



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



James Scott Memorial Fountain

# Belle Isle Park

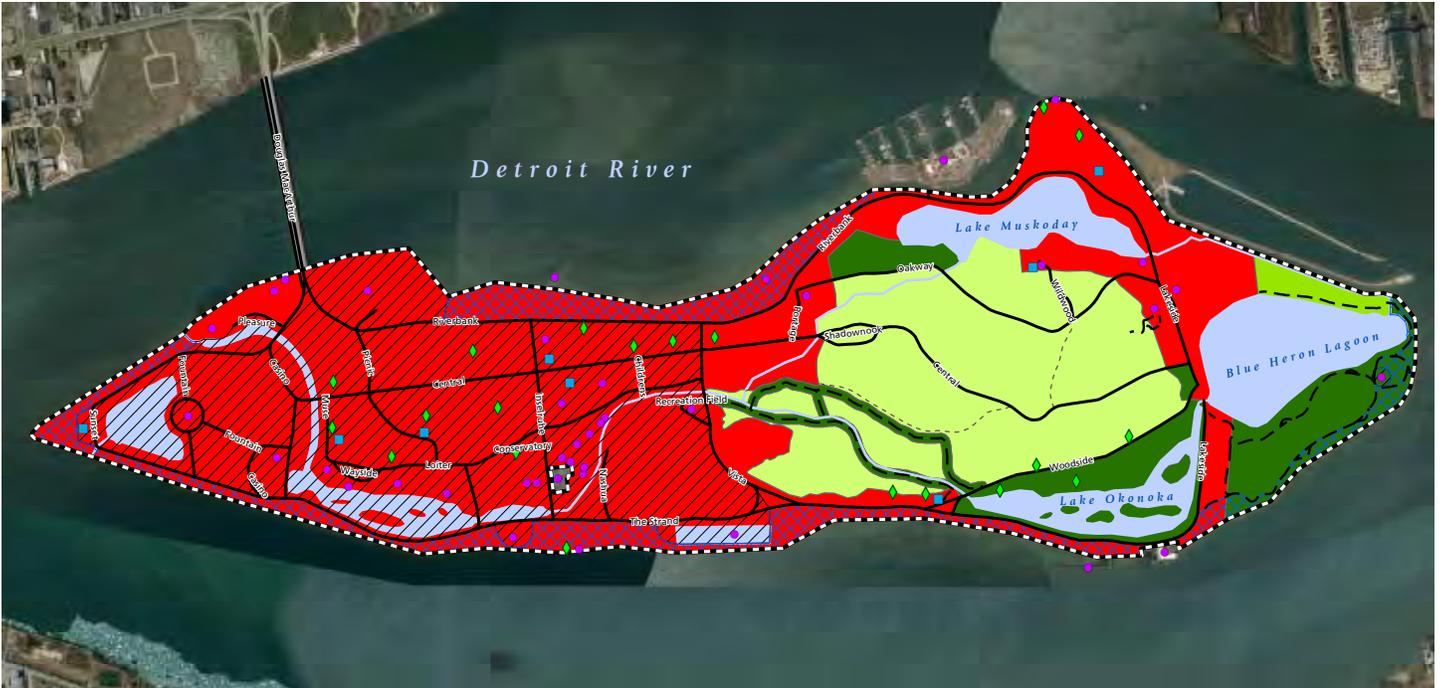
## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Approved July 19, 2018

Prepared with the assistance of

B R   
Beckett & Raeder

[www.bria2.com](http://www.bria2.com)



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Belle Isle Park - Draft Management Zones

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Esri Basemap

|                          |                     |                             |                            |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Belle Isle Park Boundary | Restroom Buildings  | <b>Management Zones</b>     | Developed Recreation       |
| Roads                    | Shelters            |                             | Cultural Landscape Overlay |
| Trails                   | Park Infrastructure |                             | Scenic Overlay             |
| Abandoned Roadbeds       |                     |                             | Primitive                  |
|                          |                     | Backcountry                 |                            |
|                          |                     | Natural Resource Recreation |                            |



Beckett & Raeder

This project was directed by Deborah Jensen, Management Plan Administrator, Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division with assistance from Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

## PLAN APPROVALS

### Michigan DNR

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Natural Resources Deputy

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

### Belle Isle Conservancy

\_\_\_\_\_  
 President, Belle Isle Conservancy

7/13/2018  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

# PLAN APPROVALS

## PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following dates reference when the plans were presented for recommendation. In some instances, additional time was allotted for plan review following the presentation with subsequent approval received by email.

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| PRD- Section Chiefs                          | <u>3/26/2018</u><br>Date |
| Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee           | <u>5/17/2018</u><br>Date |
| DNR- Resource Management Bureau              | <u>4/10/2018</u><br>Date |
| MSPAC- Stewardship Subcommittee              | <u>5/30/2018</u><br>Date |
| NRC- Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee | <u>6/14/2018</u><br>Date |

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**RESOLUTION NO. 05-2018-01**

**BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BIPAC)**

**RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE  
“BELLE ISLE PARK STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN”**

**ADOPTED: May 17, 2018**

**WHEREAS**, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division, in association with the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), has completed the Strategic Management Plan for Belle Isle Park; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process reflects balancing of natural resource protection values, historic and cultural resource values, recreation and education opportunities, including various DNR and BIC programs and events; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process included multiple stakeholder, constituent, and public input; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan represents sound guidance for future planning that is consistent with the missions of the DNR, the Parks and Recreation Division, the Belle Isle Conservancy, and the Belle Isle Advisory Committee; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan is in alignment with the recommendations of the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel report submitted to Governor Rick Snyder; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Parks and Recreation Division and the Belle Isle Conservancy.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee recommends to the DNR approval of the Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee further recommends that the DNR, Parks and Recreation Chief and the Director approve the Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan and forward to the City of Detroit.

Submitted by: Ron Olson, DNR, PRD

**Motioned by: Bud Denker**  
**Seconded by: Rev. Lonnie Peek**

**Yeas: 6**  
**Nays: 0**  
**Abstained: 0**  
**Absent: 1**

*This Resolution was adopted by the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee at their regular meeting on May 17, 2018 as Resolution No. 05-2018-01*

**RESOLUTION NO. 06-2018-04****MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)****RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE  
“BELLE ISLE PARK STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN”****ADOPTED: June 14, 2018**

**WHEREAS**, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division, in association with the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), has completed the Strategic Management Plan for Belle Isle Park; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process reflects balancing of natural resource protection values, historic and cultural resource values, recreation and education opportunities, including various DNR and BIC programs and events; and

**WHEREAS**, the planning process included multiple stakeholder, constituent, and public input; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan represents sound guidance for future planning that is consistent with the missions of the DNR, the Parks and Recreation Division, the Belle Isle Conservancy, and the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan is in alignment with the recommendations of the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel report submitted to Governor Rick Snyder; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Management Plan has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Parks and Recreation Division, Belle Isle Conservancy and the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee recommends to the DNR approval of the Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee further recommends that the DNR, Parks and Recreation Chief and the Director approve the Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan and forward to the City of Detroit.

Submitted by: Ron Olson, DNR, PRD

**Motioned by:** Committee member, Chris Tracy

**Seconded by:** Committee member, Julie Clark

**Yeas: 9**

**Nays: 0**

**Abstained: 0**

**Absent: 6**

*This Resolution was adopted by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee at their regular meeting on June 14, 2018 as Resolution No. 06-2018-04*

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MacArthur Bridge

# Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan

## Executive Summary

Belle Isle Park, the most visited state park in Michigan and the United States, is rich in culture, history, and natural resources. The growing demand for open spaces and recreational opportunities for city residents led to a variety of developments on the island over the years. The park's attractions, including the Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Belle Isle Nature Center, James Scott Memorial Fountain, and Dossin Great Lakes Museum, provide rich educational value and strong cultural identity to the park, as well as the City of Detroit. Visitors also come to Belle Isle Park for the scenic landscape, beach, fishing, boating, grilling, athletic, cultural, family, and community activities.

Belle Isle Park became Michigan's 102nd state park in February 2014, and is operated by the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) under a 30-year lease agreement with the City of Detroit. The DNR is assisted by the DNR Law Enforcement Division (LED), Michigan State Police (MSP), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). PRD has strong support from the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) and guidance from the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC). Other DNR divisions also provide assistance.

Specific areas of the island are not included in the lease agreement with the city and are therefore not managed by the DNR. This includes the City of Detroit water intake area,

the U.S. Coast Guard Station, the city greenhouses, and the Detroit Yacht Club. Other areas are managed through lease agreements with third party entities such as the Belle Isle Nature Center (Detroit Zoological Society), the Dossin Great Lakes Museum (Detroit Historical Society), the Belle Isle Aquarium (BIC), and the Belle Isle Boat House (Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc).

The purpose of this Strategic Management Plan is to guide the future long-term sustainability of Belle Isle Park. It encompasses many facets of planning and operations for the park from the perspective of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) optimizing joint resources to best serve the mission of the park.

The management plan seeks to uphold the Parks and Recreation Division's Mission: "to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities" and the mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy: "to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the natural environment, historic structures, and unique character of Belle Isle Park as a public park for the enjoyment of all – now and forever."

**WHY:** The desired outcome of this plan is to ensure every visitor has an enjoyable recreational experience on Belle Isle that is memorable.

**WHAT:** To deliver the desired outcome will require:

- Continuous improvements to the park
- Excellent customer service
- Providing a clean atmosphere
- Providing a safe atmosphere
- Ensuring relevant opportunities are offered
- Consistent maintenance and operational standards
- Maintaining an appropriate balance of opportunities for self-directed recreation and being good hosts to groups seeking to hold events in the park

**HOW:** The desired outcome will be accomplished by:

- Effective maintenance, operations and security plans
- Effective communication systems
- Enforcing park rules compassionately
- Being customer oriented

- Properly informing the public
- Operating efficiently
- Maximizing and leveraging collaboration with partners to achieve desired outcomes
- Addressing the carrying capacity of Belle Isle Park due to the rapid increase in visitation in the last 3 years
- Community engagement
- Ensuring the public has a voice through the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee
- Partnering productively with the BIC by:
  - Leveraging resources
  - Collaborating on planning and evaluating service outcomes
  - Seeking philanthropic investment in the park and its assets
  - Carefully reviewing new opportunistic plans and proposals to ensure that they fit the mission, are sustainable, and add clear value to the park.
  - Participating in annual evaluations of the park and its service



Metro Detroit Youth Day Activities

This Strategic Management Plan brings together DNR staff, BIC staff, other state agencies, stakeholders, and the public in a process that describes the following for the park:

- Core values and guiding resources on which the Strategic Management Plan is based.
- Management goals, objectives and accomplishments for the first three years of DNR management.
- Strategic direction for the next ten years, focusing on continued transformation, financial stability and partnerships.
- Purpose and significance that captures the unique identity of Belle Isle Park.
- 20-year Management Zone Plan reflecting the resource protection goals and the level of development appropriate for the different areas of the park.
- 10-year Action Plan that describes projects currently underway and future projects (including those leveraged by partners) that address the desired future condition within the park as a whole and within each of the designated management zones. These goals address the enhancement of infrastructure, management and operations that further the mission of Belle Isle Park.
- Proposal review process to ensure that new initiatives are carefully considered and analyzed based, not only on their impact and merit associated with the strategic plan, but also on their ability to be sustainable within operations and maintenance budget and resources.
- Enhancements to the current process for permits, events, and concessions activities on Belle Isle Park in collaboration with the BIC, ensuring the proposed events and concession activities are compatible with the mission of the park and any impact on use is in balance with the benefits received.
- Opportunities to engage and utilize volunteers and partners to enhance the mission of the park.

The Supporting Analysis, included as Appendix A of this plan, provides important background information on Belle Isle Park that informs this planning initiative. It includes a comprehensive review of the park setting; area demographics; history of the island; land ownership; legal mandates; and cultural, natural, and recreation resources of the island.

While the Strategic Management Plan addresses some specific natural resource goals for the park, a separate Natural Resource Stewardship Plan for Belle Isle Park has been developed. This identifies conservation targets, goals, and threats to those conservation targets, and strategies to reach the goals. The Stewardship Plan is included for reference in Appendix H.

The Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix, presented by Lear Corporation, has been held periodically at Belle Isle Park since 1992, and every year since 2012. The current agreement for the event on the island between the Detroit Grand Prix and the City of Detroit was in place and honored by the DNR when

the department assumed management of the park in February 2014. This agreement expires in 2018. The DNR has solicited input on the potential renewal of that agreement from area residents, business owners, stakeholders and others, including a public listening session in September 2017. Currently, the Detroit Grand Prix has not submitted an application for a new agreement; therefore consideration of this event was not part of this strategic management plan process. Should an agreement be drafted, it will be made available for public review and further comment.

### Significance of Belle Isle Park

Each park management plan developed by the Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division is derived from the park's significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state's system. Belle Isle Park was determined significant due to the following:

#### Serving the Urban Core

Belle Isle Park, Detroit's grandest park, is located in the middle of the Detroit River and is connected to the city's urban center by the MacArthur Bridge. Belle Isle Park is a natural oasis on par with New York's Central Park and Chicago's Lincoln Park, and is an important resource for outdoor education. Belle Isle Park is the most visited state park in the state and the country, currently drawing an estimated four million visitors annually.

#### Rich History

Anishinaabe (Odawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomi) people knew Belle Isle as Wah-na-be-zee long before the French arrived in Detroit in 1701. As a public park at the core of Detroit life since 1880, Belle Isle Park has evolved as the idea



Historical picture of Belle Isle Casino

of recreation has changed over time. Where park-goers once strolled with parasols, viewed flowers, and rode carriages, visitors now enjoy fitness activities, team sports, eating outdoors, and more. Except during a relatively brief time from 1817 until 1879, Belle Isle has remained public land. Its many uses over the years have reflected, even if on a small scale, significant cultural and historic events of the United States including prohibition, times of civil unrest, and national defense during the Cold War.

### Historic Structures and Architectural Pedigree

The island and 59 structures, sites, and objects are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including one of the oldest continuously operating aquariums and conservatories in the country, the James Scott Memorial Fountain, and the only marble lighthouse in the country. Many notable designers add to the architectural pedigree of the island, such as Frederick Law Olmsted (developed a preliminary plan for the island), Albert Kahn (aquarium, conservatory, and lighthouse), Cass Gilbert (James Scott Memorial Fountain), George Mason (police station, horse stables, and Detroit Yacht Club), Alphaeus Chittenden (Belle Isle Boat House), Van Leyen and Schilling (Casino), and Robert Swanson (Flynn Memorial Pavilion). These significant features help to make the island a popular destination for locals and tourists in Michigan.

### Family Friendly Destination

Detroit families have enjoyed the park's friendly atmosphere for generations, and many use it as a site for family reunions, social gatherings, weddings, and other events. Attractions such as the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse, Giant Slide,

Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Belle Isle Nature Center, and canoeing / kayaking on the inland lakes and canals make this park a place for all.

### Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Belle Isle Park's variety of land and water outdoor recreation opportunities just outside the heart of downtown Detroit make it one of the city's, and state's, most visited attractions. Visitors come to enjoy viewing the unobstructed city skyline from Sunset Point, the multi-colored light show of James Scott Memorial Fountain, and the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse, situated in a migratory bird area perfect for taking in the landmark and the nature which surrounds it. For fitness enthusiasts, the park offers a 6.5 mile perimeter paved bike lane as well as a half-mile buoyed beach area – one of the few swimming opportunities on the Detroit River. Accessible fishing and paddling opportunities are found on the river, inland lakes, and canals. Programmed and team sports are available at the athletic complex and include facilities unique within the state park system, such as outdoor handball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, a rugby field, and a cricket field.

### Natural Resources

Surviving as part of Frederick Law Olmsted's original vision, the park's 200-acre old growth floodplain forest is Michigan's largest remaining "wet-mesic flatwoods" forest. Only a handful of these forests remain in North America. With a climate moderated by the Detroit River, the forest supports Shumard's oak (including the state's largest) and pumpkin ash, tree species normally found much further south. The forest provides important habitat for several rare plants and many animals, especially songbirds and amphibians. The value of the forest as stopover habitat for migratory birds is noteworthy.

### Zoological History

Over the years, deer and other wildlife in four distinct zoos in different areas of the park have fascinated visitors. The Belle Isle Zoo opened in 1895, initially featuring European fallow deer. By 1909, it hosted 150 animals in 32 acres. Sheba the elephant was purchased in 1923 using pennies saved by Detroit children. After her death, she was buried on the site. The Belle Isle Children's Zoo, a petting zoo with nursery rhyme themed exhibits, was in operation from 1947 until 1979. The Belle Isle Zoo closed in 1956, with many of the animals relocated to the main Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak. The Belle Isle Safariland Zoo (1980-2002) featured elevated walkways overlooking the animal exhibits. Today, a small herd of deer descendant from the original population is housed at the Belle Isle Nature Center, which also has live reptile and amphibian displays and provides environmental education experiences for schools, families and community groups.



Introduction to camping event at Belle Isle Park

## Management Zones

A key goal in the development of the park management plan is to continue providing the opportunities and features that attract so many visitors to the park each year, while simultaneously protecting the park's natural and cultural resources. Taking this into account, the planning team, established appropriate management zones for the park. From a palette of nine standard zones, four zones and two overlay zones were applied to Belle Isle Park. The management zone Map and a thorough review of each management zone are found in Chapter 6 of this Plan. A condensed description of each of the applied management zones is as follows:

### Primitive Zone

The Primitive Zone reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources, and is managed to only allow dispersed and low frequency use in the zone 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. The Primitive Zone covers approximately 23% of the park, encompassing the wet mesic flatwoods forest and a segment of land leading from the flatwoods to Lake Muskoday.

### Backcountry Zone

The character of the Backcountry Zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. While the 'Primitive Zone' is highly restrictive for recreational use and human impact, this zone allows for increased use and modifications of the landscape (e.g. trail development) to accommodate that use. This zone comprises approximately 1% of the park and includes the grassland restoration area north of Blue Heron Lagoon.

### Natural Resource Recreation Zone

The Natural Resource Recreation Zone supports active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural settings. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. This zone makes up approximately 11% of the park and includes part of the old golf course, the prairie and grassland bird area, the area surrounding the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse (which also has a Cultural Landscape Overlay) on the east end of the park, and the area surrounding Lake Okonoka.



Bird's eye view of Belle Isle Park and the Detroit River

**Developed Recreation Zone**

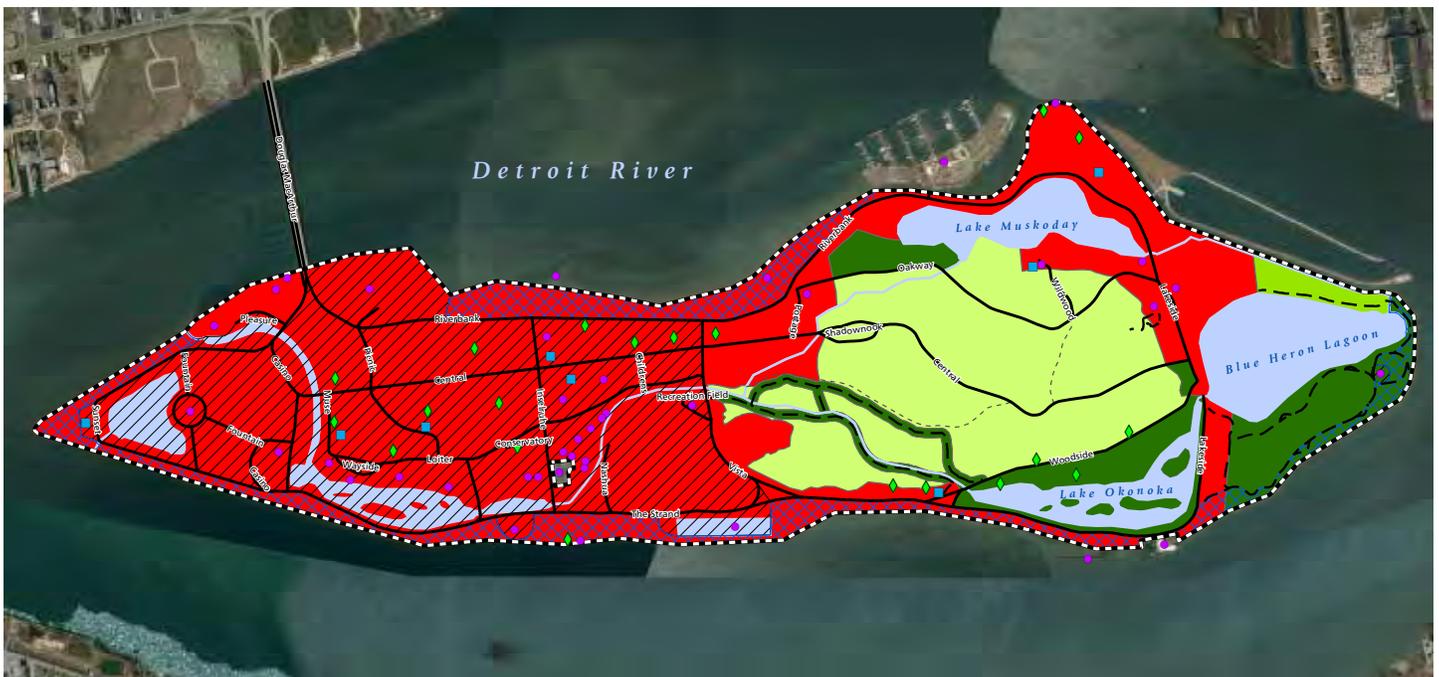
The Developed Recreation Zone supports active recreation with a high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates, with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone covers a majority of the park, approximately 65% of the land, and includes most of the main structures on the island including the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Belle Isle Aquarium, Flynn Memorial Pavilion, the Belle Isle Boat House, the Belle Isle Nature Center, the model yacht basin, the old zoo site, shelters, athletic fields, playgrounds, the beach, the Belle Isle Golf Center, fishing docks, restrooms, and the Giant Slide, among other features.

**Cultural Landscape Overlay**

The Cultural Landscape Overlay comprises 325 acres (approximately 38% of the park), and encompasses the Developed Recreation Zone west of Vista Drive and the area of the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse at the east end of the island. The overlay ensures that any development, guided by the underlying zone designation, is sensitive to the cultural resources present. The public interpretation of these cultural resources should also be considered.

**Scenic Overlay**

Approximately 11% or 97 acres, of Belle Isle Park is designated as Scenic Overlay. This designation protects and preserves the scenic views over the Detroit River from the park and of the park landscape from the water. The Scenic Overlay covers nearly the entire shore of the island between the perimeter roadway or trail and the water's edge, where views are most worthy of preservation. The largest area of Scenic Overlay extends from the east end of Blue Heron Lagoon west along the southern shoreline and around to west of the MacArthur Bridge. The other area extends along the northern shoreline from east of the Belle Isle Boat House to the west end of the Detroit Yacht Club. The Scenic Overlay provides visitors with picturesque views of the river, passing freighters, and the skylines of Detroit and Windsor.



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Belle Isle Park - Draft Management Zones**

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Esri Basemap

- Belle Isle Park Boundary
- Roads
- Trails
- Abandoned Roadbeds

- Restroom Buildings
- Shelters
- Park Infrastructure

- Management Zones**
- Primitive
  - Backcountry
  - Natural Resource Recreation

- Developed Recreation
- Cultural Landscape Overlay
- Scenic Overlay



*Beckett & Raeder*

## 10-Year Action Goals

Once the planning team established management zones to guide Belle Isle Park for the next 20 years, a series of action goals were identified. Many infrastructure repair and upgrade projects are currently underway or committed to for Fiscal Year 2017. In addition, the planning team has developed 10-year action goals that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the park in order to achieve the desired user experience. The goals are broken down into categories pertaining either to a single management zone or to the park as a whole. Below is a summary of the action goals. The full list of infrastructure investments, current projects, and 10-year action goals can be found in Chapter 7.

### Park-Wide Actions – Infrastructure

Goals for park-wide infrastructure improvements include vehicular and non-motorized circulation, wayfinding, universal access, critical utility infrastructure repairs, an historic assessment of the islands structures, and visitor access to the canals, lakes, and the Detroit River. Overall, these actions seek to enable quality experiences by having updated recreation and support facilities.

### Park-Wide Actions – Management / Operations

Park-wide management and operations goals include creating a sustainable business model for the park, assessing the impact of large events, addressing invasive species, developing guidelines for gifts and donations, evaluating concessions

opportunities and needs, improving public relations through a park communications plan, and increasing education and interpretation opportunities

### Primitive Zone

Restoring and maintaining the integrity of the wet-mesic flatwoods natural community and constituent plant and animal species is the focus of action goals of this zone.

### Natural Resource Recreation Zone

In the Natural Resource Recreation Zone, the goal is to improve fish, wildlife, and plant habitat within water bodies and grasslands and provide amenities for passive recreation.

### Developed Recreation Zone

Goals in the Developed Recreation Zone include improving existing recreation facilities such as the athletic complex, golf center, beach area, old zoo site, Kid's Row, Belle Isle Boat House, and shelters. Other action goals will include rehabilitating significant cultural and historic buildings such as the Casino, James Scott Memorial Fountain, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Aquarium and Belle Isle Conservatory, Flynn Memorial Pavilion, and restrooms for improved visitor experiences.



Enjoying the view from Belle Isle Park



The iconic Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

### Chapter One:

# Core Values and Guiding Resources

Core values and guiding resources are the foundation upon which this Strategic Management Plan is based. Core values are derived from the mission statements of the DNR, Parks and Recreation Division and the Belle Isle Conservancy, as well as policy and directives that guide everyday decisions. Historically and in recent years, there have been many planning initiatives, public input sessions, studies, and surveys specific to Belle Isle Park that can be used as a resource for future management decisions. In addition, statewide planning documents help to guide the overall direction of Michigan's park and recreation system.

### 1.1 Background

Belle Isle Park, purchased by the City of Detroit in 1879, encompasses 982 acres. The island was named after Isabelle Cass, the daughter of Michigan Territorial Governor Lewis Cass.

Owned by the City of Detroit, Belle Isle Park's design and layout were inspired by Fredrick Law Olmsted in the 1880's. The park has many unique amenities including a variety of significant architectural, cultural, and environmental features. Belle Isle Park's diverse landscape includes vibrant recreational areas, preserved unique natural areas, inland lakes, and canals - all surrounded by the Detroit River.

Belle Isle Park experienced a decline in basic maintenance and general repairs over time due to The City of Detroit's lack of resources. Necessary infrastructure maintenance, as well as repairs of electrical systems, water and sewer lines, heating systems, fire suppression systems, elevators and roofing systems had been deferred. Restrooms were closed down. Park security was lacking, leading to vandalism and the perception of an unsafe environment.

In 2013, the City of Detroit was placed into bankruptcy and an emergency manager appointed. Governor Snyder tasked the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to assume the responsibility of managing and operating Belle Isle Park through a long-term lease. In November, 2013, the Detroit City Council approved a 30-year lease. The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC) was formed with members of the committee appointed by Detroit City Council, Detroit Mayor Bing, and Governor Snyder. On December 10, 2013, following the approval of the lease between the State of Michigan, DNR and the City of Detroit, a kickoff event was held. Its theme was "All in for Belle Isle." The purpose was to feature over 40 partners that had committed to help with the enhancement of Belle Isle Park. A few months later, in February, 2014, the Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) began operating Belle Isle Park. The Michigan DNR Law Enforcement

Division (LED), Michigan State Police (MSP), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) assisted PRD with park operations. The Belle Isle Conservancy worked in close partnership with the DNR to bring additional partners, volunteers, and financial resources to the park.



## 1.2 Mission Statements

### Michigan Department of Natural Resources

#### DNR Mission Statement

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state’s natural and cultural resources of current and future generations.

#### DNR Parks and Recreation Mission Statement

The Parks and Recreation Division’s mission is to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan’s unique resources, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities.

#### Goals:

1. Protect the natural and cultural resources
2. Ensure sustainable recreation
3. Enable strong and natural resource-based economics
4. Improve and build strong relationships and partnerships
5. Foster effective business practices and good governance

#### Management Goals:

The Michigan state park and recreation system goals for all state parks and recreation areas are:

1. Serve Michigan residents and non-resident tourists by providing affordable outdoor recreation experiences
2. Generate life-long memories
3. Preserve the 95 plus year legacy of the Michigan State Park and Recreation system

4. Preserve and enhance public access to Michigan’s land, lakes, and rivers
5. Preserve and protect the unique cultural, historical, and natural resources found in the state parks
6. Evolve the trail system to identify Michigan as the Trail State



### Belle Isle Conservancy

The Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), a professionally-staffed 501 c3 non-profit organization with a Board of Directors, works in close partnership with the State of Michigan’s Department of Natural Resources, the City of Detroit, and community partners to bring additional resources to Belle Isle Park. In 2011, the Belle Isle Women’s Committee, Belle Isle Botanical Society, Friends of Belle Isle, and the Friends of Belle Isle Aquarium merged to form the BIC. The Conservancy serves as the voice of the community, as an advocate for the park, brings volunteer resources to the park, operates the Belle Isle Aquarium, and actively raises funds for needed improvements and projects on the island.

#### Mission Statement

“The mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy is to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the natural environment, historic structures, and unique character of Belle Isle Park as a public park for the enjoyment of all – now and forever.”

### Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC) was established according to the lease. The lease provided for the appointment of a seven member advisory committee by the State and the City. The purpose of BIPAC is to advise the DNR on implementation of improvements, master planning, and public safety for the park. The goals, vision, mission, and core values of BIPAC were established as follows:

## Goals:

1. Safe and clean parks
2. Customer oriented thinking
3. Stewardship of community spaces
4. Partnership and alliances
5. Continuous improvement

## Vision:

Belle Isle Park will become a national model for the delivery of urban parks recreation and conservation services.

## Mission:

Manage Belle Isle Park as a destination for park recreation and conservation services, by providing programs and facilities that are safe, clean, and well maintained.

## Core Values:

- We value environmental education and knowledge
- We value conservation and stewardship of open spaces
- We value quality programs and safe facilities
- We value all stakeholders, partners, and community organizations
- We value fiscal and physical responsibility

## 1.3 Guiding Resources

### Belle Isle Park Lease

The lease between the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan defines the responsibilities for operating and managing Belle Isle Park as a State Park and for MDOT to have jurisdiction of certain roads and bridges.

