



# LAKE COUNTY PARKS + RECREATION

2020-2024 MASTER PLAN

GET OUT. GO PLAY. EXPLORE.

Final Plan | April 2021



This publication has been prepared by the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. For clarification or additional information, please contact the following:

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Prepared February 2020 - April 2021



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Term: Jan. 2021 - Dec. 2024

Appointed by: County Commissioners

David M. Uzelac, Vice President

Term: Jan. 2020 - Dec. 2023

Appointed by: Lake Circuit Court

Carl Ploense, III

Term: Jan. 2018 - Dec. 2021

Appointed by: Lake Circuit Court

Christopher Dilts

Term: Jan. 2021 - Dec. 2024

Appointed by: County Council

Ryan Reithel

Term: Jan. 2019 - Dec. 2022

Appointed by: County Council

Mayoral Appointment

Term:

Appointed by: Mayors

Julie Jones

Term: Continual

Appointed by: Purdue Extension - Lake County

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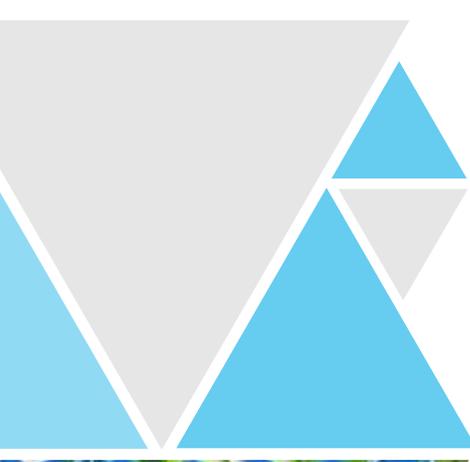
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## *A Word from our Board President...*

Every five years Lake County Parks & Recreation staff and board come together to develop a new Open Space Plan. Input is gathered to develop the plan from community members, partner organizations, and park patrons.

As we began preparing this 2020-2024 plan, looking back on Lake County Parks' history was easy. The Department was celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and it was a great opportunity to reflect on all that has been accomplished. Over those 50 years we've encouraged people to get out, go play, and explore the spaces designated for their use. Millions of people did just that.

Unbeknownst to us, looking ahead from 2020 would be a lot more difficult than normal. The pandemic forced some very immediate changes to our short-term plans as we adapted to keep people safe. It also introduced extraordinary, ongoing challenges to the basic way we operate. However, we continued to provide services to many during this time, and alongside the struggles were many bright spots. We saw record numbers of people enjoying simple walks through the park. There was renewed interest in golf and other recreational offerings. Our programs were adapted, and people filled up the waitlists to participate. As many people felt more alone than ever before, we provided a safe space to them to find connection again. While planning became a challenge, our mission only grew in strength.

From conservation to recreation, there are many things important to the Lake County Parks & Recreation Department. However, **people** are at the center of everything we do. We exist to provide a space for people to celebrate, to explore, to relax, to play, and to connect—with nature, with themselves, and with others. The goals outlined in this plan are living things, subject to change as we continue to receive feedback from our community. Our future success won't be measured by how many boxes we manage to check off, but instead by something far more difficult to put to paper. Success, to us, looks like a child laughing, rolling down a hill. A family tradition being made at a fall program. A school group learning something new about a place they never visited before. A couple revisiting the place they hiked on their first date or where they said, "I do". A person finding peace as they walk their dog along a quiet trail. People, as always, are at the heart of defining our success and if people are still getting out, playing in, and exploring their parks in five years, we'll have a lot to celebrate.

Bellaboo's  
(219) 963-2070

Buckley Homestead  
(219) 696-0769

Cedar Creek Family Golf  
Center  
(219) 365-2902

Deep River  
(219) 947-1958

Deep River Waterpark  
(219) 947-7850

Gibson Woods  
(219) 844-3188

Grand Kankakee Marsh  
(219) 552-0033

Lake Etta  
(219) 944-9601  
Banquets:  
(219) 949-6533

Lemon Lake  
(219) 663-7627

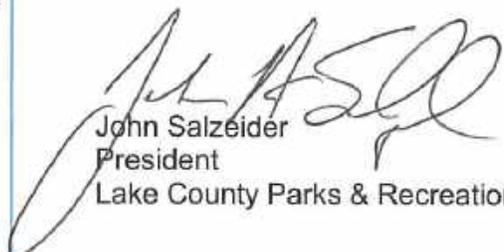
Oak Ridge Prairie  
(219) 884-7238

Stoney Run  
(219) 996-6500

Three Rivers  
(219) 962-7810

Turkey Creek Golf Course  
Pro Shop:  
(219) 980-5170  
Banquets:  
(219) 887-3550

Reservations & Tours  
(219) 769-7275



John Salzeider  
President  
Lake County Parks & Recreation Board



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# Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

### Purpose of the Plan

Only three years after the Indiana State Legislature authorized the creation of county park districts within the state, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department was formed. Since the Department was formed in 1968, board members and staff have been deeply committed to the development of a department that meets the leisure needs of present and future generations. Today, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department has grown to include 12 park sites that offer a range of passive and active recreation, open space, and revenue-generating facilities.

The 2020 - 2024 Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is an update of the 2014 Master Plan. This plan provides a guide to programs and services for residents of and visitors to Lake County over the next five years. The planning process included multiple opportunities for public input, including focus group interviews, public forums, and a survey.

### Planning Area

The planning jurisdiction for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan update is the boundary of Lake County, Indiana. Lake County is a part of Northwest Indiana and the Chicago metropolitan area, and contains a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. It is the second-most populous county in the State of Indiana.

### Mission and Goals

The mission of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board is to create and responsibly manage a county-wide system of parks and open space resources and to provide recreational, cultural, and educational programs based on these resources for the use and enjoyment of all Lake County residents and visitors.

The goals named in this park and recreation master plan update are broad statements of the values and desires of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department. These goals should be used to guide future decision-making in the system and to provide a framework for specific policies and programs. The goals reflect the understanding that it is important to provide both natural open space and recreation amenities in a balanced manner that respects the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the region.

The goals for the 2020 - 2024 Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan are as follows:

1. Acquire sufficient open space to meet current and future county park and recreation needs in Lake County, Indiana.
2. Expand the land base at existing Lake County Park facilities.
3. Maintain, operate, and develop recreation facilities that stimulate human development in concert with the environment.
4. Pursue various funding sources and alternatives for land acquisition and development of the Lake County Park System.
5. Develop, maintain, and promote conservation management practices for the county's natural resources, ecologically sensitive areas, and significant historical sites.
6. Maintain, operate, and develop outdoor recreation and education programs that provide enriching experiences in people's lives and that increase public awareness of environmental relationships.

7. Promote the development of greenways, open spaces, and park sites that improve the visual and spatial qualities of the county, provide buffers and edges to urban developments, and protect sensitive natural areas from encroachment by the development of open space.
8. Participate in the urban community utilizing planning, programming, land acquisition, and development.
9. Increase public relations and efforts toward use of an effective network for disseminating information and increasing public awareness of parks and recreation.
10. Support legislation favorable to the advancement of parks and recreation.
11. Develop, institute, and manage facilities, programs, and departmental procedures that efficiently and effectively enhance revenues from non-taxed base sources.

### Priorities and Action Schedule

The following pages list an Action Schedule for the Lake County Parks and Recreation System and then for each individual park site. The Action Schedule Items are key steps that the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department will be taking to reach the goals. Each Action Schedule Item has been given a priority ranking:

- Immediate (I) - ongoing to 1 year;
- Short (S) - 1 to 2 years;
- Medium (M) - 2 to 5 years;
- Long (L) - 5 years or beyond.

Priority rankings are flexible and may change based on unforeseen opportunities or challenges.

### Buckley Homestead

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Continue Restoration and Repair of Historic Buildings	\$30,000	GPI/Grants
2022 - 2023	Restore Milkhouse/Windmill	\$30,000	GPI/Grants/Donations
2022 - 2023	Continue Restoration of Log Cabin	\$75,000	Grants/Donations
2024	Construct Playground	\$100,000	Bond
2025 +	Construct New Visitor Center	\$2,500,000	Bond
2025 +	Construct West Parking Lot, Improve Accessibility	\$500,000	Bond

### Cedar Creek Golf Course

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Golf Driving Range Distribution Center	\$30,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Drainage and Golf Course Improvements, Addition of Two New Holes and Irrigation	\$150,000	GPI/Bond
2024	Facility Entry Enhancements	\$40,000	Bond
2024	Indoor Training Facility	\$300,000	Bond

### Deep River

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
In Process	Mill Water Wheel Restoration	\$20,000	Donation/GPI
In Process	Big Maple Lake Development	\$100,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Construct and Rebuild Four County Line Shelters	\$160,000	GPI/Bond
2022 - 2023	Big Maple Lake Restoration (Natural Edges)	\$15,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Sugar Shack Reconstruction	\$75,000	GPI/Grant
2024	Crist Mill Parking Lot Restroom	\$150,000	Bond
2025 +	New Maintenance Facility for DRWP	\$200,000	Bond
2025 +	South Park Camping/Cabins	\$8,000,000	Bond
2025 +	Pave Waterpark Delivery Entrance from Randolph Street	\$250,000	Bond
2025 +	Relocate Bridge to River Ford	\$200,000	Bond
2025 +	Ainsworth Road Underpass between Sulky Track and Big Maple Lake	\$1,000,000	Bond

### Deep River Waterpark

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2020 - 2021	Cabanas	\$35,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Rebuild Paddles Play Zone	\$75,000	Bond
2024	Flow Rider Attraction	\$3,000,000	Bond
2024	Replace Existing Water Filters	\$1,750,000	Bond
2025 +	Water Treatment Expansion	\$400,000	Bond
2025 +	Corporate/Private Areas Addition	\$100,000	Bond
2025 +	New Wave Pool	\$8,000,000	Bond

### Gibson Woods

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration/Enhancements in Nature Preserve	\$250,000	Grants/Operating Budget
2022 - 2023	Boardwalk Improvements	\$30,000	GPI
2024	Entrance and Parking Lot Mill and Resurface	\$100,000	Bond
2024	Modernize Exhibits	\$100,000	GPI, Grant

### Grand Kankakee Marsh

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration/Enhancement of Various Habitats	\$30,000	GPI/Grants
2022 - 2023	New Pumps for Hog Marsh	\$50,000	GPI/Grant

### Lake Etta

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Spray Pad	\$250,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Banquet Hall Improvements, Cold and Dry Storage	\$60,000	GPI
2024	Dog Park Improvements	\$30,000	GPI

### Lemon Lake

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Spray Pad	\$200,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Dog Park Improvements	\$10,000	GPI
2024	Replace Shelter 6, 7, and 8	\$90,000	GPI
2024	West Perimeter Fencing, Chain Link	\$20,000	GPI

### Oak Ridge Prairie

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$50,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Fishing Pond Shoreline Restoration/ Enhancement	\$20,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Maintenance Barn Extension for Natural Areas/Trails Storage	\$30,000	GPI
2024	New Shelter	\$45,000	GPI
2024	Mill and Resurface Entrance Drive and Parking Lot	\$700,000	Bond
2024	C&O Trail Construction into Park	\$1,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Pave Maintenance Drive (Redar Road) and West 58th Avenue East Service Entrance into Park	\$500,000	Bond
2025 +	Multi-Purpose Green Building	\$2,000,000	Bond
2025 +	Snow Making Machine	\$250,000	Bond
2025 +	Electricity/Water/Sewer into Park from Airport	\$400,000	Bond

### Stoney Run

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Trail Improvements	\$15,000	GPI
2024	Pave Camp Road	\$250,000	Bond
2024	Toilet Construction at Warming Shelter	\$200,000	Bond
2024	Pave Main Road	\$350,000	Bond

### Three Rivers

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Bellaboo's Storage Addition	\$15,000	GPI
2024	Expand Bellaboo's Outdoor Adventure Playground	\$2,000	Bond

### Turkey Creek Golf Course

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Park Lot Lighting	\$50,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Yellow Tee Renovations	\$10,000	GPI
2024	Turkey Creek Streambank Restoration	\$80,000	Bond
2024	South Golf Course Expansion	\$500,000	Bond
2025 +	Develop Driving Range	\$250,000	Bond

### Erie Lackawanna Trail

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$100,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Drinking Fountain at Bur Street Trail Head	\$50,000	GPI

### Oak Savannah Trail

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$200,000	Grant

### Veterans Memorial Trail

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2020 - 2021	Land Acquisition from Broadway to Iowa Street	\$100,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Construct Trail from 113th Avenue to Broadway	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2022 - 2023	Construction Broadway Bridge	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2022 - 2023	Construction Trail from Broadway to Iowa Street	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Land Acquisition from Iowa Street to Leroy	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Construct Trail from Iowa Street to Leroy	\$2,500,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Land Acquisition from Leroy to County Line Road	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Construct Trail from Leroy to County Line Road	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Acquire and Construct Trail Parking at 145th Avenue and State Road 231	\$500,000	Bond/Grant



# Lake County Parks and Recreation System Overview



## Lake County Parks and Recreation System Overview



FIGURE 1.1: LOCATION OF LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA

### Definition of Planning Area

Located along the south shore of Lake Michigan approximately 15 miles from the Chicago Loop, Lake County offers its residents the conveniences and amenities that come with having access to one of the largest major metropolitan areas in the country, while striving to provide a high quality of life. Direct access to Interstate 65, 80, 90, and 94, six major U.S. highways, and both freight and passenger rail lines, provide the basis for a transportation system that serves the County.

The planning area for this master plan update is defined as the boundary of Lake County, though programs and partnerships with agencies outside Lake County do occur. Lake County is approximately 497 square miles in size. Crown Point, the county seat, is located near the center of the County. There are seven incorporated cities and twelve incorporated towns in Lake County. These nineteen communities each offer unique experiences and lifestyles, from the historic industrial urban communities located along the shore of Lake Michigan to the rural communities that still characterize the south county area.

