

# The Ni-Miikanaake Segment of the North Country Trail

## The NCT at the western tip of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

The Ni-Miikanaake (NMK) Chapter of the NCT is responsible for 83 miles of trail at the western tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. At the western end, the segment crosses to Wisconsin. The eastern end is at Michigan Hwy M-64. The neighboring chapters are the Wisconsin Heritage Chapter to the west, and the Michigan Peter Wolfe Chapter to the east.

NMK has recently replaced part of a long roadwalk with trails at the western end of the UP. The first eleven miles of the Michigan NCT now go along a scenic route featuring a spectacular river canyon and many views over Lake Superior, primarily in the Gogebic County Forest. After a 17-mile roadwalk, the remaining parts of the trail are in the Ottawa National Forest and the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (Porkies), with a small part on private lands. The NMK segment is in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties.

Most of this segment is classified as primitive, and is in a remote area. Almost all of it is out of cell phone range. In summer, the main concerns are mosquitoes, ticks and the occasional bear. There are beautiful beaches on Lake Superior at Black River Harbor (BRH) and the mouth of the Presque Isle in the Porkies.

## Camping along the NMK Segment:

Gogebic County Forest: Dispersed, leave-no-trace camping is permitted. Link to more information and permits: <https://www.gogebicforestryandparks.com/special-use-permits>

Ottawa National Forest: Dispersed, leave-no-trace camping is permitted. There is also an organized campground at Black River Harbor just uphill from the parking area at the harbor. More information at this link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/ottawa/recreation/camping-cabins> or at 906-932-1330

Porkies (Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park): Camping is permitted *only*

at designated campsites and only by reservation. More information and reservations at this link: <https://michigan.gov/Porkies> or at 906-885-5275.

For all these areas, campers should keep in mind these are remote areas with intermittent cell access. They may wish to consider an emergency communications device that can work through the satellite network. Bears frequent this area, and food supplies should be suspended off the ground or otherwise bear-proofed.

## Parking:

Powers Vista Trails:

Parking is free and not restricted at Superior Falls, and at the parking lot at the east end of the Powers Vista trails.

Black River Harbor:

A parking permit is required, and can be gotten at a box at the parking lot. Parking is free on Thursdays. A Federal Lands Permit or similar is valid here.

Porkies:

A Michigan Passport or other state park permit is required. These can be obtained at the entrance booths or the Visitor Center.

## Other:

The main roads crossed, outside of the roadwalk, are

Lake Road (Gogebic County Hwy 505),

Black River Parkway (Gogebic County Hwy 513)

Presque Isle Parkway (Gogebic County Hwy 519),

South Boundary Road

M-64 (forms the eastern boundary of NMK segment.)

To get to a store or town from these crossings is at least a 10-15 mile walk. The nearest cities and towns are:

Hurley (WI)

Ironwood

Bessemer

Wakefield

Bergland

This write-up is accurate as of Jan 2025 There will likely be reroutes in the future.

Abbreviations used below:

ONF - Ottawa National Forest

PMWSP - Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (Porkies)

SBR - South Boundary Road (in the Porkies)

