

# GERRISH TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

The Township of Gerrish is located in the Northwestern portion of Roscommon County. It is a popular tourist area.

The primary attraction for our visitors is Higgins Lake which has been rated as the world's sixth most beautiful lake. This lake covers 10,317 acres with 20.5 miles of shoreline more than half of which are included within Gerrish Township's borders. Gerrish Township operates a public park at the northeast end of the lake that is presently used primarily for swimming and sun bathing. Recreational access to Higgins Lake is provided by two State Parks. One of which, South Higgins Lake State Park, is totally within Gerrish Township. The other, North Higgins Lake State Park, is located in Lyon and Beaver Creek Townships. The State also provides an access site in Lyon Township. In addition, there are many roads that end at Higgins Lake all of which provide differing degrees of lake ingress and egress. Access, at these points, is now limited much more due to a recent court decision. Access opportunities are now limited at the forty-nine road ends that are in Gerrish Township.

The surface of the Lake is 1154 feet above sea level and its surrounding lands slope up gently from the lake. The average summer temperature for the area is in the low seventies.

Higgins Lake provides excellent swimming, boating, and fishing. Fishermen fish the lake for perch, trout, and bass in the summer and the ice fishermen try for these species as well as pike. It is a deep, clear, blue, cool water lake and is ranked

as the tenth largest in the State. The AuSable River is fifteen miles to the North and its South Branch runs through the Village of Roscommon just five miles to the East. These waters are renowned for trout fishing.

The winter months also have a great deal to offer the sportsman. Higgins Lake and the surrounding area provide ice fishing, snowmobiling and skiing.

The area also attracts deer, turkey, partridge, grouse and rabbit hunters. Birders from around the world come for a chance to see or hear the famous Kirtland Warblers in the spring. Our many eagle and osprey as well as 53 reported species of birds attract birders throughout the year as well.

The extensive amount of state land in the Township provides many opportunities for visitors and residents to explore the wooded areas for wildflowers, ferns, trees and natural habitats of mammals and birds.

The loggers first settled in Roscommon County in the mid-nineteenth century. When the forests were cleared, the population ebbed until 1970 when a slow population growth began. Growth has continued to rise as more and more people have discovered the beauty and serenity of the area. It has been estimated that a 15% to 20% population growth will occur between now and 2015. The East Michigan Planning and Development Region used U.S. Census data to project Roscommon's growth. They found that Roscommon County is growing at a steady rate. In that study, Gerrish Township showed a 1.2% to 1.3% increase.

Other than the wonderful recreational opportunities provided by the adjacent waters, there is a shortage of other types of recreation such as playgrounds and play fields in Gerrish Township. This plan proposes to discuss the current nature and capacity of such facilities and to provide a viable plan for an orderly expansion of current facilities and the provision of additional facilities to include legal access to Higgins Lake to provide greater recreational enjoyment for our residents and visitors.

It is the intent of Gerrish Township to use this plan as a guide for the provision of public recreational services in the Township. This plan is not an attempt to be all-inclusive, but rather to establish parameters from which logical public development can take place. It is the intent of this plan to be flexible and to accommodate both active and passive recreational facilities. This document establishes recreational goals for the Township, reviews the condition of existing programs, and establishes a program for future improvements.

It must be remembered that although the local population is small, tourism generates over 100,000 people in the summer season in the Higgins Lake area. In addition, as a result of snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, ice fishing and other related winter sports, tourism and recreation for local residents are of paramount importance.

The strategy for providing recreational facilities and services has been formulated through the analysis of those needs

that surfaced through public meetings and a comprehensive review of the present facilities available. Therefore, this document was accepted by the Gerrish Township Board and is submitted for review as the **GERRISH TOWNSHIP RECREATIONAL PLAN 2008.**

CHAPTER I

CHARACTERISTICS

OF THE

POPULATION

INTRODUCTION

The population of Gerrish Township is fluid especially if our visitors are considered. This transient population should be included in any study of the recreational needs of this area. These visitors provide a significant contribution to the commercial enterprises of the area. We acknowledge this influence as a major factor in Gerrish Township's financial well-being. Therefore, this study of the population of Gerrish Township will consider both the permanent residents as well as the transients. For the purposes of this study, these "visitors" are divided into two groups. One group is comprised of true vacationers who do not own a residence in this area. These persons normally camp in one of the two State parks, rent a cottage, or stay with friends in the area. The other group includes those who have a cottage or summer home here. These people may either spend the entire summer here or just weekends with, perhaps, a two or three week vacation at their summer place.

#### The Permanent Population

The newest population estimate for Gerrish Township shows it growing faster than the county as a whole. The current US Census' "Sub-County Population Sets" shows the Township growing by 94 persons or 3.5% from 2000 - 2006. Using the US Census' newest county-wide population estimates, released July 2008, the County is growing only at 0.2% from 2000 - 2007. Because of these new numbers, East Central Michigan Planning and Development Region now predicts a 2% to 5% population growth for Roscommon

County between 2000 and 2015, with Gerrish Township double that.

What is important, especially in planning for recreation needs for the permanent residents is that much of the growth is in the older age segments, while youth segments are leaving. In 2000, the median age was 48 years. In 2010 Census, this number will likely be higher.

County-wide, Roscommon County is losing the youth and young working age groups. The 2010 Census will tell if this is the case in Gerrish Township.

Just released, August 2008, US Census age-segment estimates for **Roscommon County** are below. This may also give an indication to how the Township is changing...

