

# RIFLE RIVER RECREATION AREA PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## LONG RANGE ACTION GOALS

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



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation Division  
07/24/2020

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This plan was prepared by:  
Matt Lincoln, Park Management Plan Assistant  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Division

**Rifle River Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan Approvals:**

<u>Vicki McGhee</u> Chief, Planning & Infrastructure Section	<u>7-22-2020</u> Date
<u>Jacklin Blodgett</u> Chief, Field Operations Section	<u>7-24-20</u> Date
<u>Ronald Allison</u> Chief, Parks & Recreation Division	<u>7-24-2020</u> Date



**PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Reviewed and recommended for approval via e-mail by:

Tricia Weisend, Park Supervisor	11.25.2019
Scott Cook, Regional Field Planner	3.13.2020
Bill Doan, Roscommon District Supervisor	4.14.2020
Ray Fahlsing, Stewardship Unit Manager	3.16.2020
Debbie Jensen, Park Management Plan Administrator	1.03.2020

Reviewed and recommended for approval by:

Parks and Recreation Division Section Chiefs	09.09.2019
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**FOR INFORMATION:**

MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE	09.18.2019
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NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL	11.07.2019
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# 1) Introduction

Rifle River Recreation Area is located in northeast Michigan, just east of Rose City and south of Lupton, in Ogemaw County. Prior to acquisition, the property was managed as a game farm by Mr. Jewett and was known as the “Grousehaven Game Farm”. The state acquired 4,449 acres of the original 7,360 acres in 1944 for purposes of fish and wildlife management. The park was initially managed by the Wildlife Division. The transfer of management in 1963 to the Parks Division was in recognition of the variety of recreation opportunities provided. The recreation area includes 7 lakes, 3 ponds, and 7 miles of trout streams serving as the headwaters of the Rifle River. Over 4,100 acres are open to hunting. The surrounding land use is primarily undeveloped and very similar to that within the park, although residential development can be found east of the park boundary.

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

## 1.1 Planning Objectives

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

The Phase 1 GMP for Rifle River Recreation Area, approved in May 2007, presents a 20-year management zone plan and defines the purpose and significance of the park. The supporting analysis included in the Phase 1 GMP provides important background information on the recreation area such as park setting, area demographics, history, land ownership, legal mandates, and cultural, natural and recreation resources. This Phase 2 plan builds upon the previous planning step and identifies 10-year action goals to be accomplished in the park as a whole and in each of the management zones. These are implementation items for park staff and partners, addressing infrastructure and park management, and operations that impact the resource protection and visitor experience at the park. While the Phase 2 GMP addresses some specific natural resource goals, a separate Stewardship Plan will be developed to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource goals and management strategies.

## 1.2 Plan Process Overview

The Rifle River Recreation Area planning team met periodically over a ten-month period, beginning in Summer 2018. For this Phase 2 plan, the first step was to review the Phase 1 GMP to assure that no conditions have changed that would result in the need to amend the overall guiding document. The planning team completed the required 5-year review of the Phase 1 GMP and determined that no changes were needed.

Stakeholder and public input was sought throughout the planning process to ensure the DNR is responsive to its partners and visitors. Stakeholders were invited to provide input early in the planning process through a workshop designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at Rifle River Recreation Area. An on-site survey conducted by Michigan State University (MSU) in the summer and fall of 2017 also provided user insight to the park. The planning team used this information to guide the development of the draft Phase 2 plan. The public was invited to comment at a public input meeting to review the draft plan. The draft plan was also available on-line and comments were accepted via Email. The planning team reviewed all of the comments received before recommending the final plan for adoption.

### **1.3 Planning Team**

This Phase 2 General Management Plan was developed with valuable input and expertise of the planning team.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DIVISION</b>
Tricia Weisend	Unit Supervisor	Parks and Recreation Division
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator	Parks and Recreation Division
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager/Plan Administrator	Parks and Recreation Division
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Unit Manager	Parks and Recreation Division
Bill Doan	District Supervisor	Parks and Recreation Division
Scott Cook	Regional Field Planner	Parks and Recreation Division
Amy Swainston	Trails Specialist	Parks and Recreation Division
James Hines	Lead Ranger	Parks and Recreation Division
Lisa Gamero	Cultural Resource Analyst	Parks and Recreation Division
Kathrin Schrouder	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries Division
Brad Bellville	Conservation Officer	Law Enforcement Division
Dale Ekdom	Forester	Forest Resources Division
Mark Boersen	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Division
Peter Rose	Geologist	Minerals Management
Jon Spieles	Interpretive Manager	Marketing and Outreach Division

### **1.4 On-site Survey, Stakeholder and Public Input Overview**

An on-site survey was conducted by Michigan State University (MSU) between June and November 2017. This survey provided representative sampling of park visitors to ascertain visitor demographics, park experience and suggested changes/things not to change. Of the questionnaires distributed to a sample of those visitors who arrived by vehicle, 73 were completed and returned by day-use respondents and 113 were returned by campers. The data analysis showed that the average amount of time a day visitor vehicle was in the park was 9.5 hours and the day visitor party averaged 2.8 people per vehicle, however

many of these visitors were also campers. For camping respondents, the average was 2.6 people per vehicle.

Of those surveyed, 11 percent of day use visitors and 13 percent of campers reported one or more persons in their party with a physical impairment that impacted work or recreation activities.

The most common activities for campers were camping, hiking, swimming, nature observation and bicycling in order of participation. Day use visitor participation was similar, with camping, hiking, swimming, paddling and nature observation listed in order of participation. Visitors were generally very satisfied with their visit, giving the park a favorable level of satisfaction score of 8.4 out of 9, with 9 being highly satisfied. Most respondents want the campgrounds to remain the same and to keep the “no motors” rule on the lakes while maintaining the same level of access to these lakes. When asked about changes to the park, respondents identified campground improvements related to generator regulation, improving playground opportunities and improving navigation on the Rifle River. The full On-site Use and User Study Report is provided in Appendix C.

A Stakeholder Workshop was held on October 16, 2018 at the Rose Township Hall, Lupton, Michigan. A total of 42 invitations were sent to organizations associated with, or that have an interest in, Rifle River Recreation Area. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the park. A total of 9 participants represented organizations from around the region. A summary of the input received is provided below: a full report of the meeting is provided in Appendix B.

Strengths identified by stakeholder representatives in attendance included the headwaters of the Rifle River for protection and education, and a large undeveloped tract of land for protection. Stakeholders also identified year-round family friendly recreation opportunities at the park, clean and cared for restroom facilities, community economic support, natural resource programs and open water.

Weaknesses of the park identified by stakeholders in attendance include: lack of water hook-ups in the campgrounds, budget, public communication, reservation system, generator noise in the campground, lack of electricity in the rustic campground, debris in the river and invasive species.

Opportunities identified include establishing a friends group which could help to spearhead volunteer programs at the park with local partner organizations. Other suggestions were to improve communication with local school districts for expansion of education opportunities, invasive species education, establish generator regulation to reduce noise in the campgrounds, improve river clean-up partnerships, and promote all recreation opportunities available at the park including for all four seasons.

Threats identified by stakeholders included invasive species, budget, surrounding land use, natural disasters and special interests.

A public input meeting was held on May 7, 2019 at the Rose Township Hall in Lupton, Michigan to review the draft plan. A press release was distributed to 13,623 recipients, as well as 41 stakeholders one month

in advance of the meeting. Attendees included neighbors and members of the general public. Comments received included generator noise reduction, natural resource protection and management, and interpretation. A full report of the meeting is provided in Appendix B.

## 2) Overview of Phase 1 Plan

The Phase 1 GMP for Rifle River Recreation Area was approved on May 2, 2007. The following information summarizes the significance statements and management zones for the park, which were defined in the Phase 1 GMP.

### 2.1 Significance Statements

Rifle River Recreation Area was determined to be significant for the following reasons. These statements contain minor corrections made by the Phase 2 planning team without changing the original meaning or intent.

- This tract of land is largely intact and devoid of manmade intrusions except for a meandering park road system that was part of the original Grousehaven development, and the campground and day-use improvements to serve users. The “feel” is that of a UP wilderness area, with excellent hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Rifle River Recreation Area contains 4,449 acres with 7 lakes, 3 ponds, and 7 miles of trout streams. 4,100 acres of the RA are open to hunting. Sustaining a viable fishery and wildlife population is important to park visitors along with maintaining the park’s scenic beauty.
- The headwaters of the Rifle River, a high-quality trout stream, are found in the recreation area. This river is protected under the Natural Rivers Act.
- This recreation area contains two ecologically sensitive northern fens and an extensive high-quality floodplain forest. It provides suitable habitat to host a variety of rare species of plant and animal life.
- Rifle River Recreation Area provides year-round recreational opportunities within its scenic interior. Camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, biking, paddling, hunting, fishing and sightseeing are the most popular activities enjoyed by visitors.



Kayaking is popular on the park's lakes, which prohibit motors

- Rifle River Recreation Area contains cultural resources in the form of foundation remnants of early homesteads, and remnants of the Jewett family impact on the land, including a fish rearing raceway.
- Rifle River Recreation Area offers excellent opportunities for research, education and interpretation in the areas of:
  - The unique ecological northern fen systems.
  - Wildlife, forest, and fisheries management.
  - Cultural aspects of the Grousehaven Game Farm and the early homesteaders of the area.
  - Rare plant and animal species.



School group visits the park

## 2.2 Management Zones

Considering the identity and significance of Rifle River Recreation Area, management zones have been assigned to each area of the park. From a palette of nine zones, six base zones and three overlay zones were applied to Rifle River Recreation Area. A condensed review of the management zones follows. A thorough description of each Management Zone can be found in the Phase 1 GMP.

- Primitive Zone – located in the northwest corner of the park, this zone is characterized by wetland conditions of cedar swamp. It represents 670 acres of the park. The zone reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural environment with only dispersed, low impact recreational uses allowed.
- Backcountry Zone – is comprised of 1,400 acres of park land characterized principally by lowland hardwood vegetation and proximity to the Rifle River and contributing tributaries. In this zone, use will be limited to activities such as hiking, biking on trails, and dispersed recreation for hunting, mushrooming, birding, and other low impact uses. The character of this zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact through recreational use.
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone – is 2,255 acres of park land that forms the middle half of the park. This land is characterized by rolling wooded terrain and the cluster of seven small lakes. In this zone, more active recreation takes place with rustic camping, trail use, hunting, and boating and fishing on the lakes. Natural resources may be managed to support visitor activities but will be protected to the degree possible and appear natural.

