

METROPARKS™



LAKE ERIE MASTER PLAN





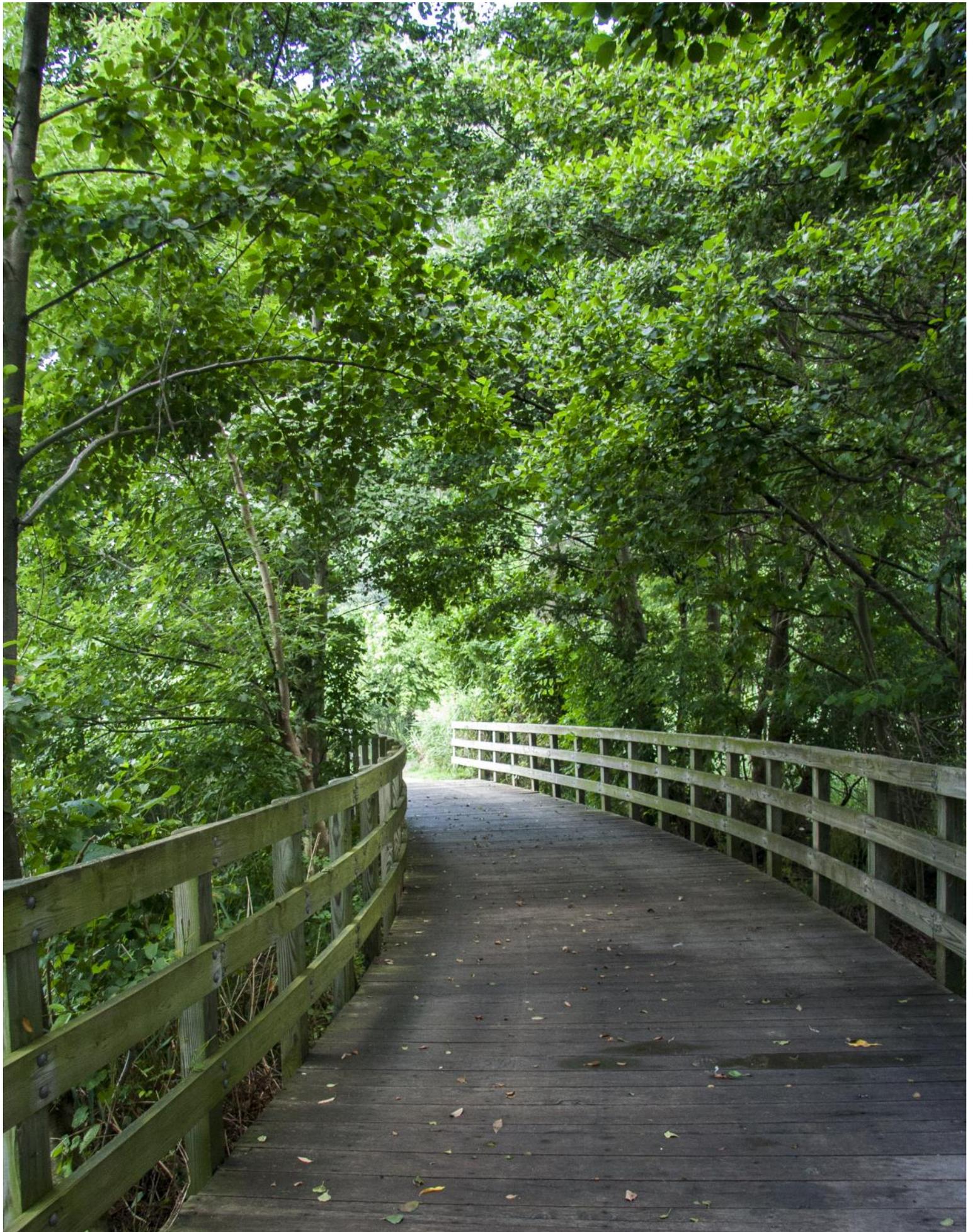
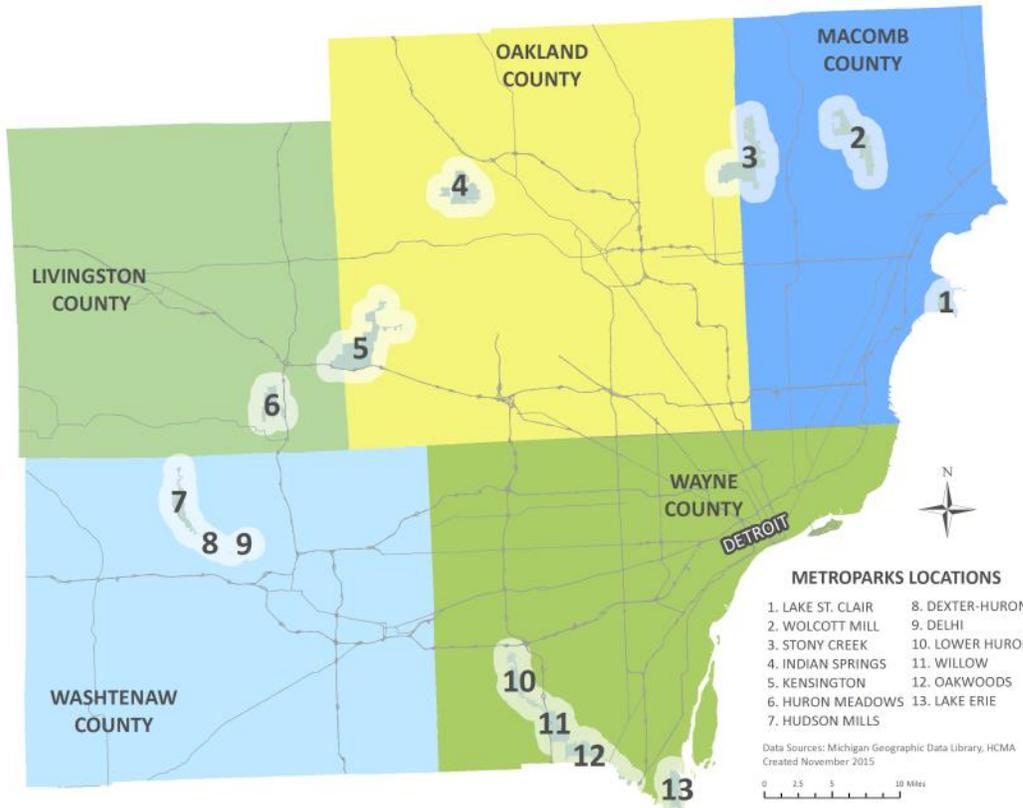


Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
ABOUT THE METROPARKS	5
ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS	6
PLANNING PROCESS	7
LAKE ERIE TODAY	8
CHARACTER	8
LOCATION	10
BIODIVERSITY AREAS	11
CULTURAL HISTORY	13
INFRASTRUCTURE	15
FACILITIES & CENTERS	18
LAND	20
WAYFINDING	22
TRAILS	23
ACCESSIBILITY	25
REVENUE	27
REVENUE SOURCES	27
VISITORS	28
PROGRAMS & EVENTS	29
COMMUNITY INFLUENCES	30
POPULATION	30
PROJECTS & INITIATIVES	32
PUBLIC INPUT	34
OUTREACH PROCESS	34
RESULTS	35
ACTION PLAN	38
NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES	38
PROJECT LIST	39
PLANS, STUDIES, & INITIATIVES	43
KEY PROJECTS	46

INTRODUCTION

About the Metroparks

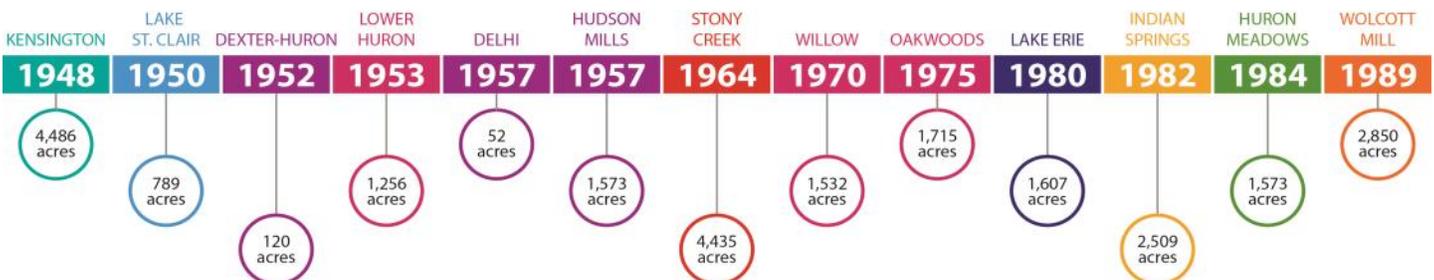


The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority was sanctioned by the Michigan State Legislature in Act No. 147 of the Public Acts of 1939. Named after the two longest rivers within its boundaries, the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is a regional park agency consisting of 13 Metroparks encompassing approximately 25,000 acres of land within a five county area in southeast Michigan.

Much credit can be given to Henry S. Curtis and Harlow O. Whittemore for making the Metroparks a reality. The 1937 vision for a park system proposed a series of parks connected by a long parkway extending from Lake St. Clair along the Clinton and Huron rivers to Lake Erie below the mouth of the Detroit River.

Funding of the parks began in 1942 with a property tax levy, limited to one-quarter of one mill. The rate today has been adjusted to .2140 mills.

PARK DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



Administration & Operations

Board of Commissioners

A seven-member Board of Commissioners governs the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority. The Board of Commissioners meets the second Thursday of each month, where they make policy decisions for the Authority, including approving expenditures, acquiring land, planning of new parks and facilities, approving fees and charges, awarding contracts through competitive bidding, and other matters necessary to provide regional recreation. The Board appoints staff officers for the Metroparks.

Two commissioners, appointed by the Governor of Michigan for a term of four years, serve as representatives at large. Five commissioners, one each to represent the counties of Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Livingston and Washtenaw, are appointed for a term of six years by the board of commissioners of the above-named counties.

Director is the Chief Executive Officer of the Metroparks, provides leadership and executive oversight of all administrative and operational activities.

Administrative Departments provide administrative support to operations, and guide the organization towards its mission.

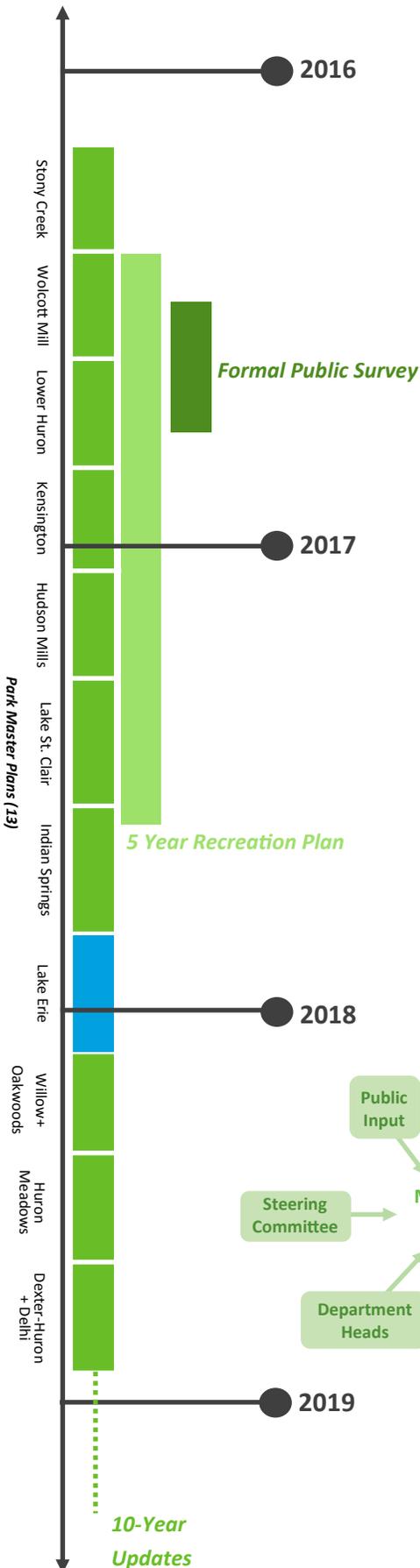
Operational Departments facilitate the day-to-day operations of the parks, making sure patrons have enjoyable and educational visits. They include Maintenance and Interpretive Services.

Metropark Police ensure that everyone can enjoy the parks in a safe and secure environment.



Introduction

Planning Process



Several factors contribute to the recommendations that will be proposed for Lake Erie in the master plan. One of the most important is the public input collected through meetings, questionnaires, and online comments. This reveals the public's hopes and expectations for the park and significantly influences plan recommendations. A master plan steering committee was formed to include park employees with exceptional knowledge of Lake Erie and the surrounding community, who along with the experienced Metroparks department heads provide their professional opinions.

In 2016, the Metroparks Planning Department scheduled an aggressive timeline for completing all 13 park master plans in three years. Each park will be given a planning window of six months, with overlap between parks. Some master plan timelines may be extended or delayed if the Board of Commissioner's recommend further public input following their review of the draft plan. The order of the parks in the planning process was determined by staff based on current and planned park projects, planning need, geography, and park popularity.

