

## **Introduction**

Casco Township has established the importance of recreation to the Township's quality of life by passing a five-year millage to support parks and recreation facilities in 2006. The opportunity is important for establishing a park system in the Township, which is situated in a tourism and recreation intense area of West Michigan. This plan helps establish how to make the best use of funds received from the millage, and looks at the needs of the community and its residents.

This plan represents the ideas of the Township's officials and residents through meetings and an "Issue Identification" Workshop. The planning process was a combined effort of the Township's Recreation Committee, Township Officials, interested citizens, and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

The Action Plan provides a schedule for completing a number of improvements. The Township should strive to follow the established schedule, but should consider the schedule a "living guide" since funding opportunities and other events may not always mesh with the schedule. The integrity of the plan will not be compromised if actions are rescheduled during the five-year planning period. Finally, this plan should be a working document that is frequently used for guidance and updated if necessary. The next complete update of the plan should occur in 2011.

### **Community Description**

This recreation plan was prepared for Casco Township. The Township is located in the southwest corner of Allegan County (Map 1).

The plan focuses on providing recreation opportunities to residents of the Township through the acquisition, development, and maintenance of community-owned parks. While the primary focus is on providing residents of the Township with recreation opportunities, improvements to the Township's park system will benefit adjoining townships and nearby communities, schools, and visitors to Casco Township.

Supplemental information describing the Township's physical and social features is included in Appendix A to allow people to see the information and to meet the guidelines for recreation plans.

**Map 1**

## Administrative Structure

### **Parks and Recreation Board and Township Board**

The Township's residents are the final authority in the Township since they elect the Township Board, which must approve any improvements to the Township's parks. Currently, the Township's recreation-related planning activities are undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Committee, which reports to the Township Board. The Parks and Recreation Committee is comprised of appointed members of the community. The Township Board and Parks and Recreation Committee are listed below:

#### Casco Township Board

- Allan Overhiser, Supervisor
  - Julie Cowie, Clerk
  - Lu Winfrey, Treasurer
  - Eldon Ridley, Trustee
  - Judy Graff, Trustee
- Tom Jessup (left mid-plan to serve on County Commission)

#### Casco Township Parks and Recreation Committee

- Eileen Mead, Chair
  - Samuel Fleming
  - Doug Murdoch
  - Diane Schlanser
  - Greg Haas
  - Joe Williams
  - Jim Ridley

### **School District**

The Township is served by two public school districts: South Haven Public Schools and Fennville Public Schools.

### **Allegan County**

Allegan County maintains many parks, but none of them are in Casco Township (see recreation inventory).

### **Staff and Volunteers**

The Township has several paid positions including Trustees, Supervisor, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, Building Department Staff and Office Clerk, Cemetery Maintenance, Zoning Administrator and Clerical. Volunteers include the seven members of the Casco Township Parks and Recreation Committee (appointed by the Township Board) as well as others throughout the Township.

**Budget Information**

Table 1 identifies budget information related to the Township and recreation-related line items.

**Table 1 – Casco Township Revenues and Expenses (for the 12 months ending June 30, 2006)**

Category	Amount (\$)
<b>Revenues</b>	
Property Tax	72,049.40
Senior Services	26,440.04
Light Districts	2,600.08
Administrative Fees	3,379.49
Building Permits	44,543.53
Electrical Permits	12,500.00
Sales Tax	182,720.00
Cemetery Service Fees	13,996.60
Interest and Rent	27,116.42
Interest Earned	23,265.01
Application Fees	9,862.50
Summer Tax Collection Fee	10,767.66
Other	30,172.15
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>459,412.88</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Wages and Salaries	143,980.52
Training and Dues	5,295.98
Contractual Services	130,126.90
Supplies and Expenses	3,263.41
Postage and Printing	9,666.65
Water and Sewer	116,666.00
Equipment and Maintenance	9,461.31
Utilities	11,805.87
Transfer Station	55,756.12
Recreation	1,923.63
Human Services	27,941.54
Other	55,496.42
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>571,384.60</b>

Source: Casco Township

In 2006 the Township Passed Parks Millage for 0.25 mils. This will generate roughly \$35,000 annually for the five-year period beginning in 2007.

### **Recreation Inventory**

The recreation inventory provides a summary of facilities in the Township and surrounding areas.

#### **Casco Township**

Casco Township has a number of properties that are not intensely developed, but that serve residents and visitors. Map 2 identifies the locations of each site.

