

The background of the cover is a scenic photograph of a lake surrounded by forested hills. The trees on the hills are in autumn, showing shades of yellow and orange. A large, semi-transparent map of Michigan is overlaid on the right side of the image. The title text is centered on the right side, overlaid on the map and the lake.

Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013–2017





This report was prepared for:

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This plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).

December 2012

CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	3
Chapter 2. Goal and Objectives of the SCORP.....	7
Chapter 3. Key Outdoor Recreation Strategies.....	9
Chapter 4. Public Engagement Process.....	22
Chapter 5. Michigan Wetlands and Outdoor Recreation.....	24
Chapter 6. Summary and Conclusions.....	28
References	30

Appendix A: Michigan's State Parks and Recreation Areas

Appendix B: Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey

Appendix C: The Role of Outdoor Recreation in Advancing Michigan's Economy

Appendix D: SCORP Development Team

Appendix E: Summary of SCORP Community Conversations

Appendix F: Summary of Public Input on Draft SCORP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Michigan offers a wide range of outdoor recreation activities from the traditional (e.g., camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and off-road vehicle [ORV] trails) to the new and emerging (e.g., adventure racing, disc golf, white water paddling). Recreation opportunities can be found in the hundreds of state-owned parks, recreation areas, forests, campgrounds, and trails, as well as the thousands of community playgrounds, parks, trails, nature preserves, and beaches, and more than 30 federally owned parks, lakeshores, heritage/historic areas, scenic trails, forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuaries. Some of these facilities are highly developed with modern infrastructure, and others are more natural, remote places. They are located all over the state, in rural communities as well as in the heart of some of our urban centers. Every community in Michigan is within 50 miles of a State Park or Recreation Area, and even closer to numerous local and regional parks or recreation spaces.

All of these resources play an important role in Michigan's expansive outdoor recreation system, both individually and collectively. They provide numerous social, health, economic, and environmental benefits and are places that continue to attract residents and out-of-state visitors alike.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Since Michigan outdoor recreation can be used in a variety of ways to achieve a range of community goals, it is important to understand how people are recreating outdoors in order to identify preferences and the potential future direction of outdoor activity in Michigan. Michigan's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a five-year strategic plan that shapes investment by the state and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. It is designed to evaluate

ongoing and emerging outdoor recreation trends, needs, and issues, and establish priority strategies for achieving outdoor recreation goals. The state and its local outdoor recreation partners utilize the SCORP as an ongoing framework and action plan for guiding their outdoor recreation management and policy decisions. It is also a tool for helping the state meet the vision of President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors Initiative*, which seeks to better connect Americans to the great outdoors, conserve and restore America's great outdoors, and work together on partnerships for achieving these goals.

In developing the 2013–2017 SCORP update, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) undertook a variety of efforts to engage the public, recreation providers, and other outdoor recreation stakeholders in identifying key recreational assets, priorities, and strategies for the coming five years. These stakeholders provided significant direction on how the state and local communities could better collaborate to approach management of Michigan's entire system of parks and outdoor recreation spaces, and many of these stakeholders will be active partners in implementing the objectives and strategies identified in the SCORP.

The overarching goal for the 2013–2017 SCORP is to:

Protect and manage Michigan's diverse and abundant natural assets to meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors, and the economic development needs of the state and local communities.

This goal is best achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- ◆ Improve the collaboration and cooperation between all outdoor recreation providers to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs and desires of its residents and visitors, and that users are made aware of opportunities throughout Michigan's outdoor recreation system
- ◆ Ensure the maintenance and continuous improvement of outdoor recreation facilities
- ◆ Improve access to and connectivity between recreational opportunities
- ◆ Integrate the provision of outdoor recreation with economic development plans and activities to advance economic prosperity
- ◆ Market outdoor recreation opportunities and their associated amenities to ensure that residents and visitors alike are aware of all opportunities and communities are realizing the economic benefits associated with those opportunities
- ◆ Contribute to the protection of Michigan's high-quality natural resources and help residents and visitors gain appreciation of those resources through interpretation and programming

Over the next five years, the state and local recreation partners will actively use the SCORP to direct their infrastructure, programming, and marketing investments and other decisions in order to meet the goal and accompanying objectives, and continue to make Michigan a top-tier outdoor recreation state.



CHAPTER 1. **Introduction**



Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan: Process and Purpose

Michigan's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a five-year strategic plan that directs state and local investment in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. It evaluates ongoing and emerging outdoor recreation trends, needs, and issues, and establishes priority strategies for achieving outdoor recreation goals. The SCORP is a living framework and action plan that is used by the state and its local outdoor recreation partners to guide their outdoor recreation management and policy decisions.

Developing a five-year SCORP also makes Michigan eligible for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding from the U.S. National Park Service. The MDNR is the agency authorized to represent the state with regard to the LWCF program. Michigan has received almost \$1 million annually during the period of our previous SCORP (2008–2012). These funds are critical for the renovation and development of state and local park and recreation infrastructure that meets the needs of our residents and visitors.

Michigan's Outdoor Recreation System

Michigan is home to over 100 State Park and Recreation Areas covering 285,000 acres with 13,500 campsites in 142 campgrounds and over 850 miles of trails. These State Parks and Recreation Areas offer a range of activities from the traditional (e.g., camping, hunting, fishing) to the new and emerging (e.g., adventure racing, disc golf, white water paddling). There are also four State Forests encompassing over 3.8 million acres of land that are managed for resource protection, natural-resource-based economic activity, and recreation. The MDNR also manages 400,000 acres of state game areas. These areas are managed to provide hunting opportunities and are all located in the southern portion of the state. In addition, there are over 1,100 public water access sites throughout the state offering boaters and anglers access to lakes, rivers, and streams. Finally, equestrians have both short, close-to-home trail opportunities as well as the 190-mile Shore to Shore trail.

Some of these recreation areas are highly developed with modern infrastructures, and others are more natural, remote places. These public lands are located all over the state, in rural communities as well as in the heart of some of our urban centers. Every community in Michigan is within 50 miles of a State Park or Recreation Area, and even closer to numerous local and regional parks, trails, or other recreation spaces. See Appendix A for a map of Michigan's State Parks and Recreation Areas.

The system is also made up of thousands of community playgrounds, parks, greenways, trails, nature preserves, and beaches, and more than 30 national parks, lakeshores, heritage/historic areas, scenic trails, forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuaries. These local, federal, non-profit, and private-sector parks and recreation areas enrich the system by also offering a broad diversity of recreational offering—both close to home and as destination locations.

Trails have become an increasingly important part of Michigan's recreation system and there are over 12,000 miles of hiking, multi-use, equestrian, off-road vehicle, and snowmobile trails throughout the state (Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council, In draft). Some of these are short, intra-community loops or connectors and others are long, regional recreation and transportation networks. The 4,600-mile, multi-state North Country Trail runs through Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsula. It is the longest national scenic trail in the United States, and connects us to our neighboring Great Lakes and Midwestern neighbors. A snowmobiler can ride from the Indiana/Michigan border to the tip of the Upper Peninsula as part of the states' 6,200 miles of interconnected snowmobile trails. There are over 3,000 miles of ORV trail that offer different levels of challenges and opportunities geared toward different types of ORV vehicles.

All of these resources are important parts of Michigan's expansive outdoor recreation system, both individually and collectively.

Recreation Trends

Nationally, outdoor recreation participation levels have remained steady and even increased slightly (Outdoor Foundation 2011; Cordell et. al. 2008).

According to the Outdoor Foundation, which tracks annual outdoor recreation trends, almost 50 percent of all Americans aged six and older participated in some type of outdoor recreation activity over the last several years (Outdoor Foundation 2011).

National trends regarding which outdoor recreation activities are growing in popularity and/or participation and which are seeing decline have been indicating a change in the way people recreate outdoors. The more traditional outdoor recreation activities such as camping and fishing that dominated outdoor activity in the mid-20th century have been tapering off since the 1990s because of changes in lifestyles, technology, information, and time.¹ Nature-based and backcountry recreation activities (such as viewing/photographing wildlife, hiking, backpacking) have all seen growth since the early 2000s, with particularly rapid growth in the viewing/photographing wildlife category (Outdoor Foundation 2011; Cordell et. al. 2009). Hunting, which showed a fairly significant decline through 2006, has experienced a slight rally beginning in 2007 and is up overall since then (Cordell et al. 2009). Passive outdoor recreation in the form of picnicking, kite flying, lunch outdoors, or unstructured play time is still among the most frequently noted in surveys, with the average number of days participating in any of these activities ranging from 37 (people who do not identify themselves as an outdoor recreation participant) to 57 (people who identify themselves as an outdoor recreation participant) (Outdoor Foundation 2011).

These trends are similar in Michigan. Outdoor recreation continues to be an important and popular activity for residents of our state. In a public opinion survey conducted by Public Sector Consultants (PSC) for this SCORP update, PSC found:

- ◆ Nearly 84 percent of Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- ◆ More than three-quarters of respondents are *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the amount and quality (around 79 and 77 percent, respectively) of outdoor recreation in Michigan.

¹ See Outdoor Foundation, 2011 (trends between 2006–2010), Cordell et. al., 2009, and Cordell et. al. 2008.

- ◆ Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 29 percent of users as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- ◆ Over 33 percent of those who selected camping and 35 percent of those who selected hunting or trapping as their most important activity are willing to drive more than 6 hours, on average, to participate.
- ◆ Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of Michigan outdoor recreation users went outside 51 or more days in the year for outdoor recreation of any type (including dog walking), with about half doing so for more than 100 days. This compares to only 48 percent of adults aged 25 and older at the national level (although dog walking was not included as an outdoor recreation activity) (Outdoor Foundation 2012).
- ◆ Over 75 percent of respondents feel that the children in their household participate as much as or more in outdoor recreation than they did as a child.
- ◆ 33 percent of all respondents said their participation in outdoor recreation has increased in the last five years.

Exhibit 1 shows the top outdoor recreation activities in Michigan identified by survey participants (Public Sector Consultants 2012). Appendix B provides a detailed summary of the public opinion survey.

EXHIBIT 1. Top 10 Rated Michigan Outdoor Recreation Activities

	Percentage participating
1) Biking, all types, combined	25%
2) Camping	24
3) Fishing	23
4) Walking outdoors, including dog walking	21
5) Hiking, all types, combined	20
6) Play outdoor games/sports (soccer, basketball, baseball, etc.)	17
7) Hunting or trapping	15
8) Swimming, all types, combined	13
9) Boating	11
10) Visit playgrounds	10

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, *Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey*, April 2012.

The MDNR also tracks the number of day use and camping visits at all of its State Parks in order to track user trends over time and plan for staffing needs. Over the last five years, day use is up overall by 16 percent. The parks saw modest changes in use between 2007 and 2010, but in 2011 day use jumped up by 17 percent from the year before. The jump is likely due to the implementation of the Recreation Passport in 2011, which has made it easier and more convenient for people to visit parks more regularly. Camping at State Parks is down overall during the past five years, from a high of 4.5 million visits to a low of just over 4 million in 2010. Like day use, camping visits saw a jump in 2011, with the number of visits up by 9 percent compared to 2010 (Herta 2012).

In evaluating outdoor recreation trends, and utilizing this information for management decisions, it is important to understand the overall magnitude of participation. Walking for pleasure, for example, averaged over 200 million participants nationally between 2005 and 2009, based on the U.S. Forest Service's 2005–2009 National Survey on Recreation and Environment, which is almost 25 million more participants than in the next highest category, gathering with family and friends. Viewing and photographing fish, birds, and other wildlife now has more participants (over 265 million) than hunting and fishing combined (over 164 million) (Cordell 2012).

Key Issues Affecting Outdoor Recreation in Michigan

Michigan's system of parks and outdoor recreation areas and opportunities are key drivers of the state's prosperity. State and community investment in parks and recreation provides substantial social, health, economic, and environmental returns. While the state has abundant outdoor recreation resources and they are an important part of our history, culture, and lifestyle, there are a number of key issues that could impact provision of and participation in outdoor recreation in the coming years. Some of these issues are:

- ◆ *High rates of obesity and chronic disease among Michigan's population* (MDCH 2011). In addition to changes in eating habits, an increase in sedentary work and lifestyles, longer work hours, greater dependency on automobile transportation, and limited free time are all contributing to high rates of obesity and associated chronic disease nationwide. Outdoor recreation could be an increasingly important part of the mechanisms for

addressing these health issues by increasing people's activity level and exposure to peaceful, natural spaces.

- ◆ *Demographic shifts*. Michigan has suffered a net loss of residents, and has particularly struggled to retain and attract young adults over the last decade.² As a result, the state has become “older.” The state must focus its outdoor recreation offerings on meeting the needs of these changing demographics and utilize outdoor recreation opportunities to attract residents to the state and retain them.
- ◆ *Economic decline*. Michigan has suffered significant economic decline and turbulence in the last few decades, particularly related to the decline of the auto industry.³ The loss of 800,000 manufacturing jobs has correspondingly meant a loss of recreation enthusiasts (Scorsone and Zin 2010). Parks and outdoor recreation facilities have suffered with fewer resources as a result of this decline. But parks, greenspaces, and outdoor recreation areas can also be catalysts for building vibrant and prosperous communities that attract businesses and a talented workforce
- ◆ *Lack of collaboration among recreation providers*. Lack of collaboration limits our ability to view outdoor recreation as a system of many players and opportunities, each of which contribute necessary recreation infrastructure and programming elements. Increasing collaboration maximizes use of scarce resources, eliminates duplication, and increases recreation opportunities.

These issues impact people's participation in outdoor recreation, and shape the quality and quantity of the recreation opportunities provided in Michigan. These are challenges and opportunities, and have helped to shape the state's goal and objectives for the 2013–2017 SCORP.

2 U.S. Census Bureau. Comparison of 2000 Census and 2010 Census—all population and people aged 20–34.

3 See Citizens Research Council, *Changes to Michigan's Economy*, Presentation to the Business Leaders For Michigan Fiscal Summit, May 2010; and Public Sector Consultants and Brookings Institution, *Michigan's Urban and Metropolitan Strategy*, January 30, 2012, for a discussion of changing demographics.

CHAPTER 2. **Goal and Objectives of the SCORP**



Chapter 2. Goal and Objectives of the SCORP

Outdoor recreation provides many benefits to Michigan's economy and its residents, and is a critical part of our history and culture, health and well-being, and overall prosperity. The recreation and demographic trends and key issues described in Chapter 1 demonstrate the need for a robust, comprehensive, and high-quality outdoor recreation system in Michigan.

