

Gov. Whitmer Secures Funding for 75 Local Parks and Outdoor Recreation Projects

Bipartisan budget marks 50 years of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund with grants for land in Keweenaw, Northeast Lower Peninsula, and elsewhere

LANSING, Mich.—Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer celebrated the passage of the balanced and bipartisan budget for fiscal year 2027 that includes \$45 million in Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants for 75 land acquisition and park development projects across the state, leveraging nearly \$64 million in local and matching funds for a combined \$108.9 million investment in public land and outdoor recreation. These investments will help more working Michigan families explore and enjoy Michigan’s public lands and natural resources.

“Michigan’s parks, trails, and public lands bring are some of the best places to spend time with family and friends, and these investments will help make them even better,” said **Governor Whitmer**. “I’m proud we got a balanced, bipartisan budget across the finish line that includes grant funding for 75 projects in communities across our state. By partnering with local communities, we’re expanding access to the outdoors, protecting our natural resources, and creating more places where people can live, work, and play. Let’s keep getting it done.”

“Every corner of Michigan benefits from this investment, whether it’s a new trailhead, a riverfront park, or land protected for the next generation,” said **State Budget Director Jen Flood**. “These grants will turn local visions into places where families can hike, fish, and connect with the outdoors. When we invest in parks and public land, we’re investing in the quality of life that keeps people in Michigan.”

“Since its inception, the Trust Fund has awarded crucial grant dollars to local governments and state agencies for creative projects and acquisitions that greatly benefit residents and local economies in every county of the state,” said **DNR Director Scott Bowen**. “The protection and enhancement of Michigan’s outdoor recreation opportunities and cherished wild places are more important than ever. We’re grateful to the visionaries who created this unique funding source and to the many partners who continue to elevate its impact for current and future generations of Michiganders.”

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund is a restricted fund that was established in 1976 to provide funding for public acquisition of lands for resource protection and outdoor recreation, as well as for public outdoor recreation development projects. It is funded through interest and earnings on funds derived from the revenues of state-owned oil, gas and minerals. To date, the Trust Fund has granted more than nearly \$1.4 billion to state and local units of government to protect public land and develop and improve recreation opportunities in Michigan.

As the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund celebrates its 50th anniversary year in 2026, visit Michigan.gov/MNRTE to see a list of all [previous grant awards](#), information about the fund, anniversary events, and a map pinpointing the locations of many funded projects throughout Michigan.

This round of acquisitions and developments includes \$6.5 million for the DNR to acquire nearly 22,650 acres in the Keweenaw Peninsula, consolidating state-managed land for recreation and natural resource protection and ensuring Michiganders can enjoy the natural beauty of the Keweenaw for generations to come. It also includes \$1.5 million for the DNR to acquire 460 acres adjacent to the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State park, adding wooded hills, trout streams, and wildlife habitats to one of Michigan's most popular and beautiful state parks. Finally, it includes \$5 million for the DNR to acquire over 1,400 acres of forestland, including all of Turtle Lake and nearly 2 miles of the Turtle Creek corridor, protecting habitat and water quality in the Au Sable River watershed.

More information about the 75 land acquisition and development projects supported in the fiscal year 2027 budget can be found below:

Acquisitions

- \$4.8 million for East Bay Township to acquire an easement on 333 acres known as the Ridge Nature Preserve, permanently protecting public access and future trail connections to the Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation trail system.
- \$2.5 million for Saugatuck Township to acquire 119 acres on the Kalamazoo River, including more than 2,200 feet of river frontage, for a new destination park and nature preserve.
- \$1.6 million for the DNR to acquire 354 acres of oak-pine barrens habitat in Newaygo County, connecting the east and west units of the Muskegon State Game Area.
- \$1 million for the DNR to acquire 6.62 miles of former railroad right-of-way, closing a critical gap in the North Country National Scenic Trail and Michigan's Iron Belle Trail.
- \$840,000 for Spring Lake Township to acquire one acre on Petty's Bayou, creating a new waterfront park with a canoe and kayak launch, fishing access, and wildlife viewing.
- \$730,200 for the city of Muskegon to acquire 2 acres adjacent to Hartshorn Municipal Marina, expanding public access along Muskegon Lake.
- \$400,000 for the city of Lansing to acquire 3 acres along the Grand River from Norfolk Southern railroad, expanding the Lansing River Trail system.
- \$280,000 for Clinton Township to acquire a 0.55-acre parcel along the Clinton River, expanding river frontage within George and Woody parks.
- \$220,200 for Eaton County to acquire 50 acres adjacent to Lincoln Brick Park along the Grand River for new amenities, habitat restoration and trail access.
- \$175,000 for Kimball Township to acquire 39 acres along the Black River, creating an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant water access site with parking and safety improvements.
- \$174,000 for the city of Yale to acquire 5 acres along Mill Creek for waterfront access, ADA parking and pathways, and a future trailhead on the Wadhams to Avoca Trestle Trail.
- \$168,700 for the city of Detroit to acquire 4 acres adjacent to Salsinger Park for a new trailhead on the 27.5-mile Joe Louis Greenway.