### History of the Lake County Parks and Recreation System

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department is a 52-year-old agency dedicated to providing a county-wide system of parks and trails that offer recreational opportunities and access to open space and natural areas. The Lake County Parks Board, created in 1968, made its first land purchases later that year and established the first county park in 1972 at Lemon Lake. Stoney Run County Park was dedicated the following year. The system has grown to include twelve parks and two trails. A detailed history and list of milestones is included in the Appendix.

### Lake County Parks and Recreation Board Profile

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Board is a statutory bi-partisan policy-making body appointed by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the county government with single appointments from the mayors of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago, and an appointment from the cooperative extension coordinator.

This Board formulates and adopts policies related to the operation, management, and planning of the park and recreation facilities and activities within the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Board meets publicly on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Purdue Cooperative Extension Offices located at 2291 North Main Street, Crown Point, Indiana, 46307.

### Lake County Parks and Recreation Department Profile

The day-to-day management and operations are administered by the Department's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Operating Officer (COO). The CEO acts as Secretary to the Board and is appointed by the Board on an annual basis. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department is made up of four divisions that are responsible for a variety of functions:

- Administrative Services Division:** Responsible for management of daily operations of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department, the Administrative Services Division oversees human resources, finance, and budget management. Additionally, Administrative Services provides information and technology support services concerning reservations and public information. The Administrative Staff, consisting of the CEO, COO, Division Superintendents, and other key personnel, work in concert to provide long-range planning and utilization of Departmental resources.

## Lake County Parks & Recreation Organization Chart

August 13, 2015

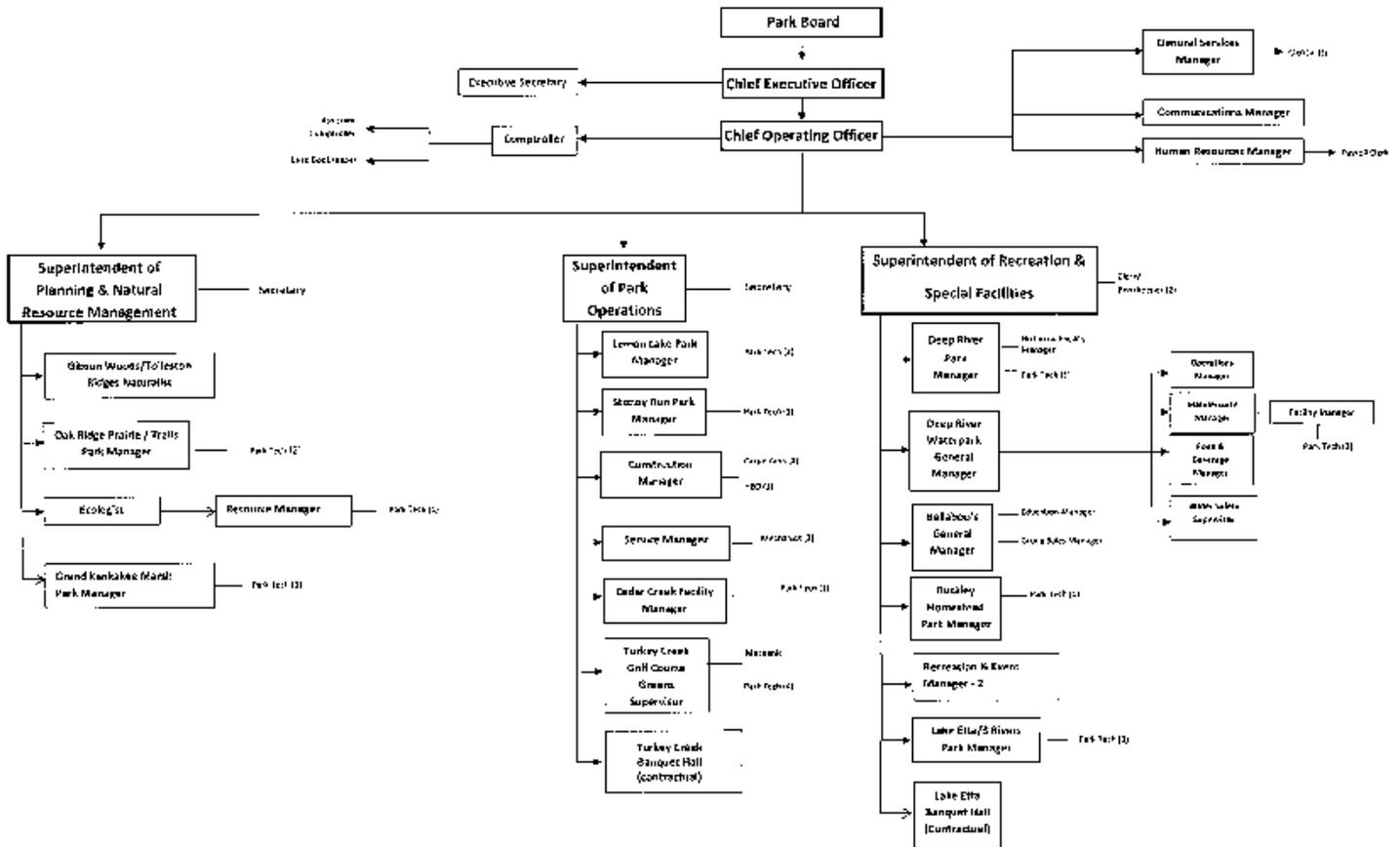


FIGURE 1.2: LAKE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

- Park Operations Division:** The Park Operations Division’s responsibilities include the day-to-day operation and maintenance of several park sites and golf courses. The Division is also responsible for providing support services to other divisions in the areas of equipment maintenance and repair, in-house construction, major facility maintenance projects and horticulture.
- Recreation and Special Facilities Division:** The Recreation and Special Facilities Division is responsible for park sites that center on revenue-generating operations, programs, and their associated facilities. The Division is responsible for management, operations, and maintenance activities that ensure successful revenue generation at each revenue center.
- Planning and Natural Resource Division:** The Planning and Natural Resource Division is responsible for park sites that are centered on maintaining and managing natural resources, trail maintenance, environmental education, land acquisition. The Division also coordinates planning projects between Divisions and with outside agencies.

### **Mission and Goals**

The mission of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board is to expand and responsibly manage a county-wide system of parks and open space resources and to provide recreational, cultural, and educational programs based on these resources for the use and enjoyment of all Lake County residents and visitors.

The goals of the Parks and Recreation Board reflect the understanding that it is important to provide both natural open space and recreation amenities in a balanced manner that respects the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the region. The Board is guided by the following goals:

1. Acquire sufficient open space to meet current and future county park and recreation needs in Lake County, Indiana.
2. Expand the land base at existing Lake County Park facilities.
3. Maintain, operate, and develop recreation facilities that stimulate human development in concert with the environment.
4. Pursue various funding sources and alternatives for land acquisition and development of the Lake County Park System.
5. Develop, maintain, and promote conservation management practices for the county's natural resources, ecologically sensitive areas, and significant historical sites.
6. Maintain, operate, and develop outdoor recreation and education programs that provide enriching experiences in people's lives and that increase public awareness of environmental relationships.
7. Promote the development of greenways, open spaces, and park sites that improve the visual and spatial qualities of the county, provide buffers and edges to urban developments, and protect sensitive natural areas from encroachment by the development of open space.
8. Participate in the urban community utilizing planning, programming, land acquisition, and development.
9. Increase public relations and efforts toward use of an effective network for disseminating information and increasing public awareness of parks and recreation.
10. Support legislation favorable to the advancement of parks and recreation.
11. Develop, institute, and manage facilities, programs, and departmental procedures that efficiently and effectively enhance revenues from non-taxed base sources.

### **Budget**

The guiding philosophy of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department has been one of investing - investing for the present and for the future through the creation of quality park and recreation opportunities. This philosophy has taken hard work and creative strategy. Like most other government agencies in Indiana, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department is challenged to maintain, and even increase, services with fewer resources.

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department has a dedicated tax rate, but the board, staff, and volunteers knew long ago that the tax levy would not allow for continued growth. While crucial to the operation of the county parks and other green spaces, the traditional tax revenue would not support additional services demanded by the public. In response, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department expanded their income through revenue-generating facilities, partnerships with foundations, grants, and other creative means.

Annually, the CEO, COO, and Comptroller work together with staff and the board to develop the annual budget based on the estimated tax revenue and the projected department-generated revenues. The Lake County Council approves the department budget locally before it is sent downstate for final approval from the Department of Local Government Finance. The following list shows the budget for the past three years as well as the approved 2020 budget:

<b>2017:</b>	<b>\$6,626,702</b>
<b>2018:</b>	<b>\$6,783,498</b>
<b>2019:</b>	<b>\$7,017,724</b>
<b>2020:</b>	<b>\$7,205,211</b>

### Collaboration

Many collaborations and partnerships have played an instrumental role in the development of the Lake County Parks and Recreation System. The following agencies and entities are active partners with the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department:

Agency/Entity	Collaborative Activity/Partnership
Calumet Astronomical Society	Home site and open house location at Buckley Homestead
City of Hobart	Robinson Lake Trailhead and trail maintenance partners at Oak Savanna Trail
City of Whiting	Whihala Beach Partnership
Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative	Lake County Parks and Recreation Department hosts programs as part of the Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative
Dunes Calumet Audubon Society	Home site and meeting location at Gibson Woods; Help to provide programming
Fit4Mom	Hosts classes at Bellaboo's
Harvest Tyme Farm Park	Sponsors Bellaboo's Autumn Harvest Celebration
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Nature Preserves	Office space, land acquisition, and management assistance at Oak Ridge Prairie; Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant partner, restoration, enhancement, monitoring and maintenance partner at Gibson Woods
Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife	Shelby boat launch partner at Grand Kankakee Marsh
Lake County Board of Commissioners	PGN project construction partnership
Legacy Foundation	Training and resource/information sharing
Little Amigos Spanish Lesson	Host classes at Bellaboo's
Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission	Partners on Little Calumet River with ChiCal Rivers Grant Partner, restoration and maintenance of site; Park partnership with Lake Etta County Park; Land acquisition and project partnership with Three Rivers County Park
Mom to Mom, NWI	Advertising exchange
National Audubon Society	ChiCal Rivers Grant Partner, restoration and maintenance partner at Little Calumet River Habitats
Purdue Extension Service	Joint projects and partnerships

Agency/Entity	Collaborative Activity/Partnership
Purdue University - Northwest	Has the Northern Indiana Remote Observatory (NIRO) at Buckley Homestead, which is controlled from the Hammond campus
Shirley Heinze Land Trust	Monitoring assistance at Gibson Woods
Soccer Shots NWI	Host classes at Bellaboo's
Southshore Convention and Visitors Authority	Cross promotion, video services, etc.
The Nature Conservancy	Land acquisition and management assistance at Oak Ridge Prairie; Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant partner, restoration, enhancement, monitoring, and maintenance assistance at Gibson Woods; ChiCal Rivers Grant Partner, restoration and maintenance assistance at Little Calumet River Habitats; Office space at Oak Ridge Prairie
The Wetlands Initiative	ChiCal Rivers Grant Partner, restoration and maintenance assistance at Little Calumet River Habitats
Town of Griffith	Maintenance assistance at Erie Lackawanna Trail
Town of Schererville	Maintenance assistance at Erie Lackawanna Trail; Construction and maintenance assistance at PCN
Trailblazers Bike Shop	State Road 51 and Cleveland Trailhead partners and maintenance assistance at Oak Savanna Trail
Wild Ones	Gibson Woods Chapter's home site and meeting location

# Features of Planning Area



## Features of Planning Area

### Natural Features and Landscape

#### Geology, Topography, and Soil

Three distinct landforms identify Lake County: the Calumet Lacustrine Plain in northern Lake County, the Valparaiso Morainal Area in central Lake County, and the Kankakee Outwash Plain in southern Lake County.

The Calumet Lacustrine Plain is a sandy region surrounding the southern end of Lake Michigan, marking the site of former Lake Chicago. As the glacial lake retreated, level lakebed areas, sand bars, and old beach ridges were left. Changing rates of melting, movement of the earth and crust or possible breaks in the moraine resulted in major fluctuations in the lake's level.

The Valparaiso Morainal Area is just south of the Calumet Lacustrine Plain. It is a composite of several end moraines, one super-imposed atop the other in response to minor fluctuations of the terminus of the retreating tongue of glacial ice. This land averages about 150 feet higher than the adjacent plain to the north. Moraines are low hills of earth and rock left behind by melting glaciers at the end of the ice age.

The Kankakee Outwash, located south and southeast of the Valparaiso Morainal Area is a low, poorly drained sandy area. It consists of extensive glacial outwash, and/or lake and river deposits formed by numerous cycles during the Wisconsin glaciation.

