



**2019-2023**

# Mancelona Area Recreation Plan



**Mancelona Area Planning Commission**

Village of Mancelona & Mancelona Township

# 2018 Mancelona Area Recreation Plan

## Acknowledgements

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Prepared with assistance from



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# Introduction

Mancelona has a great deal of high quality recreation opportunities and events. Throughout the area there are recreational assets that provide year round outdoor enjoyment. Nearly 200,000 acres of forested land, 264 miles of rivers and streams, and more than 76 lakes make Antrim County an outdoor recreation paradise. Nearby Shanty Creek Resorts are a widely-known and popular destination. The Mancelona Buck Pole and the Annual Bass Festival draw thousands of visitors annually and showcase the downtown. Trail systems surrounding the Village include the North Country Trail hiking trail and state-owned ORV and snowmobile trails.

With its natural beauty, small town lifestyle, access to nearby amenities, and tremendous recreation opportunities, the Mancelona area affords residents a pleasant quality of life and attracts visitors from all

places seeking a relaxing getaway.

The abundant public land, trails, parks, community events, and nearby recreational amenities make the Mancelona area a four-season playground. Winter snow brings snowmobiling and skiing; hikers and ORV users arrive for the warmer months; and autumn color tours and hunting season draw visitors and residents alike. The changing seasons also provide the backdrop for community events such as the Bass Festival, Buck Pole, and White Pine Stampede. These recreation opportunities, along with the area's rural character, are key elements to Mancelona's economy and quality of life.

The area's access to recreation offers 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.

## **Plan Overview**

To help guide future recreation improvements and enhancements, the Mancelona Area Joint Planning Commission initiated this planning process in 2017. This Recreation Plan is intended to identify the Mancelona Area's recreation priorities and to offer an implementation road map for the recreation goals and objectives identified through this planning process.

The Plan is organized as follows:

*Chapter 1, Community Description*, includes information regarding the Mancelona Area'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

### Population

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 both the Mancelona area and Antrim County. Between 2000-2010, Antrim County's population grew by 2%, compared to 27% growth between 1990-2000. And between 2010-2016, the County's population actually declined for the first time since 1960.

The Mancelona area also experienced a general increase of population through the decades. More recently, the Village has seen a slight continuous decline in population. The Village's population was 1,408 in 2000 while the 2016 population estimate is 1,363. The Township population peaked at 3,010 in 2010 but has dipped to 2,946 in 2016. The community's resident population appears to have endured despite the closure of the Dura Automotive manufacturing plant, the community's largest employer, in 2008 and the departure of 300 jobs.

### Age and Household Size

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.

On average, the residents of the Village and the Township are substantially younger than the overall County. The median age in the Village is 35.1 years and 37.6 years in the Township. In contrast the County's median age is 50. Mancelona is also younger than the statewide median age of 39.5. While all are aging, Mancelona is aging at a slower rate than the county or the state.

Median Age		
	Median Age (2016)	% Change from 2010
Village of Mancelona	35.4	3.8%
Mancelona Township	37.6	0.5%
Antrim County	50.0	5.5%
State of Michigan	39.5	1.5%

*Source: US Census-ACS Data*

This difference is also reflected in household size as younger communities tend to have larger households. The average household size in Mancelona is 2.71 persons with an average family size of 3.10. While many communities are experiencing a decrease in household size, the average household size for Mancelona since 2000 has been level, with average household size in the Village actually increasing from 2.62. Antrim County overall is experiencing a trend that is declining from 2.27 persons per household in 2000 to 2.33 persons per household today.

As the age of the population and household size remains steady, so will the demand for parks and recreation amenities and services. Ensuring that the recreation needs of youth are addressed will continue to be important for the Mancelona area. And in addition to providing opportunities for the area's youth and adolescents, planning for the needs of all age groups and abilities will best position Mancelona for the future.

### Income & 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.

Workers in Mancelona earn less on average than workers countywide and statewide. The annual median household income in the Village is \$34,688 and \$36,392 in the Township. In comparison, the median household in the county earns \$48,825 while statewide; the median household earns \$50,803 per year. Despite lower incomes, however, costs of living are higher, and many households in the area struggle to make ends meet. In 2016, the poverty rate was 24% in the Village and 22% in the Township, where as the County was at 13%.

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 Mancelona.

<b>Personal Income</b>		
	<b>Median Household Income (2016 dollars)</b>	<b>Per Capita Annual Income (2016 dollars)</b>
Village of Mancelona	\$34,688	\$17,341
Village of Mancelona and Mancelona Township	\$36,392	\$15,934
Antrim County	\$48,825	\$28,180
Michigan	\$50,803	\$27,549
<i>Source: US Census– ACS Data</i>		

## Community Health

Personal health depends on a variety of factors, and while these decisions and circumstances are highly individual and personal, they are all closely connected to our physical and social environments. Providing access for all residents to safe and enjoyable recreational facilities is important in ensuring a high quality of life and personal health.

