



# General Management Plan

## Tahquamenon Falls State Park

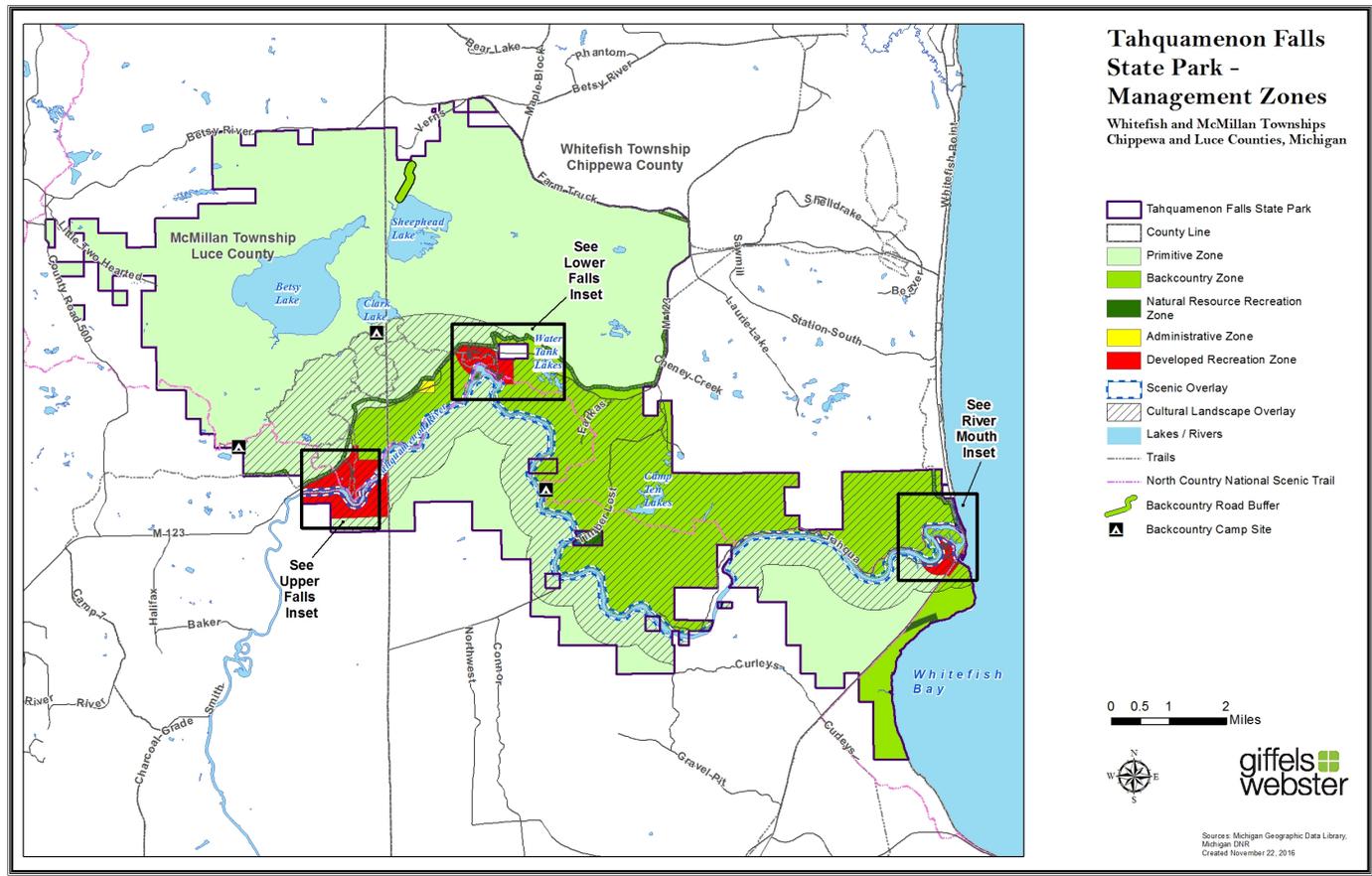


Approved February 1, 2017  
Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division

Prepared with assistance of:



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**TAHUQUAMENON FALLS STATE PARK PLAN APPROVALS:**

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

*Ronald A. Olson*  
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 Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

*1/26/17*  
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*1/27/17*  
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*Deborah Jensen*  
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 Director, Department of Natural Resources

*2/1/2017*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**TAHQAMENON FALLS STATE PARK PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

PRD – SECTION CHIEFS:	<u>10/03/2016</u> Date
PRD – MANAGEMENT TEAM:	<u>10/27/2016 (via Email)</u> Date
DNR – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU:	<u>11/03/2016</u> Date
MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE	<u>11/07/2016</u> Date
NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:	<u>12/08/2016</u> Date

# Resolution No. 12-2016-1

## MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

### RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE “TAHQAMENON FALLS STATE PARK GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN”

**ADOPTED: December 8, 2016**

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

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

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

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Tahquamenon Falls 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 Tahquamenon Falls State Park;

Submitted by: Chris Graham, Chair, MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee

**Motioned by: Mike McDonald**

**Seconded by: Bob Hoffmeyer**

**Yeas: 9**

**Nays: 0**

**Abstained: 0**

**Absent: 3**

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# Table of Contents

## **Executive Summary**

### **Chapter 1: Core Values & Guiding References**

- 1.1 Mission Statements**
- 1.2 Additional Guiding Resources**
- 1.3 Summary of Legal Mandates**

### **Chapter 2: Plan Process Overview**

- 2.1 Planning Objectives**
- 2.2 Planning Team**
- 2.3 Outreach Strategies**
- 2.4 Summary of Public Input Survey**

### **Chapter 3: Purpose & Significance**

- 3.1 Park Purpose**
- 3.2 Statements of Significance**
- 3.3 Public Affirmation of Statements**
- 3.4 Relationship with the Local Community**

### **Chapter 4: Management Zones**

- 4.1 Developed Recreation Zone**
- 4.2 Natural Resource Recreation**
- 4.3 Backcountry Zone**
- 4.4 Primitive Zone**
- 4.5 Administrative Zone**
- 4.6 Scenic Zone**
- 4.8 Scenic Overlay**
- 4.7 Cultural Landscape Overlay**

### **Chapter 5: 10-Year Action Goals**

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Supporting Analysis including Resource Maps**
- Appendix B: Public & Tribal Input Summary**
- Appendix C: Planning Team Meeting Summary**
- Appendix D: Toonerville Trolley Lease**
- Appendix E: Land Transfer**
- Appendix F: Natural Area Documentation**

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# Executive Summary

Tahquamenon Falls State Park, encompasses over 48,000 acres stretching east to west over 13 miles, and is the second largest state park in the system. Tahquamenon Falls State Park is located in Whitefish Township, Chippewa County and McMillan Township, Luce County, in the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan, approximately one and one-half hours north of the Mackinac Bridge. M-123 is a federally designated scenic byway, which provides access to the three main areas of the park: Rivermouth Campground and day use area 5 miles south of Paradise, the Lower Falls 10 miles west of Paradise and the Upper Falls 14 miles west of Paradise. The Village of Newberry is located approximately 30 miles southwest of the park.



*Spectacular views of the beautiful waterfalls bring visitors to the park.*

Most of the park is undeveloped woodland and wetland without roads, buildings or power lines. The centerpiece of the park is the Tahquamenon River with its waterfalls. The Upper Falls is one the largest waterfalls east of the Mississippi River. It has a drop of nearly 50 feet and is more than 200 feet across.

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a popular year-round tourist destination, hosting over 500,000 visitors per year. Although most of the visitors come to see two of Michigan's most beautiful waterfalls, the park also offers more than 40 miles of hiking

trails, 13 inland lakes, 24 miles of the Tahquamenon River and a proposed 20,000 acre Natural Area. Hiking trails within the park include 27 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST), a congressionally designated trail that stretches 4,600 miles from New York to North Dakota. The hiking route of Michigan's Iron Belle Trail from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood on the Wisconsin border, shares the NCNST through the park. Camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing and photography are popular activities in the spring and summer. In fall, many people enjoy hunting and viewing the beautiful autumn colors. Winter provides opportunities for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on the miles of marked trails.

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

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

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

The Parks and Recreation Division of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversaw the planning process. The Plan was developed with significant and valuable input from the Planning Team, stakeholders, and the public. Additionally, several existing planning documents, including the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report, were used as guiding references (See Chapter 1 for additional information on guiding references).

### **Significance of Tahquamenon Falls State Park**

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

#### **Natural Land Experience**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park invites visitors to "unplug" and experience solitude in its vast areas of wilderness. The park's 75 contiguous square miles offer visitors an opportunity to interact with the natural environment, of which the vast majority remains undeveloped. The park protects an association of thirteen natural communities, including patterned fen and muskeg, at a landscape scale seldom seen.

#### **Waterfalls**

Central to the park are two waterfalls; the Upper and Lower Falls. The Upper Falls, the largest in Michigan and considered to be second only to Niagara Falls east of the Mississippi River, drops 50 feet creating a picturesque landmark. The Lower Falls offers a cascading visual experience with its rocky shorelines and rushing tannin colored water.

### **Water Resources**

The prominent waterfalls and extensive system of rivers and lakes within Tahquamenon Falls State Park provides natural habitat and diverse recreation opportunities. The Tahquamenon River, a proposed National Wild and Scenic River, meanders 24 miles through the 48,000-acre park, with most of it remaining undeveloped. The park's inland lakes and streams are remote and free of shoreline development.



*The Upper Falls, popular tourist destination, drops nearly 50 feet.*

### **Lake Superior Shoreline**

The Tahquamenon River flows eastward emptying into Lake Superior at Whitefish Bay. The four miles of Lake Superior shoreline in the park offers visitors a chance to see fragments of Michigan's maritime and logging history. The remote shoreline is a major migration corridor and habitat for birds year-round.

### **Wildlife**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is home to many unique wildlife species that are sought out by visitors. Moose, black bear and grey wolves thrive in the large tracts of undeveloped landscape, and while they are not always seen, their sign is evident throughout the park. Birders come to the peatland areas in search of spruce grouse, black-backed woodpeckers, secretive marsh birds, and warblers that are rarely seen in Lower Michigan, but are frequently spotted within the park.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a four-season outdoor recreation hub and offers year-round outdoor interpretive programs. Opportunities abound for camping, kayaking/canoeing the waterways, hiking remote trails, including segments of the North Country National Scenic Trail and the Iron Belle Trail, and walking the accessible trail system and boardwalks to explore the rushing water of the falls. In winter months, visitors can have a "deep snow" experience with activities such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on lantern-lit trails at the Upper Falls. Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a destination for outdoor enthusiasts including hikers, snowmobilers, anglers, photographers, and nature watchers.

### **Tourism**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a vacation destination, attracting over a half a million visitors annually. The park draws visitors from around the world to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, serving as a major element of the region's economy in all seasons. The privately owned and operated Camp 33 Brewery is located within the park and is popular among visitors.

## Management Zones

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

**Developed Recreation Zone** comprises 3% (approximately 1,232 acres) of the park and allows active recreation with high density of use. This zone include the Upper Falls and the area around the brewpub, the Lower Falls, and the Rivermouth Campground and boating access site. Observation points, picnic areas, concessions, and modern campgrounds are located in this zone.

**Natural Resource Recreation Zone** comprises 0.3% (approximately 130 acres) of the park and permits active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. While a higher level of use is allowed in this zone, there is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation. This zone includes the snowmobile corridor that runs through the park, and the island at the Lower Falls.