**Miami Park** – This two acre property includes 800 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan. The site is located at the road-end of Miami Avenue, west of the Blue Star Highway on the west side of Section 18. The site is surrounded by medium density residential uses. Since the site is currently undeveloped, there are no accessibility issues – except that beach access is limited due to erosion and steep bluffs..

**Mt. Pleasant Access** – The site is located in Section 19 at the intersection of B Street and B Avenue, west of the Blue Star Highway. The site is surrounded by medium density residential uses. There are no facilities or signage identifying the site as a public access point. The site is wooded and provides a good view of Lake Michigan, but no easy access to the beach. This access site’s size and boundaries are currently in dispute and erosion is also an issue.

**First Street Park** – This access site provides 20 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan. The site is located in Section 31 on First Street, off Northshore Drive. The site is surrounded by medium density residential uses, with residential units adjacent to the site. The access site includes a gravel road/driveway leading to an unpaved pathway that leads to a wooden stairway with 50 steps and a resting point with benches midway down the stairs. Signage includes rules and no-parking signs. Strengths of the site include the view of Lake Michigan and the fact that the site is the only public access to Lake Michigan for quite a distance. Weaknesses include the lack of parking and the proximity to the adjacent properties – which has created issues in the past.

**Glenn Shores Access** – This site, located in Section 6, is maintained by a neighborhood association and is surrounded by medium density residential uses. The site is located off Orchard Lake Drive, west of the Blue Star Highway. Facilities include a wooden stairway and seating at the top of the stairs. Signage at the park identifies the site as a neighborhood-owned site, but actual ownership needs to be established.

**Township Hall** – The Casco Township Hall sits on 40 acres of property in Section 18 (on the southwest corner of 107<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 71<sup>st</sup> Street) that has vacant land available for recreation uses. The site is surrounded by other public uses including a cemetery on the north side of 107<sup>th</sup> Avenue, agricultural uses and low-density residential uses.

**Township Property** – Casco Township owns 28 acres of property in section 20. The vacant heavily wooded property is in a primarily agricultural area.

### **Other Facilities in Casco Township**

**Steffan Property** – This property is privately owned. The family that owns the property is working with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy to determine the best way to preserve the site for future generations. This 8.5 acre property includes 300 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan. The undeveloped site contains a variety of types of mature trees and is a unique site. The property is located on the Blue Star Highway in the southwest corner of Section 7. The site is surrounded by low density residential uses. Since the site is currently undeveloped and privately owned, there are no accessibility issues.

**SHARP** – This 93 acre site, proposed by the South Haven Area Recreation Park (SHARP), is located in Section 30. The undeveloped site is adjacent to US-31 (to the west), 103<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (to the south), and 71<sup>st</sup> Street (to the east). The site is surrounded by primarily agricultural uses. This is a multi-jurisdictional effort that would serve several communities and include a variety of active recreation facilities such as soccer fields, baseball, basketball, tennis, and support facilities. Since the site is currently undeveloped, there are no accessibility issues. SHARP currently has an option to purchase the property, which is currently privately owned.

**Glenn Shores Golf Club** – This nine-hole public course is located in Section 6, off Blue Star Highway.

**Hawkshead Links** – This 18-hole public course is located in Section 20, north of 105th Avenue.

**South Haven Golf Club** – This 18-hole public course is located in Section 30, off Blue Star Highway.

**Map 2**

**Surrounding Communities**

**Ganges Township** – The Township maintains Pier Cove, a public beach on Lake Michigan. The Township also has three public access sites to Lake Michigan, with limited facilities and parking. Glenn Public School offers some recreation facilities.

**City of South Haven** – The City of South Haven, south of Casco Township, maintains ten community parks, two public beaches, three Lake Michigan Access Sites, and the Municipal Marina. Additionally, the Kal-Haven Trail ends/begins in South Haven and goes 45 miles east to Kalamazoo.

**Covert Township** – This Township, south of the City of South Haven, contains one township park and one Van Buren County Park.

**Allegan County**

Allegan County maintains several parks. Table 2 provides a brief description of the County’s parks.

