

**Minutes of the
Michigan Trails Advisory Council
April 12, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) was called to order by Chair Frank Wheatlake at 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, April 12, 2016, at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center in Roscommon. Members present: *Frank Wheatlake, Bill Manson, Jim Duke, Sarah Nicholls, Mike Foote, Tom Dunn, Tim Kobasic, Drew YoungeDyke, and Nancy Krupiarz.*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: Ron Olson (PRD), Paul Yauk (PRD), Barbara Graves (PRD), Scott Lint (FRD), Amy Swainston (PRD), Todd Neiss (PRD), Ron Yesney (PRD), Bill Doan (PRD), Dennis Nezich (FRD), David Lemmien (FRD), and Tom Weston (PRD).

ACTION ITEMS

MOTION: Mr. Mike Foote moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jim Duke and it carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Tom Dunn moved to approve the revised October 21, 2015 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tim Kobasic and it carried unanimously.

UPDATES

State Trail Plan Update

Mr. Paul Yauk handed out the new Michigan's Rustic Campgrounds and Pathways brochure. Ms. Amy Swainston said if anyone had any requests for changes to let her know. Mr. Yauk went over the updated State Trails Implementation Plan spreadsheet and priorities (attached).

Chair Wheatlake asked Mr. Ron Olson if the Governor and his staff were satisfied with the direction the program is going in. Mr. Olson responded that they are trying to get established so that the program is sustainable. For example, the ORV program has a fee associated with it with a sunset that is coming up in a few years and they need to demonstrate results from that so that it can be extended.

Mr. Tom Dunn said one of the things they are lacking on is marketing. Mr. Olson said the Oakland County project is going to be a big deal because it is going to bring a facility to southeast Michigan; it will have a large audience. Mr. Dunn said he thinks people need to know that it is user-based and self-sustained.

Mr. Paul Yauk said that by the middle of the summer we are going to have a unified message that is going to project what they have done with the dollars; here are the improvements and here are future projects. They are going send a message out to the public that their dollars do make a difference. They are going to do it with all the programs. We have a great story to tell we just have to get it out there.

Mr. Drew YoungeDyke commented that the Rustic Campgrounds and Pathways brochure is great for a user. He wanted to know what the distribution model was for it. Ms. Amy Swainston said they had 20,000 printed; 10,000 were sent to the U.P.; the rest to the three northern districts, the Outdoor Adventure Center, and to Lansing for trade shows. Printing costs were used with Recreational Trail Permit funds and they are hoping the supply will last two years. Mr.

Olson said 95% of the people he talked to that have gone to all the shows this spring want something like it. He said we need to think about, especially with trails, how to convey the message.

Chair Wheatlake said they should have a metric and measurement on where they are at available this summer or first and second quarter; a news conference where you invite Michigan Outdoor News and the Detroit Free Press and convey what we are doing. Mr. Olson agreed that it was a good idea and that he will talk to Ed Golder and to arrange something.

Marquette Trails Portal Update

Mr. Tom Weston introduced himself as the Chief Technology Officer at the DNR. He gave the committee an update on what they have accomplished since he presented the pilot to the committee last October:

- The pilot has been completed as of December 2015.
- Partnered with the City of Marquette, Convention Visitor Bureau (CVB), Federal, NCTA and other local trail groups.
- Audited, cleansed and connected 900 miles of trails in the County, including the Hiawatha Water Trail.
- Converted 900 miles of trail data to the Code for America Open Trails Data standard.
- Published our trail data in the Code For America, OuterSpatial Portal, with API's ready to be consumed.
- Published our trail data in the MI DNR Open Data Portal.
- Partnered with Polaris & Marquette CVB to consume our data.

Next steps:

- Developing plans to move out of pilot phase.
- Implement technology at the local level to manage data.
- Aggressively work with other groups to consume our data; USGS, Open Street Map, Google/Bing, Various Trail Associations.

They would like to get the technology implemented in Marquette in the next six months so they have tools in hand for DNR employees and private groups to manage the data. Once there is a system to audit, cleans, and keep current, they will pursue other counties. Once they have technology in the field and buy-in from partner groups, it is straight forward. His goal would be to get everything done by the end of 2018.

Liability Update

Mr. Ron Olson went over the memorandum that was presented to the Equine Trails Subcommittee in March (attached). The question came up about volunteerism and liability. In the statute there exists a substantial protection of people that do volunteer work on approved projects. The memo includes a summary of the statute. As long as you are executing your work in a bonifide, volunteer role you are covered. This is different than Snowmobile and ORV clubs that are under contract and are required to carry liability insurance. He is talking about volunteers that are doing trail work and that type of activity. Volunteers are well protected as long as it is sanctioned and bonifide. If you stray off and do illegal things; for example, if

someone is inebriated and goes out and starts operating machinery and hurts someone, then that is a different matter.

Chair Wheatlake asked where they are at with Kirk Lampham when he made the presentation to them back in October and the Recreational Land Use Act amendments and if there is an advocate. Mr. Paul Yauk said the bill was dropped, but they are looking at possibly bringing it back up in Lane Duck. Mr. Olson said that he can find out who the advocate is and get back to them.

Forestry and Trails Working Together for Multiple Objectives

Mr. Dennis Nezich introduced himself as the field coordinator for the Forest Resource Division. He started with thanking the Committee for letting him join the meeting and that they value the perspective of the group to help guide them through some of the issues they deal with.

They manage a 4 million acre state forest system; mostly in the northern two-thirds of the state and have a lot of customers they deal with, one being the timber industry. The timber industry helps them to manage and maintain forest health. It is probably the most important method that they implement in wildlife habitat management and it also helps the local economies. There have been some successes in the recreation program over the last year. Annually they have over 700 timber sale contracts spread through the state forest system in any given year. Sixty-one thousand acres are managed in one form or another. A lot of the timber sales interface with recreational use; with designated trails, pathways, equestrian trails, snowmobile trails, and ORV trails. There are relatively few issues that arise, and there is a commitment on their part to work through them.

There has been good success and partnerships between Parks and Recreation (PRD) and the Forest Resource Division (FRD). Some examples are:

- Vasa Trail - on August 2nd a windstorm came through that produced a lot of damage to the trail. Utilizing some special ways to implement timber industry contracts, they got the trail cleared. Mr. Dave Lemmien, the unit manager, worked very closely with Mr. Todd Neiss, and together they were able to tackle a significant issue that developed.
- Blueberry Ridge in Marquette County - a very popular ski trail. Management of timber has been planted in that area. There have been a lot of concerns expressed by the public, but they worked with Mr. Bill Doan and the local park manager Mr. Ron Yesney and others to have improved communications with the user groups.
- Chippewa Hills in Alpena County - a pathway where a significant amount of timber was planned for harvest and a local group became concerned. They sought consultation with the groups, they worked closely with Parks, and he thinks they are close to having a plan that they will be able to implement that will lead to the trail improvement and also allow them to manage their timber resources.
- Pigeon River Country - there has been a lot of interaction with user groups and he thinks in a couple of days there is going to be a land use order of the director reviewed by the NRC that expands equestrian use on Pigeon River Forest.
- Snowmobile trail program - there is good contact between FRD and with local clubs that allow them to be a valuable tool to help PRD in order to make the program work effectively. They have been going through a transition for a number of years and he thinks it is progressing and

they are seeing improvements in the recreation program. All FRD staff are engaged in recreational programs to some degree; their managers are involved in trail planning, reviewing trail proposals, routing through the state forests. Their foresters are putting in the timber sale boundary lines and developing the specification for timber sales. There is a huge interface with the recreation program by depending on those foresters to appropriately plan out the timber sales. They have recently developed some guidance for staff to help them do this. The fire officers are directly engaged in all of those various activities.

They have a positive relationship that he thinks will continue. That is the message that Mr. Bill O'Neill wanted him to convey today and he appreciates the opportunity to speak with the group.

Chair Wheatlake asked Mr. Nezich how many tons of fiber is the plant going to consume and if it was all soft wood. Mr. Nezich responded about 600,000 cords a year and most of it is soft wood. There is going to be minimal amount of hard wood but it is mainly spruce, pine and fir. A little bit of white pine, but not much. Chair Wheatlake asked Mr. Nezich to thank Mr. Bill O'Neill for giving the information to them and to tell him thank you, from his perspective, he has taken the word "no" out of the FRD and he appreciates it.

Oak Wilt and the Potential Impact Trail Maintenance Activities Could Have on the Spread of the Disease (presentation attached)

Mr. Scott Lint introduced himself as with the Forest Health Program in the Forest Health and Cooperative Program Section of FRD. It was suggested that he give a quick update of where they are and what they have been seeing with Oak Wilt here in the state.

