

FORT CUSTER RECREATION AREA PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

LONG RANGE ACTION GOALS

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

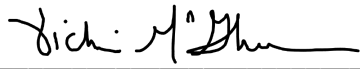


Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Parks and Recreation Division
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Fort Custer Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan Approvals:



Chief, Planning & Infrastructure Section

7-19-23
Date



Chief, Field Operations Section

7.19.23
Date



Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

7/19/2023
Date



Young children play on the beach

PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Reviewed and approved by:

Parks and Recreation Division Section Chiefs 2/5/2023

Presented for information to:

MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE 6/14/2023

NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6/28/2023



Campers enjoy cooking over the campfire

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1. Introduction

Fort Custer Recreation Area is located between Battle Creek and Kalamazoo in southwest Michigan. The 3,033-acre park features three lakes, the Kalamazoo River, a swimming beach, modern and equestrian campground, rustic cabins, more than 40 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails, and hunting and fishing opportunities. Historically, the land that is now the Fort Custer Recreation Area supported a complex of tall grass prairie, oak barrens (prairie with 1 to 10 trees per acre) and open oak-hickory woodland. Ongoing ecological restoration, including prairie planting, invasive plant control and prescribed fire, is occurring throughout the recreation area. The land that makes up the park was part of the Fort Custer Military Reservation and was transferred from the United States Government in 1971 and 1973, following operation for recreation by the state under a lease agreement beginning in 1957. The Department of Defense still operates the Fort Custer Training Center which covers over 7,500 acres, bordering the park to the east and south. As part of Michigan's state park system, the terms recreation area and park are used synonymously in this plan.

The General Management Plan (GMP) guides the future long-term management of Fort Custer Recreation Area and is based on the mission of the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD) "to acquire, protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources, and to provide access to land and water public recreation and education opportunities".

1.1 Planning Objectives

The objective of the GMP is to bring together Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) staff, representatives from other Department of Natural Resource (DNR) divisions, stakeholders and the public into a planning process that directs management decisions and implementation strategies for the recreation area.

The Phase 1 GMP for Fort Custer Recreation Area, approved in 2009, established a 20-year management zone plan and defined the purpose and significance of the park. The supporting analysis included in the Phase 1 GMP provides important background information such as park setting, area demographics, history, land ownership, legal mandates, and cultural, natural and recreation resources. This Phase 2 GMP builds upon the previous planning step and identifies 10-year action goals to be accomplished in the park as a whole and in each of the management zones. These are implementation items for park staff and partners, addressing infrastructure, and park management and operations that impact the resource protection and visitor experience at the park. This plan updates and replaces the original phase 2 plan approved in 2010. While the Phase 2 GMP addresses some specific natural resource goals, a separate Stewardship Plan has been developed to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource goals and management strategies. This 2003 plan will also be updated in the near future.

1.2 Plan Process Overview

The Fort Custer Recreation Area planning team met periodically over a 12-month period, beginning in October 2021. For this Phase 2 GMP, the first step was to review the Phase 1 GMP to ensure that no conditions have changed that would result in the need to amend the overall guiding document. While the phase 1 plan is still relevant, the planning team recommended some minor corrections and adjustments to the management zone map and the significance statements, as discussed in chapter 2.

Stakeholder and public input was sought throughout the planning process to ensure the DNR is responsive to its partners and visitors. Stakeholders were invited to provide input early in the planning process through an online meeting designed to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities at Fort Custer Recreation Area. The planning team used this information to guide the development of the draft Phase 2 GMP. An online public meeting was held to present the draft plan and answer questions on the plan content. The draft plan was also made available on the department's website and interested parties were encouraged to participate in an online survey to help prioritize the action goals or provide further comment via email. DNR staff also met with the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Tribe to discuss the draft plan and items of mutual interest. The planning team reviewed all the comments received and made edits as appropriate before recommending the final plan for adoption.

1.3 Planning Team

This Phase 2 GMP was developed with valuable input and expertise of the planning team.

NAME	TITLE	DIVISION
Tony Trojanowski	Unit Supervisor	Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator	PRD
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager	PRD
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Unit Manager	PRD
Bob Clancy	Ecological Restoration Specialist	PRD
Pat Whalen	District Supervisor	PRD
Justin Gerould	Regional Field Planner	PRD
Jill Sell	Trails Specialist	PRD
Elissa Buck	Commercial Services Program Admin.	PRD
Robbert McKay	Historic Architect	PRD
Stacy Tchorzynski	Archaeologist	PRD/Michigan History Center
Sgt. Holmes	Conservation Officer Supervisor	Law Enforcement Division
Matt Diana	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries Division
Shana Ramsey	Park Interpreter	Marketing and Outreach Division
Scott Jones	Planning Specialist	Forest Resources Division
Randy Heinze	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Division

1.4 Stakeholder, Public and Tribal Input Overview

A stakeholder virtual input meeting was held via Microsoft Teams on March 1, 2022. Over 60 invitations were sent to organizations associated with, or that were determined by the planning team to have an interest in, Fort Custer Recreation Area. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to the park. A total of 28 individuals represented organizations from around the region. Below is a summary of the input received. A full report of the meeting is provided in Appendix B.

Strengths identified by stakeholder representatives in attendance included the location of the park, recognizing the easy access from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, and the variety of recreation opportunities available, including the expansive trail system for multiple use types, camping and water access. The variety of natural habitats and birding opportunities were also seen as important assets. Challenges identified included aquatic and terrestrial invasive species management, aging infrastructure and the scarcity of funds to fix it, lack of access for snowmobiles and e-bikes, and traffic issues on busy days, amongst others. Many opportunities were cited, including partnerships to assist with invasive species management, trail upkeep, park promotion and natural resource education. Opportunities for trail improvements were also discussed by developing the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through the park, considering a Kalamazoo River Water Trail, and improvements to the mountain bike trailhead.

The Fort Custer Recreation Area Draft Phase 2 GMP was available for public review and comment on the project website from August 16 through September 11, 2022. The public was also invited to learn about the plan and share their thoughts at a virtual public meeting on August 30, 2022. The meeting began with a brief introduction of planning team members, followed by an overview of the general management plan process, Fort Custer Recreation Area, and the draft general management plan contents. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period which covered wide-ranging topics.

A post meeting online survey was designed to help prioritize and provide feedback on the proposed action goals, which was completed by 239 individuals. Priorities identified included trail related improvements, replacing the campground restroom buildings and resurfacing the park roads. A complete report of the public input received is provided in Appendix B.

DNR staff met with representatives of the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Tribe on October 17, 2022, to discuss the draft GMP. Topics of mutual interest included the overall context of the cultural landscape and the opportunity to interpret the landscape history, and potential for land within the recreation area to be identified for use for Tribal ceremonies or events. The DNR will continue to work with the Tribe to identify and implement projects of mutual interest.

Changes made as a result of the public input included incorporating corrals and other improvements in the equestrian campground goal, adding further clarification to the goal relating to watercraft controls on Eagle Lake, including consideration for bike traffic in the park road reconstruction and including Tribal interests and potential partnership opportunities in the action goals.

2. Overview of Phase 1 General Management Plan

The Phase 1 GMP for Fort Custer Recreation Area was approved in November 2009. The following information summarizes the significance statements and management zones for the park, which were defined in the phase 1 plan.

2.1 Significance Statements

Fort Custer Recreation Area was determined to be significant for the following reasons. These statements contain minor edits made by the phase 2 planning team without changing the original meaning or intent.

- Fort Custer Recreation Area, located on the Kalamazoo River in Kalamazoo County, provides inclusive recreational opportunities in an area lacking in public lands. From its inception, Fort Custer Recreation Area has been planned, developed, and used for a wide range of recreational, natural resource, and educational interests.
- Fort Custer Recreation Area has areas of high value natural resources, including oak barrens, tall grass prairie and dry-mesic southern (oak-hickory) forest. They are some of the best examples of these landscapes in Michigan and are the subject of ongoing ecological restoration. There are over 50 plant and animal species that have been found at or near Fort Custer Recreation Area which are federally- or state- threatened.
- Together with the adjacent Fort Custer Training Center (FCTC), a contiguous landscape of over 10,000 acres is managed for its natural resource values. The DNR and FCTC work towards common resource goals, having a significant impact in the area. In addition, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy owns and manages a 290 acre preserve across the Kalamazoo River from the recreation area and has prioritized further acquisition along the river corridor.
- Culturally significant, Fort Custer Recreation Area borders Territorial Road, once a stagecoach route, and contains a wide array of old house and farm foundations. In 1917, Camp Custer was built for military training during WWI. The camp was named after Civil War cavalry officer General George Armstrong Custer. In 1940, Camp Custer was designated Fort Custer and became a permanent military training base for WWII.
- Fort Custer offers a variety of water resources including Eagle Lake, Jackson Lake, Whitford-Lawler Lake, frontage on approximately three miles of the Kalamazoo River, and smaller unnamed wetland areas spread throughout the park. Fishing and paddling are popular activities and Eagle Lake is managed for Muskellunge, which is rare in the state park system.
- Trail usage is a large component of the park. Fort Custer is a popular year-round destination for mountain bikers, equestrians, hikers, cross country skiers, and dog mushers. The North Country

National Scenic Trail, which is also the hiking route of the state's Iron Belle Trail, passes through the northwest corner of the recreation area and the proposed extension of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail will add a regional trail connection.

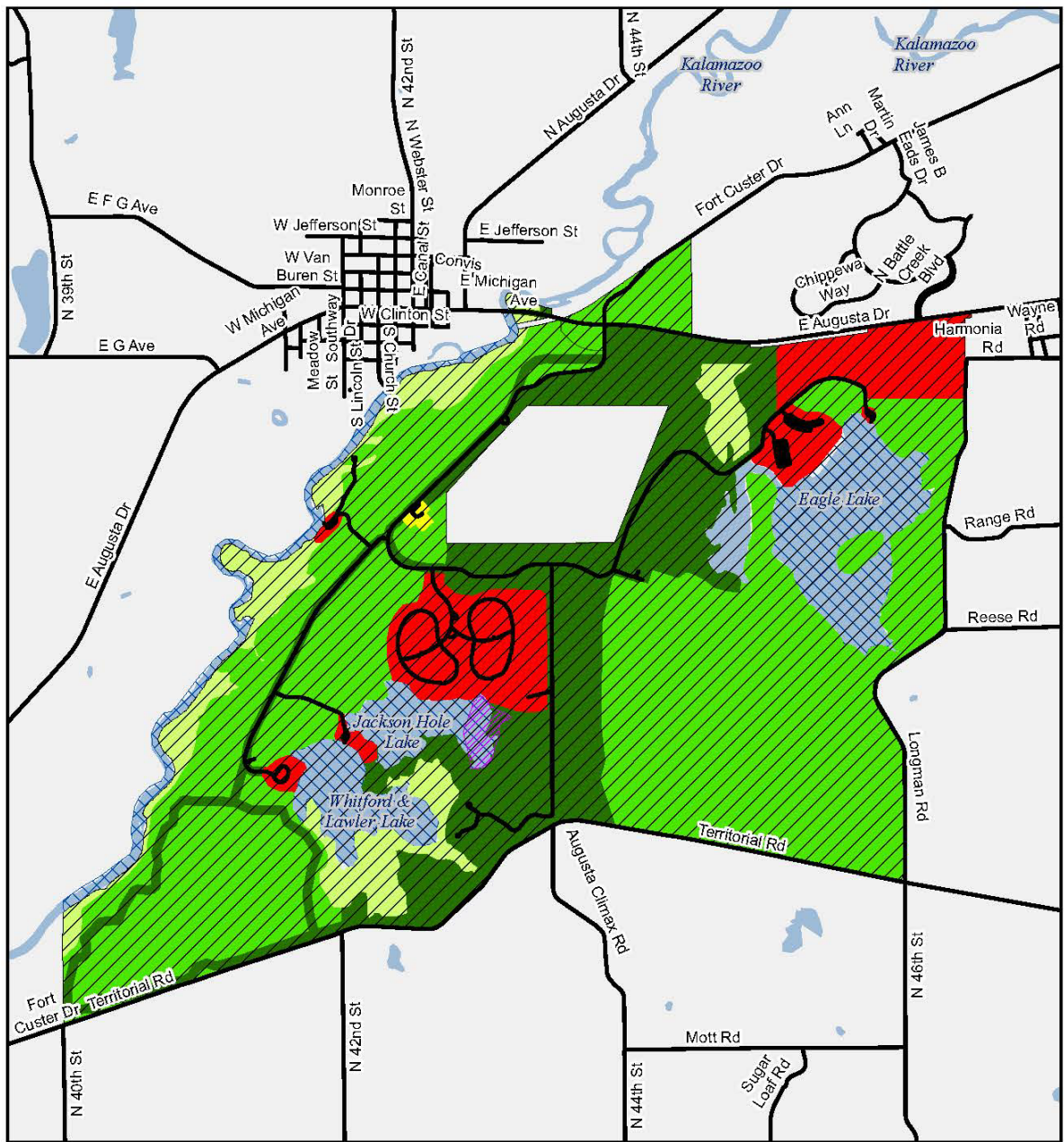
2.2 Management Zones

During review of the Phase 1 GMP, several minor adjustments to the management zones were determined to be necessary. These are mainly due to inaccuracies in the original GIS mapping, as well as some planning changes that have occurred since the phase 1 plan was approved. The following adjustments have been made to the zoning and acreage totals for each zone adjusted accordingly.

- The Natural Resource Recreation corridor in the northwest corner of the park has been adjusted to accommodate the proposed route of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT). The Phase 1 GMP clearly intended to accommodate the KRVT through the park, however, the route has changed since that time.
- The Primitive Zone along the Kalamazoo River corridor was redrawn to better reflect the river floodplain and existing ground conditions.
- A Natural Resource Recreation Zone was added around the Riverside Cabin to capture this existing facility.
- In the northeast corner of the park, individual zone maps in the phase 1 plan contradict each other, showing old roadbeds as both Natural Resource Recreation and Developed Recreation. This is likely an error stemming from when the area was rezoned to accommodate the disc golf course. All old roadbeds within the Developed Recreation Zone are now shown as such.
- Zoning around the waterbodies was edited to correct some inconsistencies in the original zoning and to reflect the current and desired ground conditions.
- The Administrative Services Zone around the park headquarters was edited to more accurately reflect where this use is on the ground.



