



BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR STRATEGIC PLAN



Belle River Route

June 2019

Plan Prepared by



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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY



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Island Loop Route

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

ORIGIN OF THE WATER TRAIL

In 2010, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) initiated efforts to organize and facilitate new ways to connect people to the waterways of St. Clair County for recreational paddling. With funding provided by Michigan's Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program, staff from the MPC worked to identify, map and assess each public access point along Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and connected waterways in St. Clair County. In addition, MPC staff members worked with local officials, paddlers and interested citizens to identify the location of potential paddling routes. Based on these initial efforts, 16 unique paddling routes were identified and dedicated (one additional route has since been dedicated) as an official "Blueway." Together, these 17 paddling routes make up the *Blueways of St. Clair*.

Since its inception, the Blueways of St. Clair has become one of the most well-established, organized and dynamic system of water trails in Michigan. Under the direction of the MPC, and in cooperation with a dedicated leadership committee consisting of members from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, area NGOs and local units of government, the Blueways of St. Clair now oversees roughly 150 miles of water trails on 17 unique paddling routes supported by more than 50 public access sites. Over the last nine years, the MPC and its partners have made substantial improvements to the Blueways system of water trails, including installing eight accessible launches, dedicating an additional paddling route, developing a comprehensive map/brochure and interactive website, installing wayfinding and interpretive signs, hosting community paddles, and creating a complementary regional Trail Town program. In 2013, the Island Loop Water Trail, which passes under the Bluewater Bridge, was awarded a National Water Trail designation by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS designation was the first such designation in Michigan and one of just 22 nationally. In 2018, the Island Loop Trail was awarded a State Water Trail designation by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, one of just eight water trails in Michigan to receive the Department's inaugural designation.

While the Blueways of St. Clair have experienced tremendous success to date, in 2017 the MPC and its partnering entities recognized the popular system of water trails was at a critical crossroad. The long-term funding and management goals of the water trail system had never been clearly articulated. In addition, specific municipal and shared regional infrastructure needs and priorities had not been clearly identified, and there remained a continuous need for regional marketing, programming and education initiatives.

In 2018, with additional funding provided by Michigan's CZM Program, the MPC initiated a comprehensive planning effort to develop a *Strategic Plan* for the Blueways of St. Clair. Building off the positive momentum and success of the last nine years, this Strategic Plan provides the framework and direction for the long-term sustainable development and management of the Blueways system of water trails.

St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission serves as the planning department for St. Clair County. The mission of the Planning Commission is to provide innovative and proactive planning services to County residents through the application of professional skills, adopted plans and standards that foster economic prosperity, enhance quality of life, and preserve the natural environment for current and future generations.

National Water Trail Designation

The formal ceremony for the National Park Designation of the Island Loop Route.



WHAT IS A WATER TRAIL, AND WHAT IS THE BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR?

A water trail is a designated route (or routes) on a navigable waterway such as a river, bay or canal that is designed, implemented and managed to foster educational and recreational experiences for the user. Water trails are intended *primarily* for non-motorized uses such as kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding.

The Blueways of St. Clair encompasses over 150 miles of water trails on 17 unique paddling routes along 10 different waterways through the coastal communities of St. Clair County. From slow, peaceful paddles through the Port Huron State Game Area, to paddling along the coastline of Lake Huron and in downtown Port Huron, to meandering through the channels of Russell Island and one of the world's largest freshwater deltas, the Blueways system of water trails offers a unique experience for every paddler. The following section provides a brief description of each unique paddling route.

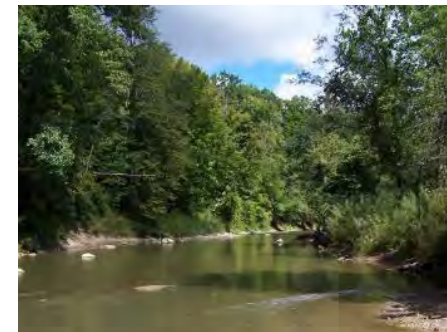


1. Norman Bridge Paddle

Distance: 5 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The Norman Bridge Paddle route winds through the Port Huron State Game Area along the Black River. Paddlers put in at Comstock Road Bridge and get out at the Norman Road Bridge.

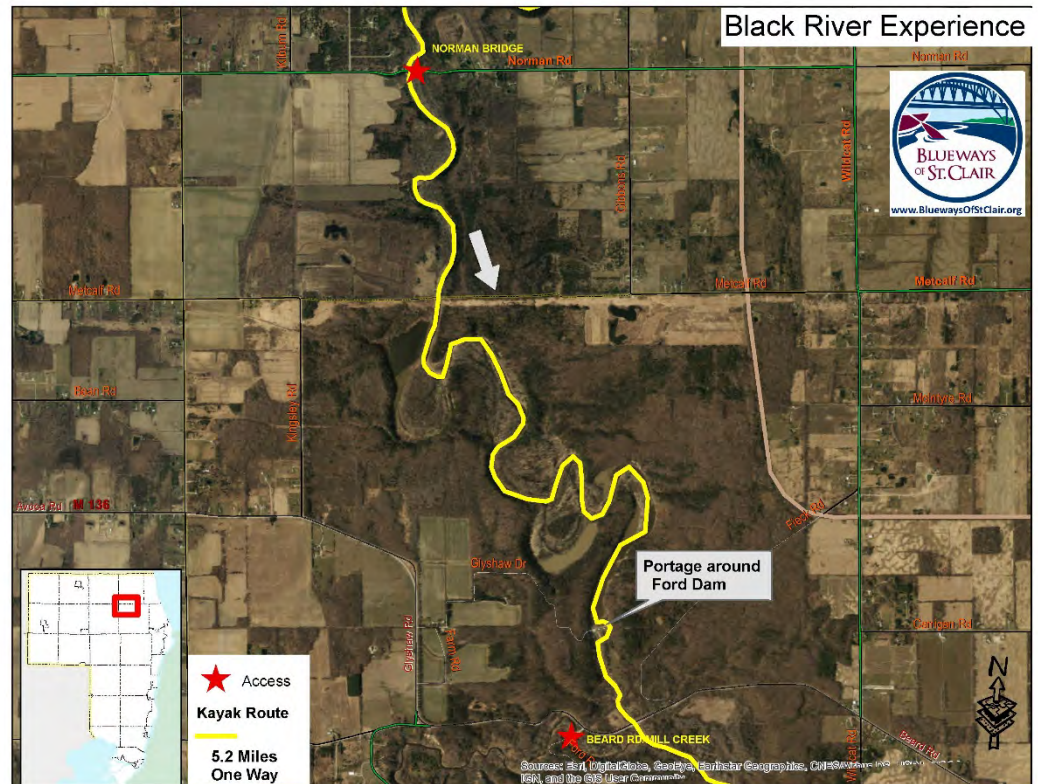


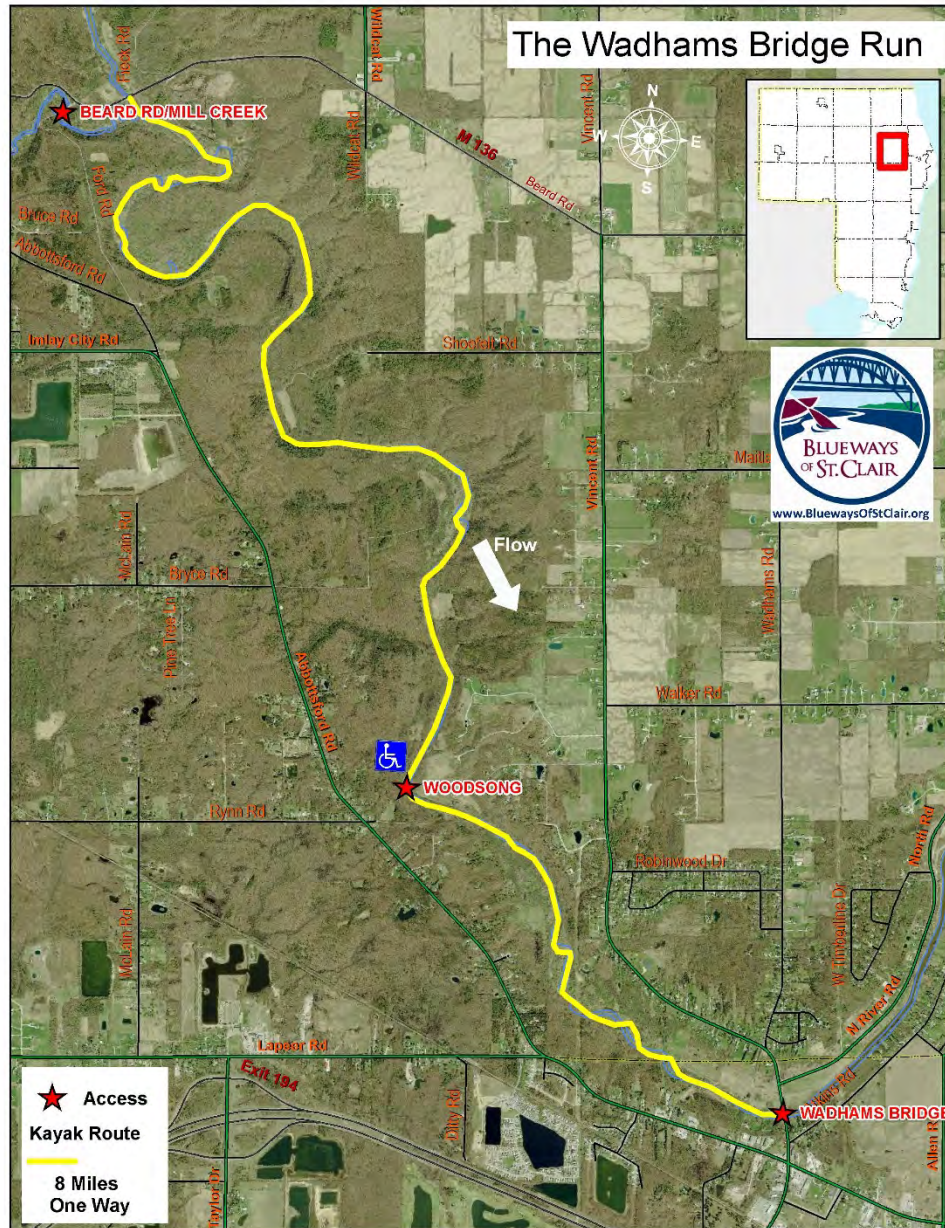
2. Black River Experience

Distance: 5.2 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The Black River Experience paddling route continues through the Port Huron State Game Area along the Black River. Paddlers put in at the Norman Road Bridge and get out at the Beard Road Bridge. Paddlers should also be prepared to portage the Ford Dam, which is the only private property along this stretch of the river.





3. Wadhams Bridge Run

Distance: 8 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The Wadhams Bridge Run paddling route runs along the Black River through Clyde Township. A great stretch of river for beginners, paddlers put in at Beard Road Bridge and get out at the Wadhams Road Bridge. Paddlers should be aware that cellphone coverage in this area is nonexistent and access to the Black River at Wadhams Road is difficult.

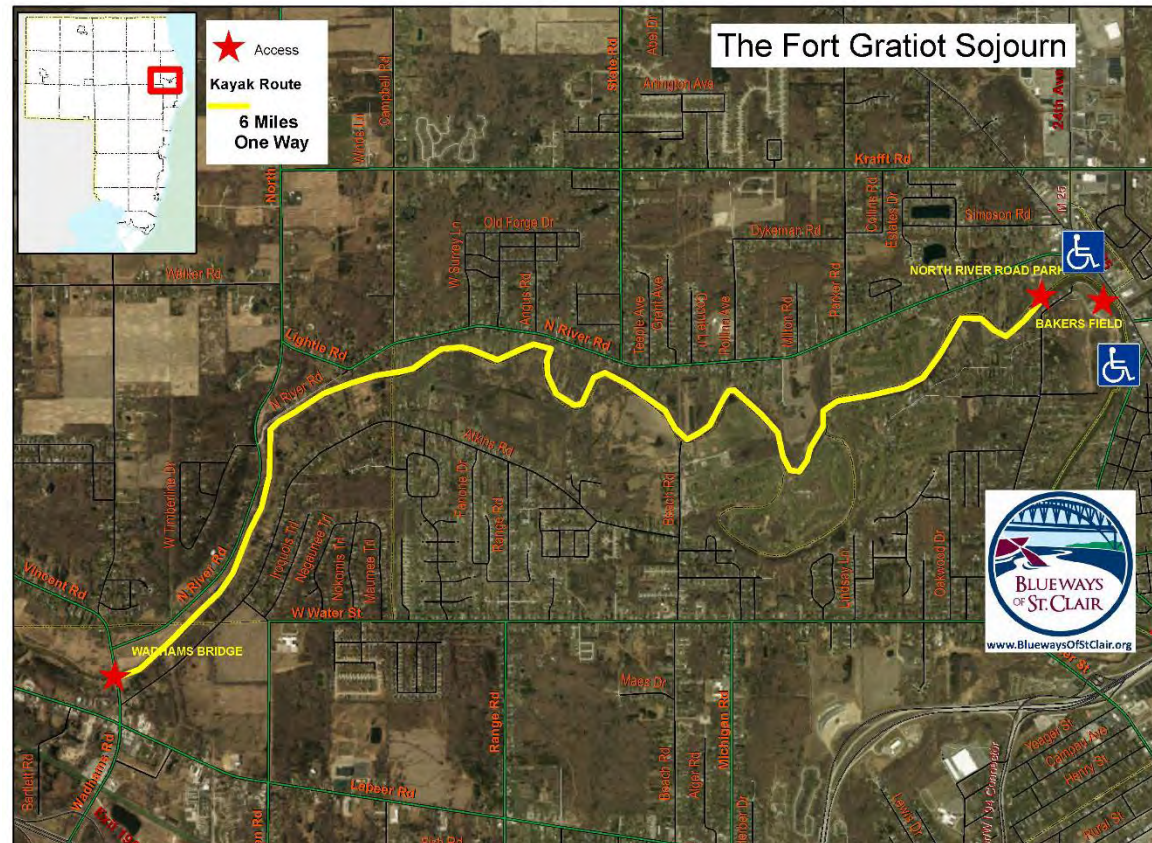


4. Fort Gratiot Sojourn

Distance: 12.2 miles round trip

Level: Easy

Description: The Fort Gratiot Sojourn paddling route is a relaxing, winding paddle through farmland and rural landscapes along the Black River. Paddlers put in at River Road Park and paddle upriver to Wadhams Road Bridge and back.





5. The Island Loop

Distance: 10 miles round trip

Level: Intermediate (due to strong currents and recreational boating and freighter traffic)

Description: The Island Loop paddling route is perhaps the most well-known water trail in the system of Blueways due to its National and State Water Trail designations. Paddlers put in at North River Road Park on the Black River. Paddlers then head east through a separate canal and under the Taintor Gate before entering Lake Huron just north of Lakeside Park. From there, paddlers head south under the Blue Water Bridge and into the St. Clair River before heading back north at the mouth of the Black River through downtown Port Huron. Paddlers should be aware that the Taintor Gate will close when there are strong winds out of the northeast to protect the canal from filling up with silt and sand from Lake Huron.



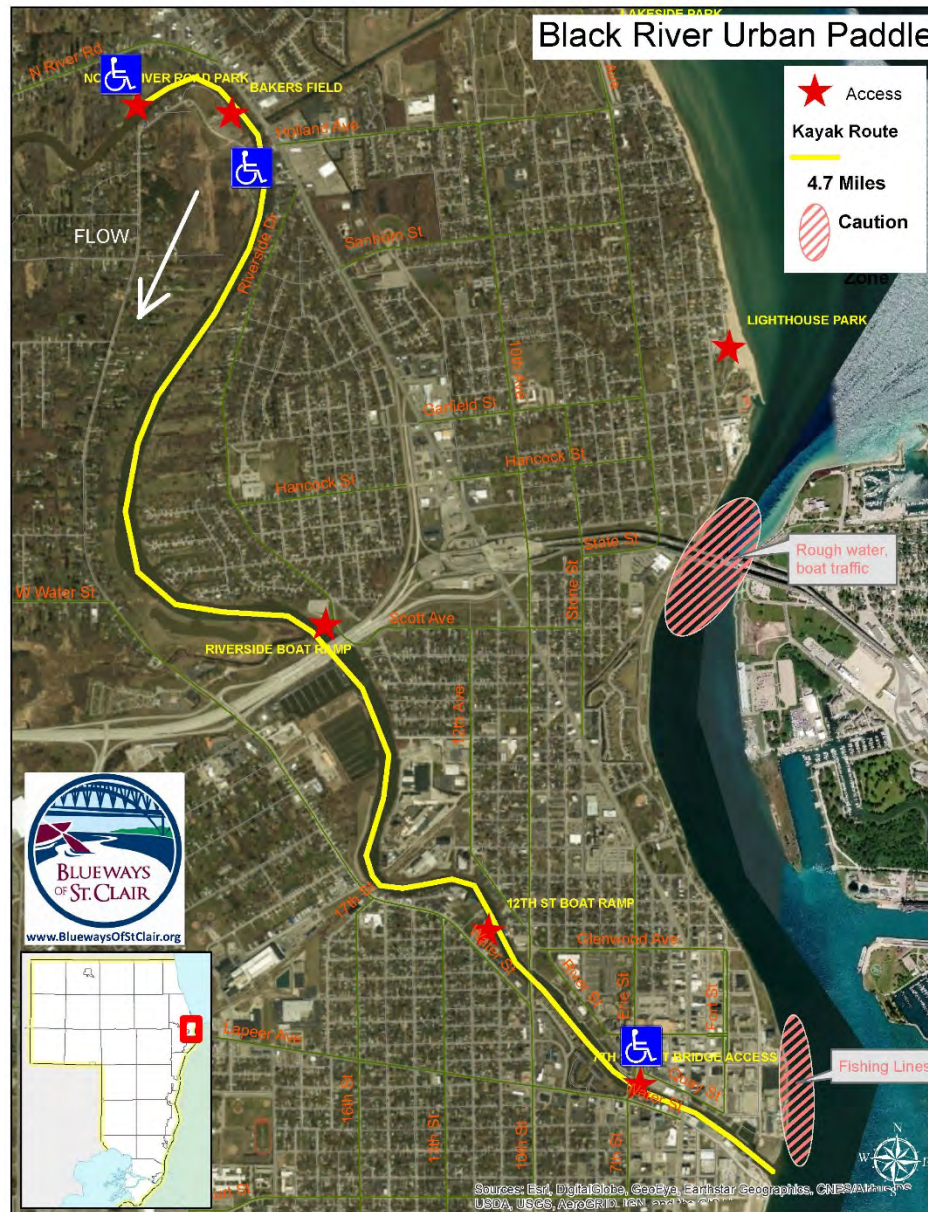
6. Lake Huron Paddle

Distance: 5.7 miles

Level: Easy, under calm conditions

Description: The Lake Huron Paddle route hugs just under 6 miles of Lake Huron coastline from the Metcalf Road-end just north of Fort Gratiot County Park to Lighthouse Park at the mouth of the St. Clair River in Port Huron. Paddlers can access the Lake Huron Paddle from six other access sites along various stretches of trail.





7. Black River Urban Paddle

Distance: 4.7 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The Black River Urban Paddle takes paddlers past beautiful residential neighborhoods and through the City of Port Huron before ending at the St. Clair River. Paddlers put in at North River Road Park or Bakers Field Park and can take out at a number of access sites in downtown Port Huron.

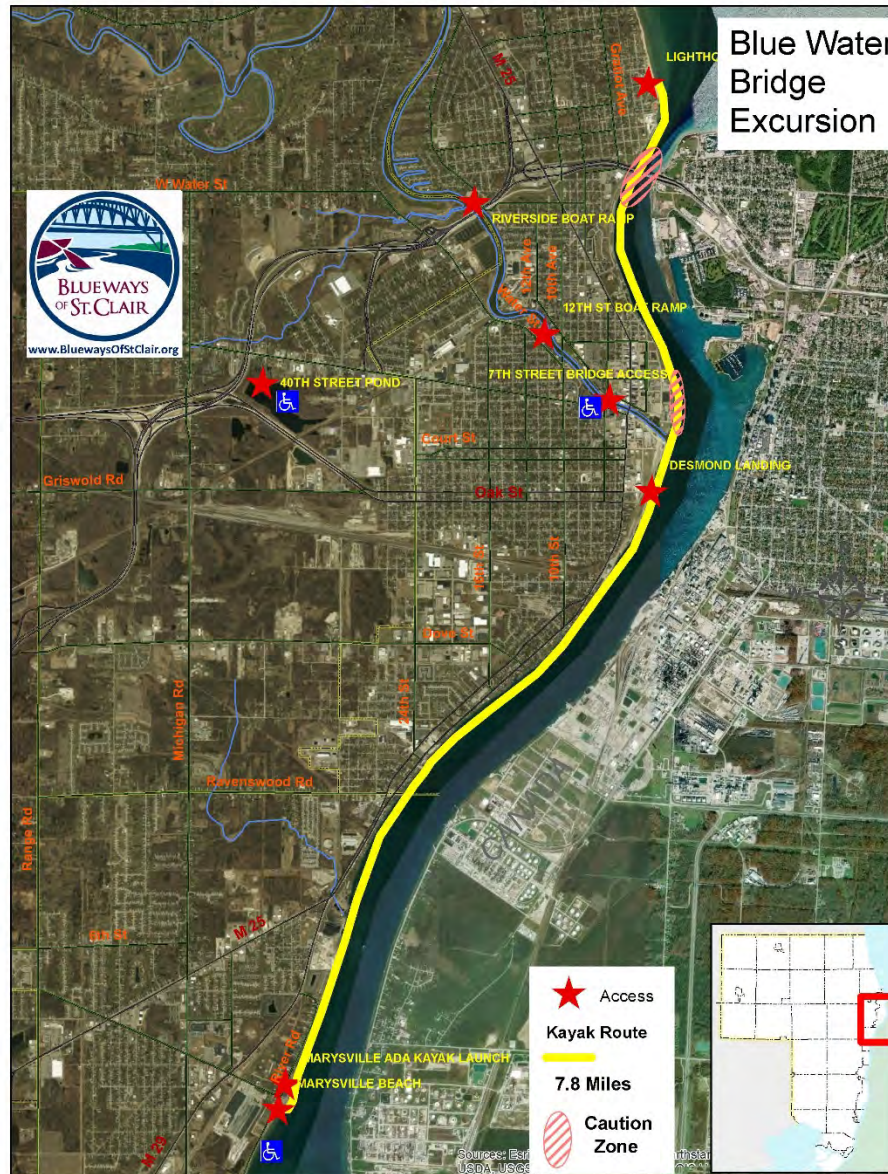


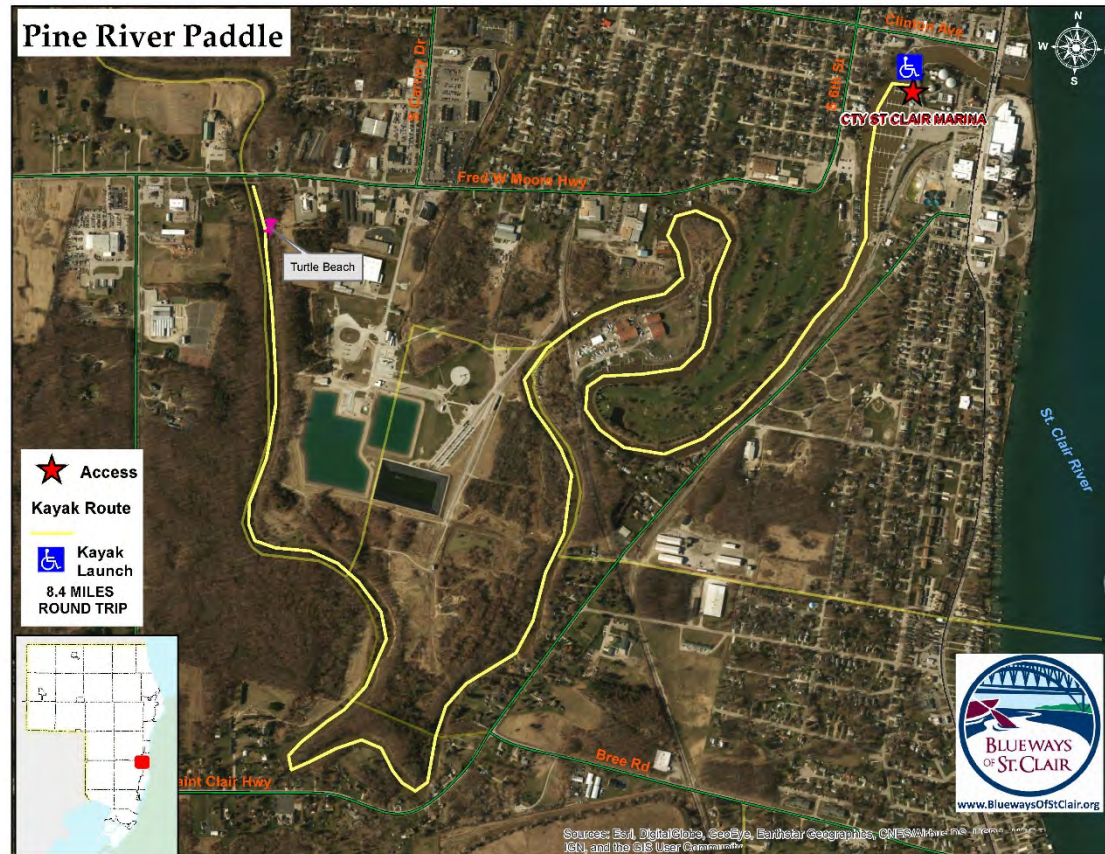
8. Blue Water Bridge Excursion

Distance: 7.8 miles

Level: Intermediate (due to strong currents and recreational boating and freighter traffic)

Description: The Blue Water Bridge Excursion paddling route follows the beautiful blue waters of the St. Clair River under the Blue Water Bridge to Marysville Beach. Adventurous paddlers can continue downriver to access sites in St. Clair and Marine City.





9. Pine River Paddle

Distance: 8.4 miles round trip

Level: Easy

Description: One of the more popular paddling routes in the system of Blueways, the Pine River Paddle traverses 4.2 winding miles up the Pine River. Paddlers put in at the St. Clair Boar Harbor (marina) and make the return at “Turtle Beach,” just south of the Fred Moore Highway.



