



Trailblazing in Michigan

Fall 2011



is 20 Years Old ! !

Chelsea Dettlin, MTGA Intern

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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Pedaling beneath the canopy of a West Michigan wilderness, 2011 "Michigander" cyclists hit the trails July 16th through July 22nd for the annual *Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance* two, six, and seven-day bike tours. The valiant crew of 687 family members, friends, and trail lovers braved scorching summer temperatures and torrential downpours as they crossed 328 miles of greenways and country roads.

Many friends are made during this no rush, stop and smell the roses "staycation". Here fun, family, friends and fitness are all encompassed beneath the summer sun. Everyone has the chance to savor the trails and small towns of the REAL Michigan. Serving as a showcase for the MTGA mission of trail expansion, the "Michigander" is a not just a tour, but a cause supported by many.

This year was quite the remarkable and memorable occasion for the bike tour. Celebrating its 20th anniversary, MTGA invited "Michigander" co-founders Roger Storm and Rick Oberle to re-tell the story of the origins of this adventure tour. Walking listeners through the evolution of our trail system, the speakers pointed out the clear relationship between past tour routes and the development of Michigan into the #1 state for trail miles! This year we were able to connect our tour with 12 trails and 10 different single tracks for mountain bikers, by far the most in the history of "Michigander"!

The entertainment and activities did not stop there. By day staff and volunteers "tricked out" the SAG stops with outrageous themed decor, goodies and of course endless jugs of cold water and Gatorade. By night kids and adults alike could enjoy concerts and games, even jump on the shuttle to downtown areas and grab an ice cream or sample the local brews! After a hard day in the heat, the weekend ride brought us to South Haven where "Michigander" riders were greeted by the mayor himself and invited to his riverside bonfire for some R&R, hot dogs and s'mores.

Indeed, hospitality was at a high on the western side of the state as bicycle tourists were welcomed by friendly attitudes and kind gestures. Riders eager to beat the record high temperatures were able to hit the trails sooner than intended as



(Continued on page 2)

Seeking Re-Election



Toni Thompson - Kalamazoo, MI

- Former Banker
 - President of The Friends of the Kalamazoo River Trustway
- 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.*



Mike Eberlein - Haslett, MI

- Retired from Michigan Department of Transportation, Enhancement Greens Program Coordinator
 - Director of Safe Routes to School Program for Michigan Department of Transportation
- "Currently, I believe the board's priorities for focus and action are 1) enhancement of the synergy created by our highly successful partnership with the Michigan Fitness Foundation through renegotiation of our Joint Operating Agreement, 2) expansion of MTGA's presence and following in the social media of the day, as well as the traditional media, and 3) securing and growing sustainable financial support for the MTGA organization and its programs"*

New Board Positions



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 Nokomis Learning Center
- Founding member and first president of the Sank Yrill 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 trails and greenways as vital 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."



Paul Wildanski - Chelsea, MI

- Assistant Director, Marketing and Strategic Planning - University of Michigan Office of Development.
 - Bachelor Degree at Eastern Michigan University in communication Technologies with secondary concentration in 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 Michigander 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 in state residents and tourists alike discover the joys of the journeys they can take along our trails."*

Michigander 26th Year Ride (Continued from page 1)

school caterers accommodated visitors by arriving at the site an hour early to serve breakfast. During lunch time, communities across the state showed appreciation for the extra foot traffic brought from "Michigander" by donning discounts and welcome signs as they competed for the hungry bellies of our many riders.

From Kalamazoo to Plainwell, around to Holland and Grand Haven, this 2011 circle tour crossing 328 total miles (126.5 trail miles) truly tested the boundaries of human tolerance as we encountered 6 treacherous days of 90-100 degree weather. Despite the gauntlet of environmental conditions, the strength of love and support between friends and family overcame Mother Nature's unexpected tricks. As one rider said "This is not always fun, but the satisfaction and accomplishment of finishing is unbelievably rewarding." Void of any major

heat related injuries and sicknesses, tired but glowing riders flew through clouds of bubbles and the finish line to the sounds of the stereo and the bellowing cheers of our own Sam "Pit Bull" Kennedy.

