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2025 - 2029

Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan

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WEST MI SHORELINE
Regional Development Commission

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MISSION STATEMENT

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. The Commission's mission is to "promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and regional partners." The general regional goal of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is to provide assistance to member local governments in addressing regional and public policy issues, especially as they pertain to planning and development.

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INTRODUCTION

The Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan, is intended to guide present and future recreational resource development within the township to address the needs of all residents, including parkland, parks facilities, recreation programs, and public open space. Although the plan summarizes all recreation opportunities within the township, the main purpose is to assess and prioritize recreation facilities and/or programming under the control of Blue Lake Township.

This plan is also prepared to satisfy the requirements set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Recreation plans are required by the MDNR for state and federal grant eligibility to encourage communities to take a long-term view of their parks and recreation futures. Plans must not be older than five years and must be on file with the MDNR. For this reason, this plan should be revisited and updated no later than the year 2029 to have it ready for submittal to the MDNR no later than February 1, 2030.

Overview of the Planning Process

In 2024, Blue Lake Township contracted with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) to assist the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission with concurrently updating the community's recreation plan and master plan. This edition is a descendant of the recreation plan that was established in 2005 by Blue Lake Township with WMSRDC assistance. The resulting plan was adopted in 2006 and served the community through 2011. In late 2011, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission conducted the five-year review of the recreation plan. That version was subsequently approved in early 2012 and served the community through 2017. For the 2017-2022 plan, Blue Lake Township again enlisted WMSRDC to assist with updating the plan.

Every effort has been made to present information that is current and accurate. Blue Lake Township and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission shall not be held liable for any errors or omissions related to this plan. This plan is a general planning document. Therefore, a thorough investigation with original research materials should be undertaken before proceeding with any specific implementation decisions.

Citizen input is essential to addressing recreation-related issues facing the township. Planning is most effective when all sectors of the citizenry provide input into the future of their community. The opportunity for input was provided through a public meeting, an online survey, Township Board meetings, Planning Commission meetings, and a public hearing. Notices of these meetings were published in the White Lake Beacon, a general circulation newspaper in Blue Lake Township, as well as on the township's website.

Function of the Plan

This plan is intended to serve as a tool to help guide future township decisions related to recreation, rooted in the desires of residents and the availability of resources.

The following are specific functions of this Plan:

- To provide a means for township residents to participate in determining the future of their community, thereby promoting the interests of the community.
- To establish goals and objectives to be used as a guide for future decisions regarding public recreation and open space and not to be competing with private enterprise.
- To outline strategies to ensure that future improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of the township.
- To provide a detailed inventory of recreation facilities and assist decision-makers with development decisions related to those facilities.
- To identify suitable areas for future recreation development while encouraging the preservation and conservation of natural resources.
- To provide means by which grant funding can be secured for recreation related development projects.
- To prepare a plan that is consistent with Michigan Public Act 156 of 1917, as amended.

Legal Basis and Development

This plan is enabled by Michigan law but does not carry the power of statutory law or ordinance. Its principles are derived from Public Act 156 of 1917, an act authorizing townships to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds which states, in part that:

Sec. 1 (2-4). Townships may acquire, equip, and maintain land, buildings, or other recreation facilities. Townships may employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants. Townships may vote and expand funds for the operation of such a system.

Sec. 3 (1-4). Townships may operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds independently, or cooperate with any other city, village, county, township or school district in its conduct in any manner in which they may mutually agree or delegate the operation of this system to a Recreation Board created by any or all of them, and appropriate money, voted for this purpose, to such board.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Blue Lake Township is located along the northern border of Muskegon County. The county is situated along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan approximately halfway between Traverse City, Michigan and the Michigan/Indiana border. The township has a total area of 35.7 square miles, with 34.4 square miles of land and 1.3 square miles of water. The vast majority of township land is covered by forests and other natural vegetation. The township lies within the management boundaries of the Huron-Manistee National Forests and includes over 3,000 acres of federally owned land. There are also numerous privately owned camps which collectively occupy over 6,000 acres of land.

Blue Lake Township is bordered by Otto Township in Oceana County to the north, Dalton Township and the Village of Lakewood Club to the south, Whitehall and Montague townships to the west, and Holton Township to the east. The county seat, the City of Muskegon, is located approximately 15 miles to the south.

Population Characteristics

According to the 2020 Census, Blue Lake Township claimed 1.37% of the Muskegon County population, with 2,416 of the county's 175,824 persons. The township's population density was 72 persons per square mile, compared to the county's density of 345 persons per square mile. Between 2010 and 2020, the township's population density increased only slightly.

The township has experienced continual growth in the last several decades, as shown in Table 1. The 2022 ACS gives the township an estimated population of 2,509.

Table 1

BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS			
	Population	**Change**	**% Change**
1970	715	-	-
1980	1,101	+386	54.0%
1990	1,235	+134	12.2%
2000	1,990	+755	61.1%
2010	2,399	+409	20.6%
2020	2,416	+17	0.7%

