

**Newaygo County
Comprehensive Parks and Recreation
Master Plan
2006-2011**

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Section I. Introduction

This plan charts the direction for Newaygo County Parks and Recreation over the next 5 years (August 1, 2006 – July 31, 2011). This plan was done through a public process designed to solicit citizen input on multiple occasions, assessing the current recreation infrastructure in the county and looking ahead to future county needs and opportunities. It focuses on the outdoor recreation needs of Newaygo County residents. It acknowledges that the role of Newaygo County Parks is not to focus on athletic facilities or highly developed community level recreation resources, rather on natural resource based recreation opportunities. This complements those less natural resource based, more programmed facilities and programs provided by other local units including schools, townships and cities in the county. It also complements more rustic outdoor recreation opportunities provided by the state of Michigan and the US Forest Service.

The plan was prepared by Michigan State University Extension Specialist Dr. Charles Nelson, graduate student Melissa Lott and Kristen Steger (all from the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies) under a contract between Newaygo County and Michigan State University. It was funded by the Fremont Area Foundation and Michigan State University Extension. It benefited from previous Newaygo County Park and Recreation plans regarding Newaygo County history and a description of the county's physical resources. These were essentially duplicated and additional information provided. It also benefited from other local governmental unit plans within Newaygo County regarding their recreational infrastructure and initiatives as well as information from the Michigan DNR and US Forest Service.

Besides charting the five year direction for Newaygo County Parks and Recreation, the plan, upon DNR approval, also provides the county eligibility to apply for and receive Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants. These matching grants provide funds for capital improvements facilitating public outdoor recreation including acquisition and development of recreational lands and facilities. Both funding sources require a match, which ensures a local commitment for capital improvements and for the county to provide evidence and assurances that they will properly maintain and operate recreational opportunities established under these programs. The MNRTF requires a minimum local match of 25% and the LWCF a minimum local match of 50%.

County History and Development

This section benefited heavily from the Newaygo County Park and Recreation Plan 2001-06. From 11,000 years ago until the arrival of the first Europeans in Michigan, various Indian tribes periodically occupied what is now Newaygo County. During the retreat of the last glacier, tundra and forests of spruce covered the landscape. Indians of the Paleo Period followed caribou into what is now Michigan. Projectile points (fluted, lanceolate points) that were used by the Indians have been found north of the Muskegon River in Newaygo County.

By 2000 B.C., the forests and rivers began to look like those of today. Between 2000 B.C. and about 500 B.C., Indians of the Archaic Period hunted deer in winter and fished in summer. By about 100 B.C., the Hopewell Indians lived in what is now called Newaygo County. The Hopewell culture probably extended as far north as the Muskegon River in Newaygo County. Artifacts from this period have been found in numerous mounds on the river bluffs between Newaygo and Croton, where the Hopewell Indians buried artifacts with their dead.

The Mallon Mounds near Brooks Lake and other mounds date from the Woodland Period (700 to 1000 A.D.). Indians of this period were probably the progenitors of the Ottawa Indians, who made contact with the first Europeans. The Ottawas engaged mainly in specialized fur trapping. They exchanged furs for agricultural products grown to the south. They fished in summer and hunted in winter. Archaeological evidence at sites in Oceana County indicates that they hunted buffalo, beaver, and elk.

The first Europeans to navigate the Muskegon River were French trappers who traded with the Indians well before recorded history. The earliest permanent settlement was a trading post on the Muskegon River that dates to about 1834. Another trading post was established at Old Woman's Bend, 2 miles below the present city of Newaygo.

European settlement of Newaygo County began with lumbering. When the Indians gave up title to their land following the Treaty of 1836, speculators came to Newaygo County from Chicago. They established claims over the vast timber resources, established squatters rights at river mouths, and ran sawmills with water power.

A group of capitalists from Chicago journeyed up the Muskegon River using a French fur trader as a guide. Part of this group, the Penoyer Brothers, stopped on the site that is now Newaygo and built the area's first saw mill.

John Brooks, who had previously cleared debris from the Muskegon River, had floated logs down the river before, but the Penoyers were the first to raft them down the river to Lake Michigan and finally to Chicago. A member of this first group to come to the area, Jack McBride, built a cabin at the mouth of Penoyer Creek, thus becoming Newaygo's first permanent white settler.

The boundaries for Newaygo County were set in 1840, but being unorganized, it was attached to Kent County to the south. It became a separate County in 1851, being organized in 1852.

There are many legends and stories concerning the name chosen for the County, Newaygo. It is believed that the name was derived from an Ottawa Indian brave, Nah-way-go, who had a reputation for bravery and strength and was known for his courage on the battlefield. Seen and admired by the area's first white settlers, Nah-way-go died sometime in the late 1830's.

In 1853, lumbermen from Glenn Falls, New York, came to the area, and with a charter from John Brooks who in the same year plotted out and sub-divided what is now the City of Newaygo built a larger mill called the Big Red Mill that soon employed 200 people. A log dam was built for the mill which became the largest water-powered saw mill in the state with 120 saws. Fire destroyed the mill in 1867 but it was soon rebuilt and expanded. The mill was then sold to D.P. Clay and played a significant role in the lumbering heydays in Newaygo. The company employed up to 300 men and at its height, in 1888, had log drives of a half a billion board feet of lumber per year. Newaygo was the first County Seat and a brick courthouse was built in 1886.

The nearby Croton Dam area was also thriving at this time. John Stearns, coming from Croton, New York, named the settlement after his hometown in 1850. Mr. Gauweiler, a lumberman, and Mr. Kaufman, a farmer, settled there at this time. The settlement grew as trade increased, and by 1869, Croton boasted 400 residents. However, a flood in 1881 and a fire in 1889 destroyed most of the settlement.

Other lumbering settlements started in Bridgeton (1853), Fremont (1855), Hesperia (1867), Grant (1893) and White Cloud (1870). As the settlements grew, roads were constructed and in 1849, the first state road was built from Croton and Newaygo to Muskegon. In 1854, a state road was built from Newaygo to Grand Rapids and facilitated the construction of the Big Red Mill at Newaygo. The Grand Rapids, Newaygo, and Lake Shore Rail Road came to Newaygo in 1872, connecting the city with Grand Rapids. In 1875 the rail road was extended to White Cloud.

Settlement and growth came late to the future County Seat, White Cloud. Prior to 1870, there was no real growth. However, construction of the railroad in 1875 spurred new growth. When lumberman Wilcox and Morgan came to the area, there was already a settlement there, Alleyton, started by Mr. Alleyton. Wilcox and Morgan started a second settlement across the river called Morgan Station. In 1872, lumbering operations started on the White River and fast growth came to the area. At the request of the postal officials, Morgan Station was renamed White Cloud and in 1872, the Village was incorporated. Both settlements continued to grow and by 1882, they had 136 school age children. Alleyton grew larger and faster and was considered the more elegant of the two. By 1880, it had 550 residents, and 32 businesses. Unfortunately, on July 4, 1894, after already suffering from one fire, another struck, wiping out the Village. It was never rebuilt, and little remains to indicate its former existence.

When the lumbering era began in the early 1800's in Michigan, it was expected to last hundreds of years. However, within approximately fifty years, the vast softwood timber resources in the Lower Peninsula, including those in Newaygo County were harvested and the slash burned over more than once. Some believe that more logs were floated down the Muskegon River than any other river in the world. It is estimated that only one out of every three trees were actually harvested, the rest having been destroyed by forest fires. The forests and the soils were forever changed as a result of clear cutting, forest fires and farming.

The crops in the areas of cleared forest were used to feed the growing population in the lumbering camps. Several hundred acres were cultivated in the mid 1800's in an area of remnant prairie in what is now Big Prairie Township. The soil in this area was Sparta sand that had a 12 to 18-inch layer of mixed sand and organic material. It was devoid of trees and could be easily farmed. The fertility of the soil was fair, and good crops were produced during the first few years. After removal of the nutrients by the first few crops however, the soil was dry and subject to blowing and in some areas, 2 to 3 feet were eroded. As a result, the largest area of desert east of the Mississippi River was created. The area became a tourist attraction until it was reforested in the early 1930's. Plantations of pine now cover much of the area.

By the early 1890's, with the vast timber resources depleted, lumbering moved out of the area. By the last quarter of the 19th century, some of the more easier to drain wetlands were converted to farmland. In the early 20th century, Rice Lake in Grant Township, was drained and its lakebed is now used for specialty crops. As the logging industry slowed and farming increased, a canning factory established in Fremont to market the produce, grew into a major enterprise known today as Gerber Products.

With the lumbering era over, other industries began to replace the economic focus of the area. In 1898, the marl beds just north of Newaygo were acquired by D.L. Stivens of Newaygo Manufacturing Company and a group of Grand Rapids businessmen and a cement company was formed. By 1902, the first barrels were shipped.

Not all of the land that was originally settled was suitable for farming and many farms were later abandoned. Much of this land reverted to the Federal Government and today is managed as part of the Manistee National Forest. Today, the United States Forest Service owns approximately 108,000 acres or almost 20% of the County. Other farmland was purchased for recreational uses. Forest products from the second growth forests and recreation are the chief resources of the northern two-thirds of the County. In the southern third of the County, farming and industry has evolved. With some of the largest muck farms located in the eastern half of the County, Grant is known as the onion capital of the world. There are also significant apple and peach orchards.

The County's two hydroelectric dams on the Muskegon River produce enough kilowatts of electricity to power a city of 23,000 people. Both Croton Dam and Hardy Dam are on the National Register of Historic Places. Croton was constructed in 1906-07 and was the first hydro facility in the nation to use 110,000 volt transmission lines. Hardy went into service in 1931 and at the time was the tallest earthen dam in the world. Today it is still Michigan's tallest earthen dam and provides a 3,800 acre reservoir that is enormously popular for outdoor recreation.

Newaygo County's three largest cities incorporate all these major uses. The City of Newaygo is known for its angling opportunities for chinook salmon, steelhead and brown trout, as well as boating, canoeing and kayaking. Fremont is the home of the world's leader in baby food, Gerber Products. White Cloud, with its motto emphasizing its

recreation activities, “Where the North Begins and the Pure Water Flow” is the County Seat.

In summary, Newaygo County has a rich human, geologic and biological history. The geologic history shaped the landscape, providing habitat for a wide variety of living organisms. In turn, it also provided opportunity for human habitation and development. The county’s diversity, exceptional surface water resources and proximity to major population centers in western Michigan make it an exceptional tourism destination today. The climate provides four seasons, each with its own special recreational opportunities.

Section II. Community Description and Resource Inventory

The scope of this Park and Recreation Plan is Newaygo County. While the County is blessed with other outdoor recreation opportunities, such as State and Federal forests, recreation opportunities provided by other local units, privately owned recreation opportunities from both commercial providers and individual households and conservancy-owned natural areas, there is a clear role for Newaygo County in meeting the park and recreation needs of Newaygo County residents and in complementing the tourism infrastructure of the county to support this important economic sector. This plan covers the full range of outdoor recreation in the county. It is envisioned that it will complement what others including cities, townships, villages, school districts, DNR and US Forest Service provide, taking advantage of unique opportunities afforded at the county level.

Location and Climate

The Newaygo County is located in the west central part of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. It is approximately 24 miles from east to west and 36 miles from north to south. It has an area of 551,757 acres, or about 862 square miles, of which 9,760 acres is water. White Cloud is the county seat and is located in the north central part of the County. The 2000 Census population was 47,874, and the 2010 estimated population is 54,746.

The climate of Newaygo County is widely varied because of topographical variations and the proximity of the County to Lake Michigan. The climatological records kept in the County are not considered reliable. Therefore, data from Baldwin, which is about 6 miles north of the County, Big Rapids east of the county and Hesperia, west of the County, near the Newaygo-Oceana County line are used.

In winter the average temperature is 22.0 degrees F at Baldwin, 21.9 degrees at Big Rapids, and 22.9 degrees F at Hesperia. The average daily minimum temperature is 12.5 degrees F at Baldwin, 13.4 degrees F at Big Rapids, and 13.4 degrees F at Hesperia. The lowest temperature on record is -49 degrees F at Baldwin, -36 degrees F at Big Rapids, and -35 degrees F at Hesperia.

In summer the average daily maximum temperature is 81.1 degrees F at Baldwin, 79.6 degrees F at Big Rapids, and 80.1 F degrees at Hesperia. The highest recorded

temperature is 104 degrees F at Baldwin, 103 degrees F at Big Rapids, and 100 degrees F at Hesperia.

Growing degree days are equivalent to “heat units”. During the month, growing degree days accumulate by the amount that the average temperature each day exceeds a base temperature (50 degrees F). The normal monthly accumulation is used to schedule single or successive plantings of a crop between the last freeze in spring and the first freeze in fall.

