

*White River Township
Muskegon County, MI
Recreation Plan
2012
Public Copy*



Revised January, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Community Description	
Location.....	2
Climate and Topography.....	3
Soils.....	4
Slopes.....	5
Township Land Use.....	8
Township Recreational Property	9
Transportation.....	10
Zoning	11
Fish and Wildlife	11
Special Characteristics	
Population.....	15
Projections.....	15
Seasonal Population	15
Ethnicity	16
Special Needs	16
Population by Age	20
Housing, Households and Size	21
Public Opinion	24
Organization and Administration	25
Basis for Action Program	
Existing Conditions.....	28
Standards.....	28
Goals, Objectives and Capital Improvement Schedule (CIS).....	31
Revised January, 2015	
Appendices	33

INTRODUCTION – WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

The White River Township Recreation Plan sets forth the township's anticipated direction on matters of future recreational development. The plan is based on:

- **Public Input** – The input of area residents concerning recreational needs and desires, including information provided by a comprehensive mail survey of township households
- **Opportunities** – Assessments of existing recreational opportunities, including those of neighboring units of government
- **Standards** – The use of recreational standards to determine potential levels of need
- **Master Plan** – The *White River Township Master Plan* serves as the township's primary land use document pursuant to future growth and development
- **Current Recreation Plan** This plan is an update of the Township's present Recreation plan. As such, this plan builds on the solid foundation established by the Township on matters of recreational planning and programming
- **Resources** – Assessments of potential resource opportunities and constraints (e.g. staffing, funding, etc.) applicable to the township relative to meeting identified needs.

The White River Township Recreation Plan will serve as a guide to the Township Board, and others, on matters of allocating staff time and financial resources for recreational efforts. The plan is a flexible instrument, subject to modification as warranted. Notwithstanding its flexibility, the plan offers specific detail on projects anticipated over the next several years. The plan encourages ongoing public participation in the planning, development and evaluation of recreational opportunities.

WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP – DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

White River Township is located in Muskegon County along the east shore of Lake Michigan on the west, White Lake and the White Lake channel on the south, Montague Township on the east, Claybanks Township and Oceana County on the north. The community is within 10 minutes driving time from the cities of Montague and Whitehall. The larger urban centers of Muskegon and Grand Rapids are, by way of the U.S. 31 and I-96 freeways, approximately 30 and 55 miles distant respectively. Access to U.S. 31, the region's north-south freeway, is provided by the Fruitvale and Colby Road interchanges. The township's rather close proximity to the Muskegon and Grand Rapids regions provide township residents with a host of cultural and recreational opportunities.



CLIMATE and TOPOGRAPHY

The township's climate is heavily influenced by the community's location on the east shore of Lake Michigan. The township's proximity to the lake results in a moderation of extremes in temperature in both summer and winter months. The hottest month of the year is July, with an average temperature of 79 degrees Fahrenheit. The coldest is January, with an average temperature of 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The region has a growing season of 145 days, with approximately 31 inches of rainfall annually. Annual snowfall averages is excess of 93 inches.

The township's most prominent physical features are the sand dune areas located along and landward of the Lake Michigan shoreline. Some of the dunes in these areas rise to an elevation of more than 150 feet above the lake level. Topography landward of these dune areas is gently rolling to flat. Other topographic features include Flower Creek, Little Flower Creek, the Pierson Drain and Sadony Bayou. The Bayou, located at the foot of the Pierson Drain, is a remnant of a former natural outlet from White Lake to Lake Michigan. During the 1870's the outlet was modified with the introduction of the present White Lake Channel.

SOILS

Soil types play a significant role in planning future land uses in any community. Soils provide an essential element of White River Township's character and quality of life and have an impact on the suitability of land for various types of development, including recreation.

Because White River Township has no municipal sewer or water systems, and because these systems will not be available in the foreseeable future, the location and intensity of future development is highly dependent on the capability of soils to accommodate septic systems, building foundations, public and private roadways, certain forms of recreational development and/or use. *(Pursuant to the above, it is noted that a small enclave of township homes near the City of Montague are served by that city's municipal water system. However, there are no plans at this time to expand that service to other township locations.)*

Soil characteristics that make a parcel of land ideal for agriculture, wildlife preservation or other such pursuits may

render it unsuitable as a building site due to wetness or a high water table. Conversely, soil types that are ideally suited to building development may be only marginally suited to farming or other uses.

Soil characteristics that influence the suitability of land for various types of development include permeability, wetness, bearing capacity, shrink-swell potential and slope. In all but the most extreme cases, limitations posed by poor soil characteristics can be overcome by careful site planning, management and design. Those characteristics presenting the most severe limitations to intensive development include the following:

- **Soils with high water table, wetness and poor permeability**

Soils having these characteristics are generally unsuited for septic system installations, road construction, and building site development. Septic systems cannot function properly without modification in design and layout. Soils tend to be of insufficient strength to support building foundations.

Shrinking and swelling of soils during freeze/thaw cycles can damage building foundations unless soils are modified with appropriate fill material.

- **Rapid permeability & poor filtration capability** – Soils having these characteristics are generally well suited to building site development, but may inadequately filter septic system effluent prior to reaching the underlying water table. Intensive development on these soils may pose a threat to unprotected groundwater supplies.

The generalized soils map illustrates the general location of soil associations found in White River Township. Table 1 provides a general overview of the suitability of and limitations posed by the soil types occurring within each association. The information presented on the map and table is intended to help with the process of determining areas of the community best suited to various types and densities of development. This information is not site specific. It is general in nature and not intended to eliminate the need for on-site

investigation of soils when development proposals are made. Detailed information about soils can be found in the Muskegon County Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey.

SLOPE

Slopes of less than 12 percent generally present slight limitations to development. However, caution should be exercised when siting non-motorized and motorized vehicular routes, particularly those necessary for emergency access purposes. Those between 12 and 18 percent present moderate limitations that may be overcome by careful site planning. Slopes in excess of 18 percent render a site generally unsuited to development.

For the most part, township slopes exceeding 12 percent are located in the area of dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline and along the banks of the local creeks and drains.

