



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



KEITH CREAGH  
DIRECTOR

May 12, 2014

**TO:** Keith Creagh, Director

**INFORMATION:** Natural Resources Commission

**Transaction:** State Trail Acquisition  
Ontonagon to Rockland Railroad Corridor – Ontonagon County  
Land Transaction Case #20130267

**Purchase:** 160.64 acres (13.25 linear miles) more or less - \$516,715.00

**PA 240 of 2012:** PILT Estimate: \$4,137.33  
This parcel is north of the Mason-Arenac County line and will result in an increase of 160.64 excluded acres.

**Description:** Ontonagon County, Ontonagon Township, T52N, R40W, Sections 25, 36, Ontonagon Township, T52N, R39W, Section 31, Ontonagon Township, T51N, R39W, Sections 6, 7, 8, 17, 16, and 21, Rockland Township, T51N, R39W, Sections 28, 27, 34, 35, and Rockland Township, T50N, R39W, Sections 6, 5, 8, 17, and 16: as more completely described in the case file.

**Seller:** Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad Company (E&LS), Wells, Michigan

**Special Conditions:** Preservation of the Railroad Corridor by provisions of Federal Law, Section 8(d) of the National Trails Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247 (d).

**Authority:** Act 451, Public Acts of 1994, as amended

**Notice:** This item will appear on the Department of Natural Resources (Department) June 3, 2014, calendar, and is eligible for approval on June 10, 2014.

**Purpose:** The acquisition of this inactive railroad corridor, which includes a railroad bridge over the Ontonagon River, will provide key trail connections at the Village of Ontonagon and Rockland, and provide additional recreation opportunities in the western Upper Peninsula.

**Comments:** Situated along the southern shore of Lake Superior and the mouth of the Ontonagon River, the Village of Ontonagon sits at the northern terminus of the subject E&LS railroad corridor. Running north-south through the village, the main line of the 12.71 mile long corridor fronts and parallels the Ontonagon River along a portion of the river known locally as the "Sloo," and has served as a barrier between the Village's downtown and the Ontonagon River. A wye, or triangular shaped junction, located just north of M-64, once served to direct rail traffic onto an industrial spur and across the bridge over the Ontonagon River. The wye, bridge, and 0.54

mile of the spur line, all located within the Village of Ontonagon, are included as part of the subject property.

At the southern end of the village the railroad corridor turns southeasterly, crosses, and then parallels US-45, traversing rural residential, agricultural, and timber lands. The corridor will again cross US-45, roughly 3.5 miles from the southern terminus outside of Rockland, traversing primarily timber lands and a gravel operation.

The corridor presents the following opportunities:

- Connects Ontonagon regionally to all major cities from Marenisco (west), to Copper Harbor (north), to Iron River (south) using the designated ORV route/trail system (except for 6 miles between Rockland and Mass that is in the project stage). Without this connection Ontonagon would remain marginally connected by routes supported by MI-TRALE, that are located along paved county roads and the recently approved M-64 ROW using the highway bridge into Ontonagon.
- Connects Ontonagon internally; the village marina, located on the south side of the Ontonagon River, has no direct access to the village for services. The railroad bridge to be acquired will provide a trail for the boating public to reach those services.
- Bolsters Ontonagon's plans to become a starting point, destination, and base location for multiple recreational sports that are natural resource based. A major concern in making this a reality has been the lack of a non-paved route into the village. This acquisition will remove that concern and allow Ontonagon to build a year round recreational economy.
- Supports local efforts to have Ontonagon considered as a "Pure Michigan Trail Town." Located on the Keweenaw Water Trail, Ontonagon is currently working to secure funding to construct a paddling trail head on Rose Island within the village limits. This acquisition will help foster the development of a land based multi-use trail system to complement the water based system.

Acquisition of this parcel will contribute to achieving Department and Division goals and strategies by providing additional public recreation opportunities.

Engagement:

The Department has engaged the Ontonagon County Planning Commission in discussions regarding the acquisition upon receipt of a resolution of support from the Ontonagon County Board of Commissioners.

- Recommendation:
- 1) That the acquisition be approved, with payment to be made from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, State Trails Initiative, as contained in Act 16 of 2011.
  - 2) That the property be dedicated for public use and administered by the Parks and Recreation Division.
  - 3) That the lands described be acquired for designation and use as a Michigan Trailway when legislated requirements are met.

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief  
Wildlife Division

William O'Neill, Chief  
Forest Resources Division

James L. Dexter, Chief  
Fisheries Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief  
Parks and Recreation Division

