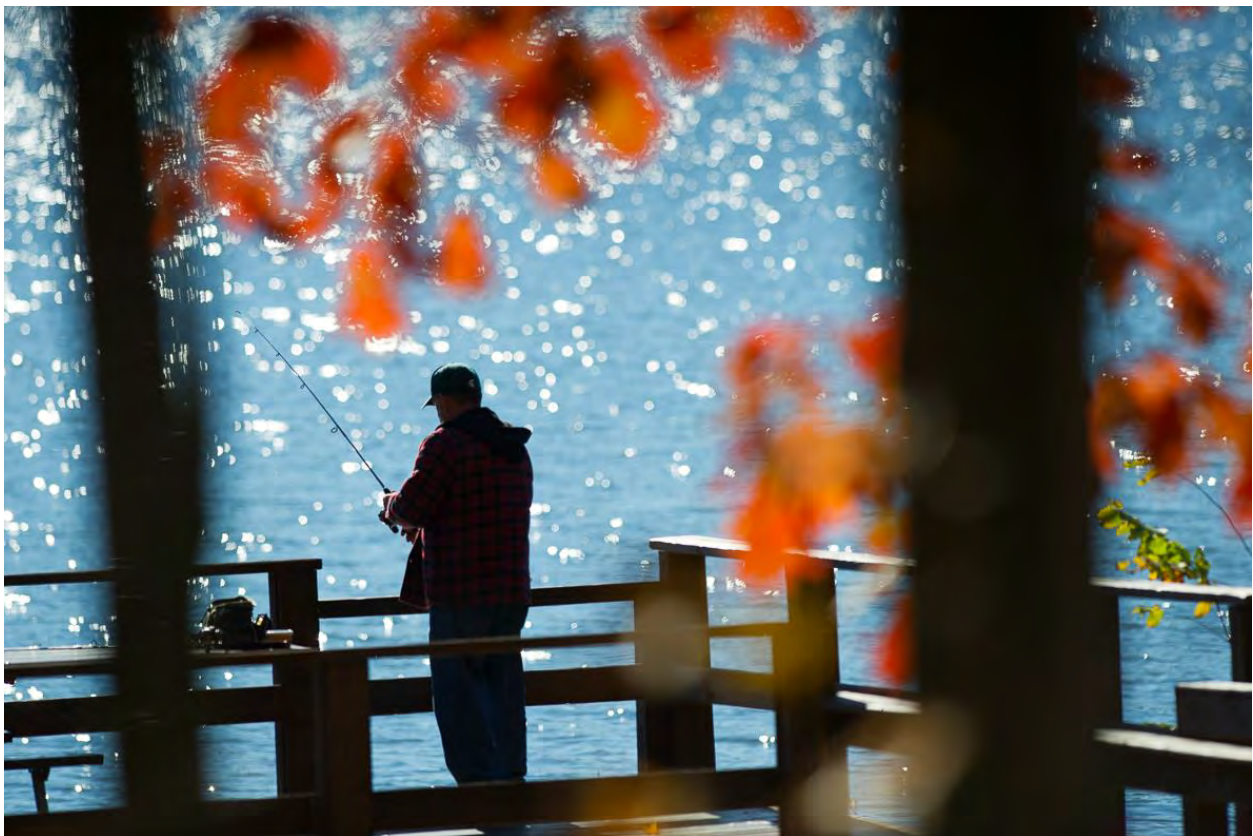


# IONIA STATE RECREATION AREA PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## LONG RANGE ACTION GOALS

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



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation Division  
04/12/2018

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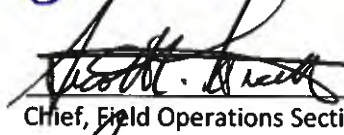


This plan was prepared by:  
Matt Lincoln, Park Management Plan Assistant  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Division

**Ionia State Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan Approvals:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Planning & Infrastructure Section

6-29-18  
Date

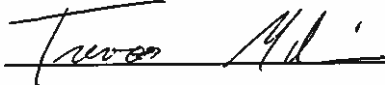
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Field Operations Section

7-6-18  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Parks & Recreation Division

7/9/18  
Date

**PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Park Supervisor – Ionia State Recreation Area

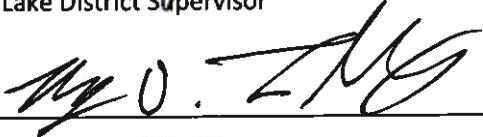
4-29-18  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Field Planner

5-18-2018  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rose Lake District Supervisor

5-2-2018  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Stewardship Unit Manager

6-27-2018  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Park Management Plan Administrator

6-28-2018  
Date

**FOR INFORMATION:**

PRD – SECTION CHIEFS

MSAPC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE

NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL

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# 1) Introduction

Ionia State Recreation Area (Ionia SRA) is located on the Grand River in Ionia County. The 4,418 acre park was established for purposes of creating public recreational opportunities and developing a man-made lake in what was defined in the early 1960's as the "lakeless" area of the state. This initiative established the park and led to development of Sessions Lake in the late 1970s. The Sessions Lake fishery is managed by Fisheries Division as a warm water fishery that experiences strong public use and appreciation. Active recreation for swimming, boating (no wake), and fishing, as well as passive recreation for picnicking on the shores and viewing are hallmark attributes of the lake.

The park provides inclusive recreational opportunities in an area lacking in public lands. From its inception, Ionia SRA has been planned, developed, and used for a wide range of recreational and educational interests. The recreation area includes an area designated for Field Trial use, a modern campground, two modern cabins, equestrian trails and campground, mountain bike trails, hiking trails, a disc golf course and several historic buildings.

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

## 1.1 Planning Objectives

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

A GMP develops as a result of a series of planning steps, with each step building upon the previous.

- Phase 1 (completed January 2006) presents a 20-year management zone plan and defines the purpose and significance of the park.
- Phase 2 (this document) identifies 10-year action goals to be accomplished in the park as a whole and in each of the management zones.
- Five-Year Implementation Plan (future) breaks down the action goals to be accomplished in the first five years of the GMP into specific projects with potential funding sources
- Annual Work Plan addresses what will be accomplished in each year and what progress has been made throughout the previous year.

## 1.2 Plan Process Overview

The Ionia State Recreation Area planning team met periodically over a ten month period, beginning in February 2017. For this Phase 2 plan, the first step was to review the Phase 1 GMP to assure that no conditions have changed that would result in the need to amend the overall guiding document. The Phase 1 Plan for Ionia SRA was approved on January 25, 2006. The planning team completed the required 5-year review of the Phase 1 GMP and determined that no changes were needed.

Stakeholder and public input was sought throughout the planning process to ensure the DNR is responsive to its partners and visitors. Stakeholders were invited to provide input early in the planning process through a workshop designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at Ionia SRA. The planning team used this information to guide the development of the draft phase 2 plan. The public was invited to comment at a Public Input Meeting to review the draft plan. The draft plan was also available on-line and comments were accepted via Email. The planning team reviewed all of the comments received before recommending the final plan for adoption.

## 1.3 Planning Team

This Phase 2 General Management Plan was developed with valuable input and expertise of the planning team. Please refer to Appendix C for a summary of the planning team meetings.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DIVISION</b>
Trevor McGinn	Unit Supervisor	Parks and Recreation Division
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator	Parks and Recreation Division
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager/Plan Administrator	Parks and Recreation Division
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Program Manager	Parks and Recreation Division
Murdock Jemerson	District Supervisor	Parks and Recreation Division
Joe Strach	Regional Field Planner	Parks and Recreation Division
Sarah Burton	Planning Assistant	Parks and Recreation Division
Nicole VanBloem	Trails Specialist	Parks and Recreation Division
Scott Hanshue	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries Division
Laurie Perkins	Education Historian	Michigan History Center
Cary Foster	Conservation Officer	Law Enforcement Division
John Niewoonder	Field Operations Manager	Wildlife Division
Leo Evans	Fire Officer	Forest Resources Division
Natalie Elkins	Marketing and Outreach Representative	Marketing and Outreach Division
Peter Rose	Geologist	Minerals Management

#### **1.4 Stakeholder and Public Input Overview**

A Stakeholder Workshop was held on April 10, 2017 at the Ionia MSU Extension Office. A total of 58 invitations were sent to organizations associated with, or that have an interest in, Ionia State Recreation Area. Two timeslots were available and participants were invited to provide their input, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the park. A total of 19 participants represented organizations from around the region. A summary of the input received is provided below: a full report of the meeting is provided in Appendix B.

Strengths identified by stakeholder representatives in attendance included the easy-to-get-to location in proximity to population centers and lower crowds. Natural resource strengths identified included hunting opportunities, fisheries and wildlife. The 1847 Sessions Schoolhouse, 1898 Sessions School, hereafter referred to as the “Posse House”, cemetery and remains of pioneer homes were also identified as important assets. In addition, the variety of recreation opportunities provided was seen as a strength.

Weaknesses of the park identified by stakeholders in attendance include: lack of updated facilities in the campground, deteriorating roads, invasive species and lack of mountain bike trails. Also identified was a lack of equestrian trailheads/parking lots for access to equestrian trails at the park. Erosion on the point and flooded roads off of Riverside Drive were also identified as weaknesses.

Opportunities identified include the potential for regular stakeholder meetings, upgrading of campground facilities, improving the equestrian trails, and repaving the boat launch road. Additions identified include mountain bike trails, aqua park, the re-use of the Posse House and range, and access from the Red Meijer Grand River Valley Rail-Trail to the park. Natural resource opportunities identified include invasive species control through partnerships with local students.

Threats identified by stakeholders included lack of funding, economic shifts, invasive species, weather, technology, staffing, and lake quality.

