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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PO Box 27187
Lansing MI 48909
1213 Center St., Suite D
Lansing, MI 48906
Phone: 517-485-6022
Fax: 517-347-8145
www.michigantrails.org

Objects in the Mirror are Closer Than They Appear

Roger Storm, DNR

Hard to believe that over twenty-five years have passed since the Michigan TRRails Alliance (MTA) merged forces with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). I was hired soon after that merger to set up shop as the first Michigan Chapter Coordinator. That pivotal event not only changed the direction my life would take but also the direction of trail development across Michigan. Stocked with a Chapter Board that consisted initially of Dick Allen, Len Barnes, Bruce Birr, Larry Deck, Gordon Guyer, Ray Holland, Dick Kleca, Jonathon Macks, Roger McCarville, Joel Mikkelsen, and June Thaden, we charged off in the spirit of Johnny Appleseed to introduce and spread the good word about converting inactive railroad corridors into trails. Looking back, it’s amazing the legacy that group of individuals, and many others across the state too numerous to mention here, helped to create.

Case in point: I’ll never forget that first one-day RTC training seminar I attended in early 1989 in Indianapolis, Indiana. A listing of all rail-trails by state was provided within the materials given to all those in attendance. Michigan was identified as having a grand total of one rail-trail; the Paint Creek Trail. Today, that number has grown to 119 rail-trails, more than in any other state, with a total of over 2,300 rail-trail miles. Truly an accomplishment we should all be proud to have helped foster.

In 1990, the Chapter released a booklet entitled “The Discover Michigan Trail: A Trail Vision for Michigan.” It is a vision that refuses to die; that being an interconnected statewide system of trails on abandoned railroad corridors, and other routes, that would serve as a backbone linking together other trails, parklands, communities, resorts, historic sites, and local green space networks into a cohesive recreational system, a system that would complement river corridors and the Great Lakes to give Michigan an unequaled land and water recreational system. Sound familiar?

The graphic above roughly illustrates the Discover Michigan Trail concept. Be sure to compare this map to the next version of the Proposed Governor’s Showcase Trail from Belle Isle to Ironwood. You might be surprised!
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance Board Candidates

Running for Re-Election

Toni Thompson - Kalamazoo, MI

- Former banker
- President of the Friends of the Kalamazoo River Trailway
- Vice President of Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo
- Member of Parks’ Commission for Kalamazoo County.

"Through my board service, I aim to contribute to MTGA’s sustainability and promote the organization’s mission and activities to my social and professional networks locally, statewide and nationally."

Paul Wiklanski - Chelsea, MI

- Associate Director, Prospect Development & Analytics - U of M Office of Development
- Eastern Michigan University - B.S. Communication Technologies & Fine Arts

"My goal is to continue to find ways to promote the MTGA, the use of the trails and greenway network and encourage more people to enjoy them. I’d like to see an increased participation in the Michiganer bicycling event as well as increased support from state government. Finally, I’d like to see this amazing network more actively promoted by the Pure Michigan campaign so that our residents and tourists alike discover the joys of the journeys they can take along our trails."

Rick Brown - Okemos, MI

- Undergraduate degree in management, a major in marketing and minors in history and communications.
- Masters degree in urban and regional planning.
- Previous service on the Board of Directors of Notomis Learning Center.
- Founding member and first president of the South Trail Audubon Society in Saline.
- Recipient of Michigan Audubon Society’s Community Awareness Award.

"To foster vibrant place-making and revitalization efforts in communities across Michigan by incorporating trails and greenways into the mix of recreational and transportation options available, to promote and greenways as an integral part of any multi-modal transportation system and improve the perception of and garner support for non-motorized trail projects among the public and elected officials, especially in urban areas where safe, interconnected, and efficient alternatives to the automobile are needed."

Running for Election

Brad Garmon - Lansing, MI

- Director of Conservation and Emerging Issues at MEC
- Governor Snyder appointee to Mich. State Parks & Rec. Blue Ribbon Panel
- Served on DNR Public Land Strategy Steering Committee
- Office of the Great Lakes’ Water Strategy Cabinet
- Pigeon River Country Advisory Council

"I’m passionate about helping communities and businesses get connected to Michigan’s amazing trail culture, and plugging into the economic and social benefits they provide. I’m also very interested in helping MTGA broaden its base of stakeholders to cover more trail types and users, and solidify its status as the leading policy advocate for non-motorized trails in the state, so that we stay a strong sought-after advisor on major new state-wide trails initiatives and issues. "

Page 2
MTGA has been advocating for a prominent, interactive, all-inclusive trail-user friendly site to be part of the Pure Michigan travel website for several years. It is essential if Michigan is to be known nationwide as the #1 Trails State.

