



Saginaw County Recreation Plan



2009 – 2013

DRAFT

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Saginaw County

Recreation Plan: 2009-2013

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Introduction



About the Saginaw County Recreation Plan

Saginaw County has developed a Recreation Plan to serve as a guideline to improve recreation facilities and develop new recreational opportunities. To that end, this document forms the basis to guide policy for implementation of improvements and new initiatives that will meet the recreational goals and interests of the Saginaw County community. The plan was guided by the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission.

Before any recreation plan is adopted and enacted, it is first important to understand what the needs of the residents are, what recreational opportunities already exist, and what sort of projects are relevant for residents based on age, ability, population, density, and the availability of recreational opportunities in neighboring communities. This plan has carefully considered input and suggestions via active communication from County residents, County officials, and other community stakeholders. This input is a critical component to this plan, and, together, the voices of Saginaw County have united to develop a recreation plan to enhance the quality of life for everyone.

The foundation for the development of the Saginaw County Recreation Plan was based on the following goals:

- Involve the community in the process to develop a five-year Recreation Plan,
- Identify and map existing Saginaw County recreational facilities,
- Build common ground among Saginaw County stakeholders in addressing the future recreational needs and priorities of the County,
- Enable Saginaw County to be eligible for financial assistance based upon the Recreation Plan,
- Facilitate interagency collaboration in establishing recreation goals, objectives, and actions, and
- Continue to support and implement improvements for barrier-free, Universal Access to County parks.



Broadly speaking, Saginaw County officials intend to use this plan to guide their work on all future recreational and parks projects within the County. It is also a strategic document that articulates specific goals to various agencies and organizations that fund local recreational and parks improvement projects. Specifically, this plan is developed in accordance with the guidelines for Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). A five-year, DNR-approved Recreation Plan is necessary for Saginaw County to pursue DNR-administered grants. This Recreation Plan is written for a single county, Saginaw County. It covers all aspects of recreation within the community.

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Community Description



About Saginaw County

Saginaw County is located in central lower Michigan. See Figure 1. Counties that are adjacent to Saginaw include Bay and Midland Counties to the north, Tuscola County to the east, Gratiot County to the west, and Genesee and Shiawassee Counties to the south. Organized in 1835, Saginaw County was settled as a lumbering and fur trading community. Outside of the urbanized area in and around Saginaw, the county remains a largely rural agricultural community. Saginaw is the county seat and it is home to several automotive related manufacturing facilities.

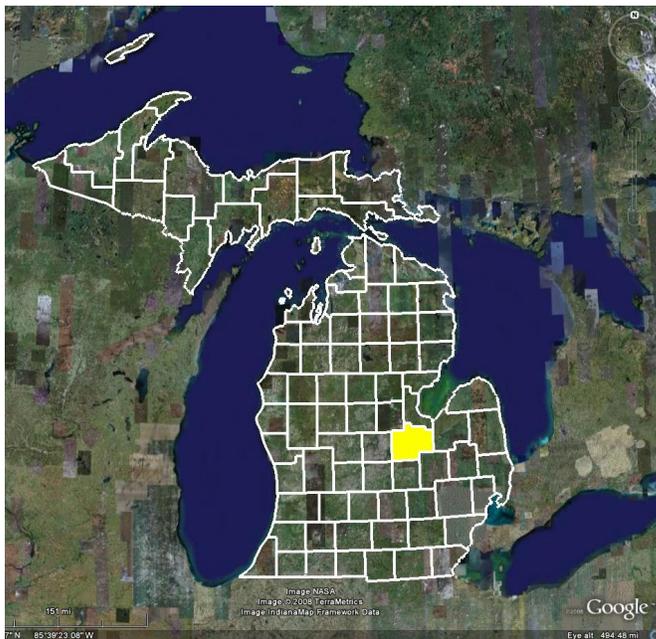


Figure 1: Saginaw County is located in central lower Michigan

Saginaw County contains three cities, 27 townships and five incorporated villages. **According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Saginaw County was 210,839.** The 1990 population was 228,059 showing a population decrease of approximately 7.6% from 1990 to 2000. The July 2007 U.S. Census estimate of the population was 202,268, showing that the County population is continuing to decline. This is reflective of the poor economy in Michigan and the automotive industry, in particular.

Five communities in Saginaw County have more than 10,000 people: Saginaw (61,799), Saginaw Township (39,657), Thomas Township (11,877), Bridgeport Township (11,709) and Buena Vista

Township (10,318). These five communities account for 64% of the population in Saginaw County. Two townships and two villages have less than 1,000 people. Those are Marion Township (925), Zilwaukee Township (61), Village of Merrill (782), and the Village of Oakley (339).

Other general population characteristics regarding Saginaw County are shown on the following page.