Table 2 – Allegan County Parks

Park	Location	Acreage	Picnic Facilities	Water Features	Active Play Areas	Other
Dumont Lake Park	Monterey Twp.	19	X	X	X	Swimming
Dumont Lake Boat Launch	Allegan Twp	3		X		Boat Launch
Gun Lake Park	Wayland Twp.	4	X	X	X	Swimming
Littlejohn Lake	Allegan Twp.	113	X	X	X	Swimming, Trails
Silver Creek Park	Heath Twp.	320	X	X	X	Swimming, Equestrian, Camping
West Side Park	Ganges Twp.	11	X	X	X	Swimming
Ely Lake Campground	Clyde Twp	90		X		73 camp sites, boat launch
Pine Point Campground	Valley Twp	80		X		32 camp sites, boat launch
Bysterveld Park	Dorr Twp	70				
New Richmond Bridge	Manlius Twp	80		X		Historic bridge

Source: Allegan County Parks and Recreation Plan

**State of Michigan Facilities** (Located within Region 8)

**Holland State Park** – This 142-acre park on Lake Michigan located in the City of Holland, in Ottawa County. The park offers 368 campsites, picnic facilities, swimming, a beach house, a boat launch and fishing.

**Saugatuck State Park** – This 866-acre park on Lake Michigan is located in the City of Saugatuck, in Allegan County. The park offers swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, and picnic facilities.

**Ionia Recreation Area** – This 4,085 acre facility located between Saranac and Ionia in Ionia County has 50 campsites and offers a variety of opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, swimming, boating, a beach house, a boat launch, hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking and horseback riding.

**Grand Haven State Park** – This 48-acre park is located on Lake Michigan in Ottawa County's Grand Haven. The park provides a variety of opportunities including 182 campsites, picnic and playground facilities, swimming, a beach house and fishing.

**Yankee Springs Recreation Area** – This 5,017-acre area is located in eastern Allegan County/western Barry County. The recreation area provides many opportunities including 325 campsites, an organization camp, equestrian activities, picnic facilities, swimming, concessions, playground facilities, boat launch areas, an interpretive program, hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, mountain biking and cross-country skiing.

**White Pine Trail** – This 92 mile Rail-Trail stretches from Comstock Park, in Kent County, to Cadillac, in Wexford County. The trail is currently open along most of its course, and is paved in many areas. Plans are to pave the entire trail.

**State of Michigan Facilities** (Located within 50 miles of Region 8)

- Traverse City State Park – Grand Traverse County
- Interlochen State Park – Grand Traverse County
- William Mitchell State Park – Wexford County
- Orchard Beach State Park – Manistee County
- North Higgins Lake State Park – Crawford County
- South Higgins Lake State Park – Roscommon County
- Wilson State Park – Clare County
- Newaygo State Park – Newaygo County
- Charles Mears State Park – Oceana County
- Silver Lake State Park – Oceana County
- Duck Lake State Park – Muskegon County
- Muskegon State Park – Muskegon County
- P. J. Hoffmaster State Park – Muskegon County
- Hart-Montague Trail – Muskegon and Oceana Counties
- Sleepy Hollow State Park – Clinton County
- Fort Custer Recreation Area – Kalamazoo County
- Kal-Haven Trail – Kalamazoo and Van Buren Counties
- Van Buren State Park – Van Buren County
- Warren Dunes State Park – Berrien County
- Grand Mere State Park – Berrien County
- Warren Woods Natural Area – Berrien County

**State Game Areas** (Located within Region 8)

**Allegan County**

- Allegan State Game Area

**Kent County**

- Rogue River State Game Area
- Cannonsburg State Game Area
- Lowell State Game Area

**Ottawa County**

- Grand Haven State Game Area

**Ionia County**

- Flat River State Game Area
- Lowell State Game Area
- Portland State Game Area

**Montcalm County**

- Flat River State Game Area
- Stanton State Game Area
- Langston State Game Area
- Edmore State Game Area
- Vestaburg State Game Area

**Osceola County**

- Pere Marquette State Forest
- State Wildlife Management Area

**Mecosta County**

- Pere Marquette State Forest
- Haymarsh Lake State Game Area

### **Boat Launch Sites**

Allegan County has 24 public Boat Launch sites maintained by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The list of sites follows.

- Big Lake
- Hacklander (Kalamazoo River)
- Duck Lake
- Green Lake
- M-89 Bridge
- Little Tom Lake
- Howard Shultz Park
- Pine Creek Impoundment
- Pike Lake
- Miner Lake
- Swan Lake
- Lake Sixteen
- Swan Creek Pond
- Main Ottawa Landing
- Gun Lake County Park
- Eagle Lake
- Sheffer Lake
- New Richmond (Kalamazoo River)
- Base Line Lake
- Allegan Dam
- Ely Lake
- Echo Point
- George Schutmaat Park
- Selkirk

### **Campgrounds**

In addition to State and County Campgrounds there are several privately operated campgrounds in Allegan County. A summary of these facilities follows.