- Developed Recreation Zone – this 45-acre zone is located at the north end of the park. It incorporates the modern campgrounds, day-use area and boat launch, all consolidated on Grousehaven Lake. The zone supports active recreation with a high density of use. Natural resources may be managed and modified to support visitor activities.
- Visitor Services Zone – is located at the entrance to the park and takes in the headquarters, shop, campground office, and storage area. It totals just over 20 acres of land.
- Ecologically Sensitive Overlay Zone – exists as a sub-set of both the Backcountry Zone and the Primitive Zone. Totalling ten (10) acres, this designation protects two ecologically sensitive northern fens, Pintail Pond and Lost Lake. Except for an existing interpretive boardwalk trail at Pintail Pond, public entry into these zone locations will be restricted to protect the resource. In addition, a seasonal overlay exists at the east end of Devoe Lake to protect bald eagles, red-shoulder hawks, common loons, and swan habitats during active nesting (February 1 to July 15).
- Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone – This overlay consists of 46 acres. It is established to recognize the historic impact of the “Grousehaven Game Farm” on the land. The locations identified highlight remnants from the farm and the homesteads from that time period.
- Scenic Overlay Zone – no acreage is designated for this zone. It is defined by the lakes and rivers within the park, the road system that meanders through diverse habitat and terrain, and the Grousehaven Lodge Observation Tower, which offers stunning views of the entire recreation area.
- Natural River Overlay Zone – this ‘non-standard’ overlay zone consists of 377 acres and has been established to focus on the specific management requirements of the “Rifle River Natural River Plan” (see Appendix). In general, the river corridor (400’ wide) and the designated tributary corridors (200’ wide) will be managed in a natural condition, with specific limitations on man-made intrusions and specific goals of maintaining natural vegetative cover and water quality.

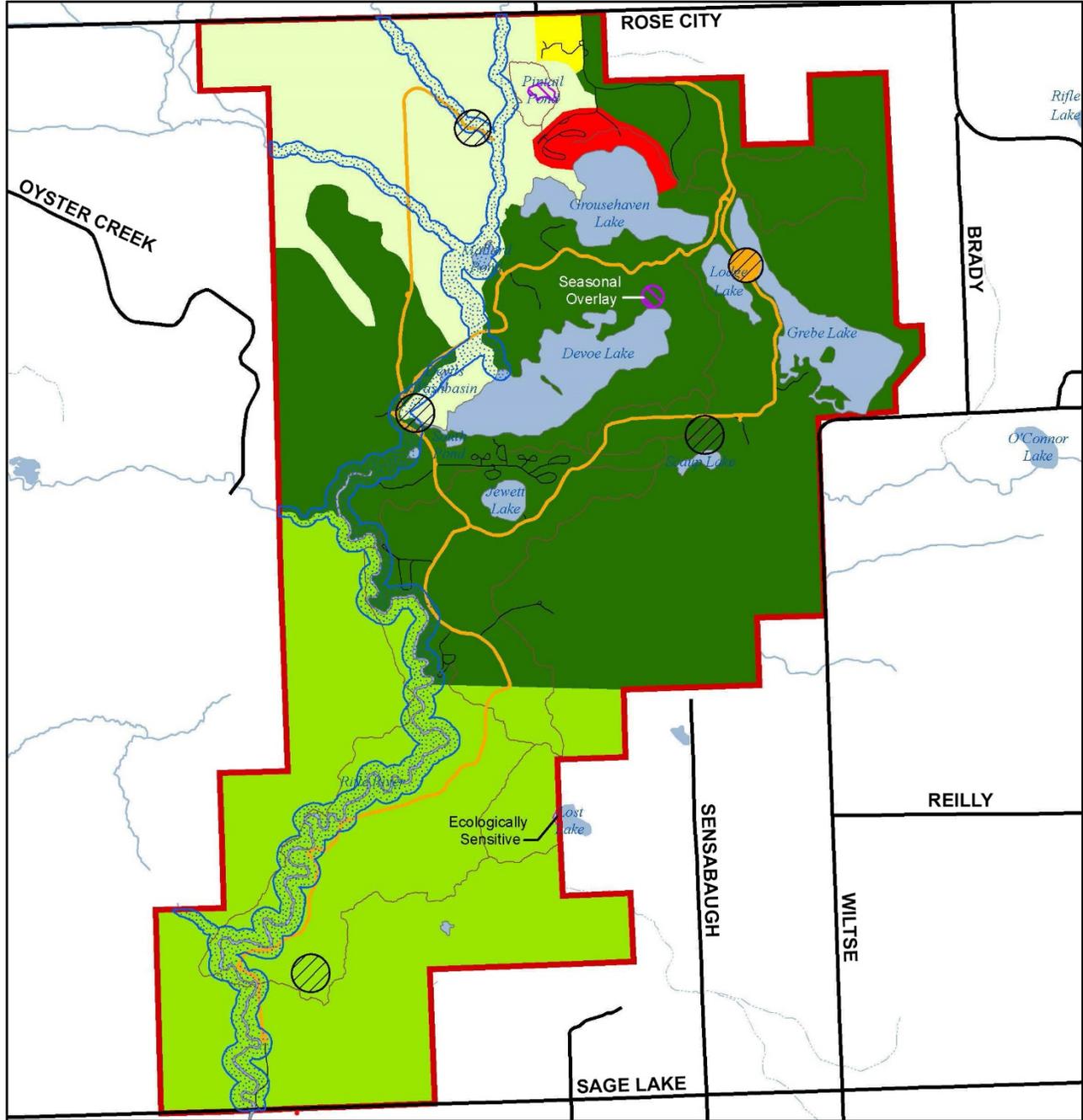
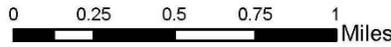


Rifle River in winter

**Legend**

- Park Boundary
- Trails
- Overlay Management Zones**
- Cultural Landscape
- Natural River
- Scenic
- Ecologically Sensitive
- Base Management Zones**
- Backcountry
- Developed Recreation
- Natural Resource Recreation
- Primitive
- Visitor Services

# Rifle River Recreation Area Management Zone Plan



## **2.3 Changes Since Phase 1 Plan**

### Management

The Recreation Passport was established in 2010 which replaced a registration tag for park entry.

The staff at Rifle River Recreation Area are responsible for four state forest campgrounds and ten boating access sites.

### Visitor Use

Camping nights have steadily increased since 2014 from 11,371 to 13,737 in 2017.

### Developments

The following projects have been completed since the Phase 1 General Management Plan was approved:

- 3D archery range
- 4 barrier free campsites at Grousehaven Lake modern campground
- Barrier free hunting blind
- Barrier free kayak launch and fishing pier
- Weather warning system

### Infrastructure Improvements

The following infrastructure improvements have been completed since the Phase 1 General Management Plan was approved:

- Remodeled Pines cabin - 2014
- Re-roofed headquarters building - 2014
- New water heater installed at Grousehaven bathroom building – 2016
- Milled asphalt in rustic campgrounds and graded roads to gravel in 2016
- Re-roofed cold storage building in 2017
- Remodeled interior of day use shelter in 2018
- New flooring and windows in contact station – 2016
- Remodeled Birch and DeVoe cabins - 2019

### Project Boundary

A project boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR has an interest in acquiring property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing seller/ willing buyer basis. The project team reviewed the existing 2004 Natural Resources Commission (NRC) approved project boundary for Rifle River Recreation Area and compared it to current plat maps, aerial photos and department initiatives to recommend changes to the project boundary as shown on the following map. The land proposed to be removed from the 2004 project boundary located to the east of the park has several different landowners and developed structures which would make any acquisition difficult to manage. The land proposed to be removed from the 2004 project boundary located to the west of the park is actively being farmed and does not possess significant natural resources. The project team noted that the park boundary should be expanded primarily to protect the Rifle River watershed encompassing tributaries of the Rifle River.

# Rifle River Recreation Area Proposed Project Boundary

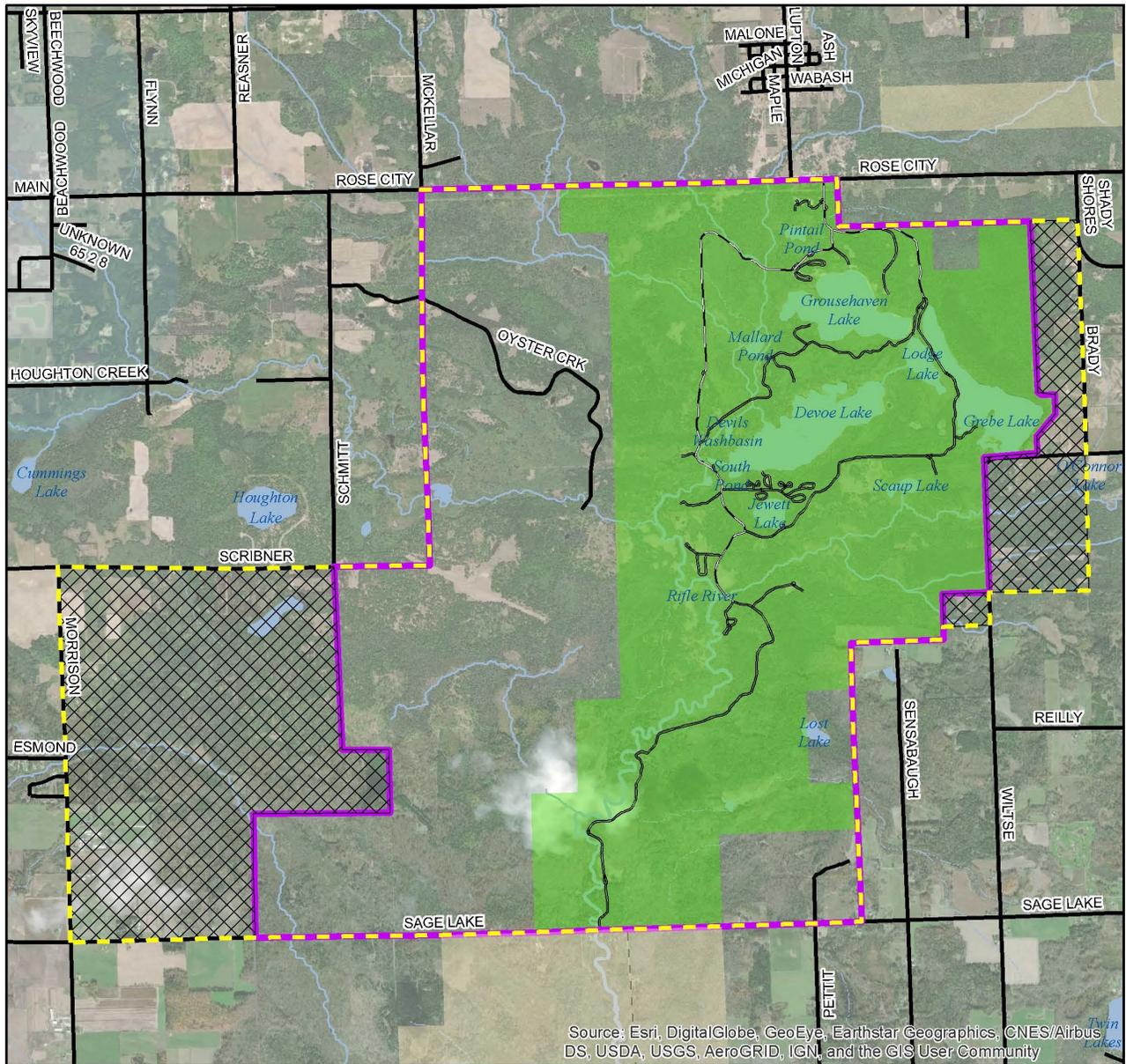
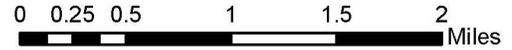