A public input meeting was held on September 19, 2017 at the Ionia High School to review the draft plan. A press release was distributed to 16,454 recipients, as well as 38 stakeholders one month in advance of the meeting. Attendees included representatives from the Jordan Lake Trail, Ionia Trail Riders Association, the Michigan History Center and members of the general public. Comments received included adding signage along the Fred Meijer Trail to direct users to the picnic area along Riverside Drive and inquiring about allowing ATVs in the state recreation area.



## 2) Overview of Phase 1 Plan

The Phase 1 GMP for Ionia State Recreation Area was completed in January, 2006. The following information summarizes the significance statements and management zones for the park, which were defined in the Phase 1 GMP.

### 2.1 Significance Statements

Ionia State Recreation Area was determined to be significant for the following reasons:

- Ionia SRA, located on the Grand River in Ionia County, provides inclusive recreational opportunities in an area lacking in public lands. From its inception, Ionia SRA has been planned, developed and used for a wide range of recreational and educational interests.
- Ionia SRA, located in what was described as a “lakeless” region of the state, was identified in 1965 as one of the locations for development of a manmade lake to provide both water-based and general recreational opportunities to the growing population of southern Michigan.
- Under authority of the “Special Dog Training Areas Act, Act 82 of 1947, the Natural Resources Commission designated Ionia SRA as one of eight Field Trial Grounds locations in the state, and specifically designated three one-hour courses at Ionia SRA for establishment of a “Championship” Trial grounds.
- Ionia SRA offers a variety of water features including Tibbets Creek, a designated trout stream, Sessions Creek and tributaries, frontage on approximately four miles of the Grand River, Sessions Lake (a 140 acre lake managed by Fisheries Division), and wildlife floodings created for waterfowl habitat.
- Ionia SRA provides Grand River floodplain habitat to two bald eagle nests and a heron rookery. The protected Trumpeter Swan has nested in and occupied the waterfowl floodings within the park.
- Occurrences of ‘Threatened’ (T), ‘Special Concern’ (SC), and ‘Endangered’ (E) species occur in the park:
  - Henslow’s sparrow (T)
  - Blanding’s turtle (SC)
  - Elktoe mussel (SC)
  - Purple wartyback (SC)
  - Round pigtoe mussel (SC)
  - Snuffbox mussel (E)
- Ionia SRA offers excellent opportunities for research, education and interpretation in the areas of:
  - Significance and importance of field trialing
  - Cultural aspects of Native American and early settlement life.

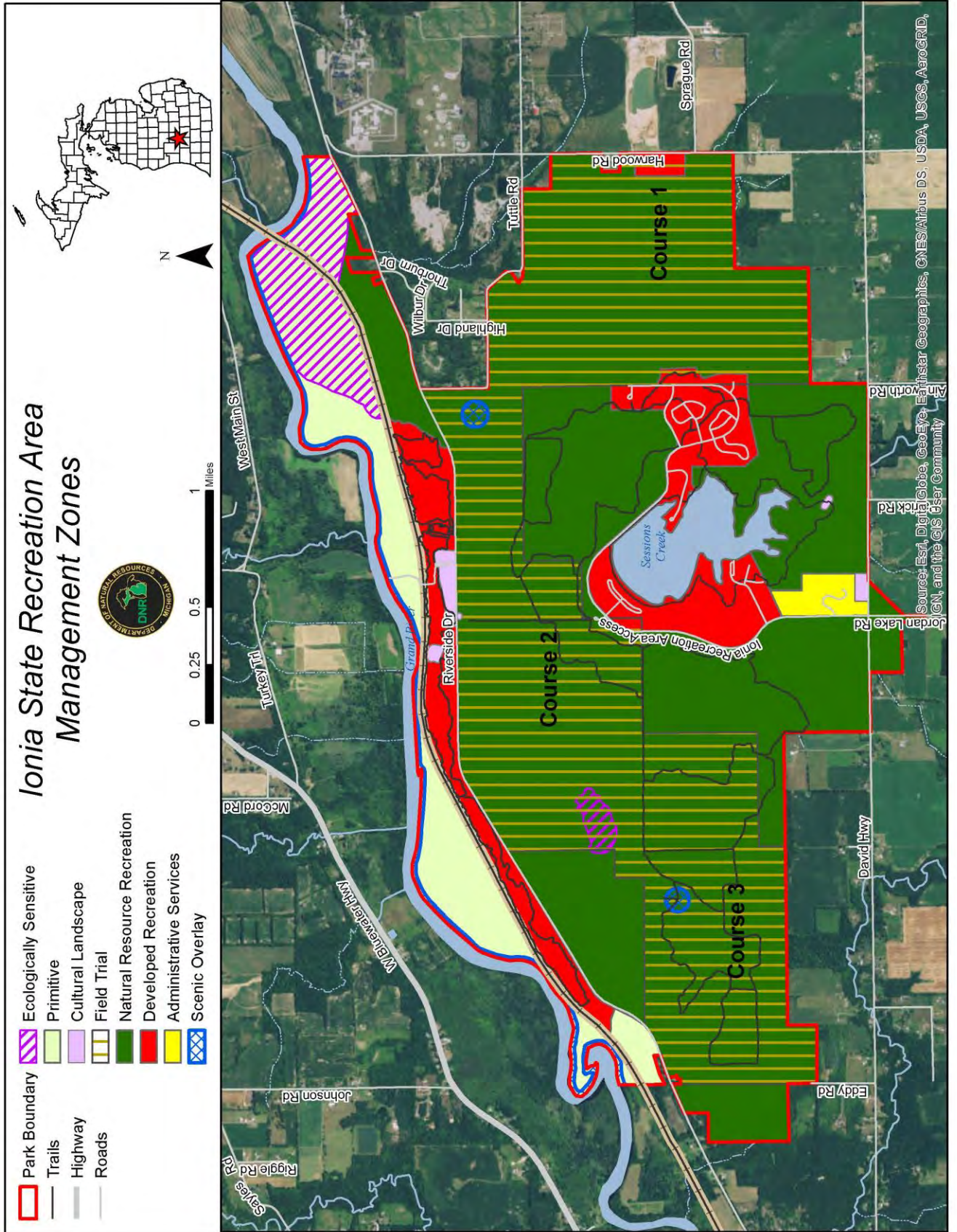
## 2.2 Management Zones

Considering the identity and significance of Ionia SRA, management zones have been assigned to each area of the park. From a palette of nine standard zones, eight were applied to Ionia SRA. A condensed review of the management zones follows. A thorough description of each Management Zone can be found in the Phase 1 GMP.

- o Ecologically Sensitive Zone comprises of 227 acres to protect nesting habitat of bald eagles, a heron rookery and trumpeter swans.
- o Primitive Zone comprises 543 acres and reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources. This zone preserves and protects the Grand River floodplain found in this park.
- o Natural Resource Recreation Zone comprises 3,113 acres, or 70%, and permits active recreation with moderate to high density of use conducted in a natural setting. This zone captures the current uses for hiking, cross-country skiing, equestrian use, birding, hunting, fishing, trapping and field trials.
- o Field Trial Course Overlay Zone comprises 1,969 acres or 45% and is recognized as an NRC designated area for 'Championship' field trial purposes. This overlay is a subset of the Natural Resource Recreation Zone and carries with it specific uses, natural resource management, and visitor use management.
- o Developed Recreation Zone comprises 492 acres and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. Campgrounds, equestrian and field trial staging areas, day use areas and mountain bike trails are all found within this zone.
- o Scenic Zone recognizes the viewing opportunities of the four miles of natural frontage of the Grand River, Sessions Lake, and two specific view points within the park. There is no relevant acreage determination for this zone.
- o Visitor Services Zone comprises 43 acres of land that includes the headquarters and shop area of the park, and for purposes of potential future relocation or expansion of an area to the north of the current developed area.
- o Cultural Resource Zone covers 21 acres and is comprised of several known historically significant locations within the park. The Sessions Schoolhouse, a Native American settlement site, an infirmary site, the "Posse House", the Haynor House, and a cemetery are all included in this zone.



1848 Sessions Schoolhouse





## 2.3 Changes Since Phase 1 Plan

### Management

Ionia State Recreation Area is also responsible for the management of 23 boating access sites throughout the region. These sites offer developed and undeveloped water access to area rivers and lakes.

### Land Acquisition

20 acres of land was acquired in 2011 with a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The land is located on the east side of the park on Harwood Road and is recommended to be managed as part of the adjacent Natural Resource Recreation Zone with Field Trial Course Zone overlay.

### Developments

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

- Two modern cabins were installed in 2012-2013 and are 95% occupied during the peak use season.
- Disc golf course was added to the park in 2015.
- Baseball field was removed to make way for the disc golf course.
- The Haynor House is no longer used as a park residence.
- Corrals were offered at the equestrian campground in 2017.
- The Riverside Picnic Area does not have a play area as described in the Phase 1 plan.
- The Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail was constructed through the recreation area on the former railroad corridor. The trail connects Saranac to the City of Ionia and the Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Trail to the east and is part of the 125 mile Midwest Michigan Trail Network connecting Gratiot, Montcalm, Ionia, Kent, Clinton and Shiawassee Counties.

