



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



A fly-over view of the lagoons at William C. Sterling State Park

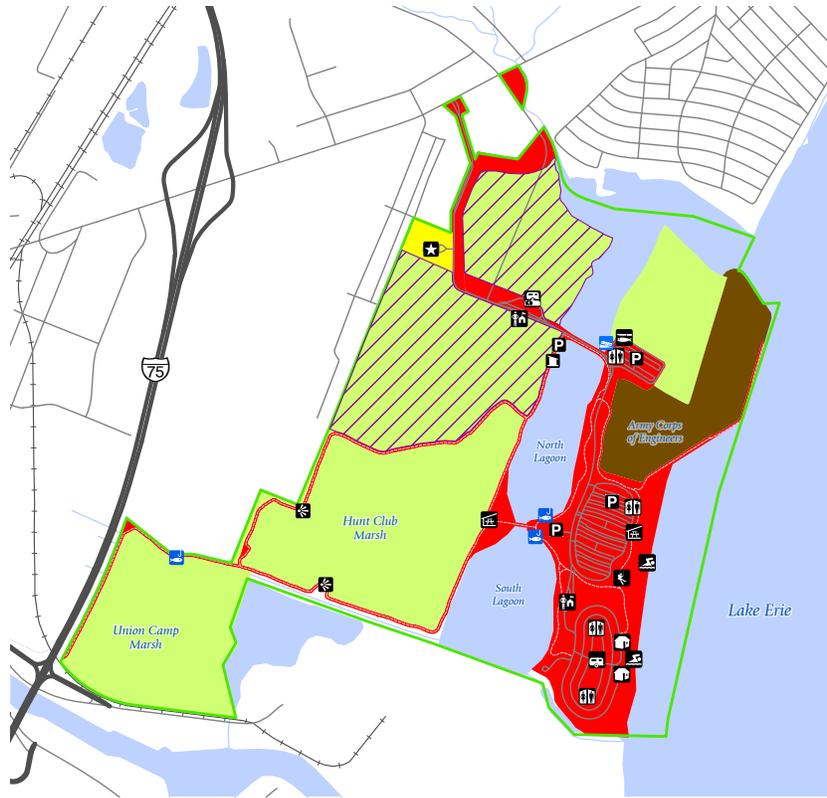
William C. Sterling State Park GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

APPROVED 03/19/2024

Prepared with the assistance of Beckett & Raeder, Inc

B R 
Beckett&Raeder

www.bria2.com



STERLING STATE PARK
Draft Management Zones

Data Sources: Michigan CIG Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Date: 9/1/2023

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Sterling State Park Boundary | Scenic Overlook | Beach | Primitive |
| State Roads | Fishing Access | Restroom | Developed Recreation |
| Roads | Contact Station | Playground | Administrative Services |
| Railroads | Park Headquarters | Vault Toilet | Confined Disposal Facility |
| Trails | Sanitation Station | Parking Lot | Cultural Landscape Overlay |
| Rivers / Streams | Fish Cleaning Station | Mini Cabins | |
| Lakes | Modern Campground | Picnic Shelter | |
| | Boating Access | | |

Beckett & Raeder

This project was directed by Deborah Jensen, Management Plan Administrator, Department of Natural Resources, DNR Parks & Recreation Division with assistance from Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

PLAN APPROVALS:

DNR Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

3/15/2024

Date

DNR Natural Resources Deputy

3/18/2024

Date

DNR Director, Department of Natural Resources

3/19/2024

Date

PLAN APPROVALS

PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

PRD- Section Chiefs	<u>01/02/2024</u> Date
DNR- Resource Management Bureau	<u>01/16/2024</u> Date
MSPAC- Stewardship Subcommittee	<u>02/07/2021</u> Date
NRC- Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee	<u>02/21/2024</u> Date

RESOLUTION NO. 02-2024-01

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

**RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE
“WILLIAM C. STERLING STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN”**

ADOPTED: February 21, 2024

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the General Management Plan is consistent with the recommendations of the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel and the Parks and Recreation Division’s strategic plan; and

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

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

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

Submitted by: Michigan State Park Advisory Committee

Motioned by: Mike McDonald
Seconded by: Mary Pitcher

Yeas: 11
Nays: 0
Abstained: 0
Absent: 1

This Resolution was adopted by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee at their meeting on February 21, 2024, as Resolution No. 02-2024-01.

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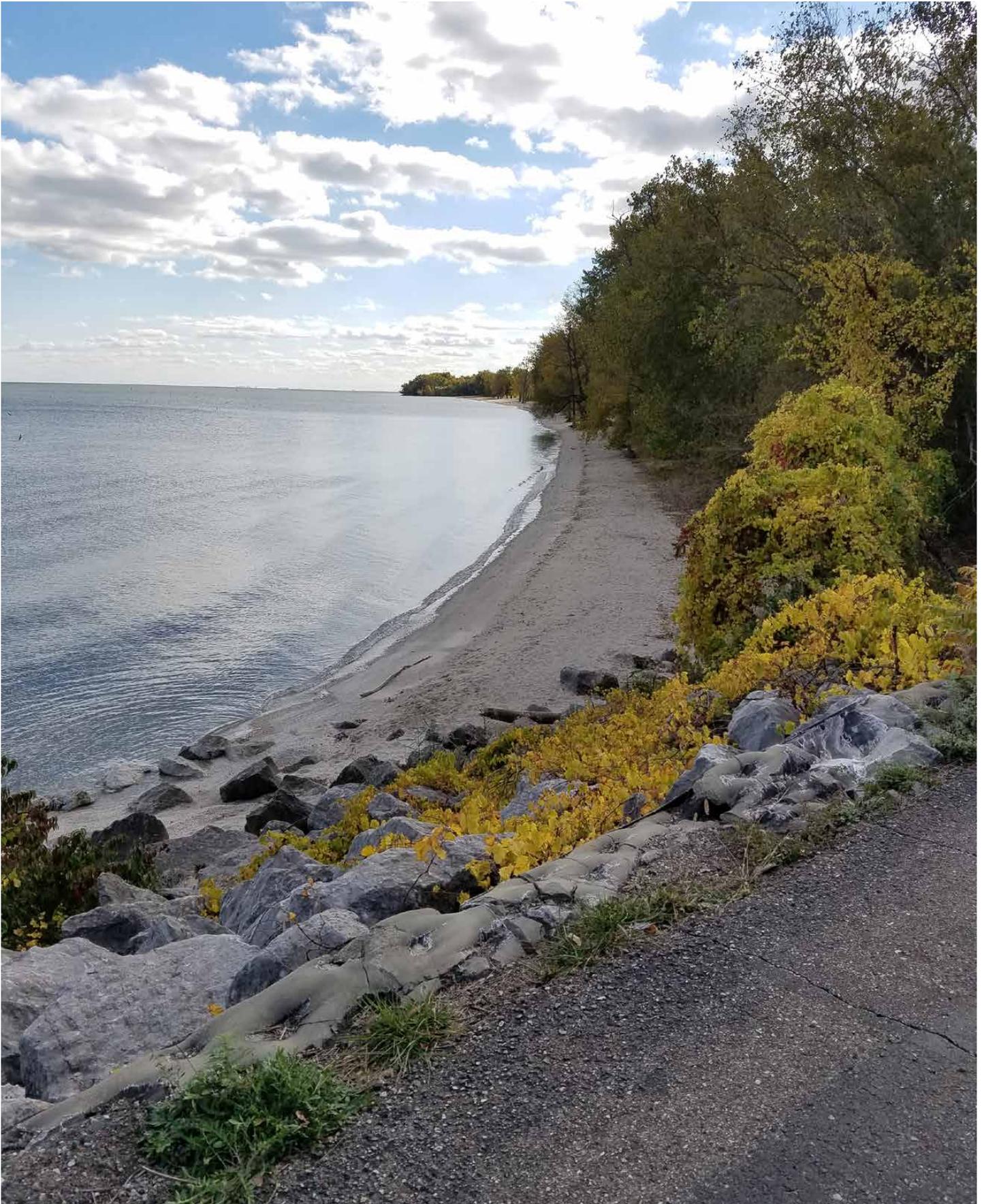
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A beach and trees along the Lake Erie shoreline



A group of smiling park visitors and employees pose with a sign saying "Sterling State Park Labor Day Weekend 2023"

General Management Plan Executive Summary

William C. Sterling State Park (hereafter referred to as Sterling State Park) is a 1,341 acre park in the City of Monroe and Frenchtown Township in Monroe County, and is the only Michigan state park on Lake Erie. The park offers both a modern overnight experience, with a large campground and full-amenity cottages, and a variety of day-use amenities including nearly one mile of beach shoreline, picnic facilities, playground, and paved trails around the park. The park's large-capacity boat launch offers access to Lake Erie and the world-class walleye fishery, and fishing piers within the park allow fishing within the lagoons. The lagoons and marshes in the park are important stop over habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl and provide habitat for rare species.

The purpose of this general management plan (GMP) is to guide the future long-term management and development of Sterling State Park. Overall, this plan seeks to uphold the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Parks & Recreation Division's (PRD) Mission: "to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities." The management plan brings together DNR staff, stakeholders, and the public into a process that defines the following for the

state park:

- Purpose and significance that captures the unique identity of Sterling State Park.
- Twenty-year management zone plan reflecting the resource protection goals and level of development appropriate for different areas of the state park.
- Ten-year action plan that addresses the desired future condition within the state park as a whole and within each of the designated management zones.

The supporting analysis, included as Appendix A of this plan, provides important background information on Sterling State Park that informs this planning initiative. It includes a comprehensive review of the state park setting, area demographics, history, land ownership, legal mandates, and cultural, natural, and recreation resources. An updated Stewardship Plan is also being developed for the park that will identify targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies, including invasive species management. Furthermore, several existing planning documents, including the DNR Evergreen Goals and the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, were used as guiding references (see Chapter One).

Significance of Sterling State Park

This general management plan was developed in consideration of the property's significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state park system. Sterling State Park was determined significant due to the aspects that are summarized below. The full statements of significance can be found in Chapter Three.

- Sterling State Park is the only Michigan state park with Lake Erie access. It offers nearly one mile of beach shoreline, a large-capacity boat launch, access to world-class walleye fishing, and beautiful sunrises over the lake.
- Sterling State Park attracts many out-of-state visitors and has regional significance as a part of a larger recreation and conservation corridor.
- The park has seen significant change in land use and character over time; nearly all the land that comprises the park was altered by earth-moving activities, stretching back to the 1700s. Recent restoration efforts created an oasis within a largely industrial and agricultural landscape.
- Sterling State Park has a significant amount of the remaining coastal marshland in the area, which is an important habitat for fish and rare species. The paved trails around the marshes provide year-round recreational access to this resource.
- As part of a migratory flyway and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Sterling State Park presents excellent birding opportunities. The marsh trails offer an accessible pathway for viewing and many birders come to the park for sightings of rare species.
- In 2002, Sterling State Park's infrastructure and amenities were completely renovated, which provides visitors with a more modern camping experience than many Michigan state parks, including a large number of full-hook up campsites. These and other amenities make it one of the most visited parks in the state.



An angler fishes from a kayak in the Sterling State Park lagoons

Management Zones

A key goal in the development of this general management plan is to continue to protect the park's natural and cultural resources, while providing recreation and education opportunities. Taking this into account, the planning team, with stakeholder and public input, established appropriate management zones for the park from a palette of nine standard zones. The management zone map and a thorough review of each management zone are found in Chapter Four of this plan. A condensed description of each of the applied management zones is as follows:

Primitive Zone

The primary purpose of the Primitive Zone is the protection of natural resources and natural processes. The zone is managed for low-impact recreational experiences in a primitive, natural landscape. Only dispersed, self-reliant, and low-frequency use is allowed. Attaining and maintaining a high-quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements or uses are allowed. This zone covers 65% of the park and includes sensitive prairies and marshlands.

Developed Recreation Zone

The Developed Recreation Zone supports active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone is approximately 25% of the park land and includes the modern campground, day-use area, trails around the marshes, boat launch, and the area for the existing and possibly relocated entrance road.

Administrative Services Zone

This zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. Typically, it will include offices, contact stations, maintenance facilities and all related land base required to conduct the business of running a state park or park. This zone covers eleven acres (roughly 1%) of the park and includes the park headquarters area.

Cultural Landscape Overlay

This zone addresses the overall cultural setting of a site, including historic structures and ethnographic sites. For example, a location associated with a particular cultural resource, such as an abandoned mine townsite representative of a bygone era, would qualify as a Cultural Landscape Zone. In this park, the Cultural Landscape Zone is used as an overlay (sub-set) of the management zones, and as such, the guidance for the underlying zone will also apply. The cultural landscape overlay covers 25% of the park and includes primitive-zoned areas that have historically seen little disturbance north of the Hunt Club Marsh and west of the lagoons.

Confined Disposal Facility Zone

The Confined Disposal Facility Zone is located in the northeastern corner of Sterling State Park. United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) operates a confined disposal facility (CDF) in this area for storage of contaminated dredge spoils. This zone is intended to designate this area as a separate use from the rest of the park as the area is not open to the public. After the agreement has ended and the land is remediated by the USACE, operations will be assumed by the DNR and recreation opportunities for this area can be pursued under a different zone designation. This zone is 9% of the park and includes the area designated for the CDF.



Two children cross the bridge over the lagoons

Ten-Year Action Plan

Once the planning team has established management zones to guide Sterling State Park for the next 20 years, action steps are identified that are desired to be implemented within the next ten years. The actions are broken down into categories pertaining either to an area of management and operations, infrastructure/development projects that require capital outlay, small infrastructure and development projects, or partner projects. Future improvements will be considered in the context of efficiency, environmental sustainability, and resiliency. Below is a summary of the action plan for the park. The full ten-year action plan can be found in Chapter Five.

Partner Projects

One action item is currently in the design phase and will be completed in partnership with other entities. This project will stabilize the Clearwater Canal shoreline and reconstruct the trails around the lagoon, marshes, and Clearwater Canal.

Management and Operations

Projects related to the management and operations of the park include exploring land acquisition within the GMP Proposed Project Boundary, invasive species removal efforts, studying the potential relocation of the park entrance road, addressing landscaping needs, and updating the natural resources Stewardship Plan for the park. Park staff will consider future enhancements and alterations to the park to support recreation, such as assessing the need for additional concessionaires and services, exploring opportunities for the addition of shade structures, particularly the need for shade trees in the campground and day use areas, exploring alternative recreation options for when the beach is closed,

considering opportunities to accommodate boat mooring and a drop-off pier, and developing an interpretive trail to enhance the park's connection to history and culture. Park staff will also assess the water depths in the approach to the boat ramp to ensure they are sufficient for boating operations. The park will also consider sustainability enhancements such as providing EV charging stations and alternative energy generation. Finally, the park can take actions to improve operations such as revising the wildlife conservation order to clarify areas of the park open to hunting.

Infrastructure and Development: Capital Outlay

Projects within the next ten years that require capital outlay funds to complete include park infrastructure upgrades such as repairing the headquarters building foundations, modernizing and updating several restrooms, addressing stormwater and grading issues, repaving parking lots and roads, upgrading the campground electrical service, and reconfiguring the traffic flow at the boat launch. Some projects could enhance recreation at the park such as developing an accessible non-motorized watercraft launch, and replacing or adding fishing piers. In addition, the park will remove a haul road and fill left from construction of the Confined Disposal Facility and restore the area to native vegetation. A phase 1 archaeological survey will be performed at targeted locations prior to some of these projects.

Infrastructure and Development: Small Projects

Small projects for the park would add outdoor shower stations, replace the fish cleaning station in kind, and add a park entrance sign on Waterworks Road.



Birding equipment set up along the shore of the lagoons



A kayaker paddles with their dog in the lagoons

Chapter One:

Core Values & Guiding Resources

1.1 Mission Statements

Throughout the planning process, the core values of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) were the foundation of the planning team’s decisions. These include the mission statement of the DNR, the DNR Evergreen Goals, and the DNR Parks & Recreation Division (PRD) Mission Statement. These values set the protection of natural and cultural resources and the provision of recreational and educational opportunities at the forefront of the plan.

DNR Mission Statement

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

DNR Evergreen Goals

- **Protect** natural and cultural resources
- **Ensure** sustainable recreation use and enjoyment
- **Enable** strong natural resource-based economies
- **Foster** effective business practices and good governance
- **Improve** and build strong relationships and partnerships, internally and externally

PRD Mission Statement

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

1.2 Guiding References

The general management planning process is guided and shaped by several resources developed to provide recommendations for managing Michigan’s parks and recreation system. In particular, these resources have helped shape the ten-year action plan established in this plan.

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

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

- Identify and protect important natural, cultural, historic, and prehistoric resources

- Diversify funding
- Prioritize development of statewide and regional systems of connected trail networks
- Encourage connections between communities and their recreational assets to strengthen regional identities
- Integrate tourism and economic development marketing
- Prioritize investment in parks and recreation

Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2027 (SCORP)

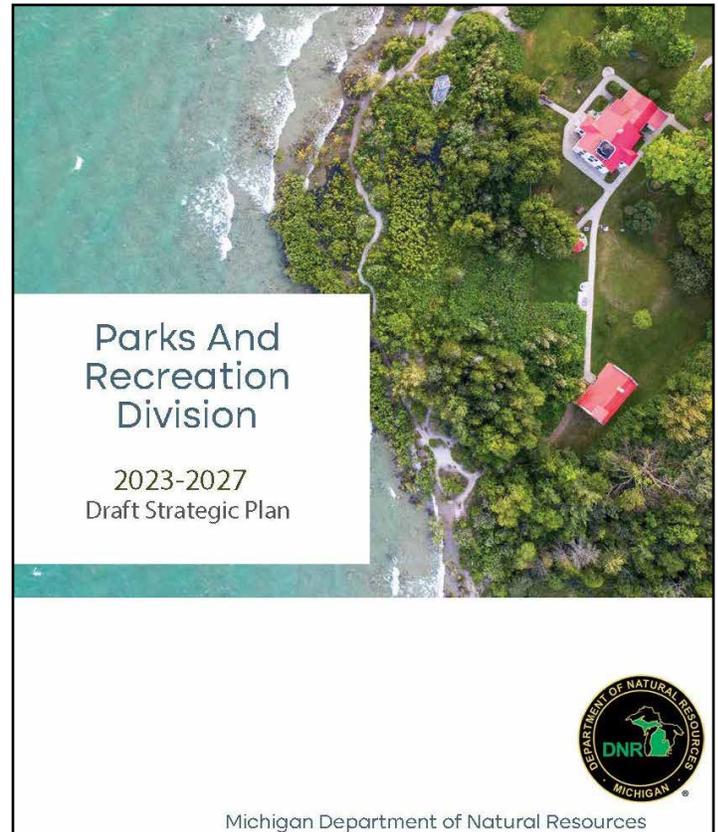
SCORP is a five-year strategic plan that shapes investment by the state and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. The plan’s overarching goal is to “ensure that Michigan’s outdoor recreation assets are equitably distributed, developed and managed to provide convenient and welcoming access to the outdoors for healthful, outdoor physical activity; and while sustaining our lands, waters and wildlife for current and future generations, drive broad-based economic and quality-of-life benefits to people and communities,” with the following strategies:

- Improve collaboration: Outdoor recreation stakeholders collaborate and cooperate to ensure that Michigan’s recreation system meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- Improve and expand recreational access: Recreation opportunities are connected and accessible to residents and visitors of all backgrounds, abilities, means and geographic locations.
- Enhance health benefits: Outdoor recreation increases the physical activity and health of Michigan’s residents and visitors.
- Enhance prosperity: Outdoor recreation advances economic prosperity and supports a high quality of life as well as talent retention in Michigan’s communities.

DNR Public Land Strategy – The Power of Public Lands (2021-2027)

The public land strategy provides a framework for the conservation and management of DNR-managed public land to ensure the best use of the state’s natural and cultural resources for the benefit of Michigan residents and visitors. The strategy sets priorities and guides actions for the best use of the 4.6 million acres of state forests, parks, trails, game and wildlife areas, and other public lands the Michigan DNR is entrusted to manage on behalf of the people. The plan identifies three broad goals with strategies and measurable objectives for each goal. These goals are to:

- Protect natural and cultural resources
- Provide access to outdoor public recreation opportunities
- Perform responsible natural resource management



Michigan DNR PRD Strategic Plan Cover

PRD Strategic Plan (2023-2027)

The PRD Strategic Plan is the overarching document that guides the Parks and Recreation Division in carrying out its mission. This plan establishes long-range goals, objectives, and strategies for Michigan’s state parks and recreation system for the 5-year period beginning in 2023. The goals identified in the plan are:

- Preserve, protect, maintain and restore Michigan’s natural and cultural resources on PRD administered lands.
- Foster appreciation for natural and cultural resources by providing inclusive and diverse recreation and education experiences.
- Sustainably fund PRD programs, operations, maintenance and facilities.
- Integrate environmentally sustainable practices into PRD culture.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trail Plan (2022-2032)

The 2022-2032 Michigan DNR Trails Plan guides the direction of more than 13,400 miles of Michigan’s diverse trail opportunities and lays out key goals to ensure these assets are sustained and remain relevant into the future. To further elevate Michigan’s national reputation as the Trails State, the DNR will pursue the following goals over the next ten years:

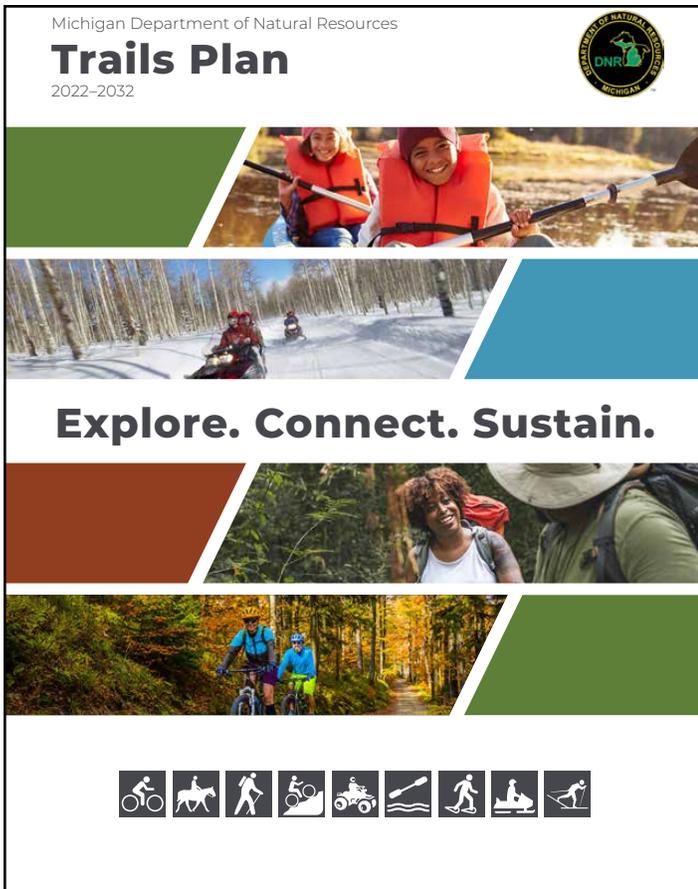
- Sustainable maintenance and development: Manage Michigan’s state-designated trails system to sustainably maintain and improve existing conditions while supporting the DNR’s long-term natural and cultural resource management goals.
- Funding: Develop and refine funding structures to ensure state-designated trails provide quality recreation and transportation experiences.
- Planning and collaboration: Model trail planning best practices to maintain and improve strong relationships and partnerships with the public, stakeholders and other governmental agencies.
- Marketing, promotion and education: Promote Michigan’s diverse trail opportunities to residents and visitors, accurately depicting experiences found throughout the state.

1.3 Summary of Legal Mandates

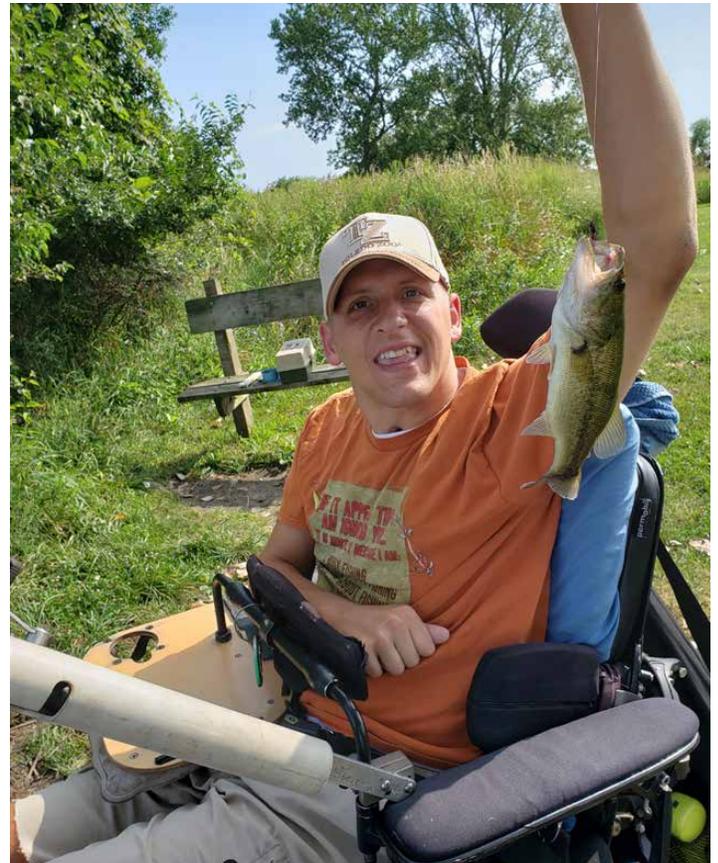
For all park general management plans, legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the plan, park management, and park operations. For the DNR’s planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers to not only state law, but also the administrative tools of “Policy” and “Directive” of the Natural Resources Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Parks & Recreation Division. The general and site-specific legal mandates applicable to Sterling State Park are listed in Appendix A: Supporting Analysis.

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

- Federal mandates to provide accessible facilities
- Federal protection of endangered species
- Preservation of natural and cultural resources
- Water resources and wetlands protection
- Hunting area controls
- Requirement for a Recreation Passport for entry into the park
- Public health code requirements for campgrounds, swimming areas, and swimmers’ itch



Michigan DNR Trails Plan Cover



An angler shows off the catch of the day



A visitor stands atop a tree trunk and takes in the view of Lake Erie



Visitors stroll the trails at Sterling State Park

Chapter Two:

Plan Process Overview

2.1 Planning Objectives

Over time, the land that composes Sterling State Park has seen tremendous change. It has existed as the home of Indigenous peoples, the grounds of hunting clubs, a summer tourist destination, a yacht club and casino, home to agricultural activities, and now a state park. Even in the time of the state park, extensive earth moving activities completely transformed the park into what it is today, with its large campground area and interior lagoons. In the present day, there is a greater focus on environmental restoration and working with the natural environment, while balancing the need for recreation in this area.

This general management planning process sets out a framework for protecting the park's resources while providing for meaningful visitor experiences. The long-range vision and management objectives for Sterling State Park are derived from the missions of the DNR and the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD), applicable legal directives, the purpose of the park, and the park's significant natural and cultural resources.

The objective of the general management plan (GMP) is to bring together PRD staff, staff from other resource divisions, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that

defines and clarifies the unique purpose and significance of Sterling State Park. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the park. Through this process, the team creates a 20-year management zone plan to guide park planning decisions as well as a 10-year action plan to establish specific action strategies for the park. Each GMP is reviewed every five years to ensure there have been no major changes that would warrant a revision to the approved plan.

2.2 Planning Process

The planning team met periodically over a thirteen month period to develop the GMP, beginning in October 2022 and ending in November 2023. Throughout the process, the team sought the input of the public and stakeholders to guide the decisions made in the plan. A stakeholder workshop was held in April 2023 to gather insight from organizations tied to the park. In addition, an online public input survey was available for interested parties to comment on their current use of the park and their priorities for the future. Following the input sessions and survey, the team developed a ten-year action plan and the draft plan.

2.3 Planning Team

This plan was developed with the direct assistance, input, and expertise provided by all members of the planning team. The planning process and document development was facilitated by Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

2.4 Summary of Input Opportunities

Public input is a critical part of the planning for Sterling State Park. Below is a summary of the public and stakeholder input methods that were used to inform the development of the GMP. Several different methods were used to ensure everyone had an opportunity for input. Full reports for each of the outreach methods are included in Appendix B of this plan.

Project Website

Information about the General Management Planning Process was hosted on the Michigan DNR’s Recreation Search page for the park. It was updated with results of the public input survey, the draft of the GMP, and notifications about the public meeting. The website contained contact information so that the public could contact the planning team at any time with questions, concerns, and input.

Stakeholder Input Workshop

To gather targeted input from governmental, non-profit, and business/tourism entities, the planning team invited over 50 stakeholders, both individuals and community groups, to participate in a facilitated input workshop held on April 11, 2023, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Frenchtown Township Hall in Monroe, Michigan. Representatives of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provided the stakeholders with a brief overview of Sterling State Park, including its natural features, cultural resources, and recreational offerings. The stakeholders were also presented the general management plan process, timeline, and an explanation of the plan elements that their input would inform: the statements of significance, the twenty-year management zone map, and action items intended to be accomplished over the next ten years.

