







Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan

2021 – 2026

CASS COUNTY
COMMUNITY PARK, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAY PLAN
2021-2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2021-2026 Cass County Park, Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan is a five-year vision for the future conception, development and sustainability of parks, recreation, open space and greenways in Cass County, Michigan. This plan was researched, developed and prepared as a cooperative effort between the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission, county and local government, and the citizens of Cass County with the assistance of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. Individuals who came together based on their passion for Cass County and the quality of life within. Their enthusiasm and insight during this process has been much appreciated. In addition, we would like to thank the participation and cooperation of the following individuals and organizations whose value in this process cannot be underestimated:

- Cass County Commissioners
- Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission
- Cass County Planning Commission Representatives
- MSU Extension
- Those who provided feedback via phone, e-mail, written comments and survey responses.
- The Friends of the Cass County Parks
- Townships, Cities, and Villages who provided information and insight
- Local newspapers and libraries for presenting our information to the public

PLAN FOCUS

As a guide, this plan will act as a road map for future planning, development, and sustainability of the natural resources, recreation facilities and opportunities within Cass County. In addition, this vision for the future will allow decision makers the opportunity to see, on paper, what path Cass County has chosen to meet its park and open space needs for the next five years and beyond.

During the development of the last plan in 2013, active solicitation of input from County residents, officials and other community stakeholders, resulted in the following goals to guide Cass County through the Recreation Plan process. It must also be noted that solicitation of input was not just centered on County residents but all stakeholders who believe well planned, developed and sustained park, recreation and open space is an important component of an enhanced quality of life. These goals are still relevant for this plan update in 2021.



Goal Summary

The following summary and corresponding five-year action plan were developed by the Cass County Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Department, members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and stakeholder groups as they worked together to create the recreational goals listed below.

GOAL 1 Establish stable and secure funding to improve and maintain county parks and recreation programs.

GOAL 2 Create and implement a marketing campaign to promote Cass County as a recreation destination for residents and visitors.

GOAL 3 Provide barrier-free accessibility to existing and future facilities.

GOAL 4 Develop and support policies that will preserve and protect valuable water, land and sky resources.

GOAL 5 Support and promote policies that will preserve and protect properties with historic and/or cultural value.

GOAL 6 Seek and establish connections between existing and future trails and pathways including greenways and blueways.

GOAL 7 Respond to changing demographics when planning future recreational facilities and programs.

GOAL 8 Enhance the positive working relationship with local and regional partnerships, including the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, to maximize the benefits of coordinated programs and facilities.

GOAL 9 Develop and implement an action plan in response to the identified needs of Cass County residents and those who participated in the planning process.

This plan was developed according to the guidelines for *Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Plan* published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Approval of this plan will allow Cass County to be eligible to pursue grant funding provided by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Historic Overview

Located in southwest Michigan, Cass County was organized in 1829 and named after the former territorial governor, Lewis Cass. This area was originally inhabited by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, with European settlers moving there in the 1820's. An old trail ran east/west across the southern portion of the county, which later became US-12 and for a while was the main road from Chicago to Detroit.

Cass County also had its role in the Civil War as a location for the Underground Railroad. Assisted largely by Quakers, many Black slaves were successfully settled there. The William Jones House, just outside of Cassopolis to the east, represented a successful "end of the line" to many.

Today, Cass County is both a rich agricultural area as well as a popular tourist spot. Although small to medium sized family farms have given way to large, more corporate-like operations, Cass County continues to play a major part in pork production in Michigan as well as other feed crops like soybeans and corn. It also contains over 94 inland lakes, a downhill ski area and several nature preserves, which makes for great water and winter sports, hiking and birdwatching. Its largest community is the city Dowagiac to the northwest, with Cassopolis, the largest village, as the county seat.

Among other milestones and entrepreneurs of note, Dr. T. K. Lawless, Fred Russ, and Edward Lowe are mentioned in the timeline as they were instrumental to the development of the county parks through the sale and/or generous donations of land.

Timeline of historic events and population growth

Population growth by decade		***Timeline of Historic Events in Cass County[1]***	
1830	919	*1829* *1834*	*Cass County officially organized* *Cassopolis designated as county seat*
1840	5,710	*1848*	*Michigan Central Railroad comes through county*
1850	10,907	*1854*	*P.D. Beckwith opens foundry*
1860	17,721	*1861-1865*	*Underground Railroad active in Cass County*
1870	21,094	*1870s*	*James Heddon revolutionizes beekeeping industry and wooden fishing lures*
1880	22,009	*1886*	*Round Oak Stove Company founded*
1890	20,953		
1900	20,876	*1908-1909*	*Dowagiac Motor Car Company opens and closes*
1910	20,624	*1919*	*T.K. Lawless receives MD degree at Northwestern teaches dermatology 1924-1941*
1920	20,395		
1930	20,888	*1939*	*Fred Russ gives 580 acres of woods to MSU*
1940	21,910	*1947*	*Edward Lowe invents "kitty litter"*
1950	28,185	*1956*	*Capt. Ivan Kincheloe, recognized as first USAF Space Pioneer*
1960	36,932	*1964*	*Southwestern Michigan College established*
1970	43,312	*1974*	*Cass County Parks & Recreation Board established*
1980	49,499	*1980* *1989*	*State of Michigan deeds 602 acres to the county to become T.K. Lawless Park* *"The Friends of the Parks" is formed*
1990	49,477	*1992* *1995*	*Tornado touches down near Dowagiac* *Property added to T.K. Lawless Park – now totals 862 acres*
2000	51,104	*2001* *2006* *2007* *2009*	*T.K. Lawless acquisition of 105 acres (MNRTF)* *Cass County adopts five-year development plan for the parks* *MEANDRS project completed at Dodd Park on Dowagiac Rive* *Cass County adopts Act 261 and creates Parks & Recreation Commission*
2010	52,293 51,581 51,453	*2012* *2013* *2017*	*Cass County BOC reduces from 15 members to 7* *New multi-purpose facility at T.K. Lawless Park* *Cass County adopts five-year development plan for parks* *Dodd Park River Trail Project is completed*
2020	52,053	*2020*	*Dr. T.K. Lawless Park designated "Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park and State of Michigan Dark Sky Preserve"*

[1] *http://lafourche.com/lawless.htm*

Physical Characteristics

Location

Cass County is located in southwestern Michigan bordered by Berrien County to the west, Van Buren County to the north, St. Joseph County to the east, and the State of Indiana to the south. This rural county is approximately two hours east of Chicago, three hours west of Detroit, and three hours north of Indianapolis.

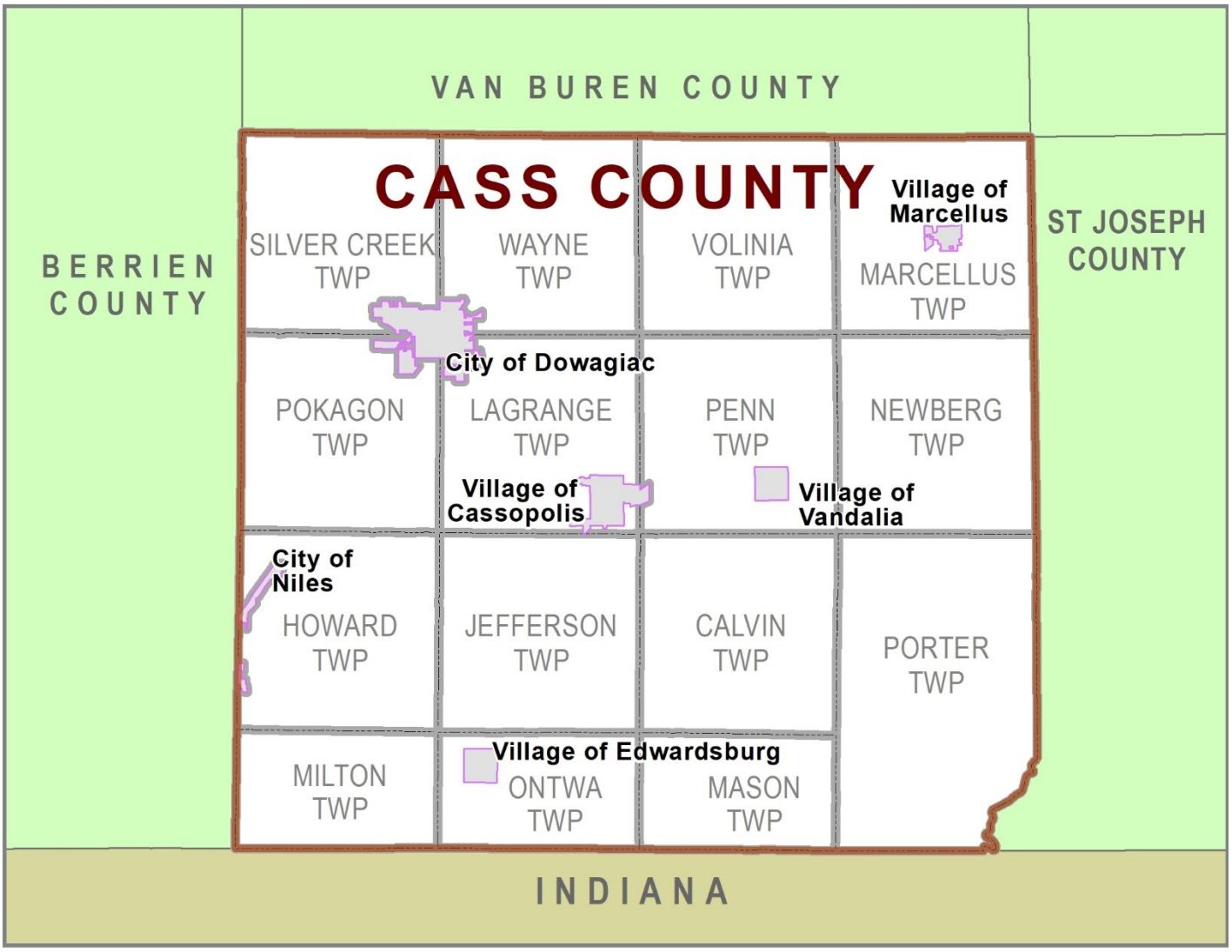


Within the 508 square miles of the county, there are fifteen townships, four incorporated villages, and one city. The total area of the county includes 16.3 square miles of water (equivalent to 3.2 percent) and 492 square miles of land.[2] There are 190,330 acres of farmland in Cass County, resulting in 811 farms at an average of 235 acres each.[3]



[2] *U.S. Census Bureau*

[3] *USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service*



Municipalities of Cass County

City of Dowagiac	Calvin Township	Mason Township	Pokagon Township
Village of Cassopolis	Howard Township	Milton Township	Porter Township
Village of Edwardsburg	Jefferson Township	Newberg Township	Silver Creek Township
Village of Marcellus	LaGrange Township	Ontwa Township	Volinia Township
Village of Vandalia	Marcellus Township	Penn Township	Wayne Township

Transportation Systems

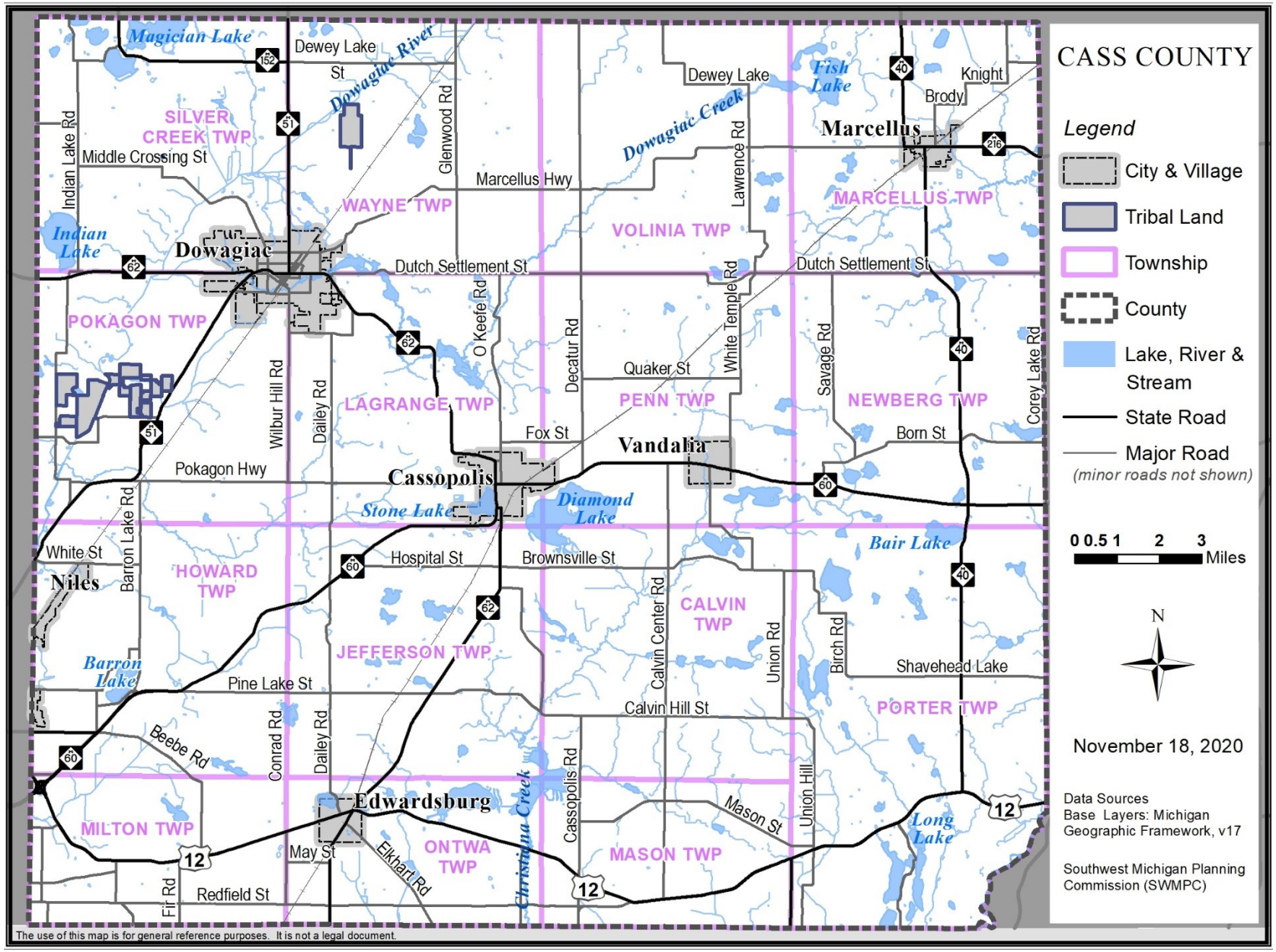
How do residents and visitors get to the parks? How accessible are the recreational opportunities? Not only is it important to have great facilities and activities, it is also important that getting there is easy too. The Action Plan has addressed this issue by calling for increased and improved signage to direct visitors to the desired facility. There is also a plan to develop the website and other marketing tools to make a recreational visit in Cass County an enjoyable and stress-free trip. Transportation can sometimes be challenging in this county, but as long as the way is not too complicated, the scenic route can become part of the adventure.

Highways - Although there are no interstate highways traversing Cass County there are a number of scenic highways facilitating transportation throughout the county. One of these highways is US-12, a designated heritage trail crossing the county east to west along the southern border. Visit https://www.us12heritagetrail.org/.

Airports -There is a municipal airport in the city of Dowagiac and a number of private airfields and heliports throughout the county. The proximity of the South Bend Regional Airport in Indiana (just south of the Cass County border) is also a viable option and has connections to several major airports.

Public Transportation -Cass County Transportation Authority provides public transportation throughout the county. This transit system consists of eleven small buses providing demand-response and semi-fixed route service. The City of Dowagiac provides on-demand Dial-A-Ride services out of its historic train depot.

Rail Service - Amtrak provides convenient travel to either Chicago or Detroit from the downtown Dowagiac historic train depot.


CASS COUNTY
Legend
City & Village
Tribal Land
Township
County
Lake, River & Stream
State Road
Major Road
(minor roads not shown)
0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles
N
November 18, 2020
Data Sources
Base Layers: Michigan Geographic Framework, v17
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC)
The use of this map is for general reference purposes. It is not a legal document.
Magician Lake
Dewey Lake St
Dowagiac River
Dewey Lake
Fish Lake
Knight
Brody
Marcellus
Dowagiac Creek
SILVER CREEK TWP
Middle Crossing St
Indian Lake Rd
Glenwood Rd
Marcellus Hwy
Lawrence Rd
MARCELLUS TWP
WAYNE TWP
VOLINIA TWP
Indian Lake
Dowagiac
Dutch Settlement St
POKAGON TWP
O Keefe Rd
Decatur Rd
White Temple Rd
Savage Rd
Corey Lake Rd
Quaker St
Wilbur Hill Rd
Dailey Rd
LAGRANGE TWP
PENN TWP
NEWBERG TWP
Fox St
Vandalia
Born St
Pokagon Hwy
Cassopolis
Stone Lake
Diamond Lake
Bair Lake
White St
Barron Lake Rd
Niles
HOWARD TWP
Hospital St
Brownsville St
CALVIN TWP
Calvin Center Rd
Union Rd
Birch Rd
Shavehead Lake
JEFFERSON TWP
Barron Lake
Pine Lake St
Calvin Hill St
PORTER TWP
Beebe Rd
Conrad Rd
Dailey Rd
Edwardsburg
Christiana Creek
Cassopolis Rd
Mason St
Union Hill
Long Lake
MILTON TWP
ONTWA TWP
MASON TWP
May St
Elkhart Rd
Fir Rd
Redfield St

Non-motorized – One of the most popular forms of recreation is also becoming a favored transportation method. Due to increased interest in physical health, rising fuel costs, and a change in social attitude, non-motorized trails are growing in popularity. The term is typically used to mean a trail (traversed without motorized vehicle) between destinations, e.g. home to work. Many communities are either studying the feasibility of non-motorized trails in their area, planning for, or have already implemented this type of transportation method. In Cass County, there are several bike trails that are being considered as possible connection points for non-motorized transportation. Other plans are being considered for an interconnected trail system that would include using existing and proposed rails to trails.

Recently, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission completed a nonmotorized plan for southwest Michigan which includes Van Buren and 6 other counties in Michigan Department of Transportation's southwest region. For this plan, on-road facilities are defined as paved shoulders with a minimum width of four feet and bike lanes with a minimum width of five feet. There are just over 568 miles of roads with nonmotorized facilities (paved shoulders and bicycle lanes) in southwest Michigan. Often on-road facilities are easier to construct than off-road facilities because the road agency usually has all or most of the required right-of-way and would not need to purchase property, which can be a major expense.

In addition, many of the roads in southwest Michigan, where traffic is low (less than 2,500 average daily traffic count) and where sight distances are not problematic, offer important connections, especially in rural areas. In the seven-county region of southwest Michigan, there are over 2,260 miles of paved roads with average daily traffic (ADT) counts of fewer than 2,500 vehicles per day (333 miles in Cass County). This figure does not include many roads for which traffic counts are not available, so the number of miles is quite higher than reflected, especially in rural areas. These roads provide experienced bicyclists with many miles of biking opportunities in a shared-use configuration.

There are 176 miles of off-road improved and 29 miles of unimproved nonmotorized facilities in the region. Cass County has 2 miles of improved shared use paths. The shared use path is located east of Cassopolis along M-62. Kalamazoo County is the leader in the region with 75 miles of off-road improved facilities.

Miles of Trail and Road Facilities in Southwest Michigan

County	On Road Facilities (paved shoulders/ bike lanes) (miles)	State Roads Average Daily Traffic less than 2,500 miles)	Other Roads Average Daily Traffic Less than 2,500 (miles)	Off Road Improved Shared Use Paths (miles)
Berrien	90	10	446	17
Branch	29	13	269	5
Calhoun	107	14	277	40
Cass	54	9	324	2
Kalamazoo	201	0.3	180	75
St. Joseph	40	7	347	2
Van Buren	47	0	364	35
Total	568	53.3	2,207	176

Below is a list of local/regional efforts to expand nonmotorized opportunities in the county. The list of on-road (shoulders/bike lanes) and off-road network priorities were identified through public input and from local planning efforts. These are not listed in any order.

Airline Trail - In an effort to create connectivity in Cass County, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Department has started to investigate the potential of a separated nonmotorized facility from the village of Cassopolis heading east connecting the bicycle routes surrounding Diamond Lake, the Cass County Council of Aging walking track (on M-60) to Dr. T.K. Lawless Park outside of the village of Vandalia. The proposed project would utilize land along the M-60 corridor heading east and would also potentially include private lands and an abandoned railroad corridor known as the Airline Railroad.

M-40 Corridor - There is a gap from the Van Buren County line south to US-12.

M-60 Corridor - There are two small sections of M-60 without facilities within the village of Cassopolis and the village of Vandalia. There is also a gap from Dowagiac to Cassopolis.

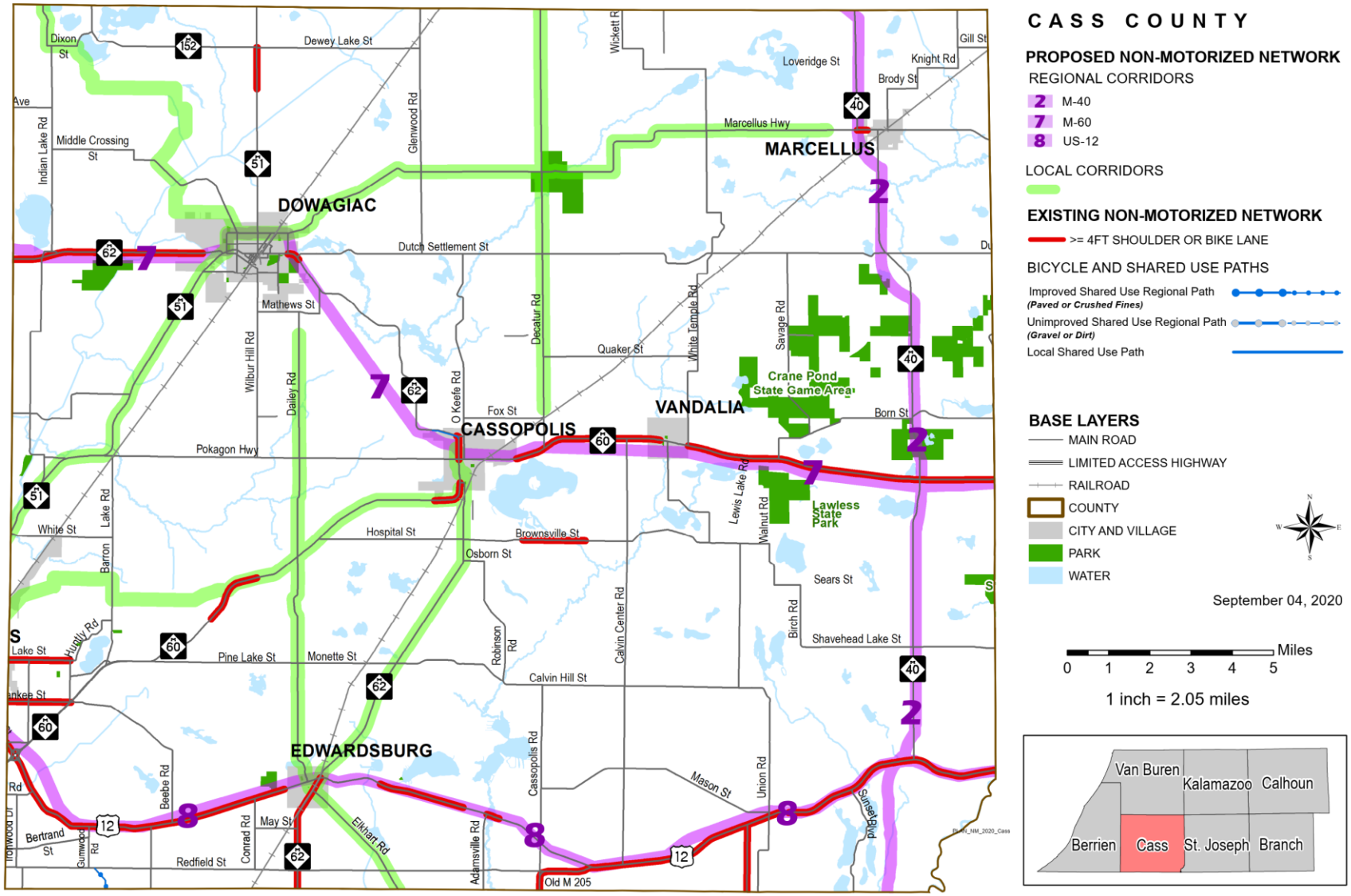
US-12 Corridor - In Cass County, there is a gap east of Edwardsburg to near Calvin Center Road.