**Administrative Zone** comprises 0.1% (approximately 38 acres) of the park and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. The zone includes the park offices and maintenance area, and all related land required to conduct the business of running the park.

**Backcountry Zone** comprises 25% (approximately 11,870 acres) of the park and emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for modification of landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses that are consistent with the natural character of the zone. This zone encompasses the north side of the Tahquamenon River to M-123, from Lake Superior to the Lower Falls, then from the Lower Falls to the Upper falls. This includes the nature study area, Water Tank Lakes, Camp Ten Lakes, and large portions of the North Country National Scenic Trail/ Iron Belle Trail and the Tahqua Trail through the park. There is also a corridor located north of Sheephead Lake zoned Backcountry.

**Primitive Zone** comprises 72% (approximately 33,810 acres) of the park, and emphasizes the natural resources of the area. It is managed to allow only dispersed, low frequency and low impact recreational use in the zone. Maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements and recreational uses are allowed. The majority of the park north of M-123 is in this zone, as well as the nature preserve south of the Tahquamenon River, and the area south of the Tahquamenon River near the Rivermouth.

**Scenic Overlay** comprises of 3% (approximately 1,611 acres) of the park has been applied to the entire Tahquamenon River bank in recognition of its natural beauty and the proposed National Wild and Scenic River designation. The Lake Superior shoreline within the park and the area around Water Tank Lakes area also covered by the scenic overlay

**Cultural Landscape Overlay** has been applied to 43% (approximately 20,320 acres) of the park in recognition of the archaeological sites known to be present in the park. Management within this overlay highlights the preservation and protection of cultural resources.

### **10-Year Action Goals**

The General Management Plan identifies 10-Year Action Goals that the Planning Team believes are necessary to guide management and development of the park in order to achieve the desired user experience and natural resource protection. Action Goals have been developed to address natural and cultural resource protection and management, recreation opportunities, education/ interpretation opportunities, management focus and development. The goals are listed in Chapter 5 of this plan. Action goals are categorized under General Action Goals if they pertain to the entire park or under specific zones, which are identified on the Management Zone Map.

Action Goals are described in Chapter 5 of this plan. They include infrastructure updates, accessibility improvements, trail evaluation, Natural Area designation, and other improvements to enhance the visitor experience while protecting the scenic beauty of the park.

# 1. Core Values and Guiding Resources

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

## 1.1 Mission Statements

### **DNR Mission Statement**

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

### **PRD Mission Statement**

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

### **Five Goals of the DNR**

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



*Submerged wetland vegetation found along the shorelines.*

“When you visit Michigan’s state parks and are surrounded with our forests, rivers, Falls and streams that have been here for thousands of years, it’s hard to imagine that changes ever occur here. As the world gets more hectic, we think Michigan residents will continue to turn to their state parks as a resource for rest and renewal.”

-Ron Olson (2013), DNR-PRD Chief

## 1.2 Additional Guiding Resources

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

### **Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan (2013 - 2018)**

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

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

### **PRD Strategic Plan (2009-2019)**

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

### **Managed Public Land Strategy (2013)**

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

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

### 1.3 Summary of Legal Mandates

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

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

- Endangered species protection, 1973
- National Historic Preservation Act, 1973 (As amended)
- National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, 1968
- National Trails System Act, 1968 (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 111-11, March 30, 2009)
- Wilderness and Natural Areas Act
- PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 Recreation Passport. A Passport is required for entry into the park.
- PA 451 of 994, Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities



*Visitors making their way to the Upper Falls.*

## 2. Plan Process Overview

### 2.1 Planning Objectives

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

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



*Planning Team members tour the park.*

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

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

In order for a plan to be successful it must allow for some degree of flexibility to adapt to changes that cannot be predicted 10-20 years out. The GMP will be reviewed every five years to ensure it is still meeting its intended purpose. The objective of the General Management Plan is to bring together Parks & Recreation Division staff, staff from other Divisions, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that defines and clarifies the unique "Purpose and Significance" of Tahquamenon Falls State Park. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan and Action Goals.

## 2.2 Planning Team

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

<b>DNR Staff</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Division</b>
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator	PRD
Craig Krepps	Unit Manager	PRD
Kevin Dennis	Unit Supervisor	PRD
Tom Paquin	EUP District Supervisor	PRD
Keith Cheli	Regional Planner	PRD
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Unit Manager	PRD
Lisa Gamero	Cultural Resources Analyst	PRD
Paul Gaberdiel	Trails Specialist	PRD
Cory Kovacs	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries
Jason Tokar	Forester	Forestry
Sherry MacKinnon	Wildlife Ecologist	Wildlife
Sgt. Mike Hammill	Area Supervisor	Law
Jon Spieles	Interpretive Manager	Marketing and Outreach
Theresa Neal	Park Interpreter	Marketing and Outreach
Peter Rose	Geologist	Minerals Management
Dean Anderson	State Archeologist	MSHDA

### **Giffels Webster Consultants**

David Birchler, AICP, Partner Emeritus

Jason Bibby, AICP, Senior Planner

Karen Zarowny, Staff Planner

Sheila Starks, GIS Specialist

### 2.3 Outreach Strategies

The Planning Team utilizes several methods in collecting information to inform the development of the General Management Plan. To gather public input, the Planning Team developed and collected information through an online survey and received over 450 responses. The survey was advertised through a DNR press release, newsletter bulletin and an email blast to registered campers. The DNR informed Tribal Governments of the planning process and invited them to meet with the DNR to discuss the General Management Plan and provide input. Stakeholders and the public were invited to open houses where they could provide verbal and written comments regarding the General Management Plan. The draft plan was also available for review on the project website, and the public was invited to email, call or mail questions or comments concerning this initiative. Upon compiling the input, the Planning Team discussed and refined the plan as appropriate. A summary of all these outreach efforts and input received is documented in Appendix B.



*The Planning Team tours the park.*

## 2.4 Summary of Public Input Survey

Understanding the important role of the public in developing this plan, the Planning Team applied a variety of methods to collect feedback and input from Tahquamenon Falls State Park users. In particular, the public input survey was used to gather general information about visitors and how they use the park, as well as recommendations for improving features and amenities offered. The survey was available for five (5) weeks beginning November 30, 2015. It was advertised by a DNR Press Release and an e-mail bulletin sent to over 11,000 individuals registered to receive state park news and 21,432 individuals who have registered to camp at Tahquamenon Falls State Park. Over 600 individuals responded to the survey and provided input. See Appendix B: Public Input Summary for the complete survey results.

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

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

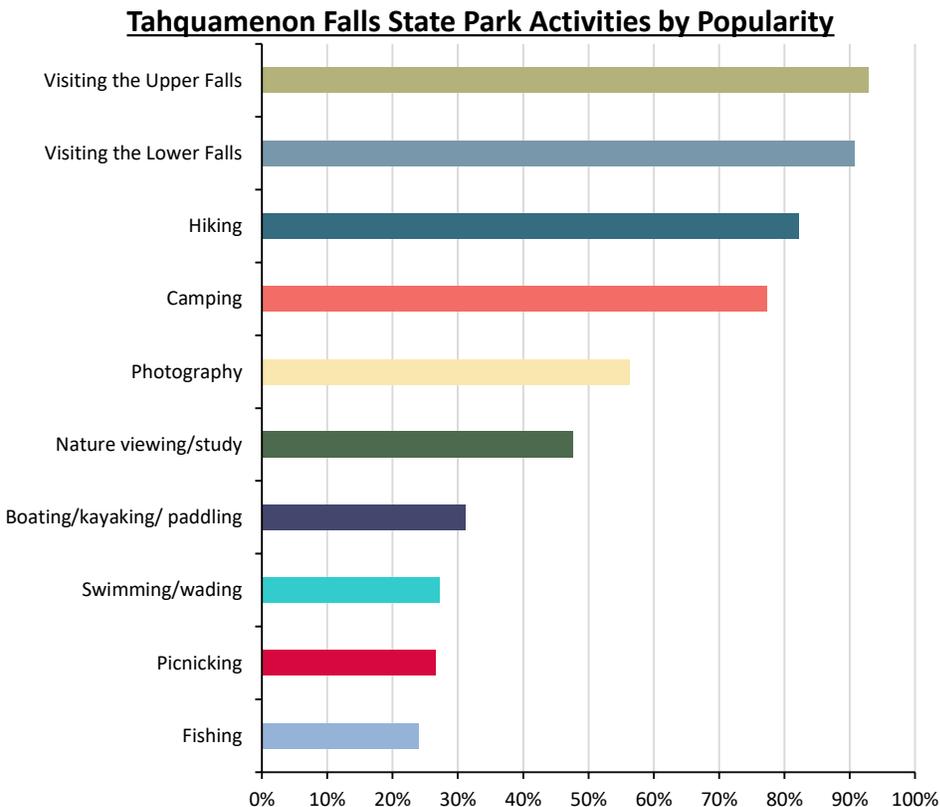
Section	Qn #s	Type of Questions
About You and Your Visit	1-6 & 41-44	The beginning and end sections asked general questions about the respondent including age, zip code, number of visits per year, reasons for not visiting, characteristics of people accompanying the respondent on their visit and the season of the year that they visit.
Activities	7-8	This section asked respondents to identify their favorite activities and locations.
Areas of the Park	9-10	This section asked respondents which areas have they visited, as well as which areas they spend the most time in.
Island at the Lower Falls	11-13	This section asked respondents if they have visited the island at the lower falls and their method access, as well as interest in expanding access options
Campers	15-20	Campers were asked about their typical length of stay, preferred camping locations, satisfaction with campgrounds, and if they would support regulations to reduce invasive species risks.
Fishing	21-24	Visitors who fish were asked about their favorite fishing locations and types of catch.
Hunting	25-27	Visitors who hunt were asked what game brought them to Tahquamenon Falls.
Snowmobiling	28-29	Visitors who snowmobile were asked which areas the of the park they frequent
Interpretive Programming and Events	32-35	The section explored respondent's awareness of interpretive programming and events in the park, suggestions for programming, and special event attendance.
General Comments	36	This section asked respondents to give their input on improvements to the park.
Community Interaction	37-39	This section asked respondents if they belong to any nature-oriented groups, if they visit other area attractions when visiting the park, and if any additional services that could improve their park experience.
Wrap Up	40	Respondents were asked to provide any other comments they would like to make about the park or the planning process.

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

Respondents of all ages completed the survey, with 50 to 64 year olds being the largest cohort (31%). The majority of visitors were US residents with a few visitors from Canada and the United Kingdom. English was noted as the primary language of most visitors, regardless of county of residence. Most respondents visit 1-2 times per year (46%), followed by non-annual visitors (40%). Over three-quarters of respondents had visited the park in the last 6 months. July through August was the most popular time to visit (60%), followed by September through November (28%). Common park accompaniment was with family (40%), followed by couples (25%), and a mix of friends and family (23%). Nearly half of respondents bring children on their visits.

### **Activities**

The top five activities undertaken by visitors are viewing the Upper Falls (93%), viewing the Lower Falls (90%), hiking (82%), camping (77%), and photography (56%). Other popular activities include nature study, boating/kayaking/paddling, swimming, picnicking, and fishing.



