



General Management Plan

Ludington State Park



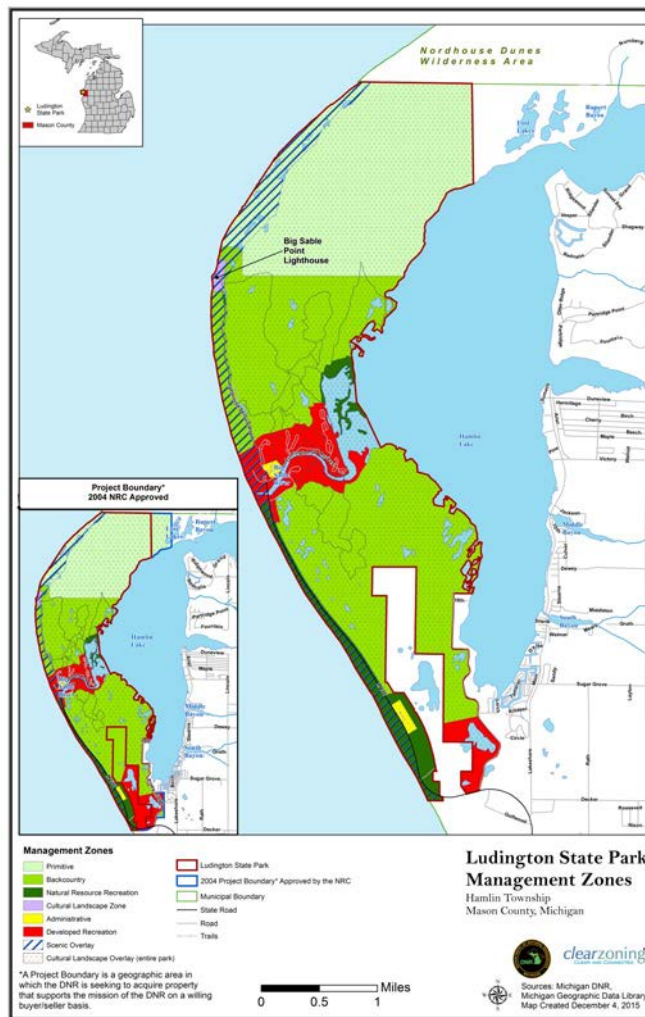
Approved March 1, 2016
Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division



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

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The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this plan are those of the DNR and do not necessarily reflect the view of the DEQ and the NOAA.


Plan Approvals:


 Chief, Parks & Recreation Division


 Date


 Natural Resources Deputy


 Date


 Director, Department of Natural Resources


 Date

PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

PRD – SECTION CHIEFS:

01/04/2016

Date

PRD – MANAGEMENT TEAM:

01/27/2016 (via Email)

Date

DNR – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU:

01/12/2016

Date

MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE

02/03/2016

Date

NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

02/11/2016

Date

Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 02-2016-01

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE “LUDINGTON STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN”

ADOPTED: February 11, 2016

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Submitted by: Chris Graham, Chair, MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee

Motioned by: Commissioner Louise Klarr
Seconded by: Committee Member, Chris Graham

Yeas: 8
Nays: 0
Abstained: 0
Absent: 7

This Resolution was adopted by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee at their regular February 11, 2016 meeting as Resolution No. 02-2016-1.

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Executive Summary

Ludington State Park, with 5,300 acres, is located along the Lake Michigan shoreline, between Muskegon and Manistee, and just an hour north of the burgeoning Grand Rapids area. The park is considered to be the area's top tourist attraction, and eloquently recognized as the "Queen of Michigan State Parks."



Spectacular sunsets bring visitors to the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The park's distinctive location and natural features make Ludington a treasure of the state. Bound between Lake Michigan and Hamlin Lake, with access to the Big Sable River, the park is within the Big Sable Dunes ecosystem. This habitat is home to a wide range of uncommon natural communities. The park's natural beauty draws visitors from near and far.

The park offers opportunities for camping, hiking, swimming, boating, and fishing, and is home to the iconic Big Sable Point Lighthouse. Camping is available in one

rustic and three modern campgrounds, containing a total of 373 sites. One modern campground is open year-round. The park contains hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and water trails. Hamlin Lake and Lake Michigan are known for bass, walleye, trout, and salmon fishing.

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

Financial assistance for this project was provided, in part, by the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this plan are those of the Michigan DNR and do not necessarily reflect the views of the DEQ and the NOAA. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversaw the planning process. The Plan was developed with significant and valuable input from the Planning Team, stakeholders, and the public. Additionally, several existing planning documents, including the Michigan

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Michigan State Parks Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report, were used as guiding references (See Chapter 1 for additional information on guiding references).

Significance of Ludington State Park

Each GMP developed by the PRD is built upon the park's unique significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state's system. Ludington State Park was determined significant due to the following (see Chapter 3 for more detailed statements):

- The “Queen” of Michigan State Parks, Ludington State Park reflects a distinctive blend of natural and cultural features, education, and recreation opportunities; an exemplary representation of the mission of the Department of Natural Resources' Park and Recreation Division.
- From inland Hamlin Lake, down the Big Sable River to the sandy shoreline of Lake Michigan, visitors are connected to these diverse water resources, and the variety of recreation opportunities. The influence of the geological features, as illustrated by the undulating dunes and expanse of Lake Michigan, provides a scenic backdrop for visitors and allows a greater appreciation for the constantly changing landscape.
- Ludington State Park integrates the well-designed trails system, its waterways, strategically located campgrounds, picnicking areas and historic gathering places, creating a connection between the natural environment, park amenities and park visitors.
- Dedication is at the root of Ludington State Park, beginning with local community leaders and the Izaak Walton League spearheading the acquisition of land to establish the park and preserve its natural beauty and amenities. The dedication continues today with the support of the Ludington community and groups, such as the Friends of Ludington State Park and the Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association, providing assistance with fundraising, volunteering and programming.
- Ludington State Park offers excellent, diverse fishing opportunities. They include boat or shore fishing on Hamlin Lake, wade or shore fishing on the Big Sable River, or surf fishing on Lake Michigan. Hamlin Lake offers walleye (stocked), muskellunge (stocked), largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie, and yellow perch. The Big Sable River offers Chinook salmon (stocked) in the fall, steelhead in the spring and fall, and smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern pike in the summer. Lake Michigan offers surf fishing in the fall and spring for Chinook salmon (stocked), brown trout, and steelhead.



Big Sable Point Lighthouse is a cultural landmark of Ludington State Park

- Ludington State Park, and the adjacent Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area, are part of the expansive Big Sable Dunes ecosystem, which is characterized by exemplary open dunes, Great Lakes barrens, and interdunal wetlands; all distinctive natural communities unique to the Great Lakes. The park also contains secondary dune forest, and provides important habitat for rare and endangered species, such as piping plover and Pitcher's thistle.



The expansive dunes are a foundation of the park's landscape.

- History is a defining theme in the development of the landscape and infrastructure of Ludington State Park. With its rich forested lands, variety of water resources and rolling terrain, it is easy to see why Native American tribes and early European settlers occupied the region. Evidence of its history exists today with archeological sites, a historic cemetery, the Hamlin Dam, the George Foster shipwreck, the Big Sable Point Lighthouse, and the legacy of the Pere Marquette Camp of Civilian Conservation Corps, which constructed many of the trails, roads, and the splendid Lake Michigan Beach House.
- Led by a full-time Park Interpreter, multi-generational, year-round programming provide an opportunity to share Ludington State Park's rich history and abundant natural resources. The park is a cultural and ecological haven for universities, researchers, schools, youth groups, and history and nature enthusiasts.

Management Zones

A key goal in the development of this General Management Plan is to continue providing the opportunities and features that attract visitors to the park each year, while simultaneously protecting the park's resources. Taking this into account, the Planning Team, with stakeholder and public input, established appropriate Management Zones for the park. From a palette of nine standard zones, eight zones (including two overlay zones) were applied to Ludington State Park. The Management Zone Map and a thorough review of each Management Zone are found in Chapter 4 of this Plan. A condensed description of each of the applied Management Zones is as follows:

Primitive Zone comprises 34% of the park, and emphasizes the natural resources of the area. It is managed to allow only dispersed, low frequency and low impact recreational use in the zone. Maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements and recreational uses are allowed. The primitive area is located north of the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and is comprised of critical barrier dunes and areas that support exemplary plant communities.

Backcountry Zone comprises 48% of the park and emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for modification of landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses that are consistent with the natural character of the zone. This area, located in the southern two-thirds of the park, includes the critical barrier dunes and portions of the shoreline of Lake Michigan and Hamlin Lake.

Cultural Landscape Zone comprises less than 1% of the park land area. The Big Sable Point Lighthouse and adjacent property have been identified within this zone. This zone includes historic structures and specific land areas of the park that have been identified as having cultural significance.

