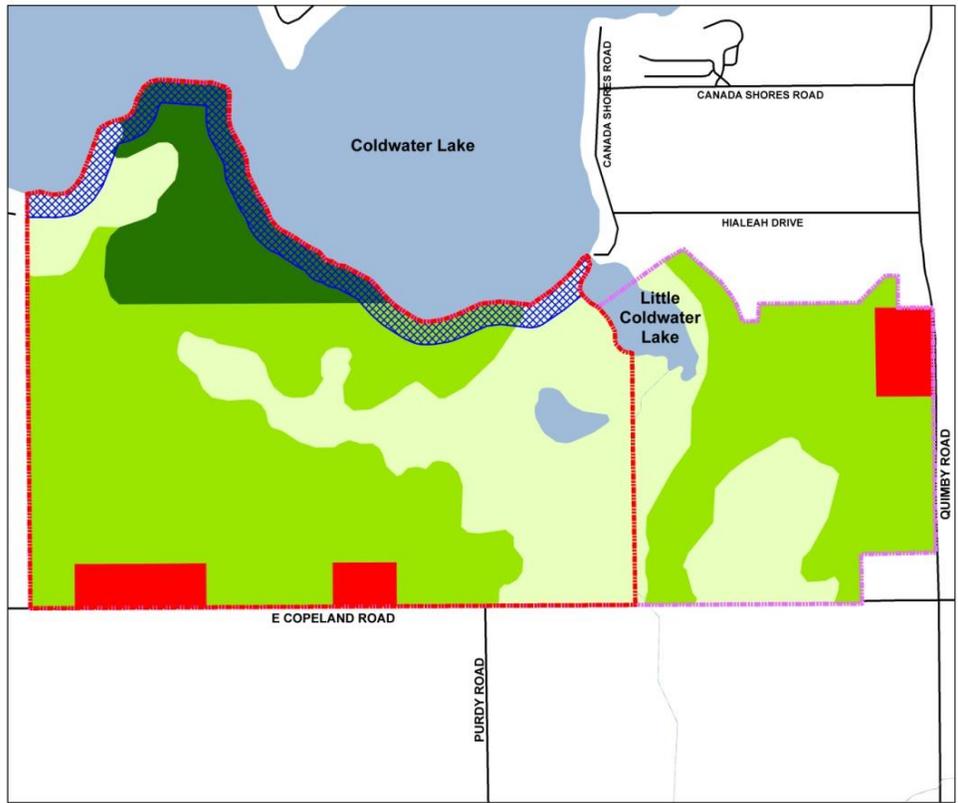


# General Management Plan Coldwater Lake State Park



Michigan Department of Natural Resources,  
Parks and Recreation Division  
In association with Coldwater Country  
Conference and Visitors Bureau  
Approved 06/30/2015

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**Coldwater Lake State Park Management Zones Draft**

Kinderhook Township  
Branch County, Michigan  
October 6, 2014

**Legend**

- Lake
- Coldwater Lake State Park Boundary
- Proposed General Management Plan (GMP) Project Boundary\*

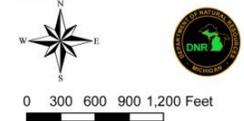
\* A Project Boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer/willing seller basis.

**Management Zones (base)**

- Primitive
- Backcountry
- Natural Resource Recreation
- Developed Recreation

**Management Zones (overlay)**

- Scenic



The project was directed by Deborah Jensen, Management Plan Administrator, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Parks & Recreation Division.

**Plan Approvals:**

*[Signature]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

*[Signature]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Natural Resources Deputy

*[Signature]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Department of Natural Resources

*6/22/15*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*6/23/15*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*6/30/15*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRD – SECTION CHIEFS:	5/11/2015 Date
PRD – MANAGEMENT TEAM:	4/23/2015 Date
DNR – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU:	5/19/2015 Date
MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE:	5/21/2015 Date
NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:	6/11/15 Date

# Resolution

## RESOLUTION NO. 06-2015-1

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

### RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE “COLDWATER LAKE STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN”

**ADOPTED: June 11, 2015**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division has completed the General Management Plan for Coldwater Lake State Park; and

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

**WHEREAS**, the planning process was further inclusive of stakeholder, constituent, and public input; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, the General Management Plan has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Parks and Recreation Division and the MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Coldwater Lake State Park General Management Plan; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee further recommends that the DNR Director approve the General Management Plan for Coldwater Lake State Park;

Submitted by: Chris Graham, Chair, MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee

**Motioned by: Chris Graham**

**Seconded by: Tim Nichols**

**Yeas: 8**

**Nays: 0**

**Abstained: 0**

**Absent: 6**

*This Resolution was adopted by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee at their June 11, 2015 meeting as Resolution No.06-2015-1.*

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# Executive Summary

Coldwater Lake State Park is 400 acres of largely undeveloped park land in Branch County, three miles north of the Indiana border. The park includes farmland, wetland and woodland, with 6,600 feet of lake-frontage on the southern shores of Coldwater Lake. The 1,600 acre Coldwater Lake is connected to the largest chain of lakes in Branch County, consisting of a total 2,500 acres of water. The park's convenient location from I-69 offers easy access. Visitors to the park enjoy passive recreation activities including hunting/trapping and hiking.



Furthermore, the park serves as an important recreational resource for Branch County as the only public land open to hunting in the county.

Future management of this park is guided by the General Management Plan (GMP), which serves two primary purposes. First, it establishes a 20-year Management Zone Plan that provides specific guidance for development, stewardship, public use, education & interpretation and park operations & management at Coldwater Lake State Park. Second, the Plan provides 10-Year Action Goals that address the desired future condition within the park. Overall, this Plan seeks to uphold the Park and Recreation Division's (PRD) Mission Statement: to acquire, protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources while providing access to recreation and education opportunities.

Several existing planning documents, including the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Michigan State Parks Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report and the Managed Public Land Strategy were used as guiding references.

## Significance of Coldwater Lake State Park

Each GMP developed by the PRD is built upon the park's unique significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state's system. Coldwater Lake State Park was determined significant due to the following features and opportunities.

