
Section I

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Once acquired from C&NW, work and planning started for the conversion of the rail bed into the Cowboy Trail. Four planning phases were used.

Public Participation Phase

From the outset, before any planning could even be started, it was necessary to hear from as many people as possible regarding the proposed change in land use for the corridor. It was especially important to hear from and talk with property owners whose land was immediately adjacent to the proposed trail.

In an effort to be sensitive to concerns and problems, both perceived and real, an active participation process was initiated within the general public and within resource oriented state agencies. This process opened the way for contributions of ideas, suggestions, solutions and partnerships before any plans were drawn or sketches rendered.

Over the course of planning and development of the trail, it will be important to keep the lines of communication open. Input and feedback from the trail's neighbors would make the plan a more accurate reflection of who they are and what the trail can become. Throughout the life of the trail, public participation will continue to be key to its ongoing success.

Inventory Phase

Effective plans start with knowledge of the type, extent, and quality of the resources available. An accurate visual documentation of the corridor was needed. Further information on background, plants and animals, cultures, surrounding area attractions and land and water characteristics was needed.

A variety of inventory methods were chosen for the Cowboy Trail, starting with a review of existing maps of the corridor. Further research of historic records and reports, trail standards and guides, United States Geological Survey (USGS) and transportation maps were used throughout the planning process.

Following an introductory review of the corridor, the next step was to 'ground truth' or actually hike the entire length of the corridor. Carrying a 50-pound backpack, an intern architect from the design firm hiked the 247 miles. He slept in a tent (most nights) and relied on existing amenities and communities to meet basic needs. His assignment was to inventory the trail corridor from the perspective and experiences of a trail user.

What unique challenges and needs would affect a user on a trail of this length and with such widely diverse types of landscapes? A number of factors appeared to be unique. Particular attention was focused on uncovering and understanding the possible impacts of such things as the distances between some communities, the unpredictable weather conditions, the psychology of aloneness, and the uncertainty of available services.

Primary documentation was done photographically with a minimum of one photo taken each mile. Additional photos, notes, and sketches were taken along the way to record items of significance. The hiker performed a '360-degree-inventory,' observing, sensing, hearing, and experiencing the full corridor and the surrounding areas — wildlife, birds, vegetation, ecological systems and changes, weather, sky, water and wetlands. He focused on how the trail interacted with adjoining rivers and streams, croplands and ranch lands, towns and countrysides. His impressions of being alone on the trail were recorded as were the impacts of vistas and the areas secluded

from highway traffic. Interaction with people along the way also became an important part of the inventory.

Once a week for the 20 days on the trail, two other members of the Master Plan design team, both registered landscape architects, took turns meeting the hiker on the trail. While traveling to meet the hiker, additional trail surveys were conducted from Highways 20 and 275 as well as from intersecting and adjacent country roads. The team members experienced first hand the trail highlights by walking portions of the trail with the hiker. Each member of the team gathered some data on parts of the trail to assure an unbiased survey. Exposed film, written notes and personal highlights of the experience were exchanged for new film and food.

Valuable insights and information for enhancing trail users' experiences were gained from hiking the trail.

Analysis Phase

With the inventory completed, the next step was a systematic analysis of the data collected. The objective was to assess as accurately as possible the influence and effects of elements on or around the trail that were deemed unchangeable. Elements of the inventory and analysis were placed on USGS maps to assist in the design. Having identified the constraints and opportunities, design alternatives could more appropriately be generated.

Design Phase

Following the public participation, inventory and analysis phases, concepts or ideas for the design development were created. Proposed activities and the existing and future objectives were fused together into a concept plan. Design studies were then completed to correspond with the goals of the concept and the concept plan.

Based on review and input from the second set of public meetings, changes and modifications were made in the design before the final drawings, recommendations and plan were completed.

Two truisms should not be forgotten when reviewing this Master Plan:

Planning is a Process

A Master Plan is a Working Tool

Changes to this plan should be expected and anticipated as new opportunities arise. As the trail develops, new ideas or needs will also develop. Look for them. Incorporate them. Trails are 'done' only when ideas stop coming.

With a commitment to public participation, the first series of public involvement meetings was held in November 1994. Planning was coordinated with city and county leaders, NGPC, Nebraska Department of Roads, Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Natural Resources Districts, local Chambers of Commerce, the National Park Service and citizen groups. News releases were distributed to all local and regional, daily and weekly newspapers.

In addition to the meeting facilitators, other members of the team included representatives from NGPC, Nebraska Trails Council, and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

In the communities of Valentine, Norfolk and O'Neill, the meetings were designed as an open house where people were encouraged to move freely about the room to the topic stations of greatest interest to them. Five trail-related topic stations were offered: An Overview of Rail-Trails; Trail Management Issues; Economic Impacts of Trails; Design and Development of Trails; and Resources in the Area Surrounding the Trail.

Each topic station was staffed with one or more resource persons. Maps of the trail, examples from other trails, photos, slides and a video were used. Attendees were free to move from station to station to discuss their concerns or ideas or ask questions. Questions and comments were recorded on large sheets, and post cards were distributed for questions or comments that came in the days or weeks after the meeting.

Two two-hour sessions were held in Valentine and O'Neill in an attempt to accommodate those who worked in town and those who had farm and ranch chores. A single, but slightly longer, open house was held in Norfolk.

In addition to the open house meetings, the team members presented information and received comments at community meetings in Ainsworth and Neligh. Members of the team also met with the Cherry County Planning Commission in Valentine. In several instances individual team members spent one-on-one time with concerned citizens in communities along the way.

More than 250 people attended the public meetings. A comprehensive report of the meetings was generated and disbursed to team members and any other persons requesting a copy. Included in the report were the comments and suggestions from attendees, recommendations for the trail planners, and assignments of tasks needing immediate attention by various members of the team. This report also became a guide in working on the design for the Master Plan.

After completion of the Inventory and Analysis Phases, preliminary designs were developed, a second set of public meetings were held in November 1995 in Norfolk, O'Neill, Long Pine and Valentine. Again, the meetings were coordinated with local officials and groups and publicized in the local papers.

The agenda for these meetings included an update of the process, a photo review of the entire corridor, a presentation of plan concepts and design development followed by open discussions on the materials presented. People were invited to remain after the meeting adjourned to review the maps and drawings and to discuss items in greater detail with members of the team.

The following morning work sessions were held with community and trail leaders to examine in more detail the plans, the concerns and the ideas from the night before as well as other feedback on the project.

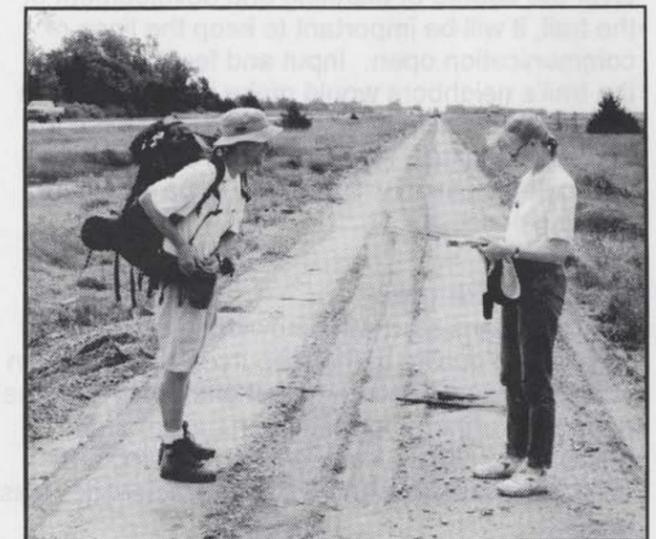
The team for this set of meetings consisted of representatives from the design firm, NGPC and RTC. In total, approximately 150 people participated in the meetings.

Comments and questions were compiled into a final report. Changes and corrections were incorporated into the draft master plan as appropriate.

In addition to the meetings in the communities along the trail, the concept plans and inventory materials were displayed in the NGPC area at the 1995 Nebraska State Fair. People from throughout Nebraska that were not directly related to the trail, as well as those familiar with the trail, viewed photos and engaged in discussions about the project. They were encouraged to voice their concerns and were provided additional information through NGPC's Internet HomePage at <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/>.

The State Fair exhibit included maps, flyers, photos, visits with the trail hiker and hands-on practice with the computerized information. Materials about the network and the trail have been forwarded to schools all across the state.

Regular one-on-one contact has continued with adjacent property owners in ongoing efforts to address concerns and answer questions. Staff, volunteers and planners have attempted to establish a 'good-neighbor' approach to the trail planning.



Mile 136 - East of Inman

Four categories of information and materials were gathered for analysis during the Inventory Phase. Each category included items of importance for the Design Phase of the Master Plan.

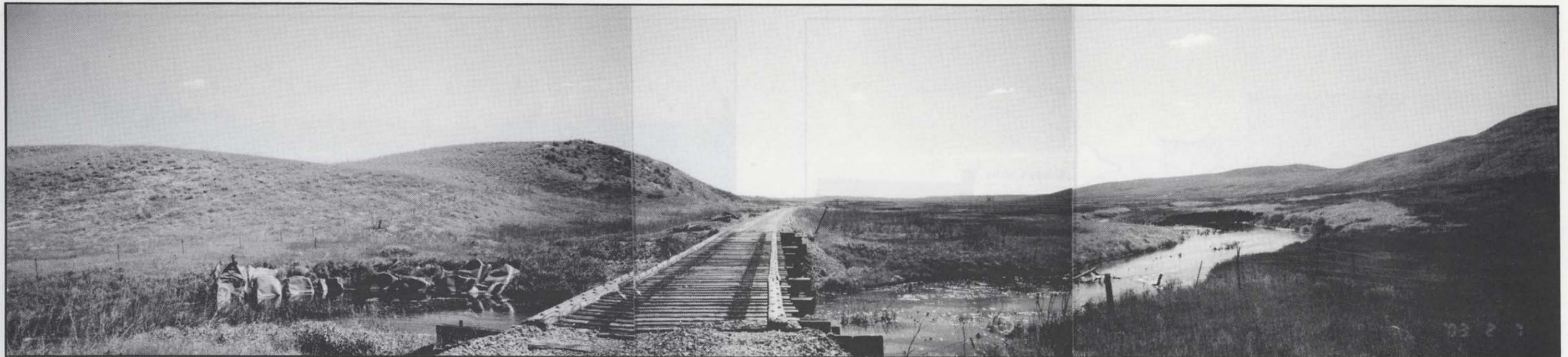
First is the physical data on the natural elements of soil, hydrology and climate, including rainfall, temperatures, snow cover and wind.

Second was the observable data. This collection of information was gathered by the hiker as he used the trail. Included are the visual characteristics of the terrain, trees, plant and animal life. Impressions are recorded of town images, character, sights and feelings. Notes were made on the impacts of the trail as it interacted with highways and roads, rivers and streams, in rural and urban settings.

The third category looked outside the right-of-way boundaries at the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions along the route. The services available, the uses of adjacent lands, population and surrounding attractions are included.

The fourth category focuses on actual trail uses and users. The most appropriate design work can only be done when the differences in users, their needs and the methods of use are identified and considered.

In a box at the end of each category are specific items that will need further consideration in the Design Phase. Some of the items will require special treatment and other items are listed to jog the memory of the designer, but each one can contribute significantly to the quality of trail experience for the user.



Mile 327 - East of Merriman

Inventory & Analysis Phases

The soils of Nebraska are a product of the action of climate and biological organism on the parent material. The parent material is the bedrock broken up on site or transported by natural agents such as wind and water to the site. The soils have also been modified by local topography, drainage, and the length of time the materials have been exposed to weathering.

Two major types of geologic deposits are parent materials for the large number of soils in the state. The majority of the soil is formed by wind-blown silt and clay known as loess. The north central portion of the state, the Sandhills region, has wind-blown sand or eolian as the parent material. Soils within river terraces, streams and bottomlands have been modified by soils formed by river and stream deposits called alluvium. Alluvium soils are recent in origin.

The soils along the Cowboy Trail are primarily of these two types, eolian and loess. Eolian is the soil type for approximately two-thirds of the trail, see Figure 3. Loess and a sandy/loam are found in the Elkhorn River bed. These soils begin to dominate the trail on the eastern one-third of the trail.

The Sandhills that were formed by the wind-blown sand are primarily rangeland. The eolian soils will hold some nutrients but the drought of the region allows only sparse grass cover. The soil does not hold moisture as well as silt or clay; therefore, the Sandhills are sparsely vegetated on the top of the dunes. Alluvium soil with a denser grass cover does accumulate in the valleys where both dry and wet meadows occur. The Cowboy Trail slices through these slight variations in the Sandhills.

Loess soil is made up of mostly silt and clay. Silt and clay are able to retain moisture and hold plant nutrients better than sand; therefore this soil type supports crop production and plant material such as trees and shrubs. The alluvium soil of the river and stream beds is one of the richest and supports the most productive crops.

Both soil types currently support native vegetation, trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. The soils outside of the old railbed should be disturbed as little as possible during construction of the trail to maintain and preserve the native plant cover.

Eolian soil can be easily eroded by the wind if the vegetative cover is allowed to die. Care must be taken to assure that the vegetation is not lost.

Design Considerations for Soils:

1. Soils should be disturbed as little as possible during construction of the trail to maintain and preserve the native plant cover.
2. Eolian soil is easily eroded by the wind (causing a blowout), if vegetation is lost.
3. Loess soil without vegetation is easily eroded by water, causing erosion channels.
4. Impact of users on the corridor, especially horses, can be detrimental to the vegetation.

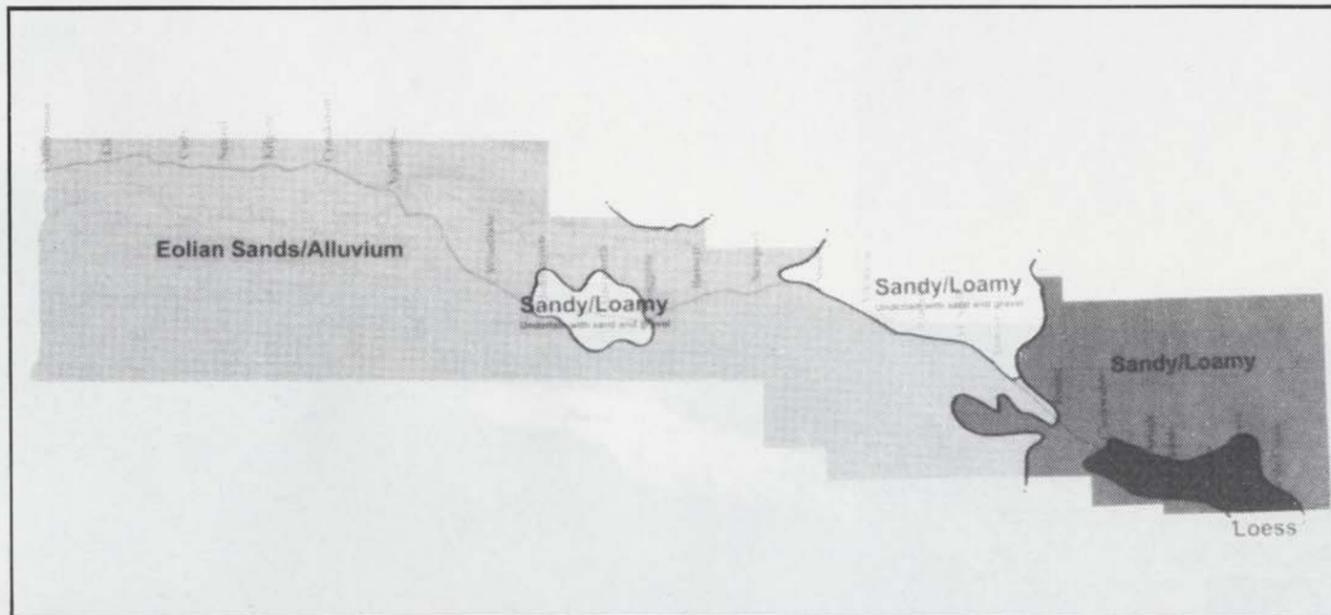


Figure 3 - Soils



Mile 284 - East of Kilgore

Hydrology

Rivers, streams and watershed areas were key in determining the initial routing of many railroads, including the Chicago & NorthWestern Railway's Cowboy Line. The contrasting impacts and influences of water are evident along many portions of the Cowboy Trail corridor.