The Planning Department collects demographic and spatial data to inform master plan recommendations. Demographic data looks at the density, age, race, income, language, and other factors of the regional population. Spatial data, usually analyzed through Geographic Information System software, looks at the physical location of the parks in relation to other recreation opportunities, transportation facilities, population centers, important natural resources, and more. Finally, the Planning Department conducts a review of park conditions to identify areas needing improvement and areas experiencing success.



The master plans are intended to be living documents, modified as needed to reflect changing conditions in the parks. However, they focus on park developments over the following ten years, and will be updated every decade through a formal planning process similar to the current one.

Public input gathered at the Lake Erie Master Plan Open House on 11/4/2017



LAKE ERIE TODAY

Character



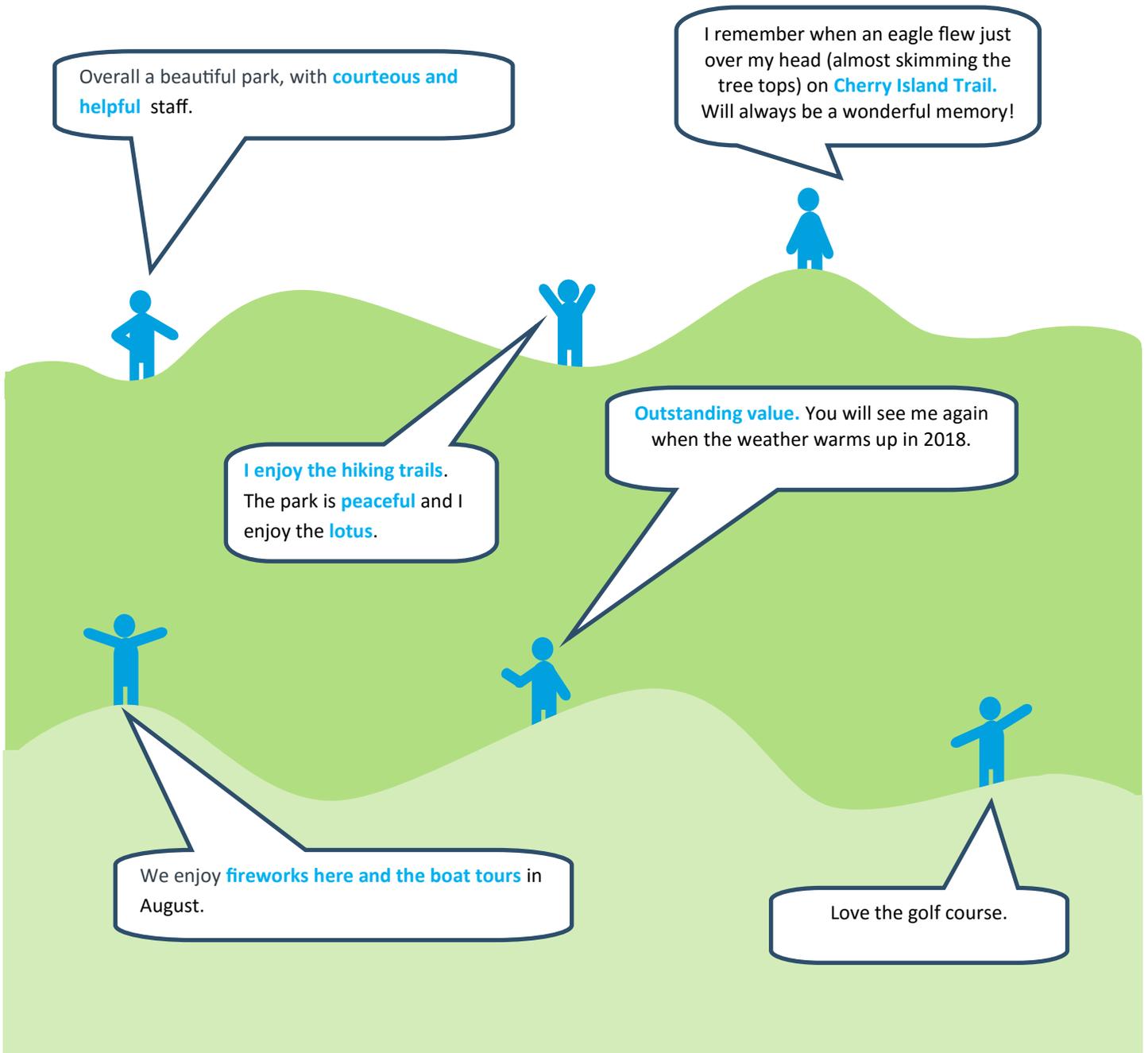
The following responses to our questionnaire highlight the many facets of Lake Erie that form a unique experience. Visitors appreciate the wide range of recreational activities available at the park, especially those related to the trails, natural resources, and golf. They see it as contributing to the surrounding community.

NEEDS

Continue to draw diverse range of visitors to the park

Build on park character to attract new visitors

OPPORTUNITIES

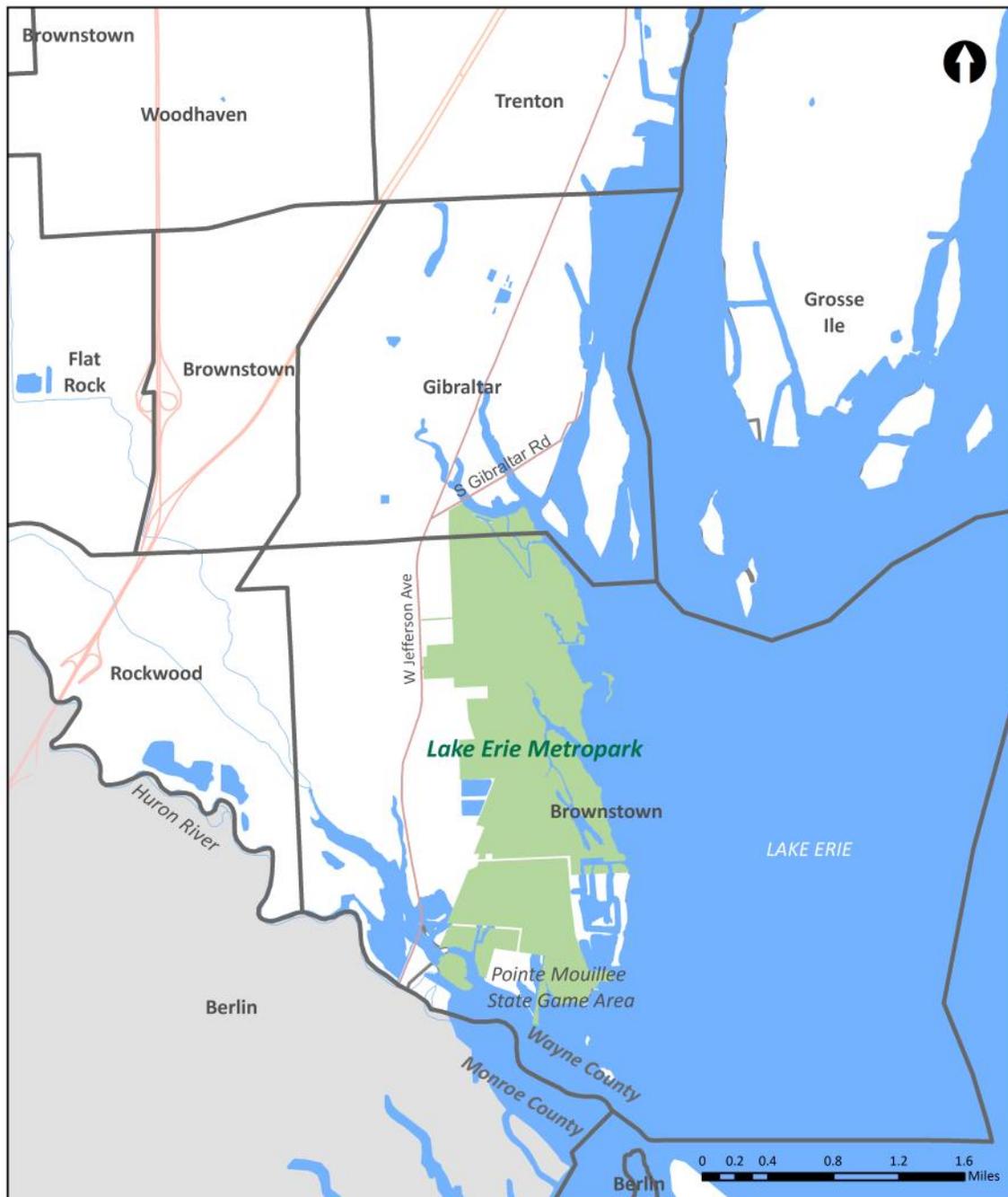




Location

Lake Erie Metropark is located in Wayne County, on its southern border with Monroe County. Most of the park is within Brownstown Township, with the northern section extending into the City of Gibraltar.

At its northernmost extent, Lake Erie reaches South Gibraltar Road. To the east is Lake Erie's shoreline. Its western boundary is Jefferson Road, and to the south it abuts Pointe Mouillee State Game Area. The park is situated at the mouth of the Huron River.



NEEDS

- Define and protect areas with important biodiversity features
- Create a resilient network of biodiverse areas in the park

OPPORTUNITIES

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life present in a given area, often measured by number and distribution of species. It is important to preserve because it provides humans with ecological services such as clean water and oxygen, leads to greater resistance and resilience during natural and human-caused disturbances, and reduces the risk of disease.

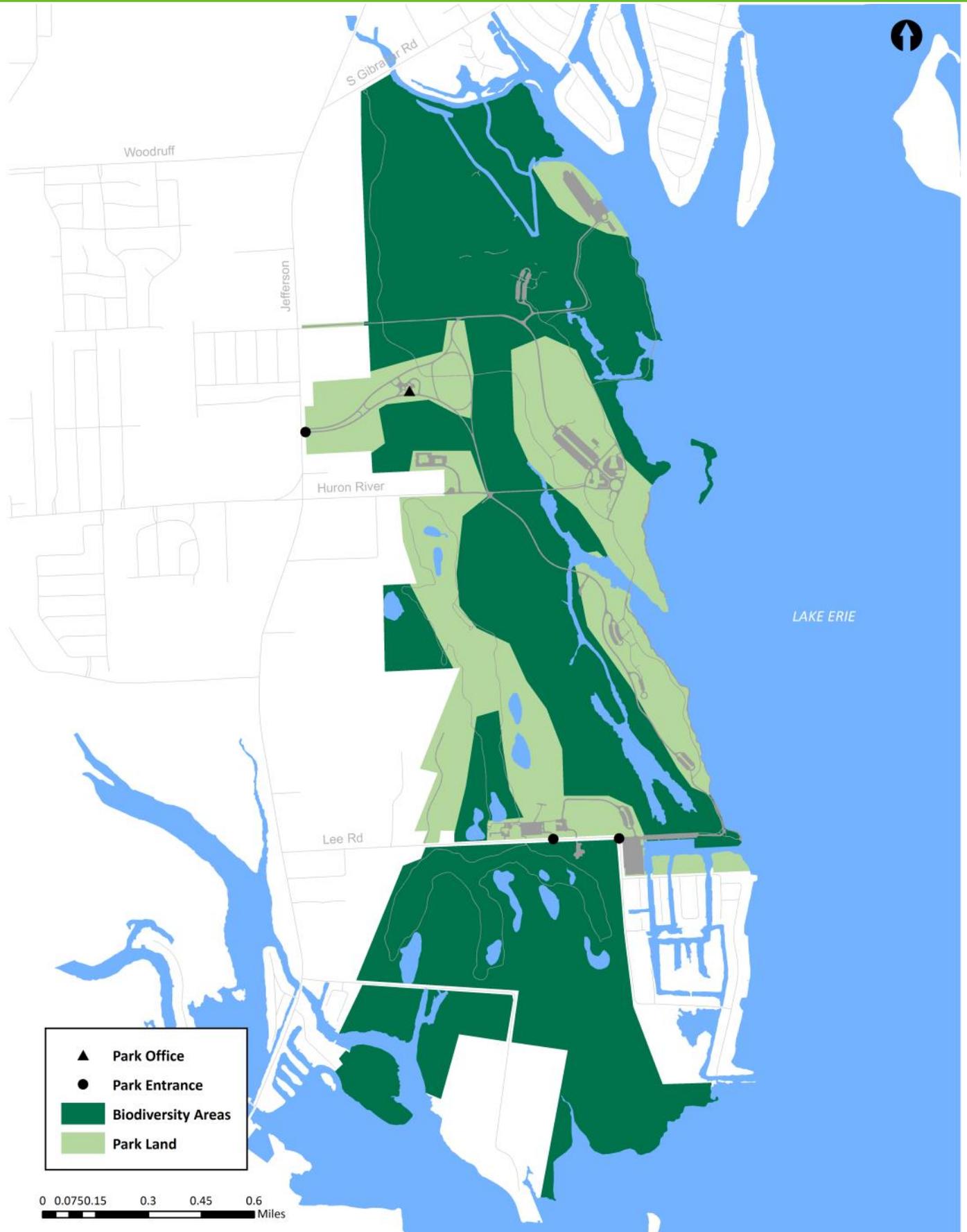


Biodiversity Areas

Identifying biodiversity areas can help inform the development of current and future park amenities, allowing the Metroparks to fulfill its mandate and mission statement of protecting the natural resources of the communities it serves. Development within biodiversity areas is carefully reviewed to minimize unnecessary disruption.