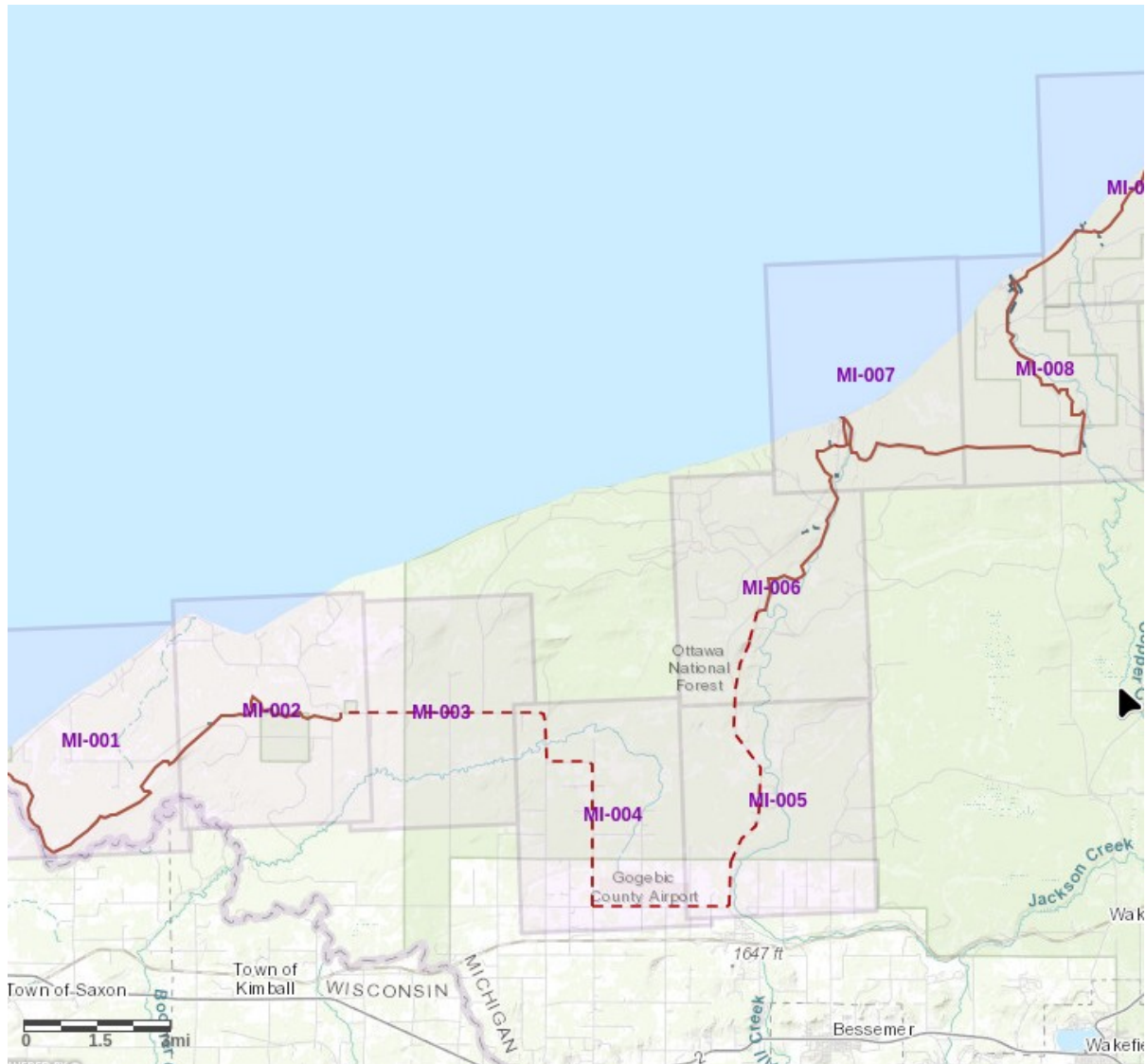
CR - County Road

BRH - Black River Harbor

Our Trail Segment - Azenza pages & Mile markers

Avenza Page	Mile Marker (from,to)	Description	Landowner
MI-001	Start to 6.5	State Line to Bald Mtn	Private, Xcel Energy, Gogebic County
MI-002	6.5 to 11.5	Bald Mtn. to just east of East Powers Vista Parking Lot	Gogebic County
MI-003	11.5 to 14.5	Lake Rd roadwalk	
MI-004	14.5 to 22.5	Lake Rd, Airport Rd to Bale Ln roadwalk	
MI-005	22.5 to 28	Airport Rd, Black River Rd (Cty Hwy 513) roadwalk	
MI-006	28 to 34.5	Black River Rd, Trailhead at Copper Peak, to Gorge Falls	ONF
MI-007	34.5 to 40	Sandstone Falls, through Black River Harbor area, to Gijik Crk.	ONF
MI-008	40 to 49.25	Gijik Crk. through the Presque Isle Unit (Porkies) to Cardinal Creek on the Lake Superior Trail	ONF, PMWSP
MI-009	49.25 to 55	Cardinal Creek to Mouth of Carp River on Lake Superior Trail	PMWSP
MI-010	55 to 61	Mouth of Carp River to Miscowawbic Peak on Big Carp River Trail	PMWSP
MI-011	61 to 65.5	Miscowawbic Peak to just east of Lake of the Clouds on Big Carp River Trail and Escarpment Trail	PMWSP
MI-012	65.5 to 74.5	East of Lake of the Clouds to the east intersection of NCT with South Boundary Rd. The Escarpment Trail,	PMWSP

		the Government Peak Trail, the Lost Creek Trail, and the small loop of NCT north of South Boundary Road	
MI-013 & MI-014	74.5 to 83.5	South of South Boundary Rd to trailhead on M-64 (MI-014 continues past M-64 into the Peter Wolfe Chapter segment of the NCT)	PMWSP, ONF



Section - section description:

Avenza Page MI-001 & MI-002 – (Mile Markers MI-00 to MI-11.5)

This is the beginning of the NCT in Michigan, as one hikes east from Wisconsin. It starts at the bridge over the Montreal River that connects WI Hwy 122 with Gogebic County Hwy 505 (Lake Road.) Immediately west of the bridge, in Wisconsin, the NCT also follows a roadwalk.