**Roscommon County Major Age Segments \***

<b>Age Segment</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>Change</b>
Children (0 to 19 years)	5,666	5,154	-512
Young Working Age (20-39 years)	4,471	5,478	1,007
Older Working Age (40 to 64 years)	9,278	8,497	-781
Seniors (65 years plus)	6,054	6,388	334

**\* Source: Missouri Census Center; "Population Estimates for MI April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007" Compiled: K. TenWolde, East Central MI Planning & Development Region**

Fourth Friday counts taken September, 2007, for the Gerrish-Higgins School system showed the count to be 1,688 children. The reduction in those aged 15 to 29 may be attributed, in part, to the scarcity of attractive employment opportunities for our wage earners who are permanent residents. A contributing factor to the growth in the number of retired citizens is the attraction

to this area by lower cost housing, less stressful living, and attractive recreational facilities.

The predominant group of our approximate 3072 permanent residents is in the age group of 30 to 65 with significant growth in the numbers of early retirees. (Our population is a low estimate since we currently have 2649 registered active voters compared to approximately 1500 in 1990 when the U.S. Census showed a population of 2421 for Gerrish Township.) Fourth Friday counts taken September, 2007, for the Gerrish-Higgins School system showed the count to be 1,688 children. With no other current data, further speculation for the younger age group is difficult although these figures show a 3.4% increase for the ten year period. An even greater growth of 50% in the age group of 45 to 65 is indicated. The reduction in those aged 15 to 29 may be attributed, in part, to the scarcity of attractive employment opportunities for our wage earners who are permanent residents. A contributing factor to the growth in the number of early-retired citizens is the attraction to this area by lower cost housing, less stressful living, and attractive recreational facilities.

The 2000 Township Census indicated 2,584 of the population over 15 years of age. Of the 3,072 counted, 1,245 were 18 years or older females. In Roscommon County, 50.8% of the County population was female.

The 2000 Census indicated that 41.3 percent, 3,178, of the non-institutionalized disabled person's ages 21 to 64 years are

employed. Roscommon County is home to 3,973 civilian veterans and has two VFW posts.

Visitors are a group of significant importance since it is estimated that our summer population was at 16,000 in 1990 and for 2000, it was estimated to be approximately 23,000.

#### INCOME

In 2000 the US Census, Gerrish Township enjoyed a significantly higher income than did the county as a whole. Every indication this trend still holds true: Below are the 2000 US Census figures indicating the 1999 income for:

2000 US Census	Roscommon County	Gerrish Township
Median Household Income	\$30,029	\$37,147
Median Family Income	\$35,757	\$46,469
Per Capita Income	\$17,837	\$19,877
Families in Poverty (%)	8.6	5.1
Persons in Poverty(%)	12.4	6.8

Compiled by: K. TenWolde: East Central MI Planning & Development Region

One fact reported in the 2000 census indicates that approximately 7,931 of the county's residents are on a fixed income such as pensions and Social Security. Due to the steady influx of retirees, that percentage has probably risen since 2000.

#### RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS

The 2000 Census reported the following minority composition for the County:

White	24,956
Black	82
American Indian	162
Japanese	2
Chinese	4

Filipino	14
Korean	10
Vietnamese	2
Asian	64
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	17

No figures are readily available for the breakdown in Gerrish Township.

#### LABOR FORCE

Approximately 2% of the residents of Gerrish Township, 49 persons, are unemployed.

The majority of those employed are in the construction and tourist driven activities. There is minimal industry in the area thus the number of Township residents employed in industry is insignificant. We are, largely, dependent upon tourism for the support of our labor force. The Township unemployment rate closely mirrors the County's which in 2008 is showing a marked increase than in previous years. According to the MI Department of Labor and Economic Growth:

#### Roscommon County Unemployment:

- 2006 = 10.1%
- 2007 = 9.6%
- First 7 months of 2008 = 11.4%

#### POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR RECREATION USEAGE

The number of residences and cottages in Gerrish Township now total 3334. There are 90 commercial establishments in the Township.

South Higgins Lake State Park provides 400 campsites that are usually full every summer weekend. We know of no plans to expand the number of campsites at the South State Park.

If we arbitrarily calculate 2.5 persons for every South State Park campsite and 3.5 persons per residence or cottage, the Township should theoretically have summer recreational facilities for 12,462 persons.

With the continual growth according to the East Central Michigan Planning and Development group and the closing of the road ends as recreational areas, we need to be looking for new recreational avenues and means to provide legal access for boaters.

Projections indicate the Township's recreational facilities and neighboring areas should be preparing to handle a larger number of people. The need in the winter months is not nearly as high due to the number of retirees who winter elsewhere.

#### TRANSPORTATION

Residents and visitors to Gerrish Township rely primarily on private vehicles for transportation. No private taxis are available. A county subsidized mini bus is available for a fee.

The Census indicated that the 16 years and over workforce used personal cars, trucks, or vans as their transportation to and from work. The census also indicated that 4,709 people drove alone to work and that 76 used carpools. At-home workers and people who walked to work numbered 576.

## CHAPTER II

### LAND USE PATTERNS

## INTRODUCTION

It is important to locate recreational facilities where the people are. Gerrish Township is unique due to the lack of any real business or industrial sections. The consideration of business district parks may, therefore, be disregarded. This portion of the study will be concerned with existing and proposed land use patterns as a guide to the location of current and additional recreational facilities.

## EXISTING LAND USE

Roscommon County is comprised of 65% State owned land. There is a possibility that some of these lands will become privately and/or governmentally owned but in an insignificant amount.

Approximately twenty-five percent of the Gerrish Township area is Higgins Lake. 6,582.33 acres in Gerrish Township are State owned which is approximately 38% of the land in the Township.







