



Trailblazing in Michigan

Winter 2013

Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance is a non-profit organization that shall foster and facilitate the creation of an interconnected statewide system of trails and greenways for recreation, health, transportation, economic development and environmental/cultural preservation purposes.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is an affiliate of the Michigan Fitness Foundation

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Exciting Changes Afoot for Michigan Trails!

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Director

The recent release of 3 official state plans has produced quite a buzz about Michigan trails! The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Panel on State Parks report, “The Future of Michigan’s Parks and Outdoor Recreation”, and the Michigan Comprehensive State Trails Plan all document the public’s love and demand for trails, and the opportunities to maximize the many trails Michigan has for the health and well-being of our citizens and for the economic prosperity of our state.

Did you know Michigan has more than 12,000 miles of trails altogether? If you count the snowmobile, ORV, hiking, equestrian, bicycling, and water trails, our state has a rich network of each type which helps to position us as “THE Trail State”! Governor Rick Snyder in his November 28th message, “Ensuring our Future: Energy and the Environment” called on the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the Michigan Department of Transportation to align and prioritize efforts to create trail connections in order to maximize the economic return. He further called for a “showcase trail” that would connect from Belle Isle in Southeast Michigan all the way to the Upper Peninsula’s Wisconsin border. While details are unclear as to whether this trail will be hiking or biking or both, the idea is exciting because it shows what Pure Michigan has to offer across the landscape. The trail would link up the most populated areas to and through the most natural resource-rich areas of the state from one end to the other.

“DID YOU KNOW MICHIGAN HAS MORE THAN 12,000 MILES OF TRAILS”

Various representatives from the above groups did come together at the Ralph A. MacMullen Center request of the DNR Director on January 11th to start to talk about how the many groups representing all the trail types can come together to advance a shared vision that will lay the platform for future trail progress in Michigan. The groups quickly saw that there was much agreement on the vision for Michigan’s trail system. Visions shared included: equal access for all incomes and all abilities, proximity to where people live, connectability in terms of place and identity, good stewardship, economically and environmentally

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Develops New Trails !

Meredith Grimm, MTGA Intern

We are happy to announce that the trail network in Michigan will expand this upcoming year through grants given by The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)! The MNRTF board of trustees recommended to the Michigan Legislature to fund 76 recreation development projects and land acquisitions in 2013. The \$23, 538,700 in recommendations include almost \$5 million for trails, with \$4,810,000 to be used in trail development and \$120,000 in acquisition dollars for the North Bank Trail.

Among the winners for trail development were:

- **DNR-Parks and Recreation Division-** \$300,000 for the Fred Meijer Clinton Ionia Shiawassee Trail for surfacing 32 miles of state rail-trail through Ovid, St. Johns, Fowler, Pewamo and Muir. Also included are improvements on grading and drainage, bridges and culverts, access management, site amenities and signage.
- **DNR-Parks and Recreation Division -** \$300,000 for the Pere Marquette Trail from Reed City to Baldwin to include drainage and surface enhancements on 16.84 miles of trail, paving of 0.4 miles, surfacing of 16.44 miles with crushed limestone, and building connector trails.
- **Berrien County-Niles Township-** \$286,000 was recommended for the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail development to include a 4-mile, 10-foot wide paved non-motorized trail from the Indiana state line to the Brandywine Creek Nature Preserve
- **Genesee County-City of Clio-** \$127,500 for the Trolley Line Trail to include a canoe/kayak launch, interpretive sign and streambank stabilization for Riverside Park
- **Wayne County-City of Dearborn-** \$280,000 for a 1/4-mile trail connector from the Rouge River Gateway Trail to Ford Field Park.
- **Ingham County-City of Lansing-** \$300,000 for the development of the Frances Park Trail to include shoreline restoration, fish habitat improvement and a regional non-motorized recreational network connection pathway linking Frances Park with Grand River Park.
- **Macomb County-Shelby Township-**\$300,000 was awarded for a connection from Riverbends Park to the Macomb Orchard Trail
- **Alger County-Au Train Township-**\$246,700 for the development of an Au Train Township Heritage Trailhead for the Marquette to Munising Trail
- **Macomb County-City of New Baltimore-**\$116,000 for the County Line Rd. Non-Motorized Pedestrian Path completion from Crapeau Creek to Main Street
- **Grand Traverse County-Garfield Charter Township-**\$199,000 for the Buffalo Ridge Trail to include continued construction of the 4.5-mile Buffalo Ridge Trail connecting west and southwest areas of the Traverse City urban area.
- **Washtenaw County-City of Ypsilanti-**\$300,000 for the River's Edge Linear Park and multi-use trail. Development includes the plaza, fishing pier, river overlook, signage and site amenities.
- **Presque Isle County-Metz Township-** \$111,600 for the development of the historical Metz Fire Trailside Park along with an interpretive trail
- **Ionia County-City of Belding-** \$274,800 for the Silk City Nature Trail addition of a 500-foot pathway connection along the Flat River
- **Van Buren County-City of South Haven-**\$217,400 for the Van Buren Trail connection from Aylworth to Abell Streets and Elkenburg in South Haven and continuing to the downtown South Haven trailhead
- **Marquette County-Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority-** \$281,000 for the Iron Ore Heritage Trail in Tilden Township, including a 4.8-mile



Western Upper Peninsula on Track for New Bike Trails

Ray Sharp, Western Upper Peninsula Health Department

One hundred years ago, miners rode trolleys to work at the copper mines and mills of Houghton County, Michigan. Today, planning is under way to convert those rail corridors into a network of bike trails connecting communities and historic sites for commuting and recreation.