To address these issues, the state has one overarching goal for its outdoor recreation efforts in the next five years:

Protect and manage Michigan's diverse and abundant natural assets to meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors, and the economic development needs of the state and local communities.

This goal is best achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- ◆ Improve the collaboration and cooperation between all outdoor recreation providers to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs and desires of its residents and visitors, and that users are made aware of opportunities throughout Michigan's outdoor recreation system
- ◆ Ensure the maintenance and continuous improvement of outdoor recreation facilities
- ◆ Improve access to and connectivity between recreational opportunities
- ◆ Integrate the provision of outdoor recreation with economic development plans and activities to advance economic prosperity
- ◆ Market outdoor recreation opportunities and their associated amenities to ensure that residents and visitors alike are aware of all opportunities and communities are realizing the economic benefits associated with those opportunities
- ◆ Contribute to the protection of Michigan's high-quality natural resources and help residents and visitors gain appreciation of those resources through interpretation and programming

Each of these objectives is critical to helping the state achieve its goal for outdoor recreation, and will be used to determine funding priority for LWCF funds. There are many strategies or actions the state could take to meet these objectives. Through an extensive public engagement process, the SCORP committee received input from stakeholders throughout the state about their vision and priorities for outdoor recreation. The following chapters outline how the state, in partnership with local and regional recreation providers, plans to meet the goal and objectives for outdoor recreation over the next five years.



CHAPTER 3. **Key Outdoor Recreation Strategies**



OBJECTIVE #1: Improve the collaboration and cooperation between all outdoor recreation providers to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs and desires of its residents and visitors, and that users are made aware of opportunities throughout Michigan's outdoor recreation system



Why Is This Important?

State Parks, Recreation Areas, Wildlife Areas and Forests are a small part of the overall outdoor recreation system in Michigan. Local and regional park systems, conservancies and other non-profits, and the private sector all offer a broad range of recreational opportunities throughout the state.

For years, park and recreation practitioners have talked about the need for greater collaboration on the provision of their services, but taking proactive steps to actually collaborate and coordinate their efforts has been a challenge. While there are several notable examples of outdoor recreation collaboration in the state, these remain the exception rather than the rule.

Greater collaboration and cooperation is often cited as a mechanism for increasing efficiencies, saving on costs, and increasing opportunities. While these are important benefits, there are many additional reasons to increase and improve collaboration. One of the most important is that the public does not see its recreation options and needs from an owner or jurisdictional perspective. Those who participate in recreation want a wide range of opportunities in their communities and as travel destinations, and they do not generally care who or what entity provides the service as long as it is high quality, convenient, and meets their needs. This would suggest that recreation practitioners need to find better ways to provide and market outdoor recreation opportunities as seamlessly as possible. This will not only allow for unified messaging regarding outdoor recreation benefits but will enable the state and local providers to collectively meet recreation needs as opposed to any one provider trying to meet all of the recreation demands of a community.

Collaborating to Make the Little Traverse Wheelway a Reality

The Little Traverse Wheelway is a 26-mile trail that runs from Charlevoix to Harbor Springs. The vision for this trail system started in the early 1990s, but five different jurisdictions owned parts of the [then] unconnected trail, and development efforts were sporadic. Through a collaborative effort over many years between five townships, the City of Petoskey, the City of Harbor Springs, Charlevoix and Emmet counties, and the non-profit Top of Michigan Trails Council, with funding assistance from the state, the trail is now a popular destination for locals and visitors. It connects to several local and State Parks, as well as Little Traverse Land Conservancy properties.

The success of this multi-collaborator effort stems from each community recognizing the joint benefit the project provides, and from utilizing the strengths and assets of each community. For example, Emmet County owns 7 miles of the trail within the City of Petoskey, but the city provides all of the maintenance for that section of trail. The Wheelway is a true model of cooperation between communities and recreation providers (Hansen 2012).

Chapter 3. Key Outdoor Recreation Strategies

Another key reason to improve collaboration and cooperation is that funding for outdoor recreation continues to be relatively flat, but the demand for an ever-widening range in the types of recreational facilities continues to grow. This means that the state must approach delivery of its recreational offerings as a single system, and collaborate to meet needs, address gaps, and reduce redundancy or underutilized infrastructure as much as possible. Cooperation among recreation providers is the best means of achieving this.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ The MDNR should evaluate and refine the requirements of local recreation plans as necessary to better foster collaboration between recreation providers, eliminate unnecessary information, encourage strategic regional recreation investments, develop linkages between neighboring recreational systems, encourage place-making, and identify where regional data gathering to assist in planning would be effective.
- ◆ The MDNR, in collaboration with the Michigan Recreation and Park Association (MRPA), should pilot a regional, collaborative outdoor recreation planning initiative that includes the state and key regional recreation stakeholders in order to prepare an inventory of recreation facilities and programs, identify facility and program gaps and strategies for filling those gaps, and identify critical corridors and linkages between communities and recreation facilities.
- ◆ The MDNR should launch yearly meetings between public, private, and non-profit recreation providers to foster collaboration and cooperation between providers, grow and improve the state's recreation system, improve marketing of the system, and explore opportunities for more regional park and outdoor recreation planning.
- ◆ The MDNR and Michigan Recreation and Park Association should encourage the establishment of regional parks and outdoor recreation management committees that meet quarterly to share information and ideas, coordinate on parks and outdoor recreation management issues, foster the growth of the recreation system within the region, and oversee development of regional outdoor recreation action plans.

- ◆ Local government agencies, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality should collaborate to integrate parks and outdoor recreation facilities needs into other infrastructure investment plans (e.g., roads, water and wastewater infrastructure) in order to leverage resources and opportunities.
- ◆ Recognize and reward collaboration and cooperation between units of government in Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund funding decisions.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

As part of the SCORP update every five years, the state conducts a randomized survey of residents to obtain data on their recreation activities and input on their views regarding the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources available in Michigan. As state and local recreation providers better collaborate to improve outdoor recreation and expand people's awareness of the opportunities, there should be a corresponding increase in people's knowledge of the quantity of Michigan's outdoor recreation resources. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by whether there is an increase in the number of people who answer "very satisfied" to the question, "*How satisfied are you with the **amount** of public outdoor recreation opportunity in Michigan?*" (from 33.1 percent of people in the 2012 survey to 40 percent of people in the next Michigan Outdoor Recreation telephone survey).



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OBJECTIVE #2: Ensure the maintenance and continuous improvement of outdoor recreation facilities

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Why Is This Important?

While communities and the state must be able to acquire new parcels of land, develop new infrastructure, and redevelop existing facilities to meet changing recreational needs, a key theme expressed repeatedly by stakeholders in the SCORP process was the need to use a “fix it first” approach. The state owns more than 100 State Parks and Recreation Areas, 400,000 acres within game areas, and four State Forests, with hundreds more owned by local, private, and non-profit entities throughout the state. These facilities offer significant value in terms of their geography, history, uniqueness, and environmental, economic, and social benefit. But many of the facilities at these recreation areas were built in the second half of the 20th century and are in need of significant upgrades and rehabilitation to improve their quality and adapt to changing user needs and demands, and some need upgrades just to make them safer for use. Since they were constructed, there have been improvements in design criteria and technology that offer greater comfort, energy and water efficiency, aesthetic character, accessibility, and safety. Newer and renovated infrastructure also helps reduce ongoing maintenance costs.

In addition to building maintenance and improvement, other infrastructure such as campsites, access points, parking lots, trails and trail heads, fishing piers, and signage need ongoing repair and improvement. The extensive trails system managed by the state and local partners, for example, must be maintained with physical safety improvements, snow grooming, clearing of access sites, and vegetation maintenance. In the case of both off-road vehicle (ORV) and snowmobile trails, users specifically pay for trail improvements through user permit fees. If these trails are not adequately maintained to meet these recreational needs, Michigan will lose this valuable sector of our recreation economy. One of the goals of the State ORV Plan is to ensure that the existing trail system is maintained to quality standards before it is expanded.

Creative Models for State Park Design and Infrastructure Plans

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is partnering with Michigan State University (MSU) on a project to engage students and faculty in research, design, and marketing that will improve State Park visitor experiences by upgrading park facilities and operations at five pilot State Park locations.

As part of the partnership, teams of students from MSU's Department of Community Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies and School of Planning, Design & Construction, with guidance and input from faculty and MDNR staff, are working with local communities to develop redesign and enhancement plans for the parks. The sites and topics chosen for the project are part of the MDNR's larger capital infrastructure needs list. The students are bringing fresh and creative approaches to help the MDNR meet existing and evolving recreation infrastructure needs.

Without engaging in upgrades and design improvements that improve quality and bring all of Michigan's recreation facilities in line with current recreation user demands, the state will have difficulty attracting people to use them for the first time and will struggle to bring them back. The state estimates a backlog of over \$300 million in improvement and maintenance needs for state-owned outdoor recreation facilities, and local communities are similarly struggling to adequately fund the upkeep and improvement of their parks and recreation spaces. These needs must be continuously addressed to maintain the high quality of these facilities if they are to be key assets in Michigan's effort to improve the health, economy, and environment of our state. Balancing ongoing maintenance needs with new construction and acquisition, improvement projects must be prioritized in terms of their ability to help the state achieve a return on investment while meeting the goal and objectives articulated in this document, as well as meeting the park and recreation outcomes identified by the Governor's recent Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ Ensure that recreational funding sources continue to recognize and support the need for infrastructure improvements to existing facilities as a key element of providing high-quality recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- ◆ The MDNR should establish building and infrastructure quality standards for state-owned parks, trails, and other recreational facilities, and ensure that the state's facilities are meeting the standards.
- ◆ Develop a plan to more regularly conduct economic research and collect statewide survey data regarding outdoor recreation needs and emerging trends in order to help the state and local recreation providers better understand and prioritize infrastructure investment needs and incorporate them into local five-year outdoor recreation plans.
- ◆ Identify 10–15 high-priority outdoor recreation facilities of state significance (e.g., major tourist destinations, historic/cultural sites, significant trails, access points to the Great Lakes), and substantially invest in the

improvement and maintenance of these facilities first to ensure that they continue to be high quality and attract visitors and residents.

- ◆ Better utilize “Friends” or other volunteer groups to help maintain and improve local and state outdoor recreational facilities. Provide consistency among MDNR programs in terms of the establishment of “Friends” organizations.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

As with Objective 1, there is an expected relationship between the improvement and maintenance of parks and outdoor recreation facilities, and people's perception of the quality of Michigan's outdoor recreation system. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by whether there is an increase in the number of people who answer “very satisfied” to the question, “*How satisfied are you with the **quality** of public outdoor recreation opportunity in Michigan?*” (from 33.1 percent of people to 40 percent of people) in the next Michigan Outdoor Recreation telephone survey.

In addition, achievement of this objective will be measured by increased visitor numbers at the 10–15 high-priority outdoor recreation facilities of state significance after improvements are completed.



OBJECTIVE #3: Improve access to and connectivity between recreational opportunities

Why Is This Important?

Research shows that participation in outdoor recreation activities increases when people can safely and easily access well-maintained recreational facilities close to home.⁴ Access is important not only from a proximity standpoint, but also encompasses the issues of safety, amenities, and transportation. If a community has a wonderful state or local park but the park is not safe because of crime or broken equipment, does not accommodate users with physical challenges, or does not allow for or encourage access by multiple modes of transportation, then it is inherently underperforming in providing recreation services. Likewise, to encourage outdoor recreation participation, improving ease and safety of access to state land must be a priority. Online and other tools should be available to find points of access into and through state lands (such as forests and game areas) and Commercial Forest Lands.⁵ State Forest lands should have a reasonable mix of access opportunities, including roads, motorized and non-motorized trails, and walk-in only areas.

A key element of providing better access and increasing the use of park and recreation facilities is connecting them to each other and ensuring that alternative transportation options exist for people to get to parks. The Outdoor Foundation's *Barriers to the Outdoors* report found that lack of transportation was one of the top barriers to greater participation in outdoor recreation activities (Outdoor Foundation 2010).

Connecting parks to their neighborhoods, downtown areas, or other recreation facilities through trails is one important way to improve access and increase participation in outdoor recreation (Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance 2007). As part of the community engagement effort for this SCORP update, the MDNR surveyed local park and recreation providers. They were asked about their priority infrastructure needs and investment plans. Over 70 percent of providers said trails were their priorities for local investment and that trails should be a priority for state investments as well (MDNR 2012).

Trails have been identified as a priority for the state as a whole for several years, and there are many groups working to address the need for cross-state “trunk” trails, regional connectors, and local connectors and loops. The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance published *Connecting Michigan: A Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan* in 2007, and the state’s Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council is currently working on a statewide trails plan that will identify key motorized and non-motorized trail needs and connections.

4 See Hipp et. al. 2011 and Mowen et. al, 2008

5 The Commercial Forest program provides a property tax reduction to private landowners as an incentive to retain and manage forest lands for long-term timber production. Commercial Forest properties must be open to the public for fishing, hunting, trapping, and non-motorized recreation use (see Michigan DNR: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/IC4171_CommercialForestSummary_185969_7.pdf).

Trails are particularly well suited to helping people be more physically active and utilize other recreation and community amenities. They are often designed to meet some of the most popular recreation activities identified by Michiganders, including biking, walking, and hiking.⁶ They are found in variety of settings, and can be located so that they are readily accessible and inexpensive for people to use.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ State and local outdoor recreation investments should give priority over the next five years to completion of regional or state-significant motorized and non-motorized trail networks that attract visitors and residents.
- ◆ The state and local communities should collaborate to improve trail infrastructure, programming, and marketing to help Michigan become known as the “Trail State,” including the development of a comprehensive, user-friendly trails database, support for trail activities, signage or “way finding” along trails, and well-maintained trailhead parking and access points.
- ◆ Identify critical trail and greenway connections between outdoor recreation facilities and communities that help promote the use of multiple parks, provide recreation opportunities close to home, connect trail users to downtown business districts, and serve as a key transportation mechanism for residents and visitors in all recreational and related community planning efforts (e.g., local recreation plans, state trail plan, downtown development plans). Priority connections should be included in local five-year recreation plans submitted to the MDNR.
- ◆ Local and regional park providers should work with public transportation providers to make routes more available to key outdoor recreation areas in their communities, and create incentive and outreach programs in order to increase people’s ability to access parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Build public transportation partnerships into local 5-year recreation plans submitted to the MDNR.
- ◆ The MDNR should complete a road access plan for State Forest lands that

provides residents and tourists with opportunities to explore Michigan’s natural resources utilizing a variety of recreation means.

