



Big Creek Township



Oscoda County, Michigan



Recreation Plan 2023-2028

1.0 Introduction

The Big Creek Township Recreation Plan 2023-2028 shall serve as a recreational planning road map for the next 5 years in the Township of Big Creek, County of Oscoda, State of Michigan. Our residents and visitors already know that we have world class, four season recreational opportunities. With over 40 miles of designated Natural Scenic Ausable and Big Creek Rivers flowing through the township which are considered Blue Ribbon Trout Streams. With over 144 square miles of wooded forest land including both the Manistee–Huron National Forest and the Ausable State Forest within our boundaries filled with motorized and non-motorized trail systems, scenic vistas, State, National and local parks make our township a wonderful place to visit and live.

Our plans primary focus is to ensure the quality recreational opportunities are available for all ages and abilities. It is also intended to provide ways to achieve recreational goals and allow for eligibility for financial assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreational Passport Grant Programs. Our five-year program is based upon Township Board outreach for public input from residents, visitors, stakeholders and staff research.

This plan was written in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans, as administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants Management team. It has also been developed with the acknowledgement of Michigan’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Many of the goals and objectives found in this plan reflect similar intentions of the SCORP and this plan desires to align Big Creek Township’s recreation with many of the state’s long-range recreation planning objectives.

A final draft of this plan was distributed to our surrounding municipalities, agencies, partners and the public for review and comment on December 15, 2022. The plan was also made available for review on our Big Creek Township website at bigcreektownshipmi.com

Consistent Township Board leadership, effective planning and stable budgeting for recreation project matching funds have afforded us the opportunity to accomplish several improvement projects since the last publication of this plan in 1998



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Section 2.0 – Community Description

2.1 LOCATION

Big Creek Township is located in the South West corner of Oscoda County which is located in the northeastern portion of the Lower Peninsula and covers an area of 144 square miles. The township is composed of four Town and Ranges. T25NR1E, T25NR2E, T26NR1E & T26NR2E. Big Creek Township has no incorporated cities or villages. The community of Luzerne is located near the geographic center of the township. The community of Mio is located on the Eastern edge of the township in T26NR2E and in the Western edge of Mentor Township in T26NR3E. Mio is the County seat and is located near the geographic center of the Oscoda County.

Typical to the rest of the northern Lower Peninsula, Oscoda County's early settlement and related land use was associated with farming and logging activities. Beginning with the Homestead Act of 1863, an influx of settlers of European descent came into northern Michigan, including Oscoda County and Big Creek Township. The majority of the first settlers in the county began homesteads mostly in the Big Creek Township in the southwestern part of Oscoda County. Thin top soil and poor farming practices eventually forced much of the farmland into abandoned land and fallow fields; consequently, reverting back to the government. Today, over 65% of the land in Big Creek Township and half of the land in Oscoda County is in public ownership (State or federal properties). The northern half of the township has heavier clay loam soils so a few small farms have succeeded and exist to this day.

Forestry, along with logging, began in the 1870s and continues today. After the bulk of the virgin timber was harvested, farming became the area's leading industry. Since the end of World War II, the County has diversified from farming to a more tourism-based economy, with logging and agriculture still important assets.

Map 2.1 – LOCATIONAL MAP



2.2 LAND USE

The environment of Big Creek Township is one of its primary assets. The gently rolling topography and a generous amount of forested land, fields, meadows and the beautiful Au Sable River provide a haven for wildlife and a scenic area for residents and tourists to enjoy.

The Township was nearly stripped of all vegetation in the late 1800s by a poorly managed timber practice, rampant forest fires, and poor farming techniques. Since the turn of the century, the protective cover has returned and it is estimated that forests now cover over 80 percent of the Township. Areas of the Township that have been developed for residential and commercial uses include the communities of Mio (the County seat) and Luzerne, with smaller developed areas found around Loon and Island Lakes.

The Huron National Forest occupies most of the southern and western halves of Big Creek Township, while the Ausable State Forest occupies lands primarily north of the Ausable River. Approximately 65% of the 92,000 acres in Big Creek Township are owned by these 2 large land holders and account for the township being primarily forested. There are 55 natural and artificial bodies of water and 44 miles of rivers and streams in the Township. The Township's major waterway is the Au Sable River, which cuts through the northern edge of the Township on an east-west course. Approximately _____ acres or ____ percent of the Township's total acreage is classified as a wetland or lowland forest. Lowland forests are usually swampy in nature and often classified as wetlands. Although no major areas of wetlands are found within the Township, many small patches are scattered throughout, mainly along or near the rivers.

