



# Mecosta County Park Commission Parks and Recreation Master Plan

2021-2025



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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Mecosta County is rural and is rich in natural resources. It has an abundance of lakes, streams and woodlands making recreation a significant part of its economy. Though summer cottages and retirement homes already surround many of the lakes, large tracts of land remain undeveloped. The prime river frontage owned by the Consumers Energy Company along the Muskegon River is one such area. Other examples include portions of the Martiny flooding project and the Haymarsh State Game Area. As a county park system, we benefit from this wealth. The beautiful settings surrounding our parks attract many visitors to Mecosta County making it possible to move closer to a County mandate of self-sufficiency in operation.

The Park Commission recognizes its responsibility to provide quality recreation facilities for residents and visitors to the County. This includes the need for upgrading existing facilities in order to meet new federal regulations affecting operation, replacing and renovating outdated structures, establishing new park lands by purchase, lease or some other means, and expanding services to meet changing customer demands of the next century. We also need to respond to the needs of the communities and population segments that desire the recreation services provided through fee generating community parks. These parks go hand in hand with county parks and serve travelers as well as area residents.

With ever-increasing operational costs, new federal laws, aging facilities, new demands for service and new opportunities for growth — a well thought out master plan is a must to make use of every dollar generated and to obtain grants and technical assistance necessary to accomplish our goals.

### Purpose

It is the purpose of this plan to provide the Mecosta County Park Commission a useful guide for the future development of their parks and to provide a comprehensive plan to address the needs of the citizens and visitors of the area. This plan will establish goals to meet the open space and recreation needs of this region to the year 2025.

### Goals of the Plan

- Update the Master Plan to address current needs and conditions to serve as a planning resource to the Mecosta County Parks Commission.
- To determine needs and make recommendations that will guide future parks and recreation decisions to best utilize the resources available to the Mecosta County Parks Commission.
- To understand what the community would like to see in future park developments and acquisitions.

## Scope

This Parks and Recreation Plan is for Mecosta County Park Commission's existing parks and recreation facilities. The needs for neighborhood parks, supporting facilities, trailway/greenway systems, and recreation programs are analyzed for the projected years 2021-2025. The plan recommendations are provided through analysis of demographic projections, county land-use trends, citizen input, past and future recreational trends, state and federal grant funding requirements, and potential land acquisition opportunities.

## Community Description

Mecosta County is in Michigan's lower peninsula, 50 miles north of the City of Grand Rapids. The county is 575 square miles in area and as of the 2010 census the population is 42,798 people. The community is separated into four villages: Barryton, Mecosta, Morley, and Stanwood; six cities and towns: Barryton, Big Rapids, Canadian Lakes, Mecosta, Morley, and Stanwood and 16 Townships: Aetna, Austin, Bid Rapids, Chippewa, Colfax, Deerfield, Fork, Grant, Green, Hinton, Martiny, Mecosta, Milbrook, Morton, Sheridan, and Wheatland.

## Mecosta County - The Land

Mecosta County is in the West-Central part of lower Michigan, bordering Newaygo County on the West, Osceola County on the North, Isabella County on the East, and Montcalm County on the South. Big Rapids, the county seat, is in the Northwestern part of the county.

Rural Mecosta County accounts for approximately 97 percent of the 575 square miles of land area. About 37 percent of this is devoted to agricultural activities but only about half is in active production. Forested land accounts for about 25 percent of the county with open space and wilderness areas following a close third in terms of land use.

## Mecosta County - The Economy

Land resources have shaped much of Mecosta County's economy. The County was originally a lumber and agricultural center that relied heavily on natural resources. After the lumbering industry began to fail in the 1900's, manufacturing and Ferris Institute made an appearance. After World War II, manufacturing became a predominant industry in the County. In the 1960's, the College, seasonal residents, and tourist growth became significant economic forces. Through the years Mecosta County has learned to utilize its land resources as an important part of its economy; now the County must recognize how to preserve and wisely use these remaining resources if it is to continue to progress.

Continued growth within the industrial sector is anticipated in light of the additional purchase of land for the area's next industrial park. The presence of the US-131 corridor through Mecosta County has proven to be a definite asset in fostering future industrial growth.

Tourism and recreation have grown significantly in the County over the past decades, as urban populations seek leisure time activities and facilities away from the congestion and confusion of

densely populated cities. Mecosta County has become extremely popular in recent years because of its proximity to large populations and an abundance of natural resources.

The economic impact of the tourist industry is not only within the individual services themselves but also in the indirect benefits generated by them. By attracting large numbers of out-of-area users, the recreational suppliers create markets for a myriad of other economically important activities; the most important among these are retail sales. Leisure time users create markets for fuel, food, fishing and hunting supplies as well as an endless list of recreational vehicles and related equipment.

## **Mecosta County - The People**

The 2019 estimated population was 43,453, a 1.5% growth from the 2010 count of 42,798. Median age is 36.5, which has been on the rise over the past decades. The aging population could be a result of two things: the increase in numbers of retirees to the county and the maturing "baby boom" generation. This group is becoming the fastest growing group in the nation while the under 18 group has declined. This new dominant group will stimulate consumption of adult-oriented leisure pursuits. It bears noting that Ferris State University with its 11,165-enrollment figure for fall 2020 is a significant group that compromises a special segment of the population.

Mecosta County is about evenly split between rural and urban population. It is anticipated that over time the county will become more urban. As people move out of the nearby metropolitan areas, they will still settle in the less populated urban areas which provide them with the kinds of services and amenities such as sewer and water, paved roads, recreational facilities, etc., that they are accustomed to receiving.

In addition to Big Rapids, Mecosta County has several other developing or existing built-up areas. Four of these are the incorporated Villages of Morley, Stanwood, Mecosta, and Barryton. Other developed areas include Remus, Chippewa Lake, Paris, Rogers Heights, Canadian Lakes Tri-Lakes Area, and the Martiny Lakes area.

The students from Ferris State University represent a special population group within Mecosta County. They are an institutional group according to the U.S. Bureau of Census, thus possessing certain similar characteristics. They are also a large enough group that they directly affect overall characteristics of the county.

Recreational development is an important part of Mecosta County, and with recreational activities come seasonal fluctuations of population. The County's second special population group, seasonal residents, causes this. Although this population group does possess similar characteristics, they are not a formal institutional group, making information gathering more difficult and less specific.

## Administrative Structure

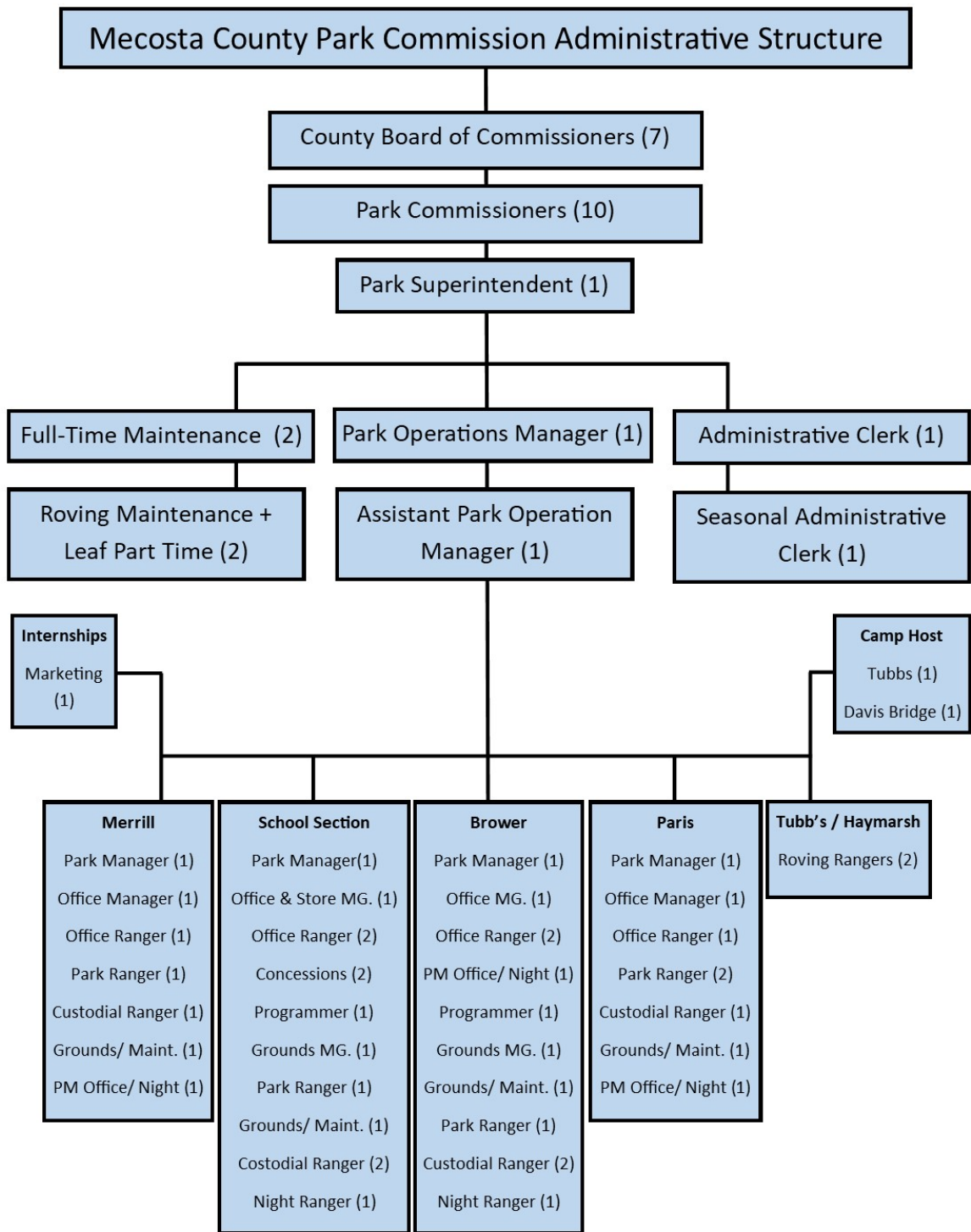
The Mecosta County Park Commission staff consists of six year-round benefited positions with two year-round, part time positions. During the peak operating season, the commission recruits 43 additional seasonal staff members and two camp hosts to manage and operate five County Parks, two Campgrounds within State Game Areas, the undeveloped White Pine Valley Recreation Area, and Michigan's Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam.

