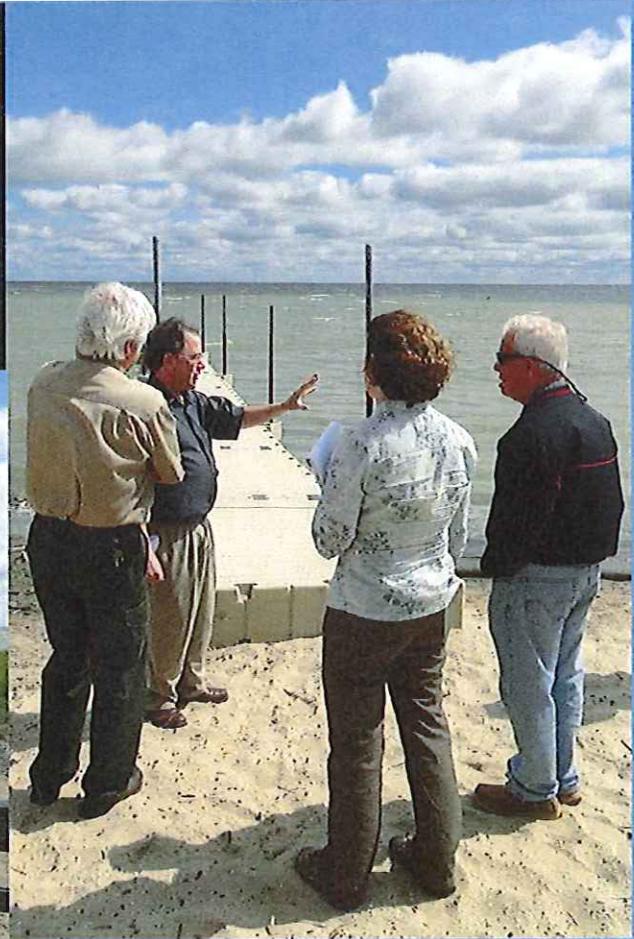




Lakefront & Beach Access Study Report

Bay City State Recreation Area



Prepared July 2014

Prepared with the assistance of:

clearzoning

www.clearzoning.com

The project was directed by Deborah Jensen, Management Plan Administrator, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Parks & Recreation Division and Laura Ogar, Bay County Director Environmental Affairs & Community Development with assistance from Clearzoning, Inc. The project was funded by the Department of Natural Resources and Bay County.

Plan Approvals:

Michigan DNR

Chief, Parks and Recreation Division _____ Date

Chief, Operations Section _____ Date

Chief, Planning Section _____ Date

Bay County

Chair, Bay County Board of Commissioners _____ Date

Bay County Executive _____ Date

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bay City State Recreation Area (BCSRA), with over 2,000 acres, is located on Saginaw Bay in Bangor and Kawkawlin Townships, in Bay County Michigan. The park currently offers a variety of land and water recreation activities, including a swimming beach, splash park, camping, hiking and nature trails, paved multi-use trails, picnicking, birding, education programs, and family-friendly events. Additionally, Tobico Marsh, one of the largest, freshwater, coastal wetlands on the Great Lakes is within the park boundaries and provides habitat for a wide array of animal and plant species.



Existing groomed beach at BCSRA



Splash Park at BCSRA

Since the original donation of 76 acres on the shores of Saginaw Bay by the City of Bay City to the new state park system in 1922, the local community has maintained a close relationship with the state park. Over the years, in coordination with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the community has made substantial investment in park improvements. Historically, swimming has been a popular activity along the shores of the Saginaw Bay, however, since the late 1950's organic muck has collected along the shoreline at Bay City State Recreation Area creating an on-going management challenge.

In recognition of the need to improve the park's under-utilized lakeshore area, a team of experts and professionals from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Bay County community representatives spent the past year soliciting public input and evaluating development and recreation opportunities for this area that will enhance day use opportunities at the park. The over-arching goal of the Lakefront and Beach Access Study is to increase visitation at the lakeshore, improve public access to the Saginaw Bay, strengthen the relationship between the park and the local community, support the economic vitality of the region, and protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of the park and legal mandates pertaining to the park.

After extensive team meeting discussion and evaluation, including a thorough review of stakeholder and public input, the Planning Team developed the following eight action strategies, which are numbered for reference and do not indicate priority:

- **Action Strategy 1: Universal Access to an Expanded Groomed Beach** – Expand the developed groomed beach and provide universal access in the area agreed to by Bay County and the DNR. This strategy includes the development of a boardwalk and 1,000 feet of additional groomed beach extending from the foredune to the standing water line, as well as continued treatment of *Phragmites australis* along the day use shoreline.
- **Action Strategy 2: Shoreline Access & Connectivity Plan** –This Plan will consider the variety of ways in which users experience the lakeshore within the context of the entire park, land and water trails, regional destinations, and amenities. The Plan will address the following:
 - A. Trail Connection – Explore opportunities for both land and water trail connections and destinations.
 - B. Boat Access – Identify appropriate boat access for small non-motorized watercraft that coordinates with universal access to lakeshore.
 - C. Beach Access – Identify strategies to improve access to developed groomed beach including visibility of vehicle parking/dropoff areas and physical access.
 - D. Restrooms – Explore appropriate restroom needs.
 - E. Birding – Identify infrastructure needs, including elevated platforms, towers, signage, etc., to enhance birding near lakeshore.
 - F. Other amenities/access/connectivity enhancements – Continue to consider other creative ways to enhance the lakeshore area as appropriate.

Long Term Vision of the Community

- G. Explore Development of a Pier into the Bay - This more complex effort would be led by Bay County and may also consider the potential development of the adjacent City Waterworks site or alternative development options for the 6.5-acre parcel at the south end of the park.
- **Action Strategy 3: Expanded Groomed Beach** – Following the implementation of Action Strategy 1 (additional 1,000 linear foot of beach grooming), the DNR, Bay County and Friends of BCSRA will review the success of the expanded beach grooming. Provided that the benefits are confirmed and the future costs can be sustained, the partners will pursue the following action steps:
 - A. Work collaboratively to support the expansion of the current maintenance activity for muck removal to the entire length of the non-vegetated sandy shoreline above the water's edge at BCSRA.
 - B. DNR to seek and/or support efforts by others to secure permits to allow for on-going muck removal along the non-vegetated sandy shoreline above the water's edge.

- C. The partners will review equipment needs, access options, and develop commitments to undertake this increased maintenance activity.
 - D. The partners, in collaboration with the DEQ, to ensure public health, safety and welfare, will develop a feasible plan for safe, appropriate disposal of the muck.
-
- **Action Strategy 4: Concession Offerings** – Outline opportunities based on user needs and wants pertaining to small non-motorized watercraft rental, food options, and other amenities that would promote BCSRA as a stop on the regional water trail.
 - **Action Strategy 5: Increase Birding Activities** – Explore opportunities and events beyond the successful Waterfowl Festival to celebrate birding, promote education and interpretive activities, as well as generate tourism and economic activity.
 - **Action Strategy 6: Enhanced Education and Interpretation** – Enhance opportunities for visitors to learn about and interpret the emergent wetlands and other natural resources found within the park. This may include exploring a variety of interpretive techniques, ensuring adequate funding is available for staffing, and implementing education and interpretive strategies.
 - **Action Strategy 7: Festival Performance Space** – Explore ways to improve the users’ experience by understanding facility needs for performers/visitors, identifying potential funding sources for improvements, pursuing funding, and collaborating with the local community.
 - **Action Strategy 8: Access Improvements** – Make facility improvements that strategically advance the goals of the completed Shoreline Access and Connectivity Plan. This may include identifying funding needs, sources and partnerships necessary for implementation, pursuing design and permitting improvements that enhance universal access, and identifying funding needs and sources for engineering, construction, and maintenance of pier project (if feasible).

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1. PURPOSE, VISION & GOALS

The area that was the subject of this study is the lakeshore associated with Bay City State Recreation Area (BCSRA). As can be seen on the aerial below, the lakeshore within the park extends from the existing groomed beach at the end of N. Euclid Avenue and runs south east along the Saginaw Bay to the old City Waterworks site: a distance of just over one mile (5,600 linear feet). This is the largest public beachfront recreational access point in 130 miles of Saginaw Bay.



In shared recognition of needed improvements to the lakeshore of Bay City State Recreation Area, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Bay County partnered together to study this area of the park, seek public input and develop specific goals and action strategies. The purpose of the Lakefront and Beach Access Study was to thoroughly review development and recreation options for the lakefront area of the Bay City State Recreation Area in an effort to enhance day use opportunities at the park. The study and the development of this report has brought together DNR Parks & Recreation Division staff, Bay County, Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Friends of BCSRA, local and regional tourism and economic development specialists, stakeholders, and members of the public. This report is the result of input provided collectively by those most invested in the park, Saginaw Bay and the Great Lakes Bay region.