We would like to take a moment and recognize our team of amazing volunteers and vendors whom are truly the body of this entire operation. "The Michigander Bike Tour" would literally not exist without this amazing group of men and women who grant us their hearts and assistance year after year. The staff at *Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance* would like to thank you all for you tireless efforts to keep the energy of this ride alive and your dedication to exposing the world to the naturally beautiful side of Michigan. Every year you impact the lives of Michigan cyclists by creating a setting for lifelong memories. We absolutely LOVE having everyone so... let's do it again next year!

News From The North

*Jeff Winegarf, Executive Director
Top of Michigan Trails Council*

If you've been enjoying the more than 250 miles of non-motorized, multipurpose trails in northern Michigan, your enjoyment is about to increase with this year's improvements and activities.

North East State Trail

Construction is in full swing on the North East State Trail (NEST) which connects Alpena and Cheboygan. Currently this is the most rugged trail of the system, its surface in its natural state ranges from dirt and cinders to sand and ballast stone. Construction to surface the trail began in April, with completion scheduled for September. The trail is currently open to the public but the installation of packed, crushed limestone on the surface will make it smoother, faster and more accessible. The trail was originally part of the Detroit to Mackinaw Railroad and was purchased by the DNR as a multi-use trail for snowmobiles in the winter and all non-motorized use year round, including bikers and walkers. This multi-use trail runs 71 miles from Alpena through Posen, Millersburg,



Onaway, Aloha and on to Cheboygan.

North Central State Trail

Completed in 2008, the North Central State Trail (NCST) is a 62 mile trail that runs through some of Michigan's most scenic venues including marshes, along rivers and lakes and within easy reach of Mackinac Island. It is the longest improved trail

in the state of Michigan. The village of Mackinaw and city of Cheboygan are excited to have new trailheads. The big news for the fall is the 1st Annual Top of Michigan 100K individual and team relay to be run on the trail. As of this writing, 20 individuals and 8 teams of 6 runners have registered for the race on October 15, 2011. The race begins in Gaylord and finishes in Mackinaw City.

Burt Lake Trail

The Burt Lake Trail received \$398,500 in funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The trail will eventually be about 18 miles of pathway for walking, running and bicycling around the North end of Burt Lake that will connect with the North Central State Trail in



Topinabee and the Petoskey-to-Mackinaw City trail in the future. This grant supports the first phase, development of 2.9 miles of non-motorized trail along West Burt Lake Road from Maple Bay to Hardwood Road. Made possible through the broad local support of \$140,000 in pledges, the contributions raised include a three year matching pledge of \$51,000 from the Burt Lake Preservation Association, and represents an amazing grassroots effort to get a trail built.

Other Happenings

The Top of Michigan Trails Council has partnered with approximately 30 other groups, including the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, to promote and market the great system of trails in northern Michigan. The collaborative has a goal of collectively marketing all northern Michigan recreational assets from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron with an Up North identity so that the rest of the country knows what it really means to go "Up North". Our group intends to create a northern Michigan identity and an interactive mapping website which contains detailed information on all types of trail systems in northern Michigan as well as information about the things to do and see and services available around the trail systems. We are planning a tourism-based trails website that is unlike anything that northern Michigan currently has to offer. This website will be a one-stop shop where users can access pre-made maps, helmet-cam videos, and other trail information such as segment length, difficulty, surface, and condition.

MTGA Annual Meeting

Thursday, Sept 29, 2011
4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Michigan Fitness Foundation
1213 Center St, Suite D
Lansing, MI 48906

Come Hear The Latest on Michigan Trail Developments!

If you would like to join us, RSVP by indicating your attendance on the ballot election card or call 517-485-6022 by **September 23** so that we can allow for enough chairs and refreshments.

The Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council Hears Equine Recommendations

Nancy Erspiner,
MTGA Executive Director

The Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council which was formed by the Governor last year has met 6 times. The Council's purpose is to advise the Directors of the Michigan Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality and the Governor on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails, including, but not limited to snowmobile, bicycling, equestrian, hiking, off-road vehicle and skiing trails. Additional workgroups were initiated to represent all the various trail types on the council, snowmobile, equine, ORV, and nonmotorized. The Equine workgroup in particular was tasked by additional legislation to develop a plan for a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways, and the draft report is out for public review through August, 2011 before finalization. The report, which is available at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2011RecReportETS_Rev_358863_7.pdf, documents 46 recommendations listed under 4 goals which advise the State on future development of the state equine trailways network. Also included are results of a survey conducted among Michigan equestrians, best practices criteria for the design of equine trails and documentation of the economic impact of the recreational equine industry to Michigan. In addition to reviewing the equine recommendations and how they dovetail with other trail uses, the other workgroups are working on mapping their particular trail systems so that in the end, critical connections may be reviewed and the various user groups may determine the best way of achieving mutually beneficial goals. The meetings of the Council, usually held at the DNR's Ralph A. MacMullen Conference Center in Roscommon, Michigan, are open to the public. A schedule and minutes of the meetings can be found at: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-39002_56382_56889--,00.html.



MTGA Embroidered Hats
Washed cotton, 6 panel raised/cft
caps. Choice of four colors \$20

Midwest Rail-Trail Book \$20 (including shipping)
Covers Trails in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio & Wisconsin

ITEM	QTY	X	PRICE	TOTAL
Book	_____	X	\$20	_____
Hat - Khaki	_____	X	\$20	_____
- Orange	_____	X	\$20	_____
- Stone	_____	X	\$20	_____
- Navy	_____	X	\$20	_____
Merchandise Total			\$	_____

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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) _____

PAYMENT

Check Payable to: MTGA or

Mastercard, Visa, or Discover

Card Number:

Exp. Date: ____/____/____

Name:

Signature:

Address:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone

Evening Phone

Email Address

Mail to : MTGA, PO Box 27187,
Lansing MI 48909

“Trail Towns”

Will Take Michigan Trails to Their Maximum Potential

Nancy Drapier,
MTGA Executive Director

In 2007, MTGA's Connecting Michigan: A Statewide Trailway Visioning and Action Plan described how a community trail programming and promotion could help achieve maximum benefit from its trail investment. The recommendations on this topic included "increasing the number and diversity of partners who incorporate Michigan trails into their programs, so that the trails are affirmed as important community assets". Then, along came the "Trail Towns" manual, a step by step guide to capturing trail-based tourism from the Allegheny Trails Alliance in Pennsylvania. This is a valuable resource for implementing the Connecting Michigan Programming and Promotion recommendations, and our northern Michigan trail communities from Gaylord to Cheboygan have adapted the Trail Towns guide for their use along the North Central State Trail.

The guide rests on 4 main pillars for becoming a "trail town":

- Organizing – building consensus and cooperation among all the stakeholders that improvements oriented towards trail users can and should be made.
- Design – Capitalizing on a community's best assets to convey a trail town atmosphere which is inviting to trail users in terms of attractiveness, safety, and convenience.
- Economic restructuring – Helping existing businesses expand and attracting new businesses to fill the needs of trail visitors.
- Promotion – Selling the positive image and increasing awareness of the events, attractions, and services that the town has to offer trail users.

The guide points out the need for a "catalyst", a community member who will take the lead in organizing the trail town planning and implementation. A downtown development authority or convention/visitor bureau, who already works with businesses in town may be an excellent resource to build the partnerships to carry out the various projects identified in the analysis process.

