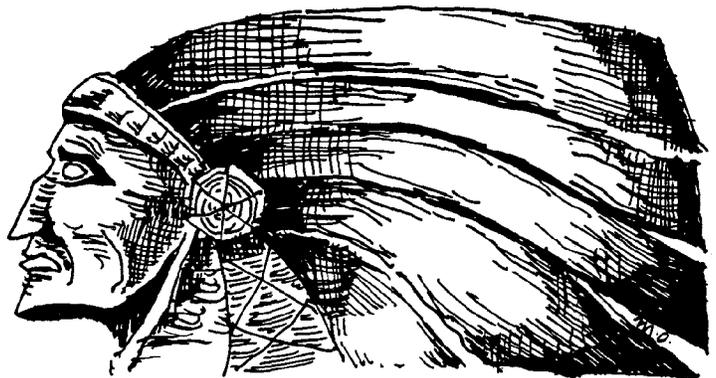


Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Recreation Division

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Lake Superior County Park Recreation Study



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LAKE SUPERIOR COUNTY PARK
RECREATION STUDY

August, 1980

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I
INTRODUCTION
AND
PURPOSE
OF
PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Lake Superior Park Recreation Study has three primary objectives. The first objective is to determine the recreational deficiencies of the region. This will be accomplished by analyzing recreation facilities within the study area and by assessing population characteristics and their needs. The second objective is to determine the opportunities and constraints for future recreation development at Lake Superior County Park. The natural resources, cultural resources, and recreation use patterns will be assessed in order to determine the site's most suitable recreation uses. The final objective will be to develop a program and a listing of recommendations for the future development at the park site. This will be accomplished by combining information gathered from the Gogebic Study Area with information concerning the specific park site.

It should be noted that this study is not intended to specifically address the issue of boating access or boat ramp feasibility at the site. Rather, its purpose will be to explore all types of recreation needs and explore the multi-purpose recreation potential of the site.

The study is divided into two parts. Part One examines the facilities within a thirty-mile driving radius of Ironwood. The existing facilities, needs, and conclusions for this region are stated. Part Two specifically addresses Lake Superior County Park. The site features, limitations, and potentials are inventoried and recommendations for future development are detailed.

II
GOGEBIC
AREA
REGIONAL
RECREATION
ASSESSMENT

LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

Gogebic County is the westernmost county in Michigan which borders on Wisconsin to the west and south and Lake Superior to the north. Iron played a key role in the development of the area, as mining towns sprang up wherever a significant ore body was located. Lumbering was also an important activity, and the entire area once enjoyed a period of prosperity. By the turn of the century, lumbermen began to move on, and large open pit iron mines in Minnesota began to outproduce deep shaft mines in Michigan. The Depression forced many struggling mines and businesses to close. The population of the area decreased as people left for economic reasons. However, in recent years, both the economy and population have begun to stabilize due to ambitious economic development programs, the tourism industry, and limited industrial expansion.

POPULATION

The population of an area is an important consideration in recreation planning. Population data is used to determine recreational deficiencies and future needs. Age and educational characteristics have proved to be important factors in the determination of the types of facilities used by a group of people. Projections and characteristics of the population of the Gogebic area are presented in this section.

Ironwood, Michigan, with a 1980 population of 8117, is the largest city in the area and serves as a focal point for this study. Ironwood is located on the Michigan-Wisconsin border. Just across from Ironwood is Hurley, Wisconsin, which is located in Iron County.

The population of Gogebic County decreased 24 percent from 1950 to 1970. Most of this decline can be attributed to out-migration of residents, which has occurred as a result of an economic decline associated with forest and mining activities.

Iron County, Wisconsin, followed a similar pattern. Recent trends and projections indicate that the population of the area is stabilizing due to improving economic conditions. Figures 1 and 2 present population trends, projections, and migration patterns.

The 1970 population of Gogebic County, broken into age groups, is presented in Figure 3. A typical population distribution shows a fairly even distribution at the extremes, with a high point in the middle (ages 20-44) associated with family formations. However, the distribution in Gogebic County shows a fairly even distribution at the ends and a dip in the middle, which may be associated with out-migration due to high seasonal unemployment. A significant portion of the population is comprised of retirees. The population of Iron County, Wisconsin, shows a similar age composition.

In 1970, 31 percent of the residents of Gogebic were classified as living in rural areas, while 69 percent resided in urban areas. The average density was 18.7 persons per square mile. However, it should be noted that the largest urbanized area in the county is Ironwood, with a 1970 population of 8711, and that 42.5% of the acreage of the county is publically-owned recreation land.

Fifty-three percent of Gogebic County residents have completed high school, which is equivalent to the State average. However, the median number of school years completed is 11.8 years, less than the 12.1 years completed as a whole.

Regional recreation facilities within a 30-mile radius of Ironwood were inventoried for this study; thus, the current and projected population data from the portion of the study area in Wisconsin must be included in the needs assessment.

