

Chapter 7

Recreation Plan

Introduction

Because of the recreational opportunities in Otsego Lake Township and the abundance of natural resources, the Township wishes to include recreation as a key component in the Master Plan.

In past years, the Township has provided recreation services and facilities to residents and visitors. The mix of Township owned facilities such as Edna Schotte Memorial Park, along with other publicly owned (Otsego Lake State Park) and privately owned (Headwaters Resort) facilities offers a wide range of passive and active recreational opportunities. A description of these facilities is included in the recreation inventory, which begins on the following page. Otsego Lake Township plans not only to continue providing recreation services to its residents and visitors, but also to make improvements at the existing facilities, including compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates accessibility standards for citizens who have mobility difficulty.

As a recreation service provider, the Township recognizes the importance of planning for future recreation services and facilities. Otsego Lake Township has previously been included in the county-wide Recreation Plan. A major factor in the provision of any service is the question of how projects will be funded. One possible source of funding for recreation projects is through grants available from Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

To become grant eligible for MDNR funding, a community must have an approved recreation plan. Components of a MDNR approved recreation plan include:

- Community Description
- Recreation Inventory
- Administrative Structure
- Description of the Planning Process
- Action Program
- Basis for the Action Program
- Plan Review and Adoption

Elements of the community description can be found in earlier chapters of this report. A community location map can be found in Chapter 1- Introduction. Chapter 2 discusses socio-economic characteristics of the Township, while data on the natural environment and existing land use patterns are found in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. The remaining components of the recreation plan are covered in this chapter.

Inventory of Recreation Facilities in Otsego Lake Township

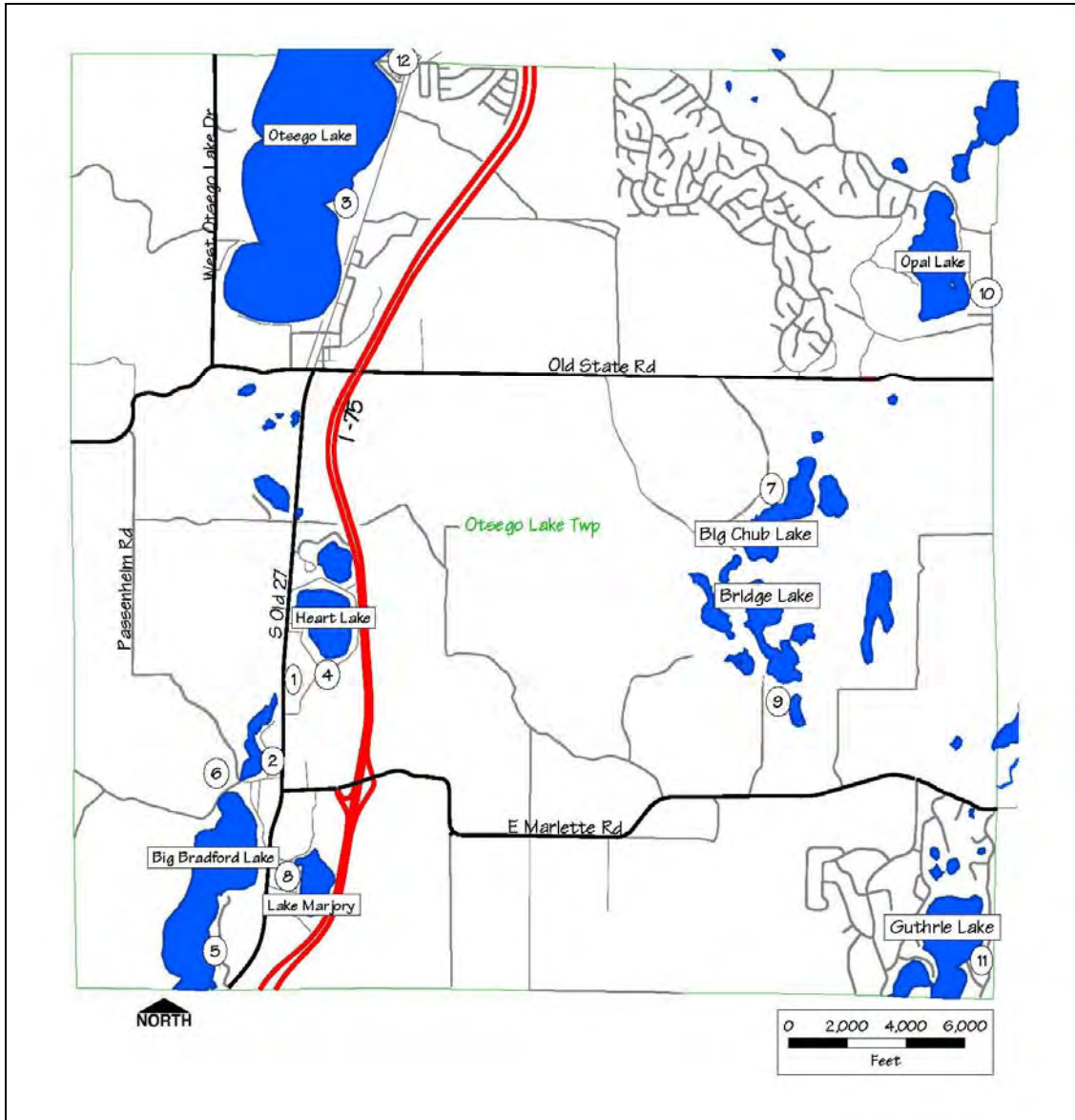
An inventory of existing recreation facilities located in Otsego Lake Township is provided below. Sites are grouped according to jurisdictional ownership. Township owned facilities are listed first, then other public sites, and finally privately owned recreation sites. Each listing is followed by a brief description of that location. Figures 7.1 illustrate the location of the public sites.