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

Figure 1: Blue Lake Township Regional Map

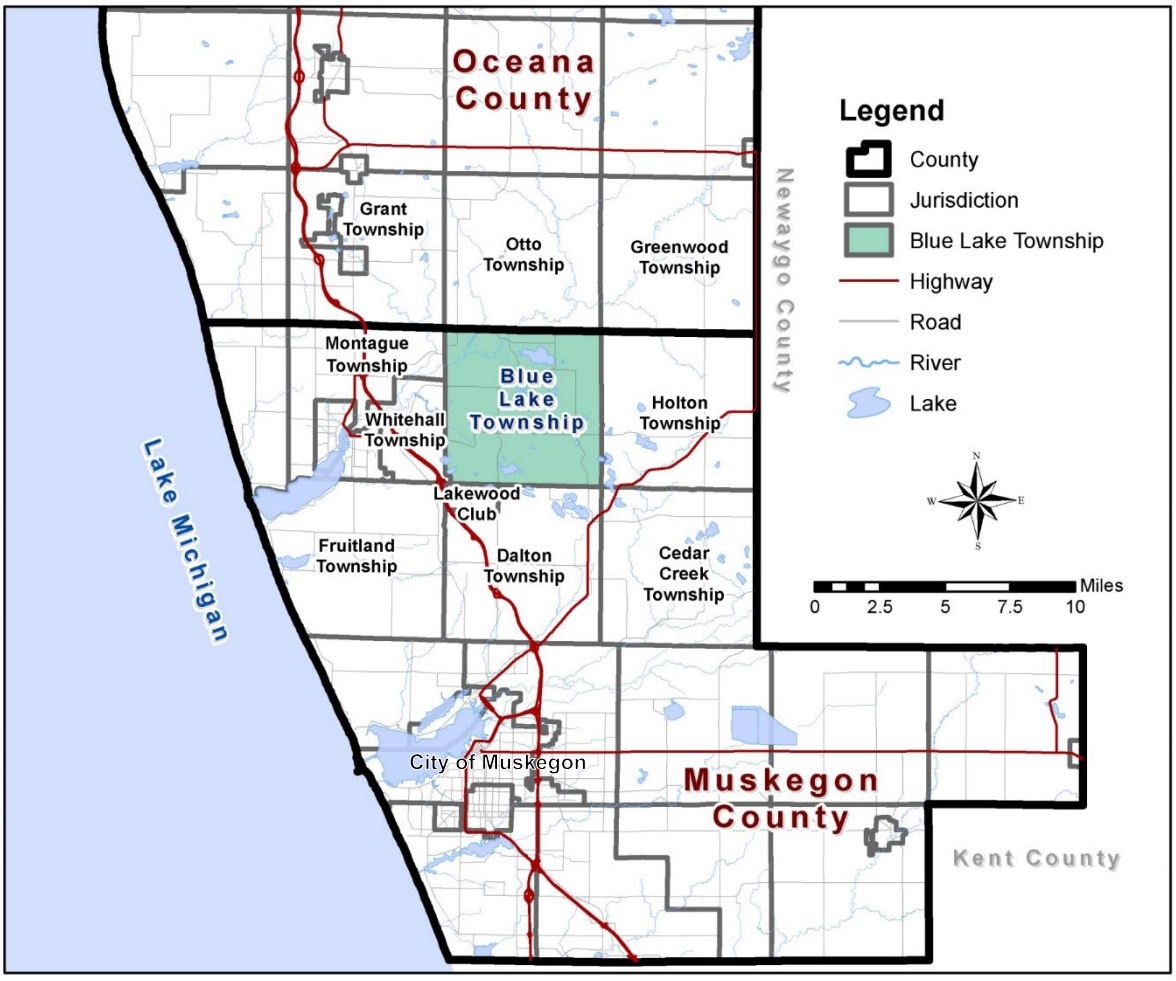


Table 2

NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS				
	2010 Population	**2020 Population**	**2010-2020 % Change**	**2022 Estimate***
Blue Lake Twp	2,399	2,416	0.7%	2,509
Lakewood Club	1,291	1,340	3.8%	1,342
Dalton Twp	9,300	9,427	1.4%	9,463
Holton Twp	2,515	2,586	2.8%	2,592
Montague Twp	1,600	1,555	-2.8%	1,549
Whitehall Twp	1,739	1,768	1.7%	1,701
Otto Twp	826	858	3.9%	763

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census
* 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Age and Gender:

Table 3 shows gender distribution, while Table 4 shows the age distribution in Blue Lake Township, compared with Muskegon County. The figures reveal a healthy population distribution for both entities. The ages 25-54 make up 36.6 percent of the township's population, while children and teenagers make up 25 percent. The township's estimated median age of 40.3 years in 2022 is slightly down from the 2017 estimate of 40.9 years. The county's estimated median age increased from 39.1 years in 2017, to 39.4 years in 2022. Please refer to the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan for additional community profile information.

Table 3

GENDER DISTRIBUTION		
	Blue Lake Township	**Muskegon County**
Male	1,207 (48.1%)	88,360 (50.2%)
Female	1,302 (51.9%)	87,587 (49.8%)

Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table 4

AGE DISTRIBUTION				
Age	**Blue Lake**		**Muskegon County**	
	number of persons	**percent of persons**	**number of persons**	**percent of persons**
0-4	113	4.5%	10,250	5.8%
5-9	148	5.9%	11,233	6.4%
10-14	208	8.3%	11,230	6.4%
15-19	159	6.3%	11,276	6.3%
20-24	188	7.5%	11,107	6.0%
25-34	219	8.7%	23,214	13.2%
35-44	374	14.9%	21,833	12.4%
45-54	327	13.0%	20,977	11.9%
55-59	279	11.1%	12,099	6.9%
60-64	187	7.5%	12,435	7.1%
65-74	205	8.2%	18,682	10.6%
75-84	93	3.7%	8,469	4.8%
85+	9	0.4%	3,782	2.1%
Total	2,509	100.0%	175,947	100%

Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimate

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

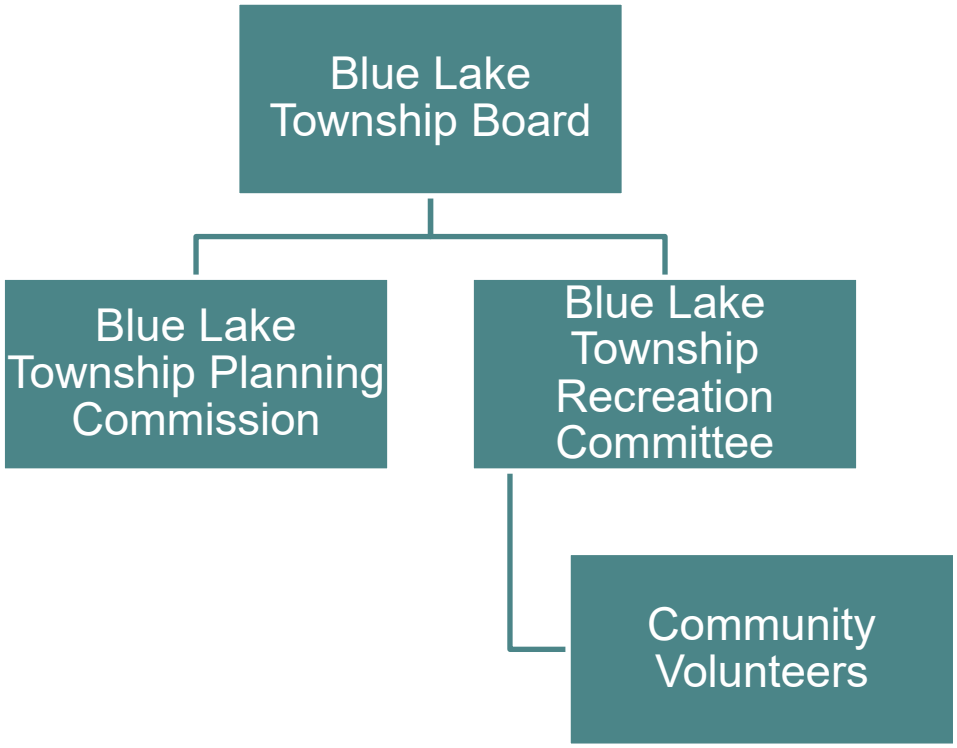
Until recently, Blue Lake Township has not operated any parks or recreational facilities. However, the township owns acreage in the southwest corner that carries significant potential for public recreation, and the township has begun making improvements to the property. In 2023, the Blue Lake Township Recreation Committee was officially established by a Township Board resolution. The Recreation Committee has a 3-year life with the ability to extend well beyond that, if needed. The committee is comprised of one township board member and six community residents appointed by the Board.

