Michigan’s Proposed Water Trail Program

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Trails are good for communities

- Sense of place; people want to live near trails and in walkable communities
- Increased land values
- Healthy recreation and transportation options
- Connected communities and community centers
- Highlight local history
- Public exposure to stewardship
Michigan State Trails Program

Over 12,500 miles of designated state trails
National Leader in Trails

- State Designated Trails
  - 12,500+ miles

www.michigan.gov/dnrtrails
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- Forest Service and NPS Trails
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- Forest Service and NPS Trails
  - 1,600+ miles
- US Bike Routes
  - 900+ miles

Total 20,000 miles
Michigan is the National Leader in Trails

September 17-24, 2016

more than 12,500 miles of designated state trails

- Hiking: 4,170
- Off-road Vehicle Trails: 3,800
- Equestrian Trails: 1,490
- State Park Trails: 973
- Bike Trails: 1,483
- Snowmobile Trails: 6,204

FIND YOUR TRAIL ADVENTURE AT www.michigan.gov/trailsweek
But... two things missing

State Designated border to border trail
Michigan has the most great lakes coastline, thousands of miles of rivers and inland lakes coastline and we are the trail state.

So the question is not why have a program, but how can we not?

This is documented in the State Trail Plan, State Land Strategy and Water Strategy.
Michigan Water Trail Opportunities

- 3288 miles of Great Lakes Coastline
- 10,000 miles of rivers and streams
- 11,000 inland lakes (over five acres)
- One of tourism’s largest growth rate is in paddle sports.
Why is a program needed?

When:

• There are already locally designated water trails
• People have been using “water trails” for centuries
• There is a National Water Program
• Private liveries already promote their trails

Because:

• Providing clear information to the public is essential.
• Development of standards are required to have consistent information to manage public expectation.
• Regional engagement and coordination is needed to develop, market and maintain a water trail.
How do you create a new state program?

Create a draft policy

- Internal Policy Document
- Review by Division Chiefs
- Process for Approval

• Why follow this process?
  – Provide direction for future employees
  – Ensure review by different perspectives
  – Remove potential conflicts, arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making
State Designated Water Trails:

Water trails that are supported by broad-based community partnerships, have applied for designation, have been granted that status by the DNR. The trail provides conservation, heritage and recreation opportunities.

State Designated water trails can be for either motorized or non-motorized use.
The DNR, in designating a water trail, will seek to ensure the following:

- A quality trail experience
- Clear information for users
- Broad community support
- A sustainable Business plan
1. Inland Water Trails, non-motorized
   - Beginner Segments
     • Shorter segments (1-2 hours/3-6 miles)
     • Well signed and spaced access sites
     • Exposure to new users
   - Intermediate Segments
     • Longer segments (2-4 hours/6-12 miles)
     • Increase skill level needed
   - Advanced Segments
     • Longer segments (4+ hours/12+miles)
     • Increased skill level needed
     • Navigation & self rescue required
Designation Types continued

2. Great Lakes Water Trails
   – Along great lakes coastline and connecting water bodies.
   – Provide consistency with Great Lakes partners

3. Motorized Water Trails
   – Unique opportunities such as the Chain of Lakes and Inland Waterway
Process for designation

• Applicants must show how they meet the four criteria of the program
  – Quality Trail experience
  – Clear Information for Users
  – Broad Community Support
  – Sustainable Business Plan

• Then it will go through the DNR’s Trail Proposal Process (includes reviews from all DNR Divisions)

• Final approval is by the DNR’s State Trail Coordinator
• Trail segment types, additional segments, accessible segments and amenities can be changed
• Self auditing will be required for make sure the trail is maintained to state standards.
• DNR can remove a trail from designation.
Draft Policy can be downloaded at:

http://liaa.org/media/projects/media/draft_criteria_for_a_designated_water_trail_final_version2_81816.pdf

Send comments by September 30th to:
DNR-Watertrails@michigan.gov