The stakeholders were divided into small discussion groups and worked together to complete a series of exercises discussing the park’s current status, opportunities for partnerships, the park’s potential benefit to the larger community, and the stakeholders’ vision for the park’s future. Each table then reported out to the larger group. The results of the table exercises can be found in Appendix B. Two of the top items for consideration were to develop a marina and a visitor center in the park. While these items were not considered to be appropriate due to funding limitations and neighboring facilities, actions are proposed to add interpretive signage to the park to enhance the park's connection to

Planning Team

DIVISION	TITLE	NAME
PRD	Management Plan Administrator	Debbie Jensen
PRD	Park Supervisor	Jason Morgan
PRD	District Supervisor	Gary Jones
PRD	Regional Planner	Joe Strach
PRD	Stewardship Unit Manager	Ray Fahlsing
PRD	Historic Architect	Robb McKay
PRD	Lands Liason	Matt Lincoln
MHC	Archaeologist	Stacy Tchorzynski
FD (Fisheries)	Fisheries Biologist	John Buszkiewicz
LED (Law)	District 9 Supervisor	Sgt. Jason Becker
MMS (Minerals)	Geologist	Peter Rose
WLD (Wildlife)	Wildlife Biologist	Zach Cooley
PRD	Commercial Services & Land Use Program Admin	Elissa Buck

culture, history and natural resources and to consider boat mooring opportunities for those staying in the park.

Online Public Input Survey

One of the methods the planning team used to gather input from park users was an online survey. This online approach provides a convenient way for those who have access to the internet to provide feedback, though it is not designed to be statistically representative of Sterling State Park users or uses, as respondents self-select. The online survey provides valuable information about what certain individuals or groups (hope to see in the park’s future management.

The survey was advertised to a diverse range of people through various means. A press release was sent out to subscribers of boating, wildlife viewing, statewide DNR news and Michigan's trails filtered for the metro Detroit region, which included 37,485 email subscribers. It was also promoted in local media outlets. The survey link was also sent to over 50 stakeholders the planning team had identified who were invited to share the survey. In addition, it was sent to those who had registered to camp at the state park in the last 3 seasons, which included an additional 10,267 recipients.

Responses were collected from March 21, 2023 through May 1, 2023. During the collection period, 2,346 individuals responded to the survey. The survey included questions on what activities the visitors participated in during their visit, their thoughts on the day use and overnight park amenities, recreation opportunities, special events and programs, their overall satisfaction with their experience, and their thoughts on future improvement of the park.

Some of the common improvements requested included more shade trees, particularly in the campground, trail repairs, replacing the fish cleaning station and adding a kayak launch, which are included in the action items.

Tribal Communication

The department’s tribal coordinator reached out to the twelve federally-recognized Tribes in Michigan with a letter notifying them of the GMP process and timeline and inviting input.

Public Meeting

The public was invited to share their thoughts about the Sterling State Park Draft General Management Plan at a virtual public meeting that was hosted online by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on September 21, 2023, from 6:00- 7:30 p.m. The general public was notified about the meeting through a press release, internet postings, and email notifications. A total of 23 attendees were recorded.

The meeting began with a brief introduction of planning team members, followed by a short overview of the general management plan process, Sterling State Park, and the draft general management plan contents. Attendees were given an opportunity to ask questions of DNR staff. At the end of the meeting, attendees were asked to visit the interactive public input survey link to review and comment on the statements

of significance, management zone plan, and ten-year actions goals. There was also a section for additional feedback on the management plan and the input process. A full report of the input received can be found in Appendix B.

Following the public meeting, the planning team met to discuss the input received and make any necessary changes to the plan. Changes made to the plan following the meeting included revising the Lake Erie, Sterling Marshes, and Modern Recreation significance statements to include more accurate verbiage; and adding actions to upgrade the campground electrical service, consider adding a drop-off pier, assessing water depths on the approach to the boat ramp, and add a dump and fill station when the park entrance road is reconfigured.

2.5 Climate Adaptation Planning

The following anticipated climate change impacts and vulnerabilities have been identified that could impact recreation and park infrastructure at Sterling State Park.

Source: Fourth National Climate Assessment (2018) – Northwest. www.adaptationworkbook.org/explore-impacts.

- Temperatures in the Midwest are projected to increase by 5.6 to 9.5F by the end of the century (2071-2100).
- The frequency and intensity of heat waves is expected to increase across the Midwest by the middle of the century (2036-2065).
- The frequency and intensity of cold waves is expected to decrease across the Midwest by the middle of the century (2036-2065).
- Drought risk is expected to increase across the Midwest by the end of the century.
- Climate conditions will increase fire risks in the Midwest by the end of the century.
- Average annual precipitation is projected to increase



An aerial view of Sterling State Park during the July Fireworks Festival

slightly across the Midwest over the next century.

- The frequency of intense precipitation will continue to increase across the Midwest under climate change.
- The annual frost-free season is expected to increase by roughly 30 days in the Midwest by the end of the century.
- Climate change will amplify many existing stressors to forest ecosystems in the Midwest, such as invasive species, insect pests and pathogens, and disturbance regimes.
- Surface water temperatures are expected to rise due to warming air temperatures and will cause decreased seasonal mixing of inland lakes, reducing lake dissolved oxygen levels.

In addition, Lake Michigan and Huron water fluctuate widely over time (6.2 feet between 2013 and 2020). Lake Erie and St. Clair typically fluctuate along with Lake Michigan-Huron but with a smaller amplitude.

Some of the potential impacts of the changes to park use and management include:

- Extended use season, which could have both benefits in terms of revenue and challenges in terms of staffing.
- Shoreline/trail erosion
- Flooding due to increased precipitation/high waters
- More insect pests impacting visitors and vegetation
- Increased frequency and intensity of storms
- Higher temperatures affecting visitor comfort and safety, desire to be close to and access to the water and higher demands on electricity for camper cooling systems.

A variety of adaptation strategies, approaches and tactics will be considered to address these impacts in both the short- and long-term park management and development decisions.

Approaches include:

- Resistance: Improving defenses against change and disturbance to retain a relatively unchanged condition
- Resilience: Accommodating some degree of change to allow return to prior condition following disturbance
- Transition: Intentionally facilitating change to align a system to new conditions.

Adaptation planning is critical for communities and facilities, including Sterling State Park, that encounter risks such as those identified above. Increasing resilience and mitigating hazards will continue to be an important goal for the park management staff and will be considered as part of all action items moving forward. Specifically at Sterling State Park, actions will focus on finding ways to adapt to increased temperatures and intermittent water quality issues. The lack of shade in the park is already a comfort issue for park visitors, and increased temperatures will only serve to exacerbate this. Potential options could include planting more trees, though tree growth in the park has been less than robust, or alternative options for shade can be explored such as rentable shade structures or constructed shade sails or other additional permanent shade structures. In response to the Lake Erie water quality, the park will need to consider providing alternatives to beach recreation. One of the strengths of the park is in wildlife viewing and experiencing nature, so park management should encourage visitors not to rely solely on the beach for all recreation experiences.



Lotus blooming at Sterling State Park



Visitors play spikeball on the beach in front of the beach-front cottages

Chapter Three:

Purpose and Significance

3.1 Purpose of Sterling State Park

Park purpose statements are based on park legislation, legislative history, special designations and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) policies. These statements reaffirm the reasons for which Sterling State Park was included as part of the state park system.

- To be used as a public park, for the purposes of public recreation or the preservation of natural beauty or historic association in accordance with Act 218, Public Acts of 1919, which created the Michigan State Park Commission.
- To preserve and protect Sterling State Park’s unique natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.
- To provide access to land and water based public recreational opportunities.
- To provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public that reflect the DNR mission and the unique qualities of Sterling State Park
- To specifically provide valuable lakefront with a sandy beach, picnic area and campground in an area of great need of recreational opportunities in the Detroit metropolitan area.¹

¹ Eight Biennial Report of the Department of Conservation (1935-1936), page 102

3.2 Statements of Significance

Each general management plan (GMP) developed by the Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) is built upon the foundation of the park’s significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state’s system. Sterling State Park was determined significant due to the following:

Lake Erie

Sterling State Park is the only Michigan state park with Lake Erie access and boasts nearly one mile of beach shoreline. Lake Erie can also be reached via the park’s large-capacity boat launch allowing anglers access to a world-class recreational fishery. Visitors and campers enjoy sweeping lake views and sunrises over this Great Lake.

Regional Significance

A gateway park for out-of-state visitors, Sterling State Park is the first state park encountered after crossing the Michigan border on I-75, attracting a significant number of out-of-state visitors. The park has regional significance as a part of a larger recreation and conservation corridor and acts as a connection point between local parks, the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Land Use Evolution

Throughout its history, the land comprising Sterling State Park has seen significant change in land use and character. Nearly all the land in the River Raisin delta was altered by dredging and filling activities, stretching back to the 1700s. More recent environmental restoration efforts have created an oasis within a largely industrial and agricultural landscape. This new era for the park as post-industrial reclaimed land is perhaps best symbolized by the return of the beautiful blooming lotus flowers.

Sterling Marshes

Over time, there has been a tremendous loss of coastal marsh in the western Lake Erie shoreline. Sterling State Park has a significant amount of the remaining coastal marsh in the area, making it all the more critical. The Sterling State Park marshes connected to Lake Erie are important for fish recruitment and spawning, as a nursery for young fish, and as habitat for a significant number of rare species. The accessible flat and paved trails around the marshes provide year-round recreational access to this resource.



A great egret stands in a marsh

Birding Opportunities

As part of a migratory flyway and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Sterling State Park presents excellent birding opportunities. Over 250 bird species have been reported at the park through eBird. When water levels in the marshes are drawn down, mud flats are created that attract thousands of shorebirds. The marsh trails offer an accessible pathway for viewing and many birders come to the park for sightings of rare species.

Modern Recreation

In 2002, Sterling State Park was a recipient of Clean Michigan Initiative development funds which completely renovated the park infrastructure and amenities. As a result, the park provides visitors with a more modern camping experience than many Michigan state parks, including a number of full hook-up campsites designed for large rigs. More recently, several full-amenity cottages have become available for rent on the Lake Erie shore. Due in part to these amenities, the park is one of the most visited in the state.

3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance

Stakeholder and public input assisted the planning team with affirming the significant features and opportunities at Sterling State Park. The feedback from the online survey confirmed that access to a nearby modern campground, Lake Erie access, trails, and natural setting in an urbanized area are key aspects of the park. Comments from survey respondents relating to those significant features are provided below.

"As someone who's family used to own charter boats.. and whom has fished her whole life... I find it super peaceful out there while fishing. Very clean areas."

"I really appreciated the trail near the river and around the marsh. I saw so many birds including hawks, barn swallows, cranes and a fledgling eagle. I really enjoyed the native plants on either side of the path and I really want to try that trail that spurs off of the marsh trail and seems to go to the urban area. Next visit I am exploring that one! I liked the information about the lotus in the gazebo where I saw the barn swallows."

"We love being able to be right on the water so it's a favorite campground for that. We like being able to go to the beach, playground, hiking, biking and seeing nature!"

"[What I like most about the day use facilities is] the playground on the beach was very nice my children also enjoy being able to get a snack from the cart. I like that parts of the sandy beach were

shady. Additionally the beach was accessible for a disabled member of our party up to the sand so while they were still quite a bit back they were able to still be down by the water to watch the kids play.”

“Sterling State Park has been a large part of my life. Not only for my own use of walking and running, but for the young people that I’ve coached for close to 40 years. I have always taught our kids to respect and help take care of the park, because it is part of our home.”

“The park is great location, even though we live close by we like to visit and camp at Sterling.”

The park is a feature on the Great Lakes Way, a vision of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan for an interconnected set of 160 miles of greenways and 156 miles of blueways where “all residents and visitors of southeast Michigan are connected to and benefit from world-class freshwater, wildlife, recreation and heritage right in our backyard.” The non-motorized River Raisin Heritage Trail runs from Sterling State Park to Munson Park in the city of Monroe, connecting places of interest such as the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, downtown Monroe with its historic district, restaurants and shops, and several other local parks. This trail is often used by visitors to the state park to enjoy the offerings of the community during their stay.

Sterling State Park is a celebrated asset to the community, with many local residents visiting frequently to use the trails, view wildlife or enjoy family time at the campground, beach and playground. In addition, Sterling State Park is the site of a well-loved and well-attended Independence Day fireworks event, where large numbers of community members gather to enjoy the display and create lasting memories.

3.4 Community Connection

Sterling State Park has maintained a close physical and historical connection to the Monroe community since the initial gift of land from the City of Monroe and the Monroe Piers Land Company nearly 90 years ago. Named for a prominent outdoorsman and businessman from Monroe, the history of the land use tells the story of changing community values over time.



Two visitors relax on the beach

Management Zone Progression Table

MANAGEMENT ZONE	NATURAL RESOURCE IMPACTS	VISITOR USE	DEVELOPMENT LEVEL
ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE	None	Restricted	None
PRIMITIVE	Very low	Low (dispersed)	Very low
BACKCOUNTRY	Low	Low to moderate	Low
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE	Low to moderate	Moderate	Moderate
NATURAL RESOURCE RECREATION	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate
SCENIC	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate
HISTORY EDUCATION	Moderate to high	High	Moderate to high
DEVELOPED RECREATION	High	High	High
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	High	High (primarily staff)	High

Chapter Four: Management Zones

The 20-year management zone plan was developed in keeping with the park’s purpose and significance. The primary goal in the development of the management zones is to protect and enhance the park’s natural and cultural resources while also supporting outdoor recreation and education opportunities. From a palette of nine management zones, the planning team studied the park and applied zones that best fit distinct areas of the park based on existing and desired future conditions. Management zones describe a variety of activities that may be appropriate within the zone and address the desired future condition for the following categories:

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

The resource condition, visitor experience, and level of development vary in each of the nine standard zones, as indicated in the figure above. Sterling State Park was divided into the following three standard zones and one custom zone:

- Primitive Zone
- Developed Recreation Zone
- Administrative Services Zone

- Confined disposal facility zone
- Cultural landscape overlay

Sections 4.2 through 4.6 are standard management zone descriptions for zones applied to Sterling State Park, with section 4.7 detailing the non-standard zone. Examples of recreation activities and development that may be allowed in each zone are general and may not necessarily be appropriate or allowed at this location.

4.1 Project Boundary

Project boundaries are geographic lines that help define the state’s public lands acquisition and disposal strategy (land strategy). These boundaries contain a majority of state ownership, as well as privately owned lands that, should they ever become available for sale, would be a priority for the DNR to pursue acquiring.

The DNR undertook a comprehensive statewide project boundary review in 2020. The GMP planning team reviewed the project boundary for Sterling State Park and supports the 2020 Project Boundary approved by the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the DNR with the following three revisions.

- Acreage to the west of I-75 is recommended to be removed from the project boundary as the parcels are already in public ownership (City of Monroe and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge)



Esri, USDA Farm Service Agency

STERLING STATE PARK

Proposed Project Boundary

Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Date: 2/12/2024

- Sterling State Park
- State Roads
- Roads
- Railroads
- Trails
- Rivers / Streams
- Lakes
- 2020 NRC Approved Project Boundary*
- GMP Proposed Project Boundary
- Recommended to be Added to the Project Boundary
- Recommended to be Removed From the Project Boundary

- Other Publicly-Owned Land**
- United States of America
 - City of Monroe

**A project boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer / willing seller basis, approved by the Natural Resources Commission in 2020*

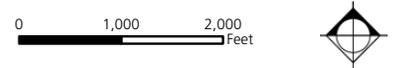


STERLING STATE PARK Draft Management Zones

Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Date: 9/1/2023

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Sterling State Park Boundary | Scenic Overlook | Beach | Primitive |
| State Roads | Fishing Access | Restroom | Developed Recreation |
| Roads | Contact Station | Playground | Administrative Services |
| Railroads | Park Headquarters | Vault Toilet | Confined Disposal Facility |
| Trails | Sanitation Station | Parking Lot | Cultural Landscape Overlay |
| Rivers / Streams | Fish Cleaning Station | Mini Cabins | |
| Lakes | Modern Campground | Picnic Shelter | |
| | Boating Access | | |



- The area just south of the Union Camp Marsh that includes the on-ramp to I-75 is recommended to be added to the project boundary. MDOT is considering road improvements and should the on-ramp be abandoned the area could serve as a trailhead for the existing River Raisin Heritage Trail.
- A small parcel to the west of the park entrance is recommended to be removed from the project boundary because it is already developed as a gas station.

The approved project boundary includes parcels that would benefit the park by providing additional upland capable of recreational development, frontage on the River Raisin and more contiguous land ownership around the park entrance. The area encompassed by the GMP proposed project boundary is 1,608 acres, compared to the 2020 NRC approved project boundary which encompassed 1,682 acres. If the land within the project boundary were purchased, it would add 267 acres to the park.

4.2 Primitive Zone

The primary purpose of the Primitive Zone is the protection of natural resources and natural processes. The zone is managed for low-impact recreational experiences in a primitive, natural landscape. Only dispersed, self-reliant, and low-frequency use is allowed. Attaining and maintaining a high-quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements or uses are allowed. This zone covers 65% of the park and includes sensitive prairies and marshlands within the park. This also includes areas proposed for future restoration.

Natural Resources

- Native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation.
- Native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components and processes are maintained, restored and protected.
- Human-caused habitat fragmentation is eliminated.
- Non-native species are controlled or eliminated.
- Natural hydrology is maintained or restored.
- Vegetative management is only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removal of invasive species), and to manage pests and disease.
- Where agricultural fields currently exist, a strategy should be developed to bring these areas into compliance with the intent (nature/character) of the zone.
- New agricultural fields may be allowed but only as a specific and limited phase of an Ecological Restoration Plan or as a critical component of a plan for managing species of greatest conservation need.
- Haying may be used as a short-term vegetation

management treatment.

- Prescribed fire is allowed to mimic natural disturbance or control invasive species.

Cultural Resources

- Archaeological resources are preserved.
- Ethnographic resources are protected.
- Extant historic structures may be preserved, but more often are removed or allowed to molder in place.

Recreation Opportunities

- Recreation is dispersed.
- Self-reliant, non-mechanized (no bicycle, horse, or motorized use) outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, backpacking, primitive camping, cross-country skiing, hunting/trapping/fishing, nature observation).
- Trail density is low. Trail routes are point to point and not sinuous in design. Trails are single track and natural surface (except as needed to protect the resource), although existing two-tracks may be allowed to remain.

Education Opportunities

- Primarily off-site.
- Interpretive signage is allowed at trail heads and at overlooks.

Visitor Experience

- Low visitor to visitor encounters.
- Visitors are engaged in high solitude, off-trail or trailed, self-reliant outdoor activities.
- High time commitment.
- High challenge and adventure.
- Discovery area with minimal on-site interpretation.
- Low noise tolerance.
- Low interaction with DNR staff.

Management Focus

- Maintain low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality.

Development

- Very low level for visitor accommodation (e.g., foot trails).
- Site hardening only allowed to protect sensitive resources (e.g., boardwalk).
- Little evidence of human activity

4.3 Developed Recreation Zone

The Developed Recreation Zone supports active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. This zone is approximately 25% of the park land and includes the modern campground, day-use area, trails around the marshes, boat launch, and the area for the existing and possibly relocated entrance road.

Natural Resources

- Natural resources may be actively managed and modified to support visitor activities.
- Water quality is maintained or restored.
- Vegetative management will address hazard trees, invasive species, and pests and disease, and will also be allowed to facilitate development, recreational use, and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape. Native vegetation is still emphasized. PRD's tree planting standards should be followed in this zone.

Cultural Resources

- Archaeological resources are preserved.
- Ethnographic resources are protected.
- Extant historic resources may be preserved, restored, or adaptively used to support visitor activities, operational or educational purposes.

Recreation Opportunities

- High levels of recreation activity in a highly structured environment.
- Visitors engaged in activities in diverse natural and modified land and water settings (e.g., hiking, modern and semi-modern camping, bicycling, horseback riding, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting/trapping, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, day use beach, swimming, picnicking, disc golf, and other day use activities where people congregate).
- Except in areas with Exemplary Natural Communities, trails may be sinuous to provide for recreational challenge. Multi-use linear trails are allowed in this zone.

Education Opportunities

- Interpretive signage may be provided at campgrounds, day use facilities, boating facilities, registration buildings, trail heads, on the trail, and at overlooks.
- Active programming at campgrounds and other areas where people congregate.

Visitor Experience

- High visitor to visitor encounters accommodated.
- Visitors engaged in activities in diverse land and water settings for recreation and education.

- Variable time commitment.
- Variable challenge and adventure.
- Variable level of exertion.
- High noise tolerance.
- High interaction with DNR staff.
- High accessibility.

Management Focus

- Maintain use of zone in accordance with PRD's mission.
- Management of people.
- Public safety.
- Protection of resources.
- Public accessibility.

Development

- High level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities (e.g., modern restrooms, walkways and parking, trails, benches, picnic tables, picnic shelters, modern and semi-modern campgrounds, modern cabins and shelters) for recreation and educational opportunities.
- Site hardening (e.g., boardwalks, fencing, surfaced pedestrian paths) as necessary to protect sensitive resources and provide accessibility.
- Strive for universal access in all new developments.



Campsites within the modern campground

4.4 Administrative Services Zone

This zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. Typically, it will include offices, contact stations, maintenance facilities and all related land base required to conduct the business of running a state park or park. This zone covers eleven acres (roughly 1%) of the park and includes the park headquarters area.

Natural Resources

- Natural resources may be actively managed and modified to support administrative and support activities.
- Vegetative management (primarily tree removal for safety) is allowed.

Cultural Resources

- Cultural resources and structures are preserved, adapted, or rehabilitated to support administrative activities.
- Historic structures should be re-purposed before new construction where possible.
- Non-utilized or non-stabilized structures may be removed.

Recreation Opportunities

- None

Education Opportunities

- Person-to-person contact at park headquarters for general information, both verbally and written (brochures, maps, etc.).
- Informational kiosk.

Visitor Experience

- Business and information only.
- High noise tolerance.
- High accessibility.

Management Focus

- The business of running a park.
- Appropriate facilities for staff, equipment and materials.
- Employee safety.
- Public access to office.

Development

- High level of development of facilities for support of administrative activities (e.g., office space, meeting rooms, employee locker room, employee eating area, shop space, storage space and related)
- Provide maximum level of accessibility for public.



Sterling State Park entry sign

4.5 Cultural Landscape Overlay

This zone addresses the overall cultural setting of a site. For example, a location associated with a particular cultural resource, such as an abandoned mine townsite representative of a bygone era, would qualify as a Cultural Landscape Zone. In this park, the Cultural Landscape Zone is used as an overlay (sub-set) of the management zones, and as such, the guidance for the underlying zone will also apply. The cultural landscape overlay covers portions of the park (about 25%) that have potential to include significant cultural resources.

Natural Resources

- Prescriptive description of the underlying zone will apply.

Cultural Resources

- Resources may include historic buildings, structures and objects, archaeological and ethnographic sites, and other landscape characteristics and features which represent cultural values and land use over time.
- Cultural resources are preserved or rehabilitated for visitor understanding and/or for compatible adaptive use by DNR or partners.
- Historic structures may be adaptively used for operational uses or educational purposes or preserved simply for their historic value.

Recreation Opportunities

- Visitors engaged in sightseeing, recreational, and educational activities in a cultural setting (e.g. automobile, bicycle, walking, hiking tour), compatible with and sensitive to the setting.
- Recreation opportunities as allowed by the underlying zone designation.

Education Opportunities

- Interpretive signage may be used at trail heads, on the trail, overlooks, and other points of interest.
- Moderate off-site interpretation.

Visitor Experience

- Visitor experience varies in accordance with the underlying zone

Management Focus

- Maintain cultural character of the zone, and if a sub-set of a resource zone, maintain emphasis on natural resource quality.
- Keep development consistent with the zone.

Development

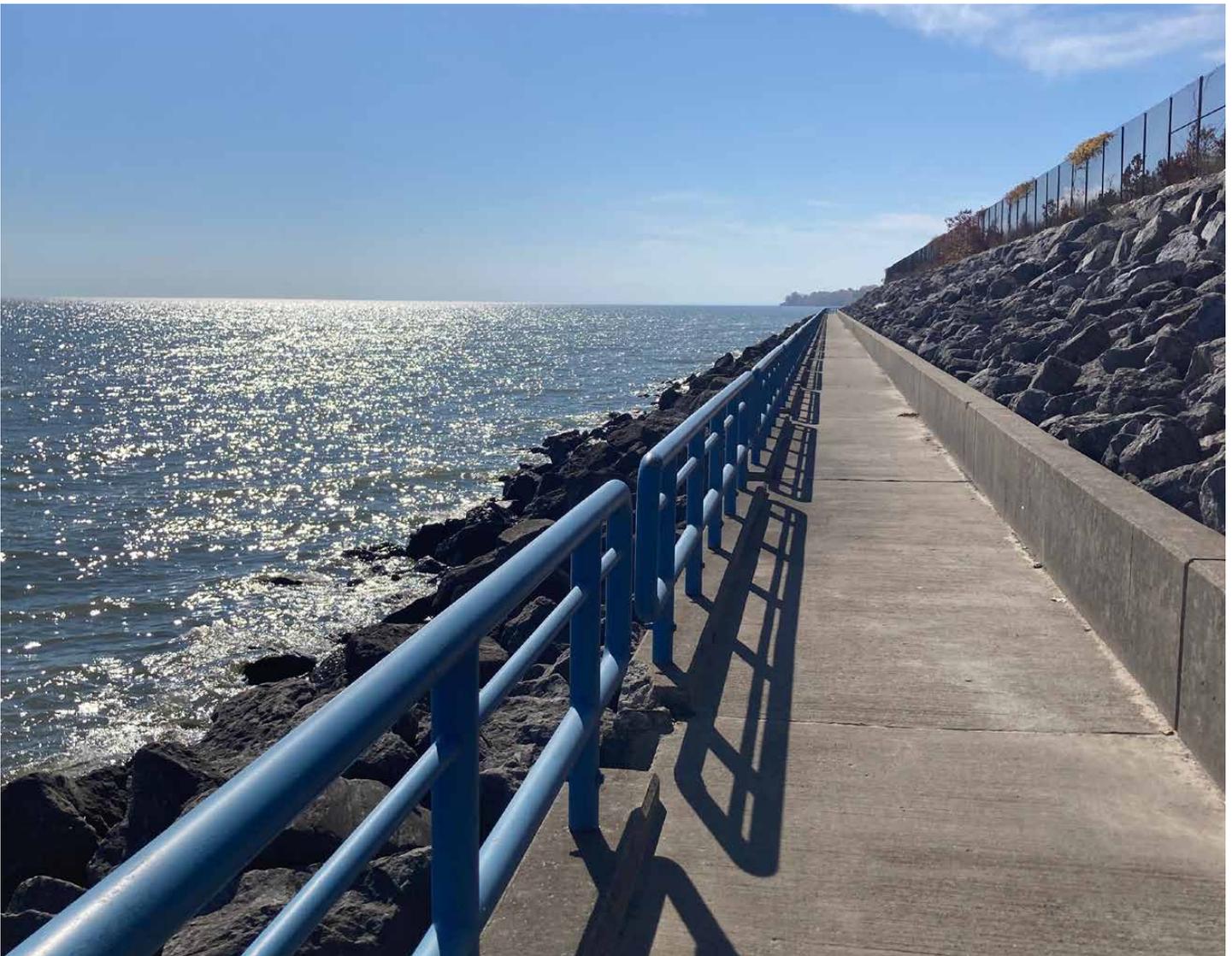
- Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape are tolerated.
- Level of development consistent with the underlying zone.



