



mParks - Michigan Recreation and Park Association and Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance surveyed Michigan's 2018 Gubernatorial Candidates to complete this questionnaire compiled from input by our statewide memberships. Below are the full, unedited responses.

	Bill Schuette	Gretchen Whitmer
What do you believe is the most important role of the Natural Resources Trust Fund?	<p>"Michigan has a rich heritage of forests and sand dunes, lakes and rivers, fish and birds and wildlife all providing us with abundant beauty, recreation and livelihood. We know we are blessed to call these lands and waters home. Michigan voters enshrined the Natural Resources Trust Fund in our Constitution for a very specific purpose: to preserve and protect Michigan's bountiful resources for generations to come. Stewardship of these resources is the most important role of the Natural Resources Trust Fund.</p> <p>Throughout my career, I have supported and encouraged conservation, including three opinions as Attorney General that have prevented raids on the Natural Resources Trust Fund. Most recently, I issued an opinion stating that the Legislature may not use the Trust Fund to finance projects that are not approved by the Trust Fund Board."</p>	<p>The most important role of the Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) is that of conservation of natural habitats and resources, as well as development of quality outdoor recreational opportunities for all people in this state without political interference.</p>
What do you believe is the most important role of the State Park Endowment Fund?	<p>The Michigan State Park Endowment Fund was established in 1994 for the operation, maintenance and capital improvements of the Michigan state parks. I believe the most important role of this fund is to focus on reducing the backlog of park infrastructure improvements. We need to properly maintain our state parks so residents can enjoy our abundant natural resources for years to come.</p>	<p>The most important role of the State Park Endowment Fund has been to provide a reliable source of funding year-round to supplement the work of the MNRTF efforts in public land acquisition, development and maintenance. This is so important as money to maintain and improve our parks becomes more needed with time and the MNRTF continues to have restricted development spending.</p>
Would you propose less or more spending to maintain Michigan natural resources? Why?	<p>When fund balances are healthy, we should use those resources to fulfill the mission of the funds.</p>	<p>Over the last 8 years we have witnessed the clear consequences of taking our natural resources for granted. When a Governor fails to see the people behind the budget line, we see problems like the Flint Water Crisis in return. We get a 6-year cover-up of PFAS contamination, hazardous materials leaked in the Great Lakes, and free corporate passes to sell our state's water. I am proposing to reinvest in our natural resources because I know that these budget savings mean nothing for a family who can't drink the water coming out of their faucet, or enjoy the natural areas in their own community. As Governor, I will reinvest in our natural resources so every Michigander is confident in the safety of the outdoor spaces around them.</p>
Do you believe that more funding should be dedicated to trails maintenance work? If so, where should that money come from?	<p>There is a great need for more robust trail maintenance. I'm willing to work with everyone who wants to find solutions, and am open to discussions about how funding and grant allocations could be adjusted for maintenance work. In terms of potential user fees, I understand that motorized vehicles already pay these fees; walkers and bikers do not, but some are willing to pay if it means better maintenance. I am willing to listen to all voices on this issue, and will work together to reach consensus.</p>	<p>It's important we protect and preserve our trails for everyone to enjoy. This means we must be willing to raise and spend the money that is needed to keep our parks clean and safe. We can improve maintenance funding by ending cuts to revenue sharing, protecting revenues going into the State Park Endowment Fund, and supporting my water placemaking plan through a new Department of Great Lakes and Freshwater. By restoring revenue sharing to its full funding capacity and offering new funds through the water placemaking plan, we can ensure that the State Park Endowment Fund is not altered and there is sufficient, year-round funding for trail maintenance.</p>
Do you believe that the state should continue to prioritize funding of destination trails similar to the Iron Belle Trail and the Great Lake to Lake Trails?	<p>YES</p>	<p>YES</p>

Do you believe that there should be a fee-based user charge to access state trails?		YES
Do you support development of a statewide water trails program with funding from the state?	YES	YES