On-Road Network Priorities:
- Pine Lake Street
- Redfield Street
- Decatur Road
- Dutch Settlement Road
- Oil City Road
- Pokagon Highway
- Marcellus Highway (Dowagiac to Marcellus)

- Mason Street
- Brownsville to Calvin Center along Calvin Center Road
- Diamond Lake Loop in Cassopolis
- Pokagon Road from Cassopolis to Berrien County
- M-62 - Cassopolis to Dowagiac to Edwardsburg
- Dailey Road - Edwardsburg to North of M-60
- Barron Lake Road - M-60 to Pine Lake
- Maple/Brody/M-40/Gooding Street/Burlington Road/Love Ridge Street (end at The Rock on Fish Lake)

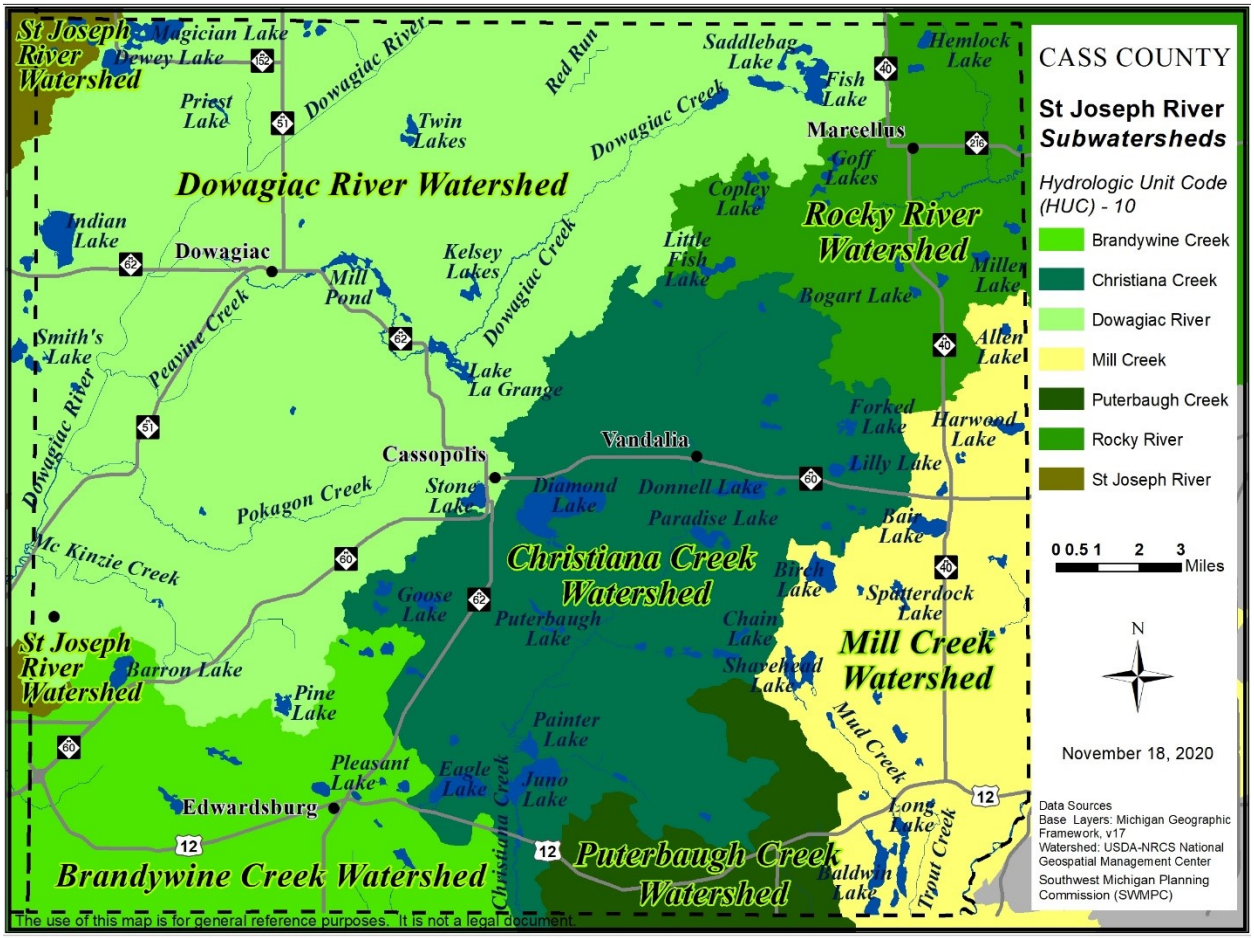
Off-Road Network Priorities:

- Gumwood to Bertrand
- Cassopolis to Dowagiac
- Cassopolis to Jones
- Dowagiac to W. Indian Lake Road to Eau Clare along M-62
- Cassopolis to Niles
- Airline Trail (Decatur Street to Vandalia)


CASS COUNTY
PROPOSED NON-MOTORIZED NETWORK
REGIONAL CORRIDORS
2 M-40
7 M-60
8 US-12
LOCAL CORRIDORS
EXISTING NON-MOTORIZED NETWORK
>= 4FT SHOULDER OR BIKE LANE
BICYCLE AND SHARED USE PATHS
Improved Shared Use Regional Path
(Paved or Crushed Fines)
Unimproved Shared Use Regional Path
(Gravel or Dirt)
Local Shared Use Path
BASE LAYERS
MAIN ROAD
LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY
RAILROAD
COUNTY
CITY AND VILLAGE
PARK
WATER
September 04, 2020
Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5
1 inch = 2.05 miles
Van Buren
Kalamazoo
Calhoun
Berrien
Cass
St. Joseph
Branch
DOWAGIAC
MARCELLUS
VANDALIA
CASSOPOLIS
EDWARDSBURG
Crane Pond State Game Area
Lawless State Park
Dewey Lake St
Marcellus Hwy
Loveridge St
Knight Rd
Brody St
Middle Crossing St
Glenwood Rd
Indian Lake Rd
Dutch Settlement St
Mathews St
Wilbur Hill Rd
Dailey Rd
Decatur Rd
O Keefe Rd
Quaker St
White Temple Rd
Savage Rd
Fox St
Born St
Pokagon Hwy
Lake Rd
White St
Barron
Hospital St
Brownsville St
Osborn St
Lewis Lake Rd
Walnut Rd
Sears St
Birch Rd
Shavehead Lake St
Lake St
Pine Lake St
Monette St
Robinson Rd
Calvin Center Rd
Calvin Hill St
Mason St
Union Rd
Beebe Rd
Bertrand St
Redfield St
Conrad Rd
May St
Elkhart Rd
Cassopolis Rd
Adamsville Rd
Old M 205
Sunset Blvd

Natural Resources

The basic description of the county is a good indicator that there are a number of natural resources to be enjoyed in Cass County. This rural county has almost 190,000 acres in farmland, (811 farms[5]) over 200 hundred waterways, and a low population density. Water- ways (AKA blueways) may include lakes, swamps, streams, rivers, and creeks; each offering a different and sometimes unique type of recreational activity. All of Cass County is within the St. Joseph River Watershed with sub-watersheds including the Dowagiac River, Rocky River, Christiana Creek, Brandywine Creek, Mill Creek and Puterbaugh Creek.



[5] *USDA – National Agricultural Statistics Service – www.agcensus.usda.gov*

Michigan is nationally known as a trout fishing destination with tens of thousands of cold, quality trout streams and hundreds of trout lakes accessible to anglers. In Cass County, the MDNR features Dowagiac Creek, Dowagiac River, Birch, Harwood and Hemlock Lakes on their Trout Trails online application. https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79119_79146_81198_81203---,00.html

The list below, although not completely comprehensive is a good example of lakes in the county. Some lakes are small, private, or not recorded, and are therefore not on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources list.

Partial List of Lakes in Cass County and size in acreage[7]

Bair Lake	199	Baldwin Lake	265	Bunker Lake	107
Birch Lake	300	Birch Lake Millpond	174	Christiana Lake	
Cable Lake	91	Chain Lake	35	Copley Lake	31
Coberts Lake	47	Cook Lake	13	Driskels Lake	37
Diamond Lake	1020	Donnell Lake	246	Fish Lake	340
Eagle Lake	379	Finch Lake	144	Hemlock Lake	63
Garver Lake	67	Harwood Lake	122	Lewis Lake	34
Huyck Lake	26	Long Lake	245	Miller Lake	57
Little Fish Lake	139	Pleasant Lake	80	Robbins Lake	64
Paradise Lake	185	Shavehead Lake	270	Skyhawk Lake	48
Saddlebag Lake	103	Twin Lake (south)	44	Twin Lake (north)	62
Stone Lake	148	Belas Lake	58		

By offering more than 94 inland lakes and miles of rivers and streams, Cass County has been and continues to be, a fisherman's paradise. Whether chasing the elusive brown trout, pike or bluegill, Cass County offers an abundance of fishing opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy. As we strive to increase public access to our waterways, Cass County takes pride in offering more than a half mile access to the Dowagiac River and Dowagiac Creek at Russ Forest County Park and the only public access sites on Shavehead and Birch Lakes. At Lawless County Park, fishermen have access to four inland lakes that would otherwise have no other public access. In addition, we incorporate and encourage "Best Management Practices" such as conservation buffers, erosion and sediment control, chemical disposal, and fertilizer management, as we all do our part to protect the waters of the Cass County Parks and beyond.

[7] *www.**lake**place.com/**lake**finder/**mi**/**cass***

Listed below is a cross section of lakes that have a good reputation for fishing success based on local views. The list of fish species commonly caught is a fair representation of the fishing potential throughout the county. [8]

Birch Lake
Location: Near Vandalia, in Cass County, Michigan
Size: 295 acres
Lake Notes: Specializing in Bluegill and Rainbow Trout. Maximum depth of 95 ft.

Eagle Lake
Location: Near Edwardsburg, in Cass County, Michigan
Size: 379 acres
Lake Notes: Specializing in Bluegill, Crappie and Largemouth Bass. Walleye and Northern Pike also caught. Maximum depth of 35 ft.

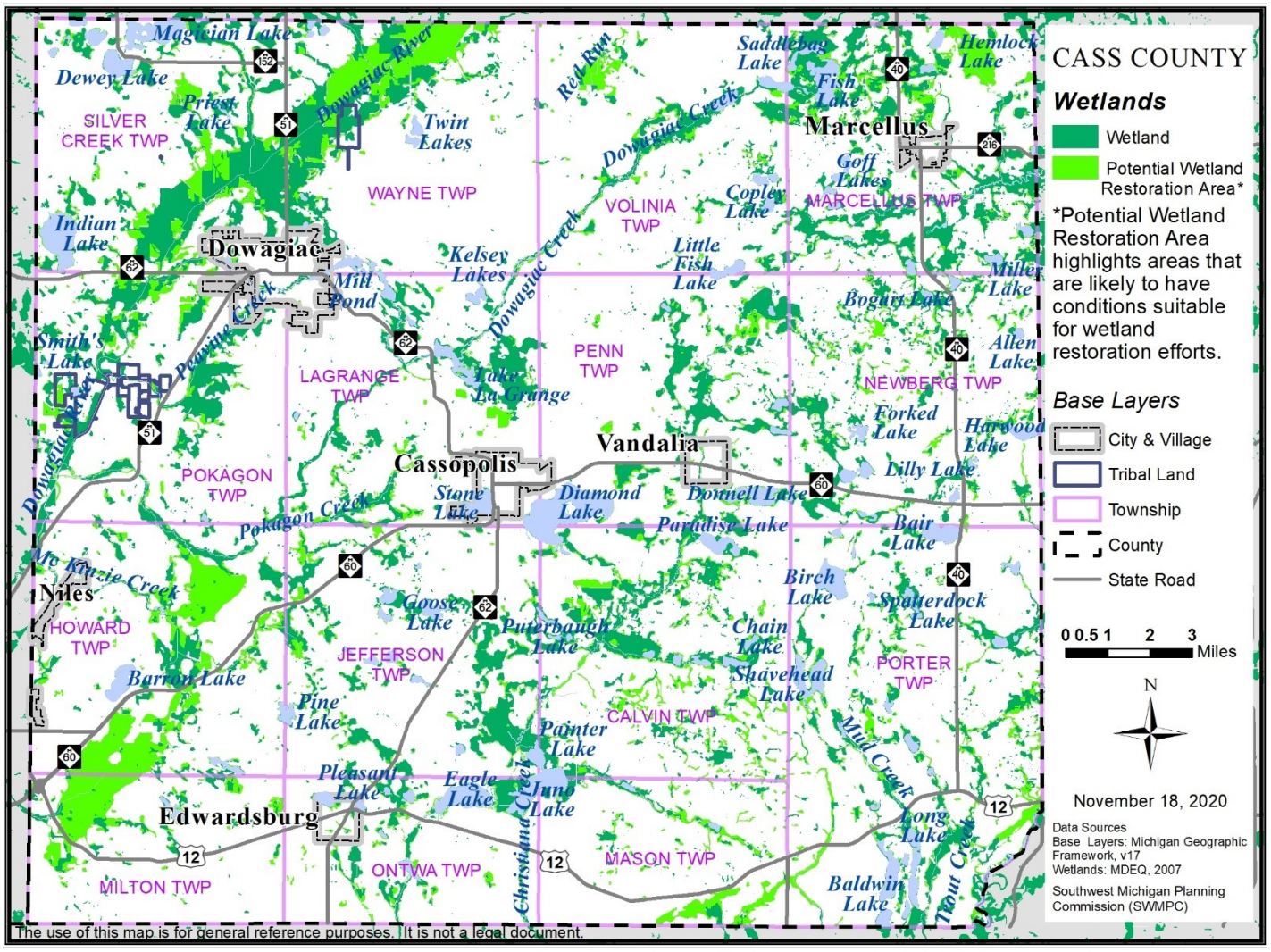
Fish Lake
Location: Near Marcellus, in Cass County, Michigan
Size: 340 acres
Lake Notes: Specializing in Bluegill and Crappie. Walleye and Largemouth Bass also caught. Maximum depth of 47 ft.

Magician Lake
Location: Near Sister Lake, in Cass County, Michigan
Size: 498 acres
Lake Notes: Specializing in Northern Pike, Bluegill and Crappie. Walleye, Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass and Rainbow Trout also caught.

Shavehead Lake
Location: Near Union, in Cass County Michigan
Size: 289 acres
Lake Notes: Specializing in Bluegill and Crappie. Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass and Rainbow Trout also caught. Maximum depth of 70 ft.

Cass County also has abundant wetland resources, many are extensive along the rivers and streams. Wetlands are one of the most diverse ecosystems that not only provide many recreational opportunities such as hunting, bird and wildlife watching, but also mitigate flooding and protect water quality.

[8] Michigan Lakes.com

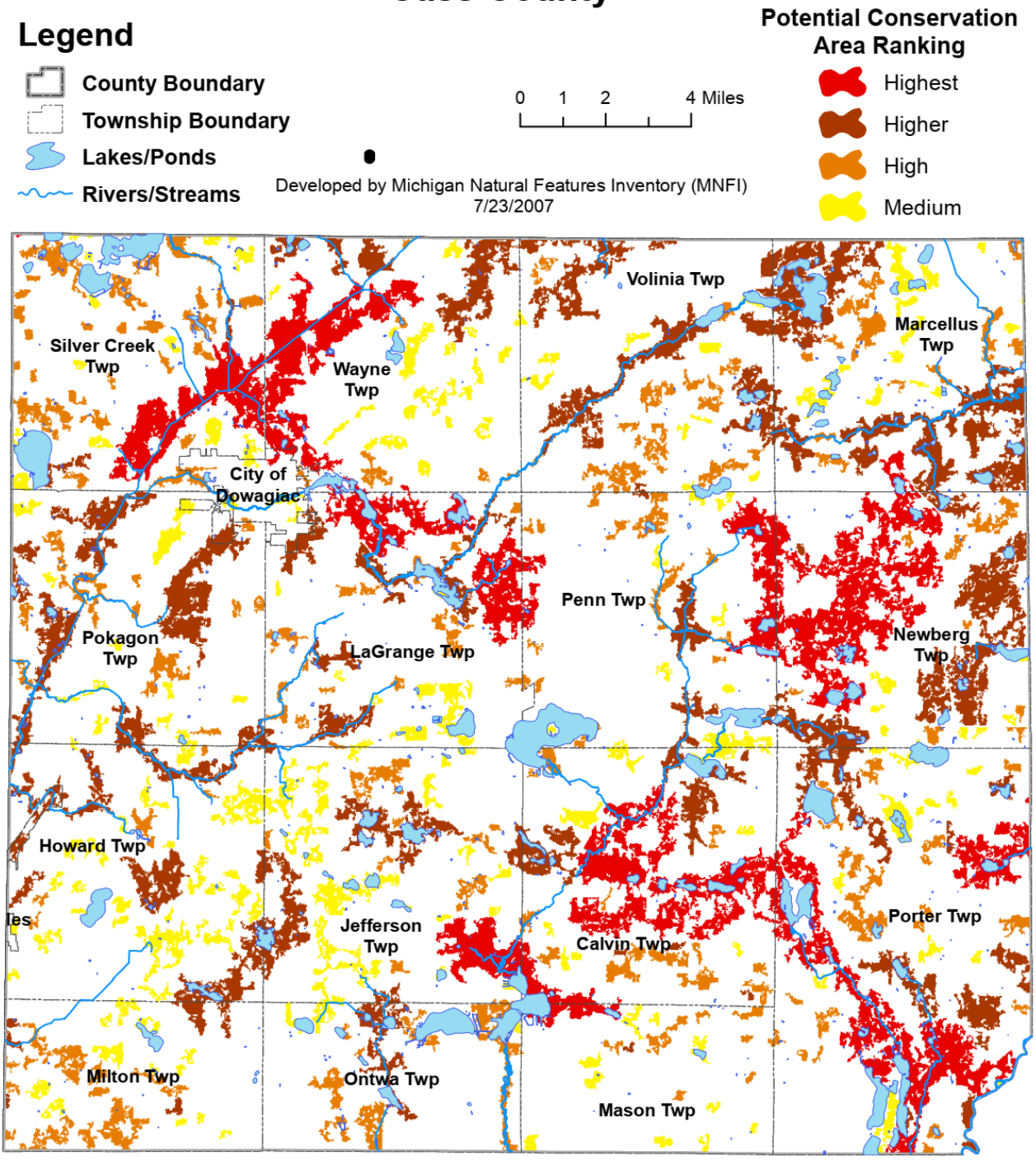


Cass County is blessed with many high quality natural areas as is shown in the Potential Conservation Areas map. This map was developed by Michigan Natural Features Inventory to prioritize lands based on total size of the natural area, length of stream corridor, landscape connectivity, restorability of surrounding land, vegetation quality and biological rarity score (threatened and endangered species). The map below can be utilized in developing a countywide green infrastructure plan of protected high quality natural areas.

Further, the **Jones Area Conservation Plan** provides a locally-informed vision for present and future conservation in the region based around identified conservation corridors, and conservation values—including water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational assets. Through the expansion of conserved land, site-specific restoration, and protection of natural resources, SWMLC and its partners seek to facilitate the creation of an exceptional greenspace that will sustain and enrich the region's quality of life for generations. (See appendix for executive summary of plan.)

Potential Conservation Areas

Cass County



Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. Scoring criteria used to prioritize sites included: total size, size of core area, length of stream corridor, landscape connectivity, restorability of surrounding land, vegetation quality, and biological rarity score.

Data Sources: Michigan DNR IFMAP land cover circa 2000, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) Biotics Database (2007), Michigan's Vegetation circa 1800, and the National Hydrologic Database stream lines.

Social Characteristics

Population

As seen in the following population chart, (next page) the population of Cass County has grown 86 percent since 1950.

With the increased popularity of rural homes and waterfront cottages the county is anticipating a somewhat faster rate of growth in the coming years. One indication of this possibility is the number of summer/weekend vacation homes in the county. In 2010 there were over 3,300 homes (12.8 percent of total homes) designated as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.[11] An increase in this type of home ownership designation may have an impact on recreational facilities and programs - not only in the number of consumers and the days of visitation, (weekends may become busier) but also in the types of activities desired and pursued.



The following table compares Cass County with the metropolitan areas of Detroit and Chicago. In addition to the numerous lakes and waterways and the popularity of second and get-away homes, the rural atmosphere and low population density also make Cass County an attractive primary residential location.

Population Density Comparisons (2010)[12]

Detroit	5,144	People per square mile
Chicago	11,842	People per square mile
Cass County	106	People per square mile

[11] U.S. Census Bureau (2010)
[12] U.S. Census Bureau (2010)

An indication of the likelihood of this prediction is the rate of growth in townships versus the growth in villages. Municipalities experiencing more than a 100 percent growth since 1950 are indicated (*) in the population chart below.

Population Changes in Cass County 1950 - 2010[13]

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1950-2010
Cass County	28,185	36,932	43,312	49,499	49,477	51,104	52,293	86%
***Calvin township**	996	1,172	1,347	1,643	1,813	2,041	2,037	105%
Dowagiac city	6,542	7,208	6,583	6,307	6,409	6,147	5,879	-10%
***Howard township**	2,952	4,622	5,497	6,524	6,378	6,309	6,207	110%
***Jefferson township**	987	1,255	1,718	1,963	2,112	2,401	2,541	157%
Cassopolis village (pt.)	1,527	2,027	2,108	1,933	1,822	1,740	1,774	17%
Balance LaGrange twp.	961	1,294	1,475	1,593	1,584	1,600	1,726	80%
Marcellus village (pt.)	1,014	1,073	1,139	1,134	1,193	1,162	1,198	18%
***Bal. Marcellus township**	610	741	867	1,329	1,376	1,550	1,341	120%
***Mason township**	590	853	1,519	2,132	2,450	2,514	2,945	399%
***Milton township**	1,179	1,541	1,727	2,235	2,284	2,646	3,878	229%
Newberg township	907	1,023	1,174	1,382	1,627	1,703	1,632	80%
Niles city (pt.)						5	1	
***Edwardsburg village**	616	902	1,107	1,135	1,142	1,147	1,259	104%
***Balance Ontwa township**	1,404	2,870	4,117	4,652	4,450	4,718	5,290	277%
Vandalia village (pt.)	360	357	427	447	357	429	301	-16%
Balance Penn township	804	1,165	1,348	1,597	1,520	1,473	1,473	83%
Pokagon township	1,518	1,935	2,189	2,394	2,188	2,199	2,029	37%
***Porter township**	1,402	2,001	2,765	3,857	3,857	3,794	3,798	171%
Silver Creek township	1,773	2,108	2,886	3,361	3,101	3,491	3,218	86%
Volinia township	774	815	986	1,182	1,032	1,174	1,112	44%
***Wayne township**	1,272	1,970	2,333	2,699	2,780	2,861	2,654	109%

**Municipalities with over 100% increase in population from 1950 to 2010*

[13] Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget/CSSTP

Special Needs

We all know the positive results the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 created when it came into effect and how the 21st century parks and recreation industry has taken it one step further with the inception of "Universal Design Standards" that encourage design based on what is best for all users not just those with special needs. However, is it really enough to be just "accessible"?