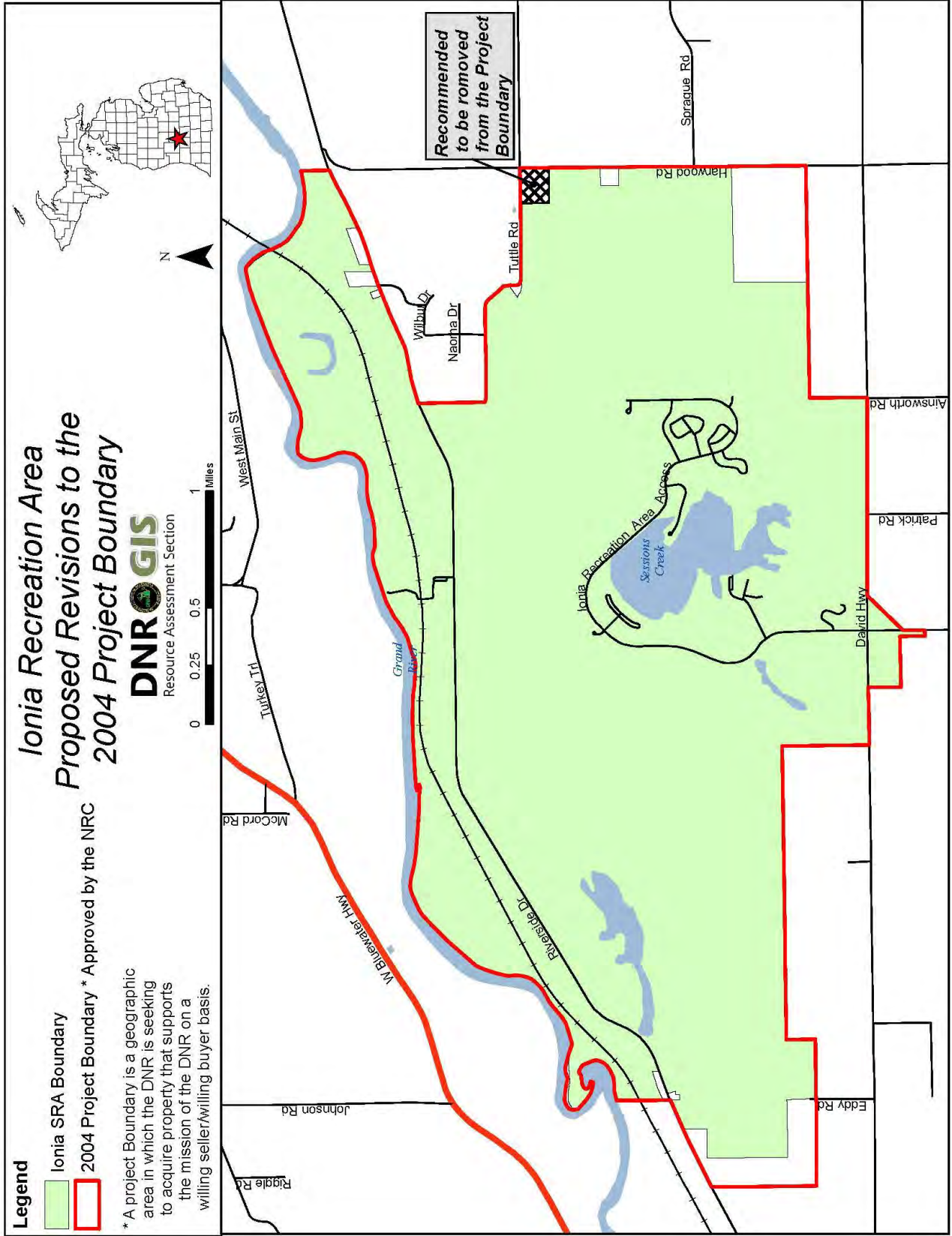


Corral at Equestrian Campground

### Boundary

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. 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 Ionia State Recreation Area.

The planning team recommended three parcels located on the east end of the property on Harwood Road to be removed from the Project Boundary as these parcels have been developed. Proposed revisions to the 2004 Project Boundary are illustrated on the map that follows. In addition, the planning team recognized desire to acquire land between the current park boundary and roadways, improving management efficiency of the park.



## 2.4 Supporting Documentation Updates

### Park Significance

In addition to the significance statements identified in the Phase 1 GMP, the project team also identified that the park is heavily used for hunting and fishing, specifically known for waterfowl, which is significant when compared to other parks in the system. Tibbets Creek is a designated trout stream that supports a population of Brook Trout. The park is also home to 33 former farmstead sites, with evidence of these sites including foundations and fences.

### Threatened and Endangered Species

The following is the list of Threatened and Endangered Species found at the park according to a 2003 survey performed by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. This list does not include species found in the adjacent Grand River or within the Red Meijer Grand River Valley Rail-Trail corridor.

<b>Animal Species</b>	<b>State/Federal Status</b>
Henslow's sparrow ( <i>Ammodramus henslowii</i> )	Endangered
Blanding's turtle ( <i>Emydoidea blandingii</i> )	Special Concern
Snuffbox ( <i>Epioblasma triquetra</i> )	Endangered
Purple wartyback ( <i>Cyclonaias tuberculata</i> )	Threatened
Elktoe ( <i>Alasmidonta marginata</i> )	Special Concern
Round pigtoe ( <i>Pleurobema sintoxia</i> )	Special Concern

### Minerals

Currently, nearly all of the state-owned mineral rights within Ionia State Recreation Area are under lease. This lease is due to expire on March 1, 2018. To date, no wells have been drilled.

### Annual Visitation

In 2016, Ionia State Recreation Area hosted 8,470 camp nights which include 257 camper cabin nights, 49 nights at the group camp, and 167 mini-cabin nights. Day-use visitation was estimated at 227,645.

### Vegetation Management Plan for Field Trial Area

A Vegetation Management Plan was developed by the Stewardship Unit for the field trial areas.

### Cultural Resources Research

Since the adoption of the Phase 1 GMP, extensive research has been conducted concerning past human occupancy of the 21-acre cultural resource zone of the Ionia SRA. This additional information regarding the history of these populations and their intact and remnant structures; 1847 Sessions Schoolhouse

(National Register of Historic Places), 1898 Sessions Schoolhouse “Posse House,” and the Haynor Centennial Farmstead is located in the office of the Southern Lower Peninsula Historian at the Michigan History Center in Lansing.

Legal Mandates

Legal Mandates have been updated and are included in Appendix A of this plan for reference.

Funding Sources

An updated funding source map has been produced for the park, depicting the funding sources used to purchase property for the park, including the most recent acquisitions.

Metal Detecting

A metal detecting map has been included in this document, depicting the areas open to metal detecting at Ionia State Recreation Area.



Posse House (Former 1898 Sessions School)