Oak Wilt is a vascular wilt fungus that clogs the producing tissues of the vessels of a tree and prohibits movement of fluids and nutrients and kills the tree very rapidly. It starts out as a single tree infection but quickly spreads through the root system. There are characteristic pockets of mortality, which is the disease moving underground through the root.

The fungus is dormant in trees that died last summer in the landscape and in the next couple of weeks, as things warm up, the fungus will produce a fruiting body that they call a "pressure pad" that forms underneath the bark. This fruiting body produces a spore; it is sweet smelling and it attracts a number of different sap-feeding beetles. While they are feeding on the fruiting structure they pick up spores that stick to the beetle and the beetle then flies to sap that is coming from a fresh wound on any kind of tree, but if it is a red oak tree it inadvertently delivers the spore to that sap and it infects that tree. This happens within a couple of hours by the time a tree is injured. Beetles are attracted particularly to a fresh wound. The fungus then develops in the tree through the next two months and the tree begins to wilt (in northern Michigan typically in late June and early July). Mortality occurs very rapidly, usually within 2 - 3 weeks, and the tree will have lost all of its leaves. This is a new infection over land via the beetle vector.

The other way the disease spreads is from an infected tree. It moves through the root system of that tree to adjacent trees that are healthy. Underground all the roots are interconnected and grafted together, so while this tree is dead the fungus is able to migrate through the root system to adjoining trees that are still alive killing those trees. Year after year it continues to progress through the root system.

Prevention would be to not injure the pointy-leafed oaks during the susceptible period, which is April 15 through July 15 in Michigan. If injury does accidentally occur during this period, they advise that you immediately get paint on the wound. It is the only time they recommend using any kind of wound dressing or paint; it is not to help heal the tree, but to put barrier between the beetle and the tree.

Mr. Lint provided an overview of Michigan's oak resource where you can see oak wilt and how it is very wide-spread across the state, in particular near trail systems. There is a lot of opportunity for infection on trail systems in state forests. Some activities that might occur on trails with potential to spread oak wilt would be pruning branches and also plow lines where injury occurs to the root collar. Over the course of the last year he has come across sections where the disease is spreading rapidly. He didn't know if they were using anything to blade OVR trails, or not, but if so and doing it between April 15 and July 15, and you are disrupting the root system near the surface and you are causing that root system to ooze sap. That is a potential infection site.

In the Gladwin field trial area, Wildlife did a road work project in the spring and inadvertently caused about 7 or 8 new infections along the roadside. We need to consider the potential activities with construction equipment of the felling of trees that could possibly injure them.

Recently, one of the foresters came to him and said they may have a problem with oak wilt after timber sale crews were in an area the last week of May, first week of June. When he went out in August, he found 46 newly infected trees on 13 acres of land. The thing that really concerned him was he was standing right in the middle of an ORV trail. If somebody went down that trail with a pruning saw and a tractor and dinged up trees all down the trail, we could potentially have infection along the trail system. He wants everybody to be aware of the potential risk.

Another example was near the Baldwin Field Office in May when one of the fire officers took a piece of equipment out to prep it for spring. He drove around with his blade on the front of the skidder and a plow on the back making sure everything worked. There is an oak wilt pocket there with a source of spores and they ended up with 20 brand new infections.

They have always said that the beetle was the vector; it is very effective at the right time of year. Oak wilt can be managed; it is host- obligate so it needs red oak to survive, so we can isolate the fungus by creating root graft barriers, which is a 5 foot long blade that goes down into the soil and cuts all the root connections so that the fungus has nowhere to go. The bad thing about this is that they come in and cut off all the red oak on top because they are most likely going to die anyway. That is to help prevent the production of new spores and continued spread of the fungus. The message he has is prevention is inexpensive, management is very expensive and it is intrusive and not something that they really want to see happening on our trail systems.

They are continuing to do oak wilt management on state forest land. Recreation is very much a high priority when it comes to managing it. They work very close with the Parks and Recreation Division and they have done a lot of state forest treatments, state forest campground treatments, and state park treatments. It is something that is out there and it is going to continue to be there and they are going to continue to manage it. It is not going away, but we can have a tremendous impact on what we do as far as preventing the spread of this disease.

Every year they put out an annual report called The Forest Health Highlights that is available at the listed website. There is a good map in there of the distribution of oak wilt across the state of Michigan, plus 50 pages of other forest health information.

Mr. Tim Kobasic asked Mr. Lint what they are doing to replace those trees that are taken out and if they are putting more hard mast in. Mr. Lint responded that hopefully there is white oak available on site and typically red oak and white oak are together. White oak is able to resist an oak wilt infection; it rarely kills white oak trees. They preferentially manage towards white oak on those sites. If there is no white oak there, he doesn't know the answer to that question. It is going to depend on what is available on that site in the surrounding stand. They are not actively going back and planting in that one to two acre spot.

Mr. Kobasic asked, in relation to the fungus, if a tree is harvested does that fungus become inert after it is dead or can that be transmitted just like we see happening with ash borer. Mr. Lint said there is a risk of moving oak wilt through the movement of dead wood. All the trees that have died last summer that are still standing on the landscape have the potential to produce spores this spring. If you cut those trees down and you move them as firewood, they will still produce pressure pads in a wood pile. So yes, there is a vector. What they do is they advise people not to move trees that have died from oak wilt unless the bark is coming off of them.

Mr. Kobasic asked if that was part of the embargo about coming across the Straits with firewood. Mr. Lint said that they are opposed to moving firewood at any time because of the number of different things; oak wilt, emerald ash borer, beech scale, gypsy moth egg masses. The regulation that applies at the bridge he believes is all hardwood.

Chair Wheatlake asked if FRD is not going to harvest red oak during the summer months. Mr. Lint said that is correct, and they have a timber sale restriction on that for a number of years. It has been their experience that even with a very good timber sale operator they are seeing case after case of single tree infection occurring on the landscape, so now they are advising staff to impose every restriction.

Chair Wheatlake asked if the number of diseases that have occurred in the forest in the last 15 – 20 years are a natural cycle. Mr. Lint said oak wilt is an exotic; it's invasive, it is not native to the United States. It is believed to have come from Central or South America. It behaves like an invasive; it kills its host quickly. Natural pathogens do not do that. Beech Scale is another exotic and so is Dutch Elm. There is also root rot that is a concern and they are beginning to see more and more of it that is impacting red pine. It is a native, so they should be able to manage it, and it should not be a killing front like emerald ash borer all the other exotics are.

STAFF REPORTS

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup

- They had their last SAW meeting in Sault Ste. Marie in conjunction with their MSA groomer workshop. They talked about the snowmobile easement grant program and they finally have a vehicle to expend money out of the Snowmobile Permanent Easement Fund. Mr. Ron Yesney has been heading the group. Mr. Darrell Welch and the Rec Specialists from all the areas have been involved in implementing a plan.

- Last year they requested that every grant sponsor take oil samples from their equipment to get a head of the problem, but it wasn't handled right. They have one of their SAW members working with Mr. Richard Kennedy to make sure that this year it all goes off. They will do a better job of getting that out next year.
- GPS updates – they have been talking for the last three years about GPSs in all groomers. It is just trying to figure out which one is going to work the best.
- Mr. Bill Lucas has been working on a two-year tractor turnaround. He saw one of the prices come through and it doesn't quite meet the criteria. He is not sure what is being done with that.
- They had a Millersburg Bridge update and the bridge is actually going to get done this summer.
- The car-moose quarry on Rodgers City Trail is still an ongoing issue. It's getting close, but one of the big problems is the quarry wants that property because it goes through the middle of their quarry right next to their explosive shack. If it's a rail bank, how do you really do that if it ever comes back to rail. Paul's group is going to work on that.
- They made recommendations to the DNR to add a "Bridge Ahead" sign to their sign book. It is one of the major complaints from every snowmobiler out there because in the beginning and end of every bridge there is usually a bump.
- Yuma to Copemish Trail is probably going to be worked on this summer. They are going to need some RTP funds down the road and some other funds to repair the bridge over the Manistee. It is going to be a multi-use trail.
- One of the issues that Mr. Ron Yesney brought up is they have a lot "back country riders", who like to come up from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and lower Michigan that pull in to a two-track and unload and go. The problem is they are blocking all of the two-tracks off that are being used for logging roads, so that is becoming an issue. Some loggers have had issues with snowmobilers coming through active logging units. They need to do some more education with logging and with snowmobilers.
- They still have an issue with the Dodie Bridge in Munising. It was put in 12 years ago and it is a 7-year bridge. The Feds put a bridge on top of the old bridge that was falling apart.
- Pellston -Topanaby is still having issues. They are making their way through the U of M property. Now they have some private property issues that he thought they had all taken care of, but the local guys don't have those easements in hand.
- It was a terrible year; they didn't start grooming until January 12. With the spotty snow melt, trail permits are going to be down. Mr. Olson said that through the end of March they had \$123,147 and in '15 there was \$133,238 through the end of March; that is down 7.5%. That doesn't include what may have occurred. It probably will not fluctuate much.

