



Wexford County Parks and Recreation Plan

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction



Wexford County

Home to the Huron-Manistee National Forest and the Pere Marquette State Forest, nearly 80% of the County's land cover is forested, with about 41% of its total acreage managed by the National Forest Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Nearly 15% of the County's surface area consists of water features, which include several major lakes and a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. These assets provide Wexford County residents and visitors with countless year-round opportunities for activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, or horseback riding.

The County's lakes, rivers, forests, trails, community events, and recreation programming provide other benefits as well. Recreation activities and events bring residents and visitors together, fostering opportunities for cultural activities, education, and civic engagement. They promote public health and wellness by encouraging opportunities for physical activity, which is critical in staying healthy, reducing stress fighting obesity, and preventing chronic health conditions.

Parks also act, increasingly, as economic drivers, raising property values, drawing new residents to the community, and encouraging new development and tourism. Because of the important role it plays in the community's quality of life and desirability, recreation improvements

and enhancements support and encourage—and in some cases, create—new investment and economic development.

To help guide with future recreation improvements, the Wexford County Board of Commissioners contracted with Networks Northwest to revise their 2019-2023 Parks and Recreation Plan, with an emphasis on public input opportunities. This plan presents an evaluation of the County's parks and recreation opportunities and community needs. It is intended to identify the County's highest recreation priorities and to offer an implementation road map for the recreation goals and objectives identified by the community.

The Plan is organized as follows:

Chapter 1. Administrative Structure, summarizes the process through which recreation decisions are made.

Chapter 2. Community Description, includes information regarding the County's population, natural features, and other community information.

Chapter 3. Recreation Inventory itemizes the County's existing recreational facilities.

Chapter 4. Planning and Public Input, explains how public input was gathered and used in developing and prioritizing recreation goals,

objectives, and action program, and identifies recreation goals of existing county plans for consideration and in goals, objectives, and actions.

Chapter 5. Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan describes proposed recreation goals and improvements, and suggests specific implementation activities to achieve those goals.

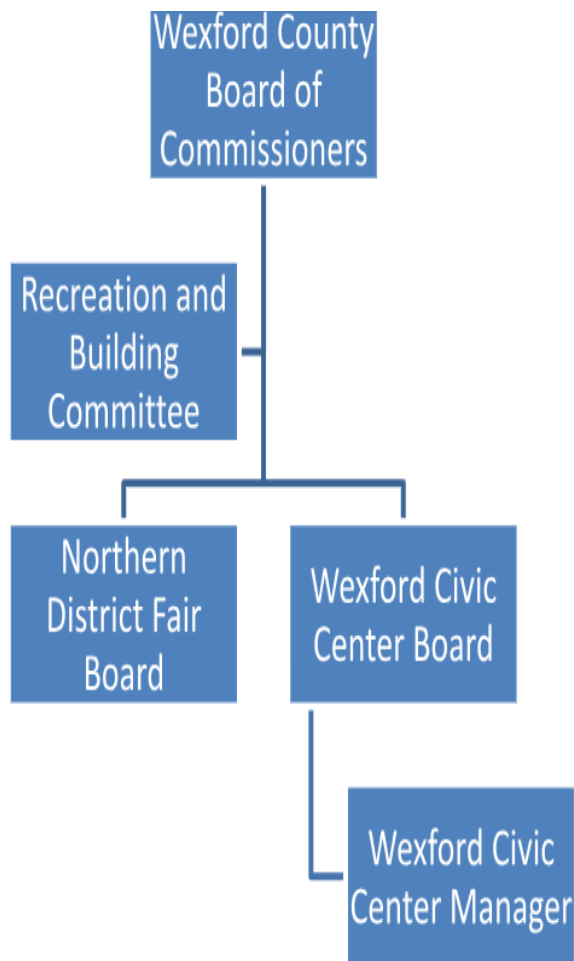
DNR Recreation Planning Guidelines

This Plan was developed according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans.

Through its recreation grants program, currently funded through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides financial assistance to communities that would like to purchase land for parks, or are planning to improve or develop recreation facilities.

To be eligible to apply for these grant programs, a community must have a 5-year recreation plan, approved by the DNR, that meets certain requirements. This Recreation Plan was developed to comply with all MDNR requirements for recreation plans.

1. Administrative Structure



Organizational Structure

The Wexford County parks and recreation system are guided by the Board of Commissioners with recommendations from the standing Recreation and Building Committee. The County BOC is responsible for adopting budgets, approving contracts, adopting policy, and the oversight of staff. The Recreation and Building Committee assists with the oversight of budgets, planning, staffing, and other issues related to the County's parks, recreation, and facilities.

While there is not a formal Parks and Recreation Department, the County Administration Department assists the BOC and Recreation and Building Committee to carry out directives, planning, and projects related to the parks and recreation system.

Staff, Relationship with Volunteers and Community Organizations

Under contract with the County through 20XX, Boon Sports Management oversees the maintenance and operations of the Wexford Civic Center (locally referred to as The Wex) and the maintenance of the Civic Center facilities.

Figure 1 Wexford County Administrative Structure

Boone Sports Management staff The Wex with a full time facility manager who is charged with the day to day operations, promotions and marketing, and the maintenance of the grounds and facility with assistance from 15-20 part time employees. Civic center users and other community groups continue to provide support for the facility.

Wexford County also partners with the Northern District Fair Board for the use of the fair grounds and facilities at the Fairgrounds and Civic Center for 3 weeks every August. The County maintains the buildings that are located on the Fairgrounds.

Parks and Recreation Budget

The parks and recreation budget is funded by the general fund through taxes and State and Federal grant programs. Additional sources of funding include, but are not limited to Michigan DNR grant programs, Michigan Economic Development Council, millages, bonding, grants and foundations, donations or user fees.

Fiscal Year (Jan 1 - Dec 31)	Parks and Recreation Budget
2022	\$58,000
2023	\$58,000
2024 (Projected)	\$58,000

2. Community Description

Wexford County is located in the northwestern part of the Lower Peninsula, surrounded by Manistee, Grand Traverse, Missaukee, Osceola, and Lake Counties. Wexford County has two cities, three villages, and sixteen townships with separate boards and officials who make decisions at the local level.

The natural features and vast public land in Wexford County provide a diversity of recreational opportunities, including areas for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, skiing, and hiking, among others.

Population Characteristics

The County's permanent population estimate in 2021 is 33,552 people. The population grew 2.8% since 2010. The southeast corner of the county is the population center. City of Cadillac and surrounding townships have the largest populations in the county: the city has 10,317, Haring Township has 3,528, Clam Lake Township has 2,827, Cherry Grove Township has 2,642, and Selma Township has 1,975.