- Hungry Horse Campground, Dorr, 83 campsites
- Sandy Pines Wilderness Trails, Hopkins, 2,400 campsites
- East Lake Camping, Hopkins, 109 campsites
- Dumont Lake Campground, Allegan, 82 campsites
- Schnable Lake Family Campground, Martin, 133 campsites
- Saugatuck KOA, Saugatuck, 225 campsites
- Tri-Ponds Family Camp Resort, Allegan
- Walker's Landing, Saugauck
- West Wind Campground, Saugatuck

### **Golf Courses**

Allegan County has 20 golf courses. A list of the courses follows.

- Hidden Valley, Shelbyville
- Orchard Hills, Shelbyville
- Lake Doster, Plainwell
- Lake Monterey, Dorr
- Winding Creek, Holland
- Clearbrook, Saugatuck
- Eagle Creek, Allegan
- Hawkshead Links, Casco Township
- Prairiewood, Otsego
- Shagbark, Plainwell
- West Shore, Douglas
- Wilderness Hills, Plainwell
- Glen Shores, Casco Township
- South Haven Golf Club, Casco Township
- Cheshire Hills, Allegan
- The Ravines, Saugatuck
- Lynx Golf Course, Otsego
- Yankee Springs, Wayland
- Diamond Springs, Hamilton
- Shamrock Hills, Gobles

**SKI AREAS**

- Bittersweet, Allegan County
- Pando, Kent County
- Cannonsburg, Kent County
- Timber Ridge, Van Buren County

**Plan Adoption**

This section of the Recreation Plan documents that Casco Township has submitted copies of the Plan to the required organizations, held a public meeting, and adopted the Plan. Copies of the following documents are included in Appendix B:

- Letter to Allegan County (Regional Planning Commission did not receive letter since it assisted in planning effort)
- Notice of Issue Identification Workshop
- Notice of Public Hearing and Availability of Plan for Public Review
- Township Board Resolution

### **Description of Planning and Public Input Process**

The following identifies the steps used to develop the Casco Township Recreation Plan.

**Community Description** – This step includes two sections. The first section describes the Township's physical features. These features include location, climate, soils, natural features, wildlife, and a description of the transportation network. The second major portion of this step describes the Township's social features. This section describes the existing population and provides information about Allegan County and Michigan for comparison. The plan includes population features including age and sex distribution; racial distribution; people with physical disabilities; types of households; employment; and income information. Much of this information is included in Appendix A to allow people to see the information and to meet the MDNR planning guidelines.

**Recreation Inventory** – The WMRPC developed a description of the facilities through on-site visits to the Township's recreation sites. Information includes acreage, types of recreation activities, types of equipment, an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses, surrounding land uses and other descriptions of the physical attributes of the area's recreation facilities. The inventory also includes a summary of surrounding communities' facilities and a description of County Parks and Michigan State Parks within Region 8.

**Goals and Objectives** – This step helped establish the Township's recreation issues, goals, and objectives. The Township identified and ranked issues by inviting a varied group of area residents to a workshop and then turned the issues into goals. The participants also helped create a series of objectives to reach each of the goals. The workshop was held at the Township Hall on February 12, 2007.

**Action Program** – This step identifies what actions the Township will perform over the five-year planning period (2007-2011). The Plan identifies actions in an easy to understand format that allow readers to understand each action. The Action Program also identifies where and when an action will occur; who will accomplish the action; how much the action will cost; and potential funding sources. The Action Plan also includes a Basis for Action Program that identifies why each of the actions is a priority.

**Administrative Structure** -- This step describes how the Township administers recreation facilities and activities.

**Plan Adoption** – This section of the Recreation Plan documents that Casco Township submitted copies of the Plan to the required organizations, held a public hearing, and adopted the Plan. Copies of the following documents are included in Appendix B:

- Letter to Allegan County (no letter to regional planning commission since it assisted in preparing the plan)
- Notice of Issue Identification Workshop
- Notice of Public Hearing and Availability of Plan for Public Review
- Township Board Resolution

**Issues, Goals, and Objectives**

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission facilitated a workshop to help Casco Township identify issues, set goals, and develop objectives. The workshop was advertised in the South Haven Tribune. The following people attended the meeting on February 12, 2007 at the Township Offices:

