

# SAUGATUCK DUNES STATE PARK 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 Saugatuck Dunes State Park.



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation Division  
04/10/2019

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

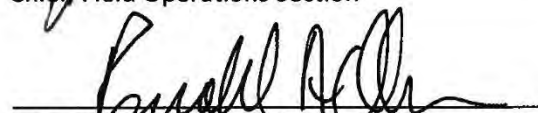
**Saugatuck Dunes Phase 2 General Management Plan Approvals:**

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

7.24.19  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

8/1/19  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

8/7/19  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **PLAN APPROVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Reviewed and approved by:

Kurt Maxwell, Park Supervisor

Joe Strach, Regional Field Planner

Gary Jones, District Supervisor

Ray Fahlsing, Stewardship Unit Manager

Debbie Jensen, Park Management Plan Administrator

## **FOR INFORMATION:**

PRD – SECTION CHIEFS

MSAPC – STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE

NRC – MICHIGAN STATE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL

**RE: Saugatuck Dunes GMP Phase 2 Final Plan Approval:**

I approve Saugatuck Dunes Phase 2 General Management Plan.

Gary Jones  
Plainwell District Supervisor  
621 N. 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Plainwell MI 49080  
269-204-7044

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I approve the Saugatuck Dunes Phase 2 GMP.  
Thank you!

***Debbie Jensen***  
Park Management Plan Administrator  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation Division  
**517-284-6105**  
[JensenD1@michigan.gov](mailto:JensenD1@michigan.gov)

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I approve. Nice job.

Joe Strach

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Looks great! I approve the Saugatuck Dunes Phase 2 General Management Plan .

Thanks,

Kurt

**Kurt Maxwell, Supervisor**  
**Van Buren and Saugatuck Dunes State Parks**  
**Kal-Haven and Van Buren Trail State Parks**  
**269-637-2788**

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I approve the Saugatuck Dunes GMP Phase 2 Plan. I did notice that under state statutes part 351 and 365 of PA 451 of 1994 were missing.

- Ray

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# Table of Contents

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

- 1.1 Planning Objectives**
- 1.2 Plan Process Overview**
- 1.3 Planning Team**
- 1.4 On-Site Survey, Stakeholder and Public Input Overview**

## **Chapter 2: Overview of Phase 1 Plan**

- 2.1 Significance Statements**
- 2.2 Management Zones**
- 2.3 Changes since Phase 1 Plan**
- 2.4 Supporting Documentation Updates**

## **Chapter 3: 10-Year Action Goals**

## **Chapter 4: Implementation Strategy**

- 4.1 Implementation Toolbox**
- 4.2 Documentation of Changes**
- 4.3 Documentation of Accomplishments**
- 4.4 Five-year Review Process**

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Legal Mandates Update**
- Appendix B: Public Input Summary**
- Appendix C: 2017 On-Site Use and User Study Report**

# 1) Introduction

Saugatuck Dunes State Park is located on Lake Michigan in Allegan County, southwest Michigan. This 994-acre park was established for purposes of protecting the park’s unique natural resources, to provide recreation opportunities compatible with the natural resources found at the park and to provide educational and interpretive opportunities reflective of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The park was established in 1978. Recreation activities available at the park include hiking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, fishing, wildlife viewing and swimming all with a backdrop of scenic dunes and 2.5 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.

The General Management Plan (GMP) guides the future long-term management of Saugatuck Dunes State Park, 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.

The Phase 1 GMP for Saugatuck Dunes State Park, approved in March 2010, presents a 20-year management zone plan and defines the purpose and significance of the park. This phase 2 plan builds upon the previous planning step and identifies 10-year action goals to be accomplished in the park as a whole and in each of the management zones. These are implementation items for park staff and partners, addressing infrastructure and park management and operations that impact the resource protection and visitor experience at the park.





**1.2 Plan Process Overview**

The Saugatuck Dunes State Park planning team met periodically over a ten-month period, beginning in February 2018. 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 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 Saugatuck Dunes State Park. An on-site survey conducted by Michigan State University (MSU) in the summer and fall of 2017 also provided user insight to the park. 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 Open House 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.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DIVISION</b>
Kurt Maxwell	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
Glenn Palmgren	Stewardship Ecologist	Parks and Recreation Division
Gary Jones	District Manager	Parks and Recreation Division
Joe Strach	Regional Field Planner	Parks and Recreation Division
Matt Metzger	Park Ranger	Parks and Recreation Division
Jill Sell	Trails Specialist	Parks and Recreation Division
Lisa Gamero	Cultural Resource Analyst	Parks and Recreation Division
Matt Diana	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries Division
Gerald Thayer	District Lieutenant	Law Enforcement Division
Scott Jones	Planning Specialist	Forest Resources Division
Don Poppe	Field Operations Manager	Wildlife Division
Peter Rose	Geologist	Minerals Management

#### 1.4 On-site Survey, Stakeholder and Public Input Overview

An on-site survey was conducted by Michigan State University (MSU) between June and November 2017. This survey provided representative sampling of park visitors to ascertain visitor demographics, park experience and suggested changes/things not to change. Of the questionnaires distributed to a sample of those visitors who arrived by vehicle, 118 were completed and returned by respondents. Data analysis showed that the average amount of time a day visitor vehicle was in the park was 3.1 hours and the day visitor party averaged 2.8 people per vehicle. Many visitors from out-of-state contributed significantly to local spending in the region. The five most common activities at the park were hiking, swimming, sunbathing, nature observation and photography, with hiking as the most important park activity noted. Visitors were generally very satisfied with their visit, with 97% of respondents giving the park a favorable level of satisfaction. While most respondents would like to see no changes to the park, additional restrooms, improved trail signage and drinking water at the beach were suggested. The full On-site Use and User Study Report is provided in Appendix C.

A Stakeholder Workshop was held on April 26, 2018 at the Laketown Township Hall, Holland, Michigan. A total of 39 invitations were sent to organizations associated with, or that have an interest in, Saugatuck Dunes State Park. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the park. A total of 23 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 convenient location in proximity to population centers. Natural resource and experiential strengths identified included the park's beautiful lakeshore, designated Natural Area, unfragmented forests, and an immersive, quiet experience unique to Lake Michigan parks. The connection to the Felt Mansion and Laketown Township Park was also noted as a strength.



Weaknesses of the park identified by stakeholders in attendance include: lack of accessibility, lack of parking, limited public land ownership, vandalism, entry and trail signage, and lack of stewardship among users. A lack of connection to the regional bike trail was also listed as a weakness.

Opportunities identified include sharing resources with the neighboring township park, a welcome kiosk with educational information, entry signs, land expansion, trail links to downtown Saugatuck and cross-promotion with regional tourist organizations. Recognition of former State Senator Patty Birkholtz and her contribution to environmental protection at the park was also identified.

Threats identified by stakeholders included invasive species, forest pests, lack of funding, overuse, neighboring development, politics and lake levels.

The public was invited to an open house on October 23 at the Felt Estate Carriage House to review the Phase 2 General Management Plan 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 e-mail. A press release went out 2 weeks in advance of the open house to 13,623 recipients of the government-delivery system, including 39 stakeholders associated with the park.

A total of 39 people attended the open house. the Draft 10-year Action Goals were well received. Many attendees favored expanding the park boundaries to protect undeveloped coastal environments and to continue to improve the trail system and park wayfinding signage.



## 2) Overview of Phase 1 Plan

The Phase 1 GMP for Saugatuck Dunes State Park was approved on March 29, 2010. 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

Saugatuck Dunes State Park was determined to be significant for the following reasons. These statements contain minor corrections made by the phase 2 planning team without changing the original meaning or intent.

