

2013

Ross Township, Michigan



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Township Mission Statement

The mission of the Ross Township Board of Trustees is to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Ross Township by:

- Providing a safe environment in which to live;
- Maintaining the rural character and quietude of our community;
- Protecting the natural resources of our community;
- Responding to the needs of the Township with respect and concern; and
- Upholding and enforcing local, state, and federal laws.



Introduction

The Ross Township Parks and Recreation Plan provides a vision for the future to guide citizens and public officials with parks and recreation decision making. The goal of this document is to provide a logical, consistent, and purposeful approach to managing parks, and recreation facilities and services within the Township. The Plan sets forth the overall mission and goals of the Township, a description of physical and socio-economic conditions within the community, an inventory of existing facilities and resources, a discussion of key issues, and recommendations involving all facets of parks and recreation.

This Plan will allow the Township to evaluate the progress of recreation planning in the area. Recreation can be separated into four main categories: physical, social, cognitive, and environmentally-related recreation. Physical recreation focuses on sports and various physical activities. Social recreation addresses recreational activity that emphasizes social interaction opportunities. Cognitive recreation consists of cultural, educational, creative, and aesthetic activities. Lastly, environmentally-related recreation involves the natural environment as the setting or focus for activity. Each of these categories of recreation relates to each other and all four are an important part of human development. The Ross Township area is fortunate to be able to offer all four types of recreation to its residents and visitors, and has the capacity to connect all of its recreational assets to the community and surrounding communities.

Administrative Structure

Ross Township is fairly typical in its governmental administrative configuration. The Township Board of Trustees consists of seven elected officials: a Township Supervisor, a Township Treasurer, a Township Clerk, and four Township Trustees.

The Ross Township Planning Commission consists of seven members appointed by the Township Supervisor and approved by the Township Board. The Planning Commission is scheduled to meet monthly at 7 pm on the fourth Monday of each month. The Planning Commission is authorized to make recommendations to the Township Board concerning planning, zoning, and recreation-related issues. The Zoning Board of Appeals is composed of three members appointed by the Township Supervisor and approved by the Township Board. It is the only governmental body in the Township that can issue variances for site development that does not conform to the Ross Township Zoning Ordinance, including all park and recreational developments.

Ross Township does not have a parks-related department/committee or a separate annual budget related to parks development or operation. It is anticipated that the current approach to parks/recreation management within the community will continue . . . using volunteers and partnerships and actively pursuing grants and available funding options.

Ross Township Board of Trustees

Jeff Bither, Supervisor
 Cynthia Genung, Treasurer
 Monica Markillie, Clerk
 Sid Durham, Trustee
 Diane Langshaw, Trustee
 Owen Murray, Trustee
 Jon Scott, Trustee

Ross Township Planning Commission

Jim Lauderdale, Chair
 Russel Fry, Vice-Chair/Secretary
 Jeff Price, Vice Chair
 Robb Blain
 Gregg Pierce
 Jon Scott
 Sherri Snyder

Rebecca Harvey, AICP, PCP, Township Planning Consultant
 Associated Governmental Services (AGS), Zoning Administrator



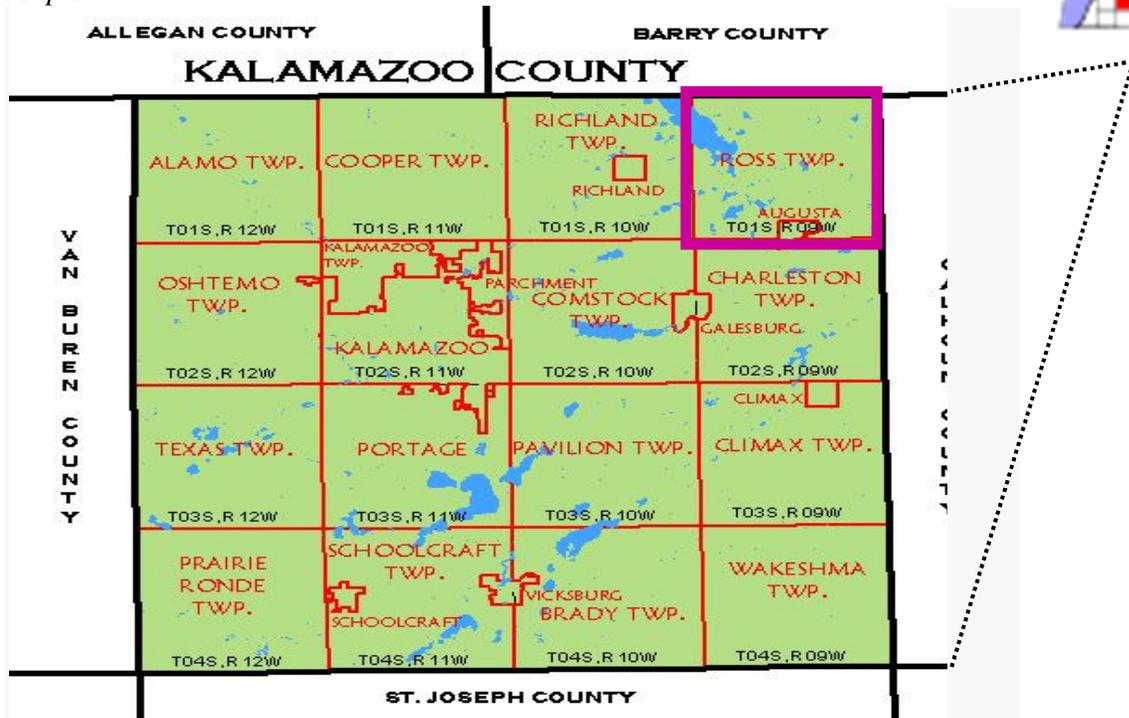
Community Description

Physical Characteristics

Situated in the northeast corner of Kalamazoo County, Ross Township has a total area of 36.0 square miles (93.2 km²). Of the total area, land comprises 33.3 square miles (86.3 km²) or 92.68% and water accounts for the remaining 2.7 square miles (6.9 km²) or 7.42%.



Map 1



Location:

Ross Township of Kalamazoo County is located between two of southwest Michigan’s largest metropolitan areas, Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Not only is access to economic opportunity abundant, but plenty of recreational opportunities exist in the area. The Township is situated around the south end of Gull Lake, one of the region’s premiere inland lakes, and is approximately fifty miles east of the sandy shores of Lake Michigan. **(Map 1)**

Climate:

Climate and weather conditions play an essential role in recreational planning. The climate of the area is fairly temperate with warm humid summers and cold winters due to the interaction of polar and tropical air masses along the mid latitudes. This type of climate is classified as humid continental. Located east of Lake Michigan, the region experiences ‘lake effect’ weather conditions. **Figure A** sets forth the average temperature and precipitation during 2008 for Kalamazoo County. Kalamazoo County experiences an average daily temperature of 49.7 degrees. This average temperature varies between 23.7 degrees in January and 73.2 degrees in

July. The average precipitation is 34.8 inches and snowfall averages 73.1 inches of accumulation. (Table 1)

