



22 Mile Road



Sections



The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) is a long-distance hiking trail that stretches across eight states from Vermont to central North Dakota. Part of the National Trails System, the NCT links scenic, natural, historic, and cultural areas and allows visitors to experience a variety of landscapes.

When completed, the Trail will be the longest continuous hiking trail in the United States. The total projected length of the North Country Trail is 4,800 miles, of which more than 3,100 have already been completed. In Michigan, the NCT also serves as the hiking route of the DNR's Iron Belle Trail. Newaygo County is home to about 70 miles of the NCT.

To the North

Ironically, "flat as a proverbial pancake" is perhaps the best way to describe this section's most unique highlight. While originally covered by heavy forests, there was also a huge 3,500-acre tract of [wetlands](#) known as Rice Lake. Farmers drained the area in the 1930's to exploit the nutrient-rich muckland soil to grow onions, carrots, celery, and mint. The NCT crosses the far southeast corner of the former wetland areas turned into agricultural land. Kosten Drain, located in the heart of the muckland, is the southern drainage for the former Rice Lake. It is the primary headwaters and tributary of the Rogue River, whose banks the NCT traverses in the [Rogue River State Game Area](#).

Historically, three tribes of Native Americans gathered at Rice Lake each autumn to collect [wild rice](#) and hunt vast flocks of migrating waterfowl. Today, stone bird-points and arrowheads can be found on the area's muck farms. In 2022, another relic of the past was discovered just east of the trail when a mastodon skeleton was unearthed. The [Clapp Family Mastodon](#) is now housed at the Grand Rapids Public Museum.



To the South

The [Rogue River State Game Area](#) covers 6,135 acres and is administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The NCT section in this game area is about 7 miles long, the longest unbroken section of wilderness trail in Kent County. Although open year round, it is wise for hikers to wear orange blaze during hunting seasons. Small game season typically runs from mid-September to the end of March and deer season is from mid-September to late December. The exact dates can be found at michigan.gov/dnr.



MAPS + DISCOVERY

Please scroll down for more detailed information.

22 Mile Road Sections

(Updated 5/1/25)

Directions to Trailhead: From M-37 (3 miles south of Grant), turn on 22 Mile Road for 5 miles to just before Oak Avenue. It is safest to park on Oak Avenue since it has less traffic flow. Put an "NCT Hiker" sign in your window and be sure to park completely off the road.

Northbound Overview & Trail Usage: Say "hello" to Newaygo County! The name "Newaygo" means "*many waters*" in Algonquin. In fact, hikers can look forward to passing several lakes and streams along this **15 mile** (mostly) road walk from 22 Mile Road to the Croton Dam Trailhead. Due to large stretches of private property and farmland, there are only a few short segments of single track trail in this section. Options for new, off-road sections continue to be explored by Trail planners, so watch for reroutes marked by carsonite posts. Pay attention since the road walk is not blue-blazed! There is one reliable on-trail water source midpoint at the inlet stream to Bill's Lake.

Northbound Trail Description: On the northside of 22 Mile Road, begin your hike on Oak Avenue and observe the following waypoints on your zig-zagging route to Croton Dam (mileage is approximate):

- **In 4.5 miles:** Go north on Oak, turn east on 128th Street (which traverses the southeast corner of muck farms from the drained Rice Lake swamp), continue on dirt 128th and turn left (north) on 0.5 miles of single track trail marked by blue blazes (**NOTE: Trail is closed during rifle hunting season, normally Nov. 15 to 30**), then come out and turn left (north) onto dirt-tracked Locust Ave
- **In 9.0 miles:** Cross 120th Street on Locust, continue and turn west on 92nd Street, turn north on Pear and cross the inlet to Bill's Lake, turn east on 86th Street, turn north on Swan, cross M-82, turn east on 80th Street, go north on Locust, turn east on 76th Street, turn north on Elm
- **In 1.0 miles:** Enter the woods on the West side of the road (left). Look for a carsonite post with a North Country Trail Sticker. NOTE: This section of the trail is NOT marked with blue blazes, so watch for a limited number of NCT directional post markers. You will cross a parking area in about a mile, then stay left of a picnic pavilion to exit the Dr. M.K. Conklin Park in the northeast corner of the park. Descend a stairway, cross Croton Drive, descend another set of stairs, turn left at bottom and continue along the paved path
- **In .5 miles:** Turn right on Croton Drive, cross the Muskegon River bridge, and turn right into the Croton Dam Trailhead parking area (overnight parking is allowed here)

Southbound Trail Description: You are now in Kent County! The land here is quite flat and wooded. The trail passes along a marsh hosting waterbirds and an enormous number of spring peepers, whose chorus is astonishing in the spring. It also follows the Rogue River and provides a number of attractive views of the river.