

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund



2025 Annual Report



Message from DNR Director Scott Bowen and MNRTF Chair Dr. Brandy Brown



Scott Bowen



Dr. Brandy Brown

The past 12 months have marked another exemplary year for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board of Trustees, continuing a perpetual legacy of providing funding for important land acquisitions and the development of numerous recreational projects throughout our state.

“With the rising cost for goods and services across so many different industries, public outdoor recreation provides a cost-effective way for individuals and families to find entertainment and fun at little or no cost,” said Dr. Brandy Brown, chairwoman of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board. “The Trust Fund plays a huge role in offering these spaces and places, which also help drive local economies and tourism.”

The number of Trust Fund-assisted projects over those almost five decades of effort totals over 3,000. Local units of government contribute matching funds to the projects and purchases providing important investment, joint ownership and pride in the results of these collaborative efforts.

“Year in and year out, these highly sought after and competitive Trust Fund grants demonstrate that there is a massive amount of need for Michigan communities, and this program is so nice to have to help address those needs,” Brown said. “We always have more requests for grants than funding available.”

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Scott Bowen, who also serves on the Trust Fund Board, said that each year the panel is presented with numerous creative and worthwhile projects to choose from, making the selection process difficult. “From a wider view, the grant process itself involves collaboration among grant applicants, DNR staff, the Trust Fund Board and the state Legislature passing the grant appropriations bill to make it all happen to get great projects out the door and on the ground in communities across Michigan,” Bowen said.

He added that there are numerous benefits to acquiring, preserving and developing public outdoor recreation spaces. “Not only do these developments promote good health, exercise and fitness, these projects also make sound investments in outdoor recreation.” Bowen said. “Year after year, the Trust Fund continues to contribute to the quality of life for our Great Lake state.”

Bipartisan legislation was implemented during the administration of Governor William Milliken that created the Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund, the predecessor of the Trust Fund. This occurred in 1976, America’s bicentennial year. The legislation directed royalties from the sale and lease of underground minerals, including oil and gas, into the Kammer Fund on behalf of Michigan residents. In an idea still unique to Michigan, money from the fund was used to purchase and improve public lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

What followed has been a tremendous legacy spreading the Trust Fund’s wealth over a half-century of important land acquisitions and development projects that have proved vital for counties and local communities across Michigan.

Trust Fund history

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund was established under the Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976 to provide a permanent funding source for the public acquisition of land for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. Subsequently, the program was enshrined for permanent protection within Article IX, Section 35 of Michigan's Constitution. Funding was provided by revenue derived from royalties on the sale and lease of state-administered oil, gas and mineral rights.

In 1984, the Trust Fund was expanded to allow funding development of public land. Per the Michigan Constitution, the maximum amount of accumulation of nonrenewable mineral royalties in the Trust Fund is \$500 million. This level was reached in 2011 and represents the permanent investment corpus. Today, the Trust Fund functions as a permanent endowment which funds grants, administration and payments in lieu of taxes to local government.

With the passage of Proposal 1 in 2020, the Trust Fund board is now able to exercise greater flexibility in balancing funding between acquisition and development projects. This allows the board to respond to the state's changing recreation needs by acting more nimbly in its annual project selections. That's because acquisition and development grants each receive a minimum of 25% of total funding, allowing the remaining 50% to go toward either acquisition or development projects based on the greatest needs and benefits, rather than a stipulated amount.

The Trust Fund has awarded over \$1.3 billion in grants to local units of government and state agencies for projects throughout all 83 Michigan counties. Of this total, \$297 million has been invested in trails. In excess of 1,000 public parks have been acquired, developed or both. Other projects funded have included ballfields, boating access sites, trailheads, restrooms and other amenities, for a total of 3,015 Trust Fund-assisted projects since 1976. To learn more about the Trust Fund visit Michigan.gov/MNRTF.

10-year grant history

Grant awards (dollars)				Number of grants		
Application Year	Acquisition	Development	Total	Acquisition	Development	Total
2015	19,926,000	8,031,200	27,957,200	26	44	70
2016	27,670,800	19,940,100	47,610,900	27	87	114
2017	28,852,900	21,014,000	49,866,900	34	97	131
2018	18,650,600	7,393,400	26,044,000	30	34	64
2019	17,199,800	11,500,000	28,699,800	18	60	78
2020	27,289,600	10,500,000	37,789,600	30	46	76
2021	22,299,700	23,292,500	45,592,200	22	95	117
2022	15,003,500	8,302,700	23,306,200	15	30	45
2023	17,518,500	9,820,600	27,339,100	18	35	53
2024	19,262,600	22,503,400	41,766,000	17	68	85
Total	213,674,000	142,297,900	355,971,900	237	596	833

Local and state acquisition and development projects, 1976-2024



Trust Fund Board

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board of Trustees, authorized by Public Act 451 of 1994, is composed of five members, including the director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources or a member of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, and four state residents appointed by the governor. The resident members serving in 2025 were Dr. Brandy Brown of Comstock, Christina MacInnes of Beulah, Steven Hamp of Ann Arbor and William R. Rustem of Mason. Scott Bowen represented the DNR as director. Board priorities for 2025 included land and water trails and regionally significant projects.

