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Kalkaska County

Parks & Recreation Plan

2023-2027
DRAFT

Acknowledgements

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Community Profile

HISTORY

Kalkaska County is in the northwestern part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The county is bounded to the north by Antrim County, the east by Crawford County, to the south by Missaukee County, and to the west by Grand Traverse County.

The county is comprised of 561 square miles land of ample forests and trails, offering opportunities for camping, hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, or just enjoying nature. Kalkaska County has some 275 streams and over 85 lakes, making it a destination for fishing and boating as well.

Kalkaska County was officially organized as a county in 1871, when it was created from a portion of land originally a part of Grand Traverse County. The Village of Kalkaska was named the county seat in 1872. The name likely comes from a Chippewa word meaning "burned over land" or "flat table of land".

The first family settled near Round Lake in 1855; the family remained the only settlers in the area until after the Civil War. Other settlers searching for farmland began arriving in 1866, and by 1870, the population of the county reached 424 people, with 51 farms. By 1910, the population had reached 8,097 people with some 842 farms.

DEMOGRAPHICS

When planning for parks and recreation it is important to consider the demographic characteristics of Kalkaska County to ensure that all demographic groups are represented when planning for public facilities and that all groups have suitable recreation facilities. The demographic information in this chapter was sourced from the following locations, in this preferred order:

- » **2020, 2010, 2000, and 1990 US Decennial Censuses.** The decennial censuses are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States. Mandated by the United

States Constitution the aim of the decennial census is to count 100% of the US population. Because the decennial census has been operating since 1790, it offers a valuable reference point to illustrate how populations have changed over time. While the decennial census has been administered for over 200 years the questions have shifted to better capture modern populations' information. For example, history of rebellion against the United States is no longer a question on the form.¹ Information collected in the most recent counts includes information about age, sex, race, the relationship between household members, and household tenure.

- » **American Community Survey.** The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the "long-form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types of information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a continual basis. Including these questions in the decennial census would be more resource-intensive and could reduce the response rate for the more critical decennial census. The ACS is a sample; a random selection of households are sent the ACS every year and the Census Bureau uses the responses to create estimates for the rest of the population. Because the ACS is a sample smaller communities require multiple years of sampling to create accurate estimates. Communities with less than 20,000 people must be sampled over 60-months to create estimates, these estimates are referred to as 5-year estimates. Kalkaska County does not have a population over 20,000 so this plan will use ACS 5-year estimates.

POPULATION

By 2020, the county has a population of 17,939. Kalkaska County ranks 66 out of 83 Michigan counties in terms of population. The county has a population density of approximately 32 persons per square mile.

Table XX: 1980 – 2020 Population

1980	1990		2000		2010		2020	
Count	Count	Growth	Count	Growth	Count	Growth	Count	Growth
10,957	13,497	23.2%	16,571	22.8%	17,153	3.5%	17,939*	4.6%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census, P1.

Table XX: Change in Kalkaska County Age Cohorts, 2015-2020

Age Cohort	2015 Population	2020 Population	Change	% Change
Under 5 years	939	943	4	<1%
5 to 9 years	1,056	948	-108	- 10%
10 to 14 years	1,074	1,176	102	9%
15 to 19 years	1,008	979	-29	- 3%
20 to 24 years	829	835	6	.01%
25 to 34 years	1,793	2,047	254	14%
35 to 44 years	2,044	2,036	-8	<1
45 to 54 years	2,599	2,307	-292	- 11%
55 to 59 years	1,405	1,305	-100	-7%
60 to 64 years	1,307	1,551	244	19%
65 to 74 years	1,985	2,252	267	13%
75 to 84 years	902	1,014	112	12%
85 years & over	289	332	43	15%
Total	17,230	17,725*	709	4%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

*Note: Total population counts based on U.S. Decennial Census; Population By Age based on 5-year ACS estimate

Over the past 30 years, Kalkaska County has seen large population increases. Thanks in part to the discovery of new oil and gas reserves, from 1980 through 2000 the county saw double digit growth. More modest population growth has continued since. Population grew 4.6% between 2010 and 2020, higher than the state average of 2.0%.²

Age & Household Characteristics

The U.S. population continues to increase in age as the Baby Boomer population hits retirement age. Kalkaska County has become a popular retirement destination as more older residents move into the area. The county's median age is 44.3, which is higher than the statewide median age (40.2 years).³ The county's older population is increasing, each age cohort 65 and older saw double digit growth rates between 2015 and 2020. As the population increases, the need for barrier-free and universally accessible recreation increases, as does the need to prioritize passive recreation, such as walking paths .

Despite declining numbers of children and family households, individuals under the age of 19 still make up nearly a quarter of Kalkaska County's total population (24%).⁴ Youth-oriented recreation opportunities will continue to be important for both current residents and as an amenity to draw new families to the county.

Disability

Understanding disability is essential to recreation planning because it may impact what park and recreation amenities residents can access and use. Some 17.7% of residents in the county have a disability, compared to 13.9% of residents statewide. The highest percentage of disabilities include ambulatory (ability to move) difficulty (10.4%), independent living difficulty (8.5%) and cognitive difficulty (7.2%). Of those ages 65 and older, the highest percentage of disabilities include ambulatory difficulty (22.6%), hearing difficulty (16.4%), independent living difficulties (13.2%),

Map XX: Kalkaska County Population Density

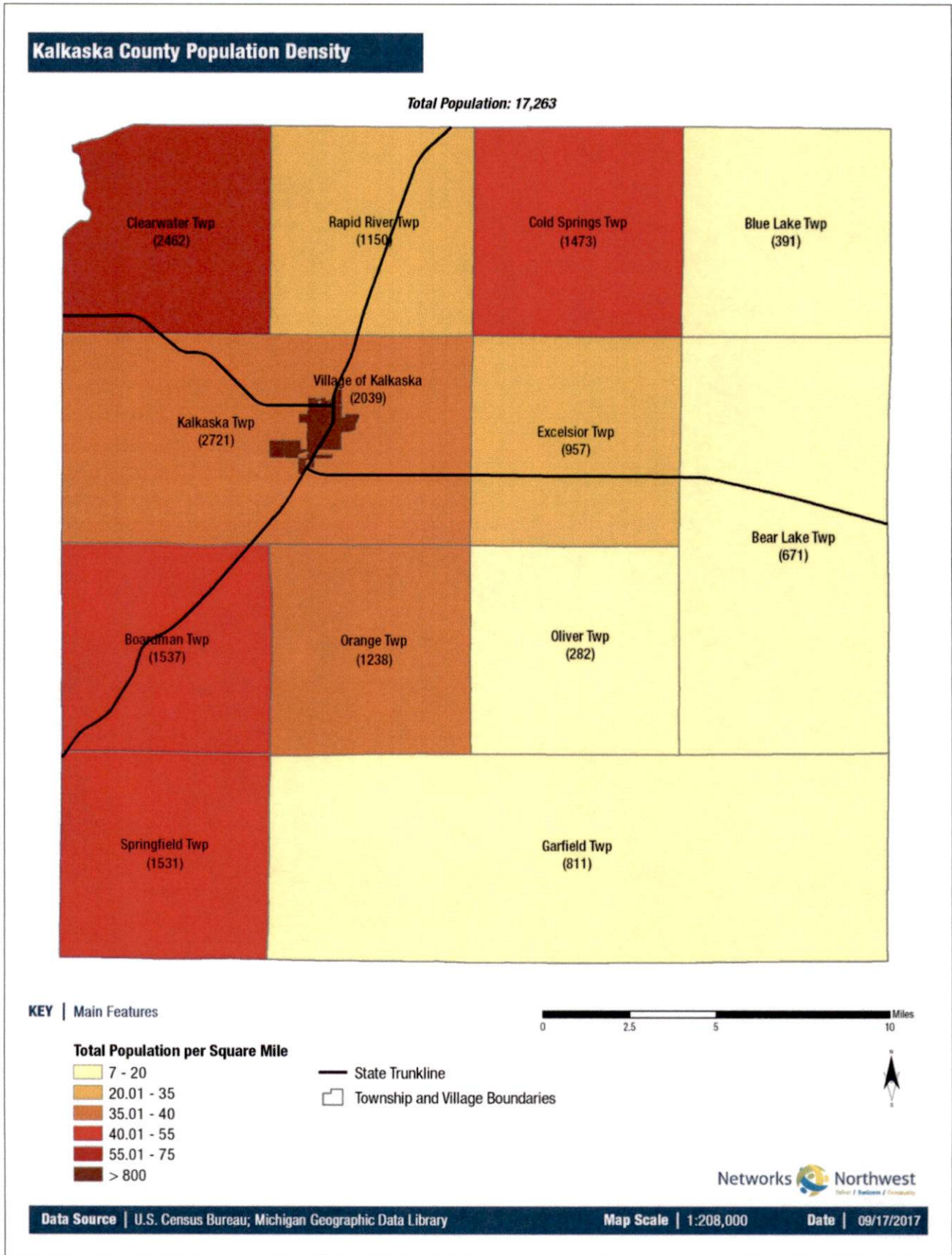


Table XX: Disability

Disability	% Of Population
Ambulatory difficulty	10.4
Independent living difficulty	8.5
Cognitive difficulty	7.2
Hearing difficulty	5
Self-care difficulty	4.2
Vision difficulty	1.9

self-care difficulty (9.4%), cognitive difficulty (6.5%) and vision difficulty (4.9%).⁵