During the peak operating season, which is from late April to early October, the camping portions of the parks are open with eight seasonal park managers overseeing daily operations and rules enforcement of each park. Additional seasonal staff positions include office rangers, custodians, grounds & maintenance workers, park rangers, night rangers, programmers, and concessions workers.

The eight year-round staff positions consist of a Park Superintendent, Park Operations and Assistant Operations Managers, Administrative Clerk, two Full-Time Maintenance & two Part-Time Maintenance staff. The Mecosta County Park Commission itself consists of ten commission members who meet monthly to evaluate park operations, maintenance and finances and provide direction to the Park Superintendent. The full-time staff members work cohesively to plan, develop, administer and maintain a comprehensive operation providing recreational opportunities and an economic stimulus for Mecosta County. These staff members oversee the general operations of the parks from seasonal staff hiring to budget preparation, maintenance requirements, and operational procedures.

The Park Commission contains six sub-committees consisting of Building & Grounds, Personnel, Finance, Master Plan, Rules & Regulations, and Michigan's Dragon Trail. Each sub-committee meets as required to evaluate circumstances and operational changes and to provide recommendations to the full Park Commission.

The County of Mecosta provides a variety of services to the Park Commission including payroll and record keeping operations. All park finances are reconciled through the County Treasurer's office with annual audits being conducted. Full-time employees are incorporated into Mecosta County's benefits plan. Liability coverage is also provided under the County Plan. The County Building Department, County Road Commission, District Health Department, County Emergency Management, and The Department of Natural Resources act in an advisory capacity. The County Board of Commissioners provides governmental oversight and appoints members to the Park Commission as required. The Park commission acts as an information resource for local units of government such as townships and villages, area schools, Ferris State University, many local community organizations, and individual citizens.





## Mecosta County Park Commission

The Park Commission is appointed by members of the County Board of Commissioners to three-year terms and is made up of ten citizen members:

- Marilynn Bradstrom, County Commission
- Van Johnson, Road Commission
- Karla Miller, Drain Commission
- Gary Swier, Planning Commission
- Steve Stratton
- Eric O'Neil
- Stephen Perialas
- Bryan Roles
- Bill Stanek
- Tim Vogel

Organized under Public Act 261 of 1965, the Park Commission oversees the finances and general operations of the county park system. The Commission meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. at the administrative headquarters located in Paris, Michigan. The Park Commission is composed of a representative of the Planning and Zoning Board, the Drain Commissioner or designee, a representative from the County Road Commission, and seven appointed representatives by the County Board of Commissioners, of which, at least one but not more than three shall be members of the County Board of Commissioners for a total of ten Park Commission members. The Parks Superintendent answers directly to the Park Commission.

The Park Commission makes organizational decisions and provides recommendations to the Board of Commissioners, including guiding the development of the Parks Master Plan. The Park Commission also provides direction and leadership to the parks staff regarding recreational operations and policies to meet the needs of county residents. The Park Commission holds committee meetings and monthly meetings as required and in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Parks Budget and Funding

Current Budget

Parks and Recreation Budget Summary

		Actual 2015	Actual 2016	Actual 2017	Actual 2018	Actual 2019	Budget 2020
508-000-885.000	AUDIT EXPENSE	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200
508-000-917.000	BANK CHARGES	50	10	30	20	23	50
508-000-719.000	BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION	42	63	110	126	42	0
508-000-830.000	BOOKS/PRINTED MATERIAL	7,310	2,140	660	3,693	7,982	6,500
508-000-870.000	BUILDING REPAIR/MAINT.	19,557	8,089	10,177	9,290	10,757	11,950
508-000-970.000	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	12,577	46,834	9,198	0	15,257	379,000
508-000-880.010	COMMUNITY EVENT PROMOTION	0	0	0	0	3,229	3,500
508-000-984.000	COMPUTER EQUIPMENT	379	6,067	2,418	1,360	3,998	6,500
508-000-809.000	CONFERENCE EXPENSES	1,267	1,980	1,982	1,093	1,230	1,000
508-000-801.000	CORPORATION COUNSEL	0	628	0	0	0	1,000
508-000-864.000	CREDIT CARD EXPENSE	21,390	19,591	21,573	23,838	26,655	27,000
508-000-991.000	DEBT SVC INT.	3,675	2,109	2,531	1,452	2,417	0
508-000-718.000	DENTAL, VISION, LIFE	5,422	5,533	5,585	6,015	5,535	4,823
508-000-971.000	DEPRECIATION EXPENSE	89,144	95,332	96,012	98,236	136,976	0
508-000-812.000	EMPLOYEE PHYSICALS	5,813	5,214	4,750	5,590	4,980	4,725
508-000-852.000	EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS	744	602	821	700	1,030	900
508-000-853.000	EQUIPMENT REPAIR	9,221	5,897	3,007	5,518	7,398	11,300
508-000-980.000	EQUIPMENT/FURNITURE	1,000	4,854	5,970	11,424	11,203	500
508-000-742.000	GAS/FUEL	11,070	10,334	11,843	16,213	12,985	12,800
508-000-849.000	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	80,239	49,894	89,177	78,705	77,910	112,950
508-000-717.000	HEALTH INSURANCE	49,715	51,754	64,577	70,630	70,573	71,953
508-000-717.010	HEALTHCARE SAVING PROGRAM	370	265	290	300	295	355
508-000-891.000	INDIRECT COST ALLOCATION	28,512	28,512	28,512	28,512	28,512	28,512
508-000-704.010	INSURANCE SUBSTITUTE	2,708	1,562	0	0	0	0
508-002-869.000	LICENSES/PERMITS	3,096	5,602	5,704	5,539	5,189	5,875
508-000-710.000	LONGEVITY	720	720	0	0	0	0
508-000-972.000	LOSS ON SALE OF CAPITAL ASSETS	0	27,225	0	0	0	0
508-000-882.000	MARKETING	0	8,328	9,916	10,341	8,505	8,000
508-000-713.010	MEDICARE/FICA	5,576	6,095	6,751	7,859	7,750	8,484
508-000-808.000	MEMBERSHIP/DUES	225	855	225	585	595	600
508-000-714.000	MERS	29,475	26,240	45,928	46,861	46,876	50,640
508-000-901.000	MISCELLANEOUS	1,167	1,582	1,010	1,635	2,950	4,500
508-000-728.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,929	2,988	2,834	2,001	2,061	2,600
508-000-858.000	ON-LINE SERVICES	6,876	2,600	2,531	7,818	12,526	17,730
508-000-703.000	OTHER SALARIED	155,301	161,926	192,827	201,224	204,396	238,558
508-000-709.000	OVERTIME WAGES	733	2,665	1,462	3,033	307	2,350
508-000-708.000	PART-TIME HOURLY WAGES	128,094	171,280	197,992	252,970	237,569	234,003
508-000-712.000	PENSION EXPENSE	-17,943	8,288	-47,293	-1,081	9,123	0
508-000-705.000	PER DIEMS	5,450	5,375	4,025	3,025	4,125	3,500
508-000-821.000	POSTAGE	334	328	246	106	177	340
508-000-828.000	PRINTING/PUBLICATIONS	2,389	1,540	1,803	289	205	2,500
508-000-813.000	PROF.&CONTRACT SVCS/NON-EMPLOYEE	45,363	80,704	19,173	19,100	19,333	62,250
508-002-905.000	REFUNDS	2,241	4,869	1,271	4,198	6,470	24,055
508-000-706.000	REGULAR FULL-TIME WAGES	85,823	76,676	78,138	83,450	84,653	98,022
508-000-724.000	SICK TIME WAGES	5,062	1,316	725	3,194	3,811	0
508-060-713.000	SOCIAL SECURITY/FICA	23,838	26,062	28,918	33,607	33,138	36,055
508-000-855.000	SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT	0	0	0	0	70	100
508-000-855.010	SOFTWARE PROGRAMS AND UPDATES	0	1,500	179	0	0	100
508-000-773.000	SUPPLIES/MINOR EQUIPMENT	33,169	33,456	37,518	41,758	33,204	45,050
508-013-773.010	SUPPLIES/MINOR EQUIPMENT-STONE HOUSE	0	0	0	28,722	29,806	35,000
508-000-822.000	TELEPHONE	5,739	5,977	5,789	6,374	5,872	5,425
508-000-810.000	TRAVEL/MILEAGE EXPENSE	3,605	3,513	1,844	2,468	3,335	2,500
508-002-715.000	UNEMPLOYMENT	26,083	28,050	29,869	32,412	39,018	40,500
508-000-750.000	UNIFORMS & SHOES	1,356	1,369	740	2,141	3,185	3,570
508-000-720.000	UNUSED SICK LEAVE	0	2,795	3,090	2,892	1,849	4,500
508-000-823.000	UTILITIES/REPAIR	102,889	111,228	108,790	131,917	133,792	144,200
508-000-723.000	VACATION WAGES	10,109	7,442	4,595	8,031	11,343	0
508-000-854.000	VEHICLE MAINTENANCE	4,299	6,571	5,465	7,403	10,882	17,000
508-000-981.000	VEHICLE PURCHASE	0	0	0	0	0	0
508-000-716.000	WORKMAN COMPENSATION	9,076	9,649	12,183	17,087	14,273	15,000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1,034,479</b>	<b>1,184,278</b>	<b>1,125,668</b>	<b>1,331,875</b>	<b>1,407,573</b>	<b>1,800,524</b>