Developments

- \$400,000 for Washtenaw County to improve accessibility at Parker Mill Park, including a paved parking lot and universal access to the Border-to-Border and Iron Belle trails.
- \$400,000 for the city of Holland to replace a deteriorated 30-year-old boardwalk at Van Raalte Farm Park.
- \$400,000 for Ottawa County to improve accessibility at Rosy Mound Natural Area, including accessible trails, a Lake Michigan overlook and a new regional trailhead.

- \$400,000 for the South Haven Area Recreation Authority to replace a section of the Old Riverwoods Boardwalk along the Black River, connecting the Kal-Haven Trail with fishing rails and a kayak launch.
- \$400,000 for the city of Monroe to replace the playground at St. Mary's Park and rehabilitate tennis and basketball courts, adding lighting and a new pavilion.
- \$400,000 for East Bay Township to extend the Three Mile Trail to an existing trailhead within the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's Mitchell Creek Meadows Nature Preserve.
- \$400,000 for the city of Detroit to build an inclusive playground at Clemente Park, along with new parking, a multi-sport court and landscaping.
- \$400,000 for the city of Grayling to build a 1.8-mile shared-use pathway along M-72 connecting the I-75 Business Loop to Rayburn Natural Area, improving pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- \$400,000 for the city of Otsego to build barrier-free restrooms and changing rooms at Riverfront Park, along with a firepit near the pavilion.
- \$400,000 for Grand Traverse County to reconstruct the Vasa Trailhead, adding accessible parking, a plaza and a new connector path to the Vasa Pathway.
- \$400,000 for Elmwood Township to build a 10-foot-wide multi-use trail along Cherry Bend Road, connecting the TART Trail extension to Cherry Bend Park and the Leelanau Trail.
- \$400,000 for the city of Saginaw to build a universally accessible path through Bliss Park, along with an expanded play area, a labyrinth and native landscaping.
- \$400,000 for Oscoda Township to build a new ADA-compliant bathroom and shower building at Oscoda Beach Park, with boardwalk access to the beach and improved parking.
- \$400,000 for the city of Montague to improve ADA accessibility at Cullen Field, including paved parking, a gathering area and a path connecting to the Hart-Montague Trail.
- \$400,000 for the city of Fenton to build ADA-compliant playground equipment, a bathroom and a paved parking lot at Bush Park, along with a segment of the Riverwalk trail system.
- \$400,000 for Ottawa County to build a 0.7-mile segment of the Idema Explorers Trail across the Bass River, connecting the Bass River State Recreation Area to local neighborhoods.
- \$400,000 for the DNR to stabilize bin walls and the seawall at Copper Harbor State Harbor, protecting boater access to Lake Superior.
- \$400,000 for Midland County to renovate the boat launch, parking lot and driveway at Sanford Lake Park, ahead of the Sanford Dam rebuild.
- \$400,000 for Lincoln Township to build a permanent accessible bathroom at Lincoln Township Beach Park, along with a nine-space parking lot.
- \$400,000 for Saugatuck Township to extend the Blue Star Trail 3 miles along Blue Star Highway, including a separated bike lane over I-196 and a new trailhead.
- \$400,000 for the city of Hudsonville to build a 30-space parking lot and trailhead patio at the Hudsonville Nature Center.
- \$400,000 for Cannon Township to build about 8,350 feet of non-motorized trail along Cannonsburg Road, connecting to the Cannon Trail and Cannonsburg Ski Area.
- \$400,000 for the village of Lakeview to build off-road segments of a multi-use trail loop around Tamarack Lake, along with two trailhead parking lots.
- \$400,000 for Imlay City to build a paved ADA-accessible parking lot along the Polly Ann Trail, along with a paved pathway connecting Fifth Street to Lions Park.
- \$400,000 for the city of Ionia to build a new universally accessible playground, parking lot and shelter at McConnell Park.

