



# Mecosta County Park Commission Parks and Recreation Master Plan

2026-2030

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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upgrading existing facilities in order to meet new federal regulations affecting operation, replacing and renovating outdated structures, establishing new park lands by purchase, lease or some other means, and expanding services to meet changing customer demands of the next century.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 2030.

### Goals of the Plan

- Update the Master Plan to address current needs and conditions to serve as a planning resource to the Mecosta County Park 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 2026-2030. 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 with a population of 40,321 people according to 2023 ACS census data. The community is separated into four villages: Barryton, Mecosta, Morley, and Stanwood; two Census Designated Places (CDP's): Canadian Lakes and Paris; one city: Big Rapids; and 16 townships: Aetna, Austin, Big Rapids, Chippewa Lake, 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.

Mecosta County has an area of approximately 575 square miles, with nearly 100 percent of that area as rural land. The only registered Urban Area is the City of Big Rapids, whose area of 4.5 square miles only accounts for about 1% of the County's total land area. About 37 percent of the total land area 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 40,321 people estimated by the 2023 ACS Census data is almost a 1% increase from the 2020 count of 39,900. Median age is 40.6, which has been on the rise over the past decades and continues to climb. 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 9,959-enrollment figure for 2024 is a significant group that comprises a special segment of the population.

A majority of Mecosta County's population, approximately 80%, resides in rural areas. The other 20% reside within the City of Big Rapids. 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. These areas include the Villages of Barryton, Mecosta, Morley, and Stanwood; the CDP's of Canadian Lakes and Paris; and the townships of Chippewa Lake and Martiny Lakes.

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.

**Population:** The county’s population has been slowly declining from 2010 to 2020, with a small increase over the past few years. As the population changes, so will the need for recreational facilities for both residents and tourists.

Population	2010	2020	2023
Mecosta County	42,798	39,900	40,321

**Age:** The median age of the county continues to rise every year through both an increase of retirees moving to the area and general population aging. Knowing the spread of age groups is important for creating recreational opportunities that can serve everyone.

Age	Mecosta County	%
Under 18 years	7,903	19.6%
18 to 64	24,273	60.2%
65 years and over	8,145	20.2%

**Gender:** The gender distribution within the county is nearly 50/50.

Gender	Mecosta County	%
Male	20,120	49.9%
Female	20,201	50.1%

**Disabled Persons:** If park and recreation facilities are not barrier free, many of these residents will be limited in participating in recreational activities.

Population	Mecosta County	%
Disabled Persons	6,814	16.9%

**Race:** The racial composition of the county and surrounding area is majorly white.

Race	Mecosta County	%
White	36,288.90	90%
Black	887.06	2.2%
Native American	282.25	0.7%
Hispanic or Latino	1,128.99	2.8%
Asian	322.57	0.8%
Native Pacific Island	-	0.0%
Two or more	1,370.91	3.4%
Other	80.64	0.2%

## Administrative Structure

The Mecosta County Park Commission staff consists of seven year-round benefited positions with six part time, year-round positions. During the peak operating season, the commission recruits (42) additional seasonal staff members and (2) camp hosts to manage and operate five County Parks, two Campgrounds within State Game Areas, the White Pine Valley Group Camping and 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.

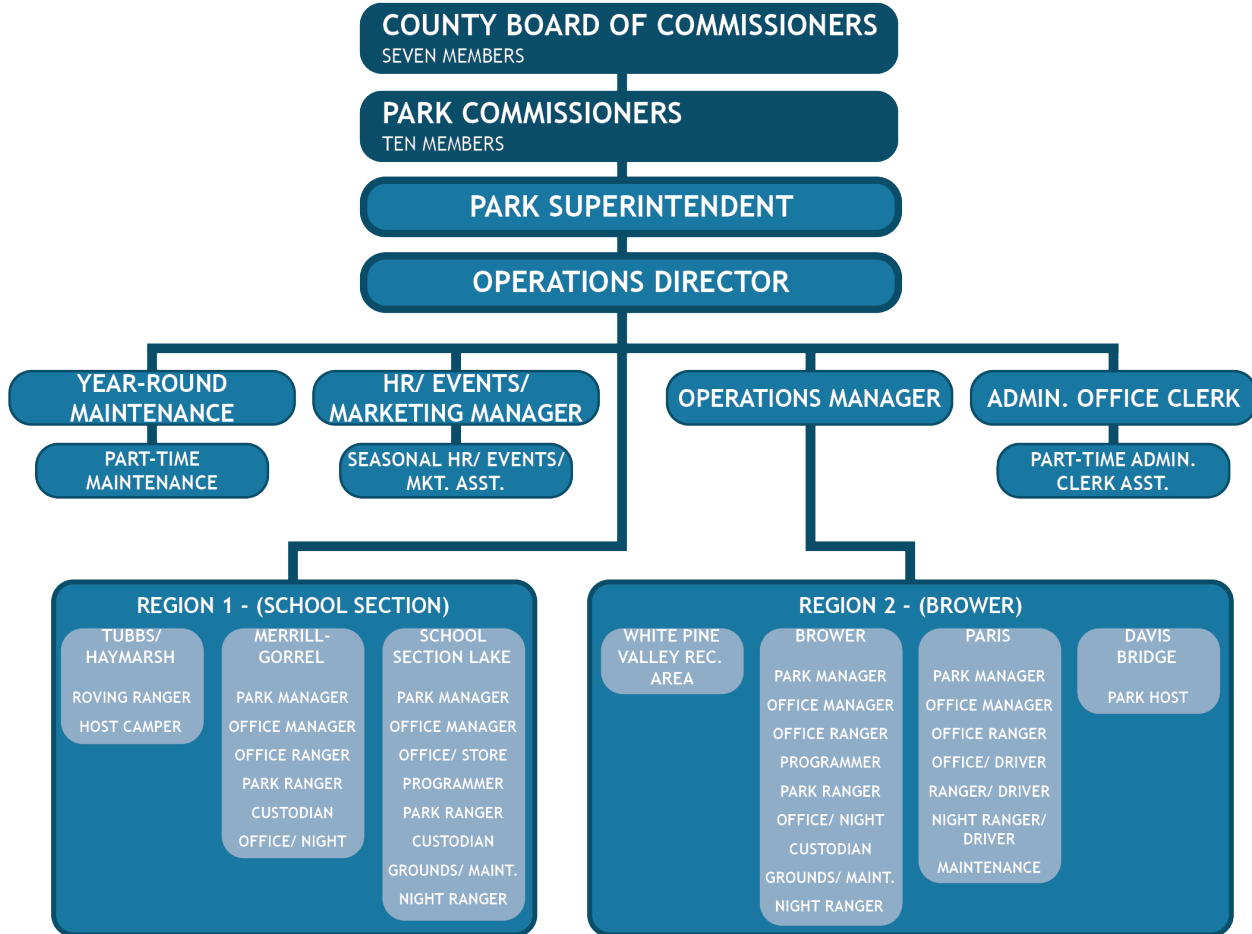
Year-round staff positions consist of a Park Superintendent, Operations Director – Region 1, Operations Manager – Region 2, HR, Events & Marketing Manager, Full-Time Administrative Clerk with (2) Part-Time Administrative Assistants, (2) Full-Time Maintenance staff with (4) Part-Time Maintenance employees. 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 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 PARKS