"Accessibility includes a whole spectrum of possibilities, and there's a big difference between something that's minimally accessible (ADA compliant), completely accessible, and truly inclusive of people with all types of abilities and challenges. Accessible means you can get there. It means you may be able to use parts of the playground, but inclusive means you're playing together with all of the children," explained Mara Kaplan, founder of Let Kids Play!, a consulting firm that helps playground equipment manufacturers and others understand the full needs of a community—including those with disabilities. An inclusive playground is for everyone, and because of that—although it's a bigger undertaking with more planning required and probably some programming needed as well—this type of playground is a benefit to the entire community. And in a world where play is an endangered opportunity for kids of all abilities, there's no better time to build a fantastic playground than right now!"[14]



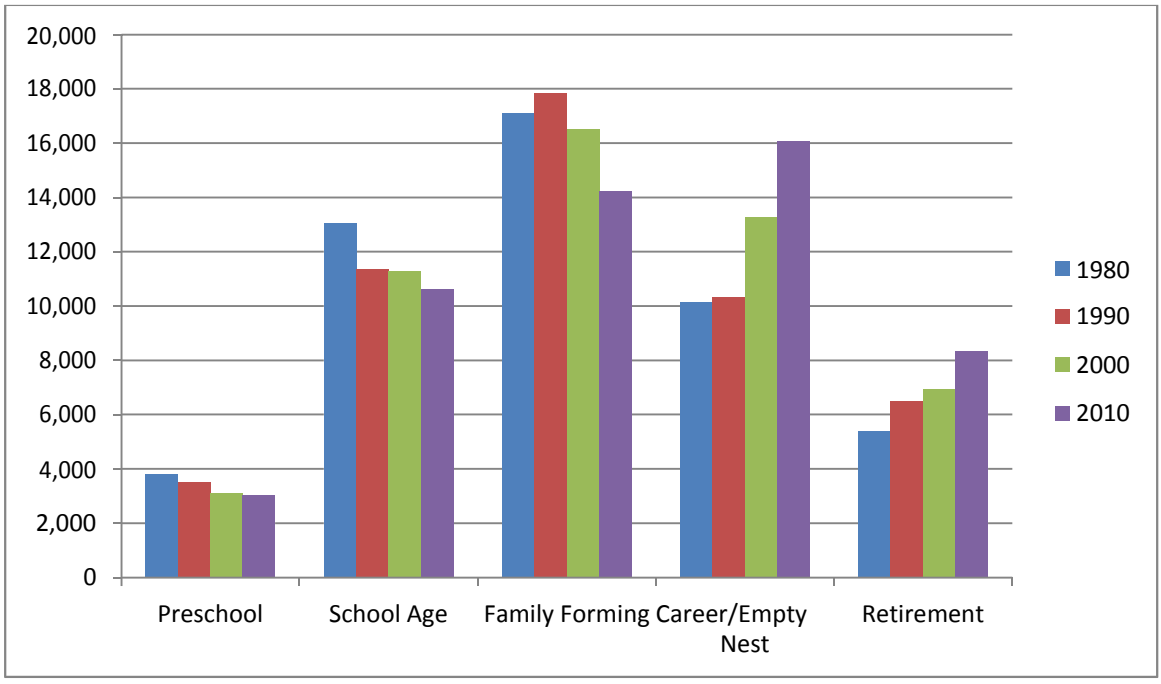
In Cass County, based on 2010 census figures over 70% of the population has some type of disability based on the census definition of "disability" and those who responded. Knowing these numbers allows us to plan accordingly when developing recreational services. It is a segment of the population that won't and shouldn't be ignored by an industry that prides itself on providing affordable and meaningful parks, recreation, open space and greenways for all segments of the population.

[14] Jessica Royer Ocken, Recreation Management Magazine

Age Distribution

Similar to national trends, Cass County continues to see an increase in the population aged 45 years and older. The chart below represents the division of population by age, cohort and clearly shows the steady increase in the retirement group and the jump in the group. Also, note the decline in all three groups younger than 45 years.

Since age distribution can be an important factor to consider for future recreational needs, the following table looks at the changes in age distribution by percentage of total population. (1980-2010) The population between the ages of 20 - 44 years, the *Family Forming* cohort, has been declining since 1990, this age group still comprises the second largest sector of the population; the largest sector of the population belongs to the Career/Empty Nesters in the 45-64 year age group.



	Under 5 years	5-19 years	20-44 years	45-64 years	65 years and over
1980	3,793	13,061	17,083	10,155	5,407
1990	3,504	11,338	17,842	10,316	6,477
2000	3,102	11,267	16,532	13,276	6,927
2010	3,008	10,625	14,227	16,078	8,355

Change in Age Distribution Shown by Percent of Total								
	1980	% of Total	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2010	% of Total
Preschool Under 5 years	3,793	7.7%	3,504	7.1%	3,102	6.1%	3,008	5.8%
School Age 5-19 years	13,061	26.4%	11,338	22.9%	11,267	22.0%	10,625	20.4%
Family Forming 20-44 years	17,083	34.5%	17,842	36.1%	16,532	32.3%	14,227	27.2%
Career/Empty Nest 45-64 years	10,155	20.5%	10,316	20.9%	13,276	26.0%	16,078	30.7%
Retirement 65 years and over	5,407	10.9%	6,477	13.1%	6,927	13.6%	8,355	16.0%
Total Population	49,499		49,477		51,104		52,293	

Applying the knowledge of changes in age distribution to local recreational planning can be accomplished through the observation of national trends tracking the most popular travel/leisure/recreation pursuits. The trends of one age group in particular seem to have been surveyed and observed more than any other - the Baby Boomers! This generation includes those born between 1946 and 1964, which means the first group of Baby Boomers are becoming of retirement age.

Cass County Population Distribution by Race (2010)[15]

- White – 90%
- Black or African American – 5%
- Native American – 1%
- Asian – 1%
- Other – 1%
- Two or more races – 3%

- Hispanic or Latino – 3%
- Non-Hispanic or Latino – 97%

[15] U.S. Census (2010)

Educational Achievement

In addition to creating an inventory of school recreational facilities and programs that are available to the public, knowledge of student enrollment and educational achievement plays a part in knowing what programs and recreation development projects a community should plan for.

Cass County has four complete school districts within its boundaries and shares portions of nine other school districts with the adjacent counties of Berrien, Van Buren, and St. Joseph. In 2011 there were 7,525 students enrolled in grades K-12. Cass County is also the home of Southwestern Michigan College, a public community college (annual enrollment is approximately 3,000) with campuses located in the City of Dowagiac and the City of Niles on 240 acres.[16]

The percentage of residents with a high school diploma in Cass County is equal to that of the nation as a whole; however, the percentage of those with a Bachelor's degree or higher is approximately half that of the nation.

Level of Education Comparison (2010)[17]			
	Cass County	**Michigan**	**United States**
High School diploma	86.5%	88.4%	85.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	16.7%	25.3%	28.5%

[16] College Navigator 2012
[17] U.S. Census 2010

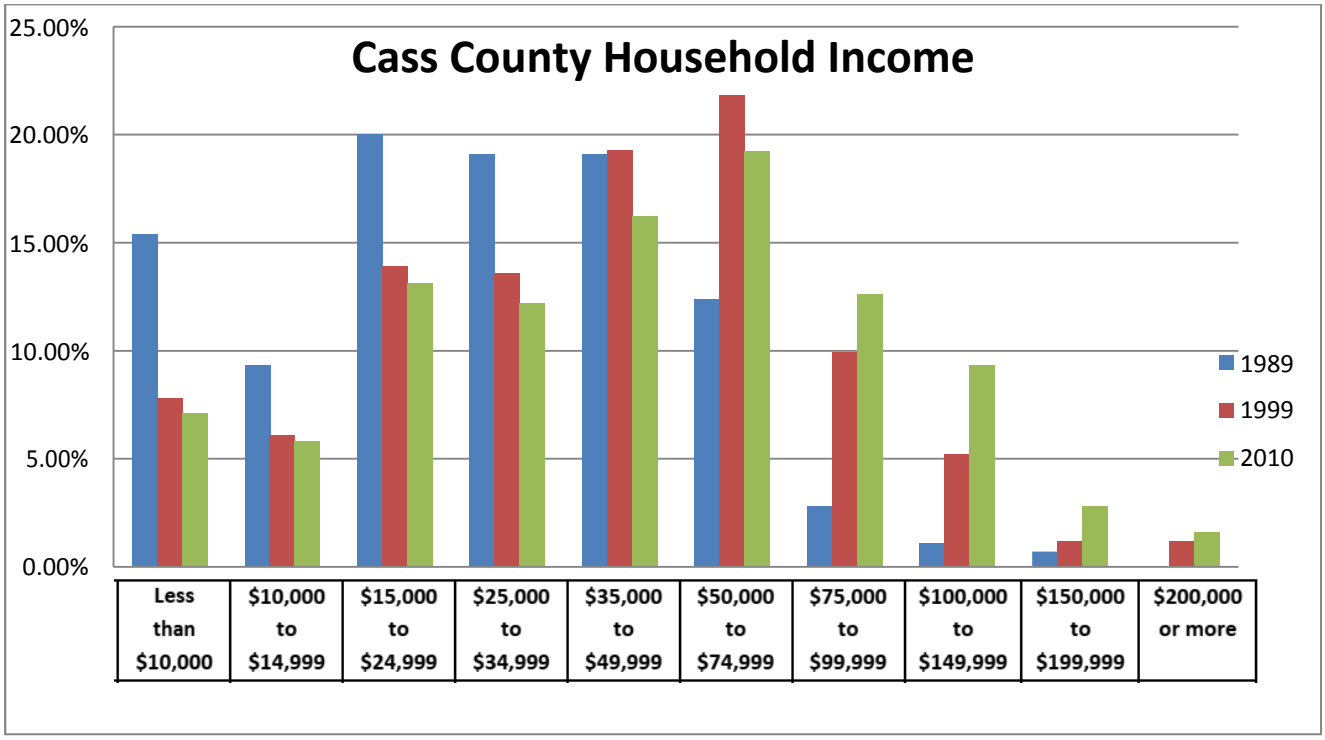
Economic Characteristics

The major employment industries in the county are manufacturing, education, health, and social services. Within those industries, the most common occupations are in production, transportation, and material moving as well as sales and office occupations.

INDUSTRY[18]	Number of Employed	Percent of Total
Manufacturing	6,265	26.8%
Educational, health and social services	4,626	19.8%
Retail trade	2,505	10.7%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	1,817	7.8%
Construction	1,738	7.4%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1,402	6.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	1,251	5.3%
Other services (except public administration)	909	3.9%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	875	3.7%
Wholesale trade	666	2.8%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	568	2.4%
Public administration	534	2.3%
Information	249	1.1%

The household median income for the county ($45,432) is 93 percent of Michigan's household median income ($48,669).[19]

[18] U.S. Census (2010)



Legend[20]

	Less than $10,000	$10,000 to $14,999	$15,000 to $24,999	$25,000 to $34,999	$35,000 to $49,999	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $149,999	$150,000 to $199,999	$200,000 or more
1989	15.4%	9.3%	20%	19.1%	19.1%	12.4%	2.8%	1.1%	.7%	0%
1999	7.8%	6.10%	13.9%	13.6%	19.3%	21.8%	9.9%	5.2%	1.2%	1.2%
2010	7.1% (1,435)	5.8% (1,174)	13.1% (2,647)	12.2% (2,459)	16.2% (3,271)	19.2% (3,881)	12.6% (2,555)	9.3% (1,881)	2.8% (575)	1.6% (323)

[20] http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Michigan/cp26027.pdf

Recreation and the Economy

The economic impact of recreational attractions and their subsequent connection to tourism is an important consideration when planning facilities and programs. Looking outward as well as inward will help determine the types of investment that will reap the greatest reward. A thorough look at existing assets coupled with a comparison of national trends will bring focus to creating a recreation and leisure market that will meet the goals and objectives of Cass County's parks and recreation administrative leadership, supporters, and consumers.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture[21], the jobs, tax revenues, and business created by the Active Outdoor Recreation Economy are the lifeblood of rural communities that rely on recreation tourism to enjoy a high quality of life. Benefits of rural tourism and recreational development include:

- Spikes in employment growth rates
- Buoyed earnings and income levels
- Lowered local poverty rates
- Improvement in local educational attainment and health

Although Cass County is largely agricultural (based on farmland acres) only 2.4 percent of the residents make their living in farming. The annual contribution of agriculture to the local economy however, is a substantial $101,549 million dollars,[22] an increase of over $37 million dollars from the 2002 figures. An interesting idea to increase this economic contribution is to consider the combination of agriculture, tourism, and recreation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture promotes value-added initiatives to assist farmers seeking to increase their income. Some of the suggestions for agricultural product alternatives relevant to this plan include U-pick operations, roadside stands, and "agritainment" enterprises using natural resources for such activities as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, hayrides, fee fishing or hunting, and bird watching.[23]



[21] NASS Fact Finders for Agriculture 2002 Census of Agriculture County Profile. Market Value of Production
[22] http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Michigan/cp26027.pdf
[23] USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (Alternative Enterprises-Value Added Agriculture)

Dog parks are another interesting idea that has become quite popular in other parts of the country. Typically found near larger population areas the idea is spreading to vacation and recreation areas. Although it is not necessarily agriculture-based, it is worth considering – evidently some Cass County residents are already supportive of the idea and willing to pay for this form of outdoor recreation. Twenty-percent of the respondents participating in the 2020 survey indicated they would like to have a dog park at T.K. Lawless Park.



As the popularity of these activities continues to grow, the appeal of Cass County as a recreation destination becomes more evident. The need for, and value in, promoting responsible use of natural resources is also confirmed. It is possible, profitable, and desirable to provide recreation without adversely affecting the environment.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

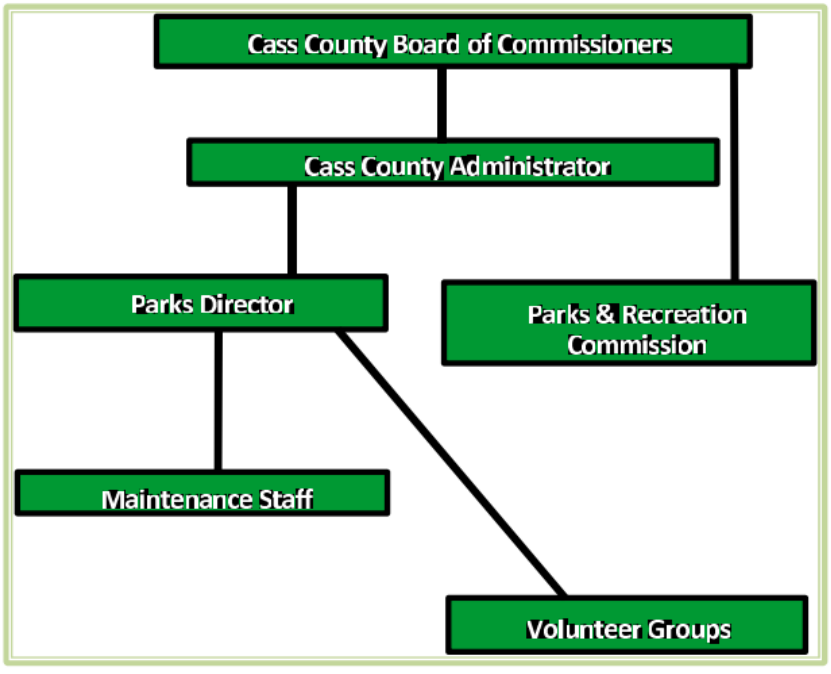
Governing Body

A seven member elected Cass County Board of Commissioners governs Cass County. As the elected governing body, the Board of Commissioners are responsible for setting county wide policy, setting priorities, and adopting an annual operating and capital improvement budget.

In 2009, the Board of Commissioners voted to restructure the county parks under Public Act 261 of 1965. In doing so, a ten member Parks and Recreation Commission was created to set park policy and advise the County Administrator and Board of Commissioners on park issues. By statute, this ten member commission includes the following:

- Road Commission Chairperson
- Planning Commission Chairperson
- Drain Commissioner
- County Commissioner
- Six Members Appointed by the Board of Commissioners

Parks Department Organizational Chart



Staff, Volunteers and Partnerships

Currently, Parks and Recreation staff consists of one full time employee and one part-time employee who are responsible for over 900 acres of park land, various physical structures, recreation and event programming.

Like with so many other agencies and organizations, volunteers that work at our county parks are the one constant in a world of inconsistent budgets and paid staff. No longer are volunteers considered a luxury item, but more an irreplaceable piece of the success puzzle. A well-managed volunteer network creates a sense of ownership and community positivity within our parks system. So much of what we do is a direct reflection on partnerships created with the dedicated individuals, stakeholders, user groups' and private entities who work hand in hand with county officials parks staff. In 2019, conservative estimates indicate that more than 3,200 volunteer hours were spent in support of grounds and building maintenance, special events, parks promotions and Recreation Plan Development.



Volunteer Hours

Year	Volunteer Hours
2013	1,850
2014	2,350
2015	2,700
2016	3,100
2017	2,900
2018	3,950
2019	3,250
2020*	1,450
Total	**21,550**

*Covid-19 related

Creating partnerships with volunteer organizations promotes a sense of ownership and personal worth for the individual. It also allows Cass County Parks the ability to leverage monies designated for parks, recreation and open space into a greater return on investment. The volunteer organizations listed below represent a small sample of those who put forth extraordinary effort is supporting parks, recreation and open space in Cass County.

Local Scouting Organizations are responsible for the development and much of the current maintenance of Coy-Steiding Group Campground at Lawless Park. In addition, Cass County has been very fortunate to be on the receiving end of over thirty Eagle Scout Projects within its

borders. Construction projects such as foot bridges, disc golf renovation, floating docks, cabins, etc. not only allow the scout to qualify for the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout but it shows community involvement and most often completes a high priority project that enhances park features.

Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association (NIMBA) is a Northern Indiana biking organization that is responsible for 80% of the maintenance of a 10 mile mountain bike trail at Lawless Park. In addition, they host two revenue generating biking events each year along with various volunteer trail clean-up days and training sessions.

The Friends of the Cass County Parks a non-profit organization (501c3) organization with the primary function of special event programming and support, promotions, long range planning and development.

Club Dead Disc Golf Club, located in St. Joseph County, Michigan, is dedicated to promoting disc golf in Southwest Michigan and beyond. They are responsible for an entire re-design of the Lawless Park 18 Hole Disc Golf Course and 70% of the current maintenance.

Partnership for MEANDRS (Meeting the Ecological and Agricultural Needs of the Dowagiac River System), along with several other entities is the driving force behind the historic river restoration efforts at Dodd Park. Long standing ties with Cass County officials allow the Partnership for MEANDRS to expand their insight and passion past the boundaries of Dodd Park into other communities and jurisdictions.

Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan) as part of their Freshman orientation, university officials send incoming freshman into the local community to do projects. Arthur Dodd Park is a recipient of their extraordinary efforts each fall. Projects range from river restoration, to facilities and grounds maintenance.

Cass County 4-H Association plays a large role in special event staffing, event promotions and maintaining over 10 miles of Equestrian trails at Russ Forest County Park.

Michigan Association of County Parks Officials (MACPRO) exists to serve the interests and well-being of county government sponsored park and recreation lands, facilities, and programs across the State of Michigan. It does this through member driven education, partnering with others of similar interests, legislative advocacy, networking, and promoting awareness and use of county outdoor recreation facilities by Michigan citizens. (micountyparks.org)

Relationships with Other Agencies

Especially in the area of promotions, area school districts graciously allow parks department literature to be distributed throughout the student population. In return, the parks department has adopted the policy of waiving all applicable fees when using park facilities. Parks department personnel are regularly invited to participate in “Career Day” at Edwardsburg Public Schools and Southwest Michigan Community College along with hosting “Animals of Cass County” field trips for districts throughout Cass County.

As stewards of the land, county and township officials place a high priority on preserving our natural resources, not only as an enhancement of the quality of life within the county but as valued source of tourist dollars as well. As reflected from data gathered for this plan, residents and non-residents also place a high value on protecting our environment now and for future generations.

A few examples of those leading by example in Cass County conservation efforts include:
The Cass County Parks and Recreation Department - Using “Best Management Practices” such as buffer strips, fertilizer and nutrient management and erosion control, they manage park properties along the Dowagiac River, Dowagiac Creek and at the headwaters of the Donnell Lake Watershed.

Friends of Cass County Parks was founded in 1989. The Friends are a group of park supporters dedicated to connecting people with nature, recreation and the community, while partnering with other agencies and the Cass County Parks Board of Commissioners. "Friends" members work side by side with fellow park enthusiasts and community leaders, as we all come together to help protect and enhance our quality of life in Cass County and beyond.

Partnership for MEANDRS (Meeting the Ecological and Agricultural Needs within the Dowagiac River System)
The Dowagiac River is very unique in lower Michigan—its temperature and flow regimes put it in the same standing as the classic trout waters of northern Michigan. However, channelization and straightening of the river in the early 1900s effectively destroyed the fishery/habitat. With much of the river corridor still relatively undeveloped, many of the old meanders are still intact. MEANDRS’ long term goal is to functionally restore the ecosystem through river channel restoration, where feasible. Funding is being used to do major stream channel restoration at pilot locations.[9] In 2007, while partnering with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources,

Cass County Parks and Recreation and a host of other organizations, finished the historic MEANDRS project in Arthur Dodd Memorial Park. In doing so, a ½ mile stretch of the Dowagiac River was re-connected to its original flow path and flood plain from the early 1900's.

The **Friends of the St. Joseph River (FOTSJR)** are dedicated to the preservation and protection of the St. Joseph River Watershed. Sub-watersheds of the St. Joseph River in Cass County include Rocky River, Mill Creek, Donnell Lake, Christiana Creek, Cobus Creek, and Brandywine Creek. Educational opportunities are provided by FOTSJR through workshops and forums sponsored by state and local group partnerships from Indiana and Michigan.

It is essential that we cultivate inter-agency collaboration, we depend on a variety of public agencies in support of park, recreation and open space in Cass County. Whether it be equipment utilization from the Cass County Road Commission, sharing construction strategies with staff members of the Parks and Recreation Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, cross staffing with MSU Extension, or Dodd Park project funding collaborations with Pokagon Township, partnering efforts allow agencies to stretch tax payer dollars, increase efficiency, and create relationships that can be counted on now and into the future.

Valued Partners

Andrews University	(The) Friends of the Cass County Parks
Boy Scouts of America	Leader Publications
Cairnstone Adventures	Marcellus News
Cass County Administrator's Office	Michiana Astronomical Society
Cass County Animal Control	MI Association of County Parks and Rec. Officials
Cass County Board of Commissioners	Michigan State University
Cass County Conservation District	Michigan State University Extension
Cass County Council on Aging	Midwest Energy
Cass County District Library	Neighbors
Cass County Drain Office	Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association
Cass County Fair Association	Partnership for MEANDRS
Cass County 4-H	PHM Digital Planetarium & Space Museum
Cass County 4-H Horse Leaders' Association	Pure Michigan Campaign
Cass County Maintenance Department	River Country Tourist Council
Cass County Road Commission	Sauk Trails RC&D
Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission	St. Joe Valley Fly Fisherman's Association
Cass County Probate Court	State of Michigan Government Leadership
Cass County Sheriff's Department	South Bend Tribune
Cass County Youth Council	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Club Dead Disc Golf Association	Southwest Michigan Tourist Council
Crane Pond State Game Area	Southwestern Michigan College
MI Department of Natural Resources	Townships of Cass County
Dowagiac Rotary	Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan
Edwardsburg Voice	
(The) Equine Ladies	

Funding

Parks and Recreation operating and capital budgets are created, reviewed and recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission and County Administrator, with final approval by the Board of Commissioners. These budgets are funded almost entirely by County general fund and capital improvement monies.

