



# General Management Plan

## Muskegon State Park



Approved September 26, 2017  
Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division

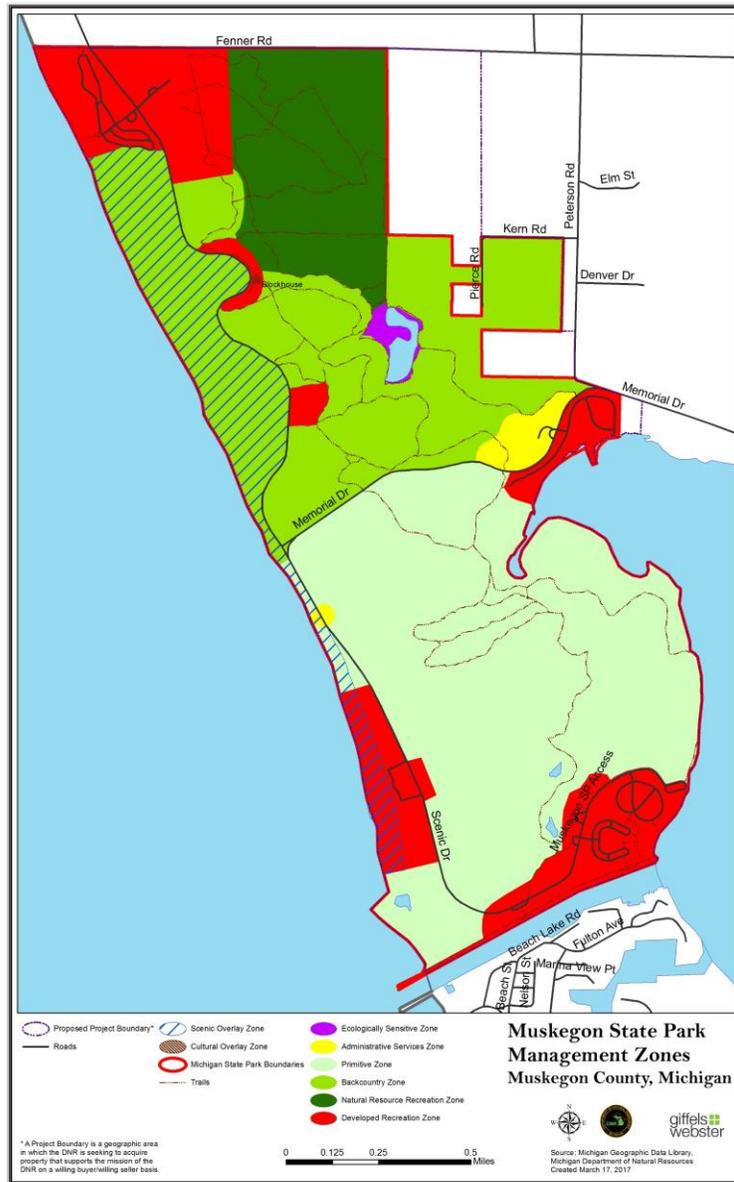
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**MUSKEGON STATE PARK PLAN APPROVALS:**

The project was directed by Deborah Jensen, Management Plan Administrator, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Parks & Recreation Division with assistance from Giffels Webster.

8/19/17  
*[Signature]*  
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 Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

*9/12/17*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

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

*9/15/17*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

*[Signature]*  
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 Director, Department of Natural Resources

*9/26/2017*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**MUSKEGON STATE PARK 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:	<u>9/10/2017</u> Date
DNR – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU:	<u>7/11/2017</u> Date
MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE	<u>7/26/2017</u> Date
NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:	<u>8/10/2017</u> Date

# Resolution 08-2017-08

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

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

**ADOPTED: August 10, 2017**

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

Submitted by: MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee

**Motioned by:** Commissioner Louise Klarr

**Seconded by:** Committee Member, Mike McDonald

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

***This Resolution was adopted by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee at their regular meeting on August 10, 2017 as Resolution No. 08-2017-08***

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# Executive Summary

Muskegon State Park encompasses approximately 1,233 acres and includes over two miles of Lake Michigan shoreline. It is one of the earlier parks in the state park system, established in 1923. The park's exceptional natural setting, as well as distinctive recreational opportunities, make it a one-of-a-kind destination along the state's west coast.

The park is located within both Laketon Township and the City of Muskegon, Muskegon County, in west Michigan, approximately one hour northwest of the metropolitan Grand Rapids area. Scenic Drive runs north-south along the park's lakeshore, providing access to the majority of the park's facilities. Memorial Drive connects the park east-west and links Snug Harbor, Muskegon Lake access, and day use areas to Scenic Drive.



*Stairwell from the Lake Michigan campground down to the beach, providing visitors breathtaking views of the shoreline.*

Muskegon State Park is a popular year-round tourist destination, hosting over 900,000 visitors per year. The park offers a variety of opportunities and settings, which include clean sandy beaches, impressive dunes, ample fishing opportunities, and a variety of year-round activities. Proximity to urban areas often makes the park a prime destination for families, which continue to visit the park generation after generation.

The park also hosts the Muskegon Sports Complex, which operates as a non-profit facility in partnership with the Michigan

Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Sports Complex draws in visitors both locally and nationally as one of the few public luge facilities within the United States. The park also features the Blockhouse, a unique architectural structure perched at the highest point in the county. The original structure, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, was lost to a fire and rebuilt in 1962. The Blockhouse has been a community icon in the Muskegon area for many years.

Muskegon State Park features modern campgrounds at the Channel Campground with 147 sites and at the Lake Michigan Campground with 106 sites, as well as a rustic organizational camp. Alternative lodging with two mini-cabins and a yurt is also provided. Both the alternative lodging and the Lake Michigan Campground are open to winter camping. The park also offers more than twelve miles of hiking and cross-country ski trails spread throughout the park.

The Supporting Analysis, included as Appendix A of this plan, provides background information to inform this planning initiative. It includes a comprehensive review of the park settings, area demographics, history, land ownership, legal mandates, and cultural, natural and recreation resources.

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 Muskegon 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.*

While the GMP addresses some specific natural resource goals for the park, a separate Stewardship Plan will be developed by the PRD Stewardship Unit to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies.

The Parks and Recreation Division of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversaw the planning process, assisted by Giffels Webster, consultant of the DNR. 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 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report, were used as guiding references (See Chapter 1 for additional information on guiding references).



*Blockhouse photo circa 1938.*

### [Significance of Muskegon State Park](#)

Each GMP developed by the PRD is built upon the park’s significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state’s system. Muskegon State Park was determined significant due to the following:

#### **Unique Park History**

Muskegon State Park, established in 1923, preserves a rich history as one of the earlier parks in the state system. The Muskegon area was known as the “Lumber Queen of the world,” and the land where the park currently sits today was the former site of the Ryerson Hill & Company lumber mill. As the park expanded through the 1930s it was in receipt of national work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, and local assistance from groups such as the Boy Scouts, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and Izaak Walton League.

The architectural icon of the Blockhouse is a landmark in Muskegon State Park. Located at the highest point in Muskegon County, the structure is culturally significant in its uniqueness to the state park system and in its connection to the local community.

### **Natural Communities**

Muskegon State Park is home to a diverse set of natural communities unique to the Midwest. The forested dunes, open dunes and the coastal plain marsh support native plants and rare, threatened and endangered species. The park also provides an important migratory stopover habitat for birds.

### **Diverse Waterways**

The diverse waterways found at Muskegon State Park offer abundant opportunities for sport and enjoyment. Lake Michigan's two miles of sandy shoreline provides a popular day use beach and offers a scenic view of the State's western coast. Lake Michigan, Muskegon Lake, and the Channel are premier fishing destinations for many species of fish. In addition, visitors are within a short drive of other excellent river fisheries. Recreational opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized boating are also abundant along these waterways.



*Park visitors fishing along the Muskegon Channel.*

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Well-designed, integrated facilities offer visitors access to different recreational experiences throughout the park. Woods, sand dunes, and beaches can be explored by an extensive foot-trail network. The scenic Memorial Drive that skirts along the shoreline of Lake Michigan gives cyclists and drivers breathtaking views of Michigan's west coast.

