

**WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP**

**RECREATION PLAN  
2006-2011**

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**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

**Sue Matsko**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this plan is to provide general guidance and direction to the Township and to non-profit or for-profit recreation providers concerning the current and future needs of West Traverse Township. In accomplishing this, the Recreation Plan for 2006-2011 should provide a solid foundation for future parks and recreation improvements.

The Recreation Committee of West Traverse Township wrote this plan using advice from many valuable resources, beginning with the taxpayers of this township. Other resources included HARBOR, Inc. which assists in providing collaboration amongst townships of the Harbor Springs school district.

Herein, recreation is viewed not only in terms of facilities and programs, but also in terms of educational opportunities relating to the natural environment found in West Traverse Township. This is in keeping with a gem that is located in and supported by this township in the name of The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. This facility exemplifies the best in the merging of recreation and education. For example, the hiking trails include information about the plant and animal life that reside in the various natural communities throughout which the walker/hiker wanders. Even the beach and dunes areas provide wonderful places to “recreate” on a weekend afternoon, but also contain written reminders as to how these special areas were originally formed. The Little Traverse Conservancy provides ongoing nature programs at this facility for children from multiple school districts in the area as well as programs offered for those visiting this region.

Our goal was to follow the pattern provided by our nature preserve and to apply it to other open spaces currently owned by West Traverse Township by combining healthful outdoor activities with opportunities for increased understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

West Traverse Township is located on the north shore of Little Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan in the northern Lower Peninsula. This township is bounded on its western side by Lake Michigan, on its northern side by Friendship Township, on its eastern side by Little Traverse Township, Pleasantview Township, and the city of Harbor Springs. The Harbor Point area which projects out into Little Traverse Bay from Harbor Springs is also a part of this township and is positioned in the southeast corner of West Traverse Township ( See Inset of West Traverse Township Parks Map, p.28)

While this is the smallest township in Michigan (about 16 square miles), it contains some of the most beautiful and diverse geographical and ecological lands in the state. For instance, West Traverse Township has 48,300 feet of Lake Michigan frontage, 5.5 miles of one of the state's most scenic highways, M-119, and 7,900 acres of land classified as vacant, woodlands, or farm.

The Lake Michigan frontage has been prime land for residential development since the early 1900's. Once those areas were no longer available, the next areas were forested and non-forested areas with scenic views of Little Traverse Bay. Now, residential sites are moving to areas that used to be farmed and that have no view of Lake Michigan. Many of the homes that had been built as "second or vacation homes" have become primary residences housing retirees.

In addition to residential areas, farming lands, and open spaces, this township also includes an industrial park and several golf courses showing a real diversity in land use. In the section titled "Goals and Objectives", land use data as well as socio-economic data pertinent to this township and this plan are presented in detail.

While this plan is prepared for West Traverse Township lands and its focus is derived from what the township residents have currently indicated are their needs and interests, it also incorporates data obtained from several surveys that involved neighboring townships as well. The West Traverse Township's Planning Commission Survey of 2005 has information relative to recreation and open space that is highlighted in the "Goals and Objectives" section of this plan. In addition, data was used from a reaction needs survey by HARBOR, INC. and information coming from the Emmet County Planning Commission, and a group looking at shared recreation facilities between Harbor Springs and Petoskey.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

An elected five member Township Board manages West Traverse Township. This Board directs all West Traverse Township operations and as such makes all determinations regarding recreation.

This Five Year Plan was prepared by a volunteer Recreation Committee appointed by the Township Board. It was reviewed by the West Traverse Township Planning Commission and then recommended to the Township Board. Upon approval, it became a part of the Master Plan that the Planning Commission maintains for this township.

The General Fund for this township finances approved operations, facilities maintenance and improvements, and capital development of recreational areas, parks and the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. For the last five years , \$38,000 has been set aside for parks and recreation. In addition to State Revenue Sharing and property tax collections, federal and state grants will become another source of possible revenues throughout this five-year plan.

West Traverse Township has a unique connection with The Little Traverse Conservancy through The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. This is a tract of land in West Traverse Township with Lake Michigan frontage generously donated to the Conservancy but with the stipulation that it be developed into a Nature Center and be accessible with no fees to the residents of West Traverse Township. The taxpayers of West Traverse Township are assessed 0.25 mills or less/year to manage this preserve, which includes beach frontage.

West Traverse Township also contributes money to the City of Harbor Springs to assist with the operational and maintenance costs associated with the City Beach, The Geraldine Ford Park, the Boat Launch and other similar common recreational and park facilities.

Volunteers right now work on the planning aspects of the recreation facilities, but an important part of this plan is to establish a core of volunteers committed to helping in a variety of ways to meet the goals of this recreation plan. The optimum concept would be to have volunteers for each of the different areas of development as many of these have very different expertise and interest needs.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

**VOTERS**

<b>ELECTED WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP BOARD</b>
Supervisor Treasurer Clerk 2 Trustees

<b>APPOINTED PLANNING COMMISSION</b>
Chair Secretary Township Board Representative 4 Members-at-large

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

### **PLANNING PROCESS:**

The development of this five-year plan for recreation began with the preparation of the first approved five-year plan that was in place from July of 2000 until July of 2005. Much was learned in that five-year period relative to those concepts that are more likely to become a reality and those that will not. Even the best planning process cannot account for all the variables that can occur in a five-year span within any political jurisdiction that may have an effect on priorities.

