

***DRAFT***



2019-2023

# Wexford County Recreation Plan



# Wexford County Recreation Plan 2019-2023

WEXFORD COUNTY, MICHIGAN

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# Introduction

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 owned 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 two federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. 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 future recreation improvements and enhancements, the Wexford County Board of Commissioners initiated an update to the 2013 Wexford County Recreation Plan in 2017. This Recreation Plan presents an evaluation of Wexford County's recreation opportunities and 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, Community Description**, includes information regarding the County's population, natural features, and other community information. The intent of this section is to provide a context for the plan that will assist in establishing goals.

**Chapter 2, Administrative Structure**, summarizes the process through which recreation decisions are made.

**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 Program** 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 Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway 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.

# Chapter 1: Community Description

Wexford County is located in the northwestern part of the Lower Peninsula, surrounded by Manistee, Grand Traverse, Missaukee, Osceola and Lake Counties.

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 region's natural resources, scenic beauty, and high quality of life have long made the area a desirable location for second homes, as well as for retirees and families. This contributed to substantial population growth through the 1970's, '80's, and '90's – Wexford County's population grew by 55% between 1970-2000. However, significant changes in the economy over the years, combined with changes in development patterns throughout the region, have had an impact on the population in Wexford County. Economic decline resulted in loss of manufacturing jobs, particularly in communities like Cadillac, which hosts numerous industries with close connections to the automotive industry. As the region contended with these and other economic challenges, its historically high growth rates slowed. Between 2000-2010, Wexford County's population grew by 7% - the County's slowest growth rate since 1960.

## 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.

Almost all of Wexford County's population growth between 2000-2010 was concentrated in age cohorts of 45 years and up. With fewer jobs available, many residents and their families left the area to find

employment opportunities elsewhere, reflected by a 20% decline in individuals aged 35-44 in Wexford County. Because this age group is most likely to be part of a household with children at home, the County also experienced a decline in all age groups between the ages of 5-19 years. Yet, as younger people and families left the region, the numbers of those aged 45 and older increased. Between 2000-2010, the number of households in Wexford County with one or more people over the age of 60 increased by about 27%. Some of this growth reflects natural age increases, as the Baby Boomers begin to reach retirement age; while some growth can be accounted for by new residents that moved to the area following retirement.

Between 2010-2017, Wexford County continued to grow in age cohorts of 55 years and up. Population in the younger cohorts has remained relatively steady when compared to the previous decade,

As individuals age, needs increase for facilities that accommodate passive recreation such as walking. Barrier-free access to recreation is particularly important for an aging population, and the provision of barrier-free and universally accessible recreation will become an increasingly high priority as the population ages. Passive recreation activities, such as walking, also increases in importance for an aging population.

Despite declining numbers of children and family households, individuals under the age of 19 make up a quarter of Wexford County's total population (25.5%). 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 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

reports that 2016 per capita income in Wexford County was \$33,435, compared to \$44,253 for the statewide per capita income. In 2016, the median household income in the County was \$40,417, which is 25.7% below the state's median household income of \$50,803.

Despite lower incomes, however, costs of living are typically higher, and many households in the area struggle to make ends meet. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2016 poverty rate was 18.8% in Wexford County, compared to 16.3% in Michigan.

Lower-income residents can face greater challenges in accessing recreation, and providing recreational opportunities to those with limited needs is an important consideration when planning for recreation in Wexford County.

### Seasonal Population

Wexford County's outdoor recreation opportunities contribute to a significant seasonal population. Tourists and seasonal residents alike travel to the region to take advantage of the state and federal forest lands, prime inland lakes and streams, and trails.

Data available from the Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Study (2014) shows changes in population by month in each county in Northwest Michigan, including Wexford County. Wexford County's population is estimated to increase by 21% in the summer months to over 41,000. This includes seasonal residents, overnight visitors, and other transient residents that are staying in second homes, campgrounds, RV parks, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and cottages. This increased activity brings added visitor spending throughout the County, but also comes with community costs in the form of added maintenance for trash removal, landscaping, and other activities. With limited recreation budgets and staff in many communities, some communities struggle to plan for, budget, and address seasonal usage patterns at local parks.