Five Year Actual Budget

Year	Op. Exp.	Cap. Exp.
2016	$158,000	$8,000
2017	$146,000	$277,000
2018	$144,000	$30,000
2019	$151,000	$13,000
2020	$190,000	-0-

Five Year Proposed Budget

Year	Op. Exp.	Cap. Exp.
2021	$196,000	$15,000
2022	$201,000	$91,000
2023	$207,000	$100,000
2024	$213,000	$100,000
2025	$219,000	$25,000

RECREATION INVENTORY

Summarized Inventory of Municipal Recreational Facilities

In 2020, the Cass County Parks Department drove every road in the county to update the county-wide municipal recreation inventory. This originated in 2006, when each municipality in the county was asked to inventory the amenities available at the recreation facilities located in, owned, or controlled by the municipality. The following table is a summary of the amenities available to Cass County. (The inventory includes school facilities which may or may not have unlimited availability to the public.)

Number of Water Related Facilities		**Number of Facilities Offering Winter Activities**	
Water Access	77	Cross Country Skiing	14
Fishing	68	Sledding	6
Boat Launch	51	Downhill Skiing	1
Canoeing	55	**Number of Picnic Facilities**	
Swimming	22	Playgrounds	66
		Picnicking	54
Number of Facilities with Trails		Shelter/Pavilion	47
Hiking Trails	23	**Number of Facilities with Sports and Games**	
Biking Trails	6	Outdoor Sports	77
Fitness Trails	6	Indoor Sports	21
Equestrian Trails	2	Volleyball	22
Number of Camping Facilities		Horseshoes	14
Public Camping	17	Ball Golf	6
Group Camping	11	Disc Golf	2
Dump Stations	7	Public Hunting	
Number of Facilities with		**Number of Barrier-Free Facilities**	
Modern Restrooms	60	ADA Accessible	67
Primitive Restrooms	33		

Cass County has received over $3 million in Michigan Department of Natural Resources grants over the years for the development and acquisition of recreational facilities. Here is a summary of the grants received from MDNR.

City of Dowagiac	89-126	Rudolphi Woods	115,100	Acquisition
Cass County	89-251	Dr. T. K. Lawless Park	81,400	Development
City of Dowagiac	94-100	Northwest Park	64,500	Acquisition
Cass County	96-087	Dr. T. K. Lawless Park East 80	96,000	Acquisition
City of Dowagiac	98-010	Heddon Park	42,647	Development
Cass County	99-226	Dr. T. K. Lawless Park North	151,700	Acquisition
DNR - Fisheries Division	02-178	Dowagiac River Access Acquisition	235,000	Acquisition
City of Dowagiac	08-021	Youth Sports Park Acquisition	100,000	Acquisition
Silver Creek Township	08-151	Silver Creek Area Youth Sports Park	100,000	Acquisition
City of Dowagiac	11-016	Silver Creek Russom Park Development	300,000	Development
Silver Creek Township	11-017	Silver Creek Russom Park Development	298,200	Development
DNR - Fisheries Division	14-0200	Dowagiac Creek Access and Corridor Acquisition	749,900	Acquisition
Cass County	15-0154	Dodd Park Water Trail Development Project	277,500	Development
Ontwa Township	17-0027	Edwardsburg Connector Path	40,000	Development
City of Dowagiac	17-0059	Cass Avenue Trailhead	175,300	Development
City of Dowagiac	18-0117	Elks Trail Easement Acquisition	56,200	Acquisition
Village of Vandalia	19-0162	Milo Barnes Park Improvements	36,900	Development
Village of Cassopolis	19-0100	Cassopolis Connector Development Project	300,000	Development
			3,220,347	

The next section provides details on the four grants awarded to Cass County Parks from MDNR.

Status Report for Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

Project Number: TF89-251 **Project Year:** 1989 **Project Status:** Closed **Project Title:** Dr. T.K. Lawless Park Improvements (Development)



This grant helped shape Lawless Park. Improvements included a lighted parking area, picnic shelter / electric, picnic tables and grills, play equipment, one mile handicap trail improvement, rustic two-rail fence, entrance sign, open games field, and modern toilet facilities. All improvements are currently operational, and in good shape. In an ongoing partnership with local scouting organizations, two Eagle Scouts replaced the rustic two-rail fencing with whole log cedar fencing manufactured by the Traverse County Conservation District. Park signage, parking lot and universal trail are all slated for improvements during this current recreation plan project cycle.



Playground Equipment, Universal Trail, Modern Toilet

Picnic Table, Grill, Rustic Fence, Light





Open Games and Ball Fields



Picnic Shelter



Modern Toilet



Lighted Parking Area,
Rustic Fence

Project Number: TF96-087 **Project Year:** 1996 **Project Status:** Closed **Project Title:** Dr.T.K. Lawless Park East 80 (Acquisition)

This grant purchased 80 acres of rolling hills, beautiful hardwoods and the only public lake frontage and access on Lime and Wetherbe lakes. This land currently has over two miles of hiking, biking and cross country skiing trails. There is lake access to both lakes for summer and winter fishing, as well as a controlled hunting program.



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Scenic Trail



Scenic Overview



Lime Lake

Project Number: TF99-226 **Project Year:** 1999 **Project Status:** Closed **Project Title:** Dr. T.K. Lawless Park North (Acquisition)

This land was purchased from a local farmer to allow the installation of a multi-use trail all the way around the park and to expand hunting opportunities within Lawless Park. Currently the trail has been completed and a thirty-foot bridge and 150' of boardwalk have been completed by three Eagle Scouts. This land also provides access to the old Airline Railroad right-of-way so a connection to a rail/trail from Cassopolis would be a possibility in the future.[25]

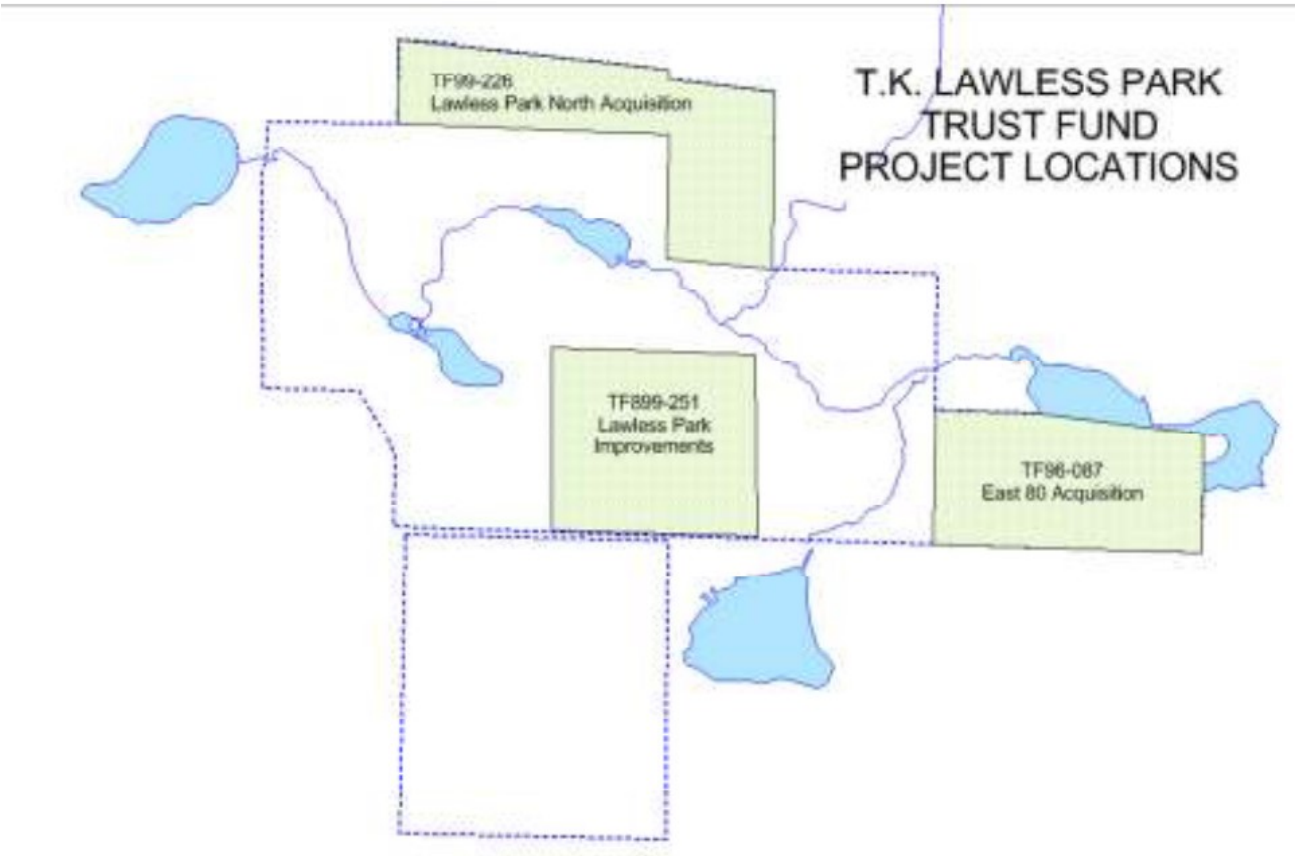


Scenic Boardwalk



Panoramic View

[25] Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Parks Department


T.K. LAWLESS PARK
TRUST FUND
PROJECT LOCATIONS
TF99-226
Lawless Park North Acquisition
TF899-251
Lawless Park
Improvements
TF96-087
East 80 Acquisition

Project Number: TF15-0154 **Project Year:** 2015 **Project Status:** Closed **Project Title:** Dodd Park Water Trail Development Project

The Dodd Park Water Trail Development Project was a proposal to improve and create new barrier free /ADA/Universal compliant site amenities to support the development of a new water trail on the Dowagiac River. The Dowagiac River is the largest cold water river system in Southwest Michigan. Development included a new water trail with trailhead signage, Universal Design compliant kayak/canoe launch, bridge, and parking expansion. In addition, there is a new ADA compliant, waterless, restroom and camping area complete with two ADA compliant cabins, picnic grills, picnic tables and fire rings along with electric, furniture/fixtures and two accessible pathways.



Rental Cabins



Restroom Facilities



Bridge



Universal Design Compliant Canoe/Kayak Launch

Inventory of County Parks Department Recreational Facilities

The county park facilities were inventoried by SWMC staff and the County Parks Department director and were evaluated using the accessibility assessment standards listed below.[26] The following pages include a description of amenity highlights, location, and assessment of each park operated by the County.

Accessibility Assessments:

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

Veteran's Memorial Park

This special-use park is located on M-62 just west of Cassopolis and four miles southeast of the City of Dowagiac. Veteran's Memorial Park is a quiet, well-shaded park with benches, flag poles,

General Information

- Entrance Fee: none
- Open: year-round
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset



Accessibility Rating: 2

There are no stairs or barriers between the parking area and the memorial. There is no paved access, however the lawn is level. There are no amenities.

[26] Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Arthur Dodd Memorial Park

Located on Creek Road, five miles northeast of the City of Niles, this 51-acre park is located along the beautiful Dowagiac River with its fishing, swimming, and paddle sport opportunities. Arthur Dodd is a natural resource area and home to the historic Dowagiac River MEANDRS project. With three picnic shelters, play equipment, and a number of other amenities, Arthur Dodd is very popular regional destination for water recreation.

Park Amenities

Picnicking	Play equipment	3 Picnic shelters (one with electricity)
Fishing (Class A trout stream)	Horseshoe Pits (2)	Hiking trail (I mile)
Volleyball court	Open games area	ADA Canoe landing
Electricity at each two shelters	Security lighting	ADA Rustic restrooms
Fresh well water	Cross country skiing (4 miles)	ADA Rental Cabins (2)

General Information

- Entrance Fee: (donations are appreciated)
- Open: year-round
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Accessibility Rating: 3

With the recent grant improvements, many of the park facilities at Arthur Dodd Park meet ADA guidelines; those include restrooms, boating access, cabins, expanded parking lot and the foot bridge. Eighty percent of the walkways are paved, others are hard packed and there are no stairs. The park also has a freshwater pump.



Fred Russ Forest Park

Located within the 580-acre Fred Russ research forest, (on Marcellus Highway, eight miles east of Dowagiac) this 13-acre natural resource area is one of the most visited parks in Cass County. Fred Russ Forest is on both sides of a Dowagiac Creek tributary and serves as a trailhead for equestrians. There are a number of amenities (see below) including picnic tables, walking trails, and a lookout spot for wildlife viewing.

Park Amenities

- Picnic facilities (two shelters with electricity)
- Play equipment
- Fishing
- Horseshoe Pit
- Canoe landing
- Rustic restrooms
- Over four miles of hiking trails, equestrian tr and cross-country skiing trails.
- Security lighting
- Fresh well water



General Information

- Entrance Fee: (donations are appreciated)
- Open: year-round
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Accessibility Rating: 2

Russ Forest does not have any paved walkways; however, the areas around the picnic shelters are close to the parking lot and are hard-packed and level.

Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park

This two-acre mini park provides public access swimming and fishing in Little Fish Lake and is located 0.2 miles west of Lawrence Road on the north side of the lake. The park is open sunrise to sunset May through September.

Park Amenities

- picnic area
- open games field
- beach
- rustic bathrooms
- fresh well water from a pump
- small picnic shelter



General Information

- Entrance Fee: (donations are appreciated)
- Open: seasonal
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Accessibility Rating: 2

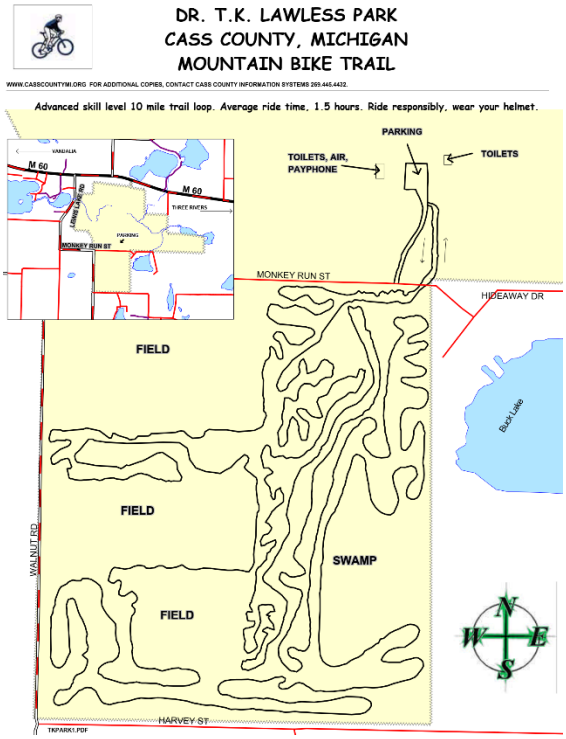
No physical barriers blocking the area, but not wheelchair accessible and bathrooms are rustic.

Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park/Michigan Dark Sky Preserve

The largest community park in Cass County, T.K. Lawless offers a wide variety of leisure and recreational opportunities. Located on Monkey Run Street, nine miles east of Cassopolis off M- 60 and Lewis Lake Road, this 862-acre natural resource area is open year-round for all-season recreation. In addition to the many opportunities for outdoor activities, the park also has modern and convenient comfort facilities, and a rustic campground suitable for individuals or groups.

In 2020, this park was designated as one of only two International Dark Sky Parks in Michigan.





Park Amenities

- Leisure biking (7 miles)
- Mountain biking (10 miles)
- Hiking trails (7 miles)
- Cross-country skiing (7 miles of groomed trails)
- Picnic shelters (2) with electricity
- Two ball fields/soccer field
- Horse shoe pits
- Fishing
- Inner tube sledding (tubes provided)
- Fully accessible paved trail (1 mile)
- Play equipment
- Two picnic shelters
- Open games field
- Volleyball court
- Disc Golf (18 hole)
- Modern restrooms
- Large parking area
- Security lighting
- Fresh well water (pump)
- Fireplace

General Information

- Entrance fee: $2.00 county resident, $3.00 non-county resident

Coy-Steiding Group Camp *(Part of T.K. Lawless Park)*

- Organized groups only
- 15 rustic campsites, each with fire ring & table
- Cabin (sleeps 4-6)
- Picnic shelter with tables
- Fresh well water
- Fire bowl
- Reservations required

General Information

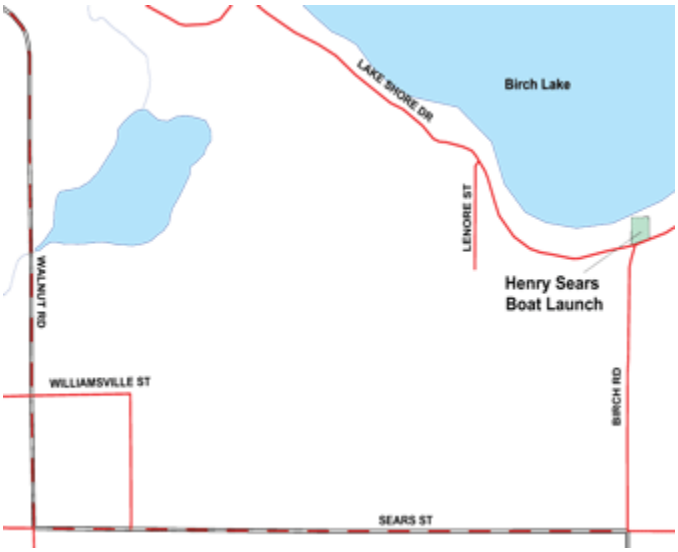
- Entrance fee: $2.00 in county / $3.00 out of county Park
- Open: year-round
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Accessibility Rating: 2

Full barrier-free bathrooms, along with a one-mile paved walkway with mostly level, hard packed surfaces and no stairs. Total access to the picnic pavilions and each has an accessible table.

Henry Sears Boat Launch

Serving as a public boat launch, this mini-park is located at the intersection of Birch Road and Lake Shore Drive on the south side of Birch Lake.



Park Amenities

- Boat launch

Accessibility Rating: Unrated

Harmon Park East

Located on the Shavehead Lake peninsula, this mini-park provides public swimming access to Shavehead Lake.

Park Amenities

The park has a small picnic area, limited parking, and has one portable bathroom facility.



General Information

- Entrance Fee: none
- Open: year-round
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Accessibility Rating: 2

Limited parking,
limited access
bathroom facility

Harmon Park West

Also a mini park, Harmon West is a public boat launch accessing Shavehead Lake.

Park Amenities

Picnic Pavilion.
Limited parking.

Accessibility Rating: 2

General Information

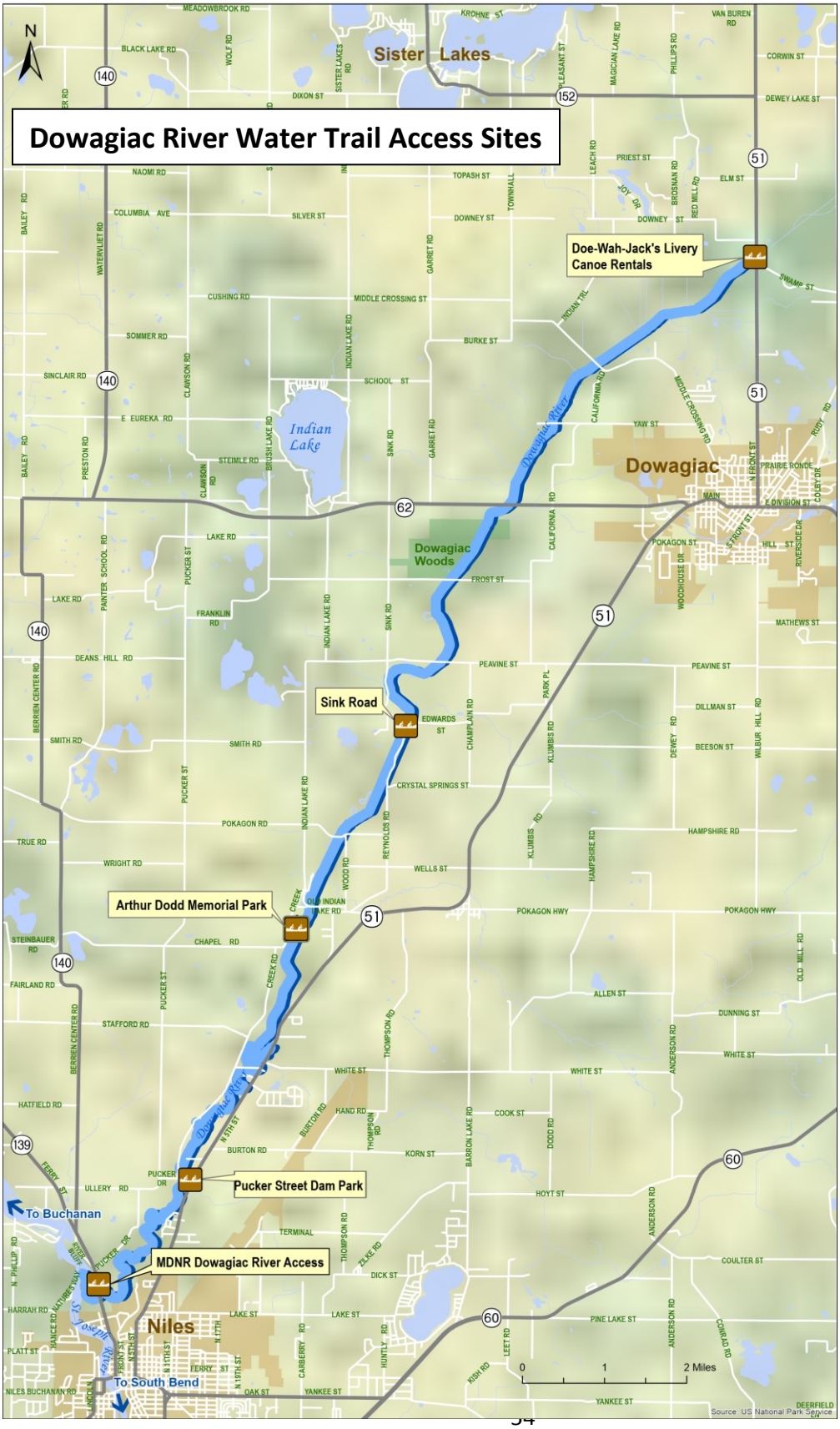
- Entrance Fee: none
- Open: year-round
- Parking: limited
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

Dowagiac River Water Trail

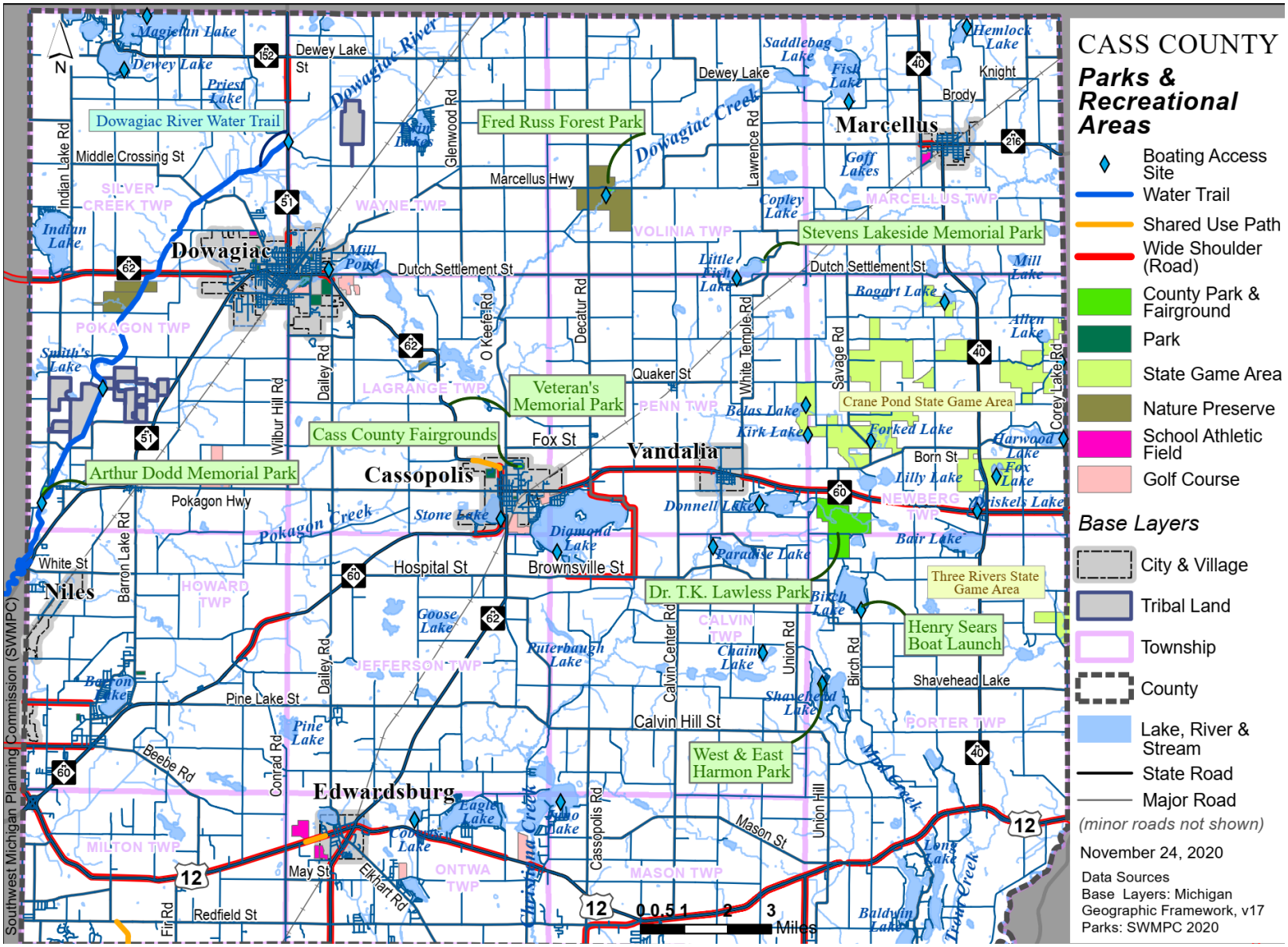
The Dowagiac River Water Trail flows through rural southwest Michigan. The river is moderately to fast-paced. The Dowagiac River is the largest cold-water river system in southern Michigan. The river is lined with trees and wetlands and offers fantastic views of wildlife. The Dowagiac River also offers great fishing and is known for brown trout and its steelhead and salmon runs. Both Dowagiac and Niles have many restaurants and other amenities. There is a canoe/kayak rental business on M-51 north of Dowagiac offering 2-6 hour trips. There is a new access site on Peavine Street and Arthur Dodd Park has a new canoe/kayak launch. The City of Niles is working to remove the Pucker Street Dam (should be completed Fall 2021) and improve the boat ramp at this property and provide other trailhead amenities.