The beach along the Lake Erie shoreline

4.6 Confined Disposal Facility Zone

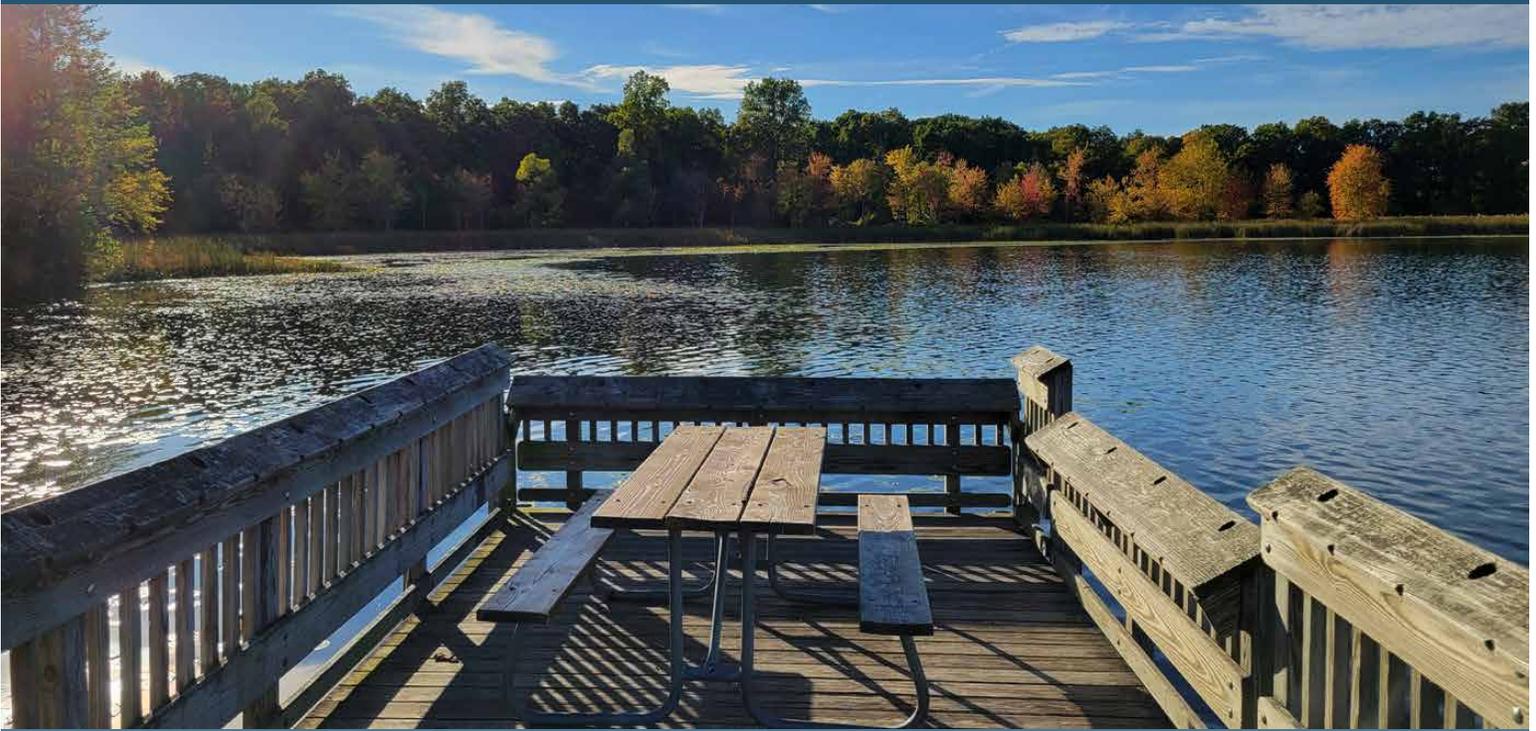
The Confined Disposal Facility Zone is located in the northeastern corner of Sterling State Park. United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) operates a confined disposal facility (CDF) in this area for storage of contaminated dredge spoils. This zone is intended to designate this area as a separate use from the rest of the park as the area is not open to the public. After the agreement has ended and the land is remediated by the USACE, operations will be assumed by the DNR and recreation opportunities for this area can be pursued under a different zone designation. This zone is 9% of the park and includes the area designated for the CDF.



A walkway along the side of the Confined Disposal Facility



Snow-covered trails with animal tracks and footprints



A fishing pier with picnic table at the Sterling State Park lagoons

Chapter Five:

Ten-Year Action Plan

5.1 Current Issues and Opportunities Overview

Sterling State Park currently faces several key issues that contribute to the need for long-range planning and action. These include:

- Though the park infrastructure is relatively new compared to many parks around the state, it was all constructed at a similar time around 20 years ago and so is starting to require repairs and upgrades at a similar time.
- The park land is low-lying, and as the water level of Lake Erie fluctuates, the trails built adjacent to the water can become inundated and erode. In addition, tree roots have been growing under the trails and deteriorate the trail condition. In order for these trails to continue to be usable for recreation, they must be reconstructed.
- The Lake Erie water quality can sometimes be too poor to allow swimming in the lake. As the beach is a key recreation feature at the park, this can leave many visitors looking for another form of recreation.
- Concessions at the park are currently limited, and the public desires additional food availability.
- The park receives high visitation, which presents challenges and opportunities. Traffic flow can be congested within the park, and the park entrance is not at a signalized intersection, which can cause difficulties entering and exiting the park. The entrance road to the park could be re-aligned to connect to an existing signalized intersection, which could also allow for the opportunity to add a non-motorized path along the road.
- The park is open to hunting, but it can be confusing to visitors where hunting is allowed.
- Fishing and boating infrastructure is in need of upgrade and repair, such as the fishing piers and fish cleaning station. A revision to the boat launch's traffic flow configuration has already been designed but needs to be implemented. In addition, since boating is so popular at the park, there is an opportunity for providing mooring for boats.
- The park connects to the River Raisin Heritage Trail and a broader history corridor in the area, which presents opportunities for interpretation as well as continued trail connectivity.
- Sustainability opportunities can be combined with infrastructure upgrades, such as considering the opportunity for alternative energy generation within the park as well as addressing stormwater management and site drainage when reconstructing parking lots that need to be repaired. In addition, the park can consider vegetation management such as designating no-mow zones and working towards cultivating appropriate tree species within the park.
- Prior earth-moving activities related to construction of the Confined Disposal Facility and other features within the park have left evidence on the landscape that needs to be restored.

5.2 Sterling State Park Ten-Year Action Plan

The planning team has developed a 10-year action plan that it believes includes actions necessary to guide management and development within Sterling State Park to achieve the desired resource protection and user experience. Action items are recommended that address natural resources, cultural resources, recreation opportunities, education/interpretation opportunities, and development. Any future improvements will be considered in the context of efficiency, environmental sustainability and resiliency, for example, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and solar energy infrastructure. These actions apply either to the whole park or to specific locations within the park, as appropriate, and according to the management zone. Refer to the zone descriptions in Chapter Four for appropriate activities in each zone.

Management plans do not guarantee future funding to achieve the actions identified but are based on funding realities and sound investment policies. 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.

Action items are prioritized 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 3-5 years. Priority Level 3 projects are desired but can be tackled in the next 6-10 years once funding has been identified. Some goals are intended to continue throughout the plan timeframe and are an “ongoing” priority. Opinion of probable costs have been developed for each capital outlay action goal identified (see Appendix C), and these projects will be included in the statewide master project list. The following tables outline the actions planned for the next ten years. In the program input column, the bolded party is the program lead.

Partner Projects

The following action item is currently in the design phase and will be completed in partnership with other entities.

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Stabilize the Clearwater Canal shoreline and reconstruct the trails around the lagoon, marshes, and Clearwater Canal.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager Michigan Department of Transportation Monroe County Environmental Protection Agency



A bike is parked along the side of the paved trail

Management and Operations

The following action items relate to the management and operations of the park.

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Continue to explore land acquisition within the GMP Proposed Project Boundary.	Ongoing	All	Park Manager Lands Liaison
Continue to implement phragmites removal efforts within the park. Work with partners to treat invasive species in the vicinity of the park.	Ongoing	All	Stewardship Park Manager Local Property Owners
Work with the Army Corps of Engineers to remove invasive species within the confined disposal facility.	Ongoing	Confined Disposal Facility	Stewardship Park Manager Army Corps of Engineers
Investigate water depths on the approach to the boat ramp within the park boundary to ensure they are sufficient for boating operations	1	Developed Recreation	Park Manager
Address landscaping needs in the developed recreation zone, including the planting of shade trees, removal of inappropriate vegetation and replacement with low maintenance plantings and identification of no-mow areas for environmental benefit and to discourage geese.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager Stewardship
Develop an interpretive trail to describe the park history and connection to the broader history corridor. Consider alternatives that are not subject to vandalism.	1	Developed Recreation	Engagement and Innovation Specialist Park Manager Marketing and Outreach Michigan History Center
Update the natural resources Stewardship Plan for the state park, identifying targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies, including invasive species management.	1	All	Stewardship Park Manager Fisheries Wildlife
Revise the wildlife conservation order that opens parts of the park to hunting to allow for hunting west of the non-motorized trail on the east shores of the lagoons rather than west of the park road for added clarity and safety.	2	All	Park Manager Regulatory Unit Manager Wildlife Law Enforcement Division

Management and Operations, Continued

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Assess the need for additional concessionaires and services. Consider the possibility of providing expanded kitchen or food preparation space for a concessionaire.	2	Developed Recreation	Commercial Services Administrator Park Manager
Consider options to increase shade in developed areas of the park through the addition of permanent or temporary shade shelters/sails or concession opportunities.	2	Developed Recreation	Park Manager Regional Planner
Explore the potential for alternative recreation opportunities or amenities to provide for times when the beach is closed.	3	All	Regional Planner Park Manager Commercial Services Administrator
Explore opportunities to provide boat mooring for campers and a drop-off pier to improve launch ramp functionality.	3	Developed Recreation	Park Manager Regional Planner
Study a potential relocation of the entrance road, including partial abandonment of Waterworks Road, to route traffic to an existing traffic signal on North Dixie Highway with the goal of improving traffic flow, safety, circulation at the sanitation station, and habitat quality. Include consideration of non-motorized transportation.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Study the potential for alternative energy generation, such as wind or solar power, to provide energy for the park.	3	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager Productivity Analyst
Consider the addition of EV charging stations to the parking areas.	3	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager Productivity Analyst

Infrastructure & Development: Capital Outlay

The following actions are larger projects that require the use of capital outlay funds.

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Complete an assessment of the headquarters building foundations and make repairs as recommended.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Replace one floating fishing pier in the lagoon south of the bridge.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Address the failing stormwater system beneath the park roads and parking lots.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Implement the re-design of the Bartnick Boat Launch traffic flow reconfiguration.	1	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Develop an accessible non-motorized watercraft launch within the park lagoons.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Replace the southern fishing pier near the campground and consider adding a pier on the lagoon near the causeway.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Rehabilitate the main park roads and day use parking lots. Study parking capacity and whether areas could be converted to pervious overflow parking areas.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Improve stormwater management, campsite grading, and drainage within the campground.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Complete the removal of fill and haul road remaining from the construction of the Confined Disposal Facility and restore the area to native vegetation.	2	Primitive	Stewardship Regional Planner Park Manager
Perform a structural inspection and modernize the Midway Day-Use Toilet Building.	2	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Perform a phase 1 archaeological survey of the land within the cultural landscape overlay zone and additional targeted areas.	2	Cultural Landscape Overlay	DNR Archaeologist Park Manager
Modernize or replace the toilet building at the boat launch.	3	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Design and construct a new modern toilet building at the trailhead.	3	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager
Upgrade the electrical service in the campground.	3	Developed Recreation	Regional Planner Park Manager

Infrastructure & Development: Small Projects

The following action items can be funded through the Small Projects funding source.

ACTION	PRIORITY	MANAGEMENT ZONE	PROGRAM INPUT FROM
Add outdoor shower stations in the vicinity of the beach.	1	Developed Recreation	Park Manager
Replace the fish cleaning station in kind.	1	Developed Recreation	Park Manager
Add a park entrance sign on Waterworks Road.	1	Developed Recreation	Park Manager

Proposed Wildlife Conservation Order Revision



Sterling State Park- Land Open to Hunting 0 0.3 0.6 Miles

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- State Park Boundary
- River/Stream
- Road
- Zone A
- Zone B
- Zone C
- Closed to Hunting

Hunting Regulation Change Area



Updated: 02/15/2024

Wildlife Conservation Order

7.35 Sterling state park, trapping and waterfowl hunting allowed; exceptions. Sec. 7.35:

- (1) Trapping shall be allowed during the established trapping seasons on all state-owned lands in the dedicated boundary except within the developed areas of land known as the Bartnik boat launch, the park headquarters, the beach and picnic areas and campground of Sterling state park.
- (2) Waterfowl hunting shall be allowed from the day after Labor Day to September 15 and in January and February during established seasons south and west of the park entrance road (Zone B), except there shall be no taking of any animals after 10:00 a.m. and shooting from the east shore of the lagoons shall be in a westerly direction only.
- (3) Waterfowl hunting shall be allowed from the day after Labor Day through the end of February during the established seasons on all state-owned lands in the dedicated park boundary in (Zone C) the southernmost 300 acres, known as the Union camp marsh, bordered by Elm street on the south, interstate highway I-75 on the west, the south shore of the Clearwater drain on the north and the Ford River Raisin Warehouse property on the east. In addition, (Zone A) the area east of Waterworks road, west of the Army Corps of Engineers confined disposal facility fence extending out halfway into the water channel and south of Sandy creek and north of the park entrance road, also known as the old campground (restored lake plain prairie area) and Sterling harbor basin; except within developed areas of land known as the Bartnik boat launch.

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A view of watercraft on Lake Erie

Chapter Six:

Implementation Strategy

This chapter of the general management plan (GMP) provides guidance for implementation of the action plan and maintaining the plan so it remains relevant in the long term. These guidelines will also help the park align the action plan 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.

All proposed changes in the park should be reviewed to ensure they are in compliance with the approved Management Zones.

6.1 Implementation Toolbox

The following is a list of items to consider when reviewing and prioritizing the implementation of action items 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 plan.
- Follow-up regularly on progress for action items that are not the primary responsibility of the Unit Supervisor with the responsible program position.

Funding

- Estimated costs for capital outlay projects are included in the Opinion of Probable costs section. These costs should be refined and adjusted by the Regional Field Planner as designs and studies are completed.
- Identify potential funding sources for each project/task. Liaise with PRD grants coordinator as appropriate.
- Align potential funding sources with the annual capital outlay funding requests.
- Request District Small Project funding through the District Supervisor for small projects identified in the 10-year Action Plan.

Scheduling

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

6.2 Documentation of Changes

The Unit Supervisor 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 five-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 it. In reviewing the action plan for changes, documentation should be provided for goals that may become irrelevant or are no longer viable, as well as proposed new action items, including justification.



An angler displays their catch



A child enjoys a snack at a park picnic table

The management zoning map should also be reviewed regularly. Any proposed changes to the map related to land acquisition or disposal, errors in the original zoning, or land management changes should be documented. Note that 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.

6.3 Documentation of Accomplishments

As action items are completed, the Unit Supervisor 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.

6.4 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 five-year review is made up of the Park Management Plan Administrator, Unit Supervisor, Regional Field Planner and District Supervisor, with other team members included as may be necessary. A Five-Year Review Form will be used to record all changes to the plan within the past five 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 plan, the planning team will complete the Five-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 complete GMP planning process led by the Park Management Plan Administrator. If changes to the action plan only are required, the Phase 2 GMP planning process will be implemented.

Park Profile

AREA	1,341
COUNTY	Monroe
TOWNSHIP	City of Monroe/ Frenchtown Charter Twp.
LATITUDE	41° 54' 56" N
LONGITUDE	83° 20' 1" W
ADDRESS	2800 State Park Road Monroe MI, 48162
PHONE	734-289-2715



Appendix A: Supporting Analysis

A.1 Park Overview

William C. Sterling State Park is the only Michigan state park on Lake Erie, located approximately 45 minutes from Detroit in Monroe County. Just a few miles from the Ohio border, Sterling State Park is recognized as a gateway park: the first stop for out-of-state visitors. Established in 1935, the park is named for William Clark Sterling (1849–1924), a businessman, waterfowl hunter, boating enthusiast and outdoorsman of Monroe, Michigan. The park’s 1,341 acres include over ¾ of a mile (4,360’) of sandy beach on Lake Erie, boating and shore fishing, the lagoon and Clear Water Drain, lakefront camping, wildlife viewing and seven miles of trails. The park is well known for its access to walleye and perch fisheries.

Over 95% of the wetlands along the western shore of Lake Erie have been lost. The park protects over 500 acres of Great Lakes emergent and submergent marsh. These marshes are important stop over habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. The park’s marshes and prairie protect 15 rare species including the federally listed white prairie fringed orchid, which was discovered after lakeplain prairie was restored. Nine rare mussels, including two that are federally

endangered, are found in the waters within the park and Lake Erie near shore area.

In the northeast corner of the park, the United States Army Corps of Engineers operates a confined disposal facility for contaminated dredge spoils.

Location & Community

Sterling State Park is situated between the Detroit and Toledo metropolitan areas in the southeastern-most corner of the State of Michigan. Most of the park is in Frenchtown Township, with a small portion in the City of Monroe, the county seat of Monroe County. Monroe County borders the State of Ohio (Lucas County) to the south with the Lake Erie shoreline forming the eastern boundary. Monroe County is part of a region with an identity strongly linked to the Great Lakes and the transportation and agricultural industries. The county features a rural landscape, historic small and medium-sized towns, with a limited amount of suburban and commercial development and some significant industrial components including two power plants (one nuclear) and several current and former rock quarries.

Sterling State Park is accessed from Dixie Highway, which runs along the lakeshore between Monroe and Detroit and features a paved shoulder/bike lane. Interstate 75 is just one mile west of the park, providing the primary north-south link between Detroit and Toledo. The River Raisin Heritage Trail also provides non-motorized access to the park from the City of Monroe and various points of interest.

Sterling State Park is part of the River Raisin Heritage Corridor, for which an updated planning effort was completed in 2022. The Heritage Corridor Plan brings together Sterling State Park along with the River Raisin National Battlefield Park and other historic, natural, and cultural sites in Monroe under one planning effort that seeks to “enhance unique places where residents and visitors can connect with significant stories and enjoy the landscapes of Monroe” .

The US Census Bureau considers portions of northern Monroe County as part of the Detroit Urbanized Area and parts of southern Monroe County as part of the Toledo Urbanized Area. In 2000, the City of Monroe and portions of surrounding

townships were designated as the Monroe Urbanized Area, The 2020 Census also considered Monroe County, as part of the Detroit-Warren- Ann Arbor-Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) Monroe County is an active member of both the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG).

A.2 Demographics

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Monroe County has a population of 155,274 in 2021, a 0.3% increase from 2010. The population density of the county is 281.8 persons per square mile compared to 178 statewide. The community is predominantly white, with white alone, not Hispanic or Latino, making up 90.4% of the population, compared to 74.2% in Michigan as a whole. The age and sex statistics are on par with those of the state. The median household income for Monroe County is \$65,453, compared to \$59,234 in Michigan. The number of persons over 25 years with a bachelor’s degree or higher, 21%, is lower than the state average of 30%.

Geography Quickfacts

FACT	MONROE CO.	MICHIGAN
Population per square mile, 2020	281.8	178.0
Land area in square miles, 2020	549.35	56,608.22

Population Quickfacts

FACT	MONROE CO.	MICHIGAN
Population estimates, July 1, 2021, (V2021)	155,274	10,050,811
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2021)	154,809	10,077,331
Population, percent change- April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2021, (V2021)	0.3%	-0.3%
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	152,021	9,883,640
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.1%	5.5%
Persons under 18 years, percent	21.1%	21.4%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	19.3%	18.1%
Female persons, percent	50.3%	50.4%
White alone, percent	93.9%	79.0%
Black or African American alone, percent	2.9%	14.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.4%	0.7%
Asian alone, percent	0.7%	3.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	Z	Z
Two or More Races, percent	2.0%	2.7%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	4.0%	5.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	90.4%	74.2%
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent age 1+, 2013 – 2017	68.4%	85.4%
High school graduate or higher, percent age 25+, 2016 – 2020	91.4%	91.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent age 25+, 2016 – 2020	21.0%	28.1%
Median household income (in 2017 dollars), 2016- 2020	\$65,453	\$59,234
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2020 dollars), 2016 – 2020	\$33,202	\$ 32,854
Persons in poverty, percent	9.7%	13.1%

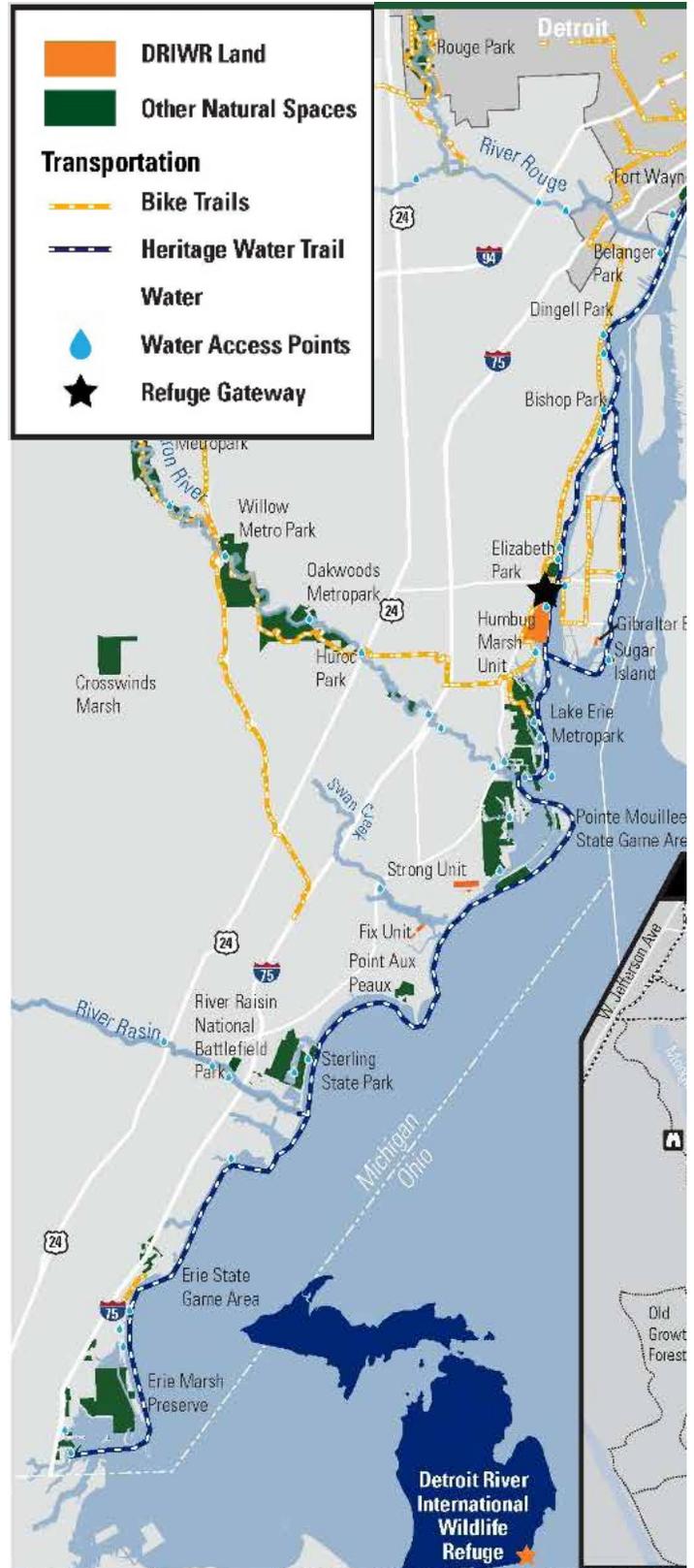
Frenchtown Township and the City of Monroe are two of the most populous municipalities in Monroe County, with estimated populations of 21,643 and 20,336, respectively, as of 2021. The City of Monroe is showing a slight decline in population, while Frenchtown Township is showing a slight increase. The township continues to have predominantly agricultural land use, but steady increases in development continue, particularly near Lake Erie and in the southern and central portions of the township near the City of Monroe.

A.3 Regional Recreation Resources

The area around Monroe offers a variety of public and private recreation opportunities for visitors and residents. Below are the primary opportunities located within a 30-mile radius of Sterling State Park in Michigan. Additional opportunities are available in Ohio but are not listed here.

Federal Recreation Resources

- Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge:** The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established in 2001 as a result of bi-national efforts from politicians, conservation leaders, and local communities to build a sustainable future for the Detroit River and western Lake Erie ecosystems. Because of this collaboration, international status was given to the refuge — making it the first of its kind in North America. The refuge consists of nearly 6,000 acres of unique habitat, including islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands within an authorized boundary extending along 48 miles of shoreline. The international wildlife refuge’s Ford Marsh Unit borders Sterling State Park to the south. The 240-acre marsh exemplifies Lake Erie’s coastal wetlands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the marsh to promote habitat for native species, including migrating and wintering waterfowl.
- River Raisin National Battlefield Park,** preserves, commemorates and interprets the January 1813 battles of the War of 1812 and their aftermath in Monroe and Wayne counties in southeast Michigan. The battle resulted in the greatest victory for the British, who were aligned with Tecumseh’s American Indian confederation, and the greatest defeat for the U.S. The massacre that followed the battle, in which wounded American prisoners were killed, incited the emotional rally cry, “Remember the Raisin,” spurring support for the rest of the war. Located just north of I-75 in the City of Monroe, the park has a Visitor and Education Center and a paved 0.6-mile Battlefield Loop Trail with historical markers. Additionally, a 1-mile wood chip Mason Run Loop Trail traverses the Battlefield grounds where ‘living history’ demonstrations are re-enacted. Still in its early development stages, this park’s master plan envisions restoration of the French Ribbon farms established in the late 1700’s along the banks of the River Raisin. The park is also a key destination on the **River Raisin Heritage Trail**, eight miles of paved hike-bike trails connecting major historic sites, multi-jurisdictional parks, monuments, and important natural and ecological features.



A map of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

- **Huron River National Water Trail** is a 104-mile (167 km) inland paddling trail connecting people to the river's natural environment, its history and the communities it touches in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Huron River empties into Lake Erie approximately ten miles north of Sterling State Park.

State Recreation Resources

State Parks

There are no state parks, recreation areas or state trails within 30 miles of Sterling State Park. The closest parks are Belle Isle Park and Milliken State Park on the Detroit River in the City of Detroit, and Lake Hudson Recreation Area, 55 miles to the east in Lenawee County.

State Game Areas

The following State Game Areas, providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, wildlife watching, and other recreational opportunities are located in Monroe County.

- **Erie State Game Area** (approx. 3,221 acres) is located just north of the Ohio state line along the shores of Lake Erie. The area is open to hunting and features islands, peninsulas, extensive mudflats, and the outlet of the Ottawa River and several creeks.
- **Petersburg State Game Area** (approx. 616 acres) is located about 15 miles east of Sterling State Park. The area is known for quality small game and upland game bird hunting opportunities and features the rare oak openings ecosystem that has been the focus of many restoration efforts. There are large fields of Lupine wildflowers and as recently as 2014 sustained a population of Karner Blue Butterflies.
- **Pointe Aux Peaux State Wildlife Area** (approx. 185 acres) is an area of primarily mudflats, with a 90 acre water level controlled wetland. It is located south of the Enrico Fermi Nuclear Plant in Frenchtown Charter Township.
- **Pointe Mouillee State Game Area** (approx. 5,159 acres) is located in northern Monroe County and southern Wayne County at the confluence of the Huron River, Detroit River, and Lake Erie. The area features several islands including Celeron and Stony Islands in the Detroit River and adjacent marsh/mudflats. The main unit is one of the largest fresh water marsh restoration projects in North America and includes areas managed as a wildlife refuge with limited access and a managed waterfowl hunt area with permit and use restrictions for hunting. There are also thousands of acres open to all public hunting with no permit required. It is one of the top birding areas in the Mid-west because of the diversity of bird species and the diversity of habitat. Recognized as an International Shorebird Importance area in 2001 with 10,000-20,000 shorebirds annually documented as using the area. Muskrat trapping is allowed by permit and has a long history in this area.
- **Crystal Waters State Game Area** (approx. 680 acres) is

the newest State Game Areas (acquired in 2021) located in northern Monroe County. The land was previously used for sand and gravel mining. The property provides public access to a variety of hunting and fishing opportunities, seven inland water bodies (the only publicly accessible inland lakes in Monroe County), and more than six miles of hiking trails. Several years of land management and improvement projects are ongoing.

Pure Michigan Byways (Heritage Route)

Pure Michigan Byways are specially designated and signed state trunkline routes with special significance. The Michigan Heritage Route Program, the original name for the Pure Michigan Byways, was created by the Public Act 69 of 1993 and designed to identify, inventory, protect, enhance, and in some cases, promote state trunklines and adjacent land with distinctive or unique scenic, cultural or historic qualities.

- **Monroe Street Pure Michigan Byway** - The portion of M-125 through the Old Village Historic District of downtown Monroe was designated as one of Michigan's first Historical Heritage Routes in 1996. Monroe Street provides a reflection of 200 years of history, including residential, religious and commercial landmarks and structures, as well as natural resources such as the historic River Raisin, known by Native Americans as "Numaseppee" or River of Sturgeon.

Huron Clinton Metroparks

- **Lake Erie Metropark** (1,607 acres) is located approximately 24 miles north of Sterling State Park. The park features 3 miles of shoreline, an 18-hole golf course, swimming pool, Marshlands Museum and Nature Center, boat launches, marina, hiking trails, playground, and opportunities for kayaking and fishing.
- **Oakwoods Metropark** (1,756 acres) is located along the lower Huron River, connected to Willow and Lower Huron Metroparks via a 15-mile paved hike-bike trail. This metropark features scenic woods, Nature Center, an equestrian trail, picnic areas and kayak and fishing access.
- **Willow Metropark** (1,531 acres) is located off I-275, just south of I-94, 17 miles north of Sterling State Park. This park includes acres of mature woodlands, 17-acre Washago Pond and the picturesque Huron River. Recreation opportunities include hike-bike trails, cross-country skiing, fishing, golf, disc golf and a children's play area.
- **Lower Huron Metropark** (1,258 acres) of mature woodlands, grassy meadows, and the scenic Huron River. Recreation opportunities include hiking/biking on paved trails, shore fishing, canoeing, picnicking, basketball, volleyball, and tennis. The Turtle Cove Family Aquatic Center located within the park features a water slide and lazy river.

