

3.0 Management Zone Plan



With guidance of the Planning Team and input from our stakeholders and the public, the Recreation Area “Purpose and Significance” statements were formulated. This established an identity for Rockport as a place to interact with natural and cultural resources, as well as protect, preserve and enhance the natural features. While there are multiple reasons to visit Rockport, many people associate the site with access to water. Rockport’s deep water port attracts boats, commercial fisherman, divers (shipwrecks), and swimmers. The quarry is another draw for fossil hunters, classrooms, target shooting, and historians. The undisturbed habitats support a high variety of wildflowers, and animal and bird habitats. The diverse terrain includes sink holes, old growth white pine forests, and cobbled and sand beaches.

The Management Zone Plan, Figure 3, was developed according to the Identity. Similar to the Purpose and Significance statements, the Management Zone Plan was also drafted with Planning Team, stakeholder and public support. The Management Zone Plan seeks to preserve and protect the resources, while creating appropriate recreational uses, and educational and interpretation opportunities. To achieve this, Rockport was divided into the following zones:

- ◆ Primitive Zone reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources. It is managed to only allow dispersed and low frequency use for low impact recreational purposes. Attaining and maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements or uses are allowed.
- ◆ Natural Resource Recreation Zone permits active recreation with moderate to high density of use conducted in a natural setting. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but higher levels of uses are allowed.

This is Phase I of the General Management Plan for Rockport. Phase I determines management zones (MZs) for the park land. MZs describe a variety of activities that **may be** appropriate within that zone. Identifying specific activities that **will occur** is a function of Phase II general management planning, and not a component of this plan.

Developed Recreation Zone provides for active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. Recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible.

Cultural Landscape Zone addresses the overall setting in which is found not only historic structures, but also non-structural evidence of the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts and social institutions of any community.

