



# Trailblazing in Michigan

Winter 2012

**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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## Connecting Michigan - Successes in 2011

*Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA*

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance made more strides in 2011 in accomplishing the recommendations in the Connecting Michigan State Trailways Vision and Action Plan than ever before. You may recall that the Connecting Michigan plan resulted from the deliberations of 10 task forces and over 200 participants. Released in 2007, the plan presented 39 goals and 130 action steps to accelerate our interconnected statewide system of trails and greenways in Michigan. MTGA board and staff have been seizing every opportunity to pursue our Connecting Michigan goals whether it be in cooperation with state departments, legislators, or as a MTGA –led initiative. You can view the plan for yourself in our online trailway toolkit at <http://library.michigantrails.org/funding/connecting-michigan-a-statewide-trailways-vision-and-action-plan/>

### The Great Lake to Lake Trail

The Connecting Michigan On-Road Connections task force had recommended that trails link together for long-distance routes utilizing both on- and off-road routes to encourage increased trailway use and tourism revenue. This past year, MTGA channeled a generous donation from the Kellogg Foundation into the Great Lake to Lake Trail project, envisioning a 260+ mile trail made up of 15 existing trails and connecting routes in between, linking 78 communities along its path from South Haven to Port Huron. A MTGA team increased awareness of this potential “super-trail”, worked on defining the route in the gaps, identified and engaged a vast array of stakeholders, built a consensus on a trail name and logo, and developed templates for signage and a website. A poster/brochure was the final product for Phase 1 which can be used to further promotion and trail development. It was only the beginning of this project and MTGA is currently fundraising for Phase 2 to implement the website and the first signage for the trail and continue to pursue connections in the gaps.



### Complete Streets Training and Community Engagement

Another recommendation of that task force was to raise the awareness of state and local transportation officials on how nonmotorized **on-road** connections can be used to connect trails and to showcase nonmotorized transportation networks so that municipalities, transportation planners, and public officials regularly incorporate nonmotorized transportation into their planning, programming and development. In 2010, MTGA combined their advocacy efforts with many other partners in pushing for the statewide Complete Streets Act. This legislation provides that nonmotorized and public transportation is integrated into the policies and procedures of state

*Continued on page 4*

# Kalamazoo Trails For All Seasons: 5 Years and Counting

*Chelsea Dietlin, MTGA Intern*

In 2006, the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County and the Kalamazoo County Parks Department was granted funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop programs that would raise awareness and encourage use of the Kalamazoo River Valley Rail Trail. This was accomplished by planning events that promote health and fitness, tourism, economic development, recreation, transportation, education, quality

of life and preserve land and the environment. Through the program's years of implementation, the Kalamazoo County Parks Foundation has continually re-evaluated the effectiveness and success of their events by conducting research to find out what the people want.

This in combination with hundreds of completed surveys asking questions regarding raising

awareness of the trail(s), reasons for not using the trail(s), media preference and events/programs that would encourage usage of the trail(s) has proved to be quite effective when engaging the community.

Sticking to the philosophy of year-round engagement, the end product has been a packed calendar of season-appropriate trail fun! Winter means snow shoe clinics and snowflake safaris where families learn about the science of snow and discover animals that live along the trail. Spring, summer and fall are jam packed with weekly walking tours, golf cart excursions, and the very popular dog walking club ,Mutt Strutters. Lead by a certified PetSmart trainer, participants gain personal insight, tips and techniques on how to walk your dog in public places. Special summertime events feature monthly guest speakers who join the walking tours and educate community members on various health related topics. Mascot Day stations mascots from local sports teams and businesses at different points along the trail in which eager participants bike and walk to meet the furry

fellows making them eligible for prize giveaways. Tales on the Trails provides education on health and fitness to youth as community outreach volunteers located along the trail read stories to youth promoting activity between stories. To see what is going on today on the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, visit their page on the Kalamazoo County website at <http://www.kalcounty.com/parks/krvt/trailprogramming.htm>

The programs this year have demonstrated a new level of success, showing increased volunteerism, participation, trail awareness and interest by community members to host their events along the trail. The greatest barrier to overcome thus far has been engaging all socio-economic levels with trail events. 2011 has shown a measurable breakthrough regarding community diversity by offering a wide range of opportunities for people of all ages and all abilities. There is no doubt, Kalamazoo has laid out a community outreach plan that could be replicated for ALL Michigan trail communities.

