the OHIO TRAILS VISION

2019

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Division of Parks and Watercraft

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FROM OHIO GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE

We have so much to see and do in Ohio, and our thousands of miles of trails are part of what makes our state special, unique, and wonderful.

Ohio's trails are a passport to some of the state's most scenic locations. They provide a way to escape the stresses of everyday life and enjoy our natural wonders.

The 2019 Ohio Trails Vision serves as a framework to manage and promote our trails, and I appreciate the efforts of everyone involved in this project, with special thanks to Senator Sean O'Brien, Senator Steve Wilson, and the Ohio Trails Partnership.

I also invite Ohioans to experience our wonderful trails firsthand. Whether it's walking, biking, hiking, or horseback riding, our trails provide opportunities to enjoy the beauty of Ohio and take in the wonders of our natural resources.

Mike DeWine
Governor

FROM ODNR DIRECTOR MARY MERTZ

Ohio's extensive system of trails is a gateway to exploration of our state's abundant and diverse natural resources. Our trails bring people together, provide alternative transportation routes, promote healthy living, and have a significant positive impact on our economy – influencing home-buying decisions and serving as travel destinations for people in and out of our state. I am proud of Ohio's extraordinary trail system.

Meeting the recreational and destination needs of a wide range of trail users requires partnership and planning at multiple levels. Jumpstarting that process, State Senators Steve Wilson and Sean O'Brien created the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus, which became a catalyst for an updated statewide trails plan. I thank them for their leadership and passion for Ohio's trails.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources was committed to the success of this plan and creating it in collaboration with trail enthusiasts across the spectrum. The result is the 2019 Ohio Trails Vision, a comprehensive framework to guide partnerships today and in the future for trail development, connectivity, and maintenance throughout the state.

Broad participation by trail supporters, users, advocates, and recreation providers, along with the state and local government officials, was invaluable. My thanks to the Ohio Trails Partnership, whose persistence was key to realizing the trails plan update. I appreciate your time and effort; without it, this plan would not have come to fruition.

I am proud of the collaboration between ODNR and the Trails Advisory Team. While listening to and considering so many public comments, you brought to the table your years of trails experience and developed a dynamic trails plan that will serve Ohioans well into the future.

In all that we do at the ODNR – from planning new trails to restoration of endangered species – we achieve our mission of protection and wise use of Ohio's natural resources through sound science, with integrity, and respect for those whom we serve.

Mary Mertz
Director

FOREWORD

Ohio is blessed to have an extensive trails network of more than 5,000 trail miles. From the Ohio to Erie Trail, which spans more than 326 miles from Cincinnati to Cleveland, to the 1,400-mile Buckeye Trail that reaches into every corner of the state.

Preserving and expanding our trails is incredibly important as they provide a multitude of benefits for the citizens and communities throughout Ohio. In addition to promoting good health and boosting local economies, trails draw people together. They allow friends and families to step away from televisions and computers to share an outdoor experience together.

In early 2017, we were approached by several trail advocacy groups interested in improving and expanding Ohio's already impressive trail system. In response, we co-founded the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus (OLTC), the nation's first-ever bipartisan, bicameral state-level legislative caucus dedicated entirely to trails and the environment.

The goal of this caucus was, and is, to bring together like-minded legislators who can work at the state level to advocate for trails and do all they could to support trail development and connectivity throughout Ohio.

Our colleagues at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) have been invaluable and enthusiastic partners on this journey. Notably, the department took immediate steps to address the OLTC's two priorities: the launch of a new Ohio trails website, trails.ohiodnr.gov, achieved in 2018 during "Ohio's Year of the Trail." The second was a long overdue update of the statewide trails plan, which you now hold in your hand: The 2019 Ohio Trails Vision.

We in the OLTC are proud of all the work that went into producing this document. While the publishing of the plan is an achievement in and of itself, the Ohio Trails Vision identifies additional areas for progress. We look forward to continuing our work with our OLTC colleagues, the ODNR, the Ohio Department of Transportation, TourismOhio, and others to make the Buckeye State the best place in America to live, work, and raise a family.

State Senator Sean O'Brien
Co-Chairman
(D-Bazetta)

State Senator Steve Wilson
Co-Chairman
(R-Maineville)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ohio Trails Partnership (OTP), a group of non-motorized trail advocates and managers, successfully worked with State Senators Sean O'Brien and Steve Wilson to establish the Ohio Trails Legislative Caucus in 2017. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) was invited to participate in a series of meetings designed to advance trails in the state. Working with the OTP and caucus, ODNR committed to creating a new plan that would promote and advance public recreational trails throughout Ohio. This Ohio Trails Vision is the result of that commitment.

Recreational trails are extremely popular in Ohio. Communities across the state are planning and building trails to provide residents with more opportunities to live healthy, active lifestyles. The strength of the state's trail system is the diversity of experiences it offers, with systems available for bicyclists, walkers, runners, hikers, paddlers, equestrians, motorized users, and more.

To create the Ohio Trails Vision, ODNR assembled an ad hoc Trails Advisory Team comprised of 24 trail advocates, planners, managers and users from across the state. This team crafted the Ohio Trails Vision statement and eight visionary goals to help guide the trail system. This vision and goals will help advance Ohio as a destination for recreational trails.

The team also helped formulate the public input process and assembled findings and recommendations to help implement the vision. During June and July in 2018, 290 trail constituents provided feedback at five public meetings held around the state. The online survey, which ran from late August through October, received more than 7,600 responses.

Several themes emerged from the public outreach effort. Partnerships and volunteer groups have been key to establishing and managing Ohio's trails. While communities are developing plans for trails across the state, the availability of dedicated funding to maintain the existing trails and build new trails has not yet caught up with the demand. Also, better marketing of Ohio's existing trail opportunities is an excellent way to enhance their impact. Finally, it is critical to ensure that Ohio's trails connect people and communities as well as provide needed amenities.

The vision has been established and now the work begins to meet the goals set forth in this document. Key recommendations will continue facilitating meetings of the Trails Advisory Team to help prioritize and implement the findings and recommendations. ODNR is committed to continuing its work to inventory trails across the state, which will be used to track progress toward reaching the goals.

Through a collaborative effort, with state and local government, trail managers, trail advocates and trail users working together, Ohioans can create a world-class trail system.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

It has been my honor to lead on behalf of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the production of the 2019 Ohio Trails Vision plan. In doing so, I've had the opportunity to work with numerous trail groups, advocates, and users – all of whom are passionate about the benefits of having a world-class trail system in our great state. Their input and dedication was invaluable; without it this vision plan would not have been possible.

The Ohio Trails Vision is a document that helps set the future for Ohio's recreational trails. A Trails Advisory Team used extensive public input to formulate goals, findings, and recommendations to help advance trails in the state. These recommendations establish a framework for state government to work with communities, land managers, trail advocates, trail volunteers and trail users. While many excellent trail opportunities are mentioned, it is not intended to be a user guide to Ohio's trails. To learn more about trail opportunities in Ohio, please visit trails.ohiodnr.gov.

Tom Arbour

Land & Water Trails Coordinator
ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft

USING THE TRAILS VISION

This plan is for anyone interested in trails in Ohio, from community trail developers and users, to those seeking to understand the future of trails in our state.

Chapter 1 gives background on how Ohio is a trail leader. **Chapter 2** contains the vision statement, all goals, and all findings and recommendations that are found throughout the rest of the document. If you have time to read one chapter, start with chapter 2. If you need more specific information for a goal or finding and recommendation, refer to the corresponding chapter in the body of the document.

Chapter 3 provides the methods used to develop the document, and **Chapter 4** gives results of the public input process. These are critical chapters to help understand how input was gathered and to better understand the results.

Chapters 5 through 8 provide information that applies to all types of trails in the state. If you are interested in how to partner with others, fund trails, develop and manage trails, and market trails, you will find valuable information in these chapters.

Chapter 9 outlines ODNR's responsibility for keeping and maintaining an inventory of trails. If you are interested in providing trail data to the statewide trail database, you will learn more in this chapter.

The remaining chapters of the document provide more specific information for six different trail types. Findings and recommendations are presented for multi-use trails, hiking trails, motorized trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and water trails. If you are interested in any of these trail types, these chapters provide more depth to address distinct needs and considerations for trail users.

Throughout the document, there are findings and recommendations. While these findings and recommendations were targeted to help guide future work of the Trails Advisory Team, they were written in a general sense to assist and guide anyone looking to develop, manage and improve recreational trails.

CHAPTER 1

OHIO IS A TRAIL LEADER

Leading the Way

When the Ohio Department of Natural Resources convened its first Trails Advisory Team meeting in April 2018, trail planners, managers, users and advocates from across the state came together to create a new vision for Ohio's trails. At that first team meeting, participant shared how important trails have become to their local communities over the last 20 years. As ODNR trail planners held public meetings and gained input from nearly 300 people in person and more than 7,600 people via an online survey, it became clear that Ohioans are passionate about their trails. Ohioans see how trails stimulate local economies, enhance quality of life, offer recreational opportunities and provide safe transportation alternatives.

The State of Ohio has a multitude of trails that are both treasured by local communities and serve as a destination for people traveling to Ohio. What most defines Ohio as a trail leader is the diversity of trail types offering experiences for everyone. Trail advocates highlighted the following statewide opportunities throughout the planning process as examples of Ohio's world-class recreational opportunities.

RECREATIONAL LANDS

Per state law, Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 1545, the establishment of local park districts resulted in the creation of locally operated agencies across the state. These park districts provide a multitude of close-to-home recreational opportunities, including countless miles of trails for Ohioans to enjoy.

Ohioans have demonstrated strong partnerships and collaborations to manage trails across boundaries; notably local governments working with land management agencies and the public to create significant trail networks.

ODNR, through its Division of Parks and Watercraft, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, and the Division of Forestry, provide more than 1,600 miles of recreational trails for hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, running, horseback riding and recreational vehicle riding.

The Wayne National Forest features more than 300 miles of trails for hiking, recreational vehicle riding, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park offers over 125 miles of trail, including the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath, the Buckeye Trail and mountain biking trails.

Ohio's conservancy districts (ORC 6101) manage thousands of acres of lands and waters across the state, offering numerous recreational opportunities.

DEDICATED STATE FUNDING

Ohio is fortunate to have a dedicated funding source for trails through the Clean Ohio Trails Fund, which routinely awards more than $6 million annually for trail corridor acquisition, trail development, and trailhead facilities.

OHIO'S DIVERSE AND EXPANSIVE TRAIL SYSTEM

The Trails Advisory Team has identified six major categories of trails: Multi-Use, Natural Surface Trails, Motorized, Mountain Biking, Equestrian, and Water. Following are just a few examples that demonstrate how Ohio is already a trails leader. With a coordinated effort of trail planners, managers and users working together, Ohio can continue to maintain and create world-class trail opportunities

MULTI-USE TRAILS

Communities across Ohio are making the local investment in multi-use trails in recognition of the many benefits they bring to residents. Examples of popular multi-use trails running through communities include:

The Ohio to Erie Trail, primarily an off-street recreational multi-use trail, runs 326 miles from the Ohio River in Hamilton County to Lake Erie in Cuyahoga County.

The Miami Valley region in southwest Ohio is home to the nation's largest paved trail network, anchored by the Little Miami Scenic Trail that runs from Cincinnati to Springfield.

NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS

The Buckeye Trail is Ohio's official hiking trail, completing a 1,400-mile loop that circles the state. Approximately 60 percent of the trail is complete. Working with Wayne National Forest, the Buckeye Trail Association is developing a 90-mile continuous stretch of natural surface trail that will become a backpacking destination only 1 hour from the Columbus metro area.

The 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail, a national scenic trail designated by Congress, runs through Ohio from New York to North Dakota. For most of its 1,006-mile route through Ohio, it shares a route with the Buckeye Trail. The City of Dayton has been designated by the Buckeye Trail Association as the largest trail town along its route in recognition of its support to both the trail and trail users.

MOTORIZED TRAILS

Ohio has a dedicated state recreational vehicle fund that is used to expand recreational-vehicle use on state lands funded by registration of all-purpose recreational vehicles. While Ohio's motorized trail system is small compared to surrounding states, the system is improving, and opportunities exist to expand these types of opportunities. This can be done by adding trail mileage and visitor amenities such as upgraded camping and better access to local communities for supplies and fuel.

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Over the last 20 years, Ohio's mountain biking opportunities have greatly expanded. The state currently has at least 450 miles of public mountain biking trails. Ohio is home to the Mohican Mountain Bike Trail, which has been designated as an EPIC trail by the International Mountain Bicycling Association. The EPIC trail designation denotes true backcountry experiences that are technically and physically challenging as travel destinations for mountain bikers.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

With more than 1,600 miles of trail available to equestrians, Ohio is a known destination for riders from other states. In particular, the trails at Hocking State Forest have become a nationally known destination.

WATER TRAILS

Since the creation of ODNR's water trail program in 2006, the state has designated and funded 11 water trails across Ohio. The Great Miami River Watershed Water Trail, Ohio's only nationally designated water trail by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, contains 117 public access points along 291 miles of the Great Miami, Stillwater and Mad rivers in southwest Ohio.

DEDICATION OF VOLUNTEERS

Ohio's trail system has developed with the critical help of volunteers providing the vision and stewardship for trails of all types, working in conjunction with government, the business community, nonprofit organizations, and foundations throughout the state. ■

CHAPTER 2

VISION, GOALS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Photo Courtesy of Wayne National Forest

DEVELOPING THE VISION

To develop a vision for Ohio's trails, ODNR convened the Trails Advisory Team consisting of trail planners, managers, users and advocates from across the state. At the first meeting, the team put together the vision for the future of Ohio's recreational trails. After discussion and refinement, the team agreed the following statement represents the continued desire for Ohio to be a leader in recreational trails.

THE OHIO TRAILS VISION

OHIO IS A LEADER IN PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE TRAILS FOR ALL USERS, OFFERING AN EXTRAORDINARY NETWORK OF WORLD-CLASS RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES LINKING COMMUNITIES, PEOPLE AND PLACES WHILE STIMULATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VITALITY.

Trails Leader

It is important to recognize that Ohio is already a trail leader and seeks to expand its leadership role by continuing the construction of world-class trail opportunities for all users.

Sustainable

Ensuring that Ohio's trail system is sustainable is vital to it's long-term success. First, the trail system must be environmentally sustainable. Trails enhance our enjoyment of nature and cultural resources and they should be planned in a way that has the least impact on these resources. Second, it is equally important the trails Ohioans build are financially sustainable. Will the trail receive the desired capital maintenance and improvements in the future as it degrades under normal use? Will the resources be available to ensure trails are operated and maintained in the best way possible? A sustainable system is critical for Ohio to remain a trail leader.

All Users

Ohio's trail system must be able to accommodate and be easily accessible to all residents. It should also be welcoming to visitors traveling to Ohio to use our extensive trail system.

Connected Network

Ohio's trail system must be unified in a way that connects trails of all types together in a large network that crosses political and jurisdictional boundaries.

World-Class

Trail planners and managers should implement best management practices to ensure the trails we build and manage are truly world-class opportunities.

Recreation

Trails are extremely popular forms of outdoor recreation. They allow Ohioans to observe and connect with nature, have fun, exercise, relax and improve health and wellness.

Transportation

Trails are increasingly used as alternative forms of transportation and communities across the state are recognizing this and making the investments in trails. One of the largest funding sources for building trails in Ohio comes from the Federal Highway Administration's transportation alternatives program administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Stimulating Economic and Social Vitality

Trails provide both economic and health benefits, stimulate local economies and provide opportunities to improve the health and wellness of Ohioans.

GOALS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the Trails Advisory Team met to create a vision for Ohio trails, the team created an overall goal for Ohio's trail system and then a goal for each of the six Ohio trail types identified as opportunities that are available across the state.

Overall Goal: Provide a trail experience within 5 miles of every Ohioan.

If all Ohioans can live within the relatively short distance of 5 miles to access a trail, Ohio will provide outstanding trail experiences for its residents and visitors. ODNR will continue to monitor the development of trails and inventory all types of trails so that the attainment of this goal can be measured over time.

OVERALL GOAL: PROVIDE A TRAIL EXPERIENCE WITHIN 5 MILES OF EVERY OHIOAN.

Photo Courtesy of Cleveland Metroparks

Responsibility Implementing the Vision Goals

The Director of ODNR is tasked with creating the statewide vision for Ohio's recreational trail system. This plan is intended to stimulate a strategic approach for creating a system of trails by all levels of government, trail organizations and trail users. All public trails that are planned and developed in Ohio are part of the statewide trail vision. It is through a collaborative effort, working throughout the state across all trail types, that Ohioans can together realize the vision of Ohio as a leader in providing world-class recreational trails.

The findings and recommendations presented in this chapter are key to achieving the Ohio Trails Vision and associated goals. In order to prioritize and implement the recommendations, ODNR and the Trails Advisory Team are committed to regular meetings.

Trails Advisory Team

Finding: While Ohio has been very successful in developing a trail system since the creation of the last Ohio trails plan in 2005, many of the recommendations in that plan are still valid today and were not implemented.

Recommendation: Continue to hold regular meetings of the Trails Advisory Team and maintain the recently created trails coordinator position to help prioritize and implement the recommendations of the Ohio Trails Vision.

The following findings and recommendations apply to trails of all types in Ohio and are grouped by the chapter they appear in the document. When prioritized and implemented, each of these findings and recommendations will help Ohio realize the vision and overall goal to provide a trail experience within five miles of every Ohioan.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Importance of Partnerships

Finding: Partnerships are essential to developing successful trails.

Recommendation: Continue to encourage trail managers to work with as many partners as possible, including all levels of government, trail advocates, trail users, other trail managers, and private industry and businesses.

State Government Coordination

Finding: There is a need for a more coordinated approach across the appropriate state agencies regarding all types of trails.

Recommendation: Create a cross-agency working group that meets several times a year to discuss how state government can work together to ensure progress toward meeting the goals of the Ohio Trails Vision.

Volunteers

Finding: Volunteers play an important role in all aspects of trails of every type.

Recommendation: Develop guidelines and best management practices for the creation of volunteer programs that allow volunteers to more easily work across land management boundaries.

TRAIL FUNDING

Funding a Statewide Trail System

Finding: To realize the Ohio Trails Vision, more dedicated funding for all trail types will be required.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase dedicated trail funding for both multi-use, natural surface and water trails of all types.

Trail Reconstruction and Capital Improvements

Finding: Dedicated funding for trail reconstruction and capital improvements is limited.

Recommendation: Explore dedicated funding options for capital improvements for all types of trails.

Trail Operations and Maintenance

Finding: Funding for trail operations and maintenance is limited.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase opportunities to fund trail maintenance and operations for all types of trails.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Trail Corridor Acquisition

Finding: The capacity is not present at the local level to act in a timely fashion to acquire corridors for trail development.

Recommendation: Explore ways to strengthen the abilities of trail developers to acquire corridors and properties for trails.

Ability to Develop Trails

Finding: Large communities have the expertise and resources to plan, design, fund and build trails, while smaller communities have fewer resources to do the same.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase trail building ability in smaller communities.

Trail Guidelines

Finding: There is a need to establish statewide guidelines and best management practices for the design, construction, operations and maintenance of trails of all types in order to provide a better experience for trail users.

Recommendation: Work with the Trails Advisory Team to explore the development of statewide trail guidelines.

Strategies for Diversity

Finding: Trails are underserving members of minority and low-income communities.

Recommendation: Develop strategies to engage a more diverse user base for Ohio's trails and develop new trails in underserved areas.

User Conflict

Finding: When different types of trail uses intersect, conflict arises between trail users. Separate trails for separate use is preferred.

Recommendation: Develop educational opportunities for trail uses of all types that articulate appropriate trail use and behavior.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Trail Use Surveys

Finding: Better scientific trail-user data is needed; particularly data identifying characteristics of users based on trail type, economic impact, overall enthusiasm, and exploration of what would enhance trail experiences.

Recommendation: Implement a standardized trail user survey platform that can be used by trail managers, as well as statewide groups, for determining year-round marketing and experience development opportunities and challenges.

Brand and Market Ohio Trails

Finding: Trail users find it challenging to find needed information statewide about Ohio's trails.

Recommendation: ODNR will continue development of a website with the intent of producing an easy-to-use and resourceful interactive map of all Ohio trails, a calendar of trail events and linkages to destination marketing organizations for each trail experience.

Statewide Trail Marketing Plan

Finding: The state lacks a consistent way to market its trails.

Recommendation: A data-driven statewide marketing plan for Ohio's trails should be produced. This marketing plan should address trail use from a broad perspective, including economic development and public health.

Trail Towns

Finding: The trail town concept has been used to connect communities with trails, users and businesses to promote growth and economic vitality.

Recommendation: Establish an Ohio Trails Town program that provides a process for recognition and guidelines for best management practices for recognition of communities that support world-class trails and provide resources to people interested in exploring new business opportunities catering to trail users.

Cross-Training Trail Managers and Travel Professionals

Finding: There is not widespread collaboration between people who manage trails and those who promote communities.

Recommendation: Develop workshops for trails managers, destination marketing organizations and businesses that demonstrate the economic potential of trails. These workshops also should teach communities to create and market recreation experiences that meet the expectation of trail users. Incorporate these learning opportunities into existing conferences and educational events by coordinating efforts between the trail and travel economy communities.

Trail Sustainability

Finding: Any effort to increase trail use must be accompanied by sustainability measures to protect the resources, as well as the integrity of the trail experience for future users.

Recommendation: Provide resources and best-practices training for trail managers on sustainability and protection of the trail experience.

TRAIL INVENTORY

Local and Regional Planning Efforts

Finding: An increasing amount of communities are engaging in trail planning. These efforts are led by local park districts, local government and regional planning bodies.

Recommendation: ODNR will continue to gather local trail plans and integrate them into the state trail inventory and plan.

ODNR Trail Inventory

Finding: The 2005 Trails for Ohioans plan featured an inventory of current, proposed and planned trails, which quickly became outdated.

Recommendation: Going forward, ODNR will maintain an online interactive map of current and proposed trails that is based on publicly supported and published plans generated from local communities.

Standards for Trail Data

Finding: Trail managers are using various methods of mapping and inventorying trails across Ohio.

Recommendation: ODNR will lead an effort to help create a minimum set of trail data standards so local and regional datasets can be more easily compiled, integrated and shared.

State Trail Designation

Finding: Since the passage of Ohio Revised Code 1519 legislation in 1972, which gives the Director of ODNR the authority to designate state trails, very few trails have been designated.

Recommendation: Explore the options that come with official state trail designation by ODNR.

In addition to the findings and recommendations that apply to all trails, the Trails Advisory Team developed goals and subsequent findings and recommendations for six individual trail types:

MULTI-USE TRAILS

Goal: Provide a connected multi-use trail network that links every county in Ohio.

Multi-use trails, also known as shared use paths, greenways or bike trails, are hard-surfaced trails designed for bicyclists, walkers, runners and other pedestrians. These trails form the backbone of our state trail system. The visionary goal presented by the Trails Advisory Team imagines an Ohio where every county is connected via a multi-use trail network. If fully implemented, this trail network would truly establish Ohio as a destination for multi-use trail users.

The following findings and recommendations are key in order to realize the goal for multi-use trails:

Emerging Trends

Finding: Novel personal transportation options, including electronic scooters, bicycles, skateboards, monowheels and hoverboards that provide alternatives to walking and bicycling, are presenting new opportunities and challenges to trail managers and users.

Recommendation: The trail planning process needs to continue to respond to emerging trends to help guide planning and policy that maximizes the benefits new technology provides, helps mitigate unintended consequences and ensures coordination and consistency across land management boundaries.

Priority Corridors

Finding: Priority corridors for the statewide multi-use system need to be established.

Recommendation: Establish a broad-based statewide task force of multi-use trail planners, funders, advocates and developers to establish criteria for priority corridors.

Multi-Use Trails for Active Transportation

Finding: Multi-use trails are now seen as one part of a network of active transportation options in communities.

Recommendation: Trail plans should include on-street bike lanes, protected bike lanes, side paths, shared-lane markings, and other active transportation infrastructure when trail construction is not feasible.

Opportunities for Coordination of Funding Agencies

Finding: Trail developers use multiple sources of local, federal and state funding to build multi-use trails.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase coordination and understanding of the roles of ODNR, ODOT and metropolitan planning organizations in planning, funding and developing multi-use trails.

NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS FOR HIKING, RUNNING, AND BACKPACKING

Goal: Provide a natural surface hiking trail in each community in Ohio.

Goal: Work to complete the Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Natural surface trails are important for connecting Ohioans to nature and wildlife. Nature trails, longer day hiking trails and overnight backpacking trails offer ways for Ohioans to explore our natural heritage. Providing nature trails and day hiking experiences for all Ohioans enhances the daily lives of residents, while backpacking trails have the potential to bring travelers to Ohio for overnight stays. With the development of a nature trail in every Ohio community and the completion of two major backpacking trails, Ohio would become a destination for natural surface trail users.

The following findings and recommendations are key to realize the goals for natural surface trails:

Funding Natural Surface Hiking Trails

Finding: Natural surface hiking trails are very popular, highly used and desired.

Recommendation: Explore ways to provide more dedicated funding to support the development and maintenance of sustainable natural surface hiking trails.

Long Distance Hiking Trails Corridor Acquisition

Finding: Significant stretches of the Buckeye Trail and North Country Trail utilize road corridors.

Recommendation: Expand and create additional backpacking opportunities by identifying priority gaps, preserve existing corridors and fund corridor acquisition for these long-distance natural surface hiking trails.

Backpacking Amenities

Finding: While Ohio has several natural surface backpacking opportunities, the established trails need more camping opportunities and key amenities in strategic areas.

Recommendation: Trail and land managers should work together with backpackers to develop camping opportunities and other amenities in strategic locations along backpacking trails.

Nature and Wildlife Observation

Finding: Natural surface hiking trails are how many people experience nature and wildlife in Ohio. The development of natural surface hiking trails is a tool to aid conservation on a larger scale.

Recommendation: Ensure dedicated land conservation initiatives like the Clean Ohio Greenspace program continue to provide additional natural surface hiking trail opportunities.

MOTORIZED TRAILS

Goal: Provide at least two destination quality motorized trail experiences for motorized recreational vehicles with overnight amenities and expand regional trail opportunities for motorized recreational vehicle users.

While Ohio has public trails for recreational motorized vehicles today, there is great demand from motorized users for more access to public lands in Ohio. Motorized trails are defined as those used by owners of all-terrain vehicles (ATV), including four-wheelers, wide off–highway vehicles (OHV) and off-road motorcycles. Trail users would like the length of trails expanded and the overnight amenities improved so these areas could be considered destinations in order to compete with opportunities in adjacent states. The current trail systems are concentrated south and east of Columbus. Having more regional opportunities across the state would also enhance Ohio's motorized trail system. Finally, the Trails Advisory Team recognizes that there are currently no public trails available to full-size off-road vehicles. While that trail type is not addressed in this goal, this opportunity is further discussed in the motorized trail chapter.

The following findings and recommendations are key in order to realize the goal for motorized trails:

Rules and Regulations

Finding: The two major public motorized trails providers (the ODNR Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service) have different rules and regulations.

Recommendation: Continue the working group established between the two agencies and the motorized community to create better alignment.

Acceptance

Finding: While there is high demand for increased motorized trail opportunities from owners of vehicles, there is also strong opposition from non-motorized trail users.

Recommendation: Create a forum that brings together users from all sides of the issue to develop possible solutions to increase motorized opportunities in the state while minimizing impacts to the environment, wildlife and existing recreational uses.

Needs of Users

Finding: The current motorized trails lack the desired connections to overnight facilities, length and varying difficulties, and access to local communities to become destination quality trails.

Recommendation: Encourage trail developers to consider unique needs to motorized users when designing trail systems for motorized users. They should work with local municipalities to designate or permit legal routes to the desired amenities utilizing infrastructure such as township, county and state routes.

Finding: Motorized trail users are increasingly demanding wider trails to accommodate "side by sides" and Utility Task Vehicles (UTVs), or more narrow, single-track trails to accommodate off-road motorcycles.

Recommendation: Encourage the development of trails that are designed for wider motorized vehicles and narrower single-track trails.

Off-Road, 4x4, Full-Size Vehicle Trails

Finding: Ohio has no public trails that accommodate full-size off-road 4x4 vehicles.

Recommendation: Institute a working group of land managers and user groups to investigate the potential for public off-road full-size 4x4 vehicle trails in Ohio.

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Goal: Provide at least four destination quality trails that qualify for the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) EPIC Designation and two communities that are designated as IMBA Ride Centers.

The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) has recognized one Ohio trail, the Mohican Mountain Bike Trail, as an IMBA EPIC trail. The EPIC trail designation denotes true backcountry experiences that are technically and physically challenging as travel destinations for mountain bikers. IMBA's Ride Centers are a more encompassing designation that considers the range of mountain biking opportunities available in a community. With the development of four IMBA EPIC trails and at least two Ride Centers, Ohio would be transformed into a destination for mountain biking.

The following findings and recommendations are key to realizing the goal for mountain biking:

Access to Public Lands

Finding: While a shift over the past 20 years has occurred statewide with land managers becoming more accepting to mountain biking as a recreational opportunity, the mountain bike community would like increased access to public lands.

Recommendation: Create a forum that brings together mountain bikers and land managers to promote the development of sustainable mountain bike trails. This could help change the perception that mountain biking has a high impact on the landscape.

Diversity of Trail Experiences and Connectivity

- **Finding:** Current mountain bike trails in Ohio offer similar experiences that cater to intermediate rather than entry level or advanced rider abilities.
- **Recommendation:** Land managers and local communities are encouraged to explore opportunities to develop introductory and advanced skill building experiences that are preferably connected to existing bicycling infrastructure.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Goal: Provide and improve destination quality equestrian trails throughout the state.

Ohio has an excellent equestrian trail system. However, it was clear during the planning process that equestrian trail users would like to see the amenities associated with these trails improved across the state. Improving camping facilities, parking and restrooms are all critical to ensuring our equestrian trails continue to be a destination. The trails at Hocking State Forest and Mohican-Memorial State Forest are the most popular destinations for members of the Ohio Horseman's Council, a group of members advocating for equestrian trails statewide.

The following findings and recommendations are key to realizing the goal for equestrian trails:

Sharing Equestrian Trails

Finding: There is great concern from equestrians regarding interactions between equines and people who do not own equines.