- Bruce Barker
- Gary Greenspan
- Bonnie Reimex
- Mike Kiefer
- Sue Kiefer
- Richard Barden
- Audrey Storr
- Thomas Storr
- Martin Overhiser
- Arlene Dickerson
- Joe Williams
- Jim Ridley
- Eldon Ridley
- Norman Fouts
- Allan Overhiser
- Charles Fines
- Bill Hladik
- Ken Graff
- Judy Graff
- Robert Venner
- Samuel B. Fleming
- Diane Schlanser
- Gregory W. Haas
- Dave Bee (WMRPC)

Everyone had several opportunities during the two-hour session to identify issues important to them (related to recreation in Casco Township). The facilitator from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission took notes of the comments and created the following set of issues, goals, and objectives (as refined by the Recreation Committee and general public during a meeting on March 20, 2007 (Recreation Committee) and at the Public Hearing (April --)).

**Issue #1** – Public access to Lake Michigan (and all of the Great Lakes) is an issue that divides members of most lakefront communities. Casco Township is not an exception to this – with some members of the community feeling more access should be provided and others feeling access should be limited.

**Goal #1** – Strive to provide an appropriate level of public access to the Lake Michigan Shoreline in Casco Township.

**Objectives:**

1. Clarify ownership and boundary issues of all existing access sites owned by Casco Township or other government bodies (County, State, South Haven, neighborhoods, etc.).
2. Continue to maintain and improve the First Street Access Site.
3. Determine feasibility of improving Miami Access Site and Mt. Pleasant Access Site (signage, stairs, parking).

4. Work with neighborhood to determine ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the Glenn Shores Access Site.
5. Work with adjacent communities, Allegan County, and the State of Michigan to identify access sites near Casco Township.
6. Continue to work with property owners adjacent to, and near, access sites to address issues and concerns.
7. Develop signage, to be placed at all access sites, that explains the rights of the public and the rights of property owners – discuss appropriate behavior for both.

**Comments:** The majority of discussions at the February 12, 2007 meeting related to public access to Lake Michigan's Shoreline. Some people want to limit access, and others want to see access to Lake Michigan maintained or expanded. Six miles of the Lake Michigan Shoreline cannot be restricted to the use of a select few people, and people are allowed access to the high water mark along the entire length of the Great Lakes in Michigan, but the property owners along Lake Michigan have many concerns related to erosion, privacy, crowds, noise, vandalism, parking, etc.

This is an issue that goes beyond the scope of a recreation plan. A recreation plan's primary function is to help communities create an action plan for improving recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Solving the age-old issue of land ownership along a great lake is not going to be solved in a five-year recreation plan.

**Issue #2** – The Township has no active recreation facilities to meet the demands of residents.

**Goal #2** – Develop a park adjacent to the Casco Township Hall that provides recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to Casco Township

**Objectives:**

1. Develop a site plan of the future township park to create a vision for the site's potential and to create excitement for the project – include an action plan that establishes a schedule and cost for improvements.
2. Ensure the site plan includes a mix of activities suitable for a community park – including baseball, picnic facilities, a pavilion, basketball, trails around the perimeter, a band shell, playground equipment, disc-golf, and other facilities.
3. Ensure that the park is build to allow universal accessibility.
4. Determine the cost of such a facility and determine how much will be funded through the ongoing millage, how much needs to come from grants (such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund), and how much should come from other sources such as individuals and organizations.

**Comments:** This 40 acre site, adjacent to the Township Hall, is ideally located for active recreation activities since the area around the park is fairly open and would not create too many issues with neighbors – and it is already a publicly-owned space. Such a facility

would be a great way to use funds from the millage that the residents of Casco Township approved in 2006 – since the site is centrally located and would provide activities suitable for everyone. Additionally, recreation standards indicate the need for many types of active recreation facilities in Casco Township (see Table 5).

**Issue #3** – The “Steffan Property” is an 8.5 acre family-owned site on Lake Michigan that the family is wishing to preserve.

**Goal #3** – Continue to work with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and the Steffan Family to establish the best use for the site that respects the wishes of the Steffan Family.

**Objectives:**

1. Determine an appropriate level of participation for the Township and work to ensure the Township’s vision related to land use and recreation match the wishes of the Steffan Family.

**Comments:** Currently the Steffan Family is working with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy to preserve this unique 8.5 acre site overlooking Lake Michigan. Whether or not the Township will play a role in the future of the site depends on the wishes of the family, but the Township should assist in whatever manner it can to preserve the property for future generations.

