



Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



2018–2022



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Executive Summary

Overview

Michigan offers a wide range of outdoor recreation activities, from the traditional (e.g., camping, hunting, hiking, cycling, fishing, photography, birdwatching, snowmobiling, and off-road vehicle [ORV] riding) to activities that are seeing significant gains in national participation (e.g., adventure racing, kayak fishing, cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, standup paddling, and other silent sports and backcountry activities) (Outdoor Foundation 2017). Recreation opportunities can be found in the hundreds of state-owned parks, recreation areas, forests, campgrounds, and trails. Additionally, thousands of community playgrounds, parks, trails, nature preserves, beaches, and more than 30 federally owned parks, lakeshores, heritage/historic areas, scenic trails, forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuaries provide ample recreation opportunities. 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

Michigan's 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 of Michigan 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. The SCORP is designed to be broad—serving as a guide for all outdoor recreation activities and communities throughout Michigan. It is flexible to allow for collaboration and strategic partnerships, to be adaptable to changing needs, and to be open to new ideas and strategies.

In developing the 2018–2022 SCORP update, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) undertook a variety of efforts to engage the public, recreation providers, nonprofit organizations, user groups, and recreation businesses 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 outdoor recreation spaces. The SCORP was also reviewed through a public comment period. Input provided through this process ranged from requests for additional maps to changing how the survey results were reported. In each case, authors carefully weighed the input received

against the overall plan objectives and made adjustments where possible. Many of the stakeholders engaged in the development of the plan will also be active partners in implementing the objectives and strategies identified in the SCORP.

The overarching goal for the 2018–2022 SCORP is to:

Protect and manage Michigan's diverse and abundant natural and cultural assets to provide relevant, quality experiences that meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors and support economic prosperity.

This goal is best achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- **Foster stewardship and conservation:** Natural and cultural resources are protected and residents and visitors are effective stewards of those resources.
- **Improve collaboration:** Outdoor recreation stakeholders collaborate and cooperate to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- **Raise awareness:** Residents and visitors are aware of the variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan and have access to relevant information to connect with these opportunities.
- **Improve recreational access:** Recreation opportunities are connected and accessible to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations.
- **Provide quality experiences:** Michigan's outdoor recreation system provides users with quality

experiences in balance with resource management and conservation.

- **Enhance health benefits:** Outdoor recreation increases physical activity and the health of Michigan's residents and visitors.
- **Enhance prosperity:** Outdoor recreation advances economic prosperity and supports a high quality of life as well as talent retention in Michigan's communities.

Each of these objectives is critical to helping Michigan achieve its goal for outdoor recreation and are not presented in priority order. By promoting stewardship and conservation, natural resource management will continue to be a priority for the state's residents and visitors regardless of where they live or what outdoor recreation activities they prefer. Drawing on our collective stewardship, we can collaborate and cooperate to improve and enhance relevant outdoor recreation opportunities for all Michiganders and tourists by helping raise awareness of new and existing recreation opportunities and improve recreational access to provide quality experiences for everyone. Working toward these objectives, we will enhance the health of our residents and visitors and support Michigan's economic prosperity. The state supports these efforts through a variety of grant programs as well as staff and other resources.



Chapter One. **Introduction**



SCORP: Process and Purpose

Michigan's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 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 outdoor recreation management and policy decisions.

Developing a five-year SCORP also makes Michigan eligible for U.S. National Park Service support through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The MDNR is the agency authorized to represent the state with regard to the LWCF program. These funds are critical for the renovation and development of state and local park and recreation infrastructure that meets the needs of Michiganders and tourists.

Michigan's Outdoor Recreation System

Michigan has world-class recreation assets. Our Great Lakes, inland lakes, rivers and streams, forests, and other natural and cultural resources provide an unparalleled foundation to support outdoor recreation. Throughout Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas there are over 8 million acres of public land, which is among the highest of states east of the Mississippi and nationally. Of this land, the MDNR holds over 4.6 million acres in public trust in state forests, state game areas, recreation areas, and state parks that are managed for a wide array of purposes, including recreation, sustainable forestry, mineral access, and wildlife populations. The Great Lakes define our geography—Michigan has more shoreline than any state other than Alaska and the most freshwater shoreline in

the country—but more importantly, our water resources help define the character of our state. These assets provide federal, state, regional, local, nonprofit, and private recreation stakeholders with the foundation for our state's outdoor recreation portfolio.

Michigan is home to 103 state park and recreation areas, covering 306,000 acres with 13,496 campsites in 142 campgrounds.

These state parks and recreation areas offer a range of activities from the traditional (e.g., camping, hunting, hiking, cycling, fishing, photography, birdwatching, snowmobiling, and ORV riding) to the new and emerging (e.g., adventure racing, kayak fishing, cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, standup paddling, and other silent sports and backcountry activities) (Outdoor Foundation 2017). 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 in 70 state game areas, which are managed to provide conservation and wildlife-based recreation opportunities and are predominately located in the southern portion of the state. A Blue Ribbon Advisory Group issued a report in 2016 regarding the management of southern State Game Areas that will help guide recreational uses in these areas.

Michigan is home to two of the nation's four National Lakeshores—Pictured Rocks and Sleeping Bear Dunes. The National Parks Service also manages Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw National Historical Park, the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, and the MotorCities National Heritage Area. These national treasures share with the public the chance to connect with our natural

Throughout the state, mountain biking continues to grow with more trails being developed and more people participating in the sport. Copper Harbor and Marquette have been recognized as being among the best mountain biking hubs in the world by the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

world and cultural heritage, and in 2016, they drew 2.6 million visitors (National Park Service 2017).

Michigan is the third in the nation for boater registrations, and the MDNR operates many access points and amenities for boaters. There are 19 state harbors on the Great Lakes and connecting waterways, 64 local community harbors that were developed with the assistance of MDNR grant funding, and 13 harbors of refuge. Among these assets, there are 6,351 slips and two state locks. Throughout Michigan, there are 1,100 developed public boat access sites, offering boaters and anglers access to lakes, rivers, and streams.

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, both in rural communities and 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 maps of Michigan's state parks, recreation areas, game areas, and state forests. The MDNR, through its Parks and Recreation Division, operates an exceptional trail system that is comprised of more than 12,500 miles of hiking, multi-use, equestrian, ORV, and snowmobiling trails. This includes over 2,700 miles of rail trails connecting Michigan communities with convenient and healthy recreation opportunities. There are over 1,300 miles of equestrian trails, including the 300-mile Shore-to-Shore trail. There are also 1,400 miles of biking trails and 4,000 miles of hiking trails. For motorized trail enthusiasts, there are over 3,600 miles of designated ORV

trails and 6,200 miles of designated snowmobile trails. In addition, local recreation providers offer many miles of additional trails in Michigan.

In 2016, the state legislature passed Public Act 288, which directed the MDNR to open most state forest roads in the northern Lower Peninsula to ORV use. The MDNR is in the process of reviewing, in detail, which lands and roads will be open to ORV use, evaluating potential environmental and resource impacts, proximity to private land, user safety, potential user conflicts, management plans, and public access impacts, among other criteria. The MDNR will complete its road access plan for the northern

Lower Peninsula by the end of 2017. The southern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula road access plans will be completed by 2018.

Michigan is also working towards completion of the signature Iron Belle Trail, where there are 793 miles for biking (60 percent complete) and 1,223 hiking miles (72 percent complete). When complete, the Iron Belle Trail will offer two routes from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula. The multistate North Country National Scenic Trail runs through Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas. It is the longest national scenic trail in the United States and connects us to our neighboring Great Lakes and midwestern neighbors.

Protecting Michigan's cultural resources are also part of the MDNR's mission. The Parks and Recreation Division has recorded 805 archaeological sites, 363 historic structures, and 46,000 acres of Natural Areas, which protect native ecosystems.

Michigan's outdoor recreation system is also made up of thousands of community playgrounds, parks, greenways, trails, nature preserves, and beaches, as well as more than 30 national parks, lakeshores, heritage/historic areas, scenic trails, forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuaries. These local, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector parks and recreation areas enrich the system by also offering a broad diversity of recreational opportunities both close to home and as destination locations. All of these resources are important parts of Michigan's expansive outdoor recreation system, both individually and collectively.

Recreation Trends

Participation in outdoor recreation at the national level has remained steady and even increased slightly (Outdoor Foundation 2017; Cordell 2012). According to the Outdoor Foundation (2017), which tracks annual outdoor recreation trends, almost 50 percent of all Americans age six and older participated in some type of outdoor recreation activity over the last decade. The Outdoor Foundation estimates that participation in recreation is even higher for Michigan, with 63 percent of residents participating yearly (Outdoor Industry Association 2017b).¹

How we recreate outdoors has changed over time, with some outdoor recreation activities growing in popularity and/or participation and others seeing a decline. Nationally, the more traditional activities such as camping and fishing that dominated outdoor activity in the mid-20th century have declined since the 1990s because of changes in lifestyles, technology, information, and time (Outdoor Foundation 2016; Cordell et al. 2008; Cordell et al. 2009). Nature-based and backcountry recreation activities (such as hiking, backpacking, and kayaking) have all seen growth since the early 2000s. In recent years, the highest rates of increase in participation nationally have occurred in the stand-up paddling, cross-country skiing, and BMX-bicycling categories (Outdoor Foundation 2017). 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). Nationwide, 21 percent of

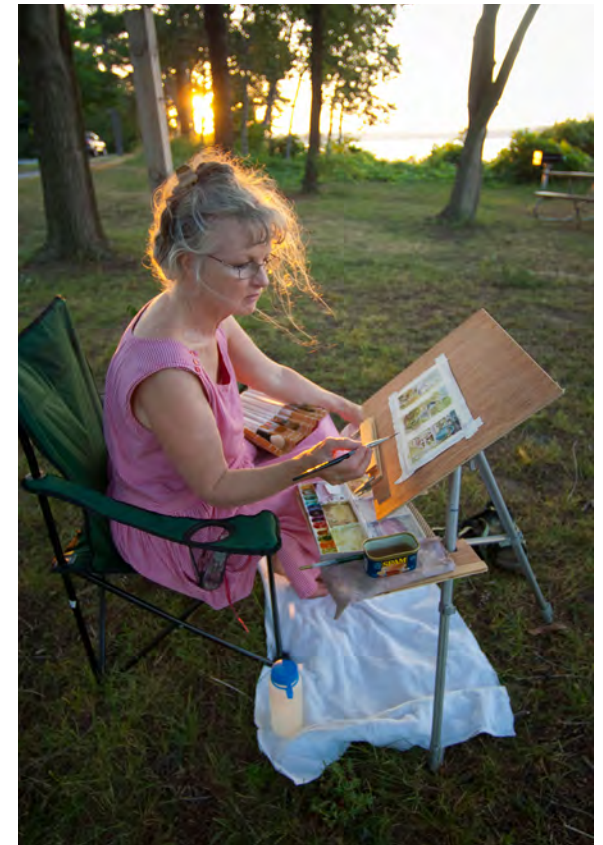
users participate in outdoor recreation two or more days per week, and an additional 14 percent participated at least one or more day per week (Outdoor Foundation 2016).

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 the 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).

In Michigan, outdoor recreation continues to be an important and popular activity for residents and visitors of our state. The continued success of Michigan's Recreation Passport program demonstrates increased outdoor recreation participation rates at state facilities. The Recreation Passport, introduced in 2011, gains vehicles access to state parks, state forest campgrounds, trailheads, and state boat launches for an annual fee. The funding derived from the sales supports the state's recreation system. The MDNR and secretary of state data shows that in 2012, 27.34 percent of people registering vehicles purchased a Recreation Passport—in 2016, this increased to 31.85 percent.

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. Between 2014 and 2016, park visits grew from 19.4 million to 27.5 million, representing a 41 percent increase in visitations.

significant portion of higher participation rates can be attributed to the addition of Belle Isle Park to the state's portfolio of recreation assets. Visitation rates show that Belle Isle Park attracted 4.1 million visitors in 2016, accounting for about 15 percent of all visits to state parks and recreation areas, making it the most-visited state park in the nation. Within the same period, camping nights at state facilities increased by approximately 20 percent.



¹ This recreation rate differs from the rate estimated through the SCORP survey process (79 percent participation) due to a differing methodology and definition of what constitutes outdoor recreation; however, both indicate a high participation rate in Michigan.



While total outdoor recreation rates appear to be up in Michigan, the activities in which people participate continues to change. Participation in hunting of any kind continues to decline. Between, 2012 and 2016, the number of people purchasing a hunting license declined by 10 percent. The number of people purchasing fishing licenses remained relatively consistent within the same period. To better understand Michiganders' participation rates and preferences regarding outdoor recreation, Public Sector Consultants conducted a public opinion survey, which found:

- Eight out of ten Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Three out of five of Michigan's black or African-American and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents participate in outdoor recreation, compared to over four out of five white, non-Hispanics.
- Those aged 25–34 and 45–54 had the highest rates of outdoor recreation participation (around nine out of ten people).
- More than three-quarters of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 84 and 82 percent, respectively).
- Just under three-quarters of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (73 percent and 74 percent, respectively).
- One out of five of Michigan's black or African-American; Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin; or any other non-white race residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to only one out of ten white, non-Hispanic residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- One out of five of Michigan's black or African-American residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to less than one out of ten white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 26 percent of users as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- Nearly half of people who camp or hunt are willing to travel more than six hours, on average, to participate in these activities.
- Over 89 percent of Michigan outdoor recreation users went outside 52 or more days in the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with nearly 60 percent 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 2016).
- Most outdoor recreation users utilize recommendations from family and friends (68 percent, an increase from 59 percent in 2012), followed by Internet searches (55 percent) or previous experience with a location (54 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (85 percent), swimming outdoors (76 percent) and sledding or tubing (54 percent) having the most participants.



This year's survey was modified from its previous version in 2012 to ask direct questions about 34 specific activities. The 2012 survey question was open ended and resulted in respondents listing only a few outdoor recreation activities, possibly those that are the most important to them, and omitting others. Due to the change in how this question was asked, direct comparisons of participation rates for specific activities cannot be made between the 2012 and 2017 citizen surveys. There are a few exceptions, which are noted in Appendix B.

Exhibit 1 shows the top outdoor recreation activities, according to the percent of the population participating, in Michigan, along with total participant days, identified by survey participants.² Also included at the bottom of the table are the total participation rates for biking of any kind, camping of any kind, and hunting of any kind. The survey was modified to obtain days of participation for future use in an economic contribution analysis. It should be noted that some of these participation rates are higher than other data would suggest (such as percent of the population that purchases hunting licenses per year being lower than the participation rate of survey respondents), and many of these activities may be engaged in at the same time. Participation rates should be adjusted based on known and verifiable data before an economic contribution analysis is conducted. Appendix B provides a detailed summary of the public opinion survey and the methodology used to estimate the total participant days.

Exhibit I. Top Outdoor Recreation Activities, by Percent Participation

Activity	Total Participant Days	Participation Rate
Relaxing outdoors	436,642,901	75%
Walking outdoors, including dog walking	576,132,624	74%
Visiting parks or playgrounds	150,420,905	67%
Sightseeing and/or driving for pleasure	200,974,504	64%
Visiting nature centers or historic sites	36,465,987	56%
Swimming outdoors	99,130,632	54%
Picnicking	58,330,039	53%
Fishing	77,266,345	41%
Team or individual sports outdoors	84,751,341	37%
Wildlife viewing and/or photography (including birding)	108,373,278	36%
Hiking/backpacking	48,025,953	34%
Jogging/running	137,149,463	34%
Canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, or wind surfing	26,960,187	32%
Road biking	68,469,091	31%
Motor boating	49,747,531	31%
Sledding/tubing	23,677,874	30%
Tent or rustic camping	28,629,569	30%
Shooting sports (including archery)	52,810,204	30%
Modern or RV camping	40,259,553	25%
*Biking of any kind (road or off road)	N/A	40%
*Camping of any kind (modern, RV, tent, or rustic)	N/A	39%
*Hunting of any kind (big game, waterfowl, upland, or small game)	N/A	20%

Note: Due to different methodology, these participation rates cannot be compared directly to the 2012 SCORP survey.

*Denotes an activity in which multiple response categories were combined into a single figure.

Source: Public Sector Consultants conducted a statewide recreation telephone survey of Michigan residents on behalf of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, April–May 2017.

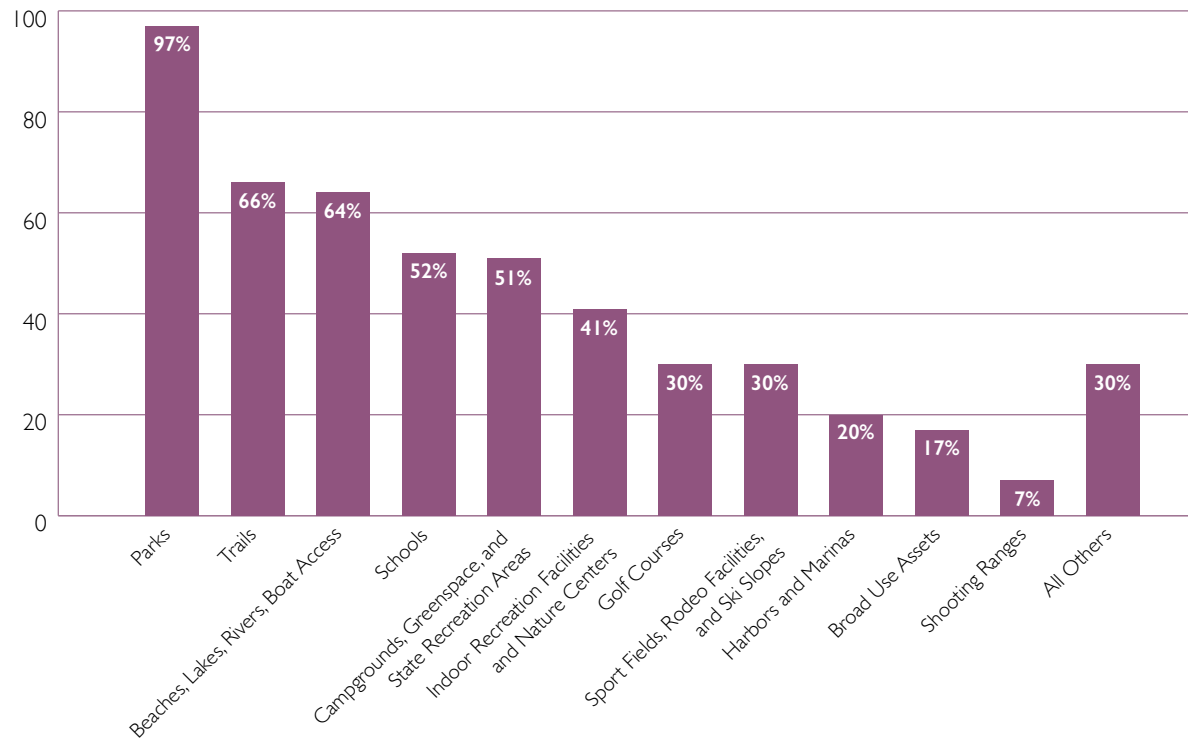
² Participant days were calculated by extrapolating out the average number of participant days from survey respondents to the general population based on participation rate.

