

Manistee County Planning Building, 395 Third Street Manistee, Michigan 49660

Meeting:

Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
6:15PM

Location:

Manistee County Planning  
Department Conference Room  
395 Third Street  
Manistee, MI 49660  
And via Zoom

## MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION

### AGENDA

- A. Call to Order and Roll Call
- B. Approval of the Agenda
- C. Approval of Minutes from November 3, 2025
- D. Conflicts of Interest
- E. Public Comment
- F. Updates
  - 1. Friends of SMARTrails
  - 2. Benzie Manistee County Dirt Birds
  - 3. Benzie Manistee County Snowbirds
  - 4. County-Wide Recreation Plan
  - 5. Planning Department Staff
- G. Old Business
  - 1. County-Wide ORV Ordinance Update
  - 2. County-Owned Property: 11 Mile Rd
- H. New Business
- I. Other Items before the board
  - 1. 2026 Meeting Schedule
- J. Adjourn

\*\* Members must attend in person to be counted as in attendance and to be allowed to vote on matters before the Commission. Public and invited guests may attend via Zoom \*\*

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84771684920>

Meeting ID: 847 7168 4920

Passcode: 4176

One tap mobile

+16468769923,,84771684920# US (New York)

+16469313860,,84771684920# US

Manistee County Planning Building • 395 Third Street • Manistee, Michigan 49660

**DRAFT**  
Monday, November 3, 2025  
6:15PM

Manistee Planning Conference Room  
395 Third Street,  
Manistee, MI 49660  
and via Zoom

**MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**

**Call to Order & Roll Call:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Wayne Beldo at 6:15 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wayne Beldo, Margaret Batzer, Linda Cudney, William Shryer, Robert Schuelke, Glenn Zaring, Gary Schwaiger, Paul Petrovich

MEMBERS ABSENT: Devin Wegner, Shayne Machen

**QUORUM:** Confirmed

OTHERS PRESENT: Katie Gruenberg, Planning Director; Jodie Lynch, Planner 1; Jessica Sorensen, Assistant Planning Secretary; Sally Trisch, Dickson Township; Tim Knoper, Benzie-Manistee Dirt Birds

DIGITAL MEDIA: Mark Coe, Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds

**Approval of the Agenda:**

**Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to approve the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, agenda as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Discussed correction to the date of the minutes.

**Ms. Cudney motioned, supported by Mr. Petrovich, to approve the October 2025 meeting minutes with the corrected date. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Conflicts of Interest:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Updates:**

**Friends of SMARTrails: Report by Ms. Linda Cudney**

- Last meeting held October 20, 2025.
- Working to update trail signage at the Copemish trail head to include SMARTrails. Received approval to place temporary signage, until the permanent sign can be made which will include SMARTrails.
- AJ's Excavating expects to complete trail work by Thanksgiving. Trail up to Dutchman Creek bridge nearly complete; awaiting Bear Creek bridge installation.

- Group is reviewing promotional branding on items (koozies, stickers, magnets, pens) for outreach.
- Coordinating a Ribbon-cutting ceremony to follow trail project completion along with a press release.
- Updating friends of SMARTrails Member contact list.

Discussion followed on:

- Whether the trail project remains on track for grant completion before February 2026.
- Bridge delivery logistics and site access.

**Benzie - Manistee County Dirt Birds: Reported by Mr. Tim Knoper**

- Final club meeting of the season held recently.
- On track to have the blessing of the ORV's June 6<sup>th</sup> in Mesick; committee formed.
- Trail cleanup completed along railroad grade near Kaleva; strong volunteer turnout.
- Additional cleanup scheduled for upcoming Saturday (Intended clean up locations may be changed due to federal government shutdown).

**Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds: Report by Mr. Mark Coe (via Zoom)**

- Preparing for winter grooming operations.
- Equipment maintenance in progress (oil changes, inspections).
- Brushing, signage replacement, and grooming completed across Manistee and Benzie County trails.
- Continuing collaboration with the Betsie Valley Group on maintenance coordination.
- General acknowledgment of strong volunteerism with the Snowbirds organization.
- Recognition for contributions to maintaining county winter recreation opportunities.
- Bear Creek Bridge installation:
  - expected this month.
  - will enhance connectivity for snowmobile routes.
  - connect the Betsie Valley Trail system through Kaleva, improving regional snowmobile access.
- Resurfacing of trail segment between Thompsonville and Copemish is coming along nicely
- Their yearly annual grant has been accepted

Upcoming meetings:

- Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) Committee Meeting: December 4
  - Group coordinates state-level snowmobiling programs to align local and regional priorities.
- Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Board of Directors Meeting: December 6
  - Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Association (MISORVA) works on issues with all clubs throughout the state.
  - Assists with resolving issues and lends support to the 63 recognized snowmobiling organizations statewide.

Discussion followed on:

- Concerns about vehicles using trail sections as private driveways.
- Mr. Coe confirmed damage to gates and posts; noting reinforcements and added barriers are planned.
- Enforcement challenges were noted due to limited DNR presence and public reporting is encouraged when violations are observed.

Mr. Zaring guided discussion to improving public awareness and communication for trail users.

- Current outreach relies on Facebook and organizational websites.
- Proposed collaboration with the Manistee County Tourism Bureau for broader visibility.
- Suggestions included website cross-linking, shared maps, and centralized trail condition updates.
- The MISORVA posts weekly statewide trail condition reports. Especially during snowmobile season Dec 1<sup>st</sup> to Mar 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Groups were encouraged to contact the Tourism Bureau to provide links to trail information and improve public access.

### **County-Wide Recreation Plan: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg**

- Recreation Plan Survey is live.
- A mass mailing of the survey was sent to the local units of government.
- Continuing outreach to local governments for resolutions of support and contributions.

#### Timeline:

- November 2025: Stakeholder public input sessions and outreach with schools/youth groups
- Winter 2025: Draft major plan chapters.
- Winter 2025–26: Community profile meetings.
- Spring 2026: Present public input for drafting local goals and objectives.
- May-June 2026: present local goals and objectives to Recreation Commission for County review
- June 2026: Target draft completion.
- Late fall 2026: Final plan adoption and validation.

#### Upcoming public input session:

- Pleasanton Township Hall – Tuesday, November 18, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
  - Members are encouraged to promote the event and the survey.
  - Discussion on strategies to increase participation through social media, newspapers, and community events.

### **Planning Department Staff: Report by Ms. Gruenberg**

#### Planner vacancy:

- Recruitment is ongoing.
- Interim planning coverage provided by current staff.

### **Old Business:**

#### **County – Wide ORV Ordinance: additions from Prosecutor’s Office: Report by Ms. Gruenberg**

- Ordinance submitted for 45-day review by local units, MDOT, DNR, and MCRC.
- Road Commission review scheduled for November.
- Board of Commissioners public hearing: December 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
- There were minor revisions provided by Prosecutor’s Office.
- Staff will provide an update at January 2026 meeting.

### **New Business:**

#### **County – owned property: 11 Mile Rd: Presented by Mr. Wayne Beldo**

Review of county-owned parcel for potential non-motorized trail site.

#### Discussion points:

- Parcel subject to forestry management plan.

- Potential for timber harvest revenue to support recreation grants or trail projects.
- Need to confirm harvest status, revenues, and access easements.
- Consideration of surface material and compatible recreational uses.

Staff designated to:

- Confirm forestry plan status with County Controller.
- Obtain latest forestry report.
- Explore allocation of proceeds toward trail development or matching funds.

**Other Items before the board:**

**Expiring Terms:**

- Discussion on expiring member terms; Staff will be notifying the Clerk's office to confirm postings for upcoming vacancies.
- Members asked to update contact information and communication preferences.

