Mission of MDNR

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the State’s natural resources for current and future generations.
Forest Recreation Numbers in Michigan

There are:
- 29 million annual fishing days
- 2.4 million annual snowmobile days
- 4.2 million annual ORV days
- 18.4 million annual hunter days
- 2.8 million annual wildlife viewing days
  - Snowmobiling, ORV riding, and Wildlife Viewing are the only numbers that have grown over the past 10 years

State Priorities

- Resource Conservation
- Trails
- Community Outdoor Recreation
- Forest Recreation Infrastructure
- State Park Infrastructure
- Coordination and Communication

State’s Actions for Public Access

- Offering Trust Fund grants to local governments
- Partnering with conservancies in the acquisition of easements and land
- Consolidating unusable state land and using profits to fund purchase of lands for public recreation
- Land exchanges

Snowmobile Trails

- Key Points
  - 60% of Snowmobile Trails in the U.P. are on private land; relying mainly on Corporate Lands.
  - There are 3,000 miles of snowmobile trail in the U.P. There are 6,200 miles statewide.
  - 58,133 snowmobiles traveled the Bill Nichols trail last winter. That is the highest total ever recorded.
Snowmobile Trails

• More Facts
  – Michigan has 309,995 registered snowmobilers. That ranks first in the nation
  – Our 6,200 miles of trail ranks us ninth in the nation behind New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, Idaho, Maine, and New Hampshire
  – The snowmobile program is self-funding, it derives no money from the general fund
  – The average Snowmobiler:
    • Is 41 years old. 37% are 50 and older
    • Has household income of $70,000
    • Spends $4,000 per year on snowmobiling
    • Spends 7.2 nights per year in a motel while snowmobiling
    • Rides 990 miles per year
  – Over $1 billion in economic impact is generated by snowmobiling in Michigan
  – Over 6,455 full time jobs are created by snowmobiling in Michigan

• The Future of Snowmobiling = Sno-Country By-Ways Conservancy
  – A permanent trails program developed by the Michigan Snowmobile Association to enable clubs to purchase permanent easements for snowmobile trails
  • The mechanism for doing it has not yet been developed or agreed to
  – Once implemented, this program should save snowmobile clubs a lot of time and effort, eliminate constant reroutes, and enable businesses and communities to plan for the future with a secured trail in place

ORV Trails

• Key Points
  – Upper Peninsula ORV routes and trails are widely dispersed and not interconnected
  – All trails are on Federal or State lands
  – There are 305 miles of ORV trail in the West U.P. There are 3,000 miles statewide. 700 miles of this is motorcycle trail, not suitable for use by ATV’s
  – The program is working on ways to meet the demands of the user group. The sport is growing fast
  – 5,000 ORV’s traveled the Bill Nichols trail last summer. That number is increasing every year.

• Potential
  – ORV sales in Michigan have outpaced snowmobile sales for the last several years
  – Many ORV riders are looking for a point to point trail riding experience similar to what is offered in the snowmobile program
  – There is a need to develop more ORV trail mileage to accommodate users

• Struggles and Pitfalls
  – The ORV user groups are not as well organized as snowmobilers. A statewide umbrella organization needs development. Local groups need to get more involved
Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding

- These numbers are hard to develop
- It is estimated that these numbers have increased over the last 10 years
- Many municipal groups and non-profits provide for this type of recreation
- Paddle sports are estimated to have seen a dramatic increase

Land Control – Acquisitions, Easements, etc

- Funding
  - Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
  - Recreational Trails Program
  - Recreational Improvement Fund
  - MDOT Intermodal Enhancement Funds
  - ORV Grant Funds
  - Snowmobile Grant Funding
  - Foundations and advocacy organizations

- What to do?
  - Get involved
  - Grass roots, community driven projects are most successful
  - Don’t sit back and wait
  - If you’ve got a project in mind, contact MDNR and then get community and legislator support

Trail Expansion and Development

- Where and how?
  - Work on connecting trails via Corporate lands and County roads
  - Coordinate acquisition of more rail-trails. Governor Granholm has recently made public comments about the importance of connecting Michigan communities via trails
  - Work together to develop projects
  - $1,000,000 dollar Trust Fund grant recently received for the acquisition of Trailways in MI.

Thank you

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