



MEMORANDUM

To: Alpena County Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Alpena County Planning Commission

From: Alpena County Administrator

RE: Recreation Plan 2019-2023: Review of Objectives & Action Plan

Date: May 2023

The current Recreation Plan for Alpena County is a joint planning document with the following partners:

Charter Township of Alpena
Green Township
Ossineke Township
Wilson Township

The plan is a five-year plan and expires at the end of this year (2023). Recreation Plans are required documents for eligibility for most state and federal grants – as well as being best practice for current and future use, capital planning and economic development. The responsibility for the creation of the Recreation Plan, as well as the County Master Plan, lies with the Alpena County Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission has budgeted for an update of the Recreation Plan this year – to complete another five (5) year plan and has recommended and received approval to contract with NEMCOG to do that work. This year the City of Alpena jumped off their update schedule to plan a year early so that they could join in for a joint Recreation Plan. This new level of collaboration and joint planning will, hopefully, lead to new ideas and initiatives to grow recreational assets and opportunities for Alpena County residents and visitors.

A planning subcommittee for the participating units will meet in May to start developing the community survey to gather public input and to provide guidance for the project overall. It will, however, be very important the Parks & Recreation Commission be very involved in reviewing current goals, objectives & strategies and providing detailed direction and information to the

Planning Commission for the report. It will also be important to start creating metrics for the implementation of the plan and then tracking progress towards completing those action items and achieving the objectives.

As a first step – review the broad Objectives and make recommendations for any changes, additions, deletions.

Current Master Plan:

ALPENA COUNTY OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. Encourage the pursuit of outside funding sources, such as State and federal grants, for recreational development and improvements.
2. Work in cooperation with communities and agencies to ensure access is available to surface water resources, such as lakes, rivers, Lake Huron and Misery Bay, for activities such as boating, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and ice boating.
3. Continue to work with land conservancies and public agencies to identify key parcels and set aside undeveloped properties for parks, nature preserves, and future recreational needs.
4. In a cooperative effort, designate snowmobile routes that connect communities to regional snowmobile networks by working with the appropriate local unit of government, snowmobile groups, the County Road Commission, County Sheriff Department and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
5. Support the integration and expansion of non-motorized transportation facilities to link neighborhoods, communities, commercial areas and cultural destinations, parks, schools and regional parks and trails.
6. Promote Alpena as a trail destination. The Recreation Commission OR another organization or committee that includes economic development representatives could work together to develop and promote trails. Work with local businesses, health professionals and hospital to promote biking and walking for health. Support efforts to tie together the various trail systems, existing and proposed such as a South Bay Trail loop as well as the Thunder Bay River water trail project.
7. Encourage improvements to non-motorized recreation trails such as cross-country ski trails, bike trails and horseback riding trails. Work with state agencies and local governments to continue to improve and enhance regional multi-use trails for year round use including the North Eastern State Trail (NEST) and the Alpena to Hillman Trail. Non-motorized transportation may be in the form of on-road bicycle facilities, sidewalks, side-paths, and shared use off-road paths. Great trails have great amenities and there would be need to add rest stops, benches, overlooks, interpretive signs and local access sites along the trails.

Trails-related objectives:

- a. Add amenities and access points along the NEST.
 - b. Improve the surface and accessibility for the Alpena to Hillman Trail.
 - c. Add amenities, trailhead and access points along the Alpena to Hillman Trail.
 - d. Work with and coordinate the many volunteers that are maintaining existing trail.
 - e. Work with the DNR to find the best location for mountain bike trails on existing DNR land.
 - f. Non-motorized transportation facilities and trail connections;
 - Connect from Alpena south to Oscoda (NOTE: A Coastal Zone Management Grant has been awarded to do trail planning in this corridor in 2019.) Connect to Partridge Point, Ossineke and Negwegon State Park.
 - Connect to Norway Ridge via Werth Road and a connection from the Alpena to Hillman Trail.
 - Create a connection from Alpena to Rockport and Long Lake County Park
 - Work with the DNR to find a solution to the 2 mile gap of trail corridor between M-65 and Salina Road and then improve trail from M-65 to Hillman
 - Connect Alpena to Hillman Trail with Optimist Acres and Alpena Sno- drifters barn
 - g. Water Trails
 - The Huron Blueway trail is planned but needs to be marketed; the County could facilitate a group to mark, sign, and promote this trail.
 - Thunder Bay River water trail mapping project is wrapping up the mapping work in 2018. Look at public access and consider improvements, signage, maps and marketing.
 - Need livery to provide boats for both the Lake Huron/Thunder Bay water trail, the Thunder Bay River and the water trail in Lake Besser in the City.
 - Because there is a very easy beginner water trail in Lake Besser, plus the islands and shipwrecks in Thunder Bay and Lake Huron PLUS the Thunder Bay River, there is a HUGE opportunity to develop and promote water trails in the area.
 - h. Create a trailhead for Norway Ridge and the Alpena to Hillman Trail from M-32.
8. Consider re-activating the Recreation Commission to build, manage, and maintain regional trail systems and coordinate with trail groups. Trail opportunities exist for all trail user groups (ATV/ORV, motorcycle, equestrian, non-motorized, bicycling, mountain biking, water trails, snowmobiles, and hiking).
 9. Support and encourage improvements to area indoor and outdoor recreational, historical and cultural facilities and programs in accordance with locally adopted recreation plans or other officially adopted documents.
 10. Create a Karst Discovery Trail that you could drive and or bike ride to each site. Consider purchase of the Karst property along the NEST on Maple Grove Road as a day use park and trail destination. Work with the Michigan Karst Conservancy.
 11. Encourage more and safer enjoyment of hunting and fishing.
 12. Continually seek input from the public for planning future recreation needs and to promote safe use of recreational opportunities.

FACILITY-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

County Parks

Objectives:

1. *Increase usage of the campgrounds through improved advertising and working with local and state tourism organizations*
2. *Continue to make improvements to camp sites and associated facilities to improve user experience*
3. *Address Americans Disability Act (ADA) guidelines when making improvements to campground facilities*
4. *Expand family oriented activities and activities for kids*
5. *Improve boating and fishing opportunities*
6. *Provide opportunities for winter recreation at Manning Hill Park*
7. *Develop partnerships with community service clubs, organizations and agencies to assist with maintenance and improvements to parks*
8. *Seek funding from a variety of sources to support operations and capital investments.*
9. *Conduct water quality testing*

The next steps will involve working with each park – the Park Committees, Point Person, and Park Managers – to review and update the CIP projects listed in the Master Plan and determine which projects are complete, in progress, or not yet started (or still relevant) and begin building the project list for the next five years. This lines up well with the overall CIP planning for the County which will start in June and wrap up in July.