Mr. Schuelke announced completion of a 5-foot path from Tippy Dam Road to High Bridge. With a long-term goal to establish two-way, bike-safe, connections between Udell Hill Road and Warfield Road.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

**Mr. Shryer motioned, supported by Mr. Zaring, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Next Meeting:**

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 @ 6:15PM; Manistee County Planning Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Friends of SMARTrails  
Board Meeting Minutes  
December 8, 2025  
Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club  
6:00 PM**

**Board Members Present:** Zachary Pawlowski, Vice Chair; Linda Cudney, Secretary; Jacque Erdman, Treasurer, Claire Richard, Bonnie Brown, Mark Coe, Dave Myers.

**Board Members Absent:** Rob Carson.

**Guests:** Sara Herberger, MCCF

- I. **Call to Order** Meeting called to order by Zach Pawlowski, vice-president at 6:05 PM.
- II. **Consent Agenda** It was motioned and supported to accept the consent agenda. AIF. Motion carried.
  1. **October 20, 2025 Board Minutes**  
Motioned by Claire, supported by Bonnie to accept the minutes from the October 20, 2025 meeting. AIF. Motion Carried.
  2. **Treasurers Report and Payment of Bills:**  
Jacque furnished Treasurers reports through December 8, 2025, plus YTD. MCCF account shows \$4,261.46, Filer Credit Union Account shows \$5,855.99 and FCU share account balance is \$21.40. Total balance is \$10,138.85. No bills, but the hosting charge automatically comes out monthly for \$20.00. Motioned by Linda, supported by Claire to accept the Treasurers report. AIF. Motion carried.
- III. **New Business :**
  1. **Another member of SMART**  
Do we look for another member to replace Elaine Gibbs, as she is not returning to the board. Different ideas came up and members will check with different people, or possibly put it on "Social Media", but we are now an 8 member board (By laws say no less than 5, and no more than 15 members).
  2. **Meeting dates for 2026**  
Going over the 2026 dates, it was decided to meet the second Monday of January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September and December. In October, the meeting will be the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, with no meeting in November. Designated "Clean up Trails Day's are Saturday, May 16, 2026 and Saturday, September 12, 2026. Motioned by Claire, supported by Bonnie to set the 2026 meeting dates. AIF. Motion Carried.

#### **IV. Old Business**

##### **1. EDA Update**

The trail is finished from Thompsonville to Copemish, and the bridge over Bear Creek is getting put in this week, so will be finished soon. There will not be a permanent sign put up, so Linda will check with Shane at Gourdie Frasier and also Scott Slavin, as the DNR has to okay the sign.

##### **2. Trail Flip Chart of Manistee County Trails**

Work in progress. Looking at adding Equestrian trails. Need to see if we can get some digital copies made for the chart.

##### **3. Reports from other Trail Entities**

Claire stated she is on the board for Shoreline Cycling. Mark stated that the Snowbirds are securing funding for the Thompsonville to Interlochen Trail. The Snowbirds are thinking of inviting various Manistee County persons for a "County Ride" sometime, possibly in late February. The snowbirds will furnish a few extra sleds if someone wants to ride and does not own a snowmobile. The Dirtbirds will have "Blessings of the ORV's" in the spring at Ellens Corners in Mesick.

##### **4. Fundraising Ideas/Summit**

Tabled, but not forgotten. (Couple of things on the radar to check out for fundraising).

##### **5. Bullet Points List**

Discussion on adding Connecting Big M to the list. Discussion on how this could be decided. Looking into it.

##### **6. Tribal Discussion**

Tabled but not forgotten.

##### **7. Branded items**

Zach said he will have information by the January annual meeting.

#### **V. Other Business**

##### **1. Recreation Commission Update**

There was no December meeting for lack of actionable items, but at the December meeting of the County Commissioners, December 16, the County ORV ordinance will be hopefully approved. Also, copies of the timber harvest on the County owned property on 11 Mile Road will be discussed and would like to request the BOC to see if the funding could possibly go to the Commission for recreation projects.

##### **2. Social Media**

Discussion on putting the progress of the trail from Thompsonville to Copemish, plus bridge over Bear Creek. Also, possible a ribbon cutting of the trail, trailhead, and bridge. A tentative date set for Friday, April 17, 2026. If it is done in Copemish, Linda offered the use of the new Cleon Township Hall if it is finished by then.

##### **3. Admin Technology**

Work in progress.

#### **VI. Board Members Comments/Correspondence**

1. Linda has a few corrections to do on the list of SMART board members and will have a final soon to send out to all.

2. A question was asked about signage on the trail from Thompsonville to Copemish. These should go up in the spring, as people will be riding ORV's and Side by Sides on the trail.

Some riders have been riding on the trail for a long time, and it may deter them if there are signs that say "No motorized vehicles". Types of signs were discussed, but the DNR has the final say on signs.

**VII. Adjourn.** Motioned and supported to adjourn at 7:37 PM.

**Next meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026 in Kaleva at the Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Club at 14121 Industrial Drive, Kaleva.**

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by:

**Linda Cudney, Secretary**

SMART

2026

**January**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**February**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

**March**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**April**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**May**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**June**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**July**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**August**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

**September**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

**October**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**November**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

**December**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Meeting Dates  
Designated Clean Up Trail Days  
SunCatcherStudio.com

## Friends of SMARTrails Board of Directors Phone Number/Email

		<u>PHONE</u>	<u>EMAIL</u>
<b>Rob Carson</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>616 293-8667</b>	<a href="mailto:rob.carson@networksnorthwest.org">rob.carson@networksnorthwest.org</a>
<b>Zachary Pawlowski</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>231 288-9100</b>	<a href="mailto:hello@zacharypawlowski.com">hello@zacharypawlowski.com</a>
<b>Linda Cudney</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>231 620-9241</b>	<a href="mailto:lcudney@aol.com">lcudney@aol.com</a>
<b>Jacque Erdman</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>231 633-8343</b>	<a href="mailto:jerdman0650@gmail.com">jerdman0650@gmail.com</a>
<b>Dave Myers</b>		<b>616 450-4921</b>	<a href="mailto:cyndiesuecharters@gmail.com">cyndiesuecharters@gmail.com</a>
<b>Mark Coe</b>		<b>231 944-0678</b>	<a href="mailto:mark@mifarmtofreeser.com">mark@mifarmtofreeser.com</a>
<b>Claire Richard</b>		<b>231 357-1784</b>	<a href="mailto:claire.richard231@gmail.com">claire.richard231@gmail.com</a>
<b>Bonnie Brown</b>		<b>231 690-2147</b>	<a href="mailto:bonniebrown810@gmail.com">bonniebrown810@gmail.com</a>

**Rob Carson**  
19326 Six Point CT.  
Copemish MI 49625

**Zachary Pawlowski**  
273 Sixth St.  
Manistee, MI 49660

**Linda Cudney**  
19708 Cadillac Hwy  
Copemish, MI 49625

**Jacque Erdman**  
13765 Lakeside Ave  
Bear Lake, MI 49625

### others send minutes to

**Sara Herberger**  
**Wayne Beldo**  
**Laura Heintzeman**  
**Katie Gruenberg**  
**Margaret Batzer**  
**Scott Slavin**  
**Stick & String**

**231 510-4432**

**Mark Coe**  
7260 Chief Road  
Kaleva, MI 49645

**Claire Richard**  
411 Birchwood Drive  
Manistee, MI 49660

**Bonnie Brown**  
7248 Rogers Memorial Drive  
Onkama, MI 49675

**Dave Myers**  
17179 Nessen City Road  
Copemish, MI 49625

[sara@manisteefoundation.org](mailto:sara@manisteefoundation.org)  
[beldo300@gmail.com](mailto:beldo300@gmail.com)  
[lheitzelman@manisteefoundation.org](mailto:lheitzelman@manisteefoundation.org)  
[kgruenberg@manisteecountymi.gov](mailto:kgruenberg@manisteecountymi.gov)  
[margaretbatzer@gmail.com](mailto:margaretbatzer@gmail.com)  
[slavins@mighigan.ov](mailto:slavins@mighigan.ov)  
[stick@string@gmail.com](mailto:stick@string@gmail.com)

# 2026

## January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

## March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

## May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

# Benzie-Manistee Snowmobile Club Trail Report



**Trail Condition:** Fair

**Last Groomed:** December 16th, 2025

**Reported On:** December 19th, 2025 @ 11:03am

## Groomer Report

**Benzie Manistee Snowbirds want to welcome you to Manistee, Benzie and Leelanau Counties. Trails # 3,33,37,39,313,386,391,395** Thompsonville Express between Thompsonville and Kaleva opening soon, waiting on final approvals to open the bridge.