## Legend

- Rifle River Recreation Area Ownership
- Rifle River RA 2004 NRC Project Boundary\*
- Land proposed to be removed from NRC Boundary
- Rifle River RA 2019 Proposed Project Boundary
- Forest Resources 2004 NRC Project Boundary
- Lakes and Rivers All



\*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.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

## 2.4 Supporting Documentation Updates

The following is the list of rare species and important natural communities found at the park according to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

### Animals:

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>State Status</b>
Slippershell	<i>Alasmodonta viridis</i>	Threatened
Red-shouldered hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	Threatened
Blanding's turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Special Concern
Common loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Threatened
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Special Concern
Rainbow Iris	<i>Villosa iris</i>	Special Concern

### Natural Communities:

Northern Fen (*Alkaline Shrub/herb Fen, Upper Midwest Type*)

### Annual Visitation

In 2018, camp nights at Rifle River Recreation Area totaled 13,862. Lodge nights totaled 787 and there were 9 shelter bookings. Day use visitation in 2018 totaled 66,695. These numbers are steady when compared to numbers from previous years.

### Legal Mandates

Legal mandates that impact Rifle River Recreation Area have been updated and are included in Appendix A of this plan for reference.

### Metal Detecting

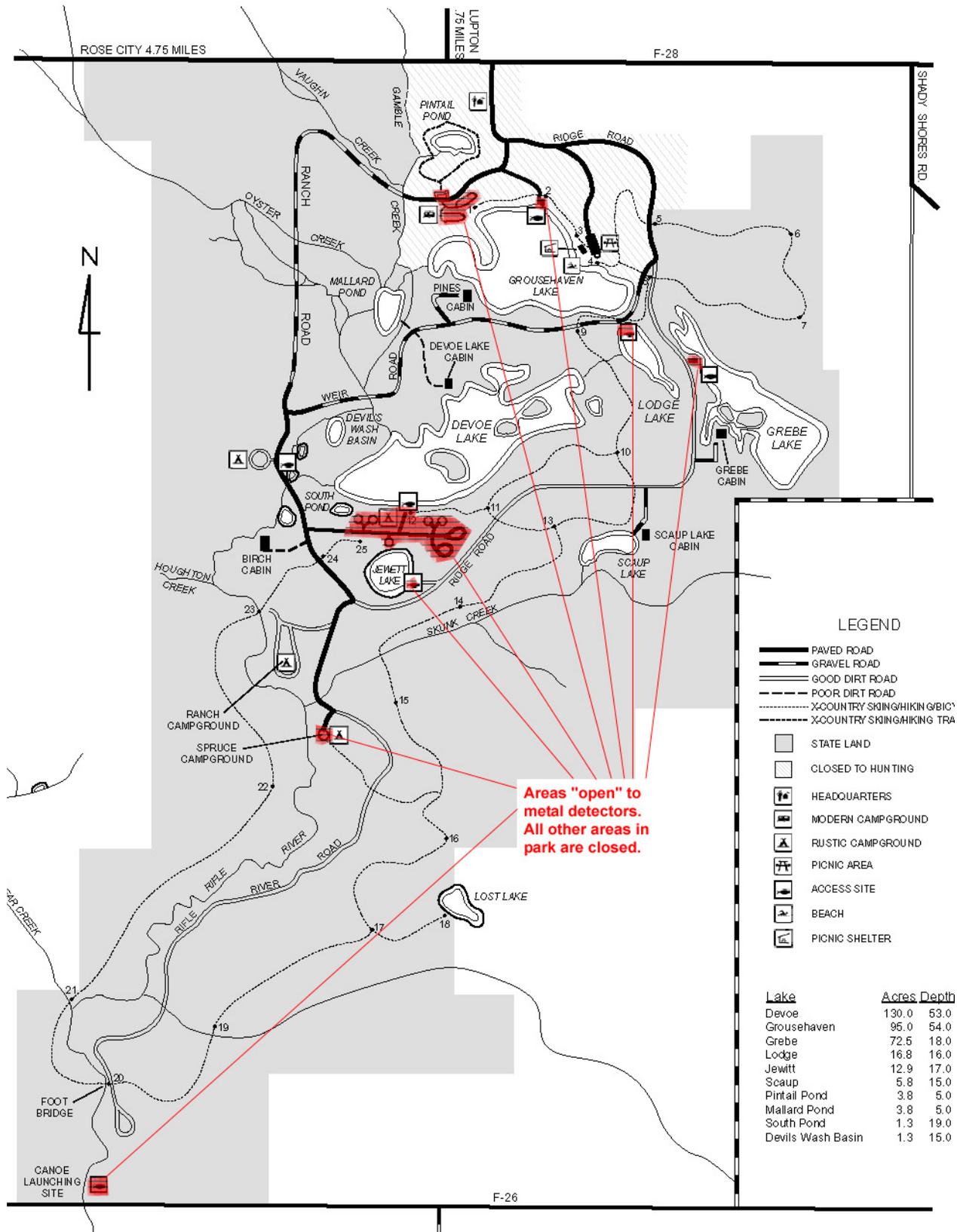
A metal detecting map has been included in this document depicting the areas open to metal detecting.

### Mineral Ownership

The DNR owns all mineral rights in the park.

### Funding Sources

An updated funding source map has been produced, depicting the funding sources used to purchase property for the park. A description of these funding sources can be found in the Phase 1 Plan.



Rifle River Recreation Area land open to metal detecting

**Legend**

-  Rifle River RA Boundary
-  Trails
-  County Paved Roads
-  Paved Roads

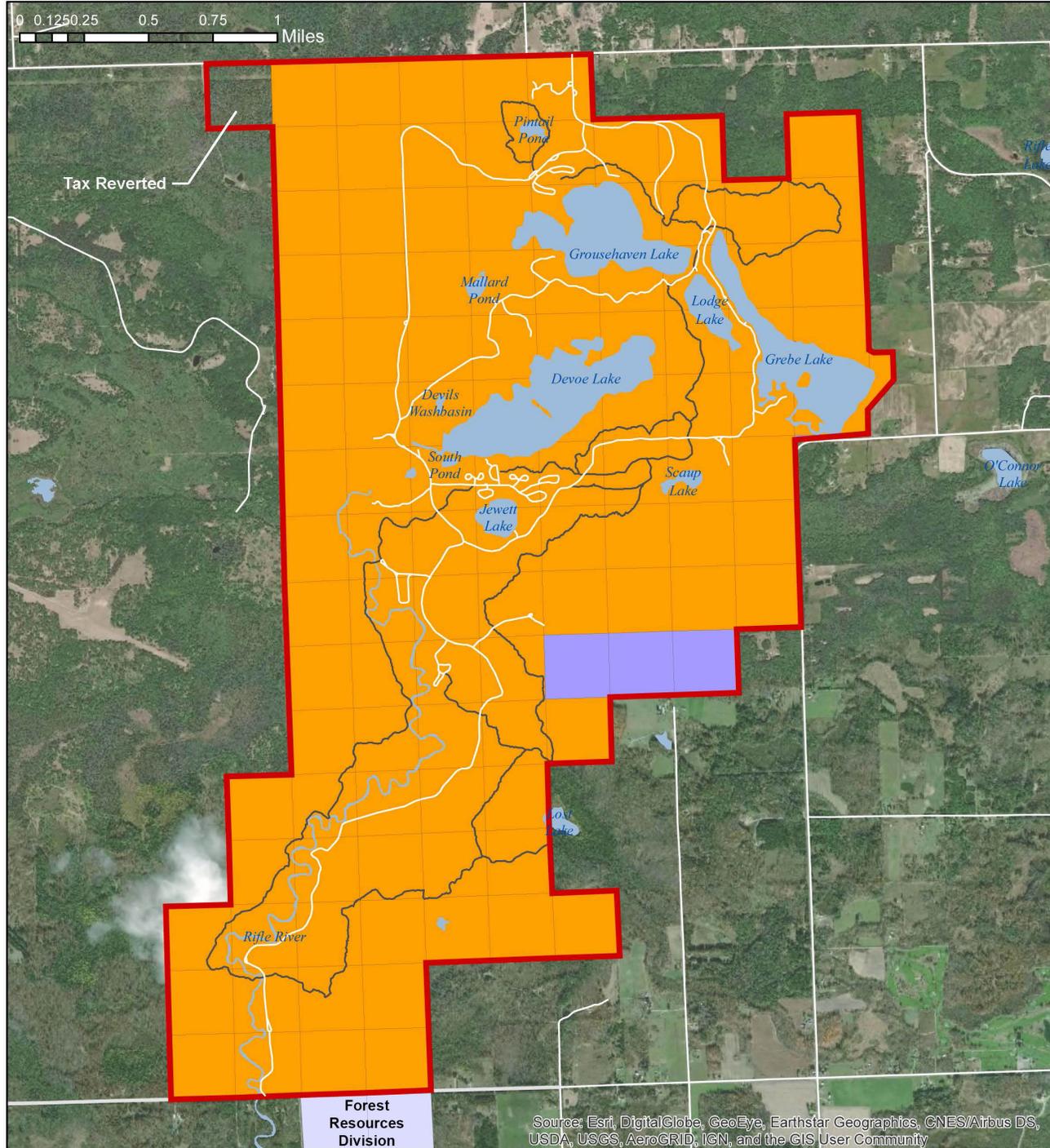
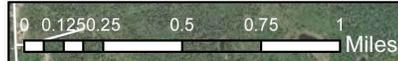
**Funding Source DNR Parcels**

-  Other Funds

**fundesc**

-  Special Legislation
-  State Game Fund

# Rifle River Recreation Area Funding Sources



### 3) 10–Year Action Goals

The action goals proposed for Rifle River Recreation Area were developed by the planning team in response to stakeholder and public input and in context with the core values and guiding resources discussed in the Phase 1 plan. The action goals for Rifle River Recreation Area generally focus on upgrading existing infrastructure such as roads, bridges and drainage while maintaining a focus on protecting natural resource-based recreation experiences. Additional education and outreach is also proposed. Priorities identified in this plan include strengthening relationships with internal and external partners, managing fallen timber and dead trees within the river corridor, improving roads and bridges and improving camping experiences. Working cooperatively with surrounding communities and other regional partners is also a priority, supported by the recommendations of all of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan.