Funding for township-sponsored recreation is provided by the Blue Lake Township Board. In fiscal year 2024, the township had $23,000 in the budget for Community Forest / Recreation Park. This is meant to support supplies, equipment and tools, ground maintenance and clean up, equipment rental, and other services. The committee makes recommendations to the Township Board which has approving authority over such matters.

Blue Lake Township does not have paid staff dedicated to park and/or recreation duties. The six Board-appointed recreation committee members have contributed many hours in building and maintaining a new park and trail system at Blue Lake Township Park, which opened to the public in 2024. These volunteer contributions have been instrumental in establishment of the park, as well as ongoing improvements. In the near term, the township will continue to rely upon Recreation Committee members to improve and maintain the park. In the future, the township may look to community residents for assistance with further developing and maintaining the park. Additionally, the township will welcome donations from community residents, such as cash donations, labor, and land for recreation purposes.

The township has no recreational agreements with school districts, other public agencies, or any private organizations within Blue Lake Township. Private youth camps in the township occasionally partner with schools in neighboring communities.

Figure 2: Blue Lake Township Recreation Administration



RECREATION RESOURCES INVENTORIES

Blue Lake Township is blessed with abundant natural resources, including untouched forest land, precious wildlife habitat, and pristine rivers and lakes. Township officials and Regional Commission staff worked closely to generate a detailed recreation and resources inventory for the township. Several methods were used to assist in conducting an inclusive inventory. Although there is only one township-owned park, there are several privately-owned and operated recreational facilities within the township, as well as two county parks.

For this updated plan, the recreation and resources inventories were reviewed and updated as needed using information available on the Internet. Then, township officials, along with Regional Commission staff, reviewed the information and maps to verify the accuracy and location of identified recreation facilities and amenities.

Township Owned Facilities

Blue Lake Township Park:
Located in the southwest area of the township, Blue Lake Township Park is the first and only township-owned park. The park opened to the public in June of 2024. At the time this plan was written, Blue Lake Township had established a parking lot at the trailhead along Automobile Road, as well as 2.5 miles of the Red trail that are open to the public. A 6.3-mile Green trail is planned, with 1.7 miles having been flagged already. A Blue trail system is also planned, which is expected to be about 2.5 miles. When all three trail systems are completed, there will be about 10 to 11 miles of trails at the park.

Accessibility Assessment:
Currently, no trails at Blue Lake Township Park have been designed for accessibility. However, within four to five years, an accessible trail is tentatively planned to provide access to a small lake within the park. As the township park is further developed, the following basic rating scale can be used by the township to evaluate accessibility and track progress. At the time this plan was written, Blue Lake Township Park would have an Accessibility Rating of 1.

Table 5

ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT SCALE	
1	None of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
2	Some elements meet 2010 ADA
3	Most elements meet 2010 ADA
4	All elements meet 2010 ADA
5	The facility meets the Principles of Universal Design

Status Report for Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation:
In the past, Blue Lake Township has neither received nor applied for grants for park improvements or acquisition.

Privately Owned Facilities

Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp:
Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp is a national leader in the instruction of fine arts to youth from around the world. Many of the students who attend the summer sessions come from as far as Europe, Asia, and South America, thanks to the International Exchange Program. The 1,600-acre camp opened in 1966 on the shores of Little Blue Lake, at the same site as a previous camp, Camp Hardy. Hardy, the first camp located in the township, began operation in 1910. Its operator and owner was the Chicago-based Lawrence Home for Boys.

In its first year, Blue Lake Fine Art Camp hosted 280 students. Each summer, the principal camp program serves more than 5,400 gifted elementary, junior high, and high school students with diverse programs in music, art, dance, and drama while offering more than 175 performances during its Summer Arts Festival. Financial aid is available for many of the students that meet certain criteria, such as audition or portfolio, arts instructor recommendations, and in some cases, financial need. The camp is an inclusive facility, providing housing, dining, and entertainment for its campers. Many popular entertainers have visited the camp, including the U.S. Army Field Band, U.S. Navy Band, Bill Cosby, Bob Hope, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, and Victor Borge. Blue Lake hosted over 300,000 campers in its first 50 years.
Website: http://www.bluelake.org/

Owasippe Scout Reservation:
The largest operating camp in Blue Lake Township belongs to the Pathway to Adventure Council (formerly Chicago Area Council) of Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts of America). Established in 1911, it boasts the title of the oldest continuous Scout Camp in the nation and is one of the five largest scouting-owned parcels in their "Central Region," which encompasses 16 states in the Midwest. According to Muskegon County parcel data, Pathway to Adventure Council owns over 4,000 acres of land in Blue Lake Township and is therefore very important to the township from several standpoints. Regarding land use, social activities, and economic and environmental concerns, the scouting groups have significant influence on the township.

Scout camping is not the only recreational use of the Owasippe Scout Reservation property. Throughout the year, it is frequently used by the public for activities such as hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and hunting. In addition, according to a 2002 BioBlitz

assessment conducted by the Nature Conservancy, the property was home to 19 animal species listed by the State of Michigan as being threatened, endangered, or having "special concern", and three of which were also listed at the federal level by the 1998 Federal Endangered Species Act. These three animals are the Karner Blue Butterfly (endangered), Bald Eagle (threatened), and the Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnake (candidate for federal status). The bald eagle was delisted from the federal list in 2007, and the eastern massasauga rattle snake was upgraded to threatened status in 2016. The Karner Blue Butterfly remains endangered.

Boy Scouts annually populate the Owasippe Scout Reservation during the summer months of June, July, and August. At its peak in the 1960's, Owasippe annually hosted about 13,000 Boy Scouts, and had a capacity of 16,000. In the early 2000's, the number of campers had reduced to approximately 1,300 Chicago-area Boy Scouts and approximately 1,300 Boy Scouts from other areas. Since then, annual attendance has gradually increased.

After years of consideration, the Chicago Area Council resolved in 2002 to sell the property because of the steady decline in campership and due to its financial situation. By 2004, the Boy Scouts had a prospective buyer and had asked the township for a rezoning request as a prerequisite to the sale of Owasippe. The request called for approximately 3,500 acres at Owasippe to be rezoned from forest/recreation to residential, allowing for the development of homes, condominiums, and camping lodges. The zoning variance was denied by the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission at its March 15, 2006, meeting, and the prospective deal fell apart in 2008 following a court decision upholding the township's rezoning denial.
Website: http://www.pathwaytoadventure.org/

Camp Pendalouan:
Camp Pendalouan is a year-round outdoor education center, summer camp, and conference facility serving schools, families, and organizations. Pendalouan serves over 10,000 kids annually. It is located on over 105 acres in Blue Lake Township near Big Blue Lake, the Manistee National Forest, and the White River. Pendalouan offers numerous programs throughout the year such as: overnight camps, day camps, family camps, seasonal events, and school programs. Pendalouan hosts several specialty camps and events, such as Women's Adventure Weekend and Halloween Camp, and is also available for retreats and rentals.