While the programming was launched from the availability of grant dollars, the trail itself is funded by private donations, state dollars, and partnerships between the volunteers of the Parks Foundation and like-minded individuals. Funding and volunteer support keep this paved, non-motorized trail well maintained, and safe and free for all recreationalists! The Kalamazoo River Valley Rail Trail, Battle Creek Linear Park, Kal-Haven State Park Trail and Portage Bicentennial Park Trail link together completing a 140 mile route.

This article was based upon the content published in the 2010 Kalamazoo River Valley Trail Annual Programming Report available as a pdf at <http://library.michigantrails.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/KRVT-Annual-Report.pdf>.

If you would like to support programs beyond the initial grant funding, all contributions are welcome and appreciated. 100% of donations to the KRV Trail Program will be dedicated to the support of community programs, such as the "Learning Cycles" bike donation program with our local elementary schools, interpretive nature walks along the trail, and weekly walking and biking clubs. Join them on the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail and consider supporting future programming!

# 2011 - A Big Year for Trails Funding

*Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA*

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board was very good to Michigan trails this year! Five trail acquisition projects totalling 5.29 million were recommended for funding. Winning big was a critical segment of the Great Lake to Lake Trail in Wixom, Walled Lake, and Commerce Township. This 5.45 mile rail-trail project between the Huron Valley Trail and the West Bloomfield Trail was awarded 3.75 million, which will help to close one of the gaps in the cross-state Great Lake to Lake Trail from South Haven to Port Huron. Other trail acquisition grants were as follows:

- Jackson County - \$187,500 for the Sparks County Park Trail Connector
- St. Clair County - \$150,000 for the Blue Water River Walk Expansion
- Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources - \$1 million for various critical trail connections
- Negaunee Township - \$202,700 for Negaunee Twp. Rec Trails

A total of 31 projects totaling \$7.26 million were recommended for trail development funding. Some state-owned rail trails and many local trails were recommended for grants, including:

- Buchanan - \$288,000 for McCoy's Creek Trail
- Traverse City - \$210,000 for Boardman Lake Trail West
- Ironwood - \$295,900 for Depot Recreation Park and Trailhead
- Suttons Bay - \$240,000 for Front Street Pathway
- Texas Twp. - \$300,000 for Texas Drive Nonmotorized Trail extension
- Hancock - \$262,500 for Navy St. Park Boardwalk
- Emmet County - \$300,000 for Petoskey to Alanson Rail-Trail
- Ottawa County - \$300,000 for Ottawa Beach Waterfront Walkway
- Watersmeet Twp. - \$276,800 for S. Agonikak National Rec. Trail Improvements

- Charlevoix County - \$300,000 for Boyne City to US-31 Trail
- Petoskey - \$300,000 for Petoskey Downtown Greenway North Segment
- Ionia County - \$300,000 for Grand River Valley Rail-Trail
- Oakland Twp. - \$300,000 for Paint Creek/Polly Ann Trail Connector
- Calumet Twp. - \$29,000 for Calumet Lions Park Trail Improvements
- Bessemer - \$279,900 for Mary St. Ethnic Commons and Trailhead
- Hastings - \$244,900 for Tyden Park Riverwalk Trail Extension
- Inkster - \$192,500 for Inkster Greenway Trail
- Ypsilanti - \$289,400 for Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge
- Dept. of Natural Resources - \$300,000 for Fred Meijer Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Trail
- Dearborn - \$268,900 for Camp Dearborn Nonmotorized Trail
- Petoskey - \$59,700 for Quarry Harbor Nonmotorized Trail
- Delhi Twp. - \$300,000 for North Trail Connector
- Kentwood - \$125,400 for Northeast Park Boardwalk Expansion
- Laketon Twp. - \$300,000 for Bear Lake Rd. Nonmotorized Trail
- Clio - \$124,800 for Pine Run Creek Trail Improvements
- Saginaw County - \$251,500 for Saginaw Valley Rail-Trail Extension
- Tuscarora Twp. - \$250,900 for Marina Park Trailhead
- Edenville Twp. - \$191,500 for Twp. Trail, Fishing Pier and Dock
- Dept. of Natural Resources - \$300,000 for Statewide Equestrian Initiative
- Frankenlust Twp. - \$300,000 for Great Lakes Bay Region Trail Bridge Renovation
- Pewamo - \$85,200 for Pewamo Trailhead

**Congratulations to all of the deserving winners!**

transportation planning so that all legal users of the road are safely accommodated. This year, MTGA developed and presented training for individuals and communities on how to advocate for the **local** complete streets legislation that is necessary in order for the state legislation to be effective. With local Complete Streets policies, trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and other intermodal connections will be regularly factored into transportation planning. Over 300 citizens and community officials took part in trainings, and Michigan has witnessed the passage of 60 local Complete Streets policies this past year.