2025 MNRTF Board recommendations - development projects

County	Grantee	Project	Award
Allegan	City of Otsego	Riverfront Park Improvements	\$400,000
Allegan	City of the Village of Douglas	Blue Star Trail Expansion	\$215,000
Allegan	DNR - Marketing and Outreach Division	Echo Point Shooting Range Development	\$200,000
Allegan	Saugatuck Township	Expansion of the Blue Star Trail	\$400,000
Barry	DNR - Marketing and Outreach Division	Barry Shooting Range Development	\$200,000
Benzie	Village of Thompsonville	Paving the Betsie Valley Trail	\$299,100
Berrien	City of Buchanan	Riverfront Park Improvements	\$385,000
Berrien	Lincoln Charter Township	Lincoln Township Beach Bathroom	\$400,000
Calhoun	City of Marshall	* Marshall Riverwalk Improvements	\$200,000
Crawford	City of Grayling	M-72 East Trail - Rayburn Connector	\$400,000
Eaton	City of Pottersville	Lake Alliance Park Improvements	\$267,600
Genesee	City of Fenton	Bush Park Improvements	\$400,000
Genesee	Genesee County	* Stepping Stone Falls Lot Improvements	\$125,000
Gogebic	City of Bessemer	* Bessemer Iron Belle Trailhead Development	\$227,800
Grand Traverse	East Bay Township	Extension of the Three Mile Trail	\$400,000
Grand Traverse	East Bay Township	Holiday Woodlands Trail Development	\$300,000
Grand Traverse	Grand Traverse County	VASA Trailhead Improvements	\$400,000
Grand Traverse	Long Lake Township	Cedar Run Creek Natural Area Improvments	\$133,200
Gratiot	City of Alma	Overlook Deck-Accessibility Project-Riverside Park Pavilion	\$340,400
Houghton	Chassell Township	Sturgeon River Launch Project	\$106,200
Ingham	Meridian Charter Township	Meridian Regional Trailhead	\$349,600
Ionia	City of Ionia	McConnell Park Improvements	\$400,000
Iosco	Oscoda Charter Township	Oscoda Beach Park Restrooms/Showers Building	\$400,000
Iron	Mansfield Township	* Dawson Lake Park Improvements	\$289,800
Kent	Cannon Township	Cannonsburg Rd. Non-Motorized Path	\$400,000
Kent	Village of Sparta	Rogue River Park South Kayak Landing	\$275,000
Keweenaw	DNR - Parks and Recreation Division	Copper Harbor State Harbor Seawall and Binwall Upgrade	\$400,000
Lapeer	City of Imlay City	Imlay City Polly Ann Trailhead Improvements	\$400,000
Leelanau	Elmwood Charter Township	Cherry Bend Multi-use Trail Project	\$400,000
Leelanau	Leelanau County	Veronica Valley Lower Pond Trail Improvements	\$50,000
Livingston	Hamburg Township	Lakelands Trail Zukey Lake Footbridge Renovation	\$100,000
Mackinac	Clark Township	Kerri Mertaugh Multi-Use Path	\$296,000
Mecosta	City of Big Rapids	Big Rapids Clay Cliffs Nature Area Trail Project	\$391,400
Midland	Midland County	Sanford Lake Park Renovations	\$400,000
Monroe	City of Monroe	St. Mary's Park Redevelopment	\$400,000
Montcalm	Village of Lakeview	Tamarack Lake Trail Loop	\$400,000
Muskegon	Blue Lake Township	Grass Lake Development Project	\$90,000
Muskegon	City of Montague	Cullen Field Improvement Project	\$400,000
Muskegon	City of Norton Shores	Lake Harbor Park Splash Pad	\$190,500

