



# 40th Street Trailhead



## 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

Through the eyes of time, this section treks through a series of undulating beach sand and **coastal ridges**, now heavily forested with Oak and young White Pine. Layers of heavy clay lay in lower intradune areas and under the sand beneath your hiking boots. This combination of soils tends to hold water at the surface, so be prepared to slish through ankle-deep water in the spring runoff during heavy snow years or after periods of heavy rainfall.

There are several **coastal plain marshes**, identified as "Critically Globally-Imperiled", with less than 3% of these original ecosystems remaining worldwide. Rare plants and insects make their homes here, so please "hike gently." You will also encounter beautiful **coniferous swamp** ecosystems which provide habitat for diverse wildlife, water birds, and trees, including red maple, northern white cedar, and black willow.

The highlight at the north end of this section is the impressive **boardwalk** crossing a coastal marshland between Cucumber and Alley Lakes. Constructed in 2019 by NCT volunteers and Forest Service personnel, the 605 linear feet of elevated boardwalk serves two purposes; it protects the fragile **marsh ecosystem** and prevents hikers from suffering wet feet.

White Oak Leaf



Wood Ducks  
(Female & Male)



### To the South

There are two scenic points of interest in the first mile, the first being the **Newaygo County Sports Park and Welcome Center**. A ¾-mile spur trail leads to Little Lake Placid by the winter sliding hill and the Welcome Center at the top by M-37. The second is an overlook of Twinwood Lake. A short spur trail leads to the rustic **USFS Twinwood Lake Campground** at the lake's edge with campsites, picnic tables, pit toilets, and boat launch.

Next, enjoy an imaginary walk through glacial history! The road walk in this section will take you along a narrow sand ridge. On either side, you will notice several deeply-rounded depressions. Some are dry, but most contain small lakes, pocket marshes, or bog lands. The two large **kettle lakes** along this section are cold and fairly deep. These are what remain of massive chunks of ice that fractured from the retreated glaciers some 10-14,000 years ago. The sand below your feet was deposited from ice chunks as meltwater made its way to the Muskegon River watershed.

**Please scroll down for more detailed information.**



## 40th Street Trailhead Sections

(Updated 5/1/25)

**Directions to Trailhead:** Take M-37 three miles north from Newaygo, turn left (west) on 40<sup>th</sup> Street and go a half-mile to the road to trailhead parking on the left (south) side of 40<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Northbound Overview & Trail Usage:** The NCT travels **8.5 miles** from 40<sup>th</sup> Street north to Alley Lake on single-track trail tread that is open to hikers only. Mountain bikes and horses are prohibited. Two slow-flowing creeks offer marginal on-trail water at about 4 and 5 miles along the northbound route. Be sure to treat or filter all drinking water collected on the NCT.

**Northbound Trail Description:** At the east end of the parking area, take the spur trail several hundred feet, turn left (north) on the NCT, cross 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and sign in at the trail box register about 100 yards past the road crossing. Hikers will encounter the following waypoints:

- **In .75 miles:** A spur trail goes right (east) leading in 0.2 miles to the M-37 Roadside Park that has pit toilets and picnic tables but no water
- **In 1.5 miles:** Cross FS 5531, hike through an old pine plantation, and pass the east end of a coastal plain marshland at 28<sup>th</sup> Street and view an interpretative sign
- **In 3.25 miles:** Cross an isthmus of land between two marshes, pass a series of wetland ponds, cross a slow-moving stream in a drainage ditch, pass through a cedar swamp, and reach a wooden bridge over Coonskin Creek
- **In 1.0 miles:** Pass a trail box register in a pine forest and cross Centerline Road
- **In 1.5 miles:** Cross the long boardwalk over the marshland near Alley Lake
- **In 0.5 miles:** Arrive at Echo Drive and go left ¼ mile to Alley Lake parking area

**Southbound Overview & Trail Usage:** This southbound section travels **2.6 miles** from 40<sup>th</sup> Street to 58<sup>th</sup> Street. The general character of the past 40+ miles of southbound single-track trail is interrupted early in this section by a 1.7-mile road walk along Basswood Drive. The dirt surface is forgiving and traffic is light, but be alert for ORVs moving fast on blind corners. The road walk parallels a set of railroad tracks and the NCT route crosses them three different times. The section's remaining mile of off-road trail is single-track tread. No mountain bikes or horses are allowed and no on-trail water sources are available, except at Twinwood Lake.

**Southbound Trail Description:** At the east end of the parking area, take the spur trail and turn right (south) onto the NCT. Hikers will encounter the following waypoints:

- **In 0.5 miles:** Cross M-37 and arrive at the spur trail that leads to the Newaygo County Welcome Center
- **In 0.3 miles:** Cross the railroad tracks, cross seasonal Basswood Drive, re-enter the woods to an overlook and spur trail to Twinwood Lake, and step onto Basswood Drive
- **In 1.7 miles:** Hike along dirt-tracked Basswood Drive, cross the railroad tracks again, and soon branch left (east) off Basswood onto 56<sup>th</sup> Street
- **In 0.1 miles:** Cross railroad tracks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time and arrive at the 58<sup>th</sup> St. parking area