



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LANSING



REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES  
DIRECTOR

November 10, 2008

**TO:** Rebecca A. Humphries, Director

**INFORMATION:** Natural Resources Commission

**Transaction:** Lease of State-owned Land  
Allegan State Game Area – Allegan County  
Land Transaction Case #20050381

**Lease:** 25-year renewable lease

**Conditions:** Standard lease requirements

**Description:** Three 15-foot-wide trail corridors extending 50.3 miles and including associated parking lots, trailheads, and staging areas in the Allegan State Game Area meandering through T03N, R13W, Monterey Township, T03N, R14W, Heath Township, T02N, R14W, Valley Township, and T03N, R15W, Clyde Township, Allegan County, Michigan.

**Lessee:** Allegan County Parks and Recreation Commission (ACPRC)  
Allegan, Michigan

**Lease Value Considerations:** The Department of Natural Resources (Department) has determined that the public benefit and value of the capital improvements, maintenance, and operations to be assumed by ACPRC exceed the value of the lease fee indicated by the Department's Granted Easement Fee Schedule.

**Authority:** Part 5 of Act 451, Public Acts of 1994, as amended

**Notice:** This item will appear on the Department's November 24, 2008 Calendar, and is eligible for approval on December 1, 2008.

**Comments:** Allegan County desires to lease three 15-foot-wide trail corridors over a total distance of 50.3 miles as well as associated parking lots, trailheads, and staging areas of the Allegan State Game Area (ASGA). The lease will make possible the ACPRC's plans for the development, operation, and maintenance of its Equestrian Trail System.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Keith J. Charters, Chair • Mary Brown • Hurley J. Coleman, Jr. • Darnell Earley • John Madigan • J. R. Richardson • Frank Wheatlake

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In the 1960s, the State of Michigan established four special use areas within the boundaries of the ASGA for, among other things, equestrian use. At that time, no designated trails were created because dispersed riding was believed to be less damaging to the environment than the creation of bridle trails. However, over time, horseback riders in these areas have created trails on their own. Since these trails were not designed with sensitive environmental conditions in mind, some of them have been created in areas that would be best avoided. This has caused damage to the more sensitive ecosystems in the area through erosion, the trampling of threatened plants, the spread of exotic plants, and other impacts.

The solution is to create a designated trail system within the ASGA that avoids entering into these sensitive environments. Through the combined efforts of the DNR, the ACPRC, and many volunteers, a designated trail system will be created that will protect the environment and keep many of the equestrian trails open for use. Because the funding mechanism used for the ASGA does not provide for management for certain recreational activities, such as equestrian trails, the ACPRC has agreed to take on the construction and maintenance responsibility for this trail system via a long-term lease agreement with the Department.

The proposed lease will be for a period of 25 years and is renewable for an additional 25-year period. It will advance the mission of the Department by developing and providing facilities for outdoor recreation. The Department is reserving the right to relocate the leased corridors for management purposes. The normal cost of a lease as determined by the Department will be offset by capital improvements that the ACPRC intends to invest in the development, operation, and maintenance of the site over the lease period. The ACPRC will provide the following capital improvements and maintenance to the trail system: American's with Disabilities Act accessible vault toilet buildings at each parking area; two improved parking areas; clearing/constructing of equestrian trails; trail directional signage; and trailhead signs at each parking area with trail registration information, trail maps, and picnic tables and grills located at each new parking area.

At the August 25, 2005 meeting, the Department's Land Exchange Review Committee reviewed the request and supported the recommendation that the Department lease the property to the ACPRC.

The original four special use areas, which allowed dispersed horseback riding, included lands acquired by government exchange, tax reversion, State Game Funds, Game and Fish Funds, and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) funds. By eliminating dispersed riding in these lands, designated trails were routed away from lands acquired

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with restricted funds that were purchased for wildlife restoration and generally not compatible with uses such as horseback riding. All trails proposed for leasing have been moved from these lands, with the exception of two short (less than ¼ mile) sections of trail that were moved to an existing county road right-of-way and to an existing Department work road to minimize impacts to wildlife species and habitat. The leasing of lands acquired with the MNRTF is not considered a conversion since it is for the purpose of having the lessee operate the project area or facility on behalf of the funding recipient for outdoor recreation.

- Recommendations:
- (1) That the 25-year non-exclusive lease of the trail system be approved with the provision for renewal, provided all terms are complied with by the ACRPC.
  - (2) That the lease be administered by the Department's Wildlife Division.

