

**MECOSTA TOWNSHIP
RECREATION PLAN
2019 – 2023**

**PREPARED BY:
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
AND
MECOSTA TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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Introduction

Mecosta Township has established the importance of recreation to the Township's quality of life by developing this Recreation Plan. This plan represents the ideas of the Township's officials and residents through meetings and an "Issue Identification" Workshop. The planning process was a combined effort of the Township Board, Township Planning Commission interested citizens, and the Mecosta Township Board of Trustees.

The Action Plan provides a schedule for completing a number of improvements. The Township should strive to follow the established schedule, but should consider the schedule a "living guide" since funding opportunities and other events may not always mesh with the schedule. The integrity of the plan will not be compromised if actions are rescheduled during the five-year planning period. Finally, this plan should be a working document that is frequently used for guidance and updated if necessary. The next complete update of the plan should occur in 2023.

Mecosta County, with input from Mecosta Township, developed a Recreation Plan in 2002. Mecosta Township developed a Master Plan in 2010 and a Recreation Plan for the township in 2014.

Community Description

This recreation plan was prepared for Mecosta Township. The Township is located in western Mecosta County (Map 1).

The plan focuses on providing recreation opportunities to residents of Mecosta Township through the acquisition, development, and maintenance of community-owned parks. While the primary focus is on providing residents of the Township with recreation opportunities, developing a Township park system will benefit Mecosta Township, the Village of Stanwood, adjoining townships, schools, and visitors to the area.

Supplemental information describing the Area's physical and social features is included in Appendix A to allow people to see the information and to meet the guidelines for recreation plans.

Administrative Structure

Township Board & Planning Commission

The Township's residents are the final authority since they elect the Township Board, which must approve any expenditures. Mecosta Township's recreation-related planning activities are undertaken by the Township Planning Commission, which is listed below along with the Township Board:

2014 Members

Mecosta Township Planning Commission

Howard Bowersox, Chair
Linda Bechaz
Ron Bongard
James Cain
Mike Malcomson
Mary Withers

Mecosta Township Board

Michelle Graham, Supervisor
James Cain, Trustee
Susan Sikkema, Clerk
Mary Quinlan, Treasurer
John Johnson, Trustee

2018 Members

Howard Bowersox, Chair
Mike Malcomson
Linda Bechaz
Pam Scarbrough
James Cain
Jessica Walsh
Aaron Pieri

Michelle Graham, Supervisor
James Cain, Trustee
Lois Brennan, Clerk
Mary Quinlan, Treasurer
John Johnson

School District

The Township is served by Morley-Stanwood Community Schools. Stanwood Elementary, in the Village of Stanwood, houses only pre-school classes at this time. Two buildings between Morley and Stanwood house K – 12 students. Morley Elementary is closed.

Mecosta County

Mecosta County maintains many parks, one of which is in Mecosta Township (see recreation inventory).

Staff and Volunteers

This includes the five members of the Mecosta Township Board the seven members of the Planning Commission, and volunteers throughout the Township.

Budget Information

Table 1 identifies general budget information related to the Township. The Township has several categories of revenues and appropriations, and this list provides a summary related to the Township's budget for the current year.

Table 1: Summary of Budgeted Revenues and Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2018-2019

| Revenues | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| General Revenues | \$451,450 |
| Zoning | \$1,500 |
| Building | \$21,200 |
| Total | \$474,300 |
| Expenditures/Appropriations | |
| General | \$30,000 |
| Township Board | \$10,500 |
| Supervisor | \$23,550 |
| Elections | \$10,000 |
| Assessor | \$30,000 |
| Clerk | \$30,200 |
| Board of Review | \$1,800 |
| Treasurer | \$37,600 |
| Cemetery | \$7,000 |
| Building and Grounds | \$91,000 |
| Fire | \$80,000 |
| Zoning | \$33,750 |
| Building | \$34,350 |
| Junk | \$2,500 |
| Streets | \$9,200 |
| Parks and Recreation | \$15,000 |
| Personal Services | \$27,250 |
| Total | \$473,700 |

Source: Mecosta Township

Recreation Inventory

The recreation inventory provides a summary of facilities in the Township and surrounding areas. Map 1 shows the locations of the facilities that are located within the Township.

Mecosta Township

Mecosta Township currently maintains one recreation facility and assists with the maintenance of another facility.

Richard H. Evens Park – This two-acre park is adjacent to the Township Hall on 11 Mile Road. The park includes one ball field, a grill, a picnic table, a nine-hole disc golf course and a basketball hoop. Parking is available at the Township Hall. The park is surrounded by a nice forested area and low density residential homes. Strengths of the park include the quiet surroundings, the trees, and the proximity to the Township Hall. The primary weakness is the lack of activity areas for younger children, a handicap accessible picnic area and nature and exercise trails. The Township Hall has indoor space available to rent for events such as wedding receptions, family reunions, and other events.

Accessibility Evaluation: There are no pathways connecting the parking to the facilities, but there is a paved parking lot. Future improvement of a universally accessible children's play area and picnic tables should include accessible pathways.

Ulrich Park – This park is located on Northland Drive at the Rogers Dam. Consumers Energy owns the park, which includes a gravel parking area, an accessible pit toilet, and an accessible fishing pier. The park also includes three picnic tables. The park is surrounded by the dam and low density residential uses, and is just south of several commercial businesses in Rogers Heights. Strengths of the park include its fantastic views of Rogers Pond and the dam, as well as being a very visible and well-maintained park (right on Northland Drive).