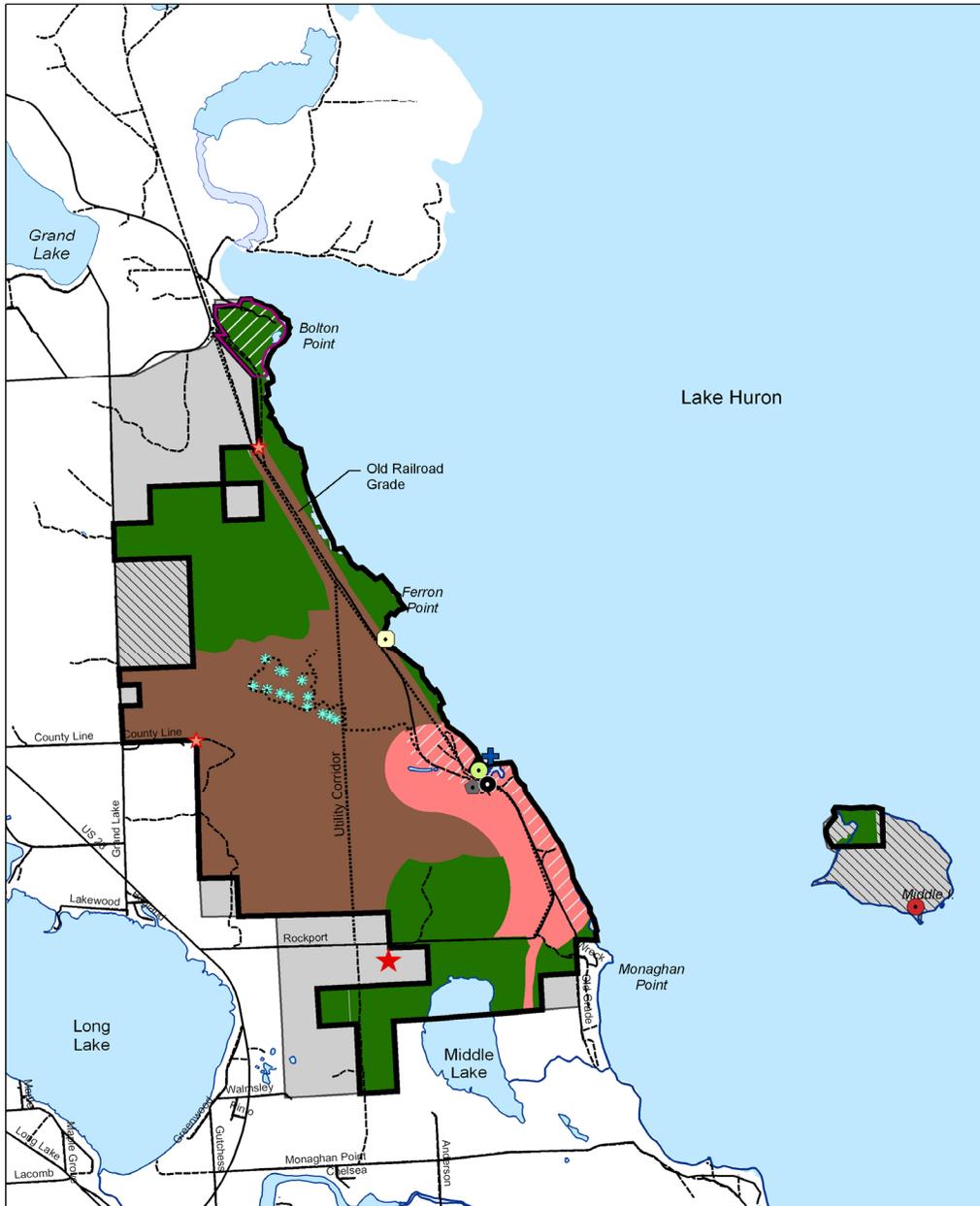
Other Plan Features and Recommendations

- ◆ Regional Consideration. As described in the Preface of this document, the planning for the Rockport Property was performed in conjunction with Negwegon State Park and Thompson's Harbor State Park. The planning effort, supported by a consensus of the Planning Team, resulted in the following concept: Rockport would be established as the central "hub" of the three sites, allowing Negwegon and Thompson's Harbor to remain in a relatively undisturbed, natural state. The concept of the hub is one in which Rockport would be identified by visitors as the first stop to exploring northeast Michigan. At Rockport, there may be an interpretive center or a similar structure where people would become oriented as to the location of each site, as well as become aware of the connecting trails, and educational and recreation opportunities available at each site. Maps, brochures and perhaps information on eco-tourism businesses would be available at this central gathering place.

Of the three sites – Negwegon State Park, the Rockport Property, and Thompson's Harbor State Park – Rockport was selected as the ideal hub for two reasons: its central location between Negwegon and Thompson's Harbor; and, it has already been the site of much disturbance in the Developed Recreation Zone (see Figure 3). Scuba diving, a significant deep water boat access to Lake Huron, a Township Park, fossil collection, and long-range target shooting, are some of the activities that currently take place in this area. In contrast, Negwegon and Thompson's Harbor remain in a primarily undeveloped, natural state. To preserve their pristine environments, parking will remain minimal, but more dispersed to improve access. Rockport would be the advertised "central" location, and would be improved to accommodate more intense use and development. Note: should the concept of Rockport as the central hub not, modifications to the General Management Plan for Thompson's Harbor could be necessary (see Thompson's Harbor General Management Plan).

- ◆ Access and Parking. Current access to the Rockport Property is by Rockport Road from US-23. This Plan considers two additional points of entry, both would include small parking areas: County Line Road (a central

Figure 3: Management Zone Plan for the Rockport Property



- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Property Boundary | Potential Camping |
| Dedicated Boundary Approved by the NRC | Quarry |
| Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team | Sink Holes (General Location) |
| Besser Natural Area | Sand Boils |
| Lake | Existing Point of Access |
| Paved Road | Potential Future Point of Access |
| Unpaved Road | Management Zones |
| Rivers and Streams | Primitive Zone |
| Unpaved Multi-Use Trail | Natural Resource Recreation Zone |
| Middle Island Lighthouse | Developed Recreation Zone |
| Rockport Bay | Cultural Landscape Zone - Overlay |
| Parking | |
| Township Park | |

0 0.150.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Miles



**Rockport
Management Zone Plan**

point of access that could facilitate easier access to the sink holes); and access from the north (adjacent to the Besser Natural Area).

- ◆ Signage. Appropriate signage is needed to inform the public of the site's location. Interpretive, directional and education signage within Rockport, Negwegon and Thompson's Harbor will be developed under Phase 2.
- ◆ Camping. The highly modified quarry area, in general, may offer opportunities for more extensive development with low resource impacts. The quarry also offers other recreational opportunities and any camping development would be respectful of other uses.
- ◆ Future Purchases. Part of the DNR's mission is to acquire lands with unique natural, cultural and historic resources for the purposes of public recreation and education. The NRC-approved dedicated boundary for the Rockport property is provided in Section 2.5. Land within the dedicated boundary would be a priority purchase for the DNR, should the opportunity to purchase and funding become available. Land in the dedicated boundary is currently in private ownership, and therefore has not been designated a management zone. Major land purchases will prompt an amendment to this Plan.

