

# Oceana County

Recreation Plan  
2014 Update

Prepared by: Oceana County  
Parks & Recreation Commission

# Table of Contents

- Introduction ..... 3
  - Overview of the Planning Process ..... 3
  - Function of the Plan ..... 3
  - Legal Basis and Development ..... 3
    - Community Description ..... 4
  - Geographic Context ..... 4
  - Community Information ..... 4
  - History of Community ..... 6
  - Early Infrastructure ..... 7
    - Unique Recreational Resources ..... 7
    - Significant Weather ..... 8
- Community Data and Analysis ..... 8
  - Demographics and Characteristics of Population ..... 8
    - Population Trends and Projections* ..... 8
    - Racial Characteristics* ..... 9
    - Age Distribution* ..... 11
  - Income Distribution ..... 14
  - Local Economy and Employment ..... 15
- Transportation ..... 16
- Natural Features ..... 18
  - Climate* ..... 18
  - Topography* ..... 20
  - Water Features* ..... 20
  - Soils* ..... 23
- County Government ..... 24
- Recreational Analysis ..... 24
  - Recreational Standards ..... 24
  - Recreation Facility Inventory ..... 25
    - County Parks* ..... 25
    - Other Facilities (Township/Local Parks)* ..... 27
    - Potentially Developed and Conceptualized Facilities ..... 29

Action Program ..... 31

Updated Goals and Objectives..... 32

Capital Improvement Program ..... 34

Conclusion..... 34

Bibliography ..... 35

Appendices..... 37

    Appendix A: Plan Meeting/Public Input..... 37

    Appendix B: Plan Review and Public Hearing ..... 38

    Appendix C: Oceana County Government Structure ..... 39

    Appendix D: Oceana County Park Regulations ..... 40

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## **Introduction**

This Document, the updated Oceana County Recreation Plan, is intended to guide present and future recreational resource development within the County, to include parkland, parks facilities, recreation programs, and public open space.

In addition, the Plan is prepared to satisfy the requirements set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Recreation plans are required by the MDNR for state and federal grant eligibility and to encourage communities to take a long-term view of their parks and recreation assets. Plans are to be updated every five (5) years and must be filed with the MDNR in Lansing.

## **Overview of the Planning Process**

This is the first update of the Oceana Parks and Recreation Commission Recreation Plan, originally published in 2009. Citizen input remains a keystone in guiding the Commission in its mandate to wisely govern its natural resources and recreation assets. The opportunity for input is provided through Town Meetings, Parks and Recreation Commission meetings, and Public Hearings. Notices of activities and opportunities have been published in the Oceana Herald-Journal, and are included in this updated Plan.

## **Function of the Plan**

The Plan is used by the decision-makers of the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission, based on the wishes of the general public and the availability of resources.

The following are specific objectives of this Plan:

- Provides the framework for County residents to determine the future of their community, thereby promoting the interests of the entire community.
- Establishes long-range goals and objectives for decisions regarding public parks development, recreation and open space.
- Outlines implementation strategies to ensure future development is consistent with the goals and objectives of Oceana County.
- Provides a detailed inventory of recreation facilities within the County to assist decision-makers with development decisions related to those facilities.
- Designates suitable areas for future recreation development while encouraging the preservation and conservation of natural resources.
- Provides the foundation to ensure eligibility for grant funding might be secured for recreation-related acquisition and development projects.
- Is consistent with Michigan Public Act 156 of 1917, and Michigan Public Act 261 of 1965, both acts as amended.

## **Legal Basis and Development**

This Plan is enabled by Michigan law but does not carry the power of statutory law or ordinance. Its principles are derived from Public Act 156 of 1917, an act authorizing governmental units to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds which states, in part that:

*Sec. 1 (2-4). Counties may acquire, equip, and maintain land, buildings, or other recreation facilities. A County may employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants. Counties may vote and expend funds for the operation of such a system.*

Regulations regarding the establishment of County Parks and Recreation Commissions are spelled out in Public Act 261 of 1965 and subsequent amendments, including Public Act 242 of 1966, Public Act 102 and 216 of 1968, Public Act 167 of 1977, and Public Act 223 of 1981. These acts dictate membership requirements and procedures for determining length of term on the Commission for said members.

## **Community Description**

The Plan includes updated information about Oceana County, its social and physical attributes, population and housing characteristics, economic status, existing land information, etc. Where appropriate, historical trends have been updated to show how Oceana County is evolving.

## **Geographic Context**

Oceana County is 536 square miles and located along the shore of Lake Michigan, approximately half way between the Michigan - Indiana border and the Grand Traverse Bay. Mostly rural in nature, Oceana County is a leading agriculture producer of fruits and vegetables, as prime farmland is prevalent.

Oceana County is well-known for its abundant natural resources and diverse recreational opportunities. The shoreline of Lake Michigan along Oceana boasts one of the more beautiful stretches of beach and is the basis of a significant recreational and tourist-based economy. Though rural, residents are a relatively short drive from many metropolitan areas. Muskegon and Ludington are just 30 minutes away, while Grand Rapids is less than an hour and a half. Detroit and Chicago are each about a four (4) hour drive from the County seat of Hart. Residents of Oceana County enjoy the serenity of rural life and the beauty of open spaces, while still enjoying amenities associated with an urban lifestyle.

## **Community Information**

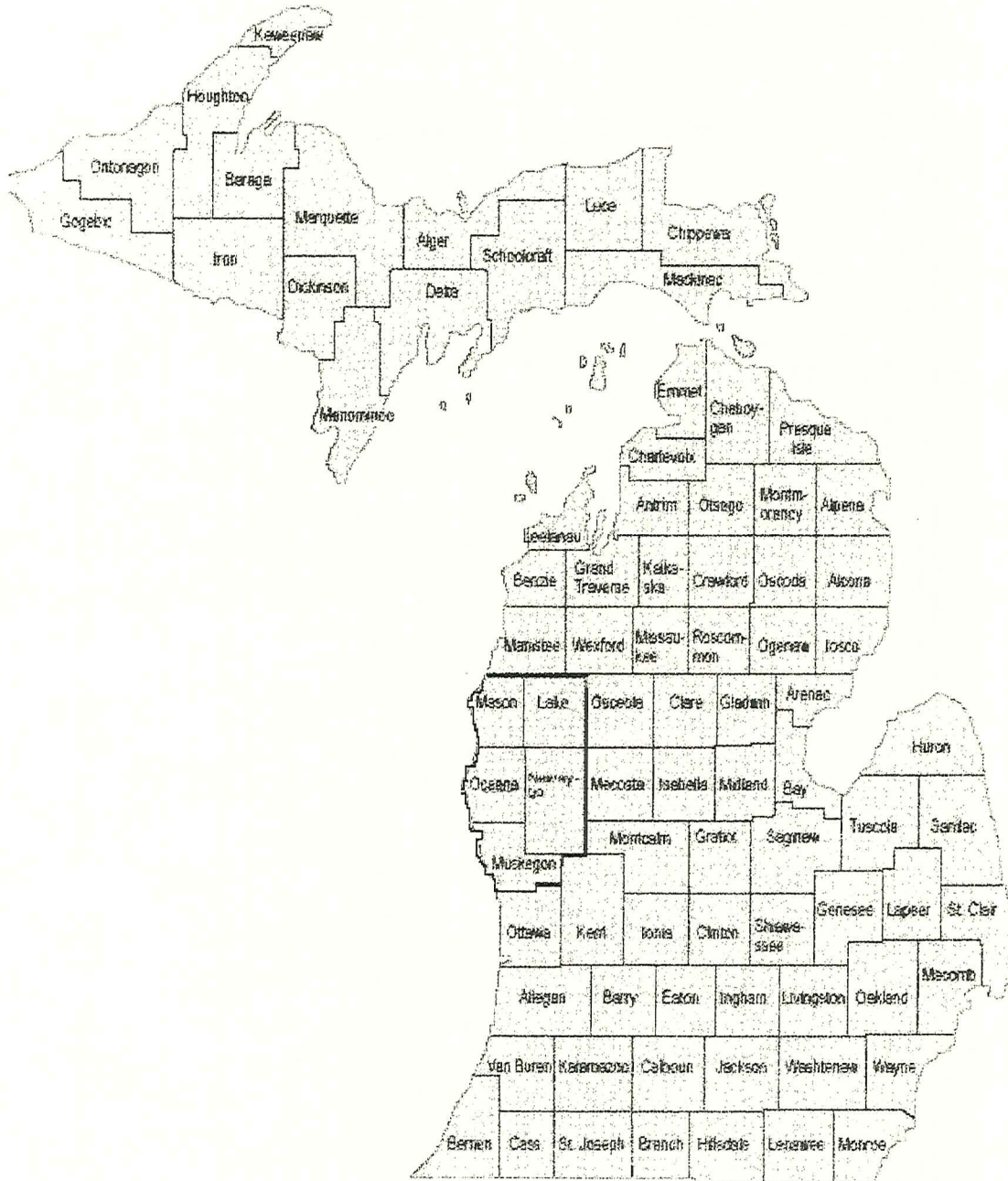
There are sixteen townships in Oceana County. The counties bordering are Mason to the north, Newaygo on the east, Muskegon to the south, and Lake Michigan on the west. The County Seat is the City of Hart.

Though mostly rural, Oceana County has a number of notable features. There are 65 inland lakes, winding rivers and streams, and the world's-largest shifting sand dune, positioned between Lake Michigan and Silver and Upper Silver Lakes. U.S. Highway 31 is the major north-south freeway, a vital corridor through West Michigan to Chicago and north to Traverse City.

There is no longer any railroad activity in the county. The last of the rail corridor was converted to the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail State Park. The trail is a Michigan State Park facility that runs from Hart through the center of Oceana County south to northern Muskegon County. The trail is paved and utilized by many types of recreationists.

Oceana County and its features are depicted later in this document in **Figure 5 – Oceana County Recreation Facilities** on page 31.

**Figure 1- Oceana County, MI and Planning Region 14**



## History of Community

Oceana County's rich, detailed history dates back to March 2, 1831. Seven years before Michigan was to become a state, the Territorial Legislature established an "Oceana County." This included all of the present-day Oceana, along with parts of Muskegon, Montcalm and Kent Counties. The first European settlement was on Lake Michigan near Whiskey Creek. A sawmill was central to the settling of the area, as the lumber industry provided most of the employment opportunities in the early days.

It was not until 1855 that the State of Michigan Legislature established Oceana County with its present-day boundaries. The County was divided into three (3) parts, and townships were established:

1. Pentwater, which stretched across the northern portion,
2. Stony Creek (which was later known as Benona) which covered the middle portion, and
3. Claybanks, the southern portion

Rapid growth ensued, roads and bridges were constructed, and forests cleared for farmland. As growth continued, governance of the developing County and its residents became a top priority.

The three (3) original townships were later divided into smaller governmental units. Greenwood and Elbridge Townships were formed in February 1858. Otto and Weare Townships in February 1860, Hart Township in December 1860, followed by Golden Township in 1864. Crystal and Newfield Townships - 1865; Leavitt and Grant Townships - 1866; Shelby Township - 1867, Ferry Township in 1868. The last of the sixteen townships, Colfax, was established in 1869. Interior Township development proceeded rapidly. Pentwater Village incorporated in 1867, the first in Oceana County. The history was marked by the white settlers that came from Europe, and the Native Americans that already inhabited the area.

Late in the 1850's, the Ottawa Indians relocated from the Grand Rapids/Kent County area to Oceana County. This was the result of an agreement between the area tribes and lawmakers in Washington, D.C. The Ottawa Indians agreed to abandon their land on the Grand River, in exchange for lands further north. The land they chose is now part of Elbridge and Crystal Townships. The government built schools for the Native Americans and money was appropriated for livestock and tools.

The great Chief Cob-Moo-Sa was a highly respected orator, debater, and leader of people. The most famous Native American in Oceana County, he worked tirelessly to ensure the Ottawa tribe enjoyed the best quality of life possible. Chief Cob-Moo-Sa is still revered today. There is a memorial at Taylor Road and 144th Avenue in Elbridge Township, and a nearby lake and stream are named after him.