Prescribed fire is an important management tool



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Fort Custer Recreation Area - Management Zones

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lakes and Rivers | Developed Recreation |
| Roads | Administrative Services |
| Zone | Ecologically Sensitive Overlay |
| Primitive | Scenic Overlay |
| Backcountry | Cultural Landscape Overlay |
| Natural Resource Recreation | |



Updated: 07/27/2022

A condensed review of the management zones follows. A thorough description of each management zone can be found in the Phase 1 GMP.

- Primitive Zone – Of the total 3,030 acres in the park, 227 acres (7.5%) of undeveloped land fall into this zone description. This area represents the floodplain of the Kalamazoo River, the marsh area north of Eagle Lake, and the marsh area south of Whitford-Lawler Lake. Under the Primitive Zone designation, only foot traffic is allowed. No mountain bike or equestrian riding will be permitted.
- Backcountry Zone – This zone covers 1,277 acres of the park (42%). The PRD Stewardship Unit actively manages several areas within the park where the natural resources are of higher quality. For example, Fort Custer Recreation Area contains excellent examples of oak barrens (widely spaced oak trees in fields of grasses and wildflowers) and dry-mesic southern (oak-hickory) forest. The Stewardship Unit conducts prescribed burns and prairie reestablishment in identified areas of the park. This zone allows moderate levels of recreation compatible with the natural resources, including mountain bike and equestrian trails.
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone – The Natural Resources Recreation Zone comprises 896 acres of the park (30%). It is utilized for general recreation, including hunting, fishing, trapping, birding, and trail use for hiking, biking, equestrian, dog mushing, and cross-country skiing. The Lakeview, Trailside, and Riverside rustic cabins are found in this zone.
- Developed Recreation Zone – There are six different areas with this designation covering 300 acres (10%), including the modern campground, day-use beach area, equestrian staging area/campground, Whitford-Lawler Lake day use area, and four boating access sites. These are all well-defined use areas and developed for intensive recreational use.
- Administrative Services Zone (formerly Visitor Services Zone) – This zone includes the headquarters, shop area, and the old manager's residence. The Administrative Services Zone totals just under 4.5 acres of land.
- Ecologically Sensitive Overlay – This overlay is designated for the protection of the trumpeter swan during the nesting season on Whitford Lake, and/or Jackson Lake. (Note: zone designation in all areas of the park will be defined by wherever the protected birds nest). Historically the swans have nested on the east side of Jackson Lake. This zone makes up 16 acres (less than 1%) of the park.
- Scenic Overlay – This zone recognizes the viewing opportunities along the Kalamazoo River, Jackson Lake, Whitford-Lawler Lake, Eagle Lake, and viewpoints at the Hilltop picnic shelter. The total overlay acreage is 398 (13%) of the recreation area.

- Cultural Landscape Overlay – The entire park falls within this zone because of its history and the high probability of evidence of past uses within the park. The park’s southern boundary is Territorial Road, which was originally a Native American trail. As pioneers came to Michigan, the trail provided a major east/west route. Lawler Cemetery is located next to Territorial Road. Owned by Frank W. Lawler, a local farmer at the time, the cemetery contains tombstones of some of the state’s early settlers. Over time, the trail grew into a stagecoach route between St. Louis and Detroit. Eventually, the area was farmed by early settlers. In 1917, Camp Custer was built for military training during World War I. The camp was named after Civil War cavalry officer General George Armstrong Custer. In 1940, Camp Custer was designated Fort Custer and became a permanent military training base for World War II. Several old homestead foundations and one silo (still standing) are scattered throughout the park. Lastly, a veteran’s hospital used to be located just north of Eagle Lake. Interpretive opportunities exist using kiosks and interpretive signage to explain the parks vast history.

2.3 Project Boundary

A project boundary is a geographic area reflecting the future desired park boundary. The DNR has an interest in acquiring property within this boundary that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing seller/ willing buyer basis. Disposal of land that does not support the department’s mission may also be considered. A 2020 statewide boundary review resulted in an update to the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) approved project boundary for Fort Custer Recreation Area from that shown in the Phase 1 GMP. This new project boundary includes the former antenna field, a 160-acre inholding within the recreation area, and land west of the Kalamazoo River. The Fort Custer Training Center property is no longer included in the project boundary. The planning team supports the 2020 project boundary, as shown on the following map. At the time of writing, the DNR is in preliminary discussions with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs regarding incorporating the former antenna field into the recreation area. If that becomes a reality, the area is recommended to be zoned Backcountry to reflect the natural resource goals of this land.



Kalamazoo River through the recreation area

2.4 Changes Since Phase 1 General Management Plan

The following changes have occurred at Fort Custer State Recreation Area since the Phase 1 GMP was approved in 2009.

- Shared mountain bike and equestrian trails were separated in 2014, and the new equestrian trails were cut in that summer.
- The first 1.7 miles of the entrance road was milled, reshaped, and repaved in 2012.
- The electrical system in the East Loop of the campground was replaced in the spring of 2018.
- The project to connect the campground to the City of Battle Creek sewer system is nearly complete, pending a Department of Defense review of Consumer's Energy environmental impact study and work plan.
- Several buildings have been re-roofed.
- The disc golf course was removed in 2015 or 2016, after the disc golfers stopped providing course maintenance.
- Solar arrays have been added to the headquarters building and are also planned for the campground.
- Security fencing has been installed at the headquarters area.
- Added 7 equestrian campsites at the staging area.
- Entered into a new concession contract with Simple Adventures LLC through November 2027 to provide sales at the beach and camp store, and watercraft rentals.

2.5 Supporting Analysis Updates

The following updates are provided to the supporting analysis included in the Fort Custer State Recreation Area Phase 1 GMP.

Demographics

The population of Kalamazoo County has increased from 238,063 (2000 census) to 261,670 (2020 census), an increase of just over 9% over a 20-year period. Conversely, the two major cities closest to the park, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, have experienced a small decline in population over the last 20 years. The county is also seeing an increase in racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in the Hispanic community. The percentage of black and Hispanic or Latino residents is significantly higher in the cities of Battle Creek (Calhoun County) and Kalamazoo than in Kalamazoo County as a whole. Similarly, while the per capita income and persons in poverty is on par with that of Michigan, median household and per capita income is significantly lower in the cities, with a correspondingly higher percent of persons in poverty.

Natural Resources

Flora

There are three notable features regarding the plant life within Fort Custer Recreation Area. First, the floodplain forest along the Kalamazoo River contains particularly high species diversity, some of which are rare. Secondly, there are still remnant populations of plants only found within oak barrens despite its near complete loss over the last 200 years. Lastly, the Stewardship Unit has collected seed from those remnant populations to reestablish the dominant grasses and wildflowers within oak barrens restoration areas where prescribed fire is used to ensure suitable conditions for them to thrive.

The floodplain along the Kalamazoo River has a high diversity of plant species that are adapted to frequent over-the-bank flooding which is responsible for the wide range of conditions suitable for diverse plant life. The overstory contains red maple, swamp white oak, green ash, black ash, American elm, bitternut hickory, blue-beech, among others. Common species of the ground flora include calico aster, wood nettle, poison ivy, riverbank grape, black snakeroot, fringed loosestrife, jumpseed, Virginia wild-rye, sedges, (e.g., *Carex grayii* and *C. muskingumensis*), blue-flag iris, moonseed, stinging nettle, false nettle, wild ginger, purple meadow-rue, spotted touch-me-not, white grass, blue lobelia, and arrow-leaved tear-thumb.

Fort Custer's oak barrens restoration areas represent just a fraction of their former extent in the region prior to Euro-American settlement. One of the largest patches of dry sand prairie in southern Michigan may have been Coguaiaick Prairie at Fort Custer Recreation Area in Kalamazoo County. The openings were always prone to tree growth, but regular fires maintained widely scattered oak trees – a condition corroborated by Indigenous People, General Land Office Surveys, early settler accounts, existing ecosystems in the region, and relic plant communities. Fort Custer's historic oak barrens were surrounded by oak-hickory forests, swamps, floodplain forest associated with the Kalamazoo River, and a variety of wetlands. The regular fires lit by Indigenous Peoples ended after the Treaty of 1821 removed them, allowing tree encroachment into the barrens. This was later followed by intensive settlement during the second half of the 19th century. Today, the upland areas on loamier soils that were once used for settler farming or grazing have transitioned to forest. The areas on sandier soils are now predominantly stands of even-aged black locust and shrubs. This nearly complete loss of the oak barrens has resulted in a major reduction in biodiversity and the viability of species associated with barrens, as well as the end of this open landscape that dominated much of southern Michigan.

The Stewardship Unit's restoration is not only re-establishing the dominant grasses and wildflowers from seed collected from remnant populations, but larger structural changes through whole locust (and other non-native trees) stand removal and by conducting regular prescribed fires that are essential to restoring the full suite of biodiversity of this most imperiled of Michigan's natural communities.

The following rare plant species have been recorded at or near Fort Custer Recreation Area:

- Beaked agrimony (*Agrimonia rostellata*) – state threatened
- Beak grass (*Diarrhena obovata*) – state threatened

- Black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) – special concern
- Cut-leaved water parsnip (*Berula erecta*) – state threatened
- Dodder (*Cuscuta pentagona*) – special concern
- Downy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*) – state threatened
- Eastern few-fruited sedge (*Carex oligocarpa*) – state threatened
- False boneset (*Kuhnia eupatorioides*) – special concern
- Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) – state threatened
- Goosefoot corn salad (*Valerianella chenopodiifolia*) – state threatened
- Green violet (*Hybanthus concolor*) – special concern
- Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*) – special concern
- Lesser ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes ovalis*) – state threatened
- Log fern (*Dryopteris celsa*) – state special concern
- Narrow-leaved sedge (*Carex amphibola*) – special concern
- Queen-of-the-prairie (*Filipendula rubra*) – state threatened
- Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) – state threatened
- Stiff gentian (*Gentianella quinquefolia*) – state threatened
- Three-awned grass (*Aristida longespica*) – state threatened
- Upland boneset (*Eupatorium sessilifolium*) – state threatened
- Virginia flax (*Linum virginianum*) – state threatened
- Wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) – special concern
- Watermeal (*Wolffia brasiliensis*) – state threatened
- Wild sweet potato (*Ipomoea pandurata*) – state threatened
- White false indigo (*Baptisia lactea*) – state special concern
- Yellow fumewort (*Corydalis flavula*) – state threatened

Fauna

Fort Custer Recreation Area has a lengthier and more extensive faunal record than many park and recreation areas, although major gaps still exist. Fortunately, ongoing studies are continuing to contribute to a better understanding of the recreation area's faunal biodiversity. Birds associated with open, natural lands have returned to Fort Custer within the oak barrens restoration areas including breeding populations of Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows. Particularly notable at Fort Custer is one of the most robust populations of Cerulean warblers in the state. The population has undergone a study using banded birds, but much more monitoring and research are needed to understand how the population is responding as environmental conditions change at breeding, migration, and wintering areas.

Comprehensive mammal surveys have not been conducted at Fort Custer. In 1997, there was a failed attempt to detect the state-endangered prairie vole which is known to occur within the Fort Custer Training Center. More common species known to occur include white-tailed deer; gray, red, and fox squirrels; eastern chipmunk; eastern cottontail, red fox, and woodchuck.

Reptiles and amphibians are also significant at Fort Custer due to a number of rare species including Blanchard's cricket frog. Spotted turtle, eastern massasauga rattlesnake and eastern box turtle. The

cricket frog population is in Whitford and Eagle lakes. Box turtles have been studied using mark-recapture techniques to assess adult survival. A 2008 fisheries survey observed snapping turtle, common musk turtle, common map turtle, painted turtle, and spiny softshell turtle.

Eagle, Whitford-Lawler, and Jackson Hole Lakes all contain largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, northern pike, and channel catfish. The Kalamazoo River is a warm water fishery. More species inventories are needed on mussels, bats, and insects but they have not been conducted due to a lack of resources.

The following rare species have been documented at or near Fort Custer Recreation Area:

- American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – special concern
- American bumblebee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) – special concern
- Blanchard’s cricket frog (*Acris blanchardi*) – state threatened
- Blanding’s turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) – special concern
- Black-and-gold bumblebee (*Bombus auricomus*) – special concern
- Cerulean warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) – special concern
- Cooper’s hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – special concern
- Common gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) – state threatened
- Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) – special concern
- Eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*) – federally threatened
- Eastern pipistrelle (*Perimyotis subflavus*) – special concern
- Eastern whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) – special concern
- Elktoe (*Alasmidonta marginata*) – special concern
- Ellipse (*Venustaconcha ellipsiformis*) – special concern
- Flutedshell (*Lasmigona costata*) – special concern
- Golden borer (*Papaipema cerina*) – special concern
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – special concern
- Henslow’s sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) – state threatened
- Louisiana waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*) – special concern
- Median striate (*Striatura meridionalis*) – special concern
- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – special concern
- Pickerel frog (*Lithobates palustris*) – special concern
- Prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) – state endangered
- Prothonotary warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) – special concern
- Rainbow (*Villosa iris*) – special concern
- River fingernail clam (*Sphaerium fabale*) – special concern
- Round pigtoe (*Pleurobema sintoxia*) – special concern
- Spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) – state threatened
- Sprague’s pygarcia (*Pygarcia spraguei*) – special concern
- Trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) – state threatened
- Watercress snail (*Fontigens nickliniana*) – special concern

Additionally, many rare animal species may be found in the park if a survey was conducted, especially for insects, bats, dragonflies, and mussels. The following is a sub-set of some high priority species requiring additional survey:

- Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) – special concern
- Blazing star borer moth (*Papaipema beeriana*) – special concern
- Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) – special concern
- Evening bat (*Nycticeius humeralis*) – state threatened
- Eastern pipistrelle (*Perimyotis subflavus*) – special concern
- Gray ratsnake (*Pantherophis spiloides*) – special concern
- Hooded warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) – special concern
- Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) – Federally endangered, special concern
- Least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) – state threatened
- Least shrew (*Cryptotis parva*) – state threatened
- Little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) – special concern
- Marsh wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) – special concern
- Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) – federally threatened, state special concern
- Ottoe skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*) – critically imperiled
- Pickerel frog (*Lithobates palustris*) – special concern
- Prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) – state endangered
- Regal fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*) – state endangered
- Spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) – state threatened
- Woodland vole (*Microtus pinetorum*) – special concern

Education and Interpretation

There has not been an Explorer Guide in recent years due to the lack of qualified applicants.