County Recreation Resources

Monroe County has six county parks under the jurisdiction of

the Parks and Recreation Commission, consisting of 221 acres of land.

- **Heck Park** (15 acres) is located on N. Dixie Highway in Frenchtown Township. It contains a Veteran’s memorial and museum, pavilion, sledding hill, walking paths, play and exercise areas, basketball courts, benches and grills.
- **Nike Park** (80 acres), located on Newport Road in Frenchtown Township, includes a picnic area, play equipment, pathways, a model aircraft flying area, dog training area, soccer fields, picnic pavilions and other amenities.
- **Vienna Park** (57 acres), located in Bedford Township at the south of the county, has a small pond and natural area as well as play equipment, a disc golf course, paved parking areas, ball diamonds, soccer fields, horseshoes, and picnic facilities
- **Waterloo Park** (9 acres) is located on the River Raisin at the end of Mulhollen Drive in Monroe Township. Although it is the smallest county park, it has many facilities, including a fishing pier, canoe landing, paved path, exercise equipment, picnic shelters and playground.
- **West County Park** (60 acres) is on Rightmire Road in Dundee Township. This site, which fronts the River Raisin, features restored natural areas, trails, small shelters, parking areas, river access and benches. A Native American memorial project provides a small gathering space and tribute area.
- **Navarre-Anderson Trading Post and Territorial Park** (5.6 acres) in Frenchtown Township is a county-owned historical site consisting of restored and recreated historic structures, a historic schoolhouse repurposed as a

country store, interpretive information, and scenic open space along the River Raisin. It is also used as a canoe/kayak landing and has a wade-in fishing access point.

Municipal Recreation Resources

Frenchtown Township has three small community parks and several neighborhood/subdivision parks featuring play equipment and beach access.

The City of Monroe has four community parks featuring playgrounds, river access and other recreational facilities, in addition to the larger Munson Park and a number of smaller neighborhood parks serving local residents.

- **Munson Park**, the city’s largest park located at the west end of the city, is adjacent to the Monroe Custer Airport. The park features hiking and biking trails, tennis and sand volleyball courts, a skate park, picnic shelters, fishing pond, play structure, sledding hill, natural areas, community gardens, and softball, baseball, and soccer fields.
- **River Raisin Heritage Trail** is an 8-mile paved hike-bike trail that connects Sterling State Park and the City of Monroe’s Munson Park. The trail winds along the River Raisin, also connecting major historic sites such as the River Raisin National Battlefield, state and local parks, nationally significant buildings, monuments and important natural and ecological features. The trail terminates at the historic Navarre-Anderson Trading Post (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and Territorial Park. Several trailheads and amenities are provided along the way, including St. Mary’s Park Trailhead.



River Raisin Heritage Trail System brochure

Collaborative Recreation Efforts

The **Great Lakes Way** is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to create a connected set of greenways and blueways, creating a route from Lake Huron through western Lake Erie through Monroe, Wayne, Macomb, and St. Clair counties. It links both existing and proposed trails to form a route of 160 miles of greenways and 156 miles of blueways.

Water Recreation

Located on the shores of Lake Erie, with three major rivers and several creeks draining into the lake, Monroe County has ample opportunities for water recreation.

Public Access Sites in Monroe County:

Public Access Sites in Monroe County

SITE NAMES	WATER BODY	DESCRIPTION	MANAGING UNIT
Pointe Mouillee State Game Area	Lake Erie, Huron River	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced boat ramp with limited water depth, 60 parking spaces	Michigan DNR
Mouillee Creek Mouth	Lake Erie, Mouillee Creek	Boating Access Site with gravel-surfaced ramp, suitable for medium-sized and smaller boats only, 10 parking spaces	Michigan DNR
Swan Creek – Dixie Highway	Lake Erie, Swan Creek	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced boat ramp with limited water depth, restroom, 22 parking spaces	Michigan DNR – La Salle Twp.
Wolverine Park	River Raisin	Canoe/Kayak launch, fishing	Village of Dundee
Erie State Game Area	Lake Erie	Boat launch	Michigan DNR
Luna Pier Lake Erie Accessible Boat Launch	Lake Erie	Boat launch	City of Luna Pier
Luna Pier Boat Launch	Lake Erie	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced boat ramp with limited water depth	City of Luna Pier
Hellenberg Park	Lake Erie, River Raisin	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced ramp, 50 parking spaces.	City of Monroe
Ford Park	River Raisin	Hard surface, medium watercraft, boat launch, fishing	Village of Dundee
Ida-Maybee Rd	River Raisin	Kayak launch and fishing	Monroe County
Lauer-Finzel Lot	River Raisin	Kayak launch, fishing	City of Monroe
Veteran’s Park	River Raisin	Fishing	City of Monroe
Bolles Harbor of Refuge	Lake Erie, La Plaisance Creek	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced boat ramp with limited water depth, restrooms	Michigan DNR
Waterloo Park	River Raisin	Fishing pier, canoe landing	Monroe County
Raisinville Rd.	River Raisin	Kayak launch, fishing	Raisinville Twp
Halfway Creek	Lake Erie	Boating Access Site with hard-surfaced boat ramp with limited water depth, restroom, 46 parking spaces.	Michigan DNR

Source: *Monroe County Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan, 2019-2023*

Water Trails

A water trail is a designated route on a navigable waterway such as a lake, river, canal or bay, that is designed and managed to create a positive outdoor recreation experience for the user. Water trails feature well-developed access points, often are near significant historical, environmental or cultural points of interest and often have nearby amenities like restaurants, hotels and campgrounds.

- **Huron River Water Trail** (nationally and state designated) – see description under Federal Recreation Resources above
- **Central River Raisin Water Trail** (state designated) – 11 miles transitioning from a natural environment west of the City of Monroe to an urban environment within the city.

Other paddling opportunities in the area (not designated as water trails) are inventoried in the Monroe County Water Trail Master Plan and include the following:

- **Upper River Raisin** – 17 miles from Petersburg to west of Monroe
- **Lake Erie** - Four routes are identified in Monroe County totaling 42 miles. Parts of these trails are on the open waters of Lake Erie, which can be dangerous and change quickly. Sea kayaks are recommended for travel on the Great Lakes.
 - Lower Huron/Pte. Moullee/Swan Creek
 - Brest Bay/Lower Raisin/Bolles Harbor: includes the shoreline and lagoons at Sterling State Park.
 - Otter Creek/Toledo Beach/Luna Pier
 - Erie/North Maumee Bay

Private Recreational Areas

The following are just some of the private recreation opportunities available in Monroe County.

- Camping opportunities in Monroe County are available mainly in private campgrounds, except for Sterling State Park.
- Monroe County has thousands of boat slips in privately owned marinas up and down the Lake Erie coastline. The marinas vary widely in terms of size and facilities. Indoor boat storage, charter fishing, oil and gasoline sales, bait and tackle, boat rental, and other services are available at select locations.
- There are 20 golf courses in Monroe County, plus additional driving ranges. There are no municipally owned courses in the county, and some of the courses are open only to members.
- The many sportsman's clubs in Monroe County reflect the area's heritage as one of the region's premier waterfowl hunting areas. Monroe County contains 12 shooting ranges, most of which are private clubs, with facilities for archery, skeet shooting, target shooting, and other firearm activities.

- Other attractions in the county include riding stables, a racetrack and drag strip, farm tours and orchards, drive in theater as well as indoor facilities such as bowling alley, skating rink, gyms and fitness centers, swimming pools and movie theaters.

Nature Preserves

- **Erie Marsh Preserve** (2,200 acres), managed by The Nature Conservancy, is located on North Maumee Bay, south of the City of Monroe. It represents 11% of the remaining marshland in southeastern Michigan and is one of the largest marshes on Lake Erie. This preserve plays an important role as a migratory and nesting area for shorebirds, waterfowl, land birds, and, in the fall, raptors. The preserve also harbors threatened and rare species including American lotus, swamp rose-mallow, and eastern fox snake.

Historic Places

As one of the oldest Euro-American settlements in the Lower Peninsula, Monroe has many historical sites, most notably the River Raisin National Battlefield described above under Federal Resources. There are also many historic buildings and transportation routes in the area, some of which are recognized on the State or National Registers of Historic Places. These include the George Armstrong Custer Equestrian Monument, the Sawyer House, Governor Robert McClelland House, Michigan Historic Crossroads informational site at the Welcome Center on I-75 and the Michigan Southern Railroad at Flat Iron City Park.

The Monroe County History Room and Museum, located on Monroe Street, offers history exhibits and special programs. Permanent exhibits and regularly changing displays illustrate past lives and experiences of Monroe County people, pioneer history, agriculture, military history, industry, business, and the home.

A.4 History of Sterling State Park

Indigenous peoples harvested, hunted and fished the River Raisin and the Lake Erie marshes of present-day Sterling State Park for thousands of years. Resources were abundant and travel relatively easy, drawing Anishinaabe and other First Peoples to this rich landscape. The Potawatomi lived here when the first European settlers arrived in the River Raisin delta. In 1775, a depot of the Northwest Fur Company was established on the River Raisin. The City of Monroe, then named Frenchtown, was founded in 1778, making it the second oldest city in Michigan. The Potawatomi granted land to French settlers for the Sandy Creek Settlement in what is now Sterling State Park as early as 1780. By the War of 1812, the settlement consisted of possibly sixteen homes but was abandoned in 1813 following the Battle of Frenchtown. Beginning in 1834, the City of Monroe and the Federal Government embarked on an ambitious project to

create a navigable canal at the mouth of the River Raisin. When the canal was completed, a series of wooden piers and warehouses were built to accommodate the resulting shipping trade. Monroe became established as Michigan's only port on Lake Erie, as well as a center of activity for hunting, trapping, and fishing in the marshes. The Indigenous groups living in present day southeastern Michigan and northern Ohio ultimately ceded the land to the British and United States governments through a series of treaties between 1785 and 1855.

In 1775, a depot of the Northwest Fur Company was established on the River Raisin. The City of Monroe, then named Frenchtown, was founded in 1778, making it the second oldest city in Michigan. Beginning in 1834, the City of Monroe and the Federal Government embarked on an ambitious project to create a navigable canal at the mouth of the River Raisin. When the canal was completed, a series of wooden piers and warehouses were built to accommodate the resulting shipping trade. The town became established as Michigan's only port on Lake Erie, as well as a center of activity for hunting, trapping, and fishing in the marshes.

The present-day state park is named for William Clark Sterling (1849–1924), a businessman and outdoorsman of Monroe, Michigan.

William C. Sterling was instrumental in founding the Monroe Marsh Club, a hunting club formed several years after the famous Golo Club dissolved (1881). William's father, J. M. Sterling was a founding member of the Golo Club (1854). The Monroe Marsh Club leased and purchased about 5,000 acres of marsh, including land that would become William C. Sterling State Park. The club house of the Monroe Marsh Club was moved to the nascent Sterling State Park for use as a pavilion.

A successful trespass lawsuit was brought by William C. Sterling, trustee for the Monroe Marsh Club, against the Liberal Club, a rival hunting club. The suit was landmark

because it established the principle that the right of hunting and shooting of wild fowl was vested in the owner of the soil.

By 1905, an estimated 70,000 people were visiting Lake Erie at the River Raisin's terminus each summer for recreation. The Monroe Piers Resort Park included a lighthouse, casino and dancing pavilion, swimming beach, commercial roller coaster, carousel and a small luxury hotel, the Hotel Lotus. Viewing of the epic floral display the aquatic American lotus was a major draw.

William C. Sterling began a carp farm operation in 1916 that provided fish for sale in eastern markets like New York and for international trade to the Far East. The carp rearing ponds likely included some of what is now Sterling State Park's Union Camp Marsh. In 1927, the Monroe Carp Pond Company sued the River Raisin Paper Company, because the company's effluent was killing the farmed carp. It is one our nation's earliest environmental lawsuits. While the suit established that pollution was causing environmental harm, the judgment was largely for the paper company, recognizing its greater economic importance to the City of Monroe.

The Newton Steel Company purchased 350 acres of former Monroe Marsh Club lands in 1928 for the development of a steel plant on the north bank of the River Raisin (adjacent to modern day Sterling State Park). This purchase marked the end of the resort and hunt club era and began the transformation of the River Raisin delta into an industrial zone. The plant, which later became the Ford Plant, employed hundreds of workers, but public access to the Lake Erie and its beaches was then a thing of the past.

William Sterling also had an interest in rowing, participating in the first regatta of the Northwestern Amateur Rower's Association at Toledo, Ohio, in 1869. The enthusiasm for the regatta lead to the formation of several Monroe rowing clubs. When the Monroe Yacht Club was organized in 1887, William C. Sterling was named its first commodore. A small clubhouse was erected on the south side of the piers in 1902. A few years later, the Monroe Parks and Resort Company erected a "Casino" adjacent to the Yacht Club to serve as an event and entertainment venue for the many visitors to the area. As tourism dwindled, the Yacht Club purchased the casino for their clubhouse. The building was moved across the ice in 1927 to the Monroe Piers Land Company property, that would later become part of Sterling State Park. After the dissolution of the Yacht Club in 1935, the building was given to the state and became a park pavilion and concession stand.

Ten years after William C. Sterling's death, a group of Monroe citizens, including his son W. C. Sterling Jr., worked to have the marshland north of the River Raisin become a state park named in his honor. The state acquired the park's first



William C. Sterling and friends hunting at Lucky Point c.1915

acres—a narrow strip lying between Lake Erie and a lagoon—in 1935. The land was donated by the City of Monroe and the Monroe Piers Land Company, which had once been owned by Sterling. An additional 395 acres was under a 30-year lease from the Monroe Yacht Club and included the club house. The state park was dedicated in 1936, initially called Monroe State Park, It was renamed William C. Sterling State Park in 1937/38, a requirement of the deed.

Work to improve the park began in 1936 under the Works Progress Administration, an American New Deal agency employing millions of job-seekers (mostly unskilled men) to carry out public works projects. Improvements included beach cleanup and landscaping, construction of changing booths and box toilet buildings, club house renovation, roadway and bridge improvements and hand pumps.

Further land purchases in 1938 and 1942 added 312 acres and additional lake frontage to the park. A master plan was prepared for the park and approved by the Conservation Commission in December 1943. Detailed construction plans were completed for parking areas, playground, roads, walks and beach development. Improvements through the late 1940s and early 1950s included expansion of the picnic area and facilities, and two new employee residences, replacing old buildings that were razed.

Sterling State Park was closed for a year in 1952 due to flooding as a result of high lake levels and wind setup from a severe storm. Tons of sand were washed from the shoreline, resulting in the loss of many large trees and the old Monroe Yacht Club clubhouse. Major repairs were completed to roads, parking areas and buildings, with assistance from local citizens. A lagoon was excavated in 1955, using the excavated material as fill to add approximately 265 acres of land, increasing parking and adding day-use facilities. According to an April 7, 1955 article in the Monroe Evening News, “filling in part of the lagoon and swamp will increase the land area of the park from about 75 acres to approximately 340 acres. Water areas will be

reduced from 479 acres to 165 acres.”

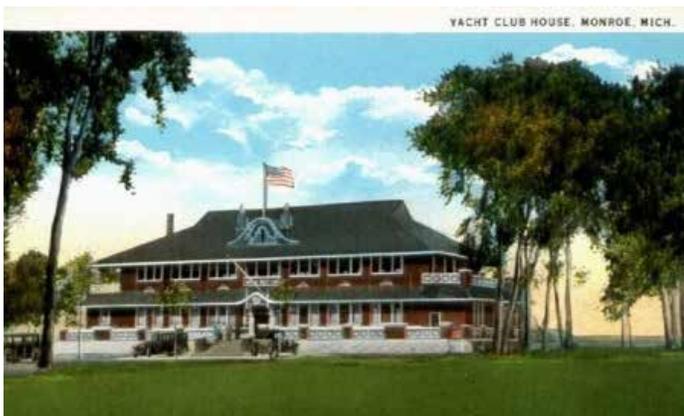
This loss of 479 acres of submergent and emergent marsh was a tremendous loss of wetland. There is evidence that the area of the excavated lagoon was farmed, at least during low lake levels and as early as 1932. The perimeter of the farmed area was ditched. The first evidence of this ditching is from a park reconnaissance map from 1932 and a nautical chart from 1934. Whether the ditching alone was sufficient to drain the former marsh sufficiently for farming or whether the area was dewatered by means of pumping water is unclear. What is clear is that the marsh was impacted by agriculture prior to the 1955-57 dredging and that for various periods of time, high water sometimes flooded the farmed fields.

In the 1960s and 1970s, waste from surrounding city sewers, along with pesticides and fertilizers from agricultural operations, made its way into Lake Erie and caused eutrophication (premature aging) of the lake, killing fish and causing unsightly algae. These pollution problems resulted in beach closures and dramatically reduced visitor numbers, from a high of over 1.2 million visitors reported in 1959. Phosphorus inputs were reduced by half from the 70’s and 80’s as a result of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the United States and Canada which resulted in Lake Erie becoming one of the greatest ecosystem recoveries in the world.

In 1963/64 infrastructure improvements took place using bond program funds, including a new water distribution system, entrance roads and drives, buildings, sewage disposal, storm drainage and electrical distribution system. A new master plan for the park was approved in 1968 and revised in 1972 and 1976. A new campground was developed in several loops west of the lagoon using Capital Improvement funds. Development and land acquisition continued through the 70s and 80s, with the campground connected to municipal sewer in 1978.

In the 1983, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) created a Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) within the boundary of Sterling State Park by removing uncontaminated material from the Lake Erie shoreline and bottomland and placing it in several locations in the park. This material was partly redistributed as part of an ecological restoration project completed in 2014. The CDF is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and is operated and maintained by the Detroit District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It has an area of 89 acres, a total constructed capacity of 4,300,000 cubic yards, and receives about 80,000 cubic yards every two to three years. It had an approximate remaining capacity of 1,400,000 cubic yards as of 2015.

In 2001, William C. Sterling State Park was included as the



Monroe Yacht Club, c. 1928

southern border of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge as a cooperating partner.

In 2003, the park received Clean Michigan Initiative funding for a \$17 million renovation project. The park was remodeled to include a six-mile system of paved walking and biking paths. The upland area (adjacent to Lake Erie) that was created from dredging marsh, was further elevated 7 feet by placing 400,000 cubic yards of fill brought from outside the park. A new 47-acre campground and parking areas were constructed here. Much of the existing campground had been elevated using fill from creation of the CDF, but it was still prone to flooding during high water levels and seiche (water set-up) events from Lake Erie.

The renovation included upgrading the Sterling Marsh Trail, which loops for three miles around the park's largest lagoon diked marsh, passing a observation tower, observation deck and interpretive area dedicated to viewing wildlife. The land elevation of the abandoned campground was returned to the original elevation and restored to lake plain prairie. Part of the abandoned campground was used to create a wetland mitigation for the CMI project. A Great Lake Coastal Restoration Grant funded restoration of the old campground. Road bed, landscaping and some 86,000 cy of USACE fill from excavation of the CDF was removed and lakeplain prairie restored. The federally threatened prairie white-fringed orchid re-emerged from the seed bank in the restored prairie.

In 2012 and 2014, Sterling State Park received Great Lake Restoration Initiative grants from the USEPA totaling \$3,420,00. Creation of the CDF had placed over a million cubic yards of clean material on multiple areas of the park. Under this project, 186,000 cubic yards of this material was placed in near shore area of the deep North Lagoon to created 19 acres of emergent and shallow submergent Great Lakes marsh. This created submergent marsh and fish habitat where it had existed prior to being dredged in 1955-57. The project also re-created 33 acres of lakeplain prairie on the areas where the CDF fill was removed. The second project repaired dikes and installed water control for 310 acres of marsh, the Hunt Club Marsh and Union Camp Marsh. These projects aided in the removal of the both the Fish and Wildlife Habitat and the Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations Beneficial Use Impairments from the River Raisin AOC. The projects moved the River Raisin AOC closer to delisting. A follow-up project in 2018, reconnected over 90 acres of historic coastal marsh (undiked) to Lake Erie, improving fish spawning and wildlife habitat.

A.5 Land Ownership

Funding Sources

The state acquired the lands encompassed by Sterling State Park through a variety of funding sources. Often, conditions attached to the original funding source, or other details of the property transaction, encumber the future use or disposition of the land.

The funding source map at the end of Appendix A identifies the sources used in acquiring land within Sterling State Park. The following outlines in more detail each funding source associated with the park.

Gift

The initial acres of the park were acquired through gifts from the Monroe Piers Land Company (232.82 acres) and the City of Monroe in 1935 (3 acres).

Exchange

The State acquired 105 acres through land exchanges in 1992 and 2004.

Special Legislation

Acquisitions for park purposes through this source are tied to specific funding established by the legislature under Public Act 27 of 1944, and Public Act 50 of 1944. The majority of the land at Sterling State Park was purchased using this fund (approximately 880 acres) either on its own, or as a match for other funding sources, between 1944 and 1973. This included land from the Monroe Piers Land Company, Consolidated Packaging, Leanus Fix, and other private individuals.

Michigan Land Trust Fund

The "Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976" (Public Act 204 of 1976) created the Michigan Land Trust Fund (MLTF) program to provide a source of funding for the public acquisition of lands for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. Funding was derived from royalties on the sale and lease of State-owned mineral rights. This fund was replaced by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in 1984.

- 11.5 acres of land were purchased using MLTF in 1986

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal program administered in Michigan by the Department of Natural Resources on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS). Land purchased using LWCF funding must be used for public outdoor recreation purposes.

- The state acquired 77.66 acres of land using LWCF in 1972, with the required 50% match provided by Special Legislation.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The MNRTF was created by a state constitutional amendment in 1984, which required that oil, gas, and other mineral lease and royalty payments be placed into the Trust Fund, with proceeds used to both acquire and develop public recreation lands. To implement the constitutional amendment, the Legislature passed the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act of 1985 (P.A. 101 of 1985, Act 101). Two MNRTF grants were used to purchase land at Sterling State Park.

- 54.75 acres from private party in 1991
- 30 acres from The Conservation Fund in 2008. The Conservation Fund purchased the property at PRD’s request and held it until MNRTF funding was in place.

Land Exchange Facilitation Fund

The Land Exchange Facilitation Fund (LEFF) was used to purchase two small parcels (24.92 acres) from the City of Monroe and Sterling Pointe Real Estate Holdings in 2001 and 2008, respectively.

Corps of Engineers

In the “Agreement Between the United States of America and The State of Michigan for Local Cooperation at Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan” which can be found in Appendix D, an agreement was entered into on March 10th 1982 that authorized “the construction, operation and maintenance of Contained Spoil Disposal Facilities of sufficient capacity to contain the deposits of dredge materials for a period not to exceed ten years.” (Congress amended the CDF authority in 1988, allowing the facilities to be used until no longer needed or completely filled.) In the agreement, the State was required to furnish all lands necessary for the construction, maintenance and operation; hold and save the United States free from damages from the aforementioned operations, maintain the facility after completion of its use for disposal purposes in a matter satisfactory to the Secretary of the Army, and comply with applicable legislation described in the document. The State retains title to the lands, however the facility may be conveyed to another party only after completion of the facility’s use for disposal purposes and with a written agreement described therein.

Granted Easements

The following easements grant access or construction rights on Sterling State Park property. The documentation was obtained through the Michigan Land Ownership Tracking System and may not be complete.

- DTE Energy (2015) – easement to construct and maintain underground electric line
- Consolidated Paper Company (1949) – easement to construct and maintain a culvert under park entrance road and to dredge the main canal.
- Detroit Edison Company (1950 and 1959) – permits to construct and maintain electric distribution line
- Michigan Bell Telephone Company (1959) – easement to construct and maintain telephone line
- Frenchtown Township
 - Easement to construct and maintain pump station (1970)
 - Easement to construct and maintain storm drain (1993)
- County of Monroe (1976) – 15- to 20-foot-wide easement to construct and maintain sanitary sewer.
- Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (formerly Department of Environmental Quality) (2002) – conservation easement to protect the wetland functions and values existing on the easement premises (in accordance with Permit 01-58-0012-P). Grantor shall maintain easement premises in their natural and undeveloped condition.

Acquired Lease

The State of Michigan has a lease agreement with the City of Monroe for use of 2.82 acres of land known as the Waterworks Site on State Park Road for park purposes. The lease began in 1968 and is renewable every ten years. The city maintains right of access.



A young child plays on the beach

Concession

- Recreation Resource Management (DBA: Vista Recreation) (2020) to allow Lessee to install or construct, operate and maintain lodging units within designated areas of Sterling State Park. 20-year renewable lease.
- Farming Concession agreement with Kevin LaBeau (2018) to farm the 49.9 acres of land at Sterling State Park (expires November 30, 2024).
- Jr’s Concession (2019) Mobile Beach Concession providing Food and Vending Machines (expires November 30, 2025)

Operating Agreements

Various operating agreements are in place allowing commercial entities to operate in Sterling State Park, including camper unit rentals and boating services.

Grants

The following grants were received for acquisition or development projects at Sterling State Park.

PROJECT NUMBER	YEAR	PROJECT TITLE	STATUS	AMOUNT	SCOPE OF GRANT
TF07-131	2007	Sterling State Park Acquisition	Closed	\$925,000.00	Acquisition of 52 acres located at the entrance to Sterling State Park to provide a continuous connection to adjacent state park property.
TF86-193	1986	Sterling State Park Beachhouse Development	Closed	\$375,000.00	Development will include a new beachhouse at Sterling State Park.
TF98-206	1998	Sterling State Park-Accessible Wetlands Interpretive Trail	Closed	\$292,600.00	Construct 2.5 miles of bituminous pedestrian trail including fishing/viewing piers, with interpretive stations around wetlands/lagoons at Sterling State Park.
Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Grant (GLCRG) #02CR-1.08	2003	Coastal Ecological Restoration of Sterling State Park	Closed	\$531,538	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lakeplain prairie restoration (old campground 85,000 cy of historic fill removed) • Invasive plant control • Eastern fox snake monitoring Local genotype propagation fields
EPA: GL-00E00506-1	2010	River Raisin Wetland Enhancement and Habitat Evaluation	Closed	\$1,350,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water level control in 310 acres of wetlands • Phragmites control in 1,100 acres of wetlands Baseline data wetland conditions and key species
EPA-R5-GL2010-1	2010	William C. Sterling State Park Marsh and Prairie Restoration	Closed	\$1,500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore 19 acres of submergent marsh Restore 33 acres of lakeplain prairie
EPA Project Number 112019	2012	River Raisin AOC Wetland/Habitat Restoration	Closed	\$570,000	Complete dike repair and water control

A.6 Legal Mandates

For all park general management plans, legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the general management plan and subsequent action plans. For our planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers 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. Specific to Sterling State Park, the following legal mandates have been identified.

Federal Statute

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 1973

This Act authorizes the determination and listing of species as endangered and threatened, and prohibits unauthorized taking, possession, sale and transport of endangered species.

BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT, 1940 AND AMENDMENTS

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.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, 1966 AS AMENDED

This is the primary federal law governing the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States. The law establishes a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections which encourage the identification and protection of cultural and historic resources of national, state, tribal and local significance. Projects that receive federal support in any form may be subject to compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA to ensure that impacts on historic properties are considered and that any adverse effects are avoided, minimized or mitigated.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990, AS AMENDED

This federal civil rights legislation prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities to participate in the mainstream of American life. It includes standards for accessible design that sets the minimum requirements for newly designed or altered State and local government facilities, public accommodations, and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.



The sun shines on snow-covered marshes on a winter day

State Statute - Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) and Amendments

PA 451 OF 1994, PART 5	Gives the DNR authority to make rules to support its mission. This includes State Land Rules, Land Use Orders, Wildlife Conservation Orders, Fisheries Orders and Watercraft Control.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 31 WATER RESOURCES PROTECTION	Provides authority to EGLE to require a permit for any occupation, construction, filling, or grade change within the 100-year floodplain of a river, stream, drain, or inland lake.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 301 INLAND LAKES AND STREAMS	Requires a permit from the state (EGLE) to undertake certain activities relating to inland lakes and streams, such as dredging, fill, marinas, structures, alteration of flow, etc.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 325: GREAT LAKES SUBMERGED BOTTOMLANDS	A permit is required for all filling, dredging, and placement of permanent structures (i.e., docks, piers, pilings, etc.) below the "ordinary high water mark" and on all upland channels extending landward of the "ordinary high water mark" of the Great Lakes.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 303 WETLANDS PROTECTION	Requires a permit from the state (EGLE) to undertake certain activities in regulated wetlands, such as, dredging, fill, construction or drainage.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 419: HUNTING AREA CONTROL	Section 324.41901 establishes the powers of the Department to establish safety zones for hunting.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 741 STATE PARK SYSTEM	The department shall create, maintain, operate, promote, and make available for public use and enjoyment a system of state parks to preserve and protect Michigan’s significant natural resources and areas of natural beauty or historic significance, to provide open space for public recreation, and to provide an opportunity to understand Michigan’s natural resources and the need to protect and manage those resources.
PA 35 OF 2010, PART 741 RECREATION PASSPORT	This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site “Recreation Passport” that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle.
PA 451 OF 1994, PART 761 ABORIGINAL RECORDS AND ANTIQUITIES	The state reserves the exclusive right and privilege to all aboriginal records and other antiquities including those found on the bottomlands of the Great Lakes.