### Land Use & Planning

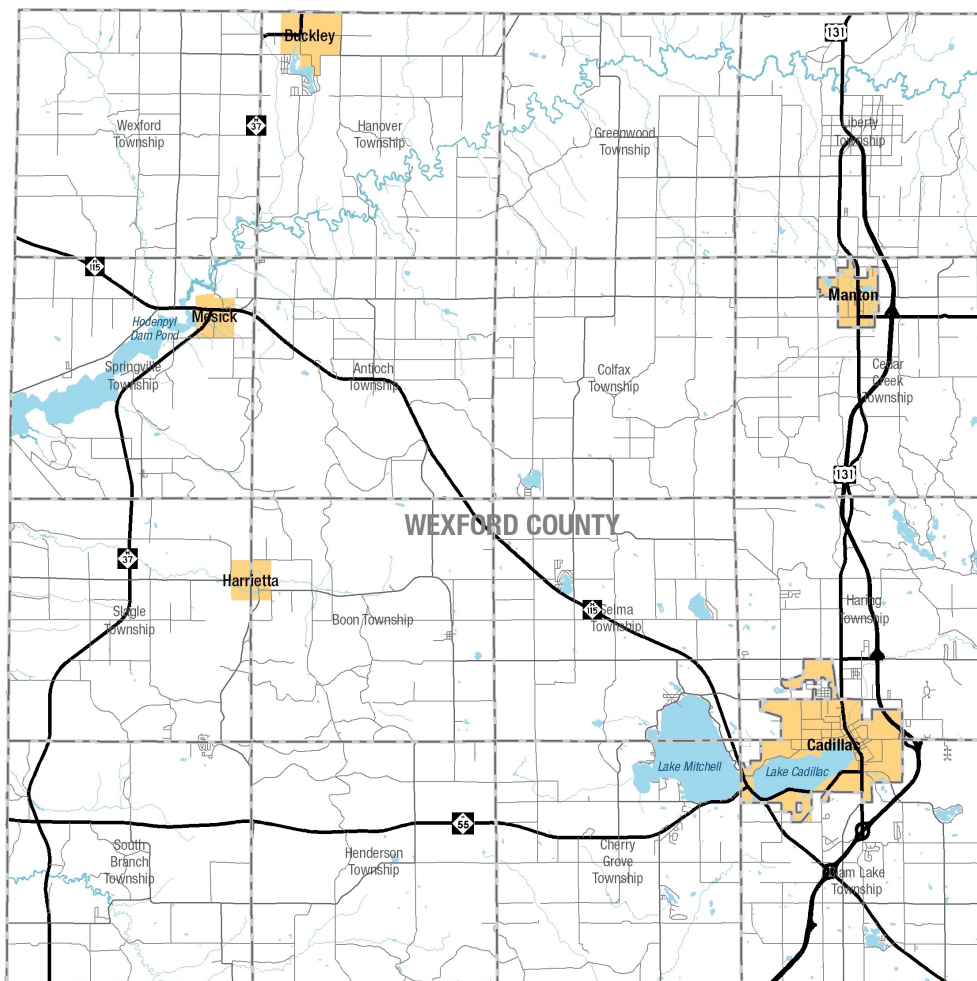
Any recreational expansion or newly-created recreational facilities should be coordinated with the community to insure appropriate location for the proposed activity, and consistency with the township, village, or city master plan and zoning ordinances as applicable.

**Table: Change in Wexford County Age Cohorts, 2010-2017**

Age Cohort	2010 Population	2017 Population	Change	% Change
Under 5 years	2,223	2,056	-167	-7.5%
5 to 9 years	2,181	2,213	32	1.5%
10 to 14 years	2,186	2,283	97	4.4%
15 to 19 years	2,139	1,924	-215	-10.1%
20 to 24 years	1,735	1,807	72	4.1%
25 to 34 years	3,713	3,826	113	3.0%
35 to 44 years	3,920	3,676	-244	-6.2%
45 to 54 years	5,063	4,284	-779	-15.4%
55 to 59 years	2,365	2,568	203	8.6%
60 to 64 years	2,018	2,416	398	19.7%
65 to 74 years	2,863	3,663	800	27.9%
75 to 84 years	1,680	1,819	139	8.3%
85 years & over	655	741	86	13.1%
Total	32,741	33,276	535	1.6%

*Source: US Census Population Estimates*





Data Source: Michigan Open Data; Networks Northwest; Wexford County  
 Produced By: Networks Northwest, April 2018



## Transportation Systems

### Highways

The County is served by six state/federal highways including U.S.-131, Old US-131/Business US-131, M-115, M-55, M-37, and M-42.

### Public Transportation

The Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority, or WexExpress, is a door-to-door public transit service for residents and visitors of Wexford County.

### Air and Rail Service

The Wexford County Airport is open to the public and is a general aviation airport. It is located two miles north of the City of Cadillac on land owned by the City of Cadillac and Wexford County. The airport is

operated by the Wexford County Airport Board Authority.