## Relationships

**Consumers Energy** – The Park Commission has lease and operations agreements with Consumers Energy for use of the property containing Brower County Park, Davis Bridge County Park and Michigan’s Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam.

**Michigan’s Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam Partnership** – The Park Commission works in conjunction with Newaygo County Parks and West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance to operate and maintain Michigan’s Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam. Mecosta Township (Mecosta County) and Big Prairie Township (Newaygo County) also serve on the executive committee for the trail and have made financial contributions toward trail construction. Other entities included on the executive committee include Michigan State University Extension, the County of Mecosta, the County of Newaygo and Consumers Energy.

**North Country Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area** – The Park Commission works in partnership with the NCCISMA on many levels. The Park Commission provides in-kind donations to the organization offering storage and office space and has completed educational projects and events within the park system related to Invasive Species.

**Muskegon River Watershed Assembly** – The Park Commission and Muskegon River Watershed Assembly work hand in hand on many Muskegon River improvement-oriented projects. Examples include a recent tree planting event within Paris and School Section Lake County Parks and a current dam removal and restoration project that is being evaluated within Paris Park. Park staff have volunteered to assist with Sturgeon netting prior to lamprey treatments on the Muskegon River in recent years.

**DNR Fisheries** – The Park Commission works hand in hand with the Fisheries Division of the DNR in stocking efforts of Rainbow and Brown Trout into the Muskegon River. We assist with the raising and planting of 20,000-30,000 fish annually and are currently in the middle of a six-year agreement to provide this resource. The Park Commission and Regional Fisheries staff members are in regular communication as to the health of many of lake and rivers within our county. Park staff have also recently volunteered and been involved in net survey studies within various bodies of water.

**DNR Wildlife** – The Park Commission has a great working relationship with our regional DNR Wildlife Division. The wildlife division leases storage and office space at Paris Park from the Park Commission and work together with operational agreements in Haymarsh State Game Area and Martiny State Game Area with the Park Commission maintaining all camping facilities and assisting with roadway, boat launch and trail projects. The Park Commission assists with facility needs as a deer, bear and other various wildlife check station location. The Park Commission property in Paris houses equipment for local Conservation Officers such as boats, ATVs, snowmobiles, evidence lockers, and other amenities used regularly in their daily functions.

**DNR Parks** - The Park Commission works in partnership with DNR Parks on maintenance items where the White Pine Trail passes through Paris County Park. During winter months trail grooming equipment is periodically stored within Paris Park. The Park Commission works to ensure signage throughout this section of the White Pine Trail is maintained and the trail remains clear of debris. Multiple parking areas to access the White Pine Trail are made available to trail users and are maintained by the Park Commission.

**Kiwanis Club/Circle K - Haunted Hatchery** – The Park Commission assists the local Circle K and Kiwanis Club organizations with their annual haunted hatchery event as a fund-raising activity benefitting many local organizations such as toys for tots. The event is held in the Paris Fish Hatchery building each year.

**Mecosta County Convention and Visitors Bureau** – The Park Commission works closely with our CVB to help bring tourists and tourism dollars to Mecosta County businesses. Many out of county visitors stay within the County Parks or attend events held within the parks on an annual basis. The Park Commission promotes the entire county when attending trade shows and other outdoor events. The CVB has provided financial contributions to Michigan’s Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam and is currently partnering with the Park Commission on a Dragon Pass program to help benefit local hotels and motels who will benefit financially from the trail.

**School Section Lake Property Owners Association Partnerships** – The Park Commission partners with the School Section Lake Property Owners Association on fish stocking and weed control programs at School Section Lake. The Park Commission attends annual meetings of the property owners and works hand in hand with the association to ensure all parties are involved in decisions that may affect the lake.

**School Section Lake Veteran’s Memorial Project** – The Park Commission recently partnered with this organization to fundraise, create, and install a Veteran’s Memorial within the park.

**Remus Historical Society – School Section Lake Pavilion Project** – The Park Commission partnered with these organizations to fundraise and execute a renovation plan for a history stone pavilion within the park. The building now serves as a Concessions building after a complete exterior renovation by the pavilion project organization and interior renovation by the Park Commission.

**Boy Scouts** – The Park Commission has ties with many local Boy Scouts organizations. Annual practice for their trip to Mackinaw Island take place by performing drills at Paris Park followed by a picnic. The White Pine Valley Recreation Area is used by multiple troops for various group camping events each season.

**Michigan Hydroplane Racing Association** – The Michigan Hydroplane Racing Association holds races at Brower Park each season and works with the Park Commission to bring this event to the area benefiting many local businesses.

**Old Settlers Reunion** – The annual re-union of the Old Settlers organization takes place at School Section Lake Veteran’s Memorial Park each year with assistance from the Park Commission. The picnic event dates back to the 1890’s and celebrates the heritage of the first African American settlers in Michigan.

**Culture Alive/Little River Schoolhouse Program** – The Park Commission partners with the Culture Alive Organization to provide opportunities for 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms to visit and experience what a day in a one room schoolhouse was like in the early 1900’s including the educational curriculum and clothing from the period. The one room schoolhouse within School Section Lake Veteran’s Park also hosts a variety of educational events each Saturday from July 4<sup>th</sup> thru Labor Day put on by Culture Alive within the park.

**Mecosta and Osceola-Lake Conservation District** - The Park Commission partners with the conservation district each year to host two tree sale events within the Paris Park fish hatchery building. There is an annual spring tree and shrub sale and an annual fall seedlings sale held within Paris Park.

**Relief Michigan & DTE Foundation** - The Park Commission partnered with these organization for a tree planting in Paris County Park to enhance the park grounds by replacing a large number of trees which were uprooted during a straight-line wind event in 2018.

**Nestle Waters – Ice Mountain** – The Park Commission has partnered with Nestle Waters Ice Mountain Plant through a grant to create an erosion stabilization plan for Davis Bridge County Park.

**TC Energy (TransCanada)** – The Park Commission partnered with TC Energy with funding to create a 1.5 mile hiking/biking loop referred to as the Brower Loop addition to the Michigan’s Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam.