Field Trial

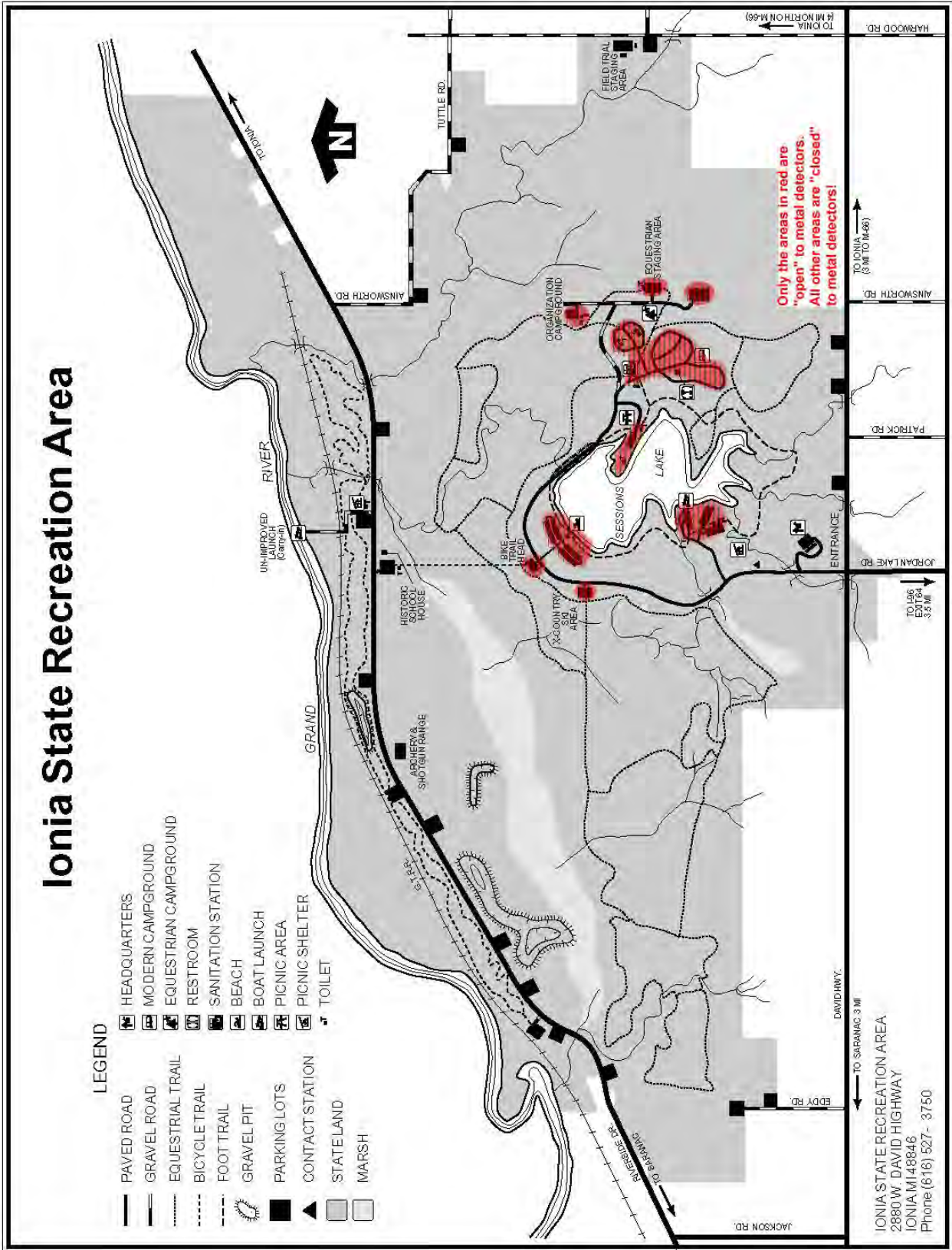


Tent camping at Ionia SRA

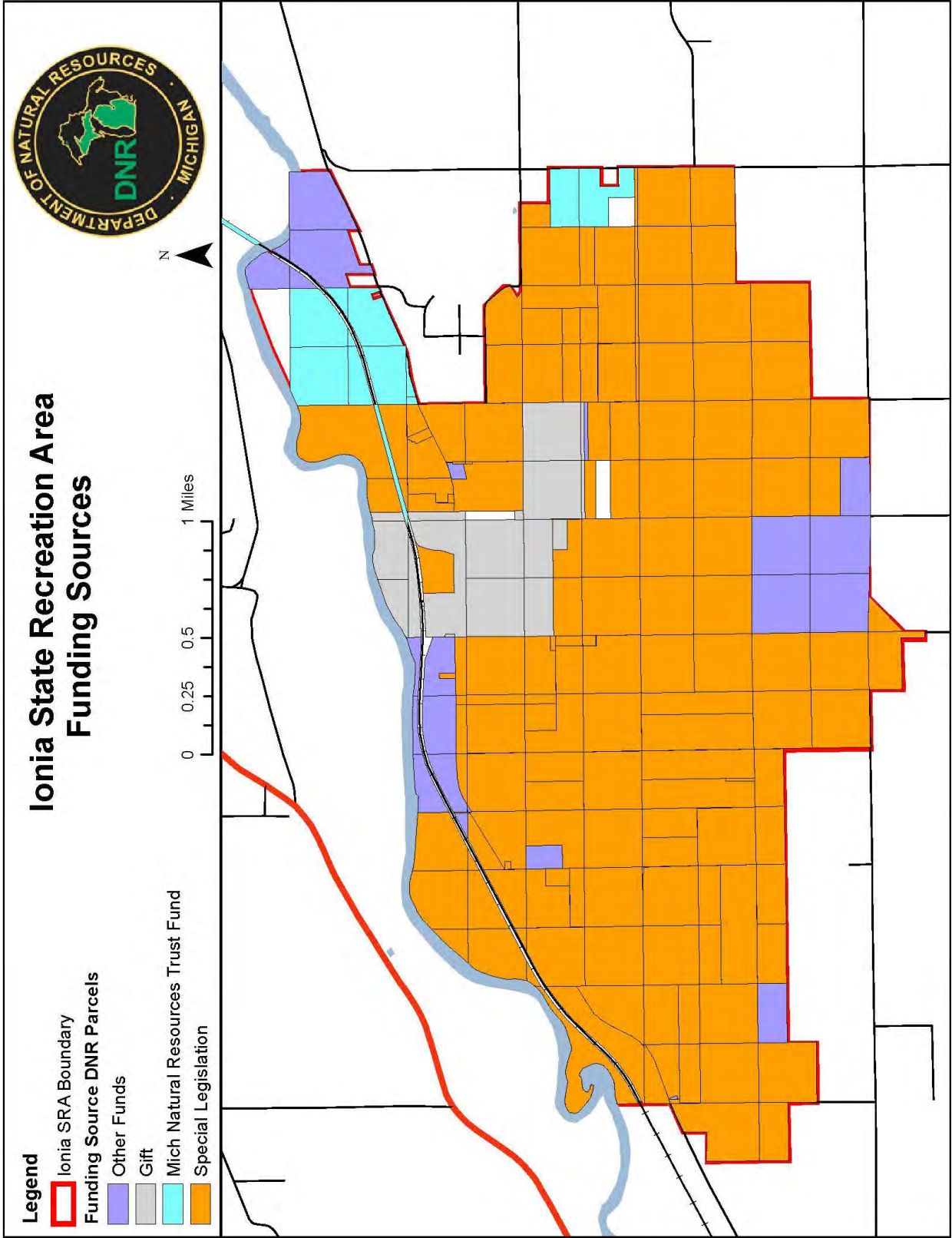


Mini cabin in the modern campground









### 3) 10–Year Action Goals

The Action Goals proposed for Ionia State 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 Phase 1 of this plan. Priorities identified in this plan include renovation and re-use of the historic buildings at the park and expanding management partnerships to improve management efficiency. Working collaboratively is supported by the recommendations of all of the major planning efforts guiding recreation in Michigan, including the Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Blue Ribbon Panel Report to Governor Snyder and the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan. The Governor’s Economic Prosperity initiative is another illustration of the importance of planning regionally. Ionia State Recreation Area is located in Economic Prosperity Region #4. Other improvements proposed will continue to maintain, improve and expand the recreation opportunities available while protecting the natural and cultural resources of the park.

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 one overlay zone in order to achieve the desired user experience. For each management zone in the plan, action goals are recommended 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, but are intended to be realistic in terms of budget realities. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan.



Equestrian trail riding and camping is provided at the park



Chief Cob-Moo-Sa Mountain Bike Trailhead

## General Action Goals

**Many of the 10-Year Action Goals for Ionia State 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>			
Implement invasive species control, with a strong emphasis on early detection and rapid response. Monitor roads, trails, and any new development sites for possible invasive species introductions.	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Stewardship Fisheries	Park Supervisor
Develop a Stewardship Plan for the park	5 years	Park Supervisor Stewardship	Stewardship Ecologist
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Maintain and enhance opportunities for hunting/fishing/gathering/trapping/birding	Ongoing	Stewardship Wildlife Park Supervisor Fisheries	Park Supervisor
Add rustic hike-in, paddle-in and/or ride-in campsites around lake	1-2 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner	Park Supervisor
Continue to stock Walleye in Sessions Lake as prescribed by Fisheries Division	Ongoing	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries Biologist
<b>Historic/Cultural Resources</b>			
Continue monitoring archaeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Stewardship State Archaeologist	Cultural Resource Analyst
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	Stewardship Regional Planner	Cultural Resource Analyst
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Create a self-guided cultural resource interpretation tour	1-2 years	History Center Marketing & Outreach Stewardship	History Center

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Expand the Explorer Guide Program to include cultural resource programs	1-3 years	Park Supervisor History Center Recreation Programmer	Recreation Programmer
<b>Management</b>			
Review and update Wildfire Plan and Emergency Plan	Annually	Park Supervisor Stewardship Forest Resources	Park Supervisor
Explore acquisition of property within proposed General Management Plan project boundary as property and willing sellers become available	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Stewardship Lands Manager	Lands Manager
Continue to complete and comply with annual safety inspections and plans	Ongoing	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Improve and maintain roadways throughout park	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	Field Planner
Promote park and increase community involvement through local partnerships	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Local Partners	Park Supervisor
Provide consistent park boundary marking	1-3 years	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Increase awareness of trail and park visitors that land is open to hunting by signing the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail corridor through the park.	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Policy Manager Trails Specialist	Policy Manager
<b>Development</b>			
Hold annual update meeting with special interest groups associated with the park	Ongoing	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Determine locations and install three donated fishing platforms	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner Fisheries	Park Supervisor
Evaluate potential locations and develop a 3-D archery range	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner	Park Supervisor
Develop multi-use trail from Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail to day use beach area via the existing trail through Field Trial Area #2 while providing access to the Sessions Schoolhouse and improving pedestrian crossing on Riverside Drive	5-7 years	Park Supervisor History Center District Supervisor Field Planner	Field Planner

### 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 propose only very low levels of development, in order to protect the important habitat. Only foot traffic is allowed in this zone.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Continue to manage natural resources, protecting important wildlife habitat	Ongoing	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Include the carry-down Grand River boating access site in the Michigan Recreational Boating Information System	1 year	Park Supervisor Waterways	Park Supervisor
Improve carry-down Grand River boating access site	1 year	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor

## Natural Resource Recreation Zone

**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 recreation 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 levels of recreation compatible with the natural character of the zone.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Monitor the farm lease at the southeast corner of Jordan Lake Road and David Highway for compliance	Ongoing	Park Supervisor Stewardship	Park Supervisor
Reroute hiking trails around wet and flooded areas	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner Stewardship	Park Supervisor
Redesign and implement improvements to Field Trial Course #2 parking, creating a separate parking area for the Sessions Schoolhouse and incorporating multi-use space around the schoolhouse	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor History Center	Field Planner
<b>Development</b>			
Develop equestrian trails in old gravel pits south of Riverside Drive in partnership with Ionia Horse Trails Association	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner Stewardship IHTA	Field Planner
Expand parking lot on Eddy Road for field trial and equestrian use	1-2 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner IHTA IFTGA	Park Supervisor

IHTA = Ionia Horse Trails Association

IFTGA = Ionia Field Trial Grounds Association

## Field Trial Course Zone

**The character of the Field Trial Course Zone is intended to support landscape for 'championship' field trial purposes. The Zone is under active stewardship through an agreement with user groups to restore a high quality oak barrens ecosystem for field trialing. Management focus should be specific to natural resources that support field trial activities.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Initiate discussions between Ionia Field Trial Grounds Association and Ionia Horse Trails Association for possible shared use on Field Trial Course 3	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Trial Liaison IHTA IFTGA	Park Supervisor
Explore the expansion of the "Forbidden Trail Day" event to an annual event in collaboration with Ionia Horse Trails Association and the Ionia Field Trial Grounds Association	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Field Trial Liaison IHTA IFTGA	Park Supervisor
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Monitor maintenance items compliance of the lease with the Ionia Field Trial Ground Association	Ongoing	Park Supervisor IFTGA Stewardship	Park Supervisor
<b>Development</b>			
Develop a reclamation plan for the gravel pit north of Field Trial Course 1 for field trial use	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Stewardship Field Planner	Field Trial Liaison