Saginaw County Demographic Data - 2000 U.S. Census	
Population	210,039
Median Age	36.3 years
Total Households	80,439
Housing units occupied by renters	26.2%
Median Household Income	\$38,637
Population age 5+ with a disability	20%
Population with bachelor's degree or higher	15.9%

Saginaw County is approximately 818 square miles in size or 521,800 acres. Major state roadways that carry traffic north to south across the county are M-83, M-13, M-52, M-84, and I-75. Roadways that carry traffic east to west across the county are M-52, M-46, and M-81.

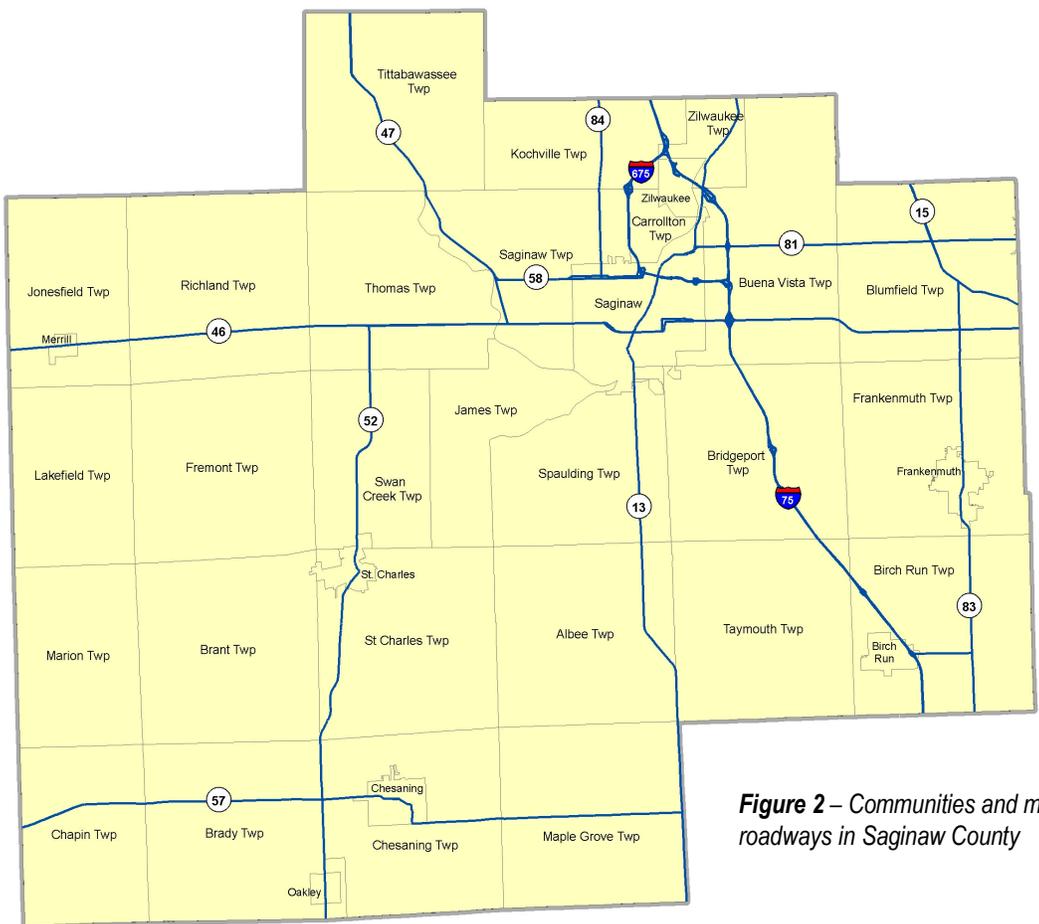


Figure 2 – Communities and major roadways in Saginaw County

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There are large tracts of public or semi-public lands in Saginaw County. The largest tracts are controlled by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The DNR lands include the Gratiot-Saginaw State Game Area in Marion and Brant Townships, the Shiawassee River State Game area in St. Charles, Swan Creek, James, and Bridgeport Townships, and the Crow Island State Game Area in Zilwaukee Township, Kochville Township, Carrollton Township, and Buena Vista Township. The Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is located mostly in Spaulding and James Township.

The other public or semi-public lands are largely golf courses, and County, City, and Township parks. Figure 3 shows the Conservation and Resource Lands (CARL) in Saginaw County, based upon mapping data from the Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited.