The following criteria for determining biodiversity areas were adapted from a matrix that the Natural Resources Department uses to determine work priorities throughout the park system. The following page shows a map of proposed biodiversity areas in Lake Erie.

Metric	What	Why	Metric	What	Why
Elemental Occurrence	the presence of a species under legal protection, or of a complete system recognized as in condition similar to pre-settlement	statutory, occurrences protected by law from intentional take	Percent Invasive Species Cover	percentage of total acreage with invasive plant coverage	areas with few invasive species require less work, have greater return on investment
FQA (Floristic Quality Assessment)	presence of plant species likely to occur in conditions similar to pre-settlement	determines the ecological value of a system based on its floral assemblage	Community Ranking	rank assigned by the state due to natural community rarity or rate of decline	assesses the vulnerability of each natural community within the state
FQI (Floristic Quality Assessment) Connectivity	the presence of a quality habitat (greater than 35 FQI) within 100 feet of another	connected habitats provide diverse resources and facilitate migration, increase species fitness	Wetlands	the presence of wetlands	wetlands tend to have greatest diversity, and are also critical to promote healthy water resources
Size	acreage of the habitat in question	large habitats provide more diverse resources and facilitate migration, increase species fitness, resilience	Habitat Connectivity	the presence of a complementary habitat within 100 feet of another	connected wetlands promote genetic diversity conservation and water quality



NEEDS

Better educate the importance of preserving important cultural features

Draw new visitors with programming/education based on history of park

OPPORTUNITIES

British defeated in War of 1812

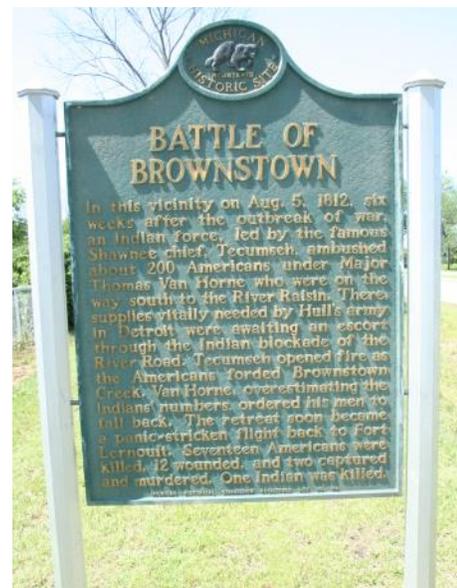
The village of Brownstown moved locations several times during its history, but prior to the War of 1812 it was located partially within the northern border of the park. The community now known as Brownstown was once a part of French Canada. Eventually, as the French influence dissipated, the area fell into British hands and finally came under American rule after the British defeat in the War of 1812.

The cannon monument located at the north end of the park is directly related to the efforts of Dr. Hal C. Wyman. A prominent physician in late 19th century Detroit, he was also a history buff. Using his own funding, he secured the cannons for a monument honoring soldiers from the War of 1812.

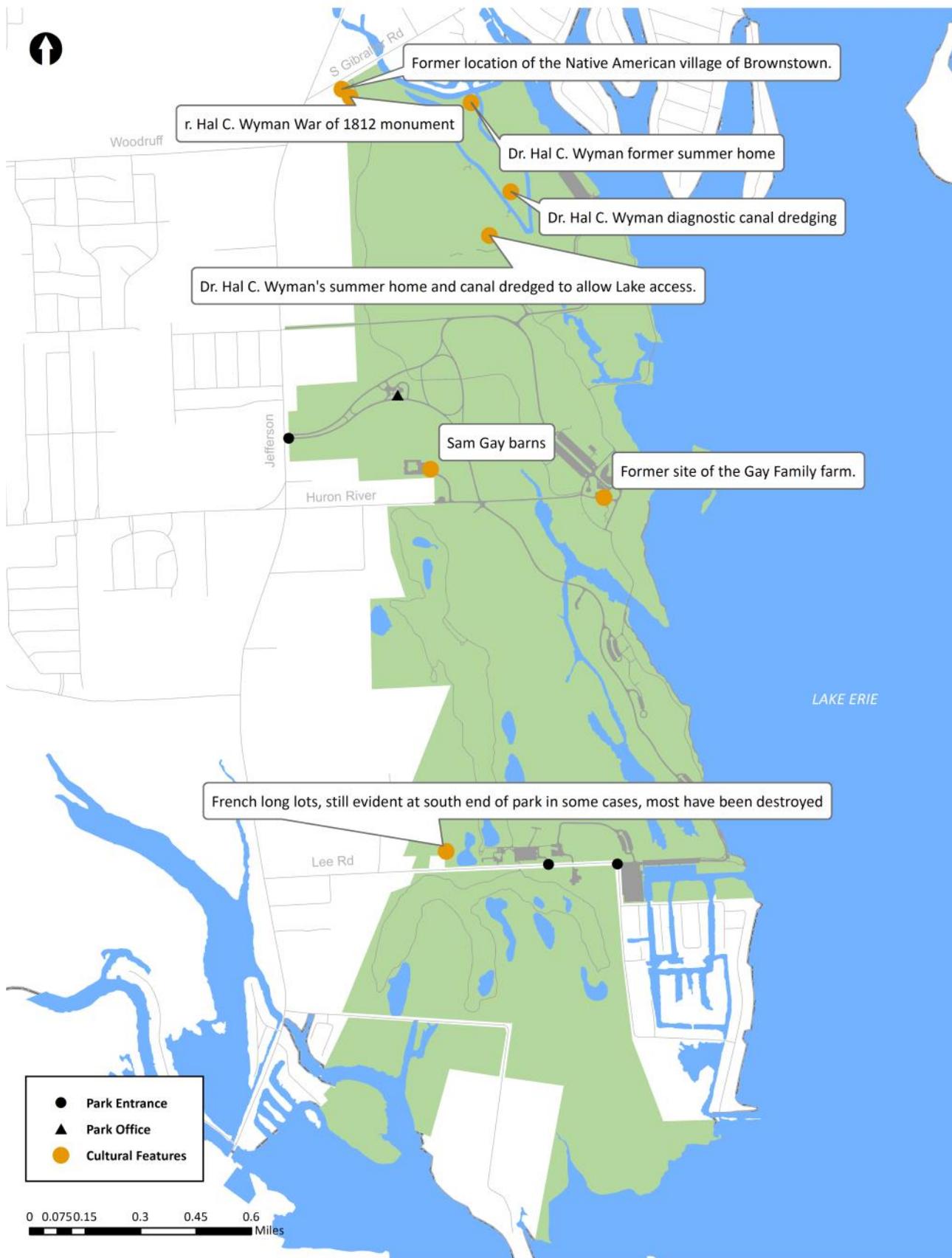
Cultural History

French Long Lots and Water Access

The area now known as Brownstown began as a Native American settlement near Gibraltar and Jefferson roads. The area was a historical site for meetings of native tribes in the “Northwest Territory” during the late 1700’s and early 1800’s. Various projectile points have been found along the shoreline, suggesting a former Native American presence. French Long Lots, also known as ribbon farms, can be seen along the southern portion of the park. These properties had water access, a valuable commodity for the newly arrived.



The cannon monument led by the efforts of Dr. Hal C. Wyman.



Infrastructure

In order to serve the varied needs of park visitors, Lake Erie contains a number of buildings, surfaces, facilities, and activity areas. Many of these were constructed years ago or decades ago and may require replacement in the near future.

The infrastructure necessary to maintain the activities available in Lake Erie includes roads, parking lots, boardwalks, trails, utilities, and much more. Since maintaining infrastructure is costly, it is important going forward to avoid overbuilding and collocate facilities to minimize paving, utilities, and reduce maintenance. Although Lake Erie Metropark is relatively isolated from other large recreation areas, a goal in the planning process is to ensure that the facilities in the park complement others nearby rather than create duplication.



