

Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan

2020-2024



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
How the Planning Process Works	5
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW	6
The Setting	6
The Past.....	6
Climate and Land Use	6
Water Resources, Soils, Topography	7
Fish and Wildlife.....	7
Transportation System.....	8
POPULATION, HOUSING AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS	14
Population Trends.....	14
Population by Age	17
Housing Unit Occupancy.....	19
Race and Ethnicity.....	19
Disability Characteristics.....	20
Income Statistics	20
IMPACTS OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.....	21
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE	21
ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS	22
INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.....	27
Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory.....	27
Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities.....	27
Recreation Facilities in Big Prairie Township	27
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	30
Newaygo County Parks & Recreation	30
Big Prairie Township Park Commission.....	30
Big Prairie Township.....	33

Adjacent Recreation Facilities.....	33
Michigan’s Dragon at Hardy Dam	34
RESOURCE INVENTORY	35
Native Prairie Grass Project	35
DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS.....	35
Planning Methods.....	35
Public Input Process.....	36
NARROWING THE FOCUS – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN.....	37
Goals and Objectives.....	37
<i>Big Prairie Township</i>	37
<i>Big Prairie Township Park Commission</i>	37
PROPOSED FIVE YEAR ACTION PLANS.....	39
Big Prairie Township Action Plan	39
Big Prairie Township Park Commission Action Plan.....	40
Additional Comment.....	41
Financial Issues.....	41
Parallel Action Programs.....	41
Public Participation	41
APPENDIX.....	42
A. Ratification.....	42
Official resolution of adoption by the Big Prairie Township Board dated January 14, 2020.....	42
Official resolution of adoption by the Big Prairie Township Parks Commission dated January 16, 2020	43
Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners.....	44
Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.....	45
B. Public Notification.....	46
Notice of public input meeting	46
Notice for the 30-day public review period and subsequent public hearing held before adoption of the plan by the governing bodies	47
C. Summary of Public Input.....	48

Survey questionnaire distributed at the Big Prairie Township Hall and made available on the Township and Parks Commission websites from September 2019 through January 2020 (two pages):..... 48

Summary of survey questionnaire responses:..... 50

Summary of comments received at the public meeting held on October 10, 2019: 53

Minutes from public meeting on October 10, 2019: 53

Summary of comments received at the public hearing held on January 14 12, 2020, following 30-day review period: 54

Minutes from public hearing on January 14, 2020: 54

DRAFT

The Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan was originally completed in August 2008 with the assistance of Donald L. Holley, PE, Consulting Engineer. This updated edition, covering 2020 through 2024, was written by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) in cooperation with Big Prairie Township Board and the Big Prairie Township Park Commission. The WMSRDC is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties.

Cover Photo: Operators Village Day Park, Big Prairie Township Park Commission

Acknowledgements

Big Prairie Township Board

David Wright	Supervisor
Judy Baker	Clerk
Julie Scott	Treasurer
Mary Anderson	Trustee
Jackie Thompson	Trustee & Assessor

Big Prairie Township Park Commission

John Clark	Chair
Randy VanDam	Vice Chair
Sharon Ruehmeier	Treasurer
Colleen Ryman	Secretary
Sally VanderGalien	

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

James Rynberg, Chairperson
Bonnie McGlothin, Vice-Chairperson
Dale Nesbary, Secretary

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

Project Staff:
Stephen Carlson, Program Manager



The mission of WMSRDC is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.

INTRODUCTION

To say that “A river runs through it” would be an apt characterization of Big Prairie Township. Long before the advent of early settlers to Michigan, the Muskegon River flowed through the local prairies and majestic hardwood and virgin pine forests on its way to Lake Michigan. As the forests were decimated and a different type of economy evolved, the Muskegon River was exploited for hydro-power in the early 1900’s, resulting in the long-term impoundments of Croton and Hardy Dams. These large reservoirs are a focus for living and recreation for all who live in the area, and for the many visitors who are attracted by the simple beauty of the area.

The assessment and evaluation of the recreational needs of this community is being undertaken jointly by the Big Prairie Township Board and by the Big Prairie Township Park Commission.

The resulting plan is intended to reflect the needs of the permanent residents of Big Prairie Township as well as the needs of the many seasonal visitors who are attracted by the local natural and recreational assets and who contribute a good deal to the local economy.

It must be emphasized that the township, through its separately elected Park Commission, administers the very large Oxbow and Big Bend campgrounds through an agreement with Consumers Energy. This is a non-profit venture with all revenues used for operation and for funding of improvements to these campgrounds.

How the Planning Process Works

The purpose of recreational planning is to inventory and evaluate recreational opportunities, facilities and needs within the planning jurisdiction of Big Prairie Township and to develop a plan to fulfill unmet needs or to upgrade inadequate recreational facilities within the community.

In order to form a basis for potential applications for State of Michigan funding, the planning process involves community participation and public awareness. Also, defined needs and proposed projects are prioritized for the five-year period 2020-2024.

This current planning effort is in essence an updating and revision of an original recreation plan prepared in 1999 for the period 1999-2004. The plan was updated in 2008 and 2014 as well.

During the planning period, the current Newaygo County Recreation Plan and other local plans were reviewed; not only for ideas, but also as a way to anticipate and preclude duplication of other locally available or contemplated recreational facilities or programs, which would also be available in Newaygo County and thus available to residents of Big Prairie Township.

It must also be recognized that there are recreational facilities within Big Prairie Township, which while available to residents, are primarily used by non-residents and certainly travelers from other states. Thus the planning effort must focus dually on the primarily local residents’ needs as well as the facilities which serve a broader non-resident populace.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Setting

Within a 30 mile or so drive from metropolitan Grand Rapids, Big Prairie Township and Newaygo County have long been a recreational destination for city folk needing a short respite or a seasonal home. No incorporated cities or villages lie within Big Prairie Township, which is on the eastern tier of townships within Newaygo County (See Figure 1).

As noted in the introduction to this plan, Big Prairie Township is bisected by the Muskegon River and its features are dominated by the enormous backwater lake of Hardy (Dam) Pond, containing in excess of 3,900 acres. Due to its hydropower purpose and heritage, a large percentage of Hardy Pond shoreline is owned, controlled and managed by Consumers Energy Company. They have been good stewards and maintained natural conditions to the extent feasible. Also, in accordance with federal (FERC) guidelines, recreational opportunities are provided for the public on lands abutting Hardy Pond and/or owned by Consumers Energy Company.

Thus the broadly appealing natural setting of Big Prairie Township, enhanced by the river dam now over 80 years old and by the healing re-growth of forests, is both a great year-around home and a recreation destination for many more.

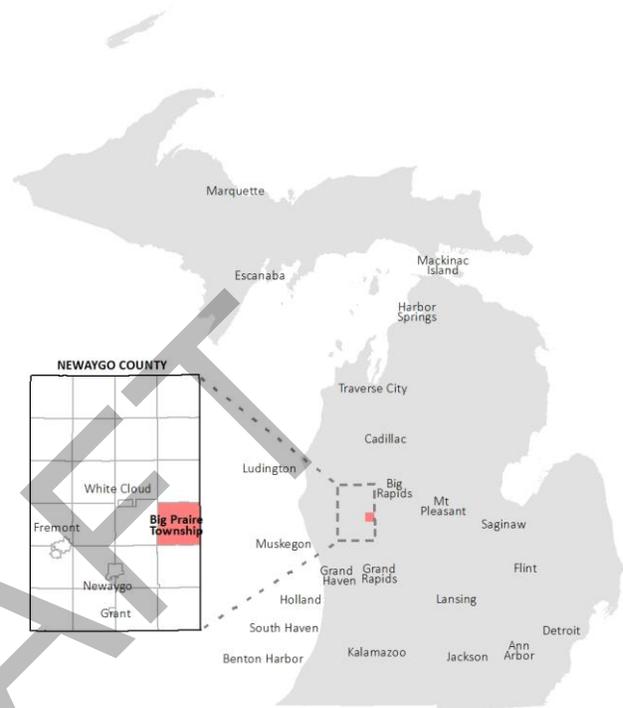
The Past

The most recent (2017) Newaygo County Recreation Plan aptly narrates the highlights of local history from Native American presence to early European white exploration/settlement, to lumbering, early agricultural efforts, and progression to the present. For those interested in more details, refer to the county plan and its sources.

Climate and Land Use

The climate of the planning area, although with cyclical variations, is moderate and certainly influenced by the Great Lakes. Annual precipitation is about 30-35 liquid inches, of which is 70-80 inches of average snowfall. Weather extremes seem to vary from about 10 F winter to 100 F summer, with summer averages of about 80 F and winter averages of about 20-25 F.

Figure 1



Actual land use is somewhat governed by ownership, with perhaps 60% of Newaygo County land being covered by forest and close to 40% of that lying within the Manistee National Forest or owned by Consumers Energy Company. According to the County Plan, another 20% of forested land area is in private ownership.

While there is some land in agricultural use, aside from forest areas, much of the remaining land use is for recreational purposes. Keep in mind that about 6 square miles or about 15% of Big Prairie Township is occupied by Hardy Pond.

A Big Prairie Township zoning map is presented as Figure 2 but it may not be of sufficient detail for accurate interpretation. Also see Figure 3, land use cover.

Water Resources, Soils, Topography

As the County Plan states, “Newaygo County has abundant surface and ground water resources.” While there are fewer lakes within Big Prairie Township than in the rest of Newaygo County, the jewel that is Hardy Pond is one of the larger inland water bodies in the entire state.

Groundwater resources, while plentiful, must continue to be protected from pollution influences and excessive fertilization from aging septic systems constructed too close to water features and on sites which would not be acceptable under current guidelines.

Even recreational activities can contribute to pollution of water resources and such activities must be monitored. Some potential recreational expenditures may involve facilities to control potential of water pollution.

The local topography is a reflection of glaciation from the last ice age, and the natural erosion of the past 10,000 years, thus the glacial outwash deposits and moraines characteristic of this area of Michigan. The 3,900-acre Hardy Pond appeared over 80 years ago. Figure 4 shows topography of the township.

The County Plan contains a more detailed discussion of Newaygo County soil associations, which are similar to soils specific to Big Prairie Township, which are:

- 2 Cosad-Del-Rey-Sickles
- 5 Coloma-Spinks-Metea
- 6 Toogood-Boyer

The associations listed above are all sandy types located in glacial moraines or outwash plains and terraces. Cosad-Del-Rey-Sickle is more poorly drained and theoretically less suitable for septic tank absorption fields. Additional soil details are available by reference to the Newaygo County Soil Survey. Figure 5 graphically depicts the soil associations within Big Prairie Township.

Fish and Wildlife

The high percentage of forest cover and public or quasi-public land ownership within the township serves to preserve and enhance wildlife and fish habitats.

Deer and turkey populations are probably at higher levels than experienced during Native American occupation. Fishing regulations and fish management / stocking programs continue to permit an extremely productive sports fishery. Development of land adjacent to lakes and rivers must be adequately regulated to protect the habitat from encroachment and pollution. Stream banks are best protected by natural vegetation and root systems to control bank erosion.

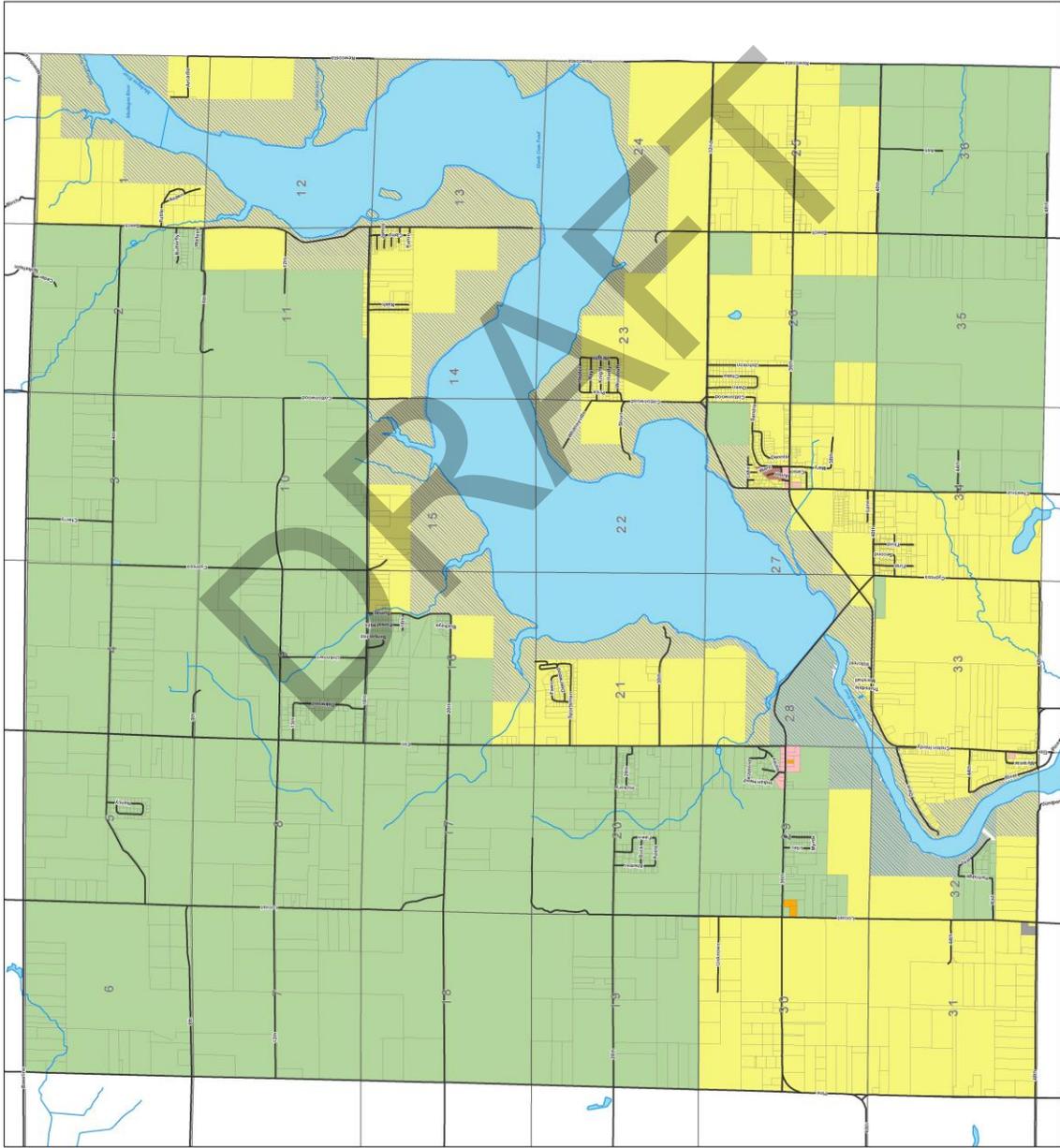
Transportation System

Figure 6 illustrates the primary network of state roads. As in most Midwest states, local roads are aligned along section lines, but conforming to natural obstacles. There is only one Muskegon River road crossing within the township, which is at Hardy Dam.