In the semi-arid western Sandhills, where the average rainfall is only 20 inches per year, the sandy soils absorb the falling rain so quickly there is little runoff. The Sandhills are a mix of spring-fed wetlands, surface waters, and the groundwater of the Ogallala Aquifer. As the trail moves east and the soils change, the hydrology also changes. Sections of the trail level in the immensity and the dynamic interaction offered by the

waterways. Heavy rainfalls quickly swell the streams, rivers and creeks, while a dry season often leaves the river and stream beds cracked and dry. The trail is influenced by north central Nebraska's two most significant waterways, the Niobrara River and the Elkhorn River. In addition, the trail interacts with Long Pine Creek, a tributary of the Niobrara, Cache Creek, a tributary of the Elkhorn and numerous other intermittent drainage ways and streams.

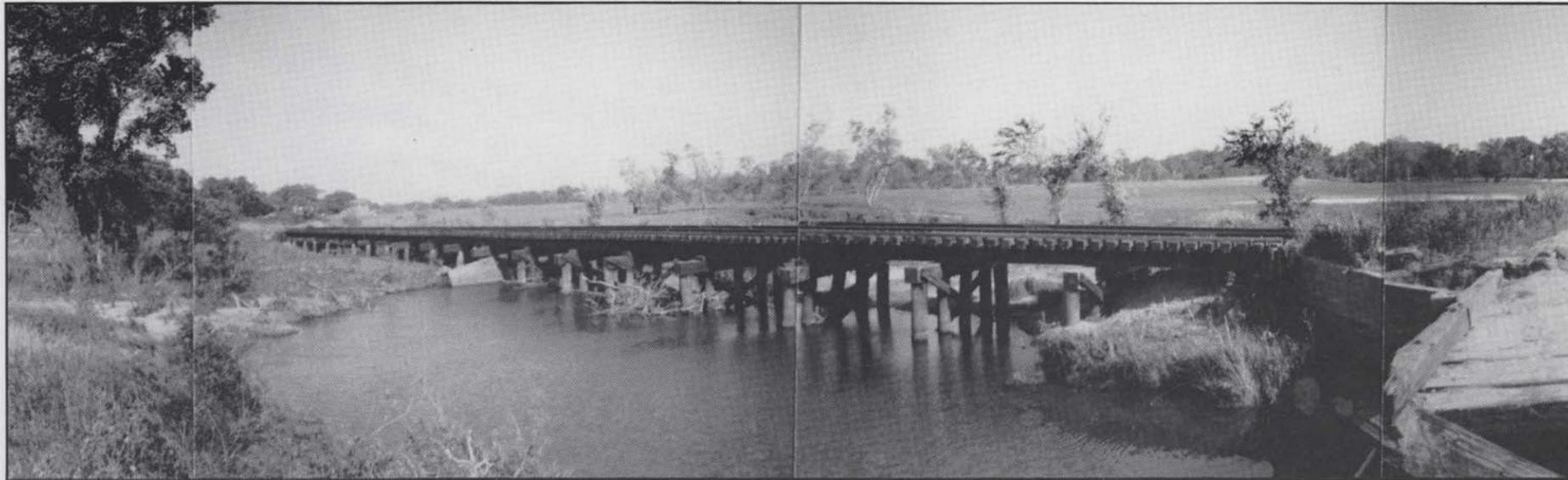
Great lengths of the corridor are routed through lowlands where storm runoff collects and feeds into the area's major water courses. In many instances the trail bed runs parallel to these drainage ways, and in other instances the trail bed bisects the drainage ways, creating important trail-side wetlands.

The extensive interaction of the Cowboy Trail with water systems is evidenced by the fact that more than 200 bridges, extending nearly three miles, are found on the trail. Nearly two-thirds of the bridges are located on the eastern one-third of the trail, a clear indication of the increased amount of interaction between trail and water. Figure 4 shows the most significant crossings.

At Valentine the trail crosses on a high railroad bridge, 148 feet above the Niobrara River, where a spectacular view of this major river awaits the trail user. Further east at Long Pine, a second high and historic bridge awaits the trail user. This one is 115 feet above Long Pine Creek. The number and frequency of bridges increase as the trail moves eastward from the Sandhills to the meadows.

Design Considerations for Hydrology:

1. Interpretive pieces about water — the value, need, sources, concerns.
2. Determine if there is need for any changes in Cowboy Trail legislation regarding emergency or restricted use of the trail ROW by snowmobiles, provided sufficient snow cover is available.
3. Maintenance plan for areas subject to occasional flooding.
4. Importance of wildlife wetlands to be emphasized.
5. Water purification issues/needs for trail users, both animals and humans.
6. Flood water retention, diversions, etc.



Mile 122 - East of Clearwater

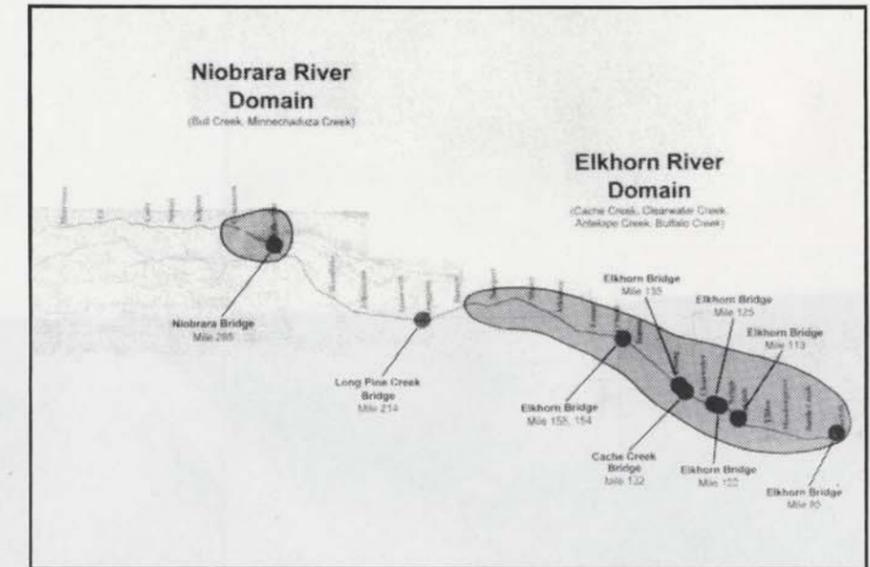


Figure 4 - Rivers

Natural Features

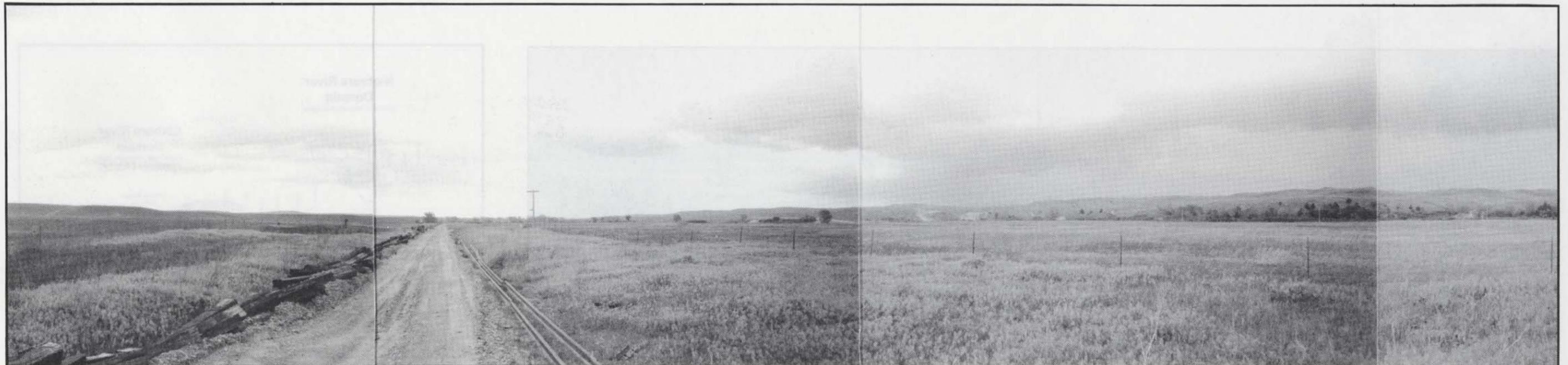
Climatic conditions will have a major effect on the maintenance, condition and use of the Cowboy Trail. Both the trail and the trail user will be subject to the full range and intensity of the weather and the climatic elements.

During the inventory, the trail hiker was affected by a variety of weather — intense heat and cold; torrential rain that flooded rivers; lightning, wind and thunder; pleasant 80° temperatures and refreshing breezes.

The four seasons are well defined. Generally, the springs and falls are mild, summers are hot, and winters are cold. However, as Nebraskans will say, “No Nebraska weather is generally anything! Don’t like it? Just wait a minute — it’ll change.” It is safer to say the weather has ‘reasonable extremes.’ Summer heat and winter cold often reach extreme temperatures. Violent summer storms are most frequently a response to the temperature extremes and are short in duration. Prolonged and severe dry periods in the prairies can create dangerous fire conditions. Wind is nearly always present.

The Cowboy Trail user will develop an appreciation for the effects that the climate has played in the settlement and development of land use in this part of Nebraska. Few of the towns or other locations along the trail are designed to modify the effects of the climate. Area residents have adapted their lifestyles to the full range of effects from the climate and trail users will want to take their lead. Current forecasts and storm warnings, plus safety precautions to be taken in severe weather, should be readily available to trail users.

From west to east, average climatic conditions vary widely. Figures 5 through 9 graphically depict the variances in precipitation, snow cover, temperatures, and wind velocities.



Mile 278 - East of Crookston

Climate

The inventory and analysis of the climate were done to verify the usability of the Cowboy Trail and to anticipate any climate-related needs of the trail user. To those ends, the collected data supports the following conclusions:

- A. With mean annual precipitation ranging from 18" (west) to 27" (east), wet conditions should not have a serious consistent impact on trail use. See Figure 5.

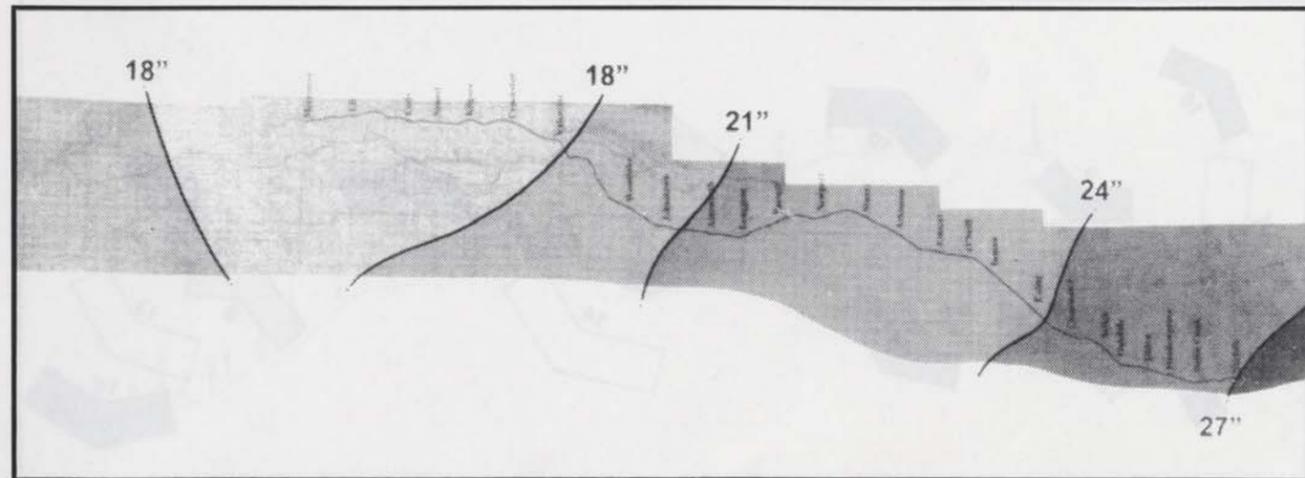


Figure 5 - Mean Annual Precipitation

- B. Snow cover is sporadic and inconsistent. See Figure 6. While snow related activities could be accommodated, they should not be expected. Even with sufficient snow fall, where the ROW is on high ground, heavy winds will blow the snow off the trail. An unusual snowfall without the winds could make the trail usable for winter activities. However, a lack of snow cover could increase the potential number of user days for bicycling and hiking.

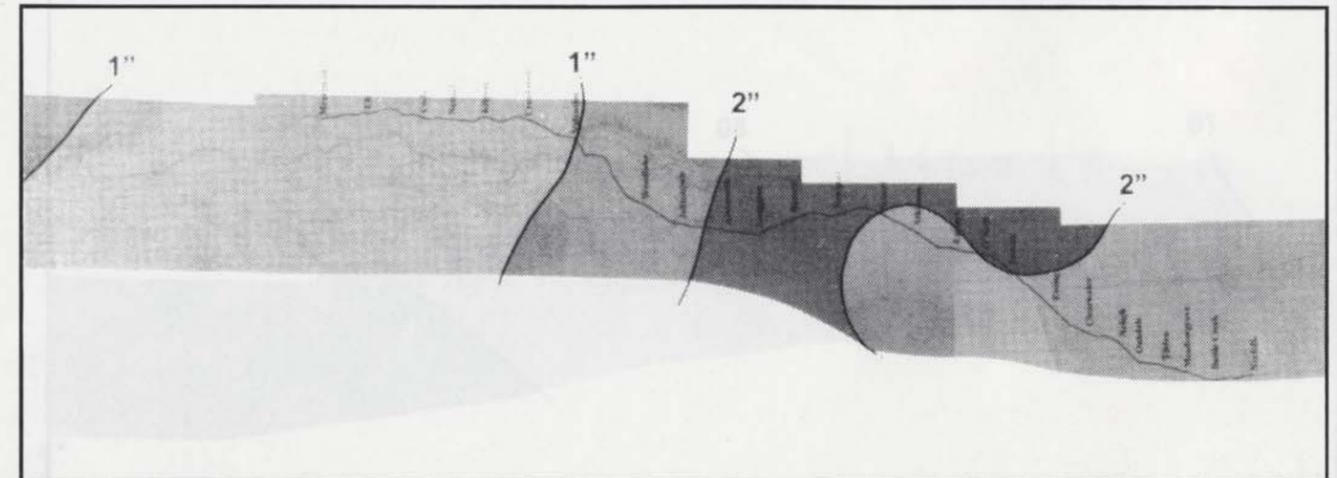


Figure 6 - Average depth of snow cover February 1st

Natural Features

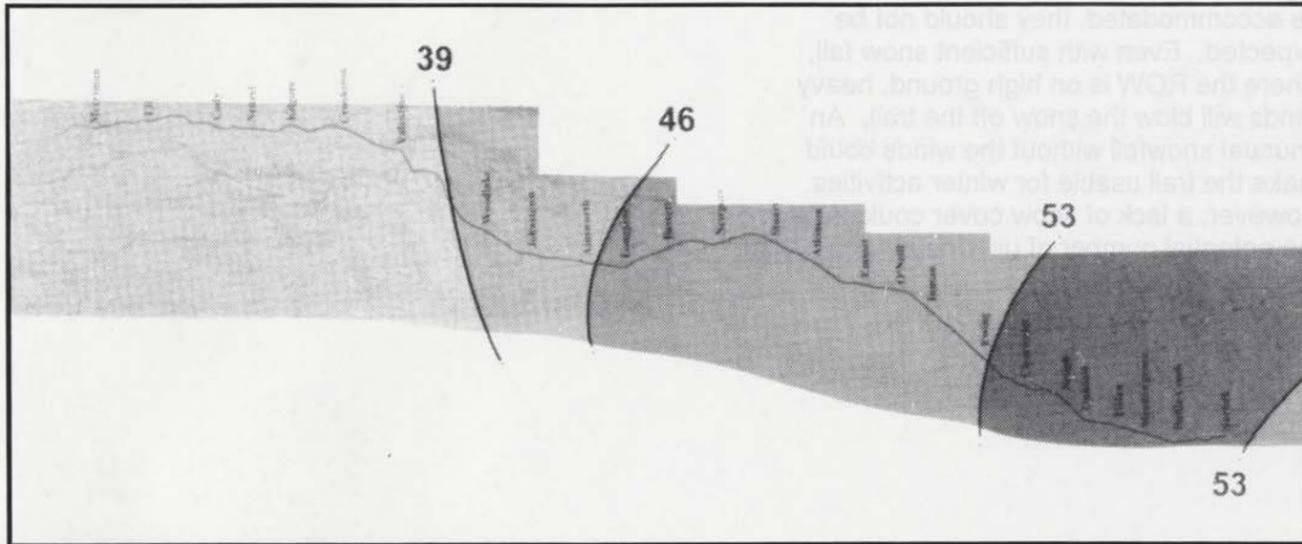


Figure 7 - Days per year with maximum temperature 32°F

- C. With a total of only ± 80 days in which a high temperature exceeds 80°F and a total of only ± 45 days where the high temperature does not reach 32°F, extreme temperatures will affect trail use less than 33% of the time. See Figures 7 and 8. The remainder of the time, or ± 250 days of the year, could offer comfortable daily temperatures between 32°F and 80°F.
- D. Average wind velocities of ± 10 mph during summer, autumn and winter will impact trail users, especially bicyclists. In the spring, the average wind velocities are ± 13 mph and the prevailing winds are from the west. See Figure 9. Both factors will affect trail users, especially because the trail corridor is open and exposed.