From our first initiative to develop an online Michigan Trails Finder as part of the Connecting Michigan Statewide Trails Vision and Action Plan in 2007, to last year’s work on the Michigan Comprehensive Trails Plan, we have continually searched and made note of the components we feel are necessary to effectively market and promote Michigan’s trails.

We recently removed the Trails Finder from our website due to the recognized need for updating and redesign. With the realization there were other technologically capable private and public entities interested in doing this work, we continue to consult with state and local trail stakeholders, and various private entities in order to learn what is truly needed by Michigan trail users, and to ultimately shape the most user-friendly, content-rich tool for trail information possible.

The latest “Up North Trails Initiative,” is an online interactive website www.upnorthtrails.org for all the trails in the 22-county Northern lower peninsula that offers a lot to like. The site offers the following features: 1) Choose your trails by activity: hike/run, bike, cross-country ski, horseback, ORV/ATV, snowmobile or motorcycle; 2) Choose your desired geographic area; and 3) View a clickable identification of each trail, that pops up interactively as you hover and click the mouse over the trail line on the map... and this is where the website really begins to shine! Click on the pop-up link, and you get a detailed trail synopsis page.

Each trail synopsis page features a filter for points of interest within proximity of the trail. Upon clicking the points of interest button, the trail map is populated with icons for trailheads, natural features, cultural interest, visitor center, fishing, historical sites, campgrounds, scenic views, emergency care, wildlife or nature viewing, beaches, parks, educational interest, and water access. Further clicking on any of the points of interest on the map will bring up a synopsis of that feature, including address, highlights, a descriptive paragraph, and website, if any.

Adjacent to the points of interest button described above, a parallel button of “Trails Nearby” allows a view of additional trails on a larger scale map, and from this map, a new drill-down investigation of those trails may begin.

Several geographic formats are available for viewing the maps, including topographic, satellite imagery, and National Geographic’s own style of map. Other stunning features of this site include a live weather gauge set for the particular trail area you are exploring, a photo gallery, and a link to other maps of this particular trail. Both the trail synopsis pages and the additional maps are printable to allow for easy sharing and portability.

Still to come on the site are links to private businesses that will provide trail users more information about services, like hotels, restaurants, bike shops, etc. that they might want to access along the way. Also on the radar are plans for trail user interaction. Good or bad experiences, favorite scenes or attractions along the trail, photos, or pertinent details of a person’s trip, when logged onto the site can help future travelers plan their itinerary accordingly, and enrich their trail experience.
In 1997, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the successor to the Rails to Trails Conservancy Michigan Chapter, released the Connecting Michigan Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan, the results of a two-year planning project to achieve the mission of an interconnected trails and greenways system. The recommendations from that plan embrace the original Discover Michigan Trail concept and continues to be the guidepost for MTGA’s work today.

Roger Storm, Trailway Acquisition Specialist - Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Roger Storm has 29 years experience in the rails-to-trails movement, the last 14 years as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Land Use Planner, responsible for assessing and negotiating the acquisition of railroad rights-of-way for use as recreational trails. Prior to working for the MDNR, Mr. Storm established the first office of the Michigan Chapter of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, predecessor to the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance. He has coauthored two trail guidebooks with his hiking partner, and wife, Susan Wedzel, *40 Great Rail-Trails in Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana, and Hiking Michigan.*

(Up North Trails Continued from page 3)

In the meantime, here are a couple national websites presenting Michigan’s trails which may prove helpful in the planning of your trail adventures. They include:

All Trails - *www.alltrails.com* is a site by digital network company, All Trails, in cooperation with National Geographic. The site has a variety of trail types from every state, including Michigan, but it is not comprehensive because it is dependent on website users submitting information. The site offers website users a chance to have their own account where they log in their trail experiences, maps, photos, keep track of their trips, and meet others doing the same. Maps are not downloadable or printable unless a member advances to a paid level of membership.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy - *www.traillink.com* is a site for rail-trails and other multi-use pathways in all states. It offers a narrative description of each trail and specifics, such as mileage, surface, endpoints, and a photo gallery. An added benefit of this site is that names of nearby hotels are displayed with links for further trip planning. Here too, you must create an account and upgrade from free to an annual membership to download GPS info, printable maps, and other data.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance will continue to advocate for a statewide trail promotion platform which gives trail users the details they need to easily access all state trails information and plan an itinerary. We believe the right information at the right time and in the right format will accelerate trail enjoyment for all.

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**Trail Towns Tour**

**“TRIPLE T”**

*Alyssa Sturm, MTGA Intern*

Jump on your bike and pedal along with MTGA on Sunday, October 5 as we ride through Southeast Michigan. The Trail Towns Tour will explore one of the best connected trail networks, taking off in South Lyon and riding through the Huron Valley Trail, the Milford Trail, Kensington Metro Park and Island Lake Recreation Area. The route is a combination of paved trails, dirt roads and optional undeveloped trails.