The first Muskegon YMCA Camp was conducted at Duck Lake in 1923. The next year in 1924, the camp was moved to a site on Big Blue Lake, now known as Hiawatha Beach. The camp had adopted the name "Camp Williams" in honor of Sir George Williams, the founder of the YMCA in London, England. It was then renamed "Camp Pendalouan" in the 1930s. Since then, Camp Pendalouan continued to show steady growth in enrollment, equipment, leadership, and program.

With 100 years of camping experience, Pendalouan provides quality programming dedicated to safety, fun, healthy living, and character development. Programming focuses on instilling values of honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility that help provide benefits of community and belonging for all. The Pendalouan community has a wide range of campers from all over West Michigan, the Chicago area, and from across the country. Camping at Pendalouan has been impacted by thousands of volunteers, staff, alumni, campers, families, and friends in the past century.
Website: https://muskegonymca.org/pendalouan/

Gerber Scout Reservation:
First opened in 1951, Gerber Scout Reservation is located in the Manistee National Forest and operates Boy Scout Summer Camp and Webelos & Cub Scout Summer Camp. It is a nationally accredited Scouting America camp of the Michigan Crossroads Council. The property is located directly to the east of Camp Owasippe, is almost 800 acres, and contains Big Britton Lake, Little Britton Lake, and Mayo Lake.

In recent years, Gerber Scout Reservation attendance has swelled from 900 in 1997 to over 2,500 in 2012. Much of this increase can be attributed to the 1998 initiation of the Cub Scout and Webelos Adventureland, a section of the camp dedicated to Cub Scouts. Gerber currently has the capacity to accommodate 425 Boy Scouts and 200 Cub Scouts each week or session.

Activities offered at the camp include the Waterfront, Honor Ground, Climbing Tower/COPE, Scoutcraft, Handicraft, Environmental Resource Center, Archery, and Shooting Sports. Recently, an air-conditioned leaders' lounge was added to allow adults to view their Scouts' progress and check emails. The new dining hall, named the Ralph K. Merrill Centennial Dining Hall, was completed in time for the 2010 summer camp season. Centennial Dining Lodge boasts state of the art facilities, a capacity of over 700, and a safe place to take shelter.
Website:
https://michiganscouting.org/camping/properties/gerber-scout-reservation/

Pioneer Trails:
Pioneer Trails, formerly known as Camp Emery, rests on 48.8 acres, including ¼ mile of Big Blue Lake frontage, on the edge of the Manistee National Forest. With the help of Rotary International Muskegon sponsorship, Camp Emery began when Rotary members' interest in the Children's Home stimulated a movement to establish a

summer camp for underprivileged children, with the dual role of improving physical condition and of aiding in character building. Rotary raised $33,000 for the purchase of property from the Blue Lake Club on Big Blue Lake, and for the preparation of existing buildings for use as a camp. The Children's Home organization sought out underprivileged children to be given the benefits of the camp and conducted the activities of the camp during the summer season, while the Rotary financed its operations and supervised the maintenance of the property. Later, Rotary financed camp additions and improvements, such as a dining hall and kitchen. In 1976, Rotary spent over $30,000 to refurbish buildings, build new cabins, and update sanitary facilities. In 1988, Camp Emery was renamed to Pioneer Trails, and is now primarily used by Pioneer Resources. Pioneer Trails is the host site for camp programs serving many specialized populations, including: Discovery Day Camp, Ignite Your PATH to Employment, Camp Connected, Camp Bold Eagle, and Camp Courage.
Website: http://www.pioneerresources.org/pioneer-trails/

White River RV Park & Campground:
The White River Campground is located in the northwestern corner of Blue Lake Township along the White River. Activities available at the campground include canoeing, kayaking, natural trails, tubing, fishing, basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, and wading creek. The facilities and services of the campground include cabins, full-service camp sites, primitive camp sites, restroom buildings, camp store, recreation hall, picnic shelter, laundry room, heated pool, propane, dump station, pump out service, and free wireless internet hotspots.
Website: http://www.whiterivercampground.com

Happy Mohawk Canoe Livery:
Happy Mohawk Canoe Livery is located in the northwestern corner of Blue Lake Township along the White River. It offers choices from canoes, kayaks, rafts, and tubes for enjoying the beautiful White River. Happy Mohawk also provides two picnic areas along the river and encourages fishing. Trips include one, two and a half, or three and a half hours with transportation, paddles, and personal floatation devices provided.
Website: http://happymohawk.com/

Oak Knoll Family Campground:
Oak Knoll Family Campground is located on 20 acres on the north side of Big Blue Lake. The campground provides rustic sites or sites with electric, electric with water, and a full hook-up campground. Four cabins with ceiling fans and air conditioning that can sleep up to four people are also available. Amenities of the campground include a camp store, laundry room, pavilion, modern bathrooms with showers, dishwashing station, playground (swings, slides, and climbing tower), games (tetherball, volleyball, basketball, corn hole, and horseshoes), cabin rental, full amenity trailer rentals, and picnic table with fire ring on every site. The camp operates from May 15 through September 30.
Website: http://www.oakknollfamilycampground.com

County Owned Facilities

Deremo Boat Launch:
Deremo Boat Launch is a paved launch and is maintained for boating, water-skiing, and fishing. The Deremo access site is located on Fruitvale Road on the north side of Big Blue Lake. The hours of operation are from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., and it is open year-round with limited snow removal. There are no fees for use of this boat launch or for parking at this site. No daily or annual permits are needed at this site.
Website: http://www.muskegoncountyparks.org/park-facilities