**Integrating Trails into Tourism**

Michigan is #1 in the nation for the number of trail miles, and we believe this should be used to attract tourism, particularly from outside the state. However, if information on trails and related tourism amenities are hard to find online, Michigan loses the opportunity to attract trail visitors. As part of the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council created by Public Act 46 of 2010, MTGA is working to link trails with other tourism attractions and amenities to allow one-stop user-friendly information to encourage trails tourism. The Top of Michigan Trails Council is working with the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments to develop user-friendly trails data in an online format together with other tourism information, and MTGA is pushing this model statewide. The Connecting Michigan Trail Programming and Promotion task force recommended this collaboration.

**Linking up trails in Southeast Michigan**

The Michigan Department of Transportation has been rehabilitating the I-275 Metro Trail in Wayne and Oakland counties so that it can be a major nonmotorized spine through Southeast Michigan as it links to other existing trail networks, including the Downriver Linked Greenways to the south and the Oakland County Trail network to the north. MTGA has been working to strengthen the Friends of I-275 Metro Trail group so that there is a strong volunteer corps that can monitor trail conditions, provide more frequent upkeep, add trail enhancements and advocate for nonmotorized connections through each community it traverses. The Friends group held its first fundraising and awareness-building event in June, carried out frequent trail cleanups and is establishing a good working relationship with MDOT to allow for a safe, well-maintained and fully interconnected trail system in Southeast Michigan. Other communities we assisted this year with trails technical assistance included: Wixom, Walled Lake, and Commerce Townships, Calhoun County, Luna Pier, Bronson, Coldwater, and Sturgis, Clinton, Ionia, and Shiawassee counties, Ironwood, Escanaba, Grayling, Cadillac, Chelsea, Detroit, Benton Harbor, Lansing, Birch Run Township and others. The popularity of trails continues to soar across the state as evidenced by the many new parks and rec plans and master plans which incorporate public input that demands these facilities. Our "Connecting Michigan" mission has never seemed more doable than it does today, and MTGA will continue to strive to make it happen.



**MTGA Embroidered Hats**  
Washed cotton, 6 panel relaxed fit caps. Choice of four colors \$15

**Midwest Rail-Trail Book \$15**  
Covers Trails in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio & Wisconsin



**MTGA Cup \$10**  
Teal Green ceramic mug with MTGA logo

MTGA Cup	_____ X	\$10	_____ \$
Trail Book	_____ X	\$15	_____ \$
Hat - Khaki	_____ X	\$15	_____ \$
Orange	_____ X	\$15	_____ \$
Stone	_____ X	\$15	_____ \$
Navy	_____ X	\$15	_____ \$
<b>Shipping &amp; Handling</b>			<b>\$ 6.00</b>
<b>Merchandise Total</b>			<b>_____ \$</b>

**Individual**

Annual - \$15 - 3 Year: \$35 \_\_\_\_\_

**Family**

Annual : \$20 - 3 Year: \$45 \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization**

Annual: \$50 - 3 Year: \$125 \_\_\_\_\_

**Lifetime** \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total (U. S. Dollars)** \_\_\_\_\_

Check Payable to: MTGA or Mastercard, Visa, or Discover  
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# Fred Meijer-Remembered for Trails and So Much More

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA

MTGA was saddened to learn of the passing of Fred Meijer, head of the famous grocery store chain, this past November 25th. Mr. Meijer, who died of a stroke at age 91, was one of Michigan's legendary trail heroes and was an impassioned leader for many other causes as well throughout the state. His involvement with trails kindled when as a boy of 7, he was given his first bike from his father. This led to a lifelong interest which included bicycling in many areas of the United States and Europe. His trails legacy started in 1994 with a generous donation for the acquisition of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail, which ran to the town where the first Meijer store was located. From there he enthusiastically gave one of the lead gifts to the capital campaign for the West Michigan Multi-Use Trail Network. The trails which benefitted from this gift and others he has bestowed, all bear his name as part of their title, including the Fred Meijer White Pine, M-6, Kenowa, Standale, Berry Junction, Flat River, Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee, Grand River Valley and Flat River Valley.



Mr. Meijer embraced the benefits that trails bring to their communities. In an interview for the "West Michigan Trails Magazine" this past year, he let on that safety was one of the top reasons why he supports trails, followed by environmental appreciation, health, and tourism. In the interview, he commented that trails were important to connect people with nature. "We all live near a trail and the investment in a bike is small compared to other things. As our society becomes more urbanized and technology-

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driven, trails provide a window into the rural areas and the diverse environment in which we live. One experiences the environment in a special way that is missed when traveling by car." Helping the region to compete with other locations in the world was another reason why he felt trails are important, according to the interview.

