

KEWEENAW TRAIL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEWEENAW COUNTY, MICHIGAN

REVISION 1



KEWEENAW RIDGE TRAIL, EAGLE HARBOR TOWNSHIP

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: EAGLE HARBOR TOWNSHIP
GRANT TOWNSHIP
HOUGHTON TOWNSHIP
WESTERN UPPER PENINSULA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGION

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INTRODUCTION

The KEWEENAW TRAIL Committee was formed in January 2006 to establish a Keweenaw Peninsula wide silent sport trail system. It will be used not only as a recreational resource but also to conserve and consolidate important ecosystems and promote economic growth, while increasing access to historical and aesthetic locations. It is one leg of an important multiuse Keweenaw County wide trail system that encompasses all trail uses including both motorized and non-motorized. To that end it is the desire of this committee to support and work with all trail users to establish the Keweenaw Peninsula as a world class trail destination.

KEWEENAW TRAIL MISSION STATEMENT

The KEWEENAW TRAIL mission is to establish a silent sport trans-peninsula trail system that promotes recreational activity, economic growth, and conservation in conjunction with the esthetic, ecological, and historical uniqueness of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

KEWEENAW TRAIL ORGANIZATION

The KEWEENAW TRAIL organization is a multi-jurisdictional municipal project in partnership with conservation organizations, local businesses and recreational organizations.

MEMBERS

Many members, supporters and stakeholders are needed to be successful. The KEWEENAW TRAIL Committee will be asking for support from organizations and individuals as the project proceeds and the time is appropriate. The current founding members are listed below:

- Eagle Harbor Township
- Grant Township
- Houghton Township
- Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Copper Harbor Improvement Association

KEWEENAW TRAIL OVERVIEW

The long-term use of the KEWEENAW TRAIL is as a recreational silent sport trail system providing access to and interconnecting conservation and historical areas. It also forms a larger conservation wildlife corridor for the protection of coastal habitat. It will provide public coastal access in perpetuity protecting view sites as they naturally exist. Where appropriate, it will co-exist with motorized trails for the better good of other trail users.

KEWEENAW POINT TRAIL

The Keweenaw Point Trail encircles the tip of the Keweenaw which is owned primarily by the State of Michigan and The Nature Conservancy. It contains both motorized and non-motorized trails as managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). A citizen's advisory committee was formed in 2004 to help provide local input to the MDNR on resource usage and long term planning.

The trail would start in Copper Harbor and form a loop around the peninsula's point back to Copper Harbor. The trail maximizes its shoreline exposure and includes destinations such as Horse Shoe Harbor, High Rock Bay, Keystone Bay, the Montreal River, and Estivant Pines.

KEWEENAW RIDGE TRAIL

The Keweenaw Ridge Trail runs from Copper Harbor to Eagle Harbor. It follows along the top of the ridge parallel to the shoreline and provides grand vistas of Lake Superior Shoreline and the surrounding wetland habitat. It would provide a wildlife corridor connecting the Eagle Harbor Conservation area to the Copper Harbor Conservation area. Destinations along the Trail include The Nature Conservancy's Mount Baldy preserve, the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge, and several other conservation properties including Michigan Nature Association and two Michigan Audubon Society preserves.

GREAT SAND BAY TRAIL

The Great Sand Bay Trail system is made up primarily of the Eagle Harbor Conservation Area but also extends to Eagle River. It encompasses the Eliza Lake Preserve, Long Lake Refuge, and the Dunes Marshes Preserve. It also links into the Michigan Nature Association's Redwyn Dune Hiking Trail. Furthermore, it provides access to the beach at Great Sand Bay, which is one of the most popular summer spots in the area. In the winter it serves as the Eagle Harbor Township Cross Country Ski Trails.

CLIFF'S TRAIL

Running between Eagle River and Allouez, the trail climbs to the top of the Cliff's providing peninsula wide vistas along this stretch of the trail. Additionally, Eagle River located in Houghton Township, is the County seat. Numerous historical sites are located along this trail as well as the historical mining town of Central.