- ◆ The recreation community should ensure adequate access to water-based recreation by continuing support for marina and boat launch facilities and increasing access points and infrastructure for canoes, kayaks, and fishing, particularly for people with physical limitations.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

When the above actions are implemented, it is expected that there will be significant improvements in the connectivity between Michigan’s parks and communities and that trails will increasingly be seen as both a site for recreation or tourism and a means of transportation. Success in achieving this objective will be measured in several ways, including:

- ◆ Whether Michigan maintains its ranking as the number one Rails to Trails state by the Rails to Trails Conservancy
- ◆ Whether Michigan is consistently recognized by media or association groups as one of the top five places for other motorized or non-motorized trails
- ◆ Priority trail connections (motorized and non-motorized) identified in the Michigan Comprehensive Trails Plan (in draft) are completed or under way by the timeframe recommended in that plan
- ◆ A majority of respondents in the next five-year Michigan Outdoor Recreation telephone survey indicate that they are “very satisfied” with the quality and accessibility of dispersed recreation resources in the state (such as State Forest camping, hunting, or birding areas)

⁶ See Public Sector Consultants, *Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey Summary of Findings*, 2012, for a list of top ten recreational activities.

OBJECTIVE #4: Integrate the provision of outdoor recreation with economic development plans and activities to advance economic prosperity

Why Is This Important?

Outdoor recreation is big business in Michigan and the United States as a whole. Parks and outdoor recreation resources and opportunities contribute to state and local economic prosperity primarily by:

- ◆ Attracting visitors to specific locations and regions, bringing new dollars into the state
- ◆ Helping to create vibrant communities that attract businesses and talented workers
- ◆ Spurring recreation-serving business creation and expansion through direct demand and expenditures by recreationists for gear, vehicles, and recreation services
- ◆ Increasing property values (and resulting tax revenues) for adjacent properties and neighborhoods

Outdoor recreation-based tourism is a particular asset and opportunity for Michigan. As the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)-sponsored *Pure Michigan* campaign persuasively demonstrates, Michigan has beautiful natural resources and recreational amenities that attract people to this state in all four seasons. Tourism is one of the top three industries in the state (behind only manufacturing and agriculture) (Library of Michigan 2011), and our outdoor recreation opportunities – from world class trout streams, to Great Lakes beaches, to more than six thousand miles of connected snowmobile trails, to iconic places such as Pictured Rocks National Seashore – underpin much of the state’s tourist activity. A report prepared for the MEDC by D.K. Shifflet & Associates indicated that Michigan ranked eleventh in the nation among states for U.S. leisure visitor days in 2010, with an estimated total of more than 187 million visitor days. The study found that:

- ◆ Direct spending by leisure travelers equaled \$12.6 billion dollars. This is up 13 percent from 2009 and compares to only a 4.5 percent increase for the United States as a whole.
- ◆ Out-of-state visitors make a substantial impact on the state's leisure market. Overall number of out-of-state person-day visits increased by 24 percent in 2010, and spending by out-of-state leisure visitors increased by 30 percent (D.K. Shifflett & Associates 2011).

Beyond tourism, outdoor recreation also adds to community vitality and helps grow local economies by attracting businesses and workers. Michigan's outdoor recreation resources provide a competitive advantage in today's new economy paradigm, where "place" and quality of life are key drivers of talent and business location decisions. There is an emerging sector of people, particularly young "millennials" and retirees, who are more mobile and are making decisions about where to live based on quality-of-life amenities, including access to parks, trails, and other outdoor recreation areas. Companies are also increasingly recognizing that their ability to attract talent is connected to the quality of the community, and associated entertainment and recreational amenities are often an important part of their recruiting package (Florida 2002; Adelaja et. al. 2009; Michigan Recreation and Park Association, 2009). Few states in the country offer natural assets com-

“The competition for talent is global and intense, requiring some very strategic thinking on the part of business leaders, who increasingly look to public amenities as part of the tools required for talent recruitment and retention. Thus the states and communities must be mindful of the quality of life demands that the best and the brightest of today require in seeking employment locations, with parks and recreation being foremost on that list.”

—Mike Hayes, President/CEO,
Midland Center for the Arts and former Vice President of Executive Relations for Dow Chemical

that outdoor recreation amenities, including Great Lakes shoreline, presence of trout streams, number of State Forest campgrounds, presence of identified trails, and number of boat launches, had only positive effects on population and employment levels (Adelaja et. al. 2012).

Outdoor recreation-serving businesses also benefit from a robust system of recreation areas and infrastructure. When outdoor recreation participation expands, there are significant opportunities for businesses to meet the equipment and service needs of those users (e.g., hunting and fishing gear, ORV and snowmobile retailers, bike shops, camping supply outfitters, and guide services). The growing diversity of recreational opportunities and demand for increasingly advanced recreational technology, materials, and equipment are also

parable to those that underpin Michigan’s four-season outdoor recreation opportunities.

Outdoor recreation areas, parks, trails and greenspaces also help develop local economies by increasing local property values and spurring the growth of recreation-serving businesses. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that outdoor recreation generated \$39.9 billion in federal tax revenue and \$39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue in 2011 from sales and property taxes (Outdoor Industry Association 2012). In Michigan, a 2012 study by the Land Policy Institute which looked at the effects of green infrastructure on Michigan’s economy found

driving entrepreneurialism and business opportunities in this sector (Outdoor Industry Association 2012). The Outdoor Industry Association estimated \$646 billion in national user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses in 2011, behind only health care and financial services and insurance spending (Outdoor Industry Association 2012). In Michigan, more than 3,500 businesses classify themselves as “sporting goods and bicycle shops,” and this doesn’t account for outdoor recreation apparel, vehicles, or service providers (Reference USA 2012).⁷ Hunters and anglers alone spend over \$3.4 million a year on their sports (Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation 2007).

Appendix C, “The Role of Outdoor Recreation in Advancing Michigan’s Economy,” describes the potential economic benefits and opportunities for Michigan in more detail.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ Local park organizations should work with Councils of Government to integrate high-priority outdoor recreation infrastructure needs into regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) that are submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration in order to link them with economic goals and leverage funding opportunities.
- ◆ Michigan Recreation and Park Association should take the lead in assisting decision makers at all levels in understanding how outdoor recreation facilities and programming help communities by supporting ongoing, updated research on the role of outdoor recreation in promoting economic prosperity, including information on how and which recreation investments provide high social and economic returns for the state.
- ◆ The MDNR should recognize opportunities for the public and private sector to collaborate on events-oriented recreation, and identify the appropriate administrative infrastructure to foster this cooperation (e.g., permit applications and user fees) by launching a regional pilot project.
- ◆ The MDNR should develop a trail-oriented economic development program, similar to Pennsylvania’s Trail Town Program[®], that helps connect

⁷ Includes retailers with SIC code 5941.

key Michigan trails to their surrounding communities, and helps businesses maximize the economic potential of the trail(s). Evaluate options for expanding this model to other recreation destinations in the state as well.⁸

- ◆ In order to ensure the continuing quality of the *Pure Michigan* brand, encourage customer service training for employees of all local and state outdoor recreational venues that have significant tourist visitation. Training should also include information on surrounding community amenities in order to help visitors take advantage of other local entertainment or retail opportunities.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

When the above actions are implemented, both the state and local communities and regions will better understand why and how parks and outdoor recreation should be connected to economic development efforts. Success in this objective will be achieved when all local recreation plans submitted for review by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources identify how their plan assists in advancing economic prosperity in the planning area and all regional CEDS include at least one priority park and outdoor recreation project identified by local communities or regional planning organizations.

⁸ Pennsylvania's Trail Town program is an economic development initiative that helps businesses and communities along the Great Allegheny Passage to attract trail users and maximize the economic potential of the trail. See: <http://www.trailtowns.org/>.



OBJECTIVE #5: Market outdoor recreation opportunities and their associated amenities to ensure that residents and visitors are aware of all opportunities and communities are realizing the economic benefits associated with those opportunities



Why Is This Important?

While Michigan has abundant and diverse recreational opportunities throughout the state, there are gaps in the state's effort to market those resources—both to our own residents and potential visitors—which is keeping the state from fully leveraging all the benefits that our outdoor recreation assets could provide. In recent years, the *Pure Michigan* campaign has made great strides in marketing the state, including its beautiful natural resources and outdoor recreation, and overall tourism has increased, despite the poor economy (D.K. Shifflett and Associates 2011).

The MDNR has also invested significant time and resources in marketing outdoor recreation opportunities to residents, particularly new users, with programs such as the Recreation 101 program that offers a series of free introductory recreation courses in state and community parks. The purpose of the program is to expose people to new recreational pursuits, and expand the number of people participating in outdoor recreation. The MDNR has also partnered with Gander Mountain on a First Time Campers Program which provides two nights of camping, assistance with setting up your campsite, and loaned camping gear (e.g., tents, lanterns, stove). These programs have exposed hundreds of new individuals and families to outdoor recreation activities, and are helping to create lifelong recreation enthusiasts.

Continuing these efforts and expanding state and local marketing activities is a priority for the

state in achieving the SCORP goal. Some of the state's greatest amenities are still not being sufficiently marketed or highlighted by state agencies and local communities, and there are opportunities for targeting marketing efforts to specific user groups to showcase some of the differentiated outdoor recreation opportunities the state offers.

For example, the state's current *Pure Michigan* Travel and Tourism and State Parks and Recreation Division websites don't provide users with enough detailed information on state park and recreation facilities, such as information on the style of recreation space (e.g., forested, natural campgrounds versus highly developed sites), photos that help users see what the facility is like, GIS-based maps of facilities, user reviews or posts with information and tips, or descriptions of supporting amenities in surrounding communities (e.g., lodging, dining, shopping). The *Pure Michigan* Travel and Tourism website provides some of this information, but lacks these types of details for State Park and Recreation Areas, State Forests, and other state recreation-related facilities (such as boat access sites). This makes it difficult to persuade people to try new recreation activities or visit new recreation areas because they are hesitant to gamble on something they don't know enough about.

Other states and some Michigan regions (such as Huron Shores Heritage Route and the Upper Peninsula's Great Waters) have successfully created comprehensive online databases that showcase their parks and outdoor recreation areas, provide detailed information and images, and highlight opportunities

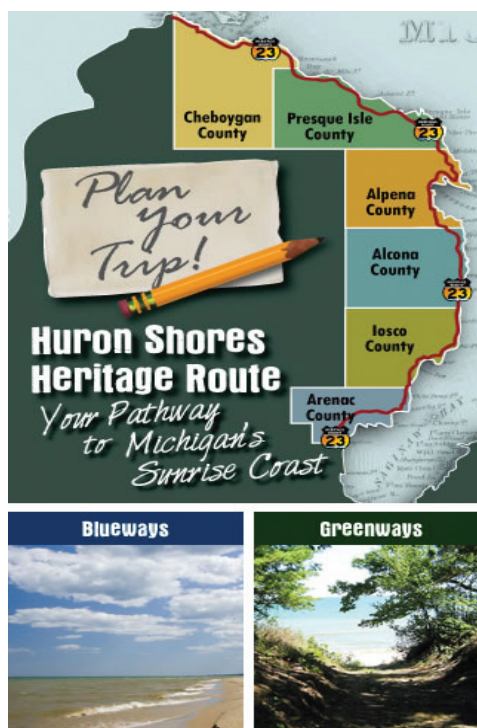


Figure 1: Huron Shores Heritage Route Website www.us23heritageroute.org/default.asp

for connecting recreation activities with other community events or places. This type of upgraded, system-wide marketing is a priority for Michigan to increase outdoor recreation participation by residents and visitors.

There are also significant opportunities to further target marketing efforts toward particular user groups that are ripe for expanded outdoor recreation participation. Focusing marketing efforts on young workers, retirees, and residents trying to improve their health could help accelerate the growth of outdoor recreation participation and help the state better capitalize on the economic and health benefits that parks and outdoor recreation provide.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ Increase the level of marketing collaboration and coordination between the MDNR, the MEDC's *Pure Michigan* Travel and Tourism and business/talent attraction programs, local recreation providers, and local convention and visitor bureaus to help leverage outdoor recreation resources as one of the primary drivers of tourism and talent attraction in this state.
- ◆ The MDNR, working with *Pure Michigan*, should create a "1-stop shop" online geo-referenced database of parks, outdoor recreation, and related visitor or tourism amenities by region so that people can easily access information on what is available at a particular outdoor recreation facility and in the surrounding community. This should include details on the facilities such as maps, photos, user ratings, and other information helpful to recreation users
- ◆ The MDNR and communities should undertake differentiated marketing for some outdoor recreation user groups (e.g., young adults, retirees, runners, ORV users) to highlight relevant outdoor recreation opportunities, level of challenge and amenities, and target information delivery mechanisms.
- ◆ State and local health departments and park and recreation agencies should collaborate on a targeted marketing effort to the health care industry and patients that highlights the linkages between outdoor recreation and opportunities for improved individual and family health.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

When this objective is achieved residents and visitors will have significantly better tools and information available on parks and outdoor recreation opportunities which will help encourage greater overall participation and enable people to more easily plan their park and outdoor recreation visits. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by the completion of a statewide on-line outdoor recreation information and marketing tool and an annual increase of 5 percent in the number of people visiting that website for the first few years after it is completed.

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OBJECTIVE #6: Contribute to the protection of Michigan's high-quality natural and cultural resources and help residents and visitors gain appreciation of those resources through interpretation and programming

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Why Is This Important?

Many of Michigan's most popular outdoor recreation activities are closely tied to high-quality natural and cultural resources. State Parks protect our natural treasures such as sand dunes, forests, petroglyphs, and wetlands. The state's trout streams are world class and attract fishermen from around the world; healthy forest lands support a substantial population of hunters, wildlife viewers, photographers, hikers, and campers; and numerous high-quality lakes and rivers support boaters, kayakers, canoeists, and swimmers. Compared to

Michigan's Coastal Dunes

Michigan's Great Lakes shoreline represents the largest collection of freshwater dunes in the world. The dunes offer a diversity of wildlife, topography, habitat, and climatic conditions that are unique to Michigan. There are 21 designated sand dune viewing areas along Michigan's coasts, most of them in State Parks and in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. These access sites are an important way to teach people about dune ecology and history while protecting these fragile systems from trampling and overuse.

