

CHAPTER 2: IDENTIFYING OUTDOOR RECREATION DEMAND IN MICHIGAN

The SCORP planning process identified key statewide outdoor recreation demand through:

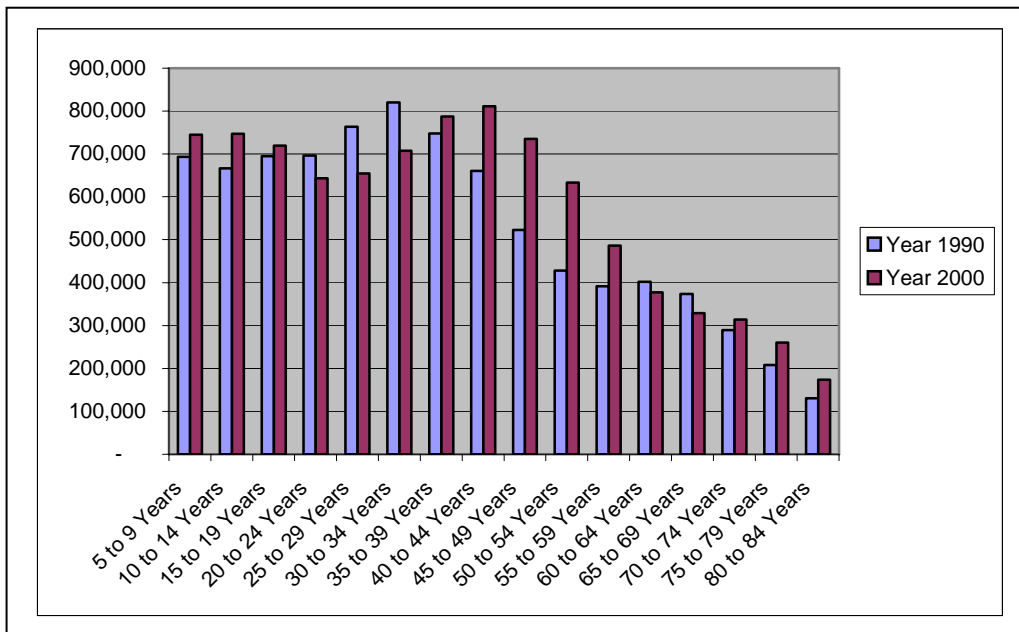
1. Review of Michigan population and trends using 2000 U.S. Census data.
2. Review of outdoor recreation participation in Michigan.
3. Review of the key initiatives of the Michigan DNR and others that integrally effect outdoor recreation in Michigan.
4. A mail survey of registered Michigan voters concerning their outdoor recreation habits, preferences, demographics, support of potential SCORP initiatives and outdoor recreation needs.
5. Review of all community outdoor recreation plans on file with the Michigan DNR.
6. A mail survey of all local units of government with a current or recent community park and recreation plan on file with the Michigan DNR.
7. Input from five public information meetings held across the state to receive input on the draft SCORP. Presentations also were made at meetings for eight additional recreation related groups.
8. Input from the DNR SCORP steering committee, chaired by Charles Nelson and supervised by Deputy Director Koch and including representatives of the Office of Lands and Facilities; the Parks and Recreation Division; Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division; Office of Communications; Wildlife Division; Fisheries Division; Grants Management; and the contractor, the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resources Studies of Michigan State University.

MICHIGAN'S POPULATION

The demand for outdoor recreation is influenced by the size, characteristics and geographic distribution of populations. Three important population subgroups are (1) the Michigan resident population, (2) seasonal populations with access to seasonal homes, and (3) tourists to the state.

Resident Population

Michigan's population grew by 6.9 percent between 1990 and 2000, reaching 9,938,444 people in 2000 according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Slightly less than half of the population is under age 35, 30 percent are 35-54 years of age and 21 percent are 55 or older. The largest increase between 1990 and 2000 was in the 50-54 age cohort (48 percent increase), followed by 45-49 (41 percent increase). Growth of more than 20 percent also was observed in the oldest age groups (75+) and the shoulder baby boom cohorts (ages 40-44 and 55-59). The age cohort from 25-34 declined by 14 percent. This and research by Nelson and Valentine (2002) suggests that many second homes, especially in the northern Lower Peninsula, may be converted to permanent homes in retirement. It also suggests that planning needs to emphasize the full range of the life cycle. This may mean a wider range of facilities to meet community needs and special attention to providing for the needs of young and old alike.



Eighty percent of the population classified themselves as white in 2000, 14 percent as Black or African-American and about 6 percent as other races. Hispanic/Latino populations make up 3.3 percent of the population, but grew by 60 percent over 1990. As Michigan’s population continues to diversify, understanding the increasingly complex makeup of communities is essential to identify and meet outdoor recreational needs. It also is important to provide positive opportunities to introduce people to outdoor recreation activities new to them.

The census classified just over two-thirds of households as “family households.” Thirty-two percent of households are non-family households with 26 percent being householders living alone and 6 percent others. Across all households, 36 percent have at least one member under age 18 and 23 percent have at least one member 65 years or older. The average household size was 2.6 in 2000, while the average family size was 3.1. As the number of households expands while the average household size declines, security for recreators and opportunities to break social isolation become increasingly important. For example, security for the elderly or single parents with young children becomes increasingly paramount. This may be expressed in design through improved visibility and lighting or through management with better-trained and equipped recreation law enforcement personnel. For those living alone, more opportunities for socialization through outdoor recreation venues and programs can provide a positive link to the broader society.

Population trends differ by region. The fastest growing region of the state is the northern Lower Peninsula, where the population grew by 18 percent over the past decade. In contrast, the Upper Peninsula’s population increased by only 1 percent. The metropolitan fringe or suburbs of Michigan’s major cities was the other major growth area, increasing by 13 percent. In contrast, Michigan metropolitan areas experienced minimal population growth of two percent.