Chair Wheatlake noted the vacancy on SAW and said they want to try and get younger people involved in each of the subcommittees. They are going to hold off on making any appointments until they get an opportunity for the department to go out and search. Mr. Manson said the vacant position is representing grant sponsors, so you want somebody that knows about snowmobile trails and grooming, etc. He agrees that they need to get some youth.

Tourism

- Tourism and Strategic Plan has an objective to support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a diverse, extensive, and high quality network of motorized, non-

motorized, and water-based routes and trails. Mr. Paul Yauk and Ms. Nancy Krupiarz are on the committee, as well as a representative from MDOT. Related to the Strategic Plan they have in the past developed a bicycle tourism marketing plan which is somewhat related to this group and they are in the process of developing an Equestrian Tourism Marketing Plan, which should be ready by the end of the summer.

- Travel Michigan by the end of the year is going to redevelop its website. If you go to Michigan.org it is organized by place so you really have to know where you want to go to get any information, which is not good if you are not from Michigan and you don't know where you want to go. The new version will be activities-based, so if you are coming to engage in any activity that we offer here in Michigan you will go to that activity then you will get told these are the best places to go do those activities. That should benefit all the groups.

Equine Trails Subcommittee

- Mr. Mike Foote said the liability issue has already been covered by Mr. Olson. It was resolved and he is glad it was taken care of.
- Big Oaks opened officially on 10/1 last year and they are having an opening celebration on 5/7/16. That is a big deal and everybody is looking forward to that.
- There was a discussion of equestrian-only campgrounds. The major concern with mixed-camping was liability and safety and how non-horse people were going to behave around horses. They do not have an avenue to educate people when they come into the park; bicycles, Frisbees, etc. The ETS made the recommendation to the DNR to keep them separated at this point and they will continue to discuss.
- He will be working with Ms. Nikki Van Bloem, Ms. Bennett's replacement. They will get the project list finalized and they will report out to ETS again at their next meeting.
- A bridle tag fee was brought up again. He thinks some of the equestrians understand that maybe this is something they need to look at.
- At the Stallion Expo he talked to Sean Speaker who is the new manager. They had an interesting discussion about electricity in an equestrian campground. Everyone was thinking it was a great idea to move forward with, however, looking at the number of campsites that they have at Ionia, which is probably one of the biggest ones in the state, in order to put electricity in there it is going to be cost-prohibited at this point.
- Carts were talked about at the last meeting. He would like to address it from the ETS standpoint first, with some recommendations to bring to MTAC. At that point, he would present some pictures to show everybody what the different carts are that they are proposing to have on equestrian trails. Possibly this summer they are going to get together with some others such as the Michigan Horse Drawn Vehicle Association and DNR staff.
- Mr. Yauk had gave a talk to the Horse Council a couple months ago and talked about doing a public service announcement. The goal is to have three announcements that can be aired regarding equestrians and interaction with bicycles, cars, etc.

Chair Wheatlake asked if they have any more targeted forest campgrounds for equestrian use coming up this year and if they are looking at additional locations. Mr. Bill Doan said there is a campground proposal for an equestrian/ORV campground in Ontonagon County; there is no funding for it yet. Mr. Olson said that last year they opened Headquarters Lake in the previously closed campground in the state forest and they have a blue ribbon committee looking at all the state game areas.

Off-road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup

- The Workgroup is pleased to announce that the Oakland County/DNR Joint venture in the Groveland ORV Park continues to move forward with the 400 acre ORV park in Southeast Michigan. Hopefully, the park will be open within a 2-year window.
- The Department received its first shipment of the new carbon fiber trail marking posts and will have trail maintainers starting install this year. A committee was formed to work on reimbursement rates for the clubs and maintainers to install signs and remove of older confidence markers from trees. The committee will also look into rates for brushing/signing and grading of trail system.
- Discussed implementing a plan to provide for funding of an easement program for private properties, similar to that of the Snowmobile Program.
- Discussion of conflicts of wheeled vehicle use during winter grooming season on groomed snowmobile shared trails. This is becoming more of an issue with ORVs are more and more becoming a 12 month season.
- Working on a Joint ORV/SAW meeting again this year. Preferably in the Upper Peninsula.
- Second ORV free weekend was set for 3rd full weekend of August and the Department has put out a press release.
- HB5275 was introduced by Tristin Cole to have the Department inventory all forest roads and open them up for ORV use unless posted closed. We will be working with the Legislature on the progression and will report back to MTAC.
- The group plans a busy year as work continues on the cross state trail for the Upper Peninsula. Infrastructure maintenance and repair, and continued development of new trail for the users.
- There was a short budget meeting on ORVs.

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup

- They met on February 17 in person at the MParks Conference. It was a good meeting, with good turnout. They discussed a number of legislative issues, including the volunteer liability on maintaining trails and in particular, Ebikes. Ebikes are becoming a big issue.
- They are trying to collect information from other states regarding non-motorized funding sources for trails.
- They are looking at discussion maintenance and funding sources to maintain water trails.
- The meeting in Traverse City on February 17 was good attendance and good discussion points. Their next meeting is going to be in May where they want to discuss a new, broader legislative outreach strategy to talk about trails.

Parks and Recreation

- Mr. Paul Yauk presented a map of Trail staff and their positions (attached). The newest person they hired is Ms. Nikki Van Bloem; Southern Lower Trail Specialist. She has been a Department employee for 20 years. She has been in several parks around the state; her latest a manager at Maybury State Park. They are glad to have her on board.
- One position they still need to fill is the motorized trails analyst, which will be a key position that will be representing a number of people's positions; ORV, snowmobile.

- Iron Belle has taken priority; they have pulled Ms. Kriss Bennett off her duties so she can take the lead on it. They hired a Communications Specialist, Doug Donnelly, who will start on April 25. He will be stationed in Lansing.
- He is impressed and appreciates the commitment of the staff in the Trails Program. It is a pleasure working with them, the committees, and the public.

INFORMATIONAL UPDATE

ATV/ORV & Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS) - Mr. Tim Kobasik, presented a map of the proposed trail link. The Director responded to Chair Wheatlake with a status update that he has asked staff to revisit the issue and that it is their intent to take a fresh view and collect additional recommendations, options, and comments. Staff will be directed to develop additional alternatives by the end of June. Information will be shared internally and with stakeholders.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Leon Hewitt introduced himself as a professional engineer who was asked by Rex Swinehart, the Greenwood Township supervisor for help with a replacement bridge over Filer Creek on Kolarvic Road in Greenwood Township. Mr. Hewitt gave a history of how the bridge was washed away in a major storm in 2008 and was never replaced. He is asking MTAC to recommend to the State that they help fund the project.

Mr. Todd Neiss from the department said that Kolarvic Road used to be part of the Michigan Cross-Country Cycle Trail, so they had a trail that was on that particular county road. The road washed out and they moved the cross country cycle trail to an alternative route to get around Filer Creek. They no longer have a designated trail on Kolarvic Road. Mr. Neiss said it was a county road from his understanding.

Mr. Tim Kobasic said that this might be something the county should pursue under the Natural Resources Trust Fund for the construction of a bridge. Chair Wheatlake said the Township can make a request to the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund. Mr. Ron Olson added that it would have to be part of their park recreation and open space plan so it would have to be a planned out recreational corridor and then they would have to have public meetings and have that established in a plan. Mr. Olson said there are also Recreational Passport grants that are smaller in nature that they could apply for but they still have to have the same requirements. A contact person would be John Mayes.

Mr. David Lemmien said he would look into the situation at the local management unit and talk with the Wexford County Road Commission. Chair Wheatlake asked him to report back to them at the next meeting.

Ms. Joan Duncan said she has been working concertedly to try to figure out a trail across the U.P.; three times farther than the Shore-To-Shore Trail. She has one proposal that seems to be coming to fruition and that is a parking lot near Marquette which will be perfect for the Iron Belle Trail, the North Country Trail, the snowmobile trail, and horses. She asked if the snowmobile Trail 8 could be used also for horses because it goes all the way across the U.P. She is asking if they could attempt to use as much of the snowmobile trail as possible.

Mr. Paul Yauk said to send him a recommendation and they will look into it. Mr. Ron Yesney thinks there are some options; he thinks that parts of Trail 8 would be usable. They would have to determine where the portions of trail are that could be used; some of it is already designed multi-use so it would be legal for the equestrians to be there. It would just be a matter of designating it for that purpose. If they can find a funding source to help compliment their snowmobile easement dollars that would help solidify those easements year-round, then they could entertain equestrian use on those parcels.