## TOPOGRAPHY, SOIL AND CLIMATE

The topography of the County is the result of extensive glaciating. Elevations range from approximately 900 feet to 1300 feet above sea level. The soil is primarily sand with isolated pockets of clay deposits.

The chief climatic features are a mean annual temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit; a normal precipitation, including melted snow, of about 30 inches; an average annual snowfall of about 75 inches; low wind movement; low evaporation; low percentage of possible sunshine; and moderately high humidity. The amount of evaporation from the lakes is about equal to the annual precipitation of approximately 27 inches.

Winters are long as temperatures below freezing prevail from November to March with occasional below freezing temperatures expected in September, October, April, and May. The summers are characterized by high percentages of sunshine and moderate temperatures. The average summer temperature is 73 degrees Fahrenheit with temperatures reaching into the 90's at times.

The climate is conducive to winter sports and summer recreation for the entire area.

## WATER RESOURCES

Roscommon County is situated in the central highland region of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan on the surface water divide between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Because of this position in the headwaters region of the Muskegon and AuSable Rivers, the severity and frequency of flooding is much less than along the downstream portions of the rivers. In addition, the geologic and soil conditions in this area favor the storage of water and provide better than average ground water reservoirs. Throughout the county, glacial deposits generally yield groundwater in excess of 500 gallons per minute. The quantity of glacial groundwater available at relatively shallow depths makes this the primary source for domestic water in the county and is a definite asset for future development.

The extent of surface water resources has been the most important contributing factor towards the development of the county as a major recreational area. With proper management and protection against misuse and pollution, the surface and ground waters will continue to be a major natural resource asset of the county and the Township of Gerrish.

CHAPTER III

EXISTING PARKS

AND

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

SIZE AND LOCATION OF  
EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

1. Gerrish Township Park is on the northeast shore of Higgins Lake. It is slightly less than one acre in size. It is heavily treed except for the beach area. The beach has about 400 feet of waterfront.

The park has:

- \*9 picnic tables
- \*1 Gazebo
- \*Universal accessible boardwalk to the Gazebo
- \*4 barbecue grills
- \*Bath house with two flush restrooms not universally accessible. Changing stations are provided in both the Men's and Women's restrooms.
- \*Universal accessible portable restroom rented for summer
- \*Swing/play set
- \* Bike rack
- \* Tether ball
- \*1 drinking fountain
- \*1 volleyball area
- \*1 picnic area
- \*Benches
- \*Paved parking area with universal parking area

Access is via a paved road. During summer weekends, parking is overcrowded which makes it difficult for latecomers to visit the park.

2. Town Hall Park is adjacent to the Gerrish Township Hall and the Police Building that is located on 20 acres. This park has:

- \*1 baseball diamond
- \*2 cement tennis courts. (A liner covers the courts during the winter months to provide a skating rink, weather permitting.)
- \*1 basketball court
- \*1 football/soccer field
- \*1 slide/play set
- \*2 swing sets with 5 swings
- \*3 large tires for climbing
- \*1 tetherball
- \*1 outdoor seasonal ice skating rink
- \*Pavilion, universal accessible, with 6 picnic tables and 2 grills
- \*A portable restroom is provided from May through October.
- \*Township Hall restrooms universal accessible.

The Township Hall's paved parking lot provides adequate parking with universal parking areas.

The entrance to the East Walking Trail is off the Police Parking lot.

3. 20 acres on the Westside of the Township obtained to be developed into a Park. Preliminary clearing of the land for projected use has been completed.

4. Kelly Beach is an area many swimmers use during the summer months. The beach area is actually the roadway of Grosbeak Avenue that runs along the shore. There is a problem with parking at this location due to the fact that parking is not permitted within two blocks. This restriction is necessary to avoid the road congestion that would occur if unlimited parking were permitted. There are no restroom facilities at the present time.

Negotiations Are ongoing with the Roscommon County Road Commission to develop a plan/agreement so that the Township may regulate activities at this location and so that the Township could provide restroom and garbage amenities.

5. South State Park is one of the finest parks in the State. The park is operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. It provides:

- \*Boat launch

- \*Beach

- \*Campsites

- \*Play area with:

  - 1 slide

1 swing set

1 carousel

\*2 large parking lots for boat trailers and their tow vehicles

\*Walking trails

\*Pavilion with grills

\*Store

6. Marl Lake is directly across East Higgins Lake Drive from the South State Park and is under the jurisdiction of the DNR. Marl Lake is completely encircled by State owned land. It provides:

\*1 class I boat launch facility (no motors)

\*Wild life viewing area

\*Marked nature trails/walking and bike

\*Paved parking

(Public restroom facilities)

7. There are 49 roads that end at Higgins Lake in Gerrish Township. They provide varying degrees of ingress and egress to the lake. All other activities are now prohibited.

8. DNR Cross Country Ski Trail (across from Cross Country Ski Headquarters, County Road 100) that may be used for walking trails in the summer.

9. Roscommon Elementary School, County Road 100
  - \*2 slides
  - \*1 play area apparatus
  - \*2 baseball diamonds
  - \*Various climbing/play structures
  
10. Five soccer fields, Pinewood off County Road 101.
  
11. Gerrish-Higgins Schools
  - \*1 running track
  - \*2 sand volleyball courts
  - \*3 gymnasiums
  - \*1 outdoor drinking fountain
  - \*1 football field

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Gerrish Township Park and the Town Hall Park have been evaluated for universal accessibility. The pavilion at the Town Hall Park is wheelchair accessible. Universal accessible restroom facilities are available at the adjacent Township Hall. The Township budget line item **408-751-976-0** Parks and Recreation Bldg/Grounds will secure an universal accessible picnic table for the pavilion to accompany the other three tables currently in place. All other facilities are accessible.