Design Considerations for Climate:

1. Post weather conditions at kiosks. Include in all print materials a number to dial for emergency weather reports and safety precautions in case of sudden, severe storms.
2. Determine if a need exists for any changes in trail legislation/policy regarding emergency or restricted use of snowmobiles on the trail should sufficient snow cover be available.
3. Prevention and treatment for blowouts.
4. Access to drinking water for animals and humans on hot days in isolated areas.
5. Shade for areas without trees.

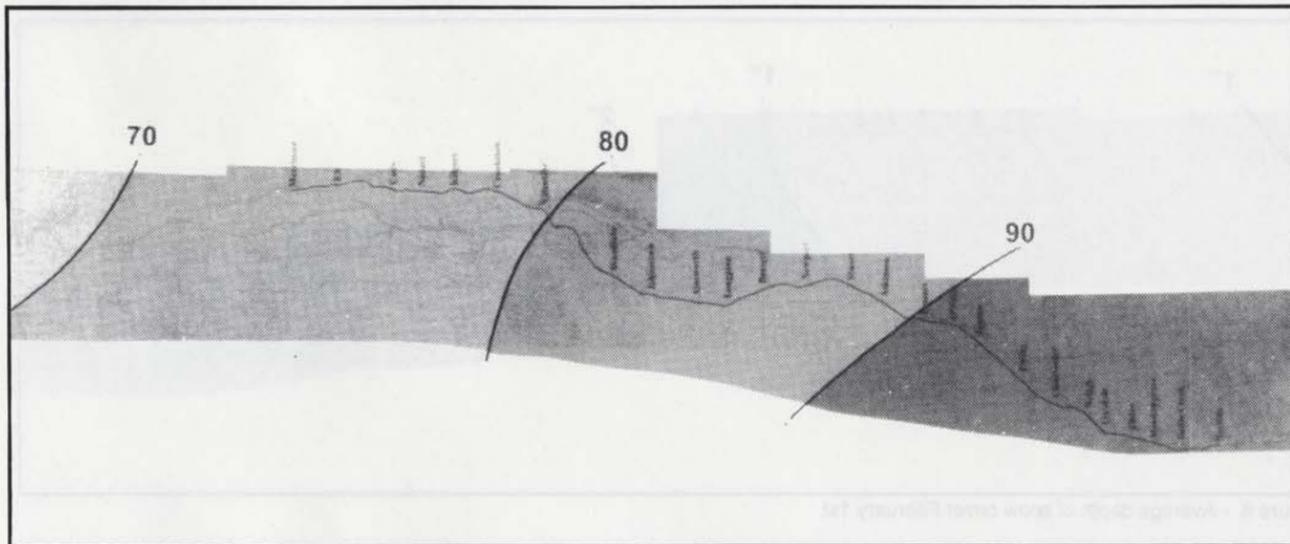


Figure 8 - Days per year with 80°F temperatures

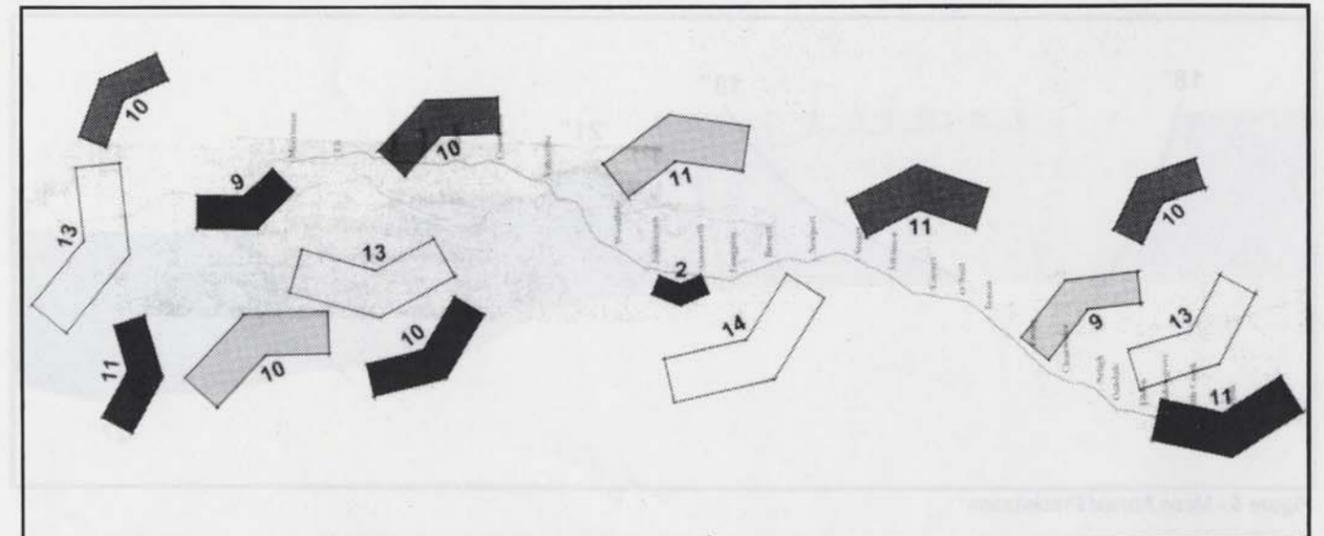


Figure 9 - Prevailing winds and velocities

Observations from the Trail

"Out of rolling hills came small valleys, from here came streams and creeks, some with only trickles of life...you can see the gradual change in vegetation, in color...."

T. Brown, Trail Hiker

The western landscape of the route differs significantly from that on the eastern end, and the contrast is striking. However, when viewed as a continuum, the changes unfold slowly from end to end and these subtle differences in landscape character are what help to define this unique Nebraska landscape experience.

Several different landscape types identified along the route are shown in Figure 10. Although they are not true scientific biomes, they do exhibit unique visual indicators.

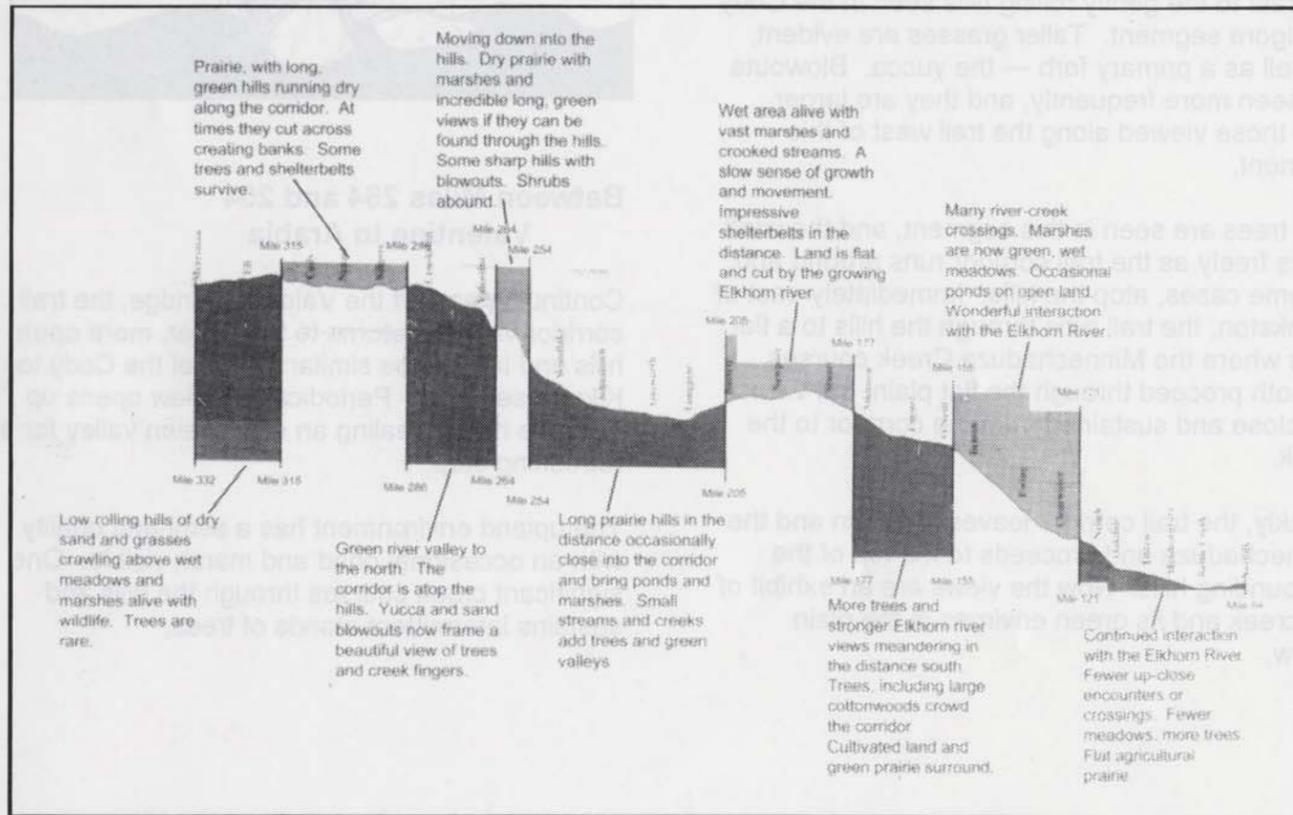
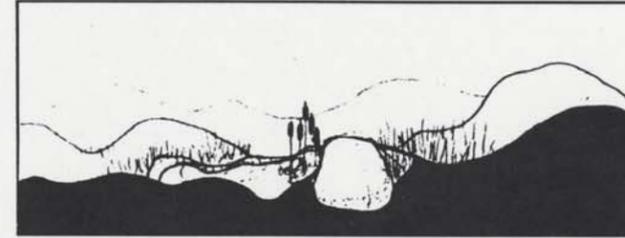


Figure 10 - Visual Character

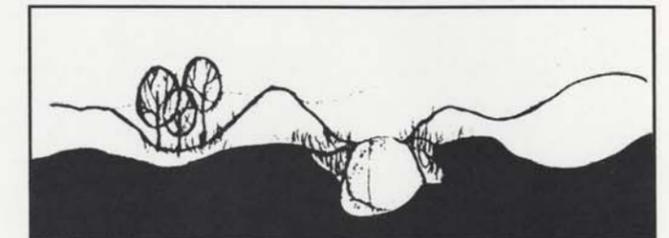


Between Miles 332 and 315 Merriman to Cody

Heading east from Merriman, the trail user begins in the midst of a geology and topography unique on the North American continent — Nebraska's 12.5 million acre Sandhills. The trail, located in a valley drainway, proceeds through numerous wet areas and ponds with flowing streams often in view. This region supports an abundance of wildlife, especially bird species.

The hilly, sandy dunes are held tentatively in place by short grass prairie plant communities. The near constant winds can threaten the stability of these fragile hills of sand. Serious erosion in the form of 'blowouts' can occur when the vegetative cover is broken or torn away.

Trees are not in abundance, but where present, they are usually found growing in clusters around surface waters. The low, gentle, and dry sandy hills offer a stark contrast to the green meadows where the lakes and marshes lie. Where the hills are close to the trail route, an outstanding border is created to frame the expansive sky. At sunset, a quiet pause lends itself to the visual and auditory experiences of the rich diversity of indigenous wildlife including coyotes, birds, and insects.



Between Miles 315 and 286 Cody to Kilgore

The hills in the Cody area are more open and, therefore, allow for longer views across the prairie. The hills are flatter but longer and sometimes they seem to extend across the trail route. The railroad cut the corridor into the hillsides, creating dominant side banks beside the route in this location.

In this segment, the trail corridor moves away from the drainage way, and the areas of surface water occur with less frequency. However, the landscape near the trail is more green and lush where the side banks provide some protection from the wind.

Trees are still scarce. Near towns and clusters of buildings, trees form shelter belts and community edges.

Fantastic views of hills can be seen against the seemingly endless sky. The hills appear to be a series of connected waves instead of isolated or free standing mounds.

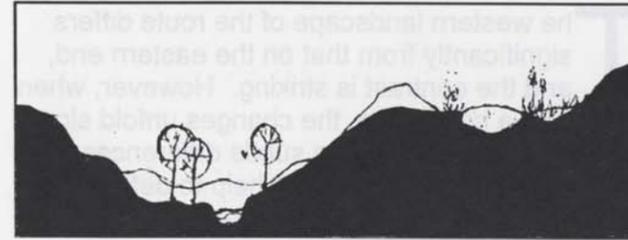
Visual Character: views, topography, vegetation and wildlife



Between Miles 318 and 288
Cody to Kilgore



Between Miles 332 and 318
Membran to Cody



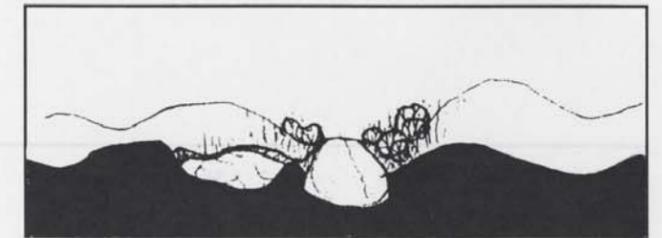
Between Miles 286 and 264
Crookston to Valentine

The visual character of the landscape adjacent to the trail corridor changes immediately west of Crookston. The hills exhibit more pointed tops in contrast to the gently rolling hills seen in the Cody to Kilgore segment. Taller grasses are evident, as well as a primary forb — the yucca. Blowouts are seen more frequently, and they are larger than those viewed along the trail west of this segment.

Few trees are seen in this segment, and the wind blows freely as the trail corridor runs around and, in some cases, atop the hills. Immediately east of Crookston, the trail runs through the hills to a flat plain where the Minnechaduzza Creek courses. As both proceed through the flat plain, the views are close and sustained from the corridor to the creek.

Quickly, the trail corridor leaves the plain and the Minnechaduzza and proceeds to the top of the surrounding hills. Now the views are an exhibit of the creek and its green environs in the plain below.