Land Ownership

The 160-acre in-holding in the northern area of the park is no longer operated as an antenna field. At this time, it is not open to the public and is owned by the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. The DNR desires to incorporate this property into the recreation area.

The gift of the land from the Federal Government contains several restrictions and stipulations regarding access and use of the land. Oil, gas and minerals rights were retained by the Federal Government. A copy of the Deeds is included in Appendix E

Relationship to Other Recreational Resources

- SWMLC owns approximately 290 acres on the west side of the Kalamazoo River, known as the Augusta Floodplain Nature Preserve. The property, which is currently undeveloped with limited access, was purchased in 2016 and includes high quality forest habitat.
- The Battle Creek Linear Park trail currently terminates at the northeast corner of Fort Custer Recreation Area. The future Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVt) will run through the northern part of the recreation area and link the Battle Creek Trail to the KRVt through Galesburg and beyond to the Kal-Haven Trail.
- The North Country National Scenic Trail, and hiking route of the Iron Belle Trail, runs through a portion of the recreation area north of Dickman Road.

Recreational Resources

Trails

At the time of approval of the original phase 2 plan in 2010, most of the trails were shared use open to hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use. In 2014, a comprehensive planning exercise resulted in the separation of most of the mountain bike and equestrian trails.

- Blue Trail – 4 miles circling Jackson and Whitford-Lawler lakes is open to both equestrian and mountain bike use.
- Equestrian Trail (brown) – a series of inter-connected loops totaling approximately 15 miles
- Yellow Trail – 5 miles, open to mountain biking, hiking and cross-country skiing.
- Red Trail – 8.6 miles, open to mountain biking, hiking and cross-country skiing.
- Green Trail – 7 miles, open to mountain biking, hiking and cross-country skiing.

Equestrian Campground

Seven equestrian campsites were added along the north and east perimeters of the equestrian staging area. A covered picnic table and charcoal grill are also available.

Fishing

DNR Fisheries Division manages Eagle Lake as a Muskellunge fishery. Great Lakes strain Muskellunge are stocked at a target rate of 150 fall fingerlings (0.75/acre) in alternate years.

Safe fish consumption guidelines have been issued for the Kalamazoo River due to the presence of PCBs, dioxins and PFOS, which can be found at www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish

Park Use Numbers

Camper numbers have increasing steadily since the phase 1 plan was written in 2004. Day use estimates have increased dramatically over the last 17 years by over 52%.

	2004	2014	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Day Use Visitors	482,013	505,268	590,903	543,804	552,084	802,023	845,857
Campers	44,122	43,760	58,800	54,094	58,142	46,394*	58,850

*Numbers impacted due to closures related to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Legal Mandates

The legal mandates section of the Phase 1 GMP was incomplete. See Appendix A for a complete list of legal mandates impacting the property.



Young person fishing from a dock

3. 10–Year Action Goals

The action goals proposed for Fort Custer Recreation Area were developed by the planning team in response to stakeholder and public input and in context with the core values and guiding resources discussed in the Phase 1 GMP. The action goals generally focus on upgrading existing infrastructure while maintaining a focus on protecting natural resource-based recreation experiences.

The planning team has developed 10-year action goals that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the designated management zones to achieve the desired user experience. Action goals are categorized under two types: Management and Operations and as Infrastructure and Development, which is further broken down to small projects and capital outlay projects. These categories align with the annual Capital Outlay funding process. Action goals are recommended to address the following categories:

- Natural resources
- Historic/cultural resources
- Recreation opportunities
- Education/interpretation opportunities
- Management focus
- Development

Management priorities identified in this plan include working with the Department of Military and Veteran’s Affairs to incorporate the former antenna field into the recreation area, completing an interpretive plan, and clarifying land use rules. Capital outlay priorities include constructing the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through the park, increasing parking to relieve congestion at the Eagle Lake boat launch and considering canoe and kayak access, replacing campground toilet shower buildings, and replacing electricity in the west campground loop. A long-term goal includes studying the merits of an alternative day use entrance off Dickman Road. Other goals will be accomplished by partnering with the Fort Custer Horse Friends Association and Southwest Michigan Mountain Biking Association to make improvements to the equestrian campground and mountain bike staging area. These goals are supported by the recommendations of all the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

A separate Natural Resource Stewardship Plan has been developed that identifies conservation targets, goals, and threats to those conservation targets for the park. Conservation targets identified include a large complex of oak barrens (savanna) and dry-mesic southern (hickory-oak) forest, which is rare in Michigan. The current Stewardship Plan was completed in 2003 and is scheduled to be updated within the next two years.

Management plans are based on known needs, funding realities and sound investment policies, but 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.

The following 10-year action goals are ranked in terms of priority based on health, safety, and welfare, as well as ease of implementation (cost, ability to implement with own staff, partnerships, etc.). Priority Level 1 projects indicate those that should be addressed within the next 2 years. Priority Level 2 projects include those that should be addressed within 2-5 years. Priority Level 3 projects are desired, but can be tackled in the next 5-10 years, once funding has been identified. The Program Input From column identifies the project coordinators for each goal with a project lead identified in bold. Opinion of probable costs have been developed for each capital outlay action goal identified (see Appendix C) and these projects will be included in the statewide master project list. The prioritization schedule identified for each capital outlay goal is not guaranteed and is subject to funding availability.

Management and Operations

Action Goals	Priority	Management Zone	Program Input From
Work with DMVA to incorporate former antenna field into the park through lease or land exchange and review boundaries between the park and training center	Ongoing	N/A	Lands Liaison Park Manager District Supervisor Stewardship
Investigate a feasible off-road equestrian trail connection from the equestrian trailhead north along Augusta Climax Road	1	Developed Recreation Natural Resource Recreation	Park Manager Stewardship FCHFA
Review Administrative Rule R281.739.8 prohibiting operation of a vessel powered by a motor except an electric motor on Eagle Lake and ensure no-wake order would still apply if rescinded.	1	N/A	Policy Analyst Park Supervisor LED
Update the natural resource Stewardship Plan	1	All	Stewardship Ecologist Park Manager Wildlife
Consider appropriate location for mountain bike beginner/ skills loop at trailhead	2	Natural Resource Recreation Backcountry	Park Manager Stewardship SWMMBA
Create an interpretive plan for interpretation of landscape history	2	All	Archaeologist Historic Architect Park Manager NHBP

DMVA – Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

FCHFA – Fort Custer Horse Friends Association

LED – Law Enforcement Division

NHBP – Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

SWMMBA – Southwest Michigan Mountain Biking Association

Infrastructure and Development: Capital Outlay

Action Goals	Priority	Management Zone	Program Input From
Construct Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through the park	1	Developed Rec. Natural Resource Recreation	Trails Specialist Park Manager
Design and construct additional parking at Eagle Lake launch and consider a designated launching area for non-motorized watercraft	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Complete connection of campground to City of Battle Creek sewer system	1	All	Regional Planner Park Manager
Replace two campground toilet shower buildings	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Replace electricity on west loop of campground and review ADA campsite additions (sites 1 through 110)	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Repave and reconstruct park roads as needed including consideration for bike traffic	3	All	Regional Planner Park Manager
Install cold storage building at park headquarters and consider removal of old park managers house	3	Administrative Services	Regional Planner Park Manager
Complete a feasibility study for an alternative day use entrance off Dickman Road	3	Developed Rec. Natural Resource Rec.	Regional Planner Park Manager

Partner Projects

Action Goals	Priority	Management Zone	Program Input From
Work with NHBP to identify and implement projects of mutual interest	Ongoing	All	Park Manager NHBP District Supervisor Stewardship
Complete installation of solar array at campground	1	Developed Recreation	PRD Business Analyst Park Manager Utopian Power

Action Goals	Priority	Management Zone	Program Input From
Implement mountain bike staging area improvements including picnic tables/benches, improved signage, accessible surfacing, and reroofing vault toilet and change courts	1	Developed Recreation	Park Manager Regional Planner SWMMBA
Coordinate with FCHFA to construct an equipment storage shed in the service yard	2	Administrative Services	Park Manager FCHFA
Design and implement equestrian campground improvements considering electricity, shade for horses, corrals, and connecting to campground water system.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager FCHFA
Install shade shelter in the mountain bike staging area	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager SWMMBA



Horse riding and mountain biking are popular activities in the recreation area

4. Implementation Strategy

This chapter of the general management plan (GMP) provides guidance for implementation of the action goals and maintaining the plan so it remains relevant in the long term. These guidelines will also help the park align the action goals with park, district and statewide annual funding processes and annual tasks outlined in the Parks and Recreation Division's Strategic Plan or other planning documents. Although the implementation of the GMP will require commitment from staff at every level, it will be the primary responsibility of the Unit Supervisor/Manager to oversee plan implementation.

A long-range plan such as this must maintain a degree of flexibility in order to be responsive to changing circumstances or opportunities that cannot be foreseen. It is recognized that some goals may be accomplished in a short time frame, while others may carry over through multiple years. It will be important to track progress so that the plan remains a relevant park management tool. The GMP will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains viable.

4.1 Implementation Toolbox

The following is a list of items to consider when reviewing and prioritizing the implementation of action goals identified in the GMP.

Coordination/ Communication

- Meet regularly with the Regional Field Planner and District Supervisor to coordinate and prioritize large capital projects for capital outlay requests.
- Maintain an open dialogue with local partners and stakeholders to coordinate community-related projects as identified in the action goals.
- Follow-up regularly on progress for action goals that are not the primary responsibility of the Unit Supervisor/Manager with the responsible program position.

Funding

- Identify estimated cost for each capital improvement/infrastructure project, with assistance from Regional Field Planner or other planning and infrastructure section staff as needed.
- Identify potential funding sources for each project/task. Liaise with PRD grants coordinator as appropriate.
- Align potential funding sources with the annual "call for projects" in July for capital outlay funding requests.
- Review action goals list and determine which projects can be requested to receive District Small Project funding through the District Supervisor.

Scheduling

- Further prioritize projects based on need, funding, staffing and other constraints and opportunities.

- Incorporate project/task assignments into annual staff performance objectives

4.2 Documentation of Changes

The Unit Supervisor/Manager should keep a record of any major changes to the park since approval of the GMP and note potential updates that may be required in the future. Documenting these changes will assist in the 5-year plan review or when the GMP is updated. Changes may include:

- New user requests or conflicts
- Emerging recreation, funding or partnership opportunities
- Changes in land management
- Land transactions or changes to the Approved Project Boundary
- Major infrastructure projects or removal of structures

Changes may be documented by marking up the park's copy of the GMP or maintaining a log that is kept with the GMP. In reviewing the action goals for changes, document goals that may become irrelevant or are no longer viable, as well as proposed new action goals, including justification.

The park zoning is intended to be a long-term document. Changes will only be considered with adequate justification and are subject to a formal review and approval process.

4.3 Documentation of Accomplishments

As action goals are completed, the Unit Supervisor/Manager should mark them as such in the park's copy of the GMP, including the completion date. This will also help to maintain a log of accomplishments for district and division-wide reporting purposes, including PRD's strategic plan.

4.4 Five-year Review Process

General management plans are reviewed every five years from the date of approval of either the Phase 2 plan or the complete GMP. The planning team for the 5-year review is made up of the Park Management Plan Administrator, Unit Supervisor/Manager, Regional Field Planner and District Supervisor, with other team members included as may be necessary. A 5-Year Review Form will be used to record all changes to the plan within the past 5 years. Upon reviewing the GMP and the documented changes, the planning team will determine whether the changes warrant a complete update of the plan.

If there are no major changes required in either the zoning or the action goals, the planning team will complete the 5-Year Review Form and attach it as a supplement to the existing GMP. If zoning changes are needed, the GMP will be revised or updated following the established planning process led by the Park Management Plan Administrator. If changes to the action goals only are required, the Phase 2 GMP planning process will be implemented.

APPENDIX A – LEGAL MANDATES UPDATE

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 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.

Legal Mandates were listed in the phase 1 plan. However, due to omissions and updates, a complete updated list of legal mandates impacting Fort Custer State Recreation Area follows.

FEDERAL STATUTE

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 1973	
This Act authorizes the determination and listing of species as endangered and threatened, and prohibits unauthorized taking, possession, sale and transport of endangered species	
NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, 1966 AS AMENDED	
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.	

STATE STATUTE

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS	
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 EGLE 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 (EGLE) to undertake certain activities relating to inland lakes and streams, such as dredging, fill, marinas, structures, alteration of flow, etc.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS	
PA 451 of 1994, Part 303 Wetlands Protection	Requires a permit from the state (EGLE) to undertake certain activities in regulated wetlands, such as, dredging, fill, construction or drainage.
PA 451 of 1994, Part 315 Dam Safety	A permit is required for dams with a dam “height” of six feet or more and that have a surface area of five acres or more at the design flood elevation. A permit is required for new dam construction, enlargement of an existing dam or impoundment, dam repair, dam alteration, dam removal, dam abandonment, or reconstruction of a failed dam.
PA 451 of 1994, Part 351 Endangered Species Protection	The law governs those acts necessary for the conservation, protection, restoration and propagation of endangered and threatened species of fish, wildlife and plants in cooperation with the Federal Government.
PA 451 of 1994, Part 419 Hunting Area Control	Section 324.41901 establishes the powers of the Department to establish safety zones for hunting.
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.
PUBLIC HEALTH CODE	
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 Fort Custer State Recreation Area.