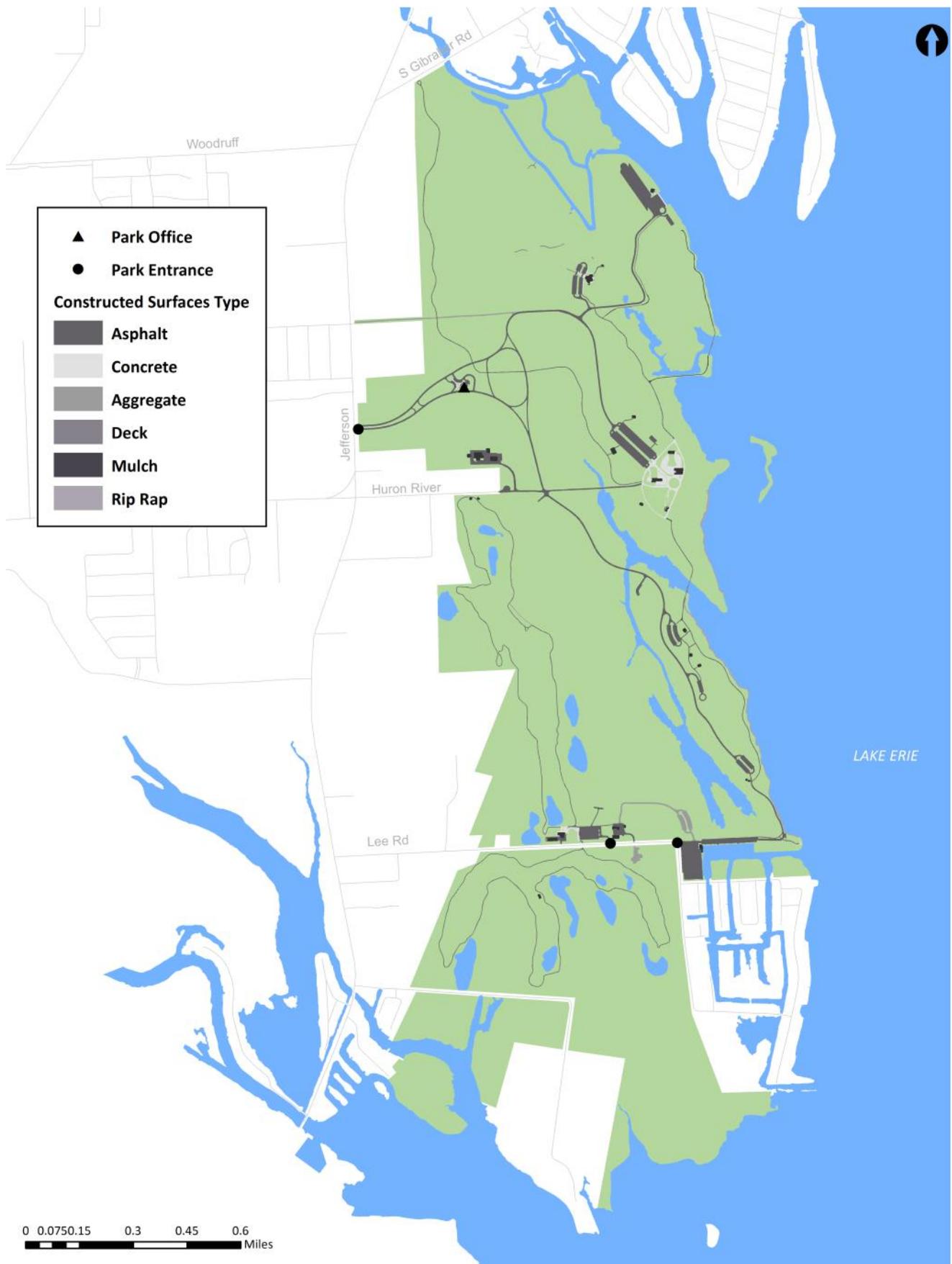
NEEDS

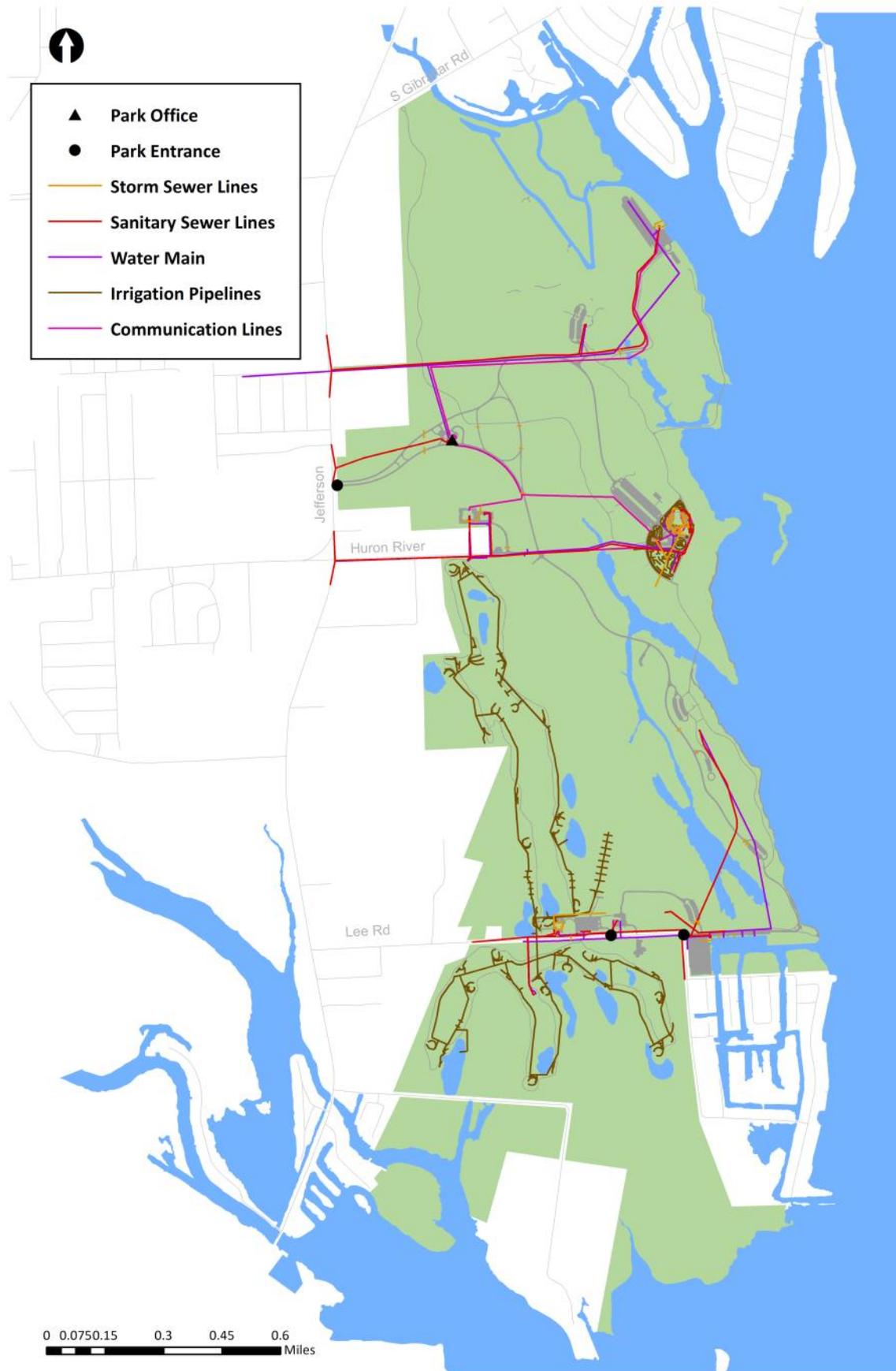
Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure

Redevelop park areas to better serve visitors and environment

OPPORTUNITIES

Lake Erie Infrastructure	
Public bldgs / avg age	8 / 29
Service bldgs / avg age	9 / 24
Comfort stations / avg age	2 / 5
Road miles	4.95
Parking lot acreage	21.79
Playgrounds	3
Percent of park mowed	12
Picnic shelters	5
Sand volleyball courts	2
Baseball fields	1
Fishing platforms	1
Tennis courts	0
Ice skating rinks	0
Basketball courts	2
Public canoe/kayak launches	1





Facilities & Centers

Lake Erie features a number of facilities that define its character and enhance the recreational experience of visitors. Some of these either require an admission fee, are available for rentals, or sell concessions, supplementing park revenue. As with all park infrastructure, it is a priority to keep the facilities well-maintained and replace them when no longer functional.

Marina Point

The marina point offers an observation deck and fishing site that was developed in 1999 and includes benches, a viewing scope, fishing deck, access walks, trees, and a parking lot.

Boat Launch

The boat launch provides access to the large, open waters of Lake Erie and the Detroit River. It includes twelve boat ramps, a canoe/kayak launch, parking lot and restrooms.

Marina

The purchase of the Windjammer Marina (now the Lake Erie Marina) was approved at the October, 1980 Commission Meeting. The first season the Metroparks operated it was in 1981. It features more than 100 wells complete with water and electricity, daily transient docks, marina ice fishing, and a marina office with restrooms.

Great Wave Area

The “Great Wave” wave action pool includes a spray area and playground. This area also includes the food bar and sledding hill, three picnic shelters, softball diamond, two



basketball courts, two volleyball courts, and two tennis courts.

Golf Course

The 6,489 yard, par 72 golf course is surrounded by natural wetlands and ponds. It includes a starter building, driving range, practice green, and cart paths.

Marshlands Museum

The Marshlands Museum explores the rich cultural and natural heritage of the Downriver/Lake Erie shore region through exhibits and programs. The museum also includes seasonal displays on the marsh and lake ecology, highlighted by a 1,300 gallon Great Lakes Aquarium and the “Muskrat Club”, an interactive corner for children.



Lake Erie Today

The Metroparks are moving towards a more data-driven approach to developing facilities. In order to best serve the residents of southeast Michigan and use resources wisely, the Planning Department has identified the location of similar facilities and programs. The goal for future development is to avoid duplication and instead offer unique facilities that fill recreation voids in the geographic area where the park is located.

The map below shows the location of aquatic facilities, golf courses, boat launches, neighborhood sports facilities, and interpretive programs that compete with those offered at Lake Erie. Relatively few of these facilities and programs available in the five-mile radius can be built upon the park's unique and significant features. This may present opportunities for Lake Erie to meet the recreational needs of the area in new ways distinct from other recreational opportunities moving forward.

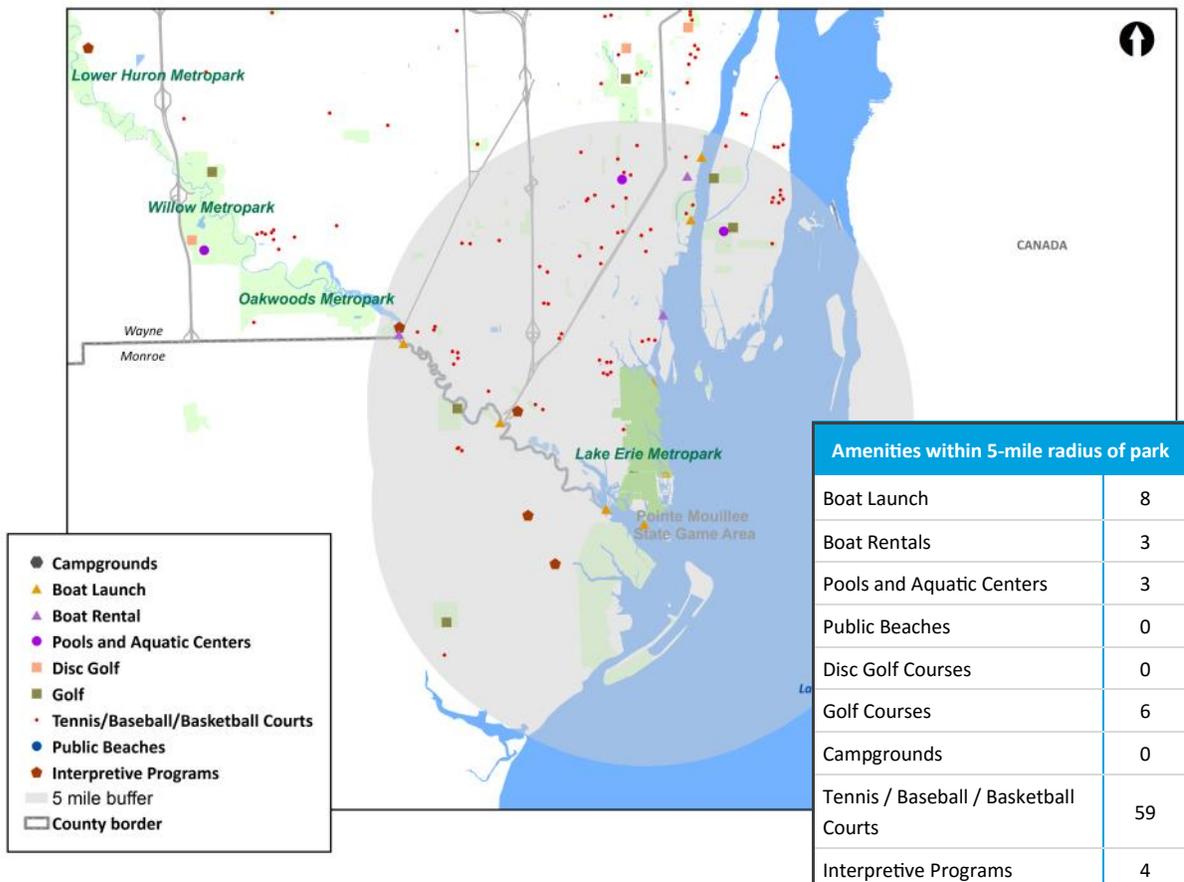
NEEDS

Identify areas of facility duplication for repurposing and consolidation

Provide unique recreational facilities to draw visitors from across the region

OPPORTUNITIES

NEARBY FACILITIES



NEEDS

Work with county and local communities to address any park boundary issues

Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations

OPPORTUNITIES

Grants

Over its history, Lake Erie has received six grants from the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) for the Marshlands Museum, trails, marina point, and more. The land specified as the project area of those grants was encumbered in perpetuity—meaning it may never be converted into a private or non-recreational use. Approximately 98% of Lake Erie is encumbered, as shown on the following page.

The generous grants from the DNR and other sources have allowed Lake Erie Metropark to develop the high-quality recreation it offers to the public today.



Encroachments

The Planning Department has worked with Lake Erie park staff to identify external encroachments on park boundaries. These include private development on park property, dumping waste, and breaking through fence lines. Together with a new combined map of county parcels in relation to historic Metroparks-created parcels, this will help staff resolve existing property issues.

Since Lake Erie abuts several residential areas, it is important to work with neighbors to discourage illegal paths into the park and identify areas where a formal pedestrian entry point may be necessary to serve a neighborhood.

Informal Access Points

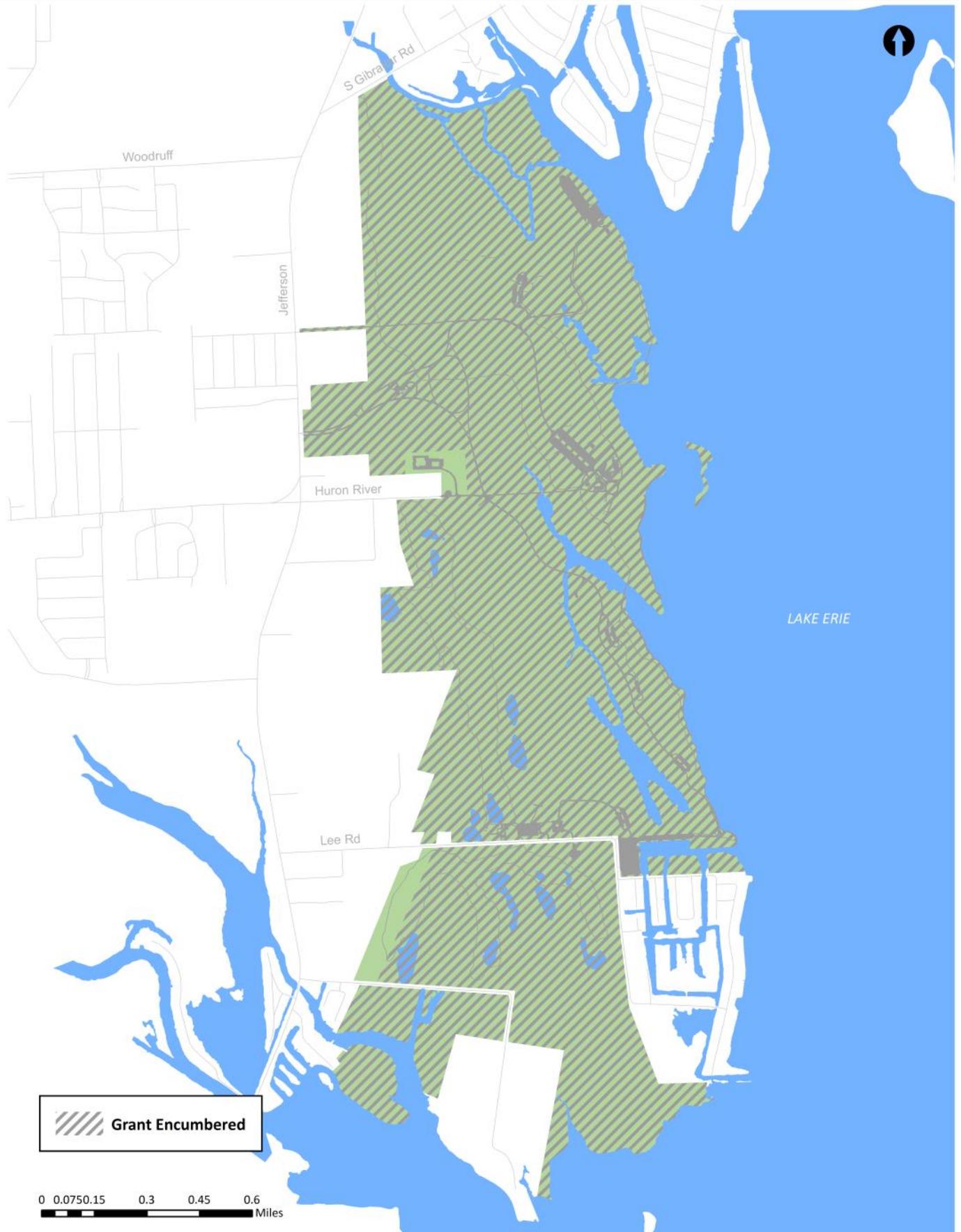
Certain spots on the park border are open to pedestrian access but not formally designated as an entrance. These must be monitored and considered in the planning process. Individuals may park on adjacent streets and enter the park on foot, affecting the tolling revenue of the park and potentially causing negative traffic impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Easements

Lake Erie contains various utility easements, meaning that utility providers are allowed to use certain sections of land to run power lines or other equipment, in order to provide service to the surrounding area. In the future, the Metroparks will collaborate with surrounding municipalities and agencies to link into existing utilities rather than building park-specific utilities. This will help create the vision of a clean, efficient park system.

