



# General Management Plan

## Yankee Springs Recreation Area



Approved September 6, 2016  
Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division

Prepared with assistance of:



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## **YANKEE SPRINGS RECREATION AREA 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:

05/02/2016

Date

DNR – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU:

07/12/2016

Date

MSPAC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE:

08/04/2016

Date

NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

08/11/2016

Date

# RESOLUTION NO. 08-2016-2

## MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

### RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE “YANKEE SPRINGS RECREATION AREA GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN”

**ADOPTED: August 11, 2016**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Parks and Recreation Division has completed the General Management Plan for Yankee Springs Recreation Area; 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 Yankee Springs Recreation Area; 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 Yankee Springs Recreation Area 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 Yankee Springs Recreation Area;

Submitted by: Chris Graham, Chair, MSPAC Stewardship Subcommittee

**Motioned by:** Brad Garmon  
**Seconded by:** Bob Hoffmeyer

**Yeas: 9**  
**Nays: 0**  
**Abstained: 0**  
**Absent: 0**

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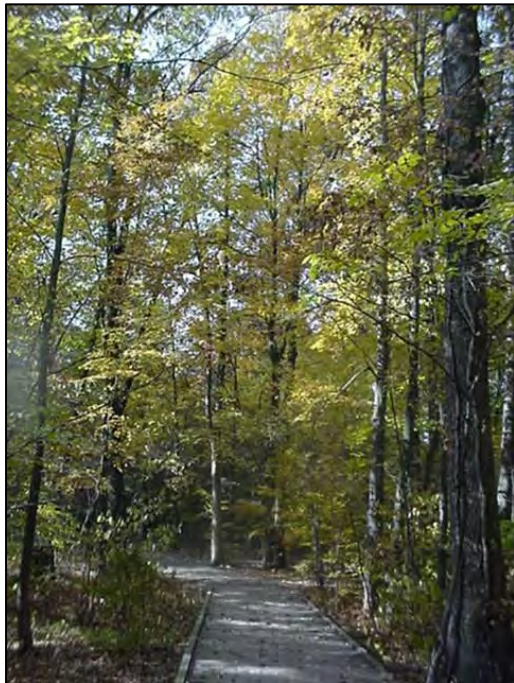
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# Executive Summary

Yankee Springs Recreation Area (YRSA), with 5,200 acres, is centrally located between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo on the east side of US 131 in southwest Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Its location, natural and cultural features, and variety of recreational opportunities, make the recreation area attractive to a wide and diverse visitor group. Yankee Springs Recreation Area encompasses ten lakes, including the 2,680 acre Gun Lake, which is the largest inland lake in southwest Michigan.



Trails meander through canopy forests and other natural areas which are abundant at Yankee Springs.

The recreation area is a year-round destination for visitors with a variety of recreational interests. For camping enthusiasts, the recreation area offers a 200-site modern campground with access to Gun Lake, a 78-site rustic campground next to Deep Lake, and a 25-site rustic campground developed for equestrian use. With a total of 38 miles of recreational trails, Yankee Springs Recreation Area is popular with hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and cross-country skiers. The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST), a federally designated National Scenic Trail that stretches from New York to North Dakota, travels 6 miles through the recreation area. This trail doubles as the hiking route of the Iron Belle Trail, which travels Michigan from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood near the Wisconsin border. These national and state trails, as well as trails in the adjacent Barry State Game Area, further adds to the trail network.

The recreation area offers large tracts of undeveloped land featuring rolling topography, canopy forests, lakes, wetlands, and kettle depressions. These diverse natural environments support habitat for a wide variety of native plant and animal species, including the rare Eastern massasauga rattlesnake and prairie white-fringed orchid. YRSA also provides extensive land open to hunting and ample fishing opportunities on its many lakes. Trails, open space, natural areas and recreational amenities in the adjoining Barry State Game Area serve to extend and expand these opportunities with a combined 22,000 acres in public ownership.

Future management of this recreation area 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 Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Second, the Plan provides 10-Year Action Goals that address the desired future condition within the park as a whole and 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, historic, and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources and provide 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 to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource goals and management strategies. This plan will be developed by the PRD Stewardship Unit in consultation with Wildlife, Forestry and other resource divisions.

The Parks and Recreation Division 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. Furthermore, several existing planning documents, including the Michigan Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Michigan State Parks Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report, were used as guiding references (See Chapter 1 for additional information on guiding references).

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



## Significance of Yankee Springs Recreation Area

Each GMP developed by the PRD is built upon the park's unique significant features that make it distinct from other parks in the state's system. Yankee Springs Recreation Area was determined significant due to the following:

### History

History is a defining theme of Yankee Springs Recreation Area, beginning with the glacial geology that created its landforms. The rich natural resources drew Native American tribes of hunters and gatherers to the area. Pioneer migration and farming of the land followed, aided by an early stagecoach route between Battle Creek and Grand Rapids that stopped in what is now Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Yankee Springs was one of two areas in Michigan developed by the National Park Service (NPS) as a Recreation Development Area for the dual purpose of conservation and recreation. The camp facilities were designed by the NPS and the outdoor centers and infrastructure were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.



The efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corp can be seen throughout the park, especially in the historic organizational camps.

### Open Space and Habitat

In combination with the adjoining Barry State Game Area, Yankee Springs Recreation Area provides 22,000 acres of public open space and wildlife habitat, making it a destination for hunters, anglers and naturalists. The recreation area is large enough to support numerous game and non-game species and provides visitors with a sense of wildness unique in southwest Michigan.



Equestrian campsites offer horse and owner overnight accommodations.

### Accommodations

Yankee Springs Recreation Area provides a unique combination of camping and lodging options, offering visitors active recreational opportunities, refuge in the more pristine natural environment, and experience with the culture and history of years past. Campers will find both rustic and modern camping, camp sites along the water with boat docking options, sites designed for equestrian use with easy access to riding trails, and two nationally recognized historic outdoor centers with individual and group cabins.

### Trails

Yankee Springs Recreation Area offers a trail network that supports year-round activities and use by hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and cross-country skiers. The trail network is further enhanced through its connection and relationship with the Barry State Game Area and the federally designated North Country National Scenic Trail and statewide Iron Belle Trail which share a route running through the park.

### Natural Features

Yankee Springs Recreation Area, with its closed canopy forest, ten lakes, wetlands and large tracts of undeveloped land, provides a natural habitat that supports a number of exemplary natural communities, such as prairie fen and dry-mesic southern forest. The recreation area also supports a number of rare and protected species, including the cerulean warbler, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake and prairie white-fringed orchid.

### Geological Occurrences

The movement of glaciers across Michigan left Yankee Springs Recreation Area with a number of geological landforms, such as the Devil's Soup Bowl. All ten lakes and other water features within the park are of glacial origin.

### Water Resources

At 2,680 acres, all-sports Gun Lake is the largest inland lake in southwest Michigan and a significant resource to the surrounding community and the southwest region. Gun Lake, along with nine other lakes within the park, provides a variety of active and passive water recreation experiences.



A floating dock provides access and fishing opportunities at Deep Lake.

## **Management Zones**

A key goal in the development of this General Management Plan is to continue providing the opportunities and features that attract so many visitors to the recreation area 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 recreation area. From a palette of nine standard zones, seven zones (including two overlays) were applied to Yankee Springs Recreation Area. The Management Zone Map and a thorough review of each Management Zone are found in Chapter 4 of this Plan. A condensed description of each of the applied Management Zones is as follows:

**Primitive Zone** comprises nearly 24.6% of the recreation area, 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 or users are allowed. Much of this zone includes sensitive wetlands.

**Backcountry Zone** comprises near 52.8% of the recreation area and emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for modification of landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses. Much of the recreation area's hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and equestrian trails are located within this zone.

**Natural Resource Recreation Zone** comprises 12.8% of the recreation area and permits active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. Most of the Deep Lake Campground and an area east and west of Briggs Road are located in this zone.

**Developed Recreation Zone** comprises 9.5% of the recreation area and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The modern campground and outdoor centers are located within this zone.

**Administrative Zone** comprises 0.3% of the recreation area and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. The zone includes a park office, maintenance facilities and all related land required to conduct the business of running the recreation area.

**Cultural Landscape Overlay** has been applied to 3.7% of Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Management within the Cultural Landscape Overlay highlights the preservation and protection of the cultural resources.

**Scenic Overlay** has been applied to 0.5% of Yankee Springs Recreation Area, encompassing the Devil's Soup Bowl and Grave's Hill in recognition of their unique and scenic qualities.

## **10-Year Action Goals**

The General Management Plan looks at each Management Zone and identifies 10-Year Action Goals that the Planning Team believes are necessary to guide management and development within the zones in order to achieve the desired user experience and natural resource protection. Action goals are categorized under General Action Goals if they pertain to the park as a whole or under the applicable Management Zone. They address natural and cultural resource protection and management, recreation opportunities, education/ interpretation opportunities, management focus and development. The goals are listed in chapter 6 of this plan.



