



# **PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN ST. JAMES TOWNSHIP**

**DRAFT JANUARY, 2018**



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This draft plan has been prepared, at the Township Board’s request, by Patrick Cull, with assistance from the Land Information Access Association.



Comments may be sent by email to Patrick Cull at [cull.stjames.twp.bi@gmail.com](mailto:cull.stjames.twp.bi@gmail.com) or PO Box 335 Beaver Island, MI 49782, or to Kathleen McNamara, St. James Township Supervisor.

## INTRODUCTION

This Parks and Recreation Plan is intended to serve as the vision and comprehensive guide for citizens and public officials in planning for the future of parks and recreation in St. James Township. In compliance with Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*, this plan includes a summary of the key recreational assets of the township, a description of the township's administrative structure, and a summary of the public input process. In addition, this plan includes goals, strategies and an action plan for implementation for the next five years. It is important to note that this plan is a “working document,” providing the flexibility to respond to changing conditions, new opportunities or new resources and innovations that align with the goals of the plan.

Due to its unique relationship with neighboring Peaine Township, as well as unique island-based stakeholder groups and the DNR, many of the goals and objectives outlined in the plan impact the entire island and will require extraordinary cooperation.

Furthermore, this plan is intended to integrate with and complement the planning processes, information and objectives of the *Beaver Island Master Plan*, which was recently adopted by both St. James and Peaine Township in 2017.

### **VISION STATEMENT (as defined in the 2017 Beaver Island Master Plan):**

*In 2045, Beaver Island will be a thriving community: economically diverse, socially vibrant, and environmentally rich. High quality ecosystems will be preserved and managed in a sustainable way, but also leveraged to support ecotourism and economic development. Historic and cultural resources will help define the Island, telling stories of its rich past and attracting visitors and new residents. There will be a diversity of affordable housing options that meet the needs of all residents and pave the way for changing demographics. A connected network of bike paths, sidewalks, and paddling routes will link recreational assets, community services, and residences.*

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

As stated in the 2012 St. James Township Recreation Plan and the 2017 Beaver Island Master Plan, tourism is “the backbone of Beaver Island’s economy.” Both short-term visitors and seasonal residents indisputably drive the township and its economy. Access to the island’s natural resources, including its forests, lakes and beaches, as well as Lake Michigan itself, is undoubtedly a major factor in drawing visitors to the island.

St. James Township is located in the northern part of Beaver Island, making up about a one-sixth of the island. St James Township also has jurisdictional purview over many of the islands in the Beaver Island Archipelago, including Hat, Hog, Garden, Squaw, Whiskey, Trout, High, and Gull islands.

With many miles of undeveloped yet accessible beach frontage and miles of peaceful county roads, St James Township has a very rural character. The small Village of St. James contains several single-family homes, a handful of year-round small businesses, three churches, and the Beaver Island Community School. The Village also has a number of summer homes scattered on small forested or beach lots. The wellbeing of the community depends on its natural resources, as it has since the days when Native Americans and early settlers were living on Beaver Island.

The defining feature of the township is St. James Harbor and its environs, where most of the day-to-day commerce of the island take place, especially boating and the transportation of goods, services, freight, and passengers by water. The harbor area reflects a traditional town development, with buildings located close to the road, minimal parking, and mixed uses in multiple-story buildings. The pedestrian scale, mix of commercial and residential uses, and lack of overcrowding have all contributed to its small-town character.

As previously noted, St. James Township is a recreational-tourism based community. Its population and housing gains are largely attributed to the growth of second homes, retirees, and seasonal tourists who desire access to and immersion in the island’s spectacular land and water resources. These gains slowed during the first decade of the 21st century due to Michigan’s well-documented economic recession. Yet tourism, with its short-term visits and seasonal residences, continues to be the main economic driver of the township and the entire island.

These trends solidify the critical importance of the township’s recreational assets for its own wellbeing, but it doesn’t fully capture the way that recreational activities help bring the community together. School sports matches are intergenerational and community-wide events. Fundraising events such as a 5K run or a bicycle festival, and environmental activities such as beach cleanups and wildlife habitat enhancement projects also bring together seasonal and year-round residents as a community. And nearly all of these and other events are implemented by scores of volunteers throughout the community, often without reliance on government funding.

### The People of St. James Township

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 1990 and 2000 censuses, as well as its 2010-2014 American Community Survey, the populations of Beaver Island in general and St. James Township in particular have shown a trend of slow growth. In the 1990 Census, St. James Township had a population of 276. As of the



2000 census, the township had 307 — growth of 11.2%. This rate has slowed significantly since then. The American Community Survey's 2014 population estimate for St. James Township is 317 — a growth rate of only 3.3%.

The median age of St. James Township's residents has increased during this same span. As of the 2000 Census, the population's median age was 45.6 years old. The estimates for 2014 place the township's median age at 54.8, a 20.2% increase. Although the increase is only slightly higher than that of Charlevoix County as a whole, it is nearly double that of the state of Michigan's 10.7% increase during the same span of time, and both the county and the state have a much lower median age (46.4 for Charlevoix County and 35.5 for the State of Michigan). Beaver Island as a whole has seen an increase in people over the age of 45, and a sharp increase in people aged 65 and over. It has also seen a decrease in those aged less than 9 years old, as well as between 25 and 44 years old. The 25-34 year old bracket has dropped an estimated 65.7%, and the 35-44 range has dropped some 46.6%. Both of these ranges are indicators that Beaver Island has fewer young, growing families as full-time residents than it once did.

Mirroring the slow-growing and aging population is the housing situation on the island. Owner-occupied housing units only increased by 4.3% in the years between 2000 and 2014, while renter-occupied housing units showed no change. Meanwhile, vacant units have increased by 130%. The only housing category that showed a significant growth during this time span was seasonally-occupied homes, which increased by 54.2%. Indeed, some 70% of all housing units on Beaver Island are used only seasonally as of 2014.

Finally, despite the slight increase in owner-occupied housing units and more sharp increase in seasonal housing units, the taxable property value of the township has dropped. Although St. James Township has seen over a \$1.25 million increase in the taxable value of commercial properties between 2010 and 2016, the taxable value for residential properties has dropped over \$11.77 million during this span.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The following section describes how parks and recreation functions are carried out in St. James Township.

The Township Board is directly responsible for the operation of its recreational assets. Township staff is responsible for much of the day-to-day maintenance of those assets. As there is only one full-time maintenance person on staff who splits his time between St. James and Peaine Townships, some larger jobs and duties are contracted out.

Many recreational activities are implemented by non-governmental island organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Beaver Island Historical Society, Little Traverse Nature Conservancy and Central Michigan University's Biological Station. Active citizens also play an important role in supplementing recreational activities and facilities. For example, a new citizen-based trail committee recently worked to develop a comprehensive water trail plan for the island.

The current St. James Township budget (April 2017-March 2018) allocated approximately \$66,450.00 for Parks and Recreation. An additional \$12,000.00 is budgeted for lawn care and costs associated with the operation of public restrooms from the Building and Grounds budget category. A detailed breakdown of budget expenditures is provided in Figure 1.1 below:

**Figure 1.1**

Expenditure Item	Approximate Amount
Wages	\$10,600.00
Supplies & Equipment	\$1,000.00
Capital Outlay	\$20,500.00
Repair & Maintenance	\$5,500.00
Fireworks	\$8,000.00
Professional Services and Planning	\$9,000.00

Lawn Care	\$6,000.00
Public Boat Launch Access	\$850.00
1. Public Restrooms	\$5,000.00
<b>Approximate Total</b>	<b>\$66,450.00</b>
<b>Approximate total GF Revenue</b>	<b>\$413,000.00</b>
<b>% Devoted to Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>16%</b>

These expenditures support the following recreational areas: McDonough Ballpark, JF Gillespie Public Beach Playground Park, Public Restrooms in Village, Township Campground, Gull Harbor Natural Area, Whiskey Point Lighthouse and Open Area, Township Tennis Courts, and several Pocket Parks around the Harbor. In future budgets, the needs of the water trail will be considered.