Recommendation: Where users must share common areas with other users, add signage to educate the public about the risks associated with equines and proper trail etiquette.

Trail Sustainability

Finding: Much of the equestrian trail system in Ohio was not planned and was not constructed using sustainable methods.

Recommendation: Encourage land managers to assess equestrian trails to determine if they can be redesigned and upgraded to have less impact on the landscape and require less maintenance.

Camping and Trailhead Facilities

Finding: Ohio is a destination for equestrian trail users, however, equestrians would like the amenities to be upgraded on existing trails.

Recommendation: Explore the possibilities of upgrading day-use trailheads and the overnight amenities of equestrian trails across the state.

WATER TRAILS

Goal: Increase the total mileage of designated water trails in the state to 1,200 miles.

Ohio is fortunate to have beautiful river corridors that provide world-class recreational opportunities. As of 2018, ODNR had designated more than 650 miles of these streams as 11 state water trails. When a stream becomes a water trail, communities along the river work together to identify all public access points and permanent hazards, and then the communities share this information with the public via hazard signage, brochures and online maps. Additional opportunities for water trail development include the Ohio, Cuyahoga, Tuscarawas, Sandusky and Hocking rivers and the shoreline of Lake Erie. With 1,200 miles of water trails, Ohio would become a destination for paddlers.

The following findings and recommendations are key for realizing the goal for water trails:

Paddling Conditions

Finding: Recreational paddlers are increasingly in need of more information to help plan their paddle excursions based on environmental conditions.

Recommendation: Develop a pilot system on a state water trail to help paddlers decide if river conditions match their skill level.

Marking Permanent Hazards

Finding: Lowhead dams and other permanent hazards remain a threat to the safety of paddlers.

Recommendation: Ensure that all permanent hazards on the state's dedicated water trails are adequately marked with signage both upstream and downstream warning paddlers about lowhead dams.

Awareness

Finding: While recreational paddling has nearly quadrupled since 2006, users are unaware that Ohio has designated specific waterways across the state that make up a water trail system for recreational paddling.

Recommendation: Develop a marketing tool that is widely distributed across Ohio that highlights each state water trail.

Water Trail Improvement

Finding: The desired amenities for water trails have become more robust since Ohio's water trail program began.

Recommendation: Examine each water trail created since the program's inception and make recommendations for potential upgrades of the trail. ■

From the Survey– “I love our trails, we are very fortunate to have such amazing park systems. I’m looking forward to the years ahead as the trails continue to be improved & maintained!”
Photo Courtesy of Metroparks Toledo

CHAPTER 3

CREATING THE VISION

Photo Courtesy of MORPC

ODNR TRAIL PLANNING HISTORY

ODNR has held the responsibility for creating a comprehensive plan for the development of a statewide trails system since the Ohio General Assembly passed amended Senate Bill 247 and it was signed the legislation into law by Governor John J. Gilligan on July 21, 1972. The law (ORC 1519) mandated ODNR to publish the first state trails plan by 1975. With the publication of the plan, entitled "Ohio Trails," ODNR aimed to establish trail policies and implement a trails program at all levels of government statewide.

Trail planning came to the forefront once again when the Ohio General Assembly voted to place a proposal on the November 2000 election ballot to create the Clean Ohio Trails Fund, which included a $25 million appropriation for recreational trails. The legislature noted that funding from the new Clean Ohio Trails Fund must be in "synchronization with the statewide trails plan." With the ballot's passage, ODNR commenced the creation of a new trails plan and in 2005 published this plan, titled "Trails for Ohioans - A Plan for the Future." The plan quickly became out-of-date as communities planned more trails across Ohio than identified in the plan.

In 2017, the Ohio Trails Partnership, –a group of trail advocacy organizations, including the Buckeye Trail Association, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Ohio Horseman's Council, American Canoe Association and the Central Ohio Mountain Bike Organization,– successfully lobbied the Ohio legislature to create the bi- partisan Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus. Chaired by Senator Sean O'Brien and Senator Steve Wilson, the caucus met for the first time in spring 2017. The caucus created goals, one of which was to pass a concurrent resolution to declare 2018 the "Year of the Trails in Ohio."

Another goal set by the caucus was to update the 2005 state trails plan. Since ODNR is given this responsibility by ORC 1519, the agency committed to updating the plan in 2018. The ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft created a new administrative position, the trails coordinator, in September 2017 to develop the plan.

REVIEW OF OTHER STATE'S TRAIL PLANS

One of the first tasks was to review the 2005 Ohio plan and trail plans published by other states to focus on overall concepts that should be included in Ohio's plan. Most plans were created primarily by the state's department of natural resources staff, based heavily on public input. Many states chose to gather a group of trail planners, managers, and other invested entities to provide insight and input.

After review of the plans of other states, the following focus areas were defined: 1) Trail maintenance and funding for maintenance; 2) Partnerships and assistance from other agencies, including state agencies, local entities, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, etc.; 3) Signage and maps; 4) Trail gaps and networks; 5) Funding; 6) Events, including meetings, conferences, workshops, etc. for trail planners/managers; and 7) Marketing. ODNR representatives presented these findings to the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus for their feedback early in the planning process. The next step was to create a Trails Advisory Team.

TRAILS ADVISORY TEAM

ODNR, the Ohio Trails Partnership (OTP) and the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus determined that an advisory team consisting of Ohio's trail leaders should be in place to guide the planning process. In addition to OTP member organizations, ODNR invited additional representatives from areas and organizations not represented in the OTP. Representatives of motorized trail users, metropolitan planning organizations, park districts and the leadership of the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association were also invited to join the advisory team.

The Trails Advisory Team first met in April 2018. ODNR trail planners presented the background research and presented the intended scope of the trails plan. The focus of the meeting was to develop the Ohio Trails Vision. During its May meeting, the team focused on developing goals for each of Ohio's six major trail types. Additionally, the basis for the upcoming regional public meetings was reviewed, as well as preliminary questions and content for the online public survey.

The team's July meeting focused on input received during five regional public meetings that took place in June and early July. Statistics, results and comments were presented for the team to discuss. The team further developed the public survey questions. The final meeting of the team took place in early October where the team reviewed the 7,602 survey results. ODNR staff outlined the plan's content as provided by the advisory team and developed a draft of findings and recommendations.

The Trails Advisory Team was an instrumental group of trail experts who provided essential approaches and insight to creating the best possible statewide trails plan for Ohio. They provided important, valuable input through this collaborative process. ODNR thanks the following members of the team for their assistance in developing the Ohio Trails Vision.

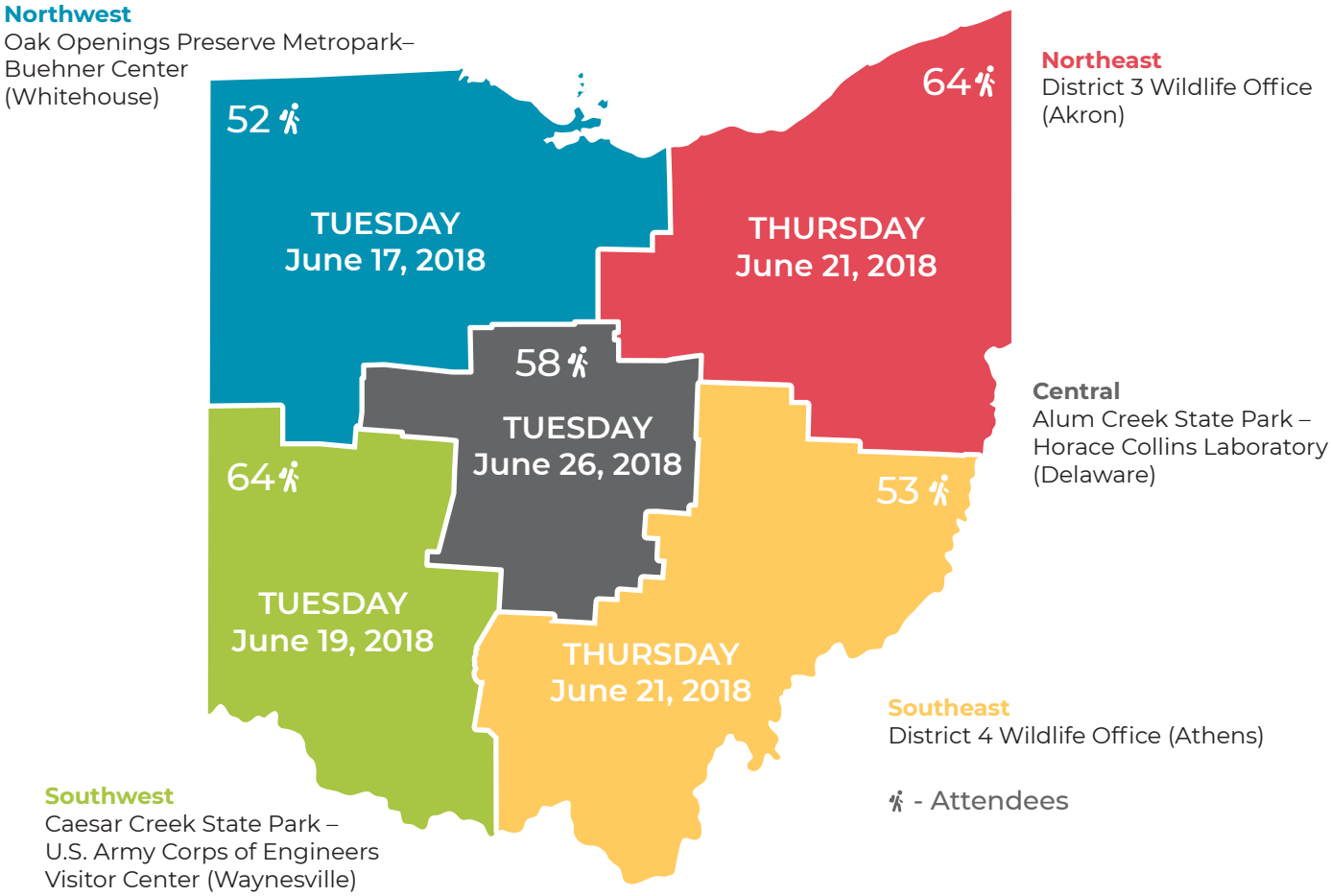
Trails Advisory Team

Organization	Name
Ohio Horseman's Council	Tom Green
Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization	Dan Fausey
Tuscarawas River Canoe and Kayak Race	Mary Jo Monte-Kaser
Ohio Motorized Trails Association	Tom Cowher
American Motorcyclist Association	Marie Wuelleh
Buckeye Trail Association	Andrew Bashaw
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	Eric Oberg
ODNR Office of Real Estate and Land Management	D'Juan Hammonds
ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft	Tom Arbour
ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft	Alissa Belna-Muhlenkamp
ODNR Division of Forestry	Nate Jester
Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Office of Statewide Planning and Research	Andrew Shepler
ODOT Office of Program Management	Caitlin Harley
Ohio Travel Association	Melinda Huntley
National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program	Rory Robinson
National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program	Andrea Irland
U.S. Forest Service – Wayne National Forest	Chad Wilberger
Cleveland Metroparks	Isaac Smith
Five Rivers MetroParks	Amy Dingle
Ohio Parks and Recreation Association / Stark Parks	Bob Fonte
Metroparks Toledo	Allen Gallant
Ohio to Erie Trail	Lisa Daris
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission	Melinda Vonstein
Green Umbrella-Tri-State Trails	Wade Johnston

REGIONAL PUBLIC MEETINGS

A series of five regional public meetings were held throughout Ohio in June and July. These meetings were strategically hosted at locations allowing Ohioans the opportunity to attend a meeting and voice their thoughts and concerns. Trail planners, builders, managers, advocates and users attended the meetings. The dates, locations and number of attendees for the meetings are listed below.

The meetings began with a presentation by ODNR and National Park Service trail planners. Afterward, meeting attendees were asked to do two things. First, they were asked to provide their written concerns, opportunities, and recreational resources they utilize. Second, they were asked to examine large maps of Ohio's trails, add any significant trails that were missing, identify opportunities for new recreational trails and draw connections for an expanded statewide trail system. The trail meetings were well attended and served as excellent networking opportunities for trail



advocates and planners to discuss the future of trails in their region and statewide. This information was invaluable to help create this plan. More information about the meeting attendees, including the names of the more than 100 organizations represented, can be found in the appendix.

SURVEYS

Several months of preparation went into creating the content for the online public survey. The Trails Advisory Team was consulted to ensure the online survey was designed to obtain the most important information from trail users. Ultimately, the team created several questions that helped better understand the feedback we received in the regional meetings. While anyone could take the survey, the questions were targeted to obtain feedback from trail users.

The online survey was implemented through Survey Monkey and was available to the public from August 24 through October 31, 2018. It was distributed and publicized in a variety of ways. The link to the online survey was sent via email to all the regional public meeting attendees using the information provided on the sign-in sheets at those meetings. The Trails Advisory Team also took on the task of sharing the link with their colleagues and networks. Social media, e-newsletters and a link on the homepage of the ODNR website also played important roles in spreading the word. A total of 7,602 trail users completed the survey.

SUMMARY

When ODNR planners initially met with members of the Ohio Trails Partnership, the group expressed concern regarding the level of public input used to create the 2005 state trails plan. From the outset, ODNR determined that public participation, led by an advisory team of trail leaders across the state, would be important for the development and ultimate success of this plan. This plan was shaped by the advisory team and informed by thousands of Ohio's trail users, planners, builders, managers, and advocates. ■

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Photo Courtesy of Richard T. Bower and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

This chapter summarizes the public input gathered during the five regional meetings and public online survey.

REGIONAL MEETING RESULTS

More than 290 trail stakeholders attended the in-person regional public meetings. They provided feedback on trail priorities, challenges they have encountered, and the resources they utilize when planning, building, maintaining, and using trails. ODNR planners thoroughly read every response and organized the feedback into several themes for each question.

What are your priorities for Ohio's trail system?

Responses were classified into one of 11 themes, listed in no particular order:

- Need for trail-specific amenity improvements, such as camping, maps, signage, parking and trash receptacles.
- Concerns regarding conflict between trail users.
- Acquiring and protecting trail corridors.
- Need for more trails that are accessible to all.
- Importance of partnerships and collaborations.
- Desire for a trail system that is more interconnected.
- Ensuring trails are sustainably built in an environmentally and culturally sensitive manner.
- Need for better maintenance of trails.
- Importance of trails for transportation.
- Trails as economic development opportunities.
- Need for better information about Ohio's trails.

What are your challenges in working with trails in Ohio?

Several priorities were also listed as challenges. Building local political and public support for developing trails is a challenge in areas where trails are not already well-established. Smaller communities lack the resources and expertise compared to larger ones to plan, develop and manage trails.

- Need for trail-specific amenity improvements like camping, maps, signage, parking and trash receptacles.
- Concerns regarding conflict between trail users.
- Acquiring and protecting trail corridors.
- Need for better maintenance of trails.
- Building and maintaining partnerships.
- Need for better information about Ohio's trails.

Challenges that were not listed as priorities:

- Building political and public support for trails.
- Finding money to fund trails.
- Capacity to plan, build and maintain trails.
- Maintaining safety on trails.

What resources do you use when planning, building, maintaining and using trails?

Responses were categorized into two themes: resources for developing trails and resources for finding information about trails.

Funding, Partnerships and Collaborations

- Community engagement
- Federal, state and local grants
- Community foundations
- Local chambers of commerce
- Regional planning commissions
- Private businesses
- Corporate sponsorships
- Trail advocacy organizations
- Volunteers
- Volunteers with specialized skills: architect, planner, attorney

Trail Information

- Websites and such as All Trails, the Hiking Project and Trail Link
- Buckeye Trail Association's Trail Town Program
- Ohio Dept. of Transportation brown directional road signage
- Trail advocates' websites

MAPPING EXERCISE

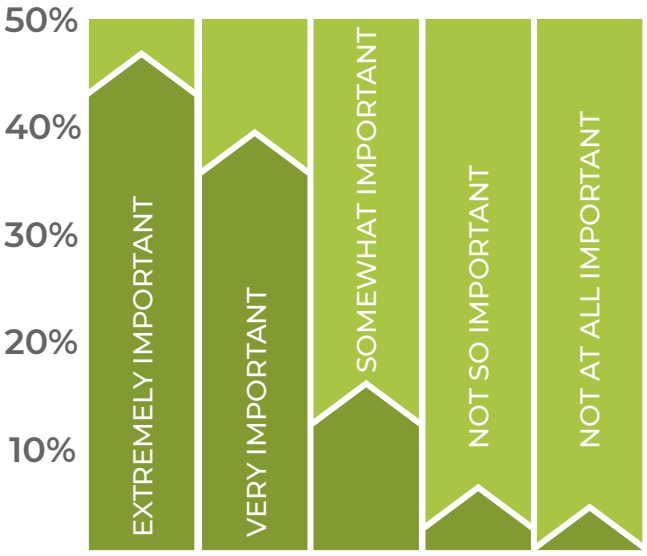
The mapping exercise provided new information on dozens of trails across the state that did not exist in ODNR's Ohio trail database. The mapping exercise also offered a wealth of information on current and planned trails of all types. Several trail planners provided their contact information and instead of drawing planned trails on the maps, they sent electronic geographic information system (GIS) datasets to ODNR planners to be compiled into the Ohio trail database. The information will be published as an interactive web map and updated as new trails are planned and constructed.

TRAIL SURVEY RESULTS

Working with the Trails Advisory Team, ODNR created a public survey to gain input from trail users. A total of 7,602 individuals completed the survey. An overall theme of the survey is that trail users in Ohio use many different types of trails, and a single individual is likely to use many different types of trails.

Following are the questions we asked, and the responses we received.

Question 1. How important are trails to your daily life?



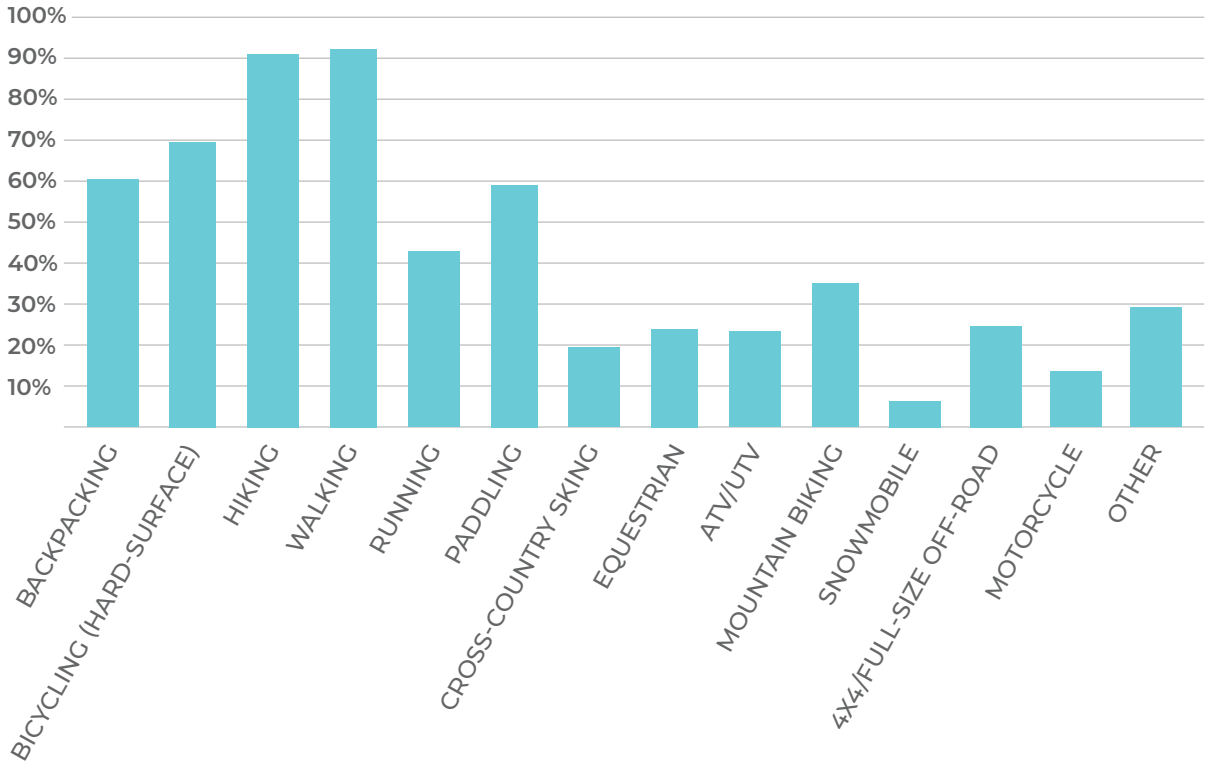
This question was asked to determine how important recreational trails are to the survey respondents. The respondents viewed trails as important, with 82.34 percent indicating trails are extremely important or very important to their daily lives. This finding confirms the survey reached Ohioans that use trails and find them very important.

Question 2. Please indicate how many times per YEAR you participate in the following trail activities?

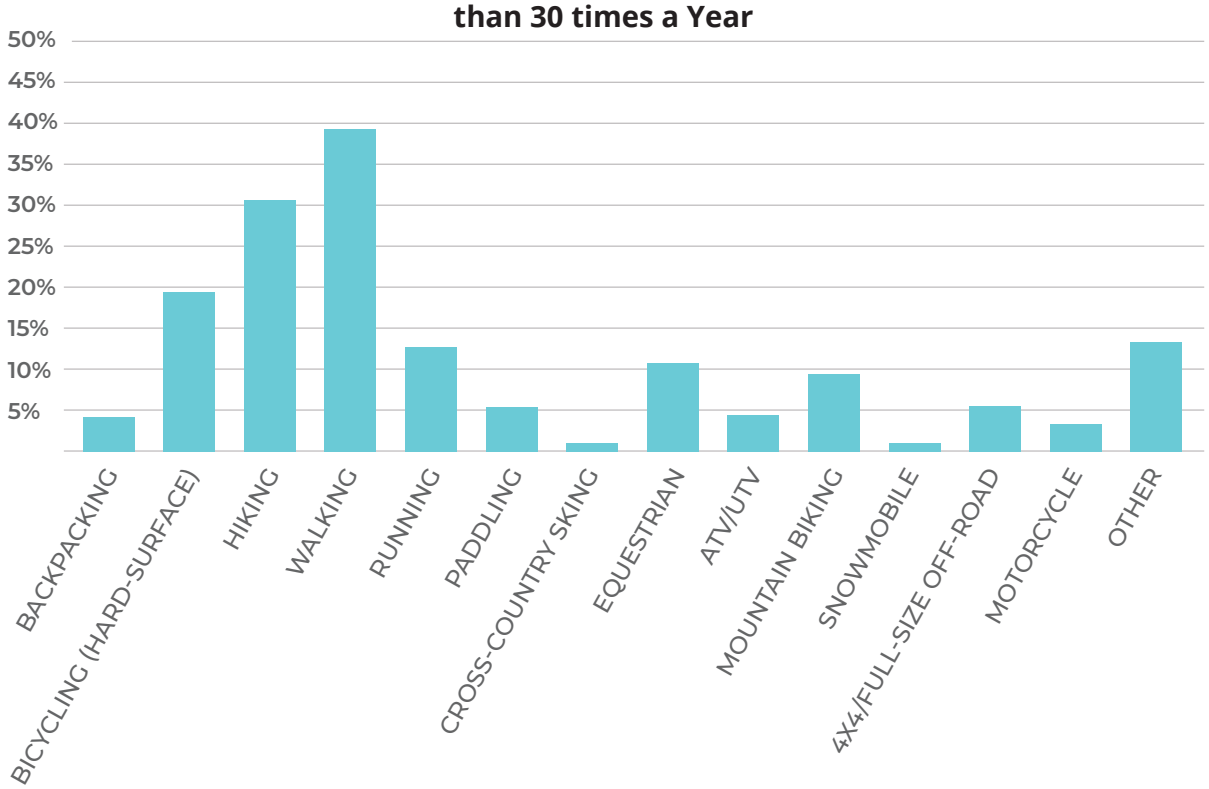
The answers to this question helped refine the types of trails that are the most used by the survey respondents. The results presented are summarized by trail activity.

The trail participation question was also used to determine how frequently each survey respondent participated in each trail activity. Hiking, walking and bicycling on hard-surfaced trails were the trail activities done the most frequently, with 43 percent, 34 percent and 21 percent of participants in these activities doing them at least 30 times a year. Other activities where users participated in the activity more than 30 times a year were running (13 percent), equestrian trail riding (12 percent) and mountain biking (10 percent).

Percent of Survey Respondents who Particpate in Selected Trail Activities



Percent of Survey Respondents who Particpate in Selected Trail Activities more than 30 times a Year



Question 3. How satisfied are you with the following types of trails in Ohio?

Survey respondents who use multi-use trails and natural surface trails for hiking, walking and running are the most satisfied. Backpackers, equestrians and water trail users are moderately satisfied. Users that show the least amount of satisfaction are mountain bikers and motorized trail users. Motorized trail users were the least satisfied with the trail systems in Ohio, demonstrating the gap between demand and availability of trails for motorized vehicles.

WATER TRAILS

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS

SHARED USE PATH - HARD SURFACE

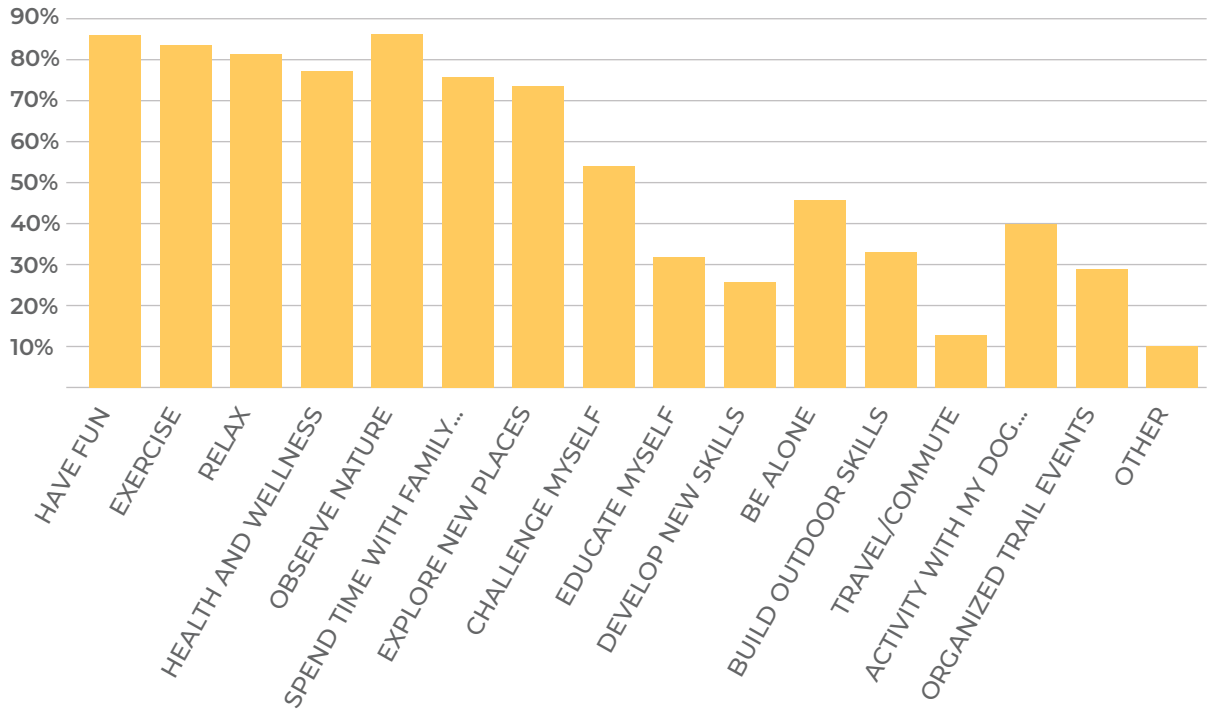
BACKPACKING TRAILS

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

MOTORIZED TRAILS

Question 4. Why do you use Ohio's Trails? Check all that apply.

Nature observation was the most popular reason for using trails (85 percent), followed by having fun (84 percent), exercise (82 percent), relaxation (82 percent) and health and wellness (78 percent). While only 13 percent of survey respondents said they use trails to travel and commute, this result demonstrates the increasing role that trails play in providing a form of alternative transportation. Gaining access to fishing and hunting sites, wildlife observation areas and nature photography were frequently mentioned by users who provided additional written comments.

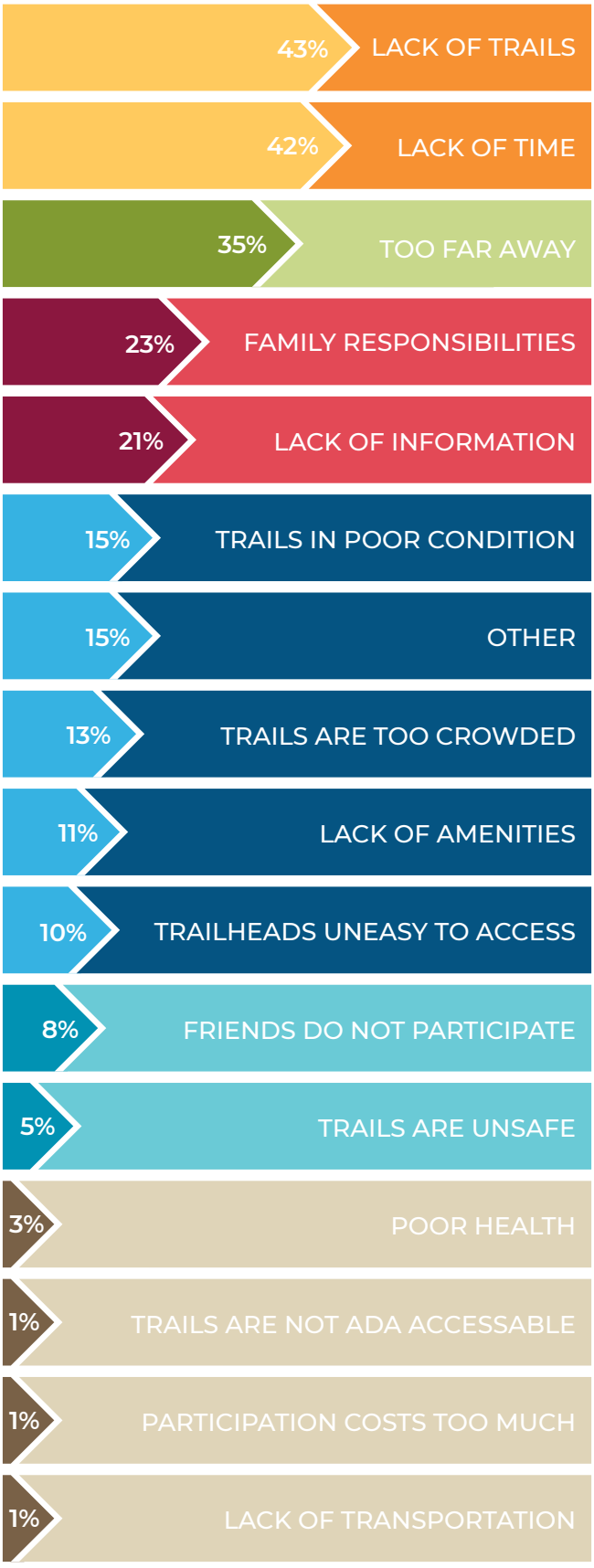


Question 5. What keeps you from using Ohio's trails? Check all that apply.

