

Michigan Statewide Trails Plan: Goals and Objectives

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has embarked on an 18-month process to update the 2013 Statewide Trails Plan, which will guide trail investment and management decisions by the DNR over the next five years. With the assistance of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council, the DNR has developed a draft vision and strategic goals to be incorporated in the updated trails plan. These goals will be reviewed in greater detail through a series of public forums to obtain feedback from Michigan's residents. Following the public forums, the DNR will make appropriate revisions to the goals and objectives of the plan and identify action steps that the DNR can take within the next five years to continuously improve DNR managed trails in Michigan.

Vision

Michigan will solidify its national recognition as “The Trails State” by providing sustainable and diverse trail experiences to connect people and communities, provide for the health and wellness, transportation, and outdoor recreation pursuits of Michigan's residents and visitors, supporting the vibrancy and prosperity of Michigan and its communities.

Outcomes

Successful implementation of the trails plan will support the following outcomes:

Quality trail experiences and resource management: With proper funding, coordination, and planning, Michigan's trail systems will be maintained and sustainably expanded to provide diverse motorized and nonmotorized opportunities for safe, quality trail experiences while also managing Michigan's natural and cultural resources.

Public stewardship: By developing and promoting trail systems residents and visitors are knowledgeable about trail opportunities as well as regulations and use practices. Trails will serve as a pathway to engage with Michigan's cultural and natural resources, cultivating a stewardship mindset to, protect and enhance these resources, and improve understanding of how public lands are managed for multiple purposes.

Community and economic prosperity: Through intentional planning, collaboration, and promotions, Michigan's trails can be leveraged for the greatest benefit to support community and economic prosperity in Michigan. Trail systems enhance the quality of life for Michiganders making our state and its communities a great place to live and draw visitors from other regions contributing to the tourism economy.

Goals

To achieve the long-term vision and outcomes, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources will pursue the following goals over the next five years:

Goal #: Sustainable Maintenance and Development

Manage Michigan's trails system sustainably to maintain and improve existing conditions while protecting natural and cultural resources.

Objectives

1. Design and locate trails to meet current and future needs for all users
2. Prioritize quality trail experiences over the quantity of trails
3. Elevate maintenance of existing trails systems in comparison to the development of new systems
4. Connect trail users and adjoining communities to form a network of interconnected trails and users
5. Prioritize completion of destination trails such as the Iron Belle and Great Lake to Lake trails
6. Integrate environmentally sustainable practices
7. Ensure trails are sustainably managed, maintained, sited, and developed in conjunction with the long-term resource management goals of the department.

Goal #: Planning and Collaboration

Model best trail planning practices to maintain and improve strong public, stakeholder, and department communication, relationships, and partnerships.

Objectives

8. Coordinate planning with partners including user groups, government, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers
9. Prioritize planning at a regional scale and across DNR Divisions
10. Foster collaborative partnerships across user groups and among resource managers
11. Foster support for key initiatives from partners, legislators, and stakeholders

Goal #: Marketing, Promotion, and Education

Promote Michigan's diverse trail opportunities to residents and visitors, accurately depicting experiences found in the state.

Objectives

12. Develop and implement an education strategy to minimize user conflict; promote trail safety and general use practices such as leave no trace principles; and enhance understanding of public lands management
13. Promote Michigan's diverse trail opportunities to encourage use from residents and visitors
14. Coordinate with community, business, and government partners to promote trail systems
15. Utilize relevant technology and promotional practices to engage and educate new and existing audiences
16. Enhance available technology tools and services to make trail information easily accessible
17. Develop and implement wayfinding and signage guidelines
18. Connect trail users to Michigan's natural resources and cultural heritage
19. Document use patterns and analyze significance of trail-based recreation to the state and its communities

Goal #: Funding

Develop and refine funding structure to ensure trails are maintained and developed to provide quality recreation experiences.

Objectives

20. Develop additional sources of sustainable funding for nonmotorized trail maintenance funding,
21. Continue to strengthen current funding sources for maintenance, development, and acquisition
22. Coordinate funding sources more strategically to achieve greater outcomes
23. Seek funding opportunities to leverage investments

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