As would be expected, residential and commercial development is found mostly in or near the community of Mio, with lesser amounts of similar development in the community of Luzerne. A few residential dwellings are also found at the southern end of the township along the small lakes and interspersed throughout the forest lands and major roadways of the township. There are very few light industrial properties located in the Township

The majority of agricultural lands, as well as non-forest lands (probably used as agricultural lands at one time) are found concentrated in the center of the Township and just north of Mio.

Outdoor recreation within Big Creek Township is undoubtedly a major attraction for local residents and tourists alike. The Township is over 80 percent forested with 65 percent of the land owned by the U.S. Forest Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The National Forest Service owns 147,885 acres or 231 square miles of Oscoda County. This is all within the Huron National Forest, which occupies the entire southern half of the County and stretches into neighboring counties. State ownership in the County equals 55,000 acres or 86 square miles.

The existing resources favor future recreational development, but this development must be channeled into constructive avenues or the unique character of the Township could easily be destroyed. It is essential to retain the natural characteristics of the land and still provide adequate recreational facilities for the tourists, as well as for the local residents.

2.3 TRANSPORTATION

The major north-south highway in Big Creek Township is State Route M-33, which cuts along the center of northeastern Michigan and connects county residents with Interstate 75 to the

south, a distance of approximately 35 miles from Mio. The Township's major east-west route is M-72, which connects the Township with Grayling and I-75 to the west, and with Harrisville and Lake Huron to the east. Other significant roads include County Road 489, which runs north-south through Greenwood and Big Creek Townships and connects to M-72 in Luzerne and M-33 south of Mio; County Road 487, which runs north-south and from County Road 489 to M-72 and back to County Road 489 south of the Ausable River. County Road 487 is also Mapes Rd which is Federal Forest Highway 1 and runs south from County Road 489 to West Branch in Ogemaw County.

There is no public transportation available within the Township. No passenger or freight rail services exist within the Township. There is one public airfield in Big Creek Township located on Federal land near County Road 487. The main public airport, Oscoda County Regional Airport, is owned and operated by Oscoda County and is located in Mentor Township on M-33 in Mio.

2.4 CLIMATE

The climate of Big Creek Township makes it an attractive area for recreational enthusiasts. A generous amount of snowfall in the winter makes winter sports a popular recreational activity in the County (e.g. snowmobiling, cross country skiing, ice fishing, etc.). The summer months include recreational activities such as ORV riding, swimming, boating, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and biking. The Township is a hotspot with abundant inland lake fishing as well as premier trout fishing on the Au Sable River and Big Creek Tributaries. Spring weather brings out mushroom hunters and bird watchers, while the fall is great for hunting activities and color tours.

2.5 POPULATION

Population and the dynamics of demographics are important when considering the future planning of recreational facilities. Evaluating different trends including growth, age, and housing help provide a basic understanding of who the current users are today, and who will be the future user groups of tomorrow.

Big Creek Township has had a steady population increase since 1990. Although this growth rate includes declines and increases, there is an overall increase in population. Mio Ausable Schools has had a steady decline in enrollment since 2000. The amount of publicly owned land in Huron-Manistee National Forest limits the amount of developable land, thereby minimizing the population growth.

Future growth is expected and it is anticipated that it will continue at an overall steady rate, based on the trend over the previous century but the population is aging. More retirees are moving to the area but with fewer manufacturing jobs within the county families with children are not locating here at an increasing rate.

Household Population

Household data is used to determine population growth projections.

A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, including a family and

non-family members (US Census).

According to the US Census, the average household size in the Township was 2.00 in 2020.

In 2020, there were 1387 households in the Township.

Demographic Data

As humans progress through life, they pass through stages that generally correspond to their age levels. Life-cycle analysis is used to anticipate future changes in items, such as consumption, housing, medical care, education, and recreation.

The preschool and early school age (9 and younger) should be thought of as continuing students for the next five years.

The young adult should be thought of as future workers. To keep this vital population group in Big Creek Township (they represent 17% of the population), higher education facilities and job centers will be needed.

The Family Formulation age group (20-44) are the workers and family creators. This population group is needed to sustain a community.

People who are raising older children (typically the 10-19 age group) and/or preparing to retire and are in the 45-64 age classification.

Retirement typically begins at the age of 65. This active age group will need medical facilities. People aged 75 and older typically need senior care facilities, medical centers, and mass transit.

As the population grows and changes with regards to demographics, recreational needs will change as well. It is important to monitor the changes so that recreational facilities are developed for the current and projected populations. Currently, recreational facilities in Big Creek Township, Oscoda County, Michigan, and the United States fall short in connecting with the population. Facilities are either under-managed, outdated or, in most cases, do not provide for the local demographic population (they ignore the what, where, and how of recreation).