Despite the contributions of Cob-Moo-Sa and his peers, cultural differences existed between the Ottawa tribe and the white settlers that caused conflicts. For example, the idea of individual land ownership was a foreign concept to the Native Indian. Along with the encroachment of white settlers, many Indians would give up their land. Descendants of the Ottawa tribe still return to pay tribute to the rich history and culture of their ancestors.

## Early Infrastructure

Early roads in the County were rough and undeveloped. "Two tracks" for wagon trains made it difficult for travel on the sandy, hilly terrain near Lake Michigan, especially during the cold winters. The invention of the automobile changed everything, requiring hard surface roads be built to support this growing mode of transportation. The first mile of hard surface road in Oceana County was built through a grant from the State of Michigan in 1906-1907. The project was funded at \$1,000 per mile, was nine (9) feet wide, and ran from the corner of the Methodist Church in Mears west one (1) mile, to Beebe's Corners. The new road was so popular that the City of Hart and Golden Township began to build roads. Golden Township's first was also one (1) mile long and ran north from the Methodist Church in Mears.

The development of the automobile, and roads to support it, brought many changes to the lifestyles of County residents, including improving the access to basic health care. The two (2) hospitals developed enjoyed lengthy tenures as quality health care facilities. Oceana Hospital started out in a small house in the 1920's, on the corner of Courtland and Lincoln Streets in Hart. This was its home until 1954; the location was outgrown and moved over East Main Street. This building now operates as an assisted-care facility with medical offices. Oceana County also has a long-term care facility, known as the Medical Care Facility. The Medical Care Facility has 113 beds and provides outpatient physical therapy.

The other facility of note was known as Shelby Hospital. It was established in 1922 by two (2) nurses, because of the growing need for health care services in the Village. A new building was dedicated in 1925 to serve as the state-of-the-art hospital. Funding was raised through public clubs and donations came from private interests. In 1928, control was turned over to three (3) doctors, two from Shelby and one from Ludington. Shelby Village acquired the Hospital in 1938 and managed it through many changes. The building was added to in 1948 and 1964, and became the Lakeshore Community Hospital in 1969. Ownership was transferred to a non-profit corporation in July of 1984 to better serve area residents. Another expansion of the facility was completed in 1998. Today, Shelby Lakeshore is part of the Trinity/Mercy Health Partners group.

## Unique Recreational Resources

In 1919, Carrie Mears, daughter of lumber baron Charles Mears, donated 25.19 acres of land to be designated as a park. Silver Lake was named by Charles Mears, who in the 1880's threw a silver dollar into the lake, proclaiming "I christen thee Silver Lake." On December 13, 1920, the land was deeded to the State of Michigan to create Silver Lake State Park. Park development occurred slowly; an additional 191.25 acres was transferred by the United States Commerce Department in 1926. A new concession area and caretaker living quarters were added in 1927, and a boat livery with bait shop built in 1930. Growth tapered until after World War II, when a Master Plan was implemented. Less expensive automobile transportation, the proximity of the lake to the beautiful golden sand dunes, and the rise in popularity of camping and outdoor recreation resulted in a boom. Visitors began to flock to the area in the 1950's. Visitors now come from all around the world to visit the Park, consisting of roughly 3,000 acres. Charles Mears State Park, fourteen miles to the north, in Pentwater, was also established because Carrie Mears donated land to honor her father, Charles Mears.



The Double JJ Ranch, located outside Rothbury, is another recreation area attracting visitors globally, much like Silver Lake and Charles Mears State Parks. In the 1930's the property was a Girl Scout Camp. Following that it became the "Jack and Jill Ranch" and was primarily a dude ranch. Some years ago, it received a grant from the Michigan Jobs Commission for to further develop its properties. Today it is now the Double JJ Resort, covering nearly 600 acres. Amenities include an 18-Hole championship golf course, airfield, riding stables, horse boarding, a water park, condominiums and restaurants. The resort plays host to a music and arts festival each year that draws campers from around the globe. Proceeds from this event have a significant economic impact on the locale.

### **Historic Weather Events**

In September of 1986, Oceana County received a record seven to ten (7-10") inches of rain between Tuesday, September 9 and late Thursday, September 11. The deluge flooded most of the City of Hart and overwhelmed the Hart Lake dam. The dam was breached and then collapsed, causing a chain reaction of catastrophic events. The swollen 250-acre lake emptied into the Pentwater River in just a few hours. Extensive damage occurred to public and private property, roads washed away, and trees snapped in half by the rushing waters. The State Street Bridge downtown at Hart Lake and on U.S. 31 northbound over the Pentwater River each collapsed. Evacuations occurred and fortunately no one was seriously injured.

The winter of 2008-2009, with 170-3/4 inches of snow, was the snowiest ever recorded in Oceana County. As a result of late snow melt and early heavy spring rainfall, the worst flooding since 1986 occurred. The winter of 2013-2014 was the second most cold on record, with snowfall of over 140 inches. Coupled again with very late thawing of the ground and record early April rainfall of 10 inches in less than ten (10) days, Oceana County again saw record flooding and damage to public infrastructure.

### **Community Data and Analysis**

The following data provides an updated, detailed snapshot of the social, economic, physical and natural characteristics of Oceana County, background data important in making recreation-related decisions.

### **Demographics and Characteristics of Population**

Population data and related factors help provide a clearer picture of the makeup of the community. The following sections contrast the differences between 1970- 2010 U.S. Census of Population and Housing and the 2010 U.S. Census of General Population and Housing Characteristics.

#### ***Population Trends and Projections***

**Table 1** illustrates the actual census figures from 1980-2010 and population forecasts from 2015-2040 for each minor civil division (MCD) in Oceana County. Grant, Shelby, and Newfield Township are the most populated, followed closely by City of Hart and Shelby Village.

Oceana County Population Projections 2010-2030, shows current and future population assumptions for Oceana County. According to West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) population projections, Oceana County will decline gradually by about 4.23% or 1,124 persons over the

next twenty years, or from 26,570 in 2010 to 25,446 by 2030. These forecasts are based on recent trends on births, deaths, and migration rates. The information regarding these variables is provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Internal Revenue Service, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Population forecasts into the future are less reliable, a projected estimate of 26,570 persons by 2040. If trends are as projected, Oceana County might see a 6% decrease in population the next 30 years.

Oceana's County's numerous campgrounds, parks, bed-and-breakfasts, and other recreational facilities are a huge draw for tourists during peak season. Tourist season typically begins in mid-May and lasts through the end of September. Oceana County's population is estimated to swell to 37,872 though actual figures are difficult to predict. This simple projection was estimated by multiplying the 2010 average household size which was 2.58, by the total homes used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, which was 4,381 units in 2010. Actual numbers vary as many tourists stay at such campgrounds and other non-permanent facilities, not included in the 2010 Census figures.

### *Racial Characteristics*

**Table 2**, Racial Composition of Oceana County, shows that the racial distribution within Oceana County over the past three decades has not varied significantly. From 1980 to 2010, Oceana County saw a slight rise in those who identified as Black or African American from about 0.2% of the total population in 1980 to about 0.4% of the total population in 2010 or a 0.2% rise. For those who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, there was a rise from 1.0% of the total population in 1980 to 1.3% in 2000 then a 0.2% drop by 2010. Those who identified as Asian saw a slight rise in population between 1980 and 2010. Prior to 2010, data was not available for those identifying as Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander. People who identified as Two or More Races saw a gradual increase of about 4.3% between 1980 and 2000 to 8% of the total population then about a 6% decline between 2000 and 2010. As shown by the figures in table 2, Oceana County is less diverse than the State of Michigan in most categories. In 2010, those who identified as two or more races made up about 2.0% of Oceana County's total population and 2.3% of Michigan's total population. Those who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native made up 1.1% of Oceana County's total population, coming out ahead of the State of Michigan's percentage of total population by 0.5%.

As shown in **Table 2**, race and Ethnicity have been presented separately. According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), race and Hispanic origin (ethnicity) are separate and distinct concepts and when collecting these data via self-identification, two different questions must be used. The Census Bureau follows these standards. Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race. From 1990 to 2010, Oceana County realized a 7.2% growth in those who identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino from 6.5% of the total population in 1990 to 13.7% in 2010. The percentage of people who identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino in Oceana County is significantly higher than the State of Michigan's overall percentage of 4.4% total population.

**Table 1**

**Oceana County Population Trends and Projections  
1980-2040**

	Actual Census Figures				Forecasted Population					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Oceana County	22,002	22,454	26,873	26,570	26,150	25,913	25,678	25,446	25,215	24,987
Benona Township	1,203	1,133	1,520	1,437	1,424	1,411	1,398	1,385	1,373	1,361
Claybanks Township	733	679	831	777	769	762	755	748	742	735
Colfax Township	328	374	574	462	451	447	443	439	435	431
Crystal Township	602	658	832	838	819	812	804	797	790	783
Elbridge Township	899	820	1,233	971	957	948	939	931	922	914
Ferry Township	898	1,033	1,296	1,292	1,263	1,252	1,241	1,229	1,218	1,207
Golden Township	1,358	1,302	1,810	1,742	1,704	1,688	1,673	1,658	1,643	1,628
<b>Grant Township</b>	<b>2,366</b>	<b>2,578</b>	<b>2,932</b>	<b>2,976</b>	2,903	2,877	2,851	2,825	2,800	2,774
Greenwood Township	815	915	1,154	1,184	1,185	1,174	1,163	1,153	1,142	1,132
Hart Township	1,801	1,513	2,026	1,853	1,833	1,817	1,800	1,784	1,768	1,752
Leavitt Township	848	804	845	891	875	867	859	851	844	836
<b>Newfield Township</b>	<b>1,968</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>2,401</b>	2,357	2,336	2,315	2,294	2,273	2,253
Otto Township	426	404	662	826	805	798	791	783	776	769
Pentwater Township	1,424	1,422	1,513	1,515	1,502	1,488	1,474	1,461	1,448	1,435
<b>Shelby Township</b>	<b>3,506</b>	<b>3,692</b>	<b>3,951</b>	<b>4,069</b>	4,011	3,975	3,939	3,903	3,868	3,833
Weare Township	939	1,041	1,261	1,210	1,188	1,177	1,166	1,156	1,145	1,135
<b>City of Hart</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>1,942</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>2,126</b>	2,103	2,084	2,065	2,047	2,028	2,010
Hesperia Village(part)	529	586	590	615	611	605	600	594	589	584
New Era Village	534	520	461	451	448	444	440	436	432	428
Pentwater Village	1,165	1,050	958	857	848	840	833	825	818	810
Rothbury Village	522	407	416	432	422	419	415	411	407	404
<b>Shelby Village</b>	<b>1,624</b>	<b>1,871</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>2,065</b>	2,036	2,017	1,999	1,981	1,963	1,945
Walkerville Village	296	262	254	247	246	244	242	239	237	235

Source: West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) demographic and economic projections 2015-2040

**Table 2****Oceana County Racial Composition and Ethnicity  
1980-2010**

<b>RACE</b>	1980		1990		2000		2010		<b>Michigan 2010</b>	
White	20,901	95%	21,062	93.8%	24,284	90.4%	23,952	90.1%	7,803,120	78.9%
Black or African American	42	0.2%	67	0.3%	86	0.3%	119	0.4%	1,400,362	14.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	221	1.0%	284	1.3%	279	1.3%	285	1.1%	62,007	0.6%
Asian	33	0.1%	89	0.4%	67	0.2%	61	0.2%	238,199	2.4%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	0.0%	2,604	0.0%
Two or More Races	805	3.7%	952	4.2%	2,157	8.0%	531	2.0%	230,319	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	22,002		22,454		26,873		26,570		9,883,640	
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	1980		1990		2000		2010		<b>Michigan 2010</b>	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	N/A	N/A	1,468	6.5%	2,119	8.6%	3,629	13.7%	436,358	4.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino	N/A	N/A	20,986	93.5%	24,754	91.4%	22,941	86.3%	9,447,282	95.6%
<b>Total</b>	22,002		22,454		26,873		26,570		9,883,640	