- **Hunting** - Coldwater Lake State Park is the only public land open to hunting in Branch County and one of only a few sites within the tri-county area of Branch, Calhoun, and St. Joseph Counties. The park is easily accessible, located a half mile from the I-69/ Copeland Road interchange, providing opportunities for hunting of small game, deer, turkey and waterfowl.
- **Undeveloped Lakeshore** – The park includes 1.25 miles of scenic, undeveloped shoreline, on the otherwise largely developed 1,600 acre Coldwater Lake. The lake, which is part of the largest chain of lakes in the County, is a popular destination for fishing and recreational boating.
- **Wetland Habitat** - Wetlands make up over 120 acres of the park area. The emergent and forested/shrub wetlands provide habitat for a diversity of native plant and animal species, with a low occurrence of invasive species.

## Management Zones

A key goal in the development of this General Management Plan is to provide access and to improve recreation opportunities at the park, while simultaneously protecting the park's resources. Taking this into account, the Planning Team, with stakeholder and public input, established appropriate Management Zones for the park. From a palette of nine standard zones, four zones and one overlay zone were applied to Coldwater Lake State Park. The Management Zone Map and a thorough review of each Management Zone are found in Chapter 4 of this Plan. A condensed description of each Management Zones is as follows:

- **Primitive Zone** – approximately 128 acres, just over 32% of the park is comprised of primarily wetland areas. This zone reflects the desire to keep wetlands in their natural state with low frequency and low impact recreational use.
- **Backcountry Zone** – The Backcountry Zone comprises 205 acres, just over 51% of the park area. This zone emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for limited modification of the landscape to accommodate a moderate level of recreational use alongside ecological restoration. Much of this zone is currently agricultural fields and a strategy should be developed to bring these areas into compliance with the intent (nature/character) of the zone.
- **Natural Resource Recreation Zone** – This zone covers 53 acres (13% of the site) and allows active recreation with medium-high density of use conducted in natural settings. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but higher levels of use are permitted. This zone is located in the north of the park and identifies an area where a higher level of development may be desirable. The natural resources along the lakeshore will also be protected by the Scenic Overlay.
- **Developed Recreation Zone** - This zone comprises 15 acres (3.8% of the park) and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, development dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone includes two areas of land at the major access points off Copeland Road.
- **Scenic Overlay** - This scenic overlay comprises 31 acres along the shores of Coldwater Lake and reflects a desire to maintain the scenic views and natural beauty of the waterfront. The 200 foot wide buffer is intended to ensure that any development, guided by the underlying zone designation, is sensitive to the viewscape.

## 10-Year Action Goals

The General Management Plan looks at the park as a whole and each management zone, and identifies 10-Year Action Goals that the Planning Team believes are necessary to guide management and development in order to achieve the desired user experience and natural resource protection. Action goals are considered for each of six key considerations. Highlights from the Action Goals detailed in Chapter 5 include the following:

### Natural Resource Goals

- Create a stewardship plan (Natural Resource Management Plan) to create and sustain native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components

### Historic Cultural Resource Goals

- Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources

### Recreation Opportunity Goals

- Identify ways to improve physical connectivity beyond park boundaries
- Identify hiking/cross country ski trail opportunities
- Explore and identify the feasibility for shore fishing access opportunities
- Explore and identify non-motorized access to the lakeshore
- Identify viewscape locations

### Education/Interpretation Opportunity Goals

- Evaluate and identify opportunities for interpretation, programming and environmental education

### Management Goals

- Explore land acquisition as it becomes available.
- Maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting/gathering/trapping and wildlife viewing
- Establish marketing goals for the site with the DNR Marketing and Outreach Division
- Identify funding sources and partnerships for future park projects

### Development Goals

- Prepare a phased concept plan for park improvements
- Develop hiking/cross-country ski trail opportunities as identified in the concept plan
- Improve parking and vehicular access to the park
- Implement phased-in recreation elements as identified in the concept plan

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# 1. Core Values & Guiding Resources

Core values are the foundation upon which the park management plan is based. Core values are derived from the mission statements of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Parks & Recreation (PRD), as well as the priorities of the Director, to ensure that the state will acquire, preserve, and protect 1) natural resources and 2) cultural resources, and continue to provide 3) public recreation and 4) educational opportunities throughout the state park system.

## 1.1 Mission Statements

### **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 for current and future generations.

### **PRD Mission Statement**

The Parks & 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.

### **Five Goals and the DNR**

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

*"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value"*

Theodore Roosevelt



*Wooded wetland in the northwest of the park*

## 1.2 Additional Guiding Resources

The General Management Planning process is guided and shaped by several resources developed to provide recommendations for managing Michigan's park and recreation system. In particular, these resources have helped shape the 10-Year Action Goals established in this Plan.

### **Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (2013-2017)**

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 utilize Michigan's diverse and abundant natural assets to meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors, and the economic development needs of the state and local communities, by:

- Collaboration and cooperation
- Maintenance and continuous improvement of facilities
- Access to and connectivity between facilities
- Integration with economic development plans
- Effective marketing
- Protection and interpretation of natural resources



### **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 included in the report include:

- 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 and trail experiences and 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 compliments other plans and planning efforts

### **PRD Strategic Plan (2009-2019)**

The PRD Strategic Plan, approved in 2009, was developed to establish one cohesive plan for the division that spells out long-range goals, objectives, actions, and specific tasks for Michigan's state park and recreation system. Park General Management Plans are a defined process in the Strategic Plan.

### **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 identified for each goal. These goals are to:

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

## **1.3 Summary of Legal Mandates**

For all park General Management Plans, legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the General Management Plan and subsequent Action Plans. For our 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 & Recreation Division. There are several general and site specific legal mandates applicable to Coldwater Lake State Park listed in Appendix A: Supporting Analysis.