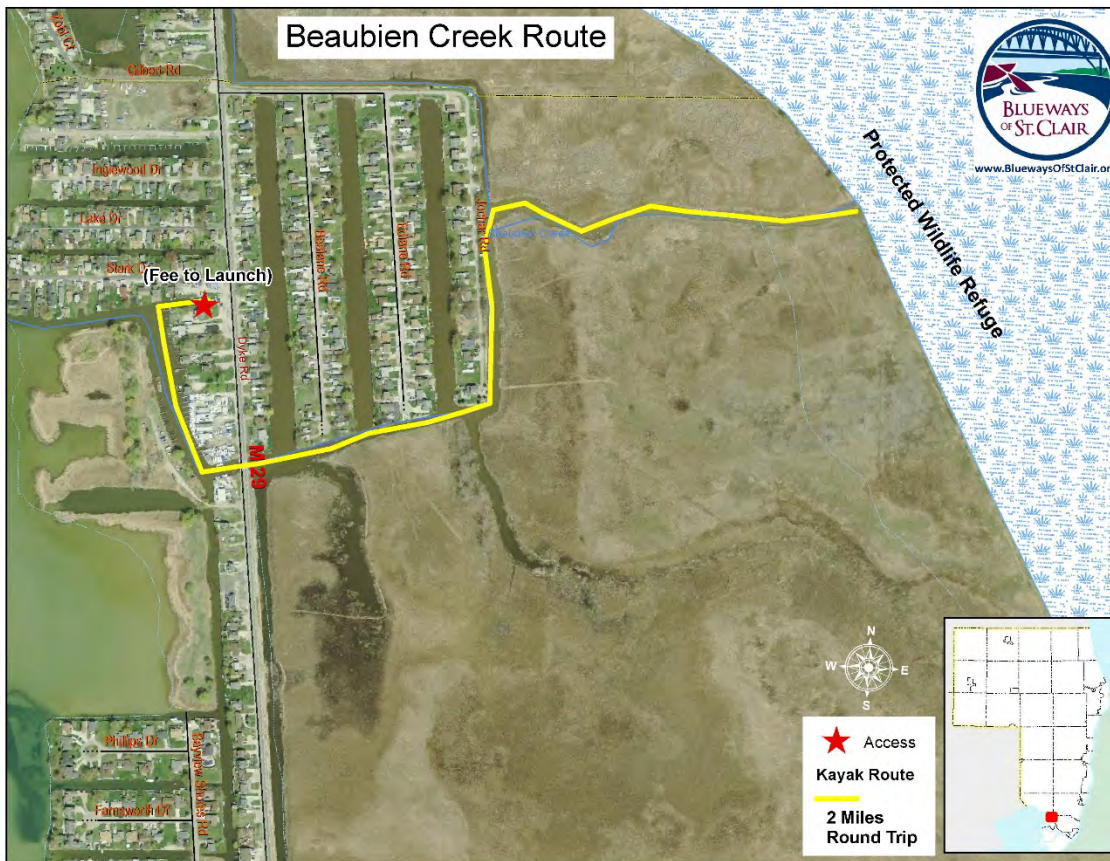
10. Belle River Route

Distance: 14.5 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The Belle River Route follows the Belle River as it meanders through China and East China Township and Marine City before ending at the St. Clair River. Paddlers put in at China Township Park and get out at either the DNR Boat Launch or Marine City Beach on the St. Clair River. Paddlers should note that there is significant woody debris in the northern portion of the water trail, making passage difficult at times, especially near King Road. However, portions of the water trail near Marine City remain free of woody debris.





11. Beaubien Creek Route

Distance: 2 miles round trip

Level: Easy

Description: The Beaubien Creek Route is a short and easy water trail for beginner paddlers. Paddlers access the water trail at The Kayak Store at the corner of Stark Drive and Pointe Tremble Road and traverse south and east along the creek through neighborhoods and then marshland foliage. Paddlers should turn around at the St. John's Marsh Wildlife Refuge. This route features great opportunities for fishing and for viewing many bird species.

12. The Bouvier Bay Journey

Distance: 5.6 miles round trip

Level: Easy

Description: The Bouvier Bay Journey paddling route also begins at The Kayak Store at the corner of Stark Drive and Pointe Tremble Road and runs south along the shoreline of Bouvier Bay, cutting through Anchor Bay Drive and ending at Deckers Landing at the North Channel. During times of high water, Deckers Landing may be under water and not accessible.





13. St. John's Marsh Explorer

Distance: 5.6 miles one way

Level: Easy

Description: The St. John's Marsh Explorer paddling route begins at the St. John's Marsh Wildlife Viewing Area. From there, paddlers head into the marsh or northwest along Dyke Road/M-29. Paddlers may get out at The Kayak Store on Beaubien Creek or make a loop and exit the water trail from the trailhead.



14. The Sny Loop

Distance: 11 miles round trip

Level: Intermediate due to strong currents

Description: The Sny Loop is a very unique paddle route through the St. Clair River Delta along the *Chenal A Bout* (known locally as the Sny). Paddlers enter the Sny Loop at Deckers Landing on the North Channel and turn around once reaching Strawberry Island. During times of high water, Deckers Landing may be under water and not accessible.





15. Russel Island Loop

Distance: 4.3 miles round trip

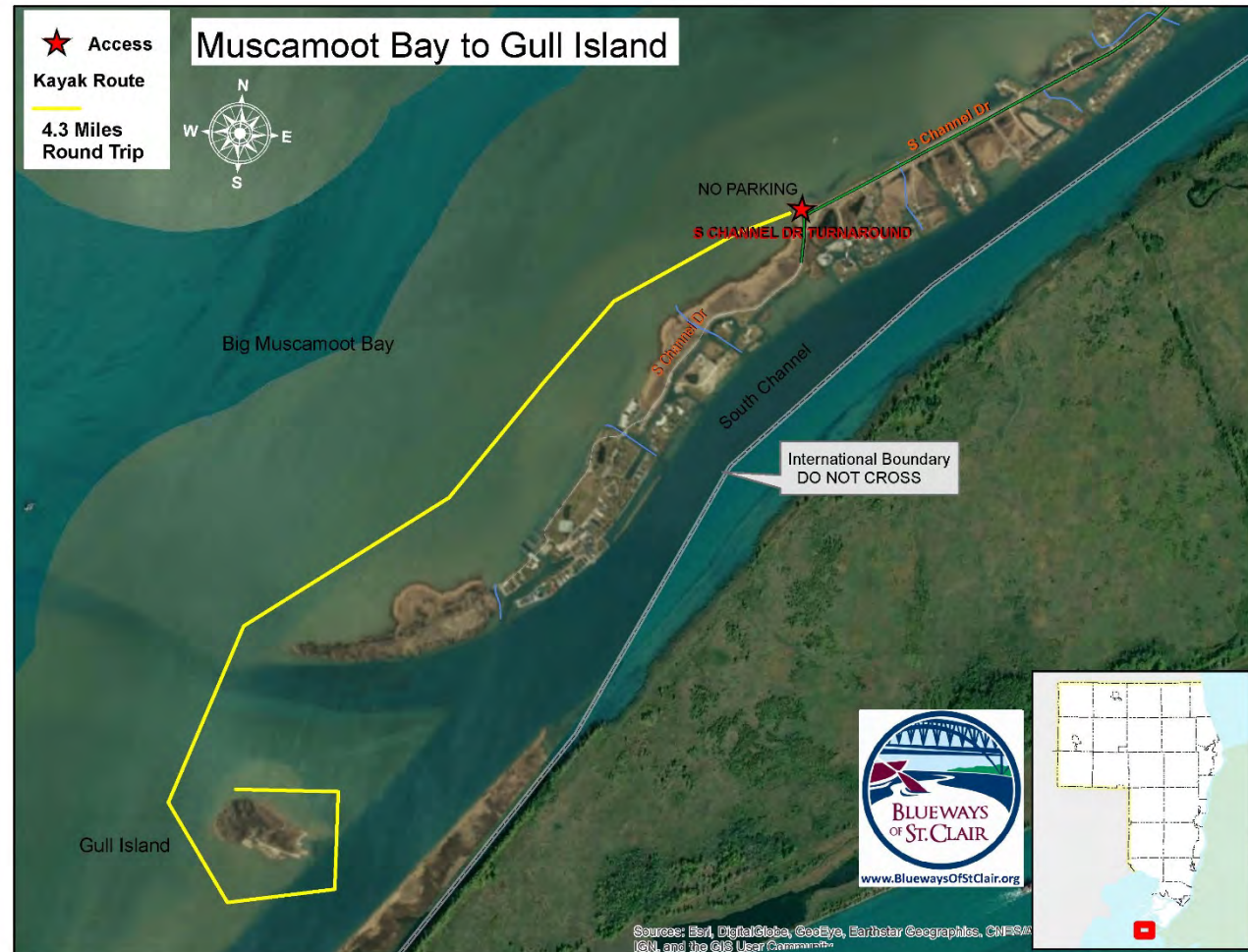
Level: Intermediate (due to strong currents and recreational boating and freighter traffic)

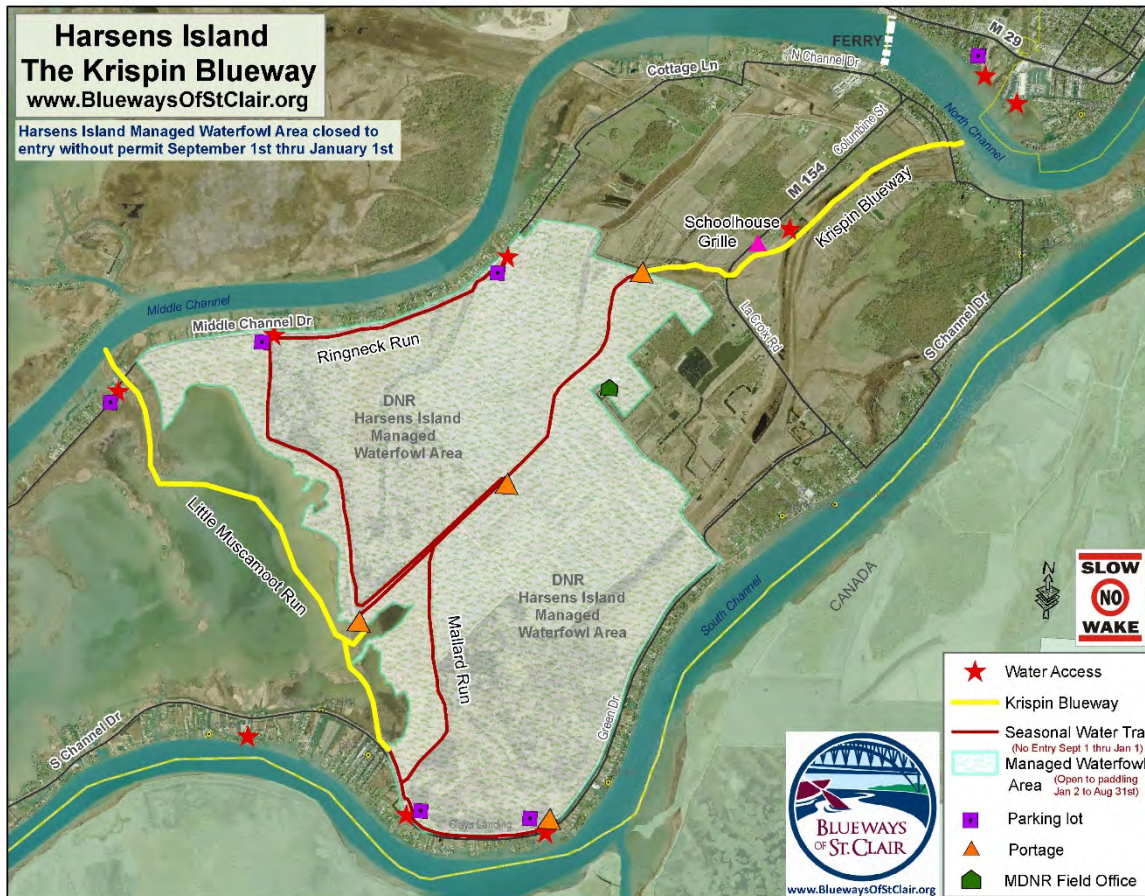
Description: The Russel Island Loop is a charming paddling route around a private island with no roads. The paddling route begins at the DNR Boat Launch in Clay Township. From there, the water trail crosses the North Channel and through the Grande Pointe Cut to the east side of Russel Island. From there, the water trail travels north along the St. Clair River, before it cuts back into another channel on Russel Island and then back to the DNR Boat Launch in Clay Township.



16. Muscamoot Bay to Gull Island**Distance:** 4.3 miles round trip**Level:** Easy

Description: The Muscamoot Bay to Gull Island paddling route begins at the South Channel Drive turn-around. From there the water trail runs south along the peninsula, through the South Channel and around Gull Island. The round-trip paddle is great for beginner paddlers and offers great views of Big Muscamoot Bay.



**17. Krispin Blueway****Distance:** 14 miles**Level:** Easy

Description: Dedicated in 2017, the Krispin Blueway is the newest water trail in the system of Blueways. Located on Harsens Island, the Krispin Blueway is actually a designated County Drain. Under a Great Lakes Restoration grant, the drain had a substantial amount of habitat restoration and dredging work performed that widened the drain and made it accessible to paddlers. Paddlers can access the Krispin Blueway at the DNR Boat Launch off Pointe Tremble Road in Clay Township (across the North Channel). Parts of the water trail meander through a DNR Wildlife Management Area. Those areas of the water trail are closed annually during the hunting season (September-January).



WHO WILL MAKE USE OF THE WATER TRAIL?

The visibility and awareness of the Blueways of St. Clair has grown substantially over the last nine years. As a result, the number of people who use the system of water trails for paddling continues to increase. The steady increase in use parallels national trends for all paddlesports. According to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), paddlesports, largely fueled by stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking, are one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the United States. A 2015 Special Report on Paddlesports prepared by the OIA notes that more than 21.7 million people — or 7.4% of all Americans — participated in paddling activities in 2014. This marks an increase of more than 3 million participants since the OIA began collecting data in 2010. Kayaking, which is the most popular form of paddling, had approximately 13 million participants in 2014. This increase in use has been driven by several factors, including the relatively low cost of equipment, an increased number of accessible access sites on nearby waterways, and the fact that people of all ages and abilities can participate.

According to a 2017 study commissioned by the Huron River Watershed Council, the nearby Huron River Water Trail experiences roughly 2.8 million visitor days throughout the five-county region annually. In Ann Arbor, the popular livery near the “cascades” averages nearly 100,000 boat rentals each summer. Due to its proximity to the greater Metropolitan Detroit Area, and given the success of other water trails like the Huron within southeast Michigan (see inset map at right), it is anticipated that the Blueways of St. Clair will not only continue to serve the residents of the communities adjacent to the river, but also serve as a destination for paddlers and trail-tourists from all over the Midwest and Canada.

STUDY AREA

As previously mentioned, the initial planning effort to develop the Blueways system of water trails was funded through a grant from the Michigan CZM Program. As a result, the Blueways’ 17 water trails are located along the eastern reaches of St. Clair County and utilize its coastal and connected waterways. The entire system of water trails is located along 10 unique bodies of water (see Map 1.1).

- Lake Huron
- St. Clair River
- Black River
- Belle River
- Pine River
- Anchor Bay
- Beaubien Creek
- The North Channel
- St. Clair Flats (Delta)
- Krispin Drain
- Chenal A Bout

Water Trails in Southeast Michigan



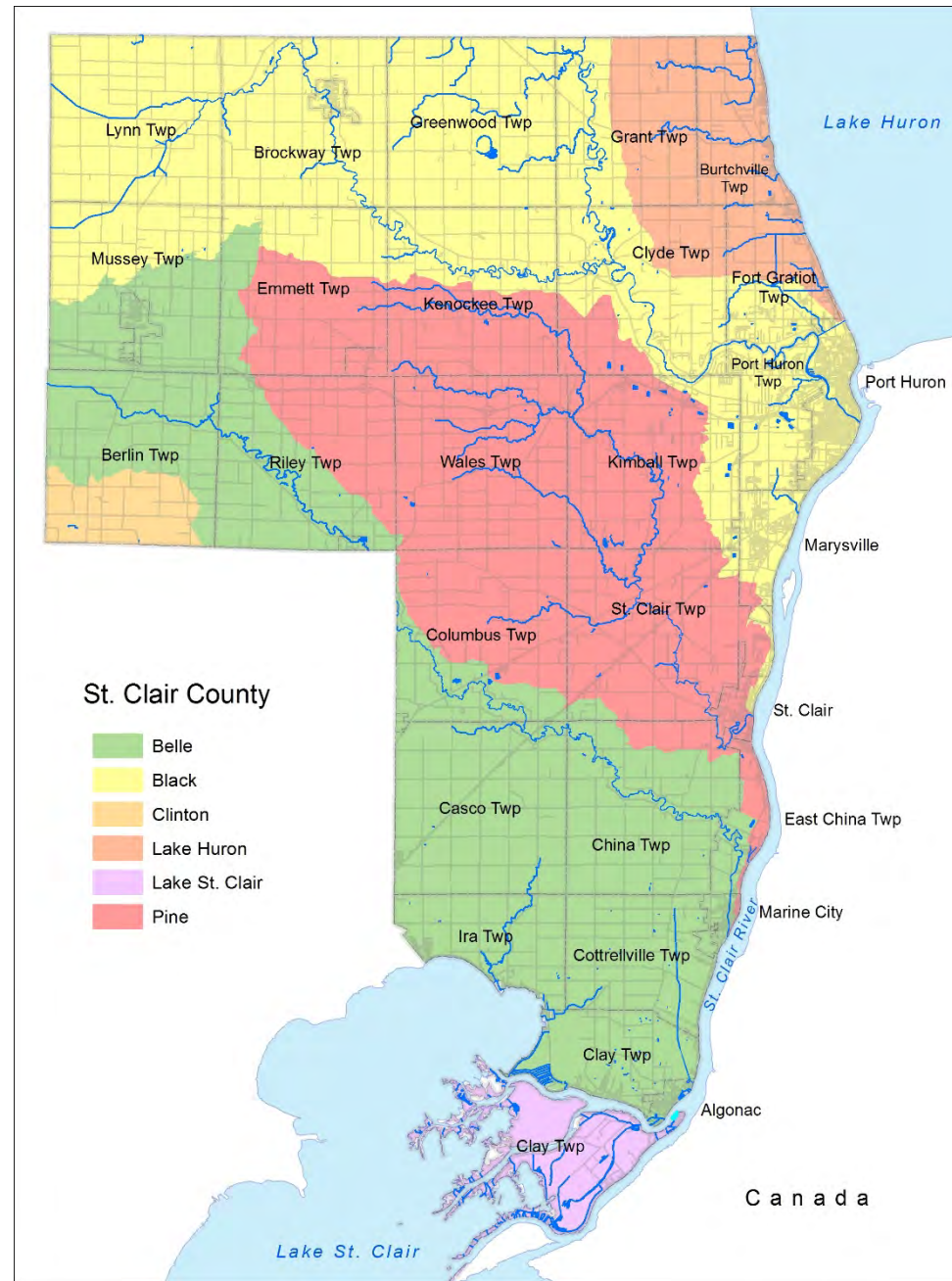
This part of St. Clair County encompasses six unique watersheds, encompassing more than 620 square miles (see Map 1.2). Several water trails are located in the St. Clair River Delta. Located in Lake St. Clair at the mouth of the St. Clair River between the Province of Ontario, Canada and Michigan, the St. Clair River Delta is the largest freshwater delta in the Great Lakes basin. Consisting of seven active deep channels, the Delta is classified as a river-dominated feature with classic “bird’s foot” structure similar to the Mississippi Delta model.

The Blueways system of water trails flows through 13 jurisdictions in St. Clair County, including the coastal communities of Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City and Algonac. Most of these cities have a traditional downtown layout, with historic buildings centered along a “main street,” sidewalks, numerous waterfront and outdoor dining experiences, boutique-style shops and art galleries. In addition, each community features at least one (if not several) access sites where paddlers can easily access both the nearby water trail and downtown.

Map 1.1 – St. Clair County
Coastal Waterways



Map 1.2 – Regional Watersheds



INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND SHIPPING IMPLICATIONS

The St. Clair River serves as the international boundary between Michigan and the Province of Ontario in Canada. Paddlers can freely cross international boundaries on the St. Clair River, but it is not recommended. However, paddlers who land in Canada (anchor, wade or touch the bottom with a paddle) are committing an illegal act unless the arrival is properly reported to the appropriate authorities. Violation of international border-crossing law can result in severe penalties.

The St. Clair River also serves as a primary shipping route for Great Lakes cargo vessels. As such, paddlers on water trails on the St. Clair River need to be aware of and respect their presence. According to Federal Law, vessels (including paddlecraft) less than 66 feet in length shall not impede the passage of a vessel operating in a narrow channel. In addition, anchoring in a navigation channel is against the law except in the case of an emergency.

NO WAKE ZONES

During the strategic planning process, several paddlers noted a desire to learn about which water trails are free from the wake of passing motors boats. Map 1.3 and Map 1.4 illustrate the no wake zones for waterways in St. Clair County.

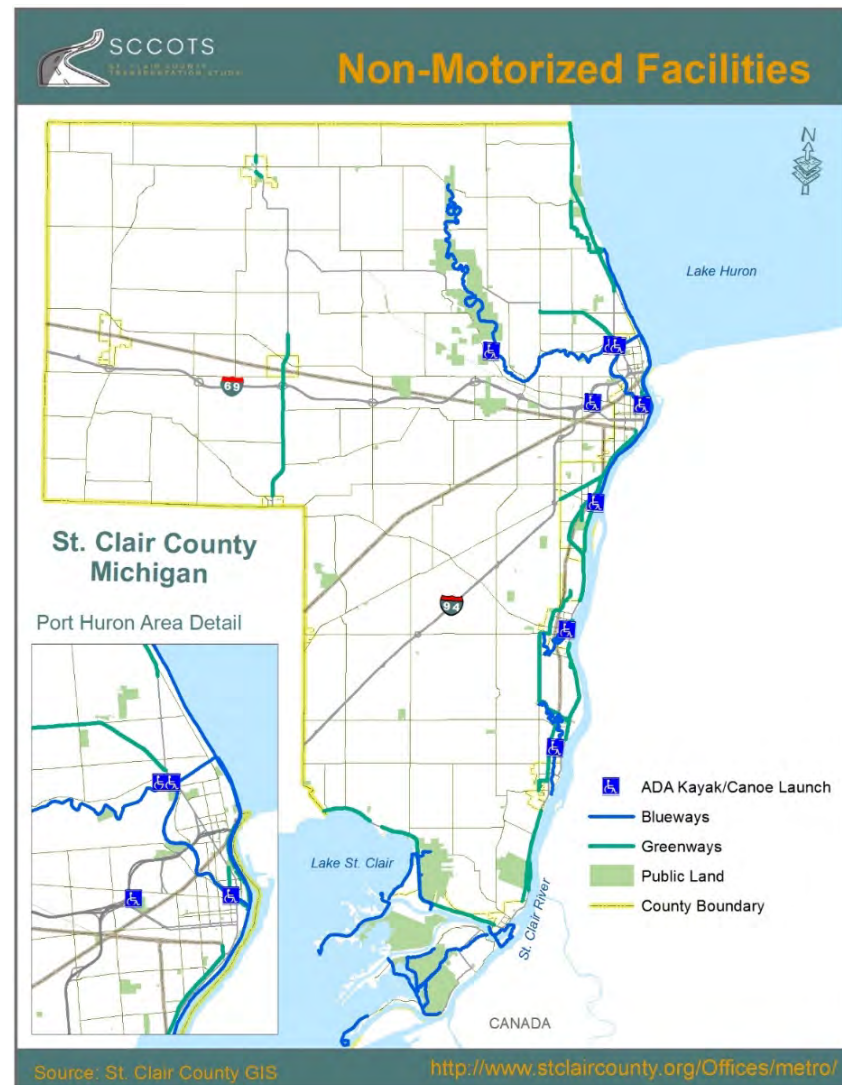
Maps 1.3 and 1.4
No Wake Zones



CONNECTIONS TO REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEMS

The Blueways system of water trails flows along and/or provides direct connections to several boardwalks and non-motorized trails throughout St. Clair County, including the Bridge to Bay Trail, the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, and U.S. Bike Route 20. In addition, the Blueways will connect to the Great Lake to Lake Trail, a planned non-motorized trail that will connect Port Huron to the City of South Haven along Lake Michigan. Map 1.5 illustrates the location of non-motorized trails within St. Clair County.

**Map 1.5 – St. Clair County
Non-Motorized Trails**



WHO WILL BE LEADING THE WATER TRAIL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT?

Currently, development efforts for the Blueways of St. Clair is directed by staff from the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission. An informal committee made up of local officials, non-profit organizations and paddlers meets periodically to discuss issues related to the Blueways system water trails. At this time, the committee largely plays an advisory role.

During the strategic planning process, staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission and members of the leadership committee worked together to discuss the possibilities and framework for a more formal arrangement for the long-term planning, management and funding of the Blueways. After several discussions, a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Trail Governance and Management* was developed that, when signed, clearly articulates the formal responsibilities of involved parties, including the Metropolitan Planning Commission; St. Clair County Parks and Recreation; local governments that own, lease or operate land touching the Blueways; and a new formal Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee.

Under the MOU, the Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee will be a formal committee of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission. As such, members would be appointed by the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The new Leadership Committee would consist of a representative of each of the 13 local units of government who own, lease or operate land adjacent to the river, representatives from non-profit organizations (e.g., Friends of the St. Clair River), representatives from the business community, and members of the public. The Leadership Committee will be charged with supporting and making decisions on the overall development, maintenance and management of the water trail.

Under the MOU, the Metropolitan Planning Commission would chair the new Leadership Committee and facilitate its meetings. The Metropolitan Planning Commission would also be charged with leading and coordinating the development, maintenance and promotion of the Blueways with both public and private partners.

Additionally, under the MOU, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation and each of the local jurisdictions along the system of water trails will be charged with helping to oversee and maintain their access sites and associated amenities. The local jurisdictions will also work closely with the Leadership Committee and the Metropolitan Planning Commission to secure long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the water trails. The formal MOU outlining the purpose, membership, and roles and responsibilities of each entity can be found in *Appendix A*.

Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee

Once implemented, a new Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee will be charged with supporting and making decisions on the overall development, maintenance and management of the water trail. The new Leadership Committee will be a formal committee of St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission.