* Iron Belle Trail projects

Development projects continued

County	Grantee	Project	Award	
Muskegon	Village of Fruitport	Pamona Park Shoreline Access and Trail Development	\$400,000	
Oakland	City of Lathrup Village	*	Lathrup Village Municipal Park Playground Replacement	\$400,000
Oakland	Oakland Charter Township	Blue Heron Environmental Area Trail Development	\$400,000	
Oakland	City of Rochester	Elizabeth Neighborhood Park Development	\$375,000	
Ottawa	City of Holland	Van Raalte Farm Park Boardwalk Project	\$400,000	
Ottawa	City of Hudsonville	Nature Center Development Project	\$400,000	
Ottawa	Ottawa County	Idema Explorers Trail - Bass River Segment	\$400,000	
Ottawa	Ottawa County	Rosy Mound Natural Area Improvements	\$400,000	
Ottawa	Village of Spring Lake	Central Park Redevelopment	\$400,000	
Saginaw	City of Saginaw	Bliss Park Improvements	\$400,000	
Saginaw	Zilwaukee Township	Zilwaukee Township Saginaw River Park Development	\$197,900	
Sanilac	Lexington Township	Cros-Lex Trail Revitalization	\$240,900	
St. Clair	City of Port Huron	Knox Park Development	\$250,000	
St. Clair	City of Port Huron	Lakeside Park Accessible Play Features	\$250,000	
St. Clair	City of Port Huron	Sanborn Park Restrooms	\$250,000	
Van Buren	South Haven Area Recreation Authority	Old Riverwoods Boardwalk Improvements	\$400,000	
Washtenaw	Washtenaw County	*	Parker Mill Park & B2B Trail Accessibility Improvements	\$400,000
Washtenaw	Ypsilanti Charter Township	North Bay Park Pavilion	\$308,600	
Wayne	City of Detroit	*	Clemente Park Inclusive Play Area	\$400,000
Wayne	DNR - Parks and Recreation Division	Belleville Lake West Boating Access Site Redevelopment	\$350,000	
Wexford	DNR - Michigan Historical Center	White Pine Trail Heritage and Signage Project	\$280,000	

2025 MNRTF Board recommendations - acquisition projects

County	Grantee	Project	Award	
Allegan	Saugatuck Township	Riverside Park Acquisition	\$2,464,300	
Eaton	Eaton County	Lincoln Brick Park Expansion	\$220,200	
Gogebic	DNR - Parks and Recreation Division	Porcupine Mountain State Park Addition	\$1,500,000	
Grand Traverse	East Bay Township	Ridge Nature Preserve Acquisition	\$4,813,600	
Ingham	City of Lansing	Railroad Parcel Acquisitions	\$400,000	
Kent	DNR - Parks and Recreation Division	*	Elmdale to Lowell Trail Acquisition	\$1,000,000
Keweenaw	DNR - Parks and Recreation Division	Keweenaw Heartlands Acquisition	\$6,500,000	
Macomb	Clinton Charter Township	George & Woody Park Land Acquisition	\$280,000	
Muskegon	City of Muskegon	Hartshorn Marina Expansion	\$730,200	
Newaygo	DNR - Wildlife Division	Muskegon State Game Area Land Consolidation	\$1,600,000	
Otsego	DNR - Forest Resources Division	Turtle Lake Acquisition	\$5,000,000	
Ottawa	Spring Lake Township	Petty's Bayou Waterfront Acquisition	\$840,000	
St. Clair	Kimball Township	Black River Access Acquisition	\$175,000	
St. Clair	City of Yale	Mill Creek Waterfront Acquisition	\$174,000	
Wayne	City of Detroit	Joe Louis Greenway - Salsinger Trailhead	\$168,700	

* Iron Belle Trail projects

Understanding how the Trust Fund works



Warren Gateway Trailhead Park, Detroit

In May 2011, the corpus of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund reached \$500 million and, in accordance with the Michigan Constitution, the funding formula of the Trust Fund changed significantly. New revenue from state-owned oil, gas and other mineral production stopped being deposited into the Trust Fund and started to be deposited in the State Park Endowment Fund. Funds available for grants from the Trust Fund, as well as payments in lieu of taxes and administrative costs, now come from interest and earnings on these invested funds.

The Michigan Department of Treasury manages the investment of the corpus to ensure grants will continue to be available. Adequate fund reserves are present to withstand variations in the market and to allow for continued stability in the fund. This strategy will maintain a vital Trust Fund for years to come. The estimated fiscal year 2025 ending investment balance of the Trust Fund is \$725.6 million.

Financial summary

Interest earnings and income:	\$75.6 million
Development project recommendations:	\$19.1 million
Acquisition project recommendations:	\$25.8 million
Property taxes paid on state land purchased:	\$2.8 million
Operating expenditures:	\$2.3 million



Paint Creek Trail, Orion Charter Township, Oakland County

About the cover photo

Front and back: Rosy Mound Natural Area, Ottawa County



Learn more about the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund at Michigan.gov/MNRTF.

Stay current on the latest Trust Fund news and other DNR information by subscribing to email updates. Visit Michigan.gov/DNREmail to sign up.

Questions: 517-28 GRANT (517-284-7268) or DNR-Grants@Michigan.gov.