As part of this study, the Planning Team, examined not only the lakeshore and beach area, but also considered the park as a whole in order to understand the park's context within the region. The impetus behind the Planning Team's study of the park is to accomplish the following shared goals:

- Increase visitation at the lakeshore through a diversity of day use land and water recreation opportunities
- Improve public access to the Saginaw Bay
- Strengthen the relationship between the park and the local community
- Support the economic vitality of the region
- Protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of the park and legal mandates pertaining to the park

In an effort to achieve these goals, the Lakefront and Beach Access Study serves as the foundation and basis for developing options, alternatives, and creative solutions for the lakeshore and beach area at the park. This report is intended to be used as a guiding resource for future discussion, decision-making and planning of the lakeshore. While this report outlines several specific action strategies that the Planning Team has assessed in regards to merit and feasibility, a more detailed assessment may be required for some of the alternatives in the future.



The existing groomed beach at the park

A Phase 1 General Management Plan (GMP) for the park was completed in December 2010. The General Management Plan designated 20-Year Management Zones for Bay City State Recreation Area. The project area is located primarily within the Developed Recreation Zone (with a Cultural Overlay Zone reflecting the park's archeological and historic resources), allowing for high density active recreational use. In this zone, recreation dominates with natural resource attributes enhanced as possible. There is also a small area zoned Natural Resource Recreation either side of the lagoon outlet, which permits active recreation with moderate to high density in a natural setting. This zoning ends at the ordinary high water mark where Great Lakes bottomlands begin. Wetland statutes still apply within these zones. This report provides a more detailed analysis of the lakeshore area within the context of the Phase 1 plan. Future park planning will define 10-Year action goals for the entire Bay City State Recreation Area. Some of the options discovered during the lakeshore study will be directly included in the 10-Year Action Goals. Action strategies identified through this study may be advanced in coordination with the DNR, independently of the Phase 2 planning as appropriate.

2. PLANNING TEAM & ASSESSMENTS

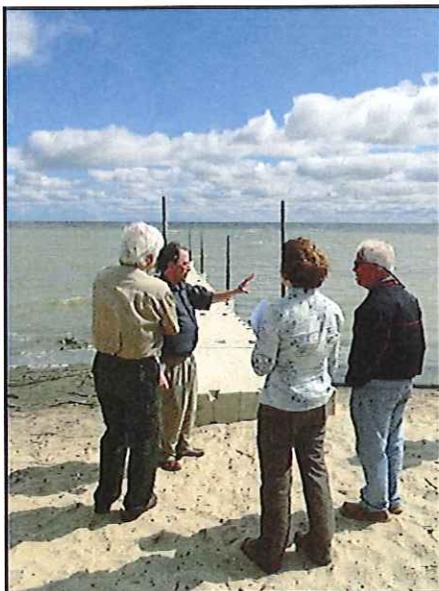
The Lakefront and Beach Access Study was completed by the project Planning Team. The Planning Team includes individuals from a wide range of professional backgrounds, expertise, and disciplines including biologists, interpreters, environmentalists, planners, county and municipal leaders, economic development professionals, historical advisors, natural resource specialists, and the like. The Lakefront and Beach Access Study would not have been possible without the valuable insight provided by all members of the Planning Team.



The Planning Team tours the park

DNR Parks & Recreation Division (PRD)/DEQ

- Debbie Jensen, PRD Management Plan Administrator
- George Lauinger, Bay City State Recreation Area Park Manager
- John Terpstra, Regional Field Planner
- Ray Fahlsing, Stewardship Unit Manager
- Valerie Blaschka, Park Interpreter
- Dan Mullen, Division District Supervisor
- Brian Rudolph, DEQ District Supervisor



Planning Team members at the beach

Bay County and Region

- Laura Ogar, Bay Country Director of Environmental Affairs & Community Development
- Tom Hickner, Bay County Executive
- Ron Bloomfield, Bay County Historical Society
- Annie Rummel, CEO Bay Country Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Greg Rankin, President of Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area
- Mike Seward, President & CEO Bay Area Chamber of Commerce
- Veronica Horn, Executive Vice President Saginaw Chamber of Commerce

Clearzoning, Inc.

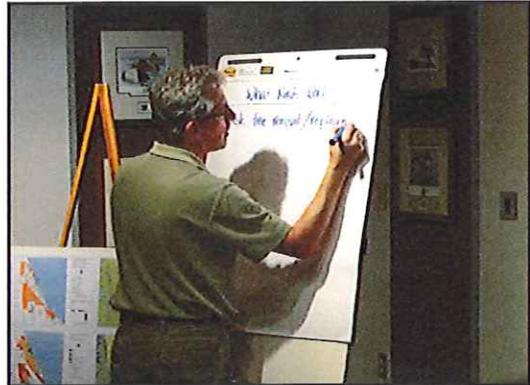
- David Birchler, CEO
- Jill Bahm, Principal Planner
- Susie Roble, Associate Planner

2.1 Meeting Overviews

Several Planning Team meetings were held throughout the process of developing this report. This section provides a summary of each individual Planning Team meeting, including the purpose of the meeting, exercises that team members participated in, and meeting outcomes.

- **Planning Team Kick-Off Meeting – August 13th, 2013 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Located at the BCSRA Visitor Center)**

The purpose of the Kick-Off Meeting was to introduce the Planning Team, tour the lakefront and beach area, determine the intent of the study, and brainstorm opportunities and strategies to improve the lakefront and beach access. Planning team members shared their recollections of the history of the lakefront as a popular location for swimming, the history of “muck” along the shoreline and its impact on usage of the beach, recent beach and shoreline management strategies implemented by the DNR, and desired improvements for this area of the park. George Lauinger, Park Manager at Bay City State Recreation Area, led the Planning Team on a tour of the park. The Planning Team assessed the existing conditions of the beach and lakefront area including beach access, beach amenities and facilities, shoreline “muck,” and the relationship between the beach and adjacent foredune and wetland area. See Section 2.2 for additional tour outcomes.



Clearzoning, Inc. facilitates the meeting

The Planning Team assessed the existing conditions of the beach and lakefront area including beach access, beach amenities and facilities, shoreline “muck,” and the relationship between the beach and adjacent foredune and wetland area. See Section 2.2 for additional tour outcomes.

The park tour was followed by an exercise that encouraged Planning Team members to evaluate what is currently working at the park, what is not working, and opportunities for improvement. Team members agreed that the spray park and the interpretive center are well-used amenities that are successful. Marketing of the park, water and land trail connections, and physical and visible access to the beach were identified as elements that could be enhanced. A new pier, food concessions and kayak rentals, and an interpretive plan were suggested strategies for improving the lakeshore area. These issues will be further discussed in the next chapter. The meeting also included discussion and planning for the public input opportunities to be provided as part of this study, which included an on-line survey and public input workshop. Please see Appendix B: Team Meeting Summary for a detailed summary of this meeting.

- **Planning Team Meeting #2 – November 22nd, 2013, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (At BCSRA Visitor Center)**

The second Planning Team meeting followed the public input survey and the Public Input Workshop. The Planning Team reviewed input received to begin developing specific strategies. In the first exercise, the Planning Team organized action strategies into two categories: 1) Action strategies that should be included in the Lakeshore and Beach Access Study; and 2) Action strategies that should be

included in the Phase 2 General Management Plan (these items were set aside for future discussion during GMP planning process).

In the next exercise, the Planning Team evaluated each action strategy based on whether it met the five shared goals of the study. The team evaluated each strategy from a cost-benefit standpoint. This allowed the Planning Team to analyze the merit and feasibility of each strategy. Finally, the Planning Team discussed the steps involved in implementing each strategy, the key decision makers, and the timeframe for completion. Again, these issues will be further discussed in chapter 4.

- **Planning Team Meeting #3 – January 9th, 2014, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. (At BCSRA Visitor Center)**



Planning Team Meeting at the Visitor Center

Prior to the third meeting, Clearzoning, Inc. sent Planning Team members a list of draft action strategies that resulted from public input and outcomes from previous Planning Team meetings. After careful evaluation the Planning Team had the opportunity to offer feedback on the draft action strategies prior to the development of this report. In the end, the Planning Team agreed that the draft action strategies addressed a variety of land and water recreational opportunities designed to enhance public use of and access to the Bay and lakeshore.

- **Planning Team Meeting #4 – March 3rd, 2014, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. (Teleconference)**

The Planning Team participated in a web conference to review and discuss the Draft Lakeshore and Beach Access Study. The Team reviewed the overall content of the document rather than formatting details. Planning Team members suggested various revisions, clarifications, and updates to the action strategies that will assist with future planning and implementation of the strategies. The Planning Team agreed to review the document in greater detail and provide comments and revisions to Clearzoning, Inc. within two weeks.