Local Plans

During 2016, the MDNR collected and analyzed all electronically available local five-year recreation plans to examine how recreation and natural resources are addressed and incorporated into local plans. In total, 200 recreation plans were collected and examined. The plans come from every region of the state and cover nearly 4.6 million Michigan residents. Nearly all provide lists of the local parks in the community (97 percent); and many specifically identify the trails (66 percent); beaches, lakes,

rivers, and boat access sites (64 percent); and forests, campgrounds, greenspace, and state recreation areas (51 percent) within their community. This information could be used to help generate combined asset maps of available recreation opportunities across the state. Exhibit 2 shows the percentage of five-year recreation plans that list information on selected assets. It should be noted that not all communities have all of the identified assets and that even those communities that do may not include itemized lists in their five-year recreation plans.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Five-year Master Plans that Include Lists of Outdoor Recreation Assets



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources compiled data from 2016–2017.

“One of the major reasons many of our urban youth indicated they did not visit or recreate at our state parks, recreation areas, forests, or scenic sites was lack of awareness. They were surprised to learn how many were within two hours of their homes. They felt our recreation resources could give them a reason to get off their phones and get active.”

Grenaé Dudley, Ph.D.,

President and CEO, The Youth Connection, Inc.



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:

- **Demographic shifts.** In the early 2000s, Michigan was the only state in the nation to experience a decline in its state population. Since 2010, the state has shown modest population gains but continues to struggle to retain and attract young adults (Roelofs 2016). As a result, the state's population has become "older" as a whole. Michigan 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.
- **Long-term economic changes.** Michigan suffered significant economic decline and turbulence in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly related to the decline

of the automotive industry. For example, between 1999, and 2009, an estimated 800,000 manufacturing jobs were lost (Scorsone and Zin 2010). This economic change may have encouraged an exodus of established residents from Michigan, resulting in a loss of recreation enthusiasts, a decline in discretionary income available for outdoor recreation pursuits, and a loss of revenues and dedicated funding for parks and outdoor recreation facilities because of this decline in participation. Since 2010, Michigan's economy has continued to improve; unemployment is at its lowest rate in over a decade, and the state ranks first in the Great Lakes and sixth nationally for job growth (State of Michigan 2017). In the 21st Century Economy, parks, greenspace, and access to outdoor recreation areas are critical assets and can be catalysts for building vibrant and prosperous communities that attract businesses and a talented workforce.

- **High rates of obesity and chronic disease among Michigan's population.** In addition to changes in eating habits, an increase in sedentary work and lifestyles, longer work hours, dependency on automobile transportation, and limited free time are all contributing to high rates of obesity and associated chronic disease nationwide. Michigan has the 16th highest rate of adult obesity. Currently, more than 30 percent of adults are considered obese—an increase from 22 percent in 2000 and 13 percent in 1990 (State of Obesity 2017a). Outdoor recreation could be an increasingly important part of the mechanisms for addressing these health issues by boosting people's activity level and exposure to peaceful, natural spaces.

- **Collaboration among recreation stakeholders.** When there is a lack of collaboration, it limits our ability to view outdoor recreation as a system of many partners and opportunities, each of which contribute necessary recreation infrastructure and programming elements. Increasing collaboration can maximize use of scarce resources, eliminate duplication, and increase recreation opportunities.
- **Technological innovation.** Changing technology continues to reshape our lives, including the ways we interact with each other and our environment. These changes have created both challenges and opportunities for outdoor recreation. As a society, our screen time continues to increase—our children are spending more hours indoors in front of computers, televisions, tablets, and phones, and are spending less time playing outside. But technology also can help enhance our outdoor experiences. Advancement in equipment technology can help make more areas accessible to more people. Advancement in communication and information technology can help us share and find information about outdoor recreation opportunities. Technology can also enhance our experiences by providing new ways of connecting with nature through mobile applications, such as those that provide classification indexes for birders. Technology may also create opportunities to help monitor and control invasive species by enabling GPS-connected reporting capabilities. These are just some of the ways that technology is changing how we interact with nature. Undoubtedly, technology will continue to evolve and change how we interact with each other and our environment, as well as how we participate in outdoor recreation.
- **Sustainable funding.** Michigan is a national leader in developing innovative funding sources to support outdoor recreation and natural resource management. Since it was created, the Michigan Natural Resource

Trust Fund has awarded over \$1 billion in grants to support the acquisition and development of lands for recreation. The establishment of the Recreation Passport decreased the cost of a state parks pass while increasing participation rates as well as revenue generated to support recreation investments. These innovative models have helped us develop our recreation infrastructure at the state and local levels; however, greater emphasis is emerging around the need for further development of mechanisms that support maintenance of existing recreation assets to ensure that they provide high-quality experiences for Michigan’s residents and visitors. For example, Michigan’s state parks system has identified over \$285 million of needed improvements to its aging facilities. Belle Isle Park, which was recently added to the state’s portfolio of recreation assets,

has an additional estimated \$300 million in capital improvement needs. Furthermore, among local park and recreation systems, sustainable funding remains a large challenge. To illustrate this point, between 2012 and 2016, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund received more than 300 grant requests totaling almost \$70 million that exceeded available funding through the trust.

These issues impact people’s participation in outdoor recreation, and shape the quality and amount of recreation opportunities provided in Michigan. The challenges in this process, however, have helped to shape the state’s goal and objectives for the 2018–2022 SCORP.





Chapter Two. **Goal and Objectives of the SCORP**



Outdoor recreation provides many benefits to Michigan's residents and its economy, 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 one 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 and cultural assets to provide relevant, quality experiences that meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors and support economic prosperity.

This goal is best achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- **Foster stewardship and conservation:** Natural and cultural resources are protected and residents and visitors are effective stewards of those resources.
- **Improve collaboration:** Outdoor recreation stakeholders collaborate and cooperate to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- **Raise awareness:** Residents and visitors are aware of the variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan and have access to relevant information to connect with these opportunities.
- **Improve recreational access:** Recreation opportunities are connected and accessible to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations.

- **Provide quality experiences:** Michigan's outdoor recreation system provides users with quality experiences in balance with resource management and conservation.
- **Enhance health benefits:** Outdoor recreation increases physical activity and the health of Michigan's residents and visitors.
- **Enhance prosperity:** Outdoor recreation advances economic prosperity and supports a high quality of life as well as talent retention in Michigan's communities.

Each of these objectives is critical to helping Michigan achieve its goal for outdoor recreation and are not presented in a priority order. By fostering stewardship and conservation, natural resource management will continue to be a priority for the state's residents and visitors regardless of where they live or what outdoor recreation activities they prefer. Drawing on our collective stewardship, we can collaborate and cooperate to improve outdoor recreation for all residents and visitors by helping raise awareness of new and existing recreation opportunities and improving recreational access to provide quality experiences for everyone. Working toward these objectives, we will enhance the health of our residents and visitors and support Michigan's economic prosperity. The state supports these efforts through a variety of grant programs as well as staff and other resources.

These objectives will help the state determine priorities for LWCF funding. 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 stakeholders, can meet the goal and objectives for outdoor recreation over the next five years. Each action item, unless indicated otherwise, identifies the role the state should play in achieving the objectives.



Chapter Three. **Key Outdoor Recreation Strategies**



Objective One: Foster Stewardship and Conservation

Natural and cultural resources are protected and residents and visitors are effective stewards of those resources.

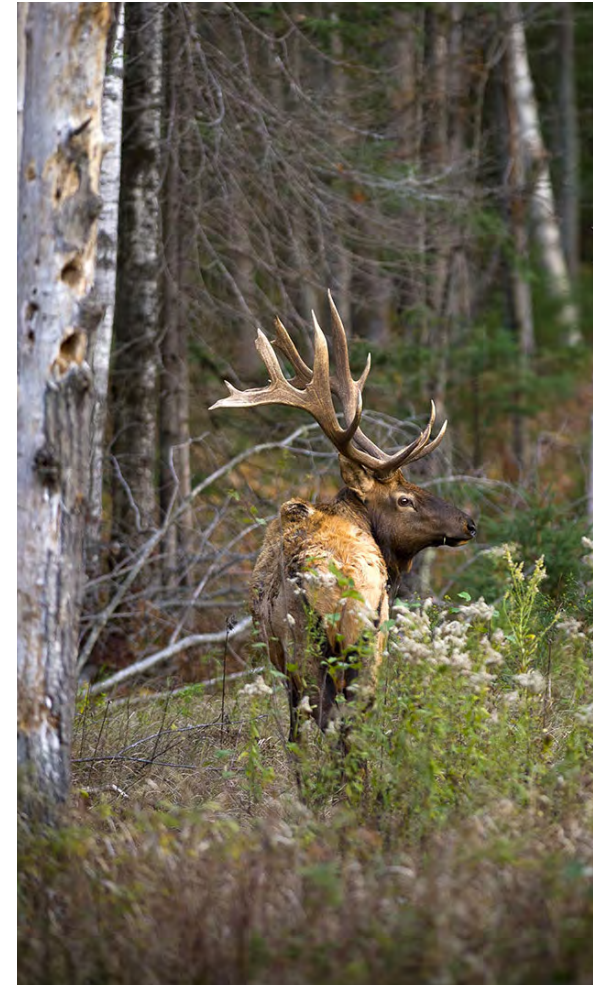
Why Is This Important?

Many of Michigan's most popular outdoor recreation activities are closely tied to high-quality natural and cultural resources. State parks protect our natural and cultural treasures, such as sand dunes, forests, petroglyphs, and wetlands. The state's streams attract anglers 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. The state's public lands also serve as an important part of the natural resource economy, including sustainable forestry and other resource-driven industries. State forest lands, in particular, are managed for multiple, purposes, including timber harvest, wildlife, and recreation.

Michigan is the Great Lakes State, which provides us great opportunity and responsibility as stewards of the world's largest freshwater system. For the first time, Michigan developed a comprehensive vision for the management, protection, and restoration of our water resources as part of the *Sustaining Michigan's Water Heritage: A Strategy for the Next Generation* report, which helps guide the investments and actions regarding water resources.

Compared to many other states, Michigan is blessed with diverse and valuable natural and cultural resources which must be protected, managed, and restored to maintain a backdrop for a broad system of outdoor recreation that attracts residents and tourists. These resources not only provide many different types of active recreation, but also offer places for quiet, peaceful time where people can escape the noise and chaos of everyday life. The addition of interpretive resources creates immersive experiences that strengthen and deepen connections to places and activities. 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). It is also important to find more ways to expose people to nature, wildlife, and other cultural assets and interpret these resources 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 plays a role in the state's broader effort to protect and manage natural and cultural resources.
- Support and create opportunities to enhance stewardship through interpretation and programming.
- Manage recreational access to be sensitive to maintaining the quality of our natural resources.
- Create opportunities for residents and tourists to experience outdoor recreation that introduces them to, and allows them to continually experience, Michigan's natural and cultural resources. Incorporate natural and cultural resource appreciation, education, and stewardship concepts into park and recreation programming where possible.
- Integrate opportunities for natural and cultural resource protection and management into development of new or improvement of existing park and outdoor recreation facilities throughout the state.
- Continue serving as a facilitator, collaborator, and leader with local and regional organizations to prevent introductions of invasive species, minimize the spread of existing populations, and respond to and control high-priority species in recreation areas.
- Implement citizen science programs to educate and increase awareness among users to prevent and detect invasive species, as well as to connect residents and visitors with local control resources on recreational lands, lakes, and streams.
- Create and support opportunities to partner with youth and educational organizations to support stewardship and conservation activities.
- Provide heritage interpretive guidance for recreation partners through a heritage trails website, the Native

American Heritage Master Plan developed under Act 247 of 2016, and provide continuing consultation services on heritage interpretation in outdoor recreation planning.

- Recreation providers should embrace environmentally sustainable design and management practices, such as the use of green infrastructure and wetlands to manage stormwater and trails to serve as wildlife corridors or pollinator refugia.

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 managing important recreation-supporting natural and cultural resources, demonstrated through trends in wildlife surveys, fish creel surveys, annual bird counts, and state wetlands inventories. Furthermore, this objective can be measured by the prevalence of invasive species within our recreation areas.

Another way this objective will be measured is by how widely programs are available that educate people about the function and importance of natural resources and create lifelong 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. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by the number of local park and recreation departments offering these programs and the number of people participating.

“A person's conservation ethic begins with their connection to nature. If we compel people to engage in the natural environment through recreation, one cannot help but be overcome by the awesome responsibility to conserve, protect, and enhance our natural resources for future generations.”

Dan Eichinger

Executive Director,
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Objective Two: Improve Collaboration

Outdoor recreation stakeholders collaborate and cooperate to ensure that Michigan's recreation system meets the needs of residents and visitors.

Why Is This Important?

State parks, recreation areas, wildlife areas, and forests are just a part of the overall outdoor recreation system in Michigan. Local and regional park systems, schools, conservancies and other nonprofits, as well as the private sector all offer a broad range of recreational opportunities throughout the state.

For years, park and recreation stakeholders have talked about the need for greater collaboration on the provision of their services, but taking proactive steps to collaborate and coordinate their efforts remains challenging. While there are several notable outdoor recreation partnerships in the state, these are frequently 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, needs, and priorities from an owner or jurisdictional perspective. Those who participate in recreation want a wide range of opportunities in their communities and as travel destinations. The public does not generally care who or what entity provides the service as long as it is high quality, convenient, and meets their needs. This suggests 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 recreation providers to collectively meet recreation needs as opposed to any one provider trying to meet all of the recreation demands of a community.

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 Michigan must approach delivery of its recreation 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.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments developed a Web-based park finder that provides a one-stop shop for information about outdoor recreation activities in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties. The site includes over 2,600 parks and recreation areas maintained by federal, state, regional, county, local, nonprofit, and private organizations. Through the site, users can search for recreation activities throughout the region and close to home.

Find out more at:

<https://maps.semcog.org/ParkFinder/#>

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- Community five-year recreation plans should foster collaboration among recreation providers, encourage strategic regional recreation investments, develop linkages between neighboring recreational systems, encourage placemaking, and identify where regional data gathering to assist in planning would be effective.
- Serve as a liaison for youth and adult representatives of multiple user groups (e.g., cycling, hiking, equestrian, motorized trail users, paddle sports, etc.) to identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration and to serve as a forum to evaluate differing priorities for recreation management.
- Serve as a facilitator, collaborator, liaison, and leader with other recreation providers and stakeholders to explore the feasibility of coordinated delivery of recreation opportunities at a regional level.
- Serve as a facilitator, collaborator, liaison, and leader with other recreation providers and stakeholders to conduct regional recreation asset inventories and gap assessments to identify opportunities to enhance regional collaboration, marketing, and strategic recreation investments.
- Local government agencies, MDNR, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) should collaborate to integrate parks, trails, and outdoor recreation facilities' needs into other infrastructure investment plans (e.g., roads, water and wastewater infrastructure, and wetlands preservation and mitigation) in order to leverage resources and opportunities.
- Continue to recognize and reward collaboration and cooperation in grant funding decisions, utilizing sources such as Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Forest Legacy Program, and other sources.

- Enhance and expand partnerships with friends or other volunteer groups to help maintain and improve outdoor recreational facilities. Provide training and resources for appropriate MDNR staff members, and other stakeholders to develop and support these volunteer groups.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

As part of the SCORP update, 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* or *satisfied* to questions about the amount and quality of outdoor recreation.

Since 2007, the percentage of residents who are *very satisfied* with the quantity of public outdoor recreation in Michigan has been increasing, from 70 percent in 2007, to 79 percent in 2012, and now 84 percent in 2017. This year, the citizen survey was expanded to include questions on residents' satisfaction with the quantity of public outdoor recreation within a half hour of their homes. An increase in local satisfaction will also be used to gauge the success of providing quality experiences.

“Identifying collaboration as a major objective in SCORP sets the standard for the industry. The future of outdoor recreation is dependent on successful collaborations across all sectors. Users expect organizations to collaborate and are empowered by and engaged in programming.”

Ann Conklin

Executive Director, mParks

“Collaboration is the key. When local government, the state, and nonprofit partners work together to acquire recreational land and develop facilities, the benefits to public recreation multiply many times.”

Thomas C. Bailey

Executive Director, Little Traverse Conservancy

Objective Three: Raise Awareness

Residents and visitors are aware of the variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan and have access to relevant information to connect with these opportunities.

Why Is This Important?

While Michigan has abundant and diverse recreational opportunities throughout the state, there are gaps in efforts to market these resources to both Michigan residents and potential out-of-state visitors. These gaps keep the state from fully leveraging all the benefits that our outdoor recreation assets could provide.

Over the last decade, the Pure Michigan campaign has made great strides in marketing the state, including its beautiful natural resources and outdoor recreation assets. A 2015 study of the tourism image of the Pure Michigan campaign found that Michigan's image as a tourism destination was strongest in comparison with other states in the Midwest from the sports and recreation perspective (Longwoods International 2016). The study found boating and water sports, sailing, fishing, and canoeing/kayaking to be among the state's top five strongest assets when compared with the national tourism market.

Beyond the Pure Michigan campaign, the MDNR has invested significant time and resources in marketing outdoor recreation opportunities to residents, particularly to new users, through programs like the Recreation 101 program, which offers a series of free introductory recreation courses in state and community parks. The purpose of the Recreation 101 program is to expose people to new recreational pursuits, and expand the number of people participating in outdoor recreation. For example, the Hook, Line, and Sinker program teaches the basics of fishing and casting at over 30 state parks and hatcheries through the summer months. The DNR has also teamed up with mParks, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and local fitness instructors in the MI Big Green Gym program, which encourages people to become more active and aware of the state's recreation opportunities. Programs like these expose 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 and demographics to showcase outdoor recreation opportunities the state offers.