Map 1 (Regional Recreation Facilities), illustrates the portions of Ontonagon County, Michigan, and Vilas and Ashland Counties, Wisconsin, which are included within a 30-mile radius of Ironwood. However, the populations of these counties

Figure 1
Population of Gogebic Study Area and Major Population Centers

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Gogebic County	24,370	20,676	20,600	20,600	20,300
Ironwood City	10,265	8,711	8,117	7,503	7,057
Bessemer City	3,304	2,085	2,755	2,684	2,562
Wakefield City	3,231	2,757	2,762	2,730	2,644
Ironwood Township	2,537	2,256	2,708	3,096	3,107
Bessemer Township	2,083	1,800	1,882	2,099	2,274
Ramsey	1,158	1,068	1,065	1,043	1,011
Wakefield Township	613	456	537	764	939
Erwin Township	641	545	598	710	796
Marenisco Township	832	635	565	478	434
Marenisco	--	300	266	246	223
Watersmeet Township	864	800	676	536	487
Iron County, Wisconsin	7,830	6,533	6,670	6,653	6,472
City of Hurley, Wisconsin	2,763	2,418	2,285	2,178	2,000
City of Montreal, Wisconsin	1,361	877	785	657	500
Total Study Area*	31,336	26,409	26,594	26,717	26,285

*Study Area Population = (Gogebic - Watersmeet Township) + Iron County, Wisconsin

Source: Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and Michigan Department of Management and Budget's 1979 Population Projections.

Figure 2
Migration Patterns in Gogebic County, 1965 - 1970

	under 15 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years
In-Migration	554	104	835	261	427	254	222
Out-Migration	627	381	236	227	460	426	203
Net Migration	-73	-277	-599	34	-33	-172	19

Source: Michigan Statistical Abstract, 12th Edition, 1977.

Figure 3
1970 Population by Age Group
Gogebic County

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-4 years	1364	7%
5-19 years	5700	28%
20-44 years	4650	22%
44-64 years	5594	27%
65+ years	<u>3368</u>	<u>16%</u>
	20,676	100%

Median Age is 38.4 years

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1970

were not included in the study area estimates. The reasons for this are: 1) only small portions of any of these boundaries are included and none of these portions have significant population centers, and 2) most of the land is comprised of state and national forest lands and Indian reservations. Watersmeet Township of Gogebic County, which falls entirely outside the 30-mile radius, is also excluded from the study area population. Recreational needs and deficiencies were determined using the 1980 population of the study area, which was rounded to 27,300. Because the population of the area is expected to remain steady or decline, it was felt that this would be a good choice.

REGIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Regional recreational facilities are those which serve people within a broad geographic area. For the purposes of this plan, regional facilities were defined as those within a 30-mile radius of the City of Ironwood. This boundary does not include all of Gogebic County, but focuses on the areas where population is concentrated and delineates areas within a 30-minute driving time. Ironwood is located on the Michigan-Wisconsin border, and thus many facilities located in Wisconsin are included. The inventory of facilities in Michigan is more extensive. In Wisconsin, a number of small county forests and other local facilities have been omitted.

Regional facilities are generally larger than ten acres, and include primarily state, national forest, county, and private areas. These facilities are listed in Figures 4 and 5 and depicted in Map 1. Privately-owned campgrounds are listed in Figure 6, but are not shown on the map.

Also not shown are snowmobile trails, bicycling routes, hiking and cross-county ski trails. Both counties have extensive acreages in public ownership and lightly travelled roads available for these activities. Iron County, Wisconsin, alone has 315 miles of snowmobile trails, 29.6 km of well-groomed cross-county ski trails, and several major hiking trails. Boating and public access facilities are discussed in the following section.

Figure 4
Regional Recreational Facilities in Michigan

	Acres	Baseball Diamonds	Multipurpose Field	Tennis Court	Playground	Picnicking	Swimming	Fishing	Hiking	Boating	Boat Launch	Campground (no. of sites)	Electricity	Showers	Water	Scenic View	Notes
State Parks																	
Lake Gogebic State Park	361				X	X	X		X			165	X	X	X		
Porcupine Mt. State Park	58,332					X		X	X		X	199	X	X	X		
National Forest Facilities (Ottawa National Forest)																	
Black River Harbor	16					75	X	X		X	X	41			X	X	49 berths/moorings
Bobcat Lake	11					11	X	X		X	X	12			X		water skiing
Henry Lake	10											11			X		water skiing
Potawatomi & Gorge Falls	13					8									X		
County Parks																	
Little Girl's Point (Gogebic)							X	X	X		X	12			X	X	historic
Lake Gogebic County Park (Gogebic)					X		X	X	X		X	75	X				
Ontonagon County Park						X	X	X		X	X	50	X		X		
Ski Facilities																	
Porcupine Mt.																	skiing; 1 chair, 1 t-bar, 4 tows
Mt. Zion																	skiing; 1 t-bar, 1 tow
Indianhead Mt.																	skiing; 3 chairs, 2 t-bars, 2 tows
Copper Park Ski Flying Hill																	skiing; 1 chair
Big Powderhorn																	skiing; 3 chairs, 1 t-bar, 4 tows
Black Jack																	2 chairs, 1 T-bar tow
Boating Facilities (other than State Park or National Forest)																	
Presque Isle River Canoe Trip										X	X				X		wild, fast trip
Chaney Lake	575									X	X						administered by the Waterways Division
Black River Lake	68									X	X						administered by the Waterways Division; water skiing & high-speed boating prohibited
Mud Creek (canoes)										X	X						administered by the Waterways Division
Berland Dock (Lake Gogebic)																	township; motorboats & water skiing - 10 AM/6:30 PM