Land Use Orders of the Director

5.2 Possessions 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:

(1) Possess or consume an alcoholic beverage within the following described locations from April 1 through Labor Day, without written authorization of the park manager:

(a) Fort Custer RA - entire park

5.4 Watercraft use in certain state parks, prohibited conduct.

Order 5.4 A person shall not do the following:

(1) Operate a vessel in excess of a slow, no-wake speed on any of the following described waters:

(c) Fort Custer RA - Jackson lake; Lawler lake; Whitford lake; Eagle lake.

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 SPs and RAs

(12) Fort Custer RA, prohibited conduct. A person shall not do the following at the Fort Custer RA:

(a) Excavate, dig or probe the grounds, or remove ordnance without written permission.

(b) Operate a snowmobile off the designated snowmobile route.

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

(22) Fort Custer RA, Kalamazoo county.

Wildlife Conservation Orders

Wildlife is owned by all the people of the state of Michigan, and protection is administered and managed by the Michigan DNR. Hunting and trapping regulations including methods of take, bag limits, license quotas, and season dates are established by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and are described in the Wildlife Conservation Orders.

7.60 Fort Custer recreation area; unlawful acts; exceptions; posting required.

Sec. 7.60 A person shall not do any of the following:

(1) Take an animal with a firearm from November 15 to December 1 or hunt or take Canada geese during September 1 to 15 on those portions of the Fort Custer recreation area described as follows:

(a) All lands in section 3, T2S R9W, lying southeasterly of the park entrance road; and all that part of section 2, T2S R9W, lying north and west of the old military road intersection with the Eagle lake day use area entrance road, and all lands in section 3, T2S R9W, north of the day use area entrance road to the intersection of the main park entrance road.

(2) A person shall not take an animal within the limits of the area commonly referred to as the Fort Custer campground and posted as closed to shooting.

(3) A person shall not take waterfowl from any state-owned lands or waters in the Fort Custer recreation area from September 1 through Labor day.

(4) Signs containing the hunting closure shall be posted in such a manner and at such locations as will provide reasonable notice of the closure to the public. History: Eff. Mar 31, 1989; Am. 16, 1989, Eff. Aug 1, 1989; Am. 13, 1999, Eff. Sep 1, 1999; Am. 2, 2016, Eff. April 15, 2016; Am. 2, 2021, Eff. Mar. 12, 2021

Watercraft Controls

EAGLE LAKE - R281.739.8 - Operation of vessel powered by motor. *(Note, this is recommended to be rescinded)*

8. On the waters of Eagle lake, sections 1 and 2, T2S, R9W, in Fort Custer recreation area, Charleston township, Kalamazoo county, it is unlawful to operate a vessel powered by a motor except an electric motor.

History: Eff. November 3, 1979

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.

Quit Claim Deed

The land comprising Fort Custer State Recreation Area was transferred to the Michigan DNR in 1971 for use and maintenance of a public park or public recreation purposes. An additional 95 acres, north of Eagle

Lake was transferred in 1973. The entire park is subject to Federal transfer requirements as outlined in the Quitclaim Deeds.

Notable requirements are as follows:

- The grantor reserved access rights and easements across the property for ingress and egress to excepted tracts (antenna field) and for utility purposes.
- The property must be used and maintained for public recreation in perpetuity.
- The property must be signed as public recreation land and acknowledge that it was acquired from the Federal Government
- The land shall not be sold, leased, assigned or otherwise disposed of. Certain concession agreements may be allowed provided prior agreement is sought.
- The DNR must submit biennial reports to the Secretary of the Interior.
- The land is subject to a reversion clause should it be required for national defense purposes

APPENDIX B –

STAKEHOLDER, PUBLIC AND TRIBAL INPUT SUMMARY

Over the duration of the Phase 2 General Management Plan development process, the planning team ensured a variety of opportunities for stakeholder and public input and feedback.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT MEETING SUMMARY

The planning team invited over 50 stakeholders, both individuals and community groups, representing governmental, recreational, non-profit, and business/tourism interests, to participate in a facilitated input workshop held online via Microsoft Teams on March 1, 2022 from 2-4 p.m. Representatives of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provided the stakeholders with a brief overview of Fort Custer State Recreation Area and an outline of the phase 1 general management plan (GMP) components and the phase 2 update planning process and timeline that their input would inform.

Input from the stakeholders to help inform the management plan was solicited through a Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities exercise, the results of which are presented below.

Strengths

Location/General

- Consistent to the mission of the DNR and the Parks and Recreation Division – maintenance and upkeep, expectations
- Established park - well known amongst the community
- Accessibility – close to Battle Creek and Kalamazoo
- Convenient between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek and near I-94 and M-96
- Proximity to the Fort Custer National Cemetery (convenient) (one of two in Michigan)

Recreation

- Cabins
- Beach and swimming access (groups)
- Camping – limited availability on Calhoun County
- Trails – equestrian trails (none in Calhoun County)
- Expansive trail system for many uses (limited opportunity in region) (2)
- Trails are great distances and nice loops
- Volunteer support (trails)
- Expansive/size of the park (2)
- Group events (pavilions)
- Connectivity of trail system
- Variety of recreation opportunities
- Campground sites (spaced out well, especially in the lower half)
- Large beach with parking and concessions

- Trail system covers a long distance
- Equestrian trails and staging area
- Good access to recreation amenities and also areas that are more secluded
- Mapping and signage at the park specifically for trail users
- Kalamazoo River boat launch site

Natural Resources

- Variety of natural wildlife habitats
- Water features
- Popular for birders especially during migration period

Challenges

- History of land – military operations
- Reconfiguring trail systems to manage conflict/changes (e.g. NE corner)
- Losing hunter access (too many trails)
- Gravel Roads from 40th to Fort Custer Drive (crashes)
- Invasive species management (aquatic and terrestrial) including new threats
- Aging infrastructure and scarcity of funding to address it
- Exclusion of user groups that have historically had access to it (snowmobiles)
- Invasive species
- E-bike policy (excluded on Mtn. Bike trails and other natural surface trails)
- Lack of multiple access points on the river
- Traffic on busy days into the park
- Identifying equitable land for exchange of former antenna field (federal requirements)

Opportunities

- BCK CISMA – partner on invasive species work
- Local high schools – relationships and volunteer opportunities
- Small rustic camping opportunity (for trail users, fishermen or hunters)
- Calhoun County Visitor's Bureau – promotion
- Improvements to main MB trailhead area – gathering area and kids loop
- Opportunity for education on natural resources (USFWS)
- Land users (volunteers) willing to put in labor and fund raising
- Review policy for e-bikes and determine where we can allow e-bikes in the park
- Ensuring a balance between user groups by keeping lines of communication open
- Educational signage highlighting historical aspects of the park
- Review snowmobile policy and determine how snowmobiles could be reintroduced in the park, potentially limiting access to historic snowmobiles
- Partnerships with the Training Center to access federal funding sources to reduce energy footprint and energy costs
- Kalamazoo River Valley Trail extension through the park
- Development of a Kalamazoo River Water Trail

The meeting concluded with general discussion and questions, including the possibility of a new park access road to the day use area from Dickman Road (I-96) and the need to work with the National Cemetery and MDOT if planning moves ahead.

Attendees:

Name	Representing
Lynn Vanderbos	DMVA
Terry Eisen	Northside Snowmobile Club
Rebekkah Ausbury	Kalamazoo County Road Commission
Sarah Nelson	BCK Cisma
Adam Bydash	Fort Custer National Cemetery
Nancy Simmonds	Fort Custer Horse Friends Association
Ryan Baker	Kalamazoo River Alliance
Athira Jayadevan	MDOT
Zach Whitacre	BCK Cisma
Derek Haroldson	EGLE
Dana Wagner	Discover Kalamazoo
Daryl Hutson	SWMMBA
Douglas Ferrall	Calhoun County
Kaitlyn Kelly	USFWS
Linda Freybler	Battle Creek CVB
Rebecca Quinn	Simple Adventures
Dan Warnaar	SWMMBA
Jeff Heppler	Augusta Chief of Polics/Village Manager
Hope E. Stanley	Kalamazoo County Health Dept.
Rachael A. Grover	Kalamazoo County Planning
Avery, Delbert	DMVA
Anyah S. Preston	Kalamazoo County Drain Commission
Vince Carahaly	Southcentral Michigan Planning Council
Elliott A. Christensen	Kalamazoo County Drain Commission
David M. Rachowicz	Kalamazoo County Parks
Lucus D. Pols	Kalamazoo County Health Dept.
Galloway, Shaughn L	USFWS
Nate Strong	Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

Planning Team Attendees:

Debbie Jensen (Park Management Plan Administrator), Matt Lincoln (Land Liaison/ Grants Specialist), Justin Gerould (Regional Field Planner), Pat Whalen (Acting District Supervisor), Tony Trojanowski (Unit Manager), Ray Fahlsing (Stewardship Unit Manager), Jill Sell (Trails Specialist), Stacy Tchorzynski (Archaeologist), Matt Diana (Fisheries Biologist).

DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

The Fort Custer Recreation Area Draft Phase 2 General Management Plan was available for public review and comment from August 16 through September 11, 2022. The draft was available on the project website and the public was invited to learn about the plan and share their thoughts at a virtual public meeting on August 30, 2022, from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. The general public and stakeholders were notified about the meeting and other opportunities to comment on the plan through a press release and internet postings.

Virtual Public Meeting

A total of 14 attendees were recorded, although over 60 people registered for the event and to receive additional information. The meeting began with a brief introduction of planning team members, followed by an overview of the general management plan process, Fort Custer Recreation Area, and the draft general management plan contents. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period. Topics discussed covered many different aspects of the park, including camping opportunities, stewardship efforts and various suggestions for improvements. A summary of the questions and answers follows.

Virtual Public Meeting Questions and Answers Summary

- Q. how often do they restock the lakes with fish? My last few outings were...disappointing, might be the fisherman?
- A. every other year Eagle Lake is stocked with muskie fingerlings that are 12 inches long.
- Q. Can they lift the alcohol prohibition at the campground, many state campgrounds allow alcohol, why is it prohibited?
- A. The ban was put in place over 20 years ago in response to people drinking to excess resulting in law enforcement issues and several serious accidents, including fatalities. There is no intent to lift the alcohol ban at this time.
- Q. are you gonna be adding more trails to ride bikes on?
- A. The only additions proposed are a beginners' or skills loop near the mountain bike trailhead (approximately a half mile) and the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail that will go through the northern part of the park. The park has over 40 miles of trail currently and with balancing other uses and natural resource protection there are no plans for further expansion.

- Q. Is there a timeline for the addition of electricity and water at the equestrian campground?
- A. Currently, no. The project is still in the planning stages.
- Q. Use of antenna field should consider locations of uncommon plants so development does not adversely impact them.
- A. Currently we do not have plans to develop that area.
- Q. Is there any plan to add additional dump and water station? Any thought to any future full services (water/sewer) at camp sites? If you added another entrance to the park would it be considered to also have an additional sanitation station?
- A. No plans at this time. It is our hope that once the hook up to the municipal sewer system is complete it will speed things up at the sanitation station.
- Q. ebikes and snowmobiles, any thoughts of adding these to the plan?
- A. Ebikes are covered under an overall DNR policy which generally prohibits riding on natural surface trails. The proposed Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KVRT) through the park will be open to certain types of ebike. There are no plans to change the snowmobile use right now. The recreation area does not connect to any snowmobile trail and there is a lot of other trail use in the park currently, including dog mushing, which could result in conflicts.
- Q. how many group campsites do you guys have? do you plan to add more?
- A. There are two group campsites, each accommodating 60 people. These are considered adequate and there are no plans to add more.
- Q. Would the Antenna field provide room for new trails?
- A. There are no plans to add more trails in this area currently. If it becomes part of the park, it will need to be evaluated to consider the natural resources.
- Q. Does the development plan recognize that the North Country National Scenic Trail passes thru the north edge of FCRA? Should consider expanded parking at the NCT trailhead along the county road just north of Dickman Rd.
- A. The plan does recognize the NCT through the park. Expanded parking is not currently in the plan but is something we could consider, in coordination with MDOT, the county, or the NCT Association.
- Q. do you guys need volunteers for these projects? if someone were to want to help how would they sign up?
- A. Volunteers are always welcome. There are opportunities to assist with the trails through the mountain bike or equestrian group or through stewardship days. Look for opportunities to sign up for stewardship days on the DNR's website or contact Tony for specific opportunities. Volunteer activities also include seed collecting from native species.