Income

In addition to age considerations, communities must also ensure that recreational amenities are within the financial means of most of its residents. The 2020 median household income is \$49,402, a 22% increase from 2015, but still well below the median income statewide (\$63,498).⁶

Poverty is higher in Kalkaska County compared to statewide rates. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 12% of county residents live in poverty, compared to 13.7% in Michigan. Poverty among children under 18 years of age is 20%, which is also higher than the state average (18.7%).⁷

In addition, many in Kalkaska County who may not fall below the poverty level still struggle to meet basic living needs. The residents who were asset-limited, income-constrained but employed (A.L.I.C.E.) is at 26%, which is slightly higher than the statewide average of 25%.⁸

LAND USE & PLANNING

Kalkaska County is about 89% “natural areas,” 11% agricultural land, 1% residential, and just under 1% combined commercial and industrial. The majority of undeveloped land is forested; over 282,595 acres of land in Kalkaska County are forested land use/cover.⁹

Recreation is an important focus of the 2022 Kalkaska County Master Plan, with recognition of the significant impact that natural resources provide on the county’s recreation opportunities, and subsequently, quality of life and economy. The Plan identifies “Guiding Principles” as statements to guide decision making relative to land use, transportation, and public improvements, and

recreation is the focus of **Guiding Principle #11**, which states:

“Highlight the fact that Kalkaska County is a playground. People live and visit the County to enjoy the many recreational amenities such as snowmobiling, fishing, hunting, camping, canoeing, hiking, biking, cross country skiing, rafting, and ATV riding. The huge amount of State-owned land and the clean, pristine rivers provide these great recreation opportunities and add to the quality of life. This is a place to play.”

The Plan then identifies a number of policies that highlight the county as a **recreation playground**. These are:

- » Prevent the over-development of these resources.
- » Promote regulations that respect and protect the quality of the land, water, plants, and animals.
- » Ensure that Count, Township and Village Master Plans address these amenities and their protection.
- » Utilize the Recreation and Open Space Plan when making land use decisions and purchasing land. · Use land conservancies and conservation easements to protect open space and recreation-oriented areas.
- » Be familiar with the State’s plan for State owned lands and support initiatives for land preservation.
- » Support eco-tourism (tourism based on natural resources) as an economic support for the County, but don’t overuse the resources.
- » Maintain the quality of the rivers and streams to continue to provide pleasant recreational experiences.
- » Encourage the development of State, County, and Township improved parks and facilities within the County.

Under Future Land Use, the Master Plan designates three districts—Forest Areas, Recreation Stream Corridor, and Special Purpose—as land use areas that should primarily focus on recreation (see Chapter 7 of the Master Plan, Future Land Use, for details on the desired land use and proposed action steps for these areas).

Zoning

Local governments in the county include the twelve (12) townships: Bear Lake, Blue Lake, Boardman, Clearwater, Coldsprings, Excelsior, Garfield, Kalkaska, Oliver, Orange, Rapid River, and Springfield; and the incorporated village of Kalkaska. Kalkaska County administers zoning for seven townships; while Garfield, Blue Lake, Clearwater, Rapids River, and Boardman Township maintain and administer zoning locally. The county, along with locally zoned townships, each have an established zoning ordinance from which the zoning administrator and planning commission make their implementation and enforcement decisions. Each of these communities provide allowances for public and private park and recreational facilities. Kalkaska County provides for recreation activities in a number of zoning districts, including the Forest-Recreational Districts and Resort-Recreational Districts. Various recreational activities are allowed as permitted and special uses in a variety of districts.

The Kalkaska County Planning Commission administers county zoning for seven townships under its zoning jurisdiction, but also serves as an advisory and oversight body to review and make recommendations relative to zoning and land use issues within communities that administer their own zoning. The recommendations are non-binding and serve to guide the discussions and decision-making processes of the local governments.

Any recreational expansion or newly created recreational facilities should be coordinated with the community in which it is located to insure appropriate location for the proposed activity, and consistency with the township or village master plan and zoning ordinance.

Transportation Systems

Roads, Highways, and Motorized Trails

The primary mode of transportation for residents within the County is by automobile, via a connection of state and county highways. Michigan State Highways in the county include M-72 that travels east-west, connecting the county to Grayling to the east and Traverse City to the west; US-131 which provides access to Antrim County to the north and Wexford County to the south; and M-66 that provides access to Missaukee County to the south and merges with



Bicyclists along a separated nonmotorized trail.

US-131 in the Village of Kalkaska. These roads are maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation. In addition, there are many county roads throughout the area that are maintained by the Road Commission.

Snowmobiles and off-road vehicles (ORVs) are authorized to use road shoulders on county road rights-of-way, and a number of motorized trails are available on public land (see Chapter 3, Recreation Inventory). Trail opportunities for ORVs are soon to be expanded with Public Act 288 of 2016, which will open all state forest roads to ORV use upon completion of a statewide inventory of the roads/trails by the DNR.¹⁰ To date, approximately 89% of state forest roads have been inventoried and opened to ORV use.¹¹

Public Transportation

The Kalkaska Public Transit Authority (KPTA) offers transportation opportunities by bus through individual reservations and some FLEX route service. This service operates five days a week to provide rural communities convenient, predictable, and affordable transportation within Kalkaska County and some service to neighboring counties.

Air and Rail Service

The Kalkaska Village Airport is located in the southwest corner of the Village of Kalkaska and is owned and operated by the Village. The airport includes a paved runway that runs from northwest

to southeast. The airport does not include amenities found at larger airports but does provide an important service for area industries and tourists who use the facility for light aircraft landings. Commercial and passenger air service is provided by Cherry Capital Airport located in the southern portion of the City of Traverse City.

A rail line runs north-south through Kalkaska County, bisecting the Village of Kalkaska. Rail is used only to serve industrial freight needs at this time.

Non-Motorized Transportation

The Kalkaska Area Recreation Trail, an off-road, non-motorized transportation pathway in the Village of Kalkaska, provides a 2-mile loop for residents. Several additional non-motorized trails are available throughout Kalkaska County (see Chapter 3, Recreation Inventory).

Natural Features

Natural resources are a critical component to the well-being of Kalkaska County. Many residents are employed in natural resources occupations such as oil and gas, in addition to industries such as manufacturing and retail services. Kalkaska County has 275 miles of rivers and streams, and 85 inland lakes, making seasonal and recreational tourism a provider of jobs and contributing to the economic well-being of county residents.¹²

Topography

Kalkaska County is located over a geologic formation known as the Salina-Niagaran Reef. The county is 7,000 feet above one of the most successful oil producing basins in the state. Oil and gas are produced from fields scattered across the county.¹³

Kalkaska County is generally classified as hill-land, plains and upland plains. Level to gently rolling hills and slopes cover the mid-section of the county. Hills and ridges run through the east half and northwest section with elevations from 1,000 to 1,400 feet above sea level. A plateau divides the

watershed in the county from the Manistee River to the southeast and the Boardman and Rapid Rivers to the northwest.

Vegetation

Forested areas make up much of the county, with 282,592 acres of forestland versus 82,513 acres that are non-forested. Of the forestland, 204,863 acres are forested with deciduous trees and shrubs and 77,729 acres are forested with coniferous trees and shrubs. Native trees include birch, oak, beech, white, red and jack pine, black and white spruce, balsam fir, hemlock, tamarack, red and white cedar, ash, elm, basswood, walnut, cherry, juniper, aspen and several species of maple.¹⁴

Visitors from all over come to Kalkaska's forests to camp, hike, or pursue other recreational activities. From an economic perspective, forest-based industries, recreation, and tourism support hundreds of jobs countywide, acting a significant component of the area's economy.¹⁵

Water Resources

Kalkaska County has over 275 miles of rivers and streams. The county also contains more than 85 lakes for a total water area of 6,848 acres of 1.9 percent of the total surface area.¹⁶ Highly popular with permanent and seasonal residents alike, much of the county's residential recreation activity has occurred near the county's lakes or rivers. Fishing has long been a popular activity in Kalkaska due to the high quality of the County's rivers. Kalkaska's quality and abundant fishing opportunities have even provided literary inspiration, inspiring and appearing in Ernest Hemingway's "Nick Adams" stories.

Sources

- 1 1870 Census: Index of Questions, United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1870_1.html
- 2 U.S. Census, Decennial Census 2020, P1
- 3 2020 American Community Survey, U.S. Census, DPO5
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 U.S. Census, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, S1810
- 6 U.S. Census, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, S1901
- 7 U.S. Census, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, S1701
- 8 United for ALICE, <https://unitedforalice.org/state-overview/Michigan>
- 9 2017 Kalkaska County Recreation Plan
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, State Forest Roads, <https://michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/state-forest-roads>.
- 12 U.S. Census 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S2401
- 13 2017 Kalkaska County Recreation Plan
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.



Rugg Pond.