Figure A

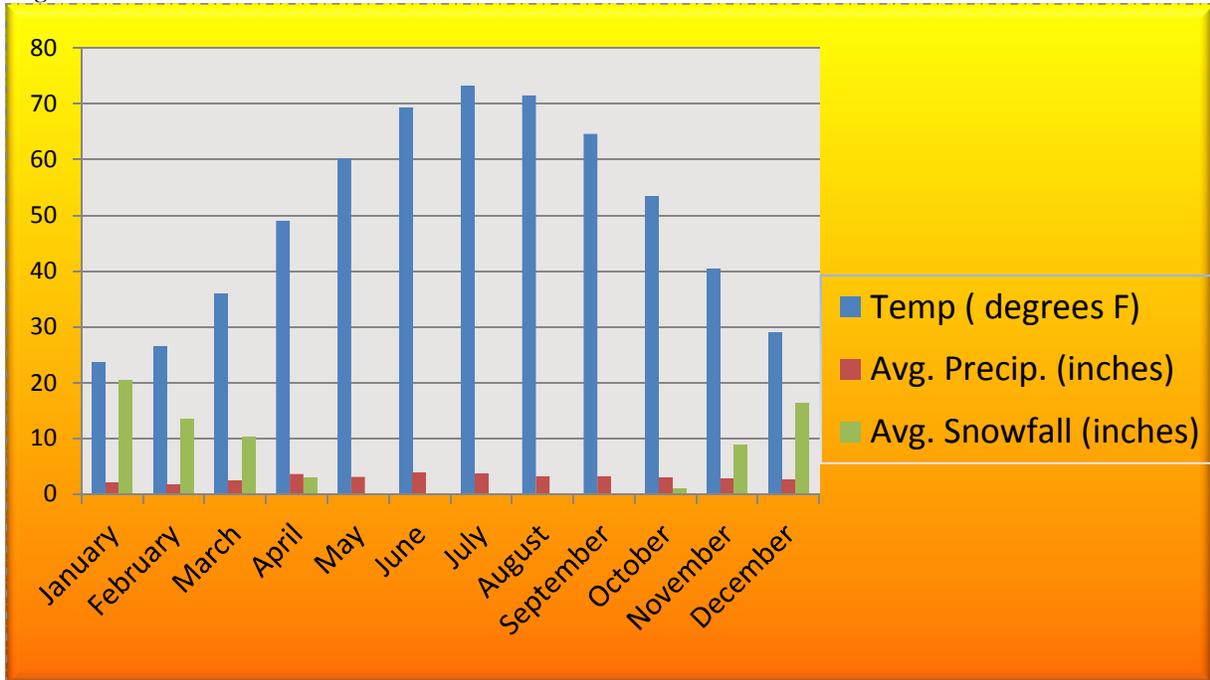


Table 1

Month	Average Daily Temperature (degrees F)	Precipitation (Inches)	
		Average	Average Snowfall
January	23.7	2.1	20.5
February	26.5	1.7	13.5
March	36.0	2.4	10.2
April	49.0	3.6	2.9
May	60.2	3.1	0
June	69.2	3.8	0
July	73.2	3.6	0
August	71.5	3.2	0
September	64.6	3.2	0
October	53.4	3.0	0.9
November	40.4	2.7	8.8
December	29.0	2.6	16.3
Annual	49.7	34.8	73.1

(Source: Michigan State University Dept. of Geography)

Transportation:

While many of the transportation routes in the Township are rural, there are some main arterial links. M-89 runs east to west, virtually dividing the Township in half. This highway connects much of the Township’s population to the south end of Gull Lake and the Richland area where the majority of commercial activity occurs. M-96, another main arterial highway, runs east to west through Augusta. Both of these highway routes connect Battle Creek (to the east) and Kalamazoo (to the west) to Ross Township. Because of the community’s rural transportation pattern, secondary roads (primarily 40th Street and 42nd Street) act as the Townships main north and south routes. **(Map 2)**

Map 2

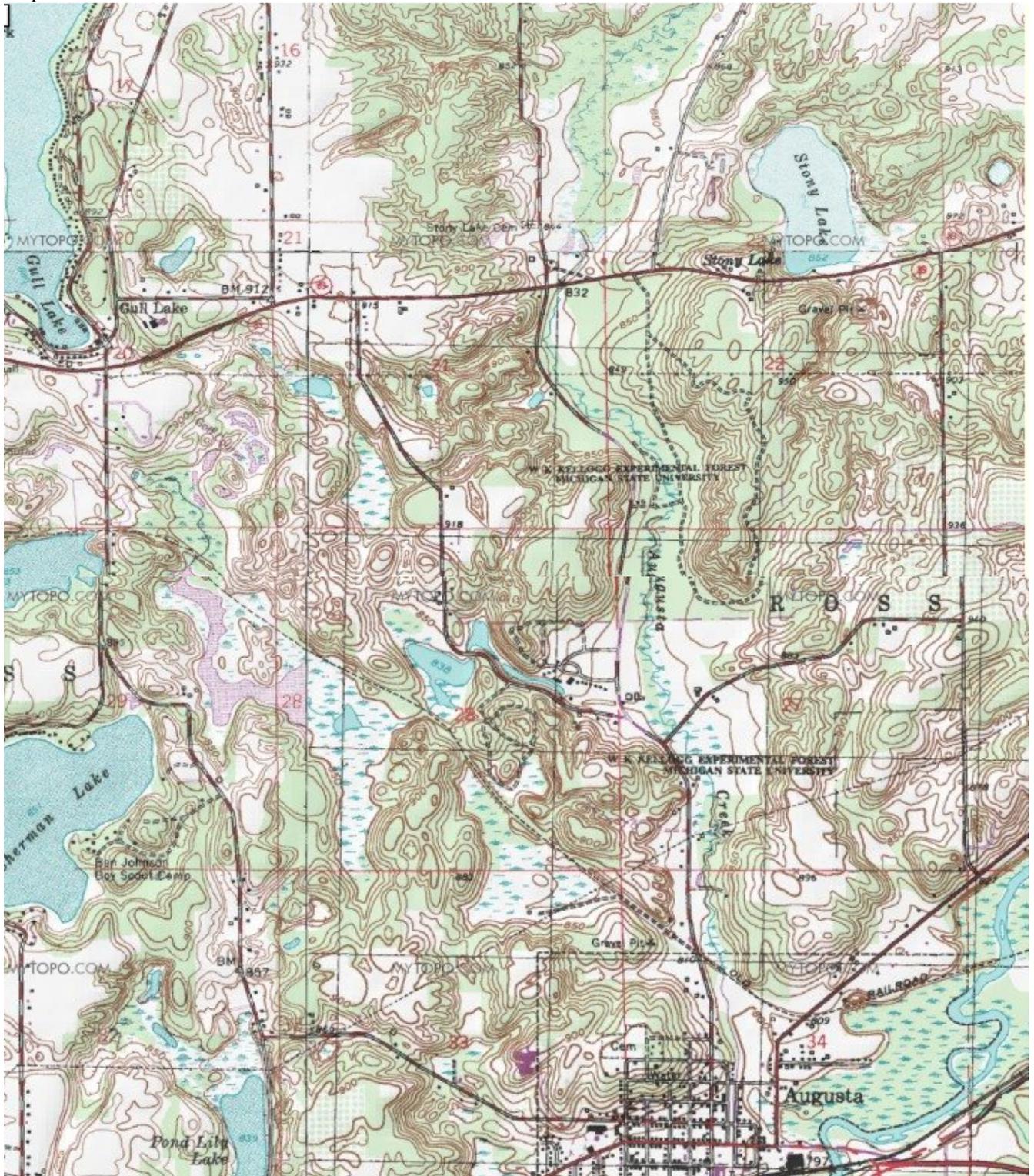


(Source: Kalamazoo County)

Topography:

Like much of Kalamazoo County, Ross Township is known for gently rolling hills and traversable terrain formed by past glacial activity. Glacial moraines and kettle lakes dot the landscape. Most of the Township is between 825-900 feet above sea level, some of the highest levels in the County. As would be expected, the lowest levels are found along Augusta Creek as it flows south to the lowlands of the Kalamazoo River. **(Map 3)**

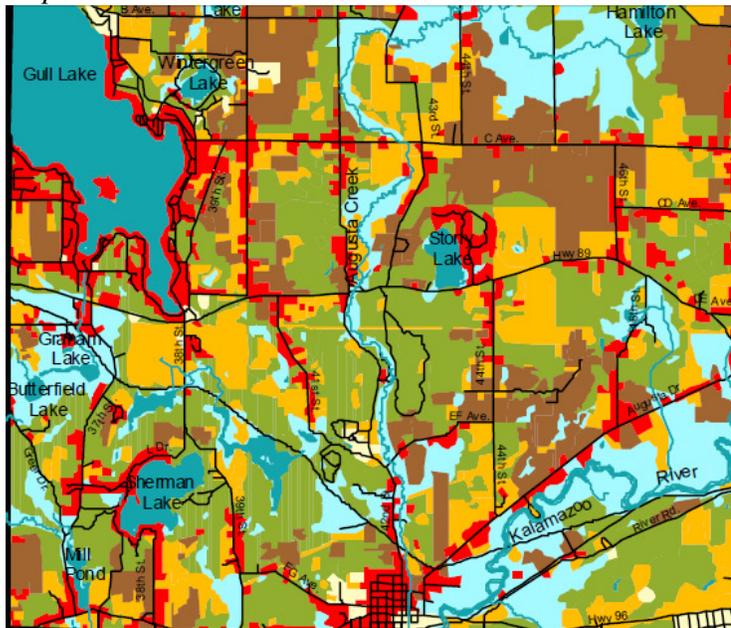
Map 3



(Source: <http://www.digital-topo-maps.com/>)

Land Use:

Map 4



Legend

- . Residential
- . Commercial/Industrial
- . Agriculture
- . Open space/
Recreational
- . Forested
- . Wetlands
- . Lakes & ponds

(Source: Four Twp. Water Resource Council)

- Residential:

Much of the residential land use in the Township is concentrated near or along the south end of Gull Lake and near Augusta. The remaining residential development is scattered throughout the Township along arterials, secondary roadways, and other natural features.