Wexford county is serviced by the Great Lakes Railway Company from Clare, Mt. Pleasant, Midland and points south to Traverse City, Yuma, and toward Petoskey. The rail north of Yuma 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-Croswell-Lupton, 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 Pine River are federal Wild and Scenic Rivers. 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.

# Chapter 2: Administrative Structure

## Organizational Structure

The Wexford County Board of Commissioners (BOC) consists of nine members that are elected by the public every two years. The County Board adopts budgets, approves contracts, adopts policies, and oversees staff. Budgets, planning, staffing, and other issues related to parks, recreation, and other County facilities are also overseen by the BOC's Recreation and Building Committee.

## Staff, Relationship with Other Agencies, & Volunteers

Under contract with the County, the Boon Sports Management Board oversees the maintenance and operations of the complex, and reports to the BOC's Recreation and Building Committee. Boon Sports Management is responsible for maintaining all of the Civic Center facilities. The County and Boon Sports Management are operating under a ten year contract.

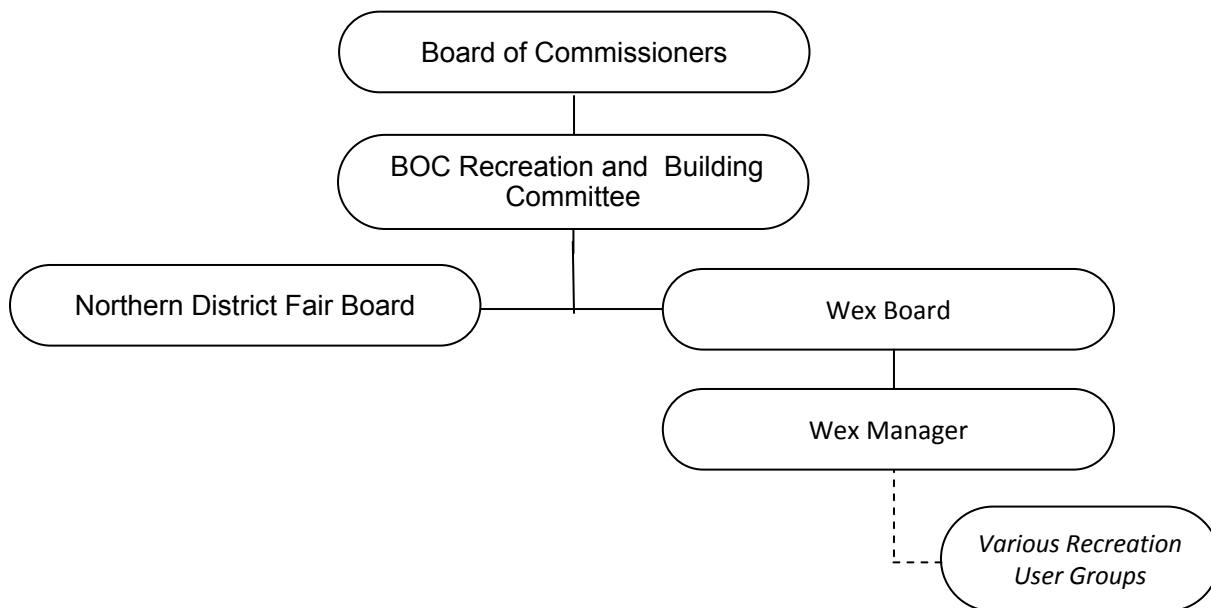
Boon Sports Management staffs the Wexford Civic

Center with one full-time staff member (the manager), and 10-12 part-time employees. The manager is in charge of day-to-day operations, part-time staff, promotion and marketing activities, maintenance of the grounds. User groups and different community groups provide key support for the facilities.

Wexford County also partners with the Fair Board for use of the fair grounds. The Fair Board has complete access and use of the facilities at the Fairgrounds and Civic Center for three weeks every August. The County maintains the buildings located on the Fairgrounds.

## Funding & Budgeting

The County General Fund is the primary source of funding for park maintenance, improvements, and activities. The 2017-2018 parks and recreation budget was \$58,000; the 2018-2019 budget (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31) is \$58,000. The proposed budget for 2019-2020 is \$58,000.



## Chapter 3: Recreation Inventory

A wealth of recreation opportunities are available to Wexford County residents and visitors. These opportunities are fundamental to the overall quality of life, and can serve as a strategic asset in new economic activity and community enhancements. An understanding of the current recreation facilities in Wexford County—beyond those owned by the County—will provide greater context for determining gaps, needs, and priorities, and for identifying opportunities for support, promotion and partnership.