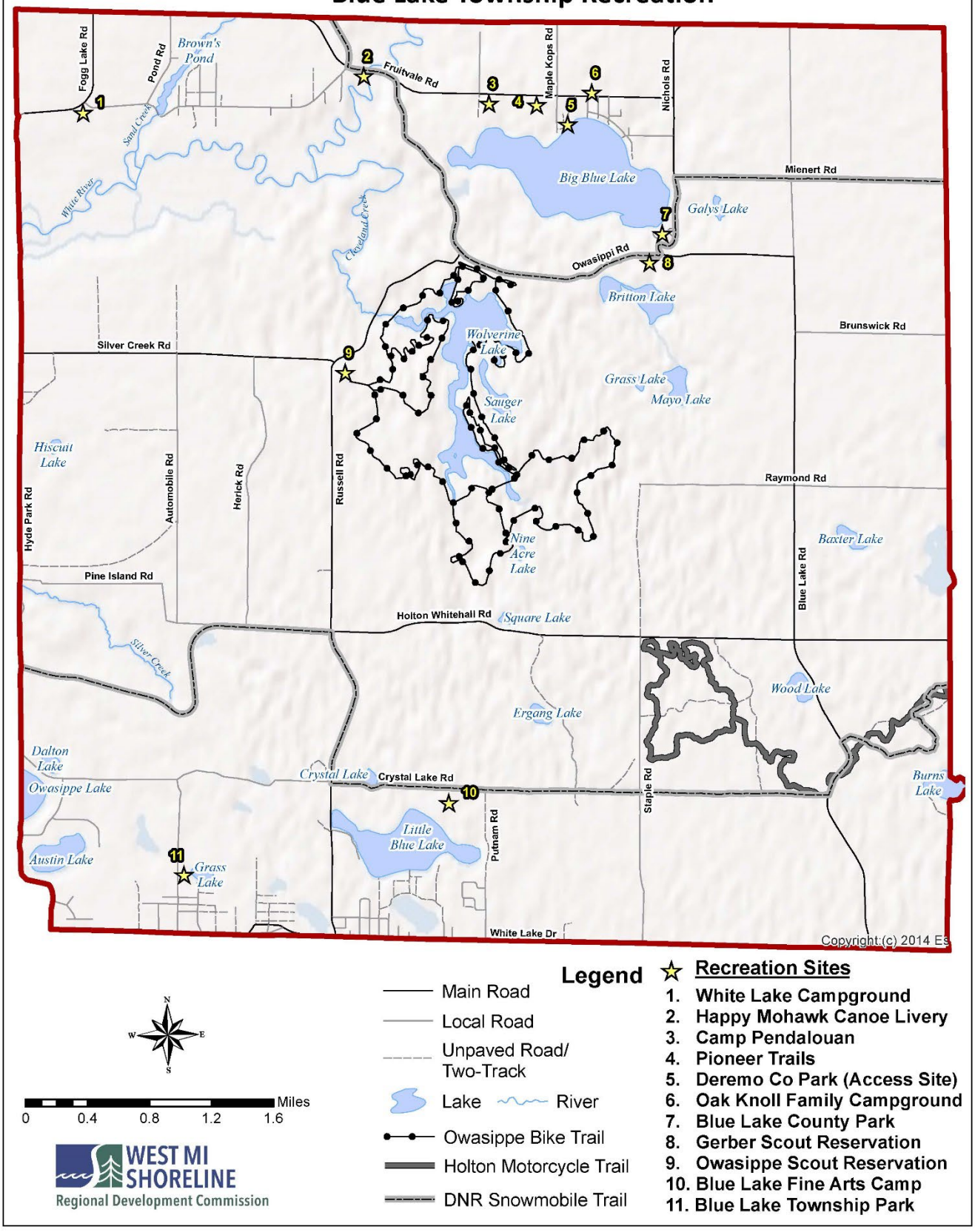
Blue Lake County Park:
Blue Lake County Park is located along the southeast shore of Big Blue Lake. The park is 25 acres with nearly 600 feet of frontage along Big Blue Lake. The park is a perfect place for fishing, boating, water-skiing, picnicking, swimming, sunbathing, and camping. Blue Lake County Park is open daily throughout the year. Day use hours are 8:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. May 15 through September 15. The park is closed from September 16 through May 14.
Website: http://www.muskegoncountyparks.org/blue-lake-park

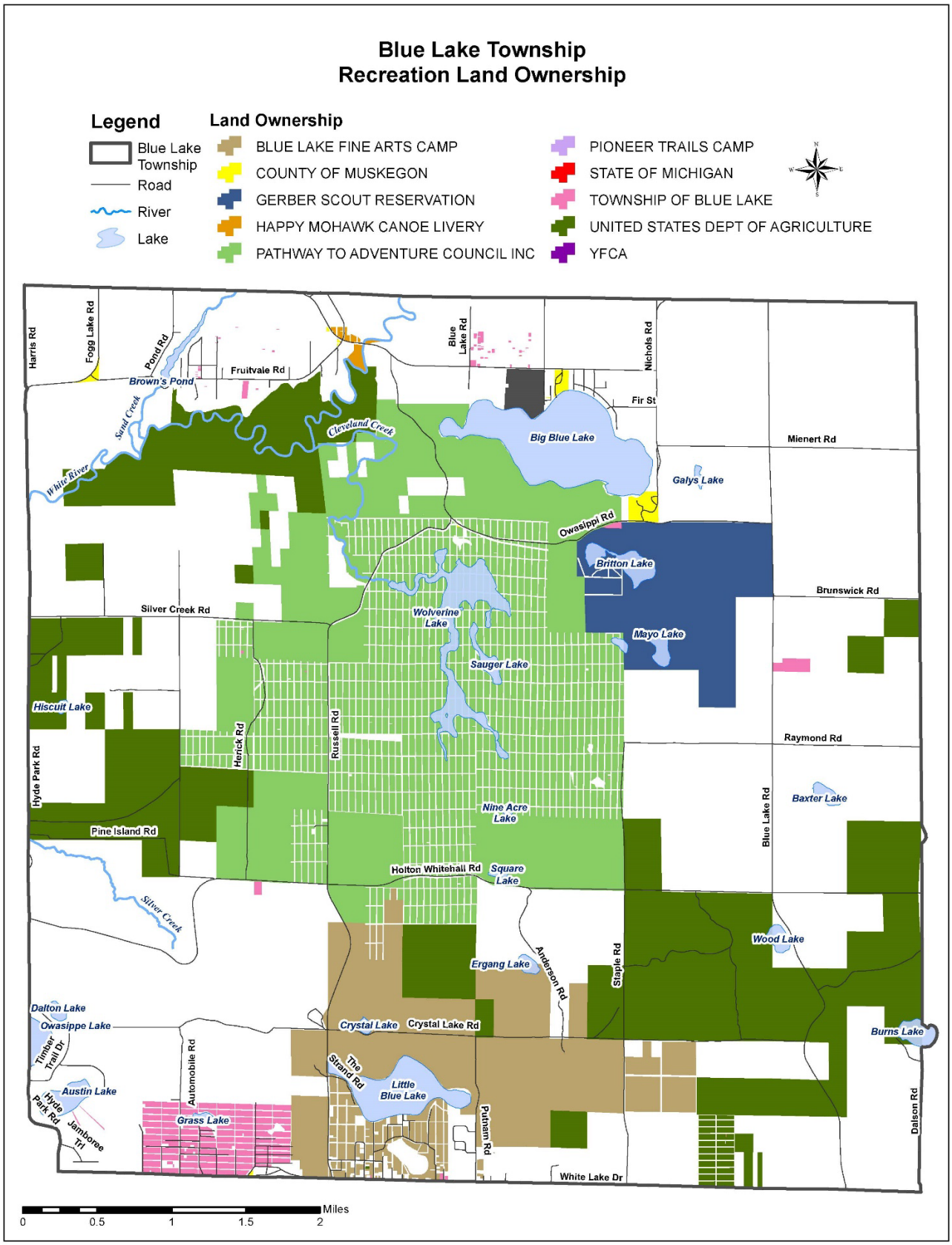
Other Trails

Holton Loop Motorcycle Trail:
This trail extends into the southeast area of the township into Holton Township on public-owned forest land. It is for motorcycles only. The portion in Blue Lake Township requires riders to have a Secretary of State driver's license. A portion of the trail in Holton Township requires riders to have an MDNR ORV license, trail permit, and Secretary of State license.