IHTA = Ionia Horse Trails Association

IFTGA = Ionia Field Trial Grounds Association



## 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. This zone encompasses day use picnic areas, swimming beach areas, campground area, cabin, and boating access sites. The 10-Year Action Goals direct management decisions and development projects designed to promote and support these diverse visitor activities.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Recreation Opportunities</b>			
Investigate repurposing part of the equestrian campground for skills course in partnership with Ionia Horse Trails Association	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor IHTA	Park Supervisor
Improve day use beach area accessibility, including picnic and beach improvements	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	Field Planner
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Evaluate potential aqua park addition and determine feasibility as warranted	Ongoing	Park Supervisor District Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Remove underutilized Riverside Picnic Shelter	1-2 years	Park Supervisor	Park Supervisor
Sign adjacent park amenities from Fred Meijer River Grand River Valley Rail-Trail	1-2 years	Park Supervisor Trail Specialist FFMRVRT	Trail Specialist
Upgrade electrical service in modern campground to 50 amp	5-10 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	Field Planner
Improve trail between the beach and the dam to provide multi-use access from the campground to the beach	5-10 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner	Field Planner
Renovate restroom and shower facilities in campground and day-use areas	5-10 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	Field Planner
Remove unused parking lots near the modern cabins	5-10 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	District Supervisor



Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Development</b>			
Perform a cost benefit analysis and explore the feasibility of additional alternative lodging opportunities near existing modern cabins	1-3 years	Park Supervisor District Supervisor Field Planner	Park Supervisor
Work with West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance to develop and implement mountain bike opportunities in old gravel pits north of Riverside Drive	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner Stewardship WMMBA	Field Planner
Renovate the boating access site road	1-3 years	Park Supervisor District Supervisor Field Planner	District Supervisor
Repurpose organization campgrounds for rustic campsites	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner District Supervisor	Field Planner

IHTA = Ionia Horse Trails Association

WMMBA = West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance

FFMRVRT = Friends of the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail-Trails

### Visitor Services Zone

**This 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 Ionia State Recreation Area.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
Explore feasibility to either re-use an existing facility or construct a new building for boating program cold storage	1-2 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner	Park Supervisor

## Cultural Resource Zone

**This zone encompasses cultural resources at the park for preservation and interpretation. This includes the Haynor House, Posse House, Sessions Schoolhouse, Infirmary site, Native American settlement site, and cemetery.**

Action Goals	Target Completion Date	Program Input From	Responsible Program Position
<b>Education/Interpretation Opportunities</b>			
Work with local partners and Michigan History Center to erect Michigan History Commission signs for Posse House and Sessions Schoolhouse	1-3 years	History Center Local Partners	History Center
<b>Management Focus</b>			
Resolve site control of Posse House in partnership with the Ionia County Sheriff's Department	1-2 years	Park Supervisor Regulatory Unit	Regulatory Unit Supervisor
Remove restricted access shooting range associated with the Posse House in partnership with the Ionia County Sheriff's Department	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner County Sheriffs	Park Supervisor
Renovate the Posse House for historic interpretation use	2-7 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner History Center Stewardship	History Center
<b>Development</b>			
Stabilize Haynor House in partnership with the Michigan History Center	1-3 years	Park Supervisor Stewardship History Center	Stewardship
Identify re-use of Haynor House, partnering with the Michigan History Center	1-3 years	Park Supervisor District Supervisor History Center Stewardship	History Center
Renovate Sessions Schoolhouse for historic interpretive use in partnership with the Michigan History Center	3-5 years	Park Supervisor Field Planner History Center Stewardship	Field Planner

# APPENDIX A – LEGAL MANDATES UPDATE

Legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the Phase 2 General Management Plan. For our planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers not only to federal and state law, but also the administrative tools of “Policy” and “Directive” of the Natural Resource Commission, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Parks and Recreation Division. Examples include Orders of the Director, Parks and Recreation Areas State Land Rules and other laws, commission orders, and rules of directives that apply to the recreation area.

Legal mandates applicable to Ionia State Recreation Area were identified for the Phase 1 General Management Plan. The legal mandates listed in Appendix A of the Phase 2 General Management Plan provide a supplement to the legal mandates previously identified in the Phase 1 General Management Plan and should be referred to concurrently.

## FEDERAL STATUTE

<b>ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 1973</b>	
The purposes of this Act are to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved, to provide a program for the conservation of such endangered species and threatened species, and to take such steps as may be appropriate to achieve the purposes of the act.	
<b>BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT, 1940 AND AMENDMENTS</b>	
This Act prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from "taking" bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The Act defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." "Disturb" includes actions that may result in injury to the eagle, a decrease in its productivity or nest abandonment.	

## STATE STATUTE

<b>NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (NREPA) AND AMENDMENTS</b>	
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 5</b>	Gives the DNR authority to make rules to support its mission. This includes State Land Rules, Land Use Orders, Wildlife Conservation Orders, Fisheries Orders and Watercraft Control.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 31 Water Resources Protection</b>	Provides authority to DEQ to require a permit for any occupation, construction, filling, or grade change within the 100-year floodplain of a river, stream, drain, or inland lake.

<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 301 Inland Lakes and Streams</b>	Requires a permit from the state (DEQ) to undertake certain activities relating to inland lakes and streams, such as dredging, fill, marinas, structures, alteration of flow, etc.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 303 Wetlands Protection</b>	Requires a permit from the state (DEQ) to undertake certain activities in regulated wetlands, such as, dredging, fill, construction or drainage.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 315 Dam Safety</b>	A permit is required for dams with a dam “height” of six feet or more and that have a surface area of five acres or more at the design flood elevation. A permit is required for new dam construction, enlargement of an existing dam or impoundment, dam repair, dam alteration, dam removal, dam abandonment, or reconstruction of a failed dam.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 741 State Park System</b>	The department shall create, maintain, operate, promote, and make available for public use and enjoyment a system of state parks to preserve and protect Michigan's significant natural resources and areas of natural beauty or historic significance, to provide open space for public recreation, and to provide an opportunity to understand Michigan's natural resources and the need to protect and manage those resources.
<b>PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 Recreation Passport</b>	This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site “Recreation Passport” that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle.
<b>PA 451 of 1994, Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities</b>	The state reserves the exclusive right and privilege to all aboriginal records and other antiquities including those found on the bottomlands of the Great Lakes.

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

## **LAND USE ORDERS**

### **5.4 Watercraft use in certain state parks, prohibited conduct.**

Order 5.4 A person shall not do the following:

- (1) Operate a vessel in excess of a slow, no-wake speed on any of the following described waters:
  - (f) Ionia RA - sessions lake.

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

Ionia recreation area, prohibited conduct.

- (16) A person that has been issued a campsite permit shall not possess or allow to be possessed upon the campsite more than 4 animals other than horses by all members of the camping party combined.

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

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

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

- (37) Ionia Recreation Area, Ionia County.

## **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDERS**

### **State Parks and Recreation Areas**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **7.65 Ionia recreation area, unlawful acts, exceptions; posting required.**

Sec. 7.65 (1) A person shall not take any waterfowl from September 1 to Labor day within 450 feet of any campsite, picnic area, beach, parking area, or boat launch.

(2) A person shall not take any waterfowl from the day after Labor day to September 15 after 8:00 a.m. within 450 feet of any campsite, picnic area, beach, parking area, or boat launch.

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

History, Am. 2, 2016, Eff. April 15, 2016.

## **TROUT STREAM FISHING REGULATIONS**

Tibbets Creek is a Type 1 Trout Stream. The season is last Saturday in April through September 30. The minimum size limit for Brook Trout is 7” and 8” for Brown Trout. Daily possession limit for all trout and salmon is 5 fish, but no more than 3 trout 15” or greater.

## **STATE LAND RULES**

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

# APPENDIX B – STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

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

## Overview of Public Input Opportunities

**Stakeholder Workshop** – A Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis was performed on April 10, 2017 at the Ionia MSU Extension Office to gather information from stakeholders about the park to inform the Action Goals. Stakeholders had the opportunity to attend either an afternoon session or an evening session. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to the park. A total of 19 participants represented organizations from around the region and provided input. Input gathered is listed below:

### **STRENGTHS**

- Well-kept secret
- Good work with local authorities
- Lower crowds
- Staff is accessible

### **Location**

- Good location, centrally located between Lansing and Grand Rapids
- Two access points/two park feel

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- Fisheries
- Fishing off point is good for handicap
- Variety of wildlife
- Hunting opportunities/quality
- 1847 school house, remains of pioneer homes, posse house, Alanzo Sessions (past Lt. Governor) homestead, infirmary, cemetery, native American village

### **Facilities, Programs and Activities**

- Horse trails
- Beach
- Good day use
- Field Trial grounds are well rounded

- Variety of recreation and overnight opportunities
- Equestrian campground corral
- Mountain bike trails
- Open year-round
- Multi-use park
- Water access
- Trail access/variety
- Field trial area (fenced)
- Good amount of facilities/restrooms
- Beach
- Org. campground is beautifully maintained
- 4 miles FMRVT
- Chainsaw classes/ other learning opportunities
- Boat launch
- Lake is good for kids

## **WEAKNESSES**

- Rules always changing, creates confusion (1 year equine campers allowed to use bathhouse, 1 year no)

### **Facilities**

- Rocky equine trails
- Lack of RV hook-up
- Water, electric, sewer in campground is lacking
- Lack of electric in equine campground
- Bathhouse in campground needs work
- Not enough miles of equine trails
- Beach bathhouse needs slight upgrades
- Old fencing on equine trails, hazard to horses and riders
- Interior roads, road to boat ramp very rough
- Lack of electricity in org. campground
- Autumn Olive, invasive species in general
- Not enough mountain bike trails to draw from other counties
- Park entrance not biker friendly
- Lack of equine trailheads/parking lots
- No AD access to GRVT from park
- No good spot to camp along river for multiday river trips
- Hiking trail around the lake is often flooded or wet



