

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



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The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations—a role it has embraced since the creation of Michigan's original Conservation Department in 1921.

The director serves as the department's chief executive officer, monitors program activities to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of department operations, and ensures that the department's mission, policies and statutory mandates are met. The director's primary authority flows from the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended) and is authorized by Executive Order 1991-31 to delegate decision-making authorities to appropriate levels within the department. DNR divisions, programs and offices are housed within two main bureaus, Resource and Administration, while some other positions report directly to the department director.

Resource Bureau

The Resource Bureau includes the Fisheries Division, the Forest Resources Division, the Law Enforcement Division, the Parks and Recreation Division and the Wildlife Division.

The **Fisheries Division** is mandated to protect and manage the state's aquatic resources, including fish populations, other aquatic life and habitats that are held in trust for all Michigan residents. The division promotes the wise use of these resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Online at: Michigan.gov/Fishing.

Michigan offers a wealth of fishing opportunities with its two peninsulas that touch four of the five Great Lakes. The state has more than 11,000 inland lakes, tens of thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and 3,000 miles of freshwater shoreline—more than any other state.

Fish populations and other forms of aquatic life are monitored and studied by biologists to ensure these resources' long-term protection. Up to 12 fish species are hatched and reared at six state hatcheries, which have state-of-the-art facilities to produce fish of very high quality. These fish are stocked annually into designated public waters throughout the state to maintain or improve fish populations. Michigan ranks fifth in the nation in fishing participation, with 1.1 million licensed anglers who annually contribute \$2.3 billion to the state economy.

The **Forest Resources Division** manages, protects and provides for the sustainable use of Michigan's forest resources. Michigan has one of the largest dedicated state forest systems in the nation, spanning 3.9 million acres. This division sustainably manages those acres to provide critical habitat for wildlife, valuable resources for a thriving timber products industry, outdoor spaces for recreation, and opportunities for carbon offset credits through an innovative pilot effort leveraging the carbon-storage capacity of state forests.

Michigan's forests and other land-based industries play a crucial role in supporting regional and rural economies. The division also houses an urban and community forestry program that supports community health and wellness by promoting the benefits of trees and sharing information about tree care. Online at: Michigan.gov/Forestry.

Forest health program staff and DNR partners work to ensure forest vitality by detecting, monitoring and managing forest health issues such as pests, diseases and invasive species. Private landowners, cities and rural communities benefit from programs that leverage federal dollars to help create sustainable landscapes across the state. The Forests Resources Division also houses the Resource Assessment Section, which uses state-of-the-art mapping techniques to aid in resource management.

The division also is charged with protecting state forests and private land across the state through its nationally recognized wildfire prevention and suppression program.

The **Law Enforcement Division** is home to Michigan's conservation officers. It is Michigan's oldest statewide law enforcement agency, created in 1887. Conservation officers use law enforcement and education to protect Michigan's natural resources and environment for the health, safety and enjoyment of the public. They are state-licensed law enforcement officers with authority to enforce all criminal and civil laws in Michigan. While primarily enforcing regulations for outdoor recreation activities such as off-road vehicle use, snowmobiling, boating, hunting and fishing, they also provide traditional law enforcement assistance, when needed, to communities across the state and often serve as first responders. The Law Enforcement Division handles many other responsibilities, including education, recreational safety and public outreach. The division provides investigative and enforcement services and coordinates emergency management and homeland security responsibilities for the department. Online at: Michigan.gov/ConservationOfficers.

The division evolves to meet new challenges and deliver more effective service. Additional staffing, harnessing of technology, and training in the latest investigative techniques are key drivers of its success. New officers have been hired regularly since Fiscal Year 2014, thanks to funding investments by the state. To stay on the cutting edge of technology, the division enhanced its Report All Poaching system (online at Michigan.gov/RAP or by phone/text at 800-292-7800) in 2017 to accept text messages, including photographs.

The **Parks and Recreation Division** protects, preserves, acquires and manages Michigan's 103 state parks (and cultural and historic resources within those parks), trails, state forest campgrounds and more than 1,300 boat launches. The division also operates 19 state harbors and partners with 63 locally operated public harbors that make up the Harbors of Refuge system along the Great Lakes. Outdoor recreation offerings also include the Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit, the Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park, the Silver Lake State Park ORV Area and the Holly Oaks ORV Park. Michigan state parks annually host more than 28 million visits—though that number swelled to 35 million during the COVID pandemic—and are a major attraction for Michigan's tourism industry, contributing \$650 million to the state's economy in day-use visits and camping alone. Online at: Michigan.gov/StateParks.

