

SECTION E: ACTION PROGRAM, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS SCHEDULE, AND RATIONALE

- 1) **Rationale for the Action Program/Capital Improvements Schedule:** The development of the Antrim County 2005 Comprehensive Recreation Plan was an eighteen-month effort conducted by the Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission and the staff of the Office of the Coordinator/Planner. Three proposed projects from the Year 2000 Plan, Antrim Creek Natural Area, Wetzel Lake Park, and the “Jabara Property” have become a reality. The Jabara Property project has been renamed to Cedar River Natural Area.

Recent public surveys confirm the results from various surveys taken over the years. All citizens responding to one survey considered the natural and recreational resources of Antrim County to be very important or somewhat important to the county’s economy. Ninety percent taking part in this survey said that these resources were important to the health of county residents and that greater use of these facilities would increase the overall quality of health. The majority expressed high satisfaction for the quality of the area resources but also felt more was needed. Access to the resources in general was rated fair to good. Promotion of two of the natural areas in the county was rated good but only fair for other county sites such as public access sites, historical sites, forested land, etc. The majority was in favor of better promotion of the county resources. Specific suggestions and/or concerns from more than 200 individuals have been received and noted.

The Parks and Recreation Commission, staff from the Office of the Coordinator/Planner, County Commissioners, park employees, staff from the Antrim Conservation District and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, and members of the general public continue to identify the following as primary, community goals: 1) Watershed protection, 2) open space protection, 3) maintenance and expansion of existing facilities, and 4) public access to water. These broad and specific guidelines are reflected in the following proposed actions.

Barnes Park, Elk Rapids Day Park, Wetzel Lake Park, Grass River Natural Area, Antrim Creek Natural Area, and Cedar River Natural Area all function and are managed differently. For example, Barnes Park and Elk Rapids Day Park are under the supervision of a park manager. A county appointed sub-committee presently looks after the new Wetzel Lake Park. This sub-committee has conducted several fund raising events for the benefit of Wetzel Lake Park. The Grass River Natural Area is managed and supported by a long established incorporated membership. While these and all other county owned lands are under the auspices of the County Board of Commissioners at present there is no overall Parks and Recreation director or coordinator. There is a consensus that if and when funds are available a parks director would provide better coordination between the various groups now representing the operation of the six main recreation sites plus better management and use of the many lesser known and used sites in the county.

- 2) **Action Program:** Antrim County's outstanding natural resources support its tourism and recreation-based economy as well as providing exceptional recreational and educational benefits for its residents. Maintaining existing facilities is an inherent priority in the Plan with due consideration given to expansion. The County continues to experience permanent population growth as well as the sometimes three-fold seasonal population increase. In addition, because much of the population increase is occurring away from the waterfront properties, lake-accessibility is also an important objective of this Plan. Based upon these considerations the following proposed actions were established and approved by the Park and Recreation Commission. Six pages are attached that summarize anticipated maintenance and development needs for the Grass River Natural Area, Barnes Park, Elk Rapids Day Park, Wetzel Lake Park, Cedar River Natural Area, and Antrim Creek Natural Area. A seventh page is attached that addresses other sites in the county including the 147 public access sites, the lesser used inland county forest parks, Mohrmann and Murphy, county-wide projects such as trails, and establishing a Parks Director position.

Detailed proposed plans follow for the Grass River Natural Area, Barnes Park, Elk Rapids Day Park, and Wetzel Lake Park:

Grass River Natural Area 5-year Plan

Overview

The next five years will see big changes at the GRNA. The 'Grass River Center' building, designed to augment the rail trail facility, will be that organization's primary focus. Developing the 'Grass River Bike Trail' Rail Trail, as an integral part of the site development, will be an important capital improvement project that must not be lost in the shadow of the other projects. Purchase of land will continue as opportunities arise. Monitoring and maintaining public access to the 1,164-acre site will continue to take more and more resources, as population grows.

Ongoing:

Land protection. Acquisitions of parcels that contain significant wetland or other natural features within the +/- 1,600-acre 'gray-line' around the existing preserve. Priority given to large parcels and/or waterfront on Lake Bellaire, Grass River, Clam Lake, and the three feeder trout streams, Shanty, Cold, and Finch Creeks. Projected 5-year cost: \$1,000,000 based on \$200,000/yr average.