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## 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:

- Chris Zimmerman, County Commission
- Van Johnson, Road Commission
- Karla Miller, Drain Commission
- Gary Lambrix, Planning Commission
- Marilyn Bradstrom
- Bill Stanek
- Tim Vogel
- Paul Griffith
- Jerrilynn Strong
- Rick Hatkowski

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 Mecosta County Services Building in Big Rapids, 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

GL Number	Description	2023 Amended Budget	2023 Activity	12/31/2024 Amended Budget	YTD as of 12/31/2024	2024 Projected	2025 Dept Request
<b>Estimated Revenue</b>							
508-000-539.000	State Grants	-	40,494.95	581,200.00	111,520.71	281,400.00	699,800.00
508-000-588.000	Capital Contribution Revenue	-	-	-	-	-	-
508-000-608.000	Other Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
508-000-642.000	Sales	-	-	60,000.00	72,722.37	84,000.00	80,000.00
508-000-643.000	Sale of County Assets	11,805.00	9,901.00	-	-	-	-
508-000-651.000	Camping Park Fees	1,471,000.00	1,473,611.28	1,580,000.00	1,395,423.84	1,580,000.00	1,650,000.00
508-000-652.000	Vehicle Permits	381,000.00	383,036.03	356,000.00	313,131.50	365,000.00	375,000.00
508-000-665.000	Interest on Investments	25,200.00	41,021.86	12,500.00	20,700.41	20,500.00	5,000.00
508-000-668.000	Rental Income	7,000.00	7,416.88	750.00	4,668.31	7,500.00	8,000.00
508-000-671.000	Budget Uses of Fund Balance	1,021,213.00	-	1,168,867.00	1,168,867.00	1,168,867.00	130,215.00
508-000-675.000	Contributions/Donations Revenue	170.00	170.00	-	-	-	-
508-000-691.000	Refunds&Reimburements	34,634.00	51,062.25	10,041.00	4,059.44	10,041.00	10,000.00
508-000-692.000	Insurance Refunds	-	-	-	-	-	-
508-000-698.000	Misc. Revenue	177,000.00	177,660.78	90,000.00	50,320.64	65,000.00	75,000.00
508-000-699.000	Transfers In	400,000.00	437,390.89	366,591.00	112,539.47	280,000.00	505,000.00
<b>Total Estimated Revenue:</b>		<b>3,529,022.00</b>	<b>2,621,765.92</b>	<b>4,225,949.00</b>	<b>3,253,953.69</b>	<b>3,862,308.00</b>	<b>3,538,015.00</b>

Full budget summary included in the Appendix.

## 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) have made financial contributions during trail construction. The executive committee for trail oversight includes the County of Mecosta, the County of Newaygo, West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance, 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. The Park Commission has hired NCCISMA to address invasive species concerns within park properties as needed.

**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 tree planting event within Paris and School Section Lake County Parks and an ongoing dam removal and restoration project taking place in vicinity of Paris Park. Park staff have volunteered to assist with Sturgeon netting prior to lamprey treatments on the Muskegon River. The Watershed Assembly utilizes park building and grounds to complete various studies and hosts a variety of events and presentations.

**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 stocking of 20,000-30,000 fish annually at Paris County Park. The Park Commission and Regional Fisheries staff members are in regular communication as to the health of many of the lakes and rivers within our county. Park staff have also 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 works 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 such 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.

**Save The Ponds (Paris Restoration)** – The Park Commission has partnered with the community fundraising group “Save The Ponds” to work toward fundraising and restoration goals in bringing the historic Paris Fishponds back to life and to revive cultural community events within the park.

**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.

**Mecosta County Sheriff’s Office** – The Park Commission partners with the Sheriff’s Office to host multiple boaters’ safety courses each year within the county parks.

**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. In 2025 the Park Commission assisted the POA in completing a thorough fisheries study of the lake with contractors completing net survey’s, electroshocking, and other survey methods, and partnering with DNR Fisheries staff in evaluating the health of the waterbody and recommendations toward the future of the fishery.

**School Section Lake Veteran’s Memorial Project** – The Park Commission partnered with this organization to fundraise, create, and install a Veteran’s Memorial within the park. The organizations partner each year to hold a Memorial Day ceremony at the site and toward ongoing maintenance of the physical Veteran’s Memorial.

**Remus Historical Society – School Section Lake Pavilion Project** – The Park Commission partnered with these organizations to fundraise and execute a renovation plan for a historic 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 takes place by performing drills at Paris Park followed by a picnic. The White Pine Valley Recreation Area is being renovated and licensed for use by youth groups and community organizations to host group camping events.

**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 hotels and businesses.

**Old Settlers Reunion** – The annual reunion 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 Memorial Park also hosts a variety of educational events each Saturday from July 4<sup>th</sup> through 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.

**Primo Brands – Ice Mountain** – The Park Commission has partnered with Ice Mountain in many ways including a grant to provide erosion stabilization along the Muskegon River at Davis Bridge County Park. Ice Mountain provided funding support toward the development of Michigan’s Dragon Trail.

**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.

**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 volunteers 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 County 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. A portion of the Dragon Trail runs through the County as well, passing through two County parks along the way.