The legal mandates that most directly impact planning and management at Coldwater Lake State Park focus on the following areas:

- Identification of the duties of the DNR in reinforcing its core values concerning preservation, protection and management.
- Wetlands Protection
- Hunting Area Control
- Requirement of a Recreation Passport for entry into the park

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# 2. Plan Process Overview

## 2.1 Why Plan?

Park planning is not a new concept. The DNR has developed Master Plans in the past for many of Michigan's state parks. 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. Coldwater Lake State Park was purchased in 1988 and has never had a Master Plan or General Management Plan.

In late 2013, the Coldwater Country Conference and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) convened a meeting between the DNR and Branch County representatives to discuss the possible development of the property. This prompted the DNR to complete a General Management Plan for the site in order to get public input and provide a vision for the park.

General Management Planning sets out a framework for protecting park resources while providing for meaningful visitor experiences. The long-range vision and management objectives for the park are derived from applicable legal directives, the purpose of the park, and the park's significant natural and cultural resources.

A GMP develops as a result of a series of planning steps. Each step builds upon the previous, and action decisions focus on (1) the mission of the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD), and (2) the specific Purpose and Significance of the park. There are three stages of planning, implemented in the following order:

- 1) **General Management Plan (GMP)** that presents a 20-Year Management Zone Plan used to guide park planning decisions and a 10-Year Action Goals Plan that establishes specific action strategies within each management zone.
- 2) **5-Year Implementation Plan** outlines specific actions to implement the General Management Plan.
- 3) **Annual Work Plan** addresses what will be done during a given year, and what progress was made throughout the previous year.

## 2.2 Planning Objectives

The objective of the General Management Plan is to bring together Parks & Recreation Division staff, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that defines and clarifies the unique "Purpose and Significance" of Coldwater Lake State 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.

Extensive input was sought throughout the planning process. A public input workshop was held on June 17, 2014, to obtain ideas and comments on people's vision for the future of Coldwater Lake State Park, which gave the planning team a baseline of information from which to begin their planning process. An online survey was also developed that solicited input from the public and park users. Stakeholders and the public were invited to workshops where they could provide verbal and written comments regarding the General Management Plan. The draft plan was also available for review on the Department's

website, and the public was invited to email, call or mail questions or comments concerning this initiative. The Planning Team discussed and collected input and refined the plan as appropriate.

### 2.3 Planning Team

The Coldwater Lake State Park General Management Plan would not exist without the valuable input and expertise provided by all members of the Planning Team. Please refer to the Appendix for summaries of all Planning Team meetings.

<b>DNR Staff</b>		
<b>Division</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>
PRD	Management Plan Administrator	Debbie Jensen
PRD	Planning Analyst	Matt Lincoln
PRD	Unit Supervisor	Jim O'Brien
PRD	District Supervisor	Murdock Jemerson
PRD	Regional Planner	Joe Strach
PRD	Stewardship Unit Manager	Ray Fahlsing
FD	Fisheries Biologist	Brian Gunderman
LED	Field Operations Area Supervisor	Sargent Joe Kellam
M & O	Coordinator – Explorer Program	Karen Gourlay
WLD	Southwest Region Field Operations Manager	Mark Sargent
<b>Coldwater Country Conference and Visitors Bureau Staff</b>		
CVB	Director	Debra Yee
CVB	Board Member	Russ Hickey



*A series of planning team meetings were held throughout the process*

## 2.4 Summary of Public Input Survey

Understanding the important role of the public in developing this plan, the Planning Team developed a public on-line survey to gather information from existing and potential park users. The survey was available for a period of 5 weeks and was promoted in a DNR press release, on the DNR and Coldwater CCVB websites, and in the media and social media. A total of 247 people completed the survey. The full survey results are available in Appendix B. The following presents an analysis of the survey results which assisted the planning team in developing this plan.

### Park User Demographics

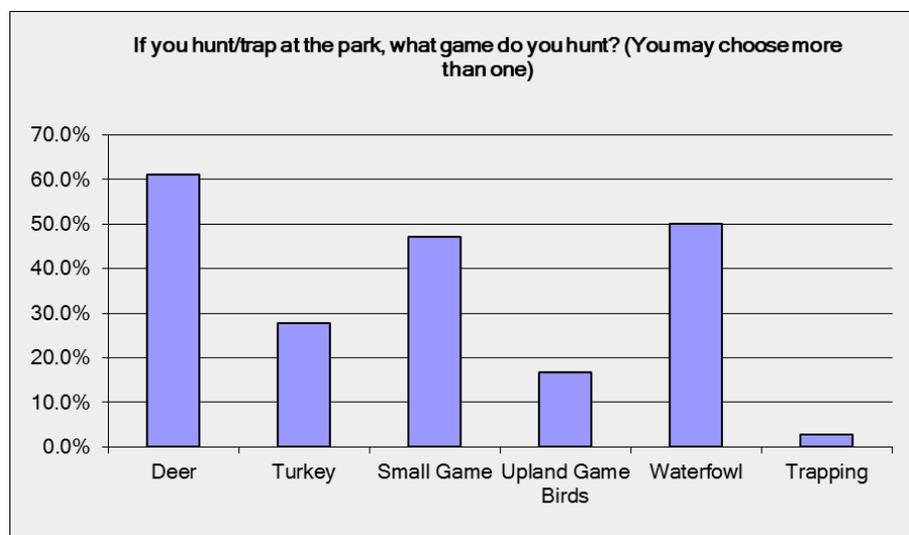
The vast majority of those responding to the survey, over 60%, were adults over the age of 50. Only 18 were under the age of 30. The majority of the respondents reported having a primary residence zip code in Branch or neighboring counties. However, the number of people living some distance from the park, including out of state, suggests a proportion are seasonal residents, which is typical of the chain of lakes area. (Refer to the Survey Responses by Zip Code map). When asked “where do you currently recreate?” the majority are state park visitors (over 70%) with a large percentage also using private lands. 58% of responses reported having a recreation passport, which is required for vehicular entry into any state park and provides critical funding to the DNR. When asked how they currently access Coldwater Lake, the responses were almost equal. 34% of respondents do not access the lake at all, 34% use a public access site and 31% have lake frontage.