### Belle Isle Park Planning Initiatives and Studies

Beginning with initial design proposal by Fredrick Law Olmsted in 1883, and throughout the park history up to present day, there have been a number of master plans, studies, and reports relating to various aspects of Belle Isle Park. These have been implemented or followed to a varying degree. A complete list of the known plans and a summary of the primary recent planning initiatives are provided in Appendix E.

### Belle Isle Park Surveys

In order to be responsive to the needs of park users and to determine how to reach out to non-users, several surveys have been commissioned in recent years. In the summer and fall months of 2010, the Belle Isle Conservancy and the Project for Public Spaces conducted a survey that included park users (on-site) as well as off-site respondents and organizational supporters (remote); 2,237 surveys were collected.

Following the 2014 season, the BIPAC conducted a strategic goal setting process to help define expectations for Belle Isle Park. One action step was to obtain a statistically valid assessment of the public perception of Belle Isle Park since the DNR commenced operation in February 2014.

MORPACE Marketing, Research and Consultants designed the survey to gain an understanding, among different cohorts, of their perceptions of Belle Isle, its importance and value, and established questions that could be repeated in the future to measure progress. The survey was based upon a statistically significant random sample of residents from Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, and from the City of Detroit.

The results of these surveys, together with the online questionnaire and public input undertaken as part of this planning effort, are being used to guide investments and to ensure that the park operation is aligned with the public expectations.



Family photos at James Scott Memorial Fountain

## 1.4 Statewide Recreation and Public Land Management References

### Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2018-2022 (SCORP)

SCORP is a five-year strategic plan that shapes investment by the state and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. The Plan's overarching goal is to "Protect and manage Michigan's diverse and abundant natural and cultural assets to provide relevant, quality experiences that meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors, and support economic prosperity" by meeting the following objectives:

- Foster stewardship and conservation
- Improve collaboration
- Raise awareness
- Improve recreational access
- Provide quality experiences
- Enhance health benefits
- Enhance prosperity

### Michigan State Parks & Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report (2012)

The Blue Ribbon Panel's report to Governor Snyder identifies a number of recommendations for system-wide changes to programs, management, infrastructure type, and investment strategies that set up the visionary framework for the next 30-50 years of park and outdoor recreation management in Michigan. Several of the recommendations in the report are:

- Identify and protect important natural, cultural, historic, and prehistoric resources
- Diversify funding
- Prioritize development of statewide and regional systems of connected trail networks
- Connections between communities and their recreational assets to strengthen regional identities
- Integrate tourism and economic development marketing
- Prioritize investment in parks and recreation

### Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan (2013-2018)

The Trail Plan, developed by an 11-member committee appointed by Governor Snyder, includes eight priority recommendations with associated key actions that should be implemented to assist in achieving the vision of establishing a high quality, nationally-recognized, state-wide trail system. The eight recommendations are as follows:

- Trails are maintained to ensure a sustainable and quality trail system
- Expand trails, trail experiences, opportunities to

ensure accessibility to trail systems, outdoor recreation opportunities, and natural and cultural resources

- The Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council leads the effort to maintain and enhance Michigan's reputation as the trail state
- Link trails, trail users, and adjoining towns to create memorable trail experiences and enhance economic prosperity
- Develop, enhance, and celebrate partnerships and collaborations
- Implement a marketing plan including an electronic portal that allows citizens and visitors to be aware of all trails and related amenities
- Develop funding sources and mechanisms for trail maintenance, acquisition, and development
- Ensure that the state's trail system complements other plans and planning efforts



## PRD Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections

The PRD Strategic Plan is the overarching document that guides the Parks and Recreation Division in carrying out its mission. This plan establishes long-range goals, objectives, and strategies for Michigan’s state park and recreation system for the 5-year period beginning in 2017. The plan identifies the most important issues facing the PRD and helps to define where resources should be focused for maximum benefit to carry the state park and recreation system beyond its centennial milestone in 2019. The goals identified in the plan are:

- Be exemplary stewards of Michigan’s natural and cultural resources.
- Provide users with quality outdoor recreation experiences in balance with resource protection.
- Continue to advance Michigan as the “Trail State.”
- Provide a relevant gateway to connect people to nature and Michigan’s cultural heritage, and foster understanding and support for PRD’s mission among future generations.
- Improve and maintain strong public, stakeholder, and department communication, relationships, and partnerships.
- Engage in strategies to increase community and state economic prosperity.
- Sustainably support PRD programs, operations, and facilities.
- Foster and adopt effective and safe business practices.

## Managed Public Land Strategy (2013)

The DNR-Managed Public Land Strategy provides a framework for the continued conservation, use, and management of public lands to provide an enhanced quality of life for Michigan residents, create jobs, and protect the essence of Michigan: its woods, waters, wildlife, and other natural and cultural assets. The Strategy identifies three broad goals with desired outcomes, metrics, and measurable objectives for each. These goals are to:

- Provide quality outdoor public recreation opportunities
- Foster regional economic prosperity
- Protect natural and cultural resources for future generations

## 1.5 Summary of Legal Mandates

For all park management plans, legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the general management plan, park management, and park operations. For the DNR’s planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers to not only state law, but also the administrative tools of “Policy” and “Directive” of the Natural Resource Commission, the Department, and the Parks and Recreation Division. There are several general and site specific legal mandates applicable

to Belle Isle Park listed in Appendix A: Supporting Analysis.

The legal mandates that most directly impact planning and management at Belle Isle Park focus on the following areas:

- Protection of threatened and endangered species, including eastern massasauga rattlesnake, Blanding’s turtle, purple wartyback, eastern pondmussel, eastern fox snake, Forster’s tern, and common tern
- Preservation of cultural and historic resources
- Local watercraft control
- Public health code requirements for swimming areas and swimmers’ itch
- Water resources, wetlands, and inland lakes and streams protection
- Requirement for a Recreation Passport for entry into the park
- Land use orders of the Director controlling possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages, use hours, erection of canopies, and the operation of snowmobiles



Belle Isle Boat House



Belle Isle Park entrance sign

## Chapter Two:

# Management Goals and Outcomes - The First 3 Years

### 2.1 Management Goals & Outcomes

In July 2012, the Michigan DNR developed a phased management approach for Belle Isle Park (see exhibit E of the Belle Isle Park Lease Agreement in Appendix B). The following management goals and desired outcomes were established by the PRD for managing Belle Isle Park during the first three years of the lease and were developed to coordinate with the conclusions drawn from the 2010 survey results. Each element listed defines an expected improvement to the park, addressing the overall goal of establishing Belle Isle Park as a clean, safe park for all to enjoy.

- Create a clean and safe environment
- Restore the expectation of the Belle Isle Park experience
- Unify stakeholders and supporters
- Preserve the rich history of the island
- Enhance recreational opportunities
- Protect the natural resources
- Address immediate needs
- Implement sustainable contraction of infrastructure

- Establish a sustained model of resources for long-term management of the island
- Expand youth employment opportunities in the fields of natural resources, environmental protection, and agriculture



Volunteers on Belle Isle Park Clean Up Day

# MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OUTCOMES-THE FIRST 3 YEARS

## 2.2 Accomplishments to Date

The defined management goals and desired outcomes lead to the development of planning processes with action items identified to address immediate safety concerns and operational needs. The following chart is based on the priorities that were identified by DNR Parks and Recreation staff prior to the lease with the City of Detroit being implemented. The chart indicates the current status of each initiative.

| INITIAL PHASE PLANNING PROCESSES AND ACTION ITEMS  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| PLANNING PROCESS   | STATUS              |
| Coordinate with law enforcement (Michigan DNR Law Enforcement Division, City of Detroit Police Department, Coast Guard, Homeland Security, US Border Patrol, and Michigan State Police) on a security plan | Completed           |
| Meet with newly created Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee, Belle Isle Conservancy, and other vested stakeholder groups  | Completed / Ongoing |
| Meet with other state agencies (Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Corrections, Department of Transportation etc.), and DNR divisions on current and potential projects / funding          | Completed / Ongoing |
| Continue updating previous infrastructure assessment information to prioritize critical needs  | In Progress         |
| ACTION ITEMS   | STATUS              |
| Evaluate all contracts, leases and concessions related to Belle Isle Park  | Completed / Ongoing |
| Extend Riverfront contracts for trash removal and mowing   | Completed           |
| Establish a visible staffing and visitor services presence   | Completed           |
| Clean up trash / debris and provide adequate receptacles   | Completed           |
| Remove debris in public spaces and organize maintenance areas  | Completed           |
| SHORT-RANGE PLANNING PROCESSES AND ACTION ITEMS  |                     |
| PLANNING PROCESS   | STATUS              |
| Assess staffing levels and equipment needs for primary use season; develop annual operational budget   | Ongoing             |
| Coordinate volunteer activities with newly created Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee, Belle Isle Conservancy, and other vested stakeholder groups   | Completed / Ongoing |
| Evaluate the locations and relationships between shelters, restroom buildings, parking and drinking fountains  | Completed           |
| Develop a comprehensive marketing and outreach plan  | Ongoing             |
| Establish a sponsor/partner "adoption" program   | In Progress         |
| Coordinate with Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) to re-establish a bus route to Belle Isle Park   | Completed           |
| Establish recreational programming such as Metro Youth Fitness and expand other interpretive programs through the Belle Isle Nature Center   | Ongoing             |
| ACTION ITEMS   | STATUS              |
| Interview and hire permanent staff   | Completed           |
| Retrofit buildings like the Casino, Athletic Shelter / Refectory and Flynn Memorial Pavilion with energy efficiency updates (windows, insulation, photo sensors, timers, etc.)                             | In Progress         |
| Renovate and rehabilitate shelters such as the Newsboy, Schiller, Pony Area and Fishing Pier as well as comfort stations such as Graystone, Woodside and at the golf course                                | In Progress         |
| Establish a new endowment for long-term sustainable funding  | Pending             |

| SHORT-RANGE PLANNING PROCESSES AND ACTION ITEMS, CONTINUED   |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| ACTION ITEMS   | STATUS                    |
| Establish a restricted fund to receive event and use permit revenues   | Completed                 |
| Create a gift guide for sponsors and donors  | In Progress               |
| Develop a reservation system for shelters and grounds for events during primary use season   | Completed                 |
| Establish Recreation Passport as a funding source  | Completed                 |
| INTERMEDIATE-RANGE PLANNING PROCESSES AND ACTION ITEMS   |                           |
| PLANNING PROCESS   | STATUS                    |
| Coordinate volunteer activities with Belle Isle Conservancy and other vested stakeholder groups  | Completed / Ongoing       |
| Meet with the State Building Authority on a bond option for addressing major building and park improvements to be repaid once the Recreation Passport becomes effective  | Pending                   |
| Assess shoreline erosion and identify critical areas for soft shoreline stabilization  | In Progress               |
| Seek grants such as Coastal Zone Management, Great Lakes Fisheries Trust and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to conduct an hydrologic study of the lakes and canals to convert back to a naturalized system | Completed (Grant Secured) |
| Begin discussions with the Michigan College Foundation and Youth Connections on a natural resources institute program and youth employment   | In Progress               |
| ACTION ITEMS   | STATUS                    |
| Clean catch basins and provide curb cuts for increased drainage  | In Progress               |
| Construct and improve way-finding and overall signage  | In Progress               |
| Provide a contact station or informational kiosk at primary park entrance for immediate park and program information   | Completed                 |
| Meet with MDOT on the conversion of internal road segments through wooded wetlands into multi-use trails and a two-way traffic concept   | In Progress (planning)    |
| Enhance fishing opportunities at existing structures   | In Progress               |
| Coordinate invasive plant (i.e. phragmites) species volunteer days   | Ongoing                   |
| Repair and expand outdoor tables for primary use season  | In Progress               |
| Implement mowing reductions and the “Grow not Mow” program to educate visitors, reduce operational costs, create habitat and combat geese  | In Progress               |
| Initiate recycling program   | In Progress               |

Chapter 7 of this plan provides additional detail on specific infrastructure investments and projects currently underway as of July 2017.



Bicyclists excited at James Scott Memorial Fountain at Belle Isle Park

## Chapter Three:

# Strategic Direction - The Next 10 Years

As the DNR looks ahead to the next ten years, providing a clean and safe park environment to maximize quality, diverse, recreation experiences, will continue to be a priority, while also tackling the bigger issue of long-term physical and financial sustainability. With an estimated \$300 million in critical infrastructural needs island-wide (see Chapter 7), the DNR must be strategic in its investments and innovative in its approach to funding. Cultivating existing and forging new partnerships will be key to Belle Isle Park's success. Effective communication both internally and externally is critical to the effective management of Belle Isle Park and to provide positive experiences. In order for Belle Isle Park to become a world-class urban park the following must be accomplished.

### Transformation:

- Addressing basic infrastructure needs, along with continued physical renovation projects, will remain a high priority. Restoration of the historic structures on the island for stabilization and appropriate use is critical.
- Through enhanced maintenance and operations, and appropriate activities, amenities, and programs, Belle Isle Park will continue to welcome all.

- With a focus on public safety, the presence of the DNR Law Enforcement Division and the Michigan State Police has helped to assure the public that the park is safe. This emphasis on public safety will continue.

Rehabilitation and maintenance of the island's infrastructure within its historically significant context is a mammoth task and must be accomplished in a logical and strategic manner. This management plan has put in place guidelines to ensure improvements within the park will not compromise the island experience by introducing conflicting uses and ideas. Chapter 7 of this plan addresses priorities for capital investments over the upcoming 10-year period. Any new proposals that were not considered as part of this management planning process, must be carefully considered and analyzed based on the need, whether the proposal complements the unique nature of Belle Isle Park (or would it be better suited elsewhere). Refer to Chapter 8, Proposal Review Process.

### Financial Stability:

- Belle Isle Park's annual operations should be supported by a diverse portfolio of revenue streams including appropriations from the State of Michigan, grants, sponsorships, foundations, event fees, shelter rentals, merchandise and concession sales.
- Physical renovation projects on Belle Isle Park should be funded through a variety of sources including, but not limited to, capital campaigns and possible bond options.
- An endowment for operations and infrastructure will be considered as part of the long term strategy.
- BIC shall serve as a fundraising partner to help implement and support diverse revenue streams for the park.

### Partnerships:

- Belle Isle Park must be led by a strong, cooperative partnership between the DNR and the BIC. The DNR and BIC should operate as two wings of one organization, with common interests. The DNR is responsible for the overall operations and management of Belle Isle Park. The BIC will focus on leading capital campaigns and collaborate on developing revenue generating events, concessions, sponsorships, and philanthropic contributions.
- The DNR is the ultimate decision maker on operational policies and procedures, as well as providing operations and capital improvement budgets. This is dictated by the terms of the 30 year lease. The DNR will integrate BIC into their planning processes as it relates to setting operating

budgets and determining annual capital project plans.

- The DNR will work collaboratively with BIC and other community partners on program development. The BIC will lead community outreach efforts to achieve our common interests.
- The DNR will collaborate with the BIPAC and BIC to advise on planning policies and budget needs. The DNR will ensure there is alignment with the planned priorities for short- and long-term investments in Belle Isle Park with our partners and the public.
- The DNR and BIC will operate under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered into in December 2017, that defines their roles and responsibilities as the parties continue to work together to further the common goals of the park.
- A strong communication plan, supported by both the DNR and the BIC, is essential to a seamless operation between the two entities. The desired outcome is excellent communication to maximize visitors' experience.
- DNR's continued improvement of operational management practices and infrastructure investment on Belle Isle Park will rely on multiple partnerships between state agencies, public and private organizations, and individuals. Currently there are over 20 partnerships in place on the island.



Earth Day at Belle Isle Park



Sunrise at the Belle Isle Boat House at Belle Isle Park

## Chapter Four: Plan Process Overview

### 4.1 Planning Objectives

The DNR has developed master plans in the past for many of Michigan's state parks; however, most of these plans are now 20-40 years old and do not reflect today's realities or desires of recreational users. Furthermore, past plans put a strong emphasis on development and did not often include stewardship of natural and cultural features or opportunities for education and interpretation. Belle Isle Park has only been a state park since 2014, but master planning of the island reaches back to 1883, when Frederick Law Olmsted developed a preliminary plan for the park. The Belle Isle Master Plan was completed in 2005 by Hamilton Anderson Associates for the Detroit Recreation Department. Since that time, many plans and studies for various facets of the island have been completed, and renovations of many of the park's structures and infrastructure are underway.

The Belle Isle Park Strategic Management Plan follows an established planning process adopted by the DNR Park and Recreation Division. PRD management planning sets out a framework for protecting park resources while providing for meaningful visitor experiences. The long-range vision and management objectives for Belle Isle Park are derived from the mission of the DNR and the Parks and Recreation Division, the mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy and the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee, applicable legal directives, the purpose of the park, and the park's significant natural and cultural resources.

The objective of the management plan is to bring together Parks and Recreation Division staff, staff from other DNR resource divisions and state agencies, the Belle Isle Conservancy, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that defines and clarifies the unique "Purpose and Significance" of Belle Isle Park. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the management zone plan and action goals.

### 4.2 Planning Process

The Belle Isle Park planning team met periodically over an twelve month period to develop the management plan, beginning in March of 2017 and ending in March of 2018. Throughout the process, the team sought the input of the public and stakeholders to guide the decisions made in the plan. Two stakeholder workshops and two public input workshops were held in March of 2017 to gather insights from organizations tied to the park and the public. In addition, an on-line questionnaire was available to interested parties not able to attend the workshops for comment on the current park amenities and their priorities for the future. Following the input sessions and survey, the team developed a list of action plan priorities and developed the draft Strategic Management Plan. Two public meetings to review the draft plan were held in February of 2018. The planning team then revised the plan based on the input received.

## 4.3 Planning Team

| PLANNING TEAM           |                                       |                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| DIVISION                | TITLE                                 | NAME                          |
| PRD                     | Management Plan Administrator         | Debbie Jensen                 |
| PRD                     | Planning Student Assistant            | Sarah Burton                  |
| PRD                     | Unit Manager                          | Karis Floyd                   |
| PRD                     | Unit Supervisor                       | Jacob Brown                   |
| PRD                     | Metro District Supervisor             | Mike Terrell                  |
| PRD                     | Southern Field Operations Chief       | Scott Pratt                   |
| PRD                     | Urban Area Planner                    | Amanda Treadwell              |
| PRD                     | Stewardship Unit Manager              | Ray Fahlsing                  |
| Belle Isle Conservancy  | President                             | Michele Hodges                |
| Belle Isle Conservancy  | Vice President                        | Katy Wyerman                  |
| Belle Isle Conservancy  | Chief Operations Officer              | Summer Ritner                 |
| Belle Isle Conservancy  | Director of Community Engagement      | Brittany Sanders              |
| FD (Fisheries)          | Fisheries Biologist                   | Jeff Braunscheidel            |
| FRD (Forestry)          | Urban Forester                        | Kevin Sayers                  |
| FRD (Forestry)          | DNR- Americorps                       | Angel Squalls                 |
| LED (Law)               | District Supervisor                   | Lt. Joe Molnar                |
| MOD (Marketing)         | Education Services Manager            | Kevin Frailey                 |
| MOD (Marketing)         | State Park Explorer Program           | Karen Gourlay                 |
| MOD (Marketing)         | Educator                              | Gary Williams                 |
| WLD (Wildlife)          | SELP Field Operations Manager         | Joseph Robinson               |
| WLD (Wildlife)          | Wildlife Biologist                    | Zach Cooley                   |
| SHPO / MSHDA            | State Archaeologist                   | Dean Anderson                 |
| SHPO / MSHDA            | Historical Architect                  | Robbert McKay                 |
| Michigan History Center | Director                              | Sandra Clark                  |
| PLANNING CONSULTANTS    |                                       |                               |
| Beckett & Raeder, Inc.  | Principal                             | Christy Summers, PLA, LEED AP |
| Beckett & Raeder, Inc.  | Project Professional                  | Caitlin Jackson, PLA          |
| Beckett & Raeder, Inc.  | Project Professional                  | Morgan Haffey                 |
| Beckett & Raeder, Inc.  | Project Professional / GIS Specialist | Marisa Laderach               |

## 4.4 Summary of Public Outreach

Public input is a critical part of the planning for Belle Isle Park. Below is a summary of the public and stakeholder input methods that were used to inform the development of the management plan. Several different methods were used to ensure everyone had an opportunity for input. Full reports for each of the outreach methods are included in Appendix C of this plan.

### Project Website

A public-facing website was maintained throughout the duration of the planning process at <http://mdnrmanagementplans.org/belle-isle-park/>. This website was updated with general information about the park and park maps, results of the public input survey, and the draft of the Strategic Management Plan. The website contained a contact form so that the public could contact the planning team at any time with questions, concerns, and input.

### Stakeholder and Public Input Workshops

In order to gather targeted input from governmental, non-profit, and business/tourism entities, the planning team invited a group of stakeholders to attend one of two input workshops in March of 2017. Similarly, the public was invited to attend one of two public input workshops held the day after the stakeholder meetings. All meetings followed a similar format. The attendees were given a brief overview of the planning process, recent development accomplishments on the island, and current park projects. Then, attendees were divided into groups and completed a series of group brainstorming exercises. These included rapid-fire questions about the current state of Belle Isle Park, how they hoped the park would be in the future, and what they liked the most and least about the park. They were asked to describe what they felt had changed at the park in the last three years, and then asked what improvements and changes they would like to see in the park in the future. After each group reported out, the most desired improvements from each group were recorded, and all attendees voted on their top future priorities from among all the ideas.

### Online Public Input Survey

One of the methods the planning team used to gather input from park users was an online questionnaire. This online approach provides a convenient way for those who have access to the internet to provide feedback and accurately transfers all responses for analysis. However, it is not designed to be representative of Belle Isle Park users or uses, as respondents self-select. They are not sampled on a random or systematic basis that would ensure accurate representation of users or uses. Nevertheless, the on-line survey does provide valuable information about what certain individuals or groups (those who are motivated to comment about the park, those likely

to receive DNR communication about the survey, and those who have easy access to the internet) hope to see in the park's future management. This questionnaire was intended to provide an opportunity for input to those who could not attend the workshops, and collected similar information. This questionnaire and the public meetings were advertised through a DNR press release sent to over 21,000 people signed up to receive notices from the DNR regarding Belle Isle or the southeast Michigan area and 84 media outlets. It was shared via local media outlets including TV and radio, and unofficially on social media. 1,536 responses to the online questionnaire were collected.

### Public Meetings

Two Public Input Meetings to review the Draft Strategic Management Plan for Belle Isle Park were held on February 1st, 2018, at the Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Adventure Center at 1801 Atwater Street, Detroit. The general public was notified about the meetings through a press release, internet postings, and email notifications. A total of 147 attendees were recorded on sign-in sheets.

Each meeting included an overview of the strategic management plan process and plan contents, followed by an opportunity to provide input on the statements of significance, draft management zones, and ten-year action goals. Participants had the opportunity to affix comments directly onto the presentation boards, record comments on flip charts, and complete a comment sheet, as well as converse with planning team members. In addition, participants were given ten dots to prioritize their preferred action goals from the ten-year action goals. Four copies of the complete Draft Strategic Management Plan were available to attendees during the meeting for review.

Primary changes made in response to the comments are as follows:

- Additional information provided on the status of the Grand Prix in the first chapter of the plan
- Minor changes/corrections made to the statements of significance
- Minor edits made to the zoning descriptions to better explain the intent of each zone
- Goal relating to reducing the impact of the paddock area was strengthened to include assessing its current use
- Goal added regarding analysis of the shoreline
- Sub-bullet added to complete the boating access site feasibility study that is currently underway and consider the results
- Priority of trail connections around Blue Heron Lagoon increased
- Priority of improving shelters increased
- Additional information provided on educational programming in the supporting analysis



One of the many scenic bridges at Belle Isle Park

## Chapter Five: Purpose and Significance

### 5.1 Park Purpose

Park purpose statements are based on park legislation, legislative history, special designations and DNR policies. These statements reaffirm the reasons for which Belle Isle Park was identified as part of the state park system.

Belle Isle Park became part of Michigan's state park system in 2014, when the state of Michigan entered into a lease with the City of Detroit for the long-term operation, and management of the park. The purpose of the lease is to continue to enhance the management, operation and maintenance of the park for the benefit of the public, under Authority of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.70103 and 324.74103.

The purpose of the Michigan State Park system is to:

- Protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources.
- To provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities.
- To enable the public to have diverse, quality outdoor recreation experiences

### 5.2 Statements of Significance

Each management plan developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) is derived from the park's significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state's system. Belle Isle Park was determined significant due to the following:

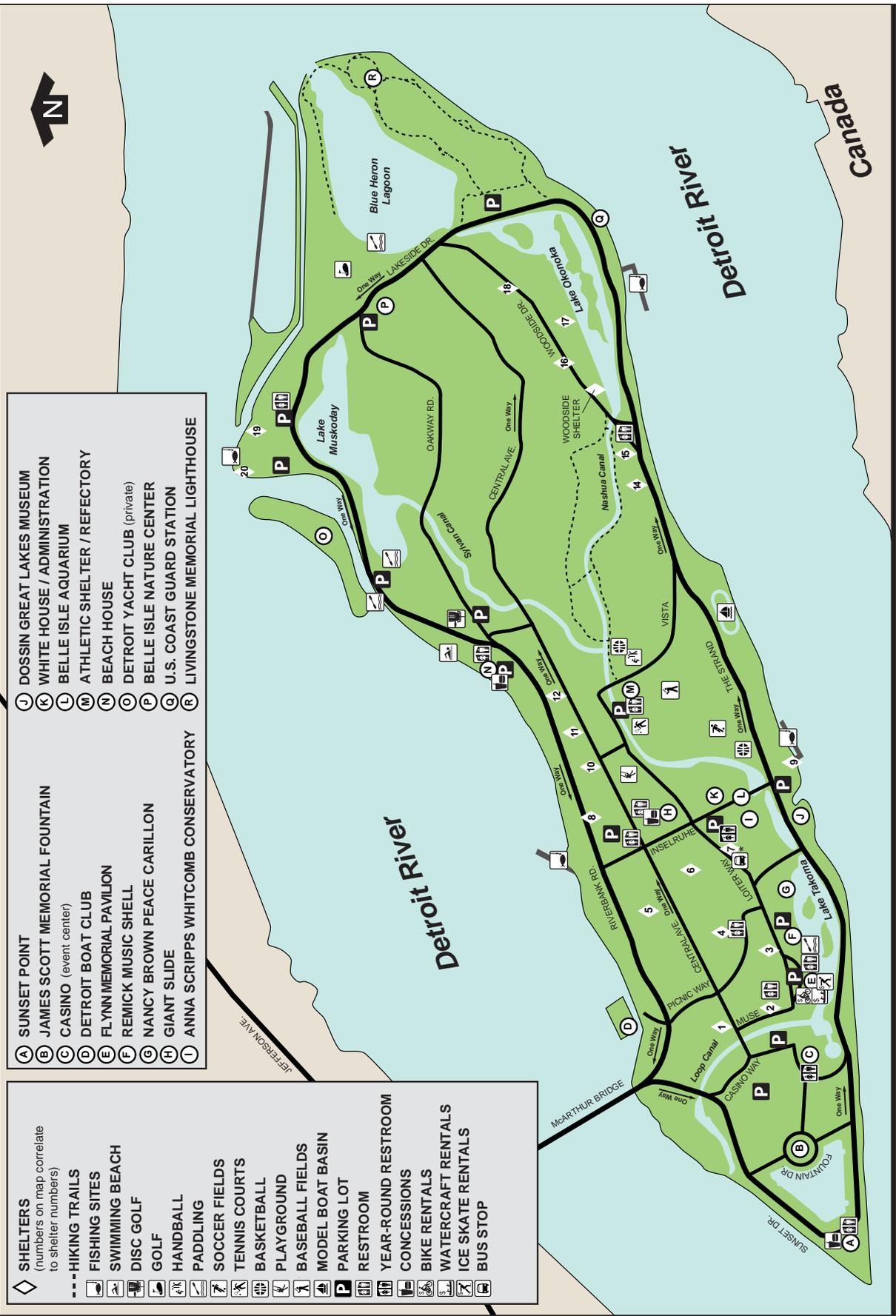
#### Serving the Urban Core

Belle Isle Park, Detroit's grandest park, is located in the middle of the Detroit River and is connected to the city's urban center by the MacArthur Bridge. Belle Isle Park is a natural oasis on par with New York's Central Park and Chicago's Lincoln Park, and is an important resource for outdoor education. Belle Isle Park is the most visited state park in the state and the country, currently drawing an estimated four million visitors annually.

#### Rich History

Anishinaabe (Odawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomi) people knew Belle Isle as Wah-na-be-zee long before the French arrived in Detroit in 1701. As a public park at the core of Detroit life since 1880, Belle Isle has evolved as the idea of recreation has changed over time. Where park-goers once strolled with parasols, viewed flowers, and rode carriages, visitors now enjoy fitness activities, team sports, eating outdoors, and more. Except during a relatively brief time from 1817 until 1879, Belle Isle has remained public land. Its many uses over the years have reflected, even if on a small scale, significant cultural and historic events of the United States including prohibition, times of civil unrest, and national defense during the Cold War.