**Family & Group Camp** – The Park Commission has a facility referred to as the Family and Group Camping Grounds where various community organizations and camps take place each season. Some examples include Camp Wilderness, which is an outdoor education camp for your 10-14 years old and Earful of Fiddle Music and Dance Camp, which is an annual immersive traditional music and dance camp.

**Park Vendors and Suppliers** – The Park Commission has agreements with many local businesses including food trucks/trailers, concessions suppliers, retail product suppliers, firewood suppliers, ice suppliers, fishing bait suppliers, propane suppliers, septic service providers, port-a-john suppliers, electrical service companies and more.

**Volunteering with Mecosta County Parks** – Operating and maintaining the Mecosta County Parks System is a major undertaking that involves many people with many different skill sets. We have been fortunate to have a large number of quality people who have come together to help make our parks system what it is today. In particular, volunteers have played an important role in our efforts and will continue to be important as we move into the future.

## Resource Inventory

Water access and natural areas are an important part of Mecosta County's park system. Mecosta Parks allow direct access to the Hardy Dam Reservoir, School Section Lake, Merrill Lake, Gorrel Lake, Tubbs Lake, Haymarsh Lake, and the Muskegon River. The DNR managed Haymarsh Lake State Game Area and Martiny Lake State Game Area are within Mecosta County and have 53 rustic camping spots available through the Haymarsh and Tubbs Lake Campgrounds. Approximately 24.5 miles of the 92 mile long Fred Meijer White Pine Trail are located within Mecosta County and runs through Paris Park.

## Recreation Programming

The Mecosta County Park Commission hosts events throughout the summer months at several county park locations. The Michigan Boaters Safety course is hosted within multiple parks each season along with varied other educational training sessions. School Section Lake Park and Brower Park both contain Arts and Crafts buildings with a programmer on staff at each of these locations to offer weekend family activities and craft projects. The parks host several annual events such as Independence Day Parade's, Christmas in July, and Halloween in August. Each park participates in a community open house weekend offering waived entry fees in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources free fishing weekend each June. Meet and Greet events are held at Brower, Paris, Merrill-Gorrel and School Section Lake Parks where community members can visit the park and meet with Park Commission and staff members while enjoying provided food and beverages. Additional family events such as Trivia Nights, Karaoke Nights, Wagon Rides, Corn-hole Tournaments, and more are held throughout the peak season. A variety of events hosted by community organizations are also held within the county parks each season such as Fishing Tournaments, Boat Racing, Bike Races and more. Additional recreational programming in the county is organized by private groups, school districts, and similar entities. Sports leagues and other youth programming for both students and community members are offered by townships, villages, the City of Big Rapids, schools and youth sports organizations such as T-Ball, AYSO Soccer, Rocket Football, Youth Hockey, and Upward Basketball.

## Recreation Inventory

The recreation inventory is an essential item to the Parks and Recreation Services. It allows the county to assess the quantity/type of facilities and where they are located. It showcases the variety of programs and events offered. It helps identify where new facilities should be built, where ADA upgrades are needed, and opportunities for programs and events. The county continually updates the recreation inventory as renovations and additions to the parks occur, so there is always a current list available. The county will continue to bring all facilities into compliance with current accessibility standards.



### Brower Park



Park Description

Brower Park provides access to the 18 miles of navigable water on the backwaters of the Hardy Dam. This beautifully wooded 280-acre park boasts almost 8000 feet of river frontage with 1000 feet of sandy beach. Water sports and family friendly amenities highlight the attractions of the park. The Hardy Pond is accessible by boat launches on the north and south shorelines. Family friendly activities include event programming, arts and crafts, hayrides, and movie nights. Additional park amenities include, hiking trails, tennis courts, disc golf, volleyball, basketball, horseshoes, playgrounds and picnic areas. Brower Park contains 230 campsites and 10 Camp-N-Cabins. Pets are welcome.





### Davis Bridge Day Use Park

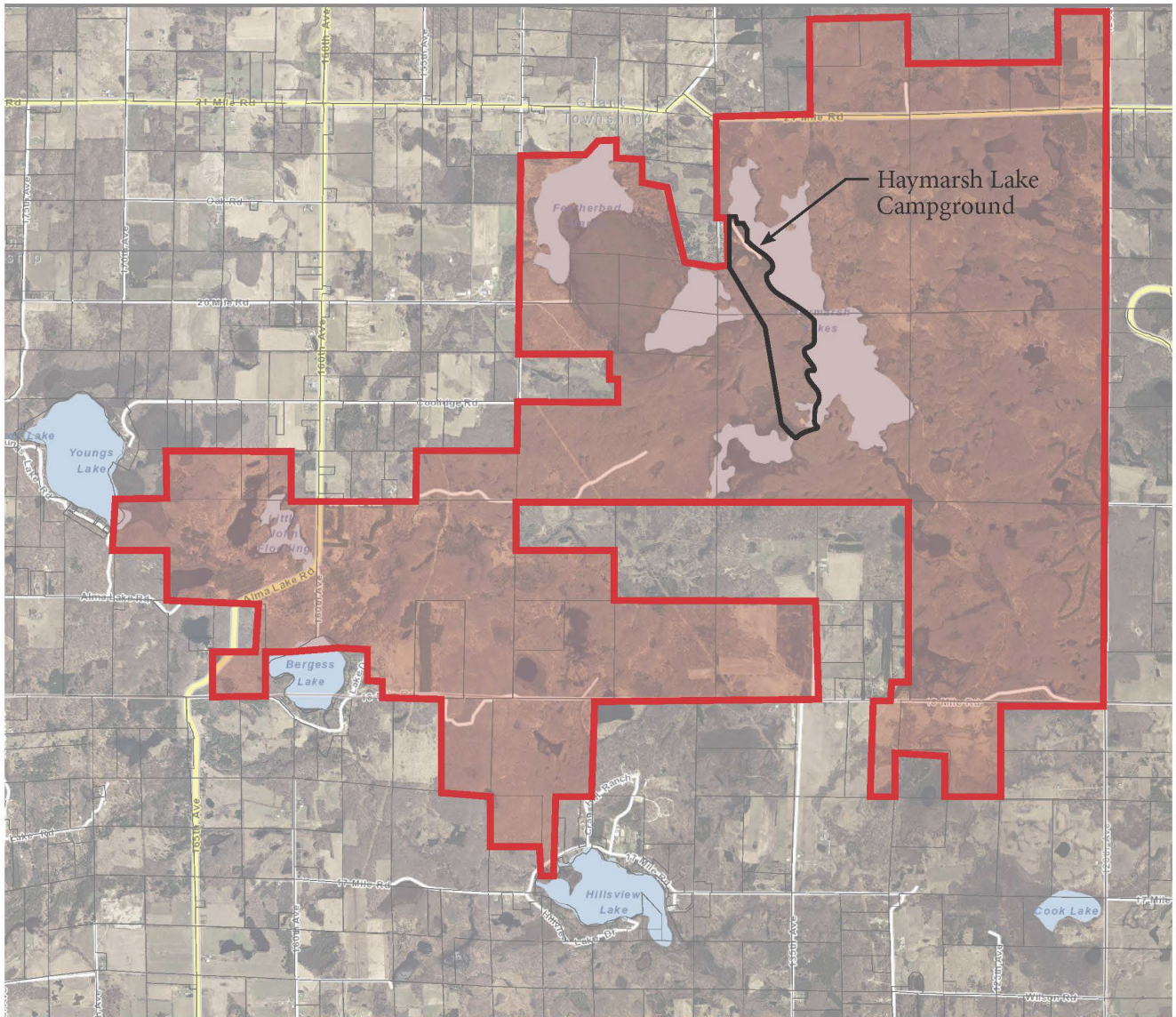


**Park Description:**

Davis Bridge Park offers a serene environment to enjoy natural surroundings and partake in a riverside picnic. For guests who enjoy fishing, the park offers 500 feet of shoreline and a boat launch on the banks of the Hardy Pond Reservoir. Davis Bridge Park's 20 acres contain a concrete launch ramp, a vault toilet, a hand-operated water pump, picnic tables and grills. Parking is available for your vehicle and boat trailer. A host camper is often on site to provide assistance if needed. Camping is not available at Davis Bridge Park.