William E. Moritz, Ph.D.  
Natural Resources Deputy

Mark H. Hoffman  
Chief Administrative Officer

I approve the staff recommendations

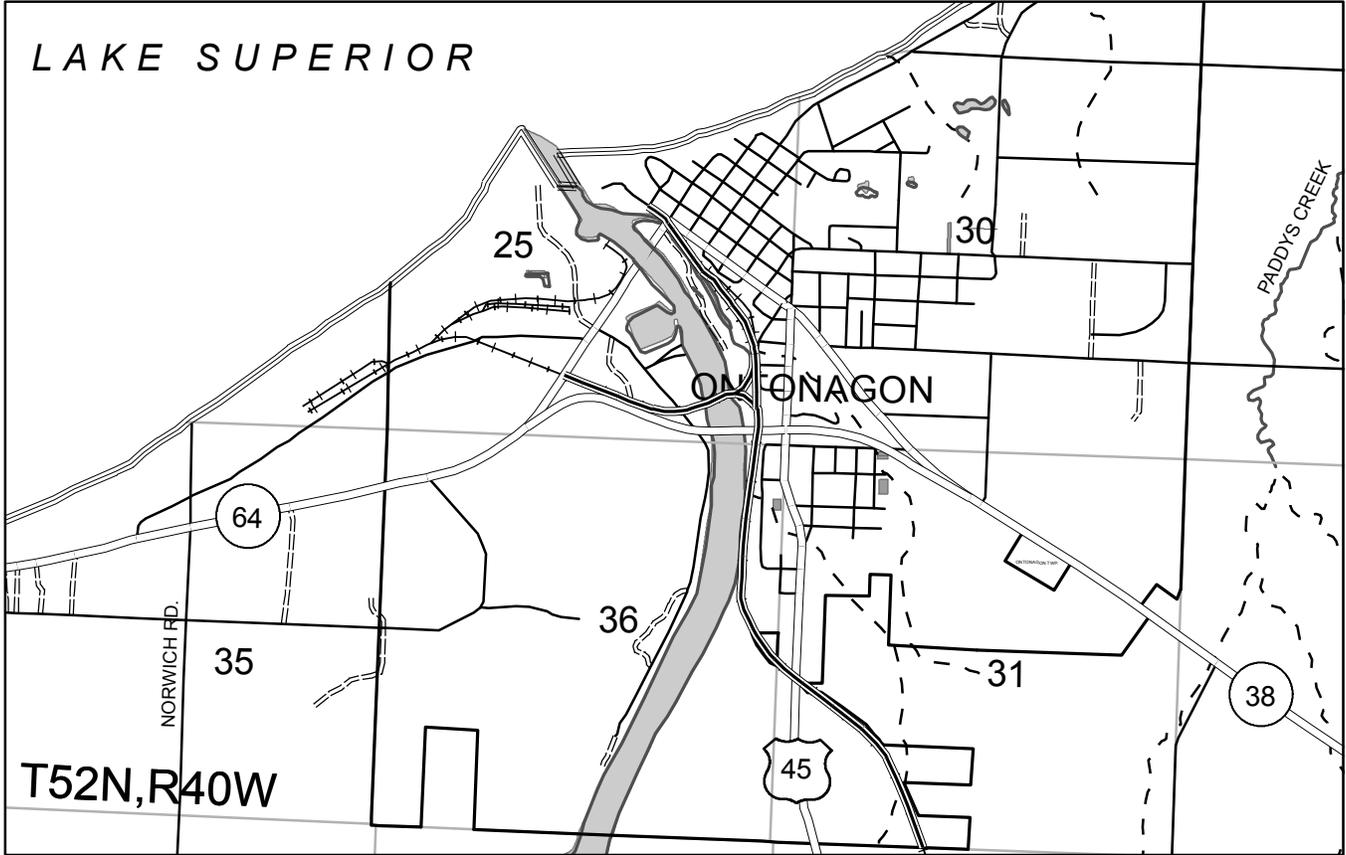
Keith Creagh  
Director

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Date Approved

# STATE TRAIL ACQUISITION

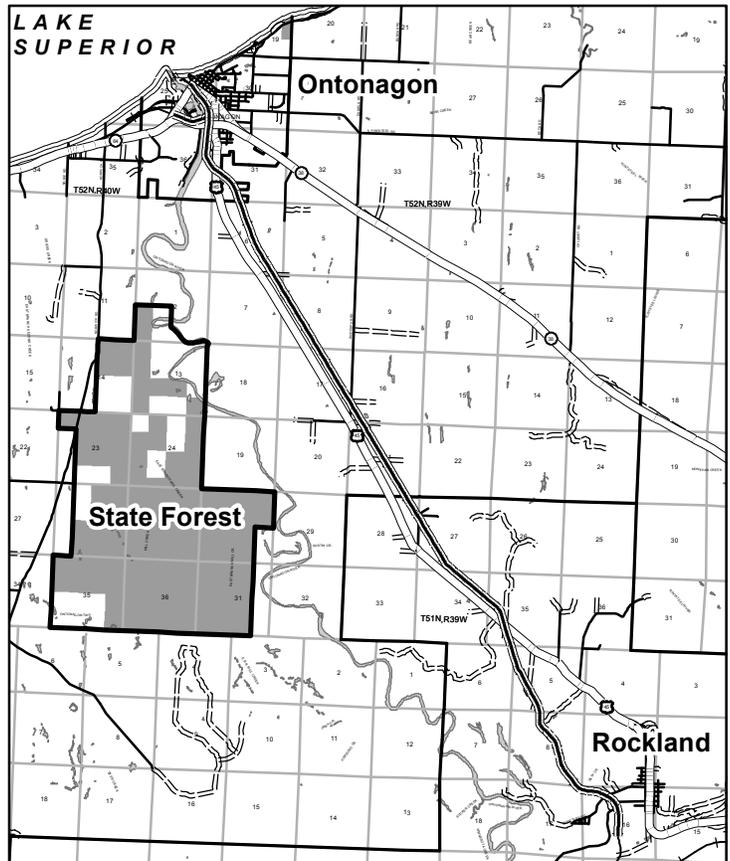
## Ontonagon to Rockland Railroad Corridor -- Ontonagon County

### Land Transaction Case #20130267



#### City of Ontonagon

-  State Forest Boundary
-  Land Offered to DNR  
from Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad  
(160.64 acres, 13.25 miles -- \$516,715)
-  State Land
-  Private Land



#### City of Ontonagon to Town of Rockland



DNR -- Finance & Operations Division  
Real Estate Services Section  
03/11/2014