# Belle Isle Park



- (A) SUNSET POINT
- (B) JAMES SCOTT MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN
- (C) CASINO (event center)
- (D) DETROIT BOAT CLUB
- (E) FLYNN MEMORIAL PAVILION
- (F) REMICK MUSIC SHELL
- (G) NANCY BROWN PEACE CARILLON
- (H) GIANT SLIDE
- (I) ANNA SCRIPPS WHITCOMB CONSERVATORY
- (J) DOSSIN GREAT LAKES MUSEUM
- (K) WHITE HOUSE / ADMINISTRATION
- (L) BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM
- (M) ATHLETIC SHELTER / REFECTORY
- (N) BEACH HOUSE
- (O) DETROIT YACHT CLUB (private)
- (P) BELLE ISLE NATURE CENTER
- (Q) U.S. COAST GUARD STATION
- (R) LIVINGSTONE MEMORIAL LIGHTHOUSE

- ◇ SHELTERS (numbers on map correlate to shelter numbers)
- HIKING TRAILS
- 🏊FISHING SITES
- 🏊SWIMMING BEACH
- 🏊DISC GOLF
- 🏊GOLF
- 🏊HANDBALL
- 🏊PADDLING
- 🏊SOCCER FIELDS
- 🏊TENNIS COURTS
- 🏊BASKETBALL
- 🏊PLAYGROUND
- 🏊BASEBALL FIELDS
- 🏊MODEL BOAT BASIN
- 🏊PARKING LOT
- 🏊RESTROOM
- 🏊YEAR-ROUND RESTROOM
- 🏊CONCESSIONS
- 🏊BIKE RENTALS
- 🏊WATERCRAFT RENTALS
- 🏊ICE SKATE RENTALS
- 🏊BUS STOP

### Historic Structures and Architectural Pedigree

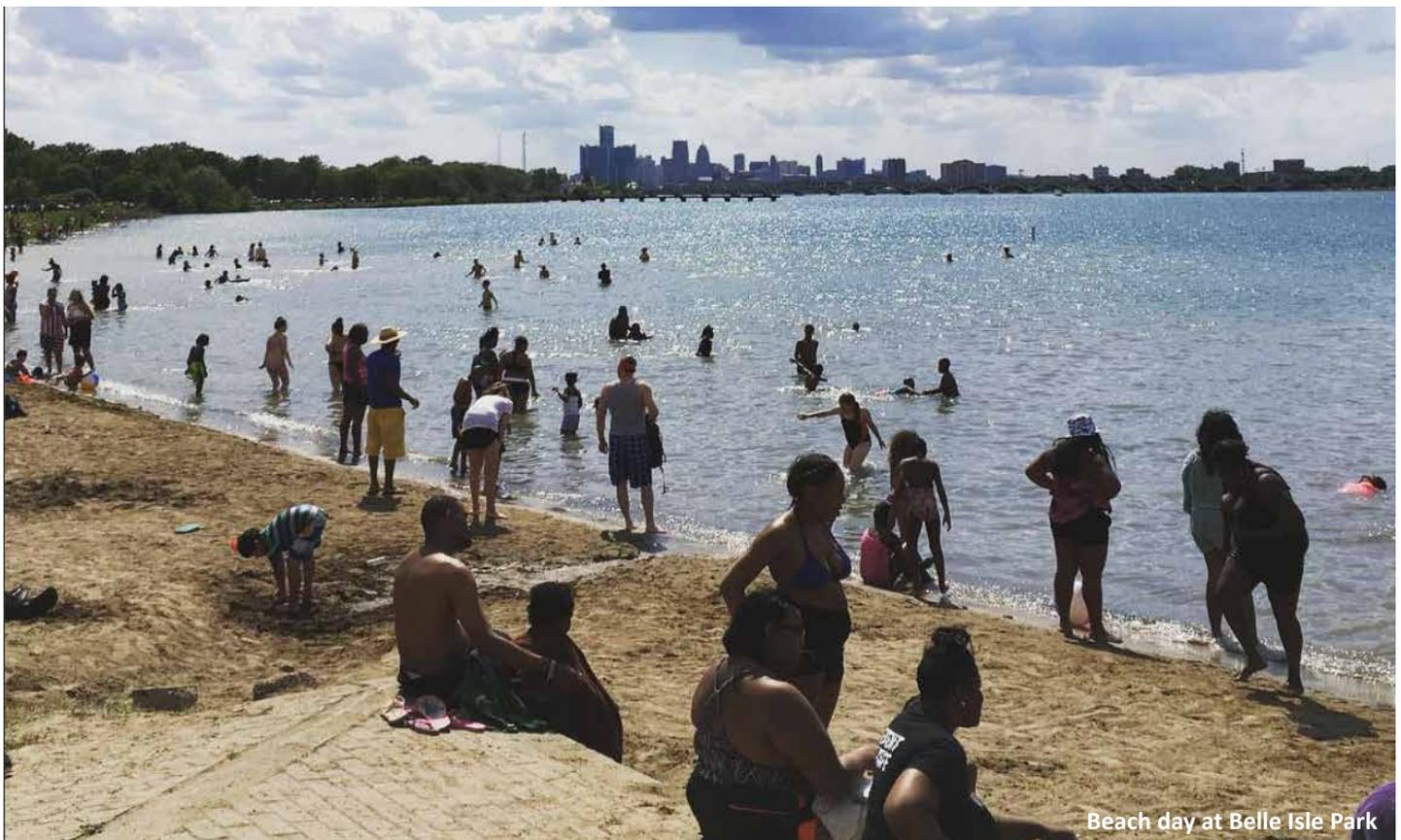
The island and 59 structures, sites, and objects are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including one of the oldest continuously operating Aquariums and conservatories in the country, the James Scott Memorial Fountain, and the only marble lighthouse in the country. Many notable designers add to the architectural pedigree of the island, such as Frederick Law Olmsted (developed a preliminary plan for the island), Albert Kahn (Aquarium, Conservatory, and lighthouse), Cass Gilbert (James Scott Memorial Fountain), George Mason (police station, horse stables, and Detroit Yacht Club), Alphaeus Chittenden (Belle Isle Boat House), Van Leyen and Schilling (Casino), and Robert Swanson (Flynn Pavilion). These significant features help to make the island a popular destination for locals and tourists in Michigan.

### Family Friendly Destination

Detroit families have enjoyed the park's friendly atmosphere for generations, and many use it as a site for family reunions, social gatherings, weddings, and other events. Attractions such as the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse, Giant Slide, Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Belle Isle Nature Center, and canoeing / kayaking on the inland lakes and canals make this park a place for all.

### Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Belle Isle Park's variety of land and water outdoor recreation opportunities just outside the heart of downtown Detroit make it one of the city's, and state's, most visited attractions. Visitors come to enjoy viewing the unobstructed city skyline from Sunset Point, the multi-colored light show of James Scott Fountain, and the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse, situated in a migratory bird area perfect for taking in the landmark and the nature which surrounds it. For fitness enthusiasts, the park offers a 6.5 mile perimeter paved bike lane as well as a half-mile buoyed beach area – one of the few swimming opportunities on the Detroit River. Accessible fishing and paddling opportunities are found on the river, inland lakes, and canals. Programmed and team sports are available at the athletic complex and include facilities unique within the state park system, such as outdoor handball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, a rugby field, and a cricket field.



Beach day at Belle Isle Park

## Natural Resources

Surviving as part of Fredrick Law Olmsted’s original vision, the park’s 200-acre old growth floodplain forest is Michigan’s largest remaining “wet-mesic flatwoods” forest. Only a handful of these forests remain in North America. With a climate moderated by the Detroit River, the forest supports Shumard’s oak (including the state’s largest) and pumpkin ash, tree species normally found much further south. The forest provides important habitat for several rare plants and many animals, especially songbirds and amphibians. The value of the forest as stopover habitat for migratory birds is noteworthy.

## Zoological History

Over the years, deer and other wildlife in four distinct zoos in different areas of the park have fascinated visitors. The Belle Isle Zoo opened in 1895, initially featuring European fallow deer. By 1909, it hosted 150 animals in 32 acres. Sheba the elephant was purchased in 1923 using pennies saved by Detroit children. After death, she was buried on the site. The Belle Isle Children’s Zoo, a petting zoo with nursery rhyme themed exhibits, was in operation from 1947 until 1979. The Belle Isle Zoo closed in 1956, with many of the animals relocated to the main Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak. The Belle Isle Safariland Zoo (1980-2002) featured elevated walkways overlooking the animal exhibits. Today, a small herd of deer descendant from the original population is housed at the Belle Isle Nature Center, which also has live reptile and amphibian displays and provides environmental education experiences for schools, families and community groups.



Belle Isle Children’s Zoo, 1940s



Introduction to Camping at Belle Isle Park

## 5.3 Role in the Community

Belle Isle Park has long been “the people’s park” - an important recreation resource for the residents of Detroit. It continues to be the most significant open space near the urban core. The attractions on the island provide rich educational value and strong cultural identity to the park as well as the City of Detroit. Visitors also come to Belle Isle Park for the scenic landscape, the beach, fishing, boating, and athletic, cultural, family, and community activities. From September 2016 to August 2017, the estimated number of visitors to the park was over 4 million, which is a significant increase since 2014, and represents the highest visitor numbers amongst Michigan’s 103 state parks. The DNR and Belle Isle Conservancy host many events on the island that contribute to the park’s high visitation. The park is an integral part of the revitalization of the Detroit Riverfront, including the River Walk, William G. Milliken State Park, Outdoor Adventure Center, and Dequindre Cut Greenway.

## Partnerships

The strong connection of this park to the community is demonstrated not only by the large number of visitors, but also by the many volunteers that assist with projects and events on the island. Over 20 local community partnerships regularly assist at the Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, at special events, clean-ups, and stewardship days. Non-profit and philanthropic organizations and individuals play a key role in park improvements. A partnership between the DNR and the City of Detroit solidified Belle Isle as Michigan’s 102nd State Park in February 2014; the park is currently operated by the DNR under a 30-year lease agreement with the city and with the assistance of the Belle Isle Conservancy.

MANAGEMENT ZONE PROGRESSION

| MANAGEMENT ZONE             | RESOURCE CONDITION | VISITOR EXPERIENCE | DEVELOPMENT LEVEL     |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE      | Pristine           | Restricted         | None                  |
| PRIMITIVE                   |                    |                    |                       |
| BACKCOUNTRY                 |                    |                    |                       |
| CULTURAL LANDSCAPE          |                    |                    |                       |
| HISTORY EDUCATION           |                    |                    |                       |
| SCENIC                      |                    |                    |                       |
| NATURAL RESOURCE RECREATION |                    |                    |                       |
| DEVELOPED RECREATION        | Active Management  | Significant Use    | Extensive Development |
| ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES     |                    |                    |                       |

# Chapter Six: Management Zones

The 20-Year Management Zone Plan was developed in keeping with the park’s purpose and significance. The primary goal in the development of the management zones is to protect and enhance the park’s natural and cultural resources while also supporting outdoor recreation and education opportunities at the park. From a palette of nine management zones, the planning team studied the park and applied zones that best fit each area of the park. Management zones describe a variety of activities that may be appropriate within the zone and address the desired future condition for the following categories:

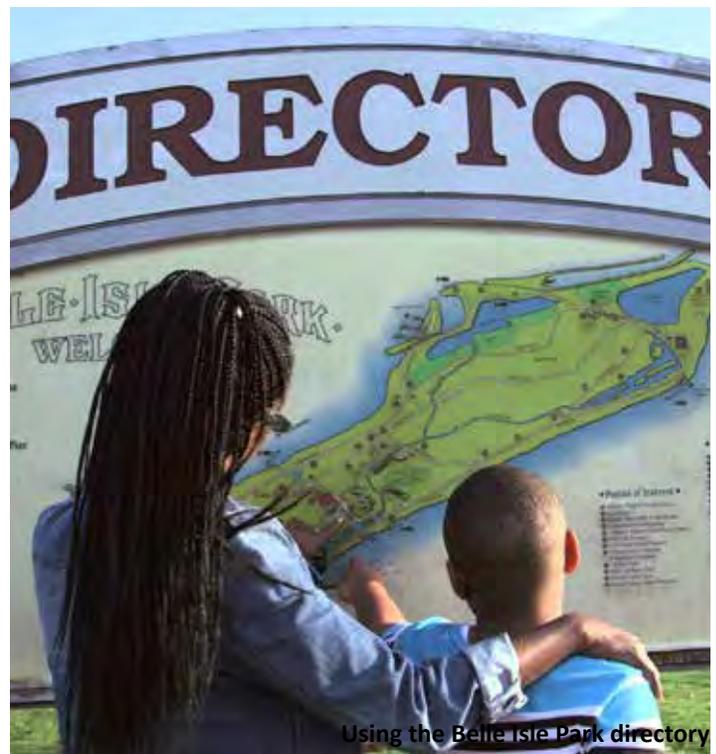
- Natural Resources
- Historic/Cultural Resources
- Recreation Opportunities
- Education/Interpretation Opportunities
- Visitor Experience
- Management Focus

The resource condition, visitor experience, and development level varies in each zone, as indicated in the figure below.

Belle Isle Park was divided into the following four zones and two overlays:

- Primitive Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone

- Developed Recreation Zone
- Cultural Landscape Overlay
- Scenic Overlay



Using the Belle Isle Park directory

# Belle Isle Park - Primary Features

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Shelter 1/ Newsboy             | 35 Detroit Boat Club                  |
| 2 Shelter 2/ Muse                | 36 Flynn Memorial Pavilion            |
| 3 Shelter 3/ Loiter Way          | 37 Remick Music Shell                 |
| 4 Shelter 4/ Central Ave         | 38 Nancy Brown Peace Carillon         |
| 5 Shelter 5/ Central Ave         | 39 Dossin Museum                      |
| 6 Shelter 6/ Central Ave         | 40 Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory |
| 7 Shelter 7/ Bus Stop            | 41 Aquarium                           |
| 8 Shelter 8/ Bath House          | 42 North Fishing Pier                 |
| 9 Shelter 9/ Fishing Pier        | 43 Police Headquarters                |
| 10 Shelter 10/ Central Ave       | 44 Giant Slide                        |
| 11 Shelter 11/ Central Ave       | 45 White House                        |
| 12 Shelter 12/ Schiller          | 46 Greenhouse Maintenance             |
| 14 Shelter 14/ Strand            | 47 Golightly Annex                    |
| 15 Shelter 15/ Woodside Dr       | 48 Storage/ Workshop                  |
| 16 Shelter 16/ Woodside Dr       | 49 Central Power Plant                |
| 17 Shelter 17/ Lake Okonoka      | 50 Century Barn                       |
| 18 Shelter 18/ Woodside Dr       | 51 Fishing Platform                   |
| 19 Shelter 19/ Daisy Dock 1      | 52 Former Horse Stables               |
| 20 Shelter 20/ Daisy Dock 2      | 53 Kids Row Playground                |
| Woodside Woodside Shelter        | 54 Drying Shed                        |
| 21 Sunset Point Restroom         | 55 Sawmill                            |
| 22 Shady Nook Restroom           | 56 Athletic Complex                   |
| 23 Stone Comfort Station         | 57 Model Yacht Basin                  |
| 24 Bear Pit Comfort Station      | 58 Beach House                        |
| 25 Kids Row Comfort Station      | 59 Oakway Refectory                   |
| 26 Woodside Comfort Station      | 60 Detroit Yacht Club                 |
| 27 Lake Muscoday Restrooms       | 61 Oxbow Fishing Platform             |
| 28 Oxbow Comfort Station         | 62 Storage/ Workshop                  |
| 29 James Scott Memorial Fountain | 63 South Fishing Pier                 |
| 30 Police Radio Building         | 64 Coast Guard Station                |
| 31 DWSD Facility                 | 65 Belle Isle Nature Center           |
| 32 Harbor Master                 | 66 Belle Isle Driving Range           |
| 33 Belle Isle Casino             | 67 ADA Playground                     |
| 34 Promenade Trellis             | 68 Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse    |



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Parks & Recreation Division

Updated: 11/09/2017

Legend:

- Shelters (Green Diamond)
- Restroom Buildings (Blue Square)
- Park Infrastructure (Purple Circle)
- Trails (Dashed Line)
- Wet mesic flatwoods forest (Tan Area)
- Park Boundary (Dashed Line)
- Abandon Roadbed (Yellow Line)



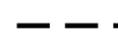
SOURCE: ESRI, DIGITALGLOBE, GEBCO, LANDSAT, SPOT, AIRPHOTO, CNES/AIRBUS DS, USDA, USDA, NASA/USGS, NOAA, AND THE USGS NATIONAL DATA CENTER

# Belle Isle Park - Draft Management Zones

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Esri Basemap

 Belle Isle Park Boundary

 Roads

 Trails

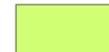
 Abandoned Roadbeds

 Restroom Buildings

 Shelters

 Park Infrastructure

## Management Zones

 Primitive

 Backcountry

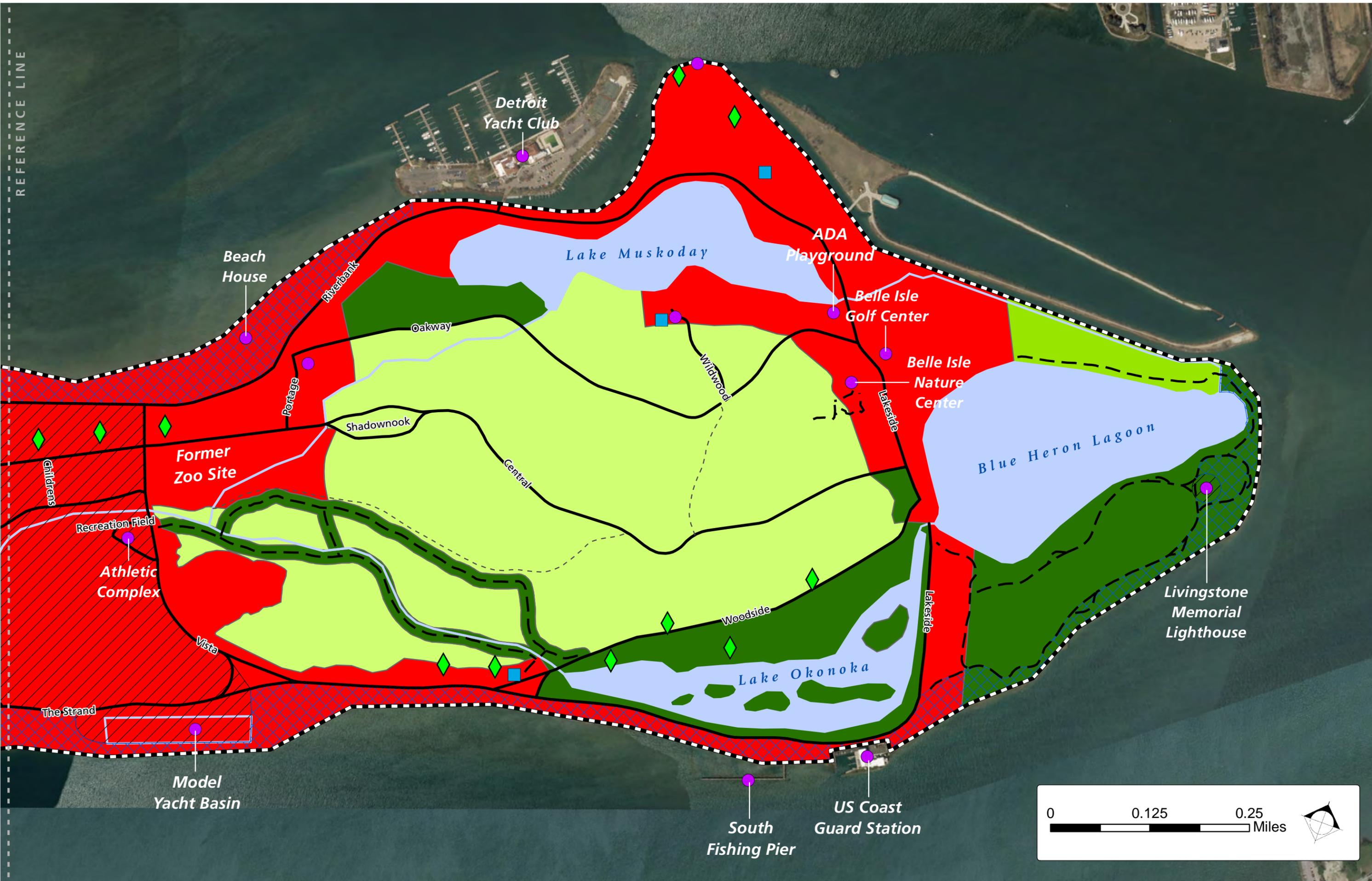
 Natural Resource Recreation

 Developed Recreation

 Cultural Landscape Overlay

 Scenic Overlay





REFERENCE LINE

Detroit Yacht Club

Beach House

Lake Muskoday

ADA Playground

Belle Isle Golf Center

Belle Isle Nature Center

Blue Heron Lagoon

Former Zoo Site

Athletic Complex

Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse

Lake Okonoka

Model Yacht Basin

South Fishing Pier

US Coast Guard Station



### 6.1 Primitive Zone

The Primitive Zone reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources, and is managed to only allow dispersed and low frequency use in the zone 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. The Primitive Zone covers approximately 23% of the park, encompassing the wet mesic flatwoods forest and a segment of land leading from the flatwoods to Lake Muskoday. The existing trails through the flatwoods are zoned Natural Resource Recreation reflecting the higher level of activity within the trail corridors.

#### Natural Resources

Native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation in this zone. Native Michigan natural communities / ecosystem components and processes are maintained, restored and protected, and human-caused habitat fragmentation is eliminated. The Natural Resource Stewardship Plan will determine the appropriate habitat management for the park. (See Appendix H)

#### Historic/Cultural Resources

There are two historic structures within or bordering this zone: the Nashua Bridge on Woodside Drive, and the Sylvan Creek Bridge on Oakway Road. Although no below-ground cultural resources have been documented in this zone, there is evidence of prehistoric sites and Native American activities in the area.

#### Recreation Opportunities

This zone allows dispersed, low density off-trail or trailed, self-reliant (no bicycle or equestrian use) outdoor activities (e.g. Hiking, nature observation, etc.).

#### Education Opportunities

Education opportunities in this zone are primarily off-site. Interpretive signage is allowed at trail heads and with low frequency on trails and at overlooks.

#### Visitor Experience

The visitor can expect a low frequency of encounters with other visitors. Visitors are engaged in high solitude, off-trail or trailed, self-reliant outdoor activities. This zone requires a higher time commitment, and high levels of challenge and adventure. It is considered a “discovery” area with minimal on-site interpretation. The noise tolerance in this zone is low, and visitors can expect low interaction with DNR staff.

#### Management Focus

The focus is to maintain the low-impact character of this zone, with an emphasis on natural resource quality. The abandoned roadbeds (Wildwood and Tanglewood) that are in this zone will be evaluated as part of the flatwoods restoration plan for removal/restoration or possible trail use.

#### Development

This zone maintains a very low level of development except for visitor accommodation (e.g. foot trails). Site hardening is only allowed to protect sensitive resources (e.g. boardwalk). There should be little evidence of human activity and typically low accessibility in this zone. Currently, there are undesignated trails, park roads, and abandoned road beds within the Primitive Zone of Belle Isle Park.



Group walk on one of Belle Isle Park's Nature Trails

## 6.2 Backcountry Zone

The character of the Backcountry Zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. While the 'Primitive Zone' is highly restrictive for recreational use and human impact, this zone allows for increased use and modifications of the landscape (e.g. trail development) to accommodate that use. This zone comprises approximately 1% of the park and includes the grassland restoration area north of Blue Heron Lagoon.

### Natural Resources

Natural resources may be modified slightly to support visitor use, but tolerance for natural resource impacts is low. Native Michigan natural communities / ecosystem components and processes are maintained, restored, and protected. The Stewardship Plan will determine the appropriate habitat management for the park.

### Historic/Cultural Resources

No above-ground historic structures are present in this zone. Although no below-ground cultural resources have been documented in this zone, there is evidence of prehistoric sites and Native American activities in the area.

### Recreation Opportunities

Moderate levels of recreation that are compatible with natural character of the zone are allowed. At Belle Isle Park, this zone includes a restored grassland which may be viewed from nearby trails and parking areas.

### Education Opportunities

Education opportunities such as interpretive signage at trail heads, on the trail, and at overlooks are allowed.

### Visitor Experience

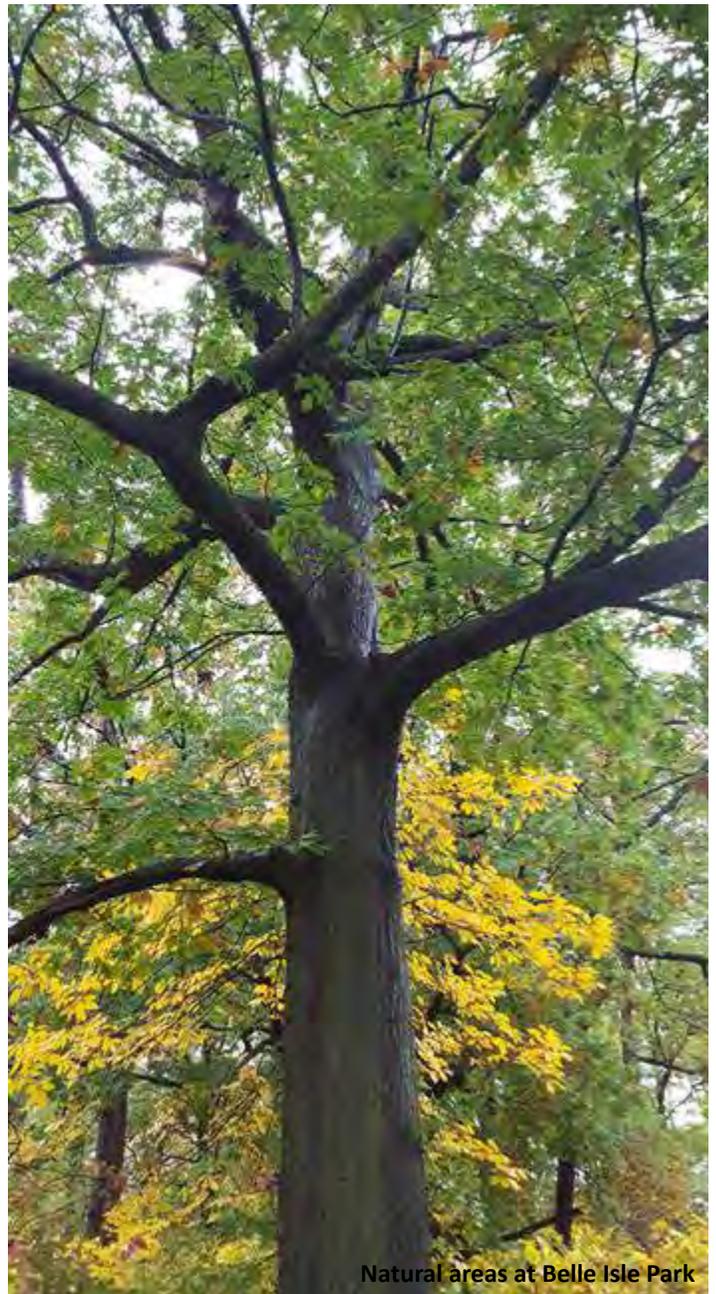
Moderate visitor encounters are accommodated in this zone. Visitors will be engaged in self-reliant, non-motorized outdoor activities. Moderate challenge and adventure should be expected, with low noise tolerance and interaction with DNR staff.

### Management Focus

The management focus is to maintain the low-impact character of this zone, with an emphasis on natural resource quality.

### Development

This zone may contain a low level of development to support visitor access to outdoor activities, such as trails, trailhead parking, marked routes, and educational opportunities. Development would be unobtrusive and would blend with natural environment. Site hardening such as boardwalks, fencing, and pedestrian paths may be necessary to protect sensitive resources.



Natural areas at Belle Isle Park

### 6.3 Natural Resource Recreation Zone

The Natural Resource Recreation Zone supports active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural settings. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. This zone makes up approximately 11% of the park and includes part of the former golf course at the end of Lake Muskoday, the prairie and grassland bird area, the area surrounding the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse (which also has a Cultural Landscape Overlay) on the east end of the park, and the area surrounding Lake Okonoka. The existing trail corridors within the flatwoods area have also been designated as Natural Resource Recreation to reflect a moderate level of both foot and bicycle use. The width of these corridors is intended to represent only what is necessary for the trail surface and associated amenities.

#### Natural Resources

In this zone, the natural resources may be managed or modified to support visitor activities with moderate impacts, while being protected to the degree possible and maintaining a natural appearance. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management 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 maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape.

#### Historic/Cultural Resources

The Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse is located within this zone, recognized by a Cultural Landscape Overlay. Although no below-ground cultural resources have been documented in this zone, there is evidence of prehistoric sites and Native American activities in the area.

#### Recreation Opportunities

Moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with natural character of the zone are permitted. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings (e.g. hiking, bicycling, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and outdoor education).

#### Education Opportunities

Interpretive signage may be provided at trail heads, on the trails, and at overlooks.

#### Visitor Experience

Visitors can expect high encounters with other visitors and moderate interaction with DNR staff. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings for recreation and education. This zone requires a variable time commitment as well as variable challenge and adventure. There is a moderate noise tolerance in this zone.

#### Management Focus

The management focus is to maintain use of the zone appropriate to the PRD Mission, to protect public safety, protect natural resources, and provide universal access.

#### Development

A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is acceptable, including restrooms, concrete/asphalt/gravel walkways and parking, trails, benches, tables, and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening, including boardwalks, fencing, and surfaced pedestrian paths, is allowed as necessary to protect sensitive resources. A moderate level of accessibility should be expected in this zone. This zone currently includes park shelters, a storage / workshop building, and restrooms.



Flying a kite at the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse



Flynn Memorial Pavilion

## 6.4 Developed Recreation Zone

The Developed Recreation Zone supports active recreation with a high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates, with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone covers a majority of the park, approximately 65% of the land, and includes most of the main structures on the island including the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Belle Isle Aquarium, Flynn Memorial Pavilion, the Belle Isle Boat House, the Belle Isle Nature Center, the model yacht basin, the former zoo site, shelters, athletic fields, playgrounds, the beach, the Belle Isle Golf Center, fishing docks, restrooms, and the Giant Slide, among other features. The large percentage of developed recreation zone at Belle Isle Park reflects the existing high use levels of this urban park.

### Natural Resources

Natural resources are actively managed and modified to support visitor activities. Vegetative management in this zone will address hazard trees, invasive species, pests, and disease, and will also be allowed for purposes of facilitating development and recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape.

### Historic/Cultural Resources

There are many historic and cultural resources within this zone and also within a Cultural Landscape Overlay. These include the James Scott Memorial Fountain, Belle Isle Casino, Flynn Pavilion, Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, White House, historic shelters and comfort stations, the Belle Isle Boat House, the model yacht basin, and the athletic complex. Emphasis will be on rehabilitation and preservation. Although no below-ground cultural resources have been documented in this zone, there is evidence of prehistoric sites and Native American activities in the area.

### Recreation Opportunities

High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are permitted in this zone. Visitors may be engaged in recreation in diverse and modified land and water settings. Bicycling, boating, canoeing, kayaking, beach-going, eating outdoors, family reunions, and other day-use activities are found in this zone.

### Education Opportunities

Interpretive signage may be used at day-use facilities, boating facilities, registration buildings, trail heads, on the trail, and at overlooks. Active programming is encouraged at areas where people congregate.