Easy access to visitors for the many recreational potentials of Big Prairie Township is a strength. Anecdotally, occasional rises in the cost of automotive fuel have barely slowed seasonal recreational traffic in recent years.

DRAFT

Figure 2

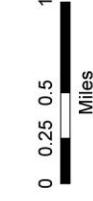


Big Prairie Township Newaygo County, Michigan

Zoning Map

DRAFT: April 10, 2008

- A-R: Agricultural Residential
- L-I: Light Industrial
- MHP: Manufactured Home Park
- N-C: Neighborhood Commercial
- R-R: Rural Residential
- R-2: Residential
- L-R: Lakefront Residential District
(Includes all parcels or lots having frontage on a body of water)



LSL Planning, Inc.
Community Planning Consultants

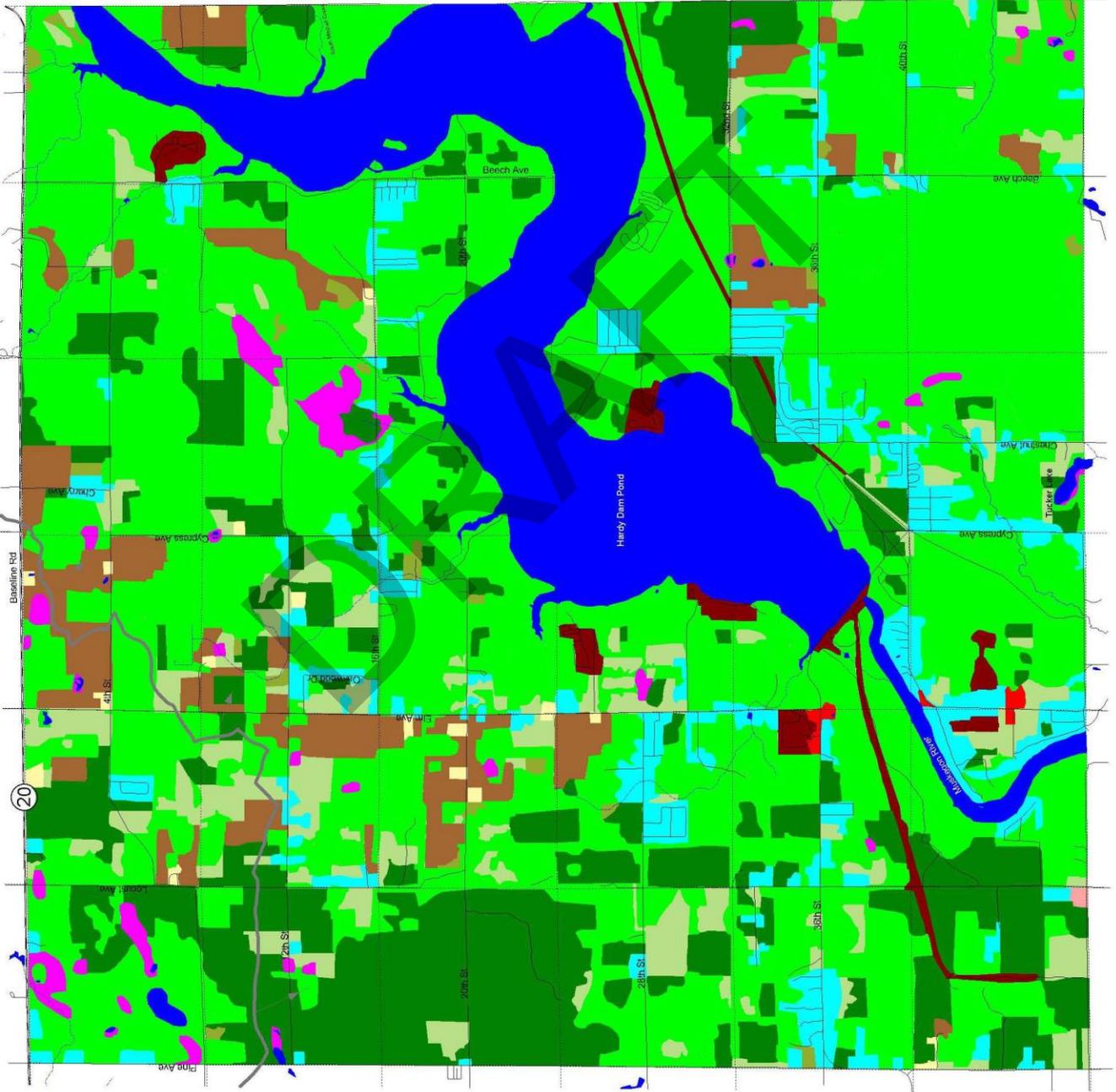


Figure 3

Land Use/Cover - 1998

Big Prairie Township

Newaygo County, Michigan



Muskegon River Watershed Boundary
(General Flow Direction)

Rivers/Creeks
Drains/Intermittent Streams
Lakes

Political Limits

Interstate
U.S. and State Highways
County Roads
Local Roads
Railroads
Section Lines

Land Use/Cover Types

- Residential
- Commercial/Institutional
- Industrial
- Other Developed Area
- Cropland
- Orchards and Other Specialty Crop
- Confined Feeding/Permanent Pasture
- Other Agricultural Land
- Grasses and Forbs - Open Field
- Shrub Open Field
- Deciduous Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Water
- Wetland
- Sand Dune/Other

Scale: 1:25,000

Scale bar: 0, 1320, 2640, 3960, 5280 Feet

North Arrow

Base Data Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information,
Department of Information Technology, 2002.

Land Use Cover Data Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic Information,
Department of Information Technology, 2002.

Information Services Center
Annis Water Resources Institute
Grand Valley State University

Map Prepared: January 2003

Figure 4

Natural Features Map (USGS Quad.)

Big Prairie Township

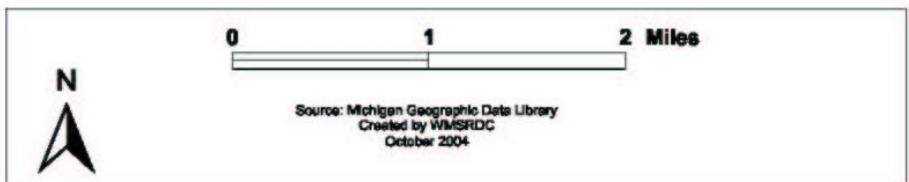
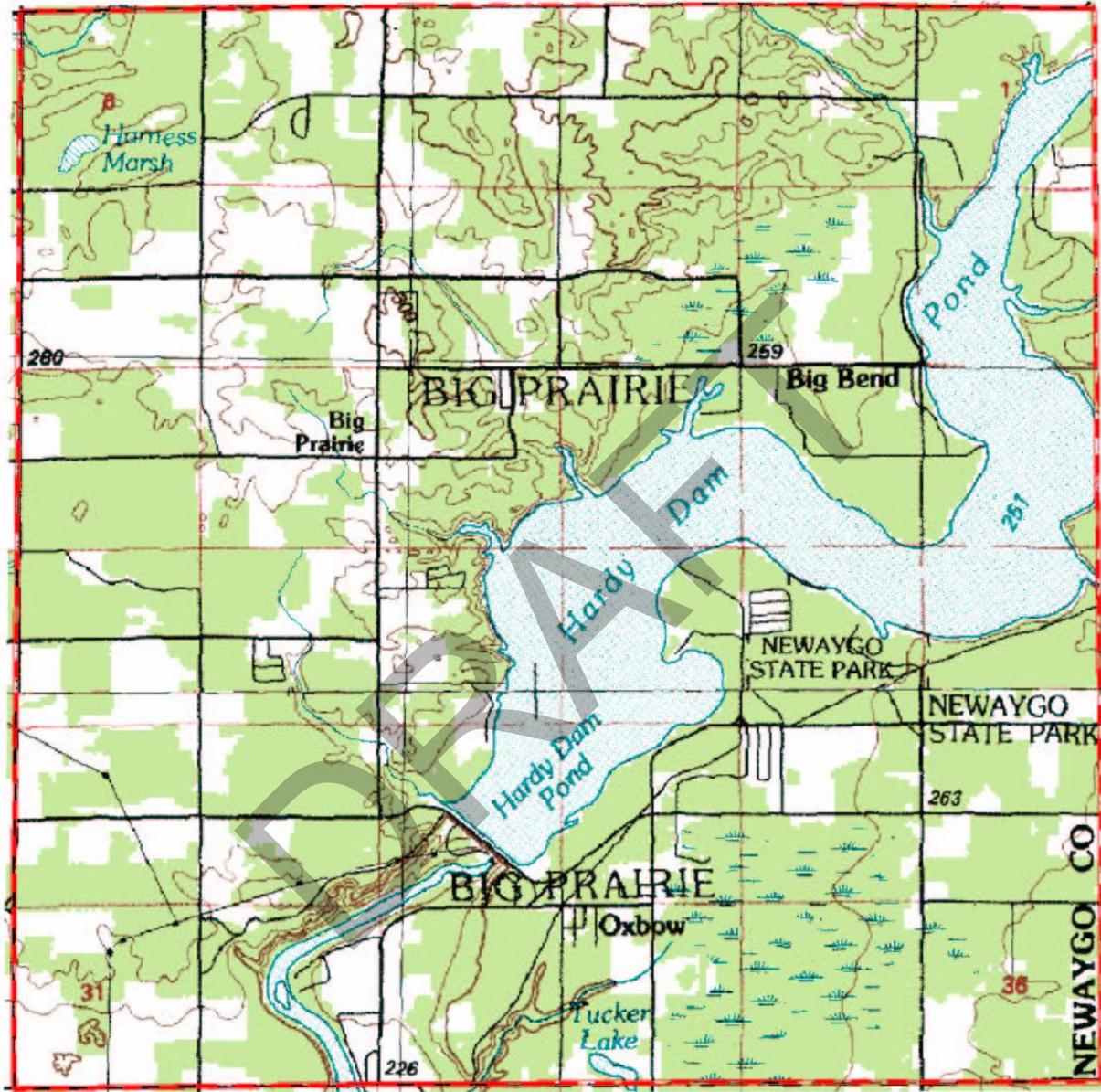
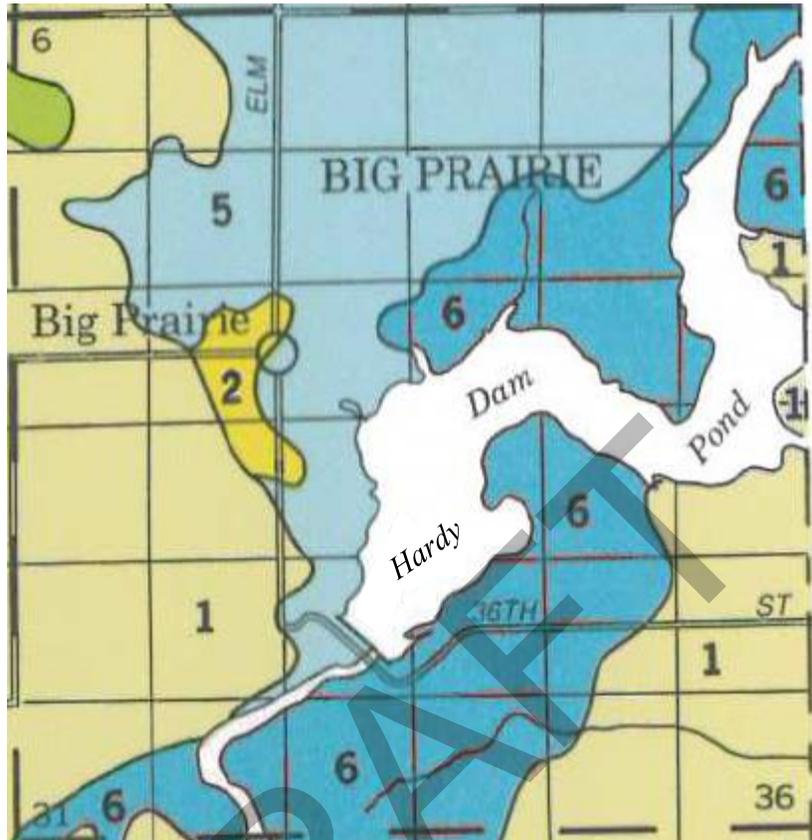