As you walk east along Lake Road, look for a dirt road on the right about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile in. It may be gated. Take this road to the southeast, and up the hill. The lower part may be

muddy. Following this road, the hiker will come to a cut-over-slash area. This road joins with motorized trail 160, marked by orange signs. Continue south, and uphill. At the top of the hill there is an overlook of the Montreal River gorge, with a picnic table and grill.



From the Montreal Gorge overlook, turn east, still following the motorized trail. The trail goes through a variety of forested and somewhat-open landscape. After three miles, the hiker will come to Bald Mountain, a high spot featuring a view to the southeast, and a stainless steel teepee for rest or camping.



From here, follow the road downhill to the northeast. This short road features a couple of benches and signs illustrating the types of trees in the forest. At the foot of this road, crossing Powers Rd, continue across Powers to a trail through the forest. An overlook/parking is about 600 ft to the west, just off the trail, along Powers Rd. Note the expansive views of Lake Superior and the Bayfield Peninsula at mile marker MI-8.5 to MI-9. The trail continues to the Powers Vista East parking lot.

#### MI-003 – MI-005 (Mile Markers MI-11.5 to MI-28)

From the Powers Vista East parking lot there is a 17-mile roadwalk. There is a spring about one mile west along Lake Rd, from the intersection of Lake Road and Powers Rd. About mile marker MI-20.5 the trail turns left (east) onto Airport Rd. There is a bar (Hautala's - maybe food) at this corner. The road continues past the Gogebic-Iron Airport, and the trail turns left (north) onto Black River Rd. At mile marker MI-26.5 there is a small park with 1-2 campsites and views over the Black River. At mile marker MI-29.5 hikers encounter Copper Peak, a one-time ski jump, now being restored. Visitors can take a

chairlift to the top, enjoy the views, and there is a gift shop/visitor center. Down the road on the north side of Copper Peak is the trailhead and start of the main section.

#### MI-006 – MI-007 (Mile Marker MI-28 to MI-40)

There are 5-6 parking spots at the trailhead. The trail goes downhill and to the left (north - watch for a turn) and runs along the Black River. After about 3 miles the first waterfall appears, Great Conglomerate Falls. The following 3.5 miles feature three more waterfalls. This is a more developed area, with boardwalks in some places and more casual tourists. The trail crosses Black River Rd at about MI-34.5, running behind some houses. Watch for other intersecting trails in this stretch. Crossing back over Black River Rd, the hiker will go past Rainbow Falls. The trail goes down a hill to the parking lot for Black River Harbor. This developed area features a pavilion, picnic area, pit toilets, organized camping, beach, and docking. Take the pedestrian suspension bridge (originally built by the CCC) across the river to continue up the other side of the river valley.



The trail goes up the east side of the valley via a series of steps. There are particularly large hemlock trees along this stretch. About a mile up the valley, at the east side of Rainbow

Falls, the trail turns to the left (east) and continues past Sagaigon Creek. After a couple more ridges-and-creeks the trail comes to the large ravine for Bobolink Creek. Coming up the side of the ravine of Bobolink Creek, one enjoys a nice view across the ravine.