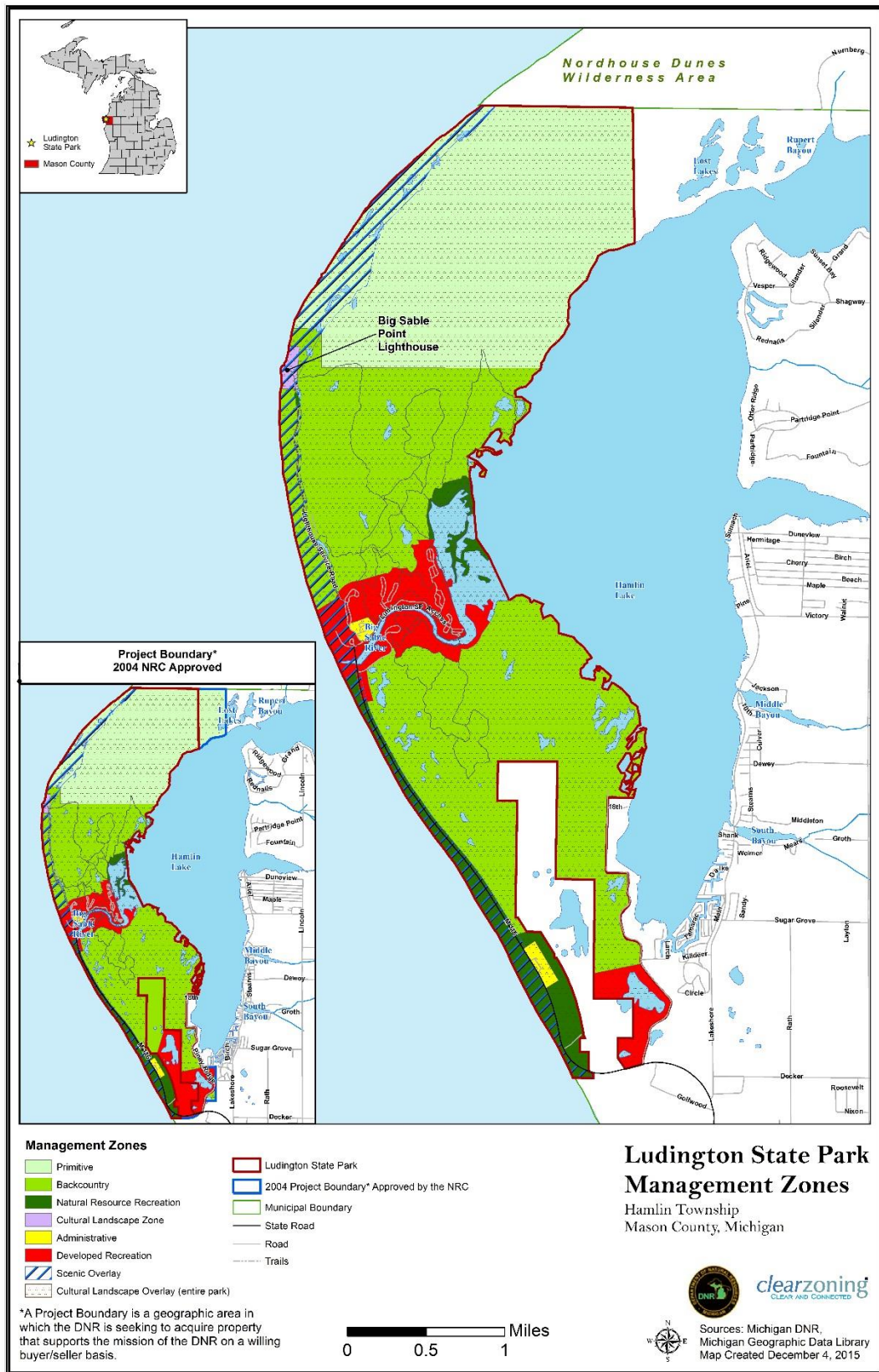
Natural Resource Recreation Zone comprises 7.5% of the park and permits active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. While a higher level of use is allowed in this zone, there is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation. The Lake Michigan shoreline, following M-116 is included in this zone as are the Island Trail, Lost Lake Trail, and the service drive leading to the Big Sable Lighthouse.

Developed Recreation Zone comprises 9% of the park and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The zone stretches from Lake Michigan to Hamlin Lake and encompasses the Lake Michigan Beach House, modern campgrounds and day use areas, fishing piers and platforms and several trails, including the Skyline Trail and Sable River Trail.

Administrative Zone comprises 0.6% of the park and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. The zone includes the park offices, contact stations, maintenance facilities, sanitation station and all related land required to conduct the business of running the park.

Scenic Overlay has been applied along the shoreline of Lake Michigan of Ludington State Park. This overlay includes the entire length of Lake Michigan's shoreline in recognition of its natural beauty.

Cultural Landscape Overlay has been applied over the entire park in recognition of the historic structures, trails, landscape, and archaeological sites known to be present in the park. Management within this overlay highlights the preservation and protection of cultural resources.



10-Year Action Goals

The General Management Plan identifies 10-Year Action Goals that the Planning Team believes are necessary to guide management and development of the park in order to achieve the desired user experience and natural resource protection. Action goals are categorized under General Action Goals if they pertain to the park as a whole or under specific zones, which are identified on the Management Zone Map. Highlights from the Action Goals detailed in Chapter 6 include the following:

General Action Goals (apply park-wide)

- Stabilize Hamlin Lake shoreline in areas along the Island and Lost Lake Trails.
- Continue to monitor and protect piping plover nesting areas during the breeding season.
- Continue to protect the exemplary natural communities and legally protected species.
- Work with partners to develop access points and amenities along the Lake Michigan water trail.
- Develop educational and interpretive programming technology, such as the “on-cell” technology utilized by the Mason County Cultural Trail
- Continue stocking fish in Hamlin Lake and Big Sable River
- Continue to explore land acquisition of properties within the Project Boundary, with emphasis on the Sargent Sand property.
- Continue efforts to achieve greater visitor accessibility in all development opportunities.

Primitive Zone

- Pursue Natural Area dedication under the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act.

Backcountry Zone

- Correct erosion at the Island Trail shelter.
- Replace and maintain canoe trail portage structures and confidence markers.

Cultural Landscape Zone

- Provide ways for visitors with mobility limitations to experience the views from the lighthouse.
- Complete the Historic Structures Report for the Big Sable Point Lighthouse.
- Implement recommendations of Historic Structures Report for the Big Sable Point Lighthouse.



View from the Big Sable Point Lighthouse window in late winter.

Natural Resource Recreation Zone

- Work with MDOT to conduct a study on vehicle and non-motorized access and parking along M-116.
- Install shade shelters, benches, and distance markers along the road to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse.

Developed Recreation Zone

- Develop beach house interpretive exhibits.
- Prepare and adopt a vehicle and pedestrian circulation master plan, including implementation strategies.
- Continue to work with partners on tree replacement program(s).

Administrative Zone

- No specific Action Goals have been identified.

Scenic Overlay

- Continue to protect the scenic qualities of the lakeshore.

Cultural Landscape Overlay

- Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources.
- Continue to protect historic and cultural resources.
- Refer to General Action Goals and those in the underlying zones.

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1. Core Values and Guiding Resources

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

1.1 Mission Statements

DNR Mission Statement

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

PRD Mission Statement

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

Five Goals of the DNR

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



Lake Michigan Beach House is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Piping plover nesting habitat covers the extent of the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Source: <http://www.fws.gov/>

1.2 Additional Guiding Resources

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

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

SCORP is a five-year strategic plan that shapes investment by the state and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. The Plan's overarching goal is to utilize Michigan's diverse and abundant natural assets to meet the fun, relaxation, and health needs of Michigan's residents and visitors, and the economic development needs of the state and local communities, by:

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



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

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

- Identify and protect important natural, cultural, historic, and prehistoric resources
- Diversify funding and use new criteria to target investments
- Prioritize development of statewide and regional systems of connected trail networks
- Encourage greater connections between communities and their recreational assets to strengthen regional identities
- Use parks and recreation areas as a key tool for revitalizing Michigan's core urban areas
- Integrate tourism and economic development marketing
- Prioritize investment in parks and recreation

Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan (2013 - 2018)

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

- Maintain trails to ensure a sustainable & quality trail system
- Expand trails and trail experiences and opportunities to ensure accessibility to trail systems, outdoor recreation opportunities and natural and cultural resources
- The Michigan Trails Advisory Council leads the effort to maintain and enhance Michigan's reputation as the trail state
- Link trails, trail users and adjoining towns to create memorable trail experiences and enhance economic prosperity
- Develop, enhance and celebrate partnerships and collaborations
- Implement a marketing plan including an electronic portal that allows citizens and visitors to be aware of all trails and related amenities
- Develop funding sources and mechanisms for trail maintenance, acquisition and development
- Ensure that the state's trail system compliments other plans and planning efforts

PRD Strategic Plan (2009-2019)

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

Managed Public Land Strategy (2013)

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

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

1.3 Summary of Legal Mandates

For all park General Management Plans, legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the General Management Plan and subsequent Action Plans. For our planning purposes, the term "Legal Mandates" refers to not only state law, but also the administrative tools of "Policy" and "Directive" of the Natural Resource Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Parks & Recreation Division. There are several general and site specific legal mandates applicable to Ludington State Park listed in Appendix A: Supporting Analysis.

The legal mandates that most directly impact planning and management of Ludington State Park focus on the following areas:

- Endangered species protection. Ludington State Park has areas designated as critical habitat for piping plover. The piping plover nesting habitat is also addressed as a part of the Director's Land Use Order.
- Critical Dunes. A portion of the lakeshore is designated as critical dune area and protected from certain uses unless a permit is obtained.
- Preservation/Protection/Management. Identification of the duties of the DNR in reinforcing its core values concerning preservation, protection and management.
- Recreation Passport. A Passport is required for entry into the park.

2. Plan Process Overview

2.1 Why Plan?

Park planning is not a new concept. The DNR has developed Master Plans in the past for many of Michigan's state parks. Most of these plans are now 20-40 years old and do not reflect today's realities or desires of recreational users. Furthermore, past plans put a strong emphasis on development and did not often include stewardship of natural and cultural features or opportunities for education and interpretation.

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



The Ludington State Park Planning Team on the Park Tour.

A GMP is the first of a series of planning steps: each step building upon the previous. Action goals focus on (1) the mission of the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD), and (2) the specific purpose and significance of the park. There are three stages of planning, which are undertaken in the following order:

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

In order for a plan to be successful it must allow for some degree of flexibility, to adapt to changes that cannot be predicted 10-20 years out. The GMP will be reviewed every 5 years to ensure it is still meeting its intended purpose.

2.2 Planning Objectives

The objective of the General Management Plan is to bring together Parks & Recreation Division staff, staff from other DNR divisions, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that defines and clarifies the unique “Purpose and Significance” of Ludington State Park. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan and Action Goals.

The Planning Team utilized several methods in collecting information to inform the development of the General Management Plan. To gather public input, the Planning Team developed and collected information through an on-line survey and received over 1,000 responses. The survey was advertised through a DNR press release, newsletter bulletin and email to registered campers.