Administrative Structure

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Kalkaska County Board of Commissioners consists of seven members elected every two years. The County Board adopts budgets and approves contracts, adopts policies, and oversees staff. Recreation budgeting, planning, staffing, and other parks and recreation issues are also overseen by the County Board.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) oversees all maintenance of all county recreation facilities, and it reports on the status of recreation facilities to the County Board.

STAFF

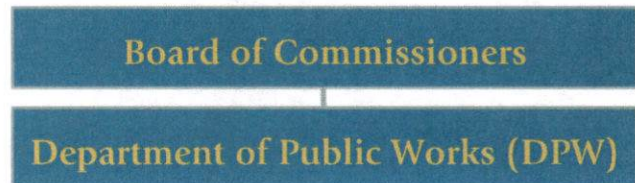
Parks are maintained by seasonal and year-round county employees, as well as volunteers. Two full-time employees, including a director and administrative assistant, are employed at the Kaliseum, which also employs several part-time employees. A caretaker is employed seasonally to manage Log Lake Campground. Maintenance at other parks is handled primarily by Department of Public Works staff and contracted services.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES & VOLUNTEERS

The county's fairground facilities are largely maintained by various user groups who use the facilities, including the Kalkaska Horse Project, 4-H, baseball programs, soccer, and the Kalkaska County Agricultural Fair.¹

Kalkaska County partners with various agencies, including the Village of Kalkaska, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and Kalkaska Public Schools on the Kalkaska Area Recreational Transportation (KART) Trail. Volunteers maintain Trail landscaping, while Quality Thyme Garden Club maintains gardens at several locations along the trail and throughout the community.

Figure XX: Organizational Chart



The county works with the Village of Kalkaska, and several local and regional organizations to coordinate events, such as the National Trout Festival, the Iceman Cometh Challenge, Winterfest, and others.

FUNDING AND BUDGETING

Parks and recreation funding for facilities and activities comes primarily from the county's General Fund. Additional funding comes from cell tower revenue at the Civic Center & Fairgrounds complex. In 2020, \$693,570 was allocated for parks and recreation funding and \$480,555 funds were dedicated in 2021. Additionally, user fees, rentals, donations, and program fees go toward funding the Kaliseum operating expenses. Operation and maintenance of the Sports Complex is funded partially by a 2020 millage.²

Sources

- 1 2017 Kalkaska County Recreation Plan.
- 2 Michigan Dept. of Treasury, Community Engagement & Finance Division, <https://treas-secure.state.mi.us/DocumentSearch>.

Recreation Inventory

Kalkaska County's parks and recreational facilities include the Kaliseum, Civic Center/Fairgrounds, the KART Trail, Log Lake Campground, and Rugg Pond Natural Area, as well as numerous road ends that provide public access to lakes throughout the County.

The Recreation Inventory provides discussion on the county's recreation facilities, and their place in the community, as well as parks and recreation facilities surrounding the Village of Kalkaska. Included for each facility is a summary of public input relative to the park, received through the questionnaire and public forum. The inventory also includes an assessment of the accessibility of the park to people with disabilities, based on the process and criteria explained in the section below.

Because of their importance to residents, the inventory also identifies parks and recreation facilities found regionally.

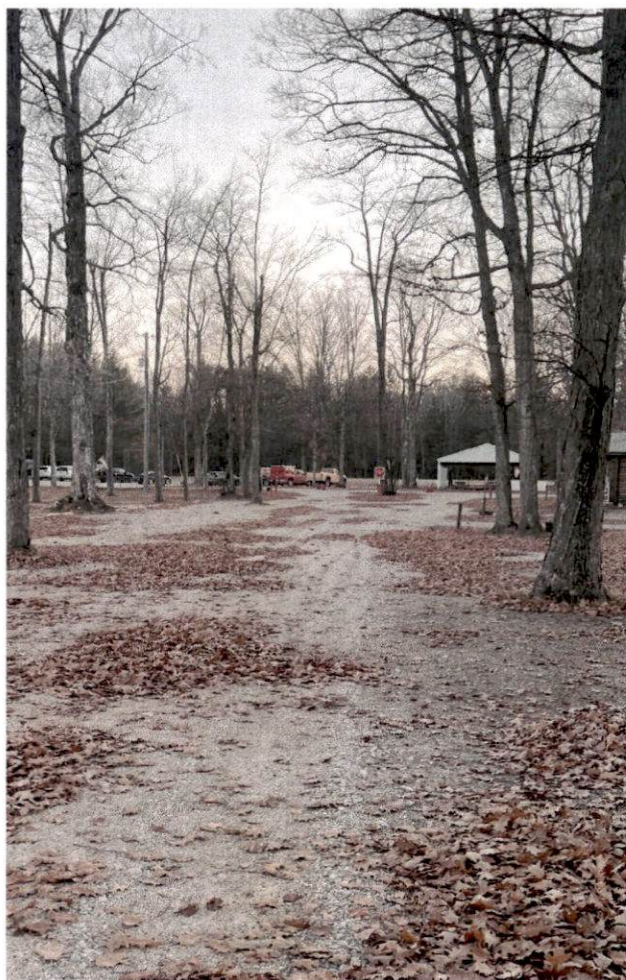
ACCESSIBILITY

The accessibility evaluations for the Kalkaska County parks and recreational facilities were conducted during the field inventory of facilities, accessibility was rated on the following scale.

- 1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design

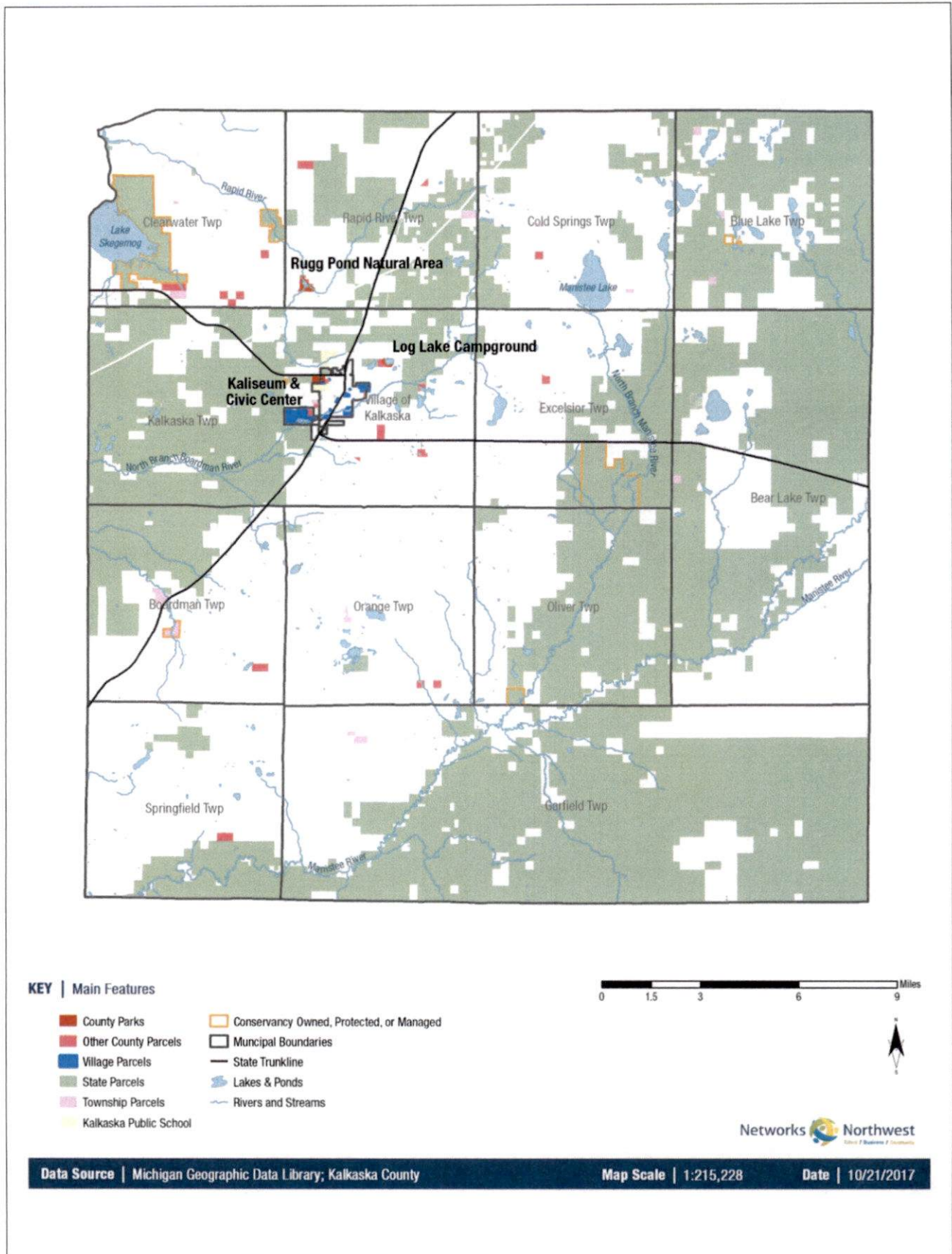
GRANT INVENTORY

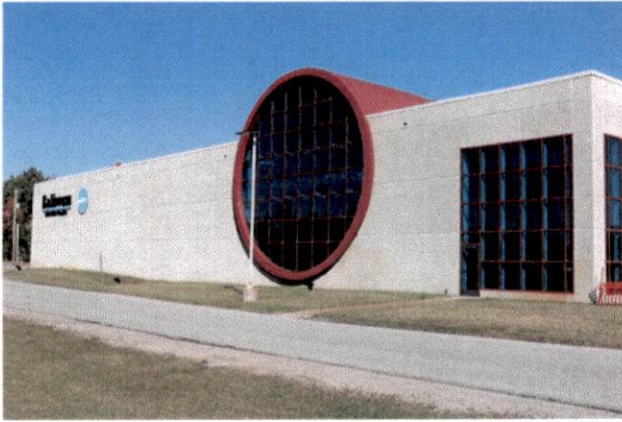
Kalkaska County has received three recreation grants from the MDNR. A copy of the DNR Grant History, which includes descriptions of each, are included at the end of this chapter. The required Post Completion Self Inspection Reports are included in the Appendix.