At the county level, Livingston County in the southeastern metropolitan fringe is the fastest growing at 36 percent between 1990 and 2000. Nine northern Lower Peninsula counties experienced growth of more than 25 percent (Lake, Benzie, Otsego, Roscommon, Leelanau, Antrim, Emmet, Newaygo and Clare). Counties in metropolitan regions that experienced

declines were Wayne (Detroit) and Saginaw (Saginaw). Four Upper Peninsula counties also experienced population declines (Ontonagon, Marquette, Gogebic, and Iron). In some respects, the state returned to growth patterns observed during the 1980s with considerable amenity migration increasing populations of northern counties. Retirement and seasonal home conversions to permanent residences appear to be contributing to these patterns.

Seasonal Populations

Seasonal homes are an important part of the lifestyle of many Michigan residents and account for a considerable share of outdoor recreation. Michigan had 233,922 seasonal homes in 2000, accounting for 5.5 percent of all housing units in the state. The number of seasonal homes grew by 5 percent between 1990 and 2000, a rate slightly lower than Michigan's overall population growth. The rate of growth in seasonal homes is dampened somewhat by conversions of seasonal residences to permanent residences in many parts of the state.

While research on seasonal homes is limited, a profile of recreation activity patterns associated with seasonal homes may be gleaned from two studies in northern Michigan. Stynes et al. (1997) measured patterns of use from a sample of seasonal homeowners in six northern Lower Peninsula counties.

Almost half of seasonal homeowners cited outdoor recreation as an "extremely important" reason for owning the seasonal home. On average, seasonal homes were occupied 86 days in 1994. This was split 48 days during the summer, 17 in the fall, 13 in spring and 8 in winter. The most popular summer recreation activities at the seasonal home were swimming, followed by boating, hiking, sightseeing, fishing from a boat, fishing from shore and bicycling. Water-based activities frequently occurred on the seasonal homeowner's property, while the majority of hiking, ORV use, bicycling, nature study and other activities took place on nearby public lands/facilities. In studies of state and national forest users, Nelson and Lynch (1995) noted adjacent residents and their guests accounted for the majority of dispersed recreation user hours on state and national forests in the northern Lower Peninsula. Key activities included hunting, fishing, nature observation, picking wild edibles and trail activities.

The importance of outdoor recreation activities to seasonal homeowners also can be seen in the kinds of equipment kept at the seasonal home. Three-fourths of seasonal homeowners kept fishing gear at the home and 58 percent had a powerboat. Other popular equipment includes bicycles (53 percent), canoes/kayaks (47 percent), downhill/cross-country skis (30 percent), sailboats (27 percent), hunting gear (25 percent), snowmobile (15 percent), off-road vehicles (11 percent) and personal watercraft (5 percent).

Extrapolating the survey results to all northern Lower Peninsula counties (summer activity only), Stynes et. al. (1997) estimated that seasonal homes (owners, family and guests) generated 5.8 million person days of swimming and 5.3 million person days of boating. Other significant activities were 3.7 million person days of fishing (2.0 million from a boat and 1.7 million from shore), hiking (2.5 million), sightseeing (2.3 million) and bicycling (1.2 million).

The spatial distribution of seasonal homes significantly affects the demand for outdoor recreation and other services in different parts of the state. Seasonal homes account for over a quarter of all housing units in 29 of Michigan's 83 counties and over a third of housing units in 15 counties. The highest share of housing units that are seasonal is in Lake County (61 percent), followed by Keweenaw County (50 percent) and Oscoda, Roscommon, Alcona and Montmorency Counties all at 48 percent. Seasonal homes tend to be concentrated in high-amenity areas and often around inland lakes or along Great Lake shoreline. Michigan has 147

townships with seasonal homes representing at least half of all housing units. As seasonal homes tend to be located in areas with lower density resident populations and limited development, they can have sizeable relative impacts on rural areas, both in terms of the economy and outdoor recreation demand.

Tourists to the State

As background for the Michigan Tourism Industry Strategic Plan 2007-11, Dr. Don Holecek, former director of the Michigan Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center at Michigan State University provided a summary of Michigan tourism in 2006. He noted that in 2004, Michigan travel expenditures were \$17.5 billion. Of that, leisure travel accounted for 72 percent or \$12.6 billion. Resident expenditures constituted 53 percent of all travel expenditures. There were at least 210,000 jobs supported by travel in Michigan. Unfortunately, while there was sizeable spending in Michigan for travel, Michiganians were spending even more on travel outside of Michigan. The net result is that in 2004 Michigan had a \$2.8 billion deficit in balance of trade for Michigan tourism.

Michigan tends to be a regional destination with 72 percent of Michigan travel by Michigan residents, another 18 percent by residents of other Great Lakes states and 10 percent from all other origins. Much of Michigan tourism is natural resource recreation related, as evidenced by the current Pure Michigan ad campaign which emphasizes the state's abundant natural resources. However, while the ads may be natural resource recreation related, there is little overt recognition of state, local or federal outdoor recreation resource providers or specific locations (e.g. Tahquamenon Falls State Park), even though they may be prominently featured in promotional efforts. Michigan has many world-class tourism assets including the Great Lakes, forests, inland lakes and rivers, trails, campgrounds and parks. These are linked by an impressive transportation system and connect to friendly people and communities. However, relatively little public money is invested in tourism promotion compared to other Great Lakes states and provinces. While tourism is a critical industry for the future of the state as we seek to diversify our economy, there are still significant informational and promotional challenges to overcome.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION

Examining participation in selected individual activities provides a more detailed picture about participation in and the economic aspects of a number of key outdoor activities. For activities where participants are licensed, registered or pay a fee, data is more readily available as there is a list of people to efficiently question and there is likely a restricted funding source provided by user fees to support the activity, including tracking participation, management concerns and spending of participants.

Hunting and Fishing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) conducts a nationwide study of participation and economic impact for hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing every five years, with data also available at the state level. For 2006, USFWS estimates that 756,000 people aged 16 and over hunted in Michigan in 2006. This accounted for 11.9 million hunter days. This is the fifth largest number of hunters of any state and third most hunter days. Hunters were estimated to have spent \$279 million in 2006 on Michigan hunting trips and \$639 million on hunting-related equipment in Michigan

Over 1.4 million people aged 16 and over fished in Michigan during 2006. Those anglers log almost 25.3 million angling days, with 9 percent (2.4 million) by nonresident anglers. Michigan is fifth in the nation in the number of anglers behind Florida, Texas, California and Minnesota. It is

third in the nation in the number of angler days behind only Florida and Texas. Expenditures on Michigan fishing trips were \$585 million in 2006 and another \$1 billion is annually spent on fishing-related equipment, including tackle and boats.