The top five reasons selected were there are not enough trails (43 percent), a lack of time (42 percent), trails are too far away (35 percent), family responsibilities (23 percent), and lack of information (21 percent).

Some of these factors correlate with each other. While trail managers have limited ability to influence the behavior of trail goers, they can provide more easily accessible trails and improve the ways they reach out to the public.

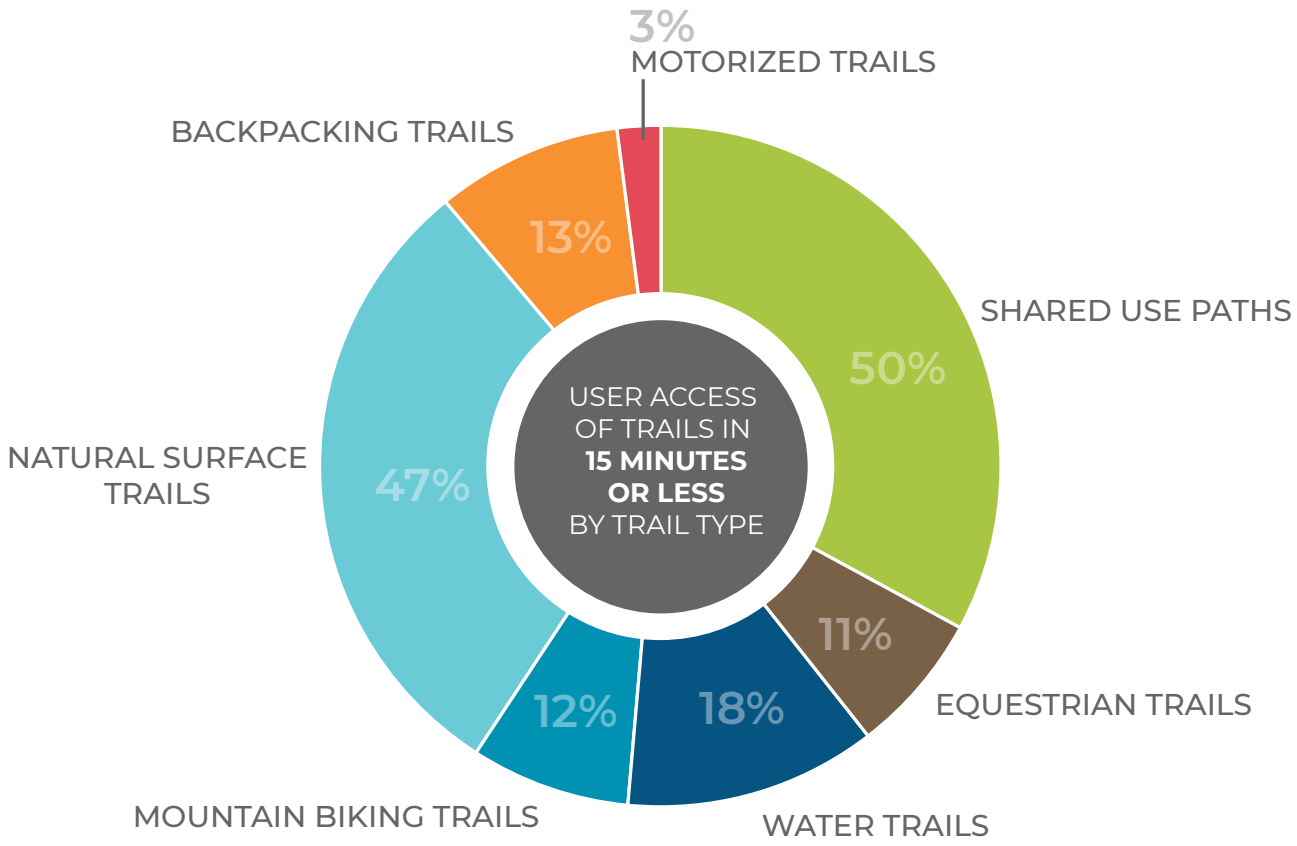
When this same question was asked during the 2005 trails plan survey, "there are not enough trails" was only the fourth most popular response. In the 2018 survey, this reason came to the forefront as the No. 1 reason Ohioans are not using trails. This finding may reflect the increasing desire for motorized trails in the state. When considering only motorized trail users who took the survey, 61 percent of this subgroup selected "there are not enough trails" as being a reason that keeps them from using Ohio's trails.



Question 6. Regarding trails in Ohio, about how long does it take you to access each type of trail?

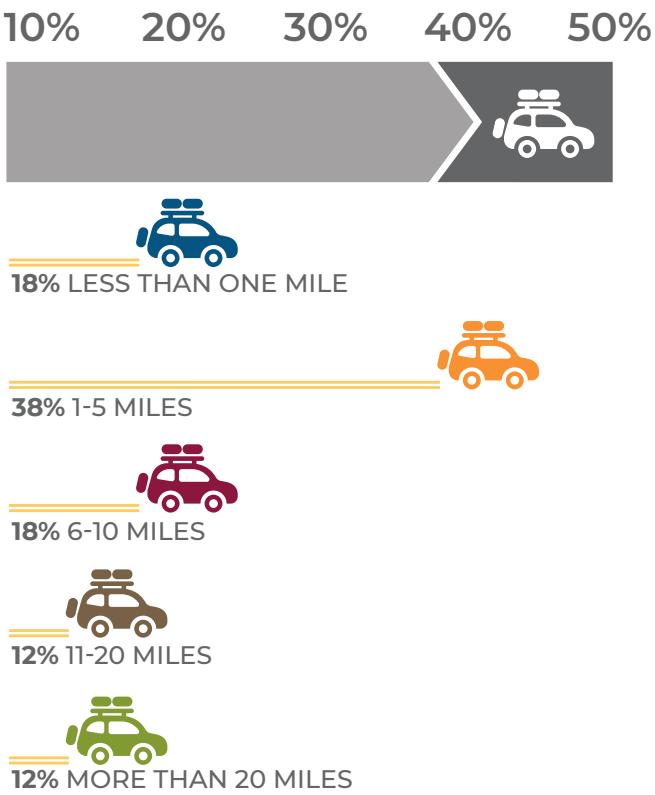
It's not surprising to learn the most used trails in Ohio are also the closest to the survey respondents. Fifty percent of the respondents who use multi-use trails can access them in 15 minutes or less, while 47 percent of natural surface trail users who walk, hike or run can access them in 15 minutes or less.

Interestingly, water trails are the next most accessible trail type with 18 percent of users able to access them in 15 minutes or less, followed by backpacking trails (13 percent can access in 15 minutes or less) mountain biking trails (12 percent can access in 15 minutes or less), equestrian trails (11 percent can access in 15 minutes or less) and motorized trails (3 percent can access in 15 minutes or less).



Question 7. How close do you live to any type of trail?

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents answered that they live within 5 miles of any type of trail. This question was asked as one potential measure of reaching the goal that all Ohioans be within 5 miles from a trail experience. Seventy-five percent of the respondents live within 10 miles of a trail, while 88 percent of respondents live within 20 miles of a trail.



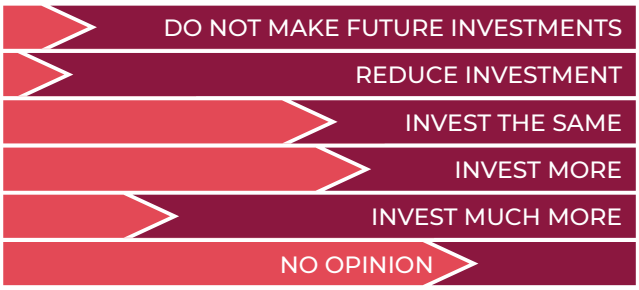
Question 8. What is your favorite Ohio trail?

This question gave trails users the opportunity to identify their favorite Ohio trail. Demonstrating the passion for trails in Ohio, 5,720 respondents answered this question. Every type of trail was mentioned, showcasing the diversity of Ohio's trail system. Statewide trails that were named frequently included the Buckeye Trail, Ohio to Erie Trail, Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath and Little Miami Scenic Trail. Respondents also named numerous local trails offered by park districts, local government parks, state and national forests, state parks, state nature preserves, conservancy districts and Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

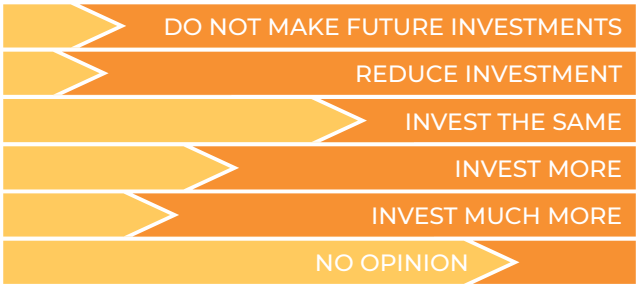
Question 9. Regarding trails in Ohio, how should future investment be made in the following types of trails?

Users were asked to rank how investments should be made in seven different types of trails. Regarding natural surface trails, 61.8 percent of the respondents believed that natural surface trails for walking, hiking and running should receive more or much more funding, while 51 percent felt the same about multi-use trails. Backpacking trails received the third most support for increased funding, followed by water trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and motorized trails.

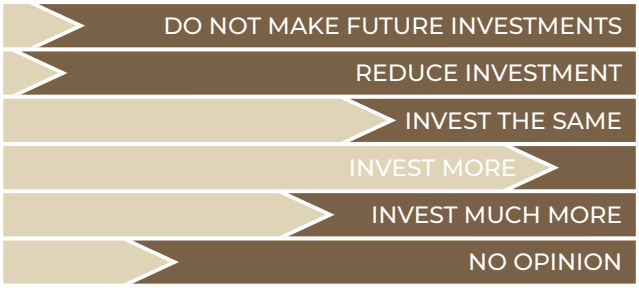
WATER TRAILS



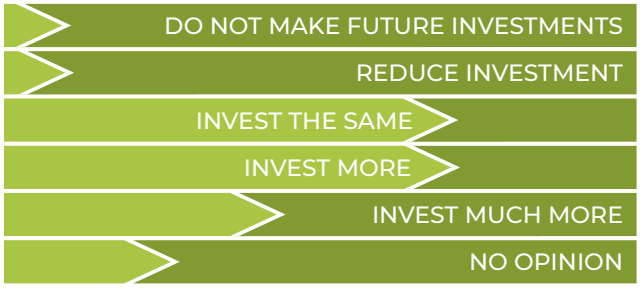
MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS



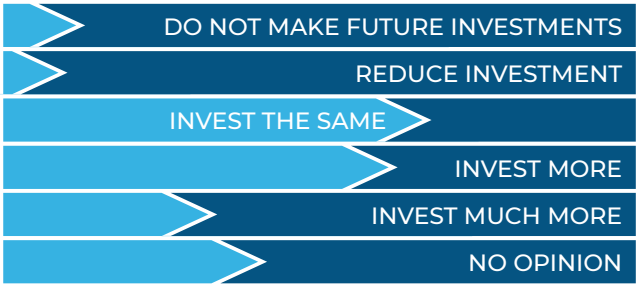
NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS



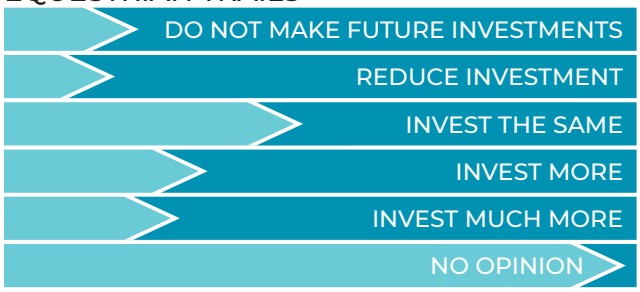
SHARED USE PATH - HARD SURFACE



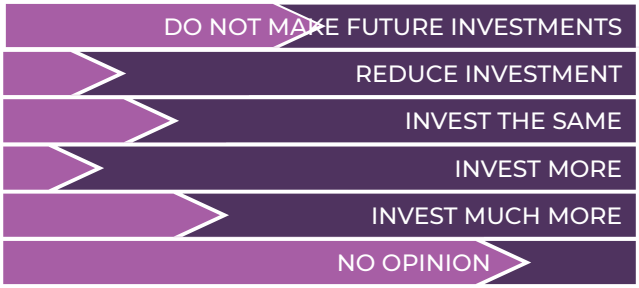
BACKPACKING TRAILS



EQUESTRIAN TRAILS



MOTORIZED TRAILS



Question 10. How important to you are the following trail priorities?

Survey respondents indicated that building more trails was the most important trail priority, followed by increased funding for trails, making it easier to find information about trails, improving maintenance and upkeep, and addressing gaps in destinations. The lowest priorities were making trails more accessible to people of all physical abilities, improving trail amenities and improving safety. A total of 731 respondents listed "other" priorities. Many of these responses addressed user conflicts on the trail, support for and/or opposition to motorized trails and the need for specific trail amenities.

Question 11. How important to you are the following trail amenities?

Survey respondents indicated that on-trail maps and signage were the most important trail amenities, followed by parking, restrooms, trash receptacles and drinking water. Amenities considered less important by the survey respondents included shopping, grocery stores, restaurants and activity-specific specialty stores.

Question 12. Please share any other comments regarding Ohio's trails:

A total of 1,738 respondents took the opportunity to freely share information about Ohio's trails. The responses ranged widely, and each response was read. ODNR sampled the responses and grouped them into the following categories. By far, the most often commented aspect of Ohio's trails was the opposition or support for expanded motorized trails. During the survey period, the ODNR Division of Forestry put forward three proposals for the expansion of motorized trails on state forests that likely increased the amount of comments both for and against motorized trail expansion.

Mentioned Most Frequently:

- Opposition and support for expanded motorized trail opportunities in the state.

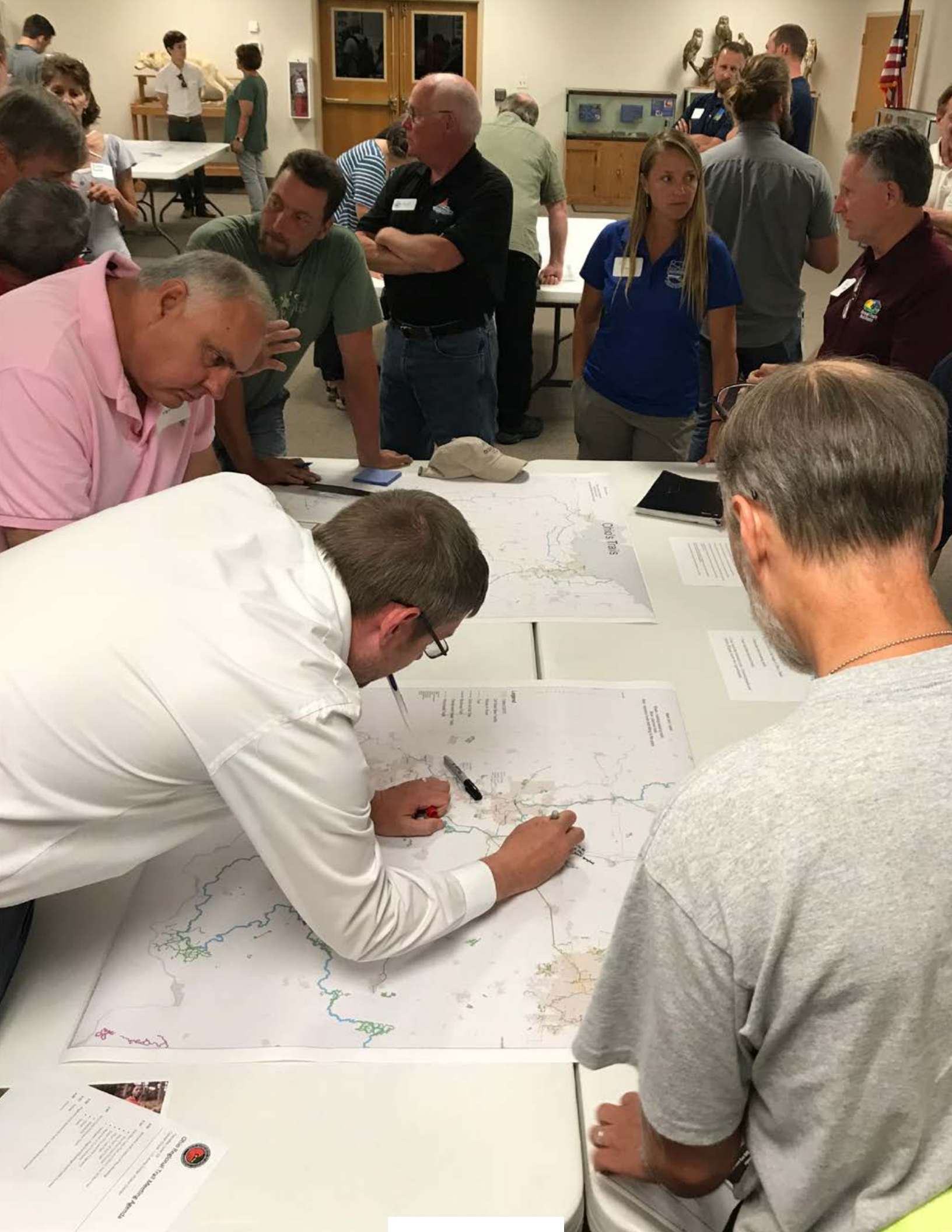
Also Mentioned:

- Need for trail-specific amenity improvements, like camping, maps, signage, parking and trash receptacles.
- User safety.
- General praise for the trail system in Ohio.
- Need for more trails of a specific type, often in a specific geographic region.
- Use of volunteers to maintain trails.
- Concerns regarding conflict between trail users.
- Desire for a trail system that is more interconnected.
- Need for better maintenance of trails.
- Need for better information about Ohio's trails.
- Need for trails more accessible to all.

CONCLUSION

ODNR planners assembled the feedback from the public meetings and online survey and presented it to the Trails Advisory Team. The team used this information to produce many findings and recommendations that should be further explored to meet the Ohio Trails Vision. Those findings and recommendations are presented and explained in further detail throughout this document. ■

From the Survey– “Love Ohio’s trails and would love to see them continue to improve!”


Child's Trails

CHAPTER 5

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Photo Courtesy of Adam Schweigert and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Partnerships and collaborations are strategic alliances that achieve greater impact than can be generated individually. Partnerships are relationships, whether legally binding or informal, which set out clearly defined guidelines to achieve expected results. Collaboration is a cooperative process in which many trail users with varied interests work together to find creative solutions for problems.

Both partnerships and collaboration are important to developing successful trails. Whether working across jurisdictional boundaries or between agencies and departments, leveraging the benefits of cooperation allows the best possible experiences for trail managers and users. Partners are empowered to work together on a common cause, developing broad-based support for ideas that are more likely to be implemented.

Consider the development of trails from start to finish – the visionary plan for a trail or trail system, land acquisition, construction, maintenance, improvements, educational programming and events. There are many opportunities to partner that allow trail managers, planners and users to effectively create world-class trail systems. Partnerships and collaboration are essential for the best possible future for Ohio's trails.

Importance of Partnerships

Finding: Partnerships are essential to developing successful trails.

Recommendation: Continue to encourage trail managers to work with as many partners as possible, including all levels of government, trail advocates, trail users, other trail managers, as well as private industry and businesses.

OPPORTUNITY FOR STATE GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE TRAILS IN OHIO

Several agencies at a statewide level have interests in promoting trails, including ODNR, Ohio Dept. of Transportation (ODOT), the Ohio Dept. of Health, and TourismOhio. Improved collaboration between the appropriate state agencies would benefit future trail efforts. A cross-agency working group that would meet several times per year could discuss how state government can work together, more efficiently and effectively, to ensure progress toward meeting the goals of the Ohio Trails Vision.

State Government Coordination

Finding: There is a need for a more coordinated approach across the appropriate state agencies regarding all types of trails.

Recommendation: Create a cross-agency working group that meets several times a year to discuss how state government can work together to ensure progress toward meeting the goals of the Ohio Trails Vision.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Benefits

There are many benefits of trail partnerships, including:

- Allowing for new perspectives and mutual learning.
- Creating a sense of shared ownership helps better manage future conflicts.
- Establishing new connections with the public and private industry can increase community involvement.
- Providing opportunities to bridge traditional divides between public and private land management.
- Ensuring public lands are managed in an inclusive way.
- Increasing influence by strengthening and expanding programs and services.
- Streamlining operations to gain efficiencies.
- Achieving greater leverage among stakeholders to build awareness or advocacy.
- Addressing complex issues that require coordinating multiple stakeholders.
- Expanding into new places and reach new users.

Challenges

Common challenges include:

- Overcoming deeply held beliefs, organizational culture and different personalities.
- Partnerships can form, but no one is willing to take the lead.
- Different sizes, capacities and skillsets can make it challenging for organizations to partner.
- Different partners may have different priorities.
- Information and standards are different between partners.
- Communication can be difficult.
- Sacrificing local needs for the development of a larger trail system outside an organization's jurisdiction.
- Competition for similar funding sources.

HOW OHIOANS ARE PARTNERING TO PLAN TRAILS

Presented below are several ways Ohioans are partnering and collaborating to advance trails. At least one example of an established, successful partnership is provided for each theme. These examples are provided to help trail managers, advocates and users forge new partnerships across Ohio.

Trail Planning

Collaborations and partnerships are critical to establish when planning a trail. When federal, state and local governments work together with the private sector and trail users, the resulting trail system will better connect communities with a network of trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Without collaboration, trail planners risk missing opportunities to connect important destinations, leverage funding, and share valuable experiences and resources.

Example: Cuyahoga County Greenways

This collaborative of local and regional agencies and organizations in Cuyahoga County is working to facilitate communication, keep focus and drive a regional trails effort. The group is raising the visibility of trails and prioritizing funding methods and actions to complete a network of trails used for both active transportation and recreation. The partners are working in collaboration to develop more than 500 miles of multi-use trail opportunities in the county.

Funding

Funding for all phases of trail development and management is a major concern for trail planners. Multiple sources are often used to fund one project, as there are grants and monies available from a many of sources: The federal government, state government (ODNR and ODOT), nonprofit organizations, foundations, and local private businesses (hospitals, corporate entities, etc.). This variety of funding can be complicated by different guidelines, matching funds, timelines, and project eligibility. Partnerships and collaborations can leverage dedicated funding, creating opportunities that are usually viewed positively by funders.

Example: Richwood Lake Trail

The small village of Richwood in Union County had a dream to improve a dirt path around a lake and connect three schools, a senior center and all existing park facilities with a paved multi-use trail. To realize this vision, village officials worked with residents and the Union County Health Department to receive a grant of technical assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. Together, they strategically pieced together multiple sources of funding from ODNR, Creating Healthy Communities, Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund, the state capital budget, private foundations, and generous in-kind donations to design and build the 1-mile trail system that could not have been possible without partnership and collaboration.

Programming

The implementation of programming is key to reaching a trail's full potential. Partnering with other land managers, local businesses, and community groups to take advantage of their experiences, resources and social networks to promote trails can result in a greater variety of events and programs along the trail.

Example: Metroparks Toledo

Metroparks Toledo partners with a variety of local groups and organizations that provide educational and outdoor skills programming events associated with the Maumee River Water Trail. These include group paddling events, races, competitions and festivals. Event organizers include the Northwest Ohio River Runners, Toledo River Gang, Black Swamp Conservancy, Maumee Valley Tri-Adventure Race, Sandpiper Boat, Partners in Education, Toledo Rowing Club, Wood County Park District, Toledo Naturalists Club and ODNR. Without these organizations, it would not be possible for the Maumee River Water Trail to have such a wide array of effective programming.

Volunteers

Volunteers are vital to many of Ohio's trails. They assist with the development, operations, maintenance and overall support. Their efforts can be used as in-kind match for many grants making resources stretch even further. They are heavily invested in and dedicated to the trails they serve and use. Volunteers are the backbone of trails for many organizations, and they can improve trails by donating their time and skills.

Example: Buckeye Trail Association

The Buckeye Trail Association (BTA) relies on hundreds of volunteers to assist with many efforts on the Buckeye Trail. Buckeye Trail adopters are each responsible for maintaining 1 to 10 miles of the trail.

Their duties include clearing and blazing trails, communicating with local land managers, recruiting other volunteers and promoting events. The BTA offers training for volunteers through the Buckeye Trail Crew, which organizes 15 weeks of training for trail construction and heavy maintenance. The Buckeye Trail would not be as successful as it is today without a strong volunteer base.

Example: Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization (COMBO)

COMBO has built and maintained more than 60 miles of mountain-biking terrain in the region. All trails are patrolled by local International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) trained National Mountain Bike Patrol volunteers. COMBO also hosts multiple events, including races, "dirt school" educational clinics and social events. The COMBO mission statement is to create, advocate and preserve quality mountain biking in central Ohio. Without this partnership between volunteers and land managers, central Ohio would not have the excellent mountain biking experiences it has today.

To maximize the benefits of the dedicated volunteers that are actively caring for all trail types, the Trails Advisory Team expressed the need for policies that allow volunteers to more easily work statewide across trail management boundaries. For example, volunteers looking to work with ODNR's multiple lands must

interact with four separate divisions, each of which have different volunteer policies and procedures.

Volunteers

Finding: Volunteers play an important role in all aspects of trails of every type.

Recommendation: Develop guidelines and best management practices for the creation of volunteer programs that allow volunteers to more easily work across land management boundaries.

Friends Groups

Friends groups are vital in ensuring the success of trails. They assist with all aspects of trails including design, development, funding, maintenance, programming and events. Some are small groups of volunteers and others are major organizations with large budgets and staff. Their mission is to support trails in whatever way is necessary.

Example: Friends of Little Miami State Park

The Friends of Little Miami State Park (FLMSP) was formed by people who love and enjoy the Little Miami Scenic Trail. They wanted to assist ODNR in keeping the trail safe and enjoyable for users. They created a hotline to report downed trees and other non-emergency issues. If volunteer work crews are not able to solve a problem, the issue is routed to park management. The FLMSP board meets monthly and communication between the board and park management is maintained on a regular basis.

Relations have been boosted by participation in joint projects. For example, hazardous ash trees killed by the invasive emerald ash borer needed to be removed along all 50 miles of the trail. Several rotating groups of volunteers worked for weeks, side by side with park staff, as the hazards were removed. The FLMSP play a vital role in ensuring the success of the trail.

Advocacy

Public support is vital to achieve the many benefits of trails. Partnerships that speak with a combined voice can advocate for trails, influencing communities and elected officials to embrace the development and protection of trail experiences. Advocacy partnerships can identify trail issues, network with partners and meet with community leaders.

Example: Ohio Trails Partnership

The Ohio Trails Partnership is a group of trail advocacy organizations led by the Buckeye Trail Association, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, COMBO, Ohio Horseman's Council and the American Canoe Association. The group originally partnered to help eliminate trail user conflicts. When the group was re- constituted in the mid-2010s, their mission expanded to advocating for trails to elected officials and state agency leadership. The group also works with local governments, community leaders and trail users to help advocate for trails in Ohio. Their accomplishments include helping to establish the Legislative Trails Caucus and to spur the creation of this trails plan.

Example: Southern Wayne Advocacy Council

The Southern Wayne Advocacy Council (SWAC) is a nonprofit organization based near Ironton,

Ohio, that collaborates closely with the management staff at Wayne National Forest. They have participated in discussions that eliminated equestrian and mountain bike trail fees and reduced motorized trail fees at Wayne National Forest. They continually work with the staff of the Wayne National Forest to maintain and expand trails in southeast Ohio through volunteering and applying for trail grants. They also offer community input on recreation and proposed forest management projects.

Regional Partnerships

Establishing strong connections on a larger scale across multiple boundaries and organizations is the strength of regional partnerships. Dozens of partnerships in Ohio are involved and working together on one trail or network for the benefit of the local economy, community and trail users.

Example: Central Ohio Greenways

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of cities, villages, townships counties and regional organizations serving central Ohio. MORPC takes pride in bringing communities of all sizes and interests together to share best practices and plan for its growing region. The Central Ohio Greenways Board is a committee of MORPC, with a mission to expand the number of trail miles and increase the use of trails for all people. The 22 board members work on trail development, operations and access, partnership and marketing. The board collaborates with member jurisdictions to connect trail projects and understand the priorities of each member organization while providing guidance for trail prioritization, maintenance and communication standards.

Example: Tri-State Trails

Tri-State Trails is an alliance of trail advocates in the tri-state region of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. This public-private collaboration advances a vision to connect and expand the region's trail network. Tri-State Trails works with many organizations that have differing priorities and across multiple levels of government. A management structure that accomplished common goals had to be created. One effort known as the Cincinnati Riding Or Walking Network (CROWN) is a plan for a 30-mile trail loop around the city of Cincinnati that will serve as a hub for several regional trails. Work is also underway to link the region's two longest trails, the Little Miami Scenic Trail and the Great Miami River Trail.