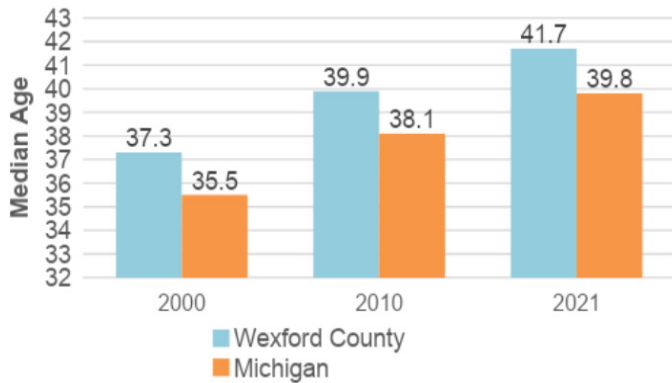
Wexford County and Municipalities Population Estimates, 2010-2021				
Municipality	2010 Population	2021 Population	Numeric Change	Percentage
Wexford County	32,653	33,552	899	2.8%
Village of Buckley	580	844	264	45.5%
Village of Harrietta	113	209	96	85%
Village of Mesick	454	373	-81	-17.8%
Antioch Township	660	870	210	31.8%
Boon Township	571	782	211	37%
Cedar Creek Township	1,644	1,732	88	5.4%
Cherry Grove Township	2,488	2,642	154	6.2%
Clam Lake Township	2,593	2,827	234	9%
Colfax Township	897	989	92	10.3%
Greenwood Township	562	618	56	10%
Hanover Township	1,364	1,691	327	24%
Haring Township	3,167	3,528	361	11.4%
Henderson Township	168	217	49	29.2%
Liberty Township	891	824	-67	-7.5%
Selma Township	2,196	1,975	-221	-10.1%
Slagle Township	595	439	-156	-26.2%
South Branch Township	303	272	-31	-10.2%
Springville Township	1,780	1,579	-201	-11.3%
Wexford Township	934	955	21	2.2%
City of Cadillac	10,384	10,317	-67	-0.6%
City of Manton	1,456	1,295	-161	-11.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Yr Estimates

Age and Household Characteristics

The age of a community’s residents is an important factor in determining recreation needs. Communities can work to provide diverse recreation opportunities to accommodate the varying abilities and interests of residents at different stages of life.

The median age divides the age distribution into two equal parts; half of the cases fall below the median value and half are above the median value. Wexford County’s 2021 median age is 41.7, about two years older than the state median age (39.8). The median age of Wexford County and the State of Michigan has been steadily increasing since 2000.

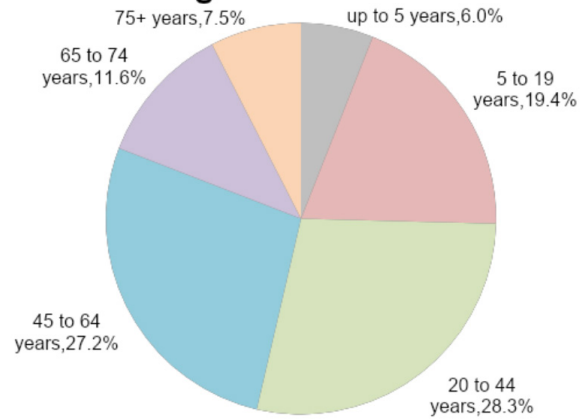


The total 2021 Wexford County population is broken down into the following age groups:

Category	Age	Total	Percent
Preschool	Under Age 5	2,012	6%
School Age	Age 5 to 19	6,506	19.4%
Family Forming	Age 20 to 44	9,481	28.9%
Empty Nest	Age 45 to 64	9,136	27.8%
Senior	Age 65 to 74	3,888	11.6%
Elderly	Age over 75	2,529	7.5%

The majority of county population (28.3%) is in the family forming age group, between the ages of 20 to 44. The second largest group is empty nesters (27.2%) between the ages of 45 to 64. The third largest group are youth, ages birth to 19 years old (25.4%). The median age and the age cohorts describe an aging population where the empty nest and senior population groups will continue to grow.

Age Distribution



As individuals age, the need increases for facilities that accommodate passive recreation such as walking. Barrier-free access and universally accessible to recreation is particularly important for persons with a disability as well as senior and elderly adults. Barrier-free access and universally accessible to recreation such as hard-surface pathways and accessible kayak launches allows aging seniors and the elderly access to activities they might not otherwise enjoy. Additionally, all recreation facilities should adhere to standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act for barrier-free access.

The youth population groups (preschool and school aged) are holding steady at 25.4% when compared to the 19 and under population in the previous plan. Youth-oriented recreation opportunities will continue to be important for both current residents and as an amenity to draw new families to the county.

Income and Poverty

When planning for recreation, it is important to ensure that activities and amenities in the community are within the financial means of the majority of residents. The American Community Survey reports that 2021 per capita income in Wexford County was \$27,772, compared to \$34,768 the statewide per capita income. In 2021, the median household income in the county was \$54,114, which is 16.8% below the state’s median household income of \$63,202. 8.9% of all families in Michigan had income below the poverty level; similarly, 8.1% of all families in Wexford County had income below the poverty level.

Families in Wexford County and throughout the nation are dealing with higher prices of goods and services due to rising inflation levels as well disruptions to the food supply chain (GAO Office, 2023). “While food prices generally increased about 2% in prior years, they increased about 11% from 2021 to 2022.” In 2022, the annual inflation rate 6.5%, as measured by the consumer price index, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Prices for eggs, butter and margarine, lettuce, white bread, and dairy and related products rose dramatically. Lower income residents can face greater challenges in accessing recreation, and providing recreational opportunities to those with limited means is an important consideration when planning for recreation in Wexford County.

	Wexford County	State Average
Number of Households	13,002	4,029,761
Labor Force Participation Rate	57%	61%
ALICE Households	31%	26%
Households in Poverty	14%	13%
Source: 2021 United for ALICE Wexford County Report		

ALICE is an acronym that stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. Many struggle, especially as wages fail to keep pace with the rising cost of household essentials (housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and a basic smartphone plan). Households below the ALICE Threshold – ALICE households plus those in poverty – can’t afford the essentials. In Wexford County

Seasonal Population

Like many northwest Michigan communities, Wexford County experiences an influx of seasonal residents and tourists throughout the year. However, the decennial Census and the Amer-

ican Community Survey only consistently and comprehensively track the permanent population.

Networks Northwest’s 2022 Seasonal Population Study for Northwest Lower Michigan analyzed the 2020 seasonal population for the ten counties in northwest Michigan: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford. The study collected data for permanent and part-time residents and overnight visitors in accommodations and short-term rentals (STRs) by county.

Northwest Lower Michigan’s permanent base population is 310,802 and expands to include its largest amount of part-time residents and overnight visitors in July at an estimated total of 676,052 persons, a 118% increase.

Wexford County is the least-seasonal county in the region, with the total population change of 42% between 40,879 in the month of February and 58,168 in July. The permanent population represents roughly 78% of the total population in the off-season and 61% of the total population in the on-season. The seasonal growth of the county is driven by people staying in traditional accommodation businesses (hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, campgrounds, etc.). Table 5 illustrates the monthly estimated differences between the permanent population and seasonal residents/overnight visitors for the county.

Land Use and Planning

Any recreational expansion or newly-created recreational facilities should be coordinated with the community to ensure appropriate location for the proposed activity, and consistency with the township, village, or city master plan and zoning ordinances as applicable. The Wexford Joint Planning Commission reviews land use and zoning decisions for the following jurisdictions: Antioch Township, Boon Township, Cherry Grove Township, Hanover Township, Liberty Township, Selma Township, Slagle Township, South Branch Township, Springville Township, and Wexford Township.

Wexford County Seasonal Population

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average
Permanent Popularion	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	33,673	
Combined Part-time and Over-night Pop-ulation	7,799	7,206	10,952	11,196	19,258	22,637	24,495	24,388	19,273	13,028	11,297	7,737	14,939
Total Seasonal Population	41,472	40,879	44,625	44,869	52,931	56,310	58,168	58,061	52,946	46,701	44,970	41,410	48,612
Percent Change	23%	21%	33%	33%	57%	67%	73%	72%	57%	39%	34%	23%	

Transportation

Wexford County is served by six state/federal highways including US-131, Old US-131/Business US-131, M-115, M-55, M-37, and M-42. The Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority, or Wex-Express, is a door-to-door public transit service for residents and visitors of Wexford County .The WexExpress also provides regional transportation with daily trips to/from Traverse City.