On August 13, 2015, the Planning Team invited key stakeholders to attend a focus group meeting held at the Ludington Public Library. Invitations were extended to Tribal Governments, government and community agencies, and recreation, cultural and natural resource organizations; 25 stakeholders participated in the focus group. A complete list of participants and summary of the input is provided in Appendix B, Public Input Summary. Focus group participants were asked about their vision of the park in the next ten years and what their organization could contribute to the park. The information helped to inform the team as they worked to develop drafts of the significance statements and action goals. In addition to the focus group, a sub-committee of the Planning Team met with the Michigan Department of Transportation to discuss the coordination of efforts regarding future improvements of M-116.

The Planning Team hosted a public open house on November 12, 2015. The information provided at this meeting will be used to further refine the plan. The draft plan was also available for review on the project website, and the public was invited to email, call or mail questions or comments concerning this initiative.

2.3 Planning Team

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

DNR Staff		
Division	Title	Name
PRD	Management Plan Administrator	Debbie Jensen
PRD	Grant Coordinator	Matt Lincoln
PRD	Unit Manager	James Gallie
PRD	Unit Supervisor	Dan Adams
PRD	District Supervisor	Tim Schreiner
PRD	Regional Planner	Annamarie Bauer
PRD	Ecologist	Glenn Palmgren
PRD	Cultural Resources Analyst	Lisa Gamero
PRD	Trails Coordinator	Emily Meyerson
Fisheries	Fisheries Biologist	Mark Tonello
Law Enforcement	Area Supervisor	Sgt. Carla Soper
Law Enforcement	Field Operations	Officer Kyle Publiski
Marketing & Outreach	Park Interpreter	Alan Wernette
Wildlife	NLP Wildlife Field Operations Manager	Keith Kintigh
Forestry	Forester	Mike Lesinski
Minerals Management	Geologist	Peter Rose
MSHDA	State Archeologist	Dean Anderson

Clearzoning Consultants

David Birchler, AICP, Chief Executive Officer

Mardy Stirling, Senior Planner

Karen Zarowny, Staff Planner

Sheila Starks, GIS Specialist

2.4 Summary of Public Input Survey

Understanding the important role of the public in developing this plan, the Planning Team applied a variety of methods to collect feedback and input from Ludington State Park users. In particular, the public input survey was used to gather general information about visitors and how they use the park, as well as recommendations for improving features and amenities offered. The survey was available for six (6) weeks beginning July 7, 2015. It was advertised by a DNR Press Release and an e-mail bulletin sent to over 11,000 individuals registered to receive state park news and 8,500 individuals who have registered to camp at Ludington State Park. Over 1,000 individuals responded to the survey and provided input. See Appendix B: Public Input Summary for the complete survey results.

The public input survey provided the following information to the Planning Team:

- The type of visitors using the state park (ex: age, distance traveled, frequency of visits)
- The activities that visitors participate in the park and the surrounding community
- The tendencies of campers and their likelihood to engage in certain activities while at the park
- Additional amenities or improvements that visitors would like to see prioritized

Section	Qn #s	Type of Questions
About You	1-7	This section asked general questions about the respondent including age, zip code, number of visits per year, reasons for not visiting, how and where they enter the park, and the season of year that they visit.
Activities	8-11	This section asked respondents to identify their favorite activities and locations.
Campers	12-13	Campers were asked about accessing the beach from the campgrounds.
Additional Opportunities	14-15	The section asked respondents to indicate their satisfaction with facilities and provide comments on the current condition of the park and if they would like to see any improvements.
Fishing	16-18	Visitors who fish were asked about their favorite fishing locations and types of catch.
Hunting	19-20	Visitors who hunt were asked what game brought them to Ludington.
General Comments	21-22	This section asked respondents to give their input on improvements and conservation efforts.
Information Access	23-25	Respondents were asked to identify if and how they received information related to programming at the park.
Surrounding Community	26-27	This section asked respondents to indicate whether they visit other area attractions when visiting the park.
Wrapping Up	28	Respondents were asked to provide any other comments they would like to make about the park or the planning process.

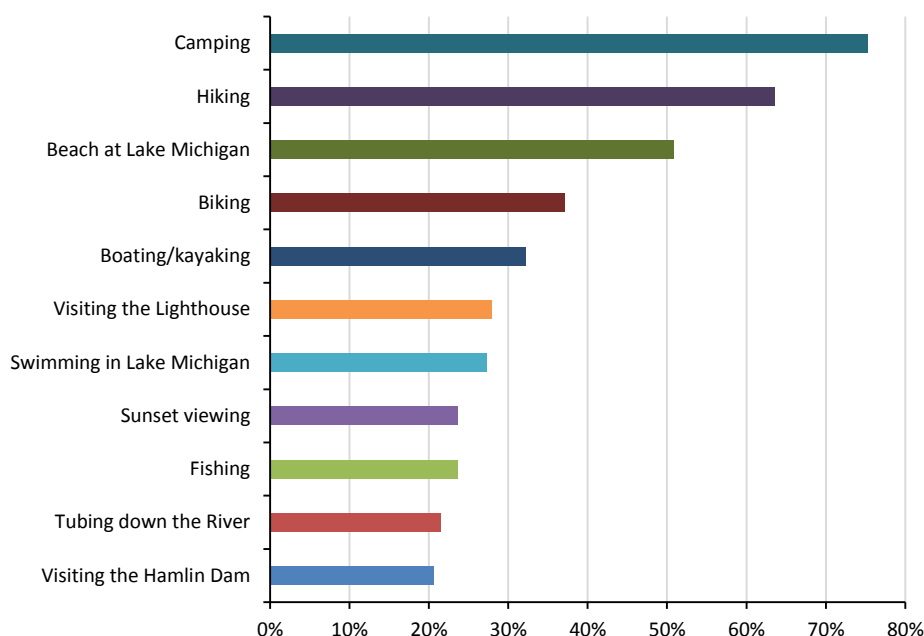
About You

Respondents of all ages completed the survey, with 50 to 64 year olds being the largest cohort (39%). Most visited the park 1 to 2 times a year, with summer (74%) and fall (40%) being the most popular seasons. The majority of visitors enter the park by car (95%), though a few travel on foot, by bike, or by boat.

Activities

The top five activities undertaken by visitors are camping (75%), hiking (64%), going to the beach (51%), biking (37%), and boating/canoeing/kayaking (32%). Other popular activities include visiting the Big Sable Point Lighthouse, swimming in Lake Michigan, fishing, watching the sunset, and floating/tubing on the Big Sable River. The comments indicated that respondents generally appreciated the range of activities available at Ludington State Park.

Ludington State Park Activities By Popularity



Campers

Approximately three-quarters of all visitors completing the survey camp at Ludington State Park. Beechwood has the highest satisfaction level of all campgrounds, followed by Cedar, Pines, and Jack Pine Campgrounds. An overwhelming majority (98%) incorporate accessing the beach during their stay. Walking, biking, and driving are almost equally distributed among visitors who access the beach. Over a third of campers who accessed the beach responded that they would take a shuttle service between the campgrounds and the beach, if offered. Others expressed concerns related to the frequency and convenience of a shuttle and the need to transport a lot of gear.

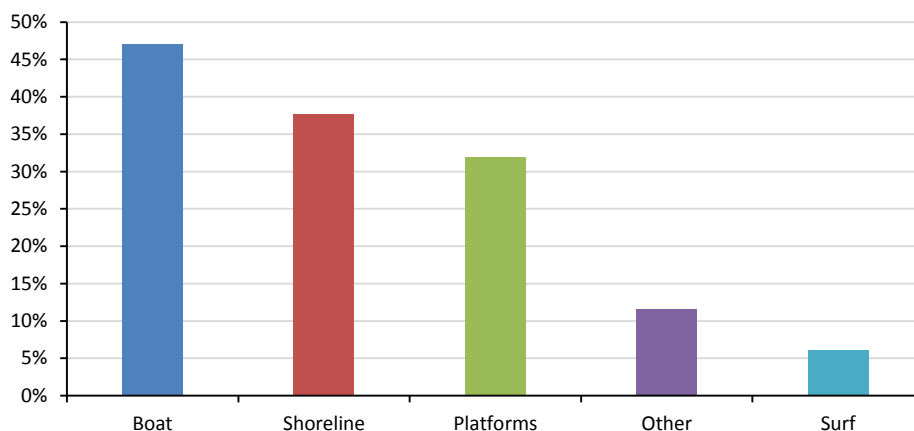
Additional Opportunities

Overall, the majority of respondents were very pleased with Ludington State Park. The Lake Michigan shoreline, hiking trails, boardwalks, the Big Sable Point Lighthouse, and Beechwood Campground received the highest marks in satisfaction. Many would like to see the return of a nature center in its original location, improved trails, and improved camping amenities, such as updated bathrooms.

Fishing and Hunting

Four out of ten respondents fish at Ludington. The majority fish by boat (46%), but other popular locations include the shoreline (38%) and platforms (31%). Pan fish was the most popular catch (71%), followed by largemouth bass (48%), smallmouth bass (40%), walleye (33%), northern pike (32%), and Chinook salmon (27%). Only 3% of respondents claim to hunt, with small game and deer as the game of choice.

Most Popular Fishing Location at Ludington State Park



General State Park Comments

Overall, the comments expressed were positive. The top category for improvement was camping. Many asked that more camping sites be available. Because it is such a popular camping destination, availability can be quite difficult. Improvements to the campsites such as modernization and updates were also brought up, as well as a better reservation system. Visitors would also like to see improvements to beach areas, including better parking, a dog-friendly area, and improved beach house amenities at both Hamlin Lake and Lake Michigan. Many would like to see expanded nature programs within the park. Respondents believe shower updates at both the beach house and campgrounds would improve their stay. Combating congestion was also a common theme. Almost a third of survey participants offered suggestions regarding conservation efforts. Improved trail care and etiquette and enforcement was mentioned as a concern. Respondents would also like to see more recycling throughout the park. Many comments also addressed the negative impact of the sand mine in the southern area of the park (on private land).