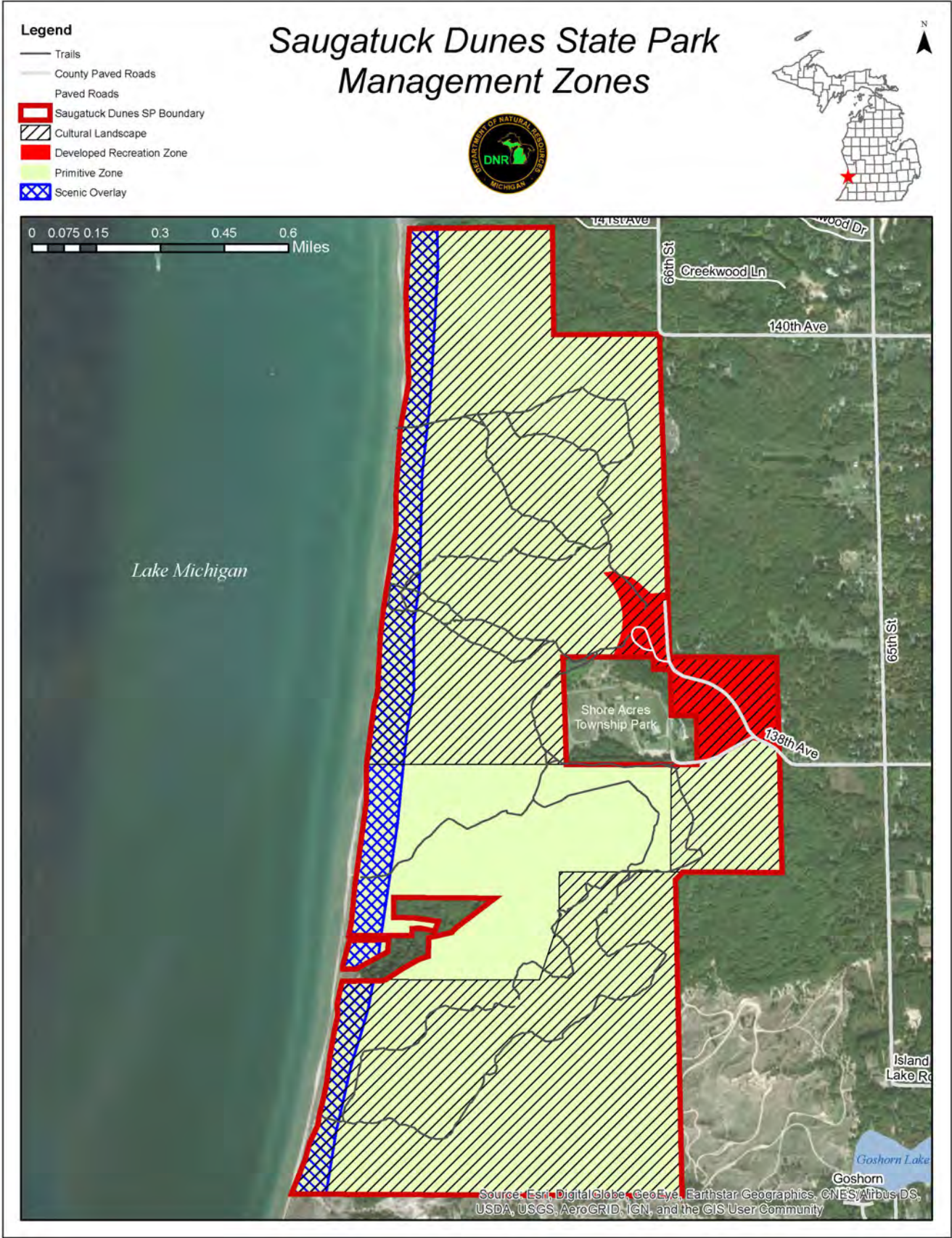
- Saugatuck Dunes State Park offers the public 2.5 miles of pristine Lake Michigan shoreline.
- Saugatuck Dunes State Park contains fresh water coastal dunes over 200 feet tall, with terrain varying from steep slopes to rolling hills. Three elements are represented in this park: open dunes, mesic southern forest and interdunal wetland.
- Saugatuck Dunes State Park provides year-round opportunities for recreation, education and enjoyment within a natural setting and allows access to Lake Michigan.
- Most of Saugatuck Dunes State Park lies within the designated critical dune area, which is subject to statewide development restrictions pursuant to the Sand Dunes Protection Act of 1978.
- The park also contains a dedicated Natural Area due to its significance of open dunes, mesic southern forest, interdunal wetlands, large blowouts, and wooded dunes. Pitcher's thistle, listed as threatened by the state and federal governments, occurs within this area. In addition, the State-endangered prairie warbler uses the open dunes in summer and variety of migrating songbirds use the red oak dominated forested dunes in the spring and fall.
- Cultural resources found in Saugatuck Dunes State Park include the historic Felt Mansion (owned and operated by Laketown Township) and the associated Felt Farm. Artists have also been inspired by the park's beauty.
- The Felt family's history of environmental stewardship and alternative energy development has significant potential to provide educational opportunities.
- Dune restoration is on-going at Saugatuck Dunes State Park to remove non-native and inappropriate vegetation.

## 2.2 Management Zones

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

- Primitive Zone, approximately 949 acres (95%) of the park, reflects a desired condition that emphasizes the natural resources. Almost all of Saugatuck Dunes State Park, comprising the designated Critical Dunes Area, is designated Primitive Zone and will be managed to only allow dispersed and low frequency use for low impact recreational purposes.
- Scenic Overlay Zone, approximately 99 acres (10%), recognizes that there are aesthetic qualities to be preserved and protected in the park. While much of the park has high scenic qualities, the Lake Michigan shoreline was identified during the planning process as a scenic overlay.
- Cultural Landscape Zone, approximately 787 acres (79%), recognizes that there are not only historical structures, but also non-structural evidence of the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts and social institutions of any community. The former Felt estate, to which most of the park once belonged, can play a role in educating the public about the significance of the Felts from a historic and environmental perspective.
- Developed Recreation Zone, approximately 45 acres (5%), 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. The Developed Recreation Zone includes the existing parking area and land either side of the road leading into the park. It was noted in the Phase 1 plan that opportunities for overnight accommodations (e.g., camping) in this zone would be explored in the Phase 2 planning.





## **2.3 Changes Since Phase 1 Plan**

### Management

A portion of the Felt Estate property lies within Saugatuck Dunes State Park and is leased to Laketown Township to operate and maintain the property as a cohesive complex which includes the Felt Estate Carriage House. The lease with Laketown Township was extended in 2012 for the Carriage House and surrounding property. The lease is now a renewable 25-year lease allowing for Laketown Township to begin renovations of the Carriage House.

Since 2013, lake levels have steadily increased and beach erosion is occurring, leaving little beach in some areas.

During busy summer days, overflow parking spills out onto the county road and grassy areas of the park are used for overflow parking.

### Visitor Use

Since the inception of the Recreation Passport, visitor use has increased throughout the entire year. Visitor attendance has increased from 118,176 in 2014 to 194,504 in 2017. As a result of the increase in visitor use, vault toilets often fill to capacity and need to be pumped more frequently. Winter hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other winter recreation activities are also occurring more often at the park.

### Developments

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

- Trail signage was upgraded in 2017.
- Staging areas along the road leading to in-holdings were developed to improve local emergency response.
- Vault toilets were updated in 2017.
- Picnic shelter roof was replaced in 2017.
- A hand pump for potable water was added in the day use area.
- Benches were added and repaired in 2012.

### Shore Acres Township Park

Several additions have been made to the neighboring Shore Acres Township Park since 2010 including a mountain bike loop, pump track, wedding chapel and a disc golf course.

### Boundary

Several attempts have been made since 2010 to acquire property located south and north of the park without success. However, the property south of the channel was purchased by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan for coastal dune preservation purposes. The planning team reviewed the NRC approved 2004 project boundary for the park and recommended the following changes:

- Removed the property south of the channel as it is now owned by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan.
- Added additional land on the north end of the park to provide additional road access and to protect wooded dune ecosystems.







The land between the southern park boundary and the channel is within the 2004 NRC approved project boundary and also included in the recommended 2018 project boundary. This property is proposed for residential development and conservation areas. The DNR maintains an interest in the protection of the natural resources associated with this property.



**Saugatuck Dunes State Park from the air**

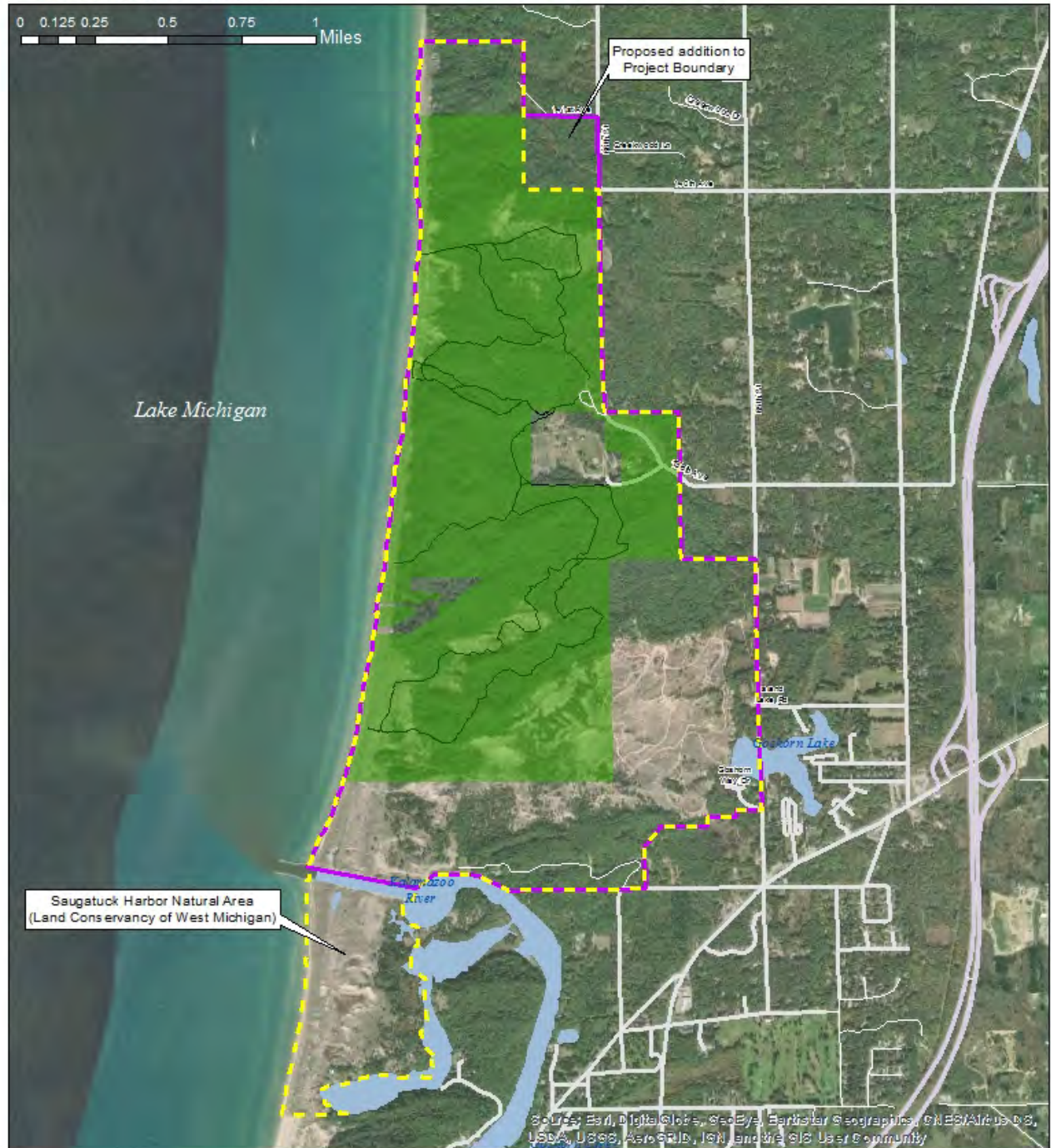
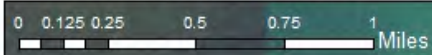


