

# Michigamme Township

## Recreation Plan 2021-2026



## **INTRODUCTION**

Michigamme Township is located on the western border of Marquette County and consists of a mostly rural landscape with a small, developed area along US-41/State Hwy 28. Most activity is located in the southern part of the Township, including the townsite, the highway, and Lake Michigamme with its recreation opportunities.

The remainder of the Township includes forests, lakes, rivers and wetlands, providing a vast area for land and water based recreational opportunities.

### **1. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

The unique location of Michigamme Township allows for an abundance of year-round recreational opportunities. The Ottawa National Forest covers much of the northern part of the Township. A large portion of McCormick Tract Wilderness, a small portion of Craig Lake State Park, the majority of Van Riper State Park and most of Lake Michigamme rest within the Township. There are also numerous lakes and a few small public parks. The North Country Hiking Trail and Moose Country Snowmobile Trail #8 pass through. This land base offers extensive hiking, fishing, biking, and camping opportunities in the warmer months. During the winter, ice-fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are popular activities.

#### **Forestlands**

The forests of Michigamme Township and the surrounding area have matured again since the early mining and logging days denuded the landscape. The forests consist mostly of a mixture of northern hardwood, White Pines and lowland conifers that provide continued opportunities in forestry management and production. The forests are also an important part of the culture of the Township, providing many options for outdoor recreation such as hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, snowshoeing, skiing, canoeing/kayaking, biking, running, scenic viewing, and wildlife and nature experiences. A sliver of the Ottawa National Forest rests in the Northern part of the Township and contains the McCormick Wilderness which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

## **Wetlands**

Wetlands are often referred to as marshes, swamps, or bogs. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers defines wetlands as “those areas inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions”.

Residents of Michigan are becoming more aware of the value of wetlands. Beyond their aesthetic value, wetlands improve water quality of lakes and streams by filtering polluting nutrients, organic chemicals and toxic heavy metals. Wetlands are closely related to high groundwater tables and serve to discharge or recharge aquifers. Additionally, wetlands support wildlife, and wetland vegetation protects shorelines from erosion.

According to the Department of Environmental Quality Wetlands, there are designated wetlands in the northern part of the township going as far south as the central part of the McCormick Tract Wilderness called “Mulligan Swamp”. Smaller pockets of wetlands exist throughout the Township. Wetlands are an important, and often undervalued, part of the township’s recreation opportunities.

## **Soils**

Soil composition analysis is used in land use planning to predict soil behavior for selected land uses. Depending on the planned use of the land, improvements may be needed to overcome soil limitations. This information is useful to community officials, engineers, developers, and homebuyers. According to the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service, most of the soils within the township are Soils and Miscellaneous on Bedrock-Controlled Moraines. The soils surrounding Lake Michigamme are Soils on Disintegration Moraines. The soils in the northern part of the township are a combination of Soils on Till-Floored Lake Plains and Dissected Moraines, and Soils on Outwash Plains, Terraces, and Beach Ridges. The majority is gneiss and granite with some quartzite in the northern part of the township and around the Lake Michigamme area. There is a small amount of Iron formation around the Lake area as well.

## **Water Resources**

Both human and natural ecological systems depend upon water. Perhaps the most valuable natural resource of Michigamme Township is the abundance of fresh water. Having been of historic importance, it is also the resource that will, to a great extent, determine the future of the area. Thus, the management of water becomes a prime factor in planned development. The principal

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reasons for controlling development on or near water are to protect watersheds to preserve the quality and quantity of the water supply, prevent damaging floods, and protect recreation lands.

Michigamme Township contains a lot of shoreline on Lake Michigamme, as well as the many other small lakes in the Township. The shoreline is a major attraction for local residents and tourists and helps to form the overall character and attractiveness of the community. Lake Michigamme is one of the most important environmental features in the Township given its overall impact on the Township's history, economy, development, and character. There are two larger rivers that connect water bodies within the County of Marquette. The Peshekee River is a 31-mile-long river that runs south into Lake Michigamme. The Yellow-Dog River's main branch begins at the outflow from Bulldog Lake in the Ottawa National Forest on the boundary between Baraga and Marquette counties. The river's mouth is on Lake Independence, near Big Bay, Michigan, and is part of the Lake Superior watershed. It is about 32 miles in length with nearly 85 miles of tributaries.