An extensive survey at the Gerrish Township Park has determined several areas of deficiency. The current bathhouse is circa 1930 and is not compliant. A portable universal accessible restroom/changing room is rented for the months the Park is open. Universal accessible picnic tables and grills have been purchased. The Recreation Committee has designed the necessary pathways to insure that the picnic area/beach area is accessible. The parking area is a paved facility with designated universal accessible parking.

There are currently no programs at either the Town Hall Park or Gerrish Township Park to be assessed for accessibility.

At the present time, Kelly Beach and the road ends are not Township controlled areas. There is no parking, restroom facilities, or picnic facilities to evaluate.

The South State Park and Marl Lake are under the jurisdiction of the DNR. Compliance would be out of our control

as would facilities at the Roscommon Elementary School, High School and the two soccer fields.

PRIVATE FACILITIES IN GERRISH TOWNSHIP:

1. Family Campground, County Road 100
  - \*1 full basketball court
  - \*1 tetherball
  - \*1 horseshoe court
  - \*4 play areas/apparatus
  - \*1 grass volleyball court
  - \*1 picnic shelter
  - \*6 picnic tables
  - \*1 flush restroom
  - \*Unpaved trails
  - \*60 campsites
2. Ye Old Country Club, County Road 100 just east of I-75 overpass
  - \*9 holes
3. Cross Country Ski Headquarters, 9435 County Road 100, north of Robinson Lake Road (County Road 103)
  - \*1 warming hut
  - \*1 ski rental/sales facility
  - \*1 parking lot with access to DNR ski trails across the road
4. Great Circle Camp Ground, County Road 104 and Marl Lake Road
  - \*Campsites

\*playground

5. Higgins Lake Boat Yard, County Road 200
  - \*1 boat launch
  - \*1 sales/service building
6. Old Point Comfort Marine Sales and Service, County Road 200
  - \*6 sales/service/storage buildings
7. Pioneer Hill, County Road 100 at County Road 101
  - \*Sledding
8. Pioneer Hills Marine
  - \*4 buildings for sales/service/storage
9. Tee-Pee Restaurant/Motel and Campground, M-76
10. Higgins Lake Boat Club, Treasure Island Association,  
Treasure Island, Higgins Lake
  - \*Sailing regatta
  - \*Swimming/sailing lessons
11. Trappers Restaurant - currently not open
12. Pine Pantry - currently not open
13. Timbers Restaurant
14. Northwinds Motel
15. Wooden Treasures
16. Nibbles
17. Yorty's Antiques
18. Light House Gifts
19. Arcade



RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

1. DNR, County Road 100, Section 34, Markey Twp  
\*3.87 acres - public access site to Houghton Lake
2. DNR, Old 27, Section 34, Lake Twp.  
\*2 acres - public access site to Houghton Lake
3. Burning Oaks Golf Course, Lansing Road, Section 10, and Markey Township.  
\*18 hole course
4. Pine View Golf Course, M-55, Section 09, Roscommon Township  
\*18 hole course
5. The Quest, Old 27, Section 03, Roscommon Twp.  
18 hole course
6. White Deer Country Club, M-55, Section 14, Denton Township  
18 hole course
7. Markey Township Park, County Rd 100, Section 28, Markey Township  
30 acres-
  - \*3 sets of swings
  - \*1 tennis court
  - \*1 slide
  - \*1 merry-go-round
  - \*1 basketball hoop
  - \*1 set riding animals
  - \*swinging gates
  - \*6 grills
  - \*12 tables

- \*1 large swing
  - \*1 shuffleboard court
  - \*Soccer fields under construction
8. County Road 100 Park, County Rd 100, Section 2, Denton Twp.  
20 acres
- \*Ball field with bleachers
  - \*4 soccer fields
9. Michigan State Park, County Rd 300, Section 11, Lake Twp.
- \*50 primitive campsites on Houghton Lake
10. Lyon Township Park, Old 27
- \*Ice skating rink
  - \*Baseball diamond
  - \*Hiking/cross country ski trails
  - \*Walking trails
  - \*Pavilion
  - \*Picnic tables/grills
  - \*Toddler swings/play area
11. Wallace Park, M-18, Village of Roscommon, ½ acre
- \*Timber pavilion
12. Roscommon Village Metro Park, Village of Roscommon, 8 acres
- \*3 Ball diamonds
  - \*Tot lot
  - \*4 tennis courts, 2 asphalt and 2 concrete
  - \*Full size basketball court
  - \*2 enclosed bathrooms, barrier free
  - \*Nature trails/walking

13. Fireman's Memorial Park, off of M-18 on Robinson Lake Road  
4 acres
  - \*Small playground
  - \*Rest rooms
  - \*Walk-through artifact site of fire equipment and memorabilia
14. Fairgrounds, Village of Roscommon, 20 acres
  - \*Restrooms
  - \*80 picnic tables
  - \*Various public functions including County Fair, Fourth of July fireworks and Fireman's Memorial celebration
15. Community Center, Village of Roscommon, 2 ½ acres
  - \*Public building with various recreational activities to include cards, bingo, dance, arts and crafts, walking, croquet, ball playing and horseshoes.
16. CRAF Center, Village of Roscommon
  - \*Full basketball courts
  - \*Fully equipment weight rooms and work out rooms
17. Two privately owned canoe liveries on the outskirts of the Village of Roscommon
18. Start of maintained snowmobile trails in Village of Roscommon
19. 4-H sponsors basketball at Gerrish-Higgins Middle School and a summer sports program.
20. Camp Westminster, Lyon Township, N. Higgins Lake Drive
  - \*Summer camping opportunities