Maintenance. All of the physical infrastructure must be maintained for public access and safety. This may require replacing boardwalk sections and bridges. Projected 5-year cost: \$50,000.

Construct Grass River Bike Trail on existing rail bed, Phase I, from Fisherman's Paradise public access on Lake Bellaire to GRNA site of new building. Will require steering committee and local fund raising, along with DOT commitment to fund, awarded in 2003. Phase I: \$400,000 total, including \$100,000 local match. Phase II, from GRNA entrance to Crystal Springs Road: \$150,000 to \$200,000, including \$50,000 local match.

Activities by year:

2005

Grass River Center Capital Campaign to raise funds for the construction and operation of the new building. 2005 will probably be primarily outreach to small number of large donors. Grass River Bike Trail railroad trail project should be beyond legal questions and into implementation. GRNA site maintenance will include those trails nearest the site of the proposed new rail trail and building to handle increased use after the projects are complete.

2006

Grass River Center Capital Campaign to raise funding for the construction and operation of the new building. The second year of the campaign may include a grant request to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) for a portion of the construction costs. Capital Campaign would provide the local match and operating budget.

2007

Continued Grass River Center Capital Campaign, larger number of smaller donors. Finalization of architectural plans. Possible beginning of construction.

2008

Construction and furnishing Grass River Center. \$900,000 to \$1,300,000. Linking GRC to the Rail Trail as part of parking/pedestrian access/landscaping of building.

2009

Phase II of the Grass River Bike Trail, from the new visitors center to Crystal Springs Road. \$200,000.

The Grass River Natural Area, Inc. will take the lead on the Capital Campaign. GRNA will need assistance and support from the Parks and Recreation Commission for all of the projects listed here. Leadership on the Rail Trail is critical, as well as support for additional acquisitions of land as they become available. If the next five years go according to plan, the major capital improvements within GRNA will be taken care of for the foreseeable future. The following five years (2010 – 2014) would include protecting the remaining critical habitat areas, and extending the rail trail to Bellaire and Alden.

Barnes Park:

Barnes Park is the only large waterfront camping facility in the county. Its size and available services make it comparable to nearby state parks. Demand for the park far exceeds capacity, as evidenced by lack of site availability during the summer season. To accommodate the demand and improve the overall park infrastructure, some of the rustic sites have been targeted for upgrading to electrical capability. To alleviate congested pedestrian and bicycle traffic and improve public safety along the entrance road, a paved non-motorized trail, separate from the roadway, as been identified as a park priority. Another priority is the expansion and upgrading of the existing bathhouse and playground facilities. This will not only improve the quality of both facilities but also greatly improve accessibility and, in the case of the playground area, improve public safety. Repaving of the interior park road is needed as part of the park infrastructure overhaul, as recreation vehicle traffic on the park road is causing rapid deterioration of the road surface. The small park office also needs to be replaced with a building of

adequate size and accessibility for all staff and visitors.

Elk Rapids Day Park 5-Year Plan (2005-2009):

Overview

This exceptional County Park features 1,300 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan in a natural somewhat secluded setting. Its boundaries are within the village of Elk Rapids and Elk Rapids Township. Courses of action to improve and encourage increased utilization of the Elk Rapids Day Park are necessary to develop the park as a substantial contributor to quality of life, community health and an important recreation economy.

Overall direction, including capital outlay, was derived through a committee process, which involved citizens from the Village, Township and County. Funding is estimated.

Ongoing 2005-2009:

As the recreation site includes forest and beach, bathhouse, pavilion, playground area and picnic areas, regular safety inspections and maintenance are needed. The County makes Minimal funding (\$10,000 range) available for regular maintenance.

The natural setting is ideal for forestry education and conservation. The location also provides a great location to better understand the Great Lakes and early pioneers of the region. Bathroom facilities, a pavilion with seating and table arrangements and adequate parking offer a very positive venue to inject an exciting curriculum. The goal is to develop an educationally sound curriculum and provide teacher and student materials.

Increase promotion of the Elk Rapids Day Park.