The Western Upper Peninsula (U. P.) is known for wild and scenic forests, mountains and rivers, and for the snowiest winters east of the Rocky Mountains. The region is a hiker's paradise, with hundreds of miles of backcountry trails



from the Porcupine Mountains to the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula, along with Isle Royale National Park. Winter recreation opportunities abound, with the Midwest's best snowmobiling and downhill and cross country skiing. World class single-track mountain bike trails are proliferating faster than U. P. mosquitoes in May,

Photo by Ray Sharp including the Copper Harbor trail system, which has been featured in several national publications since receiving "Epic Ride" designation from the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

As a popular destination for mountain bikers and other silent sport enthusiasts, the Western U. P. is ripe for the development of rails-to-trails bicycle touring facilities. All the ingredients are in place: great scenery, friendly small-town destinations, plenty of state and local campgrounds, and interesting historic sites, all linked by former rail lines that carried millions of tons of ore during the heyday of copper and iron mining. In the Copper Country (Houghton and Keweenaw counties, Michigan's northernmost area) and the Iron Range (Gogebic County, the state's westernmost point), groups are planning new non-motorized pathways, taking advantage of right-of-ways that link old mining towns.

Inspired by the successful development of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail in nearby Marquette County, planners in Houghton County envision a Copper Heritage Trail, a 30-mile bike loop connecting Hancock, Lake Linden and Calumet, with links to the south through Houghton, and to the north through Keweenaw County to Copper Harbor. Informal planning partners include Keweenaw National Historical Park (whose mission is to tell the story of Boom Copper), Western U. P. Planning and Development Region, Inc (a six-county planning agency), Western U. P. Health Department (which seeks to increase access to healthy physical activity), local trail groups of all types (bike, ski, ATV and snow mobile) and city, township and county government officials.

The vision for the Copper Heritage Trail is a bike path surfaced with asphalt or crushed limestone on the old rail bed that follows the Torch Lake shoreline, passing by ruins of copper mills and other points of interest before turning uphill to the Calumet mining district. The route will serve commuters biking from outlying areas to Houghton and Hancock, as well as tourists who want to explore historical sites. Interpretive signs will inform visitors about places of historical or cultural significance.



Photo by Ray Sharp

Planners meet under the auspices of the Alternative Transportation Committee of the Copper Country Trail Scenic Byway, a nationally designated scenic highway. The aim of the committee is to develop a route for biking and hiking that can take visitors beyond roadways and parking lots to experience Copper Country history firsthand. The committee is receiving technical support from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). Meanwhile, the Houghton and Keweenaw County Commissions are moving to approve bylaws for

Changes Afoot for Michigan Trails - Continued from page 1

sustainable, safe, provoking unique and memorable experiences, “best in class”, useable, varied, and innovative. There was a shared realization of the declining dollars available to further develop, maintain, and promote the system; however it was noted that “a budget is nothing more than a statement of priorities,” and that the more we can as a group sharpen our priorities and tighten up metrics to demonstrate progress, the more likely the funding situation can improve. It was noted that there had never been so many years of trail experience together in one room before and that even though there is fierce competition for dollars between trail use types, none of the trail systems will see much progress without a shared vision and measurable outcomes.

As the Michigan Comprehensive Trails Plan moves into its final public review and moves toward final adoption in March, there is much optimism for setting a new stage for trail progress in Michigan, one that involves a shared vision, collaboration, and accountability.

Western UP on Track for New Bike Trails - continued from page 3

a two-county recreational trail authority to facilitate trail planning, funding, coordination and long-term access issues.

At the same time, 100 miles to the west, Gogebic County is planning a county-wide rails-to-trails project to link Ironwood with Bessemer, Wakefield, Lake Gogebic, Watersmeet, to connect with existing cycling networks in neighboring Vilas and Iron Counties in Wisconsin. Gogebic County’s Western U. P. Convention and Visitors Bureau added a 1 percent hotel surcharge in July 2012 and pledged \$70,000 a year for local match money for MDNR Natural Resources Trust Fund grants to develop the trail, beginning in Ironwood and heading east over several years.