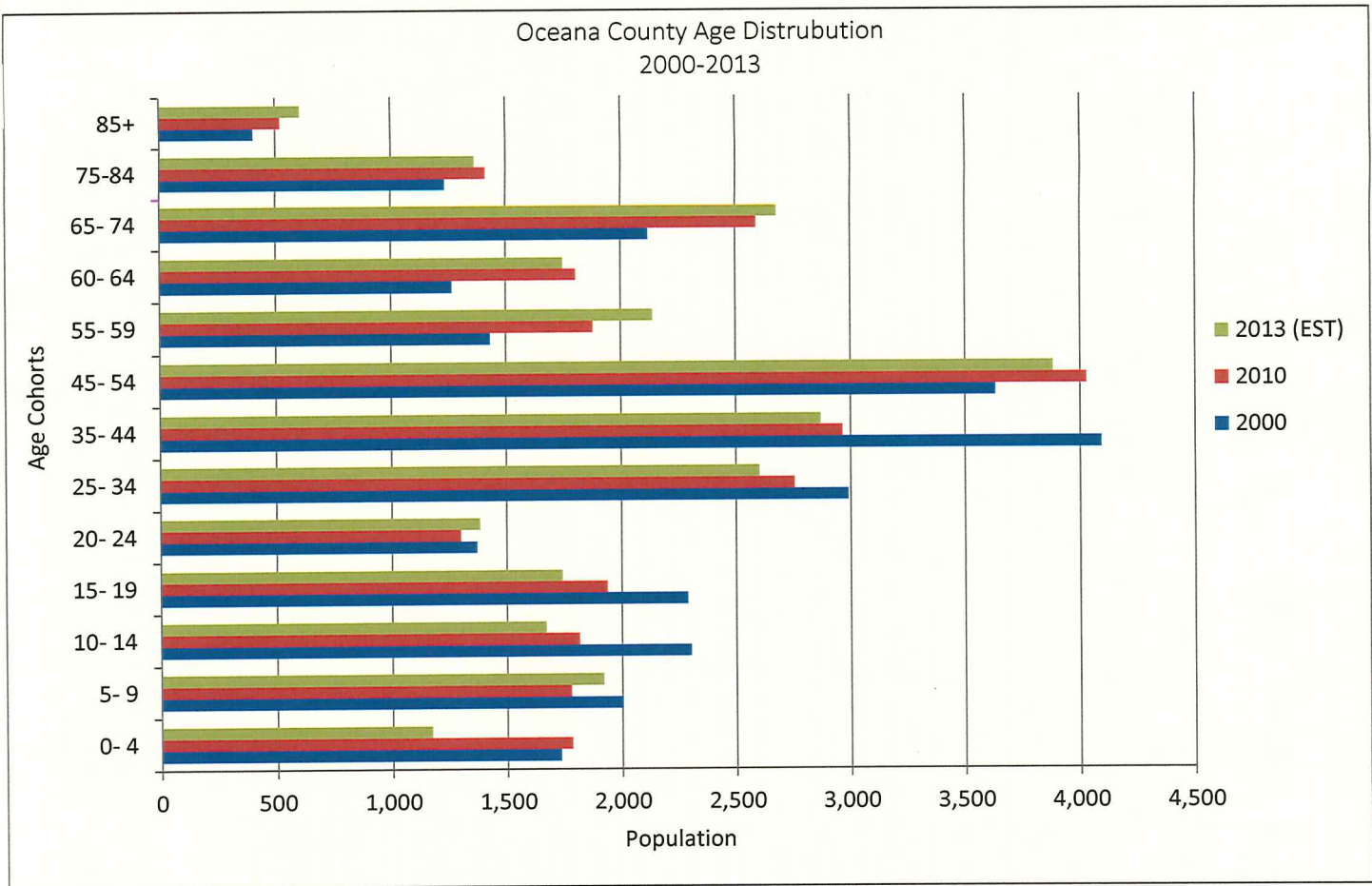
Source: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing  
2010 Census General Population and Housing Characteristics

**Age Distribution**

It is useful to note an increase or decrease in certain population groups, specifically the school age and the retirement age populations. These population groups can indicate whether there is an increased need for recreation services that cater to school-age children or senior citizens. Historically, these two groups have the most specialized recreational needs.

In 2013, as shown in **Figure 2**, 3,883 people were part of the 45-54 age group in and accounted for about 15 percent of the total population. Individuals in the 35-44 age group accounted for about 11% of the population, or 2,871 people, and made up the second largest age group in 2013. 65-74 year-olds came in third, at 2,680 or approximately 10% of the total population. The least populace was the 85+ age group, with a population of 608 residents and accounting for just 2% of the total population. The second least populace group were the 0- 4 year-olds, a population of 1,172 or about 5% of the population.

From 2000-2013 the population distribution for people ages 0-19 remained relatively stable, though there was a slight decline in 0-4 year-olds in the 2013 census estimates. Oceana County saw a decline in 20-24 year olds. From 2000 to 2013, the 25-34 and 35- 44 age groups declined in population, while the 45-54 year-olds increased in population. Populations of people aged 55-59, 60-64, and 65-74 grew slightly between 2000 and 2013. Those 65-74 years of age saw the largest growth over the 13 year period. Populations of people aged 75-84 and 85-and-over grew slightly between 2000 and 2013. Individuals in the 75-and-up group made up a smaller percentages of the overall population than did the group between 0-4.



**Table 3**

Oceana County Age Distribution 1980-2013					
Age	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013 (EST)
0- 4	1,806	1,767	1,733	1,782	1,172
5- 9	1,846	1,990	2,004	1,778	1,920
10- 14	2,002	1,825	2,303	1,814	1,671
15- 19	2,247	1,637	2,288	1,937	1,743
20- 24	1,559	1,116	1,371	1,300	1,384
25- 34	3,076	3,339	2,989	2,756	2,603
35- 44	2,454	3,212	4,094	2,966	2,871
45- 54	2,140	2,915	3,633	4,028	3,883
55- 59	1,120	1,065	1,432	1,879	2,140
60- 64	1,035	1,064	1,266	1,805	1,748
65- 74	1,682	1,864	2,120	2,591	2,680
75-84	764	956	1,235	1,412	1,364
85+	271	254	405	522	608
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,002</b>	<b>22,455</b>	<b>26,873</b>	<b>26,570</b>	<b>26,327</b>

Source: 1970, 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing  
 2010 Census Profile of General Pop and Housing Characteristics & 2011-2013 ACS Demographic and Housing EST

As shown in **Table 4**, the median age of Oceana County residents increased each year from 1980 to 2013. Neighboring counties and the state of Michigan followed a similar trend from 1980 to 2013, though Michigan residents were an average of about 12 years younger than Oceana County residents in 2013. According to **Table 5**, the distribution of men and women in Oceana County is nearly identical, with men and women each making up approximately 50% of the population. Figures are similar for 2000 and 2010.

**Table 4**

Oceana County & Selected Area Median Age 1980-2013					
County	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013 (EST)
Oceana	30.0	33.5	36.9	41.8	42.3
Muskegon	28.9	32.7	35.5	38.2	39.0
Newaygo	30.9	33.3	36.4	40.9	42.2
Mason	32.3	36.2	40.4	45.1	45.8
Michigan	28.8	32.6	37.3	38.9	39.4

*Source: 1970, 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing  
2010 Census Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics & 2011-2013 ACS Demographic & Housing EST*

**Table 5**

Oceana County Population by Sex 2000-2013						
	2000		2010		2013	
Male	13,544	50.4%	13,344	50.2%	13,171	50.0%
Female	13,329	49.6%	13,226	49.8%	13,156	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	26,873		26,570		26,327	

*Source: 1970, 1980, and 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing  
2010 Census Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics & 2011-2013 ACS Demographic and Housing EST*

## Income Distribution

**Table 6, Per Capita Income: Oceana County and Selected Areas**, illustrates per capita income (PCI) and how it compares with surrounding counties and the State of Michigan. The figures shows that Oceana has lagged behind surrounding counties, as well as the State averages, in terms of per capita income. Oceana County's 2012 PCI trailed Muskegon County, by \$1,954 or 9.57 percent. Further, Oceana County's 2012 PCI was \$6,507 below the state PCI, 26.05 percent. Many conclusions can be drawn from this, including that Oceana County residents may not have as much disposable income to spend on recreation, compared to other areas of the region or the state. Further, lack of available resources shows that there is a heightened need for grant assistance to the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission. County officials have taken these factors into consideration when determining future recreation needs and policies regarding the accessibility of county facilities. County residents enjoy most park amenities free of charge. Residents and visitors are charged a small fee to camp at rustic and improved sites at Black Lake County Park. This policy allows for equitable access to all county residents (and non-residents) regardless of income level, age, or any other socio-economic factors.

Fee-based facilities have not received widespread support unless the fee(s) are levied against non-resident visitors. The County has not considered creating a fee structure that differentiates from residents or non-residents due to the potential it may discourage visitors, and therefore negatively impact the local business community. This "resident-nonresident" fee structure has been adopted in other local and county facilities across Michigan with mixed results.

**Table 6**

Oceana County & Selected Area Per Capita Income 1979-2012					
	1979	1989	1999	2009	2012
Oceana	\$5,627	\$9,582	\$15,878	\$17,661	\$18,470
Muskegon	\$6,358	\$11,345	\$17,967	\$19,421	\$20,424
Newaygo	\$5,696	\$10,307	\$16,976	\$20,661	\$20,003
Mason	\$6,192	\$10,848	\$17,713	\$21,574	\$22,747
Michigan	\$11,696	\$14,154	\$22,168	\$24,724	\$24,977

*Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing  
2007-2009 Selected Economic Characteristics ACS 3 Yr EST & 2010- 2012 Selected Economic Characteristics ACS 3 Yr EST*

## Local Economy and Employment

Oceana County's economic conditions are predicated on its two (2) biggest staples, agriculture and tourism. Tourism is bolstered by the attraction of many residents from outside the county to the Local, County and State Parks. Oceana County's Tourism organizations are very active in promoting the County as a recreation destination. Oceana County is widely recognized for its agricultural production, a leader in fruits and vegetables, and most notably, asparagus and cherries. These two main sources of economic revenue provide spin-offs in the form of many other services and indirectly-related industries. Because of the relative proximity to the urban area of Muskegon County, some people relocate to the more-pristine areas of Oceana County, deciding to commute to the "city." As of 2000, approximately 55 percent of Oceana County's workers (14,450 persons) lived in Oceana County (2000 Regional Economic Information System). Of those not working in Oceana County, approximately 25 percent are employed in Muskegon County, 5 percent in Mason County, 8 percent in Newaygo County, and 7 percent in other counties. This information is based on place-of-residence information for those living in Oceana County.

According to the Regional Economic Information System, Oceana County is very similar to the rest of the five-county region in that the service sector employs the most people in the county, 18 percent, for 1999. Following close behind is retail employing about 16 percent and government employing about 14 percent of those working in Oceana County. The manufacturing sector employs 13 percent. In general, about 4 of 5 people employed in the county work in one of the two previously-named industries. The other one in five is employed in: construction, transportation, wholesale, or financial/investment/real estate. Service and retail employment is on the rise, with government employment remaining steady. This information is based on place-of-work and takes into account those working in Oceana County, regardless of their place of residence.

The number of unemployed has risen dramatically in the past few years. The 2000 Census shows a 6.9% unemployment rate, which is now at 20% and appears to still be on the increase. This is in part due to the poor economic conditions of the entire state at this time. The concern is whether the County economy is diverse enough to support a long term rate of high unemployment.

Oceana County showed a slight decrease in its poverty rate from 1990 to 2000. If taken into account the 3,000-4,000 migrant laborers, many of whom are "settling out" now, this figure will probably change significantly. An increased median age (beyond middle age) is associated with increased rates of poverty in many rural communities; and as the population chart indicates, there is a large increase in the number of 65-and-older population.