Example: Great Miami Riverway

The Great Miami Riverway is an entire region of trail networks in southwest Ohio that is focused on the corridor of the Great Miami State and National Water Trail system. The riverway is inclusive of communities and agencies along the corridor, including: Sidney, Troy, Piqua, Tipp City, Miami County Park District, Dayton, Montgomery County, Miami Conservancy District, Five Rivers MetroParks, West Carrollton, Miamisburg, Franklin, MetroParks of Butler County and Hamilton. These partners came together to market and publicize the region as a cohesive entity. They have created a five-year plan with the goal of growing the river corridor as a connected, unified, regional place in hopes of attracting more visitors. Their plan includes branding, marketing the region as a destination, improving wayfinding signage and coordinating events. This partnership is a great asset to the region.

Networking and Training

Collaboration for the purposes of shared learning and networking can be a very valuable partnership. Conferences and workshops on a local, regional or statewide scale can be beneficial to trail planners, developers and managers. Learning how other trails are being developed and providing continuing education on relevant topics strengthens trail efforts. Working with local convention and visitors bureaus, metropolitan planning organizations, other local entities and nonprofit organizations to plan a variety of experiences will also allow for additional partnerships to be formed. Collaboration at this level could lead to identifying trail network gaps and possible solutions for connectivity.

Example: Greater Cleveland Trails and Greenways Conference

Focusing on trail and greenway development in northeast Ohio, this conference has provided an opportunity for professionals, advocates, community leaders and business interests to be inspired, recognize the benefits of trails, explore emerging trends, and network with leading trail experts and peers to build support for trails. The one-day program includes presentations in the morning followed by afternoon field trips to nearby trails.

Health

Partnering with local hospitals, healthcare entities or health departments can be beneficial to the development of trails and the promotion of trails as part of a healthy lifestyle. As health organizations look to be more proactive in preventing disease and chronic illness, they are collaborating with parks and trails to promote and fund programs and activities. Partnerships with the health fields can also be beneficial for important data and monitoring to demonstrate the need for and benefits of trails.

Example: Ross County Destination Trails

Ross County Destination Trails is a group of partners led by the Adena Health System in Ross County. The group is working to make Ross County a destination for hiking, trail running, horseback riding and mountain biking connected by a network of multi-use greenway trails. Partners include Adena Health System, city of Chillicothe, Ross-Chillicothe Convention and Visitors Bureau, Ross County commissioners and the Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce. Adena, the major healthcare provider in the region, recognizes the importance of providing access for residents to be able to recreate and improve their health and well-being. Advocacy for expanded trails and outdoor activities is aligned with Adena's vision of "being instrumental in creating healthy, thriving communities." The partnership has created a not-for- profit board to administer and promote the plan for sustainable, destination quality trails.

CONCLUSION

Partnerships are important throughout the entire process of trail planning, building, maintaining and use. The state can continue to expand and enhance quality trail experiences through partnerships and collaborations between all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, private businesses and trail users. There are many excellent trail projects that would not be possible without partnerships, collaboration and working together as a collective team. ■

From the Survey– "Need better cooperation between park systems, government, volunteer groups to build and maintain good trails."

Photo Courtesy of Friends of the Little Miami State Park

Photo Courtesy of Buckeye Trail Association

CHAPTER 6

FUNDING

Photo Courtesy of Stark Parks

To realize the Ohio Trails Vision outlined by the Trails Advisory Team, trail planners and managers will have to continue to work creatively and strategically to fund a statewide system. Ohio's trail system has developed in part to several dedicated funding streams. This chapter highlights ways planners are funding trails of all types in Ohio outside of normal operating budgets. Trail developers often rely on several different dedicated funding sources with different match requirements, funding cycle timelines and environmental requirements. Ohio's trail planners are using local, state, and federal funding sources to their advantage to develop world-class trails.

The programs presented below are those that can be used for projects that are separate from roadways. The chapter concludes by providing an analysis of trail funding and presents the overall findings and recommendations that will need to be implemented to realize the Ohio Trails Vision.

MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES

Clean Ohio Trails Fund

Funding Source

Tax-exempt bonds sold by the State of Ohio authorized by the State Capital Budget

Funding Administrator

ODNR Office of Real Estate and Land Management

Program Description

The Clean Ohio Trails Fund (COTF) was originally proposed by Governor Bob Taft in his 2000 State of the State address, where he called for a $400 million bond program to preserve natural areas and farmland, protect streams, create outdoor recreational opportunities, expand a statewide system of recreational trails, and revitalize urban areas by returning contaminated properties to productive use. This proposal became State Issue 1, and in 2000, it was overwhelmingly approved by Ohio voters. In 2001, the Ohio General Assembly enacted Amended Substitute House Bill 3, spelling out the administrative details of the program. ODNR administers the COTF reimbursement grant program in consultation with the COTF Advisory Board. Sections 1519.05 and 1519.06 of the ORC provide authority for the Clean Ohio Trails Fund and the advisory board.

Cities and villages, counties, townships, special districts, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Projects are typically capped at $500,000 and require a minimum 25 percent local match. Approximately $6.25 million is awarded annually. Applications are submitted to ODNR on an annual basis before being evaluated by grants staff through a detailed review. Recommendations are presented to the COTF Advisory Board before being submitted to the ODNR Director for final approval.

Eligible Projects

Projects eligible for funding from the COTF include: trail projects that are in synchronization with the statewide trails plan, or a current regional trail plan; trail projects that complete regional trail systems and/or provide links to the statewide trail system; trails that link population centers with an outdoor recreation area and facilities; trail projects that involve the purchase of rail lines, or preserve natural corridors; trail projects that provide links in urban areas that support commuter access; and trails that provide economic benefit.

Program Impact

Through 2018, the COTF dedicated more than $86 million to provide Ohioans with better access to recreational opportunities. More than 260 trail projects have been awarded, which resulted in:

- 123 miles of corridor acquisition
- 437 miles of new trail
- 44 bridges
- 14 tunnels
- 36 trailheads

Important Information

The COTF is often the first choice for trail planners since it is a state program and has less administrative requirements compared to federal government funding sources. The COTF primarily funds linear multi- use trails, however, it has funded long-distance backpacking trail projects like the Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Recreational Trails Program

Funding Source

Federal Highway Administration via federal transportation bills

Funding Administrator

ODNR Office of Real Estate and Land Management

Program Description

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a reimbursement grant program funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). RTP funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non- highway recreational fuel use: fuel used for off-highway recreation by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles and off-highway light trucks. The program has been authorized since 1991 in sequential federal transportation bills – the current bill is Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

Cities and villages, counties, townships, special districts, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Projects are capped at $150,000 and require a minimum 20 percent match. Approximately $1.6 million is awarded annually. Applications are submitted to ODNR on an annual basis, then they are evaluated by a grants staff through a detailed review. Recommendations are presented to the State Recreational Trail Advisory Board before they are submitted to the ODNR Director for final approval.

Eligible Projects

The RTP program funds the acquisition, restoration, construction, development of trails and related trail facilities. Trail educational projects and trailhead development are also eligible. Limited costs associated with engineering and design are eligible for funding if those costs are part of the development project. Trail maintenance activities and, in limited cases that meet certain criteria, purchase of trail maintenance equipment, are eligible.

Program Impact

From its inception in 1991 and through 2018, the RTP has awarded funds for 342 Ohio trail projects:

- 61 miles of property acquisition
- 228 miles of new trail
- 2 trailhead acquisitions
- 29 trailheads
- 47 new bridges
- 14 equipment grants
- 1,049 miles of trail restored

Important Information

Since the funding is derived from gas taxes, 30 percent of the funding each year must be spent on motorized trails. This program also funds maintenance of existing trails and is the only dedicated trail grant program available that funds natural surface loop trails.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Funding Source

Set-aside of the Surface Transportation Block Grant program from Federal Highway Administration via federal transportation bills

Funding Administrator

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) or metropolitan planning organizations

Program Description

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program provides money from the federal government to states to fund transportation projects. The transportation bill enacted in 2015, known as the FAST Act, requires an approximate 10 percent set-aside to be dedicated toward transportation alternatives, which ODOT manages as its Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). ODOT distributes these funds to the Ohio's 17 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), which use the funding to support local transportation alternatives projects. Four MPOs consistently return the money to ODOT on a yearly basis so that they can be included in the statewide TAP, which ODOT administers for areas not within an MPO. The TAP program is one of Ohio's largest sources of funding for multi-use trails. Only local governmental entities, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource or public land agencies are eligible for this funding. A 20 percent match is typically required. Currently, ODOT provides up to 95 percent of the project cost due to the use of toll revenue credit for projects scheduled for construction through state fiscal year 2023. ODOT uses a scoring process and an internal project selection committee to recommend projects to the deputy director of the Division of Planning. MPOs around the state each use different processes for granting their TAP funds.

Eligible Projects

Eligible projects applicable to trail development include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, recreational trails and safe routes for non-drivers. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities may include multi-use trails, bike lanes, traffic signs, new sidewalks, bicycle parking racks and covered bicycle shelters. Upgrades to facilities to meet federal, state and/or local responsibilities for compliance with what the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires are eligible, as are traffic calming improvements to reduce conflicts in heavy pedestrian areas. Recreational trail projects that offer a transportation component take priority over those that are only recreational.

Program Impact

From federal fiscal year 1992-2017, according to information provided by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's transportation alternatives data exchange, TAP and its predecessor, the Transportation Enhancement Program, have distributed $53.8 million for multi-use trails and $186 million for pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Ohio. In federal fiscal year 2018, $27.3 million of TAP funding was available in

Ohio (this does not include the approximately $1.6 million that goes toward the RTP administered by ODNR). In the most recent funding cycle, ODOT received $40 million worth of project applications with only $12 million available to distribute outside of the MPOs. Over time, TAP funds have become an increasingly more important funding source to develop multi-use trails as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Ohio.

Important Information

While many multi-use trail projects have been funded by TAP, it is important to note that all proposed projects must have a direct relationship to surface transportation or well-defined benefits as a recreational trail facility. TAP provides the largest amount of dedicated funding each year available for the construction of multi-use trails. In addition to TAP, the Federal Highways Administration maintains a matrix that lists all pedestrian and bicycle funding opportunities available through the U.S. Department of Transportation Transit, Highway, and Safety funds, which is available at: fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.pdf.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) was developed by the federal government to implement surface transportation projects that contribute to air quality improvements and provide automobile traffic congestion relief. Funds are provided for use in a U.S. EPA designated air quality area. The programs are administered locally by the applicable regional planning entity. Eligible applicants are political subdivisions within a designated air quality area. Multi-use trails, signed bike routes and bicycle lanes are eligible projects, as are sidewalks, crosswalks, outreach related to safe bicycle use and bicycle parking facilities.

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation Discretionary Grants

This highly competitive federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation funds innovative multimodal transportation projects that can include trails and other bike and pedestrian facilities. (BUILD) was previously known as the TIGER program. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the availability of $1.5 billion in funding under the BUILD program.

State Capital Bill Community Projects

Approximately every two years, the Governor and Ohio Legislature work together to produce the state's capital bill, an investment in Ohio's infrastructure and local community projects. Work on the 2019-2020 capital bill began in 2017 as community representatives throughout the state worked with Governor John Kasich's administration and their legislators to identify priority projects, some of which included trails. When signed by the governor in March 2018, House Bill 529 authorized more than $5.1 million for local communities to develop, upgrade and maintain trails.

NatureWorks and the Land and Water Conservation Fund

These two programs administered by the ODNR Office of Real Estate can be used to provide funding for trail projects, especially projects or portions of projects located in parks, nature preserves and dedicated forest lands. Projects important to the development of water trails, including canoe and boat launch facilities, are also eligible. The NatureWorks grant program is funded through the Ohio Parks and Natural Resources Bond issue, which was approved by Ohio voters in November 1993. The program provides up to $150,000 of reimbursement assistance (25 percent local match required) to local government subdivisions for the acquisition, development and rehabilitation of recreational areas. The maximum project available is allocated based on the population of the county so only Ohio's largest counties are eligible for the maximum award. In 2017, the program awarded grant money to 92 projects, including 11 trail projects and six hand-powered watercraft access projects.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1964. Funding for the program has been authorized through 2018, and ODNR accepted applications in 2018. At the end of 2018, several proposals are under consideration in the U.S. House and Senate to both reauthorize and/or reform the program. For 2017, 14 projects received funding in Ohio, four of which had a trail component. Awards are capped at $500,000 and require a 50 percent local match. Projects have included property acquisition and trail construction, as well as amenity upgrades and construction like restrooms and parking lots.

Clean Ohio Greenspace Fund

The Clean Ohio Greenspace Fund is a companion program to the COTF. The program is managed by the Ohio Public Works Commission, but projects are evaluated and awarded at the local level by boards called Natural Resources Advisory Committees. The program is dedicated to the acquisition of green space and the enhancement of river and stream corridors. The program has resulted in the acquisition of more than 26,000 acres in the state of Ohio. Many of these lands now have low-impact natural surface recreational trail systems. In addition, the fund has been used to buy corridors for the construction of multi-use trails.

Local Dedicated Funding

The importance of trails has been reflected in the development of dedicated funding at the local level. As the public's demand for trail opportunities rises, local initiatives to provide dedicated funds for trail development will likely increase. Two recently created local dedicated trail funding streams have been created in central and western Ohio.

In 2018, the Delaware County Board of Commissioners began offering $100,000 to local communities and organizations to develop multi-use trails. These dedicated trail funds can be used as the match requirement for state and federal grants like COTF and RTP. Also, in 2018, the city of Oxford passed a property tax levy to fund the construction of a 12-mile multi-use trail system. The levy raises $10 million and will be used to leverage other grants, provide dedicated money for construction, and set aside funds for long-term maintenance and operation.

Non-Traditional Sources

The increasing demand of trails has led trail planners to obtain resources from a wide variety of groups. During the Ohio trail plan public meetings, trail planners and advocates provided resources they have utilized to fund trails. Non-traditional sources include community foundations, nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce, private businesses, real estate developers, corporate sponsorships, user fees and trail advocacy groups.

FUNDING ANALYSIS

Does the Current Funding Meet the Demand?

With the increasing popularity of trails, there is an increasing demand for the currently available dedicated trail grant dollars. As local and regional governments plan more trails, the need for dedicated funding will likely increase. It is important to note that even the largest, best funded park districts seek state and federal funding opportunities for trail construction. To reach our trails vision in Ohio, more money will be needed.

Funding a Statewide Trail System

Finding: To realize the Ohio Trails Vision, more dedicated funding for all trail types will be required.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase dedicated trail funding for both multi-use, natural surface, and water trails of all types.

Dedicated Funding for Trail Reconstruction and Capital Improvements

As Ohio's trail system ages, trails that were built using dedicated funds, such as the COTF program, will eventually outlive their intended lifetimes. When this happens, the trails will need to be reconstructed. COTF funding can be used only for the construction of trails, not long-term maintenance or capital improvements. The only dedicated trail program dollars that can be used for the reconstruction, capital improvements, or maintenance of trails are the RTP grants coordinated by ODNR.

Trail Reconstruction and Capital Improvements

Finding: Dedicated funding is needed for trail reconstruction, and capital improvements is limited.

Recommendation: Explore dedicated funding options for capital improvements for all types of trails.

Funding for Trail Operations and Maintenance

Many trail developers across the state, especially in rural and smaller communities, are also in need of funding assistance for daily operations and maintenance. Trail managers are meeting this need with volunteers, which is discussed in both the Partnerships and Collaboration chapter and the Development chapter. Even so, increased monetary resources that can be used for maintenance should be examined to ensure a well-maintained trails network across Ohio.

Trail Operations and Maintenance

Finding: Funding for trail operations and maintenance is limited.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase opportunities to fund trail maintenance and operations for all types of trails.

CONCLUSION

There are many possible sources of funding to develop trail projects in Ohio. The passage of the Clean Ohio Trails program in 2000 gave Ohio a state-generated vehicle to provide funding to local communities to develop trails. Funding derived from the federal government through transportation programs is the other key funding stream used in Ohio for trail development. For Ohio to grow as a trail destination, it is necessary to establish more dedicated funding for the construction and long-term maintenance. ■

Photo Courtesy of Chuck Gulker and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

CHAPTER 7

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

To realize the Ohio Trails Vision, Ohioans across the state will have to work together to develop trails. This chapter presents an introduction to the trail planning process, provides advice for trail developers, and presents findings and recommendations to be implemented to realize the Ohio Trails Vision.

PLANNING TRAILS

Trail Corridor Acquisition

An important component in trail development is the acquisition of property for trails. In Ohio, the responsibility for this acquisition lies with local trail developers. Throughout the planning process, trail developers stressed the difficulty and expense associated with trail corridor acquisition. To develop a world-class trail system, trail developers must be able to act quickly when the opportunity exists to acquire trail corridors.

One notification tool for trail managers for rail corridor abandonment is the early warning alert system managed by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. This program alerts state agencies and local communities of rail abandonments to initiate corridor preservation efforts for future trail use. The Trails Advisory Team believes that more attention and direct assistance from state government could advance the preservation of potential trail corridors of all types. This attention, combined with a quickly accessible and dedicated funding source used to secure trail corridors, would help realize the Ohio Trails Vision.

Trail Corridor Acquisition

Finding: The capacity is not present at the local level to act in a timely fashion to acquire corridors for trail development.

Recommendation: Explore ways to strengthen trail developers' abilities to acquire corridors and properties for trails.

Capacity to Develop Trails

Trail planners and advocates provided a great deal of feedback regarding the construction of trails throughout the trail planning process. One concern that stood out is the apparent disparity between the capacity of smaller communities and local nonprofit organizations to develop trails compared to larger communities.

Large agencies often have dedicated employees who specialize in grant writing, landscape architecture, planning and engineering. If they do not have the needed skill set required within the organization, they often have the discretionary funds to hire outside firms to fill in these gaps. Smaller agencies and nonprofits simply do not have these resources. Ultimately, the development of a true state trail system that connects Ohio's metropolitan and rural areas will require more trail assistance in areas where that capacity has not been developed.

Trail planners across the state do recognize this capacity gap and will often assist smaller communities within that metropolitan region. One example is how the Cuyahoga Greenway Partners held a trail development workshop for communities in the region in fall 2018. The area's leading trail planning agencies detailed best management practices for the funding, design and construction of multi-use trails. ODOT has encouraged planning in local communities by providing funds for regional active transportation plans that include multi-use trails. While these efforts are excellent and should be continued, there is still need for a more coordinated approach to assist smaller communities to truly make Ohio a trails destination.

Ability to Develop Trails

Finding: Large communities have the expertise and resources to plan, design, fund and build trails, while smaller communities have fewer resources to do the same.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase trail building ability in smaller communities.

Designing Trails

The design of trails that have minimal impact on surrounding resources, both natural and cultural, is not only good practice, but a requirement of many of the funding sources available to trail developers. The best designed trails complement and enhance the surrounding landscape. One of the challenges faced by many trail developers is the inability to use dedicated trail funding sources for environmental compliance and design that occurs separately from the construction phase. Trail planners should consider consulting with the following regulatory agencies to assist in planning and design:

- Ohio Historical Preservation Office – cultural and historical concerns
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – wetland and stream impacts
- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency – wetland and stream impacts, hazardous materials investigations
- U.S. Coast Guard – navigable waterways
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources – broad environmental review including impacts to state threatened and endangered species
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – federally threatened and endangered species
- Local floodplain administrator – floodplain concerns

BUILDING AND MANAGING TRAILS

Trail Guidelines

After reviewing other state trails plans, ODNR planners determined that the development of trail guidelines would be outside the scope of this Ohio Trails Vision process. However, the need for better standards for all trail types, in order to provide a more predictable user experience, was consistently mentioned by trail planners and users. Therefore, the need for trail guidelines for the state should be further explored by the Trails Advisory Team.

Trail Guidelines

Finding: There is a need to establish statewide guidelines and best management practices for the design, construction, operations, and maintenance of all trail types to provide a better experience for trail users.

Recommendation: Work with the Trails Advisory Team to explore the development of statewide trail guidelines.

Trail Management and Maintenance using Volunteers

When planning a trail system, trail managers must consider the need for maintenance and long-term capital improvements to ensure the trail remains sustainable well into the future. Volunteers and trail users are critical to involve during all the phases of trail development and management. Trail managers should consider working closely with volunteers through friends groups, adopt-a-trail programs and clean-up events. Trail managers have formed successful partnerships with organizations such as the Buckeye Trail Association, the Ohio Horseman's Council, Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization and many others to maintain and manage trails in Ohio. Many of these partnerships are highlighted in the Partnerships and Collaboration Chapter.

Strategies for Diversity

Trail developers of all types are concerned about the need for trails to serve a more diverse population, highlighting the need for equity and inclusion to accommodate the needs of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. In the past decades, trails have been developed in an opportunistic manner in many settings across Ohio. Developers and advocates have recently spent more time contemplating whether this development has been done equitably for all Ohioans. Many surveys of trail users across Ohio have consistently shown that there are large population demographics that are largely underrepresented within trail users. Local government, trail collaborations and advocacy groups are working to address these issues with varying degrees of success. Everything from analysis of trail development priorities to programming and outreach to underserved populations have been utilized as tactics to ensure that trail development moving forward focuses on all areas and members of communities that trails are being created in.

Strategies for Diversity

Finding: Trails are underserving members of minority and low-income communities.

Recommendation: Develop strategies to engage a more diverse user base for Ohio's trails and develop new trails in underserved areas.

User Conflict

The Ohio Trails Partnership is an example of a successful partnership of the non-motorized trail advocacy groups in the state that helps resolve potential conflicts on the trails. The Trails Advisory Team brought together motorized users and non-motorized trail users together in a form to discuss all types of recreational trails in Ohio. In general, trail users prefer single use trails whenever possible, however, this is not always feasible. Education and signage are key to help mitigate conflict on Ohio's trails.

User Conflict

Finding: When different types of trail uses intersect, conflict arises between trail users. Separate trails for separate use is preferred.

Recommendation: Develop educational opportunities for trail uses of all types that articulate appropriate trail use and behavior.

CONCLUSION

While developing a trail from start to finish is challenging, the completion of a successful trail system can benefit the community and the state for future generations. This chapter highlighted some of the stages of the trail planning and development process. The recommendations given by the Trails Advisory Team are important to implement the Ohio Trails Vision. ■

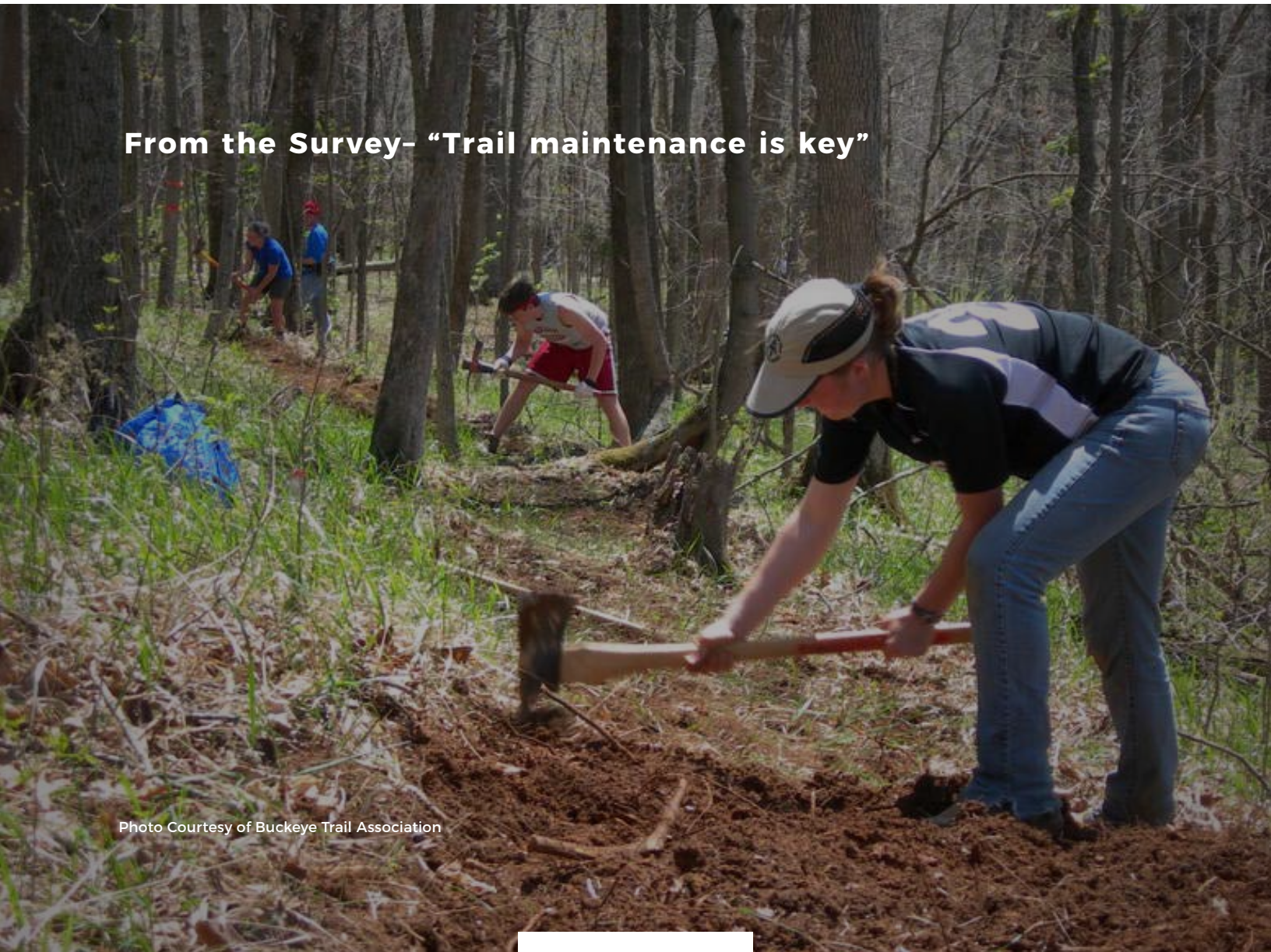


Photo Courtesy of Buckeye Trail Association

CHAPTER 8

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Photo Courtesy of Tri-State Trails

Trail use in Ohio is among the top outdoor activities, however, lack of information about where to go and what to do continues to be a top barrier. Building awareness of Ohio as a trail destination and increasing the awareness of trails in general would meet the demand of trail users and generate economic impact for all communities in the state. The intent of this chapter is not to present a marketing plan. Instead, this chapter outlines key opportunities and explores potential marketing roles of state government, destination marketing organizations and trail managers to ensure coordination and effectiveness.

Ohio's destination marketing organizations (DMOs) come in various forms and often have names that include the words convention, visitors, and bureau (CVB). TourismOhio, a branch of state government, fills this role at the state level. Dozens of local DMOs operate largely at the county or municipal level. Examples include Lake Erie Shores and Islands, Great Miami Riverway, Destination Toledo, Experience Columbus, Destination Cleveland, Visit Greater Springfield, Ross-Chillicothe CVB and Dublin CVB. Most of these are nonprofit organizations that work independently under a board of directors. The mission of these groups is to promote visitor and business travel that generates visitor spending for a destination. Coordination between trail managers and DMOs at all levels within the state will be key to realizing the Ohio Trails Vision.

MARKETING GOALS

The findings and recommendations presented in this chapter are based on the four marketing goals identified in Figure 1. These goals arose from discussions held by the Trails Advisory Team and the Ohio Trails Partnership, as well as a series of regional nature tourism workshops for resource managers and tourism professionals throughout the state conducted in 2013 by ODNR and the Ohio Travel Association. Two of these goals – increase awareness and increase economic activity and quality of experience – are combined because of the intertwining connection between them.

INCREASE AWARENESS, ECONOMIC IMPACT AND QUALITY OF OHIO TRAILS

Understanding Trail Users

Trail users vary greatly depending on the trail types they use, the frequency of and enthusiasm for using and the intensity of the trail experiences they seek out. To best direct future marketing opportunities, trail managers will need accurate information about trail users. While several survey efforts, including the survey produced in this plan, can tell us many important things about Ohio trail users, the methodologies used by different organizations have resulted in similar, yet slightly different results. This makes it challenging to make direct comparisons and actionable marketing decisions based on the currently available information.

As an example, managers of the 340-mile Miami Valley Trails system, the most extensive connected multi-use trail system in Ohio, collectively survey trail users on a regular basis. However, the results have varied depending on the time of year the survey was conducted, making data needed for marketing analysis difficult to access. The following are results of a 2017 study conducted during one week in September. This list could look very different given different weather conditions, or if the survey was conducted at another time of year.

- Biking, walking and running are the top activities on the trail.
- A total of 17 percent of trail users are from outside the region.
- The typical trail user in 2017 (as in past years) was older (two-thirds above age 45) and male (60 percent male).

When exploring opportunities for growing trail use, trail planners must also consider the enthusiasm level of trail users. Research has identified that for many outdoor recreation niches, those who are most passionate about the activity spend money differently during trips than recreationists who combine trail experiences with other attractions or activities in the region. Ultimately, recreationists are using trails for very different reasons. Understanding trail users and the reasons why they use trails are both essential for designing and promoting recreational experiences. Because of this, the Trails Advisory Team recommends the following:

Trail Use Surveys

Finding: Better scientific trail user data is needed, particularly data identifying characteristics of users based on trail type, economic impact, enthusiasm, and exploration of what would enhance trail experiences.

Recommendation: Implement a standardized trail user survey platform that can be used by trail managers, as well as statewide groups, for determining year-round marketing and experience development opportunities and challenges.

Attracting Travelers to Ohio's Trails

This section presents a conceptual framework that helps to understand the different stages of traveler experiences. Trail managers seeking to raise awareness of a community trail or a regional DMO hoping to increase overnight visitation may consider these stages useful. Potential strategies are identified within each travel stage. Boundaries between the stages are often fluid. For example, experiencing a trail and sharing that experiences with others often occurs simultaneously.

INSPIRE AND DREAM

Goals	• Stimulate interest in Ohio trail experiences. • Convince travelers to think about trails year-round. • Convince travelers to consider visiting a trail when they arecoming to Ohio for another purpose.
What Are People Thinking About At This Stage?	• "Trails look fun, like a good way to relax, like a good way to get fit, etc. I should go on a trail." • "I'm planning a trip to Ohio. Trails look fun!"
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Convince the traveler that visiting an Ohio trail is a good idea, and they should start planning a visit.
Potential Strategies	• Produce inspiring images and video content of trail experiences that are available and then share those images and video content with trail managers and destination marketing organizations at all levels. • Develop search engine optimization and marketing (SEO/SEM) strategies that link trail opportunities to those searching for information about the state or a local region/community.