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

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

A separate Natural Resource Stewardship Plan will be developed that will identify conservation targets, goals and threats to those conservation targets for the park. This plan will also identify and define strategies to reach the goals for Rifle River Recreation Area. For this park, resource management includes managing a portion of the park for even-aged aspen for wildlife.

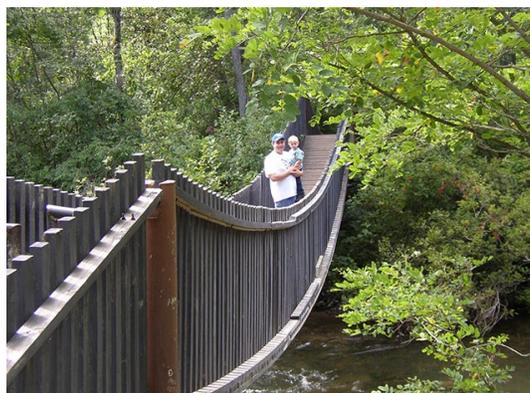
Management plans are based on known needs, funding realities and sound investment policies, but do not guarantee future PRD funding to achieve the actions identified. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired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

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

<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; OPERATIONS</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Implement invasive species control, with a strong emphasis on early detection and rapid response. Monitor roads, trails, and any new development sites for possible invasive species introductions.	Ongoing	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Park Supervisor Fisheries
Continue to work with local communities on developing trail connections to the park as opportunities arise.	Ongoing	All	<b>Trail Specialist</b> Park Supervisor
Support volunteers for stewardship projects in the park	Ongoing	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Park Supervisor Local Partners
Maintain and enhance opportunities for natural resource-based recreation including but not limited to hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping and birding	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship WLD Fisheries
Continue monitoring archaeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship State Archaeologist
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Regional Planner Park Supervisor
Continue to complete and comply with annual safety inspections and plans	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Review and update Wildfire Plan and Emergency Plan.	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship FRD
Maintain cold water discharge between Grousehaven Lake and the Rifle River	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Fisheries
Meet with FRD, WLD and Fisheries Division for their input regarding park natural resource goals.	Ongoing	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Park Supervisor FRD WLD Fisheries
Explore acquisition of property within proposed General Management Plan project boundary	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Land Specialist

<b>MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS Continued</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Continue to communicate and engage with the local community to strengthen partnerships	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Local Partners
Strengthen relationships with partners and volunteer organizations to work towards common goals (e.g. watershed council)	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Promote recreation opportunities offered in non-peak seasons using a variety of media (e.g. social media, website, news)	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> MOD
Interpret park history using multiple resources including the explorer guide program and the auto tour.	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> History MOD
Continue to work with Forest Resources Division to manage for even-aged aspen in the Natural Resource Recreation Zone (reflecting history as a game preserve)	Ongoing	Natural Resource Rec.	<b>Stewardship</b> FRD WLD Park Supervisor
Align Rifle River Recreation Area with generator noise policies being developed by the DNR Parks and Recreation Division	1	Natural Resource Rec.	<b>Park Supervisor</b> District Supervisor Regulatory Unit Manager
Inventory, assess and continue to maintain culverts in coordination with potential partners (MDOT, etc.)	1	All	<b>Regional Planner</b> Asset Management Team
Partner with local schools and conservation organizations to develop a conservation education plan and programming for the park	2	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Explorer Guide MOD Local Partners
Develop a Natural Resource Stewardship Plan for the park, identifying conservation targets, goals and threats to those conservation targets	2	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Park Supervisor
Complete Michigan Forest Inventory (MiFI) stand mapping for the park	2	All	<b>Stewardship</b> Park Supervisor

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; DEVELOPMENT: CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Assess Bridge #3 (Ranch Bridge) for repair or replacement to accommodate emergency vehicles	1	Backcountry Natural Resource Rec.	<b>Regional Planner</b> Park Supervisor
Resurface roads from park entrance to modern campground	1	All	<b>Regional Planner</b> MDOT
Maintain and improve sanitary sewer system, including drain fields, based on EGLE requirements	1	Developed Rec.	<b>Regional Planner</b> EGLE
Improve drainage on gravel roads including culvert repair/replacement and road re-grading	2	All	<b>Regional Planner</b> MDOT
Repair or replace Bridge #3 (Ranch Bridge) based on assessment	2	Backcountry Natural Resource Rec.	<b>Regional Planner</b> Park Supervisor
Renovate Swing Bridge	2	Backcountry	<b>Regional Planner</b> Park Supervisor Trail Specialist
Identify potential ADA fishing node locations along the river	3	Natural Resource Rec. Backcountry	<b>Regional Planner</b> Park Supervisor Fisheries Natural Rivers
Explore upgrades to campground electrical service (50 amp) and perform a cost benefit analysis	3	Developed Rec.	<b>Regional Planner</b> Park Supervisor Business Analyst



Swinging bridge over Rifle River

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; DEVELOPMENT: SMALL PROJECTS</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Continue to work with Fisheries Division to remove fallen trees from the river	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Fisheries Natural Rivers
Continue to address dead ash trees along river corridor	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> FRD Stewardship Natural Rivers
Align hunting signage and enforcement with the Wildlife Conservation Order	2	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship
Improve accessibility in day use beach area and improve visibility from parking lot (signs, clearing, etc.)	2	Developed Rec.	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Regional Planner
Renovate auto tour and explore using new technology	3	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship MOD

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act  
 EGLE – Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy  
 MDOT – Michigan Department of Transportation  
 MOD – Marketing and Outreach Division  
 FRD – Forest Resources Division  
 WLD – Wildlife Division  
 Fisheries – Fisheries Division



Accessible canoe/ kayak launch in Grousehaven Lake

## 4) Implementation Strategy

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

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

### **4.1 Implementation Toolbox**

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

#### Coordination/ Communication

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

#### Funding

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

#### Scheduling

- Further prioritize projects based on need, funding, staffing and other constraints and opportunities.
- Incorporate project/task assignments into annual staff performance objectives

## **4.2 Documentation of Changes**

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

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

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

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

## **4.3 Documentation of Accomplishments**

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

## **4.4 Five-year Review Process**

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

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

# APPENDIX A – LEGAL MANDATES UPDATE

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

The following legal mandates are additions or updates to the legal mandates as originally included in the Phase 1 GMP.

## FEDERAL STATUTE

<b>BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT, 1940 AND AMENDMENTS</b>	
This Act prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from "taking" bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The Act defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." "Disturb" includes actions that may result in injury to the eagle, a decrease in its productivity or nest abandonment.	
<b>NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, 1966 AS AMENDED</b>	
This is the primary federal law governing the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States. The law establishes a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections which encourage the identification and protection of cultural and historic resources of national, state, tribal and local significance.	

## STATE STATUTE

<b>NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS</b>	
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 5</b>	Gives the DNR authority to make rules to support its mission. This includes State Land Rules, Land Use Orders, Wildlife Conservation Orders, Fisheries Orders and Watercraft Control.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 303 Wetlands Protection</b>	Requires a permit from the state (DEQ) to undertake certain activities in regulated wetlands, such as, dredging, fill, construction or drainage.

<b>NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS</b>	
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 315 Dam Safety</b>	A permit is required for dams with a dam “height” of six feet or more and that have a surface area of five acres or more at the design flood elevation. A permit is required for new dam construction, enlargement of an existing dam or impoundment, dam repair, dam alteration, dam removal, dam abandonment, or reconstruction of a failed dam.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 365 Endangered Species Protection</b>	The department shall perform those acts necessary for the conservation, protection, restoration, and propagation of endangered and threatened species of fish, wildlife, and plants in cooperation with the federal government, pursuant to the endangered species act of 1973, Public Law 93-205, 87 Stat. 884, and with rules promulgated by the secretary of the interior under that act.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 741 State Park System</b>	Requires the State Park system to preserve and protect Michigan’s significant natural and historic resources, recognizes it as an important component to the tourism industry and requires State Parks to work in concert for a coordinated Michigan park and recreation plan. Also requires the Department to create, maintain, operate, promote and make available to the public state parks.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 324 ORV Use on forest roads and other state owned land</b>	All forest roads shall be open to ORV use as provided in section 72188. All other state owned land under the jurisdiction of the department shall be closed to ORV use except designated roads that are not forest roads, designated trails and designated areas.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 401 Wildlife Conservation</b>	An individual shall not hunt with a firearm within 150 yards of an occupied building, dwelling, house, residence, or cabin or any barn or other building used in connection with farm operation.
<b>PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 Recreation Passport</b>	This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site “Recreation Passport” that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities</b>	The state reserves the exclusive right and privilege to all aboriginal records and other antiquities including those found on the bottomlands of the Great Lakes.

<b>PUBLIC HEALTH CODE</b>	
<b>PA 368 of 1978, Part 125, Campgrounds, Swimming Areas and Swimmers' Itch</b>	Established to protect and promote the public health by establishing health code requirements and regulations that all public (including DNR) and private campgrounds must meet. Includes permitting, licensing, inspections and rules regarding sanitation, safety standards and public health. Also covers testing and evaluating quality of water at bathing beaches, safety and rescue equipment.

## **ORDERS**

The following Orders apply to Rifle River Recreation Area.

### **Land Use Orders of the Director**

#### **5.1 State parks and recreation areas, certain conduct prohibited.**

Order 5.1 A person shall not do any of the following in any state park or recreation area:

(2) Operate an unlicensed, wheeled motorized device capable of transporting a person on a park road or parking lot, unless otherwise permitted by posted notice. Use of such devices shall be permitted for individuals with mobility impairments.

History: Iss. Sept. 17, 1993; Am. 10, 1995, Post Oct. 23, 1995; Am. 16, 2007, Post Oct. 12, 2007; Am. 6, 2013, Post Feb. 11, 2013; Am. 8, 2014; Post Aug 19, 2014.

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

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

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

(69) Rifle river RA, Ogemaw county.

### **Wildlife Conservation Orders**

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

**7.1 Hunting or trapping in state parks or game refuges; designating where permissible; permits; hunting or trapping in state recreation areas.**

Sec. 7.1 (1) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter or by permit issued by the director, no person shall trap or hunt with firearms or dogs or in any other manner in any state park, state game refuge, or other lands under the control of and dedicated by the department as a game refuge or wildlife sanctuary.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, state recreation areas shall be open to hunting and trapping during established seasons.

(3) Trapping in state recreation areas, except as otherwise provided in this chapter, shall be limited to those areas at least 50 feet outside of the mowed portions of developed picnic areas, swimming beaches, parking lots, boat launches, children's playground structures, campgrounds or headquarters' areas. A duffer-type, egg-type, or similarly designed foothold trap for raccoon may be used within the exempted area only by written permission by the designated department representative.