### Haymarsh Lake State Game Area

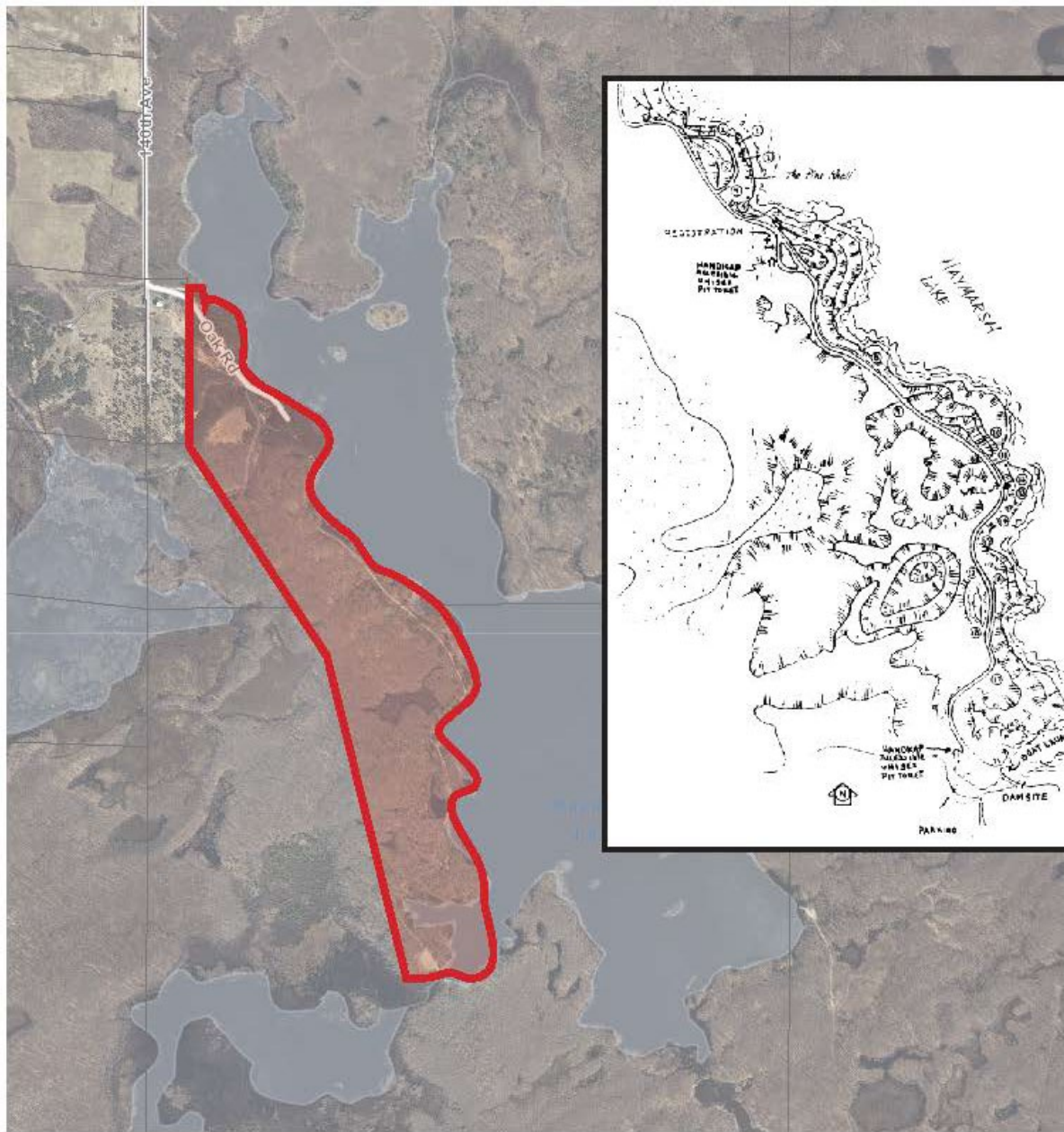


**Park Description:**

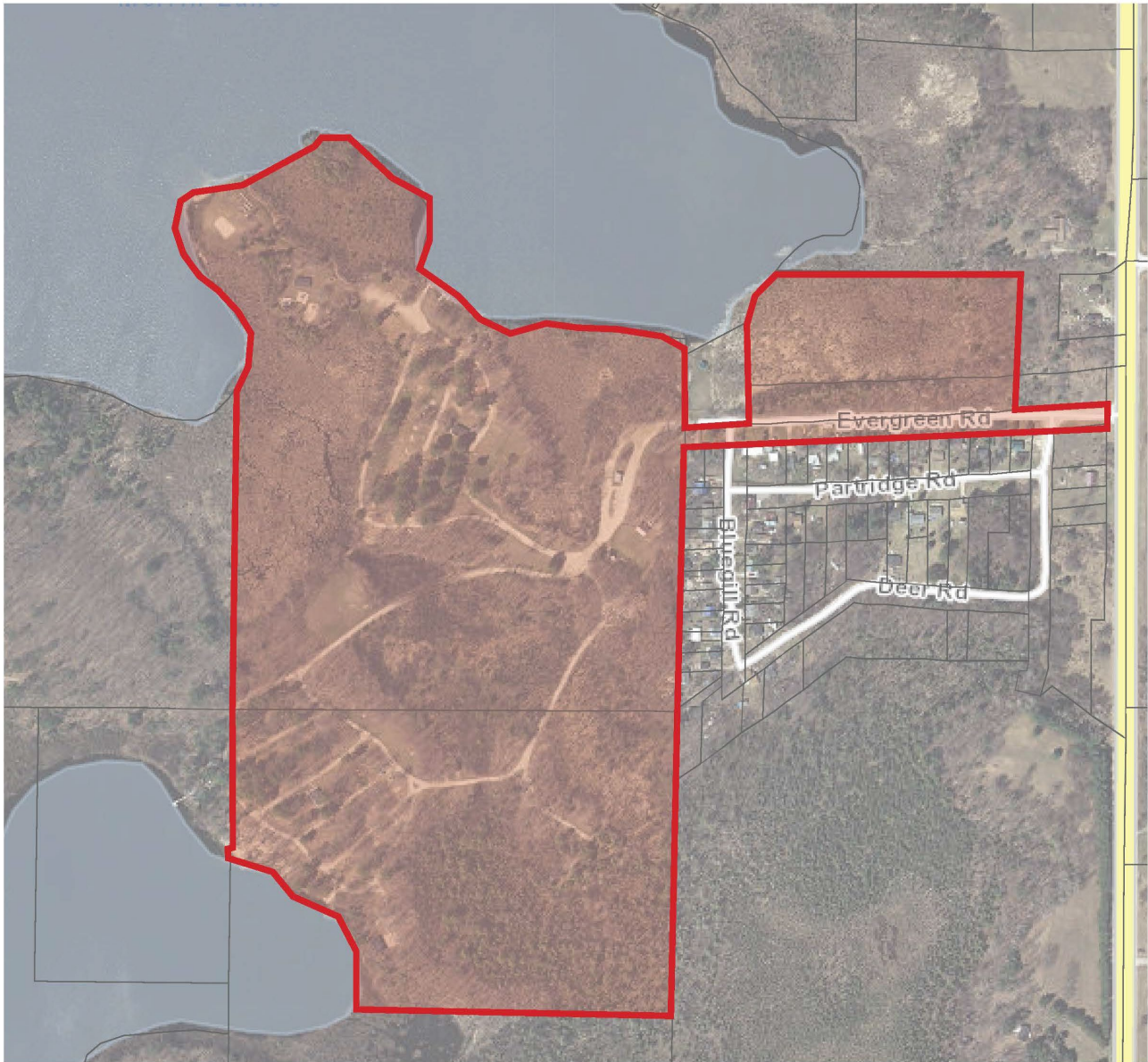
Haymarsh Lake Campground is located within DNR managed Haymarsh Lake State Game Area containing 6,737 acres. The campground is perched on the edge of Haymarsh Lake, which is a flooding project resulting in the combining of the 6 former individual lakes. The campground contains 19 rustic campsites, boat launches, vault toilets, and a hand water pump.



### Haymarsh Lake Campground



### Merrill-Gorrel Campground



**Park Description:**

Merrill-Gorrel Park offers frontage on both Merrill and Gorrel Lakes. Each lake offering a boat launch, swimming beach, playground equipment and picnic area. Merrill-Gorrel Park's 90 acres offer a fishing pier, wooded trails, volleyball, basketball, horseshoes, shuffleboard, tetherball, and a ball field. 146 campsites along with 2 picnic pavilions and 4 Camp-N-Cabins enhance this picturesque getaway. Pets are welcome.



Paris Park



Park Description:

Paris Park is located at the site of the former Paris State Fish Hatchery. The Parks 40 wooded acres border the Muskegon River and provide access to Michigan's Longest Rail Trail State Park. The White Pine Trail stretches a distance of 92 miles and runs directly through Paris Park. Additional highlights of the park include an Eiffel Tower, Tube/Canoe Launch, Picturesque Hiking Trails, Historical Landmarks, Trout Ponds, Picnic Areas and Playgrounds. Park accommodations include 66 campsites, 3 Camp-N-Cabins, Pavilion Rentals, and Group Camping options. Pets are welcome.