### **Muskegon Sports Complex**

The Muskegon Sports Complex, located within the park, is a community cornerstone. This non-profit operation in partnership with the DNR focuses on providing accessible recreation. Hosting the only public luge facility in the state, and one of only four in the nation, the Sports Complex is a one-of-a-kind recreation destination. The facility is visited by both beginners and experts with a wide array of activities including ice skating, sledding, snowshoeing and cross country skiing, with plans to expand to year-round recreation.

### **Camping Experiences**

Muskegon State Park offers a choice of year-round camping experiences. The Lake Michigan campground offers a wooded setting close to the scenic shoreline, while Channel Campground provides a spacious "old-style" layout that is seldom found in many of the parks today. Alternative lodging of mini-cabins and a yurt are also available.

## 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 Muskegon 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:

**Developed Recreation Zone** comprises 17% (approximately 214 acres) of the park and allows active recreation with a high density of use. This zone includes the Lake Michigan Campground, the Blockhouse, day-use beach, Channel Campground, Snug Harbor, and the developed area of the Muskegon Sports Complex.

**Administrative Zone** comprises 1% (approximately 17 acres) of the park and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. The zone includes the park office, maintenance area, contact station at the Lake Michigan beach, and all related land required to conduct the business of running the park.

**Natural Resource Recreation Zone** comprises 12% (approximately 146 acres) of the park and permits active recreation with a medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. While a moderate level of use is allowed in this zone, there is an emphasis on resource quality over recreation. This zone includes the remainder of the Muskegon Sports Complex and the associated cross-country ski-trails.

**Backcountry Zone** comprises 29% (approximately 362 acres) of the park and emphasizes resource quality over recreation. The character of this zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact through recreation use. Moderate levels of active recreation use that are consistent with the natural character of the zone are allowed. This zone encompasses the north side of Memorial Drive. This area is heavily wooded and contains a multitude of looped hiking trails.

**Primitive Zone** comprises 39% (approximately 479 acres) 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 majority of the park south of Memorial Drive is in this zone.

**Ecologically Sensitive Zone** comprises 1% (approximately 15 acres) of the park containing Lost Lake, a rare, natural coast plain marsh that supports a diverse array of wildlife seldom seen in this part of the country. Protection of the natural community in the area is the top priority of this zone. Native species and natural processes remain undisturbed and pristine. Recreational activities are prohibited and visitor use is restricted.

**Scenic Overlay** has been applied to 11% (approximately 135 acres) of the park which includes the Lake Michigan Shoreline from the Lake Michigan Campground to the day-use beach in recognition of its natural beauty.

**Cultural Landscape Overlay** has been applied to the area surrounding the Blockhouse in recognition of the Blockhouse for its historical and cultural significance to the Muskegon area. 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. They address natural and cultural resource protection and management, recreation opportunities, education/interpretation opportunities, management focus, and development. The goals are listed in Chapter 5 of this Plan.



*A repurposing strategy for the beach house was identified as an action goal by the Planning Team.*

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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 natural resource-based economies
4. Improve and build strong relationships and partnerships
5. Foster effective business practices and good governance



*Lost Lake of Muskegon State Park is a rare, ecologically sensitive coastal plain marsh rarely found in this area of the United States.*

“These assets provide a place to recreate and . . . help make our communities cohesive, connect people to their places and to each other, engender civic engagement, and remind us of our connection to the natural world and to our history.”

-Blue Ribbon Panel (2012)

## 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, statewide trail system. The eight recommendations are as follows:

- Maintain trails to ensure a sustainable and quality trail system
- Expand trails and trail experiences and opportunities to ensure accessibility to trail systems, outdoor recreation opportunities, and natural and cultural resources
- The Michigan 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



*Muskegon Harbor entrance.*

### 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 federal and 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 Muskegon State Park listed in Appendix A: Supporting Analysis.

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

- Endangered species protection, 1973
- National Historic Preservation Act, 1973 (As amended)
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, 1940 (and amendments)
- PA 451 of 1994, Part 535 Sand Dune Protection and Management
- PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 Recreation Passport. A Passport is required for entry into the park.
- PA 451 of 994, Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities



*In 2015, the first nesting pair of Piping Plover since 1950 was discovered in the park.*

## 2. Plan Process Overview

### 2.1 Planning Objectives

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.



*Planning Team members tour the park.*

A GMP is the first of a series of planning steps. Each step builds upon the previous, and 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 five years to ensure it is still meeting its intended purpose. 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 Muskegon 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.

## 2.2 Planning Team

The General Management Plan would not exist without the valuable input and expertise provided by all members of the Planning Team. Representatives from each of the DNR's resource divisions are invited to participate. This enables the planning team to review the issues at hand from many different perspectives, representing the diverse interests of the public we serve. Please refer to the Appendix for summaries of all Planning Team meetings.

DNR Staff		
Name	Title	Division
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator	PRD
Matt Lincoln	Planning Assistant/Land Liaison	PRD
Gregory Sherburn	Unit Supervisor	PRD
Matt Schwemin	Lead Worker	PRD
Josh Fogel	Ranger	PRD
Roland Johnson	District Supervisor	PRD
Annamarie Bauer	Regional Planner	PRD
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Unit Manager	PRD
Lisa Gamero	Cultural Resources Analyst	PRD
Nikki VanBloem	Southern Trails Coordinator	PRD
Rich O'Neal	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries
David Fisher	Forester	Forest Resources
Guntis Kalejs	Wildlife Ecologist	Wildlife
Chris Simpson	Conservation Officer	Law Enforcement
Elizabeth Brockwell-Tillman	Park Interpreter	Marketing and Outreach
Peter Rose	Geologist	Minerals Management
Dean Anderson	State Archeologist	Cultural Resources Management and Planning (MSHDA)

### **Giffels Webster Consultants**

David Birchler, AICP, Partner Emeritus

Jason Bibby, AICP, Senior Planner

Karen Zarowny, Associate Planner

Sheila Starks, GIS Specialist

Deirdre Clein, Staff Planner



*Planning Team providing input during meetings.*

### 2.3 Outreach Strategies

The Planning Team utilized several methods in collecting information for assistance with the development of the General Management Plan. To gather public input, the Planning Team developed and collected information through an online survey and received nearly 800 responses. The survey was advertised through a DNR press release, newsletter bulletin and an email blast to registered campers. The DNR informed Tribal Governments of the planning process and invited them to meet with the DNR to discuss the General Management Plan and provide input. Stakeholders and the public were invited to open houses where they could provide verbal and written comments regarding the General Management 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. Upon compiling the input, the Planning Team discussed and refined the plan as appropriate. A summary of all these outreach efforts and input received is documented in Appendix B.



*Participants at the Public Open House.*

## 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 Muskegon 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 five (5) weeks beginning July 12, 2016. 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 7,205 individuals who have registered to camp at Muskegon State Park. Nearly 800 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:

- Details about visitors to Muskegon State Park (ex: age, distance traveled, frequency of visits)
- The activities that visitors participate in at the park and in 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 and Your Visit	1-5, 26-28, & 30-33	The beginning and end sections asked general questions about the respondent including age, gender, zip code, the number of visits per year, reasons for not visiting, other destinations included in their trip to the park, and awareness of park related activities.
Activities	6-8	This section asked respondents to identify the activities they took part in, which was most important to them, and how would they describe the park to others
Campers	9-14	Campers were asked about their typical length of stay, if they would support regulations to reduce invasive species risks, if they brought additional motorized or non-motorized vehicles, and what did they enjoy most about their stay.
Alcohol Regulations	15	Visitors were asked to share their thoughts on the park's current alcohol regulations
Beach House	16	Visitors were asked how they would like to see the beach house be repurposed.
Fishing	17-20	Visitors who fished were asked their preferred fishing location, how they accessed the water, and catch preference.
Hunting	21-22	The section inquired respondents if they participated in any off-shore waterfowl hunting, as well as their thoughts on the park's current hunting restrictions.
Visit Satisfaction	23-24	This section asked respondents to share their level of satisfaction in their visits to the park
General Comments	25	This section asked respondents what changes, if any, would they make to the park,
Wrap Up	39	Respondents were asked to provide any other comments they would like to make about the park or the planning process.