Because obesity is closely connected with lifestyle issues such as physical activity, higher rates of obesity and diabetes among those in poverty may,

in part, reflect issues associated with recreation access and costs. While public recreation facilities are often available at low- or no-cost, many individuals are priced out of recreation opportunities like fitness programs or facilities, or by the cost of equipment. This is of particular importance as the nation, state, and region contend with rising rates of obesity and associated with chronic diseases such as diabetes.

## Seasonal Population

As a community centered around its outdoor recreation opportunities, Mancelona’s economy and population are seasonal, with an influx of visitors and seasonal residents, and accompanying economic activity, occurring often in the summer months.

Data available from the Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Study (2014) shows changes in population by month in each county in Northwest Michigan. Antrim County’s population is estimated to increase by 42% in the summer months to over 40,000. This includes seasonal residents, overnight visitors, and other transient residents that are staying in second homes, campgrounds, RV parks, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, cottages, and marinas. The seasonal increase in population provides additional consumer spending the local economy, but also places increased demand on municipal services and facilities, including Village and Township recreation facilities. When activity at and demand for recreation facilities climbs so dramatically, it necessitates added maintenance .

## Physical Environment

### Topography

Mancelona’s topography is a product of glacial actions that created the unique terrain and land formations within the region. The Village and the US

-131 corridor sit within a glacial valley that extends down to Kalkaska and is situated between two parallel glacial moraines, one to the northeast and one to the southwest. This area is part of Elk River watershed which outlets to Grand Traverse Bay in Lake Michigan.

At 1,125 feet above sea level, the Village of Mancelona rests on a high plain that covers most of the southeastern Antrim County. Elevations in Mancelona Township reach upwards of 1,400 feet. Other communities in Antrim County are at lower elevations, including Bellaire at 627 feet and Elk Rapids at 597 feet. Headwaters of the Manistee River are located farther east in Mancelona Township.

## Soils

Most of the Mancelona area contains upland soils characterized by Kalkaska-Montcalm soils, which are well-drained, nearly level to very steep, sandy soils on hills, ridges, and knolls. The southeastern portion of Mancelona contains Rubicon soils consisting of very deep, excessively drained soils formed in sandy deposits and hills.

## Water Features

Lakes in Mancelona include Wetzel Lake, Johnson Pond, Hawk Lake, Lake Harold, Nelson Lake, Peckham Lake, Tillie Lake, and Sand Lake. Located across the northwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, the Manistee River is approximately 190 miles long and originates in eastern Mancelona Township in the Lakes of the North resort area at an elevation of 1,250 feet. It has a drainage area of 1,780 square miles and outlets into Lake Michigan.

## Groundwater

Groundwater in varying amounts can be found from both glacial drift and in the various kinds of bedrock geology found in Mancelona.

## Fisheries and Wildlife

Antrim County offers sport fisherman an abundance of fishing opportunities with over 264 miles of quality fishing streams. This area is a focal point for trout and salmon fishing. Fish and wildlife in Antrim County is an important industry which relies on maintaining a high level of water quality. Hunting for whitetail deer attracts many people to the county annually. The deer harvest in Antrim County is approximately 2,000 – 4,000 annually. The stag or buck harvest is approximately 1,600 annually. A variety of habitat also provides the hunter with good ruffed grouse, woodcock, squirrel, rabbit, and turkey hunting opportunities. Game species of importance to trappers are bear, beaver, otter, muskrat, raccoon, opossum, skunk, red fox, coyotes and weasel.

## Climate

In Mancelona, the summers are comfortable and partly cloudy and the winters are freezing, snowy, windy, and overcast. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from 11°F to 79°F and is rarely below -5°F or above 87°F. The warm season typically lasts from May to September while the cold season often lasts from November to March. Mancelona averages 34 inches of rain per year.

The Antrim County Road Commission has been maintaining snow fall records from 1938 through 2018. The annual average snowfall for Mancelona is 151 inches with snow fall occurring from October to April. The month of January receives the highest annual average of 44 inches. As noted in the map prepared by the National Weather Service, Mancelona is impacted by Lake Michigan's lake-effect zone and is centered in a significant snow belt stretching from the Kalkaska area to the Gaylord area.



# Chapter 2:

## Administrative Structure

### Organizational Structure:

#### *Village of Mancelona*

The Village of Mancelona is governed by a five member board, consisting of one president and four trustees. The Village Council oversees all expenses, grants and funds for maintenance for the parks in the Village. In the past, the Council has established an ad hoc committee to oversee special recreation projects.

The Village has a Department of Public Works Division which maintains the Village's parks and recreation facilities. DPW reports to the Village Council on the status of recreation facilities.