21. McMillan Center, Lyon Township, N. Higgins Lake Drive
  - \*Conference center
  - \*Shooting range
  - \*Beach
22. North State Park, Beaver Creek, N. Higgins Lake Drive
  - \*Campsites
  - \*Beach
  - \*Hiking/cross country ski trails
  - \*Snowmobile trails
23. American Veteran's Legion Park, Lyon Township
  - \*Beach
  - \*Swing
  - \*Picnic tables
  - \*Building
24. Phoenix Park, Lyon Township, Phoenix Avenue
  - \*Swings
  - \*Picnic tables
  - \*Beach
  - \*Bathhouse
25. Skyline, Beaver Creek
  - \*Downhill skiing
  - \*18 hole golf course
26. Gahagan Nature Center, Southline Road, Roscommon, universal accessible
  - \*Nature trails/walking
  - \*Indoor nature display

27. Fox Run, Beaver Creek, 4 Mile Road
  - \*18 hole golf course
28. Tisdale DNR, Tisdale Avenue, Village of Roscommon
  - \*hiking/cross country ski trails
  - \*snowmobile trails
29. Hanson Hills, Military Road, Grayling
  - \*Downhill skiing
  - \*Ski and Snowshoe Trail system
  - \*Lodge with changing rooms, warming area and waxing benches
30. Hartwick Pines State Park, North Down River Road, Grayling
  - \*Cross country ski trails and mountain bike trails
  - \*Walking trails
  - \*Visitor center
31. Higgins Hill, M-76, Beaver Creek
  - \*Snowshoe trails/walking trails
  - \*98 campsites
  - \*Planned recreational activities and playground
32. DNR Launch site, Section. 10, Lyon Township, W. Higgins Lake Drive
  - \*Launch site
  - \*Parking lot
  - \*Restroom
  - \*Additional parking across road
33. Lyon Township Park, Sam-O-Set and Bismark Blvd., Lyon Township

- \*Swings
- \*Picnic Tables
- \*Slide
- \*Teeter-totter
- \*Beach

34. Denton Tennis Courts, Section 15, Across from Prudenville Elementary School near Peach Tree

- \*Tennis courts
- \*Practice wall

35. Denton Soccer Fields, County Road 100

36. Denton Pavilion, County Road 100

- \*Picnic tables

37. Denton Township Lakeside Park, Lake Street

- \*Benches
- \* Picnic tables

38. Roscommon Township Tennis Courts, S. Townline Road, near Houghton Lake Senior Citizens Building, Section 18, Denton Township

- \*Tennis courts

39. Roscommon Township Lakeside Park, Townline Road at M-55

- \*Benches
- \*Picnic tables

40. Gazebo, old 27 north of M-55

- \*Viewing area for osprey nests and other water birds

41. The Fox Golf Course, Flint Road, Markey Twp

- \*18 hole course

## LAKES AND RIVERS IN GERRISH TOWNSHIP

There are two lakes in Gerrish Township, Higgins Lake and Marl Lake. There also is the Cut River so named because it was man made in the logging days to connect Higgins Lake with Houghton Lake to the south so that logs could be floated south to begin their trip to the lumber mills in Muskegon.

Higgins Lake is, by far, the larger of the two lakes. It occupies 10,317 acres and is 141 feet deep in places. Its shore is almost completely developed with homes, cottages, and marinas. It has two wetland areas that should be protected from development. They are the Baton and Hiedeman Marshes.

Marl Lake, by contrast, is small and shallow. Its bottom is muddy and weeded. The shore properties are all owned by the State of Michigan. Marl Lake is an adjunct to South Higgins Lake State Park. It provides rustic camping on its East shore and an access site on its west side. This lake also contains fish but it pales in comparison with Higgins Lake. Due to its muddy bottom, it is not a popular lake for swimming.

CHAPTER IV

THE

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

## INTRODUCTION

This presentation has discussed the population, land use, and recreation facilities in the Township of Gerrish. Other concepts must be discussed and defined prior to the actual plan formulation. These include parks and recreation goals as well as an identification of the deficiencies in the existing parks and recreation program.

## GOALS

Goals outlined have been defined as hopefully workable compromises to serve the Township residents as well as our tourists.

1. Improve our park system so that it may better serve all those who currently use it and attract those who do not use it at this time.

2. Provide improved recreational facilities with universal access and programs for all segments of the population, young and old, and including persons with universal needs.

- a. More and better playground equipment for children.
- b. Athletic areas.
- c. Increase walking opportunities in natural settings.
- d. Improve public awareness regarding the availability and nature of the recreation facilities.
- e. Better access to recreational facilities for persons with universal needs.

3. Preservation of natural resources.

4. Purchase the Higgins Lake Boat Yard in order to give recreation opportunities and access to all who wish to use Higgins Lake. The new name would be, Gerrish Community Park with the following features;

- a. A youth fishing pier to promote enthusiasm for fishing.
- b. Bird watching opportunities; loons, ducks, bald eagles, geese, etc.
- c. Swimming classes to be held in the spring.
- d. Hunters safety classes to be held by a certified instructor in the purposed meeting room.
- e. Ice fishing and snowmobile access at the launch site (parking lot will be maintained and open all winter).
- f. Family picnic and playground area.
- g. Launch site for day use.
- h. Free mooring of the County Law enforcement boat
- i. Boaters' safety and snowmobile classes to be held annually and taught by state certified instructors in the purposed meeting room.

