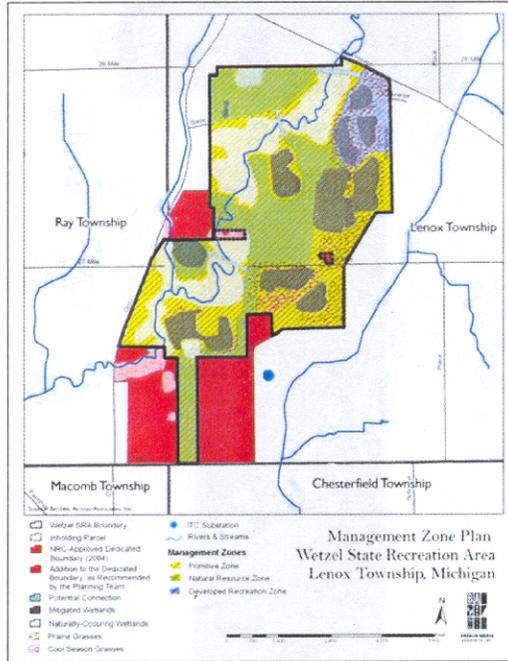


May 2008

# General Management Plan

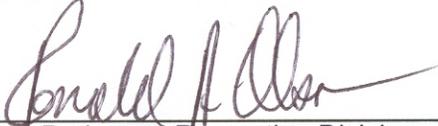
Long-range management guidance focused on the specific natural resources, historic-cultural resources, recreation opportunities and the education-interpretation opportunities of...

## Wetzel State Recreation Area



Prepared by Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc. on behalf of MDNR-Parks and Recreation Division and Lenox Township, and directed by Paul N. Curtis, Management Plan Administrator

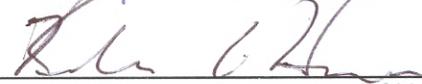
### PLAN APPROVALS:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Parks and Recreation Division

5/21/08  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Resource Management Deputy

5/22/08  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

5/22/08  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**RESOLUTION NO. 11-2007-03**

**RESOLUTION OF  
THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR MICHIGAN STATE PARKS  
TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE "WETZEL STATE RECREATION  
AREA - GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN"**

**ADOPTED: November 28, 2007**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Natural Resources' (Department) Parks and Recreation Division has completed Phase 1 of the General Management Plan for the Wetzel State Recreation Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process reflects sensitivity to natural resource values, historic and cultural resource values, recreation and education opportunities, is inclusive of all Department programs, and representative of eco-management; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process was further inclusive of stakeholder, constituent, and public input, and was assisted greatly by a partnership with Lenox Township of Macomb County, who funded the consultant services for development of the plan and were active participants throughout the process; and

**WHEREAS**, the General Management Plan represents sound guidance for future planning phases that will be consistent with the mission of the Department and the Parks and Recreation Division, and reflective of the purpose and significance of the Wetzel State Recreation Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the General Management Plan has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Parks and Recreation Division Management Team, the Department Statewide Council and its Southern Lower Peninsula Ecoregional Team, and has been recommended for approval by the Stewardship Subcommittee of the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks approves the Wetzel State Recreation Area Phase 1 - General Management Plan; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that greater emphasis be included in the Executive Summary, general text and maps for future, desired acquisitions; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks further recommends that the Department Director approve the Phase 1 – General Management Plan for the Wetzel State Recreation Area; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that upon approval by the Department Director, the Parks and Recreation Division initiate the Phase 2 – Long Range Action Plan for the Wetzel State Recreation Area.

Submitted by: Michael McDonald, Chair of the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks' Stewardship Subcommittee

<b>Motioned by:</b>	<b>Mary Pitcher</b>	<b>Yeas:</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Seconded by:</b>	<b>Todd Scott</b>	<b>Nays:</b>	<b>0</b>
		<b>Absent:</b>	<b>4</b>