Alternative Leadership Scenario

As it is currently constituted, staff members from the MPC provide the direct administration and day-to day oversight of the Blueways of St. Clair. However, the MPC could relinquish the day-to-day duties to a regional NGO, such as the Friends of the St. Clair River, but retain its role in advising, planning and funding the Blueways through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee

- Support and implement the Blueways of St. Clair Strategic Plan and develop annual priorities.
- Collaborate on efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways system of water trails.
- Hold quarterly meetings (or more, if needed).
- Inform and educate water trail users regarding paddling etiquette and interaction with other river users (including large freighters) and adjacent property owners.
- Work with local jurisdictions and other access-site owners to manage, maintain and improve trailheads and secondary access sites.
- Work with local government officials to secure resolutions of support for the Blueways, trailheads and secondary access sites in their jurisdiction.
- Continually reassess and determine benchmarks and measurements of success.
- Establish standards for development and maintenance of access sites and amenities along each water trail.
- Assist in developing and implementing a comprehensive safety plan for the Blueways.
- Promote and market the Blueways.
- Hold an annual paddling event.



St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission

- Convene quarterly (or more frequent) meetings of the St. Clair Blueways Leadership Committee.
- Develop progress reports regarding the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the development of the Blueways to be distributed to the Leadership Committee.
- Serve as the primary liaison and contact between all Blueways stakeholders and partners.
- Serve as the primary spokesperson for the Blueways with media, the community, and at state and regional events and conferences.
- Coordinate volunteer activities and public events along and associated with the Blueways.
- Coordinate collective efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways.
- Develop marketing and promotional materials for the Blueways.
- Continue to update and maintain the Blueways of St. Clair website.
- Coordinate physical improvements (e.g., launches, signage) at access sites with local jurisdictions throughout the Blueways.
- Develop maps and other important information for public distribution.

- Assist the Leadership Committee in securing resolutions of support for the water trail and access sites from participating jurisdictions.
- Provide final approval of relevant matters, based on recommendations of the Leadership Committee.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation and Local Jurisdictions

- Maintain and develop access sites.
- Install and maintain signage at access sites.
- Secure resolutions of support for the Blueways and access sites.
- Collaborate on efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways.
- Appoint a member to the Leadership Committee.
- Coordinate and collaborate on issues and events with the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

VISION

In the year 2029, the Blueways of St. Clair is an exemplarily system of water trails, recognized in the Great Lakes region and beyond as a dynamic “must do” destination for paddling and eco-based tourism. The Blueways system of water trails provide a wide variety of natural and urban paddling experiences that can accommodate people of all ages and abilities. The Blueways system of water trails provides safe and unique outdoor recreation opportunities for tourists as well as residents of its neighboring communities, and ties into other water and non-motorized trail systems throughout the region.

Local officials, citizens and business owners in the communities along the Blueways system of water trails consider the water trail to be an important asset and integral part of their community as well as the region. The Blueways system of water trails consistently reinforces the water-based identity and healthy lifestyles of the region.

People can easily access each water trail, and users are also encouraged to explore the culture, heritage, businesses and services of nearby communities. Paddlers interact with the system of water trails through a series of annual events and programs that celebrate the waterways and their natural, cultural and recreational heritage.

The quality of the waterways, fisheries and wildlife habitat of the system of water trails continues to improve through greater awareness, stewardship and partnerships with conservation organizations, municipalities, paddlers and interested citizens.

The quality of the paddling experience continues to improve through long-term sustainable funding, strong collective leadership and cooperation between municipalities, conservation organizations, tourism agencies, paddlers, business owners and interested citizens.



GOALS

The Leadership Committee adopted the following goals for the Blueways:

1. Continue to promote and improve recreation, public access and user experience along the Blueways.
2. Continue to support and integrate ongoing public awareness, education, conservation and restoration efforts that enhance and promote the health of the Blueways.
3. Secure sustainable management and funding for the Blueways.
4. Support and contribute to the *Discover the Blue* brand.
5. Promote *Leave No Trace* principles.
6. Support, promote and improve waterway-related activities that are inclusive to all ethnicities, ages and abilities, including paddling, boating, fishing and bird watching.
7. Develop and maintain high-quality access sites and user experiences.
8. Provide for a safe water trail by continually promoting and cultivating a comprehensive approach to emergency management and education.
9. Continue to establish an identity for the water trail by facilitating public outreach and marketing programs.
10. Connect the Blueways system of water trails to nearby parks, public spaces, non-motorized trails and other water trails.
11. Support local and regional efforts to increase water-based tourism and connections with downtowns along the Blueways system of water trails that support and promote new opportunities for economic development.
12. Continue to leverage the state and national water trail designations.
13. Continue to be a recognized leader in water trails throughout the Great Lakes region.
14. Encourage new and non-traditional users to engage with the system of water trails.
15. Use best practices to manage woody debris that both supports fish and wildlife and allows for recreational access with minimal impact.



STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Plan was developed using the methods, tools, and resources outlined in the 2017 *Michigan Water Trail Manual*. In addition, the MPC used criteria and best management practices from the state and federal water trail designation programs as the framework for the Strategic Plan.

National Water Trail Designation, National Park Service

All applicants must demonstrate the following seven best management practices:

1. **Recreation Opportunities.** The water trail route has established public access points that accommodate a diversity of trip lengths and provide access to a variety of opportunities for recreation and education.
2. **Education.** The water trail provides opportunities to learn about the value of water resources, cultural heritage, boating skills and outdoor ethics.
3. **Conservation.** The water trail provides opportunities for communities to develop and implement strategies that enhance and restore the health of local waterways and surrounding lands.
4. **Community Support.** Local communities provide support and advocacy for maintenance and stewardship of the water trail.
5. **Public Information.** The public is provided with accessible and understandable water trail information, including details for identifying access and trail routes; cultural, historical and natural features; hazards; and water quality. The water trail is promoted to the community and a broad national audience.
6. **Trail Maintenance.** There is a demonstrated ability to support routine and long-term maintenance investments on the water trail. Facilities are designed, constructed and maintained by incorporating sustainability principles.
7. **Planning.** An applicant must also incorporate and maintain a water trail plan that describes a vision, desired future conditions, and strategies to strengthen best management practices.



State of Michigan Water Trail Designation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

All applicants must demonstrate the following criteria:

1. Provide a quality trail experience.
2. Provide clear information for users.
3. Demonstrate broad community support.
4. Demonstrate a sustainable business, maintenance and marketing plan.

Pure Michigan Water Trail Designation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

All applicants must demonstrate the following criteria:

1. The jurisdiction is easily accessible to the water trail.
2. The jurisdiction has adopted a formal resolution in support of the designation.
3. The jurisdiction has adopted a plan for providing support services for trail users.
4. The jurisdiction has established a formal water trail advisory committee.
5. The jurisdiction has hosted an annual trail-related event or project.
6. The school board within the jurisdiction has endorsed a trail-based learning component within the school district.
7. The jurisdiction's land use plans, ordinances and other planning documents recognize the relationship between the trail and the community's other assets, or there is demonstrated support to add these provisions.



CHAPTER TWO – THE PLANNING PROCESS

BACKGROUND

The development of this Strategic Plan required comprehensive data collection and analysis, stakeholder input, research and review of budgets and existing planning efforts, projects, activities and programs, and site visits. Ultimately, all this information was used to provide recommendations regarding the development of the Blueways of St. Clair.

BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR COMMITTEE

A Blueways of St. Clair Committee was established in 2012 to provide general administration and direction to the Metropolitan Planning Commission regarding the Blueways of St. Clair. The Committee is led by Metropolitan Planning Commission staff and made up of representatives from other county departments, municipal recreation directors, staff from local non-profit organizations, business owners and volunteers. A sub-committee (i.e., the *strategic plan steering committee*) of the Committee was established to help guide the strategic planning process. Three sub-committee meetings were held throughout the planning process. Each meeting was publicly noticed and the public was welcome to attend and participate.

Additional information and recommendations for the Strategic Plan was collected from staff of the Metropolitan Planning Commission and additional conversations with officials from participating municipalities, who have been working on the development of programs and capital improvements for the last nine years.

SITE ASSESSMENTS

To get a better understanding of how paddlers are currently accessing the system of water trails and to better identify the opportunities and challenges of each access site, staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission conducted a formal assessment of each access site along the system of water trails. Using the *access-site assessment form* template from the Michigan Water Trails Manual, these assessments included field documentation of site conditions, available amenities, and a variety of other characteristics that typically support water trails.

Additional assessments were conducted using maps and aerial photography and through discussions with community stakeholders. In the end, access sites for the water trails were organized under two categories (which are described more thoroughly in *Chapter Three*):

- Trailhead
- Secondary Access Site

Blueways of St. Clair Committee

The Blueways of St. Clair Committee consists of representatives from several local units of government and community organizations:

- Lori Eschenburg, Water Trail Planner, St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission
- Mark Brochu, Director, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission
- Dr. Annette Mercatante, Medical Health Officer, St. Clair County Public Health
- Sheri Faust, Environmental Health Educator, St. Clair County Public Health
- Dennis Delor, Special Events, Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission
- Nancy Winzer, Recreation Director, City of Port Huron
- Trice Hawkins, Recreation Director, City of St. Clair
- Tom Dennis, Zoologist, Blue Water Audubon
- Laurie Dennis, volunteer, Blue Water Audubon
- Kris Dombrowski, Proprietor, The Kayak Store
- Stefanie DeNardin, Recreation Coordinator, City of Marysville
- Kirsten Lyons, Stewardship Director, Friends of the St. Clair River
- Melanie Chandler, Recreation Coordinator, City of Port Huron
- Mike Edmondson, Volunteer

Input and recommendations for this Strategic Plan were collected from the Blueways of St. Clair Committee over the course of three meetings, as well as through additional meetings with other local officials.



Blueways of St. Clair Committee Meeting: April 11, 2019



Algonac/Clay Township Trail Town Meeting: February 21, 2019

CHAPTER THREE – RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter outlines recommendations for programming, capital improvements, marketing and administration for the Blueways of St. Clair. It is important to recognize that many of the recommendations listed in this plan will take several years to realize. However, several recommendations could be implemented in the near term and will be critical to the continued success of the Blueways of St. Clair.

RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRAMMING

Personal Safety and Emergency Response

The expected yearly increase in use of the Blueways system of water trails will raise the potential for incidences involving accidents, injuries and rescues. The Metropolitan Planning Commission will need to work with local municipalities on the task of hazard mitigation, adequate rescue preparedness, water trail usage and safety, outreach and education.

Water hazards can be broken down into two categories: personal and environmental. Personal hazards — such as alcohol consumption, diving into unknown water depths, paddling too close to freighters, paddling alone, or paddling without a personal flotation device (PFD) — are highly avoidable through basic education and responsible behavior, though accidents and injuries may still occur on the water. Environmental hazards like high water levels, steep grades, woody debris and subsurface rocks can be sufficiently mapped and managed. In addition to somewhat unpredictable river terrain in some waterways in St. Clair County, severe hail and thunderstorms, flash floods, high winds and lightning can leave a paddler in a position of extreme vulnerability. With risks like hypothermia and drowning, it is vital that rescue crews are well prepared for expedient river entry and locating of victims.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should facilitate an annual “safety summit” with public safety agencies from each municipality in which a water trail is located, as well as regional entities like St. Clair County, the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Border Patrol. The purpose of the annual summit is to make sure public safety agencies are aware of any new developments along the system of water trails, answer questions and address concerns, and establish collective operational guidelines for emergency response and water rescue. Future summits may also include a discussion about implementing safety signage along each paddling route.

Public Safety

Local public safety agencies have been valuable partners in assisting with several paddling events hosted by the Blueways.



Education and Safety

Safety

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to make paddlers aware of the hazards of paddling on connected waterways throughout St. Clair County.



Paddler education and safety are very important components of the Blueways of St. Clair. While paddlers will be using the trails at their own risk, there are good sources of education and training that can be made available to paddlers. For example, the Coast Guard Auxiliary offers a variety of educational materials and programs to help teach paddlers about safety and decision-making skills, such as the Operation Paddle Smart Program, Paddle Smart “If Found” ID stickers for boats, and paddlecraft inspections. The Coast Guard offers these paddle stickers and paddlecraft inspections free of charge. Other lifesaving tools — such as developing “float plans” and wearing life jackets — should be promoted as standard practice. Programs like these are often accompanied by brochures and other forms of media that can easily be incorporated into the Blueways of St. Clair website and kiosks at access sites. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should develop a formal educational and safety program that utilizes these types of materials.

Many paddlers, and especially novice paddlers, are often unaware of the “rules of the water.” When paddlers fail to yield the right-of-way to larger boats, they place themselves in potentially dangerous situations, as pilots in large boats may not be able to easily see a lone paddler or paddlers not wearing high-visibility gear. The St. Clair River serves as a shipping route for Great Lakes cargo vessels. As such, paddlers need to be aware of and respect their presence. According to Federal law, vessels (including paddlecraft) less than 66 feet long shall not impede the passage of a vessel operating in a narrow channel. In addition, anchoring in a navigation channel is against the law except in the case of an emergency. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should develop education materials for paddlers to inform them of these “rules of the water.” Information about the rules should also be placed on each trailhead kiosk. In addition, information should continue to be included in the water trail brochure and on the Blueways of St. Clair website. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should also work with the Lake Carrier Association and the Pilots Association to make them aware of the water trails and the potential interface with paddlers.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should establish a series of paddling classes and hands-on workshops that reinforce safety and introduce people to paddling and the Blueways system of water trails. Classes may include an introduction to paddling for both adults and kids as well as a self-rescue class. Other classes may include information about how to buy the right kayak and life jacket. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should reach out to and work with local school districts and community organizations to host paddling classes for kids, people with physical or learning disabilities, and populations who may not have traditionally been engaged with the river or with paddling.

In addition to these formal safety efforts, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should work with local paddlers to establish a water trail ambassador program. Ambassadors would paddle sections of each water trail at least three times a year (in the spring, mid-summer and fall) and make general observations (with photos as necessary) about the status of water trail launches, signs, trash, woody debris, water levels, trail etiquette, and personal safety (e.g., how many people are not wearing life jackets). All of this information could be noted and cataloged with the local jurisdiction and the Metropolitan Planning Commission. Ambassadors could also help answer questions from the public about the water trails, help to plan trips, give advice about hazards, and teach proper trail etiquette.

Paddling and Water Trail-Based Programs

The full potential of the water trail will not be realized unless the local and regional population base is aware of it and knows how to access it. The Metropolitan Planning Commission needs to make sure local officials and residents are aware of the Blueways and the different paddling experiences they offer. This past spring, under a grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, the Metropolitan Planning Commission piloted a “summer paddle series,” a guided public paddle in five coastal communities in St. Clair County. Each paddle was led by a local certified paddling guide and featured local experts talking about the historical, environmental and cultural places and amenities along each water trail. Each paddle concluded with a meal at a local restaurant. The goal of the summer paddle series was to introduce people to paddling, show paddlers different water trails throughout the county, and connect paddlers with the goods and services of other communities in St. Clair County. Given the success of the pilot summer paddle series, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should conduct an annual summer series on different water trails throughout the county.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should also consider expanding the number of paddling trips it hosts that both introduce paddling to novices and demonstrate the unique paddling experiences on the river. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should reach out to and work with local school districts and community organizations to host paddling tours for kids, people with physical or learning disabilities, and populations who may not have traditionally been engaged with local waterways or with paddling. Each of these paddling tours and/or events provides an opportunity for the Metropolitan Planning Commission to discuss, inform and leverage support from participants about the environmental conditions of the river and ongoing conservation and restoration efforts.

Given the large geographic scope of the Blueways system of water trails, transportation (on land) between access sites can be cumbersome. At this time, there are a handful of outfitters that can transport paddlers (and rent equipment) between access sites. However, Blue Water Area Transit, St. Clair County’s regional public transportation provider, offers safe, convenient and reliable transportation to most of the coastal communities in St. Clair County. In fact, a handful of the fixed routes in the area pass by several of the existing access sites identified in this plan. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should initiate discussions with Blue Water Area Transit about creating a special program that would support the shuttle needs of paddlers along the water trail. This program might include establishing new dropoff and pickup sites, reduced fares for paddlers, and even a kayak rack for a number of buses.

Invasive Species Awareness Program

In the summer of 2019, the Metropolitan Planning Commission will be participating in a statewide pilot *Invasive Species Paddling Detection, Reporting and Public Awareness Program*. Through a partnership with Michigan Sea Grant and LIAA, this program will teach volunteer paddlers to identify and report invasive species along specific water trails in St. Clair County. The Blueways of St. Clair is one of 11 such trainings planned around the state. In addition to this training effort, Michigan Sea Grant and LIAA will be developing area-specific invasive species signs for placement at key access sites. If successful, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should explore additional training opportunities in the future, either through continual partnerships with Michigan Sea Grant and LIAA or through its own programming efforts.

Programming

Paddling events, like the 2019 Summer Paddle Series, help to create better awareness of the Blueways of St. Clair and paddling.



Adopt-An-Access Program

Last year, the Metropolitan Planning Commission initiated an *Adopt-An-Access (A3) Program*. The program allows individuals, organizations or companies to sponsor an access site over a multi-year period. Each level of commitment comes with a financial obligation that covers the cost of items such as signage, shoreline improvements, infrastructure repairs and amenities. The sponsorship also includes a commitment to complete a volunteer work bee at the site at three times throughout each year. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to promote this innovative program and recruit additional sponsorships. The Adopt-An-Access form can be found in *Appendix B*.

Woody Debris Management

In some of the more rural areas of several of the water trails, there has been and continues to be significant woody debris. The management of woody debris in a safe and sustainable manner is an important component to a river's health and to the water trails. Although woody debris is often considered a nuisance for paddlers, it is important to remember that woody debris is an important component of the stream's anatomy. Woody debris in a waterway that is at least four inches wide and six feet long is considered Large Woody Debris. Collections of Large Woody Debris are often referred to as logjams, snags or debris dams. In the past, Large Woody Debris was removed from a waterway to enhance recreational access or to prevent flooding. However, we now know that Large Woody Debris promotes the health of the river, controls erosion, slows runoff, provides food and cover for aquatic creatures, and creates deep pools that provide shelter for a variety of fish.

In those rivers with a designated water trail, woody debris should be managed using the "Clean and Open Method." Developed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), this method provides specific guidance on how to manage woody debris and when a permit from the DEQ is needed. In general, if the proposed work only moves/removes tangled-up floating wood, cuts back wood that is secured to the banks or the bottom of the river, keeps impact to the riverbank and river light, does not secure anything to the bottom of the navigation, and does not secure structures to the banks or bottom of the river, it will not require a permit.

Given the heavy tree canopy along some water trails and the frequency of flash-flood events due to severe weather, some Commission can continue to direct paddlers to areas (routes) that are free of woody debris, and should be clear about the potential for woody debris in print and online descriptions of water trails. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should explore the development of a formal woody debris program to safely and properly manage woody debris in water trails throughout St. Clair County. This program could utilize support and resources from municipalities along the water trail as well as trained volunteers. The program could have many active components, including: a consistent method to inventory, assess and map woody debris; a robust training program on how to safely remove woody debris using best management practices; a safety plan; guidelines and practices for coordinating and working with volunteers; and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities. The Metropolitan Planning Commission would need to identify and pursue funding sources to facilitate this comprehensive woody debris program.

Woody Debris Management

Some of the more rural areas of several water trails, like the upper reaches of the Pine River Paddle, will require woody debris management.



Liability

The National Sea Grant Law Center conducted a legal review of liability issues potentially associated with water trail development, management, maintenance and use. This information is advisory only, and should not be construed as legal advice.

Water Trail Access Points. Private and public landowners who make water trail access available on their property would be protected from legal liability in most cases. Liability will likely be based on negligence, which simply means the landowner failed to follow normal standards of care against unreasonable risk of harm. In Michigan, the Recreational Use Act limits liability to public and private landowners who open their land to the public for recreational use or access, and specifically provides immunity for injuries arising out of persons entering or exiting a trailway. Exceptions to this immunity occur when injuries are caused by a landowner's gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct, or where a landowner charges a fee for use of the specific access point.

Additionally, local governments that operate launch sites or maintain access points would likely be subject to sovereign immunity. Under Michigan's Governmental Tort Liability Act, a local unit of government would not likely be liable to water trail users so long as it is engaged in the exercise or discharge of a governmental function. However, the operation of a proprietary concern that is intended to produce a profit and is not supported by taxes or fees is not a governmental function, and immunity may not apply.

Liability for Improvements. Water trail improvements can include maintenance of floating docks, signage, lockers or other amenities. The addition of these types of improvements will not increase a landowner's liability under the Michigan Recreational Use Act. However, governmental immunity may not apply to the management of a developed recreational area. In Michigan, recreational site improvements such as the addition of parking lots and signage may not qualify to make a site less natural or "developed."

Water Quality. Under certain circumstances, waterways in St. Clair may have high *E. coli* concentrations that exceed total and partial body contact recommendations. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should consult with its respective counsel to better understand the legal liability if paddlers access the water under such conditions. The results of this research should be included in a future Safety Plan.





RECOMMENDATIONS – ACCESS SITES

This plan identifies 44 access sites that support the system of Blueways throughout St. Clair County. These sites include everything from formal boat launches to small stretches of shoreline in parks and areas near bridges and overpasses. Each site received an onsite assessment, was inventoried, and then was reviewed and analyzed by the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The Metropolitan Planning Commission then worked to categorize each access site by type and future use — that is, what type of site it *should* be. These categorizations are utilized to help identify priorities for future projects and investments. It is important to remember that before any improvements are made, each proposed access site must first be formally approved by the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the site owner. The two access site categories are described below:

“Trailhead” Access Sites Should Have:

- ADA kayak launch
- Suitable launch surface
- Parking (paved) for multiple vehicles
- Other amenities (restrooms, launch sign, interpretive signage, trash receptacle, kayak rack, potable water, pavilion, picnic table)

“Trailhead” access sites should stand out as the “signature access sites” for the water trail. Each trailhead should have a suitable launch surface (e.g., paved boat ramp or dock), designated and/or off-street parking (incl. trailers), a designated loading area, and restrooms (brick-and-mortar or portable). Other amenities may include garbage and recycling receptacles, potable water, picnic areas, a covered pavilion, lighting, and boat racks/lockers. Directional signage from roadways, wayfinding signage along the water, launch signs (facing the water and land), and information kiosks (w/interpretive panels) should be included at these sites. These sites should also feature barrier-free amenities (e.g., kayak launch, accessible parking, accessible route) where feasible.

“Secondary” Access Sites Could Have:

- Unpaved path to the water’s edge
- Limited parking
- Minimal amenities (portable restroom, trash receptacle)
- Access sign

“Secondary” access sites may or may not have a formal (e.g., paved ramp) launch surface. In most instances, these access sites will require the paddler to “carry in” to the water’s edge (e.g., road-end, steep slope adjacent to the water) or require walking across a wide expanse of open space. Secondary access sites should be clearly visible from the water. These sites should also be signed with a launch sign (visible from land and water) but may not require a kiosk. These access sites may feature roadside parking, a portable restroom and a trash receptacle. Directional signage from the nearest roadway should also be included. With additional investment, these sites may have the potential to become trailheads over time.

“Trailhead” Access Site Example:
St. Clair Marina



“Secondary” Access Site Example:
DNR Access Site at Snooks Highway



The following recommended site improvements were developed for each access site. These potential site improvements should be used as a general framework and planning tool throughout the development of these access sites over time. It is important to note that these potential site improvements are not intended to be the final design of each access site. While some improvements might be easier to implement (e.g., portable restrooms), further design work will be required to incorporate all the recommendations into formal construction documents for implementation. It is also important to note that agreement as to the extent, funding, timeline and long-term maintenance for such improvements will require the approval of the owner of each access site.

Each access site recommendation is composed of at least two parts:

1. Site Description: The following pages provide an aerial photo and description for each access site, including all of its current amenities and features.

2. Potential Improvements: Also included on the following pages is a description of potential improvements for each site.

Cost estimates should be revised following additional design work, engineering and material/equipment specification. As noted above, recommendations for each access site will include a combination of amenities to provide an optimal, practical access-site experience for paddlers. In doing so, the following amenities were considered. A few examples of these amenities are provided on the following page. A more thorough description of these amenities can be found in the Michigan Water Trails Manual.

- Launch Type (including universally accessible launch with accessible routes)
- Restrooms (flush, portable and/or vault toilet)
- Picnic Tables
- Pavilion/Shelter
- Trash Receptacles
- Signage (wayfinding, launch, kiosk)
- Parking (paved or unpaved) and Loading/Staging Area
- Potable Water
- Kayak Storage (rack/locker)
- Boat Slide
- Camping
- Beach Access
- Lighting
- Concessions
- Wi-Fi
- Turn-around
- Pathway

Boat Storage (Rack or Locker)

Boat storage allows paddlers to safely secure their watercraft at an access site. The size and materials of boat storage may vary depending on the amount of use and the physical characteristics of the site.



Boat Slide

A boat slide can help paddlers maneuver their boat up and down steep slopes or around large obstacles.



Portable Restroom

Portable restrooms can be placed at busy access sites or at access sites where more formal bathroom facilities are not feasible.



Pavilion, Picnic Area, Trash Receptacle

Just a few simple amenities can support conscientious use of the water trail and establish a positive paddling experience.



Access Sign

Signage identifies access sites to paddlers on the water.



Universally Accessible Launches. The Metropolitan Planning Commission, in partnership with the County Parks and Recreation Commission and local municipalities, has made a concerted effort to place universally accessible launches at several locations throughout the Blueways (8 sites in total – and 6 planned). Map 3.1 illustrates the location of each current and planned accessible launch.

The following summary about universally accessible launches was provided by Cindy Burkhour of Access Recreation Group. Cindy is one of Michigan's foremost experts on universally accessible launches and was a key contributor to the design of the EZ Dock Accessible Launch. A detailed summary of site features for universally accessible launches can be found in *Appendix C*. Paddlers of all abilities want to launch and land smoothly without capsizing or damaging their watercraft. They need firm surfaces that support their movement from their arrival place to the launch at the water's edge, and sufficient space to accommodate the length of their watercraft during put-in and take-out. In addition, paddlers must be able to stabilize their watercraft during transitions into and out of their vessel and into and out of the water. It is important to consider universal design practices in the development of the complete water access facility, from car to launch. Simply stated, universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Universal Design

Launch sites that consider universal design (including accessible launches) will ensure that people with all types of abilities are able to safely access the water trails.