**Legend**

-  2004 Project Boundary\*, Approved by the NRC
-  Recommended 2018 Project Boundary
-  Saugatuck Dunes State Park Boundary
-  Trails
-  County Paved Roads
-  Highway

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

# Saugatuck Dunes State Park Boundary Map



Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User community

## 2.4 Supporting Documentation Updates

### Threatened and Endangered Species

The following is the list of Threatened and Endangered Species found at the park according to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

Rare animals:

Prairie warbler ( <i>Setophaga discolor</i> )	State Endangered
Cerulean warbler ( <i>Setophaga cerulea</i> )	State Threatened
Hooded warbler ( <i>Setophaga citrina</i> )	State Special Concern

Rare plants:

Pitcher's thistle ( <i>Cirsium pitcheri</i> )	Federal Threatened and State Threatened
Ginseng ( <i>Panax quinquefolius</i> )	State Threatened
Bladderwort ( <i>Utricularia subulata</i> )	State Threatened
Meadow beauty ( <i>Rhexia virginica</i> )	State Special Concern

The following exemplary natural communities have been documented within the park.

Interdunal Wetland
Mesic Northern Forest
Open Dunes

### Minerals

100% of mineral rights are owned by the State of Michigan for Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

### Annual Visitation

In 2017, Saugatuck Dunes State Park day-use visitation was estimated at 194,504.

### Legal Mandates

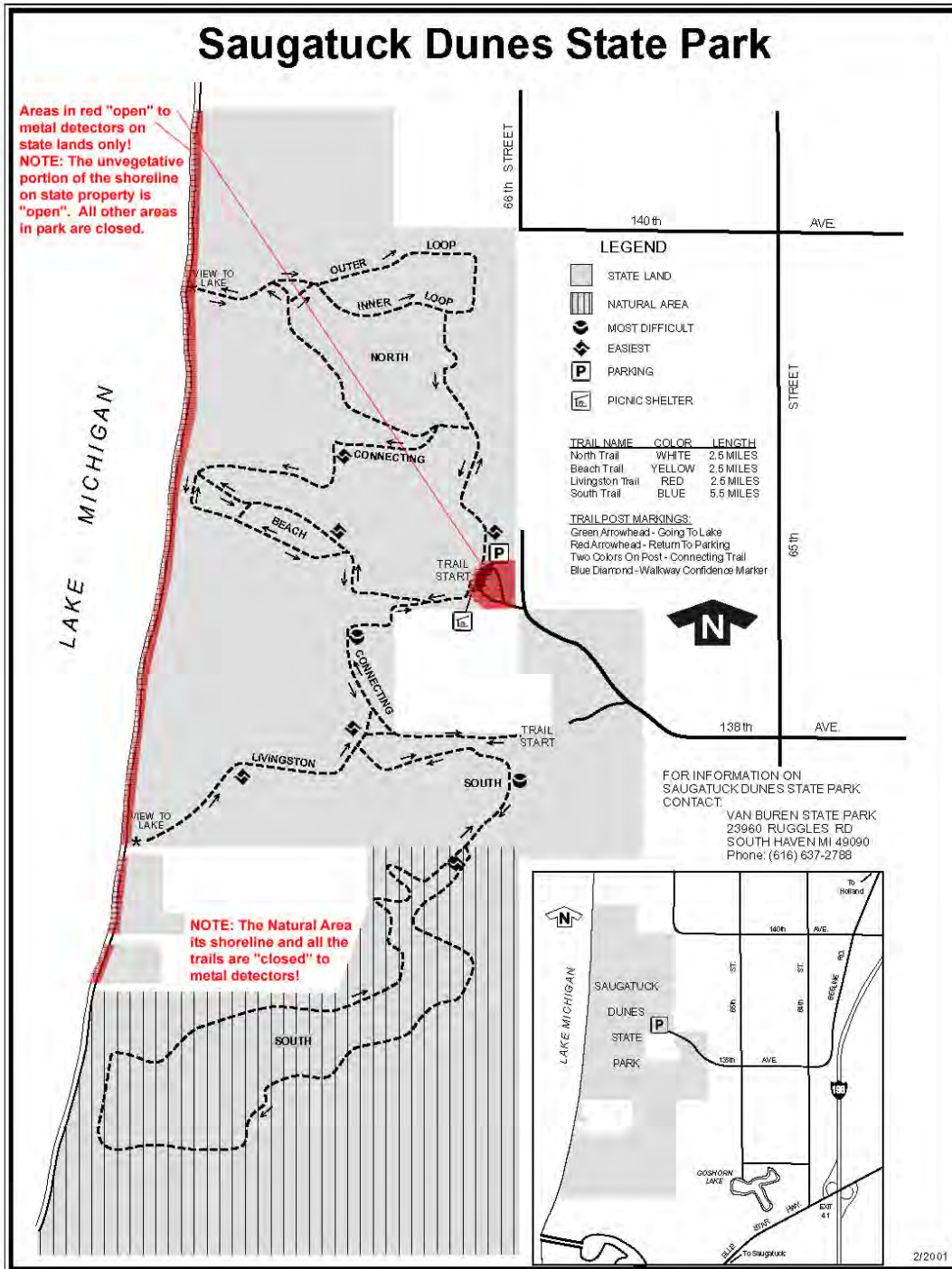
Legal Mandates have been updated and are included in Appendix A of this plan for reference.

## Metal Detecting

A metal detecting map as shown below depicts the areas open to metal detecting.

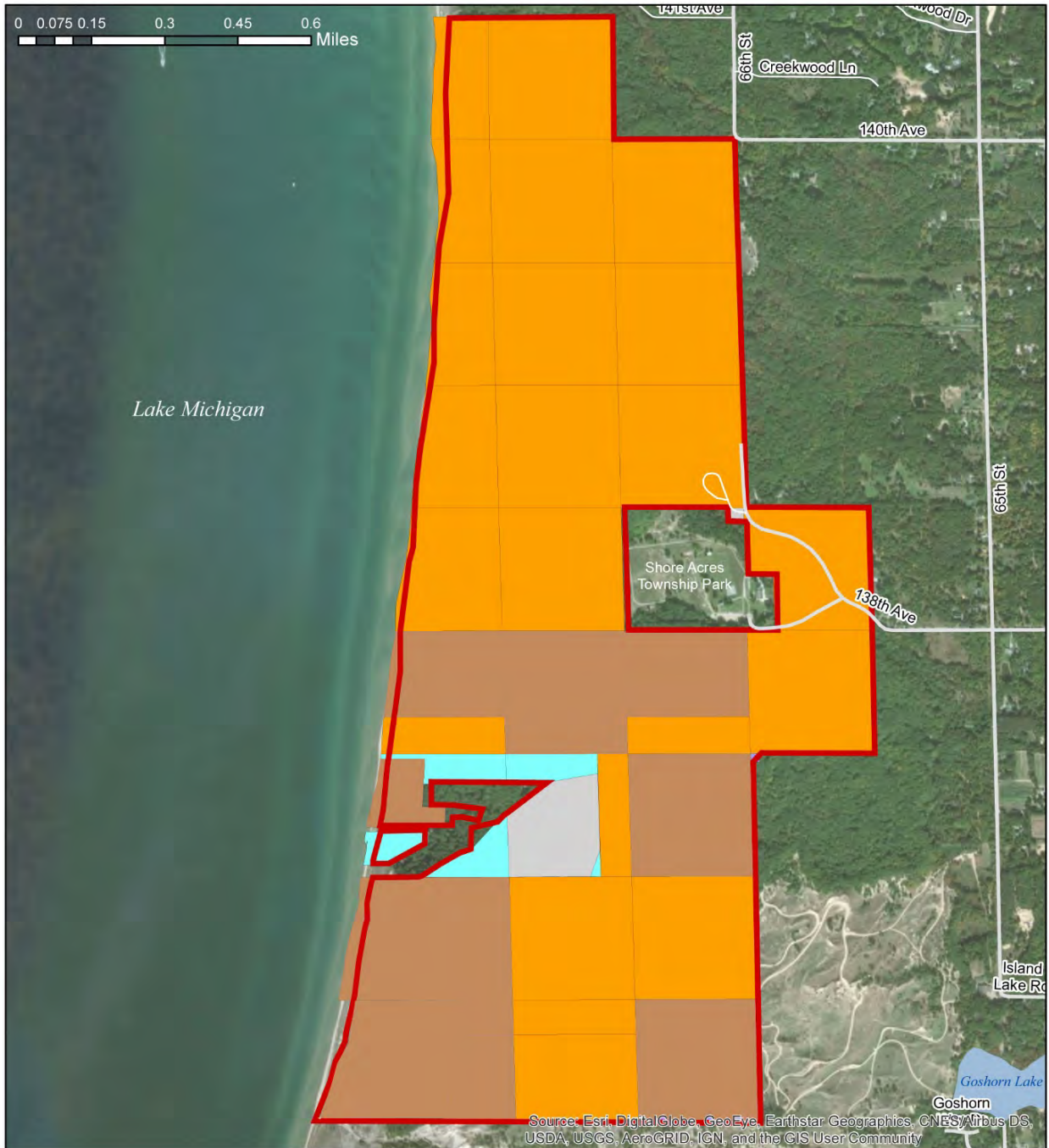
## Funding Sources

An updated funding source map has been produced for the park, depicting the funding sources used to purchase property for the park. A description of these funding sources can be found in the Phase 1 Plan.