- Q. Is there a source for the pre-history of the park like where homesteads were located? I run across foundations while on the trails and just wonder who lived there and how big the farms were. just curious.
- A. Below ground cultural resources are sensitive and we do not typically share location for protection purposes (except for approved research). We are planning to develop interpretation materials for the previous land uses of the recreation area, such as farmsteads, for enhanced public understanding. A meeting attendee indicated that information on the history of Fort Custer can also be found at the McKay Library in Augusta.
- Q. did the state get any oil spill money from Enbridge that could be used to fund more Custer state park projects?
- A. There was a natural resources damage assessment levied against Enbridge Energy. A small portion of that was administered by fisheries division to fund a three-year aquatic invasive species study and control project on all three of our lakes. The majority of that went to the state park stewardship section for some of their prairie habitat restoration.
- Q. Some campsites have concrete pads, is that for seasonal and or handicap access?
- A. Currently, there are two campsites with concrete pads. Those sites are in the east loop and were improved as part of the electrical system replacement in that half of the campground. They are designated as barrier-free, however by our camping policy if those are the last sites remaining unoccupied, we can register any camper onto them.
- Q. Any feasibility of improved parking at Dickman Rd canoe launch? This is outside of FCRA boundaries, I think, but any insights on parking there would be appreciated.
- A. It is not currently in the plan, but something to consider.
- Q. what kind of efforts are being made to remove invasive species?
- A. There are several stewardship volunteer days where they work on primarily black locust, autumn olive, honeysuckle, multiflora rose removal primarily in the prairies, but also in some of the woodland sections. Periodically, stewardship enters into contracts to perform larger scale invasive tree removals.
- Q. is fort Custer seasonal if so what sites are?
- A. The campground is open year-round and is one of the few state park campgrounds in the region to be open through the winter. The west loop is closed from December 1 until about the end of March.
- Q. Any plans to add additional docks or pier's possibly for fishing at the lakes?
- A. Not at this time. Funding to construct and maintain fishing docks is difficult to come by.
- Q. Any plans for changes to the cabins?
- A. Aside from maintenance, not at this time.
- Q. could you consider kayak, canoe, rowboat rentals in the summer?

A. Canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards are currently available through the summer months through a concessionaire at Eagle Lake.

Q. Any chance for a backcountry campsite for NCTA hikers?

A. Room is limited in the area of the park that the NCT passes through.

At the end of the meeting, attendees were asked to participate in a public input survey to review, comment on, and help prioritize the ten-year actions goals.

Post Meeting Online Survey

Two hundred and thirty-nine individuals completed the post meeting online survey that was designed to help prioritize and provide feedback on the proposed action goals and public input opportunity. In the survey, participants were asked to prioritize their top five action goals from the ten-year action goals list (see table on following page). The top priorities, in order of preference were:

- Implement equestrian campground improvements considering electricity, shade for horses and running water
- Construct Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through the park
- Consider appropriate location for mountain bike beginner/ skills loop at trailhead
- Replace two campground toilet shower buildings
- Investigate a feasible off-road equestrian trail connection from the equestrian trailhead north along Augusta Climax Road
- Repave and reconstruct roads as needed
- Implement mountain bike staging area improvements including picnic tables/benches, improved signage, accessible surfacing, and reroofing vault toilet and change courts.

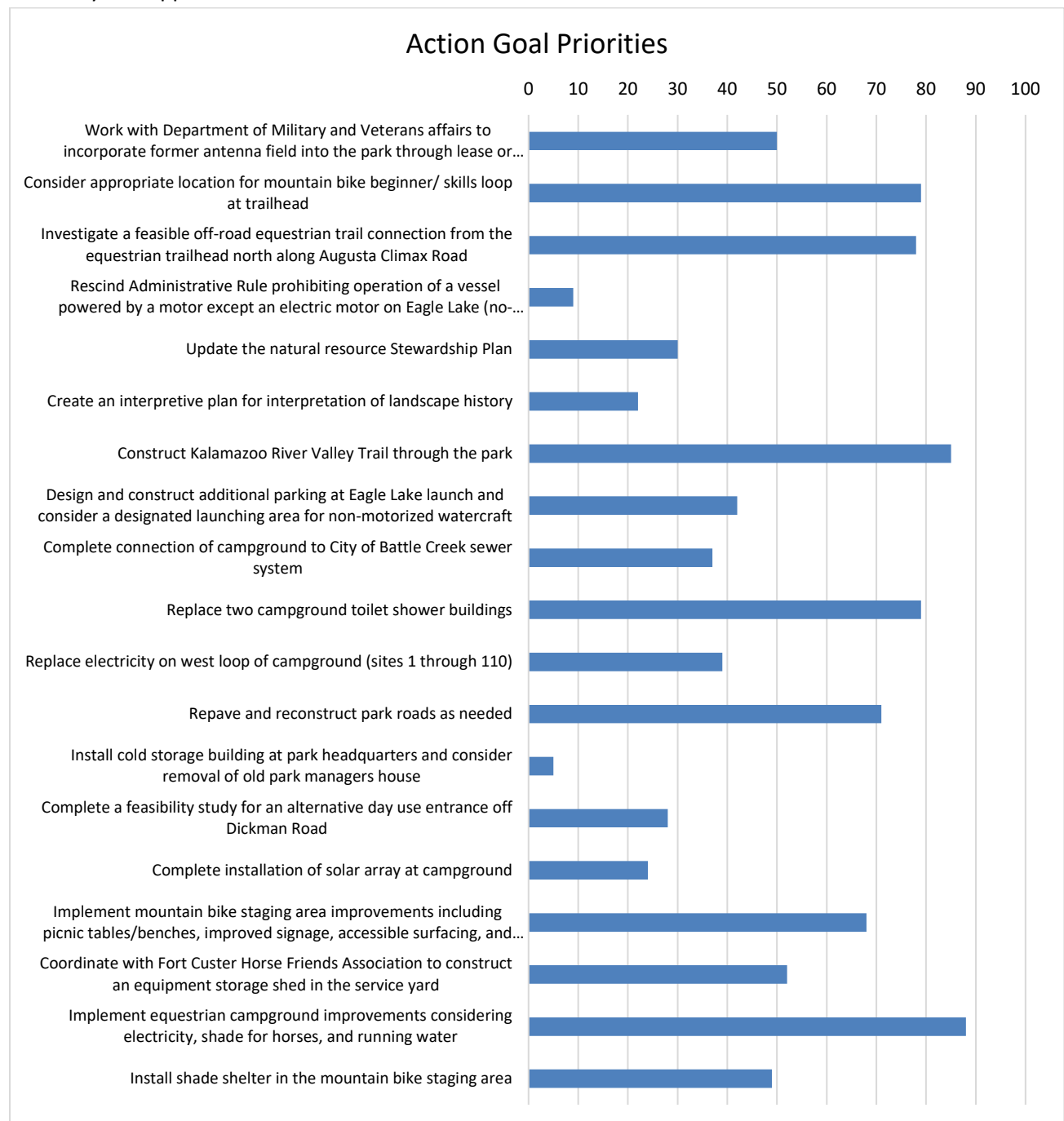
When asked if any actions should be added to the list, a variety of responses were submitted. Common themes included:

- Additional improvements to the equestrian campground, such as adding corals, and larger sites.
- Improvements at Eagle Lake, such as shade on the beach, concession building updates, a playground (natural playground) and more amenities such as an outhouse for out-of-season use, picnic tables and general improvements to the area.
- Additional fishing docks
- Additional mileage for mountain bike and equestrian trails and other trail improvements, including maintenance.

When asked if any actions should be removed from the list, the majority of the 48 comments, were in relation to the boating restrictions. Many would like to see Eagle Lake restricted to electric motors only, although it was not clear if people understood that the no-wake order would remain and is what is currently being enforced as many said to leave it as it is.

Additional comments regarding Fort Custer Recreation Area or the draft plan included many positive comments regarding the park and repetition of comments made in other areas of the survey. Several respondents expressed concern that there were few actions related to hunting and fishing and that an emphasis on trails and other amenities was moving away from the DNR's mission.

Very few of the survey respondents attended the online public meeting. The overwhelming reason for not attending was that they were not aware of it. Those that did attend the meeting mostly rated it favorably and appreciated the virtual format.



Email Comments

The following letter was received via email.



September 13, 2022

Debbie Jensen
DNR Park Management Plan Administrator
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Dear Ms. Jensen,

Discover Kalamazoo would like to suggest specific improvements to Fort Custer in response to your recent webinar on the Phase 2 General Management Plan.

Please know that we are delighted that you are continuing to make improvements to the Fort Custer Recreation Area. Parks, trails and waterways are very important assets to Discover Kalamazoo and our community, and as such we regularly feature them in our marketing activities targeted to potential out-of-town visitors. Our ads and website pages featuring outdoor recreation, especially trails and waterfront/waterways have proven to be some of our most engaging content, demonstrating to us their ability to help us attract valuable leisure travelers.

There are three things we recommend you prioritize in your plans:

1. Facilities for the launch of canoes, kayaks and tubing. This would include parking areas downstream, transportation upstream for launch, rental facilities and restrooms/changing areas. These types of facilities are hugely popular in other parts of Michigan, and inquiries to Discover Kalamazoo indicate demand in our area. If you created facilities like this, we would market them from Spring to early Fall to the surrounding areas.
2. Free, unimpeded access on trails including through the State Park area. We are so fortunate to have the Kal-Haven Trail and KRVT connecting into Kalamazoo County, and are very much looking forward to improvements which will make the entire lake-to-lake trail system safe and easy for bikers to traverse our great state. This is already a significant tourism draw for us, and we think the planned improvements will make it even better. It is critical, however, that access be easy for bikers and not require passes or fees as they go from one portion of the trail to another. It can't be like a toll road or bikers will choose other trails. This could even discourage people from using the Kal-Haven Trail or the other portions of the KRVT if they learn that "there are fees to use trails in SW Michigan" without understanding the nuances.
3. Enhanced access for travelers with disabilities. We are beginning a concerted effort to attract visitor with disabilities to Kalamazoo County. As one in four Americans currently has a disability of some kind, this is an important and valuable market. And of course, improvements for visitors with disabilities will benefit residents as well. It would be great to be able to market Fort Custer Recreation Area as a fantastic, accessible outdoor recreation area for all travelers.

Thank you very much for soliciting community input, and for your commitment to making Fort Custer an even better asset. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane S. Ghosh".

Jane S. Ghosh
President & CEO
jghosh@discoverkalamazoo.com

**Fort Custer Recreation Area
Phase 2 General Management Plan Update
Meeting with Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi**

Monday October 17, 2022, 1301 T. Drive, Fulton

Present:

NHBP: Homer A. Mandoka – Planning & Land Use committee chair (PLUC)
John Rodwan – Tribal Environment Director & PLUC member
Doug Taylor – Tribal Historical Preservation Officer
Nat Spurr – Tribal PLUC member
Andre Mandoka – Culture Associate & PLUC member
DNR: Debbie Jensen, Park Management Plan Administrator
Tony Trojanowski, Supervisor, Fort Custer Recreation Area
Patrick Whalen, Plainwell District Supervisor
Ray Fahlsing, Stewardship Unit Manager
Nicole Hunt, Regulatory Unit Manager/PRD Tribal Liaison (virtual)
Robb McKay, Historic Architect (virtual)

The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi requested a meeting with the DNR to review and provide input on the new phase 2 general management plan for Fort Custer Recreation Area, which is currently in draft form.

After welcome and introductions, the meeting began with a presentation by John Rodwan of the environmental work undertaken by the Tribe, focusing primarily on wild rice and river restoration.

Debbie Jensen gave a brief overview of the general management plan process and content for Fort Custer Recreation Area. Ray Fahlsing explained the high value natural resources, including efforts to restore prairie at the park and manage the landscape through prescribed fire. Ray also indicated that seed collection occurred at the site and could be made available to the Tribe. There are no known Native American archaeological sites on the property, although no formal surveys have taken place. Many former farmsteads and remnants of the past military use are visible on site.

The overall context of the cultural landscape was identified as a topic of mutual interest. The native lands of the Potawatomi, Chippewa and Ottawa Tribes, making up the Three Fires Alliance, extended across most of Michigan. There is an opportunity for the DNR to partner with NHBP to tell the story of the landscape through on-site signage or other means. The Tribe also expressed an interest in land within the recreation area being identified for use (non-exclusive) for Tribal ceremonies or events. A link between Native Americans and the military base was also identified, with Native Americans having the highest percentage of any ethnicity for enlistment.

A question was asked regarding notifications for projects such as these. Debbie works with Trevor VanDyke and Nicole to send a notification to all Tribes within the treaty area of the project, inviting comment. This has historically been done for all complete or phase 1 general management plans. This will be extended to phase 2 plans, such as this, in the future.

The outcome of the meeting was that the NHBP would make a list of achievable goals for partnership at Fort Custer and make a recommendation to the various councils for approval by the Tribal Council. Depending on the timeframe, this list will be reviewed by the DNR for inclusion in the general management plan, or a general action goal to work with the Tribe to identify and implement projects of mutual interest will be added to the plan. The DNR desires to have the final draft of the plan complete by the end of November if possible.

The meeting was followed by a tour of the Pine Creek Reservation for those able to attend.

APPENDIX C –

CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECTS OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

State Park Funding

The primary funding sources for state park improvement and development projects are Recreation Passport sales (motor vehicle registration fee), the Park Endowment Fund (generated from royalties from oil, gas and mineral extraction on public land) and the Park Improvement Fund (from camping and other state park user fees). One-time appropriations from the state General Fund may also be ear marked for specific needs but are not guaranteed. The annual capital outlay budget for state parks varies significantly from year to year, averaging approximately \$14 million per year in the five years prior to FY 2022. The state park system is 100 years old and much of the infrastructure is aging. Identified infrastructure needs across the state park system is currently estimated to be several hundred million dollars.

With such a large gap between financial need and budget, all projects are carefully analyzed to look at innovative solutions to increase efficiencies or downsize assets. In 2021, Governor Whitmer allocated \$250M for state park and trail infrastructure improvements through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides an opportunity to make a significant impact in addressing priority projects. Several projects at Fort Custer Recreation Area are earmarked to be completed with ARPA funds.

Estimated Cost of Proposed Developments

The following table provides an estimate of probable cost for each capital outlay development project proposed at Fort Custer Recreation Area over the next ten years. Management and operations actions, small projects, which are funded out of district or park funds, and those lead by partners, are not included in this list but may have additional financial implications. The costs are based on information available at the time and will be refined as conceptual and detailed designs are completed. Where noted, the costs may only include studies or project planning, which will provide direction for development costs if determined appropriate. The costs are based on 2022 prices and should be adjusted according to the consumer price index and the market at the time of implementation.

The following action goals are ranked in terms of priority based on health, safety, and welfare, as well identified need and ease of implementation (cost, ability to implement with own staff, partnerships etc.). Priority Level 1 projects indicate those that should be addressed within the next 2 years. Priority Level 2 projects include those that should be addressed within 2-5 years. Priority Level 3 projects are desired but can be tackled in the next 5-10 years once funding has been identified.