Public Health Code

PA 368 OF 1978, PART 125, CAMPGROUNDS, SWIMMING AREAS AND SWIMMERS’ ITCH	Established to protect and promote the public health by establishing health code requirements and regulations that all public (including DNR) and private campgrounds must meet. Includes permitting, licensing, inspections and rules regarding sanitation, safety standards and public health. Also covers testing and evaluating quality of water at bathing beaches, safety, and rescue equipment.
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Orders

The following Orders apply to Sterling State Park:

LAND USE ORDERS OF THE DIRECTOR

5.2 Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in certain state parks and recreation areas, prohibited conduct.

Order 5.2 A person shall not do any of the following:

- (2) Possess or consume an alcoholic beverage within the following described locations from April 1 through Labor Day
- (c) Sterling SP- day-use areas of the park.

5.12 Certain state parks and recreation areas, requirements for use, certain conduct prohibited.

Order 5.12 The following conduct shall apply to use of Michigan SPs and RAs:

- (4) Sterling SP, conduct prohibited. A person shall not do the following at Sterling SP:
 - (a) Launch or attempt to launch a vessel equipped with an inboard or outboard motor, except an electric motor into the waters of the south lagoon from any state-owned lands lying south of the centerline of the park entrance road.

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:

(77) Sterling SP, Monroe 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.

7.35 Sterling state park, trapping and waterfowl hunting allowed; exceptions.

- Sec. 7.35 (1) Trapping shall be allowed during the established trapping seasons on all state-owned lands in the dedicated boundary except within the developed areas of land known as the Bartnick boat launch, the park headquarters, the beach and picnic areas, and campground of Sterling state park.
- (2) Waterfowl hunting shall be allowed from the day after Labor day to September 15 and in January and February during established seasons south and west of the park entrance road, except there shall be no taking of any animals after 10:00 a.m. and shooting from the east shore of the lagoons shall be in a westerly direction only.
- (3) Waterfowl hunting shall be allowed from the day after Labor day through the end of February during the established seasons on all state-owned lands in the dedicated park boundary in the southernmost 300 acres, known as the Union camp marsh, bordered by Elm street on the south, interstate highway I-75 on the west, the south shore of the Clearwater drain on the north and the Ford River Raisin Warehouse property on the east. In addition, the area east of Waterworks road, west of the Army Corps of Engineers confined disposal facility fence extending out half-way into the water channel and south of Sandy creek and north of the park entrance road, also known as the old campground (restored lake plain prairie area) and Sterling harbor basin; except within developed areas of land known as the Bartnick boat launch.

History: Eff. Mar 31, 1989; Am. 17, 1991, Eff. Jan 1, 1992; Am. 13, 2005, Eff. Jul 8, 2005; Am. 12, 2007, Eff. Jul 13, 2007; Am. 2, 2016, Eff. April 15, 2016.

FISHERIES ORDERS

Lake Erie has daily possession limits for walleye and perch that differ from the statewide regulations as described in FO-215.22.

LOCAL WATERCRAFT CONTROLS

SANDY CREEK BAY AND NORTH LAGOON - R281.758.5 - Slow--no wake speed.

5. On the waters of Sandy creek bay and the north lagoon at Sterling state park, section 35, T6S, R9E, and section 2, T7S, R9E, Frenchtown township, Monroe county, it is unlawful for the operator of a vessel to exceed a slow--no wake speed.

History: Eff. October 28, 1976

STATE LAND RULES

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

A.7 Landscape Context and Natural Resources

A regional landscape ecosystem classification has been developed for Michigan, which distinguishes major landscapes based on macroclimate, physiography, soil and vegetation. Sterling State Park lies within the Maumee Lake Plain of the Washtenaw sub-subsection (VI.1.1). The sub-subsection is a flat, clay lake plain dissected by broad glacial drainageways of sandy soil. The lake-moderated climate and productive loamy soils resulted in early and intensive agricultural development. The Maumee Lake Plain is the former lake bottom of Lake Maumee, a proglacial lake and an ancestor of present-day Lake Erie. It formed about 17,500 years ago.

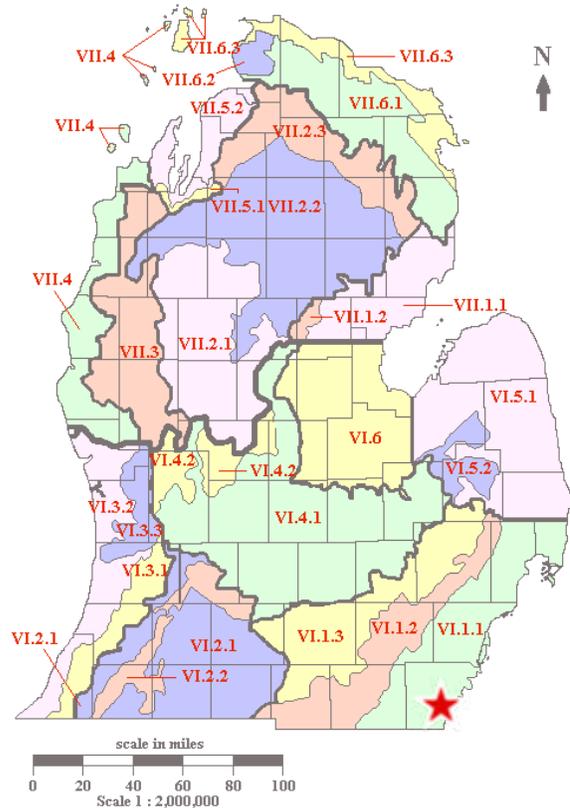
Located along the shoreline of Lake Erie, much of the park was part of an extensive Great Lakes marsh delta that extended south from Sandy Creek to the mouth of the River Raisin. A narrow spit formed the eastern park boundary between the marsh and Lake Erie.

Climate

The climate of the park is somewhat moderated by Lake Erie. The growing season is generally long, ranging from 150 to 180 days, with a longer growing season near the shoreline of Lake Erie. The landscape ecosystem subsection is characterized by extreme minimum temperatures ranging from -18°F to -26°F, with the lowest temperatures along the inland edge of the sub-subsection. Average annual precipitation ranges from 30 to 32 inches. Snowfall is relatively light, ranging from 30 inches in the south to 50 inches in the north.

Water Resources

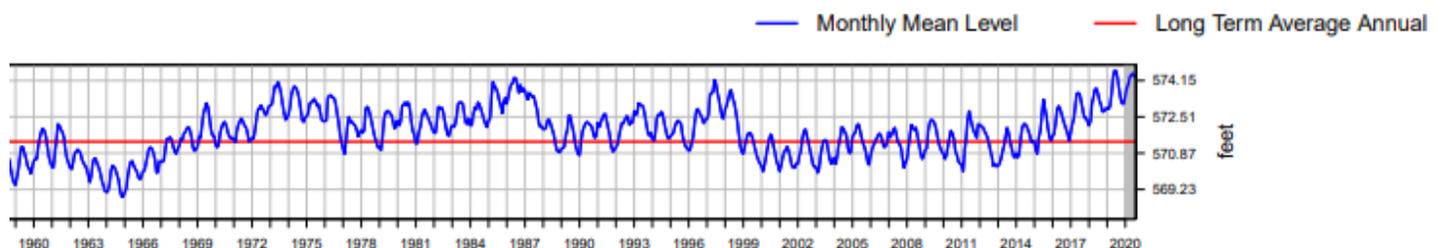
Sterling State Park is rich in water resources. Sandy Creek forms the northern boundary of the park and the Clear Water Drain is much of the Park's Southern Boundary. In the park's southwest the Union Camp Marsh reaches almost to the River Raisin at Elm Street. Lake Erie forms the eastern boundary of the park. Lake Erie is the shallowest and warmest of the Great Lakes, with a surface area of 9,910 square miles. The Jerry C. Bartnik Memorial Boating Access Site provides access to Lake Erie.



Source: Albert, Dennis A. 1995. Regional landscape ecosystems of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin: a Working Map and Classification.

The park includes of over 400 acres of emergent marsh with connection to Lake Erie. These marshes are important to the lake's fisheries. Over 95% of the original wetlands bordering the western shore of Lake Erie have been lost, an area larger than the Everglades. (NOAA) Dredging of marsh in the 1950s created the 160-acre lagoon, that bisects the park. The lagoon is popular for bank and pier fishing.

The long-term average annual water level of Lake Erie is 571.75 feet above mean sea level, with fluctuations of more than five feet observed in monthly mean water levels over time. Lake Erie reached an all-time high-water elevation of 574.21 in 2019.



Lake Erie Water Levels, 1960 to present day (US Army Corps of Engineers)

Three distinct basins within Lake Erie provide a variety of offshore habitats. The Detroit River, Maumee River, and smaller tributaries drain into the western basin, where Sterling State Park is located. Lake Erie averages 24 feet deep and contains extremely nutrient-rich water. The western basin’s warm, shallow water and nutrient-rich agricultural runoff result in frequent harmful algal blooms (HABs).

Wind blowing across Lake Erie pushes water down wind. Strong sustained winds, such as a derecho storm event, pile water onto the far shore. This flooding phenomenon is known as a wind setup. When the wind calms, the water sloshes back across the lake; back and forth like waves in a bathtub until they dissipate. This sloshing is known as seiche. It takes between 6-12 hours for a seiche oscillation to cross Lake Erie. Large seiches cause shoreline flooding and significant water level drops.

Wind setups have topped 20 feet in lake level rise along the eastern shores of Lake Erie. Fortunately for Wm. C. Sterling State Park southwest winds prevail in most storms. However, wind setups of over eight feet have occurred at Sterling State Park. In 1952, during a period of high lake levels, fierce sustained northeast winds piled water onto Sterling State Park destroying most of the Park’s infrastructure including the historic Yacht Club clubhouse that was moved to the park in 1927. The park was closed for a year for repairs. In 1972, the park again suffered significant flood damage from wind setup. Continued wind setup and seiche event flooding of Sterling’s

modern campground prompted its relocation as part of the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) renewal of the park.

Smaller wind setup and seiche events cause water levels to lower and rise in Sterling’s marshes and lagoons. Water level can change by several feet in just a few hours. West winds blow water out of the park and east winds move water into the park. Except during extended periods of calm wind, water is always flowing into or out of Sterling’s marshes because of changes in wind.

Environmental Issues

The River Raisin is designated an Area of Concern (AOC) under the 1987 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. AOCs are defined as "geographic areas designated by the Parties where significant impairment of beneficial uses has occurred as a result of human activities at the local level." The boundaries of the River Raisin Area of Concern are the lower (2.6 miles) portion of the river, downstream from Dam No. 6 at Winchester Bridge in the City of Monroe, extending one-half mile into Lake Erie following the Federal Navigation Channel and along the nearshore zone of Lake Erie both north and south, for one mile. Contaminated sediments from oils, grease, heavy metals and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been identified as the primary pollutants of concern. The 1987 River Raisin Action Plan (RAP) identified nine beneficial uses as being impaired. Of these, five have since been removed due to restoration and cleanup efforts.



A map of the River Raisin Area of Concern

Sterling's coastal wetlands, submergent and emergent marsh provide spawning and nursery habitat for Lake Erie fish and provide important habitat for waterbirds. The wetland within Sterling State Park have been greatly manipulated. Dredging of the marsh for access and transport began in the late 1700s. Parts of the marsh have been diked and ditched for farming, waterfowl hunting and fish farming. The largest loss of wetland occurred when the park's lagoons were created by dredging in 1956 to create dry upland for park use, over 425 acres of marsh were lost.

Historically water pumps manipulate water in diked marsh areas. Water levels were manipulated for fish farming, row crop agriculture and waterfowl hunting. Today, both the Hunt Club and Union Camp Marshes are diked and have water level control. Water levels are sometimes lowered in the Hunt Club and Union Camp Marshes to provide critical mudflat habitat for thousands of shorebirds during their spring and fall migrations. Sometimes water levels are raised to control invasive plants like phragmites and glossy buckthorn. Nonetheless, most of the time the water in the marshes is allowed to fluctuate with Lake Erie water levels. Water control structures and culverts designed for fish passage into and out of both marshes.

In 2018 a fish passage was installed to connect the north lagoon submergent marsh to over 90 acres of marsh previously disconnected from Lake Erie.

Topography

The topography of Sterling State Park is essentially flat, with land rising from a low elevation of approximately 571 feet at the Lake Erie shoreline to 575 feet inland from the lagoons. Much of the topographic variation in the park is manmade. In 1956, dredging created a large area of upland landward of the Lake Erie barrier spit. The elevation of this area, which is now the campground and day use area was raised seven feet with fill from outside the park in 2003.

Topography of the park was also transformed when US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) spoiled over a million cubic yards of clean material excavated to create the confined disposal facility at numerous locations within the park. Some of this material has since been removed in an effort to restore hydrologic connection and restore lake plain prairie.

Soils

Upland portions of the park were once farmed and consist of silty clay loam soils. Some wetland areas were drained and also farmed. The developed portions of the park have been extensively filled and manipulated and the soils (aquents) are poorly to very poorly drained. Areas where the USACE placed materials from the CDF excavation are not natural. Large

amounts of fill and soil was brought in to elevate the area of new campground (CMI) and day use parking area. The soils in this area are not natural.

Geology and Mineral Resources

The park occupies an area of the Lake Erie delta within the Maumee Lake Plain, the lake bottom of proglacial Lake Maumee. The campground and day use beach area are atop areas of fill. Bedrock beneath the park consists of dolostone (dolomite) of the Silurian Bass Islands Group. There is little history of oil & gas exploration in the area and potential for hydrocarbons is considered low. Any portions of the park considered Great Lakes bottomlands would be off limits to mineral leasing.

Early 1800's Vegetation

The area that became Sterling State Park was platted with French Claims and so predates General Land Office land survey. Vegetation had already been impacted by the early 1800s. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the delta of the River Raisin was a complex of submergent marsh, emergent marsh and lakeplain prairie with areas of lowland hardwoods on higher ground. The distributaries of River Raisin and Sandy Creek created a braided network of waterways through what is now the park. The ecosystem was dynamic as distributaries changed course and the water levels of Lake Erie fluctuated. Floods, wind setup and fire also played a role.

During periods of high Lake Erie water levels, emergent marsh moved inland replacing lakeplain prairie; during low water lakeplain prairie pushed the marshes lakeward. Areas of slightly higher elevation were likely lowland hardwood forest, but were likely limited in extent until the arrival of Europeans. Areas of wet-mesic flatwoods may have occurred in the park as patches of white trout Lily, *Erythronium albidum*, are suggestive. Today the forested wetlands that remain within the park have lost their ash canopy to emerald ash borer. Mesic southern forests occurred on better drained portions of the clay lake plain within this sub-section. These forests were dominated by American beech, sugar maple, white oak, American elm and hickory. How much mesic southern forest occurred in the western upland areas of the park is unclear, but an artist's rendering from the 1860's suggests that there was little forest.

Current Vegetation

Alteration of land cover within Sterling State Park has been extensive. Upland portions of the park were farmed and the marshes manipulated by dredging, filling and building dikes. Other areas were filled, primarily with dredge spoils, to enable development. Nonetheless, remnants of the original Great Lakes marsh have persisted and have re-established.

Restoration efforts at Sterling State Park over the last two decades have been extensive and focused on two natural communities: Great Lakes marsh and lakeplain prairie. Only tiny pocket remnants supporting constituent lakeplain prairie flora remained prior to restoration. An ash dominated lowland hardwood forest with wet-mesic flatwood character occurred at the park until the arrival of the emerald ash borer. A proliferation of white trout lily remains in fencerows suggestive of wet-mesic flatwoods.

Restoration work re-created over 100 acres of lakeplain prairies and improved over 400 acres of Great Lakes marsh. Extensive invasive species control has also taken place. Hundreds of acres of near monoculture phragmites has been controlled and high-quality Great Lakes marsh restored. An attempt is made to treat all the phragmites in the park is made

annually. Prescribe fire is used to maintain the ecological health of the park’s marshes and prairies.

The Hunt Club and Union Camp marshes (a combined 310 acres) now have water control and can be managed to control invasive plants and provide good habitat for shorebirds, fish, and other wildlife. Fish passage was accommodated in the water control design. After years of restoration the marshes are once again healthy with large areas of American lotus.

Rare Flora and Fauna (From MNFI report and/or GIS)

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) Biotics database documents six rare native plants and nine rare animals within the park. Additionally, nine rare freshwater mussels are known from the waters within the park and the near shore areas of Lake Erie adjacent to the park. Sullivant’s

Rare Flora

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATE STATUS	FEDERAL STATUS
American lotus	Nelumbo lutea	Threatened	
Arrowhead	Sagittaria montevidensis	Threatened	
Prairie white-fringed orchid	Platanthera leucophaea	Endangered	Threatened
Short-fruited rush	(Juncus brachycarpus),	Threatened	
Sullivant’s milkweed	Asclepias sullivantii	Threatened	
Swamp rose-mallow	Hibiscus moscheutos	Special Concern	
Trailing wild bean	Strophostyles helvula	Special Concern	

Rare Fauna

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATE STATUS	FEDERAL STATUS
Marsh wren	Cistothorus palustris	Special Concern	
Common gallinule	Gallinula galeata	Threatened	
Bald eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Special concern	
Least bittern	Ixobrychus exilis	Threatened	
Osprey	Pandion haliaetus	Special Concern	
Pugnose minnow	Opsopoeodus emiliae	Endangered	
Eastern Fox snake	Pantherophis gloydii	Threatened	
King rail	Rallus elegans	Endangered	
Barn owl	Tyto alba	Endangered	

Freshwater Mussels

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATE STATUS	FEDERAL STATUS
Eastern elliptio	Elliptio complanata	Special Concern	
White catspaw	Epioblasma obliquata perobliqua	Endangered	Endangered
Snuffbox	Epioblasma triquetra	Endangered	Endangered
Eastern pond mussel	Ligumia nasuta	Endangered	
Black sandshell	Ligumia recta	Endangered	
Threehorn wartyback	Obliquaria reflexa	Endangered	
Round hickorynut	Obovaria subrotunda	Endangered	
Pink Heelsplitter	Potamilus alatus	Special Concern	
Deertoe	Truncilla truncata	Special Concern	

milkweed, a native constituent of lakeplain prairie was relocated to the park from the nearby I-75 as part of a MDOT mitigation.

Wildlife

Sterling State Park is a birding “hotspot” in Monroe County. Birders have reported 250 species to eBird with nearly 2,300 checklists submitted. The diked marshes when their water is drawn down to create mudflat, are attracting very large numbers of shorebirds (and birders) during spring and fall shorebird migrations. Monitoring in 2014 documented 118 species on spring surveys, and 139 species during fall surveys (2,355 individual shorebirds were observed). Rarities include Hudsonian godwit, Wilson’s phalarope and red knot. The paved trail around the Hunt Club Marsh provides exceptional accessible birding. Birders walking the trail often view sixty or more species during the spring migration.

A pair of king rails nested in the park in 1981 and 1982. In May of 2014, PRD contractor Allen Chartier, documented by audio recording, calls of a single king rail. This very rare bird may occasionally nest in the park.

Marsh and grassland birds are found in the restored prairie and Great Lakes Marsh. The marshes and lagoons are frequented by a variety of migrating and wintering waterfowl. Raptors also frequent the park, including bald eagle, osprey, northern harrier, long eared owl and saw whet owl. Barn owls were last observed in Sterling State Park in 1977, the last document nesting of the species in the State of Michigan.

The state endangered pugnose minnow was documented in the Sterling lagoon.

Mammals include white-tailed deer, raccoon, mink, muskrat and a variety of small mammals.

The insect fauna of the park is not well surveyed or documented.

The park has a rich herpetofauna, including the state threatened eastern fox snake. Other species found at Sterling State Park include Northern water snake, brown snake, eastern garter, ribbon snake, snapping turtle, musk turtle, American toad and leopard frog.

Nine rare freshwater mussel species occur within the waters of the park and nearshore areas of adjacent Lake Erie, including two federally endangered species.

Crayfish at Sterling State Park are an important species in lakeplain prairie.

Fisheries

The boating access site within the park provides access to Lake Erie via Sandy Creek. Lake Erie offers outstanding walleye fishing, drawing anglers all year long. The fish cleaning station is the biggest draw for local and regional anglers. Shore fishing and small non-motorized boat fishing is available in the lagoons within the park.

Water bodies contained within the park include 1) Sandy Creek and its open water areas with the Jerry C. Bartnik Memorial Boating Access Site for boaters to access Lake Erie as well as shore fishing opportunities; 2) two lagoons (north and south) with designated parking, accessible fishing piers, and shore fishing opportunities; 3) two large marsh complexes (Hunt Club Marsh and Union Camp Marsh) with dikes surrounding them and water level controls with fish passage options; and 4) the Clearwater Drain running along the southern edge of the property connecting Lake Erie to the south lagoon, the two large marsh areas, and the Raisin River to the south via the Mason Run Drain.

The nearshore area of the Clearwater Drain has sharp drop-offs and deep, turbid water. Aquatic vegetation is commonly absent from the Clearwater Drain nearshore area as well as along the west shore of the South Lagoon. The South Lagoon shore dropped off sharply (nearshore depths of 2-6 feet) similar to the drain, but with more submerged woody material present. The North Lagoon shore is more gently sloping (1-4 feet depth) with diverse aquatic vegetation. Aquatic plants observed in this lagoon included naiads, curly-leaf pondweed, various native pondweed species, Eurasian milfoil, pickerel weed, and other emergent reeds and grass species.

Typical sport fish species found in Lake Erie and these waterbodies include bullhead, carp, catfish, white and black crappie, largemouth bass, longnose gar, northern pike, bluegill, green sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, orangespotted sunfish, walleye, white bass, and yellow perch. A total of 29 different fish species were collected in the Lagoons and Clearwater Drain during Michigan DNR fish sampling efforts in 2011 and 2014.

A.8 Recreational Resources

Sterling State Park offers modern camping and a day-use area with supporting amenities as described below.

Modern Camping:

Sterling modern campground provides 256 sites, most with 20/30 amp electric, and 76 with full hook-up with 50 amp electric.

Cottages:

10 cottages have been installed along the Lake Erie waterfront,

operated through an agreement with a private operator. The cottages sleep up to seven in two bedrooms, with a bathroom, kitchen, dining space and common area.

Trails:

- Sterling Marsh Trail – 6 miles of paved trail are open to hiking and biking. The Hunt Club Loop is 2.7 miles, and the remainder of the mileage is made up of connector trails to the Hunt Club trail loop, trails around the lagoons, through the day use area and the lake shore trail.
- River Raisin Heritage Trail – 1.05 miles. Connected to existing park trails, the River Raisin Heritage Trail provides access to historic sites, additional local parks, and downtown Monroe.

Fishing:

The park is known for its walleye fishing. Shore fishing is possible at Sterling’s three lagoons, and two feature a fishing pier, one each north and south of the foot bridge.

Paddlesports:

Kayaks are available for rent at the campground office.

Boat Launch:

The Jerry C. Bartnik Memorial Boating Access Site provides

access to Lake Erie and is located within the park. It has 302 parking spaces, fish cleaning station and a modern restroom building.

Beach:

The park has nearly one mile (4,360') of sandy beach along Lake Erie. There is a dedicated swimming beach located near the day-use area.

Picnic Area:

The picnic area is located in the day-use areas and includes vending machines, two modern toilet buildings, grills, picnic tables and a playscape that is shared with the campground.

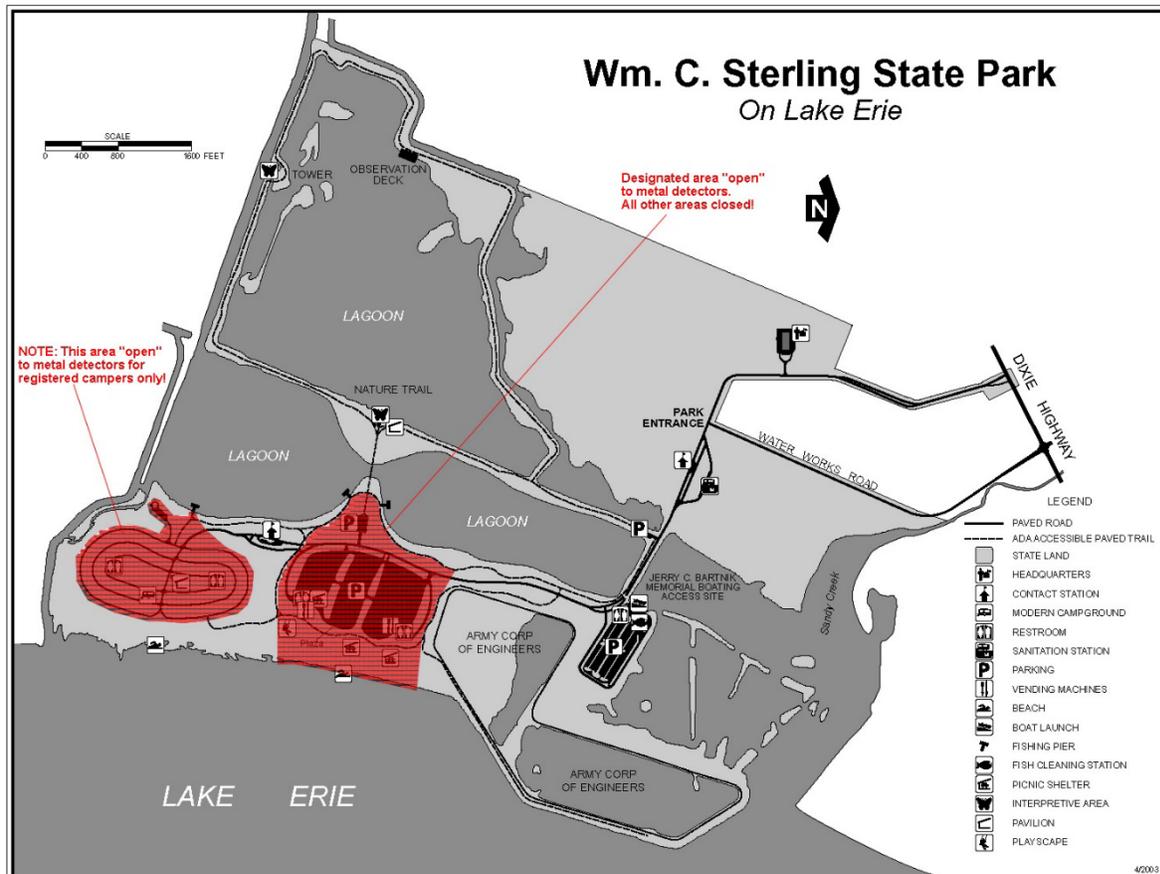
Hunting and Trapping:

Trapping and waterfowl hunting are permitted in certain areas of the park.

Pavilions:

The Heron and Red Oak shelters, located in the day use area near the beach, are available for rent.

Metal Detecting:



A map of areas open to metal detecting at Sterling State Park

Metal detecting is recognized as a legitimate recreation activity when it is conducted in ways that do not damage natural and cultural resources in Michigan state parks nor violate applicable state statutes. The park map that follows clearly shows where this activity is allowed. Areas located within the campground are limited to registered campers only.

A.9 Historic and Cultural Resources

There are no extant historic structures at Sterling State Park. The Fix House, once listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was removed in 1980. The house dated from the mid-1850s and was characteristic of French-Canadian architecture once prevalent in the Monroe area. The 20th century yacht club building in the southeastern extreme of the park was also removed.

Archaeological sites have been reported in the park. Portions of the landscape may be sensitive for archaeological resources representing land use over time.

A.10 Programming and Events

Several different programs and events are held in the park, including:

- Park programs such as Hook, Line, and Sinker “Learn to fish with the DNR” and the State Park Explorer Program.
- July 2nd and 3rd Fireworks Festival
- June- National Wild Turkey Foundation BB Gun Shoot
- Clean Boats Clean Waters Boat Wash Bartnik and Bolles

- Bow Fishing Tournament
- Walleye Tournament
- 5k Memorial Races
- Great Lakes Great Responsibility Beach Cleanup
- Jefferson Cross Country Invitational
- Cross Country Jamboree

A.11 Park Use Statistics

In 2021, Sterling State Park hosted over 29,653 camp nights (83,722 guests) and over 1.2M total visits (including campers). While recorded day use numbers fluctuate, camping numbers have been increasing steadily over the last five years. Camping numbers are derived from reservations in CAMIS where numbers per party are self-reported. Day use visitors are estimated based on car counts multiplied by 3.7 for the number of persons per vehicle.

The most popular months for both campers and day-users are June through August, peaking in July. However, the park enjoys significant day use visitation year-round (estimated at over 50,000 per month) and campers throughout the season. Although weekends are booked more frequently, the campsites are also often occupied during the weekdays in the peak summer months.

Shelter reservations typically number between 40-50 bookings per year, accommodating approximately 2,000 guests.

The top cities for camping reservations for Sterling State Park (2021) are illustrated in the following table, indicating the park draws primarily from the metro Detroit area. A substantial number of visitors, also come from Ohio, particularly the Toledo area.