5. Gerrish Township Lake Access Plan - An overall plan for the implementation of a comprehensive Township Vision for legal access to Higgins Lake. The partners' cooperation required to implement this Plan include the Roscommon County Road Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Quality, Lyon Township Board, and the Gerrish Township Board

- a. Community Park as indicated in 4. above
  - i. Dock
  - ii. Ramp
  - iii. 140 Hoists

- iv. Swimming area
  - v. 150 parking spaces
  - vi. Pavilion
  - vii. Restrooms
  - viii. Trash receptacles
  - ix. Boat wash
  - x. Police patrol
  - xi. Control ordinance
- b. Gerrish Township Park
- i. Dock
  - ii. 60 hoists
  - iii. Beach area
  - iv. Swimming area
  - v. 25 parking spaces
  - vi. Pavilion
  - vii. Restrooms
  - viii. Trash receptacles
  - ix. Police patrol
  - x. Control Ordinance
- c. Grosbeak/Kelly Beach
- i. Dock
  - ii. Ramp
  - iii. Beach area
  - iv. Swimming area
  - v. Restrooms (portable)
  - vi. Trash receptacles

- vii. Police patrol
- viii. Control Ordinance
- d. South Park (eastern end of South State Park)
  - i. Dock
  - ii. Ramp
  - iii. 80 hoists
  - iv. 60 parking spaces
  - v. Restrooms
  - vi. Trash receptacles
  - vii. Boat wash
- e. Maplehurst Drive
  - i. Dock
  - ii. Ramp
  - iii. Beach area
  - iv. 20 parking spaces
  - v. Restroom (portable)
  - vi. Trash receptacles
  - vii. Police patrol
  - viii. Control Ordinance
- f. Hitchcock/Burdell Road
  - i. Dock
  - ii. Ramp
  - iii. Beach area
  - iv. 10 parking spaces
  - v. Trash receptacles
  - vi. Police patrol

vii. Control Ordinance

6. A Regional Trailway - a seamless path connecting Counties and regions.

i. Main Trailway around Higgins Lake

ii. Trailway branch going past the Gerrish Higgins schools on Sunset Drive and into the Village of Roscommon

iii. Trailway connector heading north and connecting to the Crawford County Trailway system

DEFICIENCIES

There are many deficiencies in our current recreation facilities. Items that immediately come to mind are:

1. Inadequate universal accessibility in several of the sites.
2. Inadequate parking at the northeast Gerrish Township Park.
3. Lack of park facilities on the west side of the lake.
4. Lack of safe walking/biking/rollerblading paths/trails.
5. Lack of general knowledge of available recreational facilities/opportunities
6. Lack of lake access to the general public.

## PROCESS

- A) Clerk, Norma Lee Boyle, and Treasurer, Rebecca Ragan, appointed co-chairmen at the regular Gerrish Township Board meeting on November 9, 1999.
- B) Assessor, Cheryl Gillman, volunteered to be a member of the committee.
- C) Preliminary recreation plan as proposed by recreation committee in 1995 updated.
- D) Display ad placed in Roscommon Herald News on Sunday, December 12, 1999, soliciting help of residents.
- E) Announced at regular meeting December 14, 1999, for resident participation.
- F) First meeting held Wednesday, December 15, 1999, 10:00 a.m. at Township Hall. Present: Norma Boyle, Gerrish Township Clerk, Co-Chairman; Rebecca Ragan, Treasurer, Co-Chairman; Cheryl Gillman, Assessor; Ralph Desloover, Fire Chief; Barb Stauffer, Crawford-Roscommon Conservation District; Liz Wade, Higgins Lake Advisory Committee; Jean Lawrence, resident; Ann Schauer, resident.
- G) An article in the Roscommon Herald News on Sunday, January 16, 2000, soliciting comments on the proposed Recreation Plan. Written comments to be received by Co-Chairmen Norma Lee Boyle and Rebecca Ragan or verbal comments received at second meeting on Wednesday, February 9, 2000, 10:00 a.m.
- H) Second meeting held Wednesday, February 9, 2000, 10:00 a.m. Published in the Roscommon County Herald-News January 30, 2000. Announced at the regular Gerrish Township Board meeting on Tuesday, January 11, 2000 and Tuesday, February 8, 2000. Public invited to review and comment on proposed plan.
- Present at the second meeting were: Norma Lee Boyle, Co-Chairman; Rebecca Ragan, Co-Chairman; Cheryl Gillman, member; William Case, Higgins Lake Property Owners Association and Higgins Lake Foundation; Ralph Desloover, Gerrish Township Recreation Committee member; and Phillip J. Cadieux, Maxine Graff, Neil Cantley, Barbara Cantley, Jean Lawrence, Dolores Buckley, all residents.
- Changes made to the original draft based on input from numerous residents who had written and/or sent verbal input via those present.
- I) On July 13, 2004, the Board authorized the formation of a

committee to investigate establishing a Park/Marina on the Lake in an effort to find other options for those boaters who have been displaced due to the recent court cases. Volunteers requested and resulted in Wally Chwan, Co-Chairman; Rick Meeks; Tom Koscinski, Chairman; Rebecca Ragan; Art Schauer; and Frank Homola. Name chosen for the committee is Lake Access Committee.