Figure 5
Regional Recreational Facilities in Wisconsin

	Acres	Baseball Diamonds	Multipurpose Field	Tennis Court	Playground	Picnicking	Swimming	Fishing	Hiking	Boating	Boat Launch	Campground (no. of sites/acreage)	Electricity	Showers	Water	Scenic View	Notes
County Parks																	
Lake of the Falls	40	X		X	12	X	X			X		30/20				X	
Schornberg Park	160	X		X	32	X	X		X			6/20				X	
Weber Lake	10				35	X	X	X	X			6/1				X	
Potato River Falls	80				12	X	X					12/4				X	
Saxon Harbor	80	X		X	30	X	X		X	X		17/5				X	55 berths/moorings
Twin Lake County Forest	40				X		X		X							X	
Radar Hill	4				6												
Gile Park	3			X	13	X	X		X							X	
State Parks																	
Copper Falls State Park	1,360						X	X	X			X				X	cross country skiing
Moose Lake Hemlocks Scientific Area	40				X											X	
Sandy Beach Lake State Forest	80				25	X	X		X			37/16				X	
Other																	
Broken Spear Riding Stables																	riding trails
Upton Park	20				8		X	X				2/1				X	town of Anderson
White Cap Mountain	400																skiing
Albert C. Morzenti Memorial Park	10	X	X		4											X	City of Montreal, historic, skating
Chequamegon National Forest	(portion contained in western part of the study area.)																

Figure 6
Privately Owned Campgrounds
in the Study Area

Michigan

Alpine Trailer and Campground	75 sites
Delmar's Campground	25 sites
Circle Hills Campground	22 sites

Wisconsin

	<u>Sites</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Big 6 Mercer Camper and Trailer Park	35	12
Fort Flambeau Campgrounds and Trailer Park	45	11
Frontier Campgrounds	20	4
King's Cozy Resort	2	5
Lake Vue Trailer Court	25	18
Morgan's Campground	22	12
Norway Point Resort	4	38
Raap's Resort	80	10
Springstead Lake Family Campground	19	NA
Stehr's Resort	6	3
Wagon Wheel Resort	1	4
Westphal's Resort	7	1
Wildwood Haven Resort	14	80
Turtle-Flambeau Flowage Area (Flambeau Paper Company and Chippewa & Flambeau Improvement Company)	<u>25</u>	<u>NA</u>
Subtotal	305	198

Sources: Northwest Regional Planning Commission Surveys, 1976
 Woodall's Trailering Parks and Campgrounds, 1975
Wisconsin's Campgrounds, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
 Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners (WACO),
1970 Campground Directory

Boating Facilities

The Gogebic County area is rich in water resources, which include Lake Superior and numerous inland lakes and rivers. Lake Gogebic is the largest lake in Gogebic County. The largest lakes in Iron County, Wisconsin, are the Gile Flowage and Flambeau Flowage.

Black River and Saxon Harbors are two small boat harbors on Lake Superior. Both harbors are overcrowded at present. A 1977 report indicated that transient boating at Saxon-Black River averaged 1247 boat day visits during a 120-day boating season that year. Black River Harbor, located in Gogebic County, is operated by the U.S. Forest Service. In 1979, Black River Harbor had 49 berths/moorings and a waiting list of 21 boaters. The turnover rate at this harbor is estimated at two boats per year. Saxon Harbor is located in Iron County, Wisconsin, and is operated by the County. Saxon has 55 berths/moorings and a waiting list of 21 boaters. The turnover rate is approximately two boats per year.

Seven miles east of Saxon and fourteen miles west of Black River is a small boat launch where Oman's Creek empties into Lake Superior near Little Girl's Point. Current reports indicate that an average of fifteen small power boats tie up at this location and that this number may increase to as many as fifty boats during the peak summer season. Present facilities are crowded and summer storms frequently block the channel entrance with gravel and restrict use of moored boats until the channel mouth is dredged.

There are a number of inland access sites in Michigan. These are included in the Regional Recreational Inventory list in Figure 4. Also mentioned are Mud Creek and Presque Isle River, which provide canoeing opportunities in the area.