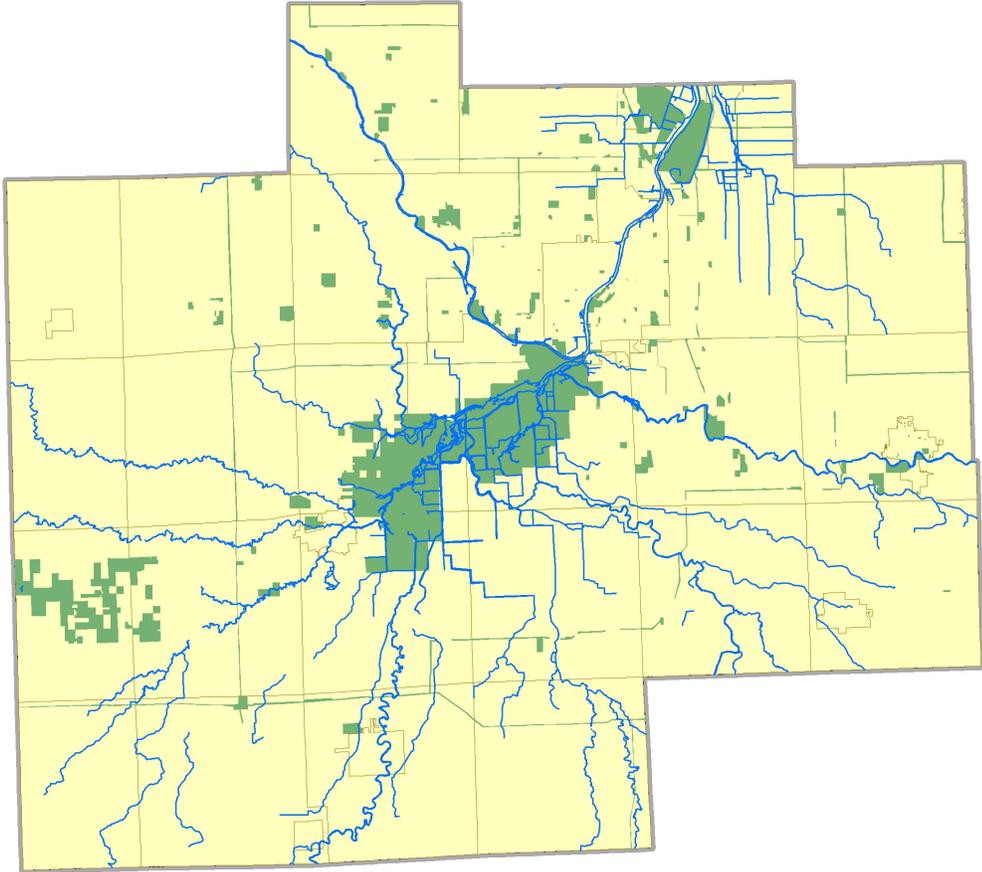


Figure 3: The green shaded areas show publicly and privately held conservation and resource lands in Saginaw County. The large green areas in the center of the county are the Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge and the Shiawassee River State Game Area. (Source: *The Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited*)



The Tittabawassee, Shiawassee, Cass, and Flint Rivers are all major tributaries of the Saginaw River in Saginaw County. Each river and its corridor provide unique fish and wildlife habitat in Michigan. Migratory birds in the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways use these river corridors, especially those in the Shiawassee River “flats” area in the central portion of the County. Anglers from across the state enjoy the walleye fishing in Saginaw County, particularly in the Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers.



Administrative Structure



About the Saginaw County Recreation Parks & Recreation Department

Policy Making Bodies

The Saginaw County Board of Commissioners is the governing body of the County of Saginaw. The Board consists of 15 Commissioners who are elected by district. Board decisions that affect the Parks and Recreation Commission are first acted upon by its County Services Committee. The committee is comprised of the Chairman of the Board and five additional Commissioners.

The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission was formed in 1969 under the provisions of the Michigan County, Regional Parks and Recreation Act, Act 261 of the Public Acts of 1965. The Parks and Recreation Commission is authorized to plan, develop, maintain, and supervise park land, and to establish rules for the protection, regulation, and control of its facilities. All actions of the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission are subject to the approval of the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners.

The County Parks and Recreation Commission is comprised of ten members. Three of the members are represented on the Commission by statute:

- Chairperson of the Saginaw County Road Commission
- Saginaw County Public Works Commissioner
- Chairperson of the Saginaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission
- No less than one and no more than three members of the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners

The remaining four to six members (to total ten Commissioners) are members of the Saginaw County community at large. They are appointed for three year terms by the County Commission.

The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission meets monthly.

Management Structure and Staff

The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission establishes policies, develops plans, approves grant applications and land acquisitions, establishes a budget, and approves fee structures. The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for operating and maintaining the parks, making the day-to-day decisions regarding financial expenditures, and implementing development plans.

The Director of the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Department oversees all activities and functions of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Four full-time employees, and approximately 30-35 seasonal employees work under his direction. Maintenance operations at the County parks are combined with overall Saginaw County maintenance activities under the direction of the County’s Maintenance Director. The parks maintenance functions are funded through the Parks and Recreation Commission’s budget as a purchase of services from the County. An organizational chart is shown below.