Travel time to work is another indicator of future employment trends. The largest sectors of commuters in Oceana County are those that travel less than twenty minutes to work or those who work from home (55 percent of the total workforce). There is also a large sector of workers traveling between 20 and 39 minutes to work (38 percent of the total workforce). The information from the 2000 U.S. Census supports the theory that those 38 percent of individuals are probably not working in Oceana County.



## Transportation

The transportation system is often described as the physical and operational infrastructure which accomplishes the movement of people and goods from place to place. Transportation systems are broken into a number of subsystems known as modes (such as highway, rail, air pedestrian, waterborne, biking, etc.) and involve different types of vehicles and routes.

Like many rural and suburban areas, the primary mode of transportation in Oceana County is vehicular traffic (Figure 3, page 22). For ease of planning, engineering, maintenance, and funding, roadways are classified according to their function. The following is a list of basic roadway classifications:

- **Freeways:** Roads that provide largely uninterrupted travel, often using partial or full access control, and are designed for high speeds.
- **Arterials:** Major through roads that are expected to carry large volumes of traffic. Arterials are often divided into major and minor arterials, and rural and urban arterials.
- **Collectors:** A low-to-moderate capacity road which serves to move traffic from local streets to arterial roads. Unlike arterials, collector roads are designed to provide access to residential properties.
- **Local Roads:** Provide access to resources, farms and residences for short distances at low speeds. These roads have the lowest speed limit, and carry low volumes of traffic. In some areas, these roads may be unpaved.

**Table 7**

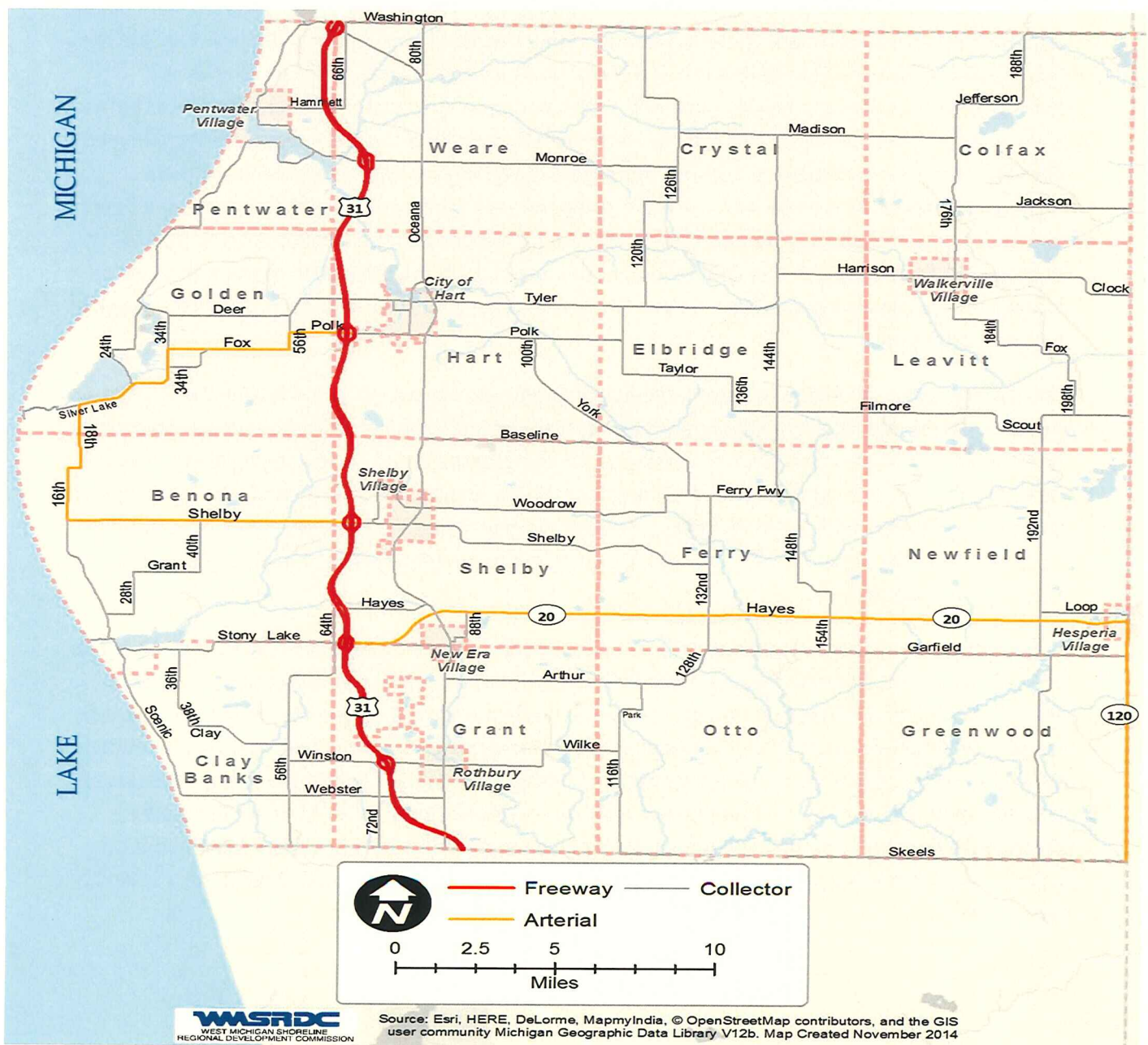
Oceana County has one U.S. highway route, US-31, and two State roadways, M-20 and M-120. US-31 also has two business routes off of the main highway designed to facilitate travel into commercial and industrial areas. US-31 serves as the main north-south corridor through the County and links Oceana County with other urban, rural, and suburban areas along Lake Michigan. M-20 is an east-west corridor that runs through the southern part of the county. M-20 eventually links up M-37 and US-131, two major north-south routes through the State.

Oceana County Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts 2013	
<b>Route US-31</b>	
N JCT US-31 BR Montague to Winston Rd	18,558
Winston Rd to JCT M-20	9,620
JCT M-20 to Shelby Rd	10,304
Shelby Rd to US-31 BR Hart	8,512
US-31 BR Hart to S JCT US-31 BR Pentwater	7,363
N JCT US-31 Pentwater to Old US-31	8,676
<b>Route USBR-31</b>	
S JCT US-31 Pentwater to Long Bridge Rd	3,017
Long Bridge Rd to E Village Limit Pentwater at Turn	3,123
E Village Limit Pentwater at Turn to N Village Limit Pentwater	2,950
N Village Limit Pentwater to N JCT US-31 Pentwater	2,206
<b>Route M-20</b>	
Old US-31 to 154 <sup>th</sup> AVE	2,154
154 <sup>th</sup> Ave to West Hesperia Village Limit	2,756
West Hesperia Village Limit to JCT M-120	3,322
<i>Source: Michigan Department of Transportation Traffic Estimates, Traffic Monitoring Information System 2014</i>	

M-120 proceeds between the southeastern corner of the county and the Village of Hesperia. **Table 7**, Oceana County Traffic Counts on U.S. and State M- Routes, provides vehicle traffic information on the most heavily traveled roads.

As with other counties, transportation plays a key role in where development has and will take place. Industrial and commercial businesses require access to good roads. Accordingly, most past and planned development has aligned itself with the US-31 and Oceana Drive (Business Route 31) corridors. The importance of farming and agriculture in the County means that road maintenance is extremely important. It is also crucial to the tourism industry in the County. The success of all sectors of the economy is reliant on the condition of the road network.

**Figure 2- Oceana County Transportation System**



## Natural Features

The natural features in Oceana County continue to be important factors in the planning process as these features aid in determining whether or not the site is suitable for recreational development. They are also often cited as an important reason why people choose to live in Oceana County. Further, these features are important in contributing to a positive quality of life for residents. Like anywhere else, if not managed properly with a goal of sustainability, Oceana's enticing natural features may be lost or damaged.

## Climate

Due to its proximity to Lake Michigan, Oceana County experiences unique climate conditions. Lake Michigan has a moderating effect on the climate. Summers are cooler and winters are milder along the lakeshore than seasons occurring further inland. The difference is noticeable when comparing average daily temperatures between the communities of Montague, located along the lakeshore, and Hesperia, approximately 30 miles inland. These two communities are used for comparison because they are the closest areas to Oceana County that complete historic data was available. The data for the two communities illustrates that during the months of June, July, and August, Hesperia experiences between a two and three degree higher average daily maximum temperature than Montague. During the year, Hesperia experiences between a one and two degree higher daily maximum temperature than Montague. In terms of average daily minimum temperatures, Montague's are higher across the board for the entire year than those temperatures reported for Hesperia. These climatic differences are illustrated in **Tables 8 and 9**. The data reflects norms based upon the 1981-2010 record period of the Michigan State Climatologist's Office for the City of Montague and 1981-2010 records for the Village of Hesperia, Michigan.

The presence of Lake Michigan causes a climatic phenomenon known as "lake effect" snow. As cold air passes over Lake Michigan's warm water, the air is warmed and gains moisture from lake evaporation. The warmed, moisture-laden air rises, forms clouds, and produces snow along the colder shoreline of Lake Michigan as far as 40 miles inland. Climatologists have identified a snow-belt along the lakeshore counties, especially the counties Muskegon, Ottawa, Allegan, and Van Buren, whose average seasonal snow fall is over 90 inches (Eichenlaub 177). Oceana County experiences this phenomena as well but to a somewhat lesser degree.

Michigan's winter climate is dominated by cold Continental polar or milder Pacific air masses. They are fairly dry air masses because they have either formed over a landmass or have lost moisture due to orographic uplift. On occasion, tropical air masses dominate Michigan's summer climate. Tropical air masses are moist and account for Michigan's humid summer weather (Eichenlaub 4). Oceana County's climate is further shaped by the presence of Lake Michigan. When the prevailing westerly winds cross Lake Michigan, Oceana County's climate has semi-marine modifications to it. Marine climates are characterized by milder temperatures, increased precipitation, and higher and more sustained wind speeds. The aforementioned modifications are the "lake effects" with which Oceana County residents are familiar.

Precipitation is fairly well distributed throughout the year. The growing season, May through September, receives an average of 3.50 inches per month as reported for the City of Hart. May and September are the wettest months, with 3.616 and 3.801 inches of precipitation, respectively. February is the driest month in Hart with 1.881 inches of precipitation reported, though February receives the second highest annual total snowfall total. January averages the highest annual snowfall of any other month of the year.

**Table 8**

Hesperia Village Climatic Data 1981-2010													
Temperature Data	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Maximum Temperature (F)	30.37	33.38	43.41	56.98	67.87	77.40	81.69	80.11	72.34	59.23	46.43	34.01	56.94
Average Minimum Temperature (F)	14.26	15.01	21.44	32.63	41.87	51.57	56.17	55.60	46.82	36.56	28.64	19.66	35.01
<b>Precipitation &amp; Snowfall</b>													
Annual Total Precipitation (Inches)	2.109	1.461	2.297	2.983	3.667	3.328	2.519	3.592	3.721	3.741	3.072	2.531	35.021
Annual Total Snowfall (Inches)	20.83	13.08	8.17	3.33	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.60	6.87	22.23	71.14

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office, Climate Statistics West Central Lower Division, Hesperia, MI 1981-2010

**Table 9**

City of Montague Climatic Data 1981-2010													
Temperature Data	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Maximum Temperature (F)	30.50	33.00	42.73	55.87	66.60	75.43	79.59	78.19	71.06	58.81	46.01	34.48	56.02
Average Minimum Temperature (F)	17.92	18.79	24.39	33.86	42.98	52.46	57.03	56.76	49.90	40.35	31.98	23.01	37.46
<b>Precipitation &amp; Snowfall</b>													
Annual Total Precipitation (Inches)	1.490	1.450	2.230	3.291	3.253	2.816	2.747	3.466	3.698	3.588	3.459	1.958	33.349
Annual Total Snowfall (Inches)	25.80	17.05	8.24	3.33	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.50	4.73	20.86	74.55

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office, Climate Statistics West Central Lower Division, Montague, MI 1981-2010

**Table 10**

**City of Hart Climatic Data  
1981-2010**

<b>Temperature Data</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Maximum Temperature (F)	29.44	32.38	41.63	54.84	66.11	75.27	79.95	77.82	70.49	57.66	45.23	33.77	55.38
Average Minimum Temperature (F)	16.29	17.20	23.54	34.27	43.61	53.45	58.26	57.44	49.72	38.86	30.64	21.53	37.07
<b>Precipitation &amp; Snowfall</b>													
Annual Total Precipitation (Inches)	2.479	1.881	2.238	2.911	3.616	3.502	3.079	3.479	3.801	3.610	3.445	2.706	36.746
Annual Total Snowfall (Inches)	26.86	19.01	6.98	3.55	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.80	4.92	23.47	81.65

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office, Climate Statistics West Central Lower Division, Hart, MI 1981-2010

**Topography**

The topography of Oceana County is the result of complex glacial processes. The Wisconsin glacial ice sheet, and more specifically its Lake Michigan Lobe, covered the western portion of Michigan approximately 8 to 12 thousand years ago. This topography is quite varied because of a number of natural features that are present in the County. The most prominent of these features (and probably the most well-known) are the dune formations located in the western part of the County near Lake Michigan. These fragile and sensitive areas are particularly important to the overall economy because of their relationship to tourism. These areas should be closely monitored because of their relative importance to the county. Inland topography has a rolling characteristic as a portion of a major moraine is located in the county. The retreat and subsequent activity of the most previous glacial action is responsible for the relatively large amount of relief both from east to west and north to south.