DISCOVER AND RESEARCH

Goals	• Ensure the trail or trail destination comes up first and repeatedly as travelers start exploring options. • Ensure trails are considered by travelers when planning a visit to Ohio.
What Are People Thinking About At This Stage?	• "I want to plan a trail experience. Where can I go?" • "What do others say about some of these trail destinations?" • "Why should I go to trail X over trail Y?" • "I'm coming to Ohio. Which trails are close to where I will be?"
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Choose your trail or trail destination over all others.
Potential Strategies	• Ensure trail experiences can be found with DMO resources at all levels, including TourismOhio. • Ensure that a reputation management strategy is in place to solicit and respond to user reviews on sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp. • Ensure SEO/SEM strategies are in place.

PLAN

Goals	• Build trust and loyalty with your future guest by making it easy for them to find what they need.
What Are People Thinking About At This Stage?	• "I'm going to trail X. I want this to be the best-ever for me and my fellow trail users." • "What should I see and do? What will I need? How many days? What is it going to cost?"
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Upsell to staying additional days and/or adding additional points of interest to their visit.
Potential Strategies	• Digital and mobile maps and other trip planning tools are functional and informative. • Ensure types of trail experiences, trail lengths and difficulty are identified. • Ensure trail experiences are easy to find on DMO resources at all levels, including TourismOhio. • Trail websites should also include what there is to see and do near the trail, such as natural areas, attractions, dining options, museums, etc. • Offer itineraries for different types of trail users. • Collaborate with niche partners along the trail, such as craft breweries, local foods and other authentic experiences to create unique experiences linked to trail users.

ACTION AND BOOK

Goals	• Seal the deal. Convince trail user to commit to travel and make reservations.
What Are People Thinking Bout At This Stage?	• "I know what I'm doing. Now, I have to confirm my plans." • "How do I make lodging reservations? Are there packages available? Do I need to reserve equipment or transportation from one end of the trail to another?"
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Make booking the trip easy. • Upsell to longer stays and other activities in the area.
Potential Strategies	• Connect trails directly to lodging options in the area or to local DMOs when booking interfaces. • Connect trail users directly to booking engines for local businesses such as restaurants, museums, other natural areas, etc.

ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

Goals	• A traveler's experience on Ohio trails exceeds their expectations.
What Are People Thinking About At This Stage?	• "This trail is fabulous. I'm having an amazing time." • "How do I get to X? What more can I do? If I have a question, where can I go for help?" • "I must share this experience with my friends. Right now."
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Make them feel special. Provide local only information.
Potential Strategies	• Signage to trailheads and experiences nearby are clear and readily available, including signage to towns from the trail. Map signage on trails provide mileage, difficulty, amenities and connections to communities. • Wi-Fi availability. • Mobile apps for trails are easy to use and are linked to amenities on and off the trail. • Trails and amenities are available and maintained. • Businesses provide exceptional service and recognize customers who are trail users. Businesses offer special discounts to trail users and provide shipping services. • Businesses provide types and quality of goods and services that trail users expect. • Overnight facilities offer safe places to store equipment. • Offer trail passports for trail users to connect them to local businesses and experiences. • Pedestrian-friendly communities provide safe and navigable ways for trail users to explore.

SHARE

Goals	• Traveler tells other people about the great time they had in Ohio.
What Are People Thinking About At This Stage?	• "I had such a good time on that trail. I want to tell others."
How Do We Move Them To The Next Stage?	• Keep the conversation going.
Potential Strategies	• Promote trail hashtags on the trail, on publications and digital platforms. • Sponsor online contests and activities to boost engagement. • Provide opportunities for trail users to subscribe to trail newsletters.

From the Survey– "Ohio has GREAT trails, let's keep improving and promoting them."

Photo Courtesy of Tom Bilcze and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

The strategies presented above are meant to serve as ideas for all trail planners to market their trails. The Trails Advisory Team presents the following findings and recommendations to increase awareness, economic impact and experience quality of Ohio trails:

Brand and Market Ohio Trails

Finding: Trail users say it is challenging to find needed information statewide about Ohio's trails.

Recommendation: ODNR will continue development of a website with the intent of producing an easy-to-use and resourceful interactive map of all Ohio trails, a calendar of trail events and links to destination marketing agencies for each trail experience.

Statewide Trail Marketing Plan

Finding: The state lacks a consistent way to market its trails.

Recommendation: A data-driven statewide marketing plan for Ohio's trails should be produced, with opportunities for leveraging cooperative participation from DMOs at all levels, as well as consideration of branding. This marketing plan should address trail use from a broad perspective, including economic development and public health.

Trail Towns

Finding: The trail town concept has been used to connect communities with trails, users and businesses to promote growth and economic vitality.

Recommendation: Establish an Ohio Trails Town program that provides a process for recognition and guidelines for best management practices. This would recognize communities that support world-class trails and provide resources to those interested in exploring new business opportunities catering to trail users.

INCREASE COLLABORATION AND ACCESS TO MARKETING EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE

In many parts of the state, trail managers are not connected to local or regional DMOs, and many of these organizations lack understanding of the marketing potential of their trails. Conversations about enhancing the outdoor economy in Ohio have been numerous and lengthy. In 2013, the Ohio Travel Association and ODNR met with 80 tourism and resource management professionals to discuss opportunities for nature tourism, including trails. During sessions around the state participants expressed the need for increased capacity to develop nature tourism experiences, which are coordinated regionally and statewide. Specific needs identified include hands-on tools and worksheets, collaborative training workshops, and identification and sharing of customer service needs specific to the type of outdoor recreationist. Work during these sessions produced lists of learning

needs for both resource managers and tourism entities. Participants also called for coordination of a statewide nature tourism strategy.

The Trails Advisory Team presents the following recommendations to increase collaboration in marketing trails across the state:

Cross-Training Trail Managers and Travel Professionals

Finding: There is not widespread collaboration between people who manage trails and those who promote communities.

Recommendation: Develop workshops for trails managers, DMOs and businesses that demonstrate the economic potential of trails and teach communities to create and market recreation experiences that meet the expectation of trail users. Incorporate these learning opportunities into existing conferences and educational events by coordinating efforts between the trail and travel economy communities.

PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF TRAIL EXPERIENCES

With increased use comes potential challenges to ensure sustainability of trails. Protecting the trail experience means ensuring that the waters, lands and wildlife are healthy, even with increased potential impact by users. Sustaining the trail experience also means keeping the most enthusiastic of users at the forefront of consideration and planning, as not all users will put the same demands – nor expect the same experiences – on a trail. If trails and their experiences are not sustainable, future gains will not be realized. The trails advisory team presents the following recommendation regarding trail sustainability:

Trail Sustainability

Finding: Any effort to increase trail use must be accompanied by sustainability measures to protect the resources, as well as the integrity of the trail experience for future users.

Recommendation: Provide resources and best practices training for trail managers on sustainability and protection of the trail experience. ■

CHAPTER 9

TRAIL INVENTORY

Photo Courtesy of Buckeye Trail Association

ODNR TRAIL INVENTORY HISTORY

In addition to the responsibility of creating the state trails plan, ORC 1519 tasks the ODNR, through the Chief of the ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft, to "prepare and maintain a current inventory of trails, abandoned or unmaintained roads, streets, and highways, abandoned railroad rights-of-ways, utility easements, canals, or other scenic or historic corridors or rights-of-way that are suitable for recreational use." Further, the code states that any "state department, agency, political subdivision, or planning commission shall furnish available maps, descriptions, and other pertinent information to the Director for inspection and duplication, for trail inventory and planning purposes."

In preparation of the 2005 state trails plan, ODNR created a trail inventory of all critical linear trails in the state. The inventory focused on multi-use trails, although long distance natural surface trails like the Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail were included. For the first time, ODNR used geographic information system (GIS) technology to develop an electronic trail database. Data gathered for the inventory included existing, planned and proposed trails. Planned trails were those that had not yet been built but were in some formal stage of planning. Proposed trails were more conceptual than a planned trail. Proposed trails might include a corridor that no public agency is actively pursuing but has the potential to be developed into a trail. Finally, the trail inventory grouped trails by five classifications determined by the length of the trail: national, state, regional, county-wide and community trails.

The 2005 effort was excellent and resulted for the first time in a true statewide database of Ohio's linear trails. The data was presented in a system of statewide and regional maps in the 2005 plan. Although the 2005 plan stated that "maintaining an up-to-date inventory of existing, planned and proposed trails requires it to be ever-changing, requiring constant revision as new trails are introduced into the system," the inventory was not updated after the 2005 publication of the plan.

In 2018, as a part of revising the state's trail plan, ODNR committed again to updating the Ohio trail inventory. For this effort, ODNR committed to collect information on all of Ohio's recreational trails, including loop trails that are within the boundaries of parks and other recreation areas. Throughout the planning process, ODNR reached out to dozens of trail planners and managers across the state, compiling data and plans for existing, planned and proposed trails.

As ODNR examined trail datasets and plans, it quickly became clear that there were differences in the ways trail managers and planners collect and manage their respective data. ODNR planners have begun the preliminary process of analyzing these datasets for consistency. ODNR accepted data in any format, including GIS data, computer aided design (CAD) files, and paper or electronic plans and documents.

Going forward, so as to streamline the addition of local and regional datasets into the Ohio trail inventory, ODNR trail planners will work with data managers to develop a minimum standard for electronic trail data.

Standards for Trail Data

Finding: Trail managers are using various methods of mapping and inventorying trails across Ohio.

Recommendation: ODNR will lead an effort to help create a minimum set of trail data standards so that local and regional datasets can be more easily compiled, integrated and shared.

Due to the timeline established by the Legislative Trails Caucus to complete the trails plan in 2018, coupled with the fact that an enormous number of trails have been built and planned since 2005, ODNR made the decision that the updated trail inventory will be completed after this written plan is published. To measure the state's progress toward reaching the goal of having a trail

opportunity within 5 miles of all Ohioans, it will be critical to keep this inventory up-to-date moving forward. Instead of publishing static paper maps, the new Ohio trail inventory will be housed in an online interactive map. If trail planners or managers would like their data to be included in the Ohio trail inventory, we ask that they submit plans and data to the trails coordinator with the ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft.

Local and Regional Planning Efforts

Finding: An increasing amount of communities are engaging in trail planning. These efforts are led by local park districts, local government and regional planning bodies.

Recommendation: ODNR will play a continuous role to gather local trail plans and integrate them into the state trail inventory and plan.

ODNR Trail Inventory

Finding: The 2005 Trails for Ohioans plan featured an inventory of current, proposed and planned trails, which quickly became outdated.

Recommendation: Going forward, ODNR will maintain an online interactive map of current and proposed trails that is based on publicly supported and published plans generated from local communities.

STATE TRAIL DESIGNATION

In addition to requiring ODNR to complete an inventory of Ohio's trails, ORC gives the Director of ODNR the authority to designate a state trail by entry in the Director's journal. According to the ODNR Office of Real Estate and Land Management, only two trails have been designated as state trails since the law was enacted in 1972. These trails include a portion of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath between Grand Lake St. Marys and Fort Loramie, and the multi-use trail at Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve. More research is needed to fully understand why this trail designation authority was not used by ODNR, and research should determine the benefits and associated responsibilities with officially designating state trails.

State Trail Designation

Finding: Since the passage of ORC 1519 legislation in 1972, which gives the Director of ODNR the authority to designate state trails, very few trails have been designated.

Recommendation: Explore the advantages and disadvantages of official state trail designation by ODNR.

The next several chapters take a deeper dive into the six major trail types found in Ohio. For the Trails Vision Plan to be successful, it is important to have a solid understanding of what these trails are, how they are being used, current the benefits to Ohioans, potential challenges, etc. so that Ohio's trail system can be properly maintained, sustained, and expanded. ■

CHAPTER 10

MULTI-USE TRAILS

Goal:

Provide a connected multi-use trail network that links every county in Ohio.

Photo Courtesy of Susan Sharpless Smith and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Multi-use trails, also known as shared-use paths, greenways or bike trails, are hard-surfaced trails designed for bicyclists, walkers, runners and other pedestrians. These trails form the backbone of our state trail system. The visionary goal presented by the Trails Advisory Team imagines an Ohio where every county is connected via a multi-use trail network. If fully implemented, this trail network would establish Ohio as a destination for multi-use trail users, provide safe and healthy transportation alternatives and improve the quality of life for all Ohioans.

WHAT IS A MULTI-USE TRAIL?

Multi-use trails, including shared-use paths, are trails that are at least 8 feet wide, with a current minimum width standard for a newly built trail being 10 feet. These trails are open to all non-motorized users, and with the passage of House Bill 250 and subsequent signature by Governor John Kasich in 2018, class 1 and class 2 electronic bicycles (e-bikes). Trail users include pedestrians, cyclists, skateboarders, rollerbladers, strollers, wheelchair and other mobility device users. The trail surface may be asphalt, concrete or a hard-packed stone material. Every effort is made to construct new trails to meet accessibility guidelines.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEM

The Ohio to Erie Trail

Ohio's existing more than a 1,000-mile multi-use trail system was developed initially at the regional and local levels. In 1991, a vision was put forth to create a paved recreational multi-use trail from Cincinnati to Cleveland called the Ohio to Erie Trail. This planned trail corridor had the potential to serve as the spine of a state multi-use trail system. The trail would use already established trails linked by new trail segments built by local and regional governments and organizations.

Today, the Ohio to Erie Trail route spans 326 miles. Of this route, 280 miles exist on paved trails. The remaining 50 miles run on city streets in urban areas and rural roads away from metropolitan areas. The trail traverses the four major metropolitan areas of Cincinnati, Columbus, Akron and Cleveland, and the Ohio to Erie Trail is also linked to downtown Dayton. While there are still several critical gaps that need to be closed, the Ohio to Erie Trail vision is nearly complete less than 30 years after it was originally conceived. Local communities and organizations across Ohio worked together to create a true state multi-use trail.

Significant Ohio Multi-use Trail Networks

Today, multi-use trails are being planned across the state. These efforts are led by park districts, local governments, regional planning bodies, nonprofit organizations and others. Communities of all sizes are developing trails to enhance the lives of their citizens. The following are several of the significant multi-use trail networks in Ohio.

- **The Miami Valley Trails** (MVT) system, with Dayton as its hub, comprises 340 miles spanning from Cincinnati to Bellefontaine and reaching as far west as Greenville. This system is the nation's largest paved trail network. The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission helps coordinate the network.

- **Tri-State Trails**, an initiative based in Cincinnati, operates south of the MVT network to connect and expand trails, and it is also used to make interstate connections in Kentucky and Indiana. The heart of this effort is the Cincinnati Riding Or Walking Network (CROWN), which envisions a 104-mile active transportation network in the urban core. If the Tri-State Trails vision is realized, the nation's

largest paved trail network system would expand from Ohio into Kentucky and Indiana.

- **Central Ohio Greenways** (COG) board is a committee of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) with a mission to expand the number of trail miles and increase the use of trails for all people. The COG board consists of trail managers, local municipalities, corporate entities, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders in the greater Columbus region. The greenway network consists of more than 230 miles of multi-use trails and proposes an additional more than 500 trail miles. Four of the greenway trails are included in a segment of the Ohio to Erie Trail, which cuts through central Ohio. COG provides guidance for trail prioritization in marketing and communications, operations and accesses, partnerships and trail development.

- **Cuyahoga Greenway Partners** is an initiative among Cuyahoga County Planning, Cleveland Metroparks and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordination Agency (NOACA) to build an interconnected system of greenways and trails. This work includes the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail, which currently spans approximately 100 miles from Cleveland to Dover, much of the route also serving as the Ohio to Erie Trail. Further south, the Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan is a public-private partnership operating in Summit County led by the Ohio and Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and **Summit Metroparks** to provide a county-wide trail system centered on the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath. On the southern end of the Ohio to Erie Trail in Stark County, Stark Parks is leading the effort to develop a multi-use trail system. The towpath is also connected to adjacent trails developed in Portage County.

- In the Toledo area, **Metroparks Toledo** and the **Toledo Area Metropolitan Area Council of Governments** are working together to create a network of multi-use trails, including the Oak Openings Corridor Trail that would connect five parks west of Toledo. This trail will connect to the Wabash Cannonball Trail.

Potential Statewide Trail Corridors

The Great American Rail-Trail, a vision of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, is a national effort to create a trans-continental multi-use trail. The proposed corridor spans approximately 3,700 miles and is currently more than 50 percent complete. Ohio sits in a key position among the 12 states along the route. Entering Ohio in Steubenville, the route would head west linking to the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath. The route would then utilize a long portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail through Columbus and to Xenia where it will connect via the Creekside Trail to Dayton. From Dayton, the route would follow the Wolf Creek Trail west to the Montgomery-Preble county line. More work would be needed to span a gap to reach nearby Richmond, Indiana. Other key gaps in the route include Steubenville to Zoarville in Jefferson, Harrison, Carroll, and Tuscarawas counties. Gaps in Wayne and Holmes counties include the corridor from Orrville to Fredericksburg. The Great American Rail-Trail is within grasp of

completion in the state and will position Ohio as a leader in the construction of this national trail.

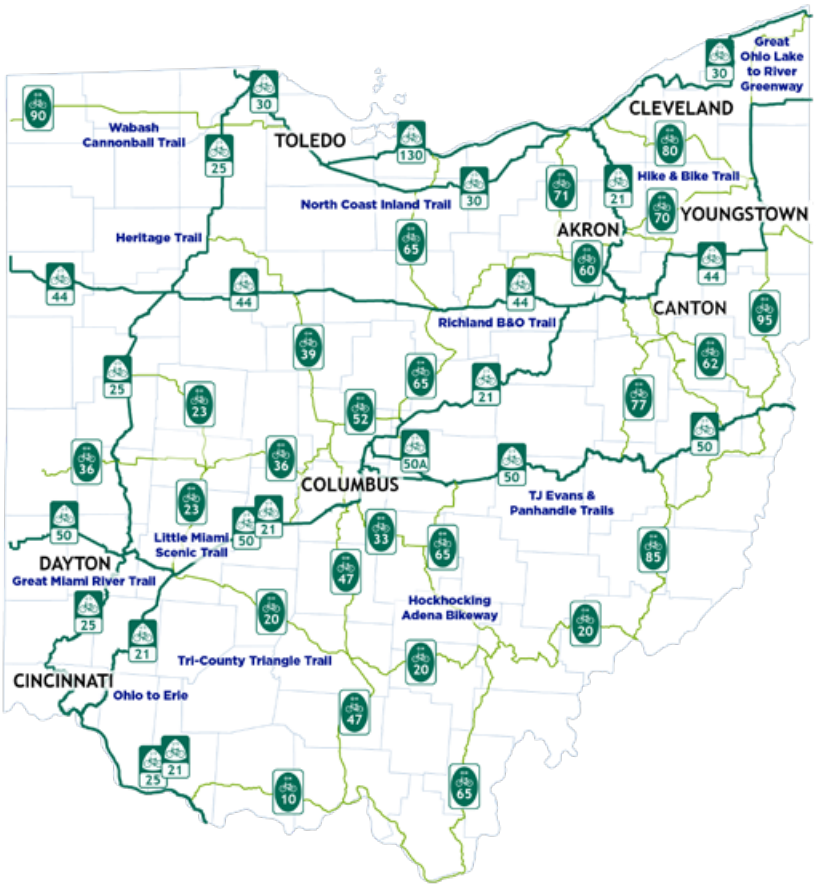
The North Coast Inland Trail currently spans from Lorain County to Ottawa County on a former rail corridor. Currently, 63 miles of this corridor have been developed into trail. Although there are several significant gaps, this trail offers a potential to connect northeast and northwest Ohio.

The Wabash Cannonball Trail extends 63 miles west from the Toledo area along a former railroad corridor to Montpelier with the possibility of a westward expansion connecting to Indiana.

The Tri-County Triangle Trail, also known as the Paint Creek Recreational Trail, currently runs 34.8 miles from Chillicothe to Washington Court House. This corridor, if extended west to the Xenia-Jamestown Connector Trail, would link Chillicothe to the Miami Valley Trails system.

In northeast Ohio, communities have developed the Western Reserve Greenway. This trail runs 43 miles south from the city of Ashtabula to Warren. After a gap, this corridor continues south in the form of the Niles Greenway, which connects to the 11-mile Mill Creek Metroparks Bikeway through much of Mahoning County. After another gap in southern Mahoning County, the corridor continues from Washingtonville to Lisbon in Columbiana County as the Little Beaver Creek Greenway Trail. This corridor is envisioned by local planners to connect through Columbiana County, reaching the Ohio River at the Pennsylvania border. The entire length of this corridor is known as the Great Ohio Lake to River Greenway. The Industrial Heartland Trail Coalition (IHTC) is working on connecting this all the way to Pittsburgh.

The IHTC has also been working to develop a corridor to link Cleveland to Pittsburgh. Trail planning is underway to connect Zoar to Bowerston in Harrison County. From Bowerston to Jewett, the route uses the 11-mile Conotton Creek Trail. Another gap exists from Jewett to Steubenville. The coalition is working on connecting across the Ohio River and then to Pittsburgh as the Ashtabula–to–Pittsburgh corridor. The IHTC will ultimately connect four states, creating a premier destination offering a 1,500- mile multi-use trail network.



Other significant multi-use trails at least 10 miles in length not connected to a major network

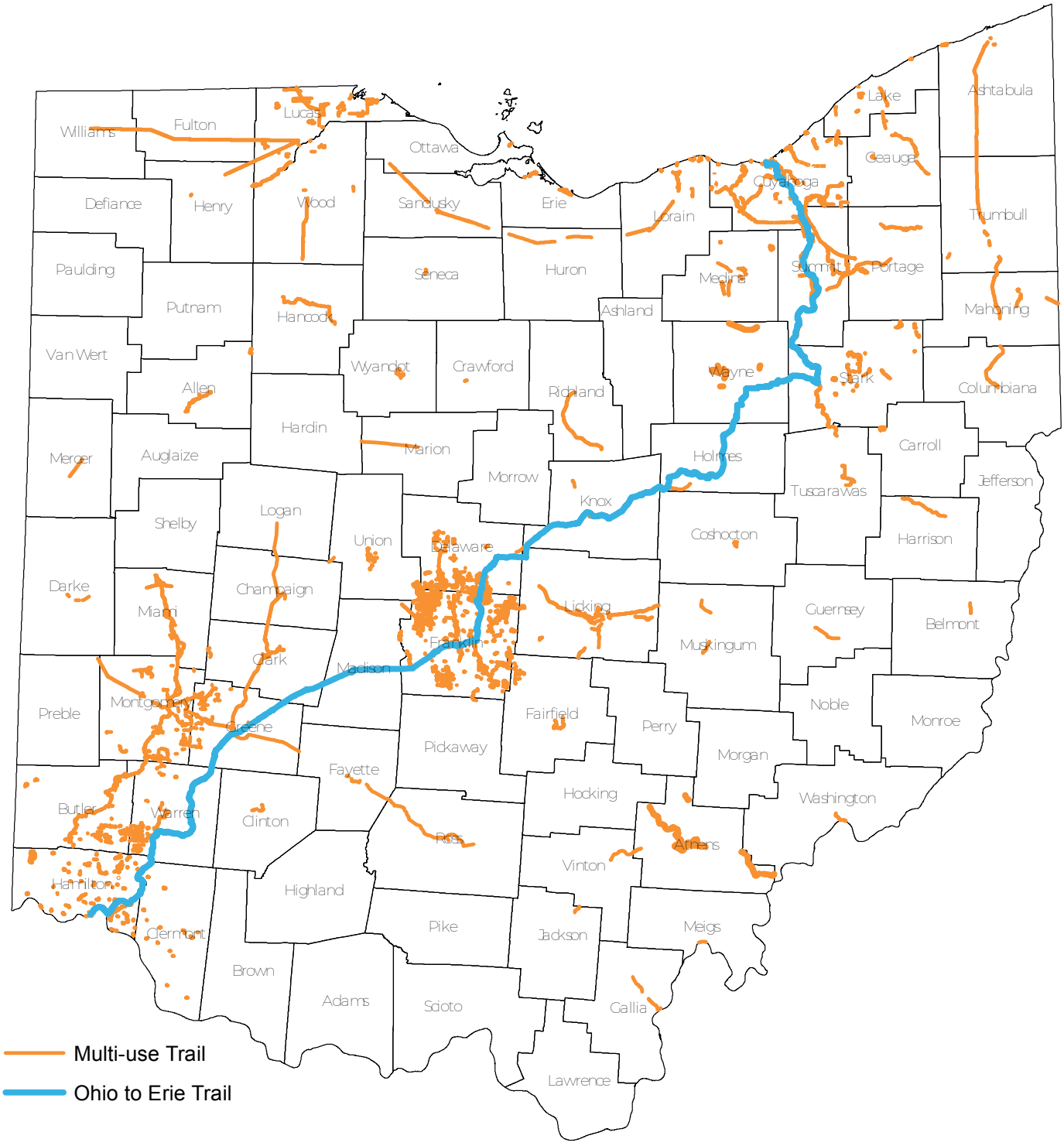
Trail Name	Length	Route	Region
Maple Highlands Trail	20.6 miles	Middlefield to north of Chardon	NE Ohio
Richland B&O Trail	18.5 Miles	Mansfield to Butler	NE Ohio
Hockhocking Adena Bikeway	20.4 Miles	Nelsonville to Athens	SE Ohio
Lima Rotary Riverwalk	13.3 Miles	North-south route through the city of Lima	NW Ohio
Heritage Trail	17.2 Miles	East and west of the city of Findlay	NW Ohio
Slippery Elm Trail	13.1 Miles	Bowling Green to North Baltimore	NW Ohio
TJ Evans Trail	24.1 Miles	Johnstown to Hanover	Central Ohio
Marion Tallgrass Trail	12.4 Miles	West from Marion	Central Ohio

The Ohio Department of Transportation's State and US Bike Route System has identified more than 3,000 miles of priority bike route corridors utilizing roadways and trails across the state. The goal of this system is to provide bicyclists with safe and convenient connections through and to population centers and destinations in Ohio. Together these routes connect more than 400 Ohio communities for intrastate travel, recreation and tourism, linking 76 counties. The system serves as a backbone that local and regional trail and other active transportation networks can build on and connect to across the state.

Other Multi-use Trails and Networks

The trails and networks presented above are some of the larger, more significant trail systems in Ohio. There are many more multi-use trails present in the state. There are also many more planned trails than what we have mentioned. As mentioned in the trail inventory chapter, ODNR is committed to inventorying all existing and planned multi-use trails in the state. This inventory will exist in an online interactive map that can be updated as new trails are planned and built, rather than a static inventory presented in this plan.

MULTI-USE TRAIL NETWORK OVERVIEW



Areas Lacking Multi-Use Trails

Large areas of the state lack significant mileage of multi-use trails. In northwest Ohio, places lacking significant multi-use trails include Defiance, Paulding, Putnam and Van Wert counties. Further east, Hardin, Wyandot and Crawford counties form another cluster. In southwest Ohio, there are large expanses of Brown, Highland, Adams, Scioto, Pike, Jackson and Lawrence counties without a multi-use trail network. Finally, trails are relatively limited in the eastern and southeastern counties of Perry, Morgan, Washington, Noble, Monroe, Guernsey and Jefferson counties. Developing multi-use trail and active transportation plans can help connect counties and municipalities that lack trail systems with people, places and opportunities.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Ohio's multi-use trails have mainly developed on current or former transportation and utility rights-of- way and along river corridors. These trail corridors often span many governmental jurisdictions, which can cause fragmented and disconnected networks, along with inconsistent management and maintenance.

Multi-use trails are increasingly being considered linear parks in both urban and rural areas. Trails in more rural settings tend to be less accessible to local communities as they have less access points along them. In the last 20 years, multi-use trails have increasingly been developed in densely populated areas. In some areas, multi-use trails, in the form of side-paths, have taken the place of sidewalks. These multi- use trails along major road corridors in highly populated areas tend to be readily accessible from neighborhoods and employment centers. These trails may lack sufficient rights-of-way in certain areas, requiring on road riding or walking and more user-attention at intersection crossings.

Where resources are abundant, the physical condition of the state's multi-use trails are excellent. When resources are lacking, the condition of the trails can suffer from lack of maintenance and funds for major capital improvements, such as repairing geologically unstable corridors, bridge repair, and replacement or repaving the trail's surface.

CONCERNS

A primary concern expressed to ODNR during the planning process is the lack of dedicated funding for the long-term capital improvement funding for the multi-use trail system. Ohio's own linear trail funding source, the Clean Ohio Trails program, funds the construction of new trails. It does not fund the reconstruction, capital improvement or expensive long-term maintenance like repaving a trail or replacing a trail bridge. This concern is further addressed in the Funding chapter as it applies to many different trail types.

Another concern brought forth is the need for more consistent management of the system. When the trails are owned and managed by a multitude of communities, care and management can vary widely depending upon the availability of local resources. Larger communities tend to have many more resources than smaller communities. Additionally, users of multi-use trails expressed how these trails are marked and signed. Wayfinding information has become an increasingly important aspect

of trail development. The Ohio to Erie Trail, for example, is Ohio's major state multi-use trail, but because it is managed by different entities, the signage and maps along its route are inconsistent. The Ohio-to-Erie Trail Inc. organization has worked diligently to create a system for the trail, and where their signage is deployed, users react positively. Central Ohio Greenways has also done commendable work in creating a regional signage policy to address this issue.

While multi-use trails have never been more popular, another concern brought forward by some trail planners and builders is building better relationships and support with landowners adjacent to a trail project. Although often unfounded, landowners have expressed concerns with trespassing, liability and negative impacts to crops, livestock and property values. Consistent information provided to landowners, including an explanation of the Ohio recreational use statute, could help eliminate many of these concerns. Developing partnerships early in the trail planning process, as outlined further in the Partnerships and Collaboration chapter, is another way of building support for a trail project.

