

## EXISTING USES AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### A. Land Use

The glaciated topography and sandy soils of the Boardman River watershed limit agricultural activities. Where soils are more productive and slopes are more gentle as in the southern portion of the watershed, a fair degree of success has been had with dairy farming. Abandonment of non-productive farms in the northern part of the state has been a major trend of long standing, however, many farms, especially in Kalkaska County, have been re-established as tree farms supplying a substantial share of the nation's Christmas trees.

By far the greatest land uses in the watershed are forestry and recreation. Recently, oil and gas explorations and production, sweeping across the north country, have made discoveries in the Boardman River Valley. Hunting, fishing and other resort activities account for a large part of the land utilization in the area. Seasonal and permanent dwellings are fairly abundant and are concentrated along or near lakes and streams. The growing demand for recreational lands in recent years is one of the reasons for a higher proportion of private land retention in the watershed.

Numerous developments are visible from the river, but a substantial amount of this is confined to the mainstream below Brown Bridge Dam. Except for Ranch Rudolph and a few cottages near the "Forks", few developments are visible from the river in the headwater areas. Some development and an occasional farm may be seen from some of the tributaries in the southern part of the watershed.

The area between Brown Bridge and Sabin Pond includes over 80 dwellings (including 12 mobile homes). Although the majority of these are seasonal, a portion are year-around homes. In addition to the buildings, there are 18 access bridges crossing the river. Most of these are foot bridges. However, several have been built to give the property owner vehicular access to his property or hunting grounds on the other side of the river.

### B. Private Recreation Facilities

Private campgrounds provide 638 campsites to the camping enthusiast in the two county area encompassing the watershed. Ranch Rudolph, located on the Boardman above Scheck's Place Forest Campground, offers a full range of recreation activities from canoe trips to horseback riding. Other recreation activities provided by private sources include charter boats for fishing on the Great Lakes.

### C. Public Recreation Facilities

Camping facilities along the immediate river area are limited. Brown's Dam, Scheck's Place and Fork's Forest Campgrounds offer about 35 campsites. Interlochen and Traverse City state parks and six other state forest campgrounds

within a short distance of the river offer additional camping opportunities. In addition, there are seven county, township or municipal parks near the watershed each providing some camping and day use facilities for recreationists.

Only one public access site is located on the river. However, access is provided at the three campgrounds from Brown Bridge Pond up to the Forks. Additional access to the stream for fishermen is provided over state lands in the upper reaches of the river and at selected county road bridges.

Other public facilities or areas of interest in the vicinity are the Sand Lakes Quiet Area; Shore-to-Shore Horseback Riding Trail, which crosses the river near Scheck's Place; Platt River State Fish Hatchery; Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore; and the Petobego State Game Area.

#### D. Fishing

As a trout stream, the Boardman ranks among Michigan's top ten streams. Above Brown Bridge Dam, the Boardman River is a top quality, moderate size trout stream flowing through the Fife Lake State Forest. It contains excellent populations of small to moderate size brook and brown trout. Brown trout in the 10 to 13 inch size range are abundant. Considerable public ownership and scenic terrain make the stream a pleasant one to fish. The bottom is firm sand and gravel and the stream is relatively swift.

Below Brown Bridge Dam, the stream widens but it still has a rapid flow over a gravel and sand bottom. Brown trout dominate the fish population. Their numbers are somewhat less than their food supply will support as natural reproduction is impaired by Brown Bridge Dam. The Boardman is still a fine trout stream, however, all the way down to the Boardman Hydro Pond.

Were it not for Boardman Dam, Sabin Dam and a few other minor obstacles in the lower Boardman, the river between Brown Bridge Dam and its mouth would, without a doubt, be one of Michigan's finest steelhead and salmon streams. Its size, physical characteristics and water quality compare favorably with the Little Manistee River. However, removal of the dams would affect the County Education Reserve property. The county property, including the Boardman and Sabin dams and their impoundments, were dedicated by Grand Traverse County as a Natural Education Reserve due to its unique combination of soils, water, topography, forest cover and wildlife in relation to its accessibility to the population center of Traverse City.

The lower part of the river within the confines of Traverse City suffers from municipal development, but still receives substantial runs of steelhead, lake trout and salmon seasonally upstream to the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Dam. The impoundments on the river, particularly Brown Bridge Pond and Boardman Lake (which is actually a natural lake), support typical warmwater game fish populations.

Nearly all of the Boardman's numerous tributaries are top quality trout waters and important nursery streams, with the more sizeable ones supporting considerable trout fishing of their own.

#### E. Wildlife Observation and Hunting

The Boardman River valley and surrounding uplands contain a good variety and sizeable populations of deer, small game, fur-bearing animals, waterfowl and a great many species of non-game wildlife.

Major game species in the area include whitetail deer, squirrels (both black and gray and fox squirrels), cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse, many species of waterfowl and shorebirds. The mute swans found in the Traverse Bay area are a particular attraction for bird watchers. The bay area and Boardman River are the only major wintering areas in Michigan for the nonnative swan.

Fur-bearing species found in the area include muskrats, mink, raccoon, beaver, otter and fox. Coyotes, bobcats and possibly an occasional black bear also found in the watershed.

A survey conducted in Grand Traverse County in 1970 indicated there were roughly 45,000 hunter days spent on deer hunting and a like amount of time on the pursuit of small game. Roughly 4,500 hunter days were spent hunting waterfowl.

#### F. Canoeing and Boating

The north and south branches of the river above the "Forks" consist of narrow channels, shallow riffles, overhanging brush and fallen trees which make these streams undesirable for recreational canoeing.

The mainstream of the Boardman from the "Forks" downstream to Boardman Lake, a distance of about 25 miles, provides a full day trip. The moderate to fast current of the Boardman makes this an enjoyable stretch to traverse by canoe. Portages are necessary at Brown Bridge, Boardman and Sabin hydro dams. Any one wishing to continue a trip through Boardman Lake to the mouth of the river at Traverse Bay must portage the water control dam at Boardman Lake.

The river is not large or consistently deep enough for boating. Therefore, this activity is restricted to the three impoundments, Boardman Lake, and the extreme lower reach of the river at Traverse City.

#### G. Historic and Archaeological Sites

Although Grand Traverse and Kalkaska counties are rich in Indian and European history, sites of historic or archaeological interest have seldom been authenticated. State archaeological site files do not show original settlements or camps in the proposed natural river area along the Boardman River. If a

systematic archaeological survey were to be undertaken, numerous Indian campsites along the river would undoubtedly be uncovered.