According to a 2001 study by the American Planning Association, 70% of adults in the United States do not achieve the recommended amount of activity each week. This statistic may be related to the lack of connectivity between the general population and recreational facilities available. The U.S. Surgeon General recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity at least five days per week. The sedentary lifestyle is a primary factor in up to 200,000 deaths annually. Approximately 64% of Americans are overweight; and one in three is obese. More than a third (36%) of young people in grades 9-12 do not participate in vigorous recreational activities three or more days a week, and one fourth (25%) of those aged 6-17 are already overweight. Although these statistics do not specifically represent Big Creek Township, they do show how critical it is to provide recreation opportunities for all age groups and to encourage active lifestyles.

According to the publication, Designing Healthy Michigan Communities, Michigan has more overweight and obese adults and children than the national average and holds the ranking for the second highest number of obese people. One of the reasons for the higher obesity rate is that typical Michigan communities are designed to require travel by automobile and are not conducive to pedestrian activity. Walking and biking to school has declined by 40% from 1977 to 1995. To facilitate and promote walking, well-conditioned sidewalks that connect homes to community areas such as schools, downtown stores, parks, shopping areas, and nature reserves are important.

Interestingly, the number of individuals under the age of five decreased from the 1990 Census. This decrease could be due to people having smaller families, therefore fewer children. The number of individuals age 5 to 14 increased when compared to the 1990 Census. This age group, along with the 15 to 24-year old's, represents the teenage/young adult cohort.

The age cohort between 25 and 44 is commonly referred to as the "family formulation" stage of life. This age group is comprised of adults who are in the workforce and typically beginning a family. This age cohort makes up 16.5% of the population, which is the third largest portion. These individuals enjoy passive recreation, such as walking on trails and canoeing/kayaking, and more active recreation opportunities such as playing tennis or softball. In addition, this group enjoys family-oriented recreational amenities such as improved parks, designated hiking trails, and community gathering areas.

The 45 to 59 age cohort consists of the mid-career workforce and early retirees. This age group had the highest percent of increase from the previous decade. Nationwide, this is the single-largest population group; moreover, it represents 24.5% of the population in the Big Creek Township. This age group benefits from the same recreation opportunities that are enjoyed by the 25 to 44 cohort.

The 60 to 74 age cohort are the retirees who enjoy more passive recreation, including walking, kayaking, and boating. This age group represents 28% of the population in Big Creek Township. To facilitate recreation for this age group and for people older than 75, facilities need to be barrier-free and easily accessible.

Race and Gender

Oscoda County, similar to other northern Michigan communities, has a mostly white population. The 2020 U.S. Census reported that 95% of the population is white. The next largest race is Black and Hispanic, which each are approximately 1% of the population. The remaining population is made up of Asians, and Native American Indians, all less than 1% of the total population.

Of the total population of 2739, the female population is 48% or 1,315, and the male population is 52% or 1,424.

Seasonal Dwelling

More than 58% of housing units in Big Creek Township are utilized for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Over the last decade, 233 units (7% Increase) have become occupied, which could be related to retirees moving to their seasonal homes in Oscoda County.

Section 3.0 – Administrative Structure

3.1 Big Creek Township Administrative Structure

The Big Creek Township Board is responsible for the planning and operation of the Big Creek Township Recreational Facilities.

Organization

Big Creek Township Board Members - 2022

James (Randy) Booth	Supervisor
Rhonda Mundt	Clerk
Susan Avery	Treasurer
Deb Coulon	Trustee
Karen Mitchel	Trustee

Responsibilities of the Big Creek Township Board

It is the intent of the Big Creek Township Board to provide a safe and enjoyable park system for the residents and visitors to Big Creek Township.

The operation consists of maintaining approximately 13.9 acres of Luzerne River Park land, this park includes 13 campsites, a canoe slide, Ausable River Access and day use activities located north of Luzerne on the Ausable River. The Comstock-Nelson Park which includes 2.8 acres in the town of Luzerne. It features a large playground, Pavilion and bathroom facilities. Joe Pillars Park which is a 7-acre site leased from Consumers Energy and is a handicap accessible fishing platform and Ausable River fishing access site located at the Mio Dam.

Big Creek Township has 2 part time maintenance personnel to maintain the recreational improvements. They work directly under the supervision of the Big Creek Township Supervisor.

3.2 Luzerne River Park

Budget

Big Creek Township has established a Park Fund separate from the township general fund. During their annual budget process, the Big Creek Township Board allocates the necessary funding for all annual maintenance and any planned improvements to the Luzerne River Park budget.

