



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

Dear Black Mountain Ski Trail Supporter:

Thank you very much for expressing your support for the beautiful Black Mountain Ski Trail. It is a great resource for the area and the entire state of Michigan (state). The following information has been prepared in an attempt to give you the latest information regarding annual grooming activities, efforts to support the upcoming March 6 Nordic ski, and a snapshot of the entire designated ski trail system.

Black Mountain Pathway totals 30 miles in length. Since winter of 2006, the Black Mountain Chapter of the Thunder Bay Trail Association (TBTA) has groomed seven miles of the trail with a volunteer agreement. This agreement is still in place today and continues to provide for a great partnership between the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), and the TBTA. The remaining 23 miles were groomed by DNRE staff.

This year, as in previous years, the DNRE provided the preseason maintenance of all 30 miles of the trail by clearing vegetation, trees and branches, which would obstruct the winter use of both groomed and ungroomed portions of the trail. The DNRE continues to assist users of the system by providing snow plowing services for the four parking lots to assure that skiers and snowshoers can safely access the entire system by parking in lots, rather than on road right-of-ways.

Due to funding cuts, the DNRE has not been able to continue the grooming of the remaining 23 miles of trail this year. However, we are well aware of the importance of the annual ski event to the local community and the users.

Staff has worked with the TBTA to assure that the very important Nordic ski event scheduled for March 6, 2010, will be a continuing success story despite funding reductions impacting the statewide ski grooming program. The event permit, required under statute, was written to provide the TBTA the opportunity to groom the entire route of the event as needed, starting a week before the event and ending immediately following the event.

The DNRE, as have all of us, had to make very tough decisions when implementing programs impacted by declining state revenues. The state forest ski grooming program is one such example. Recently the average annual program expenditures were \$265,668. Program funding comes from three sources: 1) the state's General Fund which has seen severe reductions over the last several years; 2) the Recreational Improvement Fund grants actively sought by the DNRE to support the program; and 3) a very small portion of the funding is from donations placed in fee pipes at various trails (generally less than \$9,500 per year statewide).

The entire designated state forest ski trail system groomed in the 2009 season totaled 238.9 miles. Until this year DNRE staff groomed 146.4 miles of trail, while grooming of an additional 92.5 miles was accomplished either under a long standing grant funded contract or an existing volunteer agreement.

This year, continuing general fund reductions lead to the decision that the state could no longer continue to groom these trails with employees.

While implementing budget reductions, the DNRE must work and stay consistent with the various Labor Agreements. We are currently reviewing and assessing those agreements, to find ways to address and resolve the grooming issue, while still being in compliance with the Labor Agreements.

Groomed ski trails are still being provided as all existing contracts and volunteer agreements were continued; 92.5 miles are still being groomed as a result. Several communities have generously contributed local donations and provided funding to the DNRE so that an additional 39 miles of ski trails would continue to be groomed by bargaining unit members.

The combination of collaborative efforts has resulted in 146.9 miles of the 238.9 mile trail system being groomed (61% of the system). One hundred percent of the preseason maintenance and the continued plowing of parking lots are being accomplished, allowing for the use of the entire system for snowshoe enthusiasts and a variety of skiing conditions.

A summary of the designated state forest trail grooming efforts for the 2009-2010 season is provided below:

- **3 Contract Trails (RIF Grant Funded)** **Total of 53.5 Miles**
Blueberry Ridge
Ogemaw Hills
VASA

- **5 Volunteer Trails** **Total of 39 Miles**
Black Mountain (partial)
Cadillac
Chippewa Hills
Norway Ridge
Paradise Pathway

- **6 Donation Funded Grooming** **Total of 54.4 Miles**
Algonquin
Anderson Lake
Canada Lake
Muncie Lakes
Pine Baron
Wildwood Hills

- **9 Ungroomed Trails**

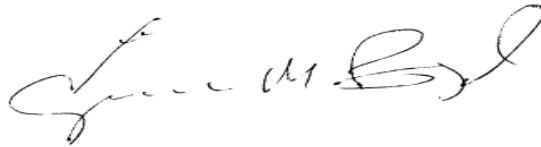
Black Mountain (partial)
Cedar River
Days River
Indian Lake
Lake Glidden (a.k.a. Lake Mary)
Mason Tract
Merriman East
Pine Bowl
Pine Valley
Tisdale Triangle

Total of 92 Miles

238.9 Total Miles

Again, thank you for your support of the Black Mountain Ski Trail and for your understanding while we continue to search for innovative opportunities which will expand grooming activities on the entire system.

Sincerely,



Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
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cc: Director Rebecca A. Humphries, DNRE
Mindy Koch, Resource Management Deputy Director, DNRE