The total annual precipitation is 33.97 inches at Baldwin, 31.90 inches at Big Rapids, and 33.57 inches at Hesperia. Of these totals, 19.18 inches at Baldwin, 18.52 inches at Big Rapids, and 18.91 inches at Hesperia usually fall in April through September. The growing season for most crops fall within this period. In 2 years out of 10, the rainfall in April through September is less than 15.81 inches at Baldwin, 15.20 inches at Big Rapids, and 14.94 inches at Hesperia. The 1-day record rainfall during the growing season was 3.75 inches at Baldwin, 4.55 inches at Big Rapids, and 6.19 inches at Hesperia. On average, thunderstorms occur 34 days at Baldwin and 36 days each year at Big Rapids and Hesperia. June, July, and August each have an average of six thunderstorms.

The average seasonal snowfall is 82.7 inches at Baldwin, 70.5 inches at Big Rapids, and 75.5 inches at Hesperia. The greatest snow depth at any one time of record was 41 inches at Baldwin, 36 inches at Big Rapids, and 30 inches at Hesperia. On average, 111 days at Baldwin, 103 days at Big Rapids, and 97 days at Hesperia have at least an inch of snow on the ground. The number of such days varies greatly from year to year. The heaviest one-day snowfall on record was 33.5 inches at Baldwin, 16.0 inches at Big Rapids, and 11.0 inches at Hesperia. The greatest monthly snowfall was 65.3 inches at Baldwin, 44.5 inches at Big Rapids, and 48.1 inches at Hesperia. The greatest seasonal snowfall was 126.1 inches at Baldwin, 115.3 inches at Big Rapids, and 120.0 inches at Hesperia. The least snowfall recorded for a winter season was 23.6 inches at Baldwin, 13.0 inches at Big Rapids, and 30.1 inches at Hesperia.

The average relative humidity at 1 p.m. is about 62 percent at all three stations. Humidity is higher at night and the average at 7 a.m. is 83 percent. The prevailing wind is from the southwest. Average windspeed is highest, 11.3 miles per hour, in January. The sun shines 62 percent of the time possible in summer and 30 percent in winter.

In summary, the climate of Newaygo County provides a four season location for winter, spring, summer and fall activities. Snowfall is often sufficient for extensive winter activities including cross country skiing, snowmobiling, sledding, tobogganing and snow shoeing. Winter temperatures are sufficiently cold to provide safe ice for ice fishing and ice skating. However, with the presence Croton dam, fishing in the Muskegon river on the tailrace and downstream is open even in the winter.

During spring, Newaygo County’s climate provides ample opportunities for many types of outdoor recreation including mushroom picking, open water fishing, turkey hunting,

wildlife viewing, boating, non-motorized trail use (e.g. hiking, bicycling, equestrian, etc.), off-road vehicle use and camping. A key challenge of spring, especially in the northern part of the county where the vegetation (red, white and jack pine and oak) is on dry sites (sandy), is wildfire. There is danger prior to and at the beginning of spring green up. Recreationists are in direct contact with vegetation and need to be especially careful with sources of ignition such as cigarettes, motorized recreational equipment and campfires.

In the summer, Newaygo County's lakes and rivers are critical recreation resources. County parks on Hardy Pond, the Muskegon River and Pettibone Lake provide welcome breaks from the heat for campers, swimmers, anglers, boaters and those just seeking the cool blue of inland waters. With over 300 lakes and hundreds of miles of rivers and streams, there are water based recreation opportunities for almost every taste.

During fall, the mixture of Newaygo county's softwood (pine, fir, cedar) forests and hardwoods (oak, maple, aspen, etc.) provide a tremendous spectacle of color for sightseers. Other outdoor recreation opportunities such as trail use, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping and boating are available.

Physiography and Relief

The bedrock in Newaygo County consists of edges of bowl-like formations that fill the Michigan Basin. Marshall Sandstone underlies the entire County. The Michigan Formation overlies the Michigan Sandstone in the eastern half of the County. This formation is primarily limestone, gypsum, and dolomite interceded with shale and sandstone. To the east, Bayport Limestone and Parma Sandstone progressively overlie these rocks. In the central part of the County and in some areas in the eastern half, red beds overlie the Michigan, Saginaw, and Grand River Formations. They consist mainly of sandstone, shale, clay and minor beds of limestone and gypsum.

Overlying the rock formations is a mass of glacial drift, which was deposited after the Wisconsinian Glaciation. The glacial drift ranges from 200 to 800 feet in thickness. It is coarse gravel to fine lacustrine clay. Many of the soils in the County formed in the drift.

The present surface features in the County generally are the result of glacial action. Two major physiographic regions are recognized in the County, one consists of several outwash plains and lake plains in nearly level valleys having definite boundaries. Glacial melt-water streams, which were much larger than the current rivers and streams, deposited outwash material in the valleys. The abandoned melt-water channels are filled with organic deposits in some areas and kettle lakes in others. As the ice receded and the levels of the glacial lakes dropped, the valleys were incised and terraces formed along the present streams and rivers. The other physiographic region consists of rolling and hilly moraines rising from the nearly level valleys or plains.

Streams and rivers have greatly modified the surface in Newaygo County. The predominant water feature is the valley of the Muskegon River, which exits the

southwestern part of the County. The highest elevation is 1,300 feet above sea level in the far northeastern part of the County.

Soils

The soil map of Newaygo County shows the soil associations that are dominant in the survey area. Each association consists of one or more major soils and some minor soils and each association has a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainages.

The general soil map can be used to compare the suitability of large areas for general land uses. Areas of suitability can be identified on the map as well as soils that are not suitable. Because of the small scale, the map is not suitable for selecting a site for a road or building or other structure; however, more detailed maps are available for specific areas for planning purposes.

There are eight general soil associations identified for the Newaygo County area as follows:

1. Plainfield-Grattan-Brems Association
Nearly level to steep, excessively drained and moderately well-drained, sandy soils on outwash plains and moraine.
2. Cosad-Del Rey-Sickles Association
Nearly level and gently undulating, somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained, sandy and loamy soils on lake plains.
3. Glendora-Abscota-Algansee Association
Nearly level and gently undulating, very poorly drained, somewhat poorly drained, and moderately well drained, sandy and loamy soils on flood plains.
4. Marlette-Metea-Sprinks Association
Nearly level to steep, moderately well-drained and well drained, loamy and sandy soils on moraines.
5. Coloma-Spinks-Matea Association
Nearly level to steep, excessively drained and well drained, sandy soils on moraines.
6. Toogood-Boyer Association
Nearly level to steep, somewhat excessively drained to moderately drained, sandy soils on outwash plains and terraces.
7. Adrian-Carlisle-Martisco Association
Nearly level, very poorly drained, organic soils on lake plains and outwash plains.
8. Pipestone-Covert-Kingsville Association
Nearly level and gently undulating, somewhat poorly drained, moderately well drained, and poorly drained, sandy soils on outwash plains.

Farming

In 2002, it is estimated that about 135,422 acres (a quarter) of Newaygo County was farmland as compared with an estimated 131,779 acres in 1997. The 2002 total estimated farmland acreage reflected a 3% increase from the 1997 estimate. The diversity of soils and conditions appropriate for a wide variety of truck and vegetable crops helped create the conditions that made Gerber in Fremont a worldwide leader in baby foods. Because

many of the soils are suitable for cropland, the climate is favorable, and the markets for farm products are nearby, farming probably will continue to be an important part of the economy in Newaygo County. Since much of the prime farmland is located in the southwest and southerly portions of the County, which is also closest to the Muskegon and Grand Rapids metropolitan areas, it is anticipated that there will be increased pressure from non-farm land use development in the future. However, the nature of soils in these areas also has serious erosion limitations and these characteristics will influence future land uses.

Land Use Patterns

Each year, some areas in Newaygo County are developed for residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Deciding what land should be used for development is a very important issue. The general soil map is suitable for broad land use planning, but it is not suitable for selecting a site for a specific use. For example, the seasonal high water table and moderately slow permeability are severe limitations on much of the acreage in the Cosad-Del Rey-Sickles association. The seasonal high water table is a severe limitation in areas of the Pipestone-Covert-Kingsville association. Flooding, ponding and the seasonally high water table are severe limitations in areas of the Glendora-Abscota-Algansee association. The seasonal high water table, ponding, and the instability of organic material are severe limitations in areas of the Adrian-Carlisle-Martisco association. The slope is a severe limitation in parts of the Marlette-Metea-Spinks and Coloma-Spinks-Metea associations.

Some of the soils in the County are well suited to development. These include the less sloping, well drained soils in the Plainfield-Grattan-Brems, Coloma-Spinks-Metea, and Toogood-Boyer associations.

The Cosad-Del Rey-Sickles and Marlette-Metea-Spinks associations are better suited to farming than the other associations. Their suitability should be considered when broad land use decisions are made. A considerable acreage of these associations is already used for building sites, golf courses, or other non-farm uses.

Some of the soils in the County are well suited to farming but are poorly suited to non-farm uses. The major soils in the Cosad-Del Rey-Sickles Association are examples. Wetness limits farm uses on these soils, but it can be overcome by a drainage system and by land shaping. It cannot be easily overcome for development uses.

Most of the soils in the County are well suited or fairly well suited for woodlands. Many soils are well suited to parks and other recreational areas. Un-drained areas of Adrian and other poorly drained or very poorly drained soils provide habitat for many species of wildlife and are good nature study areas.

Water Resources

Newaygo County has abundant surface and ground water resources. The ground water is a source of good quality drinking water for the residents of the County. There are 460

natural lakes (234 of which are larger than 1.3 acres in size) and the 356 miles of streams in the County, which provide outstanding recreational opportunities. Hydroelectric dams on the Muskegon River, owned and operated by Consumers Energy, have formed two man-made lakes: Hardy Pond, completed in 1931, is 3,750 acres in size of which 2,845 acres are located in Newaygo County, and Croton Dam Pond completed in 1907, is 1,235 acres in size.

Most of the larger natural lakes are in the southern half of the County. They are within 10 miles of the City of Newaygo. Hess Lake, the largest, is 1,125 acres in size, and Fremont Lake, the next largest, is 790 acres in size. Brooks, Bills, Pickerel, Brookings, and Ryerson Lakes are all larger than 200 acres in size. The areas around the lakes have been intensively developed for residential uses. As a result, some of the lakes are sandy and are used intensely for residential and agricultural purposes that generate effluent from septic systems and livestock wastes, causing water quality concerns. Recent efforts have been implemented to upgrade sewage treatment in many Newaygo County waterfront areas. Another challenge is algae blooms from agricultural nutrient inputs. Again, best management practices of applying appropriate amounts of fertilizer and vegetative buffers between crop fields and waterways are being implemented, but some problems still persist.

Fortunately, most of the lakes have high-quality water. Lakes with water quality challenges include Hess, Fremont, Peterson, and Hesperia Lakes. The smaller lakes in the public forest areas provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities and activities. The numerous unnamed bodies of water scattered throughout the County provide habitat for many species of wetland wildlife.

Newaygo County is drained by several rivers. The northern part of the County is drained by the Pere Marquette and Little Pere Marquette Rivers. The White River originates in the central plain in the County and flows west through White Cloud to Lake Michigan. The Muskegon River drains a large area of the middle and southern parts of the county flowing in a southwesterly direction through Newaygo. Crockery Creek and the Rogue River, which are in the southernmost part of the County, flow south into the Grand River Basin.

Forest Lands

Sixty-one percent of Newaygo County's 537 thousand acres of land is forested (MSU Extension 2006). Of this 62% is in private ownership, almost all owned by small, non-industrial owners. Of the 38% in public ownership, the vast majority is part of the Manistee National Forest managed by the US Forest Service. Oak-hickory, beech-maple and lowland hardwoods make up 79% of the forest land in the county. Pine types (white, red and jack) are predominant on 15% of the forested acreage.

Population and Social Characteristics

Newaygo County’s population has grown rapidly in the past 15 years. From 1990 to 2000, Croton Township had the greatest absolute increase in population (Figure 1). Importantly, every township in the county grew during the decade with 17 of the 24 townships growing at a pace of greater than 28%.