Accessibility Evaluation: This facility does include provisions for people with handicaps. The restroom is accessible and there is a fishing pier that allows for a variety of users. Parking is also designated.

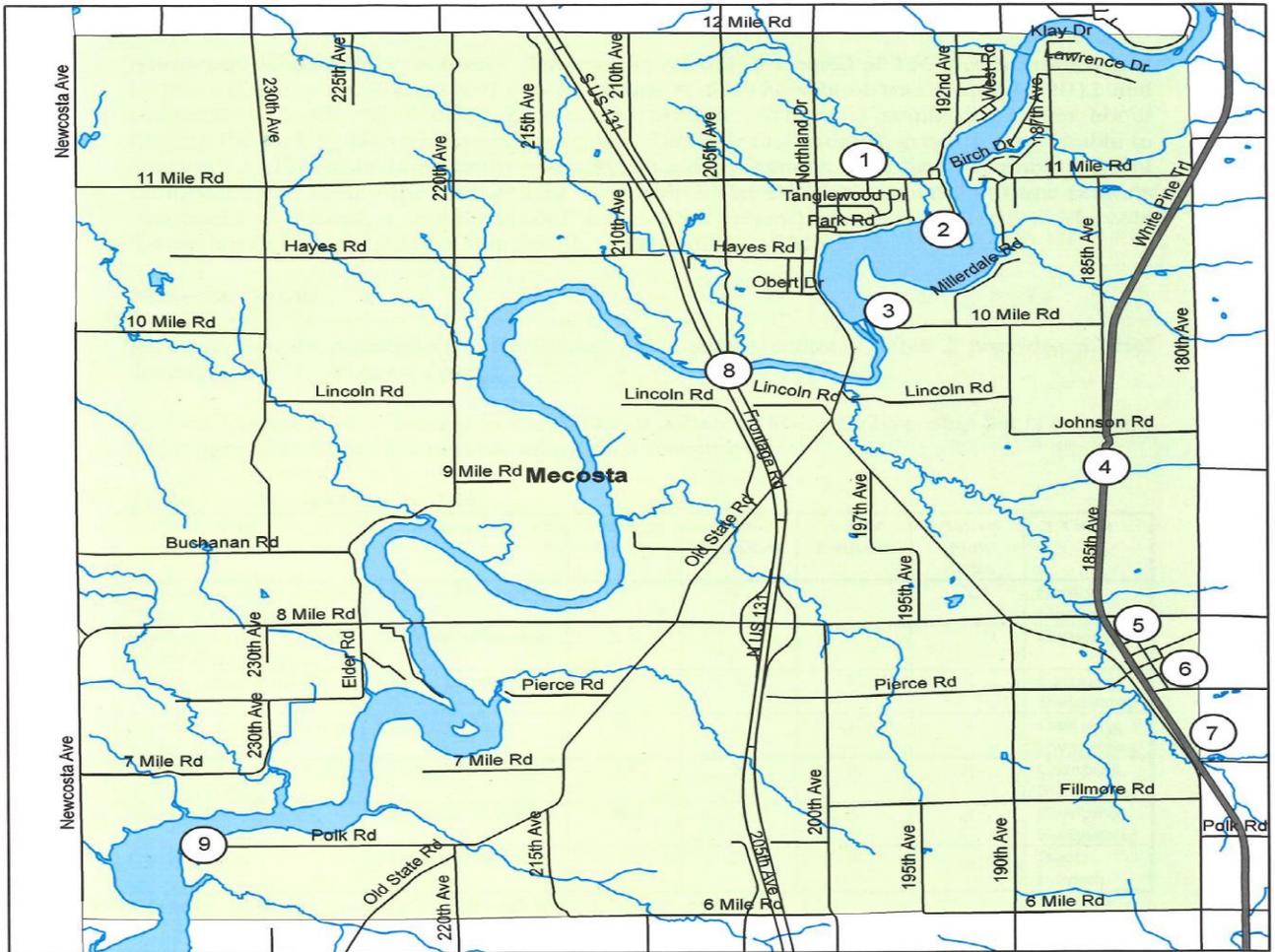
Additionally, there are Village of Stanwood, Morley-Stanwood Community Schools, Mecosta County, and State of Michigan recreation facilities within the Township that are accessible to Township residents, but the Township is not responsible for maintaining or improving the facilities.

Village of Stanwood

Stanwood Buffalo Park – The Village of Stanwood has one park, which is adjacent to the local Eagles Service Club at the intersection of 7 Mile and 180th. The park includes two softball fields, a picnic shelter, a playground, grills, a basketball court, horseshoes, and volleyball courts. The park is surrounded by low density residential uses. Strengths of the park include its proximity to the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park, its many facilities, and the overall condition of the park. This park has been designated as an official staging area for the White Pine Trail.

Stanwood Cemetery – The Stanwood Cemetery provides a quiet place for people to walk and reflect. The Cemetery is located on the southeast side of the Village of Stanwood and is surrounded by residential uses. Mecosta Township contributes to the maintenance of the cemetery.