Log Lake Campground.

Map XX: Kalkaska County Recreation Inventory





Kaliseum

The Kaliseum is an indoor recreational complex located on the 40-acre Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex with the Civic Center and Fairgrounds. The Kaliseum was built in 1999, with funding from a millage and grants. A partial operational millage was renewed in 2020. Additionally, maintenance and operational costs are supplemented by user/membership fees.

The complex has an ice rink, a gym, meeting room and community space. These facilities host a wide variety of activities including hockey, exercise classes, pickleball, roller derby, educational programs, community meetings, and other athletic and community events and activities.

The site's amenities are used by county residents and non-residents from the surrounding area. Memberships are available to Kalkaska County residents and non-residents for use of the gym, and ice rink; and all of the site's amenities are available to rent for parties, events, and other activities. Some office space is also available to rent.

The Michigan State University Extension office recently relocated to the Kaliseum as part of the county building plans. MSU Extension is the land-grant arm of the university and they have been providing education and outreach to the residents in Kalkaska County for over 100 years. They offer programs to residents in a variety of program areas like youth development, nutrition and health, natural resources, agriculture and agribusiness,

leadership and civic engagement and governmental public policy. They offer local education in the community like 4-H youth soccer, livestock education and market experiences at the local fair. They provide nutrition education for income-eligible adults and youth on how to eat healthy while on a budget. They also provide education and trainings for local units of government on best practices as an elected official plus strategic planning for community groups.

Public input indicates that the Kaliseum is one of the most valued recreational facility in the county. The public indicated that use of the facility has resulted in needed maintenance, particularly to the HVAC system and updated amenities, such as lockerroom/shower refurbishments. Comments also addressed the desire to bring back the pool.

Plans are being considered for larger facility upgrade based on the need for an upgrade to the ice arena to meet the needs of the community.

Facilities include:

- » Physical Activity Room/Fitness Center
- » Conference Room
- » Multi Purpose Room
- » Indoor Ice Rink with bleachers

Accessibility Assessment: 4



Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex

The 40-acre Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex includes the Civic Center, Fairgrounds, and Kaliseum (discussed separately). The complex is host to a wide variety of amenities that are used by a number of different stakeholder groups. Annual community events are hosted here, including the Kalkaska County Agricultural Fair, National Trout Festival, and Kalkaska Winterfest. Other community-oriented activities, such as fundraising events, and regular sports events, such as soccer and baseball games, are hosted here.

The Fairgrounds includes baseball diamonds, soccer fields, an arena with bleachers, a horse arena, livestock buildings, a concession stand, and picnic areas. The Civic Center building includes indoor exhibit, event, and meeting space.

The primary service area of the Civic Center and Fairgrounds complex is Kalkaska County. However, several of the events held at the complex have a regional, state-wide, and event national reach

Public input on the Civic Center focused on the need to improve the facility due to it being outdated. When asked how to improve it, nearly half of survey respondents suggested remodeling the facility. Comments received also indicate a lack of use and familiarity with the facility. Input received through this planning process as well as through a simultaneous planning project focused specifically on the Fairgrounds & Civic

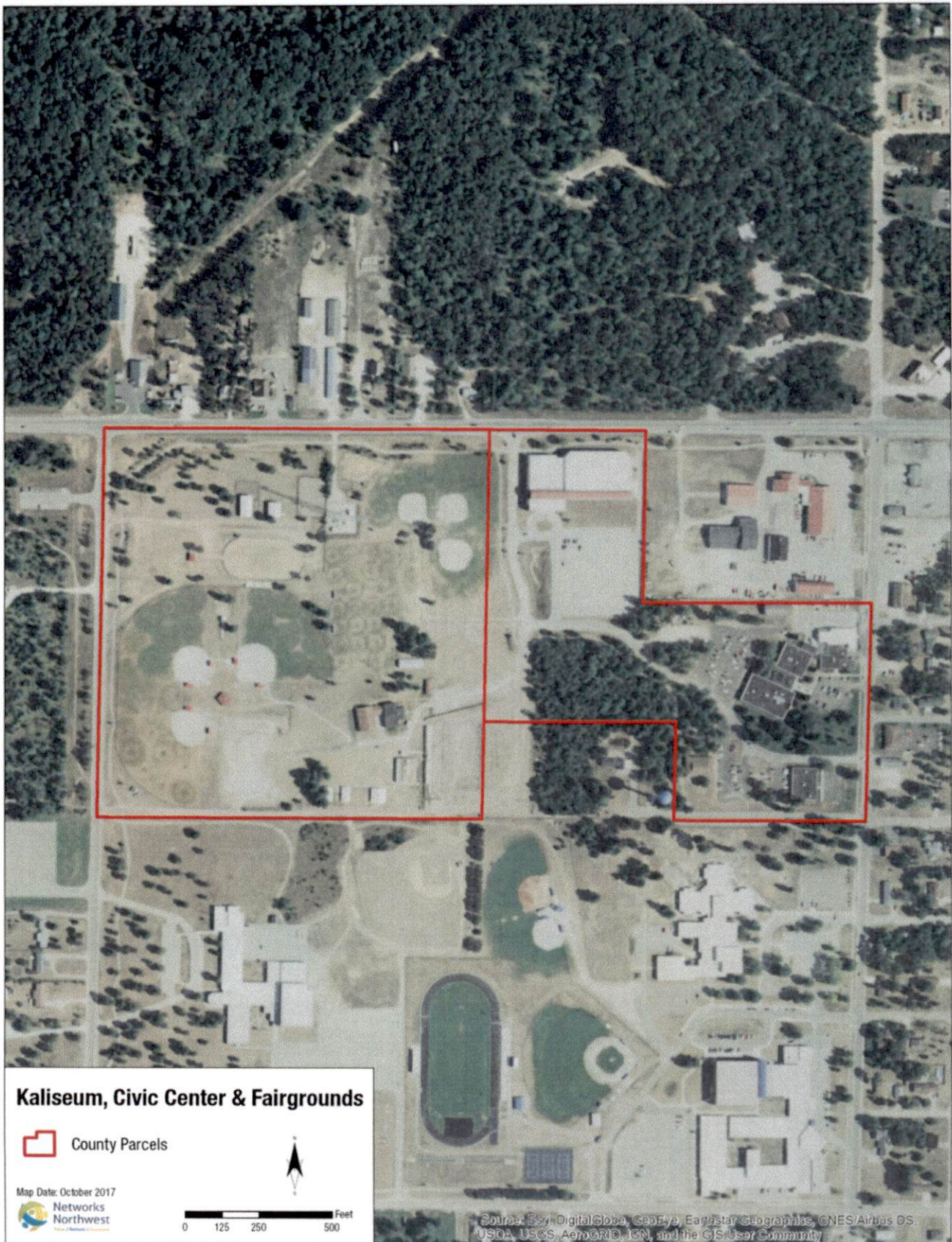
Center indicates the need to create a more formal structure to coordinate use of the facilities.

Facilities include:

- » Baseball diamonds
- » Soccer fields
- » Horse arenas
- » Livestock buildings
- » Civic Center building
- » Kalkaska Area Recreational Trail (KART)
- » Arena and Grandstands

Accessibility Assessment: 3

Map XX: Kaliseum, Civic Center & Fairgrounds





Kalkaska Area Recreational Transportation (KART)

The Kalkaska Area Recreational Transportation (KART) Trail is a 2-mile long, paved, non-motorized trail that loops around the Kalkaska County Fairgrounds, Kaliseum, Kalkaska Public Schools, and Kalkaska County administrative buildings. Residents and visitors can access the trail at the Kalkaska County Fairgrounds for walking, running, and bicycling.

The trail was constructed in 2007 with funding from Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) grants and local match from KART partners, including the Village of Kalkaska and Kalkaska County. Ownership and maintenance responsibilities are shared by Kalkaska County, the Village of Kalkaska, Kalkaska Public Schools, and MDOT. Volunteers provide some assistance with maintenance and landscaping.

The existing trail was intended to be Phase 1. Phase 2 of the trail would extend to a proposed reroute of the North Country Trail to the south of the Village

of Kalkaska. Other suggested additions to the KART trail would include linkages to village-owned forest property and provide linkages to Chalker Park, Mill Pond, and Log Lake Campground.