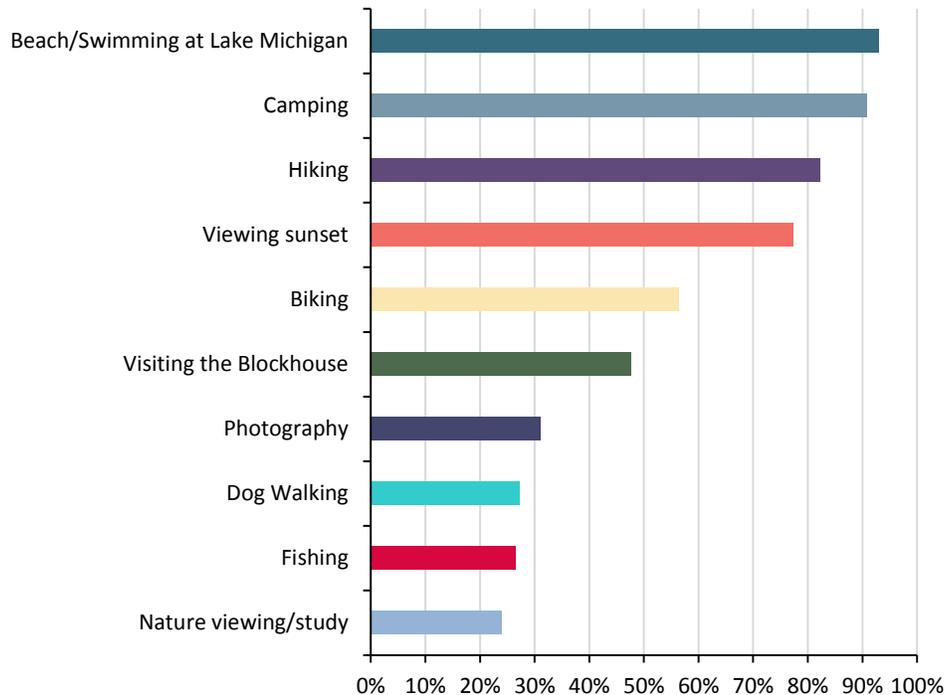
### **About You & Your Visit**

Respondents of all ages completed the survey, with 50 to 64-year-olds being the largest cohort (37%). Most respondents visit 1-2 times per year (40%), followed by 11 or more times per year (19%). Over three-quarters of respondents had visited the park in the last 6 months. July through August was the most popular time to visit (64%), followed by September through November (28%), and year-round visitors (27%). When asked if they visited other attractions in the area, Michigan Adventure (18%), restaurants (16%), Lake Michigan (16%), Downtown Muskegon (7%), and Grand Haven (6%) were the most popular responses from survey participants. Most participants received information about the park through social media (30%), followed by the DNR Park Information website (28%) and word of mouth (27%). Most (81%) were not aware of the newly formed Friends Group whose members volunteer and help to fund special programming, with nearly a third interested in learning more about the group.

### **Activities**

The top five activities undertaken by visitors are going to the beach and/or swimming at Lake Michigan (84%), camping (68%), hiking (62%), viewing the sunset (66%), and biking (46%). Other popular activities include visiting the Blockhouse, photography, dog walking, fishing, and nature study. When asked what was the single most important activity for visitors, camping (39%) followed by visiting the beach (21%) were the most popular responses.

**Muskegon State Park Activities by Popularity**



### **Campers**

Over a third of all visitors completing the survey camp at Muskegon State Park. Most stay two to three nights (47%), followed by four to six nights (29%). Campers supported the idea of using only locally sourced firewood (84%), with many indicating they already follow this practice. Others voiced concern about pricing and the lack of enforcement of such a requirement. Many campers bring a camping trailer (65%), non-motorized watercraft (27%), or motorized watercraft (20%). When asked what they enjoyed most about camping at Muskegon State Park, it was the unique locations of the campgrounds at both Lake Michigan and the Channel. Bathroom updates were the most frequently mentioned improvement (20%) campers would like to see.

### **Alcohol Regulations at the Park**

Muskegon State Park currently holds alcohol restrictions in the spring and summer. Alcohol is prohibited throughout the entire park from April 15 through Labor Day, except for the campgrounds. Alcohol is restricted from the campgrounds April 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>. The majority of respondents were in favor of these restrictions (48%), with 30% against and 22% with no opinion. Many mentioned that they did find the regulation rules somewhat confusing.

### **Beach House**

The survey asked respondents to share ideas how to better make use of the currently underutilized beach house on Lake Michigan. The majority agreed it would be a great location for concessionaires, particularly for food (snacks, ice cream, or even a restaurant), equipment rentals (kayaks, paddleboards), private events, sundries, entertainment, and interpretive means.

### **Fishing**

Over a third of respondents fish at Muskegon State Park (37%). The most popular fishing location was the Channel (43%). The Channel walkway (48%) or boat (47%) were the typical means of accessing the water to fish. Pan fish (44%), walleye (32%), largemouth bass (25%), smallmouth bass (25%), and steelhead (22%) were the most popular catches at the park. However, 39% indicated that they do not fish for a specific catch.

### **Hunting**

Only 15 respondents indicated that they waterfowl hunt off the shores of Muskegon State Park. The majority of survey respondents were in favor of keeping the park closed to hunting (55%), with 17% in favor of keeping a portion of the park open to hunting and 28% maintaining no opinion on the matter. Many commented that they appreciate having a safe place to go during hunting season.

### Visit Satisfaction

The majority of park goers were very satisfied with their visit to Muskegon State Park (44%), with 41% satisfied and 10% somewhat satisfied. Less than 5% had a satisfaction level below somewhat satisfied. Respondents shared that the park is an amazing resource to the public that is clean with an expansive waterfront. Other expressed they would prefer updates to the park's older facilities. A small percentage mentioned they would like to see biking trails in the park. When asked what changes respondents would make to the park, bathroom improvements was the most frequently mentioned (17%), followed by a desire for increased biking opportunities (16%) and campground improvements (15%). Approximately 10% responded that no changes are necessary, while other desired changes included beach improvements (particularly on Muskegon Lake at the Channel Campground), trail signage and maintenance, a dog beach, expansion of activities and programs offered at the Muskegon Sports Complex and improvements to the beach house.

### Wrap Up

Participants expressed the importance of camping experiences at Muskegon, and how this is a treasured past-time in a beautiful setting. Some expressed they would like to see more for visitors at the beach, as well as updates to the aging infrastructure of the park. Respondents were asked to choose three words to describe Muskegon State Park. Their responses are provided in the word cloud graphic on the following page. 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 Muskegon 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 Muskegon 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 Muskegon 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 Muskegon State Park.

### 3.2 Statements of Significance

#### Unique Park History

Muskegon State Park, established in 1923, preserves a rich history as one of the earlier parks in the state system. The Muskegon area was known as the “Lumber Queen of the world,” and the land where the park currently sits today was the former site of the Ryerson Hill & Company lumber mill. As the park expanded through the 1930s it was in receipt of national work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, and local assistance from groups such as the Boy Scouts, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and Izaak Walton League.

The architectural icon of the Blockhouse is a landmark in Muskegon State Park. Located at the highest point in Muskegon County, the structure is culturally significant in its uniqueness to the state park system and in its connection to the local community.



*Bald eagle in the park.*

### **Natural Communities**

Muskegon State Park is home to a diverse set of natural communities unique to the Midwest. The forested dunes, open dunes and the coastal plain marsh support native plants and rare, threatened and endangered species. The park provides an important migratory stopover habitat for birds.

### **Diverse Waterways**

The diverse waterways found at Muskegon State Park offer abundant opportunities for sport and enjoyment. Lake Michigan's two

miles of sandy shoreline provides a popular day use beach and offers a scenic view of the State's western coast. Lake Michigan, Muskegon Lake, and the Channel are premier fishing destinations for many species of fish. In addition, visitors are within a short drive of other excellent river fisheries. Recreational opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized boating are also abundant along these waterways.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Well-designed, integrated facilities offer visitors access to different recreational experiences throughout the park. Woods, sand dunes, and beaches can be explored by an extensive foot-trail network. The scenic Memorial Drive that skirts along the shoreline of Lake Michigan gives cyclists and drivers breathtaking views of Michigan's west coast.