Otsego Lake Township owns one property which is currently being used for recreational purposes. Table 7-1 contains information on these facilities.

Table 7-1 Facilities Owned and/or Operated By Otsego Lake Township			
Name	Size	Facilities	Needs for ADA Compliance
Remi & Edna Schotte Memorial Park [shown as #1 on Fig. 7-1 map]	24.8 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pavilion ➤ Picnic Tables ➤ Playground ➤ Playground Equipment ➤ Hiking Trails ➤ Restrooms ➤ Grills ➤ Drinking Fountain ➤ Baseball Diamond ➤ Horseshoe Pit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accessible Restroom facility ➤ Pavilion accessible route from parking area ➤ Designated parking spaces near pavilion

Additionally, the Township in cooperation with the County Road Commission, maintains a bike lane the full length of Memorial Drive.

Figure 7.1: Publicly Owned Recreation Site Locations, Otsego Lake Township



KEY for Figure 7.1 Recreation Site Locations, Otsego Lake Township:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Remi & Edna Schotte Mem. Twp Park, | 7. Big Chub Lake |
| 2. Otsego Lake Township Hall | 8. Lake Marjory |
| 3. Otsego Lake State Park | 9. Bridge Lake |
| 4. Heart Lake | 10. Opal Lake |
| 5. Big Bradford Lake | 11. Guthrie Lake |
| 6. Little Bradford Lake | 12. Arbutus Beach |

Table 7-2 contains information on other publicly owned land in Otsego Lake Township. There are seven State owned facilities in the Township. All of these facilities are located adjacent to water and provide boat ramps and public access to the water bodies.

Table 7-2 Public Recreation Facilities in Otsego Lake Township		
Name	Map 7-1 Location Key	Facilities
Otsego Lake State Park	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Park with 156 campsites ➤ 1000' sand beach ➤ Boat Launch
Heart Lake	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Big Bradford Lake	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Little Bradford Lake	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Big Chub Lake	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Lake Marjory	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Camping – Lake Marjory State Forest Campground ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Bridge Lake	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Opal Lake	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Guthrie Lake	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access ➤ Public fishing site
Lakeview Road end	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public access on Otsego Lake

There is a range of privately owned recreational and cultural opportunities within the Township. Table 7-3 is a listing of these facilities.

Table 7-3 Privately-owned Recreation Facilities in the Township	
Name	Facilities
Michaywe' Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Golf Course ➤ Cross Country Skiing ➤ Hiking Trails ➤ Restaurant ➤ Clubhouse -private members only ➤ Pool - private members only
Guthrie Lake Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clubhouse with pool – private members only ➤ Lake access

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), all areas of public service and accommodation became subject to barrier free requirements, including parks and recreation facilities and programs. The ultimate goal is to provide recreation opportunities that include everyone regardless of physical or mental impairment.