### Drainage and Water Resources

As a part of the intercontinental divide, the Valparaiso Moraine divides the regional drainage pattern in two, with one system flowing into the Saint Lawrence River system and the other system flowing into the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River system. The northern part of Lake County is in the Little Calumet Watershed, which is a sub-area of the Great Lakes/Saint Lawrence River watershed that flows east toward the Atlantic Ocean. This watershed flows through the Calumet River, Little Calumet River, Turkey Creek, Deep River, and a host of tributaries and man-made drainage ways, emptying into Lake Michigan at various points along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The southern part of Lake County is in the Mississippi River watershed, which flows west and south toward the Gulf of Mexico. The natural drainage in this area, which includes Eagle Creek, Cedar Creek, West Creek, and various tributaries, has been

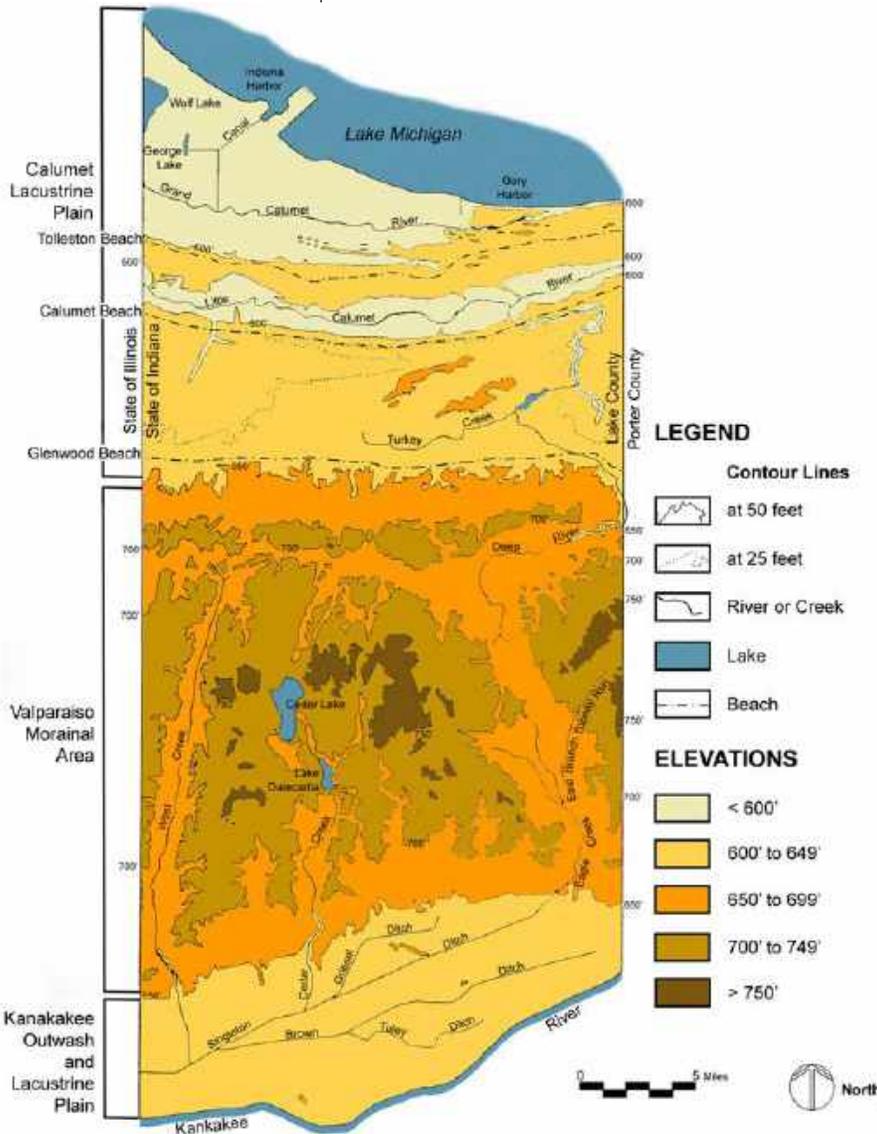


FIGURE 2.1: GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

supplemented by an extensive network of ditches and field tile that flow into the Kankakee River. This continental watershed divide runs through Lemon Lake County Park.

### Natural Landscape and Woodlands

Much of Lake County's original natural features have been lost to development. Particularly hard hit have been the unique dune and swale environment along Lake Michigan and the northern third of the county. The Indiana Dunes National Park as well as Gibson Woods, Tolleston Ridges Nature Preserves, and similar dune and swale areas along the lakeshore are some of the remnant and native area preserved from this once dominant ecosystem.

Most of the remaining wooded areas are located along the major rivers and streams. A considerable amount land in lowlands and marshes remain undeveloped, which provides an excellent opportunity for conservation and open space. Areas of such lands include lands in the northern part of the county along the Little Calumet River and in the southern part of the county along the Kankakee River. The area of lands along the Kankakee River was, at one time, one of the largest freshwater marshes in the country.

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department has been diligent about land acquisition in these unique areas. Each Lake County Park area has been identified due to their unique geologic and natural features, which ultimately guide decisions on development, management, operations, or programming. For example, the 131 acres of Gibson Woods Nature Preserve is one of the last sizeable remnants of high quality dune and swale topography remaining in the Midwest. Because of the widespread urbanization and industrialization in Northwest Indiana, this type of topography and its associated natural communities have been almost entirely eliminated. The rare environment, surrounded by urban development, was only preserved as it was deemed surplus railroad property of the Gibson Yards. While owned and operated by the Lake County Park Board, Gibson Woods Nature Preserve is a state dedicated nature preserve due to its rare plants and animals, some listed as endangered. Preserving dune and swale areas as well as wooded areas, marshlands, and lowlands is a natural fit for a regional park system like the Lake County Parks and Recreation System.

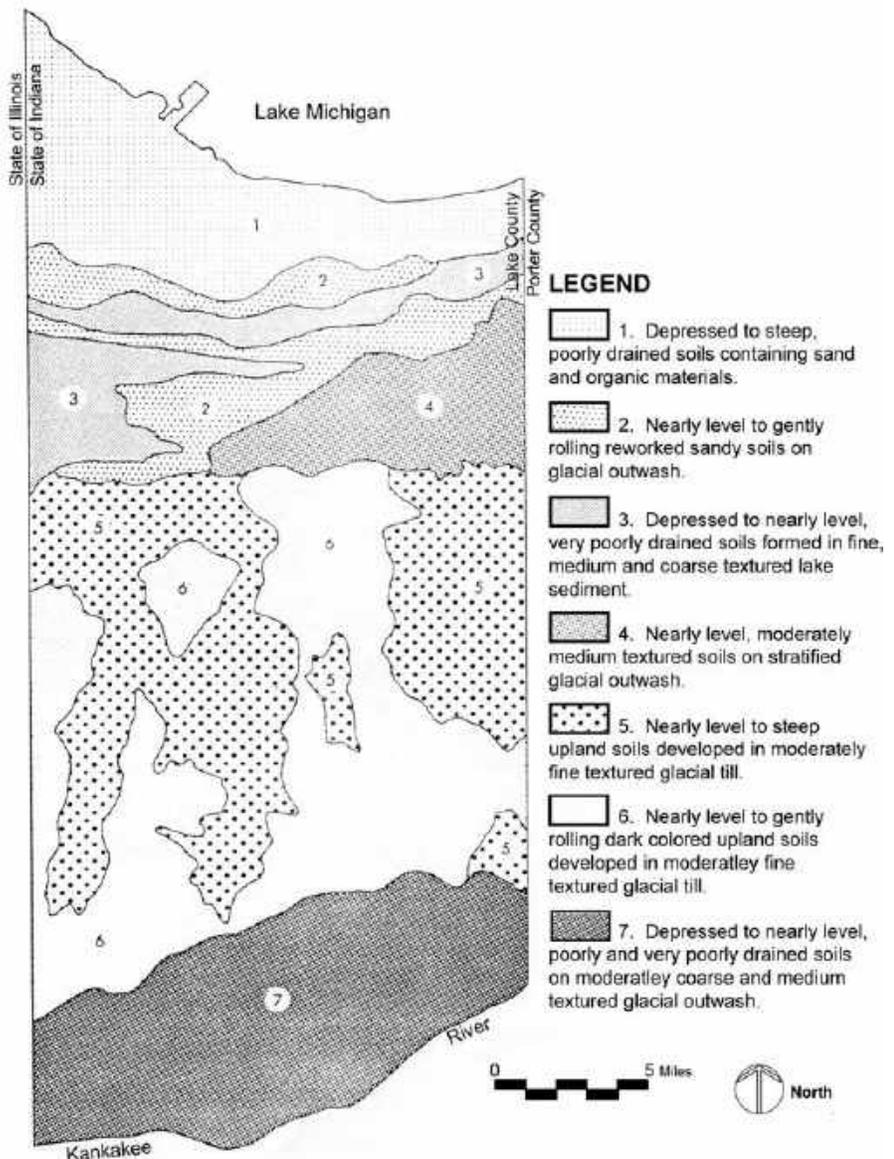


FIGURE 2.2: SOILS AND DRAINAGE

### Climate

One of the more notable changes since the last Park Plan update is the impact of climate change on the planning area. In 2018, the Indiana Dunes Climate Change Adaptation Plan was unveiled by Save the Dunes, a nonprofit organization in northwest Indiana focused on protecting and restoring the dunes and all natural resources in northwest Indiana’s Lake Michigan watershed. According to the report, changes in temperatures, precipitation, and the early onset of spring are exposing the region to climate impacts. Some of these impacts include lake-level changes, changes in forest compositions, and habitat changes for plants and animals.

The average summer high in Lake County is still around 85 degrees, while the average winter low is around 15 degrees. Precipitation averages 33 inches annually. However, the Indiana Dunes Climate Change Adaptation Plan indicates that precipitation in the area is expected to become characterized by fewer but heavier rain events. Precipitation in the summer months will gradually decrease, yet increase during the winter months. According to the Indiana Dunes Climate Change Adaptation Plan, the number of days in the growing season has increased and this trend is expected to continue.

Weather plays a critical role in the success of programs and revenue generation for the Lake County Parks. Facilities like Deep River Waterpark, with a season that runs from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, depend on hot summers to generate attendance. Likewise the golf revenues suffer when spring weather is cold and rainy and the season is delayed. In an effort to extend public recreational opportunities as well as generate off-season income, Deep River Waterpark added a family ice skating plaza that operates from late November through late February.

### Wildlife Habitat

Overall, Lake County is home to a variety of woodland and grassland mammals as well as significant fishery and aviary habitat. Whereas the greatest factor once impacting these habitats was the development of Lake County, a shifting climate now threatens these habitats as well, making land acquisition and open space management even more of significant importance.

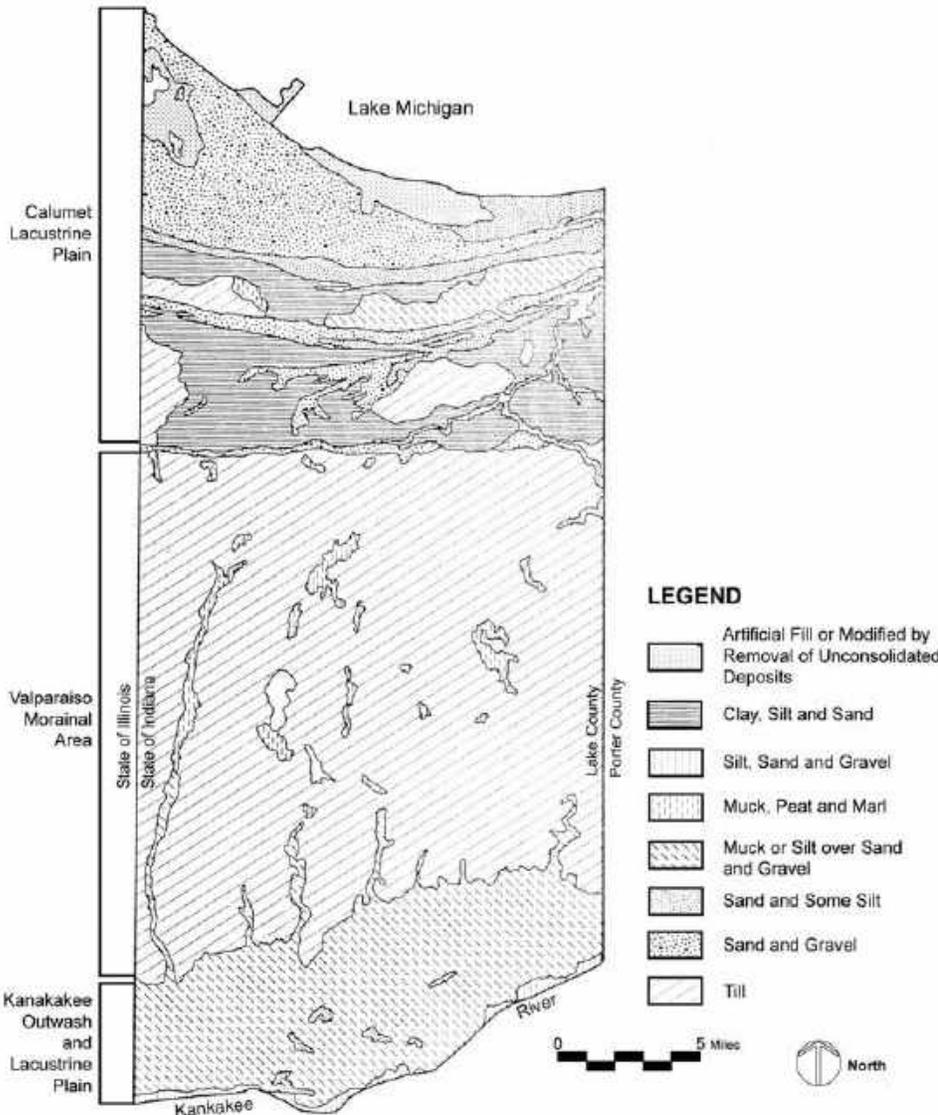


FIGURE 2.3: SOILS AND GEOLOGY

Most of the woodland and grassland inhabitants are traditional species such as white-tail deer, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, coyote, and fox. The fishery habitats in Lake County are numerous and include natural fisheries as well as those that are stocked by State and local agencies. White perch, bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie, and yellow perch represent the largest fishery populations. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department provides access to fishing at Grand Kankakee Marsh, Stoney Run, Lemon Lake, Riggle Lake at Oak Ridge Prairie, and Lake Etta.

In addition to providing traditional habitat for numerous bird species, Lake County's location on the south shore of Lake Michigan also provides many opportunities for accommodating the migration of birds as they make their treks north and south each year. Lake County falls within the Mississippi flyway, one of four major migration routes in the country. The Lake Michigan shoreline, Kankakee River, numerous streams and lakes, and varieties of habitat that provide forage allow Lake County to provide an important link in this annual trek.

In Lake County, bird migration is affected by Lake Michigan. A variety of warblers, hawks, herons, and various birds of prey can be seen each year, along with major duck and geese populations. The nearby Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area has long been known as a prime locale for the migrating Sandhill Crane. More and more Sandhill Cranes are also seen annually in the fields at the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park.

Many of these species find their home in Lake County Parks and Recreation Department lands, which emphasizes the importance of preserving or restoring their natural habitat. According to the Indiana Dunes Climate Change Adaptation Plan, as climate change progresses, it will be important for land managers to do the following:

- Create climate refugia areas, which are habitat areas that persist as climate changes;
- Create landscape corridors, which allow plants and animals to move to more suitable locations;
- Support healthy populations with sufficient diversity to adapt;
- Create blocks of natural landscape large enough to be resilient to large-scale disturbances and long-term changes;
- And minimize additional threats and stressors.