# 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

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

Blue Ribbon Panel  
(2012)



YSRA trails are used year-round.

## **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**

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

The legal mandates that most directly impact planning and management of Yankee Springs Recreation Area focus on the following areas:

- Wildlife conservation orders that establish the parameters for hunting and trapping within the recreation area.
- Compliance with public health and safety regulations regarding campgrounds, wastewater systems, and discharge of pollutants to surface water and groundwater.
- Identification of the duties of the DNR in reinforcing its core values concerning preservation, protection and management.
- Requirement of a Recreation Passport for entry into the park.



## 2. Plan Process Overview

### 2.1 Why Plan?

Park planning is not a new concept. The DNR has developed Master Plans in the past for many of Michigan's state parks and recreation areas. 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 last comprehensive Master Plan for YSRA was undertaken in 1966.



Planning Team visiting Chief Noonday Outdoor Center.

The General Management Planning (GMP) process provides a new way of planning for parks and recreation areas. The GMP sets out a framework for protecting recreation area resources while providing for meaningful visitor experiences. The long-range vision and management objectives for the recreation area are derived from applicable legal directives, the purpose of the recreation area, and the its significant natural and cultural resources.

A GMP develops as a result of a series of planning steps. Each step builds upon the previous, and action decisions focus on (1) the mission of the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD), and (2) the specific Purpose and Significance of the park or recreation area. There are three stages of planning, implemented in the following order:

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

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

## 2.2 Planning Objectives

The objective of the General Management Plan is to bring together Parks & Recreation Division staff, stakeholders, and the public into a planning process that defines and clarifies the unique “Purpose and Significance” of Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the recreation area through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan and Action Goals.

The Team utilized several methods in collecting information to inform the development of the General Management Plan. To gather public input, the Planning Team developed and collected information through an on-line survey and received 1,025 responses. The survey was advertised through a DNR press release, newsletter bulletin and email to registered campers.

On April 29, 2015, the Planning Team invited key stakeholders to attend a focus group meeting held at Yankee Springs Township Hall. Invitations were extended to government and community agencies, and recreation, cultural, business, and natural resource organizations; 26 stakeholders participated in the focus group. A complete list of participants and summary of the input is provided in Appendix B, Public Input Summary. Focus group participants were asked about their vision of the park in the next ten years and what their organization could contribute to the park. The information helped to inform the team as they worked to develop drafts of the significance statements and action goals. The Planning Team also extended an invitation to meet with Tribal Governments: input from the Gun Lake Tribe is included in Appendix B.

The Planning Team hosted a public open house on January 28, 2015. 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. The information provided at this meeting was reviewed and considered during refinement of the plan.



Stakeholders discuss their vision for YSRA.



Participation of park goers and local residents at the Public Open House.

## **2.3 Planning Team**

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

<b>DNR Staff</b>		
<b>Division</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>
PRD	Management Plan Administrator	Debbie Jensen
PRD	Planning Assistant	Matt Lincoln
PRD	Unit Manager	Andru Jevicks
PRD	Unit Supervisor	Joe Jandernoa
PRD	District Supervisor	Rollie Johnson
PRD	Regional Planner	Joe Strach
PRD	Stewardship Unit Manager	Ray Fahlsing
PRD	Cultural Resource Analyst	Lisa Gamero
Fisheries	Fisheries Unit Manager	Brain Gunderman
Law	Conservation Officer Supervisor	Lt. Gerald Thayer
Law	Conservation Officer	Sgt. Jeff Rabbers
Marketing & Outreach	Park Interpreter	Shana Ramsey
Wildlife	Wildlife Biologist	Sara Thompson
Forestry	Forester	Jessie Brammer
Minerals	State Geologist	Peter Rose
Minerals	Property Specialist	Cynthia Watson

### **Clearzoning Consultants**

David Birchler, AICP, Chief Executive Officer

Mardy Stirling, Senior Planner

Karen Zarowny, Staff Planner

Sheila Starks, GIS Specialist

## **2.4 Summary of Public Input Survey**

Understanding the important role of the public in developing this plan, the Planning Team applied a variety of methods to collect feedback and input from Yankee Springs Recreation Area (YRSA) users. In particular, a public input survey was utilized to gather general information about visitors, how they use the recreation area, as well as recommendations for improving features and amenities currently offered. The survey was available for five (5) weeks beginning March 31, 2015. It was advertised by the DNR Press Release and an Email bulletin sent to nearly 20,000 individuals, including those registered to receive state park news and visitors known to have camped at Yankee Springs. Additionally, interest groups, such as

the mountain bike organization, also publicized the survey on their membership site. This resulted in a larger proportion of survey responses from a specific interest group than is represented by the typical attendance/figures for Yankee Springs Recreation Area. See Appendix B: Public Input Summary for more survey result information. Over 1,025 individuals responded to the survey and provided input.

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

- The type of visitors using the recreation area (ex: age, distance traveled...etc.)
- The activities that visitors participate in the recreation area
- The preferences of campers, equestrian, and mountain bikers
- Additional amenities or improvements that visitors would like to see prioritized

Section	Qn #s	Type of Questions
About You	1-5	This section asked general questions about the respondent including age, zip code, number of recreation area visits per year, reasons for not visiting, and the season of year that they visit.
Activities	6-7	This section asked respondents if they primarily visited the park as a day user or camper and to identify their favorite activities.
Campers	8-10	Campers were asked about their typical length of stay, where in the park they primarily stay and why they choose Yankee Springs Recreation Area.
Experience of Yankee Springs Recreation Area	11-14	This section asked respondents to identify in which areas of the park they spend the most time, rate existing facilities and recreational opportunities, and provide feedback on improvements they would like to see.
Gun Lake Day Use Area	15	Day users were asked to indicate what activities they participate in at the Gun Lake day use area.
General Recreation Area Comments	16-17	This section asked respondents to provide comments on improvements and conservation efforts they would like to see within the recreation area.
Equestrian Experience	18-20	Equestrians were asked about their typical length of stay, how far they travel to access the park and if the existing equestrian campground met their needs.
Mountain Biking Experience	21-23	Mountain bikers were asked about their typical length of stay, how far they traveled to access the park and the quality of their biking experience.
Wrapping Up	24	This section asked respondents to provide any additional comments they have about the recreation area or General Management Planning process.

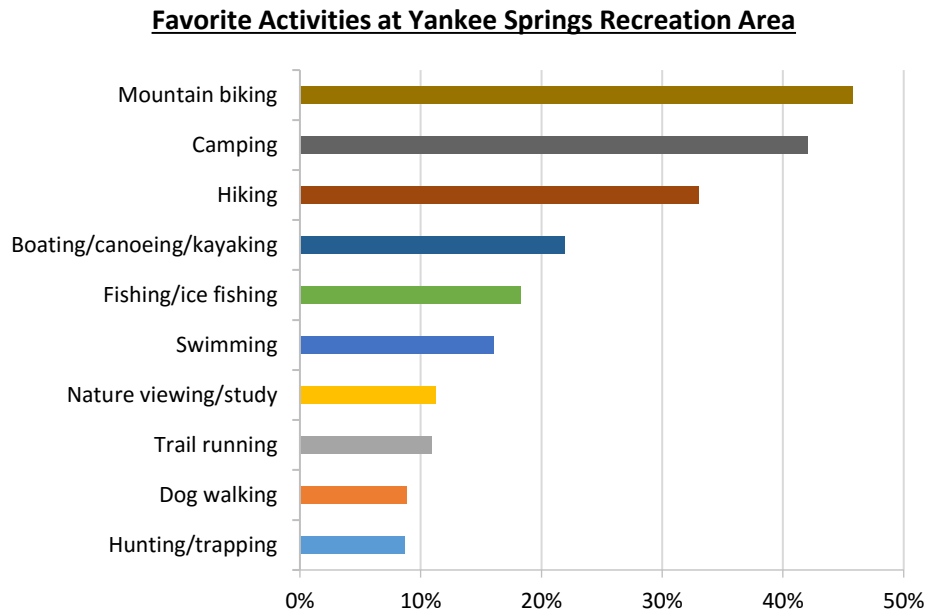
### **About You**

Respondents of all ages completed the survey; however, the majority (30%) were between 50 and 64 years of age. The greatest number of respondents visited Yankee Springs Recreation Area year-round (45%) with the Summer (June –August) being the single most popular season. Two-thirds of all visitors are day users. With the majority (31%) of respondents visiting eleven or more time per year, and traveling a distance of 25 to 50 miles (42%), Yankee Springs draws most of its repeat visitors from within an hour's drive.



### **Activities**

The top five activities undertaken by survey respondents are mountain biking (46%), camping (42%), hiking (33%), boating/canoeing/kayaking (22%), and fishing/ice fishing (18%). Other popular activities included swimming, nature viewing, trail running, dog walking, and hunting/trapping.