Additionally, this plan benefited greatly by having information directly relating to the recreation needs of the taxpayers of this township from “The West Traverse Township 2005 Community Survey” prepared by the West Traverse Township Planning Commission (data presented in Goals and Objectives Section of this plan). The backgrounds of the members of the Recreation Committee provided yet another mechanism for developing a plan that best addresses the interests of the township and the surrounding community. Two of the members had helped in drafting the first five-year recreation plan and two members have extensive knowledge of nature centers in Michigan and were strong proponents of understanding how best to utilize available lands for recreation and educational purposes.

Probably the best match in terms of planning process is to relate it to the Systems Approach to Planning in that this represents a melding of information about recreation and open space use coming from the taxpayers of this township along with a comprehensive review of the current lands owned by the township. This review assessed all the natural aspects of the lands, which provided the key as to how best utilize these spaces. This same approach to planning regarding recreation has been modeled by HARBOR, Inc., an organization serving six other jurisdictions in addition to West Traverse Township that are in the Harbor Springs School District. The West Traverse Recreation Committee has attended and learned from the planning sessions lead by HARBOR, Inc., that have focused on planning for addressing the current and future recreation and open space needs of this area.

## **PUBLIC INPUT:**

There is no future for a plan unless there is knowledge of the plan and agreement with the plan by the people it is meant to serve. To that end a “Public Review and Input Plan” was put into place, which provided the greatest opportunity for distributing this proposed five-year plan to as many interested people as possible. More than adequate time was provided for feedback as well as giving a variety of ways by which that information could be returned to the Recreation Committee.

There were the formal sessions of presentation of this plan that included the West Traverse Township Planning Commission and the West Traverse Township Board. During all the stages of presentation of the West Traverse Township Five-Year Recreation Plan, the reader will note that the plan is referred to as the “Draft” plan and not referred to as the actual West Traverse Township Five-Year Recreation Plan until its actual adoption by the West Traverse Township Board at its November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006 meeting.

The “Draft” plan was presented the first time to the West Traverse Township Planning Commission on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006. There was discussion by the members present with a few minor changes suggested, which were made (Appendix ), but the Planning Commission requested that the “Draft” Plan come back again for their meeting on August 9<sup>th</sup>, because two of the Commission members were absent. There was much praise of this plan given by the Commission members and the Recreation Committee was pleased to bring the plan back for discussion and review again on August 9<sup>th</sup>.

The amended “Draft” Plan was presented at the August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 West Traverse Township Planning Commission and was again well received (Appendix ). The Planning Commission formally recommended this Five-Year Recreation Plan to the Board for approval.

This plan went to the West Traverse Township Board for its preliminary review and approval on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (Appendix ). The West Traverse Township Board voted unanimously for approval of this “Draft” Recreation Plan and was pleased to have it now move into more extensive review by the West Traverse Township community and neighboring communities.

It seems significant to note at this point that there are many West Traverse Township taxpayers who attend both the Planning Commission and Board meetings so knowledge of this plan and discussion of this plan by the public took place at those sessions as well.

For Public Review of The West Traverse Township Five-Year Recreation Plan, the first step was placing a Notice of Public Review of the Plan in The Petoskey News Review. This notice (Appendix ) informed the public that the plan was available for review at The West Traverse Township Hall from September 25<sup>th</sup> until October 25<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the entire plan was placed on the West Traverse Township website with mechanisms for the public to send comments.

Next a notice for a Public Hearing on the West Traverse Township Five-Year Recreation Plan was placed in The Petoskey News Review (Appendix ) announcing the date and time as 7:00 P.M. on Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition another local newspaper, The Harbor Light, wrote an article that not only repeated the date and time of the Public Hearing but also went into depth explaining in more detail what is involved in such a plan and why it is important to have. The journalist also included some specific details found in the plan as well as information about the MDNR and the need to have a plan that met the criteria of the MDNR (Appendix ).

Included in the Appendix are the agenda and the handout prepared for the Public Review. Also included is a summary of the contents of the participants. These comments did not necessitate a change to the existing WTT Five-Year Recreation Plan but certainly showed a strong interest in the 80 acre Ridge Road parcel, and will result in our forming a volunteer group to work together on improvements there, beginning in April.

The Director of HARBOR, Inc., Danna Widmar, reviewed the WTT Five-Year Recreation Plan and was generally well pleased with it and stated, “the content relative to the broader community and adjacent jurisdictions is consistent with the input received in the HARBOR, Inc. process” (Appendix ). The Executive Committee of HARBOR, Inc. also provided support for this plan. Danna wanted to be certain that it was noted, “all neighboring townships have had the opportunity to review this plan as well and added comments and suggestions”.