#### Resource Protection

The natural, cultural, and historic resources of Lake County continue to be impacted as development, neglect, and climate change reduce the opportunity to further study and understand them. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) maintains an inventory and tracks these resources with the hope that they, as well as other private and public agencies, might maintain and preserve these important assets. Natural resources are particularly the victims of development, and the most in need of protection.

Unique ecological and historic conditions occur on several sites in Lake County. It is important that these sites be preserved and that they be maintained in their natural states and not used for active recreation purposes. It is important, however, to provide residents with opportunities to learn from these resources and develop a better understanding of the relationships of our natural resources in a global environment. The IDNR resource inventory provides an opportunity for the Lake

County Parks and Recreation Department to be stewards of the land, and protect these resources before they are lost. The following list identifies natural areas and sensitive sites that should be considered for resource protection.

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Beemsterboer Property          | 28. Hobart Marsh                    |
| 2. Biesecker Prairie              | 29. Hoosier Prairie Nature Preserve |
| 3. Brunswick Center Savanna       | 30. Ivanhoe Dune and Swale          |
| 4. Burr Oak Woods                 | 31. Ivanhoe South Dune and Swale    |
| 5. Calumet Prairie                | 32. Lake County PNA #34             |
| 6. Cedar Lake Marsh               | 33. Lake Etta Expansion East        |
| 7. Clark and Pine Dune Swale      | 34. Lakeshore Railroad Prairie      |
| 8. Clark and Pine East            | 35. Lakewood Dune Forest            |
| 9. Clark and Pine Nature Preserve | 36. Liverpool Nature Preserve       |
| 10. Clark and Pine Refraction     | 37. Laura Lake                      |
| 11. Clark Junction East           | 38. Marquette Park                  |
| 12. Clark Junction West           | 39. Merrillville Mire               |
| 13. Cline Dune and Swale          | 40. Miller Interdunal Ponds         |
| 14. Conrail Site                  | 41. Monastery Woods                 |
| 15. Cressmore Prairie             | 42. Mystery Mounds                  |
| 16. Deep River Marsh              | 43. NIPSCO/Ashland Chemical Site    |
| 17. Deep River Woods              | 44. Oak Ridge Prairie West          |
| 18. Dupont Tract                  | 45. Park Site 4                     |
| 19. Gary Industrial Foundation    | 46. Prairie Ridge                   |
| 20. Gary School City              | 47. Roxanna Pond                    |
| 21. Gary Works Natural Area       | 48. St. John Prairie                |
| 22. Garyton Wetlands              | 49. Seidner Dune and Swale          |
| 23. Gaylord Butterfly Site        | 50. Tolleston Ridge Addition        |
| 24. German Methodist Cemetery     | 51. US Steel Prairie                |
| 25. Gibson Woods Nature Preserve  | 52. Van Buren Street Sites          |
| 26. Grand Calumet Tern Site       | 53. Wood Lake Dune Savanna          |
| 27. Halostab Property             |                                     |

### Historical Features

Much of the Great Lakes region was occupied by the Potawatomi Nation dating back over 500 years. The Potawatomi were an Algonquian-speaking people who practiced both an agricultural and hunter-gatherer lifestyle, utilizing the abundant supplies of fish and waterfowl in the region. They established a number of trails throughout the area that later became routes for the fur trade. French traders set up trading posts throughout the region, which helped the Potawatomi to grow their Nation to include over five million acres in what are now five of the Great Lakes states. Following the British victory in the French and Indian War the Potawatomi, after having sided with the French and already being displaced by white settlers, moved further into the wilderness areas.

Surveyors first began setting monuments in what is now Lake County in the late 1820s. The first settlers arrived following treaties signed in 1826 and 1832, and squatted on lands on Cedar Lake and along the Deep River from the Crown Point to Hobart areas, where the soils of the Valparaiso Moraine provided quality agricultural lands. In 1837 Lake County was created from what had been the western half of Porter County, and in 1841 Crown Point became the County seat. During this period land sales began in LaPorte. A union of squatters, formed to protect their land claims, traveled to LaPorte to garner title to their lands.

The Great Sauk Trail, an early transportation route passed through Ross Township in the east central section of Lake County. One of the first permanent settlers in Ross Township was Massachusetts native John Wood who purchased land in 1835 on Sauk Trail along Deep River. Two years later, Wood opened a saw mill on the site and the next year the county's first grist mill which remained in operation until the current brick grist mill was built by Wood's son Nathan in 1876. Several original homes, including the elaborate Italianate style home built by Nathan remain today. Both the grist mill and Nathan's home are part of the historic section of Deep River County Park.

By 1840, the population of Lake County had reached over 1,400, but with the center of agriculture in Lake County so far from the City of Chicago, growth was somewhat moderated.

By 1850, nearly 4,000 people resided in the County. Many German immigrants were among these early settlers, and their heritage is reflected in the names of many of the communities that they established, including St. John, Schererville, Brunswick, Klaasville, and Whiting. During the 1850s, Aaron Norton Hart arrived from Philadelphia with his family and started changing the history and cultural landscape of Lake County. Mr. Hart purchased fifteen thousand acres of mostly swamp land from the government and set about making the land usable. Operating a road and ditch digging business, Mr. Hart oversaw development of an extensive system of drainage ditches. The Hart Ditch, which connects to the Little Calumet River, opened up nearly 20,000 acres of fertile land for settlement and agriculture. The Cady Marsh Ditch and Spring Street Ditch were later built, creating still more productive land.

At about the same time, the first railroad line crossed the northern part of Lake County, providing area farmers with direct access to the Chicago market for their goods. Raw materials also were more easily brought into the County, and the increase in trade allowed the settlers to significantly modify their way of life. Large tracts of land along the rail lines were purchased by some visionary individuals, and in 1869 George Hammond and his partners opened a meat packing plant along the

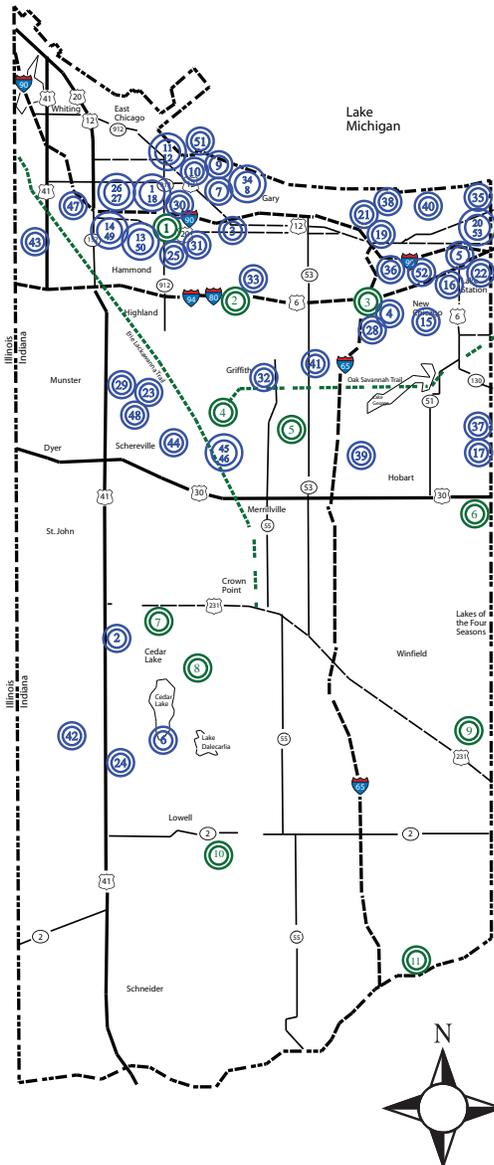


FIGURE 2.4: LAKE COUNTY PARK SITES AND NATURAL/SENSITIVE SITES

## Lake County Park Sites

- 1 **Gibson Woods Nature Preserve**  
6201 Parrish Ave., Hammond, Indiana 46323
- 2 **Lake Etta**  
4801 W. 29th Ave., Gary, Indiana 46406
- 3 **Three Rivers**  
2800 Kansas St., Gary, Indiana 46405
- 4 **Oak Ridge Prairie**  
301 S. Colfax St., Griffith, Indiana 46319
- 5 **Turkey Creek Golf Course**  
6400 Harrison St., Merrillville, Indiana 46410
- 6 **Deep River: Woods Mill & Visitor Center**  
9410 Old Lincoln Hwy., Hobart, Indiana 46342  
**Deep River County Line Road Entrance**  
**Deep River Waterpark**  
9001 East U.S. Hwy. 30, Crown Point, Indiana 46301
- 7 **Cedar Creek Golf Course**  
10483 W. 109th Ave., Cedar Lake, Indiana 46303
- 8 **Lemon Lake**  
6322 W. 133rd Ave., Crown Point, Indiana 46307
- 9 **Stoney Run**  
8900 E 142nd Ave., Hebron, Indiana 46341
- 10 **Buckley Homestead**  
3606 Belshaw Rd., Lowell, Indiana 46356
- 11 **Grand Kankakee Marsh**  
21690 Range Line Rd., Hebron, Indiana 46341

## Trails

- ..... Oak Savannah Trail
- ..... Erie Lackawanna

Grand Calumet River near the state line. As prospective workers and their families came seeking jobs, a new town was developed adjacent to the plant.

New railroads brought more industrial development to the southern shores of Lake Michigan. The industrial north and rural south of Lake County began to experience tensions when the Pullman strike of 1894 affected the farmer's ability to get their perishable goods to market in Chicago. As more industry arrived, housing, schools, churches and businesses were provided to serve their workers. By 1900, over half the population of Lake County was located in only three communities: Whiting, Hammond, and East Chicago. United States Steel opened a new factory in Gary in 1906, to join Standard Oil in Whiting and Inland Steel in East Chicago as representative of the symbiotic relationships between the industrial giants and the communities that grew up around them.

The first two decades of the 1900s saw more immigrants from eastern European countries coming to find jobs in the steel industry, and some communities reflected the scope of this immigration in their majority foreign-born populous. By 1920, the population of northwestern Indiana was nearly one quarter of a million. Business and industry continued to prosper, and new development continued to change the landscape of the County. By 1930, approximately 60 percent of the industrial belt of Lake County was made up of immigrants. But native-born Americans were maturing and enjoying prosperity as well and were becoming an ever-higher percentage of the population.

The 1930s saw the Great Depression end the industrial expansion, and Lake County endured a period of flat growth until the advent of World War II. During this period the majority immigrant population gave way to their children and grandchildren, as native-born Americans dominated the political and business world of Lake County. As the war progressed, emigrants of Mexican and African-American decent found jobs and affordable housing available. After the war, the development of the interstate highway system added fuel to an already booming housing and commercial development market. The new highway infrastructure allowed workers to live further from their places of employment and transitioned some of the Lake County communities into a dual role as self-sufficient community and bedroom suburb.

In the late 1960s, several factors caused a major decline in the economy of Lake County. Low-wage steel producers in other countries and smaller mill operations in the United States caused the major steel producers to lay off significant numbers of workers and in some cases, cease production entirely. There was a population exodus in the northern part of the County, with a 29 percent drop in Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago. At the same time, the central and southern parts of the County increased population by over 12 percent, but the overall population of Lake County fell from 546,253 to 475,594 over a twenty year period. During this time, a new mall and entertainment complex were built in Merrillville, and by 1990, the majority of Lake County's population no longer lived in the industrial communities in the northwest.

Throughout the 1990s and up until today, moderate growth has once again been evident in Lake County. New development, both commercial and residential, continues to build in the central and south county areas. In the industrial communities along the Lake Michigan shore, the steel makers have reinvested dollars to bring back a viable, though much scaled-down presence. Other industry has come in as well, but there has been a decided shift away from industry and manufacturing that

can be seen even today in census numbers. A much greater diversity of employment has come to the region, with obvious jumps in service industries and recreational pursuits. Because these jobs pay less than the manufacturing positions that they have replaced, the overall economy of the County remains relatively flat. The successes in the transition, however, should encourage a slow and steady rise in the quality of life in Lake County.

## **Man-made Features**

### **Road Network**

Lake County is a confluence of several major interstates, US routes, and state roads. Interstate 65 in Lake County connects Chicago to Indianapolis and is also called the Casimir Pulaski Memorial Highway. Interstate 80/94/US 6 connects Lake County to Chicago and Michigan and is also called the Frank Borman Expressway from the Illinois state line east to the Indiana Toll Road interchange in the eastern portion of the county. Interstate 94 has been referred to as the Chicago-Detroit Industrial Freeway. US 6, which connects Lake County to Chicago and Ohio, is part of the Grand Army of the Republic Highway, a name that honors an American Civil War veterans association.

US 30 is part of the historic Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental improved highway for automobiles across the United States of America. US 12 from Gary eastward is part of Dunes Highway, a connection between Gary and Michigan. US 41 runs north and south through Lake County, connecting the county to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Florida. US 231 also runs north and south through Lake County, starting in St. John connecting to Florida.

State Road 53 is known locally as Broadway and also the Carolyn Brown Mosby Memorial Highway. State Road 51 is also known as the Adam Benjamin Memorial Highway. State Road 912, or Cline Avenue, from US 12 north and westward is known as the Highway Construction Workers Memorial Highway. State Road 2 in the southern part of the county, starts at the Illinois border and runs east-west through the Town of Lowell all the way to South Bend, Indiana. State Road 55 starts in Gary and runs south to the Crawfordsville area in Central Indiana.

### **Railroads**

There are several passenger and freight rail lines that operate through Lake County. Amtrak, a publicly funded railroad service operated and managed as a for-profit corporation for passenger movement, has a main hub in Chicago. Amtrak operates 374 trains per day and connects 896 destinations in 46 states. There are two Amtrak stations in Lake County: the Hammond-Whiting Station and the Dyer Station, with a planned station for Lowell, Indiana.

There are several Class I railways that cross through Lake County, including the Canadian National Railway, CSX Transportation, and the Norfolk Southern Railway.