2 *Population*

Newaygo County

Percent Change from 1990 to 2000

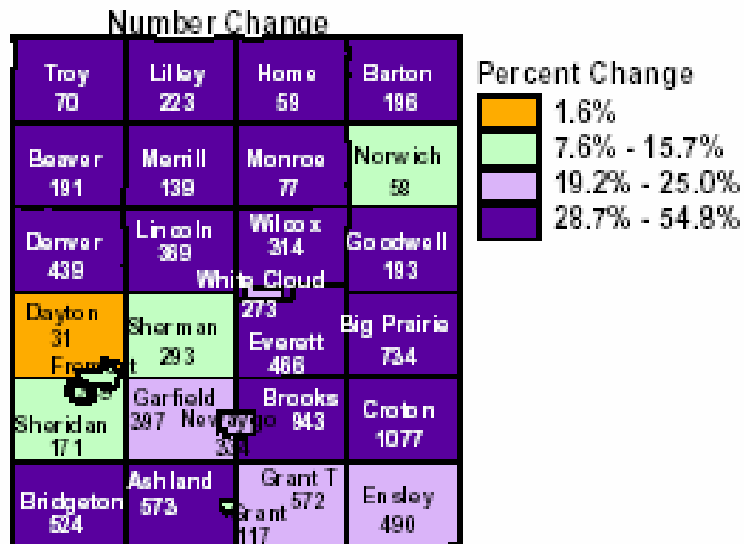


Figure 1. Newaygo County Population Growth 1990-2000 by Township. (Source: Michigan State University Extension, 2000)

The United States Census for 1990, 2000 and the 2005 estimates provide even greater detail of changes in Newaygo County’s population and economy and how it compares with the State of Michigan (Table 1).

Table 1. Selected census data comparisons between Newaygo County and the State of Michigan.

Characteristic	Newaygo County	State of Michigan
Population, 2005 estimate	50,019	10,120,860
Population, percent change, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005	4.5%	1.8%
Population, 2000	47,874	9,938,444
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	25.3%	6.9%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2004	26.8%	25.1%
Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2004	13.2%	12.3%
White persons, percent, 2004 (a)	96.5%	81.4%
Black persons, percent, 2004 (a)	1.3%	14.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2004 (a)	0.8%	0.6%
Asian persons, percent, 2004 (a)	0.3%	2.2%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2004	1.1%	1.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2004 (b)	4.5%	3.7%
White persons, not Hispanic, percent, 2004	92.2%	78.1%
Living in same house in 1995 and 2000, pct age 5+, 2000	60.5%	57.3%
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2000	78.7%	83.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2000	11.4%	21.8%
Persons with a disability, age 5+, 2000	8,952	1,711,231
Homeownership rate, 2000	84.4%	73.8%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2000	4.6%	18.8%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2000	\$88,700	\$115,600
Persons per household, 2000	2.68	2.56
Median household income, 2003	\$38,409	\$46,291
Persons below poverty, percent, 2003	11.7%	11.0%
Private nonfarm employment, 2003	9,485	3,885,221
Private nonfarm employment, percent change 2000-2003	6.3%	-4.6%
Retail sales per capita, 2002	\$6,421	\$10,889

Characteristic	Newaygo	
	County	State of Michigan
Land area, 2000 (square miles)	842	56,804
Persons per square mile, 2000	56.8	175.0
Land area (acres)	538,880	36,354,560
US Census Bureau, 2006		

From 1990 to 2000, Newaygo County’s population jumped over 25%, making it one of the fastest growing counties in Michigan in terms of population. This growth rate is 3.5 times the average for Michigan counties. This trend, although at a somewhat reduced pace, continues into this decade with an estimated 4.5% increase from 2000 to 2005. This strongly suggests that to meet the recreation needs of County residents, the County will need to provide additional recreation opportunities.

Newaygo County is unique in that it has a higher percentage of people classified as children (under 18 years of age) and seniors (65 years of age and over) than the State of Michigan. This suggests that while many are choosing to retire in Newaygo County, many others are raising families here.

The population of Newaygo County is primarily white, much more so than the State of Michigan. However, as the nation and the state become increasingly diverse, so will Newaygo County. While African Americans and Asian Americans are less common than in Michigan as a whole, Hispanic or Latinos and Native Americans are more common than in the State of Michigan. Considering that the proportion of seniors is higher than the State as a whole and that almost nine thousand persons in Newaygo County over the age of five years are disabled, the importance of universal access to recreational facilities is increasing.

Newaygo County housing is more likely to be private, single family dwellings than the State of Michigan as a whole. More than four in five households in the County own or are purchasing the home in which they live. Less than 5% of the housing stock is rental housing. This is also affected by the amount of seasonal housing, typically owned by those from downstate western Lower Michigan, who own their second home on one of the County’s many bodies of surface water.

While the need for recreation is growing with the County’s growing population, the County also faces economic challenges. According the County’s website, tourism is a major part of the economy, along with agriculture, forestry and manufacturing. However, median household income for 2003 was about \$7,800 less than the state as a whole.

III. Administrative Structure

The administrative structure of Newaygo County is:

County Board of Commissioners

District #1, Ronald Sanders; District #2, Rosswell Fulton; District #3, Stanley Nieboer; District #4, James Maike; District #5, Adam Wright; District #6, Timothy Purcell; District #7, Daniel Powell.

County Administrator, Tobi Lake

Parks Director, Laurie Gracik

Maintenance Technician, Ken Tice

Park and Recreation Commission (established under authority of PA 261 of 1965)

Cynthia J. Sullivan.....White Cloud

Drain Commissioner

James Maike, Jr, Sec.....White Cloud

Board Commissioner

Exp: 12-31-2006

Daniel D. Powell.....Grant Planning/Zoning Rep

Louis Meeuwenberg.....Fremont

Road Commissioner

Gerard Deschaine.....Newaygo

Exp:12-31-2006

Richard Kooistra, Chair.....Twin Lake

Exp: 12-31-2006

Stanley Stroven.....Fremont

Exp: 12-31-2007

Jack Hoving.....Bitely

Exp: 12-31-2007

James Sherman.....Fremont

Exp: 12-31-2008

Rachel Wisner Simard.....Newaygo

Exp: 12-31-2008

Roles of County Board of Commissioners and County Park and Recreation Commission

The County Parks Director reports directly to the Park and Recreation Commission, which then reports to the County Board of Commissioners. The Park and Recreation Commission (a PA 261 of 1965 commission) submit an annual budget to the County Board of Commissioners for approval and adoption. Once that budget is approved and monies appropriated, the Park and Recreation Commission has day to day management responsibilities, which are carried out through the Parks Director.

Recent Budgets for Newaygo County Parks

Table 2. Newaygo County Park Operation Budget FY 2004-05 and Comparison to FY 2003-04.

Category	FY 2004-05 Adopted Budget	FY 2004-05 Actual	FY 2004-05 % Budget Achieved	FY 2003-04 Actual
Revenue Total	308,337.00	260,360.70	84% of budgeted revenue received	274,564.37
Expense Total	308,337.00	282,879.17	92% of budgeted expenditures spent	364,402.51
Revenue Minus Expense	0.00	(22,518.47)	Actual revenue 92% of actual expenditures	(86,838.14) Revenue 75% of exp.

Programming

Newaygo County Parks provides self-directed recreational opportunities at its parks. This includes fishing, swimming, camping, boating, relaxing, picnicking, non-motorized trail use, wildlife viewing, socializing and other self-directed activities. There is no programming staff.

Current Funding Sources

Sources of revenue include nightly camping fees, seasonal campsite rental fees, daily watercraft slip rental and launch fees and seasonal watercraft slip rental and launch fees. Parks generating revenue include Henning, Hardy Pond Marina, Sandy Beach and Pettibone. County general fund dollars have sparingly been provided for operations, more consistently for capital improvements, especially as a match for state, federal and private foundation grants. The Fremont Area Community Foundation has been an important local source of grant funding for capital improvements in the Newaygo County Parks.

Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are important to the Newaygo County Parks. Civic minded individual citizens as well as local civic organizations have provided assistance to the parks including litter clean up, assistance with basic maintenance and support in raising funds for capital improvements. The Newaygo County Parks Commission also serves without pay in providing guidance for the parks and as a liaison to the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners.

Relationship with School Districts, Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations

Newaygo County Parks are involved in two key community relationships. The first is with the Newaygo Area Community Park and Recreation Advisory Council (NACPRAC). This includes the City of Newaygo, Newaygo Public Schools, Garfield Township, Brooks Township and Newaygo County. NACPRAC focuses on the entrance area to Henning Park which is important to all jurisdictions as it provides team sport areas including ball fields, soccer fields, swim area and other community assets. These are funded jointly by the participating governmental entities.

The second is with the Newaygo County Recreation Authority. This is a group of interested citizens and government officials (including County Parks Director Gracik) from the City of Newaygo and the surrounding townships facilitated by the Land Information Access Association (a non-profit organizations based in northwestern Lower Michigan), is developing a recreation authority in part of the county. This is authorized under Michigan Public Act 321 of 2000, the Recreational Authorities Act. It allows cities, counties, villages, townships and districts (the equivalent of a voting precinct) to form an authority to meet a set of defined recreation needs. There is considerable interest in this group regarding improvements to Henning Park tennis courts and ball fields.

IV. Recreation Inventory

The following inventory examines the outdoor recreation resources available in Newaygo County, including Newaygo County Parks. In Newaygo County there are four cities (Newaygo, White Cloud, Fremont and Grant) and one village (Hesperia). In addition, some townships have developed outdoor recreation facilities. The various school systems tend to focus primarily on athletic facilities and opportunities that benefit both students and the surrounding communities. Cooperation between cities, townships and schools is common in programming community recreation activities such as adult and youth athletic leagues.

Methods Used

Park and recreation plans of other Newaygo County jurisdictions were reviewed. Websites provided by communities, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service were examined to provide additional inventory information. The Newaygo County Park Director and the plan senior author also visited Newaygo County parks to conduct a more in-depth inventory.

Newaygo County

Newaygo County currently operates five parks. They are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Newaygo County Parks and selected characteristics.

Park Name Park Type Size of Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Service Area Other - Misc
Hardy Dam Marina Marina-Boating 2.2 acres in size	Boating, fishing, picnicking	Marina facility with 26 slips, launch, seasonal rental available	Entire County Leased from Consumers Energy on Hardy Pond
Henning Park Campground 82.0 acres in size	Modern camping, fishing, swimming, picnicking, playground, soccer, softball, baseball	Launch, 60 campsites (seasonal site rental available), ball diamonds, soccer, volleyball court, basketball court	Entire County County owned on Muskegon River
Pettibone Lake Park Campground 3 acres in size	Modern camping, picnicking, swimming	Launch, 16 semi-modern campsites (seasonal site rental available), beach	Entire County County owned on Pettibone Lake
Sandy Beach Campground 129 acres in size	Modern camping, fishing, swimming, picnicking	Licensed for 200, now have individual 150 campsites (seasonal site rental available) use “back 50” as group sites, beach, launch	Entire County Leased from Cons. Energy on Hardy Pond. County owns 80 acres adjacent to Sandy Beach

Park Name Park Type Size of Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Service Area Other - Misc
Sports Park County Park 89.91 acres in size	Tobogganing, sledding, ice skating, music/theatre, community meetings, educational gatherings	Educational building (lodge), office, outdoor stage, two toboggan runs, ice skating area, maintenance facility, trailhead for Newaygo County snowmobile trail	Entire County County owned on M37 and Placid Lake

In addition, the County owns an access point to the Muskegon River in Bridgeton Township on Warner Avenue that was formerly County Road Commission property. The past plan (2001-2006) also suggests the County owns “several small lake access lots” on Diamond Lake in Lincoln Township. This was disputed at the public information meeting on May 23, 2006 by some area residents and needs to be investigated.

It is notable that two of the major park facilities (Sandy Beach, Hardy Dam Marina) are leased from Consumers Energy. This has provided significant value to the county (reduced acquisition costs), but it has also limited the county’s ability use revenue generated at these sites to benefit other parts of the county park system due to the terms of the lease. These state that revenues at the leased sites shall be used to support those sites. Hence, revenue from Sandy Beach cannot be used to upgrade some aspect of Pettibone Lake County Park. Also important is that Newaygo County lacks a county level trail system or a county level trail plan.

Location of Newaygo County Parks

A Newaygo County road map is attached that denotes the location of all Newaygo County Parks (Appendix D).

Accessibility Assessment of Newaygo County Parks

(Sandy Beach = 2) Newaygo County Parks is striving to provide universally accessible facilities as they replace or build new facilities. For example, in 2003-04, the new bath/beach house built at Sandy Beach is fully accessible. However, funds have not been available to replace an older bath/beach house still in use that is not fully accessible. When the older one is replaced, the new facility will be fully accessible.

(Hardy Marina = 4) Hardy Pond Marina is fully accessible per standards in 1997 following an upgrade as part of the relicensing of Consumers Energy to operate Hardy Dam as a hydro electric facility by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. This includes two fully accessible vault toilets, a hard surface parking area, boat ramps, skid pier and boat slips.

(Pettibone Park = 2) At Pettibone Lake, an older facility, renovations are being planned (see Action Program) which will be fully accessible when completed.