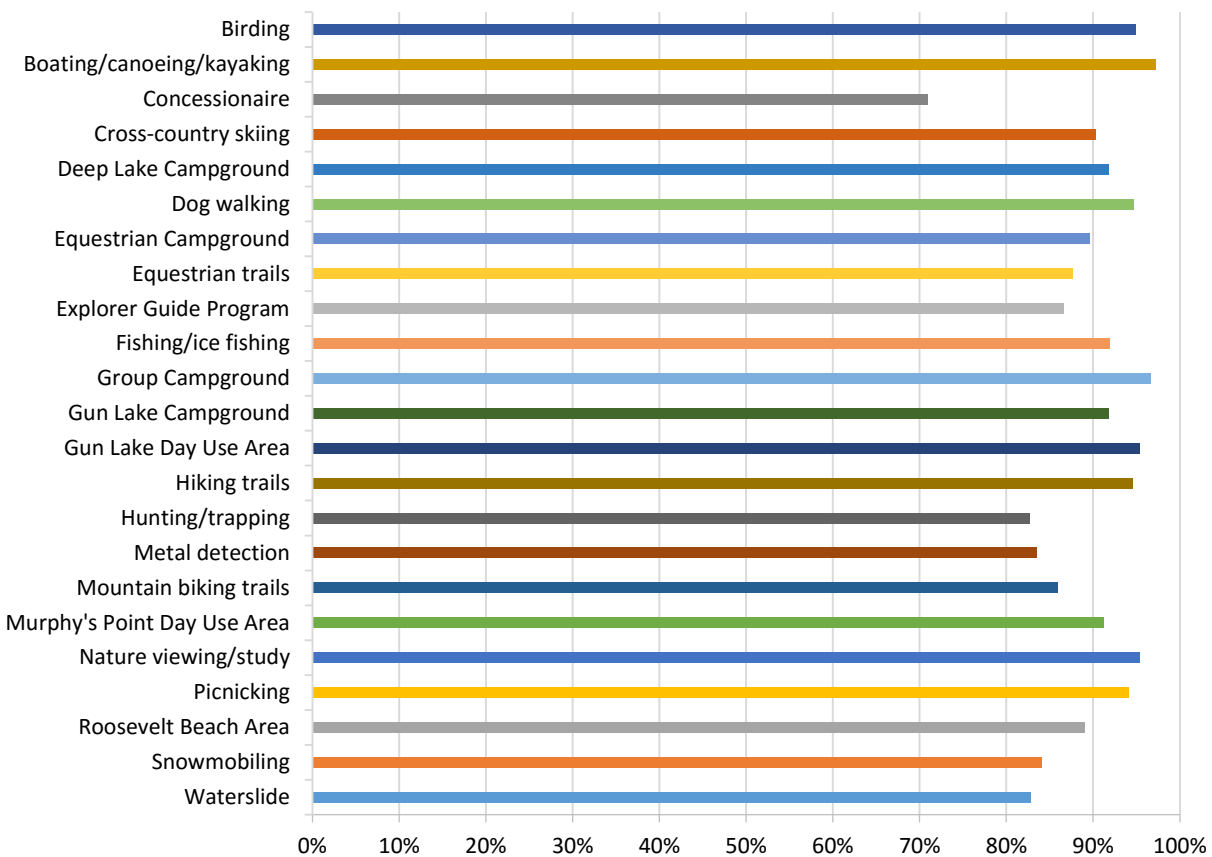
### **Campers**

Approximately one-third of respondents report that they camp at Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Nearly half of all campers stayed 3-6 nights and over one-third of respondents indicated that they stayed 1-2 nights. The majority (65%) of campers preferred the modern facilities of Gun Lake Campground, while over one quarter chose the rustic campground at Deep Lake. The top reasons for camping at Yankee Springs were location and setting, proximity to home, recreation area features, and facilities. Campgrounds were rated good to very good by most respondents. In the future, campers would like to see updated water and electrical facilities at the modern campgrounds, preservation of the rustic campground at Deep Lake, as well as improvements in litter collection and recycling.

### **Experience at Yankee Springs Recreation Area**

The most popular facilities within Yankee Springs are mountain bike trails, campgrounds, hiking trails, Gun Lake day use area, and the North Country National Scenic Trail. Most respondents are satisfied with the recreation area amenities. A complete list of responses can be found in Appendix B.

### **Percent of Respondents Satisfied with Current YSRA Amenities**



### **Gun Lake Day Use Area**

Of those who visit the Gun Lake day use area, the top activities for respondents are swimming, picnicking, kayaking/boating, nature viewing, and dog walking. Comments received regarding the day use area concerned overcrowding and the need for washing stations.

### **General Recreation Area Comments**

Overall, respondents had positive comments about Yankee Springs Recreation Area. When asked what improvements they would like to see, visitors suggested more trails with better maintenance and a stronger separation between activities. Trail signage improvements, less motorized vehicle use in the natural environment, enhanced facilities at the campgrounds (water, electrical, recycling), and preservation of historic buildings were also mentioned. Respondents voiced concern regarding invasive species and trail erosion, and expressed a strong desire to preserve the area's natural beauty and habitat. A complete list of responses can be found in Appendix B.

Yankee Springs Recreation Area is popular with equestrians and nearly half of respondents indicate that they stay overnight. The majority of equestrian campers found the campgrounds met their needs. Suggestions were to modernize the campgrounds and provide better maintained trails.

Mountain biking, based on the survey responses, was identified as the most popular activity at Yankee Springs. In a general survey question regarding facilities and recreational opportunities, the majority (86%) of responders said that they were satisfied with the mountain bike facilities. The majority of mountain bikers are day users (88%) as opposed to campers (12%). Of those identifying as mountain bikers, two thirds (68%) find that the mountain bike trails met their needs but offered suggestions for improvements such as more mountain bike trails, improvements to existing trails, and providing options based on experience level.

Finally, respondents were asked to choose three words to describe Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Their responses are provided in the word cloud graphic below. The larger the word, the more times it was offered.



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## 3. Purpose and Significance

There are over 100 parks and recreation areas in Michigan's State Park system and each park has its own unique and defining characteristics. This chapter describes what makes Yankee Springs Recreation Area 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 Yankee Springs Recreation Area was identified as part of the state park system.

- To be used as a public park for the purpose of public recreation or the preservation of natural beauty or historic association in accordance with Public Act 218 of 1919 which created the Michigan State Park Commission.
- For exclusive use of the property as a public park, for recreational and conservation purposes in accordance with the transfer from the United States government.
- To provide access to diverse intensive and extensive recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing and nature observation.
- To preserve and protect Yankee Springs Recreation Area's significant natural and cultural resources and areas of natural beauty for current and future generations.
- To provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public that reflect the DNR mission and the unique qualities of Yankee Springs Recreation Area.

### 3.2 Statements of Significance

#### History

History is a defining theme of Yankee Springs Recreation Area, beginning with the glacial geology that created its landforms. The rich natural resources drew Native American tribes of hunters and gatherers to the area. Pioneer migration and farming of the land followed, aided by an early stagecoach route between Battle Creek and Grand Rapids that stopped in what is now Yankee Springs Recreation Area. Yankee Springs was one of two areas in Michigan developed by the National Park Service (NPS) as a Recreation Development Area for the dual purpose of conservation and recreation. The camp facilities were designed by the NPS and the outdoor centers and infrastructure were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.



### **Open Space and Habitat**

In combination with the adjoining Barry State Game Area, Yankee Springs Recreation Area provides 22,000 acres of public open space and wildlife habitat, making it a destination for hunters, anglers and naturalists. The recreation area is large enough to support numerous game and non-game species and provides visitors with a sense of wildness unique in southwest Michigan.



Winter scene of Hall Lake by Jeff Garrison.

### **Accommodations**

Yankee Springs Recreation Area provides a unique combination of camping and lodging options, offering visitors active recreational opportunities, refuge in the more pristine natural environment, and experience with the culture and history of years past. Campers will find both rustic and modern camping, camp sites along the water with boat docking options, sites designed for equestrian use with easy access to riding trails, and two nationally recognized historic outdoor centers with individual and group cabins.

### **Trails**

Yankee Springs Recreation Area offers a trail network that supports year-round activities and use by hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and cross-country skiers. The trail network is further enhanced through its connection and relationship with the Barry State Game Area and the federally designated North Country National Scenic Trail and statewide Iron Belle Trail which share a route running through the park.

### **Natural Features**

Yankee Springs Recreation Area, with its closed canopy forest, ten lakes, wetlands and large tracts of undeveloped land, provides a natural habitat that supports a number of exemplary natural communities such as prairie fen and dry-mesic southern forest, as well as rare and protected species, including the cerulean warbler, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake and prairie white-fringed orchid.