There is a partnership forming to ensure that a pathway is maintained on the Dowagiac River to allow passage of canoes/kayaks and drift boats. Currently, the partners include Cass County Parks Department, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, MDNR Fisheries, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, Cass County Drain office and fishing guides. There is also an interest to increase and improve public access sites on the Dowagiac River.

More information on the water trail can be found here https://www.michiganwatertrails.org/trail.asp?ait=cv&cid=155.


Dowagiac River Water Trail Access Sites
Doe-Wah-Jack's Livery Canoe Rentals
Sink Road
Arthur Dodd Memorial Park
Pucker Street Dam Park
MDNR Dowagiac River Access
To Buchanan
To South Bend
Sister Lakes
Indian Lake
Dowagiac
Dowagiac Woods
Niles
Dowagiac River
0 1 2 Miles
Source: US National Park Service

Cass County Parks and Recreation Map



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process began August 2020 with the review of the previous plan and development of a survey. It was determined that much of the information in the 2013 plan was still relevant but some updates were needed. It was also determined the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission would be the recreation plan steering committee due to the diverse backgrounds of its members. The steering committee is represented by delegates from the County Board of Commissioners, planning commission, road commission, MSU Extension, parks and recreation staff, and the community. In addition, the recreation plan was discussed in Parks and Recreation Commission meetings which are open to the public and their agendas and minutes published monthly on-line.

Public Input

Acknowledging the importance of developing a park, recreation, open space, and greenway plan that is endorsed and supported by residents of the community, the parks department and steering committee made a dedicated effort to seek input. An online survey was offered to the public through the month of October 2020 to gather public input. Paper copies were also available at the County offices. The survey was promoted through social media, press releases (newspaper and radio coverage), and shared with partner email lists. The link was also sent to all municipal clerks in the county asking them to share with local officials and residents. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic no public workshops were held. There was a 30 day public comment period before a public hearing held in January 2021. The draft plan was available online and at all libraries within the county.

The response to the survey was very successful with 387 responses. Below is a summary of results with more detailed results in the Appendix.

- Most respondents were full time residents (72%) and 14% second home owners.
- Responses were received from each municipality (city, village and township) in the county, with the most being from Porter Township (34%).
- Most of the respondents were over the age of 61 (43%), with 33% being 41-60 years old, 22% being 19-40 and no respondents under the age of 19.
- Over 50% of the respondents visit Cass County Parks one to five times per year.
- 90% rate their experience at county parks average to above average.
- The most enjoyed County Parks are T.K. Lawless followed by Fred Russ Forest.
- 72% of respondents knew that T.K. Lawless has received designation as an International Dark Sky Park.

- 59% support the development of the Airline Trail.
- The most desired amenities were updated hiking trails (68%), updated restrooms (46%), picnic areas (36%) and natural/wildlife areas (35%), playgrounds (28%), canoe/kayak launches (26%) and fishing (25%). There was also interest in pickle ball, dog parks, splash pad and boat launches.
- The most desired improvements to Dodd Park were hiking trails, increased paddling (clear river, etc.), improved playground/rustic play area and native plants/trees.
- The most desired improvements at Russ Forest were new bathrooms (60%) and rental cabins (23%).
- The most desired improvements at T.K. Lawless Park were an observation deck at Hogback Lake (36%), an observatory (32%), connect to rail trail (32%), nature center (25%), equipment rental (24%), dog park (20%) and splash pad (20%).
- The most desired improvements at Harmon East are improved/expanded beach area, restrooms, garbage cans and trash pickup, picnic tables and better enforcement.
- The most desired improvements at Harmon West are paving the boat launch, grading the parking and adding a boat wash station.
- The most desired improvements at Henry Sears Boat Launch are improve parking and launch, bathrooms and a boat was station.
- The most desired improvements at Stevens Lakeside are native plants/landscaping/monarch waystation and general renovation of facilities.
- The most desired improvements at Veterans Memorial are native plants, picnic tables, benches and bathrooms.
- For folks with disabilities, the most desired improvements are wheelchair access (dedicated, paved parking, paved paths to bathrooms, etc), paved paths, accessible playground and swings, accessible bathrooms and more benches along trails.
- General comments about County Parks is more publicity is needed, a splash pad, more programming and no fees.



Edwardsburg Elementary School Field Trip

Public Review and Comment

The draft plan was available in several locations for a thirty day public comment period. (December 14, 2020- January 13, 2021) Announcements were published in the local newspapers and posted in the county building. The draft plan was placed in all the local libraries in Cass County and it was available on-line at casscountymi.org. A few comments were received including: Extending hours of Dr. T. K. Lawless Park to accommodate dark sky activities; Consolidate Facebook pages that have information on the International Dark Sky Park; and Include information on the Jones Area Conservation Plan.

Following the thirty-day public comment period, a formal public hearing was announced and held on January 21, 2020. Final review and adoption of the plan will occur by the Cass County Board of Commissioners on January 21, 2020 at their regular meeting.

Goal Development

The purpose of the Cass County Parks and Recreation Department shall be to plan, acquire, develop, preserve, administer, and sustain community parks, recreation, open spaces and greenways in Cass County. The fundamental long range goal of the parks and open space plan is to acquire specific lands such as a county wide swimming area but more so to develop sites already under county control. Proposed open space and/or recreation sites will serve a secondary but important function in the preservation of unique natural areas and in the development of overall county growth patterns to ensure the enhancement of a quality living environment.

When determining project priorities, the following objectives were considered:

- Provide the greatest recreation opportunity for the least per capita cost
- Preserve areas of ecological, historical and aesthetic significance
- Incorporate “Best Management Practices” for sound resource management
- Help shape future county development in a desirable pattern
- Serve multiple interests and population groups by improving the availability and accessibility of facilities. Require “ADA Accessibility”, strive for “Inclusive Accessibility”
- Have multi-use characteristics and multi-season capabilities
- Strike a balance between active and passive recreation open space
- Plan for long term sustainability
- Cultivate long term relationships and partnerships

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Goals

The following summary and corresponding five-year action plan were developed by Cass County Board of Commissioners, the Parks and Recreation Department, steering committee members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and stakeholder groups as they worked together to fulfill the recreational goals listed below.

GOAL 1 Establish stable and secure funding to improve and maintain county parks and recreation programs.

County Board of Commissioners and residents will be asked to support consistent and adequate funding for the county parks. Staff will work with volunteer organizations such as the Friends of the Parks, scouting organizations, 4-H, and others to increase membership and fundraising events. Efforts will be made to maximize supportive resources such as time and energy, monetary donations, real property, and physical and intellectual talents. Increased efforts will be made to seek and apply for funding opportunities on the local, state, and federal levels and the private sector, including matching funds.

GOAL 2 Create and implement a marketing campaign to promote Cass County as a recreation destination for residents and visitors.

Through careful consideration of Cass County's available amenities and through research of popular recreational and leisure pursuits, develop a marketing strategy to attract residents and visitors to the parks. The survey conducted in 2020 indicated that many respondents were not aware of several of the county recreational areas. The marketing strategy will include further development of the Park and Recreation Department's website, social networks, and other promotional materials designed to highlight the attractions and increase facility usage.

GOAL 3 Provide barrier-free accessibility to existing and future facilities.

After a thorough assessment of existing facilities, suggested improvements are in various stages of implementation and will continue to be a high priority. Barrier-free design features will be incorporated into future park development projects.

GOAL 4 Develop and support policies that will preserve and protect valuable water, land and sky resources.

The residents of Cass County have indicated that the preservation and enjoyment of wildlife in its natural state is highly desired. In response, opportunities will be pursued to acquire land for the purpose of the preservation of valuable water and land resources whenever possible. Park preservation and protection policies will be established to encourage responsible use of natural resources through good example. The county and local municipalities will be encouraged to adopt land use policies that will enhance the protection of natural features, land, and water quality.

Current successful educational programs (fifth grade conservation day tour) will continue to promote land conservation for the protection of high quality natural areas. Further educational opportunities designed to promote land conservation, including farmland preservation on Park farmland, for the protection of high quality natural areas in the county will also be sought and developed when possible to demonstrate best management practices.

GOAL 5 Support and promote policies that will preserve and protect Cass County Park properties with historic and/or cultural value.

Cooperate with the efforts of the Cass County Historical Society, and request assistance from other organizations such as Southwest Michigan College, and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, to research and identify properties with historic and/or cultural value. Develop and promote activities and policies that will preserve and protect identified properties as well as support efforts to provide rehabilitation and enhancement where needed.

GOAL 6 Seek and establish connections between existing and future trails and pathways including greenways and blueways.[27]

Develop a marketing strategy to promote the need for increasing desirable trail-ways which will include paved and unpaved hiking and biking trails, non-motorized trails, waterways and open space greenways. Promote the increased health and economic benefits derived from the availability of enhanced and interconnected trail resources.

Work with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Cass County Information Systems, and other similar groups to develop maps indicating existing trail-ways and potential locations for linkages. Develop a prioritized systematic approach for the acquisition and development of properties that will directly connect existing trail-ways. Work with county departments to develop policies to promote the inclusion of bike trails as part of road projects. Pursue regional cooperative opportunities with groups such as Bike Michiana for connecting trail-ways with neighboring municipalities in Michigan and Indiana.

GOAL 7 Respond to changing demographics when planning future recreational facilities and programs.

Maintain awareness of population growth areas and seek to understand the changes in different age groups, conditions of health and disabilities, socio-economic indicators, or other significant population changes which may have an impact on recreational programs and facilities. By seeking community support and input, define, plan, and develop projects that will meet the needs and desires of the changing demographics.

GOAL 8 Enhance the positive working relationship with local and regional partnerships, including the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, to maximize the benefits of coordinated programs and facilities.

Through partnerships educational programs should be established to increase knowledge and respect for the rich cultural history of Cass County's first inhabitants. Seek intergovernmental cooperation to establish coordinated efforts for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and natural recreation areas.

GOAL 9 Develop an action plan in response to identified needs of Cass County residents and those who participated in the planning process.

From previous recreation plans, community surveys, and through current information gathered from the residents of Cass County, specific projects and areas of improvement have been proposed and are under consideration. The plan for those projects is in the next chapter "Five-Year Action Plan".

Action Plan

Which projects will be done? Project ideas are sometimes referred to as *immediate needs*, *future needs*, or *hopeful wishes*. A five-year action plan functions as a guide to sort through and understand project priorities, identify cost and time requirements, establish accountability, and to set benchmarks for recognizing successful completion.

This action plan was developed through research and site visit reports, survey response assessment and through the collaborative efforts of the steering committee, the Parks and Recreation Commission, Parks Department staff, SWMPC staff, and Cass County Board of Commissioners.

The action plan is organized by park - each with its own project matrix. The last page of the plan describes projects that are not associated with a specific park.

Legend: Priority levels are 1-5. Number 1 represents the highest priority – Number 5, the lowest. CCPD = Cass County Parks Department CCRC = Cass County Road Commission

Arthur Dodd Memorial Park

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Replace play equipment	6 months	$40,000	CCPD	1
New bathrooms	1 years	$120,000	CCPD	2
Expand parking area	1 year	<$75,000	CCRC	2
Scenic overlook	3 months	<$10,000	CCPD/Eagle Scouts	2
Modern campground	2 years	$200,000	CCPD	2
New foot bridge	6 months	<$55,000	CCPD	3
Scenic wetland trail	6 months	$35,000	CCPD / Volunteers	3
Provide road access to the water for canoe/kayak/drift boat users	1 year	$30,000	CCPD	4

Veteran's Memorial

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Redo tuck pointing (flag base repair)	*6 months*	*$5,000*	*CCPD*	*1*
Provide barrier free access (sidewalk)	*2 years*	*$30,000*	*CCPD/Volunteers*	*2*

Russ Forest

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Lighting for parking lot	1 year	<$10,000	CCPD	1
Bridge	1 year	$50,000	CCPD /Volunteers	1
Re-pave parking area	6 months	$22,000-$33.000	CCRC	1
New bathrooms	2 years	$120,000	CCPD	1
Develop equestrian trails and facilities	2 years	$10,000	CCPD /Volunteers	2
Play equipment	1 year	$40,000	CCPD	3
New Picnic Shelter	6 months	<$25,000	CCPD	3
Entrance signage	6 months	$5,000	CCPD	4
Rustic Cabins	1 year	$75,000	CCPD	4

T.K. Lawless

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Improve parking area	2 years	$80,000	CCPD	1
Dark Sky Facility Development	2 years	$500,000	CCPD	1
Dog park	1 year	$50,000	CCPD / Volunteers	1
Overnight camping	1 year	$100,000	CCPD	1
Observatory	1 year	$100,000	CCPD	2
New entrance road	2 years	$100,000	CCPD	2
Scenic Overview/Viewing Platform	2 years	$500,000	CCPD	2
Splash Pad	1 year	$30,000	CCPD	2
Nature center	2 years	$300,000	CCPD	2
RV Camping Area	2 years	$100,000	CCPD	2
Fishing deck	1 year	$20,000	Eagle Scouts	3
Store/equipment rental (Frisbees,	6 months	$20,000	CCPD	3
Band shell	1 year	$100,000	CCPD	3
Overnight lodging	2 years	$3,000,000	CCPD/Private Vendor	3
Blueway connector	3 years	$30,000	CCPD	4

Stevens Lakeside Memorial

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Re-pave parking area	6 months	$10,000	CCRC	1
New play equipment	8 months	$20,000	CCPD	2
New bathrooms	1 year	$50,000	CCPD	2

Harmon East – Swimming Access

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
New Seawall	6 months	$20,000	CCPD	1
Extend beach	6 months	$5,000	CCPD	1
New signage	8 months	$2,000	CCPD	2
Gravel parking area	6 months	$2,000	CCRC	2

Harmon West – Boat Launch

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Pave parking area	1 year	$20,000	CCRC	1
Concrete boat ramp	2 years	$20,000	CCPD/State	1

Henry Sears – Boat Launch

Description of project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Re-pave parking area	6 months	$11,000	CCRC	1
Extend boat ramp	8 months	$5,000	CCPD/State	2
Increase parking area	1 year	$20,000	CCRC	4

Other Projects

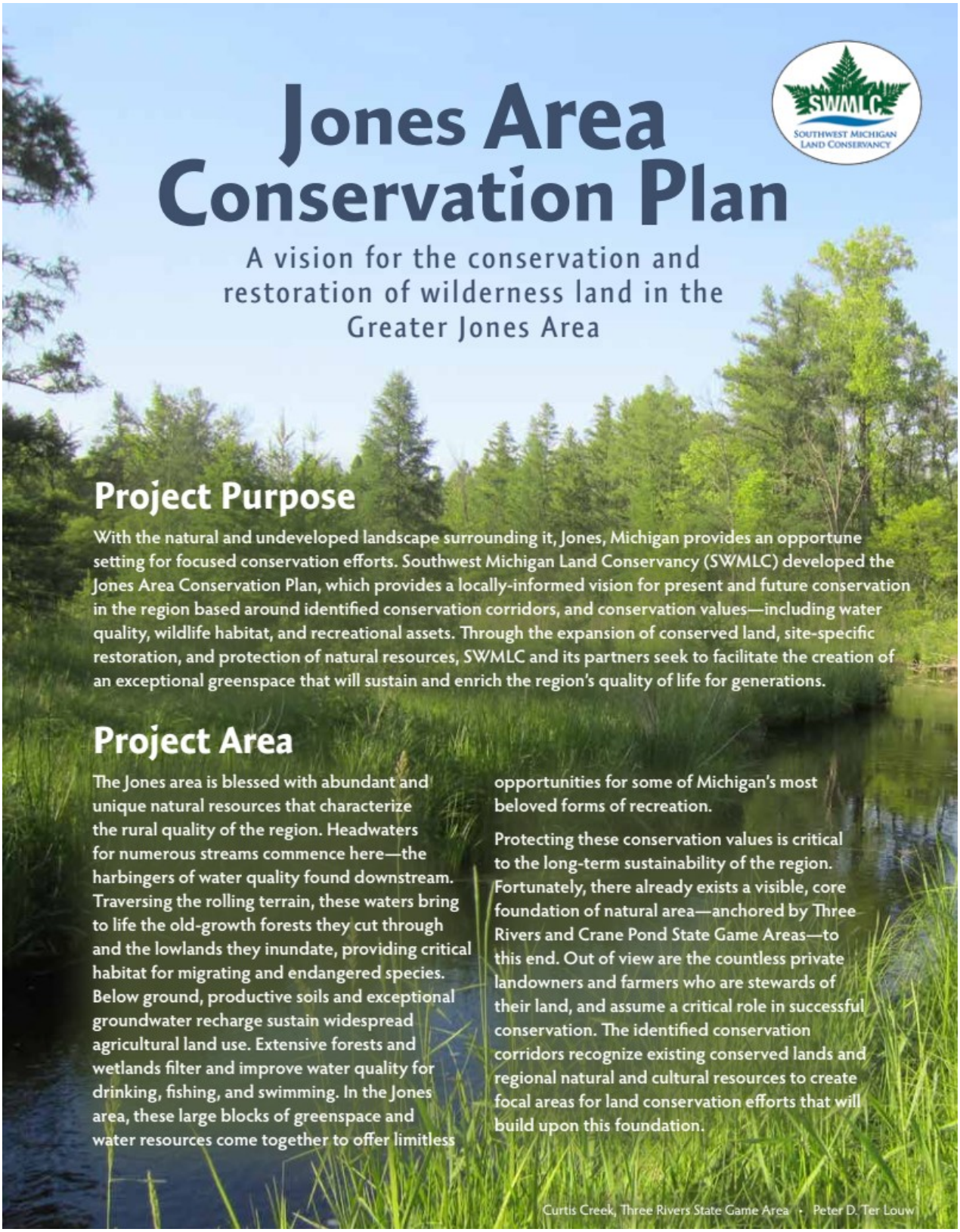
Description of Project	Time to Complete	Estimated Cost	Responsible Entity	Priority
Rails to Trails connection (Decatur Road to Vandalia – old Airline Railroad)	2 years	$400,000	CCPD Village of Vandalia	1
"Get Wet" area	2 years	<$200,000	CCPD	1
Beach (County)	3 years	<$400,000	CCPD	1
County park (southern Cass County)	3 years	<$750,000	CCPD	2
Transmission line easement (M-60 to Three Rivers-Silver Creek-Dowagiac-Indian Lake area)	4 years	<$500,000	CCPD Dowagiac Silver Creek	3

The Cass County Parks Department is a partner in the **Jones Area Conservation Plan** which provides a locally-informed vision for present and future conservation in the region based around identified conservation corridors, and conservation values—including water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational assets. Through the expansion of conserved land, site-specific restoration, and protection of natural resources, SWMLC and its partners seek to facilitate the creation of an exceptional greenspace that will sustain and enrich the region's quality of life for generations. One of the major roles that the Cass County Parks Department can play is to assist with land preservation efforts, especially in the corridor between county parks. This plan was supported by a resolution of the County Board of Commissioners. (See appendix for executive summary of plan.)

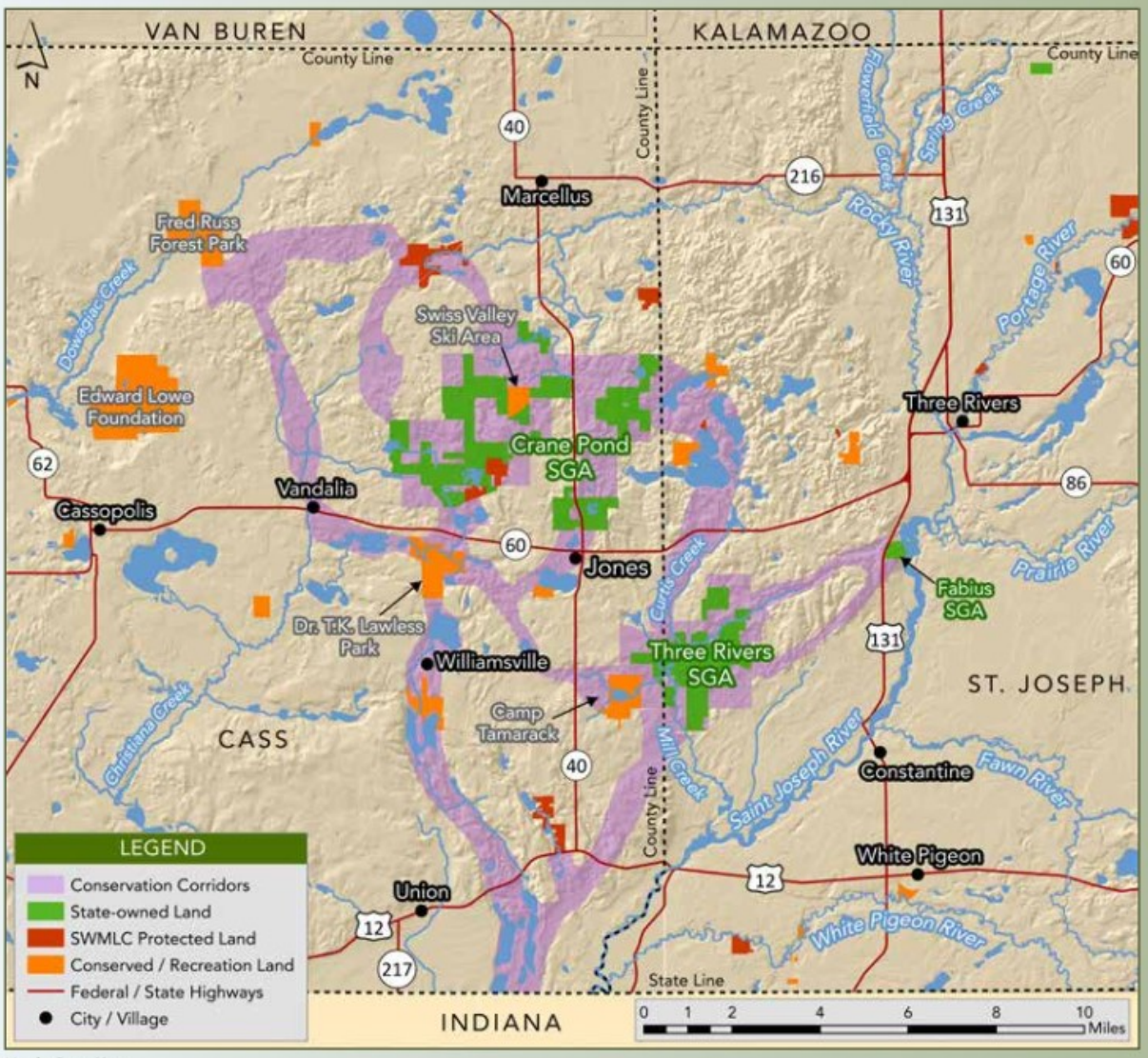
There is a need to increase and improve access to the Dowagiac River to support the water trail for canoes, kayaks and drift boats. Specifically drift boats need an access between Peavine Street and the Pucker Street Dam location. MDNR and Cass County Parks are exploring opportunities at Dodd Park.

