



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
**Managed Public Land Strategy**  
*Highlights*

[www.michigan.gov/dnrlandstrategy](http://www.michigan.gov/dnrlandstrategy)

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## An overview

Michigan citizens own 4.6 million acres of land that is managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The land is managed to protect Michigan's natural and cultural resources, provide quality outdoor recreation opportunities and foster regional economic prosperity.

The DNR-Managed Public Land Strategy (Strategy) establishes a framework for the continued conservation, use and management of these public lands to provide an enhanced quality of life for Michigan residents, create jobs and protect the essence of Michigan's woods, waters, wildlife and other natural and cultural assets.

The DNR-Managed Public Land Strategy Advisory Committee was established in November 2012 to advise the DNR on land strategy development. The 17-member committee consisted of Michigan leaders from various geographical locations around the state representing important public land uses, including the Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Michigan Trout Unlimited, Michigan Recreation and Parks Association, Plum Creek Timber Company, Alliance for Economic Success, Northern Initiatives, Michigan State University and many more. Upon completion of the DNR Public Land Strategy in 2013, the committee was disbanded.

## How state land was acquired



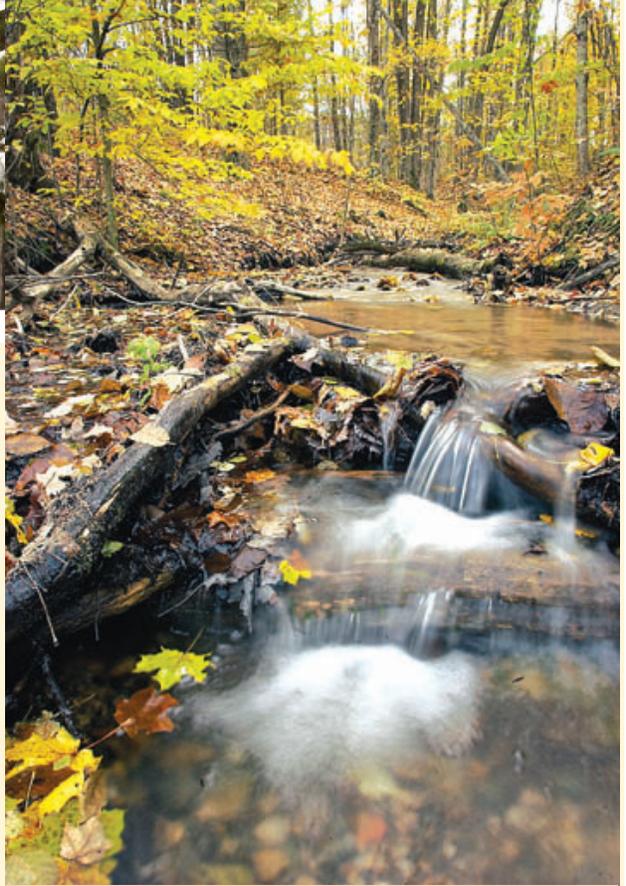
The Strategy builds on the strengths of Michigan's public land ownership: diversity of landscapes, quality of resources and opportunities, dispersed locations throughout the state, and use that supports local economies. These strengths allow DNR-managed public lands to be leveraged to grow local economies and provide a diverse portfolio of quality recreational opportunities. These opportunities attract tourists and retain residents while conserving the land's natural and cultural resource values. Successful implementation of the plan will be driven by collaboration with local units of governments, regional organizations, and the private and non-profit sectors. Implementing the strategy will ensure that the state's Pure Michigan brand is enhanced, and that the character and productive capacity of Michigan's wide array of natural and cultural resources are conserved for future generations.

## DNR-managed public lands

The DNR manages 4.6 million acres of public land and 6.4 million acres of mineral rights.

Of the 4.6 million acres of public lands, more than 3.8 million acres are designated as state forests, 352,000 acres are designated as state parks or recreation areas, and 360,000 acres are in designated state game areas. Over a period of more than 100 years, these lands were acquired using a variety of funding sources. Many of the lands came to the state's portfolio through tax reversion. The acquisition funding source defines how the lands may be used.