In addition, the Gillette Sand Dune Visitor Center at Hoffmaster State Park has a state-of-the-art exhibit that tells the state's unique sand dune story, including dioramas of dune habitats and interactive video and computer stations that teach people about other sand dune parks in Michigan. Ludington State Park's Visitor Center offers similar educational exhibits that help people understand the unique value of Michigan's coastal dunes.

many other states, Michigan is blessed with diverse and valuable natural and cultural resources which must continue to be protected and restored in order to maintain a broad system of outdoor recreation that attracts ever greater numbers of resident and tourist participants. These resources not only provide many different types of active recreation, but also offer places for quiet, peaceful recreation time where people can escape the noise and chaos of everyday life. Research shows that spending time in natural areas or green environments and having opportunities to view and experience nature can help reduce stress, depression, anxiety, attention deficit and hyperactivity, and exhaustion (de Vries et al. 2003).

While Michigan's State Parks, Recreation Areas, Game Areas and Forests protect large amounts of natural and cultural resources, there are continuing opportunities for integrating recreation opportunities into other resource protection and land management efforts. It is also important to continue to find ways to expose people to nature and wildlife and interpret these resources in order to increase people's appreciation for and stewardship of these natural treasures.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- ◆ Continue to integrate recreation planning into state and local natural resource and land management planning efforts to ensure that recreation facilities play a role in the state's broader effort to protect natural resources.
- ◆ All recreation providers should create opportunities for residents and tourists to experience outdoor recreation activities that introduce them to, and allow them to continually experience, Michigan's spectacular natural resources. Incorporate natural resource appreciation and stewardship concepts into park and recreation programming where possible.
- ◆ Integrate opportunities for natural resource protection and restoration into development of new or improvement of existing park and outdoor recreation facilities throughout the state.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

The MDNR and other partners monitor habitat cover and conduct fish and wildlife population surveys throughout the state. These surveys provide current status and trends on the health of Michigan's natural resources. If fish and wildlife populations are healthy, we can make assumptions about the quality and quantity of habitat supporting those populations, and vice versa. Given the strong connection between natural resources and recreation opportunities, one way the achievement of this objective will be measured is by how well Michigan is protecting important recreation-supporting natural and cultural resources, demonstrated through trends in wildlife surveys, fish creel surveys, annual bird counts, and state wetlands inventories.

Another way this objective will be measured is by how widely programs are available which help educate people about the function and importance of natural resources and create life-long natural resource stewards. The MDNR, in cooperation with local communities, volunteers, and school programs, offers several programs that help expose people to the joys and benefits of outdoor recreation and spending time outdoors, including its Recreation 101 and State Park Explorer programs. Recreation 101 is a series of "introduction to [camping, fishing, snowshoeing, etc.]" courses offered at State Parks and local parks, and the Michigan State Park Explorer program provides outdoor education experiences at more than 40 State Parks and local or regional facilities (at their request). These initiatives not only teach people about recreation opportunities but they also help educate about the natural resources and wildlife in State Parks and local parks.

Success in achieving this objective will also be measured over the next five years by whether the number of local parks and recreation departments that offer the Recreation 101 program has doubled, and all Recreation 101 and Explorer programs have specifically incorporated natural resource protection elements into educational and training activities. Participants in these programs will have information on how they can become involved in resource stewardship efforts upon completion of their program.

CHAPTER 4. **Public Engagement Process**



In developing the 2013–2017 SCORP update the MDNR, in partnership with its consulting team (see Appendix D for a listing of the SCORP team), undertook a variety of efforts to engage the public, recreation providers, and other outdoor recreation stakeholders in identifying key recreational assets, priorities, and strategies for the coming five years. Many of these stakeholders will be active partners in implementing the objectives and strategies identified in the SCORP, and provided significant direction on how the state and local communities could better collaborate to approach management of Michigan’s entire system of parks and outdoor recreation spaces.

The MDNR relied heavily on the use of surveys to obtain initial input from the public and recreation providers. Four different survey mechanisms were employed during the process:

- ◆ An online survey made available as part of the MDNR’s broader Strategic Planning effort included numerous questions on outdoor recreation priorities and challenges. The state received more than 3,000 responses to this survey, and feedback that was related to outdoor recreation was integrated into the development of draft goals and objectives.
- ◆ A statistically significant public opinion survey was utilized to obtain data on outdoor recreation participation, challenges, and SCORP priorities. The ten-minute phone survey of 400 Michigan residents was conducted in April 2012, with participation weighted to match Michigan’s demographic profile.
- ◆ An electronic survey was sent to local park and recreation providers (e.g., parks districts) in March 2012, with questions regarding their priority recreation needs, investment strategies, and resource or technical assistance needs. Over 200 recreation providers participated in the survey.
- ◆ An online questionnaire was sent to approximately 800 people in July 2012 to obtain feedback on prioritization of the draft SCORP objectives and strategies the MDNR had developed. Just under 50 people participated in this short online survey.

The state’s consulting partner, Public Sector Consultants, also conducted a series of five “community conversations” in locations across the state. These small, focus-group style conversations were structured to obtain detailed input from providers and users regarding the state’s outdoor recreation assets, prior-

ities for investment, and strategies for achieving the draft SCORP objectives. The feedback provided at these meetings was used to refine draft objectives and shape the specific action items recommended in Chapter 3. A detailed summary of these conversations is provided in Appendix E.

The MDNR and its consulting team also met with five of the state’s standing natural resource-oriented advisory groups:

- ◆ State Parks Advisory Committee
- ◆ Waterways Commission
- ◆ Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board
- ◆ Forest Management Advisory Council
- ◆ Michigan State Trails Advisory Council

These groups provided input on the goals and priorities for the 2013–2017 SCORP and discussed specific connections between their work or planning efforts and the SCORP priorities. They are key players in helping direct the state’s natural resources protection, management, and investment activities, and will be critical in overseeing implementation of the SCORP objectives.

Finally, in partnership with its consultants and the Michigan Recreation and Park Association, the state conducted a webinar on the topic of “Outdoor Recreation as a Driver of Michigan’s Economic Prosperity” in July 2012. Participants and panelists discussed how parks and outdoor recreation contribute to the development of vibrant communities that attract people to live, locate a business, work, or visit, and how Michigan can better leverage its outdoor recreation amenities to revitalize some of its economically struggling communities. The panelists emphasized that park and recreation areas are key components of healthy communities and economies, and that the park and recreation industry and business sector need to better collaborate to invest in and market these resources. This first webinar proved to be so popular that two additional webinars were offered during August and September focusing on outdoor recreation collaboration, and several additional webinars will be offered through the end of 2012.

A draft of the SCORP document was made available for public review in October and comments are summarized in Appendix F, Summary of Public Input on Draft SCORP.

CHAPTER 5. **Michigan Wetlands and Outdoor Recreation**



The 1986 Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (Public Law 99-645, S. 303) requires states to address wetlands protection in their five-year SCORP documents. The SCORP wetlands component must:

- ◆ Be consistent with the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan developed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- ◆ Be based on consultation with the state's fish and game management and wetlands protection agency(ies)
- ◆ Include a description of priority wetlands planning and funding under the Land and Water Conservation program

This section of the SCORP reviews the benefits and types of wetlands in Michigan, the status of Michigan's wetlands resources, recent planning and funding efforts, and new initiatives and priorities.

Overview of Michigan's Wetlands Resources

Michigan's wetlands statute, Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, defines a wetland as "land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh" (MDEQ Nd).

Michigan has many types of wetlands including bogs, fens, deciduous swamps, wet meadows, emergent marshes, vernal pools, wet prairies, and conifer swamps. These wetlands provide critical habitat for Michigan's fish and wildlife populations and help protect water quality by filtering out pollutants that run off land. They also provide flood control in many parts of the state by providing excess water storage during storm events and periods of snow melt (MDEQ Nd).

Status of Michigan's Wetlands Resources

In 2008, Ducks Unlimited conducted an update of the National Wetlands Inventory for Michigan. Preliminary results indicate that there was a loss of emergent, forested, and scrub/shrub wetlands acreage between 1998 and 2005,

while acreage of open water and aquatic bed habitat increased. Overall, there was a net decrease of over 3,600 acres of wetlands habitat in the state (Ducks Unlimited 2008).

Michigan's wetlands continue to be threatened by many causes. Habitat quality and acreage continue to be impacted due to invasive species (e.g., phragmites, reed canary grass, glossy buckthorn, and mute swans), pollution, and development. Global demands for food, fuel, and space affect the availability of land for conservation (e.g., increasing demand for food and biofuel is driving the conversion of wetlands and grasslands habitat to agriculture). In addition, climate change has the potential to impact Great Lakes water levels, interior wetlands, precipitation events, and water temperatures. Public funding for conservation has decreased and federal funding for wetlands programs continues to be in jeopardy due to program cuts. Finally, social and demographic changes, including continuing urbanization of North America, are creating generations of people who are increasingly disconnected from the outdoors and wildlife, and who as a result have less of a wetlands stewardship ethic.

Wetlands Planning and Protection Efforts

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) was updated in 2012 with a new emphasis on the integration of waterfowl populations, habitat, and social values (NAWMP Committee 2012). Michigan began revision of the NAWMP Michigan Implementation Strategy in September 2012 with a completion date of August 2013. This plan will be revised by the Michigan NAWMP Steering Committee and it will seek the input of a broad stakeholder group. Michigan's plan will attempt to also integrate waterfowl populations, habitat, and social values.

Conservation goals for wetlands and associated uplands from the current NAWMP Michigan Implementation Strategy (1998–2013) have been met and exceeded by approximately 39 percent (150,400 acres protected, 59,000 acres restored, and 54,600 acres enhanced). This success can be attributed to a number of key programs (e.g., North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Wetlands Reserve Program,

Partners for Fish and Wildlife) as well as the accomplishments of individual agencies (such as the MDNR) and organizations.

Joint Ventures were established across North America to assist in the implementation of the NAWMP. Michigan is located within the Upper Mississippi River Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (UMRGLR JV). The 2007 Implementation Plan and associated bird Habitat Conservation Strategies for the UMRGLR JV set goals for both wetlands maintenance and protection objectives and restoration and enhancement objectives for Michigan to meet carrying capacity for breeding and non-breeding population goals in the UMRGLR JV. These acreage goals are divided into several different wetlands community types. Importantly, Michigan accounts for a large portion of the marsh habitat maintenance objective and the shallow semi-permanent marsh restoration and enhancement objective for the JV (UMRGLRJV 2007).

Finally, in 2009 the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes, with input from thousands of stakeholders at more than 20 meetings across Michigan, led the effort to prepare and implement the Michigan Great Lakes Plan designed to protect, restore, and sustain Michigan's Great Lakes for current and future generations. The plan was developed in response to the economic and environmental imperative for protecting the Great Lakes, and outlines numerous recommendations to conserve wetlands habitat (Michigan Office of the Great Lakes and MDEQ 2009).

Wetlands Funding

In addition to Land and Water Conservation funding, a key funding source of wetlands conservation is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Nationally, the NAWCA benefits the economy by translating \$1.08 billion in federal funds into at least \$3.5 billion in additional economic activity in the United States. These expenditures have created, on average, nearly 3,800 new jobs annually throughout the country, generating nearly \$840 million in worker earnings each year. Michigan has received 49 NAWCA grants between 1987 and 2012, which have conserved over 47,300 acres of wildlife habitat (wetlands and associated uplands). More than \$16.6 million was secured through these grants and matched by over \$57.5 million of non-federal funds from partners.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) administers the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), another key program for preserving wetlands on private lands. Since it began, the CREP has provided 75,000 acres of wildlife habitat (over 55,000 acres of grassland and nearly 20,000 acres of wetlands restoration) nationwide. In Michigan, the state entered into a partnership agreement with the federal government to establish a state CREP program. The program has been helping protect the environment and enhance wildlife since 2000. The partnership includes private and public conservation organizations, universities, and farm landowners. Partners work together to implement conservation practices relative to soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat. The CREP includes eligible farmland in Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, Lake Macatawa, and the Western Lake Erie Basin Watersheds, covering all or parts of 30 counties in Michigan. The program targets nonpoint source pollution resulting from crop production, reducing the transport of phosphorus, nitrates, and pesticides by 70 percent. The overall goal of the program is to enroll 85,000 acres for conservation practices, promoting the use of native grasses and wildflowers and improving habitat and wildlife diversity through leveraging federal funds. The technical assistance for the CREP is delivered through conservation districts.

The USDA-NRCS administers the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Since 1998, there have been 452 contracts that have conserved 33,360 acres of wetlands and associated uplands. The program also has an unfunded backlog of 160 landowner requests as of August 2012.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program restores, improves, and protects fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through alliances between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other organizations, and individuals, while leaving lands in private ownership. In Michigan, between 2001 and 2012, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program has invested resources to conserve over 23,215 acres of wetlands and associated uplands habitat, and restore or improve 235 miles of rivers and streams through its work with private landowners.

New Initiatives and Priorities

Beginning in 2010, President Obama pledged support for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) which targets the most significant ecosystem issues in the region, including invasive aquatic species, nonpoint source pollution, habitat restoration, and contaminated sediment. The GLRI is a new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-led program that aims to protect, maintain, and restore the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of the Great Lakes. Restoration of wetlands and other habitats is a GLRI focus area, and its objective is to protect, restore, or enhance 97,500 acres of wetlands, wetlands-associated uplands, and high-priority coastal, upland, urban, and island habitats by 2014. Competitive GLRI grant funds have been available through the EPA, the USFWS, and other federal agencies since 2010. Michigan state agencies, non-government organizations, and local governments have been very successful in securing several GLRI grants since 2010.

Beginning in September 2012, a cooperative Michigan Waterfowl Legacy (MWL) partnership was launched. The MWL is a ten-year initiative to “re-store, conserve, and celebrate Michigan’s waterfowl, wetlands, and waterfowl hunting community. MWL is a ‘call to action’ to honor yesterday, engage today, and to build for tomorrow. MWL is for waterfowlers, other hunters, and the general public.” The effort is a partnership between state and local government agencies and nonprofit conservation organizations, and waterfowl hunting stakeholders. The goal is to reconnect people with the legacy and value of Michigan’s wetlands and waterfowl, promote waterfowl hunting, improve habitat, and increase the health of waterfowl populations (MDNR Michigan Waterfowl Legacy).