Appendices

Jones Area Conservation Plan



Focusing on Conservation Corridors



Map by Bruce Howe

Crane Pond State Game Area

Crane Pond SGA is located just north of Jones at the intersection of M-40 and M-60. In contrast to Three Rivers SGA, Crane Pond's 4,237 acres of land is largely fragmented. Stretching east to west, the SGA starts around the St. Joseph-Cass county line and continues in pieces east nearly to Vandalia. Management of the SGA focuses mainly on sustaining huntable game populations, in accordance with its funding decree. 75-acre Forked Lake is the most prominent water feature within the SGA, located in the southwestern portion of its extent.



Expansion, Restoration, and Protection In and Around Corridors

Habitat fragmentation is recognized as one of the greatest threats to the integrity of natural areas and conservation values because of its cascading effects on species population, biodiversity, and vital ecological services. Truly understanding its impacts on natural resources requires evaluation from a "big-picture" perspective—fragmentation is a landscape-level phenomenon.

The natural areas in the Jones Conservation Area, while abundant, are at times discontinuous, and connected only by narrow corridors of unprotected forest and streams, or nothing at all. Corridors of protected natural area provide critical habitat for migratory songbirds and the means of mobility for land animals. Corridors also enhance forest and water quality by facilitating the building of resilient ecosystems and by buffering water bodies from other land uses. Focusing land conservation and restoration efforts in and around these corridors in the present creates a framework for successful conservation endeavors in the future.

Building upon Public and Private Open Space Resources

Numerous existing public and private natural areas already protect significant conservation values and provide unique recreational opportunities, and create a foundation for further conservation, including:

- Crane Pond SGA – Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division
- Three Rivers SGA – Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division
- Tamarack Swamp Preserve & Spirit Springs Sanctuary – Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
- Dr. T.K. Lawless Park & Fred Russ Forest Park – Cass County Parks
- Swiss Valley Ski & Snowboard Area
- Camp Tamarack – Boys Scouts of America , LaSalle Council
- Edward Lowe Foundation

The Jones Area Conservation Plan endeavors to build upon this foundation through the identification of conservation corridors. The corridors provide a framework for focused conservation efforts, such as land protection and habitat restoration, that benefit regional conservation values.



Conservation Strategies for the Jones Area

The following strategies will enable expansion, restoration, and protection of the core natural areas, and conservation corridors linking them, that are critical to water quality, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and agricultural land use. These strategies seek to recognize the diversity of land uses and land users that have an interest in, and can benefit from, high-quality natural areas and resources.

• Land Conservation

Conserve land through acquisition and conservation easements using both private and public funding sources. Focus conservation efforts in and around identified conservation corridors to link existing conserved parcels, such as Crane Pond and Three Rivers State Game Areas.

• Public Engagement / Education

Provide landowners with information and access to governmental organizations and cost-sharing programs that promote conservation of agricultural land and restoration of natural areas. Host public outreach events that inform and educate.

• Habitat Restoration

Promote the creation and/or protection of large blocks of grassland-oak savanna habitat areas similar to Savage Prairie (Crane Pond State Game Area) throughout the region.

• Ecological Health

Promote awareness and implementation of invasive species management on public and adjacent private lands to enhance the quality of forest, grassland, wetland, and riparian habitat in the region.

• Recreational Opportunities

Support active and passive recreational opportunities in the region, such as road and mountain biking, hunting and fishing, downhill and cross-country skiing, and hiking and birding. Promote the shared values of recreation and protection of natural areas.

• Agricultural Conservation

Recognize the importance of agriculture to the region when implementing conservation strategies by protecting groundwater recharge areas and high-quality farmland.

Three Rivers State Game Area

Three Rivers SGA is located about 2 miles south of M-60 along the county line between Cass and St. Joseph counties. The SGA covers 2,103 acres of land that is fairly compact and contiguous. that was originally managed for sustainable huntable populations of game species, though recently more focus has been placed on managing the unique landscapes it contains. Curtis Creek, one of the highest quality designated trout streams in Michigan, flows south through the SGA.

Project Approach

The Jones Area Conservation Plan intends to provide a baseline for understanding the landscape-level issues in the region, and proposes conservation strategies to address those issues. Most importantly it intends to crystallize a locally-informed vision of conservation for the region.

Creation of the Plan brought together a diverse alliance of local and state governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and non-profits which formed the Jones Area Conservation Planning Committee. The Committee met several times over the course of 2014-2015, including with the public, to examine conservation values within the project area. The Committee then organized these values into five categories significant to the Jones area: water quality, wildlife habitat, recreational assets, and surrounding land use. The categories provided the framework for a geographic mapping analysis that translated those values into conservation corridors, upon which conservation efforts can be focused.



Kathy Fenton-Mille

SWMLC is continuing to work with project partners to implement the solutions outlined in this document. The Jones Area Conservation Plan acknowledges and prioritizes regional conservation values to create pathways toward success. Furthermore, leveraging the involvement of all relevant stakeholders allows the Plan to remain flexible, and therefore viable, for years to come.

To fulfill the vision presented here, SWMLC is actively seeking landowners within the Jones project area who are interested in conserving or restoring their land.

Please reach out to us at (269) 324-1600, or conserveland@swmlc.org.

Project Partners

- Michigan Department of National Resources, Wildlife Division
- Michigan Department of National Resources, Fisheries Division
- Friends of the St. Joseph River Watershed
- Ducks Unlimited
- St. Joseph County Drain Commissioner
- Cass County Parks & Recreation
- Cass County Conservation District
- USDA Farm Services Agency
- Edward Lowe Foundation
- Swiss Valley Ski Area & Heart Smart Events
- Michigan Nature Association

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
8395 East Main St., Galesburg, MI 49053 · 269-324-1600 · www.swmlc.org

Survey and Results

Cass County Parks and Recreation Plan Survey

1. Do you live in Cass County, MI?

- [ ] I am a full time resident
- [ ] I am second home owner
- [ ] I live outside Cass County
- [ ] Other (please specify)

2. If you reside (full or part-time) in Cass County, which City, Village or Township is your residence located in?

3. In which age category are you?

- ( ) 18 or younger
- ( ) 19-40
- ( ) 41-60
- ( ) 61 and older

4. How many times on average each year do you visit Cass County Parks?

- ( ) 0
- ( ) 1-5
- ( ) 6-10
- ( ) more than 10

5. Which Cass County Parks do you enjoy most (select as many as you want)?

- [ ] Fred Russ Forest County Park
- [ ] Dr. T.K. Lawless Park
- [ ] Arthur Dodd Memorial Park
- [ ] Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park
- [ ] Veteran's Memorial Park
- [ ] Henry Sears Boat Launch
- [ ] Harmon Park East - Swimming Access
- [ ] Harmon Park West - Boat Launch

6. How would you rate your overall experience(s) at Cass County Parks?

below average | average | above average

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

7. Please select up to 6 activities or facilities that are most important to you to have at Cass County Parks.

- [ ] Fishing
- [ ] Updated Restrooms
- [ ] Camping
- [ ] Observatory
- [ ] Hiking Trails
- [ ] Nature Center
- [ ] Arts & Crafts
- [ ] Picnic Areas
- [ ] Snowmobiling
- [ ] Playgrounds
- [ ] Sport fields (baseball, soccer, football)
- [ ] Sport courts (tennis, pickle ball, basketball)
- [ ] Festivals
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] Cross Country Skiing
- [ ] Swimming
- [ ] Horse trails
- [ ] Youth activities
- [ ] Paved bike trails
- [ ] Mountain bike trails
- [ ] Canoeing/Kayaking
- [ ] Nature/bird watching
- [ ] Concerts
- [ ] Interpretive programs
- [ ] Natural areas/wildlife areas
- [ ] Dog Park
- [ ] Disc Golf

8. Several improvements were just made at Arthur Dodd Memorial Park. Are there others you would like to see?

2

9. What improvements would you like to see at Fred Russ Forest County Park?

- [ ] New Bathrooms
- [ ] Lighting for Parking Lot
- [ ] Paved Parking Area
- [ ] Develop more horse trails
- [ ] Rustic rental cabins
- [ ] Other (please specify)

10. Did you know that Dr. T.K. Lawless Park received designation as an International Dark Sky Park and it is only one of two in the state of Michigan?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

11. What improvements would you like to see at Dr. T.K. Lawless Park?

- [ ] Rustic rental cabins
- [ ] Lodge
- [ ] Observatory
- [ ] Splash Pad
- [ ] Observation Deck over Hogback Lake/eagle nest
- [ ] Expanded programming
- [ ] Equipment rental (fat tire bikes, cross country skis, snow shoes, etc)
- [ ] A Rail Trail Connection to Vandalia and Cassopolis
- [ ] Nature Center
- [ ] Dog Park
- [ ] Band Shell
- [ ] Interpretive trails
- [ ] Other (please specify)

12. What improvements would you like to see at Harmon Park East - Swimming Access?

13. What improvements would you like to see at Harmon Park West - Boat Launch?

14. What improvements would you like to see at Henry Sears - Boat Launch?

3

15. What improvements would you like to see at Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park?

16. What improvements would you like to see at Veteran's Memorial Park?

17. Would you like to see a bike path from Cassopolis to Vandalia on the old Airline Railroad?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Add any comments:

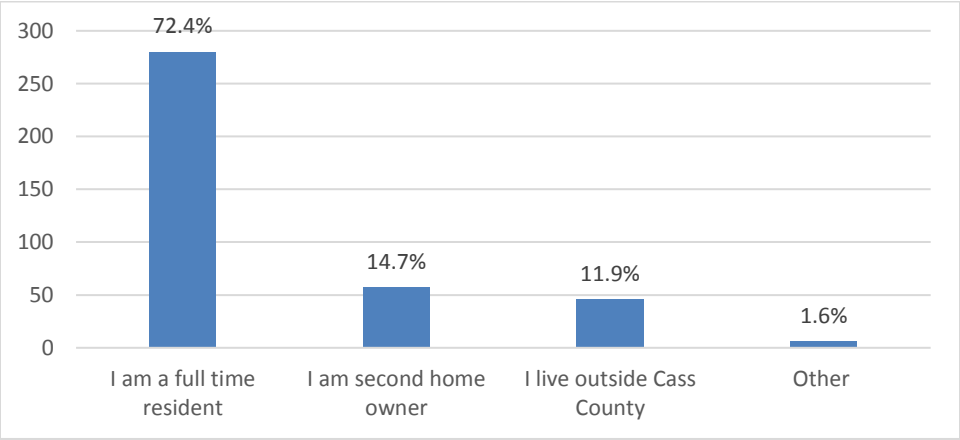
18. If you or someone in your family has any disabilities or limitations, are there any specific improvements at any of the county parks that you would like to better accommodate you and your family?

19. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding Cass County Parks and Recreation Facilities or Opportunities?

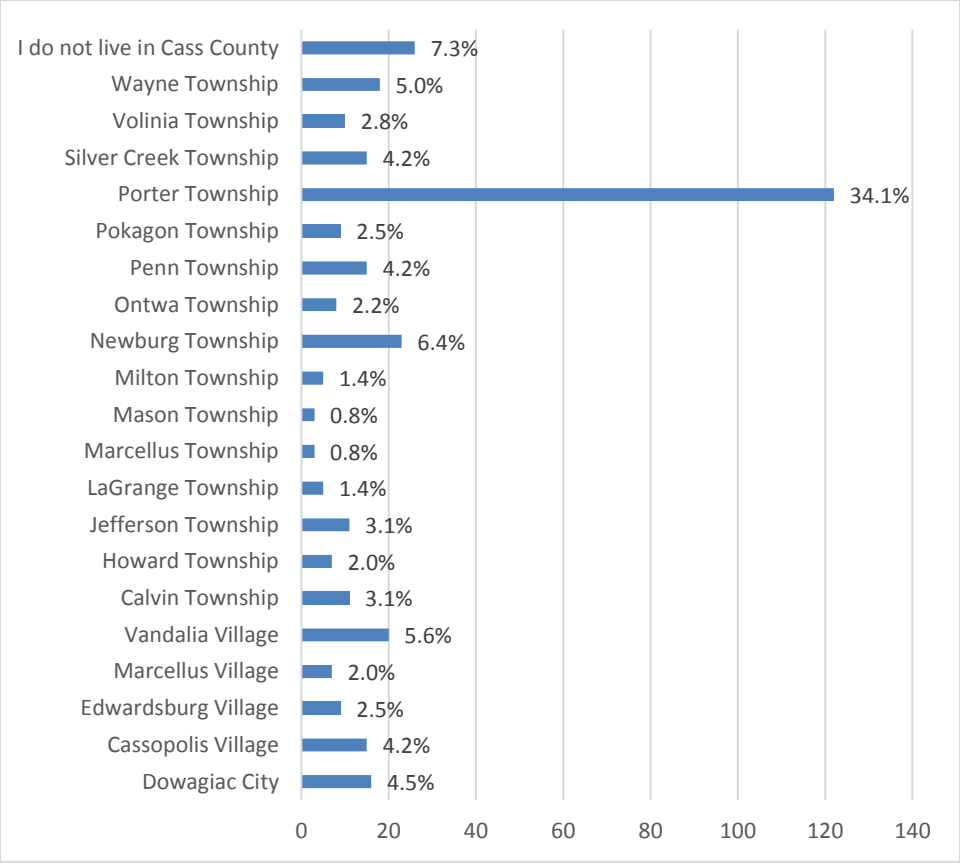
2020 Survey Results

There were 387 responses received.

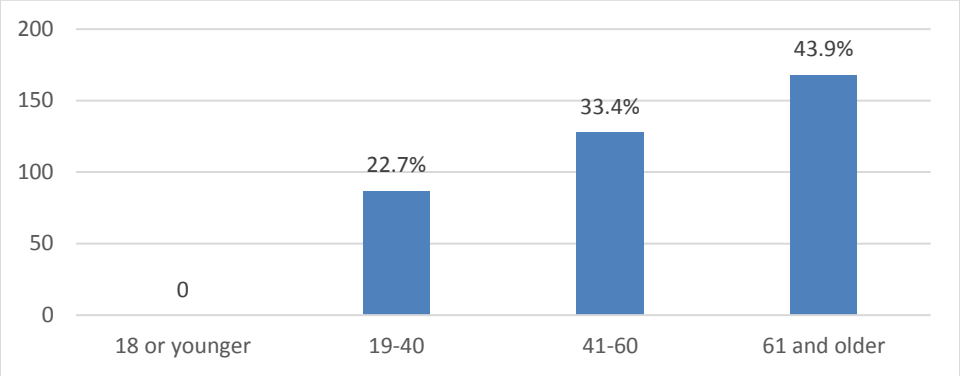
Q1) Do you live in Cass County, MI?



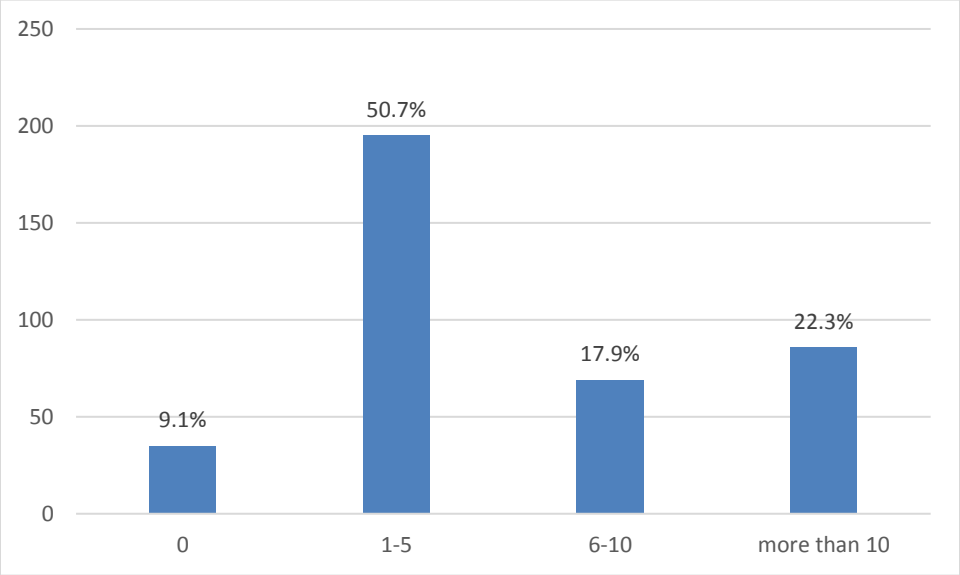
Q2) If you reside (full or part-time) in Cass County, which City, Village or Township is your residence located in?



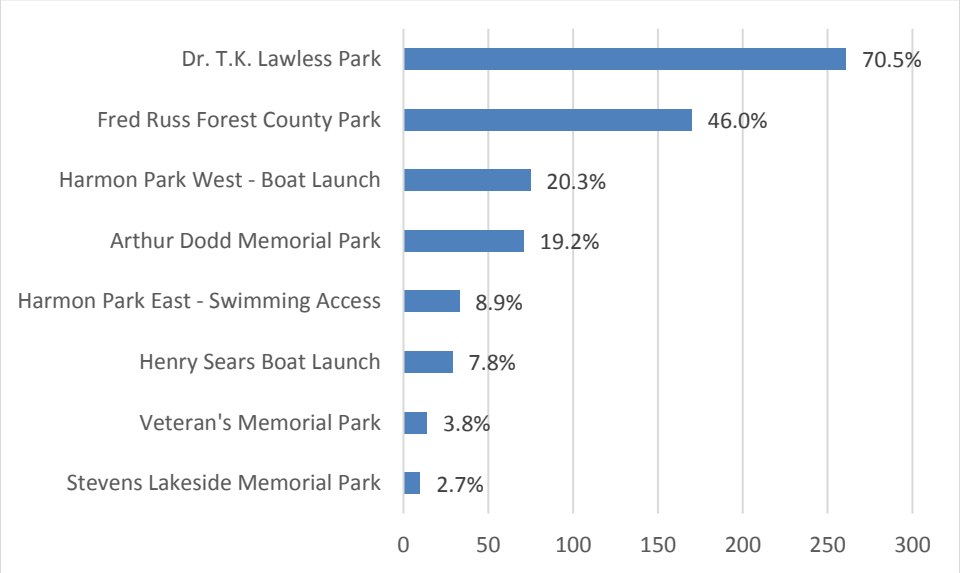
Q3) In which age category are you?



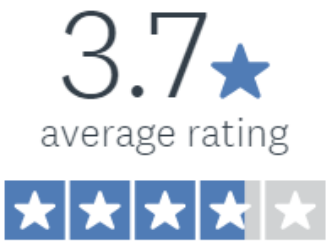
Q4) How many times on average each year do you visit Cass County Parks?



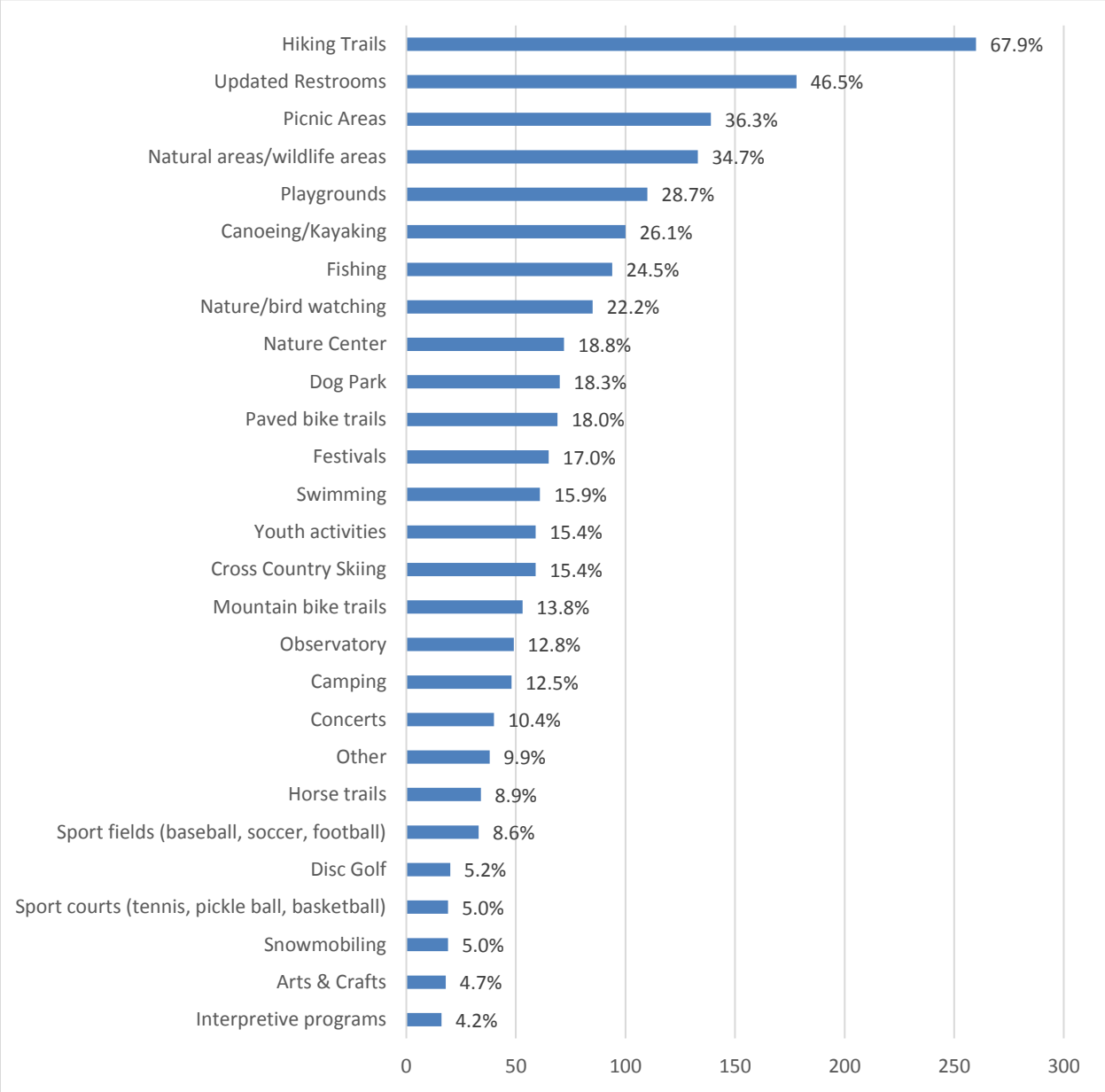
Q5) Which Cass County Parks do you enjoy most (select as many as you want)?