- Commercial:

Commercial development in Ross Township is generally separated into three areas: Augusta, M-89 and the south end of Gull Lake. Augusta is the largest commercial area supplying small shops and locally owned companies. Commercial land use along the M-89 corridor and on the south end of Gull Lake is largely geared toward marine-related services and dining near the water.

- Industrial:

Industrial activity in the Township area is almost non-existent with the exception of the flour mill located within the Village of Augusta.

- Agriculture:

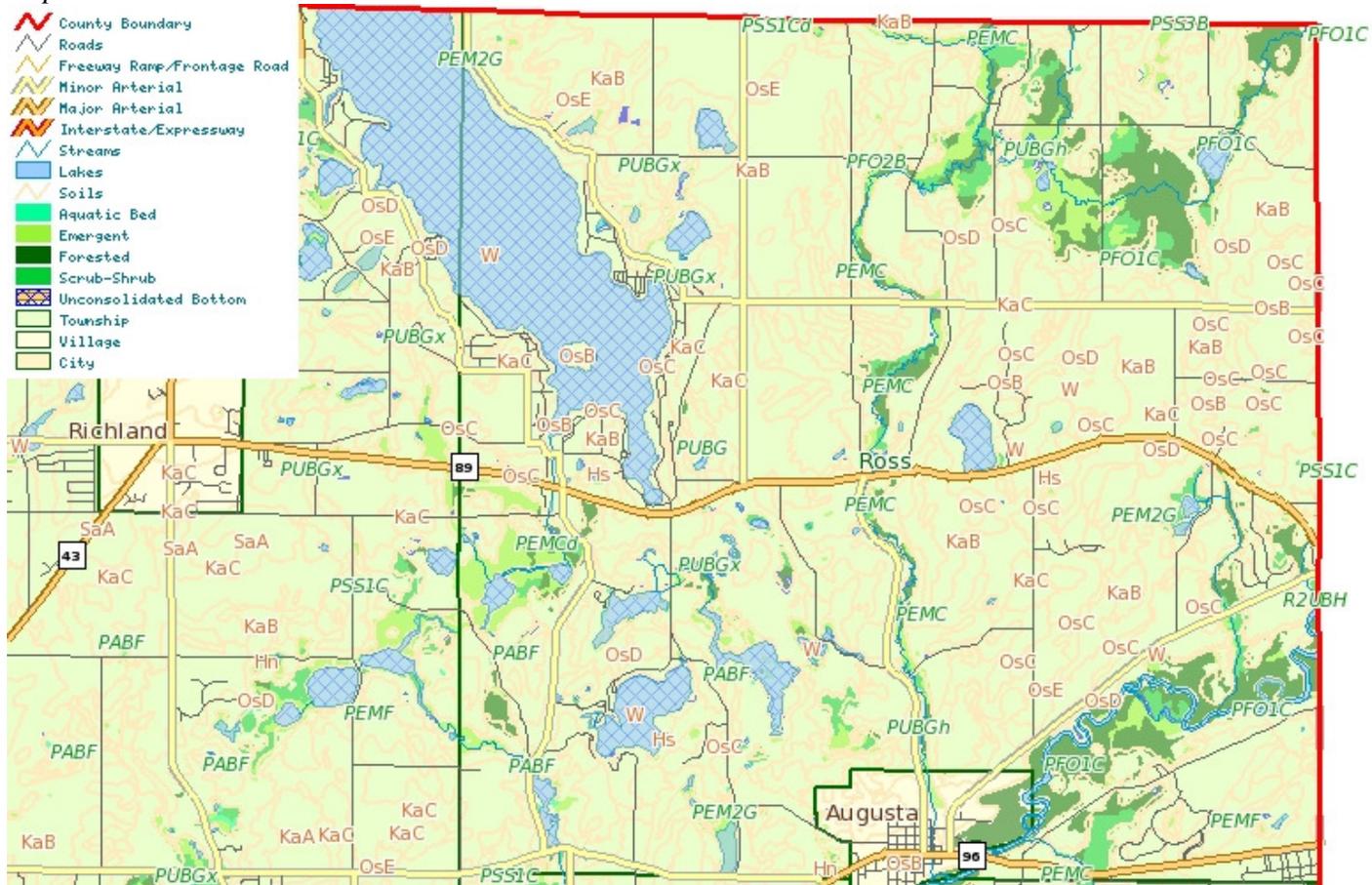
While much of the agricultural land is situated north of M-89, small and large agricultural establishments ranging from 40 to 200 acres are scattered throughout the Township, supplying job opportunities for the community. The Kellogg Biological Station, a

research field station operated by Michigan State University, has large holdings of land in the Township.

Environmental Attributes

Water, soil, vegetation and wildlife are the Township’s greatest assets and most precious resources. These attributes are an integral part of Ross Township’s recreational opportunities and outdoor activities. The ability to preserve and maintain balance between nature and the Township’s rural ambience is an important characteristic of the community that needs to be upheld. **Map 5** illustrates common soil types and other environmental attributes of the Township.

Map 5



(Source: Kalamazoo County)

Soil:

Soil composition is very important to understanding the current environmental structure in the Township. Ross Township consists of two general types of soils: Kalamazoo-Schoolcraft, found in the northwest portion, and Oshtemo-Coloma-Kalamazoo, found in the remaining portions of the Township. Kalamazoo-Schoolcraft soil is nearly level to rolling, well drained soils that have

loamy or loamy and sandy subsoil which was formed in glacial outwash. Oshtemo- Coloma-Kalamazoo soil is undulating to steep, well drained, or somewhat excessively drained soils that have sandy subsoil or loamy and sandy subsoil which was formed in glacial outwash and sandy moraine deposits. These types of soils allow for easy recreational development of camp areas, picnic areas, paths and trails, playgrounds, and golf fairways. Different variations of each soil type exist throughout the Township and should be taken into account when developing specific tracts of land.

Vegetation and Wildlife:

Woodlands, wetlands, marshes, and bogs play host to a variety of vegetation and wildlife. An assortment of healthy deciduous and coniferous forest dominates the Township's landscape. Some of the more common species of trees include Northern Pin Oak, Jack Pine, Black Oak, White Oak, Red Pine, Eastern White Pine, American Basswood, Northern Red Oak, White Ash, Black Walnut, Yellow Poplar and Sugar Maple. The undergrowth of these woodland areas allows white tail deer, raccoons, opossums, and other small mammals to thrive while the canopy is occupied by an assortment of bird species.

The wetland ecosystem, including marshes and bogs, offers some of the most unique vegetation and wildlife found in the Township. These environments are hosts to hundreds of waterfowl in their natural habitat, including trumpeter swans, Canadian geese and a variety of duck species which rely on a stable, maintained and well-preserved environment.

Water Resources:

The water resources are some of the most unique environmental attributes in the area. These resources provide a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Gull Lake is known as one of southwest Michigan's premier inland lakes and the largest lake in the region. At 2,050 acres, the lake serves a diverse population of fish and wildlife. Boat launches and parks allow for easy public access to the lake. Other smaller inland lakes including Sherman, Cranes Lake (both south of Gull Lake) and Stony Lake (east of Gull Lake) provide additional recreational opportunities and public access (only Sherman Lake). Sherman Lake is home to the local YMCA and offers great bass fishing to the public. These water features are part of the Kalamazoo and Augusta Creek watershed.