Park Maintenance Worker Job Description

Under the supervision of the Big Creek Township Supervisor, performs a variety of tasks to maintain the park grounds, buildings, and equipment.

Typical Duties:

Mow grass in and around park area, trims around buildings, sidewalk, trees and shrubs.

Rake and removes leaves and picks up litter.

Waters grass, repairs and paints benches, tables and comfort stations and other park facilities.

Installs and repairs plumbing fixtures such as commodes.

Performs minor electrical maintenance duties such as replacing fuses, lights, etc.

Operates such equipment as tractors, mowers, hand tools and power saws.

Cleans and stores park maintenance equipment.

Is available during scheduled working hours to assist the public and staff; register campers, provide directions and information to campers.

May supervise and schedule the work of other park employees

To maintain the park in a safe and clean condition.

Issue camping permits and register campers.

Patrol duties as needed.

Maintain the park buildings in a safe and clean condition.

Performs related work as assigned by the Big Creek Township Supervisor.

3.3 Comstock-Nelson Park

Budget

Big Creek Township has established a Park Fund separate from the township general fund. During their annual budget process, the Big Creek Township Board allocates the necessary funding for all annual maintenance and any planned improvements to the Comstock-Nelson Park budget.

Park Operation

Reservations for the park pavilion is handled by the Big Creek Township Clerk. All Maintenance of the Comstock-Nelson Park and its facilities is performed by the Big Creek Township Maintenance Worker under the direct supervision of the Big Creek Township Supervisor.

Park Maintenance Worker Job Description

Under the supervision of the Big Creek Township Supervisor, performs a variety of tasks to maintain the park grounds, buildings, and equipment.

Typical Duties:

Mow grass in and around park area, trims around buildings, sidewalk, trees and shrubs.

Rake and removes leaves and picks up litter.

Waters grass, repairs and paints benches, tables and comfort stations, concession stands and other park facilities.

Installs and repairs plumbing fixtures such as sinks, commodes, and drinking fountains.

Performs minor electrical maintenance duties such as replacing fuses, lights, etc.

Operates such equipment as tractors, mowers, hand tools and power saws.

Cleans and stores park maintenance equipment.

Is available during scheduled working hours to assist the public and staff, provide directions and information to visitors.
May supervise and schedule the work of other park employees
To maintain the park in a safe and clean condition.

3.4 Joseph Pillars Park

Joseph Pillars Park is named after Big Creek Township Resident Joe Pillars who has been instrumental 3 handicap Accessible Fishing Piers and a handicap accessible Scenic Overlook on The Mio Pond.

Budget

Big Creek Township has established a Park Fund separate from the township general fund. During their annual budget process, the Big Creek Township Board allocates the necessary funding for all annual maintenance and any planned improvements to the Joseph Pillars Park budget.

Park Maintenance Worker Job Description

Under the supervision of the Big Creek Township Supervisor, performs a variety of tasks to maintain the park grounds, buildings, and equipment.

Typical Duties:

Mow grass in and around park area, trims around buildings, sidewalk, trees and shrubs.

Rake and removes leaves and picks up litter.

Waters grass, repairs and paints benches, tables and comfort stations and other park facilities.

Installs and repairs plumbing fixtures such as commodes.

Operates such equipment as tractors, mowers, hand tools and power saws.

Cleans and stores park maintenance equipment.

Is available during scheduled working hours to assist the public and staff, provide directions and information to visitors.

May supervise and schedule the work of other park employees

To maintain the park in a safe and clean condition.

4.1 RECREATION DEFICIENCIES

Recreation deficiencies in Big Creek Township are difficult to determine, because of the tremendous influx of tourists during the year. According to the "Minimum Local Recreation Standards" set up by the Cooperative Extension Service at Michigan State University, Big Creek Township meets most facilities requirements based on the Township's year-round population; however, a problem arises when applying these standards to a township, such as Big Creek, which has a large number of seasonal residents and tourists. The facilities listed in the minimum recreation standards are designed for areas of larger population concentrations and more stable population numbers. The accessibility or distances set up in the guidelines are based on metropolitan areas, where the longest distance to a recreational facility is three to four miles from home. In a sparsely populated area, such as Big Creek Township, the distances to recreational facilities unfortunately are much greater.

A low population in Big Creek Township, high unemployment, a low tax base, a large proportion of senior citizens who are seasonal residents and a weak economic base contribute to the overall lack of funds available in order to improve and expand recreational opportunities within the Township. With limited tax funds available, the Township—and adjoining townships—struggle to budget for recreation funds that could be used to support expansion and improvements to recreational facilities and programs.

