



Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam Questions and Answers

5-28-2019

1. **What is the Dragon?**
 - a. A 47-mile natural surface trail designed for mountain bikers, hikers and runners, which circles Hardy Pond in Newaygo and Mecosta counties. The proposed trail will be located exclusively on land owned by Consumers Energy with stunning water views, challenging valleys and 20 proposed bridges and elevated boardwalks along the trail.
2. **Why is the trail named the Dragon?**
 - a. The Trail Committee coined the name in 2015, when it was noted that the shape of the Hardy Pond Reservoir closely resembles that of a Chinese Dragon. It's also a highly memorable name which assists in marketing the trail going forward.
3. **Who is developing the Dragon?**
 - a. The Parks Departments of Mecosta and Newaygo counties, Consumers Energy, Michigan State University, Western Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance, and Newaygo Nationals Association.
 - b. The Dragon's design was completed by Applied Trails Research, one of the pre-eminent trail design firms in the United States.
 - c. The trail's physical construction will be completed by two pre-qualified builders, Spectrum Trail Design and Trail Solutions Inc. Both firms have many years and hundreds of miles of sustainable trail building experience.
4. **When will the Dragon be constructed?**
 - a. The Dragon anticipates final approvals in early summer 2019 and first stages of construction to begin shortly thereafter. It will take approximately 3 building seasons to complete the trail.
5. **What trail design and other safeguards are in place to protect the environment in and around Hardy Pond during construction, and after the Dragon is complete?**
 - a. The Dragon and its route around Hardy Pond is intentionally designed by an internationally recognized environmental consulting firm to protect the pristine Michigan habitats and endangered species, including eagles, turtles, butterflies, and rare plants while minimizing soil erosion and disruption of fisheries and cultural heritage sites. Many studies conclude that building trails of this kind actually protects the environment very effectively by concentrating visitors in predictable places.
 - b. The trail will be built in every section to minimize ongoing soil erosion, avoid fragile pond banks, eliminate contact with fragile habitats, and properly avoid damaging or compromising wetlands or other water-intensive areas.
 - c. Construction firms are carefully screened for their strict adherence to appropriate environmental safeguards during construction. In addition, a highly qualified, independent consultant will be overseeing the construction process throughout to ensure appropriate environmental compliance.
6. **How will the Dragon project affect land and housing prices and the local economy?**
 - a. Each year the Dragon is projected to generate an additional 104,000 visitors to the area, create more than 70 new jobs, and contribute an estimated \$4.15 Million in new economic activity.
 - b. Housing and land prices are already seeing positive changes in and around the Dragon footprint. Access to trail assets almost always results in housing and land price increases, and given the low



starting prices in the area, this will likely be especially true for landowners in and around the Dragon.

7. How is the Dragon being funded?

- a. Both Newaygo and Mecosta counties contributed seed money to fund development of the Dragon. Several grants have also been received to assist in development and construction. The bulk of construction funding will come from State and Federal grants, private, corporate and foundational giving. Ongoing maintenance of the trail will be funded from a variety of sources including special event fees, parking fees, donations, and the county's parks departments' budgets.

8. Can motorized vehicles and/or equestrians use this trail as well?

- a. No. The Dragon is a non-motorized trail designed to optimize the experience for mountain bikers, hikers and runners. The trail will be a maximum of 48" wide and the main tread where most riding and hiking activity occurs will be 18" to 24" wide. Entrance limiters such as bollards and boulders will be used to reduce interactions between users and prevent unauthorized motor vehicle users. All motorized and equestrian use is prohibited.

9. How will the Dragon interact with campgrounds around the pond?

- a. The Dragon route is planned around the perimeter and entrances to parks or, with previous permission, the trail may pass thru the park's roads for camping, restrooms, water and food services.

10. Where will Dragon users park their vehicles?

- a. There will be several designated and yet to be developed trail head parking lots around the Dragon. These include Operators Park, 4-mile power lines, Davis Bridge Park, and Elder Road. Dragon users parking in Mecosta or Newaygo counties will be required to display appropriate parking permits.

11. Where will Dragon visitors camp overnight?

- a. Dragon visitors who desire to camp will need to make reservations at one of the current campgrounds around the trail. Discussions are underway about creating special use bike/hike-in campgrounds in Mecosta and Newaygo County parks.

12. Will the Dragon cross private roads and 2-tracks going to the pond?

- a. Yes, the Dragon will cross many authorized access roads. These intersections will be clearly marked with signage on the trail indicating that the rider should yield to vehicular cross traffic.
- b. If a property owner's access to the pond is authorized by Consumers Energy, then it will not be altered because of the Dragon. If it is not authorized by Consumers Energy, access and use will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

13. How will the Dragon be patrolled, kept clean, and managed to keep people off private land?

- a. WM MBA Trail Adopters will conduct weekly inspections of the trail. The WM MBA provides a "West Michigan Trail Conditions" Facebook page where all trail users can post conditions and any issues that need urgent attention on the trail. The trail coordinator and adopters then take corrective actions.
- b. The Dragon falls under the jurisdiction of Newaygo County Sherriff's Department, but there will be no predictable, scheduled trail patrol. Dragon trail use rules will be the same as all other Newaygo County Park system trails.