Marketing is one element in connecting people to nature, and Michigan's cultural heritage. But awareness also means outreach, including fostering understanding and support among future generations. To do so, Michigan must increase its presence in diverse and underserved communities, and develop strategies to make Michigan's assets relevant to audiences that may not traditionally participate in outdoor recreation.

New park assets like the Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit are an investment and a strategy to ensure that visitor centers remain relevant to youth and future generations. Located on Detroit's riverfront in the historic Globe Building, with the Dequindre Cut Trail running through its backyard, the Outdoor Adventure Center gives visitors a taste of "Up North, Downtown."

However, the state's outreach assets need to do more to market these diverse assets to residents and visitors alike. For example, the state's current travel and tourism website as well as the State Parks and Recreation website does not 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 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 know little 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 for connecting recreation activities with other community events or places. This type of upgraded, systemwide 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?

- Sustain and expand the collaborative efforts that identify recreation opportunities, including tourism gateways, outreach and coordination with partners, and outdoor recreation resource marketing to increase tourism and attract talent to Michigan. Partnerships will include, but not be limited to, MDNR, Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), local recreation departments, federal land managing agencies, land conservancies, conservation and trails groups, tourism agencies, museums/historical societies, and the outdoor recreation industry or businesses.

- Continuously evaluate and develop appropriate tools to increase awareness and access to outdoor recreation opportunities utilizing relevant technology, and ensure that these tools have up-to-date and accurate information.
- The MDNR, in partnership with statewide recreation associations, and agencies, and other stakeholders should evaluate the feasibility of developing an online georeferenced database of federal, state, regional, and local parks, as well as outdoor recreation and related visitor, tourism, and cultural amenities that are helpful to recreation users.
- Develop marketing campaigns that introduce nonusers to outdoor recreation, providing relevant messaging based on specific wants, needs, and preferences of diverse groups.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

When this objective is achieved, Michigan residents and visitors alike will have significantly better tools and information available on parks and outdoor recreation opportunities that will help encourage greater overall participation and enable people to more easily plan their park and outdoor recreation visits. To do so, the MDNR will continue to interact with the MEDC and Pure Michigan, and participate in relevant local projects. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by the completion of a statewide online outdoor recreation information and marketing tool and an annual increase of 5 percent in the number of people visiting that website for the first two to four years after it is completed. Success will also be measured via a sustained increase over the next two to three years in the state's social media presence. Considering the rate at which technology is developing, tools to measure success will be continuously evaluated as new technologies and information platforms emerge.

“Michigan has incredible opportunities for outdoor recreation and an expansive parks system. Making information about recreational opportunities readily accessible—whether through stronger marketing or better data and tools—is crucial to making sure that Michiganders and visitors can find the activity that suits their interests.”

Tim Ervin

Resource Development Director,
Manistee County Alliance for Economic Success

Objective Four: Improve Recreational Access

Recreation opportunities are connected and accessible to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations.

Why Is This Important?

Collectively, Michigan's portfolio of recreation assets, our national parks and federal forests, our state parks, recreation areas, forest and game lands; our regional, county, and local parks; as well as private and nonprofit recreation infrastructure must provide access to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations.

Michigan has world-class recreation assets. Our Great Lakes, inland lakes, rivers and streams, forests, and other natural resources provide an unparalleled foundation to support outdoor activity. Many of our parks and recreation areas were designed to serve as destination locations, drawing Michiganders and other tourists for weekends and extended trips. While some improvements could be made, collectively, Michigan has done well in filling this need. On a statewide basis, residents are highly satisfied in terms of both the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation (see Appendix B).

However, recreation and demographic trends are changing and the significance of providing outdoor recreation opportunities close to home is growing. Our outdoor recreation assets can help ensure that our communities are desirable places to live, enhance our economic prosperity, and support a healthy and active lifestyle for all Michiganders.

The survey of Michigan residents demonstrates differences in participation and satisfaction rates among racial and ethnic demographics and Michigan's regions. For instance:

- On a statewide basis, the number of black or African-American as well as Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents who indicated they participated in any outdoor recreation activities was approximately 25 percent lower than white, non-Hispanic residents.
- On a statewide basis, black or African-American residents; Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents;

and all other races other than white, non-Hispanics reported satisfaction rates of approximately 10 to 15 percent lower than white, non-Hispanic residents regarding the quality and quantity of recreation opportunities close to home.

- Black or African-American residents also reported satisfaction rates of more than 15 to 17 percent lower than white, non-Hispanic residents regarding the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation opportunities statewide. Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents reported similar satisfaction rates to white, non-Hispanic residents for the amount of outdoor recreation, but were 11 percent less satisfied with the quality of outdoor recreation opportunities statewide.
- In the nine-county Detroit Metro region, 16 percent of residents indicated they were dissatisfied with the amount of recreation opportunities within a half hour of their home, which is 5 to 10 percent higher than other regions in the state.

These challenges are not unique to Michigan. Nationally, outdoor recreation participation rates for black or African-American as well as Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents are lower than white, non-Hispanic residents (Outdoor Foundation 2017). Our recreation systems should provide access and meaningful outdoor recreation opportunities for all. To advance this effort we need to further evaluate the ways in which we locate and design our facilities and programming to serve all populations and user groups. The MDNR will work to embrace new, growing, or changing constituencies (e.g., age, economic status, race and ethnicity, differing levels of ability, etc.) in providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

On both a statewide and regional basis, Michigan's outdoor recreation system should provide broader access so that all visitors may participate in activities that suit their interests. A key element of providing better access for all user groups may mean that some activities are

supported in only certain areas to ensure that the quality of our natural resources is maintained and that all user groups and populations are able to find places where they can have high-quality outdoor recreation experiences.

Another key element of providing better access and increasing the use of park and recreation facilities is to connect these assets to each other and ensure that alternative transportation options exist for people to get to parks.

Trails have been identified as a priority for Michigan for several years, and there are many groups working to address the need for cross-state trails, regional connectors, and local connectors and loops.

Trails are particularly well suited to helping people increase their physical activity and utilize other recreation and community amenities. They are often designed to support some of the most popular recreation activities identified by Michiganders, including biking, walking, and hiking (see Appendix B). They are found in variety of settings, and can be located to be readily accessible and inexpensive for all people to use. Public Act 288, signed by Gov. Rick Snyder on September 28, 2016, changed rules for ORV use on state forest roads, and requires that the DNR conduct a comprehensive inventory of all of the state forest roads. The act also allows for the use of ORVs and pack and saddle animals by hunters to retrieve big game. The DNR is conducting an inventory of all state forest roads in the northern Lower Peninsula by December 31, 2017, and in the Upper Peninsula and southern Lower Peninsula by December 31, 2018. Maps showing the open roads for ORV use will be updated every year.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- Recreation investments should prioritize improvement, development, and acquisition of outdoor recreation assets within and near population centers, as well as those areas that address gaps in geographic distribution of outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Assess use rates and preferences of various demographics to evaluate barriers to participation, and develop and implement strategies to address those barriers.
- The MDNR should lead efforts to make people of all backgrounds feel welcome in outdoor recreation spaces and assess opportunities to develop interpretive resources, including historical and cultural materials targeted toward different demographic groups that focus on their stories in those landscapes and spaces.
- Recreation providers, including the MDNR, should enhance the diversity of its workforce to better reflect the state's demographics and to encourage a welcoming experience for all visitors.
- Recreation investments should embrace universal design principles and adaptive equipment that enhance recreation opportunities for residents and visitors of various levels of physical, cognitive, lingual, auditory, and financial ability. The MDNR should continue to develop pilot programs and share access options for trail users with vision and/or hearing impairment.
- Recreation investments should prioritize completion of regional or state-significant trail networks that provide recreation opportunities close to home, serve as a transportation resource, and link existing trail systems and parks with business districts.
- Continue to advance Michigan as the Trail State through collaborative improvements in land and water trail infrastructure, programming, and marketing.
- Evaluate new mechanisms to develop sustainable sources of funding for supporting trail improvements

“From our urban focus groups, we found that transportation and a lack of awareness and inclusiveness were key issues that interfered with active participation. Knowing that the parks and recreation sites are accessible to individuals who may have physical limitations or impairments, and that they are promoting inclusivity and cultural diversity, will bring more Michiganders to our incredible parks to enjoy the great outdoors.”

Grenaé Dudley, Ph.D.

President and CEO, The Youth Connection, Inc.

and maintenance in partnership with recreation and cultural stakeholders.

- Create partnerships between local recreation and transportation providers for incentive and outreach programs in order to increase people's ability to access parks and outdoor recreation facilities.
- Conduct regional assessments of trail networks, in partnership with recreation stakeholders, to identify



and develop trails that are suited for single and multiple uses and ensure that residents and tourists have opportunities to participate in a variety of outdoor recreation in a safe and enjoyable environment.

- Continue to develop, update, and manage a forest road access plan for state lands that provides residents and tourists with opportunities to explore Michigan's natural and cultural resources, while utilizing and balancing a variety of recreation means and resource needs.
- The recreation community should ensure adequate access to water-based recreation by continuing support for marina and boat launch facilities through the development of water trails and by increasing access points for canoes, kayaks, and fishing.

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 access to recreation opportunities for all Michiganders. Furthermore, the actions will enhance connectivity between Michigan's parks and communities, and trails will be increasingly seen both as sites for recreation or tourism and a means of transportation.

Success in achieving this objective will be measured in several ways, including:

- Examining the results of the Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey. The findings show

differences among underserved populations in outdoor recreation participation rates and satisfaction levels, which are measured by the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation opportunities at a statewide and regional level. Enhanced access for residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations should result in more consistent participation and satisfaction rates.

- Monitoring increases in the number of recreation sites that implement universal design principles, the number of recreation areas accessible via public transportation, and the number of water trails developed
- Examining whether Michigan maintains its ranking as the number one Rails-to-Trails state by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, as well as whether Michigan is consistently recognized by media or association groups as one of the top five places for other motorized or nonmotorized trails

Objective Five: Provide Quality Experiences

Michigan's outdoor recreation system provides users with quality experiences in balance with resource management and conservation.

Why Is This Important?

Outdoor recreation is essential to Michigan. It is a driver of economic prosperity through tourism and the provision of critical assets that influence the livability and appeal of our communities. Quality outdoor recreation experiences provide a diversity of recreation opportunities that meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors. The activities in which we participate vary, but collectively our outdoor recreation infrastructure should ensure that all recreationalists can participate in and enjoy activities that are important to them, while not infringing on other user groups, or causing adverse impacts to our natural and cultural resources. The MDNR wants to work with public and private recreation providers, local governments and nonprofits, and other stakeholders to provide a variety of opportunities across the state so that residents can pursue their own interests and engage in outdoor recreation in meaningful ways.

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, we must first maintain our current infrastructure and ensure it meets residents' needs. The state owns and manages 103 state parks and recreation areas, 400,000 acres of game areas, and four state forests, with thousands more recreation assets owned by local, private, and nonprofit entities throughout the state. These facilities offer significant value in terms of their geography, history, uniqueness, and environmental, economic, and social benefit. However, many of the facilities 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 or accessible to all residents. Since their original construction decades ago, 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 (e.g., campsites, access points, parking lots, trails and trail heads, fishing piers, and signage) needs 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 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 Michigan Comprehensive Trails Plan is to ensure that the existing trail system is maintained to quality standards as it is expanded. Additionally, as our trail systems face increasing and competing use, we must ensure that all users have a variety of opportunities while not infringing on those of other groups, and that all can recreate in a safe environment suitable for their desired use.

Without engaging in upgrades and design improvements that raise quality and bring all of Michigan's recreation facilities in line with current recreation user demands, the state will have difficulty attracting first-time users and will struggle to bring those that do make use of the facilities back. The state estimates a backlog of \$285 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.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, along with many conservation partners, is working together to help foster the next generation of anglers and hunters through the Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation, and Relevancy (R4) initiative.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- Recreational funding sources should recognize and support the need for maintenance and improvements to existing facilities as a key element of providing quality recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Recreational grant funding from the MDNR should prioritize projects that have sustainable maintenance funding plans as one of many criteria that include the size, scope, impact, and social benefits of a project.
- Collaborate with state associations and other stakeholders to develop and promote building and infrastructure guidelines for recreational facilities to help guide investment and maintenance of recreation infrastructure.
- Routinely assess traditional and developing recreation opportunities and user and tourism trends through data collection and input from stakeholders at a regional and statewide scale to prioritize investments.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

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?" Since 2007, the percentage of residents who are *very satisfied* with the quality of public outdoor recreation in Michigan has been increasing, from 42 percent in 2007, to 77 percent in 2012, and now 82 percent in 2017. This year, the citizen survey was expanded to include questions on residents' satisfaction with the quality of public outdoor recreation within a half hour of their homes. An increase in local satisfaction will also be used to gauge the success of providing quality experiences.

"Michigan has countless opportunities offering genuine outdoor recreation experiences to a variety of people. Whether it's losing yourself deep in the forest while foraging for mushrooms, enjoying thousands of miles of Great Lakes coastline with family, or using the state park system to teach the next generation about natural heritage, there is a place for everyone."

Lisha Ramsdell

Associate Director, Huron Pines

Objective Six: Enhance Health Benefits

Outdoor recreation increases physical activity and the health of Michigan's residents and visitors.

Why Is This Important?

Outdoor recreation provides crucial health and wellness opportunities for Michigan residents. Michigan's array of outdoor recreation facilities, settings, and programming support healthy behaviors in a variety of ways. First, they offer people opportunities to be physically active, thus helping reduce obesity and the incidence of chronic disease. Second, outdoor recreation opportunities can improve mental health by linking people to natural environments that can relieve stress levels and improve interpersonal relationships. Finally, outdoor recreation partners are increasingly engaged in health promotion activities that couple recreation with opportunities to explore healthier habits in ways such as passing tobacco-free policies and partnering with agencies to access nutritious foods.

The connection between outdoor recreation and improved health is particularly important in Michigan, where many residents suffer from poor health outcomes. Michiganders face higher numbers of both poor physical and mental health days per year than the national average (University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute 2017). In 2016, 25.5 percent of Michigan adults said that, within the last 30 days, they did no physical activity or exercise other than their regular job duties.

Improving access to outdoor recreation can improve these poor health outcomes. For example, recent research shows that leisure, not paid work or housework, is now the part of life where most physical activity occurs (NRPA 2010). By providing opportunities for physical activity during leisure time, outdoor recreation services are becoming recognized as a critical component of the United States' healthcare system (NRPA 2010).

“Physical activity is essential to health and well-being, and people who live near a park are more likely to be physically active. Michigan's parks, outdoor spaces, and trails provide an abundance of opportunities for lifelong physical activity.”

Sarah L. Panken

Director of Network Programs,
Michigan Fitness Foundation

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- Park and recreation agencies, state and local health departments, and local healthcare providers should collaborate on targeted marketing efforts that highlight and promote the role of parks and outdoor recreation in providing opportunities for physical activity and other health benefits.
- Use evidence-based practices to inform the deliberate and thoughtful design of programs, facilities, and services to enhance public health and wellness.
- Continue to invest in facilities, programs, education, and marketing that improve physical and mental health benefits through outdoor recreation. This should include opportunities to partner with Michigan's educational institutions to develop outdoor recreation-oriented curricula.



- Support the development of recreation facilities near residential populations to provide close-to-home recreational facilities and support an active and healthy lifestyle.
- Facilitate and support opportunities to provide healthy and sustainable food options within food service facilities at parks and other recreation areas.

How Will Michigan Measure Success in Meeting This Objective?

When the above actions are implemented, Michigan residents will better understand why and how parks and outdoor recreation can promote healthy living. Success in this objective will be achieved when more park and recreation agencies have partnered with health departments and healthcare providers to implement marketing and programming.



Objective Seven: Enhance Prosperity

Outdoor recreation advances economic prosperity and supports a high quality of life as well as talent attraction and retention in Michigan's communities.

Why Is This Important?

Outdoor recreation is a strong force in Michigan's economy. 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 services
- Helping retain younger residents in the State of Michigan to live and work
- Increasing property values (and resulting tax revenues) for adjacent properties and neighborhoods

Outdoor recreation-based tourism is a particular asset and opportunity for Michigan that we continue to develop and promote. As the 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 the second-largest industry in the state (behind only manufacturing), and our outdoor recreation opportunities—from world-class trout streams, to Great Lakes beaches, to more than 6,000 miles of connected snowmobile trails, to iconic places such as Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore—underpin much of the state's tourist activity (Library of Michigan 2017). A report prepared for the MEDC by Tourism Economics indicated that Michigan had more than 113.4 million visitor days in 2014. The study found that:

- Direct spending by leisure travelers equaled \$16.6 billion dollars—nearly 73 percent of all visitor spending in Michigan (as opposed to business travel).
- The tourism industry directly employed 214,333 people

in Michigan during 2014, and supported an additional 112,352 jobs in other sectors of the economy (Tourism Economics 2015).

Outdoor recreation also adds to community health and vitality and helps grow local economies by attracting businesses and workers. Michigan's outdoor recreation resources provide a competitive advantage in today's economy, 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 life the community provides to potential employees, and associated entertainment and recreational amenities are often an important part of their recruiting package (Florida 2012; Adelaja et al. 2009; Michigan Recreation and Park Association, 2009). From skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling in winter to swimming, fishing, and boating in the summer, few states in the country offer natural assets comparable 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 (2017a) estimates that outdoor recreation generated \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue and \$59.2 billion in state/local tax revenue in 2016 from sales and property taxes. In Michigan, a 2012 study by the Land Policy Institute which looked at the effects of green infrastructure on Michigan's economy, found 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., hunters and anglers, birdwatchers, backpackers, boaters, campers, cyclists, equestrians, ORV and snowmobile riders, etc.) who frequent local businesses when recreating to purchase equipment and supplies. The growing diversity of recreational opportunities and demand for increasingly advanced recreational technology, materials, and equipment are also driving entrepreneurialism and business opportunities in this sector (Outdoor Industry Association 2012). The Outdoor Industry Association (2017a) estimated \$887 billion in national user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses in 2016, behind healthcare, financial services, and insurance spending.