PRD will seek future internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan. Costs listed below do not guarantee funding, although some are earmarked to be funded using ARPA funds. 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.

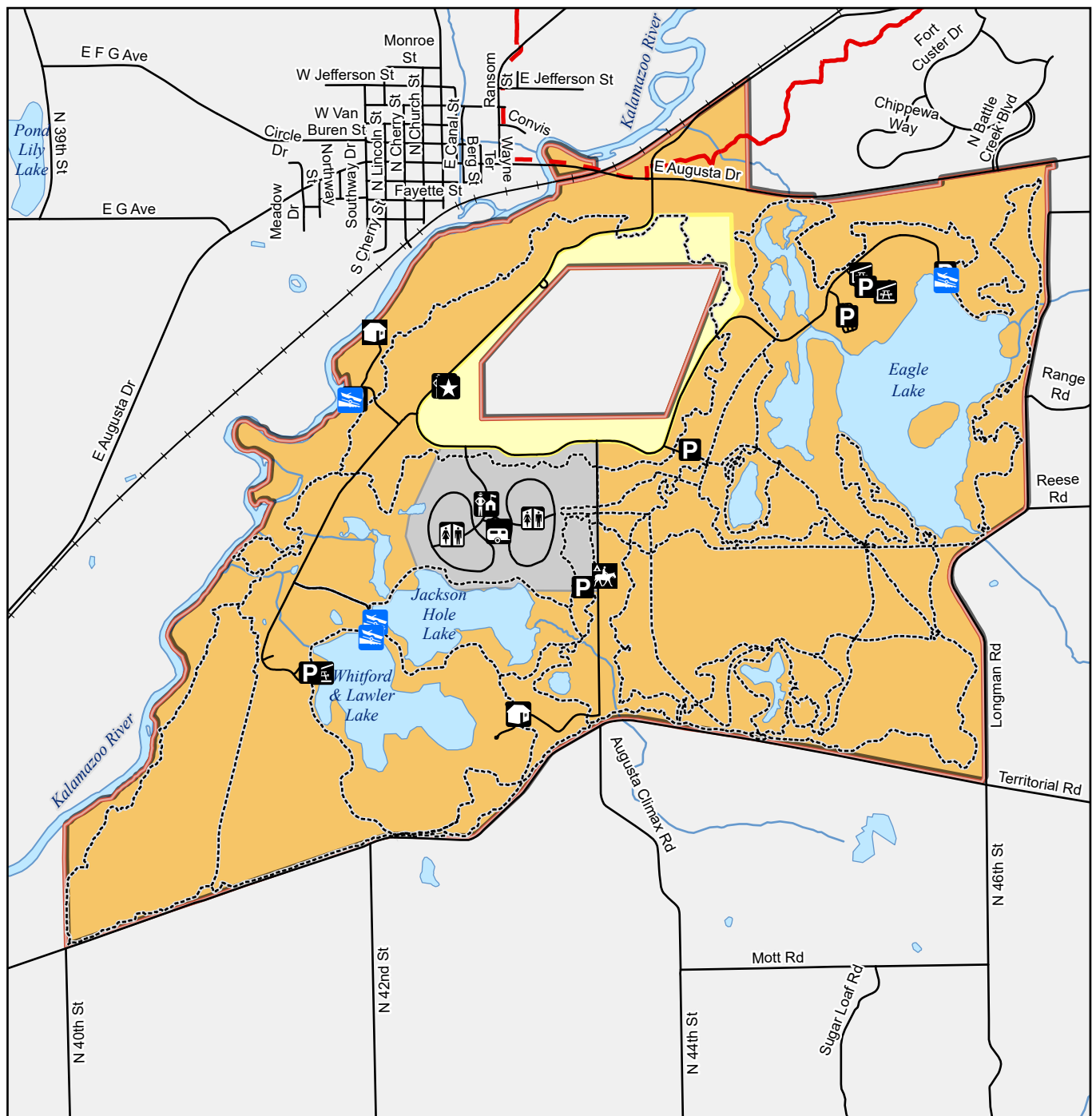
INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: CAPITAL OUTLAY		
Action Goals	Priority	Opinion of Probable Costs*
Construct Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through the park	1	\$700,000
Design and construct additional parking at Eagle Lake launch and consider designated launching area for non-motorized watercraft	1	\$75,000 design Construction TBD
Replace two campground toilet shower buildings (ARPA)	2	\$2,000,000
Replace electricity on west loop of campground, sites 1 through 110. (ARPA)	2	\$1,062,500
Repave and reconstruct park roads as needed	3	\$1,500,000
Install cold storage building at park headquarters and consider removal of old park managers house	3	\$100,000
Complete a feasibility study for an alternative day use entrance off Dickman Road	3	\$30,000
**TOTAL OPINION OF PROBABLE COSTS (10 YEARS)		\$5,467,500

**Does not guarantee funding.*

***Excludes costs yet to be identified by studies to determine best way to proceed.*

APPENDIX D – RESOURCE MAPS

- Amenities
- Forest Inventory Cover Types
- Natural Communities
- Wetlands



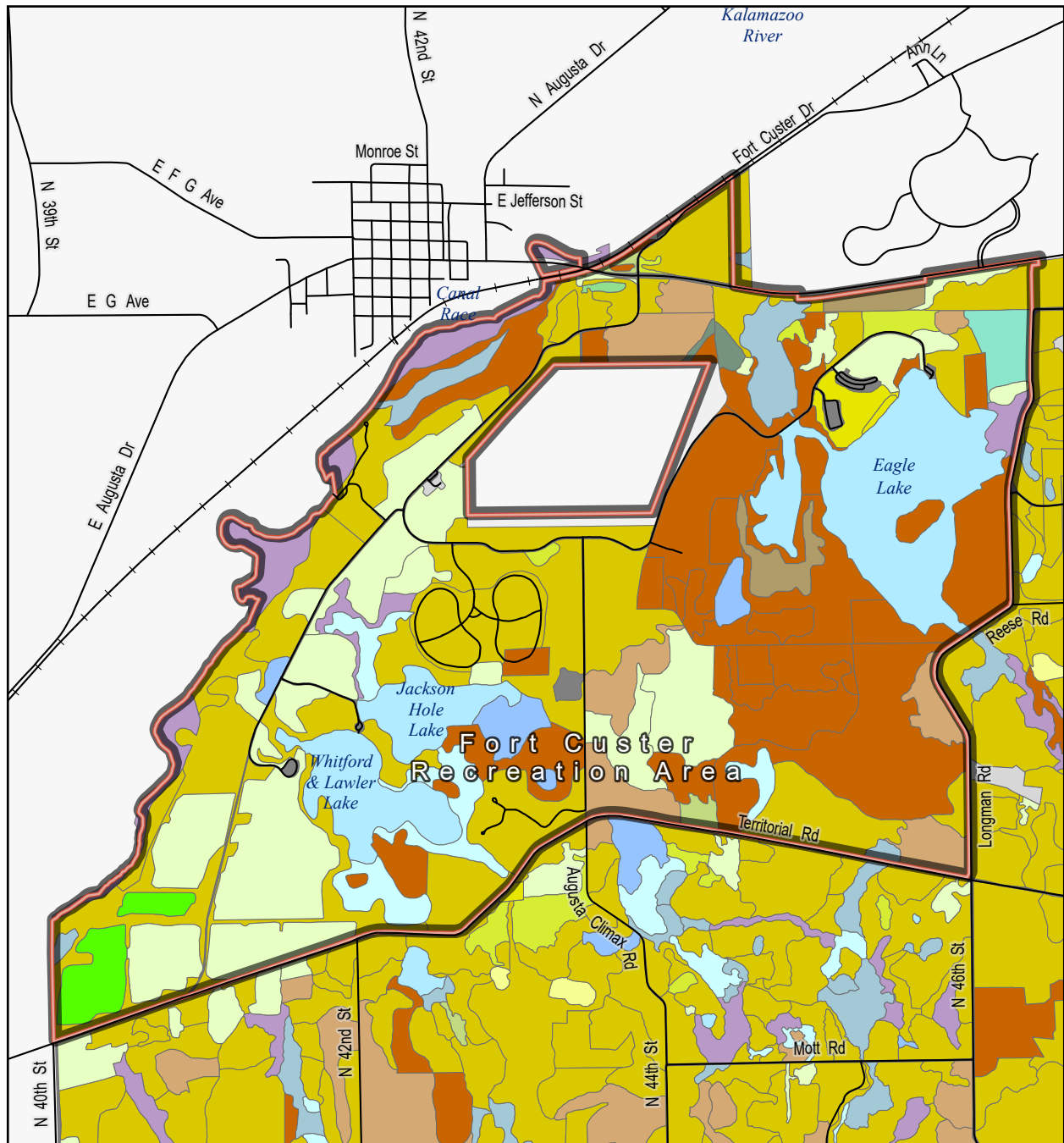
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Fort Custer Recreation Area - Park Amenities

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| State Recreation Area Boundary | North Country Trail (Certified) | Group Use Campground | Picnic Shelter |
| Roads | North Country Trail (Connector) | Modern Campground | Boating Access Sites |
| Railroad | Camper Cabin | Park Headquarters | Closed to Hunting |
| River/Stream | Equestrian Campground | Contact Station | Open to Hunting |
| Lake/Pond | Toilet/Shower | Open to Hunting with Restrictions | |
| Trail | | | |





MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



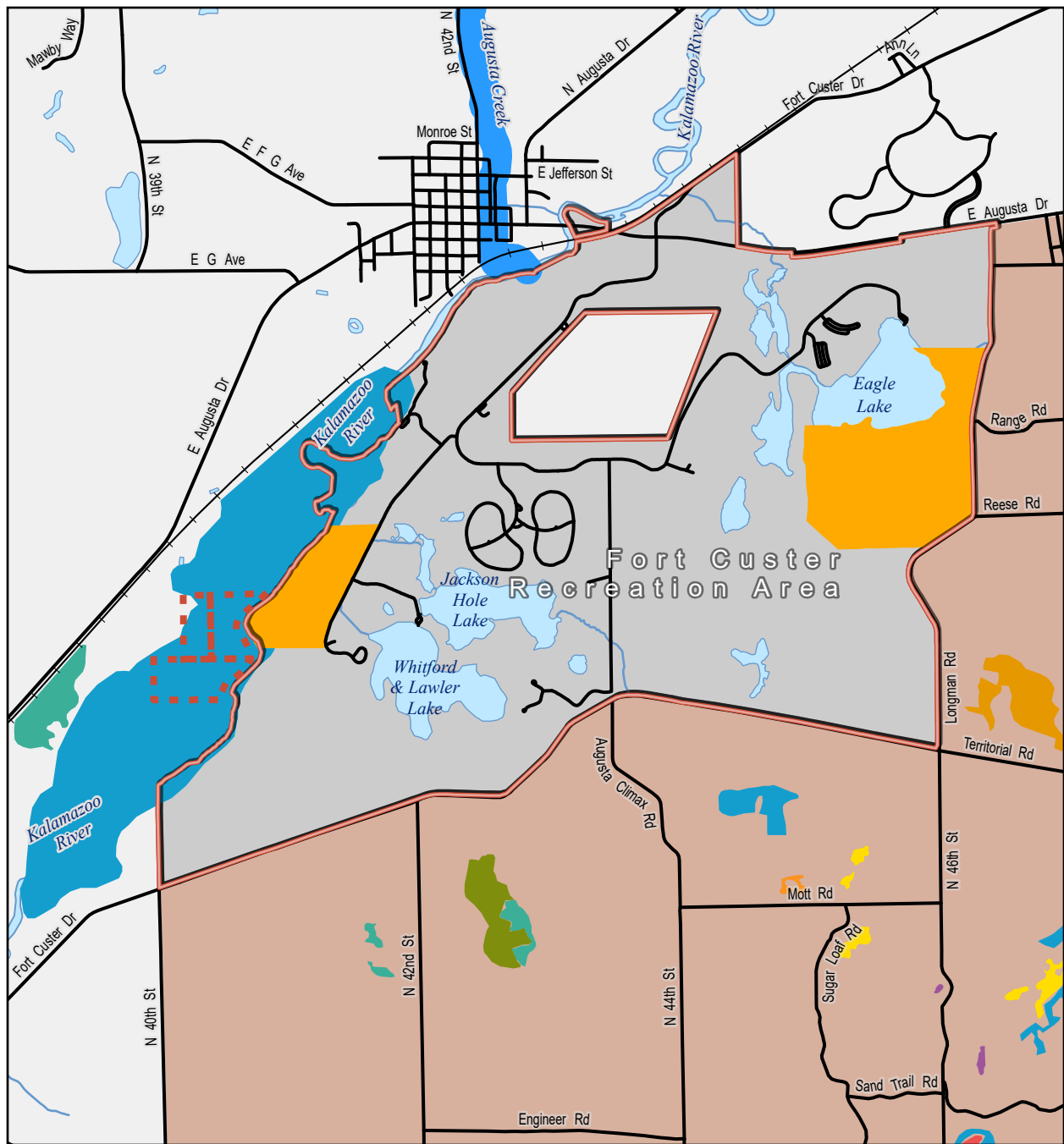
Fort Custer Recreation Area - Forest Inventory Cover Types

State Recreation Area Boundary	Oak Types	Lowland Deciduous Forest	Low-Density Trees
Road	Aspen	Non-Forest Covertype	Parks/Golf Courses
Railroad	Mixed Upland Deciduous	Low Intensity Urban	Water
State Park Boundary	Planted Pines	Road/Parking Lot	Floating Aquatic
Stand Covertype	Other Upland Conifers	Cropland	Lowland Shrub
Forest Covertype	Mixed Upland Conifers	Herbaceous Openland	Emergent Wetland
Northern Hardwood	Upland Mixed Forest	Upland Shrub	



