A8. Regional Recreational Resources

This section presents the recreational resources available at Rockport Property as well as recreational facilities in the northeast region.

A8.1 Rockport Property Recreational Resources

While Rockport is primarily undeveloped, much activity occurs within its borders. Current activities include:

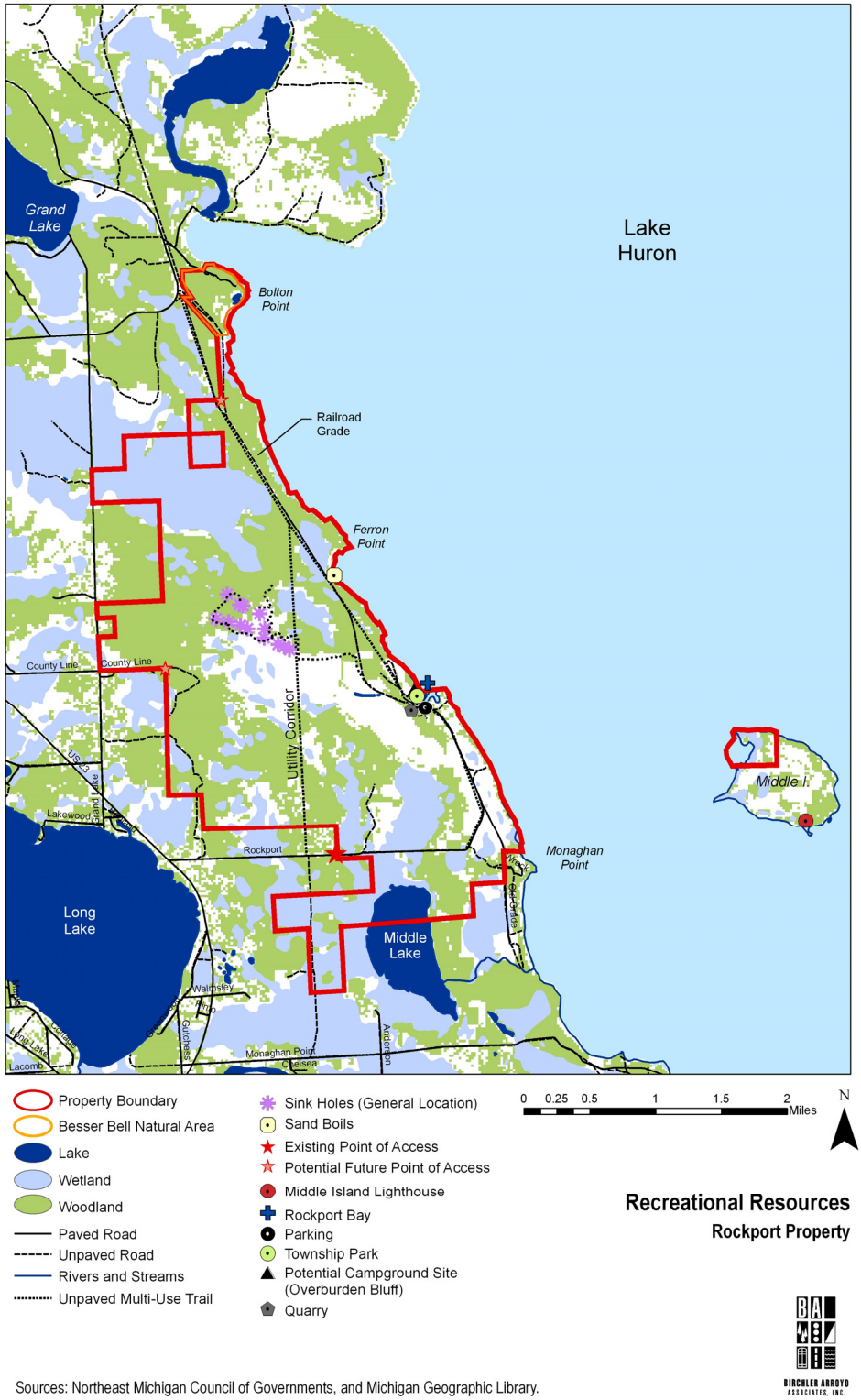
- Boating (Lake Huron accessed from the boat launch at Rockport. There are also public boat access sites to nearby Grand Lake and Long Lake)
- Deep water port
- Scuba diving
- Day-use picnic area
- Hiking trails
- Swimming (northern portion of property by Besser Natural Area
- Biking
- Fossil hunting in quarry
- Fishing
- Hunting and trapping
- Mushroom hunting
- Long-range shooting, Rifle Siting and target practice
- Freighter viewing, Middle Island lighthouse viewing
- Snowmobiling