#### *Mancelona Township*

The Mancelona Township Board is a five member board, consisting of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. The Township Board oversees all expenses, grants and funds for maintenance for the parks in the Township. Township staff maintain the Township's parks and recreation facilities.

The Village and Township may establish a joint Parks and Recreation Committee in the future to oversee the general operation of parks and recreation facilities and programming in the Mancelona area. This Committee could provide recommendations regarding parks and recreation policies and projects to the Village Council and Township Board.

If the Village and/or Township were to create such a committee, the ultimate decision-making authority and responsibility for all park related projects would reside with the Village Council and Township Board.

### Relationship with Other Agencies & Volunteers

Working with community partners such as other public agencies, nonprofits, and volunteers is an integral part of supporting parks and recreation in the Mancelona area. There are partnerships between the Village and Township, as well as with Community Resource Development (CRD), Mancelona Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and Mancelona Chamber of Commerce that have supported recreation projects and activities over the years,

Antrim County is another important partner for Mancelona. The Township partners with the County to maintain Wetzel Lake. The Antrim County Conservation District has also been a key partner on planning efforts related to Wetzel Lake and other recreation and natural resource related projects. Organizations such as this and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy play an important roll in protecting the region's natural assets, and future partnership opportunities should be considered.

The Village and Township also coordinate with local and regional organizations on several events that utilize their park facilities, including the Bass Festival, Mancelona Buck Pole, White Pine Stampede and others.

Volunteers are another integral part of supporting recreation activities in the Village and Township. While there is not a designated volunteer group, volunteers are solicited on a project-by-project basis. This assistance can provide some of the labor for "in-kind" match on projects as appropriate.

Because financial resources are limited, outside

support through partnerships and volunteers will continue to be an integral part of providing recreational opportunities to Mancelona area residents and visitors.

A future Parks and Recreation Committee could help expand coordination with local and state public agencies, local/regional organizations, and existing volunteer groups (such as those that are affiliated with the different trail groups in the region).

## **Funding & Budgeting**

### *Village of Mancelona*

The Village General Fund is the primary source of funding for park maintenance, improvements, and activities. The 2017-2018 parks and recreation budget was \$44,500; and the 2018-2019 budget is \$46,000. The estimated budget for 2019-2020 is \$47,000.

### *Mancelona Township*

The Township General Fund is the primary source of funding for park maintenance, improvements, and activities. The 2017-2018 parks and recreation budget was \$\_\_\_\_, and the 2018-2019 budget (through mm/dd/year) is \$\_\_\_\_. The proposed budget for 2019-2020 is \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Aside from the Village and Township General Funds, additional sources of funding are often needed to support recreation projects. Some sources that have been identified include service organizations and nonprofit groups such as the Mancelona Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Community Resource Development (CRD), Mancelona Downtown Development Authority

(DDA), the Mancelona School District, MDNR, and others.

## **Parks and Recreation Policies and Procedures**

The parks used by the public within the Village are all signed with hours and park rules. The Village Council, upon request or at the recommendation of Village maintenance and safety personnel, may review the individual park rules and policies. Such procedures and policies are set by resolution of the Village Council.

# Chapter 3:

## Recreation Inventory

A variety of recreation opportunities are available to Mancelona area 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. To capitalize and build on these assets, the Village and Township must consider current recreation facilities within a local and regional context, and determine gaps, needs, and priorities.

The following recreation inventory is based on information acquired through site visits, Village and Township representatives, recreation stakeholders, and a review of local and regional plans. The maps on pages \_\_ show the location of Village and Township owned facilities, as well as public recreation facilities in the surrounding region. For each Village and Township owned facility, information is provided on facility type/purpose, size, service area, amenities, and accessibility. Information is also provided on the area's other public recreation opportunities, such as trails and

private facilities.

Accessibility evaluations of the parks and recreational facilities were completed by representatives of the Village and Township with the assistance of planning consultants 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." See the text box below for the ranking system used to complete evaluations of the Village and Township facilities

### Grant Inventory

The Village of Mancelona has received one recreation grant from the DNR. A copy of the DNR Grant History is included at the end of this chapter. The required Post Completion Self Inspection Reports are included in the Appendices.

### Accessibility

The term "accessible" or "accessibility" refers to the ability of a wide range of people to easily access a facility. Examples of accessibility needs in parks may include wheelchair ramps, paved trails or pathways, or handrails. Communities are required to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which provides minimum standards for accessibility.