When evaluating the accessibility of parks and facilities, barriers should be recognized from the perspective of the participant. These perspectives aid in preparing the design and planning future improvements to both current and existing facilities. Therefore, we can determine whether a site, building, and/or facility is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.

Perspectives to Consider

- Could a person with vision impairment have a reasonable means of identifying the facilities?
- If a person is physically disabled, is there a means to access all facilities and if there are barriers, is an alternate route available?
- If a person has a reading disability, could the person recognize standard symbols indicating parking, restrooms or trailway?
- If a person uses a walking aid such as crutches or braces, could the person participate with a group in facilities and move from the arrival place (parking area) to the activity area?

An evaluation of the Otsego Lake Township park and recreational system accessibility to persons with disabilities has been conducted as a component of the recreation inventory found in this chapter. Each site was inventoried for their accessibility status, and it is noted under the discussion on that facility early in this chapter.

Transition Plan

Much of the transition plan for Otsego Lake Township consists of the removal of small-scale accessibility barriers, which is readily achievable through using the general fund expenditures. This would include the systematic upgrade of play areas, the removal of uneven surfaces and sidewalk obstructions, the placement of accessible parking space signage, and the procurement of additional wheelchair accessible picnic tables.

Capital improvement expenditures are targeted for more comprehensive accessibility remediation projects, which will be incorporated into the overall improvements of existing facilities. All new, playground equipment, site furnishings, landscaping and facilities included in the capital improvements plan shall be designed and installed in compliance with the latest adopted U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barrier Compliance Board and U.S. Department of Justice standards.

Community Recreation Events

There a number of community events held in the Otsego County area throughout the year. These following is a listing of the community events:

<u>Community Event</u>	<u>Month of Event</u>
Snowcross	January and March
Otsego Lake Fly-in	June
Alpenfest	July
Otsego County Fair	August
Par-Three Shoot out	July

Other Otsego County Recreational Facilities

Residents of Otsego Lake Township can also utilize recreational facilities outside the township bounds. Information on recreational opportunities outside of Otsego Lake Township was obtained from the Otsego County Recreation Plan by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments. There are a number of additional public and private recreational facilities in Otsego County. County/state campgrounds and parks offer a wide range of recreational activities from picnicking and baseball to hiking and swimming. The local public schools within the county also all have recreational facilities. There are ten other sites that offer water recreational opportunities that are not classified as campgrounds or local government and private parks. These public access sites have boat launches, parking areas, and toilets. All are maintained by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. In addition, there are many privately owned recreational facilities open to the public. The county recreation plan also indicates there are approximately 20 resorts for fishermen and hunters scattered throughout the county, some of which are located in Otsego Lake Township.

Trails

There are numerous recreational facilities classified as trails that are in or run through Otsego County. These trails include approximately 145 km of walking, hiking, biking and cross country skiing trails and approximately 93 miles of signed and groomed snowmobile trails.

Fairgrounds

The Otsego County Fairgrounds are located on Old 27 north of Gaylord. The fairground facilities consist of exhibit buildings, grandstand, track, and food booths. The fairground is used for an annual fair, a car show, snow-cross and a flea market.

Regional Recreational Opportunities

Several communities in the surrounding area have varied recreational opportunities. To the north, the City of Gaylord has a number of recreation facilities such as a golf course, athletic fields, a historical museum, the Otsego County Fairgrounds, elk viewing and many resorts.

Additionally, Gaylord has the Otsego Regional Airport, the Otsego County Fairgrounds, the Sportsplex which has a community hockey rink, walking track and indoor pool, ski clubs, State groomed cross country trails, and over 25 golf courses in the region. Near by Antrim and Crawford Counties offer a number of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities, similar to those found in Otsego County.

Administrative Structure and Funding

Otsego Lake Township has no formal parks and recreation board or commission. The Otsego Lake Township Board is responsible for the development and administration of recreation facilities and programs in the Township.

Under the provisions of Michigan's Township Planning Act, recommendations for recreation planning are made by the Otsego Lake Township Planning Commission to the Township Board which has final authority for recreational policy, administration, and funding. The Planning Commission, with the assistance of a consultant, developed the Recreation Plan. The Commission is also responsible for updating the plan. The Township Board must adopt the recreation plan and approve any amendments to the plan.

The Otsego Lake Township Board consists of five members: supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. All Township personnel are employed part-time.