### **Muskegon Sports Complex**

The Muskegon Sports Complex, located within the park, is a community cornerstone. This non-profit operation in partnership with the DNR focuses on providing accessible recreation. Hosting the only public luge facility in the state, and one of only four in the nation, the Sports Complex is a one-of-a-kind recreation destination. The facility is visited by both beginners and experts with a wide array of activities including ice skating, sledding, snowshoeing and cross country skiing, with plans to expand to year-round recreation.

### **Camping Experiences**

Muskegon State Park offers a choice of year-round camping experiences. The Lake Michigan campground offers a wooded setting close to the scenic shoreline, while Channel Campground provides a spacious "old-style" layout that is seldom found in many of the parks today. Alternative lodging of mini-cabins and a yurt are also available.



*The Yurt located in the Muskegon Sports Complex was booked 222 nights in 2015.*

### 3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance Statements

Stakeholder and public input assisted the Planning Team with identifying significant features and opportunities at Muskegon State Park. The feedback they provided via the online survey, the on-site workshops, and email affirmed the value of the park. Comments from stakeholders and the public further affirmed the unique characteristics of Muskegon and its significance within the State Park's recreation system. Below are just a few comments from the online survey:

#### **What are people saying about Muskegon?**

*"This is our favorite place to camp. We usually camp for ten days and again in the fall for the Michigan Irish music festival."*

*"I have been coming to Muskegon State Park since 1956; seen a lot of changes and improvements but it always feels like coming home each summer. It is an under-appreciated gem in the Michigan State Park system"*

*"I love the Winter [Muskegon] Sports Complex, it is one of the reasons we decided to move to Muskegon County.."*

*"The park as a whole allows for numerous activities and environments. Some parks have a small lake, some are only on a big lake, some don't have water at all, some don't have hiking trails or a boat launch. Some don't have winter activities. MSP has it all!"*

### 3.4 Relationship with the Local Community

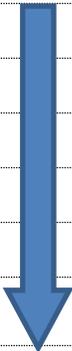
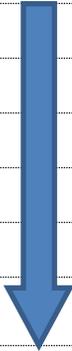
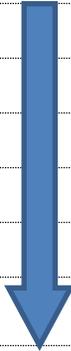
Muskegon State Park has a significant impact on the surrounding area as a tourist attraction. With over half a million visitors each year and over 100,000 campers, economic effects can be felt in the surrounding Muskegon area. The Muskegon Sports Complex is a significant partner in maintaining visitors to the park year-round with winter recreation trails, ice skating, and luge runs. Expansion of the complex to include other year-round activities is anticipated to attract more users as well and is documented in the Sports Complex Master Plan Executive Summary found in Appendix D. The year-round events, such as the lantern-lit winter cross-country skiing, trail runs, fishing demonstrations, and the Oktoberfest generate a significant turn-out, benefitting the park and surrounding community.

Additional attraction such as Michigan Adventure and other recreation facilities such as P.J. Hoffmaster, Pere Marquette Beach, and community walking and biking trails are also utilized by many park visitors. Close proximity to downtown Muskegon also allowed visitors access to museums and other unique urban amenities, and serve as a support to the local economy.

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## 4. Management Zones

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

The 1,233-acre Muskegon State Park was divided into the following eight Management Zones:

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

Management zones do not apply to the county road right-of-way alongside Memorial Drive and Scenic Drive within the park boundary. Along the southern portion of Scenic Drive, from where the county road ends, development compatible with the roadway corridor will be considered within a width equivalent to the county road right-of-way. The adjacent zoning will apply beyond that distance.

Any revisions to the zoning map will require public notification and the same review and approval process as the General Management Plan.

The Muskegon General Management Plan identifies management zone boundaries which reflect the resource protection goals and recreation development opportunities for different areas within the park. The descriptions of each management zone, found on the following pages, include an examination by the Planning Team of the zone's characteristics and potential for each of the following:

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



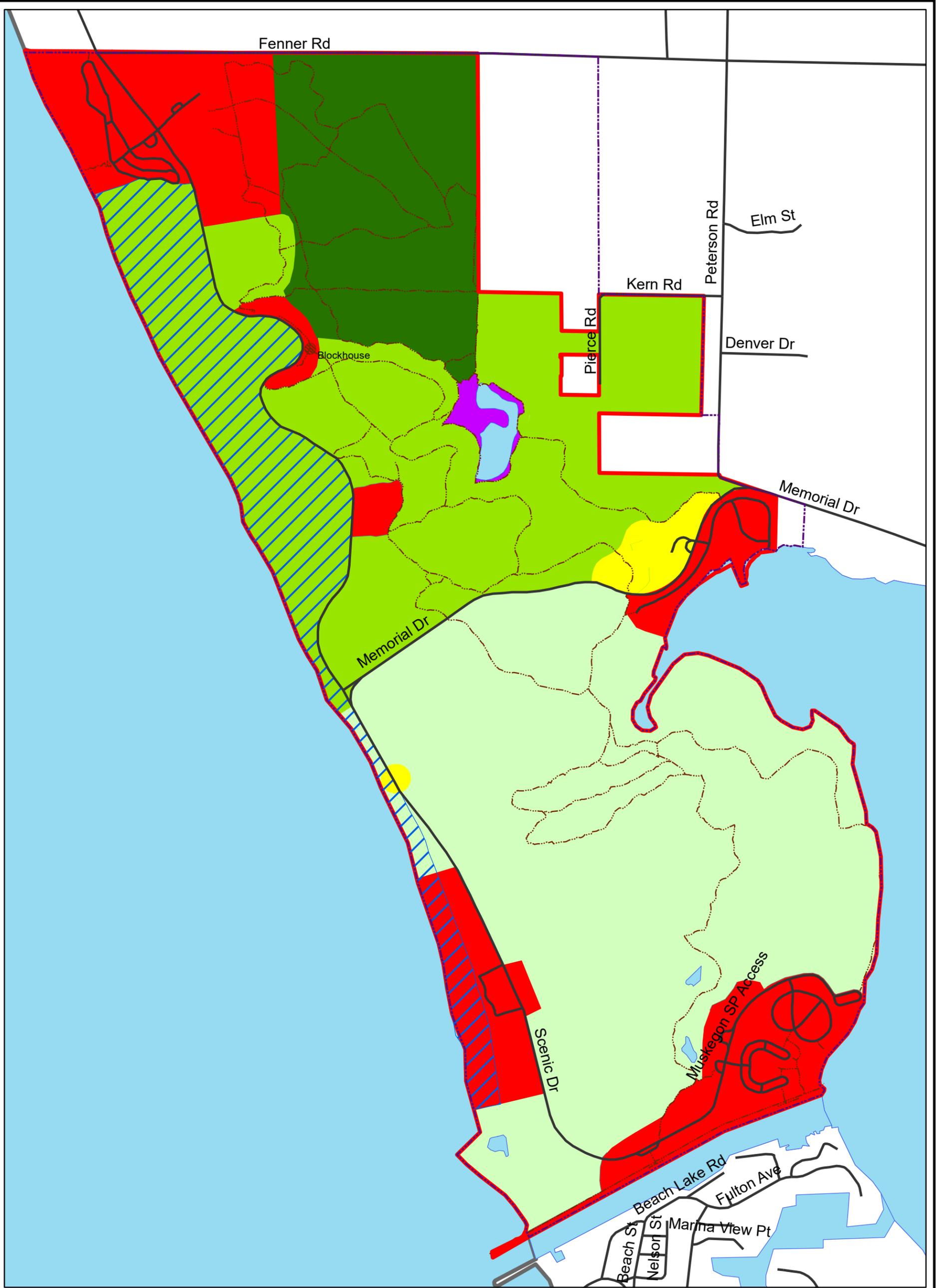
*The park continues to implement invasive species control which includes garlic mustard.*

Much of the park is designated Critical Dune, which will impact the level of development that is allowed, irrespective of zoning designation.