Information Access

The majority of participants were aware that the park has year-round programs. Most received the DNR e-mail bulletin, while others visited the DNR website or read the newspaper to learn about offerings. Social media outlets and word of mouth were less utilized sources of information. Almost half were aware of the friends group for Ludington State Park.

Surrounding Community

The majority of survey participants also go to additional attractions during their visit to Ludington State Park. Downtown Ludington and area restaurants were the most common responses, along with City Park and City Beach. More than half said they would not use a shuttle service between the City of Ludington and the State Park, citing time restrictions as a deterrent.

Wrapping Up

Participants reiterated their fondness for the park, as well as additional comments on previously mentioned improvements. Respondents were asked to choose three words to describe Ludington State Park. Their responses are provided in the word cloud graphic below. The larger the word, the more times it was offered.



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3. Purpose and Significance

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

3.1 Park Purpose

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

- To be used as a public park, for the purposes of public recreation or the preservation of natural beauty or historic association in accordance with Act 218, Public Acts of 1919, which created the Michigan State Park Commission.
- To preserve and protect Ludington State Park's unique natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.
- To provide access to land and water based public recreational opportunities.
- To provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public that reflect the DNR mission and the unique qualities of Ludington State Park.

3.2 Statements of Significance

- The "Queen" of Michigan State Parks, Ludington State Park reflects a distinctive blend of natural and cultural features, education, and recreation opportunities; an exemplary representation of the mission of the Department of Natural Resources' Park and Recreation Division.
- From inland Hamlin Lake, down the Big Sable River to the sandy shoreline of Lake Michigan, visitors are connected to these diverse water resources, and the variety of recreation opportunities. The influence of the geological features, as illustrated by the undulating dunes and expanse of Lake Michigan, provides a scenic backdrop for visitors and allows a greater appreciation for the constantly changing landscape.



Visitors enjoying the view from the Big Sable Point Lighthouse.

- Ludington State Park integrates the well-designed trails system, its waterways, strategically located campgrounds, picnicking areas and historic gathering places, creating a connection between the natural environment, park amenities and park visitors.
- Dedication is at the root of Ludington State Park, beginning with local community leaders and the Izaak Walton League spearheading the acquisition of land to establish the park and preserve its natural beauty and amenities. The dedication continues today with the support of the Ludington community and groups, such as the Friends of Ludington State Park and the Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association, providing assistance with fundraising, volunteering and programming.
- Ludington State Park offers excellent, diverse fishing opportunities. They include boat or shore fishing on Hamlin Lake, wade or shore fishing on the Big Sable River, or surf fishing on Lake Michigan. Hamlin Lake offers walleye (stocked), muskellunge (stocked), largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie, and yellow perch. The Big Sable River offers Chinook salmon (stocked) in the fall, steelhead in the spring and fall, and smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern pike in the summer. Lake Michigan offers surf fishing in the fall and spring for Chinook salmon (stocked), brown trout, and steelhead.
- Ludington State Park, and the adjacent Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area, are part of the expansive Big Sable Dunes ecosystem, which is characterized by exemplary open dunes, Great Lakes barrens, and interdunal wetlands; all distinctive natural communities unique to the Great Lakes. The park also contains secondary dune forest, and provides important habitat for rare and endangered species, such as piping plover and Pitcher's thistle.
- History is a defining theme in the development of the landscape and infrastructure of Ludington State Park. With its rich forested lands, variety of water resources and rolling terrain, it is easy to see why Native American tribes and early European settlers occupied the region. Evidence of its history exists today with archeological sites, a historic cemetery, the Hamlin Dam, the George Foster shipwreck, the Big Sable Point Lighthouse, and the legacy of the Pere Marquette Camp of Civilian Conservation Corps, which constructed many of the trails, roads, and the splendid Lake Michigan Beach House.



The variety of diverse and natural resources are apparent in its natural beauty.

a cultural and ecological haven for universities, researchers, schools, youth groups, and history and nature enthusiasts.

3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance Statements

Stakeholder and public input assisted the Planning Team with identifying significant features and opportunities at Ludington State Park. The feedback they provided via the online survey, the on-site workshops, and email affirmed that the park offers something for many types of user. Comments from survey respondents regarding the significance of the park are provided below.

What are people saying about Ludington?

“Ludington State Park is, in my opinion, the most beautiful park in Michigan. I like the mature hard wood forest, the dam and boardwalks. The idea that you can enjoy the beautiful beach of Lake Michigan and also Hamlin Lake for kayaking. The great hiking trails in search of wildlife and the bike trails. We also visit the light house which is always a stunning sight. The park possesses all the top qualities that make it my favorite place to camp.”

“We started bringing our children here 40 years ago, now our grandchildren and great grandchildren are coming. Thank you for keeping it a truly family friendly place to vacation.”

“I love the ability to walk and/or bike to most locations, the rustic feel of the campgrounds, and the proximity to so many different attractions (Lake Michigan, Lake Hamlin, hiking trails, Big Sable Point, boating, etc).”

“We love this park. We have camped here most years for about 25 years. Our kids (grown now) feel like this is their "vacation home"”

“We feel the Ludington State Park is the best around... my only complaint is that it's so hard to get into! (That's a nice problem to have).”

“Ludington is our favorite park in Michigan. It is a gem!”

3.4 Relationship with the Local Community

Ludington State Park is historically intertwined with the Ludington area community. The park's beginnings were community driven, starting with a campaign by the Mason County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in 1920 to secure 800 acres of dunes and virgin pines for park purposes. This community advocacy and interaction continues today with focused support from the Friends of Ludington State Park and the Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association. These community-based groups provide direct assistance with fundraising, volunteering, and programming which support the park and the Big Sable Point Lighthouse complex. In addition, there are several community, recreation, and natural resource partners that support the park either through the provision of services, organizing events, and/or providing tourist, commerce or recreational opportunities.

Drawing over 800,000 visitors annually, Ludington State Park consistently ranks as the area's number one tourist attraction. During a recent stakeholder meeting, individuals with vested interest in the park, were asked to comment about what they value and their vision for Ludington State Park. An overwhelming number of stakeholders expressed their sense of "pride" in the park and their commitment to maintaining and furthering the relationship with the park.

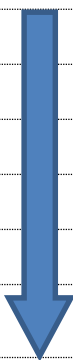
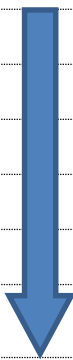
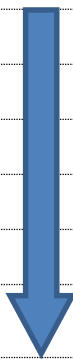
Tourism related to Ludington State Park is an important element of the Ludington area economy. Hotels, motels, bed and breakfast inns, and other types of tourist lodging are available throughout the downtown and along State Highway 31. Downtown Ludington has many restaurants, bakeries, brew pubs, and the like that spring to life during the West Michigan tourist season. Many other Ludington shops cater to the needs of local residents, as well as, park visitors.

"Provide a greater connection between Ludington State Park and other community attractions, such as the downtown and other historic trails, with a strong partnership in collaborations and marketing that enhance the entire area as a cultural destination."
LSP Stakeholder, 2015

Many in the community see the sand mining operation, which is on private land almost entirely surrounded by state land in the southern part of the park, as a negative influence on Ludington State Park and the community. This property is included in the park's Project Boundary, indicating that the state would be interesting in acquiring the land and incorporating it into the park if the opportunity arose. This would result in boundary consolidation as well as increased protection of the Critical Dune Area.

4. Management Zones

The 20-Year Management Zone Plan was developed in keeping with the recreation area's significance, identity, and purpose. The primary goal in the development of the management zones is to protect the recreation area's resources while also preserving the opportunities and features that attract so many visitors to the recreation area each year. From a palette of nine management zones, the Planning Team studied the recreation area and applied zones that best fit given the significant features of the recreation area. Management zones describe a variety of activities that **may be** appropriate within the zone. The resource condition, visitor experience, and development level varies in each zone, as indicated in the figure below.

Management Zone Progression			
Management Zone	Resource Condition	Visitor Experience	Development Level
Ecologically Sensitive	Pristine	Restricted	None
Primitive			
Backcountry			
Cultural Landscape			
History Education			
Scenic			
Natural Resource Recreation			
Developed Recreation	Active Management	Significant Use	Extensive Development
Administrative			

The 5,300-acre Ludington State Park was divided into the following six zones and two overlay zones:

- Primitive Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Cultural Landscape Zone
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone
- Developed Recreation Zone
- Administrative Zone
- Cultural Landscape Overlay
- Scenic Overlay

The Ludington State Park's General Management Plan identifies geographic boundaries within the park that promote the preservation of natural and cultural resources. The management zone boundaries also help guide the form that public access should take to encourage recreation and educational opportunities. With guidance provided through the public input process, the planning team considers the park's natural resources, historic/cultural resources, recreational opportunities, educational/interpretive opportunities, the visitor use, the type of management activities, and development opportunities within the zones. The resulting management zones address the existing and future condition of the park, develop a methodology that will best achieve the park's unique purpose within the Michigan state park system.