Trail planning in Houghton and Gogebic counties is part of a larger effort in both areas to create bike- and pedestrian-friendly environments. City commissions in Houghton and Ironwood were the first two government bodies in the Upper Peninsula to enact Complete Streets ordinances calling for the accommodation of the needs of cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities in transportation planning, and six schools across the region have conducted Safe Routes to School planning. Citizens and government officials in both the Copper Country and the Iron Range look forward to the future, when bike trails will provide places for healthy recreation, boost economic development, and link the Western U. P. to other parts of Michigan and Wisconsin for bicycle touring.

Editor’s Note: Ray Sharp is Manager of Community Planning and Preparedness at Western Upper Peninsula Health Department. The health department works with community partners to develop pedestrian and bike-friendly policies and infrastructure.



Midwest Rail-Trail Book \$15
Covers Trails in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio & Wisconsin

Midwest Rail-Trail Book \$15 _____
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Membership

Individual
Annual: \$25 - 3 Year: \$55 _____

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Annual : \$35 - 3 Year: \$75 _____

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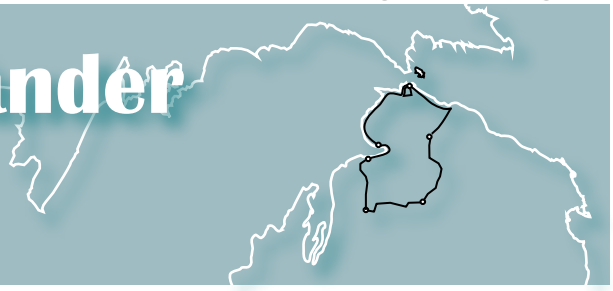
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22nd Annual Michigander Route Announced



Brooklyn Pluger, MTGA Intern

Every year, trail fans of all ages and skill level gather to participate in a week-long bicycle tour on Michigan trails and connecting roads, taking in some of our state's magnificent scenic views. This year is no different. Already in its 22nd year, the Michigander Bicycle Tour will take place from July 13-July 19. The featured trails on the 2013 tour are the Little Traverse Wheelway Trail and the North Central State Trail.

Riders choosing the two-day tour option will be able to experience what bicycle touring is all about. Two-day cyclists will take the Little Traverse Wheelway



from Charlevoix up to Harbor Springs where they will spend the night, traveling back down the trail to Charlevoix the following day. During the route, cyclists will be presented breathtaking views of Lake Michigan as the trail meanders along the shoreline.

Following the two-day tour, riders wishing to extend their stay, challenge their fitness even more, and enjoy more fun can participate in the week-long ride as we travel through quaint, northwest Michigan towns such as Bellaire, Gaylord, and Indian River, all the way up to Mackinaw City, where we will spend two nights. In the Mackinaw area, riders can explore the countryside with two optional routes, or they can travel to Mackinac Island and tour Michigan's beloved island in the best way possible: by bicycle. Finally on our last day, we will travel through Cross Village and the "Tunnel of Trees", finishing in Harbor Springs where participants will enjoy our end of year celebration.

Michigander 2013:
July 13-19

Year after year, the Michigander has proved to be a favorite among bicycle enthusiasts. Whether you're an expert, beginner, or just along for the ride, the Michigander is perfect for everyone. We're hard at work here at the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance to bring you another successful and fun filled event. Be sure to follow our website (www.michigantrails.org), blog (www.michigantrails.wordpress.com), Facebook (www.facebook.com/michigantrails), and Twitter (@michtrails) as we continue to update you on our progress.

Trust Fund Grants *continued from page 2*

interpretive heritage trail from Winthrop Junction to Ely Township, providing a continuous trail from Kawbawgam Junction in Chocoley Township to Ely Township

- **Ingham County- Meridian Township-** \$45,000 for adding approximately 2,055 linear feet of paved universally-accessible asphalt to the Wonch Park Pathway

Applications for the grants are accepted annually from both State agencies and local government units. This year, there were a total of 142 applications seeking almost \$38 million for their community projects. The MNRTF board decides the winners based on competitive scoring criteria.

Congratulations from MTGA to all of the winners! We are excited to see Michigan's trail network expand every year through every one of these funded projects.



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The New Michigan Trails Map and Directory is Available!

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Director

New year, new trails, new trail directory! The brand new MTGA state-wide trail directory is finished and ready to be distributed. This past year, 2012, Michigan added 42 more miles of developed biking and hiking trails. The updated directory has a map of the rail-trails and other multi-use linear trails in the entire state. Members were the first to receive the color-printed trail directory, and unfortunately, they were the first to realize that we had a tear problem at the folds of the new directory. However, the printing company has been kind enough to redo the whole supply with a much better folding result! We will be sending all members a new map in the spring, but if you do not want to wait that long, just send us a self-addressed envelope with 65 cents postage to:

MTGA Trail Map
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
PO Box 27187
Lansing MI 48909

To become a MTGA member, fill out the form here in the newsletter and mail or go to our website at www.michigantrails.org to join online and to see a digital copy of the map.