CHAPTER 6. **Summary and Conclusions**



Chapter 6. Summary and Conclusions

Michigan has world class outdoor recreation assets that help keep our state's residents healthy, advance our economy, and connect people to their places. The state's outdoor recreation amenities serve people of all ages and offer highly developed activities such as bike, pedestrian, and skating trails, campgrounds, playgrounds, and golf courses, as well as more undeveloped spaces for fishing, backpacking, hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. All of these are important opportunities for the state, and meet continuing recreation demands from our residents and visitors. The state and its local recreation partners are also increasingly offering opportunities to meet emerging outdoor recreation needs such as extreme sports, climbing, disc golf, water trails, and whitewater parks, while continuing to foster close-to-home opportunities

“From community parks and waterways to rural farmlands and forests, America’s great outdoors encompass a range of geographies and meet many needs. Our majestic public lands and waters are invaluable places for families and friends to relax and recreate – whether a city or a national park, a mountain wilderness, or a neighborhood trail.”

—America’s Great Outdoors:
2011 Progress Report

for running, walking, biking, and just being outdoors. Future recreation investments will need to be continually prioritized and focused to achieve the greatest return.

Beyond the health and social benefits that our outdoor recreation resources provide, they are an essential component of Michigan’s large tourism industry, and the state is actively marketing these opportunities through its *Pure Michigan* campaign. These amenities offer a significant opportunity to help communities create vibrant places that attract businesses and workers, and revitalize local economies.

In order to realize the substantial benefits that our parks and outdoor recreation areas provide this state, Michigan must continue to conserve, maintain, and improve our system of local, regional, state, and national outdoor recreation spaces.



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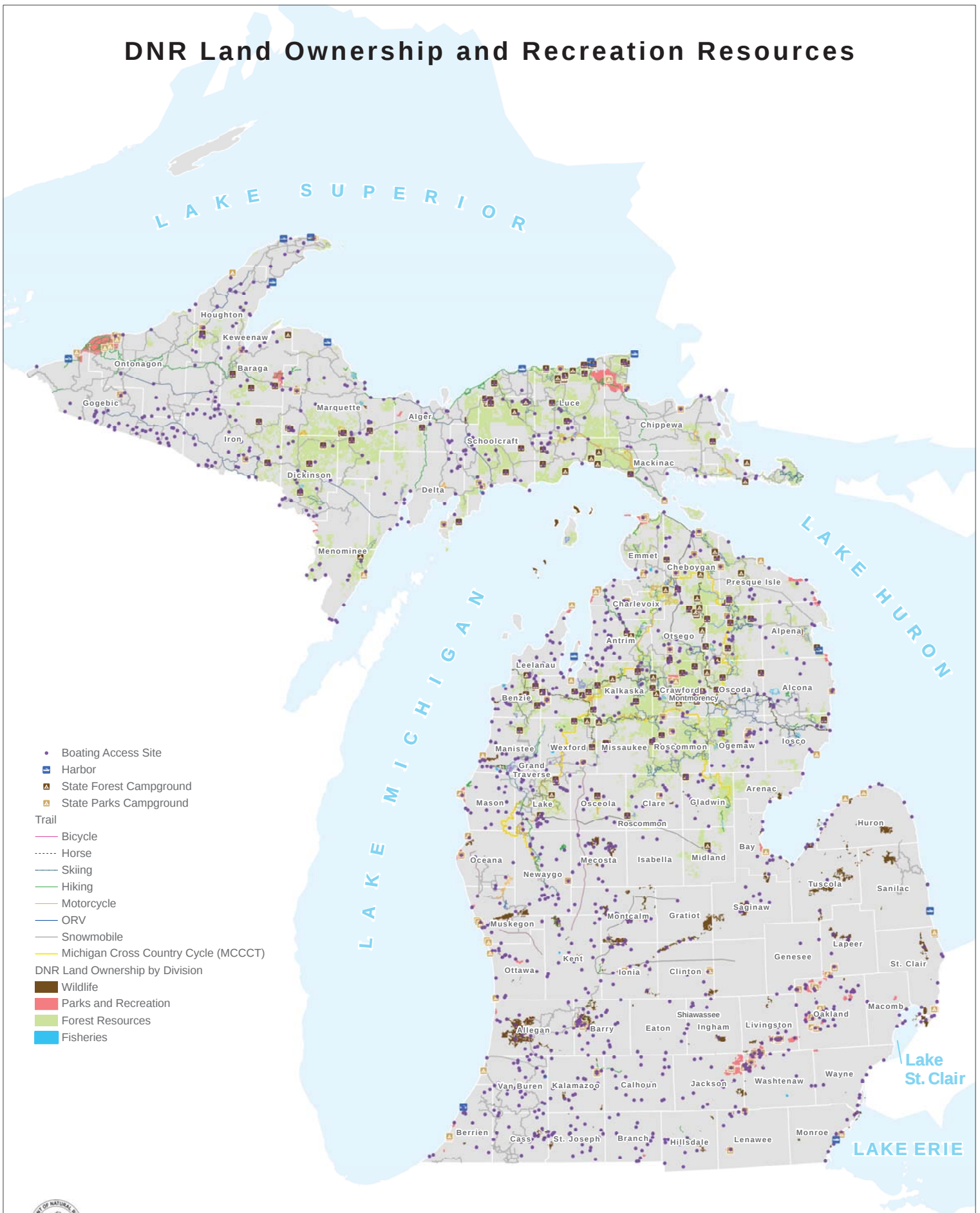
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APPENDIX A.
Michigan's State Parks and Recreation Areas

DNR Land Ownership and Recreation Resources





APPENDIX B.
Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey

APPENDIX B. Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey Summary of Findings

Introduction

As part of developing the 2013–2017 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted a statewide telephone survey of Michigan residents to help understand residents' preferences, use of, and satisfaction with outdoor recreation opportunities. This 10–15-minute survey was implemented from April 19–23, 2012, and collected a total of 400 responses from residents across Michigan. While the demographics of the respondents are similar to that of the overall statewide population, results have been weighted to more closely match the racial and age distribution of Michigan residents.

EXHIBIT I: Agreement with Potential Objectives

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/Refused
Michigan outdoor recreation should be used as a tool to:						
1) Increase individual awareness and appreciation for Michigan's natural resources	64%	28%	4%	1%	2%	1%
2) Attract tourists	62	26	5	2	3	2
3) Improve individual health	57	30	7	1	3	2
4) Contribute to an individual's fun and relaxation	52	33	7	2	3	3
5) Attract new residents to the state	46	36	9	4	4	2
6) Increase local economic development	32	43	11	7	4	3
7) Increase state economic development	32	42	12	8	4	2
8) Increase property values	43	30	11	8	6	2

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey, April 2012.

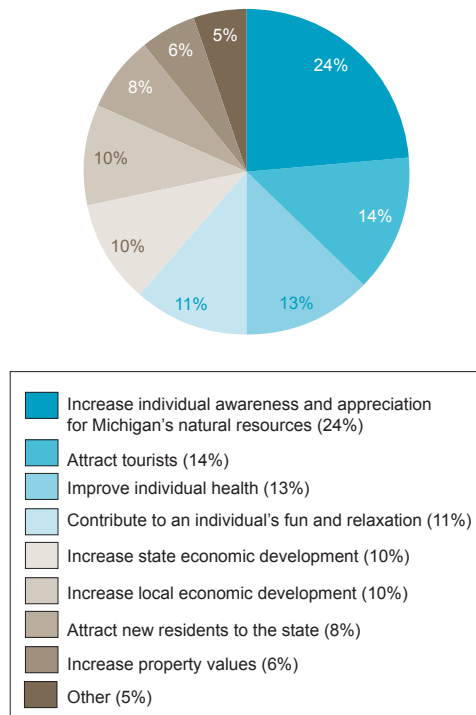
NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Responses ranked by combined total of Strongly Agree and Moderately Agree.

Selected Key Findings

- ◆ Nearly 84 percent of Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is *very important* or *moderately important* to their household.
- ◆ More than three-quarters of respondents are *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the amount and quality (around 79 and 77 percent, respectively) of outdoor recreation in Michigan.
- ◆ Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 29 percent of users as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- ◆ Over 33 percent of those who selected camping and 35 percent of those who selected hunting or trapping as their most important activity are willing to drive more than 6 hours, on average, to participate.
- ◆ Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of Michigan outdoor recreation users went outside 51 or more days in the year for outdoor recreation of any type (with about half doing so for more than 100 days). Nationwide, the average number of outdoor outings per adult aged 25 and older is just over 79 outings per year.¹
- ◆ Most outdoor recreation users utilize recommendations from family and friends (59 percent) or Internet searches/websites of any type (58 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- ◆ Only about 24 percent of respondents feel that the children in their household participate less in outdoor recreation than they did as a child.

¹ Outdoor Foundation, "Outdoor Recreation Participation: Topline Report 2012," Adult Participation, 2012. Available: <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2012Topline.pdf>. (Accessed May 2012.)

EXHIBIT 2: Top Objectives



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, *Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey*, April 2012.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Potential SCORP Objectives

Michigan outdoor recreation can be used in a variety of ways to achieve a range of community goals. In order to help the Michigan DNR prioritize SCORP projects and allocate limited available funding, survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with an assortment of objectives. As Exhibit 1 indicates, most respondents feel that Michigan outdoor recreation should be used as a tool to achieve all of the objectives listed (ranging from 73 percent to 92 percent who *strongly agree* or *moderately agree* with each).

When asked to prioritize the importance of these objectives, the most important objectives identified were to increase individual awareness and appreciation for Michigan's natural resources (24 percent), followed by attract tourists (14 percent), improve individual health (13 percent) and contribute to an individual's fun and relaxation (11 percent) (see Exhibit 2).

It is interesting to note that the objectives given the highest priority by most respondents relate to personal health, relaxation, and awareness/appreciation for natural resources as opposed to economic development initiatives, such as increasing property value or aiding state or local economic development.

Recreation Activities

Understanding how people are recreating outdoors provides an indi-

EXHIBIT 3: Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities

	Percentage Participating
1) Biking, all types, combined	25%
2) Camping	24
3) Fishing	23
4) Walking outdoors, including dog walking	21
5) Hiking, all types, combined	20
6) Play outdoor games/sports (soccer, basketball, baseball, etc.)	17
7) Hunting or trapping	15
8) Swimming, all types, combined	13
9) Boating	11
10) Visit playgrounds	10

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, *Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey*, April 2012.

EXHIBIT 4: Participation in "Less Active" Outdoor Recreation

	Cumulative Percentage
1) Walking outdoors, including dog walking	81%
2) Relaxing outdoors	76
3) Visiting parks or playgrounds	66
4) Gardening	63

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, *Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey*, April 2012.

APPENDIX B. Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey

cation of the preferences and potential future direction of outdoor activity in Michigan. Respondents were asked to list any outdoor activities they participated in within the last 12 months. No lists were provided to influence selections. Of the 400 survey respondents, 347 participated in at least 1 activity, 244 participated in at least 2 activities, 158 participated in at least 3 activities, and 92 participated in 4 or more activities. Exhibit 3 shows which activities were identified most frequently by survey participants.

For comparison nationally, 15 percent of adults aged 25 and older participate in fishing, 13 percent camp, 12 percent bicycle (of all types) and 12 percent hike. The national participation rate for youth aged 6–24 for each of these activities is higher than that for adults (18, 26, 21, 22, and 13 percent, respectively).²

To test the theory that more passive outdoor activities are either overlooked or not acknowledged as outdoor recreation, respondents were further asked if they participated in four specific activities: gardening; relaxing outdoors; visiting parks or playgrounds; or walking outdoors, including dog walking. A large majority of respondents (between 63 and 81 percent) either self selected one of these activities or responded “yes” to participating in it during the past year, when prompted (see Exhibit 4). Neither relaxing outdoors nor gardening made the list of top ten outdoor activities when first asked how they recreate outdoors, but a majority of respondents did in fact participate in them during the past year.

² Outdoor Foundation, Adult Participation.

EXHIBIT 5: Top 7 Most Important Activities by Longest Drive They Are Willing to Make

	Walking outdoors, including dog walking	Relaxing outdoors	Visiting parks or playgrounds	Camping	Gardening	Hunting or trapping	Fishing
30 minutes or less	47%	20%	42%	3%	40%	13%	0%
Up to 1 hour	23	23	33	7	24	17	17
Up to 2 hours	7	18	6	27	12	4	30
Up to 4 hours	5	10	8	10	8	25	13
Up to 6 hours	2	5	0	10	0	8	17
Up to 10 hours	0	8	0	10	0	8	0
11 or more hours	3	3	0	23	0	17	4
Don't know	13	15	11	10	16	8	17

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, *Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey*, April 2012.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

In addition to being asked what outdoor activities they participate in, respondents were also asked to identify the activity that is most important to them. Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 29 percent of respondents as the most important. Relaxing outdoors (10 percent of respondents), visiting parks or playgrounds (9 percent of respondents), and camping (8 percent of respondents) were next in order of importance. This result may be skewed by the large number of individuals who selected walking, relaxing, and visiting parks only after being specifically prompted for those activities.

Over half (51 percent) of Michigan residents went outside more than 100 days for outdoor recreation of any type. An additional 14 percent went outside for recreation once a week or more. Nationwide, the average number of outdoor outings per adult aged 25 and older is just over 79 outings per year.³

While 26 percent of respondents feel that their participation in outdoor activities has decreased in the past 5 years, 33 percent feel that it has increased.

- ◆ The predominant reason cited for a decrease in outdoor activity is declining or poor physical condition (33 percent).
- ◆ The predominant reason cited for an increase in outdoor activity is the presence of children in the household (having new children,

³ Outdoor Foundation, Adult Participation.

wanting to spend time with children or wanting their children to be active: 29 percent).

Travel Time for Most Important Activity

Adequate availability of outdoor recreation opportunities is directly related to where people are located and the amount of time individuals are willing to travel in order to participate in specific types of recreation. People are willing to travel varying distances for different activities. For the activity that is most important to them, respondents were asked, on average, what is the longest drive they would be willing to make. Results show that proximity is more important for some outdoor recreation activities than for others. Not surprisingly, respondents are willing to travel greater distances to participate in activities such as camping or hunting, and are less willing to travel far for activities such as walking, relaxing, visiting parks, or gardening (see Exhibit 5).