Distinct hunters and anglers in Michigan are counted by the DNR to provide data used by the USFWS to apportion federal excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition, archery equipment and fishing equipment for state fish, wildlife and conservation law enforcement programs (Table 1). A distinct hunter is a person who buys one or more licenses. This may include as one distinct hunter a 12-year-old who only purchases a junior small game license or a 43-year-old who purchases a small game, firearm deer, state waterfowl, archery deer, bear, spring turkey and fur harvester licenses.

Table 1--Number of Distinct Michigan Hunters and Anglers, 1980-2006 (a)

YEAR	DISTINCT HUNTERS	DISTINCT ANGLERS
2006	814,643	1,166,739
2005	789,244	1,161,432
2004	832,835	1,171,742
2003	863,946	1,189,822
2002	870,432	1,233,739
2001	887,235	1,251,146
2000	897,916	1,271,245
1999	920,473	1,322,134
1998	957,264	1,346,910
1997	952,584	1,306,588
1996	964,531	1,348,107
1995	934,430	1,464,027
1994	1,126,826	1,484,622
1993	1,140,700	1,505,862
1992	1,171,721	1,577,701
1991	1,156,422	1,564,494
1990	1,148,163	1,577,875
1989	938,503	1,619,485
1988	913,194	1,644,342
1987	926,328	1,566,589
1986	925,332	1,483,910
1985	900,266	1,414,914
1984	912,119	1,391,515
1983	890,519	1,390,981
1982	1,150,160	1,376,317
1981	1,135,265	1,457,495
1980	957,209	1,325,156

(a) A distinct hunter or angler is one individual regardless of the number of licenses purchased. The table does not include anglers under the age of 17 who do not need to purchase a license to fish.

Wildlife Viewing

Wildlife viewing involves almost 3.2 million people annually in Michigan, with over 1 million involved in some travel to participate in wildlife viewing. It is estimated almost 10 million days were spent wildlife viewing in Michigan on trips away from home. Wildlife viewing trip expenditures in Michigan are \$286 million annually with nearly \$1.3 billion also spent on equipment according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007.

(<http://training.fws.gov/library/pubs3.html>)

Snowmobiling

In the last statewide study of Michigan snowmobiling, more than 250,000 snowmobiles were used during the winter of 1997-1998 in Michigan. They logged 2.4 million snowmobiling days. On trips 100 or more miles from home or those involving an overnight stay, snowmobilers spent \$110 million annually in Michigan and another \$235 million on snowmobiling equipment (Stynes et. al 1998).

Resident Michigan snowmobilers are required to have their snowmobile registered with the Michigan Department of State if it is used on public lands or rights of way. Anyone snowmobiling in Michigan on public lands or frozen waters, unless for the sole purpose of ice fishing, also must have a Michigan DNR administered snowmobile trail permit. Snowmobile registrations were highest in the late 1970s, dropped dramatically in the 1980s, rose through the 1990s and peaked at around 300,000 in 2001-2002 (Table 2). Since then they have dropped slightly. Available records for snowmobile trail permit sales only date back to the 1999-2000 fiscal year. Their sales have declined steadily over the past seven years. This may be a reflection of fewer non-residents visiting Michigan due to recent warm winters. Registrations stayed more static as they are valid for three years and apply to Michigan residents only.

Table 2---Michigan Snowmobile Registration and Trail Permit Sales by Fiscal Year

YEAR	NUMBER OF MICHIGAN REGISTERED SNOWMOBILES (A)	NUMBER OF SNOWMOBILES WITH MICHIGAN TRAIL PERMIT (B)	YEAR	NUMBER OF MICHIGAN REGISTERED SNOWMOBILES (A)	NUMBER OF SNOWMOBILES WITH MICHIGAN TRAIL PERMIT (B)
1977-78	420,418	NA	1993-94	179,098	NA
1978-79	451,719	NA	1994-95	199,273	NA
1979-80	467,036	NA	1995-96	211,219	NA
1980-81	368,421	NA	1996-97	219,307	NA
1981-82	386,619	NA	1997-98	230,150	NA
1982-83	282,402	NA	1998-99	236,291	NA
1983-84	271,221	NA	1999-2000	256,540	263,091
1984-85	287,524	NA	2000-01	278,473	269,862
1985-86	118,641	NA	2001-02	302,860	243,090
1986-87	126,637	NA	2002-03	296,551	257,442
1988-89	142,626	NA	2003-04	291,046	252,176
1989-90	130,199	NA	2004-05	292,644	225,676
1990-91	179,223	NA	2005-06	289,717	210,864
1991-92	180,340	NA	2006-07 (c)	279,295	200,533
1992-93	189,205	NA			

(a) Snowmobile registration data from Michigan Department of State

(b) Snowmobile trail permit sales from Michigan DNR

(c) Data not complete for FY 2006-07 for snowmobile registrations.

During the most recent statewide ORV study (1998-1999), there were 125,000 state-licensed ORVs. These vehicles logged over 4.2 million days in a one-year period with approximately 31 percent in public land trail riding, 25 percent in public and private land hunting and fishing (especially ice fishing) and 44 percent in private land use not involving hunting and fishing. Michigan trip expenditures on public land riding trips during a one-year period in 1998-1999 exceeded \$40 million annually and another \$134 million was spent in Michigan on ORVs and related equipment (Nelson et. al. 2000). ORV registrations exceeded 100,000 for the first time in 1983-1984 and remained over 100,000 until the end of available registration data in 1992 (Table 3). From then until 1994, there is

no available data. The first year of data available for annual ORV licenses (required of all who ride an ORV on public lands or frozen waters in Michigan) in 1994-1995 showed a decline since the end of registration. However, since then ORV license sales have increased to levels approaching 200,000.

