**Showcasing the DNR: It’s always the right time – especially during Michigan Trails Week – to show state’s trails some TLC**

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[Michigan Trails Week](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/about/newsroom/releases/2022/09/14/get-inspired-during-michigan-trails-week) – the annual celebration that helps shine a light on the state’s vast trails network and elevates Michigan’s reputation as the Trails State – is set for Sept. 18-25. These eight days are a great time to pay tribute to Michigan’s extraordinary trails system, maybe by finding a new trail adventure, revisiting your favorite route, sharing a photo or memory with a friend or making it social. Follow MiStateParks on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MiStateParks) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mistateparks) to find ideas on how to celebrate all week long.

You can also show your love for Michigan trails by helping keep them in the best shape for everyone to enjoy safely.

## **Cleaning up**

Every season brings new adventures on Michigan’s trails – with almost 10,000 miles between off-road vehicle and snowmobile trails alone, plus thousands more miles of nonmotorized trails. So, it follows that every season, our trails need some TLC from those who care most about not only the upcoming season, but about the long-term sustainability of the state’s trails system and scramble areas.

Last spring, a large group of volunteers got together in the St. Helen Motorsport Area in Roscommon County to give a great example of just that – showing they care through action. Paul and Melanie Mulder, partnering with ORV and snowmobile trail maintenance groups, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Adopt-a-Forest program and dedicated Jeep club volunteers, pulled off one of the most successful trail and forest cleanup events I’ve seen in my career with the DNR.

The Mulders, both Ferris State University employees, organized the cleanup event that brought together more than 100 Jeeps and other vehicles from at least seven different groups – all volunteers. In total, they cleaned up 31,000 pounds of trash, 208 tires and even a couple of old boats from the St. Helen trails and surrounding forest areas. The trash filled three 30-yard dumpsters donated by the DNR’s Adopt-a-Forest program.

Follow-up efforts included identifying locations of more abandoned boats and getting them into a [test program for recycling fiberglass boats](https://fundraise.givesmart.com/form/5OLw5w?vid=u2sm3). From trail cleanup to a future partnership with the Michigan boating industry … who knew?

These projects and many years of dedicated work on the ORV trails of the northeast and north-central Lower Peninsula earned the Mulders the Partners in Conservation Award. The Michigan Natural Resources Commission presents these DNR employee-nominated awards to individuals or organizations in recognition of their commitment to conservation, natural resource management and assisting the DNR in carrying out its mission.

I have had the pleasure of working out in the field with these two, and I learned firsthand about the hard work it takes to keep the trails in shape and cleaned up for the thousands of riders that who enjoy those trails each season. Nice job, Paul and Melanie – we can’t thank you enough!

## **Where to next?**

Beginning this month, many of Michigan’s 68 snowmobile trail maintenance organizations will hit the ground to clean up the trails and routes that we hope will be covered with snow in December. Why start so early, you ask? There’s a lot to do!

Many miles of trail are shared with ORV users and will need to be graded one or more times before the ground freezes to ensure a smooth base for the groomers to pack the snow onto solidly. This time of year, the majority of snowmobile trails are overgrown and strewn with downed limbs, and oftentimes whole trees, that need to be cleared away. And yes, there are tires, trash and other waste. I’ve heard stories of mattresses, tents, refrigerators and even an old bathtub that needed to be removed from the trails, staging areas, parking lots and trailheads over the years.

But that’s not all. The next step is to check each and every sign along the trail, making sure that it is still in place from last season, that it’s not too faded or broken, that the pole is in good shape, and then replacing those that need it. Do you know that, in some parts of the state, every sign is put up at the beginning of the snowmobile season and then taken down at the end of the season?

In addition, when Dec. 1 rolls around, gates on private property will need to be opened, and “no trespassing” reminders will need to be posted to ensure that the property owners will allow us to use those sections of trail again in the years to come.

## **Call to action**

How can you help? What skills and talents can you bring to the trails?

No matter which season or form of motorized recreation is your favorite, any time is the right time for you to volunteer a weekend of your time to the local ORV or snowmobile club where you live or where you ride.

Here are just a couple of examples of opportunities to get involved coming up soon:

* The Seney Snowmobile Association’s annual trail maintenance days, Sept. 16 and 17. Friday, participants will meet at the groomer barn in Seney at 9 a.m. to do sign maintenance and light trail work. Saturday, they will meet at the groomer barn at 8 a.m. for the big trail cleanup day, with breakfast, lunch and dinner provided. [Get more details and RSVP for Seney Snowmobile Association Annual Trail Maintenance Weekend](https://seneysnowmobiling.com/trail-maintenance-weekend).
* Curtis Area Trails, which grooms and maintains 94 miles of snowmobile trails, will host its first annual trail cleanup day Saturday, Sept. 24. Participants will meet at the Curtis groomer barn at 8 a.m. for breakfast, then head out to start brushing and cleaning up the trails for the upcoming snowmobile season. Lunch and dinner will be provided. [Get more details and RSVP for Curtis Area Trail Maintenance Day](https://www.facebook.com/events/589367769391206).

Besides these two opportunities, there are 110 ORV and snowmobile trail organizations across the state, from the Keweenaw Peninsula to Allegan and everywhere in between, that could use a hand over the next several months or years.

For more information about how to contact any of the motorized trail maintenance organizations around the state, email me at [HolleyJ1@Michigan.gov](mailto:HolleyJ1@Michigan.gov) or find a [listing of local clubs on the Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Association website](https://misorva.org/misorva-supporting-clubs-find-one-to-join-today-2/).

If you’re interested in nonmotorized trails volunteering, contact DNR state trails coordinator Tim Novak at [NovakT8@Michigan.gov](mailto:NovakT8@Michigan.gov) or get in touch with a [local nonmotorized trail organization](https://www.michigantrails.org/getinvolved/trail-groups/).

I hope to meet you some day – with boots, gloves, chain saws and trash bags – on the trail.

Find more information about Michigan trails, including maps and ways to support them, at [Michigan.gov/DNRTrails](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/places/state-trails).

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