### **Project Boundary**

The state park's 2004 Project Boundary approved by the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) includes land owned primarily by private residential owners. A Project Boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer/willing seller basis. During the General Management Planning process, the Planning Team evaluated land within the 2004 Project Boundary to determine whether it still possessed the natural resource and recreational value to complement existing land within Muskegon State Park. Potential additions to the Project Boundary were also considered.

The Planning Team determined that the 2004 dedicated Project Boundary expansion in the northeast section of the park is still desirable. This would expand park ownership eastward from the Muskegon Sports Complex south of Fenner Road, until residential lots are encountered, incorporating additional undeveloped woodland into the park boundary. The Proposed Project Boundary has been expanded eastward to include land purchased by the state in 2008, south of Kern Road, and land adjacent to that parcel. A small parcel east of Snug Harbor, south of Memorial Drive, was also added to the Proposed Project Boundary. This was considered desirable to add to the potential land area for improvements at the Snug Harbor site. The Proposed Project Boundary incorporates inholdings (property owned by others completely surrounded by state owned land) and consolidates land ownership for ease of management and streamlining of the park boundary. Frontage on Peterson Road would also allow for another point of access if desired.



-  Proposed Project Boundary\*
-  Roads
-  Scenic Overlay Zone
-  Cultural Overlay Zone
-  Michigan State Park Boundaries
-  Trails
-  Ecologically Sensitive Zone
-  Administrative Services Zone
-  Primitive Zone
-  Backcountry Zone
-  Natural Resource Recreation Zone
-  Developed Recreation Zone

## Muskegon State Park Management Zones Muskegon County, Michigan



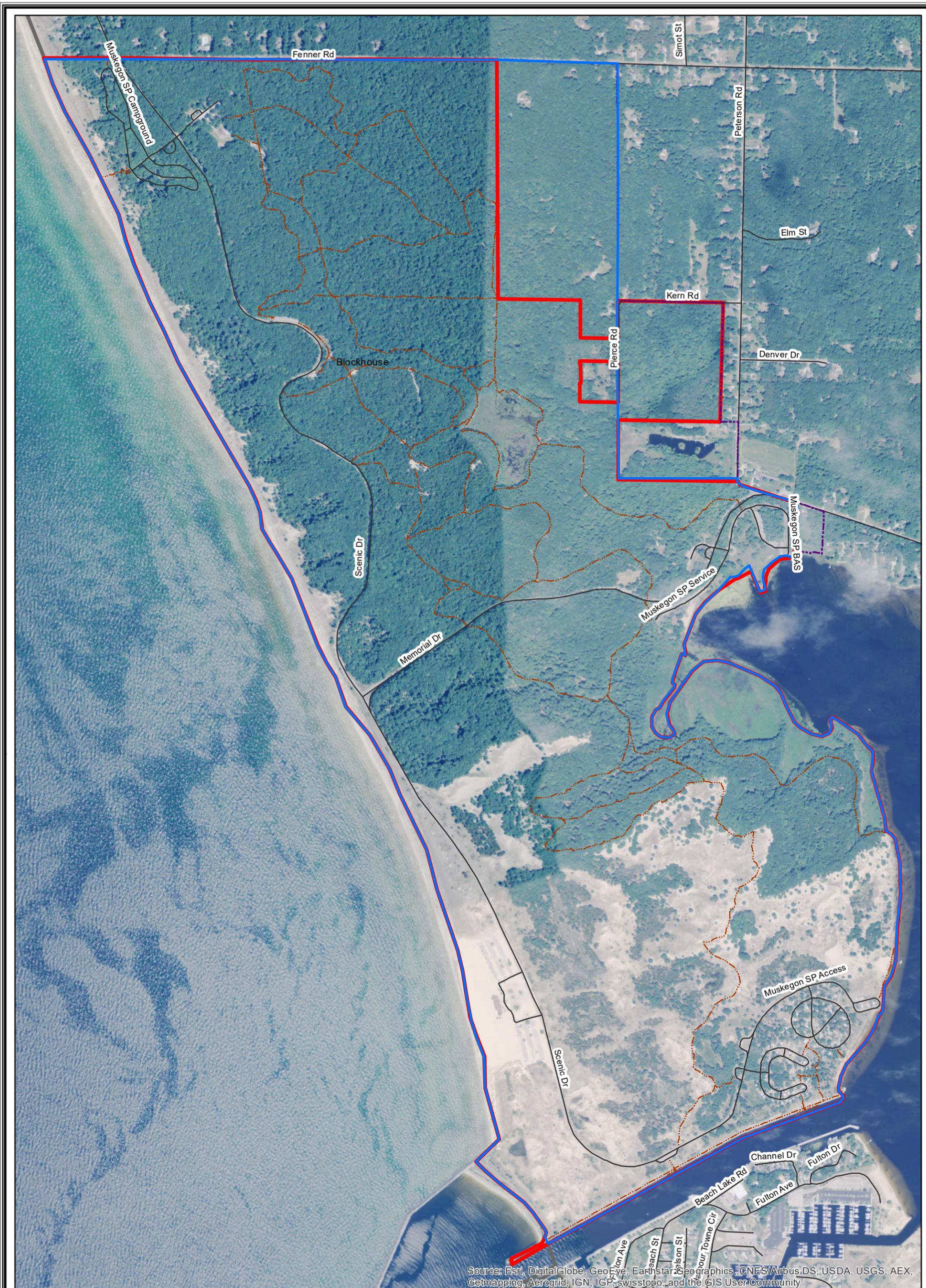
giffels  
webster



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

Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library,  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Created March 17, 2017

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

-  Michigan State Park Boundaries
-  2004 NRC Approved Project Boundary\*
-  Proposed Project Boundary
-  Roads
-  Trails

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



# Muskegon State Park Proposed Project Boundary Muskegon County, Michigan

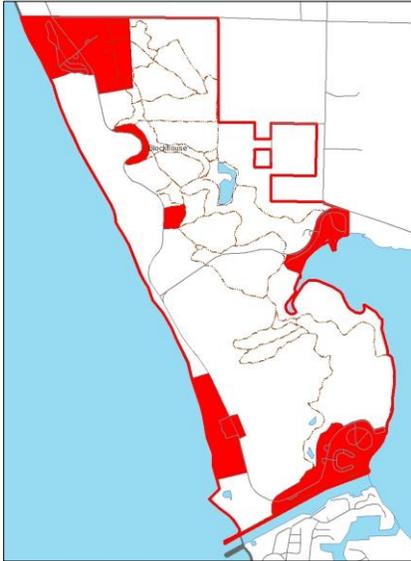


 giffels webster  
clearzoning

Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library,  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Created December 12, 2016

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## 4.1 Developed Recreation Zone



Approximately 17%, or 214 acres, of Muskegon State Park is designated Developed Recreation. This zone allows active recreation with a high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. This zone includes the Lake Michigan Campground, the Blockhouse, day-use beach area, Channel Campground, organizational camp, Snug Harbor, and the developed area of the Muskegon Sports Complex.

### Natural Resources

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

### Historic / Cultural Resources

The Blockhouse is within the Developed Recreation Zone and has been designated with a Cultural Landscape Overlay. Any cultural resources will be preserved and protected.

### Recreation Opportunities

High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are found in this zone. Visitors engage in recreation activities in diverse and modified land and water settings: modern camping, boating, kayaking, fishing, picnicking, and other day-use activities. Proposed improvements include providing more recreation opportunities at Snug Harbor, improving fishing access, further development of the sports complex, and installation of playground equipment.



*The channel day use area*

### Education Opportunities

A high level of visitor interaction can be expected in this zone. There is potential for interpretive signage at campgrounds, the beach house, the Blockhouse, as well as programming opportunities in the day-use area and Snug Harbor

**Visitor Experience**

A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated. High noise tolerance and 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, promoting and supporting a diversity of facilities and activities and providing a high level of accessibility. This includes studies on repurposing the beach house and increased recreation opportunities at Snug Harbor and working in partnership with the Muskegon Sports Complex on potential facility improvements and expansion.