Table 3--Annual Number of Michigan ORV Registrations and Licenses (a, b)

YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER
1975-76	16,003	1991-92	NA
1976-77	25,774	1992-93	NA
1977-78	67,779	1993-94	NA
1978-79	30,238	1994-95	78,060
1979-80	76,322	1995-96	97,931
1980-81	90,457	1996-97	81,918
1981-82	40,325	1997-98 (c)	104,745
1982-83	52,095	1998-99	124,469
1983-84	111,363	1999-2000	146,039
1984-85	81,283	2000-01	149,927
1985-86	139,411	2001-02	164,005
1986-87	184,715	2002-03	173,110
1987-88	146,266	2003-04	185,745
1988-89	175,538	2004-05	185,776
1989-90	179,834	2005-06	186,680
1990-91	105,555	2006-07 (d)	139,538
1991-92	NA		

(a) Registration data from the Michigan Department of State (1975-1976 – 1990-1991); No data available 1991-1992 – 1993-1994; DNR licensing data from 1994-1995 – 2006-2007). From 1975-1976 through 1996-1997, figures are for fiscal year (October 1 – September 30).

(b) Department of State changed method of reporting registrations in 1986-1987. Prior to that time only 3-year registrations transacted within the license year were reported. For 1986-1987 and beyond, all registrations in force were reported.

(c) Beginning with 1997-1998, figures are based on the license year (March 1 – February 28), not the fiscal year.

(d) Incomplete data as license year was not completed/all sales reported when plan was drafted.

The Michigan Department of State reports approximately 825,000 registered boats in Michigan in fiscal year 2005-06 (Table 4). Boat registrations grew steadily from the mid-1970s through 2000. Since then they have been static. In 2003, it was estimated that Michigan registered boats accounted for 19.1 million boating days, with 13.2 million on inland waters and 5.9 million on the Great Lakes. This does not take into account the millions of boating days by the estimated hundreds of thousands of unregistered craft (non-motorized canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts and paddle boats). Registered boaters spent an estimated \$1.4 billion on Michigan boating trips in 2003 (Great Lakes Commission 2004).

Table 4--Michigan Boat Registrations by Fiscal Year

YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER
1977-78	615,069	1987-88	686,880	1997-98	818,637
1978-79	699,396	1988-89	771,731	1998-99	825,842
1979-80	735,444	1989-90	698,795	1999-2000	829,210
1980-81	662,952	1990-91	713,412	2000-01	827,555
1981-82	692,609	1991-92	725,733	2001-02	824,460
1982-83	626,196	1992-93	726,239	2002-03	825,736
1983-84	650,011	1993-94	746,614	2003-04	822,696
1984-85	731,230	1994-95	778,683	2004-05	821,703
1985-86	645,197	1995-96	786,030	2005-06	825,585
1986-87	652,251	1996-97	800,793		

State Park and Recreation Areas

The Michigan DNR counts visits to state parks and recreation areas in two ways. Campers are counted by registrations, while day visitors are estimated based on the number of vehicles entering parks and extrapolated by an average occupancy figure. Since 1999, state park use has been moderately declining from a high of over 27 million visits to slightly more than 22 million in 2006 (Table 5).

Table 5--Michigan State Park Visits 1994-2006 (a)

YEAR	DAY USE	CAMPING	TOTAL
1994	19,528,669	5,290,032	24,818,701
1995	19,190,088	5,101,869	24,291,957
1996	18,187,183	4,878,308	23,065,491
1997	18,660,605	4,721,695	23,382,300
1998	21,144,659	5,187,068	26,331,727
1999	22,518,259	5,299,644	27,817,903
2000	20,928,503	5,103,909	26,032,412
2001	20,454,686	5,112,462	25,567,148
2002	18,299,845	4,945,814	23,245,659
2003	18,159,736	5,300,372	23,460,108
2004	16,851,718	4,910,031	21,761,749
2005	18,210,884	4,684,201	22,895,085
2006	17,822,259	4,511,760	22,334,019

(a) Visit/use is one person using a park for any portion of a day. All campers are part of registered camping parties. Day use is estimated based on the number of vehicle entries and average occupancy of a vehicle. Day use does not include those entering a state park other than in a car, truck or RV (e.g. walking, riding a bicycle, etc.). It does not also fully account for use of state recreation areas with multiple entrances, exits, etc.

Source: Harold Herta, DNR Parks and Recreation Division

Campsite nights have been more static than day visits or camper visits (Table 6). A campsite night is one registered campsite occupied for one night, regardless of the number of campers. Since 1979-80, only in the past year did this decline to below a million.

Table 6--Michigan State Park Campsite Nights, Fiscal Years 1980 - 2006

FISCAL YEAR	CAMP SITE NIGHTS
1979-80	1,103,518
1980-81	1,118,425
1981-82	1,134,958
1982-83	1,127,230
1983-84	1,117,798
1984-85	1,120,958
1985-86	1,121,427
1986-87	1,111,381
1987-88	1,158,261
1988-89	1,113,568
1989-90	1,096,935
1990-91	1,125,089
1991-92	1,022,641
1992-93	1,030,575
1993-94	1,051,632
1994-95	1,080,772
1995-96	1,059,570
1996-97	1,049,415
1997-98	1,143,392
1998-99	1,185,507
1999-2000	1,173,890
2000-01	1,146,956
2001-02	1,142,539
2002-03	1,156,130
2003-04	1,040,368
2004-05	1,005,437
2005-06	956,030
TOTAL 1979-80 THRU 2005-06	29,694,402

(a) 1995 – 14,860 campsites. Site reductions over several years (at popular parks) resulted in a reduction in sites system-wide to 13,844 by 2002.

Source: Harold Herta, DNR Parks and Recreation Division

State Forests

In addition to hunting, fishing, boating, ORV riding, snowmobiling and wildlife viewing, use of Michigan state forests include camping in designated state forest campgrounds. State forest campground camping over the past five years has been relatively static (Table 7). During this time, some opportunities have been added through the use of rental cabins, while the number of campsites has decreased as a small number of state forest campgrounds have been closed.