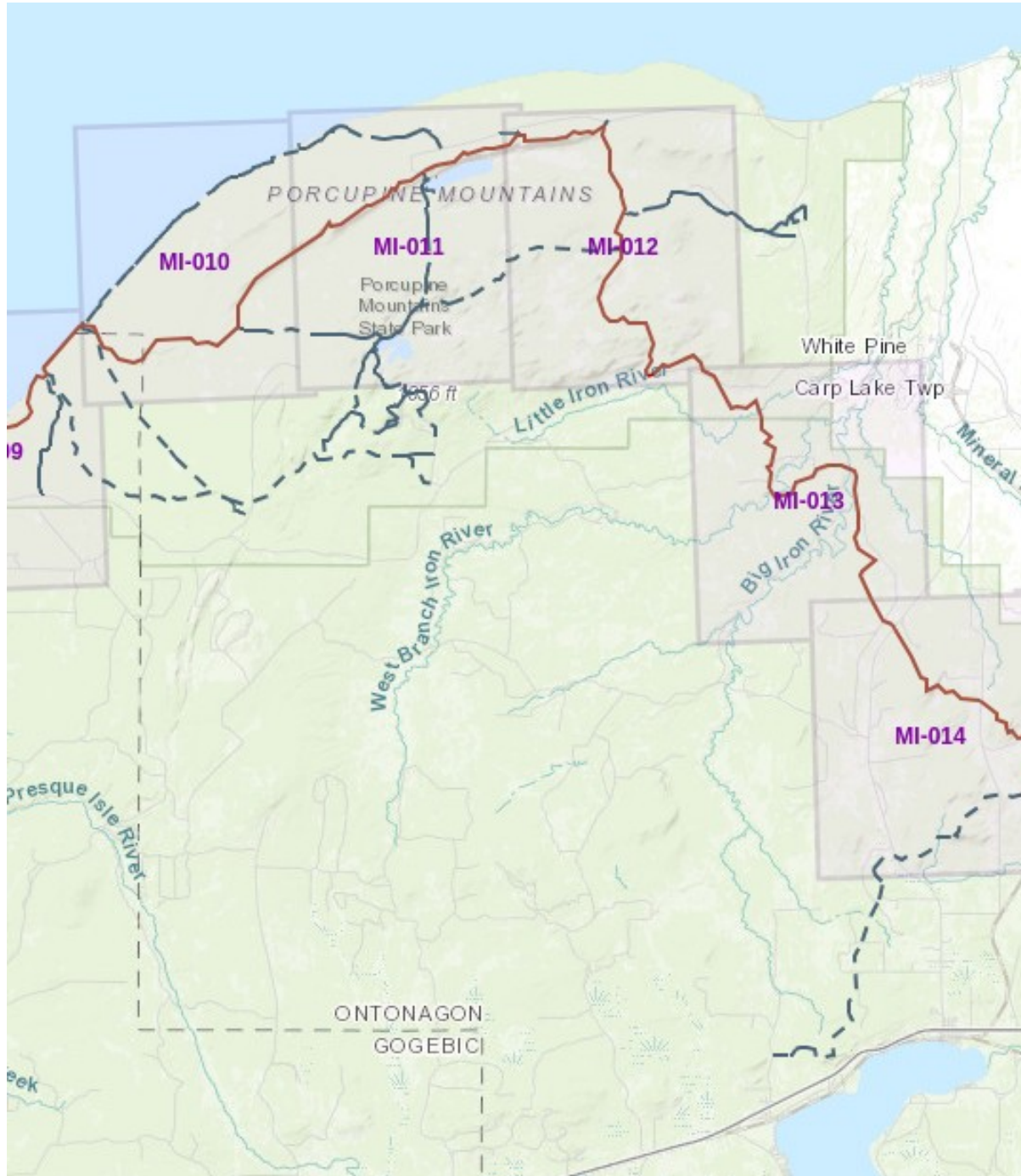
MI-008 (Mile Marker MI-40 to MI-49.25)

Next, the trail runs about four miles along an old forest road, and comes to CR 519. Creeks running north-south have cut some ravines which the hiker will have to climb through - the biggest ones are within a few hundred feet of 519. Being an old forest road, the trail tends to get muddy here. There is a trailhead and parking area at the highway. Cross the highway and the trail takes an immediate right, goes a few hundred feet, parallel to the road, and goes left into the woods. The trail enters the PMWSP, and goes past Lepisto Falls on the Presque Isle River. As of this writing, there is no boundary marker to show the entrance to the park. There is a spring on the road leading down to Lepisto Falls at about MI-43.1.



Continuing north from Lepisto Falls, the trail goes across a footbridge and up a steep slope with rope to assist the climb. The trail wanders across a higher knoll, with high-canopy trees, and meanders between the gorge of the Presque Isle River and CR 519. After 4.5 miles the hiker comes to South Boundary Road. Cross SBR, and continue on the west side of the river. The hiker comes to a more developed area, with boardwalks along the river. Coming to the mouth of the Presque Isle, there is a parking area, pedestrian suspension bridge, picnic area, camping area, pit toilets and beach. Note interesting layered rock formations, and 'potholes,' on this lower stretch of river.