**This Resolution was adopted by the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks on November 28, 2007.**

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
– Planning Process Overview	3
– Planning Objectives	3
– Planning Team	4
– Management Plan Planning Process	4
<b>2.0 Core Values</b>	<b>5</b>
– Mission Statements	5
– Recreation Area Purpose	5
– Recreation Area Significance	6
– Legal Mandates	6
– Land Acquisition	11
<b>3.0 Management Zone Plan</b>	<b>13</b>
– Primitive Zone	15
– Natural Resource Recreation Zone	17
– Developed Recreation Zone	19
<b>4.0 Future Plan Inserts</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1: Management Zone Plan	14
Figure 2: Primitive Zone	15
Figure 3: Natural Resource Recreation Zone	17
Figure 4: Developed Recreation Zone	19
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A: Supporting Analysis</b>	
Regional Setting	A-1
General History	A-3
Demographics	A-7
– Population	A-7
– Family Size	A-7
– Age	A-7
– Employment	A-8
– Racial Composition	A-8
Land Use	A-9
– Existing Land Use	A-9
– Zoning	A-10
– Future Land Use	A-11
– Utilities	A-11

Natural Resource Assessment _____	A-15
– Ecoregional Context _____	A-15
– Topography _____	A-18
– Watersheds and Drainage _____	A-18
– Flood Hazard Areas _____	A-18
– Wetlands & Grasses _____	A-18
– Woodlands _____	A-19
– State Protected Wildlife and Vegetation _____	A-19
Cultural and Historic Resources _____	A-29
Education and Interpretation _____	A-31
Recreational Resources _____	A-33
– Wetzel State Recreation Area Recreational Resources _____	A-33
– Areas of Conflict _____	A-33
– Surrounding Recreational Resources _____	A-33
Park Use and Economic Impact _____	A-39

#### Tables (Appendices)

Table A-1: Population Trends for Lenox Township and Surrounding Communities _____	A-7
Table A-2: Age Trends for the Region and Macomb County, 2005 and 2015 _____	A-7
Table A-3: Employment Trends for Lenox Township and Macomb County, 2005 - 2015 _____	A-8
Table A-4: 2000 Racial Composition for Surrounding Local Governments and Counties _____	A-8
Table A-5: Land Use for Wetzel State Recreation Area and Surrounding Properties _____	A-9
Table A-6: MGM2 Economic Impact Analysis Summary Table _____	A-40

#### Figures (Appendices)

Figure A-1: Location Map _____	A-1
Figure A-2: Land Acquisition _____	A-6
Figure A-3: Existing Land Use _____	A-12
Figure A-4: Zoning _____	A-13
Figure A-5: Future Land Use _____	A-14
Figure A-6: Ecoregional Context _____	A-20
Figure A-7: Quarternary Geology _____	A-21
Figure A-8: Soil Association _____	A-22
Figure A-9: Soil Suitability for Vegetation and Wildlife _____	A-23
Figure A-10: Lakes, Streams, Wetlands and Grasses _____	A-24
Figure A-11: Topography _____	A-25
Figure A-12: Watersheds and Subwatersheds _____	A-26
Figure A-13: Flood Hazard Areas _____	A-27
Figure A-14: Woodlands _____	A-28
Figure A-15: Wetzel State Recreation Area _____	A-37
Figure A-16: Regional Recreation Resources _____	A-38



Appendix B: Public Participation Program Results

Appendix C: Record of Planning Team Meetings

Appendix D: Memorandum of Understanding: MDNR PRD and Lenox Township



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# Executive Summary

Long-range planning for Wetzel State Recreation Area (SRA) began in January of 2006 as a joint initiative of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Parks and Recreation Division (MDNR-PRD) and Lenox Township. This endeavor represented a new planning philosophy of the MDNR-PRD. "Management Planning", a comprehensive, resource-based process, is MDNR-PRD's adaptation of National Park Service planning methodology. In our iteration of this process, we focus our attention on the four principles of the PRD Mission Statement. To that end, we thoroughly inventory the (1) natural resource values of the Recreation Area, establish its (2) historic/cultural resources, identify the (3) recreational opportunities and develop the (4) educational and interpretation opportunities.