**Issue #4** – There is currently no vision for the 28 acre property in Section 20 that is owned by Casco Township.

**Goal #4** – Establish a long-term (beyond the next five years) vision for the 28 acre site.

**Objectives:**

2. Maintain a list of improvements that would be suitable for the site when the time to develop the site is appropriate (could be first priority in next recreation plan update).

**Comments:** This site was not mentioned during the public workshop, but it is important for the Township to create a long-term vision for the site in the overall provision of recreation opportunities. There are clearly enough other issues that should be addressed before moving forward with improving this site, but this site should be considered for the long-term recreation vision.

**Issue #5** – There are limited recreation-related, linear trail opportunities in Casco Township for non-motorized activities (walking, running, bicycling, canoeing, etc.).

**Goal #5** – Identify appropriate roadways, rights-of-way, linear greenways (rivers, streams, Lake Michigan beach, etc.) that could be used for recreation-related linear uses.

**Objectives:**

1. Identify appropriate linear opportunities and develop list of appropriate improvements to be made to each resource (signage, parking, paving, amenities, etc.). This is another long-term issue that should probably not be addressed during the first five years of the Township's efforts related to recreation.

**Comments:** This issue was brought up by people that wanted to see any type of linear parkways in the Township – whether they were trails linking the Township to the Kal-Haven Trail to the south, canoeing in the rivers and streams, shoulders along roadways for bicyclists, or simply walking along the shores of Lake Michigan.

**Issue #6** – There are also regional recreation-related needs that relate to the area around Casco Township.

**Goal #6** – Continue to work with the South Haven Area Recreation Park (SHARP) Committee to determine the feasibility of creating a park in Casco Township.

**Objectives:**

1. Maintain regular communications with the SHARP Committee.
2. Adjust recreation needs of the Township if the SHARP site is developed (strive to reduce duplication of services/resources).

**Comments:** The South Haven Area Recreation Park (SHARP) site, is located in Section 30. The undeveloped site is adjacent to US-31 (to the west), 103<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (to the south), and 71<sup>st</sup> Street (to the east). The site is surrounded by primarily agricultural uses. This is a multi-jurisdictional effort that would serve several communities and include a variety of active recreation facilities such as soccer fields, baseball, basketball, tennis, and support facilities.

**Table 5 – Recreation Standards**

Recreation Facility/Opportunity	Standard (units/ Population)	Required to Meet 2020 Population (3,500)	Existing in Casco Township
Local Park Land (acres)	1/100	35 (35)	60 (mostly undeveloped)
Ball Fields (a)	1/3,000	1.2 (1)	0
Outdoor Basketball Courts (a)	1/5,000	0.7 (1)	0
Outdoor Ice Rinks	1/20,000	0.2 (0)	0
Picnic Tables	1/200	17.5 (18)	0
Playgrounds (a)	1/3,000	1.2 (1)	0
Soccer Fields (a)	1/20,000	0.2 (0)	0
Outdoor Tennis Courts (a)	1/4,000	0.9 (1)	0
Boat Launches (parking spaces)	1/400	8.75 (9)	0
Campsites (b)	1/150	23.3 (23)	0
Cross-Country Ski Trails (miles)	1/10,000	0.35 (0)	0
Fishing Access (feet)	1/1	3,500 (feet)	Unknown (but sufficient)
Hiking Trails (miles)	1/5,000	0.7 (1)	0
Horseback Riding Trails (miles)	1/20,000	0.2 (0)	0
Swimming Beaches (public)	1/25,000	0.1 (0)	1+

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

(a) Does not include school facilities

(b) Includes private facilities

**Accessibility Evaluation**

**Casco Township Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Due to the fact that there are very few developed facilities at any of the Township's properties, there are very few issues. But, as sites are developed, the Township must strive to insure that facilities are accessible. At the larger potential sites, where active recreation activities would be targeted, it will be important to provide paved pathways, parking, restrooms, accessible picnic tables, and other facilities. In the more passive recreation areas, along Lake Michigan, it will be important to have viewing areas, but it could prove difficult to provide access to the actual beach due to the slope of the shoreline area and the shifting shoreline.

**Status Report of Grant Assisted Parks**

Casco Township has never received a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund or the U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund.

**Action Program**

The previous sections of this plan lead to performing actions to address the recreation-related needs of Casco Township’s residents and visitors. The following actions identify the year, location, approximate cost, and justifications for improvements. The Action Program is a guide. Some actions may be performed prior to, or after, the scheduled time due to funding opportunities, or difficulties in obtaining funds or other resources.