KEWEENAW TRAIL MAP

Keweenaw Trail Project Area

DRAFT

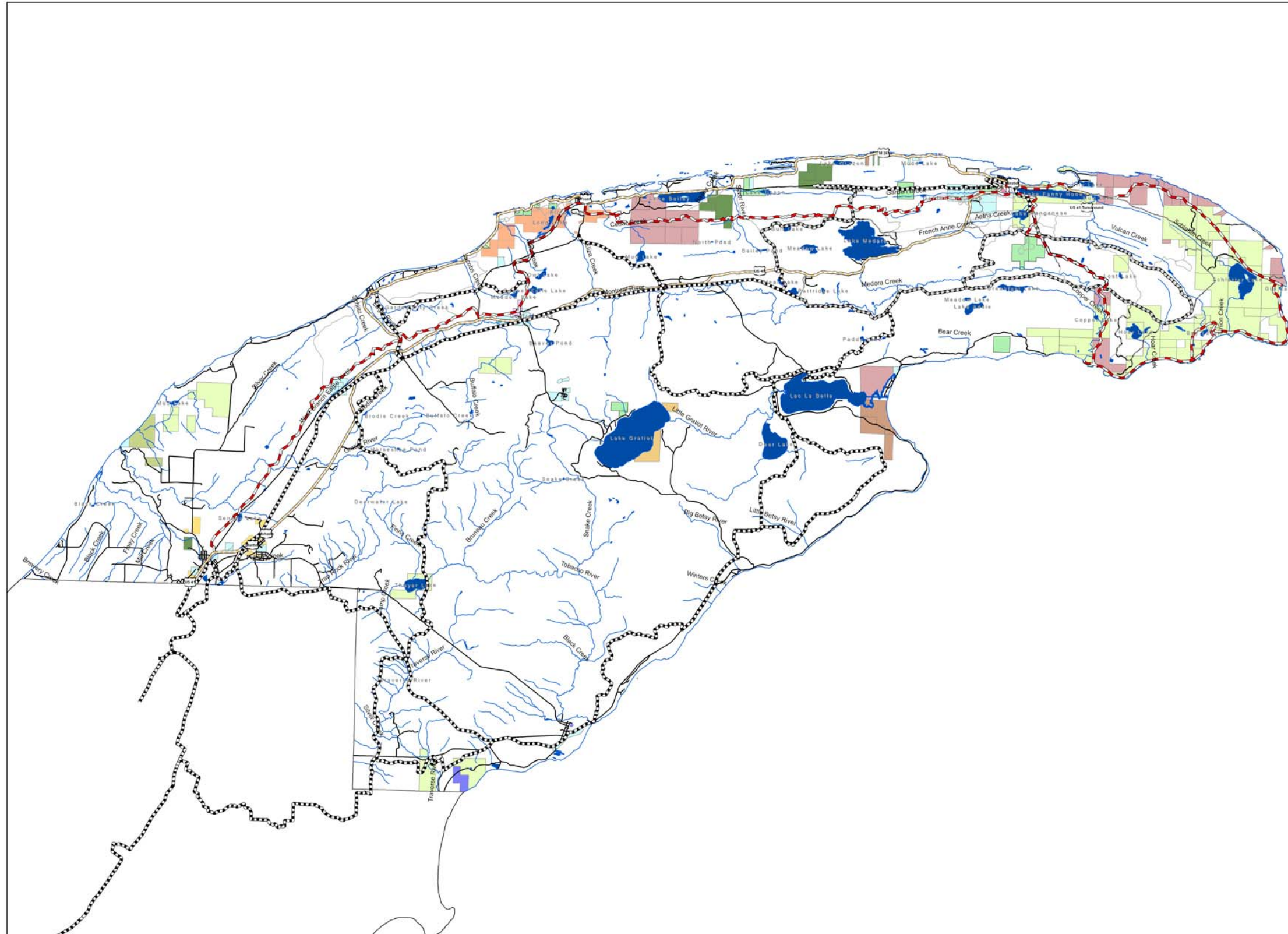
Meters
0 875 1,750 3,500 5,250 7,000

Trails

- Other Trails
- Keweenaw Trail
- Snowmobile Trails
- Copper Country Trail Byway

Ownership

- Gratiot Lake Conservancy
- Houghton Keweenaw Conservation Dist
- Michigan Audubon Society
- Michigan Nature Association
- North Woods Conservancy
- The Keweenaw Land Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- Keweenaw Historical Society
- Ahmeek Village
- Allouez Township
- Eagle Harbor Township
- Grant Township
- Houghton Township
- Sherman Township
- Keweenaw County Property
- State of Michigan Property



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PRIMARY PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the KEWEENAW TRAIL is to provide a non-motorized recreational trail system within the ecological, esthetic and historical resources of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

RECREATIONAL

It is the goal of the KEWEENAW TRAIL to provide a world class silent sport trail system to enhance economic growth and provide low impact recreational use on a scale currently not present on the Keweenaw Peninsula.

Tourism and Forest Management are the top two industries in Keweenaw County. By establishing KEWEENAW TRAIL System, we will protect coastal and other valuable habitat and renewable forest resources from fragmentation while providing low impact recreational opportunities.

While motorized sports enjoy continuing support, non-motorized recreational activity is the fastest growing form of recreational use in the Keweenaw and is arguably the least developed. The area hosts some isolated non-motorized trails but lacks a peninsula wide trail system.

The KEWEENAW TRAIL system will form the basis of a large wildlife land corridor by linking isolated existing municipal and conservation properties.

By leveraging municipal, conservancy, and state and private owned properties, a large-scale trail system is being proposed that will provide multiple non-motorized uses, public access, and resource fragmentation protection in perpetuity.

Proposed Uses

- Hiking
- Mountain Biking
- Birding
- Trail Running
- Back Country Camping
- Cross Country Skiing
- Snow Shoeing
- Skijoring

Some of the many recreational events currently held in the area are the Brockway Mountain Challenge, Copper Harbor Fat Tire Festival, the Keweenaw Trail Running Festival, the Copperman Triathlon, the



Longest Day Fishing Tournament and the Keweenaw Annual International Migratory Bird Day in Copper Harbor.