With this base of knowledge and with input of the "Planning Team" (made up of the Department resource staff, Lenox Township officials and Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.), stakeholders and the public, we established an 'identity' for the Recreation Area. The key significance of Wetzel SRA is threefold:



Forster's Tern

First, Wetzel SRA contains many natural features and special habitats. Natural features include mitigated and naturally-occurring wetlands, warm season prairie uplands and grasses, Coon Creek and associated floodplains, and woodland areas. The mitigated wetlands and warm season prairie uplands and grasses were intentionally established in the Recreation Area. There are few instances of these unique resources on State-owned land, and as such, they offer excellent research, education, and interpretation opportunities. Additionally, the mitigated wetlands appear to provide a habitat that attracts several Species of Special Concern. The Marsh Wren, Common Moorhen and Forster's Tern have been cited in Wetzel in and around the mitigated wetlands.



The Common Moorhen

Second, Wetzel SRA is the only State recreation area or park in Macomb County. It is a major source of open space and recreation in Lenox Township, and will gain value as the population grows and land development increases. The Recreation Area is used by several non-profit groups, like *Friends of Wetzel State Park*, and the *Radio Control Club of Detroit*. Residents from Lenox and surrounding areas frequent the park for hiking, relaxing, and hunting.



The Marsh Wren

Finally, Wetzel SRA is a prominent feature of the regional trailway system. The Recreation Area is a node within the Macomb County Trailway Plan, which also connects to State-wide trailway systems. Connections are planned between Wetzel and the Wolcott Mill Metropark and other regional networks like the Clinton River, Paint Creek, Bridge-To-Bay trails.

In concert with this analysis of the Wetzel's purpose and significance, the Planning Team, with stakeholder and public input, established appropriate Management Zones and their extent of influence on the Recreation Area. From a pallet of nine standard zones, three were utilized for Wetzel SRA. The Management Zone Plan is found on the cover as well as page 12 of this General Management Plan (GMP). A thorough review of each

Management Zone is presented on pages 13 through 18 of the GMP. A condensed review of the Management Zones applied to Wetzel is as follows:

- ◆ Primitive Zone: Of the total 913 acres in Wetzel SRA, approximately 566 acres of undeveloped land falls into this zone description. This represents most of the area surrounding naturally-occurring wetlands, mitigated wetlands, cool and warm season prairie uplands and grasses, and floodplain surrounding the Coon Creek and its tributaries. The focus of this zone is to maintain and protect the forested, scrub-shrub, emergent and mitigated wetlands and potholes of prairie grasses. As a result, only low impact recreation will occur: hunting, trapping, birding, and the development of foot trails for hiking and backpacking only. No equestrian or mountain bike trails will be allowed in this zone.
- ◆ Natural Resource Recreation Zone: Approximately 283 acres of Wetzel are dedicated to this zone. Much of this zone is currently unforested, open area and was selected for this designation because impacts to natural resources would be minimal. General recreation activities that are considered appropriate for this zone include: hunting, fishing, trapping, birding, rustic camping, model airplane flying and trails for hiking and cross-country skiing.
- ◆ Developed Recreation Zone: This zone comprises approximately 64 acres of the Recreation Area. It is the first zone encountered by visitors. The intent is to provide a barrier-free, educational encounter with mitigated wetlands, prairie grasses and the outdoors in general. While other zones focus on the natural setting, this zone allows for more developed uses, and potentially an outdoor classroom.

Much of Wetzel SRA's land area is occupied by wetlands, which limits space available for recreation opportunities. The Planning Team recognized the future value of Wetzel as a prime resource for recreation, and in response, identified 'Future Purchase' areas on the Management Zone Plan. Parcels were identified for purchase in the near future given their adjacency to areas of Wetzel that have recreation limitations due to the placement of the mitigated wetlands. Expanding the boundary in these areas is beneficial because: 1) expansion opens the realm of recreation opportunities available and increases visitor experience; 2) the original purpose of Wetzel was to provide an active recreation facility in this region, which was pre-empted by the location of mitigated wetlands and 3) expansion will provide more points of access, which will be needed as the visitor rate increases. Future Purchase Areas have not been designated with a Management Zone. A purchase would prompt an amendment to this GMP.