### Visitor Experience

Visitors should expect a high frequency of encounters with other visitors and DNR staff. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water settings for recreation and education. Activities in this zone would require a variable time commitment, variable levels of challenge and adventure, and low to moderate exertion. This zone has a high noise tolerance.

### Management Focus

The management focus in this zone is to maintain use of the zone appropriate to PRD Mission, protect the park's resources, maintain public safety, effectively manage visitors, and provide universal access. Protecting the aesthetic and scenic qualities of the zone is also a priority: the shoreline of most of the developed recreation zone is protected by a Scenic Overlay.

### Development

A high level of development of facilities to support visitor activities is permitted and is already evident in this zone such as restrooms, walkways, parking, trails, benches, tables, shelters, and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities, protect natural resources, and provide accessibility.



Piano lessons at Belle Isle Park

## 6.5 Cultural Landscape Overlay

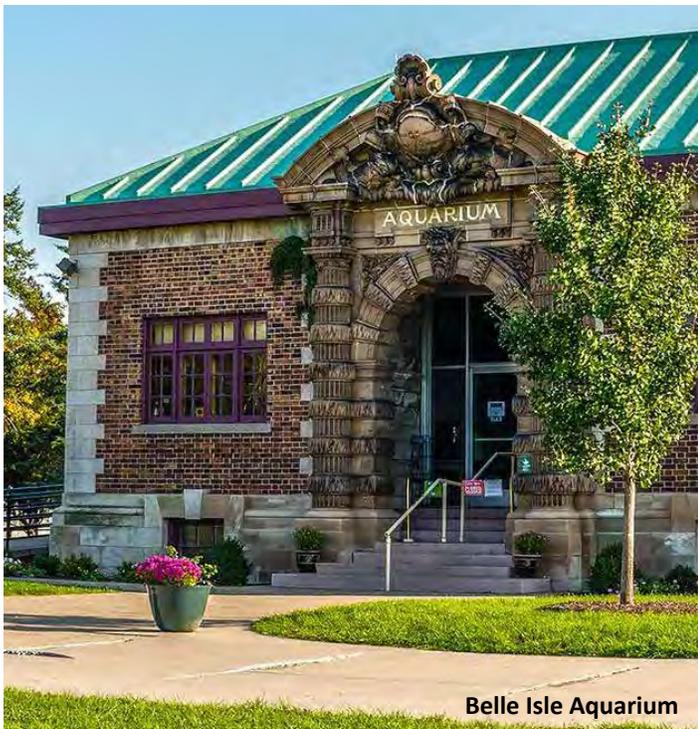
The Cultural Landscape Overlay comprises 325 acres (approximately 38% of the park), and encompasses the Developed Recreation Zone west of Vista Drive and the area of the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse at the east end of the island. The overlay ensures that any development, guided by the underlying zone designation, is sensitive to the cultural resources present. Educational interpretation of these cultural resources should also be considered.

### Natural Resources

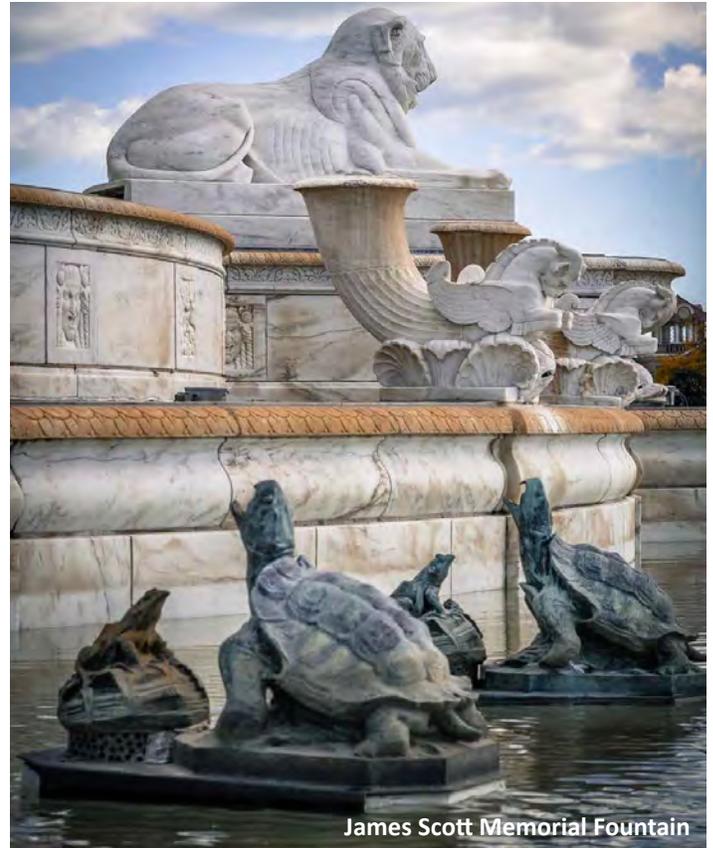
Vegetation management will be in accordance with the underlying zone (Developed Recreation). Vegetation may also be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses, which can include non-native species specific to the era and/or location, and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone.

### Historic/Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are the focus of this overlay, and include the James Scott Memorial Fountain, Belle Isle Casino, Flynn Memorial Pavilion, Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, White House, historic shelters and comfort stations, athletic complex, the Belle Isle Boat House, the model yacht basin, Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse, and Dossin Great Lakes Museum, and others. Although no below-ground cultural resources have been documented in this zone, there is evidence of prehistoric sites and Native American activities in the area.



Belle Isle Aquarium



James Scott Memorial Fountain

### Recreation Opportunities

Visitors may be engaged in sightseeing, recreational, and educational activities in a cultural setting compatible with and sensitive to the setting and the underlying zone.

### Education Opportunities

The cultural resources within this overlay will continue to provide valuable education, and further interpretation of the cultural resources, both on- and off-site, is encouraged.

### Visitor Experience

The visitor experience will be consistent with the underlying zone.

### Management Focus

Management focuses on rehabilitating and preserving the cultural resources and the cultural character of the area consistent with the underlying zone.

### Development

Development will be consistent with the underlying zone and will not negatively impact the cultural resources. Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape may be allowed.

## 6.6 Scenic Overlay

Approximately 11% or 97 acres, of Belle Isle Park is designated as Scenic Overlay. This designation protects and preserves the scenic views over the Detroit River from the park and of the park landscape from the water. The Scenic Overlay covers nearly the entire shore of the island between the perimeter roadway or trail and the water's edge, where views are most worthy of preservation. The largest area of Scenic Overlay extends from the east end of Blue Heron Lagoon west along the southern shoreline and around to west of the MacArthur Bridge. The other area extends along the northern shoreline from east of the Belle Isle Boat House to the west end of the Detroit Yacht Club. The Scenic Overlay provides visitors with picturesque views of the river, passing freighters, and the skylines of Detroit and Windsor.

Refer to the underlying management zone for level of development, visitor experience etc.

### Natural Resources

Management within the overlay will focus on maintaining the quality of the views on which the zone is based. Natural resources may be modified, to the level permitted by the underlying zone, to support both visitor use and viewing. The park shoreline will generally be protected in accordance with best management practices.

### Historic/Cultural Resources

There are no known above-ground historic structures within this overlay. Cultural resource management will be in accordance with the underlying zone.

### Recreation Opportunities

The level of recreation activity will be compatible with the underlying zone and the purpose of viewing.

### Education Opportunities

Interpretive signage may be provided at key viewing locations or off site. This designation presents an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about the river, its fisheries, and its role in the history of Detroit.

### Visitor Experience

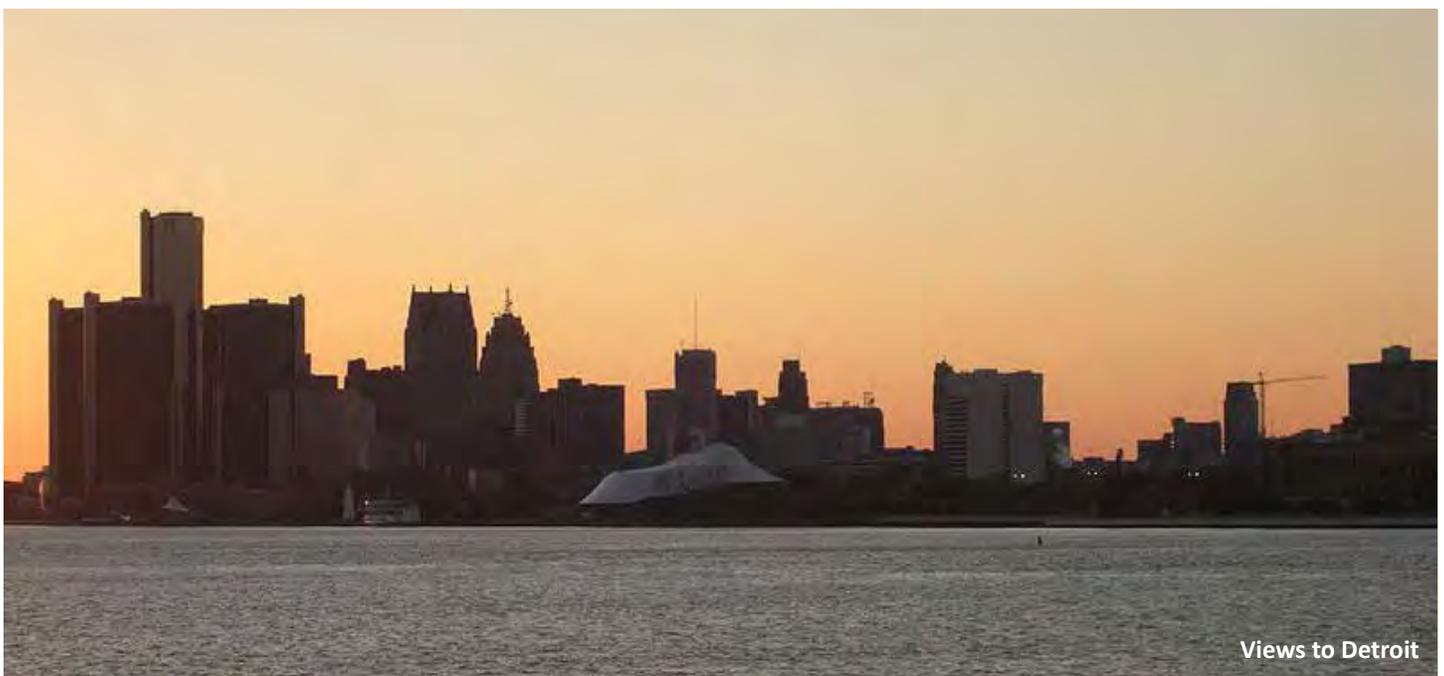
The visitors will engage in activities that allow for observation of the scenic views. The level of visitor encounters will be compatible with the underlying zone.

### Management Focus

Management will focus on protecting, preserving, and enhancing the scenic views. The shoreline area will be studied through further analysis of this zone to determine areas appropriate for habitat preservation, habitat restoration and public access to the waterfront.

### Development

Development will be compatible with the intent of the underlying zone in the Scenic Overlay while also protecting the river shoreline as appropriate. Development may support visitor access with the purpose of enjoying the scenic views, while not detracting from the scenic qualities of the area.



Views to Detroit



James Scott Memorial Fountain at night

## Chapter Seven: Action Plan

Belle Isle Park is unique within the Michigan state park system with respect to its urban park identity, operational complexity and asset management and planning needs. Infrastructure, operation, maintenance, and number of visitors eclipse those of entire state park districts. A long history of deferred repairs, driven by a perennial lack of funding, created a backlog of capital needs and deferred maintenance that surpasses \$300 million. Improved, but still less than optimal, funding for staffing, operation, and restoration/rehabilitation continue to create challenges. Innovation, efficient operation, and partnerships are critical to achieving the collective vision to make Belle Isle Park a nationally renowned park where natural resources are protected and lifetime memories are made.

Many infrastructure repair and upgrade projects are currently underway or committed to. These projects are listed on the following pages. In addition, the planning team has developed 10-year actions that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the park in order to achieve the desired user experience. Actions are recommended that address the following categories: natural resource assets, cultural resource assets, recreation assets and opportunities, education / interpretation opportunities, and development. These actions apply either to the whole park (park-wide actions) or to specific locations within the park, as appropriate and according to the management zone. Refer to the zone descriptions in Chapter 6 for appropriate activities in each zone.

In determining actions for the park, the planning team focused on the following areas:

- Improving park-wide infrastructure, such as vehicle and non-motorized circulation, wayfinding, accessibility, critical utility repairs, and increasing the visitor access to canals, lakes, and the Detroit River
- Rehabilitating significant cultural and historic buildings such as the Casino, James Scott Memorial Fountain, Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Flynn Memorial Pavilion, and restrooms for stabilization and improved visitor experiences
- Continue to focus on public relations
- Park-wide management and operations improvements, such as creating a sustainable business model for the park, assessing the impact of large events, addressing invasive species, developing guidelines for gifts and donations, evaluating concessions opportunities and needs, and increasing education and interpretation opportunities
- Creating a more welcoming entrance to the park and making access to park information more convenient
- Improving existing recreation facilities such as the athletic complex, golf center, beach area, Kid's Row, Belle Isle Boat House, shelters, and fishing/viewing facilities
- Repurposing abandoned facilities such as the former zoo site
- Restoration of the wet-mesic flatwoods

## Belle Isle Park Capital Outlay Needs



Management Plans do not guarantee future funding to achieve the actions identified, but are based on funding realities and sound investment policies. PRD and the BIC will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan.

The following ten-year action plan is based on an investment of approximately \$2 million per year by the state for capital improvements and infrastructure needs. This assumes current funding levels stay the same and does not take into account major partner funded projects or grants that may come to fruition during the life of the plan. This leaves in excess of \$280 million in known capital needs and deferred maintenance. While meaningful progress is being made, it is clear that needs still far outweigh the means and continued, elevated investment from a wide-range of sources, including a major capital campaign, is necessary to sustain Belle Isle Park for future generations.

### 7.1 Construction and Engineering Projects Currently in Progress

Listed below is a summary of capital improvement projects that are currently managed by the DNR Parks and Recreation Division (PRD). These projects are funded by capital improvement budgets from Fiscal Year 2015 through Fiscal Year 2017. Capital Outlay Funds have been allocated to stabilize the most critical needs per the Key Structures Building Assessment completed in 2015. Priority critical needs primarily address roof replacement and structural stabilization.

Five buildings being addressed in Fiscal Year 2017 include the Internal Affairs building, the former Police Headquarters, the Casino, the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservancy. The critical repairs needed for stabilization on these buildings were a result of water penetrating the buildings due to poor roof conditions. PRD is working to ensure that key buildings have a weather-tight roof and exterior; this will continue to be a priority to stop further deterioration.

ADA accessibility improvements throughout the park have been funded by capital outlay projects and outdoor recreation grants. Providing recreation opportunities accessible to all park visitors is a priority as recreation amenities are improved and installed throughout the island.



The following is a list of Belle Isle Park construction and engineering projects either completed or underway in 2017. The 19 projects have a total cost of \$6,156,984.00.

**PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY IN 2017:**

**1. SHELTER 9 SHORELINE FISHING IMPROVEMENTS, \$250,000 (GREAT LAKES FISHERY TRUST GRANT)**

Proposed improvements include providing ADA accessible parking spaces in the adjacent lot, ADA accessible access to the shoreline, replacing concrete surfaces along sheet piling and the sea wall, new ADA accessible railing along the shoreline and bench pads with clear space on one side of bench for wheelchairs.

**2. SHELTERS 5, 6 AND SHADY NOOK, CONSTRUCTION COST \$300,000 (EVENT FEES)**

Work will include roof replacement and new decking and fascia boards as required, as well as repainting the structures. Shelter 5 and 6 will have new concrete floors installed.

**3. CASINO FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM REPLACEMENT, \$700,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)**

A new generator, water pump, and new sprinkler line installation will be completed. The final phase of work will be to replace the lines in the attic.

**4. CRITICAL ROOF AND STRUCTURAL REPAIRS, \$1,366,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)**

**CASINO**

Restoration will primarily take place in the attic, and on the exterior at both of the towers on the north side of the building. The valley beam in the attic will be replaced and the roof leaks will be repaired in the northeast cupola. Weatherproofing of the attic will replace the missing fascia panels. Decorative fascia panels to match the existing panels will be fabricated. Masonry work on the northeast tower will repair areas of significant structural cracks.

**INTERNAL AFFAIRS / RADIO CONTROL BUILDING**

Repairs include roof decking replacement in building, and concrete decking replacement in the garage area, new roof membrane, and structural repairs at garage doors and window openings and masonry repairs around the exterior of the building.

**FORMER POLICE STATION HEADQUARTERS**

DNR- PRD has coordinated with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office on the replacement of roof decking, shingles, flashing, and new gutters to ensure all new materials are historically appropriate. During the project design phase the structural engineer determined that additional shoring up of the roof would be required. Previous fire damage in the attic has affected the structural integrity of the roof supports. The shoring will be left in place once the roof replacement is complete. Additional structural assessment will be required as a part of future restoration efforts.

**5. NEWSBOY SHELTER TEMPORARY STABILIZATION, \$20,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS AND DNR-PRD CULTURAL FUNDS)**

A temporary roof membrane and supports around the structure will help to stabilize it until funds have been raised for complete restoration of the shelter. The cost estimate for restoring this historic shelter is \$650,000.

**6. ATHLETIC COMPLEX RENOVATION, \$780,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS AND A NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GRANT)**

Work will include improvements to handball court structure, baseball fields, and the existing soccer field.

**7. JAMES SCOTT MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN RAMP AND SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS AT BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM (BIA) AND THE ANNA SCRIPPS WHITCOMB CONSERVATORY (ASWC), \$295,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS AND PRIVATE FUNDING FROM BIC)**

Sidewalks have been poured at the BIA and ASWC. The James Scott Memorial Fountain ADA access construction documents have been finalized. The DNR-PRD has applied for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant to implement ADA access to the fountain and replace sidewalks around the fountain for ADA accessibility. The project team has coordinated with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to ensure the proposed design solution is sensitive and in keeping with the historic integrity of the James Scott Memorial Fountain.

## PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY IN 2017, CONTINUED

## 8. BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM AND ANNA SCRIPPS WHITCOMB CONSERVATORY STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT, \$200,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

A structural assessment of these two buildings and the ventilation in the conservatory has been completed, as well as stabilization of the lily pond. The structural and ventilation report as well as prior assessments will assist the DNR-BIC in laying groundwork for a capital campaign to address the long-term revitalization of the BIA and ASWC. This will involve critical repairs, feasibility studies, designing new systems and completion of a comprehensive revitalization plan for both buildings.

## 9. LILY POND STABILIZATION, \$75,000 (BIC GARDEN PARTY EVENTS, \$10,000 MDOT GRANT, PRD BELLE ISLE STEWARDSHIP BUDGET)

Stabilization repairs to the pond included: draining and cleaning the concrete pond, repairing all major cracks and sealing the pond, replacing piping between the pond and show house, relocating and upgrading control valves, and installation of new infiltration system for fish. Site work included resetting of the large landscape boulders around the pond, new gate and iron fence on the northeast side of the pond, replacement of all gutters on the aquarium building, and regrading garden area to ensure water was drained away from the aquarium building.

## 10. OFFICE SPACE ENGINEERING FOR RELOCATION OF BELLE ISLE STAFF, \$350,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

The White House is not suitable for sustained use as office space as the current live load capacity does not meet requirements for office use. The DNR-PRD will assess costs to move offices to an alternate location on the island. This assessment will review construction costs to improve the Internal Affairs building to meet the minimal requirements for DNR-PRD staff and LED officers.

## 11. IRON BELLE TRAILHEAD DEVELOPMENT, \$600,000 (NATIONAL RECREATION TRAILS FUND GRANT AND MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND GRANT)

The parking lot area along Lakeshore Drive near the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse has been selected as the southern terminus trailhead for the Iron Belle Trail. This will include parking lot improvements, ADA access to new amenities, restrooms and interpretive signage. The engineering and construction for trailhead development will be funded with a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant and a Recreational Trail Fund Grant. Engineering for the Iron Belle Trail and the remaining loop trail around the island will begin in early 2018. Trail engineering will be funded with a grant awarded from the National Park Service in 2017 for the Belle Isle multi-use loop trail.

## 12. LAKE OKONOKA SHELTER AREA IMPROVEMENTS, \$300,000 (MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND)

Design to improve shelter facilities on the north side of Lake Okonoka will begin late in the summer of 2017. The MNRTF grant will provide for new shelters, new play structures and ADA access to these amenities. The construction schedule will align with the Lake Okonoka Habitat Restoration construction schedule.

## 13. CASINO ELEVATOR ASSESSMENT, \$15,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

An assessment of the current elevator will be completed to determine what elements need to be repaired or replaced. The elevator improvements will be funded with FY 2018 Capital Outlay.

## 14. BATHROOM IMPROVEMENTS, \$25,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

Continuation of bathroom improvements will include painting and installation of new fixtures. Comfort Stations to be addressed include: the Stone Comfort Station, Shady Nook, Woodside, Oxbow Comfort Station, and the Bath House Comfort Station.

## 15. ADA ACCESSIBLE KAYAK LAUNCH AT NASHUA CANAL, \$25,000 (DNR - PRD TRAILS GRANT)

Design for ADA accessible kayak launches will be completed in coordination with the Lake Okonoka Habitat Restoration project. The two launches will be installed on either side of the new stop log structure that will be put in at the end of the Nashua Canal to maintain canal levels. The existing stop log structure between the Blue Heron Lagoon and Lake Okonoka will be removed to allow fish passage from the Blue Heron Lagoon through Lake Okonoka to the Detroit River. The launches will allow for easier passage over the stop log structure.

## PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY IN 2017, CONTINUED

## 16. BOATING ACCESS SITE (BAS) FEASIBILITY STUDY, \$75,000 (DNR - PRD WATERWAYS CAPITAL OUTLAY)

The assessment will provide a feasibility study of constructing a BAS at William G. Milliken Park and Harbor as well as two locations on Belle Isle for motorized boat access to the Detroit River and associated access and parking.

## 17. WET - MESIC FLATWOODS HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN, \$525,000 (NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FUND GRANT)

The scope of this project includes: final design, engineering, and, required permit approval for hydrological restoration of the wet-mesic flatwoods. Project design and engineering will be based on the hydrological survey completed in 2016, as well as other surveys completed that relate to the scope of this project including; topographic and bathymetric survey, tree survey, geotechnical investigations, and animal and plant monitoring. Final engineering submittals for this project will provide for improved hydrologic function with regard to the integrity of the wet-mesic flatwoods and definition of areas of opportunity for public education within the flatwoods.

## 18. ISLAND WIDE STORMWATER UTILITY ASSESSMENT AND MAINTENANCE, \$215,984 (STORMWATER, ASSET MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER (SAW) GRANT, CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

A SAW Grant has been awarded to fund a Stormwater Asset Management Plan on Belle Isle. The stormwater system in many locations around the island has surpassed its useful life. The scope of this project comprises an assessment of the stormwater system to determine priority areas for replacement and development of an overall improvement strategy. The project scope includes the following tasks: locate and geospatially reference all existing stormwater sewer lines, existing catch basins, and open drainage systems using GPS equipment; clean and televise all stormwater sewer lines and existing catch basins; a condition review and evaluation of the existing technical assessment report to determine deficiencies; and recommendations to correct deficiencies, including estimates of probable cost and a five year implementation plan.

## 19. STORMWATER LINE REPAIR, \$40,000 (CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS)

This project will fund the replacement of collapsed stormwater lines in the Stables yard that prohibit use of the area for DNR-PRD staff as well as the DNR Law Enforcement Division (LED) Officers that use the garage in the area for equipment storage.

## BELLE ISLE PARTNER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

### 1. PUBLIC LIGHTING AUTHORITY (PLA), INSTALLATION OF NEW SOLAR STREET LIGHTS, \$1,500,000

PLA has installed 200 new solar lights around the perimeter streets and along Central Avenue. They are currently in the process of removing the old light poles and installing new concrete over removed pole foundations.

### 2. DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY (DHS), DOSSIN GREAT LAKES MUSEUM SITE IMPROVEMENTS

The Detroit Historic Society has developed a plan to improve the outside facilities at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum. The work to improve the grounds, drop off area and parking will be broken up into three construction phases. The first phase of the plan will improve the shoreline amenities for visitors. The scope of work will begin with the west side of the building and continue around to the opposite side of the basin. The DHS and DNR- PRD will work together to coordinate new railing to be installed at the Dossin site improvement project and Shelter 9 shoreline fishing renovations.

### 3. FRIENDS OF DETROIT RIVER (FDR), LAKE OKONOKA HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT, \$5,045,520 (\$4,975,520 NOAA, \$70,000 DNR)

The FDR is working to complete construction documents for the restoration project to put out to bid. A consultant has been hired to complete geo-tech investigations and provide review of the proposed bridges on Lakeside Drive and the Strand. A bridge will be constructed over the new connection between the Blue Heron Lagoon and Lake Okonoka to allow for kayak passage. The culvert on the Strand has been appropriately sized for fish passage to the Detroit River. DNR-PRD and SHPO are reviewing the proposals to ensure the style of the bridge is appropriate and design allows for existing bike lanes and a future shared use path outlined in the Belle Isle Trail Master Plan.

### 4. MDOT, MACARTHUR BRIDGE MAINTENANCE PROJECT, \$2,340,000

MDOT will begin preventive maintenance work on the MacArthur Bridge in summer 2017. Scope of work will include replacing joints, deck patching, placing a sealer on the roadway surface, and reconstructing the approaches immediately adjacent to the bridge in kind.



Photo Credit: Ramiro Zarate

## 7.2 Future Projects

The following 10-year action goals will guide management and development within Belle Isle Park as a whole and within each of the four designated management zones. The actions are ranked in terms of priority based on health, safety, and welfare, as indicated by the column on the right hand side of the table. Priority Level 1 projects address structures or systems that are in eminent danger of failure or present a safety hazard and should be addressed within the next 2 years. Priority Level 2 projects address structures or systems that may present a health, safety, or welfare hazard in the near future and should be addressed within 2-5 years. Priority Level 3 projects are desired, but can be tackled in the next 5-10 years. The highest priority projects (top 25) are also listed on the 5-year capital improvement plan (see Appendix F), which provides related cost information. Additional projects have been added by the planning team to include those not related to capital investment (for example management, operations, education, and programming), items identified through the community input sessions, or projects that will likely extend beyond the 5-year time frame.