### **Areas of the Park**

The Upper and Lower Falls were the most popular destinations in the park, visited by 97% of respondents. The foot trail between the two falls, which is part of the NCNST and the Iron Belle Trail, was also frequented by many respondents (68%). The modern campground at the Lower Falls was the third most popular area (58%), followed by visiting the Lake Superior shoreline (58%), and the hiking trail loops (47%). Respondents indicated that they tend to spend most of their time in these popular locations, as well as the Rivermouth campgrounds (28%)

### **Island at the Lower Falls**

Respondents who have and have not visited the Island at the Lower Falls were split near 50/50. Of those who had accessed the Island, 41% had rented a rowboat to do so. An overwhelming majority (80%) supported the construction of a footbridge and renovation of the rowboat area. Supporters commented that they enjoy their rowboat experience and hope the park continues this tradition. Bridge access may increase the frequency of visits to the island, and provide increased access to all individuals. Those not in favor of a bridge expressed concern of the encroachment into the natural setting.

### **Campers**

Approximately three-quarters of all visitors completing the survey camp at Tahquamenon Falls State Park. The majority stay at the modern campground at the Lower Falls. Most stay two nights (27%), followed by 3 (24%) and 4 (20%) nights. The modern campground at the Lower Falls has the highest satisfaction level of all campgrounds, followed by modern campground at the Rivermouth, the Rivermouth Pines (semi-modern/rustic) campgrounds, and the Lodge. The majority of campers indicated that the scenic beauty of the falls was their primary reason for camping at the park. Campers supported the idea of using only locally sourced firewood (93%), provided that it is of good quality and at a reasonable cost.

### **Fishing and Hunting**

Over a quarter of all respondents fish at Tahquamenon Falls. The majority fish along the Tahquamenon River (75%). Anglers indicated they were not particular on their catch, though walleye was the most popular species. Only 14 respondents hunted in the park, with deer, grouse, and partridge the game of choice. Comments indicated it is not a prime hunting location.

### **Snowmobiling**

Only 6% of respondents snowmobile in the park. The Upper Falls and the trail system from Newberry to Paradise were the most frequently travelled areas. Many commented that they stop at the brewery at Camp 33 along their way.

### **Interpretive Programming and Events**

Half of respondents answered they were aware of the park's interpretive programming. When asked what areas they would be interested in learning about through a program, park history (27%), wildlife (17%), animals (12%), the Falls (9%), and birds (8%) were the most frequently suggested topics. Attendance at a special event was not the primary reason of their visit for the majority of visitors (93%). Nearly half (47%) of survey participants utilize the DNR website to receive information on the park.



# 3. Purpose and Significance

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

## 3.1 Park Purpose

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

- To be used as a public park, for the purposes of public recreation or the preservation of natural beauty or historic association in accordance with Act 218, Public Acts of 1919, which created the Michigan State Park Commission.
- To preserve and protect Tahquamenon Falls 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 Tahquamenon Falls State Park.

## 3.2 Statements of Significance

### **Natural Land Experience**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park invites visitors to “unplug” and experience solitude in its vast areas of wilderness. The park’s 75 contiguous square miles offer visitors an opportunity to interact with the natural environment, of which the vast majority remains undeveloped. The park protects an association of thirteen natural communities, including patterned fen and muskeg, at a landscape scale seldom seen.

### **Waterfalls**

Central to the park are two waterfalls; the Upper and Lower Falls. The Upper Falls, the largest in Michigan and considered to be second only to Niagara Falls east of the Mississippi River, drops 50 feet creating a picturesque landmark. The Lower Falls offers a cascading visual experience with its rocky shorelines and rushing tannin colored water.

### **Water Resources**

The prominent waterfalls and extensive system of rivers and lakes within Tahquamenon Falls State Park provides natural habitat and diverse recreation opportunities. The Tahquamenon River, a proposed National Wild and Scenic River, meanders 24 miles through the 48,000-acre park, with most of it remaining undeveloped. The park’s inland lakes and streams are remote and free of shoreline development.

### **Lake Superior Shoreline**

The Tahquamenon River flows eastward emptying into Lake Superior at Whitefish Bay. The four miles of Lake Superior shoreline in the park offers visitors a chance to see fragments of Michigan’s maritime and logging history. The remote shoreline is a major migration corridor and habitat for birds year-round.

### **Wildlife**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is home to many unique wildlife species that are sought out by visitors. Moose, black bear and grey wolves thrive in the large tracts of undeveloped landscape, and while they are not always seen, their sign is evident throughout the park. Birders come to the peatland areas in search of spruce grouse, black-backed woodpeckers, secretive marsh birds, and warblers that are rarely seen in Lower Michigan, but are frequently spotted within the park.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a four-season outdoor recreation hub and offers year-round outdoor interpretive programs. Opportunities abound for camping, kayaking/canoeing the waterways, hiking remote trails, including segments of the North Country National Scenic Trail and the Iron Belle Trail, and walking the accessible trail system and boardwalks to explore the rushing water of the falls. In winter months, visitors can have a “deep snow” experience with activities such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on lantern-lit trails at the Upper Falls. Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a destination for outdoor enthusiasts including hikers, snowmobilers, anglers, photographers, and nature watchers.

### **Tourism**

Tahquamenon Falls State Park is a vacation destination, attracting over a half a million visitors annually. The park draws visitors from around the world to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, serving as a major element of the region’s economy in all seasons. The privately owned and operated Camp 33 Brewery is located within the park and is popular among visitors.



*Scenic view of the Tahquamenon River, with the Lower Falls in the distance.*

### 3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance Statements

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

#### What are people saying about Tahquamenon Falls?

*"This park is one of the places that all Michigan families take their kids to one time or another, a tradition spanning generations. It is one of the parks that defines "going up north"..."*

*"We've been coming there for over fifty years in all four seasons and can't explain what draws us there every year other than it never really changes..."*

*"My family loves to camp and enjoy nature. TFSP offers great camping and the beauty of the area is unmatched."*

*"I like the microbrewery at the park and the ice cream place. Usually I get ice cream and then walk out to the falls. It is always a pleasant experience."*

*"It is the most beautiful, remote, quiet campground. That has the benefit of an inland Falls and Great Falls. And it is close to lots of things to do."*

*"Totally satisfied. From Tennessee and have visited 8 or 9 years for a week at a time. Will do it again. Great job."*

*"We LOVE this park. We consider it home."*

### 3.4 Relationship with the Local Community

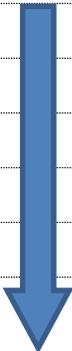
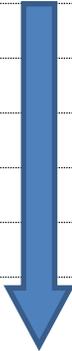
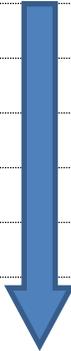
Tahquamenon Falls State Park has a significant impact on the surrounding area as an Upper Peninsula tourist attraction. With over half a million visitors each year and over 100,000 campers, economic effects can be felt in the surrounding communities of Newberry and Paradise. The park programming and year-round events, such as the lantern-lit winter hikes, trail runs, canoe races, and the Harvest Festival generate a significant amount of spending, benefitting the park and surrounding communities.



*The park supports a number of concession opportunities offering goods, food and services to park visitors.*

## 4. Management Zones

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

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

The 48,000-acre Tahquamenon Falls State Park was divided into the following eight Management Zones:

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

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

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

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

### **Project Boundary**

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

The Planning Team determined that the proposed boundary to the north and east of the park is still desirable. This would take land ownership to the nearest road, which facilities management and access, and is consistent with the Project Boundary for state forest land. However, to the south, while acquisition of any remaining river corridor contiguous with the park land is desirable and in the public's interest, other land is difficult to access and manage due to surrounding private ownership and has been recommended for removal from the Project Boundary. An exception to this is the land adjacent to M-123, which has potential for trail improvements and supports an important natural community (rich conifer swamp) as well as historic bald eagle and osprey nesting sites.

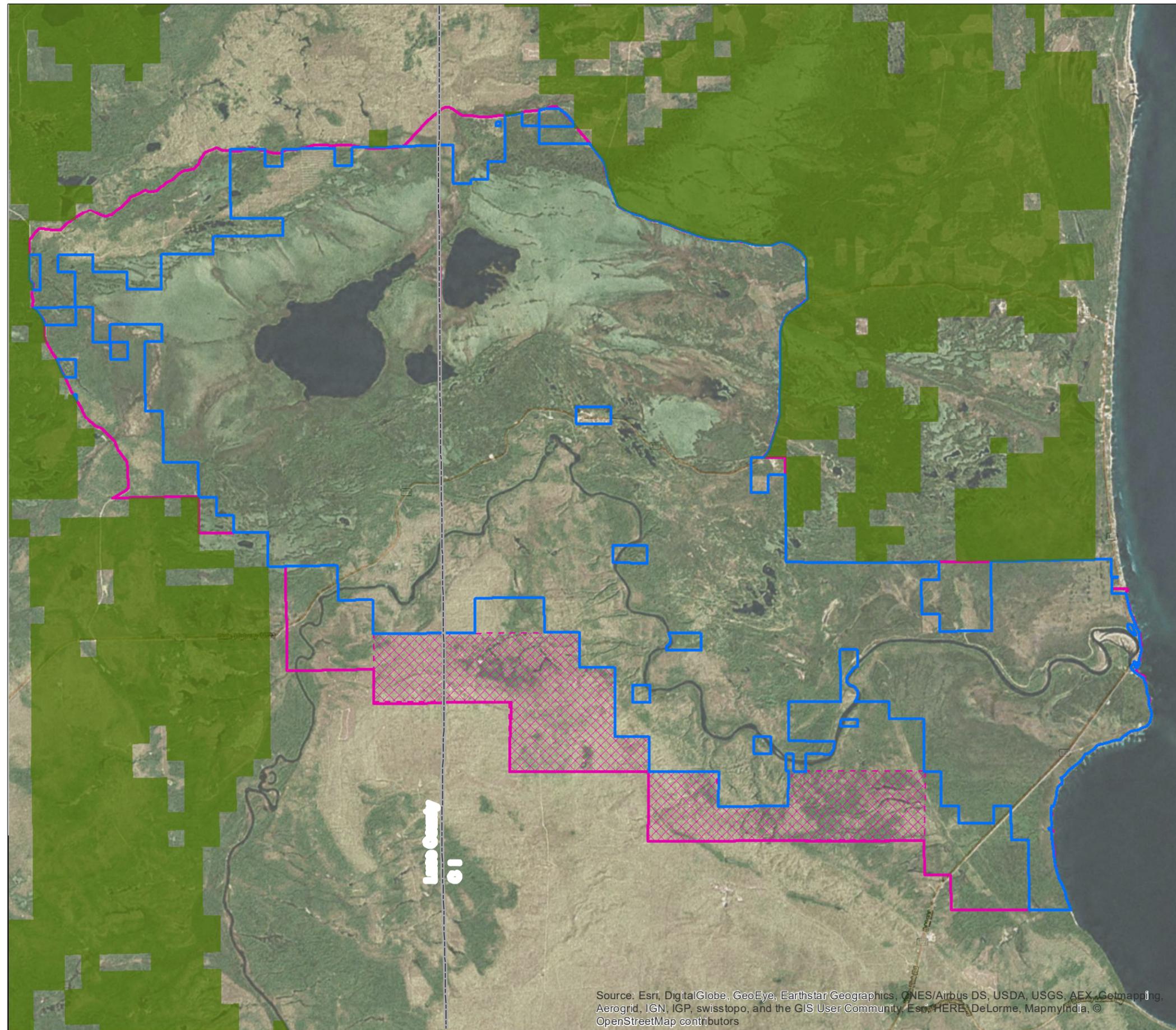
The shared boundary with the Newberry Forest Management Unit also presents opportunities for cooperation and consistent management, particularly north of Betsy Lake, where the peatland complex continues onto forest land.