Mr. Jim Duke said in the Hiawatha National Forest there are already designated equine trails that parallel Trail 8 on the western zone that are designated and are marked with the blue marks for equine. Mr. Yesney said they have the trail head proposal that Joan spoke of in the database; they also have a proposal that they are working on to connect Thunder Valley with the fairgrounds and then potentially to go west from there. Mr. Olson said to keep in mind that these are all great ideas but one of the conundrums is still the funding.

Mr. Paul Mulder – stated the Filer Creek Bridge shines a bad light on a lot of things and it certainly puts a black eye on the ORV and snowmobile community and the Department that we let this situation get away. It happens in a lot of places and he hopes that they can take this issue and go forward with it to mitigate this. The liability issue - he sees the non-motorized and motorized as having a divide in the liability issue and he hopes they can work on closing that divide. The GEMS issue is another because of Wildlife. There is a divide in the whole system. Hopefully they can come up with an answer for this and make the woods better for everybody.

Chair Wheatlake said that at the next meeting they are going to have a report on Filer. The Department is going to work on it. They talked about a solution for GEMS. And they are addressing liability and it is being held up by the legislature. They are not naive and they are working and trying to do the right thing.

Mr. Neiss said Destination Players did a fabulous half hour presentation on Silver Lake State Park and Lake County ORV riding; it is on Fox Sports Detroit. He sent a DVD to Mr. Yauk and Mr. Olson. It is well done and it promoted the ORV trails in Lake County and also at Silver Lake State Park. Fox Sports has not put it on their site yet.

He is working with Emily Meyerson on a potential pilot project for the escalation of the carsonite posts using a Youth Core SEEDS group, using them to do some of the labor.

Mr. Drew YoungeDyke said they are opening up registration for a 5K trail run-archery triathlon that they will hold in July in southeast Michigan as a way to promote fitness amongst the hunting community and vice versa. He thinks trails will play a role in that. They are going to be redesigning the Michigan Out of Doors Magazine and are going to feature recreational interests that are non-hunting and fishing. They will do more features on ORVs and snowmobile trails as well.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 7, 2016.

Mr. Mike Foote moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:06 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tom Dunn and it carried unanimously.

State Trails Implementation Plan

Action Item Implementation Leads

Priority: Expand trails and trail experiences	Assigned to	Deadlines	Assistance Needed	Cost
Iron Belle Trail Biking 58% Complete, Hiking 72% Complete	Paul Yauk, Kriss Bennett			
Strategic Plan to Funders		Mid 2016		
Private Funding Plan		Mid 2016		
Development Process		Ongoing		
Events and Marketing		Ongoing		
Develop Trail Logo Due Early 2015				
Partnering with Local Governments and North Country Scenic Trail				
Complete Governor's Showcase Trail/Iron Belle		Dec 2018		
Complete DNR trail inventory	Staff			
Identify Priority Gaps Among Trail Types				
ETS/SAW/NAW	MTAC, Paul Yauk, Subcommittees			
MTAC established this as 2014 priority at 4/8/2014 meeting		2016		
MTAC define criteria for priority gaps		Complete Dec 2016	Keep on MTAC agenda, and DNR staff assist where necessary	
Final Report		07/09/1905		
Coordinate all trail organizations processes	Paul Yauk			
Coordinate MDOT, Federal, local and regional processes and programming to maximize trail development and use		Spring 2015	MTAC via defining liaisons to the Council.	
Meet with state agency funding partners to align State Trail Plan goals		Summer 2016		
Identify opportunities to create 10 experience trails	Staff			
Create one trail proposal process	Paul Yauk			
Meet with PRD/FRD Field Coordinators to discuss review roles in review of trail proposals on FRD lands and PRD lands	Paul Yauk, Anna Sylvester	Complete Winter 2016		
PRD/FRD Field Coordinators define reviews to add to Trail Proposal Process	Paul Yauk, Anna Sylvester	Complete Summer 2016		
Modify Trail Proposal Database for edits and addition of new reviewers for trails on FRD lands and for PRD lands	Paul Yauk, Dave Forstat	Fall 2014	Need time allocation for Dave Forstat, program administrator of the Trail Proposal Database, to edit/add names to the Database to make this functional.	Dave's Time
Determine with partners designated inland water trails	Paul Yauk, Trail Coordinators	2017		
Review DNR land use orders for enforceability	Jason Fleming, Paul Yauk			
Review LUOD for trail related orders and issues related to enforceability		2016	LED review and consultation	Staff time
Review and consult with LED related to enforcement questions and issues		2016		Staff time
Complete trail and bridge inventory	Steve Krzesicki			
Explore reopening UP state forest campground for equestrians and new equestrian camping	Anna Sylvester	Ongoing	Re-opened Headquarters Lake SFCG and Cedar River North for equestrian camping. Big Oaks Campground May 7th. WE continue to explore additional opportunities.	
Designate five connected lake system trails	Paul Yauk, Trail Coordinators	2017		
Create an inventory of rivers with water trail potential	Trail Coordinators	2017	Planning and reviews needed	
Create development guideline for all trail types	Staff Assignment			
Complete plan for providing interpretive/programming for state trails	John Spieles, Ron Olson			
Begin designated water trails		2017		
Conduct a demand analysis to determine signature equestrian state park	Staff, ETS			
Complete designate of GL shoreline water trails	Non-motorized workgroup to develop	Ongoing		
Complete designate of inland water trails		Ongoing		
Implement ORV Management Plan	Motorized Trail Staff	Ongoing		
Review ORV training program for effectiveness	Motorized Trail Staff	Ongoing		

State Trails Implementation Plan

Action Item Implementation Leads

Priority: Ensure compatibility with other plans				
Develop conflict resolution process	Staff			
Develop a cross walk between all strategy plans	Staff			
Develop legislative proposal to increase fines for snowmobile trail permit	Jason Fleming			
Develop policy regarding timber management as relates to trails	Ron Olson, Bill O'Neill			
Ensure trails are sustainability developed	Trail Specialist Team			
Priority: MTAC to lead efforts to maintain trail state reputation				
Staggered terms for MTAC	Completed			
Restructure MTAC to involve others	Paul Yauk			
MSTAC Agenda item to discuss and identify others, i.e.: MDOT, public utilities, economic development and health agencies, Pure MI and other tourism organizations		2016		
MTAC process for tracking plan implementation	Staff	2016		
Draft tracking process for MSTAC review and approval			Policy staff to draft process for tracking plan implementation.	Staff time
Survey trail user at least every three years	Paul Yauk			
Draft survey questions and review with MTAC		2016	Policy Staff draft questions	Staff time
Conduct survey of trail users	Michigan Parks and Recreation Association	2016	Mechanism for survey (survey monkey, paper, etc.)	Staff time
MTAC recommendation on safety issues	Paul Yauk			
MTAC create ad hoc subcommittee to identify trail users safety issues		2016		
MTAC create evaluation and monitor standards about safety issues		2017	Policy and State Trails staff to assist and facilitate MSTAC subcommittee	Staff time, travel and meeting locations
Priority: Develop funding sources and mechanisms for trail maintenance				
Compile costs of maintaining and operating existing trails	Mark Mandenberg			
Partnership with MDOT	Paul Yauk, Claire Stevens, Mark Mandenberg			
Identify funding sources and gaps and develop strategy	Mark Mandenberg			
Explore trail funding sources in other states	Mark Mandenberg, Intern			
Ensure existing funding sources are targeted to priority trail development and maintenance needs	Mark Mandenberg			
Develop criteria for identifying priority trails and trail connections	Mark Mandenberg			
Create means to evaluate impact of trails	Donna Stine			
Evaluate the equitable sharing of maintenance costs on multiple use trails	Jason Fleming			
Transition to Opt out Recreation Passport/or other fund sources	Ron Olson			
Create guide to assist LUG in financing, developing and maintaining trails	New position			
Leverage grant funds		Ongoing		
Priority Ensure sustainability by maintaining trails to established guidelines				
Ensure DNR's ability to implement trail plan	Ron Olson, Bill O'Neill			
Align DNR to implement trail plan and efficient management	Ron Olson, Bill O'Neill			
Retire trails that no longer used	Regional Trail Coordinators			
Develop priority trail infrastructure maintenance list	Steve Krzesicki			
Develop means to protect the condition and usability of groomed trails	Jason Fleming			