The following recreation inventory is based on information acquired through site visits, input from recreation stakeholders, and a review of local and regional plans. The map on the next page shows the location of the County-owned facilities, as well as other public recreation facilities in the County. For the County-owned facilities, information is provided on facility type, size, service area, amenities, and accessibility. Discussion from the public and stakeholder input is also reflected on the following pages. Because of their importance to residents, the inventory also identifies parks and recreation facilities found regionally.

### Accessibility

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, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans* (MDNR, 2016). These criteria are based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. To assist with the assessments, the planning committee referenced the New England ADA Center “Checklists.”

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 & Northern District Fairgrounds

The 40 acre site is home to the Wexford Civic Center, including the Civic Arena and Ice Arena, and the Northern District Fairgrounds. The facilities serve residents from around the County as well as members of nearby communities. Public input received through the survey emphasized the importance of the facility to its residents and businesses.

The Wexford Civic Arena and Ice Arena is an important connection for indoor recreation and entertainment in the County. The Wex is an important hub for hockey, as well as all kinds of events and activities. Efforts to promote use of the space to different user groups and organizations, and partnerships with area businesses, have helped increase activity at the Civic Center in recent years.

The facility hosts a number a large community events, including Project Christmas, the annual Governor's Breakfast, the annual Senior Expo, Cadillac Pop Culture Con, gun and knife shows, blood drives, and professional wrestling events.

**Ice Arena:** The Wex is a regional hub for hockey and figure skating. The Ice Arena hosts adult hockey leagues, high school youth hockey practice and games, learn-to-skate programs, and public open skate. The ice is ready by October and typically removed by April. When the ice is removed, the arena is used for a variety of other activities, including roller derby and dryland training.

**Civic Arena and Auditorium:** The 20,000 sq. foot Auditorium is used for a diversity of public and private events including banquets, concerts, trade and consumer shows, wedding receptions, a circus, and more. The space can accommodate a large number of vendors and customers, even RVs. The bleachers fold out with seating for 1,800. There is additional chair seating for approximately 800.

A commercial kitchen services both the Ice Arena and Civic Arena/Auditorium, which each have their

own concession stands. The facilities also share a large parking area.

**Northern District Fairgrounds:** Annual community events are hosted here, most notably, the Northern District Fair. 2018 marked the 110th Northern District Fair here. Events include the Farm Stock Tractor Pull, Demo Derby, livestock judging, pie baking contest, livestock market sales, garden tractor pulls and a battle of the bands in the grandstand. The Northern District Fair Board has access to the entire Civic Center for the full month of August every year.

The Octagonal Building is located on the Fairgrounds. The historic building was closed in 2015 by the Wexford County Board of Commissioners as a safety precaution. Originally built in 1908 for the first fair in Cadillac, it is said to be one of two left in Michigan (the other is on the Calhoun County Fairgrounds in Marshall). The Octagonal Building Committee was dissolved by the Board of Commissioners in 2018.

### Accessibility Assessment = 4

**Public & Stakeholder Input:** At 84%, the majority of survey respondents indicated that they use the Wexford Civic Center facilities. The Ice Arena and Civic Auditorium had nearly the same reported usage (50%) among survey respondents. Use of the Fairgrounds was only slightly lower (46%).

Survey comments addressed the need for improvements to the Wexford Civic Center, ranging from general updates to specific areas for improvement. Many were general comments about the need for updates/upgrades to the "Wex" facilities. Others cited specific areas for improvement, the most common of which were the parking lot (21 comments), locker rooms, octagon building, fairgrounds, and auditorium.

The facility is in need of some large capital improvement projects including the HVAC system in both the ice arena and auditorium, the auditorium roof, and the parking lot.





## Pinoco Park

This 40-acre County-owned parcel is located in Boon Township. There is an unpaved access drive that leads to a turn-around on the property. There are no facilities on the site.

The parcel was previously owned by 4-H and MSU Extension. The County has owned the parcel since the late 1990s. There may have been a previous interest in using the site for a horse arena and/or camping. However, the site remain undeveloped.

## Accessibility Assessment = 1

**Public & Stakeholder Input:** In response to use of Pinoco County Park, the majority of respondents indicated that they “never” use the park. Few indicated “rarely” or “occasionally” using it. Conversations had with the recreation stakeholders throughout the planning process also indicate a lack of awareness about the facility.

Please refer to the map on page \_ for the park’s location.





## Recreation Assets

A wide variety of public and private recreation opportunities are available within Wexford County as well as a short distance away. Townships, cities, and villages maintain local parks and recreation facilities, and the extensive state and federal land includes a number of trail systems, campgrounds, boat launches, and more.

Non-profit organizations such as the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy (CALC) also contribute to the recreation and scenic opportunities in the County. 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.