Mecosta Township Location & Parks and Recreation Inventory



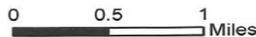
Legend

- Roads
- Water Features
- Township

1. Mecosta Township Hall & Richard H. Evens Park
2. Rogers Pond Public Access Site
3. Rogers Dam - Consumers Energy
4. Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park
5. Stanwood Elementary School
6. Stanwood Cemetery
7. Stanwood Buffalo Park
8. 131 Bridge Public Access Site
9. Brower park (Mecosta County)



Prepared by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
Framework from the Michigan Geographic Data Library



Morley-Stanwood Community Schools

Stanwood Elementary School – This public school is located at 156 North Front Street in the Village of Stanwood and served grades K-5. The school was closed in 2012 and consolidated with the Morley Elementary School. The elementary is now housed on the middle school/high school campus located south of Mecosta Township in Deerfield Township north of the village of Morley. The Stanwood building is presently used for pre-school classes. The Morley building is closed.

Mecosta County

Mecosta County maintains several parks and a senior center. Table 2 provides a brief description of the County’s parks.

Brower County Park is located in the southeast corner of Mecosta Township but is primarily a campground so does not provide many local resources.

Table 2 – Mecosta County Parks

| Park | Location | Acreage | Picnic Facilities | Water Features | Active Play Areas | Other |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Mecosta County Senior Citizens Center | Morton Township | 5 | X | | X | Senior Center |
| Tubbs Lake State Forest Campground | Martiny Township | n.a. | | | | Camping |
| Paris County Park | Green Township | 40 | X | X | X | Camping Swimming |
| Merrill Lake County Park | Fork Township | 90 | X | X | X | Camping, Swimming |
| School Section Lake Veteran’s Park | Morton Township | 85 | X | X | X | Camping, Swimming |
| Brower County Park | Mecosta Township | 280 | X | X | X | Camping, Swimming |
| Davis Bridge | Mecosta Township | 3 | X | X | | Boat Launch |

Source: Mecosta County Parks and Recreation Plan

State of Michigan

Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park – This 92 mile trail stretches from Grand Rapids to Cadillac. Portions of the trail are paved, but the four mile section in Mecosta Township is not paved. Buffalo Park in Stanwood has been designated as a trailhead and there are access points on 8 Mile Road, Johnson Road, and 11 Mile Road/180th Avenue.

US-131 Bridge Access Site – The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains a boat access site on the Muskegon River directly underneath US-131. The site can be accessed by 205th Avenue. The site is located downstream of Rogers Dam.

Rogers Pond Access Site – The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains a boat access site on the Muskegon River (Rogers Pond). The site is located near the intersection of 196th Avenue and Park Street. The site is located upstream of Rogers Dam.

Boat Launch Sites

Mecosta County has 23 public Boat Launch sites maintained by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The list of sites follows.

- Lake Mecosta
- Rogers Pond
- Chippewa Lake
- Haymarsh Lake Flooding
- Pretty Lake
- Townline Lake
- Clear Lake
- Hillsview Lake
- Brockway Lake
- River Bend Bluffs
- Jehnsen Lake
- Rustford Pond
- Lower Evans Lake
- Big Evans Lake
- Upper Evans Lake
- Winchester Dam
- Bergess Lake
- Tubbs Island
- Tubbs Lake
- Browers Park Marina
- Paris Park
- Alma Lake
- 131 Bridge

Campgrounds

There are a variety of campgrounds in Mecosta County. A listing of these facilities follows.

Hungerford Lake Recreation Area – Big Rapids
Cran-Hill Ranch – Rodney
Paris Park and Campgrounds – Paris
River Ridge RV Resort – Mecosta Township
Brower Park – Mecosta County
School Section Lake – Mecosta
Sarns Resort – Morley
Shooltz’s Landing – Mecosta
Bluegill Lake Family Camping Resort – Mecosta

Golf Courses

Mecosta County has several golf courses. A list of the courses follows:

St. Ives Golf Resort, 9900 St. Ives Drive, Stanwood
Tullymore Golf Course, 11969 Tullymore Drive, Stanwood
Clear Lake Golf Club, 14777 150th Ave., Big Rapids
Falcon Head Golf Club, 14120 Northland Drive, Big Rapids
Ferris State University Katke Golf Course, 1003 Perry Ave., Big Rapids

State of Michigan Facilities Located within Region 8 (Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Osceola, and Ottawa counties)

Holland State Park – This 142-acre park on Lake Michigan located in the City of Holland, in Ottawa County. The park offers 368 campsites, picnic facilities, swimming, a beach house, a boat launch and fishing.

Saugatuck State Park – This 866-acre park on Lake Michigan is located in the City of Saugatuck, in Allegan County. The park offers swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, and picnic facilities.

Ionia Recreation Area – This 4,085 acre facility located between Saranac and Ionia in Ionia County has 50 campsites and offers a variety of opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, swimming, boating, a beach house, a boat launch, hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking and horseback riding.

Grand Haven State Park – This 48-acre park is located on Lake Michigan in Ottawa County’s City of Grand Haven. The park provides a variety of opportunities including 182 campsites, picnic and playground facilities, swimming, a beach house and fishing.

Yankee Springs Recreation Area – This 5,017-acre area is located in eastern Allegan County/western Barry County. The recreation area provides many opportunities including 325 campsites, an organization camp, equestrian activities, picnic facilities, swimming, concessions, playground facilities, boat launch areas, an interpretive program, hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, mountain biking and cross-country skiing.

White Pine Trail – This 92 mile Rail-Trail stretches from Comstock Park, in Kent County, to Cadillac, in Wexford County. The trail is currently open along most of its course, and is paved in many areas. Plans are to pave the entire trail.