The following ADA Ranking system was used to complete evaluations:

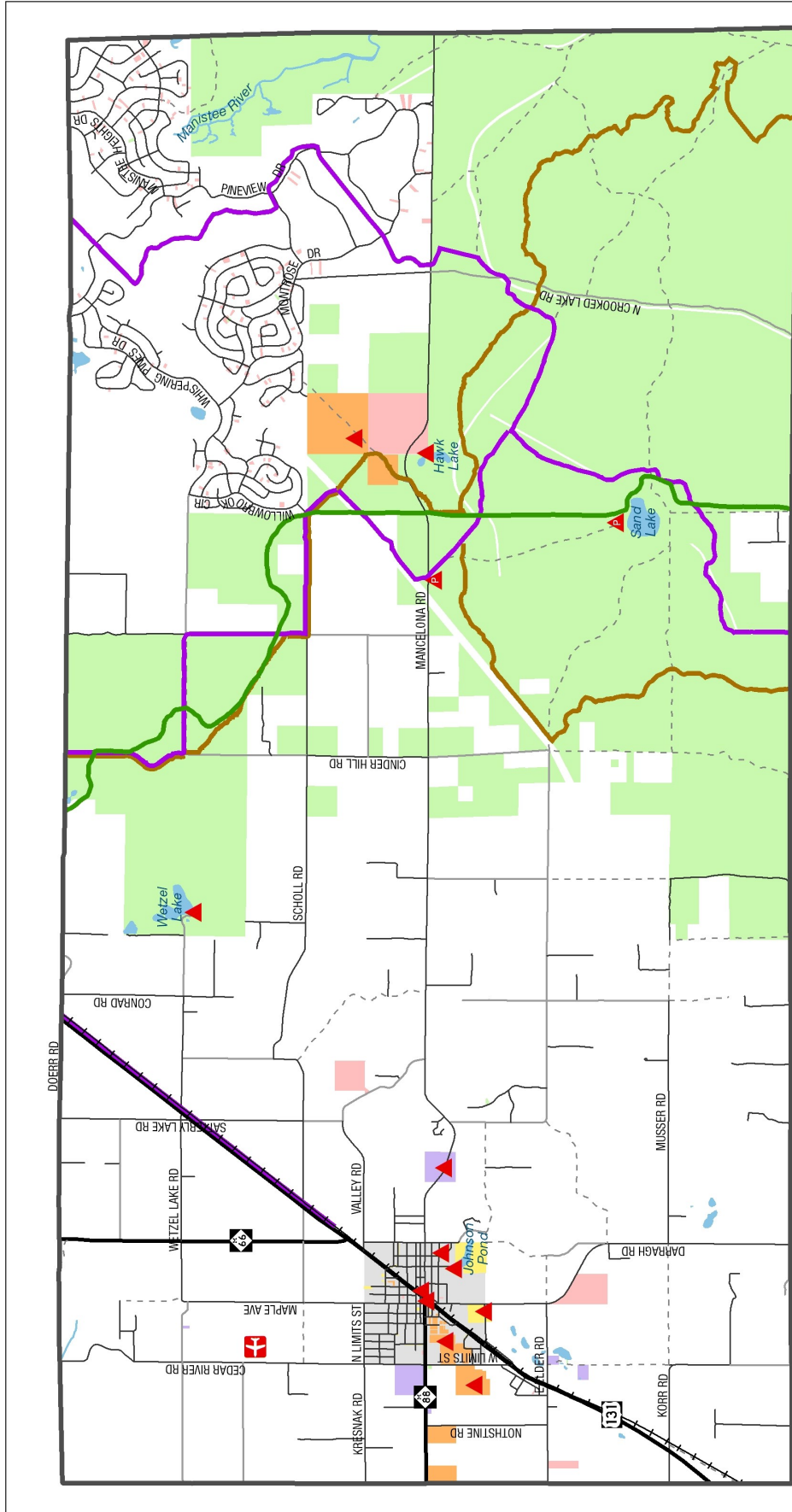
**1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines**

**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**



### Mancelona Area Recreation

- Public Recreation**
- ▲ Parks and Recreation Assets
  - ✈ Airport
  - Non-Motorized Trail
  - Snowmobile Trails
  - ORV/Motorcycle Trail

- Public Land Ownership**
- State of Michigan
  - Antrim County
  - Mancelona Township
  - Mancelona Public Schools
  - Village of Mancelona

- Highway
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- - Seasonal Road
- + Railroad

- Mancelona Township
- Village of Mancelona





## Railroad Park

This community park is located at the Northeast corner of US-131 and East State Street. Although less than one acre in size, the park features a pavilion, playground, and outdoor fitness stations. Public restrooms are connected to the information booth located across the railroad tracks. Parking is located next to the pavilion (paved) as well as the playground (unpaved). The parking area on the north end is available to snowmobiles in the winter. In addition to serving Village residents and snowmobile users, the park offers travelers passing through Mancelona with a place to stop with easy on and off access and two parking lots.

Railroad Park is the site of a number of community events, such as the Farmers Market and Buck Pole. The Buck Pole is hosted by the Mancelona Regional Chamber of Commerce every year on November 15 and 16. The event is enjoyed by hunters and locals who gather to admire bagged bucks and enjoy a bonfire, warm food, and prizes.

