

SUMMARY OF PROPERTY CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOREST HEALTH and MANAGEMENT:

The predominant forest types are northern red oak and aspen. Records show aspen on part of the property was removed in 1963, creating a two-aged stand of pole sized younger aspen and scattered large red oak, red pine and white pine. In the un-harvested areas, the older aspen and white birch are declining and dying. The red oak, red and white pine and younger aspen trees are healthy and there were no major insect or disease problems. Although, with the oak/aspen forest types, there is potential for gypsy moth infestations and oak wilt. This plan recommends limited timber management in stands predominated by aspen. The large pine trees located along the lower wetland and much of the oak forests will be left as old growth pine forests. The oak forests could receive treatment to salvage trees if there is a high level of mortality from wildfires, insect or disease problems.



SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE FEATURES:

The protected property forms an anchor point for the inter-lake ecological corridor, that extends from Green Township northward into Long Lake Township, eventually diminishing into a fragmented, narrow landscape feature. Several wetlands provide important yet limited wildlife habitat. Ridgelines, traversing the property, connect wetlands and water features. Red oak provides mast crops of acorns for deer and squirrels. The declining aspen and white birch are good homes for cavity nesting animals and birds. The small stand of large pine trees provides summer and winter cover. Good supplies of food, water and shelter are abundant to wildlife. There are no natural upland openings on the property.

RESOURCE PROTECTION:

There are two small depressions that form open marshes on the property. Three forested wetlands encroach on the property. All of these wetlands are unique and limited resources in the predominately dry, sandy upland habitat. As opportunities arise, Long Lake Township should facilitate the expansion of protected lands in this inter-lake ecological corridor. Either fee simple purchase or establishing conservation easements on adjacent properties can accomplish this.



Logging trucks and large 4-wheel drive "mud" trucks are damaging the access road. During wet periods, these large-tired trucks tear up wet, muddy areas, making the depressions deeper and leaving ruts; that in turn make it difficult for people driving cars and small trucks to use the road. ATV's are causing erosion on trails and hillsides. Another threat to the natural area is the dumping of garbage, construction debris and yard waste. This trash problem extends beyond the 120-acre parcel.



IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL FEATURES:

There are several segments of trails on the property. These segments are part of a larger network of paths and trails that extend beyond the parcel through private property. Two of the trails are unimproved roads. Other trails were created by people repeatedly walking through the woods along the same route and eventually wearing a pathway. Key to improving recreation is to link these segments on the property and create a connected network of trails on the 120 acres.



AESTHETIC FEATURES:

Natural views abound on this property. Oak and aspen forests cover level areas and ridgelines. A stand of large red and white pine, reminiscent of pre-settlement old growth pine forests, can be found on the property. Several small wetlands, located on the property, include sparsely forested bogs, forested wetlands, and emergent open wetlands. White pine forests border the emergent pothole wetlands. The terrain is rolling in the northern half, becoming relatively level in the southern portions. Two ridgelines run in a northeasterly direction across the northern part of the property, creating vantage points of the woodlands and wetlands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on field visits, subsequent analysis of field data and community input, the following recommendations have been developed:

Trail System

- 🌲 Improve existing trails by clearing brush and branches, and installing trail markers.
- 🌲 Develop a connected network of hiking trails by creating cross-connectors.
 - North-South Connector
 - Pond Connector (elevated walkway to bridge wet area)

- 🌲 Suggestions for trail names – Luhrs Marsh Trail, Pine Marsh Trail, Ridgeline Trail, Oak Run Trail
- 🌲 Develop an outdoor educational component to the hiking trails by developing a interpretative brochure, erecting nature information signs, and building benches and wildlife viewing platforms.
- 🌲 All hiking trails should be designated non-motorized, excluding the access road.
- 🌲 Correct erosion problems caused by Off Road Vehicles.
- 🌲 Monitor trails for erosion problems and correct problems as needed.

Access Road and Parking Lot

- 🌲 Improve access road to provide access for recreational use and accomplish management activities.
- 🌲 Improve access road to the proposed parking lot. Improvements should be minimal such as by filling low areas, providing two turnouts, and road should be kept as a single lane road.
- 🌲 Develop a small gravel parking lot to accommodate several cars (around four vehicles).
- 🌲 Address concerns of adjacent landowners on the location and use of the access road.

Signage

- 🌲 Mark the property boundary with small signs to identify park boundaries and minimize trespassing incidences on adjacent properties.
- 🌲 Erect trail markers along the hiking trails to identify their location. At junctions of trails, place location maps with the trail system.
- 🌲 Develop and erect park usage/rules signs at key locations within the park. Suggested locations are at trailheads and where existing trails cross the park.
- 🌲 Nature information signs should be erected explaining plant communities, flora and fauna.

Trash Issues

- 🌲 Stop the dumping of trash, construction debris and yard waste.
- 🌲 Establish a Friends of the Park group of concerned citizens to monitor the park and to help clean trash.
- 🌲 Install and maintain a trash receptacle at the parking lot.

Timber Management

- 🌲 Manage designated areas for pulpwood and sawlog production. Harvest mature aspen, red maple, and white birch in these designated areas.

Wildlife Management

- 🌲 Improve wildlife habitat by leaving dead standing trees and leaving healthy northern red oak trees for mast production. Snags immediately adjacent to trails should be removed for safety reasons.
- 🌲 Work with community organizations to build and maintain wildlife nesting boxes.

Old Growth Forests

- 🌲 Allow the pine forests along south side of the marsh and most of the oak forests to mature towards an old growth state.

Young Growth Forests

- 🌲 Maintain younger growth areas by harvesting aspen and red maple trees in designated areas. Timber harvests will occur every 40-50 years.

Recommended Recreational Uses

- 🌲 The overall approach is to provide an area for quiet, wildlands recreation. Within this context hiking, cross-country skiing, nature walks, hunting, outdoor education and mushroom hunting are all compatible recreational uses. The use of ORV's, snowmobiles and mountain bikes are not compatible with quiet wildlands recreation and should not be allowed on hiking trails and throughout the property. Since the access road is considered a county road, ORV's, snowmobiles and bikes can use the road.

Resource Protection

- 🌲 Work with agencies and organizations to either purchase adjacent lands or establish conservation easements.
- 🌲 Protect wetlands by setting aside 100' no-harvest buffers and correcting erosion sites.
- 🌲 Designate all hiking trails as non-motorized to reduce the potential for erosion on the sandy hillsides.

Outdoor Education

- 🌲 Work with the Grand Traverse Conservation District to develop the outdoor education potential of the park.
- 🌲 Develop an interpretative brochure with information on flora and fauna.

Partnerships and Grants

- 🌲 Continue to build partnerships with organizations such as the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy, Grand Traverse Conservation District, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.
- 🌲 Seek grant funding from foundations and agencies to share in the costs of developing the Township Park.