Any alterations to the natural topography affects natural drainage systems, therefore where possible, all development should integrate the natural topography to reduce costly storm water management systems and construction methods to control drainage and sedimentation.

**Water Features**

Oceana County has many surface water features, including five (5) rivers and 65 lakes. The three (3) largest inland lakes in the County are Silver, Pentwater and Stony Lakes. Rivers include: North/South Branches - Pentwater River; North/South Branches - White River; South Branch - Pere Marquette River.

The Silver Lake watershed includes Silver Creek, Upper and Lower Silver Lakes, and Lake Holiday. The area is bounded on the west by the world's largest shifting sand dunes. High-density development around these lakes has led to numerous water quality issues. A number of citizen groups and interested individuals have partnered with Grand Valley State University, the USGS and MI Department of Environmental Quality, performing ongoing studies to identify these issues and establish policy. It is through all of these efforts that aquatic habitat and water quality will be restored.

In 2009, Benona and Claybanks Township residents and officials formed a group called the Stony Lake Improvement Board, and with assistance of the DEQ, developed the “Stony Lake Improvement Plan”. It is hoped that this group will undertake the effort to fund and write a management plan for the entire Stony Creek watershed, entirely located with the Benona/Claybanks Coastal Zone managed by the U.S. EPA, Michigan D.E.Q. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

The Pentwater River Watershed includes Pentwater Lake and both branches of the River. The program is coordinated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a collaboration between the Oceana County Conservation District, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Grand Valley State University's Water Resources Institute, and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. The project has significant linkages to local governments and private citizen groups that meet continually to discuss water quality issues and establish policies to protect its environs.

In 1975, the Natural Resources Commission also designated the White River (North and South Branches) and many of its tributaries as “Scenic, Wild or Natural”, (See Figure 4) in accordance with the Natural River Act (Public Act 231 of 1970). These are defined as waters in an agricultural, scenic or wild settings. The Natural River Act of 1970 identified rivers, streams and creeks needing protection from unwise use, exploitation and development (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Natural Rivers Zoning Program).

The South Branch of the Pere Marquette River flows through a very small portion of Oceana County, in the upper northeast sections of Colfax Township. There is a formal Watershed Management Plan for the Pere Marquette, designated a “Natural River”.

In 2009, the 667-page “White River Watershed Management Plan” was adopted. The WRWMP covers the North and South Branches of the White River, most of its tributaries, and White Lake, which connects with Lake Michigan. A result of nine (9) years of research and study, it was a collaborative effort by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Natural Resources, Grand Valley State University’s Annis Water Research Institute, many scientists, biologists and volunteers.

The WRWMP includes most of Newaygo, Oceana and Muskegon Counties and provides the blueprint for protection, preservation and restoration. Without proper resource protection and management, harmful materials from roadways, lawn care chemicals, farms, residential sewage and nutrients easily enter these waterways. In addition, siltation and eutrophication are harmful effects of erosion and polluted runoff that also have negative impacts. The White River Watershed map in **Figure 4** shows the vast amount of land and waterways that are included and affected, and why effectively managing this in Oceana County is critical.

Finally, Oceana County has many miles of County Drains. These “drains” help to handle additional water run-off in areas where soils may not be conducive to rapid absorption. The drains are monitored and managed through Assessment Districts by the Oceana County Drain Commission. In some instances, a

Natural-River designated waterway lies within a drain district, requiring additional coordinated restoration, protection and maintenance activities.

Figure 4

# Trout Streams and Lakes

## White River Watershed

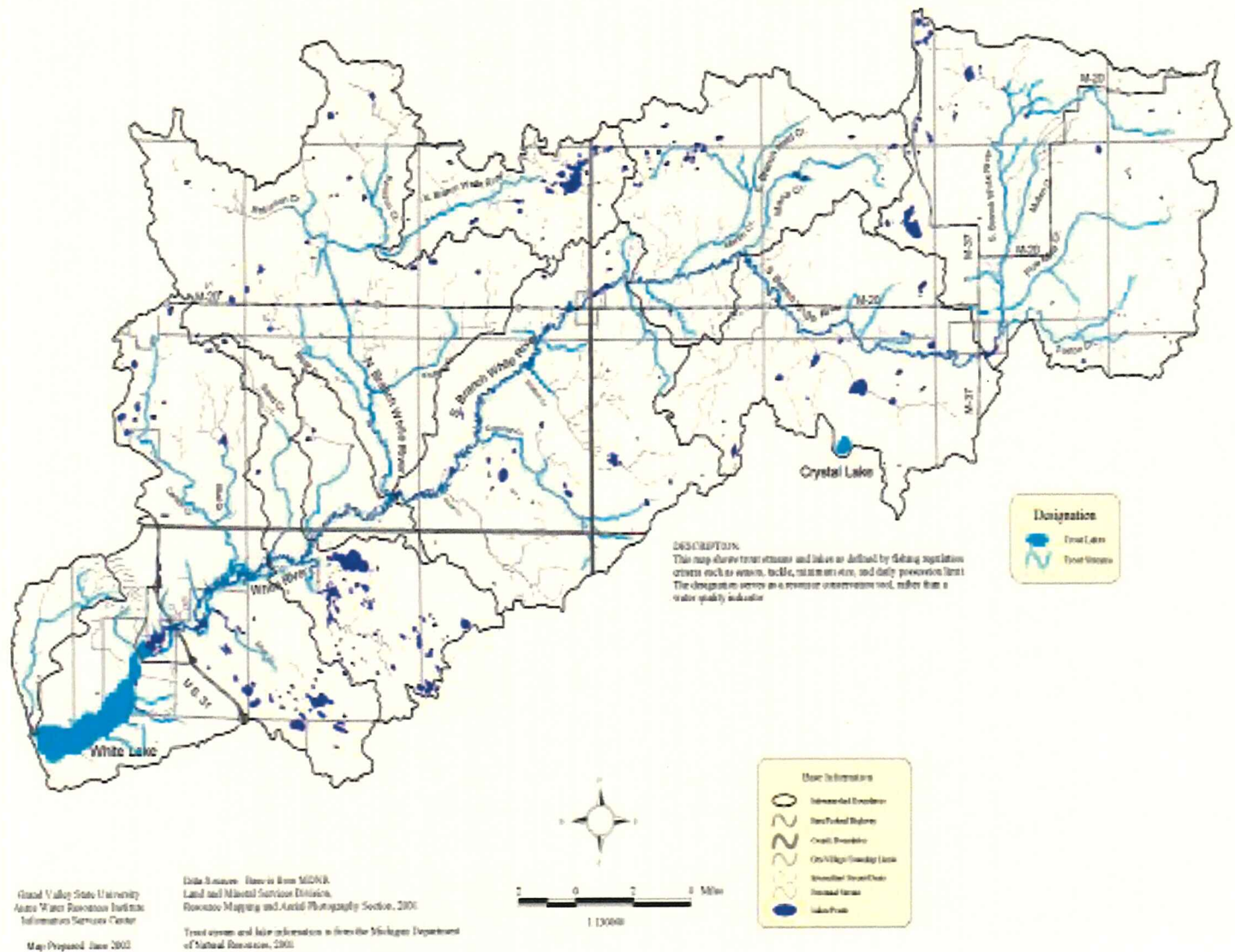


Figure 17. Trout Streams and Lakes in the White River Watershed. Produced by AWRI-GVSU, June 2002.

## *Soils*

For the majority of rural Michigan, soil, and the type of development it allows or restricts, is a key factor in determining where recreation and recreation facilities development will occur. The suitability of soils for roads, foundations, wells, and septic systems is critical in determining the location and intensity of development. Various soil characteristics such as depth, permeability, wetness, shrink-swell potential, erosion potential, slope, and weight-bearing capacity are all factors that make a soil suitable or unsuitable for a given use. Often, the soil characteristics that create development limitations can be overcome by appropriate design and management.

Soil surveys determine the extent of flood prone areas, access to aquifers, erosion and sedimentation potential, ability to site septic tanks and absorption fields, and the limitations for construction. Soil information is important because it graphically depicts areas which should or should not be developed in a particular manner, based upon the soil's suitability. In some cases, mitigation measures can be used to alleviate some or all of the limitations for a particular soil type. However, these measures are often costly, both to the developer/owner, and to society at large (via the natural environment). Therefore, soil maps are an important guide for siting future recreational development.

There are eleven major soil groupings associated with Oceana County's Soil Survey and the Oceana County Comprehensive Plan. Areas of "Nearly Level to Very Steep", "Moderately Well Drained to Excessively Drained Soils" and "Areas of Dune Land" make up about six (6%) percent of the County, used as woodland. Erosion hazard and seedling mortality are the major management concerns as these soils are generally unsuited to cropland, are poorly suited or not suited at all for pasture.

Areas of "Nearly Level to Very Steep, Excessively Drained, Moderately Well-Drained, and "Poorly Drained" soils make up about 23 percent of the County. Erosion hazard, hazard of wind throw, and seeding mortality are the major management concerns. Some of these soils are suitable as cropland. If cultivated crops are grown, management concerns are soil blowing, water erosion and seasonal wetness.

Areas of "Nearly Level to Very Steep, Excessively Drained and Well-Drained" soils account for about 60 percent of the county. These soils are suited to cropland and orchards. Water erosion, a low content of organic matter, limited available water capacity, seasonal wetness, and land slope are the major management concerns. If the soils are used as woodland, seedling mortality is the major management concern. The erosion hazard is also a management concern in rolling to very steep areas.

Areas of "Nearly Level to Steep, Well-Drained and Somewhat Poorly-Drained, and Very Poorly-Drained" soils comprise about seven (7%) percent of the county. These soils are used as cropland. Soil blowing, water erosion, seasonal wetness, compaction, and land slope are major management concerns. If the soils are used as woodlands, the hazard of wind throw and seedling mortality are the major management concerns.



Finally, areas of “Nearly Level, Very Poorly-Drained, and Poorly Drained” soils accounts for roughly four (4%) percent of the county. These soils are used as woodland. Seedling mortality and the hazard of wind throw are the major management concerns.

Oceana County has predominantly sandy soils, characteristic of west Michigan areas adjacent to and near Lake Michigan. Prime farmland is prevalent, but as agriculture is the cornerstone of the County's economy, these areas must be preserved. This requirement should dictate that any new residential or recreational development be directed elsewhere within the County.

## County Government

Oceana County is governed by a County Board of Commissioners consisting of seven (7) members that are elected to 2-year terms. The Board meets regularly on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at 2:00 p.m. Special meetings are scheduled as circumstances warrant.