### **Fish and Wildlife Resources**

The Michigan DNR maintains a Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) listing plant and animal resources that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern. The lists include all elements (species and natural communities) for which locations have been recorded in the database for each county. Information from the database cannot provide a definitive statement on the presence, absence, or condition of the natural features in any given locality, because much of the state has not been specifically or thoroughly surveyed for their occurrence and the conditions at previously surveyed sites are constantly changing. The County Elements Lists should be used as a reference of which natural features currently or historically were recorded in the county and should be considered when developing land use plans.

Endangered fish species include the Redside Dace which is a small minnow. Threatened animal species include the Redshouldered Hawk, Common Loon, Lake Herring or Cisco Fish, and Delicate Vertigo. Animal species of special concern include the Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Osprey, Wood Turtle, Snails, the Crested Vertigo, and Mystery Vertigo. Insects include the Extra-striped Snaketail, Splendid Clubtail, and Rapids Clubtail.

Endangered plants include the Small Yellow Pond Lily. Threatened plant species include the Goblin Moonwort, Calypso or Fairy-Slipper, Assiniboia Sedge, Large Toothwort, Woodland Everlasting, Hedge-Hyssop, Farwell's Water Milfoil, Ginseng, Sweet Coltsfoot, Seaside Crowfoot, Prairie Buttercup, and New England Violet. Special plant species of concern include the Purple Clematis, Male Fern, Fragrant Cliff Wood Fern, Fir Club Moss, and American Shore-Grass.

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There is significant interest in game birds and fish in Marquette County, such as Ruffed Grouse and Trout. Others are also interested in songbirds such as the endangered Kirtland's Warbler. Each species requires different variations of the four basic habitat components which are food, water, cover, and space. It is important to determine what species are likely to frequent the existing habitat and then determine the specific habitat needs of those species. It is also important to keep in mind that for every management decision implemented, some species will be benefited, and others will be negatively impacted. There are always tradeoffs involved. Michigan provides a landowner's guide for species management and more information is available from the local conservation district.



## **2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

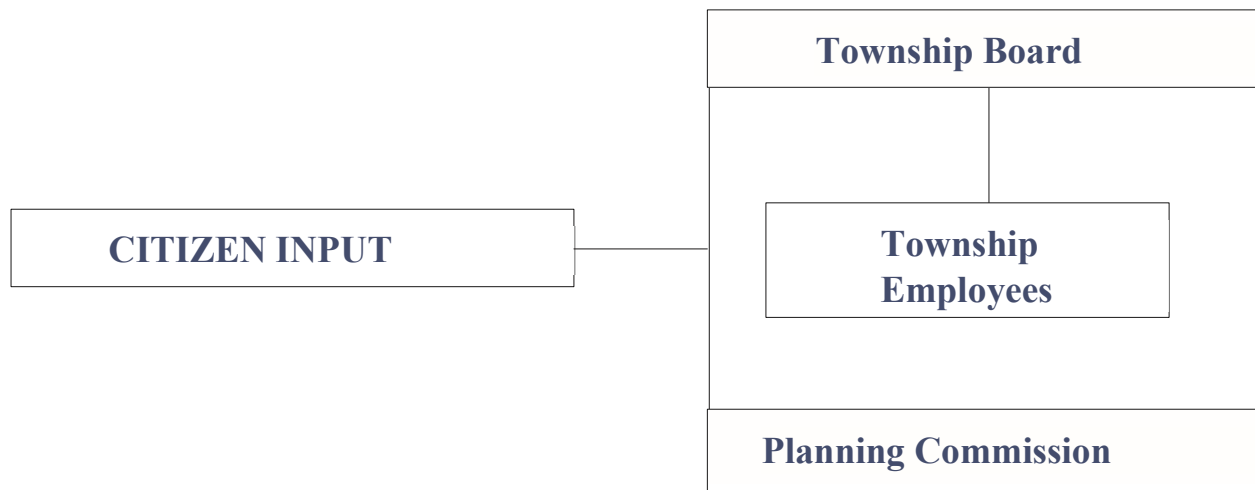
In the township, park and recreation facilities are managed primarily by the township's public works employees, with oversight by the township's Supervisor and Board of Trustees.

The township's Planning Commission also makes recommendations on initiatives they may create, sending them to the Board of Trustees for approval. An organization chart is included in this plan.

The Village supports and maintains recreation facilities through annual General Fund appropriations. In 2019, the township expended approximately \$145,000 for maintenance and operations of recreation facilities and capital expenditures.