### Existing Park Use

Over half of the respondents do not currently visit Coldwater Lake State Park, while another combined 38% visit less than one time per year or between 1-5 times a year. Many answered that they do not visit the park because it is undeveloped and hard to access. Of those who do visit, hunting/trapping and fishing are the most popular activities.

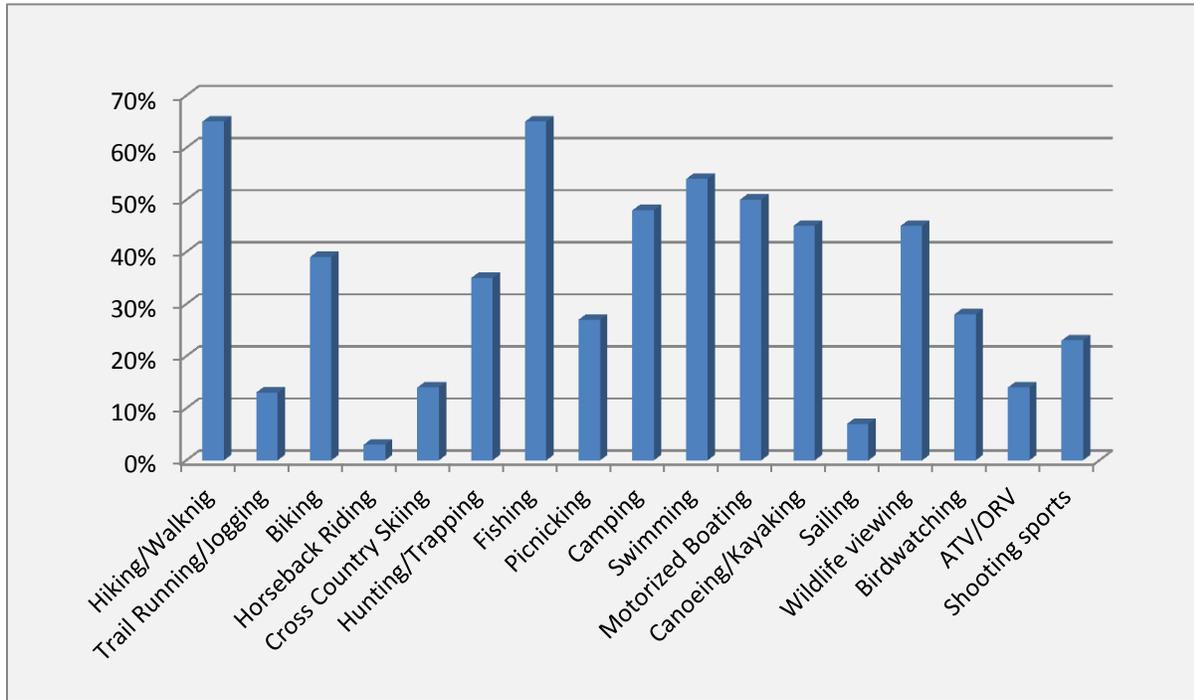
The planning team identified different aspects of Coldwater Lake State Park: Coldwater Lake, the wildlife, wetlands, woodlands, farm fields and open land, and the geographic location. The respondents were asked to rate each aspect as to whether it was not important, somewhat important, important, or very important. 60% responded that the wildlife in the park is the most important aspect; followed closely by Coldwater Lake itself with 57.5%, and then the woodlands with 51.5%. The farm fields and open land were rated the least important, with 54/200 people finding it of no importance to the park.

Coldwater Lake State Park is the only public hunting area in Branch County. 26% of the park visitors surveyed reported hunting and/or trapping at the park. The type of game hunted inside the park is illustrated by the graph opposite.



### Desired Recreation Activities

The chart below shows the wide range of outdoor recreation activities that survey respondents participate in (generally). Fishing and hiking/walking are the two that stand out as the most popular activities, while horseback riding and sailing were ranked low in this surveyed group.



Questions regarding future opportunities or enhancements at the park showed a wide range of differing opinions. When asked about the desired level of development at the park in the future, the answers were fairly evenly split between no development (29%), low level development (19%), moderate development (26%) and high development (25%).

When asked about what types of facilities or enhancements respondents would like to see, habitat restoration stood out above all others, followed by hiking trails, fishing access and lake viewing. Facilities least popular were picnic areas, cross-country skiing, camping, swimming, hunting access and boat launch, with over 40% of responses indicating “no need”

Respondents were then asked “What **one** recreation opportunity would you **most** like to see at Coldwater Lake State Park?” The most popular opportunity was hiking trails (35 out of 80 responses), followed by no development (31) and camping (30).

Other comments were collected with the majority of comments in favor of no development or keeping the park natural.

# 3. Purpose & Significance

There are over 100 parks in Michigan's State Park system and each park has its own unique and defining characteristics. This chapter describes what makes Coldwater Lake State Park a significant asset to the state's park system.

## 3.1 Park Purpose

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

The park was approved for purchase under authority of Sec. 3, Act 17, Public Acts of 1921, as amended:

- To provide an outdoor recreation facility that is easily accessible to the major population area of Southern Michigan and the local surrounding counties.
- To preserve and protect the natural features of the land, including over one mile of undeveloped lakeshore, and provide access for recreation and education opportunities pursuant to the PRD's mission.
- To provide access to the public for hunting, fishing and trapping.

## 3.2 Statements of Significance

Park Significance statements capture the essence of the park's importance to our state's natural and cultural heritage. These statements demonstrate the distinctiveness of Coldwater Lake State Park. Understanding the park's significance helps managers make decisions that preserve those resources and values necessary to accomplish the park's purpose.

### Hunting

Coldwater Lake State Park is the only public land open to hunting in Branch County and one of only a few sites within the tri-county area of Branch, Calhoun, and St. Joseph Counties. The park is easily accessible, located a half mile from the I-69/ Copeland Road interchange, providing opportunities for hunting of small game, deer, turkey and waterfowl.

### Undeveloped lakeshore

The park includes 1.25 miles of scenic, undeveloped shoreline, on the otherwise largely developed 1,600 acre Coldwater Lake. The lake, which is part of the largest chain of lakes in the County, is a popular destination for fishing and recreational boating.