### **Natural Resources**

- Invasive species
- Bank erosion on the point
- Cove between dam and the island is very shallow, not good for fishing
- Overgrowth around lake, shoreline fishing is difficult
- Beavers flood road to west, off Riverside Drive

### **Community Relationships**

- Weak relationship with equine community

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Regular stakeholder meetings

### **Facilities, Programs and Activities**

- Boat wash stations
- Signage in equine campground about use of the bathhouse
- Cabins- equine camp, modern camp
- Electric in equine campground
- Upgrade to bathrooms in campground and beach
- Aqua Park
- Upgrades to modern campground (full hook-up)
- Remove hazardous fencing on equine trails
- Dog park
- Maintain lookout on horse trail (overgrown)
- Repaving roads including boat ramp
- Widening shoulders for bike access
- Get explorer guides more involved with cultural resources as well as natural resources
- Posse House and range
- Dredge cove
- More mountain bike trails to draw from outside of the county, could be a destination for mountain bike trails
- Access to the park from the rail trail (north)

### **Natural Resources**

- Local student research to mitigate invasive spread
- Collaborate with local schools to raise pheasants

### **Partnerships**

- Work with outside groups to improve bike access to park entrance
- Lease horse grounds area for use to maintain
- Partnership between various stakeholder groups

- Turkey federation partnership to assist in invasive species and grassland habitat management through volunteers

### **Marketing**

- Promote the park

### **Cultural resources**

- Cultural resources- tie in to school systems to teach MI history. Give students the experience of a one room schoolhouse, taking sleigh/horse buggy or walk the trails to get to class
- 3 historic markers that could bring in visitors: Alanzo Sessions home site, infirmary/cemetery and 1847 schoolhouse
- Trail signs on cultural history: on hiking, biking and equine trails to describe historic use of the land and various resources along the trails
- Specific trail for history tour with maps, possibly using QR codes and cell phone apps instead of signage
- Update maps
- Overnight for kids and visiting Haynor House and schoolhouse for hands on activities and possible help with restoration of Haynor House

## **THREATS**

- Lack of funding
- Economic shift/budget cuts, failure to maintain facilities
- Failure to continue to grow
- Dog leash laws

### **Natural Resources**

- Invasive species
- Weather
- Fail to maintain quality fish source
- Hunting rights being taken away at state parks
- Lake quality, lake turning bad due to agriculture run-off

### **Staff and facilities**

- Technology changes
- Decline in staff numbers
- New workers/seasonal not trained enough to keep up with maintenance needs
- Dam stability

Name	Stakeholder Affiliation
Robert Brown Jr.	Fred Meijer RVRT
Ron Gunderson	Fred Meijer RVRT
Terri DeBarr	IFTGA Lease Manager
Laurie Perkins	Michigan History Center
Ray Fahlsing	MDNR-PRD
Matt Lincoln	MDNR-PRD
Trevor McGinn	MDNR-Ionia Manager
Murdock Jemerson	MDNR-PRD
Sarah burton	MDNR-PRD
Ryan Boyer	NWTF
Tom Karsten	NWTF
Brandon Mulnix	Village of Saranac
Gail Roderick	Kent Special Riding Program
Ted Paton	Ionia County ISD
Ron Gulembo	IFTGA
Carolyn Mayhew	Jordan Lake Trail
Melinda Pepper	Kent County 4-H Program
George Trowbridge	WMMBA
William Hoskins	Ionia Co. FM
Robbin Stout	FHTA
Melissa Eldridge	Ionia Conservation District

- **Public Input Open House September 19, 2017** – located at the Ionia High School from 6-8 p.m., members of the public were invited to learn about the Phase 2 General Management Planning process and comment on the Draft 10-Year Action Goals. The Draft Phase 2 Plan was also posted on the DNR’s website and comments were invited via Email.

**Press Release:**

## **DNR to hold public meeting September 19, 2017 to get input on Ionia State Recreation Area draft Phase 2 General Management Plan**

The Department of Natural Resources will host a public meeting on September 19, 2017 to invite public input on a new draft Phase 2 General Management Plan for Ionia State Recreation Area in Ionia County. The meeting will run from 6pm to 8pm at Ionia High School located at 250 E. Tuttle Rd, Ionia, MI 48846.

The 4,418 Ionia State Recreation Area provides a range of recreation activities including a swimming beach, camping, modern cabins, fishing, hunting, disc golf, hiking, biking, and equestrian trail riding and camping. Featured highlights of the park include a dedicated field trial area, Sessions Lake, Tibbets Creek trout stream, the Grand River and natural environments that are home to rare plants and animals. Jump Island, an inflatable aqua park, provides a unique family experience at Sessions Lake beach during the summer months.

The phase 2 general management plan for Ionia State Recreation Area defines a long-range (10-20 year) planning and management strategy that will assist the DNR Parks and Recreation Division in meeting its responsibilities to protect and preserve the site’s natural and cultural resources, and to provide access to land- and water-based public recreation and educational opportunities. A link to the Ionia State Recreation Area draft plan and additional information on the DNR’s management plan process can be found at [www.Michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans](http://www.Michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans).

The public input meeting will begin with a short presentation of the draft plan, but members of the public are welcome to attend at any time during the two-hour period to review the planning material, provide comments and talk to DNR staff. Comments can also be made via email until September 25 to Matt Lincoln at [lincolnM@michigan.gov](mailto:lincolnM@michigan.gov).

Additional information on the DNR’s General Management Plan process is available at [www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans](http://www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans).

For more information about the public meeting or the phase 2 general management plan, contact Matt Lincoln at 517-284-6111 (TTY/TDD711 Michigan Relay Center for the hearing impaired) or via email at [lincolnm@michigan.gov](mailto:lincolnm@michigan.gov). Persons with disabilities who need accommodations for the meetings should contact Lincoln at least five business days before the meeting.

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
IONIA STATE RECREATION AREA  
PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN  
Public Input Meeting  
September 19, 2017, 6pm to 8pm  
Ionia High School**

- 1. Welcome and Introductions** (5 min)
  
- 2. Presentation of General Management Plan** (20 min)
  - Summary of Phase 1 Plan: park significance statements and management zones (approved January 2006)
  - Planning process
  - Overview of draft Phase 2 Plan: 10-year action goals
  
- 3. Questions and Answers** (10 min)
  
- 4. Plan Review** (1 hour)
  - You are invited to view the plan materials and talk to planning team members
  - Post-it notes are available for you to add any comments you may have to the draft action goals
  - Complete the comment sheet to provide additional information
  
- 5. Adjourn**

**For More Information:**

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

**Email:** Matt Lincoln [lincolnm@michigan.gov](mailto:lincolnm@michigan.gov) or Trevor McGinn, [mcginnt@michigan.gov](mailto:mcginnt@michigan.gov)

**Phone:** 517-284-6111 or 616-527-3750

**Welcome – Please Sign In!  
Public Input Meeting  
Ionia State Recreation Area  
September 19, 2017**

Name	Affiliation
Gary Koelsch	Historical Society
Judy Kolesch	Historical Society
Kristie Walls	Ionia Horse Trails Assoc.
Deb Frost	Public
Mary Frost	Public
Carolyn Mayhew	Jordan Lake Trail
Tara Sowa	Ionia Horse Trails Assoc.

**DNR Employees Present:**

Name	Title
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager/Plan Administrator
Ray Fahlsing	Stewardship Program Manager
Trevor McGinn	Unit Supervisor
Laurie Perkins	Education Historian
Sarah Burton	Student Planning Assistant

Comments received at the public meeting included the following:

1. ATVs need some place to go ride in the area. The RA was suggested however other members pointed out that ATVs would tear up the ground and the RA is too small of a space.
2. Put signage on the rail trail to note where the Riverside picnic area is to increase usage and get more people into the RA.
3. [Have an] agricultural theme for the Haynor House. (note made on zoning map)
4. Buy a bag of cold patch; buy a brick [to fix the roads]. (note made on zoning map)

Comment forms were provided. One question was answered:

Are there any additional actions you would like to see?

- Need signage off Fred Meijer Trail directing people to Picnic Area/Pavilion off Riverside to use facilities.

Four additional comments were received via Email.

Received 9/06/2017

Has any further thought been given, during the development of the Phase 2 General Management Plan for Ionia State Recreation, to developing/improving an easier access to the Fred Meijer River Valley Trail (CIS Trail) from the Ionia Park?

It is still in Jordan Lake Trail Board's master plan to seek installation of paved shoulders on the three miles of Jordan Lake Road within Berlin Township, making a clear biking access to the park from the Lakewood Area, Jordan Lake Trail.

Since it is the Governor's initiative (and the State of Michigan) to connect all trails in the future, we are in hopes that this is taken into consideration during the planning process. Not to benefit only Jordan Lake Trail users, but to encourage CIS Trail users to stop at Ionia Rec. and camp for the night or just to look around and enjoy the park. It seems it could be a win/win for both Ionia State Recreation Area and the soon to be constructed Jordan Lake Trail.

I will try to attend the Sept. 19th meeting.

Thank you

Received 9/11/2017

Good Afternoon,

I just wanted to voice my opinion or requests as I speak with many others in the off road enthusiast community with the same views as my own.

I realize that Ionia State Park is more of a Horseman / Dog Trials park, but so is the Allegan State Game Area.

I am wondering why Horses are able to ride at these parks but no work has been done to accommodate Motorcycle enthusiasts? Is this due to the designation of the land as "State Game Area"?

In 1964, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources created the Allegan State Game Area by combining the Allegan State Forest, the Swan Creek Wildlife Experiment Station, and the Fennville State Game Area.

The 50,000-plus acre unit provides a wide variety of recreation for everyone with an outdoor interest - for hunting and fishing, a hike, a relaxing picnic, But not for motorcycle enthusiasts.

Why can't the DNR re classify part of this area for one (MCCT) type of trail or all Off Road Vehicles(ORV) since the area is so large and also since in 1964 the area was in fact 3 separate areas and combined into one area?