In this fiscal year, the Township also received an annual appropriation of \$10,000.00 from the Charlevoix County Parks Millage for improvements and equipment at the campground and beach.

In addition, the 2017-2018 Municipal Dock Fund reflected income and expenditures of approximately \$45,000.00 for the summer boating season. Income is from boaters. The Municipal Dock uses the DNR Reservation system and rates are set by the Michigan Waterways Commission. The dock is open from May through September and is run by a part-time harbormaster and two dock assistants.

## RECREATION INVENTORY

The following inventory (Figures 1.2 and 1.3) of St. James Township's recreational facilities and properties is based on the list developed for the 2012 St. James Township Recreation Plan, as well as a review of government documents and maps, and discussions with various island organizations and township board members. Most of the items here are properties that are owned fully or in part by St. James Township, although assets owned by non-profit organizations are also included. Privately owned businesses which support recreation are not listed. All developed facilities are barrier-free to some degree, although it should be noted that not all are easily accessible by wheelchair due to natural conditions (sand, rough ground, etc.). Whiskey Point Lighthouse, which is closed to the public, and undeveloped properties are not necessarily barrier-free or easily accessible. A full accessibility evaluation can be found after Figure 1.2. Maps of recreational assets (including non-motorized trails, the birding trail and the proposed water trail) follow. The service area for all items on the list is all of Beaver Island, which includes both St. James and Peaine Townships.

**Figure 1.2**

Name	Location/Size	Ownership	Purpose/Use	Access
Jewell Gillespie Park	St. James Harbor, ~1 acre	St. James Township	Public beach, with playground equipment, parking lot, outhouses	Open to Public
Beaver Island Municipal Dock	St. James Harbor, ~1 acre	St. James (& Peaine) Township	25-slip dock, harbormaster building with restrooms, picnic tables, greenspace	Open to boaters w/ reservation, public access
Bud McDonough Memorial Baseball Field	Near St. James Harbor, over 2 acres	St. James (& Peaine) Township.	Baseball/Softball Field	Open to Public



Beaver Island Veterans Memorial Park	St. James Harbor, ~1/2 acre	St. James Township (Leased from Wolverine Power Cooperative)	Monuments, benches, greenspace.	Open to Public
St. James Township Campground	Northern Shore, ~40 acres	St. James Township (& Charlevoix County Road Commission)	12 rustic campsites, pit toilets, water pumps	Open to Public
Font Lake Boat Launch	Northern shore of Font Lake, small strip of lake frontage	St. James Township & PSJA	Boat Launch	Open to Public
Font Lake Property 1	West side of Font Lake Rd. across from boat launch, ~2.5 acres	St. James Township	Vacant	Undeveloped
Font Lake Property 2	South side of Font View Ct., ~1/2 acre	St. James Township	Vacant, Font Lake Frontage	Undeveloped
Harbor Light Park	Whiskey Point	St. James Township	Lighthouse, greenspace, lake frontage	Open to Public (Lighthouse closed)
St. James Township Hall	St. James Harbor, ~1/4 acre	St. James Township	Meeting room	Limited Use
Tennis Courts	North of Donegal Bay Rd., West of town, ~.75 acres	St. James Township	2 tennis courts, picnic tables, small park	Open to Public
Resale Shop	North of Donegal Bay Rd., West of town	St. James Township & Peaine Township	Fire Department Auxiliary Resale Shop	Charitable business
Vacant Harbor Frontage Lot	St. James Harbor, 66ft of frontage, Stephen's Plat	St. James Township has easement rights	Vacant	Open to Public with restrictions
Donegal Bay Property 1	Donegal Bay, off Island Woods Rd. N, 1 lot	St. James Township	Vacant	Undeveloped
Donegal Bay Property 2	Donegal Bay, off Island Woods Rd., 1 lot	St. James Township	Vacant	Undeveloped
Paradise Bay Park	St. James Harbor, South of BIBCO Dock, 1 lot	St. James Township	Small park, benches, flower gardens	Open to Public

Gull Harbor Natural Area	North of St. James Harbor, 14 acres	St. James Township	Trails, ponds, wetland lake frontage, woods	Open to Public
Heritage Park	Donegal Bay Rd., across from library	St. James Township, leased to Beaver Island Historical Society	Outdoor historical displays	Open to Public
Kings Highway Property	West side of Kings Hwy, south of Hannon Rd., 1/3 acre	St. James Township	Vacant lot	Undeveloped
Iron Ore Bay Public Access	South End Rd., 22 acres and 600ft of lakefront	St James & Peaine Townships	Beach, picnic tables, pit toilets	Open to Public
Beaver Island Marine Museum	St. James harbor	Beaver Island Historical Society	Indoor and outdoor historical displays	Open to Public
Beaver Island Print Shop Museum	St. James village	Beaver Island Historical Society	Indoor historical displays	Open to Public
George & Althea Petritz Nature Preserve	North of town, 27 acres and 500ft of lakefront	Little Traverse Bay Nature Conservancy	Trails, forest, lake frontage	Open to Public
Beaver Island Community School	Harbor area, 2 acres	Beaver Island Community School	School building, soccer field, playground, gym	Limited Use
Beaver Island Community Center	Harbor area, ½ acre	Preservation Association of Beaver Island	Auditorium, kitchen, game area, radio station studio	Open to Public
Donegal Bay Road Bike Path	Inland, from St. James Township Campground to intersection of Donegal Bay Rd. and Back Hwy.	Controlled by St. James Township through easement rights with private property owners	Paved bike path	Open to Public
Port of St. James Association privately owned common properties (Mt. Pisgah, Donegal Bay Pavilion and Park, hiking trails, campground)	Several properties in NW corner of the island, including ~500ft of lake frontage	Port of St. James Association	Hiking trails, picnic pavilion, campground	For use of PSJA property owners and their guests
Former DNR Land and Building	Harbor Area, 3 acres	St. James Township	Harbor frontage with a house and garage, open area and forest	Now vacant residence of Deputy Sherriff



Beaver Island Water Trail (The Water Trail Plan is not yet completed, but various sites owned by St. James Township listed above will likely be an integral part of the completed plan)	Various	Various	Various	Not yet completed
Beaver Island Birding Trail	Encompasses some 12,000 acres	Various	Nature trail (both hiking and driving) for bird viewing	Open to public

### Accessibility Assessment

The accessibility evaluations for St James Township have been conducted by the township supervisor and deputy supervisor as part of the recreation planning process. In planning for the water trail and for recent campground improvements, the advice of Access Recreation Group, LLC, of Jenison, MI was sought. The township anticipates working further with Access Recreation Group for a more complete assessment of its sites and certainly in any new project planning.

The evaluations were based loosely on the United States Access Board's Section 15 – Recreation Facilities, the Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, Americans with Disabilities Act, and used the ranking criteria suggested by MDNR's Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans (2016). These criteria are based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

The criteria are as follows: ADA Ranking System Rank Interpretation

1. None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
2. Some of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
3. Most of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
4. All the facilities/park meets accessibility guidelines.
5. The entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