History: Eff. Mar 31, 1989; Am. 16, 1989, Eff. Aug 1, 1989; Am. 9, 2008 Eff. Jun 6, 2008; Am. 2, 2016, Eff. April 15, 2016.

**7.56 Rifle river recreation area, hunting prohibited, exceptions; posting required.**

Sec. 7.56 (1) A person shall not take an animal from those portions of the Rifle river recreation area described as follows:

(a) All state-owned lands of section 1, T23N R03E, Ogemaw county, except the SW 1/4 lying south of the north shoreline of Grousehaven lake, and the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4, and the SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4, and the South 1200 feet of the SW 1/4 of the SE 1/4 lying north and east of Grousehaven lake.

(b) All state-owned lands of the E 1/2 of the E 1/2 of section 2 lying east of Gamble creek and north and west of Grousehaven lake, T23N R03E, Ogemaw county.

(2) A person shall not take any waterfowl from Rifle river recreation area from September 1 to Labor day.

(3) Signs containing the hunting closure shall be posted in such a manner and at such locations as will provide reasonable notice of the closure to the public.

History: Eff. Mar 31, 1989; Am. 2, 2016, Eff. April 15, 2016

**Watercraft Controls**

**DEVOE LAKE - R281.765.7 - Motorboats prohibited.**

7. On the waters of Devoe lake, sections 11 and 12, town 23 north, range 3 east, Cumming township, Ogemaw county, it is unlawful to operate a motorboat.

HISTORY: EFF. JUNE 22, 1972

**GREBE LAKE - R281.765.8 - Motorboats prohibited.**

8. On the waters of Grebe lake, sections 1 and 12, town 23 north, range 3 east, Cumming township, and section 7, town 23 north, range 4 east, Hill township, Ogemaw county, it is unlawful to operate a motorboat.

HISTORY: EFF. JUNE 22, 1972

**GROUSEHAVEN LAKE - R281.765.9 - Motorboats prohibited.**

9. On the waters of Grousehaven lake, sections 1 and 2, town 23 north, range 3 east, Cumming township, Ogemaw county, it is unlawful to operate a motorboat.

HISTORY: EFF. JUNE 22, 1972

**JEWETT LAKE - R281.765.10 - Motorboats prohibited.**

10. On the waters of Jewett lake, section 11, town 23 north, range 3 east, Cumming township, Ogemaw county, it is unlawful to operate a motorboat

HISTORY: EFF. JUNE 22, 1972

**LODGE LAKE - R281.765.11 - Motorboats prohibited.**

11. On the waters of Lodge lake, sections 1 and 12, town 23 north, range 3 east, Cumming township, Ogemaw county, it is unlawful to operate a motorboat.

**STATE LAND RULES**

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

# APPENDIX B – STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

Over the duration of the Phase 2 General Management Planning process, the Planning Team ensured a variety of opportunities for stakeholder and public input and feedback.

## Stakeholder Workshop

A Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis was performed on October 16, 2018 at the Rose Township Hall in Lupton, Michigan to gather information from stakeholders about the park to inform the Action Goals. Stakeholders had the opportunity to attend either an afternoon session or an evening session. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to the park. A total of 9 participants represented organizations from around the region and provided input. Input gathered is listed below:

### STRENGTHS

#### **Management**

- Staff is amazing!
- Restroom facilities are well cared for

#### **Natural Resources and Location**

- Large tract
- Proximity to population centers
- Headwaters for education and examples of watershed protection
- Open water
- Clean water

#### **Recreation and Programs**

- Community and natural resource programs
- Family friendly
- Many recreation uses including camping, hiking, trout fishing and biking
- Year-round recreation opportunities
- Diversity of opportunities
- Supports local businesses and community
- Provides educational opportunities like annual field trips
- Group camp for schools and athletics
- Conservation groups like the Audubon Society

## **WEAKNESSES**

- Roads
- Lack of water hookups in campgrounds
- Lack of electricity in rustic campgrounds (Strength and a Weakness)
- Generator noise in campgrounds
- Budget
- Public communication
- Requirement for recreation passport for free events (recent changes improves this)
- Reservation system- no walk-ins
- Cancellation system too lenient (recent changes improves this)
- Debris in the river (working with fisheries on this)
- Invasive species

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- “Dark Sky” opportunities
- Establish a Friends Group for the park
  - Could coordinate volunteer organizations
  - Could help with communication to community
- Timber management – even-aged Aspen
- Social Media
- Promote different seasons and recreation opportunities for each season
- Invasive species education
- Regulate generators in campground
- River clean-up partnerships and education
- Boundary expansion

## **THREATS**

- Budgets
- Wildfire
- Natural disasters – storms
- Surrounding land use
- Special interests

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

- Appreciative of the opportunity to submit our ideas and have them considered.
- The Rifle River Recreation Area is a genuine gift in this state and certainly one of the parks that needs to be cultivated, with a ‘balance’ to recreation and conservation – incorporating as many educational opportunities as possible for the general public, local communities and students.
- Enjoyed being an observer to this process and seeing the Department of Natural Resources interact directly with community stakeholders. The presentation was well organized and allowed time for everyone to offer input. (Would have liked to see more of the public take part)

## Stakeholder meeting attendees

Name	Stakeholder Affiliation
Jerry Neubecker	Cumming Township
Daire Rendon	103 <sup>rd</sup> State Representative
Debra Abraham	West Branch Rose City Schools
Carl McGregor	Rose City Lupton Chamber of Commerce and Sunrise Café
Mark Williams	Parkview Acres Campground
Bill Roth	Ducks Unlimited
Dale Borske	Ducks Unlimited
Jim Hergott	Saginaw Bay Conservation District
Jim Hines	DNR
William Doan	DNR
Tricia Weisend	DNR
Lisa Gamero	DNR
Debbie Jensen	DNR
Matt Lincoln	DNR
Ray Fahlsing	DNR
Scott Cook	DNR

## **Public Input Open House**

A public input open house was held at the Rose Township Hall in Lupton, Michigan, on May 7, 2019 from 5pm to 7pm to review the Phase 2 General Management Plan and comment on the draft 10-year action goals. The draft Phase 2 plan was also posted on the DNR's website and comments were invited via e-mail. A press release went out 2 weeks in advance of the open house to 13,623 recipients of the government-delivery system, including 41 stakeholders associated with the park.

A total of 10 people attended the open house. The draft 10-year action goals were generally well received. Attendees identified generator noise in the rustic campgrounds as being an issue and several offered possible solutions. Attendees also identified conservation education as a priority to focus on.

The press release for the open house, the open house instructions, a list of attendees and comments received are provided below.

## ***- DNR NEWS -***

April 22, 2019

Contact: [Matt Lincoln](mailto:Matt.Lincoln@Michigan.gov), 517-284-6111

### **Help guide future of Rifle River Recreation Area**



The Department of Natural Resources will host a public open house Tuesday, May 7, to gather input on a new draft phase 2 general management plan for [Rifle River Recreation Area](#) in Ogemaw County.

The meeting will run 5 to 7 p.m. at the Rose Township Hall, 3380 Lupton Road in Lupton. People are welcome to attend at any time during the two-hour period to review the

planning material, provide comments and talk to DNR staff.

A link to the draft plan and additional information on the DNR's management planning process can be found at [Michigan.gov/ParkManagementPlans](http://Michigan.gov/ParkManagementPlans). Comments also can be shared via email through May 14 to [LincolnM@Michigan.gov](mailto:LincolnM@Michigan.gov).

The 4,449-acre Rifle River Recreation Area provides recreation activities compatible with the park's natural resources. The recreation area includes seven lakes, three ponds and seven miles of trout streams serving as the headwaters of the Rifle River. The park provides year-round recreational opportunities, including camping, picnicking,

swimming, hiking, biking, paddling and fishing. More than 4,100 acres are open to hunting, too.

The phase 2 general management plan defines a long-range (10- to 20-year) planning and management strategy that will assist the DNR in meeting its responsibilities to protect and preserve the site's natural and cultural resources, and to provide access to land- and water-based public recreation and educational opportunities.

For more information about the public meeting or phase 2 general management planning, contact Matt Lincoln at 517-284-6111 (TTY/TDD711 Michigan Relay Center for the hearing impaired) or via email at [LincolnM@michigan.gov](mailto:LincolnM@michigan.gov). Anyone needing accommodations in order to participate in the meeting should contact Lincoln at least five business days before the meeting.

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**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
RIFLE RIVER RECREATION AREA  
PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Public Input Open House  
May 7, 2019  
Rose Township Hall**

Welcome! Please review the boards around the room and provide feedback using the instructions below. The Department of Natural Resources will use your feedback to refine the Phase 2 General Management Plan for Rifle River Recreation Area. DNR staff members are available if you have any questions.

1. Please use the GREEN dots provided to indicate the 10-year action goals you feel are most important. Please use only one dot per goal.
2. If there is a goal you do not agree with, please use a RED dot and a sticky note explaining why you do not agree with it.
3. Also use sticky notes to provide any other comments on the boards.
4. You may also use the comment forms provided to provide feedback.

**For More Information:**

**DNR Management Planning Website:** [www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans](http://www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans)

**Email:** Matt Lincoln [lincolnm@michigan.gov](mailto:lincolnm@michigan.gov) or Tricia Weisend, [weisendt@michigan.gov](mailto:weisendt@michigan.gov)

**Phone:** 517-284-6111 or 989-473-2258

### Open House Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Patti Brehler	Neighbor
Andy Andersen	Neighbor
Ned Caveney	Neighbor
Jerry Fisch	Neighbor/Campground Host
Kimberly Landenberg	
Matt Pollard	Rifle River Restoration Committee
Tracy Goodsell	
Tom Goodsell	
Gregg Zoan	Boy Scouts of America
Debra R. Abraham	West Branch – Rose City

### DNR Employees Present:

Name	Title
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager/Plan Administrator
Tricia Weisend	Unit Supervisor
Amy Swainston	Trail Specialist
Brad Bellville	Conservation Officer
Steve Anderson	Roscommon Unit Manager
Scott Cook	Regional Field Planner
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Ecologist

Meeting attendees were asked to review and help prioritize action goals by placing green dots on those they considered to be the most important (each participant was provided with three dots) and yellow dots on those that they disagreed with. The total number of votes for each goal, and associated comments, are illustrated on the following pages.

