

Michigan designates first state water trails

Sarah Rahal, The Detroit News

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(Photo: David Kenyon, MI Dept. of Natural Resources)

Eight waterways flowing through a dozen counties have been dubbed the first state-designated water trails in Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources announced.

The water trails total 540 miles and are designed for boaters and visitors on lakes, rivers, canals and bays. They have been revamped to include access points with significant historical, environmental or cultural points of interests officials said.

They have placed the access points near restaurants, hotels and campgrounds for weekend-long stays.

The DNR, in partnership with the Office of the Great Lakes, finalized the first round of designated water trails,

which include:

- Central River Raisin Water Trail, 11 miles in Monroe County
- Chain of Lakes Water Trail, more than 80 miles in Antrim and Kalkaska counties
- Huron River Water Trail, 104 miles in Livingston, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties
- Island Loop Route, 10 miles in St. Clair County
- Flint River Trail, 72 miles in Genesee and Lapeer counties
- Middle Grand River Water Trail, 87 miles in Clinton, Eaton, Ingham and Ionia counties
- Shiawassee River Trail, 88 miles in Genesee, Oakland, Saginaw and Shiawassee counties
- Upper Grand River Water Trail, 91 miles in Eaton, Ingham and Jackson counties



Eight waterways totaling 540-plus miles that flow through more than a dozen counties have been selected as the first state-designated water trails in Michigan. (Photo: DNR)

Michigan has more miles of Great Lakes coastline than any other state and thousands of miles of rivers and streams, according to the [DNR's website](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79133_79206---,00.html?utm_campaign=1st+state+designated+water+trails&utm_medium=pr&utm_source=govdelivery) (https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79133_79206---,00.html?utm_campaign=1st+state+designated+water+trails&utm_medium=pr&utm_source=govdelivery). The use of waterways for transportation in Michigan is not new. Native-Americans used them for sustenance and trade; early European settlers used them to transport goods and timber; and, water resources were the foundation of Michigan's earliest manufacturing and shipping industries.

Over the last several months, the DNR cultivated the program with the help of Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee, the Michigan State Waterways Commission, the Michigan Trails Advisory Council and the Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup.

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“Water trails naturally are an increasing trend in Michigan and throughout the country, as interest in paddle sports and other water-based recreation continues to grow,” said DNR Parks and Recreation Chief Ron Olson. “We are pleased to help advance these opportunities by recognizing model public water trails that set the standard for future of Michigan’s water trails program.”

Paul Yauk, the DNR’s state trails coordinator, said that Michigan’s outdoor recreation-based tourism is experiencing major growth.

“Designating these rivers as official water trails shines an even brighter light on some incredible natural resources. We fully expect that offering – and expanding – water trail opportunities in Michigan will encourage more outdoor recreation and healthier lifestyles, and also serve as regional destinations that will give a boost to local economies,” Yauk said.

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