The numbers shown in the left hand column are for numerical reference only and are not intended to indicate priority.

| <b>PARK-WIDE ACTIONS - INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |   |                       |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| <b>NUMBER</b>                             | <b>ACTION</b>   | <b>PRIORITY LEVEL</b> |
| 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Modal Circulation &amp; Wayfinding Plan – (motorized and non-motorized, private and public transit)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with MDOT to review vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic onto and throughout park.                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review traffic pattern for vehicles entering park and locations of contact stations.</li> <li>▪ Review traffic calming measures for vehicles entering park from bridge.</li> <li>▪ Address bike lanes crossing vehicular traffic on and off the Island.</li> <li>▪ Review parking availability in high use areas and other parking alternatives such as a park shuttle to remote parking.</li> <li>▪ Work with DDOT to review expansion of public bus service on Belle Isle Park and identify additional public bus stop locations.</li> <li>▪ Evaluate alternative transportation opportunities to Belle Isle Park</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Develop wayfinding signage for park visitors.                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physical signage for facilities, roads, walking trails and blue trails.</li> <li>▪ Install informational kiosk near park entrance to provide visitors a convenient location to view park information, resources and events.</li> <li>▪ Digital signage (available online/by apps). Coordinate with future virtual tour app.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 1                     |
| 2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical utility infrastructure repairs and upgrades:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete an assessment of the water service lines and develop a strategy for replacement. Replace water mainlines within new project scopes as they are developed. Continue to address water mainline breaks.</li> <li>○ Clean out building storm drains as building repairs are made.</li> <li>○ Implement infrastructure improvements to Belle Isle Park’s storm water and sanitary system based on assessment and improvement plan (2018) to improve and separate the systems.</li> <li>○ Upgrade the electrical supply systems</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide permanent power to final contact station locations.</li> </ul>  | 1                     |
| 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a historic assessment of island structures (buildings, monuments, bridges, etc).</li> </ul>   | 1                     |
| 4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canal water management – Restore and maintain a navigable passage through the canals and lakes for small non-motorized recreational boats, while maintaining or improving the quality of aquatic habitat and protecting banks from significant erosion.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assess and upgrade canal water controls and pumps as needed.</li> <li>○ Assess canal needs for improving non-motorized water craft navigation within the canal system.</li> <li>○ Develop an aquatic weed management plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | 1                     |
| 5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve visitor access to canals, lakes, and the Detroit River and island canals.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete assessment of existing kayak vendor facility with existing facilities in park to determine best location for the kayak vendor.</li> <li>○ Assess, rehabilitate, repair, or remove fishing piers and shoreline fishing areas.</li> <li>○ Complete the boating access site feasibility study that is currently underway and consider the results.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | 2                     |

| PARK-WIDE ACTIONS - INFRASTRUCTURE, CONTINUED |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| NUMBER  | ACTION  | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| 6   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trail Plan – Improve trail system for non-motorized circulation in the park.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Design and implement the Iron Belle Trail from the trailhead to the MacArthur Bridge.</li> <li>○ Prepare design plans and cost estimates for island wide multi-use loop trail.</li> <li>○ Consider alignment, appropriate use and design of roads and trails within the wet-mesic flatwoods, following the approved management zones, as part of the restoration plan.</li> <li>○ Implement plans as funding becomes available.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>             | 1              |
| 7   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Area of the Park- Improve amenities at facilities for social gathering and ADA access to shelters.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prepare a physical needs assessment plan for amenities in this area of the park.</li> <li>○ Consider specific improvements to improve facilities for large groups such as; larger BBQ grills, larger table clusters, enlarged, improved accessibility, and waste and recycling areas.</li> <li>○ Review options for site access and parking.</li> <li>○ Assess the need for hot coal bins and their location.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 2              |
| 8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with MDOT on road, bridge and parking lot condition assessment and prioritization of infrastructure repair.</li> </ul>   | 3              |
| 9   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoreline Quality Assessment- Complete island-wide shoreline assessment to determine where “hard” shoreline and “soft”, or more natural, shoreline areas may be implemented to ensure protection from significant erosion, while maintaining or improving the quality of the shoreline habitat.</li> </ul>   | 3              |

| PARK-WIDE ACTIONS - MANAGEMENT / OPERATIONS |  |                |
|---|--|----------------|
| NUMBER                                      | ACTION   | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a sustainable financial model for the park.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and resubmit the National Register of Historic Places nomination.</li> </ul>   | 1              |
| 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the impact of large events on the park’s visitors and infrastructure and create a plan to ensure a quality experience during periods of high visitation.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamline event planning and implement equitable pricing strategies that reflect the level of effort required for PRD staff.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address invasive species control in accordance with the Belle Isle Park Natural Resource Stewardship Plan.</li> </ul>   | 1              |
| 6   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidelines for reviewing and receiving private gifts and donations.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create gift guide for donors based on park management priorities.</li> <li>○ Create process to determine when public input is required and guidelines to review and receive public input for proposals.</li> <li>○ Review DNR guidelines for donor recognition and applicability to Belle Isle Park. Identify gaps in current guidelines relative to Belle Isle Park and expand as necessary.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 1              |

**PARK-WIDE ACTIONS - MANAGEMENT / OPERATIONS, CONTINUED**

| NUMBER | ACTION  | PRIORITY LEVEL |
|--------|---|----------------|
| 7      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an enhanced Belle Isle Park Communications Plan including internal and external communications (DNR and BIC)</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 8      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete an operational maintenance plan for the park.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 9      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate concessions opportunities and needs.</li> </ul>   | 2              |
| 10     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an education and interpretation plan for Belle Isle Park                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gather personal stories relating to park history</li> <li>○ Determine the primary topics for natural and cultural interpretation</li> <li>○ Consider a variety of methods of engagement, including traditional and new media, audio and visual technologies, on- and off-site interpretation, traditional and new media, etc.</li> <li>○ Coordinate interpretation and education programming among partners</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 3              |



Belle Isle Park cherry blossoms

## CHAPTER SEVEN

The following describes proposed action goals in each of the following management zones designated at Belle Isle Park. (No goals were developed specifically for the Backcountry Zone; Refer to Park-wide Action Goals):

| PRIMITIVE ZONE  |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| Goal: Restore and maintain the integrity of the wet-mesic flatwoods natural community and constituent plant and animal species. |   |                |
| NUMBER  | ACTION  | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete restoration plan of wet-mesic flatwoods.</li> </ul> | 1              |

| NATURAL RESOURCE RECREATION ZONE  |  |                |
|---|--|----------------|
| Goal: Improve wildlife habitat within water bodies and grasslands and provide amenities for passive recreation. |  |                |
| NUMBER  | ACTION   | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support native plants and wildlife by optimizing mowing strategies.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue hiking trail connections around the Blue Heron Lagoon (floating boardwalk, etc) that will facilitate outdoor education, boating, and fishing opportunities.</li> </ul> | 2              |
| 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and expand shoreline fishing opportunities at the Blue Heron Lagoon and Lake Okonoka.</li> </ul>   | 3              |

| DEVELOPED RECREATION ZONE  |  |                |
|--|--|----------------|
| NUMBER   | ACTION   | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| <p><u>Welcome Area:</u> Entrance area to Belle Isle Park, including the MacArthur Bridge approach on the park side and the surrounding area.<br/>Goal: Create an attractive and welcoming entry point to the park, with convenient access to information and services for visitors</p>                   |  |                |
| 1  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make construction improvements for office space for staff and customer services at the new Park Office (Former Internal Affairs Building).</li> </ul> | 1              |
| 2  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate information kiosk(s) near entrance convenient for park visitors.</li> </ul>  | 1              |
| 3  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a long-term master plan for a welcome and customer service center at the former Police Headquarters building.</li> </ul>                      | 3              |
| <p><u>Athletic Complex:</u> Fields and courts surrounding the Athletic Shelter between Nashua Canal and the Strand.<br/>Goal: Improve the Athletic Shelter Complex and expand community and athletic programming, providing increased opportunities and services for the public, specifically youth.</p> |  |                |
| 4  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete critical Athletic Shelter roof repairs.</li> </ul>   | 1              |
| 5  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Athletic Complex Programming and Infrastructure Improvement Plan, and complete a historic assessment of the Athletic Shelter.</li> </ul>      | 2              |
| 6  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitate Athletic Shelter to maximize community programming as developed in Programming Plan.</li> </ul>  | 3              |
| 7  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve fields, resurface / replace courts as needed, expand athletic programming and improve ADA accessibility within Athletic Complex</li> </ul>    | 3              |

## DEVELOPED RECREATION ZONE, CONTINUED

| NUMBER  | ACTION  | PRIORITY LEVEL |
|---|---|----------------|
| <p><u>Belle Isle Golf Center:</u> Golf facilities, consisting of a short golf course and driving range, on Lakeside Dr.<br/>Goal: Support vendor with facility improvements that will provide for more efficient operations.</p>  |   |                |
| 8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change irrigation water source to the Detroit River.</li> </ul>  | 3              |
| <p><u>Beach Area:</u> Beach area and supporting facilities on north side of park.<br/>Goal: Provide a safe, fun and accessible water based recreation area.</p>   |   |                |
| 9   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and execute vendor/concession partnerships to support beach use.</li> </ul>   | 1              |
| 10  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve concessions facilities, restrooms, and parking lots to support beach use.</li> </ul>   | 1              |
| 11  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beachfront revitalization that will include: removal of inoperable water slide and provision of a outdoor eating area and splash park accessible to children of all abilities (BIC).</li> </ul>  | 2              |
| <p><u>Former Zoo Site:</u> Former Zoo site location between Nashua Canal and Central Way.<br/>Goal: Redevelop area to provide opportunities for park users</p>  |   |                |
| 12  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan with public input and identify partnerships for repurposing the site.</li> </ul>  | 2              |
| <p><u>Former Golf Course Site:</u> Former Golf Course site location on south side of Lake Muskoday.<br/>Goal: Redevelop area to provide opportunities for park users</p>  |   |                |
| 13  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan for adaptive reuse or removal of infrastructure associated with the former golf course.</li> </ul>  | 2              |
| <p><u>Kids Row:</u> Children’s playground area and the giant slide on Central Way, east of Inselruhe St.<br/>Goal: Provide a safe, fun and accessible play environment for children of all abilities with supporting amenities.</p>   |   |                |
| 14  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess play equipment for improvements.</li> </ul>   | 3              |
| <p><u>Belle Isle Boat House Area:</u> includes the clubhouse as well as associated docks and piers, outdoor program space and parking area.<br/>Goal: Oversee the restoration of the Belle Isle Boat House and associated amenities, retaining the historic integrity while providing for increased programming and revenue generation.</p> |   |                |
| 15  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc. to complete a historic structures report and a comprehensive engineering assessment of the building and facilities.</li> </ul>  | 3              |
| 16  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc. to prepare a master plan for the renovation of the Belle Isle Boat House building and grounds. The master plan should include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A potential water taxi, day dockage for boaters, bike rental, island shuttle, public access and use of the pier, and a potential concession café.</li> <li>The master plan will need to incorporate the Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc. to enhance the rowing club’s operations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 3              |
| 17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc. to prepare a capital improvements plan for the renovation of the Belle Isle Boat House building and grounds.</li> </ul>   | 3              |
| 18  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement pier renovations as funding becomes available.</li> </ul>  | 3              |
| NUMBER  | ACTION  | PRIORITY LEVEL |
| <p><u>Lighthouse / Blue Heron Lagoon:</u> Lighthouse field and area surrounding the Blue Heron Lagoon.</p>  |   |                |
| 19  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement Iron Belle Trail southern terminus trailhead plan.</li> </ul>  | 1              |

DEVELOPED RECREATION ZONE, CONTINUED

Shelters

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the Belle Isle Conservancy to raise funds for and rehabilitate the Newsboy Shelter.</li> </ul>      | 1 |
| 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve all shelters, repair damaged roof and decking, repaint and provide for ADA access to shelter.</li> </ul> | 1 |

Waterfront Structures

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address structural, safety, and accessibility issues at the North and South Piers.</li> </ul> | 3 |
|----|--|---|

Historic Structures

Goal: Maintain and enhance the character of historic structures and provide amenities to improve programming opportunities, and ADA accessibility.

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 23 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitate Casino building and grounds, maintaining the historical character and its use as a social gathering and event space.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace tile roof.</li> <li>Complete replacement of mechanical systems.</li> <li>Complete structural and masonry repairs as needed.</li> <li>Replace walks and patios as needed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | 1 |
| 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>James Scott Memorial Fountain Critical Repairs                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a structural assessment of the fountain, weir, and deteriorating basin walls, and prioritize critical needs for improvement.</li> <li>Modernize the mechanical systems within the fountain and basin pumps.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | 1 |
| 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitate Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory in association with BIC.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize rehabilitation plan.</li> <li>Review the needs and feasibility of adding restroom facilities.</li> <li>Phased implementation of the improvements as funding allows.</li> <li>Work with the City of Detroit to review Belle Isle Lease Agreement to incorporate the Greenhouses into the Conservatory Complex.</li> <li>Initiate capital campaign.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 1 |
| 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassess optimal programming at the Flynn Memorial Pavilion.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform modest and practical renovations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | 1 |
| 27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace White House foundation.</li> </ul>  | 1 |
| 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess existing use of and improve appearance and functionality of the Paddock Area.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine year-round functional use of the area.</li> <li>Seek ways to reduce the visual impact and effects of impervious surface on storm water runoff.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | 2 |
| 29 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve Restrooms                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve Bear Pit Restrooms to open comfort station facility to public using the adjacent large group gathering areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | 2 |
| 30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>James Scott Memorial Fountain Rehabilitation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitate reflecting pond retaining wall and sidewalks.</li> <li>Repair damaged marble sculptures.</li> <li>Recreate historic Pewabic tiles in basin.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | 3 |

**DEVELOPED RECREATION ZONE, CONTINUED**

| NUMBER  | ACTION   | PRIORITY LEVEL |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p><u>Historic Structures</u><br/>                     Goal: Maintain and enhance the character of historic structures and provide amenities to improve programming opportunities, and ADA accessibility.</p> |  |                |
| 31  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitate White House and Stable complex.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete deferred maintenance, improvements, and restoration as required to stabilize the buildings.</li> <li>○ Complete Programming Plan for the Stables and White House site that will allow vendor opportunities and potential interpretive and public space.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 3              |

**7.3 Potential Partner Projects**

The following projects are currently in the planning stages, being led and funded by partner organizations under the direction of, or in agreement with, the DNR.

**POTENTIAL PARTNER PROJECTS**

| NUMBER | ACTION  |
|--------|---|
| 1      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piet Oudolf Garden Project                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Garden Club of Michigan has an MOU with the DNR to retain Piet Oudolf to design a 1.5 acre garden on Belle Isle adjacent to the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon. Construction of the garden will be contingent on the funding of construction costs and an endowment for future maintenance and operations. The fundraising need is approximately \$2.7 million. The fundraising effort is currently being facilitated by Oudolf Garden Detroit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 2      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the feasibility and capital investment required to provide water taxi service from William G. Milliken State Park to Belle Isle Park, considering various locations. (By Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority)</li> </ul>  |
| 3      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belle Isle Sawmill Improvements                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The DNR-PRD is partnering with DNR-Forestry and the Arboriculture Society of Michigan Foundation to have a physical assessment of the Sawmill completed. The assessment will assist in defining the condition of the structure and future improvement costs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |



## Chapter Eight: Proposal Review Process

### 8.1 Background

Restoring and maintaining Belle Isle Park's infrastructure within its historically significant context while balancing visitor's wants and needs are key to determining priorities for funding capital improvements. Careful consideration went into the planning effort to determine the priorities for directing Belle Isle Park's limited capital outlay budget and personnel resources. Belle Isle Park's popularity attracts a steady flow of submittals for new attractions and amenities that align with current needs of the park to varying degrees. Requests for additional programming and infrastructure are a constant pressure on the limited open space within the park, as well as planning and operational resources. Proposals for development of new infrastructure must be carefully reviewed to preserve and protect Belle Isle Park's open space; its most important asset. The 2005 Belle Isle Master Plan (Hamilton Anderson) notes:

*"No one can predict the future, but the need for quality, natural open spaces is a constant. Without any set methodology for making decisions about change within the park, the island experience will continue to be compromised by conflicting uses and ideas....Nowhere else in the city can a park user find a complete and total retreat from the built environment as at Belle Isle. Belle Isle is a setting with no urban context: a balance between recreational, educational, and*

*traditional park offerings in a historic setting. With each built improvement to the island the tenuous balance between the existing varied experiences is challenged and the island's most basic, fundamental appeal as an urban retreat is jeopardized."*

A policy must be put in place to ensure that new proposals, which were not considered as part of this comprehensive planning process, are carefully considered and analyzed based on not only the project's impact and need, but also the ability to be self-sustaining and not put further strain on staff, operations and maintenance budgets. An evaluation process can be a useful management tool to:

1. Track and catalog all proposals for Belle Isle.
2. Facilitate the proposal process by clearly defining what criteria must be addressed.
3. Update and monitor the values espoused in the Strategic Management Plan.

The lease between the state and the City of Detroit requires that the state work to limit new infrastructure on the island and long term costs for maintaining additional infrastructure. In order to facilitate thoughtful and objective review of new ideas or changes on Belle Isle, a plan review to determine how the proposal aligns with the Strategic Management Plan will be completed.

## 8.2 Proposal Review

The review process will begin with an assessment of the project summary submitted by a special interest group or individual. Review of the summary will determine if the project is eligible to submit a project proposal. The initial summary review will be completed by the DNR PRD management, DNR PRD Field Planner, and District Manager. Proposals not supported by the current management plan will not be advanced for further review. If the proposed project aligns with the goals and objectives of the management plan, the project advocates will be invited to submit a detailed proposal for further review.

A team will be assembled to evaluate each proposal with members appropriate to the project. Reviewers will include DNR Park and Recreation Division Belle Isle Park management, Field Planner, Stewardship Unit and Finance Division, and DNR Division staff as appropriate (Fisheries, Forestry, Law Enforcement, and History Center). The Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), City of Detroit (department dependent on proposal), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) may also be consulted depending on the project scope.

The appropriate level of community input will be determined based on scope and longevity of proposal. Project scope that will require public input:

1. New infrastructure
2. Major development

The proposal evaluation procedure will determine a list of criteria on which each reviewer would grade the project. A final feasibility score for the project will be determined based on the average of all reviewers and public input collected. The following criteria will be considered for assessment:

- Is the project consistent with the overall goals for the park?
- Does the proposal add to the recreation value of Belle Isle Park?
- Does the proposal complement, philosophically, aesthetically, and educationally, existing uses and structures on the island?
- Is the project feasible at another location?
- Does the project have sufficient funding without impacting other park needs?
- Is the project sustainable; either generating or maintaining sufficient resources for ongoing maintenance?
- Does the project align with the management zones for the park?
- Does the proposal support enjoyment of the surrounding areas within the park, without conflict with established events and uses?

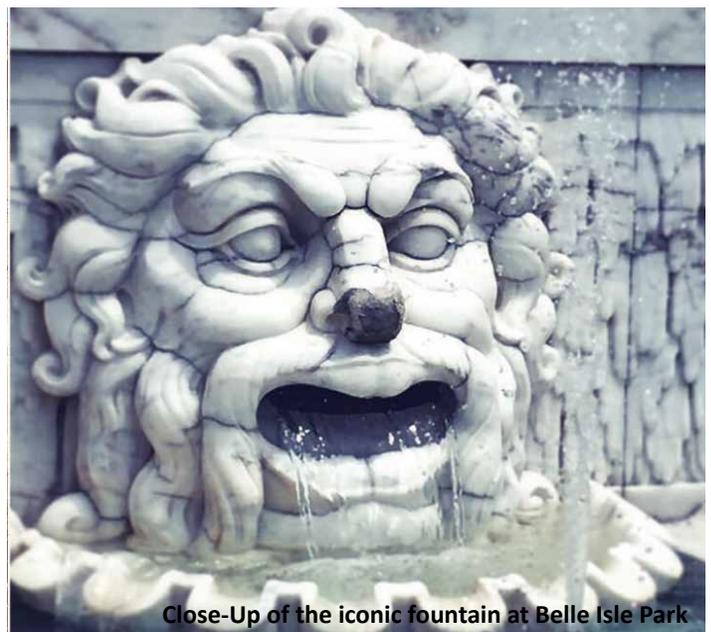
- Does the project align with current infrastructure capital improvements priorities?
- Does the proposal leverage improvements for existing infrastructure adjacent to the proposal?
- Is the proposed use or function available to all park users?
- Does the proposal meet an unmet need in the park?

Based on the established criteria, the score of the proposal would fall into 1 of 3 following categories:

1. Not a feasible project
2. Needs further clarification or revisions to be viable
3. Viable project

If the proposal is not approved it will be sent back to the party with information describing why the project is not currently viable. If there are aspects of the proposal that would benefit the park, but would have to be revised to meet all criteria, the party will have an opportunity to address deficiencies. If the proposal is determined to be a viable project as submitted then it would be forwarded to DNR PRD chiefs and Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC) for approval.

The PRD will work to fully develop and implement the proposal review process by the end of 2017. Clear criteria will be developed for proposal submittal requirements, with an application form and checklist. Items to be submitted with the proposal include a concept plan, site location within the park, cost estimate and funding information, sustainability plan, and a maintenance plan. By creating a clearly defined review process, including the public in major infrastructure and development projects, the State will ensure that Belle Isle Park is protected for future generations while presenting clear expectations and a fair evaluation process to the many groups that are interested in being part of Belle Isle Park's future.



Close-Up of the iconic fountain at Belle Isle Park



Knockerball at the Athletic Fields

## Chapter Nine: Permits, Events and Concessions

### 9.1 Background

The Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) has a long standing relationship with providing access to recreation and resources for purposes of planned events. Belle Isle Park provides a unique opportunity to host such events within the metro-Detroit area. These events should be compatible with the management and purpose of the lands and facilities, consistent with the Department's mission and policies, and any impact on the ability for the public to use the land should be in balance with the benefits received. Written approval is required to conduct these activities. PRD and Belle Isle Park staff has the authority to collect land use and other fees which take into consideration the impact on the resources and staff oversight of the event. Applications to use Belle Isle Park for events are submitted locally and reviewed by local staff.

In 2016, Belle Isle Park hosted 142 events (e.g. triathlon, walk/run events, senior power days, film shoots, yoga, and bike rides, etc.) and over 235 weddings. These events include fundraisers for the park and community events hosted by the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC). Additionally, the BIC operates the Belle Isle Aquarium, which is one of the park's event facilities.

PRD also currently manages six concession contracts on the island, which include boat and bike rental, food concessions, and other services for park visitors. The Belle Isle Golf Course and Athletic Complex are managed under seven-year lease agreements.

Permission to use state lands for events is promulgated under rule 299.921 (n), which requires written approval for events.

Department Policy 26.04.04 establishes the protocol and base procedures for processing permits. This section of the plan expands on that policy and further clarifies the scoring, pricing, and process for handling events on PRD managed properties, including those that are leased by PRD. The goal is to have a consistent process for planning events and activities on Belle Isle. The process has and will continue to evolve to reach this goal, with the following issues to be addressed:

- **Support**- Adequate PRD staffing and software for oversight and administration of events and concession operations
- **Revenue**- Appropriate funding models related to events and concessions and the need to generate revenue for the park
- **Policy**- Recreation passport for events; continuity and best use of staff resources; shelter rental impacts
- **Scope**- Large scale events and their relationship with public use, resources

### 9.2 Support

Currently, PRD has two full time and one part time staff members who are dedicated to assist with events and permits on the island:

- Event Coordinator (full time, 40 hours per week) – event planning, follow up on events, checking on numbers, etc.
- Event Ranger (part time, 20 hours per week) – part time office, part time field
- General Office Assistant (full time, 40 hours per week)- handling correspondence, email, payments for use permit required items (i.e., alcohol, canopies, reservations)

Concession interactions are handled through the park manager and sometimes park supervisor and ranger staff.

Belle Isle Conservancy also has dedicated staff for events:

- Event Coordinator— currently 5 annual events including, but not limited to, Polish the Jewel, Sunset on the Scott, Grand Prixmiere, which is held in conjunction with the Belle Isle Grand Prix, Garden Party on Belle Isle Park, and the Deeper Dive events supporting the Belle Isle Aquarium. Also manages facility rentals for the Belle Isle Aquarium.

In the future it is proposed that the following additional PRD staff positions are established to assist with event planning, enforcement and concessions:

1. Event Ranger (full-time, 40 hours a week) specifically for event management and enforcement activities.
2. Ranger assistance for concessions (part-time/seasonal, 20 hours per week from June through September) - communicate with concessionaries, auditing and enforcement.

Factoring in staff, time, and the ability for the public to utilize park space, there may be times when a limit is reached for how many events can occur on the island. Realistic expectations regarding the duties of park staff must be communicated to event planners and the general public to ensure positive experiences.

The other item needed for the support of events and rentals is a dedicated reservation/booking system for Belle Isle Park. Currently, everything is handled through phone calls, electronic correspondence, Excel and Word documents, but there is no centralized system for both staff and the public to utilize. The proposed electronic system should include:

- Online information to the public
- Calendar of availability
- Electronic forms to apply for an event
- Electronic payment options
- Report generation, such as occupancy, work lists
- Revenue for events
- Flexibility to charge rates
- Diagram of buildings (e.g. Social Tables)
- Integration with the existing shelter program in Central Reservation System (CRS)
- Online application (electronic signatures)
- Contract printouts
- Process alcohol, canopy and other permits
- Additional needs:
  - Insurance requirements
  - Payment schedules
  - Addenda

- Hyperlink to contract, with contract dates
- Maintain old bid documents, past contracts
- Auto-populate terms of leases, contracts

PRD is currently researching options to fulfill this need and the associated costs of program implementation.

## 9.3 Revenue - Fee Structure

Having events on Belle Isle should enhance the recreational experience and provide a benefit to the participants in these activities, as well as the ability for the island to recover costs for events and provide revenue for future needs. The Parks and Recreation Division has adopted a new policy to implement simpler, and more efficient, pricing strategies. The changes in policy utilize the existing Department scoring. The new fee schedule is based on a simpler, encapsulated version of the Department fee structure (IC-1141 – State Land Fees) that are quantified within the approved Department guidelines.

When events are scored and priced using the new standards, the typical events are being charged less than when priced under the City of Detroit guidelines. Staff believes a separate fee structure is needed for Belle Isle Park to address the complexity and demand. Proposed fee changes will continue to be within the existing Department Use Permit fee schedule.

In comparison to other event locations, there are considerable differences in pricing and protocol on Belle Isle. Unlike most state parks, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has authority over roads, which are maintained under state trunk line standards. MDOT, Michigan State Police, DNR-Law Enforcement Division, and Belle Isle Park staff work closely together to review the impacts of events on the public's ability to utilize the routes. Except for specific circumstances, as



Wedding in the Conservatory Showroom

dedicated trunk lines, the roads must be open to the public. This requires more staff resources to assess routes and traffic patterns, impacting the cost.

Currently, different fees are charged based on the use of designated routes versus non-designated routes. One of the ideas incorporated into the new PRD event policy that could benefit Belle Isle Park is to assess fees differently for events that are commercial ventures, or “for profit,” compared to non-profit organizations that are striving to raise money for a benefit or cause. This idea of not charging based on the routes, but rather non-profit or profit events (especially for 5K races), may allow the park to better address fees for efforts.

#### 9.4 Revenue - Recreation Passport/ Voucher Permit

The Recreation Passport required by vehicles to access Belle Isle Park is a significant source of revenue for the park. Monitoring traffic entering the park for an event for Recreation Passport compliance and making passport sales is problematic. Currently 32.2% of the registered vehicles in the State of Michigan (and 38.3% in the city of Detroit) have a Recreation Passport (Secretary of State June 2017).

Handling Recreation Passports as it relates to events, such as weddings, is a statewide issue, but for Belle Isle Park, there are at least 200 weddings a year in addition to other events. Staff has worked with event and wedding planners to look to pre-purchase Recreation Passports. With the Recreation Passports adhering to the registration of the vehicle (match color of sticker to the color of the plate tabs), money handling, and the reconciliation for what is sold and what is not, the process can be cumbersome and not very efficient. To extend this process to all weddings and other events would require a considerable amount of staff time which may not be cost effective in terms of revenue collected and time taken from other duties.

An alternative system, such as a voucher permit that would exempt event attendees from purchasing the Recreation Passport, is currently being evaluated and considered. Any change in policy would need to be reviewed by the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee and approved by the Parks and Recreation Division Chief.

#### 9.5 Scope - Large Scale Events

Belle Isle Park is the busiest state park in Michigan’s park and recreation system. While the size of the island and the amount of diverse activities allows for many events, large scale events may have an impact on the resources and the ability for the public to recreate in a public space.

Currently, for all event applications, the same process is used



regardless of size. The application is scored based on number of participants, duration of event, and the potential impacts to resources, facilities, and general public access. This scoring is handled at the local level and the majority of these events are approved without further review beyond the interaction of the applicant and the unit supervisor. Large scale events require more effort to consider based on greater demands on resources and use of the park. These requests are atypical for most state parks, and are usually reserved for larger recreation areas that have capacity to absorb the use. Belle Isle Park receives a number of large event requests each year due to the proximity to Detroit and the higher profile level, yet, as an island, the park has limited access but high volume of public use. Establishing policies and procedures and a review process to handle the demand and consider the limitations on Belle Isle Park is necessary to communicate the process and be transparent to the public.

Below is an outline plan to establish criteria for Belle Isle Park. To assist with this plan, definitions and standards from previous studies and other recreation entities will be reviewed for comparison.

1. Defining a large scale event
  - o Restricted access to certain areas of park or exclusive use – what is considered acceptable?
  - o Length of restriction – what is considered an appropriate amount of time allowed for impact?
  - o Location of restriction, high traffic areas and routes versus low traffic
  - o Space required to hold event

- Set up and tear down times – scope around actual event
  - Free vs paid event
  - Benefit to public
  - Impact on space being used
  - Infrastructure needed
  - Urban vs rural Park
  - Parking and transportation needs
  - Law enforcement needs
2. Fee Assessment
- Rental of acreage
  - Monies made from concessions
  - Fees for loss of income due to event/restricted access (shelter rental loss, venue rental loss, etc.)
  - Noncompliance fees. Fees assessed for breach of contract.
  - Administrative costs
  - Storage fees
  - Restoration fees

- Should ability to pay be a factor?
  - Should public benefit be a factor? How do we define public benefit?
3. Contracting for Accountability
- Ensure agreements offer mission-related or management/operational benefits
  - Utilize performance bonds and surety bonds
  - Environmental impact studies
  - Create a compliance team (could be community volunteers) to ensure that terms of the contract are not being violated.
  - Understand the environmental impact of events, short term and long term. Contract for damages resulting to the land and facilities and provide terms for restoration.
  - Enforcement of contract. Penalties for breach, revocation of contract. Develop enforcement procedure.
  - Decide what a reasonable contract timeline should be for event. Should each event have one contract per year, leaving room to negotiate and change, or should some events have multi-year contracts with the ability to opt out for noncompliance?
  - Include other items as necessary
4. Evaluation

Using feedback from the MORPACE 2015 survey which asked specific questions relating to large scale events and other community input, it is clear that there are both benefits and disadvantages to large scale events on Belle Isle.

- Benefits of Large Scale Events
  - Revenue generation for park
  - Revenue generation for city
  - Engagement with non-active park users who may come out to an event
  - New experiences for active park users
  - Community building and engagement
  - Broad exposure
- Disadvantages of Large Scale Events
  - Restricted land use
  - Public opposition
  - Negative exposure
  - Administrative costs
  - Detriment to land, resources, facilities
  - Permanent infrastructure



**Wedding at Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory**

The value/benefits of the event must be weighed against the impact/disadvantages.

### 9.6 Other Topics for Future Discussion

The previous narrative is to focus on issues for review which change how current PRD procedures and practices are followed. There is also a need to strengthen or enhance other parts of the program which will require continuous efforts. Some of the ongoing needs are listed below:

- Event and rental protocol: the requirement for written permission for events or business operations associated with events needs to be enforced.
- Better communication through Central Reservation System (CRS) on shelter rentals and Belle Isle Park requirements. For example, additional requests such as bicycle rental, tent structures, and number of persons the shelter accommodates.
- Develop a holistic list of what events and activities require an event or use permit on Belle Isle.
- Develop a plan to cover temporary construction relating to events; need for a diagram of layout etc.

- Approval process to allow for projects to be done in lieu of payments – require prior approval. Maintenance items are not subject to reimbursement for contract costs: hold concessionaires to contract requirements.
- Map documenting approved concession locations.
- Cross reference concessions with events.
- Expand food options.
- Conservatory: evaluate capacity to add more events.
- Stakeholders: pursue a central location to communicate events at Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Belle Isle Nature Center, Belle Isle Boat House Crew, Detroit Yacht Club, and Belle Isle Athletic Club.

### 9.7 Proposed Timeline

DNR-PRD, in association with BIC, has begun to evaluate and identify the needs to address events and concessions at Belle Isle Park as outlined above. PRD will continue to develop definitive policies and procedures to address the issues identified. The policies and recommendations will be drafted and reviewed for implementation in 2018.



Church service at Belle Isle Park



Volunteering at Belle Isle Park

## Chapter Ten:

# Volunteers and Partnerships

### 10.1 Background

Volunteers have provided significant support to Belle Isle Park for over 40 years, having a positive impact on the island and acting as ambassadors and advocates supporting the island's mission. The "All in for Belle Isle" event, held in December 2013 added a renewed interest in volunteerism and partnerships, which the DNR and BIC must continue to use for maximum mutual benefit.