**Snowbirds** – What a difference a day makes. Last groom was Tuesday the 16th, Today 12-19-25 got 2-4 inches overnight, now 17 degrees and trails have frozen up, icy patches in all counties. We are having high winds, watch for tree limbs and debris. Grooming will resume after more snowfall. Manistee County fair snow, Benzie County fair snow, Leelanau County fair snow. Trail to MAPLE CITY – CLOSED. Pettingale Rd. East to Empire Airport staging area is open, South of Empire airport across the road, SE corner of West Osborn and South Benzonia Trail. **Check out the groomer tracker app** for current trail grooming.

**Ride in Control, Do not drink and ride, Speed and Alcohol are the 2 most accident factors, PLEASE be safe for you and the other guy!**

**Manistee County** – Trail 3, south is fair, watch for downed trees and limbs, cleanup ongoing with the high winds. Highbridge North, 33 North to Kaleva fair, Chief grade 313, 389 to Bear Lake fair snow. Are you Around Kaleva? Staging at Clubhouse anytime, lots of room. Stop at the Clubhouse open Saturdays 10am – 2pm for warming, lunch, snacks, stories.

**Benzie County** – Trail 39, 37 grooming, Snow on the trail fair, 3 North of US 31, New reroute marked good, some logging on old route.

**Leelanau County** – Trail 3 to Maple City CLOSED, Trail West to Empire Airport is open, snow is fair, the staging area is south side of the airport, across West Osborn Road.

**Regular meetings 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm at the Clubhouse in Kaleva. 14121 Industrial DR. North of the Park. Public is welcome, stop in and see what makes our club tick!**

Find us on the web [www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com](http://www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com) and like us on <https://www.facebook.com/BenzieManisteeSnowbirdsClub>

**Ride in control and remember RIDE RIGHT! When stopped along the trail please STAY to the RIGHT off trail, do not block the trail.**

**Thank You, Benzie Manistee Snowbirds**



## Benzie-Manistee Snowmobile Club Trail Report

Benzie Manistee Snowbirds want to welcome you to Manistee, Benzie and Leelanau Counties.

Trails # 3,33,37,39,313,386,391,395 Thompsonville Express between Thompsonville and Kaleva opening soon, waiting on final approvals to open the bridge, see picture.

Snowbirds - What a difference a day makes. DEC 24, no recent snow and warm temps reduced our snow pack to minimal. trails have frozen up, icy patches in all counties. We had high winds, watch for tree limbs and debris. Grooming will resume after more snowfall. Manistee County poor snow, ice, Benzie County poor snow, ice, Leelanau County poor snow, ice Trail to MAPLE CITY - CLOSED. Pettingale Rd. East to Empire Airport staging area is open, South of Empire airport across the road, SE corner of West Osborn and South Benzonia Trail. Check out the groomer tracker app for current trail grooming.

Ride in Control, Do not drink and ride, Speed and Alcohol are the 2 most accident factors, PLEASE be safe for you and the other guy!

Manistee County - Trail 3, south is poor & icy, watch for downed trees and limbs, cleanup ongoing with the high winds. Highbridge North, 33 North to Kaleva fair, Chief grade 313, 389 to Bear Lake fair snow. Are you Around Kaleva? Staging at Clubhouse anytime, lots of room. Stop at the Clubhouse open Saturdays 10am - 2pm for warming, lunch, snacks, stories.

Benzie County - Trail 39, 37 grooming, Snow on the trail poor & icy, 3 North of US 31, New reroute marked good, some logging on old route.

Leelanau County - Trail 3 to Maple City CLOSED, Trail West to Empire Airport is open, snow is fair & icy, the staging area is south side of the airport, across West Osborn Road.

Regular meetings 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm at the Clubhouse in Kaleva. 14121 Industrial DR. North of the Park. Public is welcome, stop in and see what makes our club tick!

Find us on the web [www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com](http://www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com) and like us on <https://www.facebook.com/BenzieManisteeSnowbirdsClub>

Thank You, Benzie Manistee Snowbirds

PLEASE HONOR THE STAY ON TRAIL SIGNS!!!! We only have a 16' wide easement

## Benzie-Manistee Snowmobile Club



**Trail Conditions:** Good

**Last Groomed:** December 31<sup>st</sup>

**Trail Report:** 12-31-25

**Benzie Manistee Snowbirds welcomes you to Manistee, Benzie and Leelanau Counties.**

**Trails # 3,33,37,39,313,386,391,395** Thompsonville Express between Thompsonville and Kaleva has officially opened see picture.

**Snowbirds** - What a difference a day makes. DEC 31, from 8-12 inches of snow has fallen over last couple days, trails have frozen under snow with icy patches in low snow places in all counties. High winds have many trees and limbs down and covered with drifts. Ride with caution. Grooming has resumed use caution as we run trails and remove trees and limbs over the next couple days. Manistee County has good snow, some ice, Benzie County has good snow, Leelanau County good snow, Trail to MAPLE CITY - CLOSED. Pettingale Rd. East to Empire Airport staging area is open, South of Empire airport across the road, SE corner of West Osborn and South Benzonia Trail. **Check out groomer tracker app** for current trail grooming. **Ride in Control, Do not drink and ride, Speed and Alcohol are the 2 most accident factors, PLEASE be safe for you and the other guy!**

**Manistee County** - Trail 3, south is good with drifting, watch for downed trees and limbs, clean up ongoing with the high winds. Highbridge North, 33 North to Kaleva good drifts, Chief grade 313, 389 to Bear Lake good snow.

Are you Around Kaleva? Staging at Clubhouse anytime, lots of room. Stop at the Clubhouse, open Saturdays 10am - 2pm for warming, lunch, snacks, stories.

**Benzie County** - Trail 39, 37 grooming, Snow on the trail good, 3 North of US 31, New reroute marked good, some logging on old route.

**Leelanau County** - Trail 3 to Maple City CLOSED, Trail West to Empire Airport is open, snow is good, the staging area is south side of the airport, across West Osborn Road.

**Regular meetings, 1st Wednesday of the month at 7pm at the Clubhouse in Kaleva. 14121 Industrial DR. North of the Park. Public is welcome, stop in and see what makes our club tick!**

Find us on the web [www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com](http://www.benziemanisteesnowbirds.com) and like us on <https://www.facebook.com/BenzieManisteeSnowbirdsClub>

**Ride in control and remember RIDE RIGHT!** When stopped along the trail please **STAY to the RIGHT** off trail, do not block the trail.

**PLEASE HONOR THE STAY ON TRAIL SIGNS!!!! We only have a 16' wide easement**

**Thank You, Benzie Manistee Snowbirds**

COUNTY OF  
**manistee**  
MICHIGAN



Do you want to help shape the future of Recreation  
Planning in Manistee County?