What steps will you take to continue to make Michigan the number one trails state in the country?	<p>What steps will you take to continue to make Michigan the number one trails state in the country?</p> <p>We have a wonderful, vast system of trails covering all corners of our state that enhance our quality of life and provide both health and economic benefits. To make Michigan the number one trails state, we need to focus on creating more destination trails, trail connectors and loops. Also, we need to be mindful to maintain our pathways.</p>	<p>We have to invest in our trails. As Governor, I will advocate for restoring state revenue sharing to allow local governments to invest in their parks and trails again and getting aggressive with placemaking economic development. I will implement a water focused strategic placemaking plan through the new Department of Great Lakes and Freshwater, and protect funding for the State Park Endowment Fund and the MNRTF. As Governor, I will prioritize the protection of our water and air, and reinvest in our outdoor recreation to raise the quality of life for all Michiganders and leverage our natural resources to attract new residents to our state.</p>
Do you support General Fund appropriations for state trails and park development?	YES	YES
Did you know that the single greatest recreation-based asset that local governmental officials desire is more non-motorized trails? Would your administration pledge to continue the Snyder Administration's non-motorized trails a high priority around the state?	YES	YES
Michigan has an emerging land and water trail network that has the potential to link communities all over Michigan. What steps will you take to promote and develop and support this network of both land and water trails?	<p>For this initiative, I would rely on the expertise of leading groups like MParks and MTGA, as well local community leaders, for their help and advice about developing this very beneficial network.</p>	<p>I envision a new department of Great Lakes and Freshwater being tasked with creating a strategic water-focused placemaking plan that will include restoring beaches and trails for walking, in addition to protecting and rehabilitating wetlands and building more public access points for various outdoor activities. I will also continue the good work done by DNR and conservation organizations to build and maintain the vast network of trails in Michigan. Also, I intend to continue developing more consistent funding streams for the development of our trails and parks. Currently, our parks are mostly funded by various user fees, but the state can take advantage of other opportunities to expand and improve what we already have. In Ogemaw County, the Rifle River Recreation Area generated \$1,788,095 annually and created 37 jobs, all the while making the community healthier and happier. It's high time we pursue goals like this for recreation areas across our beautiful state.</p>
Some believe that Michigan citizens need more opportunities for input into state government. Would you support expanding the opportunity to provide input on statewide park and trail decisions?	Yes.	<p>Yes. The first and last thing on any public servant's mind in this state should be that they work for the people of Michigan. So we should absolutely allow for more public input, and start listening to what they are actually telling us.</p>

<p>What are your thoughts and/or concerns on multi-modal transportation connections between trails and transit lines as a strategy for reducing single-occupancy vehicles on our roadways and thereby, perhaps, reducing their degradation as well as potentially improving air quality (reduce ozone action days) via the provision of alternative commute options?</p>	<p>Where it is reasonable, I wholeheartedly support multi-modal transportation connections. With a state as big and diverse as Michigan is, I would be cautious about imposing any new regulations or mandates. But on a voluntary basis, these efforts to improve and expand transportation methods should very much be encouraged to flourish.</p>	<p>I supported the Regional Transit Authority, and voted for letting the area move forward with it in the legislature. I took that position because I know when Michiganders lack access to mobility, they can't get to work and participate in the state's economic comeback. I know how effective it can be in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change, and that the future of mobility lies in addressing our need for single-occupancy vehicles. It's a problem that must be resolved. I'm committed to bringing stakeholders together to craft an effective regional transit plan that everyone can support, and that people can use not only to get connected to new employment opportunities but to outdoor recreation options that may be currently unavailable to them.</p>