White River Water Trail:
The Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan designates the White River from the Village of Hesperia downstream to White Lake as the 15-mile White River Water Trail. A portion of this trail winds through the northwest corner of Blue Lake Township. In general, water trails are recreational routes on waterways with a network of public access points supported by broad-based community partnerships. Water trails provide both conservation and recreational opportunities. The Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan is available to view or download at http://wmsrdc.org/publications/.
Website: www.michiganwatertrails.org

Blue Lake Township Recreation




Blue Lake Township
Recreation Land Ownership
Legend
Blue Lake Township
Road
River
Lake
Land Ownership
BLUE LAKE FINE ARTS CAMP
COUNTY OF MUSKEGON
GERBER SCOUT RESERVATION
HAPPY MOHAWK CANOE LIVERY
PATHWAY TO ADVENTURE COUNCIL INC
PIONEER TRAILS CAMP
STATE OF MICHIGAN
TOWNSHIP OF BLUE LAKE
UNITED STATES DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
YFCA
Harris Rd
Fogg Lake Rd
Pond Rd
Fruitvale Rd
Brown's Pond
Sand Creek
White River
Cleveland Creek
Blue Lake Rd
Nichols Rd
Fir St
Big Blue Lake
Mienert Rd
Galys Lake
Owasippi Rd
Britton Lake
Brunswick Rd
Silver Creek Rd
Wolverine Lake
Mayo Lake
Sauger Lake
Hiscuit Lake
Herick Rd
Russell Rd
Hyde Park Rd
Raymond Rd
Baxter Lake
Nine Acre Lake
Pine Island Rd
Blue Lake Rd
Holton Whitehall Rd
Square Lake
Silver Creek
Wood Lake
Ergang Lake
Anderson Rd
Staple Rd
Dalton Lake
Owasippe Lake
Crystal Lake
Crystal Lake Rd
Burns Lake
Timber Trail Dr
Automobile Rd
The Strand Rd
Little Blue Lake
Austin Lake
Hyde Park Rd
Jamboree Trl
Grass Lake
Putnam Rd
Dalson Rd
White Lake Dr
Miles
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2

DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

In preparing the Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan update, public meetings and an online questionnaire were utilized to solicit public input. First, the questionnaire was launched on July 11, 2024. It was promoted on the Blue Lake Township website and in the White Lake Beacon newspaper on July 28, 2024. The questionnaire was available to the public through September 2024. The aforementioned newspaper notice also announced a community meeting, hosted by the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission on August 14, 2024, to gather opinions for the development of this plan as well as the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan. The public meeting was facilitated by Regional Commission staff with participation from the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission members. During the first portion of the meeting, attendees were divided into two groups to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Blue Lake Township environment, quality of life, public services, and land use. During the next portion of the meeting, the two groups compared notes and discussed the variety of topics that came up.

A summary of responses collected through the online questionnaire and initial public meeting can be found in the appendix chapter of this document. This valuable information was used to help evaluate the goals and objectives of the Community Recreation Plan.

Blue Lake Township Planning Commission reviewed and discussed the first draft of this plan at its regularly scheduled meetings on Wednesday, September 13, 2024 and October 16, 2024. These meetings were open to the public.

The final method used to solicit public input was employed after the proposed draft was reviewed and agreed upon by the Planning Commission. The proposed plan was placed on display at the township hall and on the township's website for the required public review period. The public review period spanned 30 days from November 11, 2024, through December 10, 2024. At the regularly scheduled Blue Lake Township Planning Commission meeting on December 11, 2024, a public hearing was held to receive comments regarding the proposed Community Recreation Plan. Both the public review period and the public hearing were publicized on the township's website and through notices published in the White Lake Beacon on November 10.

Comments pertaining to Township-Owned Property:
Blue Lake Township owns property in the southwest corner of the township, generally along White Lake Drive and adjacent to the Village of Lakewood Club. This property has potential for improvement as a public park or recreation area and was a focal point of public discussions. There exists strong support for improving the property for public recreation. However, concerns were raised for the township's ability to monitor and protect the space from misuse, such as dumping. Another concern is that the township property is not completely contiguous, as there are a few privately-owned properties scattered within. Ideas for public improvements included a pavilion, community gathering space, and trails. Potential improvements might include, but are not limited to, non-motorized trails, equestrian trails, and a disc golf course.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

During the public input meeting held on August 14, 2024, participants discussed many aspects of life within Blue Lake Township, including recreation. The Blue Lake Township Planning Commission used this information to help evaluate community's recreation goals and objectives, which had been identified for the previous edition of this plan. Many of the following items are carried over from the previous plan, however a few appropriate revisions were made to ensure the goals and objectives remain consistent with known public opinions and desires. Please note that the goals and objectives are listed in no particular order. The following goals are also referenced in the Goals & Objectives section of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan.

Goal: Increase public recreational opportunities within Blue Lake Township for residents of all ages.

- Maintain the Blue Lake Township Recreation Committee to oversee advancement of township-sponsored recreation opportunities.
- Develop township-owned property in the southwest corner of the township for recreational uses.
- Encourage the expansion of recreational uses in the township, including the utilization of existing camps on a year-round basis and increased usage of existing non-motorized trails and water trails.
- Improve township roads to incorporate wider and smoother bike lane shoulders.
- Create cross country/nature/bike trails within the township and, where possible, connect the trails to existing local, county, and state trail systems such as the Hart-Montague Trail State Park.
- Identify recreational opportunities for residents to take advantage of the community's natural resources throughout the year.

Goal: Increase communication between Blue Lake Township and nearby recreation providers, including surrounding communities and private businesses.

- Communicate and work cooperatively with Muskegon County Parks and Recreation officials regarding the maintenance and improvement of county-owned parks within the township.
- Maintain an open relationship with the federal government regarding federally-owned and managed land within the township.
- Establish and maintain an open relationship with private recreational providers within the township.
- Facilitate coordination of recreation programs between local schools and the township's camp facilities.
- Create and maintain a working relationship with county, state, and federal officials to investigate recreational facility development within the township.

Goal: Maintain the natural resources and rural character of Blue Lake Township through recreational uses.

- When possible, maintain property for open space and recreational opportunities in order to retain the township's natural resources and rural character.
- Maintain and/or improve the water quality of the township's lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Utilize the White River Water Trail, designated in the Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan, for increased water resources conservation and recreation opportunities.
- Control or eliminate invasive species on Blue Lake Township-owned property.