If so, Please take this quick survey below!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ManCoRecPlan>

Questions?  
Contact us at:  
planning@manisteecountymi.gov  
231-723-6041





## Recreation Commission

Recreation Commission  
C/O Planning Department  
231.723.6041  
Fax 231.398.3526  
planning@manisteecountymi.gov

January 2, 2026

To: Manistee County Recreation Commission

RE: Planning Department Staff Update

- I attended the Manistee Recreation Association (MRA) meeting on Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. It was great to see what they have going on and give a brief update on the County-Wide Park & Recreation Plan. The MRA will be hosting their Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony at TJ's Pub on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM and extended the invitation to the Recreation Commission. I have a conflicting meeting that night, so I would like one or two members to commit to attending and representing the Commission, if interested.
  - The MRA also asked about opportunities for collaboration and proposed the idea of an organized event on the trail system, such as a run or biking event. This is something we can discuss further if the Recreation Commission is interested.
  - I am going to start attending the MRA meetings quarterly.
- Friends of SMARTrails has a balance of \$1,320.00 for marketing supplies (Map Printing) with the Planning Department.
- Onekama Township will be hosting a Community Open House on Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, from 4:00 – 6:00 PM for the Onekama Trail Project.
  - They also have a survey live: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Onekama>
- Village of Kaleva Bathroom Facility / Trailhead project: The grant through the Community Foundation (MCCF) was due to expire at the end of December but will be extended for another six months as the Village decides how they would like to proceed with the project. There is a balance of roughly \$7,000 left under the grant, and they are likely going back to the drawing board with what kind of facility they are going to construct, due to the high cost of construction for the original design. I will be attending their January Village Council Meeting to discuss further with the community.
- Lisa Sagala and I met with Laura and Sara from MCCF on November 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Recreation Commission and how we can better support the efforts of the Commission. We feel that it may be in the Commission's best interest to develop a Strategic Plan as it relates to trail development to assist the Commission and staff with the best course of action to accomplish our goals. I have attached the memo I put together following our works session back in June to guide discussion.

*Prepared By: Katie Gruenberg*

Manistee County Planning Building, 395 Third Street Manistee, Michigan 49660

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

To: Manistee County Recreation Commission

Re: Follow-Up from June 12th Work Session & Next Steps

Dear Recreation Commission Members,

Thank you for a productive and thoughtful work session on June 12th. The discussion provided valuable insight and helped clarify the direction the Commission would like to pursue, especially with respect to advancing trail development throughout Manistee County.

### **Work Session Takeaways**

There was clear consensus among members in attendance that trail development and improved interconnectivity remain top priorities. Building off the priority trail routes identified in the County-Wide Recreation Plan and the Friends of SMARTrails Strategic Plan, staff will continue to align efforts with these guiding documents.

Other priorities discussed included:

- Developing a "Priorities and Procedures" document to guide local units and individuals in how to work with the Recreation Commission;
- Increasing outreach and presence in local communities to better understand their recreational needs;
- Hosting public input sessions;
- Creating a list of recreation funding opportunities to share with local units of government;
- Improving public visibility through social media; and
- Inviting local recreation groups and commissions to County Recreation Commission meetings for collaboration and information-sharing.

### **Recent Efforts**

#### **1. Kaleva to Chief Lake Trail Segment:**

Staff met with the Road Commission Manager to review the feasibility of non-motorized trail development along the unimproved corridor (McClelland Rd, Milks Rd, and McMartin Rd). There are a number of challenges with using these roads for trail access, and we may need to bring in an engineer to conduct a feasibility study to help identify the best options for development.

Manistee County Planning Building, 395 Third Street Manistee, Michigan 49660

The DNR has advised that this section must be resolved before planning and engineering for the larger Thompsonville-to-Chief Lake segment can proceed.

## 2. **Meeting with Manistee County Community Foundation (MCCF):**

We also met with Sara and Laura from the Manistee County Community Foundation to follow up on the work session and talk through how MCCF can best support the efforts of the Commission. We all concur the vision is strong for further trail development and interconnection through the County, but it's been tough to know where to start. Understanding there are many steps that must occur before we can begin construction or physical work on the priority trail routes, we felt it may be best to pursue a firm to assist the commission with a strategic plan that lays out a recommended course of action for the pre-development work on our priority trail routes. This would give us a more actionable roadmap—breaking down the big picture into manageable steps the Commission and staff can work through. Staff would pursue a grant through MCCF to fund the development of the plan. We will need to discuss how match funding will be provided.

### **Recommended Next Steps**

Based on the feedback from the work session and follow-up discussions, staff recommends proceeding with the following tasks:

- Developing a “Priorities and Procedures” document to guide outreach and communication with local units of government.
- Create a “Recreation Funding Opportunities” document for the public and local units of government
- Submitting a grant application to MCCF to fund the development of a strategic pre-development plan for the priority trail routes.

We are requesting feedback and consensus from the Commission on these proposed next steps.

### **Attached for Review**

Please review the attached documents, which we believe will be the basis for any strategic plan we pursue:

- Chapter 5: Goals & Objectives (from the 2022-2026 County-Wide Recreation Plan)
- Friends of SMARTrails 2022-2024 Strategic Plan
- 2019 Manistee County Recreation Commission Strategic Plan

Thank you again for your commitment to improving recreation opportunities in



**Recreation Commission**  
(231) 723-6041  
Fax (231) 398-3526  
[planning@manisteecountymi.gov](mailto:planning@manisteecountymi.gov)

Manistee County Planning Building, 395 Third Street Manistee, Michigan 49660

Manistee County. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any feedback, questions, or additional ideas for moving this work forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Gruenberg".

Katie Gruenberg, AICP  
Manistee County Planning Director  
(231) 398-3525  
[kgruenberg@manisteecountymi.gov](mailto:kgruenberg@manisteecountymi.gov)





# 5 Goals & Objectives



## Next Steps for Success

The goals and objectives section of any plan are key in that they are the final result of the combined data collection and community input processes. By understanding where the community has been and what challenges it is currently experiencing, it can proceed with deciding what changes should come next. Goals and objectives capture the image that the community wants to manifest in itself through organized and community-supported change. While not as specific as the action programs and individual project implementation strategies that will come later, these goals and objectives detail all of the efforts that Manistee has built consensus around and for which funding may be sought. For each individual jurisdiction's goals and objectives, see Appendix F.

### Goal 1: Review, update and implement the 5-Year Manistee County Park & Recreation Plan.

- Regularly update the map that identifies the large natural resource features/systems found within the County (i.e. Manistee River, DNR land, USFS land, Lake Michigan shoreline)
- Allocate and assign the various goals, where appropriate, identified by each community to the natural resource features/systems map.
- Use the Natural Resource Features/Systems and Community Goals Map to seek funding sources for implementation.
- Convene and host a Recreation Summit to seek volunteers for parks and recreation related committees and to assist these entities in getting started. The Recreation Commission will also attend the county-wide Trails Summit and the Regional Summit.
- Invite the DNR Grants Coordinator to Manistee County to speak and educate the communities about recreation, grants, and other implementation opportunities.
- Encourage Manistee's municipalities to share facilities and programming efforts where feasible.
- Support local jurisdictions in adopting concepts such as walkability, connectivity between points of interest, the development of pathways and trails, the protection of natural resources, improved access to recreational assets and watershed protection in their planning documents, zoning ordinances and other municipal documents.



### Goal 2: Improve access to natural resources and recreational facilities for recreational purposes.

- Continue to support the creation and development of Explore the Shores sites.
- Develop a County wide Blue Water Trail system complete with way-finding and accesses which meet the criteria of the National Water Trails System under the National Park Service.
- Develop a system of way-finding throughout the County's river systems with information about river segments, including degree of difficulty designation.
- Identify gaps and opportunities for new access points to land.
- Identify, evaluate, and make improvements to existing access points.
- Identify hubs of the trail system and seek funding to create the facilities necessary for the trail users.
- Evaluate the trails to determine if they are meeting the needs of the user.