The Kalamazoo River is the main tributary flowing through the southeast portion of the Township. Augusta Creek is the secondary tributary flowing south dividing the Township. Areas rich in species and diverse habitats (wetlands, marshes, oxbow lakes) surround the Kalamazoo River/Augusta Creek and their floodplains. An abundance of recreational opportunities are available including fishing, hunting, kayaking, and hiking.

Environmental Issues:

Environmental issues, such as water and soil pollution, are of considerable concern to the Township. Currently, there is apparent arsenic contamination on the old orchard grounds of Hillcrest Orchard. Other risks include the potential effects from the recent oil contamination of

the Kalamazoo River and the possibility of abandoning the goals previously discussed in the mission statement in times of expansion. It is important that any changes that occur within the community are consistent with the goals and visions set forth in the Township’s Master Plan and Recreation Plan and are in the Township’s best interest.

Socio-economic Characteristics

The following data is provided to reveal a demographic profile of the area that can be used to understand the basic elements of the Township’s population and assist in meeting recreational needs associated with the projected growth of the area. Sustaining a proactive stance in recreational planning will benefit Township officials and the community in the long-run.

This profile includes population counts and projections, gender and race/ethnicity data, age distribution, and the number of households and income dispersion.

Population:

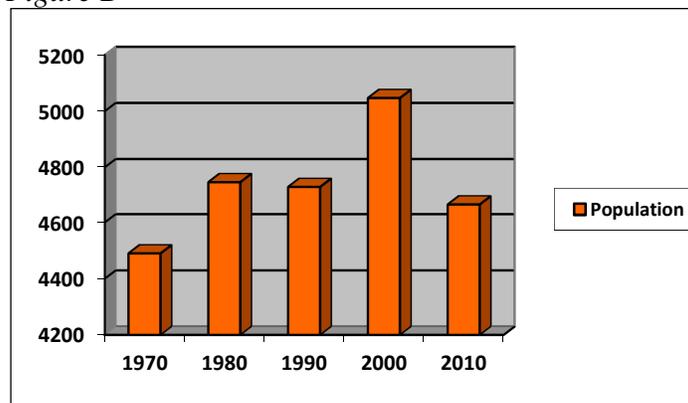
The population in the Township has remained relatively stable (**Table 2 / Figure B**). According to the 2010 Census, 4664 people are residing in Ross Township, representing a 7.6% decline in population since 2000. The average population density is estimated to be approximately 140 people per square mile. In 2009, there were 2112 households within the Township resulting in an average density of 63 households per square mile.

Table 2

Population Counts 1970-2000					
Ross Township	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
	4490	4747	4730	5047	4664

Source: US Census 2010

Figure B



(Source: US Census, 2010)

Racial Composition:

The racial composition of the Township is 94.6% White, 0.8% African American, 0.4% American Indian and Alaskan Indian, 0.9% Asian, 1.7% other races or from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 1.6% of the population. (**Table 3**)

Table 3

Gender and Race/Ethnicity Profile (table)									
	2010 Gender		2010 Race/Ethnicity						
	Male	Female	White	African American	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Hispanic or Latino	Other
Ross Twp.	2335 (50.1%)	2329 (49.9%)	4412 (94.6%)	35 (0.80%)	20 (0.40%)	42 (0.90%)	0	74 (1.60%)	81 (1.70%)
Source: US Census, 2010									

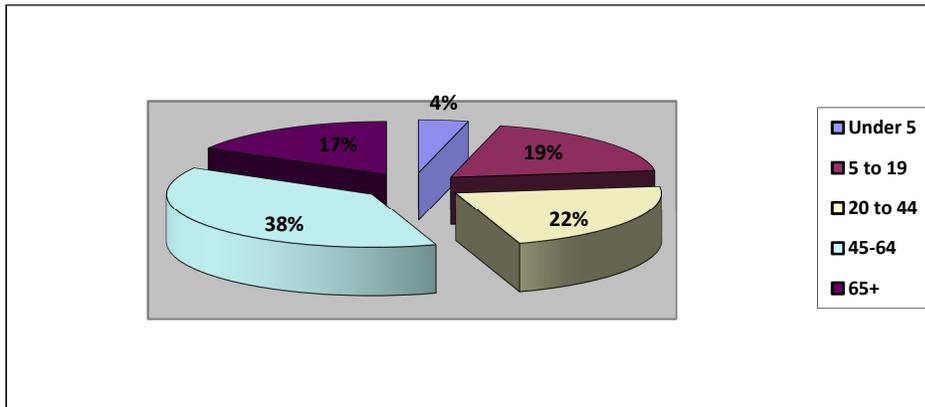
Age Distribution:

Age distribution within the Township is divided into five categories. (**Table 4**) These categories were developed premised upon the role each age group plays within a community. The Under 5 age group represents those that are not involved in the schooling system. Those age 5 to 19 years old are involved in public, private or charter schools. The 20-64 age groups represent the working population of the area and those that are approaching retirement. The 65 and over age group is the percentage of the population that is likely retired and collecting social security. **Figure C** illustrates the age groups by percentage. The median age of Ross Township residents in 2010 was 47.7 years.

Table 4

Age Distribution	
Age	Ross Township (5047 pop.)
Under 5	180
5-19 yrs.	892
20-44 yrs	1030
45-64 yrs	1788
65 and Over	774
Source: US Census, 2010	

Figure C



(Source: US Census, 2010)

Income:

The median household income in Ross Township in 2010 was \$72,276, and the median income for a family was \$81,815. The per capita income for the Township was \$34,380. About 2.5% of families and 4.2% of the population were below the poverty line, including 3.3% of those under age 18 and 2.8% of those ages 65 or over. (Table 5)

Table 5

Number of Household's Income in Dollars							
	Total # of Households	Median HH Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000-24,999	\$25,000-49,999	\$50,000-99,999	< \$100,000
Ross Township	1879	\$72,276	76	119	425	649	610

Source: US Census, 2010

Recreational Facility Inventory

Listed below are the recreational opportunities located within Ross Township. **Table 6** identifies the recreational facility and provides contact information. **Table 7** provides a list of the amenities offered at each facility. A brief description of all publicly and privately-owned facilities is also provided. An aerial photo of the Township and its parks allows readers the ability to view park locations. (**Map 6**) An interactive version of this same photo can be manipulated using Google Earth. (<http://googleearth10.com/>)