Adjacent Property Uses

Surrounding the park is predominantly single family residential. The eastern boundary is the shoreline of Lake Erie while west of the park includes a large tract of land occupied by the South Huron Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant.



Wayfinding

Vehicular Wayfinding

Standardization

Recently Metroparks updated signage installed at various times with various standards and designs. This did not reinforce the parks working together as a system and could be confusing for visitors. As older signs reached the end of their lives, they were replaced with new, standardized signs.

Simplicity

In many parks, including Lake Erie, an abundance of signage was not necessarily useful for directing visitors. Efforts were made to minimize the duplication of signs to express sign information simply in order to make navigation easier for users of the park.

Symbols

Symbols are useful for expressing information in a small amount of space, and also make park facilities more accessible for visitors who have trouble reading or speaking English. A standard set of symbols has been developed to be used in wayfinding signage.

Trail Wayfinding

Standardization

Trail types present in the Metroparks include shared use, mountain bike, ski, nature and rustic, and equestrian. Despite their different functions, these trails together create a complete recreation system, so signage will be based on a uniform template.

Flexibility

In order to serve the differing needs of users on these various trail types, the signage template will allow for removable panels and be customized to fit the needs of that user group.

Legibility

For many people, the easiest way to orient oneself in a new environment is through use of a map. For greater ease of use, all new trail wayfinding signs will include a map marked with a “you are here” symbols and the location of important park features and amenities.

NEEDS

Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs

Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence

OPPORTUNITIES



Examples above of trail wayfinding signage at other Metroparks

Trails

As part of the master planning process, staff have categorized and defined the various types of trails in the park, inventoried the miles, and specified the uses and design of each. This formal listing allows for assessment of availability of trails for various users in comparison to other trail types within the park. It will also lead to more standardized maintenance and rule enforcement processes.



Trail Type	Miles in park	Allowed Uses	Prohibited Uses	Surface
Shared-Use Trail (Hike-Bike Trail)	3	Non-motorized traffic and pets.	Horses and motorized vehicles such as golf carts, scooters, and hover-boards.	10' wide, typically asphalt, some small sections may be concrete or boardwalk.
Nature Trail	3.93	Pedestrian use only; hiking and walking. Snowshoeing is permitted on all Nature Trails except those designated for cross-country skiing. Cross-country skiing is permitted on designated trails only.	Motorized vehicles, running, jogging, pets, bikes, and horses.	Trail surfaces vary and include asphalt, aggregate, mulch and compacted earth. Portions of these trails are accessible, but most are not ADA-compliant.
Cross-Country Ski Trail	3.85	Cross-country skiing only. Many are used for other activities during the summer.	Motorized vehicles, snowshoes, hiking, bikes, horses, and pets.	Snow covered.

Lake Erie includes over 10 miles of trails. The shared use hike-bike trail connects to the Iron Belle Trail, the longest state trail in the nation with two paths to hike or bike between Belle Isle Park in Detroit and Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula. Located uniquely along Lake Erie and situated at the mouth of the Huron River, part of the last segment of the nationally designated water trail before it flows into Lake Erie. The park is notable for its expanse of beautiful shoreline and the open water. Visitors can enjoy the scenic views on the hike-bike trail, nature trails, and boardwalks.



Accessibility

To remain compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Metroparks are responsible for ensuring that park space is accessible to all members of the public. In the development of this master plan, planning staff has taken an active role in identifying areas where improved access is needed so that all guests can enjoy the park. A survey of several areas has resulted in a list of accessibility issues present at Lake Erie Metropark. These areas are highlighted below and shown on the map on the following page.

NEEDS

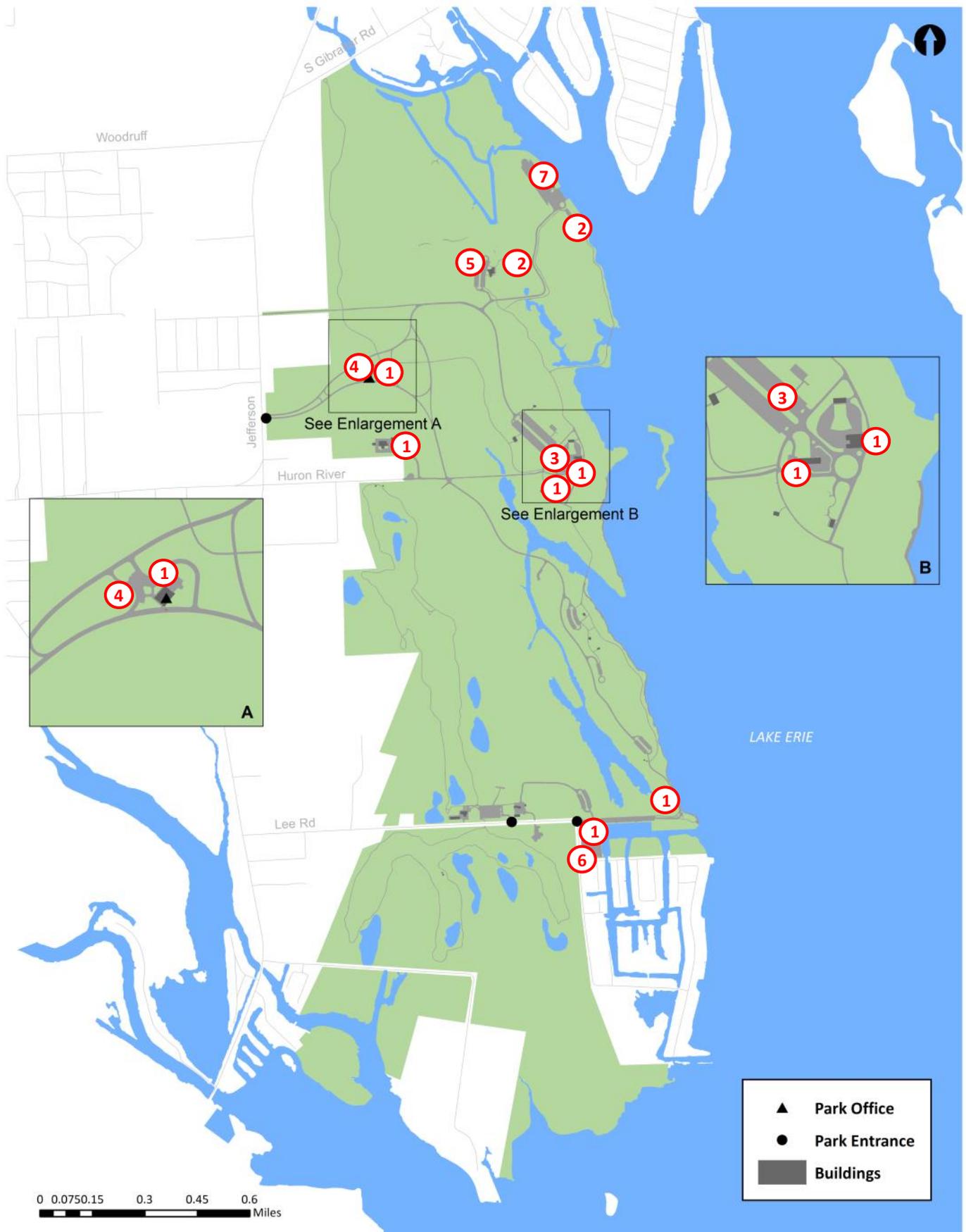
Pursue improvements to park accessibility

Ensure that users of all abilities feel empowered to take full advantage of the park

OPPORTUNITIES

Area	ID #	Description
Restrooms	1	Restrooms need to be updated for accessibility at marina and cove point
Nature Trails	2	Nature trail surface needs to be improved to meet ADA standards
Great Wave Area	3	Improved ramp access from parking spaces and connection to basketball courts
Park Office	4	Parking lot signs and van signs needed
Marshlands Museum	5	Parking lot striping and improved ramp access
Marina	6	Parking lot striping and van signage
Boat Launch	7	Parking lot signs and van signs needed

By working with the ADA Checklist provided by the ADA National Network and the Institute for Human Centered Design, the Metroparks are able to prioritize accessibility improvements of facility entrances, services, public restrooms, and other park amenities. The areas mentioned, in addition to others, were identified using the recommended methods for all HCMA parks.



REVENUE

Revenue Sources

NEEDS

Diversify sources of revenue

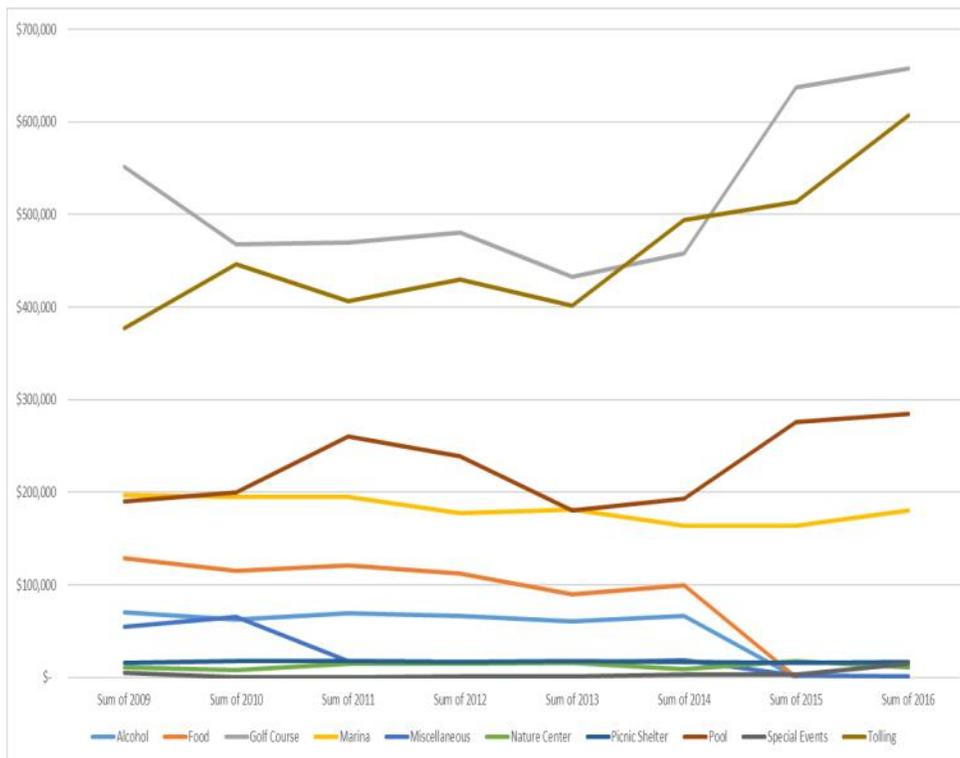
Offer new and exciting activities/
programs to visitors to both boost
tolling and gather user fees

OPPORTUNITIES

The Metroparks 2016 General Fund revenue equaled \$50,531,202. Lake Erie's 2016 operations revenue was approximately \$1,772,477, comprising 3.5% of all Metroparks revenue.

Lake Erie budgeted 2017 operations revenues are \$1,783,025, while estimated 2017 operations expenses are \$3,834,095. Property tax and other revenue is estimated to subsidize 53% (\$2,051,070) of the Lake Erie operating budget.

As the chart illustrates, the majority of revenue (approximately 37%) comes from the golf course.



2016 Operations Revenue

Revenue Source	2016 Total	% of Revenue
Golf Course	658,080	37
Tolling	606,615	34
Wave Pool	284,243	16
Marina	180,187	10
Picnic Shelter	16,800	1
Marshlands Museum	10,846	1
Miscellaneous	996	0.1

TOTAL: 1,772,477



Revenue

Visitors

Lake Erie Metropark is a regional park and can draw from the approximately 4,200,000 Michigan residents that live within a 30 mile radius (approximately a 45-minute drive) of the park. Certain events and activities may draw visitors from greater distances.

Vehicle entries to Lake Erie Metropark have hovered between 156,000 and 221,000 since 2009, fluctuating through the years but experiencing a slight decline overall. Weather often plays a role in attendance to the park; activity areas greatly affected by weather are the trails, Marshlands Museum, golf course, and the Great Wave Pool. This may explain the dip in attendance visible in 2014.

Consolidation of statistical information is needed to better assess vehicle entries, park users, event attendance, event participants, and activity participation within the park. This information will help with marketing of events, activities, and future analysis of the park.