Improvements by Year:

2005

The Elk Rapids Rotarians through the efforts of the park committee contributed an attractive entrance sign in 2004. In the spring of 2005 the sign and landscaping will be installed for the \$900 contribution, with in-kind assistance by the county and volunteer help. Directional signs to the park from the village and US31 will also be explored. MDOT will be asked to assist with US31 routing. Parking will be engineer reviewed and appropriate plans put into action. Lead county departments will be asked to contribute. Curriculum and education material development could begin this year. Professional curriculum and material development volunteers are needed as well as funding to begin the process. Two thousand dollars in startup funds would encourage the process.

2006

The village has plans to link sidewalks with the park area. (Funding and a definite timeline are issues.) Combining this completion with an exercise station route would enhance recreation, wellness and create a draw for Antrim County residents and out county visitors. It is estimated that \$2,500 to \$5,000 would provide for an exercise station trail. Tying in with interpretive trails will also be evaluated. Playground upgrades (\$2,000 to \$6,000), Sidewalk improvements (\$2,000).

2007

Repairs and improvements to the pavilion were made in 2003 and 2004. Those making

annual safety inspections project replacement in 2007. Estimates are \$10,000 to \$15,000.

2008-2009

Anticipated greater use of the Day Park will require additional funds for maintenance, security, education, promotion and infrastructure improvement. Aging facilities will also require greater attention. This may include paving of entry and parking areas. Overall improvement of bathhouse and bathroom facilities is projected. . An estimated additional \$10,000 to \$20,000 each year may be needed for the capital improvements.

Wetzel Lake Park 5-Year Management Plan

PHASE I

Erosion Control, Bathroom Facilities and Parking

This Phase was started in the summer of 2003. The County deployed port-a-john's on site for visitors, and allocated funds for the facilities and their maintenance. The Antrim Conservation District built a structure to house the bathroom. Historically, this area has experienced numerous vandalism problems; consequently, not much time and energy had been invested into its maintenance and development. At that time the Wetzel Lake Committee, comprising representatives of the County, Township, and Conservation District, wrote a newspaper article on what they were attempting at Wetzel Lake and how they were working to improve the site. The partners also addressed erosion problems caused by runoff from the access road by implementing shoreline stabilization works and regarding of the parking area. The County and District also installed large boulders, within the width guidelines of the state for ADA access, to better define the parking and beach area. The approach to the boat launch was improved with afton stone for the local fishing community. The summer seasons of 2003 and 2004 were extremely successful, and the committee is excited about the future possibilities.

PHASE II

Viewing Platform, Trails and Picnic Tables

In the summer of 2005 we would like to install a 1.25-mile walking trail around the lake. The trail will need stairs in some places for erosion control, and will connect to a lookout platform that will be used for various recreational and educational activities. We will also consider installing 4 or more picnic tables for the community to use during the day. Due to the size and vulnerability of the Wetzel Lake, the Antrim County Commissioners will be asked to develop an ordinance prohibiting motorized boat traffic on the lake, except for use of electric fishing motors by area senior residents. During this Phase we will also engage in preliminary planning for the subsequent phases of the project. We have held and will hold new community fund raisers to cover all or part of the cost of implementing the current Phase and future Phases.

PHASE III

Permanent Bath House/ Camp Host/Electricity 2005-2006

There is no electricity supply currently available on site. We will bring this to the site to allow future development of campsites and the campground water supply. We are looking at providing upgraded bathroom facilities and possible showers for the site, as well as developing plans for stationing a camp host at the site during the months of June

through August. We will also be conferring as needed with representatives of the DEQ to any needed permits for the design and installation of these park- and campsite -specific sanitary facilities.

PHASE IV

Rustic Camp Sites 2007-2008

With the installation of electric and bathroom facilities we will start to lay out some possible camping sites for rustic camping. The Committee and the District Forester will locate these sites so that there will be minimal impact to the surrounding area. Some preliminary discussions have already been held, and an early concept sketch from those discussions has been drawn.

We realize that a permit will be needed from the Department and the fee paid prior to proceeding with this phase. We understand that the permit application must include basic information such as operator, location, physical facilities and other general information. Once that permit is received, it will be displayed as stated by law. It is also understood that a primitive campground under 10 sites may be served with a unisex privy and a portable water outlet, and that the privy may not be located closer than 50 feet to the boundary of the site. At a minimum, we will meet the distance requirements, while our goal is to provide separate facilities for both genders. We anticipate that all primitive sites will be walk-in sites.