Trail developers are concerned about the need for trails to serve a more diverse population, highlighting the need for equity and inclusion to accommodate the needs of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. In the past decades, trails have been developed in an opportunistic manner in many settings across Ohio. Developers and advocates have recently spent more time contemplating whether this development has been done equitably for all Ohioans. Many surveys of trail users across Ohio have consistently shown that there are large population demographics that are largely underrepresented within trail users. Local government, trail collaborations and advocacy groups are working to address these issues with varying degrees of success. Everything from analysis of trail development priorities to programming and outreach to underserved populations have been utilized as tactics to ensure that trail development moving forward focuses on all areas and members of communities that trails are being created in.

Finally, trail managers are concerned about planning for and regulating novel forms of personal transportation that provide trail users with a safe and comfortable experience as well as consistencies across management boundaries. These forms of transportation include electric bicycles (e- bikes), electronic scooters, electric skateboards and "one-wheel" vehicles. At the end of 2018, Governor John Kasich signed amended House Bill 250, which clarifies ORC regarding e-bikes. Class 1 (pedal assist) and class 2 (pedal assist with a throttle) e-bikes will be allowed on shared-use paths (multi-use trails) unless prohibited on the path by the local regulations.

Class 1 e-bikes feature pedal assist technology that allows the bike to reach speeds of 20 miles per hour. Class 2 e-bikes have pedals but are throttle-powered as well, allowing the bike to travel up to 20 miles per hour without peddling. If local trail managers pass more restrictive e-bike regulations, the potential exists to create inconsistencies on Ohio's multi-use trail network. The new legislation does not address the use of e-scooters, electronic skateboards or one-wheel vehicles on multi-use trails.

Emerging Trends

Finding: Novel personal transportation options, including electronic scooters, bicycles, skateboards, monowheels and hoverboards, that provide alternatives to walking and bicycling are presenting new opportunities and challenges to trail managers and users.

Recommendation: The trail planning process needs to continue to respond to emerging trends. This will help guide planning and policy that maximizes the benefits new technology provides, helps mitigate unintended consequences, and ensures coordination and consistency across land management boundaries.

OPPORTUNITIES

Ohio has more than 1,000 miles of multi-use trails. There is a great opportunity for multi-use trail planners, funders, and advocates to determine priority corridors and networks that connect all the multi-use trail development completed in the last 50 years. More strategic effort will help set Ohio apart as a national model for multi-use trails.

Priority Corridors

Finding: Priority corridors for the statewide multi-use system need to be established.

Recommendation: Establish a broad-based statewide task force of multi-use trail planners, funders, advocates and developers to establish criteria for priority corridors.

Multi-use trail networks that are connected to neighborhoods, employment opportunities and other amenities are crucial for creating momentum for more active lifestyles that utilize alternative transportation alternative opportunities.

Multi-Use Trails for Active Transportation

Finding: Multi-use trails are now seen as one part of a network of active transportation options in communities.

Recommendation: Trail plans should include on-street bike lanes, protected bike lanes, side paths, shared-lane marking and other active transportation infrastructure when trail construction is not feasible.

There are opportunities to develop design guidelines that could be implemented by trail builders to provide a more consistent experience for trail users across the state. As presented in and discussed further in the Trail Development chapter, there is a need to establish statewide guidelines and the best management practices for the design, construction, and operation and maintenance of multi- use trails.

Finally, throughout this process, numerous trail planners and managers expressed that increased coordination between state and local trail funders and planners could enhance the ability to access multiple funding sources, resulting in trail development that happens more quickly and is less expensive.

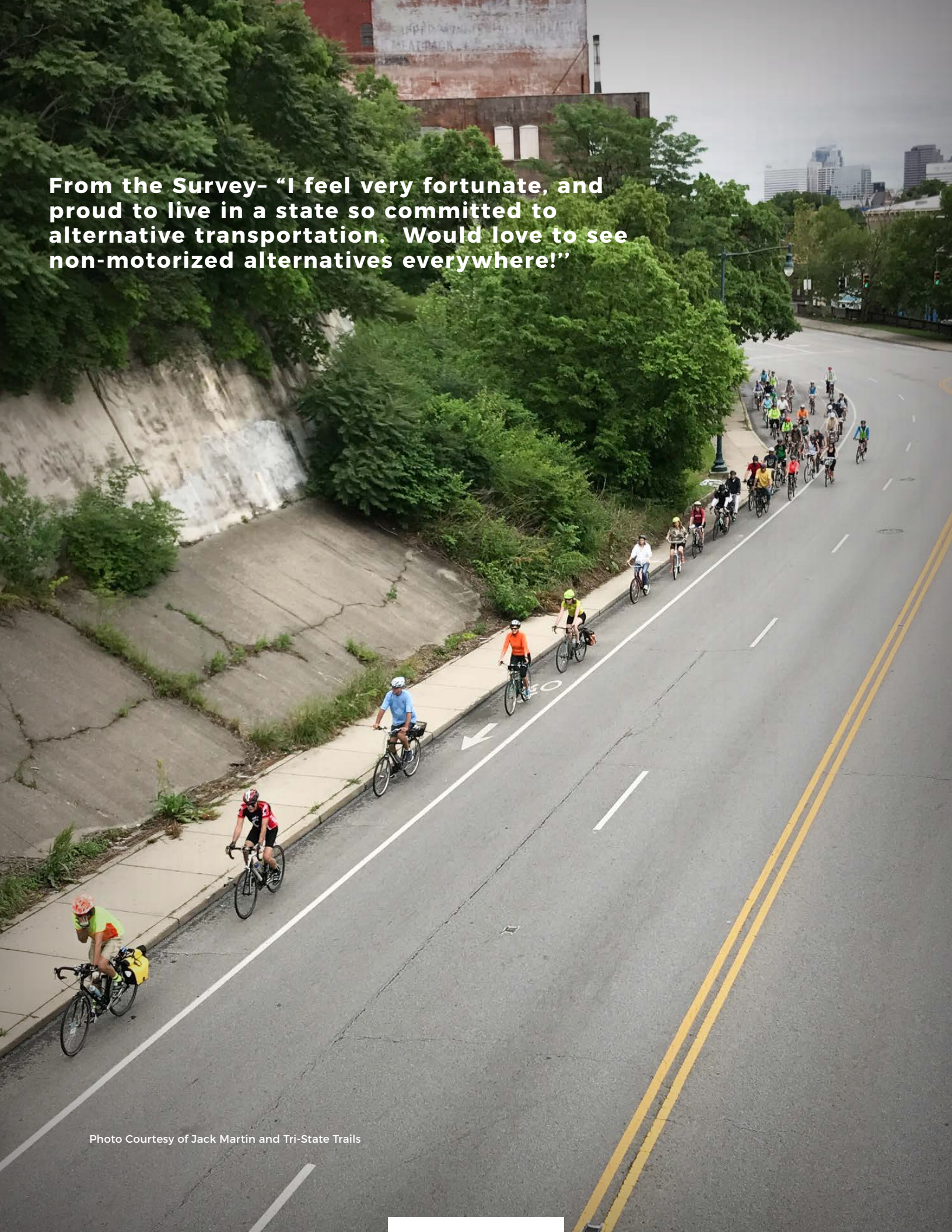
Opportunities for Coordination of Funding Agencies

Finding: Trail developers use multiple sources of local, federal and state funding to build multi-use trails.

Recommendation: Explore ways to increase coordination and understanding of the roles of ODNR, ODOT and metropolitan planning organizations in planning, funding and developing multi-use trails.

CONCLUSION

Multi-use trails are an important part of Ohio's trail system. The Trails Advisory Team envisions a network that connects communities across Ohio. This network would strengthen local economies, invite tourists, provide recreation opportunities, and benefit overall health and wellness. Ohio has a strong start toward the completion of this network. By working together, Ohioans can build upon the current trail system, transforming it into a world-class opportunity. ■

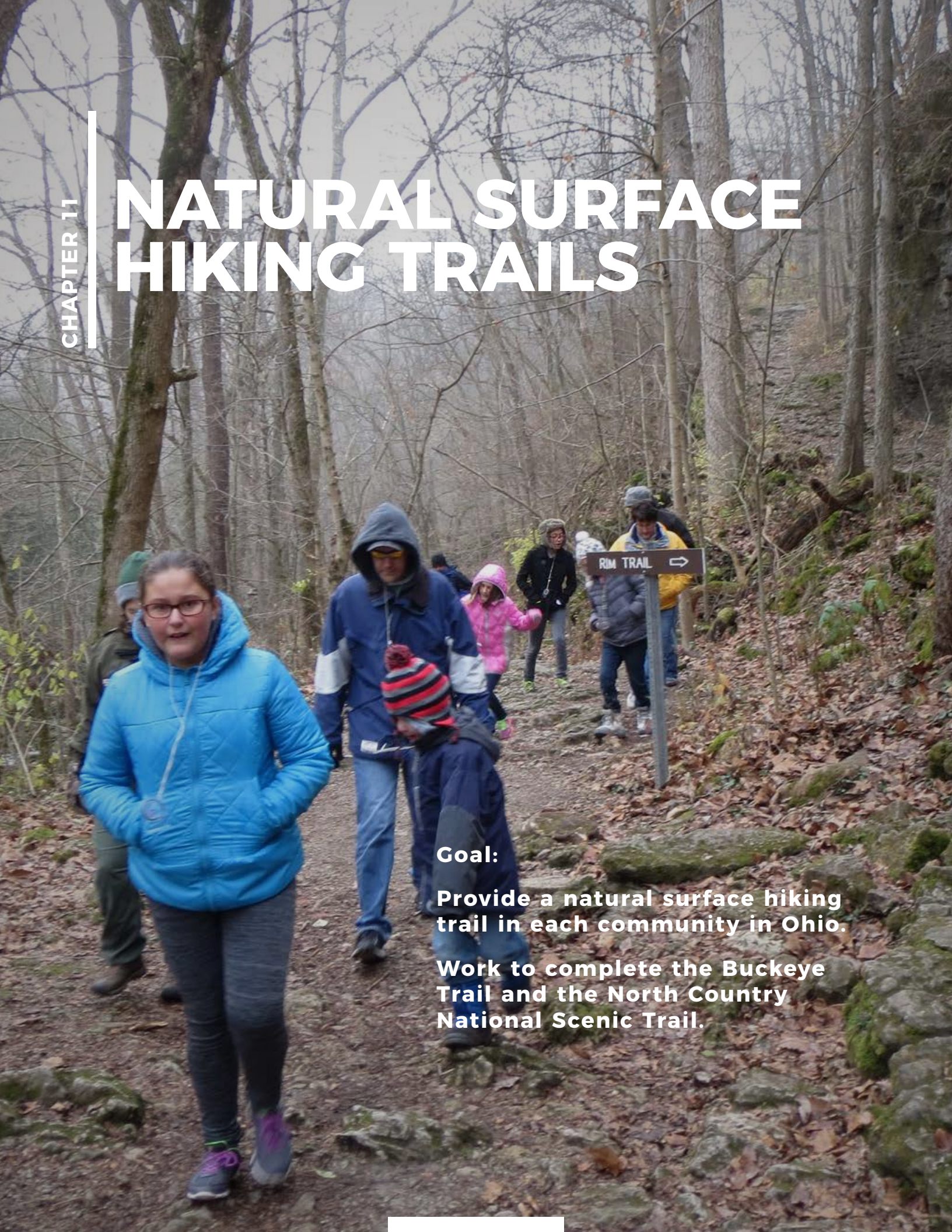


From the Survey- "I feel very fortunate, and proud to live in a state so committed to alternative transportation. Would love to see non-motorized alternatives everywhere!"

Photo Courtesy of Jack Martin and Tri-State Trails

CHAPTER 11

NATURAL SURFACE HIKING TRAILS



Goal:

Provide a natural surface hiking trail in each community in Ohio.

Work to complete the Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Natural surface hiking trails are important for connecting Ohioans to nature and wildlife. They are among the most desired trail types by Ohioans, with more than 90 percent of the trails plan survey respondents indicating they use these trails. Nature trails, longer day hiking trails and overnight backpacking trails offer ways for Ohioans to explore our natural heritage. With the development of a nature trail in every Ohio community and the completion of two major backpacking trails, Ohio would become a destination for hiking and backpacking.

WHAT ARE NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS FOR HIKING, RUNNING AND BACKPACKING?

Natural surface hiking trails are used by nature and wildlife enthusiasts, walkers, hikers, backpackers and runners. They are typically constructed in public natural areas like parks, forests and preserves, and they allow users to connect with nature. The ideal conditions for sustainable natural surface trails are a trail tread that is 18 to 24 inches wide with slopes less than 10 percent. The surface is exposed native subsoil. Some hiking trails in Ohio have been widened and hardened to accommodate increased use and visitation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING NATURAL SURFACE HIKING TRAIL SYSTEM

Nature Trails

Ohio's nature trails at local parks generally cover short distances and highlight interesting natural and cultural features. These trails are generally used for leisurely walks and exercise, accommodating the greatest spectrum of user abilities. These trails are the most easily accessed by much of the population of Ohio and are very popular in the state.

Day Hiking Trails

These trails are like local nature trails but they extend for more than a mile and are often more rugged. Day hikers will spend half a day or a whole day on these trails before heading home or staying in overnight accommodations.

Day hiking trails are used by hikers interested in slower paced exploration of the outdoors, such as trail runners, organized groups such as scouts, wildlife watchers and participants of interpretive guided trips. These trails are most commonly found on Ohio's public lands and are some of the most heavily used trails in the state. The 6-mile Grandma Gatewood section of the Buckeye Trail through Hocking Hills State Park and Hocking State Forest is one of the most popular examples of this trail type in Ohio, but trails across the state have similar characteristics.

Overnight Backpacking Trails

Ohio has fewer overnight backpacking trail opportunities in comparison to adjacent states. These trails are used by novice to expert backpackers and long-distance trail runners. Overnight backpacking is generally conducted by hiking organizations like the Buckeye Trail Association, park districts, scouting groups and groups of friends. Trail running can be done individually, with organized trail running groups or during large organized marathon events. Burr Oak State Park, Mohican-Memorial State Forest, Wildcat Hollow Hiking Trail at Wayne National Forest, Five Rivers Metroparks' Twin Valley Backpacking Trail and many additional state forests have good examples of overnight backpacking trails, all of which are loops that return the hikers back to their point of origin.

Ohio has few opportunities for multi-day backpacking, but there is a demand for this activity. Most of the demand is met by those who travel to Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest, West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest's Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, Kentucky's

Daniel Boone National Forest's Red River Gorge Geological Area and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Shawnee State Forest's 60-mile backpack trail system is the best multi-day backpacking opportunity in Ohio.

Long Distance Hiking Trails

Long distance hiking trails are unique in that they connect many of the above-mentioned trails together to create the backbone of a trails network. Often, they incorporate other trail types, including multi-use trails, through urban and suburban settings. In Ohio, the more than 1,400-mile Buckeye Trail is the primary example. This trail, originally envisioned in 1958 and recognized as Ohio's state trail by the legislature in 1967, is managed by the Buckeye Trail Association. It completes a circuit that reaches all corners of the state. The 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail, officially recognized by Congress as a part of the National Scenic Trails system, crosses through Ohio as well. The North Country Trail shares much of its 1,000-mile route through Ohio with the Buckeye Trail. Finally, the American Discovery Trail, a system of recreational trails and roads that spans the continent coordinated by the American Discovery Trail Society, utilizes the Buckeye Trail's southern sections.

Current Conditions

The conditions of Ohio's natural surface hiking trails vary greatly. While many of the state's natural surface trails are well cared for, some have exceeded visitor capacity and exhibit extreme impacts from too many users. Others suffer from vegetation overgrowth and lack of routine maintenance. Also, like other trail types, inconsistencies in natural surface trails are common. Differences in maintenance standards, water erosion, trailhead facilities, wayfinding signage, and trail planning and construction create an inconsistent user experience.

CONCERNS

Funding

Although the use of natural surface hiking trails is one of the most popular recreational activities in the state, there is concern among trail users and managers about their future. Specifically, hiking trail advocates believe that not enough consistent attention and funding has been given to these trails to maintain and expand them into world-class, destination opportunities. The creation of designated funding streams for hiking trails beyond the competitive Clean Ohio Trails Fund that primarily funds hard-surface multi-use trails is needed. The fund would be particularly useful if land managers, communities and nonprofit organizations were eligible to receive grant dollars. Money for land acquisition, planning and design, project development and implementation, volunteer support, trail maintenance costs, and signage and trailhead facilities are needed as well.

Funding Natural Surface Hiking Trails

Finding: Natural surface hiking trails are very popular, highly used and desired.

Recommendation: Explore ways to provide more dedicated funding to support the development and maintenance of sustainable natural surface hiking trails.

Importance of Partnerships

A frequent concern brought forward during the planning process is the need for better communication across land management boundaries. To realize the Ohio Trails Vision, all levels of government will need to partner together to provide consistent hiking trail user experiences. The Partnerships and Collaborations chapter of this document highlights many ways trail users are partnering across the state and offers a recommendation to address this concern.

User Conflict

During public meetings and through the online survey, trail users consistently brought up concerns regarding user conflict. Many hikers expressed concern that their experiences can easily be disturbed by more intense trail uses, such as running, mountain biking or motorized vehicles. This concern holds true for people who enjoy nature observation and the solitude that a hiking trail offers. User conflict is further discussed in the Trail Development and Management chapter, and a recommendation is proposed to develop educational opportunities that articulate proper trail etiquette and behavior.

OPPORTUNITIES

Corridor Acquisition

Targeted corridor acquisition to fill gaps and preserve existing corridors of the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trail will create long distance hiking opportunities to compete with out-of-state destinations.

Long Distance Hiking Trails Corridor Acquisition

Finding: Significant stretches of the Buckeye Trail and North Country Trail utilize road corridors.

Recommendation: Expand and create additional backpacking opportunities by identifying priority gaps, preserve existing corridors, and fund corridor acquisition for these long-distance natural surface hiking trails.

Amenities for Backpackers

In addition to filling gaps in long distance hiking trails, many backpackers would like more frequent and better camping and other amenities along these trails.

Backpacking Amenities

Finding: While Ohio has several natural surface backpacking opportunities, the established trails need more camping opportunities and key amenities in strategic areas.

Recommendation: Trail and land managers should work together with backpackers to develop camping opportunities and other amenities in strategic locations along backpacking trails.

Nature and Wildlife Observation

Respondents to the trails plan survey described how hiking trails allow them to access and connect to the natural world. They see nature trails as ways to conserve and access natural habitats.

OHIO'S LONG DISTANCE HIKING TRAILS

Buckeye Trail & North Country National Scenic Trail

North Country National Scenic Trail

Buckeye Trail

American Discovery Trail

Nature and Wildlife Observation

Finding: Natural surface hiking trails are how many people experience nature and wildlife in Ohio. The development of natural surface hiking trails is a tool to aid conservation on a larger scale.

Recommendation: Ensure dedicated land conservation initiatives like the Clean Ohio Greenspace program continue to provide additional natural surface hiking trail opportunities.

Trail Guidelines

Creating agreed upon and consistent trail management types, classes, design and construction standards, as well as best management practices for trail management along backpacking corridors, would help improve coordination between agencies and provide a better trail user experience.

Additionally, better coordination of wayfinding signage, interpretive signage and trailhead facilities would also increase the quality of the hiking experience. Since these concerns apply to many of Ohio's trails, a recommendation is provided in the Trail Development chapter for the Trails Advisory Team to explore the development of statewide trail guidelines.

Volunteers

Volunteers are critical to the management and care of Ohio's natural surface hiking trails. There are countless examples of how volunteers and land managers have worked together to be stewards of Ohio's trails. Investment in coordinated efforts to manage and support enthusiastic volunteer groups and individuals would leverage labor, cooperation and community support of our public lands. The importance of volunteers is discussed in both the Partnerships and Collaboration chapter and the Development chapter. The advisory team recommends developing best management practices that allow volunteers to work more easily across the state.

CONCLUSION

Ohio's natural surface hiking trails are in high demand. Many opportunities exist to connect people with nature. Completion of Ohio's two major backpacking trails, the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trail, would help the state become a destination for backpacking. By working together, trail managers and trail users can create a world-class hiking trail system in Ohio. ■

From the Survey- "I would like to see the Buckeye Trail connected with much less road walking, and would like camping for backpackers to be more available on the Buckeye Trail as well as other Ohio trails."

Photo Courtesy of Jack Martin and Tri-State Trails

CHAPTER 12

MOTORIZED TRAILS

Goal:

Provide at least two destination quality motorized trail experiences with overnight amenities and expand regional trail opportunities that meet the needs of motorized users.

Photo Courtesy of Wayne National Forest

WHAT ARE MOTORIZED TRAILS?

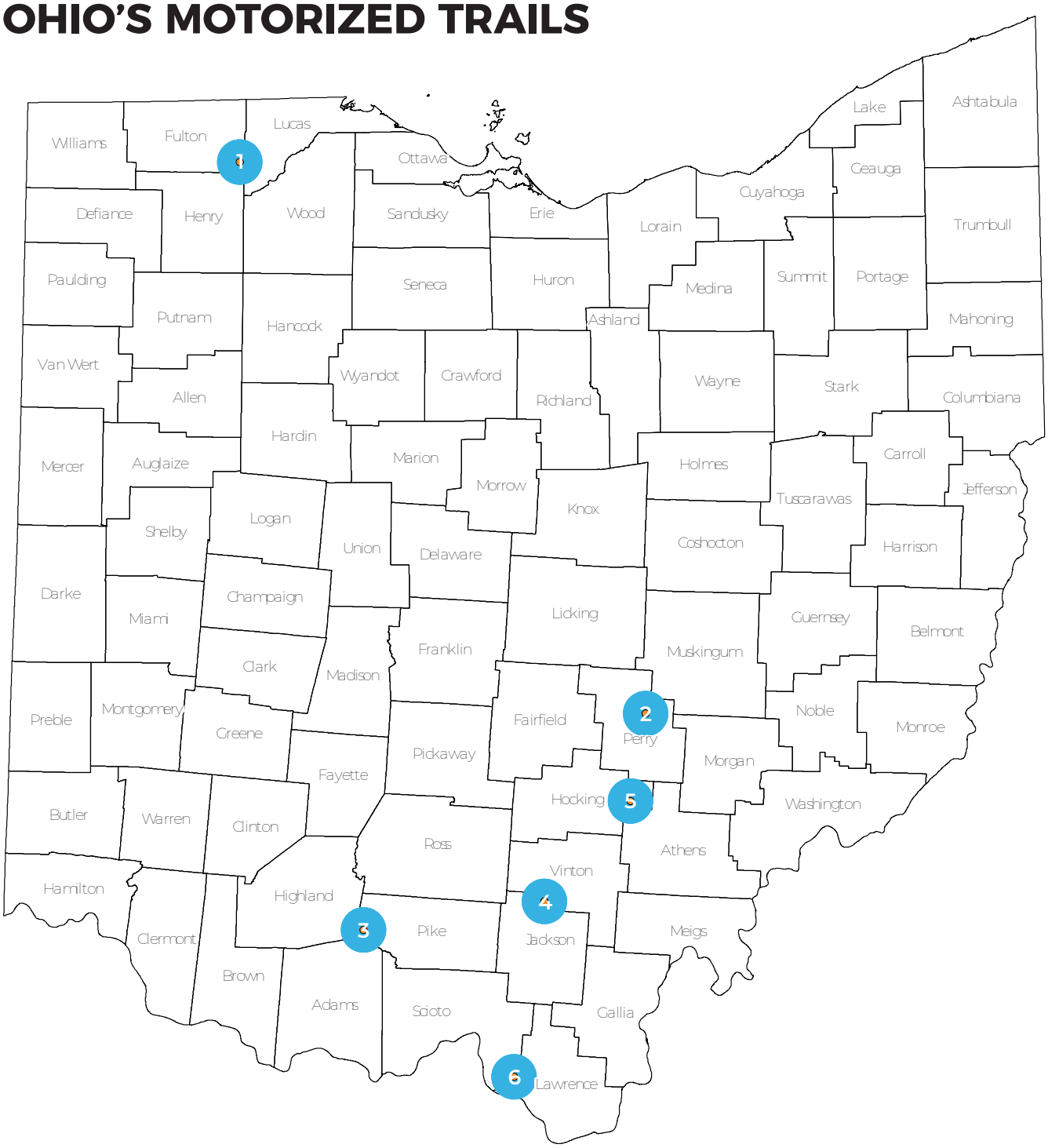
Motorized trails are trails where the use of off-highway motorized vehicles is allowed. These trails include those used by riders of all-terrain vehicles (ATV), recreational off-highway vehicles (ROV, also known as "side-by-sides), utility task vehicles (UTV), and off-road and dual sport motorcycles.

Collectively, these vehicles are named differently by the two Ohio public motorized trail managers. Per state law, the ODNR Division of Forestry uses the term all-purpose vehicles (APV) while the USDA Forest Service calls them off-highway vehicles (OHV).

While there are currently no public trails that permit full-sized off-road 4x4 vehicles ("Jeeps") in the state, these trails will be discussed further in the opportunities section of this chapter. The goal presented above is focused on opportunities for ATVs, ROVs, UTVs, and off-road and dual-sport motorcycles.

Snowmobile trails are also motorized trail opportunities. Because the opportunities are limited due to unreliable snowfall, Ohio is unlikely to become a destination for snowmobiling, but there are opportunities on public lands in state parks and state forests.

OHIO'S MOTORIZED TRAILS



1. Maumee State Forest
2. Perry State Forest
3. Pike State Forest
4. Richland Furnace State Forest
5. Wayne National Forest - Athens Unit
6. Wayne National Forest - Ironton Unit

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING MOTORIZED TRAIL SYSTEM

There are two major providers of public motorized trails in Ohio: the ODNR Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service through Wayne National Forest. The ODNR Division of Forestry operates four APV trail systems. The Wayne National Forest operates a significant OHV trail system in southeast Ohio on its Athens and Ironton Ranger Districts. In addition to motorized vehicles, both providers also allow mountain biking on these trails. These opportunities are in southern and southeast Ohio, except for Maumee State Forest, which is located in northwest Ohio.

ODNR APV Trails

Name	Length
Maumee State Forest	7 miles
Pike State Forest	18 miles
Perry State Forest	20 miles
Richland Furnace	8 Miles

Wayne National Forest OHV Trails

Forest Unit	Name	Length
Athens	Monday Creek	85 miles
Ironton	Hanging Rock	26 miles
Ironton	Superior	16.5 miles
Ironton	Pine Creek	20 miles

While Ohio's state parks do not accommodate off-highway motorized vehicles, snowmobiling is available in some state parks when conditions allow. A combined 83 miles is available at Barkcamp, Buck Creek, East Harbor, Geneva, Mosquito Lake, Punderson, Salt Fork and Sycamore state parks.

Snowmobiling is also offered on a designated trail at Mohican-Memorial State Forest and is permitted when conditions allow on the APV trails at Maumee State Forest. Snowmobiling on the ice of frozen lakes is also permitted when conditions allow at the following state parks: Buckeye Lake, Grand Lake St. Marys, Guilford Lake, Indian Lake, Lake Loramie, Lake Milton and Portage Lakes.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Because there is dedicated funding for motorized trails, the conditions of the motorized system, in general, have steadily improved. The ODNR Division of Forestry manages the State Recreational Vehicle Fund, established in ORC in 1999, to expand recreational vehicle use on state land. This is funded by registration fees of recreational vehicles like ATVs, UTVs, off-road motorcycles and snowmobiles. On average, ODNR has invested approximately $375,000 per fiscal year into improving motorized trails. With this fund, ODNR has improved motorized trailheads by adding restrooms and additional amenities, acquired property for new trails, built new trails and improved existing trails.

Funds have been spent on APV trails in state forests and on snowmobile trails in state parks. Additionally, the ODNR Division of Forestry utilizes the competitive grants provided through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Wayne National Forest also heavily relies on RTP grant dollars to supplement annual federal appropriations and trail permit revenue to maintain its OHV trail system. Wayne National Forest has received hundreds of thousands of RTP dollars in grants in recent years to maintain trails, reconstruct trails and to provide rider educational materials.

The physical conditions of the motorized trails are quite different on state forest and national forest land. While the trails on state forests are often natural surface, those at Wayne National Forest are often hardened with gravel to help minimize soil erosion. This results in two very different trail riding experiences.

Finally, the width of the trail tread on systems are significantly different. The trails in state forests are designed to accommodate vehicles as wide as 62 inches. This allows wider ROVs that are driven with a steering wheel and accommodate passengers sitting next to each other (side-by-side). These family- friendly vehicles are becoming increasingly popular because they allow multiple people to travel together. However, on the trails in Wayne National Forest, vehicles are limited to a width of 50 inches or less, which excludes riders who use wider vehicles from these trails.

CONCERNS

Rules and Regulations

One of the major concerns regarding Ohio's motorized trails system are the rule differences between the two public trail providers. As detailed before, only vehicles 50 inches or narrower are allowed on the trails at the Wayne National Forest, while the ODNR Division of Forestry allows wider vehicles. Trails in state forests are not as lengthy as some riders want, and the trails that do have this in-demand length at Wayne National Forest do not allow the increasingly popular wider ROV vehicles. Ultimately, this leads many users to leave the state to ride on trails that have the desired trail length (at least 50 miles) and allow wider vehicles.

Other concerns regarding rules are the differences in the timing when trails open and close for the year and what type of permits are required. While both agencies close their motorized trails for the winter season, the spring opening dates differ slightly between ODNR and the U.S. Forest Service, which can result in heavy demand on the system that opens first and then leads to confusion over which trails are open. Also, while all APVs must register with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the use of trails in Wayne National Forest requires a $35 seasonal permit or a three-day permit for $20. No additional trail permit is needed for ODNR's trails beyond the registration fee collected when registered with the state of Ohio.

The two agencies that manage these trails systems recognize these differences and are working together to better coordinate their systems for the benefits of riders. In late summer 2018, the agencies met with representatives of the motorized trail community to develop solutions to better align the rules of two trail systems. Both agencies have made great progress on aligning the opening and closing dates and expect to have these new dates in place for the 2019 riding season.

Rules and Regulations

Finding: The two major public motorized trails providers (the ODNR Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service) have different rules and regulations.

Recommendation: Continue the working group established between the two agencies and the motorized community to create better alignment.