The ten-member Parks and Recreation Commission discusses and makes decision related to recreation issues. The Commission, created as a result of Michigan Public Act 261 of 1965 on August 26, 1968, has an annual budget and is responsible for the upkeep and general day-to-day functions of the County Parks system.

The Parks and Recreation Commission receives direction from the County Board (as a result of their representation on the Parks and Recreation Commission), but acts as an autonomous unit. The By-Laws of the Commission dictate that certain members must be appointed from other County departments: one seat each filled from the Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, Drain Commission and Road Commission. The remaining six (6) members are not affiliated with a County department, are at-large members and serve staggered 3-year terms.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has a limited annual budget of less than \$40,000. There are numerous volunteers and private groups that work tirelessly with Commissioners to complete new projects and keep the parks clean.

## Recreational Analysis

### Recreational Standards

The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission's main function is to manage the physical assets and parks within the County's system. Because the main focus is on facilities, little programming information is necessary to evaluate how the Commission is filling the Public's needs.

**Table 11** provides a guide to future recreational development. In terms of the Oceana County Park system, there is an adequate amount of parkland based on industry guidelines. The William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail State Park is a jewel in the crown of Oceana County. There are few counties in the United States that have a population of 26,000 residents and possess such a significant trail. The residents and visitors are fortunate to have such a beautiful, functional facility.

**Table 11**

The National Recreation and Park Association standards recommend six to ten (6-10) acres of developed open space/parkland per 1,000 residents. This translates to approximately 152 to 260 acres for the 26,000+ residents of Oceana County.

Oceana County Recreation Facility Standards			
	Number of Units per Population	Number of Units in Oceana County	Facility Deficiency
Trails	1 System per Region	2 trail systems	No
Open Space	6-10 acres per 1,000	194 acres	No

*Source: Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines from the National Recreation and Park Association*

While all of the acreage in Oceana County is not fully developed, it can be said that all lands are accessible to the public. The 194 acres mentioned in **Table 11** are just County Park facilities. Not included are Village, City, Township and State Parks, or Federal areas which number in the thousands of acres as well. The County is therefore not deficient in terms of parks and open space available to residents. The Oceana County Parks and Recreation System is, however, very deficient in land adjacent to and with access to Lake Michigan available at no cost to users. Accordingly, access to the roughly 26 miles of Lake Michigan lakeshore is a top priority of residents and County officials. It is an important goal that residents and visitors have orderly and affordable access to Lake Michigan.

**Recreation Facility Inventory**

All existing recreation facilities in Oceana County have been re-inventoried to provide a broad view of the opportunities from which residents may choose. This section is designed to give direction and provide information to the recreation decision-makers in Oceana County. The facilities have been numbered (reference number in parenthesis) and listed in **Figure 5 - Oceana County Base Map and Recreation Facilities**.

**County Parks**

**Black Lake County Park (1)**, located on one hundred acres in Colfax Township, is a rustic overnight camping facility. Housing approximately fifteen sites, campers are charged \$10 per night. Campsites are located near the water, providing an area to fish, swim, or boat. There is an electric pump for water, Port-A-John facilities and an on-site manager that collects the fees. The campground itself makes up a very small percentage of the total park land. The Parks and Recreation Commission continues to discuss enlarging the camping area and adding more amenities. In 2008 the Parks and Recreation Commission contracted Wilson Forestry to write a Forest Management Plan for this park (and other County Parks) to insure its ecological, economic, recreational and aesthetic sustainability.

**Cedar Point County Park (2)**, located on the border of Golden and Pentwater Townships, is two-tiered and 3.5 acres in size. The upland area offers paved parking, picnic tables, grilles and Port-A-John. A stairway from the low-bluff dune provides access to 133 beachfront feet on Lake Michigan. The park is

heavily used from May through September. Planned improvements include a handicap-accessible ramp/stairway and boardwalk for easier access through the dune to the beach.

**Crystal Valley County Park (3)**, located in Crystal Township, is a multi-purpose recreation area of approximately ten (10) acres. Numerous unique natural features include Crystal Creek, which is dammed near the back of the property, forming Crystal Valley Pond. The pond is relatively shallow but offers swimming, fishing, and boating opportunities. In 2007, the County received a grant to completely upgrade the park. The park received a new tennis/basketball court and softball diamond. Foot trails wind through the park and a paved walkway runs along the pond to the dam where a new fishing deck was built. There are several picnic areas, including one with a covered pavilion having electrical service. Infrastructure improvements included a new well and irrigation system, fenced playground with equipment for small children and a larger playground for older children. Soccer goals have also installed. This park may be the most heavily used in the County's system.

**Doolittle County Park (4)**, is a wooded 40-acre parcel located in Hart Township adjacent to Gales Pond County Park. In 2008, the local Eagle Scout troop asked and received permission to blaze hiking trails and then provided natural feature signs. The site now also has a picnic table. It is anticipated that this park will continue to be used for hiking and passive recreation. The County's 2008 Forest Management Plan includes this park.

**Gales Pond County Park (5)**, located in Elbridge Township, consists of just under nineteen acres. A 500-foot handicap-accessible boardwalk along the west side edge of the pond was constructed with the assistance MDNR grant funds. It has turn-outs with bench seats, extends across Huftile Creek and links with a nature trail/foot path. The trail continues around the pond, crosses Fillmore Road and winds through the northern part of the property and the bridge across Huftile Creek. There are picnic tables and grilles located near the undeveloped parking area and trailhead. Signage explaining the history of Gales Pond and its marked trails make the Park an ideal one and used frequently by local schools for science/field trips. The park is included in the 2008 Oceana County Forest Management Plan.

In 2012, Fillmore Road that bisects the Park received a new timber bridge deck over the dam's spillway, which again opened the park to through-traffic. Major improvements to the road, pond and dam embankments were undertaken and completed in 2013.

**Marshville Dam County Park (6)**, is an undeveloped ten (10) acre park on Stony Creek in Benona Township. This lovely park is used mostly for fishing and hiking, nature study and photography. Overnight camping is not permitted. Because of its rather remote location, the Park has been left undeveloped and in its natural state. It too is included in the County's Forest Management Plan. The removal of the remainder of the dam is planned and will reconnect miles of cold-water fish habitat to Stony Lake and Lake Michigan.

**Mill Pond County Park (7)**, is located in Ferry Township along the North Branch of the White River. This seven (7) acre facility is used for outdoor events, picnics, fishing and swimming. There is a considerable amount of open space for hiking and observing nature. In 2008 MDOT grant funding made possible construction of a new bridge on Loop Road over the North Branch at the park entrance. A grant from

the MNRTF in 2013 paid for major improvements that included a covered pavilion, canoe/kayak launch, new picnic tables, grilles, playground equipment and expanded parking.

**Stony Lake County Park (8)**, is primarily a lake access site of roughly eight (8) acres located in Claybanks Township. The 1/4-mile long, rather steep access road leads down to the boat launch area having a permanent concrete ramp and a “T” dock for fishing. On the upper level, the park entrance road forms a circle drive providing access to several picnic locations. In season there is a portable restroom. Stony Lake Lutheran Bible Camp lies adjacent to the Park.

### *Other Facilities (Township/Local Parks)*

Other park and recreation facilities in Oceana County that are not managed by the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission are listed here for reference.

**Acker Lake Park (9)**, a boat launch and campground area, is located in Greenwood Township.

**Benona Township Park (10)**, located on approximately three (3) acres in Benona Township, offers a picnic area, playground equipment, baseball/softball diamond, Port-A-John, and access to Stony Channel for tubes and kayakers.

**Campbell Lake Township Park (11)**, located on less than an acre on the border between Leavitt and Newfield Townships, offers a primitive launch site for boats and canoes. The bathroom facilities and hand pump have fallen into disrepair at this facility.

**Claybanks Township Park (12)**, spanning over 80 acres, is well known for its campground facilities. There are numerous camping sites having picnic tables, grilles, fire pits and 2 water wells. Thirty of the camp sites have electric service. The park has ½ mile of Lake Michigan beach and a nice overlook area. The Park serves as a back-up camping facility when Silver Lake State Park is full.

**Colfax Township Park (13)**, is a small facility lying north of Walkerville on School Section Lake that has a nice beach with swim area and Port-A-John in season. The Township is discussing construction of a permanent boat launch here. There is a fee-based private campground located just across the street.

**Crystal Valley Ski Trail (14)** offers nearly 2,000 acres of contiguous federal land. The trail system consists of 4 loops, providing 9.6 miles of easy-to-most-difficult cross-country skiing. Hiking is permitted during non-snow months. The trail is marked with blue-diamond shaped confidence markers on trees, as well as difficulty and caution signs. During the skiing season the trails are groomed by volunteers.

**Golden Twp. Lake Michigan Park (15)**, located in Section 36, Golden Township, provides public access to Lake Michigan beachfront and Silver Creek. Used mainly as a swimming area, there is paved parking lot and Port-A-John facilities.

**Golden Twp. at Silver Lake State Park (16)**, located in Section 31 of Golden Township, is an open space under development. It is currently used as a staging area for community events such as the Apple and BBQ Festival held in early September each year.

**John Gurney Park (17)**, located on 17 acres in the City of Hart is used mainly for activities such as baseball, softball and tennis. The park offers day and overnight camping sites and picnic areas, along with permanent restroom and shower facilities. There are areas to boat and fish, as well as a lovely beach and swimming area on Hart Lake. This is a very popular park with camp sites often booked months in advance.

**Hart Commons Park (18)**, overlooks Hart Lake and often used for concerts and other public gatherings.

**Johnson Square Park (19)**, located in downtown Mears, plays host each July to the Mears Art Fair. Weddings and music events are often staged in its gazebo.

**Longbridge Fishing Platform (20)**, located on Longbridge Road over the Pentwater River, offers parking and handicap-accessible angling opportunities. The platform was built next to the bridge with the aid of MDNR grant funding and was dedicated in September of 2014.

**Charles Mears State Park (21)**, located on Lake Michigan in the Village of Pentwater, is a heavily used, year-round State Park. This ADA-conformant facility provides easy access to Lake Michigan and fishing along the Pentwater Channel pier. In addition to the extensive beach and swimming area, there are hiking trails, picnic areas and a concession. The camping facilities are also heavily used and in very good condition. This park draws people from all over because of the beautiful locale and facilities.

**Newfield Township Park (22)**, is a small public access site on Hightower Lake used mainly as a primitive boat launch having a small sandy beach. The park is located at the northwest side of the lake.

**Pentwater Pathways (23)** is located in the Pere Marquette State Forest, is maintained by the Oceana County Cross-Country Ski Association and the Wildlife Division of the MDNR. The trail system supports cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking.

**Pines Point National Forest Campground (24)**, located in the southeast corner of Oceana County, is a very large park within the Manistee National Forest. The park offers camping sites, picnic areas, and non-motorized watercraft and fishing access points along the White River. The park has restroom facilities also and those wishing to utilize the camp sites pay a minimal fee to do so. An interpretive nature trail has been completed and equestrian trails throughout the Park and Forest are in development. The park is the most heavily used on the east side of the County.

**Round Lake Park (25)**, located about 1.5 miles north of Mears, is a small park used mainly by picnic-goers and anglers. There is no beach area.

**Silver Lake State Park (26)**, covering nearly 3,000 acres in Golden Township, offers many amenities and opportunities for recreation. Overnight camping is a major draw, attracting tourists from around the globe. The Park encompasses the Silver Lake Sand Dune complex that includes an ORV Area, a Pedestrian-Only area, and a commercial interpretive dune ride. There is a designated swimming area, picnic grounds, boating access, and large blocks of forestland for hiking and hunting. Considerable residential and commercial development exists around the Park, and congestion will occur in the

summer, on weekends and holidays during peak season. The boating access site is undergoing redevelopment and is expected to be complete in late autumn 2015.

**Little Point Sable Light Station (26)**, designated as a part of Silver Lake State Park, sits southwest of Silver Lake on Lake Michigan. Guided tours of the lighthouse tower are offered during summer months. A large parking area, permanent restroom facilities and beautiful Lake Michigan beach frontage complete the Park's amenities.