Public input indicates that this is one of the more commonly used park facilities in the Village. Suggestions were made for additional restrooms.

*Accessibility: 3* - Accessible picnic tables and designated accessible parking at the pavilion could be added to improve accessibility.



## Triangle Park (Perry Address Park)

Located at the downtown intersection, this small triangular park is visible to many. Concerts are held here during the summer months. Public input indicates strong community support for these events, and an interest in additional concerts.

*Accessibility: 4*



## Legion Park

Less than one acre, this small park is located at the southeast corner of US-131 and East State Street. The park houses a Veteran memorial and tank.

*Accessibility: 1*



## Palmer Park

Palmer Park is a 29-acre community park located in the southeast corner of the Village on Palmer Park Road, just off US-131. The park includes a large playground, pavilion, basketball court, two tennis courts, three baseball fields, and a nine hole disc golf course. Each of the ball fields are equipped with dugouts and metal bleachers. The park is largely wooded, aside from the ball fields and courts. The Palmer Park Pavilion includes a full kitchen, indoor and outdoor eating areas, and restrooms. The pavilion is available for rent through the Village for family reunions, graduation parties, birthday parties and other gatherings. The park property on the south side of Palmer Road includes part of the disc golf course, an outhouse, and additional parking. Parking is available here for snowmobiles in the winter. The

The Village and Township are the park's primary service area. However, the park also serves Antrim County and beyond with the use of its ball fields for Little League (the park is home to the Mancelona Youth Baseball and Softball Program) and winter snowmobile parking.

Results from public input indicate that Palmer Park is the most commonly used Village or Township park

facility. Suggestions were made for basic improvements to the restrooms, parking lot, lighting, landscaping, tables, and benches. New facilities such as an ice skating rink and walking trail were also suggested.

*Accessibility:* 3 - There are paved ramps to the pavilion's picnic area and restrooms. There is one signed handicap accessible parking space next to the pavilion, however, there is no paved parking. Access to the ball fields, courts, and playground equipment is not paved.



## Johnson's Pond

This 37-acre natural area is located in the southeast corner of the Village at the end of Danforth Street. The site primarily serves the Village and nearby Township residents. The access road and parking area are not paved, and there are no recreation facilities. Children use the pond for fishing and hunting for turtles and frogs. Every year, there is a fishing contest for kids 14 and under on the opening day of trout season. The Village has been hosting this event annually for over 50 years.

The natural area has also been used as an educational platform. The Jordan River National Fish Hatchery and Communities in Schools Choose Success have teamed together in a project called Imaginature. This collaborative effort has been made possible by a federal grant to provide area kids with an outdoor experience.

Public input and discussion among stakeholders indicates an interest in trail development and amenities such as benches.

*Accessibility: 1*



## Cran Park

Cran Park is a 2-acre community green space located in the southeast corner of the Village, off Washington Street. The park was donated by William Cran to the Village of Mancelona to be used as a scenic area. The park includes open green space and a labyrinth.

*Accessibility: 1*



### **Wetzel Lake Park**

The park is leased by Antrim County from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and maintained by Mancelona Township under an agreement with the County. The day-use park offers visitors a scenic setting just north of the Village of Mancelona in Mancelona Township.

Wetzel Lake is a popular swimming hole for residents of the surrounding area. The park is also equipped with an unpaved boat launch for non-motorized access, picnic tables and grills, and two portable toilets.

Trail development around Wetzel Lake and potentially connecting to the North Country Trail has been of interest to recreation stakeholders and the public for a number of years, and continued to be a part of the discussion throughout this planning process.

Public input also indicated a need for improved maintenance at Wetzel Lake Park and an interest in improved beach conditions.

*Accessibility: 1*



### **Lesher Park**

This 40-acre Township forested area is located on County Road 38. The property was gifted to Mancelona Township and is restricted to a preserve. There is no designated parking.

*Accessibility: 1*

### **Mancelona Municipal Airport**

The Township owned airport facility is equipped with two grass runways, three hangers, and a grass parking area. The airport is seasonal (it is not plowed in winter) and is not staffed. The airport has been approved for remote controlled aircrafts. The Township is looking into adding restroom facilities at the site.

*Accessibility: 1*





## Grant History

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**Grantee**

Village of Mancelona - Antrim County

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**Project No.** 26-00609

**Project County:** Antrim

**Project Year:** 1975

**Project Title:** Palmer Park Development

**Project Status:** Grant Closed

**Grant Amount:** \$13,574.16

**Scope Item:**

Fenced tennis courts (2)

**Project Description:** Develop Palmer Park to include 2 fenced tennis courts, and LWCF sign

**Total Number of Projects:** 1

**Total Amount of Grant Given:** \$13,574.16

## Regional Recreation Assets

A variety of additional public and private recreation opportunities are available in the Mancelona area and surrounding region, including a diversity of trails, numerous golf courses, downhill skiing, snowmobile facilities, and hunting. Forested land also accounts for 65% of Mancelona Township's total land area, and a significant portion of this is located in the Mackinaw State Forest. Much of this land is available for public use.