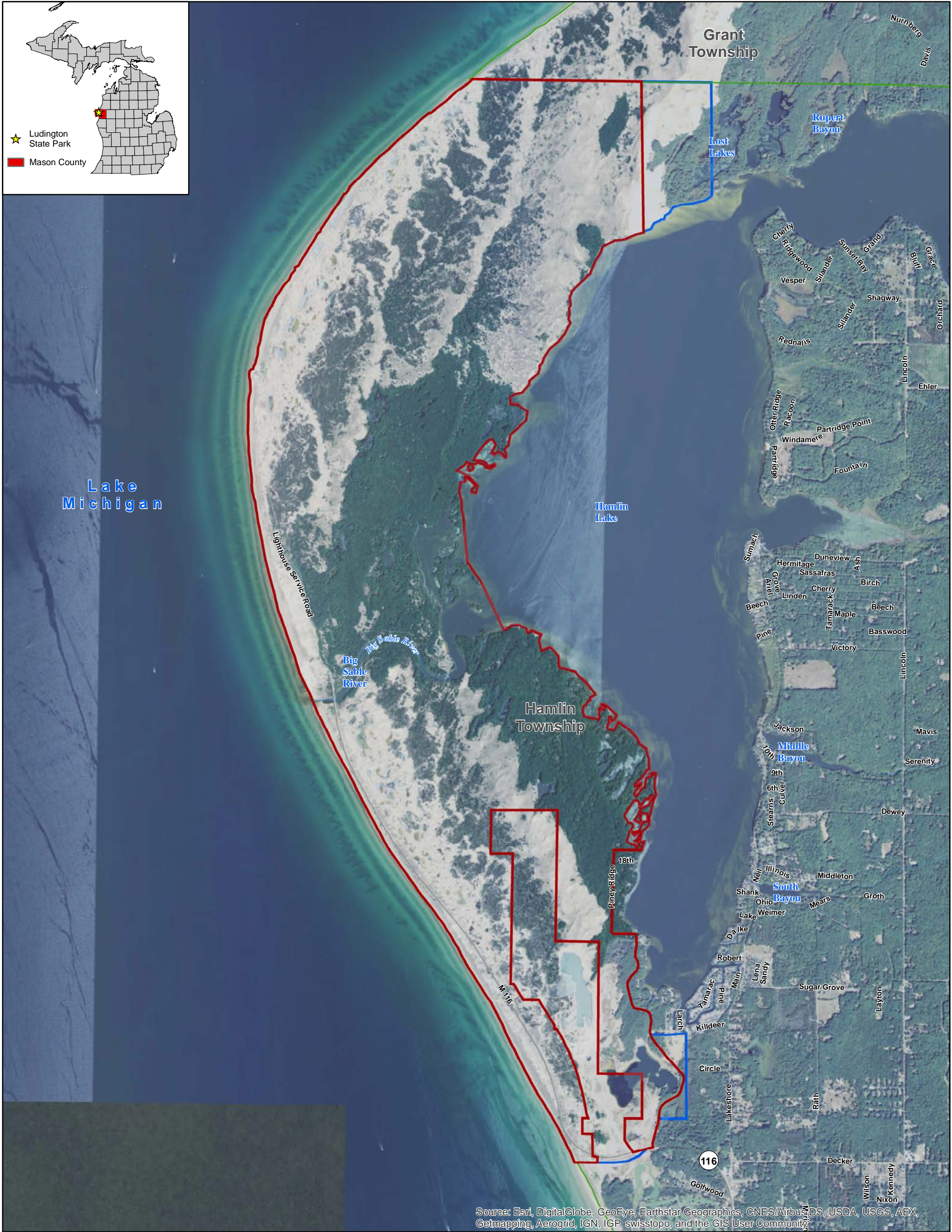
School groups use the Skyline Trail to observe for educational opportunities

Project Boundary

The 2004 Project Boundary approved by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) includes approximately 600 acres of land currently in private ownership. The Project Boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR has an interest in acquiring property on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. During the General Management Planning process the Planning Team evaluated land within the 2004 Project Boundary and determined that this land still possessed both natural resource and recreational value, and would complement existing land within Ludington State Park.

The Project Boundary includes two primary areas; 380 acres of land owned by Sargent Sand Company at the southern end of the park, and approximately 220 acres of land in private ownership adjacent to Lost Lake in the northeast corner of the park. While Sargent Sand Company's mining operation is recognized as a legitimate business, for many visitors it is seen as having a negative impact on the park in terms of noise, view points and its threatened and endangered species. The DNR purchased over 200 acres from the Construction Aggregates Corporation in 1997, east of the current mining operation, and at that time also made efforts to purchase the remaining 380 acres. Acquiring this property would protect the Critical Dune area and consolidate the park boundaries. The portion of the 380 acres that has already been mined could allow for more active development due to its disturbed nature and was depicted as a proposed day-use area in a 1980 Ludington State Park Master Plan revision. The land in the northeast would add to the dune ecosystem and provide water access to Lost Lake in this remote part of the park.

This Proposed GMP Project Boundary is illustrated on the Management Zone Map which follows. Appropriate zoning has been applied to the land within the Proposed GMP Project Boundary, which would apply only if the land comes into DNR ownership



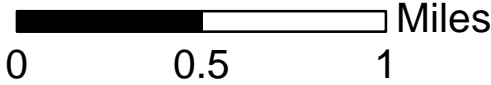
- Ludington State Park
- 2004 Project Boundary* Approved by the NRC
- Municipal Boundary

Ludington State Park

Boundary Aerial

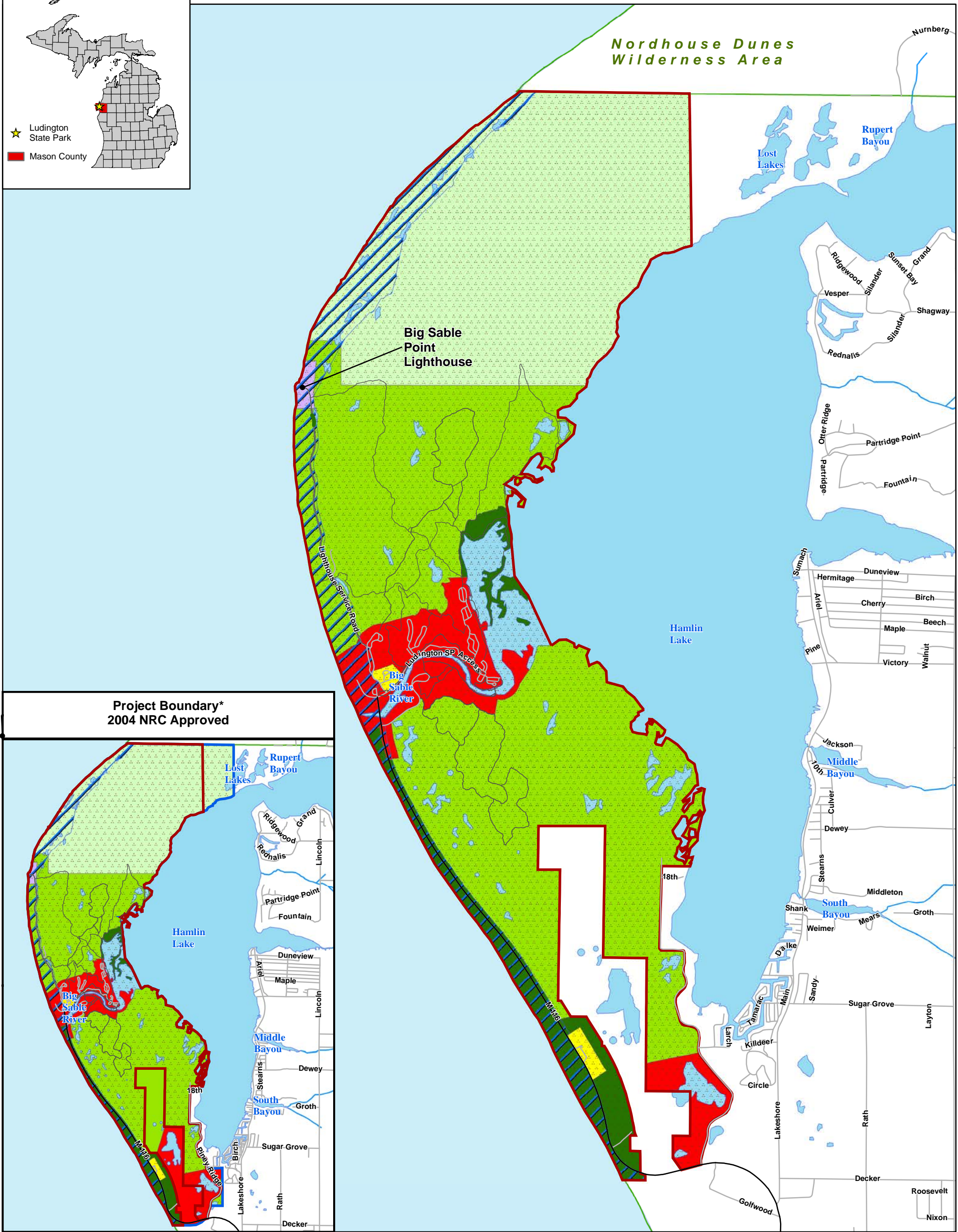
Hamlin Township
Mason County, Michigan

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



Sources: Michigan DNR,
Michigan Geographic Data Library
Map Created September 28, 2015

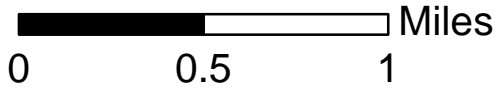
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Management Zones

- Primitive
- Backcountry
- Natural Resource Recreation
- Cultural Landscape Zone
- Administrative
- Developed Recreation
- Scenic Overlay
- Cultural Landscape Overlay (entire park)

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



Ludington State Park Management Zones

Hamlin Township
Mason County, Michigan



clearzoning
CLEAR AND CONNECTED



Sources: Michigan DNR,
Michigan Geographic Data Library
Map Created December 4, 2015

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Ludington State Park Amenities

Hamlin Township
Mason County, Michigan

- Concession/Store
- Entrance
- Fishing Pier/Platform
- Cabins
- Pavilion or Pedestrian-Shelter
- Playground
- Toilet
- Natural Resource Recreation
- Administrative
- Developed Recreation
- Roads
- Trails