## DNR-managed public lands support Michigan's reinvention by:

- Supporting a timber industry that generated \$17.9 billion for Michigan's economy;
- Yielding timber sales that result in more than one million cords of wood being harvested annually for market;
- Providing the backbone of Michigan's \$22.2 billion tourism industry (six of Michigan's top 10 tourist destinations are managed by the DNR);
- Making it possible to host 1 million visitor camp nights and 22 million visitors in Michigan state parks;
- Providing more than 12,000 miles of trails and 2,623 miles of rail-trails—the most rail-trails of any state;
- Supporting hunting and fishing opportunities, with hunting and fishing, respectively, generating \$2.3 billion and \$2.4 billion annually for Michigan's economy, much of that driven by easy access to public lands;
- Providing access to 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas storage capacity in depleted oil fields, the greatest volume of any state, with 13 percent of that capacity on DNR-managed public lands;
- Giving access to the most diverse portfolio of freshwater fishing in the world, allowing Michigan the designation as a top destination for fly fishing and bass fishing;
- Providing natural benefits such as air pollution removal, water quality protection, wildlife habitat and stormwater management;
- Allowing for the stabilization of local property values and adding substantially to Michigan's quality of life; and
- Providing 1,300 boating access sites and 84 public harbors/marinas, which support Michigan's \$4 billion boating industry.

*Public lands are an important part of Michigan's reinvention, both for recreation and resource-based industries. Having a comprehensive management policy for what land the state owns, and why, will help guide the quantity, location and use of our public lands to better serve citizens.*

- Governor Rick Snyder



# Goals, desired outcomes and measurable objectives

## GOAL: Provide quality outdoor public recreation opportunities

### Desired outcomes

- Citizens and tourists experience Michigan's incredible natural and cultural resources through diverse, adaptable and accessible outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Michigan's population has the opportunity to be physically active through outdoor recreation opportunities.
- The recreational system in the state is planned, developed and managed collaboratively among all recreation providers.
- Provide public access every five miles on the Great Lakes.
- Provide access every mile on Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River from Lake Huron to Lake Erie.
- Designate public water trails that have appropriate signs, amenities and promotion on 30 percent of Michigan's navigable waters, five connected lake systems, and 75 percent of the Great Lakes and connecting channels shoreline.
- Provide a well-maintained, interconnected system of multi-use trails that are within five miles of 90 percent of Michigan's citizens.

### Measurable objectives

- Complete a road plan that ensures motorized and non-motorized access to public land.
- Provide access for every citizen to 500-acre blocks of public land within 15 miles of their residence.
- Increase access to the amount of land available for dispersed public recreation in southern Michigan by 25 percent with emphasis on areas with low per capita access.
- Work with Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) regions and local partners to establish unique natural or cultural resource brands for each region.
- Work with local governments to provide public access on all priority lakes over 100 acres.
- Provide access to 25 percent of smaller lakes (less than 100 acres in size) that have a publicly important recreation opportunity.
- Complete a gap analysis of existing access points on navigable or publicly important rivers and streams, and fill identified gaps by providing public access every six miles on larger river systems and at least one location on smaller stream systems.
- Provide a safe harbor of refuge system on the Great Lakes with one harbor every 30 miles.
- Fill critical linkages to complete the five Great Lakes lake-to-lake linear trails.
- Fill critical linkages to complete the proposed hike and bike trail system from Belle Isle to Ironwood, Mich.
- Develop an interconnected snowmobile trail system on secure permanent easements.
- Create an interconnected system of equestrian trails in Southeast Michigan by connecting equestrian looped routes.
- Provide at least 4,000 miles of safe and connected off-road vehicle (ORV) opportunities.
- Develop bike connections to the state's extensive off-road multi-use recreation trail network to create better access for communities, neighborhoods and families.
- Complete the acquisition and development of the 400 undeveloped miles of the 1,150-mile North Country National Scenic Trail within the state.
- Revitalize Michigan's core urban areas by working with partners to establish five signature parks and integrate green infrastructure into Michigan's urban redesign and redevelopment efforts.