# Saugatuck Dunes State Park Funding Sources

- Legend**
- County Paved Roads
  - Paved Roads
  - Saugatuck Dunes SP Boundary
  - Funding Source DNR Parcels**
  - Other Funds
  - Dingell-Johnson Fund
  - Game & Fish Fund
  - Gift
  - Mich Natural Resources Trust Fund
  - Multiple Funds
  - Special Legislation
  - State Game Fund



### 3) 10–Year Action Goals

The Action Goals proposed for Saugatuck Dunes State Park were developed by the planning team in response to stakeholder and public input and in context with the core values and guiding resources discussed in the Phase 1 Plan. This park has experienced a substantial increase in attendance in recent year, prompting the planning team to determine how to better accommodate increased use while maintaining the natural character of the park. Priorities identified in this plan include parking lot expansion, signage improvements and continued natural resource protection. Working collaboratively with Laketown Township and other regional partners is also a priority, 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. As part of this initiative, economic prosperity regions were established. Saugatuck Dunes State Park is in Economic Prosperity Region #4. Other improvements proposed will continue to maintain and improve the recreation opportunities available at Saugatuck Dunes State Park 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 two designated management zones and two overlay zones in order to achieve the desired user experience. Action goals are categorized under two types: Management and Operations and as Infrastructure and Development which is further broken down to small projects and capital outlay projects. These categories align with the PRD Strategic Plan as well as the annual Capital Outlay funding process. Action goals are recommended to address the following categories:

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

Management plans are based on known needs, funding realities and sound investment policies, but do not guarantee future PRD funding to achieve the actions identified. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan. On an annual basis, PRD districts determine priorities for project planning and project capital outlay. Each district’s top projects are then evaluated at a state-wide level for available funds.

The following 10-year action goals are ranked in terms of priority based on health, safety, and welfare, as well as ease of implementation (cost, ability to implement with own staff, partnerships etc.). Priority Level 1 projects indicate those that should be addressed within the next 2 years. Priority Level 2 projects include those that should be addressed within 2-5 years. Priority Level 3 projects are desired, but can be tackled in the next 5-10 years, once funding has been identified. The Program Input From column identifies the team members for each goal with the team leader identified in bold.

<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; OPERATIONS</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Review and update Wildfire Plan and Emergency Plan	Annually	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Stewardship Forest Resources
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	All	Stewardship Volunteers <b>Park Supervisor</b>
Continue to complete and comply with annual safety inspections and plans	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Continue to explore land acquisition of properties within the recommended 2018 project boundary on a willing-buyer/willing-seller basis	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Land Liaison
Continue to work towards addressing staffing needs in response to increased park use	Ongoing	All	<b>District Supervisor</b> Park Supervisor
Continue to strengthen partnership with Laketown Township	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Laketown Township
Continue surveillance for archaeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Cultural Resource Analyst State Archaeologist
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	All	<b>Cultural Resource Analyst</b> Field Planner
Evaluate future proposals as may be submitted to connect the park to existing regional trail network	Ongoing	All	<b>Trail Analyst</b> Field Planner Park Supervisor
Continue to manage the recommended natural area in the same manner as the designated Natural Area	Ongoing	Primitive	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Continue to maintain and improve park boundary markers	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Continue program of graffiti removal/treatment and enforcement	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>

<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; OPERATIONS (Continued)</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Provide education on pet policy to improve visitor's experience at the park	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Complete a Natural Resources Stewardship Plan for the park, identifying targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies.	1	All	<b>Stewardship Ecologist</b> Park Supervisor
Investigate a registration system for school groups to inform DNR staff of visits	1	All	<b>Marketing &amp; Outreach</b> Park Supervisor
Work with local partners to recognize former Senator Patty Birkholtz and her work on environmental protection at the park (specifically the naming of the Natural Area)	1	All	<b>District Supervisor</b> Stewardship Park Supervisor Local Partners
Seek solutions to issues associated with parking on county road, including safety concerns, customer service expectations, recreation passport revenue and resource damage	1	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Road Commission
Work towards establishing a Friends Group for the park.	2	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Coordinate with Lake Michigan Water Trail to include park information for trail users	2	All	<b>Trail Analyst</b> Park Supervisor
Partner with regional tourist organizations and local communities to cross-promote and provide regional facility information	2	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Local Partners
Determine the need for existing pump house and easement or remove as warranted	3	Primitive	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Laketown Township Land Liaison
Work towards expanding the dedicated Natural Area as defined in the Phase 1 General Management Plan	2	Primitive	<b>Stewardship</b>

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; DEVELOPMENT: CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Develop a concept plan for proposed facilities including cold storage building, information kiosk, parking lot expansion, entry booth, picnic shelter replacement and restrooms	1	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor District Supervisor Stewardship
Construct additional vault toilets and/or explore upgraded restroom facilities (rustic) in response to increased park use	2	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor
Expand parking capacity in response to increased park use while being sensitive to the carrying capacity of the park's natural resources	2	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor Stewardship
Construct cold storage building in partnership with Laketown Township	2	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor District Supervisor Laketown Township
Replace picnic shelter	3	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor



**A school group learns about the dunes**



<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; DEVELOPMENT: SMALL PROJECTS</b>			
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Management Zone</b>	<b>Program Input From</b>
Continue to improve trail signage/maps throughout the park, including park entry signs from Shore Acres Township Park	Ongoing	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Improve signage on inholding driveways to inform trail users	1	Primitive	<b>Park Supervisor</b>
Install entry sign to direct visitors into the parking lot from the county road	1	Developed	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Road Commission
Work with Laketown Township and the Allegan County Road Commission to explore parking lot capacity signage before entering the park	1	N/A	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Road Commission Laketown Township
Replace park entry booth	1	Developed	<b>Field Planner</b> Park Supervisor
Investigate opportunities to provide all-terrain wheelchairs to improve park accessibility	2	All	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Laketown Township
Construct information kiosk to highlight area attractions, park education, warnings, and park history	3	Developed	<b>Park Supervisor</b> Field Planner Local partners Marketing and Outreach



## 4) Implementation Strategy

This chapter of the general management plan (GMP) provides guidance for implementation of the action goals and maintaining the plan so it remains relevant in the long term. These guidelines will also help the park align the action goals with park, district and statewide annual funding processes and annual tasks outlined in the Parks and Recreation Division's Strategic Plan or other planning documents. Although the implementation of the GMP will require commitment from staff at every level, it will be the primary responsibility of the Unit Supervisor/Manager to oversee plan implementation.

A long-range plan such as this must maintain a degree of flexibility in order to be responsive to changing circumstances or opportunities that cannot be foreseen. It is recognized that some goals may be accomplished in a short time frame, while others may carry over through multiple years. It will be important to track progress so that the plan remains a relevant park management tool. The GMP will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains viable.

### **4.1 Implementation Toolbox**

The following is a list of items to consider when reviewing and prioritizing the implementation of action goals identified in the GMP.

#### Coordination/ Communication

- Meet regularly with the Regional Field Planner and District Supervisor to coordinate and prioritize large capital projects for capital outlay requests.
- Maintain an open dialogue with local partners and stakeholders to coordinate community-related projects as identified in the action goals.
- Follow-up regularly on progress for action goals that are not the primary responsibility of the Unit Supervisor/Manager with the responsible program position.

#### Funding

- Identify estimated cost for each capital improvement/infrastructure project, with assistance from Regional Field Planner or other planning and infrastructure section staff as needed.
- Identify potential funding sources for each project/task. Liaise with PRD grants coordinator as appropriate.
- Align potential funding sources with the annual "call for projects" in July for capital outlay funding requests.
- Review action goals list and determine which projects can be requested to receive District Small Project funding through the District Supervisor.

#### Scheduling

- Further prioritize projects based on need, funding, staffing and other constraints and opportunities.
- Incorporate project/task assignments into annual staff performance objectives

## **4.2 Documentation of Changes**

The Unit Supervisor/Manager should keep a record of any major changes to the park since approval of the GMP and note potential updates that may be required in the future. Documenting these changes will assist in the 5-year plan review or when the GMP is updated. Changes may include:

- New user requests or conflicts
- Emerging recreation, funding or partnership opportunities
- Changes in land management
- Land transactions or changes to the Approved Project Boundary
- Major infrastructure projects or removal of structures

Changes may be documented by marking up the park's copy of the GMP or maintaining a log that is kept with the GMP. In reviewing the action goals for changes, document goals that may become irrelevant or are no longer viable, as well as proposed new action goals, including justification.