- ◆ For the activity that is most important to them, nearly 30 percent of respondents did not want to travel more than 30 minutes, on average, to participate in it, while another 24 percent did not want to travel more than one hour.
- ◆ Those who indicated camping or hunting/trapping as the outdoor activity most important to them were more likely to be willing to travel longer distances than those who indicated walking, relaxing outdoors, visiting parks, gardening or fishing.
- ◆ Over 33 percent of those who selected camping and 25 percent of those who selected hunting or trapping as their most important activity are willing to drive more than 6 hours, on average, to participate.

Tools for Planning Outdoor Recreation

A variety of tools are employed by Michigan residents when planning their outdoor recreation, including newspapers, magazines, and personal recommendations. Respondents were asked to indicate all the resources they primarily used in planning their outdoor recreation.

- ◆ A majority of respondents rely on advice and/or recommendations from family or friends to plan their outdoor recreation activities or utilize Internet searches of any type (approximately 59 and 58 percent, respec-

tively), while close to half utilize previous experience (47 percent).

- ◆ Around a quarter of respondents use such tools as Pure Michigan information or website, state park websites, magazines, brochures/fliers, or newspapers to plan their outdoor recreation activities (ranging from 21 percent to 26 percent).

Limits to Recreation Use

Public participation in outdoor recreation can be limited by a variety of factors. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 19 different reasons why they may not recreate more.

- ◆ Dislike of outdoor pests such as mosquitos, lack of time, lack of money, and personal health reasons (53 percent, 39 percent, 28 percent, and 27 percent, respectively) are the primary reasons cited for why respondents do not participate more in outdoor recreation.

Children and Outdoor Recreation

It is often commented that children today participate “less” or “more” than “when I was a kid.” To gain an understanding of the changes in outdoor recreation participation, respondents who have children living in their households were asked if those children participate *much more*, *more*, *much less*, *less*, or *about the same* in outdoor recreation as they did when they were a child, and if they participate less, why.

- ◆ Interestingly, only 24 percent of respondents with children feel that their children participate *less* or *much less* in outdoor recreation than they did as a child, while 35 percent feel that their children participate in *more* or *much more* outdoor recreation.
- ◆ A wide variety of reasons are cited by households with children who participate less in outdoor recreation: computer/television/video game usage (18 percent); too many other interests (18 percent); no time for outdoor recreation (17 percent); children are too young (14 percent); would rather play indoors (13 percent); among others.

The State of Michigan and Recreation

To help with planning action steps for the Michigan SCORP, Michigan resi-

APPENDIX B. Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey

dents were asked about the importance of the DNR with regard to recreation opportunities in Michigan, their satisfaction with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan, as well as what steps they feel the state of Michigan could take to improve the amount of and participation in outdoor recreation.

- ◆ Nearly 71 percent of respondents feel that the role of the DNR is *very important* or *somewhat important* in delivering their outdoor recreation experience.
- ◆ Approximately 79 percent of respondents are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the amount of public outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan, and over 77 percent are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the quality. These percentages are higher than those found in the 2007 SCORP survey, which indicated that around 70 percent were satisfied with the amount of opportunity and around 42 percent were satisfied with the quality.
- ◆ The predominant response for the one action the state of Michigan could take to improve the amount of public outdoor recreation was that the state should/can do nothing/keep up the good work (13 percent, compared to 8 percent of respondents in 2007 citizen survey), while 8 percent of respondents feel that more advertising and/or more availability/distribution of information is needed.
- ◆ While the 2007 SCORP citizen survey identified reducing/eliminating/not increasing fees as the most important action the state of Michigan could take to improve the amount of opportunity (17 percent) and increase participation in (24 percent) public outdoor recreation in Michigan, only around 5 percent of current survey respondents feel that way for both categories. This could be due to the sharp economic downturn occurring at the time of the last SCORP survey.

Conclusion

With limited available SCORP funding in Michigan, it is important to prioritize objectives and for activities to be in line with the greatest needs and wants of Michigan citizens. This statewide citizen survey was designed to help the DNR understand the preferences, use of, and satisfaction with Michigan outdoor recreation. The activities respondents participate in and find most important are as varied as the citizens of Michigan themselves. Michigan has high rates of participation in and frequency of outdoor recreation. Overall, the majority of Michigan residents are satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation available in Michigan and feel that the DNR is important in delivering their outdoor recreation experience. Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation should be used as a tool primarily to help increase individual awareness and appreciation for Michigan's natural resources, followed by attracting tourists and improving individual health.





APPENDIX C.

The Role of Outdoor Recreation in Advancing Michigan's Economy

Introduction

Michigan is blessed with numerous and diverse outdoor recreation assets—from local trails and greenways, to inland lakes and streams, to iconic places such as Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. These resources provide opportunities for residents and visitors to get outside and enjoy nature, get exercise, spend time with family and friends, and even compete in races or other recreational challenges. They provide physical and mental health benefits, help strengthen community fabric, and connect people to each other and their communities. They also provide substantial economic benefits for the state and its communities.

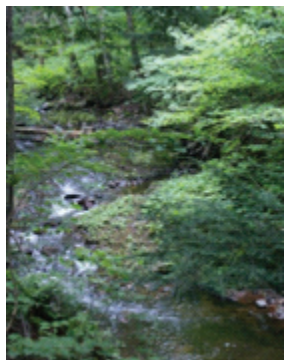


Photo courtesy Shanna Draheim

Numerous studies over the last few decades have documented the positive economic impacts of parks and outdoor recreation spaces, including national-, state-, and park-specific studies on recreational expenditures, associated trip amenities (such as lodging or restaurants), property value increases, and indirect economic benefits that ripple through communities.

There has been less analysis and discussion, however, of how states and communities can actively leverage these benefits as part of their economic development toolbox in order to create comparative economic advantages.

In order to utilize Michigan's outdoor recreation assets to help drive the state's prosperity, the state and its communities must not only recognize and understand the economic benefits that these resources provide, but also integrate outdoor recreation needs and investments into state and local economic development plans and efforts.

With careful research and targeted investment, local governments can grow their economies by developing outdoor recreation facilities and providing outdoor recreation programming.

How Important Is the Outdoor Recreation Economy?

Nationally, outdoor recreation is big business. The Outdoor Industry Association has released numerous reports on user trends and the economic significance associated with these trends. The Association's June 2012 publication, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, estimates the contribution of outdoor recreation to the national economy in 2011 (Outdoor Industry Association 2012). According to this study, outdoor recreation in 2011:¹

- ◆ Generated 6.1 million American jobs across the service, manufacturing, management, and sales sectors
- ◆ Accounted for \$646 billion of user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses, behind only health care and financial services and insurance spending
- ◆ Generated \$39.9 billion in federal tax revenue and \$39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue
- ◆ Expanded by approximately 5 percent annually between 2005 and 2011 despite the national recession that took place in that period

In recent years, the role of parks and outdoor recreation resources in advancing economic well-being has received increasing attention in Michigan, and for good reason. These resources provide significant economic returns to the state. A recent study by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University isolated variables that have an effect on population and economic performance of communities in Michigan. The study included 27 natural asset variables (such as State Forest campgrounds, trout streams, marinas) to determine whether a causal relationship exists between these variables and population, income, and employment levels. In other words, the study tested whether the variables have a positive, negative, or negligible effect on communities. The study found that over half the natural asset variables had at least one positive cumulative impact on resident population, income, or employment levels. Seven of the natural asset variables had only positive cumulative effects on both employment and population levels. These variables are Great

¹ The study included the following outdoor recreation activities: bicycling, camping, fishing, hunting, motorcycling, off-roading, snow sports, trail sports, water sports, and wildlife viewing.

Lakes shoreline, presence of a trout stream, miles of pristine or no-impact streams, percentage of functional subwatersheds (river systems with minimal human impact), State Forest campgrounds, presence of identified trails, and boat launches (Adelaja et al. 2012).

Parks and outdoor recreation resources contribute to state and local economic prosperity primarily by:

- ◆ Helping to create vibrant communities that attract businesses and talented workers,
- ◆ Attracting visitors to specific locations and regions, bringing new dollars into the state,
- ◆ Spurring recreation-serving business creation and expansion through direct demand and expenditures by recreationists for gear, vehicles, and recreation services (for example, outfitters, guides), and
- ◆ Increasing property values (and resulting tax revenues) for adjacent properties and neighborhoods.

*“More American jobs
depend on trails sports
(768,000) than there
are lawyers in the U.S
(728,200).”*

—Outdoor Industry Association, 2012
(adapted from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook 2012–2013)

Although less tangible, recreation resources play a role in increasing participation in exercise and reducing stress, thereby providing economic benefits by lowering the costs of addressing chronic health care issues. This could be particularly relevant for a state such as Michigan, which has the fifth highest obesity rate (31.3 percent) in the United States (Stobbe 2012).

Creating Vibrant Communities

Michigan's outdoor recreation resources provide a competitive advantage in today's new economy paradigm, where “place” and quality of life are key drivers of talent and business location decisions. Few states in the country offer natural assets comparable to those that underpin Michigan's outdoor recreation opportunities.

Community planners frequently refer to strategic efforts to enhance a community's sense of place as “placemaking.” Public open space such as parks, trail systems, bike lanes, and paths can contribute substantially to a community's quality of life, which is an important consideration when people are deciding where to live. Businesses also consider these community amenities when determining where to locate their operations because quality of life is an important factor in attracting and retaining the talented professionals who are essential to business success. High-quality outdoor spaces that offer a wide range of recreation options can play an important role in business and residential attraction and retention.

Through much of the 1900s, economic development strategies frequently emphasized production-based models that focused on converting raw materials into durable and non-durable goods. These strategies frequently included providing access to raw materials, capital, skilled labor, industrial facilities, and transportation systems; regions that offered all of these were likely to succeed.

As the pace of globalization has increased, and employment in U.S. manufacturing has declined, this model for economic prosperity has become less effective. Technological innovation has also created conditions where information can be exchanged more readily, such that non-resource-specific employment (for example, professional services) is less dependent on location than in the past. Thus, professional service providers (sometimes referred to as the “creative class” or “knowledge workers”) have more flexibility in where they choose to work or locate a business. Given this flexibility, they tend to place greater emphasis on the quality of life of prospective communities in which they may locate (Florida 2002, Adelaja et al. 2009). For communities and regions in Michigan to be competitive in the changing economy, they must cater to the desires of knowledge workers who are a driving force in the new economy. High-quality outdoor recreation amenities can be a key component of community attractiveness.

Attracting Visitors

Michigan's tourism industry is one of the three largest industries in the state, behind only manufacturing and agriculture. In an effort to capture a greater

portion of the national tourism and outdoor recreation market, Michigan has been investing significant resources in its Pure Michigan campaign to attract tourists to the state, and most of the advertisements for this effort focus on Michigan's natural features and outdoor recreation opportunities.

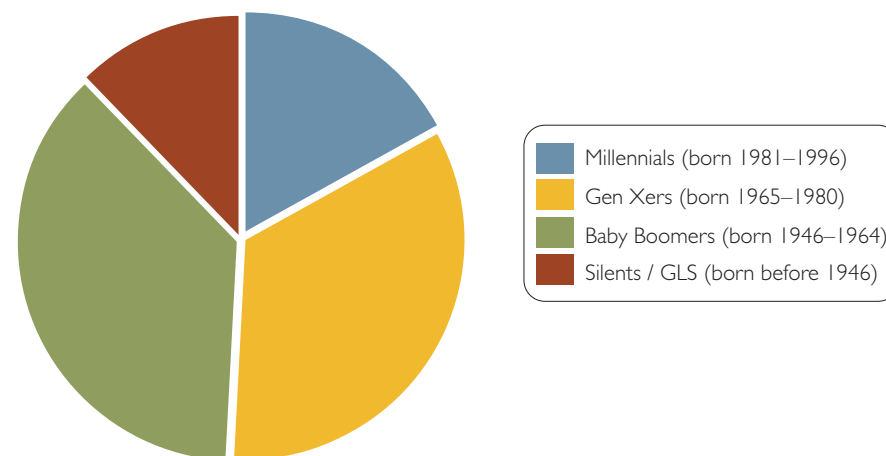
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) tracks visitors to the state and evaluates the return on investment from the *Pure Michigan* campaign specifically. The 2010 Visitor Profile compiled for the MEDC shows that **"Michigan leisure is up in every volume metric: visitors, [number of] parties, days spent at the destination, and direct spending"** (D.K. Shifflet & Associates 2011). While the *Michigan Visitor Profile* is not specific to outdoor recreation and its economic significance in Michigan, it provides useful information about tourism in the state and offers some perspective on visitor demographics and preferences that the state and communities can use in marketing Michigan's extensive outdoor recreation opportunities to attract more visitors.

Key findings of the 2010 report include:

- ◆ Michigan ranked eleventh in the nation among states for U.S. leisure visitor days.
- ◆ The state gets most of its out-of-state visitors from Illinois, Indiana, Florida, Ohio, California, and Wisconsin.
- ◆ Michigan had 187 million leisure person-day visits in 2010, a 4 percent increase from 2009. The U.S. as whole saw a decrease in leisure person-days during this period.
- ◆ Direct spending by leisure travelers in Michigan equaled \$12.6 billion dollars. This is up 13 percent from 2009 and compares to only a 4.5 percent increase for the U.S. as a whole.
- ◆ Out-of-state visitors have a substantial impact on the state's leisure market. Overall number of out-of-state person-day visits increased by 24 percent in 2010, and spending by out-of-state leisure visitors increased by 30 percent.
- ◆ Michigan is a strong draw for camping and for RVs.
- ◆ Visitors are very happy with the quality of their experience. Over 75 percent rated their satisfaction with the experience as 8 or above on a 10-point satisfaction scale.

The study also found a shift in the age of tourists visiting Michigan. Baby boomers are now the largest share of leisure visitors to Michigan, edging out "Gen Xers" for the first time in five years. Exhibit 1 shows the generational breakdown of Michigan's tourist visitors.

EXHIBIT 1. Percentage of Leisure Person-Days by Generation Cohort



SOURCE: D.K. Shifflet & Associates, 2011.

Recreation activities still rank fairly low in terms of overall activities in which visitors participate when they come to Michigan. Dining (31 percent), shopping (24 percent), and entertainment (23 percent) are the highest ranked activities, while 4 percent or less of visitors participated in camping, hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, eco-tourism, national or

"At the core of the outdoor recreation economy is the outdoor consumer, whose diverse interests fuel a robust and innovative industry...they fill their garages with bicycles, dirt bikes, backpacks, boats, skis, tents, hunting rifles, and fishing gear."