4.2 RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

While most of Big Creek Township's recreational development is oriented towards visitors and tourists, there is an Oscoda County Park along with the Mio Ausable School Grounds that are devoted *primarily* to the permanent residents. The Township and residents do value their existing facilities and work hard to maintain them. Big Creek Township officials and residents also recognize the value and abundance of natural resource based recreation that exists throughout the County.

Recreational opportunities that exist include:

- Softball, baseball, youth soccer
- Cross-country skiing, hiking, biking, horseback-riding
- ORV & snowmobiling
- Fishing, canoeing
- Site-seeing (wildlife auto tours)
- Annual Fly-Ins at the Luzerne Airport and Oscoda County Regional Airport
- Hunting for small and large game
- Shooting

With so much energy focused on providing recreational facilities and activities for visitors, recreational facilities for resident's use are sometimes overlooked. Much more of the Township's resources are devoted to recreation for the tourist; however, residents are not excluded from utilizing the recreational facilities. All of the Big Creek Township Recreation

Facilities have day use activities available to residents as well as visitors. The large tracts of public land also offer recreational opportunity to both residents and visitors; hundreds of miles of multi-modal trails extend over the public land and are available for year round use.

The current challenge Township leaders are facing is the development of a more comprehensive program for recreation. Recreational opportunities are limited with regards to programmed activities; therefore, developing a more comprehensive plan would greatly benefit Township residents.

The Au Sable River

The Au Sable River may be the best-known tourist attraction in the Township. Compared to other rivers in northern Michigan, this portion of the Au Sable is relatively undeveloped. Above the dam, it has been designated as a "natural river" by the State of Michigan, while below the dam the federal government has designated it as a "wild and scenic river."

The Au Sable River and Big Creek watersheds provide excellent trout fishing, with the Au Sable being rated one of the ten best trout streams east of the Rocky Mountains. The Au Sable flows 31 miles through Oscoda County while Big Creek provides over 15 miles of top rated trout fishing. The remaining streams in the Township, total over 30 miles.

Hunting

The Mio area has been known as the epicenter of prime deer hunting for many years. The large deer herds built up following the wild fires of the 1890s to 1920s and the herd peaked in the late 1940s to early 1950s. Large areas of public hunting ground and the tremendous deer herd combine to attract a large number of hunters to the Township.

In addition to deer hunting, small game hunting is also popular with the local residents of Big Creek Township as well as with visitors. Bear, grouse, woodcock, rabbit and squirrel attract hunters from around the state.

Wildlife Viewing

The Kirtland's Warbler is a rare and endangered songbird that resides in a very limited area of the State, including Big Creek Township and Oscoda County. The Warbler nests only within a small area centered around Mio. Public agencies are managing over 18 square miles of forest for the Warbler's nesting area. Many birdwatchers come to this area in order to view the Warbler. A "Kirtland's Warbler Festival" has been held annually at the Kirtland Community College (near Roscommon) as a tribute to the Warbler. This weekend-long festival includes many activities for individuals and families designed for better environmental appreciation and awareness.

Multiuse Trails

Another tourist attraction within the Township is the miles of multi-modal trails, previously mentioned.* Several non-motorized trails exist including the Michigan Shore to Shore Trail, which traverses the Township. Riders and hikers are able to travel from Lake Michigan (Empire, MI) to Lake Huron (Tawas, MI). Other non-motorized trails exist in the Township including the Midland to Mackinaw Trail. Motorized trail systems are also extremely popular with visitors. The motorized trail systems include the Oscoda County Snowmobile Trail, Bull Gap ORV Trail,

Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail, Mio and Hunt Creek ORV Trail Systems, and the Meadows Trail System.

*For more information on Oscoda County's diverse multiuse trail system refer to the [Oscoda County Multiuse Trail Master Plan](#). A non-profit group, called H.A.R.T.S, has formed to carry out the goals set forth by the master plan.

Camping/ Campground Facilities

Several campgrounds dot the landscape in Big Creek Township; currently there are enough campsites to accommodate more than 800 people. A total count, including private parks and motels, brings that figure up to more than 1,500. Given the large amount of publicly owned land within the County, there is ample land to develop more camping areas. Many of the existing campsites are "primitive" or provide water only. While these may be adequate for the sportsman and backcountry campers, the remaining camper demographic that wants modern amenities is lacking.