Fall-themed SAG stops in South Lyon, Wixom and Milford will make this a fun, relaxing 35-mile family-friendly ride! Check-in at Milford Central Park between 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. There will be an after-ride party on Milford’s Main Street starting at noon—one ticket for a cold beverage and a prize giveaway are included!

**Early Registration:**

- Adults: $30
- Ages 11-17: $15
- Ages 10 & Under: FREE

**After Sept. 27:**

- Adults: $35
- Ages 11-17: $20
- Ages 10 & Under: FREE

Register today: [http://michigantrails.org/trail-towns-tour](http://michigantrails.org/trail-towns-tour)

Registration closes October 1, 2014
The 23rd Annual Michigander Bicycle Tour showcased some of the greatest trails, back roads and towns of Michigan. We had seven wonderful days of biking on the Pere Marquette State Rail Trail, the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail, the Betsie Valley Rail Trail, Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail, Leelanau Trail and TART Trail. Celebrity sightings, wildlife, unbeatable views of cherry tree orchards and Lake Michigan are just a few of the many highlights from this year’s ride.

Throughout the ride, bicyclists were able to explore Pure Michigan on trails and back roads. Lush trees canopied over the trails, providing some much appreciated shade on the sunnier days. Michigander riders conquered steep hills to experience surreal views of miles of cherry orchards, and the cool breeze from Lake Michigan swept along the TART trail. Pedaling through the route, riders were able to meet new friends and reconnect with old pals. The ride has become a tradition for families and friends, who reunite for a week of making new memories and reminiscing on the old ones.

Riders flocked into each of the picturesque towns at night, eager to absorb local flavor. The towns got a boost in tourism, with riders visiting local eateries, bars, ice cream shops and boutiques. In Leland, we had a brush with fame with a sighting of Tim Allen. Singer Alison Krauss and her band were also spotted exploring downtown Traverse City before her concert at Interlochen.

Dark Sky Program Director Mary Stewart Adams met us in Mesick to tell the story of the night sky, and gave a tremendous presentation about the art, history, science and poetry of the stars. After the presentation, Mary brought riders outside to view the high constellations of summer and the stars that are visible to the naked eye, including the bright blue star Spica, the star of abundance in the constellation Virgo the maiden, which appeared close to the red planet Mars. They gathered just before sunset to take advantage of the remarkable time between sunset, moonrise and starshine.

Riders were fueled by delicious KIND bars, who was a sponsor of the Michigander Bicycle Tour. We also enjoyed a rest stop and sponsorship at Crystal Mountain, where we were able to cruise down the Crystal Coaster Alpine Slide. Dips, turns and remarkable views of the mountain made this a great SAG stop for riders. An generous support from Meijer helped with the quality of the entire ride.

Consistent with the sights and sounds of Northern Michigan, a few riders stumbled upon a brown bear passing over the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail. Their hearts were pounding and adrenaline surged with this rare encounter, but were thrilled to have captured it all on camera! Riders were able to catch a glimpse of fish in hidden creeks and the Harrietta Fish Hatchery. Sailboats and kayakers lined the horizons of Lake Michigan and brilliant blue waters glistened alongside the boardwalk in Traverse City.

Veteran Michigander riders were awed by the improvement of trails, as past Michiganders rode the rough and rocky terrain of the undeveloped Pere Marquette Rail Trail. The improvement of the trail system over the decade has these Michigander riders coming back for more. The recent signing of the Pure Michigan bill by Governor Snyder will translate into more trail improvements, along with towns creating businesses that cater to trail user’s needs. The hospitality of each town we rode through showed the support of the trail system throughout Michigan and the potential opportunities for economic growth.

We are honored to continue the tradition of exploring Michigan from a bicycle seat. Be sure to mark your calendars for next year’s ride, July 11-17. Thank you to everyone who rode the 23rd Annual Michigander Bicycle Tour this year and for supporting the Michigan trail system!

**Michigander Thanks Our Sponsors**

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Crystal Mountain
MTGA Annual Meeting

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Director

Set for October 9, 2014

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance will hold its annual membership meeting on Thursday, October 9, 2014 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Michigan Fitness Foundation, 1213 Center Street, Lansing, Michigan 48906.

This year, Sandra Clark, Director of the Michigan Historical Center, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, will be highlighting the features of the Heritage Trails Initiative, a new effort aimed at bringing several of our trails colorful history to life. The Michigan Historical Center helps people discover, enjoy and find inspiration in the historical sites throughout Michigan.

MTGA Executive Director Nancy Krupiarz will present the various MTGA initiatives that have been progressing over the last year. In addition, attendees will confirm board election results.

In order to provide enough seating and refreshments, please RSVP on the ballot slip or email Nancy at nancy@michigantrails.org if you plan to attend.