



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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DNR Says Recreation Goes On in Houghton County

LANSING, MICH. Although a catastrophic rain event on Sunday, June 17, left many area recreation trails impassable, most Michigan Department of Natural Resources facilities in the Copper Country remain open for business, according to Doug Rich, district supervisor for the department's Parks and Recreation division.

"All of our local state parks are still open, including McLain, Fort Wilkins, Baraga and Twin Lakes. Our state forest campground at Emily Lake is open as well" said Rich. "Boaters and anglers should know that even though there are a handful of boating access sites temporarily closed because of storm damage, they can still use the majority of our local boat ramps." Boating access sites remain closed until further notice at Lily Pond, Boston Pond, Bootjack, Otter Lake and Otter Dam, all in Houghton County.

McLain State Park users generally take highway M-203 heading north from Hancock to get to the park. Because of a washout on that portion of M-203, visitors are being redirected to Calumet, then west on M-203 to the park entrance.

Recognizing that fixing recreational trails is secondary to repair of area homes, businesses, and roads, DNR officials are nevertheless looking ahead to restoring an important part of the local economy as quickly as possible. "Snowmobiling, hiking, ATV riding, and other trail use is huge in the Copper Country. With the 200-plus inches of snow they get most winters, that area is a mecca for trail riders from all over the state and beyond" said Ron Olson, chief of Parks and Recreation for DNR. "Area businesses count on our trail system to support a big part of their livelihood."

The Michigan economy captured \$156 million of direct spending on snowmobiling trips in the winter of 2008-09, according to a 2010 Michigan State University economic study commissioned by the DNR. That same study showed those trips supported 1,819 jobs in Michigan that winter. The report indicated a significant contribution of snowmobiling to Michigan's recreation economy.

DNR trail count records show an average of about 400 snowmobile trips per day on the trail from Ripley to Lake Linden. The trail from Twin Lakes to Houghton averages about 800 trips per day. Many riders patronize local motels, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores and other businesses.

"We've completed an initial assessment of damage to the area trails. Our ground crews found 150 washouts on about 60 miles of trail, not to mention need for extensive grading and resurfacing. Repair is going to take a long time, a lot of people and millions of dollars" said Rich. "Our immediate concern involves looking over the trail system for any remaining threats to public safety and private property. Then the long haul of trail restoration begins."

"Now that we've got our initial evaluation done and trail closures in place, we can focus on cleaning out plugged culverts that might cause problems with the next big rain event" said Brian Mensch, a forest fire supervisor leading a DNR incident management team assigned to initiate a response to this event. "We

have additional people and equipment coming in from all over the state, but we are just getting started. This is going to take many months, even years, to get back to normal.”

Mensch also addressed environmental issues associated with trail restoration. “These trails all follow old railroad grades. Wherever those grades cross streams, we’ll be having Department of Environmental Quality staff review our plans to make sure we’re not creating water quality issues with our repair efforts.”

Hazards remain on many area roads, trails, and waterways. The DNR advises travelers, campers, and boaters to use caution in affected areas and to be alert for unstable or dangerous conditions.

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

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The SEOC is the emergency operations center for the state of Michigan. Located in Lansing, the SEOC is overseen by the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division and coordinates response and recovery efforts by state agencies and local government. The SEOC is staffed by members of state agencies for decision making and information coordination during disasters or emergencies in the state of Michigan.

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