North River Road Park |



SITE 1 – NORTH RIVER ROAD PARK TRAILHEAD

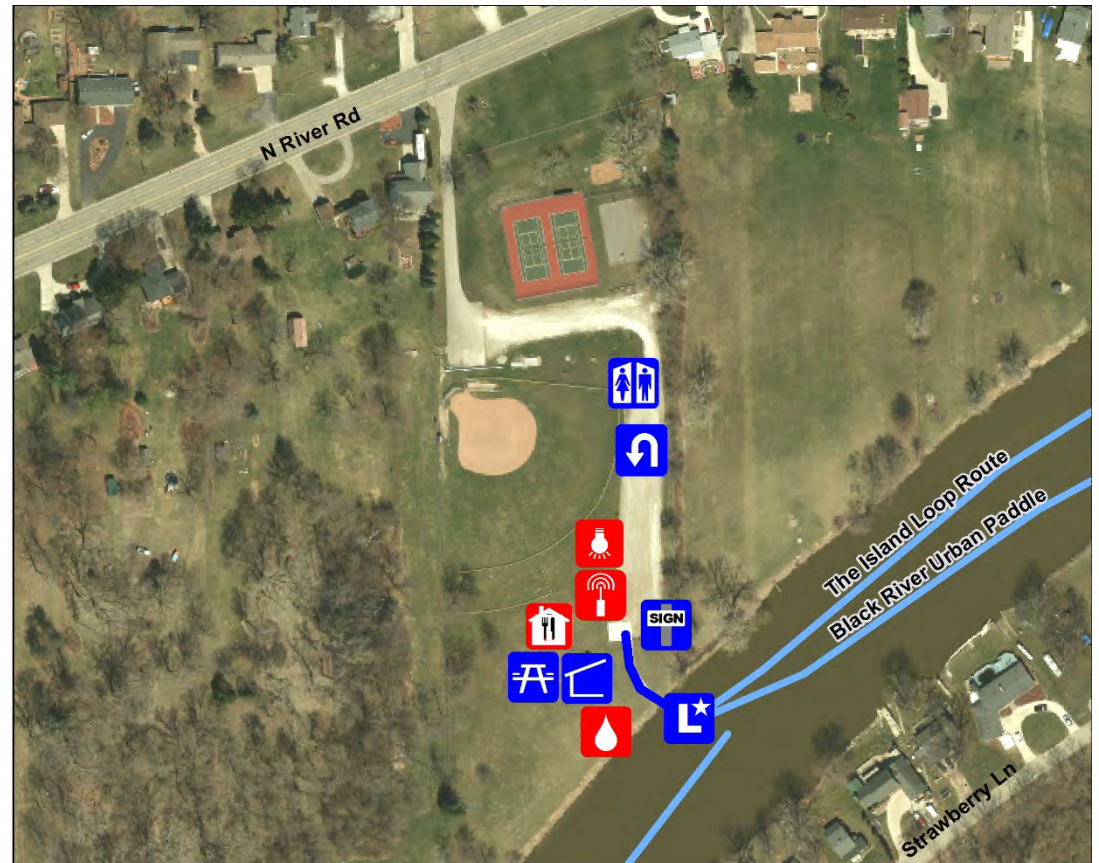
Site Description

Located just west of where the St. Clair River empties into Lake Huron in Fort Gratiot Township, North River Road Park provides access to three paddling routes: (1) Fort Gratiot Sojourn; (2) Island Loop Route; and (3) the Black River Urban Paddle. This location is already outfitted with a variety of amenities including portable restrooms, a turn-around area, picnic area/shelter, signage and an accessible launch.

Potential Improvements

Future plans for this access point should focus on adding potable water and permanent restrooms. The site should also have signage facing the water to let paddlers know that they can stop at that point. Finally, this site would benefit from having concessions, lighting and Wi-Fi connectivity.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 2 – 12TH STREET BOAT RAMP SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

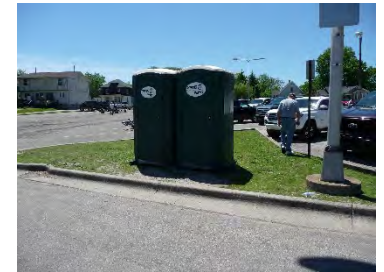
Site Description

This site along the Black River provides access to the Island Loop Route and the Black River Urban Paddle. This access point is heavily used by motorboats and, at the time of this writing, the parking is designated only for vehicles with trailers. The river is calm at this point, making it suitable for kayak and canoe launches. Trail users can find the boat ramp at the corner of Water Street and 12th Street in Port Huron. In addition to the boat ramp, other features include portable restrooms, signage and a large turn-around area.

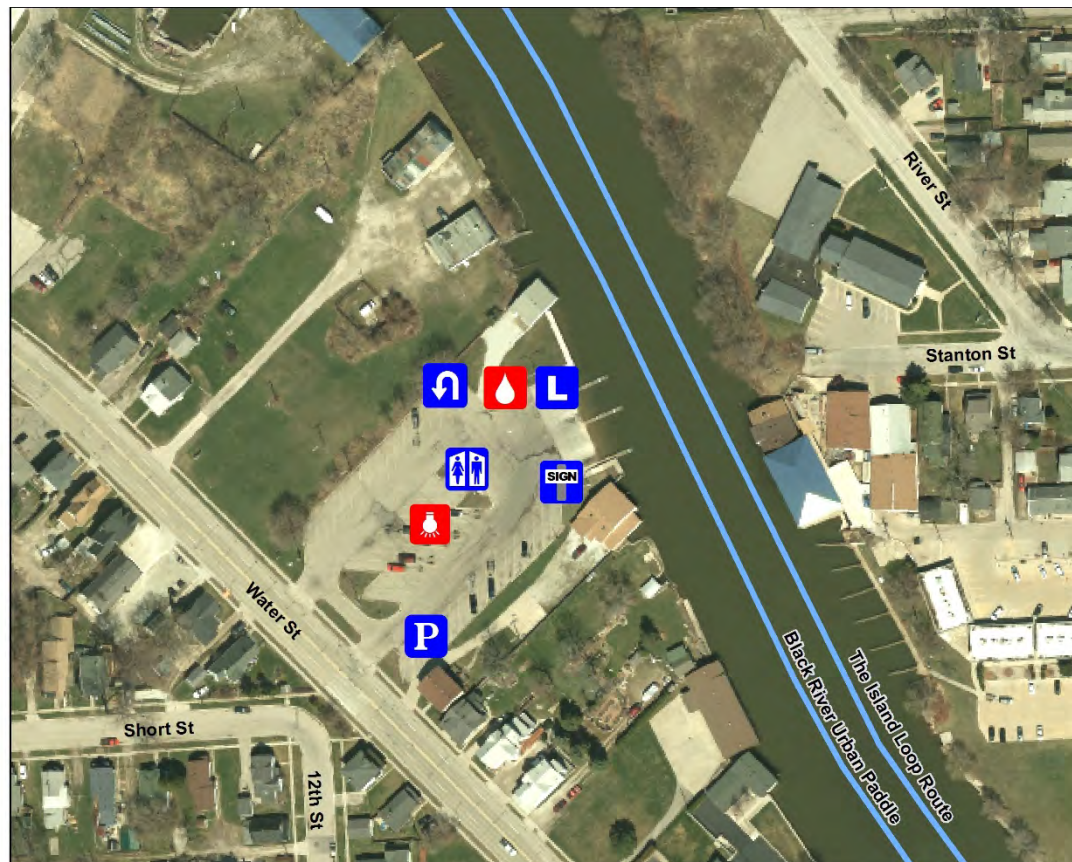
Potential Improvements

This site could be improved for water trail users by including parking for vehicles without trailers, potable water, benches and permanent restrooms. The parking lot and facilities should also have lighting.

12th Street Boat Ramp



| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 3 – RIVERSIDE BOAT RAMP TRAILHEAD

Riverside Boat Ramp |



Site Description

Following the Black River north from the 12th Street Boat Ramp, trail users will find the Riverside Boat Ramp. This access point for the Island Loop Route and the Black River Urban Paddle is on the river's northeast bank, just north of I-69/I-94 in Port Huron. The water at this site is calm and the launch itself is not as frequently used as the one at 12th Street. In addition to the boat launch, the site features a large parking area with turn-around, portable restrooms, a picnic area, and signage.

Potential Improvements

At the time of this writing, there are scheduled improvements for the Riverside Boat Ramp. Currently, the parking lot is in bad condition and the site lacks many of the amenities useful to water trail users. Scheduled improvements include parking lot resurfacing, new restrooms and possibly an ADA kayak launch. The site may also benefit from having potable water, Wi-Fi connectivity and a shelter.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
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| | | |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



TRAILHEAD

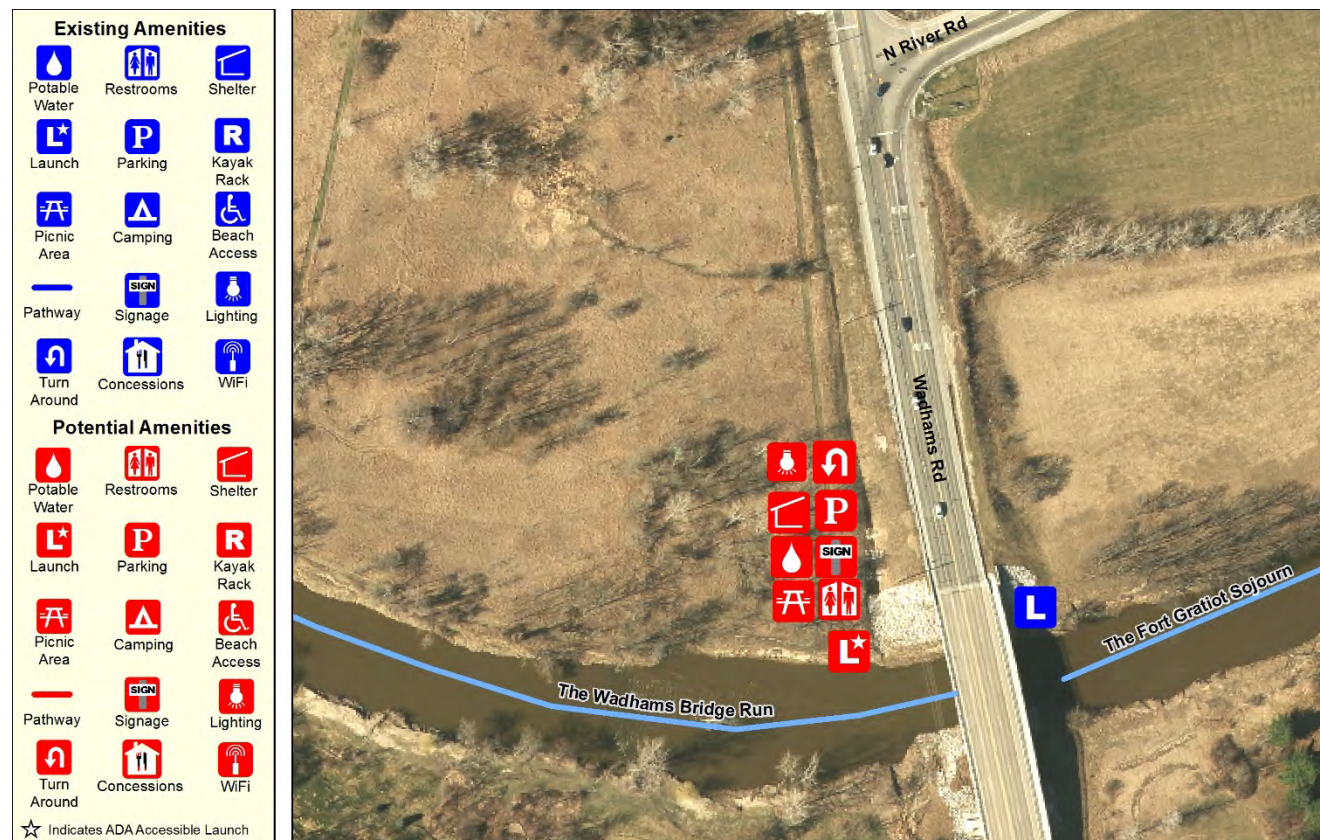
Site Description

This site is located at the new Wadhams Road Bridge in Kimball Township. At the time of this writing, the site is undeveloped except for right-of-way parking on the bridge's east side and a dirt path leading to the Black River. The path to reach the water is quite steep, and erosion and phragmites make accessibility relatively difficult. Users can access the Fort Gratiot Sojourn and the Wadhams Bridge Run from this site.

Potential Improvements

This site is planned to have an ADA kayak launch in the future. In addition, the site should also include an improved path to the water's edge, a safer parking option, a turn-around and a Blueways sign that marks the bridge as a location on the water trail. As a potential trailhead, there should also be lighting, potable water, picnic tables and portable restrooms. This access point is located along a busy road, meaning future signage additions for pedestrian and driver safety may also be necessary.

Wadhams Bridge



SITE 5 – BEARD ROAD/MILL CREEK TRAILHEAD

Site Description


Located in Clyde Township, the Beard Road/Mill Creek site would serve as a trailhead, linking to the Black River Experience as well as the Wadhams Bridge Run. At the time of this writing, there is an unimproved parking lot with ample space but no other amenities. This site, however, is an important access location due to the long stretches of inaccessibility along this section of the Black River.

Potential Improvements

This access point should include a better path to the water, as the current one is somewhat steep and experiencing erosion. In addition, the parking lot could be upgraded from gravel to something more permanent. This site should also include a vault toilet, potable water, a formal launch site, picnic tables and a shelter. Consideration should also be given to providing the opportunity to camp here.

Beard Road/Mill Creek



| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 6 – NORMAN BRIDGE

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

This site marks the end of the Norman Bridge Paddle. Water access at this site is located on the east side of the Black River on Norman Road in Grant Township. The site is undeveloped other than a dirt path leading to the water, parking adjacent to the road, and Blueways of St. Clair signage. This access site is roughly 4.5 miles from the Beard Road/Mill Creek location, making it a probable resting point along the Black River Experience water trail.

Potential Improvements

Potential improvements for the Norman Bridge site should include a better path to the water. The current path is steep and experiences erosion. In addition, this site should be outfitted with a vault toilet and potable water. Finally, this location needs cleaning up as, at the time of this writing, there is illegal dumping and graffiti under the bridge.



Norman Bridge



SITE 7 – COMSTOCK BRIDGE TRAILHEAD

Comstock Bridge



Site Description

This access site on the Black River is located in Grant Township along Comstock Road. This site serves as the trailhead for the Norman Bridge Paddle. At the time of this writing, the site has limited parking on the east side of Comstock Bridge. In addition, water access is found on the northeast side of the bridge, making for a longer carry. However, this site is located along a pristine part of the river and holds great potential should improvements be implemented.

Potential Improvements

This site should include more parking to accommodate trail users. In addition, the water here is accessible along a steep eroding bank, signifying a need for an improved path and formal launch. Furthermore, this site should feature potable water, a vault toilet, picnic tables and grills. The addition of camping opportunities may also be appropriate here.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 8 – JEDDO BRIDGE

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Descriptions

Located in Grant Township, this site at the Jeddo Road Bridge features roadside parking and a dirt path down a small hill to the water's edge. The water at this location is deeper than at the access sites downriver.

Potential Improvements

This access point should be improved by making the path to the water more manageable. At the time of this writing, the path's slope has caused it to have some erosion, posing a potential hazard to those carrying kayaks or canoes to the water. In addition, the site should have a vault toilet as well as potable water for trail users.



Jeddo Bridge



Lighthouse Park



SITE 9 – LIGHTHOUSE PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

Lighthouse Park in Port Huron provides access to both the Lake Huron Paddle and the Blue Water Bridge Excursion. The historic park features fishing, kite boarding, a playscape, sailing, scuba diving, picnic areas and a beach for swimming. The historic Fort Gratiot Lighthouse can also be found onsite. This site already has ample parking, bathrooms and potable water.

Potential Improvements

The beach should include a mat to allow for accessible access. Other potential improvements may include a covered shelter, Wi-Fi connectivity and an access sign facing the water.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Potential Amenities | | |
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| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



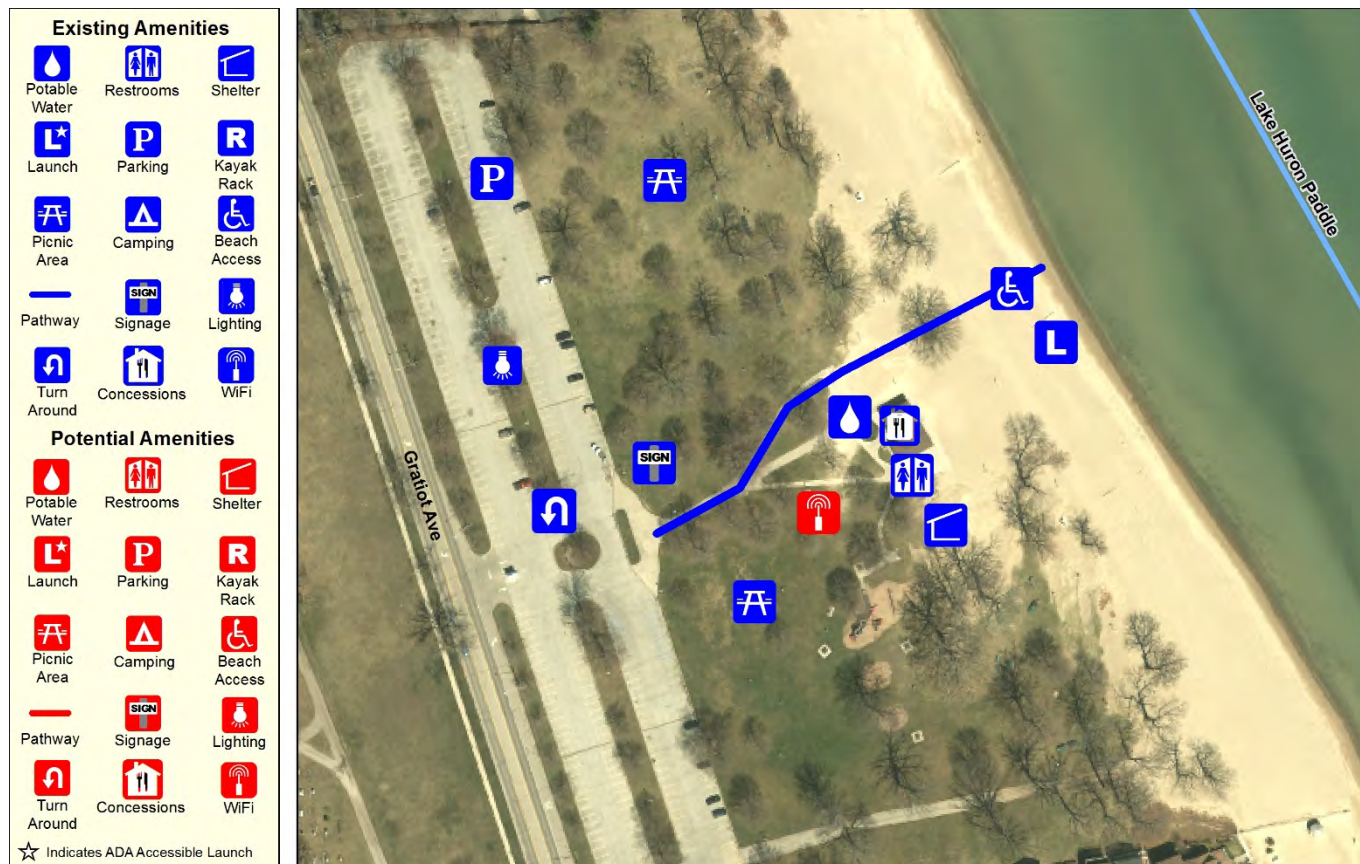
SITE 10 – LAKESIDE PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

Located in the City of Port Huron along the Lake Huron waterfront, this access site features a 17-acre park with an expansive beach. Lakeside Park is outfitted with play equipment, a splash pad, picnic tables, grills, volleyball courts, new bathrooms, beach showers and concessions. There are also multiple picnic shelters and plenty of shade trees. For water trail users, there is a drinking fountain on the beach as well as a mobi-mat for ADA accessibility along the sand.

Potential Improvements

This site is already well-suited as a trailhead for the Lake Huron Paddle. The only improvements that would add to the trail users' experience at this time would be Wi-Fi connectivity and an access sign facing the water.



Lakeside Park



Krafft Water Access



SITE 11 – KRAFFT WATER ACCESS

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

This access site can be found along Gratiot Avenue, just east of the Port Huron Golf Club and just north of Lakeside Park. Water access at this site can be found at the end of a right-of-way road that leads to a sandy beach. Visitors can park on the road, though spaces are limited.

Potential Improvements

Because the right-of-way is only 66 feet wide, there are few improvements that would be appropriate here. As a secondary access site, it should feature an access sign facing the water, portable bathrooms and potable water. However, with Lakeside Park and all of its amenities nearby, these are the only improvements that should be made.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 12 – KEEWAHDIN WATER ACCESS

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

Continuing north along the Lake Huron Paddle, the Keewahdin Water Access site provides another location for water trail users to launch from or take a rest. Similar to the Krafft Water Access, this location is limited in its size, but offers roadside parking and a place to launch from a sandy beach. Trail users can find this access point at the end of Keewahdin Road in Fort Gratiot Township.

Potential Improvements

This site should include bathrooms, potable water and an access sign facing the water. The relatively small beach and right-of-way area here makes it less feasible to include more amenities.



Keewahdin Water Access



SITE 13 – FORT GRATIOT COUNTY PARK TRAILHEAD

Fort Gratiot County Park



Site Description

This 30-acre park offers breathtaking views of Lake Huron and 852 feet of beach. Current facilities at the park include beach access, restrooms, several drinking fountains and foot washes, picnic areas, a children's playground and nearly a mile of paved walking trails. The paved parking lot contains 174 spaces. Fort Gratiot County Park is also home to the 1971 Tunnel Explosion Memorial commemorating the construction accident that took the lives of 22 men working on the water intake tunnel located beneath the park.

Potential Improvements

This site is already well-suited as a trailhead for the Lake Huron Paddle. The only added improvements could be concessions and an access sign facing the water. In addition, efforts should be made to maintain the park and limit the damage done by erosion.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



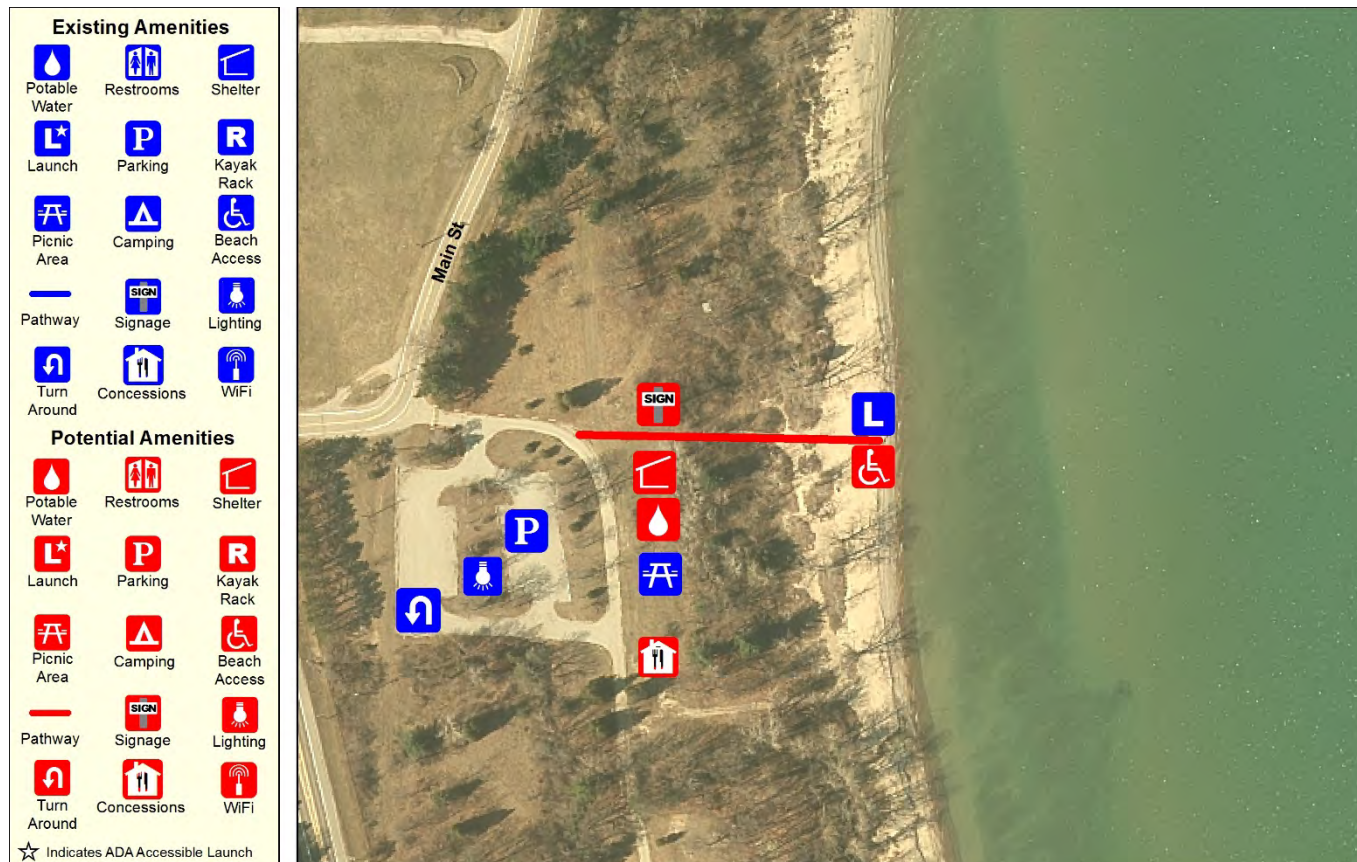
SITES 14 – LAKEPORT STATE PARK - PICNIC USE TRAILHEAD

Site Description

The first of two access points within Lakeport State Park in Burtchville Township, this location features over 2,250 feet of beach frontage along Lake Huron. This is a day-use site and requires a park pass to enter. This area of the state park has portable restrooms, ADA parking and a picnic area, making it an ideal spot to stop along the water trail.