- \$400,000 for the city of Lathrup Village to replace the playground at Lathrup Village Municipal Park with new equipment and safety surfacing.
- \$400,000 for the village of Spring Lake to build a new universally accessible pavilion at Central Park, along with access paths and a rain garden.
- \$400,000 for the village of Fruitport to build a shoreline trail along Maple Creek at Pomona Park, along with benches and overflow parking.
- \$400,000 for Oakland Township to develop trails and public access at the 107-acre Blue Heron Environmental Area, including a picnic area and interpretive signage.
- \$391,400 for the city of Big Rapids to build .75 miles of universally accessible waterfront trail at Clay Cliffs Nature Area, including two footbridges over Mitchell Creek.
- \$385,000 for the city of Buchanan to build an ADA-accessible vault toilet and fishing pier at Riverfront Park.
- \$375,000 for the city of Rochester to install accessible playground equipment at Elizabeth Neighborhood Park, along with butterfly gardens and an accessible pathway.
- \$350,000 for the DNR to refurbish the Belleville West Boating Access Site, expanding parking, replacing the boat ramp and adding a carry-down launch for non-motorized watercraft.
- \$349,600 for Meridian Township to develop a trailhead along the 105-mile Meridian Regional Trail System, including an ADA-compliant restroom and universal design amenities.
- \$340,400 for the city of Alma to rebuild the Riverside Park Overlook Deck and refurbish the pavilion, replacing site amenities installed in 1991.
- \$308,600 for Ypsilanti Township to replace the 30-year-old North Bay Park pavilion and restroom facility on Ford Lake.
- \$300,000 for East Bay Township to build a trail loop and new entrance, including a gravel parking lot, at Holiday Woodlands.
- \$299,100 for the village of Thompsonville to pave a mile of the Betsie Valley Trail from the village to the Betsie River Bridge.
- \$296,000 for Clark Township to build a half-mile segment of the Kerri Mertaugh Multi-Use Path along the North Huron Scenic Pathway, crossing Mackinac Creek and coastal wetlands.
- \$289,800 for Mansfield Township to replace the fishing and swimming dock at Dawson Lake Park, along with a new pavilion, vault toilet and accessible parking.
- \$280,000 for the DNR to install wayfinding and interpretive kiosks throughout White Pine Trail State Park, sharing the trail's natural and cultural heritage.
- \$275,000 for the village of Sparta to build a canoe and kayak landing at Rogue River Park, with paved parking and barrier-free accessibility.
- \$267,600 for the city of Pottersville to extend a non-motorized trail at Alliance Lake Park, adding pickleball courts, a trailhead and accessible parking.
- \$250,000 for the city of Port Huron to replace a 30-year-old playscape at Lakeside Park with a new and inclusive, sandcastle-themed play feature.
- \$250,000 for the city of Port Huron to build a multi-sport field at Knox Park, along with paved ADA-compliant parking, an accessible pathway and a pollinator garden.
- \$250,000 for the city of Port Huron to build permanent restrooms at Sanborn Park, along with a new play area, nature trail and ADA-compliant parking.
- \$240,900 for Lexington Township to modernize 2.6 miles of the Cros-Lex Trail, adding signage, rest stops and improved safety at road crossings.
- \$227,800 for the city of Bessemer to build a new trailhead near downtown with a pavilion, restrooms, paved parking and a multi-purpose plaza and ice rink.

- \$215,000 for Douglas to extend the Blue Star Trail 3 miles along Blue Star Highway, including a separated bike lane over I-196 and a new trailhead.
- \$200,000 for the city of Marshall to renovate a deteriorated section of the riverwalk along the North Country National Scenic Trail, replacing decking, ramps and railings.
- \$200,000 for the DNR to upgrade the Barry Shooting Range, adding electricity, water, septic, a range tower and accessible facilities.
- \$200,000 for the DNR to upgrade the Echo Point Shooting Range, adding electricity, water, septic, a range tower and accessible facilities.
- \$197,900 for Zilwaukee Township to develop riverfront land on the Saginaw River with a picnic area, fishing access, a kayak launch, and improved parking.
- \$190,500 for the city of Norton Shores to build a splash pad at Lake Harbor Park.
- \$133,200 for Long Lake Township to improve trails at Cedar Run Creek Natural Area, replacing boardwalks and rerouting segments off private property.
- \$125,000 for Genesee County to renovate the parking lot at Stepping Stone Falls, improving access to the Flint River and Iron Belle Trail.
- \$106,200 for Chassell Township to build a new parking area and vault toilet at an existing canoe and kayak launch on the Sturgeon River.
- \$100,000 for Hamburg Township to replace decking and substructure on the Zukey Lake footbridge along the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail.
- \$90,000 for Blue Lake Township to build wildlife observation structures and a trail system at Grass Lake.
- \$50,000 for Leelanau County to build a crushed-stone pathway to the fishing ponds at Veronica Valley, along with barrier-free parking and interpretive signage.

Investing in Michigan Parks and Public Lands

Parks and recreation facilities are a big part of Michigan's economy, generating value for surrounding communities, creating jobs and helping sustain small businesses. Michigan's outdoor recreation industry sustains 126,000 jobs and over \$4.7 billion in wages and salaries in the state. On average, every \$1 invested in land conservation leads to \$4 in economic benefit.

Governor Whitmer is committed to investing in Michigan's parks and public lands, expanding access to outdoor recreation, and growing Michigan's outdoor economy.

- Invested nearly \$600 million in Michigan parks and recreation areas through the Building Michigan Together Plan and budgets.
- Announced plans to create a new state park in the City of Flint, making this Michigan's 104th state park.
- Distributed more than \$275 million through nearly 600 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants over eight grant cycles.
- Invested \$55 million in the Grand River Greenway and \$60 million in the Joe Louis Greenway to expand recreation opportunities in greater Grand Rapids and Detroit.
- Signed legislation to improve local management and preservation of over 30,000 acres of forest in the Keweenaw Peninsula.
- Created the Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry to grow Michigan's outdoor industry.
- Established Nature Awaits to give every 4th grader a free field trip to a state park or recreation area so that every kid can experience Pure Michigan.