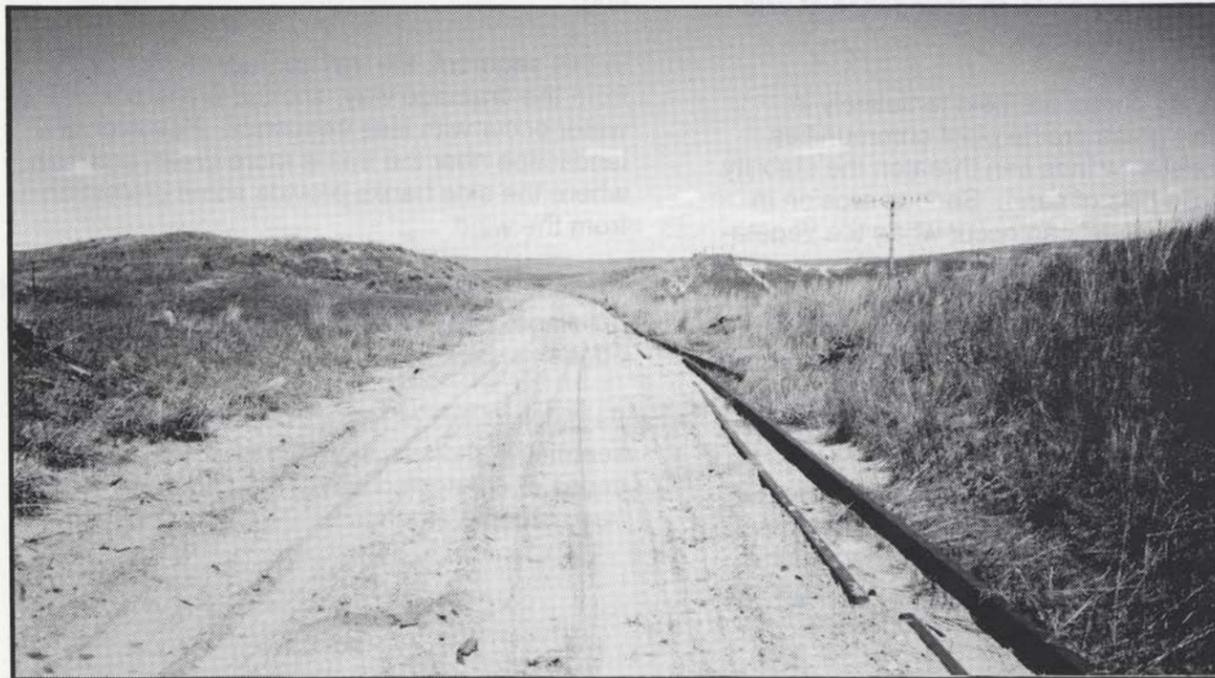
Immediately west of Valentine, the hills take on yet another visual character. The appearance is flatter and on the approach to the Niobrara River Valley, the hills reveal a 'bluffs' look. Immediately east of Valentine, the Cowboy Trail user will experience a visual highlight. Here the trail bridge, which is one quarter mile in length and 148 feet above the valley, spans the Niobrara River. The views from this bridge, clearly show the river and the surrounding environment.



Between Miles 264 and 254
Valentine to Arabia

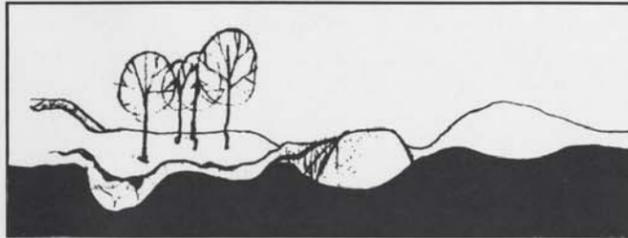
Continuing east of the Valentine Bridge, the trail corridor visually returns to the flatter, more open hills and landscape similar to that of the Cody to Kilgore segment. Periodically, a view opens up from the hills revealing an open green valley for a refreshing stop.

The upland environment has a semi-arid quality with an occasional pond and marsh visible. One significant creek courses through the hills and sustains intermittent stands of trees.



Mile 318 - East of Eli

Visual Character: views, topography, vegetation and wildlife



**Between Miles 254 and 205
Wood Lake to Bassett**

The visual character of the land adjacent to the trail corridor in this segment can best be described as rolling prairie. The topography is relatively flat with a border of small hills around the trail corridor. Elevation changes are slight and gradual.

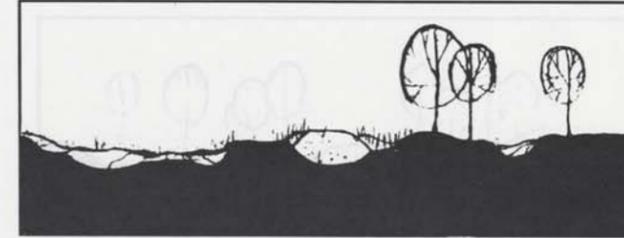
The rolling terrain is utilized more frequently for cultivation of crops than for the animal grazing found further west. Taller grasses and more dense woody plant materials are evident. Spring fed streams, small creeks, and occasional marshes sustain the landscape. Larger stands of deciduous trees are found nearby.

The corridor generally moves through lowlands and functions in conjunction with the adjacent natural drainage patterns. Indigenous wildlife is attracted to the trail corridor because of the wetland environs.

Just before entering Johnstown from the west, the trail intersects a creek located in a deep cut. The gorge is filled with coniferous trees growing up from the sheer banks of the creek and provides an unexpected contrast to the predominant rolling terrain with its stands of deciduous trees.

Visually the character of the trail corridor between Ainsworth and Long Pine is varied and unique. This entire 10-mile stretch of trail is located at a distance away from US Highway 20, and the seclusion provides an added feature to the beauty of the area. The landscape character changes from dry, upland slopes to verdant meadows and wetlands, and is bracketed on the east with the spectacular, spring fed Long Pine Creek. (The Creek is known for excellent trout fishing and it is acclaimed to have the purest water in the state.)

The trail crosses Long Pine Creek on a bridge that towers 115 feet above the valley below. This deep valley is flat at the bottom and provides an ideal site for the numerous deciduous woody plants to thrive.



**Between Miles 205 and 177
Bassett to Atkinson**

The flat, wetlands-dominated landscape adjacent to the trail corridor in this segment is the clear precursor to a dominant river environment. Wetlands and lush meadows drain to the east and feed into the numerous tributaries of the Elkhorn River.

The wetlands of this area sustain numerous wildlife species, especially birds. Drier uplands support agricultural development. Clusters of farm buildings can be seen with more frequency along the trail.

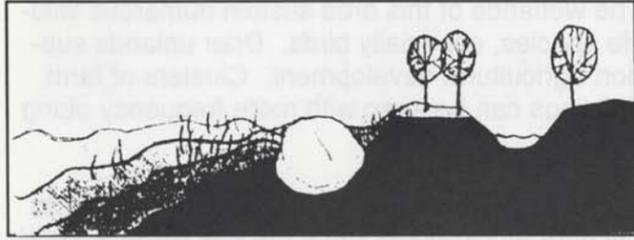
Strong stands of shrubs and wildflowers or forbs become more visible along the trail corridor. Wetland plants abound. Large areas of deciduous trees are also visible.

This segment of the trail corridor, largely secluded from US Highway 20, provides a memorable experience and a quiet place, unencumbered by traffic, to spend time appreciating nature.



Mile 219 - East of Ainsworth

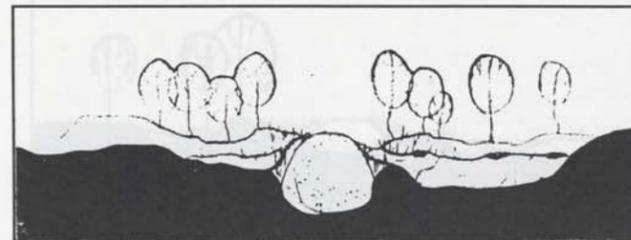
Visual Character: views, topography, vegetation and wildlife



**Between Miles 177 and 155
Atkinson to O'Neill**

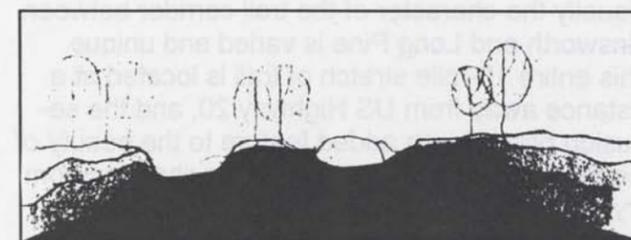
An approaching river-dominated environment of significance becomes increasingly evident on this segment of the trail corridor. Tree growth is diverse but consistent. Large masses of cottonwoods crowd the trail corridor and with their summer canopies will conceal distant views of the Elkhorn River. Stretches of the trail route are bathed in shade from these tall, stately trees.

Flat, open prairie meadows fall between strong shelter belts and the meandering tributaries of the Elkhorn River. The tall, lush, dense grasses grown here help make this region into a dominant haying area of the world.



**Between Miles 155 and 121
O'Neill to Clearwater**

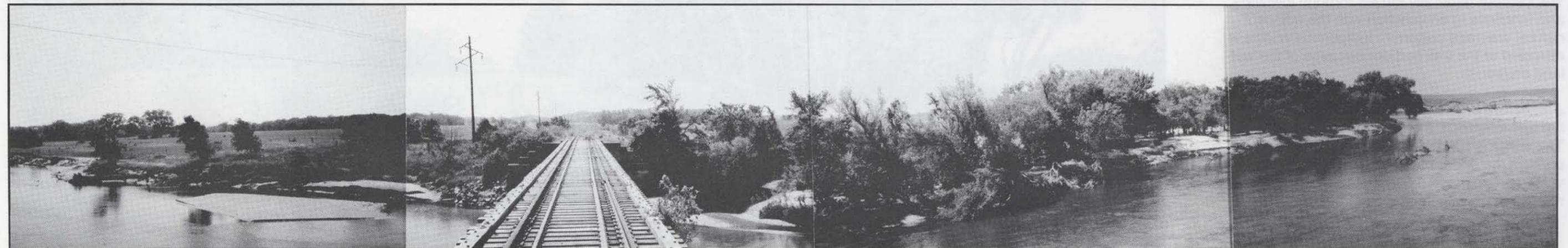
Much like the area to the west, this segment of the trail corridor courses through the tall grass prairie and the surrounding Elkhorn River environment. Major river crossings offer exciting views of the Elkhorn and adjacent riparian habitat. The sandy river banks support a diverse composite of herbaceous and woody plants. Wildlife is abundant.



**Between Miles 121 and 83.3
Neligh to Norfolk**

This segment is characterized by rich soils that are cultivated to support a variety of agricultural crops. Trees grow adjacent to the corridor even without a visible source of surface water. The route across this farm land is occasionally interrupted with crossings of the Elkhorn River. Bluffs and short rolling hills are seen in the distance across the flat cultivated land.

The Cowboy Trail ends just short of the city limits of Norfolk.



Mile 113 - East of Neligh

Visual Character: views, topography, vegetation and wildlife

Observations from the Trail

"This was the land the earth had given to the wind, who had accepted it with great pleasure. I watch it play with the grasses, the shrubs and small unknowing trees....."

T. Brown, Trail Hiker

Facts and data can be verified and measured, but feelings and impressions are nebulous and personal. They each can provide valuable information and insight for consideration in design and development.

Hiking the entire corridor brought a unique perspective to the Inventory and Analysis Phases of planning the Cowboy Trail. To experience the trail as a user provided insights that may have been overlooked or missed if evaluation had only been by facts and measurements.

Even though impressions are personal and not verifiable, they are real — for one person, at the very least. The following impressions are included to capture that personal view, a reminder that feelings add an important human dimension. They are also included to provide communities with a quick, first-impression of their community as seen from the trail.

These are notes from a single trail user as he came into each community along the corridor. The approach is from the west, headed eastward on the trail. If one were to enter from the east, views might be different, but overall impressions would likely not change.

Merriman - Mile 332

- residences are north; agriculture west
- downtown area is not strongly perceivable
- corridor has various shrubs and trees; pleasant
- setting is quiet
- patches of land covered with green grass and strange lumps; appears to have been former site for rail equipment
- highway is separated from corridor but remains visible

Eli - Mile 321

- marshy area before entering town from west
- views are open, few trees to interrupt
- very clean little town
- much water and wildlife
- east edge of town has trees along corridor

Cody - Miles 308 to 307

- town comes into view 1-2 miles out, long views
- grain storage units highlight the area
- entrance to town on a hill
- downtown clearly seen to the north — backs of buildings face the trail
- shade, water, restrooms in park at bottom of hill, next to trail
- downtown parallels corridor; openly visible

Nenzel - Mile 300

- from afar looks like a tree mass
- no agricultural buildings on skyline
- ranch to north of trail storing various types of equipment and scrap metal
- town's one street is south, across highway
- crossing conflict at highway
- park, next to highway on a hill, high point of town
- clean, quiet, incredible panoramic view

Kilgore - Mile 292

- agricultural storage units appear in the distance like icons
- dry grass plain surrounds the corridor
- residential on the west; wide-open view south to highway and beyond
- cross major highway going north
- small downtown visible from trail appears 'historic', almost abandoned; quiet

Crookston - Mile 281

- can see town through trees while still in distance
- small creek valleys and small bridges seen from top of slight hill on corridor
- railroad and agricultural buildings very visible
- downtown is visible but appears lifeless
- town is mostly residential
- more creeks and trees south across the trail; former milling area
- flat valley with surrounding hills; beginning of Minnechaduzza

Valentine - Miles 270 to 268

- on the west, corridor is surrounded by industrial, farm implement, ranching, machinery lots
- residential area with many trees; could be an old park
- center of town is typical high prairie, cowtown
- main business district is visible from trail crossing; seems far from US Highway 20
- grain storage bins profile end of main street at the trail
- at east end of town are stockyards and corrals
- view from trail is often the back of buildings

Wood Lake - Mile 244

- trail separates from highway and joins creek crossing and trees
- pass a lake

- quiet downtown to north; highway and cafe to south of main street
- park is east of main street, just off the trail

Johnstown - Mile 233

- crossing conflict with Highway 20, one mile west
- city park is north across the highway
- small downtown, main street visible from trail
- buildings look like historical old west prairie structures; served as movie set for Hollywood film
- new, modern agricultural storage contrasts with other buildings on main street

Ainsworth - Miles 223 to 222

- trail and highway separate one mile out of town
- trail curves through tree mass and over creeks
- town center has agricultural/rail structures and lumber yards
- crossing at main street provides good north view, seems separated
- east exit also 'behind' town
- trail east continues to be separated from highway — by fences and fields

Long Pine - Miles 214 to 213

- town visible from many miles west and changes with trail orientation and distance
- dramatic view-shed at Long Pine Creek
- wide ROW lined with grain storage bins
- old depot and RR crew bunk house at corner of main street
- small shady park behind bunk house
- downtown has an old west feeling, quiet, dusty
- clean, 'historic'
- wide ROW continues through town
- more grain storage
- junkyard east and north of trail

Town/City Character: sights, images, flavor and impressions

Bassett - Mile 204

- enter the 'back' of town through ranches, farms, residential
- agricultural storage area; seems like you are missing the town, like you've just passed it
- diagonal road crossing at trail at main street
- south looks to have many closed shops
- downtown is clean and active
- lots of cattle hauling; major sales barn north of trail

Newport - Mile 193

- separated from highway
- seem to enter through center of town
- feels quiet, safe, 'historic'
- many trees and open plots of grass
- hay office and agricultural storage units along corridor
- main street is almost empty, quiet, but close to trail
- north to grocery market; south to highway

Stuart - Mile 183

- from west, auto salvage adjacent to trail
- further are agricultural storage and beautiful agricultural buildings
- north to busy downtown; museum next to trail
- highway in distance
- exit behind residential and farms before intersecting with Highway 20 again

Atkinson - Miles 175 to 173

- pass alongside combination golf course and cemetery
- trail curves away from highway; into downtown
- region's trademark, agricultural/rail storage units, a welcome site
- at main street crossing, large, active downtown comes into view
- meet up with highway again on east side
- pass stockyards and implement sales dealer
- beginning to see center pivot irrigation systems

Emmet - Mile 164

- away from highway
- enter through beautiful grass fields and good sized trees
- trail enters through town's back door
- main street hard to detect; only see neatly aligned liquid fertilizer spray units
- small downtown north but not really visible

O'Neill - Miles 157 to 155

- enter through cluttered industrial, farm, and implement sales sites; then residential
- farther still to agricultural/rail storage structures
- depot, historic, brick, being restored
- across the highway to the south, a park is adjacent to trail; very visible; very close
- downtown seems very far off
- corridor becomes tree-lined and passes through hay meadows and pastures
- many bridge crossings over Elkhorn

Inman - Mile 148

- trail on extreme north of town
- very quiet, (seems like a ghost town)
- looks like safe streets to walk on
- surrounded by meadows and open fields
- town seems hidden behind the trees of the main street area
- main street has hay offices and few buildings, some activity

Ewing - Mile 135

- open prairie views coming in from west
- town is open and still
- surrounded by agriculture and livestock
- main street is diagonally north
- good view of park from the east end of the trail
- highway crossing

Clearwater - Mile 125

- from distance, town seems like a big tree mass
- agricultural storage greets users as first major structure
- rodeo and steak house across the highway
- center of town is nice, feels safe to take walk
- many downtown buildings — some 'historic', some new
- south to park

Neligh - Miles 117 to 115

- enter through residential sections
- grain storage bins
- historic flour mill and museum between trail and Elkhorn; large shade trees and green lawn on riverbank
- strong link to downtown is missing
- Riverside Park nice, visible and accessible

Oakdale - Mile 111

- no visible connection to downtown area
- beautiful views
- pass residential and agricultural structures

Tilden - Mile 104

- to west is grain storage
- to south is a park, but can't get to it from trail
- main street is close to trail, safe walk from trail
- many active stores
- trail leads to park and pool, very nice
- good facilities, but needs better linkages
- new Ice Trail will be of interest

Meadow Grove - Mile 98

- pass by liquid fertilizer storage
- no easily visible downtown
- wonderful tree masses

Battle Creek - Mile 91

- entry through a residential area and lumber yard; feels like the 'back door'
- no strong links from trail to downtown
- main street is active and has 'historic' look to it

Norfolk - Mile 82

- trail goes behind large manufacturing plants and ends
- can see more development ahead



Mile 141 - East of Inman

Exquisite examples of agricultural architecture create interesting skylines for most all of the communities along the trail. Grain storage units stand alone or in clusters along the corridor. Elevators for weighing, loading and unloading grains provide another shape and character to a town's appearance.