### School Section Lake Veteran’s Park

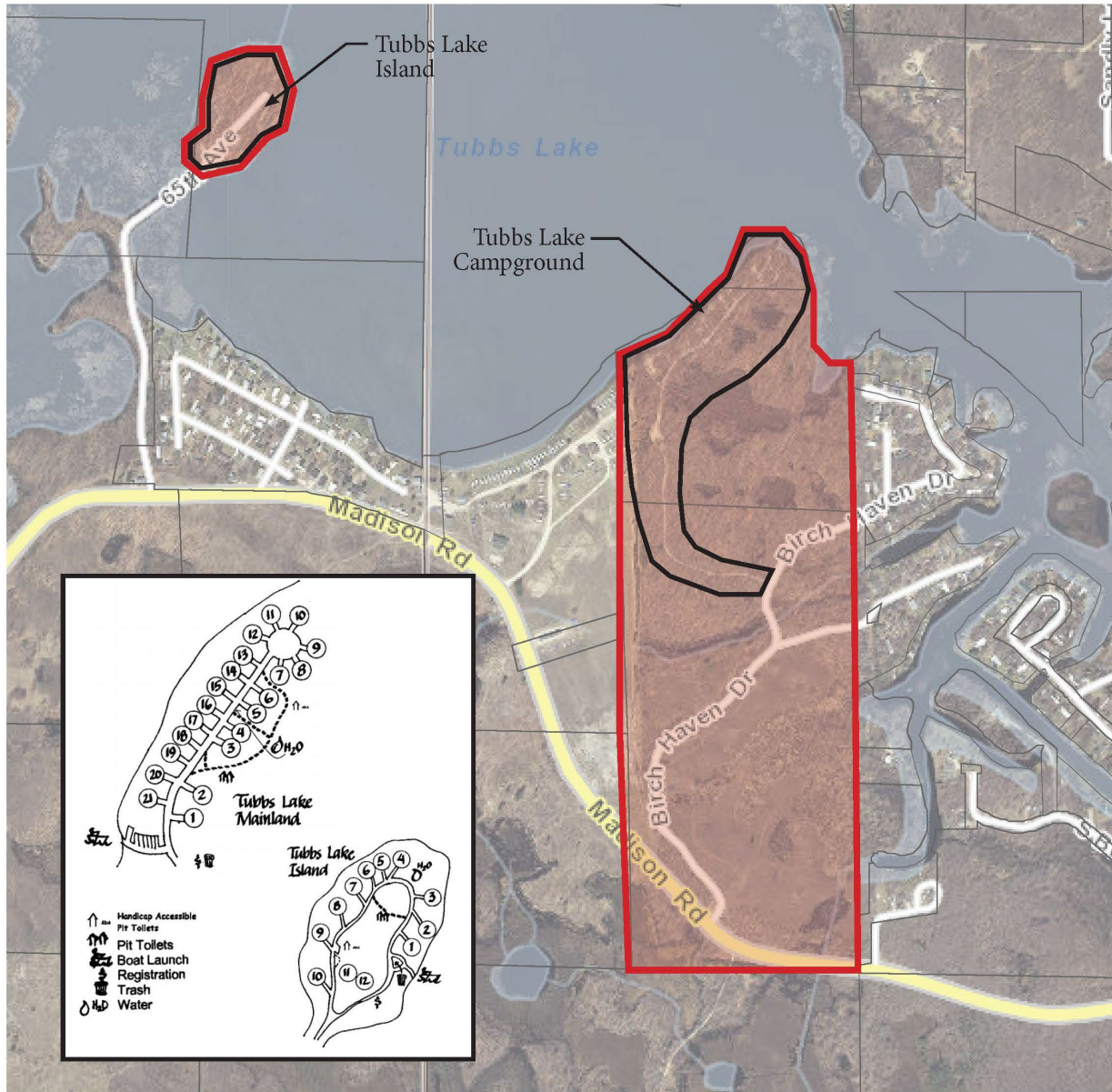


**Park Description:**

School Section Lake Veteran’s Park is a pleasant combination of history, nature, camping, and summer fun! The trademark feature of the park is the large sand swimming area and historic fieldstone concessions building. In addition to the large swimming area are many other day use features such as a shallow water boat launch, watercraft rentals, arts and crafts, volleyball, horseshoes, basketball, ball diamonds, disc golf, playgrounds and picnic areas. The parks 86 acres contain 162 campsites, 5 Camp-N-Cabins, 2 Modern Cabins, and 4 Picnic Shelters, which are available for rent. School Section Lake is home to our Family Group Camp. This complex sleeps up to 72 guests and consists of six cabins, a lodge with kitchen and dining area and a private restroom and shower building. There are no pets allowed.



### Tubbs Lake Campground



**Park Description:**

Tubbs Lake Campground is located within the DNR managed Martiny Lake State Game Area containing 7,660 acres which include 8 interconnected lakes. The campground is split into 2 sections consisting of Tubbs Mainland and Tubbs Island with 33 rustic sites available. Both sections offer waterfront rustic camping, a boat launch, vault toilets, and a hand water pump. Locally famous for quality fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities, it's a great place to explore and unwind.



White Pine Valley Recreation Area



Park Description:

White Pine Valley Recreation Area is a 200-acre woodland area with a well-developed non-motorized trail system. The location contains a parking area with trail maps, offering opportunities for hiking, biking, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, and hunting.





Regional Parks and Recreational Facilities

<b>Accessibility Legend</b>	
1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines	
2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines	
3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines	
4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines	
5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design	

<b>Mecosta County Parks - County Recreation</b>		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Brower County Park	280	3	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X					
2	Davis Bridge County Park	5.6	3	Central & Lower Michigan Counties		X				X	X				X	X										
3	Haymarsh Lake State Campground	30	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X			X	X	X				X	X		X	X		X				X	
4	Merrill-Gorrel County Park	90	1	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X						
5	Paris County Park	40	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X				X		X	X	
6	School Section Lake Veteran's County Park	85	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
7	Tubbs Lake State Forest Campground	15	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X				X						
8	White Pine Valley County Recreation Area	200	1	Central & Lower Michigan Counties												X			X		X					
<b>Other - County Recreation</b>		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Mecosta County Senior Center	5	4	Senior Citizens of Mecosta County		X					X	X	X	X		X				X	X					

City of Big Rapids Recreation		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps	
1	Brutus Dog Park	1	2	Big Rapids Area																							
2	Rotary Fitness Park	0.9	3	Public schools & residential neighborhood			X						X														
3	Charles E. Fairman Community Pool	6.4	3	Big Rapids Area		X		X			X	X	X	X		X											
4	Clay Cliffs Nature Area	57.12	1	Big Rapids Area																			X				
5	Hanchett Park	1.3	4	Integrated into the Riverwalk		X				X						X							X				
6	Hemlock Park with Bandshell	10.4	3	Big Rapids Area		X	X			X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X					
7	Veteran's Memorial Park	0.3	4	Downtown Big Rapids & Residential Neighborhood		X															X			X			
8	Industrial Park Ball Field	9	4	Local Soccer & Softball Organizations													X										
9	Library Park	1.3	4	Passive park area			X																		X		
10	Linden Street Park	0.2	4	Residential neighborhood East of the Muskegon River		X	X																				
11	Mitchell Creek Park	1.8	4	Individuals who live, work and shop in the downtown area		X					X		X												X		
12	Northend Riverside Park	144.8	4	Big Rapids Area		X	X			X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X				
13	Pocket Park	0.1	4	Downtown Merchants, Residents & Shoppers																							
14	River Street Park	16.5	3	Residents, neighborhoods & area youth league organizations						X	X					X	X	X				X					
15	Riverwalk	4.3 M	5	Linear Park used by Big Rapids & Surrounding areas						X			X		X			X				X					
16	Supervisor's Park	2.2	n/a	Vacant park land																							
17	Swede Hill Park	2.8	4	Big Rapids Area		X				X												X			X		
18	Vogel Fields	6.6	4	Local Softball Organizations		X	X										X										
Curbside Bike Lanes		Length (mi.)	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Kayak Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps	
	N. State St./Bridge St. intersection North to City Limits	0.75		Big Rapids Area																			X				
	N. State St./Bridge St. intersection East to Catherine St. then follows Milton Ave. East to the city limits	1		Big Rapids Area																			X				
	Oak St./Ives Ave. intersection South, which turns into South St. and ends at S. State St.	1		Big Rapids Area																			X				
A total of 2.75 miles of curbside bike lane have been constructed to date throughout the City of Big Rapids.																											