State Trails Implementation Plan

Action Item Implementation Leads

Assess needs and condition of all designated pathways	Regional Trail Coordinators			
Develop sign manual for all trail types and trail interpretive opportunities	Todd Neiss, Rob Katona			
Inventory amenities needs of priority trails	Third Year			
Acquire permanent easements for snowmobile trails	Richard Kennedy, Darrell Welch, Ron Yesney	Ongoing		
Adopt develop/maintenance guidelines for all trail types	Mark Mandenberg			
Priority: Develop funding sources and mechanisms for trail maintenance				
Compile costs of maintaining and operating existing trails	Regional Trail Coordinators	2017		
Identify funding sources and gaps and develop strategy	Mark Mandenberg	2017		
Explore trail funding sources in other states	Mark Mandenberg, Intern	2017		
Ensure existing funding sources are targeted to priority trail development and maintenance needs	Mark Mandenberg	2017		
Develop criteria for identifying priority trails and trail connections	Regional Trail Coordinators	2017		
Create means to evaluate impact of trails				
Evaluate the equitable sharing of maintenance costs on multiple use trails	Jason Fleming			
Transition to Opt out Recreation Passport	Ron Olson			
Create guide to assist LUG in financing, developing and maintaining trails	New position			
Leverage grant funds	Ongoing			
Research other agencies	Staff			
Priority Link trails, trail users and adjoining communities				
Update policy to allow sign program	Todd Neiss, Paul Gaberdiel			
Improve process for approving events on DNR-managed Trails	Anna Sylvester		Continue to follow the Forest Certification process for events, new timber management guidelines incorporate notification of events to timber contractors and notification of timber activities to groups	
Create toolkit to help LUG leverage area trail system	Staff			
Priority Develop trail partnerships and collaborations				
Define role of DNR, friends and other trail organization as relates to development and maintenance	Trail Staff			
Address obstacles to volunteer organizations' trail development and management on state-managed land	Trail Staff			
Create volunteer recognition and incentive program	Trail Staff			
Establish a list of volunteer needs and opportunities	Miguel Rodriguez	08/10/2014	In collaboration with the Trails Team, create a recruitment and retention plan for trail volunteers.	
Create an online portal of volunteer opportunities	Miguel Rodriguez	12/01/2014	Collaborate with other DNR divisions on volunteer recruitment and retention efforts for consistency throughout the Agency. FRD, WLD and Fish work with many volunteers, so creating regional recognition efforts across the Department will increase awareness of efforts, simplify promotion and promote continued support of the department	The online portal

State Trails Implementation Plan

Action Item Implementation Leads

Develop a communication plan to promote online portal and results of volunteer efforts, using social media, email marketing, grassroots efforts and PR.(tied to the parks, harbors, and trails marketing plans)	Marketing Staff	10/30/2014		Tokens of appreciation (pins, t-shirts, events, etc.) to encourage volunteer retention and recognition.
Clearly communicate benefits of volunteerism (retention efforts) to volunteers	Miguel Rodriguez			Specific costs would come from meeting with other divisions,
Follow through on recognition and appreciation efforts with regional events.	Miguel Rodriguez			as costs could be shared with other DNR volunteer teams.
Develop one process for friends organization for state trails and DNR-managed facilities	Maia Turek, Miguel Rodriguez			
PRD has piloted and adopted a Friends Group agreement process for state parks. This same process will next be piloted for trails groups, keeping in mind the diversity of trail group interests may require slight modifications from the state park process.			Will need to determine the best groups to collaborate with for the pilot program for motorized, non-motorized and water trails.	
Organize trail summit every other year				
Initiate opportunities for cross country skiers and hikers to become better organized as user groups	Nonmotorized Staff			
Create a program to attract new volunteers	Maia Turek, Miguel Rodriguez			
See volunteer program above				
Priority Create and implement a statewide marketing program				
Assign a QOL Leadership Academy project to link trails to health	Paul Yauk, Marketing Staff			
QOL Leadership Academy project accepted		Winter 2016	periodic meetings and email to track and facilitate project	Staff Time
Project scope approve		Spring 2017		Staff Time
Reviews with project team		Summer 2017		Staff Time
Dress Rehearsal Presentation		10/07/2017		Staff Time
Complete with partners trail marketing plan	Maia Turek, Ron Olson			
Collaborate with MOD to develop an initial marketing plan draft in collaboration with parks and harbors to insure cross-promotional efforts and resources are		10/30/2016	Collaborate with MOD for implementation resources	
Take the draft plan to stakeholder meetings for review, revisions, and additions. Also, use this opportunity to identify regional marketing opportunities to supplement the plan		2016	Stakeholder input on draft plan and additional, regional marketing opportunities.	
Contract with a creative firm to develop a Michigan Trails Brand (King Media?).		2017		
Establish the needed budget for the trails marketing plan.		2017		
Implement plan.		2017		Determined by completed plan
Partner with Pure Michigan to develop PR efforts to support national exposure of the trail system on an ongoing basis.				
Complete online portal	DNR committee			
See Volunteer recognition above				
Develop and implement iconic branding tag for trails	Maia Turek, Ron Olson			
Part of Marketing Plan above				
Create education program to minimize conflicts, promote leave no trace	New position			
Obtain national exposure for trails	Maia Turek, Ron Olson, Paul Yauk			
Part of Marketing Plan above				
Trail team is comprised of Kriss Bennett, Paul Yauk, Miguel Rodriguez				



Marquette Trail Pilot Status Update April, 2016





Why

- Michigan “The Trails State”
- How do we obtain national exposure to Michigan's trail system
- How do we digitally market all Michigan trails
- Today
 - DNR web content regarding trails are mostly PDF’s
 - Pure Mi offers a simple list of trails
 - No central application to identify all Michigan trails, public or private other than search engines
 - Trail data comes from many repositories and websites



Michigan Based Trail Websites

35 found in 30 minutes

<http://www.michigan.org/trails/> <http://www.wmtrails.org/> <http://michigantrails.us/>
<http://www.michiganwatertrails.org/> <http://www.michigan.gov/dnrtrails>
<http://www.uptrails.org/> <http://www.trails.com/toptrails.aspx?area=10064>
<http://www.fishweb.com/recreation/snowmobile/trails/>
<http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/parkmap.aspx>
<http://www.skimichigan.com/nordic.html> <http://traversetrails.org/> <http://alltrails.com/>
<http://www.exploringthenorth.com> <http://www.trails.com/> <http://www.mtra.org/>
<http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/Default.aspx?SearchType=trails>
<http://www.visitmuskegon> <http://www.michigansnowmobile.com/trailreport/>
<http://www.upnorthtrails.org/> <http://www.michigantrailmaps.com/>
<http://mmba.org/trail-guide/> <http://trailsmichigan.com/> <http://traversetrails.org/>
<http://www.singletracks.com/> <http://www.msasnow.org/>
<http://www.paintcreektrail.org/> <http://www.upsnowmobiling.com/>
<http://www.wmmba.org/> <http://www.mtbproject.com/>
<http://www.americantrails.org/> www.whitepinetrail.com <http://www.thornappletrail.com>
www.everytrail.com <http://www.railstotrails.org/> <http://kweenawtrails.com/>



Project Goals

- Become the Digital Trail State
- Connect all trails whether public or private
- Partner with our communities
- Adopt the Code for America open trails data standard
- Open Data Portal, make machine readable data the default
- All State of Michigan trail data to be published and managed from a single source



What we accomplished

- ✓ Pilot has been completed, December 2015
- ✓ Partnered with the City of Marquette, CVB, Federal, NCTA & Local Trail groups
- ✓ Audited, cleansed & connected 900 miles of trails in the County, including the Hiawatha Water Trail
- ✓ Converted 900 miles of trail data to the Code for America Open Trails Data standard
- ✓ Published our trail data in the Code For America, OuterSpatial Portal, with API's ready to be consumed
- ✓ Published our trail data in the MI DNR Open Data Portal
- ✓ Partnered with Polaris & Marquette CVB to consume our data