Historic landmarks are scattered throughout the trail. Cattle loading docks, especially on the western segment, are haunting visual reminders of the past relationship between the railroad and the ranch. Preserved log cabins, and an occasional sod house, provide glimpses of early pioneer homes. Windmills, some old and some new, dot the landscape and remind the trail user of the significance of wind and water.

Two bridges, both listed as historic landmarks, cross the Niobrara River at Valentine. One, the old railroad bridge, is an example of a determined construction effort of the late 1800s. The other, the 1932 Bryan Bridge, is Nebraska's one-of-a-kind highway bridge — a pin-connected cantilever arch structure.

In the midsection of the trail, the hay fields offer seasonal landmarks of the huge rolls and stacks of hay dotting the mowed fields. In contrast to these large hay monuments are the small hay offices where the produce is bought and sold.

Farm equipment presents yet another type of significant landmark. More than significant, these pieces are essential to the very livelihood of the farmer and the marketplace. Nearing the eastern portion of the trail, various forms and shapes of equipment will become increasingly evident, as will farmsteads with their building clusters of house, barn and silos.



Mile 216 - Long Pine Creek Bridge west of Long Pine

Mile 116 - Neligh Mills, Neligh

Landmarks: buildings, bridges and skylines

The Cowboy Trail is far from being an isolated strip of land. All along its length, the corridor meets, crosses, runs alongside and departs from other linear corridors of activity. The interaction of the streams, rivers, highways and roads adds greatly to the interest and to the character of the trail.

One of the attractions of the Cowboy Trail is the way the highway and the trail corridor intertwine like two threads. Nearly two-thirds of the total length of the Cowboy Trail is located adjacent to US Highway 20/US Highway 275. Along these stretches, the highway and the trail are directly visible to each other.

The two-lane highway carries a variety of types of traffic to include semi-trailer truck transports, passenger cars and rural implements. Traffic varies from long distance, nonstop travel to slower, locally based commuting. Regardless of the type of traffic or travel, speed on the highway is reduced at every community. Current speed on the open highway is 60 mph, and speeds are reduced at communities to 45 to 25 mph.

The highway never seems to intrude on the trail. Although in a few short segments it is located just a few feet from the trail, the highway should not have a negative influence on the utilization or user of the trail. In fact, many trail users will find comfort in knowing the highway is within view or easy access for safety, emergency services, law enforcement and communication.

One-third of the trail divides into the following thirteen trail sections, ranging in length from two to 25 miles, that are separated and secluded from the highways. The only other linear interactions are with waterways, driveways and occasionally with a gravel secondary road.

**Mile 330 to Mile 314
between Merriman and Eli
16 miles**

This segment includes a landscape replete with sandhills, ponds and marshes. The habitat creates opportunities to view birds, deer, coyotes and other native wildlife.

**Mile 311 to Mile 309
area of Cody
2 miles**

This segment features a rolling landscape through which the trail winds. The moderate inclines create unique, expansive views of the dry Sandhills prairie.

**Mile 304 to Mile 301
area of Nenzel
3 miles**

Similar to the previous description, this segment offers good views from the moderate incline of the trail.

**Mile 286 to Mile 283
area of Crookston
3 miles**

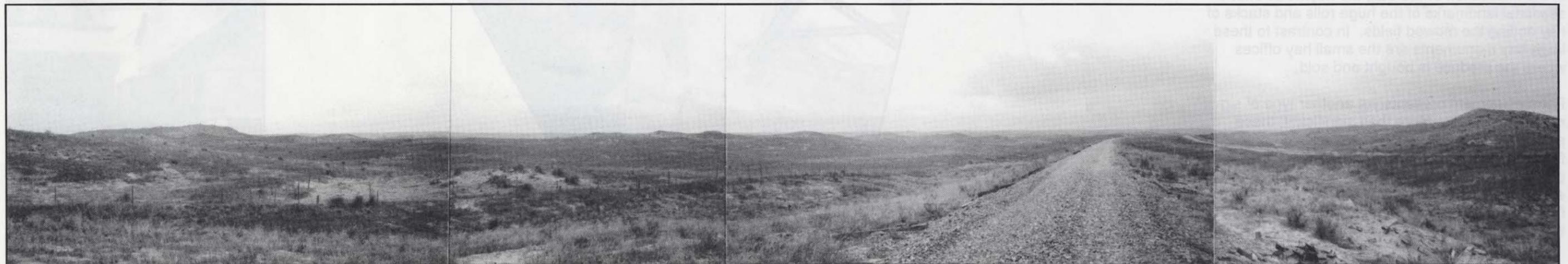
This segment offers the first view of the Minnechaduza Creek valley. The adjacent hills change in character and appear sharper and sandier.

**Mile 278 to Mile 276
between Crookston and Valentine
2 miles**

This segment features flat meadows with trees, the meandering Minnechaduza Creek and shelter belts.

**Mile 266 to Mile 254
area of Valentine
12 miles**

The segment just east of Valentine includes the crossing of the Niobrara River bridge with spectacular views of the river and the valley. After crossing the bridge, the landscape returns to the ever-present, dry-looking prairie sandhills seen west of the river valley. Ponds and marshes dot the landscape as a contrast with the dry upland hills.



Mile 284 - East of Kilgore

Mile 237 to Mile 235
area of Johnstown
2 miles

This segment finds the trail on a bank that offers a view of the valley below. The trail leads to and crosses Plum Creek with its numerous trees. Wildlife and their habitats can be easily viewed along this isolated segment of trail.

Mile 223 to Mile 214
between Ainsworth and Long Pine
9 miles

This segment takes the trail user through cultivated fields with long views of level ground and Willow Creek. An uncharacteristic, but spectacular, border of native coniferous and deciduous trees heralds the location of the Long Pine Creek Canyon — "Hidden Paradise." The canyon and creek are crossed by the 115-foot high Long Pine Bridge.

Mile 205 to Mile 184
between Bassett, Newport, Stuart
21 miles

This segment includes a stretch where the trail and the highway join, separate and then come together again. When the highway and trail are in close proximity, the highway is perceived but not offensive. Where the trail departs from the highway, there is total seclusion. It is along these stretches that large areas of wetlands, marshes, meadows and dry prairies envelope the trail.

Mile 165 to Mile 161
area of Emmet
4 miles

This segment has the trail passing through Emmet on the south side while Highway 20 passes on the north side. The trail user sees a large, substantial grove of deciduous trees and rolling meadows to the east of Emmet.

Mile 124 to Mile 122
area of Clearwater
2 miles

This secluded segment takes the trail user along the Elkhorn River and through the associated riparian environment. Significant tree canopies shade the passage and two river crossings on the existing railroad bridges enrich the trip.

Mile 114 to Mile 112
between Neligh and Oakdale
2 miles

This segment offers the trail user yet another Elkhorn River bridge crossing with views of wetlands associated with the river.

Mile 97 to Mile 84
between Battle Creek and Norfolk
13 miles

Although secluded from the highway, this stretch is accessible by numerous unpaved country roads. Views from the trail to Deer Creek, Battle Creek, and the adjacent cultivated land accent the passage. This segment ends with one final crossing of the Elkhorn River and the approach to Norfolk.



Mile 224 - East of Johnstown

Secluded Areas

Figure 11 shows the interactions between rivers, creeks or streams along the trail.

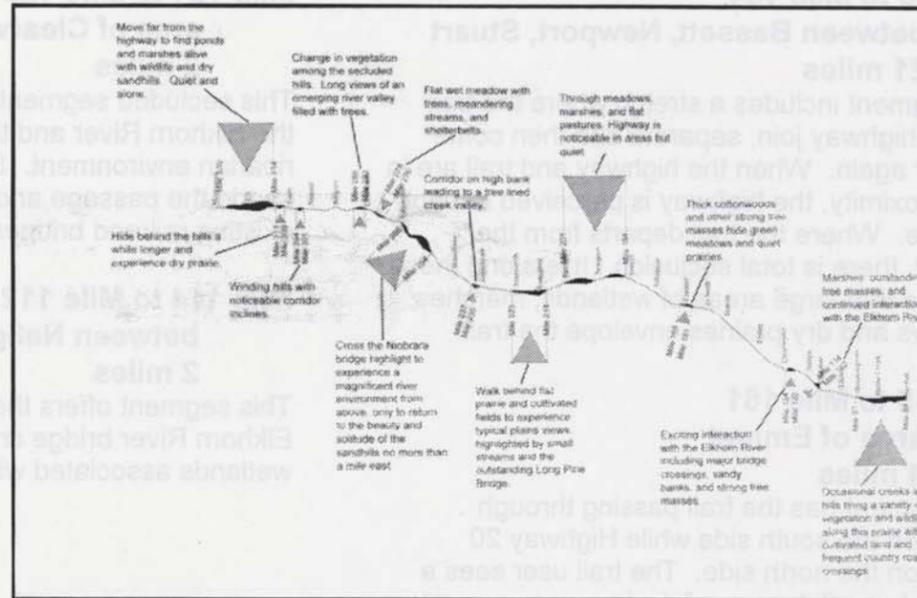


Figure 11 - Secluded Areas

Design Considerations for Crossings Between Secluded Areas:

Same-grade Crossings:

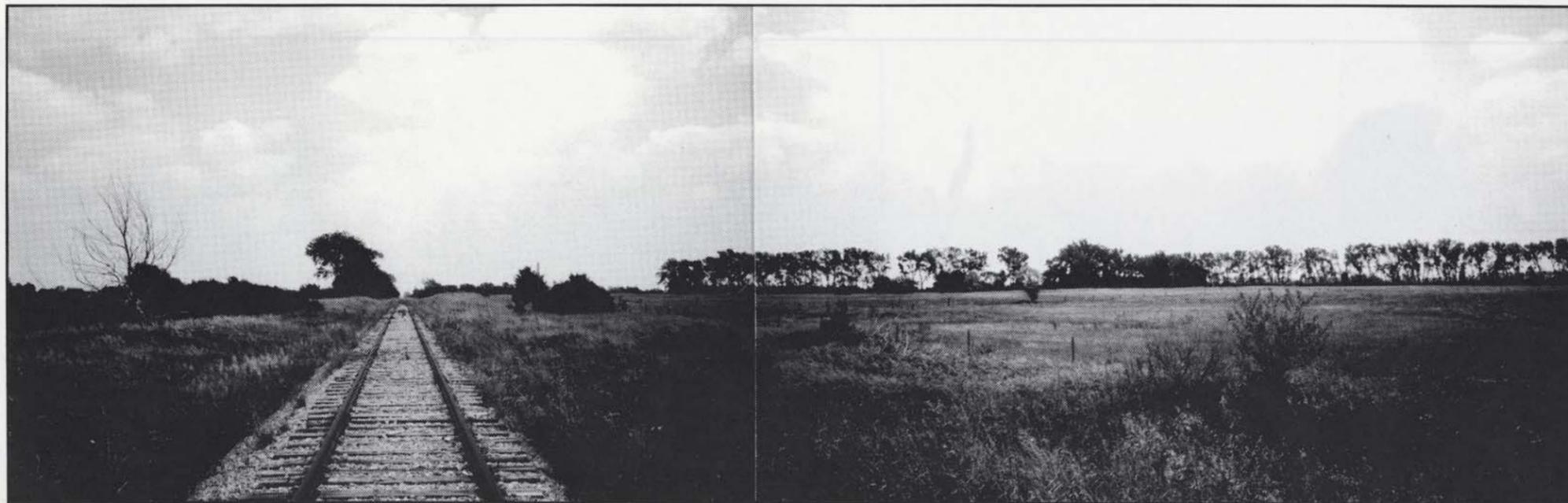
1. Stuart, Nenzel and Johnstown will need safe, convenient crossings of Highway 20.
2. Numerous such crossings between unpaved county roads and the trail occur throughout the length of the route.
3. Numerous such crossings between city streets and the trail occur in each of the communities.

Below-grade Crossings:

4. One such crossing occurs east of Long Pine with the trail routed under Highway 20.

Water Crossings:

5. Since sport fishing occurs in some of the waterways, access for trail users who wish to fish should be considered.
6. High bridges, such as Valentine and Long Pine, will need alternative routes, especially for equestrians.
7. All bridges need decking and some form of handrail or protective siding.



Mile 95 - East of Meadow Grove

Communities

Communities are an accumulation of variety. People with different backgrounds, values, interests and skills; activities and events; the kinds of businesses; the cultural and ethnic makeup — all help to define the community and its outlook on life.

Trail users will be greatly enriched by observing and learning from their encounters with the communities and the local residents. Residents will also benefit by sharing their expertise and insights with the trail users. To meet the 'outsiders' using the trail can become an opportunity to open new doors of understanding and appreciation for all.

Communities

Figure 12 identifies the 26 communities located along the Cowboy Trail. Also included are the respective railroad mile marker for each community and the distances between the towns.

Most communities along the corridor were established to support the people and businesses related to the active railroad line. When the railroad stopped operating, the populations decreased steadily and many businesses and shops closed. Remnants of the past are still evident in many places along the corridor. However, the Cowboy Trail is an opportunity for economic redevelopment, this time by providing support services for trail users.

Various levels of support services which appeal to trail users are currently available in the communities. To the degree the trail becomes a centerpiece for a community, new trail-based businesses and additional services are likely to be offered.

Communities are consistently spaced at approximately 10 – 15 mile intervals along the trail corridor. This even spacing of services provides a tremendous amount of flexibility for different types of trail users requiring dissimilar levels of accommodations.

The following list of the communities located along the Cowboy Trail includes the services and accommodations known at the time of this plan. Facilities marked 'accessible' are intended to accommodate wheel chairs. Also noted are each town's population and the distances to the neighboring communities. The list begins with Merriman on the west and proceeds east to Norfolk.