Township Recreation		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Kayak Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps	
1	Charlie Brown Park (Green Twp)	0.8	2	Green Township & Neighboring Communities			X										X	X									
2	Community Building (Chippewa Lake)	8	2	Chippewa Lake Area Residents and Visitors		X	X				X		X				X	X					X				
3	Green Township Town Hall Park	7	1	Green Township & Neighboring Communities		X	X											X					X		X		
4	Highbanks Park (BR Twp)	23.5	2	Big Rapids Township & Neighboring Communities		X	X	X		X	X		X				X			X			X				
5	Millet Park (Chippewa Twp)	1	2	Chippewa Township & Neighboring Communities		X							X					X									
6	Mitchell's Landing	66		Chippewa Township &																							
7	Morton Twp. River Park (Morton)	1		Morton Township & Neighboring Communities		X									X												
8	Pine Grove Trails (Morton)	40		Morton Township & Neighboring Communities		X										X			X				X				
9	Riverfront Park (Altona)	0.3	1	Neighboring Communities		X				X	X		X				X		X								
10	River Access Park (Green)	0.5	3	Green Township & Neighboring Communities		X																					
11	Stone Hatchery Park (Green)	1	3	Green Township & Neighboring Communities		X	X						X												X		
12	Wheatland Park (Wheatland Twp)	11	4	Wheatland Township		X	X				X		X	X			X	X									
Roadside Bike Lanes		Length (mi.)	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Kayak Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps	
	90th Ave./9 Mile Rd. south to Buchanan Rd.	0.5		Morton Township																			X				
	90th Ave./Buchanan Rd. to Buchanan Rd./100th Ave.	1		Morton Township																			X				
	M 20/80th Ave. north to 80th Ave./13 Mile	2		Morton Township, Martiny Township																			X				
	80th Ave./13 Mile Rd. north to 80th Ave./Cleveland Rd.	0.8		Martiny Township																			X				
	80th Ave./Cleveland Rd. west to 90th Ave./14 Mile Rd.	0.9		Martiny Township																			X				
<p>5.2 miles of roadside bike lanes have been constructed to date, with an additional 6.6 miles planned to be completed by 2022. Future plans to expand roadside bike lanes include another 14.5 miles throughout Morton, Martiny, Colfax, Big Rapids, and Austin Townships. This will result in one bike lane going to Big Rapids, and another bike lane to Stanwood. These bike lanes will both connect to the White Pine Trail, resulting in a 33 mile loop.</p>																											

Private Recreational Facilities		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Pizza Vibez Mini Golf	3	3	Serves both Residents of Mecosta County and Visitors of the County							X			X									X			
2	Highlands	30	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
3	Horsehead Lake	636	4	Serves both Residents of Mecosta County and Visitors of the County						X					X				X		X					
4	Katke - Ferris State University	160	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
5	Clear Lake Golf Club	240	4	Mecosta County, Michigan, and USA							X			X									X			
6	Outback Lodge & Equestrian	20	5	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X						X				
7	Pines	33	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
8	Royal	100	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
9	St. Ives			Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
10	The Gate	5	5	Residents of Big Rapids and Visitors of Mecosta County							X			X												
11	Two Hats Ranch			Residents of Big Rapids and Visitors of Mecosta County	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X			
12	Tullymore			Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			

Village Recreation		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Bromley Park (Mecosta)	0.5	2	Residents of Mecosta	X	X				X	X		X								X					
2	Buffalo Park (Stanwood)	5	2	Residents of Stanwood		X	X				X		X			X										
3	Clyde Clark Park (Morley)			Residents of Morley	X					X	X				X											
4	East River Park (Barryton)			Residents of Barryton	X	X	X			X					X		X		X							
5	L. Latimer Park (Morley)			Residents of Morley	X	X	X			X	X		X		X	X				X						
6	Lion's Club Riverside Park (Barryton)	200'	2	Residents of Barryton	X										X											
7	Louise Kinney Park (Morley)			Residents of Morley	X	X					X		X					X								
8	M-66 Park (Barryton)	1.5	2	Residents of Barryton	X	X					X		X					X			X				X	

Private Campgrounds		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Bluegill Lake Campground	56	2	Most visitors are within 100 miles, however, they have groups come from as far away as Alaska	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X						
2	Canadian Lakes Campground	N/A	2	Residents of Michigan	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
3	Cranhill Ranch	300	4	Nationwide visitors	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	Holiday Terrace Campground	4	1	Most visitors are from outside of Mecosta County	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X						
5	Mecosta Pines Campground	40	2	Mix of in and outside of Mecosta County	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X					X	X			X		
6	River Ridge Resort	20	4	Mostly Kent County and Allegan County	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
7	Sarn's Resort	200	2	Most visitors are outside of Mecosta County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X													
8	Speed's Campground	20	1	Mix of in and outside of Mecosta County	X						X	X														
9	Tubbs Resort	60	1	Most visitors are outside of Mecosta County	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X		X				
10	Youngs Lake Campground	160	1	Residents of Big Rapids and Visitors to Mecosta County	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X			X		X						

State Recreation		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Haymarsh State Game Area	6,737	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X			X	X	X				X	X			X							
2	Manistee National Forest	3,459	2	Entire State of Michigan and surrounding	X				X	X						X			X	X						
3	Martiny Lakes State Game Area	7,660	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X				X						
4	White Pine State Trail Park	93	2	Entire State of Michigan and surrounding																		X				

Area Schools		Size	Accessibility	Description	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Barryton Elementary	6	3	Gym, Soccer Field, Baseball fields			X				X						X				X		X			
2	Big Rapids High School	40	5	Gym, Two Football Practice fields, Two Softball Fields, Two Baseball Diamonds, Two Soccer Fields, Seven Tennis Courts, Track & Football Complex & Cross Country Trail							X	X					X	X	X			X		X		
3	Chippewa Hills High School & Intermediate	100	4	Gym, Football field, Softball, Baseball, soccer field, Outdoor track, Playground		X	X				X	X		X			X	X			X			X		
4	Mecosta Elementary	4	4	Gym, playground		X	X										X	X						X		
5	Mecosta Osceola Intermediate School District	50		Soccer Field													X									
6	Morley Stanwood Elementary	20	4	Gym, Playground, Multipurpose field		X	X										X				X			X		
7	Morley Stanwood High School	40	5	Gym, football. Softball, baseball, practice fields, indoor track, weight room, multipurpose courts		X	X				X	X					X	X	X		X			X		
8	Morley Stanwood Middle School	40	4	Gym, football. Softball, baseball, practice fields, indoor track, weight room, multipurpose courts																						
9	Stanwood Elementary	12	4	Gym & Playground		X	X										X	X			X			X		
10	St. Michael's	5	3	Playground			X				X			X			X	X								
11	Weidman Elementary	5	3	Playground			X				X								X							

City of Big Rapids Schools		Size	Accessibility	Description	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Big Rapids Middle School	13.5	3	Gym, Soccer Fields							X	X					X	X	X		X			X		
2	Brookside Elementary	7		Gym, Baseball/Softball Field, Playground	X	X											X	X			X			X		
3	Crossroads Charter Academy	3	4	Two Gymnasiums, Soccer/Football Field, Outdoor Track & Playground			X										X		X			X		X		
4	Eastwood Elementary	4.3	4	Gym, Baseball/Softball Field, Playground	X	X											X	X			X			X		
5	Ferris State University	880	3	Racquet & Fitness Center, Indoor & Outdoor tennis courts, Two Ice Rinks, Pool, Climbing Wall, Indoor Track, Multipurpose Courts, Weight Room, Multipurpose Fields, Basketball Courts, Football Field, 18 Hole Golf Course, Indoor & Outdoor Track	X	X	X				X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
6	Riverview Elementary	4.4	4	Gym, Two Baseball/Softball Fields, Playground			X										X	X			X					
7	St. Peter's	2.2	4	Gym, Playground & Pavilion			X										X	X			X			X		
8	St. Mary's	2	4	Gym & Playground			X										X	X			X			X		

## Grant-Assisted Parks

The Mecosta County Parks Commission has been successful in obtaining grants from the MDNR for several decades. Mecosta County has been able to maintain the facilities constructed with grant funds to allow for aesthetically pleasing sites and safe use for the public.

