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SNYDER REVEALS STRATEGY FOR BUILDING TRAIL ACROSS MICHIGAN

“We have the resources” – Governor Responds In National Trails Magazine

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Gov. Rick Snyder’s ambitious plan to build a trail across Michigan is attracting national attention.

Snyder is featured in the current issue of Rails to Trails magazine, talking about his personal connection to trails and the outdoors, and his belief that biking and walking have a role to play in the revitalization of Detroit and communities across the state.

Rails to Trails is produced by the national nonprofit organization Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, which supports the development of trails across America and has a history of involvement in trails projects in Michigan.

Responding to the key question of how Snyder’s administration proposes to pay for the cross-state trail, which will connect a number of existing trails from Detroit through the Upper Peninsula to the Wisconsin border, the Governor replied he was confident the funding was available.

“We have the resource pots available; let’s figure out what are the key pieces of trail to add,” Snyder said in the interview.

Snyder said the state’s Natural Resources Trust Fund now has $500 million available, which can be used for trail improvements or to buy land for new trail development. However, he stresses his administration will be pursuing more creative strategies to build the cross-state trail than just buying tracts of land.
“In some cases, to be blunt, we were too focused on fee-simple purchase of land,” he said. “I don’t get the point of going out to buy land just for the purpose of buying land. We need to look at alternative methods we can use in terms of acquisition. It could be easements and other access rights, which allows you to leverage those dollars even further.”

“I have no issue with working with a private party. They could continue to own [the land], they could farm it, they could timber it, but we’d have the rights to have a trail on it that’s maintained properly.”

In the wide-ranging interview, Snyder expressed his hopes for the renovation of the Globe building in downtown Detroit, and raised the possibility that the cross-state trail could connect to Canada via the bridge he plans to see built across the Detroit River.

Editor-in-Chief of Rails to Trails, Jake Lynch, said Snyder deserved credit for making the investment to connect his state with a booming trails tourism and outdoor recreation market which generates more than $600 billion in consumer spending each year.

“All across America, communities are benefitting from the creation of trail networks that bring visitors into their main streets, that boost local real estate values, and that provide opportunities for new business development,” Lynch said. “But this doesn’t happen accidentally. The governor is aware that an investment in building an iconic destination trail in Michigan will repay itself many times over in the near future. It’s terrific to see a leader with such vision.”

Read the full interview at www.railstotrails.org/magazine.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, is the nation’s largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information visit www.railstotrails.org.