While the Proposed Project Boundary represents a long-term goal, acquisition in the short-term should focus on undeveloped or minimally developed inholdings, especially those that would facilitate improved river access. Appropriate zoning has been applied to the priority parcels within the proposed GMP Project Boundary, which would only apply if the land comes into DNR ownership.

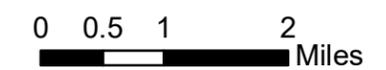
# Tahquamenon Falls State Park Proposed Project Boundary

Whitefish and McMillan Townships  
Chippewa and Luce Counties, Michigan

-  County Boundary
-  State Forests
-  Tahquamenon Falls State Park
-  GMP Proposed Project Boundary
-  Area removed from GMP Project Boundary (Included in 2004 NRC Approved Project Boundary\*)



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



clearzoning | giffels webster

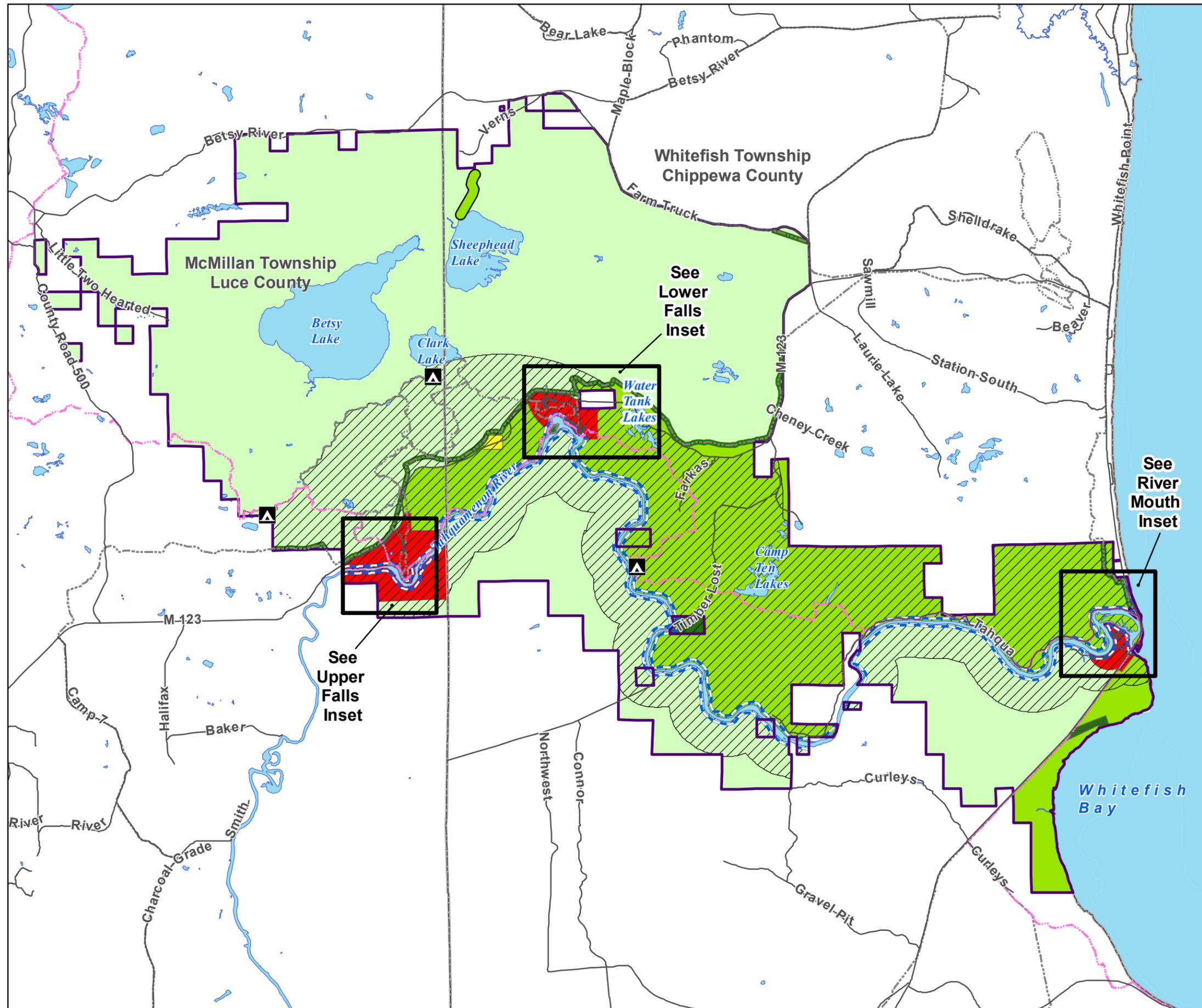
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community, Esri, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors

Created November 21, 2016

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# Tahquamenon Falls State Park - Management Zones

Whitefish and McMillan Townships  
Chippewa and Luce Counties, Michigan



- Tahquamenon Falls State Park
- County Line
- Primitive Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone
- Administrative Zone
- Developed Recreation Zone
- Scenic Overlay
- Cultural Landscape Overlay
- Lakes / Rivers
- Trails
- North Country National Scenic Trail
- Backcountry Road Buffer
- Backcountry Camp Site

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



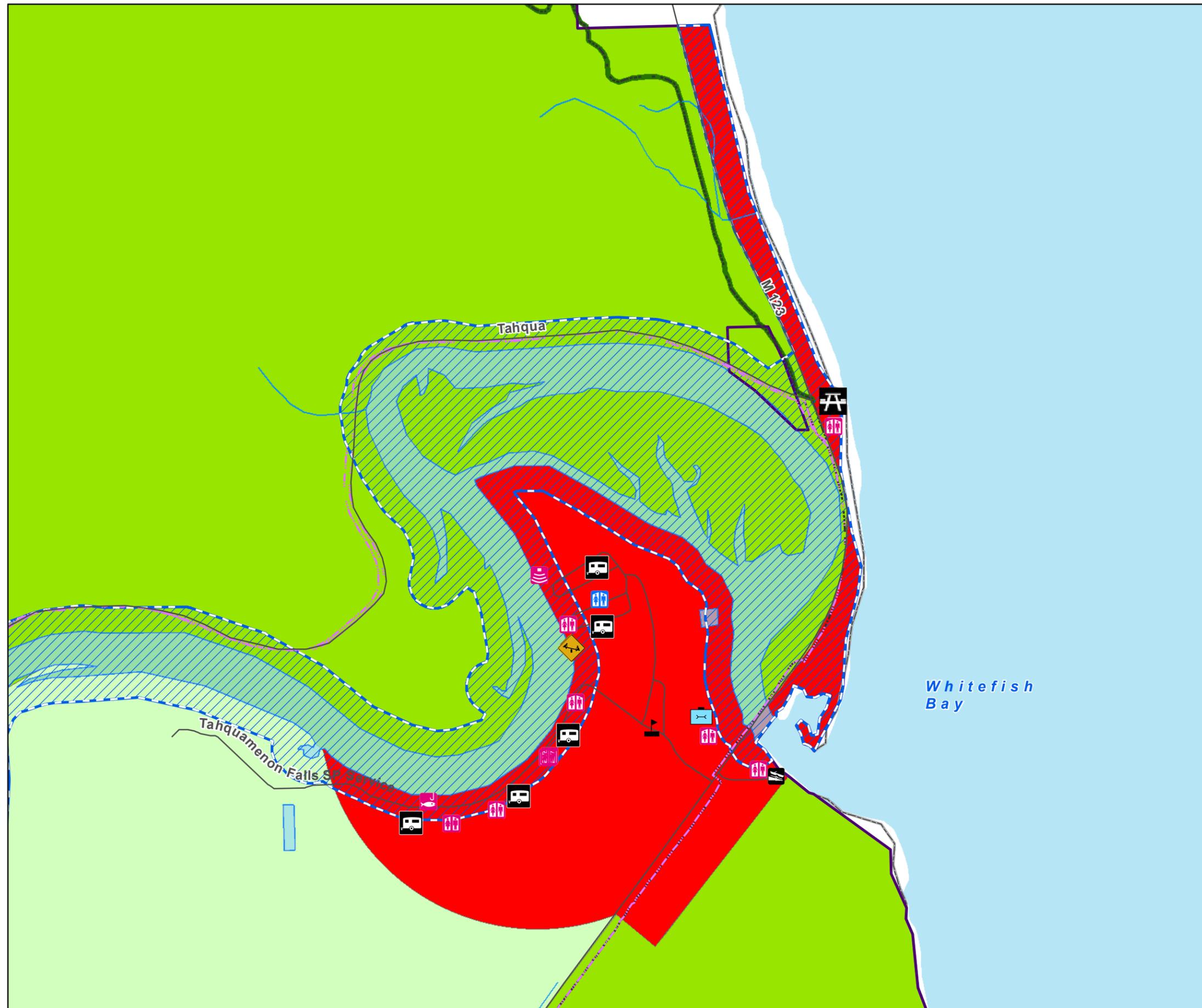
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Sources: Michigan Geographic Data Library,  
Michigan DNR  
Created November 22, 2016

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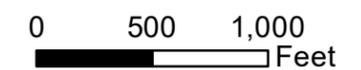
# Tahquamenon Falls State Park - Rivermouth

Whitefish and McMillan Townships  
Chippewa and Luce Counties, Michigan



-  Tahquamenon Falls State Park
-  County Line
-  Primitive Zone
-  Backcountry Zone
-  Natural Resource Recreation Zone
-  Administrative Zone
-  Developed Recreation Zone
-  Scenic Overlay
-  Lakes / Rivers
-  Vault Toilet
-  Toilet/Shower
-  Amphitheater
-  Concession Store
-  Camp Site
-  Playground
-  Fishing Platform
-  Registration Station
-  Boat Launch
-  Picnic Area
-  Maintenance Garage
-  Trails
-  North Country National Scenic Trail

Note: All zoned areas within this map include a Cultural Landscape Overlay.