### **Geological Occurrences**

The movement of glaciers across Michigan left Yankee Springs Recreation Area with a number of geological landforms, such as the Devil's Soup Bowl. All ten lakes and other water features within the park are of glacial origin.

## **Water Resources**

At 2,680 acres, all-sports Gun Lake is the largest inland lake in southwest Michigan and a significant resource to the surrounding community and the southwest region. Gun Lake, along with nine other lakes within the park, provides a variety of active and passive water recreation experiences.

### **3.3 Public Affirmation of Significance Statements**

Stakeholder and public input assisted the Planning Team with identifying significant features and opportunities at Yankee Springs Recreation Area. The feedback that was provided via the online survey, the on-site workshops, and email affirmed that the park offers something for many types of user. Comments from stakeholders and the public affirmed the unique recreational opportunities and natural significance of the recreation area within the State's park system.

### **What are people saying about Yankee Springs Recreation Area?**

*"This is not just a Recreation Area but a place where people come to live on the lake. It is one of our "Pure Michigan" areas that we need to keep for future generations."*

*"We visit the park almost every weekend to fish and walk our dog. We are very fortunate to have such a beautiful place to go so close to home. We appreciate all those that keep the park available to us."*

*"Super resource that is a jewel in the area, but could be enhanced by utilizing the resource as a recreation destination."*

*"It's a true treasure! Let's take care of it!"*

*"I have been camping there since I was a child, am now 61 and retired. [I] have taken my kids and grandkids many times over the years. [We] continue to enjoy the camp every summer when we return to Michigan."*

*"Mountain bikers love the area!"*

*"Love the scope/scale of the park and natural feel. Very nice for a downstate park. Feels more like the UP."*

*"As an amateur photographer, hiker and paddler, the park offers all these opportunities."*

### **3.4 Relationship with the Local Community**

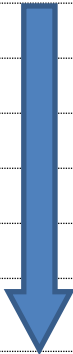
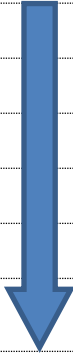
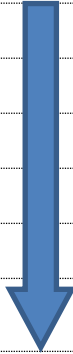
The 5,200-acre Yankee Springs Recreation Area, located in Yankee Springs Township, Barry County, draws an estimated 950,000 visitors a year from across the region. It is a popular camping spot for southwest Michigan residents, with the majority of reservations coming from residents of Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and the communities surrounding the park. Many of these visitors have been frequenting the park for generations, building family memories and traditions.

Centrally positioned between the City of Hastings, Village of Middleville and City of Wayland, the recreation area provides a large natural and recreational resource within close proximity to local businesses and services. The more immediate Gun Lake community hosts a number of service and retail businesses that rely in part on the visitors to Yankee Springs Recreation Area.

Comments from stakeholders as part of the management plan process emphasized that the natural resources and natural beauty are what makes Yankee Springs special and the park should continue to find a balance between protection of the resources and promotion as a destination. Barry County is a rural community and the natural resources, such as the recreation area and adjacent Barry State Game Area, are key to making the County a desirable place to live. Barry County, the surrounding municipalities and the many groups that work to make the recreation area a success, such as Yankee Springs Trail Riders Association, West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance (WMMBA) and North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT), have a strong sense of ownership in the park. The park also hosts a number of annual events and programs that boost attendance and connections to the community year-round.

## 4. Management Zones

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

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

### Park Boundary

The Planning Team reviewed the Yankee Springs Recreation Area boundary in relation to the adjacent State Game Area. This resulted in some clarifications of management responsibilities on the ground between the two Divisions (Parks & Recreation and Wildlife), which reflect the original transfer of land from the Federal Government.

The recreation area'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 Yankee Springs Recreation area. As a result of this assessment, the Planning Team developed a revised boundary, identified as the 2015 General Management Plan (GMP) Project Boundary. This newly defined Project Boundary eliminates some of the lands originally included in the 2004 Project Boundary which are no longer deemed appropriate for inclusion. The 2004 NRC Project Boundary, proposed GMP Project Boundary and the current Yankee Spring Recreation Area boundary are illustrated on the Proposed 2015 Project Boundary Map .

In general, the proposed Project Boundary uses public roads to define the park boundary for ease of management and public access. Appropriate zoning has been applied to the land within the proposed GMP Project Boundary, which would only apply if the land comes into DNR ownership.

The 5,200-acre Yankee Springs Recreation Area was divided into the following five zones and two overlay zones:

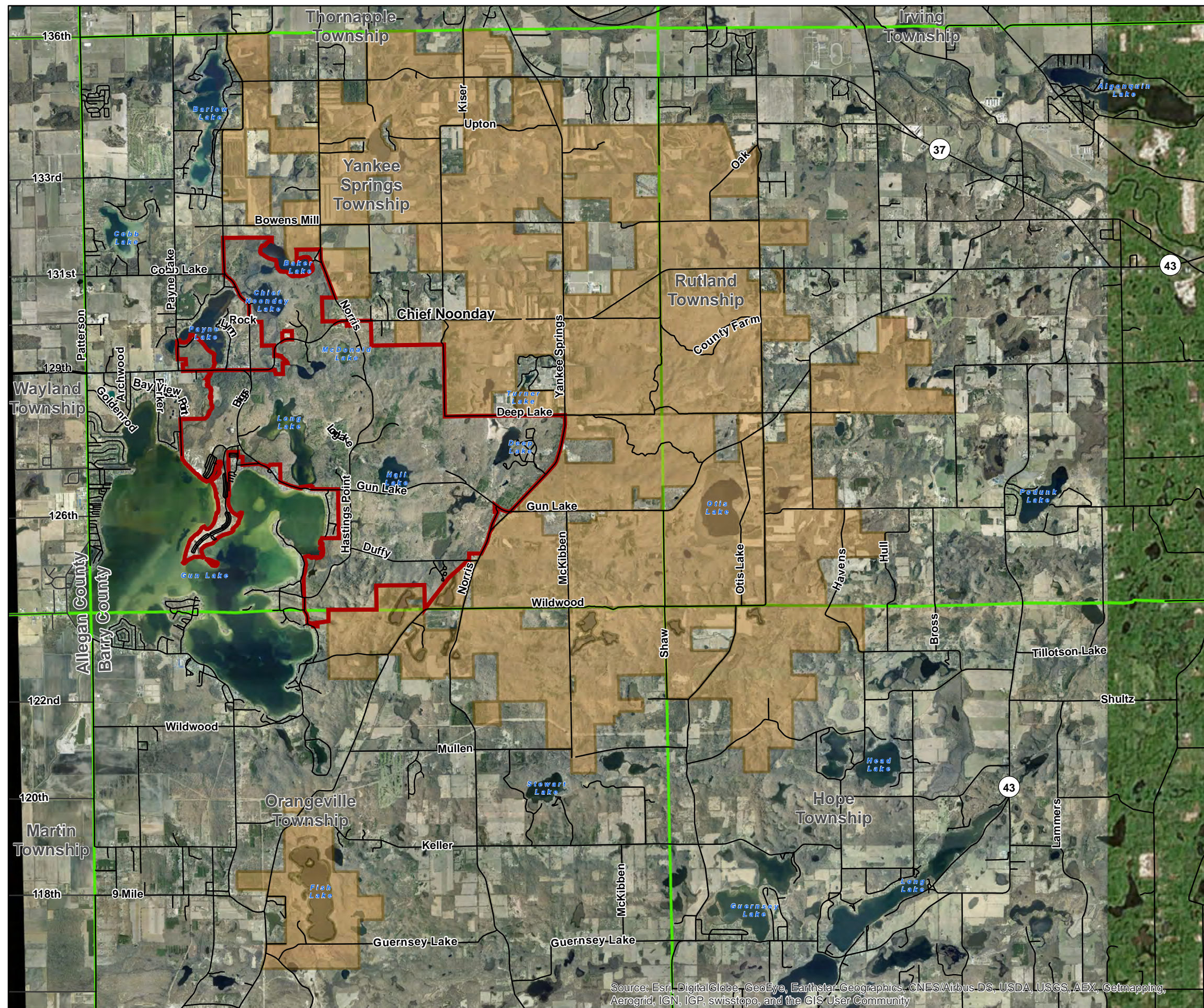
- Primitive Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone
- Developed Recreation Zone
- Administrative Zone
- Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone
- Scenic Overlay Zone

These management zones reflect resource protection goals and recreation development opportunities for different areas within the park. Roadway, trails, wetlands or other physical features are typically used to define the boundaries between different management zones for ease of identification. Minor modifications of the trails along the zone boundaries, for example to fix erosion problems, may be accommodated through the PRD's review process, in which case the zone boundary will realign to the new trail. Any other revisions to the zoning map will require public notification and the same review and approval process and the General Management Plan.