Q6) How would you rate your overall experience(s) at Cass County Parks?



Q7) Please select up to 6 activities or facilities that are most important to you to have at Cass County Parks?

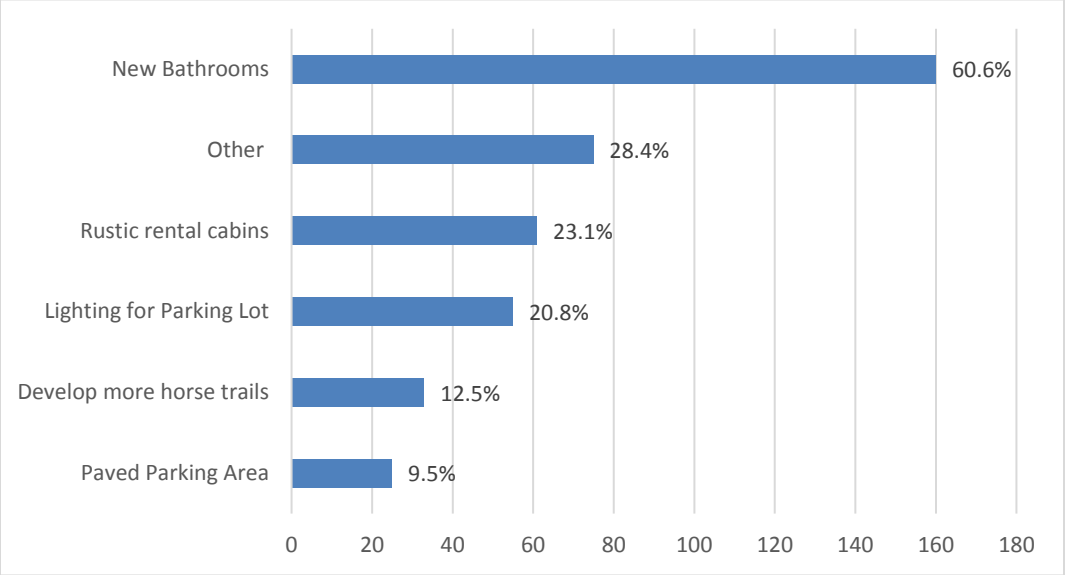


Boat launch (21), splash pad (4), dog friendly (1), farmers market (1), pickleball (1), and winter tubing (1).

Q8) Several improvements were just made at Arthur Dodd Memorial Park. Are there others you would like to see?

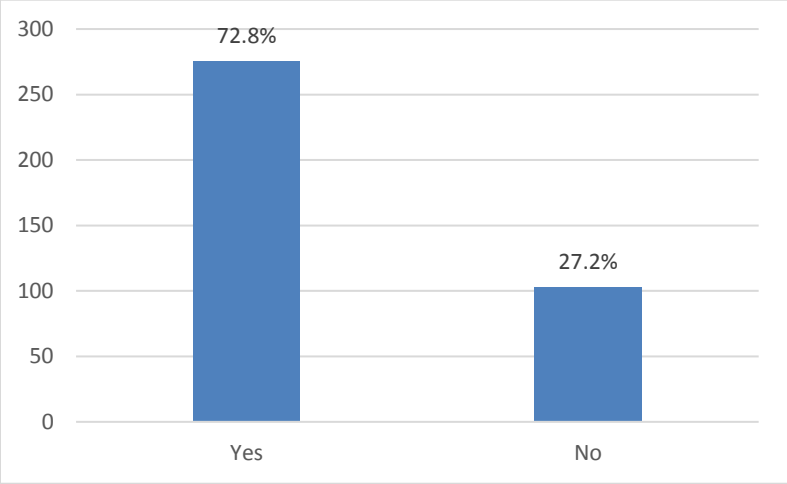
Harmon Park ramp improvement (9), trails (6), Henry Sears boat ramp (4), increased paddling (4), playground (3), fishing platform (2), native flowers/trees (2), bike trails (1), camping (1), concerts (1), dog park (1), drift boat launch (1), horse trails at Lawless (1), improve fish habitat (1), improve picnic area (1), more parking (1), rustic play area (1), splash pad (1)

Q9) What improvements would you like to see at Fred Russ Forest County Park?

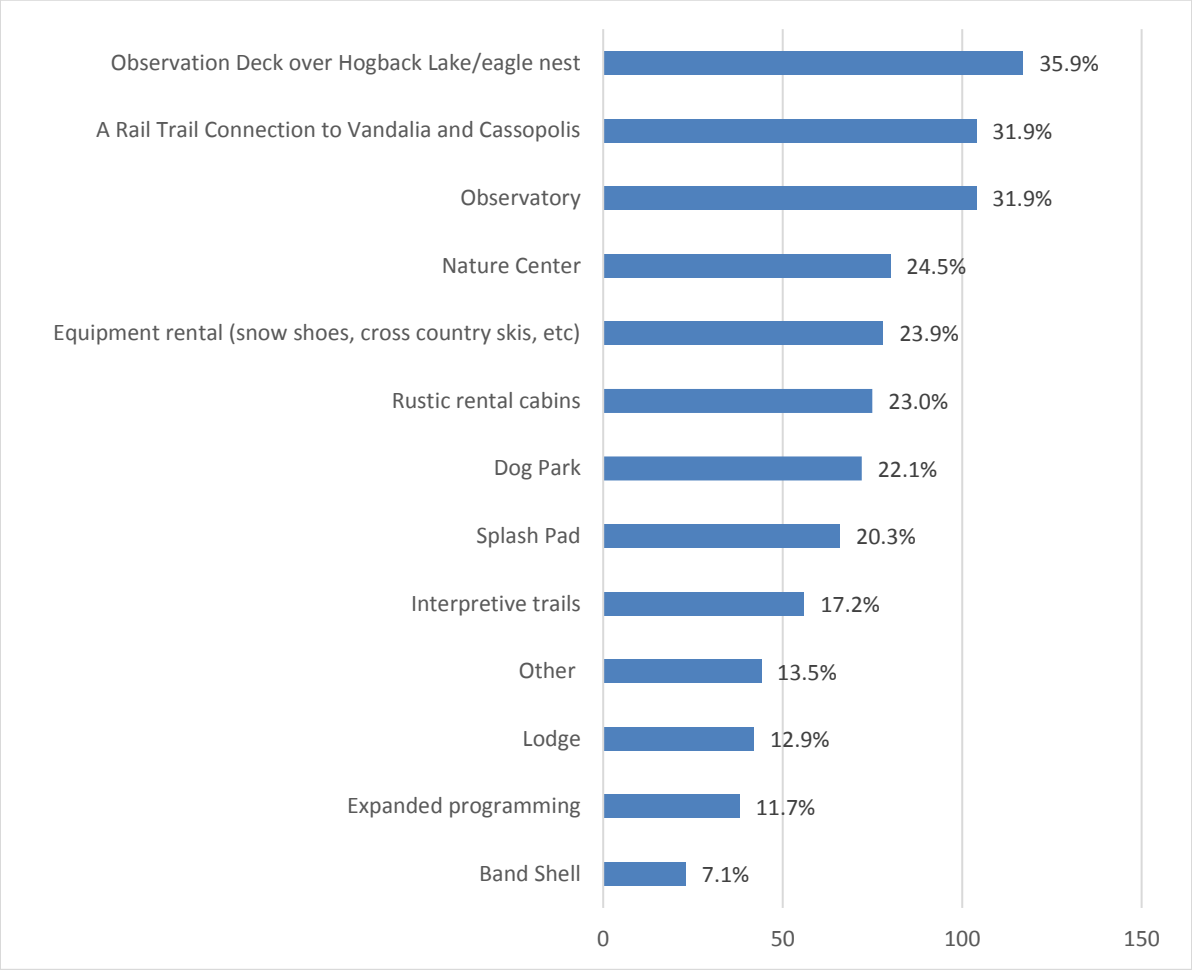


Overnight horse camping (5), pedestrian only trails (4), better signage/map (3), gravel on trails (3), bike trail (3), cross country skis (2), fishing access (2), invasive species control (2), plant trees (2), disabled access (1), enclosed pavilion (1), entrance fee (1), expand park (1), hunting (1), improve picnic area (1), kayak launch (1), monarch waystation (1), benches along trails (1), nature hikes (1), no more lighting (1), parking Newton's Woods (1), playground (1), swing set (1), trail to Newton House (1), trash cans on trails (1), water pump (1), and wildlife view platform (1).

Q10) Did you know that Dr. T.K. Lawless Park received designation as an International Dark Sky Park and it is only one of two in the State of Michigan?



Q11) What improvements would you like to see at Dr. T.K. Lawless Park?



Playground (5), expand hours (4), horse trails (3), cross country trails (2), invasive species control (2), accessible programs (1), benches (1), birding trail (1), designated photo area (1), golf range (1), groom disc golf course (1), hiking trails (1), improve baseball field (1), improve restrooms (1), interpretive plaque (1), monarch waystation (1), native plants (1), soccer goal posts (1), summer camps (1), and wildlife viewing platform (1).

Q12) What improvements would you like to see at Harmon Park East – Swimming Access?
Swim/beach area (13), restrooms (7), garbage cans/pickup (7), enforcement (4), picnic tables (4), limit visitors (3), improve steps (2), natural shoreline stabilization (2), playground (2), fishing dock (1), grills (1), invasive species control (1), more parking (1), pet friendly (1), seating (1), and shelter (1).

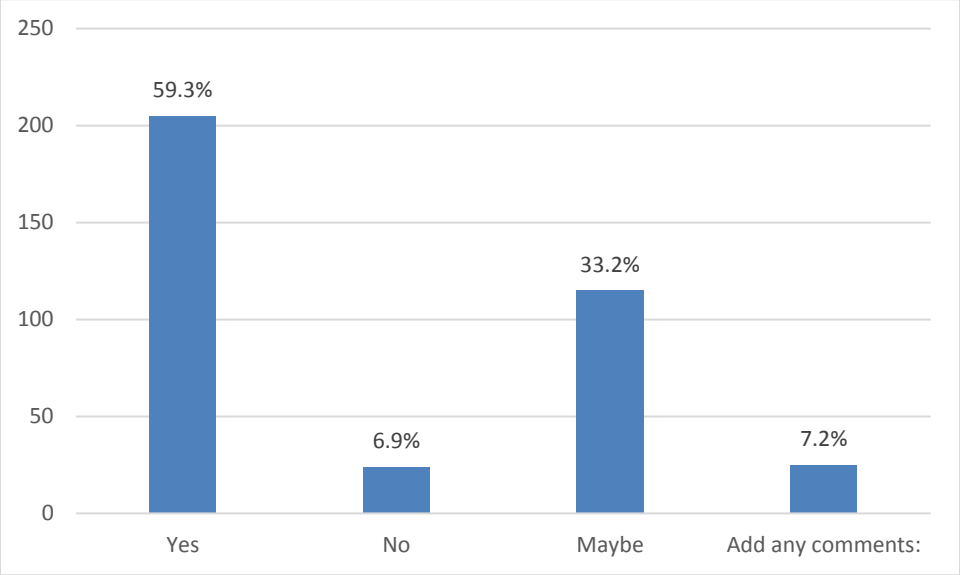
Q13) What improvements would you like to see at Harmon Park West – Boat Launch?
Pave boat launch (51), boat wash (8), grade parking (8), enforcement (4), better signage (4), landscaping (2), fee to use (2), decking for walking (1), restrooms (1), and shade trees (1).

Q14) What improvements would you like to see at Henry Sears – Boat Launch?
Parking & launch (30), bathrooms (5), swimming (3), boat wash (2), and native plants (1).

Q15) What improvements would you like to see at Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park?
Native plants (3), renovate (3), swimming (2), trails (1), playground (1), paved parking (1), bathrooms (1), boat launch (1), monarch waystation (1), and more local memorials (1).

Q16) What improvements would you like to see at Veteran's Memorial Park?
Native plants (4), picnic tables (3), bathrooms (3), signage (2), benches (1), more flagpoles (1), playground (1), shade (1), and trails (1).

Q17) Would you like to see a bike path from Cassopolis to Vandalia on the old Airline Railroad?



Wide support for additional bike paths in Cass County.

Q18) If you or someone in your family has any disabilities or limitations, are there any specific improvements at any of the county parks that you would like to better accommodate you and your family?
Paved trails (10), playground/swings (6), wheelchair access (5), restrooms (5), paved parking spaces (5), benches (3), accessible path to bathrooms (1), brail (1), lighted parking (1), and ramps (1).

Press Release – Survey

PRESS RELEASE
Contact Information:
Scott Wyman-Parks Director
120 N. Broadway St.
Cassopolis, MI 49031
(269) 445-4456
scottwy@cassco.org

CASS COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
CREATING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

What an exciting time for Cass County Parks and Recreation, and we want YOU to be part of it! We are working to update our parks and recreation plan and the Dr. Lawless master plan. Both documents will provide a five-year framework for decisions regarding the establishment, development, and maintenance of recreational programs and facilities. Having an approved parks and recreation plan is especially important as it allows the Cass County Parks and Recreation Department to be eligible for certain state and federal grants.

Parks and recreation improve the quality of life for residents, help maintain and attract residents and businesses, promote healthy physical and mental lifestyles, provide opportunities for social connections, protect natural features and the environment and improve property values.

As part of the planning process, Cass County Parks and Recreation Department is gathering public input. We are asking community members to take an on-line survey. It takes less than 10 minutes and your input will be greatly valued. The survey asks what types of improvements you would like to see at each county park including Arthur Dodd Memorial Park, Dr. T.K. Lawless Park, Fred Russ Forest County Park, Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Henry Sears Boat Launch, Harmon Park East and Harmon Park West.

You can take the survey on line by visiting https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CassCountyParks or you can pick up a paper copy of the survey at the Administrator's office, 120 N. Broadway, Suite 200, Cassopolis, MI Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The survey must be completed by October 31, 2020.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, you can contact Marcy Hamilton with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission at 269-925-1137 x 1525 or at hamiltonm@swmpc.org . The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is assisting Cass County with the development of the plan.

Recommended Classification System[29]

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting.	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	¼- to ½-mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable-depends on function.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and ½ to 3 mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
Greenways	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located communitywide facilities.	Determined by projected demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.

[29] 2012 Appendix C of DNR Guidelines

Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single- purpose use.	Variable-dependent on specific use.	Variable.
Private Park/ Recreation Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable-dependent on specific use.	Variable.

Classification	General Description	Description of each type
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists / in-line skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard- or soft-surfaced.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists / in-line skaters located in independent r.o.w. (e.g., old railroad r.o.w.). Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road r.o.w.
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-Country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

Adapted From: Lancaster, R. A., Ed. Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1983. Mertes, J. D. and J. R. Hall. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1995.

Natural Features Inventory[30]

Key

State Status: E = endangered; T = threatened; SC = special concern.

Federal Status: LE = listed endangered; LT = listed threatened; LELT = partly listed endangered & partly listed threatened; PDL = proposed de-listed; E(S/A) = endangered based on similarities/appearance; PS = partial status (federally listed in only part of its range); C = species being considered for federal status.

Cass County			
Current as of 11/27/2012			
Scientific Name	**Common Name**	**Federal Status**	**State Status**
Acris crepitans blanchardi	Blanchard's cricket frog		T
Agrimonia rostellata	Beaked agrimony		T
Alasmidonta marginata	Elktoe		SC
Alasmidonta viridis	Slippershell		T
Amorpha canescens	Leadplant		SC
Androsace occidentalis	Rock-jasmine		E
Arabis missouriensis var. deamii	Missouri rock-cress		SC
Aristida tuberculosa	Beach three-awned grass		E
Aristolochia serpentaria	Virginia snakeroot		T
Asclepias purpurascens	Purple milkweed		T
Baptisia lactea	White or prairie false indigo		SC
Baptisia leucophaea	Cream wild indigo		E
Berula erecta	Cut-leaved water parsnip		T
Bog			
Cacalia plantaginea	Prairie indian-plantain		SC
Calamagrostis stricta	Narrow-leaved reedgrass		T
Calephelis mutica	Swamp metalmark		SC
Carex gravida	Sedge		X
Carex lupuliformis	False hop sedge		T
Carex oligocarpa	Eastern few-fruited sedge		T
Catinella protracta	A land snail (no common name)		E
Catocala dulciola	Quiet underwing		SC
Catocala illecta	Magdalen underwing		SC
Cirsium hillii	Hill's thistle		SC
Clemmys guttata	Spotted turtle		T

[30] http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/data/cnty_dat.cfm?county=Cass

Clonophis kirtlandii	Kirtland's snake		E
Coastal Plain Marsh	Infertile Pond/marsh, Great Lakes Type		
Coregonus artedi	Lake herring or Cisco		T
Coreopsis palmata	Prairie coreopsis		T
Corydalis flavula	Yellow fumewort		T
Cuscuta glomerata	Rope dodder		SC
Cyclonaias tuberculata	Purple wartyback		T
Cypripedium candidum	White lady slipper		T
Dendroica cerulea	Cerulean warbler		T
Dendroica discolor	Prairie warbler		E
Dichanthelium leibergii	Leiberg's panic grass		T
Digitaria filiformis	Slender finger grass		X
Discus patulus	Domed disc		SC
Dry-mesic Prairie	High Prairie, Midwest Type		
Dry-mesic Southern Forest			
Dryopteris celsa	Small log fern		T
Eleocharis equisetoides	Horsetail spike rush		SC
Eleocharis melanocarpa	Black-fruited spike-rush		SC
Emergent Marsh			
Emydoidea blandingii	Blanding's turtle		SC
Erimyzon claviformis	Creek chubsucker		E
Eryngium yuccifolium	Rattlesnake-master or button snakeroot		T
Eupatorium sessilifolium	Upland boneset		T
Filipendula rubra	Queen-of-the-prairie		T
Fimbristylis puberula	Chestnut sedge		X
Floodplain Forest			
Fontigens nickliniana	Watercress snail		SC
Fuirena pumila	Umbrella-grass		T
Fundulus dispar	Starhead topminnow		SC
Galearis spectabilis	Showy orchis		T
Gentiana flavida	White gentian		E
Gentiana saponaria	Soapwort gentian		X
Gentianella quinquefolia	Stiff gentian		T
Geum virginianum	Pale avens		SC
Gratiola virginiana	Annual hedge hyssop		T
Great Blue Heron Rookery	Great Blue Heron Rookery		
Hardwood-Conifer Swamp			
Helianthus hirsutus	Whiskered sunflower		SC
Helianthus mollis	Downy sunflower		T
Hemicarpha micrantha	Dwarf-bulrush		SC
Heterocampa subrotata	Small heterocampa		SC
Houstonia caerulea	Azure bluet		X
Hybanthus concolor	Green violet		SC
Hydrastis canadensis	Goldenseal		T
Intermittent Wetland	Infertile Pond/marsh, Great Lakes Type		

Inundated Shrub Swamp	Shrub Swamp, Central Midwest Type		
Ixobrychus exilis	Least bittern		T
Kuhnia eupatorioides	False boneset		SC
Lepisosteus oculatus	Spotted gar		SC
Lespedeza procumbens	Trailing bush clover		X
Linum virginianum	Virginia flax		T
Lycopodiella subappressa	Northern appressed clubmoss		SC
Lysimachia hybrida	Swamp candles		X
Meropleon ambifusca	Newman's brocade		SC
Mesic Prairie	Tallgrass Prairie, Central Midwest Type		
Mesic Southern Forest	Rich Forest, Central Midwest Type		
Mesomphix cupreus	Copper button		SC
Microtus ochrogaster	Prairie vole		E
Morus rubra	Red mulberry		T
Myotis sodalis	Indiana bat	LE	E
Neonympha mitchellii mitchellii	Mitchell's satyr	LE	E
Nerodia erythrogaster neglecta	Copperbelly water snake	LT	E
Notropis anogenus	Pugnose shiner		E
Notropis chalybaeus	Ironcolor shiner		X
Oak Barrens	Barrens, Central Midwest Type		
Oecanthus laricis	Tamarack tree cricket		SC
Onosmodium molle	Marbleweed		X
Panax quinquefolius	Ginseng		T
Panicum verrucosum	Warty panic grass		T
Pantherophis spiloides	Gray ratsnake		SC
Papaipema beeriana	Blazing star borer		SC
Papaipema cerina	Golden borer		SC
Papaipema maritima	Maritime sunflower borer		SC
Papaipema sciata	Culvers root borer		SC
Papaipema silphii	Silphium borer moth		T
Papaipema speciosissima	Regal fern borer		SC
Philomycus carolinianus	Carolina mantleslug		SC
Phlox maculata	Wild sweet William		T
Platanthera ciliaris	Orange- or yellow-fringed orchid		E
Platanthera leucophaea	Prairie white-fringed orchid	LT	E
Pleurobema sintoxia	Round pigtoe		SC
Poa paludigena	Bog bluegrass		T
Polemonium reptans	Jacob's ladder		T
Polygala cruciata	Cross-leaved milkwort		SC
Polygonum careyi	Carey's smartweed		T
Polymnia uvedalia	Yellow-flowered leafcup		T
Potamogeton bicupulatus	Waterthread pondweed		T
Potamogeton pulcher	Spotted pondweed		E
Prairie Fen	Alkaline Shrub/herb Fen, Midwest Type		
Prosapia ignipectus	Red-legged spittlebug		SC

Pycnanthemum pilosum	Hairy mountain mint		T
Rhexia virginica	Meadow beauty		SC
Rhynchospora macrostachya	Tall beakrush		SC
Rhynchospora scirpoides	Bald-rush		T
Rich Tamarack Swamp	Forested Bog, Central Midwest Type		
Sabatia angularis	Rosepink		T
Scleria pauciflora	Few-flowered nut rush		E
Scleria triglomerata	Tall nut rush		SC
Scutellaria elliptica	Hairy skullcap		SC
Seiurus motacilla	Louisiana waterthrush		T
Silene stellata	Starry campion		T
Silphium integrifolium	Rosinweed		T
Silphium laciniatum	Compass plant		T
Sistrurus catenatus catenatus	Eastern massasauga	C	SC
Southern Hardwood Swamp			
Southern Wet Meadow	Wet Meadow, Central Midwest Type		
Spartiniphaga inops	Spartina moth		SC
Speyeria idalia	Regal fritillary		E
Stellaria crassifolia	Fleshy stitchwort		E
Submergent Marsh			
Tachopteryx thoreyi	Grey petaltail		T
Terrapene carolina carolina	Eastern box turtle		SC
Trichostema brachiatum	False pennyroyal		T
Trillium recurvatum	Prairie trillium		T
Trillium sessile	Toadshade		T
Triphora trianthophora	Nodding pogonia or three birds orchid		T
Utterbackia imbecillis	Paper pondshell		SC
Valeriana edulis var. ciliata	Edible valerian		T
Valerianella chenopodiifolia	Goosefoot corn salad		T
Venustaconcha ellipsiformis	Ellipse		SC
Viburnum prunifolium	Black haw		SC
Villosa iris	Rainbow		SC
Viola pedatifida	Prairie birdfoot violet		T
Vitis vulpina	Frost grape		T
Wet Prairie	Wet Prairie, Midwest Type		
Wilsonia citrina	Hooded warbler		SC
Wisteria frutescens	Wisteria		T
Zizania aquatica var. aquatica	Wild rice		T

Adoption Documents

The following documents will be added at the end of this plan documenting the plan approval process:

Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission Resolution Recommending Approval
Copy of Public Notices for Comment Period and Public Hearing
Minutes of Public Hearing
Cass County Board of Commissioners Resolution to Adopt Plan (included in minutes)
Copy of Transmittal Letter to County Planning Department
Copy of Transmittal to Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Copy of Transmittal to Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Plan Certification Checklist

CASS COUNTY
2021-2026
COMMUNITY PARK, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, and GREENWAY PLAN

Resolution of Adoption

WHEREAS, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission was formed by the Cass County Board of Commissioners under Public Act 261 of 1965, and:

WHEREAS, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission has the authority to study and ascertain the need for county parks and recreation facilities and whether this need is being met, and to prepare and adopt a coordinated plan of areas and facilities to meet this need, and;

WHEREAS, with the assistance of the various stakeholders and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission has developed a recreation plan which identifies the need for recreation areas, open spaces and greenways in Cass County and sets forth a program to develop and maintain these areas of focus within the county park system in order to meet these needs, and;

WHEREAS, the citizens of Cass County and those beyond the borders of Cass County have had the opportunity to have input into the plan through community surveys, public hearings, and a public comment period,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission adopts the Cass County 2021-2026 Recreation Plan and recommends that the Plan be forwarded to the Cass County Board of Commissioners, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for their approval.