The management zoning map should also be reviewed regularly. Any proposed changes to the map related to land acquisition or disposal, errors in the original zoning, or land management changes should be documented. Note that the park zoning is intended to be a long-term document: changes will only be considered with adequate justification and are subject to a formal review and approval process.

## **4.3 Documentation of Accomplishments**

As action goals are completed, the Unit Supervisor/Manager should mark them as such in the park's copy of the GMP, including the completion date. This will also help to maintain a log of accomplishments for district and division-wide reporting purposes, including PRD's strategic plan.

## **4.4 Five-year Review Process**

General management plans are reviewed every five years from the date of approval of either the phase 2 plan or the complete GMP. The planning team for the 5-year review is made up of the Park Management Plan Administrator, Unit Supervisor/Manager, Regional Field Planner and District Supervisor, with other team members included as may be necessary. A 5-Year Review Form will be used to record all changes to the plan within the past 5 years. Upon reviewing the GMP and the documented changes, the planning team will determine whether the changes warrant a complete update of the plan.

If there are no major changes required in either the zoning or the action goals, the planning team will complete the 5-Year Review Form and attach it as a supplement to the existing GMP. If zoning changes are needed, the GMP will be revised or updated following the established planning process led by the Park Management Plan Administrator. If changes to the action goals only are required, the phase 2 GMP planning process will be implemented.

# 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 Saugatuck Dunes State Park 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.
<b>NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, 1966 AS AMENDED</b>
This is the primary federal law governing the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States. The law establishes a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections which encourage the identification and protection of cultural and historic resources of national, state, tribal and local significance.

## 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 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 325 Great Lakes Submerged Bottomlands</b>	A permit is required for all filling, dredging, and placement of permanent structures (i.e., docks, piers, pilings, etc.) below the "ordinary high water mark" and on all upland channels extending landward of the "ordinary high water mark" of the Great Lakes.
<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.**

#### **5.16a 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:

(71) Saugatuck SP, Allegan county.

### **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDERS**

State Parks and Recreation Areas

[NONE]

### **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.

There are no designated mountain biking or equestrian trails at the park.

# 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.

## **Stakeholder Workshop**

A stakeholder meeting was held on April 26, 2018 at the Laketown Township Hall, Holland, Michigan to guide the phase 2 general management plan for Saugatuck Dunes State Park. Participants were invited to provide their input, identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to the park. A total of 23 participants represented government, business and tourism and non-profit organizations from around the region. The meeting began with a short presentation of the phase 1 general management plan that was completed in 2010 and a review of the planning process for this phase 2 plan. Input gathered at the meeting is listed below:

### **STRENGTHS**

- Great asset
- Economic driver
- Unique
- Public policy

### **Location**

- Convenient
- Easily accessible for rescue
- Close to interstate
- Close to non-motorized trails
- Can be accessed by the water (Lake Michigan Water Trail)

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- Beautiful lakeshore
- One of only 20 natural areas
- Healthy habitat
- Large block of unfragmented forest
- Connection and immersive nature experience
- Link to Felt Mansion for Heritage and tourism
- Winter ice - inspirational

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

- Beautiful lakeshore
- Primitive
- Quiet/lots of space
- Unmarked trails
- Cross country skiing

- Well maintained
- Low impact
- Inclusive/ family friendly
- Park offers diversity within the State Park System
- Research opportunities – university students
- School trips
- No camping
- Park management – very responsive

## **WEAKNESSES**

### **Facilities**

- Too small
- Lack of buffer zone around dedicated natural area
- Vandalism
- Lack of accessibility (ADA)
- Park boundary is not marked well (corners)
- No spur on bike path to beach/bike parking
- Inholdings are uncomfortable/uncertainty
- Lack of parking/transportation
- Signage
- Lack of “Sense of Arrival”
- No camping

### **Management/Marketing/ outreach**

- Uncertainty among users
- Lack of management of expectations to visitors
- Lack of respect for nature
- People getting lost on trails
- People not staying on trails
- Not following through on park expansion opportunities (Land Consolidation Plan)
- Contact shed looks run-down

### **Community Relationships**

- Laketown Township beach is small and has limited parking



## **OPPORTUNITIES**

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

- Recognize Patty Birkholtz Natural Area with a marker
- Sign secondary entrances to the park (e.g. from Township park)
- Signage that doesn't detract
- All-terrain wheelchair
- Educational material
- Dummy cameras and signage to combat vandalism
- Tick warning information
- Welcome center/information center – upgrade the contact shed
- Promote/facilitate beach clean-up
- Dog park (need identified in Township)
- Any new structures should be in harmony with the environment (e.g. timber material, routed wood signs)
- Consider bike trails outside of critical dune area
- Land expansion
- Water trail awareness

### **Partnerships**

- Bike trail from downtown Saugatuck to the park
- Other modes of transportation to the park – interurban
- Share assets with the Township Park (e.g. all-terrain wheelchair)
- Promote partnerships to save on costs
- Promote city amenities
- County tourism for information
- Form a steering committee/ regular stakeholder meetings to complete tasks
- Linkages – continued trail development Holland to South Haven
- Use Carpool parking lot east of highway with shuttle to park

### **Cultural resources**

- Provide information on history/cultural aspects of the park

### **Funding and Promotion**

- MACC grants – joint brochure/app.
- WMTA – regional tourist association
- Regional recreation map

**THREATS**

- Invasive species
- Forest pests (HWA/ Oak Wilt)
- Lack of funding to address invasive species
- Unmanaged or poorly managed growth
- Overuse
- Neighboring development
- Cell tower (impacting views, etc.)
- Political climate
- DNR needs to speak up for protection
- Lake Levels/ erosion

<b>Stakeholder Meeting Attendees</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Sarah Bushee	Graafshap Fire Department
Randy Knapp	Michigan’s Edge Mountain Bike Association
Mark Kappel	Michigan’s Edge Mountain Biking Association
Sally Winthers	State Park Hikers Group
Erik Kirchert	State Park Hikers Group
Vic Bella	State Park Hikers Group
Linus Starring	Saugatuck Dune Rides
Marcia Perry	Laketown Township
Patty Meyer	Felt Estate
Brandy Gildes	Allegan County Parks
Thomas Shuff	Laketown Twp. Parks and Recreation
Laurie Goshorn	League of Woman Voters
Michelle Sall	Laketown Twp. Parks and Recreation
Keith Walter	
Scott Bosproof	Southern Neighbor
Chris Roerig	Saugatuck Township
David Swan	CCSDSP
Nathan Nietering	Saugatuck Dunes History Center
April Scholtz	West Michigan Land Conservancy
David C. Bos	Windemere

<b>Stakeholder Meeting Attendees (continued)</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Marylynn Webster	Laketown Township
Aaron Sheridan	Saugatuck Township
Melanie LaPerriere	Resident
Deb Shields	Senator Shuitmaker

**Planning Team Attendees:** Matt Lincoln (Park Planner/Land Liaison), Debbie Jensen (Park Management Plan Administrator), Kurt Maxwell (Unit Supervisor), Matt Metzger (Lead Ranger), Joe Strach (Regional Field Planner), Lisa Gamero (Cultural Resource Specialist), Matt Diana (Fisheries Biologist)

## **Public Open House**

The public was invited to an open house on October 23 at the Felt Estate Carriage House to review the Phase 2 General Management Plan 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 e-mail. A press release went out 2 weeks in advance of the open house to 13,623 recipients of the government-delivery system, including 39 stakeholders associated with the park.

A total of 39 people attended the open house. the Draft 10-year Action Goals were well received. Many attendees favored expanding the park boundaries to protect undeveloped coastal environments and to continue to improve the trail system and park wayfinding signage.

# **Open house Oct. 23 re: Saugatuck Dunes State Park draft management plan**

Michigan Department of Natural Resources sent this bulletin at 10/11/2018 10:40 AM EDT

 Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**

*- DNR NEWS -*

Oct. 11, 2018  
Contact: [Matt Lincoln](#), 517-284-6111

**Public open house Oct. 23 on next phase of Saugatuck Dunes State Park management plan**



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is seeking public input on a new draft "phase 2" general management plan for Saugatuck Dunes State Park in Allegan County.

The phase 2 general management plan defines a long-range (10- to 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.

The public is invited to share their opinions and ideas via email or at an open house Tuesday, Oct. 23, 5 to 7 p.m. at the Felt Estate Carriage House, 6597 138th Ave. in Holland. People are welcome to attend at any time during the two-hour open house to review the planning material, share comments and talk to DNR staff.

Comments also can be made via email through Oct. 30 to Matt Lincoln at [lincolnm@michigan.gov](mailto:lincolnm@michigan.gov).

The [draft phase 2 general management plan](#) and additional information on the DNR's general management planning process can be found on the department's website at [michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans](http://michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans).

Saugatuck Dunes State Park is home to 13 miles of sandy hiking trails and beautiful views of Lake Michigan. The 994-acre park provides recreation activities compatible with the park's unique natural resources, including swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, picnicking, interpretive education and wildlife viewing. The park also is home to the Patty Birkholz Natural Area, critical dunes and 2.5 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.

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.