The Wisconsin public access sites are not included in the list of Regional Recreational Facilities. However, Iron County has 13 lakes with 200 or more acres,

which are considered for fast boating activities. Four lakes have 500 or more acres and provide 63 percent of the available lake acreage. Iron County has 181 public access sites, which provide access to 86.1 percent of the lakes. Characteristics of these access sites are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Public Access Types and Available Water Area on Lakes
in Iron County, Wisconsin

	Lakes		
	Number	Acreage	% of Total
Public Access Types			
with parking	35	20,932	72.3
without parking	28	1,139	3.9
unimproved or difficult	21	405	1.4
navigable water	22	1,478	5.1
wilderness	<u>75</u>	<u>985</u>	<u>3.4</u>
Total w/Public Access	181	24,939	86.1
Total w/o Public Access	314	4,015.5	13.9

Source: Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1976

In Iron County, the Manitowish, Turtle, and Bear Rivers offer 88 miles of canoeing. The Manitowish and Bear Rivers flow west and northwest to the Flambeau Flowage, while the Turtle flows southwest to a confluence with the Manitowish in the Flambeau Flowage. The north fork of the Flambeau River flows east to the Flambeau Flowage. The east fork of the Montreal, Tyler Locks, and Potato Rivers are for experienced canoeists. Other rivers with lower gradients and the inland lakes also provide canoeing opportunities.

LOCAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Local recreational facilities include playlots, school facilities, city facilities and others located within city limits. In this case, local facilities in both Ironwood and Hurley, Wisconsin, have been included. These cities are adjacent to each other and a needs assessment which does not consider both would be misrepresentative. Local facilities are listed in Figures 8 and 9.

RECREATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The recreational needs of a particular area can be determined using a number of different methods. The most commonly used methods are: 1) participation rates, defined as the number of occasions of participation in an outdoor recreational activity by an individual during a year; and 2) recreational standards, the number or acreages of facilities required per thousand population. There are difficulties with both of these methodologies. Participation rates do not take into account daily turnover (the number of times a facility is used in a certain day), weekend versus daily design loads, or changes in demand for various activities. Recreation standards have been derived by various groups for various purposes and are not always in agreement.

Despite these limitations, both participation rates and recreation standards are useful tools in determining the recreational needs of an area.

Figure 9
Local Recreational Facilities in Hurley, Wisconsin

	Acres	Baseball Diamonds	Multipurpose Field	Tennis Court	Playground	Picnicking (sites/acreage)	Swimming	Fishing	Hiking	Boating	Boat Launch	Camping (no. of sites)	Electricity	Showers	Water	Scenic View	Notes
City of Hurley, Wisconsin																	
Memorial Field	4.0																football field
Al Richelli Park	5.5			X	12												basketball/volley court
Minipark	(50'x150')				1												Michigan-Wisconsin border
Eagle Bluff Golf & Country Club	160																golf course
American Legion Wayside and Memorial	2.0				10												
School Facilities																	
Hurley High Athletic Field	3.5	X															track
Playgrounds (Elementary, public and private)	.5		X		X												basketball courts
Other																	
Germania Hill (private)	.25				X												basketball court
Boston Park (private)	2.5	X															
Second Street Playground (private)	.25		X														basketball court
Children's Fish Pond	2.0					2/.25	X										fishing for children
Other Local																	
W.S. Carow Park (Mercer)	10.0	X	X	X	12/2	X	X	X		X							X
Kimball Town Park	10.0				X	20/2.5	X	X									X
Island Park (Carey)	17.0					2/1	X	X		X							X
Orna Town Park	2.5				X	11/.5	X	X	X	X							

Figure 10 presents a summary evaluation of existing recreation facilities through the use of participation rates and recreation standards. By using these means of analysis, recreational deficiencies and recommendations for future development can be made. The activities in Figure 10 were ranked by participation rates which were derived from the 1976 Michigan Recreation Survey conducted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Recreation Services Division. The participation rates used were derived from the portion of the survey conducted in the Western Upper Peninsula (Region 13). The most commonly used recreation standards are those developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association. These standards provide the general guidelines followed in this study. The study area population used is 26,000. Conclusions and recommendations for future recreation in the study area are provided in the following summary.

I. Landmobiling

This is the most popular aggregate recreation activity and includes bicycling, snowmobiling, and pleasure driving. It is ranked number one by the MDNR 1976 survey in terms of the highest participations per person per year.

Bicycling: There are many scenic well paved roads in the study area which are not heavily trafficked and pass through vast acreages of publicly-owned lands. Bicycle routes do lack signage and designation, but there is an adequate supply in the area.

Snowmobiling: Snowmobiling is an extremely popular activity in the area for both residents and tourists. Wisconsin and Michigan both offer a large number of trails, though Iron County, Wisconsin, reports that their present supply is just under the recommended mileage demand and has proposed an additional 130 miles of trail. Seasonally-used roads and railroad right-of-ways may be designated to provide additional trails. To