Volunteer efforts on the island enable work to be done over and beyond what is possible with limited staff and resources. The primary benefits are:

- Fulfillment of specific needs of the park, adding additional resources to fill funding and manpower gaps.
  - Park projects
  - Beautification efforts
    - Litter collection on land and in the canals, lakes, and lagoons
- Increased visitor interaction, satisfaction, and overall experience
- Increased number of advocates and ambassadors for the park
- Better community engagement; volunteers gain a sense of ownership for Belle Isle, which cultivates additional support, including financial donors, etc.
- Fostering skilled individuals in natural resource/ park and recreation management and advocacy, with the potential to be great employees in the future

- Education on the need to manage and care for our cultural and natural resources in the wider context
- Sense of accomplishment and involvement for the individuals involved
- Company recognition for service to the community

### 10.2 Volunteer Process

#### Individual/ "Regular" Volunteers:

Regular volunteer opportunities include greeters at the Belle Isle Aquarium and the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Conservatory Lily Pond gardeners, school program docents, and assistance with special events. Monthly stewardship volunteer activities that focus on the removal of invasive species are also scheduled throughout the year. A Volunteer Handbook has been created and a uniform process to become a Belle Isle Volunteer has been established. The process is as follows:

- Opportunities, along with the volunteer application are listed on the DNR and BIC websites
- Individuals wishing to volunteer submit an application
- Application is processed by Volunteer Coordinator
- Accepted volunteers receive an invitation to a New Volunteer Orientation, where they learn about the park and volunteer opportunities from DNR and BIC staff, as well as long-time volunteers

- After orientation, volunteers are invited to on-site training in the area they wish to volunteer.
- Once trained, volunteers receive a volunteer badge and have access to the Volgistics database in which they can schedule their shifts and report their hours.
- Volunteer coordinator, with support from various Committee Chairs & lead volunteers are responsible for recruitment, orientation, training, retention, and appreciation efforts.

Stewardship Saturday volunteers work directly with the DNR Resource Steward, who maintains a calendar of events and mailing list for interested individuals.

### Group Volunteers:

Businesses, education establishments, community and youth groups, and non-profit organizations play a big part in assisting with projects at Belle Isle. Volunteer group opportunities currently include “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful”, an anti-littering campaign, canal clean-up, weeding, daffodil planting, annual spring clean-up, and other specific “Adopt-a Project” opportunities. The following process has been established for managing group volunteers:

- Park Manager and Unit Supervisor maintain a project list of park needs
- Groups contact the Volunteer Coordinator (a joint PRD/BIC position) with desired dates of service and area of interest. The Volunteer Coordinator may also actively recruit volunteers for specific projects
- Based on the identified needs and ability/ interests of the group, a project is assigned and scheduled in partnership between the Volunteer Coordinator, Park Manager, Supervisor, and Lead Ranger
- Volunteer groups are required to sign a volunteer waiver
- The project is supervised/facilitated by either a Park Ranger or the Volunteer Coordinator (or both) depending on the scope of the project

### 10.3 Paid Youth Groups

The DNR partners with a number of youth groups to assist with routine tasks such as litter pick-up and cleaning restrooms. These include Youth Connection (funded through the DNR via summer youth grant funds), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the Michigan Rehabilitation Program. These partnerships provide much needed assistance to park staff, who help to supervise the groups, and work experience opportunities for the individuals in the programs.

### 10.4 Partnerships and Gift and Acceptance

When organizations sponsor a project by making material or monetary contributions, a more formal partnership agreement is entered into between the organization and the DNR. This agreement is called a Gift and Acceptance and is a tool used throughout the PRD system to enable the state to accept

monetary or in-kind contributions for a specific purpose. Similar to the volunteer process, the project may evolve from a known need identified by park or BIC staff, or potential partners may approach PRD or BIC with a proposal. In the latter scenario, the project would be evaluated to ensure it makes a positive contribution to the island based on a number of criteria, as identified in Chapter 8 of this plan. Once approved, the process for project partnerships is as follows:

- Approval of location, design, materials, etc. (Park staff, other DNR division staff, other state agencies, BIC, City of Detroit, as determined by the scope of the project)
- Gift and Acceptance Agreement entered into between the donor and the DNR
- Project Oversight (Park staff, Field Planner, and others as appropriate)
- Organization is entitled to donor recognition subject to applicable law and at the reasonable discretion of the DNR

Monetary donations are also solicited by the Belle Isle Conservancy. Donors may give to special projects or make an unrestricted gift to support the Conservancy. Cash donations made directly to the DNR are covered under Department Policy 01.01-14.

### 10.5 Resources Required

While the benefits of using volunteers and partnerships to assist with projects and programs on Belle Isle are clear, it is important to recognize that staff, material, and monetary resources are required to operate the program. These include:

- Materials, tools, and supplies (Park operating budget / donations)
- Orientation and training materials, supplies, and other needs related to volunteers (BIC budget)
- Staff: Volunteer Coordinator, PRD, and BIC staff

### 10.6 Measuring Success

Measuring the success of the volunteer and partnership program, and continuing to make adjustments that improve the program’s effectiveness are important. The following methods will be used to monitor the program:

- Projects completed; effective use of park staff’s time
- Shifts covered (by volunteers) at the Aquarium and Conservatory
- Visitor satisfaction with customer service experience (specific to the Aquarium & Conservatory)
- Volunteer satisfaction (method- volunteer survey)

Effective monitoring relies on accurate record keeping by park management and the BIC.

## 10.7 Recommended Improvements

The hiring of a Volunteer Coordinator, jointly funded and responsible to the DNR and BIC, has greatly benefited the volunteer program. A team of PRD and BIC staff evaluated the volunteer and partnership program in September 2016 and made the following recommendations for improvements to this program:

- Consider the substantial amount of support that volunteers are able to provide to the park during project planning processes.
- Better integrate long-term volunteers who have donated their time to Belle Isle with park staff.
- Better connect park and Conservancy staff with individual/“regular” volunteers. The volunteer program will benefit from this as volunteers will feel better connected and appreciated.
  - Know where volunteers are stationed and stop in to say, “Hello,” and “Thank you.”
  - Have park and Conservancy staff attend and speak at scheduled new Volunteer Orientations and the annual appreciation event(s).

- Combine required forms (and other volunteer related documents) to reflect the joint program, where feasible.
- Continue to develop the department with full support from both the DNR and the BIC.
- Provide the same Volunteer Orientation to youth groups that work on Belle Isle, so they are appropriately informed and equipped to represent Belle Isle Park.
- Continue to recognize volunteerism through annual awards etc.

The DNR and BIC appreciate the passion, time, and talent that volunteers and partners provide and will continue to work hard to ensure the full benefits of the program are realized, fostering the community, pioneering, and philanthropic spirit surrounding Belle Isle Park into the future.



The Lily Pond

# Appendices

| PARK PROFILE |  |
|--------------|--|
| AREA         | 982 Acres                              |
| COUNTY       | Wayne County                           |
| TOWNSHIP     | City of Detroit, Michigan              |
| LATITUDE     | 42°20'25"N                             |
| LONGITUDE    | 82°59'12"W                             |
| ADDRESS      | 2 Inselruhe Drive<br>Detroit, MI 48207 |
| PHONE        | (844) 235-5375                         |



## Appendix A: Supporting Analysis

### A.1 Park Overview

The City of Detroit purchased Belle Isle in 1879. It opened the island as a public park in 1880 and hired Frederick Law Olmsted to develop the preliminary plan for the island in 1882. However, only Olmsted's recommendations for Central Avenue, a canal system, a combination pavilion, a ferry landing, and some landscaping were implemented.

The island is rich in culture, history, and natural resources. The growing demand for open spaces and recreational opportunities for city residents led to a variety of developments on the island over the years. The attractions on the island, including Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Belle Isle Nature Center, James Scott Memorial Fountain, and Dossin Great Lakes Museum, provide rich educational value and strong cultural identity to the park, as well as the City of Detroit. Visitors also come to Belle Isle for the scenic landscape, the beach, fishing, boating, and athletic, cultural, family, and community activities.

Belle Isle became Michigan's 102nd State Park in February 2014 and is currently operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under a 30-year lease agreement with the City of Detroit.

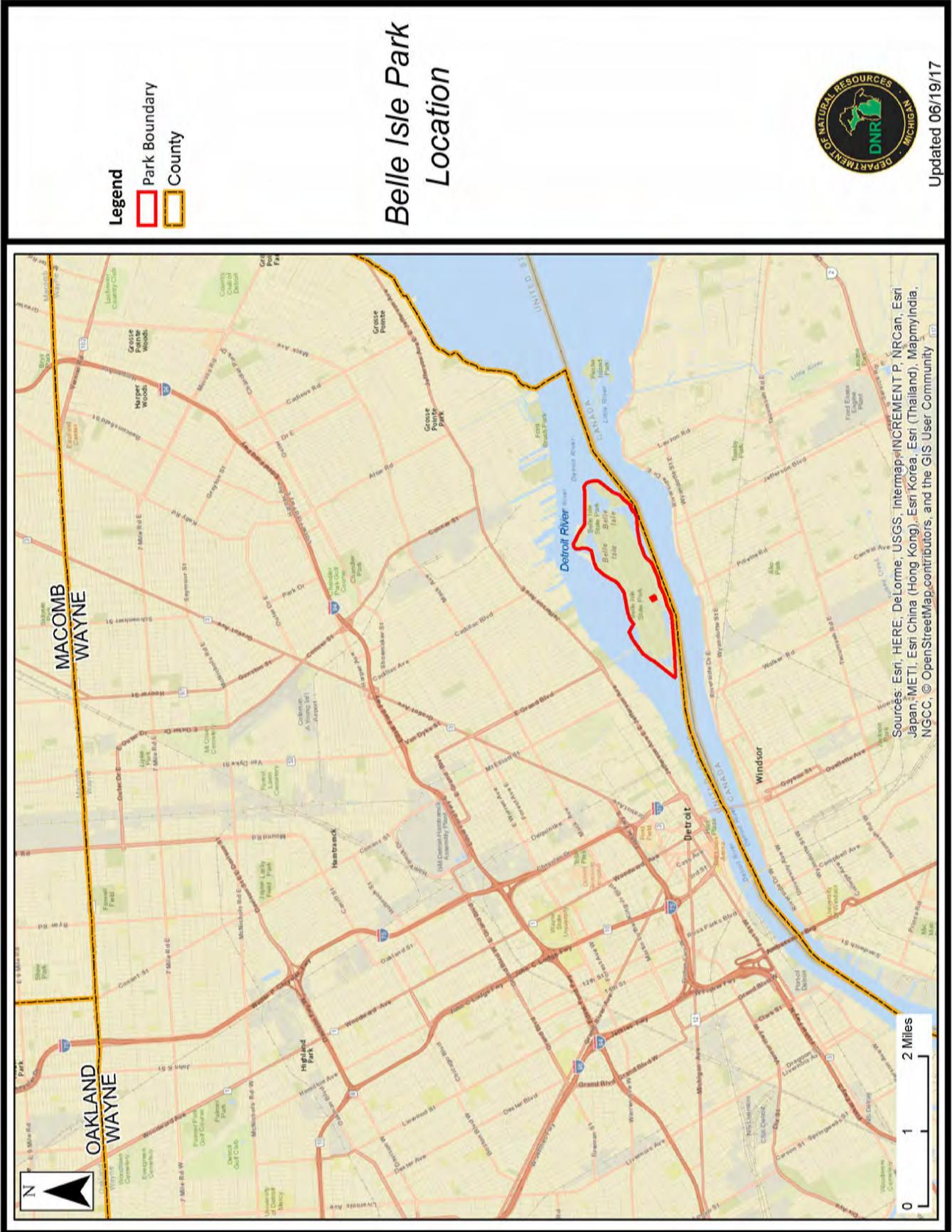
Belle Isle is operated by the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division (PRD),

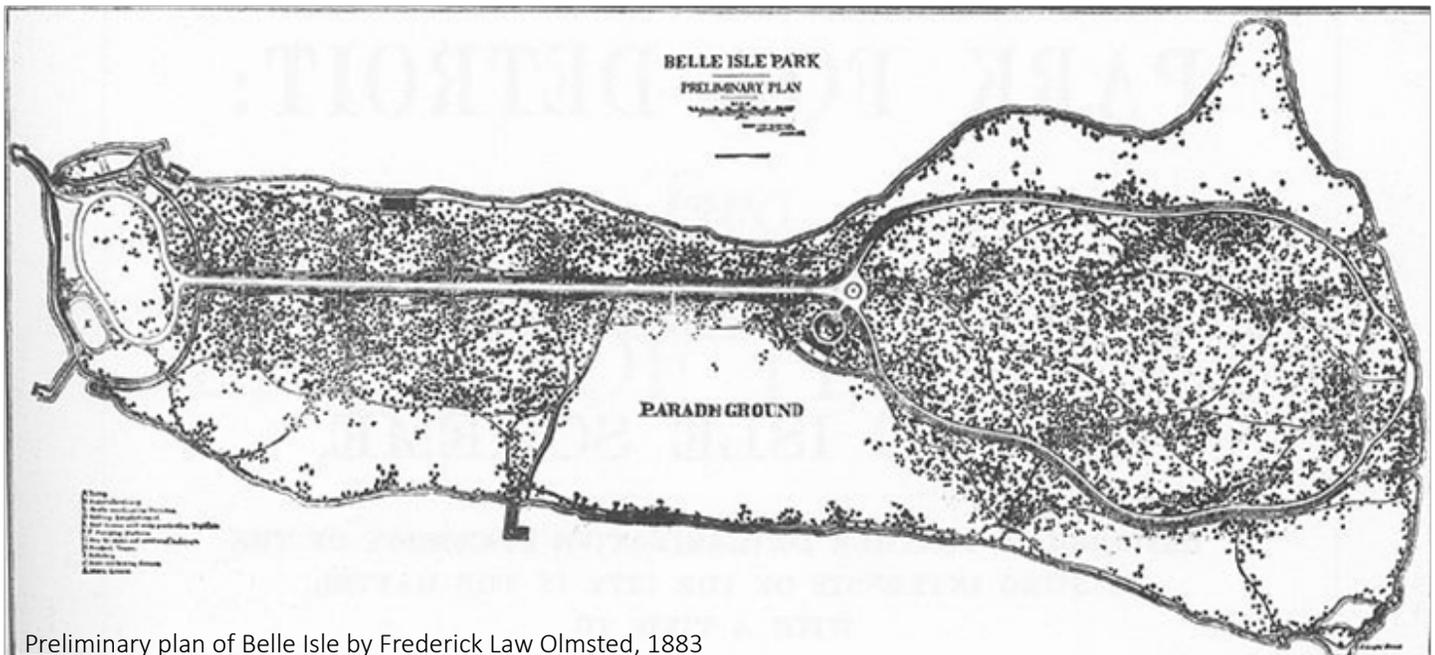
assisted by the DNR Law Enforcement Division (LED), other DNR divisions, Michigan State Police (MSP), and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). PRD has strong support from the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) and guidance from the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC).

### Location & Community

This 982-acre island park is situated in the Detroit River between the United States and Canada. The island is connected by the MacArthur Bridge to mainland Detroit on Jefferson Avenue. The park is easily accessible by car from I-75, I-94, I-96, or U.S. 10 (Lodge Freeway); and all major arteries through the City. Detroit Department of Transportation offers a bus service to the island via the #12 Conant Route.

The park is integral with the revitalized riverfront area, which encompasses the Detroit Riverwalk, Gabriel Richards Park, Chene Park, William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor, the Outdoor Adventure Center, and the Renaissance Center. The city skylines of Detroit and Windsor on both sides of the river generate beautiful scenery and unique experiences that differ from those seen from the mainland. Residents and visitors of Detroit have valued this large area of open space in the urban environment for over 135 years.





Preliminary plan of Belle Isle by Frederick Law Olmsted, 1883

## A.2 History of Belle Isle Park

Anishinaabe (Odawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomi) people knew Belle Isle long before the French arrived in Detroit in 1701. It was once a resting place for migratory swans, and the French recorded the Anishinaabemowin name for the island as Wahnabezee (Swan Island). Detroit was part of New France until 1760, when the British took over. French settlers used the island as common pasture and called it Ile aux Cochons (Hog Island). A British family and troops who attempted to develop it and use it for garrison livestock and crops were some of the first casualties of Pontiac's Rebellion in 1763. Under the British, the island passed into private ownership, a tale that includes purchase from Native Americans and legal challenges from those who believed it should be common land. The Americans who took possession of Detroit in 1796 finally confirmed ownership in 1817. On July 4, 1845, in honor of Miss Isabella Cass, daughter of U.S. senator and former Territorial Governor Lewis Cass, the name of the island was changed to Belle Isle. The island remained in private ownership until the City of Detroit purchased it in 1879 for a public park and rail crossing to Canada using bonds authorized by the state legislature. The formal opening ceremonies for the city park were conducted on May 10, 1880, and the name Belle Isle Park was established officially by ordinance in August 1881.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed New York City's Central Park, produced preliminary designs for Belle Isle. His vision was to preserve the woodland forest, which was viewed as the most unique asset of the island. Olmsted's plan included a ferry dock for boats coming to the island, a central

promenade, and a man-made canal for pleasure boating. However, Olmsted resigned before his contract expired and only some of his design elements were implemented. The Detroit News editor, Michael Dee, offered an alternative plan for the island, which was later adopted and carried out. The principles of Olmsted's design have always influenced Belle Isle. Even though the island has been constantly changing and transforming, the basic concept of a formal zone, an active zone, and a natural zone has been retained.

The current island is nearly 300 acres larger in size than its natural state. Dredging of man-made lakes, including Lake Takoma and Lake Muskoday, provided soil for expansion. Other extensions of the island used landfill and soil excavated from downtown Detroit's construction sites. The last major extension was for the lighthouse designed by Albert Kahn in 1929.

The ferry dock pavilion proposed by Olmsted was completed in 1884. The first Casino building was built in 1886 at the western end of Central Avenue, north of the current Casino. It was a wooden three-story structure designed by John Donaldson and Henry Meier in the Queen Anne-style with a canopied veranda. The current Casino, constructed in 1906, was designed by architects Van Leyen and Schilling. It is a grand, two-story Beaux-Arts building with ornate towers framing the building's four corners, and encircling verandas provide visitors with shelter. The building was opened to the public in 1908 and served as a key meeting point for visitors and groups on the island in the past, as it does today.<sup>2</sup>

1 "A History of Belle Isle" compiled by the Friends of Belle Isle, January 2002

2 Lori Feret, BIC Historian, one page descriptions of Belle Isle structures

The construction of a steel swing bridge in 1889 attracted increasing numbers of visitors to the island and allowed more development to occur. In April 1915, the bridge was decimated by fire caused by ash falling from a hot coal truck, which quickly destroyed the wood traffic deck. The current bridge was designed and constructed in 1918, with a reinforced concrete deck and 35-foot roadway, including capacity for streetcar tracks and two 12-foot sidewalks. The name was changed to General MacArthur Bridge in 1953. This bridge was rehabilitated in 1986.

Belle Isle was ideally situated for commercial fisheries and housed several when it became a park. In 1884, the park was creating ponds and wanted them stocked; the state was interested in breeding operations and planted 4 million whitefish at Belle Isle that year.

At the end of the 1889 commercial fishing season, the Detroit board of park commissioners withdrew leases from all private fisheries, out of concern for the “unsightly fish pounds and fishery buildings that disfigured the island.” Then, in early 1890, it approved the Fish Commission’s request to use the Inselruhe fishery as long as it created a “tasteful and satisfactory” building and removed temporary structures at the end of the season.

The Aquarium, Conservatory, and the formal garden, built in 1904, were designed by Albert Kahn. The sports field complex was developed beginning in 1883, and today includes a baseball diamond, running track, handball courts, tennis courts, and a soccer field. The Belle Isle Zoo can trace its history to a deer park established in 1886. Cages and additional animals were added over time. By 1909, the Belle Isle Zoo, the location of the official Detroit Zoo, had 150 animals on exhibit over a 32-acre parcel of the park. The Detroit Zoo moved to Royal Oak in 1928, gradually replacing Belle Isle’s facility (which closed in 1956) as the city’s major zoological park. Efforts to create a different zoo experience on the island included the Children’s Zoo from 1947 to 1979, when it was dismantled due to “prohibitive maintenance costs.” In 1980, the Safariland Zoo, with elevated walk ways, was constructed to give visitors an aerial view of the exhibits. This closed in 2002 and now sits abandoned.<sup>3,4</sup>

Music was also an integral part of Belle Isle Park. In the early days, orchestras performed on the ferries going to and from the island. A pagoda-like structure was built on a bridge over the Loop Canal shortly after the turn of the 20th century and was used as the setting for regular music performances. The pagoda bandstand was demolished in 1942. In the 1920s, a rounded band shell was built on a small waterway between the Nancy Brown Carillon Tower and the skating pavilion. It

3 MI Fish Commission Sixth Biennial Report 1883-1884, pages 29-30

4 MI Fish Commission Ninth Biennial Report 1889-1890, part 1, pages 54-55

was replaced by the Remick Music Shell in 1950, named after Detroit music publisher Jerome H. Remick. The music shell became the summer home of the Detroit Concert Band, with concerts continuing until 1980.

Over the years, many of the structures and buildings built in the early 20th century required major renovation due to damage by natural and weather-related hazards.

As a city park, Belle Isle has reflected the city’s social and cultural changes. Weekly band concerts were first performed in 1882 by the Detroit Opera House. In 1933, as Prohibition ended and the Great Depression drove up unemployment, the Detroit City Council debated the merits of adding a beer garden near the band shell, creating “a workingman’s paradise, where his starving cultural self could be nourished by classic renditions of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra while his parched throat would be refreshed by a stimulating glass of beer.” Despite the promise of jobs and respite for the unemployed, the Allied Youth for Prohibition and concerns about cutting into Casino revenues won the day.

The workers who came to Detroit as World War II production boomed in the early 1940s found long hours, a lack of housing and racial tension. On a hot, humid Sunday in 1943, racial incidents among the 100,000 people who jammed Belle Isle became a riot that spread across the city for two more days and left 34 people dead and hundreds injured.

By 1950, Belle Isle had become a repository for numerous monuments and fountains. As annual visitation remained high, roads were widened, facilities were added and canal flow was cut off from the river to control flooding. In the 1960s and 70s budget problems began to plague the park,



Historic photo of Belle Isle Casino



Historic photo of visitors canoeing Belle Isle Park

affecting the parks facilities and activities. In 1972, the Huron Clinton Metropark Authority designed a plan to re-energize the park. The suggestion of a toll gate to raise revenue and for management by the HCMA drew opposition and was never realized.

The more recent decline of manufacturing industries and urban growth led to declining budgets for park management and maintenance. The Detroit's Recreation Department hired Hamilton Anderson Associates and Zachary Associates to develop a long-term comprehensive master plan for Belle Isle in 1995. The plan was approved by the city in 2005, but few of the recommendations in the plan have been carried out. In 2013, the city signed a 30 year lease with Michigan Department of Natural Resources to operate and manage the park, by which Belle Isle became the 102nd state park in Michigan. With the enhanced resources of the state, the park is being revitalized and visitor numbers are increasing again.

### A.3 Demographics

The U.S. Census Bureau data demonstrates comparative information for the City of Detroit, Wayne County, and the State of Michigan.

There is a significant difference in income and housing conditions in the City of Detroit compared with the county and the state. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in the City of Detroit is about \$45,100, which is only about half of the median value for Wayne County and about one third of the state value. The median household income is also considerably lower. The poverty rate of the city almost reaches 40% of the population, compared to 15.8% in the state as a whole. The education attainment for residents of the City of Detroit is low compared to the county and state level, most notably for the attainment of bachelor's degree or higher.

The population within the city is very dense, with high rise buildings and apartments providing much of the accommodation rather than single family houses.

| DEMOGRAPHICS   |              |              |           |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| POPULATION   | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| Population estimates, July 1, 2015, (V2015)  | 677,116      | 1,759,335    | 9,922,576 |
| Population estimates base, April 1, 2010, (V2015)                                      | 713,862      | 1,820,641    | 9,884,129 |
| Population, percent change- April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2015, (V2015)    | -5.1         | -3.4         | 0.4       |
| Population, Census, April 1, 2010  | 713,777      | 1,820,584    | 9,883,640 |
| Persons under 5 years, percent, April 1, 2010  | 7.0          | 6.5          | 6.0       |
| Persons under 18 years, percent, April 1, 2010   | 26.7         | 25.4         | 23.7      |
| Persons 65 years and over, percent, April 1, 2010                                      | 11.5         | 12.7         | 13.8      |
| Female persons, percent, April 1, 2010   | 52.7         | 52.0         | 50.9      |
| White alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)  | 10.6         | 52.3         | 78.9      |
| Black or African American alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)                            | 82.7         | 40.5         | 14.2      |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)                    | 0.4          | 0.4          | 0.6       |
| Asian alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)  | 1.1          | 2.5          | 2.4       |
| Two or More Races, percent, April 1, 2010  | 2.2          | 2.4          | 2.3       |
| Hispanic or Latino, percent, April 1, 2010 (b)   | 6.8          | 5.2          | 4.4       |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, April 1, 2010                            | 7.8          | 49.6         | 76.6      |
| HEALTH   | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2010-2014                              | 16.0         | 12.3         | 10.2      |
| Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent                          | 21.4         | 12.2         | 7.1       |
| FAMILIES AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS   | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| Households, 2010-2014  | 254,197      | 667,553      | 3,827,880 |
| Persons per household, 2010-2014   | 2.69         | 2.65         | 2.52      |
| Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2010-2014             | 83.7         | 85.6         | 85.3      |
| Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2010-2014 | 9.8          | 12.8         | 9.1       |
| HOUSING  | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| Housing units, April 1, 2010   | 349,170      | 821,693      | 4,532,233 |
| Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2010-2014  | 50.7         | 63.9         | 71.5      |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2010-2014                                | \$45,100     | \$83,200     | \$120,200 |
| Median gross rent, 2010-2014   | \$756        | \$797        | \$780     |
| EDUCATION  | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2010-2014            | 77.8         | 84.4         | 89.3      |
| Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2010-2014               | 13.1         | 21.6         | 26.4      |

| DEMOGRAPHICS, CONTINUED  |              |              |           |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| INCOME AND POVERTY   | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| Median household income (in 2014 dollars), 2010-2014             | \$26,095     | \$41,421     | \$49,087  |
| Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2014 dollars), 2010-2014 | \$14,984     | \$22,643     | \$26,143  |
| Persons in poverty, percent                                      | 39.8         | 24.1         | 15.8      |
| GEOGRAPHY  | DETROIT CITY | WAYNE COUNTY | MICHIGAN  |
| Population per square mile, 2010                                 | 5,144.3      | 2974.4       | 174.8     |
| Land area in square miles, 2010                                  | 138.75       | 612.08       | 56,538.90 |

## A.4 Regional Recreation Resources

The following recreation resources have been identified in the region surrounding Belle Isle Park.

### Federally Owned Resources

#### Wildlife Refuges

- Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge: the only international wildlife refuge in North America, located along the 48 miles of Detroit River and Western Lake Erie shorelines. The refuge is made up of almost 6,000 acres of islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands. In 2001, the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established as a result of binational efforts from politicians, conservation leaders, and local communities to build a sustainable future for the Detroit River and western Lake Erie ecosystems. New facilities including a visitor center are planned to open in 2017.

### State Owned Resources

#### State Parks and Recreation Areas

- William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor: the first urban state park in Michigan, located along the waterfront of downtown Detroit. The park has become a popular destination for Detroiters for walking, biking, and group gathering. Much of the site was originally a brownfield site. Milliken State Park includes a wetlands storm water demonstration that showcases nature's water filtration.
- Maybury State Park: located in Northville, which is about 35 miles west of the City of Detroit, in northwest Wayne County. The 944-acre park offers a variety of day-use recreational options including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, equestrian riding, picnicking, and fishing.
- Wm. C. Sterling State Park: located about 40 miles south of the City of Detroit, on the shoreline of Lake Erie. The park is about 1,300 acres in size and offers over one mile of beach area for water sports including swimming, boating, and shore fishing. The site also has a modern campground. Hiking, biking, metal detecting, wildlife viewing, and swimming are popular activities in the park.

- Bald Mountain Recreation Area: located about 40 miles north of Detroit. The park consists of 4,637 rolling acres with some of the steepest hills in southeastern Michigan. The park offers rustic cabins for overnight accommodation. Hunting, hiking, swimming, and fishing are some of the recreational opportunities available at the park.

#### State Wildlife/Game Areas

- Pointe Mouillee State Game Area: consists of 3 units along and on the Detroit River, located about 40 miles south of Belle Isle. Waterfowl, ring-necked pheasant, and white-tailed deer are available species in the game area. A wildlife refuge is also located within the game area in Berlin Charter Township.

#### State Trails

- Iron Belle Trail: the longest designated state trail in the nation, starting from Belle Isle and continuing to Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula, with two routes for biking and hiking. The total length of the hiking trail will be 1,221 miles long and the biking trail will be 777 miles long, which connects many existing local and state trails.

#### Outdoor Adventure Center

- Located on Detroit's riverfront in the historic Globe Building, the Outdoor Adventure Center presents an "Up North" experience in downtown Detroit. The center opened in 2015 and provides hands-on activities, exhibits and simulators to introduce visitors to different outdoor experiences that can be found throughout Michigan.

### Huron Clinton Metro Parks

Huron-Clinton Metro Parks are a series of thirteen parks located throughout southeast Michigan. Five of them are within the proximity of Belle Isle and the City of Detroit. The rest of the metro parks are located around the outskirts of Metro Detroit.

- Lower Huron Metro Park: located about 35 miles southwest of Detroit consists of 1,258 acres of mature woodlands, and grassy meadows alongside the Huron

River. The park offers biking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming, and ice skating in winter. It also includes a golf course, sports court, and an aquatic center.

- Willow Metro Park: located in close proximity to the Lower Huron Metro Park is also a natural scenic area developed along the Huron River. The park is 1,531 acres in size and offers a 24-hole disc golf course, sports courts, and swimming. Activities like ice skating, sledding, and cross-country skiing are available in winter.
- Oakwoods Metro Park: located approx. 35 miles from to Belle Isle. About 400 acres of the park have been preserved as natural study area, where a nature center is located. Horseback riding, boating, and fishing around the nature trails are activities available in the park.
- Lake Erie Metro Park: located 35 miles south of the city and north of the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area. The park is approximately 1,607 acres in size, with a natural environment that supports a variety of wildlife and waterfowl. The site features include shelters, a wave-action swimming pool, and a child-size town play area.
- Lake St. Clair Metro Park: the park is about 25 miles northeast of the City of Detroit along the shoreline of Lake St. Clair. The shoreline is over 1 mile long with a 1,600-foot boardwalk. The park has recreational facilities for boaters, swimmers, and fishermen. There is also a nature center in the park for educational purposes.