**Figure 1.3**

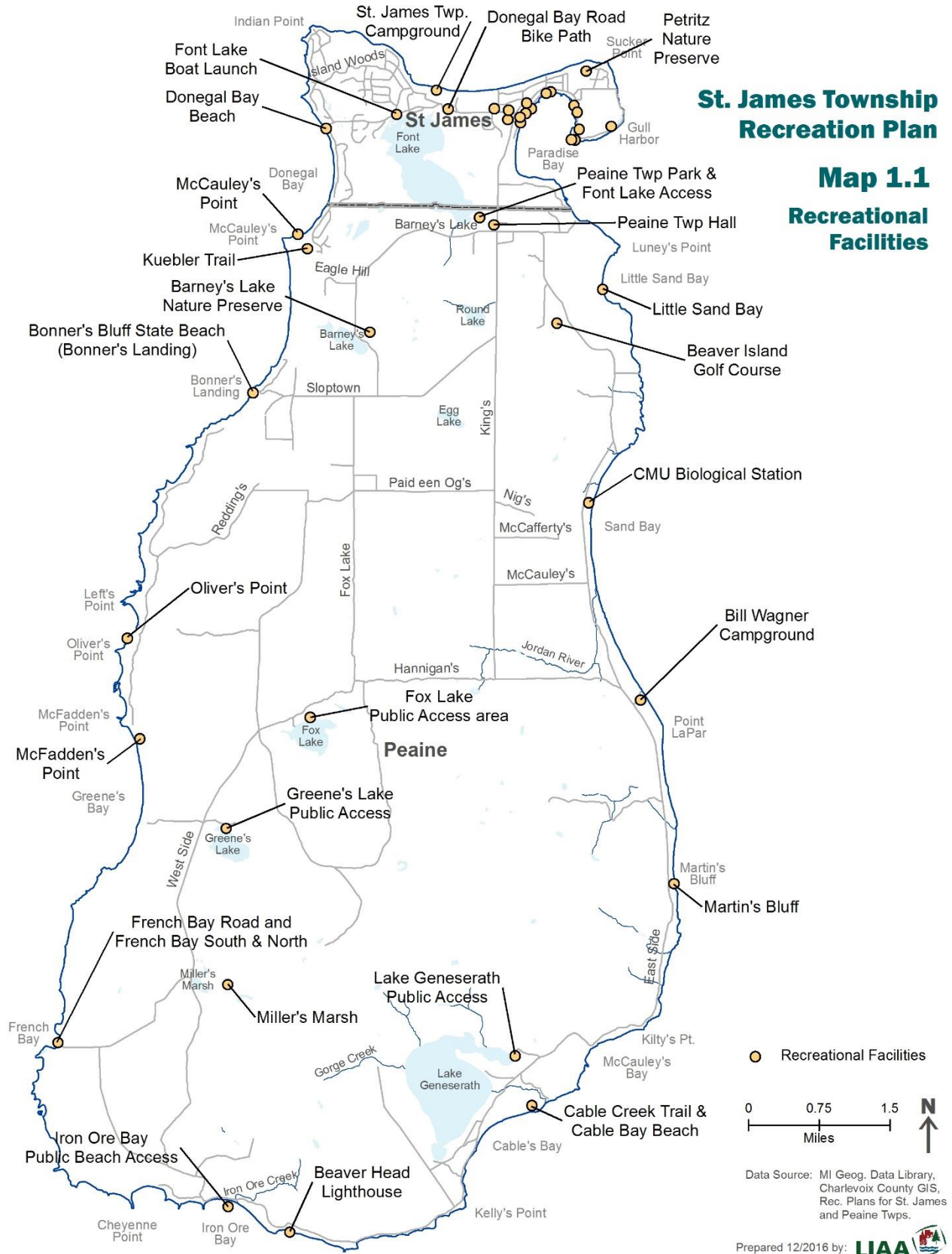
Public Facility	Asset Type	Rating
Jewell Gillespie Park	Park	2
Beaver Island Municipal Dock	Marina	3
Bud McDonough Memorial Baseball Field	Park	2
Beaver Island Veterans Memorial Park	Park	3
St. James Township Campground	Park	3
Font Lake Boat Launch	Access	1
Harbor Light Park	Park	3
Tennis Courts	Park	2
Paradise Bay Park	Park	2
Gull Harbor Natural Area	Park / Trails	1
Iron Ore Bay Public Access	Park / Access	2
Donegal Bay Road Bike Path	Trail	4

*Beaver Island Archipelago*

As previously mentioned, many of the islands within the Beaver Island archipelago fall under the jurisdiction of St. James Township, except North Fox Island and South Fox Island, which are not part of Charlevoix County. Squaw Island, Trout Island, and a small fraction of Garden Island are privately owned, while the rest are publicly owned by either the State of Michigan or the United States Federal government. Although these public properties are not owned by the township, they technically fall within its boundaries and should be treated as recreational assets.

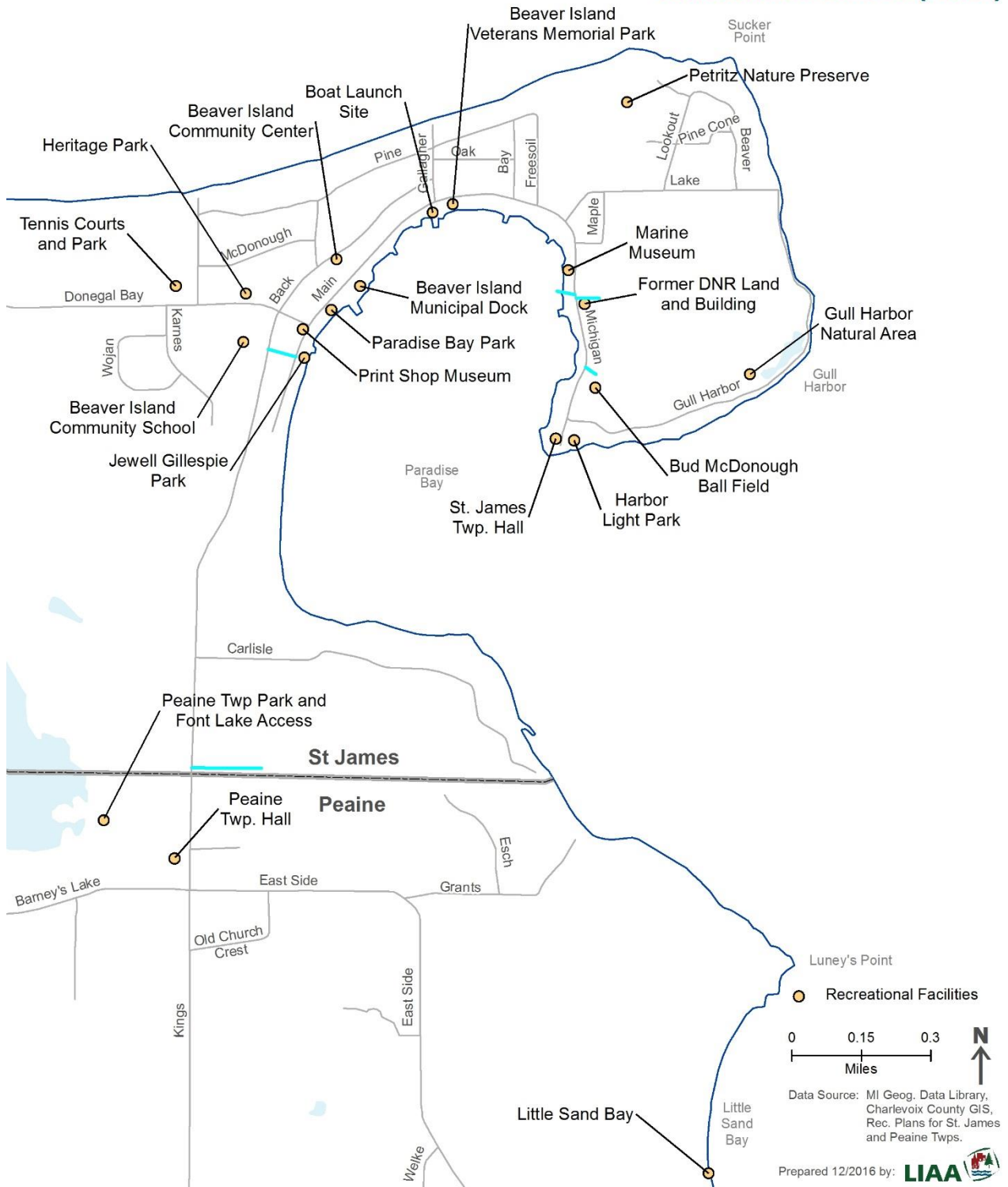
**Figure 1.4**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Approximate Size</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Administrator</b>
Garden Island	4495 acres (~100 of which are privately owned)	State of Michigan	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
High Island	3585 acres	State of Michigan	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Hog Island	2275 acres	State of Michigan	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Gull Island	230 acres	United States Federal Government	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Seney National Wildlife Refuge)
Whiskey Island	90 acres	State of Michigan	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Trout Island	80 acres	Privately Owned	N/A
Squaw Island	75 acres	Privately Owned	N/A
Hat Island	10 acres	United States Federal Government	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Seney National Wildlife Refuge)
Pismire Island	3 acres	United States Federal Government	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Seney National Wildlife Refuge)
Shoe Island	3 acres	United States Federal Government	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Seney National Wildlife Refuge)