Potential Improvements

Some of the amenities that often define a water trailhead are currently lacking at this site. First, the portable bathrooms could be replaced with permanent ones. The site should also be outfitted with potable water, concessions and a shelter. Blueways of St. Clair signage is currently absent here and should be added. Finally, to aid in accessibility along the beach, a mobi-mat should be installed from the parking lot to the launch site.



Lakeport State Park



SITES 15 – LAKEPORT STATE PARK - CAMPING TRAILHEAD

Lakeport State Park - Camping



Site Description

This access point is located along Lake Huron and features a wide array of amenities, including 283 campsites (both rustic and improved), a playground, mini-cabins, showers, picnic tables, fire circles, a volleyball court, a hiking trail and a store. There is an abundance of parking on a gravel lot. This section of the park also has abundant beach frontage with views of Lake Huron. The park is accessible year-round and requires a pass for entrance.

Potential Improvements

Given the current amenities situated at the park, this site is already well developed to act as a trailhead for this water trail. Further improvements should be focused on adding kayak lockers and storage near the beach in order to reduce the carry distance for trail users. Blueways signage and ADA accessibility should also be prioritized along with wireless internet.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 16 – BURTCHVILLE TOWNSHIP PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This park in Burtchville Township provides another trail access point along Lake Huron. The site has a pavilion area with picnic tables, portable bathrooms and lighting. There are various recreational amenities including a rollerblade area, tennis and basketball courts, a skateboard park, playscape and walking path. The water trail launch site itself can be found on a small rocky beach. Parking at this location is relatively close to the water's edge.

Potential Improvements

Though the site does have potable water, it could be improved upon by having a water bottle filler and permanent bathrooms. Additionally, this location would benefit from Wi-Fi connectivity, a spot for camping and ADA accessibility along the beach leading to the water.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



Burtchville Township Park



SITE 17 – DESMOND LANDING TRAILHEAD

Desmond Landing |



Site Description

This water trail access point is located on the newly developed Blue Water River Walk along the St. Clair River in Port Huron and serves as a rest stop for the Blue Water Bridge Excursion. This location is near where the Black River and St. Clair River meet. The Blue Water River Walk features a mile of shoreline with an observation deck, a 10'-wide trail, an outdoor classroom, a fishing pier and various public art pieces. Nearby, water trail users can find various places to eat, including Vantage Point Farmers Market. There is ample space for parking adjacent to the launch site.

Potential Improvements

Though this site is a highly appealing location to stop along the water trail, at the time of this writing, it has very few amenities for paddlers as it is a simple pebble beach. Improvements should include seating, a water bottle filler, kayak racks and a pavilion, as there is no tree canopy blocking the sun. The location also needs Blueways signage and possibly lighting.



SITE 18 – MARYSVILLE CHRYSLER BEACH TRAILHEAD

Site Description

Located along the St. Clair River in Marysville, this beachfront site is adorned with amenities that would be attractive to most water trail users. The park adjacent to the beach is a newer development that hosts various amenities including a picnic area, pavilion, playscape, permanent restrooms, signage, parking, concessions and phone-charging stations. Nearby is a fishing pier and long boardwalk with views of the St. Clair River. The area around the mile-long beach has rain gardens and various native plantings.

Potential Improvements

The site is already well-suited to act as a point of interest along this water trail. The location could be improved with the addition of kayak storage, as this is a place where trail users would be interested in observing the various attractions and landscape. There is also a need for ADA accessibility along the beachfront.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



Marysville Chrysler Beach



SITE 19 – MARYSVILLE ADA KAYAK LAUNCH TRAILHEAD

Marysville ADA Kayak Launch



Site Description

This site marks the end of the Blue Water Bridge Excursion. Located just north of the water treatment plant in Marysville, the site offers a location near Marysville Beach with an ADA accessible kayak launch. The launch has an adjoining parking lot. Nearby, one can find Veterans Park, benches and a boardwalk. There are also restaurants within close proximity.

Potential Improvements

Improvements to the site should include a portable restroom as well as drinking water and kayak racks.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 20 – CITY OF ST. CLAIR MARINA

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

Located near the City of St. Clair's retail districts along the Pine River, this marina provides several amenities that make it one of the premier access sites in all the Blueways. The City's Comprehensive Plan includes plans to renovate the harbormaster's office, the bathhouse and pavilions, as well as add an RV park, add more amenities for children, and acquire an adjacent marina if possible. These improvements would complement the harbor's existing attractions, which include an ADA kayak ramp, a campground, showers, restrooms, and pavilions with grills, tables and a fish cleaning station. Nearby, the site also features a playground area and a dog run. Kayaks and canoes are available to rent.

Potential Improvements

This site is well-suited to accommodate water trail patrons and is the beginning and end for the Pine River Paddle. A water bottle filler and concessions would help to make it a complete destination for trail users.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |

☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch



City of St. Clair Marina



SITE 21 – MARINE CITY BEACH TRAILHEAD

Marine City Beach I



Site Description

Located along the St. Clair River in Marine City, this small beach and park provides a suitable place for water trail users to stop, rest and lounge. The park has permanent restrooms, picnic tables and barbecue grills. The City also recently added a pavilion area that can be rented for event gatherings. The beach itself provides swimming access and fishing. For water trail users, the beach has a mobi-mat for ADA access. Users can access the Belle River Route from here.

Potential Improvements

This site should be improved by adding more parking. While there is a small parking area, most vehicles at the time of this writing have to park on the streets of the adjacent residential neighborhood. The park would also benefit from having kayak racks and potable water.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 22 – ALGONAC STATE PARK BEACH TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This access point is located in Clay Township along the St. Clair River. This is a largely undeveloped site across the street from the Algonac State Park entrance and all of its services and amenities. At the time of this writing, the site consists of a parking lot within a short distance of the water's edge. The area has a long shoreline, no steep slopes and shallow water.

Potential Improvements

The parking lot requires repairs, as it has many large holes that retain water. In addition, the site should be outfitted with some of the basic necessities needed by water trail users. These should include restroom facilities, potable water, picnic tables and benches.



Algonac State Park Beach



SITE 23 – DNR BOAT LAUNCH CLAY TOWNSHIP

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

DNR Boat Launch Clay Township



Site Description

Located along Pointe Tremble Road just west of Algonac, this boat launch site managed by the Michigan DNR offers ramp access to the St. Clair River. This busy location has abundant parking and vault toilets. The site requires a state parks passport or recreation sticker to access. Start here for the Russell Island Loop or the Krispin Blueway.

Potential Improvements

Permanent restrooms are needed at this busy site. In addition, water trail users would benefit from signage facing the water, kayak racks and a water bottle filler to make the location a suitable spot to stop along the trail.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



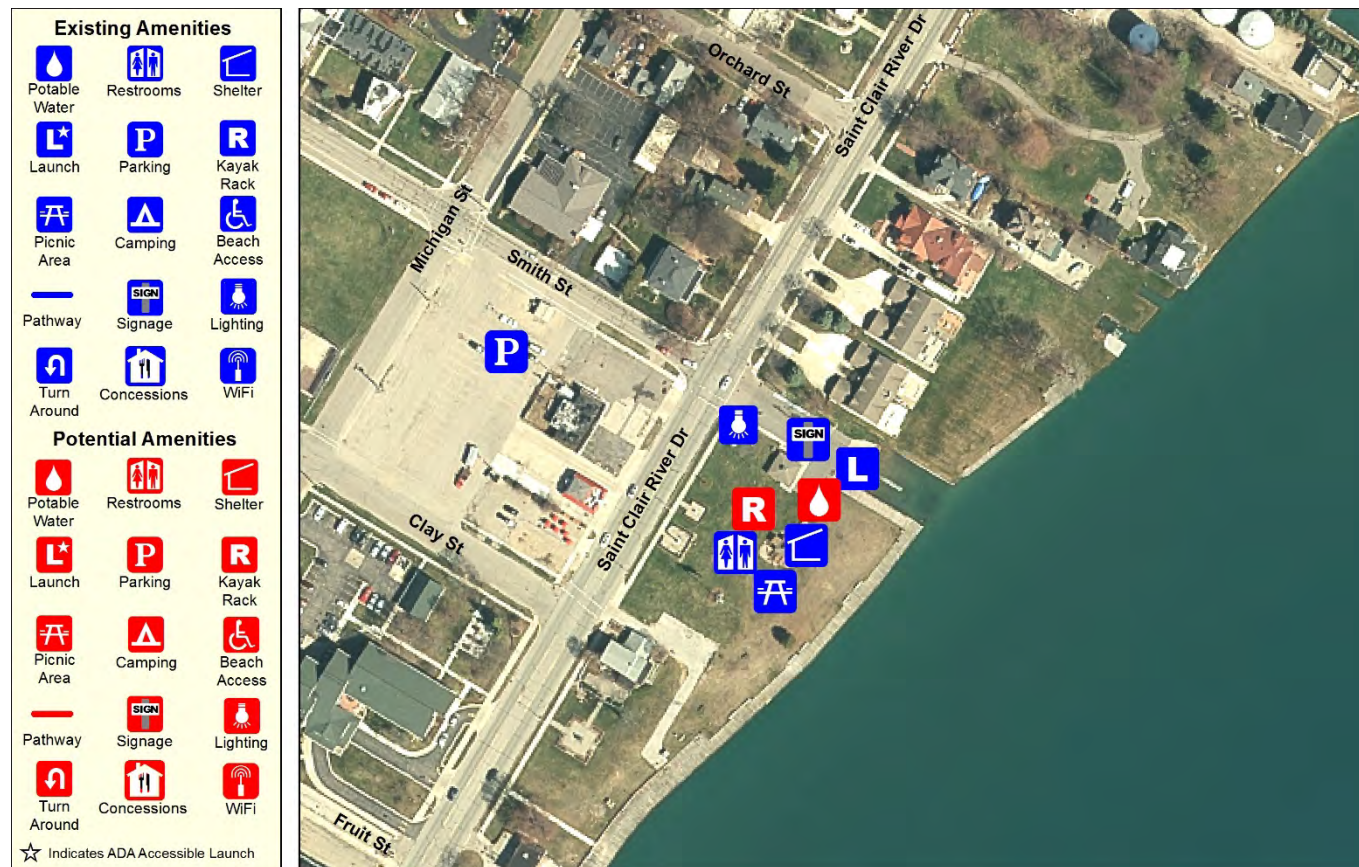
SITE 24 – ALGONAC MUNICIPAL RAMP (AT RIVERFRONT PARK) TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This access point is located in and operated by the City of Algonac. There are two docks here (with boat ramps), along with restrooms and ample parking. The boat launch area is connected to a shoreline park that has a pavilion and statuary. A boardwalk follows the shoreline from the launch site around the adjoining park. There is a place to stop and get ice cream across the street.

Potential Improvements

Improvements at this location should include a water bottle filler and a kayak rack.



Algonac Municipal Ramp



DNR Boat Launch Marine City I



SITE 25 – DNR BOAT LAUNCH MARINE CITY SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

Located in the southern area of Marine City, this DNR-operated boat launch site is well-suited to act as a secondary access site for this water trail. This launch is situated along the St. Clair River, has plenty of parking to accommodate water trail users, and is very close to the Belle River Route.

Potential Improvements

This water trail access site should be improved to include upgraded restrooms, a shelter and picnic tables. There are no nearby restaurants or cultural attractions, meaning the site itself could be retrofitted with more amenities for trail patrons.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



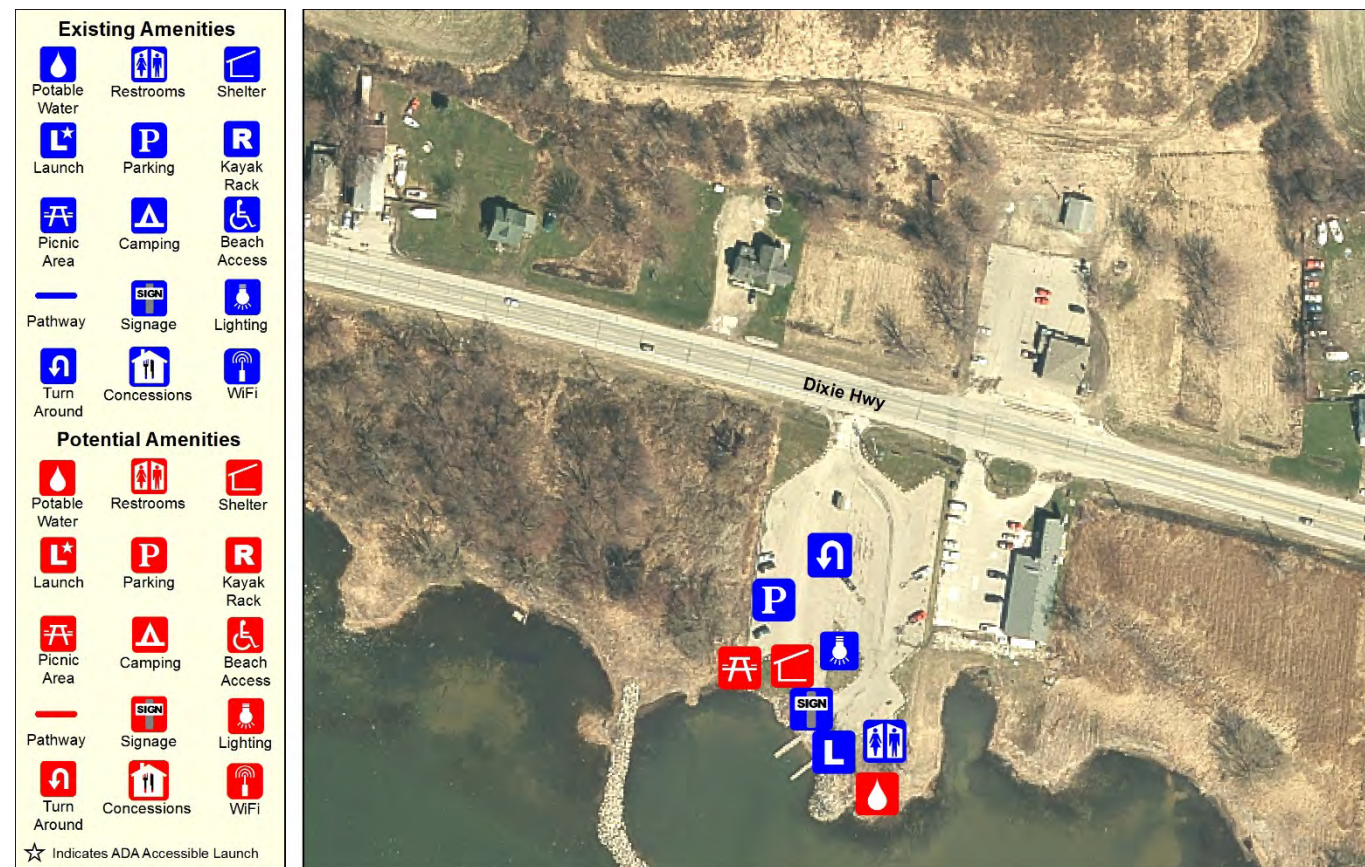
SITE 26 – DNR BOAT LAUNCH FAIR HAVEN SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

Located in Ira Township just east of Fair Haven, this water trail access site offers a ramp to launch a kayak on Anchor Bay. The site has plenty of parking and is across the street from a sports bar. This site would be the beginning and end for the future Swan Creek Trail.

Potential Improvements

At the time of this writing, the site does not have any trail-user amenities other than parking, restrooms and a launch area. To accommodate trail users, the location should include improvements such as a water bottle filler, picnic tables and a shelter.



DNR Boat Launch Fair Haven



DNR Deckers Boat Access |



SITE 27 – DNR DECKERS BOAT ACCESS SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

Located at the end of Anchor Bay Road in Clay Township, this launch site offers access to the Sny Loop and the North Channel. This location often experiences flooding and is not always accessible. Parking can be found onsite.

Potential Improvements

Improvements to this location should include potable water, restrooms and lighting.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



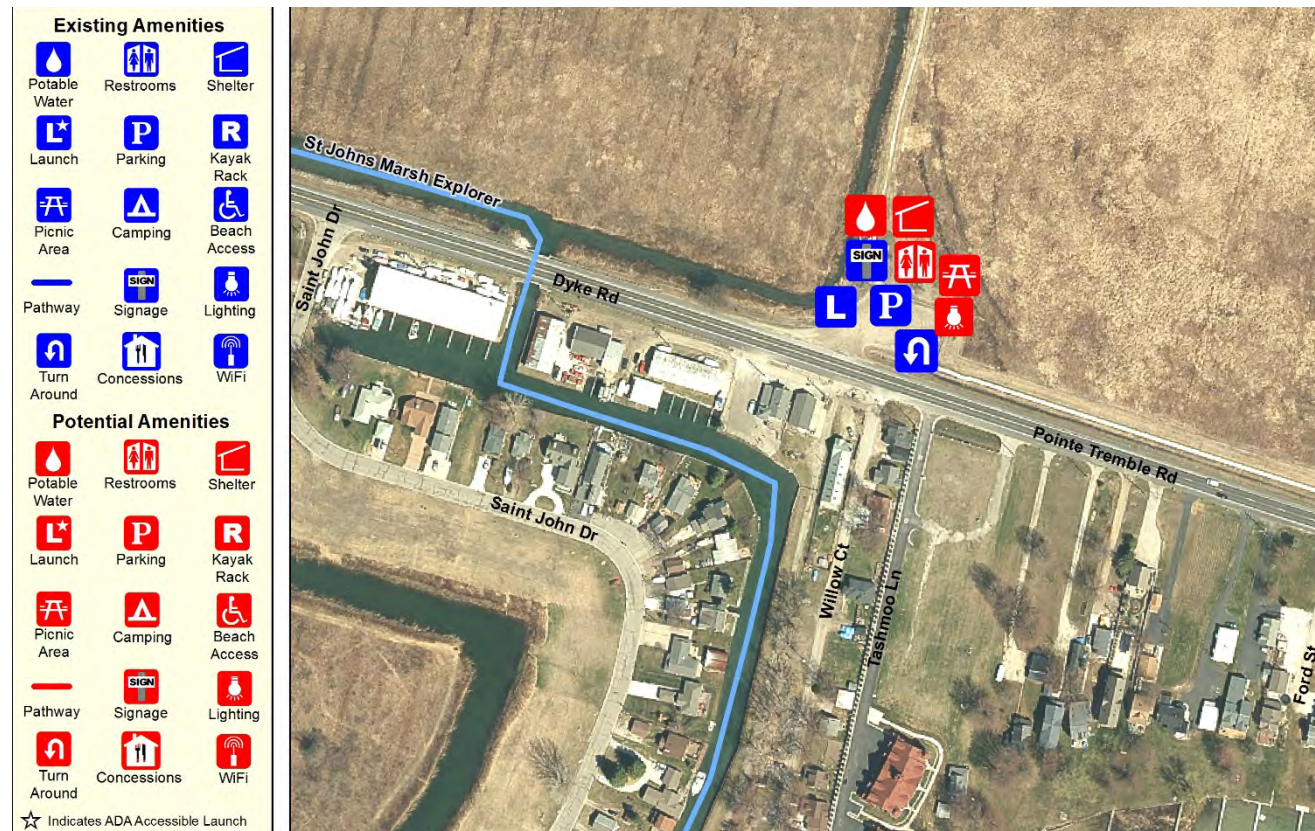
SITE 28 – ST JOHN’S MARSH WILDLIFE AREA TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This location offers a no-slope shallow entry point to explore St John’s Marsh Wildlife Area and access the St. John’s Marsh Explorer route. The site can be found along M-29 close to the St. Clair River east of Fair Haven. The site has a gravel parking lot connected to the water trail as well as a walking trail. The recreation area contains informational signage in many spots, making navigation easier. At the time of this writing, this water trail has been invaded by phragmites vegetation that makes kayaking and canoeing more difficult. However, there is a plan to restore the water flow to the marsh by building dykes and using pumps to kill the phragmites. This will create more open water, resulting in more bird and fish species and more space to recreate.

Potential Improvements

This site should be improved with the addition of a restroom, water bottle filler, benches and a pavilion. It is also recommended that the parking lot have lighting.



St. John's Marsh Wildlife Area



SITE 29 – PEARL BEACH ACCESS SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Pearl Beach Access



Site Description

Located just east of St John's Marsh Wildlife Area in Clay Township, Pearl Beach offers another launch point into the North Channel of the St. Clair River. The pier to access the water can be found at the end of a right-of-way road. The pier itself has benches and is a great location for fishing and enjoying the river. There is also a restaurant adjacent to the site. There is a seawall that makes launching a kayak more difficult, though the water is shallow here.

Potential Improvements

To make launching a kayak easier, a hole in the seawall should be cut out. This site also needs more parking, as it is currently very limited. This location would also benefit from a water bottle filler and lighting.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 30 – DNR ACCESS SNOOKS HIGHWAY

SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

This access site is located along Middle Channel Drive on Harsens Island in Clay Township and provides a connection to the Krispin Blueway. There is gravel parking, restrooms and a basic boat launch here. This area experiences flooding and may be inaccessible during certain times.

Potential Improvements

This secondary access site should include improvements such as picnic tables, potable water, a shelter and parking lot lighting.



DNR Access Snooks Highway



SITE 31 – DNR ACCESS GREEN ROAD SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

DNR Access Green Road I



Site Description

Located on the southern edge of Harsens Island along M-154, this access point provides a launch to the Krispin Blueway water trail as well as the South Channel of the St. Clair River. This site is largely undeveloped other than the gravel parking lot and Blueways signage.

Potential Improvements

Improvements here should include portable restrooms, potable water and a shelter. In addition, an ADA accessible launch should be placed on the south side of M-154 to provide easier access to the South Channel. This is also an appropriate location for picnic tables and more lighting. In addition, there should be signage that lets trail users know that they can access the South Channel on one side of the road and the Krispin Blueway on the other.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



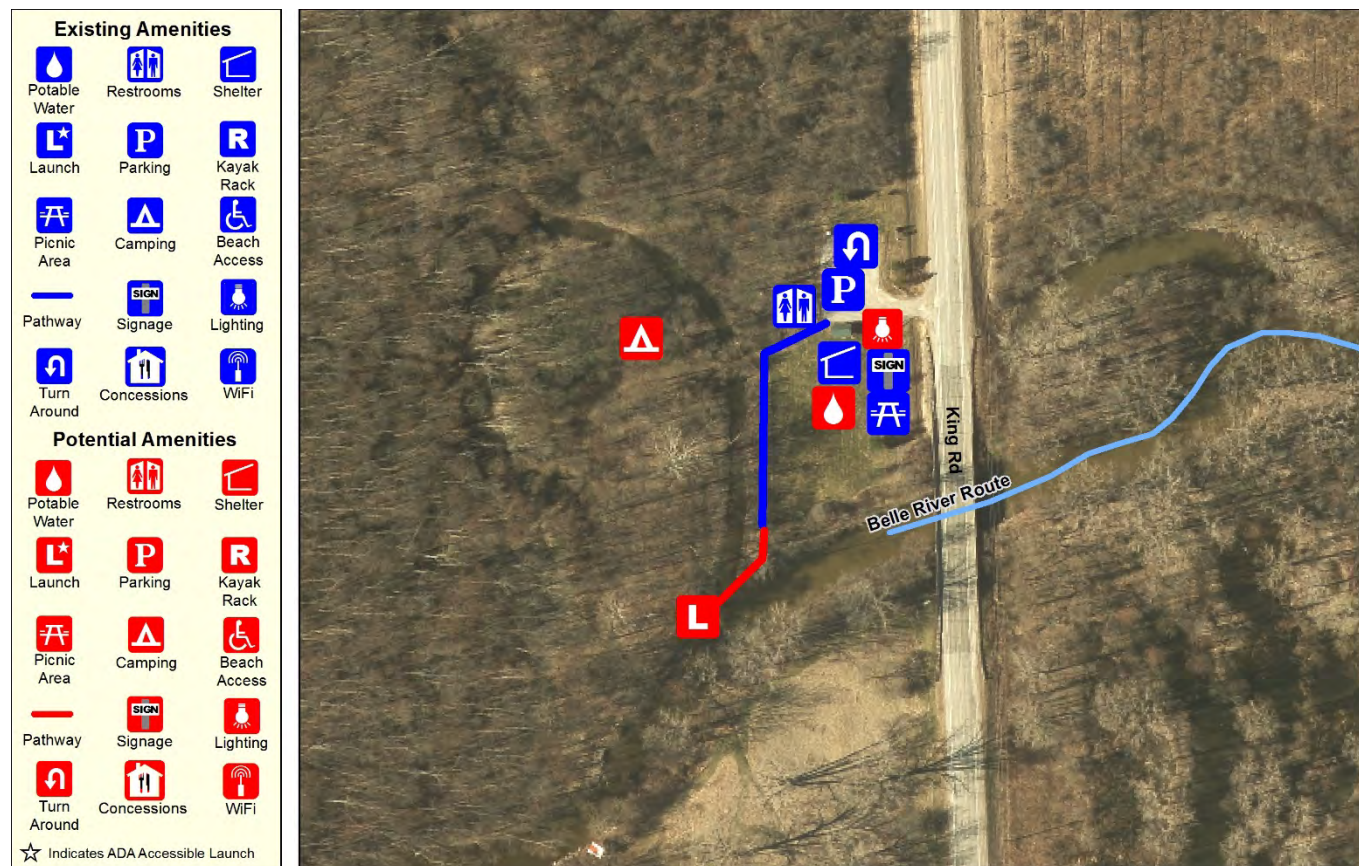
SITE 32 – CHINA TOWNSHIP PARK AT KING ROAD TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This park in China Township provides access to the Belle River and the Belle River Route. The park has a gravel parking lot surrounded by a large grassy area. There is a pavilion with benches next to a flagstone patio outfitted with fire pits. All of the infrastructure at this site has an artistic flair. There is a steep slope to access the river, at which point the water is relatively deep.

Potential Improvements

The park's pathway to the water should be improved to make access easier. The site should also have vault toilets and a water bottle filler. The forested area within the park would also be conducive to camping.



China Township Park at King Rd



SITE 33 – DNR ACCESS SOUTH CHANNEL DRIVE SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

DNR Access South Channel Dr I



Site Description

This site on the Krispin Blueway water trail can be found on South Channel Drive on Harsens Island. This is a very simple launch site with gravel parking. This location often experiences flooding due to its low elevation.