## Recreation Programming

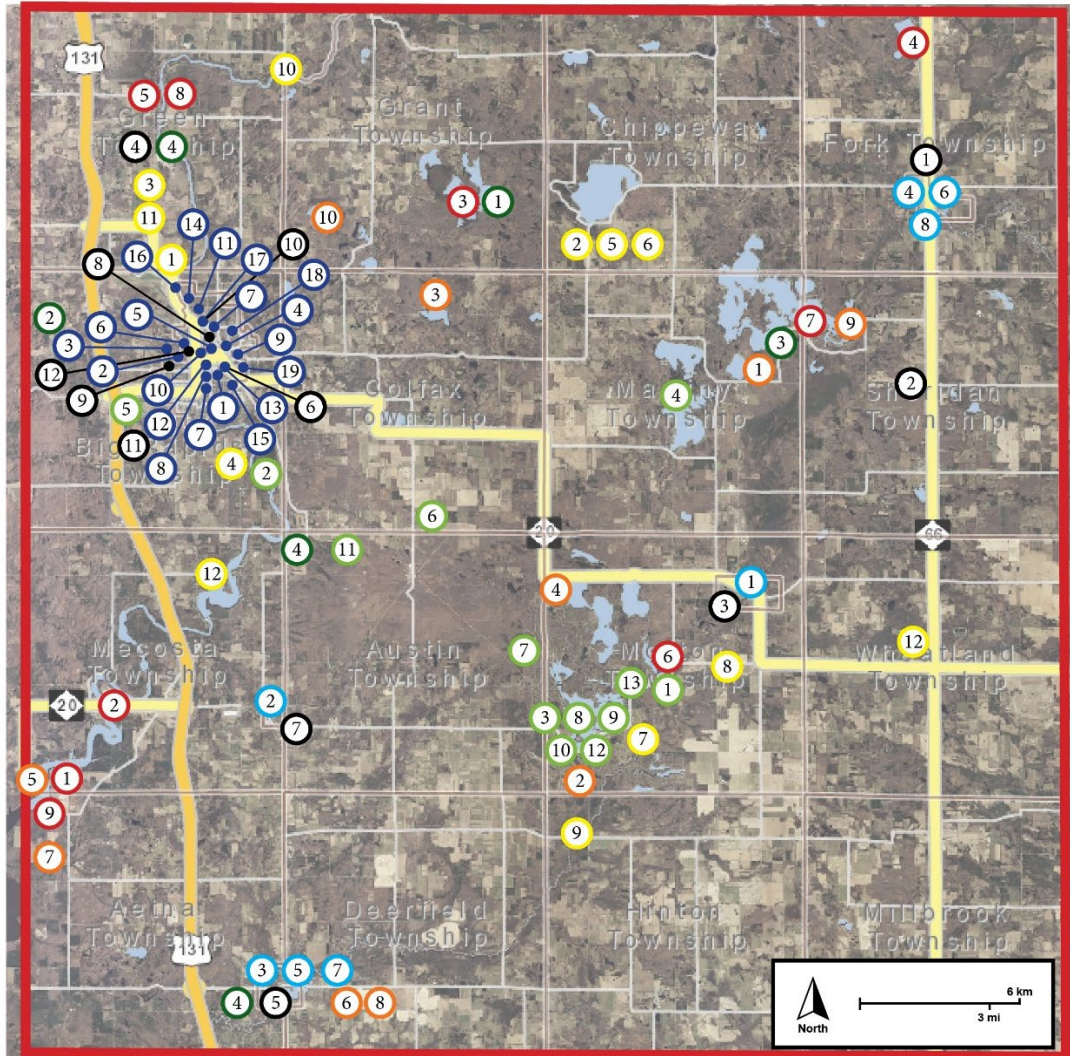
The Mecosta County Park Commission hosts events throughout the summer months at several county park locations. The Michigan Boaters Safety course is hosted within multiple parks each season along with varied additional educational training sessions. School Section Lake Park and Brower Park both contain 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 Parades, 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.

## County Parks and Recreation Resources

### Overall Parks Inventory Map



Mecosta County Parks	City of Big Rapids Recreation	Township Recreation	Private Recreation	Private Camp Grounds
1. Brower Park	1. Brutus Dog Park/ Centennial Park	1. Charlie Brown Park	1. Pizza Vibez Mini Golf	1. Bluegill Lake Campground
2. Davis Bridge Park	2. Charles E Fairman Community Pool	2. Community Building	2. The Gate	2. Canadian Lakes Campground
3. Haymarsh Lake Campground	3. Clay Cliffs Nature Area	3. Green Township Hall Park	3. Highlands	3. Cranhill Ranch
4. Merrill Gorrel Campground	4. Depot Trailhead Park	4. Highbanks Park	4. Horsehead Lake	4. Holiday Terrace Campground
5. Paris Park	5. Hanchett Park	5. Millet Park	5. Katke - FSU	5. River Ridge Resort
6. School Section Lake Veterans Park	6. Hemlock Park w/ Bandshell	6. Mitchell's Landing	6. Meceola Country Club	6. Mecosta Pines Campground
7. Tubbs Lake Campground	7. Industrial Park Ball Field	7. Morton Twp. River Park	7. Outback Lodge & Equestrian	7. Sarr's Resort
8. White Pine Valley Recreation Area	8. Library Park	8. Pine Grove Trails	8. Pines	8. Speed's Campground
9. Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam	9. Linden St. Park	9. Riverfront Park	9. Royal	9. Tubbs Resort
	10. Mitchell Creek Park	10. River Access Park	10. St. Ives	10. Youngs Lake Campground
<b>Area Schools</b>	11. Northend Riverside Park	11. Stone Hatchery Park	11. Two Hats Ranch	
1. Barryton Elementary	12. Pocket Park	12. Wheatland Park	12. Tullymore	<b>State Recreation</b>
2. Chippewa Hills Middle & High Schools	13. River Street Park	13. Richard Evens Park	13. The Sanctuary	1. Haymarsh State Game Area
3. Mecosta Elementary	14. Riverwalk			2. Manistee National Forest
4. Mecosta Osceola School District	15. Rotary Fitness Park	<b>Village Recreation</b>		3. Martiny Lakes State Game Area
5. Morley School System	16. Supervisor's Park	1. Bromley Park		4. White Pine State Trail Park
6. Riverview Elementary	17. Swede Hill Park	2. Buffalo Park		
7. Stanwood Elementary	18. Veteran's Memorial Park	3. Clyde Clark Park		
8. Eastwood Elementary	19. Vogel Fields	4. East River Park		
9. Brookside Elementary		5. L. Latimer Park		
10. Big Rapids Middle School		6. Lion's Club Riverside Park		
11. Big Rapids High School		7. Louise Kinney Park		
12. Crossroads Charter Academy		8. M-66 Park		

## 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 8,000 feet of river frontage with 1,000 feet of sandy beach. Watersports 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.