3.1 Primitive Zone

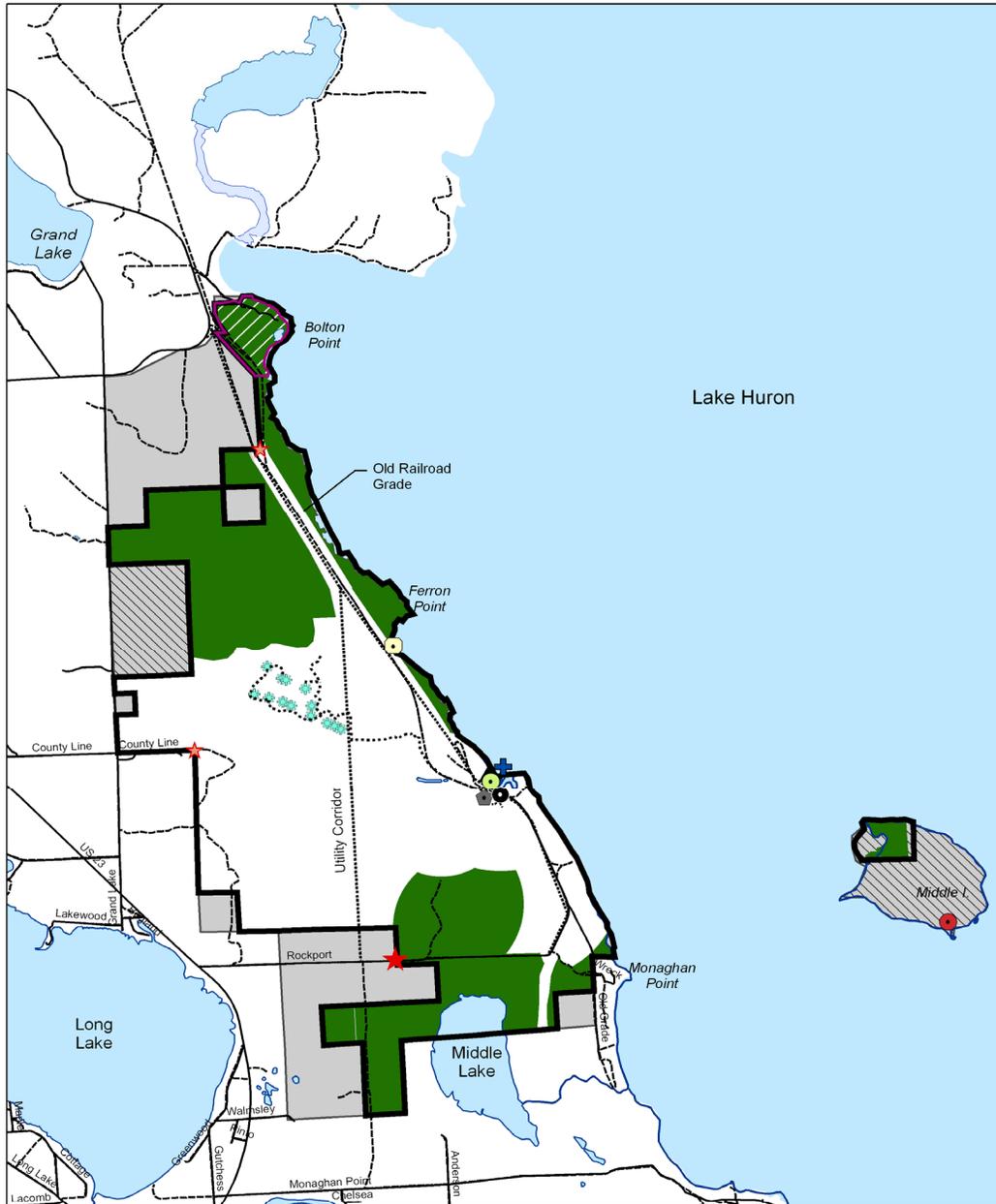
The northern and southern portions of Rockport, the Besser Natural Area, and land on Middle Island, are designated Primitive Zone. These areas encompass approximately 1,645 acres, or 39%, of the site. The Primitive designation was generally applied to land that contains sensitive wetland areas, and sensitive or undisturbed forested land. Figure 4 presents areas designated Primitive Zone. Figure 5 presents the Primitive Zones with a wetlands overlay to illustrate these impacts.

- A. Natural Resources. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease.