Potential Improvements

Potential improvements for this access site should include potable water, lighting, restrooms, picnic tables and a shelter.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



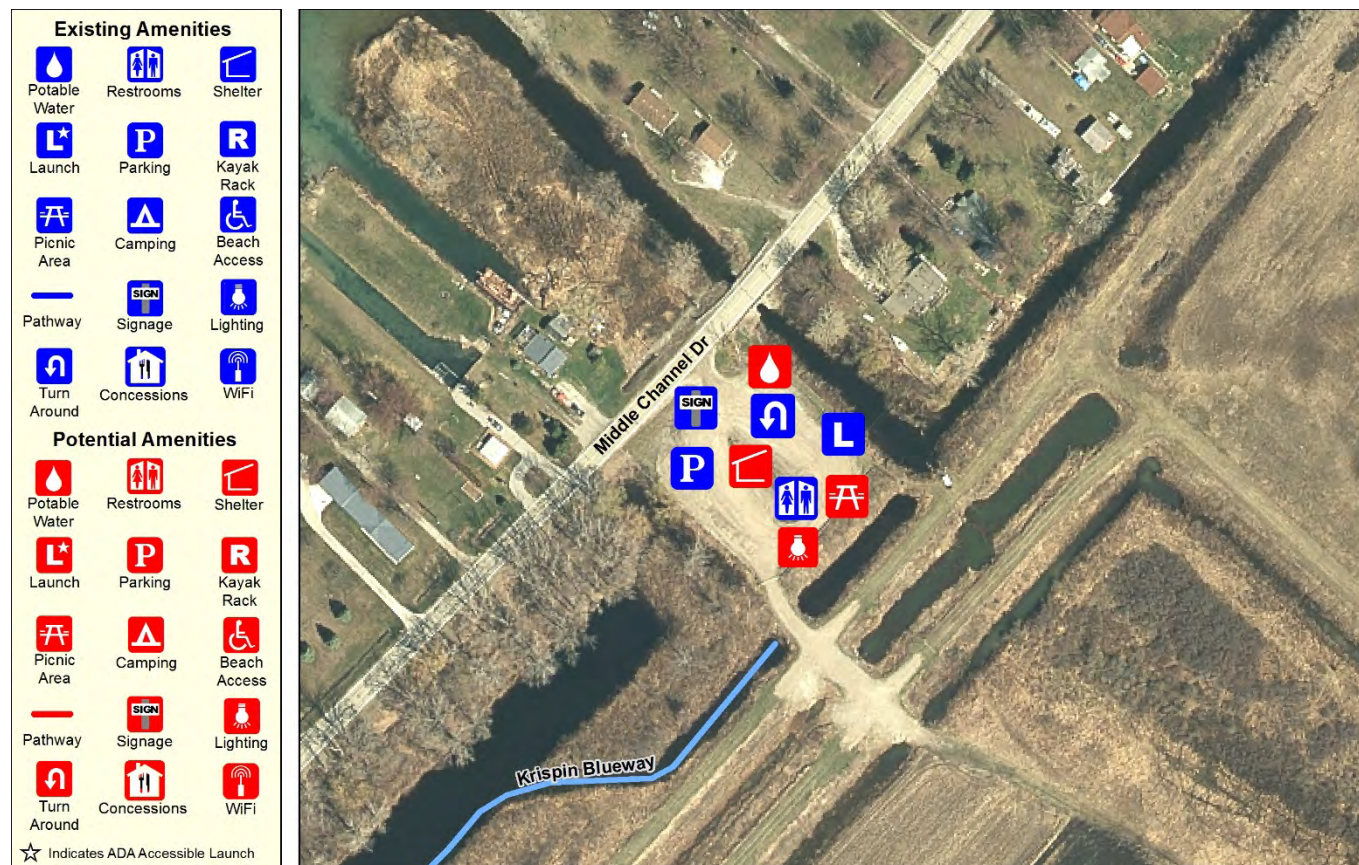
SITE 34 – DNR ACCESS AMES SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

This access point is located on the northwest side of Harsens Island and connects to both the Middle Channel of the St. Clair River and the Krispin Blueway. The Middle Channel can be reached by launching at the ramp and paddling under the bridge. The Krispin Blueway can be accessed from the site's southern edge. This is a basic launch site with very few amenities aside from restrooms and gravel parking. Due to its low elevation, this site experiences periodic flooding.

Potential Improvements

This site should be improved by adding potable water, a shelter, picnic tables and lighting.



DNR Access Ames



East China Township Park




SITE 35 – EAST CHINA TOWNSHIP PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This 80-acre park features trails, ball fields, a dog park and tennis courts. There is also playground equipment, pavilions and picnic areas. This park connects to the Belle River. The Bridge to Bay Trail also cuts through the park.

Potential Improvements

The access to the Belle River needs to be greatly improved. Several trees need to be removed and the steep bank should be cut down for kayaks to access the water. For trail users, the site should have a water bottle filler, and this would also be an ideal location for camping sites.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Potable Water |  Restrooms |  Shelter |
|  Launch |  Parking |  Kayak Rack |
|  Picnic Area |  Camping |  Beach Access |
|  Pathway |  Signage |  Lighting |
|  Turn Around |  Concessions |  WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  Potable Water |  Restrooms |  Shelter |
|  Launch |  Parking |  Kayak Rack |
|  Picnic Area |  Camping |  Beach Access |
|  Pathway |  Signage |  Lighting |
|  Turn Around |  Concessions |  WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 36 – SPRINGBORN ROAD ACCESS

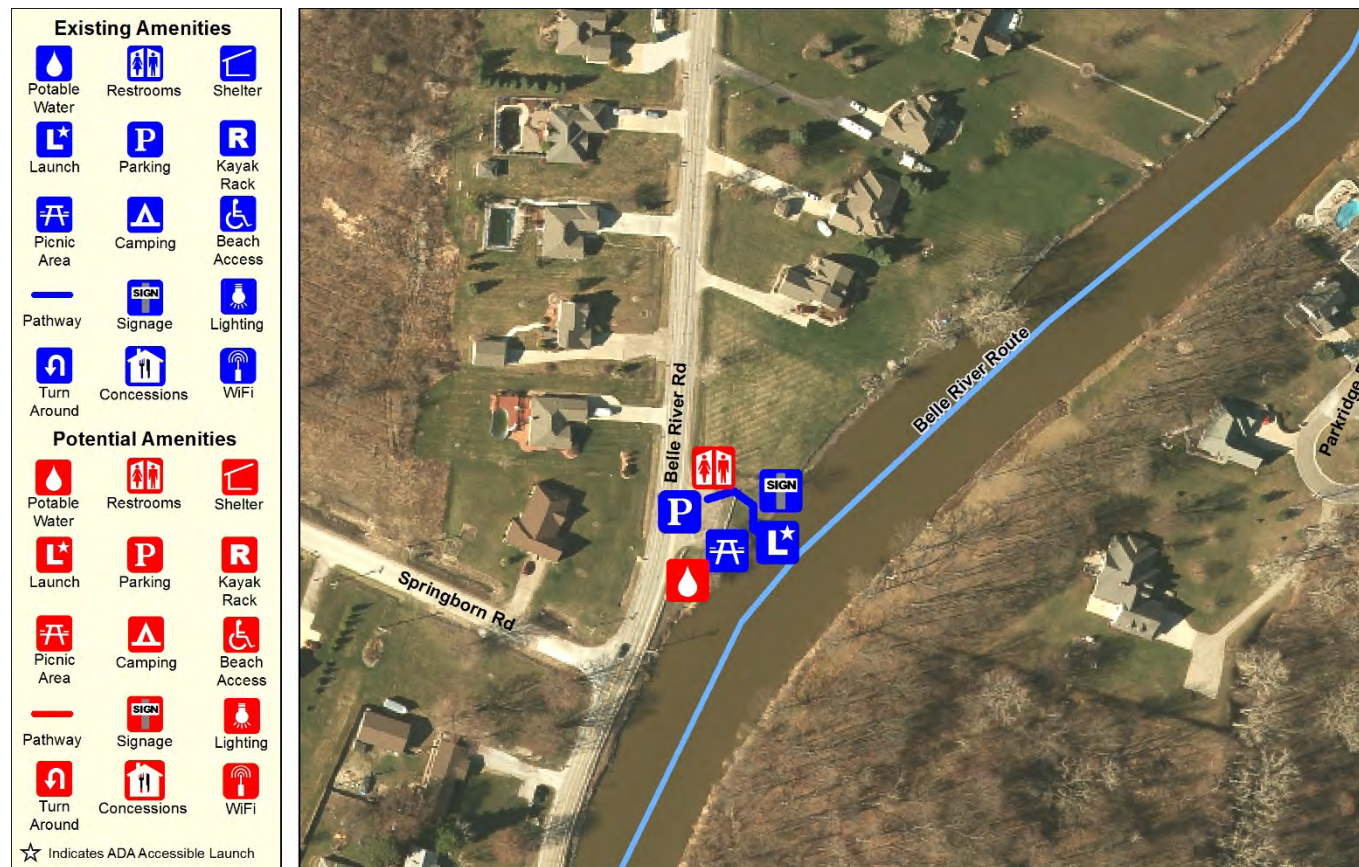
SECONDARY ACCESS SITE

Site Description

This is a relatively new access site along the Belle River, developed in 2016 by East China Township. Though a small parcel of land, the site features many quality amenities. The newly implemented launch is ADA accessible and has a picnic table and parking.

Potential Improvements

This site's improvements should include a restroom, a kayak storage rack and a water bottle filler. The park could also be improved with lighting and a grill.



Springborn Road Access



SITE 37 – FRED MEISELBACH PARK TRAILHEAD

Fred Meiselbach Park |



Site Description

This Pine River access point can be found across the road from the Township of St. Clair Hall. The parking lot has a basketball hoop and is close to a park with a restroom, pavilion, playscape and ball field. To reach the water from the parking lot, there is a small trail on a semi-steep slope.

Potential Improvements

The path to the river should be better defined and include signage. The restroom, which is currently portable, could also be upgraded to something permanent. Benches near the water should be added as well as potable water. Finally, the access point needs some cleaning up as there are many dead logs under the bridge.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



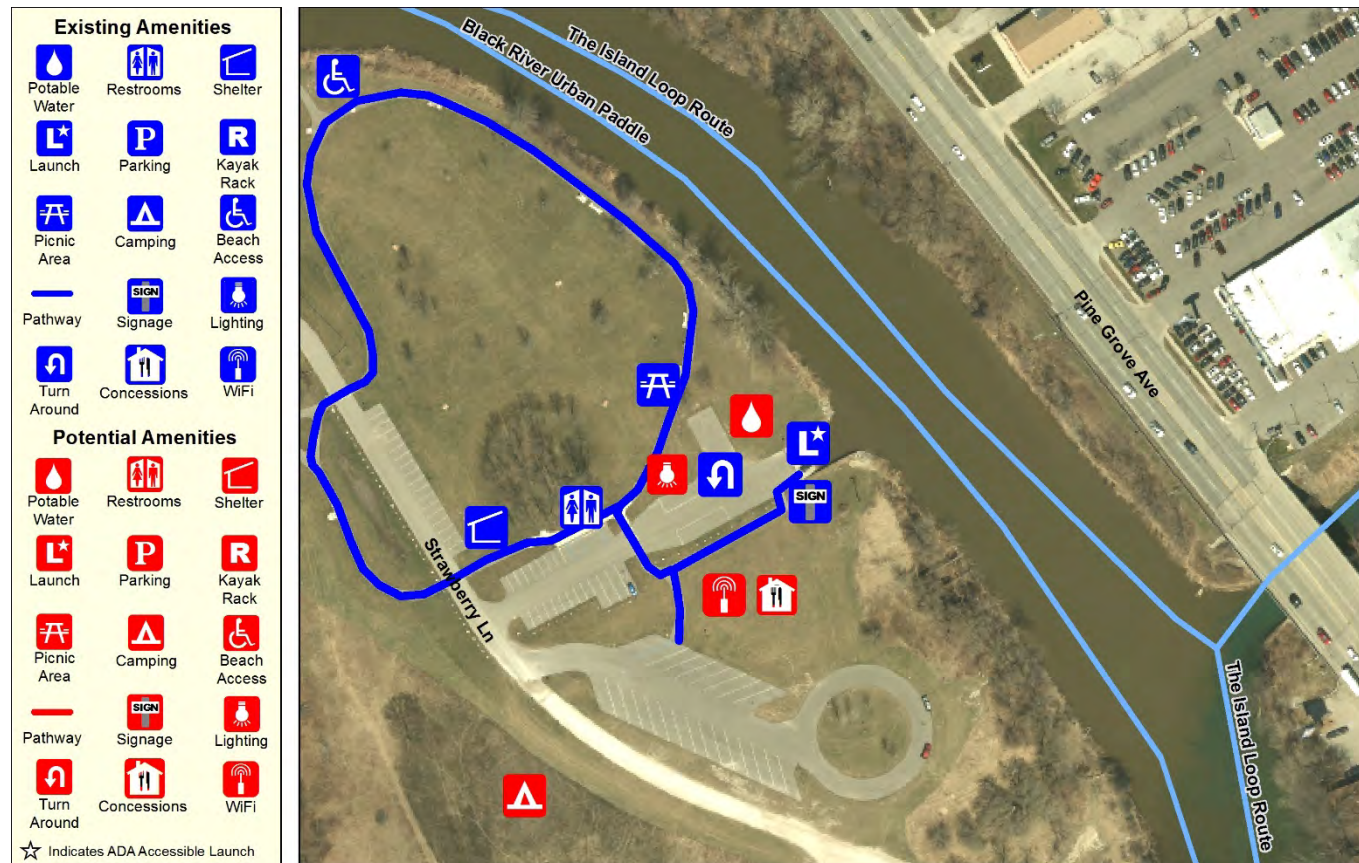
SITE 38 – BAKERS FIELD TRAILHEAD

Site Description

This newly developed 61-acre park in Port Huron Township acts as a trailhead for two Blueways of St. Clair water trails: the Island Loop Route and the Black River Urban Paddle. The park features an ADA kayak launch and an ADA fishing pier. Visitors can also find benches, picnic tables, trash cans, a bike rack and a boat ramp. The site features plenty of parking and includes a walking path.

Potential Improvements

To expand on this site's already diverse range of uses and amenities, it should also include camping and concessions. In addition, potential improvements should include potable water, lighting and Wi-Fi connectivity.



Bakers Field



SITE 39 – COLUMBUS COUNTY PARK TRAILHEAD

Columbus County Park



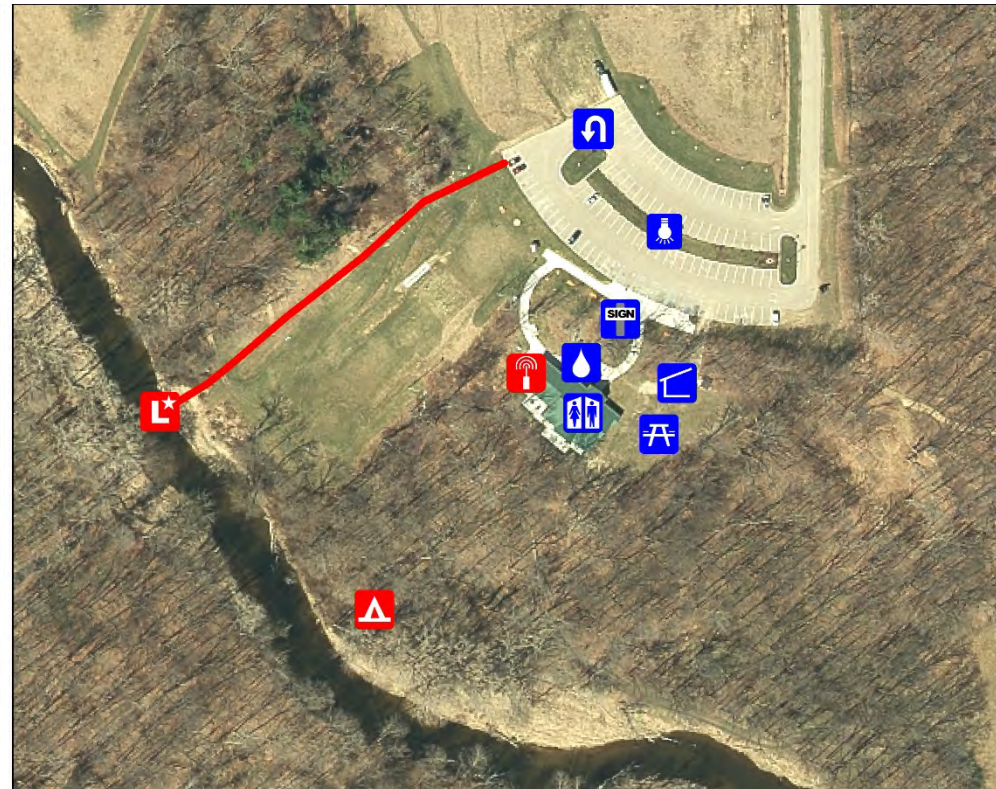
Site Description

This beautiful park consists of 411 acres of trails, woods and fields and 7,420 feet of Belle River frontage. There is a new lodge with meeting rooms and bathrooms, and several sheltered outdoor spaces. A lighted sledding hill completes this expansive park. A rustic two-mile looped trail is located on the north side of the Belle River and consists of mowed grass, farm lanes and two-track. On the south side of Belle River, a rustic nature trail has been added that runs along the scenic Belle River through wetlands and maple forest. Be aware that hunting is allowed in this park during firearm deer season in the fall.

Potential Improvements

At the time of this writing, there is no path that leads directly from the parking lot to the Belle River. One potential route for a trail to the water's edge could start from the parking lot's west side following along the northwest side of the sledding hill. This access point should also feature an ADA accessible kayak launch and a kayak slide. In addition, the large amount of undeveloped forest land at this county park makes it a desirable location for camp sites. Finally, the park could include Wi-Fi connectivity.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
| | | |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
| | | |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
| | | |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
| | | |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
| | | |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 40 – 7TH STREET BRIDGE ACCESS TRAILHEAD

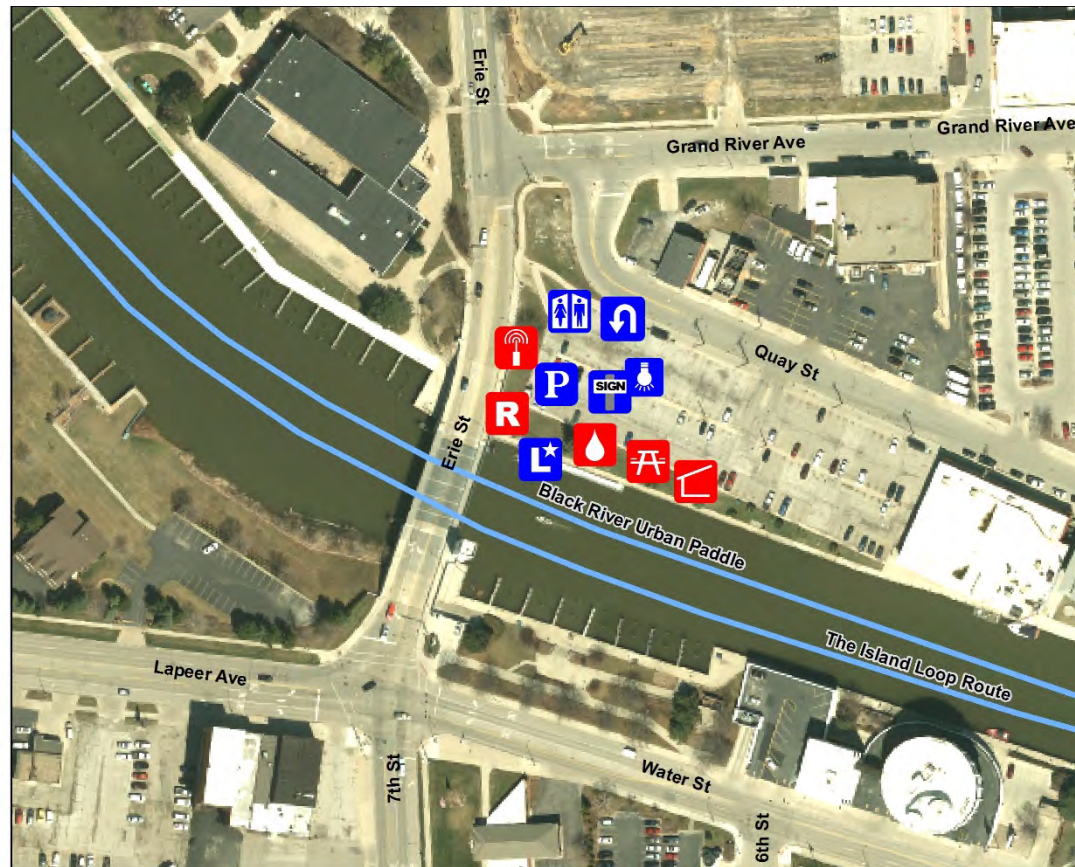
Site Description

Located near many of Port Huron's restaurants and cultural amenities, this launch site features a universally accessible kayak launch as well as kayak and paddleboard rentals. This centrally located site is also outfitted with paved parking, informational signage, a bike rack and boat slips. The 7th Street Bridge Access is located on the Black River Urban Paddle and the Island Loop Route.

Potential Improvements

Future improvements for this trailhead should include a kayak rack, potable water and Wi-Fi connectivity. Trail users may also enjoy the addition of picnic tables and a shelter.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ☆ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



7th St Bridge Access



SITE 41 – MARINE CITY DREDGE CUT TRAILHEAD

Marine City Dredge Cut



Site Description

Located between the City of Algonac and Algonac State Park, this is the site of future improvements and access to the St. Clair River from this Marine City drain. The Bridge to Bay Trail crosses the Marine City Dredge Cut at this location. At the time of this writing, the site sits on three parcels of undeveloped land. There are plans for this to be a park with an ADA accessible kayak launch.

Potential Improvements

This site has enough land to become a future trailhead with an attached park. To accommodate visitors, parking will have to be added. To help promote water trail usage, this location should also include picnic tables, restrooms, lighting, potable water, Wi-Fi connectivity and shelters.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



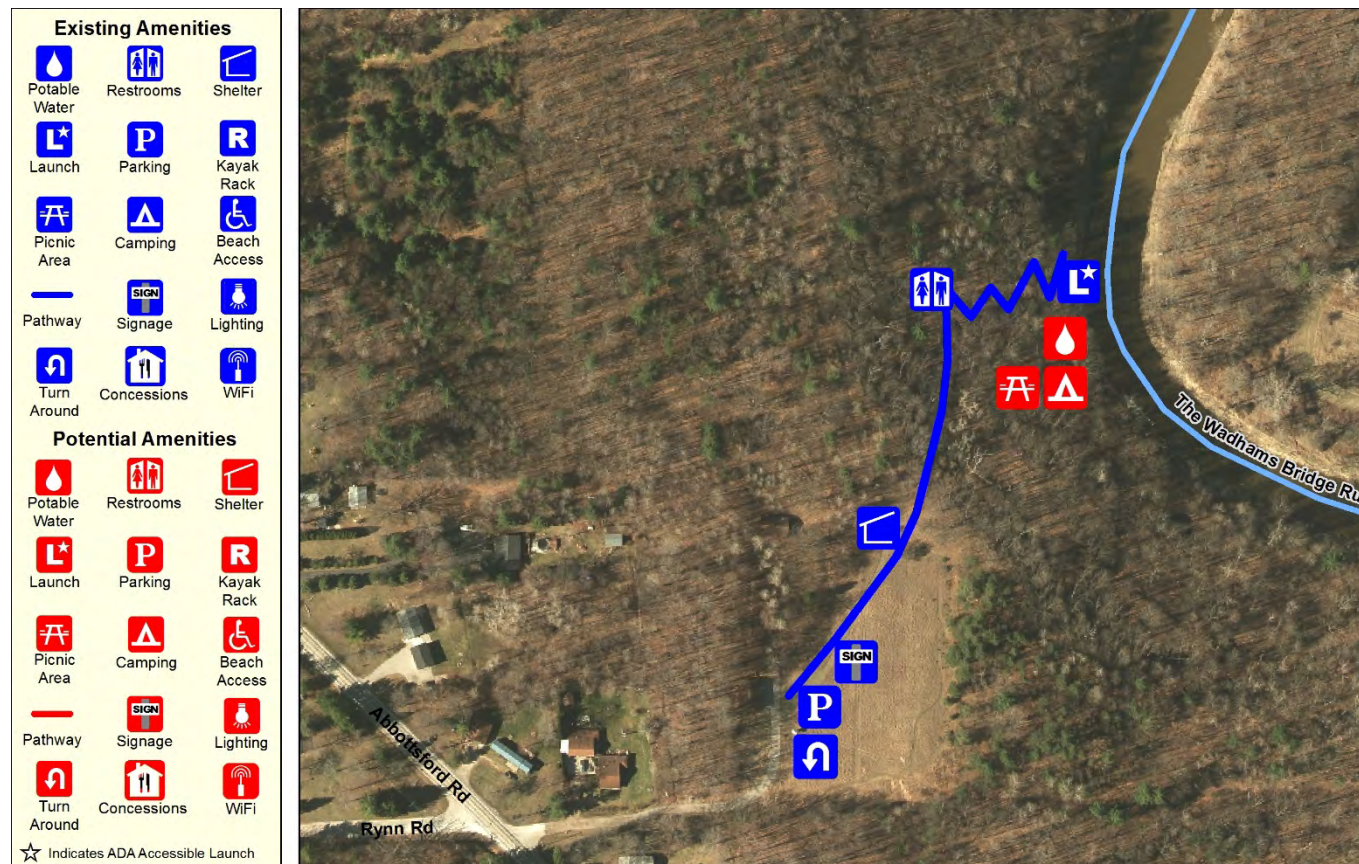
SITE 42 – WOODSONG PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

Located north of I-69 in Clyde Township, this 33-acre park features 2,800 feet of shoreline along the Black River. A wooded, steep path of switchbacks leads down to an ADA accessible launch site. If this site is used for put-in or take-out, it is highly recommended that trail users have kayak wheels. The path leading to the river from the parking lot has restrooms and a shelter. This is a great spot for resting along the Wadhams Bridge Run.

Potential Improvements

Future plans for this site include the opportunity for group camping as well as improvements to the portion of the trail with switchbacks. This access point would also benefit from picnic tables, potable water and a kayak slide.



Woodsong Park



SITE 43 – 40TH STREET POND TRAILHEAD

40th Street Pond




Site Description

This access site is located just east of I-69 in Port Huron Township. Trail users can find 40th Street heading west along Lapeer Road from Port Huron. The site features two ADA fishing piers on a spring-fed 45-acre lake. Amenities include a pavilion, six gazebos, restrooms and parking. The goal for the 65-acre park is to leave it in its most natural state. There is a small woodlot near the lake where people enjoy birdwatching.