The township is interested in partnering with community volunteers or community organizations for the renovation or creation of new recreation facilities. The township has a very active base of citizens that are involved in variety of projects to improve the livability of the townsite. Township officials plan on teaming up with volunteers to help provide the community's local match on any grant applications.

### **Township Organization**



### **3. RECREATION INVENTORY**

The inventory for the following recreational facilities was gathered using field observation and existing Township information.

The following are township-owned facilities:

#### **Michigamme Township Park**

This 7-acre park is located on the northwestern shores of Lake Michigamme. It includes a small swimming beach, baseball field, tennis courts, basketball court, volleyball court, canoe launch and boat launch, restrooms, pavilion, playground, kitchen facilities, and a public dock.

#### **Michigamme Township Campground and Beach**

The Township Campground is located along Lake Michigamme south of town. It has rustic camping with no dump station. The beach area has vaulted toilets that are functionally obsolete. A boat launch is also available and is used frequently by township residents and visitors. The boat launch needs renovation.

#### **Block Park - corner of Maple Street and Barnum Street**

This small park is across from the old Michigamme Public School. There is a swing set, slide, and merry-go-round.

#### **Township Community Building**

The Township Community Building is located on the Main Street in the village of Michigamme. It serves as a community gathering center and provides a basketball court and fitness room, as well as meeting rooms made available to the cribbage league, sewing groups and yoga classes.

The fitness room has been a recipient of grants to purchase exercise equipment from the Superior Health Foundation, and Western Marquette County Health Foundation. The Superior Health Foundation grant totaled \$7,022. The Western Marquette County Health Foundation grant totaled \$2,860.

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The Community Building has a certified kitchen that is used to prepare and serve meals to the Michigamme Area Seniors organization. This organization serves approximately 65-70 meals to the area seniors once per week. The kitchen also hosts events for fund raising activities. The Community Building serves as the heart of the Community activities.

**Township Ice Rink**

The township constructs and maintains a lighted outdoor ice rink on the Main Street as weather permits.

**US-41/M-28 Roadside Park**

The Andy Sikkema Roadside Park is located on Lake Michigamme. It includes toilets, picnic tables and grills. This park offers spectacular views of the lake.

The following are facilities owned by other units of government:

**Craig Lake State Park**

A small portion of Craig Lake State Park is located in Michigamme Township. It is the most remote state park in the system and was acquired by the State in the 1960's. The park contains six full lakes with muskellunge, bass, walleye, and northern pike, and a variety of wildlife such as deer, black bear, beaver, loons and a portion of the Upper Peninsula moose herd. Craig Lake is a wilderness area that spans 6,983 acres mostly in Baraga County with a very small portion in Marquette County. Access into the park can be an adventure. Vehicles with high ground clearance are recommended. Snowmobiles are allowed with 4" of snow or more on the ground. Cross-country skiing is permitted; however, the trails are not groomed. This park offers some of the most rugged trails in Michigan for hiking. Hunting is allowed. There are two cabins for rent and one yurt located just a two-mile hike from the parking area. There is also a metal detecting area.

**Van Riper State Park**

Van Riper State Park is located in both Champion and Michigamme Townships and comprises 1,044 acres. There is 1/2 mile of frontage on Lake Michigamme and 1 1/2 miles of frontage along the Peshekee River. The park has a nice sandy beach with concessions, a playground, picnic area, cabins, modern campsites, rustic campsites and a boat launch. Many outdoor activities include hunting, fishing, biking, swimming, Michigan State Park explorer program, watchable wildlife (maybe even a moose!), cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and metal detecting.



**McCormick Tract Wilderness (Ottawa National Forest)**

McCormick Tract Wilderness Area includes 16,850 acres, or about 27 square miles of forested land and 18 small, scattered lakes, and expands into Champion Township and Baraga County. The area contains the 3,675-acre McCormick Research Natural Area designated in 1971, and the Yellow Dog National Wild and Scenic River. It holds Bentley Trail, an historic trail system developed by Mr. Bentley which begins at White Deer Lake Settlement and continues to end at his home on Lake Superior in the Huron Mountain Club (34 miles to the northeast). The trails were made between 1904 and 1920 and are minimally maintained. It is also the site of McCormick Grand camps, and many topographical interests including headwaters of the Dead, Huron, Peshekee and Yellow Dog Rivers as well as many cliffs and waterfalls.