GRANT ASSISTED PARKS				
PROJECT #	PARK NAME	PROJECT YEAR	DESCRIPTION	GRANT STATUS
26-00015	Brower Park	1965	Water/electrical services, sanitary/sewage facilities, roads, parking lots, camping area, picnic area, playgrounds, service buildings	Closed
BF93-306	School Section Lake	1993	Shelters, playground, pathways	Closed
TF03-033	Brower Park Marina Bathhouse	2003	Marina Boathouse, sidewalks, accessible parking spaces	Closed
CFG 12-08	Tree Grant	2012	Trees planted in Paris, School Section, and Brower Parks	Closed

The beginning of the project number indicates the funding source as follows: 26 = Land and Water Conservation Fund

BF = Recreation Bond Fund

TF = Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund



## Planning Process

The Mecosta County Park Commission held a public hearing with no comments and approved the plan on 12/15/2020. The planning process involved these steps:

- Preparing a Community Description
- Updating the Recreation Inventory
- Determining our Recreation Needs for the participants of the plan
- Prepare and advertise public survey
- Developing an Action Plan to meet those needs

The Community Description defines the setting, history of the county, topography, geography, water features, vegetation, and wildlife. Population characteristics and economic considerations are also discussed. The Recreation Inventory was done using the information gathered from the county's parks. Descriptions are included of the recreation areas and their purpose and assessments have been made regarding the accessibility of each of these areas to people with disabilities. The survey was developed, reviewed, and approved by the Park Commission before it was posted (online & printed) for 30 days. The Action Plan was prepared based on infrastructure needs of the parks, input from the public, requirements of the American with Disabilities Act, and the future direction of the parks as determined by the Mecosta County Park Commission.

## Public Input

Mecosta County values the views and opinions of its residents and helped develop the following process to gather the community's thoughts by:

- Utilizing the Park Commission Master Plan Committee
- Creating and sending out a digital and printed survey asking the community specific questions of the current park system and their dreams for the future.
- Developing a comprehensive list of goals and objectives to meet the needs of the community highlighted in the survey.

## Survey Summary Results

There was a total of 572 responses to the survey, 552 responded online while 20 responded through paper fliers. Of those 572 responses there were a combined total of 289 comments given throughout the survey. A bulk of them (108) were in response to question #16 which asks for the users to provide their thoughts and ideas about the parks system.

The survey is able to conclude that an overwhelming 70% of people are in favor of an expansion of the county parks system, 29% of people are "Undecided" about the creation of a Muskegon River Water Trail, 51% of people enjoy bringing pets camping, and 55% of people rate the cleanliness of the county parks system as "Good".

After reviewing all of the 108 responses provided for question #16 a few of the most commented on topics are: road repair within the parks, maintaining the rules by the rangers, keeping School Section Lake pet free, and providing a dog park somewhere in the park system. Other less

commented on topics were the repair of the hatchery ponds, less seasonal camping spots, and maintaining park equipment. The majority of the people responding to the survey are 55-64 years old and prefer to be contacted through email.

Top 3 non-motorized trail investment priorities:

- Providing trail head improvements
- Providing access to regional trails
- Construct more trails

The top 5 visited locations are:

- School Section Lake Veteran's Park
- Brower Park
- Paris Park
- Merrill-Gorrel Park
- Haymarsh Lake Campground

Top 5 most desirable parks are:

- Brower Park
- School Section Lake Veteran's Park
- Davis Bridge Park
- Paris Park
- Merrill-Gorrel Park

Top 5 activities participated in:

- Camping
- Swimming
- Boating
- Fishing
- Trails

Top 3 reasons parks are visited:

- Close to home
- Quiet/Peaceful
- Safe

Top 5 desired event spaces:

- Farmers Market
- Concessions/Food Truck
- Arts/Crafts Festival
- Amphitheater/Concert
- Nature Education Facilities

## Top 5 most desired active recreation activities:

- Playgrounds
- Mini-Golf
- Splash Pad
- Swimming Pool
- Sledding/Tubing

## Top 5 most desired passive recreation activities:

- Natural Hiking Trails
- Beach Swimming
- Kayak/Canoe Launch
- Paved Trails
- Festivals & Concerts

## Top 3 most desired campground amenities:

- Electricity Hook-Up
- Modern Restrooms
- Wi-fi

## Top 3 most desired boating amenities:

- Shoreline Mooring Areas
- Seasonal Docking Slips
- Upgraded Boat Launches



## Goals, Objectives, and Actions

**Goal 1:** Provide all users of Mecosta County Parks with high quality, accessible, reliable, sustainable park facilities and infrastructure that supports the activities and programs within each park.

### Objectives

1. **Develop a sustainable funding model to be able to maintain and replace critical park infrastructure and to leverage future opportunities.**

#### Actions

1. Take a complete inventory and analysis of existing park assets to understand the financial burden in detail and to plan for future capital expenditures.
  2. Present the findings of the Parks Asset Management Plan to the County Board of Commissioners and the public.
  3. Provide the public with opportunities to financially partner with Mecosta County Parks to meet the needs of the park system.
  4. Take advantage of grant opportunities to leverage available funding where possible.
2. **Reduce the cost of park operations and maintenance while maintaining and improving overall quality of park facilities.**

#### Actions

1. Evaluate current maintenance practices to find ways to reduce costs.
2. When replacing current assets, evaluate each item to try to fund longer life-cycle products.
3. Continue to find ways to reduce energy use at all parks.
4. Evaluate and improve parking lot and overflow parking quantity.
5. Improve park entry and internal drive organization for better separation of uses.

**Goal 2:** Provide the residents of Mecosta County and day users improved and additional recreational opportunities.

### Objectives

1. Provide additional and improved day-use passive recreational activity for residents and local families at each park that works with and enhances existing park uses.

#### Actions

1. Provide additional and improved access to natural and paved trails within and connecting to park properties
2. Develop projects to improve access to waterways for recreation.
3. Improve and find new park facilities to host large events, and festivals.
4. Develop where possible an interconnected network of land and water trails.

2. Provide additional and improved day-use active recreational activity for residents and local families at each park that works with and enhances existing park uses.

#### **Actions**

1. Improve existing, and provide new family friendly facilities as outlined in the public survey such as playgrounds, winter recreation, disc golf etc.
3. Acquire and develop new park properties to provide a more diverse recreation offering to the public and to enhance the activities of other park & recreation providers.

#### **Actions**

1. Be prepared to take advantage of new opportunities to expand the park system.
2. Target properties along rivers and lakes for high quality recreation opportunities.
3. Target properties to help fulfill the public desire to connect to regional and local trails.
4. Identify and prioritize the purchase of rare and unique high-quality natural environments for the purpose of land preservation and public benefit.

### **Goal 3: Maintain and improve camping facilities to provide a high-quality, clean, family friendly experience.**

#### **Objectives**

1. Provide each campgrounds' guests with reliable critical infrastructure needs and amenities.

#### **Actions**

1. Continue to maintain and expand access to electricity, water, and modern restrooms.
2. Improve campground security and barrier free accessibility whenever improvements are made.
3. Continue to improve availability, reliability, and quality of WiFi connection in parks and campgrounds.

#### **Objectives**

2. Improve existing and expand recreational opportunities and experience for campground guest.

#### **Actions**

1. Improve and enhance boating opportunities and facilities.
2. Look for opportunities to expand the number of campsites available to meet demand.
3. Continue to improve overall campground cleanliness, and rule enforcement.

**Goal 4: Provide the public with good online and on-site communication, messaging, and maps about the Mecosta County Parks system and plans for future improvements.**

**Objectives**

1. Accurately depict the vision and direction of Mecosta County Parks.

**Actions**

1. Complete a comprehensive rebranding exercise to accurately reflect a desire to be known for parks and recreation.
2. Update the park's logo and slogan.

**Objectives**

2. Provide park visitors with good information on-site and online about current and future park activities and facilities.

**Actions**

1. Develop new parks maps for each site that are to scale and accurately show park properties, trails, parking, and amenities.
2. Post new park maps online as PDF's for easy printing.
3. Post future park plans online to help share the vision for growth.
4. Develop new park signage and trailhead standards to be used throughout parks.

**Goal 5: Be good stewards of the natural environment on all park properties.**

**Objectives**

1. Maintain and improve the natural environments where feasible of both undeveloped and developed areas of all park properties.

**Actions**

1. Seek to identify and eradicate invasive species from park properties.
2. Plan for green infrastructure when making park improvements.
3. Reduce the negative impacts of park use, operations, and maintenance on the natural environment.
4. Model and promote good environmental stewardship.

# APPENDICES



## **Appendix A**

### **Supplemental DNR Attachments**

**Survey Results**

**Public Notices**

**Public Meeting Minutes**

**Post Completion Self-Certification Reports**

**Public Hearing Feedback**

**Formal Resolution to Adopt the Plan**

**Community Park, Recreation, Checklist**