The final action on this plan occurred at the November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006 meeting of The West Traverse Township Board at which the West Traverse Township Board was asked to vote on its official adoption. The discussion and vote is contained in the Appendix.

# RECREATION AND RESOURCE INVENTORY

Developing a complete inventory of recreation facilities and programs is an essential and valuable component of a five year Recreation Master Plan because it provides a base of information to use in developing the action program. Understanding what recreational facilities and programs are available to West Traverse Township residents will assist in decision making in the future.

## 1. PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS OWNED BY WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP: (See map section)

West Traverse Township currently owns approximately 132 acres of land which is set aside for recreational purposes. The township parks and recreation committee members toured the Township owned properties and offer the following descriptions of each.

### Cook Property on Lake Road - Classification: Undeveloped Community Park

This property is approximately 10 acres in size and is located in Section 10 in West Traverse Township. The property has approximately 825 feet of road frontage on Lake Road on the south. The north and east property lines border with Windward Association. The property currently has three residential structures, two barns and other miscellaneous out-buildings. Other significant features include two large on-site sewage disposal systems servicing approximately 28 lots in the Forest Beach Association as well as 15 lots in the Pine Trail Association and an ample parking lot across the road from the Township Hall. The terrain is mostly flat to moderately sloping and contains mature hardwoods and open areas. An intended use for this land is the future site for a new West Traverse Township Hall.

### Ridge Road "80" – Classification: Natural Resources Area

Ridge Road "80" is located in the southwest portion of Section 3 of West Traverse Township. This parcel is 81.4 acres in size with road frontage on Ridge Road to the west and on Griffin Drive to the north. The east and south property boundaries are adjacent to private property owners. The terrain is mostly moderate to steep slopes and covered with mature trees. The area is enjoyed by mostly local people for hiking and cross country skiing. The ski trails cross over into Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club and other private properties. Snowmobile trails run along Ridge and Griffin Roads. Formal parking area is currently not provided. Users of this facility either walk from nearby residences or park their vehicles on Ridge Road.

Forty Acres on Hughston Rd. - Classification: Undeveloped Open Space

This tract of land is approximately 40 acres in size and located in the southwest corner of Section 2. The property has road frontage on Hughston Road along the south and west property lines. Part of this site was previously utilized by residents of West Traverse Township, Friendship Township, and the City of Harbor Springs as a non-hazardous waste landfill. Currently, there is no organized recreational use on the property, but the Township may be building a water reservoir on part of this parcel.

**2. OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WITHIN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP:**

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve – Classification: Natural Resources Area

The Thorn Swift Nature Preserve includes approximately 36 acres of land, 1,000 feet of Lake Michigan beach frontage and is located in section 5 of West Traverse Township. The preserve is accessed from Lower Shore Drive. The preserve is a cooperative effort between the Little Traverse Conservancy and West Traverse Township. The preserve allows for nature trails, interpretive walks, swimming and special courses in interpretive studies.

Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club – Classification: Private Golf Course, Tennis and Swimming

Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club contains approximately 1,200 acres and includes areas in Sections 3, 4, 9, 33 and 34 of the township. The area is owned by private individuals and provides several recreational opportunities for its members including cross country skiing trails, golf, hiking trails, tennis courts and a swimming pool.

Windward Association – Classification: Private Open Space and Neighborhood Park

Windward Association is approximately 225 acres in size and is located in Section 10 of the township. The area is privately owned and provides 40 acres for its residents for passive recreational activities. Tennis courts and a swimming beach are also provided.

Harbor Point Golf Course – Classification: Semi-Private Golf Course

Harbor Point Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course located in Sections 11 and 14. The property is privately owned and operated by the Harbor Point Association. Currently, the course is semi-private and is open to the public after certain hours.

### **3. PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS OUTSIDE OF WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP:**

#### Harbor Springs Area School District

The harbor Springs School district provides gymnasiums at the elementary, middle and high schools, a community pool, soccer fields, Shay playground, tennis courts, baseball fields, and outdoor running tracks.

#### City of Harbor Springs

West Traverse Township and the City of Harbor Springs have a cooperative agreement to provide swimming beaches, softball fields, sledding area (Kiwanis Park), a boat launch (Ford Park), and an outdoor ice-skating rink/skate board park (Skate Park) which are used by West Traverse Township residents. The Township shares operational and maintenance costs of these facilities with the City of Harbor Springs.

### **4. ADDITIONAL PRIVATELY OWNED SOURCES OF RECREATION INCLUDE:**

**Griffin Ice Arena**, Charlevoix - Emmet Intermediate Hockey Association operates an indoor ice rink on M-119.

**Nubs Nob** provides downhill and cross country ski trails.

**Boyne Highlands** provides downhill and cross country ski trails, as well as three 18 hole golf courses, one nine hole course, outdoor tennis courts, and several swimming pools.

**Chestnut Valley Golf Club** operates an 18 hole public golf course and offers cross country ski trails connected to the Nubs Nob cross country trail system.