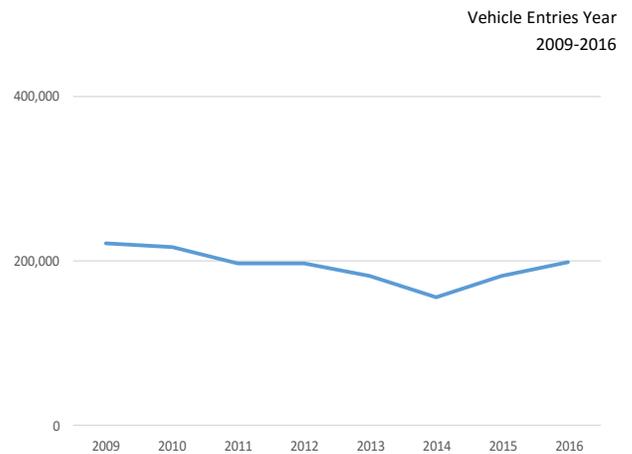


NEEDS

Target market strategy

Take advantage of proximity to urban population to grow revenue and system awareness

OPPORTUNITIES



Lake Erie Metropark 30-Mile radius



Programs & Events



Summer Discovery Cruise



Hawkfest



Day camps

NEEDS

Increase revenue and visitation

Build on enthusiasm of Lake Erie visitors with exciting, engaging programs and events

OPPORTUNITIES

Lake Erie hosts dozens of events each year, organized either by park staff or outside groups. Many of these are interpretive programs for both children and adults to explore the natural and cultural assets of the park. Some promote artistic enrichment, and others encourage physical activity or advocate for a cause. This designated “Important Bird Area” is one of the premier hawk-watching sites in North America highlighted by the annual Hawkfest. A series of popular events that offer a unique experience include the Summer Discovery Cruise and day camps for kids.

Recent events include:

- Marsh Meander
- Whitetail Wisdom
- Shoreline Clean-up
- They’re Back: Birding Adventure
- Snapping Turtle Tales
- Carve a Fish Decoy
- 21st Amendment: End Prohibition Festival
- Full Buck Moon Hike
- Marshlands Dragons
- Whooo’s There?
- Fish Camp
- Michigan Moth Night
- Lens Cap
- Coffee Club
- Lots of Lovely Lotus
- Full Sturgeon Moon Hike
- Talkin about Ospery
- Grandparents Day Make n Take
- BOO!! The History of Halloween
- Fairy Tales and Forecasting
- Hearts of Love
- Tundras and Snowies

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Population

The percentage of households without access to an automobile is gradually rising in the region. Wayne County and the municipalities directly surrounding Lake Erie show a modest trend downward to automobile access. The Metroparks were created at the time of the auto boom, when it was assumed that every family would have a car to take out to the countryside on the weekends. Since habits and lifestyles are changing, the Metroparks must look into innovative ways to provide access to the parks for all.

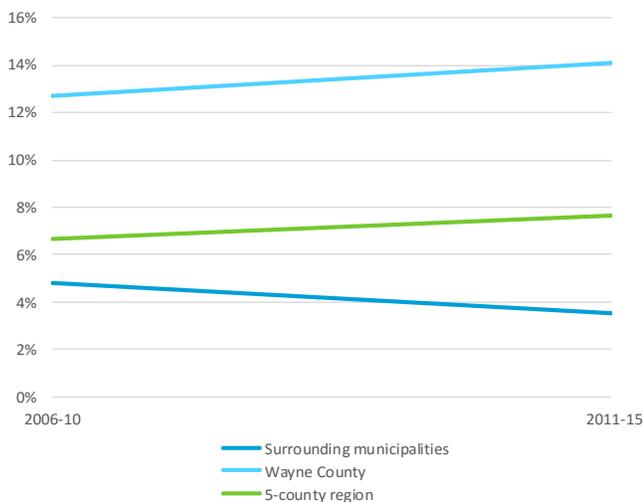
The percentage of individuals over 65 years of age is rising quickly in the region, in Wayne County, and most dramatically in communities surrounding the park. Older adults have distinct needs, often requiring accommodations for mobility and accessibility of park features such as trails and buildings. This is important to keep in mind when planning the future of a park serving an older population.

NEEDS

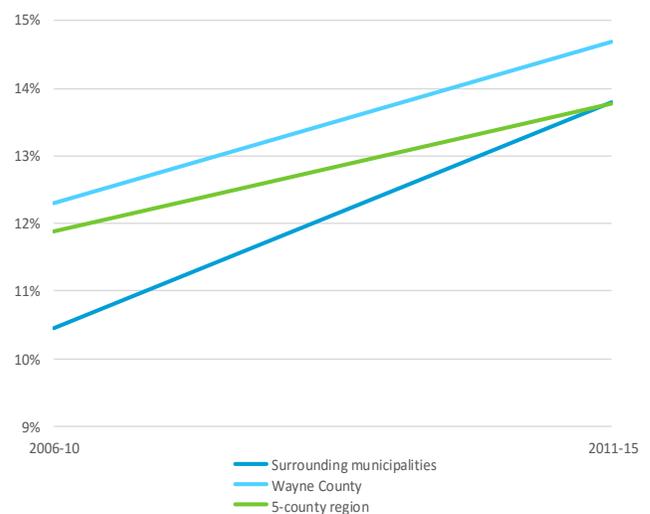
Address changing needs of new population demographics

Draw new users with a connected, accessible, welcoming and safe park environment

OPPORTUNITIES



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CARS AVAILABLE, 2006-10 through 2011-15 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)



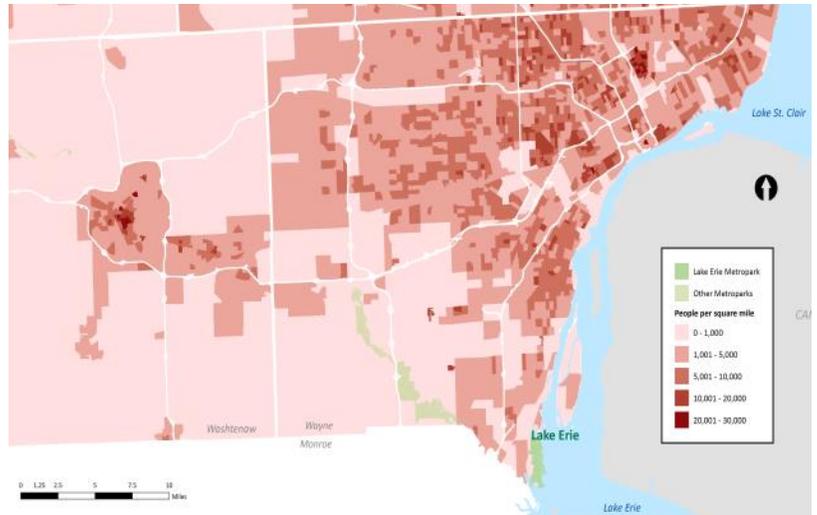
CHANGE IN PERCENT OF POPULATION OVER 65 YEARS, FROM 2006-10 through 2011-15 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

Community Influences

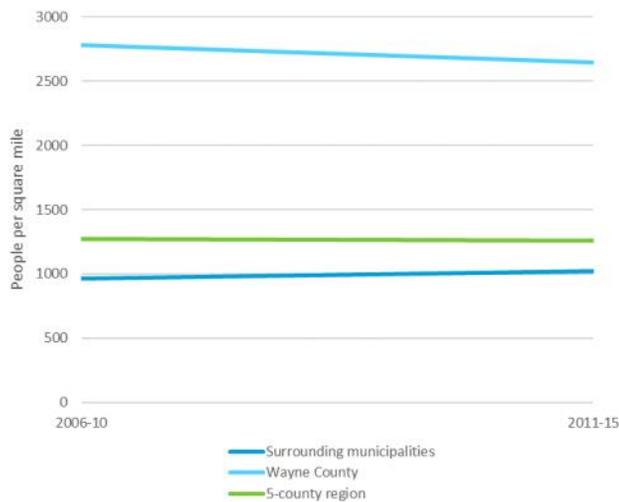
As shown below, Lake Erie is located in a lower residential density area than many other Metroparks, with the majority of land use characterized as single family residential. The areas directly bordering the park have an average population between 1,000 and 5,000 people per square mile. Associated with the noted demographic change will be the impact on housing trends. The aging baby boomers will seek different housing options than past generations of seniors. The desire will be for mixed use walkable environments with more compact smaller housing units, along with more time for passive recreational opportunities that will continue to increase in the surrounding communities.

While on average the 5-county region and Wayne County is falling in population density, the average population density in the surrounding municipalities has risen slightly, creating increased demand for recreation in the area. The estimated population from 2006-2010 to 2011-2015 slightly decreased -0.8% for the city of Gibraltar while Brownstown Township increased 4.3%.

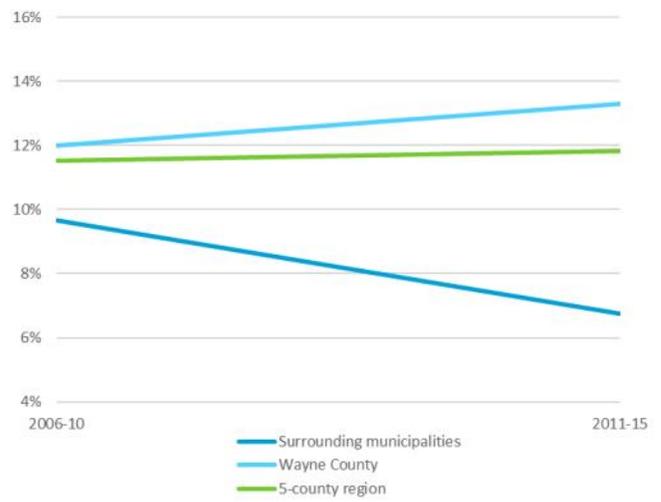
Although most households in the area still speak English as their first language, Wayne County and the region at large are seeing a slight increase in households speaking languages other than English at home. Because of this growing linguistic diversity the Metroparks are working towards more universal signage design, with a focus on easily understandable symbols. Both Gibraltar and Brownstown Township do not follow this trend, having decreased numbers of speakers of other languages.



POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT, 2010-14



CHANGE IN AVERAGE POPULATION DENSITY, 2006-10 through 2011-15
(Source: US Census American Community Survey)



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING LANGUAGE BESIDES ENGLISH AT HOME, 2006-10 through 2011-15 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

NEEDS

Improve connectivity within the park and with the community

Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities

OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding the goals and plans of municipalities bordering and/or containing Lake Erie is essential for a collaborative, comprehensive planning process. Planning staff researched the published master plans and recreation plans of surrounding municipalities, counties, and other agencies. These provided a basic idea of the direction planned for each, especially regarding land use, development, and recreation.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2014-2019 Gibraltar, Michigan

- Consider the waterfront access potential of any new development or redevelopment activities as integral to meeting community recreation needs and utilizing the City's prime natural and recreation resource.

Brownstown Township Master Plan, 2008

- The southern portion of Brownstown is predominantly residential, care must be taken to ensure compatibility between land uses, especially near West Jefferson Avenue, where neighborhood commercial uses are planned.

Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative (DLGI) Master Plan, 2008

- Twenty-one (21) communities, along with many partners including Huron-Clinton Metroparks, stepped forward and began to map how various trail connections could be made, completed a master plan, and currently being implemented community wide.

Brownstown DDA Area Market Assessment & Implementation, July 2016

- New housing and retail planned in the Town Center along with substantial investment underway in

Projects/Initiatives

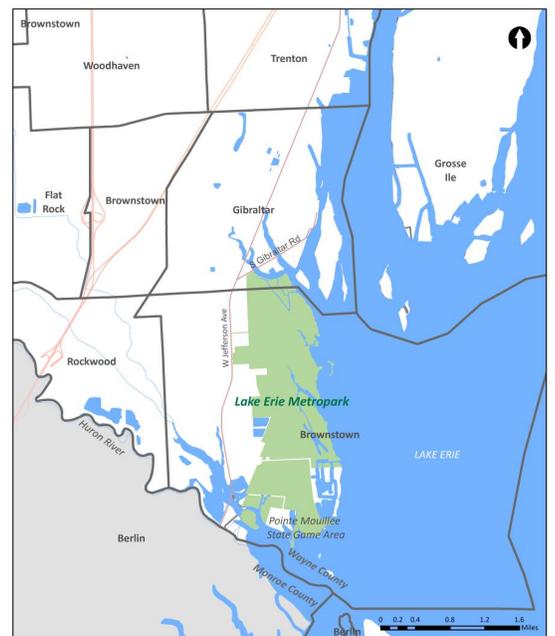
expanding commercial with passive and active recreation activities.

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

- Both the visitor center and boat dock/fishing pier are still under construction; completion is estimated in spring 2018.

Interpretive Plan for the Huron River National Water Trail, December 2017

- The purpose of this plan is to help communities and stakeholders incorporate heritage on the lower reach of the nationally designated Huron River Water Trail, from Flat Rock to Lake Erie, which will create a more meaningful trail experience and a greater sense of place.



MUNICIPALITY MAP

Community Influences

Relevant Planning Documents

Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2014-2019 Gibraltar

Brownstown Township Master Plan, 2008

City of Gibraltar Master Plan, 2002

Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative Master Plan, 2008

SEMCOG Green Infrastructure Vision, 2014

“The existence of the Lake Erie Metropark...creates an opportunity for reinvestment into unique neighborhoods and commercial areas. Goals for this area should include emphasizing the waterfront aspect to help create a sense of place and maintain an emphasis on recreation.” pg. 30

“The East West Connector was the first ‘keystone’ project of the DLGI connecting the non-motorized trail systems in Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods Metroparks, through Flat Rock, Brownstown, Rockwood, and Gibraltar and connecting into the trail system at Lake Erie.” pg. 12

“Public accessibility to the green infrastructure network is paramount, including access to parks, trails, water, and ensuring public spaces are designed for all residents.” pg. 1

Since the development and land use decisions of bordering communities and other governmental agencies directly impact the park, these neighbor master plans were reviewed and taken into account when creating this document. The opinions and ideas expressed by residents and leaders in these municipalities give Lake Erie a wider context and in many cases underscore the importance of the park’s resources to citizens.