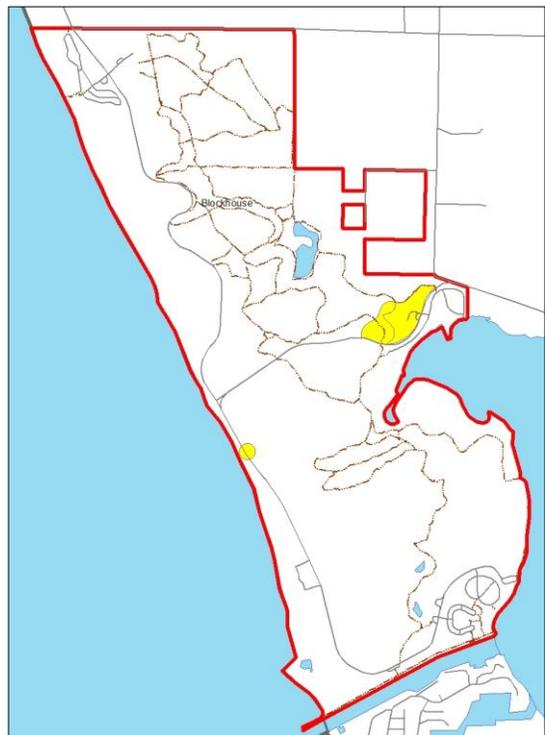
*Snug Harbor anglers.*

**Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Replacement of facilities at the Channel Campground with phased redevelopment of Snug Harbor could occur.

**4.2 Administrative Zone**

This zone is 1%, or approximately 17 acres, of total land and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the state park. Some of the park’s administrative services are located within the state regulated critical dune area. Any earthmoving, vegetation removal, and construction activities require a permit by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).



**Natural Resources**

Natural resources are actively managed and modified to support administrative and support activities. Vegetative management is allowed (primarily tree removal for safety). Land within the critical dune area shall remain as undisturbed as possible.

**Historic / Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Recreation opportunities are not provided within this zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

Person to person contact at the park office for general information occurs in this zone. Additionally, an informational kiosk may be available.

### **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**

Management focuses on the business of running the park, appropriate facilities for staff, employee safety and the like. The park will focus on improving storage capabilities, evaluating customer service and staff facilities for any needed updates, and exploring underground utility improvements in partnership with Laketon Township.

### **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone as needed to maintain the park. Land in this zone within the critical dune must obtain permitting from the DEQ for any future construction or grading.



*Currently the park employs 4 full time staff and 5 seasonal rangers.*

### 4.3 Natural Resource Recreation Zone



Approximately 12%, or 146 acres, of Muskegon State Park is zoned Natural Resource Recreation. This zone provides for active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. The Natural Resource Recreation includes much of the Muskegon Sports Complex and cross-country ski trails. While the zone designation emphasizes resource protection, a low level of landscape modification is permitted to allow for moderate interaction and recreation.

#### Natural Resources

Natural resources support visitor activities with moderate impacts. While this zone typically reflects natural processes, 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.

#### Recreation 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 and indoor activities, including hiking and other program offerings of the Muskegon Sports Complex.

#### Education Opportunities

Improved trail signage and maps may be implemented to protect and educate visitors. Interpretive signage may be appropriate at trailheads, on the trails, or at overlooks.

#### Visitor Experience

Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in a natural setting 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.



*Hiking trails.*

#### Management Focus

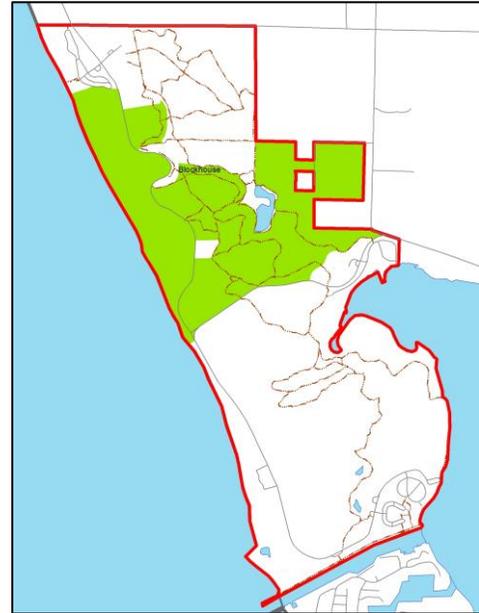
Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and improved visitor accessibility are management priorities.

### **Development**

A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. This zone allows site hardening as necessary to facilitate activities (such as ADA compliance) and to protect natural resources.

## **4.4 Backcountry Zone**

The Backcountry Zone has been applied to 29%, or 362 acres of the park. This zone emphasizes resource quality over recreation. The character of this zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact through recreation use. Moderate levels of active recreation uses that are consistent with the natural character of the zone are allowed. This zone can be found on the north side of the Memorial Drive to the Muskegon Sports Complex, and from the park's eastern boundary to Lake Michigan. Numerous hiking trails, including those connecting visitors to Lost Lake and the Blockhouse, are located in this zone. Much of the area is designated critical dune.



### **Natural Resources**

Native Michigan natural communities and ecosystem components and processes will generally be maintained, restored or protected. Natural resources may be modified slightly to support visitor use.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no known historic resources in this zone. Generally, cultural resources will be preserved and protected.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Moderate levels of non-motorized recreation compatible with the natural character of this zone are permitted. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor recreation activities in diverse natural land and water settings. Trails designated for uses other than foot traffic may not be appropriate within the Backcountry Zone at Muskegon State Park due to critical dune designation and fragile environmental conditions.

### **Education Opportunities**

This zone provides good opportunities for education of the natural and cultural resources. Interpretation may be at trailheads, on the trail, or at overlooks.

### **Visitor Experience**

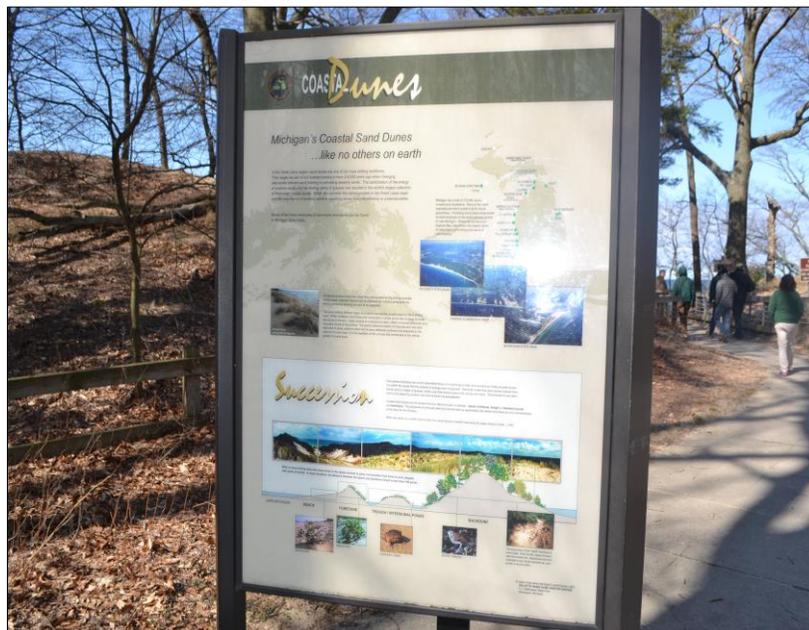
A moderate level of visitor encounters can be expected in this zone. A high time commitment and moderate levels of challenge and adventure can be expected.

### **Management Focus**

Management of this zone includes maintaining its low-impact character, with an emphasis on natural resource quality.