Trail grooming



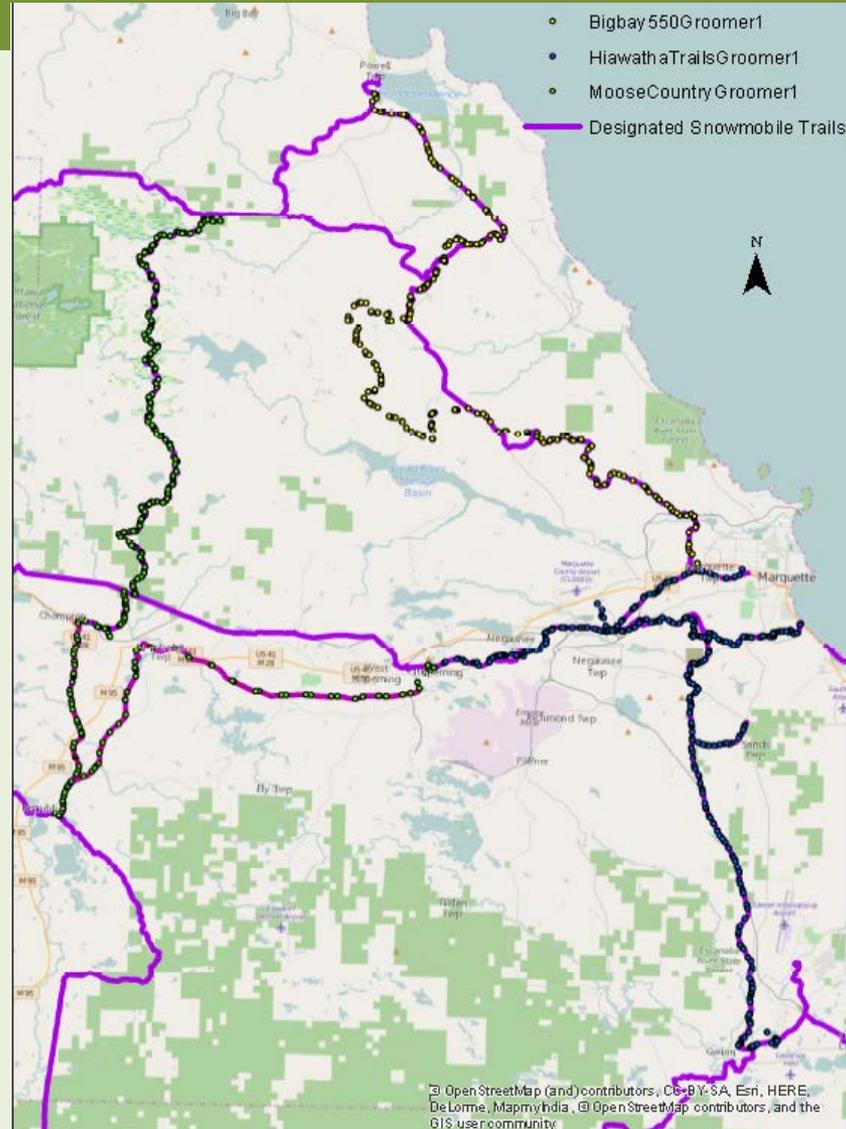


Trail grooming



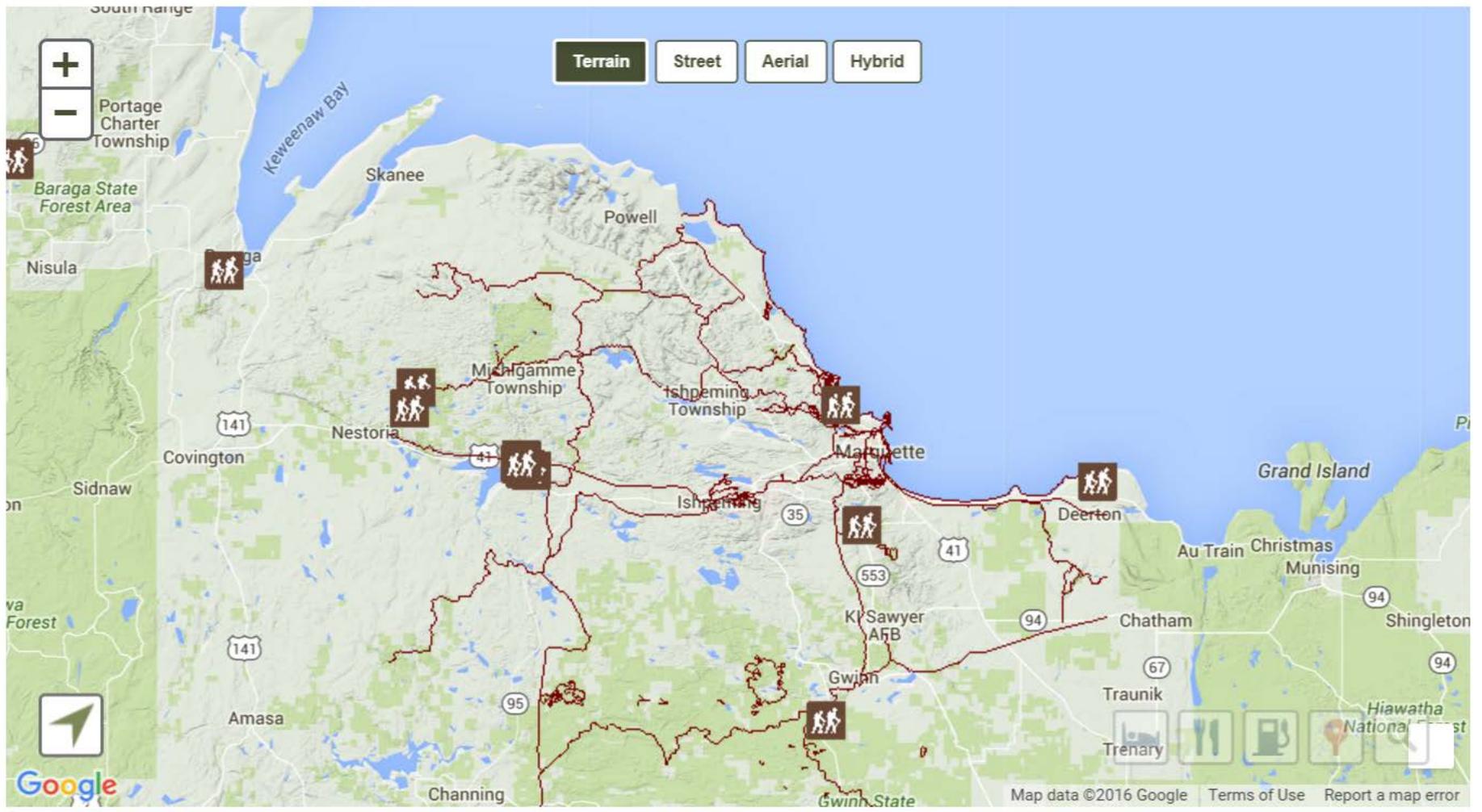


Marquette trail groomers





Marquette





Next Steps

- ✓ Developing plans to move out of pilot phase
- ✓ Implement technology at the local level to manage data
- ✓ Aggressively work with other groups to consume our data; USGS, Open Street Map, Google/Bing, Various Trail Associations etc.



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



DR. WILLIAM E. MORITZ
DIRECTOR

March 23, 2016

TO: ETS Committee
FROM: Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division
RE: Follow up to recent ETS Meeting

This is a follow up to the recent ETS meeting regarding the liability protection of volunteers performing work in state parks and recreation areas including designated trails. This directly applies to equestrian groups that support the state's equine trails and campgrounds.

To clarify there are Michigan state statutes that are in place for your reference that clearly provide corporations, political subdivisions, and the state, its agencies departments, officers, employees, and volunteers, and members of certain boards, councils, and task forces with governmental immunity when engaged in the exercise or discharge of a governmental function, for injuries to property or persons. Therefore if anything has changed it has enhanced your protection while engaging in authorized volunteer efforts to improve the state parks and recreation system.

Each group intending to assist with a project is to engage with the local park supervisor, as you have done in the past, to generate a use permit, create an understanding of the scope of the work, and obtain approval to proceed with the project.

The question was raised as to fund raising events that would benefit the park and if insurance may be required. A volunteer agreement needs to be established and the event will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the nature of the event may require insurance. In the case of no volunteer agreement, events will also be reviewed and may require insurance coverage.

In general however, the majority of approved volunteer projects will be covered under the protection provided for in the statute, provided volunteers are acting within the scope of the defined project.

Attached is a detailed reference to the statutes for your reference.

Thank you all for what you do and we will be sending this to all park supervisors to ensure we are as consistent as possible.

DEPARTMENT AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO PARTNERSHIPS WITH VOLUNTEERS

MCL 324.503 Duties of department

(14) The department may appoint persons to serve as volunteers for the purpose of facilitating the responsibilities of the department as provided in this part. Subject to the direction of the department, a volunteer may use equipment and machinery necessary for the volunteer service, including, but not limited to, equipment and machinery to improve wildlife habitat on state game areas.

The two programs (volunteer and adopt-a-trail) have different statutes but ultimately point back to the same liability coverage: Regardless of the two separate pathways, they still push back to the same coverage of liability for volunteers under **MCL 691.1408**

MCL 691.1408(1) states:

Whenever a claim is made or a civil action is commenced against an officer, employee, or volunteer of a governmental agency for injuries to persons or property caused by negligence of the officer, employee, or volunteer while in the course of employment with or actions on behalf of the governmental agency and while acting within the scope of his or her authority, the governmental agency may pay for, engage, or furnish the services of an attorney to advise the officer, employee, or volunteer as to the claim and to appear for and represent the officer, employee, or volunteer in the action. The governmental agency may compromise, settle, and pay the claim before or after the commencement of a civil action. Whenever a judgment for damages is awarded against an officer, employee, or volunteer of a governmental agency as a result of a civil action for personal injuries or property damage caused by the officer, employee, or volunteer while in the course of employment and while acting within the scope of his or her authority, the governmental agency may indemnify the officer, employee, or volunteer or pay, settle, or compromise the judgment.