Class III lines include the Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Eastern Railroad, the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad, the Gary Railway, and the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad. The Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Eastern Railroad is a short line railroad offering service from Tolleston, Indiana to Crestline, Ohio over the former Fort Wayne Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Traffic on the line includes grain, lumber products, chemicals, and steel. The Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad is known to many as the South Shore Line. This line is a Class III freight railroad operating between Chicago and South Bend, Indiana. The railroad serves as a link between

Class I railroads and local industries in northeast Illinois and northwest Indiana. The Gary Railway is a class III switching carrier for local steel supply. The railway's primary customer is US Steel Works in Gary. However, it also serves additional steel processing groups. The Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad is a Class III railroad in the United States. The line starts northwest of Chicago in Franklin Park, Illinois traveling southeast around the city to its headquarters in Hammond, Indiana. The Gibson Yard, located in Hammond, is possibly the largest auto-switching operation in the United States.

#### Airports

There are five airports in Lake County. The two larger airports include the Gary/Chicago International Airport and the Griffith-Merrillville Airport. The Gary/Chicago International Airport is a joint civil-military airport in Gary, Indiana and is owned and operated by the Gary/Chicago International Airport Authority. The Griffith-Merrillville Airport is a public airport located just east of Griffith, and is owned by Griffith Aviation. The smaller airports include the Hobart Sky Ranch Airport, a public-use airport near Hobart, the Johnson's Strawberry Farm Airport, a private-use airport near Hobart, and the Lowell Airport, a public-use airport in Lowell.

#### Bus Lines and Public Transit

The Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Authority and the Gary Public Transportation Corporation offer commuter bus systems in Lake County. The Gary Public Transportation Corporation offers numerous stops throughout the Gary and neighboring suburbs, while the Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Authority runs bus service in both Lake and Porter Counties. National transit services available to Lake County residents include Greyhound Lines.

#### Utilities

Lake County has a mix of public utilities and private utilities. The following is a summary of utilities available:

- Electricity/Gas: Northern Indiana Public Service Company;
- Water: Indiana American Water Company, Dyer Water Works, East Chicago Water Department, Hammond Water Works, Hebron Water Department, Highland Water District, Lowell Water Department, Munster Water, Schererville Water; St. John Water District, Whiting City Water Department, Winfield Water Works;
- Sewage: Cedar Lake Sewer, Dyer Sanitary, East Chicago Sanitary, Gary Sanitary District, Hammond Sanitary, Highland Sanitary, Lake Station Sanitary, St. John Sanitary, Whiting Sanitary, St. John Sanitary;
- Telephone: AT&T, NITCO;
- Cellular Phone: AT&T, Sprint, US Cellular, T-Mobile, Verizon Wireless;
- Internet: AT&T-DLS, Comcast, NITCO, Wide Open West.

#### Cultural Features

##### Festivals and Events

There are several festivals and events that take place in Lake County. One of the oldest events is the annual Lake County Fair. In 1852, the Lake County Agricultural Society started the fair as a way to showcase the achievements of agriculture in the county. Agriculture continues to be the theme, but the fair has evolved to include carnival entertainment, exciting grandstand shows, horse shows, farm animals, a fireworks show, petting zoo, great food, and contests for kids and adults. Other notable festival and events include the following:

**Pierogi Fest:** Pierogi Fest, the pride of the City of Whiting, is an opportunity for the residents to celebrate their heritage while poking a little fun at themselves. Besides lots of pierogi and an array of food vendors, the festival features a one-of-a-kind parade featuring women dressed in housecoats and babushkas like grandmothers, the lawnmower brigade in sandals and socks, plus Mr. Pierogi and Ms. Paczki.

**Festival of the Lakes:** The City of Hammond's annual Festival of the Lakes is five days of fun and entertainment on Wolf Lake, Lake George, and Lake Michigan. Taking place in July, the festival includes popular music acts, special events like the Fishing Derby and Polka Party, fair rides, games, and food vendors.

**A Christmas Story Festival:** Each year in the winter, the Indiana Welcome Center has a festival and exhibit inspired by the short stories and movie, A Christmas Story. Written by Jean Shepard, a native of Hammond, A Christmas Story focuses on his experiences while growing up in the area. The exhibit focuses on six animatronic window displays from Macy's Department Store in New York featuring different scenes of the iconic movie.

**Crown Point St. Patrick's Day Parade:** The City of Crown Point hosts a lighted night parade that features 32 entries representing the 32 counties of Ireland. The downtown area is decorated with green lights and window displays.

**The Legend of Sleepy Hollow at Buckley Homestead:** This unique four-day participatory outdoor theatre presentation is based on the classic short story by Washington Irving. The audience is guided into the past as they meet the townsfolk in search of Ichabod Crane who will happily share tales and legends like that of the Headless Horseman. This annual event is often sold out in the first few hours that tickets become available.

## Music and Arts

The South Shore Arts and Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra are located at The Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Munster, Indiana.

South Shore Arts champion the artistic identity of the South Shore by providing youth outreach, education for all ages, exhibitions, and regional arts services. South Shore Arts has been improving the quality of life along the South Shore for over 75 years. South Shore Arts conducts over 400 classes each year in all media for all ages, including ceramics, photography, painting, drawing, cartooning, and acting.

Since 2008, South Shore Arts has managed the Northwest Indiana Symphony. The Northwest Indiana Symphony is dedicated to providing quality orchestral programming that promotes opportunities for enjoyment and expands interest in and understanding of diverse music. The Symphony is comprised of the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra, the Northwest Indiana Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Northwest Indiana Symphony Chorus, and the Women's Association.

## Social and Economic Features

### Population

Lake County's population of 488,694 makes it the second most populous county in the State of Indiana. According to the US Census Bureau, Lake County's population peaked in the 1970's and experienced a sharp decline until the early 2000's. After the

LAKE COUNTY  
 2013-2017 ACS Est Total Population  
**488,694**  
 2010 US Census Total Population  
**496,005**  
 Change in Population  
**-1.5%**

2000's, the County started to experience a slow growth in population. This pattern reflects the County's economic transition from a manufacturing to more service-related industries. Recent population estimates from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) indicate the population of Lake County is once again in decline.

Consistent with the past two Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan updates, the central and south county areas have experienced the highest growth as new subdivisions and accompanying commercial development continue. The industrial

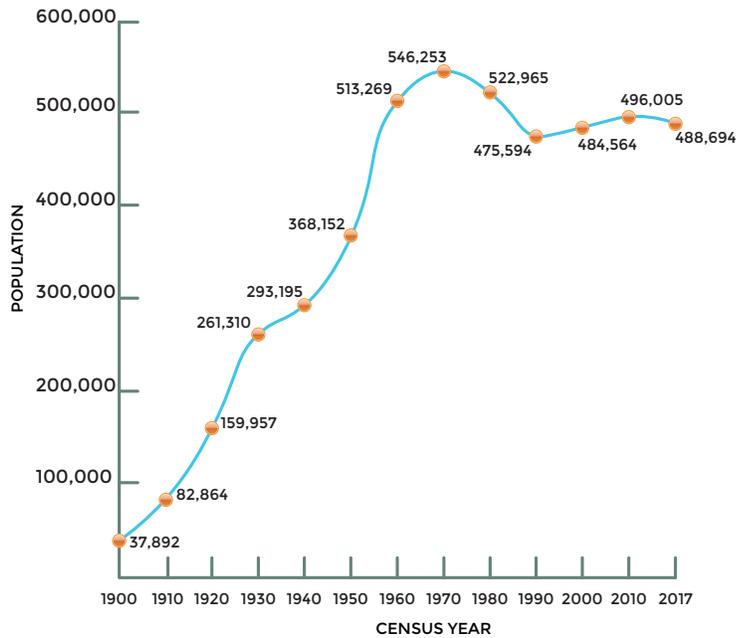


FIGURE 2.5: POPULATION CHANGE

area in the northwest part of Lake County continues to decline in population.

**Age Distribution**

According to the 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, the median age in Lake County is 39.4, an increase of two years since the 2010 US Census, and 3.5 years since the 2000 US Census. The aging population will play a role in determining amenity and program needs for Lake County residents. As with the last Park Plan update, higher activity levels of the baby boom generation will need to be considered.

**Race Distribution**

Consistent with the last two plan updates, the majority of the Lake County population remains White

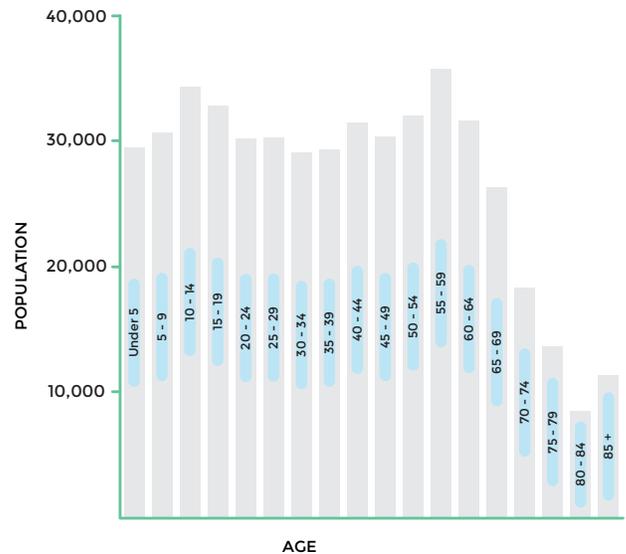


FIGURE 2.6: AGE DISTRIBUTION

LAKE COUNTY  
 Median Age  
**39.4**

(54.5%) yet the minority population continues to grow (45.5%). Black individuals make up the largest minority group (23.9%) although the Hispanic population continues to grow (18.4%).

The race of the population is important when determining certain needs in recreation. With data pointing to a growing Hispanic population in Lake County, the parks department should be ensuring printed materials, digital materials, and programs are available in Spanish.

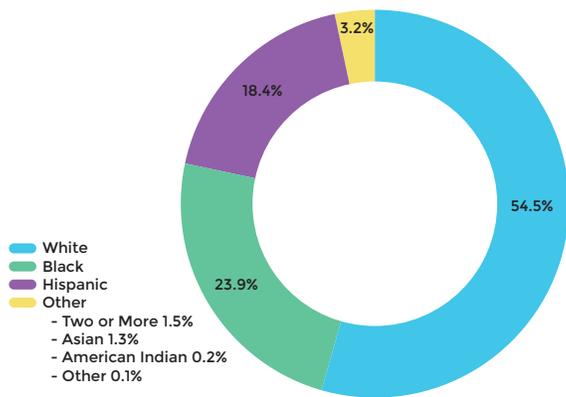


FIGURE 2.7: RACE DISTRIBUTION

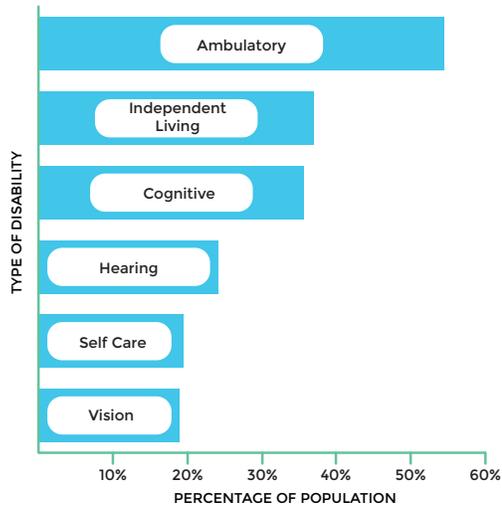
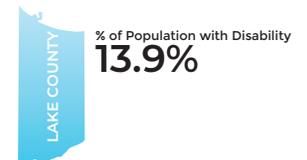


FIGURE 2.8: DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION

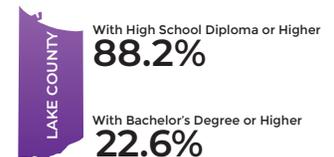
### Disability

A disability is defined as a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition that impedes a person from being able to go to work or to go outside the home unassisted. Disabilities make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. Because of these effects, persons with disabilities may need special accommodations. Approximately 13.9% of Lake County’s population has a disability, which is similar to the State of Indiana at 13.8%. The most common disability is an ambulatory disability (8.1%), which means the individual has a physical and permanent disability to such a degree that the person is unable to move from place to place without the aid of a wheelchair.



### Educational Attainment

The 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates indicates the percentage of adults living in Lake County who are a high school graduate or higher is 88.2 percent, which has increased since the last Park Plan update (86.7%). Approximately 22.6% have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is up from 19.7% in the last Park Plan update. This means that Lake County is becoming more educated, which can mean higher incomes and more leisure time.



The administration of public schools in Lake County is divided among 16 corporations and governing bodies, more than any other Indiana county. These school districts include the following:

- Crown Point Community School Corporation;
- Gary Community School Corporation;
- Griffith Public Schools;

- Hanover Community School Corporation;
- Lake Central School Corporation;
- Lake Ridge School Corporation;
- Lake Station Community Schools;
- Merrillville Community School Corporation;
- River Forest Community School Corporation;
- School City of East Chicago;
- School City of Hammond;
- School City of Hobart;
- School City of Whiting;
- School Town of Hammond;
- School Town of Munster;
- Tri-Creek School Corporation.

Schools provide special opportunities for partnerships and volunteers for park departments and park systems. The Lake County Parks and Recreation should continue to foster positive relationships with the many school districts in Lake County.

