

IV. OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM

A. Importance of Outdoor Recreation in Michigan

Michigan is a state closely identified with outdoor recreation opportunities, and the State actively promotes its outdoor recreation attractions to audiences around the country through marketing efforts like the current “Great Lakes/Great Times” campaign. Tourism and outdoor recreation account for a significant part of Michigan’s overall economy, rivaled only by manufacturing and agriculture.

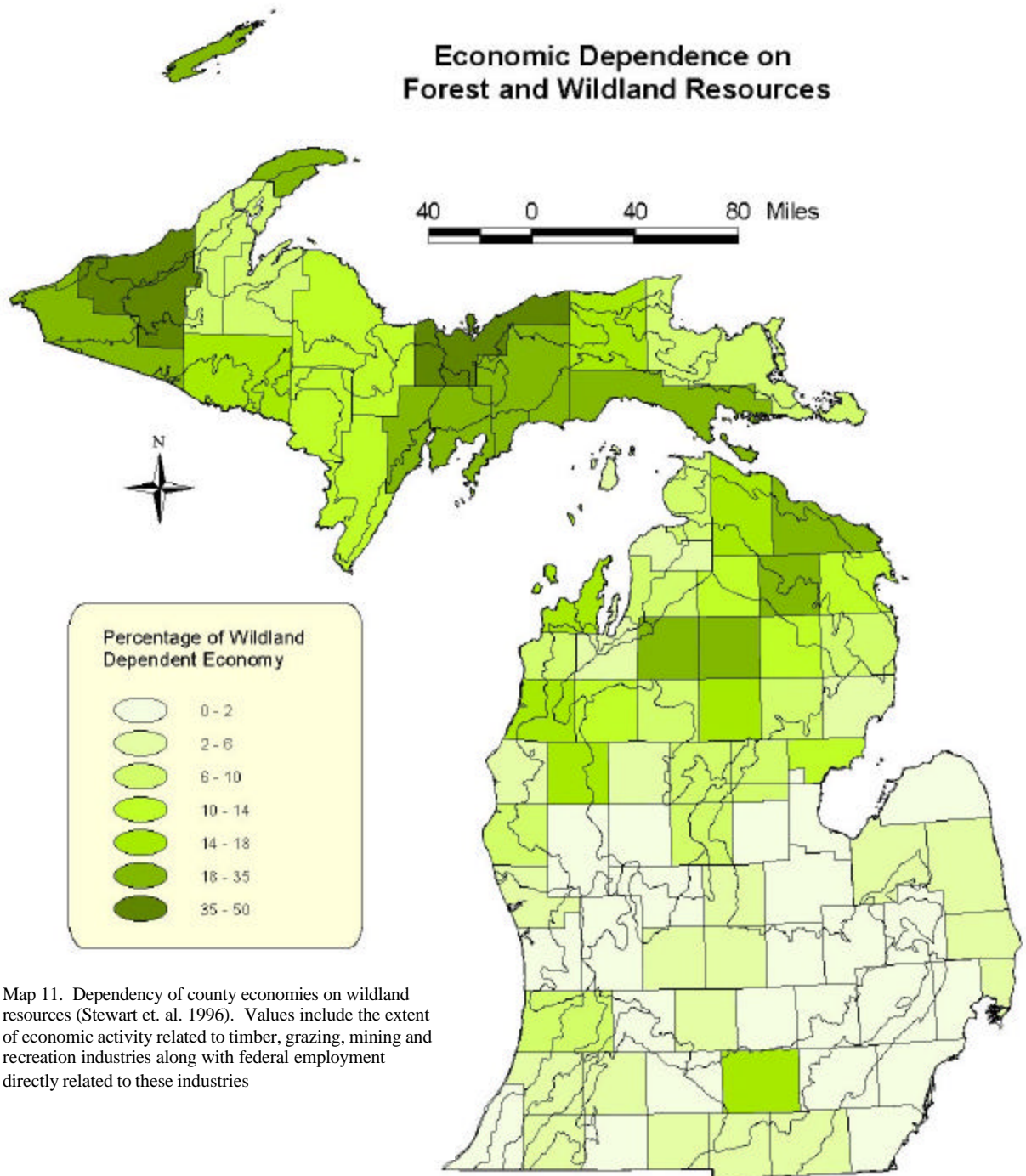
Outdoor recreation is one of the mainstays of Michigan culture, and the State’s own residents are the heart of the outdoor recreation economy. A brief summary of Michigan outdoor recreation statistics (Nelson 2001) conveys the exceptional importance of recreation to the State’s quality-of-life and economy:

- Michigan has more hunters than any other state, with 935,000 persons hunting annually for a combined 18.4 million days hunted. Hunters contribute approximately \$304 million to local economies while hunting.
- Snowmobiling trail permits sold now total 200,000, and snowmobilers spend roughly 2.4 million days riding. Expenditures on snowmobiling equipment alone amounts to \$235 million annually.
- Michigan ranks fourth among states in terms of number of fishers, 1.8 million, fishing for a combined 28.7 million days. Fishers contribute approximately \$583 million to the economy for trips and boating expenses.

With 3.9 million acres of State forest, Michigan has the largest state-operated forest recreation system east of the Mississippi, including 150 State forest campgrounds, thousands of miles of trails, 7,500 miles of rivers for fishing, canoeing or kayaking, and hundreds of miles of Great Lakes shoreline (Sandell 1998).

This public system is supplemented by publicly available land in private ownership through the Michigan Commercial Forest Act. Numerous privately owned hunting clubs operate in Michigan, as do privately run campgrounds.

Economic Dependence on Forest and Wildland Resources



B. Forest Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

Forest fragmentation on private lands represents a significant threat to each of these traditional activities. Huntable lands open to the public on privately owned forests are being lost due to increased development. Roughly one-half of Michigan's 6,000 miles of snowmobile trails are on privately held lands and can be easily fragmented by development. Also, the degradation of forests around inland lakes and streams, and increasing conflicts over shoreline use, are significant threats to fishing opportunities.

Though it is clear that recreation in forested lands is important and that opportunities for such recreation on private lands are being lost, the geographic distribution of these opportunities is such that it is difficult to develop a criterion for use in defining Forest Legacy Areas. Rather, this value is best addressed in the criteria for determining priority of acquisitions. In that process, the attributes that relate to the existence and quality of recreational opportunities can be addressed through the size and accessibility of the property, as well as the presence of surface water features and other attributes.