## St. James Township Recreation Plan

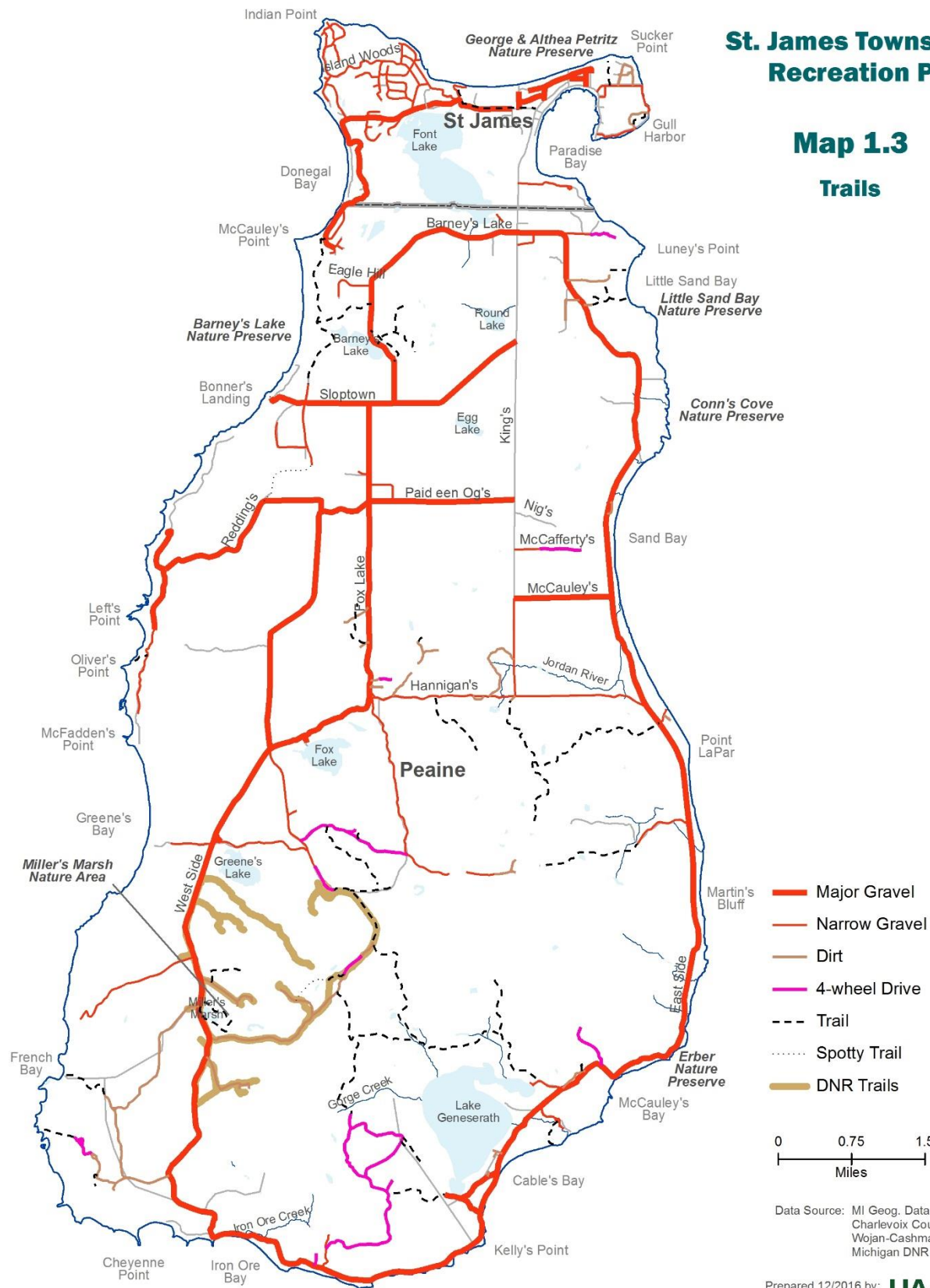
### Map 1.2 Recreational Facilities (Detail)



## St. James Township Recreation Plan

### Map 1.3

#### Trails

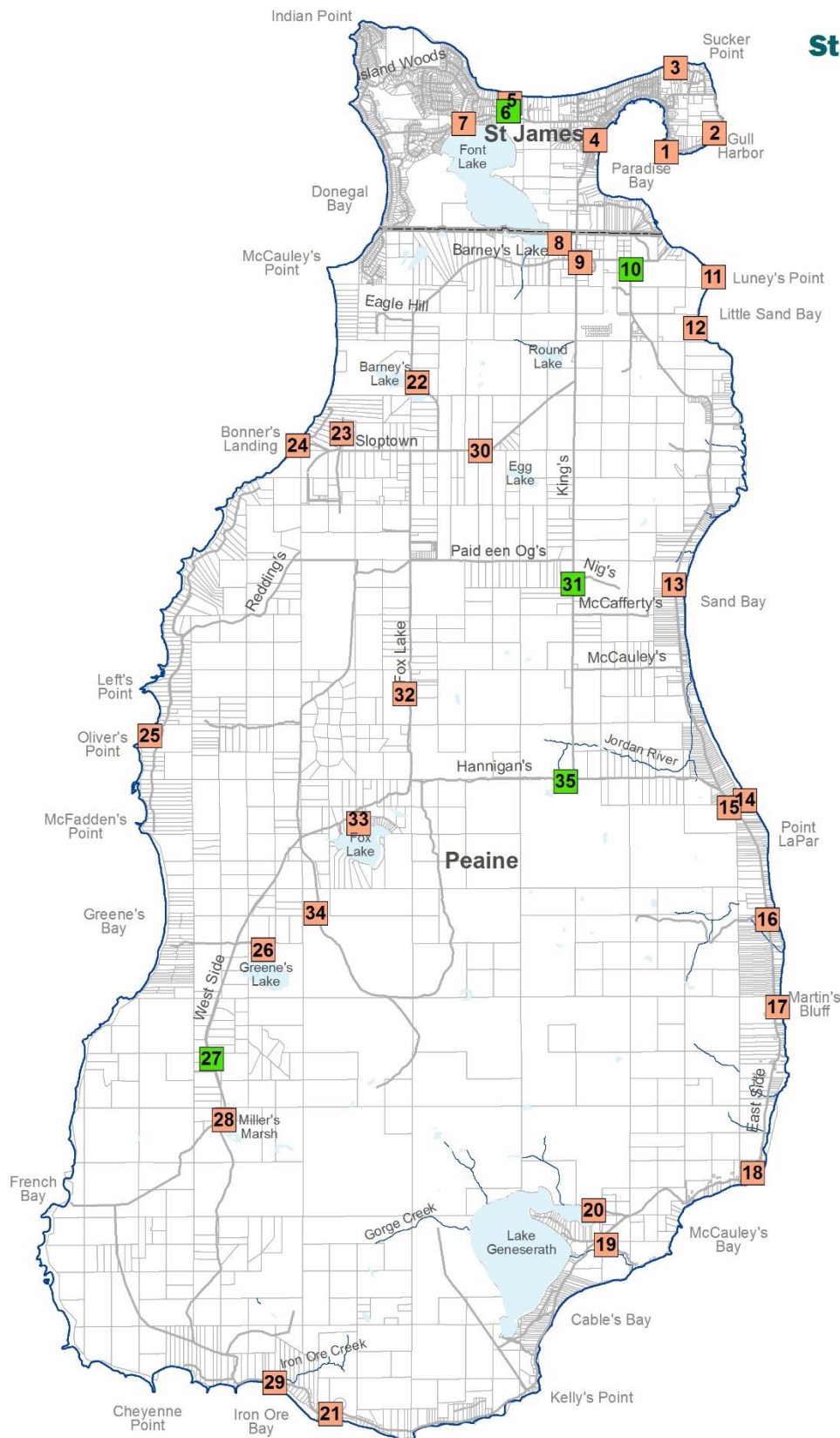




## St. James Township Recreation Plan

### Map 1.4

#### Birding Trail



#### North End Birding Sites

- 1 - Beaver Island Lighthouse
- 2 - Gull Harbor Natural Area
- 3 - George and Althea Petritz Preserve
- 4 - Chimney Swift Tower
- 5 - St. James Township Campground
- 6 - Indian Point
- 7 - Font Lake (Public Boat Launch on Donegal Bay Rd.)
- 8 - Font Lake (Peaine Township Park)
- 9 - Holy Cross Cemetery