<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; OPERATIONS</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Mgt. Zone</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Implement invasive species control, with a strong emphasis on early detection and rapid response. Monitor roads, trails, and any new development sites for possible invasive species introductions.	Ongoing	All	
Continue to work with local communities on developing trail connections to the park as opportunities arise.	Ongoing	All	1
Support volunteers for stewardship projects in the park	Ongoing	All	2
Maintain and enhance opportunities for natural resource-based recreation including but not limited to hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping and birding	Ongoing	All	1
Continue monitoring archaeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	All	
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	All	
Continue to complete and comply with annual safety inspections and plans	Ongoing	All	
Review and update Wildfire Plan and Emergency Plan.	Ongoing	All	
Maintain cold water discharge between Grousehaven Lake and the Rifle River	Ongoing	All	
Meet regularly with FRD, WLD and Fisheries Division to determine natural resource management goals for the park	Ongoing	All	
Explore acquisition of property within proposed General Management Plan project boundary	Ongoing	All	1

<b>MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS Continued</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Mgt. Zone</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Continue to communicate and engage with local community to strengthen partnerships and resolve community issues	Ongoing	All	
Strengthen relationships with partners and volunteer organizations to work towards common goals (e.g. watershed council)	Ongoing	All	<b>3</b>
Promote recreation opportunities offered in non-peak seasons using a variety of media (e.g. social media, website, news)	Ongoing	All	
Continue to work with Forest Resources Division to manage for even-aged aspen in the northeast area of the park (reflecting history as a game preserve)	Ongoing	Natural Resource Rec.	<b>1 1, should be throughout the park, not just the northeast</b>
Designate specific campsites in rustic campgrounds for generator use and sign accordingly, including adding them to online reservation system.	1	Natural Resource Rec.	<b>2 Limit decibels like other parks, not location or you limit those that need it for health reasons Don't limit because people have preferred locations. If forced to use a spot we don't care for, we will find a different place to camp.</b>
Inventory, assess and continue to maintain culverts in coordination with potential partners (MDOT, etc.)	1	All	
Partner with local schools and conservation organizations to develop a conservation education plan and programming for the park	2	All	<b>4</b>
Develop a Natural Resource Stewardship Plan for the park in cooperation with WLD, Fisheries and FRD.	2	All	
Complete MiFI stand mapping for the park	2	All	

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: CAPITAL OUTLAY			
Action Goals	Priority	Mgt. Zone	Votes
Assess Bridge #3 (Ranch Bridge) for repair or replacement to accommodate emergency vehicles	1	Backcountry Natural Resource Rec.	
Resurface roads from park entrance to modern campground	1	All	2
Improve drainage on gravel roads including culvert repair/replacement and road re-grading	1	All	4
Maintain and improve sanitary sewer system, including drain fields, based on DEQ requirements	1	Developed Rec.	2
Repair or replace Bridge #3 (Ranch Bridge) based on assessment	2	Backcountry Natural Resource Rec.	
Renovate Swing Bridge	2	Backcountry	
Identify potential ADA fishing node locations along the river	3	Natural Resource Rec. Backcountry	
Explore upgrades to campground electrical service (50 amp) and perform a cost benefit analysis	3	Developed Rec.	4 – would eliminate the generator problem
Explore installing electrical service to one of the rustic campgrounds and perform a cost benefit analysis	3	Natural Resource Rec.	

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: SMALL PROJECTS			
Action Goals	Priority	Mgt. Zone	Votes
Continue to work with Fisheries Division to remove fallen trees in the river	Ongoing	All	1
Continue to remove dead ash trees along river corridor	Ongoing	All	1
Align hunting signage and enforcement with the Wildlife Conservation Order	2	All	1

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: SMALL PROJECTS (continued)			
Action Goals	Priority	Mgt. Zone	Votes
Improve accessibility in day use beach area and improve visibility from parking lot (signs, clearing, etc.)	2	Developed Rec.	
Renovate auto tour and explore using new technology	3	All	

**Additional Comments**

- Allow battery-powered trolling motors on the lakes
- Use USFS standards for generators. (limit of decibels)
- Possible add electricity to the Ranch Rustic Campground
- Highlight more of the cultural pieces in the park, don't hide them. Preserving them doesn't matter if nobody can learn about them.
- Generator solution will make it hard for those with medical needs for electric when modern is full, which is most of the summer. An issue does exist, but this isn't the best solution for inclusion.
- We love the park and the staff does a good job tending to it. Thanks for all you do!
- Allow limited use of electric trolling motors on Grousehaven and Devoe Lakes
- Not everyone is capable of rowing
- Develop more hiking trails similar to Pintail Pond and increase visibility and ease of access (signage, etc)
- Increase educational activities, programming for the community and get the word out more.
- Don't allow too much modernization or motorized boats
- Increase recycle bins or give bags to kayakers, increase education about littering
- Need interpretive center i.e. Hartwick Pines interpreting park history, forest and game management

**Project Website**

A webpage was maintained through the duration of the planning process and was updated with maps, meeting information and the draft plan. Contact information was provided for members of the public to submit comments or ask questions.

### E-mailed/Mailed Comments:

- I've been going to RRRRA since 1958 and have been photographing there since the 1970's. My wife and I met there while camping in 1975. My family owns a cottage on Rifle Lake, just a few miles from the park. "The Area" represents so much of our family history that is the most important place for our family.
  - Our family time spent at the Rifle River Recreation Area led both of our children into the sciences with my daughter, Katherine Grzesiak of the Invasive Species Network in Traverse City and my son who majored in Entomology and Microbiology.
  - My wife (a retired educator in public schools and Michigan State University) are VERY interested in aiding the future of RRRRA and would gladly attend meetings and any other way we can be involved with the preservation and treatment of the area.

---
- Rifle River is a special place. I enjoyed the wood burning stove cabins of my youth here. I used to enjoy watching the bats swirl in the sky at Ranch, and seeing a large trout snap the tip off of my father's fly rod. I have heard the slap of a beaver tail at night, and had a string of trout taken by eager raccoons here as a kid. Many many experiences here.
  - However, I now visit the park in the off-season due to heavy use. Campsites in every campground, except modern, would be better if more space and patrols at night enforced quiet hours. Many episodes of open intoxicants. The state is more interested in packing it in to Rifle River like the Big House in Ann Arbor—than demonstrating proper conservation methods. I can no longer take my family here to camp—nor will I recommend camping here.
  - I would like to continue the conversation, but I would appreciate a response first...
  - Thank you.

---
- My Wife , kids & grandkids are frequent users of R.R.R. area State Park. I live in Shields (Saginaw), and won't make the 160 mile round trip to attend the meeting on the parks new plans. Is there another link somewhere with info on the intended changes? We are very much against any changes, as we have always considered this area the most pristine park in the lower peninsula. Any changes or "improvement's" to the park would probably attract more people, and raise the already high price of "camping". NOTHING needs to be done to this beautiful area to make it "better" !!!!

---
- Thank you for the direct link you sent. I actually read almost all of it (took an hour). We are in agreement with the largest respondents by campers, Except we like to fish more than "campers", and would love to see the river kept free of fallen trees, . We bring our kayaks, and were considering not camping there anymore, as the river was at one time impossible to navigate down to Sage lk. road. It will be a huge job to keep it clear of fallen trees - esp. ash, as there are hundreds along the river corridor that are dead & waiting to fall - hopefully not on a canoeist, kayaker or rafter. I read it has been identified as a # 1 priority, so we hope it will be done. We have our camping reservations in for June 2 thru 9. Maybe we'll see you there.

Rifle River Recreation Area Plan Comments  
May 7, 2019

Following are my brief comments and concerns regarding the draft plan for the Rifle River Recreation Area (RRRA).

The action goals are great – focused on natural resources, historic/cultural resources, and education/interpretation opportunities.

- It is most important to take advantage of what is unique to the area, something nobody else has and in the case of RRRA it is:
- One \*Grousehaven Estate (Game Farm) the why and goals of this fit wonderfully with DNR goals ( game or wildlife restoration and hunting being an important part of human culture. There is a story here and great opportunities for learning and improved habitat management. Education of landowners was a goal of Grousehaven and here the people of Michigan are the landowners. A great number of event opportunities exist – woodcock banding demonstration, a skydance evening, shooting event to mimic Grousehaven game shooting, youth hunting dog field trial, marked ruffed grouse drumming count route, etc.
- Two \*Fred Bear the great/legendary bowhunter, archery promoter and manufacturer spent considerable time hunting and enjoying the greater Grousehaven area. Think what could be done to promote bowhunting and its wonderful tradition in Michigan with events like “Fred Bear Days” around the opening of bow season at RRRA. Youth events, senior events, history and wildlife education, etc.
- Three \*after state purchase of the area it was a trout research station and trout propagation was a goal of Grousehaven as well. Here is an opportunity to education people about Michigan’s trout and trout research. Even carry forward the goal of understanding trout habitat and fishing. Events around this – Trout Unlimited started in Michigan.

I find major elements lacking in the document and so I don’t believe it can be called a plan until those are added. There is no summary of existing forest conditions. This is critical to meeting natural resource goals of forest health, diversity, wildlife and recreation. RRRA in line with its historic roots could help address and educate especially in the areas of our most rapidly declining wildlife of open and young forest habitat. At least ten percent young forest condition is a reasonable goal. Putting forest cover in the category of public education is possibly the best and maybe only way to accomplish this within RRRA. Opening maintenance is important and even opening restoration where they existed could improve things. A significant acreage of RRRA is oak of advanced age. Without proper management oak decline will be a problem if not already. It is important to regenerate and maintain oak forest habitat in RRRA. Ash mortality has affected a significant acreage on RRRA. While this is a resource lose there are or could be habitat improvement opportunities – like residue cutting to regenerate a stand, cedar regeneration, etc.

Needed is a summary of existing conditions. Then how management will sustain desired habitat conditions over the life of the plan.

I can envision a wonderful interplay between resource management and recreation for RRRA. One feeding off the other with roots going back to elements unique to RRRA Grousehaven, Fred Bear and trout research. I expect that lack of funding will be an excuse to not accomplish a lot. A number of the items I mention here have groups and individuals that could help – they just need to be asked for they are already motivated.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ned Caveney



1313 Wiltse Rd.

Lupton, Mi. 48635

989-473-3439

# **APPENDIX C – 2017 ON-SITE USE AND USER STUDY REPORT**

By Charles M. Nelson and Thomas Braum  
Department of Community Sustainability  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824

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## **Introduction**

As part of the management planning process for Rifle River Recreation Area (RA), an on-site study was conducted of a representative sample of park visitors to provide an overall estimate of mean user hours per vehicle in day use parking areas, assess local spending, ascertain the opinion of park users about the future management options and approaches and provide a profile of park visitors, both campers and day users. This on-site approach sampled users on systematically selected days and times across June - November of 2017. It used a windshield survey at all day use parking areas and the same survey handed to a sample of up to 20 camping parties on sample days to ensure representation of the full range of park users.

## **Methods**

The on-site study methodology and questionnaire were developed by the senior author in cooperation with the DNR Park Planner Debbie Jensen of the DNR Park and Recreation Division (PRD) staff. The questionnaire is found in Appendix B and is very similar to an instrument that was used in 2016 in the pilot project of integrating visitor surveys into the state park management planning process at Sleepy Hollow State Park. A sampling calendar of 27 sample days was developed that proportionally allocated sampling days across June - November based on seasonal estimates of park use for summer and fall provided by the DNR (Appendices C and D). The survey commenced in the field on June 23, 2017.