—Outdoor Industry Association, 2012.

State Park visits, sailing, and snow skiing in 2011. Several of these activities however, have high per-party trip spending (D.K. Shifflet & Associates 2011), so while these may not be the most popular activities of visitors, they still make an important economic contribution.

In addition to the Michigan Visitor Profile, there have been many studies on trip spending associated with specific types of outdoor recreation in Michigan. For example, a 2010 study, *Michigan Licensed ORV Use and Users*, analyzed the economic significance of off-road vehicle (ORV) use in Michigan on public lands during a 12-month period in 2008–09. The study estimated economic contributions of equipment purchases and trip spending, and isolated ORV trip spending by out-of-state users. The study found that these users spent \$16.8 million, which rippled through the economy and accounted for over \$20 million in total sales, 174 jobs, and \$6.7 million in labor income (see Exhibit 2).

EXHIBIT 2. Economic Impact of Out-of-State ORV Users on Michigan Economy, 2008–09

	Sales (\$000)	Jobs	Labor income (\$000)
Total direct effects	\$11,535	105	\$3,694
Secondary effects	9,350	69	3,070
Total effects	\$20,885	174	\$6,764

SOURCE: Nelson et al., *Michigan Licensed ORV Use and Users—2010*, 2010. Used with permission.

Many communities are realizing the economic value that comes with being an ongoing hub of outdoor recreation activities (by providing infrastructure or supporting recreational clubs and constituent groups) or offering annual recreation events to attract visitors to their communities. Special event recreational

The Au Sable River Canoe Marathon in northeast Michigan is the longest non-stop canoe race in North America. Every year the race draws people from around Michigan and North America to compete in and watch one leg of the “Triple Crown of Canoe Racing,” which also includes New York’s Susquehanna River and Quebec’s Saint-Maurice River.

—AuSable River Grayling to Ose-coda Canoe Marathon, N.d.

opportunities, such as running, cycling, triathlon, boat races, disc golf competitions, equestrian events, or recreation-oriented festivals are becoming increasingly popular and can bring a significant, short-term economic boost to communities. Michigan is hosting more than 450 race or tour-oriented events (such as running, cycling, duathlon, triathlon, adventure racing) in 2012, many of which attract residents as well as national and international visitors.

Recreation-Serving Business Creation and Expansion

While outdoor recreation has always driven the creation and expansion of related businesses such as bike shops, camping supply outfitters, and guide services, the growing diversity of recreational opportunities and demand for increasingly advanced recreational technology, materials, and equipment are driving entrepreneurialism and business opportunities in this sector (Outdoor Industry Association 2012).

The impact of recreation on job creation and tax revenue goes well beyond the traditional park ranger, fishing guide, or ORV salesman. Business opportunities associated with outdoor recreation include technology and digital applications, design and manufacturing of gear and apparel, eco-tourism guides, expanded gear shops (such as bikes, outfitters), and visitor-based recreation services such as dining and lodging. As noted above, the Outdoor Industry Association estimated \$646 billion of national user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses in 2011, behind only health care and financial services and insurance spending (Outdoor Industry Association, 2012).

In Michigan, there are over 3,500 businesses that classify themselves as “sporting goods and bicycle shops” alone, and this doesn’t account for outdoor recreation apparel, vehicles, or service providers (Reference USA 2012).² Several recent studies have also looked at the economic impact of specific sections of Michigan’s outdoor recreation economy, including snowmobiling, ORV use, trails, and boating.³ A study on the direct and indirect impact of boating in the state, for example, found that Great Lakes boaters spend over

² Includes retailers with SIC code 5941.

³ See, for example, Stynes 2010, Nelson et. al 2010, Army Corps of Engineers 2008, and Adeleja et al. 2010.

\$1.5 billion on annual direct and secondary watercraft-related sales, and support over 50,000 jobs related to watercraft sales and trips (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2008).

If Michigan continues to grow its outdoor recreation industry, the impact on sales, jobs, and tax revenues associated with businesses serving this industry could play a significant role in improving Michigan's economic prosperity and revitalizing local communities that have been hit hard by the recent economic downturn.

Increased Property Values

Natural resource assets that support outdoor recreation also benefit the economy through increased property values of privately owned parcels in the vicinity of publicly owned parks, trails, and natural areas. Many communities struggle to recognize the return on investment in parks, trails, or other green infrastructure from increased property values. A 2007 study conducted by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University (LPI) included a case study and detailed analysis of the contribution of recreation lands on property values in Oakland County, Michigan. This study evaluated the effect of recreation lands and trails on property value based on their proximity to one another. In the analysis, factors such as household square footage, number of bathrooms, and other variables were normalized to isolate the impact of natural resource amenities. Exhibit 3 shows the economic significance of recreation land to properties in Oakland County. The analysis concluded that parks as well as trails, sidewalks, and pathways that help create walkable communities have a significant positive effect on property values (Adelaja et. al. 2007).

EXHIBIT 3. The Effect of Recreational Amenities on Property Values in Oakland County, Michigan

Location of house from recreational land	Gain in property value	
	Percentage	Amount
Within 15 meters	+3.1%	+\$7,942.01
15 to 75 meters	+3.2%	+\$8,198.21
76 to 150 meters	+2.2%	+\$5,636.27
151 to 300 meters	+2.6%	+\$6,661.04
301 to 450 meters	Insignificant	—
Base comparison: > 450 meters	Base	Base

SOURCE: Adelaja et al., *Economic Valuation of Natural Resource Amenities: A Hedonic Analysis of Hillsdale and Oakland Counties*, 2007. Used with permission.

Studies in other states dating back over a decade have shown the same correlation between property values and proximity to green spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation. The National Park Service conducted a study in 1995 that validates this finding, and a survey of Denver real estate agents and homeowners in that same year found that 73 percent of real estate agents and 53 percent of homeowners felt that living adjacent to a trail is an asset and helps price homes higher (National Park Service 1995 and Alexander 1995).

Outdoor Recreation and Asset-Based Economic Development

Clearly, the research shows that parks and outdoor recreation provide varied and often significant economic benefits for Michigan and its communities. But how can the state and local communities better leverage these resources as part of their economic development strategies? Asset-based economic development is a relatively new tool in the economic development toolbox. This approach encourages communities to identify and leverage their regional strengths to compete in arenas in which they have a competitive advantage and are likely to succeed. Asset-based economic development requires a bottom-up approach for asset identification. Individual communities can take stock of

their unique assets to determine the areas in which they can invest for the best economic, social, and environmental return.

Michigan's substantial and unique portfolio of developed and undeveloped outdoor recreation amenities makes it a prime location for business and talent attraction, outdoor recreation-oriented tourism, and development of businesses that serve outdoor recreation users. When communities and the state as a whole better understand their outdoor recreation assets and their potential economic benefit, they can prioritize investment in the development and improvement of key outdoor recreation assets and target marketing to relevant demographic and geographic audiences. Ideally, utilizing an asset-based approach would enable the state and communities to better collaborate with each other to address priority recreation needs and gaps and find ways to link community recreation assets to grow Michigan's overall economy and jobs base.

Using an asset-based approach requires evaluation of existing local, regional, and state recreational amenities, identification of areas of strength based on local assets, identification of gaps in local and regional outdoor recreation infrastructure that, if addressed, would enable communities to expand their economy, and then targeting investment and marketing efforts to attract residents, visitors, and businesses.

To be successful, this approach must fully integrate all of a community or region's assets and align investment and marketing efforts to meet broad, interconnected goals. In other words, developing and marketing of recreational assets that are determined to provide significant economic opportunities for a community must be as important a part of the economic development "offering" as any other tool or asset, including cultural centers, business clusters, tax environment, housing prices, schools, and community charm. In addition to their inclusion in recreation or natural resource management plans, projects that support economic development based on outdoor recreation opportunities must be part of regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, Downtown Development Plans, Master Plans, and economic development incentive programs.

In Manistee County, businesses, economic development practitioners, local governments, and natural resource professionals have partnered to develop an actionable plan to leverage the county's natural assets in order to provide a good to residents and serve as a destination location for natural resource-based recreation through the Explore the Shores program. This effort is designed to provide barrier-free access to people of all abilities to the region's natural resource assets such as world class fishing, boating, and trails through an interconnected system of access sites along waterways. The Explore the Shores program has set the goal of attracting 1 million new visitors to the county by 2020. This program has been supported through investments from government entities at the state, local, and federal levels, philanthropic organizations, and the business community.

Summary and Recommendations

While individual recreation categories (such as camping, cycling, or snowmobiling) have varying levels of economic significance for Michigan's economy, they all contribute to the economic well-being of the state (Adelaja et. al, 2012). And beyond the dollars and cents impact on the economy, natural resource amenities and outdoor recreation contribute to a good quality of life that makes Michigan and its communities a desirable place to live, work, and vacation.

In order to enhance and augment the state's green infrastructure, which enables outdoor recreation, the following recommendations should be considered.

- ◆ Provide a wide array of recreation opportunities to accommodate users with different preferences.

- ◆ Cluster investments geographically to enhance the desirability of “destination locations.”
- ◆ Maximize uses that are complementary (e.g., camping and hiking) and minimize conflicting uses (for example, hunting and Nordic skiing; mountain biking and equestrian trails).
- ◆ Interconnect natural resource assets such as trails, parks, watercourses, and campgrounds to the greatest extent possible, and find ways to physically and emotionally connect them to the communities in which they are located.
- ◆ Make information about recreation opportunities easily accessible for trip planning at home and while “on the ground.” For instance, wayfinding signs in recreation areas could be improved by better marking points of interest and recreation locations. Rivers could be better marked with maps that show possible locations for “put in” and “take out” areas.
- ◆ Encourage and support community-based recreation events and competitions such as marathons, triathlons, and bicycle or canoe races.
- ◆ Encourage and enhance out-of-state visits to Michigan outdoor recreation areas to bring new dollars into the state and help rebrand the state’s image from an industrial rust belt state to a vibrant state with healthy, strong communities and bountiful natural resource amenities.
- ◆ Strengthen the marketing of the state’s outdoor recreation resources through the *Pure Michigan* campaign.
- ◆ Integrate parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming investments with other economic development plans and efforts (e.g., CEDS, Downtown Development Plans).

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APPENDIX D.
SCORP Development Team

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APPENDIX E.
Summary of SCORP Community Conversations

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Between June 16 and July 24, 2012, Public Sector Consultants hosted the five small “community conversations” with local recreation providers, community development planners, and recreation users as part of the update to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) Process. The purpose of the meetings was to obtain input on the current state of Michigan’s outdoor recreation assets, the role and function of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and other recreation providers, and priorities for future outdoor recreation in the state.

The meetings were held at the following locations:

- ◆ Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo
- ◆ American Legion, Munising
- ◆ Northern Michigan College, Traverse City
- ◆ Michigan First Credit Union, Lathrup Village
- ◆ Cheboygan Chamber of Commerce, Cheboygan

During the 90-minute conversation, participants were asked four questions:

- ◆ How would you characterize the current state of Michigan’s outdoor recreation (for example, assets, strengths, challenges, or greatest problems)?
- ◆ What do you consider the top priorities for Michigan and outdoor recreation providers over the next five years?
- ◆ How do you think the MDNR’s draft SCORP objectives line up (or don’t) with the priorities you identified?
- ◆ What in your opinion would make the updated SCORP most useful for recreation providers and decision-makers? In other words, what is a key outcome you would like to see?

State of Michigan’s Outdoor Recreation

At all of the meetings, participants were generally positive and enthusiastic about the overall state of Michigan’s outdoor recreation amenities. Some specific assets identified include:

- ◆ Wide variety of landscapes and recreation types
- ◆ Passion among recreation providers and staff
- ◆ Vast open spaces and very high-quality natural resources

- ◆ Four-season opportunities
- ◆ Ease of access through the Passport program
- ◆ Greater number of recreation spaces in urban areas in southeast Michigan
- ◆ Strong regional and metro park offerings
- ◆ Additions to trail systems in the past few years, and better trail planning
- ◆ Large diversity and abundance of recreation opportunities throughout the state
- ◆ Lots of trails for multiple users

While participants were enthusiastic about the overall state and quality of outdoor recreation in the state, they identified numerous challenges and threats to Michigan’s outdoor recreation opportunities:

- ◆ Transportation to and between outdoor recreational facilities/venues, especially for low-income residents, can be a significant limitation.
- ◆ Facilities are not maintained and continuously improved due to funding constraints, so the quality is suffering. It makes no sense to promote these areas through the *Pure Michigan* campaign if they are not high-quality facilities when people come to use them.
- ◆ There is a lack of coordinated marketing among state and local providers.
- ◆ There is not much state presence in southeast Michigan – either in providing State Parks and recreation facilities or staff participation in regional park and recreation planning and cooperation.
- ◆ We need greater access to parks and outdoor recreation facilities close to urban and metropolitan areas.
- ◆ Customer service at some parks and recreation facilities is sometimes not very good and staff is not always helpful.
- ◆ Some parks are over-utilized and some are under-utilized.
- ◆ Legislators and the public lack understanding of the value of parks and public lands for outdoor recreation.
- ◆ Some areas experience user conflicts.
- ◆ There is a lack of available detailed information on State Parks and Recreation Areas (such as pictures, descriptions of the sites and trails, connections to other activities in the region). On the website, all the state facilities look the same – there is nothing differentiating each experience so users have to take a risk in what they will find there.

APPENDIX E. Summary of SCORP Community Conversations

- ◆ Declining education/interpretation activities means fewer people understand and appreciate the resources; Michigan used to be a leader in this area, but has fallen off.
- ◆ Distrust of the MDNR by some users and stakeholders, particularly in the areas of fees and allowable uses.
- ◆ Cost/entry fees can be a barrier – especially if people don’t even have a car to register for the passport program.
- ◆ Not all recreation users pay into the system – there is a “free rider” issue. This is addressed in many ways by the Passport program, but not fully.