# 1.0 Introduction

## Planning Process Overview

The Management Planning Process develops a series of planning steps, each built upon the previous, that keep all planning and action decisions focused on (1) the mission of the Parks and Recreation Division, and (2) the specific Purpose and Significance of the park. There are four phases of planning, implemented in the following order:

- ◆ **Phase 1.** General Management Plan (GMP) that presents long-range (20 year) goals
- ◆ **Phase 2.** Long-range Action Plan that identifies long range (10 year) goals to attain the GMP (requires review of Phase 1)
- ◆ **Phase 3.** Five-Year Action Plan, which outlines specific actions to implement (requires review of Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- ◆ **Phase 4.** Annual Action Plan and Progress Report to answer what will be done this year, and what progress was made on last year's plan.

This is the **General Management Plan**, the first step in our planning process. In this phase of planning, we are defining what the park will look like in twenty years, and answering critical questions like: What will be the condition of flora and fauna? How will we address historic and cultural resources? What recreational opportunities will be provided? What education and interpretation efforts will meet the visitor? What will guide the manager's operational decisions? What will be the visitor's overall experience?

A key tool of this plan is the identification of "Management Zones" which define specific characteristics of the land, addressing management for:

- ◆ Natural features
- ◆ Historic/cultural features
- ◆ Education/interpretation, and
- ◆ Recreational opportunities.

These four elements represent the primary goals of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) Mission Statement, and provide guidance for both planning and management decisions. Within the parameters of this guidance, "Purpose" and "Significance" statements are developed for the park that establishes its unique identity and focus. No two parks are the same and this emphasis is directed at ensuring that the differences found from park to park are acknowledged, highlighted and celebrated.

## Planning Objectives

The objective of this General Management Plan is to bring together PRD Department staff, impacted and impacting stakeholders, and the public who use the park in a planning process that will define and clarify the unique "Purpose" and "Significance" of Wetzel State Recreation Area (SRA). Collectively, we will reinforce those attributes in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan. Future action plans, whether focused on a development proposal, a resource improvement initiative, an interpretive program, or day-to-day management of the park will be guided by this General Management Plan.

## Planning Team

Accomplishment of our planning objectives was and is dependent upon the valuable input provided by all members of the 'Planning Team'. Following are the names of those critical participants in this planning process:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Paul N. Curtis	MDNR-PRD, Management Plan Administrator
Steve Pondo	MDNR-PRD, Park Supervisor
Glenn Palmgren	MDNR-PRD, Stewardship Ecologist
Luba Sitar	MDNR-PRD, Pontiac District Supervisor
Kristen Bennett	MDNR-PRD, District Planner
Ernie Kafcas	MDNR, Wildlife
Jim Francis	MDNR, Fisheries
Larry Pederson	MDNR, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management
Bruce Miller	MDNR, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management
Peggy Ruby	MDNR, Law Enforcement
Janet Canode	MDNR, Office of Communications
Ed Meadows	MDNR, Office of Land and Facilities - Land
Denise Gruben	MDNR, Office of Land and Facilities - Engineering
John P. Gardner	Lenox Township Supervisor
Jeanette Ventimiglia	Lenox Township, Deputy Supervisor
Karol Ottenbacher	Lenox Township, Treasurer
David C. Birchler	President, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.
Amy Golke	Senior Planner, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

## Management Plan Planning Process

The General Management Plan is the product of a collective planning effort. The Wetzel State Recreation Area planning process began in early 2005 with conversations between Lenox Township and the Department of Natural Resources. Later that year, an agreement was reached to begin the planning process, with the assistance from Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc. In January of 2006, the Planning Team, comprised of DNR, Township representatives and consultants met for the first of many monthly meetings toward the completion of the Plan.

The first step was to determine where we are, which was developed from baseline information (Appendix A, Supporting Analysis). This inventory and analysis of existing conditions was reviewed by the Planning Team, and included the regional setting, population characteristics and natural resources and features. An evaluation of the economic impacts of the Recreation Area was also conducted.

Upon completion of the Supporting Analysis, the Planning Team considered the Recreation Area's purpose and significance, identified legal mandates and ed a management zone plan. The Team then reached out to the public for input by holding a stakeholder workshop and a public participation workshop, in addition to conducting an on-line survey (Appendix B). Representatives from a variety of interests within the community came together to discuss the planning of Wetzel. Throughout the process, an internet web page kept the community current regarding the progress of the General Management Plan. Minutes from the Planning Team meetings are provided in Appendix C.