4.1 Big Creek Township Owned Facilities

Facility Name

Amenities

Luzerne River Park

9 Camp sites with Electric 4 primitive, Canoe Slide, Playground Equipment, Outhouses, Ausable River access Picnic Area, Shelter

Comstock-Nelson Park

Large Playground, Large Pavilion, Basketball Courts Rest Room Building, Dog Park, Picnic Area

Joe Pillars Park

Handicap Accessible Fishing Pier, Ausable River Access

4.2 Recreation Facilities not owned by Big Creek Township

Oscoda County Owned

Oscoda County Campground

104 Acres on the Mio Pond, 65 Modern Campsites, 87 Rustic Campsites, Scenic Overlook, Bath House, Mio Pond Access, Picnic Area, Playground

State of Michigan Owned

Camp Ten Fishing Pier

Ausable River/Mio Pond Access, Boat Launch Handicap Accessible Fishing Pier

Mio Pond Campground

Mio Pond Access, 24 Primitive Campsites, Boat Launch, Picnic Area, Fishing Access

Parmalee Campground

Ausable River Access, 7 Rustic Campsites, Trail Access

Whirlpool Access

Ausable River Access, Canoe Slide, Outhouse

Federal Owned

Luzerne Boardwalk

Big Creek Access, Shore to Shore Trail Access

Loon Lake

Loon Lake Access, Swimming, Picnic Area, Fishing

Island Lake Campground

Island Lake Access, 17 Rustic Campsites, Swimming, Fishing, Picnic Area

Luzerne Trail Camp

10 Rustic Campsites, Access to the Shore to Shore Trail Trail

Wagner Lake Campground

12 Rustic Campsites, Swimming, Fishing

Meadows Campground

16 Rustic Campsites, Access to ORV Trails, Forest

Mio Ausable School

Playground, Baseball and Softball Fields, Track, Tennis Courts

4.3 Privately Owned

Pineacres Campground	40 Modern Campsites, Shower Building, Cabins
Rainbow Resort	12 Rental Cabins, Canoe Rental, Ausable River Access
Luzerne Express	Mio Pond Access, Tube Rental 60 Modern Campsites, 30 rustic Campsites, Canoe Rentals, Tube Rentals
Big Foot Lodge	Rental Cabins, Rustic Campsites

5.0 DNR Recreation Grant History

In 1991 Big Creek Township applied for and received a DNR CMI Clean Michigan Initiative Grant of \$54,000 to construct a playground and picnic pavilion at the Comstock-Nelson Park. The project was completed in 2000.

In 2015 Big Creek Township applied for and received a DNR Habitat Improvement Grant of \$105,000 for the development of the Joseph Pillars Park. The park was opened in 2016.

6.0 Public Input Process

During the early discussion period of developing this plan in 2019 we mailed questionnaires to all of the campers who registered at the Luzerne River Park. We asked about the maintenance of the facility what they like about the park and what improvements they would like to be made. In 2019 we also had township board members and staff ask people at our local festivals, Craft Shows Etc. what type of recreational improvements they would like to be made in our township. In 2020 when everything shut down for Covid we paused all of our planned capital improvements because of the uncertainty of how our budgets would be affected. We started the Recreation Planning process again in the spring of 2022.

We held a Public Hearing June 16, 2022. It was lightly attended but we received many good comments and feed back from the residents in attendance and those that sent written comments. We asked for comments and had discussions during our July 21, 2022 Big Creek Township Board Meeting and again during our August 18, 2022 Big Creek Township Board Meeting. The Oscoda County Herald wrote an article about the June 16, 2022 Public Hearing which garnered more comments to the board members.

7.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are a statement of community values. Objectives articulate the means and methodologies of achieving stated goals within a defined schedule. Goals and objectives state what the community wants to be in the future and the actions they are going to take to get there.

A goal is an intentionally broad vision or idea that takes the information gathered through the community input, local population demographics, and social conditions, budgets, and organizational capacity. Goals makes statements about what the community desires to achieve in recreation development, programming, and recreation facility maintenance in the future and who will benefit from those decisions.

Objectives identify the specific activities a community will undertake to achieve its goals. Objectives also require a defined schedule. As such, the attainment of a goal relies on accomplishing several objectives. Objectives are also developed through the understanding of budgets, community composition, and organizational capacity. Ideally, an objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, and have a timeline associated with it.

Big Creek Township is a year-round tourist destination. Thousands of campers, snowmobilers, ORV operators, kayakers, hikers, bicycle enthusiasts, sports fishing devotees, birders, hunters, music lovers and those who simply love the quiet, majestic beauty of the Huron Manistee National Forest flock to Big Creek Township.

