

mParks Trail Summit Report

Alyssa Lyen, MTGA Intern

Trail advocates across the state eagerly attended the annual Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (mParks) Trail Summit Conference that was held on Tuesday, January 31 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI last week. Eleven different Trail organizations were welcomed to speak about ongoing projects and exciting news going on in their respective organizations. Special guest and keynote speaker, Frank Ettawageshik, the Executive Director of the United Tribes of Michigan was also in attendance. Ettawageshik spoke about the rich Anishinaabe heritage and culture that present day Michigan was built off of as well as recognition of Native American trails that were an essential part of building healthy communities and relationships and continue to serve as important corridors today for transportation, recreation, and economic development.

The full day agenda included 6 informational presentations with over 20 speakers on educational topics like “Community Trail Networks” and “Emerging Trail Trends and Issues” and more. A lunch and networking event for professionals and advocates in the field to meet and gain knowledge was also a fun and engaging activity. The particularly interesting seminar “Trail Management” included information on preventative maintenance work for recreational trails, looking at how, why and when to go about trail work. The speakers of this seminar included Dr. Chuck Nelson of MSU, Steve Buchtel of Trails for Illinois, Emily Meyerson of MDNR and Julie Clark of TART Trails. With 188 people in attendance, the annual Trail Summit Conference was deemed a major success for host and chief operating officer of mParks, Ann Conklin. “Emerging Trail Trends” looked at new technology, such as electric-assist bicycles, and new opportunities for historic and cultural interpretation in development along the Kal-Haven Trail and others.



During the lunch period of the day, Paul Yauk, State Trails Coordinator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Cindy Krupp, of the Planning Bureau of Michigan Department of Transportation presented our very own Nancy Krupiarz with a Trail Champion plaque for her dedication and outstanding service to the people and the state of Michigan. Nancy announced her plan for retirement in June of 2017 after working in the trails world for over 20 years.

Meet Our New Intern!

Alyssa Lyen, MTGA Intern



Please welcome our new intern Alyssa Lyen. Growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, Alyssa and her family would take their vacations camping, hiking and canoeing throughout Michigan. As her interests in natural resources and recreation intensified, she found Michigan State University to be the perfect place to further develop her love of the outdoors and meet her career goals. She is in her senior year and her major is Sustainable Parks, Recreation and Tourism in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Prior to coming to Michigan Trails, Alyssa has had a variety of experiences to assist her with her work at Michigan Trails; she worked at Potbelly Sandwiches and oversaw catering for the MSU Football Team and visiting teams throughout the season, volunteered her time at the Ingham County Animal Shelter, is a Certified Tourism Ambassador of Lansing, and the director of human resources for MSU’s Destination Auction.

Alyssa will be helping with trail research initiatives, writing articles, posting on social media and assisting with logistics on the Michigander.



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IN THIS ISSUE

Latest Grant Awards

Detroit Bike City

Method to our Madness

In Memoriam

A Trifecta of Gratitude

mParks Trail Summit

Meet Our New Intern

The Michigander Bicycle Tour

“Trails are America’s new front porch . . . a new place for people to have a social life, a new forum of public space where you can meet people – your neighbors – in a nonthreatening manner. Trails can fill the social function that front porches used to play before we eliminated most of them.” -David Burwell

Michigan’s Classic Cycling Vacation Rolls into the “Most Beautiful Place in America”

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Traverse City, Leland and Frankfort from July 15-22, 2017

Northwest Michigan is home to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, dubbed the “Most Beautiful Place in America” by tens of thousands of viewers from ABC’s Good Morning America, cyclists will surely be amazed at the inspiring vistas and challenging terrain in one of the nation’s best kept secrets.

Cyclists will traverse paved and crushed stone trails and backroads through Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Traverse City, Thompsonville, Suttons Bay, Old Mission Peninsula, Northport, Leelanau Peninsula, Leland, Glen Arbor, Glen Haven, Frankfort, Elberta, Elk Rapids and Benzonia.