State of Michigan Facilities (Located within 50 miles of Region 8)

- Traverse City State Park – Grand Traverse County
- Interlochen State Park – Grand Traverse County
- William Mitchell State Park – Wexford County
- Orchard Beach State Park – Manistee County
- North Higgins Lake State Park Crawford Co.
- South Higgins Lake State Park – Roscommon
- Duck Lake State Park – Muskegon County
- Muskegon State Park – Muskegon County
- P.J.Hoffmaster State Park – Muskegon County
- Hart-Montague Trail – Muskegon and Oceana Counties
- Sleepy Hollow State Park – Clinton County
- Fort Custer Recreation Area – Kalamazoo Co.
- Kal Haven Trail – Kalamazoo and Van Buren
- Van Buren State Park – Van Buren County
- Warren Dunes State Park – Berrien County
- Grand Mere State Park – Berrien County
- Warren Woods Natural Area – Berrien County
- Wilson State Park – Clare County
- Newaygo State Park – Newaygo County
- Charles Mears State Park – Oceana County
- Silver Lake State Park – Oceana County

State Game Areas (Located within Region 8)

Allegan County

- Allegan State Game Area

Kent County

- Rogue River State Game Area
- Cannonsburg State Game Area
- Lowell State Game Area

Ottawa County

- Grand Haven State Game Area

Ionia County

- Flat River State Game Area
- Lowell State Game Area
- Portland State Game Area

Mecosta County

- Pere Marquette State Forest
- Haymarsh Lake State Game Area

Montcalm County

- Flat River State Game Area
- Stanton State Game Area
- Langston State Game Area
- Edmore State Game Area
- Vestaburg State Game Area

Osceola County

- Pere Marquette State Forest
- State Wildlife Management Area

Ski Areas Within and Near Region 8

- Bittersweet, Allegan County
- Pando, Kent County
- Cannonsburg, Kent County
- Timber Ridge, Van Buren County

Plan Adoption

This section of the Recreation Plan documents that Mecosta Township will be submitting copies of the Plan to the required organizations, hold a public meeting, and adopt the Plan. Copies of the following documents will be included in Appendix B:

- Letter to Mecosta County, the Regional Planning Commission and Consumers Energy
- Notice of Focus Group Meeting was published in the Big Rapids Pioneer newspaper on October 12, 2012.
- Focus Group Meeting held on November 13, 2018.
- Notice of Public Hearing
- November 13, 2018 minutes from Focus Group/Monthly Township meeting.
- Minutes from Township Board
- Resolution from Township Board.

Results of Focus Group and On-line Survey

This survey asked people to look at the projects we will be working with in the next five years and mark their importance from 1-10. Nine people responded to the survey.

Continue improving Evans Park and installing a playscape, a handicap picnic area and a walking trail.

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 5 High Priority | 4 Medium | 0 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

Develop a staging area for the White Pine Trail at Buffalo Park

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 6 High Priority | 1 Medium | 2 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

Put in a canoe/kayak slide at Rogers Dam

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 6 High Priority | 0 Medium | 3 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

Develop a bike path from Davis Bridge to Rogers Heights

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 4 High Priority | 3 Medium | 2 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

Expand parking at the Rogers Pond and 131 Bridge boat launches.

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 5 High Priority | 2 Medium | 2 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

Develop cross-country ski trails in the township.

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 4 High Priority | 2 Medium | 3 Low |
|-----------------|----------|-------|

We were asked to add a topic for no high speed boating on Rogers Pond after 7:30.

Kathy Pratt attended the meeting and discussed these issues with the Board. She liked the idea of the playscape and a walking trail.

Description of Planning and Public Input Process

The following identifies the steps used to develop a Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Mecosta Township in accordance with guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

Community Description – This step includes two major sections. The first section describes the Township’s physical features. The second major portion of this step describes the Township’s social features. The plan includes information about Mecosta Township and the Village of Stanwood. This section describes the existing population and provides information about Mecosta County and Michigan for comparison.

Recreation Inventory – The WMRPC developed a description of the facilities through an on-site visit to the Township’s parks, schools and other recreation facilities – including those located in the Village of Stanwood. Information includes acreage, types of recreation activities, types of equipment, an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses, surrounding land uses and other descriptions of the physical attributes of the area's recreation facilities. The inventory includes a description of County Parks and Michigan State Parks within Region 8.

Needs Analysis – This step identified the Township’s recreation issues. The Township identified and ranked issues by inviting a varied group of area residents to a workshop. The participants also helped create a series of general actions to address each of the issues.

Action Program – This step identifies what actions Mecosta Township will perform over the five-year planning period. The Plan identifies actions in an easy to understand format that allow readers to understand each action. The Action Program also identifies where and when an action will occur; who will accomplish the action; how much the action will cost; and potential funding sources. The Action Plan includes a Basis for Action Program that identifies why each of the actions is a priority in Mecosta Township.

Administrative Structure, Adoption – This step describes how Mecosta Township administers recreation facilities and activities. This step also included providing copies of the plan to Mecosta County and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, passing a resolution, holding a public hearing, and other steps necessary for plan adoption.

Plan Preparation – This step included compiling the plan and printing one camera-ready original and 20 bound final copies of the plan and 10 draft copies of the plan for review before adoption.