Top Cities for Camping Reservations

CITY & STATE	RESERVATIONS
MONROE, MI	852
TRENTON, MI	295
DETROIT, MI	259
NEWPORT, MI	239
TAYLOR, MI	238
SOUTHGATE, MI	225
LINCOLN PARK, MI	216
WESTLAND, MI	204
WYANDOTTE, MI	203
FLATROCK, MI	192



Photo by William Lowrey - National Register of Historic Places: Fix House

Park Visitation Over Time

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Campers	65,618	71,871	73,407	54,981*	83,722**
Total visits	1,022,215	846,158	794,845	986,402	1,208,738

*Decreased due to COVID closures

** RMM cottages were added to the overnight options

Camper and Day Use Visitation Data



A.12 Park Resource Maps Regional Overview Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Sterling State Park - Regional Overview



- County Boundary
- Sterling State Park
- Waterbody

Updated: 01/05/2023



Park Boundary with Other Public Land Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Sterling State Park - Park Boundary with Other Public Land

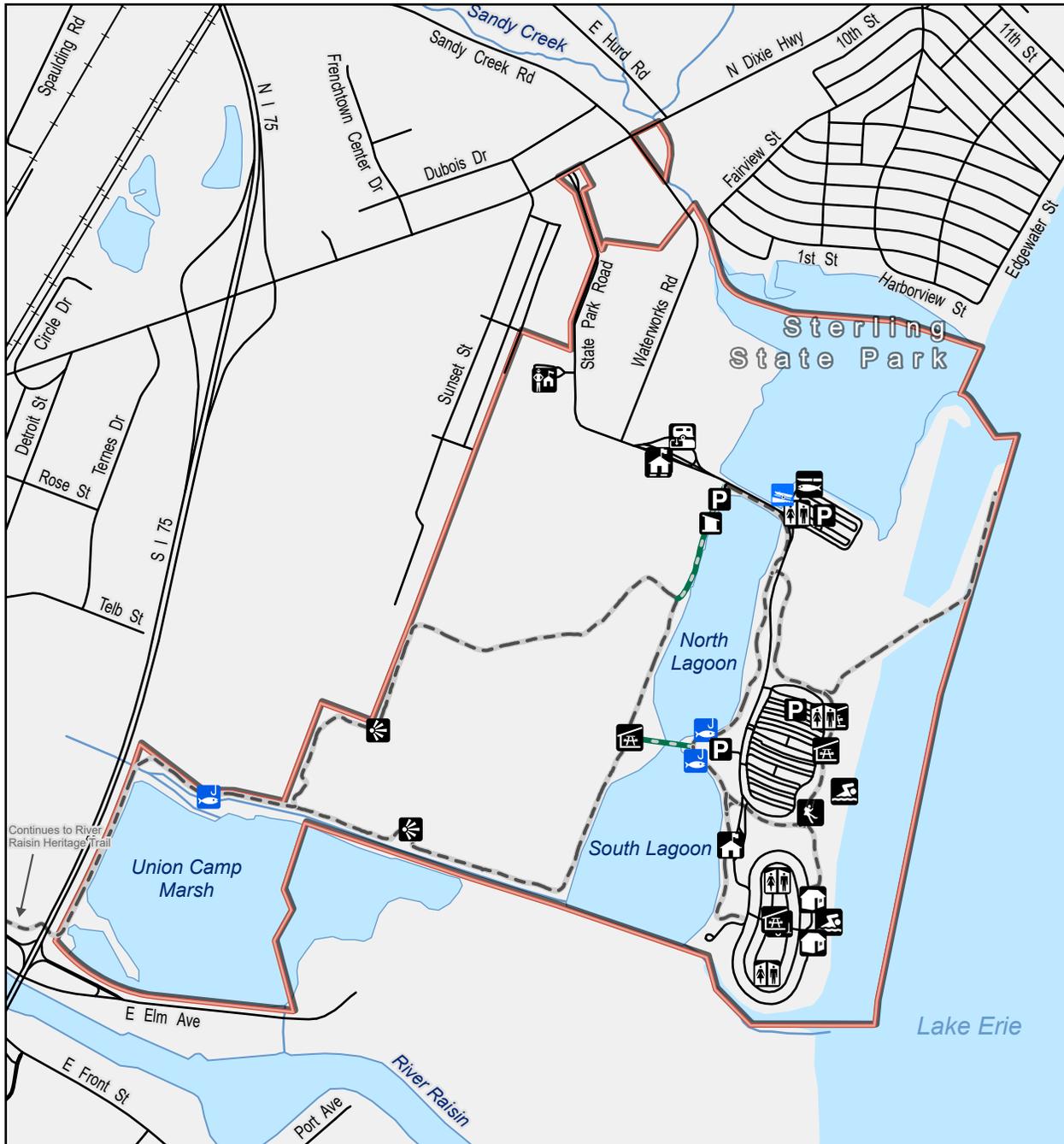
- State Park Boundary
- NRC 2020 Approved Project Boundary*
- Road
- Trail Easement
- City of Monroe
- United States of America



Updated: 07/13/2023

*A project boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer / willing seller basis, approved by the Natural Resources Commission in 2020

Park Amenities Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



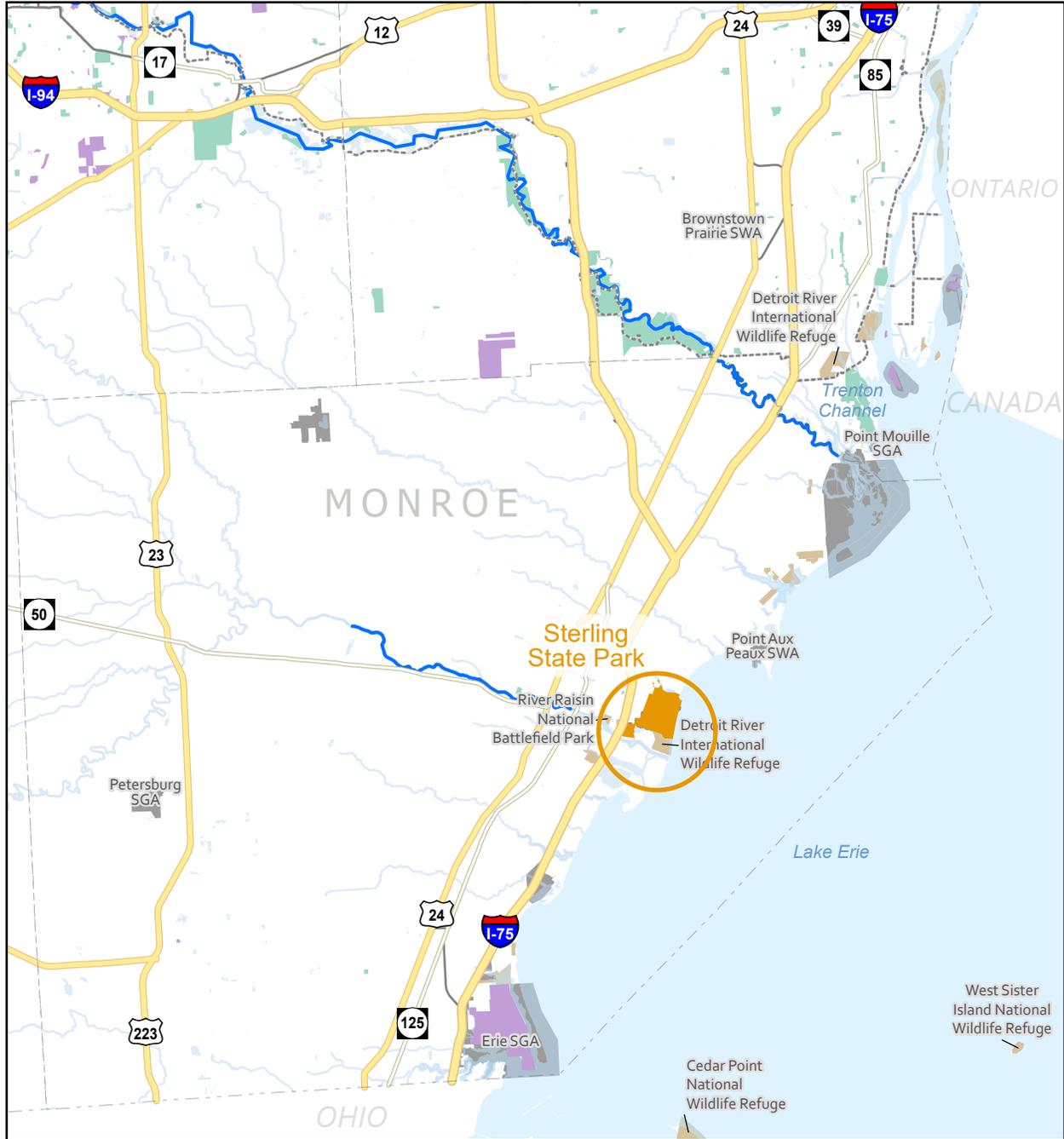
Sterling State Park- Park Amenities

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| State Park Boundary | Walking Trail | Fish Cleaning Station | Park Headquarters |
| Railroad | Multi-use Trail | Picnic Shelter | Boating Access Site |
| River/Stream | Modern Campground | Playground | Fishing Access Site |
| Road | Contact Station | Sanitation Station | Parking Lot |
| Lake/Pond | Toilet/Shower | Camper Cottages | Scenic Overlook |
| | | Beach | Vault Toilet |

Updated: 01/25/2023



Regional Recreation Resources Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Sterling State Park - Regional Recreational Resources



Updated: 01/05/2023

- County Boundary
- State Park/Recreation Area/Historic Park
- State Game/Wildlife Management Area
- Municipal/County Park
- Other Conservation Lands
- Federal Lands
- Non-motorized Trail
- Designated Water Trail



Ownership Rights Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



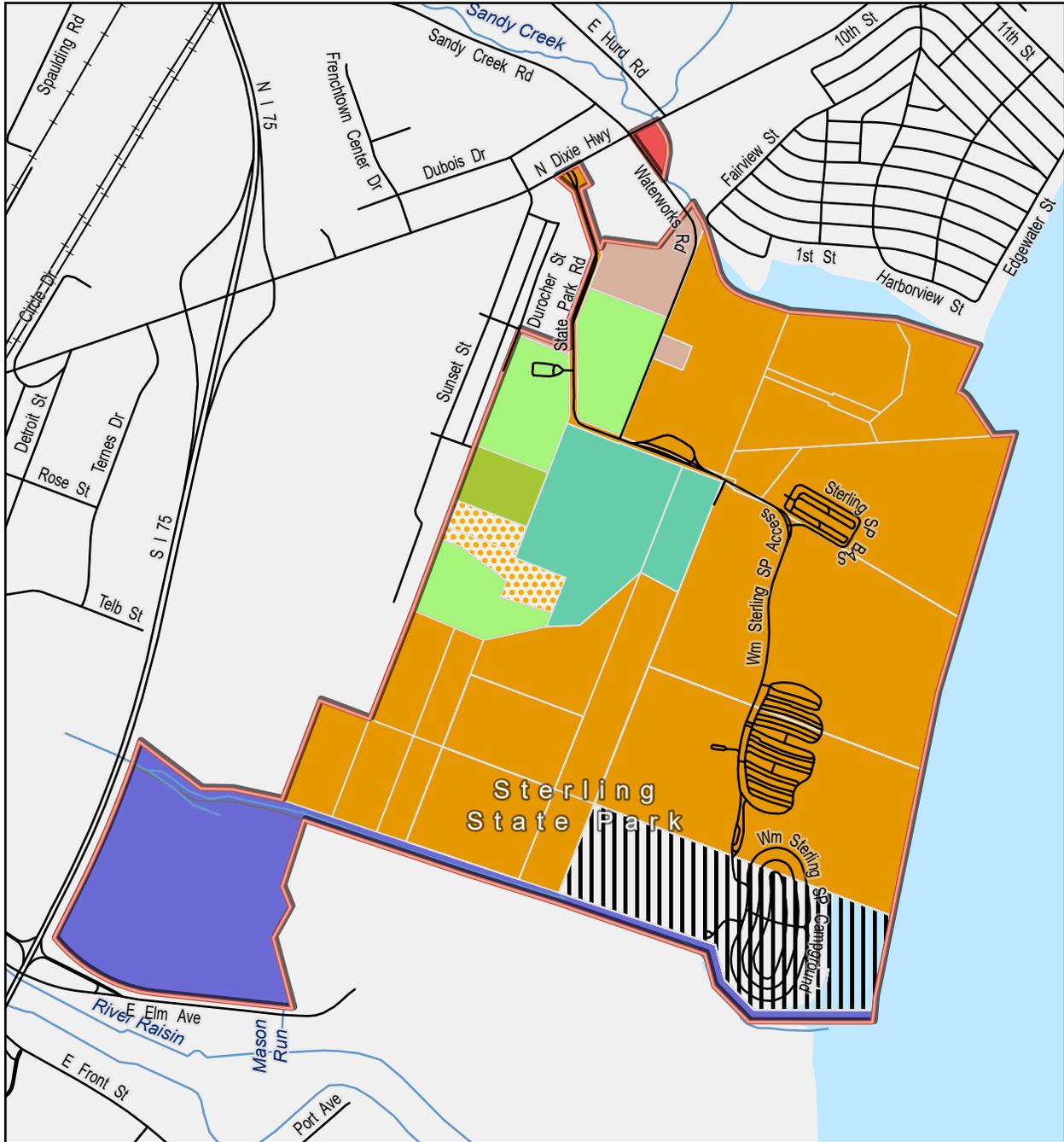
Sterling State Park - Ownership Rights

- State Park Boundary
- River/Stream
- Road
- Great Lakes
- Mineral & Surface
- Railroad



Updated: 07/13/2023

Funding Sources Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Sterling State Park - Funding Sources



- State Park Boundary
- Road
- + Railroad
- River/Stream
- Tax Reverted Land

- Funding Source
- 50% Federal Land and Water
 - Conservation Fund / 50% Special Legislation
 - General Fund/Game & Fish Fund
 - ▨ Gift

- Land Exchange Facilitation Fund
- Michigan Land Trust Fund
- Special Legislation
- Waterways Fund
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Updated: 01/05/2023



Topography Map

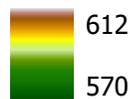


MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Sterling State Park - Topography

-  State Park Boundary
-  Lake/Pond
-  River/Stream
-  Road
-  Railroad

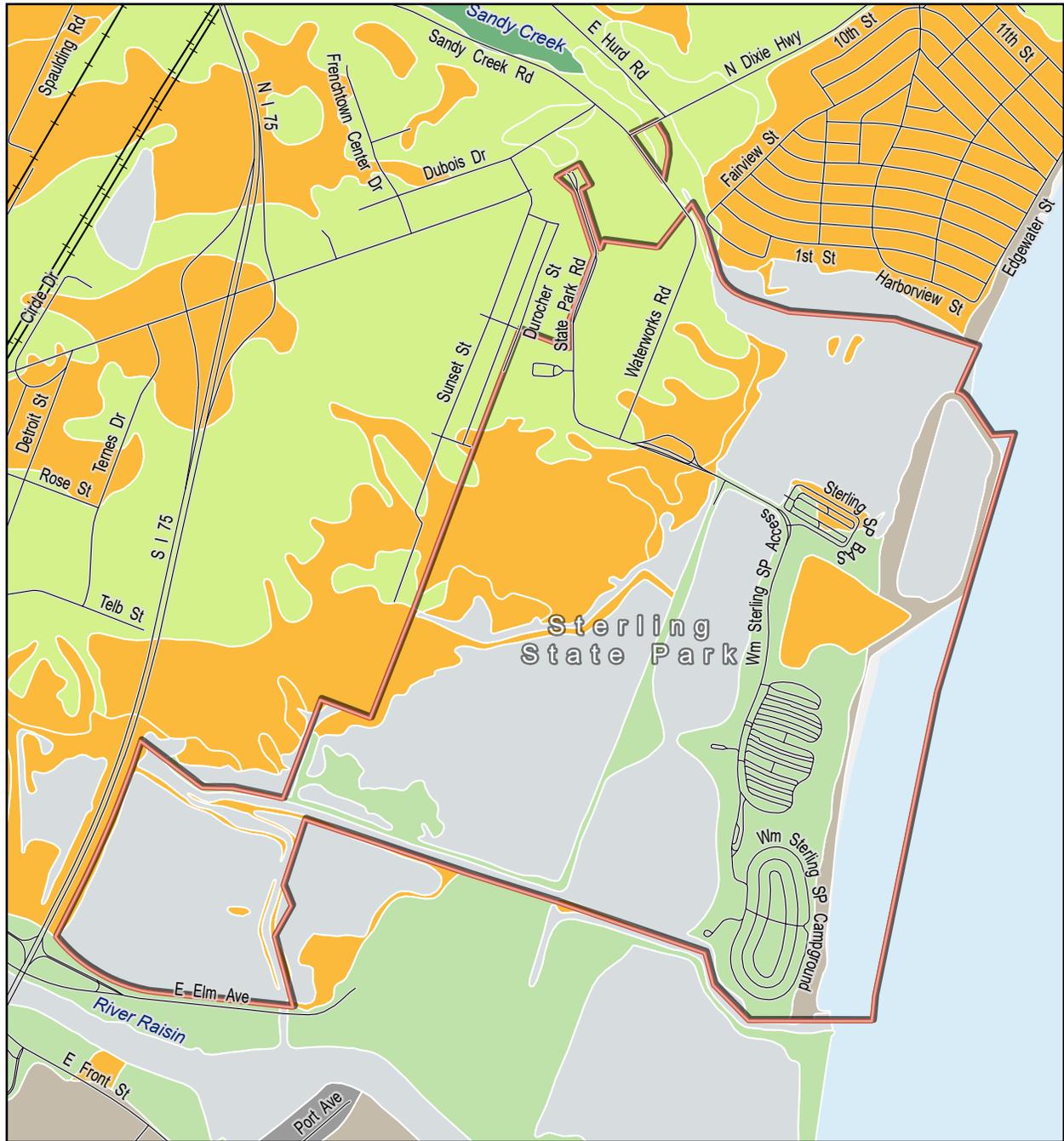
Elevation (Feet)



Updated: 07/13/2023

*Slope calculated from the 30 meter resolution National Elevation Dataset DEM for Michigan using Arc/Info GRID v9.0

Soils Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



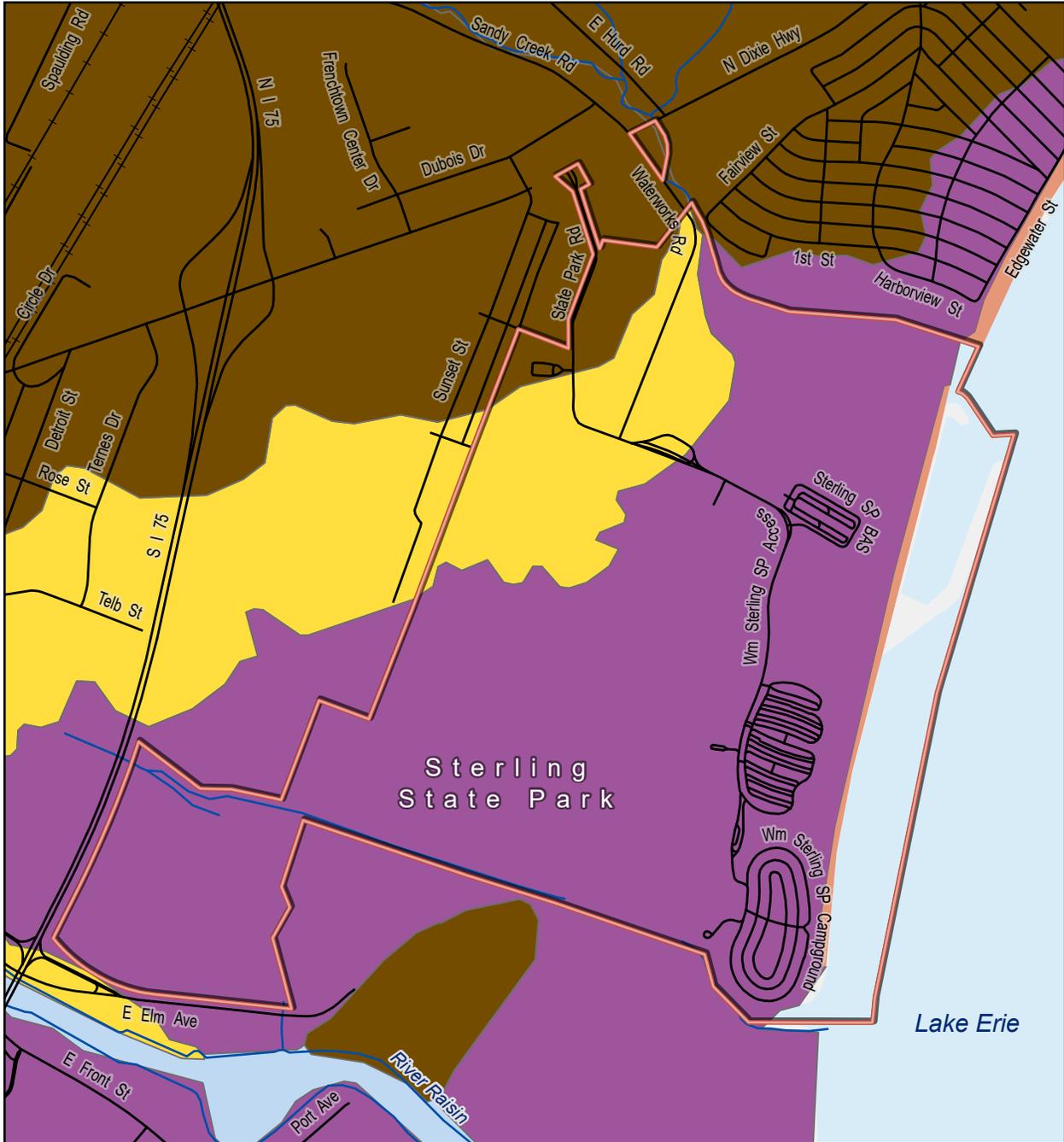
Sterling State Park- Soils

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| State Park Boundary | USA Soils Map Units
Alfisols | Bodies of Water |
| Road | Entisols | No Soil |
| Railroad | Inceptisols | Data Not Available |
| River/Stream | Mollisols | |
| Lake Erie | | |



Updated: 07/13/2023
 *Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Map Sheets, Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database, 2000

Land Cover 1800s Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Sterling State Park - Land Cover, 1800s



- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| State Park Boundary | Land Cover* |
| Road | Beach/Open Dune |
| Railroad | Beech/S Maple/B Wood/R Oak |
| River/Stream | Great Lakes Marsh |
| | Lake Plain Prairie |
| | River |

Updated: 07/13/2023

*Mapping derived from original notes of the State of Michigan General Land Office Survey conducted in the early to mid-1800s



Wetlands Map



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



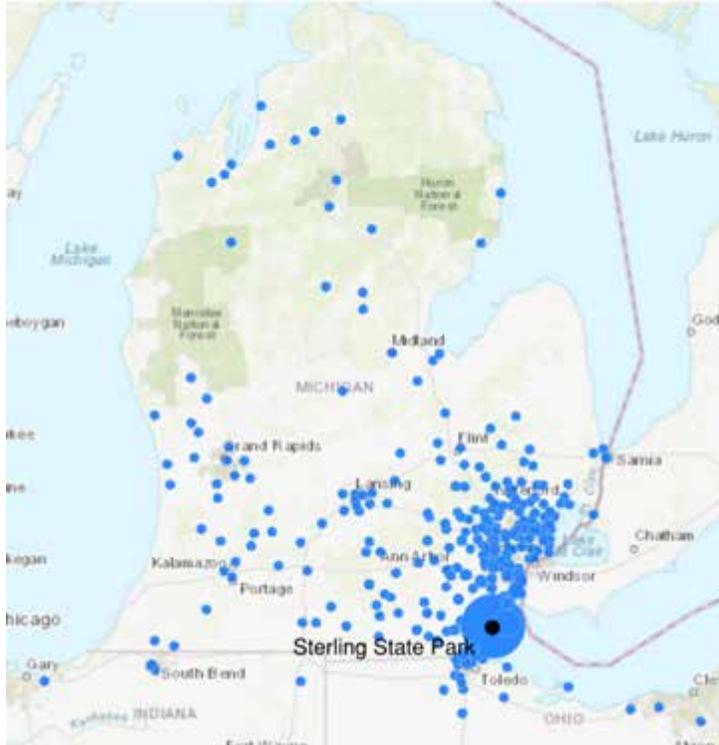
Sterling State Park - Wetlands

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| State Park Boundary | Wetlands (MNFI) | Floodplain Forest | Stream |
| Rivers/Streams | Pond | Submergent Marsh | River |
| Railroads | Lake | Impoundment | Southern Wet Meadow |
| Roads | Emergent Marsh | Southern Shrub-carr | Mud Flats |
| Great Lakes | | Southern Hardwood Swamp | Other State Park Land |



Updated: 01/25/2023 1:03 PM

*Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) scheme funded by Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) (2011)



Map depicting the zip code of survey respondents' primary residence. Larger dots represent a greater concentration of respondents. A small number of respondents are located beyond the map extents. Most survey respondents were located in the Monroe area.

Appendix

B: Public and Stakeholder Input

B.1 Summary of Public Input Survey

One of the methods the planning team used to gather input from park users was an online survey. This online approach provides a convenient way for those who have access to the internet to provide feedback, though it is not designed to be statistically representative of Sterling State Park users or uses, as respondents self-select. The online survey provides valuable information about what certain individuals or groups (those who are motivated to comment about the state park, those likely to receive DNR communication about the survey, and those who have easy access to the internet) hope to see in the park's future management.

The survey was advertised to a diverse range of people through various means. A press release was sent out to subscribers of boating, wildlife viewing, statewide DNR news and Michigan's trails filtered for the metro Detroit region, which included 37,485 email subscribers. It was also promoted in local media outlets. The survey link was also sent to over 50 stakeholders the planning team had identified who were invited to share the survey. In addition, it was sent to those

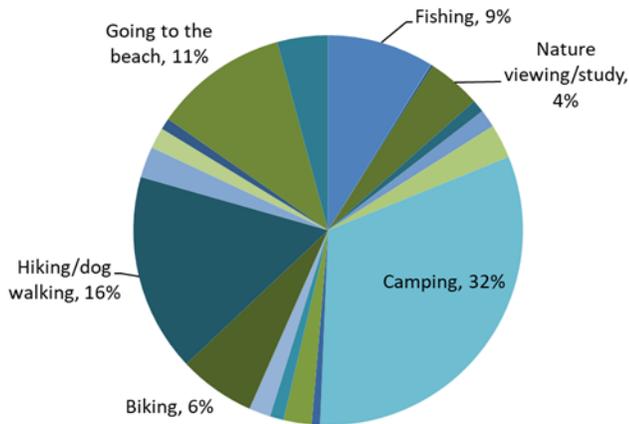
who had registered to camp at the state park in the last 3 seasons, which included an additional 10,267 recipients.

Responses were collected from March 21, 2023 through May 1, 2023. During the collection period, 2,346 individuals responded to the survey. Of those respondents, 2,261 (96%) have visited the park in the last ten years and went on to answer the remainder of the questions in the survey. Of those that did not visit the park in the last ten years, the top reasons for not visiting more often were that the park was too far away, or that they intended to visit but have not yet. They were also asked what improvements or changes to the park would make them want to visit more often. Responses included increased cleanliness of the day-use amenities, more trees/privacy in the campground, and others.

The highest number of respondents were between 50 and 64 years old (34%), most were white/Caucasian (87%), and most respondents were located in southeastern Michigan, primarily concentrated around Monroe. A small number of respondents were located outside of this regional area and are not shown on the map.

Park. The most common activities respondents reported participating in are going to the beach (66%), hiking/dog walking (58%), camping (57%), nature viewing/study (56%), swimming/wading (52%), biking (45%), and fishing (41%). When asked what activity the primary reason for their visit was, the most common answers were camping (32%), hiking/dog walking (16%), and going to the beach (11%).

Which activity is your PRIMARY reason for visiting the park?



Overnight Accommodations

Of those who responded to the survey, 61% have stayed overnight the park. Visitors to the modern campground were generally satisfied with their experience, with 36% saying they were very satisfied, and 43% satisfied. Those staying at the cottages were also satisfied, with 52% of those very satisfied, and 27% satisfied. Only about 13% of respondents reported staying at the cabins.