### **Development**

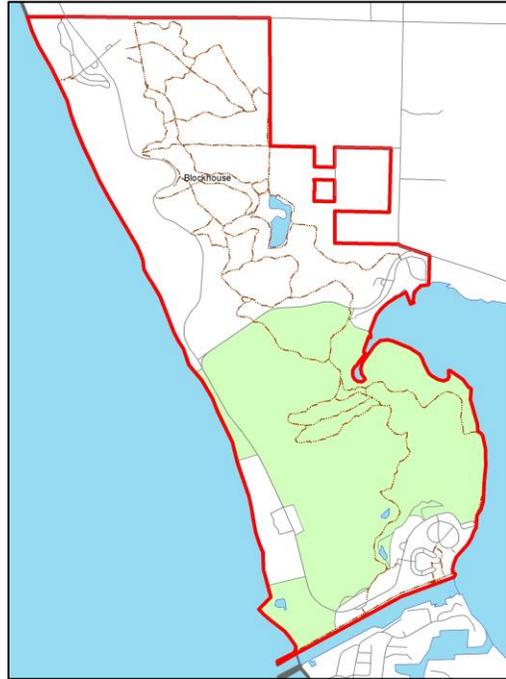
A low level of development to support access and sightseeing is permitted. Development will blend with the natural environment and may include limited site hardening to protect sensitive resources.



*Interpretive signage demonstrating the significance of the coastal dunes.*

## **4.5 Primitive Zone**

Approximately 39%, or 479 acres, of Muskegon State Park is designated as Primitive. This includes most of the park south of Memorial Drive to the Channel, and from Muskegon Lake to Lake Michigan. This zone reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources. It is managed to allow any low impact recreation. A large portion of the park’s hiking trails is located in the Primitive Zone. Much of the area is designated as critical dune.



### **Natural Resources**

Within the Primitive Zone, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodations. Native Michigan natural communities and ecosystem components and processes will generally be maintained, restored or protected.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no historic buildings within this zone. Any cultural resources will be preserved and protected.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Dispersed, low level, self-reliant recreation activities (foot traffic only) are allowed in the Primitive Zone. Appropriate outdoor activities include hiking and wildlife observation.

### **Education Opportunities**

The ecological significance of the resources in the park presents an excellent educational opportunity (primarily outside of the Primitive Zone). The use of electronic communication mediums (using podcasts, “apps”, or another virtual program) may further inform visitors on the natural features.



*Over 12 miles of hiking trails throughout the park.*

### **Visitor Experience**

Visitors may be engaged in high solitude, off trail or trailed, self-reliant outdoor activities. A high time commitment, challenge and adventure; low noise tolerance and interaction with DNR staff; and, low visitor encounters can be accommodated.

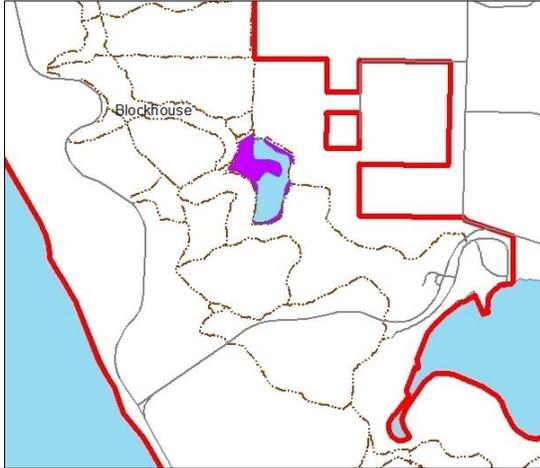
### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with an emphasis on natural resource quality. This includes working with community partners to install trail markers.

## **Development**

A very low level of development is allowed to support visitor access to outdoor activities and educational opportunities in the Primitive Zone. Site hardening is only allowed to protect sensitive resources and there should be little evidence of human activity.

## **4.6 Ecologically Sensitive Zone**



Approximately 1%, or 15 acres, of Muskegon State Park is designated as Ecologically Sensitive Zone. This designation protects and preserves the native communities and natural processes of this area. This zone encompasses Lost Lake, a coastal plain marsh which is rarely found in this area of the country. Visitor use is highly restricted, as protection of the natural habitat comes before all other uses.

### **Natural Resources**

Management within the zone will focus on maintaining the quality of the habitat by preventing potential disturbances caused by humans. Exotic species will be contained or removed. Natural community components and processes will be maintained, restored, and protected.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

There are no known historic resources within this zone.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Recreation activities are restricted in this area. Foot-trails will be kept to the existing trail system outside of the zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage may be provided off-site. Researchers and scientists may be permitted for hands-on studies of the area.

### **Visitor Experience**

Visitor use within the zone is restricted, but may be allowed for ecological research and monitoring. Visitors may observe the scenic views from the trails outside of the zone.



*Lost Lake in the winter.*

### **Management Focus**

Management will focus on protecting the resource.

### **Development**

Development is strictly prohibited, with the exception as an intervention for resource protection. Very little evidence of human activity must be maintained.

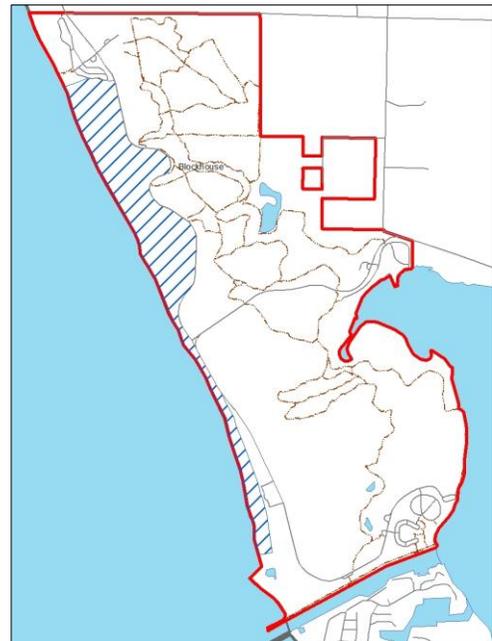
## **4.7 Scenic Overlay**

Approximately 11%, or 135 acres, of Muskegon State Park is designated as Scenic Overlay. This designation protects and preserves the scenic viewscapes offered at the park. The Scenic Overlay extends along the Lake Michigan shoreline from the Lake Michigan Campground through the day-use beach. The Scenic Overlay provides visitors with picturesque views of Lake Michigan, and the serene environment of the shoreline

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

### **Natural Resources**

Management within the overlay will focus on maintaining the quality of the viewscapes on which the zone is based. Natural resources may be modified, to the level permitted by the underlying zone, to support both visitor use and viewing.



### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

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

### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage may be provided at key viewing locations trailheads or passing areas. This designation presents an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about the dunes, including their environmental importance and sensitivity, and Lake Michigan.

### **Visitor Experience**

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



*The sand dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline.*

#### **Management Focus**

Management will focus on protecting, preserving, and enhancing the scenic views.

#### **Development**

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

### **4.8 Cultural Landscape Overlay**

A Cultural Landscape Overlay is designated in the area of the Blockhouse. The central focus of the Cultural Landscape Overlay is managing the area to preserve its historical and cultural features. This iconic structure is a unique, one-of-a-kind element within the state park system.

Activities, management, and development within this overlay shall be sensitive to the cultural resources and provide opportunities for visitor understanding and education. Management shall focus on maintaining the integrity of the cultural resources while allowing development and activities appropriate to the underlying zone that do not conflict with the cultural landscape.

Refer to the underlying management zone (Developed Recreation) for the level of development, visitor experience etc.

#### **Natural Resources**

Vegetation management will be in accordance with the underlying zone and may be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone. This includes addressing erosion.

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

Cultural resources within this zone will be preserved or rehabilitated for compatible uses by the DNR or its partners.

#### **Recreation Opportunities**

Visitors may be engaged in recreation activities appropriate to the zone and compatible with and sensitive to the setting. Development of a trail head at the Blockhouse is proposed.

### **Education Opportunities**

Education and interpretation should be explored as a priority in this zone. Developing and implementing an educational and enforcement plan to educate visitors and protect the structure from future vandalism is a high priority.

### **Visitor Experience**

Visitors are engaged in recreational and educational activities in a cultural setting. The level of noise tolerance, interaction with DNR staff or other visitors will be compatible with the underlying zone.

### **Management Focus**

The management focus is to maintain the cultural character of the zone and to ensure the Blockhouse is properly maintained and protected.