Date: January 14, 2021

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1

Fritz Kucklick, President
Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission

Proof

Client	CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION	Phone	(269) 445-4470
Address	120 N BROADWAY SUITE 200	EMail Fax	PattyD@cassco.org
AD #	1157073	Requested By	CASS COUNTY PARKS RECREATION
Class	2610		
Start Date	12/12/20	PO #	
End Date	12/12/20	Created By	
Run Dates	2	Creation Date	STACEY.MEADO
Pubs	Niles Daily Star, LeaderPub.com	Dimensions	12/08/2020
Order #	0	Price	1 X 5.0 $45.00

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Cass County, Michigan will hold a Public Comment Period for the Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan from December 14, 2020 to January 13, 2021.

The plan will be available for review during business hours by appointment only (due to COVID-19) at the Cass County Parks Department office, 120 North Broadway, Suite 200, Cassopolis, MI during the hours of Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The number to call for appointment is 269-445-4456.

You may also view the document at the branches of the Cass District Library during normal business hours (excluding the Historical Branch), as well as the county website at www.casscountymi.org

Written comments can be submitted by email to hamiltonm@swmpc.org or by mail to SWMPC, 376 W. Main St., Ste 130, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 and must be received by January 13, 2021

Niles Daily Star:
Dec. 12, 2020
PUBLIC COMMENT

Proof

Client	CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION	Phone	(269) 445-4470
Address	120 N BROADWAY SUITE 200	EMail Fax	PattyD@cassco.org
AD #	1157074	Requested By	CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION
Class	2610		
Start Date	12/12/20	PO #	
End Date	12/12/20	Created By	
Run Dates	2	Creation Date	STACEY.MEADO
Pubs	Dowagiac Daily News, Leader-Pub.com	Dimensions	12/08/2020
Order #	0	Price	1 X 5.0 $5.00
Sales Rep	Stacey Meadows		Public Notice Department
		Phone	
		Fax	(205) 669-4217

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Cass County, Michigan will hold a Public Comment Period for the Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan from December 14, 2020 to January 13, 2021.

The plan will be available for review during business hours by appointment only (due to COVID-19) at the Cass County Parks Department office, 120 North Broadway, Suite 200, Cassopolis, MI during the hours of Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The number to call for appointment is 269-445-4456.

You may also view the document at the branches of the Cass District Library during normal business hours (excluding the Historical Branch), as well as the county website at www.casscountymi.org

Written comments can be submitted by email to hamiltonm@swmpc.org or by mail to SWMPC, 376 W. Main St., Ste 130, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 and must be received by January 13, 2021

Dowagiac Daily News:
Dec. 12, 2020
PUBLIC COMMENT

Publisher's Certificate of Publication

STATE OF MICHIGAN
COUNTY OF CASS

Ambrosia Neldon, being duly sworn, says:
That she is General Manager of the Dowagiac Daily News, a daily newspaper of general circulation, printed and published in Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan; that the publication, a copy of which is attached hereto, was published in the said newspaper on the following dates:

01/16/21

That said newspaper was regularly issued and circulated on those dates.

The sum charged by the Newspaper for said publication does not exceed the lowest rate paid by commercial customers for an advertisement of similar size and frequency in the same newspaper in which the public notice appeared.

There are no agreements between the Dowagiac Daily News and the officer or attorney charged with the duty of placing the attached legal advertising notices whereby any advantage, gain or profit accrued to said officer or attorney.

SIGNED:

Ambrosia Neldon

Ambrosia Neldon, General Manager

Subscribed and sworn to before me this
16th Day of January, 2021

Jennifer E. Bounds

Jennifer Evelyn Bounds
Notary Public, State of Michigan,
County of Berrien
My commission expires 11/18/2026

Account # 144443
Ad # 1173998

CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
120 N BROADWAY SUITE 217
CASSOPOLIS MI 49031

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Due to concerns over Covid-19, the social distancing ordered by Governor Whitmer and in compliance with executive order EO-2020-15, the Cass County Board of Commissioners will hold a virtual Public Hearing on January 21, 2021 at 6:45 p.m. to discuss the draft of the Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan.

Any member of the public who wishes to virtually participate in the meeting may do so by copying and paste the following link to join the webinar: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89610741943 or by telephone at US: +1-646-558-8656 or +1-301-715-8592 or + 1-312-626-6799 or + 1-699-900-9128 + 1-253-215-8782 or + 1-346-248-7799
Webinar ID: 896 1074 1943

Recreation Plan copies may be viewed at the Cass District Library, the Cass County Parks and Recreation office by calling 269-445-4456 as well as the county website at www.casscountymi.org

Dowagiac Daily News:
Jan. 16, 2021
PUBLIC HEARING

CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING

January 21, 2021

The Cass County Board of Commissioners met for their Regular Meeting on Thursday, January 21, 2021 via Zoom.

Chair Dyes called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Jones provided the Invocation.

Clerk/Register Monica McMichael called roll:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Ryan Laylin, Annie File, Skip Dyes, Mike Grice, Roseann Marchetti, Robert Benjamin and Jeremiah Jones.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: County Administrator Jeff Carmen, Finance Director Becky Moore and Clerk/Register Monica McMichael.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda Items Only)

None.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Laylin moved, seconded by Commissioner Jones, to approve the January 21, 2021 Cass County Board of Commissioner's Agenda. Motion carried by voice vote.

RECOGNITIONS

None.

PRESENTATIONS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Chair Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Benjamin, that the following items be voted on at one time by roll call vote and be considered as a consent agenda by the Board of Commissioners:

(M-10-21) A motion to approve Claims dated January 8, 2021.

(M-11-21) A motion to approve the January 7, 2021 Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (7): Commissioners File, Dyes, Marchetti, Benjamin, Grice, Jones and Laylin.

No (0): None.

The Consent Agenda carried by roll call vote.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioners File, Marchetti and Dyes offered Committee Reports.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Commissioner Marchetti stated that the committee would meet Monday, January 25 at 9:00 a.m. as they had numerous openings.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Carmen presented the Administrator's Report.

6:45 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Dyes opened the public hearing regarding a Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan at 6:45 p.m. Parks Director Scott Wyman and Southwest Michigan Planning Commissioner Senior Planner Marcy Hamilton shared plan highlights. The plan will be sent to the State DNR after approval by the Board of Commissioners.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT - CONTINUED

Commissioners will hold a Special Meeting February 3, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director Becky Moore offered the Finance Report.

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE

Sheriff Behnke provided a Public Safety Update.

NEW BUSINESS

R-12-21

Commissioner File moved, seconded by Commissioner Benjamin, to approve the Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan.

WHEREAS, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission has undertaken the development of a 5-year Cass County 2021-2026 Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities and an action plan to protect, maintain and enhance parks and recreation opportunity and maintain open space for agriculture, forestry, fish and wildlife habitat during the period between 2021 – 2026; and

WHEREAS, with the assistance of the various stakeholders, Cass County leadership and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission has developed a recreation plan which identifies the need for recreation areas, open spaces and greenways in Cass County and sets forth a program to develop and maintain these areas of focus within the county park system in order to meet these needs, and;

WHEREAS, following discussion at their January 14, 2021 meeting, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission passed a resolution in support of the 2021-2026 Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan; and

WHEREAS, a second Public Hearing was held on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 6:45 p.m. for residents to further express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, following the Public Hearing the Cass County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to adopt the 2021 – 2026 Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Plan and recommend the plan be forwarded to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for their approval; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners does hereby adopt the 2021 – 2026 Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan as a guideline for improving recreation services for the benefit of Cass County residents and all who visit.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (7): Commissioners Marchetti, Benjamin, Grice, Jones, Laylin, File and Dyes.

No (0): None.

Resolution R-12-21 carried by roll call vote.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Benjamin moved, seconded by Commissioner Jones, to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

_____
Dwight Dyes, Chair

_____
Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

January 22, 2021

Cass County
Planning Commission
120 N. Broadway
Cassopolis, MI 49031

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a copy of the adopted Cass County Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan: 2021-2026 for your records. This five-year plan reflects the County's commitment to comprehensive recreational planning that includes measures to protect natural resources through responsible use and provides opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to participate in healthful living.

Sincerely,

Marcy Hamilton

Marcy Hamilton
Senior Planner

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651

p 269.925.1137 • f 269.925.0288 • www.swmpc.org • e swmpc@swmpc.org

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

January 22, 2021

Mr. K. John Egelhaaf, Director
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
376 W. Main Street, Ste 130
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Dear Mr. Egelhaaf:

Enclosed please find a copy of the adopted Cass County Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan: 2021-2026 for your records. This five-year plan reflects the County's commitment to comprehensive recreational planning that includes measures to protect natural resources through responsible use and provides opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to participate in healthful living.

Sincerely,

Marcy Hamilton

Marcy Hamilton
Senior Planner

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651
269.925.1137 • 269.925.0288 • www.swmpc.org • swmpc@swmpc.org

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

January 27, 2021

Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Grant Management
Lansing, MI

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a copy of the adopted Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan: 2021-2026 for your records. This five-year plan reflects the County's commitment to comprehensive recreational planning that includes measures to protect natural resources through responsible use and provides opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to participate in healthful living.

Sincerely,

Marcy Hamilton

Marcy Hamilton
Senior Planner

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651

p 269.925.1137 • f 269.925.0288 • www.swmpc.org • e swmpc@swmpc.org

Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Grants Management

COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

By Authority of Parts 19, 703 and 716 of Act 451, P.A. 1994, as amended, submission of this information is required for eligibility to apply for grants

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete, obtain certification signatures and submit this checklist with a locally adopted recreation plan.

All recreation plans are required to meet the content and local approval standards listed in this checklist and as outlined in the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans* provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Plans must be submitted to the DNR through MiRecGrants **with** a completed checklist that has been signed by an authorized official(s) of the local unit of government(s) submitting the plan. Plans may be submitted at any time of the year, but no later than February 1 of the year the local unit of government is applying for grants.

PLAN INFORMATION

Name of Plan:
Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan

List the community names (including school districts) that are covered under the plan and have passed a resolution adopting the plan.	County	Month and year plan adopted by the community's governing body
Cass County	Cass County	January 2021

PLAN CONTENT

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check each box to certify that the listed information is included in the final plan.

☒ **1. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

☒ **2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

- ☒ Roles of Commission(s) or Advisory Board(s)
- ☒ Department, Authority and/or Staff Description and Organizational Chart
- ☒ Annual and Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements and Recreation Programming
- ☒ Current Funding Sources
- ☒ Role of Volunteers
- ☒ Relationship(s) with School Districts, Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations

Recreation Authorities or Trailway Commissions Only:

- ☐ Description of the Relationship between the Authority or Commission and the Recreation Departments of Participating Communities
- ☐ Articles of Incorporation

☒ **3. RECREATION INVENTORY**

- ☒ Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory
- ☒ Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities
- ☒ Location Maps (site development plans recommended but not required)
- ☒ Accessibility Assessment
- ☒ Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities
- ☐ Waterways Inventory (if applicable)

☒ **4. RESOURCE INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)**

☒ **5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

PR1924-1 (Rev. 11/20/2018)

☒ **6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

☒ Description of the Method(s) Used to Solicit Public Input Before or During Preparation of the Plan, including a Copy of the Survey or Meeting Agenda and a Summary of the Responses Received

☒ Copy of the Notice of the Availability of the Draft Plan for Public Review and Comment

Date of the Notice: Dec 12, 2020

Type of Notice: Newspaper

Plan Location: County Office, Libraries, online

Duration of Draft Plan Public Review Period (Must be at Least 30 Days): _____

☒ Copy of the Notice for the Public Meeting Held after the One Month Public Review Period and Before the Plan's Adoption by the Governing Body(ies)

Date of Notice: Jan 16, 2021

Name of Newspaper: Dowagiac Daily News, Niles Daily Star

Date of Meeting: January 21, 2021

☒ Copy of the Minutes from the Public Meeting

☒ **7. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

☒ **8. ACTION PROGRAM**

☒ **9. POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT(S)**

PLAN ADOPTION DOCUMENTATION

APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION: For multi-jurisdictional plans, **each** local unit of government must pass a resolution adopting the plan. Prepare and attach a separate page for each unit of government included in the plan.

☒ 1. Official resolution of adoption by the governing body dated: Jan 21, 2021

☒ 2. Official resolution of the County Parks Commission or Board, recommending adoption of the plan by the governing body, dated: January 14, 2021

☒ 3. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to County Planning Agency dated: January 22, 2021

☒ 4. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to Regional Planning Agency dated: January 22, 2021

OVERALL CERTIFICATION

NOTE: For multi-jurisdictional plans, Overall Certification must include the signature of each local unit of government. Prepare and attach a separate signature page for each unit of government included in the plan.

I hereby certify that the recreation plan for

Cass County (Local Unit of Government) *includes the required content, as indicated above and as set forth by the DNR.*

Scott Wyman — Authorized Official for the Local Unit of Government

January 25, 2021 — Date

This completed checklist must be uploaded in MiRecGrants.

MDNR Self Certification Forms for Grant Funded Projects

Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Grants Management

PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT

This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.

GRANT TYPE: ☒ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
(Please select one) ☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Cass County

PROJECT NUMBER: TF15-0154 **PROJECT TYPE:** Development

PROJECT TITLE: Dodd Park Water Trail Development Project

PROJECT SCOPE: develop ADA/Universal ammenities to support Dowagiac River Water Trail

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Cass County Parks and Recreation	Scott Wyman	Director
Address	**Telephone**	
120 N.Broadway St., Suite 200	269-445-4456	
City, State, ZIP	**Email**	
Cassopolis Mi 49031	scottwy@cassco.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided? If yes, please describe change(s). ☐Yes ☒No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐Yes ☒No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area? If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐Yes ☒No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants) ☒Yes ☐No ☐N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure. ☒Yes ☐No

There is a $60.00 fee to rent a picnic shelter and $50.00 to rent a cabin per night

No entrance fee at this time

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

365 days a year / Sunrise to Sunset unless you are camping

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

The Dodd Park Water Trail Development Project is a proposal to improve and create new barrier free /ADA/Universal compliant site amenities to support the development of a new water trail on the Dowagiac River. The Dowagiac River is the largest cold water river system in Southwest Michigan. Development will include a new water trail with trailhead signage, Universal Design compliant kayak/canoe launch, bridge, and parking expansion. In addition, there will be new ADA compliant waterless, pre-cast concrete restrooms and camping area complete with two ADA compliant cabins, picnic grills, picnic tables and fire rings along with electric, furniture / fixtures and two accessible pathways.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Scott Wyman	Scott Wyman	12-1-20
Please print	*Grantee Authorized Signature*	Date
Patricia Dohm	Patricia Dohm	12-1-20
Please print	*Witness Signature*	Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

DODD PARK WATER TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (TF15-0154)

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Under normal operating conditions the Dodd Park Water Trail Project scope items will be checked at least three times a week during peak usage months of May 1 – October 1. During non-peak months scope items will be checked on at least once per week and may be increased depending on park usage patterns. The parks department also has eyes on site daily in the form of a resident that lives in a housing unit within the park and is required, by contract, to watch over the Dodd Park.

PROGRAM RECOGNITION PLAQUE



PARK ENTRY SIGN



Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Grants Management

PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT

This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.

GRANT TYPE: *(Please select one)*
☒ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Cass County

PROJECT NUMBER: TF99-226 **PROJECT TYPE:** Acquisition

PROJECT TITLE: Dr. T.K. Lawless Park North

PROJECT SCOPE: Purchase land to create greater access to public recreation

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Cass County Parks and Recreation	Scott Wyman	Director
Address	**Telephone**	
120 N.Broadway St., Suite 200	269-445-4456	
City, State, ZIP	**Email**	
Cassopolis Mi 49031	scottwy@cassco.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided? If yes, please describe change(s). ☒Yes ☐No

We now allow hunting,leisure biking,cross-country skiing and hiking

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐Yes ☒No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area? If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐Yes ☒No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants) ☒Yes ☐No ☐N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure. ☒Yes ☐No

Entrance fee is $2 per vehicle residents / $3 per vehicle non-residents

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

365 days a year / Sunrise to Sunset unless you are camping

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

This land was purchased from a local farmer to allow the installation of a multi-use trail through a previously unaccessible area of the park. In addition, this acquisition allowed the expansion of many recreation opportunities such as hunting,leisure biking,cross-country skiing and hiking. Currently the trail has been completed and a thirty-foot bridge and 150'of boardwalk has also been completed by three Eagle Scouts. This land also provides access to the old Airline Railroad right-of-way so a connection to a rail/trail from Cassopolis would be a possibility in the future.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Please print	*Grantee Authorized Signature*	Date
Scott Wyman	Scott Wyman	12-1-20
Patricia Dohm	Patricia Dohm	12-1-20
Please print	*Witness Signature*	Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

DR. T.K. LAWLESS PARK NORTH (TF99-226)

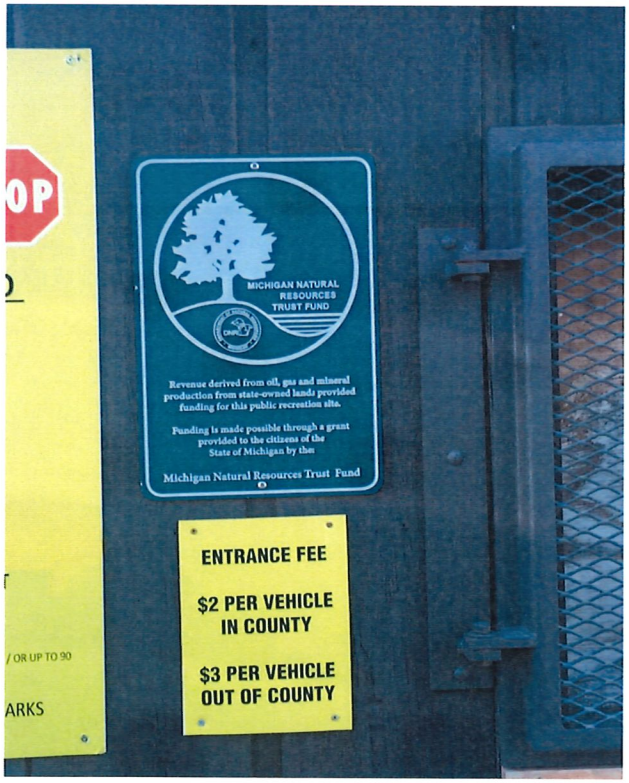
MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

The Dr. T.K. Lawless Park North acquisition is at our main park facility and headquarters of our operation so the trails, bridges and signage for this portion of the park are visual inspected 2-3 times a week and multiple times throughout the year. Repairs are made in a timely fashion due to the frequency of being inspected throughout the entire year.

PARK ENTRY SIGN



PROGRAM RECOGNITION PLAQUE



Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Grants Management

PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT

This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.

GRANT TYPE: *(Please select one)*
☒ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Cass County

PROJECT NUMBER: TF96-087 **PROJECT TYPE:** Acquisition

PROJECT TITLE: Dr. T.K. Lawless Park East 80

PROJECT SCOPE: Purchase land to create public access at two currently private lakes

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Cass County Parks and Recreation	Scott Wyman	Director
Address	**Telephone**	
120 N.Broadway St., Suite 200	269-445-4456	
City, State, ZIP	**Email**	
Cassopolis Mi 49031	scottwy@cassco.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided? If yes, please describe change(s). ☒Yes ☐No

We now allow hunting, fishing, leisure biking, cross-country skiing and hiking

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐Yes ☒No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area? If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐Yes ☒No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants) ☒Yes ☐No ☐N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure. ☒Yes ☐No

Entrance fee is $2 per vehicle residents / $3 per vehicle non-residents

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

365 days a year / Sunrise to Sunset unless you are camping

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

This grant purchased 80 acres of rolling hills, beautiful hardwoods and the only public lake frontage and access on Lime and Wetherbe lakes. This land currently has over two miles of hiking, biking and cross country skiing trails. There is lake access to both lakes for summer and winter fishing, as well as a controlled hunting program.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Scott Wyman Please print	Scott Wyman *Grantee Authorized Signature*	12-1-20 Date
Patricia Dohm Please print	Patricia Dohm *Witness Signature*	12-1-20 Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

DR. T.K. LAWLESS PARK EAST 80 (TF96-087)

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

The Dr. T.K. Lawless Park East 80 acquisition is at our main park facility and headquarters of our operation so the trails, bridges, covered benches and signage for this portion of the park are visual inspected 2-3 times a week and multiple times throughout the year. Repairs are made in a timely fashion due to the frequency of being inspected throughout the entire year.

PARK ENTRY SIGN



PROGRAM RECOGNITION PLAQUE



Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Grants Management

PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT

This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.

GRANT TYPE: *(Please select one)*
☒ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Cass County

PROJECT NUMBER: TF89-251 **PROJECT TYPE:** Development

PROJECT TITLE: Dr. T.K. Lawless Park Improvement Project

PROJECT SCOPE: develop ammenities to support operations in Dr. T.K. Lawless Park

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Cass County Parks and Recreation	Scott Wyman	Director
Address	**Telephone**	
120 N.Broadway St., Suite 200	269-445-4456	
City, State, ZIP	**Email**	
Cassopolis Mi 49031	scottwy@cassco.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided? If yes, please describe change(s). ☒Yes ☐No

We now have mountain biking,hunting,star gazing,and 18 holes of disc golf

Camping area for local scounting organizations. Mile long paved universal access trail

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐Yes ☒No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area? If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐Yes ☒No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain. ☒Yes ☐No

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants) ☒Yes ☐No ☐N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain. ☐Yes ☒No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure. ☒Yes ☐No

Entrance fee is $2 per vehicle residents / $3 per vehicle non-residents

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

365 days a year / Sunrise to Sunset unless you are camping

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

This grant helped shape Dr. T.K. Lawless Park. Improvements included a lighted parking area, picnic shelter / electric, picnic tables and grills, play equipment, one mile handicap trail improvement, rustic two-rail fence, entrance sign, open games field, and modern toilet facilities. All improvements are currently operational, and in good shape. In an ongoing partnership with local scouting organizations, two Eagle Scouts replaced the rustic two-rail fencing with whole log cedar fencing manufactured by the Traverse County Conservation District. Since its implementation,park signage, parking lot and a mile long universal access trail was created and paved along with many added recreation opportunities such as mountain biking, disc golf, hunting and the park being recognized as an International Dark Sky Park and State of Michigan Dark Sky Preserve.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Please print	Grantee Authorized Signature	Date
Scott Wyman	Scott Wyman	12-1-20
Patricia Dohm	Patricia Dohm	12-1-20

Witness Signature

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

DR. T.K. LAWLESS PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (TF89-251)

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

The Dr. T.K. Lawless Park Improvement Project is within our main park facility and headquarters of our operation, so all components of this project are visual inspected 3-4 times a week and multiple times throughout the year. Repairs are made in a timely fashion due to the frequency of being on site every day and inspected throughout the entire year.

PARK ENTRY SIGN



PROGRAM RECOGNITION PLAQUE