The Management Zone descriptions that follow, defines the existing and future condition of each of the following:

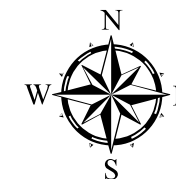
- Natural Resources
- Historic/ Cultural Resources
- Recreation Opportunities
- Education Opportunities
- Visitor Experience
- Management Focus
- Development



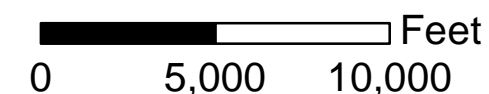
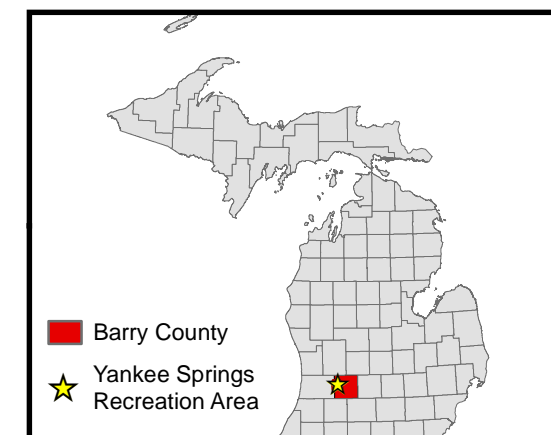


# Yankee Springs Recreation Area Aerial

Yankee Springs and Orangeville Townships  
Barry County, Michigan



- Yankee Springs Recreation Area
- Barry State Game Area



**clearzoning**  
CLEAR AND CONNECTED

Sources: Michigan DNR,  
Michigan Geographic Data Library  
Created April 18, 2016

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



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clearzoning  
CLEAR AND CONNECTED

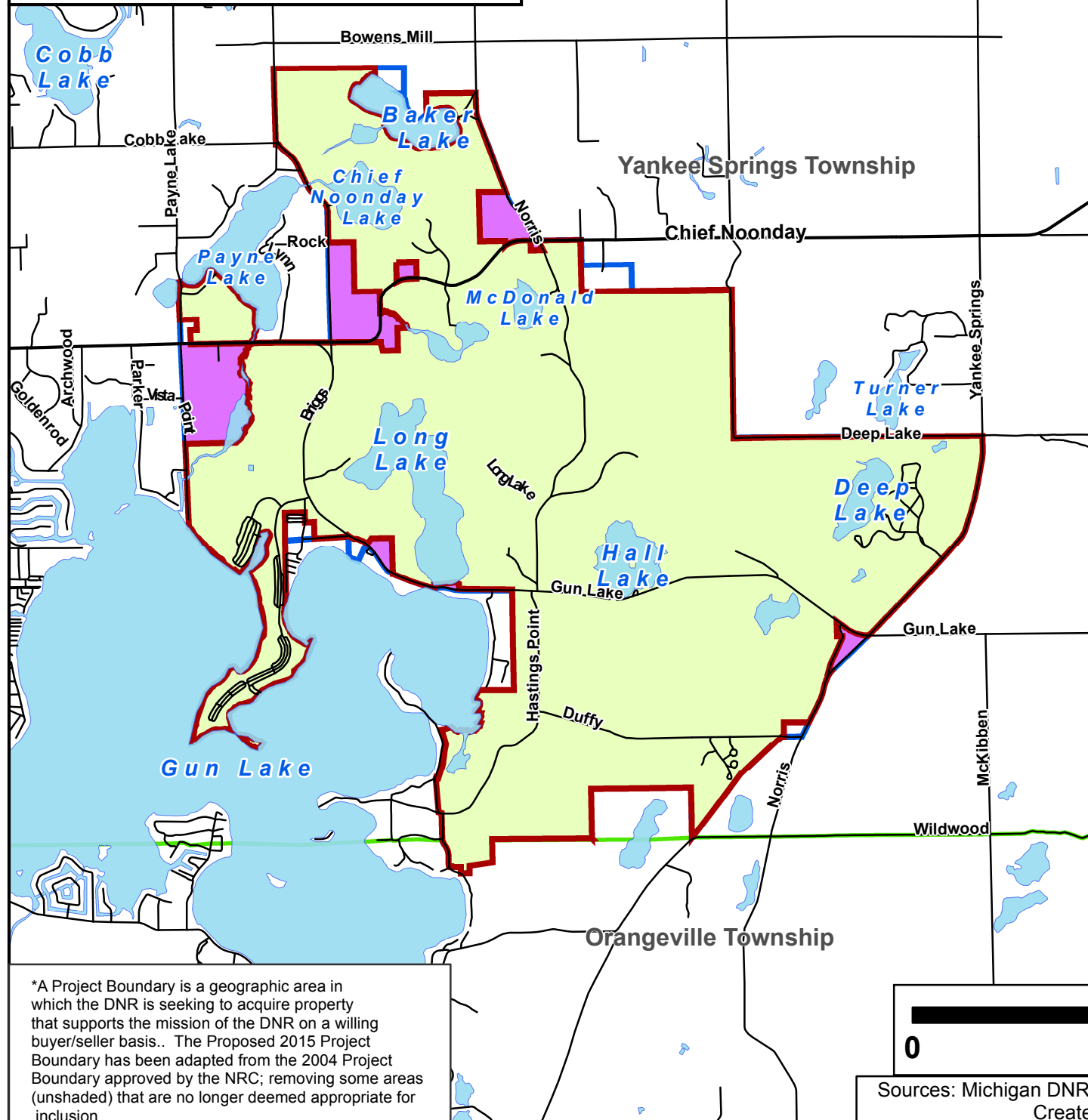
# Yankee Springs Recreation Area - Proposed Project Boundary and Project Management Zones

Yankee Springs and Orangeville Townships, Barry County, Michigan



## Proposed 2015 Project Boundary\*

- Yankee Springs Recreation Area
- Proposed 2015 Project Boundary\*
- Yankee Springs 2004 Project Boundary\* Approved by the NRC
- Municipal Boundary



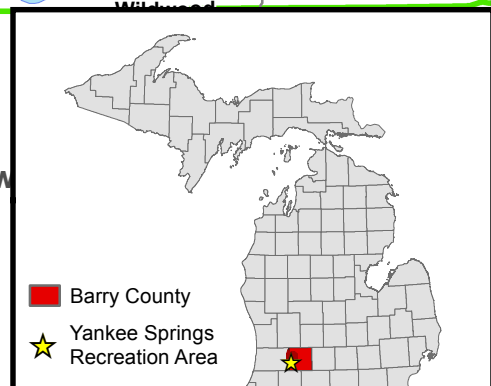
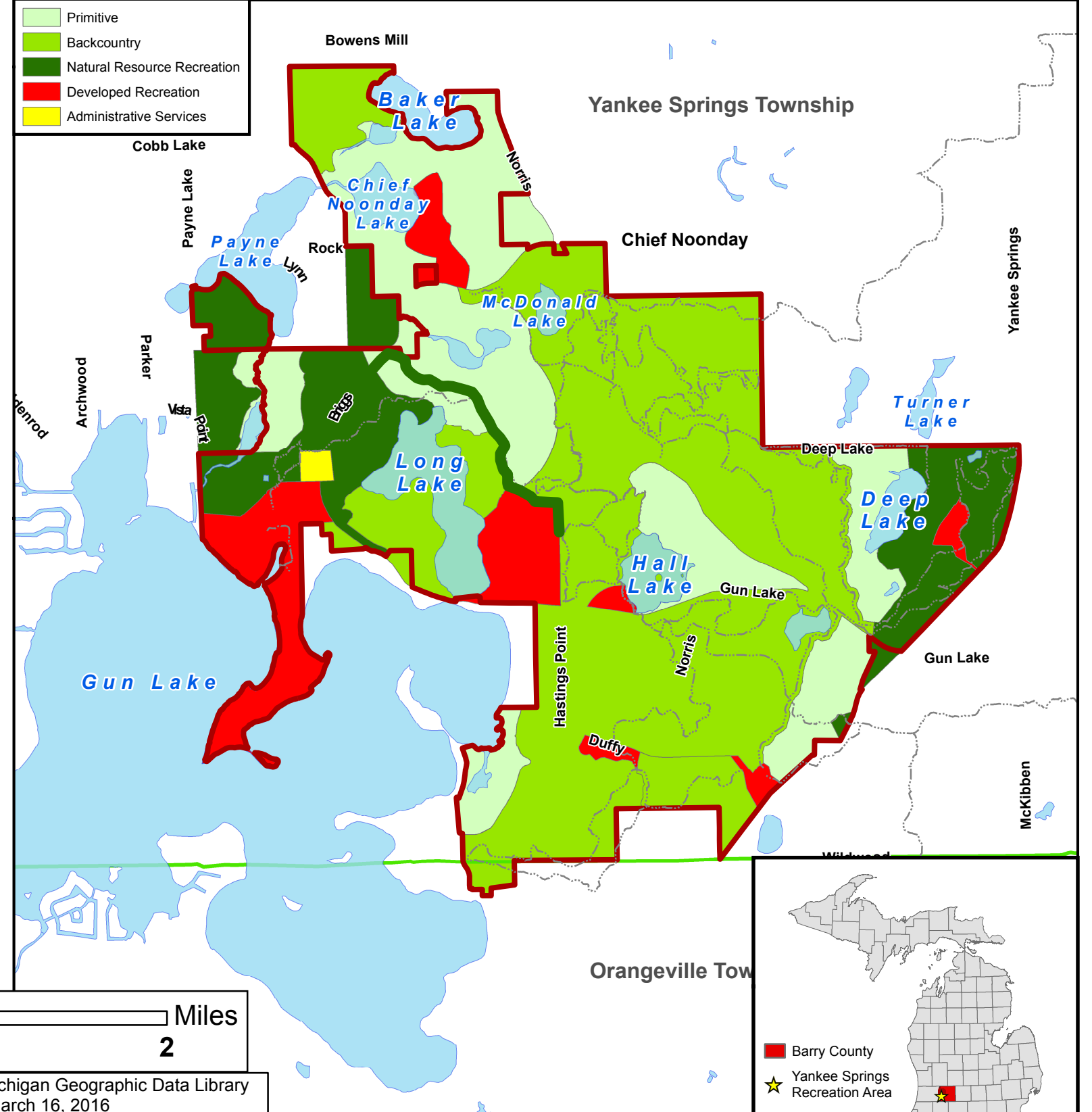
\*A Project Boundary is a geographic area in which the DNR is seeking to acquire property that supports the mission of the DNR on a willing buyer/seller basis. The Proposed 2015 Project Boundary has been adapted from the 2004 Project Boundary approved by the NRC; removing some areas (unshaded) that are no longer deemed appropriate for inclusion.