Other State-run Public water access sites: Crystal Lake boat launch (Hart Township); Pentwater Marina, which has a picnic area and restroom facilities; and McLaren Lake (Newfield Township) boat launch with a large parking lot.

**The William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail (27)**, is a State Park facility. It is the abandoned railroad right-of-way that runs from the City of Hart through Shelby New Era, and Rothbury to the City of Montague in to Northern Muskegon County. The trail is paved and is used by walkers, bicyclists, and in the winter by snowmobiles. The trail will undergo reconstruction in 2015 as a result of \$4 million in grants from the DNR and MDOT.

There are small local community parks in **Hesperia (28)**, **Rothbury (29)**, and **Walkerville (30)** all with playground equipment, play areas, and varying degrees of court spaces. iii. State/National Parks.

State-owned Public Access sites are also available on **Crystal Lake (31)**, **McLaren Lake (32)**, and **Pentwater Marina (33)**.

### *Potentially Developed or Conceptualized Facilities*

**Lake Michigan Water Trail West (34)** extends from the Lake Michigan Recreation Area north of Ludington (Mason County) to Tunnel Park in southern Ottawa County. The water trails lies within portion of Mason, Oceana, Muskegon, Kent and Ottawa counties. The trail provides access to 4 major river systems, scenic lakes, harbors, natural areas, working waterfronts, and federally designated wild and scenic rivers.

To date, the Lake Michigan Water Trail-West includes:

- 39 public access launching sites and 2 rest areas available for paddlers along the Lake Michigan water trail
- 15 campgrounds located at shoreline access sites along the Lake Michigan water trail.

Lake Michigan Water Trail West is part of the larger Lake Michigan Water Trail which when completed, will offer safe, legal, and adequate access around the entire 1,600 mile long lakeshore of America's Greatest Lake, Lake Michigan. For complete information about the Lake Michigan Water Trail Planning efforts, see the Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan, Phase I: Inventory and Analysis of Access Sites in Support of a Lake Michigan Water Trail. This document is available on the West Michigan Shoreline

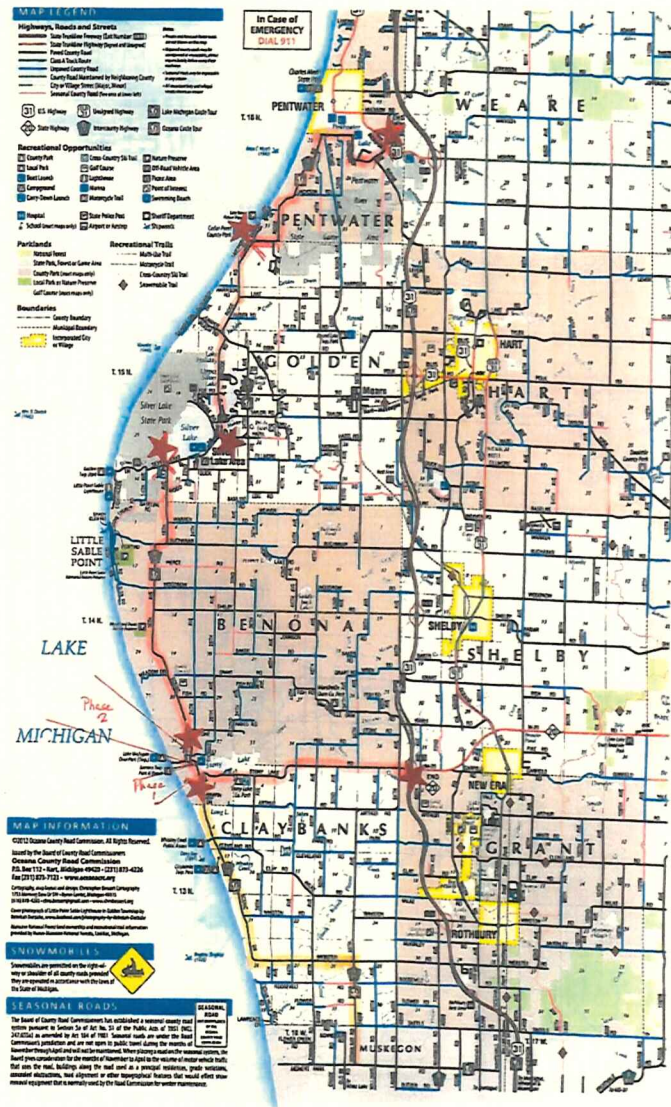
Regional Development Website at [www.wmsrdc.org](http://www.wmsrdc.org). To view a comprehensive inventory of access sites, please visit the Michigan Water Trails website at [www.michiganwatertrails.org](http://www.michiganwatertrails.org).

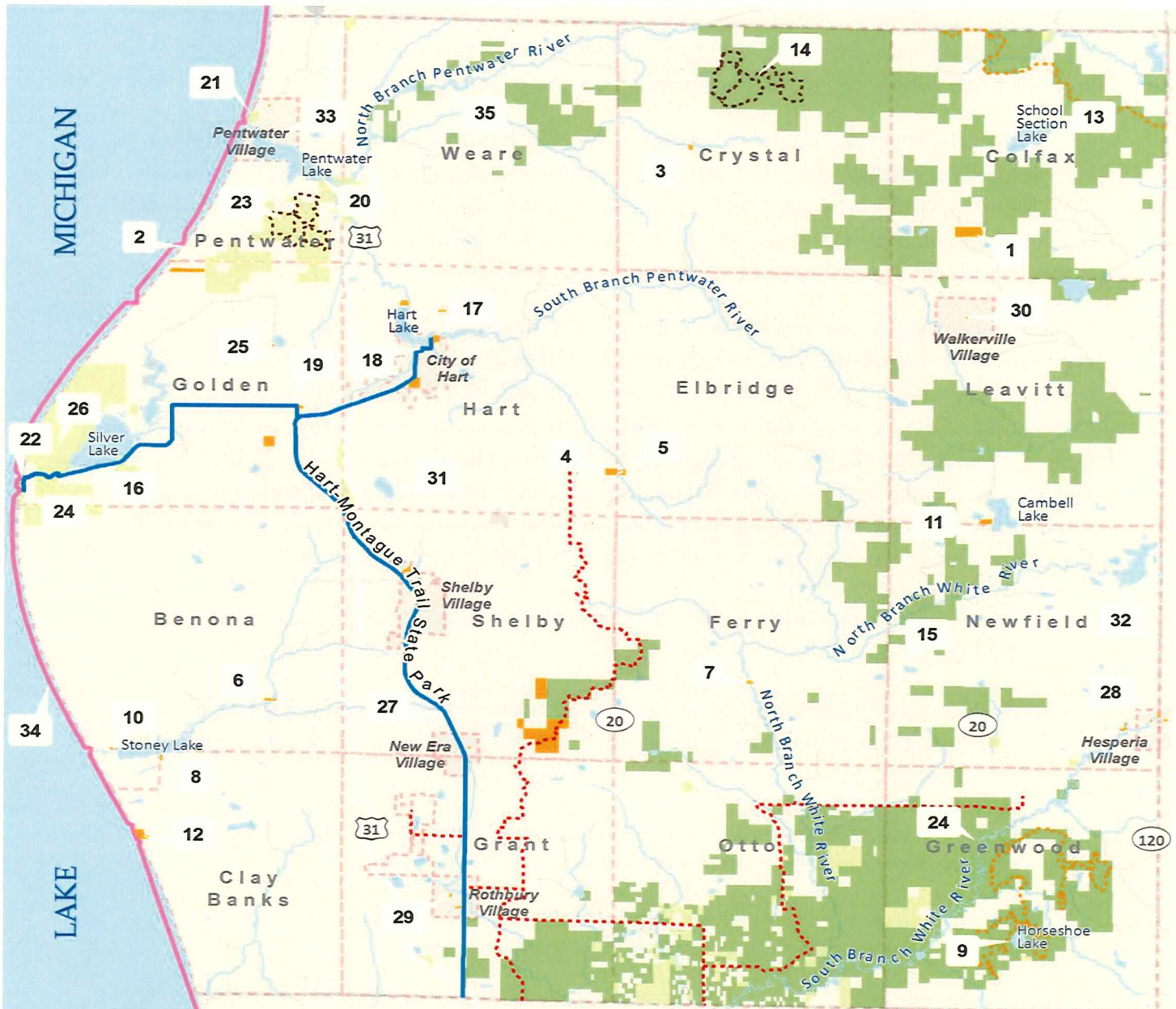
**North Branch White River Water Trail (proposed)** should be completed in the fall of 2016. The trail will span 15 downriver miles, providing non-motorized recreation opportunities from 176th Avenue in Newfield Township, through Ferry, Otto and Greenwood Townships, to its confluence with the White River. The North Branch water will become navigable for the first time since the logging era.

**Hart-Pentwater Water Trail (proposed)** would utilize the South Branch of the Pentwater River from the Hart Dam to Pentwater Lake, roughly 9 river miles. This Trail would provide a unique opportunity for users to explore four (4) types of watershed environments: deciduous, riparian, marsh, inland lake and Lake Michigan.

**Oceana Circle Tour Non-Motorized Trail (proposed - see map on right)**

This multi-year project should begin in 2016. 23 miles of paved shoulder in either direction are being planned. The route would be adjacent and along Scenic Drive/B-15 and Stony Lake Road; through Pentwater, Golden, Benona and Claybanks Townships. The non-motorized lanes would provide more safe passage for the thousands of pedestrians and cyclists traveling near shoreline. The Trail would link to the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail at its eastern termination (M-20 and Oceana Drive).





	Water Trail	ORV/ Motorcycle	County & Local Parks
Multi-Use Trail	Snowmobile	Federal Land	
Skiing/ Hiking		State Land	

**WMSRDC**  
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Source: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community Michigan Geographic Data Library V12b. Map Created November 2014



## Action Program

### Updated Goals and Objectives

The ongoing identification of key issues is an integral part of any planning process. It is through the identification of community issues that goals and objectives are developed, thereby clarifying, organizing, and prioritizing the present and future tasks to be accomplished.

Goals are broad, long-range statements reflecting a general attitude or policy intent of the County, and are often visionary. Objectives specify the courses of action that should be taken to accomplish the goals, and are typically short-range and measurable. Implementation strategies are specific courses of action and assignments of responsibility. These are intended to provide accountability for the accomplishment of the stated goals and objectives.

As discussed earlier, the key issues, goals, objectives and implementation strategies related to present-day recreation in Oceana County have been formulated through input gathered from two (2) Public Hearings and subsequent discussions between Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commissioners. These goals and objectives are implemented and monitored based on their feasibility, effectiveness and context within the recreation plans for Oceana County. The status of these goals and objectives is reviewed on a regular basis, and when appropriate, the Plan is modified to reflect changes of a physical nature or those of general public sentiment. This comprehensive process is repeated on a regular basis to ensure an accurate and timely reflection of the needs and desires of the citizens.

#### **1. Increase recreation opportunities for Oceana County Residents and Visitors.**

***A) Parkland, park facilities, and recreation opportunities will promote the use, the safety and the access for residents and visitors, regardless of age, race, income or physical or mental capacity.***

\* Parkland and recreation-related projects developed will always comply with access requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

\* The Oceana County Park and Recreation Commission will continue to coordinate park programs and keep duplication of efforts to a minimum to serve all.

***B) Identify the means by which resources can be leveraged to increase recreation opportunities. Work in conjunction with local, county, regional, state and federal programs to identify areas of need.***

\* The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to leverage parks and recreation funding through local, state, and federal grants, and with allocations from the County Board of Commissioners.

- \* The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to network with school agencies, campgrounds, and other recreation providers to increase the level of recreation services available to residents where applicable.
- \* Other groups, boards, associations and individuals will continue to be identified as future partners for recreation site or facility development, to include landowners that may wish to donate or lease property to Oceana County.