Private recreation facilities, such as Caberfae Peaks Ski & Golf Resort and Evergreen Resort, are also widely available. The County is home to numerous



privately owned campgrounds, golf courses, downhill and cross country ski facilities, snowmobile clubs, horseback riding facilities, and more.

## State and Federal Land

The Huron-Manistee National Forest 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.

## 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 (MCCCT) covers hundreds of miles and connects many trail systems throughout Michigan's lower peninsula. The MCCCT 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 northwest 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 largest 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. A spur, or loop to the North Country Trail – the Manistee River Trail – enters Wexford County to go to Seaton USFS Campground.

### 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.

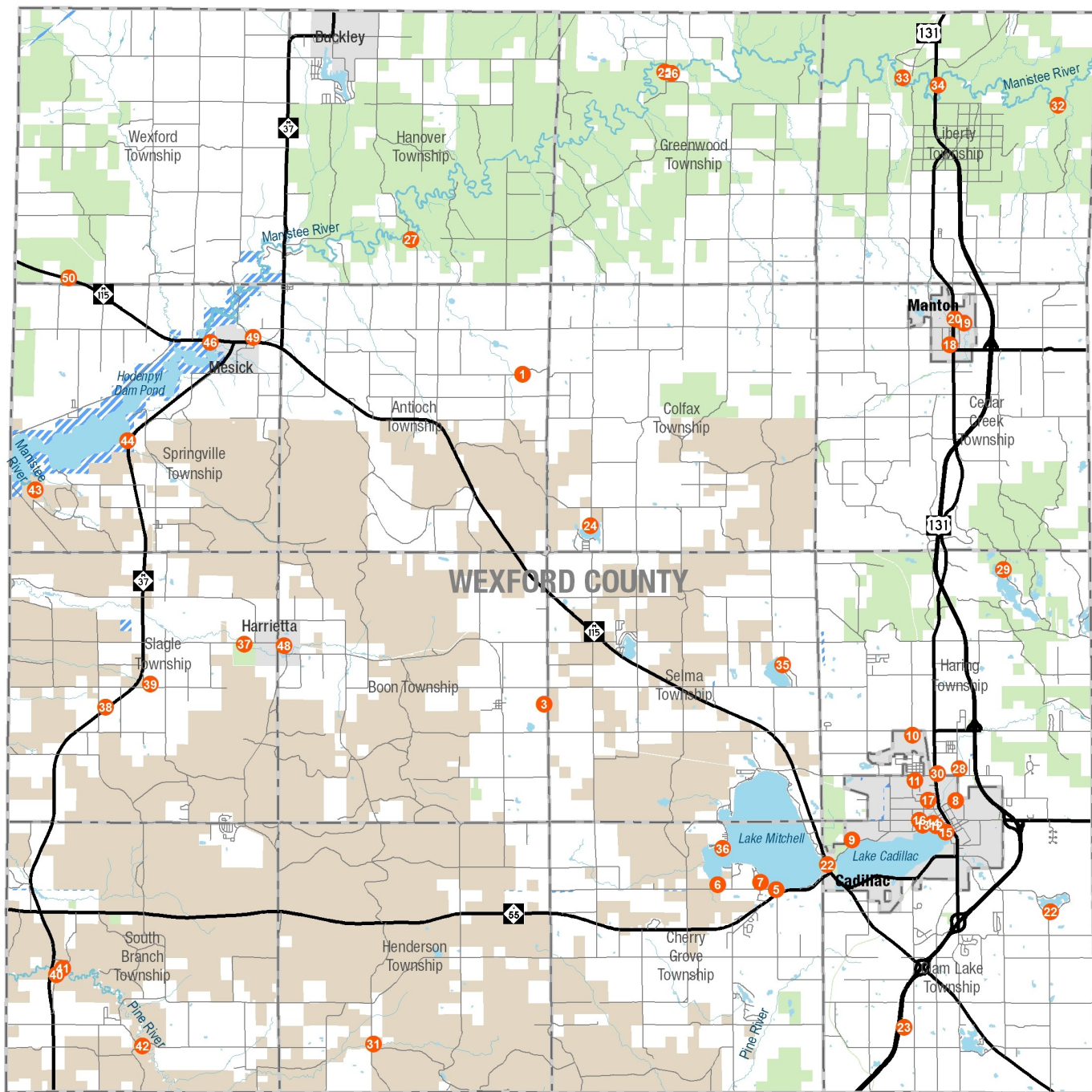
## Equestrian Trails

### 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.

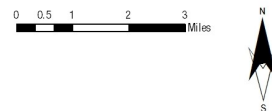
A number of regionally significant non-motorized trail systems are located just outside of the County, including the Big M, Marzinski Equestrian Trail, the Manistee River Trail, and the Fife Lake & North Country Trail Loop.