Appendix C, “The Role of Outdoor Recreation in Advancing Michigan’s Economy,” describes the potential economic benefits and opportunities for Michigan in more detail as well as how the current SCORP citizen survey can be used to estimate the economic benefit of outdoor recreation in Michigan.

What Are the Key Actions for Addressing This Objective?

- Quantify and promote the economic impact of public lands, regionally and statewide.
- Integrate local and regional high-priority outdoor recreation infrastructure needs into regional strategies that link them with economic goals and leverage funding opportunities.
- Support 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, including attracting and retaining talent and providing a high quality of life.

- Promote opportunities for public-private partnerships to collaborate on events-oriented recreation.
- Develop a program to enhance trail-oriented economic development through the designation of Pure Michigan Trails, Trail Towns, and Water Trails that helps communities and businesses maximize related economic potential.
- Connect existing trails and trail networks to create destination trails that provide multiday experiences, tell stories, and drive trail-specific tourism (e.g., Great Allegheny Passage, Katy Trail, etc.).
- Advocate for recreational and historical experiences to be part of economic development planning.
- Evaluate opportunities to use recreation funding to support redevelopment of vacant or underutilized lands and facilities to provide high-quality recreational opportunities and support community placemaking.

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 MDNR identify how their plan assists in advancing economic prosperity in the planning area and all regional Community and Economic Development Strategies include at least one priority park and outdoor recreation project identified by local communities or regional planning organizations.

“Jay’s Sporting Goods’ business model relies on Michigan’s recreation opportunities. More than 90 percent of our merchandise enhances outdoor activity, and I am frequently reminded of the importance of our products and knowledgeable staff. Our satisfied customers support our employees, who in turn make purchases in the local economy. People come from around the country—even Canada—to enjoy Michigan’s natural beauty.”

Mark Copeland

Store Director, Jay’s Sporting Goods



Chapter Four. **Public Engagement Process**



In developing the 2018–2022 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 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 will provide 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 and a steering committee to obtain initial input from the public and recreation providers. Four different survey mechanisms were employed during the process:

- In early 2017, an online survey was distributed to local units of government to help identify their outdoor recreation needs and priorities. It was distributed through the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan Association of Counties, the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Association of Regions, and mParks. It contained 30 questions and was designed by the MDNR to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. In total, 355 units provided feedback, most at the township, city, or village levels. The findings of this survey were incorporated into the SCORP objectives and action items.
- An online survey of outdoor recreation businesses was conducted in early 2017 to assess the needs and priorities of Michigan's outdoor recreation business sector. It contained 21 questions and was designed by the MDNR to take approximately ten minutes to complete. In total, 23 businesses responded with feedback.
- A statistically significant public opinion survey was utilized to obtain data on outdoor recreation participation, identify barriers to use, and obtain

information on statewide and regional satisfaction. The 20-minute phone survey of 1,550 Michigan residents was conducted from April 12 until May 6, 2017, with participation weighted to match Michigan's demographic profile. A minimum of 300 surveys were conducted in each of five identified regions of Michigan, with participation weighted to match each region's demographic profile.

- The draft outlines were sent to the steering committee in May and June 2017 to obtain feedback on the draft SCORP objectives and strategies that the MDNR had developed.

The MDNR contracted with stakeholder organizations to conduct a series of 13 community conversations statewide. The conversations were facilitated by the hosting stakeholder organization and the content of the meetings was recorded by Public Sector Consultants. These small, focus-group style conversations were structured to obtain detailed input from providers and users regarding the state's outdoor recreation assets, priorities 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 three. A summary of these conversations is provided in Appendix E.

The MDNR also consulted many of the state's standing natural resource-oriented advisory groups:

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

These groups advise the department on the state's natural

resources protection, management, and investment activities, and will be critical in overseeing implementation of the SCORP objectives.

A draft of the SCORP document was made available for public review in October and comments are summarized in Appendix F.



Chapter Five. **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 and 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 Fund 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 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."

Michigan has many types of wetlands including bogs, fens, deciduous swamps, wet meadows, emergent marshes, vernal pools, wet prairies, and conifer swamps. Wetlands play a significant role in the health and existence of other natural resources of the state, such as inland lakes, ground water, fisheries, wildlife, and the Great Lakes. Michigan's wetland statute recognizes the following benefits provided by these areas:

- Flood and storm control by the hydrologic absorption and storage capacity of wetlands

- Creation of wildlife habitat by providing breeding, nesting, and feeding grounds as well as cover for many forms of wildlife, such as waterfowl, including migratory species, and rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife species
- Protection of subsurface water resources and provision of valuable watersheds and recharging ground water supplies
- Pollution treatment by serving as a biological and chemical oxidation basin
- Erosion control by serving as a sedimentation area and filtering basin, absorbing silt and organic matter
- Sources of nutrients in aquatic food cycles and nursery grounds and sanctuaries for fish

These benefits, often referred to as wetland functions and values, play a vital role in recreation, tourism, and the economy in Michigan. This wide range of ecosystem services that wetlands provide contribute to the well-being of Michigan's residents and visitors. There are a diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities afforded by wetlands, including fishing, wildlife viewing, waterfowl hunting, and boating and paddling.

Status of Michigan's Wetlands Resources

In 2014, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality completed an analysis of the status and trends of Michigan's wetlands, and published their "Status and Trends of Michigan's Wetlands: Pre-European Settlement to 2005" report (MDEQ 2014). This project used wetland inventories from 1978 to 2005 to analyze changes in wetlands over the last 30 years in Michigan. The report indicates that Michigan currently has approximately 6.47 million acres of wetlands statewide, or approximately 60 percent of the wetlands remaining since European settlement. Since the passage of Michigan's wetlands

protection law in 1979, the rate of wetland loss has declined dramatically. Wetland loss has not been uniform across the state due to significant geographical differences, ecosystem variability of the Great Lakes coastline, urban centers, and other physical, biological, and chemical factors. Of the wetland loss that has occurred in Michigan since European settlement, 66 percent of lost wetlands were located in the southern Lower Peninsula; 20 percent were located in the northern Lower Peninsula; and 17 percent were located in the Upper Peninsula.

Of the overall wetland losses in Michigan, most of these were emergent wetlands and forested wetlands, with fewer losses of scrub shrub or aquatic bed type wetlands. These wetland losses were primarily due to agriculture or other types of development. There were new wetlands created over time, but many were open water ornamental or recreational ponds on residential lots. These wetland “gains” have not replaced the vegetated wetland communities, or the wetland functions and values on the landscape where losses have occurred.

Michigan’s wetland resources continue to be depleted at a rate that, while slowing, is still faster than efforts to restore or create wetlands. Areas with historic wetland losses are still struggling with the consequences of that loss (e.g., water quality issues, flooding and flashy streams, and loss of wildlife).

Michigan’s wetlands continue to face increasing and new threats, including agricultural development, urban development, invasive species, and climate change. 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 market 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 the North American population, are creating generations of people who are increasingly disconnected from the outdoors and wildlife, and who, as a result, may have less of a wetlands stewardship ethic.

Wetlands Planning and Protection Efforts

Michigan’s wetlands statute recognizes the important benefits provided by wetlands and their vital role in recreation, tourism, and the economy. Over 30 years ago, Michigan was the first state, and remains one of only two states, to have received authorization from the federal government to administer the federal wetland program. Because of this approval, wetlands, lakes, and streams permits issued by MDEQ under state law also provide federal approval. Part 303 regulates filling, draining, dredging, or maintaining existing wetlands uses that are connected or contiguous to an inland lake, pond, river, stream, or one of the Great Lakes, that are greater than five acres in size, or determined to be essential to the preservation of the state’s natural resources. Michigan’s wetland plan identifies long-term strategies for protection of wetland resources:

- Maintaining a short-term goal of achieving no net loss of wetland acreage, function, and public value and a long-term goal of increasing the quantity and quality of Michigan’s wetlands through restoration and management.
- Protecting Michigan’s remaining wetlands through implementation of an effective and efficient regulatory

program and maintaining administration of Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act.

- Assessing and monitoring the quality and quantity of Michigan’s wetlands to improve wetland protection, management, and restoration.
- Working with partners to identify and develop methods to improve protection, management and restoration of Michigan’s Wetlands and advance public understanding and connection to Michigan wetlands.
- Protecting and restoring Great Lakes coastal wetlands and other rare wetlands.

In addition to Michigan’s Wetland Program Plan, 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). Conservation partners in Michigan are committed to the revision of the NAWMP Michigan Implementation Strategy to reflect this integration of waterfowl, wetlands, and people.

In terms of protection efforts, conservation goals for wetlands and associated uplands from the most recent NAWMP Michigan Implementation Strategy (1998–2013) were 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 federal and state programs, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).



Joint ventures were established across North America to assist in NAWMP implementation. Michigan is located within the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (UMRGLRJV). The 2007 implementation plan and associated bird habitat conservation strategies for the UMRGLR JV set goals for both wetlands maintenance and protection objectives as well as restoration and enhancement objectives for Michigan to meet carrying capacity for breeding and nonbreeding 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 semipermanent

marsh restoration and enhancement objective for the JV (UMRGLR JV 2007). UMRGLR plans are currently being updated to reflect the goals and objectives in the revised NAWMP.

In 2016, the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes released Michigan's Water Strategy, a 30-year plan to protect, enhance, and sustainably manage Michigan's water resources. The plan was developed based on a collaborative process to obtain broad, diverse input and highlights key actions for government, tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, industry, academia, local communities, and individuals to protect and enhance one of Michigan's water resources. The water strategy features

nine action areas, including one to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems, which identifies the importance of protecting and restoring wetland function; recognizes the significant ecological and tribal importance of wild rice wetlands; and prioritizes coordination, planning, and implementation of invasive species control for management of wild rice. This section of the water strategy also highlights statewide prioritization of hydrologic connectivity restoration, groundwater resources management, and building resiliency into riparian systems.

Wetlands Funding

In addition to Land and Water Conservation Fund support, there are a number of primary funding sources for wetland conservation that have been successfully secured in Michigan. Most of these funds can be attributed to diverse and strategic MDNR partnerships that have resulted in the restoration, enhancement, and protection of wetlands across large landscapes.

One of these key funding sources of wetlands conservation is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. 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 50 NAWCA grants between 1987 and 2016, which have conserved over 56,700 acres of wildlife habitat (wetlands and associated uplands). More than \$18.8 million was secured through these grants and matched by over \$62.7 million of nonfederal funds from partners.

Michigan's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program offers a key opportunity to protect wetlands on private lands. Administered by U.S. Department of Agriculture's

Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA), CREP provides financial and technical assistance to landowners willing to voluntarily implement conservation practices to benefit water quality, minimize soil erosion, and provide wildlife habitat. Since 2000, the State of Michigan has partnered with USDA-FSA, private and public conservation organizations, universities, and farm landowners with a goal of enrolling 85,000 acres of filter strips, wetland restorations, riparian buffers, field windbreaks, and grass plantings. State funds are used to provide financial incentives to participating landowners, provide technical assistance, and leverage federal funds. The program targets nonpoint source pollution resulting from crop production, reducing the transport of phosphorus, nitrates, and pesticides by 70 percent. Eligible farmlands are located in Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, Lake Macatawa, and the Western Lake Erie Basin Watersheds, covering all or parts of 30 counties in Michigan. To date, nearly 79,000 acres have been enrolled in the eligible watersheds, including approximately 4,000 acres of permanent conservation easements. The MDNR's annual Spring Breeding Waterfowl Survey has shown an increase in waterfowl observed per square mile, compared to adjacent non-CREP areas, in both the Saginaw Bay and River Raisin watersheds. This demonstrates that CREP is likely having a positive impact on waterfowl.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Wetlands Reserve Program to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to help conserve wetlands and their related benefits. Eligible land in Michigan includes farmed or converted wetland that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits. Priority is also given to projects in close proximity to other wetlands, programs that provide habitat for state or federal threatened or endangered species, and/or programs located in a NAWCA joint venture primary focus area. NRCS develops plans to restore enrolled wetlands and protects the enrolled land

with either a permanent or 30-year easement. Since 1998, there have been 454 contracts that have conserved 40,600 acres of wetlands and associated uplands.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) works with landowners to voluntarily restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat on their private (nonfederal/nonstate) lands. Working in partnerships with other conservation agencies and organizations, the service may provide technical and financial assistance to landowners when their goals align with PFW Program goals. The program primarily works within defined focus areas to improve wetland, grassland, young forest, and coldwater stream habitats to benefit migratory birds, native pollinators, and other species with declining populations. Between 2007 and 2016, the PFW Program helped to restore or enhance 839 wetland basins, totaling more than 6,200 acres.

New Initiatives and Priorities

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) targets the most significant ecosystem issues in the region, including invasive aquatic species, nonpoint source pollution, habitat restoration, and contaminated sediment. The GLRI is an 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 60,000 acres of coastal wetlands by 2019. Competitive GLRI grant funds have been available through the EPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies since 2010. Michigan state agencies, nongovernment organizations, and local governments have been very successful in securing several GLRI grants since 2010.

In 2010, at the beginning of the GLRI program, a cooperative project, the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland

Monitoring Program, was launched by Central Michigan University. This is a large collaborative effort between over 18 universities and state and federal agencies, including the MDEQ, across the Great Lakes basin. This effort monitors Great Lakes coastal wetland plants and animals, habitat, and water quality to provide information on coastal wetland condition using fish, birds, calling amphibians, wetland vegetation, aquatic macroinvertebrates, and water quality.

Through the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative, the Coastal Conservation Working Group (CCWG) was formed in 2013, bringing together federal, state (including both the MDNR and MDEQ), tribal, and private conservation groups focused on protecting and restoring the critical Great Lakes Coastal Zone. One of the primary priorities of the CCWG is conserving coastal wetlands. Several efforts are completed or underway in a pilot geography that covers the southeast portion of Michigan (pilot geography extends from Saginaw Bay, Michigan to the western portion of Lake Erie in Ohio). These efforts include the development and deployment of two decision support tools, the development of a collaborative vision and strategy for landscape-scale conservation, and the initiation of an ecosystem services valuation study; all focused on coastal wetlands. The CCWG, collaborating with myriad partners in Michigan and Ohio, is aligning shared coastal wetland priorities, science, and on-the-ground activities to help produce meaningful benefits to fish, wildlife, and people.



Chapter Six. **Summary and Conclusions**



Michigan has world-class recreation assets. Our Great Lakes, inland lakes, rivers and streams, forests, sand dunes, and other natural resources provide an unparalleled foundation to support outdoor activity. Across ownership types, Michigan has more than 8 million acres of public land. Our 103 state parks and recreation areas, state forests, and game areas, as well as the hundreds of federal, regional, and local parks help keep our residents healthy, advance the prosperity of the state, and connect people to the outdoors while providing opportunities to take part in a wide range of outdoor activities.

On a statewide basis, residents are highly satisfied in terms of both the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation (see Appendix B). Many of our statewide recreation assets were designed to serve as destination locations, drawing visitors from across the state and around the country for weekend and extended trips. The state has excelled in developing innovative funding models such as the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund, the State Park Endowment Fund, and the Recreation Passport to support the acquisition and development of these spaces.

These innovative funding models have helped us develop our recreation infrastructure at the state and local levels. However, Michigan's recreation needs continue to evolve. Now, greater emphasis is emerging around the need to further develop funding mechanisms that support maintenance of existing recreation assets to ensure that they continue providing high-quality experiences for Michigan's residents and visitors. Additionally, greater emphasis is emerging around the need to enhance recreation opportunities close to home. While residents are satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation opportunities within 30 minutes of their house, there is a lower rate of satisfaction than on a statewide basis. Enhancing recreation opportunities close to home can help ensure that our communities are desirable places to live, enhance our economic prosperity, and support

a healthy and active lifestyle for all Michiganders. For example, recreation amenities increase property values; attract visitors, employees, and businesses; and enhance physical activity levels, leading to decreased obesity rates.

Differences in participation and satisfaction rates also become evident when reviewing survey results for different demographic groups and races. Michigan's investments in recreation amenities, programming, and staffing should seek to ensure that recreation opportunities are connected and accessible to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means, and geographic locations.

Changes in technology also continue to reshape our lives in ways that present both challenges and opportunities for outdoor recreation. As a society, we are spending more time in front of screens and less time outdoors—but technology should be viewed as an opportunity to enhance our outdoor experiences, provide greater access to information about recreation opportunities, and boost participation. For example, since the previous SCORP was developed, the use of cell phone applications increased by almost 15 percent as a method of consuming information regarding outdoor recreation. Furthermore, one-third of Michiganders now use social media to plan outdoor recreation activities—a category that was not tracked in the previous SCORP. Recreation partners should continue to embrace emerging technologies to improve and raise awareness about Michigan's outdoor recreation. In the coming years, new technologies will undoubtedly emerge that provide new ways to enhance outdoor recreation experiences.

The SCORP is a five-year action plan that will be used by the state and its local outdoor recreation partners, such as municipalities, conservation organizations, clubs and user groups, recreation-based businesses, and nonprofits to guide outdoor recreation management and policy decisions. This action plan strives to ensure that Michigan

continues to protect and manage its top-notch assets that offer fun and relaxation, and meet the needs of Michigan's residents and visitors.