Map 6

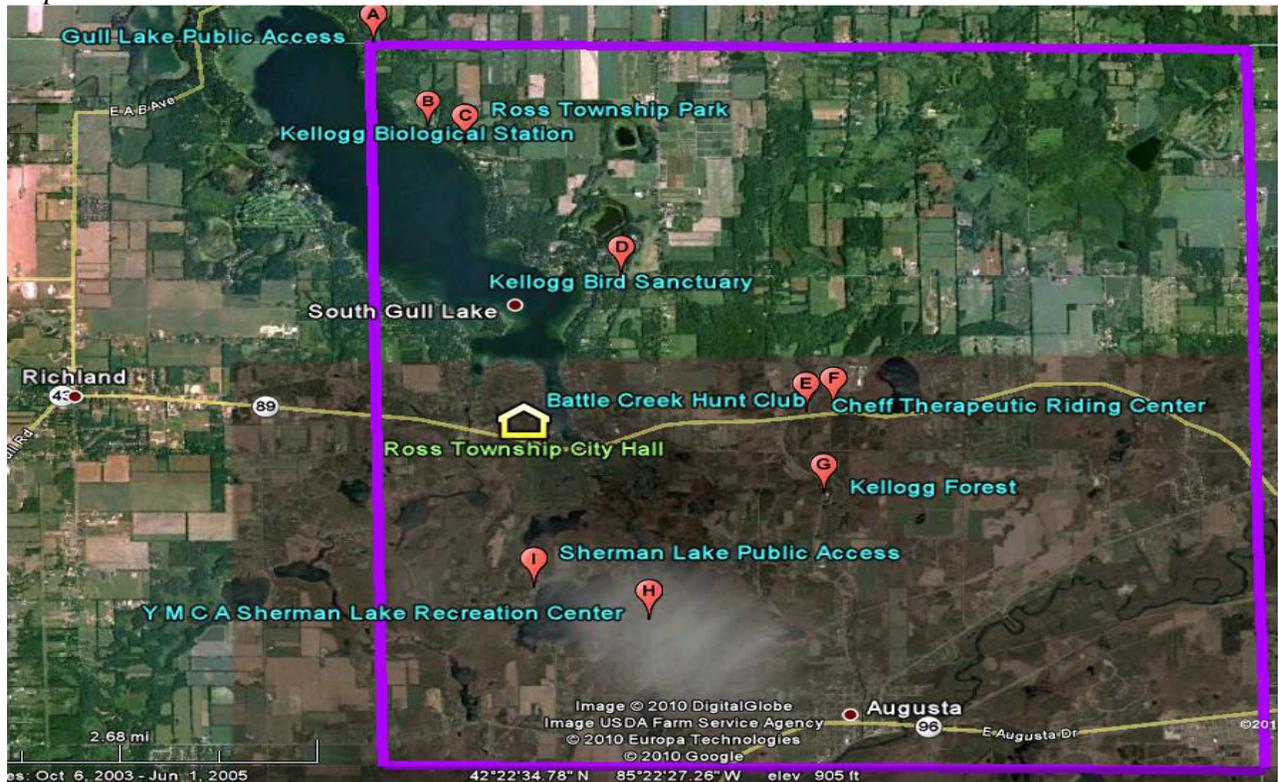


Table 6

Recreational Facility	Contact/ Web Information
Cheff Center	http://cheffcenter.org/ Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center 8450 N. 43rd Street Augusta, MI 49012 e-mail: sandi@cheffcenter.org phone: 269-731-4471
Hunt Club	http://www.battlecreekhunt.com/ Battlecreek Hunt Club 7878 N 43rd St Augusta, MI 49012 Phone: (269) 731-4423

Kellogg Biological Station	http://www.kbs.msu.edu/ W. K. Kellogg Biological Station 3700 East Gull Lake Drive Hickory Corners, MI 49060 Phone: (269) 671-5117
Kellogg Bird Sanctuary	http://www.kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary Kellogg Bird Sanctuary 12685 East C Ave. Augusta, MI 49012 Phone: (269) 671-2510
Kellogg Forest	http://www.maes.msu.edu/ressta/kelloggforest/ W.K. Kellogg Experiment Station Greg Kowalewski 7060 N. 42nd Street Augusta, Michigan 49012 Phone: 269/731.4597
Lake Access Points	http://www.ross-township.us/ Ross Township 12086 M-89 P.O. Box 475 Augusta, MI 49012 Phone: (269) 731-4888
North Country Trail	Ross Township
Ross Township Park	Ross Township
Ross Township Schools	http://gacsnet.org/ Administration Offices 1076 N. 37th St. Galesburg, MI 49053 (269)484-2000
Sherman Lake YMCA	http://www.shermanlakeymca.org/ 6225 North 39 th Street Augusta, Michigan Phone: (269) 731-3000

Table 7

Name	Facilities/Amenities																									
	Summer/day Camps	Tours	Entrance Fee	Parking	Camping	Housing	Modern Restrooms	Vault or Portable Toilet	Stairs or Path to Shore	Swimming	Picnic Area	Drinking Water	Trailer Boat Launch	Kayak/Canoe	Marina	Fishing	Hunting	Hiking	Biking	Cross-Country Skiing	Horseback Riding	Playground	Sport Facilities	Sandy Beach	Wetlands	
Cheff Center	•																									
Kellogg Biological Station		•		•																						
Kellogg Bird Sanctuary	•	•		•		•				•	•															•
Kellogg Forest	•	•		•		•				•	•															
Lake Access Points							•					•														
North County Trail																			•							
Ross Township Park			•							•	•											•				
Ross Township Schools																										
Sherman Lake YMCA	•	•		•	•					•	•					•										

Horse Facilities:

- **Hunt Club** (http://www.battlecreekhunt.com/index.php?pr=Home_Page)

The mission of the Hunt Club is to provide a fun and exciting fox hunting experience for all its members and guests. All riding disciplines can be accommodated and safety practices are always followed. The hunting grounds consist of woods, open fields, streams and ponds. This is a “complete” hunt facility, consisting of a club house and dining room, one indoor and two outdoor arenas, access to 1200 trailed acres, space for temporary or permanent boarding, state of the art kennels, shows throughout the year, available lessons, and wild Michigan red fox.

Amenities:

- indoor and two outdoor arenas
- club house
- dining room
- boarding and kennels
- parking
- 1200 trailed acres

- **Cheff Center** (<http://cheffcenter.org/>)

Opened in 1970 as the first therapeutic riding center built especially for the purpose of serving those with special needs in the United States, the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center strives to focus on what individuals can accomplish rather than what they cannot. The Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center serves riders of all ages who have physical, emotional or cognitive disabilities and is recognized by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA).

- Amenities:
- club house
 - handicap accessibility
 - parking



MSU Farms:

- **Kellogg Biological Station**

The Kellogg Biological Station (KBS) is a Michigan State University research field station with a focus on fundamental and applied research in ecology and agriculture. KBS is home to a National Science Foundation Long Term Ecological Research Site, as well as a Department of Energy Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center Field Experiment site. KBS supports undergraduate and graduate education, as well as K-12 outreach.



• **Kellogg Forest**

This 50 acre site was established in 1931 and has been operated by MSU Department of Forestry for the last several decades. The forest is known as one of the country’s premier forest research facilities for tree breeding and genetics, planting techniques, plantation establishment, and management. This once abandoned agricultural land is now a thriving forest and is open to the public with year round activities and on-site amenities.

Activities/Amenities:

- fishing
- biking
- hiking
- horseback riding
- bow hunting (10/1-1/1 must sign in at office)
- cross country skiing
- driving the forest loop
- several interpretive trails
- parking (with trailer)
- handicap accessibility

For hours of operation visit:

<http://www.maes.msu.edu/ressta/kelloggforest/visitor.htm>



• **Kellogg Bird Sanctuary**

[\(http://www.kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary/\)](http://www.kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary/)

The Bird Sanctuary was created by W.K. Kellogg in 1927 as a refuge for the Canada goose, and other migratory birds, and was an important part of trumpeter swan restoration efforts in the 1980s. The area remains an important stopover location for migrating birds and waterfowl. The sanctuary offers 180 acres of diverse wildlife habitats situated on 40-acre Wintergreen Lake. The paved sanctuary trail runs beside the lake and offers a great view of our resident waterfowl, and runs through our bird of prey and game bird areas. It

is an ideal spot for families, classrooms, birders, wildlife photographers, and nature enthusiasts.

Activities/ Amenities:

- 180 acre sanctuary
- ¾ mile walking trail
- 40 acre Wintergreen Lake
- picnic area
- handicap accessibility
- parking
- tours
- resource center/ gift shop
- restrooms

For any information regarding contact information or visitor information visit:
<http://www.kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary/visitor-info>

Lake Access Points:

- **Gull Lake** - Public access is located on Baseline Road off of East Gull Lake Drive. Parking and toilets available. Ramp is hard-surfaced. Launching big boats may be difficult. Handicap accessible.
- **Sherman Lake** - Public access on North Sherman Lake Drive. Parking available. Ramp is hard-surfaced. Launching bigger boats may be difficult. Handicap accessible.

For more information regarding Sherman Lake visit:
<http://www.shermanlakemi.com/index.htm> .

North County Trail (40th Street):

A paved extension of 40th Street, this bike trail runs parallel to 40th Street for 3 miles and is located on the east side of the road.



Ross Township Park: (<http://www.ross-township.us/thingstodo.html>)

Ross Township Park is located on the east side of Gull Lake and has approximately 100 feet of beach frontage. A car fee of five dollars is collected at the gate. Once in the park occupants can use all facilities within park boundaries and should be aware that there is no lifeguard on duty. Park hours: 9am- dusk, April 15 - October 15.