<b>2007</b>	<p><b>Action 1</b></p> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will hire a consultant to develop a site plan for the future park at the Casco Township Hall location.</p> <p>Location: Casco Township Hall, Section 18</p> <p>Cost: \$2,500.00</p> <p>Funding Source: Township Recreation Millage</p> <p>Justification: This 40 acre site, adjacent to the Township Hall, is ideally located for active recreation activities since the area around the park is fairly open and would not create too many issues with neighbors – and it is already a publicly-owned space. Such a facility would be a great way to use funds from the millage that the residents of Casco Township approved in 2006 – since the site is centrally located and would provide activities suitable for everyone. Additionally, recreation standards indicate the need for many types of active recreation facilities in Casco Township (see Table 5). A site design plan is needed to determine the location of future facilities, the cost of facilities, and to create a clear vision of the location that will serve as motivation for the Township.</p>
-------------	--

<b>2007</b>	<p><b>Action 2</b></p> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will work with the Township Board and others to formally establish the ownership and boundaries of Township-owned access sites on Lake Michigan.</p> <p>Location: No location</p> <p>Cost: Possible legal fees, surveying fees, and administrative fees</p> <p>Funding Source: Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: The majority of discussions at the February 12, 2007 meeting related to public access to Lake Michigan's Shoreline. Some people want to limit access, and others want to see access to Lake Michigan maintained or expanded. Six miles of the Lake Michigan Shoreline cannot be restricted to the use of a select few people, and people are allowed access to the high water mark along the entire length of the Great Lakes in Michigan, but the property owners along Lake Michigan have many concerns related to erosion, privacy, crowds, noise, vandalism, parking, etc.</p> <p>This is an issue that goes beyond the scope of a recreation plan. A recreation plan's primary function is to help communities create an action plan for improving recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Solving the age-old issue of land ownership along a great lake is not going to be solved in a five-year recreation plan.</p> <p>The first step in addressing this issue is creating a document that identifies the locations and boundaries of property owned by Casco Township that either currently provides access to Lake Michigan, or could provide access if developed.</p>
-------------	---

<b>2007</b>	<b>Action 3</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will continue to work with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and the Steffan Family to ensure the best possible outcome for the Steffan property.</p> <p>Location: Steffan Property, Section 7</p> <p>Cost: Administrative Costs</p> <p>Funding Source: Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: Currently the Steffan Family is working with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy to preserve this unique 8.5 acre site overlooking Lake Michigan. Whether or not the Township will play a role in the future of the site depends on the wishes of the family, but the Township should assist in whatever manner it can to preserve the property for future generations.</p>
-------------	---

<b>2007</b>	<b>Action 4</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will continue to work with the South Haven Area Recreation Park Committee to provide regional recreation resources within Casco Township.</p> <p>Location: SHARP, Section 30</p> <p>Cost: Administrative Costs</p> <p>Funding Source: Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: The South Haven Area Recreation Park (SHARP) site, is located in Section 30. The undeveloped site is adjacent to US-31 (to the west), 103<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (to the south), and 71<sup>st</sup> Street (to the east). The site is surrounded by primarily agricultural uses. This is a multi-jurisdictional effort that would serve several communities and include a variety of active recreation facilities such as soccer fields, baseball, basketball, tennis, and support facilities. .</p>
-------------	--

<b>2008</b>	<b>Action 1</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Casco Township Board, will apply to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to assist in funding the development of a park at the Casco Township Hall.</p> <p>Location: Casco Township Hall, Section 18</p> <p>Cost: Administrative Costs</p> <p>Funding Source: Township Recreation Millage</p> <p>Justification: This 40 acre site, adjacent to the Township Hall, is ideally located for active recreation activities since the area around the park is fairly open and would not create too many issues with neighbors – and it is already a publicly-owned space. Such a facility would be a great way to use funds from the millage that the residents of Casco Township approved in 2006 – since the site is centrally located and would provide activities suitable for everyone. Additionally, recreation standards indicate the need for many types of active recreation facilities in Casco Township (see Table 5). Funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund are necessary to fund the facility; match will come from the five-year Township Recreation Millage.</p>
-------------	---

<b>2008</b>	<b>Action 2</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will hire a consultant to develop site plans Lake Michigan Access sites (as determined by Committee in 2007).</p> <p>Location(s): To be determined</p> <p>Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Funding Source: Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: When the Township clarifies the ownership and boundaries of Township-owned Lake Michigan Access sites, plans should be made to provide appropriate improvements to each of the sites.</p>
-------------	--