#### Higher Education

There are a variety of institutions which provide opportunities for technical education as well as fully accredited college degree programs located within Lake County. These institutions include the following:

- Calumet College of St. Joseph (Whiting/Merrillville);
- Commonwealth Business College (Merrillville);
- Davenport College (Merrillville)
- Hyles Anderson College (Crown Point);
- Indiana University Northwest (Gary);
- Ivy Tech State College (Gary/East Chicago);
- Kaplan College (Hammond);
- Purdue University Northwest (Hammond)

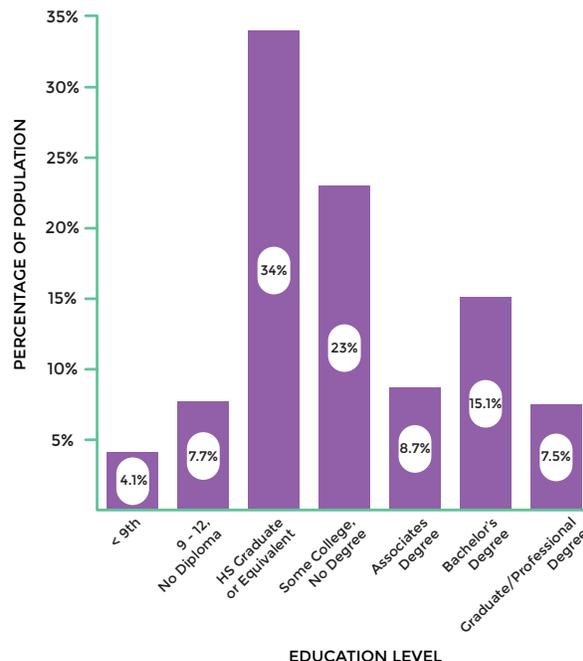


FIGURE 2.9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Like public school districts, institutions of higher learning offer unique opportunities for partnerships, projects, and volunteers to the park department and park system. Lake County Parks and Recreation should work to identify opportunities to develop deeper relationships with these institutions that provide mutual benefits.

#### Employment and Unemployment

The 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates indicate that 61.5% of the population 16 and older are in the labor force. Approximately 8.5% are unemployed, which is slightly higher than the unemployment rate in the last Park Plan update, which was at 7%.

The majority of the employed population in Lake County works in management, business, science and arts occupations (30.0%). Sales and office occupations account for 23.5%, and service occupations account for 21.9%. Production, transportation, and material moving occupations account for 17.8% of occupations, and natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations account for the remainder of the employed population at 9.5%. The percentage breakdown is similar to that of the last Park Plan update, which indicates that occupations are steady in Lake County.

### Income

The 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates show that the median household income of Lake County is \$52,559, which is up from the last Park Plan update (\$49,315). Approximately 18.9% of households in Lake County have a household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999. The second largest group has a household income between \$35,000 and \$49,999, representing 13.9% of households. The third largest group has an annual household income between \$100,000 and \$149,999, representing 13.4% of households. This changed from the last Park Plan update, where the third largest income group had an annual household income between \$75,000 and \$99,999. This may indicate that the higher education levels are translating into higher incomes in Lake County.

### Housing

According to the 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, there were a total of 211,379 housing units within Lake County, which is a 1.2% from the last Park Plan update. Approximately 87.8% of these units are occupied, leaving a 12.2% vacancy rate. Of the occupied units, 69.3% are owner-occupied and 30.7% are renter-occupied. These numbers are steady from the

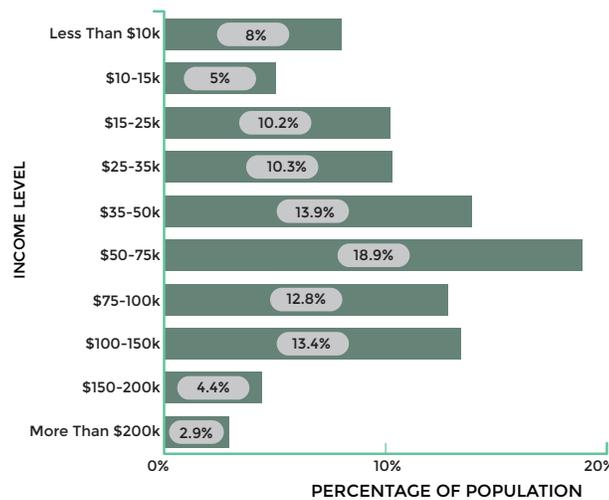


FIGURE 2.10: INCOME DISTRIBUTION

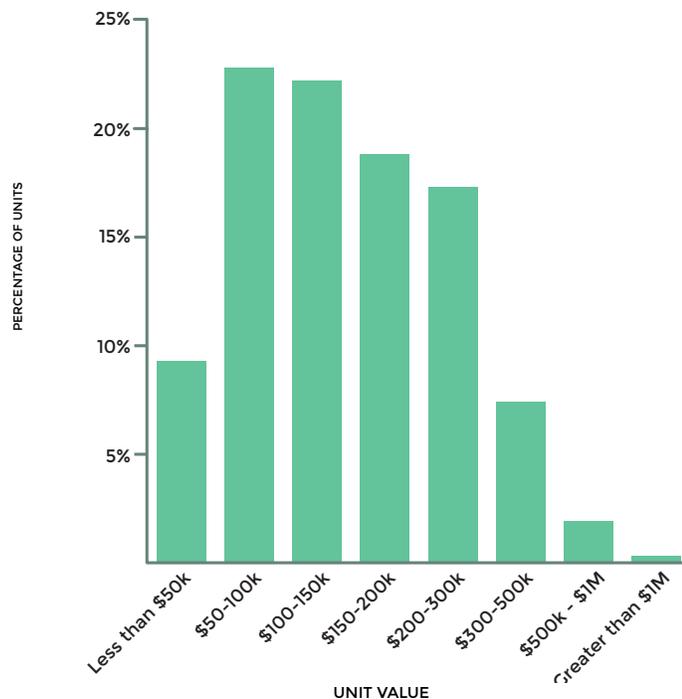
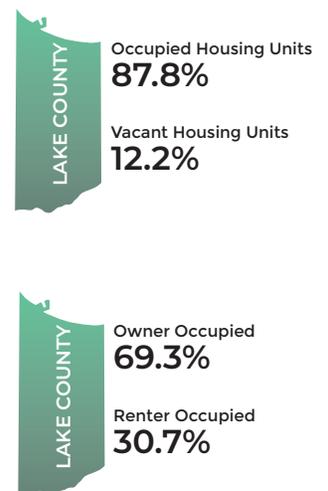


FIGURE 2.11: HOUSING VALUES





# LAKE COUNTY PARKS + RECREATION

2020-2024 MASTER PLAN

GET OUT. GO PLAY. EXPLORE.



Median Home Value

**\$140,100**

last Park Plan update.

The median value of owner-occupied units is \$140,100. Most homes in Lake County hold a value between \$50,000 and \$99,999 (22.8%) followed closely by homes holding a value between \$100 - \$149,000 (22.2%).

# Supply Analysis



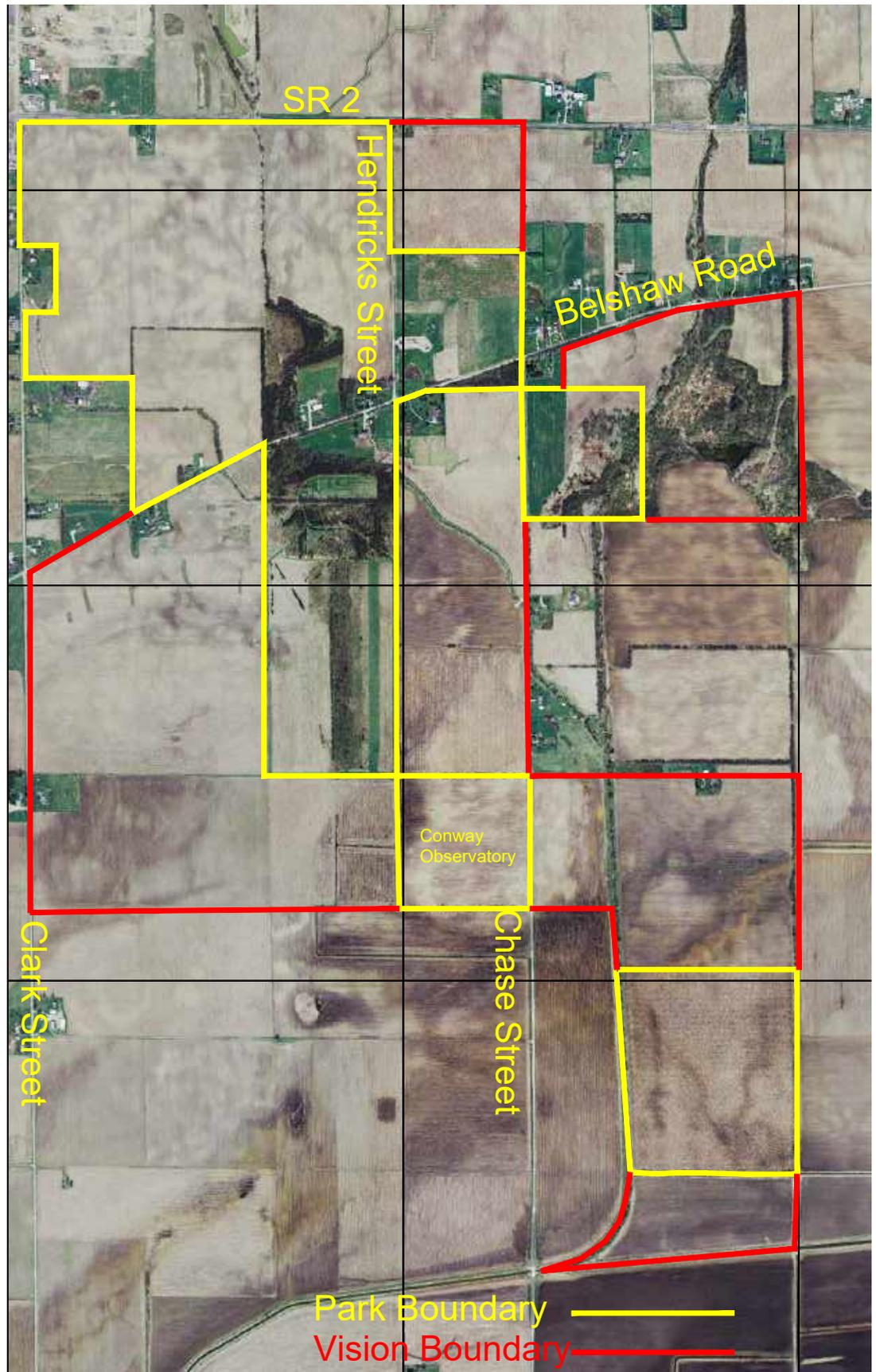


FIGURE 3.1: Buckley Homestead Living History Farm, current and vision boundaries.

## **Buckley Homestead Living History Farm**

3606 Belshaw Road, Lowell, Indiana 46356

575 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.283566,-87.377509

### **Park Description**

When Dennis and Catherine Buckley first settled in Northwest Indiana in 1849 they would never have imagined that their farmstead would one day be of interest to visitors one hundred and fifty plus years into the future. The Buckley's were immigrants who fled Ireland during the Potato Famine with their four children. In 1977, part of the homestead was donated by Rose Buckley Pearce, great granddaughter of Dennis and Catherine, to the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department so that park visitors could experience the sights, sounds, and smells of early farm life through a living history outdoor museum. Later, upon her passing, Mrs. Pearce's estate donated the remaining acres to the Park Department. The Buckley Homestead had remained in family ownership continually from the middle 1800s until donated to the Park Department in 1977. The historic traditions, culture, and heritage of farming life during the 19th and early 20th centuries continue to be kept alive on this living history farm. Buckley represents three historical time periods; 1910s farmhouse and barn, a turn of the century schoolhouse, and 1850s era pioneer farm. A self-guided trail directs visitors through each of these three historic settings when interpreters are not available.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To preserve the rural heritage of southern Lake County, Indiana;
- To preserve historical properties and facilities with primary emphasis on those listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- To provide passive and active recreational experiences;
- To promote educational experiences through historical interpretation utilizing historical buildings and artifacts;
- To develop support facilities that would limit crossing public roads;
- To develop support facilities to better serve senior citizens and bus tours;
- To develop facilities and programs focusing on the dairy operation during the years the Buckley family dairy-farmed, and to incorporate cultural and social changes of the movement from small family farms to large-scale farm operations.

### **Current Programs**

The main house museum and supporting historical buildings serve as the perfect setting for programs like basket workshops, historical doll displays, sheep shearing, weaving, spinning, and farm-related activities like threshing. Special events like the annual Fall Festival in October bring both residents and visitors to the farmstead. The popular Legend of Sleepy Hollow combines visitor participation in the theater-like performances. Traditional programs include the ever-popular school group educational tours that primarily focus on Indiana history utilizing the 1850's pioneer log farm, the turn-of-the-century one room schoolhouse, and the 1910 barn and farmyard. Daylong Hands-On Pioneer Experiences where school groups "work on the farm" are booked to capacity. Winter does not mean closing the park. Instead, horse-drawn bobsled rides are offered in January and February when snow and ice conditions permit. Non-historic programs include the Buckley 5 Miler running race co-hosted by the Lowell Park Department. This combination of hard surface cross-country race was voted best new race by the Calumet Striders in its second year.



FIGURE 3.2: Cedar Creek Family Golf Center, current and vision boundaries.

## **Cedar Creek Family Golf Center**

10483 West 109th Avenue, Cedar Lake, Indiana 46303

84 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.420964,-87.460552

### **Park Description**

In 2005, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department acquired the Cedar Creek Family Golf Center at a time when more and more golf courses were being sold for development. This short course is used for instructional purposes, with special interest on youth instruction. It is also popular with beginner golfers and for those who no longer wish to play on a long course like Turkey Creek.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To provide a golf course friendly to beginners and those who are no longer able or wish to play a long course;
- To provide recreational opportunities and revenue generation by programming the mini golf course and promoting birthday parties and other uses of the party room;
- To develop programming that attracts small businesses to utilize the facilities.

### **Current Programs**

The lighted driving range with more than 15,000 square feet of bluegrass tees and 20 artificial “golfer friendly” turf mats can accommodate about 50 golfers at one time. The nine-hole executive course consists of five par 3’s and four par 4’s for a length of 1,742 yards from the white tees and 1,606 from the red tees for a par of 31.

The mini golf course is an 18-hole adventure style miniature golf course which allows all members of the family to get into the action. The mini-golf course is used for group activities, birthday parties, and family outings. Lighting is available for nighttime play.

During the month of October, the clubhouse and the mini golf course are decorated in a Halloween theme. Many groups take advantage of the festive atmosphere to host their parties.