Potential Improvements

Future plans for the park include a nature trail around the lake. Other potential improvements should include lighting and potable water.

| Existing Amenities | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| Potential Amenities | | |
|  |  |  |
| Potable Water | Restrooms | Shelter |
|  |  |  |
| Launch | Parking | Kayak Rack |
|  |  |  |
| Picnic Area | Camping | Beach Access |
|  |  |  |
| Pathway | Signage | Lighting |
|  |  |  |
| Turn Around | Concessions | WiFi |
| ★ Indicates ADA Accessible Launch | | |



SITE 44 – COTTRELLVILLE TOWNSHIP PARK TRAILHEAD

Site Description

Located north of Algonac State Park off of M-29, this water trail launch area is maintained as a natural habitat park on the St. Clair River. This park has a naturalized shoreline, a flat area to launch kayaks and canoes, a beach at the river's edge, and a variety of aquatic habitats and native plant species.

Potential Improvements

At the time of this writing, the park is under development. When completed, this access point should have a path to the water's edge, a restroom, a shelter and potable water. There also needs to be parking with a turn-around and accompanying signage. The southern end of the park would be a good location for an ADA kayak launch, though it would have to be engineered to be protected from the swift current of the St. Clair River.



Cottrellville Township Park



Map 3.1 – Universally Accessible Launch Locations



MAINTENANCE

For the Blueways system of water trails to continue to be successful, a reliable and routine maintenance system must be established. Given the multi-jurisdictional scope of the water trails, the condition of the *collective* infrastructure of the water trails (e.g., launch sites, amenities, signage) will serve as a public measure of the overall quality of the system of water trails. For example, a broken sign and litter at an access site in Marine City may discourage paddlers from paddling the water trail on the Pine River. Ultimately, each management entity (e.g., municipality, county, DNR) will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and improvements (e.g., launch, parking area, trash receptacle, signs, etc.) at each access site under its purview. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each management entity that ensures maintenance is addressed and information on each site is accurate. Periodic maintenance needs will be monitored through collaboration between the managing entities and the Metropolitan Planning Commission. If maintenance needs persist and/or are not addressed, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, with concurrence from the site owner, may assist with specific strategies or actions.

Level of Maintenance Standards

The following maintenance standards represent the optimal conditions for access sites and signs.

Parking. Parking lots should represent the carrying capacity of the particular characteristics (both historic and projected level of use) of the access site. Parking lots at trailheads should have barrier-free features (e.g., accessible space, barrier-free routes, etc.), resilient surface material or pavement (impervious is preferred), positive directional grading away from the river to natural vegetation or grass strips for infiltration, and proper and well-maintained signage. For gravel parking lots, provide periodic grading to maintain an even surface.

Restroom Facilities. Permanent restroom facilities must pass public health requirements for public use. They must also be barrier free. Routine cleaning is the greatest challenge for restrooms and is an essential responsibility. Faucets and hand dryers should be in working condition (no leaks) and toilets should be flushable. Restrooms should be well-stocked with toilet paper, soap and paper towel.

Porta-Johns. The device supplier should have a routine maintenance schedule consistent with the level of use. A porta-john is best located on a firm and level surface to avoid rutting and tilting from repeat servicing. A porta-john should be well-stocked with toilet paper, hand-sanitizer and odor strips. Porta-johns are the most frequent target for misbehavior and vandalism. Therefore, it will be important to remove graffiti and fix broken equipment (e.g., toilet seat, door lock) in a timely manner. Ideally, porta-johns should have barrier-free dimensions and be located on a barrier-free pathway.

Trash Receptacles. Trash is a common byproduct of trail users who often picnic before and after paddling outings. Access sites should have at least one routinely serviced trash container. An upgrade to this standard would be to provide a recycling container. Site maintenance for litter should be as frequent as all park maintenance activity within the jurisdiction. The presence of litter, when not addressed, sets a low-expectation standard for trail users, encourages disregard for other aspects of site care, and is an affront to the “Leave No Trace” ethic.

Picnic Facilities, Pavilions and Benches. These experience-enhancement site improvements are encouraged along with the obligation to maintain these facilities in good condition and with routine cleaning. At least one bench pad and picnic table should be barrier free.

Vegetation. The plants, trees and grasses at some access sites will require routine maintenance activity, whether it is mowing, pruning, invasive species management, or other vegetative needs for a particular site. Native plantings and grasses are encouraged as demonstrations to the public of how natural waterfront vegetation can be planted and maintained.

Signs and Markers. While sign components, colors and placement relative to the sun are design considerations that may alleviate premature maintenance, signs do age over time. A tired, worn, vandalized or illegible sign is a must-replace item for maintenance providers.

Launch Ramps and Platforms. Launch ramps should be designed, built and maintained at an acceptable grade of 8% or less. Any hard surface should include anti-slip features for secure footing while manipulating the water craft. The ramp should be cleared of debris through routine maintenance and especially after flooding, when slippery and defacing silt deposits can hinder its use. Wood platforms should also be cleared of debris through routine maintenance. Any loose or rotting board should be replaced in a timely manner.

Accessible Launches. Accessible launches should be well connected to barrier-free routes, parking and other access site features. These launches should also be cleared of debris and bird droppings through routine maintenance and especially after flooding. Accessible launches can be removed in the offseason to reduce damage. Signs on or near the accessible launch should indicate that the launch is restricted for paddlers and not intended as a swim or sunbathing platform.

Kayak Racks and Lockers. These experience-enhancement site improvements are encouraged along with the obligation to maintain these facilities in good condition and with routine cleaning. Doors and locks should also be routinely inspected to be sure they are in proper working order.

Water-Bottle Filling Stations. Water-bottle filling stations should be in working order, with a consistent flow of water during the summer months. The bowl should be cleaned of debris and trash regularly.

OBSTRUCTIONS

There are only a handful of obstructions along the 17 water trails throughout St. Clair County, making the Blueways one of the most accessible system of water trails in Michigan.

The Taintor Gate

The Taintor Gate is a large radial arm floodgate located near the mouth of the Black River that prevents sand and silt from filling up the canal during times when there is a strong north-northeast wind. The Metropolitan Planning Commission is working with the City of Port Huron to develop a system to alert paddlers and boaters when the gate closes or opens. At this time, there is no legal portage around the gate. However, the gate is rarely closed.

| The Taintor Gate



The Ford Dam

The Ford Dam is located along the Black River Experience water trail, and is not passable by water. There are several signs that alert paddlers to portage around the dam. The portage is provided by private property owners who have graciously allowed paddlers to use their property. Local officials are working on securing funding to conduct an engineering feasibility study that would examine the possible removal of the dam in the future.

The Krispin Blueway

As previously mentioned, the Krispin Blueway navigates through a series of dykes and canals where paddlers will need to portage. In addition, there is a bridge that paddlers must pass under. During times of high water, paddlers are forced to portage around the bridge.

BRIDGES

Bridges

There are 24 bridges along the Blueways system of water trails.

There are 24 bridges over the Blueways system of water trails. The height, use and materials of the 24 bridges varies significantly. For example, bridges over highways provide a great deal of clearance for paddlers. Smaller bridges on less-traveled roads may be lower, but still provide paddlers with ample clearance. These bridges can be useful landmarks for navigation and could be utilized for future wayfinding signs. Map 3.2 illustrates the location of each bridge.

Map 3.2 – Bridges



FUTURE WATER TRAILS

Extensions

The Metropolitan Planning Commission has identified the possibility of extending two water trails, the Belle River Route and the Pine River Paddle. However, these extensions would require significant removal and/or maintenance of woody debris to allow paddlers safe passage.

Belle River Route. The Belle River Route extension would begin at China Township Park and traverse 24.4 miles east to Columbus County Park. Along the way, paddlers could take a respite or turn around at the new park in Casco Township. Columbus County Park has a true “up north” feel, with rolling hills, forested trails and prairie meadows. The Belle River peacefully meanders through the entire park. The Metropolitan Planning Commission will have to work with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Department to examine and identify the location best suited for an access site. A preliminary assessment of the park demonstrated the need for a kayak slide due to the long distance and the steep elevation change between the parking lot and the water’s edge.

Pine River Paddle. The Pine River Paddle extension would begin at Turtle Beach and traverse 5.1 miles north to Fred Meiselbach Park. The Metropolitan Planning Commission will have to work with the St. Clair Township to examine and identify the location best suited for an access site.

New Water Trails

The Metropolitan Planning Commission has also identified opportunities to dedicate additional water trails within St. Clair County. The timing of such dedications will be predicated on available resources, access, and formal agreements with the access-site owners.

Swan Creek. Swan Creek is located on the north end of Lake St. Clair in Ira Township. The proposed water trail would begin at the DNR boat launch in Fair Haven and traverse north under Dixie Highway approximately 3.3 miles to Short Cut Road and then back again.

Mill Creek. Mill Creek is a river spur that connects to the Black River in Clyde Township. The proposed water trail would begin at Beard Road. A preferred distance for the water trail has not yet been determined. However, there may be a future access point at Kilgore Road.

Marine City Dredge Cut Paddle. The proposed Marine City Dredge Cut Paddle would begin at the *Bridge-to-Bay* trailhead at the Marine City Dredge Cut and traverse 2.5 miles to Roberts Road and back. Paddlers could also continue south to explore the St. Clair River.

Jeddo Road Water Trail. The Jeddo Road water trail would be located along the northern reaches of the Black River. The proposed water trail would begin at Jeddo Road and traverse 2.9 miles down the Black River through the Port Huron State Game Area and terminate at Comstock Road.

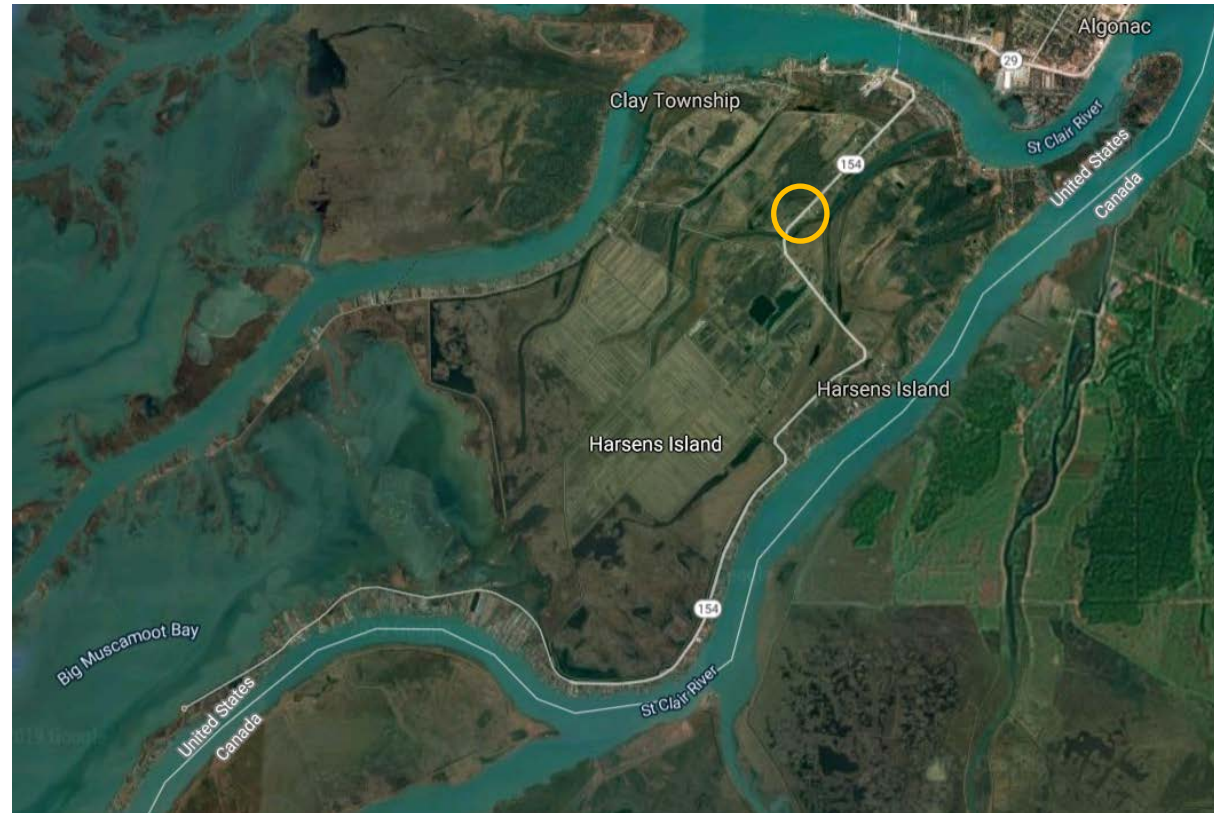
Map 3.3 illustrates the location of each proposed trail extension and new water trail.

Columbus County Park

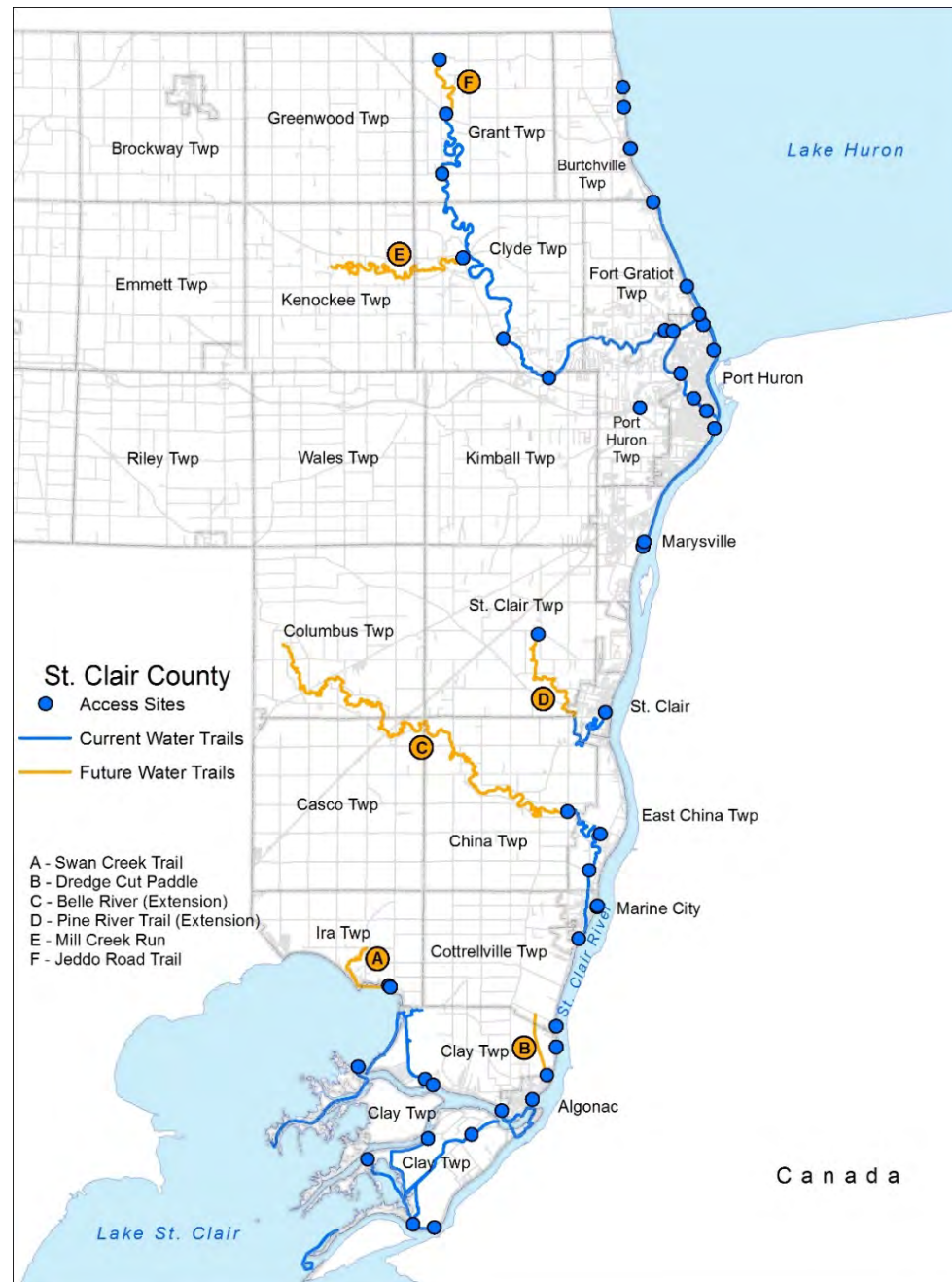


FUTURE ACCESS SITES

At this time, there is only one additional access site that is being planned for future development. The proposed access site would support the Krispin Blueway. The access site would be located in a new nine-acre park on Harsens Island. The property was recently part of a \$3.8 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) habitat restoration project funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Plans for the park include a universally accessible kayak launch, parking, bathrooms and a walking trail. The new access site would provide paddlers with access to both the North Channel of the St. Clair River, Harsens Island Wildlife Refuge and Muscamoot Bay.



Map 3.3 Future Trail Extension and Development





Dedication of the Krispin Blueway (2017)

RECOMMENDATIONS – MARKETING

Trail Branding and Identity

As part of the strategic planning process, the existing Blueways of St. Clair logo was revised. The original logo worked to create a strong brand identity for the Blueways, helping to establish the Blueways as a legitimate system of trails while developing a positive, attractive image that the public can easily recognize and embrace. The new logo colorfully illustrates the Island Loop Route as it passes under the Bluewater Bridge and should continue to build and solidify the Blueways brand. The new logo was designed to function in both color and grayscale to maximize its applicability. Moving forward, the new logo should be placed on all signage along the system of trails as well as any online and print marketing materials (e.g., Blueways of St. Clair Brochure and Passport).

As previously mentioned, the Island Loop Water Route was the first water trail in Michigan and one of only 22 in the nation to receive National Water Trail Designation from the National Park Service. Given the select nature of the designation, the Blueways should also place the National Water Trail logo on signs along the Island Loop Water Route and on any online and print marketing materials that feature the Blueways and the Island Loop Water Route.

New Blueways of St. Clair Logo



Previous Blueways of St. Clair Logo



National Water Trail Logo



Merchandise

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to purchase merchandise with the Blueways of St. Clair logo for promotional giveaways and events.



Blueways Trail Town Passport Book

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should review the use and success of the new passport book to determine if it should be continued or reproduced.



Trail Media

Trail Map and Guide

One of the most critical steps in establishing a water trail is to develop materials that identify the Routes, features and access sites of the water trail. In many instances, unlike a land trail, a water trail does not have a singular Route one can easily follow. Navigating a water trail requires a map to provide the paddler with information about the waterway and its system of access sites. This is especially important for the Blueways of St. Clair, as several of the water trails have multiple access sites, and a handful of water trails (in the St. Clair Flats area) navigate around and/or through a network of islands. A water trail map can be especially critical during times of high water, when notable landmarks and features may be under water.

In addition to being helpful while on the water, a trail guide can provide paddlers with useful information about the water trails prior to getting on the water (e.g., safety tips, emergency contacts, gear recommendations, obstacles to avoid). This type of information can help reduce risky behavior, dangerous conflicts and emergency responses. A water trail guide can also provide interesting information about the environmental, historical and cultural amenities of each community along the water trail and throughout the region.

Under a previous grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission worked with LIAA to develop a comprehensive Blueways of St. Clair Brochure — a foldable map and guide for the Blueways system of water trails (see next page). The brochure includes a map and description of each water trail and the locations of access sites. In addition, the brochure includes information about the coastal waterways of St. Clair County, safe paddling tips, paddling etiquette, emergency contacts, and leave-no-trace principles. In addition, the brochure includes information about greenways throughout St. Clair County, and information (and links) to the Blueways of St. Clair website.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should review and update the brochure every year to include new trails (or trail extensions), new pictures, or other important information related to the system of water trails and its nearby communities. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should budget roughly \$1,500 annually to print the brochures and purchase other merchandise (e.g., stickers, shirts, cozies) with the Blueways logo. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to distribute the brochure to outlets and municipalities throughout southeast Michigan as well as to venues throughout Michigan, including the MDOT welcome centers.

In 2019, the Metropolitan Planning Commission developed a “Blueways Trail Town Passport Book” designed to encourage paddling on specific water trails and provide greater awareness for local businesses in several communities along the water trails. The Passport Book was part of a larger marketing and awareness pilot program designed to bring greater awareness to the Blueways of St. Clair and the communities that support it. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should review the use and success of the Passport Book in the fall of 2020 to determine if it should be continued and/or reproduced.

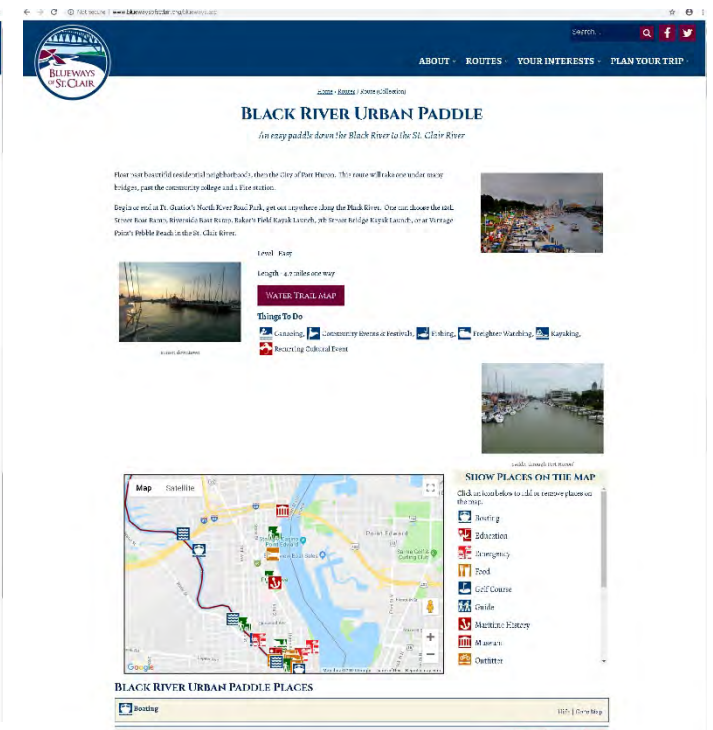
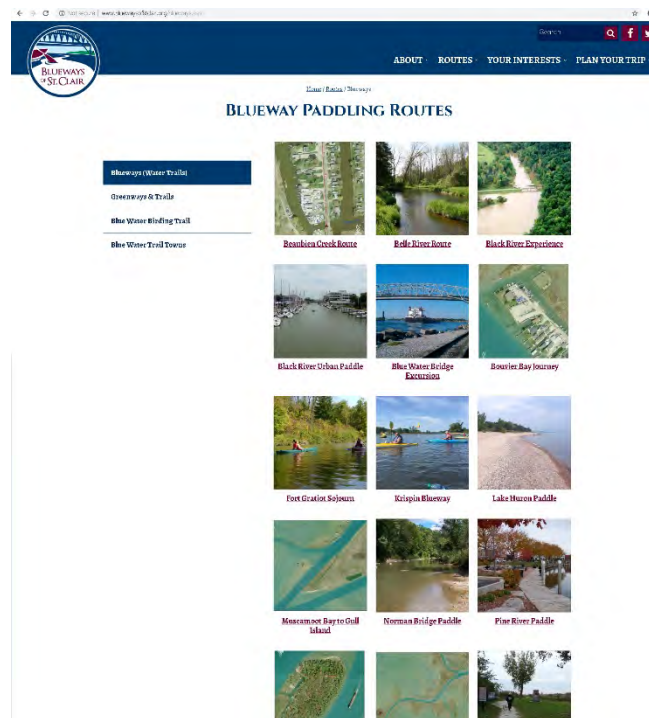


Blueways of St. Clair Website

Under a previous grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission worked with LIAA to develop a comprehensive Blueways of St. Clair website. The website features an interactive map with a description of each water trail and the location of each access site. In addition, the website includes information about paddling etiquette, safety tips, information about news and events, frequently asked questions, trail towns, and places to eat, shop and sleep. The website also features an interactive “Plan Your Trip” page that allows paddlers to build a unique trip itinerary. In addition, the website includes a link to SEMCOG’s *Michigan Trail Explorer*, which provides a 360-degree virtual tour of each Blueway. The website was designed to be “dynamic” in that the layout automatically adjusts to be viewed on multiple digital media platforms (e.g., computer, smartphone, tablet). The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to update the website, being sure to add to the “news” section regularly and adding pictures (especially to the water trail pages without pictures) and videos where appropriate.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to work with LIAA to update the Blueways of St. Clair website and the Blueways of St. Clair page of the Michigan Water Trails website at www.michiganwatertrails.org. In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to work with SEMCOG to get any new water trail (or trail extension) cataloged for the Michigan Trail Explorer.

Blueways of St. Clair Website



Social Media

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to use the Blueways Facebook page to disseminate information about future events and programs, trail conditions, trail development, large accomplishments, interesting trail features and trail services.

Public and Media Engagement

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to have a table and/or make presentations at recreation, river and/or watershed conferences and symposiums, such as the Quiet Water Symposium, Michigan Trails Summit, and the Mid-American Trails and Greenways Conference. In addition, wherever possible, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should present at local and regional grant funding workshops.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should regularly develop and submit articles about the water trails to local, regional and state media outlets, including the Times Herald, Detroit Free Press and Detroit News, as well as national outdoor adventure and paddling media outlets. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should also continue to feature an advertisement for the Blueways of St. Clair in the Michigan Trails Magazine.

Public Engagement

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to place an advertisement in the Michigan Trails Magazine.



The Metropolitan Planning Commission should also work with at least one of the regional broadcast news outlets to have a live shot of the Island Loop Route as the lead feed of their weather reports. The Metropolitan Planning Commission could ask the meteorologist to include the conditions along the Island Loop Trail in their opening report. For example, "It's a beautiful 70 degrees and sunny on the National Island Loop Trail."

In an effort to engage the larger St. Clair County and southeast Michigan community, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should make continual efforts to speak at local civic and community service meetings and have a presence at regional/community events and festivals. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should also consider hosting a speaker's series about the water trails or the sport of paddling. These presentations may be provided by staff members, public safety officers and/or paddlesport athletes.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should hire a professional photographer to take pictures of the water trails and its associated features and amenities. The photographer should capture pictures of the unique natural and cultural

Public Engagement

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to have a both at the Quiet Water Symposium and other conferences to promote the Blueways of St. Clair.



