



Little Presque Isle Trails Review

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has detailed its recommendations for designated non-motorized trails at the Little Presque Isle tract, a 3,040-acre outdoor recreation site popular with hikers and mountain bikers, located roughly five miles northwest of Marquette.

Background

- In 1996, there were 19 miles of hiking trails originally sanctioned at Little Presque Isle.
- Trails now located within the tract are a combination of those trails established under a management strategy completed in 1996, and a number of unauthorized trails built by users that have become established since then.
- In May 2015, the Friends of Harlow submitted a trails proposal to the DNR, seeking designation of 19.6 miles of mountain biking trails at Little Presque Isle.
- Over the past several months, a team of field professionals from the DNR's Parks, Wildlife and Forest Resources divisions has been compiling information and evaluating on-the-ground conditions along the trails at Little Presque Isle.

Trail recommendations

- The DNR is recommending 17.1 miles of those trails proposed by the Friends of Harlow be designated for mountain biking. In addition, the DNR is recommending 10.3 miles of trail be designated for winter biking. There are overlaps between the winter and summer proposed biking trail designations.
- DNR staff evaluated the existing hiking trails, roads and an abandoned railroad grade to determine where mountain biking would be an appropriate use, considering other users, environmental factors and sensitive ecological areas.
- The DNR team said the trails of primary concern were those situated within wooded dune and swale complex and mesic northern forest ecological reference areas (ERA).
- ERAs are portions of state forest recognized for their contribution to the landscape as areas of exceptional conservation value. They are higher quality examples of functioning ecosystems that are primarily influenced by natural ecological processes.
- An ERA identifies a geographic area where there is emphasis on conserving biological diversity achieved through maintaining these high-quality native natural communities, with a long term goal of ensuring these communities are conserved as examples of Michigan's biological diversity.

Wooded dune and swale

- Within the 604-acre wooded dune and swale complex – composed primarily of multi-aged red pine forest with white and jack pine, paper birch and red oak – the DNR is recommending the elimination of mountain biking on trails east of Marquette County Road 550.
- The DNR is also recommending eliminating and mitigating some existing hiking trails to reduce trail density and erosion within this sensitive area.
- For the west side of County Road 550, the DNR is recommending elimination of a portion of proposed mountain biking trail to reduce trail density in this portion of the ecological reference area.
- The trail mitigation efforts would be conducted to reduce the amount of unnecessary trail intersections, trail crossings and current and potential erosion into Harlow Creek.

Mesic northern forest

- Within the 193-acre mesic northern forest ERA – composed mostly of old hemlock, with scattered white pine and a mixture of yellow birch and sugar and red maple – the DNR is recommending the removal of most of the trail used by mountain bikers and hikers within this ERA.
- Two trail segments, which lie on the outer edges of the boundary of this ERA, are recommended to be retained. These trails provide connectivity for the rest of the Little Presque Isle trail system.

Winter biking

- In addition, the DNR is recommending designating 10.3 miles of trail west of County Road 550 for winter (fat tire) biking. All of the additional trails at Little Presque Isle would be closed to mountain bikes during winter, Dec. 1 through April 15.

Decision process

- The trail maps and other information provided at the open house are [now available online at the DNR's website](#) and at the DNR's Marquette Customer Service Center, located at 1990 U.S.-41 South in Marquette.
- Today's open house kicks off a 30-day period for submitting written public comments on the DNR trails recommendations. Afterward, the DNR will compile the comments received and consider potential revisions to its trails proposal.
- An internal departmental review will then be conducted. Once this process has concluded, the trails proposal will be finalized, announced and put into effect, guiding future use of the non-motorized trails at the Little Presque Isle tract.
- To submit written comments through **Oct. 19, 2016**, send email to <mailto:DNR-LPI-Trails@michigan.gov> or write to Michigan Department of Natural Resources, LPI-Trails Comments, 1990 U.S. 41 South, Marquette, MI 49855.