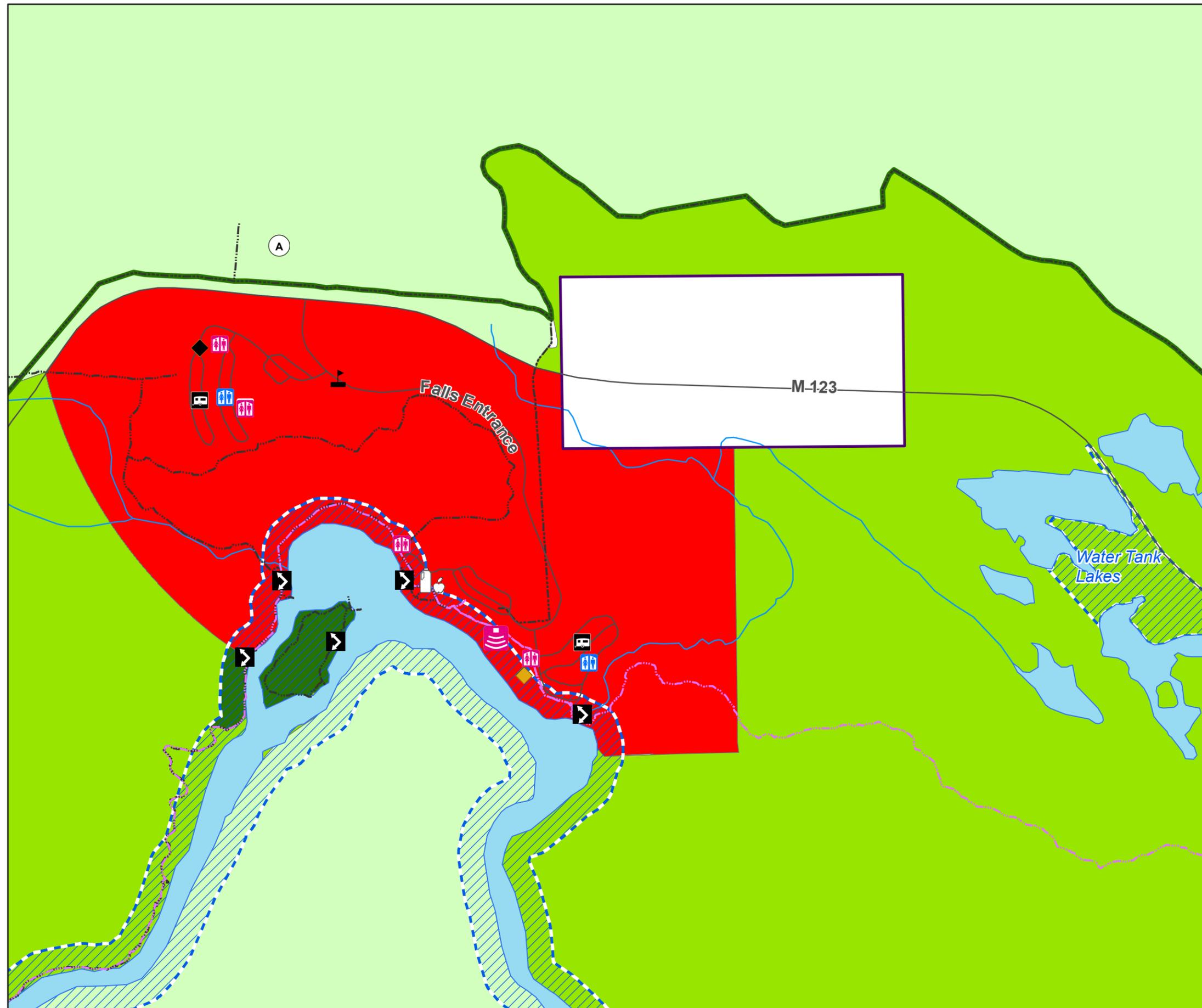
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Sources: Michigan Geographic Data Library,  
Michigan DNR  
Created November 22, 2016

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# Tahquamenon Falls State Park - Lower Falls

Whitefish and McMillan Townships  
Chippewa and Luce Counties, Michigan



-  Tahquamenon Falls State Park
-  County Line
-  Primitive Zone
-  Backcountry Zone
-  Natural Resource Recreation Zone
-  Administrative Zone
-  Developed Recreation Zone
-  Scenic Overlay
-  Lakes / Rivers
-  Trails
-  North Country National Scenic Trail
-  Vault Toilet
-  Toilet/Shower
-  Scenic Observation Platform
-  Amphitheater
-  Concession Store
-  Camp Site
-  Playground
-  Archery Range
-  Registration Station

Note: The overall Management Zones Map includes the Cultural Landscape Overlay.

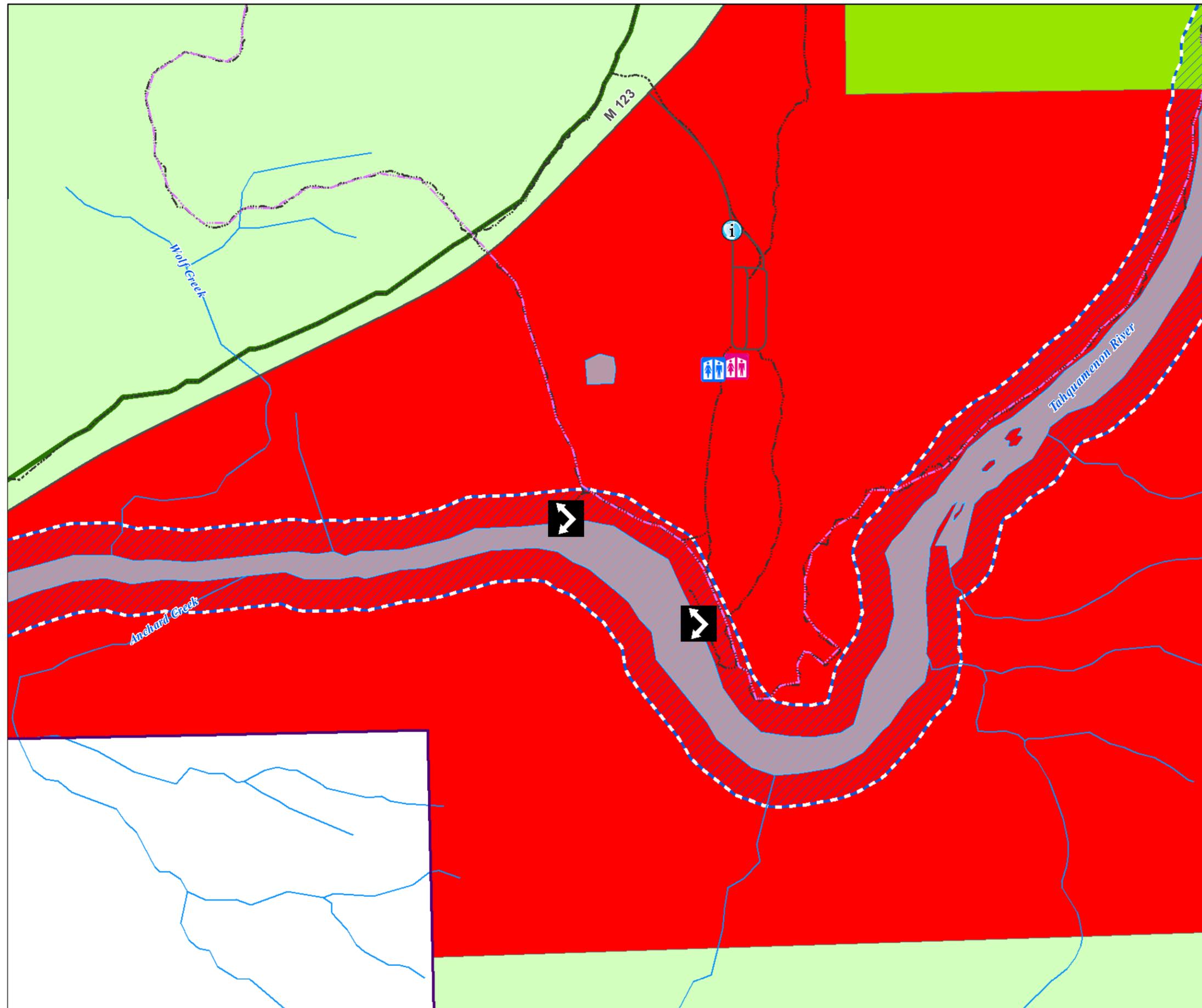


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# Tahquamenon Falls State Park - Upper Falls

Whitefish and McMillan Townships  
Chippewa and Luce Counties, Michigan



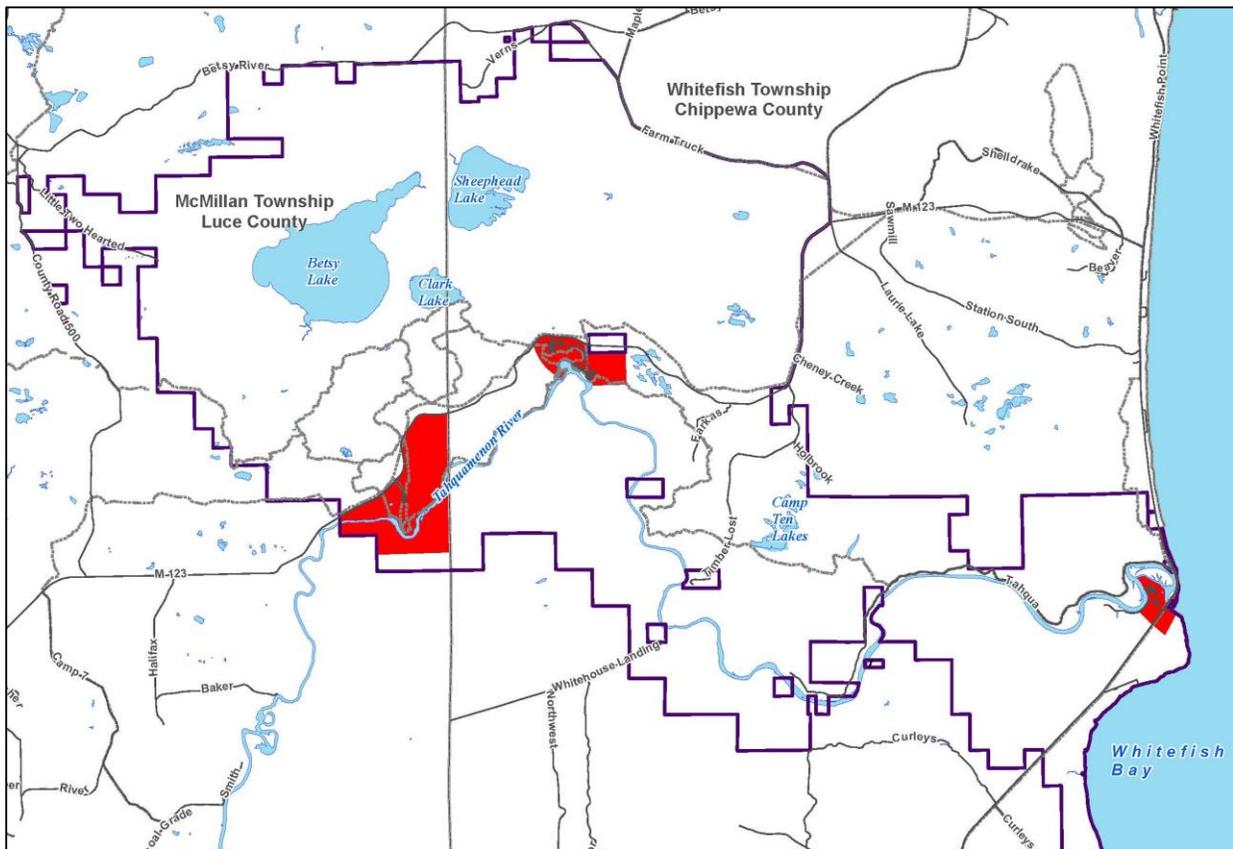
-  Tahquamenon Falls State Park
-  County Line
-  Primitive Zone
-  Backcountry Zone
-  Natural Resource Recreation Zone
-  Administrative Zone
-  Developed Recreation Zone
-  Scenic Overlay
-  Lakes / Rivers
-  Trails
-  North Country National Scenic Trail
-  Contact Station
-  Vault Toilet
-  Toilet/Shower
-  Scenic Observation Platform
-  Fact Shack

Note: All zoned areas within this map include a Cultural Landscape Overlay.



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## 4.1 Developed Recreation Zone



Approximately 3%, or 1,232 acres, of Tahquamenon Falls State Park is designated Developed Recreation. This zone allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The Developed Recreation Zone includes the Upper Falls, Lower Falls, and Rivermouth. Picnic areas, concessions, modern campgrounds, and observation points can be found in this zone.