Table 7--State Forest Campground and Cabin Camp Nights, 2000-2006

YEAR	NUMBER CAMP NIGHTS
2000	68,429
2001	89,732
2002	107,160
2003	108,738
2004	101,917
2005	106,290
2006	101,984

Source: Brenda Curtis, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division

There are many dispersed activities in state forests such as picking wild edibles (e.g. mushrooms, berries, etc.) which are difficult to measure participation. This was last done in Michigan state forests in the 1990s in the Lake Superior State Forest (eastern U.P. in 1993-1994) AuSable State Forest (Northeast Lower Peninsula 1992) and the Pigeon River Country State Forest (North Central Lower Peninsula 1997-1998). These studies revealed that hunting was the most common dispersed use of state forest lands in all three state forests and that in two of the three, adjacent private landowners and their guests accounted for up to half the dispersed use of the public forest land. Further, private lands provided numerous gateways to the public lands beyond the designated public access points such as campgrounds, boating access sites and roadsides. Use levels ranged from over 10 hours per acre per year during snow-free months in the AuSable State Forest to one-fourth that level in the Lake Superior State Forest. Seasonally, activities such as picking edibles were very important (e. g. mushrooms in May, blueberries in July/August, etc.). Use levels declined the further north one went, suggesting that distance from population centers is important in predicting future use (Nelson 1993, Nelson and Lynch 1995, Nelson et. al 1999). Across the entire state forest system, it was estimated that in 1999 there were over 23 million visits for all recreational purposes (Nelson 1999).

State Game and Wildlife Areas

Michigan state game and wildlife areas are similar to state forests in that they have unlimited ingress and egress, are often not contiguous blocks of property containing many private in-holdings and are used for a wide variety of dispersed activities. In 2006 recreational use was assessed on 11 state game and wildlife areas (undeveloped portions only) in the southern Lower peninsula. Unlike state parks, most state game and wildlife areas are located in southern Michigan, where 85 percent of the state's population resides and are close to large populations in neighboring states. Dispersed use at game areas was higher than that recorded in state forests in the 1990s at 11.5 hours per acre from mid-March to mid-December. Of this use, 23.5 percent was by adjacent private landowners and their guests who did not park in the game area, but rather walked from neighboring private property. Eighty-six percent of adjacent landowners reported using the nearby game area for outdoor recreation without driving onto the public lands. Wildlife associated recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, exercising or training a dog and trapping) accounted for about half the use in spring and summer and 98 percent of the fall use. Of the recreational use hours, 22 percent were estimated to be spent in the areas in the spring, 15 percent in the summer and 63 percent in the fall (Nelson et al. 2007).

Federal Lands

At the federal level, the National Park Service reports that Michigan federal lands had 1,649,349 visitors in 2006. The USDA Forest Service reported 2,897,000 people visited Michigan National Forests in 2004. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported 143,000 people visited national wildlife refuges and federal fish hatcheries in 2004.

Trails

Recent research projects have provided credible estimates of use of non-motorized trails at both the state and local level. The Michigan Department of Transportation has used non-motorized transportation monies to help fund research on rail-trails. This has led to a series of publications on the use and economic, social and individual benefits of various rail-trails in Michigan. For example, estimated use of the 22-mile segment of the paved Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in Midland County during snow-free months of 2001 is estimated at 177,000 visits annually. Further, almost one-fourth of visitors are not residents of Midland County, illustrating the value of trails as tourist attractions (Nelson et. al 2002). The eight-mile Paint Creek Trail in Oakland County is estimated to receive 90,000 uses during May – September of 2005 (Vogt et al. 2005). The paved 13 miles of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail in Kent County was estimated to receive

108,000 visits from April – September in 2005 (Nelson et al. 2006). The TART trails system in the Traverse City area received 156,000 uses from May – September 2002 (Moufakkir-van der Woud et al. 2002). Finally, the Lansing River Trail, an eight mile urban trail following the Grand and Red Cedar rivers in Lansing was estimated to receive 72,000 uses during May – September of 2004 (Nelson et al. 2004).

Other Outdoor Recreation

Another challenge in understanding the demand for outdoor recreation activities focuses on organized activities, such as team athletics, provided in large part by the private sector or local park and recreation agencies. Local units, nonprofits or for-profit organizations often gather participation data in ways that are not comparable or tend to be viewed as proprietary. This makes it challenging to assess the overall demand for these types of activities on a statewide basis.



KEY DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES

There are key outdoor recreation initiatives related to Michigan state parks, Michigan boating, trails and their uses, universal access, hunting recruitment and retention and land consolidation. In addition, there are initiatives such as the 2006 Michigan State Forest Plan that have important impacts on outdoor recreation as well as a variety of other sectors of the economy, ecosystem and public.

Michigan State Parks

The DNR, in conjunction with the Citizens Committee on Michigan State Parks and the Michigan State Waterways Commission are currently engaged in developing a new strategic plan that integrates state parks and boating, which are both managed by the DNR primarily through one division, the Parks and Recreation Division. The new single plan would update existing separate plans for state parks and boating that are now out-of-date. A large quantity of information is posted on the DNR website concerning this planning effort at: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_45524--,00.html

As part of that planning effort, the DNR distributed a brief two-question survey on a business reply card, from mid-May through mid-July 2007, at all state park and recreation areas. Selected visitors were asked what they most enjoyed about state parks and what one change they would most like to see occur. The questionnaires were distributed to the driver of every vehicle that entered a state park or recreation area where a gate attendant was in place, for ten days over a two-month period during one specified hour each distribution day. A total of 701 questionnaires were returned.

The most commonly mentioned aspects that state park visitors enjoyed were good maintenance, a convenient location, natural resources/features and natural resource based recreation facilities/activities (Table 8). This is closely in line with the mission of state parks.