Updated: 06/16/2022

*Forest Stand Covertypes as determined by DNR forest stand examiners during the DNR's forest inventory process



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



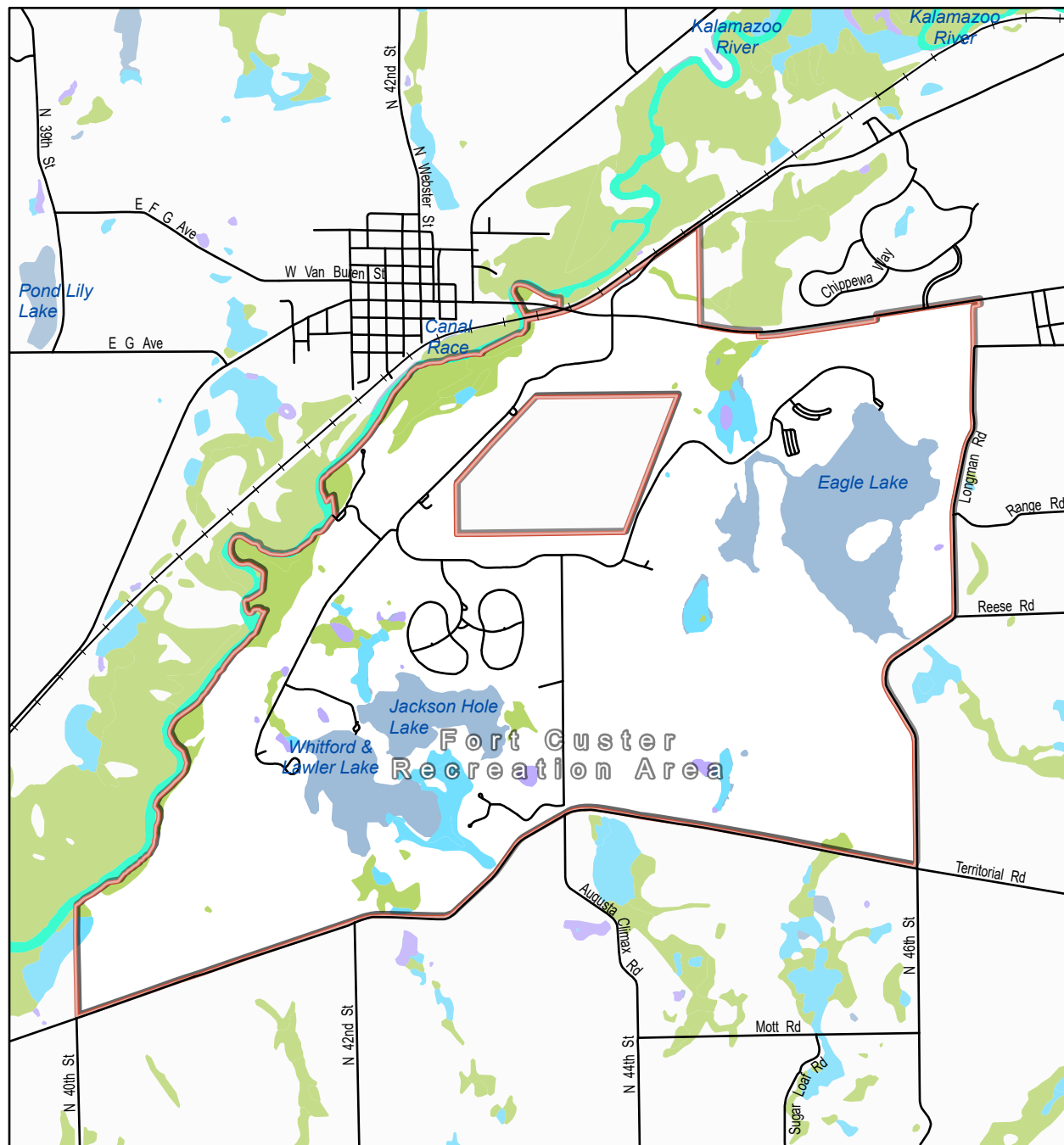
Fort Custer Recreation Area - Natural Communities

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| State Recreation Area Boundary | Dry-mesic Southern Forest | Prairie Fen |
| Conservation Easement | Floodplain Forest | Southern Hardwood Swamp |
| Road | Inundated Shrub Swamp | Southern Wet Meadow |
| River/Stream | Mesic Sand Prairie | Non-Dedicated Natural Areas |
| Lake/Pond | Mesic Southern Forest | High Priority Trout Stream Buffer |
| Railroad | Oak Barrens | Research, Development, and Military Lands |
| Bog | | |



Updated: 06/21/2022

*Natural Communities of Michigan (Michigan Natural Features Inventory)



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

0 0.6 1.2 Miles

Fort Custer Recreation Area - Wetlands

N
W
E
S

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Park Boundary | Wetlands* | Freshwater Pond |
| Railroads | Freshwater Emergent Wetland | Riverine |
| Roads Symbolology | Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland | Other |
| Lakes/Ponds | | |



APPENDIX E PROPERTY DEEDS

QUITCLAIM DEED

878 724

The UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, acting by and through the Regional Director, Lake Central Region, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, pursuant to authority delegated by the Secretary of the Interior, and as authorized by the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (63 Stat. 377), as amended, and particularly as amended by Public Law 91-485 (84 Stat. 1084), and regulations and orders promulgated thereunder (hereinafter referred to as Grantor), for and in consideration of the use and maintenance of the property herein conveyed for public park or public recreation purposes in perpetuity by the State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources (hereinafter referred to as Grantee), does hereby remise, release, and quitclaim to Grantee, its successors and assigns, subject to the reservations, exceptions, restrictions, conditions and covenants hereinafter set forth, all right, title, and interest of the Grantor in and to the following described property, situated in Sections Thirty-Four (34), Thirty-Five (35), and Thirty-Six (36), Township One (1) South, and Sections One (1), Two (2), Three (3), Four (4), Nine (9), Ten (10), Eleven (11), Twelve (12), Fifteen (15), and Sixteen (16), Township Two (2) South, Range Nine (9) West of the Michigan Meridian, Kalamazoo County, State of Michigan, and more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a point on the south bank of the Kalamazoo River in the boundary line between Townships One (1) and Two (2), monumented by a four-inch iron pipe; thence along said river the following courses and distances:
N 59° 53' E 385.00 feet to a two-inch iron pipe;
N 69° 43' E 301.50 feet to a two-inch iron pipe;
N 21° 18' E 295.00 feet to a four-inch iron pipe in the south right-of-way boundary of the Michigan Central Railroad;

Thence along said right-of-way the following courses and distances:
N 79° 18' E 381.37 feet to the point of beginning of a curve to the left having a radius of 2,914.93 feet and a central angle of 24° 08', from which point the bearing and distance to a two-inch iron pipe marking the point of intersection of the tangents to said curve is N 79° 18' E 623.13 feet;

Thence northeasterly along the arc of said curve 1227.79 feet to the point of tangency, from which the bearing and distance to the said two-inch iron pipe marking the point of intersection of the tangents to said curve is S 55° 10' W 623.13 feet;

N 55 10' E 2112.00 feet along the tangent to said curve to a two-inch iron pipe;

Thence south along a line parallel to the west line of Section Thirty-Five (35) to a point in the centerline of Dickman Road;

Thence east along said centerline 4950 feet to a point;

Thence south along a line parallel to the west line of Section Thirty-Six (36) to a point in the north line of Section One (1);

Thence in a southerly direction along the west boundary of the right of way of Longman Road to a point in the north line of Section Twelve (12) 627 feet east of the northwest corner of said section;

Thence in a southwesterly direction along said west boundary 924 feet to a point, the centerline of said road being the east line of Section Eleven (11);

Thence south along said west boundary to a point in the north boundary of the right of way of Territorial Road;

Thence northwesterly, southwesterly, westerly and southwesterly through Sections Eleven (11), Ten (10), Fifteen (15), and Sixteen (16) to a point in the west line of Section Sixteen (16);

Thence north along the west line of Section Sixteen (16) to a point in the south line of Section Nine (9);

Thence east along the south line of Section Nine (9) to a point on the east bank of the Kalamazoo River;

Thence along said river through Sections Nine (9), Four (4) and Three (3) to the point of beginning;

EXCEPTING AND RESERVING unto the Grantor the following described tracts:

Tract 1.

Commencing at the southeast corner of Section Three (3), thence west along the south line of Section Three (3) 1320 feet to a point in the centerline of Climax Road; thence north along said centerline 1500 feet to the point of beginning;

Thence east at right angles to the last described line 1320 feet to a point;

Thence in a northerly direction to a point 1000 feet south of the north line of Section Two (2) and 1000 feet east of the west line of Section Two (2);

Thence west along a line parallel to the north line of Sections Two (2) and Three (3) 2800 feet to a point 300 feet east of old U.S. Highway No. 12, now commonly referred to as Fort Custer Drive;

Thence southwest following a course 300 feet east of and parallel to Fort Custer Drive 2300 feet to a point;

Thence south 1100 feet to a point on a line 1500 feet north of and parallel to the south line of Section Three (3);

Thence east along said line to the point of beginning;

Tract 2.

Commencing at the northwest corner of the Northeast Quarter (NE $\frac{1}{4}$) of Section Two (2), thence N $89^{\circ} 43' 20''$ E along the north line of said section 245.04 feet; thence north 294.46 feet to the point of beginning;

Thence north 10.11 feet to the south boundary of the right of way of Dickman Road;

Thence N $81^{\circ} 38' 20''$ E along the said south boundary 1777.88 feet;

Thence S $0^{\circ} 14' 15''$ E 554.48 feet to the north line of Section Two (2);

Thence S $0^{\circ} 14' 15''$ E 21.66 feet;

Thence N $89^{\circ} 56' 10''$ E 182.73 feet;

Thence S $0^{\circ} 7' 30''$ W 212.09 feet;

Thence S $20^{\circ} 50' 50''$ E 55.16 feet;

Thence S $42^{\circ} 34' 25''$ E 231.45 feet;

Thence S $62^{\circ} 13' 45''$ E 241.49 feet;

Thence S $7^{\circ} 13' 25''$ E 252.31 feet;

Thence S $82^{\circ} 0' 25''$ W 1076.57 feet;

Thence S $21^{\circ} 25' 15''$ W 432.96 feet;

Thence S $47^{\circ} 18' 15''$ W 328.97 feet;

Thence S $89^{\circ} 55' 15''$ W 711.65 feet;

Thence N $45^{\circ} 35' 15''$ W 265.60 feet;

Thence N $13^{\circ} 44' 35''$ W 103.55 feet;

Thence N $1^{\circ} 18' 25''$ W 95.74 feet;

Thence west 450 feet;

Thence north 1197.66 feet to the north line of Section Two (2);

Thence north 258.34 feet to the south boundary of the right of way of Dickman Road;

Thence in a northeasterly direction along said south boundary, being along a curve to the left 484.89 feet (said curve being subtended by a chord bearing and distance N 85° 25' 33" E 484.49 feet and a radius of 3650.26 feet) to the point of beginning.

The lands herein conveyed contain 2937.33 acres, more or less, and were formerly a portion of Fort Custer Military Reservation, D-Mich-418B, under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Army, an agency of the United States Government.

SUBJECT TO any and all outstanding reservations, easements and rights-of-way, recorded and unrecorded, for public roads, railroads, pipelines, drainage ditches, sewer mains and lines, and public utilities affecting the property herein conveyed.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above quitclaimed premises, subject to the easements, reservations, exceptions, restrictions, conditions, and covenants herein enumerated and set forth, unto the Grantee, its successors and assigns, forever.

There are excepted from this conveyance and reserved to the Grantor all oil, gas, and other minerals in, under, and upon the lands herein conveyed, together with the right to enter upon the land for the purpose of mining and removing the same.

There are further reserved to the Grantor rights-of-way and easements of ingress and egress over and across the above described property to and from the excepted tracts, and such rights-of-way and easements as may be necessary or appropriate for the purpose of using, operating, maintaining, replacing, and repairing the following installations and systems, or any part thereof, situated on, under, or across the property conveyed herein:

1. Water distribution system (wells, water booster pumps and tanks), water storage tanks and reservoirs.
2. Gas distribution systems, structures and appurtenances.
3. Sanitary sewer systems, structures and appurtenances.
4. Storm sewer systems, structures and appurtenances.

5. Electrical distribution systems, structures and appurtenances.
6. Telephone communications system, structures and appurtenances.

There are excepted and reserved from this conveyance the physical properties of the above mentioned water, gas, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, electrical and communication systems and installations, together with all structures and appurtenances thereto.

The Grantor reserves a right of unrestricted vehicular ingress and egress to the tract commonly referred to as the United States Army Antenna Field via Dickman Road and Custer Drive and south on Climax Road to the north gate of the Antenna Field.

The Grantor further reserves a non-exclusive right of use and occupancy of a strip of land 25 feet wide and contiguous to the perimeter fence enclosing the aforesaid Antenna Field for the purpose of security, fence maintenance, land management, and vegetation control as may be required by the United States Army.

Pursuant to authority contained in the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, and applicable rules, regulations and orders promulgated thereunder, the General Services Administration determined the property to be surplus to the needs of the United States of America and assigned the property to the Department of the Interior for further conveyance to the State of Michigan.

It is understood and agreed by and between the Grantor and Grantee, and Grantee by acceptance of this deed does acknowledge that it fully understands the terms and conditions set forth herein and does further covenant and agree for itself, and its successors and assigns, forever, as follows:

1. The property shall be used and maintained for the public purposes for which it was conveyed in perpetuity as set forth in the program of utilization and plan contained in the application submitted by Grantee on the 2nd day of March 1971, which is incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof. Said program and plan may be amended from time to time at the request of either the Grantor or Grantee, with the written concurrence of the other party, and such amendments shall be added to and become a part of the original application and of this deed of conveyance.