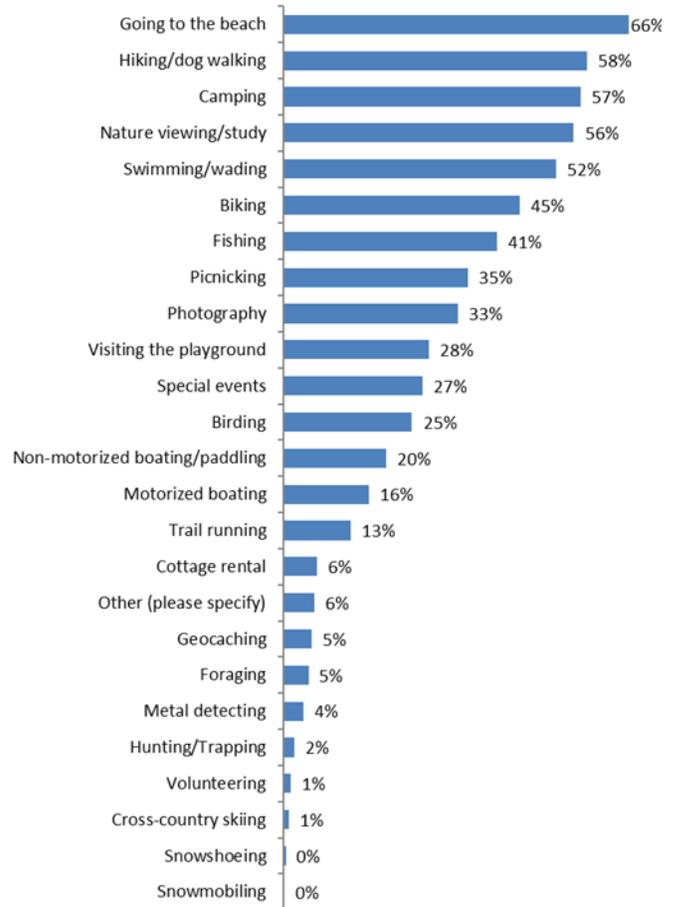
When asked what they liked most about the overnight experience, respondents frequently mentioned access and views to the beach, the cleanliness of facilities, the convenience of the park close to home, and access to the trails throughout the park. Those that indicated they only stayed at the cabins enjoyed the clean and new condition of the cottages, their full amenities, and the location right on the lake. Five randomly selected comments follow:

What did you like most about the experience?

- I like that there are so many full hook up sites
- The campsites are spacious. The restrooms/bathhouses are clean and well maintained.
- Lake view, nice sites, usually not crowded the time of year we visit
- A lot to do close by in the park.
- Very quiet

When asked if anything could be done to improve the overnight experience, around 42% of respondents indicated

Please check ALL the activities in which you participate at Sterling State Park. (Select all that apply)



that no changes were needed. However, 58% of respondents who commented indicated a desire for changes such as more trees in the campground to provide shade, trail repairs and maintenance, increased ranger presence in the evenings, cleanup of litter within the park, additional full-hookup sites and improved campground infrastructure, additional amenities (for example, more play equipment, a dog park, a kayak launch, disc golf course), and improved signage and communication. Five randomly selected comments follow:

Is there anything that could improve your overnight experience?

- More mature trees in the campground. More space between campsites.
- Is been an while since I've camped here but more trees in the camping area would be nice. In the summer it gets very hot and without many trees there isn't much opportunity for shade. Also a camp store or service building with info pamphlets, supplies, etc.

- The only suitable places for tent campers are along the very periphery, and not much shade.
- Clean up some of the zebra mussels on shore if possible.
- Some fishing docks in need of repairs/replaced.

Campers were also asked if they use the trails to travel to offsite destinations while camping, and 23% responded that they did. Common responses were local restaurants and bars, such as The Clamdigger, to travel to downtown Monroe and its local shops and businesses, local parks, and to the River Raisin National Battlefield Park. Five randomly selected comments follow:

Do you use the trails to travel to offsite destinations while you are camping?

- Would like to but there isn't anything nearby to see
- The Clamdigger
- Downtown Monroe
- Hike out to battlefield once but usually just to go check out birds in the other marshes
- We walk the trails

Trails

The trails at Sterling State Park allow visitors to experience the marsh ecosystem and natural beauty of the park, and so it is no surprise that 83% of respondents reported using the trails. The primary trail use reported was walking (91%) followed by biking (58%) and wildlife viewing (37%). When asked to rank their satisfaction of the trails on a scale from very satisfied to very unsatisfied, most respondents were satisfied with their experience (39%) and 15% were very satisfied, with 30% of respondents either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

Respondents were asked what they liked most about the trails at Sterling State Park. Survey respondents enjoyed the access

to nature and wildlife the trails provided, the scenic views such as the lake and marshes, the length of the trails and that they were easy to access, the peaceful and quiet atmosphere, the safety of the trails, variety of habitats the trails went through, the connectivity of the trails, and the usefulness of the trails for exercise and fitness. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What do you like most about the trails?

- Quiet and peaceful with occasional wildlife encounters.
- Access to multiple areas for birding. Ability to hike in a loop.
- The natural areas.
- Scenic viewing while on the trails.
- Being in the woods.

When asked what could be done to improve their satisfaction, respondents frequently mentioned repairing and resurfacing the trails since their condition has deteriorated due to tree roots and erosion; adding additional amenities such as benches, restrooms, garbage cans, water stations, and others; general trail maintenance; and adding better trail markers and interpretive signs.

Is there anything that could improve your satisfaction with the trails?

- The paths need to be replaced they are in really bad shape.
- Fix the eroded areas.
- The trails need to be fixed, there's a lot of uneven blacktop.
- The tree roots are hazards. I also felt unsafe at times (creepy).
- The trails need to be rebuilt and smoothed.

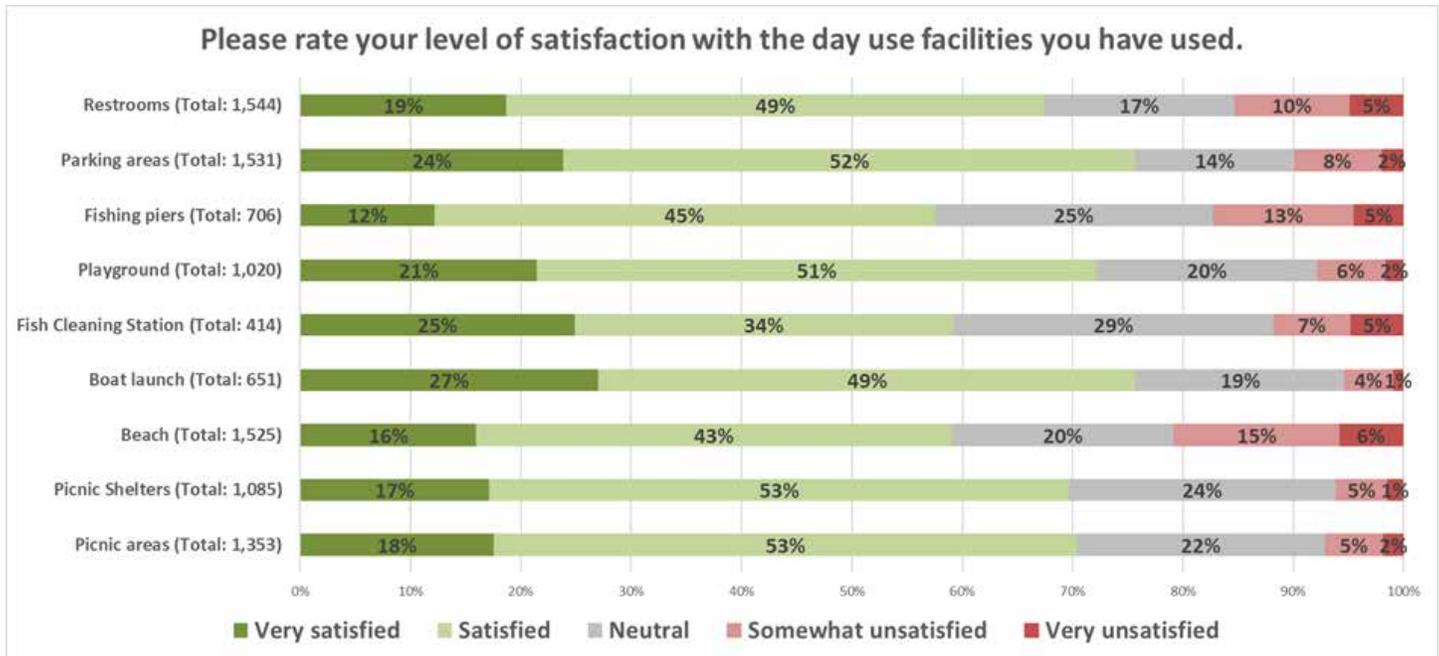
Day Use facilities

Eighty seven percent of respondents have used the park's beach, playground, boat launch, restrooms, fishing piers, or picnic shelters in the past. Users were asked their level of satisfaction with each of the day-use facilities, on a scale of very satisfied to very unsatisfied. The beach, parking lot, and restrooms were the most heavily used, and users were generally satisfied with their experience; however, when the satisfaction levels were averaged, users were most satisfied with the boat launch, and least satisfied with the fishing piers and beach.

When asked what they liked the most about the day use facilities, respondents frequently mentioned the cleanliness of the facilities such as the restrooms and beach, the availability and accessibility of the facilities with convenient parking



Two visitors smile and laugh together on the lake shore



options, the beach amenities and fishing opportunities, the size and spaciousness of the park, and family-friendly activities such as the playground.

What did you like most about the day use facilities?

- The beach is usually nice, the bathrooms are usually clean.
- Clean, nice playground. Open space.
- The large lawn area near the beach.
- Clean beach, maintained bathrooms.
- Plenty of parking close to the beach.

More than half of respondents reported that there was something that could be done to improve their experience with the day use facilities. Common themes included improving the cleanliness of facilities such as picking up litter and debris, improvements to the restroom facilities such as having them open year-round or having showers available, requests for additional facilities such as more picnic tables, shelters, and playground equipment; improvements to safety and security, water quality improvement, pet-friendly amenities, and modernization of facilities. Five randomly selected are below.

Please describe what could be done to improve your experience at the day use area:

- I wish the bathrooms stayed open year round, even if it's just a porta potty (seen those up north at state parks in the off season.) No bathroom limits how long one can stay during the winter.
- The parking lot is full of potholes, the beach almost always has garbage on it.
- Cleaner bathrooms and better concessions.

- Cleaner beach area and nicer park for kids to play. More things for kids to do.
- The restrooms need additional cleaning throughout the day and make sure they are restocked.

Survey respondents were also asked about the concessionaire at the park. The majority of respondents (83%) had not purchased food from the concessionaire. Those that had purchased food were primarily satisfied (32%) or neutral (35%) about the experience. When asked for comments about the experience, respondents cited a need for better availability, more variety, improved quality, and increased awareness about the concessions. Some were happy that there was an option available, but the general response was that improvements could be made. Respondents expressed a desire for a better overall experience when it comes to food options at the park. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What comments do you have about the concessionaire?

- Didn't know there was one.
- I am glad they are there. I believe more concessions or food trucks would be great during the summer.
- More options would be nice. We had the slushy truck and it was mediocre. Loved having an option, though.
- They're good but sometimes nobody is working when the sign says it's supposed to be open.
- Nice addition to the park.

Respondents were also asked what other services they would like to be provided at the park. Common themes include increased personal watercraft rental services; more concession/food stand options, nature and guided activities, a park store or convenience store at the campground, events

and entertainment, security and enforcement, and more. Five randomly selected responses follow:

Are there any other services you would like to see provided at the park?

- Kayak rental
- Food trucks
- A small child area added to the playground
- Rentals- paddle boats, kayaks, boards, etc.
- Geocaching

Hunting and Trapping

Only two percent of survey responses, totaling 41 participants, reported hunting or trapping at the park. The overwhelming majority (95%) hunt waterfowl, and 20% trap furbearers.

When asked to leave any comments about their hunting or trapping experience, some respondents said that they enjoyed hunting at the park but that the zones open to hunting can be confusing. Other said the park is too crowded to hunt, and that there is not enough game to target. Five randomly selected comments are below:

Please enter any comments you may have about hunting and trapping at the park.

- Waterfowl hunting at SSP is minimal at best. If every other public land is full, it's my last stop. The park doesn't hold enough birds and the habitat and hunting possibilities are minimal. I would be willing to pay for a raffle ticket on draws for hunting opportunities if it were managed and worked as good as Mouillee.
- Hunting is my top activity at the park, I want to make sure that hunters will always have access
- It would be nice to archery hunt deer
- Don't harass the trappers. I walk off the beaten path to trap. I always seem to get bothered by "curious" employees
- More clear signage on where hunting is allowed/not allowed

Fishing

Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents use the park for fishing access. They most frequently fish from the shoreline (60%) or from a fishing dock or pier (53%), or a motorized boat (47%). The preferred fishing location was split between Lake Erie (72%) and the lagoons and channels within the park (68%). The most commonly targeted species was walleye (48%) followed by no particular species (45%) and yellow perch (38%).

Comments left by anglers related to a desire to improve the fishing infrastructure such as improved fishing piers, additional fishing docks, or a desire for a fishing pier along the lake.

They also mentioned a need for maintenance of the existing infrastructure, stocking the lagoons with a variety of fish, requests for wheelchair-accessible fishing areas, and requests for amenities such as a small bait store or mobile vendor. Many respondents also expressed their satisfaction with the fishing experience and their enjoyment of the park's location and access to Lake Erie. Five randomly selected comments are below:

Please enter any comments you may have about fishing at the park.

- Great access and boat ramps to Lake Erie, all DNR Personnel in the park are very nice and friendly.
- Need more shoreline access to Lake Erie Fishing.
- Would be nice if piers went farther into lagoon.
- The fishing is very slow.
- The piers need updating.

Special Events or Programs

Most survey respondents (72%) have not participated in a special event or program at the park. Those that did most frequently mentioned participation in the fireworks display event, the Halloween-related events at the park, and cross country races and meets. They said that the fireworks event was great, even with the crowded conditions, and that traffic was handled well, though it can take some time to leave the park. The Halloween festivities were well-loved by respondents. Five randomly selected responses follow:

Please enter any comments you may have on the special events or programs in which you participated.

- Firework show is nice, the traffic at the end is just terrible and I think that's the reason more people don't show up.
- I love watching the county fireworks.
- The staff do a great job on the night of the fireworks! All hands on deck--they get us in and out of the park in a timely manner, and patrol the crowds continually.
- Cross country races.
- I wish there were more programs. I see a few, but they are very few and far between.

Respondents were asked for ideas of other events or programs they would like to see at the park. A wide variety of suggestions were given, ranging from more events or programs for children and families, such as Easter egg hunts, Halloween activities, and Christmas celebrations; outdoor concerts or music festivals; nature-related programs, guided walks, and educational presentations on wildlife and fauna; fishing tournaments, fishing classes, and other fishing-related activities; and community events, festivals, and food truck rallies.

Other Thoughts

Finally, respondents could share any other comments they had about the park, and optionally submit a photograph of their experience. Six hundred and ninety comments were submitted, which largely fell into the categories below:

- **Improvement of Infrastructure:** This includes suggestions like paving the roads and parking lots, providing full-hook ups at all campsites, making campsites level, and repairing existing structures like fishing piers and utility posts.
- **Maintenance of the Park:** Many people called for more frequent cleaning, especially in terms of garbage collection and beach cleanup. The state of the trails was a concern, with many respondents suggesting that they need to be repaired or better maintained.
- **Cottages and Cabins:** The placement of the cabins was an issue, with respondents suggesting that they blocked views of the water and detracted from the camping experience.
- **Tree Planting:** A common request was for more trees to be planted, particularly in the campground area. Respondents suggested this would provide more shade and improve the overall camping experience.
- **Additional Amenities:** This includes suggestions like adding facilities that can accommodate groups indoors, a splash pad, Wi-Fi, and a park store.
- **Preservation of Natural Habitats:** Some respondents called for the preservation of bird habitats and for better management of algal blooms.
- **Enjoyment of the park:** Many respondents reiterated their

enjoyment of the park, and that they love to come camp and visit.

Five randomly selected comments follow:

Please share any other thoughts you may have on the park.

- Nice park, big sites. Repave the road. Very bumpy.
- Love the spacious campsites!
- The trails used to be very well maintained but that has changed. They are dangerous and in desperate need of repairs.
- This is one of my favorite parks and my family always camps here together. The sites, power poles, and water spigots all could use additional maintenance.
- It needs a larger concession building that offers more variety.

Survey participants could leave a photo of their experience at Sterling State Park, and 272 images were submitted. These photographs will be used to bring the General Management Plan to life! The DNR appreciates everyone who took the time to participate in the survey.



Additional photos of Sterling State Park visitors enjoying their stay

B.2 Summary of Stakeholder Input Workshop

To gather targeted input from governmental, non-profit, and business/tourism entities, the planning team invited over 50 stakeholders, both individuals and community groups, to participate in a facilitated input workshop held on April 11, 2023, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Frenchtown Township Hall in Monroe, Michigan. Representatives of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provided the stakeholders with a brief overview of Sterling State Park, including its natural features, cultural resources, and recreational offerings. The stakeholders were also presented the general management plan process, timeline, and an explanation of the plan elements that their input would inform: the statements of significance, the twenty-year management zone map, and action plan intended to be accomplished over the next ten years.

The stakeholders were divided into small discussion groups around a numbered table (either 1, 2, or 3). They worked together to complete a series of exercises discussing the park’s current status, opportunities for partnerships, the park’s potential benefit to the larger community, and the stakeholders’ vision for the park’s future. Each table then reported out to the larger group. The results of the table exercises are outlined in the following summary.

Stakeholder Input Workshop Attendees

NAME	REPRESENTING
FLORENCE BUCHANAN	Monroe County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
TRACY OBERLEITER	Advisory Panel Senator Joe Bellino
VINCENT PASTUE	City of Monroe
GAY ADAMS	Vista Recreation
RAYMOND ADAMS	Vista Recreation
SAMUEL C. HANKINSON	Port of Monroe
PATRICK H. LEIBOLD	Monroe Resident
JEANNE MICKA	Monroe Resident
RICHARD MICKA	Monroe Resident
DICK WHITMAN	Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival
MOLLY LUEMPERT-COY	DTE
RYAN SIMMONS	Monroe County Planning
JOHN HOCHRADEL	Detroit Beach Boat Club
DAVID RAYMOND	Monroe County Sheriff

Icebreaker Question

When the stakeholders introduced themselves, they were asked to describe what matters most to them about Sterling State Park. Their recorded responses follow in the table below.

What matters most to me about Sterling State Park Is...

STATEMENT
Motto: “Doing the outdoor right.” Bring more people outdoors to enjoy their time increasing and improving family/individual experiences
That the campers have an enjoyable safe experience in the beauty of nature
Integrating trail system to the Monroe loop trail network
Destination of trails
Channel maintenance; boater safety
It’s a local jewel maintaining heritage and all the recreational offerings for families, residents & visitors. It is a part of the local eco-tourism and part of the fabric of Frenchtown
Keeping our park an engine for Monroe County- further developing our campground & fishing opportunities, further improvements to our own walking & bicycle trails
Wetlands; public opportunity
The ability for community to connect & families being able to spend time together



Stakeholders are seated in small groups and discuss the future of the park

Exercise 1: Say one word or phrase that describes the park right now.

Commonly mentioned words or phrases that stakeholders used to describe the park related to the recreation activities provided by the park and its natural beauty and diverse ecosystems within a developed area. They spoke of the quality of life that the park affords, as well as some of the unique features like the best lotus beds on the west shore of Lake Erie.

Exercise 1

WORD OR PHRASE	MENTIONED AT TABLE #
Potential	1, 2
Ecotourism	1
Recreational activities	1
Maintenance	1
Inviting	1
Quality of life	1
All seasons	1
Lake access	1
Heritage	1
Relaxation	1
Connectivity	1
No golf currently	1
Diverse use	2
Opportunity	2
Worn down biking/ hiking trails	2
Black top	2
Shadeless	2
Busy	2
Mayflies	2
Wildlife	2
Variety of vegetation	2
Scenic shoreline	2
Gorgeous sunset	2
Accessible	2
Best lotus beds on west shore of Lake Erie	3
Best scenic overlook on Lake Erie	3
Economic entity for our county	3
Great international wildlife location	3
Link (state park) between a national park (battlefield) & international wildlife refuge (Ford Marsh)	3
Lagoon system	3
Great marsh lands	3
Great trails	3
Great boat launch	3
Birding	3

Exercise 2: Say one word or phrase that you want to describe the park in the future.

When stakeholders thought about how they would like to describe the park in the future, they spoke of increased recreational opportunities such as additional rental opportunities, a golf course, a pier into the lake, kayaking, an improved boat launch, and more. They desired a park that was safe, well-maintained, sustainable, and a key part of the local ecosystem.

Exercise 2

ITEMS	MENTIONED AT TABLE #
Golf course	1
Safe bike path	1
Diverse ecosystem and visitor population	1
Historical perspective	1
Better viewing and scenic destinations	1
EV stations	1
Part of refuge on Sandy Creek	1
Rental opportunities enhanced	1
B20 recreational events	1
Safe	2
Well maintained	2
Sustainable	2
Greater off-season use	2
More trees in campground	2
Pier into the lake	2
Amenities like store etc.	2
More marsh land/wetlands	3
More kayaking	3
Improved boat launch	3
Fish passage	3
Bird migration development	3
More visitors	3
Photography	3
Artist to take advantage of	3
Public access (one of 6 with Monroe)	3
More interaction with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge	3
Beach nourishment	3
Access to canals	3
More waterfowl hunting opportunities	3
Improved trail systems	3

Exercise 3: How can the state park benefit the wider community now or in the future?

The stakeholders were tasked with focusing on the ways in which the park could benefit the larger community, whether from a standpoint of economic development, recreation, or education, for example. Stakeholders considered a wide range of subjects, covering themes such as economic impact and accessibility to the public, conservation and wildlife preservation, providing the public with recreation infrastructure and facilities, and engaging the community with events and programs.

Exercise 3

ITEMS	MENTIONED AT TABLE #
More community events	1
Promoting the park to new residents	1
More partnership with school	1
Churches & non-profits	1
Wildlife exhibit interpretive center	1
Multiuse recreation	2
Facilities like boat slips marine	2
Attraction- destination point	2
Education- nature wildlife	2
Marketing- integration with state	2
Economic impact	2
Event destination	2
Expand Partnerships	2
Public access	3
“Free” scenic overlook	3
Reduce & lower entrance fees	3
Easier access to observation deck/ tower	3
Observation to Monroe harbor	3
Improve the trail along Mason Run	3
Photo station for wildlife	3
Preserve & protect lotus beds	3
Creel counts for fish	3
Place for night fishing	3

Exercise 4: What are some collaboration and partnership opportunities that the state park presents for local communities and stakeholders?

There were three groups that more than one stakeholder group mentioned for partnership opportunities: the Business Alliance, the local schools, and the National Parks Service. Stakeholders suggested many partnerships that could provide educational and recreation events, as well as assistance with maintenance and upkeep of the park.

Exercise 4

GROUP OR STAKEHOLDER NAME	COLLABORATION OR PARTNERSHIP IDEA	TABLE #
Business Alliance	Promoting quality of life and activities; collaboration, tourism	1, 2
Schools	Activities like cleanup, field trips; recreational opportunities	1, 2
National Parks Service	Field trips, promoting local history, more parks; Heritage Trail	1, 3
Monroe Community Players	75th anniversary event	1
Promedica Hospital	Land use partnership	1
Tourism Bureau	New venue destination	1
YMCA	5K run, summer camp, field trip	1
Cornerstone	Post events- networking	2
Law, Fire, etc.	Education- touch, meet & great	2
Senior Center	Activities, site seeing, walks	2
Vista Recreation	Expanded involvement	2
Youth group	Fishing, training, swimming	2
Coast Guard	Life saving & boat inspection	3
Corps	Scenic overlook maintenance	3
Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge- Fish and Wildlife Service	Wetlands	3
DNR Wildlife Division	Law enforcement	3
Ducks Unlimited	Pump maintenance	3
Lotus Garden Club	Lotus tours	3
Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival committee	Festival	3

Exercise 5: What improvements or changes would you like to see at the state park? What things would stay the same?

Stakeholders discussed a broad array of possible improvements to the park. Major themes included increasing recreation and entertainment options, increasing environmental sustainability and improving the local ecosystem, adding visitor facilities to improve the experience, strengthening nonmotorized infrastructure and connections, and collaborating with partners outside of the park. The item receiving the most votes from members at the table were creating a concert/entertainment venue and adding a marina.

Items that the stakeholders should stay the same include what the park is most known for- the beach, modern campground, high visitation, quality fishing and boating access, and more as shown in the table.

Exercise 5: Improvements of Changes

ITEMS	TABLE #	TOTAL VOTES
Concerts or entertainment at amphitheater	1	4
Marina	2	4
More recreational activities	1	3
Add EV stations	1	3
Less cement/pavement- more trees & vegetation	2	3
Create wetlands along Waterworks Road	3	3
Visitor center/campground activities	3	3
More community partnerships	1	2
Bike path improvement	2	2
Annual Lotus Tour	3	2
Deepening the mouth of Sandy Creek at the shoreline	1	1
Visitor/ wildlife interpretive center	1	1
Water quality improvement at marshes	1	1
Store	2	1
Group camping	2	1
Great Lakes Way- Vehicular tour down highway from Wayne County	3	1
More rental activities	1	0
Broaden concessions	2	0
Less mayflies	2	0
Scenic overlook	3	0
Improve fish passage & fish count	3	0
Vessel observation site (Monroe Harbor)	3	0
Coordination with National Park Service & Wildlife Service	3	0

Exercise 5: Stay the Same

ITEMS	TABLE #	TOTAL VOTES
Beach	2	2
Camping	3	2
Maintain high usage	2	1
Quality fishing, launch ramps	2	1
Public access	3	1
Accessibility	1	0
Current user base	1	0
Buffer area between wildlife and trail	1	0
Boat Launch	3	0
Trails	3	0

Final Exercise: Collective Priorities

The top items from exercise four were transferred to another exercise wherein everyone in the session could vote on which idea they thought was the best. Out of the ideas generated, the item receiving the most votes was to develop a marina, followed by develop a visitor center and more recreational activities.

Collective Priorities

ITEMS	VOTES
Develop a marina	11
Develop visitor center	9
More recreational activities	7
Create wetlands along Waterworks Road	6
Add EV charging stations	4
Reduce paved surfaces / add trees	3



Two children participate in a water safety education event

B.3 Tribal Engagement

The following letter was sent via email to:

- Bay Mills Indian Community
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- Hannahville Indian Community
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Gun Lake Tribe of Pottawatomi Indians
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Dear Tribal Leaders:

The Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in the process of developing general management plans for the following state parks:

- William C. Sterling State Park in Monroe County
- Duck Lake State Park in Muskegon County
- Indian Lake State Park in Schoolcraft County
- Palms Book State Park in Schoolcraft County

Negwegon State Park (phase 2 plan update) in Alpena and Alcona Counties

The DNR uses general management plans (GMPs) to define a long-range planning and management strategy that will protect the natural, cultural and historic resources of the site, while considering education and recreation opportunities. A planning team, representing various specialties within the DNR, has been established and is meeting regularly to develop the GMPs for these sites.

The planning process includes several opportunities for input, including a stakeholder meeting and online survey. In addition, the draft plans will be available for review and comment prior to adoption.

For additional information on our management plan process, please visit our website at www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans

We would like to give the Tribes the opportunity to meet with us to discuss the management plan process and any thoughts you may have in relation to any of these properties.

Please contact Ms. Debbie Jensen, PRD Management Plan Administrator, at Jensend1@michigan.gov if you would like any additional information or would like to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. VanDyke

Director, Legislative & Legal Affairs Office & Tribal Liaison
Executive Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Constitution Hall, 525 West Allegan Street
P.O. Box 30028
(517) 284-6243

vandyket1@michigan.gov



B.4 Summary of Draft Plan Public Input

The public was invited to share their thoughts about the Sterling State Park Draft General Management Plan at a virtual public meeting that was hosted online by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on September 21, 2023, from 6:00- 7:30 p.m. The general public was notified about the meeting through a press release, internet postings, and email notifications. A total of 23 attendees were recorded.

The meeting began with an introduction of planning team members, followed by an overview of the general management plan process, Sterling State Park, and the draft general management plan contents. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period. Topics discussed included invasive species management, the trail reconstruction projects, wayfinding and signage, future property acquisition, future bicycle infrastructure, recycling in the park, and more.

At the end of the meeting, attendees were asked to visit the interactive public input survey link to review and comment on the statements of significance, management zone plan, and ten-year actions. There was also a section for additional feedback on the management plan and the input process. The survey link was posted to the park's website along with a recording of the meeting. The survey link was open through October 1, 2023. Comments could also be submitted during that time via email.

Survey participants were asked to prioritize their top five action goals from the ten-year actions list. The top priority actions were:

- Replace the southern fishing pier near the campground and consider adding a pier on the lagoon near the causeway.
- Continue to explore land acquisition within the GMP Proposed Project Boundary.
- Continue to implement phragmites removal efforts within the park. Work with partners to treat invasive species in the vicinity of the park.
- Stabilize the Clearwater Canal shoreline and reconstruct the trails around the lagoon, marshes, and Clearwater Canal
- Explore opportunities to provide boat mooring for campers.

Within the following pages is a listing of all comments received through the interactive public input survey as well as via email. These items, along with other input from the public, will be considered as the planning team finalizes the general management plan.

Comments Received Via Email

Email 1: Received 9/7/2023

As a young teenager I worked at Sterling State Park during the summer for 3 years (68,69,70). As a younger kid I can remember not being able to swim in Lake Erie because of the pollution from chemicals from runoff (early to mid 60's). There was a very short time when swimming was ok in the lake, we will never be able to swim in Lake Erie unless we take care of the runoff from the farmland the phosphorus is feeding the algae bloom. Everyone knows what is causing the problem but they don't want to hurt the farmer's feelings.