### Amenities:

- Boat Launches
- Swimming Area
- Sand Beach
- Hiking Trails
- Barrier-Free Fishing Pier
- Fish Cleaning Station
- Playgrounds
- Picnic Area
- Basketball Court
- Sand Volleyball
- Tennis Courts
- Baseball Diamond
- Amphitheater
- Horseshoes
- Camper Dump Stations
- Arts & Crafts Building
- Rental Pavilion
- Barrier-Free Parking & Water Access

### Accommodations & Features:

- Brower Park offers 230 campsites and 10 cabins.
- There are three modern toilet buildings in the park with showers and flush toilets. Two vault toilets are located near the Shallow Water Boat Launch.
- All campsites have electrical hook-up and a water outlet. Each site includes a picnic table and fire pit.
- Brower Park provides direct access to the Dragon Trail.
- Vehicle Permits are required for entrance in addition to camping fees.
- Pets are welcome.

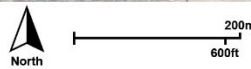
## Davis Bridge Park

### 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 along the banks of the Hardy Pond Reservoir. Davis Bridge Park’s 20 acres contain a concrete launch ramp, accessible kayak launch, fishing boardwalk, ice fishing accessibility, a vault toilet, accessible parking, 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.



Address: 22170 8 Mile Rd, Stanwood, MI 49346



### Amenities:

- Concrete Boat Ramp
- Launch Dock
- Vault Toilet
- Hand Water Pump
- Vehicle & Trailer Parking
- Picnic Areas with Charcoal Grills
- Shore Fishing
- Barrier-Free Fishing Overlook
- Barrier-Free Kayak Launch
- Barrier-Free Vehicle and Trailer Parking

### Accommodations & Features:

- Davis Bridge Park provides direct access to the Dragon Trail.
- Vehicle Permits are required for entrance in addition to camping fees.
- Pets are welcome.



## Haymarsh Lake Campground

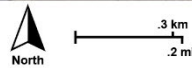
### Park Description:

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

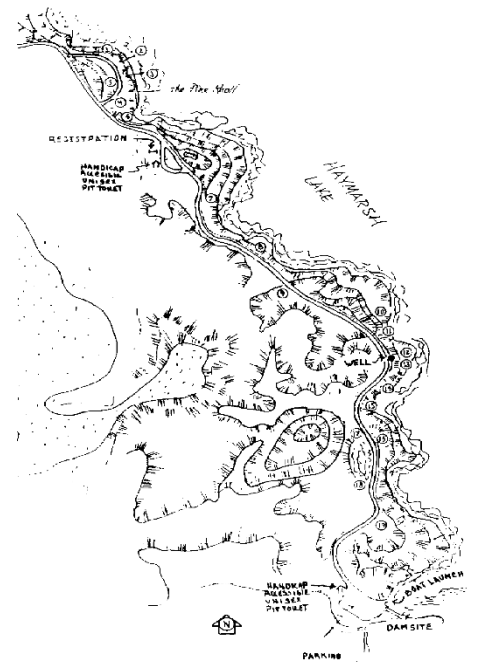


Address: 20500 140th Ave, Bid Rapids, MI 49307



### Amenities:

- Rustic Waterfront Camping
- Public Hunting Land Access
- 2 Boat Launches
- Vault Toilets
- Hand Water Pump
- Fish Cleaning Station
- Trash Dumpster



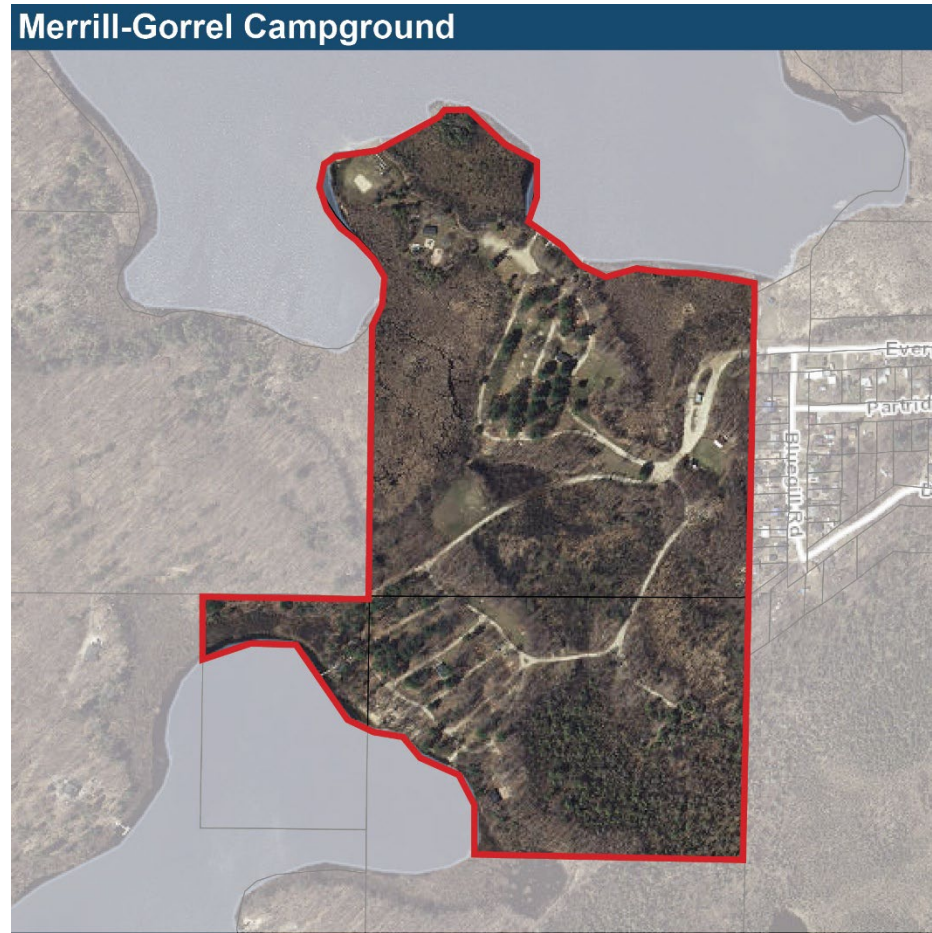
### Accommodations & Features:

- Haymarsh Lake Campground is first come, first served and does not allow reservations.
- Haymarsh Campground offers 19 rustic campsites plus a group tent camping section.
- Each Campsite contains a picnic table and fire pit.
- Mecosta County Parks vehicle permits are not required at Haymarsh Lake Campground.
- Pets are welcome.

## 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 contain a variety of amenities and accommodation options, which enhance this picturesque getaway.