2. Grantee shall within 24 months of the date of this deed make or cause to be made an accurate metes and bounds survey of the tract conveyed and the tracts excepted therefrom and shall place or cause to be placed permanent monuments at the corners or angles thereof.

3. The Grantee shall within 6 months of the date of this deed erect and maintain a permanent sign or marker near the point of principal access to the conveyed area indicating that the property is a park or recreational area and has been acquired from the Federal Government for use by the general public.

4. The property shall not be sold, leased, assigned, or otherwise disposed of except to another eligible governmental agency that the Secretary of the Interior agrees in writing can assure the continued use and maintenance of the property for public park or public recreational purposes subject to the same terms and conditions in the original instrument of conveyance. However, nothing in this provision shall preclude the Grantee from providing related recreational facilities and services compatible with the approved application, through concession agreements entered into with third parties, provided prior concurrence to such agreements is obtained in writing from the Secretary of the Interior.

5. From the date of this conveyance, the Grantee, its successors and assigns, shall submit biennial reports to the Secretary of the Interior, setting forth the use made of the property during the preceding two-year period, and other pertinent data establishing its continuous use for the purposes set forth above, for ten consecutive reports and as further determined by the Secretary of the Interior.

6. If at any time the United States of America shall determine that the premises herein conveyed, or any part thereof, are needed for the national defense, all right, title and interest in and to said premises, or part thereof determined to be necessary to such national defense, shall revert to and become the property of the United States of America.

7. As part of the consideration for this Deed, the Grantee covenants and agrees for itself, its successors and assigns, that (1) the program for or in connection with which this Deed is made will be conducted in compliance with, and the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will comply with all requirements imposed by or pursuant to the regulations of the Department of the Interior as in effect on the date of this Deed (43 C.F.R. Part 17) issued under the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; (2) this covenant shall be subject in all respects to the provisions of said regulations; (3) the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will promptly take and continue to take such action as may be necessary to effectuate this covenant; (4) the United States shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this covenant; and (5) the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will (a) obtain from each other person (any legal entity) who, through contractual or other arrangements with the Grantee, its successors or assigns, is authorized to provide services or benefits under said program, a written agreement pursuant to which such other persons shall, with respect to the services or benefits which he is authorized to provide, undertake for himself the same obligations as those imposed upon the Grantee, its successors

and assigns, by this covenant, and (b) furnish a copy of such agreement to the Secretary of the Interior, or his successor; and that this covenant shall run with the land hereby conveyed, and shall in any event, without regard to technical classification or designation, legal or otherwise, be binding to the fullest extent permitted by law and equity for the benefit of, and in favor of the Grantor and enforceable by the Grantor against the Grantee, its successors and assigns.

8. In the event there is a breach of any of the conditions and covenants herein contained by the Grantee, its successors and assigns, whether caused by the legal or other inability of the Grantee, its successors and assigns, to perform said conditions and covenants, or otherwise, all right, title and interest in and to the said premises shall revert to and become the property of the Grantor at its option, which in addition to all other remedies for such breach shall have the right of entry upon said premises, and the Grantee, its successors and assigns, shall forfeit all right, title and interest in said premises and in any and all of the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging; provided, however, that the failure of the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to require in any one or more instances complete performance of any of the conditions or covenants shall not be construed as a waiver or relinquishment of such future performance, but the obligation of the Grantee, its successors and assigns, with respect to such future performance shall continue in full force and effect:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Grantor has caused these presents to be executed in its name and on its behalf this the 16 day of August, 1921.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY

Roman H. Koenings
Roman H. Koenings
Regional Director
Lake Central Region
Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

Gordon R. Atkins
WITNESS - Gordon R. Atkins

Bruce F. Botsford
WITNESS - Bruce F. Botsford

STATE OF MICHIGAN

COUNTY

Washtenaw

ss

this 16 day of August, 1971, before me, the subscriber, personally appeared Gaylord A. Walker, to me known and known to me to be the Regional Director, Lake Central Region, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, of the United States Department of the Interior, a governmental agency of the United States of America, and known to me to be the same person described in and who executed the foregoing instrument as such Regional Director aforesaid, as the act and deed of the United States of America, for and on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, duly designated, empowered and authorized so to do by said Secretary, and he acknowledged that he executed the foregoing instrument for and on behalf of the United States of America, for the purposes and uses therein described.

Dan E. Squier
NOTARY PUBLIC - Dan E. Squier

My Commission expires:

Dec. 7, 1974

The foregoing conveyance is hereby accepted and the undersigned agrees, by this acceptance, to assume and be bound by all the obligations, conditions, covenants and agreements therein contained.

Witness

Alice E. Barker
Alice E. Barker

T. R. Tucker
T. R. Tucker

STATE OF MICHIGAN

By

Gaylord A. Walker
Gaylord A. Walker
Deputy Director of Administration
Title Michigan Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF MICHIGAN

COUNTY OF Ingham

ss

On this the 16 day of August, 1971, before me, L. Roger Laylin, the undersigned officer, personally appeared Gaylord A. Walker, Deputy, of the State of Michigan, known to me to be the person described in the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged that he executed the same in the capacity therein stated and for the purposes therein contained.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal.

L. Roger Laylin
L. Roger Laylin
Notary Public
Title

My Commission Expires July 10, 1973

PREPARED BY:

William W. Redmond
Regional Solicitor
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

QUITCLAIM DEED

The UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, acting by and through the Regional Director, Lake Central Region, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, with offices at 3853 Research Park Drive, Ann Arbor, Michigan, pursuant to authority delegated by the Secretary of the Interior, and as authorized by the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (63 Stat. 377), as amended, and particularly as amended by Public Law 91-485 (84 Stat. 1084), and regulations and orders promulgated thereunder (hereinafter referred to as Grantor), for and in consideration of the use and maintenance of the property herein conveyed for public park or public recreation purposes in perpetuity by the State of Michigan (hereinafter referred to as Grantee), does hereby remise, release, and quitclaim to Grantee, its successors and assigns, subject to the reservations, exceptions, restrictions, conditions and covenants hereinafter set forth, all right, title, and interest of the Grantor in and to the following described property situated in Section Two (2), Township Two (2) South, Range Nine (9) West, and in Section Thirty-five (35), Township One (1) South, Range Nine (9) West of the Michigan Meridian, Kalamazoo County, State of Michigan, and more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the North Quarter (N₄) post of said Section Two (2), and running thence N 89° 43' 20" E, along the north line of said Section, 245.04 feet; thence north 294.46 feet to the place of beginning; thence continuing north 10.11 feet to the southerly line of Dickman Road (so-called); thence N 81° 38' 20" E, along the southerly line of said road, 1777.88 feet; thence S 0° 14' 15" E, 554.48 feet to the north line of said Section Two (2); thence S 0° 14' 15" E, 21.66 feet; thence N 89° 56' 10" E, 182.73 feet; thence S 0° 07' 30" W, 212.09 feet; thence S 20° 50' 50" E, 55.16 feet; thence S 42° 34' 25" E, 231.45 feet; thence S 62° 13' 45" E, 241.49 feet; thence S 7° 13' 25" E, 252.31 feet; thence S 82° 00' 25" W, 1076.57 feet; thence S 21° 25' 15" W, 432.96 feet; thence S 47° 18' 15" W, 328.97 feet; thence S 89° 55' 15" W, 714.65 feet; thence N 45° 35' 15" W, 265.60 feet; thence N 13° 44' 35" W, 108.55 feet; thence N 1° 18' 25" W, 95.74 feet; thence west 450.0 feet; thence north 1197.66 feet to the north line of said Section Two (2); thence continuing north 258.34 feet to the south line of said Dickman Road; thence northeasterly along said southerly line, being along a curve to the left a distance of 484.89 feet, said curve being subtended by a chord bearing and distance of N 85° 25' 33" E, 484.49 feet, and a radius of 3650.26 feet to the place of beginning.

The property herein conveyed contains 95.977 acres, more or less, and was formerly a portion of the Fort Custer Military Reservation Base Hospital, under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Army, an agency of the United States Government.

TOGETHER WITH the appurtenances, the buildings and improvements thereon and all the estate and rights of the Grantor in and to said premises.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
COUNTY OF KALAMAZOO
RECEIVED FOR RECORD
OCT 3 6 34 AM '73
REGISTER OF DEEDS

SUBJECT TO any and all outstanding reservations, easements and rights-of-way, recorded and unrecorded, for public roads, railroads, pipelines, drainage ditches, sewer mains and lines, and public utilities affecting the property herein conveyed.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above premises, subject to the easements, reservations, exceptions, restrictions, conditions, and covenants herein enumerated and set forth, unto the Grantee, its successors and assigns, forever.

There are excepted from this conveyance and reserved to the Grantor, all oil, gas, and other minerals in, under, and upon the lands herein conveyed, together with the right to enter upon the land for the purpose of mining and removing the same.

There is also excepted from this conveyance and reserved to the Grantor Chapel Building No. 3401, located on the property herein conveyed, together with rights of ingress and egress for removal purposes in the event of sale for off-site use.

Pursuant to authority contained in the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, and applicable rules, regulations and orders promulgated thereunder, the General Services Administration determined the property to be surplus to the needs of the United States of America and assigned the property to the Department of the Interior for conveyance to the State of Michigan.

It is understood and agreed by and between the Grantor and Grantee, and Grantee by acceptance of this deed does acknowledge that it fully understands the terms and conditions set forth herein and does further covenant and agree for itself, and its successors and assigns, forever, as follows:

1. The property shall be used and maintained for the public purposes for which it was conveyed in perpetuity as set forth in the program of utilization and plan contained in the application submitted by Grantee on the 10th day of May, 1973, which program and plan may be amended from time to time at the request of either the Grantor or Grantee, with the written concurrence of the other party, and such amendments shall be added to and become a part of the original application.

2. The Grantee shall within 6 months of the date of this deed erect and

maintain a permanent sign or marker near the point of principal access to the conveyed area indicating that the property is a park or recreational area and has been acquired from the Federal Government for use by the general public.

3. The property shall not be sold, leased, assigned or otherwise disposed of except to another eligible governmental agency that the Secretary of the Interior agrees in writing can assure the continued use and maintenance of the property for public park or public recreational purposes subject to the same terms and conditions in the original instrument of conveyance. However, nothing in this provision shall preclude the Grantee from providing related recreational facilities and services compatible with the approved application, through concession agreements entered into with third parties, provided prior concurrence to such agreements is obtained in writing from the Secretary of the Interior.

4. From the date of this conveyance, the Grantee, its successors and assigns, shall submit biennial reports to the Secretary of the Interior, setting forth the use made of the property during the preceding two-year period, and other pertinent data establishing its continuous use for the purposes set forth above, for ten consecutive reports and as further determined by the Secretary of the Interior.

5. If at any time the United States of America shall determine that the premises herein conveyed, or any part thereof, are needed for the national defense, all right, title and interest in and to said premises, or part thereof determined to be necessary to such national defense, shall revert to and become the property of the United States of America.

6. As part of the consideration for this deed, the Grantee covenants and agrees for itself, its successors and assigns, that (1) the program for or in connection with which this deed is made will be conducted in compliance with, and the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will comply with all requirements imposed by or pursuant to the regulations of the Department of the Interior as in effect on the date of this deed (43 C.F.R. Part 17) issued under the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; (2) this covenant shall be subject in all respects to the provisions of said regulations; (3) the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will

promptly take and continue to take such action as may be necessary to effectuate this covenant; (4) the United States shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this covenant; (5) the Grantee, its successors and assigns, will (a) obtain from each other person (any legal entity) who through contractual or other arrangements with the Grantee, its successors or assigns, is authorized to provide services or benefits under said program a written agreement pursuant to which such other persons shall, with respect to the services or benefits which he is authorized to provide, undertake for himself, the same obligations as those imposed upon the Grantee, its successors and assigns, by this covenant, and (b) furnish a copy of such agreement to the Secretary of the Interior, or his successor; and that this covenant shall run with the land hereby conveyed, and shall in any event, without regard to technical classification or designation, legal or otherwise, be binding to the fullest extent permitted by law and equity for the benefit of, and in favor of the Grantor and enforceable by the Grantor against the Grantee, its successors and assigns.

7. In the event there is a breach of any of the conditions and covenants herein contained by the Grantee, its successors and assigns, whether caused by the legal or other inability of the Grantee, its successors and assigns, to perform said conditions and covenants, or otherwise, all right, title, and interest in and to the said premises shall revert to and become the property of the Grantor at its option, which in addition to all other remedies for such breach shall have the right of entry upon said premises, and the Grantee, its successors and assigns, shall forfeit all right, title and interest in said premises and in any and all of the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging; provided, however, that the failure of the Secretary of the Interior to require in any one or more instances complete performance of any of the conditions or covenants shall not be construed as a waiver or relinquishment of such future performance, but the obligation of the Grantee, its successors and assigns, with respect to such future performance shall continue in full force and effect:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Grantor has caused these presents to be executed
in its name and on its behalf this the 13th day of July, 19 73.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY John D. Cherry
John D. Cherry
Regional Director
Lake Central Region
Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
3853 Research Park Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan

In Presence of

James W. Cook
James W. Cook
Leonard T. Buzz
Leonard T. Buzz

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
COUNTY OF WASHTENAW) ss

On this 13th day of July, 19 73, before me, the
subscriber, personally appeared John D. Cherry, to me known and
known to me to be the Regional Director, Lake Central Region, Bureau of Outdoor
Recreation, of the United States Department of the Interior, a governmental agency
of the United States of America, with offices at 3853 Research Park Drive, Ann Arbor,
Michigan, and known to me to be the same person described in and who executed the
foregoing instrument as such Regional Director aforesaid, as the act and deed of the
United States of America, for and on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, duly
designated, empowered and authorized so to do by said Secretary, and he acknowledged
that he executed the foregoing instrument for and on behalf of the United States of
America, for the purposes and uses therein described.



Dan E. Squier
NOTARY PUBLIC
Dan E. Squier

My Commission expires:
December 7, 1974