Public input received during the planning process indicated that the KART Trail is one of the most valued pathways. Most suggestions related to the trail focused on potential connections to other trail systems or parks, as well as potentially lengthening KART.

Facilities include:

- » Paved trail
- » Landscaping
- » Dog waste bag dispensers

Accessibility Assessment: 4



Log Lake Campground

Log Lake Campground offers 40 wooded campsites, with electric, sewer available on 10 sites. The campground and park are located on a 92.3-acre site, which was willed to Kalkaska County with the provision that the property always be used as a county facility.

The community park is equipped with a pavilion (available to rent), playground equipment, restrooms, a disc golf course, ball fields, soccer field, boat launch, and swimming beach. The boat launch is used for both carry-down and trailered boats. The property is used for local events such as the K-Town Ice Bowl, a disc golf tournament.

Maintenance and operational costs are funded by user fees. Seasonal contract staff provides assistance with maintenance and administrative activities. Department of Public Works provides improvements and repairs.

Public input focused on the need for updates to most of the park's amenities, including to the pavilion/picnic area, playground equipment, and infrastructure (water/sewer/electrical).

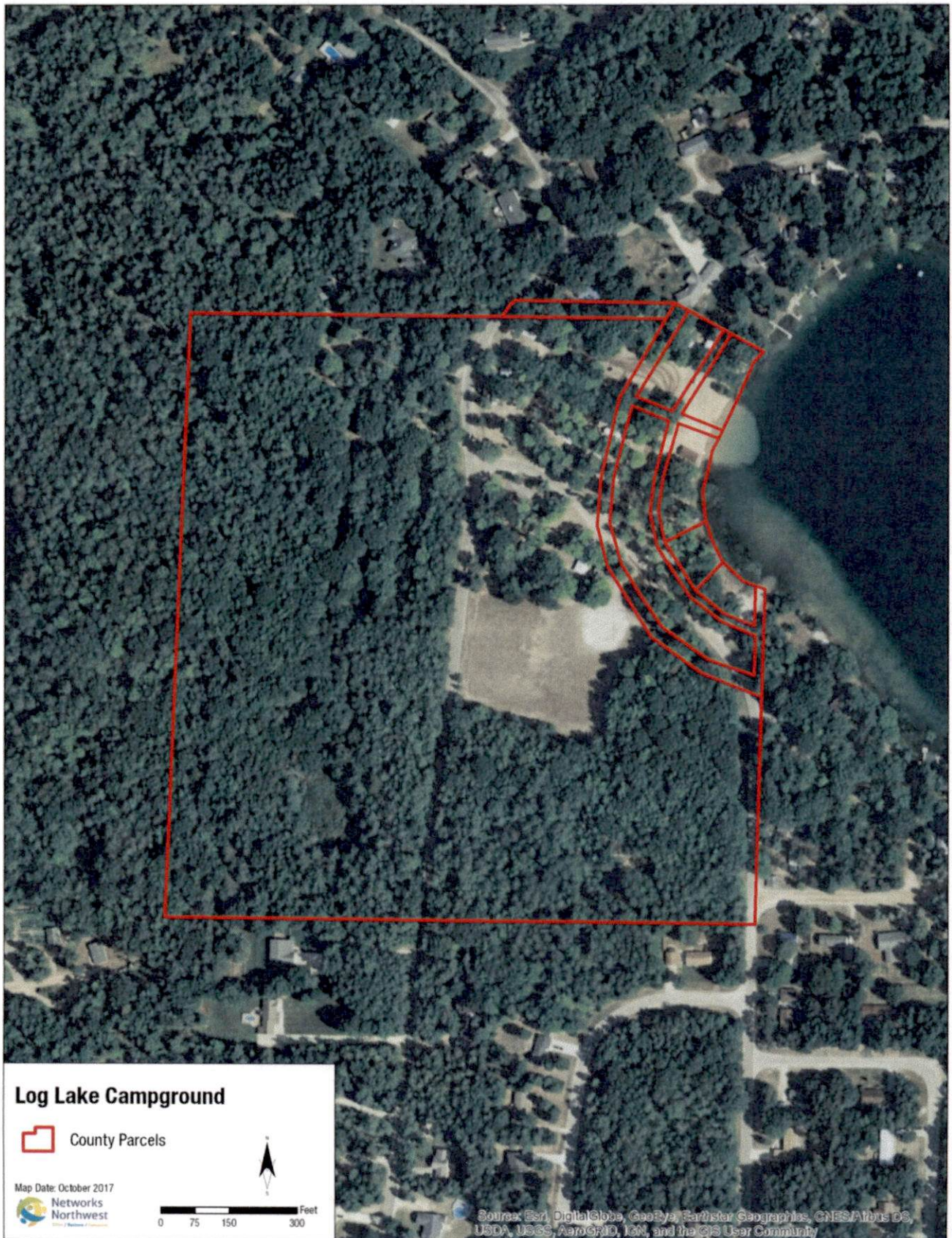
A plan is being considered to upgrade the existing campground facilities and potentially adding additional campsites.

Facilities include:

- » Campsites (40)
- » Camp store
- » Public swimming beach
- » Picnic area / Pavilion
- » Disc golf / Nature trail
- » Boat Launch / Fishing area
- » Playground
- » Ball Diamonds
- » Showers
- » Restrooms

Accessibility Assessment: 3

Map XX: Log Lake Campground





Rugg Pond Natural Area

Rugg Pond is a small park providing fishing and hiking access, located at the convergence of the two branches of the Rapid River, northwest of Kalkaska. Rugg Pond was formed following the construction of a dam built in 1904 for the Kalkaska Light and Power Company, which was eventually turned over to Kalkaska County for \$1 in 1953. The dam was condemned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1980. In 1982, a number of concerned citizens formed a group called 'Save Rugg Pond Natural Area,' to ensure the preservation and continued access to the scenic, historic site, which may once have been used for fishing by author Ernest Hemingway.

Rugg Pond has collected volumes of silt over the years. In 2019 an evaluation of the silt was provided from an anonymous donation for purposes of determining whether or not to dredge the pond. The most recent dam inspection in 2019 by DNR identified some minor dam deficiencies that would have to be completed before any dredging would be allowed. The BOC has commissioned a study to determine options for upgrading the minor issues or removing the dam entirely and how to provide dredging of the pond area.

Rugg Pond Park includes a trail, scenic overlook, fishing access, and a small boat launch. The boat launch is used for both carry-down and trailered boats. There is a trail network that extends almost around the entire perimeter of the pond; however, the trails are not maintained and are mostly used for fishing. No restrooms are present. The Rugg Pond property also includes the surrounding wetland area.

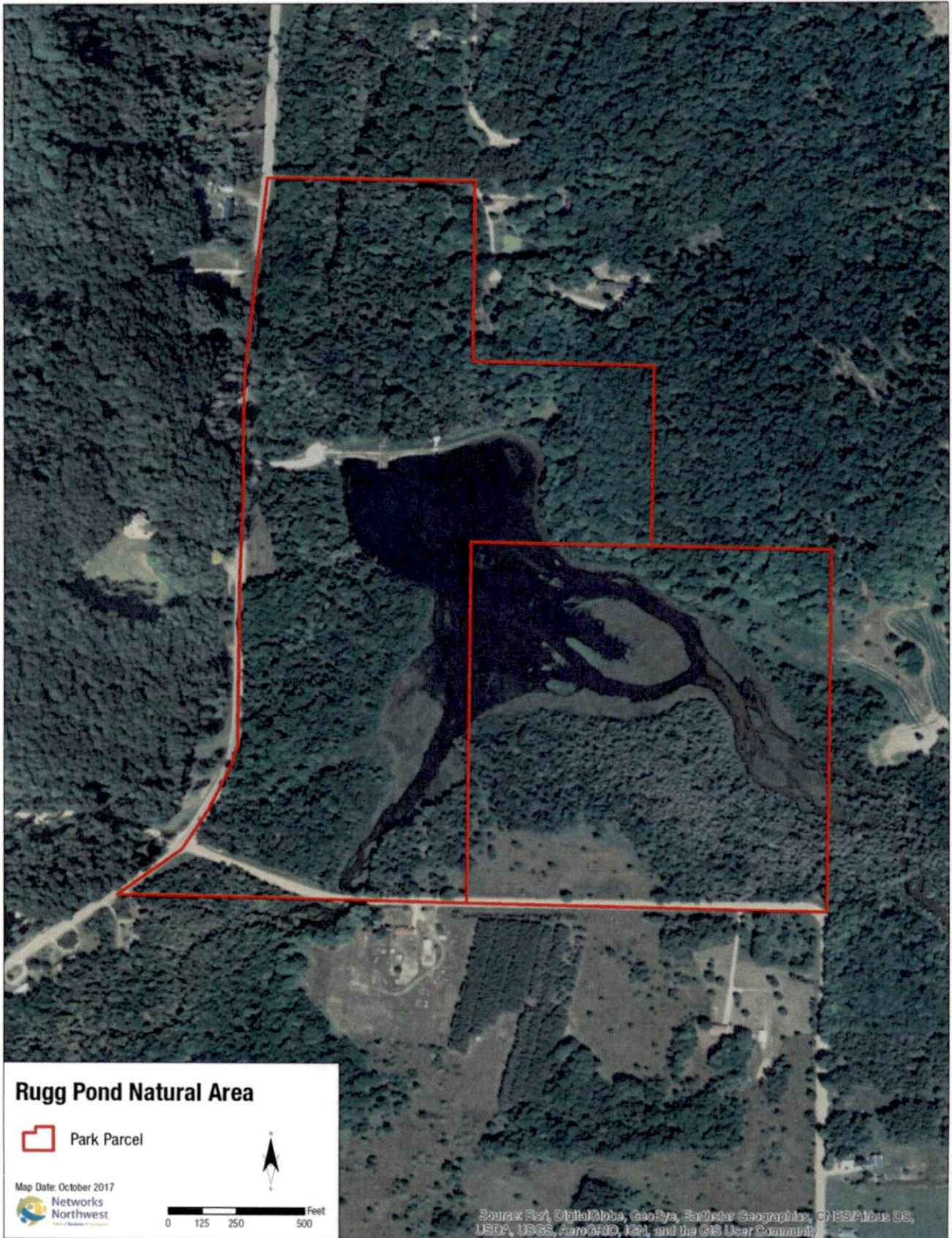
Public input regarding Rugg Pond suggested walking trail improvements, such as trail extension and trail wayfinding/signage. Other input included fixing the dam and including additional seating along with portable restrooms and adding more trails to the North.