<p>What do you believe is the single most important role that government can play in the lives of Michigan citizens?</p>	<p>"State government's role is to establish a fair, consistent, welcoming environment for job creation and economic growth. The state also has a responsibility to ensure public safety, deliver learning opportunities through public education, and provide a social safety net for the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens.</p> <p>As attorney general, I have been a voice for victims, for consumers, and for all Michiganders, because I believe everyone should be treated equally under the law with dignity and respect. As governor, I'll implement an economic plan designed to revitalize all Michigan communities, urban and rural, and a statewide education plan to improve Michigan's third grade reading scores and restore career-technical education and apprenticeships in our schools."</p>	<p>I believe the government has a duty to protect the rights of people and their families, be good stewards of public resources, and promote a high quality of life from health to education to work and to recreational opportunities. Our state prospers when our people prosper. I'm running for governor because I believe government should help people get ahead, whether that means helping someone buy health insurance or get the funds they need to advance their education. Michiganders deserve a government that works for them!</p>
<p>Would you support expansion of the Recreation Passport to require users to "opt-out" rather than having to "opt-in" as is currently the case? If so, would you be an advocate in working with the Legislature to accomplish this policy change?</p>	<p>"The Michigan Recreation Passport is a wonderfully innovative program that has provided millions of dollars in state park and state forest campground improvements and in community recreation grants. For just \$11 a year, you get access to 102 state parks and recreation areas to explore. I fully support the DNR's goal of reaching 50 percent of Michigan drivers checking "Yes" for the Recreation Passport.</p> <p>Before requiring users to "opt-out," I believe we need an enhanced education campaign to ensure Michigan residents are aware of the passport's significant benefits. Getting Michiganders to use our recreation facilities and instilling a love of the outdoors in our families is the best way to make Michigan's state parks sustainable for future generations."</p>	<p>I think the more people get out and experience our parks, the more people will be opting-in. We don't need to force those not using our parks to navigate a way to avoid paying, and I'm confident that our legislature can continue to improve park funding in a bipartisan way without new taxes or hidden fees. As Governor, I want to be transparent and upfront with people about how their money is spent, and focus on the real things that will make a difference in people's life right now.</p>
<p>Do you support a change in the Headlee Tax Limitation Law to remove existing restrictions on local governments' ability to raise property taxes?</p>	<p>When Michigan voters approved Proposal A in 1994, it was in large part because people were literally being taxed out of their homes. Proposal A has worked as intended to protect property owners while providing revenue for schools and other public services. That said, there is a mechanism in place – a Headlee override – which local governments can use if capped taxable values become problematic. It involves asking the voters to approve a millage above the current rate, but no higher than the original rate they had authorized. I fully support communities being able to make their own taxing decisions in this regard.</p>	<p>Michigan's municipal tax code is due for revision. Local communities' hands are tied when it comes to control over their own local tax structure. I would support efforts to provide for more fiscally responsible, local control over community financial issues such as investments in roads and other infrastructure systems, schools, and public safety.</p>
<p>Do you support restoring State Shared Revenues to local governments consistent with the commitment made to local governments in the 1990's? Please explain.</p>	<p>There isn't a problem facing Michigan today that couldn't be made better if we had more people living and working here. We need more people filling jobs and contributing the growth that will allow us to invest in better roads and improved infrastructure. Airplane loads of people arrive in places like Austin and Nashville daily and it isn't because of the weather. It is because those states have better economic environments and more opportunity. As governor, I will implement growth-friendly policies that help Michigan compete nationally and rebuild our population. I will cut taxes, lower auto insurance rates, fix our roads, and improve our third grade reading scores to make our state a more attractive place to live, work, start a business and raise a family.</p>	<p>Restoring revenue sharing would allow local governments to properly fund and maintain their parks. My administration will work to ensure communities have the resources they need to make their parks a place everyone can enjoy. According to the Michigan Municipal League, local communities have been short-changed \$4 billion in revenue sharing. In 2014 alone, they lost \$689 million due to underfunding by the state government. This is unacceptable, and it's not making our communities better places to live in. We need to empower local governments to make positive change for the constituents they serve.</p>