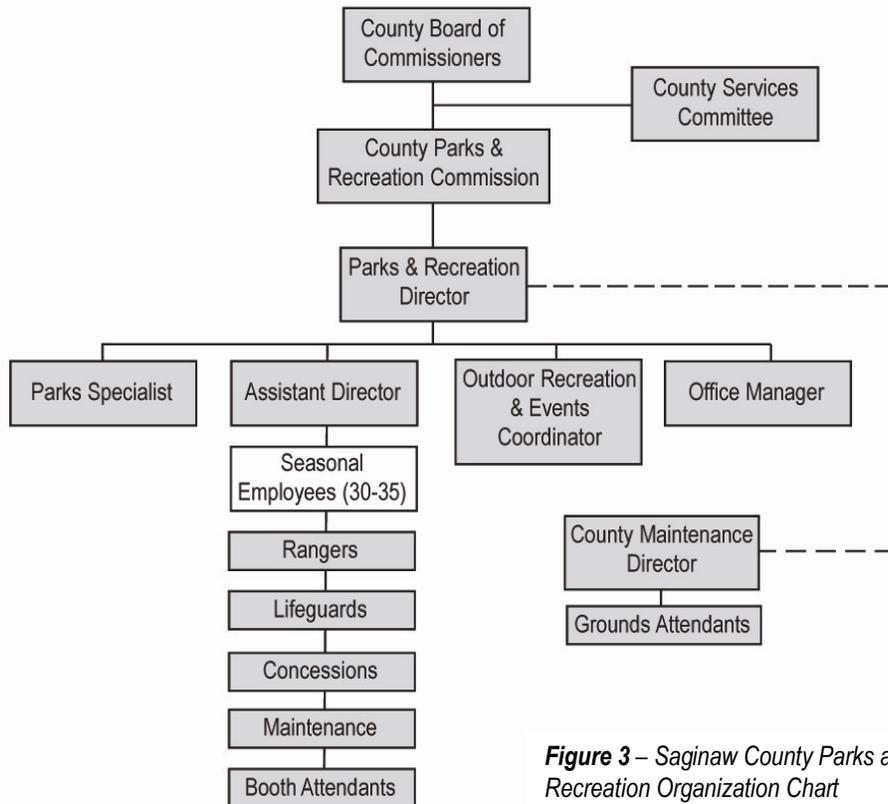


Figure 3 – Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Organization Chart



Funding and Budgets

Funding for Parks and Recreation in Saginaw County primarily comes from a County-wide recreation millage that was originally passed in 1990 and then renewed in 2000. Other sources of funding include user fees, pavilion rentals, program fees, season passes, grants and donations. User fees are charged in the form of motor vehicle entrance fees at Haithco Recreation Area and Imerman Memorial Park. Pavilions are rented at Price Nature Center, Imerman Memorial Park, and Haithco recreation area.

Budgets for the past two years are shown below:

Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Budget		
	2008	2009
Operation and Maintenance	\$834,812	\$858,478
Programming	\$15,000	\$15,000
Capital Improvements	\$26,100	\$20,200

Programming

The Saginaw County Parks department runs a variety of programs most of which are centered around children’s activities, nature activities, or dog activities. Children’s programs included Ooey Gooey art, Teddy Bear Picnic, Touch a Truck and Children’s Fun Day. Nature and outdoor programs included kayaking, fishing, and pond life. A dog activity was held each month. Most of these programs are located at Imerman Memorial Park or Haithco Recreation Area. A summary of the 2008 programs with attendance is given in Appendix E.

Volunteers

Volunteers work at a variety of the larger Saginaw County Recreation programs and sometimes provide a large portion of the program. The Saginaw Bay Walleye Club volunteers at fishing programs by measuring and scoring fish. The Optimist Club volunteers at Catch Me If You Can and registers participants along with cooking the event lunch. 4H volunteers and contributes fishing displays. The Children’s Fun Day has a large number of volunteers that provide crafts for the day along with doing face painting and manning game booths. The Touch a Truck program is based entirely of businesses and public agencies volunteering to bring large vehicles for the patrons to see. The county also utilizes volunteers for park clean up’s and beautification days. Lastly, there are citizen advisory councils for each park that meet as needed when issues arise concerning a specific park.



Relationships with Other Agencies Involved in Recreation

In addition to the volunteer groups described above, Saginaw County works with some other groups and agencies in providing recreation. The Friends of the Saginaw County Rail Trail is an official 501c3 organization that actively provides ongoing assistance with trail funding, events, and planning. Friends of the Butman-Fish Library provides nature based events in conjunction with the County. The Parks and Recreation Department also works with the Public schools and other local parks agencies on a summer program guide called Hot Times which is funded by the City/County/School Liaison Committee.