As an active member of the Motorcycling Community, I have often thought I would lobby to have ORV/ATV/ or mostly MCCT trails be available to those that live in SW Michigan.

I, myself, am a single mother of a young son, who have been Enduro riders since he was 3 years of age. It is very difficult and expensive and mostly impossible for us to get up to Lake County, Oceana County or Southern Indiana and the like just to be able to ride our Motorcycles and Camp.

These sentiments have been discussed with me by many others with the same issues. Many families end up selling their machines due to the fact that it is impossible to ride locally. All ATV/ORV riders in Northern Indiana and SW Michigan have to travel quite far to enjoy our specific recreation.

What are the reasons that no plans have been comprised for part of the Allegan State Game area being designated and designed for Motorists?

I am certain Ely Lake Campground is more than IDEAL to provide Motorists camping and use of an implemented trail system there. Also allowing ORV's to travel on the certain marked roads to get to trails could be a possibility (this has been a win win around Lake County MI) since it is such a rural area, with very few resident homes, along with the fact that vehicle traffic is mostly non existent. (except during deer season, when it sounds like a war zone there!)

Meanwhile, couldn't those that are Horse enthusiasts could be accommodated at Pine Point Campground?

Many believe that this proposed venture would bring in a great amount of revenue and commerce to the State as well as the local community, where now it seems to be a struggling and poor community for residents and businesses alike.

Many would love for this campground to be a thriving piece of land and utilized for motorists as many believe it should be, and that it is a Gold Mine for the taking if set up for Motorists or the like.

I appreciate any comments or concerns that I am not aware of on this subject. I also would venture to be accessible for further conversation on this matter

Received 9/11/2017

Good morning,

I'm sorry I won't be able to attend the upcoming meeting regarding the plan for ISRA.

My only suggestion is for the equestrian use. It would be AWESOME to have a parking area (day use) on the west side of the park that would allow access to those trails without having to ride across from the current day use or Tibbits.

I often have time for a short ride after work and have for years wished I could just ride the west trails, the ones we prefer. They are less rocky and we don't have to cross water or the bridge.

Other than that, ISRA is perfect, beautiful and a jewel, not to mention helpful and friendly staff.



Thank you

Received 9/13/2017

We are unable to attend the Sept. 19 meeting but wanted to offer comments in regards to the park. We very much enjoy what the park offers, but we would like to see the Grand River access firmed up in some way. It is always a muddy/mucky mess trying to get kayaks/tubes in/out of the water. Thanks for handling our comments.

# APPENDIX C – PLANNING TEAM MEETING SUMMARY

Over the duration of the General Management Planning process, the Planning Team held two on-site team meetings and two virtual meetings. These meetings were critical to the development of the Phase 2 General Management Plan and particularly the creation of the 10-Year Action Goals. Additionally, the meetings were an opportunity to review input received from stakeholders and the public.

## Overview of Planning Team Meetings

- **Team Meeting #1 February 13, 2017** – Located at the Ionia State Recreation Area headquarters, the kick-off meeting was an opportunity for Planning Team members to introduce themselves to one another, review the Phase 2 General Management Plan schedule and process, review the Phase 1 General Management Plan, develop the stakeholder workshop process and review any changes that have occurred since the Phase 1 General Management Plan was approved.
- **Team Meeting #2 May 18, 2017** – Located at Ionia State Recreation Area headquarters, the Planning Team reviewed stakeholder meeting feedback and began to draft the 10-year action goals for the park.
- **Team Meeting #3 June 27, 2017**, the Planning Team reviewed and refined the 10-year action goals for the park.
- **Team Meeting #4, Go-To-Meeting October 30, 2017** – The Planning Team reviewed information gathered at the public input workshop and via e-mail and finalized the 10-year action goals for the park.

**Meeting #1 Summary**  
**Ionian State Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan**  
**February 13, 2017**  
**9:00am -2:00pm**

**Ionian State Recreation Area Headquarters**

**Attendees:**

Trevor McGinn- Unit Supervisor

Debbie Jensen- Management Plan Administrator

Matt Lincoln- Lands Program Manager/ Plan Administrator

Ray Fahlsing- Stewardship Program Manager

Murdock Jemerson- District Supervisor

Cary Foster- Conservation Officer

John Niewoonder- Field Operations Manager, Wildlife Division

Sarah Burton- Management Plan Student Assistant

**Review Phase 2 General Management Plan Process and Schedule**

- In 2006, management zones were established during the Phase 1 plan: Phase 2 establishes the action goals.
- The Phase 2 Scope was distributed to the planning team and each step was explained. The planning process typically takes approximately 6 months to complete with a series of planning team meetings along with stakeholder and public input opportunities.
  - Step 1- Complete, preliminary information is already compiled.
  - Step 2- the first meeting (2/13/17).
  - Step 3- stakeholder meeting. It was discussed how to address concerns the stakeholders might have during this meeting. The stakeholder meeting is meant to address what the stakeholders needs/wants are. The working relationship with the equestrians is good currently and should be preserved.
  - Step 4- team meeting 2. Review of the stakeholder meeting and develop a draft of the action goals.
  - Step 5- team meeting 3- refine action goals
  - Step 6- draft the Phase 2 Plan
  - Step 7- Public Input Meeting. It will probably be during peak season so hopefully there will be a good turnout.
  - Step 8- team meeting 4. Review the public meeting comments and make revisions to the plan as necessary.
  - Step 9 & 10- approvals.

## Review of Phase 1 General Management Plan

When Ionia SRA was created, the river was dammed to create the lake water feature. Agricultural land, as well as old gravel pits were also acquired to create the SRA.

- Significance Statements

- There is a wide range of recreational interests.
- This SRA is one of the locations that a man-made lake was created which provided for an increase in water recreation for the area.
- Special Dog Training Areas Act. This SRA is 1 of 8 Field Trial Grounds in the state & established a “Championship” Trial ground.
- There are a wide variety of water features.  
Fisheries Division still stocks Sessions Lake and manages it as appropriate (Walleye). Scott Hanshue will be asked for an update as to what species are in the lake (Bluegill, Bass, and Catfish) and what they stock. The DNR manages the dam. There is more fishing on the lake than the river or streams because there is better access. There is one designated access to the Grand River and the road there floods regularly.
- The Grand River floodplain provides habitat for two bald eagle nests and a heron rookery. Trumpeter swans nest and occupy the waterfowl flooding’s. There is local control of mute swans through the Wildlife Division with assistance from the USFWS and the USDA. The site needs to be checked for active bald eagle nesting.
- There is a range of T&E in the SRA. Many of the aquatic species are probably not actually in the SRA, but the Grand River in general. There is not much impact to the Grand River due to hindered access by flooding.
- The SRA offers opportunities for research, education and interpretation. There are not many partnerships with groups who are currently doing this. The only known activity is the ongoing Emerald Ash Borer survey. One schoolhouse, known as the Posse House, has historically been used by the Ionia County Sheriff’s Posse. The team discussed terminating the agreement with the county (no actual documentation relating to this use has been found). The History Division and Stewardship Unit are interested in funding to make the Sessions Schoolhouse historically accurate. Sessions Schoolhouse was last restored in 1918 by daughters of the American Revolution. The Haynor House (old park manager’s residence) has many problems and History Division is interested in funding and stabilizing the building.

\* Trevor noted that hunting and fishing is a significant recreation here. There is more hunting pressure here than many other parks in the system. Look to add a significance statement on this.

- Project Boundary
  - Trails in the field trial area are not on the SRA map but are on the internal map. These are for field trial use only and the wildlife conservation order will be reviewed to make sure the trail usages are correct. Equestrian trails impact use of course #3. Opportunities to reduce conflicts in use will be investigated through the planning process. Some aspects of field trialing are growing in interest, especially with women and youth. There are several pits that present a danger to the field trialers. Trail mapping and GIS data will be reviewed.
  - An acquisition occurred on the east end of the park (see project map) since Phase 1. Pit bottom needs to be sculpted to be safe for field trialing. There is a house that needs to be removed on this land that is not being used currently. The house is privately owned and being used, the surrounding area is now ours but it's not currently being used.
  - There are three residential parcels east of the park that are recommended for removal from the proposed project boundary.
  - The property to the south of David Hwy was retained to preserve and protect the areas around the entrance. A small portion of this is leased for farming.
  - Area north of the river is of interest to preserve the quality of the river corridor but is mostly floodplain and farm land.
  - Areas to the west don't seem to have many houses, possibly just forested/wet. The field trail group was interested in this to expand their area.
  - The small private parcel at end of Tuttle Road is problematic for the adjacent field trail area and would be desirable for acquisition in the future.
  - Small area surrounded by the newly acquired area on the east site is desired as well.
  
- Management Zones
  - If no bald eagle nests or rookery, possibly remove the Ecologically Sensitive Zone to the north. Otherwise, all agreed the management zones are still accurate.
  - The rail corridor is not part of the SRA. Land ownership and management of the rail corridor needs to be clarified and possible differences in hunting regulations addressed. Signs should be posted on the trail to delineate the SRA.
  
- Supporting Analysis
  - The T&E list needs to be update.
  - The funding sources map needs to be update and check that the "other funds" or "multiple funds" designation isn't wildlife designated. Create a new map for the funding sources with a more accurate legend for the Phase 2 Plan.
  - There is a vegetation management plan for the field trail grounds, which should be included in the report (possibly just a link).

- There is no stewardship plan for Ionia SRA (Field trail management plan covers a large percentage of the land).
- Provide updated use numbers in the Phase 2 Plan.
- Adjust the language for the seasons for hunting (Pg 69) to be more open and not specific to the species. – note in Phase 2 Plan.
- Add the metal detecting map to the Phase 2 Plan.
- Riverside picnic area, no play area there. Make a note of it in the Phase 2 Plan.