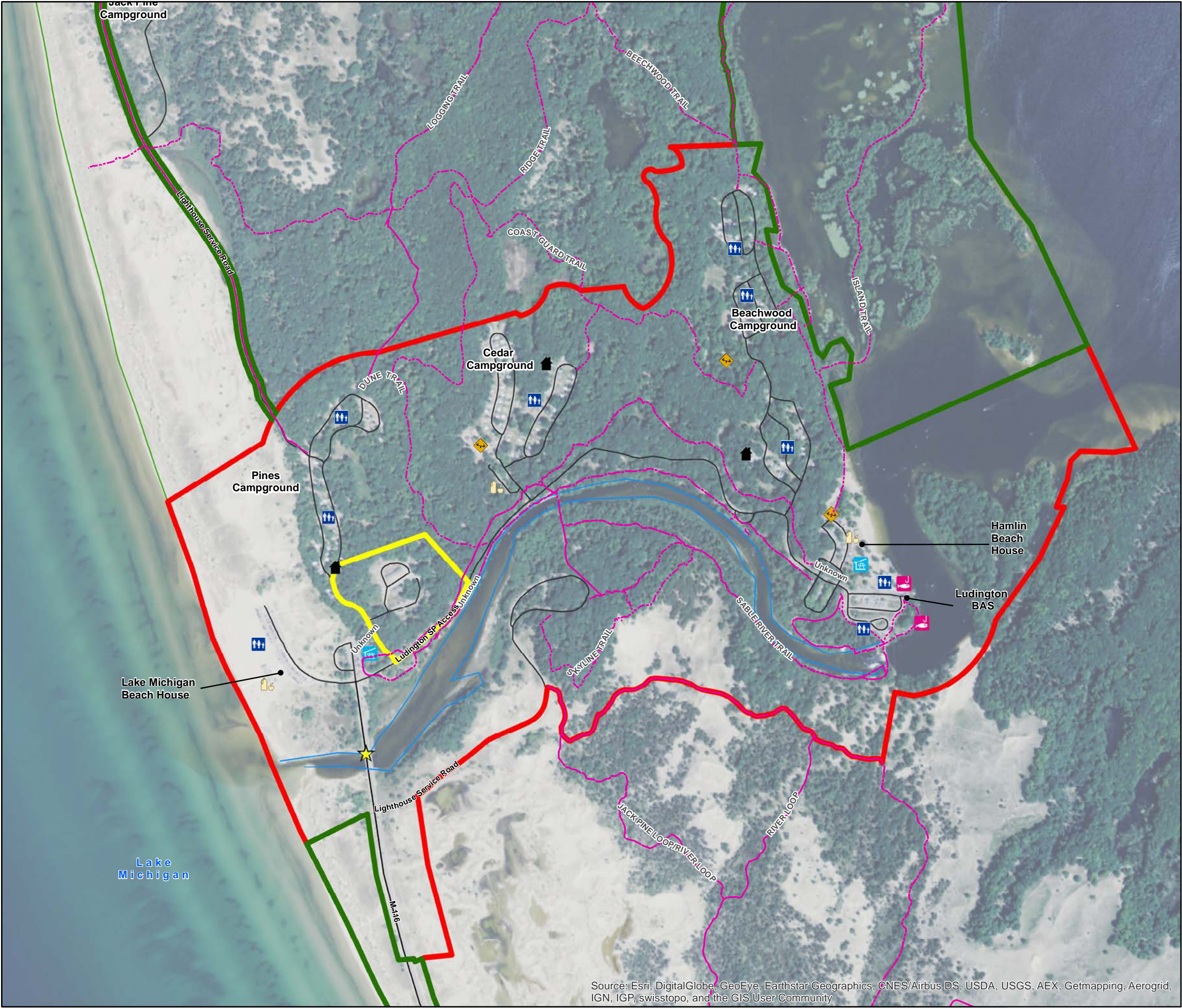
0 500 1,000 Feet



clearzoning
CLEAR AND CONNECTED



Sources: Michigan DNR,
Michigan Geographic Data Library
Map Created October 5, 2015



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

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4.1 Primitive Zone

Approximately 34% of Ludington State Park is designated Primitive. This zone preserves and protects natural habitats within the park. Only foot traffic will be allowed in this zone to ensure that the natural features are not damaged or compromised. The Primitive Zone is located north of the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and runs to the northern extent of the park. The zone includes shoreline on both Lake Michigan and Hamlin Lake. The Primitive Zone mirrors the area proposed in 1987 for legal dedication as a Natural Area under the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act. It is rich in natural resources with portions dedicated Critical Coastal Habitat, barrier dunes and exemplary dunes associated with plant communities. The dunes extend into the adjacent Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area, creating a large and contiguous ecosystem.

Natural Resources

Native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodations. This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management allowed only where necessary to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Working with the United States Forest Service to maintain the integrity and protection of the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area and Primitive Zone is an ongoing goal for the park.



Expansive dunes comprise a large portion of the park's landscape

Historic / Cultural Resources

There are no known historic structures within this zone. The park is rich in archeological sites which should be preserved and protected.

Recreation Opportunities

Dispersed, low density off-trail or trailed, self-reliant outdoor activities, such as hiking, back-packing, hunting/trapping/fishing and nature observation are typical of the Primitive Zone. This area of the park offers a large intact undeveloped area for all of these activities. The Primitive Zone permits only non-motorized use and bicycle and equestrian trails are not permitted.



The Primitive Zone provides an opportunity for quiet enjoyment and reconnection with nature.

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

Informing the public of the value of natural and cultural resources located within the Primitive Zone is valuable. However, in recognition of the undeveloped nature of this zone, interpretive signage should be primarily off-site.

Visitor Experience

Visitor experience is focused on the significant natural character of the zone, along with a sense of solitude, and a lack of man-made improvements. Overall, there will be relatively low interaction with other visitors.

Management Focus

Management will focus on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality and cultural resource protection. With the Primitive Zone bordering the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area, educating the public on the differences between the two agencies administrative rules to ensure consistent compliance is an action goal in the General Management Plan.

Development

A very low level of development is allowed to support visitor access. The focus is to maintain as little evidence of human activity as possible. The Ridge Trail and the Lighthouse Trail extend into this area, but only slightly.

4.2 Backcountry Zone

Approximately 48% of Ludington State Park is designated as Backcountry zone. The character of the Backcountry Zone is intended to be natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. It allows for a low level of development to support visitor access, including unobtrusive paths which allow non-motorized use. This zone includes a significant land area both north and south of the developed area around the Big Sable River. A large proportion of the Backcountry Zone is designated as Critical Dune, which affords additional protections on any development or disturbance of the landscape. A number of the park's hiking and cross-country ski trails are located within this zone, as well as the Jack Pines hike-in rustic campground.

Natural Resources

This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing invasive species), to address hazard trees, correct erosion of the shorelines, and manage pests and disease. Within the Backcountry Zone, natural resources may be modified slightly to support visitor use, but the tolerance for natural resource impacts is low.



Visitors have access through unobtrusive paths.

Historic / Cultural Resources

The Backcountry Zone includes three historic trail shelters located along the Island Trail, Logging Trail and the Lighthouse Trail which should be maintained. The park is rich in archeological sites and any cultural resource should be preserved and protected.

Recreation Opportunities

Moderate levels of recreation are allowed in the Backcountry Zone, provided the activities are compatible with the natural character. Non-motorized outdoor activities would be permitted, including hiking, backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, nature observation, hunting/trapping, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The Ludington State Park Canoe Trail on Hamlin Lake is located within the Backcountry Zone and provides users an opportunity to explore the inlets and natural areas along the water course.

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

The ecological significance of the resources in this area of the park presents tremendous interpretive and educational opportunities. The Backcountry Zone is diverse with water resources, forested lands, and large areas of Great Lake barrens. The Park Interpreter is able to utilize these resources informing the public of the value of natural areas of the park.

Visitor Experience

Visitors may engage in diverse outdoor activities including those that offer interaction with a variety of natural resources. Variable time commitment, challenge and adventure; moderate noise tolerance and interaction with DNR staff; and, moderate visitor encounters can be accommodated.

Management Focus

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

Development

A low level of development is allowed to support visitor access to outdoor activities (i.e., trailheads, trailhead parking) and educational opportunities are appropriate in the Backcountry Zone. Any development should be unobtrusive and blend into the natural environment.

4.3 Cultural Landscape Zone

Approximately 0.33% of Ludington State Park is designated as Cultural Landscape Zone and includes the Big Sable Point Lighthouse complex in recognition of the historic and cultural significance. While the entire park has cultural significance, the lighthouse complex provides a specific historic and cultural resource unique within the park. The central focus of the Cultural Landscape Zone is managing the area to preserve its historical and cultural features.

Natural Resources

This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses which can include non-native species specific to the era and/or location, and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone.

Historic / Cultural Resources

Historic buildings and structures within the Big Sable Point Lighthouse complex are the focus of this zone and represent the evolution of the cultural resource, temporal change, and the continuum of time. The lighthouse station will be managed in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation and in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office.

Recreation Opportunities

Visitors engage in sightseeing/tours, recreational, and educational activities compatible with and sensitive to the cultural setting.



Big Sable Point Lighthouse is one of the many historic structures within the park.

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

There are a wealth of education and interpretive opportunities within the Cultural Landscape Zone. A variety of on-site and off-site interpretation methods may be used, including interpretive signage, guided tours, and education programs such as those currently offered by the Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association, and methods using new technology to ensure outreach to a wide audience.

Visitor Experience

Visitors engage in sightseeing, organized tours, recreational, and educational activities in a cultural setting. Moderate on-site interpretation, off-site interpretation, noise tolerance, and interaction with DNR staff and volunteers is characteristic of this zone.

Management Focus

Management focus is to maintain the cultural and historical character of the zone.

Development

Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape are tolerated. A moderate level of development compatible with the cultural landscape is permitted such as interpretive media, walks, picnic area, and restrooms to support visitor access and use. Any new buildings or structures should be architecturally distinct from the existing historic structures, per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. Moderate accessibility should be expected.

4.4 Natural Resource Recreation Zone

Approximately 7.5% of Ludington State Park is zoned Natural Resource Recreation. The Natural Resource Recreation Zone runs along the Lake Michigan shoreline from the southern park boundary to a point south of the Big Sable River. This zone is also used adjacent to the service drive (50 feet wide corridor) leading to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and at the north end of the mouth of Hamlin Lake, adjacent to Lost Lake. Active recreation, at medium to high density of use, conducted in a natural setting is the hallmark of the Natural Resource Recreation zone. While the zone designation emphasizes resource protection, landscape modification is permitted to allow for moderate interaction and recreation, as well as more intensively used trail corridors.



Pathway through the dunes to Lake Michigan along M-116; a popular spot to watch the sunset.

Natural Resources

The Natural Resource Recreation Zone supports visitor activities with moderate impacts. Natural Resources should be managed to support visitor activities, but protected to the degree possible to appear natural. This zone reflects natural processes, with vegetative management focused on restoring and maintaining natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape.