New this year will be extended two night stays in each town with looped rides every other day. The Michigander includes gourmet coffee daily, healthy and hearty fare with vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options, camping, hot showers and shower trucks, upgraded SAGs with fresh ice water, assorted KIND bars, loads of fresh fruit, snacks, NUUN, and Gatorade, baggage transport, cell phone charging stations and fun entertainment.

Rates

- 2-Day \$125 adult | \$75 youth (7-12) | Youth 6 & under are free
- 6-Day \$455 adult | \$400 youth (7-12) | Youth 6 & under are free
- 8-Day \$530 | \$475 youth (7-12) | Youth 6 & under are free

Register today: www.michigander.bike



Trailblazing in Michigan

Winter 2017

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is the statewide voice for non-motorized trail users, helping people build, connect and promote trails for a healthier and more prosperous Michigan.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is an affiliate of the Michigan Fitness Foundation.

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Trails Score High on Latest Grant Awards!

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director

If the latest Natural Resources Trust Fund grant awards were any indication, then trails are still high on the list for community demand in every part of our beautiful state. Nonmotorized trails and/or the land and amenities to support them were awarded 34 percent or \$16.3 million of the total \$47.6 million available this past year. This was a very good year for the Natural Resources Trust Fund (the last couple years saw less than half of that available for grants) and a very good year for trails, of every type and in every geographic region of the state. Here is a rundown of the highlights.

As the state’s new water trails master plan is nearing final approval, communities everywhere are gearing up for their addition to the system. Seventeen communities received a total of \$4.05 million for either accessible canoe/kayak launches, launch sites, trailheads, and launch site amenities, such as restrooms. The following counties were among those who received grants for their water trails: Alpena, Berrien, Branch, Eaton, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Houghton, Huron, Ingham, Macomb, Manistee, Mason, Montmorency, Muskegon, Ottawa, Shiawassee, St. Joseph, and Washtenaw.

The Iron Belle Trail, the state’s longest nonmotorized trail initiative, a parallel 1,259 mile hiking and a 774 mile biking route, stretching from Belle Isle near Detroit to Ironwood at the Wisconsin border, garnered a total of \$5.05 million for trail property acquisition, trailheads, and trail development. A total of \$2.77 million in Iron Belle Trail biking route grants went to projects in Genesee, Iosco, Macomb, Oakland, Otsego, and Saginaw. The counties of Alger, Emmet, Gogebic, Luce, Ontonagon, and Washtenaw received a total of \$2.28 million in grants for the Iron Belle Trail hiking route. Another cross-state trail initiative, the Great Lake to Lake Trail, will benefit from the grant of \$192,000 awarded to Markin Glen County Park in Kalamazoo as additional trailhead parking and spur trails to restrooms, nature trails and mountain bike trails are implemented.

There were also plenty of awards for trails outside these long distance trail arteries. A total of \$7.08 million will be made available to the following counties for their trail acquisition, and trail or trailhead development: Barry, Berrien, Charlevoix, Clare, Cheboygan, Genesee, Gladwin, Ingham, Ionia, Kalamazoo, Marquette, Mecosta, Montcalm, Ottawa, St. Joseph, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Last but not least, Van Buren County is slated to receive \$46,300 for the first phase of implementation of the Kal-Haven Trail Interpretation Project, in which important milestones, locations, and historical events are brought to light along this 33 mile linear state park. The Kal-Haven Trail was a pilot project for this new heritage trail initiative, which communities can use as a template for sharing the history and background of trails across the state.

MTGA offers its hearty congratulations for all the 2016 Natural Resources Trust Fund grantees! For more details on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website at www.michigan.gov/dnr. It is expected these trails will not be constructed for another year or so since legislative approval and pre-construction details must be wrapped up. However, MTGA will be posting the progress on trail development as the construction season rolls around this summer.

(Continued on page 2)

Detroit: America's Comeback City, Now the Come Bike City

Todd Scott, Executive Director, Detroit Greenways Coalition

It was early April 2016, and Detroit's new Planning Director Maurice Cox called a meeting of city and non-profit staff involved in promoting biking. Held in the Mayor's conference room on the 11th floor of city hall with the group slowly enjoying some adult beverages with a platter of fancy cheese and crackers, Maurice announced that Detroit would become America's #1 bike city during his tenure.