#### East Side Birding Sites

- 10 - "East Side Drive - Bobolink Bend"
- 11 - Luney's Point
- 12 - Little Sand Bay Preserve
- 13 - Paula Simpson Trail / CMU / Old Burke Farm
- 14 - Bill Wagner Campground
- 15 - Seven Bridges Trail
- 16 - Johnny Martin's Trail
- 17 - Martins Bluff
- 18 - Erber Preserve
- 19 - "Cable's Creek Road - Warbler Alley"
- 20 - Lake Geneserath Public Boat Launch
- 21 - Beaver Head Lighthouse

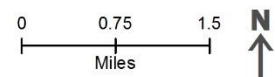
#### West Side Birding Sites

- 22 - Barney's Lake Preserve
- 23 - Protars Tomb / Kuebler Trail
- 24 - Bonner's Bluff Landing
- 25 - Oliver's Point via Mrs. Redding's Trail
- 26 - Greene's Lake
- 27 - Tara's Meadow
- 28 - Miller's Marsh
- 29 - Iron Ore Bay

#### Central Birding Sites

- 30 - Microwave Tower on Slopstown Road
- 31 - King's Highway Wetland
- 32 - Black Hills Clearing
- 33 - Fox Lake
- 34 - Camp #3 Clear Cut
- 35 - Hannigan's Road

- Go Out and Explore
- Observe from Roadside



Data Source: MI Geog. Data Library  
Charlevoix County GIS  
Beaver Island Birding Trail

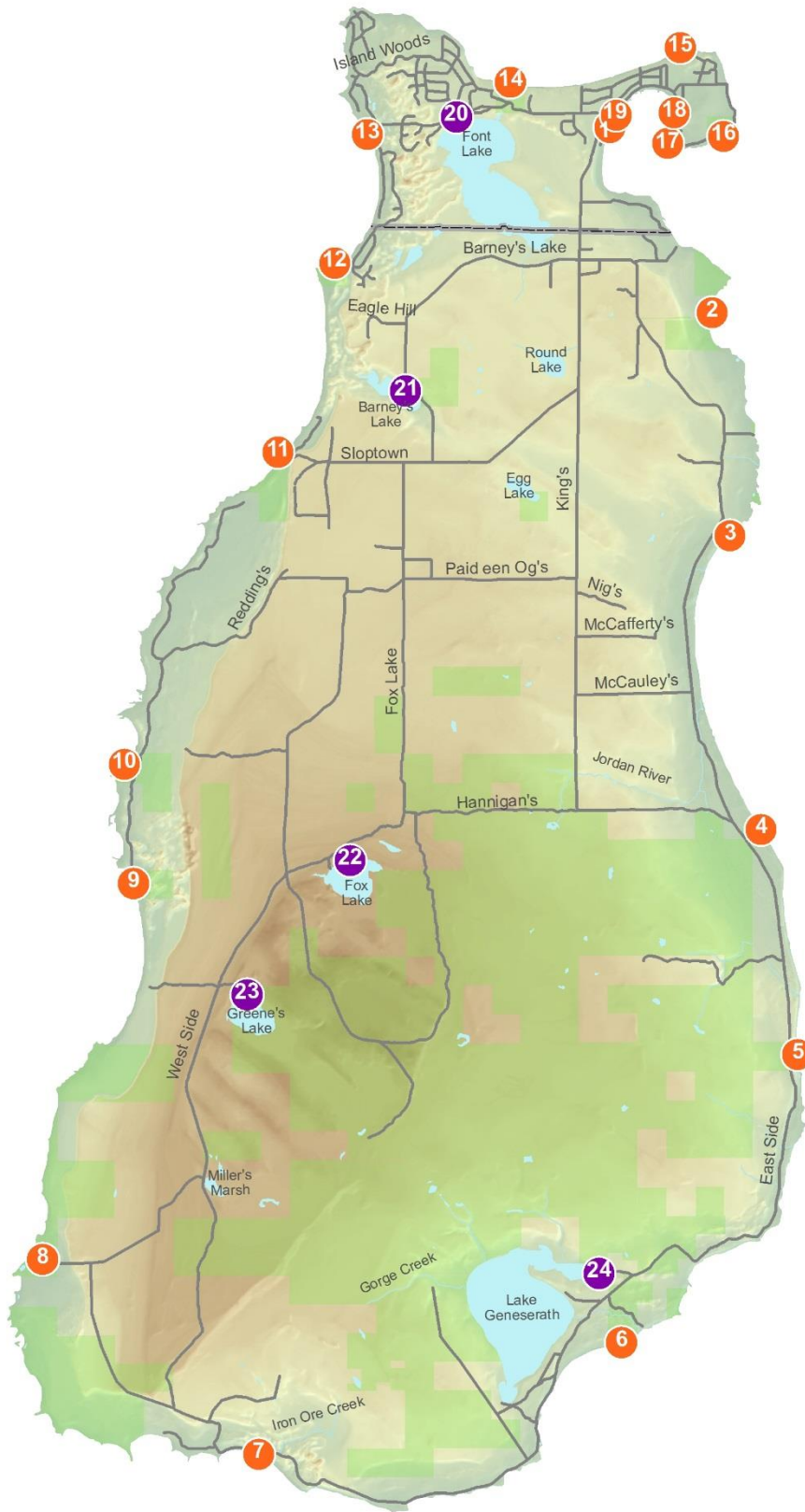
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## St. James Township Recreation Plan

### Map 1.5

#### Water Trail Access Sites

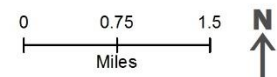


#### Coastal Access Sites

- 1 - Jewell Gillespie Park
- 2 - Luney's Point
- 3 - Mike Boyle's Beach
- 4 - Bill Wagner Campground
- 5 - Martin's Bluff
- 6 - Cable's Bay
- 7 - Iron Ore Bay
- 8 - French Bay
- 9 - McFadden's Point
- 10 - Oliver's Point
- 11 - Bonner's Bluff Landing
- 12 - McCauley's Point
- 13 - Donegal Bay Beach
- 14 - St. James Twp. Campground
- 15 - George and Althea Petritz Nature Preserve
- 16 - Gull Harbor Natural Area
- 17 - St. James Twp. Hall and Harbor Light Park
- 18 - Old DNR Dock
- 19 - Paradise Bay Park

#### Inland Access Sites

- 20 - Font Lake
- 21 - Barney's Lake
- 22 - Fox Lake
- 23 - Greene's Lake
- 24 - Lake Geneserath



Data Source: MI Geog. Data Library  
Charlevoix County GIS  
Michigan DNR  
LIAA

Prepared 12/2016 by: **LIAA**

*Previous DNR Grants*

The following parks/facilities have been acquired or developed with support from DNR grant funds.