0 1 2 Miles

Sources: Michigan DNR, Michigan Geographic Data Library  
Created March 16, 2016

## Proposed 2015 Project Boundary\* Zones

- Primitive
- Backcountry
- Natural Resource Recreation
- Developed Recreation
- Administrative Services





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## **4.1 Primitive Zone**

Approximately 24.6% of Yankee Springs Recreation Area is designated Primitive. This zone preserves and protects natural habitats within the recreation area. Some lands within this zone were purchased using Pittman Robertson funds, which has specific restrictions for use. Only foot traffic will be allowed in this zone to ensure that the natural features are not damaged or compromised by recreation. A large proportion of this zone is characterized by wetlands, including prairie fen.

### **Natural Resources**

In the Primitive Zone, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation. Native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components and processes will be maintained, restored and protected. Ecological restoration or habitat management may include tree removal, prescribed fire, herbicide use, or other methods as appropriate to maintain and restore ecological structure and processes and to remove invasive species, address hazard trees and manage pests and disease. The maintenance and restoration of natural communities will be a priority in this zone, including fen restoration to support the Mitchell's satyr habitat and explore reintroduction.



Winter views of the natural water features .

### **Historic / Cultural Resources**

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

### **Recreation Opportunities**

With the focus of this zone being preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural communities, recreational opportunities are limited to low-intensity, self-reliant (no bicycle or equestrian) uses, such as hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting/trapping/fishing, and nature observation. The majority of this area is made up of wetlands and forested lands. A few low-impact hiking trails allow access without compromising the natural features.



The woodlands and natural habitat encourages wildlife.

**Education Opportunities**

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

**Visitor Experience**

Visitor experience will reflect a high degree of natural feel, a sense of solitude, and a lack of man-made improvements. Overall, there will be relatively low interaction with other visitors.

**Management Focus**

Management will focus on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality. Routine maintenance will be provided and care will be taken to eliminate any detrimental impacts such as incursion of invasive species.

**Development**

The focus is to maintain as little evidence of human activity as possible. Trail improvements will be considered where natural resources are not compromised.



The Hall Lake prairie fen by Bradford S. Slaughter/Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI).

## **4.2 Backcountry Zone**

Approximately 52.8% of the recreation area is designated Backcountry. A large portion of the equestrian, mountain bike, and hiking trail network is located in this zone. Some lands within this zone were purchased using Pittman Robertson funds, which has specific restrictions for use. The character of this zone is natural, with minimal evidence of human impact.

### **Natural Resources**

Within the Backcountry Zone, natural resources may be modified slightly to support visitor use, but the tolerance for natural resource impact is low. Native Michigan natural communities/ecosystem components and processes will be maintained, restored and protected. Ecological restoration or habitat management may include tree removal, prescribed fire, herbicide use, or other methods as appropriate to maintain and restore ecological structure and processes and to remove invasive species, address hazard trees and manage pests and disease. Specific actions have been identified at the Devil's Soup Bowl, Grave's Hill, and Hall Lake.



Hiking trails provide a woodland experience.

### **Historic / Cultural Resources**

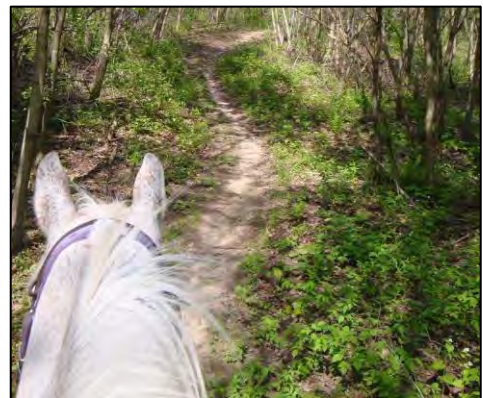
There are no historic buildings within this zone. Any cultural resources will be preserved and protected.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

Moderate levels of recreation are allowed in the Backcountry Zone, provided the activities are compatible with the natural character. Non-motorized outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings are appropriate such as hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife viewing, and horseback riding. The majority of the NCNST and Iron Belle Trail passing through the recreation area is located in this zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

The ecological significance of the resources in the park presents an excellent educational opportunity. The use of electronic communication mediums (using podcasts, “apps”, or other virtual program) may further inform visitors on features, such as the Devil's Soup Bowl.



Equestrian trails and campground allow for a full horseback experience.

**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 moderate visitor encounters can be accommodated.

**Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with an emphasis on natural resource quality.

**Development**

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



### **4.3 Natural Resource Recreation Zone**

Approximately 12.8% of Yankee Springs Recreation Area is zoned Natural Resource Recreation. This zone provides for active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. The majority of the Natural Resource Recreation Zone is comprised of the Deep Lake campground and areas east and west of Briggs Road. Sixty-six acres of land south of Payne Lake was purchased using the Game and Fish Protection Fund and must be managed for the purpose of wildlife and fisheries management. A trail corridor along the former Long Lake road bed has also been designated Natural Resource Recreation in recognition of its use by snowmobiles and as a park maintenance access road. 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 only moderate impacts. This zone reflects natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removal of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape.

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

No historic structures are known to be present in this zone. The cultural resources within this zone will be preserved and protected.

#### **Recreational Opportunities**

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

#### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage may be used at key viewing points, trailheads, or observation area(s).

#### **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, high visitor encounters can be accommodated.



Mountain bikers enjoy the rolling hills of the recreation area.

**Management Focus**

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

**Development**

A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include walkways and parking, trails, benches, rustic campsites and cabins, restrooms, and picnic tables. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities and protect natural resources. Development proposed in the Natural Resource Recreation Zone includes a beginner mountain bike trail loop near Deep Lake and the development of a non-motorized trail into YSRA from Vista Point and alongside Briggs Road.

#### **4.4 Developed Recreation Zone**

Approximately 9.5% of Yankee Springs Recreation Area 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 modern campground and day use areas at Gun Lake, the Long Lake Outdoor Center, the Chief Noonday Outdoor Center, the equestrian campground and trail head at Duffy Road, and the site of the old Manager's House at Hall Lake.

##### **Natural Resources**

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

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

The historic buildings located at the Long Lake Outdoor Center the Chief Noonday Outdoor Center are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as historic districts. The camps were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) along with other camp improvements. The structures will be preserved, adapted, or rehabilitated to support visitor activities. Non-utilized or stabilized structures not on the NRHP may be removed. Cultural resources within this zone 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: hiking, modern camping, bicycling, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, nature observation, swimming beach, picnicking, and other day-use activities.

##### **Education Opportunities**

Interpretive signage and information could be provided at the campground, trailheads, along trails and overlooks, and along the shoreline. Active programming may be provided at the campground and other areas where people congregate.

##### **Visitor Experience**

A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated. Activities for visitors to engage in could offer a variable time commitment, challenge and adventure. Visitor encounters will typically occur at the beach, along the trails, at the day use area, and in the campground. High noise tolerance and high interaction with DNR staff and others can be expected.