Historic / Cultural Resources

There are no known historic structures within this zone. Cultural resources will generally be preserved and protected.

Recreational Opportunities

Moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone are to be expected. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings, including hiking, rustic camping, bicycling, canoeing, kayaking, nature observation and hunting/trapping/fishing.

Education/Interpretation Opportunities

Interpretive signage may be used along trails and at specific points of interest. With the large span of Lake Michigan shoreline, access road to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse, and history surrounding of Hamlin Lake, there are opportunities for additional interpretive activities.

Visitor Experience

Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings for recreation and education. Variable time commitment, challenge and adventure; moderate noise tolerance and interaction with DNR staff; and, moderate to high visitor encounters can be accommodated.

Management Focus

Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and improved visitor accessibility are ongoing management activities.

Development

A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include walkways and parking, trails, benches, rustic cabins, and picnic tables. This zone allows site hardening as necessary to facilitate activities (such as ADA compliance) and protect natural resources.



The road to the lighthouse receive a high volume of foot-traffic.

4.5 Developed Recreation Zone

Approximately 12% of Ludington State Park is designated Developed Recreation. This zone allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The Developed Recreation Zone encompasses the central area of the park including the modern campground facilities, day use areas, boat access sites, designated swim beaches, Hamlin Dam,



The Lake Michigan Beach House is a popular park amenity for all ages.

amphitheater, paved and unpaved trails. Ludington State Park, with over 800,000 visitors annually, provides a variety of recreational opportunities most of which occur within the Developed Recreation Zone. Focus on enhancing visitor's recreational experience results in a strong emphasis on development and management of amenities and infrastructure within the zone.

Natural Resources

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

Historic / Cultural Resources

The Lake Michigan Beach House and the Hamlin Lake Dam are located within the Developed Recreation Zone. Areas around Hamlin Lake and the day use area are significant with historic and cultural resources identified throughout. Due to the importance and cultural richness of this park, identification of potential interpretive opportunities for visitors would be appropriate in this zone. The Planning Team has included a Cultural Landscape Overlay over the entire park.



Cyclists on the trails.

Recreational Opportunities

High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are found in this zone. Visitors are engaged in diverse and modified land and water settings, including hiking, modern camping, bicycling, boating, fishing, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, day-use beach, picnicking, and other day-use activities.

Education / Interpretive Opportunities

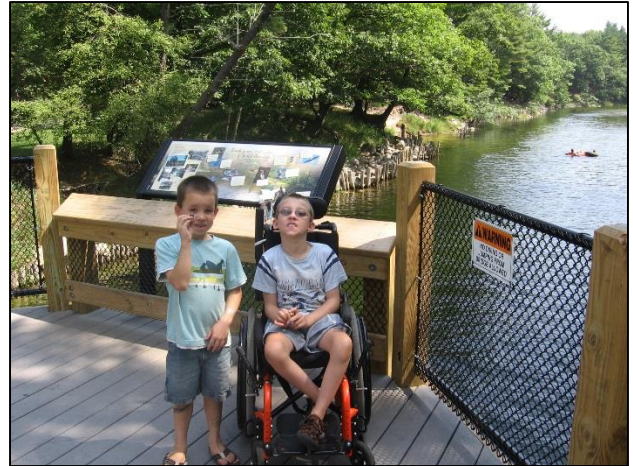
A high level of visitor interaction can be expected in this zone. Developing interpretive exhibits at the Lake Michigan Beach House, is proposed to support this engagement.

Visitor Experience

A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated, presenting opportunities for interpretive signage and active programming at the campgrounds and other areas where people congregate. High noise tolerance and high interaction with DNR staff and other users can be expected.

Management Focus

Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission and to promote and support a diversity of facilities and activities. Management of people, public safety, and universal accessibility are the management priorities in this zone. The Planning Team has identified a need to better manage vehicle and pedestrian circulation to avoid congestion and parking issues.



Boardwalks provide observation areas of Hamlin Dam and the Big Sable River.

Development

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Replacement and improvements to the aging infrastructure, such as parking areas, roadways, bathroom facilities and utility systems, are development priorities.



Modern and rustic camping options are available at the park.

4.6 Administrative Zone

This zone is 0.6% of total land and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the state park. The park headquarters, maintenance facilities and sanitation station are located in this zone.

Natural Resources

Natural resources may be actively managed and modified to support administrative and support activities.

Historic / Cultural Resources

There are no known historic structures within this zone.

Recreational Opportunities

There are no recreational activities provided in the Administrative Zone.



Administrative Zone: Contact Station and Sanitation Station is located at the southerly end of the park

Education/Interpretive Opportunities

Person to person contact at the park office for dissemination of general information occurs in this zone.

Visitor Experience

Visitors typically access the zone for business and information only. High noise tolerance and high interaction with others can be expected.

Management Focus

The management focus of this zone will be in the business of running the park, providing appropriate facilities for staff, ensuring employee safety and the like.

Development

A high level of development of facilities for the support of administrative activities and a high level of accessibility are to be expected.

4.7 Scenic Overlay

The Scenic Overlay has been applied to the entire Lake Michigan shoreline of Ludington State Park in recognition of its natural beauty.

Upholding the quality of the viewsapes will be management's priority in this zone. All activities and developments in the Scenic Overlay must be compatible with the overriding purpose of preserving viewing opportunities. Natural resources may be modified, to the level permitted in the underlying zone, to support both visitor use and viewing.



Seven miles of Lake Michigan shoreline are included in the Scenic Overlay

Because the overlay crosses the boundaries of one or more management zones, refer to the underlying zone for more detailed information.

4.8 Cultural Landscape Overlay

The Cultural Landscape Overlay focuses on preserving and protecting the historical and cultural resources in Ludington State Park. This includes historic structures, such as the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and facilities built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, as well as evidence of the traditions, beliefs, practices, life ways, arts, crafts and social institutions of Native American and other early communities. This Overlay has been applied over almost the entire Ludington State Park except for the Cultural Landscape Zone.

Management shall focus on protecting the character of the zone by reviewing all proposed earthwork activities for its potential impact on the historical and cultural resources in this zone.

Because the overlay crosses the boundaries of one or more management zones, refer to the underlying zone for more detailed information.

5. 10-Year Action Goals

The Action Goals proposed for Ludington State Park were developed in response to stakeholder and public input and in context with the core values and guiding resources discussed in Chapter 1 of this plan. The Planning Team has developed 10-Year Action Goals that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the park as a whole, and in each of the management zones, in order to achieve the desired user experience and resource protection. Action goals are recommended that address the following categories:

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

Many of the Action Goals identified for Ludington State Park include program input from community partners and other state or federal agencies. It is clear that Ludington State Park has a strong connection to the local community and efforts will continue to promote and maximize this connection for mutual benefit. This emphasis is supported by the recommendations of all of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Blue Ribbon Panel Report to Governor Snyder and the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan. The Governor's Economic Prosperity initiative is another illustration of the importance of planning regionally. In that document, Ludington State Park is located in Economic Prosperity Region 4.

One of the primary issues the Action Goals address is congestion at the park entrance and on the park roads and paved trails. It was felt that a multi-faceted approach was required to address this complex issue. These inter-related actions incorporated in the following tables include:

- Identify the potential for non-motorized connectivity between the City of Ludington and the State Park
- Study vehicular and non-motorized access and parking along M-116
- Conduct a vehicle and pedestrian circulation study, including a dedicated line for passport holders
- Increase parking at the Lake Michigan Beach House
- Explore opportunities for a shuttle service between the City of Ludington and the State Park and within the State Park

Other improvements proposed will continue to maintain, improve and expand the recreation opportunities available while protecting the natural and cultural resources of the park.

Management Plans do not guarantee future Park and Recreation Division (PRD) funding to implement them. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan. The 10-Year Action Goals

address the desired future condition at the park, and serve as a blueprint for management decisions. They are based upon the guidance of the 20-Year Management Zones and informed by the policies of the PRD and the DNR.

In addition to the Action Goals that follow, the Planning Team has identified opportunities to be considered in the future, once the more immediate concerns have been addressed and funding sources identified.

- Construction of a new accessible headquarters building
- Updates to the Beechwood Campground toilet and shower building
- Replacement of Hamlin Lake restroom and changing room facilities

General Action Goals

Many of the 10-Year Action Goals for Ludington State Park are general in nature and may apply to more than one zone or may apply within all of the management zones. These often deal with park-wide issues, such as invasive species control, facility accessibility, property acquisition, Wi-Fi connectivity, developing Stewardship, Wildlife and Emergency plans, or marketing the park's many recreational opportunities to a wider audience of potential users. Many of the overall maintenance and operational issues of running a state park also result in the need for actions across all zone boundaries, such as law enforcement.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Natural Resources			
Implement invasive species control with emphasis on early detection and rapid response	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Stabilize Hamlin Lake shoreline in areas along the Island and Lost Lake Trails	1-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Continue to monitor and protect piping plover nesting areas during the breeding season.	Ongoing	Stewardship Wildlife Park Manager Volunteers USFWS	Park Manager Stewardship
Continue to follow the administrative regulations for the critical dunes protection.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship DEQ	Park Manager
Continue to protect the exemplary natural communities and legally protected species	Ongoing	Stewardship	Park Manager
Complete Michigan Forest Inventory cover type mapping for the park	5-10 Years	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Develop a Natural Resource Stewardship Plan	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship	Stewardship Ecologist
Implement Natural Resource Stewardship Plan	Ongoing, upon plan completion	Park Manager Stewardship LRBOI	Park Manager Stewardship Ecologist
Historic/Cultural Resources			
Identify and document cultural resources within the park	Ongoing	Stewardship SHPO Park Manager	Cultural Resource Analyst Park Manager
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	Stewardship SHPO Regional Planner	Cultural Resource Analyst Historical Center