## City of Detroit

1. Dequindre Cut Greenway: a 2.6-mile long trail which was formerly an abandoned rail line and later redeveloped to an urban recreational walkway. The trail provides pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Eastern Market and the Detroit Riverfront.
2. Detroit River Walk: the walk is about 3.5 miles along the waterfront of Downtown Detroit, where residents and visitors can enjoy the spectacular view of the Hart Plaza, city skyline, and Detroit River.
3. City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for 308 parks and 12 recreation facilities across every neighborhood in the city. Detroit's parks range from mini parks under 2 acres of land, to sprawling parks like Rouge Park, which covers more than 1,000 acres. In close proximity to Belle Isle are:
  - Gabriel Richards Park, 23 acres, located across the MacArthur Bridge from Belle Isle
  - Chene Park, 9.6-acre riverfront park featuring an amphitheater, adjacent to William G. Milliken State Park

The larger city parks offering a range of recreational opportunities include the following:

- Chandler Park, 202.4 acres
- Palmer Park, 280.2 acres
- Rouge Park, 1181.39 acres
- Eliza Howell Park, 251.3 acres

In addition, the city features a wide range of public, non-profit, and private arts, cultural and sporting venue attractions.

## A.5 Land Ownership

The island was purchased by the City of Detroit in 1879 to be used as a public city park. The city, entered into a lease agreement with the State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, in September of 2013. The lease was initiated for a period of 30 years with two renewal periods that occur automatically unless either party gives notice at least one year prior to the expiration of the applicable term. Under the agreement, the Department of Natural Resources will continue to enhance the operation, maintenance, and management of Belle Isle Park for the benefit of the city and the general public. The Park will be operated as a state park, subject to the rules and regulations of the Department of Natural Resources regarding state parks. A copy of the lease agreement is located in Appendix B.

### Land on Belle Isle excluded from the Lease to the DNR

#### A. Coast Guard Station

Belle Isle Station is primarily a search and rescue unit, operating within the geographic area. The unit is located on the southern edge of the island, owned by the U.S. Coast Guard. The property (1 ¼ acres) was purchased on April 6, 1881 from the City of Detroit, but the current coast guard station was not constructed until 1942.



Dequindre Cut Greenway, Detroit. Photo: JJR Photography

**B. City water intake**

The city water intake station is a separate piece of land located on the north east corner of Belle Isle, connected to the island by bridge.

**C. Detroit Yacht Club**

The club is located on a separate piece of land leased from the City of Detroit by the Detroit Yacht Club. It is accessible from Belle Isle or through water transportation.

**D. Greenhouses**

The greenhouses adjacent to the White House on Inselruhe Avenue are owned by the City of Detroit, which supplies plant needs in the city.

**Leases and Memoranda of Agreement (MOA)**

- MOA between City of Detroit and Detroit Zoological Society of Natural Zoo, March 2006-June 30, 2020
- MOA between City of Detroit and Detroit Historical Society for Dossin Great Lakes Museum, March 2006-June 30, 2020
- Lease between DNR and Friends of Detroit Rowing, Inc., March 1, 2015-February 28, 2045
- Lease between City of Detroit and Board of Education of the School District, Belle Isle Horticulture Center

**Easements**

There are no known easements granted or acquired directly by the DNR. However, any easements in place on the property prior to the DNR entering into the lease agreement remain in effect. One such easement impacts the management of the Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory:

A Historic Preservation Easement between the City of Detroit Recreation Department and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority through its State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is in effect for the Belle Isle Conservatory and Aquarium Complex for a period of 50 years beginning October 24, 2012. This requires that the property is maintained in a sound state of repair and preserved in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, that SHPO is notified of any future work outside the scope of the Easement and that public access is provided to the property, in addition to other requirements.

**Facility Vendors**

Come Play Detroit (Athletic Complex) April 1, 2015-March 21, 2022

Dan Teak LLC (Golf Driving Range) March 18, 2015-November 30,2017

A number of other operating and concession agreements are in place for food vendors, rentals, service providers, catering, and events services.



## A.6 Legal Mandates

For all park Management Plans, all legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the Management Plan and subsequent Action Plans. For our planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers to not only to federal and state law, but also the administrative tools of “Policy” and “Directive” of the Natural Resource Commission, the Department, and the Parks & Recreation Division. Examples include Orders of the Director, Park and Recreation Areas State Land Rules and all other laws, commission orders, and rules or directives that apply to the park.

Specific to Belle Isle Park, the following legal mandates have been identified.

| FEDERAL STATUTE  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 1973</b>  |   |
| This Act authorizes the determination and listing of species as endangered and threatened, and prohibits unauthorized taking, possession, sale and transport of endangered species.  |   |
| <b>NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, 1966 AS AMENDED</b>   |   |
| This is the primary federal law governing the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States. The law establishes a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections which encourage the identification and protection of cultural and historic resources of national, state, tribal and local significance.   |   |
| <b>BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT, 1940 AND AMENDMENTS</b>   |   |
| This Act prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from “taking” bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The Act defines “take” as “pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb.” “Disturb” includes actions that may result in injury to the eagle, a decrease in its productivity or nest abandonment. |   |
| STATE STATUTE  |   |
| <b>NATIONAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS</b>  |   |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 5   | Gives the DNR authority to make rules to support its mission. This includes State Land Rules, Land Use Orders, Wildlife Conservation Orders, Fisheries Orders and Watercraft Control.   |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 31 Water Resources Protection   | Provides authority to DEQ to require a permit for any occupation, construction, filling, or grade change within the 100-year floodplain of a river, stream, drain, or inland lake.  |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 301 Inland Lakes and Streams  | Requires a permit from the state (DEQ) to undertake certain activities relating to inland lakes and streams, such as dredging, fill, marinas, structures, alteration of flow, etc.  |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 303 Wetlands Protection   | Requires a permit from the state (DEQ) to undertake certain activities in regulated wetlands, such as, dredging, fill, construction or drainage.  |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 741 State Park System   | The department shall create, maintain, operate, promote, and make available for public use and enjoyment a system of state parks to preserve and protect Michigan’s significant natural resources and areas of natural beauty or historic significance, to provide open space for public recreation, and to provide an opportunity to understand Michigan’s natural resources and the need to protect and manage those resources. |
| PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 Recreation Passport  | This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site “Recreation Passport” that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle.  |
| PA 451 of 1994, Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities  | The state reserves the exclusive right and privilege to all aboriginal records and other antiquities including those found on the bottomlands of the Great Lakes.   |
| <b>PUBLIC HEALTH CODE</b>  |   |
| PA 368 of 1978, Part 125, Campgrounds, Swimming Areas and Swimmers’ Itch   | Established to protect and promote the public health by establishing health code requirements and regulations that all public (including DNR) and private campgrounds must meet. Includes permitting, licensing, inspections and rules regarding sanitation, safety standards and public health. Also covers testing and evaluating quality of water at bathing beaches, safety and rescue equipment.                             |

## Orders

The following Orders apply to Belle Isle Park

### Land Use Orders of the Director

#### **5.2 Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in certain state parks and recreation areas, prohibited conduct.**

Order 5.2 A person shall not do any of the following:

(9) Possess open intoxicants, without written authorization of the department

(a) Belle Isle SP

Latest revision posted Feb. 19, 2014.

#### **5.12 Certain state parks and recreation areas, requirements for use, certain conduct prohibited.**

Order 5.12. The following conduct shall apply to use of Michigan state parks and recreation areas:

Belle Isle Park, prohibited conduct.

(24) A person shall not do any of the following at Belle Isle Park.

(a) Enter and remain or park a vehicle of any type on the premises of the Belle Isle Park, between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m., without permission of the department.

(b) Erect a canopy larger than 9 feet by 9 feet, and have more than 2 canopies per group unless with written permission of the department.

(c) Erect a canopy that is not open on two sides of the structure.

(d) Erect a canopy unless someone of 21 years of age or older is supervising.

(e) Skate, bicycle, or use any similar contrivances on buildings or structures not otherwise developed for this purpose.

(f) Feed geese, gulls, and other bird species.

(g) Possess a grill of any type in and around playscapes, giant slides or next to buildings

(h) Operate a snowmobile, or other motorized snow contrivance without written permission from an authorized representative of the department.

Latest revision posted Dec. 14, 2015.

#### **5.16a Entry, use and occupancy of certain state parks, recreation areas and scenic sites, prohibited conduct.**

Order 5.16a (1) A person shall not do any of the following:

(a) Enter any of the following state-owned lands with a motor vehicle unless a valid Michigan recreation passport has been purchased and affixed to the vehicle:

(8) Belle Isle SP, Wayne County.

### **Special Local Watercraft Controls – Wayne County DETROIT RIVER, ROUGE RIVER, AND WATERS WITHIN CITY LIMITS - WC-82-97-001.**

(A) WORDS AND PHRASES. All words and phrases used in this section shall be construed and have the same meaning as those words and phrases defined in the natural resources and environmental protection act, as amended, being MCL 324.101 et seq.: MSA 13A.101 et seq.

(B) PROHIBITIONS. On the waters of the Detroit River and the Rouge River, and those canals and channels connected thereto, located within the city limits, the following provisions apply:

(1) It shall be unlawful for the operator of a vessel to exceed a slow-no wake speed when within two hundred (200) feet of any shore, except:

(a) It shall be unlawful for the operator of a vessel to exceed a slow-no wake speed on the Detroit River when within four hundred (400) feet of any shore, from the western city of Detroit corporate limits to the St. Aubin marina.

(b) It shall be unlawful for the operator of a vessel to exceed a slow-no wake speed on that part of the Detroit River between the mainland shore and the north shore of Belle Isle, commencing from the St. Aubin marina to a line from the most eastern point of Belle Isle to Connors Creek extended.

(c) It shall be unlawful for the operator of a vessel to exceed a slow-no wake speed on that part of the Detroit River when within four hundred (400) feet of any shore, from Connors Creek extended to the eastern city of Detroit corporate limits.

It shall be unlawful, at any time, to operate a vessel at a speed in excess of forty (40) miles per hours (64 kilometers per hours).

History: Eff: January 5, 1998

### **State Land Rules**

Parks and Recreation Areas – State Land Rules are issued by authority conferred on the Michigan DNR by Section 504 of 1994 PA 451 MCL 324.504. The rules cover entry, use and occupation of state lands and unlawful acts.

### **U.S. Border Patrol Presence**

The border patrol monitors the boundaries between Canada and the United States daily. The border patrol will patrol the park 24 hours a day, seven days per week, checking the park's border along the Detroit River.

## A.7 Natural Resources

### Overview

Belle Isle Park is a 982-acre urban park with natural features of statewide or greater significance. This park contains the following exceptional natural features recognized by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI):

- 1 exemplary natural community, the 200-acre wet-mesic flatwoods forest
- 12 species (12 occurrences) of endangered, threatened, or special concern plants. Many of these have not been observed on the island since early 1900s.
- 25 species (31 occurrences) of endangered, threatened, or special concern animals. The majority of the animals are mussels and fish documented in waters of the Detroit River just offshore of the island.
- The federal threatened Eastern massasauga rattlesnake is believed to have historically occurred on the island, but is now extirpated.
- The federal endangered Eastern white prairie fringed orchid once was prolific on the island. It is now believed to be extirpated.

### Landscape Context

A regional landscape ecosystem classification has been developed for Michigan, which distinguishes major landscapes based on macroclimate, physiography, soil, and vegetation. Belle Isle is located in the Maumee Lake Plain within the Southern Lower Michigan Ecoregion (Section VI.1.1).

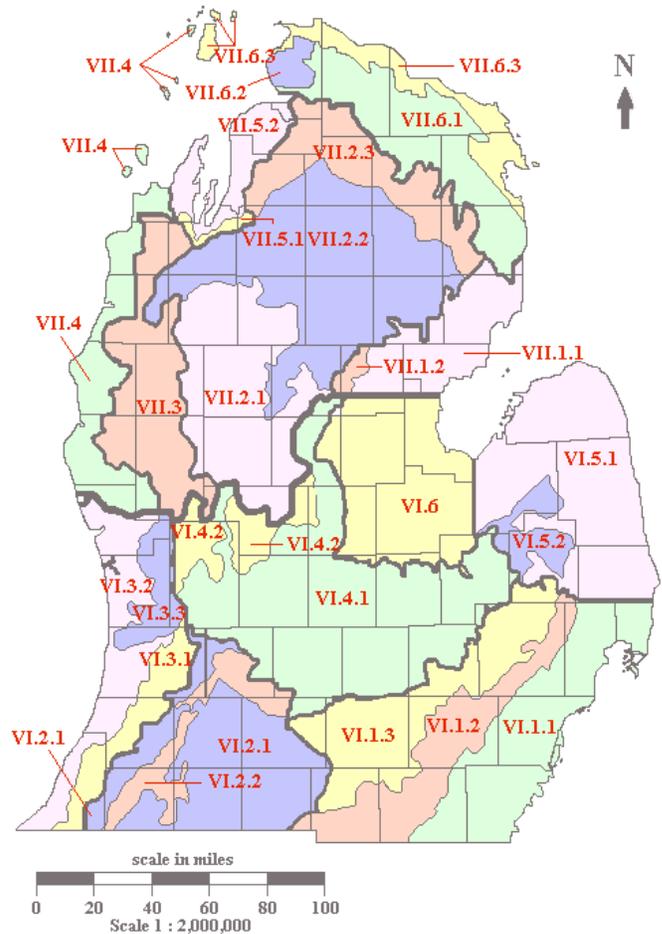
### Climate

The climate of Belle Isle is generally moderated by Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie with a longer growing season that ranges from 150 to 180 days. The temperature in winter can go as low as -26.5 F to -18.5 F. Snowfall in this ecoregion ranges between 30 inches to 50 inches and average annual precipitation ranges from 30 to 32 inches.

### Water Resources

The island is surrounded by the Detroit River water body, as part of the Great Lakes Connecting Channel (EPA). The Detroit River sources from Lake St. Clair in the north, flowing to Lake Erie in the south and forming the boundary between Detroit and Windsor, Canada for 24 nautical miles.

On Belle Isle, there are three man-made lakes, one lagoon and a complete canal system connecting all the water sources. The canals and lakes form a strangely shaped impoundment. Water levels are maintained by pumps and water control structures. The waterways used to be very popular for boating activities before the canals became unnavigable. The lakes were created by dredging the original marshes and wetlands



Source: Albert, Dennis A. 1994. Regional landscape ecosystems of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin: a working map and classification.

that once existed. The land surrounding Blue Heron Lagoon on the east end of Belle Isle was formed by fill dirt transported from the construction of basements and foundations for buildings within downtown Detroit. This lagoon provides important fish habitat and recreational fishing opportunity. The lagoon also provides significant habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl.

The chronological order of when the significant water bodies on Belle Isle were formed is as follows:

- 1883 – Construction of the Loop Canal at the upper end of the island began. It was 5 feet deep and 50 feet wide built at a cost of \$11,000.
- 1884 – Marsh Run Canal was built and lasted until 1930 when it was filled in.
- 1887 – Lake Takoma was formed.
- 1889 – Lake Okonoka was formed
- 1890 – Nashua Creek was completed
- 1893 – Muskoday Lake is formed
- 1930 – Blue Heron Lagoon was completed.



Wildlife at Belle Isle Park

### Detroit River Area of Concern, Environmental Protection Agency

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1987 established objectives and criteria for the protection, restoration and enhancement of water quality in the Great Lakes system. Under the agreement, 43 geographic areas where significant impairment of specific beneficial uses has occurred as a result of human activities were designated as Areas of Concern (AOC). The Detroit River Area of Concern (AOC) is a binational AOC in which 75 percent of the total land area of the watershed is in Michigan. The Detroit River runs 32-miles connecting Lake St. Clair and the upper Great Lakes to Lake Erie. Along the way, the river passes through a heavy industrialized landscape of more than 80 political jurisdictions that exist within the river's 711.97 square mile watershed, including the cities of Detroit and Windsor. The area was considered highly degraded because of urban and industrial development, combined sewer overflows, municipal and industrial discharges, storm water runoff, and tributaries.

Eleven specific Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI) were identified for the Detroit River AOC. These must be mitigated in order to restore the Detroit River Area of Concern and achieve delisting. The Public Advisory Council for the Detroit River AOC identified 14 habitat projects to necessary to delist two of the BUI's, degradation of fish and wildlife populations and loss of fish and wildlife habitat. Four of these restoration projects to be undertaken on Belle Isle are: restoration of the wet-mesic flatwoods forest, Lake Okonoka connection to the Detroit River (fish passage) and aquatic habitat enhancement, Blue Heron Lagoon connection to the Detroit River and South Fishing Pier aquatic habitat creation. The Blue Heron Lagoon and South Fishing Pier projects are complete. The Lake Okonoka project and forest restoration are in progress.

### Topography

The natural state of the island was about 300 acres less than the present area. Much of the construction and filling was done before 1930s. The island is relatively flat with a natural maximum elevation of only 2 feet, which assures a high water table.

### Soils

The soils within the wet-mesic flatwoods are "typically medium to slightly acid sandy loam to loam and overlay mildly to moderately alkaline sandy clay loam, clay loam, or clay. An underlying impermeable clay lens is often present, which allows for prolonged pooling of water. Seasonal water level fluctuations lead to mottling of the mineral soil layers." (MNFI)

Much of the island soils are natural, but where fill was placed, urban soil occurs. Some of the soil was fill dirt from Downtown Detroit and transferred to form extensions of the island.

### Geology and Mineral Resources

The surface of Belle Isle is covered by greater than 100 feet of unconsolidated sediments consisting of fine-grained, stratified silt and clay. Bedrock underlying the Quaternary sediments consists of Devonian shale and limestone.

There has been minor oil and gas exploration and some gas storage across the river near Windsor, Ontario. Oil and gas potential beneath Belle Isle is considered low. Most other mineral potential is also low. Salt deposits occur at depths greater than 800 feet below the surface here. These same deposits are currently mined beneath Detroit, several miles west of the island. Expansion of the existing mine to this area or development of a new mine seems highly unlikely. Many years ago, there was some natural brine production and solution mining in the area. Potential for future mineral development on the island is low. The State of Michigan does not own or manage the mineral rights to the island.



Landscape of Belle Isle Park

**Circa 1800’s Land Cover**

The island prior to European settlement was covered entirely by marsh, wet prairie and floodplain forest. A memoir from 1718 stated, “A league from the fort of Detroit is an island called Ile aux Cochon, which is a league in length. It has the finest timber in the world and prairies without end.”

Prior to the purchase by the City of Detroit in 1879, the island was privately farmed and grazed by the owner.

In 1896 Belle Isle’s flora was surveyed by O. A. Farwell, providing a rare in-depth understanding of the island’s early vegetation. However, it is important to note that alterations to Belle Isle’s land cover by Europeans had already been taking place since the early 1700’s.

**Current Vegetation**

The current land cover is mostly urban park land with large expanses of lawn. The east end of the island supports a 200 acre wet-mesic flatwood forest. There is also a small area of lakeplain prairie (native grasses and forbs, some conservative to lakeplain prairie) known from the north side of Blue Heron Lagoon. The origin of this small prairie is not well understood. The prairie occurs in area that was created by fill. Perhaps the fill material originated from an area of lakeplain prairie excavated elsewhere or some lakeplain prairie somehow survived the filling operation.

The exemplary natural community identified on the island is wet-mesic flatwoods. According to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the wet-mesic flatwoods occurs mostly on poorly drained glacial lake plain in southeastern Lower Michigan. It is dominated by a highly diverse mixture of upland and lowland hardwoods.

The Belle Isle flatwoods have been greatly degraded by altered hydrology and grazing by domestic livestock. Decades of browsing by high numbers of exotic fallow deer decreased the number of plant species and increased dominance of plants unpalatable to fallow deer, such as spice bush and trout lily. More recently invasion by the non-native emerald ash borer killed nearly all the ash trees in the forest. In response to the increased light in the canopy gaps once occupied by mature ash, dog-hair thickets of ash, silver maple and red maple have arisen. The newest threat comes from oak wilt, which is killing “red oaks” in approximately 25 percent of the forest. In the early spring of 2017, 112 northern red oak, Shumard’s oak, and southern pin oak, were removed from the forest after they were killed by oak wilt. The trees averaged over 24 inches in diameter with several over 40 inches in diameter.

Despite its degraded condition, the Belle Isle woods is one of the largest and, in relative terms, the best remaining examples of a wet-mesic flatwoods community. Many people consider

it significant at the national level. Some consider it globally noteworthy.

**Rare Flora and Fauna**

The following notable and rare plants and animals have been documented by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory and the Natural Resource Stewardship Plan for Belle Isle prepared by the DNR.

The Eastern massasauga rattlesnake is a federal threatened species. It likely once occurred on Belle Isle. It was eradicated from the island, possibly by the domestic hogs that were present prior to the land becoming a park. The Blanding’s turtle is currently under review as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

| RARE FLORA                    |                       |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| SCIENTIFIC NAME               | COMMON NAME           | STATE STATUS    |
| Aristolochia serpentaria      | Virginia snakeroot    | Threatened      |
| Asclepias sullivantii         | Sullivant’s milkweed  | Threatened      |
| Cerastium velutinum           | Field chickweed       | Extirpated      |
| Euonymus atropurpurea         | Wahoo (burning bush)  | Threatened      |
| Euphorbia commutate           | Tinted spurge         | Threatened      |
| Fraxinus profunda             | Pumpkin ash           | Threatened      |
| Lactuca floridana             | Woodland lettuce      | Threatened      |
| Lycopus virginicus            | Virginia bugle weed   | Threatened      |
| Phaseolus polystachios        | Wild bean             | Extirpated      |
| Quercus shumardii             | Shumard’s oak         | Special Concern |
| Sisyrinchium hostile          | Blue-eyed-grass       | Extirpated      |
| Smilax herbacea               | Smooth carrion-flower | Special Concern |
| Strophostyles helvula         | Trailing wild bean    | Special Concern |
| Zizania aquatica var. aquatic | Wild rice             | Threatened      |

| RARE FAUNA                         |                       |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| SCIENTIFIC NAME                    | COMMON NAME           | STATE STATUS    |
| <i>Cincinnatia cincinnatiensis</i> | Campeloma spire snail | Special Concern |
| <i>Cyclonaias tuberculata</i>      | Purple wartyback      | Threatened      |
| <i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>        | Blanding’s turtle     | Special Concern |
| <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>    | Bald eagle            | Special Concern |
| <i>Ligumia nasuta</i>              | Eastern pondmussel    | Endangered      |
| <i>Pantherophis gloydi</i>         | Eastern fox snake     | Threatened      |
| <i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>         | Eastern massasauga    | Special Concern |
| <i>Sterna forsteri</i>             | Forster’s tern        | Threatened      |
| <i>Sterna hirundo</i>              | Common tern           | Threatened      |
| <i>Villosa iris</i>                | Rainbow               | Special Concern |

Bald eagles have been observed in the park and habitat could support nesting. There are many listed and rare aquatic species, especially mussels, known to be present in the Detroit River offshore of Belle Isle, but these aquatic areas are outside the jurisdiction of the park, and are therefore not listed here.

**Fisheries**

The fishery is very diverse and fish commonly available to anglers in the Detroit River would include:

- Largemouth Bass
- White Bass
- Great Lakes Muskellunge
- Yellow Perch
- Bluegill
- Redhorse Suckers
- Spotted Sucker
- Common Carp
- Lake Sturgeon
- White Perch
- Freshwater Drum
- Smallmouth Bass
- Walleye
- Northern Pike

- Rock Bass
- Pumpkinseed
- White Sucker
- Bigmouth Buffalo
- Channel Catfish
- Bullheads
- Black and White Crappie

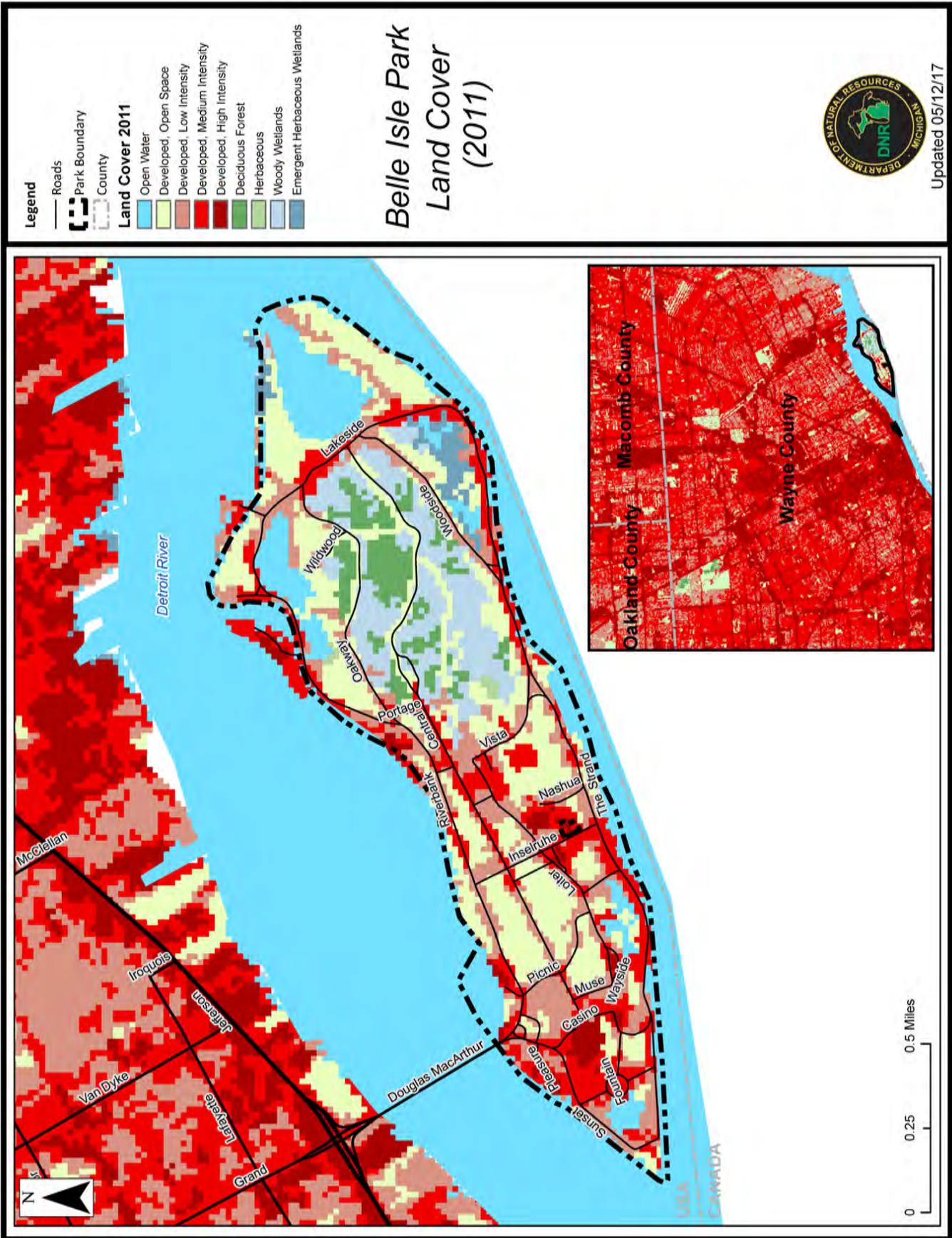
There are also many small, forage-type fish species such as minnows, shiners, darters, chubs, shad, etc. that comprise a large portion of the rest of the fish community, but are not normally caught by anglers. Fish present in the isolated inland lakes and canals include a few largemouth bass, some panfish, and various minnow species. They do not provide a significant fishing opportunity.

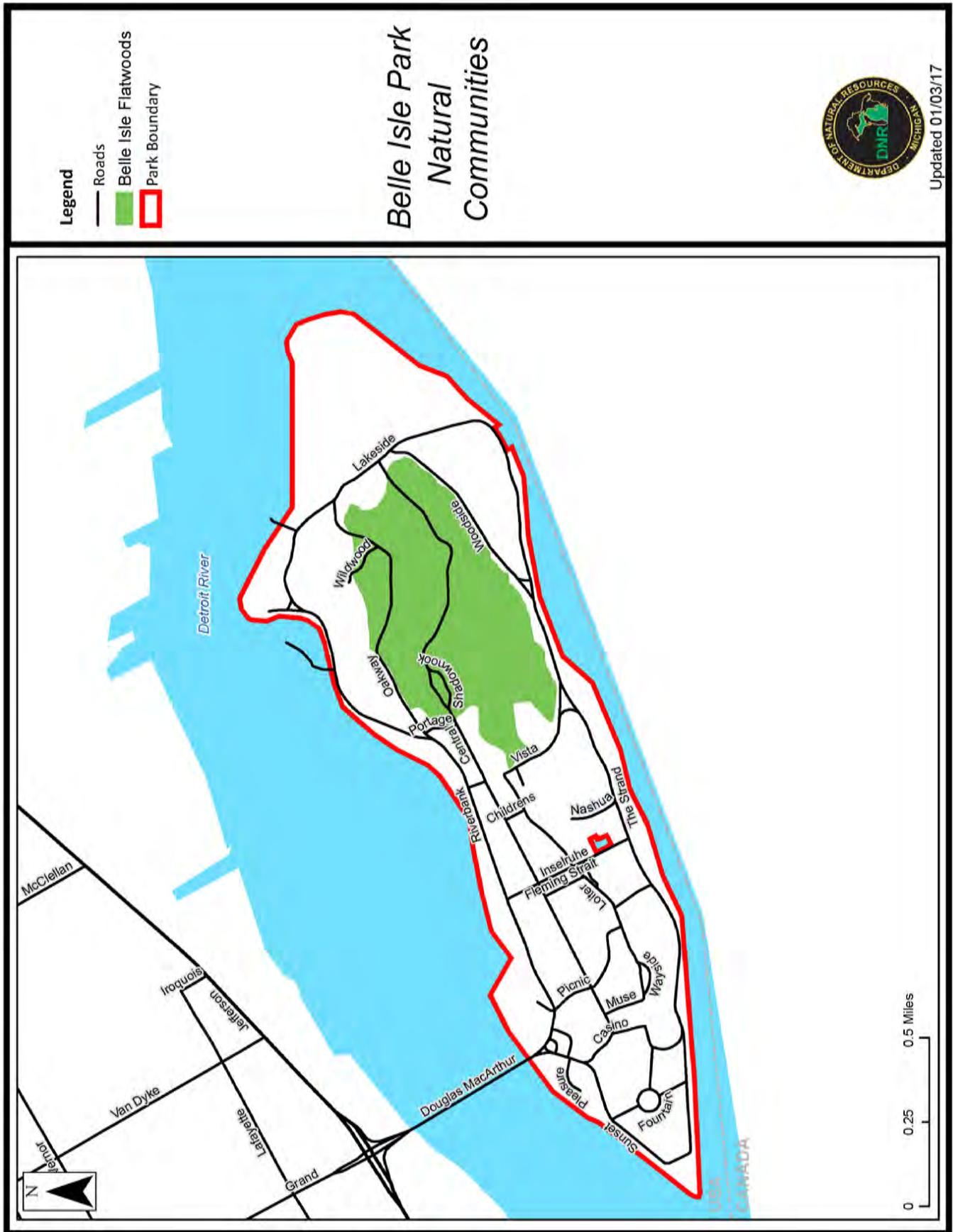
**Wildlife**

Belle Isle Park provides important stop-over habitat for migrating song birds. Blue Heron Lagoon and near shore areas of the Detroit River provide valuable feeding and loafing areas for migrating and wintering waterfowl, particularly diving ducks, including great numbers of canvasbacks.