2.2 Lakeshore Tour Outcomes

During the August 13th Kick-Off Meeting, the Planning Team toured the lakeshore area. The tour provided a chance for Planning Team members to discuss recent improvements to the lakeshore, including the groomed beach and phragmites management, and consider opportunities for future enhancements. Ray Fahlsing, Stewardship Unit Manager, noted that the groomed area at the northern BCSRA beachfront was doubled in length to 1,200 feet in 2004. He also informed the Planning Team that Phragmites management began in 2005 at which time 80-90% of the vegetated shoreline area was covered in Phragmites. There is currently less than 10% coverage due to the aggressive phragmites

eradication program. During the tour, the Planning Team examined existing access routes to the beach, and adjacent park amenities including the boardwalk, splash park, restroom facility and picnic area.

2.3 Changing Ecology of Saginaw Bay

In several regions of the Great Lakes, including Saginaw Bay, organic debris negatively affects water quality, spoiling the attractive character of beaches, and adversely impacting the regional economy. Commonly referred to as muck, this organic debris may be composed of decomposing algae and aquatic plants (macrophytes), as well as microscopic phytoplankton and zooplankton.

Perceived increases in muck is often attributed to excessive nutrient inputs into Saginaw Bay, from such point sources home owner septic systems and municipal sewage treatment plants. Non-point sources of nutrients, such as agricultural runoff, lawn fertilizers, and nutrient laden storm water are also known contributors. Recent evidence suggests that changes in water clarity, brought about by invasive zebra and quagga mussels, may also be a contributing factor. Saginaw Bay is shallow and nutrient rich.

The [2008-2013 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Multiple Stressor project](#) was the first study of its kind to examine the southwestern portion of the Saginaw Bay shoreline in detail. The NOAA study included Bay City State Recreation Area, where moderate to severe muck deposition has been documented since as far back as the 1960s. Multiple Stressor researchers concluded that the composition of the muck accumulating on the BSRA shoreline does not originate from a single source. Benthic algae (bottom growing), pelagic algae (a drift in the water) and aquatic macrophytes (leafy aquatic weeds) all contribute in differing amounts to the BSRA muck under varying weather conditions and different times of the year. NOAA also found that muck can harbor high levels of bacteria.

Many of the point sources of pollution have seen dramatic improvement, such as upgrades to municipal sewage treatment plants and treatment of storm water runoff to filter out pollutants and sediment. Unfortunately, these improvements have not resulted in elimination of the muck deposition along the shoreline. Multiple Stressor project research suggests that Saginaw Bay is so nutrient rich that eliminating phosphorus loading would not significantly decrease benthic algae growth and macrophyte growth could increase. Non-point sources of nutrient loading into the Great Lakes have proven more difficult to control. These include such things as fertilizer runoff from homesites and farm and animal wastes from pastures and feedlots. Control of invasive species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, has also proven to be difficult and eradication may be impossible.

What has been well-documented in the scientific literature, regarding the causes and sources of the muck, leads to two primary conclusions:

1. Much of the organic matter that produces the muck that is deposited on the BCRA shoreline has its origin outside of the area immediate offshore of the park, different plant sources contribute more or less during different times of the year, and
2. While BCSRA can continue working with its partners to groom the beach and maintain it as an attractive facility for sunbathers and other beach users, the park and its partners cannot “clean” the waters of Saginaw Bay.

3. LEGAL REVIEW/GUIDING RESOURCES

Throughout the Lakefront and Beach Access Study, the Planning Team studied and made reference to applicable legal mandates relating to the use of the State Recreation Area land and guiding references concerning the past and current condition of the Saginaw Bay. These include studies prepared by other agencies and institutions including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL), and several local universities

DNR Mission Statement

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

PRD Mission Statement

The Parks & Recreation Division's mission is to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities.

Five Goals of the DNR

1. Protect the natural and cultural resources
2. Ensure sustainable recreation use and enjoyment
3. Enable strong, natural resource-based economies
4. Improve and build strong relationships and partnerships
5. Foster effective business practices and good governance

3.1 Legal Mandates Review

For General Management Plans, all legal mandates are identified and serve to further guide the development of the plan and subsequent action plans. The term *legal mandate* refers not only to federal and state law, but also administrative policies and directives of the Natural Resources Commission, the DNR, and PRD. At Bay City State Recreation Area, the following legal mandates have been reviewed and/or identified as a relevant element of the Lakefront & Beach Access Study:

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), 1972

Bay City SRA falls within the Coastal Zone Management Area. The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), originally passed in 1972, enables coastal states, including Great Lakes states, to develop a coastal management program to improve protection of sensitive shoreline resources, to identify coastal areas appropriate for development, to designate areas hazardous to development and to improve public access to the coastline. Michigan's coastal program was approved in 1978. The program is administered by the Office of Great Lakes (OGL). The program includes local pass through grants and administration of coastal related sections of the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451. Review of federal agency activities for consistency with Michigan's approved program is performed by the Surface Water Assessment Section in the Water Resources Division (WRD).

PA 451 of 1994, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), Article 1, Part 5

Section 324.504: This law describes the DNR's authority to make rules that support its mission.

- (1) "The department shall promulgate rules to protect and preserve lands and property under its control from depredation, damage, or destruction or wrongful or improper use or occupancy."

PA 451 of 1994, Part 303 - Wetlands Protection, of NREPA, as amended.

The law requires that permits are obtained prior to conducting certain activities in regulated wetlands ..

A permit is required from the state for the following:

- Deposit or permit the placing of fill material in a wetland.
- Dredge, remove, or permit the removal of soil or minerals from a wetland.
- Construct, operate, or maintain any use or development in a wetland.
- Drain surface water from a wetland.

The DEQ must determine the following before a permit can be issued:

- The permit would be in the public interest.
- The permit would be otherwise lawful.
- The permit is necessary to realize the benefits from the activity.
- No unacceptable disruption to aquatic resources would occur.
- The proposed activity is wetland dependent or no feasible and prudent alternatives exist.

The vegetated area between the ordinary high water mark and the fore-dune at BCSRA is regulated wetland.

PA 451 of 1994, Part 325 – Great Lakes Submerged Lands (NREPA)

Any dredging, filling, modifying, constructing, enlarging, or extending of structures in Great Lakes waters or below the ordinary high water mark of the Great Lakes requires a permit from both the Water Resources Division within the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and the US Army Corps of Engineers. The purpose of these permits is to protect the waters of the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes bottomlands (the land lying below the ordinary high water mark).

PA 451 of 1994, Part 419 - Hunting Area Control (NREPA)

Section 324.41901 establishes the powers of the Department to establish safety zones for hunting.

PA 451 of 1994, Part 741 - State Park System (NREPA)

Sec. 74102:

- (1) The legislature finds:
 - (a) Michigan state parks preserve and protect Michigan's significant natural and historic resources.
 - (b) Michigan state parks are appropriate and uniquely suited to provide opportunities to learn about protection and management of Michigan's natural resources.
 - (c) Michigan state parks are an important component of Michigan's tourism industry and vital to local economies.
 - (d) A holistic, integrated park system that reflects the unique value of both state and local parks is a goal of this state.
 - (e) State and local park planners should work in concert for a coordinated Michigan park and recreation plan.
- (2) The department shall create, maintain, operate, promote, and make available for public use and enjoyment a system of state parks to preserve and protect Michigan's significant natural resources and areas of natural beauty or historic significance, to provide open space for public recreation, and to provide an opportunity to understand Michigan's natural resources and the need to protect and manage those resources.

PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 ("Recreation Passport")

This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site "Recreation Passport" that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle. The Recreation Passport is required for entry into all PRD administered facilities and takes the place of the Motor Vehicle Permit (MVP).

PA 45 of 2010 - Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act

Amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (PA 451 of 1994) to require the DNR to establish a plan for a statewide trail network that includes Michigan trailways, pack and saddle trailways, and other recreational use trailways, and to permit pack and saddle animals on designated trailways managed by the DNR.

PA 46 of 2010 - Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act

Amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (PA 451 of 1994) with a finding that a statewide system of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways is in the best interest of the state; requires the DNR to establish an "adopt-a-trail" program that allows volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing Michigan trailways, pack and saddle trailways, and rail-trails; and creates the Michigan snowmobile and trails advisory council within the department.

DNR, Wildlife Conservation Orders, Sections 7.1 and 7.51, State Parks and Recreation Areas

Wildlife Conservation Orders describe hunting and trapping regulations including methods of take, bag limits, license quotas, and season dates established by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC).

Sec. 7.51 states that at Bay City State Recreation Area a person shall not take an animal at any time without a written permit from the area manager, in the Tobico marsh unit refuge, or in the Bay unit (which includes the campground, beach and day use area).