Table 8--Most Enjoyed Aspect of Michigan State Parks

FACTOR MOST ENJOYED	PERCENT
Well-maintained/clean	24.1%
Convenient location	11.6%
Water features (lake, Great Lakes, stream, river, falls, beaches)	11.3%
Natural resources (general, overall)	7.8%
Trails	7.5%
Campsites/camping	6.9%
View/scenery/beauty	6.2%
Peace/solitude/relax	3.2%
Friendly staff	3.1%
Being outdoors	2.8%
Water-based activities (fish, swim, boat, sunbathe)	2.8%
Everything/All things	2.6%
Land-based activities (hike, bike, hunt, etc.)	2.4%
Low price/low fees/reasonable fees	1.8%
Being with family/friends	1.6%
Activities for kids/playgrounds	1.5%
Vegetation/forests/trees	1.0%
Good security	0.7%
Other	1.0%
TOTAL	100.0%

The most commonly mentioned changes that state park visitors wanted to see in Michigan state parks were improved restrooms and larger campsites (especially those with more amenities such as full hookups and more privacy). Other infrastructure suggestions include developing more trails, playgrounds, campsites and fully developed state parks. In addition to these capital improvements, most other improvements focused on policy/fee issues such as reducing or eliminating motor vehicle permit fees, raising motor vehicle permit fees or making the permits transferable (e.g. hang tag), improving the campground reservation system, reducing the number of sites that can be reserved, allowing more areas for dogs off leash or conversely further limiting dogs in state parks, improving law enforcement/security and additional educational programming. This illustrates some issues with obviously opposing points of view as well as some with more universal appeal such as improved bathrooms, larger campsites, more trails and more playgrounds (Table 9).

Table 9--Change Most Wanted in Michigan State Parks

CHANGE WANTED	PERCENT
Improved bathroom facilities	12.4%
Larger campsites/more privacy at campsites	8.5
Improve facilities (general)	8.5
Eliminate or reduce MVP/entry fees	8.0
More full hookup sites/water on every site	6.6
Improve campsite reservation system	6.4
Nothing/None/Keep up the good work	4.9
More/better trails, trail markers, trail maps	4.2
More activities/education	3.6
More dog friendly parks/dog beach use	3.4
Add playgrounds/improve playgrounds	3.1
Better security/more law enforcement	2.8
More restrictions on dogs/no dogs allowed/better control dogs	2.5
More MSP needed	2.5
More campsites	2.2
More campsites available without reservations	1.9
More sewer dump stations/more trash cans or bins	1.9
More funding	1.9
Cleaner bathrooms	1.3
Stores (with essentials)/laundry mats	1.3
Raise MVP/entry fees	1.2
Transferable annual passes	1.2
More friendly staff	1.0
Internet access	0.9
Recycling program/bins	0.7
No alcohol	0.6
No smoking	0.6
Eliminate/reduce alcohol bans	0.4
Open earlier	0.4
Reduce cancellation fees	0.3
No power boats	0.3
All other suggestions (each by 0.1% or less)	3.9
TOTAL	100.0%

More than half (52 percent) of the respondents included their name, e-mail and/or address to be notified of future public meetings or other events in the state park strategic planning process.

Boating Access Sites and Harbors of Refuge

A similar on-site survey conducted at state boating access sites and harbors of refuge (linked together hereafter as boating access sites or BAS) revealed key operations and capital needs. The DNR distributed a brief two-question survey on a business reply card, from mid-May through mid-July 2007, at 10 percent of the Parks and Recreation Division's unstaffed BAS as well as all staffed BAS and the state's 16 harbors of refuge. The questionnaire asked selected BAS users what they most enjoyed about Michigan BAS and what one change they most wanted. The questionnaires were distributed to the driver of every vehicle that entered a staffed BAS or harbor of refuge for 10 days over a two-month period during one specified hour each distribution day. The questionnaires were distributed during the same time period at unstaffed BAS where a roving maintenance crew distributed them at each of their maintenance stops by leaving them on the vehicle windshield of vehicles parked at the sites. A total of 211 questionnaires were returned.

The most commonly mentioned aspects that visitors enjoyed were good maintenance, a convenient location, natural resources/features and ease of launching (Table 10). These are closely in line with the mission of the state's boating program.

Table 10--Most Enjoyed Aspect of State Boating Access Sites

MOST ENJOYABLE FACTOR	PERCENT
Good maintenance/clean	33.0%
Convenient location	17.5
Easy to launch	9.3
Low price/low fee/free	8.2
Good facilities	8.2
Friendly employees	5.7
Lots of BAS/well distributed	5.2
Good fishing	3.6
Scenic/beautiful	3.1
Long hours/open round the clock	2.1
Marine safety education classes	1.0
Other	3.1
TOTAL	100.0%

The most commonly mentioned changes that users wanted to see in Michigan BAS were improved restrooms, more ramps/piers at a given BAS, more parking, and dredging to provide sufficient water depth to launch a boat (Table 11). The key operational issues that were raised included better maintenance, especially restrooms; better security/law enforcement; and friendlier staff. A policy issue regarding the requirement of a BAS vehicle sticker at a minority of sites was approached in a number of different ways. These suggestions included combining the sticker with the Michigan State Park Motor Vehicle Permit so there would be only one permit, having the permit be transferable among vehicles (such as a hang tag), having the permit on the boat, and decreasing the cost of or eliminating the permit.

Table 11--Change Most Wanted in State Boating Access Sites

CHANGE MOST WANTED	PERCENT
Cleaner bathrooms/better maintenance in general	18.2%
More ramps/more docks at sites	15.8
More parking at sites	13.8
Eliminate fees	10.3
Dredge/provide deeper water at launch	8.9
Better security/more law enforcement	5.4
More boating access needed	5.4
Nothing/none/keep up the good work	3.0
Combine state park MVP/BAS sticker	3.0
More friendly staff	2.5
Have BAS permit portable between vehicles (e.g. hang tag)	2.0
Have BAS permit on boat, not vehicle	1.5
Provide fish cleaning stations	1.5
More slips	1.5
Improve lighting	1.0
Maintain year round for ice fishing	1.0
Only allow cars with trailers in long parking spots	0.5
Remove geese/goose poop	0.5
Other	4.4
TOTAL	100.0%

A total of 70 percent of the respondents included their name, e-mail and/or address to be notified of future public meetings or other events in the planning process.