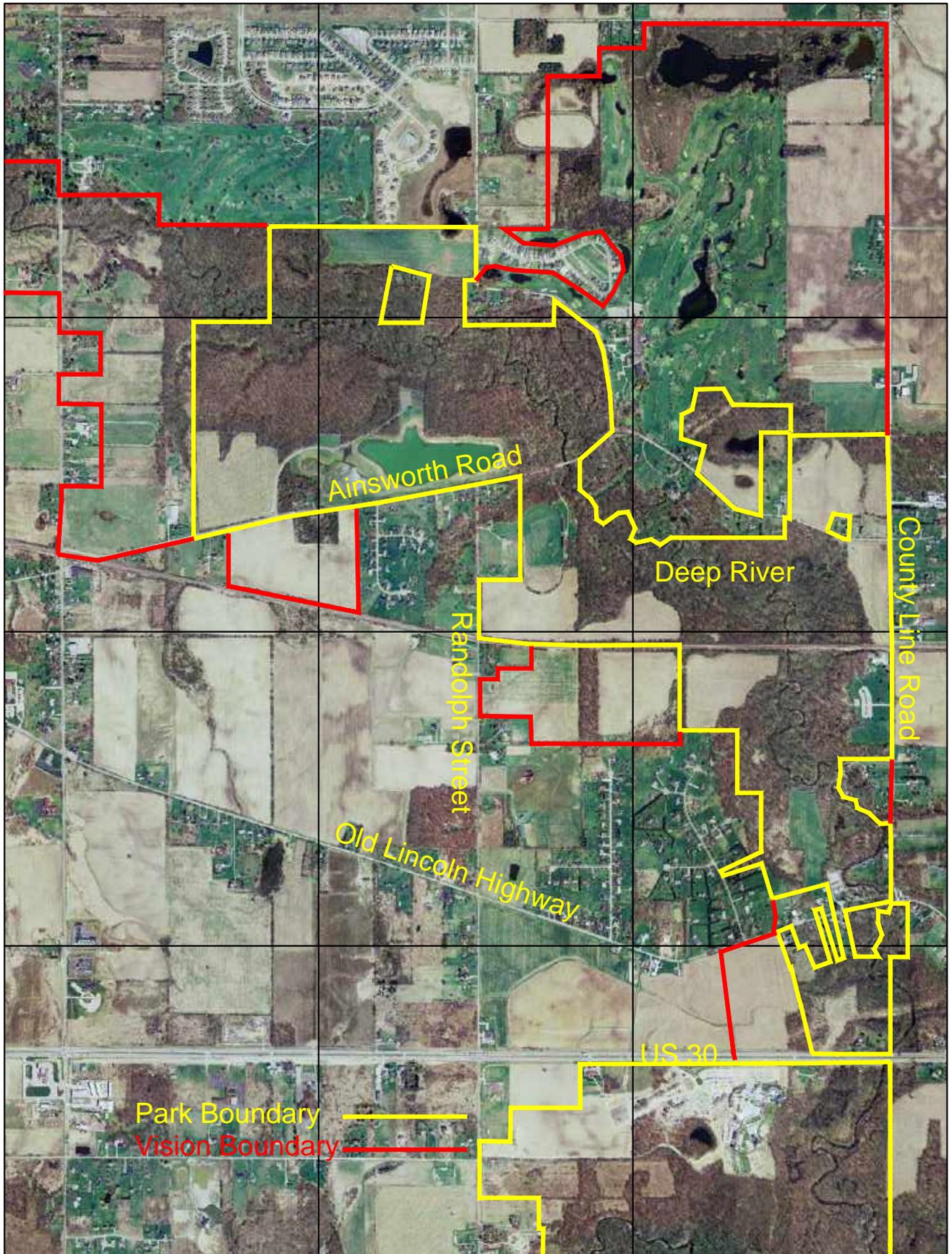


FIGURE 3.3: Deep River County Park - North, current and vision boundaries.

## **Deep River County Park - North**

9410 Old Lincoln Highway, Hobart, Indiana 46342

738 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.475944,-87.222285 (Deep River Wood's Historic Grist Mill);  
41.483097,-87.22008 (Deep River County Line Road Picnic Area)

### **Park Description**

The tremendous natural and historic resources at Deep River County Park allow for a varied and expanded program scope. Wood's Historic Grist Mill and the surrounding area provide the perfect setting to host hundreds of school groups from May through October. Special programs, like Maple Syrup in March, provide educational programs for both reserved groups and the public in general at a time when the historic buildings would not ordinarily be open. Many programs are designed for youngsters ranging from preschool age through middle school. Others, like leaf identification workshops, night hikes, perennial plant swaps, tree pruning workshops, and visits to the greenhouses are especially appreciated by those looking for a connection to nature. The arts are also an important feature of programming at Deep River County Park. The third floor of the grist mill houses art exhibits throughout the season and several friendship quilts sewn by staff and volunteers since 1979 are on display. Deep River staff hosts monthly photography club meetings. While the programming scope changes from year to year, traditional activities like non-reserved hayrides and Campfire Chillers remain exceptionally popular. Highlighting the epitome of historical interpretation in the form of "living history" are the Deep River Grinders, a vintage baseball club nine player team that draws competitors and fans from a four-state area. A short distance away, Deep River Waterpark, part of the Deep River County Park campus, is a full-service family water facility that functions as its own program seasonally.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To develop and operate an urban recreational destination utilizing the natural resources of Deep River County Park and the surrounding topography, which includes Wood's Historic Grist Mill and support buildings, miles of trails, County Line picnic grove, Big Maple Lake, and Deep River Waterpark;
- To present an historical overview of early Lake County industry using Wood's Historic Grist Mill as the centerpiece of educational programming designed around STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) concepts;
- To preserve historical properties and facilities with primary emphasis on those listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Current Programs**

Deep River County Park provides a number of passive and active recreation opportunities, including shelter rentals, a wedding gazebo, gardens, picnicking, volleyball, horseshoe pits, and trails. Programs and activities are scheduled at Wood's Historic Grist Mill and Visitor Center, Saw Mill, Sugar Shack, and the Grinder baseball field. Other programs include reserved school group field trips, weekend special programs, and the Lake County Parks photography club. Horseback riding is also accessible from the County Line or Sulky Track areas.

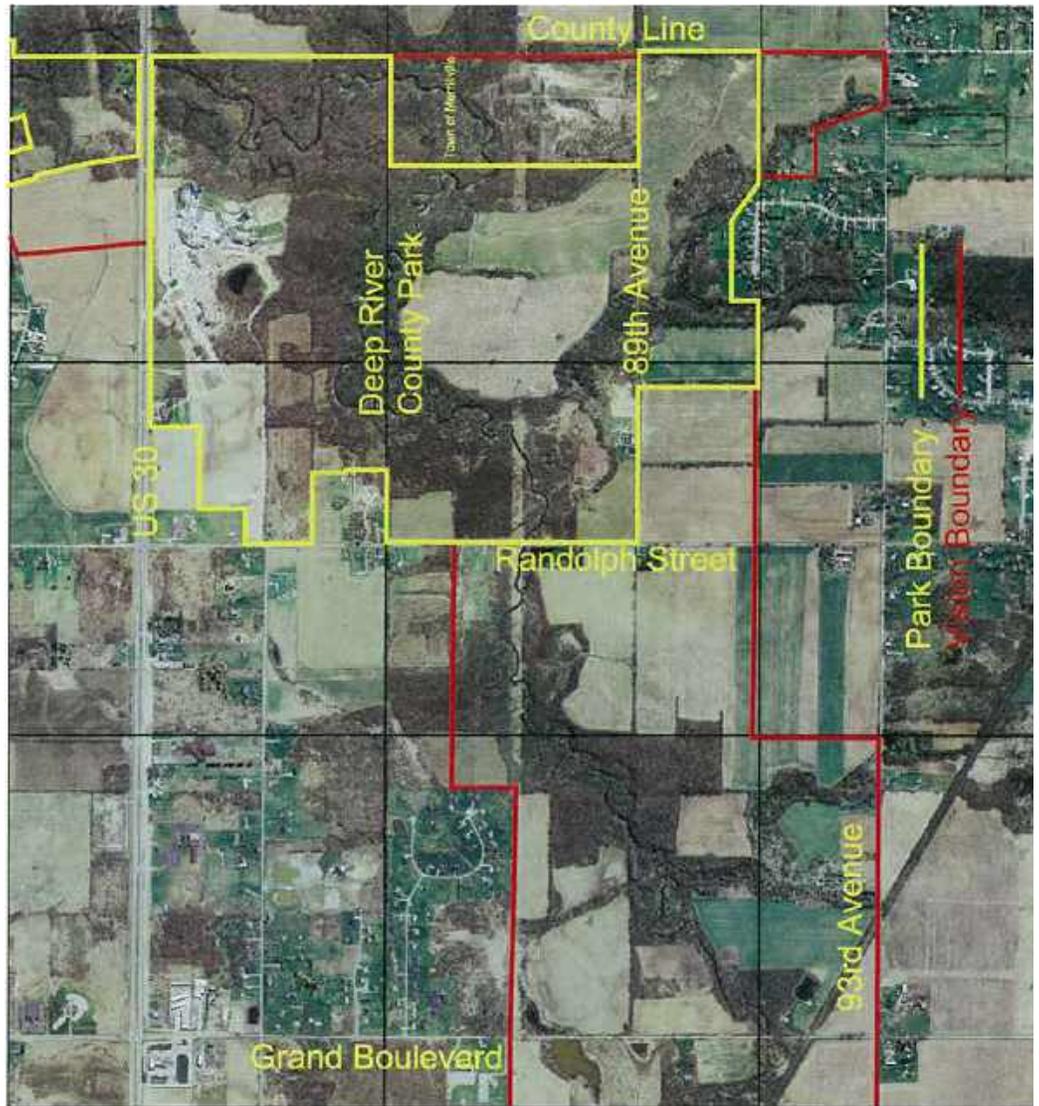


FIGURE 3.4: Deep River County Park - South, current and vision boundaries.



## **Deep River County Park - South**

9001 East US Route 30, Crown Point, Indiana 46307

689 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.47063,-87.230138

### **Park Description**

Attracting approximately 250,000 visitors a year, Deep River Waterpark is a destination resort facility that attracts regular visitors from Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan due to its easy accessibility and expansive family features. The park includes twelve waterslides and two river rides in addition to a wave pool and a variety of other water features. There are areas designed specifically for young children as well as a birthday party area, café, volleyball courts, and a gift shop. The surfside café offers a nice quiet respite from the active areas of the park. The grounds are beautifully landscaped and well-maintained, making the park one of the best water parks in the entire region. There are numerous concessionaires providing a variety of food and drink. From the day after Thanksgiving through the last Sunday in February the ice skating plaza is open for public skating and reserved groups. The park is the largest revenue-generating facility for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department and employs more than 425 people annually. There is enough land area to undertake continued expansion as demand increases and resources are available. In addition to the waterpark, the site houses the corporate offices for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department, the Park Operations facility, and the Offices of Superintendent of Recreation and Special Facilities, making this area the central hub for all Departmental administrative functions. Future plans include a campground/lodging operation and a pedestrian bridge that spans US 30 to connect the north and south sides of Deep River Park.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To be a revenue generating facility that helps support and offset other parks and programming in the system.
- To be a major destination for the overall Deep River Park Site.
- To be a hub for administrative functions.

### **Current Programs**

Special offerings include American Red Cross Learn to Swim Lessons, the American Red Cross Youth Guard Start Program, and participation in the World Waterpark Association's World's Largest Swimming Lesson. Special programs include the annual Snowflake Skate for girls and their dolls and the Lake County Parks Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative's skating party for families with special needs.

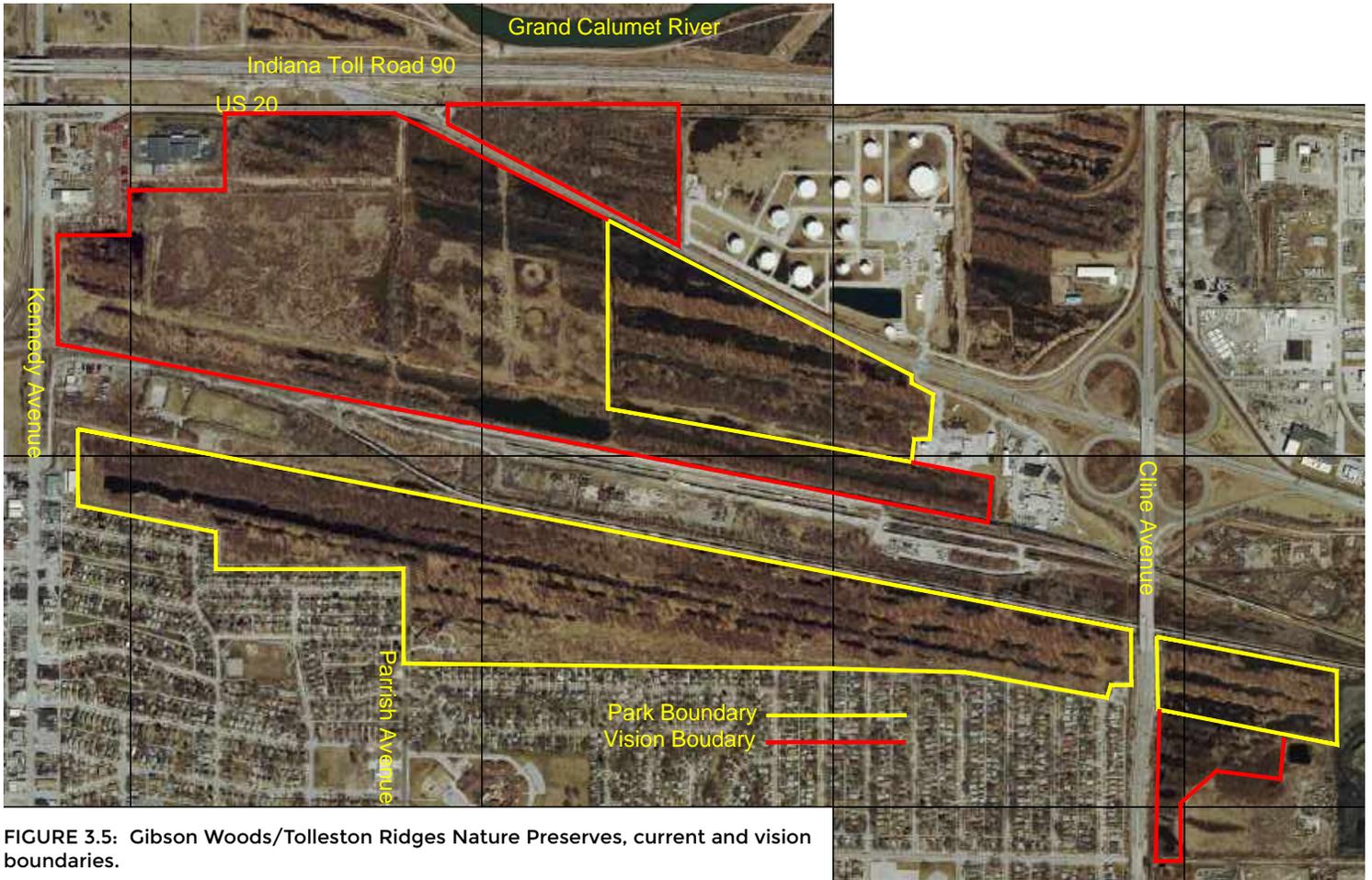


FIGURE 3.5: Gibson Woods/Tolleston Ridges Nature Preserves, current and vision boundaries.