DNR Policy 26.04-04 - Use of State-Owned Lands Administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (ISSUED: 02/01/2006)

It shall be the policy of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to manage State-owned lands in a manner that protects and enhances the public trust while providing for the use and enjoyment of those lands as outlined in the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. Applications to use State-owned lands will be considered and may be approved if the proposed use is consistent with other public interest and natural resource values.

DNR, Land Use Orders of the Director, Section 5.2 (7)(a)

Order 5.2 (7) (a) A person shall not possess or consume an alcoholic beverage at any time within Bay City State Recreation Area, except for registered campers in the campground.

Order 5.12 (21) Bay City state recreation area, prohibited conduct. (21) Operate a snowmobile off the designated snowmobile route.

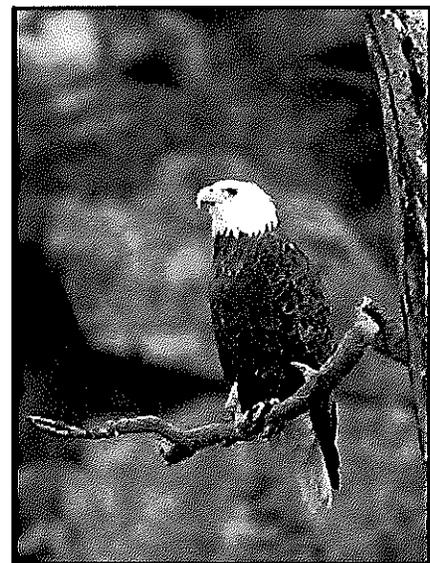
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board Policy 94.1

The 5-acre parcel at the south end of the park was purchased with grant assistance from the MNRTF. Board policy requires exclusive use of the property for public, outdoor recreation purposes. Land acquired with MNRTF assistance and any recreation facilities on that land, as well as land and water access ways must be open to the general public in perpetuity.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

There is a pair of nesting bald eagles at the south end of the lakeshore area of the park, which are afforded federal protection.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c), enacted in 1940, and amended several times since then, prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior,



from "taking" bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The Act defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb."

"Disturb" means: "to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle, 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior."

In addition to immediate impacts, this definition also covers impacts that result from human-induced alterations initiated around a previously used nest site during a time when eagles are not present, if, upon the eagle's return, such alterations agitate or bother an eagle to a degree that interferes with or interrupts normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering habits, and causes injury, death or nest abandonment.

A violation of the Act can result in a fine of \$100,000 (\$200,000 for organizations), imprisonment for one year, or both, for a first offense. Penalties increase substantially for additional offenses, and a second violation of this Act is a felony.

A copy of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act is available at:
<http://www.fws.gov/permits/ltr/ltr.html>.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

3.2 Permit Agreements

MDEQ Permit No. 04-09-0040-P

This permit, issued in 2004, granted permission to groom approximately 2.9 acres of coastal marsh for expansion of the northerly swimming beach (625 feet of lake frontage); construct and maintain two sand access paths; and mow to a height of no lower than 18 inches shoreline adjacent to the beach area.

Conditions of the permit include the requirement to mitigate the impacts of grooming and grading 2.9 acres of wetland by implementing a Phragmites Control and Demonstration Project on the southerly 3,500 feet of BCSRA frontage. Grooming, tilling or otherwise removing vegetation from this area is prohibited except as prescribed in the Phragmites Control and Demonstration Plan. The goal of the plan is to restore native wetland plant populations within coastal areas of the recreation Area and serve as an educational tool to restore native plant populations on private shoreline property.

The conditions of this permit superseded activities authorized under Permit No. 02-09-0014-P in areas south of the lagoon outlet.

Department of the Army (DA) Permit No. 90-016-117-6

Allowed for the creation and maintenance of beaches in two wetland areas. Special conditions included the recognition of a preserved area to remain in its natural condition and recorded in Liber 1921 Pages 463 through 472. (See Appendix)

Department of the Army (DA) Permit No. 04-016-132-0

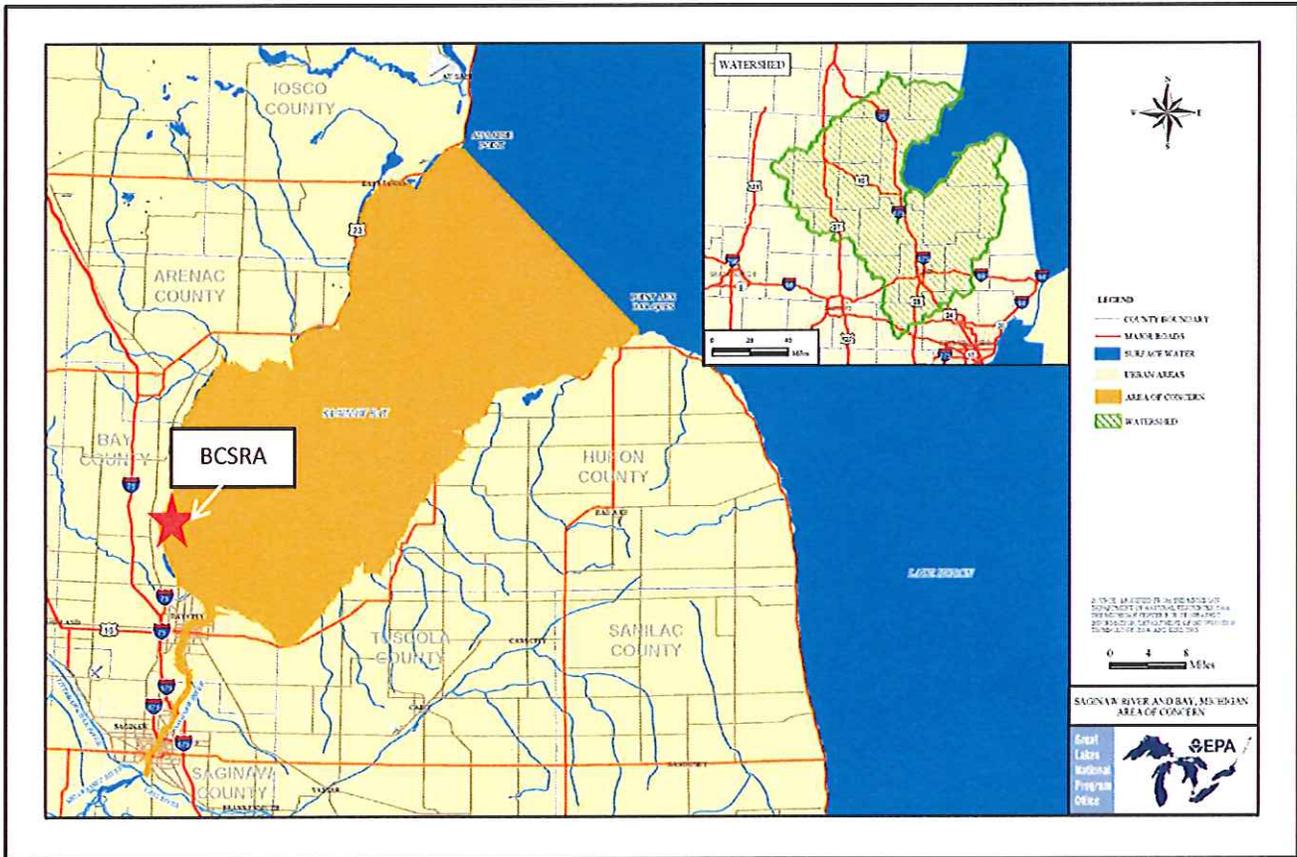
This permit provided for additional clearing of the coastal wetlands, and included a Wetland Compensation Plan. (See Appendix)

3.3 Special Designations

Area of Concern (AOC), Environmental Protection Agency

The [Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement](#) between the United States and Canada, developed in 1972 and revised in 1978, established objectives and criteria for the protection, restoration and enhancement of water quality in the Great Lakes system. The [Saginaw River/Bay Area of Concern](#) includes the Saginaw River and all of the Saginaw Bay (see the map below). Contaminated sediments, fish consumption advisories, degraded fisheries and loss of significant recreational values are the major Beneficial Use Impairments and the reasons for this AOC designation. These problems are mainly caused by high amounts of soil erosion, excessive nutrients (e.g., phosphorus and nitrogen) entering the water, and contaminated sediments. Saginaw Bay priorities include remediation of PCB contaminated sediment, nonpoint pollution control, wetland restoration, and habitat restoration. The DEQ, in

consultation with the Partnership for the Saginaw Bay Watershed, provides regular updates to the Action Plan and shows continued progress towards meeting the restoration targets.¹



Source: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/saginaw-river/index.html>

3.4 Studies, Reports and Special Management Teams

Although not legally binding, the following reports and management teams have made recommendations for land use at Bay City State Recreation Area.