J) On June 14, 2005, the Board established the Marina Steering Committee to discuss the anticipated required steps and/or requirements to secure and apply for a grant for securing a marina site. The members: Supervisor Gaylor, Treasurer Ragan, and Lake Access Committee members Wally Chwan and Rick Meeks.

K) On June 27, 2005, the Board authorized upon recommendation of the Lake Access Committee payment of \$1.00 for rental of property for off-site parking for the South State Park to allow residents to launch their boats and then take their vehicles and trailers to the off-site parking lot and/or home.

L) Upon recommendation of the Lake Access Committee, preliminary contact was made with the owners of the property currently referred to as the Higgins Lake Boat Yard as to their willingness to sell their property to the Township.

M) Notice in the Roscommon County Herald-News, Sunday, July 10, 2005, regarding a Public Hearing to receive input from citizens regarding the application by the Township for a Department of Natural Resources Grant to acquire land to develop a boat launch and marina on the property currently called the Higgins Lake Boat Yard.

N) The Recreation Plan committee revised the Gerrish Township Recreation Plan to update the current Plan and to include the development of a boat launch and marina based on the positive results from the Public Hearing.

O) Notice appeared in the Roscommon Herald News on Sunday, July 31, 2005, indicating the Gerrish Township Recreation Plan 2005 was available for review for thirty (30) days at the Township office.

P) Notice of a Public Hearing to hear comments on the proposed Recreation Plan 2005 appeared in the Roscommon Herald news on Sunday, August 14, 2005.

Q) Notice of the scheduled Public Hearing was posted at the Gerrish Township Hall on Friday, August 5, 2005.

R) Notice of the scheduled Public Hearing appeared on the Gerrish Township Website on Wednesday, July 27, 2005.

- S) Public Hearing on the Gerrish Township Recreation Plan 2005 was held on Tuesday, August 30, 2005. The Board passed a Resolution approving the Recreation Plan 2005 based on the positive response received from citizens regarding the addition of a proposed boat launch and marina to the Plan.
- T) Trustee Ostling began preparation of the draft of the Lake Access Master Plan for Gerrish Township in February, 2008, in an effort to provide legal access to Higgins Lake for additional property owners and visitors.
- U) Post public meeting held Tuesday, May 20, 2008, 6:00 p.m. for presentation of the Lake Access Master Plan. 53 residents present. Trustee Ostling answered questions regarding the Plan.
- V) Post Monday, October 6, 2008, that Recreation Plan 2008 available for review
- W) Notice in Houghton Lake Resorter, Thursday, October 9, 2008, that Recreation Plan 2008 available for review.
- X) October 6, 2008, Recreation Plan 2008 posted on Gerrish Township website.
- Y) October 6, 2008, notice posted at Gerrish Township Hall
- Z) Notice of pending Public Hearing posted October 28, 2008, at Township Hall
- AA) Notice of pending Public Hearing posted on website on October 9, 2008
- BB) Notice of such Public Hearing in Houghton Lake Resorter, Thursday, November 6, 2008
- CC) Public Hearing held Monday, November 10, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

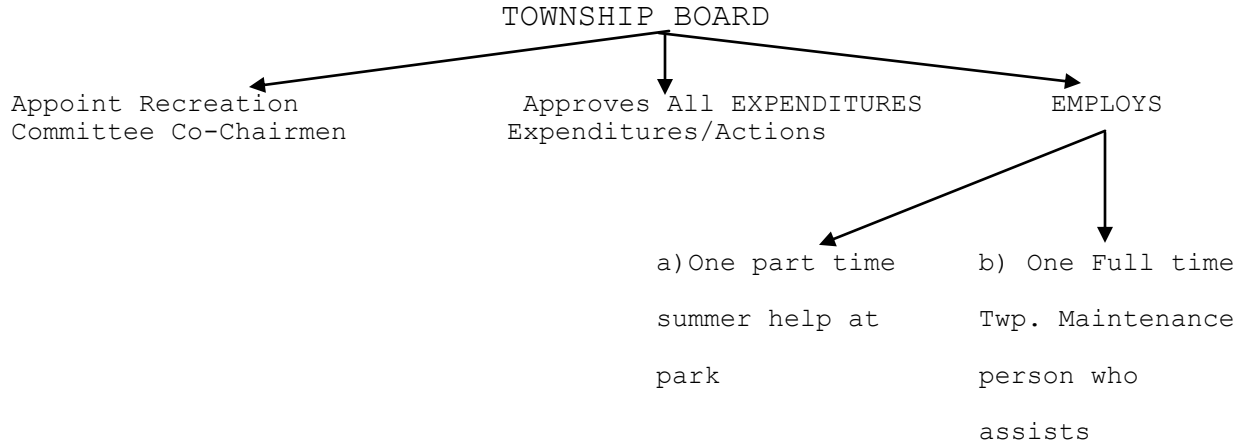
# CHAPTER V

## THE PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The Recreation Plan Committee has determined a five (5) year plan of expectations for the Township to partially correct the perceived deficiencies in the current recreational facilities in the Township is needed.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE CHART



The Gerrish Township Board is comprised of five (5) elected officials who ultimately control all expenditures and activities which are Township related. The Board does work in conjunction with the Roscommon County Road Commission for non-county road improvements.

A Board member or employee who wishes to implement a plan and/or program must first present such to the Board. A simple majority vote approval is required to proceed. Expenditures associated with the project would need prior approval. Budget line items would be identified for expenditures.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

1. Norma Lee Boyle and Rebecca Ragan appointed by Gerrish Township Board as Co-Chairman of the Recreation Plan Committee.
2. Budget line items 408-751, PARKS AND RECREATION.

