

How Did That Trail Get There?

Meet the Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance.

By Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director
Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance

If you stroll, ride or hike on a Michigan trail, you owe a bit of thanks to hundreds of people who worked to get that trail built. Years ago, when many Michigan trails had yet to be imagined, the Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance diligently worked to provide leadership and assistance to dozens of emerging trail groups. We helped plan routes, untangle access issues, build support and raise funds. The result is thousands of miles of trails that have made Michigan the #1 Trails State in the nation.

Nowadays, you are more likely to find us discussing how to connect a trail to the next one a few miles away, how best to sign trails to help people find their way, where to locate a new trailhead or the maintenance implications of various trail surfaces. When we look across Michigan, we see community after community working to meet their citizens' demand for more trail miles and trail enhancements. We've come a long way.

Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance is the statewide voice for all nonmotorized trail users. We continue to help communities plan, build and operate trails for a healthier, more prosperous Michigan.

We work to provide technical assistance communities need for their trail projects; we advocate for policies that set the stage for a more robust, well connected system; and we promote Michigan trails to the world.

Build the Long Trails and They Will Come

Connecting local trails into longer trails that cross our state results in destination trails that excite the imagination and attract users from far and wide. Two destination trail projects are nearing completion in Michigan: Our first Great Lake to Lake Trail from South Haven on Lake Michigan to Port Huron, and the Iron Belle Trail that will stretch from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood on the Wisconsin border in the western Upper Peninsula.

Both of these trails have gaps that need connecting to complete the vision. Both are getting close, in part thanks

Nancy Krupiarz and her husband Tom enjoy a beautiful Lake Michigan sunset. Nancy will be retiring as Executive Director this summer.



Lucinda Means
Advocacy Day

to major donors who share the vision to help fill in the remaining gaps. Earlier this year, Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources were grateful to receive \$1.2 million in financial assistance from Michael Levine, of Pinckney, Michigan, to complete the Lakelands Trail from Stockbridge to Jackson. This is a critical link in the Great Lake to Lake Trail which is set for a 2018 opening, using temporary connector routes where needed.

Keeping Trails Healthy and Trail Users Safe

Once a trail is built and the celebration subsides, trail groups must embrace the far less sexy issue of trail maintenance. Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance is working with groups across the state to develop



Executive Director Nancy Krupiarz (9th from the left) celebrates the official opening of the Fred Meijer Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Rail Trail on April 18, 2015.

a new source of funding for non-motorized trail maintenance. A combination of new local funding initiatives, enhanced man-power programs for trail stewardship, and targeted statewide resources could help communities address the issues they face to sustain their trails. The Alliance is leading this charge, working with the Nonmotorized Advisory Work Group, a subcommittee of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to get the job done.

On other policy fronts, we are helping local and regional trail groups better understand and address the emerging issue of electric assist bicycles on trails. We are also preparing a public campaign

on trail etiquette, guiding communities on what types of rules they should have in place and helping trail users understand proper use of the trails.

Every spring, the Alliance partners with the League of Michigan Bicyclists in the Lucinda Means Bicycle Advocacy Day at the Capitol. This year, our focus will be on ebike legislation and providing for a safe minimum passing distance between motorists and bicyclists on the road. We welcome all bicyclists to attend this event with us to help legislators understand the continuing issues bicyclists face and how to make our state a safer place for everyone.

Ride with Us on Michigan's Most Beautiful Trails

Join us this summer on the 26th Annual Michigander Bicycle Tour, July 15-22. You can spend two days, six days or eight days experiencing the majesty of Lake Michigan, pristine white-sand beaches, towering sand dunes, glorious sunsets, and seriously spectacular beach towns. Riding inland from the blue-green waters of the lakes and rivers to the towering forests and rolling hills, the natural beauty found on the trails and backroads that connect Frankfort, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Leland and Traverse City is just breathtaking. Thanks to the

rides northern position close to the 45th parallel, riders will enjoy daylight well into the evening hours. Viewing paradise from the seat of a bicycle while rolling through great trails and backroads will be unforgettable. Visit www.michigander.bike for more information.

For a shorter sampling of some of our best trails, join our one-day Trail Towns Tour on Sunday, October 1. It showcases three charming Southeast Michigan towns – South Lyon, Wixom, and Milford – and the trail system that connects them. This 30-mile ride is a combination of paved trails, dirt trails and gravel roads, winding through the beautiful fall foliage of Kensington Metro Park and Island Lake Recreation Area.

More Trails Info is a Click Away

No matter where you live in the Great Lake State, there is likely a non-motorized trail just waiting for you to explore. Pick your itinerary based on trail length, surface, and location from the Michigan Multi-Use Trails Directory & Map available on our website at www.michigantrails.org. or, for a free copy, send a 70¢ self-addressed stamped envelope to Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, P.O. Box 27187, Lansing, Michigan 48909. This trail guide



Lakeside Trail, Fruitport





26th Annual

**MICHIGANDER
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July 15-22, 2017
www.michigander.bike

You can spend two days, six days or eight days experiencing the majesty of Michigan.

is updated every other year to bring you the latest information on new trails and trail extensions across the state.

**If You Love Trails,
 You Belong with Us**

Great trails don't just happen. If you love trails, please consider joining us in our work. Become a member of the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance. You will receive a discount on all of our events, free admission to our annual meeting and expo, a quarterly newsletter about trail happenings across the state, and best of all, gain the satisfaction of knowing that you are furthering the cause of non-motorized trail development across Michigan. You can join online through our website www.michigantrails.org or give us a call at 517-485-6022 to have an application mailed to you.

See you on the trails!



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