**Little Traverse Bay Golf Course** operates an 18 hole public golf course.

**Wequetonsing Association** operates a private 18 hole golf course.

**Black Forest** provides soccer fields.

### **5. REGIONAL STATE PARKS:**

**Petoskey State Park** is approximately 6 miles from Harbor Springs and is located on the northeastern edge of Little Traverse Bay. The park offers sandy beaches and provides day use areas as well as camping facilities.

**Wilderness State Park** is located about 20 miles from Harbor Springs on the northwestern tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. This park offers many miles of trails, lake frontage, boat ramps and campgrounds.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In order to provide any type of comprehensive plan for a community, it is imperative to understand the characteristics of both the population of the community and the natural resources of that community.

The Recreation Committee reviewed demographic information derived from the 2000 Census performed by the U.S. Census Bureau as well as other data available through the West Traverse Township Offices, and the 2004 Emmet County Comprehensive Recreation Plan.

West Traverse Township is also associated with HARBOR, INC., a non-profit organization serving the city of Harbor Springs and the six townships within the Harbor Springs School District. One of this organization's goals was to assess current outdoor recreational facilities and make recommendations that would be more global than just on a township by township basis. HARBOR,INC. is working on open space needs, extending the non-motorized bike trail to Harbor Springs as well as a connecting trail corridor from this area to Cross Village and to Mackinac City. There has been a sharing of information between HARBOR,INC. and the West Traverse Township Recreation Committee such that common goals can be achieved.

Of major significance was the feedback from this township's taxpayers. The West Traverse Township Planning Commission developed and distributed the West Traverse Township 2005 Community Survey to all taxpayers of West Traverse Township. The information from this survey was to assist with the Planning Commission's five- year plan and as such contained questions pertinent to recreation.

In this section of the Five Year Recreation Plan, significant data relative to each of the above categories is presented as foundation for the Goals and Objectives.

## DATA SECTION

### NATURAL RESOURCES AND FEATURES:

#### Introduction:

Developmental policies should reflect the influences, advantages, and disadvantages of all natural features in an area. Housing, commercial and industrial development and recreation areas all depend upon the natural resources and geological features. West Traverse Township has a variety of topographic features that must be understood in order to produce a viable recreation plan.

#### Wildlife and Habitats:

West Traverse Township contains a diversity of wildlife and habitats. Although the original forests were cleared during the lumbering era, the majority of land that is either undeveloped or not in agricultural use contains healthy second-growth forests. The forest cover types are determined by soils, topography, and in this township, by proximity to Lake Michigan.

Low-lying, poorly drained soils are dominated by lowland conifers, including white cedar, balsam fir, and black spruce, and include lowland hardwoods such as red maple and balsam poplar. A good example of this forest type can be found where Five Mile Creek crosses M-119. The excessively well-drained sandy beach ridges along the existing ancient Great Lakes shorelines are dominated by red oak, hemlock, white pine and red pine. The Township's property along Ridge Road provides a good example of this habitat type. The sandy loams located through most of the township are dominated by typical northern Michigan hardwood species, including sugar maple, American beech, black cherry, big tooth aspen and white birch. Many of these forests are currently under commercial management and are selectively cut on a periodic basis.

The diversity of forest habitats, in combination with the ample agriculture throughout the Township, supports a rich diversity of wildlife. Large mammals including deer, bear, coyote, and fox can be found here. Small mammals such as rabbit, raccoon, squirrel, porcupine, and opossum are also abundant. The Township is also rich in bird life, supporting inland birds such as ruffed grouse, quail, wild turkey, hawks, owls, and songbirds as well as birds found along the shoreline or inland waterways like bald eagles, sea gulls, sand pipers, cormorants, ducks, and swans.

The land immediately adjacent to Lake Michigan deserves special note from a wildlife perspective. Although mostly developed, this land is still primarily forested. Due to the unique hydrogeology of the area, there are numerous springs or groundwater seeps at the base of the Lake Michigan bluff. In several areas, these springs are associated with substantial wetland complexes, a good example of which is found at The Thorne Swift

Nature Preserve. These wetlands provide a habitat important for many species of flora and fauna including the endangered Michigan Monkey Flower.

The Lake Michigan shoreline provides a unique habitat for wildlife and endangered species. The cobble beach along much of this township's shoreline serves as a perfect niche for a variety of insects, which in turn provide an essential food source for migrating songbirds. For example, the large numbers of midges and mayflies hatch from the cobble beach during May and June. Neo-tropical migrants on their way north to their nesting grounds in the boreal forests of Canada rest along the shoreline and gorge themselves on the insects. The low sandy dunes along this same shoreline and the damp areas between them (interdunal wetland swales) provide habitat for several rare and threatened plants including the Houghton's goldenrod, Pitcher's thistle and Lake Huron Tansy. A good representation of these shoreline habitats can be found at The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.

### **Geology:**

The Geology Section is divided into two areas of study, the subsurface geology (bedrock) and the surface geology (overburden). Bedrock is generally concealed by a mantle of unattached, loose, glacial deposits within an area. By categorizing these many deposits into general soil associations, certain assumptions about the material can be made. These assumptions will be in the area of soil suitability for wells, septic systems, and the soil's ability to support various types of land uses.