**Figure 1.4**

Park Name/Type	Grant Details	Acquisition Details	Development Details
Gull Harbor Nature Preserve	\$60,000, Gull Harbor Park Agreement; 3/30/1992; funds from DNR Trust Fund	Portion of \$80,000 purchase of 13.4 acres, 1,374 feet of frontage	N/A
Trail through Gull Harbor Nature Preserve	\$5,000, funds from Federal Coastal Management through DNR 1/15/2000	N/A	Install Paths and Benches
Repair and Upgrade of Beaver Island Municipal Dock (a.k.a. “St. James Mooring Facility” or “Beaver Island Yacht Dock”)	\$1,100,000, Harbor and Docks Infrastructure Agreement; 5/21/2003; grant-in-aid through DNR Harbor Development program, Parks and Recreation Bureau	N/A	2 year project to rehabilitate and upgrade marina at municipal dock

## DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

This recreation plan was developed through a set of planning and public input processes. The processes began in May of 2017, when the St. James Township board asked Deputy Supervisor Patrick Cull to research and develop a plan for public comment and board consideration by early 2018. In addition, the public input processes of the recent 2017 *Beaver Island Master Plan* and *Water Trail Development Plan* were major resources and guides, as both processes included extensive discussions and recommendations regarding recreation and were driven by community input. Additionally, other recent 5-year Recreation Plans were reviewed, such as the previous St. James and Peaine Township plans, as well several Recreation Plans from other townships in Charlevoix County.

Community survey results from the 2017 Beaver Island Master Plan were extremely helpful in creating the goals and objectives found in this plan. Throughout 2017, the St. James Township Board reviewed all of these survey results, especially those related to their three special areas of concern: blight, access to high-speed internet, and recreation. After review of these survey results and several rounds of discussion at its public meetings, the Township Board drafted preliminary goals for the Township. Those goals that dealt with recreation were used as the starting point for the goals and objectives ultimately listed in this plan.

In addition, the Township facilitated several discussions with individuals and organizations on the island (including the newly founded Beaver Island Trails Association) to discuss the preliminary recreation goals for the township.

On January 3, 2018, the Township facilitated a large public input meeting at Beaver Island Community School. Notice for the meeting was placed on the St. James Township website, the News on the Net website, WVBI Radio, the Beaver Island Community Calendar, the Beaver Island Forum, and the Beaver Island Message Board. Approximately 25 people were in attendance, and those unable to attend in person were able to view the meeting over a livestream on the Internet. The bulk of the discussion was related to the preliminary goals and objectives developed by township officials. A review of the comments from the public input meeting can be found in *Appendix A*.

With the responses collected from the public input meeting, township officials worked to develop a final draft of the parks and recreation plan. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, township officials submitted the draft plan for the 30 days of public comment. A copy of the draft plan was placed on the township website (in a format in which people could also submit comments), at the public library, and at the township office for public review. Notice of the 30-day comment period was placed on the St. James Township website, the News on the Net website, WVBI Radio, the Beaver Island Community Calendar, the Beaver Island Forum, and the Beaver Island Message Board.

In response to comments and suggestions provided after the 30-day public comment period, Township officials worked to develop a *final* parks and recreation plan. The *final* plan was then formally adopted following a formal public hearing in February. A copy of the notice for the public comment period and the public hearing can be found in *Appendix B*.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### GOALS

1. Increase and improve accessibility to Lake Michigan, possibly Beaver Island's greatest and most distinct resource.
2. Maximize the recreational opportunities afforded by the township's existing assets and its natural resources.
3. Improve the marketability of the township's recreational assets to tourists and visitors.
4. Make the island's recreational assets more easily accessible to its own citizens.

### OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Construct showers and improve restrooms at the Township Campground.

Helps fulfill goals 2, 3.

Potential funding sources: RPGP, MNRTF, L&WCF

#### 2. Build a new public boat ramp/launch in the harbor.

Helps fulfill goals 1, 2, 3, 4.

Potential partners: Peaine Township

Potential funding sources: CZM, MNRTF, WPG

#### 3. Designate areas for public parking for boaters and their trailers.

Helps fulfill goals 1, 2.

Potential funding sources: CCF, MNRTF, WPG, L&WCF

#### 4. Build a fishing pier on the harbor.

Helps fulfill goals 1, 2, 3, 4.

Potential partners: Peaine Township,

Potential funding sources: CZM, MNRTF, L&WCF, GLFT

#### 5. Assist in creation of Beaver Island Water Trail.

Helps fulfill goals 1, 2, 3, 4.

#### Funding Source Key:

- **RPGP**-Recreation Passport Grant Program
- **MNRTF**-Michigan National Resources Trust Fund
- **L&WCF**-Land and Water Conservation Fund
- **CZM**-Coastal Zone Management Program,
- **WPG**-Waterways Program Grants
- **GLFT**-Great Lakes Fishery Trust
- **CCCF**-Charlevoix County Community Foundation
- **CCPMA**-Charlevoix County Parks Millage Appropriation

Potential Partners: Peaine Township, Michigan DNR, Little Traverse Conservancy, Beaver Island Trails Association

Potential funding sources: CZM, CCCF, CCPMA

#### **6. Lengthen bike trail to Donegal Bay.**

Helps fulfill goals 2, 3.

Potential partners: Charlevoix County Road Commission

#### **7. Extend the Recreation Season into the winter months.**

Helps fulfill goals 2, 3, 4

Potential Partners: Peaine Township, Little Traverse Conservancy

Potential funding sources: CCCF, CMPA

## **ACTION PROGRAM**

The following Action Program describes how St. James Township intends to meet, or advance toward meeting, the aforementioned goals and objectives over the course of the next five years.

### **1. Construct Showers and Improve Restrooms at the Township Campground.**

The St. James Township Campground is a twelve-site rustic campground. Roughly equidistant between Paradise Bay and Donegal Bay and located atop a bluff with a beautiful view of Lake Michigan and some of the outer islands, the campground is one of St. James Township's most valuable recreational assets. The per-night camping fee is only \$10, and with a view of both a thick forest and of Lake Michigan, the campground should be a popular and inexpensive place to stay on Beaver Island during the summers. Despite all of these positives, however, the campground has relatively low attendance.

Part of the reason for this low attendance is likely the rustic nature of the campground. With only pit toilets and hand water pumps, the St. James Township Campground may be somewhat unappealing or intimidating to more casual campers. Constructing an expanded restroom facility, including showers, could boost the campground's appeal to these less experienced campers.

Not only would this project greatly improve upon an already valuable township-owned recreational asset, but having an inexpensive, natural place to camp with full restrooms and showers—all within walking distance of town—would be an attractive marketing device for tourists and visitors.

This project would help fulfill goals 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources) and 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors). Although this would be a fairly expensive project, funding sources such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Recreation Passport Grant Program may be available to help with the costs. In addition to designing and constructing the building, a well, septic system, and drain field would all be necessary. As the campground sits on a township-owned lot of approximately 40 acres, finding space for the building would not be a problem, although some tree-clearing may be required. When completed, the campground may have some increased expenditures—namely electricity and cleaning—but increased revenue from additional campers will mitigate or cover those costs.

Additionally, the Township Campground is slated to be a stop on the Beaver Island Water Trail. Having a shower and restroom facility located there would not only benefit the campground, but also the Water Trail.

### **2. Build a New or Improve an Existing Public Boat Launch/Ramp in the Harbor.**

Paradise Bay (sometimes known as Beaver Harbor or simply "the Harbor") is a remarkable example of a natural, sheltered harbor. It is extremely popular with boaters, as is evidenced by its two public marinas,

other docks, and various single boats that always dot the harbor throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Despite this, the harbor has always had an access problem. As addressed in the 2006 Beaver Island Master Plan, the 2012 St. James Township Recreation Plan, and the 2017 Beaver Island Master Plan, the lack of a reliable, public boat launch in the harbor is one of the island's largest recreational hurdles to get across.

The island's desire for a publicly owned boat launch has existed for some time. It was a goal in the 2012 St. James Township Recreation Plan, and in 2013 St. James Township commissioned Northwest Design Group out of Petoskey to design plans to build one at the former DNR property. The project, however, was never completed.