(Henning Park = 3) Henning Park is an older park that was constructed prior to the ADA. While some modifications have been made to improve accessibility such as grab bars and wider doors in bathroom stalls and entrance doorways, showers are not currently accessible. As renovations and improvements are made in the park, universal access will be a primary focus. In general, much of the park lends itself to universal access. Access to the Muskegon River is one of the major challenge areas where accessibility needs to be improved.

(Sports Park = 2) The Newaygo Sports Park has an office that is accessible. However, winter sports facilities such as the toboggan slopes and other outdoor recreation facilities as well as the lodge/meeting room are not accessible. The lodge is also an older structure that may have historic preservation implications, complicating accessibility opportunities. The future of the Sports Park is currently undecided and immediate investment in renovation of facilities for universal access is unlikely until there is community agreement on a use and management direction (Action Program item 6).

(Camp Swampy = 2) For the proposed acquisition at “Camp Swampy” on Diamond Lake (Action Program #1), the site lends itself to universal access. The portion of the property near Diamond Lake in the campground is gently sloping (much under 8%), has firm ground, few rocks and a road system that connects campers with important facilities (e.g. bathrooms). These facilities, especially the newest bathhouse are in good shape and were built to accessibility standards of the early 1990s. While they may need some renovation, entrances had appropriate door widths and no significant lip from ground to concrete. The waterfront will need to be developed with universal access including the beach/swimming area and boat launch, as well as fishing opportunities. However, again, current slopes should permit such site development with minimal environmental impact.

Recreation Inventory of Other Entities

Following is a recreation inventory of federal, state and local public recreation facilities.

US Forest Service

The US Forest Service owns 108,000 acres of land (20% of county) in Newaygo County as part of the Manistee National Forest. This provides exceptional opportunity for dispersed recreation such as hunting, berry and mushroom picking and nature observation. They also have a significant developed recreation infrastructure.

One of the key features is the North Country Scenic Trail, a non-motorized trail that is designed to link the State of New York with North Dakota. This trail passes through both peninsulas of Michigan and runs north/south through Newaygo County, primarily on national forest land. Key segments of the trail run from Croton Dam north to Nichols Lake Forest Campground, then north to Highbank Lake Forest Campground then continue north into Lake County.

Forest Service campgrounds provide rustic camping at Benton Lake, Nichols Lake and Highbank Lakes campgrounds. In total they provide 61 campsites in the three

campgrounds. The campgrounds provide a boat launch, swimming and fishing opportunities as well as camping. Primitive campgrounds at Brush Lake, Shelley Lake, Minnie Pond and Indian Lake provide an even more nature oriented experience and feature very minimal facilities and are often focused primarily on walk-in camping.

There are off-road vehicle opportunities on the M20 Motorsports Trail, which links with other trails in Lake County. There are snowmobile opportunities on the 45-mile Newaygo County Trail, which connects to other snowmobile trail opportunities going north and west.

State of Michigan

Newaygo State Park, a small portion state forest land along the Muskegon River and a number of water access sites on lakes and rivers are the major State of Michigan outdoor recreation sites in Newaygo County. In addition, there are established snowmobile and off-road vehicle trails designated by the DNR and their management is funded (at least in part) through grants by the DNR to non-profit organizations and other units of government such as the Forest Service.

Newaygo State Park provides a 99 site rustic campground on Hardy Pond. Activities at the park include boating, swimming, picnicking and fishing. The DNR provides a boat launch, beach, picnic facilities and two small playground areas. On its website, the DNR lists 25 boating access sites, including one operated by Newaygo County (Henning). Access sites at Sandy Beach, Hardy Dam and Pettibone Lake are not listed. Of the other 24, seven are on the Muskegon River and 17 are on inland lakes.

City of Newaygo

The City of Newaygo is located on the Muskegon River in the south central portion of the county and has one major natural resource based park, Riverfront Park. The park is being developed in phases and includes opportunities for fishing, boating, non-motorized trail uses and picnicking. Non-motorized trails are being developed to connect the park to the rest of the community. A second park, Shaw Park is a day use park with a building. It had been a long-time park, was recently converted to the school district’s alternative school, but in 2005, it once again became a city park.

City of Fremont

The City of Fremont, located in the western part of the county, is the home of Gerber Foods. It has benefited significantly in park development from major donations of parkland by private individuals at Arboretum and Branstrom parks (Table 4).

Table 4. City of Fremont parks and selected characteristics.

Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Other
Arboretum	Nature study	7 acre arboretum	Land donated
Branstrom	Picnic, non-motorized trail activities, baseball/softball, playground	Picnic shelter, baseball/softball diamonds, trails, playground	Land donated

Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Other
Veteran's Memorial	Playground, community events	Amphitheatre, playground	
Fremont Lake	Camping, fishing, boating, swimming, volleyball	Modern campground, launch, beach, volleyball courts	
Skate/Bike Park	In-line skating, bicycling	Skate/bike park facility	
Multi-purpose Court	Ice hockey, roller hockey, basketball, figure skating	Designated facilities by sport/activity	

City of White Cloud

The City of White Cloud operates the former White Cloud State Park. This 89 acre park on the White River has an 80-site modern campground. Activities available include fishing, boating, walking the nature trail, picnicking in the shelter house, using the playground and horseshoe pits, playing tennis and swimming. Smith Park (Mill Pond) along the White River provides picnicking, game courts, playground and ice skating.

City of Grant

Blanche Lake Park is located on Blanche Lake and has a boat launch. It provides picnicking and general recreation opportunities. Recently the city created a second park for in-line skating and bicycling, targeted to younger riders.

Big Prairie Township

Big Prairie Township operates three parks, two of which are focused on Hardy Pond.

Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Other
Big Bend	Camping, fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking	Modern campground with 230 sites, boat launch,	Leased from Consumer's Energy
Ox Bow	Camping, fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking	Modern campground with 182 sites, boat launch,	Leased from Consumer's Energy
Hardy Day Park	Softball, basketball, picnicking	Softball diamonds, basketball courts, picnic shelter	

Croton Township

Croton Township, located just east of the City of Newaygo in the southern part of the county, has significant recreation infrastructure, primarily connected with Croton Pond and the Muskegon River.

Park	Recreational Opportunities	Facilities	Other
Al duChemin Jr. Park	Boating, fishing, picnicking	Launch, disabled accessible fishing platform	Leased from Consumers Energy
Tailwater Park	Boating, fishing	Launch, riverfront walkway, fishing area	Leased from Consumers Energy
Conklin Park	Picnicking, baseball/softball, playground	Picnic shelter, ball diamond, playground	
Croton Campground	Modern camping, boating, fishing, swimming, playground, basketball	Campground, picnic shelter, basketball court, playground, beach, launch and marina	
East Tailwater Overlook	Fishing, scenic viewing	Fishing platform	Leased from Consumers Energy
Petit Lake			Township owned unimproved property with 300 feet of lake frontage

Status Report for Newaygo County Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

No MNRTF or LWCF grants have been received in the past five years for Newaygo County Parks. A Fremont Area Community Foundation grant was received in 2005 of \$5,000 to develop this park and recreation plan for 2006-2011. This commitment has been fulfilled. One soil erosion control grant was received in approximately 2001 through the Timberland RC & D and that work at Henning Park was satisfactorily completed and is being properly maintained.

Another was received in 2006 from the Fremont Area Community Foundation to renovate and rehabilitate the Steelcase property on Diamond Lake known as “Camp Swampy” so Newaygo County could begin operating it as a park in 2006 under a lease arrangement as they pursue acquisition through the MNRTF. This grant was for \$48,600. It is currently being expended on cleanup after more than two years of non-maintenance by Steelcase and restoration of existing camping facilities (e.g. bathrooms, electric and water systems, parking, roads, sites, picnic tables, etc.). The Fremont Area Community

Foundation has expressed their satisfaction with the work done to date by Newaygo County Parks during a June 2006 site visit.

V. Description of the Planning and Public Input Process

To begin this process, Newaygo County Parks sought and received a planning grant from the Fremont Area Foundation to contract with Michigan State University Extension to engage Extension Specialist Dr. Chuck Nelson, from the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies (CARRS) to work with community interests to the update their plan. The primary contact with the county was through Ms. Laurie Gracik, Newaygo County Parks Director. Upon approval of this contract, Dr. Nelson and Melissa Lott (a CARRS Masters student) began to review background data and information.

On Tuesday, May, 9, 2005, Dr. Nelson and Ms. Lott discussed the planning process as an agenda item at the regularly scheduled public County Parks Commission meeting. The Parks Commission is a PA 261 of 1965 Parks and Recreation Commission established the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners.

Following this public presentation, Dr. Nelson presented planning process again as an agenda item the following week to the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners at their regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday May 17. At both meetings, there were multiple opportunities for public comment. Key comments received at both meetings included the need to update the current plan which had expired, the positive opportunity to meet county recreational needs presented through the opportunity to acquire and develop property from Steelcase Corporation on Diamond Lake in Lincoln Township known as "Camp Swampy" and the need to improve the situation with the Sports Park, including relationships with Everett Township and the volunteers from that township. The Township, through volunteers, had been operating the park in recent years. They had been involved in a recent court action with the county about their agreement with the county regarding site operation. The upshot of the court decision was that the Township is not currently involved with the Sports Park and the park has sat idle since their forced departure through the court action. This has engendered many hard feelings and not provided any visible benefits in meeting county recreation needs.

A calendar for the planning process was publicly established at the Board of Commissioners meeting. It included a community meeting on May 23 at the County Building in White Cloud, a mail survey of a randomly selected sample of 400 Newaygo county voters during late May/early June, the draft Park and Recreation plan presented on Wednesday June 21, 2006 at the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners regular meeting, a 31 day period for public comment and draft plan revision and presentation of the final plan for approval by the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners on Wednesday July 26, 2006 at their regular meeting. During the 31 day comment period the plan will be available on-line on the county's website, at public libraries and township halls. In addition, copies of the draft plan will be available for distribution at the Board of Commissioners meeting June 21, 2006.

Community Input Meeting May 23, 2006

On the evening of May 23, 2006 Dr. Nelson and Ms. Lott led a community meeting at the Newaygo County building to gather additional citizen input. It was attended by 26 citizens in addition to Newaygo County Parks Director Laurie Gracik, Dr. Nelson and Ms. Lott. The meeting was structured to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current Newaygo County Park system, opportunities for future development and improvement and to discuss concerns about current or past management. The following is a summary of the input at the meeting. A more detailed rendition of the input is found in Appendix A.

Community Input Meeting for Newaygo County Park and Recreation Plan Update

May 23, 2006

Newaygo County Building

White Cloud, Michigan

Strengths of Newaygo County Parks

- Water based parks
- Family atmosphere
- Good registration system
 - reservations available
- Camping from primitive to full-hookup
- Well policed, secure
 - helpful staff
- Seasonal motor vehicle permit appreciated
 - saves money for frequent users
- Natural Beauty
 - trees, wildlife
- Close to home, convenient
- Excellent facility at Sports Park

Weaknesses of Newaygo County Parks

- Overcrowded marine conditions
- Lack good information on how to get to parks
 - need County Tourist Bureau open more hours
- Need to take park reservations earlier in the year
- Need more shelters in day use areas
 - Major need at Henning with need for large sheltered area so youth groups are not caught in the rain and youth events can continue during rainy weather
- Lack restrooms in some day use areas
- A Diamond Lake resident commented that she did not believe a site at Diamond Lake currently considered a county park really is
 - There were concerns expressed about poor behavior at the site (e.g. noise, litter, etc.)
 - Research needed on this subject of public use at this site
- Concern about how seasonal campsites are used by seasonal site holders
 - Poor appearance, cluttered

- Lack of picnic tables in some day use areas

Directions for the Future/Opportunities for Newaygo County Parks

- Meet infrastructure needs (e.g. shelters, tables, restroom, etc.) at existing parks
- Staff Sports Park Office
 - Want to “grow” parks/increase visitors with marketing, better services
 - Sports Park is site of county Tourist Bureau on major N/S route M37 and needs to be staffed regularly, including weekends
- Cooperate with Townships
 - Good opportunity for better cooperation is Newaygo Sports Park with the Everett Township
- “Camp Swampy” provides opportunity but it will take considerable work
 - Request grant dollars from MNRTF, Fremont Area Community Foundation

One New Facility/Opportunity for Newaygo County Parks

- Multi-Purpose indoor/outdoor facility for recreation
 - Freemont Area
 - Newaygo Area
- Non-motorized paved trails
 - Connect to existing trails
 - Connect to parks
 - Connect to cities
 - Not equestrian
- ATV/cycle trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Improved policing of motorized recreation use/trails
 - Concern about illegal use/activities off trail
- Need more employees on-site at Newaygo County Parks
 - Need additional maintenance
- Need full-time parks director along with better marketing of parks
- Provide outdoor recreation safety classes
 1. Hunter safety, watercraft safety, etc.
- Take care of what we have

How to Pay for It

- Raffle related to parks
- Donation/check off on property tax; would provide access to parks
 - Currently \$20.00/vehicle, \$10.00/boat launch use, \$5/daily with contemplated check off providing no greater and perhaps lesser revenue
- Special events to generate awareness, community support
 - Need attractive programs
- Is there a Friends of the Parks Group?
 - One would be helpful with in-kind labor, fund raising
- Develop a maintenance endowment

- Provide a local “discount”, thus hopefully generating new, local users, more \$
- “Expand” the season through staying open during shoulder seasons at campgrounds
 - Some of this is occurring (Director Gracik)
 - Raises concerns about increased costs too (Director Gracik)
- Raise prices
 - Focus on raising seasonal campsite rates, this is a major bargain now and those sites are full at some campgrounds indicating high demand
- Lower camping prices mid-week to generate additional use, perhaps raise more revenue

Other Comments

- Need to promote Newaygo County Parks at tourism and camping shows/events
- Increase networking with outdoor recreationists
 - Local and tourists
- Let people know what we have now
 - Raise awareness on recent improvements at Sandy Beach, etc.
- Find “untapped” volunteers
 - Challenge with liability, public safety, maintenance vs. improvements
 - May use Adopt a Park approach with scouts/churches
- Cooperate with Townships
- Work with National Junior ROTC

Citizen Survey

As a result of the need to hear from the broadest range of citizens and varying perceptions of the past, present and future role of Newaygo County Parks expressed at the May 9 and 17 meetings of the Park and Recreation Commission and the Board of Commissioners respectively, it was determined that a mail survey of 400 randomly selected registered voters would also be beneficial to updating the plan. This is approximately 1.3% of the Newaygo County electorate and is sufficient to provide accurate direction for the park and recreation plan from a broad cross section of citizens as a complement to multiple public meetings.