We will also designate a manger for this site. At this time we have not made that designation, but the selection will be made before we install the sites. Additionally, a county-owned road services this site, and as such the access to the site is under their maintenance and jurisdiction.

PHASE V

Limited Electrical Sites/Upgrade Bathroom 2008-2010

The final stage, if agreed by the County and the joint Committee, will be to install electrified RV camping sites along the ridge overlooking the lake. We are looking at around 14 sites that will cause minimal disturbance to the local environment. An existing two track to that area will be improved. Other improvements call for a pump-out station with trash removal, stairs down to the water, an improved bathhouse facility and a possible walking trail. The committee has reviewed the rules for water supplies, sewage and wastewater control and disposal, permits necessary, sewage pumping system and the requirements for water and bathroom facilities for the number of sites we are proposing. We will fully comply with those and provide a detailed list of the required infrastructure before applying for the license required. We also understand from the electrical requirements that not more than one outlet will serve one site.

County Forest Reserve Lands:

Mohrmann Park is co-located with well-managed county forestland. Primary recreational use of the Park includes hiking, fishing, and hunting. The County has also identified a need to monitor trail use at the Park to assist in future park development needs. Significant erosion also needs to be addressed on Fisk Creek, which flows through the property. Continued improvement of trails and directional signage is needed at **Murphy Park**.

Key parcels need to be acquired when opportunity and funds permit to provide public access to present landlocked county owned parcels

Additional Parks and Recreation Plans:

In addition to the managed park systems within Antrim County, there is a need for specific improvements that will greatly increase the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities. It is recommended that a **Parks Director** position be established to provide better coordination of resource management, development, and publicity. **Strategic Publicity** is needed to create more awareness of recreational resources and encourage greater use in a way that will not degrade the resource. Development of a **Long Range Strategic Plan** is a necessity if the county wishes to engage in continuous improvement of this important economic resource. Improvements to the **Elk Rapids Fishing Park** will allow for greater use and accessibility. Antrim County needs to develop a **Boat Launch** on Lake Michigan in order to meet the need for public access to this resource. There is a need for a **Public Shooting Range** for residents to use. **Non-motorized and motorized trails** need to be developed strategically in the county in order to connect to existing trails in neighboring counties. Trails will also connect points of interest and destinations, improving the opportunity for healthy recreational activities. Finally, all recreational resource sites need to have **GPS Coordinates** determined. This data will help facilitate a useful database/mapping system on the county's web site. The information generated will help increase awareness and use of the county's parks and recreational resources.

The following tables illustrate the Capital Improvement Projects that the Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission has identified for implementation over the next five years. Projects were prioritized as High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority or Conceptual.

GRASS RIVER NATURAL AREA (GRNA)

| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| GRNA Bike Trail I | ✓ | | | | | \$100,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Land Protection | ✓ | | | | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Maintenance | ✓ | | | | | \$10,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | B |
| GRNA Bike Trail I | | ✓ | | | | \$300,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Land Protection | | ✓ | | | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Maintenance | | ✓ | | | | \$10,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | B |
| GRNA Bike Trail II | | | ✓ | | | TBD | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Land Protection | | | ✓ | | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Maintenance | | | ✓ | | | \$10,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | B |
| Grass River Center | | | | ✓ | | \$1,300,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| GRNA Bike Trail II | | | | ✓ | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Land Protection | | | | ✓ | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Maintenance | | | | ✓ | | \$10,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | B |
| GRNA Bike Trail III | | | | | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County, GRNA | D |
| Land Protection | | | | | ✓ | \$200,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | A |
| Maintenance | | | | | ✓ | \$10,000 | DNR, County, GRNA | B |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual, TBD - To Be Determined