There wasn't much reaction.

Later Maurice asked me why that was. He was expecting at least some clapping and a show of enthusiasm. I told him I thought everyone was still in shock. After so many years of advocating for better biking and trails, we'd all suddenly awoke in an alternative universe where the city was not only on our side, but leading. This was a milestone event, though the seeds change had been planted many years earlier by many organizations including the Detroit Greenways Coalition and Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance. Today, trails and biking projects are getting more attention than ever from the City of Detroit, so we want to share some of the highlights.

Inner Circle Greenway

It started as a line drawn informally on a map. That line extended Detroit's Dequindre Cut rail-trail north through Hamtramck to an 8-mile long abandoned rail corridor. The corridor cut through Highland Park before turning south to Dearborn. From there, the Greenway used the Southwest Detroit Greenlink bike lanes and the RiverWalk to make a 26-mile loop. Maurice saw this trail as an opportunity to bring greenways into the neighborhood and spur community revitalization much like the Atlanta Beltline. Mayor Mike Duggan shared this vision. Last year, Detroit submitted an \$18 million federal TIGER grant request and pledged \$13 million in matching funds. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the numbers show the level of commitment. As for the abandoned rail corridor, the city continues to negotiate its purchase using \$4.5 million in grant funding our Coalition helped acquire. The city is also applying for \$6 million in TAP and CMAQ grants (with \$1.2 million in matching funds) to build protected bike lanes for the on-road portions of the loop.

Beltline Greenway

Another planned rail-trail is also moving forward very quickly - the Beltline Greenway. This former railroad ran from the Detroit River to just north of the Packard Plant in the heart of the city. This rail trail had been in the early planning stages for years. When DNR Iron Belle Trail land acquisition funding became available, the project catapulted forward. The city committed federal funding to design and build a portion of the trail from the Detroit RiverWalk (near Mt. Elliott Park) to the Gleaner's Community Food Bank - a little over a mile. The funding will also create conceptual designs for the rail-trail to extend further north.

Protected Bike Lanes

Another major change we've seen in Detroit is that protected bike lanes are now the minimum design standard for on-road bicycle facilities. We know many people prefer trails to regular bike lanes due to the physical separation from moving vehicles. Though not perfect, protected bike lanes create more separation between motorists and bikes, which encourages more people to use them.

In 2015, Michigan's first protected bike lanes were piloted on East Jefferson. It was only 0.3 miles total, and among all U.S. cities, Detroit ranked 78th. Last summer, Detroit added protected bike lanes to Michigan Avenue and Livernois. This summer all of Cass Avenue and portions of Warren Avenue will have them as well. Not to be overlooked, Downtown Detroit has an ambitious plan for two-way protected bike lanes that should break ground in 2017. This is critical since Detroit's public bike share launches in the spring with 42 stations and 420 bikes.

We expect Detroit to be ranked in the top-five among US cities for miles of protected bike lanes sometime later this year.

(Continued from page 2)

Fifty Year Vision

What could America's best bike city look like?

Last year we partnered with The Greenway Guy to develop a 50-year vision, which was defined and shaped through a series of community meetings and captured in a report and hand-drawn renderings. The renderings show how existing road and abandoned rail corridors can be adapted to provide safe, convenient, and pleasant non-stop bicycle travel across the city (view the report at www.detroitgreenways.org). Of course we're not going to wait fifty years to start implementing these concepts, we're advocating for them to get wrapped into today's projects. At the rate we're progressing, we may not need to wait fifty years to get there.



Sidebar

Detroit by the Numbers

- 7,500 - Tour de Troit registered riders
- 5,000 - A good turnout for the weekly Slow Roll bike ride
- 1,000 - Average daily trail user count on the Dequindre Cut
- 200 - Miles of bike lanes, routes, and trails
- 50 - Neighborhood-based bike clubs
- 8 - New bicycle shops opening in the past five years
- 2 - National bicycle manufacturers: Detroit Bikes & Shinola

The Detroit Greenways Coalition was formed in 2007 with assistance from Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance and became a non-profit organization in 2013. For more information, visit www.detroitgreenways.org.