There are many trails beside the NCT in this area. Follow the blue blazes up the east side of the river gorge, up from the layered rock formations. The trail continues east, coinciding with the Lake Superior Trail of the PMWSP. Hikers will encounter a steep ravine about ½ mile east of the Presque Isle River.



MI-009 (Mile Marker MI-49.25 to MI-55)

The trail goes past Speaker's Cabin. This cabin can be rented - if others are there please give them some privacy. The NCT follows the Lake Superior Trail about four miles. At points it is quite close to Lake Superior. There are campsites along the way – it is muddy in some areas. The trail will go past the ends of the Pinkerton Creek and Little Carp River Trails. Continue past the turnoffs for these trails, staying near the shore.

MI-010 – MI-011 (Mile Marker MI-49.25 to MI-65.5)

At the mouth of the Big Carp River, the hiker will note a cabin, available for rent, and a footbridge. Take the bridge across the river and look for the Big Carp River Trail. The NCT leaves the Lake Superior Trail at this point and follows the Big Carp River Trail, from end to end, for 8.5 miles to the Lake of the Clouds. The trail here runs near or along the top of the spine of the Porcupine Mountains.

At the Lake of the Clouds, the hiker will find a large viewing platform, parking lot and restrooms. This scenic overlook is generally crowded, as it is the best-known scenic attraction in the Porkies. The Big Carp River Trail terminates at the west end of the viewing platform. The NCT continues through the viewing platform and joins the Escarpment Trail, following it from end – to – end. The Escarpment Trail also runs close to the spine of the actual Porcupine Mountains, and offers excellent views to the east and west. One can see Lake Gogebic, and other sites, along this trail, which has quite a bit of hilly climbing. On this trail, one often has the feel of being on side of a rocky crag, with a steep dropoff to the south. This is quite different from the feel of most of the rest of the NMK segment, which is more deep-in-the-woods.



#### MI-012 (Mile Marker MI-65.5 to MI-74.5)

At the eastern end of the Escarpment Trail, turn south (right) to get on the Government Peak Trail. Continuing south, one encounters somewhat damp ground. About 1/3 mile south of Trap Falls the Govt. Peak Trail intersects the Lost Lake Trail. Continue south on the Lost Lake Trail. Note a yurt for camping along the trail. Just before MI-73, the Lost Lake Trail ends at South Boundary Road. Here there is a parking lot, pit toilet, and campground. Go east on the north side of SBR, over a bridge, and look for a trail entrance, uphill, going into the woods. The 1.1 mile loop just north of SBR features some rocky formations, a creek and big, older trees. Cell phone access may be possible from the highest point of this trail. The trail leads back to SBR – cross the road, and look for the trail entrance, slightly to the east.

#### MI-013 – MI-014 (Mile Marker MI-74.5 to MI-83.5)

South of SBR, the trail goes south and then cuts to the east; watch for this turn. The trail continues through a birch grove, often somewhat muddy, and intersects an old forest road. Turn left, and take the old forest road past a pile of old stoves and barrels. The old road intersects a wider road; turn right and walk downhill to the pedestrian suspension bridge over the Little Iron River.



Across the bridge, the trail goes straight uphill. This section may be a bit muddy. Beyond the crest of the hill, the trail turns left. Winding through a muddy pine grove, the hiker will come to a small creek which can be crossed on a small beaver dam or on stones. Continuing about 100 yards, the rejoins the old forest road, at MI-77. Continue southeast to an open, grassy area. This is Loggerhead Creek – cross it on a beaver dam. South of Loggerhead Creek, the trail goes uphill and wanders through three ravines, with larger hemlock trees, then joins another old forest road roughly at MI-78. Follow the old forest road, but turn east at the marking. The hiker will go downhill into the valley of the West Branch of the Big Iron River and across a pedestrian bridge. Note the large white pine trees on the downhill slope. After the bridge, the trail goes up a steep hill to start following old forest roads, which usually have several muddy spots.



After 1.6 miles, the trail crosses a second pedestrian bridge, over the Big Iron River (MI-80.) The trail then goes uphill. For one mile further the trail follows a bluff above the river valley, offering nice breezes. The trail then diverges from from the Big Iron River, crossing some other streams. At MI-82.5, the trail goes into a lower, somewhat marshy area, with a boardwalk and three small pedestrian bridges.



At MI-83.5, the trail encounters State Highway M-64. The trail runs NW-SE at this point, and M-64 runs SW-NE. The trailhead/parking lot is across the road, and the start of the Peter Wolfe Chapter segment.