| BARNES PARK | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
| Improve ventilation system in bath house | ✓ | | | | | \$2,000 | County | A |
| Windows in main bathroom | ✓ | | | | | TBD | County | B |
| Enlarge trail system within the park property | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | \$50,000 | DNR, County | A |
| Education signage on trails | ✓ | | | | | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| Pave road throughout park | | ✓ | | | | \$70,000 | DNR, County | A |
| Acquire additional 10 acres | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | \$300,000 | DNR, County | A |
| Start changes on acquired 10 acres | | | ✓ | | | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Gate moved - sites located off the existing road | | | ✓ | | | TBD | DNR, County | B |
| Basket ball ½ court, 2 hoops | | ✓ | | | | TBD | DNR, County | B |
| New drain field for the bath house | | ✓ | | | | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Addition of mechanical room at the bath house | | | | | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Bury all electrical wires | | | ✓ | ✓ | | TBD | DNR, County | B |
| Install second dump station | | | | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Enlarge park property linked to Old Dixie Hwy (on going) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| Become part of trails linked from TC to Charlevoix | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| New road behind exiting sites | | | | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Primitive sites on the new loop | | | | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Cabins | | | | | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | D |
| Plan to stop erosion on bluff, stairs (on going) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | \$20,000 | CMI or GL Basin | A |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual, TBD - To Be Determined

| ELK RAPIDS DAY PARK | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
| Signs from the Village and #US31 showing directions to park | ✓ | | | | | TBD | MDOT, County | A |
| Education signage on trails | ✓ | | | | | \$2,000 | County | B |
| Additional Trail in the park | ✓ | | | | | TBD | County | A |
| Trails linked to exercise station | | ✓ | | | | \$5,000 | DNR, County, Private Donations | B |
| Playground upgrade | | ✓ | | | | \$6,000 | DNR, County | A |
| Replace pavilion | | | ✓ | | | \$15,000 | DNR, County | A |
| Replace/repair side walk into bath house | | | | ✓ | | \$4,000 | DNR, County | B |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual, TBD - To Be Determined

| WETZEL LAKE PARK | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
| Viewing platform | ✓ | | | | | TBD | DNR, County, Grants, Township | B |
| Walking trail around lake | ✓ | | | | | \$2,000 | DNR, County, Grants, Township | A |
| Water Well | ✓ | | | | | \$4,000 | DNR, County, Grants, Township | B |
| Permanent Bath House | | | | ✓ | | \$21,000 | DNR, County, Grants, Township | A |
| Electricity | | ✓ | | | | \$11,000 | DNR, County, Grants, Township | A |
| Rustic Camp Sites | | | ✓ | | | TBD | DNR, County, Grants, Township | B |
| Limited Electrical Camping Sites | | | | ✓ | | TBD | DNR, County, Grants, Township | B |
| Sign on US-131 | ✓ | | | | | TBD | Donations | A |
| Dock to swim area | | ✓ | | | | \$6,700 | Local Support | B |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual

| ANTRIM CREEK NATURAL AREA | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
| Information Arbors - heavy timbers (north and south entrances) | | ✓ | | | | \$34,421 | DNR, County, Private Donations | A |
| Design Work (Historic and cultural display, natural resources of ACNA, protected plant species at ACNA, animal life at ACNA) | | ✓ | | | | \$17,365 | DNR, County, Private Donations | A |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual

| CEDAR RIVER NATURAL AREA | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|---------------------|----------|
| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
| Fish Structure Improvement | ✓ | | | | | \$10,000 | County, Non Profits | A |
| Improve Existing Trail System | ✓ | ✓ | | | | TBD | County | A |
| Develop more trails in Cedar River Natural Area | | | | ✓ | ✓ | \$20,000 | DNR, County | D |

Priority ranking Scale: A = High Priority, B = Medium Priority, C = Low Priority D = Conceptual

MISCELLANEOUS COUNTY PROPOSED PROJECTS

| Description of Proposed Improvement | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Est. Cost | Fund Sources | Priority |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|--|----------|
| Mohrmann Park - Trail, and other improvements | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | B |
| Mohrmann Park - erosion control on Fisk Creek | ✓ | | | | | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| Murphy Park - Trail and other improvements | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | C |
| Acquire key parcels to provide access to landlocked county owned parcels | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| Fishing Park (Below Elk Rapids dam) | ✓ | ✓ | | | | \$200,000 | DNR, County, Elk Rapids Village, Costal Management | A |
| Establish park director position | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | County | A |
| Develop long-range management plan | ✓ | ✓ | | | | TBD | County | A |
| Cross County Trails | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | TBD | County | A |
| Finish GPS of all sites | ✓ | | | | | \$2,000 | County | A |
| Boat Launch on Lake Michigan | ✓ | ✓ | | | | TBD | DNR, County | A |
| Public shooting range | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | TBD | DNR, County, Non Profits | A |