SOILS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MAP

Figure 1

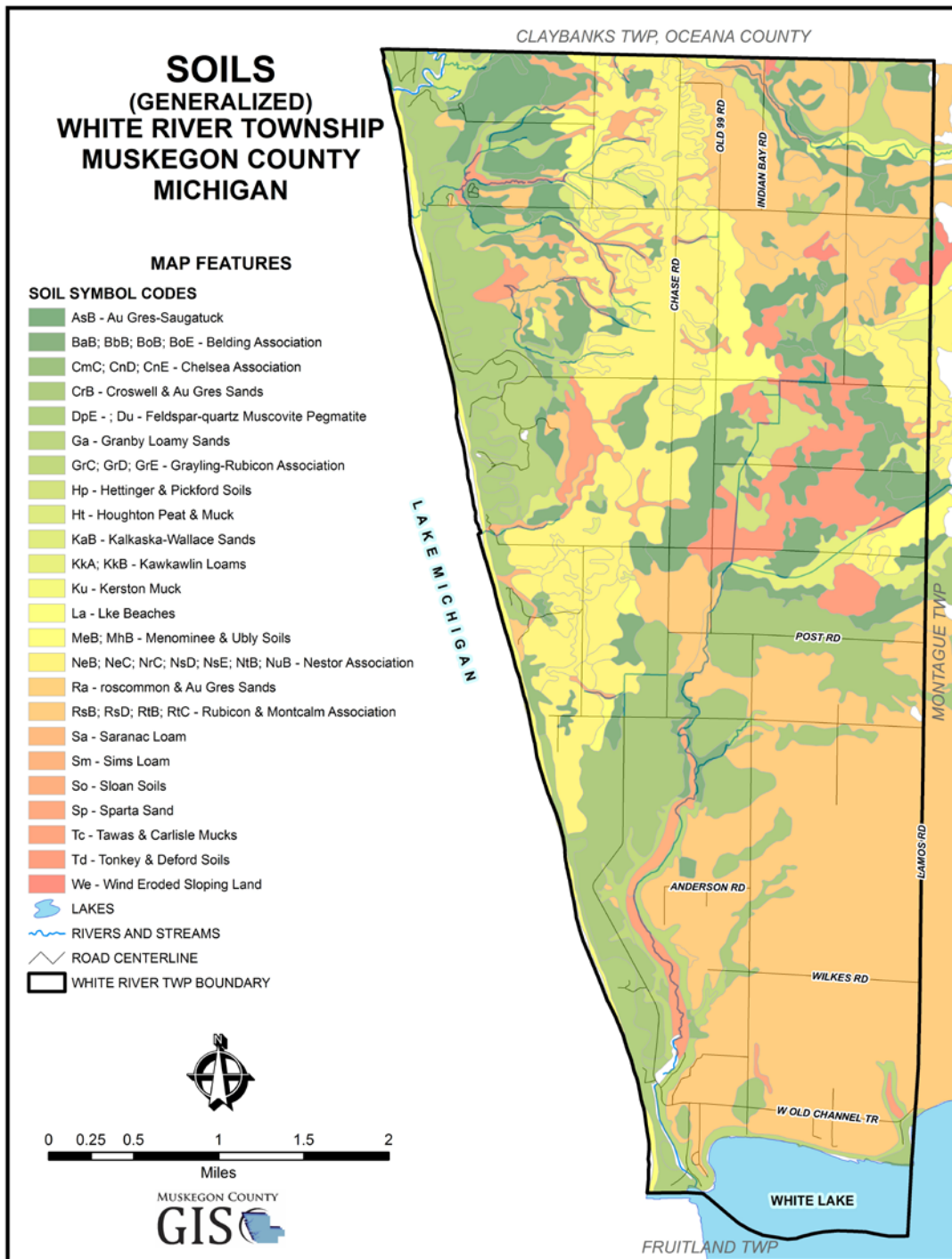


Table 1 - Generalized Building Site and Septic System Limitations

Key to Table:

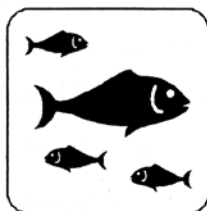
Slight - soil features and properties are generally favorable for the indicated use. Limitations are easily overcome.

Moderate (Mod) - soil features and properties are not favorable for the indicated use. Special planning, design or maintenance is needed to overcome or minimize the limitation(s).

Severe - soil features and properties are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and/or possible increased maintenance are required.

Soil Association & Description	Soil Types	Septic System Limitations	Building Site Limitations
Rubicon-Croswell-Deer Park - Nearly level to steep, well drained and moderately well drained, sandy soils on outwash plains, beach ridges and dunes.	Rubicon	Slight - Mod	Slight - Mod
	Croswell	Severe	Moderate
	Deer Park	Slight - Mod	Slight - Mod
Nester-Ubly-Sims - Gently sloping to hilly, well drained, moderately well drained and poorly drained loamy soils on lake plains and uplands.	Nester	Severe	Slight - Mod
	Ubly	Severe	Slight - Mod
	Sims	Severe	Severe
Belding-Allendale Rubicon (Montcalm Association) - Nearly level and gently sloping, poorly drained and well drained, loamy and sandy soils on lake plains.	Belding	Severe	Slight - Mod
	Allendale	Severe	Slight - Mod
Montcalm-Nester-Belding-Kawkawlin - Gently sloping to rolling, somewhat poorly drained and well drained, sandy loamy soils on lake plains, outwash plains and glaciated uplands.	Montcalm	Slight to Mod	Slight - Mod
	Nester	Severe	Slight - Mod
	Belding	Severe	Slight - Mod
	Kawkawlin	Severe	Severe

Source: Natural Resource Conservation Service



TOWNSHIP LAND USE

White River Township has a land area of approximately 15.8 square miles (10,112 acres). The township is considered a rural community, exhibiting significant amounts of acreage in open space, agriculture and low density residential development. Smaller enclaves of active commercial and industrial areas also exist, but are very minor when compared to overall land use patterns and acreage. Existing land uses may be generally described as follows:

Agriculture

Agriculture dominates the landscape of the northern two-thirds of the township. A high percentage of these lands are located on designated prime farmland soils. Except for the presence of low density non-farm dwellings, there is no substantial non-farm development in this portion of the township. Small pockets of agriculture also exist in the southern one-third of the township. Agriculture occupies slightly over 4,000 acres of land.

RESIDENTIAL

Residential development, including farm, non-farm and seasonal dwellings occupy approximately 600 acres of land. The majority of the homes are located along section line roadways throughout the township on parcels generally larger than one acre.

RESIDENTIAL (continued)

There is no substantial “infill” development anywhere in the community except for residential areas located near Lake Michigan and White Lake.

Non-farm year round dwellings represent approximately 66 percent of the community’s housing stock. Seasonally occupied homes and cottages, located primarily along the Lake Michigan and White Lake shorelines, comprise approximately 34 percent of the township’s housing stock. Areas comprised of seasonal homes, such as along or near shoreline locations, tend to represent the most densely developed portions of the township. Unlike farming and open space areas, homes along the shorelines are often on parcels of less than 1 acre.

The White River Township Master Plan indicates that the township’s overall housing density is approximately one dwelling unit per 13 acres of land.

COMMERCIAL

The township does not have a significant amount of commercial development. Freestanding commercial uses occupy approximately 4 acres of land and include the Old Channel Inn Restaurant, the White Sands Resort on White Lake and the Pigeon Hill Resort.

COMMERCIAL (continued)

Other commercial uses include a variety of minor business activities located in various areas of the township which are operated as “home occupations”.

The White River Township Board and Planning Commission do not advocate significant new commercial development. Township residents rely on businesses located in the nearby cities of Montague and Whitehall to fulfill basic retail, service and office needs.

Industrial

As with commercial development, the township relies on the nearby cities of Montague and Whitehall for the accommodation of industrial development. It is recognized that these neighboring cities offer close access to US 31 and provide high quality industrial park space fully served by municipal water and sanitary sewers.

Township Public/Recreational

Public and semi-public uses occupy approximately 223 acres of land including:

1. Township Hall

Constructed in 1998, the township hall and offices located on Post are used for township meetings, select

Township Public/Recreational (continued)

2. Cemeteries

The township owns the Mouth and Hubbard Cemeteries. The Mouth Cemetery is listed on the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) register as a site of historical and archaeological significance. The cemetery is an important part of the township’s history, and is the only site in the community listed on the SHPO’s Register. Hubbard Cemetery is included on the State Archaeologist Register as a site of archaeological significance.