Issues, Goals, and Objectives

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission developed the following list of issues, goals, and objectives by working with the Mecosta Township Planning Commission and through discussions with Township officials and site visits to the area's recreation facilities. Additionally, an issue identification workshop was held on November 13, 2012 and was well attended by a variety of people, listed below:

- Diana Bongard
- Howard Bowersox
- Janet Bowersox
- Dave Cope
- Michele Graham
- Phil Hanford
- Jennifer Heinzman
- Cindy Horn
- John Johnson
- Fernando Labra
- Gladys Lenard
- Linda Bechaz
- Stan Lilley
- Mike Malcomson
- Randy Maxwell
- Ron Monroe
- James Nostrant
- Mary Quinlan
- Jim Sandy
- Terry Stilson
- Jean Ulrich
- Mary Withers
- Dave Bee (facilitator from WMRPC)

These people represented a variety of viewpoints and organizations including the Township Board and Township Planning Commission, economic development, the local chamber of commerce, the Department of Natural Resources, Ferris State University, and many others.

The workshop participants worked separately, in small groups, and as a complete body to identify the following ranked issues.

Issue #1 (13 votes) – The lack of recreational facilities at Richard H. Evens Park, and the Township Hall, was the issue that received the most votes from workshop participants.

Issue #2 (10 votes) – There is a need for more trail facilities, and to improve existing trail facilities, for non-motorized activities. Included in this issue is the need for a pathway between Ulrich Park and Rogers Heights, and linkages to the White Pine Trail.

Issue #3 (9 votes) – There are no portage sites at Rogers Dam for canoes and kayaks.

Issue #4 (8 votes) – There are inadequate boat launch facilities in Mecosta Township.

Issue #5 (7 votes) – Sediment in the Muskegon River, upstream of Rogers Dam, is negatively impacting recreational opportunities in the Township.

Issue #6 (5 votes) – The portion of the White Pine Trail passing through Mecosta Township is not paved.

Other issues that were identified by the participants included:

- Lack of promotional information to inform people about the area's recreation resources.
- The desire to transform Stanwood Elementary School into a community center.
- Limited public access to the Muskegon River in Mecosta Township.
- Lack of a handicapped accessible fishing pier.
- Lack of a scenic area for passive recreation activities.

In 2018 the Planning Commission designated the following items as important goals for the future.

1. Developing a staging area for the White Pine Trail in Stanwood at Buffalo Park.
2. Canoe Slide at Rogers Dam to provide safer access below dam.
3. Look into a bike path from the River Ridge area to Stanwood and Rogers Heights. This would require getting a paved path along major roads – 8 mile and 131. We would need to work with M-DOT. This would be a long term goal and would be dependent on the completion of the Dragon Trail.
4. Expand parking at the boat launches at Rogers Heights and the 131 bridge. Would require help from the DNR and Consumers.
5. Develop a cross-country ski/snowshoe trail network.

The following issues, goals, and objectives are key to the success of Mecosta Township's ability to provide recreation opportunities to its residents and visitors to the area. The following are based on the input from the November 13, 2012 workshop and the 2018 review.

Issues and Goals

Issue #1 – Recent improvements at Richard H. Evens Park have added a basketball hoop and a nine hole disc golf course, but there is still a lack of activities and facilities that limit the usefulness of the park and limit residents' opportunities for recreation.

Goal #1 – Mecosta Township will complete the next phase of improving Evens Park by adding a universally accessible children's play area and picnic tables. A nature trail with exercise equipment is also being considered.

Comments: Currently Richard H. Evens Park, and the area surrounding the Mecosta Township Hall, is underutilized as a recreation resource. Expanding the impact of the Park on the lives of the Township's residents can be accomplished by developing a wider range of recreation activities and by making better use of the existing facilities at the Township Hall (parking and open space outside as well as the indoor facilities available for use by residents). Some of the facilities that are desired at the Park include a nature trail/exercise path around the perimeter of the Township-owned property, and playground equipment for children of various ages. Restrooms, potable water, additional picnic tables, grills, signage, lighting, improved access, and other improvements could greatly improve the usefulness of the currently underutilized facility.

Issue #2 – Mecosta Township lacks adequate trail facilities for non-motorized users (bicycles, pedestrians, cross-country skiing,/snowshoeing).

Goal #2 – Mecosta Township will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Consumers Energy and other groups to improve the existing network of linear resources and to create new resources linking important features of the Township.

Comments: This issue (and goal) acknowledges that while there are some trail facilities in the Township (the White Pine Trail), that there is a lot of capacity to improve. Paving the White Pine Trail is an ongoing process, with portions paved both south and north of Mecosta Township. The Township understands that maintenance of the White Pine Trail is a cooperative activity that would involve the Township and the MDNR – and perhaps others including Mecosta County and the Village of Stanwood.

Other trail opportunities, related more to creating additional linkages throughout the Township, would be up to the Township to implement, but would require the cooperation of other agencies including the MDNR, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Consumers Energy the Mecosta County Road Commission, and other agencies including the County’s Recreation Park Commission. These activities would create linkages from key points of interest in the Township, such as Rogers Dam, the White Pine Trail, the anticipated Dragon Trail, Buffalo Park and other recreation-related facilities.

Issue #3 – Canoes, kayaks, and other small boats have a difficult time portaging at Rogers Dam due to lack of a canoe/kayak slide.

Goal #3 – Mecosta Township will work with Consumers Energy to develop facilities allowing those using canoes and kayaks safe access up and down the Muskegon River.