On a sample day, the survey administrator (a Michigan State Park employee) would begin sampling at one of the day use parking areas at the beginning of the designated sample period (9AM, Noon, 3PM or 6PM) per the sampling schedule. The survey administrator would count all vehicles present upon entering the lot. Once the count is made, a questionnaire with location, questionnaire number and time is distributed to each vehicle front windshield or directly handed to the driver if he/she is at the vehicle. If it is raining, surveys are enclosed in a clear plastic bag and placed on the windshield. While most vehicles receive a questionnaire, occasionally one leaves before a survey can be administered, hence the number of surveys distributed is slightly less than the vehicle count. Also, if there are more than 50 vehicles in a lot, it is the intention that all are counted, but only the first 50 counted receive a questionnaire to limit confusion and keep to a time schedule to complete all other vehicle counts and survey distribution. At Rifle River there were no instances where this occurred in any parking area.

This method does not capture input from those arriving by bicycle and on foot, only those arriving by vehicle. However, those arriving by vehicle directly support the Michigan State Park

system through the purchase of the Recreation Passport or, in the case of non-residents, through the purchase of the non-resident motor vehicle permit. Those arriving by bicycle or on foot, if they have not purchased the Passport or a non-resident motor vehicle permit, are not providing such direct financial support.

For campers, surveys were often distributed by a different park employee as day use areas often took a considerable amount of time for survey distribution. In the campground, a survey administrator would randomly choose a campsite number between 1 and 174 (75 modern sites at Grousehaven and 99 total rustic sites at Devoe, Ranch and Spruce) and proceeded to sample the next 20 campsites where campers were present by handing them a questionnaire. If there were less than 20 sites with campers present, then the number of occupied sites with camper present received a questionnaire. If there were more than 20 present, only 20 were distributed.

Respondents returned the questionnaire by U. S. mail using the postage paid, business reply feature of the postcard. Cards were directly delivered to Dr. Nelson at MSU.

### **Results**

Results are presented in three ways. The first is observations/vehicle counts done by the survey administrator. These provide an assessment of use levels for each facility/parking area. The second is survey responses to questions 1-10, which focus on the respondent's experience the day they were sampled. Since these questions ask about the specific day's experience, there is no possibility of oversampling frequent users as each use is a use, whether done by a person who visits the park one time or 100 times in a year. However, Questions 11-16 are weighted to account for frequency of use bias as they ask about suggested improvements, things not to change and demographic information that defines the distinct park user. A frequent user, such as one who visits the park 100 times a year has 100 times greater chance of receiving a survey than one who visits the park once a year. To be able to use a one person, one vote rule where each person has an equal say in suggesting potential changes or the lack of them, the data is weighted to eliminate the frequency of use bias in sampling. For distinct users the data is weighted by the reciprocal of the number of uses the previous year (Q 16). If a person used the park once in the previous year, their weight is 1/1. If they used it 100 times, their weight is 1/100.

All results tables are provided in Appendix A and are numbered as they are in the text of this report.

### **Observations**

There were 16 sample days in summer and 11 in fall. All day use sites were sampled on all sample days in both seasons, while campers were sampled all 16 sample days in the summer, there were only 5 campground sample days in the fall due to the closure of the campgrounds Monday October 16, 2017. Table 1 shows that a total of 377 vehicles were counted in day use parking areas over the 27 sample days (304 in summer and 73 in fall) with a total of 377 questionnaires distributed (304 in summer and 73 in fall) in day use lots. The busiest lots were the Grousehaven Day Use Parking lot that provides beach access to Grousehaven Lake, and the Devoe Lake boating access site/beach lot. Campers were sampled on 16 summer and 5 fall days with a total of 420 surveys distributed (320 in summer and 100 in fall).

### **Survey Results: Uses**

Seventy-three completed questionnaires were returned by day use respondents and 113 by campers as of the December 31, 2017 cutoff for a total of 186 respondents. Since the last survey date was November 19, this provided almost seven weeks for surveys to be returned after the last sampling date. The response rate for day visitors was 19%, for campers 27% and for the combined group 23%.

### **Activities and Party Characteristics**

The average amount of time a day visitor vehicle was in the park was 9.5 hours and the day visitor party averaged 2.8 people per vehicle. However, many day visitors were in fact campers who were visiting portions of the park often 5 or more miles from their campsite who chose to drive to the site, accounting for the longer than expected length of stay. Many day visitors were grouped with others in other vehicles as the average day visitor group had 6.8 people. For camper respondents, mean people per vehicle was somewhat lower, averaging 2.6 people per vehicle.

A total of 11 percent of day use respondents and 13 percent of camper respondents reported on the day they were sampled that one or more people in their vehicle had a physical impairment that seriously limited him/her from participation in work or recreation. These persons would be classified as disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Park visitors participated in a wide range of activities. Table 2 shows that the five most common activities for campers in order of participation were camping, hiking, swimming, nature observation and bicycling on a paved road. For day visitors the five most common activities were camping, hiking, swimming, paddling and nature observation.

When campers were asked the one most important park activity to them, the five most mentioned in descending order were camping, paddling, fishing, nature observation and other (Table 3). When day visitors were asked this question, their five most common responses in descending order were camping, fishing, swimming, paddling and a tie between hunting and bicycling. Due to the large size and widespread distribution of water resources at the Rifle River RA, many campers drive to day use sites that are often miles from their campsite to participate in water based recreation and other activities and are sampled as day visitors.

### **Local Spending**

Park visitor spending in the local area of Rifle River RA was substantial (Table 4). Campers from a single vehicle reported spending an average of \$118 in the 24 hours prior to being surveyed with 91% spending something within 20 miles of the park. The greatest average amounts were for food and beverages from a store, lodging fees and vehicle related expenditures. Day visitor spending averaged \$112 per vehicle with 94% of them spending something in the local area in the past 24 hours. The greatest portion of day visitor spending was on grocery and convenience store food/drink, lodging and vehicle related expenses.

### **Satisfaction**

When asked to rate their satisfaction with their Rifle River RA experience the day they were sampled, day visitors were highly satisfied with a mean rating of 8.4 on a scale of 1 – 9 where 1 is highly dissatisfied, 5 is neutral and 9 is highly satisfied (Table 5). Almost sixty percent of campers and almost three-fourths of day visitor respondents gave their experience the highest satisfaction rating (9). Only two percent of campers and none of day visitor respondents rated their experience as dissatisfying, with three percent of campers and one percent of day visitors rating it as neutral.

When asked an open ended question about the one most important reason for their experience rating, campers were most likely to mention their wonderful/total experience at Rifle River, liking the campground in which they stayed or the nature that surrounds them in the park (Table 6). For day visitors, the most common positive comments related to nature, a wonderful overall experience and the high quality of maintenance and patrol in the RA. The most common concerns voiced related to the ratings were poor maintenance in general, poor management of the waterfront areas and concerns about the campground in which they stayed. Considering the overall ratings and comments, these comments of concern were made by a very few respondents.

### **Distinct Users Opinions**

To understand the opinions of distinct users, one open ended question asked visitors to identify the one most important change they would like at Rifle River RA. This information is weighted as previously discussed to insure frequent users who are more likely to be sampled are not over represented in the results. If a respondent provided more than one desired change, only the first change was recorded in data entry. Campers and day visitors most commonly suggested updating and increasing the number of facilities such as bathrooms, benches, drinking water sources, etc. The two other most frequent suggestions from each group were to improve roads and that there were no changes needed. Each group also had some changes relatively unique to it. For example, campers suggested improved campground maintenance, upgraded electric utilities, the addition of a playground for young children and a number of often conflicting park rule changes related to generators, quiet times, etc. Day visitors were most likely to have a specific focus on improving navigation on the Rifle River, suggesting it was difficult for them to canoe or kayak due to log jams and obstructions in the river.

When asked what one most important thing should not be changed at Rifle River RA (Table 8), campers were most likely to suggest the campground stay the same. They also supported the no motors rule on watercraft. For day visitors, keeping the no motors rules on watercraft was the top suggestion to stay the same, followed by keeping the park in a wild, natural appearing state and continuing to provide the level of lake and river access now provided.

### **Demographics**

Distinct respondent campers had a mean age of 54, with ages ranging from 24-79. Fifty-nine percent of distinct camper respondents were female and 41% male. For distinct day visitors, the mean age was 55, with ages ranging from 19-78. Sixty percent of distinct day visitor respondents were female and 40% male.

The vast majority of distinct campers and day visitors were Michigan residents (Table 9). Indiana was the second most common origin of campers, followed by Ohio and New York. The

most common day visitor origin following Michigan was Ohio and Texas, followed by Florida and Arizona. This suggest that snowbirds who spend a majority of their life in southern and western states and return to Michigan in the summer often visit Rifle River.

### **Summary**

Rifle River is a unique destination for a wide range of visitors as it provides modern camping to near wilderness conditions at remote portions of the park that are only accessed by hiking or watercraft use. It provides a wide range of outdoor recreation activities on a year round basis with the unique caveat that watercraft use must be non-motorized, emphasizing quiet and slower recreation. This appears to be highly appreciated by park visitors, but causes some irritation to some who camp in other than the modern campground and seek to use generators to have electricity. Visitors to Rifle River spend substantially in the local area, including for groceries, lodging, vehicle related spending, restaurants, sporting goods and souvenirs. This provides a very positive impact to the local economy as many lodging, restaurant and small grocery establishments are locally owned and labor intensive, keeping money spent local and quickly reverberating and multiplying through the economy as local workers spend their wages and their employers purchase many goods and services from local vendors. Satisfaction is very high among both campers and day visitors with the most common requests for improvements to update and provide more basic facilities such as bathrooms, benches, etc. One challenge is the interest in removing obstacles from the river to promote watercraft use. These obstacles to watercraft are also important habitat to trout on one of Michigan's premiere trout streams, the Rifle River and many of its important tributaries. Overall, there is great support for maintaining the natural appearance and quiet atmosphere of this major state recreation area and the high level of satisfaction is a vote of confidence by current park users.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Michigan DNR Park and Recreation Division permanent and seasonal field staff for their distribution of the survey instrument, record keeping of the number of surveys distributed and counting vehicles during sampling. We also greatly appreciate the cooperation throughout the project with Division Planning staff.

## Appendix A. Tables of Results

Table 1. Vehicle counts and surveys distributed on-site 2017 at Rifle River RA day use areas and campgrounds.