Additionally, the Wexford County Airport, owned by the City of Cadillac and Wexford County, is open to the public and is a general aviation airport. It is located two miles north of the City of Cadillac. Wexford County is also serviced by the Great Lakes Railway Company from Clare, Mt. Pleasant, Midland and points north to Traverse City, Yuma, and toward Petoskey. The railway north of Yuma (a settlement in Springville Township within Wexford County) has been removed.

Trails

Trail facilities enhance recreation opportunities, and provide a unique opportunity to combine physical activity with transportation, linking destinations while providing alternatives to motorized transportation. Trail development and connections between existing trails are increasingly recognized as important economic strategies, generating tourism and visitor spending, and even drawing new residents.

Access to a diverse and vast trail network is especially great in Wexford County. The County hosts a number of both motorized and non-motorized trail systems. Information on the specific trails is provided in Chapter 3, Recreation Inventory. Snowmobiles and off-road vehicles (ORVs) are authorized to use road shoulders on County road rights-of-way, and a number of motorized trails are available on the County’s public land. Trail opportunities for ORVs were recently expanded with Public Act 288 of 2016, which opens state forest roads to ORV use unless posted.

Natural Features

The natural resources of Wexford County are vital to the economic health and quality of life of area residents. The abundance of quality public forest land and water resources make this area a popular tourism destination, particularly for hunters, fishermen, and snowmobilers, and are an invaluable asset in attracting new visitors and investment to the area.

Topography

About 50 percent of Wexford County is made up of rolling to steep glacial moraines, with most of the remainder undulating or nearly level glacial out wash plains. The highest point in Wexford County is Briar Hill at 1,706 feet elevation.

Soils

The main soil types found in Wexford County include:

Sandy Soils. Nearly level to steep, somewhat excessively drained and well drained sandy soils. Not fertile, thus not productive for crops or trees. Fast leaching, which tends to make groundwater vulnerable to contamination from the surface. These include: Rubicon-Montcalm-Graycalm, Grayling, Graycalm, Kalkaska, Croswell sand, and Pits.

Sandy Loam Soils. Nearly level, undulating, to steep, well drained loamy and sandy soils. These include: Emmet-Montcalm and Hodenpyl-Karlin.

Loam and Clay-Loam Soils. Nearly level to steep well drained and somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. Tends to be the more fertile, productive soils. Also tends to be soils that are problems for use of on site sewage disposal systems. This includes: Nester-Kawkawlin-Manistee

Wetland and Flood Plain Soils. Nearly level and undulating, very poorly drained and moderately well drained mucky and sandy soils in bogs, depressions, drainage ways. These soils include: Tawas-CroswellLupton, Au Gres-Finch sands, Allendale loamy sand, Fluvaquents and Histosols, and Winterfield sands.

Vegetative Cover

The forests of Wexford County include hemlock and other coniferous trees, such as red and white pine, spruce and fir, and deciduous trees, such as birch, beech, maple, basswood, and oak. Swamp and wetland vegetation patterns are also found along with a multitude of shrubs. As a result of intensive lumbering in the past, most of these forested areas are second growth and, to some degree, the original forest habitat patterns have been altered.

Forest cover types represent the largest land cover in Wexford County. The three principal segments are the United States Manistee National Forest, the Michigan Pere Marquette State

Forest and the large tracts of land owned by Consumers Energy (formerly Consumers Power) along the Manistee River. All of these areas are under some degree of woodland-wildlife-recreation management plan.

Water Resources

The County is divided between two major watersheds, or drainage areas: the Big Manistee River and the Muskegon River (Clam River/Lakes Cadillac/Mitchell). Both flow into Lake Michigan. Much of the County is within the watershed of the Big Manistee River/Pine River.

Wexford County' surface waters are major attractions for recreation and tourism. The Big Manistee River and the Pine River, a federal Wild and Scenic River, run through Wexford County. The lower 26-miles of the Pine River was designated a National Scenic River in 1992. The Pine River has the fastest average flow of any river in lower Michigan. The Manistee has had a long standing reputation for being a top-quality trout stream, and provides cold water habitat for over 75 species of fish, including trout and salmon.

There are a large number of named and unnamed feeder creeks to the Big Manistee River in the north central part of Wexford County, which represents artesian flow from groundwater moving north from the glacial hills toward the river.

Major Lakes in Wexford County include:

- Lake Mitchell
- Lake Cadillac
- Hodenpyl Dam Pond
- Long Lake
- Lake Gitchegume
- Pleasant Lake
- Stone Ledge Lake
- Lake Meauwataka (Dayhuff Lake)
- Berry Lake
- Woodward Lake
- Round Lake

The streams in Wexford County are quality trout streams because of abundant groundwater discharge into the surface water resulting in cold

water streams. The protection of groundwater and riparian zones is therefore important for maintaining and protecting the County's fisheries.

Climate

Wexford County seldom experiences prolonged periods of hot, humid weather in the summer or extreme cold during winter due to the movement of pressure systems across the nation. Wexford County is located about 21 to 28 miles east of Lake Michigan.

As a result of prevailing westerly winds, crossing Lake Michigan, Wexford County experiences a lake effect influence on the weather. The lake effect is mainly in the winter, providing increased cloudiness and snowfall. With northeast winds the sky may clear and provide lower temperatures more commonly experienced at interior locations.

The lake effect has almost no effect in the summer, or for agricultural purposes. Wexford's climate is characterized by larger temperature ranges than in areas at the same latitude near the Great Lakes.



3. Recreation Inventory



Inventory

Units of government and businesses are essential to Wexford County by providing residents and visitors recreational opportunities across the County. Parks and recreation opportunities improve quality of life by promoting health and wellness and protecting the environment while supporting economic development by attracting tourists and business.

Examining the opportunities and facilities available outside of what the County owns assists with understanding where opportunity for improvement lies and determining future needs and projects. Map XX shows both County owned assets as well as those within the County (see Chart XX). County-owned sites were inventoried to provide information on facility type, size, service area, amenities, events, and accessibility. This inventory was accomplished through site visits, interviews with staff, public meetings, and previous plan documents.

Accessibility Evaluation

The accessibility evaluations for the Wexford County parks and recreational facilities were completed as part of the recreation inventory

with assistance from County staff and Boon Sports Management. The evaluations were conducted using the criteria provided in the MDNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans.

These criteria are based on the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The following ADA Ranking system was used for the evaluations:

- 1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

Grant Inventory

Wexford County has received one recreation grant from the MDNR. A copy of the DNR Grant History, which includes descriptions of the grant, is included at the end of this chapter. The required Post Completion Self Inspection Reports are included in the Appendices.



The Wexford Civic Center and Northern District Fairgrounds

The Wex includes the Civic Arena and the Ice Arena, as well as the Northern District Fairgrounds on a 40 acre parcel just north of the City of Cadillac. The Wex is managed by Boone Sports Management Company who employ a full time Facility Manager, full time Events Manager, and 15-20 part-time staff. The property is utilized by members of the public and visitors as demonstrated by the Civic Center and Fairgrounds being the most used County parks.