Current boat launching facilities on the harbor are privately owned or immediately adjacent to private businesses. The Beaver Island Marina and the Fogg dock are popular sites, but access is limited. Both of these locations are fully functioning marine-related businesses, which could present inconveniences and safety hazards to both the businesses and boaters. Each is hampered by a lack of parking, and each lacks a designated turn-around area for backing in trailers, requiring boaters to do so on Main Street.

This project would help fulfill goals 1 (increasing and improving access to Lake Michigan), 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources), 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors), and 4 (making the island's recreational assets more accessible to its own citizens). St. James Township already owns several properties on the harbor that could serve as potential sites for a boat launch. The aforementioned former DNR property is a strong candidate. Although it is possible that no land would need to be acquired for such a project, building a boat launch with an appropriate turn-around area would be expensive. Despite this, funding sources such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Coastal Zone Management Program, and the Waterways Program may be available to help with the costs. Costs would include design and construction. Some dredging may or may not be required as well, depending on the location of the site. Ongoing maintenance costs would also surely exist.

### **3. Designate Areas for Public Parking for Boaters and their Trailers.**

The current boat-launching situation on the harbor is detailed in Action Program part 2 above.

As mentioned above, the current privately owned boat-launching facilities harbor several problems, one of the most notable of which is parking. As there are currently no dedicated parking places for boaters, many boaters are forced to park their vehicles and trailers on the side of the street—primarily along Main St. and Michigan Ave. and Gallagher St. This current situation creates several safety issues. Vehicles, often large trucks with trailers, can block the view for pedestrians and vehicular traffic alike. Said vehicles are often parked along both sides of the road as well, causing bottlenecks that slow traffic and occasionally prevent full use of both lanes, forcing one driver to slow or come to a stop to wait for opposing traffic to pass through before continuing on.

This project largely depends upon the public boat-launch/ramp project. If a new public boat launch is created, onsite or nearby parking could possibly be included. If the former DNR property is chosen, for example, parking could be located to the rear of the Deputy's Residence. If the boat-launch project does not go ahead, or until it is completed, the township may explore other options for parking. Signage or ordinances prohibiting parking along certain streets may be an option.

This project would help fulfill goals 1 (increasing and improving access to Lake Michigan) and 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources). If the public boat launch project is begun, the parking situation would likely be rolled into it with a parking lot. Although this would be expensive, requests for funding from the sources mentioned above would likely include the expense of leveling and possibly paving a parking lot. In the absence of a new boat launch, or until it is completed, this project would be significantly less expensive. Signage prohibiting parking or directing boaters to parking would likely be required. A small grant from sources such as the Charlevoix County Community Foundation may help to defray these less-significant costs.



#### 4. Build a Fishing Pier on the Harbor.

With the recent return of perch to the harbor area, a fishing pier is another attractive project. As mentioned above, public access to the harbor at present is unfortunately limited. Even if the public boat launch project is successfully completed, it would not necessarily increase access to the lake for everyone. Not every resident and visitor to the island has access to a boat. A fishing pier would give boat owners and non-boat owners alike another avenue for access to the harbor.

Two major possibilities for this project exist. One is that a fishing pier could be rolled into the boat-launch project. A pier, open to foot traffic, could be located alongside or very near the boat-launch ramp. The other possibility is that the pier could exist completely independently of a boat-launch. A fishing pier could potentially exist in lieu of the boat-launch or on another site entirely.

This project would help fulfill goals 1 (increasing and improving access to Lake Michigan), 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources), 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors), and 4 (making the island's recreational assets more accessible to its own citizens). As mentioned in Action Program 2 above, St. James Township already owns several properties on the harbor that could serve as potential sites for a boat launch or a fishing pier. The aforementioned former DNR property is again a strong candidate. Although it is possible that no land would need to be acquired for such a project, building a fishing pier would be expensive. Despite this, funding sources such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Coastal Zone Management Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or the Great Lakes Fishery Trust may be available to help with the costs. Costs would include design and construction. Dredging would likely be required as well, depending on the location of the site. Ongoing maintenance costs, such as cleaning and maintaining the surface of the pier would also surely exist. Depending on the type of pier, a bubbler system may need to be put into place for the winter months, furthering the ongoing costs.

#### 5. Assist in the Creation of the Beaver Island Water Trail.

The Beaver Island Water Trail is an ongoing, collaborative project that is currently underway. The Water Trail, at its core, is the route that circumnavigates the entirety of Beaver Island's Lake Michigan shoreline, as well as locations on some of the island's inland lakes. Stretching approximately 50 total miles, the Water Trail is meant to encourage non-motorized recreational boating (especially kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards) to safely explore the waters around the island. The Water Trail, being fairly lengthy, will include several access sites with various features. Many of the access sites will only have undeveloped beach access, while others might have access to portable toilets, picnic areas, designated camping sites, or other amenities. All access sites will have lakeside signage, with a map indicating location, distance to the next site on the trail, etc. Although the trail circumnavigates the island, users of the Water Trail will be free to enter or exit the trail at any point, ensuring the trail can be used by paddlers of all skill levels. Several of the island's inland lakes will also be included in the trail and feature signage.

The Water Trail is an excellent opportunity for interpretive signage. All (or almost all) access sites are slated to include signs indicating locations and distances and, depending on the final design for these signs, there may be room for interpretive signage. Additional signs next to or near the directional signs are another option. These interpretive signs could include a wide range of information and are another aspect of the Water Trail's collaborative nature. Island history, Native American culture and history, wildlife, conservation, and ecology are all possible topics for interpretive signage along the Water Trail. Another step forward for Beaver Island regarding the Water Trail is the possible inclusion of universal design principles. Kayak ramps, beach mats, and other innovations would allow the trail to be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

Although the Water Trail spans both St. James and Peaine Township, and much of the project is being spearheaded by the new Beaver Island Trails Association, eight of the nineteen Lake Michigan access sites, as well as one of the five inland lake sites, are located within St. James Township. Of these nine access sites, eight are on township-owned property. These are: Jewell Gillespie Park, Paradise Bay Park, the former DNR property, Lighthouse Park, Gull Harbor Natural Area, St. James Township Campground, Donegal Bay, and Font Lake. As the property owner of these sites, the township will be the ultimate authority on what Water Trail amenities will go there.



This project would help fulfill goals 1 (increasing and improving access to Lake Michigan), 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources), 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors), and 4 (making the island's recreational assets more accessible to its own citizens). Possible costs would depend greatly on which amenities are chosen—things like picnic tables, portable toilets, trash cans, and emergency telephones are all possibilities. Signage will also be a cost, although it is not totally clear yet who will be responsible for the purchase and design of these signs. With smaller grants from places such as the Charlevoix County Community Foundation, or funds secured from the Charlevoix County Parks Millage, the township may be able to cover these smaller costs fairly easily over time.

## **6. Lengthen the Bike Trail to Donegal Bay.**

The bike trail, which runs approximately one mile from the intersection of Donegal Bay Road and Kings Highway in town to the Township Campground on the bluff overlooking Garden Island., is a very popular recreation site. Intended for bicyclists, walkers, joggers, and non-motorized vehicles, it runs alongside, but separate from, Donegal Bay Road. It features a paved surface and its own signs. The bike path has been praised for its added safety, as Donegal Bay Road is one of the township's busiest unpaved roads. Bikers and walkers are able to use the path as opposed to using the road, making it easier and safer for pedestrians, bikers, and drivers alike.

A little over a mile from the end of the paved bike path is the popular swimming and sunset-watching beach, Donegal Bay. Although many walkers and bikers use the path to reach the campground, or simply to reach the end and turn around for a leisure or exercise, many more use it for the first half of their trip to Donegal Bay. When the end of the paved path is reached, however, beachgoers are required to walk or bike along the side of the unpaved, fairly narrow, and fairly busy road for the remainder of the trip. The public access for Font Lake is also along this road after the end of the bike path. Increasing the length of the bike path would make the trip to Donegal Bay or Font Lake much easier for pedestrians and bikers and make the road much safer for all of its users.