**North Country Trail**

The North Country National Scenic Trail crosses seven northern states providing 4,600 miles of trail in its entirety. It begins in New York and ends in North Dakota. It was created by Congress in 1980 and is administered by the National Park Service. The Trail passes through three National Parks, twelve National Forests, and one National Grassland. This trail traverses primarily east and west through the northern part of the Township, passing through the McCormick Wilderness and Ottawa National Forest.

**Lake Michigamme**

Lake Michigamme is one of Michigan's largest lakes covering 4,292 acres or 6.706 square miles and running depths of over 70 feet. Its elevation above mean sea level is 1,550 feet. Most of the Lake is located in Marquette County with its western most part in Baraga County. The main inflow water source is the Peshekee River coming from the north east. Another is the Spurr River, found on the west end. A dam separates the Lake from the Michigamme River on the southern arm of the water body. Many islands and rock beds are in the Lake. There is an abundance of fish including Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Rock Bass and Whitefish in the deeper parts. The Lake is a site for many types of outdoor recreation including swimming, boating, fishing, sailing, and camping. There are several resorts, campgrounds, and boat launches located along the shoreline.

**Regional Recreation**

The County of Marquette offers an excellent variety of recreational facilities for residents and visitors. The County itself owns, operates, and maintains three recreational facilities: Sugar Loaf Mountain, Perkins Park, and the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge. Sugar Loaf Mountain is one of the most popular scenic overlooks on the central Upper Peninsula coastline.

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The region has several water-oriented recreational opportunities including Lake Superior, Lake Independence, Lake Michigamme, the Greenwood Reservoir and countless inland lakes and streams. Regional parks include Presque Isle Park, Perkins County Park, Craig Lake State Park, and Van Riper State Park. State-owned lands and private lands under the Commercial Forest Act are available for public recreational use.

Cross-country skiing is a very popular sport in this region. Several trails and recreation areas found here are the Fit-Strip in the City of Marquette, The Noquemanon Trail Network in Marquette, Blueberry Ridge Trail in Marquette, Presque Isle Park in Marquette, Anderson Lake Trail in the Escanaba River State Forest, Kawbawgam Ski Trail in Chocolay, Maple Lane Ski Area in Skandia, Al Quaal Recreation Area in Ishpeming, Negaunee Community Center Ski Trail and Kivela Road Trail in Negaunee, and the Iron Ore Heritage Trail. The trails are groomed and maintained by local ski clubs in cooperation with local governments. Downhill skiing is also an option at Marquette Mountain.

A vast Snowmobiling/ORV Trail System and abundant snowfall draw thousands of visitors to Marquette County every year. The routes connect to trails throughout the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin providing hours of opportunity for riding.

#### **4. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

As with all public facilities, Michigamme Township is attempting to improve accessibility to all our recreation facilities. These include installing ramps and improving sidewalks and roads and designating areas for handicapped parking. Because of the small size of our Township and significant recreation facilities with limited resources the Township has attempted to expend resources in a way to benefit the largest number of its residents. As park improvements are made the Township will attempt to improve accessibility.

#### **5. DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS and PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

Public input for the update of the recreation plan came from many sources. The most influential input came from a recent community survey. The survey was answered by 180 of the Township's 296 residents which was an impressive participation rate.

Because Michigamme Township is a small township in terms of population, interactions with citizens largely occur during the course of the year, while out an about or at various community meetings, celebrations, and activities. The Township Board meeting

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allows public input at two different times at all meetings. When recreation issues are discussed input from citizens are encouraged and welcomed. All this input was incorporated in this plan.

The Planning Commission meetings are all open to the public with opportunities for public comment at all meetings.

This past year the Township had a controversial issue with the possible sale of township property on the lake shore. Much public opinion was given at this time.

Michigamme Township officials attend the annual Lake Michigamme Property Owners Association meeting, where input from lake residents is solicited and used in the development of the recreation plan.

### **Survey Results**

The survey asked residents to rank the importance of non-essential township services. The following priorities were identified.

1. Michigamme Township Park – 754 points
2. Boat Launches – 675 points
3. Michigamme Beach – 661 points
4. Museum – 621 points
5. Library – 589 points
6. Cemetery – 505 points
7. Proposed Michigamme Campground – 395 points

The general sense of the survey was that residents prefer to maintain existing assets over developing new ones.