The Wex continues to promote the use of space and increase activity which has led to community events being held at The Wex such as the annual Governors Breakfast, Wexford County Commission on Aging Senior Expo, Cadillac Pop Culture Con, Dancing with the Y Stars, as well as events such as gun and knife shows, fundraisers, meeting space, and sports banquets.

The Ice Arena at The Wex is a single, regulation rink with seating for 500 in the bleachers known for being vital to hockey and figure skating programs. The Ice Arena hosts adult hockey leagues, high school practices and games, learn to skate programming, and public open skates. The ice is ready to skate on in October and is

typically removed in April. When the ice is removed, the Arena is able to be used for other activities such as roller derby.

The Civic Arena and Auditorium provide space for public and private events such as banquets, concerts, trade shows, wedding receptions, and more. The Auditorium space is 20,000 square feet with bleacher seating for 1800 and additional chair seating up to 800 . Both the Ice Arena and Civic Arena have concession stands which are serviced by a commercial kitchen. The Civic Arena allows for activities to the public such as batting cages, basketball court, pickleball, and indoor walking during the winter.

The Wexford Civic Center Accessibility Ranking - 4



Northern District Fairgrounds

The Fairgrounds host community events, primarily the Northern District Fair but has also hosted demolition derbies and monster truck events among others. The Northern District Fair is put on by the Northern District Fair Board, a volunteer group made up of 13-15 board members (at normal levels).

Fair events have included the Farm Stock Tractor Pull, demolition derby, livestock judging and market sales, battle of the bands, amusement park rides and games, and more. During the month of August when the Northern District Fair takes place, the Fair Board has access to the entire Civic Center property.

While still being considered for rehabilitation, the historic Octagonal Building remains on site along with a front office, a new and old horse barn, swine and beef barn, small animal barn, the VFW building, and a block outbuilding. The track and field has a grandstand with a 1000 person capacity for spectators as well as restrooms and a concession stand.

Northern District Fairgrounds Accessibility Rating - 1



Pinoco Park

Pinoco Park is a 40 acre undeveloped parcel located in Boone Township, which services the entire County. An unpaved access road and turn-around area allow for access to the property, although it continues to not be well known or used by residents. The property was formerly owned by 4-H and MSU Extension until the County became the property owner in the late 1990s.

Pinoco Park Accessibility Rating - 1

Recreation Assets

As previously mentioned, a variety of recreation and park assets are available throughout the County. Local units of government within Wexford County maintain their own parks and recreation systems, as well as federal and state land which contain trails, boat launches, and campgrounds among others.

In addition, non-profit organizations like the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy (CALC), whose mission is to “protect significant natural, scenic,

and farm lands for current and future generations and fosters an appreciation for the environment in Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford, and northern Lake and Mason counties.”. CALC has four public preserves including Waldeck Island Nature Preserve, Oliver Family Nature Preserve, Carl T. Johnson Nature Preserve, and the Kohn Family Nature Preserve. CALC also protects land by working with landowners through conservation easements, monitoring and stewardship of easement properties, and community outreach.

Private business also provides recreational opportunities in the County, such as Caberfae Peaks Ski & Golf Resort and Evergreen Resort. Wexford County also contains privately owned campgrounds, equestrian facilities, cross country and downhill skiing, snowmobile clubs, and golf courses.

State and Federal Land

The Huron-Manistee National Forests and Pere Marquette State Forest encompass hundreds or thousands of public land in and around Wexford County. The United States Forest Service and State of Michigan are a big part of what makes Wexford County a four season playground. These public lands provide areas for rustic and improved camping, hunting, fishing, motorized and non-motorized trails public access to rivers and lakes, and opportunities for wildlife and bird watching.

Wexford County’s two National Scenic Rivers are surrounded by large areas of public land providing quality canoeing and kayaking, and fishing opportunities. Much of the land along the Pine River is owned and managed by the United States Forest Service, and much of the land along the Big Manistee is owned by the State of Michigan and Consumers Energy.

Trails

Public and stakeholder input received during the planning process indicates a strong interest in trail development in Wexford County. Comments most commonly addressed the need for more trails, including paved bike trails, ORV/ATV trails, horseback riding trails, and unpaved

mountain biking trails; trail connections and extensions; improved maintenance; and more mapping/signage.

An understanding of trail systems in the area is important in identifying opportunities for trail linkages and enhancements. Wexford County is host to a number of significant trail systems, which are organized by use on the following page. Additionally, a number of regionally significant non-motorized trail systems are located just outside of the County, such as the Big M and Marzinski Equestrian Trail.

Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity for both residents and visitors. Some trails within the Manistee National Forest also permit snowmobile and ORV usage. The majority of snowmobiling is on the DNR Designated Snowmobile Trails, which are concentrated in the southern and western parts of the County. Staging areas are located along the routes. Snowmobiles are also allowed on the White Pine Trail. Cadillac Winter Promotions is a volunteer snowmobile trail grooming group sponsored by the State of Michigan. The group is responsible for maintaining and grooming around 200 miles of snowmobile trails.

ORV Trails

Long Lake Wexford Motorized Cycle Trail
This 27-mile ORV trail is motorcycle-only. The trail is sandy and mostly wooded. It is located south of Manton.

Missaukee Junction ORV Trail

Over 15 miles of ORV Trail located north of Cadillac on state land.

Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail

The Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail (MC-CCT) covers hundreds of miles and connects many trail systems throughout Michigan's lower peninsula. The MCCT trail is designed for off-road motorcycles and runs through Henderson, Boon, and Antioch Townships.

North Missaukee Trail/Route

The ORV Route and Trail run through the north-

west corner of the County in Liberty Township. The Route is for ORVs of all sizes, where as the Trail is for ORVs 50 inches in width or less, including off-road motorcycles. The Route connects to the MCCCT.

Hiking, Biking, Cross-Country Ski Trails

Cadillac Pathway

The Pathway has over 11 miles of maintained trail for non-motorized use. During the winter season, both the Cross Country Ski Trail and Winter Sports Trail are groomed by volunteers from the Friends of the Cadillac Pathway. During the non-winter months, the Pathway is used by hikers and bikers.

Clam River Greenway

This paved greenway in the City of Cadillac features a wooden boardwalk, sound garden, sun dial, gardens, and bridge opening to the Clam River. The Greenway connects Lake Cadillac trails to the Cadillac Area Sports Association Soccer & Baseball fields.

North Country Trail/Iron Belle Trail

The North Country Trail is a National Scenic Trail, stretching 4,600 miles over seven states, from New York to North Dakota. Ten national forests, and more than 150 public lands, the North Country Trail is the longest National Scenic Trail in the United States.

The Trail enters Wexford County in Springville Township and follows county roads until reaching a large block of public land along the Big Manistee River. The trail follows the north side of the Manistee River to the east side of Wexford County, where it exits the County toward Fife Lake. The trail connects to the Manistee River Trail at Coates Highway to the South and the Suspension Bridge to the North. Hikers can continue on to Seaton Creek Campground and many primitive sites along the trail.

White Pine Trail

Hendrick Meijer White Pine Trail follows the former rail road grade south of Cadillac ninety-two miles to Grand Rapids. This trail system is operated as a state park by the Department

of Natural Resources, and is maintained with assistance from the Friends of the White Pine Trail.