The hilly portions of the Township are called moraines. The steep slopes along the Lake Michigan shoreline are old beachfronts of a much larger Great Lakes water system, which was in place several thousand years ago. The moraines were formed along, and to some extent under, the margin of the ice sheet. They contain not only gravelly material, but also a confused mixture of stony clay, sand, cobblestone, etc., varying greatly in texture and general make-up within a short distance. In general, the moraines are thickly strewn with boulders, and thus are in striking contrast with outwash plains, on which small stones and large sandy areas appear. Within this morainic area, however, there are large valley-like lowlands, with flat or very gently undulating beds. Typically, the beds are swampy and poorly drained. From these valleys, there is a somewhat abrupt rise to the elevated morainic areas. These valleys appear to have held local lakes during the melting back of the glacier. The swampy areas are generally northeast of the Township as seen, for example, in the center portion of Pleasantview Township.

### **Soils:**

The movement of glaciers over bedrock material created additional soil material, which was added to the soils already carried by the glacier. The tons of pressure and slow movement of ice turned solid rock into an extremely fine ground material. The finely ground soil was deposited and transported by melt water and ice in a disorderly fashion. Some of this material came from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and some from

Canada. Thus, we have the scattered patterns of soil types that can be seen in the Emmet County Soils' Survey.

The following is a brief description of the soil associations found within West Traverse Township.

**Emmet Association:** Deep, well drained, nearly level to very steep sandy soils on moraines.

**Blue Lake-Leelanau Association:** Deep, well drained, nearly level sandy soils on beaches and outwash plains.

**East Lake-Blue Lake-Kalkaska Association:** Deep, well drained, nearly level sandy soils on lake beaches and outwash plains.

**Deer Park-Dune Land Association:** Deep, well drained, nearly level to very steep sandy soils on lake beaches and dunes.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The population changes in West Traverse Township from 1990-2000 represents a 49.5% increase, which is double the increase for Emmet County alone. A major factor in this growth has come from those individuals selecting to retire here.

**TABLE 1**

	1980 <u>Population</u>	1990 <u>Population</u>	2000 _____	2010 <u>(Projected)</u>
West Traverse Township	997	968	1,448	1,674
Emmet County	22,992	25,040	31,437	35,660
State of Michigan	9,262,078	9,295,297	9,938,444	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 \* The projection is the result of a “straight-line projection” of the trend experienced between 1980 and 2000.

### AGE GROUPS AND GENDER:

For the entire population, the gender split is 50.8% male and 49.2% female. When looking at the percentages for different age groups, this same type of even split persists. For Example, for those aged 65 and over, 48.5% are male and 51.5% are female.

**TABLE 2**  
**AGE GROUP POPULATIONS 2000**

AGE GROUP	West Traverse		Emmet County	State of Michigan
	Number	Per Cent	Per Cent	Per Cent
<5 years	60	4.14%	6.20%	6.80%
5-14 years	178	12.29%	14.50%	15.00%
15-24 years	129	8.91%	11.70%	13.70%
25-44 years	300	20.71%	28.10%	29.80%
45-64 years	509	35.16%	25.20%	22.40%
65 years & over	272	18.79%	14.30%	12.30%
TOTALS	1,448	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000

West Traverse Township’s population is older than the averages for either Emmet County or the State as seen when looking at the data for those over 45 years of age. This reflects the increased populations that have chosen to retire permanently in this area as well as those who are indigenous to this area and are also staying here.

The above facts do not imply that for recreation purposes, the school-age children and young adults have not been an important influence. This plan is meant to not only accommodate our permanent population but also to take into account all the seasonal visitors to this region as well as those who bring their families to their “second-homes” in West Traverse Township.

**TABLE 3**  
**RACE AND NATIONAL ORIGIN- 2000**

	West Traverse Township		Emmet County	State of MI
	Number	Per Cent	Per Cent	Per Cent
White	1414	97.70%	94.3%	80.20%
American Indians/ Asians/Pacific Islanders/ Aleuts	24	1.64%	3.5%	2.4%
Black / African American	2	0.13%	0.5%	14.2%
Other	8	0.53%	1.7%	3.2%
TOTAL	1,448	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

The racial composition of West Traverse Township’s population, as shown above, reflects more closely Emmet County’s data than that of the State of Michigan, which would be expected. The largest minority is that of the American Indian.

## EMPLOYMENT

The residents of West Traverse Township have job opportunities not only within this township but also in nearby townships as well as in Harbor Springs and Petoskey. All of these areas are within easy commute distances.

According to the 2000 U.S.Census data, of the population that was 16 years and older, 59.7% were in the labor force with 4.5% listed as unemployed. The following table summarizes the occupation's data as of 2000 for West Traverse Township.