Figure 10
Recreation Activity Deficiencies of the Gagebic Study Area

Rank ¹	Activity	Participations Per Person Per Year	NRPA ² Standard ²	Requirement ³	Actual	Deficiency
1	Landmobiling	19.095				
	Bicycling	7.709				--
	Horseback	.745	one per region		1	--
	Auto riding for pleasure	2.954				--
	Motorcycling for pleasure	.917				--
	Motorcycling off roads	.696				--
	Snowmobiling	5.487				--
	Other	.588				--
2	Swimming	11.980				
	Pool	1.182	1 per 15,000	2	2	--
	Great Lakes	1.843	all potential should be developed			all potential should be developed
	Inland Lakes	8.955	"			"
3	Competitive Sports	12.064				
	Baseball	1.602	1 per 4500	6	11	--
	Basketball	3.132	1 per 500	54	10	44
	Golf	.407	1 per 2500	1	1	--
	Tennis	2.425	1 per 2000	14	10	4
	Other	4.905	--		--	--
4	Winter Related	9.674				
	Ice Skating	1.260	1 artificial rink per 30,000	1	1	--
	Skiing - downhill	.871	one per region			--
	Skiing - cross country	1.864				--
	Snowshoeing	2.892				--
	Other	2.787				--
5	Shooting Sports	9.184	1 shooting range per 50,000	1		--
6	Fishing	8.316				
	Great Lakes	1.660				deficiencies are related to boating access
	Inland Lakes	4.209				
	Stream	2.263				
7	On-Foot	7.798	as many as possible			--
8	Nature-Related	3.086				--
9	Camping	1.954	no data available	6	342	no deficiency based upon available sites
10	Watercraft	1.938				
	Canoeing	.034				--
	Power boating	1.057				--
	Water skiing	.847				--
11	Picnicking	1.834	4 acres/1000 persons ⁴	109.2	47	62.2 acres

¹Participation data derived from 1976 Michigan Recreation Survey; rankings are based on participation rates.

²National Park Recreation and Open Space Standards, published by NRPA.

³NRPA Standard x Population; Population used is 27,300.

⁴G. Nez, in Urban Land.

promote safety, it has been suggested that these trails be located away from residential areas, be clearly marked, and that operating regulations be adopted and enforced.

Auto Pleasure Driving: In many recreation surveys this activity is often one of the more popular pursuits. The study area is rich in well-paved scenic roadways which overlook hillsides, woodlands, and lakes. Future development should, however:

- 1) maintain scenic vistas
- 2) develop a scenic highway tour;
- 3) establish a roadside signage system which would mark scenic tours.

2. Swimming

This is the second most popular recreation activity as designated by the state survey. According to NRPA standards, there are an adequate number of indoor pools in the study area. However, given the cool climatic conditions and few public beach areas, swimming in outdoor bodies of water is limited. Lake Superior's sheltered bays are comfortable for only two or three weeks of the year. Inland lakes, with the exception of the Gile Flowage, are generally located more than 15 miles from the population centers. To conclude, there is a shortage of beach areas and warm water swimming sites within the immediate study area.

Lake Superior's beaches provide attractive scenic vistas and opportunities for beachcombing. At present there are only three public beaches along the Lake Superior shoreline which are also within the study area. One of these, Little Girl's Point, has a significant shoreline erosion problem which limits direct accessibility. Beach front access is a priority need especially for the landlocked residents of Ironwood, Bessemer, and Hurley.

3. Competitive Sports

Baseball, tennis, basketball, and golf have a combined participation ranking of three. According to the NRPA standards, there is no shortage of baseball-softball diamonds. It should be noted, however, that some diamonds in the Ironwood and Bessemer area are in poor condition and will need improvements.

NRPA standards indicate that 44 additional basketball courts are needed. However, this need may be somewhat exaggerated since the standard may be more applicable to urbanized areas.

Four additional tennis courts are needed within the study area to meet NRPA standards. The popularity of the sport and influx of visitors from urbanized areas will assure continued use of the tennis facilities.

There are adequate golf course facilities in the study area.

4. Winter-Related

The adequacy of downhill ski areas cannot be based upon local need. Rather demand primarily originates from urbanized areas in Wisconsin and Illinois. For the purposes of this study, however, there is no downhill skiing deficiency for residents within the study area.

Substantial acreage of public lands provide plenty of opportunity for development of cross country ski trails. Trails within the National Forest lands are available and connect with some downhill ski areas. While there is no deficiency of public lands for skiing, there is a deficiency of groomed trails and designated cross county ski areas.

5. Shooting Sports

Substantial publically-owned acreage provides adequate hunting opportunities for residents and tourists alike.

In accordance with NRPA standards, the one public shooting range is sufficient to meet demand.

6. Fishing

There are an abundance of inland lakes and trout streams in the area. The Lake Superior fishery in the vicinity includes coho and king salmon, which are popular sportfish. However, the adequacy of fishing opportunities is closely related to the accessibility of the various lakes and streams. Existing access sites should be improved and new ones constructed wherever possible. Road access to large lakes is of more value than to smaller lakes, which can be accessed by foot. Boat launch sites are in particular demand because they are also used by pleasure boaters and waterskiers.

7. On-Foot, Nature Related and Camping Activities

There is no shortage of hiking trails through publically-owned lands. Wisconsin, in particular, offers several large and advertised well-marked trails.

There are few interpretive trails in the area. Trails accessible to handicapped persons are also lacking.

There is no shortage of campgrounds, although facilities at some areas should be upgraded. This conclusion is based upon a review of campground vacancy rates.

8. Watercraft

There is an abundance of canoeable rivers and inland lakes. However, these resources need to be made more accessible.

Access and overnight camping sites should be developed along canoeable rivers.

Existing launching sites should be improved, and new ones developed wherever possible.