Parking Area	Summer Count	Summer Surveys Dist.	Fall Count	Fall Surveys Dist.	Total Count	Total Surveys Dist.
Grousehaven BAS	12	12	5	5	17	17
Grousehaven Day Use	95	95	8	8	103	103
Grebe L/Obs. T./Picnic	17	17	3	3	20	20
Lodge Lake BAS	14	14	2	2	16	16
Ridge Rd/Scaup L.	3	3	4	4	7	7
Devoe L. BAS	59	59	4	4	63	63
Jewett L. BAS	7	7	5	5	12	12
Swinging Bridge	5	5	13	13	18	18
Devils Wbasin/Canoe	18	18	7	7	25	25
Sage L. Canoe	17	17	4	4	21	21
All other roadside	18	18	10	10	28	28
Pintail Pond	39	39	8	8	47	47
Total Day Use	304	304	73	73	377	377
Campers Sampled in Campground	NA	320	NA	100	NA	420

Table 2. Percent Rifle River RA respondents participating in selected recreational activities during sample day in 2017.

Activity	Campers	Day Visitors	All
Camp	98%	58%	82%
Hike/walk	87	58	75
Swim	66	55	62
Nature observation	52	44	49
Bicycle on paved road	54	32	45
Paddle canoe/kayak	42	48	44
Sunbathe	42	37	40
Photography	40	37	39
Fish from shore	40	38	39
Bike on unpaved trail	40	33	37
Picnic	31	32	31
Fish from boat	25	30	27
Pick berries/mushrooms	5	3	4
Metal detect	3	3	3
Hunt	1	7	3
Geocache	0	0	0
All others	10	10	10

Table 3. Percent Rifle River RA on-site respondents one most important recreational activity during sample day in 2017. (a)

Activity	Campers	Day Visitors	All
Camp	88%	40%	70%
Fish	3	20	9
Paddle canoe/kayak	6	11	8
Swim	0	14	5
Hunt	0	3	1
Nature observation	2	0	1
Bicycle	0	3	1
Sunbathe	0	2	<1
Picnic	0	2	<1
Photography	0	2	<1
Metal detect	0	0	0
Pick berries/mushrooms	0	0	0
Geocache	0	0	0
All others	2	3	2
Total	100%	100%	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding

Table 4. Expenditures of on-site respondents during past 24 hours within 20 miles of Rifle River RA in 2017 (a).

Item	Campers Mean \$ (% spent something)	Day Visitors Mean \$ (% spent something)	All Mean \$ (% spent something)
Grocery and convenience store food & drink	\$33 (83%)	\$29 (74%)	\$31 (80%)
Lodging fees	29 (51)	26 (40)	28 (47)
Vehicle related	23 (52)	22 (59)	22 (55)
Restaurant & bar meals & drinks	16 (39)	19 (51)	17 (44)
Sporting goods	8 (29)	8 (32)	8 (30)
All other items including souvenirs	9 (21)	8 (14)	9 (18)
Total	\$118 (91%)	\$112 (94%)	\$115 (92%)

(a) Totals may not exactly add up due to rounding.

Table 5. Rating of satisfaction with Rifle River RA use experience by on-site respondents on the day sampled in 2017.

Rating Scale	Campers %	Day Visitors %	All %
1 (very dissatisfied)	0.9%	0%	0.5%
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0.9	0	0.5
5 (neutral)	2.7	1.4	2.2
6	0.9	1.4	1.1
7	8.9	8.2	8.6
8	25.9	15.1	21.6
9 (very satisfied)	59.8	74.0	65.4
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Mean Rating (a)	8.3	8.6	8.4

(a) Rating scale: 1=highly dissatisfied; 5=neutral; 9=highly satisfied.

Table 6. Response to open-ended questions about one most important reason for satisfaction rating with Rifle River RA use by on-site respondents on the day sampled in 2017. (a)

Reason	Campers	Day Visitors	All
Generally like, wonderful, amazing, being outdoors	22%	16%	20%
Nature, wildlife, quiet	15	22	18
Like campground	20	10	16
Clean, well maintained/patrolled	12	11	12
Like river/lakes	3	7	4
Like many activities available	5	4	4
Like fishing	0	8	3
Like no motor regs. on lakes	1	6	3
Poor maintenance	4	1	3
Poor beach/waterfront mgt.	1	6	3
Poor campground	4	0	2
Like swimming	0	3	2
Good access to lakes/streams	1	3	2
Good staff/hosts	2	0	1
Like paddling	1	0	<1
Like park facilities	1	0	<1
Convenient location	1	0	<1
Park visitors friendly	1	0	<1
Poor trails/hiking	1	0	<1
Don't like no motors on lakes	1	0	<1
Other positives hard to classify	3	1	2
Other negatives hard to classify	0	3	1
Total	100%	100%	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 7. Response to open ended question about one most important improvement at Rifle River RA by distinct on-site user survey respondents in 2017 (a).

Improvement	Campers	Day Visitors	All
Update and increase facilities	19	8	16
Improve roads	4	29	11
Nothing to improve/change	11	11	11
Improve campground maintenance	14	0	10
Improve river navigation/lessen obstructions	6	19	10
Alter park rules (many different suggestions)	12	6	10
Improve campground utilities	11	0	8
Provide a playground for young children	6	<1	5
More enforcement/patrol	3	1	3
Expand camping opportunities	1	6	2
Improved access to beach/waters for disabled	2	0	2
Provide rental bicycles	2	2	2
Provide more info to visitors	<1	1	<1
Provide more watercraft launch capacity	<1	1	<1
Provide improved wading fishing opportunities	0	1	<1
Have better firewood in campground	<1	0	<1
Have catch and release fishing	<1	0	<1
Other suggestions difficult to classify	4	11	6
Total	100%	100%	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 8. Response to open ended question about one most important thing not to change at Rifle River RA for distinct on-site user survey respondents in 2017. (a)

Don't change	Campers	Day Visitors	All
Campgrounds	33%	12%	27%
No motors rule on lakes	18	28	21
Nature/wildness/quiet/wildlife	8	21	12
Don't know/Keep as is	7	11	8
Cost/price/value	6	<1	4
Convenient access/location	4	2	3
Staff personnel	4	2	3
Level of maintenance	3	2	3
Facilities	3	0	2
Rules in general	2	0	1
Beaches	<1	3	1
Trails	1	1	1
Volleyball	0	<1	<1
Other hard to classify	3	0	2
Total	100%	100%	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 9. Origins of distinct park visitors to Rifle River RA by state for on-site user survey respondents in 2017 (a)

State	% Campers Originating	% Day Visitors Originating	% All Originating
Michigan	96%	87%	93%
Ohio	1	5	2
Indiana	2	0	2
Texas	0	5	2
Florida	0	2	1
New York	1	0	<1
Arizona	0	1	<1
Total	100%	100%	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Appendix B. On-site questionnaire

### Rifle River Recreation Area Use Assessment

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Dear Driver:

Michigan State University (MSU) and the Michigan DNR are cooperating to measure recreation use of Rifle River Recreation Area as part of updating the park management plan. Please take the 4 minutes needed to complete this form and mail it to us postage paid or put it in one of the drop boxes marked "Park Surveys". You will be anonymous and your name will not be connected with study results. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

1. Please check ALL of the activities in which one or more of the people from your vehicle participated while you were in the park today.

<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking/Walking/Running	<input type="checkbox"/> Photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Paddling watercraft
<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling paved road/trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Camping	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunbathing
<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling unpaved trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing from boat	<input type="checkbox"/> Hunting/Scouting	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal detecting
<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing from shore/dock	<input type="checkbox"/> Power boating	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pick berries/mushrooms		
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature observation (birding, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other(_____)	

2. Which ONE activity was the MAIN reason visited the park today? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many HOURS was your vehicle in the park today? \_\_\_\_\_ # HOURS

4. Including you, how many PEOPLE came here in this vehicle? \_\_\_\_\_ # PEOPLE

5. Including other vehicles, how many people are in your group? \_\_\_\_\_ # PEOPLE

6. Does anyone in your vehicle have a physical impairment that seriously limits his/her participation in work or recreation? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

7. Where did you stay last night (check one)? \_\_\_ Campground in Rifle R. RA  
 Own principal home     Another campground     Another's home/2<sup>nd</sup> home  
 Hotel/motel/rental cabin     Own 2<sup>nd</sup> home     Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

8. During the past 24 hours, how much did you and those in your vehicle spend within 20 miles of Rifle River Recreation Area on the following items.

Vehicle related (gas, oil, trip related repair, etc.)	\$ _____
Restaurant & bar meals & drinks	\$ _____
Grocery or convenience store food, drink or ice	\$ _____
Sporting goods (fishing supplies, camping gear, etc.)	\$ _____
Lodging fees (camping, motel, cabin rental, etc.)	\$ _____

All other items (watercraft rental, souvenirs, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please rate on a scale of 1-9 (w/ 1 highly dissatisfied; 5 neutral; and 9 highly satisfied), how satisfied you were with **today's Rifle River RA** experience. # \_\_\_\_\_ **Rating**

10. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What ONE change would you recommend to improve Rifle River RA? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What ONE thing would you recommend not change at Rifle River RA? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What is your principal home zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years                      15. Please circle your gender. M or F

16. How many days did you visit Rifle River RA in **2016** (last year)? \_\_\_\_\_ #days

**Thanks** for your help in improving the management of Rifle River RA.

Dr. Chuck Nelson, Project Director                      \_\_\_\_\_ Time  
MSU Dept. Community Sustainability, 480 Wilson Rd.,                      \_\_\_\_\_ Site  
East Lansing, MI 48824 Phone (517) 432-0272                      nelsonc@msu.edu                      \_\_\_\_\_ Ques #

### **Appendix C. Rifle River Sampling Schedule 2017**

- 27 sample days prescribed, 27 accomplished in day use, 21 in campground (closed 10/17)
- Based on Summer and Fall use levels per 2016 DNR park use data
- For our study purposes
  - Summer sampling June-August
  - Fall sampling September - November
- Sample days are divided the same way with 2/3 on weekdays and 1/3 on weekends similar to calendar.
- Rifle River RA sampling will begin at one of the following times each sample day: 9 AM, Noon, 3PM and 6PM.

**Appendix D. Rifle River Recreation Area Planned On-Site Sampling Calendar (a)**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sampling Start Time</b>
Fri	6/23	3PM
Mon	6/26	9AM
Thu	6/29	3PM
Sat	7/1	9AM
Wed	7/5	Noon
Thu	7/13	3PM
Sun	7/16	Noon
Tues	7/18	9AM
Sat	7/22	3PM
Mon	7/24	6PM
Sat	7/29	6PM
Thu	8/3	Noon
Tues	8/8	3PM
Fri	8/18	6PM
Wed	8/23	9AM
Sun	8/27	3PM
Sat	9/16	9AM
Wed	9/20	3PM
Mon	9/25	Noon
Sun	10/8	6PM
Fri	10/13	6PM
Tues	10/17	9AM
Sat	10/28	Noon
Thu	11/2	6PM
Fri	11/10	Noon
Wed	11/15	9AM
Sun	11/19	3PM

(a) Last date for campground sampling was October 13, 2017 as the campgrounds closed October 16, 2017.