3. Township Recreational Property

The township owns an unimproved parcel located in Section 34 on Lake Michigan, south of the Old Channel Inn. It is a barrier dune that has been preserved in its natural state. This property was acquired with funds awarded by the DNR Grants Management Program in 1985.

The township owns a parcel located on the corner of Indian Bay Road and Sunset. It is a lighted, combination basketball court and tennis court. The property was acquired and built with private donations and Muskegon Community Foundation funds.

The township owns boat launch ramp and parking area located at the end of Lau Road and was paid for with township funds.

4. **County Facilities**

Meinert County Park is located on Lake Michigan at the foot of Meinert Road. Meinert Park is 149 acres in size and has 2,000 feet of sandy beach. Additionally, the park provides picnic areas with grills and tables, playground, concession stand, paved parking, modern restrooms, drinking fountain, boardwalk and stairway to a bridge over Little Flower Creek and an observation deck overlooking Lake Michigan.

5. **City of Montague Facilities**

Medbury Park, owned and operated by the City of Montague, is located on Lake Michigan at the White Lake Channel. The park includes a parking lot, restrooms, several picnic tables and paved boardwalk located along the White Lake Channel connecting the parking area to a public beach on Lake Michigan.

6. **Privately Owned (local) facilities**

Old Channel Trail Golf Course is a 27 hole golf course open to the public on a fee basis. The course has a small clubhouse with pro shop and concession facilities.

7. **Regional Recreation Facilities List** - A list of recreational opportunities available in the White Lake Township regional area is provided in the Plan Appendix

Vacant/Open/Undeveloped

This category comprises approximately 4,800 acres of land and includes wooded areas, sand dunes, abandoned farmland, undeveloped open areas and vacant tracts of land adjacent the Lake Michigan shoreline. An undetermined number of acres of land in this category may be generally unsuited for all but the least intrusive types of development due to location in MDNR designated critical dune areas, floodplains, areas of steep slopes and/or poor soils.

Water Bodies

In addition to Lake Michigan and White Lake, the township is traversed by several small water bodies. These include Flower Creek, Pierson Drain, Sadony Bayou as well as numerous, small unnamed ponds. Except for Lake Michigan and White Lake, the surface water acreage devoted to the above water bodies is minimal.

Transportation

All roads within White River Township, except those privately owned, are owned and maintained by the Muskegon County Road Commission. All roads are two lane, generally 66 feet in right-of-way, and either gravel or hard surfaced (asphalt or seal-coat). According to the Muskegon County Transportation Profile (WMSRDC), the township's roadway system is limited to local and collector streets (as opposed to arterials, major streets, or interstates).

Transportation (continued)

Traffic volumes throughout the community are generally low, due to the township's somewhat isolated location on the north side of White Lake and low resident population numbers.

Muskegon County has designated a "Shoreline Trail" route through the township that follows Old Channel Trail near the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Maps depicting existing land use (Zone Districts), public roads and facilities, and Natural Features are found on the following pages.

ZONING

White River Township is regulated by a local zoning ordinance adopted pursuant to the provisions of the Michigan Township Zoning Act (MI Public Act 184 of 1943, as amended). The ordinance includes a special Critical Dune Overlay District for purposes of offering special protection to the Lake Michigan Shoreline and associated dunes.

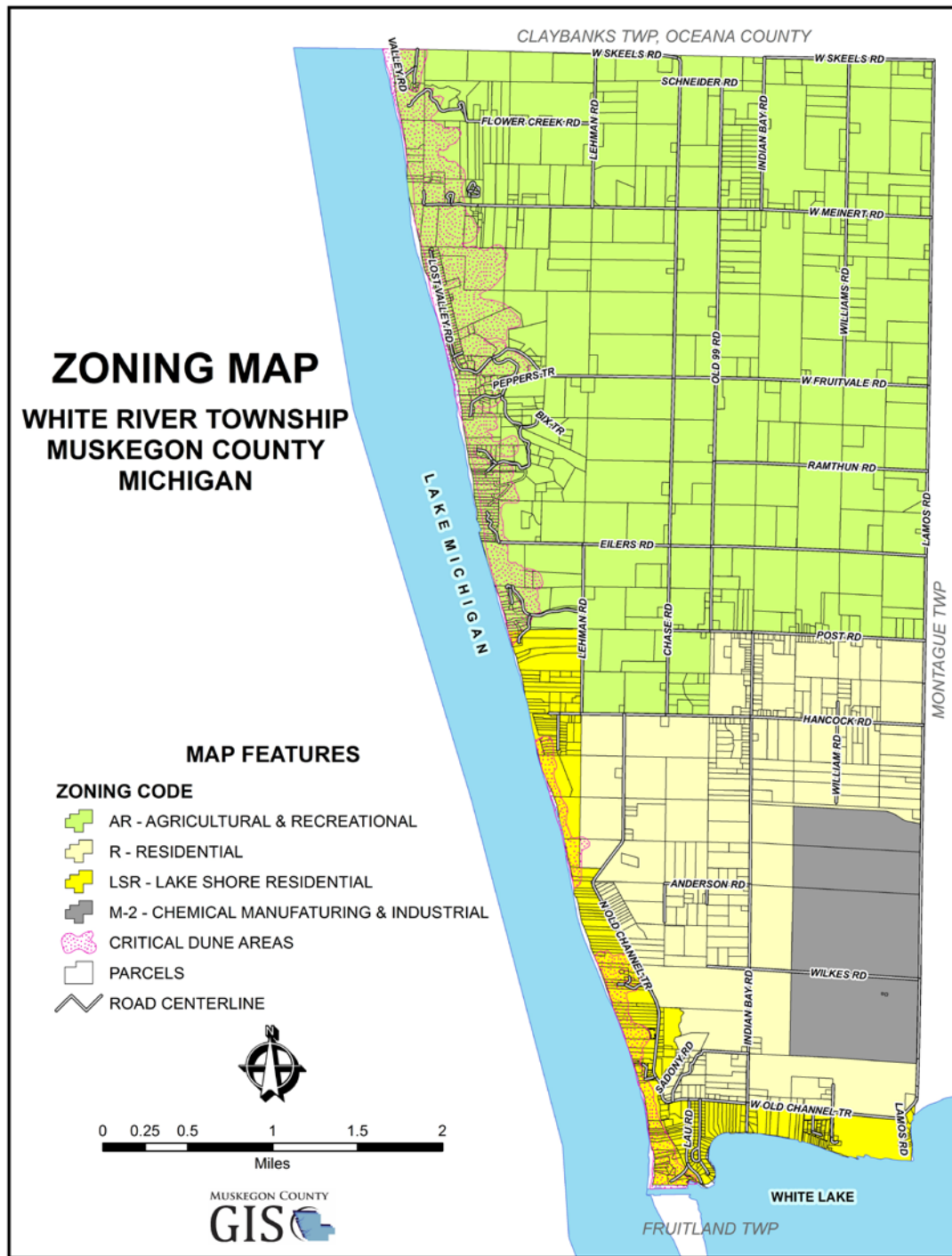
FISH AND WILDLIFE

White Lake and Lake Michigan possess a Variety of fish species common to the state. These include (common names) small and large mouth bass, lake perch, bluegill and various species of sunfish, crappie, walleye, northern pike, lake trout, brown trout, salmon and steelhead. The importance of the local fisheries may be demonstrated by the fact that nineteen marinas and charter fishing boats operate from White Lake.