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**/Note to editors:** An accompanying photo showing a beach view at Saugatuck Dunes State Park is available upon request./

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**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
SAUGATUCK DUNES STATE PARK  
PHASE 2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Public Input Open House  
October 23, 2018, 5pm to 7pm  
Felt Estate Carriage House**

Welcome! Please review the boards around the room and provide feedback using the instructions below. The Department of Natural Resources will use your feedback to refine the Phase 2 General Management Plan for Saugatuck Dunes State Park. DNR staff members are available if you have any questions.

1. Please use the GREEN dots provided to indicate the 10-year action goals you feel are most important. Please use only one dot per goal.
2. If there is a goal you do not agree with, please use a YELLOW dot and a sticky note explaining why you do not agree with it.
3. Also use sticky notes to provide any other comments on the boards.
4. You may also use the comment forms provided to provide feedback.

**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 Kurt Maxwell, [maxwellk@michigan.gov](mailto:maxwellk@michigan.gov)

**Phone:** 517-284-6111 or 269-637-2788

### Open House Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Elizabeth VanArk	
Pat Denner	
Jake R. Dicki	Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Alliance
Stephen and Joan Hasper	
Glenn DeJong	
Mary Lynn Webster	
Christopher Saldivar	Hiker
Scott Dean	DEQ
Scott Bosgreet	Neighbor
Bill Brace	Neighbor
Cindy Osman	Neighbor
R. Craig Osman	Neighbor
Tom Harrington	Neighbor
Becky Bruns	Neighbor
Charles F. Krammin	North County Trail
Barbary Brockway	Neighbor
Thomas Brockway	Neighbor
Ric Gillette	Neighbor
Megan Scheerhorn	Saugatuck Brewery
Sharon Harrington	Neighbor
Fran Popostki	Neighbor
James Schmiechen	
Kevin Stoike	Local Resident
Marcia Perry	Laketown Township Planning Commission
Mat VanHowe	Local Resident
Laurie Gasharn	Laketown Township Parks
Jon Helmrich	WMEAC
Michael Floch	Citizen
Sally Winthers	Hiker
Erick Kerchert	Hiker
Mark Randall	Hiker
Ted Reyda	Hiker
Vic Bella	
David Blatt	
Larry Dickie	
Tracy Shafroth	
Cynthia McKean	
Gary Kott	
Dayle Harrison	

**DNR Employees Present:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
Debbie Jensen	Management Plan Administrator
Matt Lincoln	Lands Program Manager/Plan Administrator
Kurt Maxwell	Unit Supervisor
Matt Metzger	Park Ranger
Scott Jones	Forest Resources Planner
Joe Strach	Regional Field Planner

Meeting attendees were asked to place green dots on action goals they considered to be the most important and yellow dots on those that they disagreed with. The total number of dots for each goal is illustrated below:

<b>MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS</b>		
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Review and update Wildfire Plan and Emergency Plan	Annually	5
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	20
Continue to complete and comply with annual safety inspections and plans	Ongoing	1
Continue to explore land acquisition of properties within the recommended 2018 project boundary on a willing-buyer/willing-seller basis	Ongoing	30
Continue to work towards addressing staffing needs in response to increased park use	Ongoing	1
Continue to strengthen partnership with Laketown Township	Ongoing	3
Continue surveillance for archaeological and cultural resources	Ongoing	6
Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	Ongoing	5
Evaluate future proposals as may be submitted to connect the park to existing regional trail network	Ongoing	4
Continue to manage the recommended natural area in the same manner as the designated Natural Area	Ongoing	14
Continue to maintain and improve park boundary markers	Ongoing	4



Continue program of graffiti removal/ treatment and enforcement	Ongoing	8
Provide education on pet policy to improve visitor's experience at the park	Ongoing	3
Complete a Natural Resources Stewardship Plan for the park, identifying targets for conservation and related natural resource management strategies.	1	9
Investigate a registration system for school groups to inform DNR staff of visits	1	1
Work with local partners to recognize former Senator Patty Birkholtz and her work on environmental protection at the park (specifically the naming of the Natural Area)	1	10
Seek solutions to issues associated with parking on county road, including safety concerns, customer service expectations, recreation passport revenue and resource damage	1	1
Work towards establishing a Friends Group for the park.	2	3
Coordinate with Lake Michigan Water Trail to include park information for trail users	2	2
Partner with regional tourist organizations and local communities to cross-promote and provide regional facility information	2	2
Determine the need for existing pump house and easement or remove as warranted	3	4
Work towards expanding the dedicated Natural Area as defined in the Phase 1 General Management Plan	3	19

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; DEVELOPMENT: CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>		
<b>Action Goals</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Develop a concept plan for proposed facilities including cold storage building, information kiosk, parking lot expansion, entry booth, picnic shelter replacement and restrooms incorporating accessible design	1	3, 1
Construct additional vault toilets and/or explore upgraded restroom facilities (rustic) in response to increased park use	1	8
Expand parking capacity in response to increased park use while being sensitive to the carrying capacity of the park's natural resources	2	3
Construct cold storage building in partnership with Laketown Township	2	1
Replace picnic shelter	3	

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: SMALL PROJECTS		
Action Goals	Priority	Votes
Continue to improve trail signage/maps throughout the park, including park entry signs from Shore Acres Township Park	Ongoing	23
Improve signage on inholding driveways to inform trail users	1	1
Install entry sign to direct visitors into the parking lot from the county road	1	1
Work with Laketown Township and the Allegan County Road Commission to explore parking lot capacity signage before entering the park	1	
Replace park entry booth	1	1
Investigate opportunities to provide all-terrain wheelchairs to improve park accessibility	2	5
Construct information kiosk to highlight area attractions, park education, warnings, and park history	2	9

**Additional Comments:**

- No more actions needed, you're doing a great job
- I like the current balance of rough versus refined. So my fear is you would do too much.
- No Master Plan (proposed)
- Add an action for overnight trailer camping facility on the east side of oxbow area – develop in conjunction with Oxbow Artist and Saugatuck East side of Oxbow to Kalamazoo Area Parking Trail to and across oxbow to Patty Birkholz area
- Improve signage from oval to south part of Kalamazoo Area
- Further discussion and search for opportunities re: the Padnos Acquisition
- Well marked out proposal. Thanks.
- Add educational signage about invasive species identification, threatened birds/ plants and the Felt structures (e.g. water tower)
- Add single track bicycle trails
- Quit cutting and burning the trees
- Acquire the 40 acre parcel on the NE corner of the park (1)
- Add signage on cougar awareness (1)
- More emphasis on improving endangered species and habitat (2)

- Construct and expand dunal wetlands (2)
- Update public on proposed North Shores Conservation Easement (4)
- Add Educational Signage
- Identify old structures on the ground
- No trailer camping (6)
- Add Trailer camping (5)
- Extensive buffer zone needed for natural area
- Use capital funds to add land to park (especially south)
- Purchase and expand as much as possible (North, south, and east)
- Expand park north to Castle Park and south to river
- Buy North Shore property!
- Purchase North Shore property- It's out of place and illegal
- Remove North Shores property from project boundary

### **Project Website**

A webpage was maintained through the duration of the planning process and was updated with maps, meeting information and the draft plan. Contact information was provided for members of the public to submit comments or ask questions.

### **E-mailed Comments:**

- Sadly, I will not be able to attend the open house on October 25 as I will be traveling out of the country. From my perspective, the big gap that needs to be addressed is the entrance to the Park. The small sign that has been placed on the check in station is not sufficient to alert cars to enter the parking lot. Cars zip right past that and into the Windmere development. As there are no residents at this time, this is not problematic. At some point, there will be people who live there and don't enjoy the intrusion. Further, people seem generally "lost" trying to find the state park. I recall that there are funds for this? I do believe a "welcome center" (however small) is in order for the entrance as the ranger station is, politely put, a bit run down. Sorry I won't make it!
- Hello,  
Please leave Saugatuck natural and development-free; this is the true draw to tourists. We must preserve and protect this beautiful natural resource!  
Please say no to development.
- Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments concerning the Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

I am a resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was born and raised in Michigan, and I am a lifelong lover of the Michigan shoreline. Since 1987, when my in-laws bought a cottage near the Douglas County Park, my family and I have been frequent visitors to Saugatuck, and we love hiking the dunes in the state park. We love the woody trails and the open dunes with no development

anywhere in sight. We love arriving where the trails spill onto the beach, where the horizon opens out before us.

Our state's gorgeous and unique shoreline is one of our most important natural resources. It's the part of this state my family and I love the most. So we would like to strongly affirm the DNR's master plan and offer our gratitude for all the people who strive to preserve the unique dunes ecosystems. "Keep it wild, keep it whole, make it grow" is a great motto for the Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

To "grow" these wild lands, we would like to encourage the DNR to expand the State Park to include the land currently earmarked for the proposed NorthShore (Padnos) development. For heaven's sake, no one needs another marina and a bunch of luxury homes! This development would fragment the habitats and unnecessarily disrupt these beautiful areas. "Habitat fragmentation is the enemy."

There are things far more important than a few already wealthy people making some money in the short term. The long-term preservation of our gorgeous natural shoreline is a far higher priority. Those who work for the thriving of the shoreline have come so far already in setting aside land for preservation and gentle public use. I and my family pledge our support for the many individuals and groups working together for the long-term good.

Thank you for your work to preserve and improve the Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

# ACCESSability

October 30, 2018

Re: Saugatuck Dunes State Park Management Plan

Dear Matthew Lincoln,

I am writing as a representative of Disability Network/Lakeshore in support of Universal Accessibility at the Saugatuck Dunes State Park. Our organization highly recommends Universal Access and Design when developing a long-range plan.