The survey instrument was designed by Dr. Nelson, reviewed by Newaygo County Administrator Tobi Lake and Parks Director Gracik and approved by the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects during May 2006. It was mailed to the sample with a cover letter and business reply envelope in late May 2006. A copy of the cover letter and the survey are found in Appendix A.

Recreational Needs Assessment Survey of Newaygo County, Michigan Residents

by

Charles M. Nelson, Associate Professor
Melissa Lott, Graduate Student
Kristen Steger, Research Assistant
Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

June 21, 2006

Introduction and Background

Newaygo County, Michigan has four major parks and an additional smaller park. They are Henning Park on the Muskegon River at Newaygo, Sandy Beach on Hardy Pond, Hardy Pond Marina on Hardy Pond the Newaygo County Sports Park off M37 south of White Cloud and the smaller Pettibone Park on Pettibone Lake in the northern part of the county. There is camping available at Henning, Sandy Beach and Pettibone. They provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities with all but the Newaygo County Sports Park focused primarily on water-based recreation such as fishing, swimming and boating. The Newaygo County Sports Park has toboggan runs, a site for a skating rink, a major snowmobile trail head and multiple buildings including those to house meetings, maintenance equipment and the county Tourist Bureau. In addition opportunities provided at Hardy Pond Marina include seasonal marina slip rental. All campgrounds except the Newaygo provide opportunities for picnicking, open areas for general recreation and close contact with nature. The parks are designed to complement what is provided by other local units, much of which focuses on team and individual sport venues such as baseball and softball diamonds and soccer fields, and access to area waterways such as the Muskegon River.

Methods

In 2006, Newaygo County contracted with Michigan State University's Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies to assess the recreation needs of Newaygo County residents and to update its park and recreation plan. The needs assessment included designing a mail questionnaire, selecting a representative sample of registered voters, mailing the survey to the sample and receiving, entering and analyzing the data. MSU researchers designed the questionnaire, with review by Newaygo County personnel, as well as the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. The questionnaire is Appendix B. The sample of 400 registered voters was randomly selected from the database of registered voters in Newaygo County by the County Clerk's office. The cooperation of County staff and the technical assistance provided by Laurie Weigold in Clinton County, was most appreciated. The questionnaire was mailed on May 31, 2006.

The cutoff date for receiving responses was June 19, 2006. All data was entered using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 11.0 for Windows. Frequencies were run to determine proportional responses. All written comments at the end of the survey were entered verbatim, with the exception of removing any vulgar language or specific personal references to insure respondent confidentiality.

Results

Of the 400 mailed, the US Postal Service returned 22 as undeliverable (either due to the resident moving and the forwarding order having expired or the death of the individual). Of the remaining 378 valid addresses, 50 (13.2%) responded and provided a questionnaire in usable condition by June 19, 2006.

Park Use and Non-Use

Of the respondents, 50% reported that they or another member of their household had visited one or more of the Newaygo County Parks during the past 5 years. Of those who had visited one or more Newaygo County Parks in the past five years, 80% had visited Henning, 76% Sandy Beach, 64% Hardy Dam Marina and 32% the Sports Park. When asked which park was the most important to their household, 45% cited Henning, 22% Sandy Beach, 22% Hardy Dam Marina and 11% the Sports Park.

Park visitor and non-visitor households were similar in that they had a similar number of people in the household (2.9 vs. 3.1) and were about equally likely to have children under 18 (36% vs. 39%) than non-visitor households. On average park visitors and non-visitors tend to have lived in Newaygo County for decades, with visitor households averaging 33.3 years and non-visitors households 32.5 years. Both groups have a high rate of home ownership, with 88% of visitor households and 96% of non-visitor households owning their home.

Resident households that visited the parks engaged in a wide variety of activities, with the most common activities in the parks being picnicking (Table 1). When asked about the one most important Newaygo County park activity for their household, camping accounted for 26% of the user households, followed by swimming, open water fishing, picnicking and relaxing, all with 13% of park user respondents.

Table 1. Newaygo County Park activities of respondent households using parks in the past 5 years.

Activity	% Participate	% Cite as Most Important
Picnic	80.0%	13.0%
Swim	56.0	13.0
Relax	56.0	13.0
Open water fish	52.0	13.0
Camp	44.0	26.1
Power boat	32.0	4.3
Ice fish	32.0	0.0
Bicycle	20.0	4.3
Canoe/kayak	16.0	0.0
Nature observation	16.0	4.3

Activity	% Participate	% Cite as Most Important
Cross-country ski	12.0	0.0
Sled/Toboggan	8.0	0.0
Ice skate	0.0	0.0
Other (b)	24.0	8.7
Total	NA	100.0

(a) Multiple answers possible, walking was not included as a choice due to the lack of trails.
(b) Other was primarily walk/hike. One person each noted personal watercraft use and Park and Recreation Commission activity. If most important activity was other, it was listed as walking.

When non-park visitors were asked an open-ended question about why they did not use the Newaygo County Parks in the past 5 years, the two most common reasons respondents provided were: lack of knowledge/information about county parks or already live on a lake or river and recreate there. Other reasons noted were parks crowded, not child friendly parks, too far from home, too expensive, don't camp, age/health reasons or not a "parks person". When asked another open-ended question "What one thing would most encourage your household to use Newaygo County Parks?" suggestions included better fishing, more child friendly opportunities such as playgrounds, lower the price to enter/camp and have senior citizen events.

Facilities and Maintenance

When park visitors were asked to rate park facilities in parks they visited in the past five years on a scale of very good to very poor, facilities at Henning received the highest ratings and the Sports Park the lowest ratings (Table 3). When asked for the most important reason for their facility ratings, respondents noted positive ratings at Henning were related to being clean, convenient, available, benches for sitting and recent beautification efforts. For Sandy Beach, facility ratings were most influenced by the level of maintenance and cleanliness, lack of shade, good beach/waterfront, poor access road condition, good location and poor staff demeanor. At Hardy Dam Marina, facility ratings were affected by convenient access, need for electric hookups and level of maintenance and cleanliness. At the Sports Park the lodge not being open, the aging infrastructure, the lack of visible maintenance and the lack of bathrooms were all negative factors.

Table 3. Rating of Newaygo County Park Facilities by Residents Who Used the Parks in the Past 5 Years (a)

Park	Mean Rating (a)	% Very Good	% Good	% OK	% Poor	% Very Poor
Henning	4.0	31.6%	42.1%	15.8%	10.5%	0.0%
Sandy Beach	3.7	22.2%	38.9%	27.8%	11.1%	0.0%
Hardy Dam Marina	3.6	11.8%	47.1%	35.3%	5.9%	0.0%
Sports Park	3.1	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%

(a) Rating scale 5 = very good; 4 = good; 3= ok; 2 = poor; 1 = very poor.

A similar question was asked regarding park maintenance. As with facilities, ratings for Henning were the highest and the Sports Park was the lowest (Table 4).

Table 4. Rating of Newaygo County Park Maintenance by Residents Who Used the Parks in the Past 5 Years (a).

Park	Mean Rating (a)	% Very Good	% Good	% OK	% Poor	% Very Poor
Henning	3.7	26.3%	31.6%	26.3%	15.8%	0.0%
Hardy Dam Marina	3.6	12.5	43.8	37.5	6.3	0.0
Sandy Beach	3.4	5.6	50.0	27.8	16.7	0.0
Sports Park	3.0	0.0	50.0	12.5	25.0	12.5

(a) Rating scale 5 = very good; 4 = good; 3 = ok; 2 = poor; 1 = very poor.

Key reasons for maintenance ratings at Henning were level of cleanliness regarding bathrooms, trash and litter. Similar factors were noted at Hardy Dam Marina and Sandy Beach. At Sandy Beach residents who had visited there also were influenced by the condition of the beach and the lack of dust control on the access road. Regarding the Sports Park, respondents who had visited it commented that their maintenance ratings were affected by support of Everett Township’s improvements to the site and the current appearance of abandonment.

When park visitors were asked, “what one most important improvement would you suggest for each park you visited”, the most common response from respondents who had visited the park was to provide no suggestion. However, the responses for those who did provide an improvement suggestion at Sandy Beach were more trees, cleaner, better control of park visitors, black top access road, additional bathrooms/showers, more campsites, activities for park visitors, lower prices and improve/enlarge the beach. For Hardy Dam Marina the suggestions were keep restrooms open 24 hours, better fishing, electric service, improve parking/ramp, better bathroom maintenance, more area to fish from shore and more boat slips. For Henning, open restrooms earlier for soccer, lower camping fees, provide sewer hookup, have free concerts, provide a nature trail and more drinking fountains. For the Sports Park suggestions were to open the cabin so people can warm up in the winter, remodel the lodge, improve bathrooms, have free concerts, bathrooms available, open on the weekend and build a picnic pavilion.

Additional Park and Recreation Opportunities

When respondents were asked “Do you support efforts to secure additional parks and recreational facilities throughout the county?” 76% were supportive, 18% did not respond and 6% were opposed. Citizen needs for additional park and recreation opportunities in Newaygo County were also approached by asking an open-ended question of all respondents: “If Newaygo County could provide additional opportunities for parks and recreation, what **ONE** opportunity would your household most prefer?” The question was designed to provide respondents the broadest latitude to make suggestions. The most common response was no suggestion (42%), followed by additional parks with camping, fishing and swimming (12%), non-motorized trails (10%), additional fishing/boating access (8%), improved showers/restrooms in campgrounds (4%),

swimming pool/water park (4%) and at 2% were dog park, disc golf, more picnic areas, basketball courts, a historic park and don't add anymore parks. The final 6% were unintelligible.

Park Funding

When Newaygo County residents were asked about their level of support for various options to fund parks, they were most likely to support volunteer efforts, the creation of a parks maintenance endowment and park user fees (Table 5).

Table 5. Level of support for selected Newaygo County Parks funding options.

Funding Source	% Strongly support	% Moderately support	% Neutral	% Moderately oppose	% Strongly oppose
Volunteer efforts	45.0	25.0	25.0	5.0	0.0
Create park maintenance endowment with area partners	36.6	34.1	22.0	2.4	4.9
Park user fees	46.7%	22.2%	15.6%	2.2%	13.3%
County general fund	17.1	39.0	14.6	17.1	12.2
County Park millage	2.4	39.0	14.6	14.6	29.3

In the case of every funding option except a millage, more supported than opposed the option. For example, 80% supported volunteer efforts and 5% opposed them. Seventy one percent supported a park maintenance endowment and 7% opposed one. Sixty-nine percent supported park user fees and 16% opposed them. For the county general fund 56% supported using county general fund monies for parks and 29% opposed it. Even for a millage, 41% were supportive and 44% were opposed.

Open Ended Comments

An open-ended question at the end of the survey asked respondents if they had any additional comments about their recreational needs. Of the 50 respondents, 15 (30%) provided such written comments. They are provided verbatim.