This project would help fulfill goals 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources) and 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors). This would likely be a fairly expensive project. The route would need to be cleared and flattened, and the surface would need to be finished. Additional signage would also be required. A paved surface, like the one on the existing length of the path would be very expensive, but alternatives such as crushed gravel would help decrease costs. A crushed gravel surface may be cheaper to maintain in the long run as well, as the current paved surface has had issues with cracking and undermining by tree roots.

## **7. Extend the Recreation Season into the Winter Months.**

Although some opportunities for recreation exist on Beaver Island year-round, the access to recreation in the winter months typically declines. The focus on public recreation is typically based around the warmer months of the year when the population of St. James Township and Beaver Island grow with the annual influx of seasonal residents and visitors. Lengthening the recreation season into the winter months could not only increase the off-season tourism industry, but also undoubtedly appeal to the island's full-time residents. During the long, cold, and somewhat isolated Beaver Island winters, access to recreation would surely have a positive effect on mental health.

Existing outdoor winter activities are largely dependent upon the weather. During cold snowy winters, activities such as snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing are all possible activities. Not only do these activities depend upon snowfall, but they are largely up to individuals' own initiative, as no trails are groomed or marked for winter use. An outdoor ice skating rink once existed on the island, but problems with upkeep and maintenance led to that project being abandoned. Hunting and ice fishing are popular offseason activities, but are also largely dependent upon the weather. Additionally, as has been noted in the Master Plan and previous township Five-Year Recreation Plans, little or no indoor recreational activity is available to year-round residents.

Possibilities to lengthen the recreation season are many and varied. Another ice skating rink could be assembled. Artificial ice or ice refrigeration is a possible option. Although it would be more expensive, it would eliminate the dependency on below-freezing temperatures. Trails, such as the paved bike path to Donegal Bay or the loop around the Gull Harbor Natural Area, could be groomed with a drag-behind snowmobile trail groomer, increasing ease of access for snowshoers and cross-country skiers. Some kind of an indoor recreation center or pool would be a very expensive but much needed addition to the island's winter landscape. A partnership with the Beaver Island Community School and its gym could provide at least some indoor activity, such as basketball, volleyball, or indoor walking or running.

This project would help fulfill goals 2 (maximizing and improving upon existing township resources), 3 (improving the marketability of the township's recreational opportunities to visitors), and 4 (making the island's recreational assets more accessible to its own citizens). Costs largely depend upon which projects are undertaken. A trail groomer would be a fairly small cost that could have immediate benefits. An ice skating rink with a natural surface would require a lot of maintenance but wouldn't be very expensive, especially if one is placed on township-owned property, such as the parking lot at Jewell Gillespie Park. A rink with an artificial surface would be more expensive, as the surface would have to be purchased and installed. An indoor recreation center would be a more long-term goal with a lot of planning, as it would be a much more expensive project. The Charlevoix County Parks Millage may help with some of the more minor costs, whereas some of the larger costs such as a recreation center may be funded through the DNR Trust Fund or other sources.

## APPENDIX A – PUBLIC INPUT MEETING NOTES

### ***Objective 1: Construct Showers and Improve Restrooms at the Township Campground***

It was noted that the addition of restrooms and showers, as well as electricity and possibly WiFi at the campground could help, at least seasonally, with the low-income housing scarcity on the island.

On the flipside, it was noted that a fine balance would need to be struck. If long-term camping is allowed or encouraged, there would likely need to be some new ordinances in place to ensure cleanliness and order in the campground. Someone would have to be responsible for enforcing said ordinances as well.

The construction of a restroom/shower would require more work—especially maintenance and cleaning—than what the Township currently does at the campground. This would be an increased expenditure for the Township.

One attendee stated, and several others agreed, that the long-term management issues and challenges of such a project should be well planned up front, as opposed to putting out fires as they happen.

Another topic of discussion was the lack of information and of transportation for potential campers. The first-come first-served nature of the campground was mentioned, and that a reservation system might be preferable. The difficulty of getting camping gear from town to the campground without a vehicle was also discussed.

Other notes or suggestions regarding the Township Campground:

- Access to the beach is difficult and dangerous
- Signage is lacking
- The campground might be a good place for a pavilion or picnic space
- The possibility of a guard rail for vehicles

### ***Objectives 2-4: Build a New or Improve an Existing Public Boat Ramp/Launch in the Harbor, Designate Areas for Public Parking for Boaters and their Trailers, and Build a Fishing Pier on the Harbor***

It should be noted that Objectives 2, 3, and 4 were discussed simultaneously.

It was mentioned that a fishing pier could be incorporated into a boat launch, making two projects into one.

Consideration for the neighbors of any potential site of development was discussed. Noise, light, parking, construction, and maintenance could all affect the lifestyles and possibly the property values of neighbors.

The need for a boat washing/cleaning station was discussed. It was mentioned that in the past, the island has rallied behind preventing the spread of invasive species. A boat cleaning/washing station would help to mitigate the spread of invasive species between Lake Michigan and the island's inland lakes.

There was a suggestion that a smaller fishing pier might be able to be done quickly with aid from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust.

Other notes or suggestions regarding objectives 2, 3, & 4

- A question was posed whether there were enough fish in the harbor to warrant a fishing pier, followed by a discussion of habitat
- Should places outside the harbor be considered?
- Is the part of the harbor that is closer to downtown a possibility?
- Depending on the size of any pier, boat launch, or parking area, and whether any of these three would be combined into a single project would greatly affect the amount of maintenance required on the finished site. For example, would bubblers (for the winter) be required?

### ***Objective 5: Assist in the Creation of the Beaver Island Water Trail***

The need for water-side signage was agreed upon, for both safety and convenience.

Other safety concerns, ranging from adequate signage to emergency telephones, were the most talked about items regarding this objective.

***Objective 6: Lengthen the Bike Trail to Donegal Bay***

The maintenance of the existing bike trail, including some cracks and roots undermining it, was discussed. The possibility of a crushed gravel, rather than paved, path was brought up. Not only would it be less expensive, it may be easier to maintain in the long-term.

Signage and safety concerns were again a big topic here. One attendee pointed out that there should be further signage throughout the existing bike trail, rather than just at the heads. There was agreement that having the existing path helps make Donegal Bay Road much safer, and that extending it was a good long-term goal.

One attendee pointed out that there may be some confusion amongst visitors between this paved bike trail and the “Biking Trail” which follows the roads around the island.

It was pointed out that the new Beaver Island Trails Association is a potential partner in any projects involving the paved bike trail.

In addition to discussing these six objectives, the public was invited to discuss any other goals or objectives they would like to see St. James Township address in the future.

***New Objective: Extending the Recreation Season***

Extending the recreation season into the winter months was a hot topic of discussion. Cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, and snowshoe trails were all discussed as possible options.

A hockey/ice-skating rink is another possible winter recreation idea. Artificial ice was also noted as a possibility.

Some of the attendees liked the idea that Beaver Island could be marketed as a place with things to do in the winter as well as in the summer, although some stressed concerns that there was limited lodging and amenities available in the off-season as of now. Still others concluded that improvements to off-season recreation could start by focusing on year-round residents, and that this would naturally lead to tourists and visitors.

A show of hands was near-unanimous in support for the addition of extending the recreation season in our Recreation Plan.

***Other Ideas & Suggestions***

- Activities for teenagers, such as a skate park or disc golf course.
- The creation of a Dark/Night Sky Park.
- A community recreation center, with a swimming pool and gym equipment.
- Improved boat launch/parking at Font Lake.
- There was much support for the Township to pursue the acquisition of the Bonadeo Property adjacent to the Municipal Dock. It was suggested that this may either allow for some sort of boat launch/fishing pier or to increase the number of slips in the municipal dock.

***Other Ideas & Suggestions Received Outside of the January 3, 2018 Public Meeting***

- Support wildlife club and others to enhance hunting and fishing opportunities.
- Develop pickleball courts.
- Develop bocce ball courts.
- Develop outdoor stage area.

## APPENDIX B – PUBLIC NOTICES