As mentioned previously, drive-in sites are more important on larger lakes; walk-in access will suffice on smaller lakes.

9. Picnicking

There is an apparent shortage of picnicking facilities. Picnic facilities are best located adjacent to open fields or scenic vistas. These sites are necessary both locally and in regional facilities.

III
LAKE
SUPERIOR
COUNTY
PARK
RECREATION
ASSESSMENT

LAKE SUPERIOR COUNTY PARK RECREATION ASSESSMENT

The second part of this study will examine the opportunities and constraints for future park development at Lake Superior County Park. The general conclusions and recommendations from the previous section will be applied to this site. An analysis of natural resources, and existing recreation uses will be combined with conclusions regarding recreation needs for the study area. Finally, detailed recommendations for development at Lake Superior Park will be made.

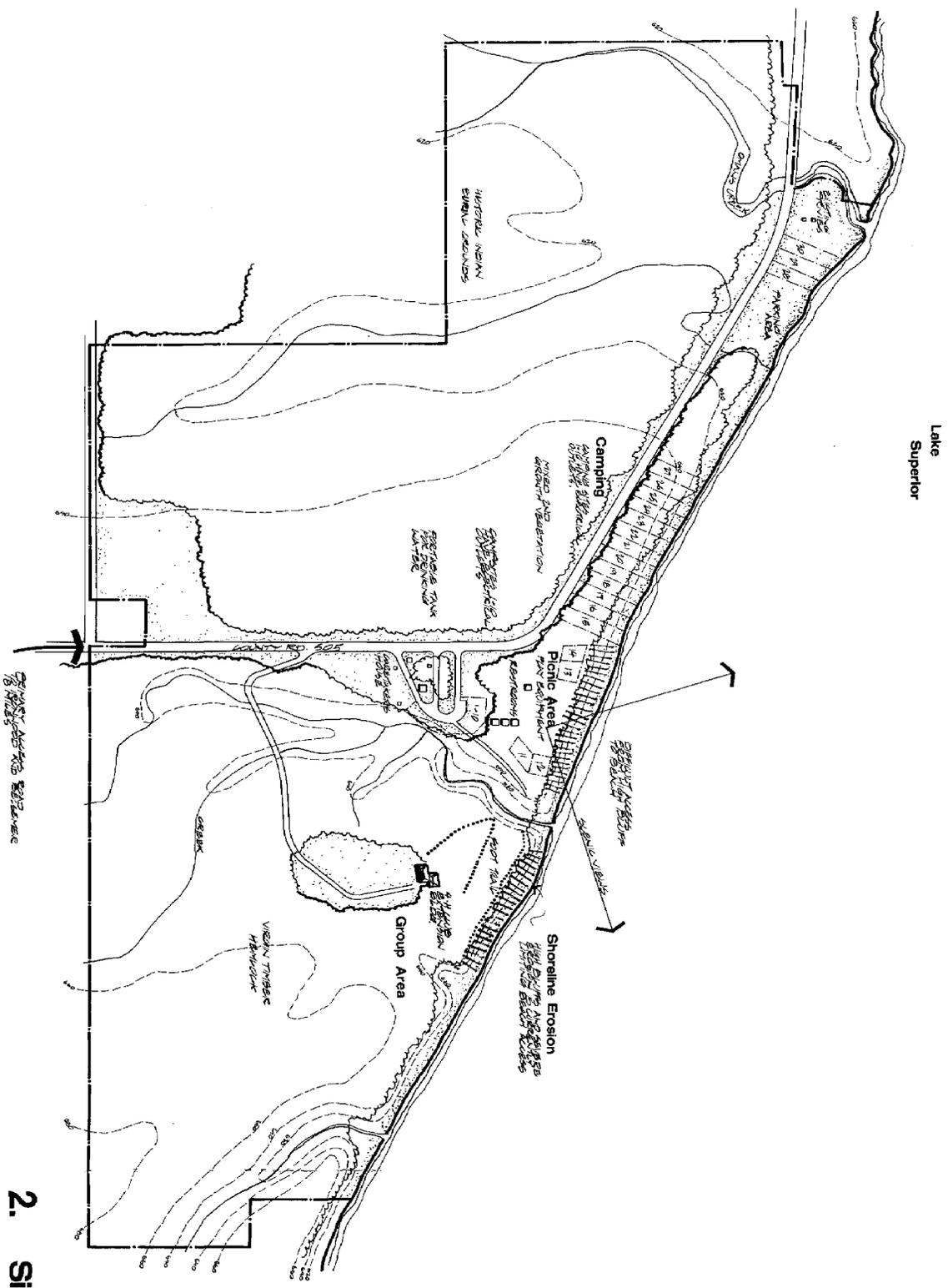
LAKE SUPERIOR COUNTY PARK SITE INVENTORY

In order to evaluate the future recreational opportunities of the Lake Superior County Park, it will be important to inventory the natural resources and existing recreational facilities. In addition to these items, recreational use patterns of the park will also be examined. This information and information from the preceding sections will be used to develop final recommendations for future development. Map 2 summarizes the site analysis.