Mackenzie Trail

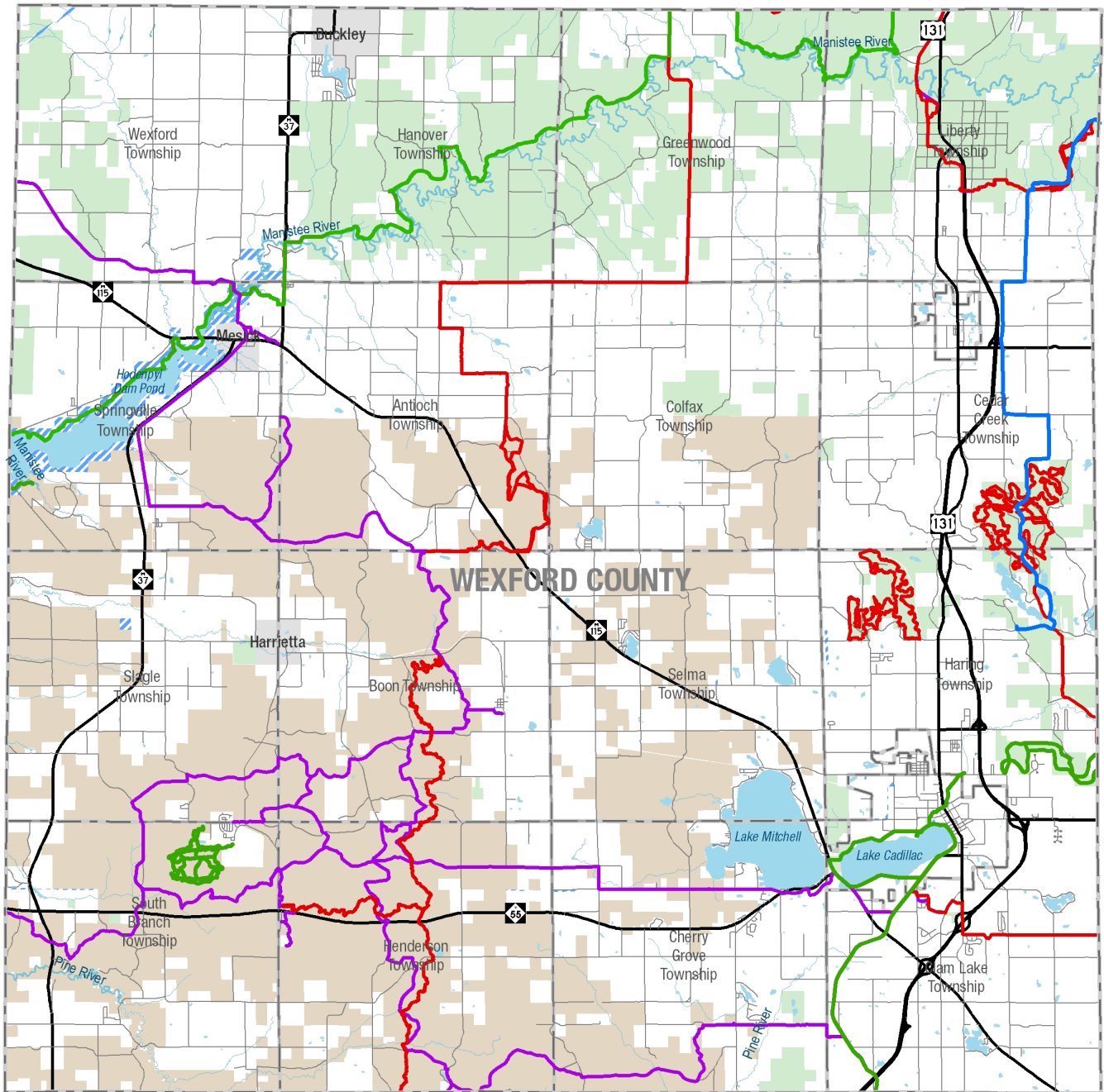
The trail includes over 10 miles of loops of varying lengths for cross-country skiing and mountain biking. The trail is located in the Huron Manistee National Forest, northwest of the Caberfae ski area. The loops range in difficulty.

Equestrian Trails

Shore to Shore Trail

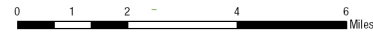
A southern spur off the main 220 mile Shore to Shore trail comes down into Wexford County towards Cadillac, passing through Hopkins Creek and Log Lake State Forest Campgrounds. The trail is open to horseback riders and hikers.

DRAFT



Wexford County Trails

- Non-Motorized Trail
- Equestrian Trail
- ORV and/or Motorcycle
- Snowmobile Trail
- Local and County Roads
- State Trunkline
- Township
- State Land
- Consumers Energy
- Huron Manistee National Forest
- City or Village



Data Source: Michigan Open Data; Networks Northwest; Wexford County

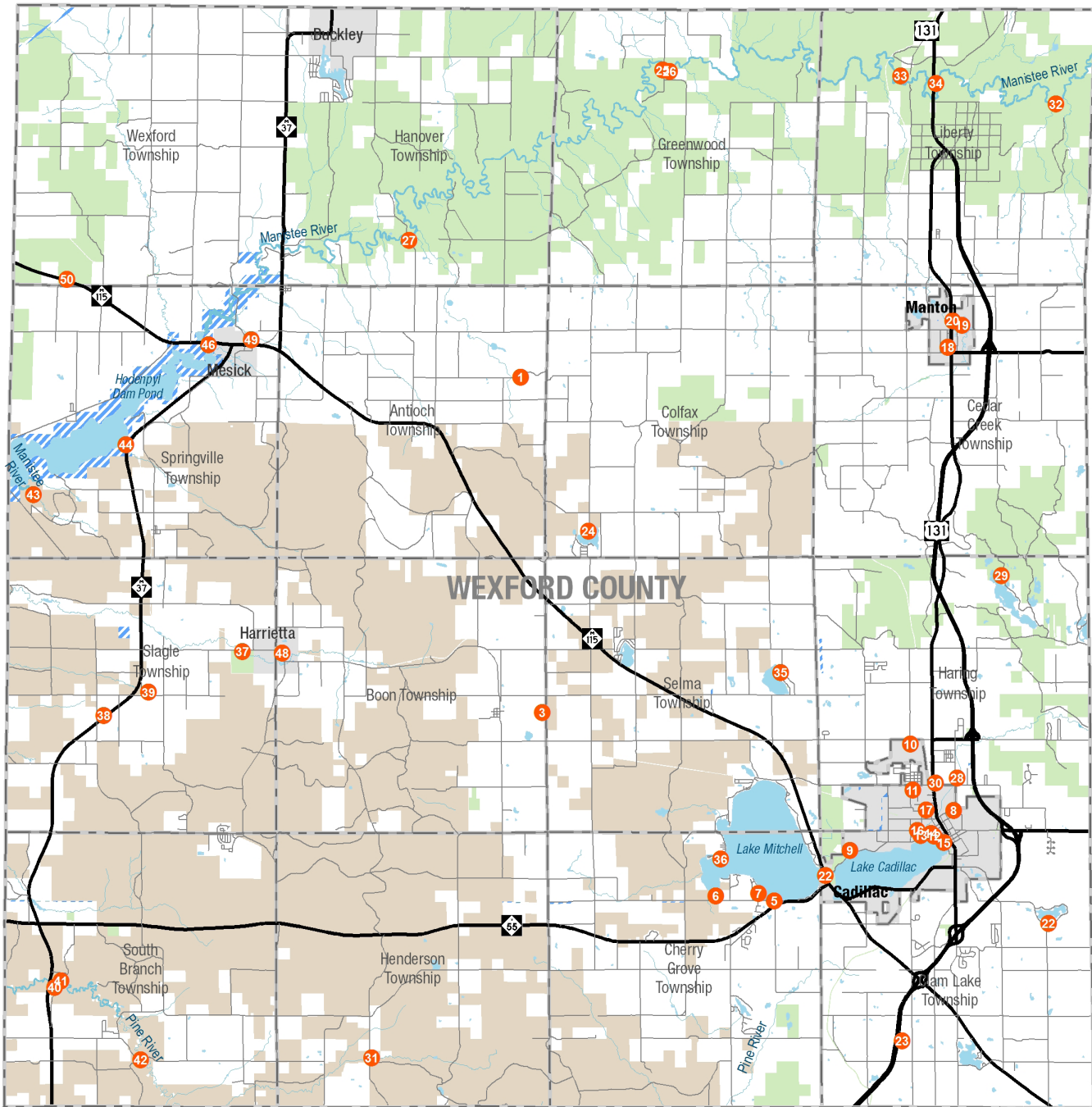
Produced By: Networks Northwest, December 2018