The **Recreation Passport** grants Michigan residents vehicle access to Michigan state parks, recreation areas, state trailhead parking and fee-based boat launches, while also helping to sustain the natural, historic and cultural places of Michigan. The Recreation Passport is purchased when residents renew a Michigan license plate through the Secretary of State. The fee (as of August 2021) is \$12 for vehicles and \$6 for motorcycles. In addition to supporting statewide recreation, the Recreation Passport also provides communities with recreation development grants for projects that provide health benefits, enhance property values, drive local economies and improve quality of life. Online at: Michigan.gov/RecreationPassport.

Michigan's more than 13,500 miles of state-designated trails connect hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, off-road vehicle users, kayakers and snowmobilers to Michigan's great outdoors. In addition, Michigan is home to the Iron Belle Trail—the longest state-designated trail in the nation—encompassing more than 2,000 miles with a route for hiking and a route for biking. It extends from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the western Upper Peninsula. The trail is more than 70 percent complete, and funding is still being secured to complete the trail.

The **Wildlife Division's** mission is to enhance, restore and conserve the state's wildlife resources, natural communities and ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. The conservation of more than 400 species of animals—the birds and mammals that sustain our state's hunting heritage, as well as nongame wildlife and plants, including threatened and endangered species—is part of that mission. Michigan is among the top states in the nation for public participation in almost every hunting category, with more than 700,000 licensed hunters contributing \$8.9 billion annually to the state economy. Online at: Michigan.gov/Wildlife and Michigan.gov/Hunting.

The Wildlife Division continues to be a national leader in wildlife disease management. Monitoring and enhancing the health of Michigan's wildlife is a critical component of the division's mission. With the finding of chronic wasting disease in a free-ranging deer herd in May 2015, the division has spent enormous time and resources understanding the extent of this fatal disease while working to slow its spread. In addition, bovine tuberculosis continues to be a disease that affects the state's free-ranging deer and livestock industry. The division is focused on a "One Health" approach that recognizes linkages among the health of people, wildlife and the environment.

The division comanages the state forests with the DNR Forest Resources Division and directly administers approximately 400,000 acres of state game and wildlife management areas. In addition to this, an extensive network of partnerships and grant opportunities significantly expands the division's conservation reach and impact throughout the state and beyond. The division also strives to uphold diversity, equity and inclusion internally and across the numerous conservation programs and services it provides to the public.

Administration Bureau

The Administration Bureau includes the Finance and Operations Division, the Marketing and Outreach Division and the Michigan History Center.

The **Finance and Operations Division** provides budget and financial services, facilities and infrastructure management, construction of shooting ranges, real estate, grants management, purchasing, field operations support and business operations. In addition, the division includes the Minerals Management Section, which manages 6.4 million acres of Michigan's mineral estate, including leasing the rights to explore and pursue development of state-owned metallic, nonmetallic, and oil and gas minerals, as well as underground natural gas storage areas.

The **Marketing and Outreach Division** works to find creative, new ways to get more residents and visitors outside, taking advantage of a variety of recreation opportunities in Michigan. The division provides expertise and services including website administration, visual and written communications, customer systems, marketing, technology, license sales, recreation skills and education programs for all ages and experience levels. Its staff works to help people understand natural and cultural resources management and why it matters.

The **Michigan History Center** fosters curiosity, enjoyment and inspiration rooted in Michigan's stories. Community engagement includes outreach, education, special programs, marketing and visitor services. The Archives of Michigan makes more than 150 million records available to the public for research. The Michigan History Museum in Lansing (MHM), 10 regional historic sites and museums, and the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve interpret Michigan's stories.

Though the pandemic halted in-person school visits throughout much of 2020 and 2021, the center's programs and sites typically welcome more than 410,000 visitors a year, including more than 45,000 schoolchildren who explore the MHM and its sites. The center also manages the Michigan Historical Marker program, the state heritage trails program and the DNR archaeology program. It works with the Michigan Historical Commission, Michigan Freedom Trail Commission, Iron Industry Museum Advisory Board, State Historic Records Advisory Board and Underwater Salvage and Preserve Committee. Online at: Michigan.gov/MichiganHistory and [Michiganology.org](https://Michigan.gov/Michiganology).