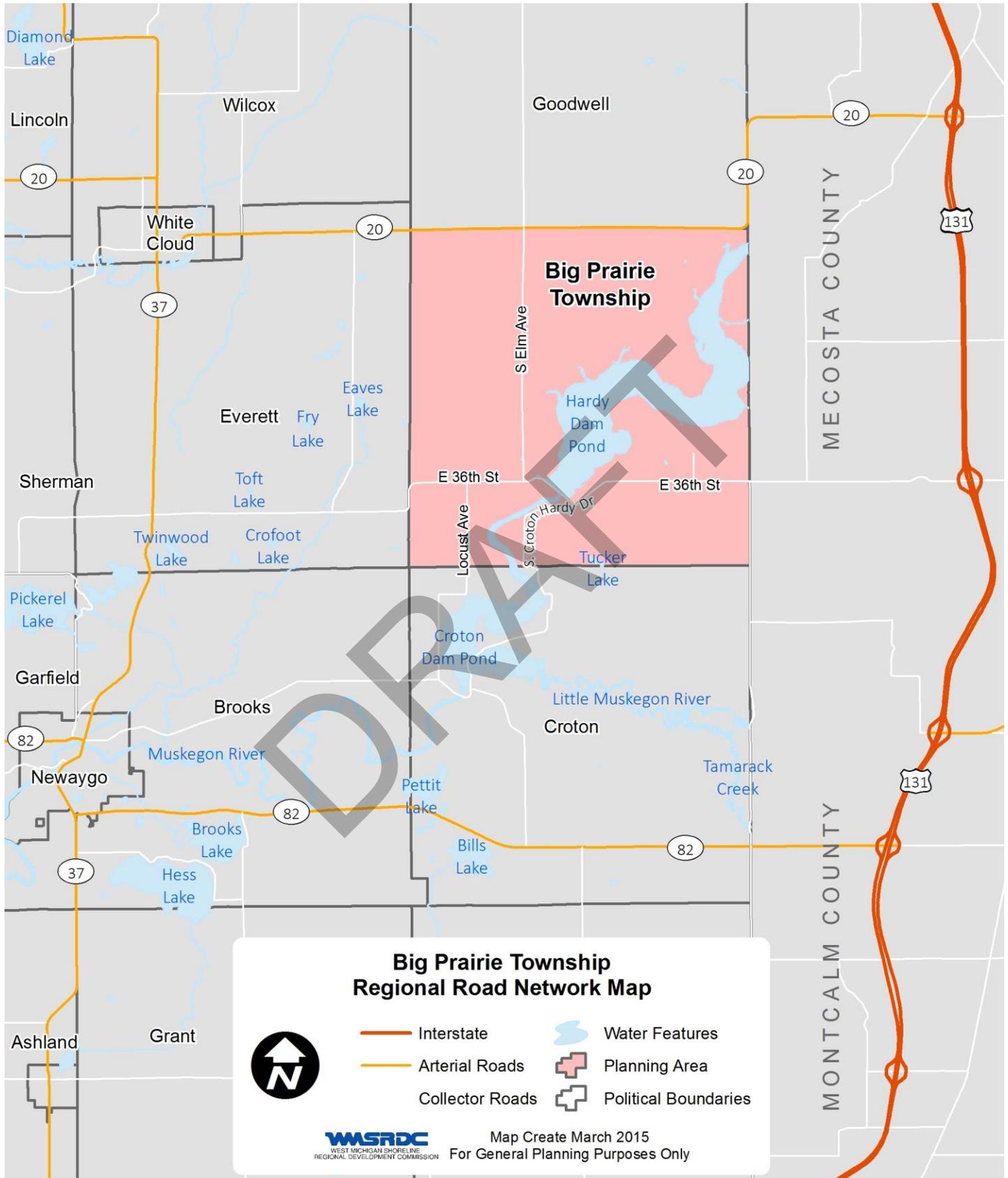
Figure 5

Big Prairie Township General Soils Map



- 1 Plainfield-Grattan-Brems association
- 2 Cosad-Del Rey-Sickles association
- 3 Glendora-Abscota-Algansee association
- 4 Marlette-Metea-Spinks association
- 5 Coloma-Spinks-Metea association
- 6 Toogood-Boyer association
- 7 Adrian-Carlisle-Martisco association
- 8 Pipestone-Covert-Kingsville association

Figure 6



POPULATION, HOUSING AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population Trends

In this section, population trends and forecasts are presented; using actual Census data, American Community Survey estimates, and forecasts provided by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. Refer to Page 15 for tabulation of various county jurisdictions.

The most recent population projections released by WMSRDC anticipate a steady to slowly declining population through 2045, countywide. As noted by WMSRDC, population projections are based on recent trends and do not consider potential population shifts. As such, these figures should serve as a rough guide when considering future recreation investments.

Table 1

Census and Population Projections						
	Actual Census Figures				Estimate	
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017 (est)	
Big Prairie Township	1,202	1,731	2,465	2,573	2,583	
White Cloud	1,101	1,147	1,420	1,408	1,381	
Newaygo (City)	1,271	1,336	1,670	1,976	2,035	
Newaygo County	34,917	38,202	47,874	48,460	48,242	
2018 WMSRDC Population Forecast						
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Big Prairie Township	2,582	2,581	2,580	2,579	2,578	2,577
White Cloud	1,381	1,380	1,379	1,379	1,378	1,378
Newaygo (City)	2,034	2,034	2,033	2,032	2,031	2,030
Newaygo County	48,230	48,209	48,188	48,167	48,147	48,126
(West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, 2018), (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)						

As shown in Table 2, Big Prairie Township and neighboring communities saw modest population increases between 1980 and 2000. After 2000, population growth began to taper off and growth remained relatively flat by 2017.

Table 2

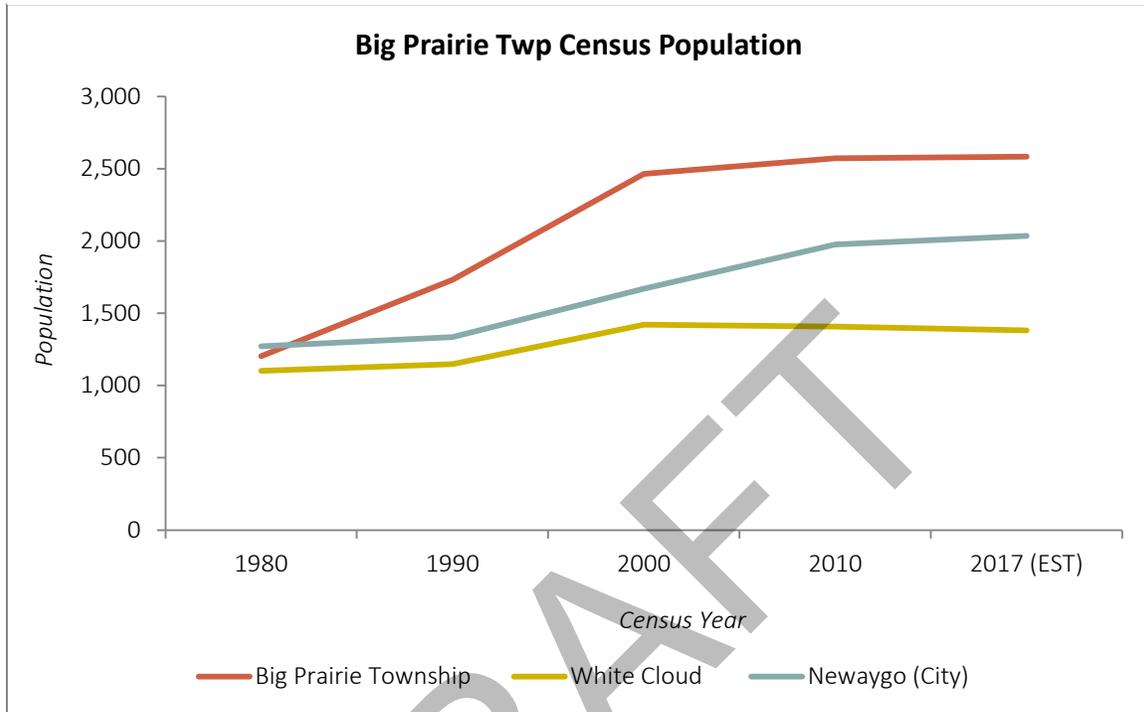
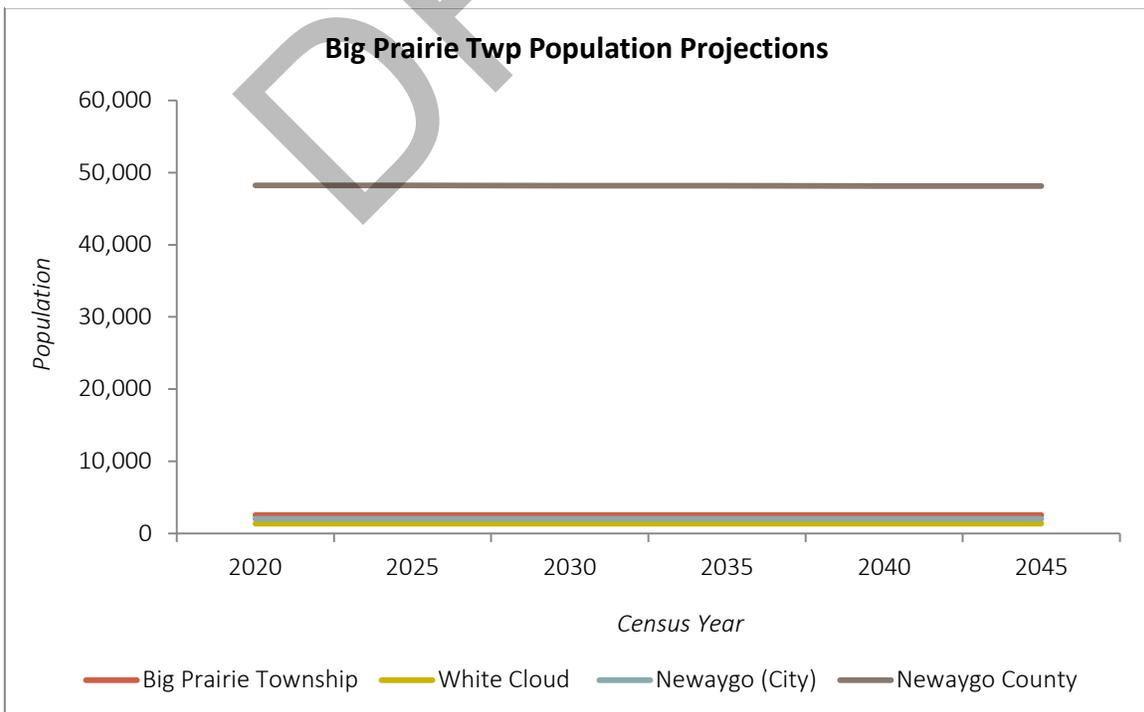


Table 3



The flat growth trend forecasted in Table 2 is reflected in the future population projections shown in Table 3. As shown, no significant gains in population are projected for Big Prairie Township, neighboring communities, or for Newaygo County between 2020 and 2045. Again, it's important to note that these projections are based on past trends and don't necessarily accurately reflect future conditions. Past population and future projections for all of the Newaygo governmental units are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Newaygo County Census & Population Forecast 2020 to 2045											
	Actual Census Figures				Estimate	Forecasted Population					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Newaygo County	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Total Population	34,917	38,202	47,874	48,460	48,242	48,230	48,209	48,188	48,167	18,147	48,126
Ashland Township	1,751	1,997	2,570	2,773	2,743	2,742	2,741	2,740	2,739	2,738	2,736
Barton Township	558	624	820	717	789	789	788	788	788	787	787
Beaver Township	443	417	608	509	504	504	504	503	503	503	503
Big Prairie Twp	1,202	1,731	2,465	2,573	2,583	2,582	2,581	2,580	2,579	2,578	2,577
Bridgeton Twp	1,562	1,574	2,098	2,141	2109	2,135	2,134	2,133	2,132	2,131	2,130
Brooks Township	2,349	2,728	3,671	3,510	3,467	3,466	3,465	3,463	3,462	3,460	3,459
Croton Township	1,556	1,965	3,042	3,228	3,235	3,234	3,233	3,231	3,230	3,229	3,227
Dayton Township	1,938	1,971	2,002	1,949	1,935	1,935	1,934	1,933	1,932	1,931	1,930
Denver Township	1,422	1,532	1,971	1,928	1,915	1,915	1,914	1,913	1,912	1,911	1,910
Ensley Township	1,461	1,984	2,474	2,635	2,664	2,663	2,662	2,661	2,660	2,659	2,658
Everett Township	1,360	1,519	1,985	1,862	1,831	1,831	1,830	1,829	1,828	1,827	1,827
Garfield Township	1,822	2,067	2,464	2,537	2,527	2,526	2,525	2,524	2,523	2,522	2,521
Goodwell Township	387	358	551	547	540	540	540	539	539	539	539
Grant Township	2,274	2,558	3,130	3,294	3,268	3,267	3,266	3,264	3,263	3,262	3,260
Home Township	185	202	261	232	230	230	230	230	230	230	229
Lilley Township	568	565	788	797	795	795	794	794	794	793	793
Lincoln Township	885	969	1,338	1,275	1,250	1,250	1,249	1,249	1,248	1,248	1,247
Merrill Township	508	451	590	667	661	661	661	660	660	660	659
Monroe Township	263	247	324	320	317	317	317	317	317	316	316
Norwich Township	450	499	557	607	600	600	600	599	599	599	599
Sheridan Township	2,465	2,252	2,423	2,510	2,465	2,464	2,463	2,462	2,461	2,460	2,459
Sherman Township	1,810	1,866	2,159	2,109	2,097	2,096	2,096	2,095	2,094	2,093	2,092
Troy Township	199	173	243	283	282	282	282	282	282	281	281
Wilcox Township	772	831	1,145	1,098	1,095	1,095	1,094	1,094	1,093	1,093	1,092
Fremont City	3,672	3,875	4,224	4,081	4,015	4,014	4,012	4,011	4,009	4,007	4,005
Grant City	683	764	881	894	883	883	882	882	882	881	881
Newaygo City	1,271	1,336	1,670	1,976	2,035	2,034	2,034	2,033	2,032	2,031	2,030
White Cloud City	1,101	1,147	1,420	1,408	1,381	1,381	1,380	1,379	1,379	1,378	1,378
Hesperia Village	347	300	364	339	333	333	333	333	332	332	332

Readers should bear in mind that the local population numbers only come into play when certain types of locally specific recreation needs are evaluated. In all likelihood, visitors and transient users will place more demand on local recreation venues than imposed by year-round township residents.

While the overall local population numbers are of some use in estimating size of facilities required, other population characteristics also influence the type of recreational needs.

Population by Age

When comparing the 2017 age distribution data (Table 5) with the 2010 census data found in the 2014 plan, the distributions were quite similar. Overall, less of the population fell within age groups 64 and below while age groups 55 and over accounted for a higher share of the overall population than in 2000.