Goal: Utilize and/or promote the vast amount of public land, open space, water bodies, and forested areas in Blue Lake Township for recreational purposes.

- Create an outreach program that will maintain the vast natural resources and recreational opportunities in Blue Lake Township.
- Install signage for township recreation facilities within Blue Lake Township.
- Identify potential public and private lands for public ingress/egress.
- Create an inventory of potential township-sponsored outdoor and recreational opportunities to be hosted on the Blue Lake Township website.

Action Program

Over the next five-year period, leaders of the Blue Lake Township will endeavor to accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in this plan. The township is dedicated to supporting recreational opportunities for community residents and visitors; capitalizing on the township's abundant natural resources while maintaining the community's rural character.

Above all, it was demonstrated throughout the planning process that the township officials, as well as the residents of Blue Lake Township, wish to help maintain the natural resources and rural character of the township through recreational uses. The township offers abundant natural resources including its lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater, woodlands, and unique wildlife habitats. The residents of Blue Lake Township cherish these resources and consider it an utmost priority to preserve and protect these features. In addition to preserving and protecting the natural resources, participants of the planning process also found it important to provide recreational uses for residents to experience the many valuable natural treasures found within the township. Therefore, it will be a priority of the Blue Lake Township Board, Planning Commission, and recreation committee to provide recreational opportunities that will protect, preserve, and highlight the unique natural features found within the township and to take prudent steps to assure that the water quality in the Blue Lake Township's lakes, rivers, and streams is maintained. This process may include the development of outdoor cross country/nature/bike trails throughout the township, as well as the purchase of additional property to remain in open space or for recreational uses.

Blue Lake Township owns property in the southwest corner of the township. In recent years, significant progress has been made toward developing this property for public recreation. A recreation committee has been established, funds have been budgeted for park maintenance and improvements, and the township has begun developing a trail system on the property. Work to further develop the trail system at this park will continue over the next 5-year period. The existence of this plan will help the township be eligible to apply for state recreation grants to further improve the property. Future amenities and improvements to this property should be consistent with the plan's goals and objectives and should have support from the community.

A major theme of this plan is to support communication and coordination with other recreational providers. The township recognizes the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with recreational providers, not only within the township, but also in surrounding

communities. These providers include private business owners, youth camps, the local school districts, as well as county, state, and federal recreational officials. Township officials will strive to work closely with these and any other recreational organizations to increase the opportunities for recreation to all residents of Blue Lake Township.

Accordingly, the goals and objectives of this plan support a multi-jurisdictional, cooperative approach to the provision of public recreation opportunities. Blue Lake Township may explore cooperative options for developing and managing its new park for public recreation. Given the property's location adjacent to Lakewood Club and Dalton Township there may be an opportunity to coordinate and collaborate. Community volunteers and/or recreation clubs may be engaged to help provide maintenance and supervision. Lastly, given the presence of Muskegon County parks within Blue Lake Township, the county might have interest and capacity to partner with Blue Lake Township in improvement and maintenance of the park.

Conclusion

If properly used, the Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan will assist Blue Lake Township in managing future recreation development. This plan is a guide for decisions and should be consulted regularly. Public input is an essential facet of planning for recreation and should be utilized when recreation decisions need to be made.

The Plan should be updated as the local situation warrants, or every five years as required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to allow the township to remain eligible for grant consideration. In addition, the township will actively pursue grant opportunities and encourage public participation through volunteering, land donations, or monetary donations for park development.

Appendix

Early Input

The Early Input phase consisted of an online questionnaire available from August through September 2024 and a facilitated public meeting held on August 14, 2024. Both efforts were noticed in the White Lake Beacon newspaper and advertised on the Blue Lake Township website at the beginning of the planning process. The wide scope of the questionnaire was intended to gather input for concurrently updating this recreation plan and the township's master plan.

Online Questionnaire

Blue Lake Township Public Input Questionnaire

Page 1 - Please share your thoughts on the following topics!

1. **Environment. Examples might include: water quality, erosion, pollution, forests, invasive species, wildlife.**
   - Strengths _____
   - Weaknesses _____
   - Opportunities _____
   - Threats _____

2. **Quality of Life. Examples might include: community character, access to services, amenities, public parks.**
   - Strengths _____
   - Weaknesses _____
   - Opportunities _____
   - Threats _____

3. **Public Services & Infrastructure. Examples might include: roads, broadband, transit, utilities, fire protection.**
   - Strengths _____
   - Weaknesses _____
   - Opportunities _____
   - Threats _____

4. **Planning & Land Use. Examples might include: development, density, land use type, public engagement, growth vs preservation.**
   - Strengths _____
   - Weaknesses _____
   - Opportunities _____
   - Threats _____

5. **Blue Lake Township Planning Commission is exploring the issue of "short term rentals" (30 days or less). Would you be in favor of allowing short term rentals within Blue Lake Township?**
   - ☐ Yes, Township-wide
   - ☐ Yes, but only in certain areas of the Township
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ If other, please specify

6. **My relationship to Blue Lake Township is best described as:**
   - ☐ Full time resident
   - ☐ Seasonal resident
   - ☐ Land owner
   - ☐ Visitor
   - ☐ If other, please specify

7. **Comments or Questions? Feel free to leave a message for the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission:**

Summary of Early Input Comments

Comments collected during the Early Input phase are summarized in the table below. The online survey garnered one response from the community, while ten people were in attendance for the facilitated public meeting. Comments that are relevant to township-owned land and township-sponsored recreation are highlighted in yellow.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
ENVIRONMENT			
low density development/population	illicit dumping	seek outside assistance to address invasive species	attitudes/expectations of new residents
rural nature	pressure for development	increase awareness of surroundings	invasive species (autumn olive, purple loosestrife)
lakes & streams	gypsy moth infestations	protect environment & natural feel	camps closing, leading to development pressure
forests & wildlife			outside actors/land brokers
camps			development
QUALITY OF LIFE			
peace, quiet & natural feel	vigilant protection of quality of life	community events	alcohol/bars
new recreation area - twp owned		develop twp land for recreation	misuse of public land
county parks		acquire open space	public space becoming a dumping ground
camps		land use code (zoning) enforcement	overuse and over-development
low density			
PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE			
strategic location of fire stations	frequent power outages/powerline management	natural gas service	speed control (as roads are improved)
fire department	county support for road condition and snow/ice in winter	bury electrical lines	
broadband	government communication regarding budget/practical limitations	coordinate/partner with road commission	
main roads	road conditions (mainly side roads)	public recreation	
access to environment	poor cell phone service due to trees/terrain		
	forgotten Fruitvale Rd		
	broadband		
PLANNING & LAND USE			
5-acre minimum requirement	enforcement	community-building events (bbq, picnic, etc)	camps closing
animals allowed in certain areas	public engagement to reaffirm zoning	explore public utilization of twp property near White Lake Drive	land splitting of large parcels
quad runners allowed in certain areas		limit development	encroachment on natural resources by development
low density & natural feel		communication (2 way - government and residents)	
large parcels		natural resources protection	
solid guiding principles			