Big Creek Township strives to balance the economic needs of the community with the needs of community members that also desire a quiet, small town with less traffic. Big Creek Township intends to generate greater economic benefits for the local businesses and enhance the well-being of the year-round residents by supporting tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and cultural impacts by addressing the needs of the visitors and the local residents.

Goal 1: Big Creek Township is a location where tourism is abundant through most of the year. Tourists are welcome because they are respectful of our communities and want to protect and enjoy natural areas that surround us.

Objective 1: Big Creek Township will promote itself as a tourist destination that offers quality Recreational experiences to those who want to experience the natural and human made Amenities available.

Objective 2: Big Creek Township will work with local businesses to develop strategies that Support local commerce through tourism and support the residents quality of life.

Goal 2: Big Creek Township is an inclusive community where people of all abilities are welcome and have easy access to all public recreation facilities in the township.

Objective 1: Big Creek Township will continue to implement ADA Design Standards whenever possible in all of its recreational improvement projects.

Objective 2: Big Creek Township will promote itself as being inclusive to people with all abilities by promoting accessibility to recreational facilities.

Goal 3: Big Creek Township Parks and Recreation Facilities will be clean and well maintained.

Objective 1: Big Creek Township will develop a maintenance plan that will set specific goals for recreational facility maintenance.

Goal 4: Big Creek Township will plan and develop new recreation opportunities and facilities for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Big Creek Township will continue to improve the existing facilities we have.

Objective 1: Big Creek Township will provide for the necessary professional services to design and implement all new recreational development projects taking care that they conform to ADA Design Standards and are safe for all users.

Objective 2: Big Creek Township will provide the necessary funding for grant matches while continually planning and seeking grant funding and private donations to help share the costs of developing all new recreational facilities.

Objective 3: Big Creek Township will seek to develop a park on a lake and provide a swimming area for our residents and visitors to use. To provide a pathway and transition area for those with physical limitations to be able to enjoy water-based activities.

Objective 4: Big Creek Township will seek to develop a safe sledding area for residents and visitors to be able to use. This will help increase winter recreation-based activity for residents and visitors alike.

Goal 5: Big Creek Township will plan to provide better walking areas including sidewalks, Pathways and trails to provide easier and safer ways for our citizens and visitors to enjoy outdoor recreation. To help them increase physical activities.

Objective 1: Work with the Mio Ausable Schools to develop a safe routes to school's plan For Mio. To develop strategies to increase the number of children walking to school. To design and construct sidewalks in Mio and improve the lighting on the backstreets.

Objective 2: Develop a plan to expand the pedestrian sidewalks in Luzerne. To improve the Lighting in Luzerne to make walking safer. To expand trails to destinations like the Luzerne Boardwalk and Comstock-Nelson Park.

8.0 Big Creek Township Recreation Plan Action Plan

2023

Luzerne River Park

Construct an ADA compliant children’s playground. Create a safe impact zone around existing swings and climber. This was recommended as an activity for campers who are staying at the park and as an improvement to the day use/picnic area. This project is strongly supported by visitors and residents. This project will benefit visitors to the park, Residents of the Township and seasonal property owners.

Estimated costs: \$50,000

Mio Playground and Park

Acquire land to develop a downtown park in Mio. This was discussed at our June 16, 2022 Public Hearing and several township meetings. This project is strongly supported. With the creation of a downtown park in Mio community events will have a location to be held without closing streets. It will provide a place for live music events. It will provide a playground where children and families can walk or ride their bikes to. The acquisition of the right parcels has the possibility of demolishing blighted properties. This project will benefit residents, visitors and seasonal property owners as well as increasing economic activity in downtown Mio.

Estimated cost \$200,00 to \$250,000

Safe Routes to Schools Plan

Develop a safe route to Schools plan for Mio in conjunction with Mio Ausable Schools and Mentor Township. This plan will help us plan sidewalk and lighting improvements for Mio. With this plan in place it will also allow us to budget for future improvements and seek several grant funding sources for revenues to implement the plan. This plan will benefit residents and visitors alike. There is strong support for the plan development and implementation.

Estimated cost \$5000

Off leash dog park at Comstock-Nelson Park

Fencing and planning for the dog park were completed in 2022. In 2023 we plan to add bench seating, shade area and obstacle course. There has been support for this project. Residents are currently using the fenced in area without any improvements as a place to take their dogs to play. This project will benefit residents and visitors.

Estimated Cost \$5000

2024

Mio Playground and Park

Start construction of Mio downtown playground and park. Plan to include a playground, Picnic Area, Fountain and an Entertainment Stage. This project will benefit residents, children, seniors and visitors to the township.