Comments: The lack of a canoe/kayak slide at Rogers Dam limits the capacity of recreational canoeists and kayakers to safely move either up or down stream. Facilities necessary for such a portage site would include two well maintained ingress-egress sites for the users as well as a maintained pathway linking the two sites. Although Consumers has a portage site, a canoe/kayak slide would make it more usable. This activity will need the cooperation of the Township, Consumers Energy, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and others to develop.

Issue #4 – There is inadequate boat launch parking at some facilities in Mecosta Township.

Goal #4 – Mecosta Township will strive to provide adequate boat launch parking at facilities along the Muskegon River.

Comments: The Township should contact the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to determine the likelihood of improving the existing boat launch parking and/or developing new facilities along the Muskegon River. Parking at the Rogers Heights boat launch and the launch under the freeway needs expansion.

Issue #5 – Sediment in the Muskegon River is negatively impacting recreation opportunities in Mecosta Township.

Goal # 5 – Mecosta Township will determine its options related to sediment accumulating in the Muskegon River upstream of Rogers Dam.

Comments: This issue has many far-reaching impacts on Mecosta Township beyond simply limiting recreation opportunities. It is unlikely that a recreation plan can adequately address this issue since the focus of a recreation plan tends to be related to accessing funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for land acquisition or the development of park facilities. The Township should contact the State of Michigan to determine options related to improving and maintaining the health of the Muskegon River since this is not an issue whose impact is only felt in Mecosta Township.

Recreation Standards

One way for a community to determine if they are adequately serving the residents is to compare the existing facilities to standards. The following table provides some standards and compares the needs of Mecosta Township's projected 2020 population of 2,725 to these standards. Since there are no facilities, Mecosta Township does not meet the standards.

Table 5 – Recreation Standards

| Recreation Facility/Opportunity | Standard (units/ Population) | Required to Meet 2020 Population (2,725) | Existing in Mecosta Township |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Local Park Land (acres) | 1/100 | 27 | 0 |
| Ball Fields (a) | 1/3,000 | 1 | 1 |
| Outdoor Basketball Courts (a) | 1/5,000 | 1 | 0 |
| Outdoor Ice Rinks | 1/20,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Picnic Tables | 1/200 | 14 | 1 |
| Playgrounds (a) | 1/3,000 | 1 | 0 |
| Soccer Fields (a) | 1/20,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Outdoor Tennis Courts (a) | 1/4,000 | 1 | 0 |
| Boat Launches (parking spaces) | 1/400 | 7 | 30 (MDNR) |
| Campsites (b) | 1/150 | 18 | 230 (Brower Park) |
| Cross-Country Ski Trails (miles) | 1/10,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Fishing Access (feet) | 1/1 | Unknown, but substantial | 0 |
| Hiking Trails (miles) | 1/5,000 | 1 | 3 (White Pine) |
| Swimming Beaches (public) | 1/25,000 | 0 | 1 (Brower Park_ |

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

(a) Does not include school facilities

(b) Includes private facilities

Status Report of Grant Assisted Parks

As of 2014 Mecosta Township had never applied for or received a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund or the U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund. In 2015 the township applied for and received grants from Great Lakes Energy People Fund and the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation in Midland.

Action Program

The previous sections of this plan lead to performing actions to address the recreation-related needs of Mecosta Township's residents and visitors. The following actions identify the year, location, approximate cost, and justifications for improvements. The Action Program is a guide. Some actions may be performed prior to, or after, the scheduled time due to funding opportunities, or difficulties in obtaining funds or other resources. Finally, this does not list all of the actions that should be performed over the five years – the Action Program focuses on physical improvements to facilities, but also lists many administrative tasks that will stretch well beyond the five year plan's schedule.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 2019 | <p>Action 1</p> <p>Action: The Township will apply for a grant to continue the improvements on Richard H. Evens Park. Phase II would include a universally accessible play area, handicap picnic tables and grills, a nature trail around the perimeter of the park with exercise stations, pathways to enhance universal accessibility, restrooms and potable water, signage, lighting, and other amenities.</p> <p>Location: Richard H. Evens Park/Mecosta Township Hall</p> <p>Cost: \$200,000 - overall cost \$5000 - engineering & design</p> <p>Funding Sources: MDNR Passport Fund, Township General Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, other Michigan Department of service organizations, private donations and other resources.</p> <p>Justification: Currently, the Township lacks traditional recreation facilities typically found in local parks. While the area is rich in natural resource-based recreation opportunities, traditional park facilities (such as playground equipment and picnic facilities) are only found at Buffalo Park in Stanwood. This lack of traditional facilities was identified as the number one issue in Mecosta Township.</p> |
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| 2019 | <p>Action 2</p> <p>Action 2: Develop Buffalo Park as a year round staging area for the White Pine Trail. Improve parking, provide year round bathroom facilities and add trail signage for locating the park and Stanwood businesses.</p> <p>Location: Stanwood</p> <p>Cost: TBD</p> <p>Funding Sources: Friends of the White Pine Trail, Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, other Michigan organizations and private donation.</p> <p>Justification: Buffalo Park has already been designated as a staging area for the White Pine Trail because of its location between Morley and Big Rapids. Providing a staging area will bring more people to the local businesses and provide a service to trail users.</p> |
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2019 Action 3

Action: Begin a dialogue with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to explore the feasibility of improving existing boat launch facility parking in Mecosta Township.