Within the Primitive Zone, the land would be managed to preserve and protect the wetlands, wooded dune-swale complexes, old growth pines, fens, and mature virgin red and white pine with spruce, balsam, cedar and birch located in the Besser Natural Area. Preserving this land is important because:

- ◆ The land provides habitat for a diverse array of animals.

Figure 4: Primitive Zone

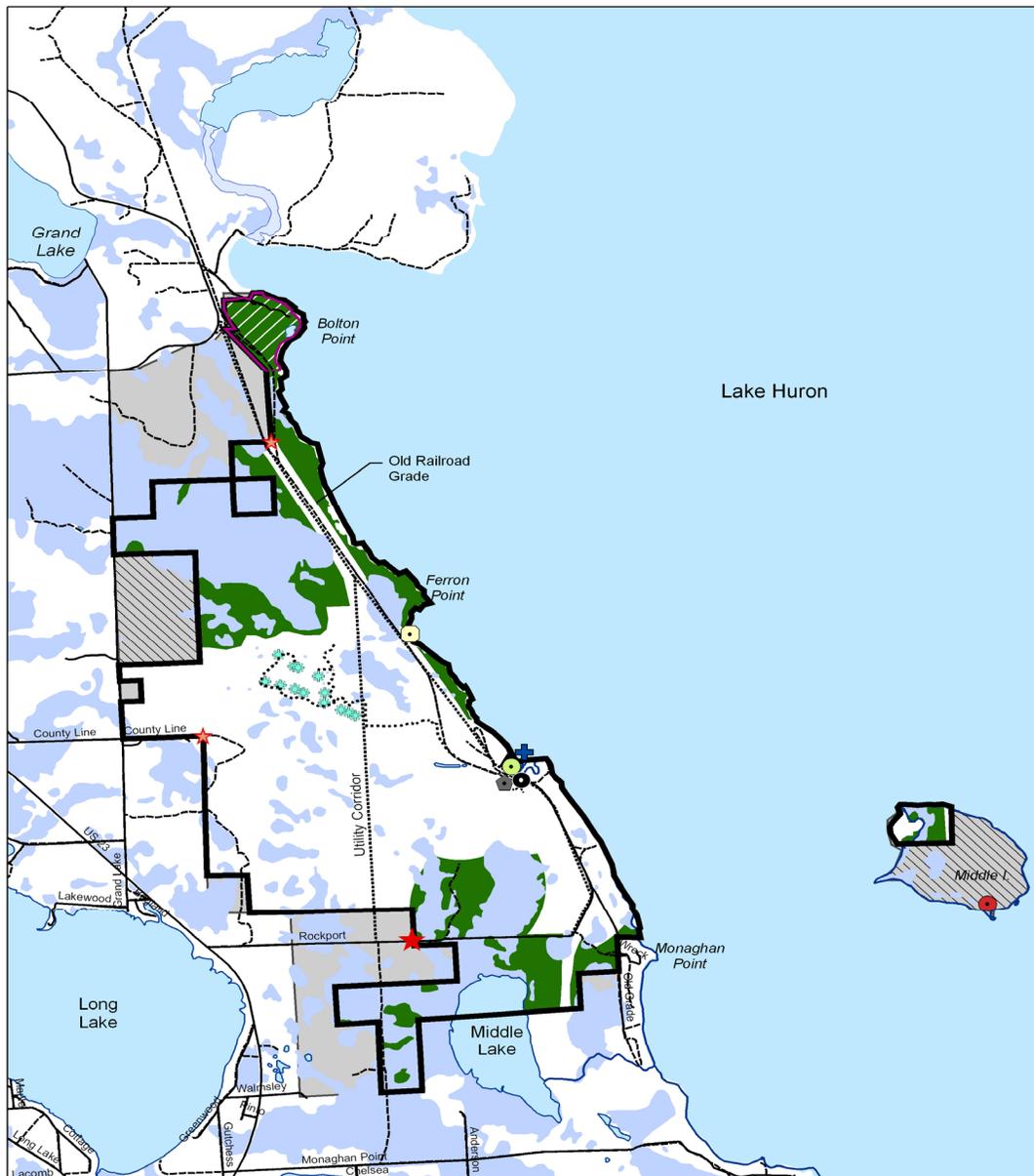


- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ○ Property Boundary | ▲ Potential Camping |
| ▬ Dedicated Boundary Approved by the NRC | ⬛ Quarry |
| ▨ Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team | ⊕ Sink Holes (General Location) |
| ▭ Besser Natural Area | ⊙ Sand Boils |
| ○ Lake | ★ Existing Point of Access |
| — Paved Road | ★ Potential Future Point of Access |
| - - - Unpaved Road | Management Zones |
| — Rivers and Streams | ● Primitive Zone |
| ⋯ Unpaved Multi-Use Trail | ▨ Cultural Landscape Zone - Overlay |
| ● Middle Island Lighthouse | |
| ⊕ Rockport Bay | |
| ● Parking | |
| ⊙ Township Park | |