Natural Resources

The natural resources of the park site offer a variety of opportunities and constraints for future park development. The vegetation is a mixture of mature hardwoods and coniferous trees. Birch and maple are the dominant species which are even-aged and are second growth stands resulting from lumbering in the early 1900s. Most significantly, the east portion of the site supports a stand of virgin hemlock timber. These trees are in close proximity to the 4-H Club Extension Building and the nearby hiking trails pass through the hemlock stand.

The soil conditions and topographic features of the site offer the most constraints to future development. The soils are primarily clay, and rolling topography with



Lake Superior

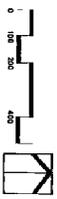
- Legend**
- ||||| HIGH SHORELINE EROSION
 - FOOT TOWNS
 - - - - - ELEVATION TERRACE
 - ELEVATION INDICATION
 - PARK BOUNDARY

2. Site Analysis

Lake Superior County Park Study
Western Upper Peninsula Parks



James Lewis, North & May, Inc.
Landscape Architecture



some steep drainage ravines are found throughout the site. High erodible clay bluffs are located along all but the western end of the site. The bluffs are approximately 60 feet high and severe erosion and slumping has occurred. A comparison of a 1939 survey with present conditions illustrate that erosion is occurring at a rate of approximately 2.5 feet per year. The slumping soil has resulted in a loss of shoreline vegetation, debris strewn beach areas, and a safety hazard for park users. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources installed "nami" rings, or concrete revetment, at the base of the erodible cliffs in 1974. These rings were hoped to reduce the rate of erosion but their effectiveness is questionable. Unless other protection measures succeed, it is likely that the rate of erosion will encroach upon County Road 505 in twenty years.

Four drainage courses flow north through the site to Lake Superior. Oman's Creek is the largest and is located on the west side of the park. Ikwesen's Creek (also known as Carlborn Creek) runs parallel to Oman's Creek and the east. Two smaller creeks are found on the east side of the park. All of these drainage areas are marked by ravines or low-lying wetlands.

The beaches are composed of sorted gravel and rock. While swimming does occur in late summer, the cool water temperatures and gravel beaches are not especially attractive for swimming.

The site offers scenic views from the high bluffs above Lake Superior. The Porcupine Mountains are visible to the northeast and the Apostle Islands are visible on the horizon of Lake Superior to the west. Together, the lake, shoreline bluffs, vegetation and surrounding hills combine to form spectacular views.

Park Use

A review of the recreational facilities and site utilities must be made prior to making recommendations for future uses. The existing recreational facilities and

use patterns have been surveyed by on-site visits, discussions with the resident caretaker and by a tally of recreation use. The tally was conducted during the summer of 1980 by senior citizen employees of the Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Program. Their count measured visits by tourists to Lake Superior County Park from Monday through Friday. Use by tourists averaged 166 visits per week. This figure does not include weekend use and use by residents of Gogebic County. Counting local use and weekend activity, the figure will approximate 400 visits per week or an average of 57 people per day during peak summer periods. Most of these visits are for the purpose of picnicking, beach use, or sight-seeing. It is estimated that camping accounts for approximately 30 percent of total site visits. In summary, the majority of park visits is for day-use activities. A more detailed discussion of the Lake Superior County Park recreation facilities and park use is as follows:

Camping: Thirty campsites are located within the park. Twelve sites have electricity and are within close proximity to potable water and toilets. Eighteen sites (without electricity) are located along County Road 505 and along the shoreline bluff. The sites located along the bluff line are gradually being eroded and it is estimated that within 20 to 40 years, these roadside sites will be lost. A record of park camping revenues and discussions with the resident park caretaker indicate that during peak summer weekends all campsites are occupied. However, during most other weekends and during summer weekdays, approximately 25 percent of the campsites are used.

Picnicking: Fifty-five picnic tables and a number of charcoal grills are located within the two-acre picnic area. This area is adjacent to the high erodible bluffs and overlooks the beach and Lake Superior shoreline. The site is characterized by a canopy of mature trees, a lawn surface, and a relatively level terrain. A swing set, slide and climbing bar play equipment are located adjacent to this area. The picnic sites are frequently used by campers and day-use visitors.

Beach Area: Below the picnic area lies the park beach. The beach is approximately 80 feet wide and composed of sorted gravel. Access to the beach is difficult from either the campgrounds or picnic area because of the steep bluffs. A suitable path or steps to the beach is not provided. Because of the cold water temperatures, gravel beach, and difficult access, the beach area is infrequently used except for beachcombing and sunbathing.

4-H Nature Center: The Gogebic County Agricultural Extension Service leases the eastern portion of the park site for nature study use and community activities. A rustic activities building (approximately 3600 square feet) houses meeting space, kitchen facilities, bathrooms, and dormitories. The building is used for a variety of organizations including 4-H clubs, youth groups, church groups, and senior citizens groups. A separate roadway entrance provides access to the building from County Road 505. Foot trails depart from the building grounds.