**TABLE 4**  
**EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, 2000**

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENT
Management, Professionals And Related Occupations	253	37.40%
Service Occupations	95	14.00%
Sales and Office Occupations	204	30.10%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0	0.00%
Construction, extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	73	10.80%
Production, Transportation, And Material Moving Occupations	52	7.70%

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, 2000

According to the U.S. Census, 2000, the data for “non-institutionalized persons with disabilities” based on age groups were as follows:

Ages 5-20 Years      21 individuals with disabilities or 6.3% of this population.

Ages 21-64 years      82 individuals with disabilities or 9.90% of this population.

Ages over 64 years    57 individuals with disabilities or 23.10% of this population.

This information indicates that for the age groups for which data was gathered, 11.3% of the resident population has some type of disability.

## **LAND USE PATTERNS**

(See chart on following page)

West Traverse Township has seen many changes in land use patterns since the early 1900s when this area was predominantly used for lumbering, fishing, and seasonal visitors around Little Traverse Bay.

Looking at us now, this Township not only still has many seasonal homes, but there has also been a major increase in residential homes. This can be accounted for not only by the increased number of retirees having West Traverse Township as their permanent residence but by the increased number of previous residents of Harbor Springs moving out of the city boundaries into nearby townships like West Traverse. As lands have been added for housing, roads must follow which represent another shift in land usage.

As noted on the Land Use Chart, the major shifts in land usage have been from “Vacant, Woodlands, Farm” lands to homes, both residential and seasonal, using almost 16% of available land as of 2001. The increase in Public and Quasi Public Lands was mainly due to the gift of the lands of The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve to the Little Traverse Conservancy.

The industrial/commercial category refers predominantly to the Franklin Industrial Park located adjacent to the city of Harbor Springs.

The zero acreage for recreation might imply that there are no existing areas for recreation within the Township. This category has limited reference to publicly-owned “organized” recreation facilities. There are Township properties and some private lands that are used informally for outdoor activities like hiking, cross-country skiing, and snow-shoeing. The Harbor Point Golf Course is listed as a Quasi-Public and provides public golf within the Township. Only for July and August does it reserve morning hours only for the Harbor Point Association Members. The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve provides hiking trails and a sandy beach for swimming.

This five-year plan is designed to show a formal shift and use of lands for recreation for the public sector within West Traverse Township.

## WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

LAND USE CATEGORY	1968		2001		PERCENT OF CHANGE
	ACRE	PERCENT OF TOTAL	ACRE	PERCENT OF TOTAL	
Residential	55	0.65	943.24	11.08	1615 +
Seasonal Homes	68	0.80	410.49	4.82	503.7 +
Multiple Family	N/A	-	70.64	0.83	N/A
Building as a Main Use/ Abandoned Building	N/A	-	12	0.14	N/A
Public & Quasi-Public	128	1.50	658.70	7.73	414.6 +
Recreation	0	0	0	0	0
Industrial/ Junk	15	0.18	19.88***	0.23	32.5 +
Commercial	32	0.38	44.37	0.52	38.7 +
Railroads	0	0	0	0	0
Roads	246*	2.89	463.32*	5.44	88.3 +
Vacant, Woodlands, Farm	7,947.04	93.36	5865.4	68.91	26.2 -
Surface Water	+/-23.96**	0.28	+/-23.96**	0.28	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,512 acres</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,512 acres</b>	<b>100%</b>	

\*Road surface measurements are determined by multiplying the linear distance of all minor and major roads by 66 feet. This calculation formulates a total measurement of actual road surface and road right of way area.

\*\* Surface water measurements represent total area of rivers, streams, and all minor lakes within West Traverse Township. River and stream calculations were determined by multiplying the total distance traveled by a buffered area of 20 feet, as an estimated average width.

\*\*\*Includes extractive operations.

## **OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION**

The data that has been presented provides a picture of the 1,448 residents of West Traverse Township as of the year 2000. What has not been provided is a fair profile of the other people who pay taxes in West Traverse Township and who reside here for part of the year. These people certainly should and do play a major role in any plans for this township.

One way to get at this number is to look at the data from the same 2000 U.S. Census that reviews Housing Occupancy. For West Traverse Township, the total housing units number 1,093. Of those, 437 or 40% are listed for “seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. While it is true that the big increase in “seasonal” residents is during the months of July and August, it must be understood that these same people spend vacation time here in the fall as well as during the winter months for all the outdoor winter activities located in and around the Harbor Springs area.

These same people are just as interested in trails for cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing as in water sports during the summer months.

One of the major ways to get and assess public input is through a survey of all taxpayers in any particular area. By doing this, one is seeking and valuing interests and needs from residents and non-residents alike.

### **West Traverse 2005 Community Survey:**

An explanation of this survey from the Chairperson of the West Traverse Township Planning Commission is as follows:

“As part of the process of updating the West Traverse Future Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance, the Township Planning Commission developed the following survey to obtain the opinions of property owners in the Township regarding future growth and public facilities improvements in the Township. The survey document was mailed to all property owners in the Township (1,327) in early January of 2005. A total of 420 surveys were returned. While not all surveys were returned, enough were returned so the calculated margin of error for the responses representative of all property owners is  $\pm 3\%$ .”