Amenities:

- parking
- restrooms
- sandy beach
- picnic area
- handicap accessibility



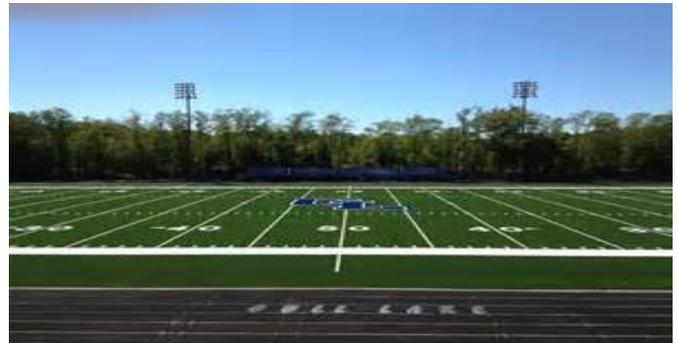
Ross Township Schools:

Two school districts are located within Ross Township - Gull Lake Community Schools and Galesburg-Augusta Public Schools. (**Map 7**) There are three school facilities situated within Ross Township boundaries. The schools’ recreational facilities are available for use by the public. Users should be aware of school hours so as to not interrupt class.

Map 7



(Source: Kalamazoo County)



Sherman Lake YMCA : (<http://www.shermanlakeymca.org/>)

This regional attraction provides recreational activity and education to local residents and surrounding populations of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. The YMCA center hosts an array of summer and school youth education programs focusing on character development, teambuilding and other academic programs. The family recreation center consists of a workout facility and swimming pool. Retreats and conferences are also available to the general public.



Activities/Amenities:

- summer camp
- horseback riding
- camping
- school programs
- rock wall
- handicap accessibility
- swimming
- retreats and conferences
- fishing
- canoe/kayak
- lodging

Area Recreational Attractions

Table 8 identifies other recreational opportunities, attractions, and activities available in the area.

Table 8

Restaurants	Lodging and Camping	Recreation, Museums, Golf, Shopping and Miscellaneous
Barking Frog 113 Canal, Augusta, MI (269) 731-3764	<u>Fort Custer Recreation</u> 5163 Fort Custer Dr, Augusta, MI (269) 731-4200	<u>Air Zoo</u> 6151 Portage Rd, Portage, MI - (866) 524-7966
Bayview Gardens 12504 E D Ave, Richland, MI (269) 731-4911	<u>Gull Lake Inn</u> 12500 M 89, Richland, MI (269) 731-4131	Barn Theatre 13351 West M-96 Augusta, MI (269) 731-4121
Hickory Timber Inn 14576 Kellogg School Rd, Hickory Corners, MI (269) 671-4996		<u>Binder Park Zoo</u> 7400 Division Drive Battle Creek, MI 49014 (269) 979-1351
Frona’s Pantry 1396 E Gull Lake Dr, Hickory Corners, MI (269) 731-2005		<u>Echo Valley</u> 8495 E H Ave, Kalamazoo, MI (269) 349-3291
<u>Gull Lake View Restaurant</u> 7417 N 38th St, Augusta, MI - (269) 731-2457		<u>Gilmore Car Museum</u> 6865 W Hickory Rd, Hickory Corners, MI - (269) 671-5089
Ice House 12443 E D Avenue Richland, MI (269) 629-4739		<u>Gull Lake View Golf Club</u> 7417 N. 38th St., Augusta, MI - (269) 731-4149
<u>Lickity Split Ice Cream</u> 301 E Michigan Ave Augusta, MI 49012-9306 (269) 731-5216		<u>McKay’s Memorial Library</u> 105 S Webster St, Augusta, MI - (269) 731-4000
Nina’s Taqueria 111 E. Michigan Ave. Augusta, MI (269) 731-5300		Maple Hills Golf Course 16344 E C Ave, Augusta, MI - (269) 731-4430
Players Grill 506 E Michigan Ave Augusta, MI (269) 731-5420		<u>Richland Community Library</u> 8951 Park St, Richland, MI - (269) 629-9085
		<u>Stonehedge Golf Club</u> 7417 N 38th St, Richland, MI - (269) 731-2300
		<u>Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort</u> 10499 N 48th St, Augusta, MI - (269) 731-2090

Natural Resources Inventory

In 2005, the Four Township Water Resources Council published the 'NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY OF PRAIRIEVILLE, BARRY, ROSS AND RICHLAND TOWNSHIPS'.

This technical report culminates a three year project to identify special and unique natural areas in the four townships. Twenty *potential conservation areas* (PCAs) are described. Easy-to-read fact sheets are available for each PCA.

The following summary of the report was provided by the Four Township Water Resources Council:

The four townships of Prairieville, Barry, Ross, and Richland are centrally located between the cities of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Over the next several decades both of these communities are expected to grow as economic development goals attract new businesses to the area. As properties are developed, natural areas are impacted. These four townships are rich in natural features, and many local citizens value the diversity of ecosystems that make this area unique and ecologically noteworthy. The large natural areas are also important for local plants and animals. Wildlife corridors and areas with less disturbed, core wildlife habitat help maintain biodiversity and sources of genetic diversity. Through managed community growth, the natural character of the four-township area may be better conserved by directing development away from land in excellent ecological condition. The goal of the Natural Features Inventory reports is to promote more well-informed decisions when property of high ecological value is being considered for development.

As reported in the 27 January 2003 Four-Township Water Resources Council, Inc. Project Update publication Natural Features Inventory to Protect Environmental Quality in Ross, Richland, Barry and Prairieville Townships, the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) of Michigan State University Extension identified 20 areas as high priority Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) within the four townships. The priority rating of each PCA was determined by many factors, including size, core area, association with streams, connection with nearby PCAs and natural areas, the restorability of adjacent properties, and the incidence of plants or animals of special concern. The identification of these 20 high priority PCAs concluded Phase I of the Natural Features Inventory.

Phase II of the inventory, based on field surveys of representative portions of each PCA rated each of these 20 high priority PCAs in terms of conservation priority. Sites were rated as excellent, very good, or good in terms of their floristic quality, wildlife habitat, and degree of human encroachment. All 20 PCAs are worthy of conservation priority, but the quality of natural features at some sites was higher than at others. These ratings should be used as a general guide in conjunction with the species lists and habitat descriptions for each PCA when evaluating development proposals in or near these PCAs.

A summary of the report on each PCA within a township is available at your township office. Although PCAs are grouped by township, each township can be considered part of the larger four-township area. Cooperative conservation efforts across the broader four-township area are encouraged. Ecosystems are “open systems” and, to the extent possible, should be managed across jurisdictional boundaries. The Four-Township Water Resources Council has published the complete Natural Features Inventory reports for all four town-ships as a single unit, which is available under publications on FTWRC web page (www.ftwrc.org).

The 2005 NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY OF PRAIRIEVILLE, BARRY, ROSS AND RICHLAND TOWNSHIPS developed by the Four Township Water Resources Council is incorporated into the Ross Township Recreation Plan by reference.

Planning Process

The 2012 Recreation Plan was a collaborative effort between the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and the citizens of Ross Township. In 2010, the Planning Commission retained a graduate student (Steve Foley) from Western Michigan University to assist in the compilation and development of the background data and recreation inventory. The Planning Commission also used the services of the Township Planning Consultant (Rebecca Harvey) to help guide the process. The Recreation Plan was created in four major steps.

First, information about the community was gathered: physical characteristics, demographics, transportation, maps and other background material was compiled; then, a review of how the parks/recreation functions are carried out and funded was conducted; and finally, an inventory of the existing recreational facilities within the Township developed. This information is summarized in the **Administrative Structure, Community Description** and **Recreational Facilities Inventory** sections of the Plan. The Township also tapped into a natural resources inventory of the area recently prepared by Four Township Water Resources Council and incorporated that work by reference in the Plan (**Natural Resource Inventory**). These data were then used to identify the issues and opportunities discussed during the second step.