### Goal 3: Continue to steward the county's natural resources.

- Support, or initiate, traffic calming measures as requested by the public for the Hodenpyl Stretch of Manistee River.
- Support watershed plans once adopted by their respective communities.
- Support the work of the Manistee County Conservation District, Grand Traverse Land



## Goals & Objectives

Conservancy, United States Forest Service, Consumer Energy, Railroad Corporations, the Department of Natural Resources and other large landowners and seek ways to strengthen their ties with recreational development.

- Collaborate with the Manistee County Land Bank Authority to identify and evaluate properties with higher ecological significance to plan for their management and potential recreational uses.

### Goal 4: Develop nature and natural resource based tourism within the county.

- Conduct an annual tour of the county-wide priority recreation sites.
- Support the M-22 Pure Michigan Byway project.
- Create a County Recreation Ambassador Program that uses volunteers to help promote the area by providing person to person contact to give tours, information, etc.
- Create identifiable segments along the rivers that are marketed, designated for difficulty, and have clearly identifiable points of access. This may be completed by designating certain river segments as water trails.
- Work with the Visitors Bureau to link planning work with their Mobile Application.
- Create a strong partnership between the Manistee County Planning Department, the Visitor's Bureau, the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce and any other organization working toward improved eco-tourism.
- Encourage recreation outfitter business development.
- Encourage the development of businesses that sell or lease recreational equipment.
- Continue to support the development of "pop up" businesses in the county at recreation sites.

### Goal 5: Look for ways to improve collaboration and partnerships to support recreation.

- Meet with the Manistee Recreation Authority, local recreation organizations, educational institutions and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians to explore ways to increase natural outdoor recreation by offering lessons/programming that teaches kiteboarding, sailing, paddle boarding, fly fishing, and other recreational activities that utilize our natural assets.
- Continue to maintain working relationships and a regular meeting schedule with Consumers Energy, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians in order to implement this Recreation Plan.

### Goal 6: Help improve and promote the use of community parks.

- Create opportunities for linkages and connections between the parks.
- Support efforts by communities to implement their park improvement goals.
- Work with the Visitors Bureau and other related organizations to promote recreation sites.

### Goal 7: Improve pedestrian and non-motorized travel in Manistee County.

- Support safe crossing points on major roads by working with MDOT, the Manistee County Road Commission and local units of government.
- Support the adoption of Complete Streets resolutions and ordinances at the local level to promote traffic calming measures along state-managed roads.
- Support safe non-motorized travel best practices at the local level.



Goals & Objectives

**Goal 8: Develop a county wide, multi-use, trail system that connects communities, natural features and is universally accessible.**

- Create a wayfinding plan for the county.
- Coordinate with SMARTrails and the local jurisdictions to implement the Manistee Lake Area Non-motorized Trail Plan, the Railroad Relocation for the Manistee Lake Area Communities Plan and the 2017 Manistee County US-31 Corridor Enhancement Plan.
- Develop trail plans for the identified trail hubs throughout the county.
- Plan a Blue Water trail system with links to neighboring Counties.
- Mark designated trail uses on the county's trails and trailheads.
- Continue to identify trail opportunities that are off road and would be procured by purchasing land, seeking easements, utilizing railroad grades, and/or converting snowmobile trail leases into multi-use easement lease agreements.

- Keep an open line of communication with all of the county's municipalities. Conduct periodic discussions concerning the current status of the recreation plan and ongoing projects.
- Publish, maintain and market ORV, snowmobile and non-motorized trails in Manistee.

**Goal 9: Plan for the maintenance and funding of recreational facilities.**

- Create a county-wide dialogue about the importance of creating a line-item budget for recreation expenditures within an individual community's budget.
- Create a county-wide dialogue about the importance of creating a recreation savings account to save money for the matching funds needed when applying for grants.
- Facilitate a seminar to discuss potential funding sources to implement the Manistee County-Wide Park & Recreation Plan.



# The Friends of SMARTrails (Scenic Manistee Area Recreational Trails ) Strategic Plan 2022-24

(Six month assignments with a two year Plan focus)

## BOARD MEMBERS:

- Rob Carson, President
- Zachary Pawlowski, Vice President
- Linda Cudney, Secretary
- Jacque Erdman, Treasurer
- Dave Myers, Trustee
- Bonnie Brown, Trustee
- Claire Richard, Trustee
- Mark Coe, Trustee
- Elaine Gibbs, Trustee



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Priorities and Board Member Short Term Work Assignments</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Vision, Mission, Values</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Trail Identification</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Goals and Work Plan</b>	<b>5</b>
Trail Goals	5
The Chief Road North Trail Project Goal #1:	5
The Chief Road South Trail Project Goal #2:	5
Fund Development Goal	5
Promotion/Marketing Goal	6
Committee Organizational Development & Capacity Building Goal	6
Appendix A: SWOT Analysis	7
Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Organizational Structure of the Board	9
Appendix C: Snapshot of SMARTrail Status in Manistee County and Needed Improvements as of May 2022	10
Appendix D: Memorandum of Understanding between SMART, TARP, FBVT	12

# Priorities and Board Member Short Term Work Assignments

Priority (June 2022-September 2022)	Board Member Assignment
Donors & Fund Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene the Marketing and Fund Development committees: <b>Jacque Erdman &amp; Linda Cudney</b></li> <li>2. Create the Fund Dev. strategy: <b>Jacque Erdman</b></li> <li>3. Create Marketing materials: <b>Linda Cudney</b></li> <li>4. Determine the big donors: <b>Executive Board</b></li> <li>5. Select 2 donors and make “the ask”: <b>TBD</b></li> </ol>
Friends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a strategy to increase the number of Friends: <b>Marketing Committee</b></li> <li>2. Pick a summer event and set up a booth: <b>Jacque Erdman</b></li> <li>3. Start planning the Trail Summit: <b>Executive &amp; Marketing Committee</b></li> <li>4. Take people on trips on the trail: <b>Dave Myers</b></li> </ol>
Trail Stewards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify one person per trail segment (Chief Road North and Chief Road South) that is the primary steward, or champion, or “go to” person, and have them start gathering Friends to do the work as outlined in this Strategic Plan.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Chief Road North: <b>Dave Myers</b></li> <li>b. Chief Road South: <b>Rob Carson to identify a person</b></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Priority (October 2022-January 2023)	Board Member Assignment
Donors & Fund Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go to a Recreation Commission meeting to ask them to write grants for property acquisition for the Chief Road South trail segment: <b>Executive Committee</b></li> <li>2. Select 1 fall event to set up a booth to do fundraising and Friend recruitment: <b>Rob Carson</b></li> <li>3. Select 2 more big donors and make “the ask”: <b>Executive Committee</b></li> </ol>
Friends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brainstorm ways to build the Friends base: <b>Marketing Committee</b></li> <li>2. Go to the Visitor’s Bureau, and other publications, and ask that they start advertising the Kaleva to Chief Road trail segment. Include the ask for Friends, donors, and donations: <b>Fundraising Committee</b></li> </ol>
Trail Stewards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively recruit more Friends for each segment to help with the work- post ads in the paper, social media, join an existing event, etc.: <b>Executive Committee</b></li> <li>2. Identify 2 partners and encourage them to work on loops off the SMARTrails main trail route: <b>Executive Committee</b></li> <li>3. Tour...Cycle...Walk the established SMARTrails during the fall as a group and with partners: <b>Jacque Erdman</b></li> <li>4. Secure property for the Chief Road South: <b>Partnership with DNR and SnowBirds</b></li> <li>5. Start researching trail/interpretive boards: <b>Dave Myers</b></li> </ol>