Merriman

- Located at Mile Marker 332
- Population is 151
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Restrooms (accessible)
 - Public Water
 - Public Showers (planned)
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Convenience Store
 - Lodging: (bed & breakfast, motel)
 - Horse Pasture
 - Shops
 - Places of Worship
- Distance east to Eli: 11 miles

Eli

- Located at Mile Marker 321
- Population is two
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
- Distance west to Merriman: 11 miles
- Distance east to Cody: 14 miles

Cody

- Located at Mile Marker 307
- Population is 177
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Market
 - Bar/Grill
- Distance west to Eli: 14 miles
- Distance east to Nenzel: 7 miles

Nenzel

- Located at Mile Marker 300
- Population is 8
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Toilets
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to Cody: 7 miles
- Distance east to Kilgore: 8 miles

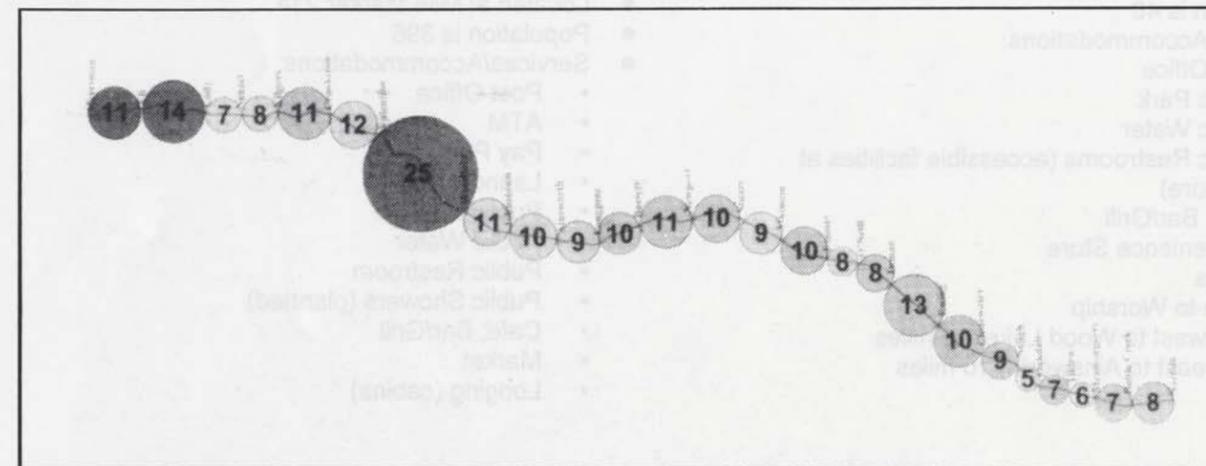


Figure 12 - Communities

Social, Cultural, Economic, Political

Kilgore

- Located at Mile Marker 292
- Population is 79
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Bar/Grill
 - Convenience Store
 - Light Manufacturing
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to Nenzel: 8 miles
- Distance east to Crookston: 11 miles

Crookston

- Located at Mile Marker 281
- Population is 99
- Distance west to Kilgore: 11 miles
- Distance east to Valentine: 12 miles

Valentine

- Located at Mile Marker 269
- Population is 2,826
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATMs
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Public Showers
 - Bar/Grills
 - Restaurants
 - Ice Cream Parlor
 - Markets
 - Convenience Stores
 - Lodging (motels, bed & breakfasts)
 - Tack Shop
 - Bicycle Rentals/Repairs
 - Sporting Goods
 - Canoe Outfitters
 - Shops

- Entertainment
- Places of Worship
- Distance west to Crookston: 12 miles
- Distance east to Wood Lake: 25 miles

Wood Lake

- Located at Mile Marker 244
- Population is 59
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Public Lake
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Convenience Store
 - Bicycle Repair
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to Valentine: 25 miles
- Distance east to Johnstown: 11 miles

Johnstown

- Located at Mile Marker 233
- Population is 48
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms (accessible facilities at Village Store)
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Convenience Store
 - Shops
 - Place to Worship
- Distance west to Wood Lake: 11 miles
- Distance east to Ainsworth: 10 miles

Ainsworth

- Located at Mile Marker 223
- Population is 1,870
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Public Showers
 - Cafes; Bar/Grill
 - Restaurants
 - Market
 - Convenience Store
 - Lodging (motels, bed & breakfast)
 - Bicycle Repair
 - Sporting Goods
 - Shops
 - Entertainment
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Johnstown: 10 miles
- Distance east to Long Pine: 9 miles

Long Pine

- Located at Mile Marker 214
- Population is 396
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restroom
 - Public Showers (planned)
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Lodging (cabins)

- Shops
- Movie (drive-in)
- Places of Worship
- Distance west to Ainsworth: 9 miles
- Distance east to Bassett: 10 miles

Bassett

- Located at Mile Marker 204
- Population is 739
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Lodging
- Distance west to Long Pine: 10 miles
- Distance east to Newport: 11 miles

Newport

- Located at Mile Marker 193
- Population is 136
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Convenience Store
 - Shops
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to Bassett: 11 miles
- Distance east to Stuart: 10 miles

Stuart

- Located at Mile Marker 183
- Population is 650
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms (accessible)
 - Public Showers
 - Cafes; Bar/Grills
 - Ice Cream Parlor
 - Markets
 - Convenience Stores
 - Lodging (bed & breakfast)
 - Horse Pasture
 - Tack Shop
 - Sporting Goods
 - Shops
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Newport: 10 miles
- Distance east to Atkinson: 9 miles

Atkinson

- Located at Mile Marker 174
- Population is 1,380
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Hospital
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park (NO camping)
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Cafe; Bar
 - Restaurants
 - Markets
 - Lodging (motel/hotel)
 - Bicycle Repair

- Shops
- Places of Worship
- Distance west to Stuart: 9 miles
- Distance east to Emmet: 10 miles

Emmet

- Located at Mile Marker 164
- Population is 70
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park (under construction)
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Public Showers (under construction)
 - Cafe
 - Horse Pasture
 - Shops
- Distance west to Atkinson: 10 miles
- Distance east to O'Neill: 8 miles

O'Neill

- Located at Mile Marker 156
- Population is 3,852
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms (accessible)
 - Public Shower (being built)
 - Cafes; Bars/Grills
 - Restaurants
 - Ice Cream Parlor
 - Markets
 - Convenience Stores
 - Lodging (motel/hotel)
 - Horse Pasture
 - Tack Shop
 - Sporting Goods
 - Shops

- Entertainment/Movie
- Band Concerts (summer)
- Places of Worship
- Distance west to Emmet: 8 miles
- Distance east to Inman: 8 miles

Inman

- Located at Mile Marker 148
- Population is 159
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restroom
 - Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to O'Neill: 8 miles
- Distance east to Ewing: 13 miles

Ewing

- Located at Mile Marker 135
- Population is 449
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
- Distance west to Inman: 13 miles
- Distance east to Clearwater: 10 miles

Clearwater

- Located at Mile Marker 125
- Population is 401
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Bar/Grill
 - Restaurants
 - Market
 - Shops
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Ewing: 10 miles
- Distance east to Neligh: 9 miles

Neligh

- Located at Mile Marker 116
- Population is 1,746
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Pay Phone
 - Laundromat
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restroom (accessible)
 - Public Showers
 - Cafes; Bar/Grill
 - Restaurants
 - Markets
 - Convenience Stores
 - Lodging: (motel, bed & breakfast (planned))
 - Tack Shop
 - Shops
 - Entertainment
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Clearwater: 9 miles
- Distance east to Oakdale: 5 miles

Oakdale

- Located at Mile Marker 111
- Population is 362
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Convenience Stores
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Neligh: 5 miles
- Distance east to Tilden: 7 miles

Tilden

- Located at Mile Marker 104
- Population is 895
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank
 - Hospital
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restroom (accessible)
 - Public Showers (locked but available)
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
 - Convenience Store
 - Lodging (motel/hotel)
 - Shops
 - Places of Worship
- Distance west to Oakdale: 7 miles
- Distance east to Meadow Grove: 6 miles

Meadow Grove

- Located at Mile Marker 98
- Population is 332
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Pay Phone
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Toilets
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Convenience Store
 - Shops
 - Place of Worship
- Distance west to Tilden: 6 miles
- Distance east to Battle Creek: 7 miles

Battle Creek

- Located at Mile Marker 91
- Population is 997
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank
 - Public Park
 - Cafe; Bar/Grill
 - Market
- Distance west to Meadow Grove: 7 miles
- Distance east to Norfolk: 8 miles

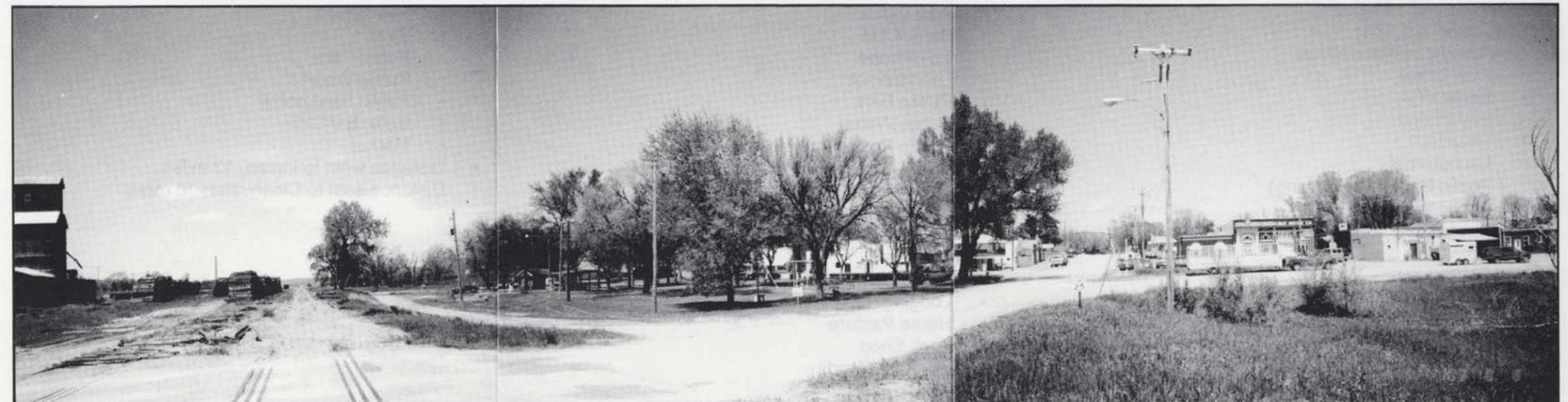
End of Cowboy Trail

- Mile Marker 83.3
- Distance west to Battle Creek: 8 miles
- Distance east from end of trail to Norfolk: 0.7 mile

Norfolk

Although the Cowboy Trail ends just outside of town, the city and trail users will have an impact on one another.

- Located at Mile Marker 82
- Population is 21,476
- Services/Accommodations:
 - Post Office
 - Bank/ATM
 - Public Park
 - Public Water
 - Public Restrooms
 - Restaurants
 - Market
 - Lodging
 - Bicycle Repair
 - Shops
 - Entertainment
 - Places of Worship



Mile 307 – Cody

The Cowboy Trail showcases the "good life" of rural Nebraska as it passes through extensive and diverse types of land use. This is not an urban trail since the most prevalent land use along the corridor is agricultural.

At the western end of the trail, the trail user will see large ranching operations with their expansive pastures for grazing. Moving eastward, the trail user will experience a shift to predominantly cultivated farmstead operations. Livestock are still present, but plowed fields, irrigation and farm machinery for planting or cultivating the crops will become much more evident.

Even the communities located along the trail reflect the agricultural base of the area. The land uses change, of course, from open agricultural fields and pastures to residential and commercial. But because of the surrounding economic base, and because the railroad line provided the connection between the product and the market, trail users will see many forms of agri-related architecture built along the corridor. Grain storage bins, elevators, hay offices, fertilizer plants, stockyards and cattle loading ramps are the structures that fuse together the produce from agricultural land uses with that of products and services from the commercial land uses. The trail continues to provide good access to that same association of land uses.

The trail runs adjacent to residential land uses with varying densities ranging from the typical detached single family residence, usually surrounded by good sized yards, to the lower densities of homes located on acreages. A few higher density, multi-family structures may be found in the larger towns. Multi-unit housing in these rural settings is most frequently for senior citizens who are no longer able to continue the

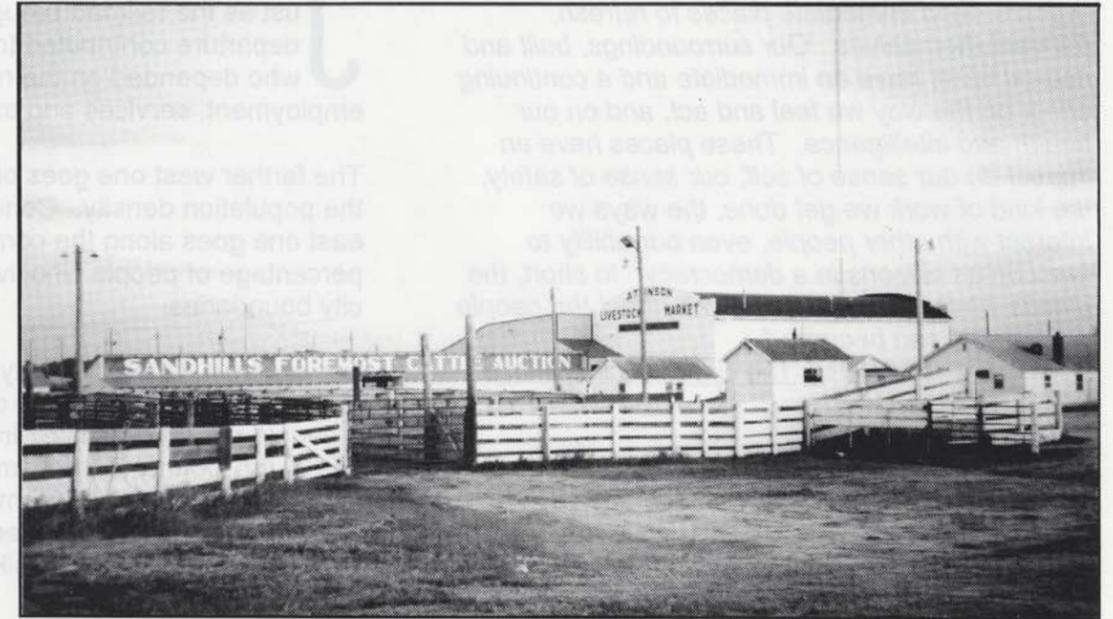
hard work of farming but whose families often are continuing the active farming operations.

A number of the towns along the corridor provide visible evidence of a time when the population was greater and the commercial district was more substantial. Vacant buildings are not uncommon.

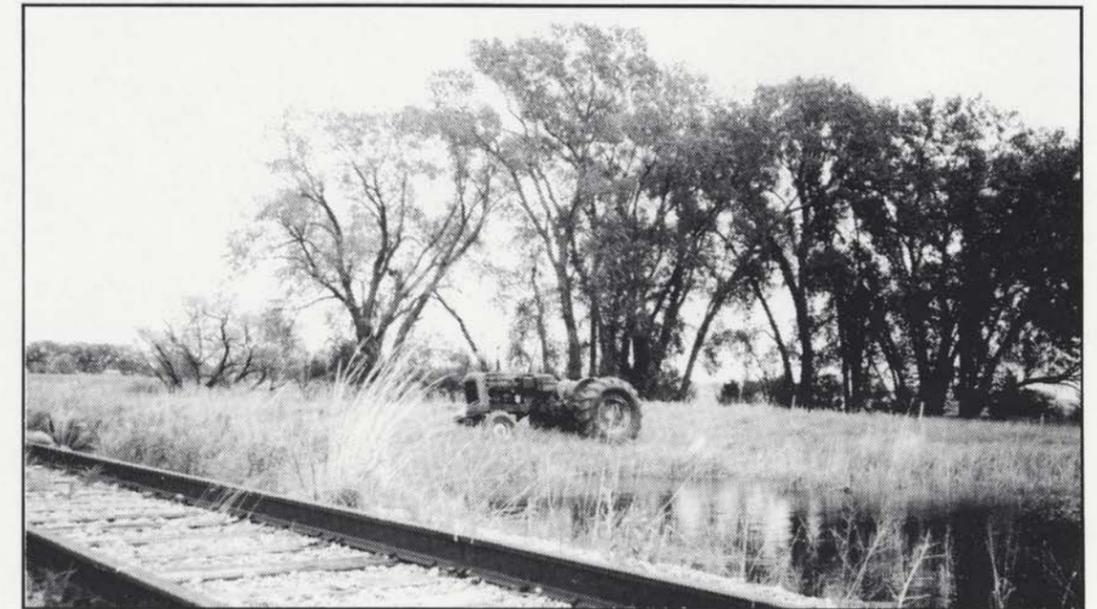
The more agricultural the land use, the stronger the identity of the people with the land. The land is viewed as their economic base, their very livelihood, and any changes or perceived changes to that use are often viewed as threatening.



Mile 308 – West of Cody



Mile 174 - Atkinson



Mile 206 - Bassett

"People need immediate places to refresh, reinvent themselves. Our surroundings, built and natural alike, have an immediate and a continuing effect on the way we feel and act, and on our health and intelligence. These places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become."

Tony Hiss, The Experience of Place

Just as the railroad brought people, its departure contributed to the loss of people who depended on the railroad for employment, services and transportation.

The farther west one goes on the trail, the lower the population density. Conversely, the further east one goes along the corridor, the greater the percentage of people who live inside town and city boundaries.

For example, Cherry County on the western end of the trail has a population density of fewer than 5 people per square mile. In total number of acres, the County is the same size as Rhode Island and Connecticut, combined. At the same time, the population of the entire County is less than 1/3 of the city of Norfolk, the eastern terminus of the trail.

Table 1 shows the makeup of the counties along the trail — population, density and cities.