### Wetland Habitat

Wetlands make up over 120 acres of the park area. The emergent and forested/shrub wetlands provide habitat for a diversity of native plant and animal species, with a low occurrence of invasive species.

### 3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance Statements

Stakeholder and public input assisted the Planning Team with identifying significant features and opportunities at Coldwater Lake State Park. The feedback they provided via the online survey, the on-site workshops, and email, affirmed that the undeveloped lakeshore and hunting are key aspects of the park. Comments from survey respondents regarding the significance of the park are provided below.

## **What are people saying about Coldwater Lake State Park?**

**“This is a wonderful property off the beaten path”**

**“This is a quiet park for local hunters and fishermen.”**

**“I’ve hunted Coldwater Lake State Park in the past and it was great habitat. With a mix of marsh, ag, and woodlands, it provides great options for hunters of many species”**

**“As an out-of-state resident who has been to the lake nearly every weekend for 30 years, I have always enjoyed viewing the state park from the lake. It’s natural state is the best part.”**

**“As far as public hunting land goes, it is the only area we have in Branch County.”**

**“Coldwater Lake State Park is a great location for deer hunting due to the mix of terrain and ag. Fields.”**

### 3.4 Connection to the Community

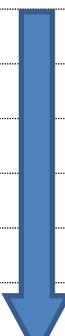
Long-term planning for Coldwater Lake State Park was encouraged by local community members expressing their desire to have a more prominent state park presence in Branch County. In its undeveloped state, the park is difficult to access and offers limited recreation opportunities. It is clear from the online survey undertaken as part of this plan, that many county residents are either unaware of Coldwater Lake State Park or do not currently visit. It is also worth noting that in 2014, Branch County had the lowest Recreation Passport participation rate in the state. Public input gained through the planning process evoked a wide range of responses, from those who wanted traditional recreational development items at the park, such as a campground, day use area and swimming beach, to those who wanted to see the area left natural. This plan recognizes that improved public access to the park and to the lakeshore can be achieved while maintaining the quiet, natural feel of a property in a largely agricultural community. Careful development of Coldwater Lake State Park could fill a void in the available recreation opportunities, while continuing to build upon the regional assets that have become synonymous with “Coldwater Country”, such as natural beauty and freshwater lakes. By raising the presence of the DNR in this south-central area of Michigan, it is also likely that support for and participation in the Recreation Passport will increase in the region.

# 4. Management Zones

The 20-Year Management Zone Plan was developed in keeping with the park’s significance, identity, and purpose. 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 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.

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			
Visitor Services			

The 400-acre Coldwater Lake State Park was divided into the following four zones with one overlay:

- Primitive Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone
- Developed Recreation Zone
- Scenic Overlay

During the General Management Plan process, the Planning Team evaluated the existing park boundary and the 2004 NRC approved project boundary. A project boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. For Coldwater Lake State Park the 2004 project boundary did not propose any changes. However, the Planning Team felt that the land to the east of the park, surrounding Little Coldwater Lake, would add significantly to the value of the park, should it become available. This would enable more comprehensive management of this wetland complex, which has the potential to support rare plant and animal species associated with wet meadow or prairie fen communities. This area would also provide additional much needed hunting land and is important in maintaining water quality. This Proposed GMP Project Boundary is illustrated on the Management Zone Map which follows. Appropriate zoning has been applied to the land within the Proposed GMP Project Boundary, which would apply only if the land comes into DNR ownership. The planning team also discussed the possibility of expanding the Project Boundary to the west and south and concluded that if any land immediately adjacent to the park becomes available, the DNR will consider purchasing the land to expand the park boundary due to the limited public land available in Branch County.

A detailed description of each management zone follows. The acreage given only includes the land currently within the existing park boundary.

# Coldwater Lake State Park Management Zones Draft

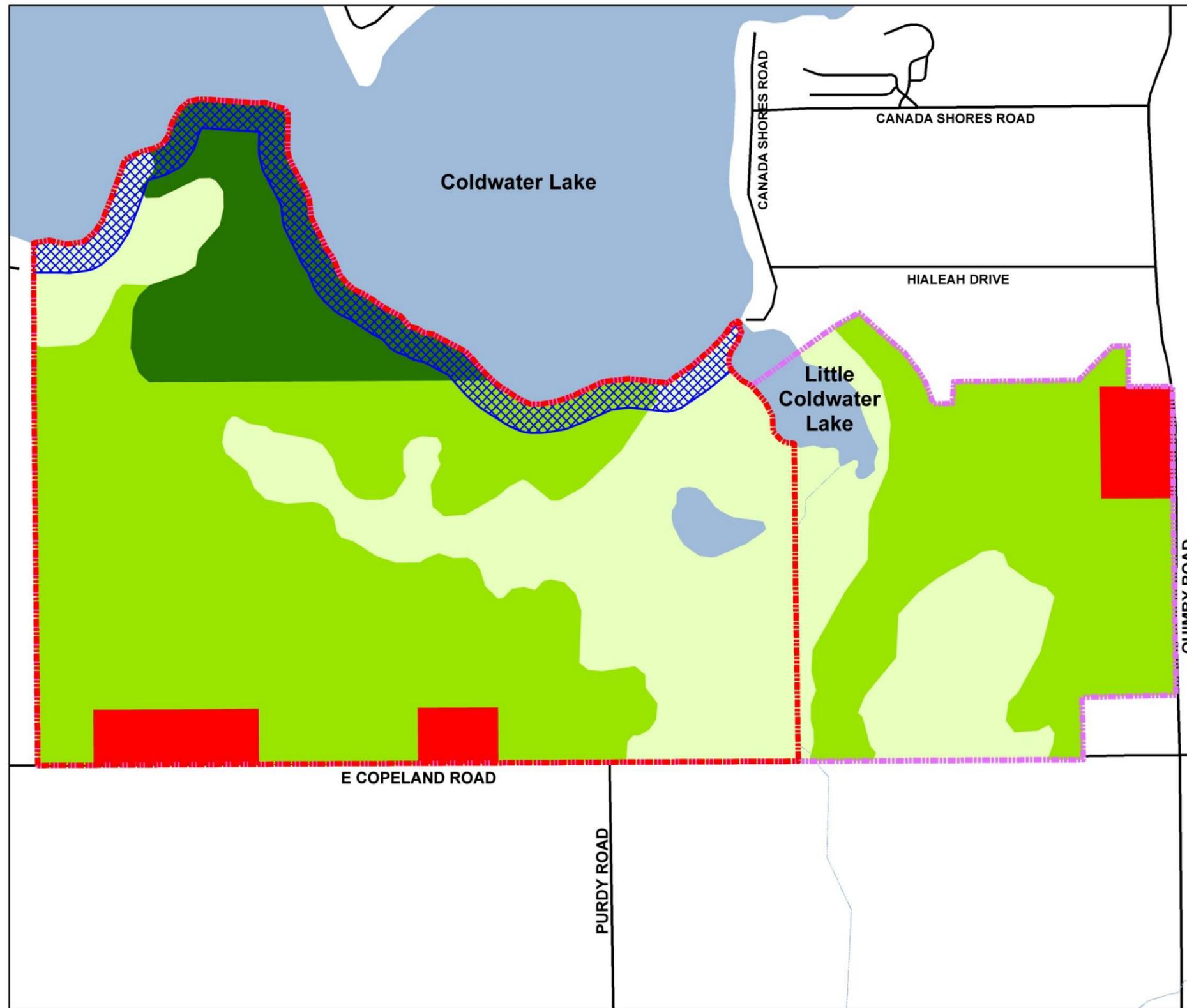
Kinderhook Township  
Branch County, Michigan