Trails

Two major state of Michigan efforts and one collaborative effort have been valuable in clarifying the need and demand for trails.

On July 18, 2006, Governor Granholm, in her remarks celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, called for a future for Michigan “.. where access to trails and recreation is available to everyone.” Based on this vision, the DNR and the Michigan Department of Transportation developed **Michigan Trails at the Crossroads: A Vision for Connecting Michigan**. The plan noted the many benefits of trails including economic, social, health and transportation, based on a multitude of Michigan studies and those from other states. Also noted is the array of trail advocates representing the motorized and non-motorized trail communities; economic development community; trail equipment manufacturers and retailers; the tourism industry; the health professions and federal, state and local park and recreation managers, as well as transportation managers who are all working toward an expanded, connected and well-maintained trail system across Michigan.

Key actions include:

1. Creation of a unified system of Michigan trails that connect natural, tourist and urban destinations: “Discover Michigan Trails.” This could be accomplished by amending the scope and charge of the Michigan Trailways Act.
2. Designation of the initial set of “Discover Michigan Trails.”

3. Appointment of a Discover Michigan Trails Council, similar to the council enabled under the current Michigan Trailways Act, but expanded in scope across all trail types and in terms of the interests afforded a seat on the council. The council would:
 - a. Create a strategy and action plan to achieve the vision for the “Discover Michigan Trails” network.
 - b. Identify and adopt guiding principles for public trail investments.
 - c. Coordinate public participation in, and serve as advising body of the creation of the statewide “Discover Michigan Trails” network plan.
 - d. Assess needs and develop recommendations to the Governor, Michigan Natural Resources Commission and Michigan Transportation Commission regarding legislative, administrative and policy changes to enhance and streamline trail network development.
 - e. Annually report the council’s recommended projects to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission and the Michigan Transportation Commission priorities for trail improvements and connections.
 - f. Create a dedicated protected funding source for multi-use, non-motorized trail acquisition, development, operation and maintenance.

This approach has many synergistic effects with other trail-related initiatives, including those of the non-motorized umbrella group, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance. Key outcomes envisioned from this “**Crossroads Vision**” include:

- Connections among population centers
- Ties to regional trail systems
- Links to state parks and state forest lands
- Connections to designated heritage routes
- Enhancements to tourism
- Enhancements to economic development
- Improved access to Michigan’s Great Lakes shoreline and natural resources
- Synergy with the objectives of Cool Cities, Cities of Promise, Michigan Steps Up, Safe Routes to School and other priority gubernatorial initiatives
- Engagement of stakeholders in decisions regarding priority trail corridor investments
- Sustainability (acquisition, development, operations and maintenance) of trail systems.
- Preservation of inactive railroad corridors for future railroad use with interim trail use

The full text is available at http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_16839---.00.html.

A companion initiative is **Connecting Michigan – A Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan** (2007). It was developed by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance with federal, state and local government and private-sector cooperators including the National Park Service and the Michigan Recreation and Park Association. The plan’s four primary goals form a framework for actions to create an interconnected trailway network that links all regions of Michigan:

- Ensure that Michigan's trailway stakeholders have ready access to technical resources and best practices from Michigan and beyond, and across all the many

- facets of railways planning, acquisition, development, maintenance, operations and advocacy.
- Improve Michigan's financial, maintenance and marketing resources necessary for developing, promoting, enhancing and sustaining a statewide interconnected railway system.
 - Improve coordination and communication, encourage cooperation, foster new partnerships to support railway planning, development, management and programming that enhances the railway experience.
 - Provide Michigan's railway stakeholders with a compelling statewide railway vision and a tactical plan to achieve and market the vision.

The full plan can be found at <http://www.connectingmichigan.org/>.

The DNR is in the process of updating the Michigan Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Plan. Michigan's first and only plan was completed in 1979. Since then, the state's network of designated ORV opportunities has grown, as has the complexity of ORV technology and recognition of their influence on Michigan's economic, social and environmental fabric. A draft updated ORV plan was released in 2005 and is still in the process of revision and adoption. The basic goals of the plan were to improve the conditions of the existing trails system, to enhance connectivity, to strengthen ORV safety education and enforcement and to restore environmental damage from illegal ORV use. The plan is available at http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-30301_30505_30506-144977--,00.html.

Universal Access

The DNR is committed to providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities for all, including people with disabilities. In 2004, the DNR Accessibility Team (AT) completed the **Strategic Plan for Accessibility** to help realize this goal. The major goals of this plan include:

- Accessibility training for DNR staff;
- An accessibility assessment of all existing DNR programs, services and facilities;
- Involvement by public disability advocacy groups in DNR's planning process;
- Development of an action plan to correct existing accessibility deficiencies;
- Development of inclusive new facilities, programs and services;
- A means to evaluate and document DNR efforts and progress toward accessibility;
- A proposed timeline for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Accessibility.

(http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_41825---,00.html).

Following the completion of the Strategic Plan, the AT was given the principal responsibility for carrying out its recommendations and to develop other recommendations and procedures for improving public accessibility to DNR facilities, programs and services. To this end, the AT has accomplished, or is in the process of completing, the following tasks:

- In conjunction with the state of Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, the team has developed two training courses: 1) accessible meeting and event planning and 2) assessment of buildings and structures for accessibility. As a result, approximately 200 DNR staff members, including those from both headquarters and field offices, have received training in one or both of these areas;

- Developed a checklist to be used to evaluate the accessibility of all DNR–owned facilities;
- Improved, and is continuing to further improve, the information (and the public’s ability to access it) on the DNR Web site about the existing accessible opportunities for the public at DNR facilities, including state parks, forest campgrounds and shooting ranges;
- Developed guidelines and criteria for evaluating the universal accessibility of proposed outdoor recreation facilities at both local and state parks and other recreation areas;
- Reviewed proposed federal accessibility guidelines for outdoor recreation areas. In June 2007, these guidelines were proposed for adoption by the federal government under the Architectural Barriers Act, which applies only to federal facilities. The AT will be providing comments on the guidelines by October 2007 in response to the federal request for comments.