To the east in Otsego County there are recreational opportunities at Otsego State Park, Hidden Valley Resort, Sylvan Treetops Resorts, many motorized and non-motorized trails.

To the south in Kalkaska County there are opportunities for canoeing/kayaking and fishing on the Boardman and Manistee rivers. There are also many motorized and non-motorized trails in Kalkaska, including the Kalkaska Area ORV Trail, the Blue Bear Snowmobile Trail, the North Country Trail, and the Shore to Shore Trail. The Seven Bridges Natural Area and the Skegemog Swamp Pathway are also within Kalkaska County.

To the north and west, within Antrim County, there are many recreational opportunities including abundant water access, including to Lake Michigan, Torch Lake, Intermediate Lake, Bass Lake, Elk Lake, and Lake Bellaire. Also, within the County are Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain Resort, Glacial Hills Pathways, Grass River Natural Area, and parts of the Skegemog Nature Preserve.

## Trails

Mancelona Township is host to a number of significant trail systems, including the North Country Trail and state-owned ORV and snowmobile trails. Input received during the planning process indicate a strong interest in both motorized and non-motorized trail development. An understanding of these trail systems is important in identifying opportunities for trail linkages and enhancements.

### Motorized Trails

The Mancelona area is known for its well groomed snowmobile trails and designated Off-road vehicle (ORV) trails. Thousands of snowmobilers travel the

## Trails

Trails are pathways that are used recreationally or for transportation by a variety of users, including snowmobilers, hikers, ORV users, bicyclists, and horseback riders. Motorized trails include those that were designed to accommodate motorcycles, ORVs, or snowmobiles, while hiking, biking, horseback riding and cross country skiing are among uses permitted on non-motorized trails. Multi-use trails are those designed to accommodate multiple user types simultaneously, such as pedestrians and cyclists. Other trails might be designed and designated for certain uses, such as hiking trails, a bike path, or snowmobile or ORV route. Close, convenient and connected trail networks encourage physical activity, with benefits in community health. In addition, trails have been found to have significant economic impacts, generating tourism and visitor spending in retail sales, hotel stays, and restaurant visits. Snowmobilers, ORV riders, and mountain bikers—many of whom travel to the region specifically for access to trails—contribute substantially to local and regional economic activity. Trails are an important and desired quality of life amenity, and can help draw new residents and visitors to the area.



trails in and around Mancelona, Pinney Bridge, Jordan River Valley, Lakes of the North and Starvation Lake during the winter months. The Jordan Valley Trail Council, a member of the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), is responsible for maintaining these trails. It relies on the work of its volunteer groomer operators. ORV use is not permitted on the State snowmobile trails.

Mancelona has the only designated off-road vehicle (ORV) trail in Antrim County. The Kalkaska Cycle Trail is an 89 mile ORV trail that extends from Antrim County south into Kalkaska County. The Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail (MCCCT) also runs through central Mancelona Township, and extends hundreds of miles, connecting many trail systems throughout Michigan's lower peninsula.

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 public land (see Chapter 3, Recreation Inventory). Trail opportunities for ORVs were expanded with Public Act 288 of 2016, which opened state forest roads to ORV use (unless otherwise indicated).

Public and stakeholder input throughout this planning process indicate an interest in enhancing connectivity of the area's motorized trail systems as well as improving access and wayfinding to the Village.

### **Non-Motorized Trails**

The North Country Trail (or Iron Bell Trail) comes vertically down through Mancelona Township. Stretching 4,600 miles over 7 states, from New York to North Dakota, the North Country Trail is the largest National Scenic Trail in the US. The trail enters Antrim County from Charlevoix County and exits through Mancelona Township into Kalkaska County. The Jordan Valley 45 Chapter is responsible for developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting this section of the North Country Trail.

Public and stakeholder input also indicate an interest in enhancing the area's non-motorized trails through trail development and improved connectivity among existing trail systems, community/recreation assets, the Village, and nearby communities. Trail development was discussed at various sites throughout the Village and Township including Wetzel Lake, Johnson Pond, and Palmer Park. Discussions around enhancements to the North Country Trail included developing connections and wayfinding between the Trail and the Village, redeveloping the trail in areas where it follows a two-track, and a connection to a future Wetzel Lake trail.