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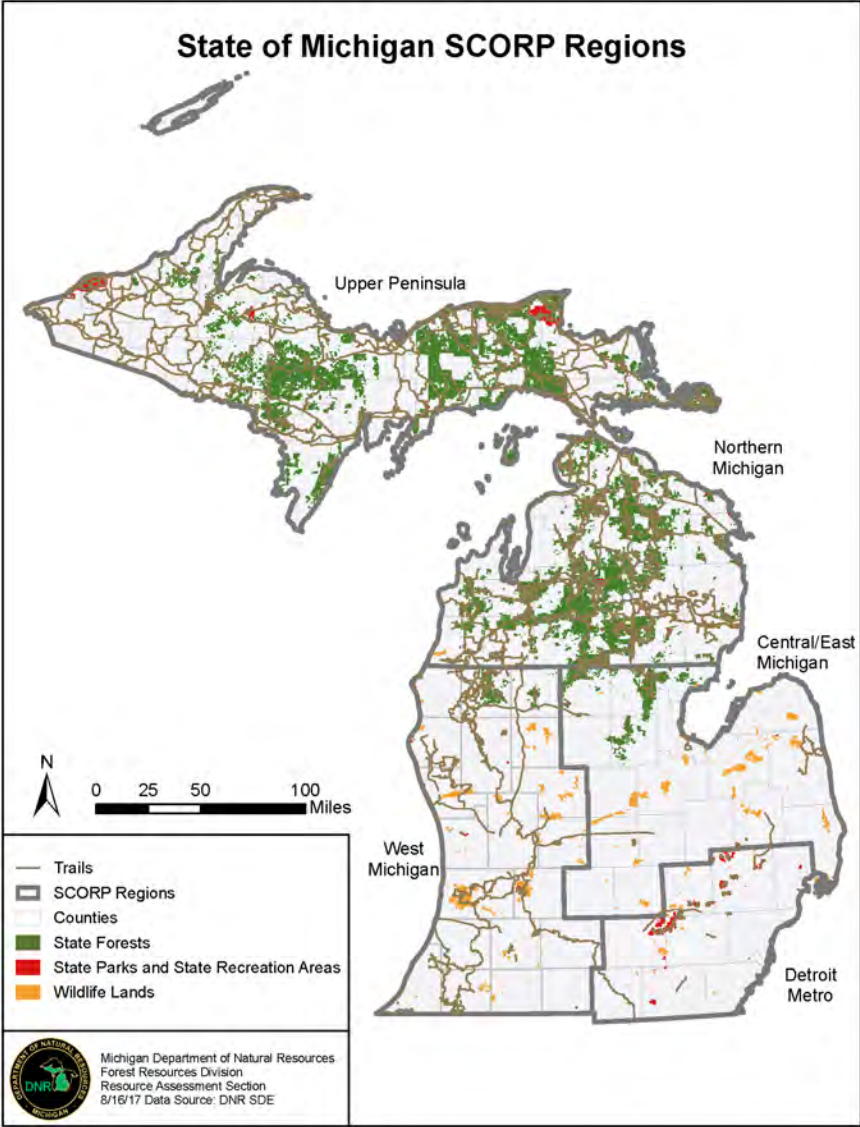
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Appendix A. **Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands**

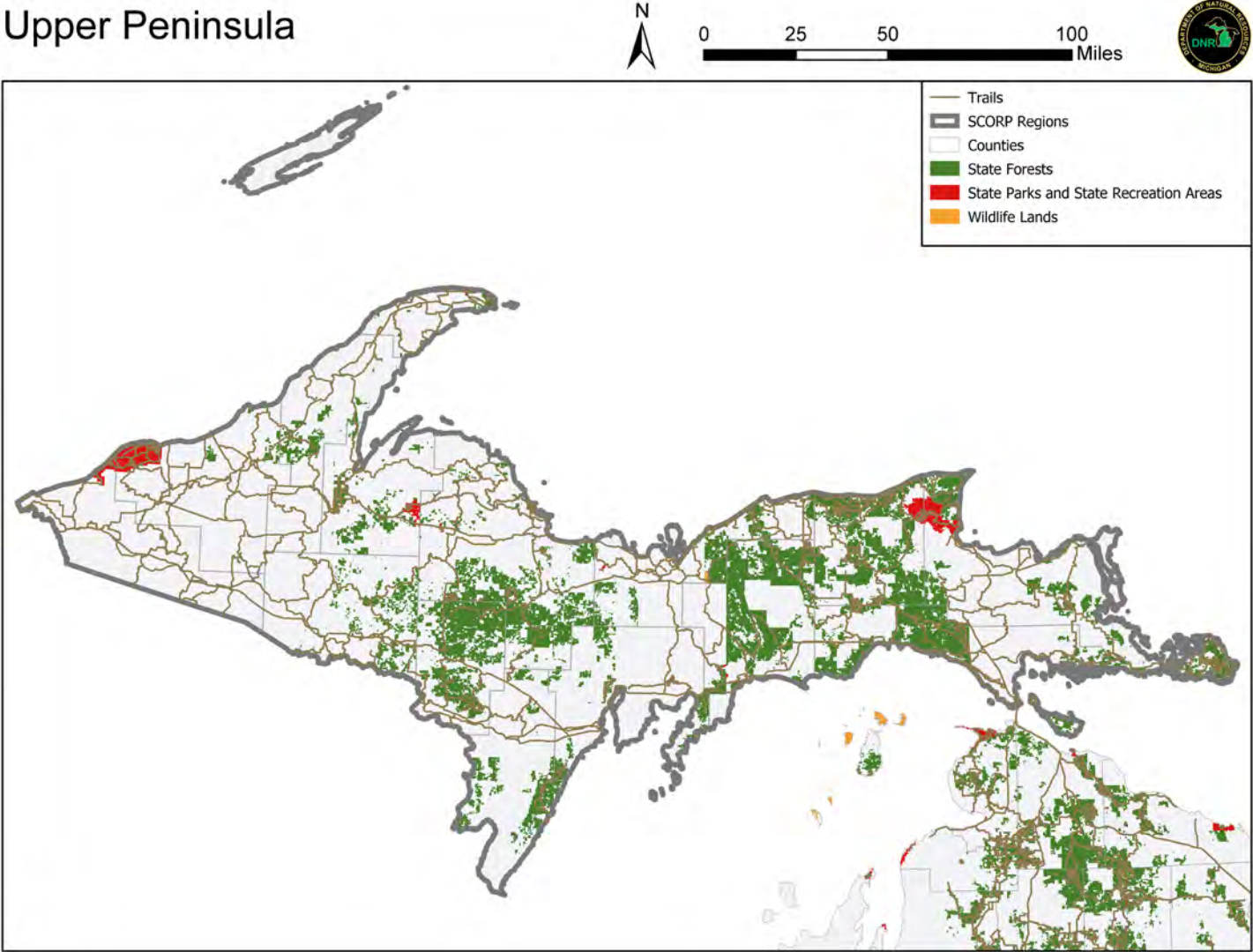


Exhibit AI. Statewide Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



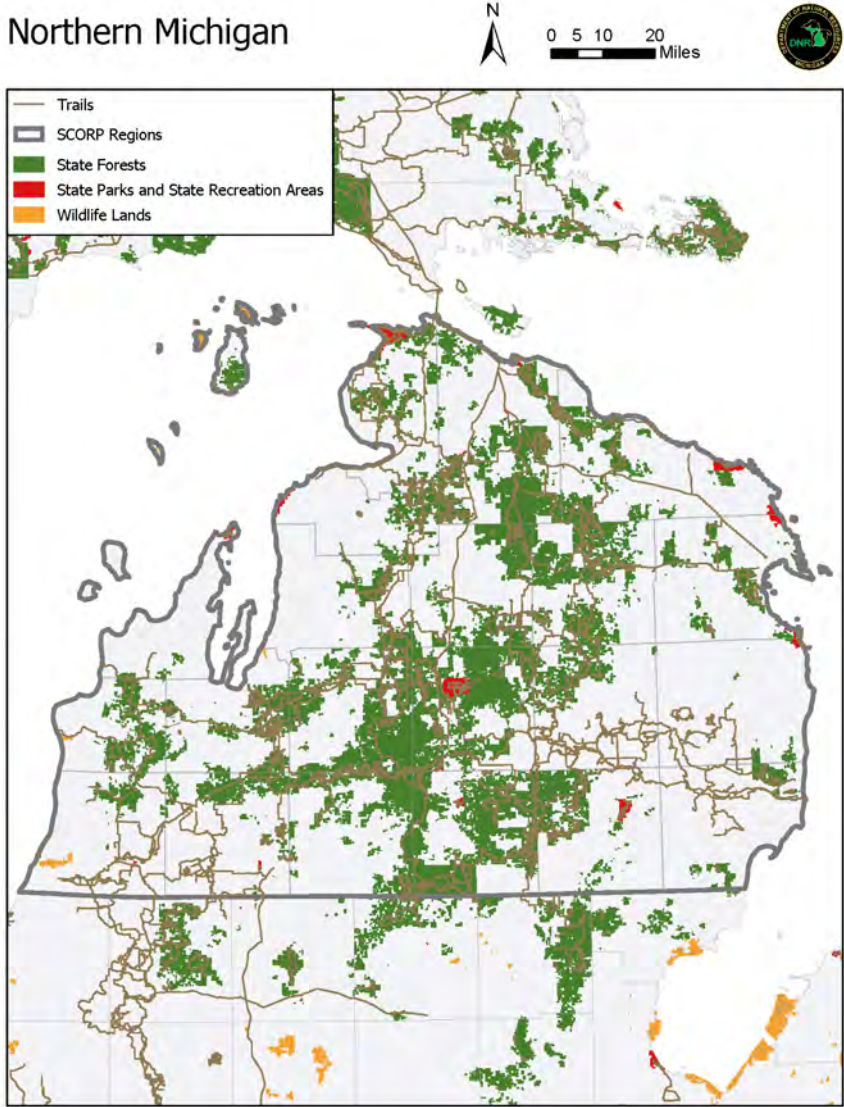
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Exhibit A2. Upper Peninsula Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



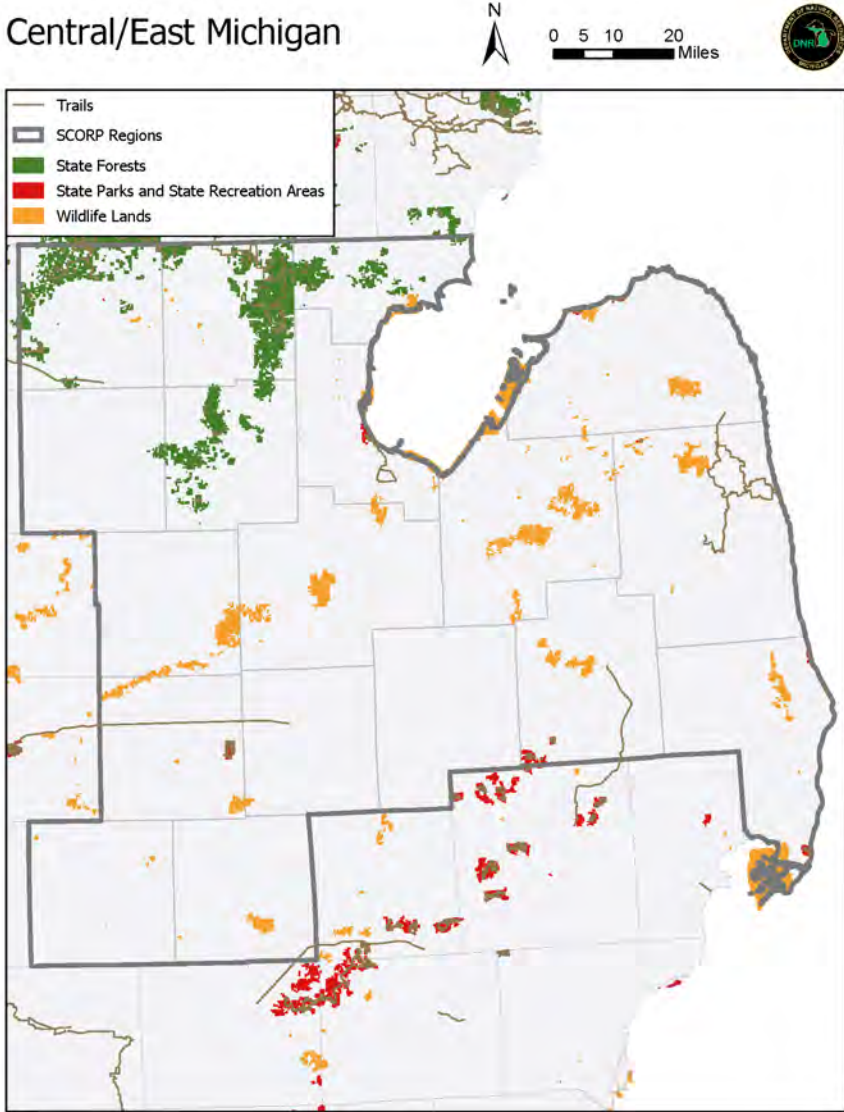
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Exhibit A3. Northern Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



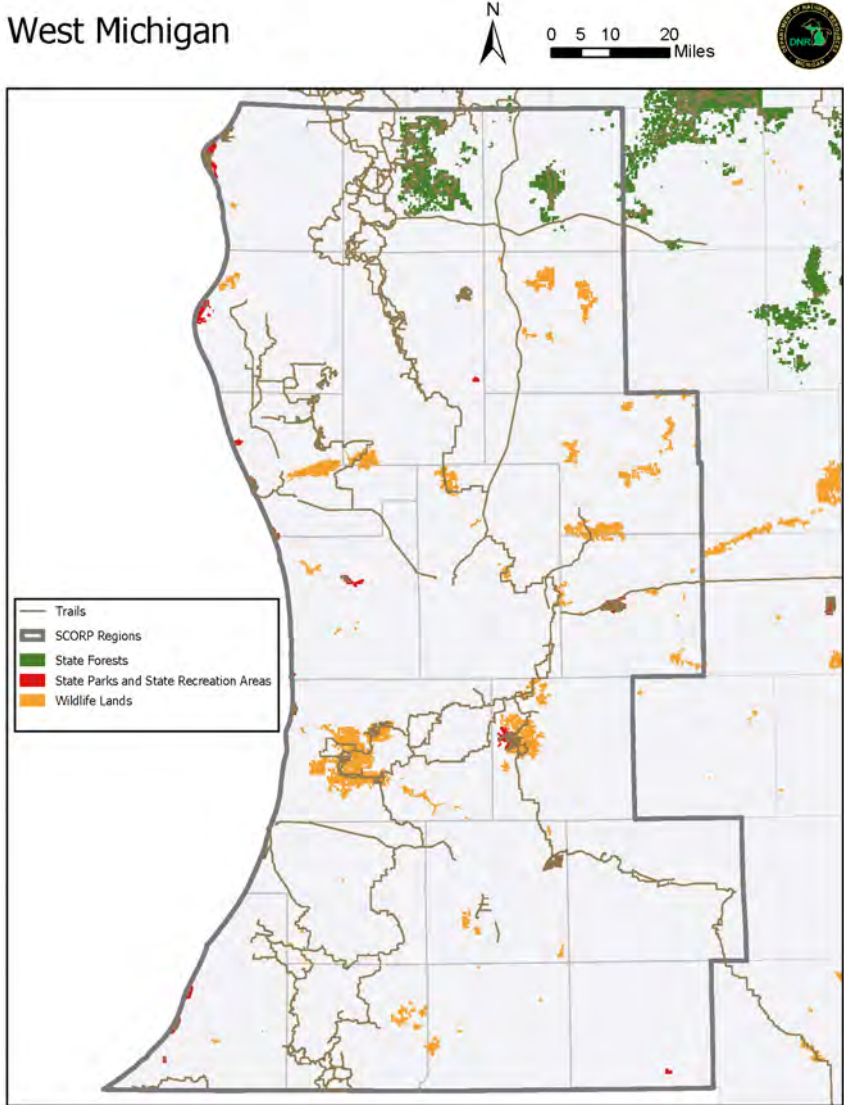
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Exhibit A4. Central/East Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



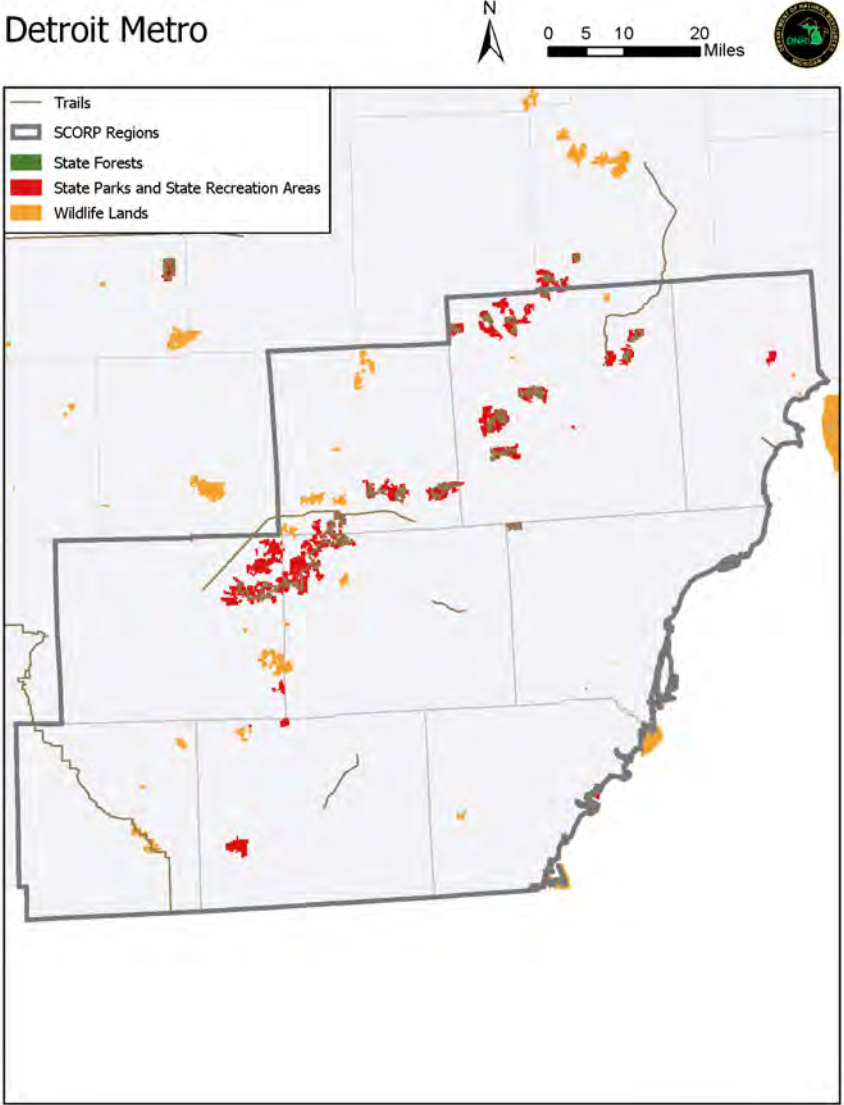
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Exhibit A5. West Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