Facilities include:

- » ¼ mile trail
- » Boat launch
- » Fishing access
- » Scenic Overlook

Accessibility Assessment: 1

Map XX: Rugg Pond Natural Area





County Road Ends

County road-ends provide water access to several inland lakes in the county. While these are not developed parks, they are county-owned public properties that provide important recreational access to lakes in the County. Road-end public access is primarily used by neighborhoods and local residents. In some cases, improvements such as benches or fire hydrants may be considered. Road-end public access points are located on lakes and streets including:

East Lake

- » Spencer Rd SE

Manistee Lake

South Torch Lake

- » Birch Street
- » Oak Street
- » Maple Street
- » Pine Street
- » Cedar Street
- » Division Street
- » Lake Street

OTHER RECREATIONAL ASSETS

A wide variety of public and private recreation opportunities are available within Kalkaska County and a short distance away from the county. Townships and the Village of Kalkaska maintain local parks and recreation facilities, while numerous state and federal parks, including campgrounds, boat launches, state and federal forest land, and the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore are located within or near the county. Private recreation facilities, including golf courses, casinos, campgrounds, numerous shopping opportunities, and statewide attractions such as the Interlochen Center for the Arts and Boyne Mountain Ski Resort are available in the county and region.

State and Federal Land

Nearly half of Kalkaska County's total land acreage is in public ownership. While about 7% of that (16,526 acres) is federally owned and is primarily used for the military, a significant majority of public land is available for public use. About 153,255 acres, or 42% of Kalkaska County's total acreage, is owned by the State of Michigan. State-owned acreage is primarily part of the Pere Marquette State Forest. See Table 5, page 36, for recreational opportunities in Kalkaska managed by the State of Michigan.

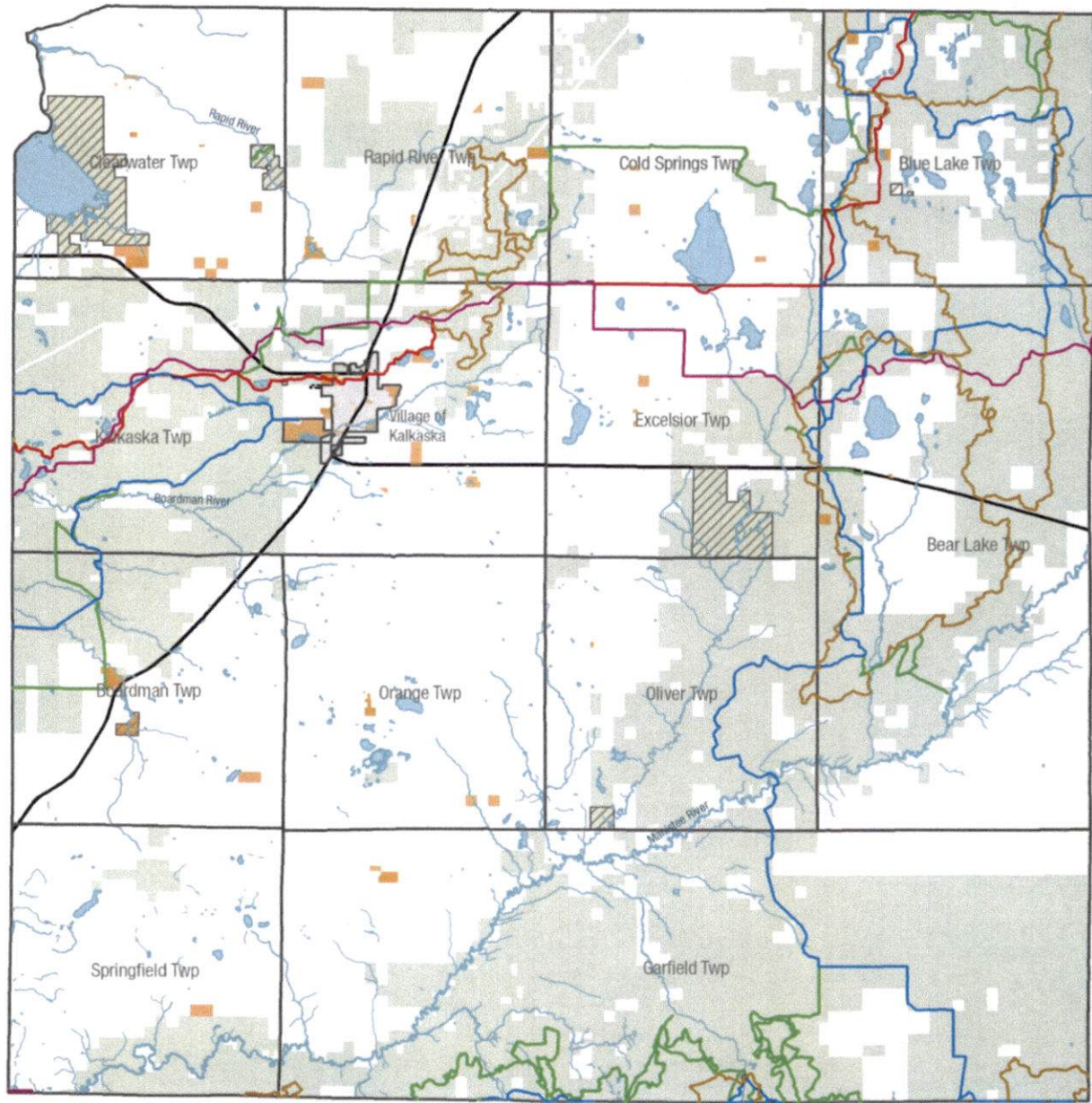
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy

The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy has worked on several land protection and stewardship projects in Kalkaska County, and currently manages the South Boardman Preserve, Seven Bridges, and Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area for recreational use. The Conservancy also recently acquired of the former Camp Tapico in central Kalkaska County, which is to become the Upper Manistee Headwaters Preserve and the Milock Family Preserve. The Conservancy plays an important role in providing recreational opportunities and protecting the natural beauty of the area. A table of land conservancy properties are provided later in this chapter.

Township & Village Recreational Facilities

The Village of Kalkaska and many townships own and maintain community parks, recreation facilities, and trails that are available to the public. See Table 6 (page 36).

Map XX: Regional Recreational Assets



KEY | Main Features

- | | | |
|----------------------|--|-----------------|
| ORV Trail | Municipal Property | State Trunkline |
| Snowmobile Trail | State Land | Rivers & Creeks |
| Shore to Shore Trail | Conservancy Owned, Protected, or Managed | Lakes & Ponds |
| North Country Trail | Municipal Boundaries | |
| Other Trails | | |



Data Source | Michigan Geographic Data Library; Kalkaska County; Networks Northwest **Map Scale** | 1:191,595 **Date** | 10/21/2017

- » **North Country Trail.** The North Country Trail is a National Scenic Trail, stretching 4,600 miles over 7 states, from New York to North Dakota. Traveling through 10 national forests, and more than 150 public lands, the North Country Trail is the largest National Scenic Trail in the US. In Kalkaska County, the trail runs roughly southwest to east, with parking access at the Kalkaska County Sports and Recreation Complex and Log Lake Campground. The Grand Traverse Hiking Club is responsible for developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting this section of the North Country Trail.
- » **Shore-to-Shore Trail.** The Shore-to-Shore Trail is a 220-mile horseback/hiking trail that runs between Empire to Oscoda, Michigan. A trail camp is available along the Rapid River in Kalkaska County. The Michigan Trail Riders Association works in partnership with the MDNR and National Forest Service to provide maintenance and promotional activities for the trail.
- » **Mountain Bike Trail.** A new mountain bike trail system provides connections between the Village of Kalkaska and Grand Traverse County that is a trail used for the Iceman and Comth Race. A new trailhead on 131 is being proposed.