Table 5

Population By Age								
	Big Prairie Township		White Cloud City		Newaygo City		Newaygo County	
Under 5 years	94	3.7%	98	7.3%	130	6.8%	2,764	5.8%
5-9 Years	101	3.9%	150	11.1%	163	8.5%	3,015	6.3%
10-14 Years	99	3.9%	83	6.2%	221	11.5%	3,258	6.8%
15-19 Years	149	5.8%	39	2.9%	118	6.1%	3,002	6.3%
20-34 Years	403	15.7%	313	23.3%	467	24.3%	8,009	16.7%
35-54 Years	645	25.1%	317	23.6%	393	20.4%	11,96	25.0%
55-64 Years	448	17.5%	163	12.1%	199	10.3%	7,794	15.1%
65 Over	623	24.3%	183	13.6%	230	12.0%	8,636	18.0%
Total	2,562		1,346		1,921		47,899	
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2017)								

As shown in Table 6, the population distribution in age cohorts 19 and under was relatively consistent as each cohort maintained a population between about 100 and 150 people. A higher proportion of people living in Big Prairie Township fell within age cohorts 20 years and above. The township’s largest cohort was the 35-54 group, which was followed closely by the 65 and over group.

Compared to the county and nearby city populations, Big Prairie Township’s population distribution is generally older (fewer school age individuals, more retirement age individuals). These figures are shown in Table 7.

Table 6

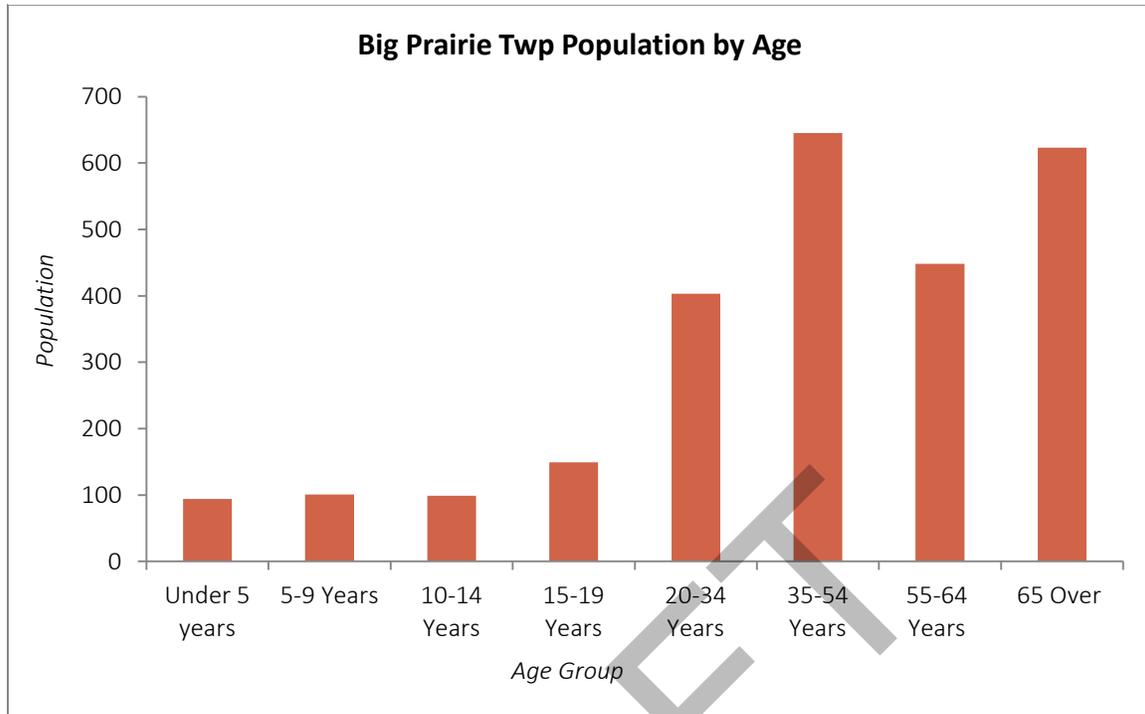
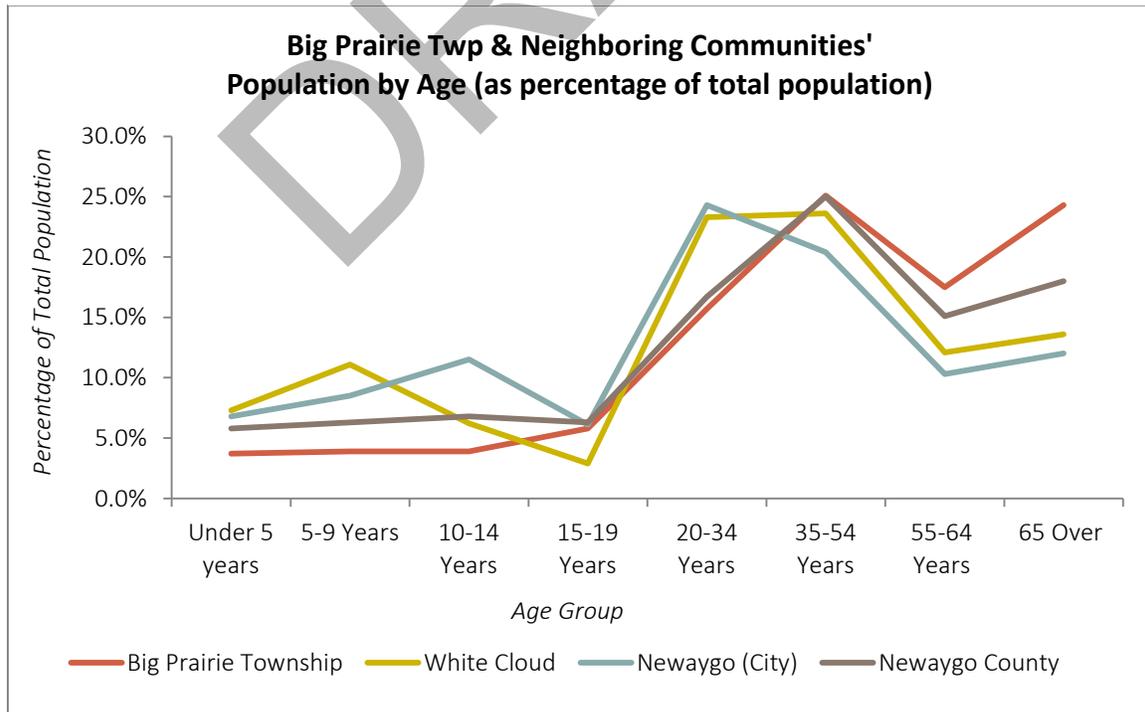


Table 7



Housing Unit Occupancy

Between the 2000 Census and 2010 Census, housing units in Big Prairie Township increased by 124 from 1,474 units to 1,598 units. Vacant units in Big Prairie accounted for about 36% of the total housing stock, or 582 units. As shown in Table 8, 455 of these vacant units were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use which accounted for about 28% of the total housing units.

Table 8

Housing Unit Occupancy								
	Occupied	Vacant						Total Housing
		For Rent	Rented, Not Occupied	For Sale Only	Sold, Not Occupied	For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	Other	
Big Prairie Township	1016	7	0	33	7	455	80	1598
White Cloud City	467	25	2	20	0	10	13	537
Newaygo City	786	38	1	11	1	18	37	892
Newaygo County	18406	272	33	458	108	4,885	913	25,075

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

Race and Ethnicity

According to 2017 Census estimates, the race/ethnicity distributions within Newaygo County and Big Prairie Township were as follows in Table 9:

Table 9

Race and Ethnicity				
	Big Prairie Township		Newaygo County	
Total Population	2,562		47,899	
White	2,406	93.9%	44,583	93.1%
Black of African American	27	1.1%	628	1.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	90	3.5%	399	0.8%
Asian	0	0.0%	164	0.3%
Native Hawaii Or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Race	12	0.5%	1,297	2.7%
Two or More Races	27	1.1%	828	1.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	5	0.2%	2,762	5.8%
Not Hispanic or Latino	2,557	99.8%	45,137	94.2%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2017)

Disability Characteristics

According to 2013 Census estimates shown in Table 10, approximately 25.1% of Big Prairie Township residents were disabled. Those in the 18-64 age cohort had the highest percentage of disability as compared to other age groups, with 12.8% of the total population falling within this group.

It is hard to draw any conclusion from these statistics as the data does not provide insight into the extent or type of disability reported. It should be noted that the 2013 census estimates did provide information defining the type and extent of disabilities for Big Prairie but the margin of error was extremely high and therefore would not be useful.

Table 10

Disability Characteristics						
	With a Disability		Without a Disability		Total Population	
Under 5	0	0.0%	118	4.6%	118	4.6%
5-17 years	48	1.9%	312	12.3%	360	14.2%
18-64 years	326	12.8%	1,184	46.6%	1,510	59.4%
65 and over	264	10.4%	289	11.4%	553	21.8%
Total	638	25.1%	1,903	74.9%	2,541	100.0%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2013)

Income Statistics

The data within Table 11 is derived from 2017 Census estimates for Big Prairie Township and Newaygo County. Overall, the median household income for Big Prairie Township was \$31,318 and the mean or average household income was \$40,458. Per capita income for Big Prairie was \$17,184, which was \$5,551 less than per capita income countywide.

Table 11

Income Statistics				
	Big Prairie Township		Newaygo County	
Median household income	31,318		45,645	
Mean household income	40,458		57,616	
Per capita income	17,184		22,735	
Income Per family	<i>Families</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Less than \$10,000	39	5.2%	605	4.7%
\$10,000 to 14,999	56	7.5%	524	4.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	113	15.2%	1,271	9.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	111	14.9%	1,235	9.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	166	22.3%	2,192	17.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	69	9.3%	3,069	23.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	96	12.9%	1,745	13.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	89	11.9%	1,628	12.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6	0.8%	353	2.7%
200,000 or more	0	0.00%	229	1.8%
Total Families	745	100.00%	12,851	

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2017)

IMPACTS OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

It might appear that the relatively low (year around) population of Big Prairie Township may be attributed to lesser or fewer opportunities for employment, and reflective of a higher proportion of retirees.

As noted in the Population Trends section, the population of Big Prairie Township has remained relatively stable over the past 15 years and is projected to remain relatively stable into the future. This is not to say that rapid growth could not or will not occur, as the township grew by almost 50% between 1990 and 2000. It is likely that based on trends outlined in the Population by Age section that the population of younger people (19 and younger) will continue to decline. As the population ages, the township will have a greater proportion of mature and elderly residents than in the past.

There is no doubt that the natural physical attractions, including woods and water, appeal broadly to both permanent and seasonal residents. The presence of large areas of public lands and access points is welcomed by residents and visitors alike. The same attractive features in Big Prairie Township extend into the adjacent townships, creating a “Newaygo” recreation destination especially from metropolitan Grand Rapids.

The local governing bodies will need to be vigilant to protect this environment from side effects of an increasing influx of visitors, and in such a way that extends an open invitation, but with understandable guidelines. Some “recreational” dollars may need to be allocated for the protection of the environment including but not limited to erosion control and nutrient/pollution control for ground and surface waters.

With such a large extent of forest area in the Manistee National Forest and on Consumer’s Energy property, forest management and sustainability seems a realizable goal, which will help maintain the natural heritage of the area.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

As a general law township, the governance of Big Prairie consists of an elected supervisor, clerk, treasurer and two trustees. The township board meets monthly at the township hall on Elm Street. Meetings are open to the public. The Park Commission meets every Monday.

The township also has an appointed township planning commission and zoning board of appeals to exercise its zoning and planning activities. Other committees may be set up as appropriate, and there is a separate township recreation committee to administer strictly township recreation functions.

Due to the unusual circumstances of the parks and campgrounds located on Consumer’s Energy Company property within the township, a separately elected park commission was created to manage these unique facilities, which are mandated under federal (FERC) regulations. While the township board apparently has oversight on the park commission budget, the township does not contribute township

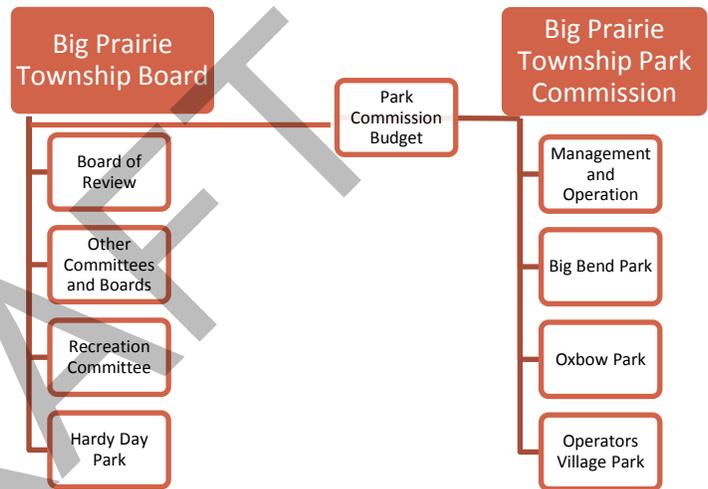
funds to the park commission. Park commission revenues are dedicated solely to operation, maintenance and capital improvements to the three parks currently in the program. Although rare, there are apparently some circumstances wherein revenues from Big Bend and Oxbow Parks could be used on “other” recreational facilities within the Township.

Potentially other similar facilities could be created on Consumer’s Energy land in the township, subject to mutual consent. The result is that Consumer’s Energy meets FERC criteria and the public reaps the benefits.

A simple administrative organization chart is presented as Figure 7. In essence, the park commission operates autonomously, albeit with oversight by the township board.

The township recreation programs administered by the township board are limited in nature and tend to focus on local needs; whereas the large campground facilities operated by the park commission attract primarily regional and seasonal visitors. Thus while the campgrounds are mostly quiet in the winter off season, the park commission must recruit, train and organize a relatively large seasonal workforce and arrange for some contracted services during the off-season.

Figure 7



While there are other publically owned and operated recreational facilities within Newaygo County, there are no administrative links between those and the township. It is conceivable that Big Prairie Township could enter into a cooperative effort on a project such as a trail extending through multiple townships.