Priorities

Participants identified many things they view as a priority for the next five years of outdoor recreation in Michigan. While there was a diverse range of opinions on the priorities, common themes included:

- ◆ Fix it first! We should be maintaining and improving our current infrastructure before we invest in additional facilities.
- ◆ Establish connections between parks and facilities, such as trails, greenways and other paths, that help promote use of multiple parks, provide recreation opportunities close to home, and serve as transportation mechanism. Create enough safe and high-quality trail connections that “every home can be a trailhead.”
- ◆ Encourage better collaboration and coordination on marketing efforts between the Pure Michigan/Travel Michigan organization, the MDNR, and local recreation providers to help leverage outdoor recreation resources as a primary tourism driver.
 - Create a one-stop shop database of recreation and related visitor/tourism by geographic areas so that people can easily access information on what’s available and do trip planning.
- ◆ Do more collaborative, integrated parks planning at a regional level, including a gap analysis of what recreation opportunities are currently provided and by which organizations. Use this to define where different providers should focus their investments and find ways to collaborate on service provision. Other states have done a better job of this than Michigan (New York, Oregon, Ontario).
- Southeast Michigan used to have a “SPARKS” group that got together regularly to help coordinate and work together on parks and recreation issues.
- It would be great to see something like SPARKS again and have SEMCOG facilitate the gap analysis/survey and coordination.
- ◆ Take advantage of opportunities to integrate outdoor recreation facilities (trails in particular) with other infrastructure investment such as roads and water/wastewater infrastructure.
- ◆ Invest in more trails and interconnection of existing trails.
- ◆ Continue to allow for primitive as well as developed recreation opportunities.
- ◆ Find ways to quantify performance through the development of metrics.
- ◆ Find ways to better utilize volunteers (e.g., “Friends” groups) to help maintain recreation spaces.
- ◆ Support and partner with private sector to enable events-oriented recreation at State Parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Charge a fee that reasonably covers state costs.
- ◆ Create greater DNR presence in southeast Michigan.
- ◆ We need to create more opportunities for quiet, natural recreation experiences.
- ◆ We must protect our natural resources, which are what make our outdoor recreation so special.
- ◆ State should move away from spreading its resources so thinly and focus on improving and maintaining quality of some high-priority parks and outdoor recreation facilities.
- ◆ Create theme or niche-oriented recreation opportunities in some areas (e.g., mountain biking, adventure courses) as a way to attract visitors.
- ◆ Create more outdoor recreation opportunities for the majority of the population (our urban/metro centers). This is a strong point of entrée for other recreation opportunities throughout the state. Milliken State Park is a great example that should be built on.
- ◆ View outdoor recreation planning and investment as an economic development tool that helps create higher-quality communities and attracts talented workers and businesses.
- ◆ Address the distrust between some of the stakeholders and the state (or

other recreation providers). To do this, we must elevate the status of outdoor recreation professionals and find ways for groups to partner and collaborate.

- ◆ Offer outdoor recreation experiences that foster natural resource appreciation and stewardship.
- ◆ Recreation is becoming more specialized, and the state will have to incorporate methods for addressing user conflicts in its resource and recreation plans.
- ◆ Undertake differentiated marketing for various user groups (young adults, retirees) relying on relevant messages and targeted information delivery by audience.
- ◆ State and local public recreation providers need to partner with local businesses to help serve recreational needs and create economic opportunities.
- ◆ Help educate recreationists about respectful and protective use of the outdoor resources (e.g., noise, trash) in order to continue support from abutting private landowners.
- ◆ Update the Commercial Forest Act to allow for more hunting.
- ◆ Address opportunities (and challenges) around public use of road ends for water-based outdoor recreation.

MDNR Draft SCORP Objectives

Participants were asked how well their identified priorities matched (or didn't) the MDNR's draft objectives for the 2013–2017 SCORP. Generally, participants felt that they matched up very well and that the SCORP objectives addressed the majority of the priorities and issues they identified. Some specific suggestions or additions were:

- ◆ Add “planning” to the collaboration/coordination objective.
- ◆ Add to the collaboration/coordination objective “and those that manage those resources.”
- ◆ Fun and relaxation is really the overarching goal for all of these—this is the outcome we want for people.
- ◆ Add concept of continuous improvement and maintenance.
- ◆ Include language regarding leveraging other funding sources.
- ◆ Incorporate the concept of improving equitable access for all residents—

physical and geographic—by creating opportunities in all geographies and addressing transportation needs.

- ◆ Someone has to emerge as the leader for each of these objectives so that everyone can buy in and see how they might help advance that objective.
- ◆ It's not enough to be aware and appreciate natural resources; we have to build in the concept of preservation and protection of those resources because they are the backbone of most of the state's outdoor recreation.
- ◆ Marketing should be a priority—promoting our parks and outdoor recreation areas is critical and DNR and the *Pure Michigan* team should be “joined at the hip.” This should include much better use of online information technology to increase use and access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

Making the SCORP a Useful Tool

As a final question in the discussion, participants were asked about what would help make the SCORP a more robust, nimble planning tool rather than just a tool to obtain federal funds. The group agreed that using the SCORP as a concise framework to set the stage for statewide goals and objectives that recreation providers at all levels could help implement and address would make it most useful.

Participants hoped to see both vision and leadership identified in the plan, and hopefully some specific metrics or guideposts for progress. Several of the groups recommended that the MDNR convene small groups like this meeting every year to monitor progress, and possibly identify specific action plans for the upcoming year.

Participants at several of the meetings suggested that we move away from local (city/county) park plans and have regions develop tactical recreation plans that address overarching SCORP goals and objectives. The groups also encouraged better linking of the SCORP with other regional planning initiatives such as the Land Policy Institute's Michigan Prosperity Initiative (and others). Participants felt that if it could go beyond the traditional parks plan and incorporate some analysis about economic opportunities, it would help communities to better see their role in implementing the plan. The idea of

APPENDIX E. Summary of SCORP Community Conversations

completing a recreation inventory for each region that covers state, regional, and local outdoor recreation facilities was brought up as a key part of this regional planning.

Participants wanted to see some discussion of how parks and outdoor recreation could and should be leveraging other funding and resources because they are such an important part of quality communities, economic development, and environmental protection.

Some participants specifically recognized the potential leadership and outreach role that an organization such as the Michigan Recreation and Park Association could play in getting communities to help execute the SCORP.

Finally, participants said the SCORP should focus on and highlight opportunities for collaboration and partnerships among local and state governments, nonprofits, and the private sector. Some participants suggested that the SCORP could even include some boilerplate language that local governments and non-profits could use in their applications to seek grant and foundation funding for their projects.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ATTENDEES

Kalamazoo

- ◆ Skip Lee, Lee's Adventure Sports
- ◆ Tony Trojanowski, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fort Custer Recreation Area
- ◆ Candi Bush, Parent to Parent
- ◆ Brandy Burnham, Parent to Parent
- ◆ Jerome Kisscorni, City of Kalamazoo
- ◆ Roland (Rollie) Johnson, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Mitch Wilson, Pretty Lake Camp
- ◆ Brian Bailey, Berrien County Park

Munising

- ◆ Fred Huffman, Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association
- ◆ Kathy Reynolds, Alger County Chamber of Commerce/Munising Downtown Development Authority
- ◆ Carol Eavou, Kewadin Casinos
- ◆ Dave Nyberg, Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- ◆ G. Dale McNamee, Senator Tom Casperon's Office
- ◆ Steve DeBranbender, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Jim Northup, National Park Service
- ◆ Dick Anderson, Hiawatha National Forest

Traverse City

- ◆ Jim Laarman, Crystal Lake Township
- ◆ Pat Laarman, Crystal Lake Township
- ◆ Richard Naperala, Grand Traverse Hiking Club
- ◆ Brad VanDommelen, Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau
- ◆ Jill Ciszewski, Grand Traverse Hiking Club
- ◆ Hohn Heiam, Grand Traverse Hiking Club
- ◆ Tim Schreiner, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Randy Smith, Renewable Services
- ◆ Joshua Stoltz, SEEDS
- ◆ Julie Clark, TART Trails Inc.
- ◆ Megan Olds, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy

Southeast Michigan

- ◆ Julie Hall, Michigan Recreation and Parks Association
- ◆ Sue Nyquist, Huron Clinton Metroparks Authority
- ◆ Chuck Smith, School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation
- ◆ Angela Ayer, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
- ◆ Amy Mangus, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

- ◆ Hope Dixon, School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation
- ◆ John Strasko, Metro Detroit Ski Council
- ◆ Dan Stencil, Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission
- ◆ Phil Castonia, Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission
- ◆ Jim Ridgeway, Alliance of Rouge Communities
- ◆ Karen Slaughter-Duperry, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
- ◆ Randy Step, Running Fit, Inc.

Cheboygan

- ◆ Mark Slown, City of Rogers City
- ◆ John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails/ Michigan Snowmobile Association
- ◆ Kaye Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails/ Michigan Snowmobile Association
- ◆ Tom Bailey, Little Traverse Conservancy
- ◆ Steve Schnell, Cheboygan County
- ◆ David Gabrish, Great Lakes ORV/Fishweb
- ◆ Al Hansen, City of Petoskey, Parks and Recreation
- ◆ Rich Knight, Koehler Township
- ◆ David Van Slembrouck, Great Lakes Eco Adventure Center

Cheboygan (cont.)

- ◆ Sheree Lincoln, Brasswind Landing Arts and Adventure Paddle Sports
- ◆ Richard Lincoln, Brasswind Landing Arts and Adventure Paddle Sports
- ◆ Emily Meyerson, Top of Michigan Trails Council
- ◆ Jim Conboy, Top of Michigan Trails Council/Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
- ◆ Paige Perry, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Michelle Corsault, Chief of Parks and Recreation
- ◆ Joseph Hefele, City of Onaway
- ◆ Steve Vorenkamp, Burt Township/Burt Lake Trail
- ◆ Lois Ballard, Cheboygan Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Rich Hill, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Maureen Engle, Benton Township
- ◆ Jim Meyer, Black Mountain
- ◆ Pat Galloup, Michigan Trail Riders Association
- ◆ Charlie Veneros, Aloha Township/Michigan/Michigan Townships Association





APPENDIX F.
Summary of Public Input on Draft SCORP

OVERVIEW

In October 2012 Public Sector Consultants, in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), completed a draft of the 2013–2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The goal is that this plan will help guide outdoor recreation investment and program decisions by the state and other public and private recreation providers over the next five years. In developing the draft, the MDNR solicited substantial input from Michigan’s parks and outdoor recreation stakeholders, including initial surveys, five community conversations held in each region of the state, discussions with relevant state advisory groups (such as the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee), and webinars in partnership with the Michigan Recreation and Park Association. These stakeholders helped the MDNR develop, refine, and revise the overarching goal and six objectives that are included in the draft SCORP. Based on the early input from stakeholders, the MDNR has identified priority actions for achieving the objectives and goal of the SCORP.

Between October 19 and November 7 the draft SCORP was released for public comment. The MDNR issued a press release and several listservs were notified regarding the availability of the document. In addition, a copy of the draft SCORP was made available for public review and comment on the MDNR’s website. The purpose of the public review was to garner stakeholder and public input about the draft SCORP document, including its:

- ◆ Effectiveness for guiding investments by the state and local, non-profit, and private-sector recreation providers for the development or improvement of recreation opportunities in Michigan
- ◆ Prioritization of objectives
- ◆ Proposed actions for each objective to address the goal of the SCORP
- ◆ Ability to be measured by the MDNR over time.

Respondents were allowed to provide comments through an online form or via e-mail.

One hundred and three individuals participated in the survey, and a handful of people provided feedback on the draft SCORP document directly to

the MDNR via e-mail. Comments ranged from general thoughts on the goals and objectives or process, to very detailed suggestions for specific changes. The MDNR and its consulting team reviewed all of the comments submitted and made some significant changes to the SCORP document to reflect common themes and suggestions, and specific recommendations where applicable. Highlights of the public comments received are summarized below.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

- ◆ **Approximately 74 percent** of respondents believe that the draft SCORP as written will be an effective tool for guiding investments by the state and local, non-profit, and private-sector recreation providers in Michigan.

Key suggestions related to this topic were that there need to be more details and specifics with regard to land use, trail options, and identification of new areas for development. Comments also suggested that the plan focuses on parks at the expense of outdoor recreation (ORV/ATV, fishing, hunting) along with related interests such as habitat protection and resource interpretation. In addition, respondents suggested that the public comment period was not sufficient.

- ◆ **Approximately 72 percent** of respondents believe that the proposed objectives prioritized by the MDNR in the SCORP are the right ones.

Comments indicated that the growth of new communities would negatively impact resources, and that there should be more emphasis on developing hunting lands. Other respondents suggested that there is too much emphasis on trails and hiking, citing the potential impact on resources from trail development. Respondents again suggested (as in the previous question) that ORV/ATV trails need more emphasis along with equestrian opportunities. In addition, some respondents questioned if dog walking and disc golf were true outdoor experiences that would set Michigan parks apart from other destinations.

- ◆ **About 73 percent** believe that the proposed actions for each objective adequately address the overall SCORP goal.

However, some criticism of the objectives suggested that they are too

APPENDIX F. Summary of Public Input on Draft SCORP

broad, and more detail is needed (such as having more than one measurable for an objective and emphasizing who will be accountable for achieving each task). Respondents also commented on how increasing fees could limit opportunities, suggesting there needs to be more consideration of increasing recreation among economically/socially disadvantaged.

- ◆ **50 percent** of respondents believe that additional outcomes and measures could be incorporated by the MDNR and other recreation providers to evaluate SCORP progress over time.

As in previous questions, respondents suggest more specificity for the objectives, by either reorganizing the objectives and providing sub-objectives, or by providing more concrete measurable indicators of progress. In addition, respondents suggested using surveys and focus groups to assess public opinion on progress, along with concrete measures such as trail counts, passport purchases, number of overnight visitors, and visitor/user satisfaction. The use of comment/suggestion boxes was also recommended as a way to measure visitor satisfaction and needs.

- ◆ When asked to provide any additional input, key suggestions from respondents included making sure that certain outdoor recreation activities are considered, such as hunting, fishing, horseback riding, ATV/ORV, and resource interpretation. There were a number of more specific suggestions as well, such as giving state residents priority for camping reservations, and the need to update trail maps and groom cross-country ski trails. Respondents also suggested the need for broader public input and for ongoing monitoring of progress on the stated objectives, and collaborative marketing efforts through local Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitor Bureaus.





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This report was prepared for:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Lansing, Michigan

Prepared by:

Public Sector Consultants Inc.
Lansing, Michigan
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Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

2013–2017

December 2012