Mr. Meijer was just as fervent in his support for several other important causes. The Fred Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park has blossomed under his care to one of the 100 most visited museums in the world, according to a recent Crain's Detroit Business article, "His name's on the store – but he leaves much more on the landscape of Michigan". In addition to the gardens, he generously gave to the Spectrum Health's Fred and Lena Meijer Heart Center and its Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion, helped create a public broadcast center for Grand Valley State University and also a new headquarters for the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. And Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance appreciates the sponsorship he arranged through the Meijer stores for the support of its annual Michigander Bicycle Tour over the past three years. In his biography, Fred Meijer: Stories of His Life, co-author Larry ten Harmsel, said "Fred would say, you know, I've had so much in my life, I hope other people can have that and live as long."

Recently, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy named him a national "Doppelt Family Rail Trail Champion", one of 25 who have made an outstanding contribution to the rail-trail movement. Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance salutes Fred Meijer as one of Michigan's legendary trail heroes and will forever remain in heartfelt gratitude for the legacy he created for our statewide trail system.

## 2012 Michigander Route Announced

Katie Heck, Michigan Fitness Foundation Intern

Every July 700 bicycle enthusiasts pack their bags and hit the trails for a stay-cation like no other. Riders receive two meals per day, overnight camping accommodations, support service and rest stops along the route. Proceeds from the family-friendly event support MTGA in their efforts to connect Michigan through a statewide system of trails. The ride will tour northeastern Michigan trails on July 14-20, 2012. Participants can choose from two, six or seven day tour options. The two day ride is an out-and-back ride that will begin in Indian River following the North Central State Trail with an overnight stay in Mackinaw City. Six day riders will check-in at Mackinac City and travel through Onaway, Alpena, Atlanta, Gaylord, Indian River and finish back in Mackinaw City. The

seven day ride begins in Indian River with the two day riders and follows the same route as the six day riders.

Each bike tour showcases Michigan's beauty while traveling a route that all ages and skill levels can enjoy. The northeastern trails allow families to explore Michigan on two wheels; a cost-effective "adventure". For others, it's an opportunity to reconnect with their Michigander "family." Take time to sign your family up for this experience of a lifetime.

More information about the route, training tips and registration information can be found at [www.michigantrails.org/michigander-bicycle-tour](http://www.michigantrails.org/michigander-bicycle-tour).

**2012  
Michigander  
Dates**  
2-Day - July 14 & 15  
6-Day - July 15-20  
7-Day - July 14-20



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Update: State Park  
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Best Wishes for a Healthy, Prosperous 2012 and Many Happy Trails!  
--MTGA Board and Staff



## Update: State Park Recreation Passport a Rising Success!

*Chelsea Dietlin, MTGA Intern*

It has been a little over a year since the implementation of the State Park Recreation Passport, which allows nature lovers complete access to Michigan's 98 State Parks and recreation areas. In addition to park access, the passport entitles you to receive discounts from hundreds of Michigan businesses enrolled in the "Passport Perks" programs. Deals range from discounts on services to free food!

As of October 2010, drivers can opt-in to purchase the \$10 passport when renewing their license plates. Designed to increase the flow of funds for park operations and maintenance by replacing the annual park pass (\$26/year), 2010-2011 sales indicate a successful launch! Previously relying on declining revenues from entry and camping fees, this new park access option has increased the DNR budget by more than seven million dollars in the past year.

The DNR has already outlined the allocation of its additional funding, indicated in John Flesher's article "State parks: New passport system brings in more cash" written this past October. He elaborates, "After covering operational expenses and reimbursing the Secretary of State's Office for administering the program, the DNR will spend about \$3 million for capital

projects, such as new bathrooms and picnic shelters, and \$1.8 million for maintenance work -- repairing broken sewer pipes and leaky roofs. An additional \$426,000 will go for state forest recreation facilities. More than \$608,000 will be distributed as grants to local parks."

Surpassing the DNR's original goal of 24% participation, the Recreation Passport continues to gain momentum among Michigan residents as we move into 2012. What does this mean for Michigan trails? Your purchase of the passport means more dollars dedicated toward the maintenance and expansion of state-owned multi-use trails and the potential of grants to

communities with locally-owned trails. As you can see, participation in this program is not only a good deal for you, but also a valuable investment in the preservation of our state's natural beauty and resources.

For more information regarding the Recreation Passport visit; [www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport) or call the DNR, Recreation Division at 517-373-9900