### Wexford County Recreation

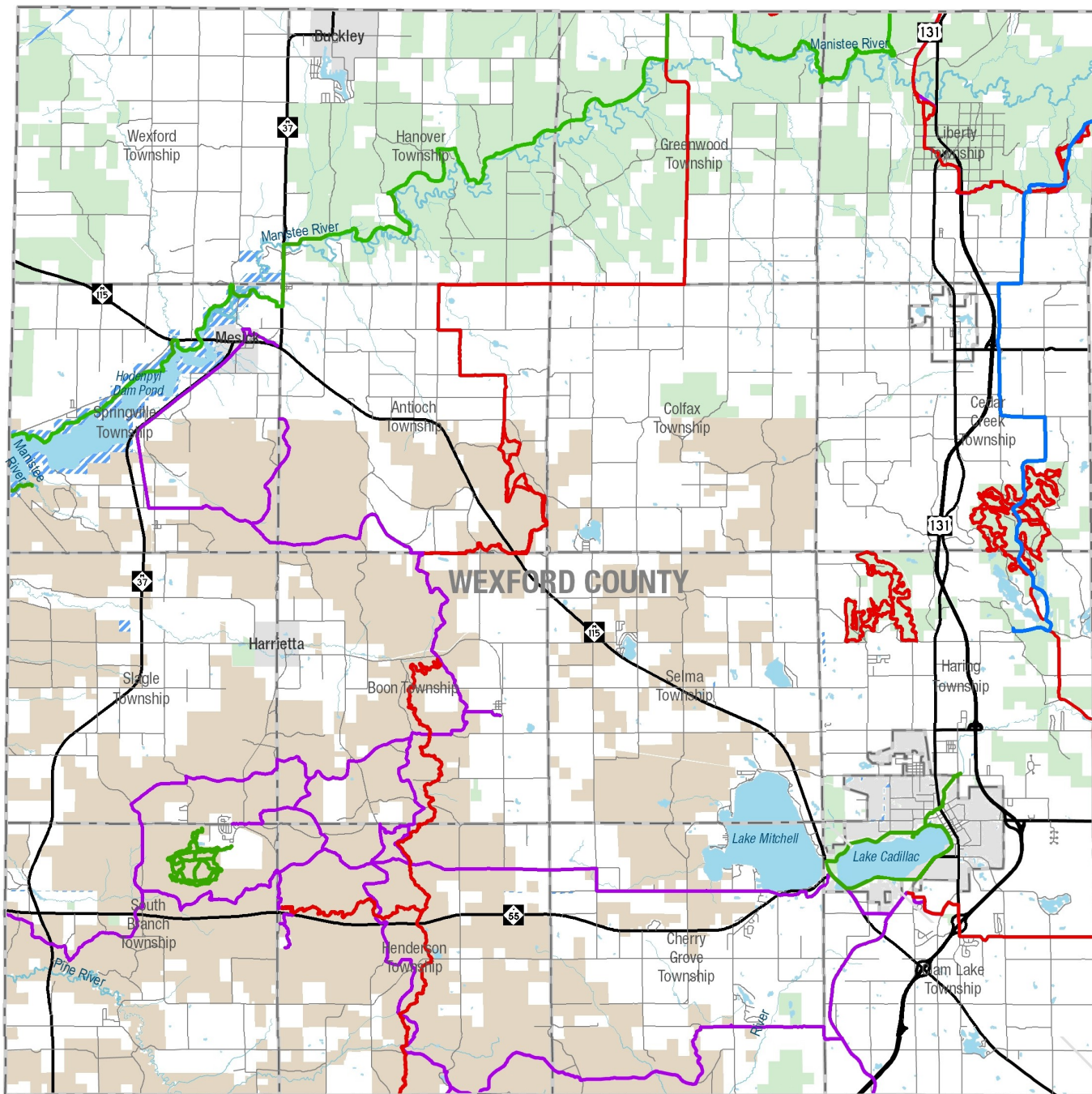
- Recreation Assets
- State Land
- Huron Manistee National Forest
- Consumers Energy
- Local and County Roads
- State Trunkline
- City or Village
- Township
- ~ Rivers
- Lakes



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

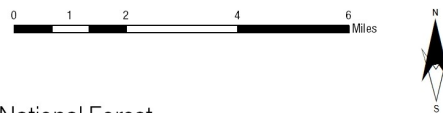
Produced By: Networks Northwest, October 2018