Proposed 2008-2009 Budget:

408-751-703-0 EMPLOYEES PAYROLL	\$7,100.00
408-751-715-0 PAYROLL TAXES	550.00
408-751-719-0 MILEAGE	250.00
408-751-775-0 MAINTENANCE SUPPLIES	700.00
408-751-775-1 MAINT. SUPPLES - DURABLE	1,000.00
408-751-796-0 ICE RINK/TENNIS COURTS	300.00
408-751-810-0 TRAIL COMMITTEE	500.00
408-751-853-0 TELEPHONE	150.00
408-751-910-0 INSURANCE	150.00
408-751-920-0 UTILITIES	350.00
408-751-956-0 MISC	200.00
408-751-976-0 BUILDING & GROUNDS	5,000.00
408-751-999-0 CONTINGENCY	<u>15,201.14</u>
PARKS & RECREATION	\$31,451.14

3. Resident volunteers solicited for two years for spring clean up with supervision by Park Attendant at the Gerrish Township Park. Practice to be continued.
4. County inmates used for heavy maintenance work and clean up at Gerrish Township Park. Practice to be continued.
5. No parks and recreation director.
6. No legally established parks and recreation commission or

advisory board.

7. No formal relationship with schools but elementary, middle and high schools are all within Township boundaries. Their outdoor facilities are open to the public.

8. State Park and Marl Lake available to the Public via daily entry fee or yearly State pass.

9. The Township Receptionist/Secretary is responsible for composing and updating the Gerrish Township Recreation Year Around flyer. Public facilities, public recreation sites and private recreation sites are listed with addresses and their locations indicated on the included map. The flyer is available to visitors to the Township Hall in the wall display near the entrance.

10. No plans of expected change in any of the above areas in the near future.

GOALS (5 YEAR TIME LINE)

1. Purchase by way of a DNR Grant and a bond, the Higgins Lake Boat Yard.
2. Develop the Westside Park
  - a) Tennis courts and practice wall
  - b) Playground area
  - c) Basketball area
  - d) Ball park/kick ball area
  - e) Walking trails/bike trails/roller blade
  - f) Pavilion
  - g) Grills and tables
3. Enlarge parking facilities at Gerrish Township Park.
4. Continue updating our recreational pamphlet.
5. Regional Trailway system
6. Develop the marina for boating needs.
7. Fill cracks and resurface with rubber coating the tennis courts.
8. Swimming lessons
9. Implement the Lake Access Master Plan

Universal accessibility will be a key design component to all improvements and new construction.

The Recreation Plan Committee has attempted to keep goals within limits of Township budget expenditures while meeting the needs of the residents and the desire to attract tourists to the area to further the economic health of the Township.

TIME LINE

**YEAR:**     1

**2**

**3**

Goal

#1 Apply for a  
DNR Grant

#6 Develop the marina  
for boating use

#2 Develop a  
Westside park

#5 Adopt Resolution  
Supporting Rotary's  
Feasibility study for  
Trailway

#8 Swimming lessons

#3 Enlarge  
parking at the  
Gerrish Park

#4 Update  
Recreational

#4 Update  
Recreational pamphlet

#4 Update  
Recreational  
pamphlet

#9 Seek co-opera-  
tion with RCRC  
DNR, State Park

#5 Continue work  
with Rotary on Trailway

#5 Continue  
work with  
Rotary on  
Trailway

#9 Apply for  
Marina permit for  
Gerrish Park,  
Community Park

#9 State Park area  
  
#9 Kelly Beach area -  
restroom and garbage  
Facilities

#7 Tennis  
Court repairs

**YEAR: 4**

Goal

#2 Continue to  
develop the Westside park

#5 Continue to work with  
Rotary on Trailway

#4 Update Recreational pamphlet

**-5-**

#9 Develop new activities  
at the Township marina

#5 Continue to work with  
Rotary on Trailway

#4 Update Recreational  
pamphlet

COSTS AND POSSIBLE SOURCES

ITEM	YEAR	COST	SOURCE
1. DNR Grant	2008	\$2,900,000.00	State of Michigan
2. Development of the Westside Park			
2a. Walking trails	2011	\$10,000	P & R Budget
2b. Ball park/kick ball	2011	\$2000	Grant/P&R budget
2c. Playground area	2012	\$10,000	P&R Budget
2d. Tables/Grills	2012	\$1000	P&R budget
2e. Interpretative trails	2013	\$500	Grant/P&R Budget
2f. Benches on walking trail	2013	\$500	P&R budget
2g. Tennis Court/practice wall	2013	\$50,000	P & R Budget
2h. Basketball area	2011	\$20,000	P & R Budget
2i. Pavilion	2012	\$40,000	P & R Budget
3. Parking facilities	2011	\$10,000	P & R Budget
4. Walking/bike/ rollerblade trails off Police Bldg. (hard surface) trails (asphalt)	2013	\$20,000	Donated help/ grant/P& R Budget
5. Pamphlet	yearly	\$200	Twp. Budget or P & R Budget
6. Develop marina	2010	\$750,000	P & R Budget
7. Tennis court repairs	2011	\$10,000	P & R Budget
8. Swimming lessons at Park	2011	-	4-H

Can be given through 4-H or MSU Extension. May cost \$1 - \$2 per child for insurance plus the cost of instructor but scholarships are available. No child in Roscommon County would go without lessons with benefit of scholarships. Transportation could be provided via mini-bus.

9. a) Marina permits - Gerrish

Park and Community Park	2009	\$1,000	P & R Budget
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b) State Park marina permit	2010	\$500	P & R Budget
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