The Township Supervisor is the chief executive officer of the township and chairs the board of trustees. The Township Clerk is responsible for keeping the Township records, paying bills, voter registration, and cemetery records, while the Treasurer is charged with keeping the Township's financial records, including receipt of tax payments and management of investments. The fire chief is responsible for overseeing all activities of the fire department/first responder service.

Other recreational facilities and activities utilized by local residents are administered both formally and informally by organizations serving multiple jurisdictions. Otsego Lake Township is located partially within the Gaylord Schools district and partially within the Crawford-AuSable School district, making recreational facilities and activities of both school districts available to Township residents. Township youth may also participate in non-school related recreation organizations.

Otsego Lake Township's recreational activities and facilities are primarily funded through the Township's general fund. Table 7-4 illustrates recreation spending for the past three years, in comparison to the Township's total budget. For the proposed 2005-2006 budget, \$40,000 has been budgeted as a recreation line item, demonstrating that the Township Board does routinely allot funding for recreational purposes. Note labor for recreation areas is budgeted in the Township Hall and grounds maintenance line item.

Table 7-4 Township Budget and Recreation Expenditures, 2003 - 2006			
Budget			
FY Ending March 31	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Total Township	\$625,359	\$529,044	\$398,749
Expenditures			
Recreation	\$40,000	\$2,000	\$1,800
Source: Otsego Lake Township Balance Sheets, 2003-2006			

Description of the Recreation Planning Process

Prior to this Master Plan (including recreation plan), Otsego Lake Township has been covered under Otsego County zoning. The Township is aware of the need to plan for future improvements at locally owned recreation sites and consider in more detail how these projects could be funded.

With these needs in mind, Otsego Lake Township signed a contract with professional community planning consultant, M.C. Planning & Design to prepare a Township Maser Plan. In addition, the Township entered into an agreement with the same consultant to develop a community recreation plan meeting MDNR requirements. The recreation plan is incorporated as a chapter in the comprehensive plan document.

Research for updating the plan and writing the draft document began in April 2005. This research included socio-economic data, natural resources, existing land use, and recreation inventory information required by MDNR as part of the recreation plan. Over the next six months, the consultant met monthly with members of the Planning Commission who reviewed and helped edit the draft recreation plan prior to submittal to MDNR.

To encourage public participation in the recreation planning process, all meetings with the Otsego Lake Township Planning Commission were open to the public and posted in local public places.

A meeting of the consultant and the Township Planning Commission was held on August 4, 2005 to devise an action plan based on suggestions obtained from a July 7, 2005 work session. Additional meetings were held with the consultant and Township to review and revise the draft document on September 1, 2005 and October 6, 2005. Finally, interested citizens were invited to attend a public hearing on May 4, 2006. Notice was published in The Gaylord Herald Times, as well as posted in local public places. Four interested citizens attended the public hearing. After the public hearing the complete document was finalized for initial submittal to MDNR.

Recreation Goals

Otsego Lake Township, because of its environmental attributes, expanses of state land, and low population density, currently enjoys a favorable reputation as an outdoor recreation area. To sustain and increase the current level of recreational activities for all age groups, the Township should encourage the growth of open-space recreation.

- Develop multi-purpose pathway in the commercial area and throughout the Township.
- Provide additional active recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors of all ages.
- Encourage operation of public and private camping facilities at designated locations of the township.
- Through zoning and review procedures, proposed subdivisions, site condominiums, planned unit developments, commercial and industrial developments should be encouraged to provide or participate in the development of neighborhood parks.
- Maintain open space and scenic vistas by encouraging PUD, clustering, and conservation easements.
- Maintain existing and establish new trails for horseback riding, bike, motorized recreational vehicle, cross-country ski, and walking use in the Township.
- Encourage a designated and regulated snowmobile route through Otsego Lake Township to connect the community to regional state designated snowmobile trails.

Otsego Lake Township has a system of parks, ball fields, and recreational facilities. To meet the needs of a growing population and the increased tourist activity, it is important to improve and expand these recreational facilities. Recreational facilities should be developed to meet the needs of the whole community, all age groups, and income levels.

- Encourage the consideration of recreational facilities as an integral part of community development plans.
- Provide permanent ADA compliant bathroom facilities at all township parks.
- Ensure ADA compliant playground equipment for township parks.
- Provide more public beach and water access in a park and picnic area setting for residents, seasonal residents, and visitors.