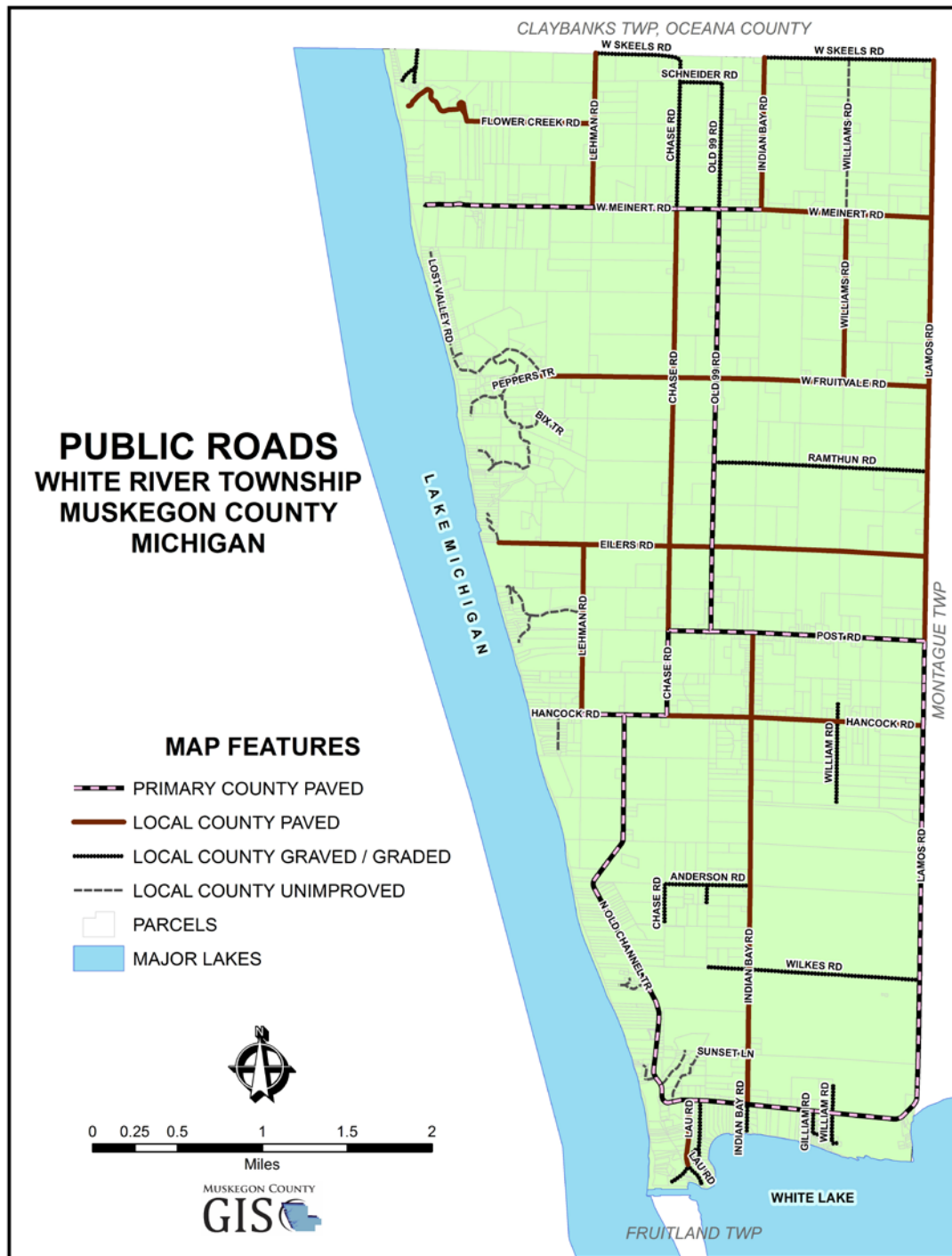
Similar to the local fisheries, wildlife found in White River Township is common to the state and includes several species classified as upland game animals. These include (common names) whitetail deer, rabbit, raccoon, fox, squirrel, coyote, ruffed grouse, ring-necked pheasant and wild turkey. The township is also home to a variety of song birds and waterfowl, eagles, opossum and other common wildlife species. White River Township is located in the Mississippi migratory fowl flyway.

Existing Zoning, Public Roads and Facilities and Natural Features maps are found on the following pages. The Township Project Location Map is found on Page 32.