March Madness & Method CRM

Alyssa Lyen, MTGA Intern

March Madness is back! Everyone that renews their membership before March 31, will receive the new 2017 Michigan Trails Magazine. Renew here: <http://michigantrails.org/donate/join-us/>



We have also implemented a new program called Method CRM in order to streamline and better manage our membership and process donations. Now, everyone will receive an email confirmation with a link to their receipt for tax purposes along with an additional email containing a link to create a free guest account and secure their portal access for future logins. This means you can pull up your membership and donation receipts at any time. While it isn't vital to create a free guest account, it may certainly come in handy during tax season. The email address via Method CRM will come from michigantrailsandgreenways@gmail.com. We ask that you save this email to your address books so we don't end up in your junk mail or spam folder. If you do not have an email address on file, we will continue to mail your receipts or send us your email to info@michigantrails.org to go paperless.

In Memoriam: Remembering David Burwell

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director



It was with deep sadness that we learned of Rails to Trails Conservancy's Co-founder, David Burwell's, passing on February 1, 2017. If it had not been for David's national vision for railtrails and his own professional knowledge of federal transportation policy, I doubt we would have the vast system that we have today.

As very aptly put by his fellow co-founder, Peter Harnik, in a blog penned by RTC, "It was David who turned 'rails-to-trails' from an idea with very good potential into a powerful national force backed by firm legal standing, true political muscle and undeniable financial backing." (For the rest of the article with more on David's background, see www.railstotrails.org/trailblog). Indeed, one of the most important funding sources we have for multi-use trails today is the Transportation Alternatives Program, the successor to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act, came from David's intricate knowledge of our nation's transportation policy and delivery system. Michigan has "tapped" into this program for almost \$252 million for railtrails and other multi-use trail arteries since the inception of the program in 1992. For this one program alone, we owe David an enormous debt of gratitude.

David's greatest vision was to establish a railtrail that spanned the entire country from one coast to the other. According to Marianne Wesley Fowler, RTC's senior strategist for policy advocacy, RTC still carries this dream for David and accepts the challenge to realize it. Here in Michigan, we strive towards our own big vision of the Great Lake to Lake Trail, Route 1 stretching from one Great Lake to another, South Haven to Port Huron. And the Iron Belle Trail, with two routes stretching from Belle Isle at Detroit north and west to Ironwood at the Wisconsin border. It was David who instigated our thinking of going beyond the individual community trail to connections beyond the borders. Today, communities in proximity to these two Michigan trail arteries are already strategizing on how they will connect to them with their own nonmotorized trails.

David used to like to quote Will Rogers, "Buy land. They're not making any more of it." He knew that the trails we establish today will mean community sustainability tomorrow. We will be forever grateful for the legacy of wonderful trails he leaves behind for generations to come.

A Trifecta of Generosity and Gratitude Celebrated for Michigan Trails

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director



The DNR Outdoor Adventure Center in downtown Detroit was filled with grateful trail users at the donor recognition breakfast for Michael R. Levine on Saturday, January 14th. An inventor, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Mr. Levine's generous \$5 million pledge will help expand and improve three trails; the Lakelands Trail State Park, Great Lake to Lake Trail Route 1, and Michigan's Iron Belle Trail. Mr. Levine's accomplishments in private industry make him one of the great innovators of our generation. Mr. Levine received his bachelor's degree in mathematics from New York University in 1958, and is a frequent speaker at institutions like the University of Michigan, Johns Hopkins University, and Florida Atlantic University. Mr. Levine shares "I love spending time in Michigan and am fortunate enough to spend time in Ann Arbor in the summer. I raised my family here. I started working with the Friends of the Lakelands Trail group in 2004; I simply wanted a safe place to ride my bike and to make new memories with my grandchildren and extended family.

To read more, visit: <http://michigantrails.org/newsroom/trifecta-generosity-gratitude-celebrated-michigan-trails/>