There are recreational facilities and programs, operated and administered by other governmental entities, which are available for residents of Big Prairie Township, particularly programs sponsored by different school districts at locations outside of the township. School districts that reach into Big Prairie include: Morley Stanwood Community Schools, Newaygo Public School District, and White Cloud Public Schools.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

Big Prairie Township has a committee that oversees the Hardy Recreation Area at no cost, while the Big Prairie Township Parks Commission typically does not use volunteers.

**Big Prairie Township
2019-2020**

Cash on Hand		Account							
General Fund Checking	101.005		\$141,976.38						
Savings Account	101.002		\$0.00						
Certificate of Deposit			\$23,295.56						
Certificate of Deposit	101.003		25,337.65						
Tax Collection Fund			\$4,500.00						
Trust & Agency Account			\$33.93						
Certificate of Deposit			\$16,089.65						
TOTAL:								\$ 211,433.17	
			Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
			2017-2018	2017-2018	2018-2019	Amended	2018-2019	(Over)	
			Budget	Actual	Budget		Actual	Under	
								2019-2020	
								Budget	
General Fund Revenue									
Current Property Tax	101.402		\$50,000.00	\$49,742.85	\$0,000.00		\$58,626.82	(\$8,626.82)	\$ 50,000.00
National Forest Money	101.425		\$1,000.00	\$5.21	\$1,000.00		\$5.35	\$994.65	\$1,000.00
Trailer Tax	101.427		\$100.00	\$123.00	\$100.00		\$108.75	(\$8.75)	\$100.00
Property Tax Admin Fee	101.447		\$20,000.00	\$23,286.82	\$20,000.00		\$25,845.92	(\$5,845.92)	\$20,000.00
Nonbus. License & Permit	101.476		\$1,500.00	\$1,435.00	\$1,500.00		\$2,300.00	(\$800.00)	\$1,500.00
O.C. Deposit Forfeit	101.479		\$8,000.00	\$0.00	\$8,000.00		\$0.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00
State Revenue Sharing	101.574		\$190,000.00	\$212,833.00	\$190,000.00		\$212,416.00	(\$22,416.00)	\$190,000.00
Charges for Services Fees	101.607		\$500.00	\$2,154.42	\$1,500.00		\$1,650.00	(\$150.00)	\$1,500.00
Grants	101.660		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest	101.665		\$250.00	\$515.56	\$500.00		\$1,788.98	(\$1,288.98)	\$500.00
Rents	101.667		\$300.00	\$425.00	\$300.00		\$5,300.00	(\$5,000.00)	\$5,000.00
Refunds-Rebates	101.687		\$3,000.00	\$9,912.20	\$3,000.00		\$6,062.72	(\$3,062.72)	\$3,000.00
Other Revenue	101.694		\$1,000.00	\$12,025.12	\$1,000.00		\$5,982.09	(\$4,982.09)	\$1,000.00
TOTAL			\$276,150.00	\$316,611.14	\$276,900.00		\$324,239.59	(\$43,186.63)	\$280,700.00
TOTAL INCOME:					\$580,261.14			(\$43,186.63)	\$492,133.17
			Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
			2017-2018	2017-2018	2018-2019	Amended	2018-2019	(Over)	
			Budget	Actual	Budget		Actual	Under	
								2019-2020	
								Budget	
GENERAL FUND EXPENSES:									
Township Board									
Wages	101.101.702		12,020.00	12,020.00	\$12,120.00		12,120.00	\$0.00	\$12,120.00
Per Diem	101.101.703		\$400.00	\$350.00	\$400.00		\$250.00	\$150.00	\$400.00
FICA	101.101.710		\$15,000.00	\$11,624.72	\$15,000.00		\$11,624.72	\$3,375.28	\$15,000.00
Office Supplies	101.101.726		\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00		\$32.00	\$68.00	\$100.00
Prof Services	101.101.801		\$6,000.00	\$3,980.41	\$6,000.00		\$1,490.34	\$4,509.66	\$4,000.00
Contracted Services	101.101.802		\$6,000.00	\$7,900.00	\$6,000.00		\$5,400.00	\$600.00	\$6,000.00
Transportation	101.101.860		\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00		\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Printing & Publishing	101.101.900		\$1,000.00	\$517.09	\$1,000.00		\$1,126.07	(\$126.07)	\$1,200.00
Miscellaneous	101.101.955		\$50.00	\$86.00	\$100.00		\$334.99	(\$234.99)	\$100.00
Donations	101.101.956		\$300.00	\$380.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,250.00	\$250.00	\$500.00
Dues	101.101.957		\$1,400.00	\$1,294.39	\$1,400.00		\$1,331.94	\$68.08	\$1,400.00
Education & Training	101.101.960		\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00		\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL			\$43,370.00	\$38,152.61	\$48,720.00	\$5,000.00	\$38,960.06	\$9,759.96	\$41,920.00

			Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
			2017-2018	2017-2018	2018-2019	Amended	2018-2019	(Over)	
			Budget	Actual	Budget		Actual	Under	
								2019-2020	
								Budget	
GENERAL FUND EXPENSES:									
Supervisor									
Salary & Wages	101.171.702		\$19,500.00	\$19,500.00	\$19,500.00		\$19,500.00	\$0.00	\$20,700.00
Per Diem	101.171.703		\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00		\$150.00	\$100.00	\$250.00
Professional Services	101.171.801		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mileage	101.171.860		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Education & Training	101.171.960		\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00		\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL			\$20,750.00	\$19,750.00	\$20,750.00		\$19,650.00	\$1,100.00	\$22,050.00
Elections									
Salary & Wages	101.191.702		\$4,000.00	\$1,215.00	\$4,000.00		\$3,499.40	\$500.60	\$4,000.00
Supplies	101.191.726		\$800.00	\$671.32	\$800.00		\$592.47	\$207.53	\$800.00
Professional Services	101.191.801		\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00		\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
Transportation	101.191.860		\$400.00	\$8.67	\$400.00		\$124.85	\$275.15	\$400.00
Printing & Publishing	101.191.900		\$600.00	\$0.00	\$600.00		\$0.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
TOTAL			\$9,800.00	\$1,894.99	\$9,800.00		\$4,216.72	\$5,583.28	\$9,800.00
Assessor									
Salary & Wages	101.209.702		\$25,000.00	\$25,265.40	\$25,000.00		\$23,159.95	\$1,840.05	\$25,000.00
Supplies	101.209.726		\$3,000.00	\$1,083.94	\$3,000.00		\$1,015.29	\$1,984.71	\$3,000.00
Prof. Services	101.209.801		\$5,000.00	\$3,279.32	\$2,000.00		\$3,455.43	(\$1,455.43)	\$3,000.00
Prof Card File	101.209.802		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$10,000.00		\$11,000.00	(\$1,000.00)	\$10,000.00
Mileage	101.209.860		\$500.00	\$376.38	\$500.00		\$432.39	\$67.61	\$500.00
Communications	101.209.850		\$140.00	\$30.00	\$300.00		\$125.00	\$175.00	\$300.00
TOTAL			\$34,640.00	\$31,035.04	\$40,800.00		\$39,188.06	\$1,611.94	\$41,800.00
Clerk									
Salaries & Wages	101.215.702		\$22,000.00	\$22,000.00	\$22,000.00		\$21,999.96	\$0.04	\$26,000.00
Per Diem	101.215.703		\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00		\$150.00	\$100.00	\$250.00
Deputy Wages	101.215.703		\$3,000.00	\$173.00	\$3,000.00		\$2,169.50	\$830.50	\$2,000.00
Office Supplies	101.215.726		\$2,000.00	\$2,450.55	\$2,000.00		\$2,165.13	(\$165.13)	\$2,000.00
Prof. Services	101.215.801		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$700.00		\$75.00	\$625.00	\$700.00
Communications	101.215.850		\$700.00	\$748.88	\$500.00		\$804.84	(\$304.84)	\$1,000.00
Mileage	101.215.860		\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00		\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Repairs	101.215.930		\$500.00	\$35.00	\$500.00		\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Education & Training	101.215.960		\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00		\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Equipment	101.215.977		\$1,500.00	\$875.96	\$1,500.00		\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
TOTAL			\$31,550.00	\$26,533.39	\$31,550.00		\$26,522.93	\$3,685.57	\$34,550.00

Big Paririe Park Commission 2019-2020 Budget

2019 Budget Accounts				3%	Page 1
Anticipated Revenue/Income:	2018 Budget Amt	2018 Actual to date	2019 Budget	Upcoming Projects	
626.1 Use & Admission Income					
626 Cabins	\$15,000.00	\$9,611.92	\$12,000.00		
627 Campgrounds	\$433,000.00	\$441,513.85	\$444,871.00		
628 Day Pass	\$22,500.00	\$18,900.00	\$19,450.00		
629 Docks	\$85,000.00	\$77,451.41	\$79,800.00		
639 Stickers	\$22,500.00	\$23,294.51	\$24,000.00		
626.1 Use & Admis. Total	\$578,000.00	\$570,771.69	\$580,121.00		
622.1 Sales & Amenities Income					
622 Apparel	\$0.00	\$1,595.88	\$1,800.00		
623 Candy	\$0.00	\$4,898.15	\$6,700.00		
632 Wood	\$3,500.00	\$4,472.00	\$4,600.00		
633 Pop	\$2,500.00	\$1,120.25	\$1,175.00		
634 Ice	\$11,000.00	\$12,373.42	\$12,750.00		
635 Ice Cream	\$3,500.00	\$3,382.48	\$3,500.00		
602 Camp Store	\$0.00	\$2,576.95	\$3,000.00		
621 Worms & Bait Sales	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$500.00		
622.1 Sales & Amen. Total	\$20,500.00	\$30,719.13	\$34,025.00		
630.1 Additional Services Income					
630 House Boat Launch	\$0.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,450.00		
646 Dump Station	\$0.00	\$70.00	\$100.00		
637 Pavillion Rental	\$500.00	\$400.00	\$420.00		
642 Electric Usage	\$27,500.00	\$23,604.06	\$24,350.00		
630.1 Additional Serv. Total	\$28,000.00	\$25,474.06	\$26,320.00		
640.1 Fees & Interest Income					
640 Sales Tax	\$0.00	\$1,284.00	\$1,500.00		
645 Rebates & Refunds	\$0.00	\$11,099.41	\$0.00		
671 Cancellatin Fees	\$0.00	\$1,916.00	\$2,000.00		

Anticipated Revenue/Income:	2018 Budget Amt	2018 Actual to date	2019 Budget	Upcoming Projects
Page 2				
640.1 Fees Income Continued:				
638 Reservation Fee	\$9,000.00	\$8,684.42	\$9,000.00	
665 Interest Income	\$1,500.00	\$6,598.50	\$6,700.00	
636 Other Income	\$0.00	\$3,146.38	\$1,000.00	
670 Donation Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
640.1 Fees & Interest Income	\$10,500.00	\$32,728.71	\$20,200.00	
Total Anticipated Income:	\$637,000.00	\$659,693.59	\$660,666.00	

Anticipated Expenses:	2018	2018	2019
700.1 Salary & Wages, Payroll			
700 Payroll Expense	\$243,000.00	\$191,521.42	
702 Salary & Wages	\$0.00	\$28,212.51	
714 State Withholding	\$0.00	\$8,688.63	
705 State Unemployment	\$22,000.00	\$15,485.55	
712 Federal Withholding	\$0.00	\$2,096.87	
704 Federal Soc Sec - Employer	\$0.00	\$12,403.92	
711 Federal Soc Sec - Employee	\$0.00	\$1,361.78	
707 Medicare - Employer	\$0.00	\$0.00	
709 Medicare - Employee	\$0.00	\$0.00	
706 Federal Unemployment	\$0.00	\$0.00	
703 Per Diem	\$15,000.00	\$10,461.50	
708 Garnishment	\$0.00	\$421.78	
710 Child Support	\$0.00	\$0.00	
700.1 Salary, Wage Total	\$280,000.00	\$270,653.96	\$297,000.00

Anticipated Expenses:	2018 Budget Amt	2018 Actual to date	2019 Budget	Upcoming Projects
Page 3				
727.1 Office & Housekeeping Expense				
727 Office Supplies	\$3,500.00	\$4,495.78	\$4,630.00	
729 Bath House Supplies	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,500.00	(assuming no paper)
900 Advertising Expense	\$3,000.00	\$746.00	\$6,000.00	Includes \$5000 Tourist Co
858 Website Expense	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	
910 Printing Expense	\$500.00	\$488.64	\$3,300.00	
915 Postage Expense	\$0.00	\$641.05	\$700.00	
932 Employee Uniform Exp	\$0.00	\$1,578.00	\$1,800.00	
727.1 Office & Housekeeping Total	\$7,000.00	\$7,949.47	\$24,930.00	
728.1 Maintenance Expense				
728 Operating Supplies	\$30,000.00	\$8,273.10	\$15,000.00	
929 Equipment Repair	\$3,000.00	\$2,232.23	\$2,400.00	
930 Building & Grounds	\$23,500.00	\$33,516.40	\$30,100.00	w/ Water Heaters
935 Vehicle Repair	\$3,500.00	\$3,145.48	\$3,500.00	
609 Tools	\$0.00	\$574.94	\$1,500.00	
936 Sub Cont Labor	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	
728.1 Maintenance Totals	\$74,000.00	\$63,641.09	\$54,500.00	
801.1 Professional Service Expense				
801 Attorney Fees	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	
801-2 Other Prof. Fees	\$20,000.00	\$389.95	\$5,000.00	w/ Rec Plan
801-3 Licenses, Permit & Lease	\$400.00	\$3,201.50	\$4,000.00	
803 Audit	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,500.00	Audit due
806 ITT & Systems Repair	\$0.00	\$557.50	\$1,000.00	
810 Education	\$300.00	\$200.00	\$1,000.00	Defib. Certification/ CPF
Personnel Screening	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	
801.1 Profess. Service Total	\$21,700.00	\$4,348.95	\$17,000.00	
610.1 Sales & Amenities Expense				
610 Pop Expense	\$2,500.00	\$854.40	\$1,000.00	
611 Ice Expense	\$7,000.00	\$6,786.37	\$7,000.00	