### **Natural Resources**

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

### **Historic / Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreational Opportunities**

High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are found in this zone. Visitors engage in recreation activities in diverse and modified land and water settings: nature-viewing, hiking, modern camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, nature observation, picnicking, and other day-use activities. Improvements include updating canoe and kayak launch, resting and destination points with water trail partners.

### **Education Opportunities**

Person to person contact at the “Fact Shack,” along with interpretive signage, offers education opportunities. A future Visitor Orientation Center is a possible improvement that will be considered.

### **Visitor Experience**

A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated. High noise tolerance and interaction with DNR staff and other users can be expected.

### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD’s mission, promoting and supporting a diversity of facilities and activities and providing a high level of accessibility. This includes studies on traffic congestion, managing rivermouth erosion, and considering a Visitor Orientation Center.

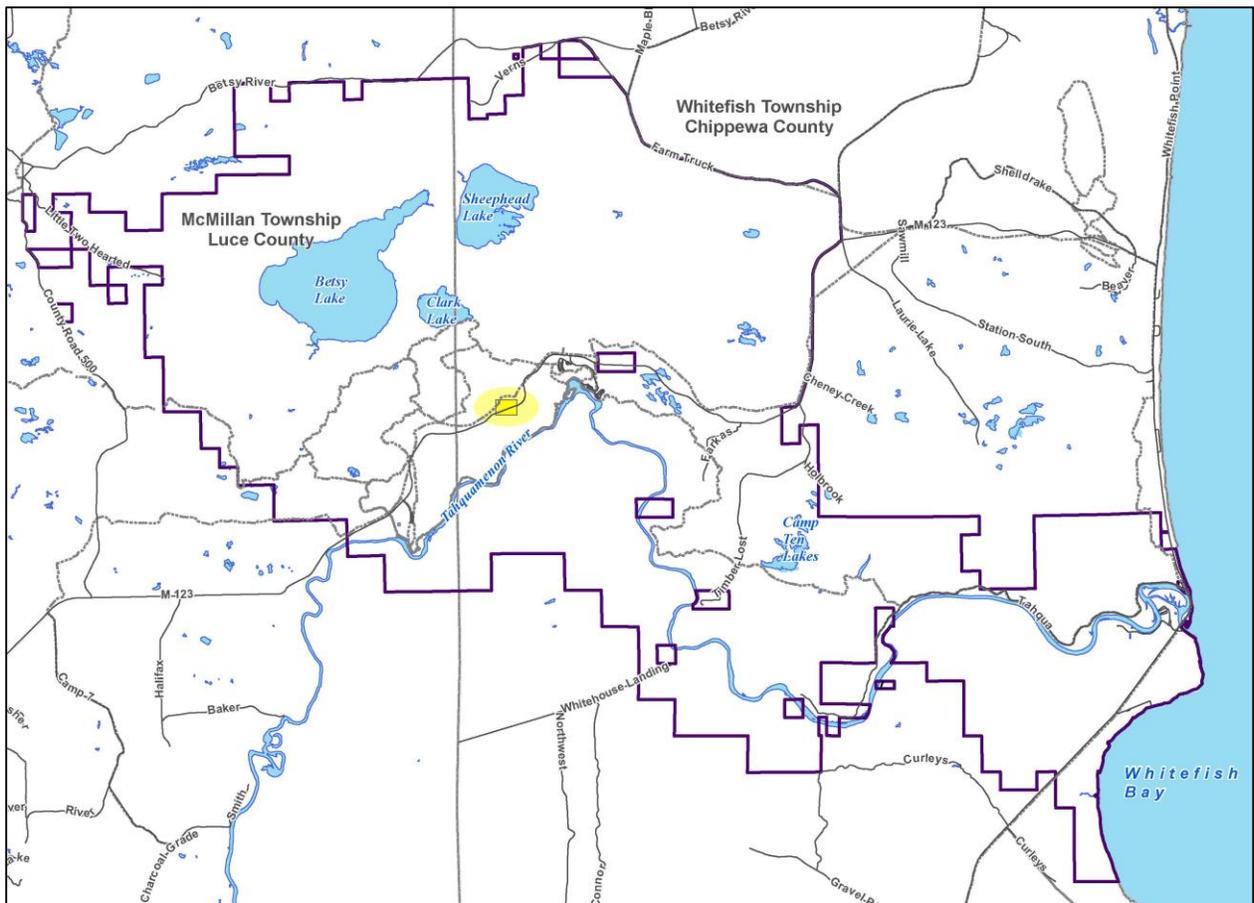


*Visitors wading near the Lower Falls.*

### **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Additional overnight opportunities, and implementation of island access and boat concession improvements may occur.

## 4.2 Administrative Zone



This zone is 0.1%, or approximately 38 acres, of total land and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the state park. Some of the park's administrative services are located outside of this zone.

### **Natural Resources**

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

### **Historic / Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources will generally be preserved and protected.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

The modern lodge provides overnight visitor accommodation in the Administrative Zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

Person to person contact at park office for general information; informational kiosk may be available. Installation of improved visitor signage and wayfinding may occur.

### **Visitor Experience**

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

### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on the business of running the park, appropriate facilities for staff, employee safety and the like. The park will focus on working with regional partners to enhance internet connectivity to the administrative facilities.

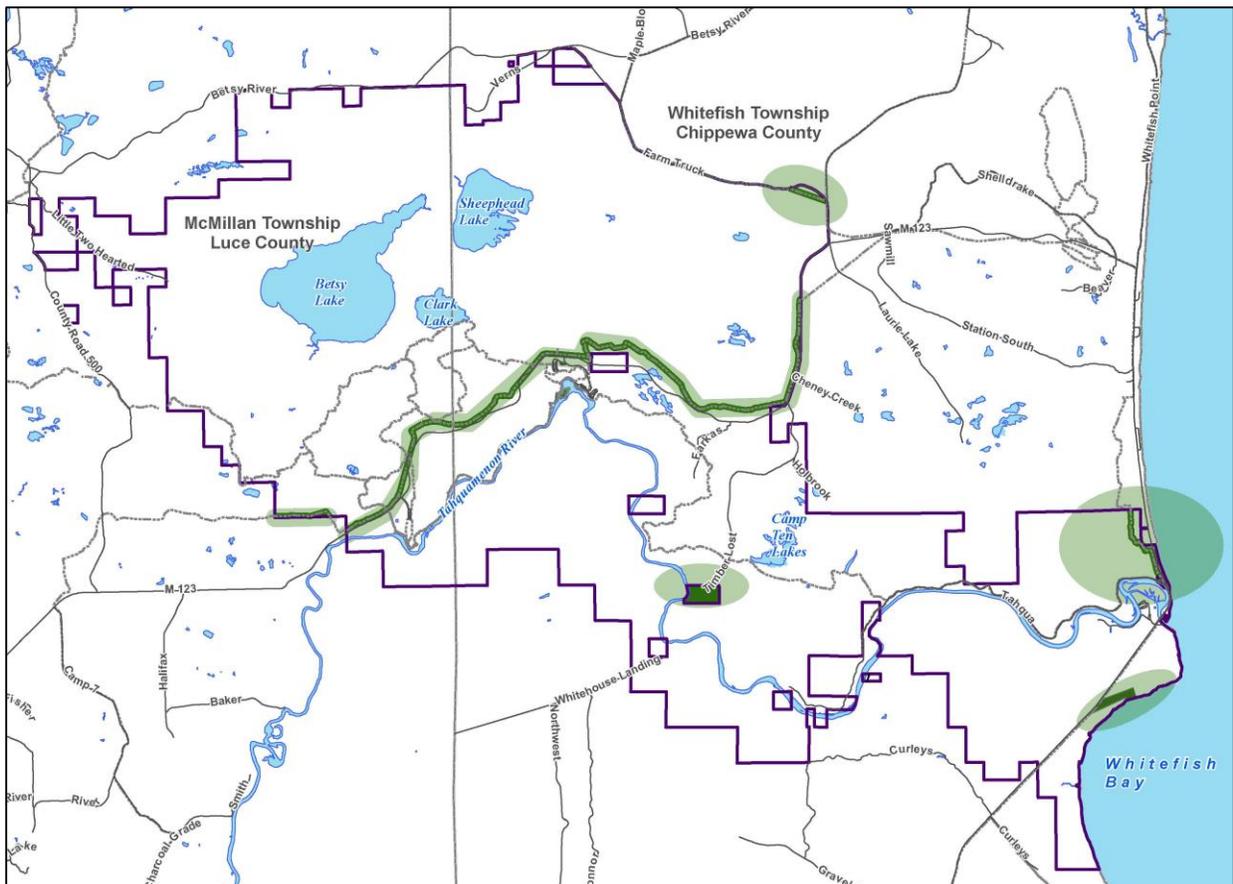
### **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone as needed to maintain the park.



*The Lodge, providing overnight visitors modern accommodations.*

### 4.3 Natural Resource Recreation Zone



Approximately 0.3%, or 130 acres, of Tahquamenon Falls State Park is zoned Natural Resource Recreation. This zone provides for active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. The Natural Resource Recreation includes the snowmobile trail corridor, the island at the Lower Falls, and an undeveloped access site to Lake Superior. While the zone designation emphasizes resource protection, landscape modification is permitted to allow for moderate interaction and recreation, as well as more intensively used trail corridors.

#### **Natural Resources**

Natural resources support visitor activities with moderate impacts. While this zone typically reflects natural processes, vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape.

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

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

### **Recreational Opportunities**

Moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone are to be expected. Visitors may be engaged in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings, including hiking, rustic camping, snowmobiling, water access sites, and nature observation.

### **Education Opportunities**

Improved snowmobile trail signage and maps may be implemented to protect the adjoining Natural Area, as well as educate visitors.