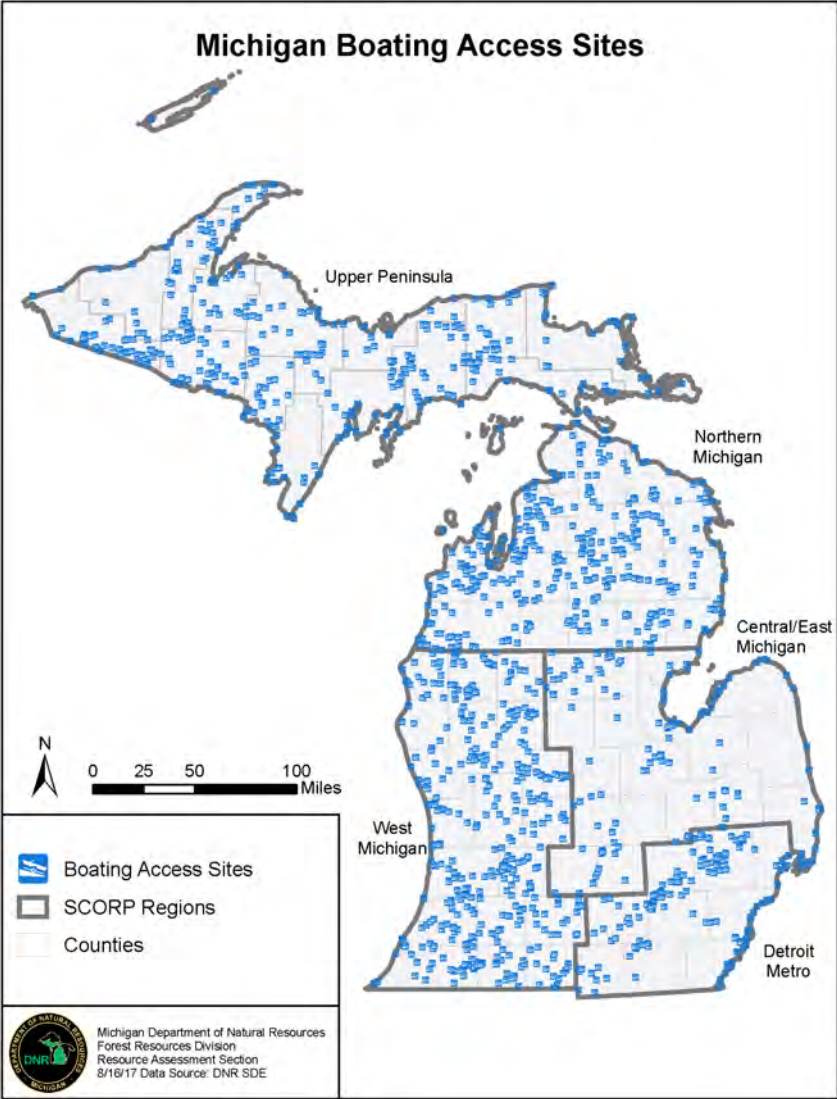
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Exhibit A6. Metro-Detroit Department of Natural Resources Recreation Lands



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Exhibit A7. Department of Natural Resources Boating Access Sites



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



Appendix B. Summary of SCORP Public Opinion Survey



Introduction

As part of developing the 2018–2022 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources conducted a telephone survey of Michigan residents to help understand their use of, preferences for, and satisfaction with outdoor recreation opportunities. The survey was modified from the 2012 version to obtain more precise estimates of residents' participation, including total days of participation, in 35 separate activities. This data provides a more robust picture of Michigan's outdoor recreation activity and can, in the future, be combined with per-day spending to estimate the economic impact of outdoor recreation in Michigan.

The 15- to 20-minute survey was implemented from April 12 to May 6, 2017, and collected a total of 1,550 responses from residents across Michigan. The survey sample was divided across five regions of the state: Upper Peninsula, Northern Michigan, West Michigan, and Central/East Michigan receiving 300 responses each; and Metro Detroit receiving 350 responses. The survey results were weighted at the statewide level using a methodology known as raking so that the results more closely match the gender, age, racial, and education distribution of Michigan residents, as well as to ensure that each region of the state is appropriately represented. Survey responses for each region of the state were also weighted by raking using regional demographic profiles.

The following summary presents selected statewide findings, a breakdown of key questions by selected demographics, and selected regional results. The statewide findings have an adjusted margin of error of 3 percent.³ The margins of error for the regional results are presented in their respective sections. Frequency reports

for the statewide analysis, selected demographic analysis, and regional analysis are available in the Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey: Frequency Reports document on the DNR website.

Selected Statewide Key Findings

- Over 79 percent of Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household. This is slightly below the nearly 84 percent of Michigan residents who felt this way during the 2012 SCORP citizen phone survey.
- Three out of five of Michigan's black or African-American and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents participate in outdoor recreation, compared to white, non-Hispanics who participate at a rate of over four out of five).
- Those aged 25–34 and 45–54 had the highest rates of outdoor recreation participation (around nine out of ten people).
- More than three-quarters of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 84 and 82 percent, respectively).
- Just under three-quarters of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (73 percent and 74 percent, respectively).
- One out of five of Michigan's black or African-American; Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin; or any other non-white race residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to only one out of ten white, non-Hispanic residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- One out of five of Michigan's black or African-American

residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to less than one out of ten white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

- Out of all activities, walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified as the most important outdoor activity by 26 percent of users.
- Nearly 47 percent of those who selected tent or rustic camping, 44 percent of those who selected modern or RV camping, and 34 percent of those who selected big-game hunting as their most important activity are willing to drive more than six hours, on average, to participate.
- Over 89 percent of Michigan outdoor recreation participants went outside 52 or more days in the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with nearly 60 percent doing so for more than 100 days. Nationwide, the average number of outdoor outings per adult aged 25 and older is just under 73 outings per year (Outdoor Foundation 2017).
- Most outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (68 percent, an increase from 59 percent in 2012), followed by Internet searches (55 percent) or previous experience (54 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (85 percent), swimming outdoors (76 percent), and sledding or tubing (54 percent) having the most participants.

³ See the methodology section for more detail on rake weights and the calculation of appropriate error rates.

Statewide Outdoor Recreation

Activities

Understanding how people are spending time outdoors provides an indication of the preferences and potential future direction of outdoor activity in Michigan. This year, direct questions were asked about total days of participation within the last year for 34 activities. This, in combination with the statewide participation rate, allows for the estimation of total participant days for Michigan residents. Due to the change in how this question was asked, direct comparisons of participation rates for specific activities cannot be made between the 2012 and 2017 citizen surveys. There are a few exceptions for a small list of activities that were directly investigated in the 2012 citizen survey, which are noted below. Overall, four out of five respondents (79 percent) reported participating in any type of outdoor recreation in the past year. Respondents were asked how many days in the past year they participated in 34 separate activities. The order of the activities read in the survey was randomized for each respondent. Of the 1,550 survey respondents, 1,268 participated in at least one of the listed activities.

Exhibit B1 shows which activities have the highest participation rate as well as the total number of participant days in Michigan.⁴ Also included at the bottom of the table are the total participation rates for biking of any kind, camping of any kind, and hunting of any kind. Respondents reported the total number of days they participated in an activity within the past year, which was then extrapolated to Michigan's total adult population to provide a total estimated number of days of activity. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents relaxed outdoors in the past year,

⁴ Participant days were calculated by extrapolating out the average number of participant days from survey respondents to the general population based on participation rate.

with an average of 76 days per year. Walking outdoors, with a 74 percent participation rate, has an average of 102 days of participation in the past year. This data was collected for future use in economic contribution analysis. It should be noted that some of these participation rates are higher than other data would suggest (such as the percentage of the population that purchases hunting licenses per year being lower than the participation rate of survey respondents). Also, many of these activities may be engaged in at the same time. Participation rates should be adjusted based on known and verifiable data before an economic contribution analysis is conducted. An activity can have a low participation rate but high (relatively speaking) total days of participation due to a high average of participation days.

Exhibit B1. Top Outdoor Recreation Activities

Activity	Total Participant Days	Participation Rate
Relaxing outdoors	436,642,901	75%
Walking outdoors, including dog walking	576,132,624	74%
Visiting parks or playgrounds	150,420,905	67%
Sightseeing and/or driving for pleasure	200,974,504	64%
Visiting nature centers or historic sites	36,465,987	56%
Swimming outdoors	99,130,632	54%
Picnicking	58,330,039	53%
Fishing	77,266,345	41%
Team or individual sports outdoors	84,751,341	37%
Wildlife viewing and/or photography (including birding)	108,373,278	36%
Hiking/backpacking	48,025,953	34%
Jogging/running	137,149,463	34%
Canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, or wind surfing	26,960,187	32%
Road biking	68,469,091	31%
Motor boating	49,747,531	31%
Sledding/tubing	23,677,874	30%
Tent or rustic camping	28,629,569	30%
Shooting sports (including archery)	52,810,204	30%
Modern or RV camping	40,259,553	25%
*Biking of any kind (road or off road)	N/A	40%
*Camping of any kind (modern, RV, tent or rustic)	N/A	39%
*Hunting of any kind (big game, waterfowl, upland, or small game)	N/A	20%

Note: Due to different methodology, these participation rates cannot be compared directly to the 2012 SCORP survey.

Source: Public Sector Consultants conducted a statewide recreation telephone survey of Michigan residents on behalf of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, April–May 2017.

In the 2012 citizen survey, respondents were only directly asked if they participated in several specific activities: relaxing outdoors; visiting parks or playgrounds; or walking outdoors, including dog walking. The participation for relaxing outdoors and visiting parks or playgrounds is similar now to five years ago, when considering both surveys' margins of error. Participation rates for 2012 for other activities are not directly comparable because in the 2012 survey the activity options were not all read aloud by the telephone interviewer (participation was asked as an open-ended question), while in 2017, each activity was read as a separate question to obtain the number of days of participation. 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 26 percent of respondents as the most important. Relaxing outdoors (7 percent), big-game hunting (7 percent), visiting parks or playgrounds (5 percent), camping (5 percent), and jogging/running (5 percent) were next in order of importance. These findings are similar to the 2012 survey. The order in which the activities were read was randomized for each respondent.

Nearly half (47 percent) of Michigan residents went outside two or more days per week (104 days or more per year) for outdoor recreation of any type. This is similar to the 51 percent who reported going outside for 100 days or more in the 2012 survey. An additional 24 percent of people went outside for recreation once a week or more. Nationwide, the average number of outdoor outings per adult aged 25 and older is just under 73 outings per year (Outdoor Foundation 2017).

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, or visiting parks.

- For the activity that is most important to them, nearly 20 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 (see the statewide frequency report for more information). This is a change from the 2012 survey, which found that 30 percent of people did not want to travel more than 30 minutes. In both 2012 and 2017, walking was the most important activity.
- Those who indicated big-game hunting or any type of camping 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.
- Nearly 32 percent of those who selected big-game hunting and 26 percent of those who selected modern or RV camping as their most important activity are willing to drive more than 11 hours, on average, to participate. This is an increase in willingness to drive from 2012 (above the margins of error) and may be due in part to the improvement in Michigan's economy between 2012 and 2017.

Tools for Planning Outdoor Recreation

A variety of tools are employed by Michigan residents when planning their outdoor recreation, including social media,

magazines, and personal recommendations. Respondents were asked to indicate all of 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 (approximately 68 and 55 percent, respectively), while over half utilize previous experiences with a location (54 percent in 2017, up from 47 percent in 2012).
- Around one-third of respondents use such tools as social media or Pure Michigan information or websites to plan their outdoor recreation activities (33 percent and 29 percent, respectively), and a nearly a quarter of respondents use cell phone applications (24 percent), brochures and fliers (22 percent), and magazines or newspapers (21 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 15 different reasons why they may not recreate more.

- Dislike of outdoor pests (e.g., mosquitos), lack of time, lack of money, and personal health reasons (49 percent, 38 percent, 32 percent, and 31 percent, respectively) are the primary reasons cited for why respondents do not participate more in outdoor recreation.

Children and Outdoor Recreation

Around 35 percent of survey respondents have at least one child under the age of 18 living in their household. This percentage is similar to the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimate of 30 percent of Michigan households having at least one member under the age of 18. Respondents were asked how many days in the past year one of the children living in their household participated in one or more of 13 specific activities.

- Visiting parks or playgrounds (85 percent), swimming outdoors (76 percent) and sledding or tubing (54 percent) have the highest participation rates by children under the age of 18.
- Children under the age of 18 have higher participation rates than adults for almost all activities. Swimming outdoors and sledding/tubing have significantly higher participation rates for children than adults.

Exhibit B2. Top Seven Outdoor Recreation Activities, Children under Age 18

Activity	Participation Rate
Visiting playgrounds	85%
Swimming outdoors	76%
Sledding/tubing	54%
Fishing	52%
Nonleague team or individual sports	46%
Team or individual sports on a league	44%
Road biking	41%

Source: Public Sector Consultants conducted a statewide recreation telephone survey of Michigan residents on behalf of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, April–May 2017.

Satisfaction with Michigan Recreation

In the 2012 SCORP survey, we found most residents were happy with the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation available in Michigan. To aid in recreation planning, this question was expanded to incorporate a more local element. For 2017, Michigan residents were asked their satisfaction with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation both in Michigan at large and specifically within 30 minutes of their home.

- Nearly 84 percent of respondents are very satisfied or satisfied with the amount of public outdoor recreation opportunities statewide, and over 82 percent are very satisfied or satisfied with the quality. These percentages are higher than those found in the 2012 and 2007 SCORP surveys, which indicated that around 79 percent and 70 percent, respectively, were satisfied with the amount of opportunity and around 77 percent and 42 percent, respectively, were satisfied with the quality. While the 2012 and 2017 numbers are not different beyond the survey's margins of error, the trend indicates an increasing satisfaction with the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation over time.
- Just under three-quarters of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (73 percent and 74 percent, respectively). People in Michigan are slightly less happy with the quantity and quality available close to their homes than with recreation that is available in the state as a whole.

Demographic Breakdowns

Michigan is a large state whose residents differ greatly on their interests, passions, and priorities. There are differences

in participation rates in outdoor recreation, the frequency with which people recreate, and the perception of the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation. By breaking down the survey responses into demographic groups, the MDNR can more fully evaluate the needs of Michigan residents. The state can begin to examine how different groups of residents feel and work toward enhancing equity in the provision of outdoor recreation.

Selected Findings by Race/Ethnicity and Age

The large statewide sample size of the citizen survey for 2017 allows for a more detailed look at participation rates and satisfaction with outdoor recreation, broken down by race/ethnicity and age groups. The following are selected findings.

- Three out of five of Michigan’s black or African-American and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents participate in outdoor recreation, compared to white, non-Hispanics who participate at a rate of over four out of five).
- Those aged 25–34 and 45–54 had the highest rates of outdoor recreation participation (around 9 out of 10 people).
- While residents aged 25–34 have one of the highest participation rates, they are the least likely age group to recreate outdoors more than four times per week (12 percent).
- White, non-Hispanic residents are more likely to be very satisfied with the amount of public outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan overall than other racial groups (43 percent very satisfied, with other rates of very satisfied ranging from only 21 to 32 percent).
- One out of five of Michigan’s black or African-American; Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin; or any other non-white race residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to only one out of ten white, non-Hispanic residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

- One out of five of Michigan’s black or African-American residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home, compared to less than one out of ten white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic, Latino- or Spanish-origin residents that are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The following exhibits present the cross-tabulation analysis of selected survey questions by race and age. They have been condensed for presentation purposes, but the full analysis is available in Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey: Frequency Reports.

Survey Question 5: During the past year, did you participate in any outdoor recreation activities in Michigan? For example, have you walked, hiked, biked, or participated in some other type of outdoor recreation activity at parks, open spaces, or in your neighborhood?

Exhibit B3. Participation in Outdoor Recreation of Any Kind, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Yes	60.1%	58.9%	84.2%	74.7%
b) No	39.9%	41.1%	15.6%	25.3%
c) I'm not sure	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B4. Participation in Outdoor Recreation of Any Kind, by Age

Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Yes	84.2%	87.1%	79.9%	90.0%	70.7%	65.4%
b) No	15.8%	12.0%	20.1%	10.0%	29.3%	34.6%
c) I'm not sure	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Survey Question 6: During the past year, on average, how often did you enjoy outdoor recreation?

Of the USER group...

Exhibit B5. Frequency of Outdoor Recreation, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Never	1.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
b) Less than once per week	10.9%	16.3%	9.0%	9.4%
c) Once per week	25.8%	25.6%	30.0%	37.5%
d) Two to four times per week	47.7%	53.5%	40.5%	35.9%
e) More than four times per week	13.3%	4.7%	19.3%	15.6%
f) Don't know/ Refused	0.8%	0.0%	0.5%	1.6%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B6. Frequency of Outdoor Recreation, by Age

Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Never	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	1.5%
b) Less than once per week	12.4%	11.3%	7.7%	8.5%	7.2%	10.7%
c) Once per week	22.4%	29.7%	38.3%	27.3%	30.9%	29.6%
d) Two to four times per week	47.6%	47.2%	37.8%	41.5%	40.7%	34.7%
e) More than four times per week	17.6%	11.8%	15.8%	20.8%	20.1%	21.4%
f) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	1.0%	2.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Michigan Recreation Opportunities (All)

Survey Question 14: How satisfied are you with the amount of public outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan, overall?

Exhibit B7. Satisfaction with the Amount of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Michigan Overall, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	71.8%	84.7%	86.5%	79.3%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.2%	4.2%	9.2%	6.9%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	8.9%	11.1%	3.8%	13.8%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B8. Satisfaction with the Amount of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Michigan Overall, by Age

Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	83.3%	86.3%	80.8%	85.1%	82.4%	86.3%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9.4%	10.4%	11.8%	9.4%	12.9%	7.7%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	7.4%	3.3%	7.3%	5.6%	4.0%	4.7%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.3%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Survey Question 15: How satisfied are you with the amount of public outdoor recreation opportunities within a half hour of your home?

Exhibit B9. Satisfaction with The Amount of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Within a Half Hour of Home, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	64.5%	61.6%	75.5%	63.6%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14.0%	19.2%	14.0%	14.8%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	21.5%	19.2%	9.7%	20.5%

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.1%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B10. Satisfaction with the Amount of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Within a Half Hour of Home, by Age

Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	74.8%	67.6%	69.3%	72.2%	69.6%	81.0%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14.9%	19.9%	10.2%	17.4%	15.8%	9.0%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	10.4%	12.4%	20.5%	10.4%	12.8%	8.7%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	1.3%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Survey Question 16: How satisfied are you with the quality of public outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan, overall?