Big Prairie Park Commission 2019-2020 Budget

Page 4				
612 Wood Expense	\$0.00	\$1,915.00	\$2,000.00	
613 Ice Cream Expense	\$2,500.00	\$2,146.68	\$2,250.00	
615 Candy Expense	\$0.00	\$1,072.00	\$3,500.00	
616 Apparel Expense	\$0.00	\$2,409.90	\$3,000.00	
624 Camp Store Expense	\$0.00	\$2,307.75	\$3,000.00	
614 Worm & Bait Expense	\$0.00	\$596.35	\$600.00	
601 Sales Tax Expense	\$0.00	\$1,241.12	\$1,500.00	
610.1 Sales & Amen. Totals	\$12,000.00	\$19,329.57	\$23,850.00	
Anticipated Expenses:	2018 Budget Amt	2018 Actual to date	2019 Budget	Upcoming Projects
821.1 Accounting Expense				
821 Credit Card Fee	\$0.00	\$10,904.82	\$11,250.00	
726 Bank Fee	\$0.00	\$37.99	\$50.00	
647 Reservation Fee	\$0.00	\$1,036.89	\$8,975.00	Mission Mgt Yrly
672 Cancellation Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
825 Penalties & Interest Exp.	\$0.00	\$928.89	\$100.00	
960 Refund Expense	\$5,000.00	\$9,140.13	\$500.00	
999 NSF Fee	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	Cust NSF
822 Accounting & Bookkeeping	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	Ross Acctg
821.1 Accounting Totals	\$5,000.00	\$22,548.72	\$26,375.00	
805.1 Operational Expenses				
805 Security Expense	\$10,000.00	\$3,045.00	\$3,200.00	New Co Sheriff Dept
860 Mileage Expense	\$800.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	
921 Garbage Service Expense	\$5,000.00	\$6,240.00	\$6,450.00	
922 Gas & Fuel Expense	\$7,000.00	\$6,274.74	\$6,500.00	
924 Sewage Expense	\$5,000.00	\$5,439.40	\$5,650.00	
940 Rental Expense	\$800.00	\$6,354.67	\$6,550.00	Includes \$5000 Hall Rent
950 Property Tax Expense	\$4,000.00	\$4,655.78	\$5,000.00	
978 Membership Expense	\$0.00	\$134.00	\$200.00	
938 Road Brining & Repair	\$0.00	\$6,720.00	\$36,800.00	Brine, Gravel, & New Paver
805.1 Operational Totals	\$32,600.00	\$38,863.59	\$70,550.00	

Page 5				
Anticipated Expenses	2018 Budget Amt	2018 Actual to date	2019 Budget	Upcoming Projects
850.1 Utilities Expense:				
850 Phone & Cable Expense	\$8,000.00	\$6,466.40	\$6,700.00	
855 Internet Expense	\$2,000.00	\$1,027.26	\$1,300.00	
920 Electric Expense	\$80,000.00	\$67,236.80	\$70,000.00	
923 Propane/Heating Expense	\$1,500.00	\$1,932.42	\$2,100.00	
850.1 Utilities Totals	\$91,500.00	\$76,662.88	\$80,100.00	
730.1 Insurance Expense				
730 Liability	\$0.00	\$7,173.00	\$7,400.00	
731 Building & Grounds	\$0.00	\$1,746.00	\$1,800.00	
732 Workers Comp	\$0.00	\$3,685.00	\$3,800.00	
733 Auto & Vehicles	\$0.00	\$6,018.00	\$6,200.00	
730.1 Insurance Totals	\$20,000.00	\$18,622.00	\$19,200.00	
880.1 Promotions				
881 Park Activities	\$0.00	\$744.33	\$3,200.00	
883 Travel & Entertainment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	
884 Meals	\$0.00	\$674.25	\$1,000.00	
905 Donations	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	(\$1000.00 Fire Dept)
880 Other Promotions	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$300.00	
880.1 Promotion Totals	\$1,000.00	\$3,068.58	\$6,300.00	
970.1 Capital Outlay Expense:				
970 Equipment	\$40,000.00	\$55,505.40	\$10,000.00	
975 Building	\$50,000.00	\$3,927.23	\$4,700.00	
977 Land	\$10,000.00	\$13,069.58	\$11,900.00	
970.1 Capital Outlay Totals	\$100,000.00	\$72,502.21	\$26,600.00	

Page 6				
Capital Gain	Equipment	Bldg	Land	
AED Defibrillator (2)	\$5,000.00			
Hand Dryers (12)	\$5,000.00	\$0.00		
BB Pressure Tank (Big Bend)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,200.00	
Oxbow Meters-committed	\$0.00		\$2,700.00	
Grills	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	
Pit Toilet Floors (Ox & BB)		\$2,700.00		
Lot Markers			\$2,000.00	
Well Houses		\$2,000.00		
Landscape & Flowers			\$2,500.00	Total Capital Gain
Capital Gain Totals	\$10,000.00	\$4,700.00	\$11,900.00	\$26,600.00

Projects to be Accomplished	Add to Capital Outlay
AED Defibrillator (2)	\$5,000.00
Hand Dryers	\$5,000.00
BBQ Grills @\$150.00	\$1,500.00
Elect. Meters - Niebors elect	\$2,700.00
Pressure Tank - BB Traller Park	\$3,200.00
Pit Toilet Floor Upgrades	\$2,700.00
Lot Markers	\$2,000.00
Lanscaping	\$2,500.00
Well Houses	\$2,000.00
Total Projects	\$26,600.00

INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

The inventory of existing recreational facilities highlights existing recreational assets within Big Prairie Township as well as facilities in adjacent communities, which are available for public use. For facilities in adjacent communities, only facilities owned by Newaygo County were included in the inventory as sufficient data for other locally owned and operated parks was unavailable at the time of this writing or had no significance to Big Prairie Township.

Regional Commission staff worked closely with township Board and Parks Commission officials to update the inventory carried over from the 2014 Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan. Regional staff used several other methods in compiling a comprehensive and inclusive inventory. First, regional staff along with township officials completed tours of facilities located within Big Prairie Township in October 2019. Second, staff reviewed the 2018- 2022 Newaygo County Recreation Plan and the Newaygo County Parks & Recreation website in detail. Finally, staff analyzed website resources to find information regarding county, state, and other recreation facilities to include in the following inventory.

Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

No parks within Big Prairie Township have received grants for park improvements or acquisition in recent history. In 1999, a grant was submitted for improvements to Big Bend Park for \$342,000 which was to be used for general park infrastructure upgrades but was subsequently withdrawn.

Recreation Facilities in Big Prairie Township

As noted in the Administrative Structure section of this plan, there are two recreational administrative entities within the township. The larger role is played by the Big Prairie Township Park Commission, which operates two campgrounds and a day use park under a lease agreement with Consumer's Energy. The primary users of these facilities are from outside the township. The township board is more concerned with the (smaller scale) recreational needs of permanent township residents, overseeing the development of Hardy Recreation Area.

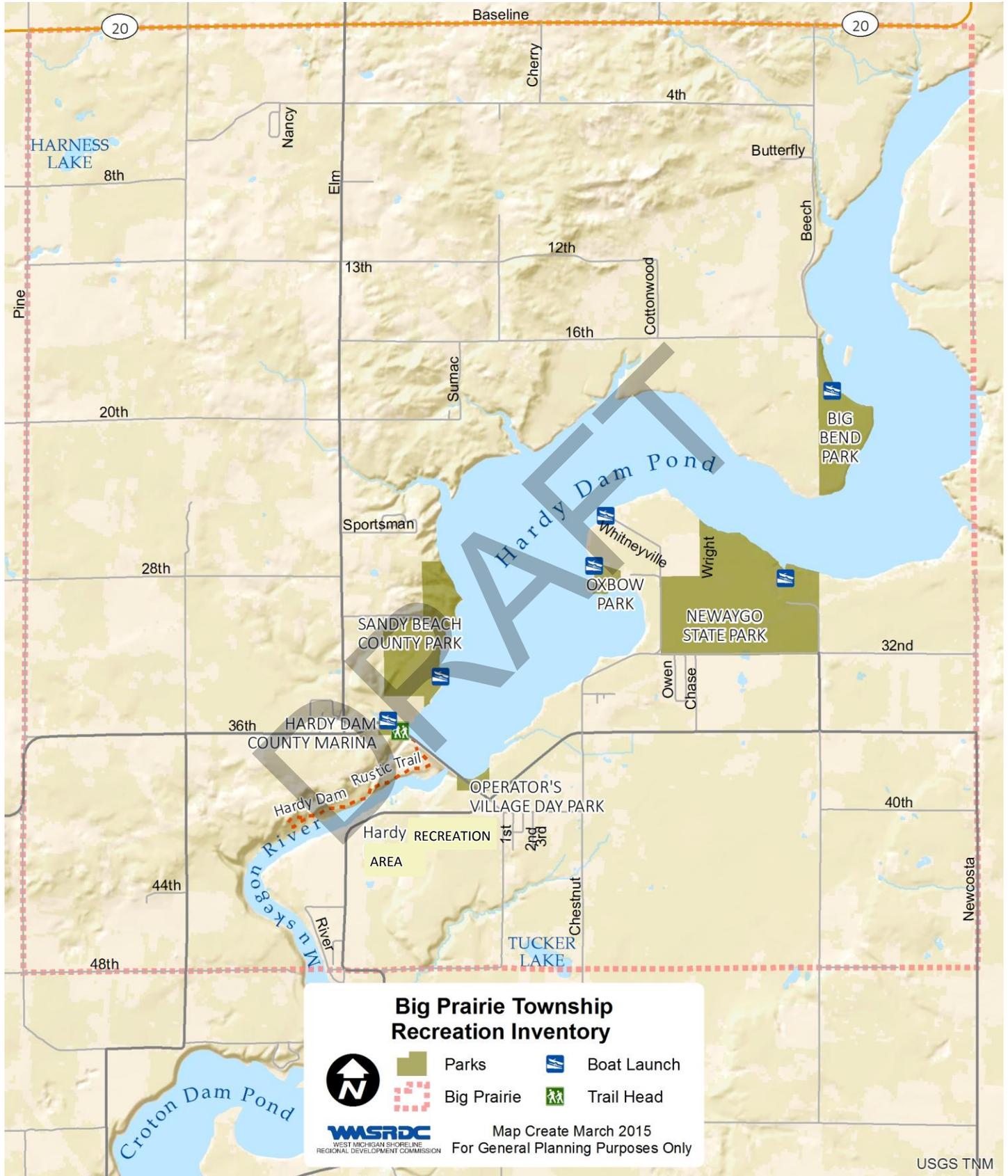
Table 12 summarizes all public park facilities within Big Prairie Township. A descriptive narrative for parks operated by the Big Prairie Township Park Commission and the Township is provided in the following table. Narrative for parks owned or operated by other entities such as Newaygo County or the State of Michigan, were captured from facility descriptions available on their respective websites. ADA Accessibility assessments were not performed for parks outside of the Big Prairie Township or Big Prairie Township Park Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 12

Recreation Facilities Within Big Prairie Township						
Park Name & Size (Acres)	Ownership/ Operator	Park Type	Facilities/ Features	Accessibility Ranking* (1-5)	Accessible Elements	Service Area
Big Bend Park	BPT Park Commission	Campground	-230 Semi-Modern Sites -Boat Launch -Restrooms -Marina -Nature Area	2	-Dedicated accessible bathrooms	Region
Croton-Hardy Pathway (6 Miles)	Newaygo County	On-Road Trail	-Paved Trail	N/A		Local
Hardy Dam County Marina	Newaygo County	Marina	-35 Slips -Boat Rental -Boat Launch -Potable Water -Vault Restrooms -Pump-Out Service	N/A		Region
Hardy Recreation Area (30 Acres)	Big Prairie Township	Community Park	-Picnic Pavilion -Softball Field -Vault Toilet	2	-Picnic Pavilion	Local
Newaygo County State Park (257 acres)	State of Michigan DNR	Campground & Day Use	-90 Rustic Campsites -Boat Launch -Vault Restrooms -Picnic Area -Playground -Beach	N/A		Region
Operators Village Day Park	BPT Park Commission	Regional Park	-30 Parking Spaces (N. side 36 th) -10 Parking Spaces (S. side 36 th) -Vault Restrooms -Fishing Pier -Picnic Area -Canoe Takeout (N side of 36 th) -Canoe Launch (S side of 36 th) -Portage Trail	2	-Accessible path to fishing pier	Region
Oxbow Park	BPT Park Commission	Campground & Day Use	-197 semi-modern sites -Central Restrooms -Showers -Public Boat launch -Marina -Beach	2	-New ADA compliant bathrooms	Region
Sandy Beach County Park (129 acres)	Newaygo County	Campground & Day Use	-225 Semi-Modern Sites -Restrooms -Showers -Picnic Area -Beach -Playground -Boat Launch -Dock Rentals	N/A		Region

*Accessibility Rankings: 1 = none of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design; 2 = some; 3 = most; 4 = all; and 5 = the facility meets the Principles of Universal Design

Figure 8



Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Newaygo State Park

Newaygo State Park is a 99-site rustic campground, which sits atop 20-foot embankments overlooking the Hardy Dam Pond, a six-mile flooding of the Muskegon River. The park caters primarily to campers, anglers, and recreational boaters. There are several picnic sites overlooking the reservoir for day users. The campground is nestled in oak and poplar forests and is noted for its large, private sites and scenic beauty. There is a 20-30 foot forested buffer between sites, and each site is provided with a picnic table and a fire ring (State of Michigan).

Newaygo County Parks & Recreation

“The Edge” Croton-Hardy Pathway

This 6-mile trail is known for its hilly terrain and lush valleys surrounding the Muskegon and White Rivers and many lakes, wetlands and streams. From Croton Dam to Hardy Dam along the Muskegon River, this picturesque trail was completed in the fall of 2013.

This first “dam-to-dam” section is part of a county-wide project to build over 80 miles of connected, paved pathways for walkers, runners and cyclists. When completed, the pathways will connect 12 townships and the communities of Fremont, Grant, Hesperia, Newaygo and White Cloud. This trail will be incorporated into the Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam (newaygocountyexploring.com).