- Parks are becoming too expensive. We like to fish, tube and swim on the Muskegon River
- My primary recreational interest is biking (not mountain biking) and without paved trails there is no place in the park system to do this. Instead, I drive to Ravenna
- Bike trails would be great. Miniature golf courses. There are so many lakes in Newaygo County and yet so few beaches for the residents to swim
- There are a few parks or lakes for instance Indian Lake in Merrill Township that you have to pay \$3.00 which is understandable. But they are nasty and dirty all the time. I think places like these need to be kept up better.
- I'm interested in more info on these parks. Is there a web site or a place to get more info? I will check on line
- We value having parks and recreation areas even if we don't use them often. We would support government funding for them

- County residents could have lower fees than visitors. Good restroom facilities are important. Informational plaques or charts on local history and nature are welcome
- As much as I use parks (Hemlock, most often), rising energy costs make additional taxes a burden I cannot afford
- I don't really have a lot of knowledge about what is available yet I am always in favor of improvement
- No thoughts should be given to expanding the park system (like Camp Swampy) until the others are up to standards (facilities, ramps, activities, clientele, etc.) and are hitting 90-100% occupancy. When you have to deny usage, then expand
- Do some newspaper articles on the various parks and promote them. I don't even know where they are, fees, facilities, etc.
- I don't support the user fees because the families who need to use the parks the most could most likely not afford the fees. We need to let these people have a place to go and have fun for no money. A lot of homes haven't any yards and the children need a place to go
- All your questions are the same. The problem is that this state lacks the goal for putting more money into the parks and our natural resources. I have been to a lot of other states' parks and this state falls way behind
- Thanks for allowing our input!
- Would support rails-to-trails or other bike path addition to Newaygo County Parks

Conclusions

Fifty percent of the respondents were in households where one or more persons had used one or more Newaygo County Parks in the past five years. Age, length of residence in the county and the presence of children in the household was not a predictor of whether people used the parks. This is likely due to the universal appeal of lifetime activities such as camping, fishing, swimming and boating, which are the staples of Newaygo County Parks.

Park visitor respondents were moderately satisfied the Newaygo County Parks. They often noted the water access, beach, fishing and camping as positives. A number also had favorable comments on facilities and grounds maintenance. However, a number specifically noted the need for additional facilities and improved maintenance. Improved facilities such as paved roads, additional marina slips, better or more restroom and shower facilities, additional water and sewer hookups and larger beach areas were all desirable. In regards to maintenance, cleanliness is very important and can be improved, both in facilities such as bathrooms, but also regarding grounds, trash pickup, litter cleanup, etc.

Respondents also had many useful suggestions on new park opportunities. While almost half had no specific suggestion, an additional camping, fishing, swimming and boating park topped the list of suggestions presented, closely followed by non-motorized trails and improved water access. Camp Swampy fits this set of needs by providing an excellent natural resource based park with camping, water access and water based recreation opportunities. It is also adjacent to national forest land that could facilitate the development of non-motorized trails.

Constraints on park use were varied, but respondents provided excellent information on how to better serve residents. For those not visiting a Newaygo County Park in the past five years, the main reasons were age/health, already living on the waterfront, lack of information and just not interested in park and recreation opportunities. While some choose to not participate in park and recreation opportunities, for many, the County can reduce constraints. Those who didn't visit parks suggested they might if there was better information about parks, more and better fishing, more child friendly opportunities such as playgrounds, lower prices and senior citizen events. Most of these suggestions can realistically be explored by the Park and Recreation Commission. Senior related events, "free days" to visit the park (similar to free fishing days the DNR uses to encourage new or returning anglers), more visible promotion and information about parks available in the media and at civic gatherings and regular events at parks can all serve residents who now are not using the parks as well as those who already enjoy them. Another option to get the word out about Newaygo County Parks is with realtors. Considering the population growth rate in Newaygo, working with realtors to better publicize county amenities would be good business for realtors and for the County Parks.

Paying for parks is always challenging. However, there was considerable support for the sources that currently support parks including user fees, volunteer efforts and some county general fund money. There was also strong support for a new funding source, a maintenance endowment. This concept of saving for maintenance needs and using gifts to grow the County's capacity to meet maintenance needs presents an additional funding tool. While it has been relatively uncommon in the parks field, it is very common with educational institutions, churches, in the arts community and with other civic institutions.

Draft Plan Public Hearing June 21, 2006

The draft plan was presented in written form and in a power point (Appendix C) at a public hearing at the regularly scheduled County Board of Commissioners meeting on June 21, 2006. The written draft plan was available for review by written copy that day, throughout the next month from June 21- July 26, 2006 at the Newaygo County Building, at public libraries and at Township Halls. It was also posted on the Newaygo County website at www.countyofnewaygo.com. The Board of Commissioners provided opportunity for public input following the presentation of the draft plan at the hearing. One resident spoke in favor of making better use of the Sports Park and resolving conflicts between Newaygo County and Everett Township. The Board of Commissioners commented favorably on the draft plan action program.

SECTION VI

BASIS FOR ACTION

The current recreation needs assessment, the community characteristics of Newaygo County, the goals and objectives of the 2001 plan that are yet to be achieved, the May 23, 2006 public information meeting, guidance from the Newaygo County Parks Commission and citizens at the May 9, 2006 meeting, guidance from the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners and citizens at the May 17, 2006 meeting, the current recreation inventory of Newaygo County, the recreation needs assessment survey of Newaygo County residents, the Michigan State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2003-2007 and the senior author's judgment constitute the basis for the actions presented in Section VII, Goals, Objectives and Action Plan.

Regarding the Michigan SCORP, the following Newaygo County action plan helps Michigan address the key state priorities of resource conservation, trails, community recreation, universal access and cooperation and coordination among governmental units. This alignment with state priorities makes Newaygo County eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation money. There are other DNR state sources of funding available regarding water access sites (the county has 5), snowmobile trails (the county owns a major trailhead and has more than 50 miles of trail in the county) and ORV trails (there are more than 30 miles of ORV trails in the county).

In the past, National Recreation and Park Association standards prescribing a minimum level of recreation land or infrastructure (e.g. 10 acres of locally owned public parkland per 1,000 residents) were used in a prescriptive approach to define community recreation needs. This approach is not used in this plan. Rather, a more modern level of service (LOS) approach is adopted. In LOS, the community is fully engaged in the process. Acquisition and development are tailored to meet community identified needs and link with recreation opportunities provided in neighboring jurisdictions. For example, the older standards approach would not take into account the influx of summer residents at seasonal homes. Newaygo County is defined by more than its population reported by the US Census Bureau. In addition, recreation and tourism go beyond important quality of life issues and also have a significant impact on the local economy. The provision of attractive resources, camping and links to area businesses is economically vital for prosperity in Newaygo County.

Key resources to assist in the proposed actions are funding sources administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. These include the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF), one time monies derived from the sale of leases and royalties on state owned hydrocarbon resources and protected by the Michigan Constitution to provide perpetual funding to support the acquisition and development of Michigan public outdoor recreation opportunities. Another source is the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the precursor to the MNRTF. This fund has been in place since 1965 and is also derived from hydrocarbon resources, those on federal lands and the outer continental shelf, through the sale of leases and the resulting royalties from extraction. It is administered in Michigan by the DNR. For motorized trails, local units, including Newaygo County are eligible for capital improvement and maintenance funding from the Snowmobile Trail Improvement Fund and the Off-Road Vehicle Trail Improvement fund. For non-motorized transportation such as paved bicycle trails and bicycles lanes along designated

roadways, the Michigan Department of Transportation administers the Transportation Enhancement Grant program. For water access sites, Waterways Program Grants to local units are administered by the DNR. They provide up to a 50% match for the design and a 75% match for construction of recreational boating facilities in the state.

A full review of such public funding resources can be found in three Michigan DNR documents: “Michigan State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003-2007”, “Recreation Grants Application Guidelines 2006” and “Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans”. All are available on the internet at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

The plan, once adopted by the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners, can be readily amended. The DNR notes: “Plan amendments must be adopted by the same governing body that adopted the original plan, unless the resolution adopting the original plan included specific language delegating that authority to another entity.” Appropriate public input and public notice must be provided. A full discussion is provided in the DNR’s “Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans” dated 1/27/06.

SECTION VII

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PROGRAM

Overall Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Newaygo County Park and Recreation Plan is to provide Newaygo County residents and visitors with enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences in a manner that safeguards the environment and public safety through the professional and efficient provision and management of Newaygo County Parks. This will improve the quality of life for residents and visitors and foster economic development and growth through responsible tourism. By providing valued water-based recreation close to major population centers on the western side of Lower Michigan it will also provide quality public recreation opportunities that conserve energy.

Specific Goals, Objectives and Actions

1. The top priority of this plan is acquisition and development of “Camp Swampy”, a 151 acre property currently owned by Steelcase Corporation on Diamond Lake in Lincoln Township. The parcel is a 52-site modern campground with paved roads and valuable swimming, boating, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities on Diamond Lake. It fits the campground quality standards county desired by county residents. Camping fees and motor vehicle permits will provide sufficient funds for park operation and maintenance. With this new campground Newaygo County would have enough critical mass in facilities and services to justify and support a full-time County Parks Director and maintenance staff which in turn will improve cleaning and daily maintenance needs of all Newaygo county parks. This was a need noted by citizens in the recreation planning process.

In the years that the campground was vacant it suffered some damage due to vandalism, lack of winterization, and storms. The Fremont Area Community Foundation has awarded funds to meet these repair needs, and temporary control of the property has been secured with a lease agreement with Steelcase Inc. to provide the County with time to seek acquisition funds. Besides the campground and the lakeshore, the property away from the lakeshore adjoins land owned by The Nature Conservancy that is to be sold to the USDA Forest Service as an addition to the Manistee National Forest. The Camp Swampy property has significant environmental conservation value for species of concern as well as for general environmental conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting and wildlife viewing. This acquisition meets a number of the priorities of the SCORP including resource conservation.

2. Conduct a non-motorized transportation and trail opportunity assessment across the County in cooperation with the County Road Commission, trail advocates, other units of government, the USDA Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other partners as appropriate. This assessment will identify opportunities, funding sources and partners for non-motorized transportation and trails including bicycle, walk/hike, run, cross-country ski, water trails, equestrian and in-line skate. It acknowledges that 1% of the Public Act 51 monies counties receive from the State of Michigan for transportation are mandated to be spent

on non-motorized transportation development and maintenance. It also recognizes important governmental partners in the US Forest Service, who have non-motorized trails in the county and the Michigan DNR and Michigan Department of Transportation which have a number of grants available to acquire, develop and some to operate non-motorized trails. The County is a vital partner in any trail effort as it is a single governmental unit that can link together other local entities such as cities, townships and villages. Development on non-motorized trail opportunities was noted in both the May 23 public meeting on the plan update and in the mail survey to a sample of Newaygo County voters. It will also incorporate trail needs noted in the 2001-2006 Plan, such as providing trail access to the Leppo Property that the County leases from the Michigan DNR adjacent to Henning Park. Funding is primarily available for trail acquisition through the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund and primarily available for trail development through the Michigan Department of Transportation's Transportation (MDOT) Enhancement Program and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality initiatives. In addition, the latest federal transportation legislation has funded "Safe Routes to Schools" to provide both information and infrastructure to encourage physical activity as a regular part of a school day by providing opportunities to bicycle or walk to schools. The Safe Routes to Schools program (funded by federal transportation money) is administered through the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports and MDOT. This focus on trails also meets one of the seven major priorities of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, trails. In addition, non-motorized trails are also one of the funding priorities of the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund.

3. Meet the following unmet needs identified in the 2001-2006 Newaygo County Park and Recreation Plan.

- a. Construct a vault toilet building at Pettibone Lake County Park to improve sanitation
- b. Complete needed dock construction and provide water and sewer at Hardy Pond Marina County Park
- c. Repair and reconstruct ball fields and tennis courts at Henning County Park
- d. Install potable water service and sewer hookups at Henning County Park campsites
- e. Expand and protect available dock space at Sandy Beach County Park

These represent high priority improvements that have a direct bearing on the ability of the parks to serve residents and attract visitors, thus supporting tourism and Newaygo County's economy. In the case of Pettibone Lake, it also provides environmental quality improvements over the current situation.