## GOAL: Foster regional economic prosperity

### Desired outcomes

- Outdoor recreation opportunities that enhance local and regional economies and assist in retaining and attracting youth and other critical workers.
- Thriving and sustainable state forest products industries that support communities by providing jobs, products and diverse and resilient forests.
- Establish Michigan as one of America's favorite four-seasons travel experiences.
- Strong and sustainable oil and gas industries that promote national security, maximize production opportunities and minimize adverse impacts.
- Extraction of non-renewable resources on DNR-managed public lands that provide sustainable funding for investments in public land, another non-renewable resource.
- Michigan's unique geology promoted for natural gas storage to stabilize energy costs and ensure natural gas supply.
- Strong metallic and nonmetallic mineral industries that leverage unique geological opportunities, minimize adverse resource impacts and provide sustained prosperity to local economies.
- A renewable energy industry that becomes competitive by capitalizing on Michigan's unique geology.
- Vibrant fisheries and wildlife-based industries that promote Michigan's world-class fisheries and wildlife opportunities and sustain local economies.

### Measurable objectives

- Meet the sustainable timber harvest goals as established in the regional forest management plans.
- Continue to hold regular oil and gas lease auctions to make leasable DNR-managed public lands available for production.
- Increase in tourism at historic parks by 3 percent.
- Increase nonresident state park passes from 250,000 to 275,000.
- Increase overnight stays at marinas by 3 percent.
- Increase the annual number of anglers who purchase a fishing license for the first time from 245,790 to 260,000.
- Increase the number of new hunters who purchase a hunting license from 99,361 to 110,000 each year.
- Increase participation in nonconsumptive wildlife-based outdoor recreation by 10 percent.
- Implement a marketing strategy that highlights Michigan's unique natural and cultural assets in partnership with Pure Michigan.
- Maintain the number of licensed charter boats above 500 statewide.



## GOAL: Protect natural and cultural resources for future generations

### Desired outcomes

- High-quality natural and cultural resources.
- Diversity of resilient cover types and natural communities that sustain healthy ecosystems and species populations.
- Michigan's identity as the Great Lakes State is sustained.

### Measurable objectives

- Achieve habitat management goals for grassland, mesic conifer, aspen cover types and wetlands to assist in achieving the goals as stated in the Upper Mississippi & Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (waterfowl), Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative, American Woodcock Conservation Plan and North American Waterfowl Management Plan.
- Maintain or enhance quality of natural communities found in designated areas such as Natural Areas, Natural Rivers or Critical Dunes.
- Pursue and maintain third party certification to ensure sustainable, healthy forests.
- Achieve population goals for state and federally listed nongame species as defined in recovery plans, including those for the Karner blue butterfly, Kirtland's warbler and piping plover.
- Double the number of acres involved in habitat partnership projects from the 2013 baseline.
- Work with partners to develop a protection strategy for 10 critical, culturally significant, rare and unique places in state parks.
- Develop a comprehensive database of known cultural features on state land.
- Develop a strategy using current GIS-based classification systems to protect representative river, lake and Great Lakes coastal habitats in each region by 2015.
- Conserve and manage aquatic species and their habitats as identified in Fisheries Division's strategic plan, Charting the Course.



## Future land management and ownership

### Key Actions

Over the next six years, the DNR will focus regionally and act collaboratively. The DNR will move aggressively to link facilities, become more data-driven, unify plans with regions and local units of governments, focus on quality of facilities and increase marketing. The DNR will continue to use technology to drive land management decisions and make it easier for local government, citizens and stakeholders to access available data. The DNR will seek continuous quality improvement in our technology systems to allow for the department, its partners and the public to understand and participate in transparent public land management decisions.

*DNR manages its land portfolio for the people of this state. The portfolio of lands must reflect the wishes of the public for recreation, economic prosperity and the legacy they wish to leave their children's children. This strategy reflects the desires of Michigan's citizens.*

- Keith Creagh,  
DNR Director

### Land disposal

The Strategy identifies a new approach for ownership of DNR-managed lands that builds upon past initiatives to consolidate DNR-managed lands.