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

The Township had survey results from 32% of the taxpayers. The pertinent questions that had to do with recreation and their results are as follows:

### **Acquisition of Land:**

**60%** of the respondents would support a millage increase to purchase “Lake Michigan access sites, important open space lands and other scenic areas within West Traverse Township.”

### **Adequacy of Available Recreational Land:**

**48%** of the respondents felt that the “availability of recreational land and facilities within the Township” were inadequate.

### **Types of Additional Facilities Desired as Specified by the 48% Noting Deficiencies:**

48% Specified Waterfront Access Sites  
35% Specified Bike Trails  
34% Specified Hiking Trails  
30% Specified Ski Trails  
25% Specified Park Area with Pavilion  
22% Specified Picnic & Barbecue Area

## WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. To provide a diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities taking advantage of the physical characteristics of the land of this township and meeting the expressed needs of its taxpayers.**
  - A. Improve and/or develop trail systems through open space areas in which interest has already been established.
  - B. Prepare trails that can be used for hiking in the spring, summer, and fall seasons and then be used for snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter season.
  - C. Working with HARBOR, INC. and neighboring townships to provide main non-motorized trails routes for the purpose of transportation and recreation that pass through West Traverse Township.
  - D. Prepare handicapped-accessible trail on the Cook Family Property.
  - E. Continue evaluating and improving beach area at the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.
  
- 2. To provide facilities and programs that encourage those living in this community to want to be outside, engaging in physical, healthful, and educational activities that enhance their lives.**
  - A. Establish system that keeps township taxpayers informed of status of recreational/educational programs and facilities.
  - B. Begin work on the Cook Family/West Traverse Township Park, which in itself will bring more of the taxpayers of this township together for outdoor activities.
  - C. Continue excellent work at the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.
  - D. Expand the educational program relative to the Cook Family Farm and Homestead located on the edge of the proposed Cook Family/West Traverse Township Park.
  
- 3. To continually educate the public on the value of understanding the natural world around them and the benefits of environmental conservation.**
  - A. At West Traverse Township public sites, provide information relative to the flora and fauna and ecology of the specimens in that area.
  - B. Encourage more “guided” programs throughout the Township’s trail systems.

**4. To provide a way to increase awareness of the significance of identifying and preserving significant historical and/or archeological features.**

- A. Begin preservation/restoration project on Cook Family Homestead.
- B. Prepare historical program based on this homestead.
- C. Provide “guided” tours/experiences of the Cook Family Homestead and the West Traverse Township Hall.

**5. To establish a core group of township volunteers who will assist in all phases of this plan.**

- A. Send out questionnaire to all taxpayers to determine interest in becoming involved with any of the projects in this plan.
- B. Organize several groups of interest-based volunteers with a representative from each serving on a Township Volunteer Board.

**6. To continually assess undeveloped lands as potential areas for acquisition for future community recreational and/or educational use.**

- A. Work with the West Traverse Township Planning Commission in identifying possible lands that have the potential to be donated to either West Traverse Township or to the Little Traverse Conservancy.
- B. Work with the West Traverse Township Planning Commission and the West Traverse Township Board to look at zoning changes that would set aside open space for recreation in new subdivision developments.
- C. Work with HARBOR, Inc. and neighboring townships to advance this goal.

**7. To maintain an updated recreation plan.**

- A. Continually seek information from the taxpayers of West Traverse Township so that we know that the recreation plans are moving in the right direction and so that we may be prepared for future needs and interests.
- B. Publish these updates on the West Traverse Township Website.

**8. To work closely with neighboring townships as a way to dramatically enhance the recreational opportunities of the entire community.**

- A. Continue associations with neighboring townships relative to ways that there can be more enhanced sharing of facilities and programs.

# WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

**COOK FAMILY HOMESTEAD:** (See map of Cook Property)

## **2006-2007**

Establish history of Cook Family Barn and House

Determine significance to its preservation and use through contacts with The Harbor Springs Historical Society, The Order of Masons, The Little Traverse Conservancy, and any other groups like the Centennial Farm Project from MSU.

Determine cost for restoration of farm based on possible intended uses.

1. Educational
2. Site for Girl and Boy Scout Meetings
3. Site for family reunions or other public gatherings

Look into possible funding sources.

Remove any materials from the barn that are not of historical significance and manage any other activity in preparation for restoration.

## **2007-2008**

Prepare any grant applications for fund assistance on any parts of project.

Begin restoration and once safety of premises is assured, begin educational programs.

Improve parking area for homestead.

Develop educational program focusing on this facility.

## **2008-2011**

Continue restoration of Cook Family homestead and maintenance thereof.

## **COOK PROPERTY:**

### **2006-2007**

Begin phase one for establishment of West Traverse Township Park on the Cook Property.

Establish route for asphalted pathway to run from the parking lot to the barn. This path should be able to be used comfortably by those using wheelchairs or walkers as well as for infants in strollers. It should also be planned to go behind the current rental properties and run through the more interesting array of flora. There should be signage as to interesting species of plant or animals visible from the path.

Purchase and position at least one picnic table at the end of the path in the open flat area by the barn.