David E. Freed, Chief  
Land and Facilities

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief  
Forest, Mineral and Fire Management

Russ Mason, Chief  
Wildlife

Ronald A. Olson, Chief  
Parks and Recreation

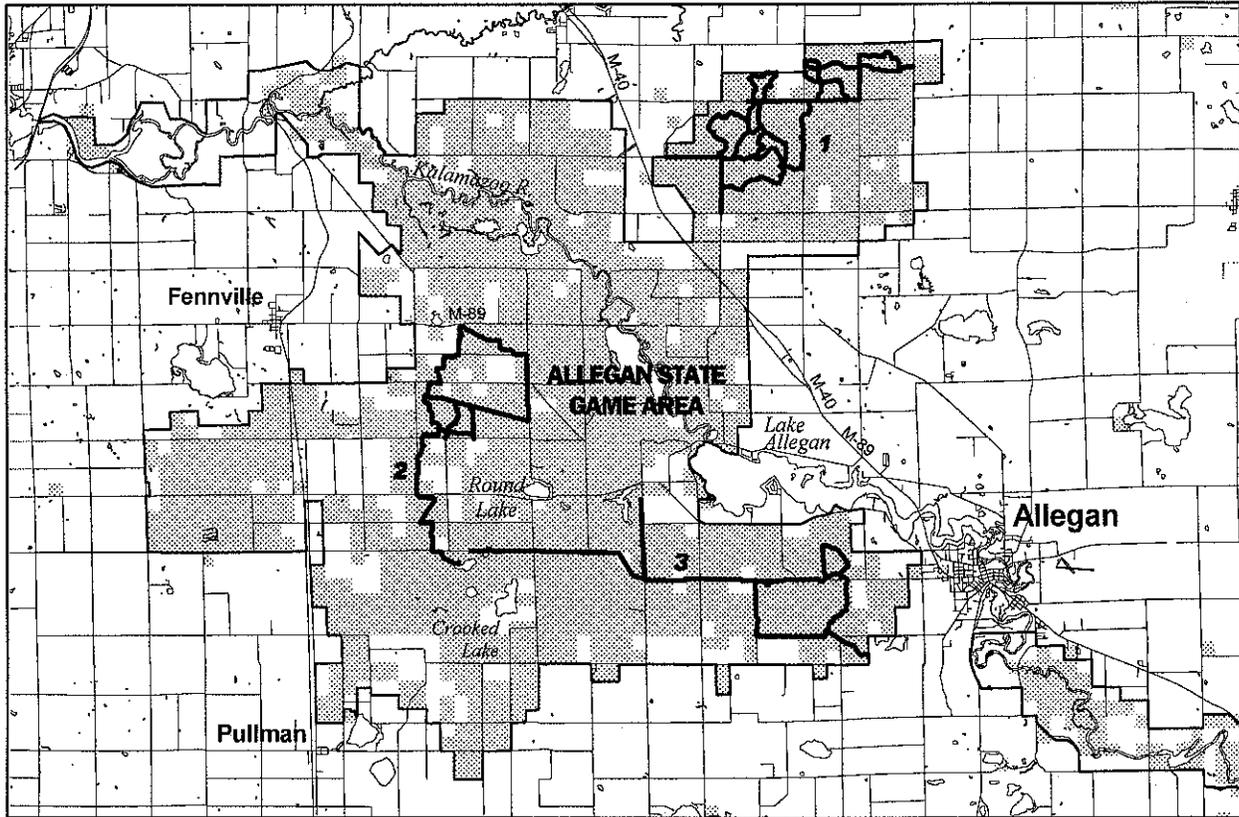
Arminda S. Koch  
Resource Management Deputy

I approve the staff recommendations.

Rebecca A. Humphries  
Director

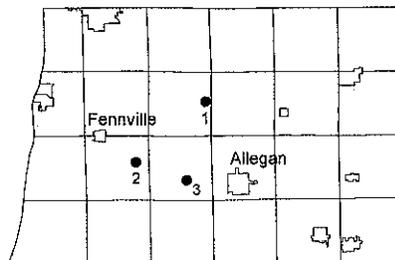
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Date Approved

**LEASE OF STATE-OWNED LAND**  
**Allegan State Game Area - Allegan County**  
**Land Transaction Case #20050381**



Trail 1: T03N-R13W, Monterey Township, and T03N-R14W, Heath Township  
 Trail 2: T02N-R15W, Clyde Township  
 Trail 3: T02N-R14W, Valley Township, and T02N-R15W, Clyde Township

- Game area boundary
- Proposed equestrian trail system to be leased from DNR  
 (Three 15-foot-wide trail corridors extending 50.3 miles)
- State land
- Private land



ALLEGAN COUNTY



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