Location: Muskegon River

Cost: To be determined

Funding Sources: Township General Fund, other Michigan Department of Natural Resources funds (Recreation Passport and others), service organizations, private donations and other resources. Removed Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Justification: Two primary boat launch sites currently in the Township. (Rogers Pond and the launch under the freeway) are owned by the State of Michigan. The Township will contact the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to determine the likelihood of improving the existing boat launches by adding more parking.

2020 Action 1

Action: Continue to develop park facilities if grant is received. If grant is denied, look for other grants or resources to finish this project.

Location: Richard H. Evens Park

Cost: \$200,000 \$15,000 engineering and design

Funding Sources: Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, other Michigan Department of Natural Resources funds (Recreation Passport and others), service organizations, private donations and other resources.

2020 Action 2

Action: Continue the development of a trail head for the White Pine Trail at Buffalo Park.

Location: Buffalo Park in Stanwood.

Cost: TBD

Funding Sources: Friends of the White Pine Trail, Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, Other Michigan Department of Natural Resources funds (Recreation Passport and others), service organizations, private donations.

Justification: Continuing to improve Buffalo Park as a staging area for the White Pine Trail is beneficial to the public and to the Village of Stanwood.

2020 Action 3

Action: Begin a dialogue with Consumers Energy to improve the portage site for kayaks and canoes at Rogers Dam on the Muskegon River.

Location: Rogers Dam/Muskegon River

Cost: TBD

Funding Sources: Consumers Energy, Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. land and Water Conservation Fund, other Michigan Department of Resources funds (Recreation Passport and others), Service organizations, private donations and other resources.

Justification: The lack of a canoe/kayak slide at Rogers Dam limits the capacity of recreational canoeists and kayakers to safely move either up or down stream. Ingress and Egress sites need to be well maintained as well as the trail connecting the two sites. This activity will need the cooperation of the Township and Consumers Energy.

2020 Action 4

Action: Follow-up on boat launch parking.

Cost: TBD

Location: Boat Launch on Rogers Pond in Rogers Heights, and the launch under the freeway.

Funding Source: Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources Fund (Recreational Passport and others, Township General Fund, service organizations, private donations.

Justification: More parking is needed at these launches, especially on busy weekends.

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| 2021 | <p>Action 1</p> <p>Action: Start a dialogue with MDOT and Consumers Energy concerning adding bike paths to connect the Dragon Trail from the River Ridge area to Stanwood and Rogers Heights.</p> <p>Location: Primarily along 8 Mile Road and U.S. 131</p> <p>Cost: TBD</p> <p>Funding Source(s): MDOT, Trail Grants, Township General Fund, private donations.</p> <p>Justification: Pathways would encourage walking, bicycling, rollerblading, and other similar activities. With enough coordination, time, effort, and funding, the pathways could be linked to the statewide trail network – including the White Pine Trail, which passes through Mecosta Township.</p> |
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| 2021 | <p>Action 2</p> <p>Action: Follow-up on portage for kayaks and canoes at Rogers Dam.</p> <p>Location: Rogers Pond in Rogers Heights</p> <p>Cost: TBD</p> <p>Funding Source: Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, other Michigan Department of Natural Resources funds, service organizations, private donations and other resources.</p> <p>Justification: With interest from Consumers Energy to aid in this project, we need to pursue a safe and developed portage area for canoes and kayaks. This provides more recreational use of the waters in the Rogers Heights area.</p> |
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2021 Action 3

Action: Start a dialogue concerning the sediment in the river in the Rogers Heights area.

Location: Muskegon River north of Rogers Heights

Cost: TBD

Funding Source: Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, area water conservation groups, Michigan Natural Resources Funds, Township General Fund, private donations and other resources.

Justification: The heavy sediment in the river in the Rogers Heights area has been a problem for many years. It limits the use of the river in that area.

2021 Action 4

Action: Explore developing cross-country ski trails.

Location: Mecosta Township

Cost: TBD

Funding Source: Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Funds, private donations and other sources.

Justification: Much of the focus in developing recreational opportunities in the Mecosta Township area has been for summer recreation. Good cross-country ski and snowshoe trails would provide winter fun and exercise.

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| 2022 | Action 1 |
| <p data-bbox="306 432 1276 468">Action: Continue quest for area bike and cross-country ski/snowshoe trails.</p> <p data-bbox="306 506 1318 575">Location: Mecosta Township, focusing on area from River Ridge to Stanwood And Rogers Heights.</p> <p data-bbox="306 615 984 648">Cost: Will need estimate from MDOT for bike trails</p> <p data-bbox="306 688 1209 758">Funding Sources: MDOT, Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources funds, private donations and other sources.</p> <p data-bbox="297 798 1284 974">Justification: Having trails that connect the new Dragon Trail, that will pass through the River Ridge/ Davis Bridge area. to Stanwood and Morley will provide more biking, roller blading and walking areas and will bring more people to the Village of Stanwood and to Rogers Heights. Cross-country/ snowshoe trails add winter recreation to the area.</p> | |

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| 2022 | Action 2 |
| <p data-bbox="315 1165 1230 1234">Action: Continue to find solutions to the problem of heavy sediment in the river.</p> <p data-bbox="306 1274 1008 1308">Location: Muskegon River in the Rogers Heights area</p> <p data-bbox="306 1348 457 1381">Cost: TBD</p> <p data-bbox="306 1421 1299 1562">Funding Sources: Funding Source: Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, Area water conservation groups, Michigan Natural Resources Funds, Township General Fund, private donations and other resources.</p> <p data-bbox="306 1602 993 1635">Justification: The river in that area has limited usage.</p> | |

2023 Action 1

Action: Update Recreation Plan, or go in with the Mecosta County Park Commission when the County Plan is next updated.