### **Visitor Experience**

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



*Row boats along the shore of the island at the Lower Falls.*

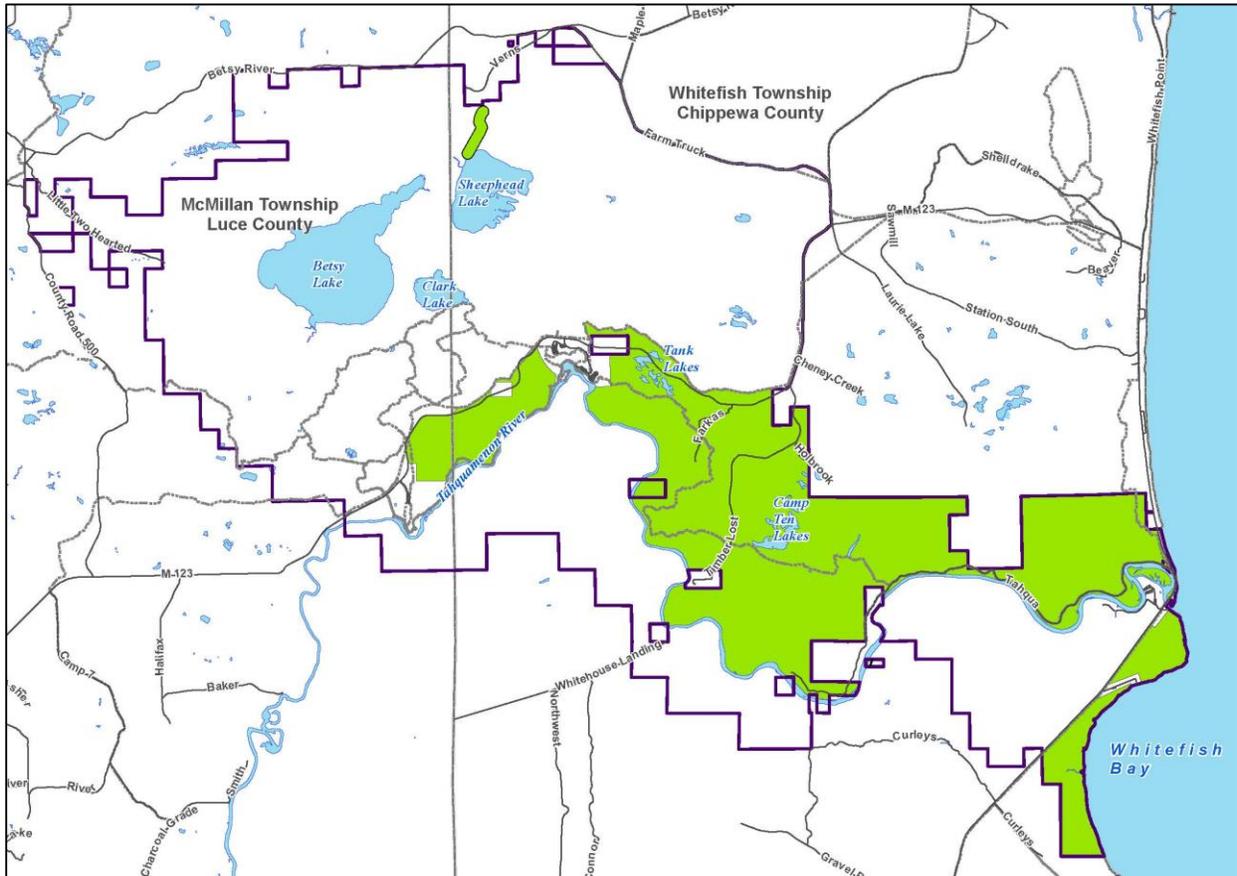
### **Management Focus**

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

### **Development**

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

## 4.4 Backcountry Zone



The Backcountry Zone has been applied to 25%, or 11,870 acres, of the park. This zone emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for low level modification of landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses that are consistent with the natural character of the zone. This zone can be found on the north side of the Tahquamenon River to M-123, from Lake Superior to the Lower Falls, then from the Lower Falls to the Upper falls. This includes the nature study area, Water Tank Lakes, Camp Ten Lakes, and large portions of the North Country National Scenic Trail/ Iron Belle Trail, including the Tahqua Trail, through the park. There is also a corridor located north of Sheephead Lake zoned Backcountry to allow for an appropriate level of access. Approximately 50% of the land within this zone was purchased using State Game Funds, which mandates primary use for hunting and fishing purposes with restrictions on the other recreation uses.

### **Natural Resources**

Native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components and processes will generally be maintained, restored or protected. Active vegetative management techniques focused on protecting the shoreline from erosion may be used.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources will be preserved and protected.



*The North Country Trail runs through the Backcountry Zone.*

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Moderate levels of non-motorized recreation compatible with the natural environment is permitted. This includes improvements in accessibility to the River Trail and backcountry camping opportunities. Hiking trails may also be improved, including the creation of a trail loop between the Lower Falls Campground and Farkas Road.

### **Education Opportunities**

The zone provides good opportunities for education of the natural and cultural resources. Interpretation will generally be outside the boundaries of the zone to reflect the natural character.

### **Visitor Experience**

A moderate level of visitor encounters can be expected in this zone.

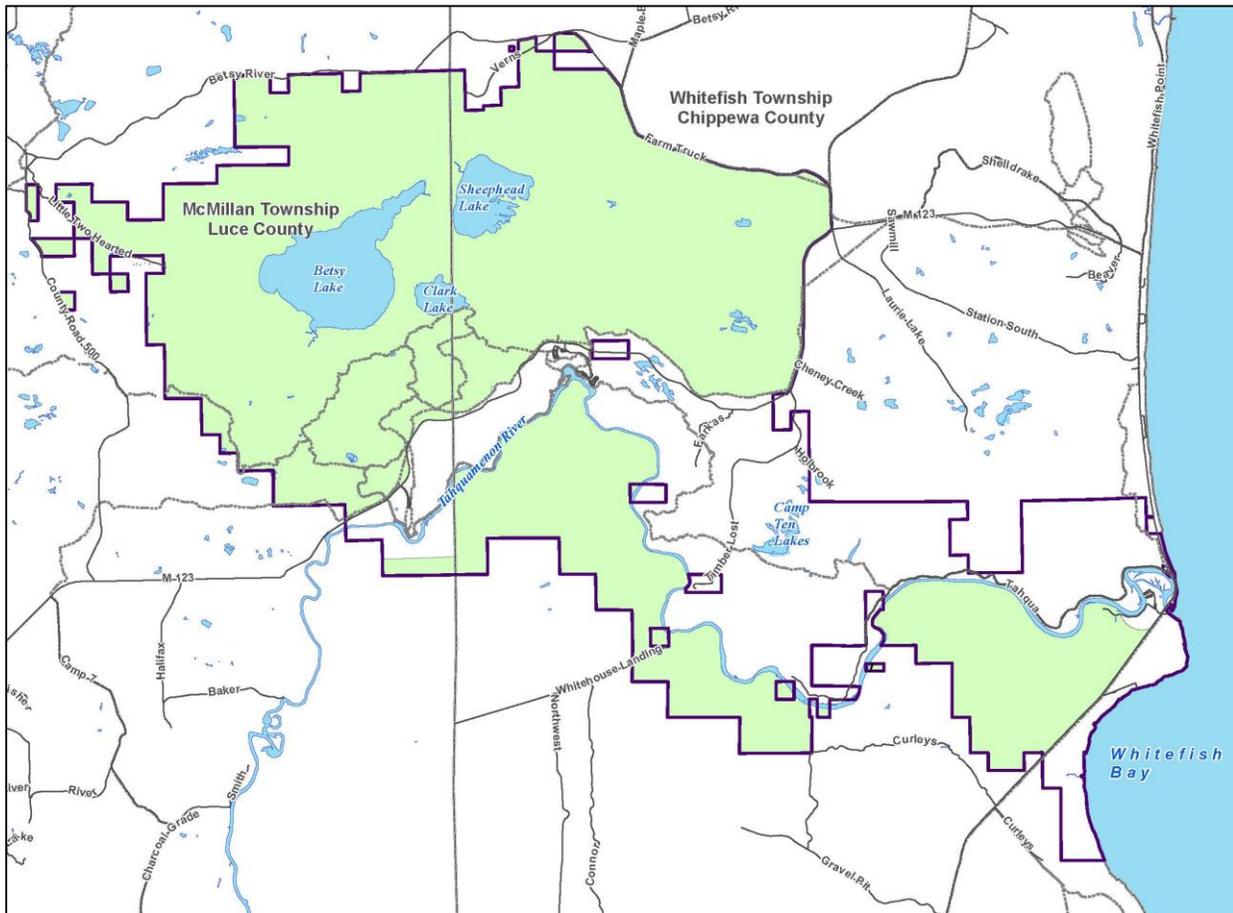
### **Management Focus**

Management of this zone will include exploring opportunities to move the North Country National Scenic Trail/Iron Belle Trail off of M-123, and exploring additional opportunities for camping cabins or other overnight accommodations.

### **Development**

A low level of development to support access and sightseeing is permitted. Development will blend with the natural environment and may include limited site hardening to protect sensitive resources. Development of a low-impact, safe vehicle pull-off location near the Tank Lakes area is proposed.

## 4.5 Primitive Zone



Approximately 72%, or 33,810 acres, of Tahquamenon Falls State Park is designated as Primitive. This includes most of the park south of the Tahquamenon River, as well as north of M-123. The character of this zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. A large portion of the park's hiking trails are located in the Primitive Zone, including part of the NCNST. Some lands within this zone were purchased using State Game Funs, which mandates primary use for hunting and fishing purposes with restrictions on other recreational uses.

### **Natural Resources**

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

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

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

### **Education Opportunities**

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

### **Visitor Experience**

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



*The natural landscape is preserved in this zone.*

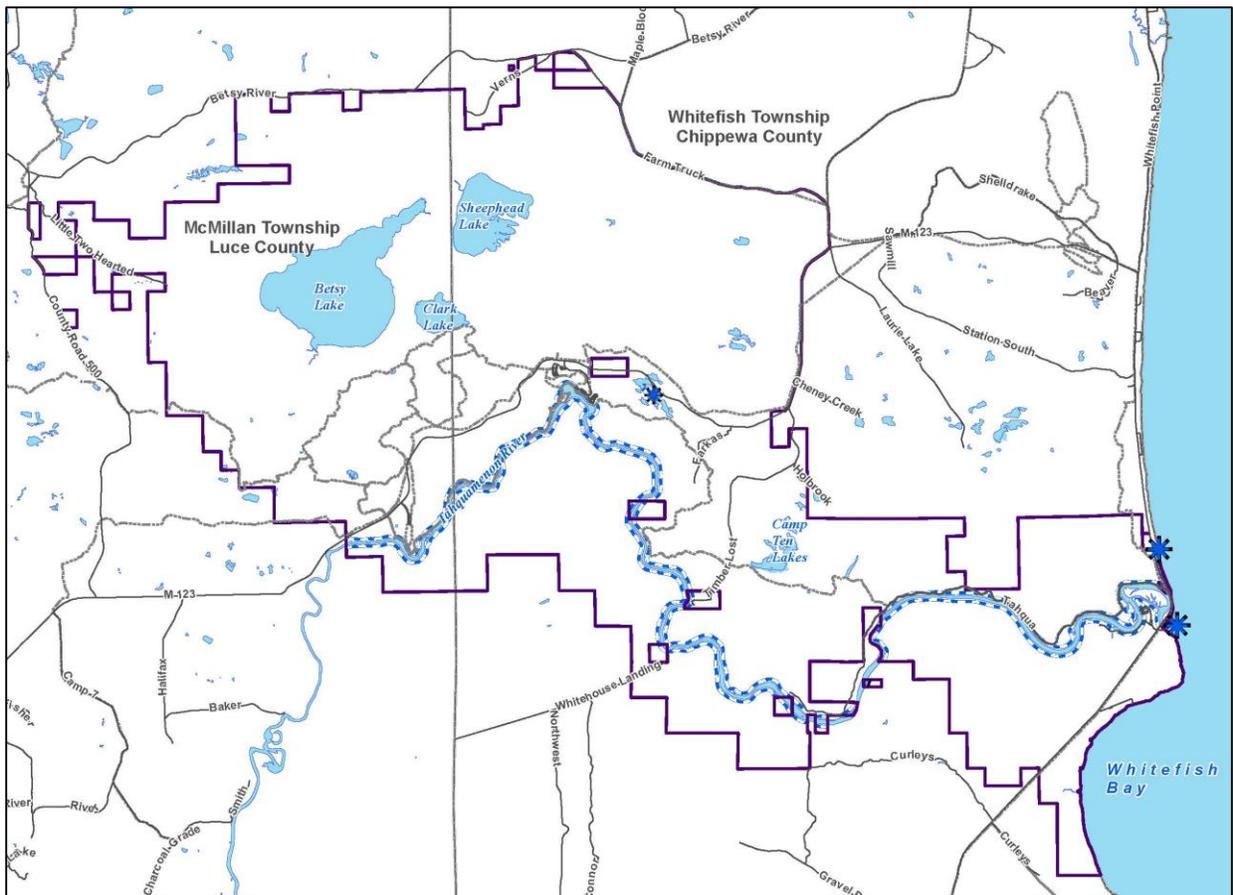
### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with an emphasis on natural resource quality. This including removing the structures on the Phillips property and designation and protection of the Natural Area.