Statements of Significance Comments

Lake Erie

Sterling State Park is the only Michigan state park with Lake Erie access and boasts nearly one mile of beach shoreline. Lake Erie can also be reached via the park's large-capacity boat launch allowing anglers access to a world-class walleye fishery. Visitors and campers enjoy sweeping lake views and sunrises over this Great Lake.

Comments:

1. Please get on board with algae control. Also find a way to eliminate cormorants. They are killing our trees.
2. True.
3. "Access to a world-class walleye fishery" sounds somewhat clinical and extractive, rather than appreciative of animals that would ideally be sustained and supported by all the same people who fish for them. Not sure how I'd reword it, though.

Regional Significance

A gateway park for out-of-state visitors, Sterling State Park is the first state park encountered after crossing the Michigan border on I-75, attracting a significant number of non-residents. The park has regional significance as a part of a larger recreation and conservation corridor and acts as a connection point between local parks, the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Comments:

1. Agreed.

Land Use Evolution

Throughout its history, the land comprising Sterling State Park has seen significant change in land use and character. Nearly all the land that comprises the park was altered by earth-moving activities, stretching back to the 1700s. More recent environmental restoration efforts have created an oasis

within a largely industrial and agricultural landscape. This new era for the park as post-industrial reclaimed land is perhaps best symbolized by the return of the beautiful blooming lotus flowers.

Comments:

1. Very nice.

Sterling Marshes

Over time, there has been a tremendous loss of coastal marsh land in the western Lake Erie shoreline. Sterling State Park has a significant amount of the remaining coastal marshland in the area, making it all the more critical. The Sterling State Park marshes connected to Lake Erie are important for fish recruitment and spawning, as a nursery for young fish, and as habitat for a significant number of rare species. The accessible flat and paved trails around the marshes provide year-round recreational access to this resource.

Comments:

1. Very true.
2. I think "marsh land" in the first sentence should be changed to "marshland," to match the usage in the second sentence and follow industry conventions.

Birding Opportunities

As part of a migratory flyway and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Sterling State Park presents excellent birding opportunities. When water levels in the marshes are drawn down, mud flats are created that attract thousands of shorebirds and over 250 bird species have been reported at the park through eBird. The marsh trails offer an accessible pathway for viewing and many birders come to the park for sightings of rare species.

Comments:

1. Excellent, but too much goose poop.

Modern Recreation

In 2002, Sterling State Park was a recipient of Clean Michigan Initiative development funds which completely renovated the park infrastructure and amenities. As a result, the park provides visitors with a more modern camping experience than many Michigan state parks, including a number of full-hook up campsites designed for large rigs. More recently, several full-amenity cottages have become available for rent on the Lake Erie shore. Due in part to these amenities, the park is one of the most visited in the state.

Comments:

1. We love to camp there, although needs many more trees and less goose poop.
2. I'm less familiar with camping language conventions, but I think "fullhook up campsites" should be "full hookup campsites" or "full hook-up campsites" lol

Should any significance statements be added?

3. For the life of me I cannot understand why there are not any boat ramps that extend much deeper into the bay. I only have a 22' cuddy cruiser and i barely have enough length to dock my boat without my v-berth hitting the pavement.
Please provide at least one or two extended length ramps (minimum 10' more than current) for those of us with larger boats.
Also set aside more funding for maintenance & repair of the fish cleaning station. And perhaps, adding a 2nd grinder and trash can.
4. Provide all campers with a sling shot and give them a fee night of camping if they kill a goose.
5. Does Sterling State Park have any special significance to local indigenous people? Have they been asked?

Management Zone Comments

1. Improve all launch facilities, more docks, improve fish cleaning facilities. (Developed Recreation Zone)
2. I don't think it should be considered a given that "active management" is on the opposite end of a spectrum from "ecologically sensitive" land. That sounds like part of the ideology that considers humans separate from nature, not part of it. (Primitive Zone)

Action Plan Priorities

To assist with action prioritization, survey respondents were asked to select their top five actions from the list below. Each time an item was selected is considered one "vote" for that item, and all votes for each action item are totaled below. The list is sorted with the actions receiving the most votes positioned at the top of the list.

ACTION ITEMS	VOTES
Replace one floating fishing pier in the lagoon south of the bridge.	6
Address the failing stormwater system beneath the park roads and parking lots.	6
Rehabilitate the main park roads and day use parking lot. Study parking capacity and whether areas could be converted to pervious overflow parking areas.	6
Implement the re-design of the Bartnick Boat Launch traffic flow reconfiguration.	5
Develop an accessible non-motorized watercraft launch within the park lagoons.	5
Improve stormwater management, campsite grading, and drainage within the campground.	5
Address landscaping needs in the developed recreation zones, including identification of no-mow zones, removal of inappropriate vegetation, selection of low-maintenance plantings and shade trees.	4
Update the natural resources Stewardship Plan for the park, identifying targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies, including invasive species management.	4
Design and construct a new modern toilet building at the trailhead.	4
Add outdoor shower stations in the vicinity of the beach.	4
Study a potential relocation of the entrance road, including partial abandonment of Waterworks Road, to route traffic to an existing traffic signal on North Dixie Highway with the goal of improving traffic flow, safety, and habitat quality. Include consideration of non-motorized transportation.	3
Assess the need for additional concessionaires and services.	2
Complete the removal of fill and haul road remaining from the construction of the Confined Disposal Facility and restore the area to native vegetation.	2
Consider the possibility of providing expanded kitchen or food preparation space for a concessionaire.	1
Study the potential for alternative energy generation, such as wind or solar power, to provide energy for the park.	1
Complete an assessment of the headquarters building foundations and make repairs as recommended.	1
Perform a structural inspection and modernize the Midway Day-Use Toilet Building.	1
Consider the addition of EV charging stations to the parking areas.	0

Action Plan Comments

Should any actions be added to the list?

1. Promedica has abandoned its plans to build a hospital on the grounds of the former River Raisin Golf Course. Portions of this property should be purchased for inclusion to Sterling State Park.
2. Longer docks for lower water levels
3. Adding managed waterfowl hunting areas
4. Upgrade electrical at campsites, GFCI's are expired and need upgrading, light at sure inop convert to LED
5. Make the fish cleaning station more robust and reliable
6. Dredge the channel from the boat launch to the lake entrance to make it deeper and wider.
7. The most common complaint of fisherman is the continual disrepair of the fish cleaning station. It rarely works, it seems to be unable to keep up with capacity. When I fish in similar municipal parks in Wisconsin (algoma for example), I find these stations clean, built to capacity and the resource (fish entrails) handled in an ecologically appropriate manner. This needs to be the #1 priority at the boat launch.

8. Something needs to be changed with the fill/dumping station when arriving at the park to camp. I find it ridiculous to have to wait in line to at the park entrance then having to fill up with water at the fill station and have to get back in the same line again. They should have a bypass lane for campers only and just check for park passes at the campground office when you check in.
9. Definitely redo trail system it is very dangerous can't tell you how many times I've tripped over the cracks! Widen the road few feet for big campers so don't have to trim trees while entering park. Also expand the 1st parking lot across from the boat launch. More garbage cans on trail & a bathroom half way in the trail, even if it's an outhouse!
10. Bike trails need to be resurfaced and widened.
11. Replace the grills that are rusted and corroded.

Should any actions be removed from the list?

1. It should not be the Michigan DNR's problem to work on the Army Corp of Engineer's dumping grounds. Federal monies need to be allocated for something caused by the Army Corps.

Additional Feedback

Question 1: Please provide any additional comments you may have on the Sterling State Park general management plan.

1. You need to plant more trees in the campground. There is no shade and its like camping in a parking lot. The channel going out to Lake Erie needs to be dredged. How about more public fishing piers?
2. The roads are depreciating at a rapid rate. The docks are too short for most boats. There needs to be a long courtesy dock for dropping off picking up passengers.
3. I use the park , 6-12 times a year. The fish cleaning station was down for almost 10 months 22-23. Expand the fish cleaning station and the parking lot. Both are too small during the peak of fishing, May and June. Maybe expand that whole marsh area behind the docks for overnight dockage. So many possibilities there
4. Nothing addresses the boat ramp, the short docks, the lack of drop off docks or the cleaning station that was down for a year and a half! Way more people come to the State Park to launch their boat year round than any of the things above that you choose to prioritize.
5. More focus should be placed on maintenance of current amenities rather than adding more. Current staffing levels seem inadequate to take care of what is already there. Floating Fishing dock has been in terrible shape for years. The trail has been sinking into the river for years. No maintenance seems to be occurring across the board.
6. Build a pick up and drop off pier along the south side of the boat launch lagoon. It would make launch congestion a lot better during busy times. Ohio does

this along with some of the launches in saginaw bay and it helps tremendously. People can pull away from the dock while they wait for someone to park the truck

7. Sterling State Park is a wonderful park and campground. The trails are a big asset to the community to get out and walk. Fixing the trails will be a tremendous boost to get more walkers.

Question 2: Did you attend the virtual public meeting (webinar)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
YES	8
NO	5

Question 3: Rate your experience with this virtual public open house format.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
VERY DISSATISFIED	1
DISSATISFIED	0
NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED	1
SATISFIED	2
VERY SATISFIED	6

Question 4: Please provide any additional feedback you may have.

1. The opportunity to allow feedback to be provided and the selection of choices.
2. Thank you, For a great presentation and information.
3. Sadly a couple of the links did not work, but what did work was well done and the effort was excellent.
4. I needed more spaces/words for my comments.
5. I love a good storymap, but the nested survey areas with their own scrollbars inside of the larger story map sometimes made it a little confusing which part of the page I was scrolling up/down on- like, I would mean to scroll back up to review my survey options on some question, but would instead scroll up on the base storymap and not be able to see what I was looking for. Might be more confusing to older or less techy people.
6. Fisherman are most important
7. easy to do
8. A count of currently selected for the 6 options.

Sterling GMP Virtual Public Meeting -

Summary of Q and A

- Q. Can a sign be put up on Waterworks Road to say Sterling State Park ahead? I have many vehicles turn around in my driveway thinking they're on the wrong road.
- A. We do own a little sliver of property at Dixie Highway and Water Works. It seems like that might be a potential location for a similar entrance sign to the one at State Park Rd entrance.
- Q. What about a visitor services center?
- A. Visitor centers are expensive to build, maintain and staff. There are also visitor centers at the International Wildlife Refuge and also the National Park Service, the battle site. We try to educate visitors in a more open setting, through interpretation, events, explorer guides. It may be something we could consider if there were partners or opportunities for collaboration, but it would not be a high priority.
- Q. Will there be a bicycle path along the entrance road for those of us who enjoy riding our bicycles into the park?
- A. That will be considered when we look at alternatives for potentially moving the main entrance to the park or repaving the roads, but it is more of a long-term goal.
- Q. Is there any way to keep the geese off the boat ramps and docks? Their droppings are a big problem for fishermen.
- A. Looking at the mow/no-mow areas is one solution: less mown grass does tend to keep them at bay. They are problematic and skid piers, in particular, require a lot of cleaning.
- Q. When is work going to start on the Heritage Trail?
- A. Design is complete and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is going to be managing the construction. It's projected to be bid out in December with construction beginning in the spring for completion in the summer. The project includes repaving the heritage trail within the state park.
- Q. Now that ProMedica has offered their property for sale at 1500 N Dixie Highway, can PRD explore the possibility of purchasing or acquiring some of that property for Sterling State Park? There is an old clubhouse in the property that could be used as a visitor center in collaboration with MDOT and the Great Lakes Way Heritage Corridor that will connect the Gordie Howe Bridge with all points south including Sterling State Park on North Dixie Highway.
- A. Purchase of all or part of the property is of interest to the DNR and we will look into it, although funding and timing may be a challenge. Partnership opportunities would make it easier to become a reality.
- Q. What is the NRC?
- A. NRC stands for the Natural Resources Commission. The commissioners are appointed by the governor. The boundaries on all DNR- managed state land were approved by the NRC.
- Q. Can you make recycling bins in the campground available?
- A. That was a program that we had implemented for quite a few years, ran by our campground host and those were taken out of commission in the COVID era. So that's something that we could certainly entertain as a program moving forward.
- Q. Has DNR asked Detroit Beach Boat Club how to fund new aid to navigation?
- A. At the beach there's a channel with the boat launch. I'm not exactly sure what this is referring to, but if they want to reach out to me here at the park, we can discuss it further detail and I can find out what it is they're looking for.

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Appendix C:

Opinion of Probable Costs

C.1 State Park Funding

The primary funding sources for state park improvement and development projects are Recreation Passport sales (motor vehicle registration fee), the Park Endowment Fund (generated from royalties from oil, gas and mineral extraction on public land) and the Park Improvement Fund (from camping and other state park user fees). One-time appropriations from the state General Fund may also be earmarked for specific needs but are not guaranteed. In 2022, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was approved by the Michigan legislature which directed \$250 million toward state park infrastructure, trails and a new state park in Flint. Sterling State Park received ARPA funds towards the Heritage Trail improvement project. The annual capital outlay budget for state parks varies significantly from year to year, averaging approximately \$14 million per year over the past five years. Although this funding will have a big impact, the amount of need is still estimated to be in the hundreds of millions due to the aging infrastructure in the state park system.

With such a large gap between financial need and budget, all projects are carefully analyzed to look at innovative solutions to increase efficiencies or downsize assets.

C.2 Estimated Cost of Proposed Developments

The following table provides an estimate of probable cost for each capital outlay development project proposed at Sterling State Park over the next ten years. Management and operations actions, small projects, which are funded out of district or park funds, and those lead by partners, are not included in this list but may have additional financial implications. The costs are based on information available at the time and will be refined as conceptual and detailed designs are completed. Where noted, the costs may only include studies or project planning, which will provide direction for development costs if determined appropriate. The costs are based on 2023 prices and should be adjusted according to the consumer price index and the market at the time of implementation.

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

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

Infrastructure and Development: Capital Outlay

ACTION ITEMS	PRIORITY	OPINION OF PROBABLE COST
Complete an assessment of the headquarters building foundations and make repairs as recommended.	1	\$75,000
Replace one floating fishing pier in the lagoon south of the bridge.	1	\$375,000
Address the failing stormwater system beneath the park roads and parking lots.	1	\$100,000
Implement the re-design of the Bartnick Boat Launch traffic flow reconfiguration.	1	\$3,500,000
Develop an accessible non-motorized watercraft launch within the park lagoons.	2	\$300,000
Replace the southern fishing pier near the campground and consider adding a pier on the lagoon near the causeway.	2	\$375,000
Rehabilitate the main park roads and day use parking lots. Study parking capacity and whether areas could be converted to pervious overflow parking areas.	2	\$4,000,000
Improve stormwater management, campsite grading, and drainage within the campground.	2	\$1,000,000
Complete the removal of fill and haul road remaining from the construction of the Confined Disposal Facility and restore the area to native vegetation.	2	\$1,000,000
Perform a structural inspection and modernize the Midway Day-Use Toilet Building.	2	\$1,000,000
Perform a phase 1 archaeological survey of the land within the cultural landscape overlay zone and additional targeted areas.	2	\$25,000
Modernize or replace the toilet building at the boat launch.	3	\$500,000
Design and construct a new modern toilet building at the trailhead.	3	\$300,000
Upgrade the electrical service in the campground.	3	\$800,000
TOTAL*		\$13,350,000

*EXCLUDES COSTS YET TO BE IDENTIFIED BY STUDIES TO DETERMINE BEST WAY TO PROCEED AND COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROJECTS THAT ARE ALREADY FUNDED.

Partner Projects with Secured Funding

ACTION ITEMS	PRIORITY	FUNDING SECURED
Stabilize the Clearwater Canal shoreline and reconstruct the trails around the lagoon, marshes, and Clearwater Canal. Completed in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation, Monroe County, and the Environmental Protection Agency.	1	\$7,550,000

Appendix D: Agreements

D.1 Confined Disposal Facility Agreement

AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AND
THE STATE OF MICHIGAN
FOR LOCAL COOPERATION AT
STERLING STATE PARK
MONROE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

THIS AGREEMENT, entered into this 10th day of March, 1982,
by and between the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (hereinafter called the
"Government"), represented by the Contracting Officer executing this Agreement
and the STATE OF MICHIGAN acting through the Michigan State Department of
Natural Resources (hereinafter called the "State"), pursuant to Section 221 of
P.L. 91-611 approved 31 December 1970;

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, Section 123 of the River and Harbor Act of 1970 (Public Law
91-611 approved 31 December 1970) authorized the construction, operation and
maintenance of Contained Spoil Disposal Facilities of sufficient capacity to
contain the deposits of dredged materials for a period not to exceed ten
years; and

WHEREAS, a Letter Report providing for the construction of Contained Spoil
Disposal Facilities at Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan, entitled
"Letter Report, Diked Disposal Area, Monroe Harbor, Michigan," was approved
26 September 1980; and

WHEREAS, a Final Environmental Impact Statement developed in support of
and supplementing the said Letter Report was filed February 8
19 82, with the United States Environmental Protection Agency; and

WHEREAS, a preliminary set of plans and specifications has been furnished to the Michigan State Department of Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS, the said Section 123 provides that the Secretary of the Army shall obtain the concurrence of appropriate local governments and shall consider the views and recommendations of the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and shall comply with the requirements of Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, P.L. 92-500, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which requirements have been complied with; and

WHEREAS, said Section 123, provides that non-Federal interests must agree in writing to furnish certain items of local cooperation prior to commencement of construction of such facilities, including a possible contribution by non-Federal interests of 25 per centum (25%) of construction costs; and

WHEREAS, the requirement for contribution by non-Federal interests of 25 per centum of construction costs for the proposed project facility has been waived by the Secretary subsequent to a finding by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency that for the area to which such construction applies, the State, municipality, and all other appropriate political subdivisions of the State and industrial concerns are participating in and in compliance with an approved plan for the general geographical area of the dredging activity for construction, modification, expansion, or rehabilitation of waste treatment facilities and the Administrator has found that applicable water quality standards are not being violated; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted Public Law 91-646, approved 2 January 1971, entitled the "Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970"; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted Public Law 88-352, The Civil Rights Act of 1964;
and

WHEREAS, the State hereby represents that it has the authority and capability to furnish the non-Federal cooperation required by the Federal legislation authorizing the project and by other applicable law.

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:

1. The State agrees that, upon notification that Government will commence construction of a Contained Spoil Disposal Facility at Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan, as authorized by Section 123 of P.L. 91-611 approved 31 December 1970, substantially in accordance with the Letter Report approved 26 September 1980, the said supporting Final Environmental Impact Statement, and preliminary plans and specifications, the State shall, in consideration of the Government commencing construction of such project, fulfill the requirements of non-Federal cooperation specified in such legislation and by other applicable law, to wit:

a. Furnish all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility.

b. Hold and save the United States free from damages due to construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility, except damages due solely to the fault or negligence of the United States or its contractors.

c. Maintain the facility after completion of its use for disposal purposes in a manner satisfactory to the Secretary of the Army.

d. In acquiring lands, easements, and rights-of-way for the Project, the State will comply with the applicable provisions of the "Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970", P.L. 91-646, approved 2 January 1971.

e. Comply with Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) and Department of Defense Directive 5500.11 issued pursuant thereto and published in Part 300 of Title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, in connection with the maintenance and operation of the Project.

2. The State shall retain title to all lands, easements, and rights-of-way furnished by it pursuant to paragraph 1 above. However, the Contained Spoil Disposal Facility contemplated herein may be conveyed to another party only after completion of the facility's use for disposal purposes and after the transferee agrees in writing to use or maintain the facility in a manner which the Secretary of the Army determines to be satisfactory.

3. The Contained Spoil Disposal Facility contemplated herein will be made available to Federal licensees or permittees upon payment of an appropriate charge for such use. In view of the above cited waiver of the requirement to contribute 25 per centum of the construction cost, the State shall not be entitled to any portion of such charges.

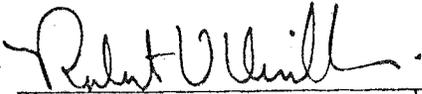
4. The State hereby grants to the Government, its officers, employees, agents, contractors, and assigns, the right to enter upon, at reasonable times and in a reasonable manner, lands which the State owns or controls, for the purpose of inspection, and for the purpose of maintaining the facility, if such inspection shows that the State for any reason, is failing to maintain the facility in accordance with the assurances herein and has persisted in such failure after a reasonable notice in writing by the Government, delivered to the State, or its designated representative. No maintenance by the Government in such event shall operate to relieve the State of its responsibility to meet its obligations as set forth in this Agreement or to preclude the Government from pursuing any other remedy at law or equity.

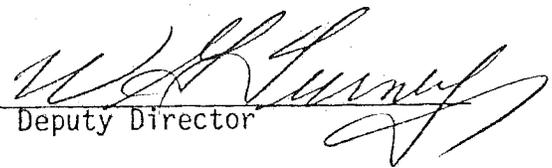
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the day and year first above written.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATE OF MICHIGAN

APPROVED:

BY 
ROBERT V. VERMILLION
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer
Contracting Officer

BY 
Deputy Director

TITLE: _____

FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

DATE: 11 March 1982

DATE: 3-10-82

ATTORNEY'S CERTIFICATE

I, RUSSELL E PRINS, a duly appointed Assistant Attorney General for the State of Michigan, hereby certify:

1. That I have examined:

a. The AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE STATE OF MICHIGAN FOR LOCAL COOPERATION AT STERLING STATE PARK executed for and on behalf of the State of Michigan by William G. Turney, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources.

b. The resolution of the Natural Resources Commission dated February 12, 1982, approving execution of the said agreement for and on behalf of the State of Michigan.

2. That in my capacity as an Assistant Attorney General, I have considered the legal effect of Section 221 of PL 91-611 approved December 31, 1970 and find that the State of Michigan has full authority and capability to perform the terms of the aforementioned agreement and that upon execution thereof, said agreement will be legally enforceable by the parties thereto.

3. That I find in particular:

a. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is authorized by law to acquire by purchase, lease, gift, or condemnation, all lands, easements and rights of way required for construction and subsequent maintenance of the project, including suitable areas required in the public interest for initial and subsequent disposal of spoil and any necessary restraining dikes, bulkheads and embankments therefore, and may, without cost, provide such lands and interests to the United States. Authority: 1947 PA 320, §§ 4, 7; MCLA 281.504 and 281.507, Executive Order 1973-2, 1973-2a.

b. That pursuant to law, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources may on behalf of the State of Michigan agree to hold and save the United States free from damages incident to the construction, operation and maintenance of the contained disposal facility, except for damages due to the fault or negligence of the United States or its contractors. Authority: 1947 PA 32, § 4(d), MCLA 281.504(d); Executive Orders 1973-2, 1973-2a.

c. That the Commission of Natural Resources pursuant to law and policy adopted by said Commission, complies with all applicable provisions of the Uniform Recreation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970 (PL 91-646).

d. That the Department of Natural Resources has authority to maintain and to commit itself to maintain the facility after completion of its use for disposal purposes in a manner satisfactory to the Secretary of the Army.

4. The said Agreement when fully executed by the parties thereto, is a binding contract subject to the laws of the United States and the State of Michigan.



RUSSELL E PRINS
Assistant Attorney General

Dated at Lansing, Michigan
this 15th day of March, 1982.

ZANDE/rf/66797

DEC 11 1987

Construction-Operations Division
Operations and Maintenance Branch

Mr. O. J. Scherschligt, Chief
Waterways Division
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Mr. Scherschligt:

Enclosed are Supplemental Agreement No. 1 to the Local Cooperation Agreement for the Monroe Harbor Confined Disposal Facility at Sterling State Park, Michigan, and a Certificate of Authority. Please review the amendment and, if acceptable, have the appropriate State representative sign and date the amendment, execute the Certificate of Authority, and return them to this office. I will then sign and date the document and return a copy to you for your files.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Mr. Mark S. Grazioli, Chief, Construction-Operations Division, at (313) 226-6794.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Harris
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Enclosures

Copy Furnished:

Mr. Subhas Chorai
Michigan Department of Management and Budget
P.O. Box 30026
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Real Estate Divn ✓
Proj-Oper Sec
O&M Br
DE

SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT #1
 BETWEEN
 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 AND
 THE STATE OF MICHIGAN
 FOR LOCAL COOPERATION AT
 STERLING STATE PARK
 MONROE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

This SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT entered into this _____ day of _____ 1987 by and between the United States of America (hereinafter called the "Government"), represented by the Contracting Officer executing this Agreement, and the State of Michigan acting through the Michigan State Department of Natural Resources (hereinafter called the "State"), pursuant to Section 221 of the River and Harbor Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-611 approved 31 December 1970), as amended.

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, The parties entered into an Agreement for Local Cooperation at Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan on the 10th day of March 1982 to construct the Monroe Harbor Confined Disposal Facility, under the authority of Section 123 of Public Law 91-611; and

WHEREAS, the said Agreement for Local Cooperation provided that the facility would be constructed in accordance with a Final Environmental Impact Statement filed 8 February 1982; and

WHEREAS, the aforesaid Final Environmental Impact Statement provided that the Government would furnish and plant 350 trees, as well as other plant materials for a nature area upon completion of the facility for disposal purposes; and

WHEREAS, The State has requested the use of the Confined Disposal Facility as a disposal area for dredging Sterling State Park Marina entrance and access channels from the existing boat launch ramp to Sandy Creek, and along Sandy Creek to Lake Erie, and into Lake Erie to maintain four foot and seven foot depths, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Section 123 (g) of Public Law 91-611 requires that an appropriate charge be made for the use of the confined disposal facilities; and

WHEREAS, in consideration for use of the facility, the State agrees to undertake the full and complete furnishing and planting of trees and other plant materials of the Monroe Harbor Confined Disposal Facility;

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:

The agreement is modified by adding Paragraph 5 to the agreement as follows:

5. a. The user fee for use of the disposal facility is waived for the one time use by the State. The State is authorized to place up to 60,000 cubic yards of dredge materials from the Sterling State Park Marina entrance and access channels from the existing boat launching ramp to Sandy Creek and along Sandy Creek to Lake Erie and into Lake Erie to maintain four foot and Seven foot depths, respectively.

b. The State agrees to undertake the full and complete landscaping plan of the Confined Disposal Facility which includes, (1) the purchase and planting of 350 trees, and, (2) the purchase and planting of other plant materials designated for a 10 acre nature area, in accordance with the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Disposal Facility. (Pages 46, A-40, A-44, A-105 through A-108).

c. The work shall be accomplished by a mutually acceptable completion date after the Government has completed its use of the disposal facility.

d. All work shall be accomplished in accordance with all applicable Federal, State, or Local Laws and regulations covering such work.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Supplemental Agreement No. 1 as of the day and year first above written.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATE OF MICHIGAN

APPROVED:

BY: _____
Robert F. Harris
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

BY: _____
TITLE: _____

FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

DATE: _____

DATE: _____

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY

I, _____, do hereby certify that I am the Assistant Attorney General for the State of Michigan, that the State of Michigan, Acting through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, is a legally constituted public body with full authority and legal capability to perform the terms of this Supplemental Agreement No. 1 between the United States of America and the State of Michigan in connection with the diked disposal project, Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan, and to pay damages, if necessary, in the event of its failure to perform in accordance with Section 221 of Public Law 91-611, as amended, and that the person(s) who have executed this Supplemental Agreement on behalf of the State of Michigan have acted within their statutory authority.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have made and executed the Certificate this _____ day of _____, 19__.

Attorney for the State of Michigan

DEC 11 1987 12:06

P 2



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 CHIEF OF ENGINEERS
 538 SOUTH CLARK STREET
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60605-1000

REPLY TO
 ATTENTION OF

Executive Office

11 DEC 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander, Detroit District

SUBJECT: Modification to Local Cooperation Agreement (LCA) between the United States of America and the State of Michigan at Monroe Harbor Confined Disposal Facility CDF, Sterling State Park, Monroe County, Michigan

1. Enclosed is a draft of Supplemental Agreement #1 to Local Cooperation Agreement dated 10 March 1982 for the subject project. The draft Supplemental Agreement is approved for use in connection with subject project.
2. The Detroit District Engineer is authorized to execute a supplemental agreement on behalf of the Secretary of the Army which does not deviate from the enclosed draft.
3. A standard Section 221, Public Law 91-611, as amended, Certificate of Authority for the draft Supplemental Agreement, signed by the Attorney General of the State of Michigan, is required. However, a Certificate of Authority similar to the Certificate used by the State for the aforesaid 10 March 1982 Local Cooperation Agreement, and pursuant to the general guidance of OCE in connection with the project at Alanson, Michigan, may be used in lieu of the standard 221 Certificate. If the latter course is followed, CENCD-RE should review the proposed Certificate to assure no limiting or conditional language is used beyond that specified for States in section 912, Public Law 99-662, which amended Section 221, P.L. 91-611.
4. Furnish this office and CERF-AP each a copy of the executed supplemental agreement and certificate.

Encl

Theodore Vander Els
 THEODORE VANDER ELS
 Brigadier General, USA
 Commanding