Other Facilities/Activities

Many other private facilities and activities are available in Kalkaska County, including numerous private youth camps, museums, nature centers, campgrounds, golf courses, cross country skiing, snowmobile clubs, horseback riding, fishing charters, and boat rentals. Hunting is available at different parks throughout the County. Please check with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for rules and regulations on hunting and fishing and the specific township for details.



Table XX: Conservation District Properties

Facility	Description and Activities	Location
Seven Bridges Preserve	One mile of frontage of the Rapid River, trail and boardwalk, wildlife/bird watching, hiking/snow shoeing, hunting, fishing. Size: 314 acres.	Clearwater Township
Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area	Fishing, hunting, hiking/snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, nature viewing. Size: 3,300 acres.	Clearwater Township
South Boardman Preserve	Hiking, wildlife/birdwatching, hunting. Size: 111 acres.	Boardman Township
Milock Family Preserve Upper Manistee Headwaters Preserve	130-acre spring-fed lake and forested areas, over six miles of trails for hiking, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, and nature viewing. Ice and summer fishing. 250-seat amphitheater. Size: 1,288 acres.	Excelsior Township

Table XX: State of Michigan Recreation Facilities

Facility	Description and Activities	Location
Pere Marquette State Forest	The Pere Marquette State Forest encompasses lands in the upper lower peninsula on the western side of the state. Counties within the Pere Marquette, are: Kalkaska, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Mason, Lake, Osceola, Oceana, Newaygo and Mecosta. Size: 177,000 acres	
Guernsey Lake State Forest Campground	Fishing, hiking, mountain biking, ORV trails, wildlife/ birdwatching, boat launch, 36 rustic campsites, vault toilets, well hand pump	Kalkaska Twp
CCC Bridge State Forest Campground	Fishing, canoeing/kayaking, ORV trails, wildlife/ birdwatching, boat launch, 32 rustic campsites, vault toilets, well hand pump	Oliver Twp
Pickarel Lake State Forest Campground	Fishing, ORV trails, boat launch, wildlife/birdwatching, 13 rustic campsites, vault toilets, well hand pump	Coldsprings Twp
Sand Lake Quiet Area	Hiking, 36 rustic campsites, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing, mountain biking. Size: 2,800 acres	Kalkaska Twp
Torch River Boat Launch	Boat launch	Clearwater Twp
Manistee River Boat Launch	Boat launch, parking	Springfield Twp
Manistee River Boat Launch	Boat launch, parking	Garfield Twp
Manistee River Boat Launch	Boat launch, parking	Oliver Twp
Cranberry Lake Boat Launch	Primitive boat launch, parking	Bear Lake Twp
East Lake Boat Launch	Paved boat launch, parking	Orange Twp
Bear Lake Boat Launch	Paved boat launch, parking	Bear Lake Twp
Big Blue Lake	Paved boat launch, skid pier, public toilet, parking	Blue Lake
Big Twin Lake	Paved boat launch, skid pier, public toilet, parking	Cold Springs Twp
Yellow Tree	Boat launch	Bear Lake Twp
Hole in the Fence	Boat launch	Bear Lake Twp
Sharon Road	Boat launch	Garfield Twp
Sandbanks	Boat launch, public toilet	Garfield Twp
Rainbow Jim's	Boat launch, public toilet	Springfield Twp
3 Mile Road	Boat launch	Garfield Twp
4 Mile Bend	Boat launch	Oliver Twp
Seven Bridges	Fishing, hiking, wildlife/birdwatching, hunting. Size: 314 acres	Valley Road North
Skegemog Swamp Pathway	Boardwalk, birdwatching, wildlife viewing. Size: 2700 acres	Rapid City Road
Starvation Lake	Boat launch, parking, restroom	Blue Lake Twp

Table XX: Township Recreation Facilities

Facility	Description and Activities	Location
Blue Lake Township		
Beaver and Channel Park	Water Channel Between North Blue Lake and Blue Lake including foot bridge.	
Boardman Township		
Township Park #13	Baseball diamond, basketball court, swings, volleyball court	School Street
Township Park #2	Picnic tables, grills	Near railroad tracks across from post office
Township Park #3	Picnic tables, grill, Mill Pond, fishing, dam	Young's Pond, on Mill St.
Township Park #4	Lighted baseball diamond, swings, outdoor bathrooms, concession stand, picnic pavilion, outdoor grills, picnic tables.	Boardman River Rd
Clearwater Township		
Aarwood Bridge Park	No information available.	Aarwood Rd
Cedar Street Park	No information available.	Crystal Beach Rd
Clearwater Township Park	½ mile paved walking trail, baseball diamonds, soccer field, pavilion	Rapid City Rd
Freedom Park	Pavilions, playground, outdoor grills, baseball diamond, rustic trails to Rapid River, outdoor toilets	Rapid City Rd
Heritage Park	Baseball diamonds, picnicking, open space, play equipment	Rapid City
Coldsprings Township		
Sands Park	Lake access, picnicking, swimming beach, boat launch	Manistee Lake
Garfield Township		
Garfield Township Park	Baseball diamonds	
Rapid River Township		
Rapid River Township Community Park	Play structure, well, parking,	Phelps Rd, Rapid City
Croy Lake	Walking paths, wildlife viewing	Priest Rd
Springfield Township		
Springfield Township Recreation Center	Manistee River overlook, playground, pavilion, summertime farmers market, sledding hills, heated pavilion, community event center	

Planning Process

The Kalkaska County Recreation Plan update was developed as part of a larger community planning process initiated in 2022 by the Kalkaska Downtown Development Authority, Village of Kalkaska, Kalkaska County Library, and Kalkaska County. The goal of this partnership endeavor was to update the County Recreation Plan, Village of Kalkaska Recreation Plan, Village of Kalkaska Master Plan, Kalkaska DDA Plan, and create a Kalkaska County Library Master Plan. The intention of updating all five of these plans via one process was to provide a collaborative and cohesive planning process, where all agencies involved participated on one “Kalkaska Planning Committee” and together had the opportunity to obtain public input, evaluate goals and objectives, and align their respective future visions as a unified team.

While the planning and public input processes were conducted concurrently, the data, analysis, and public input used to update and develop this Plan was collected and prepared to address issues and opportunities specific to recreation in the County.

PUBLIC INPUT

Public input was critical to this planning process, and two successful input opportunities were organized by the Kalkaska Planning Committee outside of the public hearing. First, an open house, *Speak Up Kalkaska!*, was held at the Commission on Aging on October 27, 2022. The event was open house style where members of the public could come and go as they please and provide input via boards. Members of the Kalkaska Planning Committee “stationed” each board to answer questions of participants. Second, an online survey was made available following the event for individual who were unable to attend the open house. The questionnaire was widely publicized online, and eighty-one (81) responses were received. Survey summaries and responses, along with information relative to public events, are included in Appendix A.



Speak Up Kalkaska! open house event

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In 2017, the Kalkaska County Planning Commission developed and affirmed guiding principles. In 2022, the committee found that these principles still held true and made no changes to them. The following is the process that occurred in 2017. In addition to utilizing public input and community data to review and update the County's 2018 Recreation Plan goals and objectives, the recreation work group applied the "Guiding Principles" established by the Kalkaska Planning Committee. The "Guiding Principles" were intended to provide a means of consistently evaluating and prioritizing the goals and objectives identified in each of the five plans. The "Guiding Principles" include:

Purposeful – The objective is relevant to the agency evaluating it and the agency can make significant change in this area.

Public Supports – The objective is important to the public, based on the results of Speak Up Kalkaska!, follow-up survey, and previous planning processes.

Public Safety – The objective supports, enhances, and protects public safety.

Economic Driver – The objective supports new and existing jobs and business.

Sustainability – The objective can be achieved utilizing existing capacity and resources, which can be reasonably maintained over its lifetime.

Compatibility – The objective supports the other agencies' goals/objectives.

Participants were asked to review prior plans and public input in order to best evaluate the existing goals and objectives and make recommendations regarding the future priorities of the Village and County. This exercise reaffirmed the relevance and importance of collaboration among the partnering agencies, as the working groups concluded that the vast majority of goals and objectives supported, or were at least relevant to, each of the "Guiding Principles." See [Appendix XX](#) for the complete evaluation.

Log Lake Campground	
Please place a sticker to indicate your preference.	
What improvements are needed at Log Lake Campground? (Mark Two)	
Playground Equipment	•••••
Update infrastructure (water/sewer/electrics)	•••••
Stamp service/Full Hook Up Sites	
Maintained Green Space/Turf Improvements	
Public/Private area improvements	•••••
Expansion/Improvement to Disc Golf	•••••
Convert rustic sites near water to open space	•••••
Comments	
Additional sign on trail	

Rugg Pond Natural Area	
Please place a sticker to indicate your preference.	
What improvements are needed at Rugg Pond Natural Area?	
Comments	
Water sitting in back area	

Speak Up Kalkaska! open house event input board.