General Action Goals (continued)			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Recreation Opportunities			
Work with partners to develop access points and amenities along the Lake Michigan water trail	3-5 Years	Regional Planner Trails Coordinator Park Manager Community Partners	Park Manager Regional Planner
Update, improve, and replace trail signs	Ongoing	Park Interpreter Park Manager	Park Manager
Work with regional partners to identify potential physical, economic, and marketing connectivity between the Park and the Mason County community	Ongoing	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach Community Partners	Park Manager
Continue to work with community partners to identify the potential for non-motorized connectivity between the State Park and the City of Ludington	Ongoing	Regional Planner Park Manager MDOT Community Partners	Regional Planner Park Manager
Work with biking organizations to consider additional opportunities for off-road cycling in appropriate areas of the park	1-3 Years	Regional Planner Park Manager Stewardship Community Partners	Regional Planner Park Manager
Educational/Interpretation Opportunities			
Develop an Interpretive Plan for the park	1-3 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Historical Center Marketing & Outreach Community Partner	Park Interpreter Marketing & Outreach
Implement the Interpretive Plan	Ongoing, upon plan completion	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach	Park Interpreter Marketing & Outreach
Develop educational and interpretive programming technology, such as the "on-cell" technology utilized by the Mason County Cultural Trail	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Historical Center Marketing & Outreach Community Partners	Park Manager Park Interpreter Marketing & Outreach
Management			
Develop a special projects endowment fund in cooperation with the Friends of Ludington State Park and community partners	5 Years	Park Manager Friends of LSP Community Partners	Friends of LSP Community Partners
Improve Wi-Fi access for visitors and staff (wireless)	1-2 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Continue to explore land acquisition of properties within the Project Boundary, with emphasis on the Sargent Sand property.	Ongoing	Land Manager Real Estate Park Manager	Park Manager Land Manager
Update Wildfire Plan	Annually	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Update Emergency Plan and coordinate with area Emergency Management agencies	Annually	Park Manager Community Partners	Park Manager

General Action Goals (continued)			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Management (continued)			
Repair and/or replace boardwalks and bridges along the Skyline and Island Trails as needed	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Friends of LSP	Park Manager
Explore opportunities for a shuttle service between the City of Ludington and the State Park and within the State Park	1-3 years	Park Manager Community Partners Regional Planner	Park Manager
Development			
Continue efforts to achieve greater visitor accessibility in all development opportunities	Ongoing	Park ManagerRegional Planner	Park Manager

Primitive Zone

The Primitive Zone emphasizes the natural resources of the area. The proposed Natural Area is included within this Zone. It is managed to allow only dispersed, low frequency and low impact recreational use in the zone. Maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements or users are allowed. For this reason, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation. The following 10-Year Action Goals relate to the continued protection of the important habitat. Only foot traffic is allowed in this zone.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Natural Resources			
Pursue Natural Area dedication under the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act	5-10 Years	Stewardship Park Manager	Stewardship
Work with USFS to maintain integrity and protection of the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area and primitive zone	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship USFS	Park Manager
Management			
Work with USFS to maximize consistencies between State and Federal land use rules for optimal visitor experience, and to provide information to the public regarding any differences.	Ongoing	Park Manager USFS	Park Manager

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

Backcountry Zone

The character of the Backcountry Zone is intended to be natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. While the Primitive Zone is highly restrictive for recreational use and human impact, Backcountry permits a slightly higher intensity of use. The Zone allows for increased activity, and slight modifications of the landscape (trail development) to accommodate that use where it is consistent with protection of the resource. Tolerance for natural resource impacts is low in the Backcountry zone and the 10-year Action Goals for this zone focus primarily on improving existing facilities rather than new development.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Natural Resources			
Correct erosion at the Island Trail shelter	1-3 Years	Friends of LSP Park Manager	Park Manager
Historical/Cultural Resources			
Maintain historic trail shelters	Ongoing	Stewardship	Park Manager Stewardship
Replace roofs on historic trail shelters	1-2 years	Stewardship	Park Manager Stewardship
Recreation Opportunities			
Replace and maintain canoe trail portage structures and confidence markers	3-5 Years Ongoing Maintenance	Regional Planner Park Manager	Park Manager

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

Natural Resource Recreation Zone

The Natural Resource Recreation Zone runs along the Lake Michigan shoreline from the southern park boundary to the point just south of the Big Sable River and Ludington State Park contact station. The Zone is also used along the Park's service drive which provides pedestrian, bicycle, and emergency vehicle access to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and at the north end of the mouth of Hamlin Lake and the islands within the cove. Active recreation, at medium to high density of use, conducted in a natural setting is the hallmark of the Natural Resource Recreation zone. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. Vegetation may be managed to facilitate recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape, as well as to address such things as hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. The 10-year Action Goals are intended to promote moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone. The Scenic Overlay Zone is used along the entire Lake Michigan lakeshore in recognition of its scenic qualities. The Cultural Landscape Overlay is incorporated within this zone in recognition of historical and cultural resources. While interpretation opportunities within the overlay should be explored, the recommendations of the underlying Natural Resource Recreation Zone are the primary focus.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Recreation Opportunities			
Develop a second canoe trail along Lost Lake near Beechwood Campground	3-5 Years	Regional Planner Park Manager Park Interpreter	Park Manager Regional Planner
Management			
Work with MDOT to conduct a study on vehicle and non-motorized access and parking along M-116	2-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Development			
Implement the recommendations of the study	TBD by study	Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor	Park Manager
Install shade shelters, benches, and distance markers along the road to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse	3-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

Developed Recreation Zone

Active recreation with high density of use, conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance, is characteristic of the Developed Recreation Zone. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced where possible. The Developed Recreation Zone occupies 9% of the park and abuts three water courses: Lake Michigan, Hamlin Lake and the Big Sable River. Ludington State Park's primary day use areas, campgrounds, and swimming beaches are located in this zone. The 10-Year Action Goals direct management decisions and development projects designed to promote and support these diverse visitor activities. The Cultural Landscape Overlay is incorporated within this zone in recognition of remnants from historic lakefront settlements. While interpretation opportunities within the overlay should be explored, the recommendations of the underlying Developed Recreation Zone are the primary focus.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Natural Resources			
Stabilize Big Sable River bank	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Regional Planner	Park Manager
Continue to work with partners on tree replacement program(s)	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Community Partners	Park Manager
Historical/Cultural Resources			
Identify and provide interpretive opportunities along the Hamlin Dam trail	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager
Recreation Opportunities			
Work with community partner(s) to install playground equipment at appropriate locations	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Community Partners	Park Manager Regional Planner
Educational/Interpretation Opportunities			
Develop beach house interpretive exhibits	1-3 Years	Marketing & Outreach Park Interpreter Park Manager Stewardship	Marketing & Outreach Park Interpreter
Management			
Conduct a vehicle and pedestrian circulation study for a master plan, including parking and a dedicated lane for Passport holders	1-2 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Prepare and adopt a vehicle and pedestrian circulation master plan, including implementation strategies	1-5 Years	Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner

Developed Recreation Zone (continued)			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Development			
Increase parking at the Lake Michigan Beach House area	3-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Improve visitor accessibility throughout the park, especially within the campgrounds and Hamlin Lake day use area	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Update Beechwood campground electrical system	3-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Update/replace North Beechwood campground toilet/shower building	3-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Repave day use area parking lots	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Improve shoreline fishing opportunities by installing piers, platforms, and the like along the Big Sable River and Hamlin Lake	5-10 Years	Park Manager Fisheries Stewardship Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Install camper cabins at appropriate locations	5-10 Years	Park Manager	Park Manager
Relocate fish cleaning station from Lake Michigan to Hamlin Lake	3-5 Years	Park Manager	Park Manager

Administrative Zone

This zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. It includes the headquarters offices and maintenance facilities with the associated land required to conduct the business of running Ludington State Park.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Refer to the General Action Goals for administrative-type activities			

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

Cultural Landscape Zone

The Cultural Landscape Zone designation has been applied to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse complex in recognition of the historic and cultural significance of this unique resource. While the entire State Park has cultural significance, the physical resources and opportunities for their interpretation provide one of Ludington State Park's most significant features.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Educational/Interpretation Opportunities			
Provide ways for visitors with mobility limitations to experience the views from the lighthouse	Ongoing	Regional Planner Park Manager Stewardship SPLKA	Park Manager Regional Planner
Complete Historic Structures Report for the Big Sable Point Lighthouse	1-3 Years	Park Manager Stewardship SHPO SPLKA	Stewardship
Development			
Implement recommendations of the Historic Structures Report for the Big Sable Point Lighthouse	Ongoing (TBD by Historic Structures Report)	Stewardship SPLKA Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Replace roof on lighthouse keeper's residence	1-3 years	Park Manager Stewardship SPLKA Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

Cultural Landscape Overlay

The Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone addresses the overall setting in which is found not only historic structures, but all non-structural evidence of the traditions, beliefs, practices, life ways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community. A Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone has been applied over the entire Ludington State Park in recognition of cultural resources known to be present in this area. The history of Native American occupancy, the park's development undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corp and the Big Sable Point Lighthouse are just a few of the cultural resources found in the park. While interpretation opportunities within the overlay should be explored, the recommendations of the underlying Zones are the primary focus.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<i>Refer to the General Action Goals and the underlying zones</i>			
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	Stewardship SHPO Regional Planner	Cultural Resource Analyst
Continue to protect historic and cultural resources	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship SHPO Regional Planner Historical Center	Park Manager Stewardship

Scenic Overlay

The Scenic Overlay Zone is applied to the shoreline of Lake Michigan in recognition of its scenic value. The priority in this zone is to maintain the natural beauty.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<i>Refer to the General Action Goals and the underlying zones</i>			
Ensure management in this zone is sensitive to the scenic qualities of the lakeshore	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Regional Planner	Park Manager

Action Goals are developed by the Planning Team with input provided by stakeholders and the public. The following categories are used to help structure the development process: Natural Resources, Historic/Cultural Resources, Recreation Opportunities, Education/Interpretation Opportunities, Management, and Development.

DEQ = Department of Environmental Quality
MDOT = Michigan Department of Transportation
LRBOI = Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office
SPLKA = Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association
USFS = U.S. Forest Service