- Bay City State Recreation Area General Management Plan, 2010

The 2010 Bay City State Recreation Area Phase 1 General Management Plan was approved by the DNR Director on September 29, 2010. This is the most recent, approved plan for Bay City State Recreation Area. The plan identified the lakeshore area as Developed Recreation Zone, where high levels of development and visitor interaction can be expected. However, appropriate protection must still be afforded to state or federally protected areas within this zone.

¹ For more info the status of the AOC, see the U.S. EPA website <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/sagrivr.html>

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan, 2004

This is a plan of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, whose purpose it is to sustain abundant waterfowl populations by conserving landscapes, through partnerships that are guided by sound science. The 2004 Plan establishes a new 15-year horizon for waterfowl conservation in North America by assessing and defining the needs, priorities, and strategies required to guide waterfowl conservation in the 21st century. The Saginaw Bay area is an area of continental significance to North American ducks, geese, and swans.²

- Saginaw Bay Water Quality Concerns, 1989

This report was prepared by the Institute of Water Research at Michigan State University and is a summary of historic reports and studies focusing on Saginaw Bay. Most involve water quality, as well as physical and biological elements.

- Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative

The Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative (SBCI) is a group of interested people, businesses, and local governments in the bay front communities of: Arenac, Bay, Huron, Iosco, Midland, Saginaw, and Tuscola collaborating with state and federal agencies for actions to improve the Saginaw Bay. The SBCI was formed in 2006 and holds monthly meeting on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

- Bay County Blueways Trail

In 2013 Bay County received a Coastal Zone Management grant administered by the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes to comprehensively plan, map, and market a water trail along the Arenac and Bay County Saginaw Bay coast and upstream of the mouth of the Saginaw, Kawkawlin, Au Gres and Pinconning Rivers in partnership with Bay County Historical Society, Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, coastal communities, recreation groups, and the public. A Blueways Trail Steering Committee has been established and will work with neighboring Arenac County to ensure a regional approach to trail development and marketing.

- Managing the Impacts of Multiple Stressors, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory

In 2007, the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, CILER, and several other partners began a 5-year project studying the effects of multiple stressors on Saginaw Bay in Lake Huron. Like many coastal areas around the world, Saginaw Bay has been subjected to numerous stressors originating from human activities. These stressors have included toxic contaminants, nutrients, sediments, overfishing, exotic species, and more recently, declining water levels. The combined effect of these stressors has compromised the health of Saginaw Bay and resulted in the loss of many ecosystem features and services that people value. Additional information can be found at www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/projects/multi_stressors/

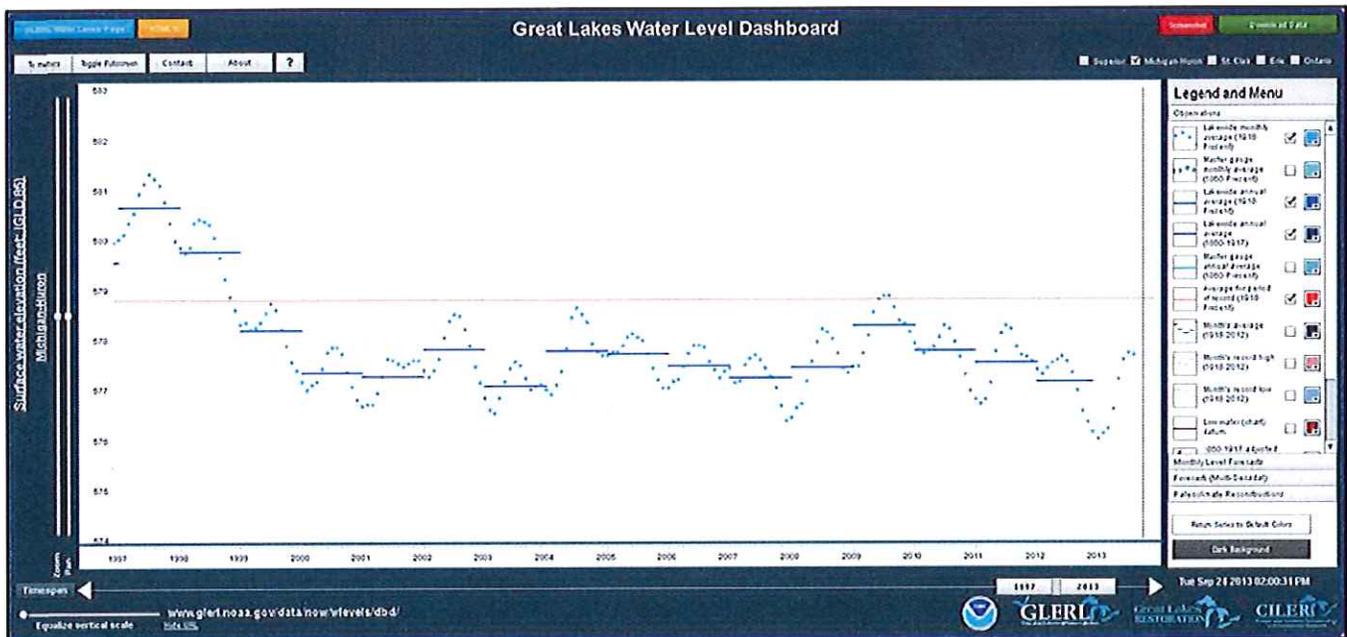
² For more information see <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/files/ImplementationFramework.pdf>

- Where People Meet the Muck: An Integrated Assessment of Beach Muck and Public Perception at the Bay City State Recreation Area, Saginaw Bay, Lake Huron

This project, funded by the National Sea Grant College Program, is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2014. The project proposes to summarize the current state of knowledge on the causes and consequences of muck conditions at the Bay City State Recreation Area (BCSRA), including the socio-economic impacts of muck at the park and on the Saginaw Bay Region as a whole. Through a robust stakeholder engagement process, the team will implement a suite of models and surveys to understand public perception of muck-related issues, and identify a series of feasible short-term and long-term management actions that could help to alleviate and better manage the impact of muck. The results will provide stakeholders with a shared understanding of the current state of knowledge related to muck and the options for effectively managing its impacts.

- Lake Huron Water Levels

The Great Lakes Water Level Dashboard is sponsored by the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\)](#), the [Cooperative Institute for Limnology and Ecosystems Research \(CILER\)](#), and the [Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory \(GLERL\)](#), part of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#). The short-term and long-term fluctuation of the water levels greatly impacts the nature of the shoreline at BCSRA. The following graph demonstrates the lake shore monthly and annual average water levels between 1997 and 2013.



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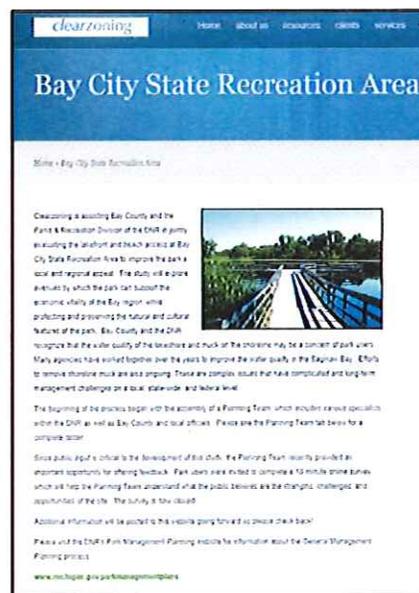
4. PUBLIC INPUT

Recognizing that Bay City State Recreation Area is a valuable recreational resource to many people for varying reasons, the Planning Team understood the importance of providing public input opportunities throughout the planning process. The Planning Team utilized a variety of methods to share information and gather feedback from stakeholders, park users and the public. These methods included an online public input survey, a public input workshop, and a project website. Please see the Appendix for more detailed information regarding public input results.