RECREATION PLAN REVIEW

The Kalkaska County Commissioners reviewed the draft plan at their December 14, 2022 meeting, and agreed to release the draft plan for public review and schedule a public hearing. Notice was posted on the County website indicating that copies of the draft plan were available online as well as at the other county offices. Copies were also made available at other public offices throughout the County. Comments were received from December 15, 2022 to January 18, 2023.

PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION

Following the 30-day public review period, the Kalkaska County Commission held a public hearing on January 18, 2023 to obtain additional public input and to review and discuss comments received during the 30 day review period. The Commission approved the plan on _____. See Appendix _ for the approval documents.

Goals, Objectives & Action Plan

The vision, goals, objectives, and action strategies are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities. These goals were developed based on review of existing facilities and input obtained through:

- » 2022 Kalkaska Community Survey
- » Speak Up Kalkaska! Open House
- » 2017 County Recreation Plan (including the Questionnaire and Public Forum)

VISION

Kalkaska County's recreation opportunities are high-quality, popular attractions for both residents and visitors. Residents, user groups, volunteers, local and County governments, and local, state, and federal partner organizations work in tandem to ensure that facilities are well-maintained, activities are coordinated amongst partners and user groups, and improvements and management are cost-effective. The County's abundant recreation opportunities are a well-recognized asset that help drive and support economic development activities County-wide, while enhancing the community's quality of life and sense of place.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In 2017, the Kalkaska County Planning Commission developed and affirmed guiding principles. In 2022, the committee found that these principles still held true and made no changes to them. The following is the process that occurred in 2017. In addition to utilizing public input and community data to review and update the County's 2018 Recreation Plan goals and objectives, the recreation work group applied the "Guiding Principles" established by the Kalkaska County Planning Commission. The "Guiding Principles" were intended to provide a means of consistently evaluating and prioritizing the goals and objectives identified in each of the five plans. The "Guiding Principles" include:

- » **Purposeful** – The objective is relevant to the agency evaluating it and the agency can make significant change in this area.
- » **Public Supports** – The objective is important to the public, based on the results of Speak Up Kalkaska!, follow-up survey, and previous planning processes.
- » **Public Safety** – The objective supports, enhances, and protects public safety.
- » **Economic Driver** – The objective supports new and existing jobs and business.
- » **Sustainability** – The objective can be achieved utilizing existing capacity and resources, which can be reasonably maintained over its lifetime.
- » **Compatibility** – The objective supports the other agencies' goals/objectives.

DEFINITIONS

In order to appropriately administer goals, objectives and strategies—and to ensure that progress is being made towards the community's vision—it's important to understand the roles of each and their relationship to each other.

- » **Goals** provide general direction and serve as a description of the desired future. They address issues and specific needs but are broad in scope.
- » **Objectives** are a means of achieving goals, and are attainable.
- » **Action Strategies** set forth the specifics necessary to accomplish objectives. One strategy might be used to accomplish multiple objectives; or an objective might require multiple strategies. Action strategies identify implementation tools (such as zoning changes) and the players involved in meeting goals and objectives.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Maintenance & Funding

Provide cost-effective, responsive, efficient recreation services and facilities

- » Pursue grant funding for planned recreation improvements.
- » Pursue the establishment of a community endowment to support recreation activities in Kalkaska

Goal #2: Infrastructure & Amenities

Maintain and improve existing parks

- » Ensure a high level of maintenance and management at all parks and recreation facilities.

Goal #3: Accessibility

Provide a variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, that meet the community's existing and future needs.

- » Ensure a diverse range of recreation opportunities throughout the County.
- » Ensure high-quality natural areas for outdoor recreation.
- » Ensure parks and recreation facilities are accessible to all users.
- » Support local efforts that enhance recreational opportunities in the County

Goal #4: Branding and Awareness

Support and promote Kalkaska County as a trail destination.

- » Coordinate trail usage groups, goals, and activities.
- » Promote and market trail information via information resources, social media, events and activities.
- » Develop an interconnected system of trailways that link communities, parks, and existing trails.

Goal #5: Partnerships & Collaborations

Work with governments, other agencies and regional stakeholders to better coordinate regional recreation efforts and improvements.

- » Collaborate with other local governments, conservation district, and key stakeholders to create a coordinated approach for a regional, interconnected parks and recreation system.
- » Work with Conservation District on conservation lands improvements, upgrades, and maintenance.
- » Continue and strengthen existing partnerships with stakeholders, regional groups and others to increased recreation usages among all resident groups and increase volunteerism.

ACTION PLAN

Action items are action-oriented and specific in nature and used as an organizational strategy to achieve the goals listed in the plan. The action plan is created to be a guide for the budgeting process for the next five years.



Trees along Rugg Pond.

Table XX: Action Plan

Year	Facility	Description	Goal
Ongoing	--	Maintain an updated 5-year recreation plan for the purposes of guiding recreation activities and to help ensure grant funding eligibility through the MDNR.	1, 5
Ongoing	--	Link fundraising activities with marketing efforts.	1
Ongoing	--	Partner with local units of governments, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to recognize mutual goals and interests to leverage funding opportunities.	5
Ongoing	--	Work with Grand Traverse Community Foundation and community partners to establish a Kalkaska Community endowment fund.	1, 5
Ongoing	--	Develop a funding strategy to guide fundraising efforts and identify funding opportunities for recreation activities.	1
Ongoing	--	Explore additional mechanisms for funding and managing recreational facilities	1
Ongoing	--	Provide for ongoing funding to provide maintenance and improvements at County parks and recreation facilities.	1, 2
Ongoing	--	Regularly review maintenance and improvement needs to determine appropriate staffing and funding levels.	2
Ongoing	--	Support "adopt a park" programs or other volunteer programs to meet specific maintenance and update needs at all parks.	2
Ongoing	Rugg Pond	Coordinate with Rugg Pond Natural Area Committee regarding all Rugg Pond activities	2, 5
Ongoing	Rugg Pond	Address maintenance items identified in the dam inspection report.	2
2023	Rugg Pond	Explore opportunities to expand on the existing trail.	2,3
2025	Rugg Pond	Extend walking trail in a loop around Rugg Pond.	2,3
2023	Rugg Pond	Explore potential for connecting walking trail with other trail systems/parks.	2,3
2024	Rugg Pond	Improve trail wayfinding (signage and maps)	2,3,4
2024	Rugg Pond	Determine feasibility and impacts of dredging or deepening Rugg Pond.	2
Ongoing	Log Lake Campground	Maintain and improve park amenities as needed, including but not limited to disc golf baskets, picnic tables and grills, pavilions, play structures, and boat launch.	2
Ongoing	Log Lake Campground	Support and encourage user groups to provide and maintain disc golf baskets/facilities that meet specifications for competitions.	2
2022	Log Lake Campground	Replace Port-A-Johns with permanent restrooms for beach area.	2
2024	Log Lake Campground	Update infrastructure, such as water, sewer and electrical.	2
2023	Kaliseum	Assess the feasibility of major structural and mechanical upgrades.	2
2024	Kaliseum	Determine the feasibility of upgrading the ice arena.	2
2025	Kaliseum	Provide upgrades/improvements to the locker rooms and restrooms.	2

Year	Facility	Description	Goal
2023	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Develop a campus master plan for the complex	1,2
2023	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Determine desired needs and uses for Civic Center for potential renovation/improvements.	2
2024	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Explore feasibility and interest in installing lighting for the athletic fields.	2
Ongoing	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Work with partners to promote and expand the use of the Civic Center, through additional events or activities.	2
2025	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Develop a formal structure to coordinate use of the Civic Center and Fairgrounds complex by the different user groups	2,5
Ongoing	Kalkaska County Sports & Recreation Complex	Develop a work agreement with volunteers and partners	5
Ongoing	KART Trail	Maintain and improve trail facilities and provide quality, long-lasting amenities, including benches and landscaping as needed.	2,4,5
2023	KART Trail	Update maintenance agreements between Kalkaska Village, Kalkaska County, Kalkaska Public Schools, and the Michigan Department of Transportation.	5
Ongoing	KART Trail	Plant trees along the KART Trail.	2,4
Ongoing	KART Trail	Work with partners to pursue funding to implement connections to the North Country Trail reroute.	1,4,5
Ongoing	KART Trail	Pursue KART Trail linkages to additional trail systems.	2,4,5
Ongoing	--	Encourage cooperation between federal, state, and local governments to further improve and expand opportunities at local park facilities.	1,5
Ongoing	--	Continue to work with partner organizations to facilitate and further recreational programs for all population groups.	3,5
Ongoing	--	Support township and village recreation planning and improvement activities through in-kind assistance or funding support.	1
Ongoing	--	Support the redevelopment of the Kalkaska County Library	2
Ongoing	--	Re-route the North Country Trail through the Village of Kalkaska's commercial district	4,5
Ongoing	--	Partner with the Village, DDA, Kalkaska County Library, Kalkaska Public Schools, DPW, and others to connect the KART with other recreational and community assets.	4,5
Ongoing	--	Identify gaps/linkage needs in existing trailway systems.	4
Ongoing	--	Explore opportunities and pursue funding to create linkages between trail systems as well as to other recreational facilities	1,4
Ongoing	--	Coordinate with Conservation District for future upgrades/improvements and connections to regional recreation options.	5

Appendix