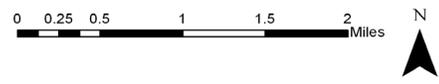
**Rockport
Management Zone Plan
Primitive Zone**

Figure 5: Primitive Zone with Wetlands Overlay



- Property Boundary
- ▭ Dedicated Boundary Approved by the NRC
- ▨ Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team
- Besser Natural Area
- Lake
- Wetland
- Paved Road
- - - Unpaved Road
- Rivers and Streams
- ⋯ Unpaved Multi-Use Trail
- Middle Island Lighthouse
- ⊕ Rockport Bay
- Parking
- Township Park
- ▲ Potential Camping
- ▣ Quarry
- ⊕ Sink Holes (General Location)
- Sand Boils
- ★ Existing Point of Access
- ★ Potential Future Point of Access

- Management Zones**
- Primitive Zone
 - ▨ Cultural Landscape Zone - Overlay



**Rockport
Management Zone Plan
Primitive Zone
with Wetlands Overlay**

- ◆ The land supports a variety of wildflowers, including Houghton's goldenrod, Dwarf lake iris, and Pitcher's thistle, which are all threatened species.
- ◆ The shoreline and coastal waters are highly valued for beach zone species composition, whitefish spawning and commercial fishing.

The Management Plan promotes the on-going maintenance and enhancement of these natural resources to ensure their success in the long-term. Native species and natural processes would take precedence over visitor accommodation.

- B. Historic / Cultural Resources. Cultural and historic resources in this zone would be preserved, removed or allowed to waste away.
- C. Recreational Opportunities. With the focus of this zone being preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural communities present within the zone, recreational opportunities are limited to low-intensity uses. Any uses must be dispersed, low intensity, off-trail or trail, self-reliant, outdoor activities. Activities that could occur in this zone are hiking, back-packing, hunting/trapping/fishing, primitive camping, cross-country skiing, nature observation.
- D. Education Opportunities. The ecological significance of the resources in this zone present a valuable educational opportunity. Information can be relayed through the use of kiosks at trailheads and interpretive signage along trails and other appropriate locations.
- E. Visitor Experience. Visitor experience would reflect a high degree of natural feel: a significant sense of solitude, and a lack of man-made improvements. There would be low interaction with others.
- F. Management Focus. Management would focus on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality. Routine maintenance of any trails or access routes would be provided. Care would be taken to eliminate any detrimental impacts such as erosion, sedimentation or incursion of invasive species. Other management strategies would be based on recommendations in a future Stewardship Plan.
- G. Development. The focus is to maintain as little evidence of human activity as possible. Only trail improvements, which can include boardwalks and/or overlooks, and educational or interpretive signage would be constructed.