4. Improve the revenue stream for Newaygo County park operations and maintenance from existing parks. One important step will be a review of fees/prices for each park and marina site. This should be conducted by the Parks Commission and Parks Director and the results presented to the County Board of Commissioners. In particular, seasonal campsite and marina slip rental, which is provided at a fraction of the cost of the price of all the season's nights if charged the individual night rate, needs to be closely examined. While there is value in knowing that there is a revenue stream through season site rental, the substantial economic benefit provided to campers and boaters with the discount fee, the substantial reductions in energy costs by not having to haul trailers and other recreational equipment back and forth from one's primary residence and the physical impact to the site from season long occupancy are other costs and benefits that need to be considered. A second key step is to explore development of a Newaygo County Parks

Maintenance Endowment. While relatively few county parks have such funds, Midland County has been highly successful with an endowment fund to help maintain the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. This model may be useful for Newaygo County to consider. It is built in part upon the regional community foundation and also greatly benefited from strong corporate foundation support. Newaygo County Parks has enjoyed some strong foundation support and has an opportunity to complement fee revenues from campgrounds, marinas, etc. with a more stable funding source using this approach. A third step would involve research and pursuit of special funding including grants both public and private, individual donations, and business partnerships. These funds would be used for special projects such as creating barrier-free access and facility upgrades.

5. Conduct a motorized transportation and trail opportunity assessment across the County in cooperation with the County Road Commission, County sheriff, trail advocates, other units of government, the USDA Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other partners as appropriate. There was citizen interest at the public information meeting May 23 in additional ORV and snowmobile trail opportunities in Newaygo County. The ORV trails in the county are on US Forest Service land. The designated snowmobile trails are on US Forest Service, State of Michigan, Newaygo County (Sports Park is a major snowmobile trailhead and staging area on the west side of M37) and willing private landowners. There are grants available to local units of government (www.michigan.gov/dnr/grants) to develop and maintain designated ORV and snowmobile trails from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. These grants cover 100% of documented costs. Both activities are increasing in popularity and have the potential to bring additional tourism to the county. Because of their focus on designated trails, these uses can be channeled to appropriate locations, thus reducing conflicts and protecting sensitive resources while providing recreation opportunity and promoting responsible tourism. Such management however takes a team approach involving users, park managers, county road commission, county law enforcement, the DNR and the Forest Service.

6. Develop and adopt a master plan for the Newaygo County Sports Park that creates and fosters partnerships with interested parties. The recent conflicts over the operation, occupancy and uses of the Sports Park between the County and Everett Township have not benefited County residents. Currently recreational use and programming has ceased and buildings do not appear to be well used or maintained. This park presents many opportunities and also many liabilities for the County. It is a more difficult site under its current configuration and use to generate a revenue stream comparable to the other, more water-based parks. It also is based partially on what many would consider a high-risk activity (tobogganing), which has liability implications, especially when a fee is charged. Other activities that took place including potlucks, music events, etc. have less liability concern and by accounts presented by those involved were greatly enjoyed by a number of residents. While it will be challenging to look to the future and seek common ground for the Sports Park, it is essential that the County do this in a positive way. Currently, this major county asset is benefiting few if any residents.

7. Establish the County Parks Director and a County Parks Maintenance position as full time positions. With four major parks (Henning, Sandy Beach, Hardy Dam Marina, Newaygo Sports Park) along with the smaller Pettibone Lake County Park, and the potential to add a fifth major park at Diamond Lake, Newaygo County needs professional, full-time

leadership to manage the use on site, to plan for park additions, improvements and renovations and seek grant and other funding sources to support and enhance this substantial set of county assets. In addition, as the County responds to citizen interests in trails and a master plan for the Sports Park, substantial coordination and facilitation along with grant writing will be required to meet the needs that will be identified. This means that the parks director cannot double as the maintenance director, nor as some other function in county government and do his/her job effectively. The Parks Director also needs to explore opportunities with local, state, and federal agencies to enhance the opportunities for recreation activities and facilities. Given the scale and scope of the U.S. National Forest Service and the State's ownership of public lands within Newaygo County, there may be opportunities to develop partnerships to provide activities and facilities that have a regional or national appeal as is the case of the "North Country Trail" that runs through Newaygo County.

There is also year round work for a maintenance position to maintain 226 campsites (Sandy Beach, Henning, Pettibone), dockage at Hardy Marina and Sandy Beach, and to restore and operate on the Camp Swampy site (another 52 campsites) as the lease with Steelcase is executed and Newaygo County Parks begin to operate this park on Diamond Lake. Regular maintenance during the late spring, summer and early fall needs a full-time maintenance person, not only to do work, but also to supervise seasonal help. Standing maintenance, such as painting and staining, picnic table reconditioning, equipment overhaul, regular upgrades of physical plant and long term maintenance of systems such as water, sewage, etc. needs professional guidance and the ability to monitor and supervise contractors and volunteers. Finally, emergency maintenance needs a "go to" person who is clearly responsible for public safety and qualified to make decisions in the field about necessary repairs to vital and potentially dangerous systems such as electric.

Proposed Newaygo County Parks Capital Budget 2006-2011

Year	Action	Cost	Source(s)
2006	Renovate “Camp Swampy” and operate as Diamond Lake County Park campground	\$48,600	4
2006	Build seawall and dock system at Sandy Beach	\$40,000	1
2007	Acquire “Camp Swampy “ from Steelcase	\$1,300,000 Includes: \$150,000 (1) \$ 38,000 (2) \$962,000 (3) \$150,000 (4)	1, 2, 3, 4
2008	Install water and sewer system at Hardy Pond Marina	\$ 35,000	2, 5
2009	Convert tennis courts to all sport courts (includes inline, skateboard, roller hockey, tennis) at Henning and renovate ballfields	\$ 75,000	2, 3, 6
2010	Construct accessible vault toilet building at Pettibone Lake	\$ 15,000	2
2010	Install water and sewer hookups at Henning	\$ 60,000	2
2011	Install additional seawall and dockage at Sandy Beach	\$ 55,000	2, 5

Suggested Funding Sources:

1. County General Funds
2. Newaygo County Park and Recreation Commission Funds
3. Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (DNR)*
4. Fremont Area Community Foundation
5. Waterways Grants (DNR)*
6. Newly formed Newaygo Area Recreation Authority
 - * Local match required (minimum 25% for MNRTF and Waterways). Match for acquisition can include cash or bargain sale during the grant period. Match for development can include billable in-kind services performed during the grant period.

It is anticipated that once a plan is developed for the Sports Park and once county level plans are in place regarding trails, additional capital requests may be made based upon those to be formed plans. However, it would be premature to suggest actions and amounts without the planning process taking place regarding those two areas.

Appendix A – Need Assessment Survey Cover Letter and Survey

May 21, 2006

Dear Newaygo County Resident:

Newaygo County and Michigan State University are cooperating to understand and meet the park and recreation needs of Newaygo County residents. Understanding those needs is integral to updating Newaygo County's Park and Recreation Plan. This needs to be done so the county is eligible to receive state and federal grants for the next 5 years to acquire or develop park and recreation opportunities.

Enclosed is a brief questionnaire asking about your household's use of Newaygo County parks, opinions about Newaygo County park operations, suggestions for future direction and basic information about your household. Your response is crucial in meeting Newaygo County's future needs and in developing grant requests for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and other sources. In the past, grant like these have matched local foundation and government dollars at a rate of 1:1 or better to acquire parklands and develop facilities.

Your name was randomly chosen from a list of Newaygo County residents. This was done to insure that residents from across the county were well represented. Please take the 10-15 minutes needed to complete the survey and then mail it to me in the postage paid envelope.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study by completing the questionnaire and mailing it back. Your responses will be confidential and your name will not be connected with the results of this research. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. If you choose not to participate or not to respond to certain questions you will not suffer any penalty or loss of benefits.

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact me at (517) 432-0272 or by e-mail at nelsonc@msu.edu. In case you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Michigan State University's Director of Human Research Protection Programs by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thanks for your help. If you wish to contact Newaygo County about parks and recreation directly, please contact Laurie Gracik, Parks Director at (231) 689-7234.

Sincerely,

Chuck Nelson, Associate Professor
Enc.

Newaygo County Park and Recreation Needs Assessment Questionnaire # _____
Newaygo County parks has oversight over 4 major parks: Sandy Beach, Hardy Dam Marina, Henning and Newaygo Sports Park. In addition it manages the smaller Pettibone Lake Park.

1. Have one or more household members visited any of these parks in the past 5 years? Yes (Please go to Q1B) No (Please go to Q 1A)

1A. If NO, what is the ONE main reason your household doesn't use the parks? _____

What ONE thing would most encourage your household to use Newaygo County Parks? _____

(Now go to Question 6)

1B. If YES, please check ALL the activities in which one or more members of your household participated while visiting any of the four major Newaygo County parks.

- | | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic | <input type="checkbox"/> Power boat | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice skate | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camp | <input type="checkbox"/> Water ski | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice fish | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross country ski |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swim | <input type="checkbox"/> Canoe/kayak | <input type="checkbox"/> Relax | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please list: _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open water fish | <input type="checkbox"/> Sled/Toboggan | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle | |

Which ONE activity listed above is most important to your household? _____

Which ONE of the five parks listed above is most important to your household? _____

Sandy Beach is located on the west shore of Hardy Pond.

2. Have one or more members of your household visited Sandy Beach in the past 5 years? Yes No (If No, go to Q3)

2A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason for visiting this park? _____

2B. Please check your rating of the facilities at Sandy Beach.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

2C. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

2D. Please check your rating of the level of maintenance at Sandy Beach.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

2E. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

2F. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for Sandy Beach? _____

Hardy Dam Marina is located on Hardy Pond near the Dam.

3. Have one or more members of your household visited Hardy Dam Marina in the past 5 years? Yes No (If No, go to Q4)

3A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason for visiting this park? _____

3B. Please check your rating of the facilities at Hardy Dam Marina
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

3C. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

3D. Please check your rating of the level of maintenance at Hardy Dam Marina.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

3E. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

3F. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for Hardy Dam Marina? _____

Henning Park is located on the Muskegon River in the City of Newaygo.

4. Have one or more members of your household visited Henning Park in the past 5 years? Yes No (If No, go to Q5)

4A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason for visiting this park? _____

4B. Please check your rating of the facilities at Henning Park.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

4C. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

4D. Please check your rating of the level of maintenance at Henning Park
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

4E. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

4F. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for Henning Park? _____

Newaygo Sports Park is located on M-37 south of White Cloud.

5. Have one or more members of your household visited Newaygo Sports Park in the past 5 years? Yes No (If No, go to Q6)

5A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason for visiting this park? _____

5B. Please check your rating of the facilities at Newaygo Sports Park.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

5C. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

5D. Please check your rating of the level of maintenance at Newaygo Sports Park.
 Very Good Good OK Poor Very Poor

5E. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? _____

5F. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for Newwaygo Sports Park? _____

New Opportunities

6. Newwaygo County is now leasing “Steelcase Camp Swampy” on Diamond Lake in Lincoln Township to provide an additional water based recreation and camping opportunity in the north central part of the county. Do you support efforts to secure additional parks and recreational facilities throughout the County? Yes No

7. If Newwaygo County could provide any other additional opportunities for parks and recreation, what ONE opportunity (place, activity, facility, etc.) would your household most prefer?

Park Support

8. Funding for the operation of the Newwaygo County Parks system is through fees collected at the county’s major parks and by volunteer efforts. There is no parks millage and no endowment fund for park maintenance. Those who use the parks support them, including non-residents. However, this does not provide an even flow of money for maintenance and operations due to changing use based on weather, fishing, etc. This may limit maintenance, shortening the life of facilities and impacting resources. It does not recognize the economic contributions the parks make to the county by attracting visitors and providing reasons for residents to stay near home. In the future, how should county park operations be supported? Check your level of support for each option.

Funding Source	Strongly support	Moderately support	Neutral	Moderately oppose	Strongly oppose
Park user fees					
County general fund					
County Park millage					
Volunteer efforts					
Create park maintenance endowment with area partners					

About Your Household

These household questions help interpret how your views relate to others in like circumstances.

9. How many years have you lived in Newwaygo County? _____ # years

10. Check whether you rent or own your home in Newwaygo County. Rent Own

11. How many people live in your household? _____ 12. How many are younger than 18? _____

Additional Comments

Please provide additional comments about Newwaygo County’s park and recreation needs. Thanks!

Appendix B

Detailed Notes from May 23, 2006

Newaygo County Public Meeting Regarding the Future of Newaygo County Parks

Recorded by: Melissa Lott

People counted-26 (excluding Dr. Nelson, Melissa Lott and Laurie Gracik, Parks Director). Of that, 17 people signed the signup sheet.

Dr. Nelson began the meeting by introducing himself, the plan for the evening and the timeline for completing Newaygo County's Park and Recreation Plan update:

On June 21st the draft plan will be presented at the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners regularly scheduled meeting at 9:30 a.m. in the Board of Commissioners Room in the County Building. The plan will be available for public review for 31 days after that presentation on the County's website, in public libraries, in Township offices and by copy obtained from the County Parks Director. Comments should be addressed to Laurie Gracik, County Parks Director at her office in the County Building by mail or email. The comments will be incorporated into the plan on July 24-25 and a final plan will be presented to the Board of Commissioners on July 26th for their approval at 9:30 AM at the regularly scheduled Board of Commissioners meeting. The public is welcome and encouraged to come to all meetings and provide input.