Public Notice Affidavit for 30-day Review Period and Public Hearing

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

State of Michigan

In the matter of : Recreation Plan Review

Mike Hrycko:
Being first duly sworn, says that he is the Publisher of White Lake Beacon, a newspaper published in the English Language for the dissemination of local or transmitted news and intelligence of a general character and legal news, which is a duly qualified newspaper, and that annexed hereto is a copy of a certain order taken from said newspaper, in which the order was published on the following dates:

DATE November 10, 2024

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 16th day of December, 2024

Michelle J. Piotrowski, Notary Public, Mason County, Michigan
Acting in Muskegon County, Michigan

My commission expires 12/18/2026

BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN PUBLIC REVIEW

The proposed Blue Lake Township Recreation Plan update will be available for public review from November 10 through December 10, 2024. The plan may be seen online at https://www.bluelaketownship.org/blog/ or in person at the Blue Lake Township Hall during regular business hours. In addition, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing during its regular meeting at 6:30 PM on December 11, 2024, to receive comments regarding the content of the proposed plan. The meeting will be held at the Blue Lake Township Hall, 1491 Owasippe Road, Twin Lake, 49457. Written comments may also be sent to scarlson@wmsrdc.org no later than December 10, 2024.

Public Hearing Minutes

Blue Lake Township Planning Commission Meeting
Blue Lake Township Hall
1491 Owasippe Road
Twin Lake, MI, 49457
December 11, 2024

The meeting started at 6:30PM

The public hearing opened at 6:30 PM

No public comment

The public hearing closed at 6:32 PM

Mike made a motion to open the regular Planning Commission meeting and Greg seconded the motion. The regular planning commission meeting opened at 6.32 PM.

Present: Mike Sikkenga, Greg Rice, Rob Gaston, Lyle Monette

Absent: Chris Bade

Perfection of Agenda: None

Minutes: Greg made a motion to approve the minutes dated October 16, 2024. Rob seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Greg made a motion to approve the Recreation Plan as presented. Mike seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

WMSRDC update: Stephen Carlson noted to the planning commission that he will update the comprehensive development plan and have it ready for the review period by the January meeting.

Planning Member Reports:

Lyle was appointed to the planning commission by the township board for 4 more years.

Rob: The recreation committee added a new member Chris Billie

New Business: None

Task of the Meeting: Recreation Plan

Next Scheduled Meeting: January 15, 2025.

Adjourn: 7:05
Michael Sikkenga, Secretary

RES 20250113-01

RESOLUTION FOR ADOPTING A RECREATION PLAN

BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN
For Blue Lake Township,
Muskegon County, MI

WHEREAS, Blue Lake Township has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2025 through 2029, and

WHEREAS, Blue Lake Township began the process of developing a community recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of the Blue Lake Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the recreation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at the Blue Lake Township Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the proposed Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan, and

WHEREAS, Blue Lake Township has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for Blue Lake Township, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission approved the Plan and recommended adoption of the Plan by the Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees, and

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees voted to adopt said Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan at its regular meeting on January 13, 2025 through a motion by Debbie Therrian and support by Lyle Monette.

Roll Call Vote:	Debbie Therrian	Yay
	Jeff Abram	Yay
	Jackson Wall	Yay
	Lyle Monette	Yay
	Melonie Arbogast	Excused

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Blue Lake Township Clerk, Jeffery T Abram, hereby declares the Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan adopted.

Clerk

I, Jeffery T Abram, Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees at a Regular Meeting thereof held on the 13th day of January, 2025.

Clerk

Regular Board Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2025
1491 Owasippe Rd., Twin Lake, MI 49457

Meeting **opened at 6:30 PM.**

Present: Jeff Abram, Lyle Monette, Debbie Therrian, Jackson Wall
Absent: Melonie Arbogast (excused)

Motion by Debbie, support by Jackson to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2024 regular board meeting. **Motion carried on voice vote.**

Perfection of agenda: None

Motion by Debbie, support by Jackson to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion carried on voice vote.**

Reports and correspondence noted.

Agenda Items

- **Clerk**
  - **Assessor 660 audit discussion** – Assessor Joe Clark gave an update on changes and his work so far. Blue Lake Township will be part of the 660 audit this year.
  - **Recreation plan** – Motion by Debbie, support by Lyle to approve Resolution #20250113-01 Resolution for Adopting a Recreation Plan. **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**
  - **Audit contract** – Motion by Debbie, support by Jackson to approve Doc. #20250113-01 audit contract with Lake Michigan CPA Services in the amount of $4850 (plus filing fee). **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**
  - **Community forest update** – They are continuing to work on flagging the Green Trail. There is now a trail map in the kiosk and signs are posted around the perimeter.

- **Fire Chief**
  - **Fire Chief Knop** reviewed current information with the board.

- **Accounts Payable**
  - Motion by Lyle, support by Debbie to approve the December 2024 expenses in the amount of $12,354.17. **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**
  - Motion by Lyle, support by Debbie to approve the December 2024 net payroll in the amount of $16,392.99. **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**
  - Motion by Lyle, support by Debbie to approve the December 2024 federal EFTPS in the amount of $3,532.15. **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**
  - Motion by Lyle, support by Debbie to approve the December 2024 state EFTPS in the amount of $876.66. **Roll call vote: 4 yes. Motion carried.**

Board Comments: None

Public Comments: Jan Erkenbrack – Question on ebikes in Community Forest

Motion to adjourn: Motion by Debbie, support by Lyle. **Motion carried on voice vote.**
Meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM.

Jeffery T. Abram
Clerk

Transmittal Letter

From: Stephen Carlson
To: Erin Kuhn
Cc: Lukens, Robert
Subject: Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 5:04:00 PM
Attachments: Blue Lake Rec adopted 1.13.25.pdf

Ms. Kuhn,

On behalf of Blue Lake Township, I'm pleased to provide you with a copy of the Blue Lake Township Community Recreation Plan (attached). The plan was adopted by the Blue Lake Township Board on January 13, 2025.

You are receiving this transmittal as the Executive Director of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, whose regional planning jurisdiction includes Blue Lake Township. In addition, the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission serves as the de facto planning commission for Muskegon County, as the county does not currently have an active planning commission. I have also copied Mr. Bob Lukens, Muskegon County Community Development Director, on this message for his awareness.

Best Regards,
Stephen

Stephen Carlson
Program Manager
Economic Development & Local Government Services
West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
231-722-7878 x 110

316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340
Muskegon, MI 49440

231-722-7878
WMSRDC.org