Site Utilities: The existing water supply is tapped from Lake Superior. Because of the danger of surface water contamination, park users are notified that the tap water is not to be used for drinking. The county provides an on-site mobile water tank for potable water. A 400-foot well has been drilled on the site. Unfortunately, the water quality and water yield is insufficient for use within the central water supply system. While alternative water supplies are being considered, costs are presently prohibiting the County from developing another supply. In the interim, the mobile water tank will supply drinking water to park users.

A modern bath house with flush toilets and changing room is centrally located on the site. Electricity is available in this bathhouse and to 12 campsites.

Vehicular access is via County Road 505. This blacktop road is plowed during winter months and provides access for the residents of Ironwood and Bessemer

(approximately 18 miles away). The roadway connects with Iron County, Wisconsin Road 122 which is also a paved roadway.

Archaeological Resources: A prehistoric Indian village site is reported to be in the area of Little Girl's Point. The Ojibwa Indians used the area as a fishing village and there is evidence that the area was used as a burial ground. A legend suggests that an Indian maiden would magically reappear at the point, and it is this legend which gives the point its name.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PARK DEVELOPMENT

With natural resources and existing recreation uses inventoried, it will now be possible to combine this information with the study area deficiencies and recommend a program of development for Lake Superior County Park. The recommendations are based upon a future design concept which makes the following conclusions:

The primary natural features are the Lake Superior shoreline and the spectacular views from the high bluffs. All future development should preserve or enhance these features and not detract from the natural beauty.

The residents of Ironwood, Bessemer, and Hurley will be the primary users of the park. The site contains one of the few county access points along Lake Superior and water-related recreation is a highly valued activity.

Future park development should remain relatively passive. Court sports, major ball fields, and intensive development are not appropriate for this wooded, waterfront site. The site's primary role should be as a day use facility for waterfront recreation.

The conclusions comprise a design concept for the park site which is based upon a review of recreation needs and the environmental capability of the site. Specific recommendations will elaborate upon a detailed recreation program for future development. The recommendations are as follows and are listed according to relative importance:

Water Supply: The surface water supply from Lake Superior will not meet State Health Department requirements. A groundwater supply must be found for use by campers, day users, and for users at the Agricultural Extension Camp. Locating, drilling, and distributing a suitable water supply will be an expensive venture and may require the County to seek Federal or State assistance. Regardless of costs, the water system is a priority issue and future development will be impaired without a safe water supply.

Shoreline Erosion: Severe slumping and soil erosion are gradually eroding the high bluffs. While this is a natural process which is difficult to prevent, the rate of erosion and safety to park users can be controlled. A variety of measures should be employed such as toe revetment, bank re-vegetation, and safety railings. Rustic wood railings would protect park users and direct foot traffic away from eroding areas. In addition to public safety, the high rate of erosion could conceivably undercut the camping sites and County Road 505. Recreation facilities would be lost and high costs would be incurred to the County if action does not take place.

Beach Access: The NRPA standards and regional recreation rates indicate that swimming and water related activities are extremely popular. The beach is one of the few access points available to residents of the Ironwood area. Unfortunately, the high bluffs and eroding banks make access difficult. A wooden stairway to the beach area is, therefore, recommended to allow easier access from the high bluffs.

Picnicking: Picnicking is highly ranked by the MDNR recreation survey. In addition NRPA standards indicate a shortage of picnic areas within the Gogebic study area. As a response to this need, picnic sites at Lake Superior County Park should be improved and expanded. Picnic tables and grills should be refurbished or replaced. An acre of picnic area with 16-20 sites could be added for use by organizations and for use during peak weekends. Picnic use is closely related to pleasure driving, a popular activity as rated by the MDNR survey. Scenic drives with a stopover at the park for picnicking could conceivably become more popular at the site.

Informal Play Field: In conjunction with the picnic areas, beach area, and use from the Agricultural Extension Building, an informal play area is proposed. The field would be approximately 1-1/2 acres and would be large enough to support unorganized softball, touch football, or informal play. The play area could be located on the south west side of County Road 505. The field would supplement the small open area near the caretakers house.

Camping: Existing campsites should be improved with grills, water supply, and a sanitary dumping station for recreation vehicles. Additional camp sites are not, however, recommended. The recreation inventory and park standards indicate a sufficient supply of camp sites in the study area. Present camping vacancy rates for the site suggest additional spaces are not needed. Unless the site's camping use significantly increases, further expansion is not recommended.

Agricultural Extension Complex: The community building and its facilities serve an important function for the local area residents. The facility should continue to be used for community organizations, youth groups, etc. The creek ravine and wooded areas separate the complex from the camping and picnic areas. Conflict of use is, therefore, not a problem, and site location is well suited for the present type of activities.

Interpretive Uses: The interpretive use of the park site should be expanded. Nature trails through the virgin hemlocks could include signage and rustic display exhibits. The trails could extend into the southwest portion of the site where it is believed that the centuries-old Indian Village was located. Here signage or interpretive displays could explain the culture of the early Indians. The interpretive facilities would be an added feature to the picnicking and day-use enjoyment of the County Park.

Traffic Circulation: Relocation of the west end of County Road 505 is recommended. The roadway should eventually be relocated away from the shoreline. This would control access to the campsites and picnic areas by permitting only one entrance and exit to the park.

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