



Mike Terrell

Skiers enjoy a day of solitude on a scenic northern Michigan trail.

Top 10 trails to try

• Northern Michigan has lots to offer the cross country skier

By MIKE TERRELL

Special to the Record-Eagle

Michigan's "up north" consistent snow conditions, pristine woodland settings, and miles of trails on state and federal forest land and private touring centers make it easy to enjoy cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

The rolling, hilly topography, endless forests, beautiful lakes and rivers, and wonderful vistas create a great backdrop for the solitude you'll find on some of the best trails in the state.

As an avid cross-country skier, I've enjoyed unexpected and delightful trails in every corner of the state. Here's my guide to some of northern Michigan's crown jewels, where folks of every skill level can enjoy a quiet ski or a good workout if you skate-

ski. The choices are endless, but here some of the choicest.

Corsair Trails

Located on National Forest Service land northwest of East Tawas, the Corsair Trail System incorporates one of the largest groomed trail networks in the state. Nestled in the beautiful Silver Valley area, the 35-plus miles of trails offer as nice a variety of length and difficulty as you'll find in the Lower Peninsula. Covering scenic rolling terrain, the well-designed, well-marked trail system is not overly difficult. Groomed weekly or more often if needed by a local volunteer organization, the trails meander across open meadows, through stands of sweet-smelling pines and towering hardwoods, and along swift flowing streams. For more information or the latest snow report, call (800) 55-TAWAS.

VASA Pathway

The VASA Pathway was originally developed for the North American VASA-a grueling one-day ski race

held annually the second Saturday of February in Traverse City. However, it has evolved into one of the finest cross-country trail systems in the state. A volunteer group oversees the DNR pathway, grooming the trails with state-of-the-art machinery purchased through a state grant and matched by local funds. They are fanatical about keeping the tracks and skating surface fresh, which translates into excellent conditions for skiers all the time. Four routes—a 2K easy loop, a 5K intermediate loop, and 10K and 25K difficult loops—are groomed for both classic and skate. The difficult loops are quite hilly. Normally open from mid-December through March, the trails meander through the scenic Pere Marquette State Forest.

For the latest trail conditions call (231) 938-4400 or click on www.vasa.org.

Sand Lakes Quiet Area

One of the most popular natural areas in northwest Michigan is locat-

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