The DNR will identify lands for potential disposal under five considerations:

1. Parcels that are either:
  - a. 200 acres or less and don't adjoin other DNR-managed public lands.
  - b. Difficult to administer due to the irregular shape of their boundaries.
 Lands meeting these criteria have been identified and total approximately 240,000 acres.
2. Lands lacking public access.
3. Lands nominated by field managers because of concerns with management effectiveness and efficiencies, or to reduce user conflict.
4. Lands that were identified in previous consolidation efforts and unsuccessfully offered to conservation partners.
5. Large blocks of land to be made available for exchange with similar blocks of land for purposes of consolidating ownership.

The 240,000 acres and other identified potential surplus lands will be reviewed by the DNR, local units of government and the public on a county-by-county basis using criteria that recognize the metrics identified in this Strategy. Based upon the criteria, parcels will be placed into one of four categories: dispose, offer to a local unit of government or alternative conservation owner, make available for exchange, or retain in state ownership.





## Targeted investments

The DNR will pursue targeted strategic investments in land located within priority areas that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Support the goals, outcomes and measurable objectives identified in the Strategy.
- Contribute to existing initiatives or plans, (e.g., trail corridor acquisition for strategic trail connections).
- Resolve user conflict.
- Improve the quality of the state's land portfolio or the user's experience.



## Project boundary review

The DNR will improve project boundary alignment of DNR-managed lands to more closely reflect actual land ownership. Currently, there are approximately 1.9 million acres of privately owned lands scattered within DNR-managed project boundaries, geographic lines that help define the state's public lands acquisition and disposal strategy. Moving forward, the DNR will focus on the goal of reducing (by 1 million acres) the amount of private lands within DNR-managed project boundaries by more closely aligning the boundaries of state recreation areas, state game areas and state forests with current and realistically anticipated future ownership. The remaining privately owned lands within the boundaries will be acquired only if they further the Strategy's measurable objectives and will be acquired on a willing buyer/willing seller basis. In other cases, boundaries will be expanded to reflect priority acquisitions, especially in southern Michigan.

## Reference sources

The DNR integrated input from the following plans and sources:

*Act 240, 2012*

*DNR Scorecard*

*Great Lakes Water Trail Plan*

*Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan*

*Michigan Historical Center*

*Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan*

*State Forest Management Plan*

*Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan*

*Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*

*GPS - Wildlife Strategic Plan*

*Charting the Course Fisheries Strategic Plan*



## Key actions from 2013-2019

Refocusing ownership, measuring progress toward meeting desired outcomes and implementing measurable objectives will precipitate significant change in the management of DNR-managed lands and the engagement model of the DNR. The DNR will move forward with the following transparent actions as they relate to the management of DNR managed lands:

### Become data driven

The DNR has significant data that is used for management of wildlife and fisheries resources and the management of state lands for oil, gas, timber and mineral production and recreation, which also may be valuable in regional economic prosperity initiatives.

### Focus regionally

The DNR will become a more active player in regional planning initiatives due to the tremendous economic asset it manages—the state's public lands.

### Link facilities

The DNR commits to linking people and facilities across a broad range of ownership types with the outdoors. This can be accomplished by identifying critical trail connections and focusing on completing those priority linkages and increasing programming, stewardship and volunteer opportunities to connect people to their outdoor "places."

### Participate in integrated planning

Ensure that DNR-managed lands meet the needs of local and regional economies through collaboration and cooperation.

### Increase collaboration

The DNR will work collaboratively with its partners to improve the outdoor recreation system of the state, enhance the quality and diversity of its facilities, grow Michigan's resource-based economy, restore habitats and species and protect cultural resources.

### Focus on the quality of facilities

The DNR will maintain quality facilities to retain and attract visitors.

### Increase marketing

The DNR will focus its marketing efforts to fully leverage all of the recreational, natural and cultural resource protection and economic benefits provided by DNR-managed public lands.