## **Management Focus**

Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD's mission and to promote and support a diversity of facilities and activities. Public safety, management of people, and universal access are management priorities. The recreation area will collaborate with partners to rejuvenate underutilized areas back to active use. Some areas of Murphy's Point will be considered to return back to its natural condition.

## **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Site hardening may be used as needed to protect the resources and provide accessibility. Proposed development includes campground infrastructure improvements. Restoration of the Roosevelt pavilion will continue, with improved universal access to the shelter and the beach. The possibility of expanding the equestrian campground, with modern amenities, will be evaluated. Other proposed development includes play structure upgrades at selected locations and additional boat mooring at the Gun Lake Campground.



Historic cabins provide family and group accommodations.



A sitting area around the fireplace provides a place to gather and enjoy the historic features of the cabin.



Many campsites in the modern Gun Lake Campground provide direct access to the water.



A sandy beach on popular Gun Lake provide water recreational opportunities.



## **4.5 Administrative Zone**

This zone is 0.3% of total land and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration, operations, and the business of running the YSRA. The Administrative Zone in Yankee Springs Recreation Area includes the park headquarters and shop buildings.

### **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**

There are no known historic or cultural resources within this zone.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

There are no recreational activities provided in the Administrative Zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

Person to person contact at park headquarters for general information; informational kiosk may be available.

### **Visitor Experience**

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

### **Management Focus**

Management focuses on the business of running the park and providing appropriate facilities for staff, equipment, and materials.

### **Development**

A high level of development of facilities for support of administrative and management activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include office space, meeting rooms, employee locker room, eating area, shop space, and storage space. A high level of accessibility is expected.



Park Headquarters.

## **4.6 Cultural Landscape Overlay**

Approximately 3.7% of land within Yankee Springs Recreation Area is designated Cultural Landscape Overlay. The central focus of the Cultural Landscape Overlay is managing the area to preserve its historical and cultural features. The Cultural Landscape Overlay has been applied to the Developed Recreation Zone, at the Chief Noonday and Long Lake Outdoor Centers and at the location of Yankee Springs Inn at Norris Road, in recognition of important historic and cultural resources.

### **Natural Resources**

Vegetation management will be in accordance with the underlying zone. Vegetation may be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses which can include non-native species specific to the era and/or location, and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources within this zone will be preserved or rehabilitated for compatible uses by the DNR or its partners. This includes the Long Lake and Chief Noonday Outdoor Centers, as they support historic buildings and landscapes that form the park's identity.

### **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 the two outdoor centers as well as 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.



## **4.7 Scenic Overlay**

Approximately 0.5% of land within Yankee Springs Recreation Area is designated Scenic Overlay. The central focus of the Scenic Overlay is to preserve the scenic value of selected areas. The Scenic Overlay has been applied to the Backcountry Zone over the Devil's Soup Bowl and Grave's Hill in recognition of the unique and scenic qualities of these features.



Wintertime at the Devil's Soup Bowl by Jeff Garrison.

### **Natural Resources**

While natural resources and vegetation may be modified slightly to support visitor use and viewing, there is generally a low tolerance for impacts on the natural resource. The zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management allowed to restore and maintain ecological structure and processes. Vegetation may also be managed to enhance the views of the zone and to allow for activities consistent with the underlying Backcountry Zone.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources will be preserved and protected.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

While the focus of this overlay is on the scenic views, the underlying zone is Backcountry and recreation activities will be compatible with this zone.

### **Education Opportunities**

This overlay presents an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about the Devil's Soup Bowl and Grave's Hill and the geological processes that created the landscape.

### **Visitor Experience**

Visitor encounters will be consistent with the underlying zone. The visitors will engage in activities that allow for observation of the scenic views, as well as those consistent with the underlying zone.

### **Management Focus**

Management will focus on maintaining and enhancing the quality of views.

### **Development**

Development will be compatible with the intent of the underlying zone and support visitor access with the purpose of enjoying the scenic views.

## 5. 10-Year Action Goals

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

Yankee Springs Recreation Area has been providing recreation opportunities to Southwest Michigan since the 1940s. Because critical facilities were constructed over a half century ago, much of its aging infrastructure is historic in nature. Park staff, stakeholders and the public agree that maintaining and upgrading the existing infrastructure, including the many historic buildings and the campground sewer system, should be a priority at the park. The recreation area is also recognized for its natural resources and scenic qualities and many of the Action Goals emphasize the need to protect these resources. The trail system at YSRA is highly valued by many different user groups and the maintenance and improvement of the trail system is also a key component of this plan, together with creating new connections to the community and to the regional trail system. Many of these Action Goals rely heavily on partnerships with the local community, user groups, the Native American Tribes, and others, in order for them to be successfully implemented. Working regionally and through partnerships are initiatives supported by the recommendations of all of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Blue Ribbon Panel Report to Governor Snyder and the Michigan Comprehensive trail Plan. The Governor's Prosperity Initiative is another illustration of the importance of planning regionally: YSRA is located in Economic Prosperity Region 4 (West Michigan).

The Planning Team has developed 10-Year Action Goals that it believes are necessary to guide management and development within the five designated management zones and two overlay zones in order to achieve the desired user experience. For each management zone in the plan, action goals were considered that address 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. The 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 a blueprint for management decisions.

## General Action Goals

**Many of the 10-Year Action Goals for Yankee Springs Recreation Area 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, developing Stewardship, Wildfire and Emergency plans, or marketing the park's many recreational opportunities to a wider audience of potential users. Many of the overall maintenance and operational issues of running a state park also result in the need for actions across all zone boundaries, such as law enforcement.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Complete MiFi coverytype mapping for the Recreation Area	1-2 Years	Stewardship	Stewardship
Develop a Stewardship Plan to identify targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Wildlife Forest Resources	Stewardship Ecologist
Implement Stewardship Plan for the park	Ongoing upon plan completion	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager Stewardship
Follow the requirements of the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for the Eastern massasauga rattlesnake upon approval, or upon listing on the Federal Endangered Species Act	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Wildlife	Park Manager Stewardship
Continue working with volunteers and other partners on invasive species control, with a strong emphasis on early detection and rapid response. Monitor roads, trails, lakes, boating access site, and any new development sites for possible invasive species introductions	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Fisheries Wildlife Forest Resources	Stewardship
<b>Historic/Cultural Resources</b>			
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	Stewardship Regional Planner SHPO	Cultural Resource Analyst State Archaeologist
Continue monitoring archeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship SHPO	Cultural Resource Analyst State Archaeologist
Partner with Native American Tribes to establish wild rice beds at Long Lake	5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Gun Lake Tribe	Stewardship
Partner with Native American Tribes and historic organization to provide cultural and historical awareness through interpretation and programming	Ongoing	Stewardship Historical Center Gun Lake Tribes Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach

General Action Goals			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Develop facilities and programs to incorporate new technology	3-5 Years	Marketing & Outreach Resource Management	Park Manager
Work with community partners to improve trail connections between the Recreation Area and local communities	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Community Partners Trail Coordinator Wildlife	Regional Planner Trail Coordinator
Develop facilities and programs to incorporate new technology	3-5 Years	Marketing & Outreach Resource Management	Park Manager
Work to increase opportunities for recreational equipment rental	Ongoing	Park Manager	Park Manager
Maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting/fishing/trapping in conjunction with Barry State Game Area	Ongoing	Park Manager Wildlife Fisheries	Park Manager Wildlife Fisheries
<b>Education/Interpretation</b>			
Develop an interpretive plan for the park that utilizes a variety of traditional and new media and incorporates information on the history of the park and the region	5 Years	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach
Continue to provide quality interpretation and education and explore opportunities to expand programming in coordination with community partners	Ongoing	Park Manager Recreation Programmer Community Partners	Park Manager
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Explore opportunities for exchange of lands between Yankee Springs Recreation Area and Barry State Game Area, within the GMP project boundary and following logical road boundaries	Ongoing	Park Manager Local Partners	Park Manager PRD Land Liaison
Finalize the Wildfire Plan	3-5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship	Stewardship
Review and update Emergency Plan	Ongoing (Annual Review)	Park Manager	Park Manager
Meet annually with local fire department to discuss wildfire and structure fire prevention and response	Ongoing (Annual Review)	Park Manager Stewardship	Park Manager
Continue to address trespass issues with adjacent landowners and mark the Recreation Area boundaries in key locations	Ongoing	Park Manager Legal Analyst	Park Manager
Continue to collaborate with community to support the mutual goals of PRD and the local partners	Ongoing	Park Manager Community Partners	Park Manager Community Partners
Continue to maintain and upgrade trail markers to improve confidence for trail users	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Trail Users Group(s)