No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
Antioch Township				
1	Antioch Township Park	Twp	Fishing	40 Acres
Boon Township				
2	Boon Township Park	Twp	Playground	
3	Pinoco Park	County	See pg. XX	40 Acres
Cedar Creek Township				
4	Manton Free Methodist Campground	Church	Camping, Childrens Play Equipment, playfeilds	50 Acres
Cherry Grove Township				
5	Forest Lawk Drive Boat Launch	Twp	Boat Launch	.2 Acre
6	Hemlock Campground	USFS	Camping, Boat Launch, Fishing	7 Acres
7	West Shore Park Boat Launch	Twp	Boat Launch	.1 Acre
City of Cadillac				
8	Diggins Hill	City	Sledding, Tennis Courts, and Disc Golf	14 Acres
9	Kenwood Beach, Park, and Boat Launch	City	Picnic Sites, Beach, Swimming, Boat Launch, Children's Play Equipment, Nature Trail, Disc Golf	80 Acres
10	Wexford County Airport	County-City	County Paved Runway, Turf Runway	100+ Acres
11	Cadillac Area Dog Park	City	Large and small dog fenced-in areas, water, and a small covered shelter	2.5 Acres
12	Lakefront Park	City	Shuffleboard, Picnic Sites, Benches, Boat Launch/Docking, Pier/Fishing, Playground Equipment, Restrooms, 1.25 mile paved and lighted Keith McKellop Walkway. The park is officially part of the Cadillac Commons site (#15).	15 Acres
13	CASA Feilds	City	Baseball Field, Softball Field	6 Acres
14	Chris Blackburn Memorial Skate Park	City	Skate Park Equipment	.5 Acre
15	Cadillac Commons	City	Picnic Areas, Dock, Performing Arts Pavilion, Amphitheatre, Restroom, Splash pad, Fire-place, Synthetic Ice Rink, Covered Market-place, bike racks, and in 2020, a trailhead for the White Pine Trail. The site hosts concerts, music in the park, and several markets and festivals.	5.3 Acres
16	Community Tennis Courts	CAPS/City	Tennis Courts	2 Acres
17	Kiwanis Park	CAPS	Soccer, Basketball, Children's Play Equipment	.75 Acre

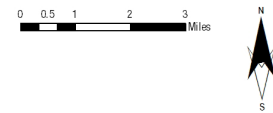
No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
City of Manton				
18	Railroad Park	City	Shuffleboard, Picnic Sites, Band Shell	1 Acre
19	Lake Billings Park	City	Camping, Picnic Sites, Swimming, Playfields, Fishing	16 Acres
20	Rotary Memorial Park		Swimming, Picnic Sites, Fishing, Horseshoes, military museum	4.7 Acres
Clam Lake Township				
21	Mitchell State Park	State	Camping, Swimming, Picnic Sites, Boat Launch, Play Equipment	32.4 Acres
22	Berry Lake Access Site	State	Boat Launch, Fishing	1 Acre
23	NB Rest Area Road Eckhert Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	28 Acres
Colfax Township				
24	Lester A. Barnes Memorial Park	Twp	Camping, Picnic Sites, Boat Launch, Fishing, Swimming	67 Acres
Greenwood Township				
25	Baxter Bridge Access Site	State	Fishing, Boat Launch	1 Acre
26	Baxter Bridge Camp-ground and Canoe Camp	State	Camping, Boat Launch	25 Acres
Hanover Township				
27	Harvey Bridge Access Site	State	Boat Launch, Fishing	1 Acre
Haring Charter Township				
28	CASA Complex	CAPS		50 Acres
29	Long Lake S.F. Camp-ground	State	Camping, Fishing, Boating	10 Acres
30	Wexford Civic Center & Northern District Fairgrounds	County	See Page XX	40 Acres
Henderson Township				
31	Ravine Picnic Area and Campground	USFS	Picnic Sites, Camping, Hiking Trail, Fishing	3 Acres
Liberty Township				
32	Chase Creek Camp-ground		Camping, Boat Launch	10 Acres
33	Old 131 Bridge Camp-ground and Canoe Camp	State	Camping, Boat Launch	10 Acres
34	Casey Jones Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	15 Acres
Selma Township				
35	Pleasant Lake Park	Twp	Picnic Sites, Swimming	.3 Acre
36	Camp Torenta	CAPS	Picnic Sites, Ball Diamond, Tennis Courts, Archery, Swimming, Fishing, Hiking/Nature Trails, Basketball	160 Acres

No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
Slagle Township				
37	State Fish Hatchery	State	Picnic Sites, Exhibitions	160 Acres
38	Juluis Becker Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	5 Acres
39	Slagle Township Park	Twp	Horseshoe Pits, Ball Diamonds, Picnic Sites, Volleyball	5 Acres
South Branch Township				
40	Peterson Bridge South Camping Area	USFS	Camping, Picnic Sites, Fishing, Canoe Launch	11 Acres
41	Peterson Bridge North Canoe Access and Camping Area	USFS	Boat Launch, Picnic Sites, Fishing	10 Acres
42	Dodson Bridge Canoe Landing	USFS	Boat Launch, Picnic Sites, Fishing	10 Acres
Springville Township				
43	Seaton Creek Picnic Area and Campground	State	Camping, Picnic Sites, Boating, Nature Study Trail	12 Acres
44	Hodenpyl Backwater Scenic Turnout	State	Picnic Sites	2 Acres
45	Mesick Wildlife Sanctuary	State	Fishing, Nature Study, Walking Trails	785 Acres
46	Mesick Memorial Park		Picnic Sites, Fishing	2 Acres
Village of Buckley				
47	Buckley-Hanover Activities Center	Village	Basketball, Tennis/Shuffleboard	1 Acre
Village of Harrietta				
48	Harrietta Community Park	Village	Children's Play Equipment	.3 Acre
Village of Mesick				
49	Mesick Community Park	Village	Ball Diamonds, Tennis/Shuffleboard, Basketball, Horseshoes, Childrens Play Equipment	5.7 Acres
Wexford Township				
50	Keith Baguley Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	3 Acres



Wexford County Recreation

- Recreation Assets
- State Land
- Huron Manistee National Forest
- Consumers Energy
- Local and County Roads
- State Trunkline
- City or Village
- Township
- ~ Rivers
- Lakes



Data Source: Michigan Open Data; Networks Northwest; Wexford County

Produced By: Networks Northwest, October 2018




4. Process and Public Input



Process

Wexford County contracted with Networks Northwest for the development of the Parks and Recreation Plan in 2023. The process began in early 2023 with the development of the 2023 Wexford County Parks and Recreation Survey guided by the Recreation and Building Committee. Throughout the late spring and summer, multiple public input opportunities were offered through community pop-up sessions at local events, collecting input from youth and child aged residents, and a community open house.