Keeping the Shumard oak safe from oak wilt







General Motors employees utilizing the Athletic Fields

## A.8 Recreational Resources

### Attractions

Attractions on the island cover a wide range of interests.

- Dossin Great Lakes Museum
  - Open year-round Friday through Sunday.
  - Dedicated to showcasing the story of the Great Lakes, with a special emphasis on Detroit's role in regional and national maritime history. Managed by Detroit Historical Society.
- Belle Isle Nature Center
  - Open daily from April-October and November-March: Wednesday through Sunday.
  - Provides a variety of educational programs and the opportunity to meet deer face-to-face in Deer Encounter exhibit. Managed by Detroit Zoological Society with a mission to bring the wilds of Michigan to the heart of Detroit.
- Belle Isle Aquarium
  - Open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday year-round.
  - Contains 118 species and more than 1,000 fish in one of the oldest Aquariums in the United States. Designed by famed architect Albert Kahn. Managed by Belle Isle Conservancy.
- Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory
  - Open Wednesday-Sunday year-round.
  - One of the oldest continually running conservatories in the U.S., boasting 13 acres, a formal perennial garden, seasonal floral beds, a lily pond garden and five sections of flora: Palm House, Tropical House, Show House, Cactus House and Fernery.
- Golf Range
  - This nine-acre, 30-bay full-length driving range includes three putting greens, two chipping greens and four sand traps.
- Athletic Fields
  - Fields are provided for softball, cricket, baseball, football, tennis, soccer, rugby, track and handball/racquetball. Leagues are managed by Come Play Detroit.
- Giant slide
  - Open June 8-Labor Day 2016
- James Scott Memorial Fountain
  - The fountain is located on the western end of the island. The fountain was dedicated to the island in 1925 built by the fortune left from James Scott, who was a very controversial Detroit real estate speculator.
  - The fountain is operated from June through September.
- Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse
  - Located at the north end of Belle Isle, this is the only light in the nation constructed of marble. It was built in 1929 with private donations as a memorial to William Livingstone, who was the president of the Lakes Carrier's Association from 1902 to 1925. The light is currently not open to the public.
- Vendors and concessions
  - A number of concessions are available on the island including bike, watercraft, and snow sport rentals. Beach equipment, carriage rides, and food services are also available.

**Recreation Activities & Facilities**

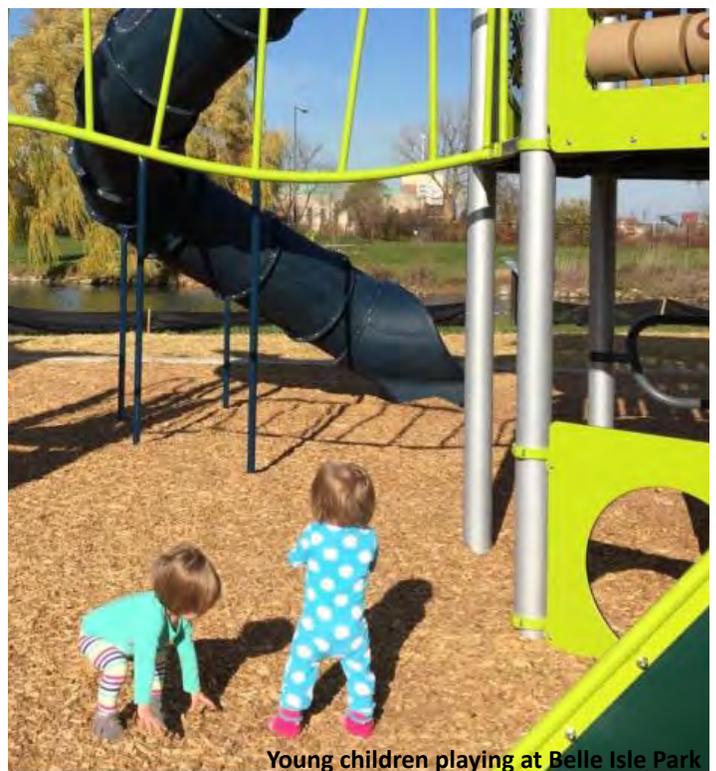
Many people access the island to enjoy the open space and scenic views or to watch the passing ships. Specific recreation activities and facilities are described below.

- Shelters
  - 20 shelters are available for use on a first come first serve basis or by reservation. Shelters occupancy ranges from 25 to 225. In addition, there are numerous grills and tables around the island for use by visitors.
- Fishing
  - There are two developed Detroit River shore fishing sites at Shelter 9 and Shelter 20 with additional sites under consideration for development. Two piers (North and South) historically used for fishing need significant renovation to serve this purpose. The inland lakes provide some minimal fishing opportunities that are being enhanced by reconnection to the Detroit River (Blue Heron Lagoon and Lake Okonoka).
- Geocaching
  - Events and activities are promoted by Geocaching organizations or individuals on the island. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location.

- Playgrounds
  - Two playgrounds are available on the island for kids and families. One is located next to the Giant Slide. Another recently constructed playground sits adjacent to the Nature Center
- Hiking
  - The existing hiking trails within the island are located along the forest and the Blue Heron Lagoon. The proposed Iron Belle trail will provide connection of hiking and biking routes from Belle Isle to Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula.
- Biking
  - Standard bike lanes are available along the roadways of the island as well as the MacArthur Bridge connecting from the mainland.
- Paddling
  - Accessible kayak launches are located at certain spots on the Detroit River and Lake Muskoday. Paddling within the canal and inland lakes is popular during warm seasons, although not all areas are currently navigable.



Recreational use at Belle Isle Park



Young children playing at Belle Isle Park

## A.9 Historic and Cultural Resources

In 1974, the island of Belle Isle was successfully enlisted on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The island was selected because of “its collective entirety, the continuity in visual imagery and its historic consistency”. The recognition by NRHP highlights the significance of Belle Isle, not only to the city, but also at a national level. There are 59 structures and buildings on the island listed. The list below provides a brief description of the significant historic and cultural resources on Belle Isle as listed on the NRHP. There are other buildings and structures on the island that are considered eligible for listing, but they are not described here.

### Casino

The first “Casino building” (not a gambling facility) on the island was built in 1887, which was a 3-story wood-framed structure. It was the first enclosed building on the island and soon became popular and overcrowded. Construction began on the current Casino building in 1906. It is a grand, two-story Beaux-Arts building designed by architect Albert Kahn with ornate towers framing the building’s four corners, and encircling verandas providing picnickers with shelter. It was designed to provide views of the Detroit River and Canada and to be an eating-place where patrons would be cooled by breezes in the era before air conditioning. The present building opened to the public in 1908. The first Casino was abandoned in 1907 and razed in later years.

### Aquarium and Conservatory

The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory is one of the oldest continually running conservatories in the United States. It is located on the south west side of the island. The building was designed by Detroit architect Albert Kahn, and after two years of construction, the Conservatory opened to the public on August 18th, 1904. The Conservatory hosts a wide variety of plant species sourced locally and around the world. In 1936 the lily pond was added to the courtyard between the Aquarium and the Conservatory. Mrs. Anna Scripps Whitcomb bequeathed her 600-plant orchid collection to the City of Detroit.

The original wood framing of the horticultural building was replaced with a steel frame in 1955, due to its poor condition, and the building was then re-dedicated as the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory in honor of one of the project’s biggest donors. Early 20th century photographs of the building show a Beaux Arts pavilion entrance, with large arched windows separated by Corinthian pilasters. This was likely replaced by the current glass and steel entrance during the 1950s renovations. The building consists of an 85-foot high dome, two wings extending to the north and south, and a show house on the east side.

The Aquarium, also designed by Albert Kahn, was opened the same day as the Conservatory on August 18th, 1904. The Belle Isle Aquarium is the only public Aquarium in the state of Michigan and one of the oldest continuously running Aquariums in the country. At the time of its opening, it was one of the six largest Aquariums in the world. The north façade of the red brick Aquarium is entered through a hipped-roof pavilion, with a striking Beaux Arts entrance executed in terra cotta. Ornately banded pilasters frame the doorway, while a similarly decorated arch is topped with a keystone bearing a molded relief of Neptune, the Roman god of water. The interior of the building has a barrel-vaulted ceiling covered entirely in green tiles, with tanks lining the central passageway, providing a feeling of being in an underwater cavern.



Historic postcard of The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

### White House

The earliest building that remains on the island, and the only extant resource that pre-dates the park’s establishment in 1879, is the White House (No. 48), a c. 1860s wood-frame Gothic Revival residence located close to the island’s center. The original 1974 Belle Isle national register nomination states that the house “was originally built as a summer residence for the Campau family and its name, ‘Inselruhe,’ means Island Rest.” The exact year of construction is unknown.

Its earliest use after the park’s establishment was for the park superintendent’s residence and office. The house served as the park superintendent’s residence in 1882-90, but also served as a saloon (early 1880s) and a restaurant, the Dairy Refreshment House, from 1890 until the late 1930s. It then served for many decades as the Detroit Garden Center, followed by use by the Michigan Horticultural Society. During the 20th century, the house has served as a restaurant, garden center, and offices. The house was renovated by the Friends of Belle Isle in 1984; this work included a new post and rail fence that currently borders the north side.

### Athletic Pavilion

The Athletic building was designed by Detroit architect Edward A. Schilling and built in 1898. The Victorian structure is adorned with conical turrets, wood detail and a tile roof. The pavilion was originally designed as a bicycle pavilion when motor vehicles could not access the island. The first floor was used for bicycle storage and rental, and second floor as a place for rest, refreshment and a view of the athletic fields. At one time there was a restaurant on the first floor, but the building has been unused for several years.

### Athletic Fields

The individual dates of construction of the fields' components are unknown, but all are shown on a 1976-77 plan. The current locations of the tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and oval track are shown on a 1914 plan, although the baseball diamonds were individually placed in the fields' center, rather than grouped as they are today. The 36-acre athletic field complex has facilities for softball, baseball, basketball, football, soccer, rugby, tennis, and track. Handball/racquetball courts are located across Vista Way next to the Nashua Trail. The field was originally used as a large parade venue. Children's Day parades were held there in the early 1900s. Today, in mid-July, Metro Detroit Youth Day is held there.

### Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse

The memorial lighthouse was erected in 1927 in honor of William Livingstone, a prominent and popular Detroit resident whose accomplishments included banking, publishing, and Great Lakes transportation. It was donated to the City of



Schiller Memorial

Detroit from the Lake Carrier's Association and the citizens of Detroit. As described by the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1930, the lighthouse has a 47-foot art deco fluted shaft of white, Georgia marble rising from an octagonal marble platform flanked by wide steps on all sides. The shaft is about 11 feet in diameter at the base, tapering to about 8 feet at the top, where it is capped by a bronze lantern of irregular octagonal shape reaching a height of 80 feet. There is a heavy bronze door at the base, and bronze inscriptions placed to indicate the purpose of the memorial. A circular interior staircase, of the usual lighthouse construction, provides access to the lantern. The structure was designed by architect Albert Kahn with ornamental reliefs designed by Hungarian architect and sculptor Giza Maroti. A bronze bas-relief portrait of Mr. Livingstone is on the lakeside of the structure and a bronze tablet inscribed with its dedication. Inside the lantern is a fourth order lens fitted with an electric light, giving a candlepower of approximately 11,500 and visible for 15 miles. The 3 foot, 40 pound, brass light was handcrafted in Paris.

### Belle Isle Police Station

The first Belle Isle Police Station was built on the island in 1889 and was a small wooden-frame structure. In 1893, architects George D. Mason and Zachariah Rice designed a building that would fit with the wooded surroundings of the island. This fieldstone structure blending earth colors and natural materials for use as a Police Station and Harbor Master was located on Inselruhe between Riverbank Road and Central Avenue. It merges the Richardsonian Romanesque style with the shingle style of the era and the look of a Norman farmhouse.

### Greenhouses

The greenhouses located adjacent to the White House have been in service since 1899. Currently there are twenty greenhouses in the complex, and nine of them were built between 1899 and 1911. The greenhouses are generally 20 feet wide by 100 feet long by 12 feet high linear glass structures. The original structure of the greenhouses was wood and glass construction with masonry foundation walls. The Greenhouses were not included in the State lease and are operated by the City of Detroit.

### Rain Shelters

There are seven remaining rain shelters on the island with distinct Victorian architectural style. Most of them are in good condition and built with attention to human scale. The existing shelters include: Newsboy rain shelter (Shelter #1), Playground rain shelter, Gray Stone rain shelter, Police field rain shelter, Pony field rain shelter, Inselruhe fishing dock and rain shelter, and Schiller rain shelter.

### Comfort Stations

There are seven historically significant comfort stations remaining on the island. Shadynook, Stone and Bear Pit comfort stations were built at roughly the same time (1895-6) with surprisingly different characters. The Bus Stop and Bath Launch comfort stations were built in 1908 and 1910 respectively, and Oakway and Woodside were built in 1922 and 1928. They reflect the particular attention that was given to architectural detailing at the turn of the century. Comfort stations, while not being in themselves historically significant, gain historical significance when considered in context to one another and to the character of the rest of the island (NRHP).

### Pump House

The 55-foot diameter rusticated stone pump house, much in character with the early 1900s utility houses found near cities on the Great Lakes, is a vital part of the unusual water system on Belle Isle. It generates a constant, invigorating change and flow of water through the island's canal system. (NRHP)

### Bridges

Due to the canal system on the island, numerous bridges were built to accommodate pedestrian and vehicle use. The early bridges were generally wooden structures, most of which deteriorated at the turn of the century. New bridges soon replaced the old ones and reconnected the circulation system. Some of the bridges still stand today, incorporating cast iron and reinforced concrete to ensure durability and to accommodate high volume use. Bridges listed on 1973 NR nomination form include:

- MacArthur Bridge
- Loop Canal Bridge (Central Ave)
- Loop Canal Bridge (Loiter Way)
- Lake Tacoma Bridge (Picnic Way)
- Nashua Bridge (Inselruhe Ave.)
- Nashua Bridge (Athletic Field)
- Nashua Bridge (Woodside Drive)
- Sylvan Creek Bridge (Oakway Road).

### General Douglas MacArthur Bridge

The present bridge was built in 1923, after fire burned down the first bridge in 1915. The bridge is nearly ½ mile long and 35 feet wide. It is a reinforced concrete cantilever arch bridge on spandrel columns, with 19 spans of maximum 30 feet height. It is the longest concrete deck arched bridge in Michigan. In 1942, the bridge to Belle Isle was renamed in honor of WWII General Douglas MacArthur. In 1984 the bridge was badly in need of repairs; the reconstruction took three years to complete.



Belle Isle Casino

### Loop Canal Bridge (Central Avenue)

Built in 1893, Loop Canal Bridge is one of the two oldest bridges on the island. The stone foundations of the bridge support a reinforced concrete and iron bridge with a span of approximately 50 feet. Of particular interest are the ornate cast and wrought iron railings and side ornamentation. (NRHP)

### Memorials & Monuments

Belle Isle became a common site for many memorials, fountains, and tributes to various people and groups, beginning in 1892 with the Newsboy Drinking Fountain. The fact that Belle Isle has been designated as an accepted site for monuments and memorials by the City of Detroit Planning Commission is evidence of the city's belief in the historical nature of the island. (NRHP)

The following memorials and monuments are listed on the 1973 NR nomination:

- Scott Memorial Fountain
- Newsboy Memorial Drinking Fountain
- Grand Army of the Republic Memorial
- Soldiers and Sailors Memorial
- General O.M. Poe Memorial
- Nancy Brown Carillion Memorial Tower
- Brady Memorial

- General Williams Equestrian Memorial
- Dante Memorial
- Schiller Memorial
- Samuel Francis Smith Memorial Flagpole
- Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse

### James Scott Memorial Fountain

In 1915, the western end of the island was expanded by 200 acres with fill from downtown Detroit building sites providing a location for the fountain and lagoon. Construction on the James Scott Memorial Fountain was completed in 1923 with its dedication on May 31, 1925. The basin's circumference is 510 feet with a series of Vermont White Marble bowls topped with a receptacle from which water can be projected 40 feet into the air. 109 water outlets in the shape of lions, turtles, Neptune figures and artistic horns project smaller jets from the base of the fountain, and 16 bas-relief panels depict early Detroit life.

James Scott was a Detroit real estate speculator and developer. He was known as a scoundrel of his days. The acceptance of his contribution by the city to construct the fountain and his life size statue on the island was very controversial.



Nancy Brown Peace Carillon Tower

### Nancy Brown Peace Carillon Tower

The Carillon Tower is located on Loiter Way at Picnic Way across from the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory gardens. It was built in 1939, in dedication to peace in the name of the much loved columnist writer Nancy Brown from the Detroit News. The tower is 85-foot tall and was designed to house a 49-bell carillon, but it is not clear whether one was ever installed. The tower now houses a digital bell system. It was designed by architect Clarence E. Day, in Neo Gothic style and built by Harlow A. Amsbary.

### Archaeological Resources

Belle Isle is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but the island's archaeological significance has yet to be evaluated. The State Archaeological Site Files (Michigan State Historic Preservation Office) indicate that while archaeological sites have been identified on Belle Isle, a comprehensive archaeological survey of the island has not been conducted.

Currently, a total of eight sites have been recorded on Belle Isle. Two of them are Native American sites, while the remaining six are more recent Euroamerican sites, including site 20WN1170, which is the site of a former Nike missile facility. The sites document early Native American presence, early European settlement, and later transformation of the island into various incarnations of an urban park. Although the island has undergone extensive physical modification, there is still substantial potential for additional as yet unidentified sites to be present. A thorough archaeological survey of the island is a necessary step in compiling an inventory of sites. That inventory will serve as a planning tool to protect and preserve archaeological resources as ground-disturbing activities are proposed.

### A.10 Programming and Events

Belle Isle Park hosts a number of events, programs, and activities that appeal to a wide range of interests. The major events held on the island are listed on the following page.

#### Events

- Detroit Chevrolet Grand Prix: The Detroit Grand Prix race moved from downtown Detroit to Belle Isle in 1992. After challenging economic times delayed the event following the 2008 season, the Grand Prix returned in 2012. The event takes place on the first weekend of June, currently under an agreement between the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix and the City of Detroit.
- Belle Isle Koi Festival: The annual koi festival takes place every Spring to honor the former tradition of moving the Koi fish to their summer home and celebrate the islands Koi collection.



Detroit Grand Prix, Photo: Nic Redhead

- Shiver on the River: Hosted annually by the Friends of the Detroit River the first Saturday in February. The Shiver is a family oriented event designed to bring people down to the river and Belle Isle Park, and to educate people about the importance of the river and the need for effective stewardship.
- Annual Ford Firework Show: July 4th fireworks on Belle Isle.
- Metro Detroit Youth Day: The largest youth event in Michigan started in 1980 and has drawn over 700,000 youngsters over the years. The event is not only fun-filled, but also serves a meaningful and educational purpose.
- Belle Isle Art Fair: The art fair was held in August, 2016 near the Scott Fountain.
- Harvest Festival: This event offers a day of games, food, campfires, hayrides, face painting, a costume contest, and a candy giveaway. The event is free to the public and is administrated by DNR staff along with other partners. The 2016 event was the 2nd annual Harvest Festival on Belle Isle.
- Holiday Stroll: A holiday walkthrough of the Belle Isle Aquarium, Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, and Dossin Great Lakes Museum. This Belle Isle Conservancy event is free to the public and offers free donuts and cider, campfires, and s'mores to guests.

### Programs

- State Park Explorer Program: This statewide program provides resource-based educational programs, hikes, and activities to visitors at over 40 parks each summer. The Belle Isle Explorer Guide provides informal programs and activities to park visitors, works with the Stepping Stones Outreach crew on scheduled programs, and assists the park with some events and community groups.
- Come Play Detroit: Activities and events are held on the athletic fields through Come Play Detroit.
- Summer Nature Camp: Belle Isle Nature Center Summer Nature Camp is a day camp divided into two groups for students 5 to 7 years old and 8 to 12 years old. It is a free week-long camp takes place through June to August.

- Stepping Stones – Outdoor Education Program: Provides outdoor educational opportunities youth 9 years of age and older. It runs from June to August on Monday, Thursday, and Friday. Participants explore two of the four activities available per session, including camping, archery, water studies, and nature exploration.

### Music

- Charivari Detroit: An electronic dance music festival presenting an assembly of Detroit based electronic dance music artists. The event was held on Belle Isle once a year in 2015 and 2016.
- Once Around Belle Isle (OABI): A one day event involves music, party, race and paddling in the summer on Belle Isle since 2012.

### Races

- Detroit Triathlon
- Escape to Belle Isle: 5K and 10K and Kid's Fun Run on Belle Isle in July.
- American Home Fitness Detroit Women's Half Marathon
- Life Walk and Run
- Fifth Third Bank Annual Belle Isle New Year's Eve Family Fun Run/Walk

### Fundraisers

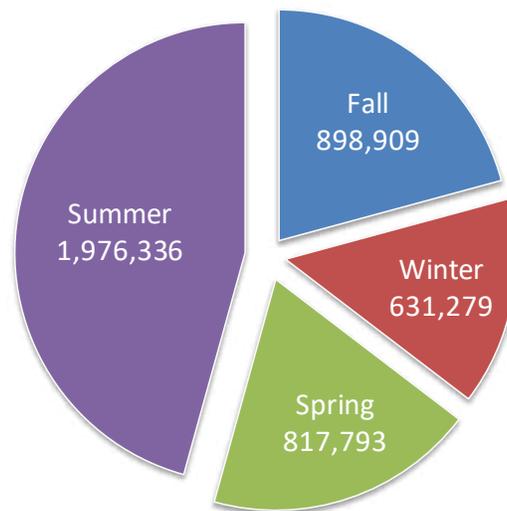
The Belle Isle Conservancy and other non-profit organizations organize many fund raising events on the island. Some of the more popular events are described below.

- Polish the Jewel, Belle Isle Legacy Luncheon: The Belle Isle Conservancy for 13 years has hosted Polish the Jewel Belle Isle Legacy Luncheon. Funds raised from this event enabled restoration of Sunset Point and historic horse stables roof. The luncheon will now focus on raising funds for a splash pad.
- Grand Prixmiere Gala: Held on the race track with the Scott Fountain as a backdrop, the Grand Prixmiere is a spectacular fundraising event.
- Sunset at the Scott: Sunset at the Scott supports the Conservancy's efforts to restore and repair damaged Pewabic Pottery tiles on the James Scott Memorial Fountain.
- Garden Party on Belle Isle: Organized by leaders of the Grosse Pointe area's garden club communities, the Garden Party raises funds for various projects that specifically benefit the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.

### A.11 Park Use Statistics

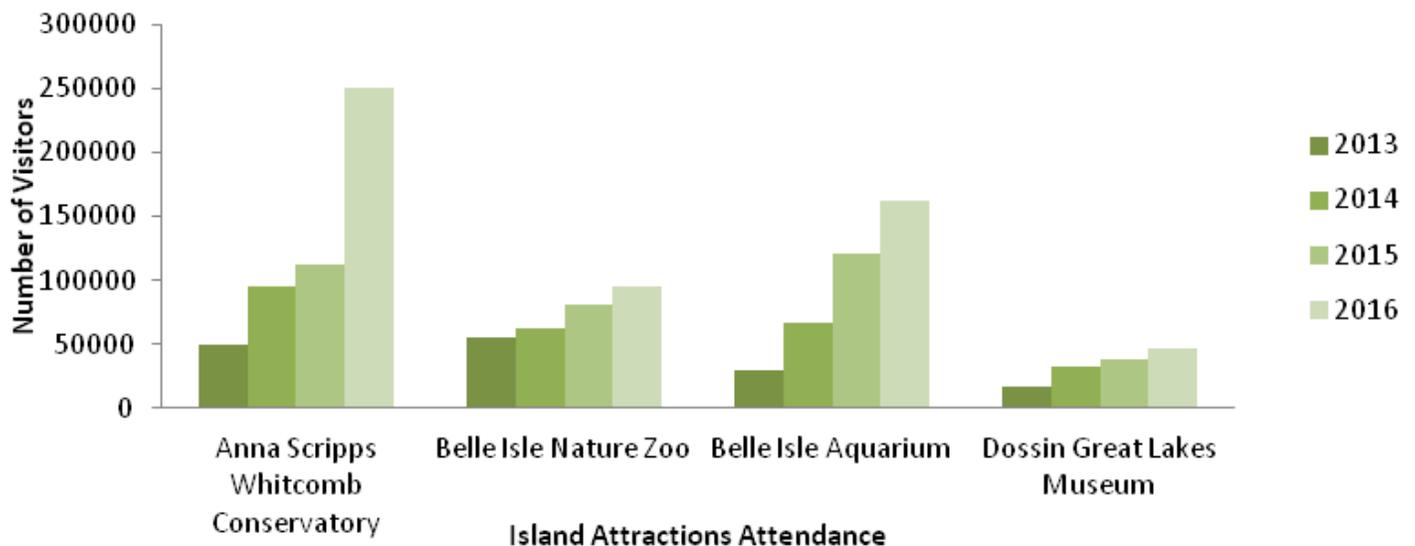
The total number of visitors to Belle Isle for Financial Year 2017 (from October 2016 to September 2017) is estimated to be 4,324,317. This is an increase of approximately 6.7% over fiscal year 2016 visitor numbers. Use numbers are generated by a counter measuring vehicles crossing the MacArthur Bridge multiplied by a factor to represent the average number of people per vehicle.

- Fall Use Season – defined by the months of September through November. About 21% of park use happens in this season.
- Winter Use Season – defined by the months of December through March. About 15% of the total park use occurs in this season due to the different weather and outdoor conditions.
- Spring Use Season – From April to May, the attendance increases to 19% when weather turns warmer.
- Summer Use Season- defined as the three-month period of June through August. Summer is the busiest season of the year, making up 45% of the total attendance.

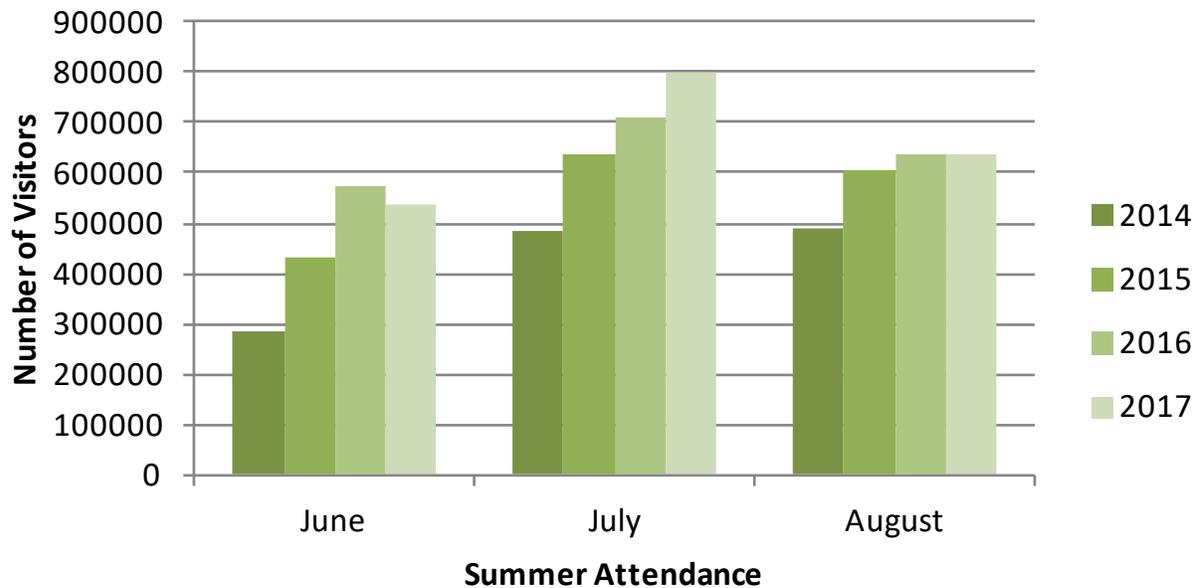


Park Attendance (October 2016- September 2017)

The attendance at island attractions has seen a significant increase from 2013 to 2014, when the Department of Natural Resources began managing Belle Isle Park. Below is a chart demonstrating the number of visitors to major island attractions from 2013 to 2016.



Park attendance overall (during the summer months) has increased by 56% from 2014 to 2017. In addition the participation in the Recreation Passport has tripled in the Detroit area since February 2014, and continues to show a steady increase since then.



- June – August 2014: 1,263,911 Visitors
- June – August 2015: 1,668,633 Visitors
- June – August 2016: 1,925,263 Visitors
- June – August 2017: 1,976,336 Visitors

## Park Revenue

Park revenue is generated through use permits for shelter and facility rentals, event fees, food and service concessions and giant slide tickets. Revenue increased dramatically from fiscal year (FY) 2014 to 2015, and continues to show a steady increase. The total revenue generated for the park in FY 2017 was \$519,929.

- Total Revenue: FY 14–FY 17: \$1,772,427
  - FY 2014 \$287,776
  - FY 2015 \$450,577
  - FY 2016 \$514,145
  - FY 2017 \$519,929





Photo Credit: Jim Lemay

## Appendix B: Belle Isle Park Lease