For this evening, input is sought concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the current county park system and opportunities to improve it. Also, input will be sought concerning how future improvements and park operations should be funded. Dr. Nelson will lead the discussion and Parks Director Gracik act as a resource person to answer questions and provide information.

Strengths

- Located on water (water based parks)
- Family atmosphere
- Good registration systems
 - registration availability
- Variety of camping from primitive to full hook up
- Security; helpful staff
- Season pass-helps to save people money
- Natural beauty –trees, wildlife
- Convenient –close to home
- Excellent facility at Sports Park

Weaknesses

- Over crowded marina conditions
- Lack of information on how to get to parks
 - need tourist bureau open
 - need phones operating earlier for park reservation
- Lack of shelter or pavilion at day use sites
 - Henning –“starts to rain, no place to put the kids”

- some day use areas lack restrooms
- Place at Diamond Lake considered a county park
 - it is not a county park
 - drugs, obscenities
 - *some research needed on this subject of public use at this site with Reg. of Deeds
- Concerns about how seasonal sites are used by several site holders
- Lack of picnic/adequate picnic tables at day use facilities

Opportunities

- Meet needs in existing parks; tables, restrooms, etc.
- Staff Sports Park Office
- Wants to “grow” parks, raise service, raise market, increase visitors with marketing services
- Give more support to the townships, “let the townships handle it”
- Cooperate with Townships
 - E.G. Sports Park with Township
- Steel case has approved the lease regarding Camp Swampy
 - The DNR is now looking at the language in the lease
 - Will open 1st of July, or end of July
 - Protect it from vandalism
 - Grant (Freemont) \$48,000 just to clean up
 - Remove mobile home
 - 2 bath houses (modern)
 - Pole barn stores kayaks, etc.
 - Pavilion area
 - 52 campsites (primitive to full hookups)

One New Opportunity/Improvement?

- Multi purpose Sports Park (indoor/outdoor), soccer fields,
- Collaboration between Freemont and Newaygo Area
- Bike trails/foot trails; non motorized to connect to parks and recreation areas and cities (paved), connecting to existing trails throughout the state
- ATV/cycle trails
- Equestrian trails

Chuck: “Are these trails for residents or tourists?”

Answer: both

- Better policing on trails
- More employees (on-site) to keep up with maintenance
- Need parks director, marketing budget
- Swim lessons, boat safety, recreation safety classes
- Sandy beach, all money generated there must stay there, and same at Hardy due to lease with Consumers
 - Only the revenues at Henning (60 sites) and Pettibone (16 sites) can the revenue be used at other parks

- Take care of what we have 1st for residents and visitors
How do we pay for it?
- *currently camping revenues are the key funding source
- Donation check off, property taxes equals access
 - County sticker to have access to parks;
 - \$30.00 for seasonal (with boat)
 - \$20.00 vehicle only
 - If it is purchased at Sandy Beach the money for sticker stays at Sandy Beach and so on
 - \$5.00 day use
- Special events
 - team up with large groups who do things such as boat races
- Steel Case- how much shoreline? ~1,200
- No one is comfortable with general funds paying for maintenance
- Special events to bring in money –“We need to draw people from all over”
- *”Is there friends of Newaygo County Parks”
- Answer: “There was”
- Maintenance endowments – great potential
- Resident/local “discount”
- *”Can we expand the season?”
- *”Can we expand the season?”
- Raise prices
- Raise seasonal rate
- Lower mid week prices
- Sports raffle

Comments

- Promote Parks at in/out of state boat/sport shows
- Chuck: “Assistance from Consumers?”
-no deal at Sandy Beach (they paid full price for electric service) but we should approach anyway
- Chuck: “We have the assets here (that’s what everyone has been saying throughout the meeting)
- Opportunities: Bikes!
- For Laurie: “Have you taken advantage of the websites, maybe more networking?”
- Awareness of the parks
- Increase networking
- “Untapped groups of people to do park work?” –juveniles (challenges-liability and public safety)
- Laurie in contact with local Scouts willing to “adopt a park”
- “Adopt a park” from Scouts to church groups
- Cooperate with Townships
- Work with National Junior ROTC

Appendix C – Draft Plan Power Point 6/21/06 Public Hearing
Newaygo County Park and Recreation Needs Assessment and Draft Park and Recreation
Plan

Dr. Chuck Nelson, Extension Specialist
Melissa Lott, Graduate Student
Kristen Steger

MSU Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resources Studies

June 21, 2006

Introduction

- Newaygo County Park and Recreation Plan
 - Needs to be updated every 5 years
- Last updated in 2001
 - Sets direction for parks and recreation
 - Prerequisite for state and federal grant money for acquisition and development
 - Critical to understand the needs of residents
 - Contract with MSU to update

Update Process

- Review of previous plan and other documents
- Inventory park and recreation facilities in Newaygo County
- Meet with Park & Recreation Commission (5/9/06) and public input
- Meet with County Board of Commissioners (5/17/06) and public input
- Recreation needs assessment
 - Public information meeting (5/23/06)
 - Mail survey of 400 randomly selected registered voters (5/31/06)
- Work with Park Director and County Administrator
 - Discuss alternatives, budget, etc.
- Public input on draft plan direction and needs assessment
 - 6/21/06 (today) at Board of Commissioners meetings
 - Public comment period of 31 days
- Board of Commissioners approval final plan 7/26/06 by resolution
- Newaygo County forward plan to DNR Grants for certification

May 23, 2006 Public Input Session

- 26 attendees
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Strengths
 - Water based parks
 - Family atmosphere
 - Sense of security
 - Close to home, convenient
 - Range of camping opportunities

- Reservations, seasonal site rental available
- Natural beauty

Weaknesses

- Lack information, awareness of parks
- Need to improve facilities
 - Picnic shelters, restrooms, launches, docks, picnic tables, etc.
- Concerns about poor behavior by some park visitors
 - Noise, litter, appearance of some seasonal sites
- What is the status of lots County owns at Diamond Lake?
 - One area resident questioned if county did own any property there

Opportunities

- Meet infrastructure needs at existing parks
 - Take care of what we already have
- Staff Sports Park
 - Tourist Bureau, recreation activities
 - Cooperate with the Townships (Everett)
- Acquire “Camp Swampy” from Steelcase
 - Use lease arrangement to clean up and open in 2006
 - Use MNRTF and FACH to help fund cleanup, renovation and acquisition
- Provide more park staffing to improve
 - Maintenance, service, security
- Have full-time parks director
 - Improved planning, grants, marketing

One New Opportunity/Facility

- Multi-purpose indoor/outdoor recreation facility in Newaygo or Freemont area
 - May link with newly forming Newaygo Area Recreation Authority
- Non-motorized trails
 - Hike/walk
 - Bicycle (paved)
 - Equestrian
 - Connect community assets
- Motorized trails
 - ORV, snowmobile
- Provide outdoor recreation safety classes
 - Hunter safety, marine safety, ORV, snowmobile

How to Pay for Parks?

- Develop maintenance endowment
- Raise prices
 - Seasonal campers, marina users
- Special events to enhance awareness, attendance
- Create Friends of the Parks group

- Expand seasons parks are open for fee related activities
- Raffle related to parks
- Have a donation/checkoff for residents on property taxes instead of motor vehicle fees
- Provide various discounts to encourage additional resident use, mid-week use
- Promote Newaygo County Parks at camping and RV shows
- Find untapped volunteers
 - Look at Adopt a Park program

Recreation Needs Assessment

- Randomly selected sample of 400 registered Newaygo County voters
- Of 378 valid addresses, 50 (13%) respond
- 50% of respondent households had used one or more Newaygo County parks in past 5 years
 - Park visitor households vs. non-visitor households
 - No visible demographic differences due to Newaygo County Park focus on lifetime activities (e.g. fish, camp, boat, etc.)
- What would encourage non-visitors to visit?
 - Better fishing, more child friendly opportunities such as playgrounds, more non-motorized trails, events (e.g. music) in the parks (especially tied to seniors), better info about parks, lower prices

Park Report Card: Facility Ratings

Park Report Card: Maintenance Ratings

Major Influences on Ratings

- Cleanliness
- Overall maintenance
- Condition of key facilities or their absence
 - Restrooms
 - Showers
 - Beach
 - Docks
 - Roads
 - Full hookups for camping, marina
- Staff demeanor

Park Uses and Most Frequently Suggested Park Improvements

- Key park uses are picnicking, swimming, fishing, relaxing, boating, bicycling, walking, nature observation
- Sandy Beach
 - More trees, more campsites
 - Additional bathrooms/showers
 - Blacktop access road
 - Improve/expand beach
 - Cleaner
 - Better control of park visitors

- Hardy Dam Marina
 - Keep restrooms open 24 hours per day
 - Provide electric service
 - More boat slips
 - Expand parking and ramps
 - Better bathroom maintenance
 - More shore fishing area, better fishing

Park Uses and Most Frequently Suggested Park Improvements

- Henning
 - Open restrooms earlier for soccer
 - Lower camping fees
 - Provide full hookups for campers
 - Free concerts in the park
 - Have a nature trail
 - More drinking fountains
- Sports Park
 - Open the cabin so people can get warm in winter
 - Remodel the lodge
 - Improve bathroom situation
 - Provide a picnic pavillion
 - Be open on the weekend
 - Have free concerts
- 76% supported additional parks, 18% neutral, 6% opposed

Suggestions for New Recreation Opportunity

- 42% no suggestion
- 12% new park with camp/fish/swim/boat
- 10% non-motorized trails
- 8% more fishing/boating access
- Other suggestions from 4% or less of respondents:
 - Improved showers/restrooms
 - Swimming pool/water park
 - Dog park
 - Disc golf
 - More picnic areas
 - More basketball courts
 - Historic/frontier park

How to Pay for Park Operations?

Needs Assessment Conclusions

- Half respondent households visited parks in past 5 years

- Park visitors were generally satisfied with park facilities/maintenance, but clear room for improvement
 - Henning best, Sports Park worst
 - Many tangible suggestions for improvement
- Support for Camp Swampy acquisition and development
 - Meets needs for new camp/swim/fish/boat park
 - Also may help provide non-motorized trails with Forest Service
- Need to reach out to residents who are potential, but not current park visitors
 - Family/child friendly, senior activities (e.g. concerts in the parks), better information/visibility for parks

Plan: Action Program

- Acquire and develop Camp Swampy into Diamond Lake County Park
- Conduct a non-motorized transportation and trail opportunity assessment
 - Trail advocates, road commission, Park & Rec. Commission, Forest Service, DNR, Schools, etc.
- Meet unmet needs from 2001-2006 plan
 - More docks, water/sewer at Hardy Dam Marina
 - Repair/reconstruct ball fields, tennis courts at Henning
 - Full service hookups at Henning campground
 - Provide protected dockage at Sandy Beach
 - Install permanent vault toilet building at Pettibone

Plan: Action Program

- Improve funding/revenue stream for Newaygo County Parks
 - Review of fees/prices
 - Explore development of maintenance endowment
 - Work with Midland County Parks
- Conduct motorized trail opportunity assessment
 - Partner with trail advocates, county sheriff, road commission, Park & Rec. Comm., DNR, Forest Service, etc.
- Develop a Master Plan for Sports Park
 - Foster partnerships with interested parties
- Have full-time County Parks Director and Maintenance Director
 - Too many valuable assets for part time personnel
 - From Park director need more focused marketing, planning, grant writing
 - From Maintenance Director need to supervision across the system and ensure emergency, routine and standing maintenance done in proper and timely fashion

Capital Funding Sources

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
 - Matching fund (3 state: 1 local)
 - 75% of monies annually spent on land acquisition/25% on facility development
 - Projects related to surface waters, wetlands, fishing and trails score very well
- DNR Waterways Grants targeted to boating access
 - 3:1 match, also available for engineering projects

- MDOT Transportation Enhancement
 - Matching fund (70% state : 30% local)
 - Best source of funds for trail development
 - Engineering and construction
- Freemont Area Community Foundation
- Parks Revenues
- County General Funds

Capital Improvement Schedule

Capital Improvement Schedule May Change

- Trail opportunity assessments
 - Major new money in new federal transportation law
- Additional grant capabilities if full time Parks Director
- Master Plan for Sports Park
- Need to look at opportunities to promote universal access
 - New state grant money coming available for this purpose

Public Input

- Questions
- Comments
- Suggestions

Appendix D – Location Map for Newaygo County Parks

Appendix E - Resolutions and Meeting Notices