October 6, 2014

## Legend

-  Lake
-  Coldwater Lake State Park Boundary
-  Proposed General Management Plan (GMP) Project Boundary\*
- Management Zones (base)**
-  Primitive
-  Backcountry
-  Natural Resource Recreation
-  Developed Recreation
- Management Zones (overlay)**
-  Scenic

\* A Project Boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer/seller basis.



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# Coldwater Lake State Park Management Zones Draft

Kinderhook Township  
Branch County, Michigan

October 6, 2014

## Legend

-  Lake
-  Coldwater Lake State Park Boundary
-  Proposed General Management Plan (GMP) Project Boundary\*

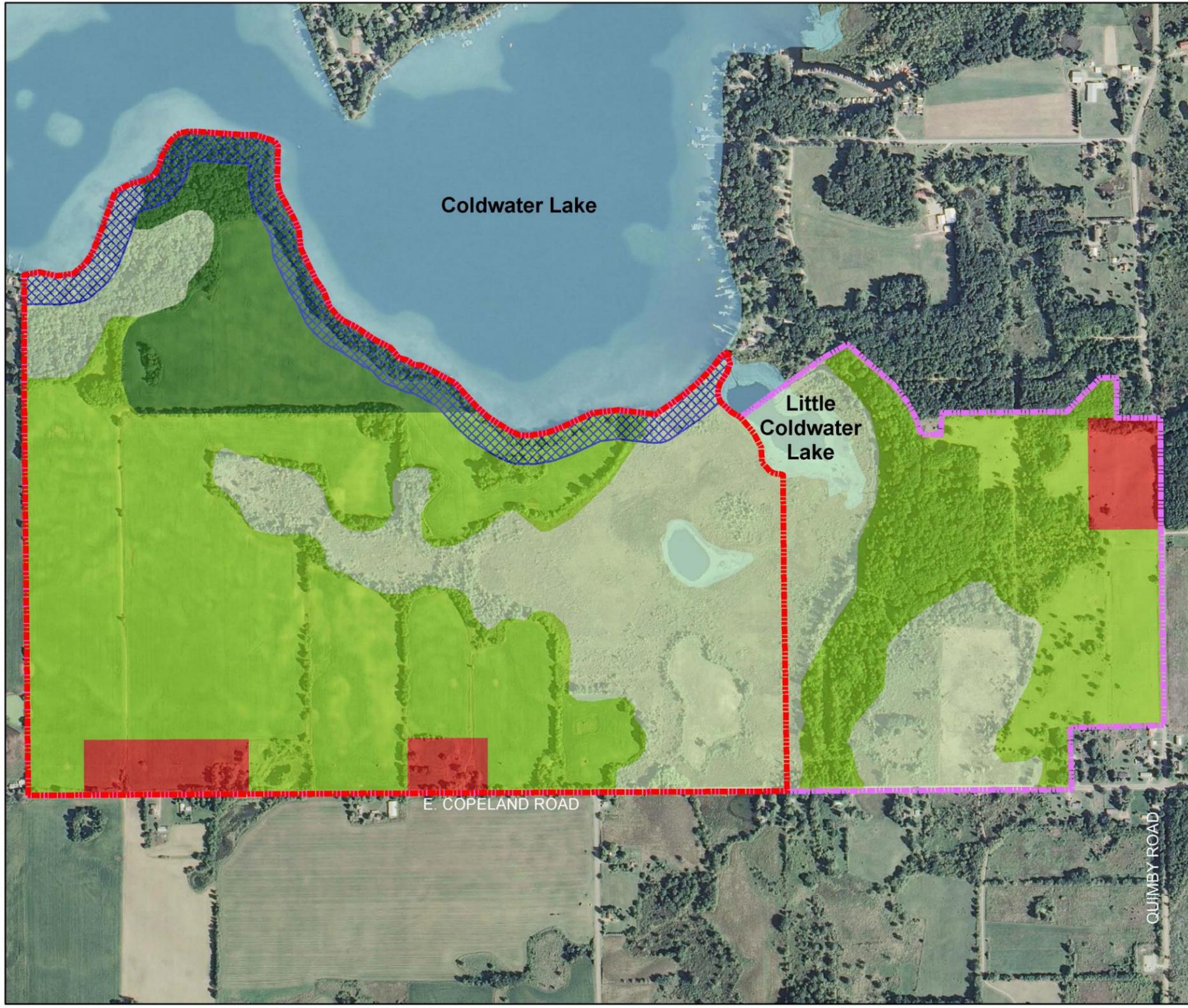
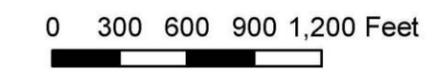
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## Management Zones (base)

-  Primitive
-  Backcountry
-  Natural Resource Recreation
-  Developed Recreation

## Management Zones (overlay)

-  Scenic



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## **4.1 Primitive Zone**

This zone includes 128 acres (32% of the park) and is comprised of the primary wetland areas. This zoning reflects the desire to keep the wetlands in their natural state, with only low frequency and low-impact recreational use. Attaining and maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements or uses are allowed.