Indemnification cannot be expanded beyond this scope. However, for the scope of work volunteer groups are typically involved in, they are covered for their efforts.

Equine Liability Act 351 of 1994

MCL 691.1663 Injury, death, or property damage; liability.

Except as otherwise provided in section 5, an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or another person is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant or property damage resulting from an inherent risk of an equine activity. Except as otherwise provided in section 5, a participant or participant's representative shall not make a claim for, or recover, civil damages from an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or another person for injury to or the death of the participant or property damage resulting from an inherent risk of an equine activity.

Oak Wilt Prevention Update

Michigan Trail Advisory Council



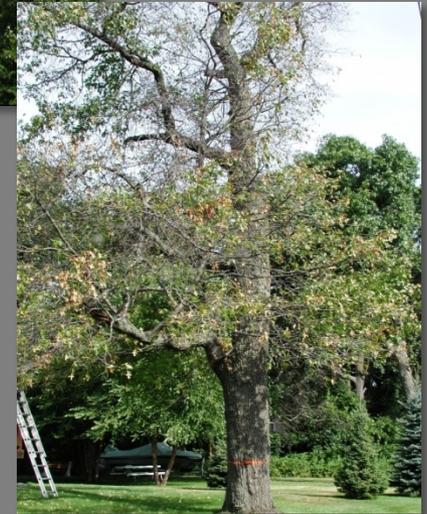
Scott Lint
Forest Health Program
Forest Resources Division



Oak Wilt Symptoms



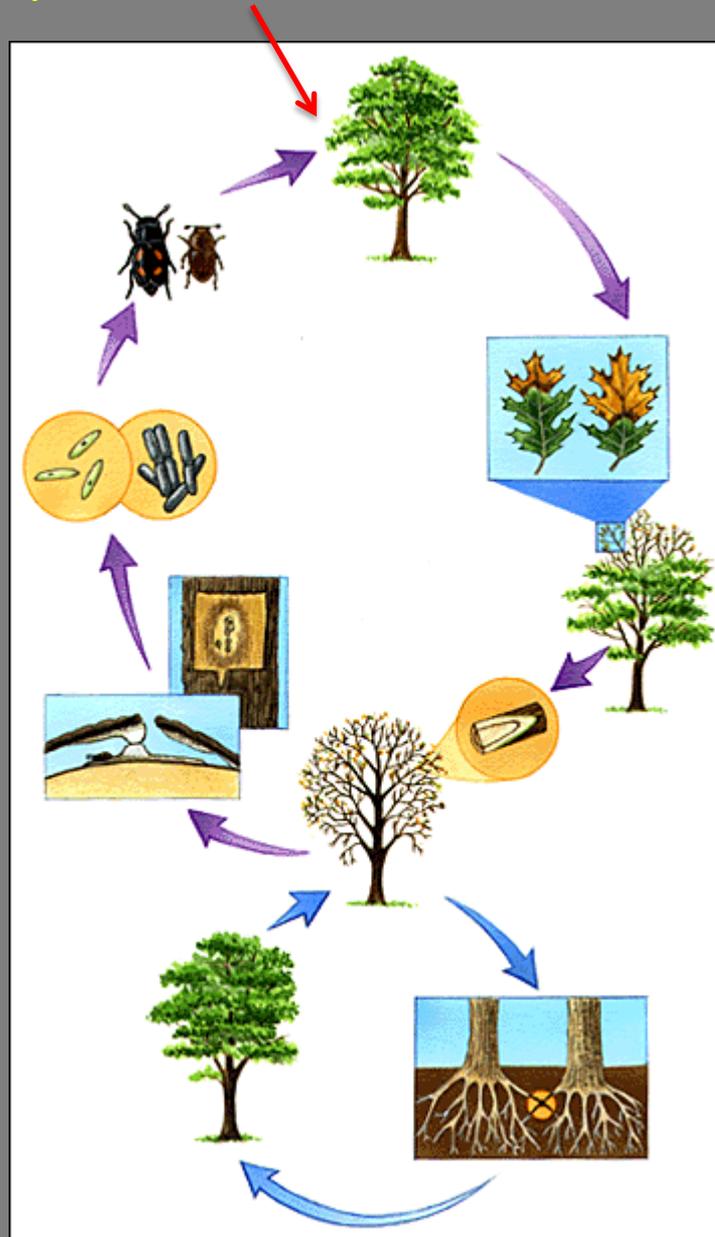
Single
dead tree



Pockets of
dead trees



prevention



Three factors required for new infection

1. Viable spore
2. Insect vector
3. Susceptible host



Prevention

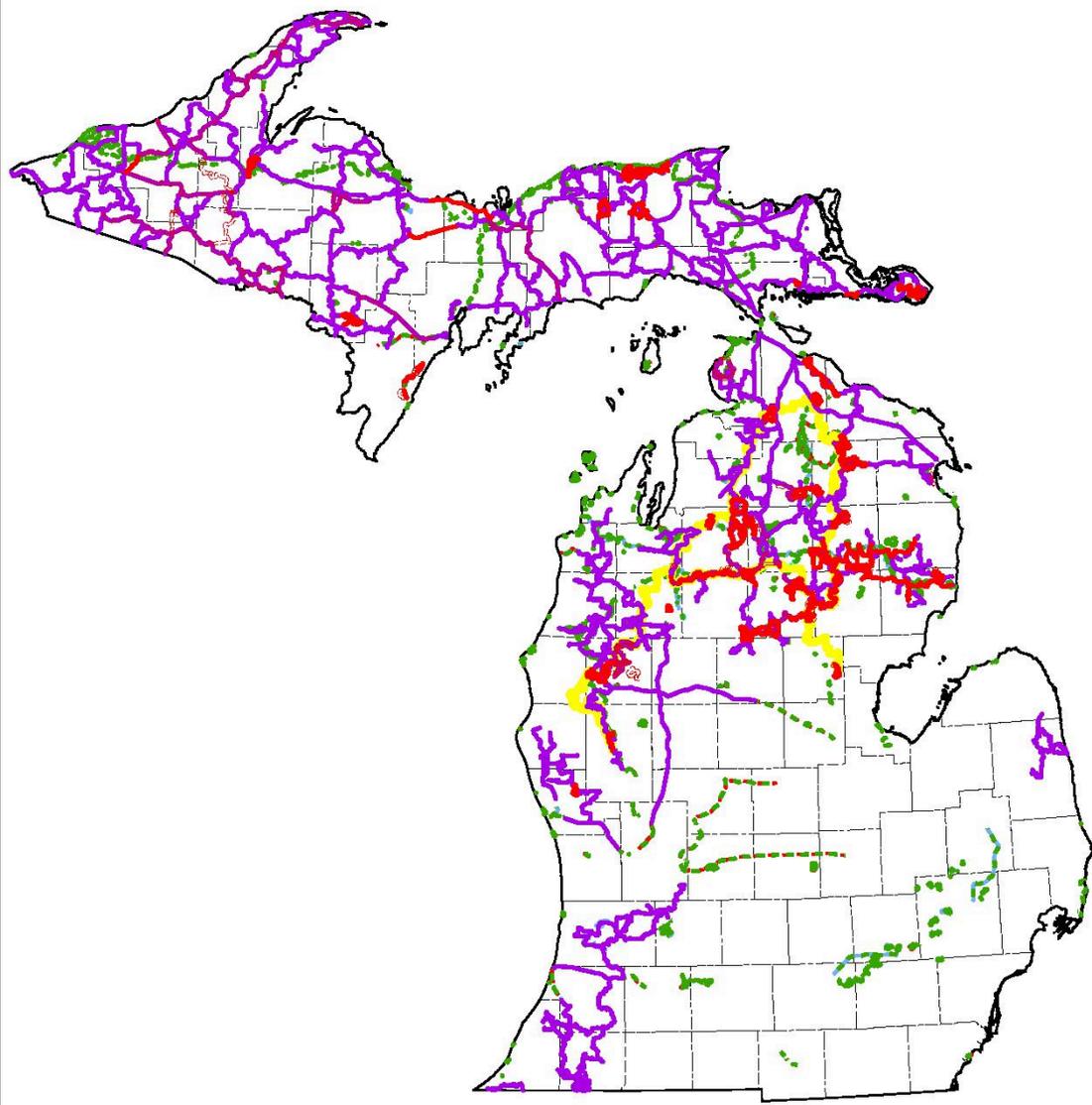


- Do not prune or injure red oaks between April 15th and July 15th
- If injury occurs or pruning must be done for safety during this period, immediately apply paint to the cut or wound.