Cost: To be determined by method of updating plan.

Funding Source(s): Mecosta Township

Justification: An up-to-date Recreation Plan provides goals for the community to follow related to improving recreation opportunities. It is also a requirement for obtaining many grants. Going in with the County and/or the Village of Stanwood could provide additional benefits.

Conclusions

Mecosta Township has a growing population, but limited public recreation facilities to meet the needs of the residents. There are many existing recreation opportunities in the area (Mecosta County and the State of Michigan maintain many facilities), but the Township has very little influence over decisions related to the types of facilities or activities provided. Mecosta Township has many ideas for developing a recreation system, and has established several areas in which to concentrate its efforts during the next five years: continue to develop facilities at Richard H. Evens Park (the Township Hall), developing a staging area for the White Pine Trail at Buffalo Park, developing biking and cross-country/snowshoeing trails, establishing a maintained canoe/kayak slide at Rogers Dam, improve river usage with better parking at boat launches and addressing the river sediment near Rogers Heights.

This plan emphasizes the need to cooperate with other organizations due to the complexity and cost of improvements.

APPENDIX A

Physical Features

The following section describes many of the Township’s natural and man-made features. The purpose is to provide users of this Plan with an overview of the natural features since recreation activities are closely related to the Township’s physical features.

Location

Mecosta County is in Western Michigan and is bordered by Osceola County to the north, Isabella County to the east, Montcalm County to the south and Newaygo County to the west. Mecosta County is 35 miles north of Grand Rapids 30 miles south of Cadillac. The City of Big Rapids is the only city in the County, which has four villages and 16 townships. Mecosta Township is in the western portion of Mecosta County and surrounds the Village of Stanwood.

Climate

Mecosta County’s weather, like all of Michigan’s, influences the recreational opportunities available throughout the year. The area can support a variety of activities throughout the year from swimming to skiing. Table A1 identifies information related to the area’s climate. Generally, January is the coldest month (20.2 average daily temperature) and has the highest snowfall (19.9 inches). July is generally the warmest month in the County (68.9 average daily temperature). It generally snows as early as September and as late as May. Precipitation peaks June through September (3.3 inches) and February generally has the lowest average (1.6 inches). Prevailing winds are from the southwest.

Table A1 – Climate in Mecosta County

| | Temperature (F) | | | Precipitation (inches) | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------|
| | Average Daily Maximum | Average Daily Minimum | Average Daily | Average | Average Snowfall |
| January | 28.6 | 11.8 | 20.2 | 2.0 | 19.9 |
| February | 31.4 | 12.0 | 21.7 | 1.6 | 14.0 |
| March | 40.2 | 20.7 | 30.4 | 2.2 | 11.3 |
| April | 55.6 | 32.4 | 44.0 | 3.1 | 1.9 |
| May | 68.5 | 42.6 | 55.6 | 2.9 | Trace |
| June | 77.9 | 52.2 | 65.1 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| July | 81.8 | 56.1 | 68.9 | 2.8 | 0.0 |
| August | 79.6 | 54.3 | 67.0 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| September | 70.7 | 46.8 | 58.7 | 3.3 | Trace |
| October | 60.2 | 37.7 | 48.9 | 2.7 | 0.5 |
| November | 44.5 | 28.3 | 36.4 | 2.7 | 6.5 |
| December | 32.5 | 17.7 | 25.1 | 2.3 | 16.3 |
| Year | 55.9 | 34.4 | 45.2 | 32.2 | 70.4 |

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Land Use

Mecosta Township has a variety of land uses which are shaped by the Muskegon River and Rogers Dam Pond, US-131 and Northland Drive, and the Village of Stanwood. Rogers Heights is the commercial center of the Township and includes a variety of commercial and service-related businesses. Low density residential is prevalent across the entire Township, with some agriculture and forested open space also mixed throughout the area. The Village of Stanwood, located in the southeast corner of the Township, includes commercial businesses and higher density residential uses. Public space is mixed throughout the township, with property owned by Michigan, the Township, and Mecosta County. Industry is limited to the Ice Mountain water bottling facility near the US-131 interchange.

Water Features

Water features are one of the Township's strengths, with the Rogers Dam Pond and the Muskegon River running from the northeast corner of the Township to the southwest corner of the Township. Several smaller streams and creeks feed into the Muskegon River.

Wildlife

The County's wildlife is typical of that found in most of western Michigan. Common wildlife includes deer, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, muskrats, beavers, squirrels, rodents and other small mammals. The area is home to a variety of birds including owls, wild turkeys, pheasants and many others. The area is also a seasonal home to many migratory birds including ducks and Canada Geese.

Native Vegetation

Originally, Michigan was covered with a dense forest of deciduous trees. As the area was cleared for farming and development, or the trees were removed for timber, the area's forests were replaced by farm fields, open field areas, orchards and smaller forested areas containing both deciduous and coniferous trees.

Transportation

US-131 bisects Mecosta County. This is West Michigan's primary north-south freeway. There is an interchange in the Township at 8 Mile Road. Northland Drive (Old US-131) also passes directly through the Township and serves the more local needs of travelers. The Township is served by Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority for public transportation.

APPENDIX B