# Chapter 4:

## Planning and Public Input Process

### Planning Process

The Mancelona Area Recreation Plan was developed in 2018 by the Mancelona Area Planning Commission, a joint planning commission formed under the Joint Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 226 of 2003, as amended, consisting of representatives from Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona. The plan was updated as part of a larger community process that included development of a Mancelona Area Master Plan for the Village and Township. Assistance in developing both the Mancelona Area Recreation Plan and Mancelona Area Master Plan was provided by Networks Northwest.

### Public Input

Public input was central to the plan development with opportunities for participation through meetings and forums. As part of the Master Plan and recreation planning process, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission conducted a community-wide survey, as well as hosted two community forums and one focus group discussion in the summer of 2018. Results from the survey and community discussions helped narrow the focus of the goals and objectives in this plan, as well as identify priority actions.

#### **Community Survey**

In 2017, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission developed and released an online survey designed to help create a shared vision for the Master Plan, and to identify priority actions for the community, including around recreation.

The questionnaire was distributed over email and the Internet in November, 2017. Two hundred forty-three (243) responses were received. An additional opportunity to respond to six select questions from the survey was provided at the Mancelona Public Schools Parent Teacher Conferences on November 9, 2017.

- There was strong support regarding the importance of being a small town with an economy enhanced through year-round tourism.
- Residents enjoy attending concerts, festivals and events like the Bass Festival and Buck Pole and enjoy the activities associated with them.
- For outdoor recreation, residents are most active in swimming, walking/hiking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, and fishing. Respondents feel most of the parks are well maintained. However, Wetzel Lake Park could be improved. Other improvements included additional winter activities (ice skating, sledding, etc.) and new trails and paths. Comments were made in support of the restoration of Mt. Mancelona.

#### **Community Forums**

In June of 2018, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission organized a Community Forum on Recreation. A number of high priority opportunities were identified from the discussion and ideas proposed at the community forums. Several of the opportunities that rose to the top were related to Recreation, and included the following:

- Regulatory barriers and lack of trails connected to the west side of US-131 create a missed opportunity to boost local businesses with trail users as well as making it easier for trail users to access trails. Create easier connections between

and the trails and trailheads.

- For visitors, finding trails and parks can be difficult. Establish a wayfinding system to find trails, parks, and other locations.
- Mancelona is lacking a parks and recreation director or committee to lead and coordinate recreation related efforts. However, there are many recreation resource people in the Mancelona area. Create a parks and recreation committee consisting of local resource people.
- Public engagement and support is needed to improving the community. Create a volunteer program to help with events, festivals, clean-up programs, and other community activities.

The complete reports summarizing comments from the survey and community forums are included in Appendix \_.

## Existing Plans and Projects

Plans and strategies that are consistent across local boundaries are critical for success. Some plans and

studies in Antrim County and the region that are important in planning for recreation in the Mancelona area include:

### ***US-131 Economic Development Strategy***

The US-131 Economic Development Strategy explores the economic issues at play along the US-131 corridor, from Cadillac to Petoskey, and identifies key actions needed to address some of the challenges impacting the corridor's economic competitiveness. As part of this effort, a local economic development plan was developed for the Mancelona community in 2016. Networks Northwest provided assistance to the community to identify, prioritize, and address issues related to growth and investment in the Village and create strategies to build upon the community development initiatives already occurring within Mancelona. Recreation is one of the key focus areas of these strategies, along with infrastructure, business and industry, workforce, housing, placemaking, governance, and marketing and promotion.

## Mancelona Area Master Plan and Vision

A master plan acts as a guide for governments and other community partners to use when making decisions. The master plan provides a blueprint for the future through the establishment of a vision, goals, and objectives. A vision is a long-term view that incorporates a community's values and aspirations and provides a shared image of what they want their community to become over the next 20 years in the future. The following was developed as part of the planning process for the Mancelona Area Master (which included development of this Recreation Plan):

### **Future Mancelona: Vision**

**Mancelona is a vibrant community, home to warm and welcoming people, excellent schools, a centrally located hub for outdoor activities, a mixed-use downtown, a variety of housing choices, and enduring small-town, rural character. Community events, parks, restaurants, shops, and services draw residents, tourists, and investment that provide economic well-being and a high-quality of life for residents.**

### ***Antrim County Recreation Plan***

The 2012 Antrim County Recreation Plan was developed with participation from stakeholders and units of government throughout the County. It provides guidance to the County and other stakeholders that are working to address issues around recreation. The County is in the process of updating the recreation plan for 2019.

### ***Framework for Our Future: A Regional Prosperity Plan for Northwest Michigan***

The Framework for Our Future: A Regional Prosperity Plan for Northwest Michigan is a regional resource for communities working to meet local goals in the ten-county Northwest Michigan region of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford counties. The Framework was developed in 2014, with participation from a broad range of community leaders, stakeholders, and the public, as part of Michigan's Regional Prosperity Initiative. It includes information, tools, and strategies that the public, community leaders, businesses, nonprofits, public agencies, and statewide stakeholders throughout Northwest Michigan can use to supplement their local deliberation, planning, and decision-making processes. The Framework includes a recreation component, titled A Framework for Recreation in Northwest Michigan, that includes data, analysis, and strategies relating to recreation assets and opportunities. Information, strategies, goals, and actions included in the Framework for Recreation were used to inform goals and objectives within the Mancelona Area Recreation Plan.