Address: 3275 Evergreen Rd, Sears, MI 49679



### Amenities:

- Two Boat Launches
- Two Beaches
- Two Swimming Areas
- Fishing Pier
- Playgrounds
- Rental Picnic Shelters
- Picnic Areas
- Sand Volleyball
- Basketball Court
- Kickball Field
- Tetherball
- Horseshoes
- Cabins
- Natural Pathways

### Accommodations & Features:

- Merrill-Gorrel Park offers 146 campsites and four cabins. 122 of them have electrical hook-ups and water outlets.
- There are four modern toilet buildings in the park with flush toilets. Two have shower stalls.
- Each campsite includes a picnic table and fire pit.
- Vehicle Permits are required for entrance in addition to camping fees.
- Pets are welcome.

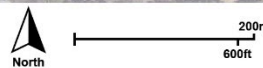
## Paris Park

### Park Description:

Paris Park is located at the site of the former Paris State Fish Hatchery. This area was selected because of its abundant sources of water and excellent railroad connections, and was a major supplier of salmon and brown trout fingerlings for stocking lakes and rivers. The Park's 40 wooded acres border the Muskegon River and provide access to Michigan's Longest Paved Rail Trail State Park. The White Pine Trail stretches a distance of 92 miles and runs directly through Paris Park.



Address: 22090 Northland Dr, Paris, MI 49338



### Amenities:

- Playgrounds
- Fishing
- Wooded Trails'
- Rental Picnic Pavilions
- Picnic Areas
- Group Camping
- Sand Volleyball
- Basketball
- Horseshoes
- Cabins
- White Pine Trail Access
- Canoe/Kayak/Tube Launch
- Historic Fish Hatchery
- Eiffel Tower
- Trout Ponds
- Tube Rentals and Transportation

### Accommodations & Features:

- Paris Park offers 66 campsites, two group campsites and three cabins.
- There are two modern toilet buildings in the park with flush toilets and showers.
- All campsites have electrical hook-up and a water outlet. 20 include septic hook-up.
- Each campsite contains a picnic table and fire pit.
- Vehicle Permits are required for entrance in addition to camping fees.
- 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 family fun! The main feature of the 86-acre park is our large sand swimming area, beach and historic fieldstone concessions building. The park is home to an original one room schoolhouse which offers educational summer programs. Our Family Group Camp is located in a secluded area of the park and offers a unique outdoor experience for larger groups. The park hosts many seasonal programs, special events, arts and crafts, and sporting opportunities.



### Amenities:

- Large Beach and Swimming Area
- Concessions Building
- Arts and Crafts Building
- Canoe, Kayak, Stand UP
- Paddleboard and Paddleboat Rentals
- Shallow Water Boat Launch
- Picnic Areas
- 4 Rental Picnic Pavilions
- Basketball Court
- Volleyball Courts
- Disc Golf
- Playgrounds
- Baseball Diamond
- Ping Pong Table
- Stocked Fishing Lake
- Fish Cleaning Station
- Camper Dump Station
- Wooded Trails
- Horseshoes

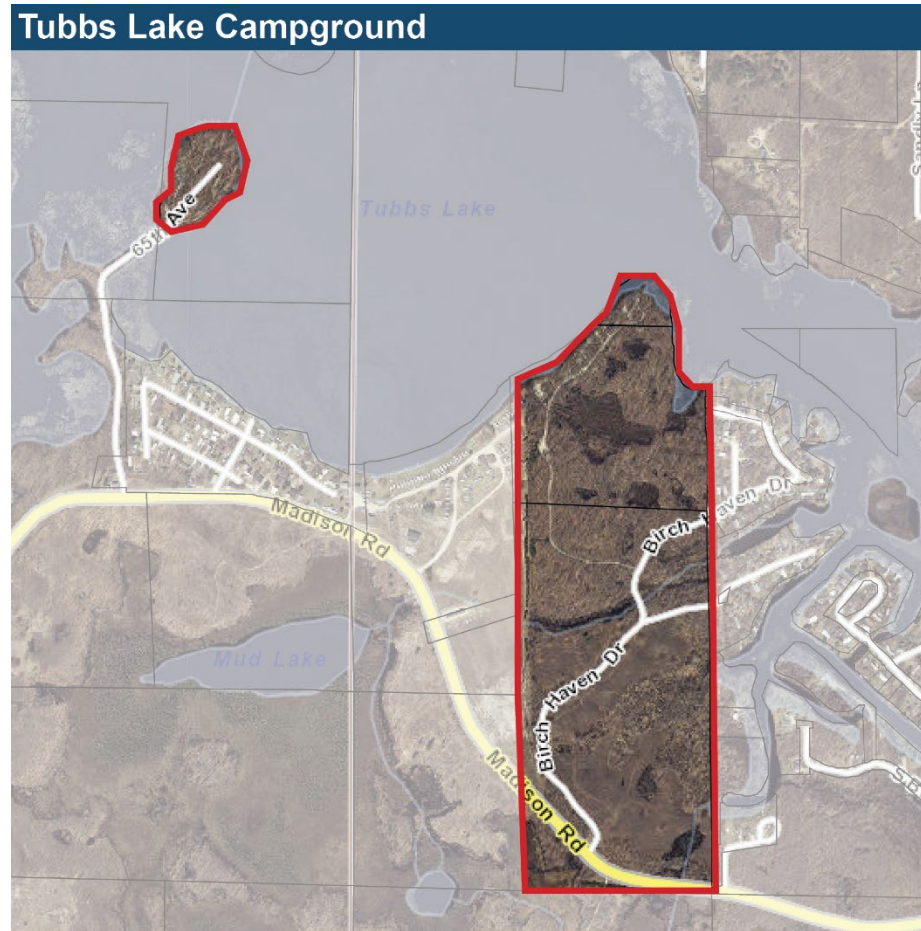
### Accommodations & Features:

- School Section Lake Veteran’s Park offers 205 campsites and five cabins. The park also contains two modern cabins with upgraded offerings.
- There are three modern toilet buildings in the park with showers and flush toilets.
- All campsites have electrical hook-up, water outlets, picnic table and fire pit.
- 4 Barrier-free paved campsites.
- Vehicle Permits are required for entrance in addition to camping fees.
- Pets are welcome.

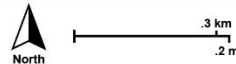
## Tubbs Lake Campground

### 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 two sections consisting of Tubbs Mainland and Tubbs Island. Locally famous for quality fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities, it's a great place to explore and unwind.