The manual includes a series of checklists to help in determining the types of projects that should be undertaken to become a trail town. Elements that can help tie the trail to the town are trailheads, portals, connecting pathways, gateways, town centers, and nodes. For example, a "portal" is a welcoming spot along the trail that educates trail users about various tourist services and businesses in a community and may be the point at which wayfinding signage begins. A "gateway" is usually at the edge of the business district where goods and services begin, and imparts some of the unique style and characteristics that

make your town a place the trail user wants to visit.

Another aspect of the Trail Towns guide is to analyze the town through the eyes of the trail user. There are the basic trail user needs that visitors need on a regular basis, such as restaurants, ATMs, bike repair, drug stores, and groceries, and there are longer-term needs, such as overnight lodging, laundry service, e-mail access, postal service, etc. The guide further encourages consideration of other potential businesses and services that would appeal to both trail users and the general public. A wildlife art gallery, for example would appeal to all those interested in the outdoors. This is where local financial incentives may be sought to encourage the growth of this second tier of a trail town's identity. According to the Allegheny Trails Alliance, "by understanding both the socio-economic and lifestyle preferences of the trail customer base, the local Trail Town organization can begin to make decisions about how best to attract these customers into the community's central business district."

Last but not least, promotion efforts are key to a trail town's success. This can take the form of organizing events that trail users would enjoy, such as a weekend music festival or a progressive dinner with stops at all the local eateries for a "taste of the town". It could also mean special promotional strategies in the form of advertising, retail sales, or marketing campaigns.

In summary, the trail becomes the vehicle and tool which a community can use to enhance their town into a place where people enjoy visiting and living. The North Central State Trail stakeholders in conjunction with Land Information Access Association have used the trail town manual to audit their towns in relation to each of the above pillars and have landed upon a plan that will help the trail to reach its maximum potential. You can view both the original Trail Towns manual and the North Central State Trail customized version of it online on the MTGA trailway toolkit at www.michigantrails.org or <http://library.michigantrails.org> under "Trail Programming and Promotion".

TRAIL TOWNS





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Social Media with MTGA

The "linkage of urban and rural spaces": this is what makes the greenway idea so fresh and compelling.

Charles Little, *Greenways for America*.

"Get Connected"

Charles Dierlin, *MTGA Intern*

with MTGA

Are you a long time supporter of *Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance* (MTGA) trying to understand all these "social media" outlets we have been pushing? As the internet world and society's dependence on social plug-ins increases, we are pushed to explore new modes of communication to stay connected with our audience and engage new supporters. Below is a short description of our online accounts.



Facebook: Individuals or companies can create "Like Pages" which allows fans of an individual, organization, product, service, or concept to join a Facebook fan club. Our page serves as a pool of information catering to ALL of our audiences. May you be a cyclist, runner, equestrian, camper, politician, activist, prospective job applicant or stakeholder we can direct you from this page.



Twitter: An online social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters, informally known as "tweets." This outlet is used extensively at events attended by MTGA staff including conferences and the Michigander Bike Tour.



Linked In: A business-related social networking site used for professional networking. We will post requests for interns and contractors here as well as board member

applications. Group members can also post policy inquiries, form coalitions and create discussion topics.



Photobucket: An image and video host, slideshow creation and photo sharing website. All the photos we post on this site can be downloaded by viewers.

michigantrails.wordpress.com

Blog: A website dedicated to regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Think of it as an online diary. While MTGA is generating content intermittently, we would like to beef it up with stories from our readers. If you would like to be a guest blogger or have any questions PLEASE contact our office!

www.michigantrails.org

MTGA Website: The most important feature of this whole network as a non-profit organization promoting the expansion of trails and greenways is our website. Here you can utilize our "toolkit" to help you find resources on turning that abandoned rail corridor into a developed trail, learn how to get your trail paved or even how to run an event related to your trail. Check-in with the active projects MTGA is working on and learn how to how to get involved. (www.michigantrails.org)

The simplest way to support the cause of Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is to use your trails. The next step is to GET ONLINE AND CONNECT!