3.2 Natural Resource Recreation Zone

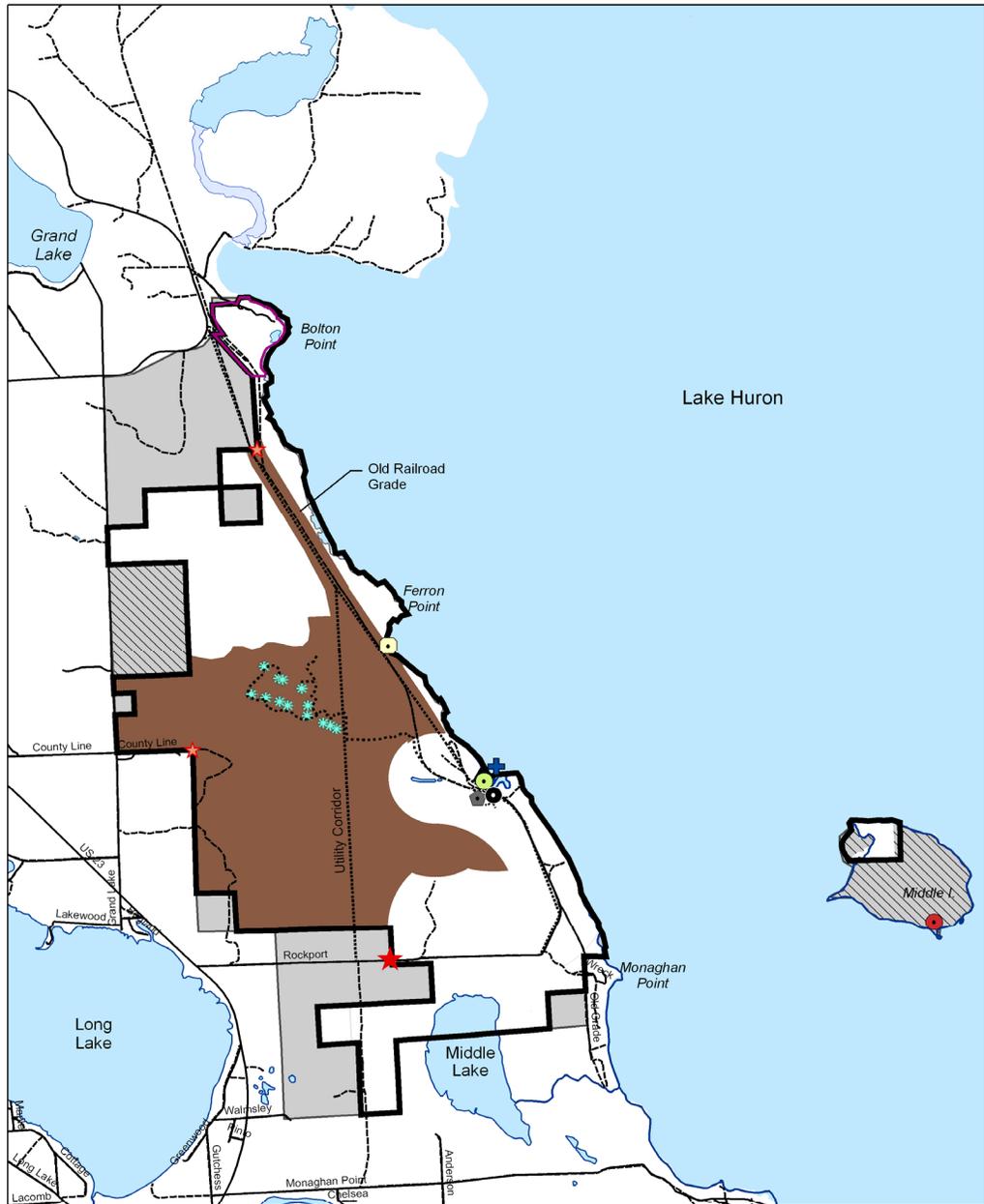
The Natural Resource Recreation (NRR) Zone comprises the greatest amount of Rockport land area (2,040 acres or 49%). This zone encompasses the central portion of the site, which includes the utility corridor, and the railroad grade. The designation was applied due to the resources contained within the land, and the potential uses for these resources. Development for exploration of the sinkholes, as well as higher-intensity uses of the trails would be facilitated by the NRR designation. Figure 6 presents land designated NRR.

- A. Natural Resources. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape.

Within the Natural Resource Recreation Zone, natural resources support visitor activities with only moderate impacts. Natural resources would be managed or modified to support visitor activities, but protected to the degree possible and the appearance should remain natural.

- B. Historic / Cultural Resources. Resources in this zone could be preserved, rehabilitated, removed or allowed to waste away. Historic structures could be adaptively used for operational uses or educational purposes.
- C. Recreational Opportunities. Moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone are allowed. Visitors are engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water settings. Activities that could be permitted include hiking, backpacking, back-country camping, bicycling, equestrian use where appropriate, canoeing, kayaking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, and showshoeing. Hunting/trapping/fishing are permitted in designated areas, and snowmobiling is permitted on designated routes. For Rockport, snowmobiling along the utility corridor and railroad grade could be a permitted activity.
- D. Education Opportunities. Information can be relayed through the use of kiosks or interpretive signage at trailheads, along trails or overlooks.
- E. Visitor Experience. Moderate visitor encounters are accommodated in the Natural Resource Recreation Zone. Activities for visitors to engage in could offer a variable time commitment, challenge and adventure. Moderate noise tolerance and moderate interaction with others can be expected.