A barrier free environment is crucial to providing a welcoming place for people of all abilities. Adding to the already accessible elements at Saugatuck State Park will enhance opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to recreational access. Disability Network/Lakeshore serves over 2,000 individuals a year within Ottawa and Allegan counties. Of those 2,000, twenty-one percent identify themselves as Allegan County residents.

I strongly encourage the Department of Natural Resources to continue to improve trail signage/maps, investigate opportunities to provide all-terrain wheelchairs to improve park Accessibility. Disability Network/Lakeshore is open to working with the DNR to discuss accessible trail solutions; accessible campgrounds with barrier-free grills, tables, and restrooms; and accessible parking. Our organization will make itself available as a resource to the Department of Natural Resources during the duration of future projects.

Thank you so much for considering the application. Feel free to call or email me with any questions. I can be reached at [kristin@dnlakeshore.org](mailto:kristin@dnlakeshore.org) or (616) 396-5326.

Sincerely,

*Kristin Myers*

Kristin Myers  
Transition



426 CENTURY LANE  
HOLLAND, MI 49423

616.396.5326  
[INFO@DNLAKESHORE.ORG](mailto:INFO@DNLAKESHORE.ORG)

# APPENDIX C - 2017 ON-SITE USE AND USER STUDY REPORT

By Charles M. Nelson and Thomas Braum  
Department of Community Sustainability  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824

February 14, 2018

## Introduction

As part of the management planning process for Saugatuck Dunes State Park (SP), an on-site study was conducted to provide a representative sample of park visitors to provide an overall estimate of mean user hours per vehicle in the parking lot, assess local spending, ascertain the opinion of park users about the future management options and approaches and provide a profile of park visitors. This on-site approach samples users on systematically selected days and times across June - November of 2017. It uses a windshield survey at the only public access point to the park to ensure representation of the full range of park users.

## Methods

The on-site study methodology and questionnaire were developed by the senior author in cooperation with the DNR Park Planner Debbie Jensen of the DNR Park and Recreation Division (PRD) staff. The questionnaire is found in Appendix B and is very similar to an instrument that was used in 2016 in the pilot project of integrating visitor surveys into the state park management planning process at Sleepy Hollow State Park. A sampling calendar was developed that proportionally allocated sampling days across June - November based on seasonal estimates of park use for summer and fall provided by the DNR (Appendix C). The survey commenced in the field on June 21, 2017.

On a sample day, the survey administrator (a Michigan State Park employee) would arrive at the park at the start time and sample the one parking area providing access to the park. He would count all vehicles present upon entering the lot. Once the count was made, a postcard questionnaire with location, questionnaire number, date and time of day was distributed to each vehicle by putting the card on the windshield or directly handing it to the driver if he/she was at the vehicle. If it was raining, surveys were enclosed in a clear plastic bag and placed on the windshield. While almost all vehicles receive a questionnaire, occasionally one leaves before a survey can be administered, hence the number of surveys distributed is slightly less than the vehicle count. If there are more than 50 vehicles in the lot, all are counted but only the first 50 counted receive a questionnaire to limit confusion and keep to a time schedule for the survey administrator to complete other duties.

This method does not capture input from those arriving by bicycle and on foot, only those arriving by vehicle. However, those arriving by vehicle directly support the Michigan State Park system through the purchase of the Recreation Passport or, in the case of non-residents, through the purchase of the non-resident motor vehicle permit. Those arriving by bicycle or on foot, if

they have not purchased the Passport or a non-resident motor vehicle permit, are not providing such direct financial support.

Respondents returned the questionnaire by U. S. mail using the postage paid, business reply feature of the postcard. Cards were directly delivered to Dr. Nelson at MSU.

### **Results**

Results are presented in three ways. The first is observations/vehicle counts done by the survey administrator. These provide an assessment of use levels for the parking area. The second is survey responses to questions 1-10, which focus on the respondent's experience the day they were sampled. Since these questions ask about the specific day's experience, each use is a use, whether done by a person who visits the park once or one hundred times a year. However, Questions 11-16 are weighted to account for frequency of use bias as they ask about suggested improvements, things not to change and demographic information that defines the distinct park user. A frequent user, such as one who visits the park 100 times a year, has 100 times greater chance of receiving a survey than one who visits the park once a year. To be able to use a one person, one vote rule where each person has an equal say in suggesting potential changes or the lack of them, the data is weighted to eliminate the frequency of use bias in sampling. For distinct users the data is weighted by the reciprocal of the number of uses the previous year (Q 16). If a person used the park once in the previous year, their weight is 1/1. If they used it 100 times, their weight is 1/100. If they had not visited the park in the previous year, their responses were weighted at 1/1.

All results tables are provided in Appendix A and are numbered as they are in the text of this report.

### **Observations**

There were 21 sample days scheduled in Summer (June – August) and 6 sample days scheduled in Fall (September – November), reflecting use levels estimated in the previous year based on mechanically obtained vehicle counts. There is a unique challenge at scheduling sample days at Saugatuck Dunes as the park has no permanent staff on-site, but is administered by Van Buren State Park. That park is approximately 30 miles distant and, depending on traffic, up to an hour travel time away. Hence, the actual sample days were decided on in the fall season based on whether personnel were available. Likewise, some sample times/dates initially scheduled in the summer were revised based on the work schedules at Van Buren SP, travel time, etc. Thus the proportion of summer to fall was similar to the plan but the number of days and visitors sampled was smaller than if the full plan had been completed due to unforeseen time conflicts in the management of the two parks. A total of 801 vehicles (685 during summer and 116 during fall) were counted during 27 sample days/times and 619 questionnaires were distributed on vehicle windshields. Of the sample period vehicle counts, the mean count per summer day was 32.6 vehicles in the lot when sampled, while in the fall it was 19.3 vehicles when sampled.

### **Survey Results: Uses**

One hundred and eighteen completed questionnaires were returned by respondents as of the December 31, 2017 cutoff. Since the last survey date was November 8, this provided almost eight weeks for surveys to be returned after the last sampling date. That is a 19% response rate.

### **Activities and Party Characteristics**

The average amount of time a day visitor vehicle was in the park was 3.1 hours and the day visitor party averaged 2.8 people per vehicle. However, many day visitors were grouped with others in other vehicles as the average day visitor group had 4.7 people. A total of 7 percent of all respondents reported on the day they were sampled that one or more people in their vehicle had a physical impairment that seriously limited him/her from participation in work or recreation. These persons would be classified as disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Park visitors participated in a wide range of activities. Table 1 shows that the five most common activities for day visitors in order of participation were hiking, swimming, sunbathing, nature observation and photography. When day visitors were asked the one most important park activity to them, the five most mentioned in descending order were hiking, swimming, experiencing the dunes/beach/lake, sunbathing and paved road bicycling. This list is somewhat limited as many activities available in other state parks are either not allowed (e.g. hunting, trail bicycling), not directly accessible from the park (e.g. fishing from a boat) or much more easily and effectively done at other public venues (e.g. shore fishing).

### **Local Spending and Lodging the Previous Night**

Park visitor spending during the 24 hours prior to their being surveyed within 20 miles of Saugatuck Dunes State Park was substantial (Table 2). Day visitor spending averaged \$134 per vehicle with 84% of them spending something in the local area in the past 24 hours. The greatest portion of spending was on lodging and restaurant expenses, followed by grocery and convenience store food/drink and other spending on miscellaneous items such as souvenirs.

For respondents, staying at their principal home the night before they were surveyed was the most common origin (68%), followed by staying at a motel/hotel/B & B (21%), another's home or second home (5%), a campground elsewhere (2%), their own second home (1%) or some other lodging location (3%).

### **Satisfaction**

When asked to rate their satisfaction with their Saugatuck Dunes SP experience the day they were sampled, day visitors were generally very satisfied with a mean rating of 8.4 (Table 3). They rated the experience on a scale of 1-9 with 1 being highly dissatisfied, 5 being neutral and 9 being highly satisfied. Almost 2/3 of respondents gave their experience the highest satisfaction rating (9), with no respondents rating their experience as highly dissatisfied (1). Only 2% rated their experience as less than neutral and only 1% rated their experience as neutral (5).

When asked an open ended question about the reason for their experience rating, positive comments were received about the nature aspects of the park (dunes, lake, beach, forest, wildlife), the joy their visit brought them, the trails and the cleanliness/good maintenance of the park. The small proportion of comments that were negative focused on the lack of easy access to the beach, regulation against riding bicycles on trails and the lack of bathrooms (Table 4).



### **Distinct Users Opinions**

To understand the opinions of distinct users, one open ended question asked visitors to identify the one most important change they would like at Saugatuck Dunes SP. This information is weighted as previously discussed to insure frequent users who are more likely to be sampled are not over represented in the results. If a respondent provided more than one desired change, only the first change was recorded in data entry. Day visitors most commonly suggested providing more facilities such as bathrooms and drinking water, keeping the park as it is, better information including improved signage, more trails and increasing maintenance (Table 5).

When asked what one most important thing should not be changed at Saugatuck Dunes SP (Table 6), distinct users were most likely to note don't change the trails, the beach/dune/lake aspect of the park, don't change anything keeping it as it is, don't change natural appearance/feel of the park and don't make access to the lake/beach easier than it is currently.