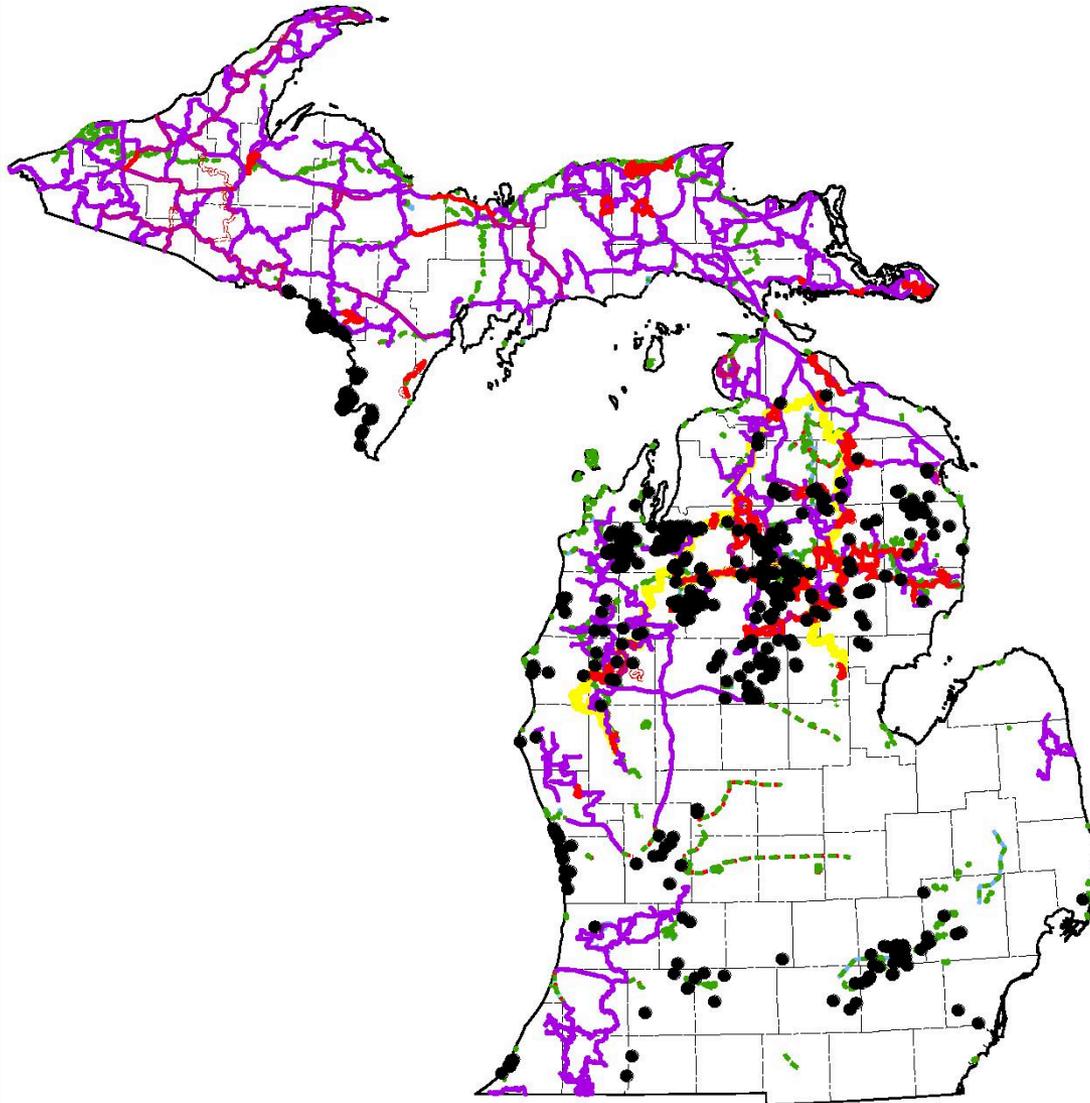
Michigan's Oak Resource



Michigan Recreation Trails and Oak Wilt



Michigan Recreation Trails and Oak Wilt



Some activities with potential to spread oak wilt:



trail maintenance

pruning



construction projects



road work

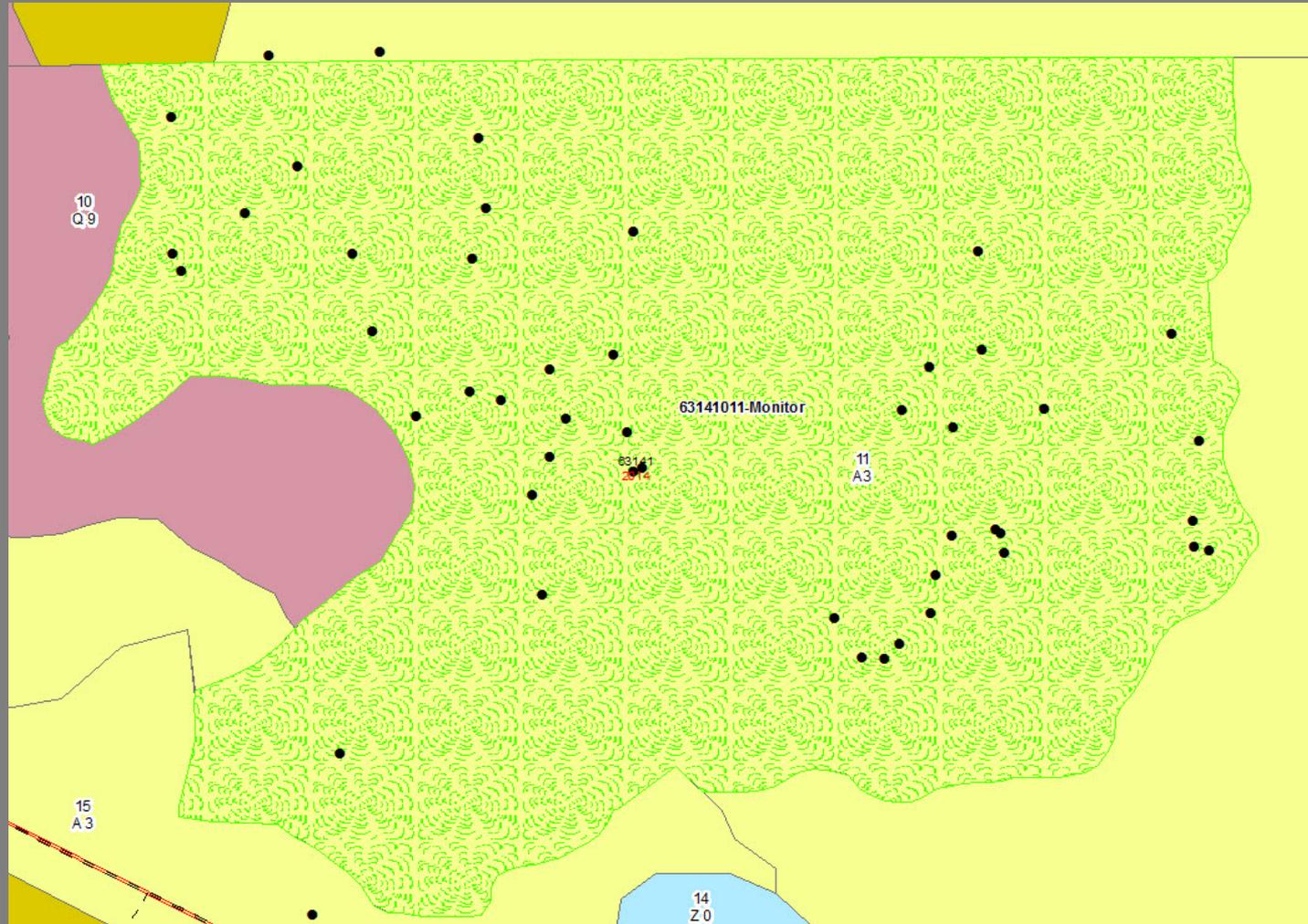
Recent examples of infection that occurred due to wounds occurring between April 15th and July 15th



Timber sale near Long Lake, Wexford County 2015



46 new oak wilt infections over 13 acres





Oak wilt management is expensive and intrusive.

Tree removals have negative impacts on recreational trails and campgrounds.



Prevention may impose some restrictions on some activities, but it is inexpensive and effective.

Many new infections are started because people were not aware of the risk posed by activities that may cause damage to red oak trees in the spring and early summer.





Michigan.gov/foresthealth



2015 Oak Wilt