### **Development**

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

## 4.6 Scenic Overlay



Approximately 3%, or 1,611 acres, of Tahquamenon Falls State Park is designated as Scenic Overlay. This designation protects and preserves the scenic views offered at the park. The Scenic Overlay extends along the entire bank of the Tahquamenon River encompassing the land to the visual horizon when viewed from the river. This is in keeping with the proposed National Wild and Scenic River designation. The Scenic Overlay includes the Lake Superior Shoreline and observation points at the Tank Lakes area. The Scenic Overlay provides visitors with picturesque views of the falls, river, inland lakes and Lake Superior.

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

### **Natural Resources**

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

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

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

### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage may be provided at key viewing locations or off site. This designation presents an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about the falls, river and lakeshore.

### **Visitor Experience**

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

### **Management Focus**

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

### **Development**

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



*A scenic view of the Tahquamenon River.*



### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Visitors may be engaged in recreation activities appropriate to the zone and compatible with and sensitive to the setting.

### **Education Opportunities**

Education and interpretation should be explored as a priority in this zone.

### **Visitor Experience**

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

### **Management Focus**

The management focus is to protect a large portion of the park north and south of the Tahquamenon River recognized as influencing the cultural and historical character of the zone. The focus of the zone is to ensure any future development within this area is sensitive to the site.

### **Development**

Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape may be appropriate. The level of development will be in accordance with the underlying zone.



*An Interpretive sign on the River's history.*

## 5. 10-Year Action Goals

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

One of the priorities identified in this plan is to continue to balance natural preservation at the park with the visitor experience. This includes working toward improvements while protecting the wild, rustic nature of the park that is valued by park-goers. This is supported by the recommendations of all of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Blue Ribbon Panel Report to Governor Snyder and the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan. It is also important to recognize that the park is a major tourism draw to this area of Michigan, and has a major impact on the surrounding community. Tahquamenon Falls State Park is located in Economic Prosperity Region 1.

The Planning Team has developed 10-Year Action Goals that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the park as a whole, and the five designated management zones, in order to achieve the desired user experience. For each management zone in the plan, action goals are recommended that address one or more of the following categories:

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

Management Plans do not guarantee future PRD funding to implement them. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan. The 10-Year Action Goals address the desired future condition at the park, and serve as a blueprint for management decisions.

## General Action Goals

Many of the 10-Year Action Goals for **Tahquamenon Falls State Park** are general in nature and apply within all of the management zones. These often deal with park-wide issues, such as invasive species control, universal access, trail systems, or marketing the park's many recreational opportunities to a wider audience of potential users. Many of the overall maintenance and operational issues of running a state park also result in the need for actions across all zone boundaries, such as law enforcement.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Continue invasive species control with emphasis on early detection and rapid response.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Explore interdepartmental approaches to forest health best management practices.	Ongoing	Stewardship Park Manager Forestry	Park Manager Stewardship
Control all Purple Loosestrife occurrences within the park.	Annually	Stewardship Park Manager	Park Manager
Develop a Stewardship Plan to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies	5 - 10 years	Stewardship Park Manager Forestry Wildlife	Stewardship Ecologist
Complete MiFi covertype mapping of the park and update the Wildfire plan by including fuel maps within the park.	5-10 years	Stewardship Park Manager	Stewardship
<b>Historic/ Cultural Resources</b>			
Review all proposed earthwork activities for impact on cultural resources.	Ongoing	Park Manager Cultural Resources Analyst State Archaeologist Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Develop more looped, non-motorized trails.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist	Park Manager
Develop a comprehensive trail management plan.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist NCNST	Park Manager
<b>Education/Interpretive Opportunities</b>			
Implement efforts to improve visitor awareness and connection to remote locations and provide a deeper environmental experience.	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Park Interpreter
Expand the audience for the park using technological opportunities (virtual) and through partnerships with stakeholders.	Ongoing	Park Manager Park Interpreter	Park Manager Park Interpreter

<b>General Action Goals</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Target Completion Date</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>	<b>Responsible Program Position</b>
<b>Management</b>			
Support US Forest Service in formalization of the National Wild and Scenic River designation.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Continue to review and monitor infrastructure needs based on visitor use and trends.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Continue to explore land acquisition of properties within the Project Boundary with emphasis on inholdings.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner PRD Land Liaison	Park Manager
Improve access to river between the Lower Falls and the Rivermouth through land acquisitions.	Ongoing	Park Manager Trails Specialist PRD Land Liaison	PRD Land Liaison
Develop and implement a sustainable funding plan to provide adequate park management staffing.	Ongoing	Park Manager District Supervisor	District Supervisor
Review and update the park's emergency plan and coordinate with area emergency management agencies.	Annually	Park Manager Local Fire Dept. EMS	Park Manager
Continue to review and update capital outlay list.	Annually	District Supervisor Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Improve boundary identification between the park, private, and State Forest lands.	3 years	Park Manager PRD Land Liaison	Park Manager
Evaluate and consolidate existing wilderness/natural area nominations. Nominate appropriate natural/wilderness area(s) under the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act (followed by rescinding existing NRC-dedicated natural areas)	3-5 years	Park Manager Stewardship Wildlife	Stewardship
<b>Development</b>			
Continue efforts to achieve greater visitor accessibility in all development opportunities.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner
Update, improve, and replace directional signage on M-123.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner MDOT	Park Manager

MDOT – Michigan Department of Transportation

NCNST – North Country National Scenic Trail

## Developed Recreation

The Developed Recreation Zone is characterized by active recreation with a high density of use, conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced where possible. The primary use areas at the Upper and Lower Falls, the campgrounds, Rivermouth boat launch, and picnic area on Lake Superior are located in the Developed Recreation Zone. A Scenic Overlay has also been applied to the Tahquamenon River corridor and the Lake Superior shoreline.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Identify desired canoe and kayak launching, resting, destination points and work to provide base line amenities appropriate for each location in partnership with water trails program stakeholders	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist Recreation Partners	Park Manager
<b>Management</b>			
Continue to manage Tahquamenon River mouth erosion on a local level and apply for qualifying grant programs for design and construction treatments.	Ongoing	Stewardship Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor	Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor
Study perceived vehicular traffic congestion within park	1-3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Undertake a cost benefit analysis for the installation of a Visitor Orientation Center to enhance visitor services and park operations.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Park Interpreter District Supervisor Regional Partners	Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor
Develop sustainable, safe and properly funded options to mitigate vehicular congestion based on study outcome.	3-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor	Regional Planner District Supervisor
<b>Development</b>			
Install additional camper cabins in appropriate locations if cost benefit analysis can identify adequate funding to support the initial development investment, maintenance and operation and long term structure recapitalization.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Complete the engineering plans for the redevelopment of the boat concessions and island access.	1-2 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Regional Planner
Implement phased development of the boat concessions and island access improvements.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Regional Planner

## Natural Resource Recreation

Active recreation at a medium to high density of use conducted in a natural setting is the hallmark of the Natural Resource Recreation Zone. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone higher levels of use are allowed. Vegetation may be managed to facilitate recreational use and maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape, as well as address such issues as hazard trees and to manage pests and disease.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretive Opportunities</b>			
Improve snowmobile trail signage and mapping to protect adjoining Natural Areas and educate users.	1-5 years	Regional Planner Trails Specialist	Trails Specialist
<b>Management</b>			
Continue specific actions to improve the lowland areas of the snowmobile trails.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist	Trails Specialist
<b>Development</b>			
Implement phased development of island access improvements.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Regional Planner

## Backcountry Zone

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

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Increase backcountry camping opportunities in an environmentally sustainable manner, include a review of existing sites.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship	Park Manager Stewardship
Explore opportunities to improve the existing trail system.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist NCNST	Park Manager
Explore opportunities to improve accessibility on the River Trail.	1-3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist	Park Manager
Create a trail loop between the Lower Falls Campground and Farkas Rd.	1-3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist NCNST	Park Manager
<b>Management</b>			
Explore sustainable opportunities and funding sources for additional camping cabins or other overnight accommodations.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Explore opportunity to move the North Country Trail/ Iron Belle Trail off of M-123 in order to enhance trail user experience and safety.	1-3 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist NCNST	Park Manager Trails Specialist
<b>Development</b>			
Develop low-impact, safe vehicular pull off and parking locations for desired public, barrier free viewing at the Tank Lake area.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner MDOT	Park Manager Regional Planner

*NCNST – North Country National Scenic Trail*

## Primitive Zone

The Primitive Zone emphasizes the natural resources of the area. It is managed to allow only dispersed, low frequency and low impact recreational use in the zone. Maintaining a high quality natural resource condition dictates the extent to which recreational improvements are allowed. For this reason, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation. The following 10-Year Action Goals propose only very low levels of development, in order to protect the important habitat.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Review trail routes for ease of maintenance and improved usage.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist NCNST	Park Manager
<b>Education/Interpretive Opportunities</b>			
Improve signage to identify the Natural Area following designation.	3-5 years	Park Manager Stewardship Park Interpreter	Park Manager
<b>Management</b>			
Review sustainable opportunities to expand foot-trail program with adequate funding.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Trails Specialist Stewardship	Park Manager Trails Specialist
Remove the cabin and supporting infrastructure on Phillips property.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner District Supervisor	Park Manager

## Administrative Zone

This zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the state park. The Administrative Zone at Tahquamenon Falls includes the park headquarters

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretive Opportunities</b>			
Create clear visitor signage and wayfinding to park destinations such as the Upper and Lower Falls.	1-3 years	Park Manager Park Interpreter Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Park Interpreter
<b>Management</b>			
Work with regional partners to secure enhanced internet connectivity for the park and surrounding area.	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Work with networks to increase cellular connectivity for safety and emergency purposes.	Ongoing	Park Manager	Park Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Complete renovations of Lodge #2 for public rental.	1-2 years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager

<b>Cultural Landscape Overlay</b>			
The Cultural Landscape Overlay has been applied to a large portion of the park both north and south of the Tahquamenon River in recognition of important historic and cultural resources.			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretation</b>			
Provide information to visitors on value of cultural resources.	Ongoing	Park Manger Cultural Resources Analyst Park Interpreter	Park Manager Park Interpreter

<b>Scenic Overlay</b>			
In recognition if it's scenic beauty, this overlay has been applied to the entire bank of the Tahquamenon River, as well as part of the Lake Superior shoreline and an area at Tank Lakes. Any development should be sensitive to the scenic qualities of this zone.			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management</b>			
Continue to recognize the compelling natural and scenic view shed along the Tahquamenon River and Lake Superior shoreline	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Develop safe vehicular pull off and parking locations for desired public, barrier free viewing at the Tank Lake area.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner MDOT	Park Manager Regional Planner
<b>Education/Interpretation</b>			
Provide appropriate interpretive information educating visitors of the scenic points.	1-5 years	Park Manager Regional Planner Park Interpreter	Park Interpreter Park Manager

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