Figure 6: Natural Resource Recreation



- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Property Boundary | Potential Camping |
| Dedicated Boundary Approved by the NRC | Quarry |
| Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team | Sink Holes (General Location) |
| Besser Natural Area | Sand Boils |
| Lake | Existing Point of Access |
| Paved Road | Potential Future Point of Access |
| Unpaved Road | Management Zone |
| Rivers and Streams | Natural Resource Recreation Zone |
| Unpaved Multi-Use Trail | |
| Middle Island Lighthouse | |
| Rockport Bay | |
| Parking | |
| Township Park | |

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles



**Rockport
Management Zone Plan
Natural Resource Recreation Zone**

- F. Management Focus. Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and universal access are management priorities.
- G. Development. A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include restrooms, concrete/asphalt/gravel walkways and parking, trails, benches, picnic tables, rustic campsites, cabins and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities and protect natural resources.

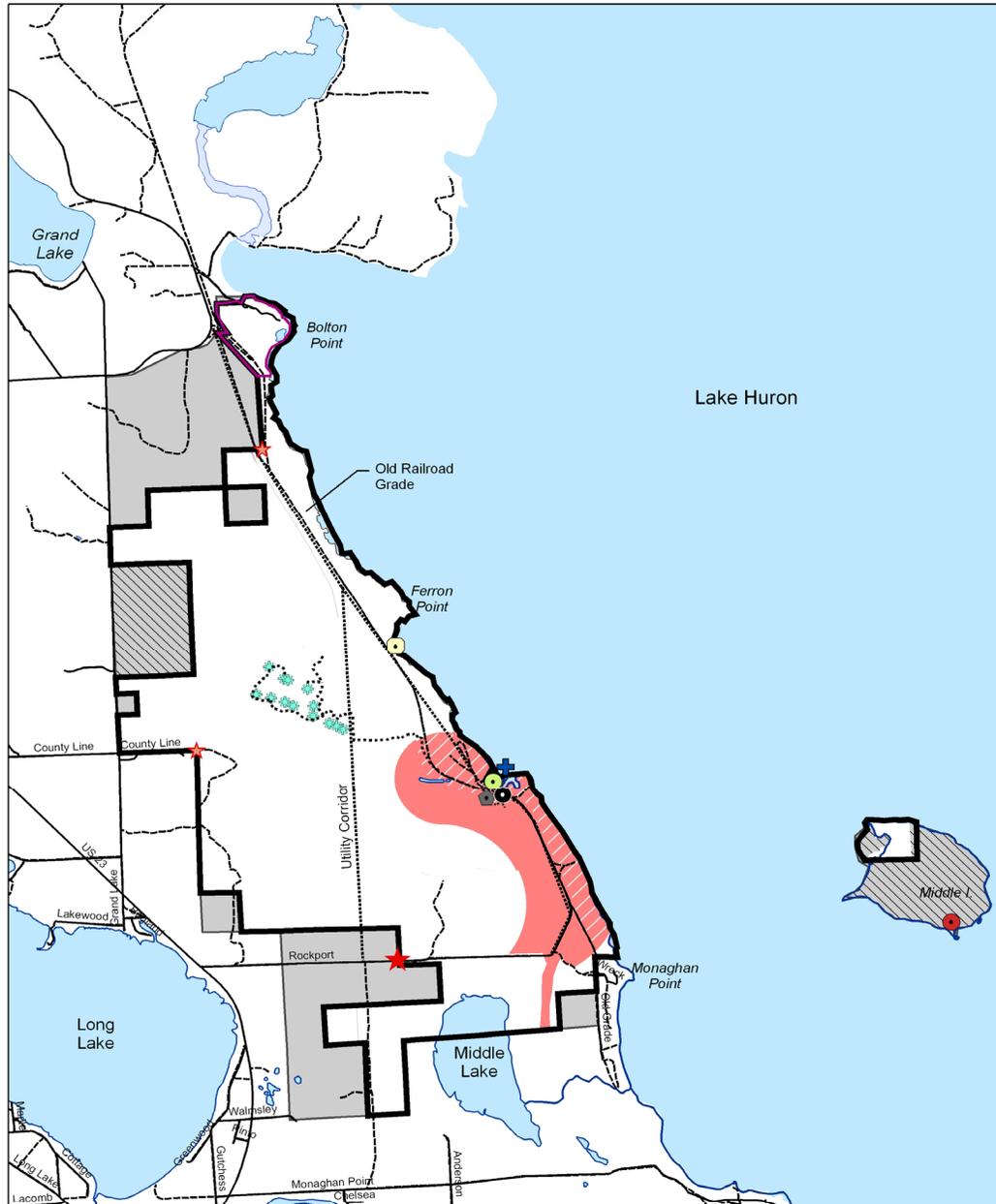
3.3 Developed Recreation Zone

Approximately 560 acres (13%) of Rockport land is Developed Recreation (DR). Land in this zone contains largely that which is currently disturbed, including the quarry and port, which is shared with many users, including the National Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary and the Chippewa Tribe. Should Rockport become a central hub for Negwegon State Park and Thompson's Harbor State Park, development could be accommodated in the DR Zone. Figure 7 presents land designated Developed Recreation.