### Wexford County Trails

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



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

Produced By: Networks Northwest, October 2018



## Other Public Recreation Assets

No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
<b>Antioch Township</b>				
1	Antioch Township Park	Twp	Fishing	40 acres
<b>Boon Township</b>				
2	Boon Township Park	Twp	Playground	
3	Pinoco Park	County	Undeveloped park unpaved access drive	40 acres
<b>Cedar Creek Township</b>				
4	Manton Free Methodist Campground	Church	Camping, Children's Play equipment, Playfields	50 acres
<b>Cherry Grove Township</b>				
5	Forest Lawn 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
<b>City of Cadillac</b>				
8	Diggins Hill	City	Sledding, Tennis Courts	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	Paved Runway, Turf Runway	100+ acres
11	Cadillac Area Dog Park	City	Children's Play Equipment, Ball Diamond, Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, Volleyball Courts	8 acres
12	Lakefront Park	City	Shuffleboard, Picnic Sites, Benches, Boat Launch/Docking, Pier/Fishing, Playground Equipment, Performing Arts Pavilion, Walking Paths, Restrooms	2 acres
13	CASA Fields	City	Baseball Field, Softball Field	6 acres
14	Chris Blackburn Memorial Skate Park	City	Skate Park Equipment	.5 acres
15	Cadillac City Park	City	Picnic Area, Dock, Rotary Performing Arts Pavilion, Amphitheatre	2 acre
16	Community Tennis Courts	CAPS/ City	Tennis Courts	2 acre
17	Kiwanis Park	CAPS	Soccer, Basketball, Children's Play Equipment	.75 acre
<b>City of Manton</b>				
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	City	Swimming, Picnic Sites, Fishing, Horseshoes, military museum	4.7 acres



No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
<b>Clam Lake Township</b>				
21	Mitchell State Park	State	Camping, Swimming, Picnic Sites, Boat Launch, Play	32.4 acres
22	Berry Lake Access Site	State	Boat Launch, Fishing	1 acre
23	NB Rest Area Ed Eckert Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	28 acres
<b>Colfax Township</b>				
24	Lester A. Barnes Memorial Park		Camping, Picnic Sites, Boat Launch, Fishing, Swimming	67 acres
<b>Greenwood Township</b>				
25	Baxter Bridge Access Site	State	Fishing, Boat Launch	1 acre
26	Baxter Bridge, Campground and Canoe Camp	State	Camping, Boat Launch	25 acres
<b>Hanover Township</b>				
27	Harvey Bridge Access Site	State	Boat Launch, Fishing	1 acre
<b>Haring Charter Township</b>				
28	CASA Complex	CAPS		50 acres
29	Long Lake S.F. Campground	State	Camping, Fishing, Boating	10 acres
30	Wexford Civic Arena	County	See Page _	40 acres
<b>Henderson Township</b>				
31	Ravine Picnic Area and Campground	USFS	Picnic Sites, Camping, Hiking Trail, Fishing	3 acres
<b>Liberty Township</b>				
32	Chase Creek Campground		Camping, Boat Launch	10 acres
33	Old 131 Bridge Campground and Canoe Camp	State	Camping, Boat Launch	10 acres
34	Casey Jones Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	15 acres
<b>Selma Township</b>				
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
<b>Slagle Township</b>				
37	State Fish Hatchery	State	Picnic Sites, Exhibitions	160 acres
38	Julius Becker Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	5 acres
39	Slagle Township Park	Twp	Horseshoe Pits, Ball Diamonds, Picnic Sites, Volleyball	5 acres

No.	Location/Name	Owner	Description of Facilities Available	Size
<b>South Branch Township</b>				
40	Peterson Bridge South Camping Area	USFS	Camping, Picnic Sites, Fishing, Canoe Launch	11 acres
41	Peterson Bridge North Canoe Access & Camping Area	USFS	Boat Launch, Picnic Sites, Fishing	10 acres
42	Dodson Bridge Canoe Landing	USFS	Boat Launch, Picnic Sites, Fishing	10 acres
<b>Springville Township</b>				
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
<b>Village of Buckley</b>				
47	Buckley-Hanover Activities Center	Village	Basketball, Tennis/ Shuffleboard	1 acre
<b>Village of Harrietta</b>				
48	Harrietta Community Park	Village	Children's Play Equipment	.3 acre
<b>Village of Mesick</b>				
49	Mesick Community Park	Village	Ball diamonds, Tennis/Shuffleboard, Basketball/Horseshoes, Children's Play Equipment	5.7 acres
<b>Wexford Township</b>				
50	Keith Baguley Roadside Park	State	Picnic Sites	3 acres

## MDNR Grant History

### Grantee

Wexford County - Wexford County

Project No. BF91-360

Project County: Wexford

Project Year: 1991

Project Title: Wexford Arena-Project 2

Project Status: Grant Closed

Grant Amount: \$108,000.00

### Scope Item:

Heating System

Insulated Doors

Main Entrance Canopy

Pave Lot and Roadway

Replace Roofing

Project Description: Parking lot/roadway and main building entry improvements, heating system and replace roof.