[Wexford County Parks & Recreation Plan Resource Page: nwm.org/WexfordRecPlan](https://nwm.org/WexfordRecPlan)
[Survey Link: bit.ly/WexfordRecSurvey](https://bit.ly/WexfordRecSurvey)

Survey Analysis

After review of the previous plan, a survey was developed and reviewed by the Wexford County Recreation and Building Committee and released the 2023 Wexford County Parks and Recreation Survey. The survey was released in March of 2023 and extended for additional response until August 31, 2023.

The survey was advertised through multiple press releases, social media, survey business cards, local units of government, and local organizations. Full results of the survey can be found in Appendix XX. 464 responses were received during the survey response period of which nearly 88% were permanent or seasonal residents of Wexford County.

The City of Cadillac was the most populous jurisdiction for response with 144, followed by Cherry Grove Township (49) and Haring Township (40). Seasonal residents lived nearby in areas like Grawn and Grand Rapids and as far as North Carolina. For those who do not reside in Wexford County, many lived in the surrounding counties and even Chicago and Cape Cod. The 61 to 70 years old bracket brought in the most responses at 102, followed closely by 41 to 50 (97), 51 to 60 years old (78) and 31 to 40 years old (72). Additionally, 80 respondents provided an email address to be sent the digital draft Parks and Recreation Plan once the public comment period commences.

When asked about the recreational activities that households enjoy, Walking was selected the most at 367, followed by Festivals (257), Hiking (245), Biking and Concerts (both 238) and Kayaking (237). Other activities that received over

200 selections included Nature/Wildlife Viewing, Camping, and Other. Other selections provided by respondents included Swimming, Boating, Mountain Biking, and Hockey amongst others.

Just over 87% of respondents participated in recreational activities at least once a week or more. 17% marked daily, 31% for 4 to 6 times a week and 28% for 2 to 3 times a week. The primary reason for recreational activity was Physical Health (41%), Mental Health (21%), and Socialization (13%). Other reasons included Family Time, all of the options, and general enjoyment. Over 15% of respondents identified barriers that prevent them from using or participating in recreational opportunities. The most common barriers included accessibility (physical and financial), awareness of opportunities, and safety and cleanliness.

When asked what recreational opportunities should be added or expanded in Wexford County, Concerts was the most selected at 107. This was followed by Walking (91), Pickleball (90), Festivals (87) and Biking (81). Other activities identified included Swimming, Mountain Biking, youth related activities, and Dog Park were amongst the responses. In looking at what facilities the County could use more of Facilities for 60 plus year olds was selected 63 times with Facilities for Winter Activities and Trails - off-road, unimproved (53 each) and Natural Areas (50) following.

The Wexford Civic Center is the most popular County park with just under 50% using it Occasionally or Often, while Pinoco Park was never used by 85% of respondents. The Northern District Fairgrounds was rarely or never used by just under 80%. The Civic Center Auditorium is the most used (45%), followed by the Ice Arena (26%) and the Fairgrounds (23%). The Wexford Civic Center (39%) was also the most selected for where improvements would be liked to be made. This was followed by Northern District Fairgrounds (30%) and Pinoco Park (7%). There were various other items mentioned by respondents such as pickleball courts, Lake Mitchell area, bathrooms, and trail improvements.

When asked for specific improvements at the County Parks, plenty of ideas were generated for each park. In regards to the Civic Center some of the projects mentioned included better bathrooms, pickleball (indoor and outdoor), general updates and repairs, more activities and improved parking. The Northern District Fairgrounds potential improvements included improvements to the grandstands and other buildings, more activities and events, improved parking and accessibility, and landscaping and beautification. Improvement ideas at Pinoco Park included signage, marketing of property, facilities (bathrooms, picnic tables, playground) and activities (walking path, disc golf).

Almost 140 respondents marked a location on the map where they felt a park could be added in Wexford County (see Map xx). Additionally, they were asked to provide what they would like to see at their selected location. While Pickleball was the most commonly selected, other considerations included picnic areas, playgrounds, walking, hiking, and biking trails, campground, waterfront access, and amenities such as splash pads, tennis courts, disc golf and basketball courts.

Over 35% of responses supported the goal of "Provide recreation facilities that are available to residents of all ages and abilities, and that are operated on a year-round basis.". This was followed by "Maintain and improve existing County parks and recreation facilities." (33%) and "Support and promote Wexford County as a trail destination with an interconnected trail system." (25%). Other Goals to Consider included improvements to fairgrounds, outdoor recreation opportunities, and improvements to existing County parks.

An open ended question was asked for ways the County can achieve the goal of providing recreation to all, and that are opened year round. Ideas generated included increasing funding for parks, partnering with local organizations and communities, maintenance of existing facilities, and the promotion of recreation opportunities. Next they were asked how the County can maintain and improve existing County parks. Ideas

generated included increased funding, maintenance of parks and recreation facilities, improvements to existing parks, and the promotion of the parks. Lastly, they were asked to identify ways the County can support being a trail destination with an interconnected system. Responses included connecting trails, maintenance of trails, promotion of trails, improved signage, and amenities such as parking and bathrooms.

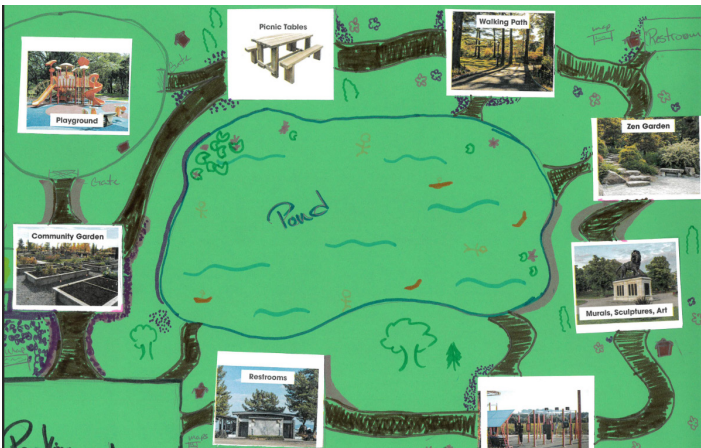
The next question asked for projects that the County can consider. There were many ideas that were generated from this including pickleball courts, bike trails, outdoor recreation, improvements to existing facilities, and more events. Lastly, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments regarding the Wexford County Parks and Recreation system. The common themes from the comments included maintenance, accessibility, new facilities to provide new opportunities, more events, and better marketing.

park features such as pathways, parking, water and landscaping. Full results can be found in Appendix XX.