**Address Main:** 16823 Birch Haven Dr, Mecosta, MI 49332  
**Island:** 17018 65th Ave, Mecosta, MI 49332



### Amenities:

- Rustic Waterfront Camping
- Public Hunting Land Access
- 2 Boat Launches
- Vault Toilets
- Hand Water Pumps
- Fish Cleaning Stations
- Trash Dumpsters

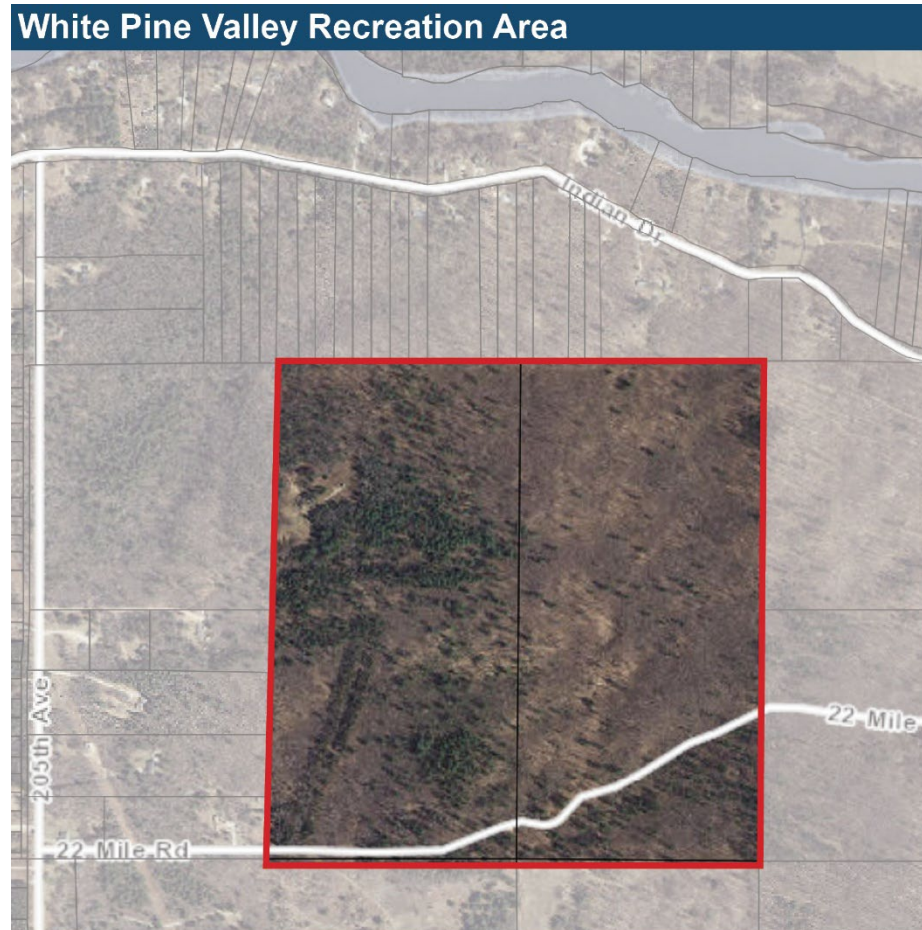
### Accommodations & Features:

- Tubbs Lake Campground is first come, first served and does not allow reservations.
- Tubbs Mainland offers 21 rustic campsites while Tubbs Island offers 12 rustic campsites
- Each Campsite contains a picnic table and fire pit.
- Mecosta County Parks vehicle permits are not required at Tubb's Lake Campground.
- Pets are welcome.

## White Pine Valley Recreation Area

### Park Description:

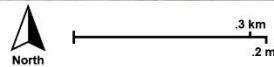
White Pine Valley Recreation Area is a 200-acre woodland area with a well-developed non-motorized trail system. The location contains a parking area with trail maps, offering opportunities for hiking, biking, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, and hunting.



### Amenities:

- Loop Trail System
- Information Kiosk
- Gravel Parking Area
- Group Campground
- Water Pump
- Portable Toilets

Address: 20200 22 Mile Rd, Paris, MI 49338



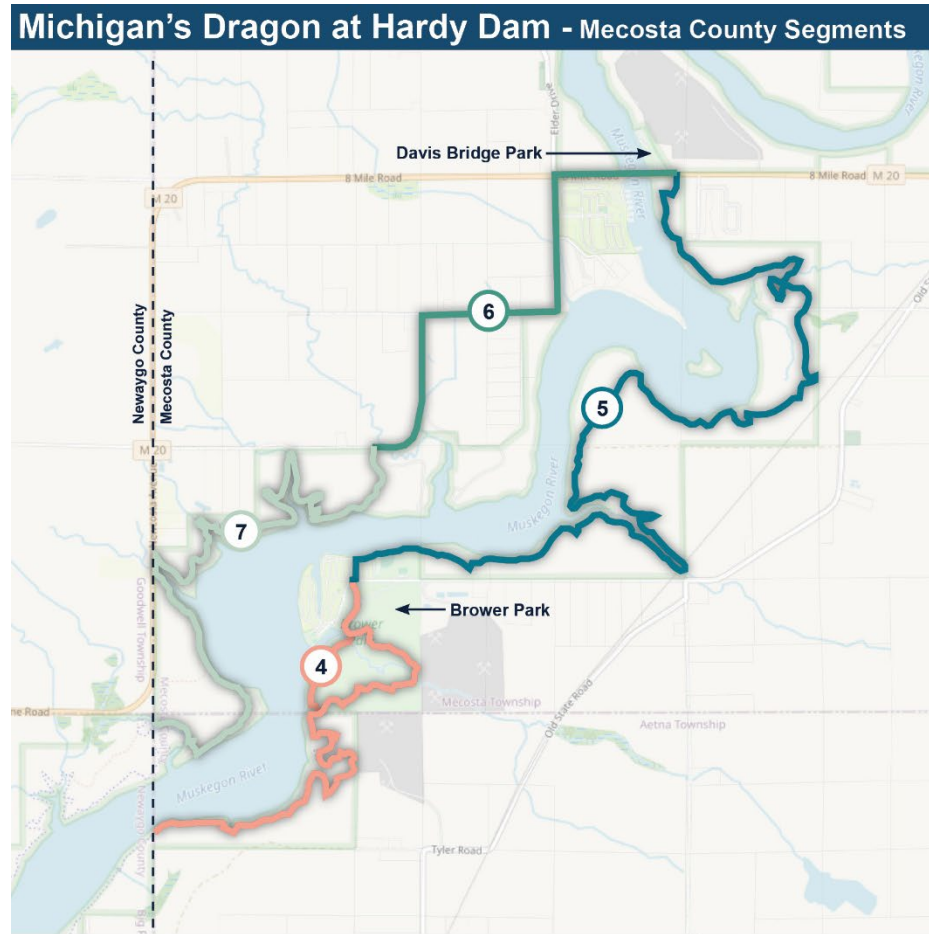
### Accommodations & Features:

- Day Use Non-Motorized Park
- Organizational camping permitted by special use permit only.