### **Natural Resources**

This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management allowed only where necessary to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing invasive species), and to manage pests and disease. Protection of native species and natural processes would take precedence over visitor accommodation.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

No historic resources are known in this zone. Cultural resources may be preserved, removed or allowed to waste away.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Dispersed, low density, off-trail or trailed, self-reliant (no bicycle or equestrian use) outdoor activities are appropriate in this zone. Low-intensity activities that may occur include hiking, hunting/trapping/fishing and nature observation.

### **Education Opportunities**

The wetlands at this park present a good opportunity for environmental education and to promote the importance of wetlands in maintaining water and lake quality. Any on-site interpretation should be sensitive to the character of the zone and may be located outside of the primitive zone.

### **Visitor Experience**

Visitor experience will reflect a high degree of natural feel: a sense of solitude, and a lack of man-made improvements. Overall, there will be low interaction with other visitors.

### **Management Focus**

Management will focus on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality.

### **Development**

The focus is to maintain as little evidence of human activity as possible. A very low level of development is permitted, including foot trails, with site hardening only allowed to protect sensitive resources (such as boardwalks).

## **4.2 Backcountry Zone**

The Backcountry Zone comprises 205 acres, just over 51% of the park area. This zone emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for limited modification of the landscape to accommodate a moderate level of recreational use. Much of this zone is currently agricultural fields and a strategy should be developed to bring these areas into compliance with the intent (nature/character) of the zone. This strategy should be in the form of a Stewardship Plan (Natural Resources Plan) developed by the Stewardship Unit with input from staff.

### **Natural Resources**

Native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components and processes should be maintained, restored and protected. Tolerance for natural resource impacts in this zone is low. The Stewardship Plan will determine the appropriate habitat management for the park.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no known historic structures in this zone, but both historic and prehistoric resources may be present in the area. All development that may impact potential resources should be cleared by PRD Stewardship Unit and the State Archeologist before proceeding.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Moderate levels of activity compatible with the natural character of the zone may occur. This could include hiking, cross-country skiing, nature observation, hunting/trapping/fishing, and other low impact, non-motorized recreation activities.

### **Education Opportunities**

Future opportunities include providing education in the form of interpretive signage and/or programming relating to habitat restoration and conservation. On-site interpretation should generally be limited to trailheads to allow for self-discovery.

### **Visitor Experience**

Moderate visitor encounters can be accommodated in the Backcountry Zone. Visitors may be engaged in self-reliant non-motorized 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 emphasis on natural resource quality and maintaining/enhancing the hunting opportunities.

### **Development**

Future low-level development to support visitor access, such as trails, trailhead parking, vault toilets, and water pumps would be appropriate. Site hardening (for example boardwalks, fencing and paths) may be necessary to protect sensitive resources. Development will be unobtrusive and blend into the natural environment. A future park access road will be permitted through this zone, leading from the Developed Recreation Zone off Copeland Road to the Natural Resource Recreation Zone. The exact layout of the road will be confirmed in a concept plan outlining proposed park improvements.

### **4.3 Natural Resource Recreation Zone**

This zone covers 53 acres (13% of the site) and allows active recreation with medium-high density of use conducted in natural settings. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but higher levels of use are permitted. This zone is located in the north of the park and identifies an area where a higher level of development may be desirable. The natural resources along the lakeshore will also be protected by the Scenic Overlay.

#### **Natural Resources**

Natural resources support visitor activities with only moderate impacts. Natural resources may be managed or modified to support visitor activities, but protected to the degree possible and appear natural. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape. Where agricultural fields currently exist, a strategy should be developed to bring these areas into compliance with the intent (nature/character) of the zone.

#### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no known historic structures in this zone, but both historic and prehistoric resources may be present in the area. All development that may impact potential resources should be cleared by PRD Stewardship Unit and the State Archeologist before proceeding.

#### **Recreation Opportunities**

A moderate to high level of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone can be supported. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water settings (ie. hiking, rustic camping, bicycling, canoeing, kayaking, equestrian use, nature observation, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing).

#### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretation may be provided at trailheads, on the trail and at overlooks.

#### **Visitor Experience**

The visitor can expect moderate to high encounters with other park visitors, with a moderate noise tolerance and moderate interaction with DNR staff.

#### **Management Focus**

The management focus in this zone will be on providing a high-quality recreational experience while taking into consideration the scenic overlay along the lakeshore. Public safety, protection of resources and providing universal accessibility will be primary considerations in this zone.

#### **Development**

Moderate levels of development of facilities for support of visitor activities are permitted and may include restrooms, concrete/asphalt/gravel walkways and parking, trails, benches, picnic tables, rustic campsites, cabins and shelters.

#### **4.4 Developed Recreation Zone**

This zone comprises 15 acres (3.8% of the park) and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, development dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone includes two areas of land at the major access points off Copeland Road.

##### **Natural Resources**

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

##### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no known historic structures or cultural resources in this zone.

##### **Recreational Opportunities**

High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment will be allowed in this zone. Visitors may engage in recreation activities in diverse and modified land and water settings. Parking lots, day-use areas, trail heads and park management/operations buildings may be located in this area.

##### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage and information could be provided at the parking areas. Active programming is encouraged within this zone, and is a location where people can be expected to congregate.

##### **Visitor Experience**

A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated and are to be expected. Activities for visitors to engage in could offer a variable time commitment, challenge and adventure. High noise tolerance and high interaction DNR staff can be expected in this zone.

##### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on providing increased access, information and visitor services for those wishing to enjoy Coldwater Lake State Park. Public safety, law enforcement, protection of resources, and universal access are management priorities.

##### **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include restrooms, paved walkways and parking, trails, benches, picnic tables, and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities, protect natural resources, and provide universal access.



*The existing park access points fall within the Developed Recreation zone*

## **4.5 Scenic Overlay**

This scenic overlay comprises 31 acres along the shores of Coldwater Lake and reflects a desire to maintain the scenic views and natural beauty of the waterfront. The 200 foot wide buffer is intended to ensure that any development, guided by the underlying zone designation, is sensitive to the viewscape. Views both into the park from the lakeshore and of the lake from within the park will be considered.

### **Natural Resources**

Natural resource modification, compatible with the underlying zone, is allowed to support visitor use and viewing. This zone reflects natural processes, with vegetative management intended to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to enhance the viewscales of the zone.

### **Historic / Cultural Resources**

Historic and cultural resource management will be consistent with the underlying zone.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

Levels of recreation opportunities will be consistent with the underlying zone. High levels of accessibility are expected at viewing areas and access points to provide equal opportunities.

### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage may be used at key viewing points, trailheads, or observation areas. There may be opportunities for off-site interpretation as well, such as live cameras or audio tours.

### **Visitor Experience**

Low to high visitor encounters, noise tolerance and time commitment may be expected, depending on the underlying zone.

### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining and preserving the scenic views of both Coldwater Lake from within the park, and view of the park from the lake.

### **Development**

A moderate level of development can be accommodated to support visitor access and site seeing (for example trails, overlooks, small picnic areas, interpretive media). Development will blend in with the natural environment and a high level of accessibility is expected.



*View across Coldwater Lake from the park*

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# 5. 10-Year Action Goals Plan

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. Action goals are recommended that address the following categories:

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

Management Plans do not guarantee future PRD funding to achieve the actions identified. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan. On an annual basis, PRD districts determine priorities for project planning and project capital outlay. Each District's top projects are then evaluated at a state wide level for available funds.

These goals apply either to the whole park or to specific locations within the park, as appropriate and according to the management zone. Refer to the zone descriptions in Section 4 for appropriate activities in each zone.

In addition to the goals that follow, the Planning Team explored the potential for group camping through a use permit application process. This approach to camping was justified due to the level of staffing needed for other forms of camping, which was deemed unsustainable at this time.

Through the planning process, many comments were received from concerned citizens that development of Coldwater Lake State Park would increase the boat traffic on Coldwater Lake. Public access is part of the mission on the PRD, however, there is no intent to put a developed (motorized) boat launch in the park as part of this plan. Access is already served by the boating access site on the northwest side of the lake.

As a result of this Management Plan, and the outreach efforts that are an integral part of the planning process, a number of organizations have come forwards as potential partners. The DNR will work with these partners wherever possible to work towards achieving the goals outlined in this plan, particularly to assist in the proposed habitat restoration.

<b>Draft Action Goal</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Program Input from</b>	<b>Responsible Program Position</b>
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Create a Stewardship Plan (natural resource management plan)	3 years	Stewardship, Park Manager, Partners	Stewardship Ecologist
Implement Stewardship Plan	Ongoing	Stewardship, Park Manager, Partners,	Restoration Specialist
Implement land based invasive species control	Ongoing	Stewardship, Partners, Volunteers	Stewardship
Manage lakeshore vegetation to protect the lakeshore and scenic viewscapes	Ongoing	Park Manager, Volunteers	Park Manager
<b>Historic/Cultural Resources</b>			
Complete cultural resource review	1-3 years	Park Manager, Stewardship, State Archeologist,	Cultural Resource Analyst
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Identify opportunities to improve physical connectivity beyond the park boundaries (land and water)	Ongoing	Park Manager, Regional Planner, Recreation Partners	Regional Planner
Identify hiking/cross country ski trail opportunities in conjunction with the Stewardship Plan and Concept Plan.	1-3 years	Park Manager, Regional Planner, Stewardship	Regional Planner
Explore and identify the feasibility of shore fishing access opportunities in conjunction with the Stewardship Plan and Concept Plan.	1-3 years	Park Manager, Regional Planner, Fisheries	Regional Planner
Explore and identify non-motorized access to the lakeshore in conjunction with the Stewardship Plan and Concept Plan.	1-3 years	Park Manager, Regional Planner, Stewardship	Regional Planner
Identify locations for viewscapes in conjunction with the Stewardship Plan and Concept Plan.	1-3 years	Park Manager, Regional Planner, Stewardship	Regional Planner

Draft Action Goal	Target Date	Program Input from	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Evaluate and identify opportunities for interpretation, programming, and environmental education.	Ongoing	Park Manager, Marketing & Outreach, Local Partners	Park Manager
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Explore land acquisition within the Proposed GMP Project Boundary as adjacent land becomes available.	Ongoing	PRD Land Manager, Partners	PRD Land Manager
Promote volunteer partnerships to meet park goals	Ongoing	Stewardship, Park Manager	Park Manager
Maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting/gathering/trapping and wildlife viewing	Ongoing	Park Manager, Wildlife, Partners	Park Manager
Review Use Permit for equestrian use at this park	Annually	Park Manager	Park Manager
Work in cooperation with Marketing and Outreach to develop specific marketing goals for the site	3-10 years	Park Manager, Rec. Programmer, Marketing & Outreach, Local Partners	Park Manager
Explore and develop revenue generating opportunities	Ongoing	Park Manager, Local Partners	Park Manager
Identify potential funding sources for future park projects	Ongoing	Park Manager, Local Partners	Park Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Prepare a phased Concept Plan for park improvements	1-3 years	Regional Planner, Local Community	Regional Planner
Develop hiking/cross-country ski trail opportunities as identified in the Concept Plan	3-10 years	Park Manager	Park Manager
Improve parking and vehicular access to the park as identified in the Concept Plan	5 years	Park Manager, Regional Planner	Regional Planner