<b>2009</b>	<b>Action 1</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will begin development of a park at the Casco Township Hall.</p> <p>Location: Casco Township Hall, Section 18</p> <p>Cost: \$400,000.00</p> <p>Funding Source(s): Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Township Recreation Millage, Township General Fund, private resources, local service clubs, other.</p> <p>Justification: This 40 acre site, adjacent to the Township Hall, is ideally located for active recreation activities since the area around the park is fairly open and would not create too many issues with neighbors – and it is already a publicly-owned space. Such a facility would be a great way to use funds from the millage that the residents of Casco Township approved in 2006 – since the site is centrally located and would provide activities suitable for everyone. Additionally, recreation standards indicate the need for many types of active recreation facilities in Casco Township (see Table 5). Funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund are necessary to fund the facility; match will come from the five-year Township Recreation Millage.</p>
-------------	--

<b>2009</b>	<p><b>Action 2</b></p> <p><b>Action:</b> The Township Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Casco Township Board, will apply to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to assist in funding the development Lake Michigan Access sites.</p> <p><b>Location:</b> To be determined</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> Administrative Costs</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b> Township General Fund</p> <p><b>Justification:</b> The majority of discussions at the February 12, 2007 meeting related to public access to Lake Michigan's Shoreline. Some people want to limit access, and others want to see access to Lake Michigan maintained or expanded. Six miles of the Lake Michigan Shoreline cannot be restricted to the use of a select few people, and people are allowed access to the high water mark along the entire length of the Great Lakes in Michigan, but the property owners along Lake Michigan have many concerns related to erosion, privacy, crowds, noise, vandalism, parking, etc.</p> <p>Funds from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund are necessary to fund the improvements, which will benefit everyone in Michigan by providing access to Lake Michigan.</p>
-------------	--

<b>2010</b>	<b>Action 1</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will begin development of Lake Michigan Access Sites.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Cost: \$100,000.00</p> <p>Funding Source(s): Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Township Recreation Millage, Township General Fund, private resources, local service clubs, other.</p> <p>Justification: The majority of discussions at the February 12, 2007 meeting related to public access to Lake Michigan's Shoreline. Some people want to limit access, and others want to see access to Lake Michigan maintained or expanded. Six miles of the Lake Michigan Shoreline cannot be restricted to the use of a select few people, and people are allowed access to the high water mark along the entire length of the Great Lakes in Michigan, but the property owners along Lake Michigan have many concerns related to erosion, privacy, crowds, noise, vandalism, parking, etc.</p>
-------------	--

<b>2010</b>	<b>Action 2</b> <p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will develop a plan for linear parkways in the Township</p> <p>Location: Township-wide</p> <p>Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Funding Source(s): Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: Planning for the designation and improvement of linear parkways (bike paths, walking trails, rivers, etc.) is a great way to create facilities that improve opportunities for everyone in Casco Township. Improving non-motorized access should be a goal of every community.</p>
-------------	---

<b>2011</b>	<b>Action 1</b>
	<p>Action: The Township Parks and Recreation Committee will hire a consultant to develop a site plan for the 28 acre Township-owned site.</p> <p>Location: Section 20</p> <p>Cost: \$2,500.00</p> <p>Funding Source: Township Recreation Millage</p> <p>Justification: This 28 acre site is ideally located for active recreation activities since the area around the park is fairly open and would not create too many issues with neighbors – and it is already a publicly-owned space. Additionally, recreation standards indicate the need for many types of active recreation facilities in Casco Township (see Table 5). A site design plan is needed to determine the location of future facilities, the cost of facilities, and to create a clear vision of the location that will serve as motivation for the Township.</p>

<b>2012</b>	<b>Action 1</b>
	<p>Action: Update Recreation Plan</p> <p>Cost: \$5,000</p> <p>Funding Source(s): Township General Fund</p> <p>Justification: An up-to-date Recreation Plan provides goals for the community to follow related to improving recreation opportunities.</p>

**Conclusions**

Casco Township's quality of life is influenced by its unique character that includes both the lakeshore resort flavor and an agricultural influence. The Township's residents support expanding recreation opportunities – both in concept and with their financial resources since a millage was passed to develop a park system. While there are many issues tied to access to Lake Michigan, it is important for the Township to provide a variety of types of recreation opportunities for its residents and visitors, and progress must be shown towards making these improvements to ensure the residents that the millage they supported for improvements was a good decision.