### **6. PAST GRANT HISTORY**

In February of 2016, Michigamme Township applied for a DNR Public Outdoor Recreation Grant through the Land and Conservation Public Fund. This grant was intended to resurface the outdoor tennis courts and outdoor basketball courts but was denied.

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In January of 2017, the DNR awarded Michigamme Township a Recreational Passport Grant of \$45,000 with a \$15,000 Township match to be used to develop the Michigamme Beach Campground for campsites and flush bathrooms. This grant was ultimately not accepted by the Township as the construction bids far exceeded the allocated funds.

## **7. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The following Recreation goals and strategies provide an Action Plan for improving recreation opportunities and facilities in Michigamme Township.

### **Preserve and enhance public access and enjoyment of unique natural amenities and existing recreation facilities**

Promote a healthy year-round lifestyle in the Township based upon access to the surrounding natural environment and improve on existing recreational facilities.

Goal: To preserve and enhance public access and enjoyment of unique natural attributes of Lake Michigamme.

- A. The survey of Michigamme Township residents indicated that maintenance and improvement of Michigamme Township Park, boat launches, and Michigamme Beach should be our highest priority. Also, of interest, but of lower priority according to our survey, is the proposed Michigamme Campground.
  - 1. To build a universally accessible fishing dock at the Michigamme Beach Park.
  - 2. To replace the boat launch at Michigamme Beach and replace pit toilets with flush toilets and space for a changing room.
  - 3. To repair the outdoor tennis courts and outdoor basketball court at Michigamme Township Park.
  - 4. To provide universally accessible parking at all Michigamme Township Parks.
  - 5. To create appropriate signage for all Michigamme Township recreational properties.
- B. The survey also showed that residents have a strong interest in developing an all-season multi-use trail through Michigamme Township to connect with the Heritage Trail and the Baraga County trails. The Township Board has passed a resolution to support the development of the trail as proposed. This trail aligns with the long-range strategic plan of the Township. A multi-use trail would serve the needs of these residents and would likely attract outdoor enthusiasts of these sports to visit our community.
  - 1. To collaborate with all other governmental units to make this trail a reality.

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2. To explore development of additional trails exclusively for cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and mountain biking.

Goal: To improve opportunities for non-residents to visit our community and appreciate the recreational opportunities available here.

- A. To improve Michigamme Beach/Campground making it safer, efficient, and more attractive.
- B. Develop a trailhead in the village to access the multiuse trail that passes through Michigamme Township.

Goal: To improve both active and passive recreational opportunities of all age groups and special populations.

- A. To obtain additional exercise equipment for the fitness room and improve signage.
- B. To arrange for individuals to teach exercise classes or enrichment classes at the Township Community Building.
- C. To continue to support the ice-skating rink with possible addition of benches and a warming hut.

**8. ACTION PROGRAM**

The following Action Plan sets priorities for the township. It must be noted, however, that the township depends on private partnerships to successfully complete projects. The township is open to taking on an appropriate project even though it's not listed in the Action Plan (however, any proposed project must be shown to be relevant to the township's previously identified Goals and Objectives).

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>
Establish a Village trail head to access DNR Multi-use Trail	Township Moose Country Snowmobile Association	Minimal	Township Moose Country Snowmobile Association
Update Boat Launch at Michigamme Beach	Township	\$15,000	Township
Universally Accessible Parking at all Michigamme Township Parks	Township	\$20,000	Township

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<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>
Create Signage to all Michigamme Township recreation properties	Township DDA	\$5,000	Township and DDA
Resurface outdoor tennis and basketball courts at Michigamme Township Park	DNR Township	\$90,000	DNR Recreation Grant Township
Build Universally Accessible Fishing Dock at Michigamme Beach	Township	\$25,000	DNR Grant Township
Improve Campground at Michigamme Beach and Develop Flush Toilets and Change House	Township	\$200,000	DNR Grant Township
Continue to support DNR all season multi-use trail through Michigamme	Township	Minimal	Township
Explore development of trail for cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and mountain biking	Michigamme Township Spurr Township	\$35,000	Spurr and Michigamme Townships DNR Grant
Increase use of Community Building with new exercise equipment and exercise and enrichment classes	Michigamme Township Spurr Township	\$12,000	Michigamme and Spurr Townships West Marquette County Health Foundation
Continue to support village ice rink with benches and warming hut	Michigamme Township	\$10,000	Michigamme Township

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————— = 1/4 mile

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