



Working together to market "Up North"....

Northern Michigan is home to hundreds of miles of fantastic trails available to a variety of users north of the 44th parallel. Visitors can access hiking trails, biking trails, snowmobile trails, ski trails, horse trails, ORV trails, and water trails. Many visitors to northern Michigan have remarked that we have some of the best trails in the country. The challenge? More people need to hear about them!

Recently, a new collaboration of partners has formed which feels that we can accomplish more together than we can separately. We have 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".

Who's on board?

Our group consists of a broad coalition of partners including regional agencies, state agencies, local agencies, and trail user groups which all have the same goal in mind – making northern Michigan a nationally-known recreation destination. There is power in numbers, so we want to include as many partners as we can in order to accomplish our goal. Here is a list of partners that have attended meetings so far in the interest of collaborating to improve northern Michigan's economy through tourism marketing:

Northeast Michigan Council of Governments
 Northwest Michigan Council of Governments
 Land Information Access Association
 Top of Michigan Trails Council
 Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance
 Eastern Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Comm.
 US 23 Heritage Route
 TART Trails
 Indian River Chamber of Commerce
 Presque Isle County Development Commission
 Mackinaw Area Chamber of Commerce
 Village of Mackinaw City
 Corwith Township
 City of Grayling
 Briley Township

Michigan Department of Transportation
 Rogue Industrial Services
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 Michigan State University Extension
 Travel Michigan
 Cheboygan County
 North Country Trail Association
 Michigan Municipal League
 Michigan Trail Riders Association
 Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians
 Topinabee Development Assoc.
 Emmet County
 Burt Lake Trail Committee
 Crawford County Trails Committee
 Lake to Lake Charlevoix Trail

Join us!

We are looking for more partners from across northern Michigan to join us in this endeavor! Our group is currently working to form in an official capacity, and we need more partners to sign on in order to ensure we are a true multi-regional collaboration and to ensure that each portion of northern Michigan is well represented in this endeavor. We plan to seek out private foundation funding and our efforts are stronger with more partners on board. If you would like to join this effort, please contact Denise Cline at dmcline@nemcog.org or 231.421.5384.

Recent Happenings

In June, two members of our Up North Trails collaborative, Steve Schnell and Denise Cline, attended a meeting in Lansing with the Michigan DNR's Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup. Members of the group discussed trail planning and trail promotion including how best to present trail information to the public. Schnell and Cline were able to share with the group the success that the northern Michigan region has had with trail mapping and marketing efforts. They discussed details of asset mapping as part of the US 23 Heritage Route program and Huron Blueways and Greenways which includes the mapping of all trails and over 1,000 things to see and do in coastal northeast Michigan in addition to the highly successful tourism website resulting from the projects. They also shared how the Up North Trails collaborative intends to replicate this successful program all across northern Michigan. We hope that northern Michigan can lead the way in trail marketing for the state!



NWMCOG
Northwest Michigan
Council of Governments



Land Information
Access Association



The "Up North"
Region:
Northern
Michigan from
the Tawas area
on Lake Huron to
Manistee on Lake
Michigan,
including the
straits area.

September 2011



Up North Trails



Our plans....website first

Web-based marketing is the first obvious step to effectively make our region known throughout the country. LIAA, NEMCOG, and MDOT partnered last year to create a coastal tourism marketing website for the US 23 Heritage Route. The website provides visitors with detailed information on over 900 things to see and do along coastal northeast Michigan. Visitors can search based on their area of interest or geographical area. The site allows visitors to create their own itinerary and map to better plan their trip. The site has been very successful and has received over 7,400 visits from 77 different countries since September. The US 23 Heritage Route program has become a partner in the Pure Michigan campaign and has established a recognizable identity as the Sunrise Coast.

Our group intends to use that program structure as a model 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 for all types of trail systems where users can access pre-made maps, helmet camera videos, trail information such as segment length, difficulty, surface, and condition, and nearby points of interest and services. In addition, the website will contain an interactive mapping component which will allow users to design their own maps based on the desired trail type and points of interest that they choose. Also, private businesses (i.e. restaurants, lodging, etc) will appear on the site as they do on the US 23 site. The regional councils of governments are committed to providing staff support to keep the site updated in order to provide the most current information to potential visitors. This website will use a centralized database that is also used for the US 23 site so that information across northern Michigan only has to be updated in a central location.

During this 1st phase of website development, Up North Trail Towns also intends to create a logo and name which communicates an identity for recreation & trails in northern Michigan.

Future promotions ...

- Printed materials such as guidebooks, brochures, and maps.
- Smartphone apps
- Regional participation in the Pure Michigan campaign
- Widespread media campaign

Some example websites

- www.us23heritageroute.org
- www.atatrail.org
- www.copperharbortrails.org/trails
- www.trailsheaven.com

Trail Town Economic Development Strategy

We intend to provide a blueprint for how local leaders can utilize their trail systems to develop and support new opportunities for tourism and economic development. Please see the draft proposal (following this page) for more detailed information.

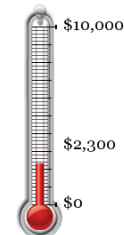
Fundraising Update: \$2,300 raised toward our goal of \$10,000

We are entering our first phase of fundraising to complete the initial website development. We have applied for grant funding, but are also seeking small donations. The more partners we have, the less each needs to contribute. When communities and agencies pool their resources, great accomplishments are possible!

Since we began our fundraising efforts, the following organizations have contributed:

Cheboygan County EDC: \$750
Emmet County: \$500
Top of Michigan Trails Council: \$200

Topinabee Development Association: \$750
Rogue Industrial Services: \$100



Get involved!