- **Online Public Input Survey** – The public input survey was developed to gather general information about park visitors, how they use and access the park, as well as recommendations for improving the lakeshore, beach and amenities offered at the park. The online survey link was provided in a DNR press release and on the DNR’s facebook page, tweeted to park followers, and made available on both the DNR’s webpage for the park and the Clearzoning, Inc. project website. In addition, Emails were distributed to those subscribing to the DNR’s Email Bulletin system for boating, the state parks newsletter, or DNR news in the Bay, Midland and Saginaw area (7,164 people) and BCSRA campers. Respondents were given approximately eight weeks to complete the survey. Approximately 700 respondents completed the survey.
- **Public Input Workshop** (October 21st, 2013 from 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel) – the Public Input Workshop was an open invitation event that brought stakeholders and park users together to discuss the park and the lakeshore area, recommend improvements, and prioritize future action steps. Approximately 75 people attended the workshop.
- **Project Website** – Clearzoning, Inc. developed a project website that was regularly updated throughout the planning process with useful resources (i.e., maps, General Management Plan, Planning Team information, etc.) for the public. A link to the online survey was provided on the website, and website visitors had the opportunity to post comments. The website link is: <http://www.clearzoning.com/clearzoning-clients/bay-city-state-recreation-area/>



Working groups at the Public Input Workshop



The project website

4.1 Public Input Survey Results

The 14-question survey was divided into three sections:

Section	#'s	Type of Questions
About You	1 - 5	Questions about respondent's age, frequency of visits, and how they access they park
Activity Preference	6-9	Questions directed toward learning what type of existing park activities users participate in
Opportunities	10-14	Questions specific to the lakeshore and improvements to this area

About You

Survey respondents of all ages completed the survey, however approximately 38% of respondents were between 50-64 years old and 25% were between 40-49 years old. While Bay City State Recreation Area welcomes visitors from around the state, approximately 65% of users come from Bay City, Bangor Township, or the Saginaw/Bay County regional area. While nearly 29% of respondents visit the park 1-2 times per year, 21% of respondents visit the park 11 or more times per year. Not surprisingly, 60% of respondents primarily visit the park during the summer season and approximately 27% visit year-round. Approximately 80% of users visit the park via motor vehicle, and 21% of respondents enter via a bicycle.

Activity Preference

The Planning team wanted to gain a better understanding of the type of recreation, education, and program-based activities users currently participate in. The categories included: 1) water-based recreation; 2) land-based recreation; 3) natural resource and interpretive-based activities; and 4) education programs and events. For each category, respondents could choose as many activities as desired. The table below shows the top 3 responses per category.

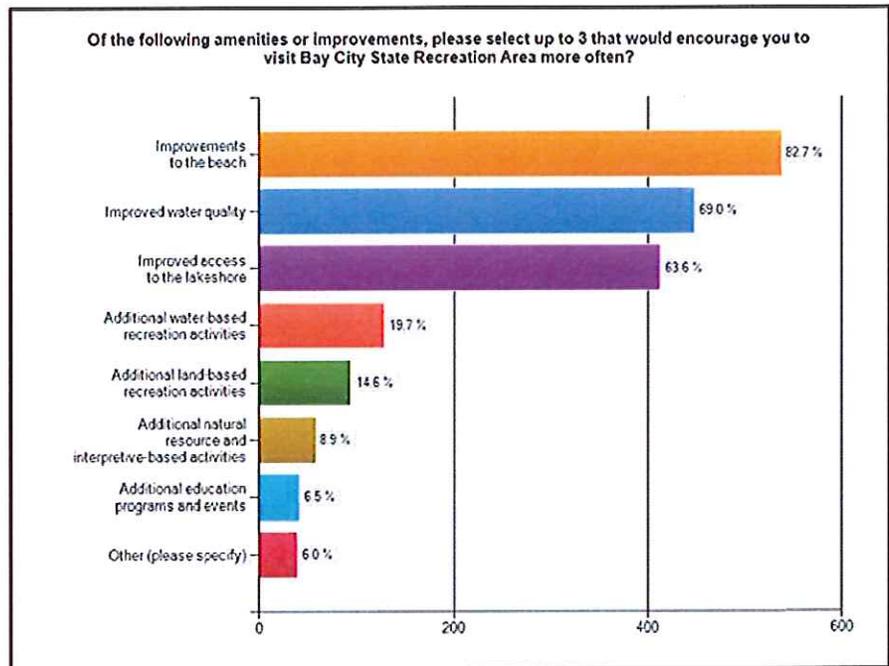
Ranking	Water-Based Recreation	Land-Based Recreation	Natural Resource and Interpretive	Education and Events
1	Swimming (35%)	Biking (58%)	Nature viewing (60%)	I do not participate in general (42%)
2	I do not participate in water activities at the park (34%)	Camping (57%)	Tobico Marsh (58%)	Family programs (25%)
3	I do not participate in water activities at other parks (23%)	Boardwalks and trails (55%)	Saginaw Bay Visitors Center (40%)	Waterfowl Festival (21%)

Opportunities

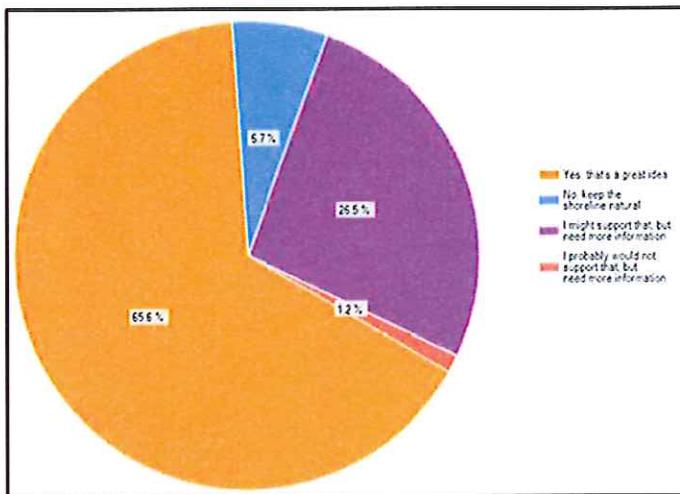
This section of the survey pertained specifically to the lakeshore and beach area. The Planning Team wanted to know what specific improvements to this area would encourage users to visit more often. Respondents had the opportunity to select improvements from a list or provide their own recommendation. Clearly, as indicated in the chart below, respondents would like to see improvements

to the beach, access to the beach, and water quality. If improvements were made to the lakeshore area, respondents claimed that they would participate in the following recreation activities (again, any number of activities could be selected):

- 1) swimming (75%);
- 2) walking and/or bicycling (60%);
- 3) sunbathing (55%);
- 4) sitting/viewing platform (53%).



Concerning existing access to the bay at the park, the response was mixed in that “poor,” “fair,” and “good/excellent,” each received a 30% to 35% rating.



Respondents were asked whether they would support additional water-related recreation and tourism amenities along the shoreline. As shown in the pie graph, approximately 65% of respondents would support these improvements, while nearly 25% would like more information.

Finally, respondents had the opportunity to provide comments regarding the park and lakeshore area. While a more detailed version of these comments is located in the Appendix, the table below

shows how comments were categorized and the corresponding number of comments per category.

Category	# of Comments
Beach/water cleanup (includes muck, weeds, water quality)	256
Access (to water, parking lot)	69
Boats (boat dock, launch, sailboats, etc.)	31
Structures (pier, seawalls, parks, pools, restaurants, etc.)	42
Frisbee/Disc golf	7
Sanford Lake, Tawas Pointe, Caseville and Oscoda as beach examples	39
Leave beach natural and pursue ecotourism opportunities	14

4.2 Public Input Workshop Results

A Public Input Workshop was held on Monday, October 21st, 2013 at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in downtown Bay City. This was an open invitation event that attracted approximately 75 attendees. The workshop was advertised in a DNR press release, and invitations were sent to key individuals and organizations identified by the planning team as having a vested interest in Bay City State Recreation Area and whose input was greatly desired. Participation was not limited to the groups who were contacted. The invitations were used as an outreach tool. The workshop brought together local and regional stakeholders from a range of backgrounds, interests, and forums.

Upon arriving at the workshop, attendees were assigned random seating at one of eleven round tables. The individuals seated together at a table made up a “work group.” For the first exercise, participants were asked to answer the following question using post-it notes: “What value does the lakeshore contribute to the park, local area and region?” Clearzoning, Inc. team members then organized the completed post-it notes on a wall in categories based on the type of response. The table below lists the various categories:

What Value Does the Lakeshore Contribute to the Park, Local Area and Region?			
Categories	Post-It Note Responses Examples		
Tourism	Tourists can have Great Lakes experience	Improvements to lakeshore will attract more visitors to park and region	A place to visit and stay
Draw of the Water	Lakeshore brings positive energy	Visitors have emotional relationship to water	Only regional access to Saginaw Bay
Economic Development	Additional recreation opportunities will help local businesses	Lakeshore contributes to economic well-being of the area	Opportunities for new businesses in local area
General Recreation	Encourages exercise	Family activities available	Inexpensive escape from the city
Water-Based Recreation	Popular swimming opportunity	Increased fishing opportunities	Kayaking, boating opportunities
Nature/Environment	Supports biodiversity	Wildlife viewing/habitat	Urban ecosystem can foster economic development
Educational Opportunities	Education value of improved lakeshore	Attracts birders and nature viewers	Need for more awareness of natural resources
Camping	Campers like to camp near beach and water		
Improvements	Remove muck and clean up weeds	Lakeshore is underutilized and could be developed	Lakeshore limited due to water quality

For the next activity, work groups were given 30 minutes to discuss the following prompt: “Focus on ways that the Bay City State Recreation Area lakeshore could attract more visitors to the park and region.” After the 30 minutes expired, each work group’s spokesperson presented its ideas while the facilitators recorded them on large sheets of paper.