User Conflict

There is perhaps no more polarizing issue regarding Ohio's trails than the expansion of motorized opportunities. While there is strong demand from owners of motorized vehicles, there is strong opposition as well. This opposition was voiced throughout the trails planning process by non-motorized trail users and wildlife conservationists. While the issue is polarizing, it is important to note that many motorized trail users also participate in other trail activities, as indicated by the results of the trails plan survey. Motorized trail users are often hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians as well.

Acceptance

Finding: While there is high demand for increased motorized trail opportunities from owners of vehicles, there is also strong opposition from non-motorized trail users.

Recommendation: Create a forum that brings together users from all sides of the issue to develop possible solutions to increase motorized opportunities in the state while minimizing impacts to the environment, wildlife and existing recreational uses.

Funding for Maintenance

The long-term maintenance of the existing trails remains a concern, particularly for land management agencies like the U.S. Forest Service. While user demand has increased, operational funding to maintain and expand trails within Wayne National Forest has decreased. Trail managers must rely more heavily on dedicated funding through grants or use trail advocacy groups for volunteer management and labor. The benefits of using volunteers to assist with trail maintenance is discussed further in the Partnerships and Collaboration chapter and the Trail Development chapter.

OPPORTUNITIES

Add and Improve Trails, Amenities and Connections

There are many opportunities to expand the motorized trail system in Ohio. The destination quality trail systems that are in demand have significant length (more than 50 miles long), accommodate a variety of vehicles and offer trails that cater to a variety of skill levels. These needs include trails that accommodate wide ROVs and single-track trails used by off-road motorcycles. Users would like these systems to be connected by trail or legal usable routes to fuel centers, overnight lodging, camping and supplies. Communities such as New Straitsville and Haydenville in southeast Ohio that are directly linked to a trail system are experiencing economic benefits from these trail connections. In addition to building destination trails, more close-to-home opportunities like off-road parks that offer skill building experiences are wanted across the state. The demand for public motorized trails is particularly strong in southwest, central, northwest and northeast Ohio due to the lack of existing opportunities. Finally, perhaps the most frequently mentioned opportunity in the online trails survey and the trails public meetings was the desire for trails that accommodate full-size 4x4 off-road vehicles. There is a strong demand for these trails.

Needs of Users

Finding: The current motorized trails lack the desired connections to overnight facilities, length and varying difficulties, and access to local communities to become destination quality trails.

Recommendation: Encourage trail developers to consider needs unique to motorized users when designing trail systems for motorized users by working with local municipalities to designate or permit legal routes to the desired amenities utilizing infrastructure such as township, county and state routes.

Finding: Motorized trail users are increasingly demanding wider trails to accommodate recreational off-highway vehicles, "side by sides" and utility vehicles, or more narrow, single-track trails to accommodate off-road motorcycles.

Recommendation: Encourage the development of trails that are designed for wider motorized vehicles and narrower single-track trails.

Off-Road, 4x4, Full-Size Vehicle Trails

Finding: Ohio has no public trails that accommodate full-size off-road 4x4 vehicles.

Recommendation: Institute a working group of land managers and user groups to investigate the potential for public off-road full-size 4x4 vehicle trails in Ohio.

Public-Private Partnerships

Creating trail connections between private, county, state and federal land could greatly increase trail mileage available to motorized users. While this would create the need for better signage and education of users, other states have adopted this model to create destination quality motorized trails. To implement this system, a great deal of coordination and partnership would have to occur.

Corridor Acquisition

In addition to constructing motorized trails on recreational lands, other states have utilized transportation and utility corridors for motorized opportunities. The acquisition of corridors is further discussed in the Development and Management chapter.

CONCLUSION

Motorized trails are perhaps the most polarizing trails issue in Ohio. There is a strong demand for increased opportunities from all motorized recreational vehicle owners. There is also strong opposition to expanding these opportunities on Ohio's public lands. Motorized trail users frequently leave Ohio for destination opportunities in adjacent states that have more public and private riding opportunities than Ohio. Balancing the potential for motorized opportunities on Ohio's limited public recreational lands will be a challenge for land managers.

However, with improvements to the existing system and the addition of regional opportunities, Ohio can better meet the needs of motorized users. ■

From the Survey- “Please add many more ATV/UTV trails through the state”

CHAPTER 13

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Goal:

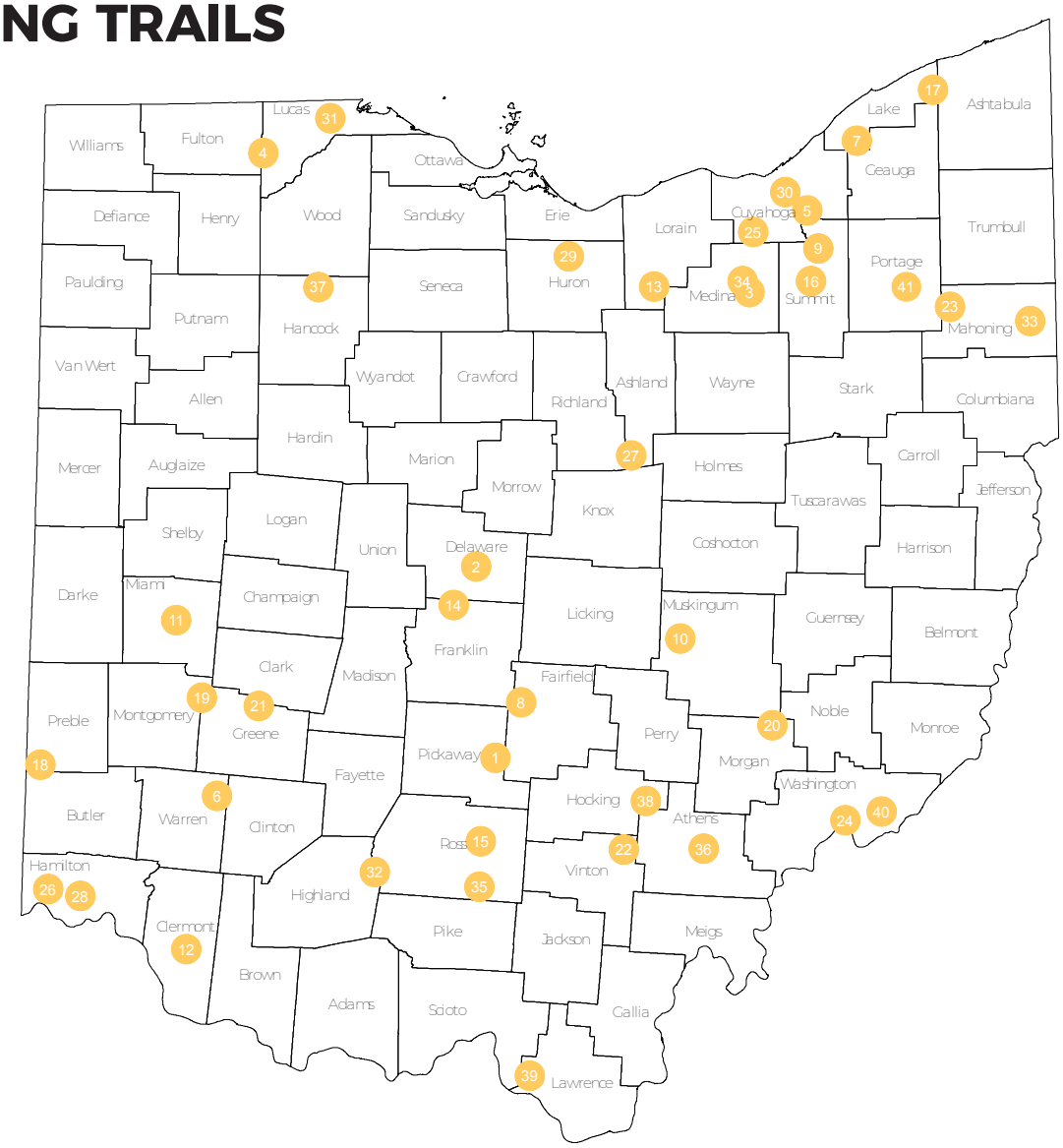
Provide at least four destination quality trails that qualify for the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) EPIC Designation and two communities that are designated as IMBA Ride Centers.

Photo Courtesy of COMBO

The International Mountain Bike Association's (IMBA) mission is to create, enhance and protect places to ride mountain bikes, recognizes significant trails and communities that provide the nation's best mountain biking experiences. IMBA has recognized one Ohio trail, the Mohican Mountain Bike Trail, as an IMBA EPIC ride. This EPIC designation denotes trails that provide true backcountry experiences, are technically and physically challenging, and serve as travel destinations for mountain bikers. They also must be at least 20 miles in length.

IMBA's Ride Center designation is more encompassing and considers the diversity of mountain biking opportunities available in a community. IMBA Ride Centers feature extensive trail networks for mountain bikers of every skill level. Achieving four IMBA EPIC trails and at least two communities in the state designated as IMBA Ride Centers, Ohio would be transformed into a destination for mountain biking.

OHIO'S PUBLIC MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS



WHAT IS A MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAIL?

Mountain biking trails are typically natural surface trails optimized for mountain bike usage. In its simplest form, a mountain bike trail consists of a sustainable, contoured dirt trail known as "single-track," which contains a tread 18 to 36 inches wide with 8 feet of overhead canopy clearance. However, these features are flexible depending on the site, and a variety of trails may be possible, including single- track, double-track, gravel or service roads. Trail surfaces may be rough, rocky, smooth, flat, uphill or descending. Trails may be built by hand or by machine. They may include natural obstacles like roots, rocks and logs, and they may include man-made obstacles like bridges and jumps. To be sustainable, IMBA mandates a trail must 1.) protect the environment; 2.) meet the needs of its users; 3.) require little maintenance; and 4.) minimize conflicts between different user groups.

A. W. Marion State Park	1
Alum Creek State Park	2
Austin Badger Park	3
Beach Ridge Bike Trail	4
Bedford Reservation	5
Caesar Creek State Park	6
Chapin Forest Reservation	7
Chestnut Ridge Metro Park	8
Cuyahoga Valley National Park	9
Dillon State Park	10
Duke Park	11
East Fork State Park	12
Findley State Park	13
Gators Bike Park	14
Great Seal State Park	15
Hampton Hills Metropark	16
Hogback Ridge Park	17
Hueston Woods State Park	18
Huffman Metropark/ MoMBA	19
Jesse Owens State Park	20
John Bryan State Park	21
Lake Hope State Park	22
Lake Milton State Park	23
Marietta Trail Network	24
Mill Stream Run Reservation	25
Mitchell Memorial Forest	26
Mohican State Park	27
Mt. Airy Forest	28
Norwalk Reservoir	29
Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation	30
Ottawa Jermain Park	31
Paint Creek State Park	32
Poland Municipal Forest Park	33
Reagan Park	34
Scioto Trail State Forest	35
Strouds Run State Park	36
Van Buren State Park	37
Wayne National Forest - Athens Unit	38
Wayne National Forest - Ironton Unit	39
Wayne National Forest - Marietta Unit	40
West Branch State Park	41

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAIL SYSTEM

Ohio has hundreds of existing miles of public mountain biking trail. The trail systems have been constructed in state parks, park district lands, local parks, state forests, Wayne National Forest and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Most trails are 5 to 10 miles in length, and are loops, or loops with optional connecting trails.

Longer trail systems are provided at Mohican-Memorial State Forest, Dillon State Park, Lake Hope State Park, Great Seal State Park and Wayne National Forest. When mountain biking first developed in the state, Ohio trails were mostly in remote, non-urban areas, and they largely lacked connectivity to other bicycle infrastructure, such as paved paths or bike lanes. Recently, Five Rivers Metroparks, Metroparks Toledo, Cleveland Metroparks, and Columbus and Franklin County

Metroparks have made great strides providing opportunities in urban and suburban settings, but most of the state's trail mileage remains in rural areas.

Riding experiences on Ohio's trails vary largely in accord with Ohio's mixed topography. Mountain biking trails have a wide range of composition, including sandy soil, rocky soil and water-holding clay. The trails also range from hilly to flat, depending on the location within the state. Trails in Ohio do not currently offer the diverse riding experiences relating to the difficulty and type of trail that riders desire today. Most trails are built with a single loop for intermediate level riders.

There are many areas in the state that lack significant mileage of mountain biking trails to meet the needs of the users. The large populated areas of the state are underserved. Geographically, there are fewer trails in western Ohio.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Mountain biking trails are generally maintained well. However, the mountain bike community perceives that there is a lack of funding and oversight from land managers. This means that most of Ohio's mountain bike trail system is constructed and maintained by volunteers. This presents three challenges: 1.) time; 2.) money; and 3.) manpower. It also means that trails are maintained at a level that is achievable by volunteers only so opportunities for development that would require significant investment of machinery or time are not realized. Major maintenance, such as rerouting of poorly designed trail sections, is challenging under these conditions.

There are inconsistencies in maintenance and design standards, which make it difficult to maintain trails. There are many different groups throughout the state working with a variety of different landowners, whom all have different standards and expectations. Maintenance standards either have a specific finished effect or are based on the following: population proximity, overall feel of the system, specific forest and soil composition, and other local variables. The standards are agreed upon by local invested partners. Working together in partnership with land managers is challenging but is the most favorable route to create unique trail experiences.

There is a mix of old and new trails in Ohio. Due to lack of access, most groups are hesitant to close an "old" trail because there are no options for replacement. Many "old," i.e., damaged or unsustainable trails, could be fixed with rerouting or machine work, but these options are often unavailable due to land manager policies or because they are too expensive. Most of the trails in the state have been developed in the last 20 years and built with some standards that allow sustainability. They were all hand-built, which provides more maintenance challenges in the long run, but overall the majority of the miles of trail are in very good shape. Many of the trails could use minor reroute work to improve drainage, which would likely reduce maintenance needs.

CONCERNS

Access to Public Lands

Mountain bike advocates perceive there is a lack of cooperation from land managers to open lands for more recreational trails. These concerns are often rooted in land managers' limited budgets to maintain additional trails, potential for user conflict, and concern that trails would harm wildlife or the environment.

Access to Public Lands

Finding: While a shift over the past 20 years has occurred statewide with land managers becoming more accepting to mountain biking as a recreational opportunity, the mountain bike community would like increased access to public lands

Recommendation: Create a forum that brings together mountain bikers and land managers to promote the development of sustainable mountain bike trails. This will help overcome the perception that mountain biking has a high impact on the landscape.

Electric Mountain Bikes

Another emerging concern facing the mountain biking community is the use of e-bikes. Some e-bikes are specifically built for mountain biking and look very similar to standard mountain bikes. However, they contain batteries and electric motors that offer pedal-assist (class 1) or throttle-assist (class 2) capabilities. The use of e-bikes is a polarizing issue among mountain bikers with strong opinions for and against their use. E-bikes allow riders with less or diminished physical capability to access more challenging terrain or continue mountain biking as they age. A primary concern about their use is that these bikes may impact the sustainability of trails by increasing erosion, requiring more maintenance and shortening the life of trails. Amended House Bill 250, signed in late 2018, permits class 1 and 2 e-bikes on shared-use paths (multi-use trails). This bill specifically prohibits e-bike use on natural surface trails used for mountain biking or any other public single-track natural surface trail historically reserved for nonmotorized use. The legislation states that e-bikes may only be permitted on public designated nonmotorized natural surface trails by the managing agency through resolution, ordinance or rule that specifically authorizes e-bikes on those trails.

Trailheads and Amenities

Several of the existing mountain bike systems, particularly in Ohio State Parks, were built by volunteers over time. As miles were added, the trails have become true destination experiences. However, the associated user access facilities have not necessarily been upgraded over time, and many trailhead facilities are beyond capacity. The presence of wayfinding signage and mapping is also an emerging concern in the face of growing demand for mountain bike trails. Working in partnership with land management staff to communicate amenity upgrades for volunteer-built trails is critical.

OPPORTUNITIES

More Trail Mileage

In general, there is an opportunity to increase the number of mountain bike opportunities in the state. In addition to the destination experiences in rural areas, mountain bikers would like to have more experiences closer to the major population centers.

Diverse Trail Experiences Connected to Bicycle Infrastructure

As discussed previously, most of Ohio's mountain bike trails cater to intermediate skill levels with relatively few opportunities for beginners and advanced users. Additionally, the trail systems that do exist are often isolated from existing bicycle infrastructure and other trail types. Mountain bikers are looking for opportunities to easily connect by bike to multi-use trails, bike lanes and other trail types.

Diversity of Trail Experiences and Connectivity

Finding: Current mountain bike trails in Ohio offer similar experiences that cater to intermediate rather than entry level or advanced rider abilities.

Recommendation: Land managers and local communities are encouraged to explore opportunities to develop introductory and advanced skill building experiences that are preferably connected to existing bicycling infrastructure.

EPIC Trail and Ride Center Possibilities

The development of trails that are recognized as IMBA as EPICs is a good measure of mountain biking success. Additionally, the development of IMBA Ride Centers, a designation that considers the diversity of mountain biking opportunities available in a community, are also important to develop. Currently, Ohio possesses one IMBA EPIC, the mountain biking trail at Mohican State Park and Mohican-Memorial State Forest. This recognition is a significant achievement for Ohio, as there are only 40 of these trails in the United States. With additional upgrades and connections to the adjacent town of Loudonville, the area could potentially qualify for status as an IMBA ride center.

A significant additional opportunity that could qualify as an IMBA EPIC include the proposed Baileys Trail System at the Wayne National Forest outside of Athens. This partnership led effort seeks to construct 88-miles of professionally designed single-track trails for mountain bikers of all skill levels. The project is currently in the funding stages, with the total costs estimated to be $2-4 million, including the creation of trailhead facilities. Planners expect this trail system to be a destination for mountain bikers from across the eastern United States. Over time, this system would be a candidate for IMBA EPIC designation. Because it will offer a wide diversity of skill levels and be connected to several communities in the area, it also has strong potential to qualify as an IMBA Ride Center.

Members of the greater Chillicothe community are also looking into becoming an IMBA Ride Center. The group has reached out to IMBA for help and guidance. With a great amount of

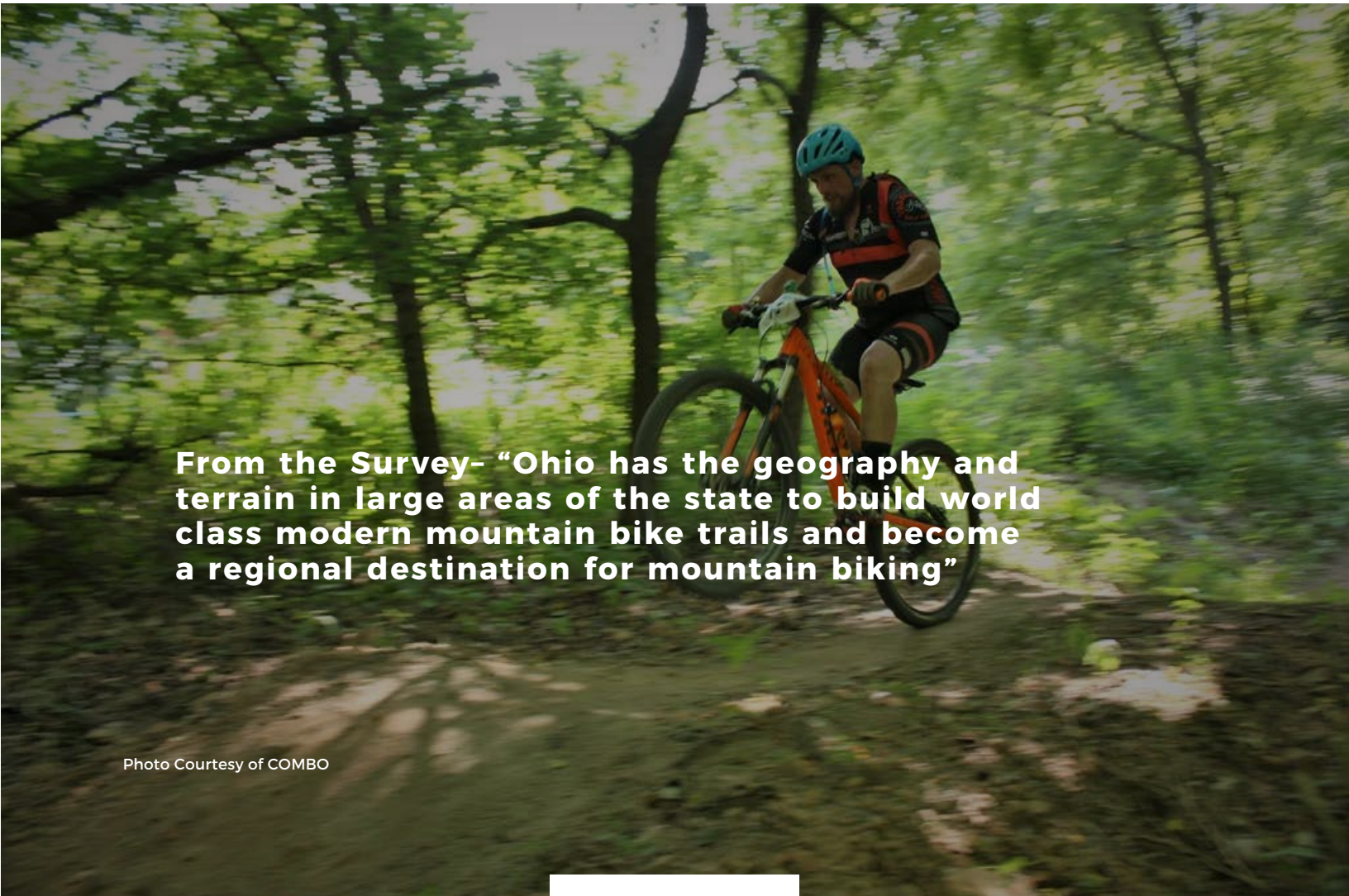
public land with rugged terrain surrounding the city and established trails at nearby Great Seal State Park, there is potential for both IMBA EPIC and Rider Center status with increased trail mileage in the area.

Other areas with potential for development mountain bike destinations include the mid-central Ohio counties of Knox and Holmes and the Dayton area, which has embraced mountain biking.

offers a destination trail to more travelers in Ohio. The planned Baileys Trail System will be another major addition. Ohio has great potential to upgrade existing trail systems and add additional trail mileage closer to the state's major urban centers to provide more riding experiences closer to home. Ultimately, with the development of more IMBA EPIC trails and the creation of designated IMBA Ride Centers, Ohio will become a leader in providing world-class mountain biking opportunities ■

CONCLUSION

Mountain biking has become an increasingly popular activity over the last 20 years in Ohio. With the designation of the Mohican Mountain Bike Trail as an IMBA EPIC, the state now



From the Survey- "Ohio has the geography and terrain in large areas of the state to build world class modern mountain bike trails and become a regional destination for mountain biking"

Photo Courtesy of COMBO

CHAPTER 14

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Goal:

Provide and improve destination quality equestrian trails throughout the state.

Photo Courtesy of MORPC

Ohio has an excellent equestrian trail system. However, it was clear during the planning process that equestrians would like to see the amenities associated with these trails improved across the state.

Improving signage, camping facilities, parking and restrooms are all critical to ensuring our equestrian trails continue to be a destination. The trails at Hocking State Forest and Mohican-Memorial State Forest are the most popular destination for members of the Ohio Horseman's Council, a group of members who advocate for equestrian trails statewide.

WHAT IS AN EQUESTRIAN TRAIL?

Equestrian trails include those that offer horseback and mule riding, but also includes driving, where equines are hitched to a cart, carriage or similar vehicle. Equestrians prefer trails with native soil single- track (2 to 6 feet in width) or multi-track (12 feet in width) with less than 12 percent elevation changes. Trails suitable for driving carts or carriages may be either native soil or improved surfaces that are relatively wide with less than 2 percent elevation change. Trails need high overhead clearance adequate for mounted riders to pass safely. Trail length is variable, with rides of two to five hours, or 5 to 25 miles in length being typical. Trails on the higher end of this range provide multi-day riding opportunities that serve as more desirable overnight destinations.

Equestrians require a trailhead where riders can conveniently and safely offload horses and equipment, park vehicles and large trailers, and safely secure their horses. Water suitable for consumption by the equines is also needed at trailheads and along the trail. A designated disposal area for manure is suggested.

Riders have shared they would like to see signage indicating trail location, intersections and a return route. Permanent mounting blocks allow riders to easily mount and dismount their equines. Restrooms with potable water and trash receptacles are preferred, but not required. Designation as to the trail difficulty is suggested but not required. Where overnight camping is permitted at or near the trailhead, areas exclusive to equines are preferred. Pull-through campsites that can accommodate multi-horse living quarters trailers would benefit equestrians.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING EQUESTRIAN TRAIL SYSTEM

Ohio has a robust equestrian trail system with approximately 1,800 of miles available for riding, with relatively few opportunities for driving. The riding opportunities are well distributed throughout the state, with western Ohio containing the fewest trails. The Ohio Horseman's Council surveys its membership each year to determine which trails are the most popular measured by number of miles ridden. The top 15 public systems out of the more than 100 equestrian trail systems available across the state in 2017 were:

1. Hocking State Forest
2. Mohican-Memorial State Forest
3. Oak Openings Preserve Metropark (Metroparks Toledo)
4. Tar Hollow State Forest
5. South Chagrin Reservation (Cleveland Metroparks)
6. Sycamore State Park
7. Strouds Run State Park
8. Pike State Forest
9. Beaver Creek State Park
10. Carlisle Reservation (Lorain County Metro Parks)
11. Hinckley Reservation (Cleveland Metroparks)
12. Rocky River Reservation (Cleveland Metroparks)
13. Caesar Creek State Park
14. Brecksville Reservation (Cleveland Metroparks)
15. Alum Creek State Park

These opportunities are well distributed, located in both rural and urban areas, contain destination and day-use facilities, and they are managed by both state and local recreation providers. The federal government provides equestrian trails at Wayne National Forest and at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Many of the larger park districts in the state also offer equestrian trails.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Many equestrian trails are in good to excellent shape, but others need maintenance. The trail systems are typically managed by ODNR, park districts and the U.S. Forest Service, and they are commonly assisted with routine maintenance by volunteer groups such as the Ohio Horseman's Council. Some trails in the system were laid out without the benefit of trail professionals and are a challenge to maintain. Common maintenance needs include cutting back of vegetation, clearing downed trees, and maintaining bridges and culverts across waterways. Often, equestrians must share trails with other users, including people who are hiking and mountain biking. Some overnight facilities are dedicated to equestrian campers only while other facilities offer designated equestrian sites within the campgrounds.

Support facilities are important complements to equestrian trails. Many trailheads and overnight facilities need upgrades, including more space for parking, and parking surfaces suitable for heavy trucks and trailers. The best facilities have tie lines, dedicated manure disposal, potable water, restrooms and mounting blocks.

CONCERNS

Sharing the Trails

Equestrians prefer trails that are designated for equine use only to reduce the possibility of horses being spooked, which would result in a potential hazard for the equine, rider and other trail users. The equestrian community believes that mechanical or motorized users should never share equine trails.

Mountain bikes may also frighten equines if they approach horses quickly without announcement.

While many trail systems have overnight camping areas that accommodate equestrians, many trail riders are concerned about the shared-use of these facilities by non-equestrians. In existing shared-use areas, these concerns can be addressed by ensuring there is signage to educate the public about the risks with equines and proper trail etiquette.

Sharing Equestrian Trails

Finding: There is great concern from equestrians regarding interactions between equines and people who do not own equines.

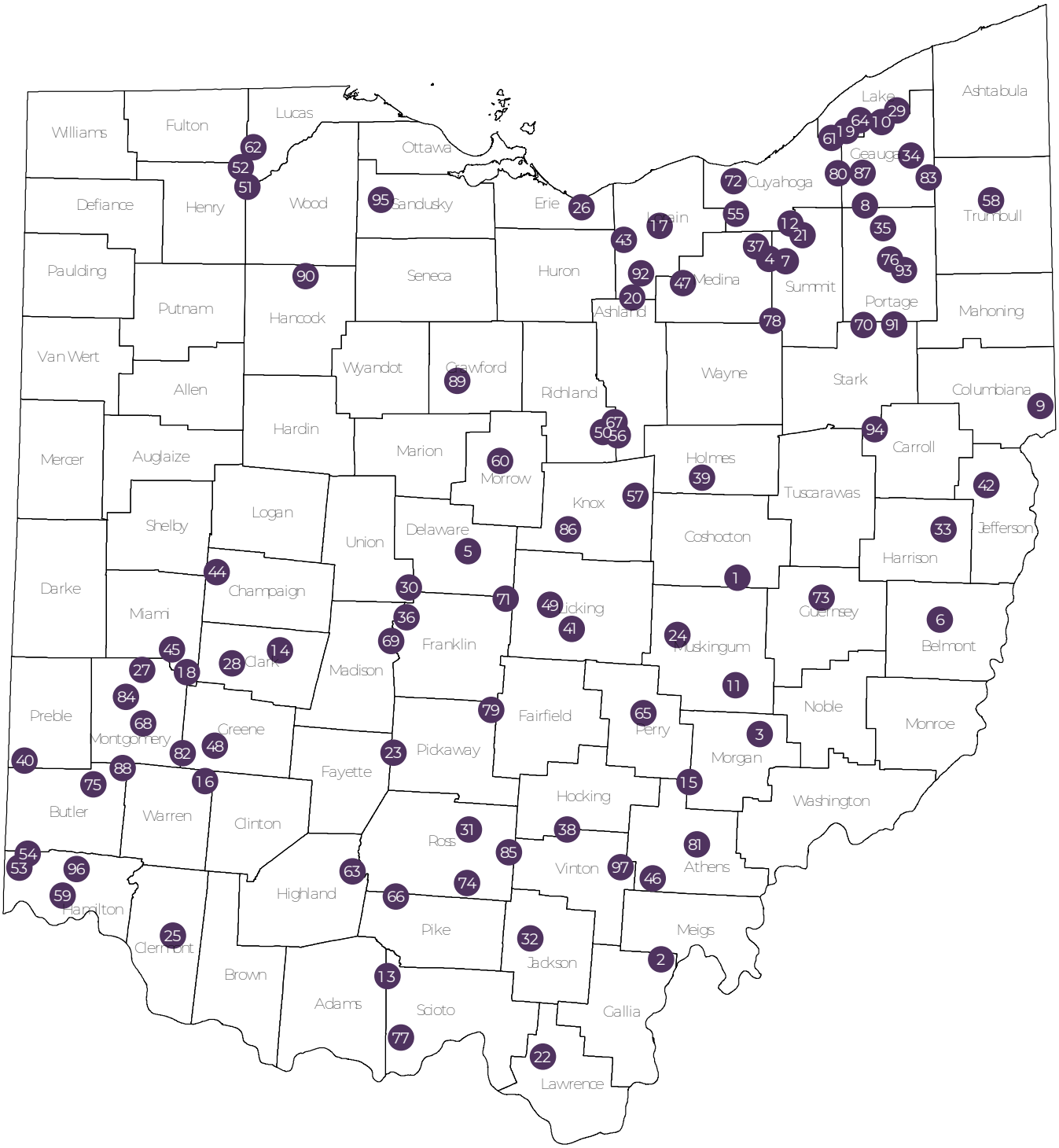
Recommendation: Where users must share common areas with other users, implement signage to educate the public about the risks associated with equines and proper trail etiquette.