Ammenity	Middle School	High School
Restrooms	15	26
Picnic Tables	7	19
Playground	9	18
Walking Path	-	17
Basketball Court	-	14
Kayak/Boat Launch	10	-
Camping	8	-
Dog Park	7	-

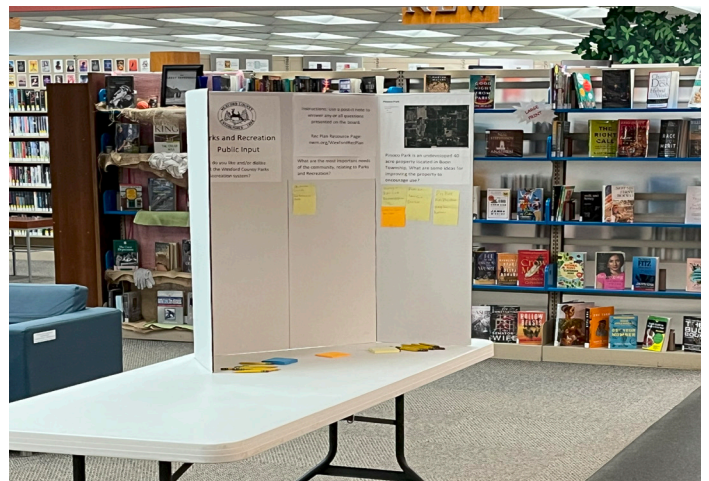
Community Pop-up Session Analysis
 Networks Northwest staff attended five different events throughout the process to offer an opportunity for public participation. Staff talked to residents and handed out survey business cards at the Manton Farmers Market (June 9, 2023 from 3pm to 6pm) and at the Freedom Festival Car Show (July 5, 2023 from 11am to 2pm) to elicit more survey responses.

In addition to these, staff attended the Buckley Old Engine Show (August 18, 2023 from 2pm to 5pm), Northern District Fair (August 19, 2023 from 12pm to 3pm), and the Wexford County Senior Expo (September 28, 2023 from 10am to 2pm). At these events, a tri-fold display board with four questions was presented for the public to respond (see Figure xx). The display board was also displayed for response at the Wexford Cadillac Public Library from September 11th, 2023 to September 19th, 2023.



School Input Session Analysis
 Networks Northwest facilitated student planning sessions at Cadillac High School and Manton Middle School. This included three 9th grade government classes, a 6th grade social studies class and one 6th grade science class.

Both classes were given 22 park amenity icons and were asked to design their perfect park. The high school students were allowed 8 amenity icons and the middle students were able to choose 6, both told that park projects have budgets and that not every feature can be included. Working in groups of 2-5, the students arranged the icons on a sheet of paper representing an open space and used markers to draw additional



The questions presented for response were: Wexford County owns The Wexford Civic Center, the Northern District Fairgrounds, and Pinoco Park. What are some improvements that could be made to The Wex and Fairgrounds? What do you like and/or dislike about the Wexford County Parks and Recreation system? What are the most important needs of the community, relating to Parks and Recreation? Pinoco Park is an undeveloped 40 acre property located in Boon Township. What are some ideas for improving the property to encourage use?

Below is an analysis of the comments received with full comments available in appendix XX.

Wexford County owns The Wexford Civic Center, the Northern District Fairgrounds, and Pinoco Park. What are some improvements that could be made to The Wex and Fairgrounds? Responses included physical improvements, amenities, and management comments such as adding a walking path, installing an outdoor PA System, LED lighting at animal barns, making space more available to rent, and removal of parking fees.

What do you like and/or dislike about the Wexford County Parks and Recreation system? Responses indicated residents enjoyed things such as places to camp, clean bathrooms, and pickleball courts. They also responded that parking fees, upkeep of parks, and need for restrooms at all sites could be worked on.

What are the most important needs of the community relating to parks and recreation? The responses to this question indicated that respondents felt that amenities and safety could be improved upon such as restrooms, picnic tables, trail enforcement, and better accessibility for mobility scooters/chairs. Other improvements included an Art Walk, trail connecting Lake City and Cadillac, or a new park in Wexford Township.

Pinoco Park is an undeveloped 40 acre property located in Boon Township. What are some ideas for improving the property to encourage use? There were a variety of potential uses mentioned

for Pinoco Park such as camping, dog park, ORV Trailhead, disc golf, pickleball and tennis courts, or a kids playground.



Wexford County Community Open House The Wexford County Parks and Recreation Community Open House was held on Thursday, September 28, 2023 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. at the Cadillac Wexford Public Library. The event was advertised through a press release, email blast to local units of government and community organizations, a flier, and social media postings. Only two members of the public attended the session to provide comments.

The Open House was set-up as a drop in style for members of the public to come in and provide comments on various prompts. The first three stations asked the public to review the current Goals and Objectives and place a dot next to the ones that they supported. They were also asked to view six different signage options and mark which they would like to see at Wexford County Parks.

The current Action Plan was also a station, and the audience was asked to mark which they support. Another station asked for improvements at the three park sites, as well as a question about funding options. The last station asked what do you like or dislike about Wexford County Parks and Recreation system, what would encourage park use, and if there is anything the County should know about Parks and Recreation.

Below is an analysis of the feedback received from the Community Open House.

Goal: Provide recreation facilities that are available to residents of all ages and abilities, and that are operated on a year-round basis.

Objectives supported:

- Support local efforts that enhance recreational opportunities in the County
- Encourage trail projects for all four seasons and for all trail users, including motorized and non-motorized uses as well as for accessibility (2x)
- Encourage and support the improvement and expansion of recreation activities in all communities throughout Wexford County
- Support enhanced communications and marketing efforts of recreation opportunities in Wexford County
- Encourage development of barrier free facilities at all parks and recreation sites (2x)

Goal: Maintain and improve existing County parks and recreation facilities.

Objectives supported:

- Provide improvements to the Wexford Ice Arena and Wexford Civic Arena/Auditorium
- NEW: Provide improvements to the Northern District Fairgrounds

Goal: Support and promote Wexford County as a trail destination with an interconnected trail system

- Support the construction, improvement, and maintenance of trails and trail crossings to connect with the existing trail network and to communities within and around Wexford County (2x)
- Promote the use of designated trails for a variety of activities, including motorized and
- Support marketing efforts that promote Wexford County as a trail destination
- Support more continuous user experiences for motorized and non-motorized trail users, including more connections to communities and other trails
- Support improved trail signage and wayfinding

Action Plan Items Supported:

- Maintain an updated 5-year recreation plan in support of recreation activities and to help ensure grant funding eligibility through the MDNR
- Replace the parking lot at the Wexford Civic Center
- Build relationships with a diversity of groups to encourage use of the County's facilities for a diversity of uses and interests through all four seasons

There was a comment left on the action plan item: "Encourage and support connecting the White Pine Trail to the Betsie Valley Trail" to include ORVs and snowmobiles. Additionally, the parking lot was mentioned as an improvement for the Wexford Civic Center.

Recreation Plan Review
To be developed

Public Hearing & Adoption
To be developed

5. Goals, Objectives & Action Plan

The goals, objectives, and action plan are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the County's values and priorities. These goals were developed based on existing facilities, public input obtained through the 2023 Wexford County Parks and Recreation Survey, meetings with the BOC Recreation and Building Committee, conversations with recreation stakeholders, and other local and regional plans and strategies.

Definitions

In order to appropriately administer goals, objectives and actions it is important to understand the roles of each and their relationship to each other.

Goals provide general direction and serve as a description of the desired future. They address issues and specific needs, but are broad in scope.

Objectives are a means of achieving goals, and are attainable.

Actions set forth the specifics necessary to accomplish objectives. One strategy might be used to accomplish multiple objectives; or an objective might require multiple strategies. Action strategies identify implementation tools (such as zoning changes) and the players involved in meeting goals and objectives.

To be revised after October 5 Meeting