

November 28, 2007

Changes at Valley Spur Trail System

Munising, MI --

Now that snow is here, cross-country skiers are dusting off their ski equipment and getting ready for another exciting season at Valley Spur. The Forest Service would like to take this opportunity to announce that the [Noquemanon Trail Network](#) (NTN) and the Friends of Valley Spur (FOVS) have formed an alliance to assume management of the Valley Spur Trail System.

Those of you who are familiar with the Friends of Valley Spur organization know that they have worked tirelessly over the past fifteen years to make Valley Spur one of the premiere cross-country ski locations in the Upper Peninsula. In conjunction with the Forest Service, the Friends have managed to stretch donations to cover operating costs every year. However, the tightening federal budget has forced the Hiawatha National Forest to reduce support for recreation facilities such as Valley Spur. This prompted the Friends group to contact the [Noquemanon Trail Network](#) about joining forces to acquire a special use permit allowing them to manage the Valley Spur Trail System.

FOVS President Dave Worel was a key player in the negotiation to partner with Noquemanon. “The NTN is an ideal partner because they have the necessary financial structure in place in order to obtain a special use permit – things like bookkeeping, insurance, publicity, and the ability to bring in grants,” Dave commented. “The NTN will primarily be involved in the financial end of the agreement while FOVS will remain the active managers. We have already benefited from this partnership to the tune of over \$8000 worth of new equipment due to a shared grant.”

The Noquemanon Trail Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing, maintaining, signing and mapping a non-motorized water and land trail network throughout Marquette and Alger Counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Their mission is to develop and maintain an interconnected, year round, non-motorized land and water trail network in the central Upper Peninsula of Michigan. They currently groom 75K of ski trails in Marquette County.

“When we learned that Valley spur might lose funding and there was an opportunity to help keep Valley Spur open, right away we wanted to help out. We want to make sure Valley Spur is kept open the same way as in the past, and maybe even improve it. This fits in with our core values of developing and supporting non-motorized recreation. We are happy to provide the infrastructure for the Friends of Valley Spur.” commented Susan Brian, Executive Director for the Noquemanon Trail Network.

The Hiawatha National Forest has been very supportive of this effort. The Forest Service encourages partnerships with local organizations to enhance recreation opportunities, and improve facilities on public lands.

“We are excited to see the professionalism of the NTN and the passion and dedication of the Friends of Valley Spur come together to manage this special trail system,” commented Dick Anderson, Recreation Manager for the Hiawatha National Forest.

“This is an excellent arrangement for everyone concerned.” stated Teresa Chase, District Ranger for the Hiawatha National Forest. “A partnership between the Hiawatha National Forest, NTN and FOVS will ensure that the Valley Spur Trail System will continue at the high level of quality and excellence skiers have come to expect.”

Although the Valley Spur Trail system now falls under the [Noquemanon Trail Network](#) (NTN) organizational umbrella, trail maintenance and grooming as well as the lodge operations will remain the responsibility of the Friends of Valley Spur. The biggest change will be a new trail fee system. In the past, suggested donations were requested from skiers. Under the special use permit, skiers will be required to pay fees. For 2007-2008, the “Valley-Spur Only” fees will be as follows: Individual day pass- \$7.00, Individual season pass-\$75.00, Student season pass-\$45.00, Junior season pass (17 & under)-\$25.00, Couples season pass- \$135.00, and Family season pass- \$175.00. All fees will be used to support the grooming and operations of the Valley Spur system. In addition, there are many other membership packages available through the Noquemanon Trail Network.

Donations will still be requested for users who are only snow shoeing. NTN will also be maintaining the mountain bike trails in the summer. Donations will be requested and will go toward brushing, mowing and signing the trail system.

For more information, or to purchase passes, please contact the [Noquemanon Trail Network](#) at 906-228-6182 or visit their website at <http://www.noquetrails.org/>. To find out ski conditions at Valley Spur, call the ski hotline at 906-387-4918 or visit their website at <http://www.valleyspur.org/>.