Mile 144 - Newport

County	Population	People/ sq. mile	Cities Along Trail
Cherry	6,307	<5	Merriman, Eli, Cody, Nenzel, Kilgore, Crookston, Valentine, Wood Lake. ("Ghost Towns:" Georgia, Roxby, Thacher, Arabia)
Brown	3,657	<5	Ainsworth, Long Pine, Johnstown
Rock	2,019	<5	Bassett, Newport
Holt	12,599	5-15	Stuart, Atkinson, Emmet, O'Neill, Inman, Ewing
Antelope	7,965	5-15	Clearwater, Neligh, Oakdale ("Ghost Town:" Stafford)
Madison	32,655	50-100	Tilden, Meadow Grove, Battle Creek, Norfolk

Table 1 Source: UNL Bureau of Business Research, 1990 Census

Trails

When The Nebraska State Trails Plan, *A Network of Discovery*, was adopted in 1994, the full 321-mile Cowboy Trail corridor was identified as a major component in the creation of a statewide and several regional trail networks. Its unbroken length, northern Nebraska location, diversity, and number of intersected communities will all serve to both spawn and attract connections to other trails and attractions inside the state and across state lines.

The Cowboy Trail's eastern end is within 50 miles of the American Discovery Trail (ADT), our nation's first multi-use, coast-to-coast trail (now in the planning stage). The ADT will travel east to west, across the south central United States, from Washington, D.C. to California. An additional north route, planned to go through the northern Midwest, will enter eastern Nebraska near Omaha, approximately 50 miles from the Cowboy Trail. Even though the proposed ADT route follows the early pioneers' route along the Platte River Valley, there are opportunities to link the ADT and the Cowboy Trail or to propose the Cowboy Trail as an alternative route for the ADT.

Within Nebraska, the network of trails is just beginning to expand. Many of the trails being built, or in the planning process, are identified in the statewide trail plan and incorporated by reference in Nebraska's *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. Much of the initial work is made possible through funding available from the Transportation Enhancement Program of the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991.

The initial 247 miles of development on the Cowboy Trail will reach from Norfolk to Merriman. The next 74 miles west to Chadron is the potential rail-with-trail segment. With the addition of this segment, the Cowboy Trail comes to within approximately 20 miles of Crawford and links into western Nebraska's prime recreation areas, — the Pine Ridge Trail through the Nebraska National Forest and Pine Ridge National Recreation Area to Chadron State Park; the railbanked White River Trail which connects Crawford to Fort Robinson State Park, as well as to Soldier Creek Wilderness and Sowbelly Canyon Trail. Trail links from the Nebraska/Wyoming state line are under modest development from Harrison, 9 miles to Andrews, a railroad "ghost" town, and into Crawford. A horse trail is anticipated from Andrews to Fort Robinson and into Crawford.

Another connection opportunity lies north across the South Dakota state line to the George S. Mickelson Trail. This 109-mile rail-trail extends south from Deadwood to Edgemont which is only 50 miles north of Crawford and approximately 70 miles from Chadron. A new rail-with-trail potential exists alongside D&ME's line into Deadwood. This was called the Old Colony Line and was C&NW's connection from the Cowboy Line into the Black Hills.

Most of Nebraska's existing trails are short, less than 20 miles in length, and are located either within communities or in state and federal parks. Connectors to the Cowboy Trail are usually on paved or gravel roads and most are undesignated and unmarked as bicycle/pedestrian routes.

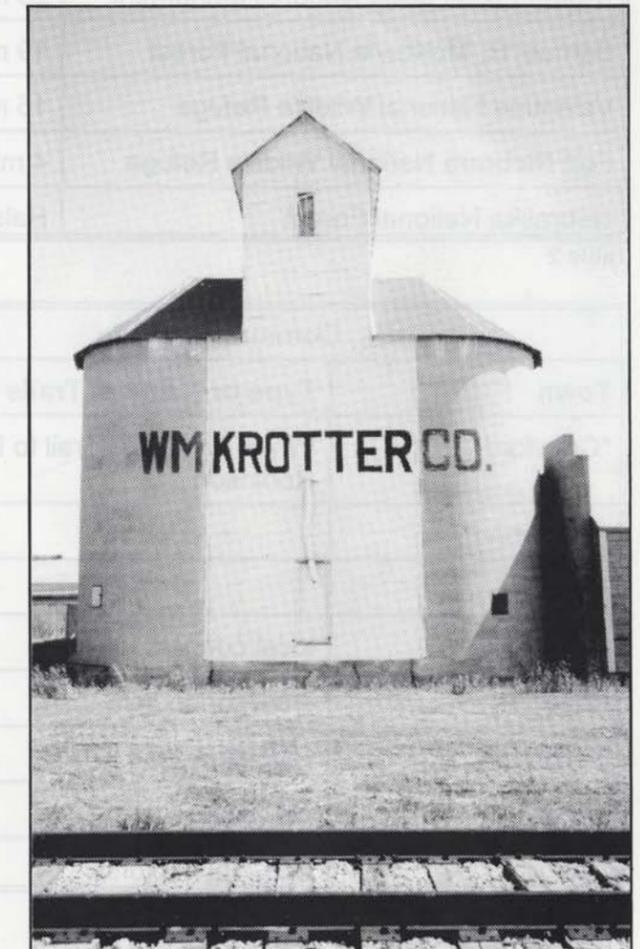
The majority of the parks with recreation trails surround the western quarter of the Cowboy Trail, from Valentine to Merriman. Internal trails, located in state and federal parks, are considered a part of the recreational offerings of that park and, generally, include an educational or historical component. These trails are neither designed nor intended for commuter or long distance travel.

In contrast, the linear character of the Cowboy Trail allows for a pattern of movement that is destination oriented. Trails within communities are for both recreation and commuting. Having both types of trails available adds value for trail users, especially when the connections are easily accessible.

The statewide trail plan shows several towns on the Cowboy Trail as connecting links to other trails and activities.

Scenic and recreational attractions along the Cowboy Trail will add greatly to the experience of the recreational trail user. In the same way, easy access and in-town linkages will add greatly to the enjoyment and fitness of those living along and using the corridor.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide lists of federal lands, state parks (SP), state recreation areas (SRA), state historical parks (SHP) and community trails on or within close proximity of the Cowboy Trail.



Mile 184 - Stuart

Connections and Attractions

FEDERAL AREAS		
Park, Wildlife Refuge, Forest	Location	Trails
*Pine Ridge National Recreation Area	7 miles south of Chadron	50 mile trail
*Oglala National Grasslands	17 miles north of Crawford	
*Nebraska National Forest	Chadron	16 mile trail
*Agate Fossil Beds National Monument	20 miles south of Harrison	trails
Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest	19 miles south of Nenzel	
Valentine National Wildlife Refuge	15 miles south of Valentine	trails
Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge	4 miles northeast of Valentine	trails
Nebraska National Forest	Halsey, 64 miles south of Valentine	trails

Table 2

Community Trails	
Town	Type or Name of Trails
*Crawford	White River Rail-Trail to Fort Robinson
*Chadron	
*Gordon	
Valentine	local connectors
O'Neill	local connectors
Neligh	Riverside Trail
Tilden	Ice (Rail) Trail
Norfolk	local connectors

Table 3

*Sites located beyond the western terminus (Merriman) of the Cowboy Trail as covered in this plan, but located along the potential rail-with-trail segment to be covered under separate treatment.

NEBRASKA STATE AREAS		
Park & Recreation Sites	Location	Facilities (selected)
*Fort Robinson SP	½ mile W of Crawford	trails, camping
*Chadron SP	9 miles S of Chadron	trails, camping
*Box Butte SRA	±30 miles S of Chadron	trails, camping
Cottonwood Lake SRA	½ mile E, ½ mile S of Merriman	camping
Bowring Sandhills Ranch SHP	N of Merriman	
Merritt Reservoir SRA and Snake River Falls	25 miles SW of Valentine	camping
Smith Falls SP	11 miles NE of Valentine	camping
Long Lake SRA	20 miles SW of Johnstown	camping
Keller Park SRA	4 miles E of Ainsworth	camping
Long Pine SRA	1 mile N, 1 mile W of Long Pine	camping, tubing
Atkinson Lake SRA	1 mile W of Atkinson	camping
Niobrara SP	±40 miles N of Neligh	trails, camping
Ashfall Fossil Beds SHP	26 miles E of O'Neill or 23 miles N and W of Neligh	
Willow Creek SRA	±10 miles N of Battle Creek, near Pierce	camping

Table 4 (SP - State Park, SRA - State Recreation Area, SHP - State Historic Park)

Historic

History and numerous historical sites and properties are spread all along the Cowboy Trail, mostly within the communities. Nearly every town has one or more structures that provide a good representation of construction and architectural styles from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The sites listed in Table 5 are located either on the trail or within reasonable distance from the trail. Most are open to the public, but the hours may be limited.



Mile 156 - O'Neill Depot, O'Neill

Town	Historic Attraction
Merriman	Bowring Ranch, north on 61
Kilgore	log cabins, in city park
Valentine	*Centennial Hall, former public school, 3rd and Macomb
Valentine	*F.M. Walcott House, 431 No. Hall
Valentine	RR bridge, east of town, ¼ mile in length, 148 ft. high
Valentine	*Bryan Bridge (highway), east of town
Johnstown	Berry Bridge, west of town
Long Pine	*RR bridge, west of town, 115 ft. high
Long Pine	RR depot, crew quarters, roundhouse (site)
Long Pine	Miller Hotel, school
Newport	city hall, hay offices, lumber yard
Stuart	log house, hospital as museum, adjacent to trail, *White Horse Ranch (nearby)
Emmet	hay office, sod house (site)
O'Neill	*C&NW Depot (eligible for register),
O'Neill	*Moses Kinkaid Building, 4th and Douglas
Inman	hay office, weigh scales
Clearwater	Singing Bridge, nearby
Neligh	*Antelope County Courthouse, 5th and Main
Neligh	*Antelope County Jail, formerly Gates College Gymnasium, 5th and L St.
Neligh	*Neligh (Flour) Mill and Elevators, 111 W. 2nd
Neligh	*St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 411 L Street
Tilden	Warrick House; grist mill and ice house (sites), city park
Norfolk	*US Post Office and Courthouse, 125 S. 4th

Table 5

* Indicates listing on National Register of Historic Places

Connections and Attractions

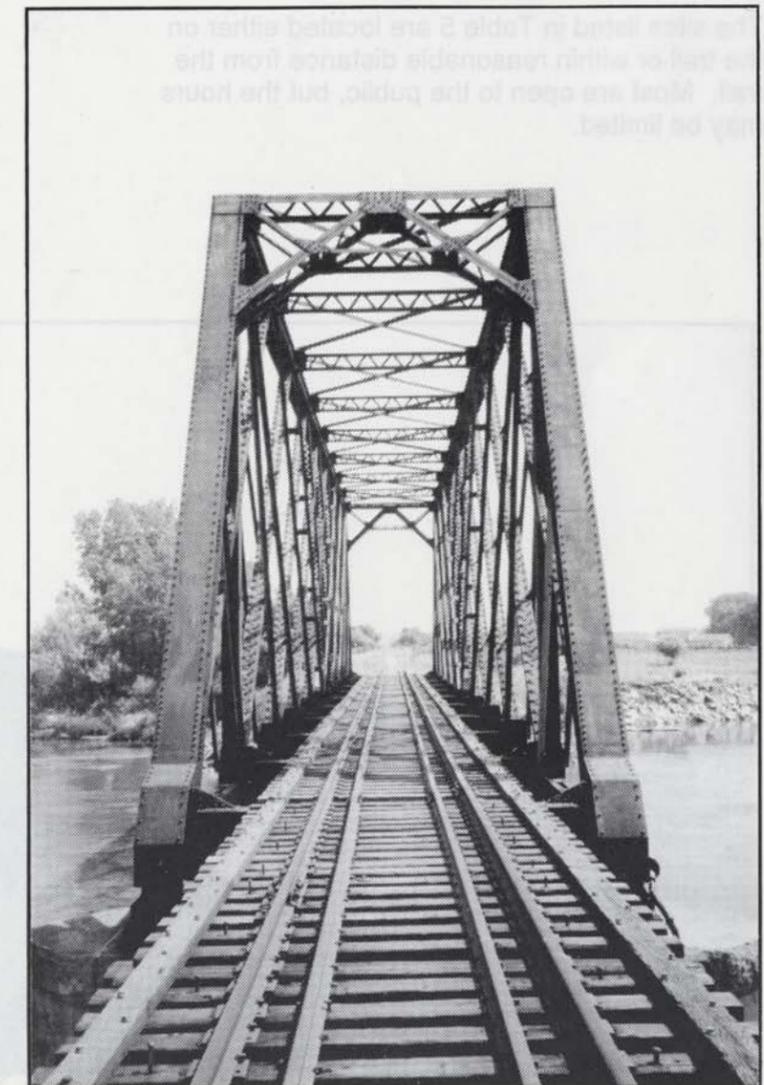
Hiking and cycling on the Cowboy Trail are only two of the many activities that can occur on or along the corridor. The following list shows off-trail activities available within short distances to trail users.

Design Considerations for Connections and Attractions:

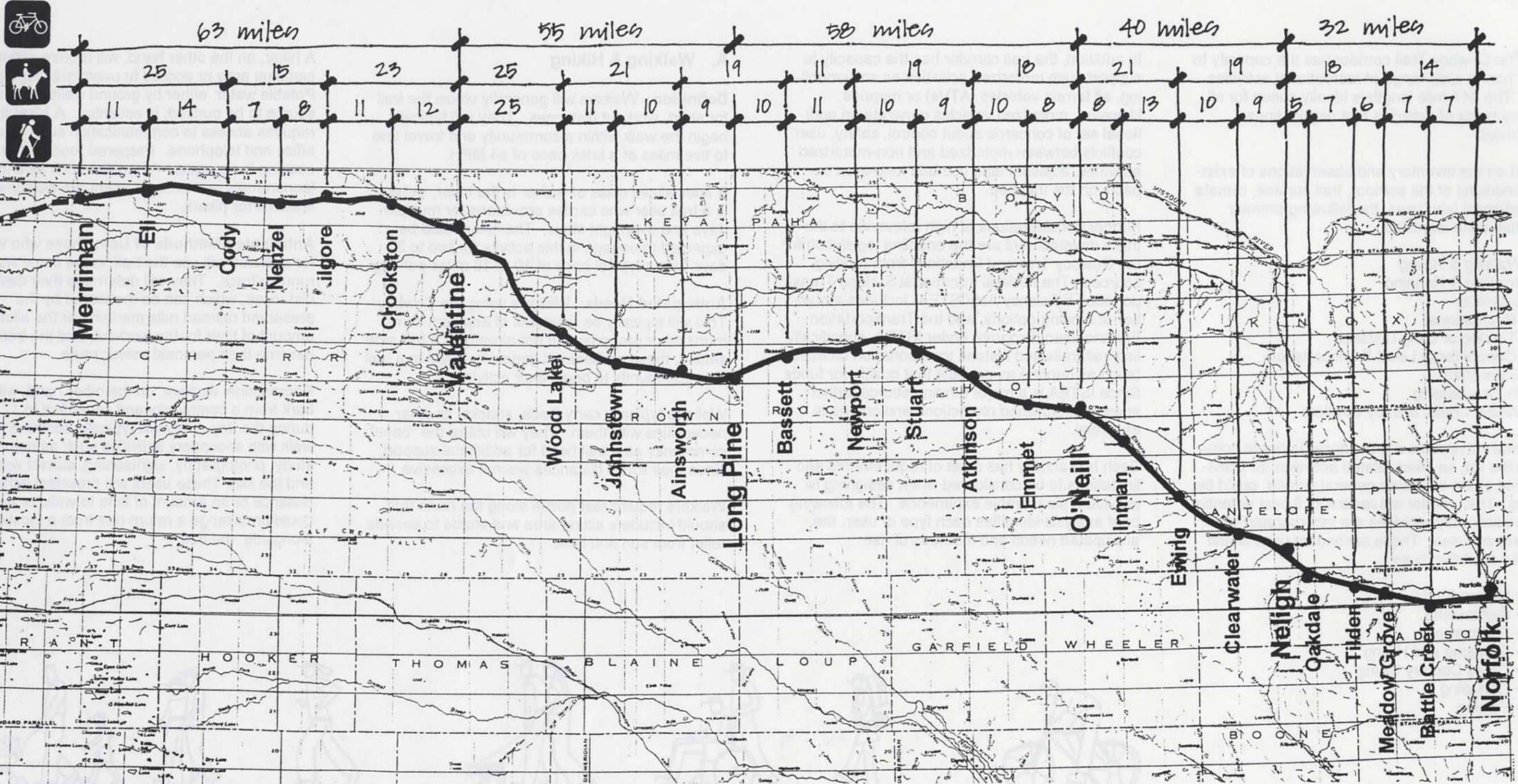
1. Where the above opportunities are available, directional signs will be needed for trail user to find them. Include signs on the community kiosks and/or on maps.
2. Add designation of connector paths within the communities from the Cowboy Trail to the activity sites. Useful to both trail users and residents.
3. Off-trail travel information should include type of surface, distance, degree of difficulty of route, hours/days of operation.