The day-use picnic area listed above is an area leased by Alpena Township. The PRD entered into a long term lease with Alpena Township in approximately 2000 to utilize 2 acres of the Boat Access Site for development of a small township day use park. Alpena Township received a Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund grant in approximately 2001 for the development of the park facility. Township park improvements were completed in the summer of 2003 and encompass a 200'x300' area near the old shipping dock and include, approximately 25 parking spaces of which 2 are barrier free, picnic tables and grills, wildflower plantings an interpretive display, benches, trees, lawn area and a historical marker. The photo below indicates the boundaries of the leased area (Parcel A in the photo).

Off-road vehicles (ORVs) and equestrian uses are not currently permitted, however the former is known to occur on the property. Visitors are welcome from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, year round. Sinkholes are unique natural features that are of great ecological and educational value. Sinkholes are also a recreation attraction to swimmers and divers. However, the land around sinkholes may not be stable, which poses a safety hazard. A recreation component must be balanced with safety and protection of the resource.

Map 11 presents the recreational resources and natural features currently available within the park.

Map 11: Rockport Property Recreational Resources and Natural Features



A8.2 Surrounding Recreational Resources

Determination of existing recreational facilities and programs is an essential step in the recreation planning process. Regional facilities are illustrated on Map 12, (page A-31) *Regional Recreational Resources*, and summarized in Table 2. The following list describes the recreational resources that are of similar size and scale to Rockport Property, and would therefore have a similar regional draw.

National Forest Land

- Huron-Manistee National Forest: A chain of forest land traversing central Michigan. Uses allowed include dispersed camping, hiking, hunting and trapping, and equestrian trails. There are no designated biking trails and off-road vehicle (ORV) use is allowed in some areas of the National Forest land.

State Forest Land

- Mackinaw State Forest: 717,500 acres of forest land located within eight counties in the northern Lower Peninsula: Alpena; Antrim; Charlevoix; Cheboygan; Emmet; Montmorency; Otsego and Presque Isle. Most of the Mackinaw State Forest was logged for Red and White Pine during the late 1800's, early 1900's. The forest is managed today for second-growth logging, recreation, and tourism purposes. Mackinaw State Forest contributes fifty of the 1,500+ mile North Country Trail, which spans from North Dakota to New York.

State Park Land

- Harrisville State Park: 107 acres. Features include: a campground; day-use area; Michigan State Park Explorer Program; playground; swimming; picnic area (with fire pits and grills); hiking; cross-country skiing; and, metal detecting area.

- Negwegon State Park: 2,500 acres. Currently the Park is primarily a rustic, undeveloped resource. Existing facilities include a parking area, restrooms, a water pump (year-round), and unpaved trail. Activities that can be enjoyed are: hiking (Potawatomi '*People of the Place of Fire'* trail); birding; dispersed snowmobiling; kayaking; beach access; metal detection; and, hunting and trapping.

- Thompson's Harbor State Park: 5,110 acres. Thompson's Harbor is located on the Lake Huron shoreline, is primarily rustic and undeveloped, and has significant natural features. Recreational opportunities include: picnicking; hiking (6 miles of trails, portion of which are handicap accessible); interpretive signage; fishing; hunting and trapping; cross-country skiing (not groomed); biking; Lake Huron access; and snowmobiling (no designated trails). Thompson's Harbor includes a Natural Area, and may also have a Critical Habitat designation for the Hines emerald dragonfly.

- Hoeft State Park: 300 acres. Recreational opportunities include: Michigan State Park Explorer Program; two playground; swimming; picnic area (with fire pits and grills); picnic shelter; biking (10-foot wide paved multi-use path connected to the Huron Sunrise Trail); hiking (4.5 miles); cross-country skiing (groomed trails); metal detecting area; hunting; and fishing.