**2. The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission focuses resources toward possible development, on a limited type and number of projects.**

- A) The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will focus on projects related to new park facilities and the addition or expansion of existing facilities.*
- B) The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will focus on projects related to waterway restoration and making sound environmentally sound improvements to its existing park facilities.*
- C) The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to support projects related to bike and pedestrian trails, especially those that may or will link with current facilities.*
- D) The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to seek funding to support the acquisition of Lake Michigan shoreline property: promote and enhance public access and use, implement best management practices, work toward sustainability and, finally, protect Oceana's natural resources in perpetuity.*

## Capital Improvement Program

The County may write grants and seek funding from other sources to complete its goals and objectives, CIP Projects or other projects not listed, that may become priorities in the future. If other funding sources can be secured, projects may be amended into the CIP. As the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission may not get grant funding every year of this Plan to complete development projects, the Capital Improvement Schedule allows the County to identify priorities and options over the life of the Plan. This ensures choices for Projects are based on the will of the general public.

Oceana County 5- Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP)			
Year	Project	Cost	Funding/Source
2015	William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail Reconstruction	\$4.4 Million	MNRTF & MDOT \$300,000- Oceana County & City of Hart Private Parties & Foundation Grants
2015	Boardwalk, New Stairway- Cedar Point County Park	\$20,000	\$15,000- MI Rec Grant \$5,000- OCP&R
2016	Begin acquisition of Poole Foundation shoreline property on Lake Michigan	\$5.3 Million	MNRTF MDNR Oceana County MI Rec Grant
2016	Marshville Dam County Park- Dam Removal, Restoration	\$75,000	\$50,000- GLFWRA \$25,000- MDNR
2017	Gales Pond/Doolittle County Parks Nature Center	\$850,000	An Oceana Conservation District Project \$5,000- OCP&R Foundation Grants
2018	Marshville County Park Improvements	\$15,000	\$10,000- MI Rec Grants \$5,000- OCP&R
2019	Lake Michigan Park (Cedar Point) improvements	\$50,000	Recreation Passport Grant MDNR OCP&R

## Conclusion

The Oceana County Recreation Plan will continue to assist Oceana County to properly manage future recreation development. The Plan is the guide for decisions, and will continue to be consulted regularly. Public input will continue to be considered when recreation facility decisions are to be made.

The Plan shall be updated as the local situation warrants, or every five (5) years as required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to ensure the County remains eligible for grant funding.

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White River Watershed Management Plan, written 2002-08, adopted June 2009

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Plan Meeting/Public Input

### Oceana Herald- Journal

(See Attached Newsprint Ad)

June 26, 2014

Published in the Oceana Herald-Journal June 26, 2014

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
REGARDING OCEANA COUNTY'S UPDATED 5-YEAR  
PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

Please be advised that the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will hold a Public Hearing on July 15, 2014 to receive input for the updated Oceana County Parks and Recreation Plan.

The meeting will take place at 3:30 p.m. in the Oceana Board of Commissioners Chambers, Oceana Courthouse, 100 North State St., Hart, Michigan. The regular Oceana Parks and Recreation meeting will follow. Both meetings are open to the public. Everyone with an interest in the recreation in Oceana County is encouraged to attend. The public meeting is being held to provide an opportunity for public input regarding direction to be taken by the Parks and Recreation Commission in regards to future recreation decisions. Citizen participation in this process is essential.

Written comments may also be submitted by July 15, 2015 to the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission, 100 N. State Street, Suite M11 Hart, MI 49420, or via email to ccargill@oceana.mi.us. If there are any questions please feel free to contact Sue Ann Johnson, Administrator at 100 S. State Street, Suite M-4, Hart, MI 49420. 231-873-4835.

### **PUBLIC HEARING AND OPEN MEETING**

No people attended the July 15, 2014 Public Meeting held by the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission to request comment and ideas for its required 5-Year Plan update.

## Appendix B: Plan Review and Public Hearing

Published in the Herald-Journal January 8, 2014

(Newsprint Copy is attached)

### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND PUBLIC REVIEW REGARDING COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION PLAN**

Please be advised that the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission will hold a Public Hearing on February 17, 2015, to receive input for the updated Oceana County Parks and Recreation Plan. The Hearing will take place at 3:30 p.m. in the Oceana County Board of Commission Chambers 100 N. State Street, Hart Michigan. Immediately following the hearing for the Updated Recreation Plan, the regular meeting of the Oceana County Parks and Recreation will take place. Both meetings are open to the public.

The Updated Oceana County Parks and Recreation Plan draft will be on display for public review prior to the scheduled Public Hearing. Citizens can also review the plan on the website

Written comments may be submitted by February 17, 2015 to the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission, 100 N. State Street, Hart, MI 49420 or emailed to [lisa\\_dutcher@hotmail.com](mailto:lisa_dutcher@hotmail.com).

### **Public Hearing & Plan Review**

The Public Hearing was called to order at 3:30p.m., February 17, 2015, in the Oceana County Commissioners Board conference Room.

Present were Walt Wheeler, Suzie Knolls, Gregg Wallace and Sue Ann Johnson. Comments were as follows:

(see minutes attached)

**Appendix C: Oceana County Government Structure**





## Appendix D: Oceana County Park Regulations

### COUNTY OF OCEANA

### PARK REGULATIONS

The Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission hereby adopts the following County Park Regulations:

No person or persons shall within any County Park or recreation area:

1. Destroy, damage, deface or remove any tree, shrub, plant, improvement, building or facility within the Park.
2. Be present in any Park between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. (10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in Crystal Township County Park only) except as a Designated Camper in the designated camping area of the Black Lake County Park.
3. Post or distribute advertising within the Park.
4. Use any loud speaker, public address system or sound amplifying equipment so as to be heard more than 100 feet from such equipment.
5. Build or maintain fires of wood or charcoal except in designated fire pits.
6. Engage in any violent, abusive, loud, boisterous, vulgar, lewd, wanton, obscene or otherwise disorderly conduct tending to create a breach of the peace or to disturb or annoy others, or to lounge, sit or lie upon walks, passages, steps or porches which obstruct the free passage of others.
7. Deposit refuse or waste material which has originated outside a park in receptacles provided for park users, to set fire to the contents of a refuse basket or trash container or to place or burn garbage in a fire ring or stove.
8. Deposit waste materials except in designated receptacles.
9. Have a glass container within any land or water area designated as a bathing beach.
10. Operate any motor propelled vehicle at a speed greater than ten (10) miles per hour except on designated roads and on other than directed by posted directional signs.
11. Possess a dog or any animal except on a leash.
12. Ride, permit or allow horses except on designated roads or designated horse trails.
13. Erect a camping facility of any kind or sleep overnight in a tent, recreation vehicle or in any other manner except in the designated camping area of the Black Lake County Park.
14.
  - a. Carry or have in possession a firearm unless unloaded in both barrel and magazine;
  - b. Shoot an air gun, gas gun, springloaded gun or slingshot; or,
  - c. Shoot with a bow and arrow.
15. Vendors are prohibited in all County Parks

Any violation of these regulations shall, upon conviction, be subject to a fine not to exceed \$100.00 and/or by imprisonment for not to exceed 90 days or by both such fine and imprisonment.

*Adopted: 04/17/2012 by the Parks and Recreation Commission Approved: 04/26/2012 by the Board of Commissioners*

OCEANA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF JULY 15, 2014

The Regular Meeting the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chairperson Eilers on Tuesday, July 15, 2014 at 3:30 P.M. in the Oceana County Board of Commissioners Room.

Present: Mr. Eilers, Mr. Mikkelsen, Mr. Whelpley, Mr. Bowling, Mr. Brown, Ms. Martin, Mr. Lundborg, and Ms. Dutcher.

Absent: Mr. Cornwell

Also present: Ms. Sue Ann Johnson, Oceana County Administrator/Fiscal Officer; Mr. Bud Lamb, Black Lake Campground Host; Ms. Mamie Reasoner, Mr. Tennis Deselle, & Mr. Don Staple.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

*Moved by Mr. Whelpley and seconded by Mr. Mikkelsen to approve the minutes of the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting of June 17, 2014 as presented. Voice vote. Motion carried.*

PUBLIC INPUT ON OCEANA COUNTY RECREATION PLAN - No public comment was offered. Ms. Dutcher recommended retaining WMSRDC to do the recreation plan. The Commission agreed and Ms. Dutcher will be contacting them.  
*Mr. Dykema arrived at 3:35 P.M.*

PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS - None

FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF MAY 20, 2014

- Fund 208 – Parks and Recreation. 2014 Budget of \$36,000 with expenditures in the amount of \$1,985.88 for the month. Fund balance - \$22,903.98.

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

- Fund 208 – Parks and Recreation
  - Prepaid Claims – \$1,775.94
  - To Be Paid Claims - \$122.00

*Moved by Mr. Mikkelsen and seconded by Mr. Bowling to approve the bills as presented.*

*Roll call vote: Mikkelsen, yes; Dutcher, yes; Brown, yes; Dykema, yes; Martin, yes; Bowling, yes; Whelpley, yes; Lundborg, yes; Cornwell, absent; and Eilers, yes. Motion carried.*

OCEANA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 17, 2015

A Public Hearing of the Oceana County Park and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chairperson Mikkelsen on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. in the Oceana County Board Conference Room for the purpose of obtaining public input on the Oceana County Recreation Plan Update.

Members present: Mikkelsen, Lundborg, Carr, Dutcher, Brown, Sebolt, Cornwell, Martin, Bowling, Whelpley.

Others in attendance were Ms. Sue Ann Johnson, Oceana County Administrator/Fiscal Officer; Ms. Suzie Knoll, District Manager, Oceana County Conservation District; Mr. Walt Wheeler, Oceana County Planning Commission; and Mr. Gregg Wallace, owner of Pentwater River Outfitters and resident of Pentwater.

Vice-Chairperson Mikkelsen asked if there were any comments from the public regarding the Oceana County Recreation Plan Update.

Ms. Suzie Knoll expressed gratitude for including the nature center idea in the Recreation Plan. She supports the river restoration concept to include opening up the south branch of the Pentwater River. She also expressed concerns over the garbage collection issues at the County parks. Discussion ensued on how garbage pickup is managed at each park.

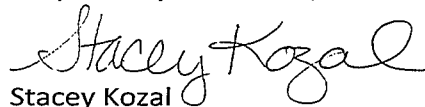
Mr. Gregg Wallace communicated that it is his impression that water resources were being underutilized both from a commercial and recreational point of view. He expressed challenges for accessing the North Branch from Hammett Road. He stated that the south branch of the Pentwater River, from 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue down to the US 31 crossing, is impassable due to tree blockage and sedimentation from the mid-1980's when the Hart Dam broke.

Mr. Wallace requested that the Oceana County Recreation Plan Update include a process in which to open up the South Branch of Pentwater River in order that it could be utilized as a recreation resource.

Ms. Dutcher encouraged Mr. Wallace to put together a group of people, including property owners, willing to help clear debris from the river. She would then be willing to assist in writing a grant for funding. She further requested that Mr. Wallace and Ms. Knoll work on writing a Watershed Plan.

As there were no other public comments Vice-Chairperson Mikkelsen adjourned the Public Hearing of the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacey Kozal

Acting Secretary

Oceana County

Parks and Recreation Commission



**Oceana County**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
County Building  
100 S. State Street, Suite M-4  
Hart, Michigan 49420



RESOLUTION APPROVING OCEANA COUNTY RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

Moved by Mr. Sebolt and seconded by Ms. Kolbe to approve the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission developed and approved the Oceana County Five Year Recreation Plan in 1998;

WHEREAS, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners, in support of the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission, recognizes the increased recreation needs of its citizens and the importance of meeting such needs now and in the future;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Oceana County Board of Commissioners approves the 2014 Oceana County Recreation Plan Update as prepared and adopted by the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission on February 17, 2015.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That certified copies of this Resolution be submitted to the Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Roll call vote: Sebolt, yes; Kolbe, yes; Byl, yes; Brown, yes; Walker, yes; Gustafson, yes; and, Powers, yes. Motion carried.

**CERTIFICATION:**

The undersigned, being the Clerk of Oceana County, does hereby certify that on the 26th day of February, 2015, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners did adopt the above Resolution at its Regular Meeting.

Rebecca J. Griffin, Clerk  
Oceana County  
Board of Commissioners