### **Legal Mandates Review**

A supplement to the Phase 1 legal mandates section was presented and reviewed.

- Update Land Use Order 5.4 to include No Wake language.
- The wording “with firearm” was added to the Safety Zone regulations language which now allows bow hunting in areas closer to populated areas.
- Take out the Natural Rivers mandate.
- Check which streams are designated trout streams and add the fishing regulations associated.

### **Ionia State Recreation Area Overview**

- Changes in the Park since the Phase 1 plan (Acquisitions, developments etc.); Current projects/ initiatives (Capital Outlay list)
  - There is a bid out for an Aqua Park which could change the user groups for this year.
  - The 2 modern cabins on the lake are 95% occupied in peak season. These were developed in 2012-2013.
  - Limited rental to the shelter at the boat launch and riverside picnic area.
  - Terminated the ballfield, no use at all and better used for disk golf.
  - The disk golf was added 1.5 years ago, still in progress. Possibly too many disk golf courses in the area, but Ionia’s course needs to be promoted.
  - 3-D archery range was discussed, could be popular as a future development, possibly in the disk golf area.
  - The SRA staff provides some grounds maintenance to the Fred Meijer River Valley Trail (FMRVT) through the SRA.
  - There needs to be a discussion about the management of the FMRVT and enforcement of park rules. Check with Nikki on this issue.
  - Lake Odessa would like to connect the Jordan Lake Trail to the FMRVT through the park along the park road but the corridor is not wide enough to put a trail alongside it.
  - DNR History is interested in the Haynor House, Posse House and Sessions School House, all of which need work. Stewardship can help.
  - Currently turning two organizational campgrounds into 10 rustic campsites.
  - There are plans to add 2 fishing platforms to Sessions Lake.
  - There is a Work Item Proposal for connector trail to FMRVT.

- Known user group projects and developments
  - Ionia Field Trial Grounds Association wants to put in a small barn and perform some vegetation management in course 3. There is also a need for a bridge over one of the creeks in the field trial area.
  - Ionia Horse Trails Association would like to see electrical sites, shelter and host site at the campground and additional trails. Potential for removing south campground loop to turn it into a cowboy skills course.
  - There is potential to develop a gravel pit into a mountain bike skills park/scramble area.
  
- Park Issues
  - There are possible electric issues with increasing demand on the 30amp service.
  - There have been some complaints about the algae on the lake.

#### **Identified stakeholder list**

The planning team drafted a list of stakeholders that will be invited to the input workshop. This will be circulated to the team for further review.

#### **Review stakeholder workshop agenda and schedule meeting**

The Stakeholder workshop will likely to occur in April.

Trevor will look into potential locations (Township Hall or library). Matt will send out potential dates.

#### **Schedule Team Meeting #2**

This will be scheduled after the Stakeholder Meeting has taken place.

**Meeting #2 Summary**  
**Ionian State Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan**  
**May 18, 2017**  
**9:00am -1:00pm**

**Ionian State Recreation Area Headquarters**

**Attendees:**

Trevor McGinn- Unit Supervisor

Matt Lincoln- Lands Program Manager/ Plan Administrator

Ray Fahlsing- Stewardship Program Manager

Murdock Jemerson- District Supervisor

John Niewoonder- Field Operations Manager, Wildlife Division

Laurie Perkins – Education Historian, History

Nikki VanBloem – Trails Specialist

**Review of Meeting #1 Minutes**

- Reviewed “To-Do” items and outlined what needs to be done and who will complete these:
  - Incorporate into Phase 2 body the waterfowl significance which was not identified as a Phase 1 Significance Statement - Matt
  - Update boundary map to include recommended removal of 3 parcels from the project boundary – Sarah
  - Add metal detecting map to plan – Matt
  - Add Field Trail Vegetation Management Plan link to plan – Ray/Matt
  - Update funding source map and funding source descriptions – Sarah/Matt
  - Bald eagle and heron data research – John
  - Add an explanation to the Phase 2 plan about the newly acquired property on the east side and the zoning for this. - Matt (possibly update maps – Sarah)
  - Revise zoning map to define trail types if possible and label Field Trial Areas 1,2,3. - Sarah
  - T&E Species list needs to be updated – Ray/Glenn
  - Provide updated use numbers for the park – Trevor
  - Note in the Phase 2 body that a play area is not present at the Riverside Picnic Area. – Matt
  - Legal mandates update from Meeting #1 Minutes – Matt
- Reviewed items identified in the first meeting and determined which ones to recommend as 10-year action goals.
- Discussion regarding equestrian trails in field trial area and how to clarify use.
- Discussion regarding cultural resources in the park and how to preserve and re-use them.



- Discussion regarding management of Fred Meijer River Valley Trail and hunting regulations that aren't consistent with surrounding Recreation Area.

### **Review of Stakeholder feedback**

- Reviewed Strengths of the park identified and recommended action goals associated with the protection of these strengths.
- Reviewed Weaknesses of the park identified and recommended action goals to address weaknesses.
- Reviewed Opportunities identified and recommended action goals associated with opportunities.
- Reviewed Threats identified and determined that action goals identified above help respond to threats.

### **Next Steps**

- Matt explained that the action goals listed in the meeting will be refined and categorized according to zone and type. The plan will also be drafted.
- Draft action goals and plan will be sent out prior to next meeting for review, which is anticipated to be in July.

**Meeting #3 Summary**  
**Ionian State Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan**  
**June 27, 2017**  
**1:00pm -4:00pm**

**Ionian State Recreation Area Headquarters**

**Attendees:**

Trevor McGinn- Unit Supervisor  
Matt Lincoln- Lands Program Manager/ Plan Administrator  
Debbie Jensen- Park Management Plan Administrator  
Ray Fahlsing- Stewardship Program Manager  
Murdoch Jemerson- District Supervisor  
Joe Strach- Regional Field Planner  
Laurie Perkins – Education Historian, History  
Sarah Burton – Management Plan Assistant

**Review of meeting #2 minutes**

- Reviewed “To-Do” items, most have been completed; addition of the Field Trail Vegetation Management Plan to the appendices is still outstanding.
- Determined that undesignated field trial trails should be removed from DNR maps to avoid future confusion with non-field trial users. Discussed further the shared use of the equestrian trails in field trial area.
- Reviewed the proposed project boundary map and approved the highlighted removed parcel previously discussed.
- Discussed the closing of the Flat River field office which transferred management of 23 boating access sites to Ionian State Recreation Area.
- Discussed additional park significance including 33 farmstead sites on the property.

**Review and refine action goals**

- “Forbidden Trail Day” event was discussed and moved to the Field Trial Overlay Zone. Also discussed the sharing of Field Trial Course #3 between equestrians and field trailers.
- Discussed differences in hunting rules between the Fred Meijer River Valley Trail and the park.
- Discussed developing an annual user group meeting as an action goal.
- There is no number in the Michigan Recreational Boating Information System for the carry down boating site along the river in the primitive zone.

- Discussed the Haynor House re-use and stabilization
- The cultural resource zone was missing from the maps thus was left out from the action goals as well. All relevant goals listed in the general actions goals section will be moved to the cultural resource zone action goals.

### **Schedule public input meeting and confirm location**

Trevor will confirm the High School for the location for the public meeting to be held in September.

### **Identified “To-Do”s**

- Change all naming to say Ionia **State** Recreation Area (Sarah/Matt)
- Pull proposed boundary to corner of David Highway and Harwood Rd and fix typos (Sarah)
- In the management zone map, label it Course 1,2,3 not Field Trail Area 1,2,3 (Sarah)
- Add the cultural resource zone to the management zone map (Sarah)
- Add a significance statement on the 33 foundations/farmsteads on the property as culturally significant (Matt)
- Change all “park manager” to “park supervisor” (Matt)
- Change map in old version of the plan to not show the field trial roads as trails (Sarah/Matt)
- Research hunting regulations on other portions of the FMRVT (Nikki)
- Pull references to GIS section of FD from maps PRD created (Sarah)
- Re-order and refine action goals including footnotes and proper titles (Matt)

**Meeting #4 Summary**  
**Ionian State Recreation Area Phase 2 General Management Plan**  
**October 30, 2017**  
**9:00pm -10:00pm**

**Go-To Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Trevor McGinn- Unit Supervisor  
Matt Lincoln- Lands Program Manager/ Plan Administrator  
Debbie Jensen- Park Management Plan Administrator  
Ray Fahlsing- Stewardship Program Manager  
Murdoch Jemerson- District Supervisor  
Joe Strach- Regional Field Planner  
Laurie Perkins – Education Historian, History  
Scott Hanshue – Fisheries Biologist  
Nikki VanBloem – Trail Specialist

**Reviewed comments received from public input meeting and by e-mail**

- The team reviewed and discussed comments received at the public input meeting.
- E-mails received were reviewed and Matt indicated that responses to the e-mails were addressed.

**Action Goal revisions based on comments received**

- Riverside Picnic Area action goal was clarified to indicate that only the shelter would be removed. Trevor reported that the reason for the removal was high maintenance costs and lack of use.
- Laurie asked if the picnic shelter could serve increased school groups in the future. Trevor felt that the location was not convenient for that use and it was determined that any needs would be addressed after restoration is completed on the school houses.
- An action goal addressing signage to park amenities from the rail trail was added.
- An action goal to improve the Grand River carry-down access site was added.
- Scott Hanshue will provide wording for a general action goal for annual fish stocking of the lake by the Fisheries Division.

**Plan review**

- Ray said the trout stream(s) should be highlighted since there aren't very many in southern Michigan.
- Grammatical and spelling errors were noted and will be addressed.

**Next Steps**

- The revised plan will be circulated to the team for final review. The plan will then be presented to PRD Section Chiefs for approval and MSPAC Stewardship subcommittee for information and comment.