An important achievement of the AT toward implementing the strategic plan was the formation of the Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) in 2007. The council is composed of citizens who represent a wide range of expert perspectives on accessibility, including representatives of the recreation and tourism industry, the medical community and DNR staff. The purpose of the AAC is to make recommendations relevant to accessibility to the DNR on the development, management and planning of facilities, programs and services to better enable the public to enjoy Michigan’s natural resources; inform and educate the public about the need for accessibility to the state’s natural resources; strive to involve citizens in the planning and development of DNR facilities, programs and services to ensure accessibility; evaluate the DNR’s facilities, programs and services periodically to ensure the council’s goals on accessibility are being achieved; and recommend awards recognizing outstanding efforts to improve accessibility.

By implementing the goals of the strategic plan and using the guidance of the AAC, the DNR is actively working to achieve full compliance with accessibility requirements and to educate its staff about this important issue. At the same time, the DNR is looking beyond the existing legal requirements to the goal of providing universal access to public outdoor recreation opportunities. Universal access to outdoor recreation has been defined as creating environments that are usable by all people of all abilities, to the greatest extent possible, by enabling independent use and ensuring full inclusive participation in all aspects of the outdoor recreation experience. In other words, providing universal access means going beyond the minimal legal requirements of existing federal and state laws and regulations to create environments in which there is no separation or stigmatization of people with differing abilities.

In 2006, the DNR received a \$3 million Access to Recreation grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to provide universally accessible public outdoor recreation in Michigan. Of the \$3 million awarded to the DNR, \$1 million will be awarded to local units of government and DNR divisions through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The funds can be matched with other funding sources, thus further leveraging funds to improve universal accessibility. Since the initial grant, a number of Michigan state parks, recreation areas and scenic sites have received universal access improvements supported in part by this funding. Three proposals from local units of government have been reviewed and recommended to receive a grant through the Access to Recreation Initiative and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Hunter Recruitment and Retention

DNR Director Rebecca Humphries formed a Hunter Recruitment and Retention Work Group in 2005. This group was comprised of hunters from across the state, members of the Natural Resources Commission and key DNR staff. They were charged with developing key initiatives to recruit new hunters and retain existing hunters. The work group made the following recommendations in 2006:

- Increase the amount of land open to public hunting in Michigan and provide better information/access to guide hunters to these lands;
- Welcome a broader range of Michigianians and visitors to hunting through lowering the age when hunting is legal and involving more women, people of color and younger adults in becoming certified hunter safety educators;
- Further incorporate hunting, fishing, camping and other forms of outdoor recreation activity into local and state park and recreation programs across the state;
- Partner with youth-oriented mentoring organizations such as 4-H, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and others to infuse hunting into ongoing youth mentoring programs (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_46403_46404-138819--,00.html).

Following those recommendations, the DNR director formed the Hunter Recruitment and Retention Implementation Work Group. It included members from the original work group and added more members with expertise in youth mentoring, legislative process, marketing and people with disabilities. Since those recommendations were made in 2006, the minimum age for hunting was lowered from 12 to 10 for small game and archery deer hunting and from 14 to 12 for firearm deer hunting on private lands. In addition, an apprentice license program was developed which allows new hunters under the direct supervision of licensed adult hunters to try hunting with an apprentice license which does not require completion of hunter safety education class. Legislation currently is under consideration that would provide Internet-available county maps clearly showing the location of the 26 percent of Michigan (9.5 million acres) open to public hunting. There also are efforts underway to develop a statewide youth hunter mentoring program with a number of professional youth mentoring organizations.

Land Consolidation

In an effort to more efficiently manage state-owned lands (state forests, state parks, state game areas, state recreation areas, state wildlife areas) the DNR is going through a three-step process:

Phase I – DNR Project Boundary Update (Complete)

An important step for the department in fulfilling that policy was the reevaluation of the dedicated boundaries of the department's land holdings. In order to help identify those lands most desirable to acquire and those most appropriate for disposal from state ownership, it was important that all boundaries be reviewed and revised in light of today's need for natural resource conservation and natural resource-related outdoor recreation. The dedicated boundaries for state forests, state game and wildlife areas, state parks, and state recreation areas were reviewed by Department staff and the Natural Resources Commission and adopted by the DNR director in May 2004.

Phase II – Parcel Review (*In Process*)

Department staff currently is reviewing all of those lands lying outside the newly identified DNR project boundaries to determine which of those lands are not contributing sufficiently to the fulfillment of the department's conservation and outdoor recreation mission to warrant their continued ownership by the department. All state-owned, DNR-managed parcels located outside the project boundaries will be classified as follows:

1. Retain under state ownership and DNR administration due to natural resource values, cultural resource values and recreational opportunities and/or location.
2. Natural resource, cultural resource and/or recreational values are such that the parcel should remain protected and/or accessible to the public but potentially owned/administered by an alternative conservation entity.
3. Natural resource, cultural resource and/or recreational values are such that the parcel does not need to remain in DNR or alternative conservation ownership. The parcel can be exchanged or sold with proceeds used to obtain lands of greater natural resource, cultural resource or recreational values that would help consolidate DNR project areas. Properties may be conveyed with conditions when determined desirable by the DNR.

Public comment will be accepted for each county as the department develops parcel recommendations. Each county will then be reviewed by the department's Land Exchange Review Committee, who will submit recommendations to the Natural Resources Commission and to the director. This process will be repeated until all 83 counties have been reviewed.

Phase III – Parcel Conveyance Process (*In Progress*)

Upon the completion of Phase II for each county, parcels that are classified as **Class 2 or Class 3** (see classifications listed above) will be considered for land exchange or possible land sale, as appropriate. Funds generated from land sales will be utilized for acquisition of high natural resource value and high outdoor recreation value lands. Governmental agencies and conservation organizations will be provided the first opportunity to acquire the lands identified for release.

http://www.michigan.gov/textonly/0,2964,7-153-30301_31154_33787-105227--,00.html.