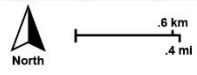
## Michigan’s Dragon at Hardy Dam

### Park Description:

The Dragon Trail is a nonmotorized trail that has propelled West Michigan into a premier adventure sports destination providing primarily hiking, running, and mountain biking experiences. The final trail system is a 45-mile linear County Park jointly managed by the Newaygo and Mecosta County Park Commissions in partnership with Consumer’s Energy. In addition, West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance (WMMBA) has entered into a volunteer maintenance agreement with the Park Commissions to assist with routine maintenance of this world-class trail system.



- Segment 4:** Starts at the 4 Mile Rd. and Newcosta Ave. in Newaygo County and continues 4.9 miles to Polk Road in Stanwood, Mecosta County. The Brower Loop portion of the trail is an additional 0.8 miles long!
- Segment 5:** 6 miles long and runs on the reservoir’s east side, starting on Polk Road in Stanwood and ending at 8 Mile Road.
- Segment 6:** Connects the east side of the trail system to the west side, running 2 miles starting on the paved shoulder of M-20 and ending at mile marker 22 on 7 Mile Rd.
- Segment 7:** The longest section of the trail. It covers 10 miles and runs on the reservoir’s west side from mile marker 22 at 7 Mile Rd. to Big Bend Park in Big Prairie Township.



## 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	X	X				
2	Davis Bridge County Park	5.6	3	Central & Lower Michigan Counties		X				X	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		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	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		X				
8	White Pine Valley County Recreation Area	200	1	Central & Lower Michigan Counties												X			X			X				
9	Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam		2	Entire State of Michigan and surrounding												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									x														
2	Charles E. Fairman Community Pool	6.4	3	Big Rapids Area	x		x			x	x	x	x								x						
3	Clay Cliffs Nature Area	57.12	1	Big Rapids Area									x			x											
4	Depot Trailhead Park	2.1	4	Big Rapids Area							x		x									x					
5	Hanchett Park	1.3	4	Integrated in to Riverwalk						x						x						x	x				
6	Hemlock Park	10.4	3	Big Rapids Area	x	x	x		x	x			x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
7	Industrial Park Ball	9	4	Local soccer and softball organizations													x										
8	Library Park/Anna Howard Shaw Memorial Park	1.3	4	Passive park area			x														x				x		
9	Linden Street Park	0.2	4	Residential neighborhood East of the Muskegon River	x	x																					
10	Mitchell Creek Park	1.8	4	Individuals who live, work and shop in the downtown area							x		x													x	
11	Northend Riverside Park	144.8	4	Big Rapids Area	x	x			x	x			x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x				
12	Pocket Park	0.1	4	Downtown Merchants, Residents & Shoppers	x								x								x						
13	River Street Park	16.5	3	Residents, neighborhoods, and area youth organizations.						x	x					x		x	x	x							
14	Riverwalk	4.3	5	Linear Park used by Big Rapids & Surrounding areas	x					x			x			x			x	x		x					
15	Rotary Fitness Park	0.9	3	Public school and residential neighborhood.			x															x					
16	Supervisor's Park	2.2	n/a	Vacant Park Land						x																	
17	Swede Hil Skate Park	2.8	4	Big Rapids Area	x	x				x												x	x			x	
18	Veteran's Memorial Park	0.3	4	Downtown Big Rapids and residential		x															x						
19	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 Sports	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					
Maple St./ Depot Park East to Bronson, N to Milton Ave.		1.5		Big Rapids Area																		x					
Colburn @ City Limits West to White Pine Trail		0.25		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 4.25 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)	18.55	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 (Chippewa Twp)	66		Chippewa Township & Neighboring Communities																							
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					
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									
13	Richard Evens Park (Mecosta Twp)	5.5	1	Mecosta Township	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 Sports	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				
5.2 miles of roadside bike lanes have been constructed to date, with an additional 6.6 miles planned. 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.																											

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 Vibe Mini Golf	3	3	Serves both Residents of Mecosta County and Visitors of the County							X			X									X			
2	The Gate	5	5	Residents of Big Rapids and Visitors of Mecosta County							X			X												
3	Highlands	30	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County						X				X									X			
4	Horsehead Lake	636	4	Serves both Residents of Mecosta County and Visitors of the County						X					X					X		X				
5	Katke - Ferris State University	160	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
6	Clear Lake Golf Club	240	4	Mecosta County, Michigan, and USA							X			X									X			
7	Outback Lodge & Equestrian	20	5	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X						X				
8	Pines	33	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
9	Royal	100	4	Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			X									X			
10	St. Ives			Primary market is outside of Mecosta County							X			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	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
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	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
6	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		
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						
11	Grays Campground	22	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								

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			
9	Hillcrest Elementary	2	4	Gym & Playground			X										X	X		X			X			

### Grant-Assisted Parks

The Mecosta County Park 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
26-01525	Senior Citizen Park	1993	Construction of a Senior Citizen Park adjacent to the Senior Citizen Center. Pavillions, shuffleboard, horseshoes, walkways, and parking.	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
TF21-0101	Brower Park	2021	Accessible kayak launch, boat launch, paved parking lot, vault restroom building, sidewalks, BF parking, boat wash station	Closed
TF23-0147	Davis Bridge Park	2023	Accessible kayak launch, paved parking lot, vault restroom building, sidewalks, BF parking	Open

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 on 12/16/2025, there were no comments made by the public. The Resolution to adopt the plan was signed by the Board of Commissioners on 01/01/2026. 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. No public comments were received during the 30-day public review period. 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 263 responses to the survey with a combined total of 227 comments given across all 31 questions. 70% of respondents are Mecosta County residents, the largest segment of that being 31-50 years of residency.

The survey is able to conclude that:

- When it comes to park use, results naturally vary between residents and non-resident respondents.

Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Day Use Visitor	66%
Nightly Camper	18%
Seasonal Camper	16%

Non-Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Day Use Visitor	15%
Nightly Camper	28%
Seasonal Camper	57%

- Most respondents consider the creation of a Muskegon River Water Trail “Moderately Important” with “Undecided” being second.

Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Very Important	18%
Moderately Important	30%
Undecided	26%
Not that important	12%
Not a priority at all!	14%

Non-Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Very Important	18%
Moderately Important	24%
Undecided	23%
Not that important	14%
Not a priority at all!	21%

- An overwhelming number of respondents are in favor of an expansion of the county parks system.
  - Residents: 81% Yes
  - Non-Residents: 76% Yes
- A majority of respondents are in favor of a parks millage.
  - Residents: 69% Yes
  - Non-Residents: 80% Yes
- Respondents are in favor of a millage towards restoring the Historic Fishponds.
  - Residents: 58% Yes
  - Non-Residents: 63% Yes
- A majority of respondents believe all Mecosta County Parks should allow pets.
  - Residents: 74% Yes
  - Non-Residents: 67% Yes
- Residents and non-residents agree on options regarding the expansion of off-season camping opportunities.

Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, more year-round rustic camping.	33%
Yes, more year-round group camping.	18%
Yes, expanded modern camping season.	45%
No, the current operating season is sufficient.	38%

Non-Residents	
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, more year-round rustic camping.	23%
Yes, more year-round group camping.	15%
Yes, expanded modern camping season.	57%
No, the current operating season is sufficient.	31%

- Overall, 49% of people rate the cleanliness of the county parks system as “Good”.
- Overall, 49% of respondents prefer to receive parks and recreation updates through social media.

Overall, residents and non-residents generally agree on the following multiple-choice questions.

Top 3 non-motorized trail investment priorities:

- Providing better or additional restrooms
- Providing trail head improvements

- Further develop ADA accessible trails

The top 5 most visited locations are:

- School Section Lake Veteran's Park
- Brower Park
- Paris Park
- Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam
- Davis Bridge Park

Top 5 most desirable parks are:

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

Top 5 activities participated in:

- Swimming
- Camping
- Relaxation/ Stress Relief
- Enjoying Nature
- Fishing

Top 5 reasons parks are visited:

- Close to home
- Natural Setting
- Clean
- Safe
- Quiet/Peaceful

Top 3 most desired event opportunities:

- Farmers Market
- Concessions/ Food Truck
- Arts/ Crafts Festival

Top 5 most desired active recreation activities:

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

- Splash Pad

Top 5 most desired passive recreation activities:

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

Top 5 most desired campground amenities:

- Modern Restrooms
- Electricity Hook-Up
- Water Hook-Up
- Security
- Wi-Fi

Top 5 most desired boating amenities:

- Kayak/ Canoe Options
- Larger Parking Areas
- Day-Use Docking
- Shoreline Mooring Areas
- 15 Min. Dock for Restroom Use & Food Pick-Up

Question #31 asks for people to provide any additional thoughts and ideas regarding the parks and recreation system. There was a total of 76 responses given to this question. The most prominent topics revolved around:

- Park Fees/Millage:
  - General commenters noted that they are hesitant to support a millage, but few would be more inclined to support if they received benefits for being County residents.
- Park Accessibility:
  - More activities for people of all ages with several comments noting specifically younger children.
  - Others noted a lack of ADA pathways, parking, and camping sites.
- Park Security/ Safety:
  - Several comments noted loud and unruly guests and lack of rule enforcement.
  - A few noted generally unsafe experiences within the parks due to animals and lack of maintenance in a few specific areas.

## Goals, Objectives, and Actions

**Goal 1:** Provide all residents and visitors 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 county residents and the general 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 the overall quality of park facilities.**

#### Actions

1. Continue to evaluate current maintenance practices to find ways to reduce costs.
2. When replacing current assets, evaluate each project to incorporate longer life-cycle construction methods and amenities.
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 entrance traffic flow and internal traffic patterns for better separation of uses.

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

### Objectives

- 1. Provide additional day use passive recreational activities at each park for local residents and visitors to enjoy. These new additions should work with the existing parks' current features to enhance the overall experience.**

#### Actions

1. Provide additional and improved access to natural surface and accessible trails within park properties and develop connectivity to other trails and park locations.
2. Develop projects to improve access to waterways for public recreation, including swimming areas and kayak/canoe launch sites.
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.

5. Collaborate with partners to build connective trail infrastructure along roadways, easements, and right of ways.
  6. Restore or replace park infrastructure as required to keep facilities available for public use.
  7. Restore historic fishponds at Paris County Park to renew public accessibility.
- 2. Provide additional active day-use recreational activities at each park for county residents and visitors to enjoy. New activities will be incorporated with existing features to enhance the overall visitor experience.**

#### **Actions**

1. Improve existing offerings and provide new family-oriented facilities as outlined in the public survey, such as playgrounds, winter recreation, mini-golf, pickleball, disc golf etc.
  2. Modify traffic barriers and infrastructure to provide additional off-season access to active day-use amenities.
  3. Meet accommodations standards and ensure that opportunities are available for those with disabilities.
- 3. Acquire and develop new park properties to provide a more diverse recreation inventory to county residents and visitors 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. Target properties and expansion to fulfill the public desire to expand camping opportunities and off-season camping availability.
5. 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. Upgrade electrical connections to meet the demands of modern camping units.
3. Improve campground security and barrier free accessibility whenever improvements are made.
4. Continue to improve availability, reliability, and quality of Wi-Fi connection in parks and campgrounds.
5. Add and improve restroom buildings, features, and barrier free accessibility.

**2. Expand and improve existing recreational opportunities and experience for campground guests.**

**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 campsite and cabin offerings for those with a disability.
4. Continue to improve overall campground cleanliness and rule enforcement.
5. Expand off-season and winter camping opportunities.
6. Add amenities desired by camping guests with pets.
7. Enhance family programming and activities supported by park staff or community organizations.

**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. Continue to accurately reflect a desire to be known for parks and recreation through brand recognition.
2. Update individual park location logos and branding to create aligned brand recognition.
3. Incorporate brand recognition through utilization of individual park mascots and naming of amenities, such as roads and cabins.

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

**Actions**

1. Continue to 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. Expand e-mail marketing and newsletters to keep public aware of park events and happenings.
5. Continue to incorporate new park signage and trailhead standards to be used throughout parks.
6. Attend industry events and trade shows to promote and educate potential visitors.
7. Promote all parks equally and as a recreation system available to County residents and area visitors.

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

**Objectives**

- 1. Maintain and improve the natural environment where feasible within 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**

**Full Budget Summary**

**Public Meeting Notices / Agenda / Minutes**

**Formal Resolution to Adopt the Plan**