The DNR also encompasses several entities, offices, committees and commissions that provide essential support and guidance to the above-referenced programs and help preserve, promote and interpret Michigan's natural, historic and cultural resources. They include:

The **Upper Peninsula Regional Office** serves to represent the department and director in the Upper Peninsula by working closely with stakeholders, media outlets, community organizations, local units of government, elected officials and the public to build awareness and understanding of department policies and programs, natural resource-related issues and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The **Public Information Office** works closely with the Executive Office and department divisions to coordinate the communication of core DNR messages to a variety of statewide audiences, serves as primary contact for media representatives, and partners in the marketing of department initiatives, programs and services—all in an effort to strengthen the public's connection to Michigan's natural and cultural resources.

The **Legislative and Legal Affairs Office** works with the Office of Attorney General on litigation involving state properties, employees and natural resource-related issues. Staff also focus its efforts on administrative rules and regulations and emerging natural and cultural resources issues, strengthening the department's relationship with the Legislature, helping to evaluate and set department policy, and assisting the director and management team with strategic planning, implementation of department priorities and special assignments. The office provides guidance in response to Freedom of Information Act requests and assists in drafting and updating department policies and procedures, administrative rules and the DNR director's orders for land use, fisheries and wildlife conservation.

The office maintains original, signed memoranda of understanding and other interagency agreements and makes recommendations on contract and grant agreement language.

This office also manages tribal coordination efforts and works to develop and sustain positive and mutually beneficial, cooperative relationships with Michigan's tribal governments, with emphasis on the natural resource provisions related to the 1836 Treaty and its associated Great Lakes and Inland Consent Decrees and the 1842 Treaty's natural resource components.

The **Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry**, established in 2019, works with partners from many sectors to anticipate emerging trends and elevate outdoor recreation opportunities and resources across Michigan. The office is focused on supporting and growing the outdoor recreation lifestyle economy, working alongside outdoor recreation businesses and nonprofits engaged in sustainable outdoor tourism, outdoor product design and innovation, retail, traditional manufacturing, and more. Online at: Michigan.gov/Mi-OutdoorRec.

The **Michigan Natural Resources Commission** is a seven-member public body whose members are appointed by the governor and subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. The commission has the exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game and sportfish and is authorized to designate game species and the establishment of the first open season for animals. Residents are encouraged to attend and become actively involved in the commission's regularly scheduled public meetings. Online at: Michigan.gov/NRC.

The **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund** (MNRTF) was established under the Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976 to provide a permanent funding source for the public acquisition of land for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. Funding was provided by revenue derived from royalties on the sale and lease of state-owned oil, gas and mineral rights. In 1984, the MNRTF was expanded to allow funding of development of public land. Per the state constitution, the maximum amount of the accumulation of nonrenewable mineral royalties in the MNRTF is \$500 million. This level was reached in 2011 and represents the permanent investment corpus. Today, the MNRTF functions as a permanent endowment and funds grants, administration and payments in lieu of taxes. Online at: Michigan.gov/MNRTF.

To date, the Trust Fund has awarded over \$1.2 billion in grants to local units of government and state agencies for projects throughout all 83 Michigan counties. Of this total, \$272 million has been invested in trails. In excess of 1,000 public parks have been acquired and/or developed. Other projects funded include ball fields, boat launches, trailheads, restrooms and other amenities, for a total of 2,639 Trust Fund-assisted projects since 1976.

The **Mackinac Island State Park Commission** is an autonomous entity formed in 1895 and responsible for all aspects of managing Mackinac State Historic Parks. It meets approximately five times a year and is made up of seven members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners serve six-year terms. Mackinac State Historic Parks includes Mackinac Island State Park, encompassing 83% of the island, Michilimackinac State Park in Mackinaw City and Mill Creek State Park in western Cheboygan County. The parks include eight ticketed museums and historic sites welcoming 350,000 visitors per year. The commission also maintains infrastructure for the island, maintains the governor's summer residence and operates the island airport. Online at: MackinacParks.com.

Additionally, there are other committees and councils that advise the department. These include, but are not limited to:

- Michigan Trails Advisory Council
- Forest Management Advisory Committee
- Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee
- Several fisheries advisory committees
- Michigan State Waterways Commission
- Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council
- Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils

Explore public input opportunities via all DNR-related boards, commissions and committees at Michigan.gov/DNRMeetings.

