Dear Trail Lover and Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance Supporter,

What a remarkable and busy year it’s been at your Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance (MTGA). Our work is taking us in important new directions to ensure that trails and their many benefits are a part of our future. We are involving more voices to the cause of Michigan trails.

Great trails (and great trail states) don’t just happen. We continue to work hard to educate elected officials in city, village, county and state government across Michigan. We assist trail groups with the resources they need to build trails for stronger and healthier communities.

Trails are a wise investment and your contributions make a difference. We are grateful to you for your giving and generous partnership, because it helps us grow a vibrant trail system across our beautiful state. Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is the only statewide group working to build, connect, promote and protect all non-motorized trails in Michigan.

To continue our work, we need to ensure we have the funds necessary for us to get our important work done. Take a moment and read some of the great things we have accomplished this year and what we are doing to ensure Michigan remains the #1 trail state in our nation for generations to come. It takes smart, tough, in-the-trenches work to keep the trail fires burning. Please send your gift today, we are counting on your support.

Together, we can create a lasting impact.

Sincerely,

Nancy Krupiarz
Executive Director
Trails vs. Roads: How did we get here?

Have you ever had this conversation or one like it?

Trails Guy: “Trails make this community a great place to live. Just look at all the different people who are using them. Let’s work together to build and connect more trails.”

Other Guy: “Trails? What a waste of money! Look at the roads. They’re a mess! That’s where we need to be spending our money. Every dollar spent on trails is one dollar less for roads. No more trails until our roads are fixed!”

It takes concerted education efforts to combat this canard. Your MTGA is working on several fronts: First, we are fighting to prevent raids on existing trail funding streams. Second, we are exploring new mechanisms for supporting trail development – analyzing how other states fund their non-motorized trails to see what mechanisms make sense for Michigan. Finally, we are working collaboratively with our partners in water trails, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, hiking and all rail-trail groups, to educate legislators and determine how, together, we can build the capacity and the public imperative for critical, statewide improvements. We will continue our engagement with legislators during 2016. And we are planning another major trails legislative event in 2017, as new representatives take their seats following the November election.

Putting Michigan Trails Information at your Fingertips.

It is important to have a powerful tool to help us locate trails, know what we’ll find along the way, and help promote our bountiful trail resources to the world. MTGA is committed to implementing a system statewide, and is working with Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Travel Michigan and others to find potential sources of funding to extend the portal statewide.

Currently, there are several trails data collection efforts. One of these is being tested by DNR as an open trails data pilot, which is being developed in Marquette County. This is to allow user-collected trails data on all types of trails in a standardized format for use on any platform – from maps and brochures to websites and smartphone apps.

We have gathered data on the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail (South Haven to Port Huron) and segments of the Iron Bell Trail (Belle Isle to Ironwood) that are ready to be converted to a standardized format. This data project will help to promote these two cross-state trails, and will showcase existing trails that help to make the case for trails to bring visitors and dollars into our state.
Sweating the Small Stuff

Every day, your MTGA works on important trail issues as well as the critical connections to knit our statewide system together. At the same time, we visit communities on a regular basis – providing support, answering questions, demonstrating new ideas that help to ensure our trails are as user friendly as they can be for all users. This work takes many forms:

- We provide assistance on trail maintenance, providing how-to information and ideas for maintenance funding and crews to make sure trails remain safe and useful.
- We help communities identify connections that could close important gaps and then consult with them on the necessary steps to make it happen.
- We work to facilitate communication between trail groups, counties and other entities to work in collaboration when planning regional trail arteries.

Legislative Day

One of the highlights of 2015 was an immensely successful Trails Legislative Day at the Michigan State Capitol. MTGA brought together 118 representatives from all major trail user groups. We met with 93 legislators and emphasized the following three issues in every legislative conversation:

1. Preserving sources of funding for trail development including the Natural Resources Trust Fund and non-motorized transportation dollars.

2. Providing resources to Travel Michigan to bring accurate, user-friendly trail information to visitors.

3. Ongoing Basic Trails 101 education for elected officials.

Because there is a significant knowledge gap among many legislators when it comes to our extensive trail system, we feel it is important to have continued dialogue to educate about the trail facts and many benefits trails provide. At the top of our list is the fact that Michigan is the #1 Trail State in the nation. Knowledge is a prerequisite for trail pride and subsequent trail support; and we are compelled to provide information to those that make decisions on our behalf across our state. It’s a one-on-one job that takes people, time and diligence to get done.
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Sincerely,

Nancy Krupiarz
Executive Director

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### 25th Annual Michigander Bicycle Tour: Bike, Brews & Beaches

The 2016 Michigander will be our 25th and it takes place in West Michigan along Michigan’s Gold Coast. We are in the planning stages and are putting together a tour unlike any you have ever ridden.

The Bikes, Brews and Beaches Tour will not only traverse classic Pure Michigan trails, it will include Michigan’s world-renown dunes, woodsy campgrounds, hotel options every night, spectacular dining, art galleries, cool entertainment, a full-moon canoe trip as well as beautiful beach towns dotted with lighthouses, and more brew pubs than you can shake a growler at, alongside loads of celebrations to mark our 25th ride.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook for breaking Michigander news. This bicycle vacation is one of the best Pure Michigan vacation values in the state and to us it is really the best way to experience the splendor of all that is Michigan. We invite you to join us...and be sure to tell your friends to include The Michigander Bike Tour in their summer vacation plans. The more, the merrier.

Registration goes live in late January here: www.michigander.bike

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- www.facebook.com/michigantrails
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### Hash Tag Fun!

- #MichiganTrails
- #TheMichigander
- #Michigander25