Purchase and position at least two benches along the route of the path. Design and put into place a large sign that denotes this area as The Cook Family/West Traverse Township Park.

Work with HARBOR, INC. relative to bike trail that might come along Lake Street to M-119. Part of the Cook Property along Lake Street might be developed for safe biking.

### **2007-2008**

Add the following to the park area near the barn:

Playground equipment for young children.

Pavilion that can hold at least two picnic tables.

Two grills.

Portable bathroom facilities.

Look into costs for bike trail as well as connection of bike trail to area behind the barn that is already being developed and would have bathroom facilities for bikers but also a pavilion for meeting and resting.

### **2008-2009**

Build permanent bathroom facilities.

Look to adding other items to the West Traverse Township Park as interest indicates.

Construct more hiking trails through the property.

## **2009-2011**

Continually monitor park's usage and users' interests as to need for expansion of facilities.

## **HUGHSTON ROAD 40-ACRE PARCEL:**

### **2006-2007**

Work with Harbor INC. relative to possible bike trail from State Road through to M-119.

Assess parcel for possible hiking, snow shoeing and cross country ski trail development.

### **2007-2008**

Prepare area for bike trail with appropriate signage.

Prepare trails for winter activities along with signage relative to significant natural features.

Select a few places along the trails that would be ideal for benches, especially for warm season hikers.

### **2008-2011**

Continually evaluate usage of area and provide improvements as needed.

## **RIDGE ROAD 80 ACRE PARCEL:**

### **2006-2007**

Bike Trail: If bike trail is to go from State Road to M-119, parts of this property could be used for a connecting link from Griffin Road to Ridge Road which directly connects to M-119. In this case, a trail suitable for biking would have to cut across this parcel.

Survey property and secure for recreational purposes.

Stabilize the current snow-shoeing trails and cross-country skiing trails.  
Develop signage that assists new users of these trails in terms of directions  
and to indicate any natural areas of interest.

Assess need for small pavilion for rest during the winter sports season but  
also usable by hikers in the summer.

**2007-2008**

Continue to work on an appropriate bike trail should this become the chosen bike  
route to M-119.

Build small parking area off Griffin Road and make improvements to Griffin  
Road.

**2008-2009**

Build pavilion for recreational users of this property.

**2009-2011**

Continue to evaluate the needs of the users of this parcel.

**THORNE SWIFT NATURE PRESERVE:**

**2006-2011**

Continually work with The Little Traverse Nature Conservancy as to any areas of  
recreational needs that should be enhanced, improved, or added to the Preserve.

**OTHER:**

**2006-2011**

Work towards ways for landowners in West Traverse Township to contribute land  
to the Township that would enhance recreational needs.

Establish an active group of volunteers from this township who will help in the  
development, assessment, and enhancement of our public areas.

## SCHEDULE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS WITH FUNDING SOURCES

<b>PRIORITY #</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS</b>
Ongoing High	2006 2011	Acquire lake frontage property	Unknown	MNRFT Donated Funds
Ongoing High	2006 2011	Acquire lands adjacent to Thorne Swift Nature Preserve	Unknown	MNRFT Donated Funds
Ongoing High	2006 2011	Working with other jurisdictions provide bike trail through any of WTT properties for major bike Route to M-119	Unknown	MDOT MNRFT LRSB
Ongoing	2006 2011	Develop open spaces for recreation in conjunction with new subdivision developments.	Unknown	Donation Local Funds
Ongoing	2006 2011	Acquire lands to enhance/improve recreational opportunities	Unknown	MNRFT Donated Funds
High	2006 2007	Prepare barn for restoration. Clean up Build asphalt pathway on Cook property that will be handicapped useable. Benches and picnic table and signage for new park.	\$2,000  \$16,000	Local Fund  Local Fund
		Ridge Road Property: Stabilize existing trails. Survey property and secure for recreational purposes.	\$10,000	Local Fund

High	2007 2008	Commence barn restoration project	\$40-50,000	MCMP/DEQ MNRFT MSU/Bicentennial Farm Project Local Fund
High	2007	Playground equipment Pavilion/Grills Portable bathrooms for Cook Family/ West Traverse Township Park	\$35,000 \$ 5,000  Unknown	MNRFT LRSB Local Fund
Medium	2007 2008	Improve Griffin Rd. and build small parking area on Ridge Road Parcel.	\$60-90,000	MNRFT RTPG Local Fund
High	2008- 2009	Build permanent bathroom facilities at Cook Family/West Traverse Township Park  Build second asphalted trail through the Cook Family/West Traverse Township Park	\$80,000  \$10,000	LRSB MNRFT Local Fund  LRSB MNRFT Local Fund

**KEY TO POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:**

- Local Fund - General Fund budget, cash donations.....
- LRSB - Local Revenue Sharing Board
- MCMP - Michigan Coastal Management Program, Dept. of Environmental Quality
- MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation
- MNRFT - Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Dept. of Natural Resources
- RTPG - Recreation Trails Program Grant, Dept. of Natural Resources