Exhibit B11. Satisfaction with the Quality of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Michigan Overall, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	69.0%	75.0%	85.7%	73.3%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.5%	12.5%	11.7%	14.0%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	15.0%	12.5%	2.5%	12.8%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B12. Satisfaction with the Quality of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Michigan Overall, by Age

Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	80.2%	81.3%	79.5%	83.3%	80.7%	86.7%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.9%	15.8%	9.8%	14.2%	13.9%	8.0%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	5.9%	2.9%	10.7%	2.4%	4.7%	5.3%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Survey Question 17: How satisfied are you with the quality of public outdoor recreation opportunities within a half hour of your home?

Exhibit B13. Satisfaction with the Quality of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Within a Half Hour of Home, by Race

Response	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	White, Non-Hispanic	All Other Races
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	65.0%	67.1%	76.9%	61.6%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.4%	24.7%	14.5%	17.4%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	18.7%	8.2%	8.4%	20.9%
d) Don't know/ Refused	1.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit B14. Satisfaction with the Quality of Public Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Within a Half Hour of Home, by Age

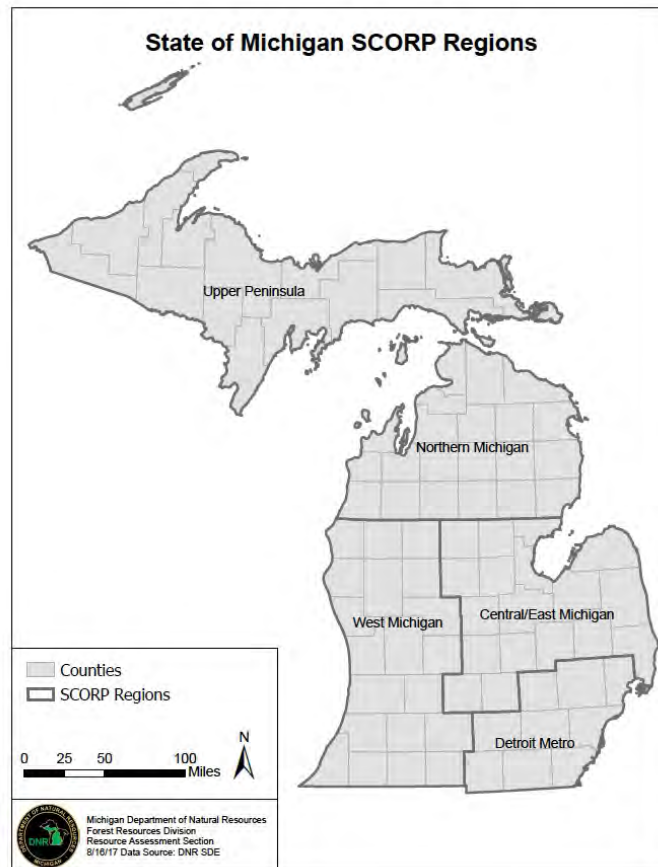
Response	Age 18–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 65+
a) Very satisfied/ Satisfied	75.2%	69.7%	75.3%	73.6%	70.6%	79.1%
b) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.4%	16.6%	14.4%	15.6%	19.5%	12.6%
c) Very dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	12.4%	13.7%	10.3%	10.8%	8.5%	8.3%
d) Don't know/ Refused	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Regional Results

In 2017, the SCORP citizen survey was expanded from the previous SCORP plan to gather more responses across the state and allow for analysis by regions. This provides the opportunity to examine the needs and issues relevant in different parts of the state and helps in targeting activities and support. The full regional analysis is available in Michigan Outdoor Recreation Telephone Survey: Frequency Reports. Exhibit B15 shows how the state was divided for survey analysis purposes.

Exhibit B15. Regional Breakdown of Michigan



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Upper Peninsula

A total of 300 survey responses were collected from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Survey responses were rake weighted to more accurately reflect the region's demographic profile and have an adjusted margin of error of 7.6 percent.⁵ Caution should be taken when comparing findings to those of other regions due to the error rates present in both analyses.

Selected Key Findings

- Nearly 87 percent of Upper Peninsula residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Almost nine out of ten Upper Peninsula respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 86 and 85 percent, respectively).
- Over three-quarters of Upper Peninsula respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (81 percent and 82 percent, respectively).
- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 27 percent of Upper Peninsula users as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- Nine out of ten (93 percent) outdoor recreation participants who reside in the Upper Peninsula went outside 52 or more days during the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with 75 percent doing so for more than 100 days.
- Most Upper Peninsula outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (64 percent), followed by previous experiences with a location (60 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.

⁵ See the methodology section for more detail on rake weights and the calculation of appropriate error rates.



- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (89 percent), swimming outdoors (79 percent), and sledding or tubing (70 percent) having the most participants in the Upper Peninsula.

Northern Michigan

A total of 300 survey responses were collected from Northern Michigan. Survey responses were rake weighted to more accurately reflect the region’s demographic profile and have an adjusted margin of error of 6.6 percent. Caution should be taken when comparing findings to those of other regions due to the error rates present in both analyses.

Selected Key Findings

- Over 88 percent of Northern Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Around nine out of ten Northern Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 87 and 90 percent, respectively).
- Eight out of ten Northern Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (82 percent and 82 percent, respectively).
- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified

by 19 percent of Northern Michigan participants as the most important outdoor activity to them.

- Nearly 95 percent of outdoor recreation participants who reside in Northern Michigan went outside 52 or more days during the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with nearly 68 percent doing so for more than 100 days.
- Most Northern Michigan outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (62 percent), followed by previous experiences with a location (58 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (81 percent), swimming outdoors (78 percent), and sledding or tubing (68 percent) having the most participants in Northern Michigan.

West Michigan

A total of 300 survey responses were collected from West Michigan. Survey responses were rake weighted to more accurately reflect the region’s demographic profile and have an adjusted margin of error of 7.1 percent. Caution should be taken when comparing findings to those of other regions due to the error rates present in both analyses.

Selected Key Findings

- Nearly 82 percent of West Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- More than three-quarters of West Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 83 and 84 percent, respectively).
- More than three-quarters of West Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their

home (82 percent and 81 percent, respectively).

- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by over 29 percent of West Michigan outdoor recreation participants as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- Over 92 percent of outdoor recreation participants who reside in West Michigan went outside 52 or more days during the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with over 65 percent doing so for more than 100 days.
- Most West Michigan outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (69 percent), followed by previous experiences with a location (60 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (89 percent), swimming outdoors (84 percent), and fishing (61 percent) having the most participants in West Michigan.

Central/East Michigan

A total of 300 survey responses were collected from Central/East Michigan. Survey responses were rake weighted to more accurately reflect the region's demographic profile and have an adjusted margin of error of 6.8 percent. Caution should be taken when comparing findings to those of other regions due to the error rates present in both analyses.

Selected Key Findings

- Over 83 percent of Central/East Michigan residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Close to nine out of ten Central/East Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 84 and 87 percent, respectively).

- Just under three-quarters of Central/East Michigan respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (70 percent and 73 percent, respectively).
- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 22 percent of Central/East Michigan outdoor recreation participants as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- Over 91 percent of outdoor recreation participants who reside in Central/East Michigan went outside 52 or more days during the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with nearly 62 percent doing so for more than 100 days.
- Most Central/East Michigan outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (71 percent), followed by previous experiences with a location (61 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with swimming outdoors (85 percent), visiting parks or playgrounds (83 percent), and sledding or tubing (63 percent) having the most participants in Central/East Michigan.

Metro Detroit

A total of 350 survey responses were collected from Metro Detroit. Survey responses were rake weighted to more accurately reflect the region's demographic profile and have an adjusted margin of error of 6.8 percent. Caution should be taken when comparing findings to those of other regions, due to the error rates present in both analyses.

Selected Key Findings

- Nearly 75 percent of Metro Detroit residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Around three-quarters of Metro Detroit respondents

are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation in Michigan (around 82 and 71 percent, respectively).

- Around three-quarters of Metro Detroit respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation within a half hour of their home (78 percent and 71 percent, respectively).
- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified by 26 percent of Metro Detroit users as the most important outdoor activity to them.
- Eighty-seven percent of outdoor recreation participants who reside in Metro Detroit went outside 52 or more days in the year for outdoor recreation of any type, with nearly 54 percent doing so for more than 100 days.
- Most Metro Detroit outdoor recreation participants utilize recommendations from family and friends (68 percent), followed by Internet searches (60 percent) or previous experiences with a location (50 percent) to plan for their outdoor recreation activities.
- Household members under the age of 18 also participated in outdoor recreation, with visiting parks or playgrounds (83 percent), swimming outdoors (68 percent), and participating in team or individual sports (46 percent for on a league and 45 percent for nonleague sports) having the most participants in Metro Detroit.

Conclusion

With limited funding available in Michigan, it is important that MDNR activities are in line with the greatest needs and wants of Michigan citizens. This statewide citizen survey was designed to help the MDNR understand residents' participation in and satisfaction with Michigan outdoor recreation. Additionally, the 2017 survey was modified from the previous version to gather total days of participation for 34 separate activities. This sets the stage for future analysis on the economic contribution of outdoor recreation in Michigan. Due to the change in methodology from the 2012 survey, participation rates for specific activities (unless otherwise noted) are not directly comparable.

The activities respondents participate in and find most important are as varied as the citizens of Michigan themselves. The state has high rates of participation in outdoor recreation and frequency of use, but there are differences between various demographic groups. This analysis can aid in targeting activities or campaigns to increase user participation for all populations by strategically targeting outreach. Overall, the majority of Michigan residents are satisfied with the amount and quality of outdoor recreation available in Michigan, and while satisfied with the quantity and quality of opportunities within a half hour of their home, they are less satisfied with what is available near where they live than with what is available around the state in general. However, there are significant differences in satisfaction levels between racial groups that need to be addressed to ensure adequate access and opportunity for all segments of Michigan's population.

Methodology

The citizen survey was implemented between April 7 and May 6, 2017, and responses were collected from 1,550 Michigan residents aged 18 and over. The sample targeted a 45 percent landline and 55 percent cell phone random-digital-dial sample, with targets set for reaching age and race subgroups. In total, 852 responses were from cell phones and 698 responses were from landlines. The sample was divided into five regions of the state, with a minimum of 300 responses per region (with 45 percent landline and 55 percent cell sample targeted for each) to allow for individual regional analysis. Statistical results are weighted to correct for sample and actual population demographic differences, including regional share of the statewide population.

Raking was used to weight the statewide and regional analyses. Rake weights for the statewide analysis were trimmed using five times the mean weight so that no individual responses were given too much or too little effect on the overall results. Trimmed weights were then reraked and this process was repeated with trimming applied for each iteration until all weights were within five times the mean, plus one (Peck 2011). Discontinuing rake weighting is also supported by other guidelines which suggest higher trim values than those incorporated in this analysis.⁶ Trimming of rake weights was not needed in the regional analyses.

The margin of sampling error for weighted data is higher than that of unweighted data. The design effects (deff) and new survey margin of error for the weighted survey were calculated, with a statewide deff of 1.2 and a new survey margin of error of .02987, or 3 percent (Pew 2010). The 3 percent survey margin of error is only slightly higher than the unweighted survey margin of error of 2.5 percent.

The regional deff and survey margins of error are: Upper Peninsula, 1.34 and 7.6 percent; Northern Michigan, 1.16 and 6.6 percent; West Michigan, 1.27 and 7.1 percent; Central/East Michigan, 1.20 and 6.8 percent; Metro Detroit, 1.20 and 6.8 percent. Overall, the slight decline in the survey's margin of error and the small deff are acceptable for the reduction in bias that weighting of the survey provides.

⁶ One method for trimming weights is using the median weight plus five (or six) times the inner quartile range. Using this methodology results in a top trim value of $0.7433 + 5 * 1.1637 = 6.56$.



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



Introduction

Michigan has been endowed with abundant and unique assets for outdoor recreation—from its inland lakes and streams, local trails, and greenways, to iconic places such as Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Tahquamenon Falls, and Belle Isle. These resources provide opportunities for residents and visitors to get outside and enjoy nature, exercise, spend time with family and friends, and even compete in races and other recreational challenges. They provide physical and mental health benefits, help strengthen social fabric, and connect people to each other and their communities. They also provide substantial economic benefits for the state and its residents.

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. Governor Snyder's Building the 21st Century Economy Commission report identified "ensuring the quality of and access to our natural resources, fresh water, and recreation" as a key recommendation to help attract and retain talent in Michigan (2017). With careful research and

targeted investment, local governments can grow their economies by developing outdoor recreation facilities and investing in outdoor recreation programs.

To help further these efforts, the MDNR expanded the 2017 statewide SCORP citizen survey to ask residents more specifically about the amount of time they spend recreating outdoors for 34 separate activities. The expanded survey allowed for the collection of participant days that can be extrapolated to the broader Michigan population, adjusted for accuracy according to known data, combined with estimated per-day costs for the various activities, and used to estimate the economic contribution these outdoor recreation activities play in Michigan's economy. This data collection sets the stage for future analysis and provides critical pieces of the puzzle—participation rates and participant days for Michigan residents.

How Important is the Outdoor Recreation Economy?

Outdoor recreation has a big economic impact across the nation. It helps drive economic activity in the communities surrounding recreation destinations and can be particularly important in rural areas (White et al. 2016). The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) has released numerous reports on user trends and the economic significance associated with these trends. In their 2017 report, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, the association estimates the contribution of outdoor recreation to the national economy in 2016 (Outdoor Industry Association 2017a). According to this study, outdoor recreation in 2016:

- Generated 7.6 million American jobs across the service, manufacturing, management, and sales sectors
- Accounted for \$887 billion of user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses, behind only healthcare, and financial services and insurance spending

Backcountry North

Year Founded: 1978

Location: Traverse City and Birmingham, Michigan

Backcountry North—100 percent Michigan owned—is Michigan's largest independent outdoor specialty retailer. It not only equips the state's outdoor enthusiast, it also actively supports local land and water conservation. Tracy Mayer, owner of Backcountry North, grew up in Traverse City and knows the importance of conserving our Great Lakes land. In Southeast Michigan, Backcountry North has teamed up with Six Rivers Land Conservancy to sponsor the conservancy's Adventure League. The Adventure League encourages the public to discover Southeast Michigan's wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities by inviting residents outside to hike, bike, and kayak. In the Grand Traverse region, Backcountry North supports the Boardman River restoration, and in partnership with national brands such as Patagonia, the company has provided funds for local river cleanups throughout the year.

- Generated \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue and \$59.2 billion in state/local tax revenue⁷

The OIA recently released statewide estimates of the economic impact of outdoor recreation. They estimate that 63 percent of Michigan residents participate in outdoor recreation each year. This is below the MDNR statewide citizens survey findings, but the difference is most likely due to the different definitions of what constitutes outdoor recreation; the MDNR survey used a more expansive definition. According to the OIA study, outdoor recreation in 2016:

- Generated 232,000 Michigan jobs and \$7.5 billion in wages and salaries directly related to the outdoor recreation sector
- Accounted for \$22.6 billion of user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses in Michigan
- Generated \$2.1 billion in state/local tax revenue in Michigan

A report on the economic contribution of national parks showed that visitors spent \$18.4 billion in the local area (within 60 miles) surrounding a national park, contributed 318,000 jobs, and drove \$34.9 billion in economic output (National Park Service 2017). In Michigan alone, the national parks drew 2.7 million visitors who spent \$235 million in the local area (National Park Service 2017). Analysis on the impact of federal lands found that recreation participants spent at least \$51 billion in the local area around the federal lands in which they were recreating (English et al. 2014).

In the past decade, the role of parks and outdoor recreation resources in advancing economic well-being has received increasing attention in Michigan as it becomes clear how these resources provide significant economic returns to the state. A 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 (e.g., 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, and 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 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 (e.g., outfitters, guides)
- Increasing property values (and resulting tax revenues) for adjacent properties and neighborhoods

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 healthcare issues. This could be

particularly relevant for a state such as Michigan, which has the 16th highest obesity rate (31.2 percent) in the United States (State of Obesity 2017a; State of Obesity 2017b).

Creating Vibrant Communities

Michigan's outdoor recreation resources provide a competitive advantage in today's economy, 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 found in Michigan.

Public open spaces, such as parks, trail systems, bike lanes, and greenways 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 talented professionals. 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 nondurable goods. These strategies frequently included providing access to raw materials, capital, skilled labor, industrial facilities, and transportation systems, and 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, the U.S. has moved away from this model of economic prosperity. Technological innovation has also created conditions where information can be exchanged more readily, such

⁷ The study included the following outdoor recreation activities: bicycling, camping, fishing, hunting, motorcycling, off-roading, snow sports, trail sports, water sports, and wildlife viewing.

that nonresource-specific employment (e.g., 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 prospective communities' quality of life in their decision making (Florida 2002; Adelaja et al. 2009). For Michigan to be competitive in a changing economy, its communities and regions will need to appeal to the 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

A recent study, *The Economic Impact of Travel in Michigan*, estimated that the traveler economy supports approximately 326,685 jobs and an income of \$10.6 billion. Of the \$22.3 billion travelers spent in Michigan in 2014, 14.5 percent of this, or \$3.3 billion, went to recreation and entertainment (Tourism Economics 2014). The National Park Service estimated that Michigan had 2.7 million visitors to the national parks alone in 2016. They are estimated to have spent \$235.0 million in the region surrounding the parks and contributed 3,767 jobs and \$333.6 million in economic output (National Park Service 2017). In an effort to capture a greater portion of the national tourism and outdoor recreation market, Michigan has continued to invest 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 MEDC tracks visitors to the state and evaluates the return on investment from the *Pure Michigan* campaign. The *2010 Michigan 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). The 2014 report *The Economic Impact of Travel in Michigan* shows that trend is continuing, with total visitation reaching 113.4 million visitors and travel spending reaching \$22.8 billion by 2014. In the past four years, traveler spending has increased 3.7 percent per year and leisure travelers make up 72.6 percent of all traveler spending (Tourism Economics 2014). While the 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.