Hardy Dam County Marina

Hardy Dam County Marina is located in a protected cove right next to the Hardy Dam on 4,000-acre Hardy Pond. The marina provides access to 17 miles of open waterway with miles of undeveloped shoreline. The marina currently offers 35 slips with daily and seasonal rental, boat launch, potable water, vault toilets, and pump-out service (Newaygo County).

Sandy Beach County Park

Sandy Beach County Park is situated on 129 acres along the shore of the 4,000-acre Hardy Pond. This park offers 176 campsites, 26 of which are full hook-up, and 9 camping cabins. A three lane modern boat launch and dock rentals are available. Additionally, this park features a sandy swimming beach, picnic area, play areas, and a group camping site. A pavilion is available for reservation. (Newaygo County).

Big Prairie Township Park Commission

Big Bend Park

Located on the west shore of Hardy Pond and accessed off Elm Road via 16th Ave (refer to Figure 8), this park has three separate semi-modern camping areas separated by a nature area. There are 230 sites at Big Bend. Camping facilities include restrooms, electric service, marina, and some area water hydrants (no sewer), playgrounds and picnic areas. A public boat launch is available adjacent to the southerly camping area. Other amenities include cabins, playgrounds, a beach, docks, bathhouses, pavilion and a dump station. After the summer camping season, park usage drops off; but the park is used for ice fishing access during winter. This park is extensively wooded with Hardy Pond views everywhere.

Oxbow Park

Oxbow Park contains about 200 semi-modern sites with electrical service and water service (no sewer); which is slightly fewer sites than Big Bend. There are two camping cabins, with plans to add more in the future. It has central restrooms with toilets and showers, and a large marina with slips available for occasional and seasonal use. Some of the sites are reserved for seasonal use and the park is host to many short-term visitors. It has a pleasant beach, playground amenities, all-around shore exposure and a nice boat launch area featuring two new docks. Like Big Bend Park, park usage drops off in the fall, with winter use primarily for ice fishing access.



Accessibility analysis: Some elements of the park are accessible, including new bathrooms. Docks need to be upgraded to ADA standards. Approach to campground office needs to be improved.

Oxbow Park Map



Big Prairie Township

Hardy Recreation Area

This park is located on the east side of Hardy Drive in Section 33 and contains about 30 acres, of which about half is wooded. Presently, the open area has a picnic pavilion, playground equipment, and a softball field. This park is used primarily by local residents and it will be a focus for improvements planned and implemented by the Big Prairie Township Board.

Accessibility analysis: Some elements of the park are accessible, including the pavilion. Proposed modifications to improve ADA accessibility include: parking area with walkway connecting to park facilities; walkway to pavilion; accessible picnic table with walkway connecting; above ground privy toilet facility with walkway spur from main walkway; and playground equipment.

Adjacent Recreation Facilities

Adjacent recreation facilities include facilities near Big Prairie Township that are accessible to township residents. For the purposes of this plan, only Newaygo County facilities are identified. The facilities, along with their type, facilities (facility elements), and service area are included below for reference. Because these facilities are all county facilities, they are available to Big Prairie Township residents for recreation and leisure.

Table 13

Newaygo County Parks & Recreation Facilities (Adjacent to Big Prairie Township)				
Park Name & Size (Acres)	Ownership/ Operator	Park Type	Facilities/ Features	Service Area
Henning Park Campground (82 Acres)	Newaygo County	Campground	-Boat Launch -60 Modern Campsites -Baseball Diamonds -Soccer Field -Volleyball Court -Basketball Court	County
Pettibone Lake Park Campground (3 Acres)	Newaygo County	Campground	-16 Semi Modern Campsites -Beach -Boat Launch	County
Sports Park County Park (89.91 Acres)	Newaygo County	Sports Park	-Educational Building (Lodge) -Office -Outdoor Stage -Two Toboggan Runs -Ice Skating Area -Maintenance Facility -Snowmobile Trailhead	County

Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam

The Trail

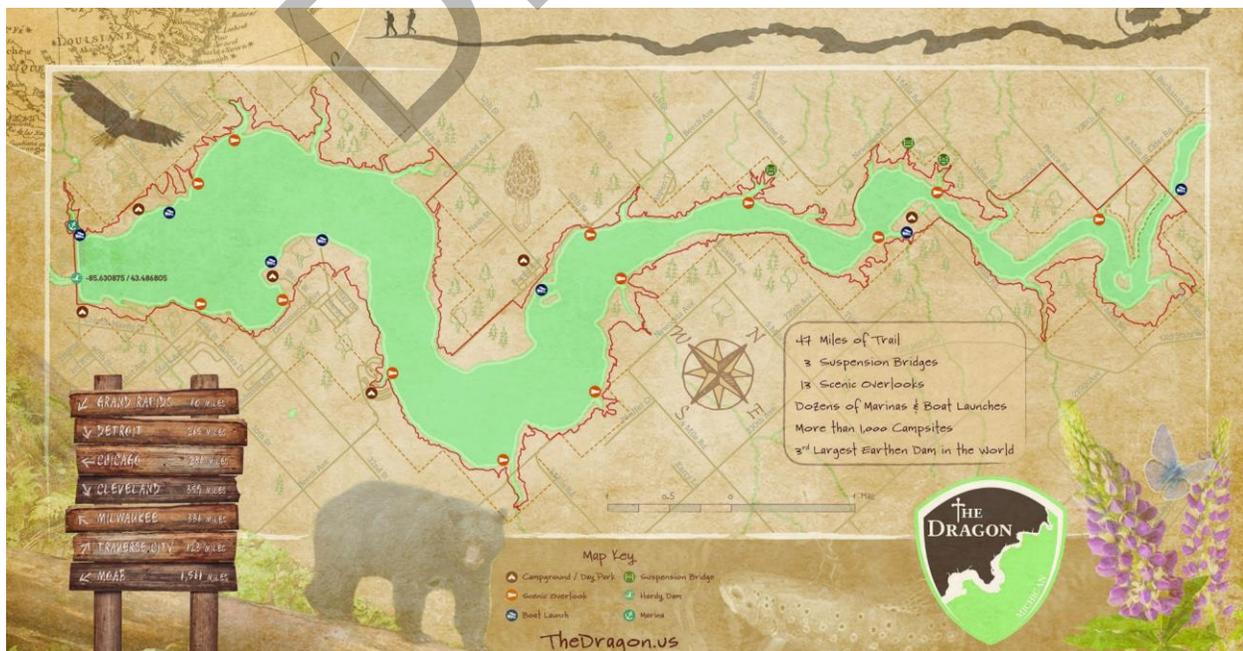
The Dragon trail is a non-motorized, multi-use, natural surface trail. It will include a 47-mile mountain biking and pedestrian adventure loop trail designed, engineered and endorsed by the prestigious International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA). Construction is expected to be complete in 2021-2022. The trail will be managed by Mecosta and Newaygo county parks boards and maintained through revenues and fees generated from the trail. It will also be located on land owned by Consumers Energy and will have water views, challenging valleys, and 23 proposed bridges along the trail.

A Brief History

In summer of 2013, the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners voted to make the Hardy Pond Trail concept a community priority by bringing the project under the County's purview. The county established a joint committee that included Mecosta County and brought together a number of other stakeholders to participate in the development of the trail. A financial commitment was made by the Fremont Area Community Foundation for an economic impact study and trail design was completed in 2014 by the International Mountain Biking Association. After years of planning and coordination, The Dragon received approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and proceeded into the first phase of construction in 2019.

Impacts for Big Prairie Township

The Dragon is expected to significantly increase traffic and usage of parks in Big Prairie Township, which will connect campgrounds, marinas, and day parks that outline the Hardy Dam Pond. The trail will bring new visibility to the township's parks visitors through passers-by; and the parks will serve as trailheads for the Dragon. The anticipated increase in visitors to the area is anticipated to create many service sector and tourism-related economic development opportunities in the Newaygo area, including Big Prairie Township.



RESOURCE INVENTORY

The resource inventory of this plan identifies open space that the community feels is important to protect into the future. Communities choose to protect open space land for many reasons; but the most common are that the land is ecologically significant. Wetlands, floodplains, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, farmland, wildlife habitat, rare species, and scenic viewsheds are all examples of ecological features that may have significant value from a conservation standpoint.

Native Prairie Grass Project

In 2007, Big Prairie Township entered into a cooperative arrangement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to restore a 34-acre prairie grass habitat as existed in the area over 150 years ago. The actual area is part of a township-owned cemetery in the SW ¼ of section 18.

The restoration process involved removing most woody vegetation, prescribed burning, invasive plant species control, and re-seeding. The project intended to restore rare and declining (grass) habitats. Initially, the invasive species Scotch Pine was removed by hydro axing the trees. Prescribed burns followed. The initial effort extended into 2009 with costs shared between the USDA and Big Prairie Township.

Subsequent to these initial efforts, a grant from the Fremont Area Community Foundation was made available to help eliminate additional woody species. In 2014, the Big Prairie/Everett Township Cemetery was awarded an additional grant from I.T.C. (a private energy transmission company) for continuing work on the prairie and to install signage and build a handicap accessible walkway.

Big Prairie Township considers the prairie grass effort a significant part of its efforts to create a more sustainable community. As such, the project will be noted as an on-going “green” project in the five-year recreation plan.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Planning Methods

In order to effectively evaluate future recreation needs in Big Prairie Township, a number of planning methods were used. The State of Michigan provides a framework for evaluating certain types of recreational facilities, through a select set of criteria. These criteria in most circumstances should only be used as a guide in determining whether or not certain types of recreational facilities are warranted or needed in relation to the population of Big Prairie Township.

In addition to reviewing facilities against state recreation standards, the township board and park commission reviewed results from input received at public meetings, citizen comments, professional planning input, and used their local community knowledge to reach conclusions about the township’s future recreation needs.

It should be understood that the specific recreation needs of residents of Big Prairie Township may differ from the recreational needs of the many seasonal visitors to the community. Users of the Big Prairie Township Park Commission facilities are predominantly non-residents, and these facilities are essentially public facilities operated as non-profit ventures. The local economic spin-off is significant. Big Prairie Township officials must strike a balance between continuing to support facilities that contribute to the local economy and serving the recreational needs of township residents. This balance is reflected in the Goals & Objectives and Action Plan of this document.

Public Input Process

To begin the public input process, a parks and recreation survey was developed and was posted on the Big Prairie Township government and Big Prairie Parks websites. The survey was directly emailed to 203 Big Prairie parks campers, and made available online from September 2019 through completion of the plan in January 2020. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

Next, the public was invited to participate in a public meeting on October 10, 2019, which was intended to gain a better understanding of resident recreation needs within Big Prairie Township. The meeting was conducted during the regular monthly meeting of the township Parks Commission, in partnership with the Township Board. The notice published for the public meeting included notice of the survey and invited the public's input and participation. During the public meeting, residents were asked to complete the survey, as well as share comments and questions in a town hall format. One member from the general public was in attendance, in addition to representatives from the Township Board and Parks Commission. Comments received during the planning process, including this meeting, are included in Appendix C.

After the draft plan was completed in December 2019, residents were invited to review the plan and provide comment about its contents during a 30-day public review period. A notice was published on December 9 and January 6 to notify the public of the review period, where to locate the proposed draft recreation plan, and to announce the date of the public hearing to receive comments regarding the proposed draft. The public review period was held from December 15, 2019 through January 13, 2020; the proposed draft was available for review at the Big Prairie Township Hall and on the WMSRDC website; and the public hearing took place on January 14. Copies of public meeting notices and meeting minutes are available in Appendix A.

NARROWING THE FOCUS – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN

The function of this section is to synthesize information gleaned from the community with data collected for this plan, evaluate recreation needs against state recreation criterion, weigh public comment, and articulate needs from an administrative perspective.

Goals and Objectives

Big Prairie Township

Goal 1: Maintain a long-term commitment, in participation with other public and private entities, to develop and complete a hiking trail system around Hardy Pond.

Goal 2: Maintain a long term commitment to the prairie grass restoration program, but with a very modest local fund outlay.

Goal 3: Devise a development plan and a phased program of improvements at Hardy Recreation Area focusing primarily upon the needs of local residents.

Goal 4: Cooperate with the coalition of organizations and local government units to complete and promote The Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam.

Goal 5: Secure funding from entities such as the State of Michigan to support development of The Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam, as well as for improvements at Hardy Recreation Area.

Big Prairie Township Park Commission

Goal 1: Upgrade aging infrastructure at Big Bend and Oxbow campgrounds.

Objective 1.1: Sanitary station upgrade or renovation at both campgrounds.

Objective 1.2: Replace wells at both campgrounds.

Objective 1.3: Replace all well houses at both parks.

Objective 1.4: Develop additional parking areas in both parks.

Objective 1.5: Replace catwalk and docking system at both campgrounds.

Objective 1.6: Survey expansion area at Oxbow campground.

Goal 2: Upgrade aging facilities at Big Bend Campground, Oxbow Campground, and Operators Village.

Objective 2.1: Replace bathhouse in Big Bend campground – The Point.

Objective 2.2: Renovate additional bathrooms in both campgrounds.

Objective 2.3: Upgrade beach and playground equipment in both campgrounds.

Objective 2.4: Add additional playground equipment at Operators Village Day Park.

Goal 3: Construct new facilities at Big Bend and Oxbow campgrounds.

Objective 3.1: Placement of additional cabins in both campgrounds.

Objective 3.2: Placement of two (2) fishing docks at Big Bend Campground.

Objective 3.3: Placement of one (1) fishing dock at Oxbow campground.

Objective 3.4: Develop full-hookup section at Big Bend campground.

Objective 3.5: Office – Oxbow Park.

Goal 4: Improve ADA accessibility at all parks.

Objective 4.1: New facility construction and facilities upgrades should comply with ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

Objective 4.2: Update amenities to remove barriers to access and include elements of accessibility.

DRAFT

PROPOSED FIVE YEAR ACTION PLANS

Over the next five-year period, the Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan will be used by Big Prairie Township and the Big Prairie Township Parks Commission to guide actions toward the goals set forth through this planning process. Through this and past the planning processes, it became apparent that the community values the existing recreational opportunities, both local and regional in nature, currently available in the township.