Media Engagement

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should continue to submit articles about the Blueways to local, regional, state and national media outlets. (see page below from article in Outside Magazine).



Access Site Signs

The Metropolitan Planning Commission should include the new Blueways of St. Clair logo on all future access site signs.



Wayfinding Signs

Wayfinding signs can help direct visitors to access sites.



Interpretive Signs

Interpretive signs can highlight specific water trails as well as unique natural, historical and cultural features along the water trail.



aspects of the water trails, animals along the water, and water trail amenities (e.g., launch signs, accessible launches, interpretive signs, etc.). In addition, the photographer should capture several images of people paddling on the water trails and interacting with their associated features and amenities (e.g., paddlers under the Bluewater Bridge or watching a passing freighter).

The collection of photos should include images of people of all ethnicities, ages and abilities. Any paddling event on the water trails should also be documented. Finally, the photographer should capture images of the water trails in different seasons and weather conditions. These images can be utilized in different formats on all the media outlets discussed above.

Trail Signage

Signs and markers are essential components of a water trail. The Blueways of St. Clair employs a distinctive 12" x 18" aluminum sign at access sites along each water trail. In the future, as access signs get replaced to due wear-and-tear or damage, they should include the new Blueways of St. Clair logo. In addition, a similar access site sign should be placed at each access site so that it is visible from the water. Depending on the size and layout of the access site, the sign could be placed on a large stable tree or stake so it's clearly visible from the water.

In addition to the access site signs, the Metropolitan Planning Commission should work with local jurisdictions to implement land-based wayfinding signs, which are meant to direct visitors (primarily by vehicle) to an access site. In communities that already have their own comprehensive wayfinding program, "water trail access site" could be placed on existing wayfinding signs. In communities without a wayfinding program, a small sign with the Blueways of St. Clair logo and an arrow could be placed in strategic locations to direct visitors to the access sites.

Kiosks

All the access sites identified as a "Trailhead" should include a kiosk. The kiosk sign standard should feature three 24" x 36" panels. Two panels should be devoted to information about the water trail(s), and one panel should be devoted to a specific Route (with a map). Each panel should be designed to allow for content and messaging that is unique to the specific access site. For example, the kiosk could include information about the unique environmental, cultural or historical features associated with a particular site or nearby sections of the water trail. In other instances, access sites closer to downtowns (e.g., Marine City) may also include information (and a map) about where to eat, sleep and shop within the downtown.

Interpretive Signs

There are a handful of interpretive signs at access sites (primary in Port Huron) that highlight unique natural, historical or cultural features of the distinct waterways and/or the surrounding communities. The Metropolitan Planning Commission, in cooperation with local landowners, municipalities and stakeholders, should continue to develop interpretive signs that can be viewed at access sites and by paddlers on the waterway(s).

Given the broad possibilities for where these water-based signs could be placed (e.g., in the water, on a bridge), the Leadership Committee and Metropolitan Planning Commission should implement a "pilot" interpretive sign program. The pilot program would allow the Metropolitan Planning Commission to work with local landowners and partners (e.g., MDOT, Coast Guard) to determine the best placement for these signs.

Leveraging the Water Trail for Economic Development

Water trails can have a significant impact on the local and regional economy. Water trails help attract and support tourism and new business opportunities. In addition, local residents often spend money on trail-related activities and businesses. The outdoor recreation industry is now recognized as one of the leading economic drivers in the United States, surpassed only by Pharmaceuticals and Motor Vehicles and Parts in terms of consumer spending. In addition, the impact of outdoor recreation reaches beyond the outdoor industry, directly fueling such major economic sectors as manufacturing, accommodations, food services and retail trade. According to a 2013 report from the Outdoor Industry Association, spending on outdoor recreation supports 6.1 million direct jobs and \$80 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues. The report states, “outdoor recreation is a growing and diverse economic super sector that is a vital cornerstone of successful communities that cannot be ignored.”

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, paddlesports — largely fueled by stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking — is one of the fastest-growing outdoor activities in the United States. A 2015 Special Report on Paddlesports prepared by the Association notes that more than 21.7 million people — or 7.4 percent of Americans — participated in paddling activities in 2014. Kayaking, which is the most popular form of paddling, had approximately 13 million participants in 2014. The Association also notes that the percentage of Americans participating in kayaking increased from 3 percent in 2010 to 4.4 percent in 2014.

Nationally, paddlers are evenly represented across age groups but tend to be more highly educated, with 49 percent of kayakers and 43 percent of canoeists achieving a college degree or higher. Furthermore, 55 percent of kayakers and 48 percent of canoeists have incomes greater than \$75,000. In 2014, kayakers across the United States took an average of eight trips during the year, contributing to 105 million trips overall.

In Michigan, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$18.7 billion in consumer spending annually. A comprehensive understanding of consumer spending on paddling in Michigan is still largely incomplete. However, *Michigan Blue Economy*, a report from the Michigan Economic Center and the Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute, noted that the small but growing canoe and kayak industry annually contributes roughly \$140 million to Michigan’s economy. In 2013, the Huron River Watershed Council commissioned an economic impact analysis for the Huron River Water Trail from the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development. The analysis found that the Huron River Water Trail generates more than \$49.5 million annually from current users, including \$33 million in Washtenaw County alone. The report also went on to note that studies show that the average paddler will travel roughly 79 miles for a day trip and 117 miles for an overnight trip.

Another report from the River Management Society summarizes notable findings on the economic impact of water trails in three different communities in the United States. According to this report, “towns that already have dining, lodging and rental services are more likely to see an increase in paddlesports tourism when they advertise and promote their water trail, as contrasted with communities that market their water trail, but do not provide standard amenities for paddlers.”

The River Management Society report also identifies the key “trail tourist” amenities that tend to successfully attract new audiences and generate economic activity:

Trail Towns

The City of Port Huron notes the Island Loop Route on a sign for the Thomas Edison Parkway.



- Access to the water
- Outfitters: rental and shuttling services
- Lodging: camping, bed and breakfasts
- Dining: restaurants, breweries, grocery stores
- Integrated recreation: hiking and biking paths
- Activities: museums, interpretive centers and other activities
- Proximity: neighboring towns with similar amenities

The report also noted that guides and outfitters, lodging and food are typically the top visitor expenditures for trail tourists. Therefore, communities with lodging, dining and outfitter/rental services already in place can expect to experience a more substantial economic benefit from a water trail.

Marketing of the water trail should incorporate the contemporary inclination of trail users to combine water-based recreation with land-based recreation. Therefore, it is essential to make physical connections between the water trail and regional land-based trails (where feasible) and to develop cross-promotional resources. It will also be important to be sure that there is at least one outfitter that can accommodate both water trail and land-based trail users.

As the link between water trails and economic development is better understood, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and neighboring municipalities should continue to look for ways to capitalize on the water trail to maximize trail-based tourism for future economic development opportunities — that is, to redefine each community as a “Trail Town.”

The Trail Town concept was first developed by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a coalition of seven different trail organizations along the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile multi-use trail running through Pennsylvania and Maryland. A Trail Town is an active, attractive and interesting place with accessible and comfortable spaces, hosting a variety of activities and promoting social interaction and a strong sense of place. A Trail Town should meet both the needs of the trail users and residents of the community. A Trail Town has the physical amenities that support trail users such as accessible launches. A Trail Town also has the business amenities to support day-trip users (e.g., kayak rental) and overnight trail users (e.g., campground, casual restaurant and laundromat). Using the basic elements of the Trail Town strategy, local officials and economic development officials can help create local and regional tools for water trail-based economic development.

Basic Elements of a Trail Town Strategy:

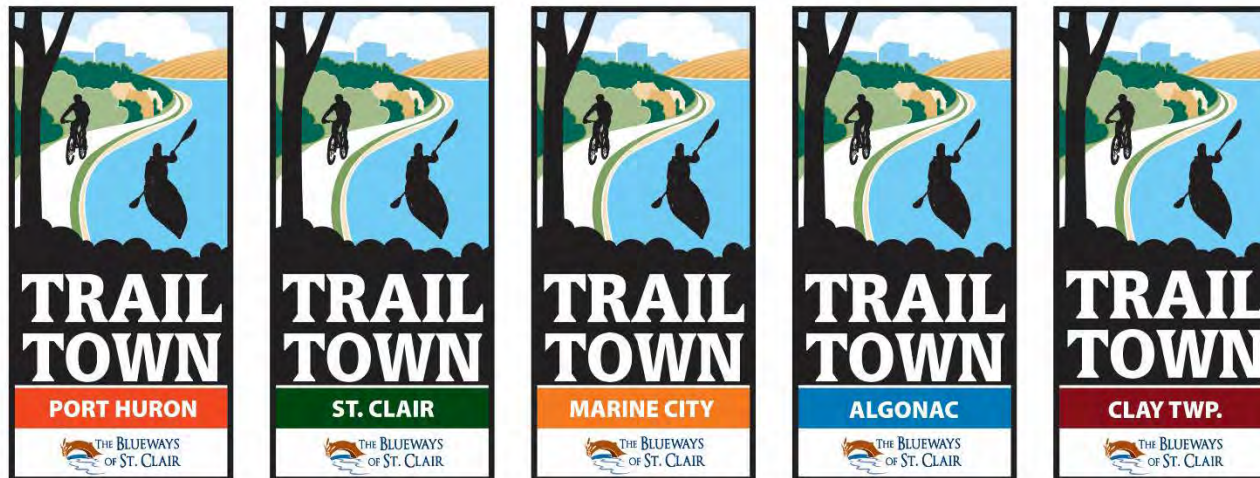
- Entice trail users to get off the trail and go into the town.
- Welcome trail users to your town by making information about the community readily available at the trail.
- Make strong and safe connections between your town and the trail.
- Educate local businesses on the economic benefits of meeting the needs of trail tourists.
- Recruit new businesses or expand existing ones to fill gaps in the goods or services that trail users need.
- Promote a “trail-friendly” character of the community.

Under a previous Michigan Coastal Zone Management grant, the Metropolitan Planning Commission worked to develop Trail Town Master Plans for five communities (Port Huron, St Clair, Marine City and Algonac/Clay Township) along its system of Blueways. [Note: That planning effort also included Trail Towns Master Plans in an additional five communities in Michigan's thumb.] Each master plan outlined a series of recommendations to create a successful Trail Town environment under four components: (1) Organizing; (2) Promotion; (3) Design; and (4) Economic Restructuring.

In addition to each plan, local Trail Town Committees were established to support the noted recommendations and perpetuate a unique Trail Town identity. Some local committees continue to meet and work on specific projects. Over the last two years, the Metropolitan Planning Commission has facilitated a handful of regional Trail Town meetings in which each community collectively discussed its progress and new opportunities for development and cooperation. The Blueways of St. Clair should continue to facilitate these meetings and explore other opportunities to further the Trail Town economic development strategy throughout the region. As previously noted, the Blueways of St. Clair Passport Book is one such effort.

Trail Towns

Under a previous planning effort, Trail Town logos were developed for five communities in St. Clair County.





Paddle and Pour Festival on the Black River Urban Paddle (Photo: The Times Herald)

RECOMMENDATIONS – ADMINISTRATION

Administration

The continual development of the Blueways of St. Clair will require significant investment in infrastructure, promotional materials, programming and personnel. As such, funding for the water trail will need to come from a variety of different sources. The Metropolitan Planning Commission and the participating jurisdictions will need to work together over the course of several years to determine the best way to secure and dedicate funding for the development and maintenance of the water trails and their associated amenities. This type of long-term, sustainable planning effort may require additional consultation with a program development consultant.

Through the strategic planning process, it was determined that one of the most critical components to the long-term success of the Blueways of St. Clair is to determine which organization(s) will adequately administer and fund programming and marketing efforts as well as the maintenance of access sites and signage. As previously mentioned in the *Introduction*, current efforts are led by staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission. As of this writing, staff is spending roughly 40 to 50 hours per month (about a quarter-time staff person) to manage all the components and activities of the Blueways (see right). The Metropolitan Planning Commission estimates that an additional 40 hours each month (totaling roughly a half-time employee) would be required to reach the Blueways' full potential and optimal levels of operation.

This Strategic Plan outlines additional capital improvements and programming efforts that will require additional administration, support and funding to be truly successful. The Metropolitan Planning Commission should begin thinking about how and if it can properly fund a position to effectively manage the Blueways. Other alternatives may include looking for formal partnerships and/or collaborations with other regional organizations like the *Friends of the St. Clair River* to take on the responsibilities of certain components of the Blueways.

In addition, over the next year, it will be important to implement and formalize the new Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee.

Current Blueways Administration Activities, 2019

- Update website and social media
- Plan and facilitate committee meetings
- Develop and update maps
- Develop and facilitate programs
- Create and make presentations at meetings, workshop and conferences
- Develop marketing materials and coordinate promotional partnerships
- Lend support to local groups and governments
- Apply for and administer grants
- Secure private funding
- Conduct fieldwork activities



The “Canal” section of the Island Loop Route

APPENDIX

Appendix A.

Blueways of St. Clair **Draft Memorandum of Understanding for Trail Governance and Management**

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter, “Agreement”) is made by and between the undersigned local governments, stakeholders and the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission regarding the development, maintenance, and promotion of the Blueways of St. Clair. (hereinafter, “blueways”).

1. Roles and Responsibilities

The development, maintenance, and promotion of the Blueways shall be done cooperatively by the Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation and local governments who own, lease, or operate land which touches the Blueways. Each shall have the following roles and responsibilities:

A. Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee

The Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee is a committee of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, which is chaired by St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission staff. The Committee consists of local units of government who own, lease, or operate land which touches the blueways, nonprofit corporations, businesses, paddlers and interested members of the public. The Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee is governed by committee rules and procedures approved by the Committee and the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission .

The Blueways of St. Clair Leadership Committee and all of its members have agreed to make decisions on the development, maintenance and management of the Blueways of St. Clair. More specifically, the responsibilities of the Committee are as follows:

- Support and implement the Blueways of St. Clair Strategic Plan and develop annual priorities.
- Collaborate on efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways system of water trails.
- Hold meetings quarterly, or more often if needed.
- Inform and educate water trail users regarding paddling etiquette, interaction with other river users (including large freighters) and adjacent property owners.
- Work with local jurisdictions and other access site owners to manage, maintain and improve trailheads and secondary access sites.
- Work with local governments to secure resolutions of support for the Blueways, trailheads and secondary access sites in their jurisdiction.
- Continually reassess and determine benchmarks and measurements of success.
- Establish standards for development and maintenance of access sites and amenities along each water trail.
- Assist in developing and implementing a comprehensive safety plan for the Blueways.
- Promote and market all the Blueways.
- Hold an annual paddling event.

B. St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission will coordinate the development, maintenance, and promotion of the Blueways of St. Clair with numerous public and private partners. More specifically, the responsibilities of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission are as follows:

- Convene quarterly (or more frequent) meetings of the St. Clair Blueways Leadership Committee.
- Develop progress reports regarding the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the development of the Blueways to be distributed to the Leadership Committee
- Serve as the primary liaison and contact between all Blueways stakeholders and partners.
- Serve as the primary spokesperson for the Blueways with media, the community and at state and regional events and conferences.
- Coordinate volunteer activities and public events along and associated with the Blueways.
- Coordinate collective efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways.
- Develop marketing and promotional materials for the Blueways.
- Continue to update and maintain the Blueways of St. Clair website.
- Coordinate physical improvements (e.g., launches, signage) at access sites with local jurisdictions throughout the Blueways.
- Develop maps and other important information for public distribution.
- Assist the Leadership Committee in securing resolutions of support for the water trail and access sites from participating jurisdictions.
- Provide final approval of relevant matters, based on recommendations of the Leadership Committee.

C. Local Governments

The local governments that own, lease, or operate land that touches the Blueways of St. Clair agree to assist in the development of the Blueways within its jurisdiction. In addition, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation agree to assist in the development of the Blueways throughout St. Clair County. More specifically, the responsibilities of the local governments are as follows:

- Maintain and develop access sites.
- Install and maintain signage at access sites.
- Secure resolutions of support for the Blueways and access sites.
- Collaborate on efforts to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the development and maintenance of the Blueways.
- Appoint a member to the Leadership Committee.
- Coordinate and collaborate on issues and events with the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

2. Term

This Agreement will be regarded as in effect from the date upon which all parties sign this Agreement until it is modified or terminated.

3. Withdrawals and Additions

Any party to this Agreement may withdraw from the Agreement at any time by providing written notice to the facilitator of the Leadership Committee. Any person, jurisdiction or agent that withdraws from this Agreement shall also withdraw from Leadership Committee.

Any local government that becomes a member of the Leadership Committee shall be required to sign this Agreement.

4. Modifications.

Any party to this Agreement may propose changes to the Agreement at any time. Any proposed changes to the Agreement must be approved by the Leadership Committee in accordance with its rules and procedures. If this Agreement is modified in accordance with this section, this Agreement shall be re-signed by all parties.

5. Additional Provisions

This Agreement is neither a fiscal nor funds obligation document. Any endeavor involving funds between Leadership Committee members will be made in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and procedures. Such endeavors, if any, will be outlined in separate Agreements.

| | | |
|-------------------|---|------|
| Signature & Title | Community/Organization | Date |
| Signature & Title | Community/Organization | Date |
| Signature & Title | St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission | Date |

Appendix B.



The Blueways of St. Clair Adopt-An-Access - A3 Program

Organization Name _____
Lead Steward _____
Email _____
Phone _____

Step 1- Choose the Access- see the list of sites in need of adoption

Initial site activities;

- Inventory all needed site work (debris removal, path substrate installation, trash pick-up, graffiti removal, shoreline improvement, etc.)
- List of needed infrastructure - benches, sign, drinking water source, Kayak Locker, picnic table, safety equipment, vault toilet etc.

Step 2 – Financial commitment

Choose a level:

2 year- \$3000 -

4 year - \$6000 -

6-10 year Partner -

Details at access:

a sign

a bench, sign or path upgrade

\$TBD (see below)

- create a work plan for the contract period, listing potential purchases by year
- Could involve improvements like pathway development, shoreline improvement for kayak/canoe launch, vault toilet construction or fishing pier. The Partner will get Website/press/print material recognition.

Step 3 - Volunteer Stewards- seasonal maintenance

Spring, Summer and Fall visits by Company volunteers;

- Maintenance; Clean-up trash, inventory for repairs (graffiti, needed maintenance), etc. Assess future site needs.

Step 4- sign the MOU Memorandum of Understanding

Partners – Private Company, Blueways of St. Clair, Township or City, MDNR, MDEQ (permitting) Others?

Appendix C.

UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE LAUNCHES

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are approximately 56.7 million Americans (roughly 18% of the population) living with some type of disability characteristic. Every effort should be made to make your water trail accessible to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities enjoy paddling with friends and family just like everyone else. Therefore, it is important to make launch sites inclusive, universally accessible and easy to use by everyone together.



UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE LAUNCH FEATURES

ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES
WITH TRAILER LENGTH

INFORMATIONAL SIGN

6-FOOT WIDE SURFACE ROUTE

BOARDING BENCH

GANGWAY AND RAMP

PULL RAILS AND ROLLERS



Clinch Park, Traverse City.

WHAT MAKES AN ACCESS SITE “ACCESSIBLE?”

There are two approaches to consider when looking to develop an accessible access site along your water trail.

In 2010, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) established guidelines for newly designed, constructed and altered recreation facilities. The guidelines require that all public boat launches (which include fixed and floating structures of all sizes) comply with ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). These guidelines support previously established standards that address the traditional amenities of the surrounding access sites (e.g., routes, parking, restrooms, etc.). While these guidelines are well intentioned, they represent the minimum legal standards for accessibility.

While compliance with ADA guidelines is required, more and more communities are choosing to embrace the principles of “universal design.” More of an inclusive and holistic philosophy rather than a legal requirement, universal design aims to create solutions that work for everyone, of all ages and abilities, together.

Whether a person uses a wheelchair, has knee or hip issues, has difficulty balancing, or just likes dry feet, paddlers of all abilities want to launch and land smoothly without capsizing or damaging their watercraft. They also want firm surfaces that support their movement from their arrival place to the launch at the water’s edge, and sufficient space to accommodate the length of their watercraft during transitions into and out of their boat and into and out of the water.

There are a handful of launch systems that can be purchased and installed along your water trail to provide a stable system for boarding and exiting kayaks and canoes. One of the most popular launch systems currently on the market that incorporates the principles of universal design is the EZ Launch by EZ Dock. Currently installed in over 100 communities throughout Michigan, the EZ Launch System features a large floating platform, guiderails, rollers and a transfer bench. This system meets and exceeds all the accessible design requirements for clear space, maneuvering space, reach ranges, force for operating mechanisms, transfers, signage and information.

The following site-design features and amenities should be considered when providing for inclusive and universally accessible launch sites.



A boarding bench allows a paddler to center over his vessel.



Gangways and ramps should have slopes less than 8.33%.

LAUNCH

- A universally accessible canoe/kayak launch system (with the features listed below) that is connected to an accessible route, placed in a location that doesn't conflict with a traditional boat launch, and is at least 25 feet long to allow paddlers dry access to the entire length of their vessel when preparing to enter/exit the vessel.
- Gangway and ramp slopes that are below 8.33%.
- A means of transfer/boarding assistance, such as a boarding bench, that centers the paddler over the vessel.
- Pull rails and rollers to assist moving the vessel into and out of the water on a surface that stabilizes the craft and doesn't damage the bottom of the vessel.
- If there is not an accessible launch system, provide a good description (and photo) of the water's edge exit/entry point so the paddler can decide if it is usable before approaching the water.

LAND-SIDE FACILITIES

- Improved surface route, 6 to 12 feet wide with slopes no greater than 5%, from the parking lot to restrooms, potable water source, information kiosk, and launch.
- Routes that have switchback turns need level landings at every change of direction, and the landing should be large enough for the individual to carry down and turn the vessel without stepping off the route surface.
- Accessible restrooms with at least one universally accessible single-user unisex restroom.
- Accessible potable water source that is approachable on all sides, operable with one hand, doesn't require pinch-grasp or wrist-twist, and requires less than 5 pounds of force to operate.
- Kiosk information provided in accessible formats and approachable via accessible surface surrounding kiosk.
- Accessible parking space(s) located nearest to the accessible route to the launch.



A solar-powered accessible launch in Wyandotte raises and lowers paddlers into the water.



Depending on the physical limitations of your launch area, the gangway from the shoreline to the accessible launch may be quite extensive. This example is in Port Huron.

Appendix D. Casco Township Belle River Park Summary

On June 18, 2019, residents and guests of Casco Township came together for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Casco Township Belle River Park. The almost 20-acre parcel on Fred Moore Highway near the I-94 overpass was purchased with the help of The Six Rivers Conservancy and its Executive Director, Chris Bunch, along with a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Casco's park will have access to over 1,400 feet of Belle River shoreline, and ideas for fishing docks and an ADA-accessible kayak launch are included in future plans. A preliminary site plan (Image D-1) is under discussion in the Township Parks and Recreation Committee and will be forwarded to the Township Board for comment.

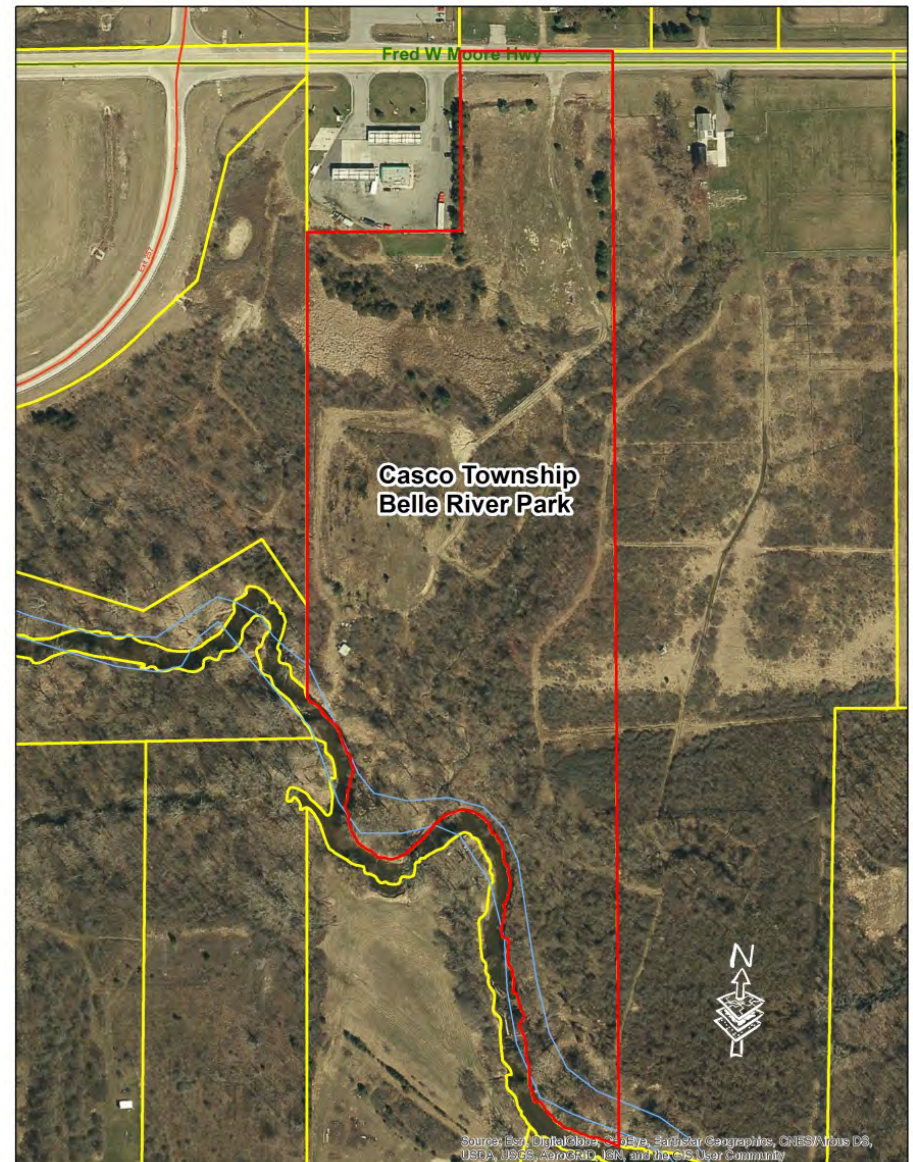


Image D-1