As of 2011, recreation activities ranked 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, ecotourism, national or state park visits, sailing, and snow skiing in 2011. Several of these activities, however, have high per-party trip spending, so while these may not be visitors' most popular activities, they still make an important economic contribution (D.K. Shifflet & Associates 2011).

In addition to the *2014 Economic Impact of Travel in Michigan* report, there have been many studies on trip spending associated with specific types of outdoor recreation in Michigan. For example, the 2010 *Michigan Licensed ORV Use and Users* study analyzed the economic significance of off-road vehicle use in Michigan on public lands during a 12-month period in 2008–2009. The study estimated economic contributions of equipment purchases and trip spending, and isolated ORV trip spending by out-of-state

Shaggy's Copper Country Skis

Year Founded: 2005

Location: Boyne City, Michigan

Shaggy's, located in Boyne City, Michigan, is a small, family-run business that grew from the recreation interests of a father and his sons. They began making handcrafted skis in 2005 and launched their business and name in 2008. They are following their passion and sharing it with others. Michiganders aren't just hitting their home trails with Shaggy's, said John Thompson, co-founder and co-owner, "Transplants will come back to Northern Michigan and take a set of our skis home with them. They love the idea of having a pair of handcrafted skis from their home state that can perform well on big mountains. Not many people have an emotional attachment to their skis, but ours remind their riders of their homes and families in Northern Michigan."

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.

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 opportunities, such as running, cycling, triathlons, 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 hosted more than 450 race- or tour-oriented events (e.g., running, cycling, duathlon, triathlon, adventure racing) in 2012, for example, 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 2017a).

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, ecotourism guides, expanded gear shops (e.g., bikes, outfitters), and visitor-based recreation services, such as dining and lodging. As noted above, the Outdoor Industry Association estimated \$887 billion of national user spending on gear, equipment, and trip-related expenses in 2016, behind only healthcare and financial services and insurance spending (Outdoor Industry Association 2017a).

Several studies have also looked at the economic impact of specific sections of Michigan's outdoor recreation economy, including snowmobiling, ORV use, trails,

and boating (Nelson et al. July 2010; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2008; and Adelaja et al. 2010). A study on the direct and indirect impact of boating in the state, for example, found that Great Lakes boaters spend over \$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).

Public-private partnerships may provide new and unique opportunities for enhanced recreation and local business development. If Michigan continues to grow its outdoor recreation industry, the impact on sales, jobs, and tax revenues associated with businesses serving this industry could continue to play a significant role in improving Michigan's economic prosperity and revitalizing local communities.

Increased Property Values

Natural resource assets that support outdoor recreation also benefit the economy by increasing 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 study conducted by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University in 2007 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 C1 shows the economic significance of recreation land to properties in Oakland County. The analysis concluded that parks, trails, sidewalks, and pathways that help create walkable communities have a significant positive effect on property values (Adelaja et al. 2007).



Exhibit CI. The Effect of Recreational Amenities on Property Values in Oakland County, Michigan

Location of House from Recreational Land	Increase in Property Value Percentage	Amount Increased
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	N/A
Base comparison: > 450 meters	Base	Base

Source: Adelaja et al. 2007.

Studies in other states dating back two decades 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 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that of 87 percent of survey respondents think that good urban neighborhoods have safe and pleasant walking access to parks (National Park Service 1995; A. Nelesen Associates, 2001). A review of over 60 studies on the impact open spaces have on residential property values showed that most increase property values; however, the magnitude depends on the size of the area, its proximity to residences, the type of open space, and the method of analysis (Active Living Research 2010.)

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 still 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 an 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. A review of parks and recreation plans across the state found that many communities are documenting their strategic recreational assets, which can then be used to help develop robust economic development strategies.

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 would enable communities to expand their economy if addressed; and targeting investment and marketing efforts to attract residents, visitors, and businesses.

To be successful, this approach must fully integrate all of a community's 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 provide significant economic opportunities for a community must be as important as any other tool or asset in the economic development offering, 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.

Summary and Recommendations

Individual recreation activities (e.g., camping, cycling, or snowmobiling) have varying levels of economic significance for Michigan's economy, but they all contribute to the economic well-being of the state (Adelaja et al. 2012). Going beyond the impact on the economy, natural resource amenities and outdoor recreation contribute to a good overall quality of life that makes Michigan and its communities a desirable place to live, work, and vacation.

In order to enhance the state's green infrastructure (a key asset that 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 (e.g., hunting and Nordic skiing, mountain biking and equestrian trails).
- Connect 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, public-private partnerships, and competitions such as marathons, triathlons, and bicycle or canoe races.
- Continue to 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.
- Continue to 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., community economic development strategies and downtown development plans).



Appendix D. **SCORP Development Team**



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Charles “Chuck” Hoover, Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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Appendix E. Summary of SCORP Community Conversations



As part of the update to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 13 community conversations were hosted throughout the state. The conversations were facilitated by local and state outdoor recreation leaders and included representatives of public and private recreation providers, conservation organizations, community development organizations, land conservancies, outdoor recreation user groups, and other nonprofit organizations.

The meeting locations and facilitators included:

- Alpena, Abigail Ertel, Huron Pines
- Detroit, Dr. Granae Dudley, The Youth Connection
- Grand Rapids, Ann Conklin, MParks
- Grand Rapids, Marc Miller, MDNR
- Grayling, Jonathan Jarosz, Heart of the Lakes
- Kalamazoo, Ashley Wick, Kalamazoo Nature Center
- Lansing, Ann Conklin, mParks
- Lansing, Marc Miller, MDNR
- Lapeer, Ann Conklin, mParks
- Marquette, Marc Miller, MDNR
- Midland, Ann Conklin, mParks
- Petoskey, Megan Olds, Parallel Solutions
- Traverse City, Megan Olds, Parallel Solutions

The purpose of the meetings was to obtain input on the current state of Michigan's outdoor recreation assets, as well as the role and function of the MDNR and other recreation providers for future outdoor recreation in the state. During the conversations, participants were asked a series of questions about outdoor recreation in Michigan, including:

- How would you describe the current state of Michigan's outdoor recreation?
- What do you consider the top priorities for Michigan and outdoor recreation providers over the next five years?
- How well do the draft objectives align with these priorities for outdoor recreation in Michigan?
- What would make the draft SCORP most useful for recreation providers and decision makers?

This feedback was used to refine objectives and develop action steps for their advancement. Responses to each of the questions are summarized below.

Current State of Michigan's Outdoor Recreation

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

- High-quality natural resources
- The Great Lakes
- Inland lakes
- Rivers and streams
- A well-developed and growing trail system
- Increased access to state recreation areas from the Recreation Passport
- A significant amount of public lands that support outdoor recreation
- A strong outdoor recreation heritage
- Passion among outdoor recreation stakeholders
- Four-season recreation opportunities

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

- Lack of information about what opportunities already exist
- Connecting kids to outdoor recreation
- Lack of transportation to access recreation opportunities
- Lack of recreation opportunities that meet the needs of underserved communities
- Inequitable access to recreation opportunities, particularly in urban centers
- Increased resource extraction on state lands

- Lack of sustainable funding to support maintenance of existing recreation infrastructure
- Managing resources for multiple user groups and conflicts that sometimes emerge
- Declining interest in hunting and fishing
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Deferred maintenance to park facilities during the recession
- Declining parks budgets at the local level
- Inequitable investments in recreation amenities throughout the state
- Desire for more specialized recreational opportunities
- A need to communicate the value of outdoor recreation assets
- A need for better mechanisms to support regional planning for recreation
- Providing responsible access and sustainable management
- More strategic acquisition of public lands
- Increased recreation infrastructure, particularly campgrounds in areas with growing use

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 include:

- The need to develop sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure that recreation infrastructure provides Michigan's desired level of service. Current funding mechanisms provide a robust framework for acquisition and development but not maintenance.
- Invasive species continue to threaten Michigan's natural resources and impact outdoor recreation. Invasive species management should be part of recreation planning and management.

- Land and water trails should continue to be a priority for investment that connects recreation assets and communities.
- The outdoor recreation community as a whole should enhance its collaborative efforts to achieve shared objectives.
- Michigan has world-class outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure but it is not always easy to find information about these opportunities. The state and other recreation partners should work to make this information more readily accessible.
- Outdoor recreation amenities should continue to prioritize placemaking to help Michigan communities be desirable places to live and visit.
- Michigan's recreation system should be more accessible to diverse populations and underserved communities.
- Recreation amenities should integrate principles of universal design to serve people with varying levels of ability
- Enhanced promotional efforts have been positive but can overburden some communities and create challenges for resource management. Promotional efforts should be more equitably distributed across the state.
- Education and programming efforts should be enhanced.
- The state should serve as a liaison for recreation stakeholders.
- The state should serve as a conduit for information sharing about recreation opportunities at all levels of government.
- Public transportation access to parks should be enhanced.
- More family-friendly events should be offered.
- Nonmotorized trails should connect parks.
- Investing in older state parks to modernize facilities should be a priority.
- The state and other recreation partners should increase

the use of social media to share information about recreation opportunities.

- The Iron Belle Trail will be a great asset for the state, which should be invested in.
- Recreation partners should develop mechanisms that address financial barriers to recreation.
- Educational efforts with schools should be enhanced at parks.
- Recreation providers should work with user groups to provide access to recreation opportunities while also ensuring that increased access or individual uses do not harm natural resources.

DNR Draft SCORP Objectives

Generally, participants felt that the draft objectives aligned well with the priorities and issues that were identified and offered suggestions to refine them, which were evaluated and integrated into the SCORP. Participants frequently discussed the action steps that would be used to achieve these objectives as well as the metrics that would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Making the SCORP a Useful Tool

As a final question in the discussions, participants were asked what would help make the SCORP a useful tool. Participants suggested that the SCORP should be accessible to the public and recreation stakeholders, rather than a document that is written solely to meet federal requirements. Additionally, participants suggested that the SCORP should be a robust planning tool rather than just a mechanism to receive federal funding. Those taking part in the conversation suggested that the report should provide clear action steps with well-defined metrics to help assess the effectiveness of achieving each of the objectives.

Participants also suggested that the SCORP should help

provide information regarding the economic significance of outdoor recreation to the local, regional, and statewide economy.



Appendix F. **Summary of Public Input on Draft SCORP**



Overview

In September 2017, Public Sector Consultants, in collaboration with the MDNR, completed a draft of the 2018–2022 SCORP. The plan’s goal is to help guide outdoor recreation investment and program decisions from the state and other public and private recreation stakeholders over the next five years. In developing the draft, the MDNR significantly increased the number of opportunities for engagement with the public and Michigan’s parks and outdoor recreation stakeholders from the 2012 SCORP. An initial online survey was sent to over 8,500 local government officials and two additional surveys were developed and sent to businesses and stakeholders via email. This year, 13 community conversations were held across the state, a significant increase from the five held in 2012. Throughout the processes, discussions were held with relevant state advisory groups (such as the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee) who helped the MDNR develop, refine, and revise the overarching goal and seven objectives included in the SCORP. Based on the early input from stakeholders, the MDNR identified priority actions for achieving the SCORP’s objectives and goal.

Between August 31 and October 2, 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, hosts of the community conversations were contacted to reach out to community conversation participants as well as to send the notice out to their organizations’ listservs. A copy of the draft SCORP was made available for public review and comment on the MDNR’s website, and it included a short survey to obtain feedback. 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, nonprofit, and private sector recreation

stakeholders for the development or improvement of recreation opportunities in Michigan

- Proposed objectives to address the goal of the SCORP
- Proposed actions for each objective to address the goal of the SCORP
- Ability to be measured by the MDNR over time

Respondents were able provide comments through an online form, via email, or first-class mail. Eighteen individuals participated in the online survey, and nineteen people provided feedback on the draft SCORP document directly to the MDNR via email or postal mail, for a total of 37 responses. The method for distribution of the draft SCORP was broader in 2017 than 2012, but had significantly fewer responses. This may be due to the increased outreach during the initial stages of the SCORP’s development, such as expansion of initial surveys, increasing the number of community conversations from five in 2012 to 13 in 2017, and the expansion of the advisory committee to include more external partners.

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

Highlights of Public Comments

All public responses were gathered and categorized for analysis. When appropriate and possible, comments were incorporated within the SCORP document. Eighteen individuals responded to the online survey, hence, percentages of agreement with the direct SCORP questions should be viewed with caution and cannot be extrapolated to the broader population. They merely represent the share

of online respondents who agree or disagree with various questions. Emailed comments did not specifically address the online survey questions, and so are not included in the number in agreement/disagreement; however, emailed and mailed responses are included in the summary text. Many of the email comments provided were in support of the current draft SCORP, suggested specific edits, or provided detailed critiques and recommended changes. The following is a summary of the public input received for the draft SCORP.

The draft SCORP, as written, will be an effective tool for guiding investments by the state and local, nonprofit, and private sector recreation providers in Michigan.

Twelve out of 17 online survey respondents agreed (the 18th did not respond). Those agreeing and disagreeing, as well as those responding with emailed comments, offered suggestions on how to improve the SCORP. Key suggestions related to this topic were that the objectives are too broad and sometimes conflicting. Some felt the goals and objectives were not aspirational enough, while others felt they were on target. Several felt that more concrete data is needed to measure progress, including the use of maps to show change. It was suggested that local communities/stakeholders may be able to provide some data in the absence of available state funding. Specific recreation activities, such as bird watching, nature study, and photography were noted to be overlooked in the report text and, as a result, have been incorporated in more locations. Comments also noted that the plan does not address the privatization of state parks, with several specifically mentioning strong displeasure with the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. In addition, respondents suggested that regional meetings need to be offered in more areas of the state and encompass more stakeholder groups.



The proposed objectives prioritized by the MDNR in the SCORP are the right ones.

Thirteen out of 18 online survey respondents agreed. However, several comments indicate that the objectives are too general and should be given a priority order, one suggestion was to provide a ranking system for the objectives for use in funding. This has been clarified in the introductory text: the objectives and action items are not in priority order. Funding criteria will vary based on the specific funds and/or grant source available. Additionally, respondents felt that progress made or setbacks experienced since the last plan are not clearly articulated. Specific benchmarks were noted in the SCORP whenever available and data collection is ongoing. Some respondents suggested that fossil fuel use should be decreased and more focus on nonmotorized activities should be encouraged, including creating quiet zones where motorized vehicles are not allowed, while others indicate the need for more ORV trails in certain areas of the state. Respondents wanted the health benefits of nonmotorized activities to be further promoted, and this is addressed within the SCORP. Some desire a better plan for promoting hunting and its cultural and economic benefits, while others want support for hunting to be decreased and focus instead placed on ecotourism and wildlife viewing. It was also noted that the plan does not mention severe weather shelters for park/trail users. Several parts of the state were noted as being neglected for improvements, including the Upper Peninsula, urban areas, and underserved communities.

The proposed actions for each objective adequately address the objectives and goal of the SCORP.

Thirteen out of 18 online survey respondents agreed. However, several respondents felt the action items did not promote enough action and/or were too broad in scope. One suggested placing more force behind the action items, such as changing the wording from things like “should” to

“require.” A few suggested limiting the number of action items. Some respondents felt that the action items passed the work onto other parties, and that some actions need to have the caveat that they will be done “only when we have the funds to do it.” Some also felt that action items contradicted each other. No changes were made to the number of action items or the introductory phrasing in order to maintain the board scope and allow for strategic opportunities that may only satisfy some of the objectives and/or action items. Respondents also suggested additional recreation activities to be included in the report. These have been added when possible.

Additional outcomes or measures should be used to evaluate the SCORP.

About half of the online respondents provided comments on additional outcomes and measures that could be incorporated by the MDNR and other recreation providers to evaluate SCORP progress over time. Respondents suggested that more specific measurements are needed to rate progress and hold the government accountable. Some specific recommendations related to increasing the number of deer of a certain age registered at MDNR check stations, or implementing an assessment tool/data collection to determine changes in outdoor recreation user obesity, fitness, and overall health to document improvement in health. Additionally, respondents want the progress to be reported annually. Some feel that too many measurement tools are identified and perhaps yearly feedback from stakeholders and the public may be a better way to measure progress. Specific recommendations included focusing on fixing/improving/maintaining existing infrastructure first, while others recommend expanding in underserved areas, such as near minority or urban areas. Respondents identified the need for more information on procedures to use during severe weather events, such as thunderstorms, lightning, hail, tornadoes, wildfires, etc. Additionally, respondents expressed

displeasure with the public/private partnership of the Grand Prix on Belle Isle.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide any additional input.

Several respondents were very pleased with the draft SCORP as written. Key suggestions for SCORP improvements include making sure that certain outdoor recreation activities are considered and promoted more within the SCORP, such as disc golf courses, equestrian trails, nonmotorized trails, mountain biking, road biking, cross-country skiing, color tours, hiking, and Great Lakes- and National Lakeshore-focused recreation. Some respondents noted that improving recreational access does not always involve development; residents want a diversity of outdoor recreation, including backcountry options. Respondents raised concerns regarding the amount and availability of campground space, including winter camping; lack of investments in sidewalks for walking; lack of dog-accessible beaches; maintaining hunting access on state lands; water safety issues, including providing adequate signage for boating rules; increasing parks in specific parts of the state; stewardship of land; and the increased use of trails by ORVs and logging trucks. Several respondents want to have the Grand Prix removed from Belle Isle, as it interferes with the “opportunity to commune with nature,” and they feel it should not be considered an outdoor recreation use and that it does not meet any SCORP objectives.

Some respondents addressed financial matters by recommending things such as adding user fees for access to state land for activities such as bird watching (and waiving the fees for low-income families), printing the fishing rules and regulations booklets every other year, offering two-year fishing licenses for a discounted rate, or charging higher taxes on water pumping for farmers and water-bottling companies. Again, the issue of “fix what we have first” was raised by some respondents.

One theme repeated by several respondents was the need to increase access to outdoor recreation for underserved communities. Wording within the survey summary sections was thought to downplay the disparities in satisfaction with outdoor recreation between demographic groups. These sections were modified to more explicitly state the differences in satisfaction and use, as well as to highlight Michigan’s recent demographic shifts more clearly.

Survey Respondent:

—
 “I believe if there were opportunities for urban populations to access a state-managed park closer to their communities (as opposed to somewhere hours away), you may see more engagement from urban-minority groups.”