### **Recreation Plan Review**

The Mancelona Area Planning Commission reviewed the draft plan at their meeting on October 15, 2018, and agreed to release the draft plan for public review and schedule a public hearing. Notice was posted in the Antrim Review indicating that copies of the draft plan were available online at the Networks Northwest website, as well as at the Village and Township offices. Copies were also made available upon request. Comments were received from mm/dd/year to mm/dd/year.

### **Public Hearing & Adoption**

Following the 30-day public review period, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission held a public hearing on November 26, 2018 to obtain additional public input and to review and discuss comments received during the 30 day review period. The Planning Commission approved the plan, and forwarded the plan to the Village Council and Township Board for approval. The Mancelona Village Council approved the recreation plan at their regular meeting on mm/dd/year, and the Mancelona Township Board approved the plan at their regular meeting on mm/dd/year. The approved plan was then submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval. See Appendix C for the approval documents.

# Chapter 5:

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

The goals, objectives, and action plan are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities. These goals were developed based on existing facilities, public input obtained through the 2017 Community Survey and 2018 Recreation Forum, discussions with the Joint Planning Commission and recreation stakeholders, and a review of other local and regional plans and strategies. 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.

### Goals & Objectives

#### **Maintain and improve parks and recreation facilities and opportunities**

- Continue to provide, maintain, and improve parks and recreation facilities and amenities for residents and visitors.
- Maintain an updated and DNR-approved 5-year recreation plan.
- Encourage and promote public art displays, community events, and festivals in parks and civic spaces.
- Consider opportunities to create additional recreational activities at existing parks and recreation facilities to attract and retain residents and visitors.
- Improve or develop new amenities to enhance recreational opportunities for the area's youth.
- Expand capacity within the Village and Township to plan for parks and recreation.
- Support improved accessibility at all parks and recreation facilities.

#### **Encourage, support, & promote enhanced recreation opportunities**

- Encourage, support, & promote additional affordable, family-oriented activities.
- Encourage & support the development of tourism/visitor businesses and services infrastructure.
- Explore partnerships with/between the Mancelona Chamber of Commerce and the Traverse City Area Visitors Bureau.
- Encourage & support the acquisition or re-development of property for new recreation facilities and opportunities
- Work with partners to explore opportunities to host events such as tournaments, competitions, races.
- Co-market organized events with golf, skiing, water, fishing, and hunting.
- Support efforts by the Explore 131 North marketing group to promote the Mancelona area and the greater 131 Corridor as a trail destination

## **Enhance, support, and promote an interconnected motorized and non-motorized trail system**

- Support potential trail routes to link snowmobile and ORV trails
- Support potential trail routes to link non-motorized trails
- Support motorized trail access to the Village of Mancelona
- Improve wayfinding between trails and the Village and community assets
- Identify potential trail connectors to parks, schools, and other community resources
- Work within ongoing coordinated trail planning efforts and with neighboring communities and stakeholders to develop and link trail systems
- Leverage and link to existing nearby trails and recreation facilities such as the North Country Trail, Glacial Hills, and Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain
- Build relationships with TOMBA, MMBA, Jordan Valley Trails Council, and other trail user groups
- Provide and promote services and amenities to trail users

## **Action Plan**

### *Parks and Recreation Committee:*

- Expand the capacity and role of the Mancelona Area Planning Commission to include planning for parks and recreation in the Mancelona Area. The Commission would provide recommendations regarding parks and recreation policies and projects to the Village Council and Township Board, and the ultimate decision-making authority and responsibility for all park related projects would reside with the Village Council and Township Board.

### *Park Facilities:*

- Develop a skate park at Palmer Park. This would provide a desired amenity for youth in the community.
- Improve the basketball court at Palmer Park.
- Improve connectivity between Palmer Park and the Village, schools, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Explore opportunities to develop a community ice rink on an existing Village or Township property, such as at Railroad Park.
- Pursue partnerships with Antrim County, MDNR, Antrim County Conservation District, and user groups to support enhancing Wetzel Lake facilities and activities

### *Trails:*

- Support motorized trail access and connectivity by enhancing access to the Village and other recreation assets, providing a staging area, developing easements, and working with user groups, the DNR, and MDOT.
- Explore and support trail development at Wetzel Lake
- Explore the development of a loop trail at Johnson Pond
- Explore the development of a paved loop walking trail around Palmer Park
- Support trail connectors to parks, schools, and other community resources



# Appendices

*To be included with final plan.*