Community-wide programs that provide opportunities for year-round recreation, personal enrichment, art, musical, and theatrical groups are contributors to the quality of life and attractiveness of the Township. It is important to ensure accessibility to adequate public recreation facilities and cultural activities for area residents and visitors. Coordinated programs and facilities that reflect the character and desires of the community can play a key role in attracting new commercial and industrial activities.

- Construct a senior center with a large seating capacity to accommodate a wide variety of educational, recreational, and social activities.
- Encourage community arts and crafts, musical and personal enrichment programs for all age groups and for seasonal and year round residents.
- Encourage cultural facilities and events that meet the needs of the entire community.

Action Program

The action program is presented below in two tables that describe improvements to existing facilities and the development of new facilities. Anticipated funding sources will be in the form of cash from the Township general fund, in-kind labor, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) grants. Sources of the grants are: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), and other appropriate grant programs.

Capital Improvements Schedule for Existing Facilities			
Existing Facilities	Year	Improvement	Cost and Anticipated Funding Source
Remi & Edna Schotte Memorial Township Park	2006	ADA accessible parking & pavilion access	\$10,000 MNRTF, Local grants and Township
	2006	Horseshoe Pits improvements	\$1,000 Local Clubs and Township
	2007	ADA accessible restrooms	\$100,000 MNRTF and Township
	2007	Existing hiking path improvements	\$2,000 Township
	2007	Improved signage	\$2,500 MNRTF and Township
	2007	Baseball field improvements	\$5,000 Local clubs, Foundations Township
	2008	New volleyball court	\$7,000 MNRTF
	2009	“Tot Lot” play area	\$10,000 LWCF
	2010	Shuffle board court	\$7,500 MNRTF, Foundations and Township
	2010	Walking Track	\$15,000 LWCF, Local grants, Township
	2010	New Soccer Field	\$65,000 LWCF, MNRTF, Soccer Association, and Township
Township Hall	2008	Senior Center facilities	\$5,000 [under investigation]

Rationale for planned Township Park and Hall Improvements

Currently the restroom facilities are not barrier free nor is there a barrier free accessible route to the pavilion. The parking area has a gravel surface. The existing horseshoe pits, hiking trails and existing baseball field are well-used and thus are in need of maintenance and minor improvements.

Additionally, due to local interest, demographics and the lack of local facilities for “tot” lot play area, volleyball court, and shuffle board court, these facilities are planned for the near future.

With the senior population comprising a significant portion of the Township population, there is an increasing demand for senior services and facilities. The Township is currently investigating the possibility of incorporating some of the senior facility, programming and services needs with the existing Township Hall.

Capital Improvements Schedule for Proposed New Trail Facilities			
New Facilities	Year	Development	Cost and Anticipated Funding Source
Multipurpose Non-motorized Pathways	2007	Along Old 27 from <u>Waters north</u> to connect with Otsego State Park and continue to Township line (for continuation in Bagley Township)	Anticipated cost: \$480,000 MDOT, MDNR. local foundations/grants and Township
	2008	Along Old 27 from <u>Waters south</u> to connect with the State Forest Campground and continue to Township line (for continuation in Crawford County)	Anticipated cost: \$180,000 MDOT, MDNR. local foundations/grants and Township
	2009	Along Old State Road <u>east of Old 27</u> to Township border.	Anticipated cost: \$540,000 MDOT, MDNR. local foundations/grants and Township
	2010	Along Mancelona Road <u>west to Township border.</u>	Anticipated cost: \$180,000 MDOT, MDNR. local foundations/grants and Township

Rationale for New Trails:

There is a need and interest to provide no-motorized pathways that connect from the downtown area of Waters to the State Park, State Forest Campground and ultimately to connect into a regional trail system. The safest trails for pedestrians and bicyclists are trails which are separate from the vehicular routes. Trails throughout northern Michigan are used extensively both by local residents and tourists.

Plan Review and Adoption

The Recreation Plan was reviewed by the Otsego County Planning Staff/Otsego County Planning Commission, additionally public comments were accepted as part of a Public Hearing held for both the Master Plan and Recreation Plan on May 4, 2006.

No comments from Otsego County were received. The Public Hearing minutes are included in Chapter 9.

The Recreation Plan was adopted by the Otsego Lake Township Planning Commission on May 4, 2006 and by the Otsego Lake Township Board on May 18, 2006. Copies of the minutes from the meetings when the plan was adopted are provided in Chapter 9.