Lake Erie Metropark is part of a broader system of recreation and green space that includes other Metroparks as well as local, county, and state parks and greenways. Due to this, recreation and green infrastructure plans were also considered in creating the Lake Erie Master Plan. Many communities are currently advancing their non-motorized networks, seeking grant funding to create greenways and paths, and cooperating to provide linked green and recreation spaces to their constituents.



PUBLIC INPUT

← Outreach Process



Since this park belongs to the people of southeast Michigan, the Planning Department aimed to include the public in multiple stages of the planning process.

The planning process began with a meeting of the steering committee, which identified organizations and individuals with significant investment in the park for targeted invitations to the public meeting. A strategy for soliciting general participation in the public meeting was also discussed.

The next step was a public meeting with community members to gather initial ideas about the direction of the park. A general park feedback survey was posted online and advertised by Metroparks social media.

These ideas were taken into account, along with staff feedback and other data, in developing initial recommendations. These were then presented to the public at a second meeting, and feedback was collected, analyzed, and incorporated into a draft Master Plan document.

This document was posted online in January 2018 for final public comment, which influenced the final Master Plan sent to the Board of Commissioners for approval in February 2018.

Public Meeting 1 - 11/4/17

- Explanation of and timeline for the planning process
- General park information and map
- Regional map on which participants placed stars to indicate their place of residence in relation to the park
- Exercise in which participants placed pom poms representing resources in jars representing activities, expressing their opinion on where investments should be made
- Opportunity to fill out survey in person

Public Meeting 2 - 12/12/17

- Short presentation on survey results, community influences, and intended projects
- Opportunity for participants to write down feedback on intended projects

Results

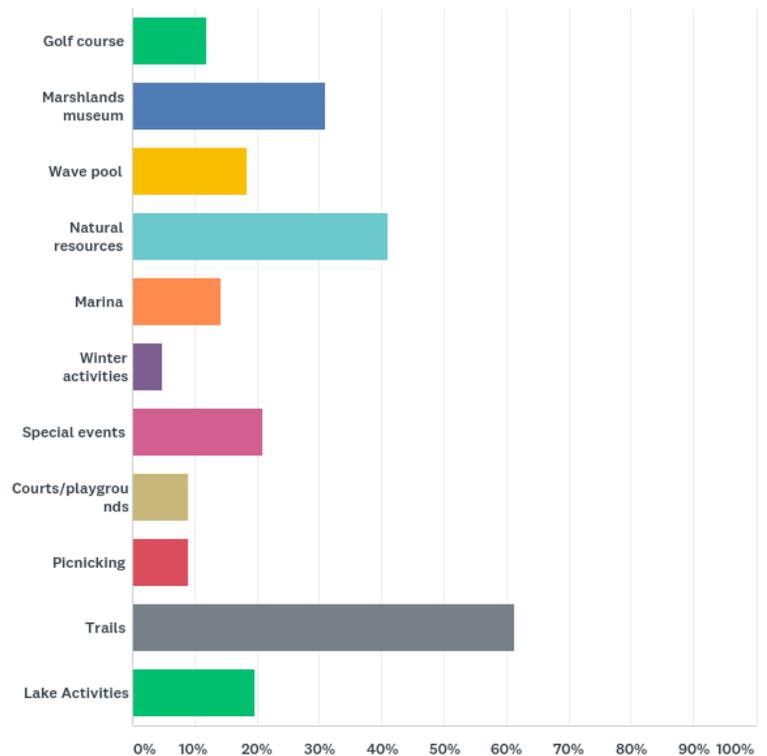
Participants in the survey and in public meetings commented on Lake Erie’s spectacular shoreline and the expansive access for boating, kayaking, and fishing. They also highlighted the fact that it is also a nationally recognized birding area with high quality habitat.

Participants requested the addition of several amenities within the park. Benches, trash cans, and shade trees are desired along the hiking and biking trails. Fitness equipment was desired within the park.

Access to park facilities was also a common theme. Comments were focused specifically at recent changes made to the building hours at the Marshlands Museum, improved kayak access to areas north of the boat launch, and improved access to a longer looped hike-bike trail within the park.



Q6: What is your favorite part of the park or activity within Lake Erie Metropark? (Choose up to 3.)



Public Input

Planning Department staff also spent two days performing intercept surveys at both the Post Regional Open Meet cross-country race event hosted at the park and at the Santa’s Workshop event at nearby Oakwoods Metropark Nature Center. Respondents who were familiar with the park offered suggestions for additional benches and trails along the waterfront, and outdoor programs and facilities that cater to families.

Questionnaire Response Topics

Trails

- Improve nature trails (5)
- Extend bike path(5)
- Extend nature trails(2)
- Add shade trees(2)
- Solar path lights
- Trail etiquette(2)

Environment

- Add wildlife habitat(4)
- Invasive plant management(2)
- More nature(5)
- Less pesticides

Maintenance

- Less mowing(6)
- Seeweed management(2)
- Dredging
- Path maintenance
- More trash cans
- General improvements(2)

Special Events/Programs

- Interpretive/educational programs(4)
- Marina events
- Live music(2)
- Movie nights(2)
- Home schooling program
- Festivals

Facilities/Infrastructure

- Buildings in wave pool area dated
- Improve infrastructure
- Kayak launch
- Dog park
- Disc golf
- Golf

Safety/Signage

- Less wave pool
- Lower speed limit
- Interpretive signage
- More lights at museum
- Better road signage

Access

- Free access during events
- Free programming
- Extend museum hours(16)
- Lower fees
- Longer pool hours
- Waterfront access(2)
- No charge for boat trailer
- Shore fishing access

Amenities

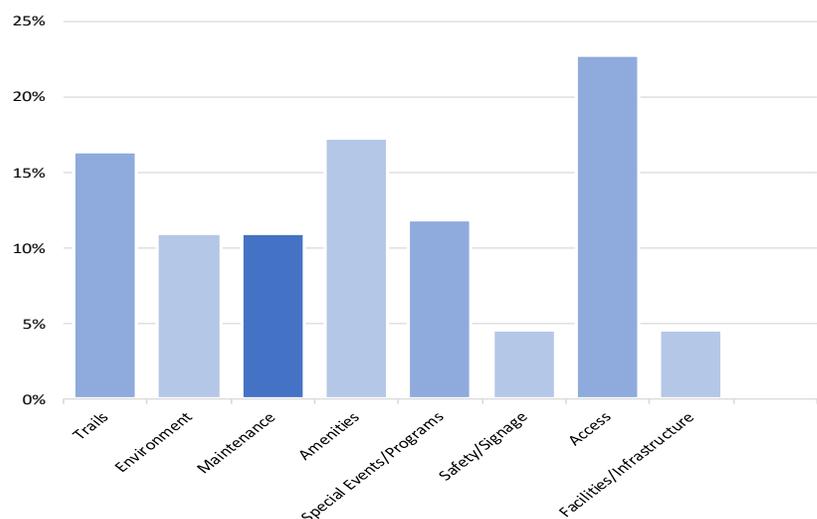
- Adult fitness equipment(2)
- Resting benches
- Water slide

- Kayak launch improvements(2)
- Zip line(2)
- Shade trees
- Hot air ballon
- TV or music at pool
- Water pumps on trails
- Bonfire pits
- Splash pad(2)
- Additional playgrounds
- Beach/swim area(2)

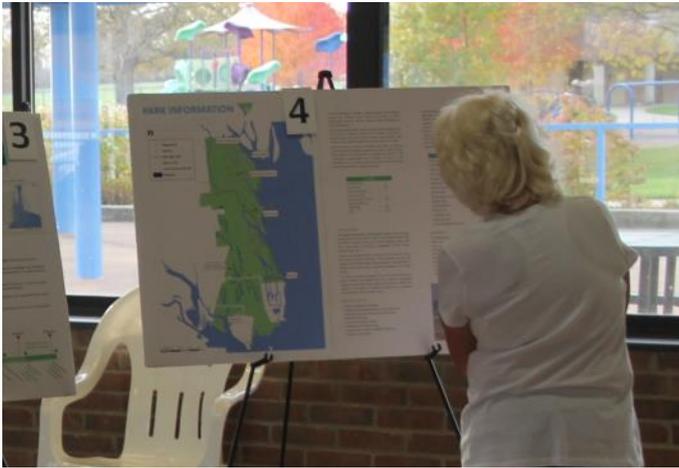


This chart shows the distribution of questionnaire response topics, as categorized by planning staff. Some responses fell into more than one category, so they add up to more than 100%.

*Uncategorized responses lacked specific suggestions or consisted of only positive remarks.



Participation



The Lake Erie Master Plan online and hard copy questionnaire received 218 responses and 29 individuals attended the two public meetings. As shown below, the questionnaire drew responses from the entire southeastern metropolitan Detroit region and beyond, but were mostly concentrated around the park itself.

NEEDS

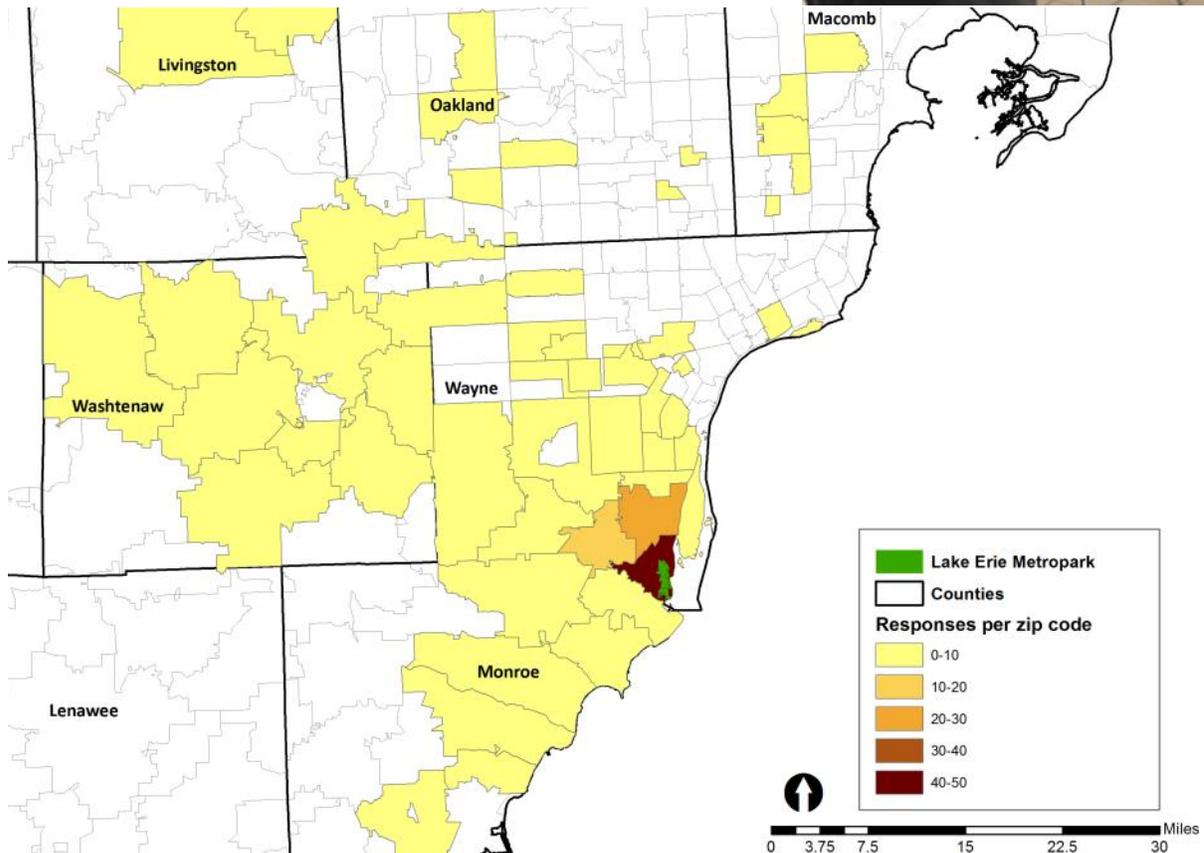
Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan

Create vibrant park through robust, transparent public outreach

OPPORTUNITIES



Survey Response Zip Code Map



Action Plan

Needs & Opportunities

Based on the assessment of park conditions, demographic research and spatial analysis, public input, and staff input, the needs and opportunities listed throughout this document were developed.