Through the process of developing the plan, community leaders stressed the need to bring campground/RV facilities up to date, and expressed an eagerness to cooperate with Newaygo County and other partners to see that Michigan's Dragon trail is completed. All upgrades and improvements to recreation facilities will be designed to meet ADA accessibility standards. It is also a priority to maintain the rehabilitated prairie lands to preserve the township's history.

The proposed action plans for the Township Board and the Park Commission are detailed below, and presented in a parallel format, similar to the goals and objectives section.

Big Prairie Township Action Plan

Year 1

Hardy Day Park – Development Plan	\$1,000
Set-aside for future improvements @ Hardy Day Park	\$2,500

Year 2

Soccer area grading/seeding (to be done with volunteers)	\$3,500
Hardy Day Park Phase 1	\$100,000*

Year 3

Set-aside for Hardy Day Park improvements	\$3,500
---	---------

Year 4

Set-aside for Hardy Day Park improvements	\$3,500
---	---------

Year 5

Set-aside for Hardy Day Park improvements	\$3,500
---	---------

Note: Set-asides are shown as a budget tool to allow accumulation of funds for a larger project or as a basis for matching funds for potential grants. The assumption is that the Township would create a specific Hardy Day Park account and actually fund it.

*Obviously this project will require more funds than allowed for normal budget expenses. The Township may opt to use its money as matching funds for a grant which would possibly allow completion of the entire proposed Hardy Day Park Trail, and perhaps another related project.

Big Prairie Township Park Commission Action Plan

Year 1 (2020)

Lot resizing and site markers	\$10,000
Primitive campsites	\$10,000
(makes up the number of sites taken out during resizing.)	
Receive Cabin #1	\$17,000
Full hookup sites (13)	\$20,000
One (1) Bathhouse upgrade	\$15,000
Two (2) Well upgrade	\$16,000
New parking lot (Oxbow)	\$30,000
Exit gates	\$4,000
ADA swimming area	\$20,000
Kayak Launch	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$157,000

Year 2 (2021)

New Bathhouse with Septic	\$200,000
Fishing Dock (2)	\$10,000
Lot resizing and site markers	\$10,000
Receive Cabin #2	\$17,000
TOTAL	\$237,000

Year 3 (2022)

One (1) Well upgrade	\$8,000
Receive Cabin #3	\$17,000
Boat launch / repairs	\$40,000
New Bathhouse	\$160,000
Lot resizing and site markers	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$235,000

Year 4 (2023)

Playground Equip. upgrade	\$54,000
Lot resizing and site markers	\$10,000
Two (2) Bathhouse upgrade	\$30,000
New parking lot day park	\$30,000
Camp Shelters* primitive only (4)	\$6,000
TOTAL	\$130,000

Year 5 (2024)

Three (3) Bathhouse upgrade	\$45,000
Office	\$120,000
Dump Station – full hookup	\$50,000
TOTAL	\$215,000

Additional Comment

Financial Issues

Due to the somewhat complex nature of the administrative relationship between Big Prairie Township and Big Prairie Township Parks Commission, financial issues arose during the planning process. For example, it is not clear whether there is a legal bonding mechanism available to the Park Commission. Bond financing is a way to accomplish a larger project, or even a combination of projects simultaneously in a way that saves time and achieves some economies of scale. The actual feasibility and political will of bond-type financing for a recreation project is unknown at this point.

Based upon cursory cost estimates, some of the potential projects would be difficult for the Park Commission to accomplish during a 5-year pay-as-you-go program in lieu of outside assistance. With repayment from Park Commission funds, it may be possible for the Township to help fund a project “package,” in combination with grant funds from the State of Michigan or other sources.

As an example, consider a project of improvements shown below. This is an illustration presented solely for comparison and does not necessarily represent any local intent to pursue bonding as means of financing.

Example Project Total Cost	\$1,000,000
Assume State of Michigan Grant	\$500,000
Local Match for Grant (by bonding)	\$500,000
Estimated annual bond debt cost at 4.5%,	
Over 10 years	\$63,200 per year
Over 15 years	\$46,555 per year

Parallel Action Programs

The primary need in Big Prairie Township, and the surrounding area in general, for the Campground/RV parks operated by the Park Commission is not to address a lack of open space or greenway space. Rather, the need for supplemental funding to reconstruct aging infrastructure at these beautiful facilities, which to a large extent, serve mostly people from outside the township. In this respect, Big Bend and Oxbow Parks function as “regional” parks that are publicly owned and operated, and provide significant benefits to the local economy.

Public Participation

(SECTION TO BE UPDATED, AS NECESSARY, FOLLOWING PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING)

Copies of meeting notices and comments received from the public are included in the appendix section.

The lack of public interest in the recreational planning is regrettable and not fully understood. It is possible that residents appreciate what they already have and do not perceive additional needs. It may also be true that the visitors who are the primary users of the campgrounds and other area recreational facilities don't believe that it is their problem.

APPENDIX

A. Ratification

Official resolution of adoption by the Big Prairie Township Board dated January 14, 2020

DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

DRAFT

B. Public Notification

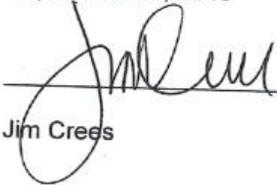
Notice of public input meeting

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF MICHIGAN
Counties of Mecosta, Montcalm,
Newaygo and Kent

Jim Crees, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is one of the editors, publishers of the River Valley, a shopper's guide, printed, published and circulated in said Counties of Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo and Kent, and that the annexed notice was duly printed and published in said newspaper on the following dates:

September 30, 2019



Jim Crees

Subscribed and sworn before me, this 30th
day of September 2019.



Notary Public: Christina M. Squires
State of Michigan, County of Lake
My Commission Expires: February 7, 2022
(Acting in the Counties of Mecosta, Montcalm,
Newaygo, and Kent)

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING
THE BIG PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN**

The Big Prairie Township Board and Big Prairie Township Parks Commission have begun the process of updating the community's recreation plan. When finished the plan will guide the community's recreation investments and enable the community to apply for recreational grant funding. Township residents and Township Park visitors are invited to attend the meeting to discuss the future of recreation in Big Prairie Township.

The meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m. on October 10, 2019 at the Big Prairie Township Hall located at 2815 South Elm Ave. White Cloud, MI, 49349. In addition all members of the public are invited to take part in a recreation survey, which is available at the Big Prairie Township Hall and on line at Bigprairietownship.org. Questions regarding these efforts may be directed to Colleen Hyman at 231-856-0447 or via email to bigprairieparks@gmail.com

Notice for the 30-day public review period and subsequent public hearing held before adoption of the plan by the governing bodies

DRAFT

C. Summary of Public Input

Survey questionnaire distributed at the Big Prairie Township Hall and made available on the Township and Parks Commission websites from September 2019 through January 2020 (two pages):

Big Prairie Township Recreation Questionnaire

Big Prairie Township is updating its 5-year community recreation plan. Please complete the survey and help us improve Big Prairie Township Parks!

Please submit completed survey to:
bigprairieparks@gmail.com
 -or- Big Prairie Township Hall
 Questions? Call: 231-856-0447 or
 Email: bigprairieparks@gmail.com

Do you live in Big Prairie Township? Yes | No

What is your age group? 0-23 | 24-35 | 36-49 | 50-64 | 65 +

What is your primary zip code? _____

How often do you visit any of the following parks in Big Prairie Township?

<i>Big Bend Park</i>	once a week	1-5 times a month	less than 5 times/year	seasonal camper	occasional camper	never
<i>Oxbow Park</i>	once a week	1-5 times a month	less than 5 times/year	seasonal camper	occasional camper	never
<i>Operators Village Day Park (Hardy Dam swim area)</i>	once a week	1-5 times a month	less than 5 times a year	6 or more times a year	never	never
<i>Hardy Dam Recreational Area</i>	once a week	1-5 times a month	less than 5 times a year	6 or more times a year	never	never

Select your primary reason for visiting parks in Big Prairie Township:

Swimming	Boating	Fishing	Picnicking	Baseball	Softball	Basketball
Disc Golf	Playground	Nature walk	Attend group activity	Camping	Metal detecting	Bike riding

Other _____

Please rate the overall maintenance of buildings and grounds at Big Prairie Township Parks you visit:

Excellent | Good | Just okay | Poor

If you seldom or never use our parks, what would the reason be? (check all that apply)

Lack of facilities	No time	Don't know what's available	Too crowded	Too far away	Not interested
--------------------	---------	-----------------------------	-------------	--------------	----------------

Other _____

What recreation activities do you enjoy at any of our parks? (check all that apply)

Boating	Baseball	Camping	Bird watching	Playgrounds
Kayaking	Softball	Fishing	Photography	Arts/Crafts
Canoeing	Basketball	Picnicking	Dog walking	Nature walks
Beach/Swim	Disc golf	Bike riding	Metal detecting	Relaxation

Other _____

Big Prairie Township Board and Big Prairie Township Parks Commission – Fall 2019

What new or different recreation activities would you like to see in any of our parks?

In your opinion, which group is most underserved within Big Prairie Parks?

Seniors	Adult	Young Adult	High School	Middle School	Elementary/preschool	Disabled persons
---------	-------	-------------	-------------	---------------	----------------------	------------------

In general, what should be our #1 focus for future parks improvements? (choose one)

Upgrade Existing Facilities	Maintain Existing Facilities	Build New Facilities	Add / Improve Amenities
-----------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------

Other _____

If funding became available, which 5 improvements would be your highest priority? (choose five)

Picnic/Grilling area	Lot size	Beach/Swim area	Wastewater system	Bathroom/ Shower
Camp Store	Primitive camping	Security	Electrical system	Cabin Camping
Dog Park	Full Hookup	Fishing pier	Playground	Parking
Basketball/ Baseball/ Softball	Campground expansion	Other	Other	Other

Regarding Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam, what would you use the trail primarily for? (choose one)

Walking/Running	Nature/Bird watching	Hiking/Backpacking	Overnight camping
Biking	Photography	Competition sports	Winter activities
Not interested in using the trail	Other	Other	Other

What are the strengths of the park(s) you visit?

What are the weaknesses of the park(s) you visit?

What information would be helpful for us to include on our website, newwaygoparks.com?

What might we address that is of great concern to you?

Thank you for your time and participation in our survey. Please note we have not asked for personal information. If you would like to identify yourself please feel free to do so.

Name:

Email Address:

Big Prairie Township Board and Big Prairie Township Parks Commission – Fall 2019

Summary of survey questionnaire responses:

(TO BE COMPLETED)

1. Do you live in Big Prairie Township?

- Yes: %
- No: %

2. What is your age group?

- 0-23: %
- 24-35: %
- 36-49: %
- 50-64: %
- 65+: %

3. What is your primary zip code?

- C:
- F:
- T:

4. How often do you visit any of the following parks in Big Prairie Township?

- Big Bend Park: Once a week: %
 1-5 times a month: %
 Less than 5 times/year: %
 Seasonal camper: %
 Occasional camper: %
 Never: %
- Oxbow Park: Once a week: %
 1-5 times a month: %
 Less than 5 times/year: %
 Seasonal camper: %
 Occasional camper: %
 Never: %
- Operators Village Day Park: Once a week: %
 1-5 times a month: %
 Less than 5 times/year: %
 Seasonal camper: %
 Occasional camper: %
 Never: %
- Hardy Dam Recreational Area: Once a week: %
 1-5 times a month: %
 Less than 5 times/year: %
 Seasonal camper: %
 Occasional camper: %
 Never: %

5. Select your primary reasons for visiting parks in Big Prairie Township (choose up to 3)

- gfhd
- ghdfgh
- dfhgdfhg
- dfhgdfgh

6. Please rate the overall maintenance of buildings and grounds at Big Prairie Township parks you visit

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

7. If you seldom or never use our parks, what would the reason be?

- Lack of facilities %
- No time %
- Don't know what's available %
- Too crowded %
- Too far away %
- Not interested %

8. What recreation activities do you enjoy at any of our parks?

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

9. What new or different recreation activities would you like to see in any of our parks?

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

10. In your opinion, which group is most underserved within Big Prairie Parks?

- Seniors %
- Adult: %
- Young Adult: %
- High School: %
- Middle School: %
- Elementary/Pre-K: %
- Disabled Persons %

11. In general, what should be our #1 focus for future parks improvements?

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

12. *If funding became available, which 5 improvements would be your highest priority?*

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

13. *Regarding Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam, what would you use the trail primarily for?*

- Excellent %
- Good: %
- Just Okay: %
- Poor: %

14. *What are the strengths of the park(s) you visit?*

-

15. *What are the weaknesses of the park(s) you visit?*

-

16. *What information would be helpful for use to include on our website, newaygoparks.com?*

-

17. *What may we address that is of great concern to you?*

-

DRAFT

Summary of comments received at the public meeting held on October 10, 2019:

- Meeting was held during a regular meeting of the Big Prairie Township Parks Commission.
- One member of the community attended the public meeting.
- No specific comments were received; however, the Parks Commission and the attendee had a productive conversation regarding the need to make the parks “ADA friendlier” (hand rails at steps, sidewalk extended, etc.).

Minutes from public meeting on October 10, 2019:

BIG PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP
SPECIAL MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Supervisor Wright.

The purpose of the meeting: Public Input on the proposed Recreation Plan for the Township Parks.

Roll call showed Wright, Baker, Scott and Colleen Ryman from the Park Commission. Also present one Township resident, Ed Lesiewicz.

Suggestions were on handicap railings, access to fishing pier, handicap accessibility to more fishing areas and a cement walk way at the Rec Area to the pavilion.

Verbiage needs to be adopted in support of the Dragon Trail.

No more comments, meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Subject to board approval

Judith Baker, Clerk

Summary of comments received at the public hearing held on January 14 12, 2020, following 30-day review period:

(SECTION TO BE UPDATED, AS NECESSARY, FOLLOWING PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING)

- No members of the community attended the public meeting.
- No comments regarding the draft plan were submitted in writing prior to the public meeting.

Minutes from public hearing on January 14, 2020:

DRAFT