Estimated cost \$250,000 to \$300,000

Mio Sidewalk Extensions Phase 1

We plan to start constructing sidewalks in downtown Mio as part of the Safe Routes to Schools Plan. This project will take several years to complete. We have strong support from our residents to improve the pedestrian access from Mio to the school and our proposed new parks. The plan is to start with 11th Street from M-72 to Deyarmond Street. This project will benefit residents and visitors.

Estimated Cost \$50,000

2025

Mio Sidewalk Extensions Phase 2

We plan to continue constructing Sidewalks in downtown Mio. In Phase 2 we plan to construct sidewalks on McCormack Street from 11th Street to M-72, on Nolan Street from 11th street to M-72, on Frick street from 11th Street to M-72. This project will benefit residents and visitors.

Estimated Cost: \$50,000

Sidewalks and Hiking Trail in Luzerne

Construct sidewalks on Deeter Road in Luzerne from M-72 to Palmer Road. Then construct a Hiking Trail along Palmer Road and Galloway Road to the US Forest Service Luzerne Boardwalk Access Site. This trail will provide an approximately 1.25-mile walking trail from downtown Luzerne to the access site. This project was discussed at our June 16, 2022 Public Hearing. It has strong Community support from the residents and business community in Luzerne. This project will benefit residents, visitors and seasonal property owners.

\$ 75,000

Mio Pond Hiking, Biking and Cross-Country Ski Trail.

The plan is to construct a hiking, biking and cross-country ski trail from the Big Creek Township Hall to the Mio Pond and the Camp Ten Bridge and Handicap Fishing Piers. There is strong public support for this project. We have included it in our plans for many years but have had obstacles developing the pathway on US Forest Service and Consumers Energy properties. Both agencies are in favor of the project. Consumers Energy is deciding whether to renew the FERC Operating license for the Mio Dam. In 2023 they will decide whether to decommission the Mio Dam at the end of its current license in 2034, If the Mio Dam license is not extended past 2034

this project will probably be cancelled. This project would benefit Residents and visitors and could increase economic activity for our township because it would be a tremendous attraction for our community.

Estimated Cost: \$350,000

2026

Mio Sidewalk Extensions

We plan to continue constructing Sidewalks in downtown Mio. Phase 3 we plan to construct sidewalks on Deyarmond Street from 12th Street to M-72, Vine Street from 12th Street to M-72, Hill Street from 11th Street to 10th Street and 10th Street from Hill Street to M-33.

Estimated costs: \$75,000

M-72 Streetscape Improvements.

We plan to design street scape improvements for M-72 from M-33 to 14th Street. In 2027 MDOT will be rebuilding M-72 from M-33 to 14th Street on the western edge of Mio. In 2026 we plan having lighting, streetscape and sidewalk improvements designed by our engineers in conjunction with MDOT so the projects can be bid and constructed simultaneously in 2027. There is strong support in the community to extend the streetscape design constructed on M-33 in Mio approximately 15 years ago. It will allow safer pedestrian transportation from downtown Mio to the Mio Ausable School, the Mio Pond Scenic Overlook and the Oscoda County Park.

Estimated Costs for Engineering Services \$75,000

2027

M-72 Streetscape Improvements

We plan on constructing streetscape Improvements in conjunction with MDOT along M-72.

Estimated Costs: \$350,000

Joseph Pillars Park Phase 2

Phase 2 of Joseph Pillars Park includes a walkway from the existing park to the tailrace of the Mio Dam, it also includes a handicap Accessible Fishing Pier located in the Mio Dam Tail Race waters. This would be a quality fishing experience for fishermen with any physical capabilities. The tail race of the Mio Dam holds Walleye, Small Mouth Bass, Pike and Trout. We have had broad support for this project since building phase one of the park. This project is also dependent upon the relicensing of the Mio Dam.

Potential Funding Sources

Big Creek Township will be seeking funding for these listed projects from myriad funding sources. Some of the funding sources considered will be the Big creek Township general Fund and Reserves. Hopefully these funds can be used as local match sources for other funding opportunities. We also plan on looking into grant opportunities from the MNRTF Development and Acquisition Grant Program, The Recreation Passport Grant Program, Private Donations, The Big Creek Township Marihuanna Excise Tax Dispersals, MDOT Enhancement Grant Programs, The US forest Service Resource Advisory Committee Grants, North Central Community Foundation Grant Programs, American Rescue Plan Funds, Consumers Energy Foundation Grant Fund, Michigan State Land Bank Authority Grants, USDA Safe Routes to Schools Grants and any other programs that may help with the funding of these recreation improvement goals and objectives stated within this plan.