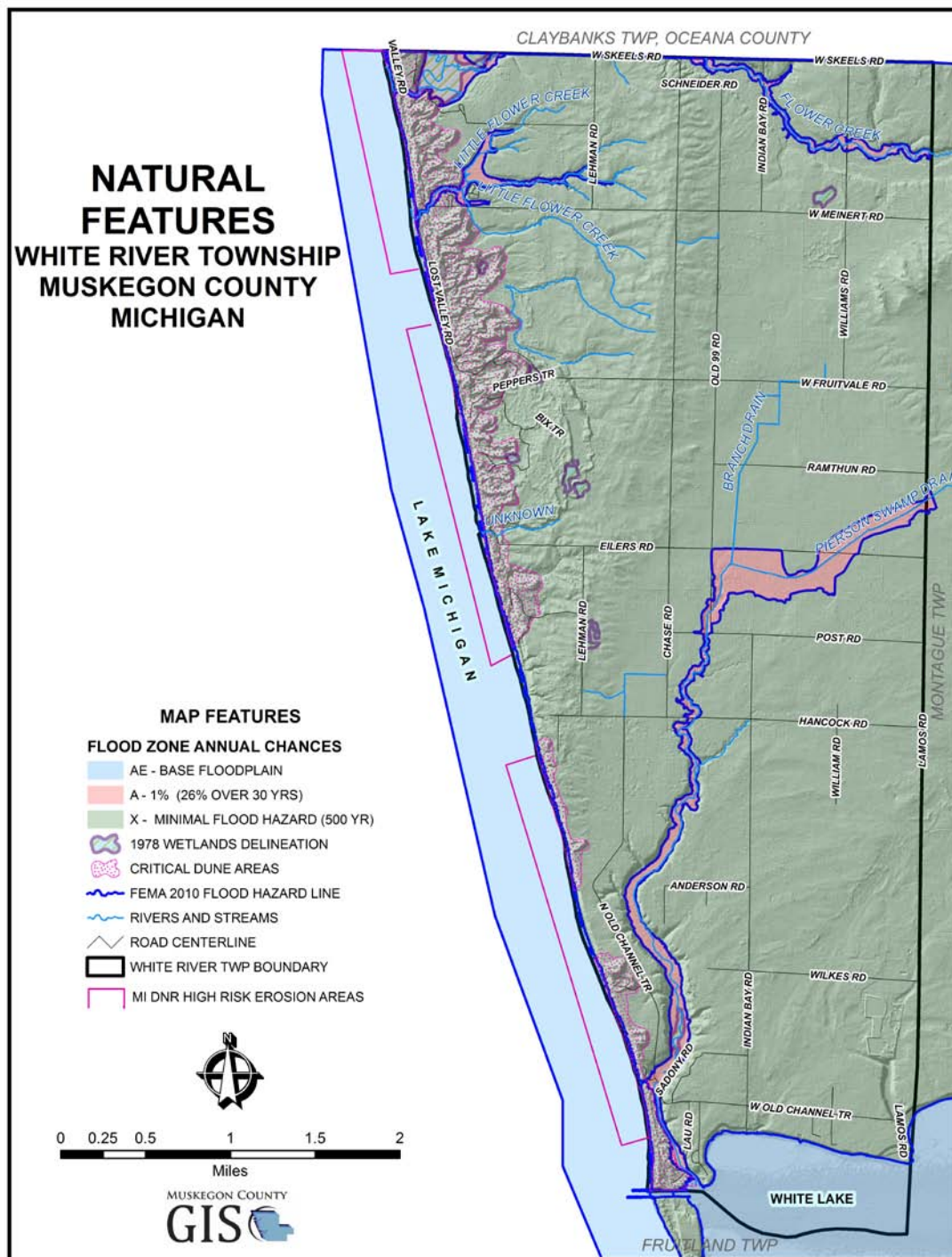
MAP - EXISTING ZONING



MAP – PUBLIC ROADS



MAP – NATURAL FEATURES



POPULATION

The U.S. Census (2010) reports a township population of 1,335 persons. This represents an increase of 85 persons, or 6.8 percent since the 1990 census. Between the years 1970 and 2010, the township's population increased from 1,016 to 1,335 persons, representing a forty year growth rate of 31.4 percent. Table 2 shows the growth rate of White River Township in relationship to neighboring communities. With the exception of the City of Whitehall and the City of Montague, each unit experienced an increase in population over the broad period extending from 1970 to 2010.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Using the same units of government as detailed in Table 2, Table 3 provides population projections through the 2030, however these projections are not available using the current census data. One must use caution when employing projections, particularly those extending to the very distant periods. Nonetheless, wisely used, projections can be beneficial for planning purposes. The township's resident population, as well as the population of surrounding governmental entities, is anticipated to grow between the 2000 to 2030 period.

Seasonal Population – The township's resident population number, as well as projected increases, do not fully describe the population picture of the township. These numbers do not take into account additional population increases experienced during seasonal periods. Based on the occupancy of seasonal dwellings, combined with daily visitors who are attracted to Lake Michigan and White Lake, is estimated the population increases by 500 to 1,000 additional people during peak, warm weather, weekends. Conversely, the winter months experience a population decline, although the magnitude of that decline does not approach summer highs.

Ethnicity – The 2010 Census indicates that approximately 95.5 percent of the township’s resident population is classified as white. American Indians, Asians, African Americans, Hispanics and mixed-races represent the remaining 4.5 percent.

Special Needs Population – Available information on township residents with special needs (e.g., hearing, vision, mobility and other challenges and needs) is very limited. Information provided by county and regional health organizations, the offices of the Muskegon Community Health Care Project, local schools, area agencies and organizations familiar with special need populations indicates that approximately 1 to 2 percent of the resident population (13 to 27 people) potentially experience some form of special need.

POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Table 2 – Population Trends by Unit of Government

Unit	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Numeric Change 1970 to 2010	Percent Change 1970 to 2010
White River TWP.	1,016	1,215	1,250	1,338	1,335	319	31.4%
Montague Twp.	1,147	1,359	1,429	1,637	1,600	453	39.5%
Fruitland Twp.	3,200	4,168	4,391	5,235	5,543	2,343	73.2%
City of Montague	2,396	2,332	2,276	2,407	2,361	(35)	(1.46%)
City of Whitehall	3,017	2,856	3,027	2,884	2,706	(311)	(10.3%)

Sources: U.S. Census

(Current data for this table is unavailable)

Table 3 – Population Projections by Unit of Government

Unit	2000	2010	2020	2030	Percent Change 2000 to 2030
White River TWP.	1,338	1,431	1,526	1,628	22%
Montague Twp.	1,637	1,777	1,896	2,022	24%
Fruitland Twp.	5,235	5,592	5,964	6,361	22%
City of Montague	2,407	2,485	2,650	2,827	17%
City of Whitehall	2,884	2,971	3,169	3,380	17%

Sources: U.S. Census and West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

Population by Age Category – The

Township's median population age is 48.5 years. Of the total population, 49 percent are male and 51 percent are female.

Table 4 provides detail on the township's resident population base by age category based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

- As a whole, the township's population is represented by a cross section of age groupings ranging from young to senior categories.
- Compared to the county as a whole, the township's population has a lower percentage of residents in the very young age categories and a higher percentage of residents in the 55+ age population categories.
- Slightly over 22 percent of the township's population is comprised of young adults and children between the ages of 5 and 19.
- This population segment typically places heavy demand on recreational facilities of an active orientation (e.g. tot lots, baseball, soccer and other field games, basketball, swimming and other water sports).
- The percentage of township residents in the 25 – 34 age group (early family forming years) is significantly less than the county. This group represents that portion of the population with the highest number of young children.
- The 35 to 54 age group comprises 26.7 percent of the population base. This age group includes later family forming years and/or mature family years. In recent times, it has become more common for families in the lower ages (35 years to 40+) of this category to experience the birth of their first child (children), or to have additional children.
- 40 percent of the population base is 55 years or older.

This broad population segment typically exhibits the need for a wide range of recreational facilities, including active and passive opportunities (e.g. swimming and sunbathing, boating, sailing, hiking and sight-seeing, cross-country skiing, hunting and fishing, bowling, dancing, group activities, travel, etc.).

Table 4 - Population by Age Group

Age	Muskegon County	% of County Population	White River Township	% of Twp. Population
Under 5 years	11,315	6.6	59	4.4
5 to 9 years	11,689	6.8	83	6.2
10 to 14 years	11,940	6.9	87	6.5
15 to 19 years	12,747	7.4	76	5.7
20 to 24 years	10,658	6.2	43	3.2
25 to 34 years	21,286	12.4	97	7.3
35 to 44 years	21,429	12.4	163	12.2
45 to 54 years	26,092	15.2	194	14.5
55 to 59 years	12,247	7	164	9.8
60 to 64 years	7,788	5.6	89	9.1
65 to 74 years	12,047	7.1	131	12.3
75 to 84 years	9,633	4.5	121	6.7
85 years and over	3,317	1.9	28	2.1
TOTAL	172,188	100	1,335	100

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010

HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLDS

Housing – The 2010 Census indicates the presence of 907 housing units in White River Township. This reflects an additional 215 units since preparation of the 1998 Recreation Plan. Most of the housing stock consists of site-built single family dwellings. It is estimated that roughly two-thirds of the new homes are occupied on a full-time basis with the remaining one-third for seasonal use. There are a few mobile homes, attached dwellings such as duplexes, and a limited number of apartments. A breakdown of the community's housing stock is found in Table 5.

Five hundred twelve homes (66% of the total housing stock are occupied year-round) Two hundred sixty-seven (34%) are classified as vacant. Of the vacant homes, the census estimates that two hundred forty-three homes are occupied for seasonal or recreational purposes. Each year, an undetermined number of seasonal homes become occupied year round as owners (existing or subsequent) establish residency in the township on a “full-time” basis.