Needs

- Continue to draw diverse range of visitors to the park
- Define and protect areas with important biodiversity features
- Better educate the importance of preserving important cultural features
- Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure
- Identify areas of facility duplication for repurposing and consolidation
- Work with county and local communities to address any park boundary issues
- Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs
- Pursue improvements to park accessibility
- Diversify sources of revenue
- Target market strategies for facilities (golf, Marshlands Museum)
- Increase revenue and visitation
- Address changing needs of new population demographics
- Improve connectivity within the park and with the community
- Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan
- Maintenance of facilities for successful operations



Opportunities

- Build on park character to attract new visitors
- Create a resilient network of biodiverse areas in the park
- Draw new visitors with programming/education based on history of park
- Redevelop park areas to better serve visitors and environment
- Provide unique recreational facilities to draw visitors from across the region
- Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations
- Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence
- Ensure that users of all abilities feel empowered to take full advantage of the park
- Offer new and exciting activities/programs to visitors of the park to both boost tolling and gather user fees
- Take advantage of proximity to urban population to grow revenue and system awareness
- Build on enthusiasm of Lake Erie visitors with exciting, engaging programs and events
- Draw new users with a connected, accessible, welcoming and safe park environment
- Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities
- Maintenance plans and scheduling for facilities (dredging)



With these in mind, the following list of projects, plans, and studies was developed. Major and minor projects have been identified as priorities and assigned a timeline, and the accompanying studies have been listed. These pages should serve as a blueprint for the future of the park over the next ten years.

Large Facilities

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Implement Marshlands Museum rehabilitation strategy	Engineering	Interpretive	Foundation, Contractors, Consultants	TBD	x	x	x
Implement Marina selective redevelopment strategy	Engineering	Planning, Operations, Maintenance	Foundation, Contractors	TBD	x	x	x
Implement Great Wave Area selective redevelopment strategy	Engineering	Planning, Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	TBD	x	x	x
Golf Course: cart path replacement, replace pumphouse, intakes	Engineering	Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	TBD	x	x	
Implement Boat Launch selective redevelopment strategy	Engineering	Operations, Planning	Foundation, Contractors	TBD	x	x	x



Infrastructure / Small Facilities

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Accessibility improvements, including interiors and walkways - parkwide	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractors	TBD	x	x	x
Tennis court replacement with volleyball court	Engineering	Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	\$30,000	x		
Park office interior and site landscaping improvements	Engineering	Planning, Operations,	Contractors	TBD		x	x
Add rip rap shoreline in Cove Point area	Engineering	NR, Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	TBD		x	
Pavement projects: main park roads, parking lot overlays as needed	Engineering		Contractors	\$1,100,000	x		
Implement Maintenance Yard redevelopment plan	Engineering	Operations, Planning Maintenance	Contractors	TBD	x		
Hike-bike trail connectivity improvements: park office, shoreline near Great Wave (longer looped trail)	Engineering	Planning, Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	TBD		x	x
Replace or remove service road bridge between Food Bar and maintenance building	Engineering	Operations, Maintenance	Contractors	\$100,000-400,000	x		
Rehabilitate existing boardwalks along nature trails, improve trails as necessary	Engineering	NR, Interpretive		\$100,000		x	

Natural Resources

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Vegetation management (annual)	NR	Planning, Operations	Contractors	\$30,000.00	x	x	x
Hazardous waste removal (annual)	NR			\$2,000.00	x	x	x
Early detection rapid response. Invasive species surveys and control in high	NR	Interpretive	MDNR	\$12,000.00	x	x	x
Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid conservation (federally threatened species)	NR		MDNR/USFWS	\$20,000.00	x	x	x
Nuisance animal control	NR		NGOs	\$3,000.00	x	x	x
Conduct prescribed fire in fire adapted communities	NR		Contractors	\$4,000.00	x	x	x
Oak wilt control and prevention	NR	Operations, Interpretive	MDNR	\$4,500.00	x	x	x
Entrance grasslands restoration	NR		Contractors	\$40,000.00		x	x
Wetland complex restoration	NR		MDNR, NGOs	\$40,000.00	x	x	x



Signage

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Nature trail wayfinding updates	Planning	Operations, Interpretive		\$1,000.00	x		
Develop and install interpretive signage	Interpretive	Operations, Planning		\$5,000.00	x		



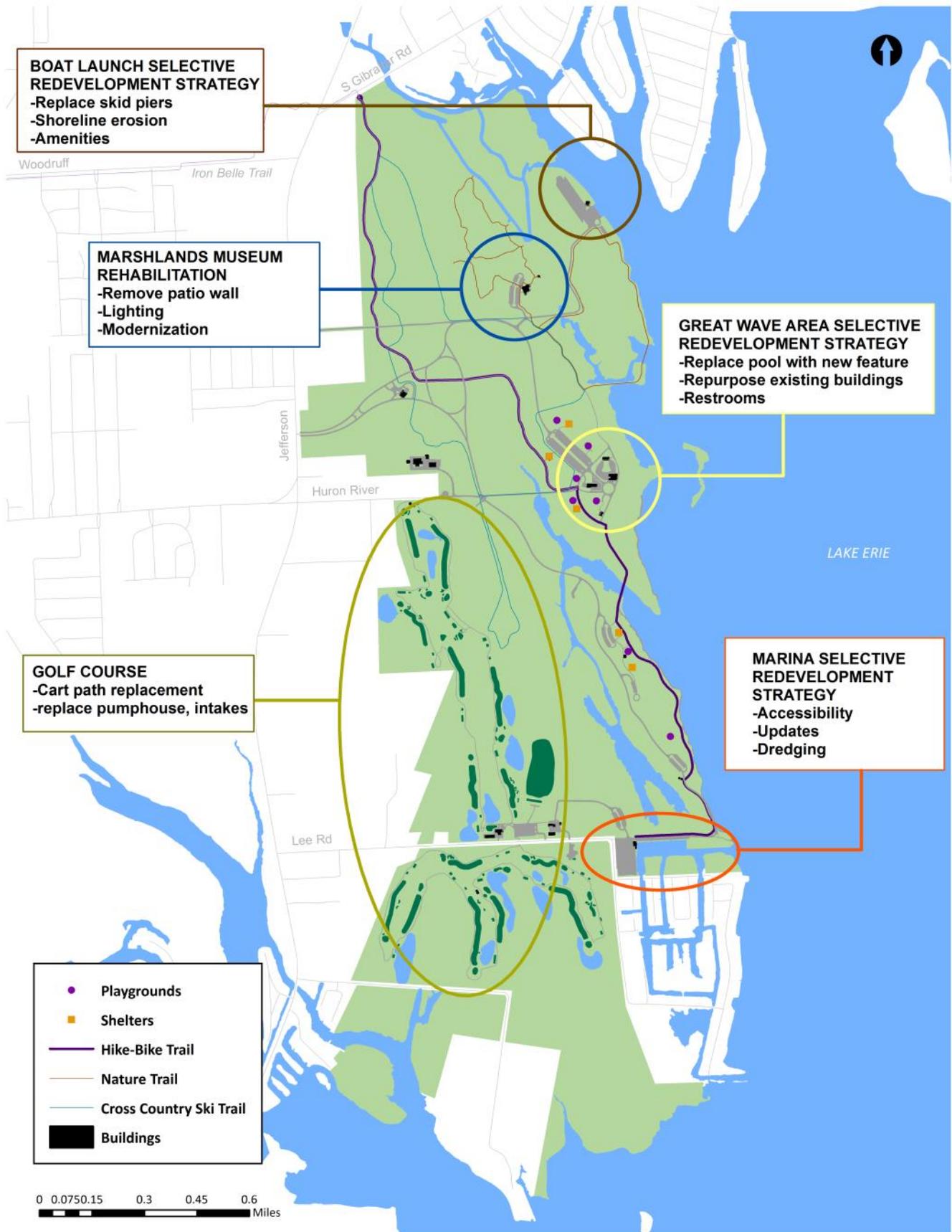
Area Plans/Studies/Initiatives

After identifying the need for changes or improvements based on user feedback and staff research, in-depth evaluation and planning must be carried out to gain a detailed understanding of problems and opportunities and determine the best strategies based on existing conditions and resources. Sometimes a process to formally monitor facility usage and gauge popularity is necessary. These studies often result in a scope of work, a work plan, and in some cases a site plan that give staff a roadmap for planned changes. Recommended studies are listed below:

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Marshlands Museum rehabilitation strategy: remove exterior patio wall, replace exterior building lighting, modernize interpretive exhibits	Planning	Interpretive, Engineering		staff time	x		
Amend the 5-Year Recreation Plan with a marina selective redevelopment strategy: minor interior/exterior building improvements, updates to electrical and exterior lighting, pier and sheet pile replacement, move dredging spoils, determine dredging plan/schedule, entrance beautification, accessibility improvements, develop alternative classroom on site (upper floor for storage only, no public access)	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance, Interpretive	DNR– MI State Waterways Fund	staff time	x		
Great Wave Area selective redevelopment strategy: replace pool with new feature utilizing existing mechanical building, retain and repurpose existing buildings, evaluate opportunities for additional restrooms	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x		
Boat Launch selective redevelopment strategy: replace skid piers, add riprap to address shoreline erosion, evaluate channel dredging necessity, evaluate opportunity for developing a fish cleaning station, separated kayak launch, and possible event pavilion	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance, NR		staff time	x		

Area Plans/Studies/Initiatives (cont'd)

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Maintenance Yard redevelopment plan: replace carpenter shop, add heated storage space	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x		
Develop storage solution and annual removal strategy for lake weeds	NR	Maintenance, Engineering, Planning	Contractors	staff time	x	x	x
Sustainability initiatives	NR	Operations, Planning, Engineering		TBD	x	x	x
Establish invasive species control tracking website	NR	Web, IT	MNFI, MISIN	staff time	x		
Stormwater monitoring	NR			\$5,000	x	x	x
Herpetological surveys	NR		NGOs	\$15,000	x	x	x
European Frog Bit control research	NR		Local universities	\$20,000	x		
Canoe/kayak access study throughout park	Planning	Engineering, NR, Operations, Interpretive	HRWC	TBD		x	
Continue to develop educational/interpretive projects with partners along	Planning	Interpretive, Engineering	HRWC	staff time	x		



Key Projects

Boat Launch Selective Redevelopment

2018-2027

The boat launch area includes restrooms and a launch for kayaks and canoes. The selective redevelopment strategy over the next ten years will consider replacing the skid piers, add riprap to address shoreline erosion, and evaluate the necessity for channel dredging. Furthermore, additional amenities including the opportunity for developing a fish cleaning station and picnic shelter will be studied.

Needs:

- Shoreline erosion
- Amenities
- Beautification
- Separated canoe/kayak launch

Solutions:

- Rip rap
- Fish cleaning station
- Event pavilion



Marshlands Museum Rehabilitation

2018-2027

The Marshlands Museum offers a rich cultural and natural heritage of the Downriver/Lake Erie shore region through exhibits and interpretive programs. The history of waterfowl hunting is brought to life with artifacts and photos featuring all phases from boats to decoys. The museum needs updated interpretive exhibits. Furthermore, building improvements and site improvements include removal of the exterior patio wall and replacement of the exterior lighting.

Needs:

- Access
- Updates to facility
- Interpretive program

Solutions:

- Remove patio wall
- Replace exterior lighting
- Modernize interpretive programs
- Hours of operation



Action Plan

Great Wave Area Selective Redevelopment

2018-2027

The “Great Wave” area at Lake Erie Metropark offers a three-foot wave action pool, a new spray area with ground sprays and dumping water features. A playground, wet shop and food bar facilities are also included in this area. The “Great Wave” area is considering consolidation with upgrades to the buildings over the next ten years.

Needs:

- Facility upgrades
- Pool improvements
- A venue that generates revenue

Solutions:

- New pool feature
- Repurpose existing buildings
- Restroom additions
- Pool modifications



Golf Course Improvements

2018-2027

This 6,489 yard, par-72 golf course is surrounded by natural wetlands and features gently rolling, bunkered fairways, and 20 acres of ponds. The facility includes a golf shop, food bar, and driving range. Maintenance improvements prioritized over the next ten years include updates to the irrigation system with the replacement of the pumphouse and intake pipes.

Needs:

- Cart path repairs
- Irrigation and pumphouse updates
- Facility upgrades

Solutions:

- Replace pumphouse, intakes
- Cart path replacement



Action Plan

Marina Selective Redevelopment

2018-2027

The Marina features more than 100 wells complete with water and electricity for seasonal dockage and operates between April and October. Daily transient dockage is also available for boats up to 35 feet in length. The Marina facility is connected by a paved trail to the Marina Point Observation Deck and Fishing Site. The next ten years will involve developing strategies for the building, site, and programming needs. In addition, any building and site improvements will need to consider compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Needs:

- Increased use
- Marketing
- Modernization
- Maintenance

Solutions:

- Building and site improvements
- Interpretive programming
- Additional landscaping/beautification
- Dredging
- Kayak launch
- Wifi



Natural Resources Management

2018-2027

Limited development and recreation is allowed in the high quality protected natural resource areas of the park. Continued as top priorities in the park, efforts including sustainability initiatives, vegetation and invasive species management, and habitat restoration will be performed by the Natural Resources staff.

Needs:

- Continued maintenance and restoration of high quality natural resource conditions
- Natural systems take precedence over visitor accommodation
- Protect important habitat

Solutions:

- Continued vegetation and invasive species management
- Sustainability



Action Plan

Other Projects

- Hike-bike trail connectivity and looped trail improvements
- Interpretive signage
- Maintenance yard redevelopment plan
- Early detection rapid response (invasive species)
- Entrance grasslands restoration
- Rehabilitate boardwalks along nature trails, improve trails as necessary









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