## Chapter 4: Planning Process

The Wexford County Recreation Plan update was developed by the Wexford County Board of Commissioners Recreation and Building Committee, with assistance from Networks Northwest. The Plan was developed using the Systems Approach to Planning, that first examines the information already available; collects public input; and develops goals and objectives based on areas of need from public input and the existing information. This is one of the recommended planning methods by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Information and feedback were collected through a Recreation Inventory update; public input received through a questionnaire; committee discussions; stakeholder interviews; and additional research and analysis conducted by Networks Northwest. Data and public input were used to develop an effective set of goals and objectives that accurately reflect the needs of Wexford County residents and visitors, and capacity of the County. By using this Systems Approach, the community can be confident that their goals, objectives, and action strategies accurately reflect the needs of County residents and visitors.

### Public Input

In order to identify public perceptions around Wexford County recreation opportunities, an electronic questionnaire was developed with input from the BOC Recreation and Building Committee. The survey was made available through email and on the County's website, and was promoted widely on social media by a number of County partners. Over 800 responses were received. Survey summaries and responses is included in Appendix A.

### Recreation Plan Review

The Board of Commissions Recreation and Building Committee reviewed the draft plan at their \_\_\_\_\_ meeting, and agreed to release the draft plan for public review, and to schedule a public hearing. Notice was posted in the \_\_\_\_\_ indicating that copies of the draft plan were available online at the Networks Northwest website, as well as at the Wexford County Administration Offices. Copies were also made available at \_\_\_\_\_. Comments were received from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

### Public Hearing & Adoption

Following the 30-day public review period, the Wexford County BOC Recreation & Building Committee held a public hearing on \_\_\_\_\_ to obtain additional public input and to review and discuss comments received during the 30 day review period. Following review and any recommended changes, the BOC Committee forwarded the plan to the Board of Commissions for their approval. The Board of Commissioners approved/did not approve the plan for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at their \_\_\_\_\_ meeting. See Appendix B for the approval documents

## Chapter 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 2018 Community Survey, discussions 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.

### Goal #1: Provide recreation facilities that are available to residents of all ages and abilities, and that are operated on a year-round basis.

Objective	Encourage the use of the Wex facilities for a variety of activities
Objective	Explore potential uses of Pinoco Park
Objective	Pursue barrier-free features at Wexford County owned recreation facilities
Objective	Support local efforts that enhance recreational opportunities in the County
Objective	Encourage a diverse range of recreation opportunities throughout the County
Objective	Provide more opportunities for the general public to enjoy the County Fairgrounds year-round
Objective	Encourage trail projects for all four seasons and for all trail users, including motorized and non-motorized uses as well as for accessibility.

### Goal #2: Maintain and improve existing County parks and recreation facilities

Objective	Continue to support maintenance of the County's recreation facilities
Objective	Provide for ongoing funding to provide maintenance and improvements at County facilities
Objective	Provide improvements to the Wexford Ice Arena and Wexford Civic Arena/Auditorium

### Goal #3: Support and promote Wexford County as a trail destination

Objective	Support the construction and improvement of trails and trail crossings to connect with the existing trail network and to existing commerce centers in Wexford County
Objective	Support trail development in and around Wexford County
Objective	Promote the use of designated trails for a variety of activities, including motorized and non-motorized uses
Objective	Support and coordinate with local, state, and federal governments and partner organizations, including the Cadillac Trails Collaborative
Objective	Support marking efforts that promote Wexford County as a trail destination

## Action Program

### Actions

Maintain an updated 5-year recreation plan in support of recreation activities and to help ensure grant funding eligibility through the MDNR

Replace HVAC in the Auditorium/Civic Arena

Replace HVAC in the Ice Arena

Replace the roof of the Auditorium/Civic Arena

Replace the parking lot at the Wexford Civic Center

Support an inventory of the facilities at the Fairgrounds and explore additional uses of the facilities

Improve signage at County Recreation facilities

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

Coordinate and cooperatively promote activities and events at County facilities

Encourage and support wayfinding signage for recreation facilities throughout the County

Encourage and support coordination of trail development projects within and connecting to Wexford County

Support trail development in and around the County by providing letters of support and participating in local and regional trail planning efforts



# Appendices

*To be included with final plan.*