Household number and size – The township has 524 households (U.S. Census – 2010). Of these, 411

(78.4 percent of total households) are classified as family households with more than one person residing within each household unit. The average number of persons per household is 2.57. Table 6 provides detail on number of households and household size.

Table 5

	2010 totals	2010% of Total HU	
HOUSING OCCUPANCY (Universe: Total housing units)			
Total housing units (HU)	907		
Occupied housing units	524	57.8	
Vacant housing units	383	42.2	
For rent	15	3.9	of vacant
Rented, not occupied	2	0.5	of vacant
For sale only	9	2.3	of vacant
Sold, not occupied	3	0.8	of vacant
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use	340	88.8	of vacant
All other vacants	14	3.7	of vacant
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	1.8		
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	36.6		

		2010% of occupied	
HOUSING TENURE (Universe: Occupied housing units)			
Occupied housing units	524		
Owner-occupied housing units	500	95.4	
Renter-occupied housing units	24	4.6	
Average household size owner-occupied	2.51		
Average household size renter-occupied	3		
POPULATION IN OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY TENURE			
(Universe: Population in occupied housing units)			
Owner-occupied housing units	1,253		
Renter-occupied housing units	72		

Source U.S. Census 2010

Table 6

	2010 totals	2010% of Total HH
HOUSEHOLDS (Universe: Households)		
Total households (HH)	524	
Family households (families)	411	78.4
With own children under 18 years	128	24.4
Married-couple family	na	
With own children under 18 years	na	
Husband-wife family	364	69.5
With own children under 18 years	111	21.2
Male household, no wife present	21	4
With own children under 18 years	11	2.1
Female household, no husband present	26	5
With own children under 18 years	6	1.1
Nonfamily households	113	21.6
Householder living alone	94	17.9
Householder 65 years and over	46	8.8
Male	41	7.8
65 years and over	14	2.7
Female	53	10.1
65 years and over	32	6.1
Households with individuals under 18 years	141	26.9
Households with individuals 65 years and over	185	35.3
Average household size	2.53	
Average family size	2.86	

Source U.S. Census 2010

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

Prior to preparation of the Recreation Plan, a community attitude survey was mailed to 930 property owners, including year-round and seasonal residents. A total of 494 surveys, or 53.1 percent of those mailed, were returned for analysis.

The survey included a variety of questions associated with the need for recreational opportunities. Pursuant to implementation, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would be willing to support special millages to pay for recreational services and facilities.

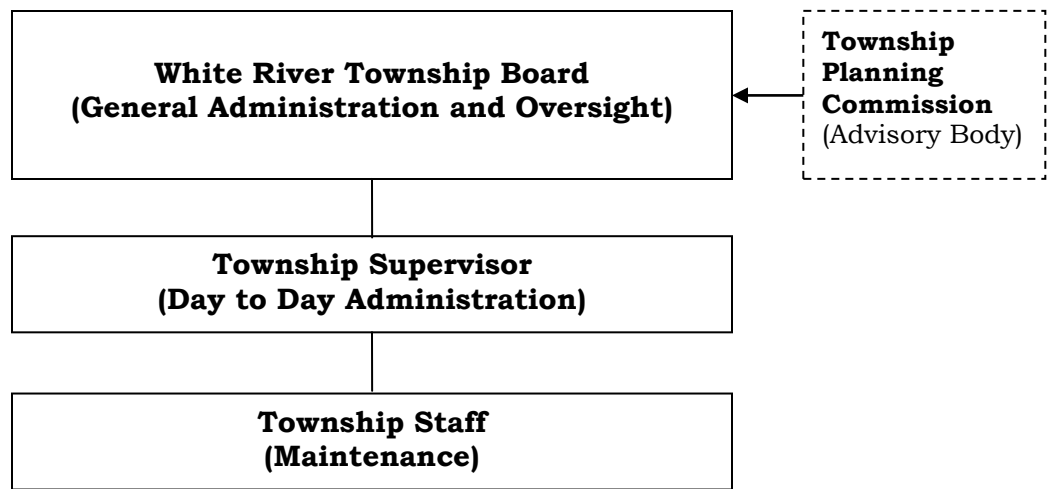
Survey information pertinent to the recreational aspects of White River Township has been incorporated into the goals and implementation portions of this plan and has been used in the identification of recreation needs. The full survey instrument is included in the Recreation Plan Index.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Organization:

The following diagram illustrates the Township's organizational arrangement pursuant to the planning, programming, administration and maintenance of recreational facilities.

WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATIVE CHART RECREATION PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION



The township employs a part-time maintenance Person who is primarily responsible for the lawn care and general maintenance of township facilities.

The Township Board and Planning Commission rely heavily on public input when making decisions concerning recreation. During preparation of this plan, extensive public input was sought through open meetings, public workshops and hearings, household mail survey and media releases.

FUNDING

The Township Board is responsible for the allocation of funds used for recreational purposes. The Board attempts to leverage limited local dollars with those of other agencies. This is indicated by the following budget breakdown which provides detail on recent funding allocations for recreation activities. (Table 7).

Recreational expenditures account for approximately 6 percent of the township's annual budget.

Table 7 – Recreation Funding Allocations for 2012

(Included Recreation Fund Balances)

White River Township

Program	Source	Amount
Cemetery Maintenance	White River Township	\$2,000
Life Ring Alarm System	White River Township	\$2,300
Tennis Court Maintenance	White River Township	\$800
Museum (Montague)	White River Township	\$200
White Lake Senior Center	White River Township	\$1,000
Fire Works (4 th of July)	White River Township	\$600
Medbury Bike Trail	White River Township	\$14,900
Lau Road Boat Launch	White River Township	\$1,000

BASIS FOR ACTION PROGRAM

“IDENTIFYING RECREATIONAL NEEDS”

The Action Program outlined in this Plan results from:

- An analysis of existing conditions
- Comparison of existing facilities and facility need with parks and recreation standards
- Estimated public utilization rates (anticipated demand)
- Distribution of existing and proposed facilities in relationship to the township’s population
- The White River Township Master Plan
- Public input generated through a comprehensive household survey conducted in 2010, as well as input received at meetings and hearings of the Planning Commission and Township Board.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Ongoing maintenance of existing facilities has been very good. Accordingly, there are no significant issues in need of corrective action. Vandalism has not been a big problem at this point in time.

STANDARDS

The application of standards in the identification of recreational need indicates the Township is deficient in virtually all areas. Like many of Michigan’s rural townships, White River Township has not focused on the provision of local recreational facilities. Historically, the Township has relied on existing natural facilities (e.g. Lake Michigan beach) and facilities and programs offered through the neighboring Montague Public Schools, the Cities of Montague and Whitehall and Montague Township to fulfill local demand.

The following table compares recreational planning standards with the facilities currently available. The table employs standards (information) taken from the Muskegon County Recreation Plan; Montague Recreation Plan; Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines (NRPA); and information secured from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Pursuant to the following table, a deficiency based on a population threshold exceeding 5,000 people (representing almost 4 times the township’s population base) has not been delineated as a local need. In most instances, facility thresholds are based on an even larger population base, such as 10,000 or more residents.

Of critical importance in the identification of recreational needs is that of public input. Public comment was considered crucial in delineating desired (and supportable) programs and facilities.

Accordingly, significant effort was placed on the receipt and analysis of public comments throughout the planning and survey process.