To join this growing regional collaboration, please contact Denise Cline at dmcline@nemcog.org. We want to make this one of the largest and most successful regional marketing programs that Michigan has ever seen. The growing list of local, regional, and state partners shows that this effort is getting noticed.

Up North Trails Collaborative....

Economic Development Tool in Action!

We have recently heard of a northern Michigan resident who is a successful retail business person and who wants to start another business. He had been thinking about starting an outdoors-related business with his son who just graduated from college. He read an article about our regional trails partnership and saw that there was significant support for this type of business in the area and decided to begin his new business venture. He has purchased property in a community in Cheboygan County and will begin his business in spring of 2012. We look forward to supporting his business by supporting the information that can be provided to him as he makes business decisions and to his customers so that they understand the value of our cultural and natural heritage of the Up North Trail Towns of Northern Michigan.

September 2011



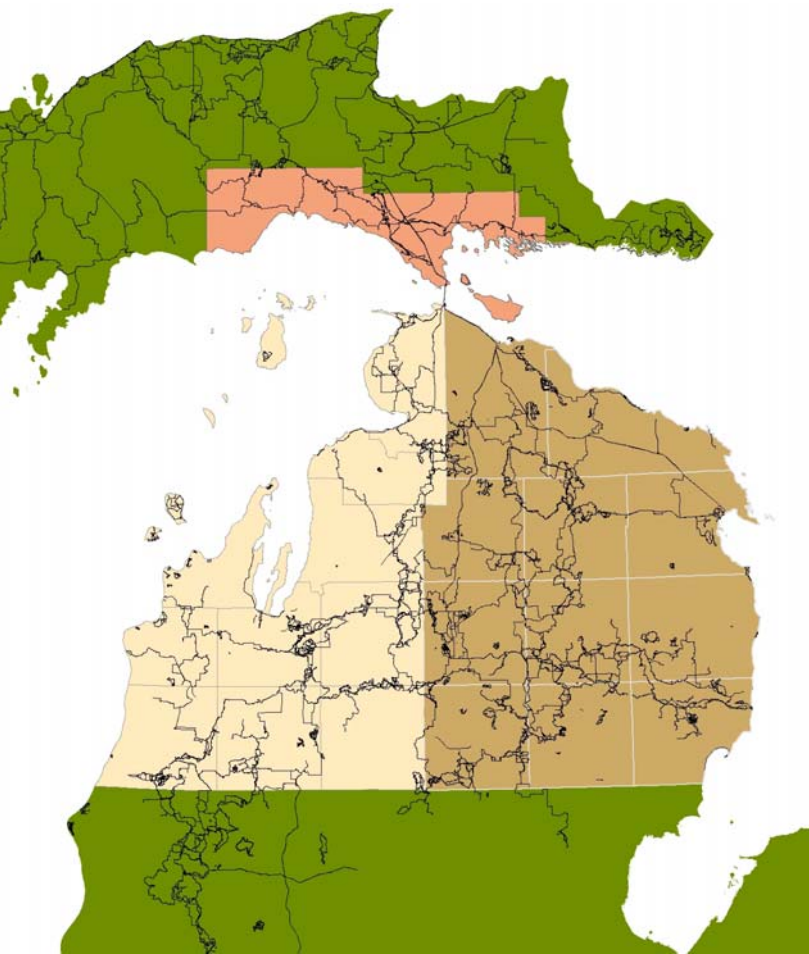
Up North Trails



Fulfilling Another Need...Data Centralization

This web-based asset information system will also fulfill another need in the State – it sets up a centralized online database where all northern Michigan trail and asset data can be kept. We will begin with the asset data that we have collected for the six counties along the US 23 Heritage Route (that includes over 1,000 things to see and do as well as detailed trail files) and build from there. We plan to expand this database to cover all of northern Michigan from Iosco County to Manistee County north to Mackinac County. The database will include all tourism-related assets (public and private). It becomes obvious that a system such as this can be utilized for marketing beyond trail systems. As other websites come online, they can pull information from this same database. A recent example is the idea of a virtual Maritime Heritage Trail currently being studied by the National Park Service. Such a “trail” would highlight maritime heritage assets throughout the State and could pull on the assets already contained within the centralized database, thereby eliminating the need to “re-invent the wheel”.

Putting such a centralized system in place means that each asset has to only be updated once. If multiple websites are pulling data from the same database, then if something changes, everyone’s websites change to reflect that. Northern Michigan hopes to become a pilot project that can be expanded to include the entire state of Michigan and which will coordinate and tie into the Pure Michigan campaign. Each region of the state could have its own tourism website with a consistent look (variations on a theme) which all pull data from the same centralized system. The data we upload includes not only name, address, and contacts but information that includes a tourist description, associated activities (i.e. kayaking, fine dining, swimming), seasons available, GPS coordinates, photos, website address, map, and directions. NEMCOG is proposing that this database is kept updated by regional staff due to the benefit of having local connections in the communities.



Michigan Snowmobile & Trails Advisory Council....

Recently, staff from NEMCOG, LIAA, and Top of Michigan Trails Council met with the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council to present this idea. The purpose of the MSTAC is to advise the Director of the DNR and the Governor on trail issues. MSTAC was very supportive of the idea and have agreed to discuss it further with members of the Up North Trail Collaborative. Recently, members of the Up North Trails Collaborative have been invited back to MSTAC to present the project and the statewide application model again for the group as well as for the Governor’s staff, Travel Michigan staff, and the Regional COG directors.

In addition, Denise Cline, from NEMCOG, is serving on a sub-committee of the Non-motorized workgroup of MSTAC to develop written recommendations.



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