



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
News Release No. 3 – June 18, 2018

Flooding and Washouts Force Temporary Closures in Western Upper Peninsula

LANSING, MICH. Crews conducting storm damage assessments today for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said the weekend storm that hit the southeastern end of the Keweenaw Peninsula did extensive damage to the area's trail system.

"We have at least 50, probably more, washouts on our trails system, most between Dollar Bay and Calumet on Lake Linden grade," said Ron Yesney, DNR U.P. trails coordinator. "There are other washouts on the Freda grade, Bill Nichols Grade, and right in Hancock, as well."

Thunderstorms that dumped as much as 7 inches of rain in 9 hours early Sunday produced extensive flooding in Houghton and Keweenaw counties that forced the DNR to close several facilities until further notice.

Crews are out working hard to assess damage and make repairs to re-open facilities as soon as it is safe to do so. All state parks in the Upper Peninsula remain open.

Floodwaters buckled and broke pavement along steep streets in the city of Houghton, crippling transportation. Large gorges were dug by the rainwater racing down and across roads, leaving piles of rocks, gravel and other debris, while the Portage Canal swelled and backed-up beyond its banks.

The National Weather Service Office in Marquette said very heavy rains fell Saturday night into Sunday morning, with widespread reports of 3 to 6 inches of rain, and higher totals in isolated areas.

Weather forecasters said many roads were washed out from Lake Linden through Dollar Bay, Hancock and Houghton. A flood warning issued Sunday night for the Sturgeon River near Alston remained in effect today for Houghton and Baraga counties.

In addition, flood advisories were in effect for the Sturgeon River near Chassell in Houghton County and the Black River near Bessemer in Gogebic County.

The DNR's Lily Pond boating access site along the Portage Canal was closed Sunday after damage was reported to the road and boating launch. The site remains closed until further notice. The Boston Pond boating access site is also closed because of flooding and damage.

Conservation officers patrolling the Portage Canal Sunday said roads leading to boating access sites and other amenities looked like rivers.

The most extensive damage to DNR facilities reported so far is to trails.

“We have around 70 to 80 miles of state-managed rail grade affected in these counties,” Jeff Kakuk, DNR western Upper Peninsula trails specialist, said today. “I have requested full off-road vehicle trail closures in Houghton and Keweenaw counties until we can assess the damage.

“The county road systems are also affected, and travel is difficult in many areas, due to closures and single-lane travel.”

Access to F.J. McLain State Park is available only from the north along M-203, via US-41.

Farther west and south, there were minor washouts reported on the Sidnaw to Bergland and Iron River to Marenisco trails local off-road vehicle clubs were said to be working on repairing today.

“Riders should ride with caution as trail conditions may change rapidly, and trail repairs may be in progress,” Kakuk said.

Several campsites have standing water at Baraga State Park in Baraga County. Storms Friday toppled trees along the South Boundary Road, and some interior trails, at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Ontonagon and Gogebic counties.

DNR staffers were assessing short-term and longer-term needs today. Some of the items on the immediate needs list included a needs assessment, damage assessment and appraisal work.

For the latest information on closures of DNR-managed facilities, visit the DNR’s webpage at: www.michigan.gov/dnrclosures.

The public is encouraged to monitor local media for up-to-date weather reports and emergency information. For updated information and additional safety tips, follow the MSP/EMHSD on Twitter at [@MichEMHS](https://twitter.com/MichEMHS) or visit www.michigan.gov/miready.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

John Pepin
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
906-226-1352 or pepinj@michigan.gov