The majority of public response to the Township's involvement in recreational planning, programming and development focused on two program priorities. These were:

1. Barrier Dune Sanctuary

expansion – Acquire the Bro-G property abutting the Barrier Dune Sanctuary Park.

2. Trail System (Montague to Montague Township to White River Township link)

– Connection of a non-motorized pathway to the Hart to Montague to Montague Township to White River Township non-motorized trail.

3. Bike Paths – General development of bike paths.

The identified programs relate relatively well with several of the deficiencies noted in the Recreation Deficiencies Table.

Table 9
Recreation Deficiencies
White River Township - 2012

	Township Facility	Standard	Need	Existing	Deficiency
1	Local Park Land (Acres)	10/1000	12.5	13	(a)
2	Ball fields	1/3,000	1	None	1
3	Basketball (outdoor court)	1/5,000	1	2	--
4	Picnic Tables	1/200	6	None	6(a)(b)
5	Playgrounds	1/3,000	1	None	1(a)
6	Soccer Fields	1/20,000	--	3	(e)
7	Tennis Court (outdoor)	1/4,000	1	2	--
8	Boat Launch parking	1/400	3	6	--
9	Campground Sites	1/150	8	None	8(c)
10	X-country ski trails	1/10,000	--	--	--
11	Hiking Trails	1/5,000	1	None	1(a)
12	Nature Areas	1/50,000	--	1	(a) (d)
13	Nature Trails	1/20,000	--	1	(a)
14	ORV Areas (acres)	1/7,500	--	--	--

Notes:

- a) Meinert Park, a Muskegon County Park located in the Township fulfills the identified Township deficiency.
- b) Medberry Park, a City of Montague Park, fulfills the identified Township deficiency.
- c) Muskegon County Pines Campground at the Johnson's Trailer Park fulfill the identified Township deficiency
- d) Dune Sanctuary
- e) Montague Township

GOALS – White River Township’s goals are to continue to maintain and improve our existing recreational facilities and to act on the public response to the survey by continuing to acquire land along Lake Michigan and by expanding the existing bike trail into our township.

OBJECTIVE – Increase public access to Lake Michigan and expand the bike trail to give riders a safe scenic trail.

BIKE TRAIL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

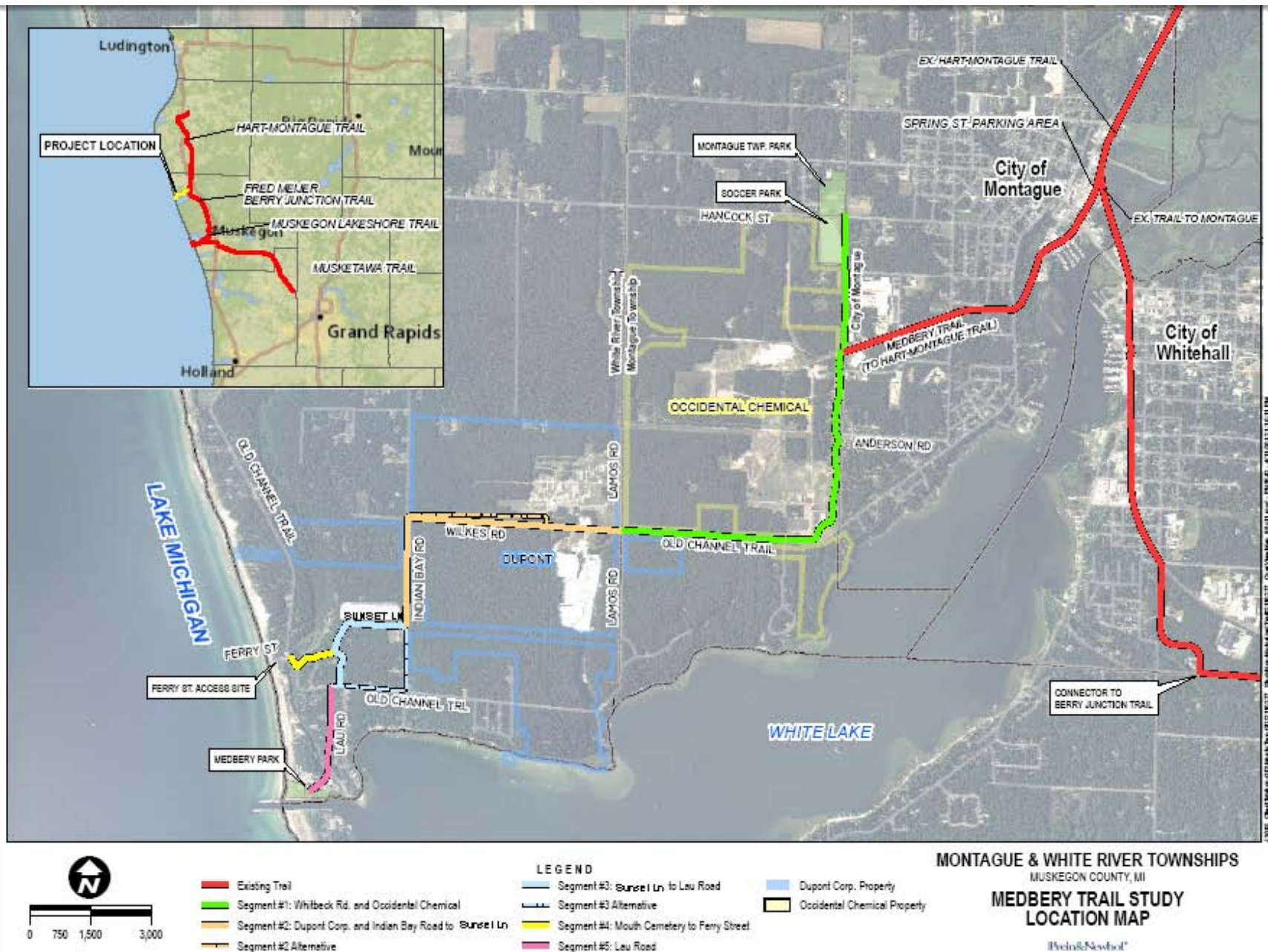
Project Name		Location (section)	Size (acres)	Planned improvements	Estimated Cost	Schedule Year	Funding Sources
1	Barrier Dune Sanctuary	2	2.2	Acquisition of Bro-G property See note (c)	\$900,000	2015/2016	Grants, Donations, Township support
2	Hart/Montague/White River Township non-motorized trail extension	Various	N.A.	1. Acquisition 2. Trail Construction	See note (a)	See note (a)	See note (a)
3	Bike Path improvements	Various	N.A.	Construction of bike paths as part of the upgrading of local roads	See note (b)	See note (b)	See note (b)

Notes:

- (a) White River Township supports the acquisition and development of extensions to the existing Hart to Montague non-motorized trail system. The timing and costs of the improvements are being researched at this time.
- (b) There are long range improvements which require additional planning and programming. It is envisioned that many of the improvements will be made concurrent with road upgrades (e.g. paving).
- (c) Enhance and expand the scenic and natural resources available to the public.
Protect the integrity of the existing park and maintain the natural character of the Sanctuary.
Buffer the dune and wetland resources from incompatible uses, such as roads and adjacent residential development.