# Vision, Mission, Values

**Our Vision:** *A County that has a well developed and connected trail system.*

**Our Mission:** *The Friends of SMARTrails is an advocacy group committed to helping create, promote, maintain, and connect trails within Manistee County and to the growing trail system in Michigan.*

## **We Value:**

- *connectivity within the State, County and regional trails and communities;*
- *universal accessibility;*
- *transparency;*
- *building partnerships;*
- *acting as leaders;*
- *community;*
- *Inclusivity;*
- *varied trail uses;*
- *partnerships;*
- *collaboration;*
- *Integrity;*
- *being community minded;*
- *teamwork;*
- *safety;*
- *healthy living;*
- *and being communicative.*

## Trail Identification

(See Appendix C for current status and needs assessment)

### **Chief Road North Trail Segments:**

Thompsonville to Copemish (to Harlan to Mesick) Trail Segment

Thompsonville to Kaleva Trail Segment (The Thompsonville Express)

Kaleva to Chief Road Trail Segment

### **Chief Road South West Trail Segments:**

Chief Road to US31

US31 to M22

M22 to City of Manistee

# Goals and Work Plan

## Trail Goals

### The Chief Road North Trail Project Goal #1:

*We will advocate for the improvements to the Chief Road North Trail Segments:*

- **Thompsonville to Copemish (to Harlan to Mesick Trail) segment:** Create “Welcome to SMARTrails” trailhead signage, with wayfinding information, that sets the tone and character of the entire SMARTrails system and welcomes the users to trails in Manistee County.
- **Thompsonville to Kaleva Trail segment a.k.a. The Thompsonville Express:** Commission interpretive panels/signs, wayfinding signage, and establish a “Welcome Center” complete with bathroom facilities and wayfinding signage in the Village of Kaleva.
- **Kaleva to Chief Road Trail segment:** Commission an interpretive panel and wayfinding signs.

### The Chief Road South Trail Project Goal #2:

*We will advocate for the creation of the Chief Road South Trail segments and establish partnerships to start securing easements.*

## Fund Development Goal

*We will diversify our ability to contribute funds to trail development that allows us to raise \$50,000.00 and enlist 100 donors within 6 months.*

### Committee:

- Create the Marketing Committee.

### Use of Funds:

- Determine the use of the \$50,000.00. *Recommendations:* start saving for grant matches, create marketing materials to expand reach of SMART group.

### Donors:

- Develop a Fund Development strategy.
- Create the talking points and marketing materials for donors.
- Identify major donors.
- Recruit the correct and specific volunteers who can speak to donors and stakeholders.

### Grants

- Have conversations with the County that clarifies the role of the Recreation Commission and the Friends regarding grant writing responsibilities.
- Advocate for the Recreation Commission to write grants for the priority segments identified in this Strategic Plan.

### Fund Development Drives

- Create a yearly Fund Development Drive: Party, Gala, Event, etc.
- Identify smaller pop up summer and fall events and set up a booth for awareness, Friends recruitment, and donations.

## Promotion/Marketing Goal

***We will increase the number of Friends of SMARTrails by 500 subscribers.***

### Public Engagement (Social Media, Events,)

- Identify smaller pop up summer and fall events and set up a booth for awareness, Friends recruitment, and donations.
- Host a Trail Summit in 2023
- Continue to support the following marketing initiatives:
  - Improve the Friends website.
  - Create an e-Newsletter
  - Create blog posts
  - Grow Facebook presence
  - Create volunteer recruitment efforts
  - Issue press releases

### Partnerships

- Secure 4 additional partners and establish them as Friends.
- Encourage partners (such as Shoreline Cycling Club) to identify areas along the SMARTrails to create loops and connections on public lands.
- Community Support
- Create a presentation to give to select boards and commissions (Chamber, County Board of Commissioners, various communities) that reviews the Strategic Plan and organization accomplishments and that focuses on the economic development, health, and transportation benefits and importance of trails.

## Committee Organizational Development & Capacity Building Goal

***We will hold at least one meeting, per committee, per month and report back to the Board of Directors.***

### Operationalize this Strategic Plan with Ad Hoc Committees

- Create Sub-Committees, or working groups, of the SMARTrails Board that correspond with specific trail segments and a Marketing Committee.
- Find Friends who will serve on the Committees.
- Place on the agenda for the Executive Committees first meeting of the year or the yearly organizational meeting, Strategic Plan Review and Update which includes identification of new priority projects and acknowledgement of successes.

## Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County Recreation Commission can write grants.</li> <li>• The Committee has a bank account.</li> <li>• The Committee has 501(c)(3) status.</li> <li>• The Committee has a fund at the MCCF.</li> <li>• There is great support for trails.</li> <li>• There are great opportunities for trail locations.</li> <li>• The Committee has active partners: GTRLC, DNR, Forest Service, Shoreline Cycling, Snowbirds, TART, MCCF</li> <li>• Committee members represent a wide geographic distribution</li> <li>• County Wide Recreation Plan which includes a Trail Plan</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent political support</li> <li>• Lack of a dedicated stream of funding</li> <li>• Lack of a grant writer</li> </ul>
<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoning</li> <li>• NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) attitude to trail location</li> <li>• Environmental</li> <li>• Inflation</li> <li>• Equipment for maintenance</li> <li>• End of life for pavement</li> <li>• Illegal use of trails</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start working with the State Park Service and US Forest Service at the beginning of every trail segment development process</li> <li>• Two avenues to build trails: private land or State/Federal land.</li> <li>• DNR Trust Fund will pay appraised value of property but only to groups who are committed to fundraising.</li> <li>• Host a Trail Summit</li> <li>• Money to build trails is available we just need to tap into those resources</li> <li>• People are moving to Manistee County</li> <li>• Asking Township Boards to lend a voice and support to the County Board of Commissioners to support trails</li> <li>• Possible sharing of a grant writer with another organization</li> <li>• Visitors Bureau supports trail development</li> <li>• We know through various community</li> </ul>

	<p>surveys that a large number of people will support a millage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Create a citizen led millage that would be voted on during the next election</li><li>● Inclusivity for different type of uses for trails leads to different opportunities</li><li>● Capitalize on the use of geography to define where different trails could be developed such as the east portion of the County containing ORV trails and the west portion of the County focused on non-motorized trails</li><li>● Obtain existing ORV and snowmobile maps to include in trail promotion and marketing</li><li>● Understand what resources our partners have that can help us in our work</li><li>● Promote the importance of the Group in making the Kaleva spur a reality</li><li>● Advocate for requirements for trails in zoning ordinances site plan approval processes</li></ul>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Organizational Structure of the Board

The By Laws established that the SMARTrails board be comprised of:

- Board of Directors (5-15 members): Officers ( President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Others as Created), Advisors, and Ex Officio Directors
- Executive Committee (Officers, 3- At Large Members)
- Nominations and Board of Governance Committee
- Finance Committee
- Ad Hoc Committees:

This Strategic Plan recommends that the Board create two additional committees and subcommittees:

- Trail Specific Committees:
  - Chief Road North Trail Segments
  - Chief Road South Trail Segments
- Marketing Committee