### **Demographics**

Distinct respondents had a mean age of 47, with ages ranging from 16-84. Sixty-four percent of distinct users were female and 36% male. For distinct day visitors, only 35% had a relatively local zip code of 494xx or 495xx, while another 32% were from outside the local area but still had a primary home in Michigan. The remaining 33% were from other states (Table 7), mostly from the nearby states of Indiana and Illinois. This suggests that Saugatuck is both attractive and well known to local residents and visitors to the SW Lake Michigan region of the state. It serves a wide diversity of both tourists and local residents. The five most common zip code origins for distinct user respondents were: 49506 (Grand Rapids); 49503 (Grand Rapids); 49424 (Holland); 49464 (Zeeland) and 49426 (Hudsonville).

### **Summary**

Saugatuck Dunes is visited by a wide range of local people, Michigan based tourists and tourists from across the nation. These visitors spend substantially in the local area, especially in venues such as lodging establishments and restaurants where a significant positive impact is provided to the local economy as many such businesses are locally owned and labor intensive, keeping money spent local and quickly reverberating and multiplying through the economy as local workers and owners spend their wages and profits. Satisfaction is very high and requests for improvements are modest with many liking it as it is. There is great support for current access levels by foot through the forest and not improving access for vehicles, bicycles, etc. The one primary request is to provide facilities such as better restrooms, more benches and better signage.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Michigan DNR Park and Recreation Division permanent and seasonal staff for their distribution of the survey instrument, record keeping of the number of surveys distributed and counting vehicles during sampling. We also appreciate the on-going cooperation with Division Planning staff with the project.

## Appendix A. Tables of Results

Table 1. Percent Saugatuck Dunes SP on-site respondents participating in selected recreational activities and most important activity during visit during sample day in 2017.

Activity	Participating	Most Important
Hike/walk	96%	51%
Swim	52	20
Sunbathe	43	8
Nature observation	31	1
Photography	28	2
Picnic	23	1
Bicycle on paved road	4	3
Fish from shore	0	0
All others	3	1
Experience lake, beach, dunes, forest, trails, park in totality	NA	13
Total	NA	100%

Table 2. Expenditures of on-site respondents during past 24 hours within 20 miles of Saugatuck Dunes SP in 2017 (a).

Item	% Spending on Item	Mean Amount \$ Spent
Restaurant & bar meals & drinks	62%	\$40
Vehicle related	44	12
Lodging fees	23	48
Grocery and convenience store food & drink	30	15
Sporting goods	2	2
All other items including souvenirs	20	15
Total	84%	\$134

(a) Totals may not exactly add up due to rounding.

Table 3. Rating of Saugatuck Dunes SP use experience by on-site respondents on the day sampled in 2017.

Rating Scale	Day Visitors
1 (very dissatisfied)	0%
2	0.8
3	0.8
4	0
5 (neutral)	0.8
6	2.5
7	6.8
8	22.0
9 (very satisfied)	65.3
Total	100.0%
Mean Rating	8.4

Table 4. One most important reason for satisfaction rating with Saugatuck Dunes SP use by on-site respondents on the day sampled in 2017.

Reason	Day Visitors
Nature, wildlife, quiet, beach, lake, dunes	49.5%
Like trails	16.2
Generally like, wonderful, amazing, being outdoors	10.8
Clean, well maintained and patrolled	6.3
Like long walk to lake	2.7
Poor lake access	2.7
Poor/Lack of bathrooms, other facilities	1.8
Uncrowded	0.9
Like picnicking	0.9
Like birding	0.9
Convenient, close to home	0.9
Lack of/poor signs	0.9
Poor maintenance of park	0.9
Other positive hard to classify	0.9
Other negative reasons difficult to classify	3.6
Total	100.0%

Table 5. Response to open ended question about one most important improvement at Saugatuck Dunes SP by distinct on-site user survey respondents in 2017.

Improvement	Day Visitors
More bathrooms, benches, drinking water	30.1%
Nothing to improve/change	23.4
Better signage and information	13.6
More trails	8.1
Improved maintenance	5.5
Increased access	4.7
Reduce entry fee	2.3
More patrol by rangers	2.0
Allow hunting	1.5
Loosen park rules to allow more types of use	0.8
Acquire more parkland to expand park	0.7
Improve facility maintenance	0.3
Other suggestions difficult to classify	2.5
Total	100.0%

Table 6. Response to open ended question about one most important thing not to change at Saugatuck Dunes SP for distinct on-site user survey respondents in 2017.

Don't change	Day Visitors
Trails	28.3%
Condition of beach/dunes/lake	16.0
Don't know/Keep as is	14.3
Natural areas/nature/wildness/wildlife/quiet	11.8
Long walk/hike required to reach beach	9.0
Level of maintenance	4.4
Cost/price	2.7
Rules/regulations	2.7
Staff/personnel	1.9
Parking	1.9
No camping	1.0
Other hard to classify	1.3
Total	100.0%

Table 7. Origins of distinct park visitors to Saugatuck Dunes SP by state for on-site user survey respondents in 2017 (a)

State	% originating
Michigan	65%
Indiana	12
Illinois	10
Ohio	3
South Carolina	3
Wisconsin	1
Kansas	1
California	1
New York	1
Kansas	1
Maryland	1
Total	100%

(a) Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Appendix B. On-site questionnaire

### Saugatuck Dunes State Park Use Assessment

\_\_\_\_\_Date

Dear Driver:

Michigan State University (MSU) and the Michigan DNR are cooperating to measure recreation use of Saugatuck Dunes State Park as part of updating the park management plan. Please take the 4 minutes needed to complete this form and mail it to us postage paid or put it in one of the drop boxes at the beach or the campground office. You will be anonymous and your name will not be connected with study results. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

1. Please check ALL of the activities in which one or more of the people from your vehicle participated while you were in the park today.

Hiking/Walking/Running       Photography  
 Bicycling paved road/trail       Picnicking  
 Fishing from shore/dock       Sunbathing  
 Pick berries/mushrooms       Swimming  
 Nature observation (birding, etc.)       Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

2. Which ONE activity was the MAIN reason visited the park today? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many HOURS was your vehicle in the park today? \_\_\_\_\_ # HOURS

4. Including you, how many PEOPLE came here in this vehicle? \_\_\_\_\_ # PEOPLE

5. Including other vehicles, how many people are in your group? \_\_\_\_\_ # PEOPLE

6. Does anyone in your vehicle have a physical impairment that seriously limits his/her participation in work or recreation?       Yes       No

7. Where did you stay last night (check one)?

Own principal home       A campground       Another's home/2<sup>nd</sup> home  
 Hotel/motel/rental cabin       Own 2<sup>nd</sup> home       Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

8. During the past 24 hours, how much did you and those in your vehicle spend within 20 miles of Saugatuck Dunes State Park on the following items.

Vehicle related (gas, oil, trip related repair, etc.)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Restaurant & bar meals & drinks      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Grocery or convenience store food, drink or ice      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Sporting goods (fishing supplies, camping gear, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Lodging fees (camping, motel, cabin rental, etc.)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
All other items (watercraft rental, souvenirs, etc.)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please rate on a scale of 1-9 (w/ 1 highly dissatisfied; 5 neutral; and 9 highly satisfied), how satisfied you were with **today's Saugatuck Dunes SP** experience. #\_\_\_\_\_ **Rating**

10. What is the ONE most important reason for your rating? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What ONE change would you recommend to improve Saugatuck Dunes SP? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What ONE thing would you recommend not change at Saugatuck Dunes SP? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What is your principal home zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

15. Please circle your gender. M or F

16. How many days did you visit Saugatuck Dunes SP in **2016** (last year)? \_\_\_\_\_ #days

**Thanks** for your help in improving the management of Saugatuck Dunes State Park.

Dr. Chuck Nelson, Project Director \_\_\_\_\_Time

MSU Dept. Community Sustainability, 480 Wilson Rd., \_\_\_\_\_Site

East Lansing, MI 48824 Phone (517) 432-0272 nelsonc@msu.edu \_\_\_\_\_Ques #

**Appendix C. Saugatuck Dunes Sampling Schedule 2017**

- Based on Summer and Fall use levels per 2016 DNR park use data
- Summer (June - August); Fall (September - November)
- For our study purposes
  - Summer sampling June-August
  - Fall sampling September - November
- Sample days are divided the same way with 2/3 on weekdays and 1/3 on weekends similar to calendar.
- Saugatuck Dunes SP sampling will begin at one of the following times each sample day: 9 AM, Noon, 3PM and 6PM.

**Appendix D. Saugatuck Dunes State Park Planned On-Site Sampling Calendar adjusted to adapt to personnel scheduling challenges**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sampling Time Start</b>
Thu	6/22	6PM
Sat	6/24	Noon
Sun	6/25	9AM
Tues	6/27	3PM
Tues	7/4	3PM
Thu	7/6	Noon
Mon	7/10	9AM
Fri	7/14	9AM
Wed	7/19	3PM
Sat	7/22	6PM
Mon	7/24	<del>6PM</del> –Change to 3PM
Fri	7/28	6PM
Sun	7/30	9AM
Fri	8/4	Noon
Wed	8/9	9AM
Sat	8/12	Noon
Mon	8/14	3PM
Wed	8/16	Noon
Sun	8/20	3PM
Thu	8/24	6PM
Fri (change from Thu above)	8/25	6PM
Tues	8/29	Noon
Sun	9/3	Noon
WD (You choose)	You choose	You choose
WD (You choose)	You choose	You choose
WD (You choose)	You choose	You choose
WE (you choose)	You choose	You choose
WD (You choose)	You choose	You choose