Funding Units:

Townships – White River, Montague, MCRC – Muskegon County Road Commission, MDNRE – Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Donation – private parties and philanthropic organizations.



PROJECT LOCATION MAP

RECREATION PLAN 2012

WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP

APPENDIX
WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN
2012

- White River Township Area (regional) Recreation Facilities

- White River Township Public Attitude Survey

White River Township Area Recreation Facilities

Unless otherwise noted, the following list of recreation facilities and opportunities was secured from the White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce web site and is provided for informational purposes only. As such information may be updated from time to time, readers are advised to contact the Chamber for current information and listings.

Golf Courses

Grand View Golf Course

5464 S. 68th Ave.
New Era, MI 49446
231-861-6616

Hickory Knoll Golf Course

3065 E Alice Street
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-894-5535

Old Channel Trail Golf Course

8325 Old Channel Trail
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-5076

Thoroughbred Golf Club

5900 Water Road
Rothbury, MI 49452
231-894-4444

White Lake Golf Club

6777 South Shore Drive
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-4232

Fishing Charters

Cook the Catch at Harbor View Grille

115 N. Mears Ave.
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-0403

Fishmas Charters

4628 Sandy Lane
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-740-2614

Getaway Fishing Charters

220 Lake Street
A-Dock
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-730-2991

Lady Lou Charters

8391 Sheridan Street
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-6928

Port City Princess

560 Mart St
Muskegon, MI 49445
231-728-8387

Shelley-Lee Charters

8934 Burrows
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-2101

Third Swan Charters, LLC

303 S. Mears Ave.
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-894-5169

Marinas

Duneshore Boating

220 Lake Street
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-5405

Ellenwood Landing Marina

8560 Ellenwood Drive
Montague, MI 49437
231-893-9663

Happy Mohawk Canoe Livery

735 Fruitvale Rd
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-4209

Montague Marina

4770 Goodrich Street
Montague, MI 49437
231-893-0135

South Shore Marina

6806 S Shore Drive
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-3935

South Shore Marina and Dockside Grill

6806 South Shore Drive
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-3935

White Lake Moorings

220 S. Lake St.
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-5253

White Lake Municipal Marina

100 N. Lake Street
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-894-9689

Whitehall Landing

410 Lake Street
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-894-5622

Area Attractions

Double JJ Ranch & Resort

5900 Water Road
Rothbury, MI 49452
231-894-4444

Hackley & Hume Home Historic Sites

484 West Webster Avenue
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-722-0278

Lake Express

1920 Lakeshore Drive
Muskegon, MI 49441
866-914-1010

Lakeshore Museum Center

430 W. Clay Ave
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-722-0278

Lewis Farm Market & Petting Farm

4180 M-20
New Era, MI 49446
231-861-5730

Michigan's Adventure

4750 Whitehall Road
Muskegon, MI 49445
231-766-3377

Montague City Museum

8717 Meade Street
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-9267

Muskegon Heritage Museum

561 W. Western Ave.
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-722-1363

Muskegon Winter Sports Complex

462 Scenic Drive
North Muskegon, MI 49445
231-744-9629

Port City Princess

560 Mart St
Muskegon, MI 49445
231-728-8387

The Caboose Museum

124 Hanson Street
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-893-4585

White River Light Station & Museum

6199 Murray Rd
Whitehall, MI 49461
231-894-8265

World's Largest Weathervane

8718 Water Street
Montague, MI 49437
231-893-1155

White Lake Area Organizations

White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Information Center

124 Hanson Street
Whitehall, MI, 49461

White Lake Association
5564 S. Shore Drive
Whitehall, MI 49461

White Lake Public Advisory Committee

Nuveen Community Center For the Arts

8697 Ferry Street
Montague, MI 49437
231-894-ARTS (2787)

Arts Council of White Lake

8695 Ferry St.
Montague, MI 49437
231-893-2524

PUBLIC ATTITUDE/OPINION SURVEY

WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP

SURVEY RESULTS

TOTAL SURVEYS MAILED	930	53.1%	return of mailed
Total RESPONDANTS	494		of total respondents

Should the Township pursue electronic distribution of township news	244	102	49.4%	20.6%
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		<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>% agree</u>	<u>% disagree</u>
1	Patrols of the township by the County Sheriff's Department are adequate.	331	101	67.0%	20.4%
2	The outdoor storage of junk and debris is a problem in the township.	210	215	42.5%	43.5%
3	The township should acquire land and construct a bike path connecting to the Hart-Montague bike trail	288	169	58.3%	34.2%
4	Homeowners should be permitted to expand their homes to include an attached apartment for use by an aging parent or other family member	371	91	75.1%	18.4%
5	A mobile home park should be allowed somewhere in the township	86	370	17.4%	74.9%
6	The township should permit light industrial development such as small machine shops, fabrication shops, etc.	299	165	60.5%	33.4%
7	A homeowner should be permitted to operate a business from his/her garage or accessory building provided the level of traffic, noise, hours of operation and other impacts are held to a minimum.	333	135	67.4%	27.3%
8	The conversion of farmland to non-farm use, such as homes, should be discouraged	313	151	63.4%	30.6%
9	Current township wind turbine ordinances (noise and safety setback) allow very few <i>commercial</i> wind turbines in White River Township. The wind turbine ordinances should be relaxed to allow more <i>commercial</i> wind turbines.	249	218	50.4%	44.1%
10	I would support passage of a special millage (1 mill or less) to be used for the purchase of development rights of prime farmlands. Under this program, the township buys the development rights from the owner so all current and future use of the land may only be for farming.	199	258	40.3%	52.2%
11	The township should consider a millage for road repair	194	258	39.3%	52.2%
12	The Township zoning ordinance has been an effective growth management tool.	279	98	56.5%	19.8%

ARE THERE FACILITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE TOWNSHIP?

	YES	NO	% Yes	% No
Swimming Pool	65	349	13.2%	70.6%
Band Shell	44	358	8.9%	72.5%
Snowmobile Trails	135	270	27.3%	54.7%
Biking Trails	297	147	60.1%	29.8%
Skateboard Park	58	342	11.7%	69.2%
Disc Golf Park	79	312	16.0%	63.2%
Rifle Range	87	320	17.6%	64.8%
Sledding Hill	237	177	48.0%	35.8%
Hiking, walking trails	319	118	64.6%	23.9%
Skating Pond	180	233	36.4%	47.2%
Cross country ski trails	244	183	49.4%	37.0%
Ball Diamonds	101	306	20.4%	61.9%
Soccer Field	82	324	16.6%	65.6%
Basketball courts	97	311	19.6%	63.0%
Picnic facilities	226	194	45.7%	39.3%
Recreational parking	160	245	32.4%	49.6%

Should the township continue to acquire land along Lake Michigan

for White Lake for park use?

277	148	56.1%	30.0%
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To preserve land in the township, or to fund any special facilities, would you be willing to:

Support passage of a special millage (1 mill or less) to be used for the purchase and development of existing and future park lands.	241	222	48.8%	44.9%
Contribute some land to the township	25	414	5.1%	83.8%
Donate money to buy land	69	371	14.0%	75.1%
Sell land to the township below market value	33	402	6.7%	81.4%
Begin a township preservation act with a 5 year expiration – 3% surcharge (average house assessment of \$350,000) would mean \$105 annually.	138	300	27.9%	60.7%