

DNR eyeing rails for trails

AP — The state wants to turn back the clock and replace a thousand miles of abandoned railroad corridors with trails for horseback riding and hiking, an official said.

Plans for the Discover Michigan Trail, which would link cities along the coasts of both peninsulas, were drawn up last year, said Robert Tyler, trails coordinator for the state Department of Natural Resources.

Officials had hoped to complete the 1,000-mile trail by 1997, but problems with gaining title to tracks have delayed the project, he said.

Another site under consideration is between Jackson and Lakeland, in Jackson and Washtenaw counties.

"I think we will be somewhat successful," Tyler said. "But we will need a lot of support from a lot of people."

ONE STATEWIDE group offering its support is Michigan Trails All-

ance, a coalition of trails organizations.

"It's a challenge," Alliance president Judy Class said of piecing together the trail. "I say to myself, I want to ride my horse that entire trail. It may take me 10 years, but eventually I'll do it."

The trail, a Michigan Sesqui-centennial project, would add to 7,310 miles of trails the state operates through its forests and parks, including 4,200 miles just for snowmobiles, Tyler said.

ABOUT 2,000 miles of rail lines have been abandoned in Michigan since 1970, and another 387 miles may become available in the next three years, according to the state Department of Transportation.

But the state has acquired only 200 miles so far, all in the Upper Peninsula, Tyler said.

The DNR is close to acquiring the 30 miles of track between Jackson

and Lakeland and another 30 miles between Kalamazoo and South Haven, he said.

Money to purchase the corridors would come mostly from the state Natural Resources Trust Fund, which uses money earned from the sale of state mineral rights, Tyler said.

THE STATE has first shot at acquiring an abandoned railroad track, and it must pay the railroad the appraised value for the property, but

that's the easy part, Tyler said.

Complex land titles often make it next to impossible for the state to purchase the land, and adjacent property owners usually want the abandoned land for themselves, he said.

Once the trail is developed, DNR Director Gordon E. Goyer said he would like to turn the project over to a private management company. Those using the trails would pay a fee to cover the cost of maintenance.

Pro tem Anderson at Oakland court

Oakland County Circuit Judge Robert C. Anderson has been appointed Oakland County chief judge pro-tempore of the Sixth Judicial Cir-

cuit Court and will assist chief judge Richard D. Kuhn in directing the administration of the court.

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