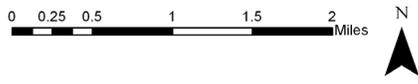
- A. Natural Resources. Vegetative management in this zone will address hazard trees, invasive species, and pests and disease, and will also be allowed for purposes of facilitating development and recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape. Natural resources are actively managed and modified to support visitor activities. Water quality is maintained or restored.
- B. Historic / Cultural Resources. Resources in this zone could be preserved, adapted or rehabilitated. Non-utilized or stabilized structures are removed.
- C. Recreational Opportunities. High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are found in this zone. Visitors engage in recreation activities in diverse and modified land and water settings: hiking, modern and semi-modern camping, bicycling, equestrian use where appropriate, boating, canoeing, kayaking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, day-use beach, picnicking, and other day-use activities. Hunting is allowed in only approved areas. Trapping and fishing are permitted in designated areas. Snowmobiling is permitted on designated routes.
- D. Education Opportunities. Interpretive signage and information could be provided at a day-use facility, boat launch, campground, registration building, trail head, along trails and overlooks.

- E. Visitor Experience. A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated. Activities for visitors to engage in could offer a variable time commitment, challenge and adventure. Moderate noise tolerance and moderate to high interaction with others can be expected.
- F. Management Focus. Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and universal access are management priorities.
- G. Development. A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include restrooms, concrete/asphalt/gravel walkways and parking, trails, benches, picnic tables, rustic campsites, cabins and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities and protect natural resources.

Figure 7: Developed Recreation



- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ○ Property Boundary | ▲ Potential Camping |
| ■ Dedicated Boundary Approved by the NRC | ⬛ Quarry |
| ▨ Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team | ⊕ Sink Holes (General Location) |
| ⊖ Besser Natural Area | ● Sand Boils |
| ○ Lake | ★ Existing Point of Access |
| — Paved Road | ★ Potential Future Point of Access |
| - - - Unpaved Road | |
| — Rivers and Streams | Management Zones |
| ⋯ Unpaved Multi-Use Trail | ● Developed Recreation Zone |
| ● Middle Island Lighthouse | ▨ Cultural Landscape Zone - Overlay |
| ⊕ Rockport Bay | |
| ● Parking | |
| ● Township Park | |



**Rockport
Management Zone Plan
Developed Recreation Zone**

3.4 Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone

A Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone (Figure 8) applies to approximately 288 acres of Rockport land, or 6.7% of the total land area. The Overlay Zone applies to the coastline of the Developed Recreation Zone, and the Besser Natural Area. When the limestone quarry was in operation approximately 1927 to 1958, the land in this zone was occupied by settlement formed quarry workers and their families. There was known to be homes, and at least one school in this area. Remnants of this once vibrant community remain.

- A. Natural Resources. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone.
- B. Historic / Cultural Resources. Structures, remnants, ships and other landscape characteristics and features which represent the evolution of the resource, temporal change and the continuum of time would be preserved, protected and enhanced. Rehabilitation or adaptive re-use for operational or education purposes are permitted.
- C. Recreational Opportunities. Visitors could be engaged in sightseeing, recreational and education activities in a cultural setting compatible with and sensitive to the setting. Activities allowed in this zone include automobile, bike, walking or hiking tour. When resources are sensitive and require substantial preservation, the general public may not have access to the exact location of the resource.
- D. Education Opportunities. The cultural and historic resources demonstrate the uniqueness of Rockport, but also contribute to the story of Michigan, and our nation. Information can be relayed through the use of kiosks at trailheads and interpretive signage along trails and other appropriate locations. Off-site interpretation may be used as well.
- E. Visitor Experience. For resources available to public viewing and/or use, moderate visitor encounters are accommodated. Visitors engage in sightseeing, recreational, and education activities in a cultural setting. Moderate noise, time commitment and interaction with others can be expected.
- F. Management Focus. Management focuses on maintaining the cultural character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality.

G. Development. Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape are tolerated in this zone. Moderate levels of development and accessibility could be provided to support visitor access and use.

Figure 8: Cultural Landscape Zone - Overlay