Based on the outcomes of the issue identification process, the third step resulted in the development of goals/objectives designed to respond to identified needs and community ideals. These goals and objectives serve as the foundation of the Plan and are described in the **Goals/Objectives** section. Finally, using the goals and objectives as a guide, a blueprint for implementation was developed (**Action Program**) to steer the Recreation Plan into action.

Through a variety of efforts, the citizens of the Township had an opportunity to participate in the process of determining the recreational values important to them and to the community. Several techniques were used to engage the public, including invited participation at Planning Commission meetings where recreational planning was a scheduled agenda item, availability of draft Plan text developed in response to Planning Commission discussions for self-directed review, and a Community Workshop held on **April 22, 2103** designed to engage further public discussion on the recreational needs of the Township and allow public review and reaction to the concepts and ideas in the draft Plan. The Community Workshop was advertised through the dissemination of ‘workshop invitations’ to area businesses and adjacent communities and the posting of the notice at the Township Hall and throughout the community. No public input was offered at the Community Workshop. *(A copy of the meeting notice, meeting agenda, and meeting minutes are provided in Appendix A)*

On **May 20, 2013**, the draft Plan was refined and accepted by the Planning Commission for public distribution/review. Public input on the draft Plan was solicited using the Ross Township web site and the posting/distribution of notices. Further, a copy of the draft Plan was made available on the Township web site for review and an on-line survey tool provided to encourage public comment. Copies of the draft Plan were also made available at the Township Hall and several other community-based facilities in the Township.

Following the public review/input period, the draft Plan was considered by the Planning Commission on **July 22, 2013** and finalized and approved for submission to the Township Board. A summary of the public input provided on the draft Plan is provided in Appendix B. *(A copy of the meeting notice, meeting agenda, and meeting minutes are provided in Appendix C)*

The Recreation Plan was then presented for adoption at a public hearing before the Township Board on **September 10, 2013**. *(A copy of the meeting notice, meeting agenda, and meeting minutes are provided in Appendix D)*

Copies of the following documents are provided in Appendix E.

- *Official Resolution of Adoption by the Ross Township Board*
- *Copy of the Letter transmitting the Adopted Plan to the County Planning Agency*
- *Copy of the Letter transmitting the Adopted Plan to the Regional Planning Agency*

Goals and Objectives

Recreational Opportunities within the Township:

Goal: *Fully utilize the potential of the Township’s water assets for recreation.*

Objective: Explore opportunities for public access to Stoney Lake and Douglas Lake.

Objective: Facilitate multi-seasonal use (i.e. ice fishing, skating, cross-country skiing) of area lakes and ponds through the provision of adequate access and maintenance of necessary amenities.

Objective: Develop a plan for the use of the Shady Bend property as a recreation site with access to the Kalamazoo River.

Goal: *Provide recreational opportunities within the Township for people of all ages and abilities.*

Objective: Establish a play structure at the Ross Township Park.

Objective: Establish a disc golf course or skate park at the Ross Township Park.

Objective: Establish an easily accessible network of non-motorized pathways near and between Township activity centers and recreational facilities.
(Map 8)

Goal: *Provide recreational opportunities that take advantage of the natural environment.*

Objective: Promote the recreational amenities provided at the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through area businesses and local organizations.

Objective: Work with the Four Township Water Resources Council (4TWRC) to provide ecologically-sensitive recreational features on public lands, such as a boardwalk into a wetlands area.

Objective: Work with the Gull Lake School District and other educational institutions and environmental groups to provide education on wetlands and environmental protection.

Goal: *Expand the recreational assets within the Township through the acquisition of property with desirable natural resources and locational opportunities.*

Objective: Identify and use local resources to pursue grant opportunities to fund the acquisition of property within the Township for recreational use.

Objective: Acquire Shady Bend property (approximately 10 acres) as recreational land.

Objective: Support Four Township Water Resources Council (4TWRC) efforts to establish conservation easements along Augusta Creek.

Accessibility of Recreational Facilities:

Goal: *Provide safe and adequate access to all Township recreational facilities.*

Objective: Provide barrier-free access to all Township recreational facilities.

Objective: Adopt and fund a program for the maintenance of Township recreational facilities.

Goal: *Provide safe and adequate parking at all Township recreational facilities.*

Objective: Provide barrier-free parking at all Township recreational facilities.

Objective: Adopt and fund a program for the maintenance of parking areas at Township recreational facilities.

Goal: *Provide for safe and convenient non-motorized access to all Township recreational facilities.*

Objective: Establish bike lanes on routes (public roadways) that provide access to Township recreational facilities. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Objective: Establish a network of non-motorized routes near and between Township activity centers and recreational facilities. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Objective: Establish a system of wayfinding signage throughout the Township that connects bike lanes and non-motorized routes with activity centers and recreation areas.

Connectivity within the Township:

Goal: *Promote connectivity between activity centers/recreational facilities within the Township.*

Objective: Establish safe and clearly defined non-motorized routes between activity centers/recreational facilities within the Township. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Objective: Apply ‘Complete Streets’ strategies to establish bike lanes on key routes within the Township. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Creating a ‘Sense of Place’:

Goal: *Recognize the value of Gull Lake in providing recreational opportunities unique to Ross Township.*

Objective: Establish a canoe livery on Gull Lake.

Objective: Facilitate the establishment of the ‘green loop’ around Gull Lake as a non-motorized route. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Objective: Provide a trailhead station and wayfinding signage to encourage use of the ‘green loop’.

Objective: Encourage site design that provides pedestrian access to Gull Lake from the Bay Commercial District area.

Goal: *Recognize the unique recreational opportunities that currently exist in Ross Township.*

Objective: Promote the recreational amenities provided at the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through marketing strategies and wayfinding signage.

Objective: Establish connectivity to the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through bike lanes or non-motorized routes. **(Maps 8 & 8a)**

Regional Recreational Assets:

Goal: *Provide for connectivity between the Township and area-wide recreational facilities.*

Objective: Participate in efforts to improve, maintain, identify, and otherwise establish the North Country Trail system as it extends through Ross Township.

Objective: Establish a bike lane route that provides access to the North Country Trail system.

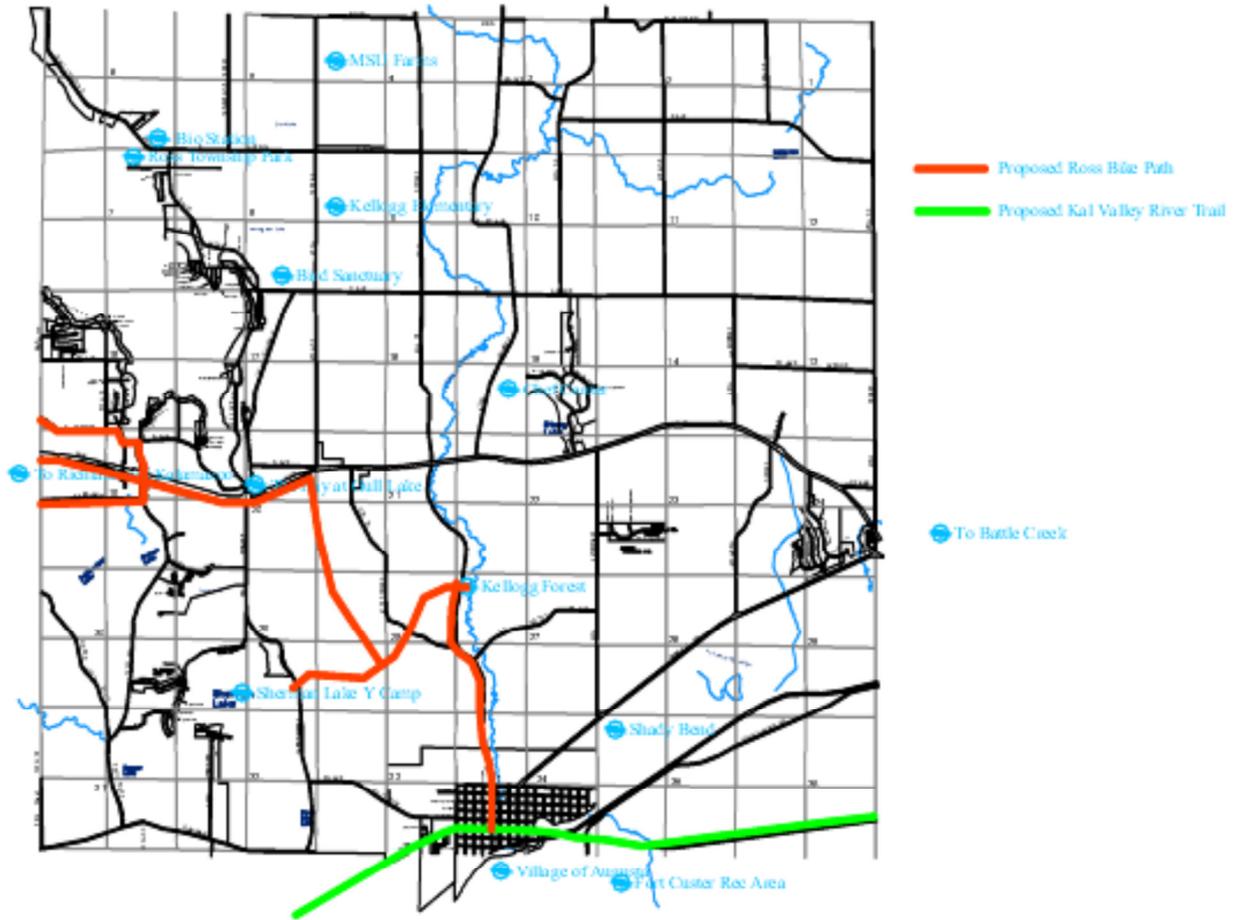
Objective: Encourage connectivity between the North Country Trail and the Bay Commercial area.