Next, attendees were provided with five colored dots that they were able to stick on the five ideas that they thought were the most important. Attendees could assign more than one dot to a single idea if desired. Below are the items that stakeholders gave the highest priority:

- ✓ Need a clean beach with Universal Access for lifetime
- ✓ A pier with restaurants
- ✓ Better public access to Bay needs to be a priority
- ✓ Pier out into water
- ✓ Dredge & reopen Tobico River
- ✓ Expand rail trail to connect to Pinconning
- ✓ Can we control muck by combination removal and sand cover
- ✓ Large physical dike to create swimming basin and harbor
- ✓ Boat launch – small craft like kayaks
- ✓ Expand or better locate the beach
- ✓ Restrooms closer to beach
- ✓ Outdoor Amphitheater
- ✓ Expand bike trail connections
- ✓ Floating docks
- ✓ Make lagoon a marquee attraction



The Planning Team received constructive feedback and numerous recommendations at the Public Input Workshop. This input greatly influenced future Planning Team conversations and is evident in the action strategies recommended in this report



The Post-it Note Exercise



The Sticky Dot Priority Exercise

4.3 Planning Team Evaluation of Input

The Planning Team highly valued the feedback and recommendations provided by the public and invested significant time and attention evaluating this input. During its November 22nd, 2013 meeting the Planning Team employed the below methods for determining if a recommended action item should be included in this report.

- Review of Priority Sticker Results – the Planning Team evaluated 37 recommendations from the Public Input Workshop. Duplicate recommendations were combined and items that did not present a specific strategy were removed. A separate list was developed for those items that did not relate specifically to the lakeshore but should be considered during Phase 2 of the park’s General Management Planning process.
- Shared Goals Matrix (Round 1 Evaluation) –the Planning Team evaluated each recommended action item on the basis of whether it satisfied all five shared goals for the study. If the recommended action item did not meet the five goals it was either discarded or added to the list of recommended action items for the Phase 2 General Management Plan. The shared goals are:
 - ✓ Increase visitation at the lakeshore through a diversity of day use land and water recreation opportunities
 - ✓ Improve public access to the Saginaw Bay
 - ✓ Strengthen the relationship between the park and the local community
 - ✓ Support the economic vitality of the region
 - ✓ Protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of the park and legal mandates pertaining to the park
- “High Low” Exercise – the remaining action items were then assessed using a “High Low” diagram. This exercise was intended to help the Planning Team consider which items may have high or low costs and/or high or low benefits. This evaluation will help with future prioritizing of the action strategies.
- Timeframe and Key Players Exercise – the Planning Team discussed the expected completion timeframe for each action strategy as well as the key decision-makers. At the end of the activity, the Planning Team had a more concise and focused list of action strategies.

5. ACTION STRATEGIES

5.1 Process

Over a period of several months, the Planning Team studied the issues of the lakeshore and beach area at Bay City State Recreation Area. The Planning Team discussed ways in which the DNR and Bay County might work together to leverage improvements to the lakeshore to benefit the park, community and region. As previously mentioned, the framework for the action strategies is based on the following shared goals:

- Increase visitation through the diversity of day use recreation opportunities;
- Improve public access to the Saginaw Bay;
- Strengthen the relationship between the park and the local community;
- Support the economic vitality of the region; and
- Protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of the park and legal mandates pertaining to the park.

Via the online survey, the project website and the public input workshop, the Planning Team solicited the public's ideas on strengths, challenges, and potential improvements to the lakeshore area. After thoroughly reviewing and refining this input, the Planning Team developed a list of action strategies that are the basis of an implementation program. *These strategies are numbered for reference and do not indicate priority.*



Tobico Marsh at Bay City State Recreation Area



The boardwalk adjacent to the beach

5.2 Action Strategies

Action Strategy 1: Universal Access to an Expanded Groomed Beach

Expand the developed groomed beach and provide universal access in the area as agreed to by Bay County and the DNR. (See letter dated December 7, 2012 in the Appendices.) The County and DNR have previously agreed to develop and maintain an additional area of lakeshore as a groomed beach in the vicinity of the splash park, with a universally accessible boardwalk extending to the foredune at/near the water's edge.

This includes the following tasks:

- A. DNR and Bay County will work together to develop design for boardwalk to ensure the developed groomed beach is universally accessible.
- B. DNR will prepare and submit USACE/DEQ permit applications.
- C. DNR will develop and maintain 1,000 feet of groomed beach extending from the foredune to the standing water line, with the assistance of the local community for the initial grooming.
- D. Bay County will construct the boardwalk under supervision of the DNR.
- E. DNR will continue to treat *Phragmites australis* along the day use shoreline.



The existing groomed beach at Bay City Recreation



The Planning Team discussed universally accessible boardwalks such as this one at Port Crescent SP

Action Strategy 2: Shoreline Access & Connectivity Plan

Develop a Shoreline Access & Connectivity Plan. This plan will consider the variety of ways in which users experience the lakeshore within the context of the entire park, land and water trails, regional destinations, and amenities. Identify funding for concept plan that will explore needed connections between the lakeshore, lakeshore amenities, other park amenities, bike trails, and identify desired visitor experiences. This plan should include the following:

- A. **Trail connection:** Identify both land and water trail locations in relationship to existing and planned internal/external land and water trail connections and destinations; define users to be served; define trail types and designs.
- B. **Boat access:** Identify appropriate boat access for kayaks, canoes, and other small non-motorized watercraft that coordinate with universal access to lakeshore.
- C. **Beach Access:** Identify strategies to improve access to developed groomed beach from foredune to standing water line, including visibility of vehicle parking/dropoff areas, as well as physical access to the beach.
- D. **Restrooms:** Explore appropriate restroom needs (temporary facilities, vault toilets and/or toilet/shower building); Identify locations with accessible route.
- E. **Birding:** Identify infrastructure needs to enhance birding near lakeshore. This may include elevated platforms, towers, binoculars, walkways, signage, smart technology, etc.
- F. **Other amenities/access/connectivity enhancements:** Continue to consider other creative ways to enhance the lakeshore area as appropriate.

Long term Vision of the Community

- G. **Explore development of a pier into the bay:** This more complex effort would be led by Bay County and may also consider the potential development of the adjacent City Waterworks site or alternative development options for the 6.5-acre parcel at the south end of the park. The DNR is willing to consider the most appropriate land management arrangement with Bay County for this parcel, including but not limited to a lease agreement, to enable the County to move ahead with development proposals in accordance with the PRD Mission and the conditions of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant used to acquire the land. The purposes for which this property was acquired using MNRTF monies will be preserved. The Public Input Workshop identified the development of a pier into the Bay that would provide better visual access to the water as desirable. A major infrastructure project of this type requires extensive background preparation to ensure investments are sound. The DNR Parks and Recreation Division has extensive demands system wide for infrastructure improvements and a project of this scale would have to be measured against other PRD capital outlay priorities.

Initial planning tasks include:

- 1) Bay County to identify and secure funding for feasibility and economic impact studies.
- 2) Bay County to conduct feasibility study that includes site investigations and environmental review, preliminary engineering to identify pier design and construction costs, and evaluation of the permit requirements for the project. Long-term maintenance and operation requirements and costs will be included in the study.
- 3) Bay County to conduct an economic study to determine the potential benefits of the pier at this location, and consider alternative locations on the Bay. This would include a cost-benefit assessment based on the feasibility, market demand, and economic impact to determine if the project moves forward or to consider alternative development options for this parcel. The study should also take into account the existing and future environmental conditions of Saginaw Bay.



The Planning Team reviewed the Oscoda Observation Pier during its discussion of developing a pier at the park

Action Strategy 3: Expanded Groomed Beach

Public input was clear for the desire to clean the beachfront of muck along the shoreline at BCSRA. However, it is recognized that this is not an easy task and takes on-going financial and operational commitment. Following the implementation of Action Strategy 1 (additional 1000 linear foot of beach grooming) the DNR, Bay County and Friends of BCSRA will review the success of the expanded beach grooming in terms of visitor numbers, public satisfaction and cost. If the benefits are confirmed and staffing levels/costs can be sustained by the partners, the following actions will be pursued, in line with the State and Federal regulations governing such work:

- A. Work collaboratively with the Friends of BCSRA to support the expansion of the current maintenance activity for muck removal to the entire length of the non-vegetated sandy shoreline above the water's edge at BCSRA.
- B. DNR to seek and/or support efforts by others to secure permits to allow for on-going muck removal along the non-vegetated sandy shoreline above the water's edge at BCSRA.
- C. DNR, Bay County, Friends, and the Chamber, etc., to review equipment needs, access options, and develop commitments to undertake this increased maintenance activity.
- D. The partners, in collaboration with the DEQ, to ensure public health, safety and welfare, will develop a feasible plan for safe, appropriate disposal of the muck.



