

Coastal improvements can create tensions between environmental and economic interests

The relationship between residents of coastal communities and their local water heritage can advance restoration efforts, create recreational opportunities and promote tourism and economic growth, a new study says.

At the same time, that relationship can create tensions between environmental and economic interests, it says.

“Widespread deindustrialization has changed the landscape and character of many Michigan communities,” according to researchers from Michigan State University and the Office of the Great Lakes in the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

“In response to these often-devastating changes, natural resources agencies have invested in restoration projects along waterfronts to facilitate a shift from an industrial past to new recreation and tourism development,” they wrote in the *Journal of Great Lakes Research*.

They based their findings on community engagement interviews and focus groups.

One element of the research was designed to measure the socioeconomic impacts of waterways restoration projects, such as construction of boardwalks and kayak launches, removal of invasive species and beach cleanups. It was carried out in

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Photo / JARED KAY

NC county is all in with trails promotion

The Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA) has welcomed North Carolina’s “Year of the Trail” initiative.

North Carolina is known as the “Great Trails State” and the TCTDA recognizes the importance of connecting people with the outdoors and believes the initiative will help promote a healthy lifestyle and provide an opportunity for visitors to explore the county’s trails, according to a news release.

Visitor surveys conducted by the TCTDA consistently show outdoor recreation to be the primary reason for visits to Transylvania County and the variety of trails in the area are an important factor. Hiking, biking, walking, horseback riding, paddling and more are all made possible through the trails found locally. These trails are a consistent part of the organization’s promotion of the area, but this year those efforts will be

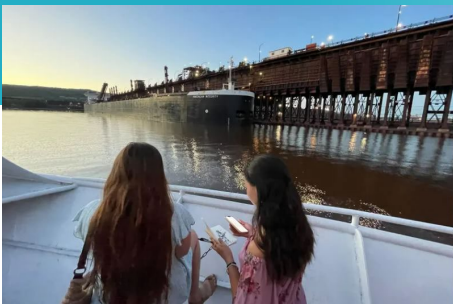
Duluth and Arkansas see the benefits of promoting outdoor recreation. See page 2

much more focused.

The TCTDA has created a Year of the Trail marketing campaign to inform visitors of the many ways they can celebrate trails in Transylvania County. The campaign will include:

- A dedicated webpage with in-depth information on local trails and other interesting facts
- A series of 14 blogs focusing on trails from different angles, from history to wildflowers to waterways to asking users to be sure to Leave It Better on the trails
- Engaging social media posts throughout the year aligned with the Great Trails State
- Infusing the Year of the Trail in digital ads, e-blasts, and other marketing efforts

– *transylvaniatimes.com*



Duluth sees water as prime selling point

Tricia Hobbs, senior economic developer for the city of Duluth, said the “opportunity to be next to water” is a prime reason people choose the Minnesota city as a vacation destination.

Hobbs spoke recently in a Zoom presentation with representatives from the public relations firm Belmont Partners and the marketing agency Lawrence and Schiller.

“When you think about all of the wonderful attractions, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, whatever that might be,” Hobbs said. “Duluth has what people are looking for, set against that wonderful, beautiful natural backdrop.”

Hobbs and her colleagues from the companies that have run Duluth’s tourism marketing efforts for the past year outlined a flurry of channels they’ll be using to target potential visitors in the key spring months when people are planning their summer travel.

“Facebook and Instagram (are) really skewing towards our older audience,” said Kyrie Bussler of Lawrence and Schiller. “We want to layer in some additional channels to help complement our younger audiences, so focusing on Pinterest and TikTok there.”

– duluthnewstribune.com

Arkansas focuses effort on the outdoors

Outdoor recreation contributed to 40,000 jobs and \$3.5 billion dollars to Arkansas’ gross domestic product in 2021.

But state officials think that only scratches the surface of what’s possible, and a new advisory council aims to find strategies to grow that business in a big way.

In her first several weeks in office, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed an executive order to establish the Natural State Initiative to “promote nature-based tourism” in Arkansas.

The governor last week announced the 17 members of her new Natural State Advisory Council, which aims to coordinate efforts among several

state departments — particularly Parks, Heritage & Tourism and Commerce — to make Arkansas a big player nationally when it comes to outdoor recreation.

That includes things like biking, hiking, camping, paddlesports — as well hunting and fishing.

Council members include Sanders’ husband Bryan, Walmart heir Tom Walton, and representatives from companies including Dillard’s and Murphy USA, as well as leaders from Arkansas tourism companies, conservation groups and state agencies like Game & Fish and the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

– 5news.com

Coastal improvements need breadth of buy-in

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Alpena, Manistee, Sault Ste. Marie and Port Huron, four small cities with waterfront industrial heritages.

The other element involved interviews with visitors to a Smithsonian Institution Water/Ways traveling exhibit.

Participants described water as a place to both feel something special and do something special. They agreed that “water is for enjoyment.”

Even so, it said participants reported a difference between their individual values — for example, the environmental benefits of water resources — and community water values, such as economic and tourism benefits.

Lead author Lissy Goralnik said, “Everyone mentioned they don’t want to be Traverse City. People from there can no longer afford to live there.”

Residents in Manistee, Alpena, Sault Ste. Marie and Port Huron understand the Traverse City experience where tourism has had a positive impact in terms of good health care and young people with new ideas moving in “but they don’t want it to explode,” said Goralnik, an assistant professor community sustainability at MSU.

To build trust and encourage “cool ideas,” it’s essential that waterfront projects have collaboration and share information among residents, local governments and community foundations, she said.

– manisteenews.com