Objective: Recognize/respond to the tourism opportunities afforded Ross Township by attractions/events/facilities in adjacent communities.

Objective: Coordinate the establishment of non-motorized routes within the Township with planned/existing routes in adjacent communities, specifically Richland Township, the Village of Richland, and the Village of Augusta.

Objective: Participate in area/regional planning efforts regarding recreation, non-motorized paths, and bike routes.

Map 8A - Ross Township Non-Motorized Routes - Phase I



Action Program

Guidelines, Plans and Policies

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
1. Explore opportunities for public access to Stoney Lake and Douglas Lake.	Township Board, DEQ, Lake Associations	-	3
2. Develop a plan for the use of the Shady Bend property as a recreation site with access to the Kalamazoo River.	Planning Commission, Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
3. Work with the Four Township Water Resources Council (4TWRC) to provide ecologically-sensitive recreational features on public lands, such as a boardwalk into a wetlands area.	Township Board, 4TWRC, DEQ	1 – 3 years	2
4. Identify and use local resources to pursue grant opportunities to fund the acquisition of property within the Township for recreational use.	Township Staff, Township Board	1 – 5 years	3
5. Support Four Township Water Resources Council (4TWRC) efforts to establish conservation easements along Augusta Creek.	Township Board	1 – 5 years	3
6. Adopt and fund a program for the maintenance of Township recreational facilities.	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1

7. Adopt and fund a program for the maintenance of parking areas at Township recreational facilities.	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
8. Encourage site design that provides pedestrian access to Gull Lake from the Bay Commercial District area.	Planning Commission	Within 1 year	1
9. Promote the recreational amenities provided at the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through marketing strategies and wayfinding signage.	Township Board, State of Michigan	3 – 5 years	3
10. Encourage connectivity between the North Country Trail and the Bay Commercial area.	Planning Commission, Township Board	Within 1 year	1
11. Recognize/respond to the tourism opportunities afforded Ross Township by attractions/events/facilities in adjacent communities.	Township Board	1 – 3 years	2
12. Coordinate the establishment of non-motorized routes within the Township with planned/existing routes in adjacent communities, specifically Richland Township, the Village of Richland, and the Village of Augusta.	Planning Commission, Township Board	1 – 2 years	1

Land Acquisition and Development

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
1. Facilitate multi-seasonal use (i.e. ice fishing, skating, cross-country skiing) of	Township Board	3 – 5 years	3

<p>area lakes and ponds through the provision of adequate access and maintenance of necessary amenities.</p>			
<p>2. Establish a play structure at the Ross Township Park.</p>	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
<p>3. Establish a disc golf course or skate park at the Ross Township Park.</p>	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
<p>4. Establish an easily accessible network of non-motorized routes near and between Township activity centers and recreational facilities</p>	Township Board	1 – 3 years	1
<p>5. Acquire Shady Bend property (approximately 10 acres) as recreational land.</p>	Township Board	Within 1 year	1
<p>6. Provide barrier-free access to all Township recreational facilities.</p>	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
<p>7. Provide barrier-free parking at all Township recreational facilities.</p>	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
<p>8. Establish a system of wayfinding signage throughout the Township that connects bike lanes and non-motorized routes with activity centers and recreation areas.</p>	Township Board	1 – 2 years	1
<p>9. Establish a canoe livery on Gull Lake.</p>	Township Board, DEQ	3 – 5 years	3
<p>10. Facilitate the establishment of the 'green loop' around Gull Lake as a non-</p>	Planning Commission,	1 – 3 years	1

motorized route.	Township Board		
11. Provide a trailhead station and wayfinding signage to encourage use of the 'green loop'.	Township Board	2 – 3 years	2
12. Establish connectivity to the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through bike lanes or non-motorized routes.	Planning Commission, Township Board	1 – 3 years	1
13. Participate in efforts to improve, maintain, identify, and otherwise establish the North Country Trail system as it extends through Ross Township.	Township Board	1 – 3 years	1

Transportation Corridors

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
1. Establish bike lanes on routes (public roadways) that provide access to Township recreational facilities.	Township Board, MDOT, KATS	1 – 2 years	1
2. Apply 'Complete Streets' strategies to establish bike lanes on key routes within the Township.	Township Board, MDOT, KATS	1 – 2 years	1
3. Establish a bike lane route that provides access to the North Country Trail system.	Township Board, MDOT, KATS	1 – 2 years	1

Education

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Priority
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<p>1. Promote the recreational amenities provided at the Kellogg Forest and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary through area businesses and local organizations.</p>	<p>Township Board, RABA</p>	<p>1 – 3 years</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>2. Work with the Gull Lake School District and other educational institutions and environmental groups to provide education on wetlands and environmental protection.</p>	<p>Township Board, Gull Lake Board of Education, FTWRC</p>	<p>1 – 3 years</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>3. Participate in area/regional planning efforts regarding recreation, non-motorized paths, and bike routes.</p>	<p>Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Staff</p>	<p>Within 1 year</p>	<p>1</p>

References

- Census Bureau Home Page. Web. 15 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.census.gov/>>.
- Four Township Water Resources Council. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.ftwrc.org/>>.
- Free Printable Topo Maps - Instant Access to Topographic Maps. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.digital-topo-maps.com/>>.
- Kalamazoo Michigan County Government Web Site, Kalamazoo County Connection. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.kalcounty.com/>>.
- Ross Township. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.ross-township.us/index.html>>.

Appendices

Appendix A

Copy of the Meeting Notice – April 22, 2013 Community Workshop

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Copy of the Meeting Agenda – April 22, 2013 Community Workshop

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Copy of the Meeting Minutes – April 22, 2013 Community Workshop

Appendix B

Summary of the public input provided on the draft Recreation Plan (*from May 20, 2013 through July 22, 2013*)

- *No public input was provided on the draft Recreation Plan during the review period of May 20, 2013 through July 22, 2013.*

Appendix C

Copy of the Meeting Notice – July 22, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting following the public input period

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Copy of the Meeting Agenda - July 22, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting following the public input period

•

Copy of the Meeting Minutes - July 22, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting following the public input period

Appendix D

Copy of the Meeting Notice – September 10, 2013 Public Hearing before the Ross Township Board

•

Copy of the Meeting Agenda – September 10, 2013 Public Hearing before the Ross Township Board

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Copy of the Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2013 Public Hearing before the Ross Township Board

Appendix E

Official Resolution of Adoption by the Ross Township Board

- Copy of the Letter transmitting the Adopted Plan to the County Planning Agency
- Copy of the Letter transmitting the Adopted Plan to the Regional Planning Agency