Off-Trail Recreational Opportunities	
water travel (canoeing, boating, rafting, tubing)	Merriman, Kilgore, Valentine, Johnstown, Long Pine, Atkinson, Emmet, Meadow Grove
swimming (pool, river or lake)	Valentine, Atkinson, Emmet, O'Neill, Neligh, Tilden, Meadow Grove, Battle Creek, Norfolk
fishing	Merriman, Nenzel, Valentine, Johnstown, Ainsworth, Long Pine, Atkinson, Emmet, O'Neill, Neligh
golf	Valentine, Johnstown, Ainsworth, Stuart, Atkinson, O'Neill, Ewing, Neligh
ball fields	Cody, Nenzel, Valentine, Long Pine, Stuart, Atkinson, O'Neill, Inman, Neligh, Meadow Grove
tennis courts	Cody, Valentine, Long Pine, Newport, Stuart, Atkinson, O'Neill, Ewing, Neligh

Table 6 See Appendix for more complete listings on each community.



Mile 85 - East of Battle Creek



Map 2

Activity Analysis

The Cowboy Trail corridor has the capacity to host a wide range of recreational activities. The 247-mile length is ideally suited for all primary types of activities that require linear movement.

Based on the inventory and observations of existing conditions of the corridor, trail surface, climate and adjacent land uses, the following primary activities were identified.

- A. Walking & Hiking
- B. Jogging & Running
- C. Bicycling
 - Recreational
 - Touring or Long Distance
 - Commuter or Local Transportation
- D. Equestrian
- E. In-Line Skating
- F. Wheel Chairs & Baby Strollers

A formal survey was not conducted prior to compiling the list, so other related activities, or activities that share the same general criteria, could be added. The corridor will realize its fullest potential when secondary activities are incorporated with the primary uses. These secondary uses would include such things as:

- Nature Study
- Sightseeing
- Photography
- Camping and Hiking
- Cross Country Skiing
- Canoeing
- Fishing

In addition, the trail corridor has the capacity to support such motorized activities as snowmobiling, all terrain vehicles (ATVs) or mopeds. However, motorized vehicles generate an additional set of concerns about control, safety, user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized activities, adjacent land use and long-term impacts on the trail bed.

Further considerations of high relevance to the trail's development are the enabling legislation for the Cowboy Trail and limitations from funding sources. The Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) includes a number of funding options, and the Transportation Enhancement Program under ISTEA specifically lists rail-trails and historic transportation facilities (such as depots) as projects that qualify for funds. Since ISTEA is a major funding source, adherence to established restrictions and criteria is essential.

Each trail activity has a set of requirements and limitations to be considered when designing to provide a pleasurable experience. The following brief analysis identifies each type of user, the anticipated needs and methods of use.

A. Walking & Hiking

Definition: Walkers will generally utilize the trail for short, workout distances. They will typically begin the walk within a community and travel one to five miles at a brisk pace of ± 4 MPH.

A specialized class of walker is the hiker. A hiker is a trail user who carries provisions for multiple days and overnight stays. The hiker could be expected to engage in this activity for two to 30 days with a typical pace of 10 to 15 miles per day.

Anticipated Needs: Walkers using the Cowboy Trail will typically be residents of adjacent communities or properties. If not already in a trail side setting, these walkers will generally travel to a trail side community to begin their activity.

Walkers typically carry fluids, snacks, or other necessities with them. They will utilize the "base" community as a trail head for additional support, since their travel distances are not excessive.

Walkers require rest points along the route that should include a sitting area and shade to provide relief from sun and heat.

A hiker, on the other hand, will require either a camping area or access to overnight lodging. Potable water, either by ground wells or as a source to be purified, is essential. A hiker also requires access to communication such as a post office and telephone. Prepared food or a grill for cooking is essential. Amenities such as shops, laundromats and entertainment are welcome features for hikers.

Anticipated Methods of Use: Those who walk for exercise will use the trail in the same way as a running track. They will determine their desired distances, which can be measured by the preserved railroad mile markers, or the allotted amount of time for the workout, and the trail will become their personal scenic route.

Recreational walkers, on the other hand, will embark from a community and cover five to 12 miles during the day. They will typically combine their walk with secondary activities such as nature study, photography, sightseeing, sunset watching and the like. These users will preselect either a distance or an amount of time to walk, or they could prearrange a return ride from a location alongside the trail.



Hikers will utilize the trail for varied types of outings. Some will make weekend trips of 20 or 30 miles, using public park camping facilities for the overnight stays. Others may set a base camp at a public facility, hike to desired features on or adjacent to the trail, and then return to the base camp. Hikers interested in experiencing the distance or linear quality of the trail will begin at one point and proceed along the trail, restocking their supplies from community markets and retailers en route.

Ideal trail surfacing requirements for hikers differ from needs of other trail users. Hikers prefer a softer surface than bicyclists or even recreational walkers. The softer surface cushions the hiker's walk which is already compromised by the amount of gear and supplies being carried. Good drainage and a smooth texture are essential for both trail hikers and trail walkers.

B. Jogging & Running

Definition: Joggers and runners will be either residents of the trail side communities or properties or visitors who utilize the communities to begin and end their trail activity. Joggers are self-sufficient during their run, but totally dependent on support facilities before and after the run. It is likely that a jogger's use of the trail will be of relatively short duration (15 minutes to two hours), a relatively short continuous distance (0 to ±15 miles), and always near or between supporting facilities such as those usually found in trail side communities.

Anticipated Needs: Joggers will require access to fluids, nourishment and rest before, during and after their runs. Shaded rest points located away from community limits should be provided along stretches of the trail. Trail surfacing requirements for joggers are similar to those for walkers. Paved surfaces are satisfactory, as are softer, more organic textures. Well-drained, smooth surfaces without depressions or potholes are essential.

Anticipated Methods of Use: Joggers from a trail side community who utilize the trail for recreation and short day use will access the trail from within their community and run for a predetermined distance or time, then return to the point of origin. It is likely that these users may occasionally run on the trail from their own community to an adjacent community, especially if the one-way distance is less than 10 miles. If so, the jogger may return to the point of origin via a shuttle.

Long-distance and cross country runners from the local school athletic teams may decide to use the trail because of the safety it provides from traffic.

C. Bicyclists

Definition: Bicyclists come with a wide range of skills and endurance. Recreational trail users or commuters will use the trail as an alternate route of travel between communities and between activity centers in some of the larger towns. They will typically begin and end their journey in a community and travel at a pace of 6-12 mph. Bicycle club riders may average as much as 15-24 mph.

Families with small children will use the trail in shorter segments, taking more rest stops and more time to cover the distance. In some cases, children will be riding with training wheels or on large wheeled toys, and in other cases, adults will be pulling a child carrier.

The long-distance bicycle traveler, either as a solo or group rider, will cover between 30 and 100 miles a day. The length of the corridor will attract cyclists in training for other athletic events and the non-motorized vacationer seeking a unique experience on a cross-state ride.

Anticipated Needs: Bicyclists that utilize the Cowboy Trail will typically be residents of communities or properties located adjacent to it. If not residents of a trail side community, these bicyclists will generally travel to a trail side community to begin the ride. Those traveling to a community to start will need safe, off-street parking.

Bicyclists typically carry fluids, snacks or other necessities with them. They will utilize communities along the route as trailheads for additional support. Since the average distance between Cowboy Trail communities is 10 to 15 miles, a ride of one to two hours, riders will be able to restock regularly on fluids and snacks.

Bicyclists enjoy rest points that include sitting areas and bike parking. Ideally, these areas should be shaded to provide relief from the sun and heat.

The trail surfacing requirements for bicycling are compatible with those required for walkers. A paved trail can provide an ideal surface for touring bikes, but softer, more organic surfaces will better accommodate mountain or hybrid bikes. In all cases, for bicycling, the trail surface must be well drained, smooth and free of potholes.

Anticipated Methods of Use: Bicyclists coming from trail side communities will utilize the trail for recreation and short day use, accessing the trail from within their community and traveling for a predetermined distance or time. It is likely that these users will travel from their own community to an adjacent community along the trail route, especially if the one-way distance is less than 10 miles.

Since bicycling is enjoyable as a group activity, it is anticipated that groups of riders will assemble at a prearranged location, most likely at a trail side community, to embark on a trip. The means of return to the starting location could be by reversing their direction along the trail, utilizing alternate county, state or federal roads or shuttle pickups.

Bicyclists who may travel long segments of the route will utilize the trail much like hikers who spend multiple days on the trail. This class of bicyclist requires camping areas, or access to overnight lodging, potable water, communication sources, food and entertainment.

D. Equestrian

Definition: Local equestrians will generally use the trail for short one-half or one day rides. They will typically begin the ride from the nearby ranches or farmsteads and travel anywhere from eight miles to 15 miles.

Equestrians who travel to the Cowboy Trail from a distance could be expected to spend from two to 20 days with a typical pace of 10 to 20 miles a day.

Anticipated Needs: The horse trail is recommended to be separate from the hiker/biker trail and should be a soft surface. Streams can be crossed by using the bridge, in most cases. Stream bed crossings, however, are recommended and will require a solid base.

Equestrians and their horses will require rest areas along the route. These trail side rest areas should provide a nearby location to tie up the horse, as well as a sitting area with shade for the rider.

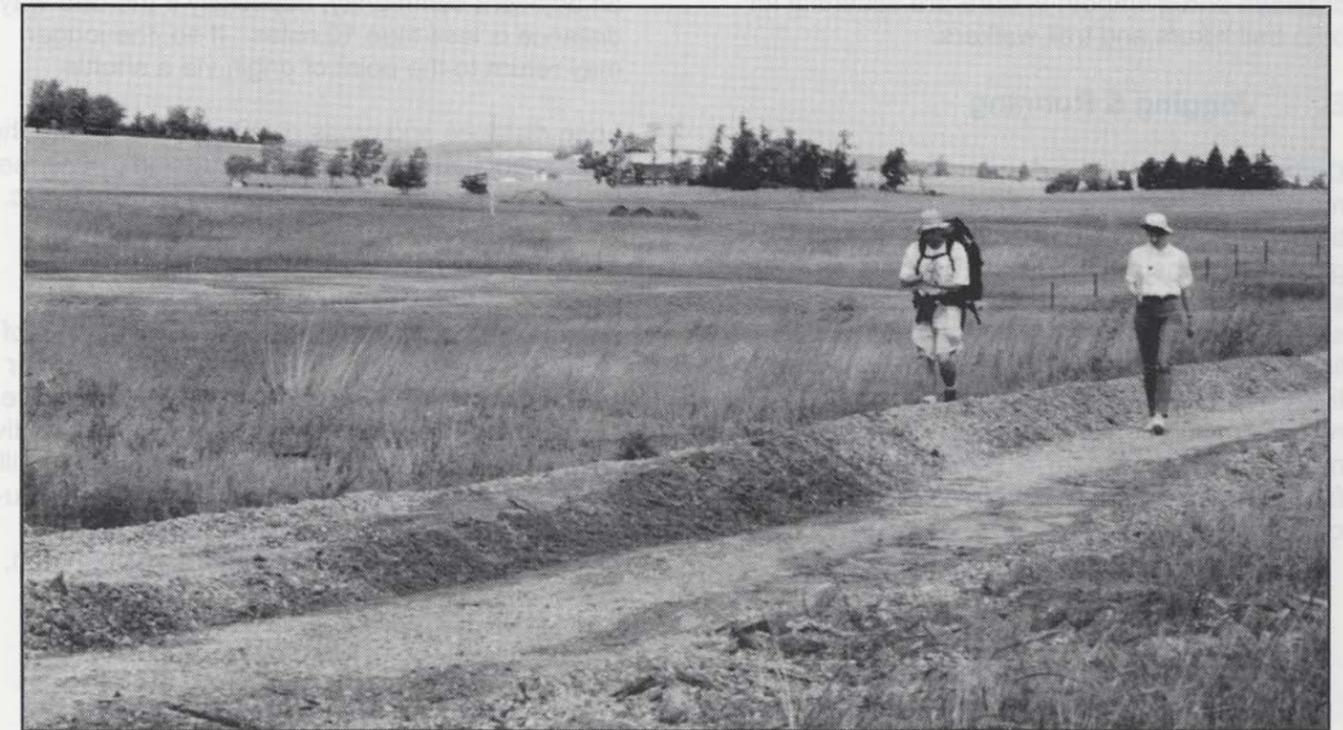
Water and hay will be important elements along the way. Water for a horse is needed approximately every 10 miles. While horses can use streams, lakes and wet areas, as well as watering tanks in trail side communities, equestrians will rely on community facilities. Hay for the horses will be either purchased in the community or brought with them.

Equestrians using the trail for multiple days will need safe secure places to stable and pasture their horses at night.

Anticipated Methods of Use: Equestrians will use the trail for various types of outings. Some equestrians will ride for a short distance and return to their point of origin while others may travel longer distances spending nights in trail communities. The long distance equestrian will use public camping or lodging facilities with overnight provisions for horses. Some equestrians will use the trail for a pleasure ride and others will ride for training. The mile markers will assist in monitoring the desired distances for all types of riding.

Equestrians and their horses have varying levels of skill and will, therefore, use the trail differently. The primary difference will be in the crossing of streams. Some equestrians will feel comfortable taking the bridge and some will prefer to go through the stream bed.

It is also anticipated that horse clubs will use the trail for club related activities. The equestrians will assemble and begin the ride at a prearranged location, most likely where ample parking is available to accommodate the large trailers. The club members will ride to a certain location and return to their place of origin using either the same route or an alternative route over country roads. Some may also ride only one way and have their trailers shuttled from the place of departure.



Mile 136 - East of Inman

E. In-Line Skating

Definition: In-line skaters will generally utilize the trail for a comparatively short distance. They can travel only on hard surfaced portions of the route, typically within a community.

Anticipated Needs: In-line skaters that utilize the Cowboy Trail will typically be residents of adjacent communities. If not residents of a trail side community, these skaters will travel to a trail side community to begin the activity.

In-line skaters like frequent rest stops with benches for sitting. Typically, they do not carry any provisions with them during the activity, and therefore, the "base" community will need to provide outlets for all fluids, food, etc. for support.

Anticipated Methods of Use: In-line skaters require a smooth paved surface to complete the activity. Therefore, it is anticipated that only hard surfaced portions of the trail (probably located within or adjacent to communities) will be able to support this activity.

F. Wheelchairs & Baby Strollers

Definition: Those who use the trail with a baby stroller, a wheelchair or other devices for assisted walking, will move slower than most other users and will travel for shorter distances. They will begin their journey from a community node or a parking area designated for trail users.

Anticipated Needs: Wheelchair users will require accessible amenities and parking. Connections between the trail and the parking area will need to be finished with no sharp corners or edges. Frequent rest points with benches and picnic tables with wheelchair access should be included. Any devices or structures, such as bollards or gates, installed to control access by unauthorized vehicles will need to provide adequate clearance for chairs and strollers.

Most frequently, this type of user will have a "base" community for support following their trail experience.

Anticipated Methods of Use: Hard or firmly compacted surfaces are better for apparatus, such as wheelchairs or strollers, with narrow wheels or with small footprints, such as crutches or walkers. Loose, granular type surfaces tend to leave stones or grit in the tire tread making it uncomfortable for those who hand propel their chairs. Loose surface materials can also be slippery for those using crutches, etc.

Other activities that could be accommodated on the Cowboy Trail with criteria similar to those for walking, jogging and biking, include cross country skiing and access for canoeing or fishing.

Cross country skiers will use the trail much like walkers or joggers and will require the same type of support and facilities. They will require a relatively smooth surface if the snow cover is thin. Their utilization of the trail will be seasonal.

Anglers and canoeists will also use the trail in much the same way as walkers — short distances to a point of destination, carrying supplies and equipment. Designed points of access to the water will be needed. The use will be seasonal.

A memorable and worthwhile experience on the Cowboy Trail will occur as a result of what is seen, heard and observed all along the route. This list of activities will be greatly augmented by the unplanned experiences and interchanges between the trail's neighborhoods and the visiting trail users.