ECOLOGICAL

The KEWEENAW TRAIL supports the ecology of the area through the concept of contiguous large-scale multi-jurisdictional conservation. This has not been done before on the Keweenaw Peninsula. By protecting large wildlife corridors that contain different but integral ecosystems, the peninsula will benefit as a unified ecosystem.



The Nature Conservancy Mt. Baldy Preserve along the proposed KEWEENAW TRAIL System

The overall ecological importance to habitat, as well as the diversity of species that live or stop by here, is that the project is central to the wildlife corridor concept and watershed protection of the Keweenaw Peninsula and the nearby shorelines of Lake Superior.

With this in mind, all areas of the Keweenaw Peninsula provide habitat for a set of threatened and endangered species common to the peninsula. Forty-four rare plant species, either western disjunct or peripheral, have been identified in the region. Twenty-three of the rare plants are listed by the state as endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.

Many Michigan Threatened bird species are in the area and the Keweenaw is a crucial and central part of a large and spectacular raptor flyway that crosses the high ridges of the peninsula. Every spring many enjoy the large swirling displays of soaring raptors. Furthermore, coastal wetlands are crucial to the reproduction and rearing of 75% of the fish species in Lake Superior. Protecting upland watersheds helps to protect Great Lakes fish.

The project area forms a continuum of ecologically similar habitat of high rocky forest to bare ridges and peaks separated by valleys of wetlands, lakes, rivers and creeks. It also links many conservation sites, including the Eagle Harbor Conservation Area, the Copper Harbor Conservation Area, the Keweenaw Point and many private conservation properties. To that end, it is critical not to lose such an important location to residential or other development interests. The area's scenic beauty is already rapidly becoming inaccessible to the public due to private development and fragmentation.

Through partnering with local conservation organizations and local governments, the KEWEENAW TRAIL will extend the ecological and recreational benefits of existing isolated municipal and conservation properties to a larger and broader interconnected area. The formation of this large wildlife conservation corridor will greatly enhance the practical benefit and protection beyond that of any one entity.

HISTORICAL

From the prehistoric mining sites to the industrialized operations of the 19th century, the Keweenaw Peninsula is blessed with a rich and diverse history. Many historical sites exist that are accessible by motorized access. Secondary access has become more relevant because of the Copper Country Trails National Byways designation awarded to the Keweenaw Peninsula. With a minimal effort many of them can be made available through non-motorized means.

Fort Wilkins, a Michigan State Park, is just one location that tells the story of the Keweenaw through reenactments of the Battery D 1st Michigan Light Artillery Civil War Encampment and other supporting programs. Many lighthouses surround the peninsula as well as copper mining ghost towns such as Mandan and Central Mine. Delaware Mine provides underground mine tours to get a truly first hand experience of 19th century copper mining in the Keweenaw.



The area is historically significant enough to warrant the creation by the U.S. National Parks Service of the Keweenaw National Historical Park. It is comprised of many cooperating site that are uniquely positioned to help tell the history of the Keweenaw.

The Proposed KEWEENAW TRAIL maximizes non-motorized access to as many historical sites from the main trail as possible. Additional sites will be accessed by spur trails. Additional trailheads can be established to accommodate day hikers while providing scenic as well as historical destinations.

By working with the Keweenaw Historical Society and the United States National Park Service, the historical story of the Keweenaw can be enhanced by providing non-motorized access through the beautiful natural resources of the area.



Eagle Harbor Lighthouse

AESTHETIC



Copper Harbor Overlook, Mt Brockway



The Nature Conservancy Mt. Baldy Preserve

RELEVANCE TO STATE AND LOCAL PLANS

This project supports many different plans at various levels of government and private efforts of non-profit conservation based groups. Fundamentally it supports “Blue Print for Tomorrow”, the Keweenaw County Land Use Plan. In this plan, land conservation and recreational use play a major role in the desired use of land in the local community.

It further supports the Parks and Recreation Plans of the State of Michigan, Keweenaw County, Eagle Harbor Township, and Grant Township. The project supports the needs of the governments to supplying recreational opportunities on public lands at all levels with easy access.

It supports the US-41 Copper Country Trail Byways Management Plan by providing for alternative public access to this historically significant and aesthetically pleasing region. The Tip of the Keweenaw Citizens Advisory Recommendations are supported through the proposed recreational use of the area. Likewise, the Keweenaw County Mountain Lodge’s Expansion Plan is supported by providing additional non-motorized trail access.

SUPPORTED PLANS

- State of Michigan Recreation Plan
- Keweenaw County Land Use Plan “Blue Print for Tomorrow”
- Keweenaw County Parks & Recreation Plan
- Eagle Harbor Township and Grant Township Parks and Recreation Plans
- Copper Country Trail National Byways Management Plan
- Michigan State Heritage Route
- Watershed Planning Efforts
- Private non-profit Conservancies

Many public agencies and private conservancies are stakeholders in the KEWEENAW TRAIL area. Planning regarding land, watersheds, view sites, and wildlife management are supported through these organizations. It is our desire to have a broad relationship with all them through common goals, objectives, and long term planning efforts. It is through such partnerships that large-scale recreation, conservation and education goals can be accomplished.