Trail Sustainability

Another major concern regarding equestrian trails is their long-term sustainability. Benched

AEP Conesville Horse Area	1
AEP Gavin	2
AEP ReCreation Land	3
Allardale Park	4
Alum Creek State Park	5
Barkcamp State Park	6
Bath Nature Preserve	7
Beartown Lakes Rservation	8
Beaver Creek State Park	9
Big Creek Park- Tupelo Pond	10
Blue Rock State Forest	11
Brecksville Reservation	12
Brush Creek State Forest	13
Buck Creek State Park	14
Burr Oak State Park	15
Caesar Creek State Park	16
Carlisle Reservation	17
Carriage Hill MetroPark	18
Chapin Forest Reservation	19
Charlemont Reservation	20
Cuyahoga Valley National Park	21
Dean State Forest	22
Deer Creek State Park	23
Dillon State Park	24
East Fork State Park	25
Edison Woods Preserve	26
Englewood MetroPark	27
George Rogers Clark Park	28
Girdled Road Reservation	29
Glacier Ridge Metro Park	30
Great Seal State Park	31
Hammertown Lake	32
Harrison State Forest	33
Headwaters Park	34
Headwaters Trail	35
Heritage Trail Metro Park	36
Hinckley Reservation	37
Hocking Hills State Forest and State Park	38
Holmes County Bridle Trail	39
Hueston Woods State Park	40
Infirmary Mound Park	41
Jefferson Lake State Park	42
Kipton Reservation	43
Kiser Lake State Park	44
Kyle Park	45
Lake Snowden	46
Letha House Park	47
Little Miami State Park	48
Lobdell Reserve	49
Malabar Farm State Park	50
Mary Jane Thurston State Park	51
Maumee State Forest- Camp Bridle Trail	52
Miami Whitewater Forest- Hamilton County	53
Miami Whitewater Forest- Shaker trace	54
Mill Stream Run Reservation	55
Mohican Valley Trail	57
Mohican-Memorial State Forest- Lodge Trailhead	56
Mosquito Lake State Park	58
Mount Airy Forest	59
Mt Gilead State Park	60
North Chagrin Reservation	61
Oak Openings Preserve Metropark	62
Paint Creek State Park	63
Penitentiary Glen Park	64
Perry State Forest	65
Pike Lake State Forest and State Park	66
Pleasant Hill Lake Park	67
Possum Creek MetroPark	68
Prairie Oaks Metro Park	69
Quail Hollow State Park	70
Rocky Fork Metro Park	71
Rocky River Reservation	72
Salt Fork State Park	73
Scioto Trail State Forest	74
Sebald Park	75
Shaw Woods	76
Shawnee State Forest	77
Silver Creek Metro Park	78
Slate Run Metro Park	79
South Chagrin Reservation	80
Strouds Run State Park	81
Sugar Creek MetroPark	82
Swine Creek Reservation	83
Sycamore State Park	84
Tar Hollow State Forest	85
Thayer Ridge Park	86
The West Woods	87
Twin Creek MetroPark	88
Unger Park	89
Van Buren State Park	90
Walborn Reservoir	91
Wellington Reservation	92
West Branch State Park	93
Whitacre Greer Bridle Trails	94
White Star Park	95
Winton Woods	96
Zaleski State Forest	97

OHIO'S EQUESTRIAN TRAILS



natural surface or hardened trails that are contoured to the landscape are the most durable and suffer the least erosion, requiring less maintenance. In many areas of the state, trail conditions may be muddy, swampy or boggy. These conditions are particularly hard on riders and equines because they can get stuck, lose shoes and experience injuries. Erosion at the leading or trailing edges of bridges and culverts are potential equine hazards as well.

Trail Sustainability

Finding: Much of the equestrian trail system in Ohio was not planned and constructed using sustainable methods.

Recommendation: Encourage land managers to assess equestrian trails to determine if they can be redesigned and upgraded to have less impact on the landscape and require less maintenance.

OPPORTUNITIES

Trail Mileage

Ohio has many opportunities for equestrians to ride trails. There is always opportunity to increase the mileage of the existing systems. Systems that contain at least 25 miles of trail serve as the best overnight destinations. However, the state has relatively few opportunities for driving carts or carriages on public lands. Adding these experiences to equestrian trail systems is another opportunity to upgrade Ohio's trails.

UPGRADE TRAILHEAD AND CAMPING FACILITIES

One of the major opportunities for upgrading Ohio's equestrian trail system is the improvement of the support facilities. As user needs have changed, many overnight equestrian facilities in the state remain rather primitive. Adding adequate parking for larger trailers, shelter, water, electric, tie-up facilities, mounting blocks, signage and maps will ensure the trails are meeting the needs of today's equestrians.

Camping and Trailhead Facilities

Finding: Ohio is a destination for equestrian trail users, however, equestrians would like the amenities to be upgraded on existing trails

Recommendation: Explore the possibilities of upgrading day-use trailheads and the overnight amenities of equestrian camps across the state.

CONCLUSION

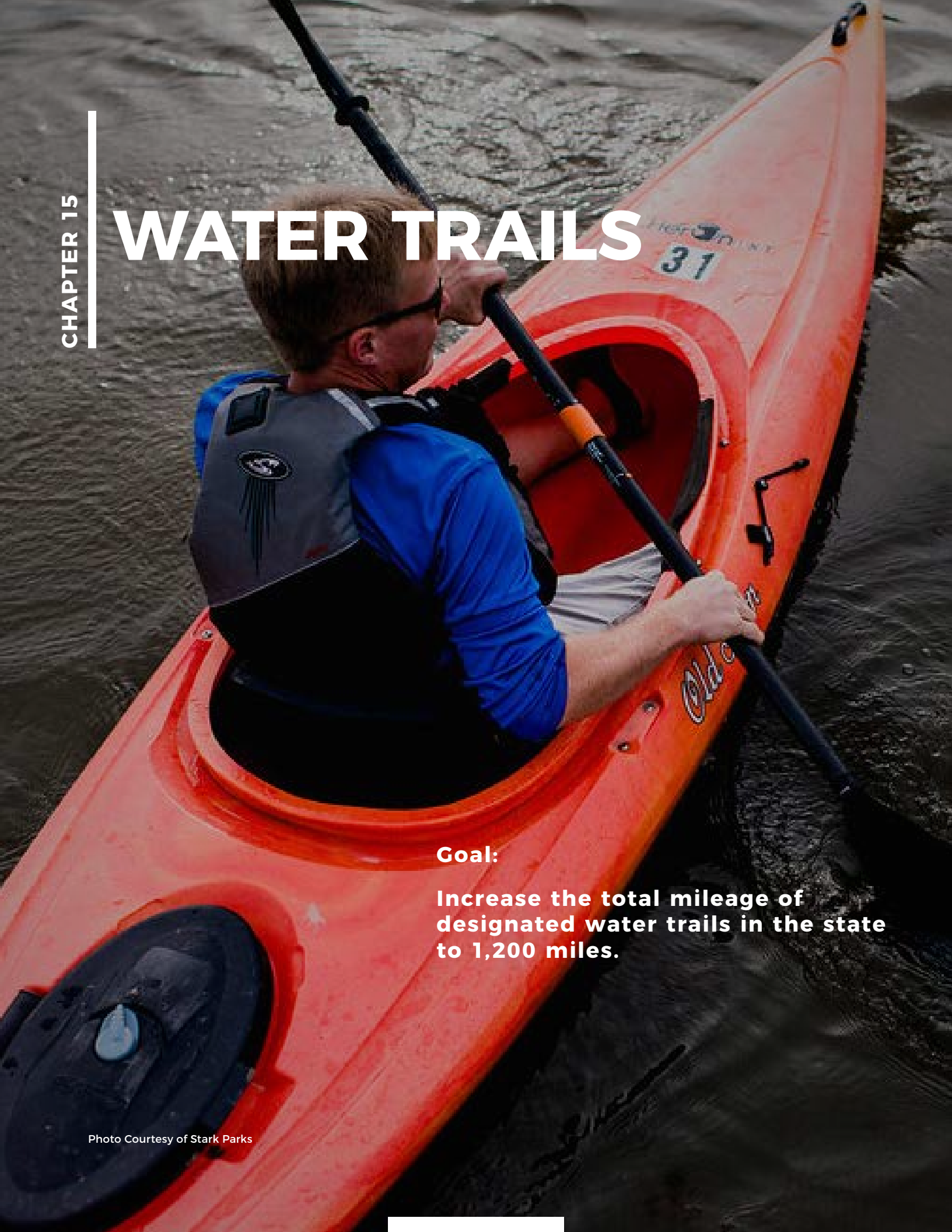
Ohio has an excellent equestrian trail system that is used by Ohioans and serves as a destination to those from surrounding states. To continue to meet the needs of our equestrians, work is needed. Trails that are not sustainably constructed will need significant maintenance and upgrades in the coming years. Additionally, support facilities will need to be upgraded as the needs of equestrians change. By addressing the major concerns

and taking advantage of opportunities, Ohio is well positioned to remain a leader in providing excellent equestrian trails. ■

Photo Courtesy of Wayne National Forest

CHAPTER 15

WATER TRAILS



Goal:

Increase the total mileage of designated water trails in the state to 1,200 miles.

Photo Courtesy of Stark Parks

Ohio is fortunate to have thousands of miles of beautiful river corridors that provide world-class recreational opportunities. Paddlers have taken advantage of these opportunities in recent years with the total number of registered non-motorized craft rising from 68,000 in 2006 to more than 257,000 in 2018. Today, ODNR has dedicated more than 650 miles of Ohio's waterways as 11 state water trails.

Reaching a goal of 1,200 miles of water trails would increase opportunities for Ohio to become a destination for paddlers.

WHAT ARE WATER TRAILS?

Water trails are marked routes on navigable waterways such as rivers, lakes, canals and coastlines for recreational use. Paddling already occurs on these waters for kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, inner tubes and small motorized recreational boating, but in the creation of a water trail, communities along the stream or lake work together to identify all public access points, facilities and permanent hazards. Safety information, contact resources and important natural, cultural and historical features along the waterway are also identified. All of this information is shared with the public through signage, brochures and online maps to create a better paddling experience.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING OHIO STATE-DESIGNATED WATER TRAIL SYSTEM

Each designated state water trail is supported by a local sponsor or water trail partnership group that coordinates and manages the trail as it crosses political and land management boundaries. To be designated, communities must demonstrate to ODNR that the planning process has included public input and gained support from local government. Additionally, the local partners must present a mapping and signage plan that includes waterway safety information. The local partners must also commit to the long-term stewardship of the trail. Once these conditions are satisfied, ODNR potentially funds brochures and/or signage developed by the local water trail partnership.

In Ohio, the chief of the ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft designates waterways as state water trails. The program began in the mid-2000s with the designation of a portion of the Kokosing River. Today, more than 650 miles of Ohio's waterways have been designated. The three water trails managed by the Miami Conservancy District, known collectively as the Great Miami River Watershed Trail, have also been designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as Ohio's only national water trail.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

ODNR provides some initial funds to create water trails, but they are planned, supported and managed locally. This has resulted in a variety of water trail types and conditions across the state. Some water trails have been developed on the entire extent of a navigable stream due to the presence of an organization to manage the trail as it crosses jurisdictional boundaries. Other trails contain only certain sections of a natural riverway because support was not able to be obtained, or a partnership was not formed to designate the entire length of a given system. The best water trails are developed along the entire extent of a natural body of water and contain a management structure that allows for communication across land management and political boundaries.

ODNR has required all designated state water trails to have a map and safety brochure of the water trail, but such information varies for these trails. Metroparks Toledo developed an extensive signage system for the most recently designated trail, the Maumee River. With their signage system, they identified each access site at the water's edge and at the roadway, making it easy for paddlers to access the river.

In addition, Metroparks Toledo developed an innovated website to help familiarize paddlers with the trail.

CONCERNS

One of the recurring concerns regarding water trails and paddling in general along Ohio's streams is whether paddlers should skip a paddling trip due to hazardous conditions. There is an increasing desire to develop a type of system that would help paddlers better determine if river conditions are conducive to recreation based on water quality, river flow, hazards like woody debris and skill level of the paddler. Ultimately, this is a complex issue since there is always risk associated with paddling on Ohio's waterways. To address this concern, the Miami Conservancy District is developing an online tool to help paddlers make better decisions regarding when to paddle on the streams in the Great Miami River Watershed. Cuyahoga Valley National Park has created an internal risk assessment that could be utilized in some capacity for the public to assess risk. These systems could potentially be adopted across the state.

Paddling Conditions

Finding: Recreational paddlers are increasingly in need of more information to help plan their paddle excursions based on environmental conditions.

Recommendation: Develop a pilot system on a state water trail to help paddlers decide if river conditions match their skill level.

The presence of lowhead dams and other permanent hazards on Ohio's waterways pose a serious danger. To address these concerns, ODNR will examine each dedicated state water trail to ensure signage is installed that provides adequate warnings to paddlers.

Marking Permanent Hazards

Finding: Lowhead dams and other permanent hazards remain a threat to the safety of paddlers.

Recommendation: Ensure that all permanent hazards on the state's dedicated water trails have adequate signage both upstream and downstream warning paddlers of hazards.

OPPORTUNITIES

While many Ohio water trails have been developed, there are many more streams and waterways that would benefit from the establishment of a water trail. Water trail projects currently in the planning stages are the Blanchard River, Lake Erie islands, Tuscarawas River, Cuyahoga River and the Portage River. ODNR has received inquiries regarding water trail development on the Ohio, Sandusky and Hocking rivers, the shoreline of Lake Erie and more. There are additional bodies of water that have the adequate accesses for water trail development, but local communities may not know about the potential for water trail development. Other streams and inland reservoirs around the state are excellent opportunities for paddling, but they do not have enough public access sites or local support to be designated water trails.

Water Trail Name	Length	Manager
East Sandusky Bay Water Trail	15 miles	Erie Metroparks
Great Miami River Water Trail	156 miles	Miami Conservancy District
Kokosing River Water Trail	28 miles	Knox County Park District
Mad River Water Trail	65 miles	Miami Conservancy District
Mahoning River Water Trail	23 miles	Trumbull County Metroparks
Maumee River Water Trail	100 miles	Metroparks Toledo
Mohican River Water Trail	28 miles	Knox County Park District
Muskingum River Water Trail	112 miles	ODNR Parks and Watercraft
Olentangy River Water Trail	9 miles	City of Columbus
Stillwater River Water Trail	92 miles	Miami Conservancy District
Vermilion-Lorain Water Trail	27 miles	Lorain County Metro Parks

With the increase in recreational paddling in Ohio, state-designated water trails offer an excellent opportunity to engage these new users. However, without knowledge of the state's water trails, paddlers will not be able to take advantage of the benefits they offer. While ODNR may provide reimbursement funding to print brochures for local water trail managers, there is a need for marketing efforts to collectively promote the state's designated water trails.

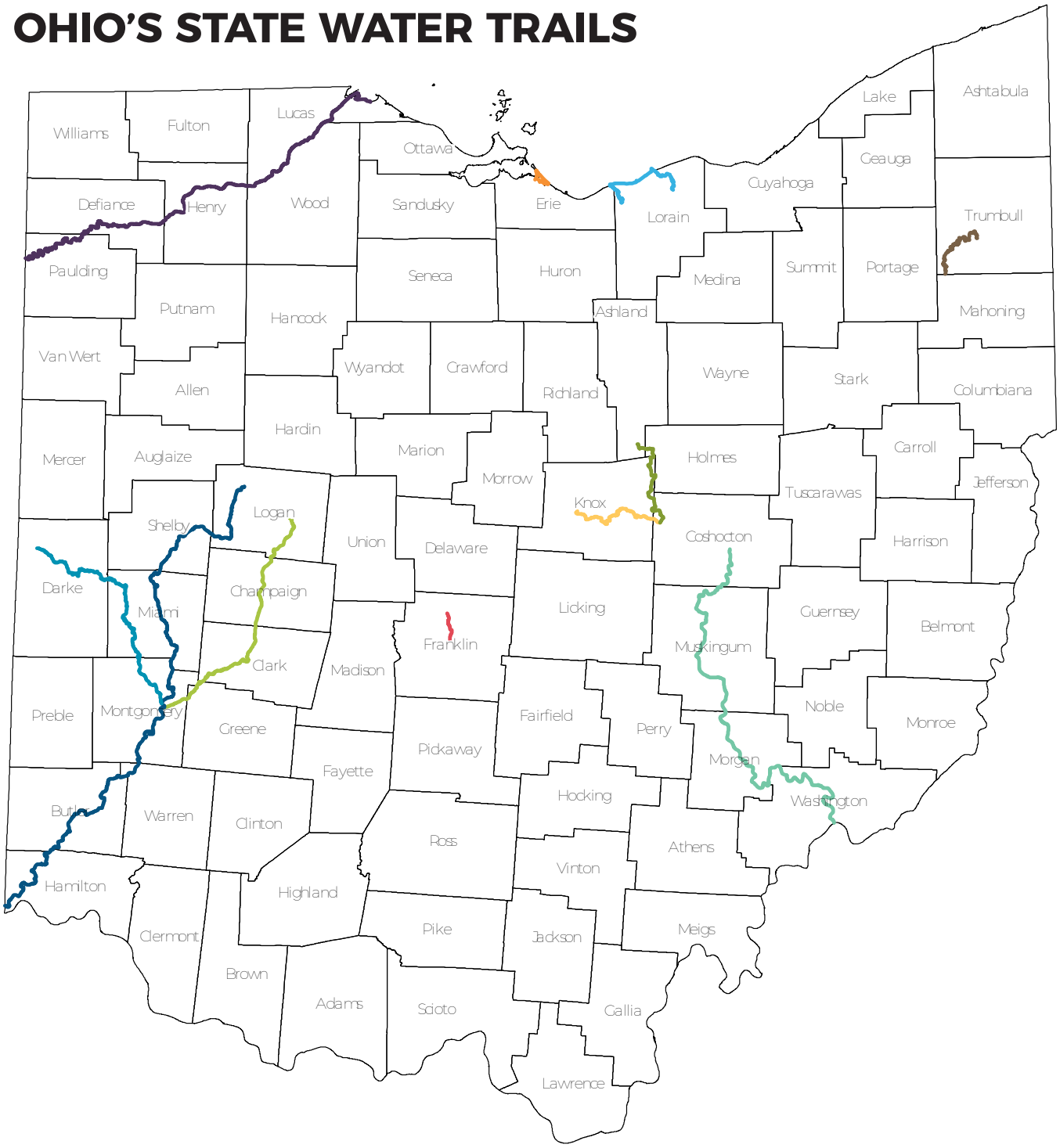
Awareness

Finding: While recreational paddling has nearly quadrupled since 2006, users are unaware that Ohio has a state-designated water trail system.

Recommendation: Develop a marketing tool that is widely distributed across Ohio that highlights each state water trail.

Over time, the expectations of paddlers have increased. There is opportunity to work with local water trail managers to examine each

OHIO'S STATE WATER TRAILS



East Sandusky Bay Water Trail
Great Miami River Water Trail
Kokosing River Water Trail
Mad River Water Trail
Mahoning River Water Trail
Maumee River Water Trail
Mohican River Water Trail
Muskingum River Water Trail
Olentangy Water Trail
Stillwater River Water Trail
Vermilion Lorain Water Trail

existing designated water trail and make recommendations for improvements of the trail's amenities. Maps, informational kiosks, additional access points, access upgrades, portage upgrades, potable water, restrooms, addition of overnight camping areas, and hazard signage are suggestions for improving the quality of Ohio's water trails. Additionally, developing programming and events can also help enhance a water trail.

Water Trail Improvement

Finding: The desired amenities for water trails have become more robust since the state water trail program began.

Recommendation: Examine each water trail created since the program's inception and make recommendations for potential upgrades of the trail.

CONCLUSION

Ohio has seen a great deal of growth in the number of registered hand-powered watercraft since ODNR created a water trail program in the mid-2000s. The state also possesses many excellent opportunities to paddle on its multiple streams, lakes and reservoirs. Ohio is well-positioned to become a destination for recreational paddling by maintaining a strong water trail program, improving existing water trails and working with local communities to develop additional water trails. ■

From the Survey– “Kayaking is taking off. Kayakers are hitting the rivers in droves.”

Photos Courtesy of Metroparks Toledo

CHAPTER 16

CONCLUSION

Photo Courtesy of Stark Parks

The Ohio Trails Vision creates a path forward for Ohio to continue being a national leader in developing trails while recognizing that trails provide significant economic and community benefits.

While this plan has been produced by ODNR, it was developed with the input of thousands of Ohioans. The Trails Advisory Team was made up of advocates, planners and managers that represent constituents across the state. The regional meetings reached more than 290 trail professionals and users. The 7,602 responses to the public trails survey provided valuable feedback.

The Trails Advisory Team's primary responsibilities were to set the vision, goals and help craft the final findings and recommendations that were created after gathering public input. This team's knowledge and experience in developing and managing trails was key to the success of the project.

ODNR is the steward of The Ohio Trails Vision. ODNR will work with the advisory team to prioritize the findings and recommendations. After prioritization, the advisory team will develop strategies for implementation. Many of the findings and recommendations were written in a broad, general sense and can also be used by any community wishing to develop trails. Partnerships will be key to implementing and realizing the vision.

From an ODNR perspective, the trail inventory findings and recommendations are the next critical responsibility for the agency. The goals laid out in this plan can only be measured with a comprehensive trail inventory. The inventory is available at trails.ohiodnr.gov.

Finally, while the intensive public input phase has ended, ODNR and the Trails Advisory Team will continue to accept feedback and respond to emerging trends, opportunities and concerns. To provide comment, please email trails@dnr.ohio.gov. ■

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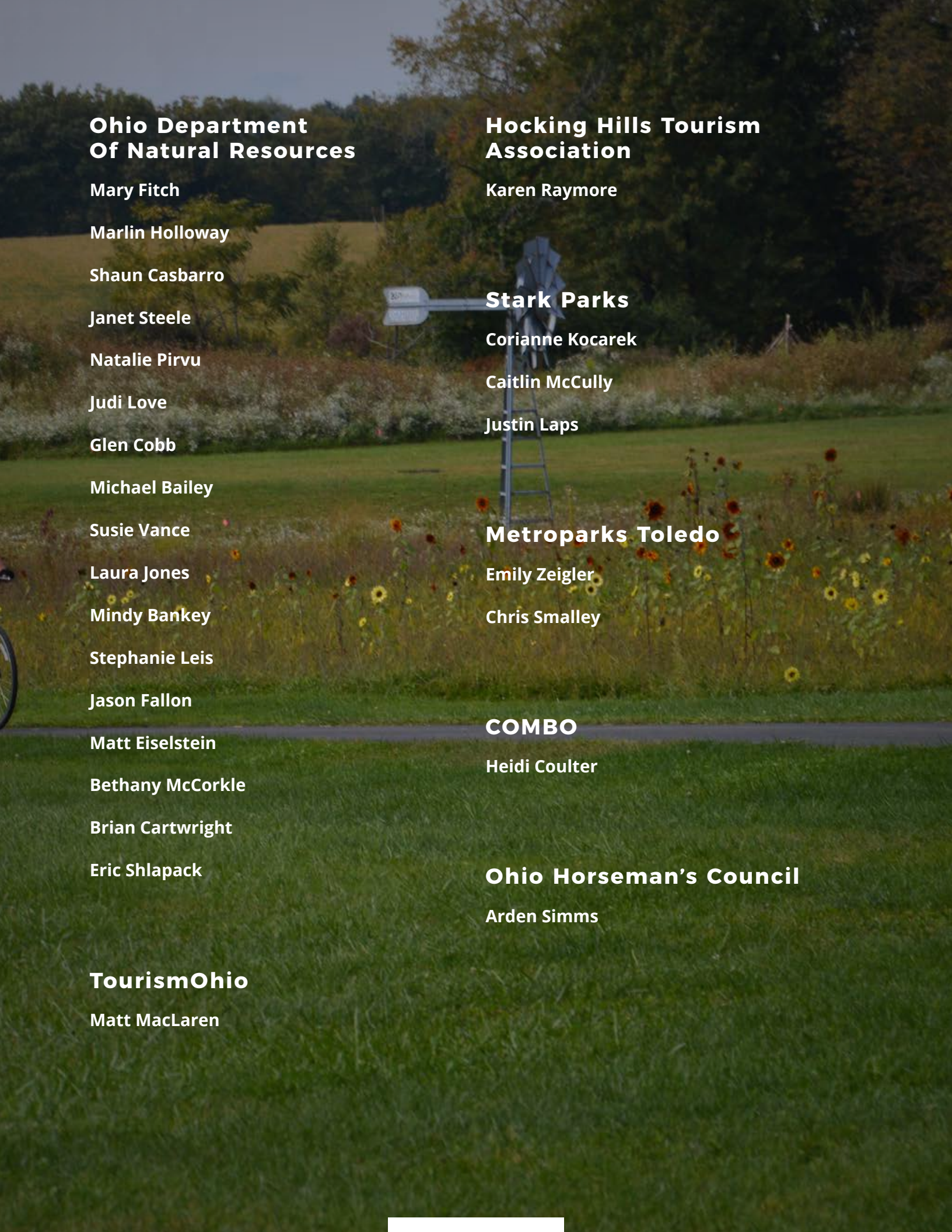
Photo Courtesy of Mill Creek MetroParks



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COMBO

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Ohio Horseman's Council

Arden Simms

APPENDIX

Regional Meeting Attendee Overview

- **More than 290 people attended**
- **15 types of organizations were represented**
- **More than 130 organizations attended**

Organizations that were represented:

- Adams County Economic and Community Development
- American Motorcycle Association
- Athens Bicycle Club
- Athens Conservancy
- Athens County Planning Department
- Athens Trails
- Bike Miami Valley
- Black Swamp Conservancy
- Buckeye Hills
- Buckeye Trail Association
- Bucyrus Tourism and Visitors Bureau
- Caesar Creek State Park
- CAMBA – Cleveland Area Mountain Bike Association
- CCIVC
- City of Bryan
- City of Canton
- City of Delaware
- City of Green
- City of Hamilton
- City of Hilliard
- City of Napoleon
- City of Oxford
- City of Sandusky
- City of Upper Arlington
- Clark County Park District
- Clark County Springfield TCC
- Clermont County Park District
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Clinton County Regional Planning
- Clinton County Trails Coalition
- COMBO – Central Ohio Mountain Bike Association
- CORA – Hueston Woods Trail Crew
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department
- Cuyahoga County Planning
- Delaware County Preservation Parks
- Delaware County Regional Planning
- Delaware County Trail Committee
- Delaware General Health District
- Five Rivers Metroparks
- Friends of the Little Miami Sate Park
- FLVT
- Friends of Madison County Parks and Trails
- Forest Service
- Friends of Madison County Parks and Trails
- Friends of Strouds Run
- Friends of Van Buren State Park
- FRMP
- Fulton County Visitors Bureau
- FHWA – OH (Federal Highway Administration)
- G.E. and Adams County Health and Wellness Coalition
- Geauga Park District
- Glass City Crawlers
- Great Parks of Hamilton County
- Hueston Woods Mountain Bike Trails
- Indian Hill Equestrian Club
- Knox County Park District
- KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission
- Lake County Off Road
- Lake Metroparks
- LCMPD
- Little Miami Advisory Council
- Live Healthy Appalachia
- Lucas County Saddle Club
- Logan-Union Champaign Regional Planning Commission
- Madison County Commissioner
- Madison County Engineer
- Marion County Park District
- Maumee Valley Planning
- MCD (Miami Conservancy District)
- Medina County Park District

- Meigs County Commissioner
- Metro Parks of Butler County
- Metroparks Toledo
- Miami County Park District
- Miami Valley Regional Planning Comm.
- Middleport Village
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- MTC
- MVMBA
- MWCD – Pleasant Hill Lake
- New Franklin
- Nimisila Neighbors and Homeowners Assoc.
- North Central Ohio Land Conservancy
- National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance NW Ohio Rails to Trails
- Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists
- ODNR
- ODOT
- Ohio Horseman's Council – Chapters represented included: Adams County, Athens County, Butler County, Danbury Township, Fulton County, Licking County, Logan County, Madison County, Medina County, Morrow County, Noble County, Pike County, Preble County, Stark County, Summit County, Warren County, Wayne County
- Ohio Environmental Council
- Ohio Erie Canalway
- Ohio Quarter Horse Association
- Ohio to Erie Trail
- Ohio University
- Ohio Valley Trail Association
- Ohio/American Canoe Association
- Olander Park System
- Ohio Motorized Trails Association
- PathPedaler.Com
- Poeggemeyer Design Group
- Portage Park District
- Raccoon Creek Paddles and Oars
- Rocky Fork Headley Hunt
- Rust Belt Revival Trail Coalition
- Simon Kenton Trail
- Southern Wayne Advocacy Council
- Stark County Regional Planning
- Stark Parks
- State Historic Preservation Office
- SWAC
- Toledo Area Bicyclists
- Toledo Roadunners
- Toledo Trail Riders
- Trail Users
- Tri State Trails
- Trumbull County Tourism
- University of Rio Grande
- Village of Galena and DCFT
- Village of Montpelier
- Warren County RPC
- Wayne National Forest
- WCPN ideastream
- WCRPC
- West Chester Township
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- Wood County Park District
- Worthington Parks and Recreation

Photo Courtesy of COMBO