# Appendix C: Snapshot of SMARTrail Status in Manistee County and Needed Improvements as of May 2022

Chief Road North Trail Segments	
Thompsonville to Copemish (to Harlan to Mesick) Trail Segment (a.k.a. DNR Trail #37)	
<p><b>Overall Current Status:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail established</li> <li>Under DNR ownership</li> </ul>	
<p><b>General Needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardize the names of the trail segments across organizational jurisdictions (so everyone is on the same page in the name of the trail).</li> <li>Develop signage that sets the character for the whole SMARTrail system and install a “Welcome to SMARTrails” sign at the Manistee County border.</li> <li>Commission interpretive signage/panels for key locations. Work with Daniel Spegal, DNR History Division <a href="mailto:spegelD@michigan.gov">spegelD@michigan.gov</a>.</li> <li>Write a letter to the DNR to Scott Slaven seeking financial help in resurfacing the trail route.</li> <li>Commission interpretive signage/panels for key locations.</li> </ul>	
Thompsonville to Copemish	Copemish to Harlan
<p><b>Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A grant has been submitted to the EDA for trail surfacing and amenities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resurfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unimproved surface allows snowmobile use currently.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resurfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users.</li> </ul>
Thompsonville to Kaleva Trail Segment (Thompsonville to Kaleva to Chief Road a.k.a.The Thompsonville Express or DNR Trail #3)	
<p><b>Overall Current Status:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under DNR Ownership (except for the private land portion between McMartin Rd. and McClellan Rd. (approximately 1.75 miles))</li> <li>Trail established but because the bridge over the Bear Creek is in need of repair you can not currently take the trail all the way to Kaleva.</li> <li>Bridge over Bear Creek is included in the EDA application for the Thompsonville to Copemish Trail Segment</li> </ul>	
Thompsonville to Kaleva North Village Boundary	Kaleva North Village Boundary to Chief Road
<p><b>Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unimproved surface allows snowmobile use</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status</b></p> <p>12 inches of well packed road gravel good for mountain bike users, hikers/walker/joggers and snowmobiles in the winter</p> <p><b>Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional limestone surfacing to increase usability for non-motorized users</li> <li>Improved road crossing, amenities</li> </ul>

# Chief Road South Trail Segments

## Chief Road to US31

**Current Status:**

- Privately owned and along County Road or County Road Commission ownership.
- Discussions have been on going with landowners and the Snowbirds.

**General Needs:**

- Discussion, support, and allowances by the Manistee County Road Commission.
- Land acquisition from private landowners through easement or purchase for corridor.
- Surfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users.

## US31 to M22

**Current Status:**

- Under private ownership
- Discussions have been on going with landowners and the Snowbirds.

**General Needs:**

- Land acquisition from private landowners through easement or purchase for corridor.
- Surfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users.

## M22 to City of Manistee

**Current Status:**

- The route is in need of determination for placement of trail. The railroad corridor exists, but the route along the railroad bed is not supported currently by the Manistee Township Board. The route was left out of their Township Recreation Plan..

**General Needs:**

- Land acquisition from private landowners through easement or purchase for corridor.
- Surfacing, improved road crossings and amenities for non-motorized users.

# Appendix D: Memorandum of Understanding between SMART, TARP, FBVT

## Memorandum of Understanding between:

Friends of SMARTrails (Friends of Scenic Manistee Area Recreation Trails)

TARP (Thompsonville Area Revitalization Plan)

FBVT (Friends of Betsie Valley Trail)

### PARTIES:

Friends of SMARTrails

Mission: The Friends of SMARTrails is an advocacy group committed to helping create, promote, maintain, and connect trails within Manistee County and to the region.

Summary, Geographic Oversight and Support Focus: The Friends of SMARTrails is a Manistee County based 501c3 non-profit with a focus on trail advocacy, trail development grant match support through fundraising, and maintenance efforts within the boundaries of Manistee County and extending to immediate neighboring county regional trail connections. The organization supports trail efforts outside of our geographic oversight through Board approved action of Letters of Support and other written and vocal support as approved by the Board. We focus our advocacy efforts in Manistee County, while welcome requests for support of trail development efforts throughout the State.

TARP

Mission:

Summary, Geographic Oversight and Support Focus:

FBVT

Mission:

Summary, Geographic Oversight and Support Focus:

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this MOU is to clarify the responsibilities of each Party in order to coordinate mutually agreed upon plans and actions so as to present a seamless, uniform junction of our trails and the Thompsonville trailhead. This Memorandum is intended to remain in effect for the duration of construction and the duration of any after project requirements imposed by funding sources up to a maximum term of twenty years. It will be our intention to maintain cordial, cooperative relations between the Parties in an ongoing fashion to assure well designed, functional trails and amenities for our users.

### TERMS:

- It is agreed that the naming of trails is under oversight of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).
- It is agreed that the assigned name "Betsie Valley Trail" pertains to the trail which extends from Elberta in Benzie County through Beulah, into Thompsonville, continuing to Copemish in Manistee County and onto Mesick and Yuma in Wexford County.
- It is agreed that TARP will determine a final plan for its trailhead, park improvements and visitor's center project, and will work in collaboration with the Village of Thompsonville, FBVT and the DNR as indicated. *\*Nothing in the preceding*

*sentence shall overrule actual trail route, width, base and surface material placed through action of the State of Michigan DNR on property under their control.*

- It is agreed that FBVT intends to terminate its project at Thompson Ave in Thompsonville.
- It is agreed that all signage shall be approved by the DNR on trail route locations where lands are under control of the DNR.
- It is agreed that uniform signage promotes wayfinding, building of brand and promotes connectivity. Trailhead and interpretive signage design, including dimensions, color, fonts, layout and structure are important to coordinate and replicate where different trail routes converge. All parties agree to work collaboratively where trails routes converge in respective geographic areas, in order to achieve and maintain uniformity. *\*Nothing in the preceding paragraph shall apply to logos, and including all design aspects and surrounding matte.*
- It is agreed to support the establishment of a trail spur from Thompsonville and the BVT to Crystal Mt Resort and adjacent low income housing.
- It is agreed upon that maintenance efforts of the Betsie Valley Trail shall be as follows:
  - Friends of SMARTrails shall make effort to maintain the multi-use developed Betsie Valley Trail from the TARP Trailhead in the Village of Thompsonville SE into Manistee County to current termination of the improved multi-use trail.
  - TARP shall make effort to maintain the Trailhead in the Village of Thompsonville.
  - BVT shall make effort to maintain the multi-use developed Betsie Valley Trail from the TARP Trailhead in the Village of Thompsonville NW to current termination of the improved multi-use trail in the Village of Elberta.

**AGREEMENT & SIGNATORIES:**

The PARTIES collectively agree to the purpose and terms of this Memorandum of Understanding. Executed upon Signatory of all Parties’ Board Representatives an

Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, by its: Board President

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
George E. Maker

Thompsonville Area Revitalization Project, by its: Board President

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Charles Krause

Friends of Scenic Manistee Area Recreation Trails, by its: Board President

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Carson



**S M A R T**  
Scenic Manistee Area Recreation Trails



Located in  
Manistee County

## Trail Status Update and Construction Goals





**S M A R T**  
Scenic Manistee Area Recreation Trails

## Trail Segment Description and Improvement Need

Segment	Status	Goal Improvements	Details
<b>A</b> Thompsonville to Copemish	Existing Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic public railroad bed extending from the Betsie Valley Trail terminus in Thompsonville SE, into Manistee County and to Copemish. Continues east to Wexford County via Segment G with potential to connect to the White Pine Trail. Funding is secured for this segment and improvements are underway. The existing unimproved trail currently accommodates snowmobiles.
<b>B</b> Thompsonville to Kaleva	Existing Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Bridge over Bear Creek</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic public railroad bed extending from the Betsie Valley Trail terminus in Thompsonville south, into Manistee County and to Kaleva. The segment includes a crossing of Bear Creek where a long removed bridge has limited non-motorized use. Funding secured via an EDA grant will allow for a new clear-span bridge over Bear Creek, opening the segment to future non-motorized and immediate snowmobile use.
<b>C</b> Kaleva to Chief	Existing Route - Road Gravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic public railroad bed extending from Kaleva south, to the unincorporated community of Chief. The segment is split by a gap in public ownership; gravel roads are used to connect the split. The surface is compacted road gravel that can currently accommodate non-motorized and snowmobile use.
<b>D</b> Chief to Lyman Rd	Planned Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure use of land</li> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	A mix of historic private and public railroad bed and road extending from the unincorporated community of Chief SW, to the corner of Lyman Rd and Adamson Lake Rd. Discussions with private landowners are on-going concerning property easements, long-term leases or acquisition for placement of the trail along this corridor.
<b>E</b> Lyman Rd to M22	Planned Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure use of land</li> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic private railroad bed extending from the corner of Lyman Rd, SW towards Onekama and then Manistee Township, M22 and the Tribal Reservation of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. This segment is entirely under private ownership and discussions with private landowners are on-going concerning property easements, long-term leases or acquisition for placement of the trail along this corridor.
<b>F</b> M22 to Manistee	Route TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish route</li> <li>Secure use of land</li> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Area identified for trail connection from M22, SW into the city of Manistee. Historic railroad bed is primarily under private ownership and discussions with private landowners are on-going concerning property easements, long-term leases or acquisition for placement of the trail in this area.
<b>G</b> Copemish to Wexford	Existing Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic public railroad bed extending from Copemish, east to Wexford County and to Mesick. Currently used by snowmobiles, this segment is a regional priority for non-motorized uses and will allow for connection to the White Pine Trail in Cadillac.
<b>H</b> Thompsonville to Interlochen	Existing Route - Unimproved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crushed limestone resurface</li> <li>Amenities (trailhead, road crossings, signage, etc.)</li> </ul>	Historic public railroad bed extending from Thompsonville, NE into Grand Traverse County to the unincorporated community of Interlochen. This segment is a priority for the Park 2 Park connection for future non-motorized use and is currently a State designated snowmobile trail.
<b>I</b> Thompsonville to Frankfort	Existing Route - Improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	Existing Betsie Valley Trail extending from the terminus in Thompsonville NW, to Frankfort that is open to non-motorized and snowmobile use. Trail surface is mostly aggregate with portions of asphalt.

# Manistee County Recreation Commission Strategic Plan

2019

## Roles and Responsibilities of the Manistee County Recreation Commission

- To oversee the creation of County wide multi-use trail system.
- Prioritize projects.
- Act as the representative of your community ensuring there is good communication between the Trail Committee and the community.
- Evaluate in the decision making costs, budgets, and other financial issues related to trail development.
- Establish goals and work to actualize them.

## Values

The Manistee County Recreation Commission set the following statements as confirmation of their values as an organization:

- We value the role that existing recreational land

contributes to recreation in the County.

- We value wise use of the natural, and other, resources in the County.
- We value being inclusive in all that we do.
- We value, and will work towards, furthering opportunities to collaborate and cooperate with others.
- We value ensuring safety in all that we do.
- We value ensuring and considering the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- We value multi- use trail systems with a focus on Non-Motorized Trails
- We value developing trails systems that are off road, using road right of ways only when necessary.
- We value working concurrently on projects that connect communities throughout the County.
- We value & Support separate ORV opportunities.
- We value the commitment that private and public property owners make to allow for trail development.

## Mission

Interconnecting communities with trails.

## Vision

A region where trails connect communities.

## Goals

1. Develop multi- use trails that will be used for all seasons.
  - a. Biking
  - b. Hiking
  - c. Water
  - d. Cross-Country Skiing
  - e. Snowshoeing
  - f. Snowmobile
  - g. ORV
2. Create a positive impact on the region.
  - a. Health
  - b. Recreation
  - c. Social
  - d. Economic
3. Develop guiding principles for trail development.
  - a. Sensitive to our natural resources and wildlife
  - b. Designed for all abilities of users
4. Create positive support for trail development.
  - a. Education
  - b. Marketing and Promotion
  - c. Positive relationship building with private and public property owners

## Priority Projects

1. Betsie Valley Trail- Thompsonville-Copemish- Wexford County Phase 1
2. Thompsonville-Kaleva
3. City of Manistee-Manistee Twp. (include Orchard Beach S.P. spur) -LRBOI-Onekama: Extending Zimmerman Trail north past M22.
4. Manistee Lake Loop (Filer, City, Manistee Twp., Eastlake, Stronach)
5. Filer-Stronach-Norman Township

## Committees

1. Outreach
2. Fund Development
3. RFP

# 2026

## Calendar

### January 01

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 <sup>H</sup>	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 <sup>H</sup>	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

### February 02

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 <sup>H</sup>	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

### March 03

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

### April 04

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

### May 05

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 <sup>H</sup>	26	27	28	29	30
31						

### June 06

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 <sup>H</sup>	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

### July 07

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 <sup>H</sup>	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

### August 08

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### September 09

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 <sup>H</sup>	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

### October 10

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

### November 11

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 <sup>H</sup>	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 <sup>H</sup>	27 <sup>H</sup>	28
29	30					

### December 12

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 <sup>H</sup>	25 <sup>H</sup>	26
27	28	29	30	31 <sup>H</sup>		

<sup>H</sup>=Government Holiday

\*Manistee County Recreation Commission

## **County Recreation Commission List:**

Linda Cudney, Secretary  
[lcudney@aol.com](mailto:lcudney@aol.com)  
19708 Cadillac Hwy  
Copemish, MI 49625  
231-378-2616

3-year term, Expires 12/31/2028  
(Appointed: December 2025)

Wayne Beldo, Chair  
[beldo300@gmail.com](mailto:beldo300@gmail.com)  
PO Box 185  
9133 Walta St.  
Kaleva, MI 49645  
231-590-0902

3-year term, Expires 12/31/2028  
(Appointed: December 2025)

William Shryer  
[wshryertms@gmail.com](mailto:wshryertms@gmail.com)

Unexpired term, Expires 12/31/2027  
(Appointed: May 2025)

Margaret Batzer, Vice Chair  
[margaretbatzer@gmail.com](mailto:margaretbatzer@gmail.com)

3-year term, Expires 12/31/2027  
(Appointed: December 2024)

Robert Schuelke  
[rschuelke@packpros.net](mailto:rschuelke@packpros.net)  
(574)229-1764

3-year term, Expires 12/31/2028  
(Appointed: December 2025)

Devin Wegner  
[dwegner@manistee.org](mailto:dwegner@manistee.org)  
475 First St.  
Manistee, MI 49660  
(269)655-7565

3-year term, Expires 12/31/2026  
(Appointed: January 2024)

### **Manistee County Representatives**

Glenn Zaring, Manistee County Planning Commission  
[gzaring@gmail.com](mailto:gzaring@gmail.com)

Shayne Machen, Manistee County Board of Commissioners  
[smachen@manisteecountymi.gov](mailto:smachen@manisteecountymi.gov)

Gary Schwaiger, Manistee County Drain Commissioner  
[gschwaiger@manisteecountymi.gov](mailto:gschwaiger@manisteecountymi.gov)

Paul Petrovich, Manistee County Road Commission  
[petrov@kaltelnet.net](mailto:petrov@kaltelnet.net)

---

**Other individuals associated, but not appointed.**

**Network Northwest / Friends of SMARTrails**

Rob Carson

[rob.carson@networknorthwest.org](mailto:rob.carson@networknorthwest.org)  
(231)342-1198

**Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Snowmobile Club**

Mark Coe

[mark@mifarmtofreezer.com](mailto:mark@mifarmtofreezer.com)

**Manistee County Community Foundation (MCCF)**

Laura Heintzelman, President & CEO

[lheintzelman@manisteefoundation.org](mailto:lheintzelman@manisteefoundation.org)  
(231)409-0211

Sara Herberger, Program Officer

[sara@manisteefoundation.org](mailto:sara@manisteefoundation.org)  
(231)723-7269

**Benzie Manistee Dirtbirds**

Tim Knoper

[knopertim@gmail.com](mailto:knopertim@gmail.com)