Muck removal at BCSRA in 1992

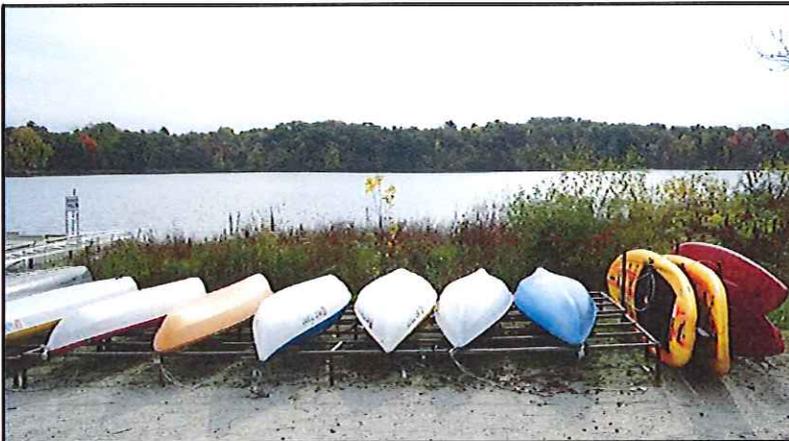


Vegetated sandy shoreline at Negwegon State Park

Action Strategy 4: Concession Offerings

Enhance concession offerings. Visitors have expressed interest in more food offerings as well as recreation equipment for use within the park. Pursue the following strategies:

- A. Conduct a market assessment to outline opportunities based on user needs and wants, within the context of the marketplace.
- B. Explore opportunities to rent kayaks, canoes, and other small non-motorized watercraft.
- C. Identify other amenities that would promote BCSRA as stop on regional water trail.
- D. Obtain appropriate permitting and contracts as needed.



Kayak and boat rental is offered at Brighton Recreation Area

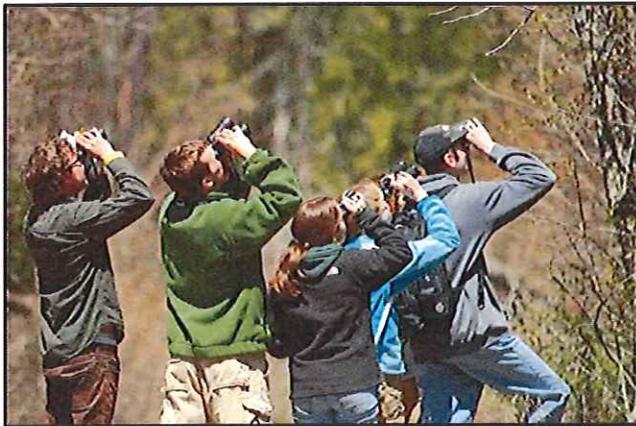


A bike and paddleboard concession was frequently discussed

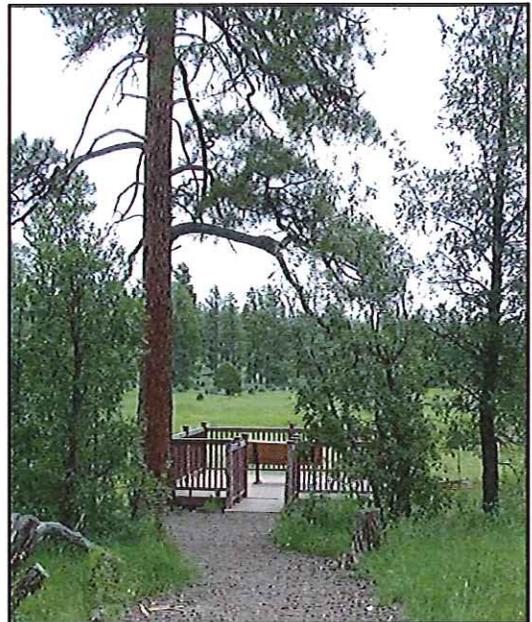
Action Strategy 5: Increase Birding Activities

Explore opportunities to increase birding activities. Bay City State Recreation Area is an important stop in bird migration and provides habitat for a variety of wetland and woodland bird species. The park is recognized as a birding hot spot on the Saginaw Bay Birding Trail with a documented collection of 235 species viewed here and two popular observation towers on the Tobico Lagoon. The public expressed an interest in participating in other events beyond the successful Waterfowl Festival to celebrate birding, promote education and interpretive activities, as well as generate tourism and economic activity. This may include the following strategies:

- A. Explore holding more bird-related events, based on migratory and native species common to the park.
- B. Create strategy for implementing bird-related events.
- C. Identify funding sources to make improvements.
- D. Implement infrastructure improvements as funding is available.



Birding events may attract more tourists to the park



Accessible observation platforms as shown above would make the park more inclusive

Action Strategy 6: Enhanced Education and Interpretation

Enhance education and interpretation of emergent wetland and other natural resources that are found within the park. This may include the following strategies:

- A. Explore variety of interpretive techniques, including signage, programming, “smart devices,” and other virtual techniques.
- B. Ensure adequate funding is available for staffing and tools.
- C. Implement education and interpretive strategies as funding is available.



Interpretive signage located at Thompson's Harbor State Park



An emergent wetland abuts the beach at BCSRA



Interpretive signage Port Crescent State Park informs visitors about interdunal ponds

Action Strategy 7: Festival Performance Space

Enhance performance space for festivals. The park is home to outdoor summer concerts that are enhancing visitor experience as well as drawing new visitors to the park. Explore ways to improve the users' experience by the following:

- A. Understand facility needs for performers and visitors.
- B. Identify potential funding sources for improvements.
- C. Pursue funding and make improvements.
- D. Collaborate with the Bay County community.



The Planning Team discussed how an outdoor performance space, like this one at Ruby Hill Park, CO, would enhance the visitor experience

Action Strategy 8: Access Improvements

Implementation of Access Improvements (to be prioritized as funding allows):

Make facility improvements that strategically advance the goals of the completed Shoreline Access & Connectivity Plan. All available funding sources will be investigated and partnerships will be a priority to ensure implementation. These may include:

- A. Identify funding needs, sources and partnerships necessary to achieve phased implementation of access and connectivity improvements, including: trail connections,

beach access improvements, non-motorized boat access, restrooms and other amenities as may be identified.

- B. Pursue design and permitting of needed improvements that enhance universal access. Identify funding needs and sources and implement universal access improvements as funding allows.

- C. If the pier project is determined to be feasible after completing the steps listed in Action Strategy 2G, Bay County must identify and secure appropriate funding for final engineering, pier construction, and long-term operations and maintenance before proceeding. Secure permits from the DEQ and Army Corps of Engineers. Bay County and DNR will work together to establish the most appropriate land administration arrangement for the 6.5-acre parcel prior to project implementation.

5.3 Action Steps Recommended for General Management Plan

During the process of developing a list of recommended action strategies to be included in this report, the Planning Team categorized public input into two categories: 1) Action strategies that should be included in the Lakeshore and Beach Access Study; and 2) Action items that in the Phase 2 General should be included Management Plan. In particular, the action items listed below were deemed more appropriate for the Phase 2 General Management Planning Process for Bay City State Recreation Area. Many of these action items pertain to opportunities and/or improvements outside the lakeshore area. During the Phase 2 General Management Planning process, the DNR Parks & Recreation Division Planning Team will consider each of these goals and determine their merit and feasibility as 10-Year action goals for the park.

- Expand rail trail to connect BCSRA to Pinconning (and to the State trail network)
- Improve and market Tobico Lagoon
- Expand cross-country skiing trails
- Improve campground drainage & access
- Expand Waterfowl Festival
- Add disc golf
- Purchase driving range

6. CONCLUSION

This Lakefront and Beach Access Study brought together a broad-based team of experts and stakeholders, all of whom remained focused on the goals of increasing visitation to the lakeshore, improving public access to Saginaw Bay, strengthening the partnerships between the state park and the local community, and supporting the economic vitality of the Saginaw Bay region.

The results of this study illustrate that a partnership will be the most effective way to ensure that the goals of this study will be incorporated “into the DNA” of state and local action strategies. It is important that the DNR, Bay County and other stakeholders continue to work together to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the strategies. The eight action strategies outlined by this study are not wishful thinking, but reflect the actual priorities of the local community stakeholders. While some strategies may offer short-range opportunities, others will require additional study and planning; however, none are impossible. Most importantly, each of the action strategies embodies the goals of the study and will result in significant improvements to the public’s enjoyment of Saginaw Bay, enhancement of economic vitality in the region, and protection of the significant natural resources at the park and associated with the Bay for many generations to come.