General Action Goals			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management Focus (Continued)</b>			
Review Gun Lake Sewer Authority (GLSA) user agreement	2 Years	Park Manager GLSA	Park Manager GLSA
Continue to work with partners and use best management practices to protect Gun Lake water quality	Ongoing	Park Manager Gun Lake Protective Association	Park Manager Gun Lake Protective Association
Evaluate the existing mountain bike trail system and make recommendation for improvements in partnership with the mountain bike alliance	1-3 Years	Park Manager Stewardship WMMBA	Park Manager WMMBA
Encourage the development of a Friends Group to assist in marketing, volunteering, fundraising and programming of the Recreation Area	Ongoing	Park Manager	Park Manager
Continue to plan and support connections to non-motorized trail systems throughout the region by engaging with our local recreation partners	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Community Partners Trail Coordinator	Regional Planner Trail Coordinator
Ensure the protection of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) as a foot traffic only trail through the Recreation Area	Ongoing	Park Manager NCTA	Park Manager
Continue to work with Wildlife Division for consistency in public information regarding Yankee Springs Recreation Area and the adjacent Barry State Game Area (Boundary, State Land Rules etc.)	Ongoing	Park Manager Wildlife	Park Manager Wildlife
<b>Development</b>			
Continue efforts to achieve greater visitor accessibility in all development opportunities	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Regional Planner
Implement phased infrastructure improvements, including renovation of the historic CCC buildings, in accordance with park priorities	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship SHPO	Park Manager Regional Planner
Work with Yankee Springs Township to facilitate Phase 1 of the Township's pathway plan through the Recreation Area	1-3 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Yankee Springs Twp.	Park Manager Regional Planner
Replace park sewer system	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager Regional Planner

CCC = Civilian Conservation Corps

MNFI = Michigan Natural Features Inventory

NCTA = North Country Association (Chief Noonday Chapter)

SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office

WMMBA = West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance

## 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 or users are allowed. For this reason, native species and natural processes take precedence over visitor accommodation. The following 10-Year Action Goals concentrate on restoration and protection of the natural resources. Only foot traffic is allowed in this zone.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Maintain and restore exemplary natural communities	Ongoing	Stewardship	Stewardship Ecologist
Restore fen habitat to support Mitchell's satyr habitat (Deep Lake Fen); explore reintroduction	Ongoing	Stewardship MNFI	Stewardship USFWS
<b>Developed Recreation</b>			
Relocate Hall Lake boating access site to west side of lake and remove the existing launch, allowing the area to naturalize	5-10 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Regional Planner Fisheries	Regional Planner

MNFI = Michigan Natural Features Inventory

USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



## Backcountry Zone

The character of the Backcountry Zone is intended to be natural, with minimal evidence of human impact. Backcountry allows for various low-intensity, non-motorized recreational opportunities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and horseback riding. The natural features of this zone also provide opportunities for hunting and nature observation. Furthermore, the Backcountry Zone allows for slight modifications of the landscape (trail development) to accommodate a use where it is consistent with the protection of the resource. A Scenic Overlay has been applied to the Devil's Soup Bowl and Grave's Hill in recognition of their scenic value. The priority in this zone is to maintain the natural beauty.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
Restore/maintain Hall Lake Fen. Explore restoring hydrology affected by Hall Lake and Gun Lake water control structures	Ongoing	Stewardship Fisheries	Stewardship Ecologist
Pursue invasive species and erosion control at Devil's Soup Bowl - ( <i>Scenic</i> )	Ongoing	Stewardship Park Manager Gun Lake Tribe	Stewardship
Restore views from Grave's Hill with vegetation management for strategic vista creation - ( <i>Scenic</i> )	3-5 Years	Stewardship Regional Planner Park Manager Gun Lake Tribe	Park Manager
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Develop interpretive message for Devil's Soup Bowl, exploring options for electronic education/interpretation using Podcasts etc. - ( <i>Scenic</i> )	5 Years	Park Manager Stewardship Marketing & Outreach	Park Manager Marketing & Outreach
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Abandon and rehabilitate unneeded user created bike trails	Ongoing	Park Manager	Park Manager
Maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting/fishing/trapping in conjunction with Barry State Game Area	Ongoing	Park Manager Wildlife Fisheries	Park Manager Wildlife Fisheries
Continue partnerships to maintain/restore trails	Ongoing	Park Manager Stewardship Recreation Partners	Park Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Designate the old roadbed through the Pines scenic area, north of Duffy Road to the northern horse trail, as an equestrian/hiking trail	1 Year	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship	Park Manager

*Scenic* = This Action Goal addresses an area of the Management Zone Map that is included within the Scenic Overlay.

## Natural Resource Recreation

Active recreation, at medium to high density of use, conducted in a natural setting is the hallmark of the Natural Resource Recreation zone. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. Vegetation may be managed to facilitate recreational use and to maintain an aesthetically appealing landscape, as well as to address such things as hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. The 10-year Action Goals are intended to promote moderate to high level recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone.

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Develop beginner mountain bike trail within the zone	1-2 Years	Park Manager WMMBA	Park Manager
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Collaborate with partners to market Deep Lake campground as a mountain bike camping destination	Ongoing	Park Manager WMMBA	Park Manager

WMMBA = West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance

## Developed Recreation Zone

**Active recreation with high density of use, conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance, is characteristic of the Developed Recreation Zone. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced where possible. The Gun Lake campground and primary day use areas are located in the Developed Recreation Zone, as well as the Chief Noonday and Long Lake Outdoor Centers. A Cultural Landscape Overlay has been applied to the Long Lake and Chief Noonday Outdoor Centers in recognition of historic significance as CCC era structures.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Evaluate the demand and feasibility of providing equestrian campsites with modern amenities (electricity) either at the existing location or a new location in the zone, in coordination with the Yankee Springs Trail Riders (YSTR)	3-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner YSRA	Park Manager
Explore opportunities for alternative lodging accommodations (yurts, cabins etc.)	5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Identify sustainable use and partnership opportunities for the group facilities at Chief Noonday Outdoor Center ( <i>Cultural</i> )	Ongoing	Park Manager	Park Manager
Evaluate the use patterns of Murphy's Point and return appropriate areas to a natural condition	2-3 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship	Park Manager
Evaluate the relocation of Hall Lake BAS to the west side of the lake, and the establishment of a joint parking area to also serve as a cross-country ski trailhead	2 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Fisheries	Park Manager
Evaluate the appropriate reuse or removal of the old Manager's residence west of Hall Lake	2 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship	Park Manager
Continue restoration of the Long Lake and Chief Noonday Outdoor Centers	Ongoing	Park Manger Regional Planner	Park Manager
Evaluate the demand for a modern restroom/shower facility at Deep Lake Campground, while maintaining the rustic feel of the site.	5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Restore Roosevelt pavilion	Ongoing	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Upgrade and install new play equipment at strategic locations within the Recreation Area	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Improve visitor accessibility to Roosevelt pavilion and beach	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Develop additional boat moorings in Gun Lake Campground	2-3 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Fisheries	Park Manager

Developed Recreation Zone			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Development (continued)</b>			
Replace the fishing dock in the Gun Lake day use area	5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Fisheries	Park Manager
Address drainage issues and flooding in the campground	2-5 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Upgrade electrical service at Gun Lake Campground	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Develop parking lot to service BAS and cross-country ski trail head	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Establish a warming center at cross-country ski trail head, possibly using the old Manager's residence	5-10 Years	Park Manager Regional Planner Stewardship NCTA	Park Manager

**Cultural** = This Action Goal addresses an area of the Management Zone Map that is included within the Cultural Landscape Overlay

NCTA = North Country Trail Association (Chief Noonday Chapter)

Administrative Services Zone			
<b>The Administrative Services Zone encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. It includes the headquarters offices and maintenance facilities with the associated land required to conduct the business of running Yankee Springs Recreation Area.</b>			
Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Development</b>			
Complete construction of the new shop building	1 Year	Park Manager Regional Planner	Park Manager
Evaluate former manager's residence across from park headquarters for possible reuse as alternate lodging	1 year	Park Manager	Park Manager

### **Cultural Landscape Zone**

The Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone addresses the overall setting in which is found not only historic structures, but all non-structural evidence of the traditions, beliefs, practices, life ways, arts, crafts and social institutions of any community. A Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone has been applied over the Long Lake and Chief Noonday Outdoor Centers in recognition of cultural resources known to be present in this area. While interpretation opportunities within the overlay should be explored, the recommendations of the underlying Zones are the primary focus.

<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Target Completion Date</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>	<b>Responsible Program Position</b>
<i>Refer to General Action Goals and the underlying zones</i>			

### **Scenic Zone**

The Scenic Overlay Zone is applied to Devil's Soup Bowl and Grave's Hill in recognition their scenic value. The priority in this zone is to maintain its unique and scenic features.

<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Target Completion Date</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>	<b>Responsible Program Position</b>
<i>Refer to General Action Goals and the underlying zones</i>			