State Forest Campground

- McCullum Lake State Forest Campground (Clinton Township, Oscoda County):

- Ossineke State Forest Campground (Sanborn Township, Alpena County): 42 camp sites for tent or small trailer use on a first-come/first serve basis, located five miles north of Rockport Property. Recreational opportunities include: barrier-free boardwalk to Lake Huron; picnicking; fishing (Lake Huron, Devil's Lake, Devil's River); hiking and biking (1 mile of trail); boating access site; and ten miles of full-sized ORV trails.

- Thunder Bay River State Forest Campground (Wilson Township, Alpena County): 10 campsites for tent or small trailer use on a first-come/first-serve basis, located 35 miles north of Rockport Property. Campground is sited on the Thunder Bay River, providing water access to every campsite. Recreational opportunities include: small boat launch; Wah-Wah-Tas-See Pathway access (includes Native American interpretive information); vault toilets and potable water from hand pump well; fishing and hunting; hiking; biking; and cross-country skiing.

Natural Areas

- Besser: 134 acres currently under the management of the Mackinaw State Forest. This dedicated Natural Area is significant for its stand of mature, virgin red and white pine with spruce, balsam, cedar and birch. This area also includes over 4,000 feet of Lake Huron shoreline composed primarily of limestone gravel shore, and provides habitat for plant species of special concern, including the Pitcher's thistle, a plant threatened with extinction.

- Approximately 307 acres within Thompson's Harbor are a dedicated Natural Area. This land has been dedicated accordingly because it encompasses a portion of a complex of forested dunes and swales. In Michigan, there are fewer than 50 remaining examples of forested wet swale communities of this quality. This area also supports one of the largest known populations in the world of the federal and state-threatened dwarf lake iris, Michigan's state wildflower. The land is under the management of Thompson's Harbor State Park. Activities to be enjoyed in the Natural Area include: hiking, wildflower viewing, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing.

County Parks

- Alcona County Recreation Area (Harrisville Township, Alcona County). Amenities/activities: Drinking water, restrooms and picnic facilities.

- Beaver Lake County Park (Ossineke Township, Alpena County). Amenities/activities: Fishing, hiking, swimming; camping, boat launch, Convenience Store.

- Long Lake County Park (Alpena Township, Alpena County). Amenities/activities: Fishing, hiking, swimming; camping, boat launch.

- Sunken Lake Campground / Park (Posen Township, Presque Isle County, operated by the Alpena County Parks Commission). Amenities/activities: Fishing, hiking, swimming; camping, boat launch.

Marinas / Boat Launches

There are several points of access to inland lakes and Lake Huron. The facilities that offer access to Lake Huron in the northeast Michigan area are:

- Alpena Municipal Marina
- Hammond Bay State Harbor (Presque Isle County)
- Presque Isle State Harbor (State owned and operated)
- Rogers City Municipal Marina

Other

- Lighthouses. Several lighthouses are located off the northeast Michigan shoreline. Middle Island Lighthouse, Forty-Mile Point Lighthouse, New Presque Isle Lighthouse, Old Presque Isle Lighthouse are generally open to the public and provide a unique aspect of Michigan's history.

  Sturgeon Scenic Point offers parking for visitors interested in visiting the lighthouse and museum on the property. The Alcona Historical Society is responsible for upkeep on the lighthouse, which is owned by the US Coast Guard.

- US-23 Heritage Route. On May 6, 2004, US-23 from Standish to Mackinaw City was officially designated as a Recreational Heritage Route, and given the moniker "Sunrise Side Coastal Highway."

- Bluewater Trail. A proposed trailway comprised of navigable waters. The Rockport property would be part of such a network.
- Huron Greenways. An initiative led by NEMCOG that developed a system of land and water trails connecting Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan and Presque

Isle counties and the resources within them. Thompson's Harbor is one stop within the greenway system.

- ORV Trails. Groomed snowmobile trails on the west side of Presque Isle County and some just south in Alpena County. These trails are used each year by many snowmobile enthusiasts. ORV trails are provided further southwest in the National forest land near Oscoda.

- Great Lakes Circle Tour. The Tour was developed in the late 1980s and consists of a 6.500-mile road network connecting the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. Information about the tour, including campgrounds, recreational areas and local attractions, is available to tourists on-line.

A8.3 Areas of Conflict

With diverse and multiple interests come the potential for conflict between users and/or between users and the natural resources or historic/cultural values of the Recreation Area. Conflicts will be reviewed during Phase II of the General Management Plan process.