### **Development**

Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape may be appropriate. This could include amenities or access improvements to accommodate visitors. The level of development will be in accordance with the underlying zone.



*The Blockhouse.*

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## 5. 10-Year Action Goals

The Action Goals proposed for Muskegon State Park were developed by the Planning Team in response to stakeholder and public input and in context with the core values and guiding resources discussed in Chapter 1 of this plan.

One of the priorities identified in this plan is to continue to balance natural preservation at the park with the visitor experience. This includes working toward improvements while protecting the rustic nature of the park, including critical dunes and sensitive natural communities that are valued by park-goers. Proposed improvements include the redevelopment of Snug Harbor for enhanced fishing access and day-use, and the repurposing of the Beach House, with community input to determine the most appropriate uses. Another priority is to work in partnership with the Muskegon Sports Complex to expand into a year-round facility, recognizing that the park has the ability to draw more tourism and the associated economic benefits to the Muskegon area. The importance of partnerships and the economic impact of recreation are supported by the recommendations of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Blue Ribbon Panel Report to Governor Snyder. Muskegon State Park is located in Economic Prosperity Region 4.

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 the eight designated management zones, in order to achieve the desired user experience. For each management zone in the plan, action goals are recommended that address one or more of the following categories:

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

Management Plans do not guarantee future PRD funding to 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.

## General Action Goals

Many of the 10-Year Action Goals for **Muskegon State Park** are general in nature and apply within all of the management zones. These often deal with park-wide issues, such as invasive species control, universal access, trail systems, 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
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Continue to implement land and water based invasive species control.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Fisheries	Park Manager
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	Park Manager Stewardship	Stewardship
Create Natural Resources Stewardship Plan that identifies conservation targets or priorities for resource management and stewardship.	5 years	Park Manager Stewardship	Stewardship Ecologist
<b>Historic/Cultural Resources</b>			
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources.	Ongoing	Stewardship State Archaeologist Regional Planner Cultural Resource Analyst	Regional Planner Cultural Resource Analyst
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Assess possible non-motorized connections between the community, the park, and park elements.	Ongoing	Regional Planner Park Manager Trails Specialist Community Partners	Regional Planner
Work with partners to ensure sustainable management and maintenance of trails within the park.	Ongoing	Park Manager Recreation Partners Community Partners	Recreation Partners
Work in partnership with the Muskegon Sports Complex on facility improvements in line with Sports Complex's Master Plan.	Ongoing	Park Manager District Supervisor Regional Planner Muskegon Sports Complex	Park Manager
Assess the need for additional trail uses on existing network (outside the Primitive Zone) based on regional offerings.	1 year	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship District Supervisor Recreation Partners	Regional Planner Park Manager
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Update and expand education and interpretive opportunities using a variety of traditional and new media relating to the park's history and natural resources.	3 - 5 years	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach Stewardship Community Partners	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach

## General Action Goals (continued)

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Continue growth of partnership with the Muskegon Sports Complex.	Ongoing	Park Manager Muskegon Sports Complex	Park Manager
Continue partnership with County Road Commission in planned maintenance scheduling.	Ongoing	District Supervisor Regional Planner Park Manager Road Commission	Regional Planner Park Manager
Encourage growth and expansion of the Friends of Muskegon State Park group.	Ongoing	Park Manager Friends of MSP	Park Manager Friends of MSP
Continue partnership with local community organizations in marketing and promotion of the park.	Ongoing	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach Community Partners	Marketing & Outreach
Work with partners to provide amenities and information to support the Lake Michigan Water Trail.	Ongoing	Park Manager Trails Specialist Recreation Partner	Park Manager Trails Specialist
Evaluate and improve signage/wayfinding of trails and facilities throughout the park.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Recreation Partners	Park Manager
Consider and support both land and water transportation services to and from the park and other area destinations.	Ongoing	Park Manager Community Partners Service Providers	Park Manager
Continue to review and update capital outlay list as needed.	Ongoing	District Supervisor Regional Planner Park Manager	Park Manager Regional Planner
Continue efforts to maintain and improve visitor accessibility in all development opportunities.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Review and share public information available on park's accessibility.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach Regional Planner	Marketing & Outreach
Continue to assess the need for improved and sustainable utility infrastructure, taking into account regional initiatives.	1 - 3 years	Regional Planner Park Manager District Supervisor	Regional Planner
Review parking opportunities and conflicts along Scenic Drive.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Road Commission	Park Manager
Review and update the mapping of all park trails for accuracy.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist	Park Manager
Advocate for waterway marking out of Snug Harbor into Muskegon Lake for improved navigation.	3 - 5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Continue to review the potential to offer archery hunting opportunities in the park should the need arise to control deer population.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Wildlife	Park Manager

## Developed Recreation Zone

**The Developed Recreation Zone is characterized by active recreation with a high density of use, conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced where possible. The Channel Campground and Lake Michigan Campground are located within the Developed Recreation Zone.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Provide more opportunity for activities within underutilized locations (bluegrass, musical events).	Ongoing	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Evaluate redevelopment of the Snug Harbor Area to provide improved visitor experiences, including but not limited to: accessibility, reestablishment of beach, day use and event amenities.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Regional Planner
Develop a strategy, with community input, for repurposing the Beach House to enhance the visitors' experience.	TBD	Park Manager District Supervisor Regional Planner Community Partners	Park Manager Regional Planner
Evaluate existing fishing pier walkway for improved access and connectivity within Snug Harbor area.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager District Supervisor Regional Planner Fisheries	Park Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Phase implementation based on the outcomes of the Snug Harbor evaluation.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Install new playscape near Channel Campground and consider low-cost play opportunities at other locations.	3 - 5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Friends of MSP	Park Manager
Replace the bathrooms at Channel Campground.	5 - 10 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Determine funding and implement the beach house improvements based on the strategy.	TBD	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner

## Natural Resource Recreation Zone

This Natural Resource Recreation Zone provides for active recreation with medium to a high density of use conducted in natural areas. The Natural Resource Recreation includes much of the Muskegon Sports Complex and cross-country ski trails. While the zone designation emphasizes resource protection, a low level of landscape modification is permitted to allow for moderate interaction and recreation.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>NOTE: Please refer to the General Action Goals</b>			

### Backcountry Zone

This zone emphasizes resource quality but allows for limited modification of the landscape to accommodate a moderate level of non-motorized recreational use.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Designate and enhance the foot-trail from the Blockhouse to the beach.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager

### Primitive Zone

The Primitive Zone 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 are allowed. For this reason, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation. The following 10-Year Action Goals propose only very low levels of development, in order to protect the important habitat.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Install signage to inform visitors of characteristics of this zone, including resource management and protection.	1-3 year	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager

### Administrative Zone

This zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the state park.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Evaluate customer service and staff facilities for accessibility and efficiency.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Improve storage capabilities.	5 - 10 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager

### Ecologically Sensitive Zone

This zone has been applied to the Lost Lake area in recognition of the unique, rare, and sensitive natural communities found in this location. The purpose of this zone is enhancement and protection of the native community and natural process. This zone restricts public use and development to protect the natural community.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Ensure conservation and protection of the natural community through restricted use.	Ongoing	Stewardship	Stewardship Ecologist
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Continue public education regarding the ecological sensitivity and uniqueness of Lost Lake.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach

### Scenic Overlay Zone

In recognition of its scenic beauty, this overlay has been applied to much of the Lake Michigan shoreline west of Memorial Drive. Any development should be sensitive to the scenic qualities of this zone and adhere to Critical Dunes classification.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Continue to recognize and promote the compelling natural and scenic viewshed along the Lake Michigan Shoreline.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Marketing & Outreach Community Partners	Park Manager

## Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone

In recognition of it's cultural significance, this overlay has been applied to the Blockhouse.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Evaluate and address erosion at the Blockhouse.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Friends of MSP	Park Manager
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Develop and implement an education and enforcement plan for protecting the Blockhouse to prevent future damage and/or vandalism.	1 - 3 years	Park Manager Stewardship Community Partners	Park Manager
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Continue maintenance and security at Blockhouse.	Ongoing	Park Manager Community Partners	Park Manager