## **Gibson Woods/Tolleston Ridges Nature Preserves**

6201 Parrish Avenue, Hammond, Indiana 46323

190 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.599352,-87.45186

### **Park Description**

While owned and operated by the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department, Gibson Woods and Tolleston Ridges are both state dedicated nature preserves due to the rare plants and animals found at these sites, some of which are listed as endangered and/or threatened species. This tract is a remnant of the very rare “dune and swale” topography formed thousands of years ago during the retreat of glacial Lake Chicago. Outside of the Indiana Dunes National Park, it contains the longest undissected dune ridge in Indiana. The Environmental Awareness Center features park-related exhibits such as an 8,000 year-old mastodon skeleton found in Lake County, live reptiles and amphibians, and educational displays. The wildlife viewing room remains one of the most popular locations in the Center.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To preserve the rare dune and swale topography of the park and to promote environmental awareness through a variety of educational programs.

### **Current Programs**

Programs at the park include topics focused on its ecology and historical development. Educational experiences include an indoor program combined with a hike into the dune and swale prairie. Programs are designed to fit the age and need of the school or other group. Nature programs like bird and wildflower walks are held throughout the year. Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, sponsored by the Lake County Parks Department, is an active volunteer group who assists in seed collection, cleaning, growing, and replanting. The popular Wild Ones Native Plant sale raises funds to support needs at the preserve. Birding 101 is a six-week series of workshops co-sponsored with the Dunes Calumet Audubon Society. Dozens of other programs are offered at Gibson Woods throughout the year.

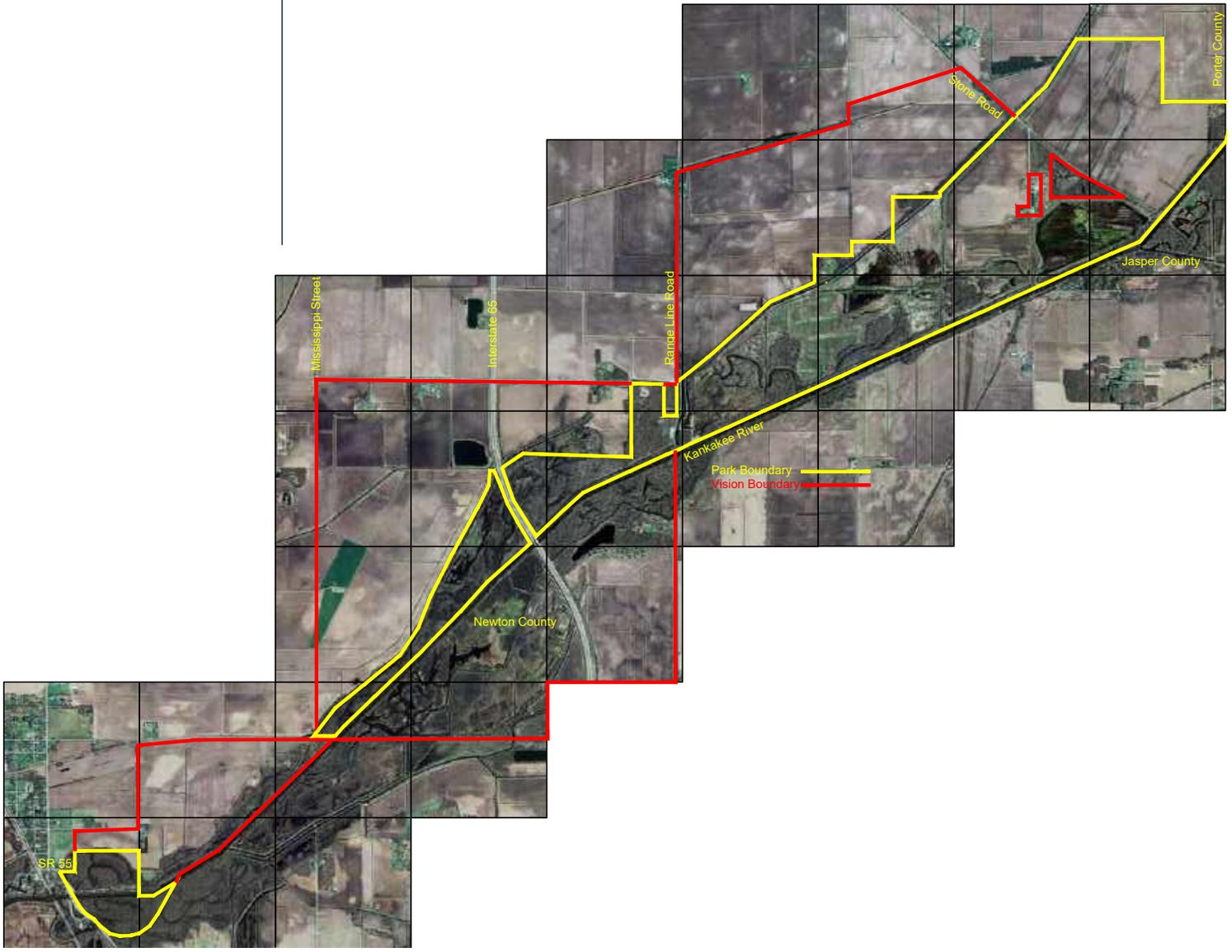


FIGURE 3.6: Grand Kankakee Valley Marsh County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## Grand Kankakee Valley Marsh County Park

21690 Range Line Road, Hebron, Indiana 46341

1959 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.220505,-87.276058

### Park Description

Located along the historic Kankakee River, the park is dynamically affected by seasonal flooding. This, along with different natural communities, provides ideal feeding in the fields for a variety of wildlife. Densely wooded areas and the remnants of old river channels provide excellent habitat for large deer herds, many species of ducks, and other wildlife. The Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park was acquired in 1977 with assistance from The Nature Conservancy. Through the years the marsh has been developed and managed for wildlife as well as public use. The careful management and regulation of hunting seasons has helped to make this property a noteworthy hunting area. Hunting, fishing, wildlife, and bird viewing make up the majority of recreation opportunities at the marsh. The levees are also heavily used as bridle trails.

### Park Site Objectives

Park site objectives include the following:

- To promote preservation and conservation of natural areas through habitat creation and restoration, flood retention, wildlife observation, and hunter education programming.

### Current Programs

For the past 30 years, the park has been the site of the annual Voyageur Rendezvous, a living history reenactment of the early French fur trade era that presents educational information in a colorful family-friendly atmosphere.



FIGURE 3.7: Lake Etta County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## Lake Etta County Park

4801 West 29th Avenue, Gary, Indiana 46406

103 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.566095,-87.396653

### Park Description

Lake Etta County Park is a partnership between the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department and the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission. This multi-use park site is one of the busiest facilities in the system partly due to its proximity to a major highway and partly because of the variety of recreational opportunities it offers. Lake Etta offers a variety of facilities and activities, including a swimming beach, fishing, picnic shelters, volleyball standards, a handicapped accessible playground, a three-season enclosed shelter, a full-service catered banquet hall, and an adjoining wedding pergola.

### Park Site Objectives

Park site objectives include the following:

- To provide active and passive recreational opportunities within an urban park site;
- To promote natural resources along the Little Calumet River.

### Current Programs

Various special programs such as the Korean and WWII War Veterans luncheon and the History Speaks Series are conducted in the Banquet Hall. G.O.A.L.S. (Go Outside and Learn Something) is a joint venture between the Lake County Purdue Extension Service, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the Lake County Parks targeted at youth who have limited opportunity to experience the out-of-doors and help them to focus on healthy lifestyles.

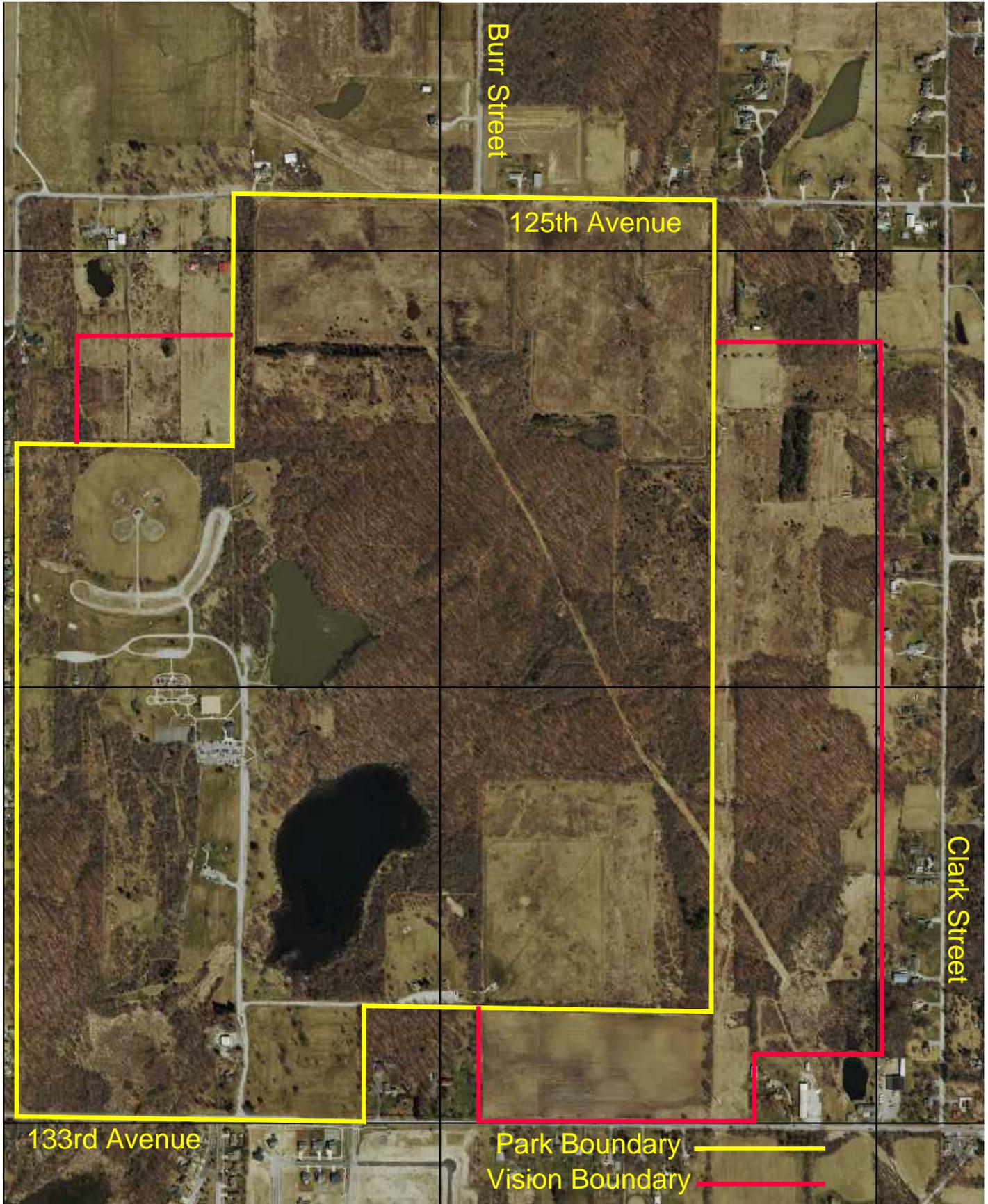


FIGURE 3.8: Lemon Lake County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## **Lemon Lake County Park**

6322 West 133rd Avenue, Crown Point, Indiana 46307

402 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.377023,-87.40723

### **Park Description**

At the 1972 March Park Board meeting, Lemon Lake County Park was named after the small marsh area that had historically been called by that name. Thus, Lemon Lake was the first Lake County Park opened to the public. Today, Lemon Lake County Park encompasses 403 acres of rolling hills and open space surrounded by wooded areas. A one-mile paved trail around the lake and more than five miles of primitive trails in hilly, wooded terrain provide a wonderful opportunity for a nature walk in the warmer months and cross country skiing in the winter. Lemon Lake County Park is more than passive recreation, however. It is home to softball fields, open play areas, a large creative playground, two sand volleyball courts, five 18-hole disc golf courses, fishing, picnicking, volleyball standards, and a 14 acre leash-free dog area.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To provide a variety of active recreational activities and facilities throughout the year;
- To highlight the natural areas of the park through trail promotion and educational activities.

### **Current Programs**

Lemon Lake is home to the Lemon Lake Flight Center, which hosts leagues, tournaments, and other events throughout the year. The Matt Lovasko Memorial “Homies” Tournament is held the second Sunday in October and hosts approximately 240 golfers.

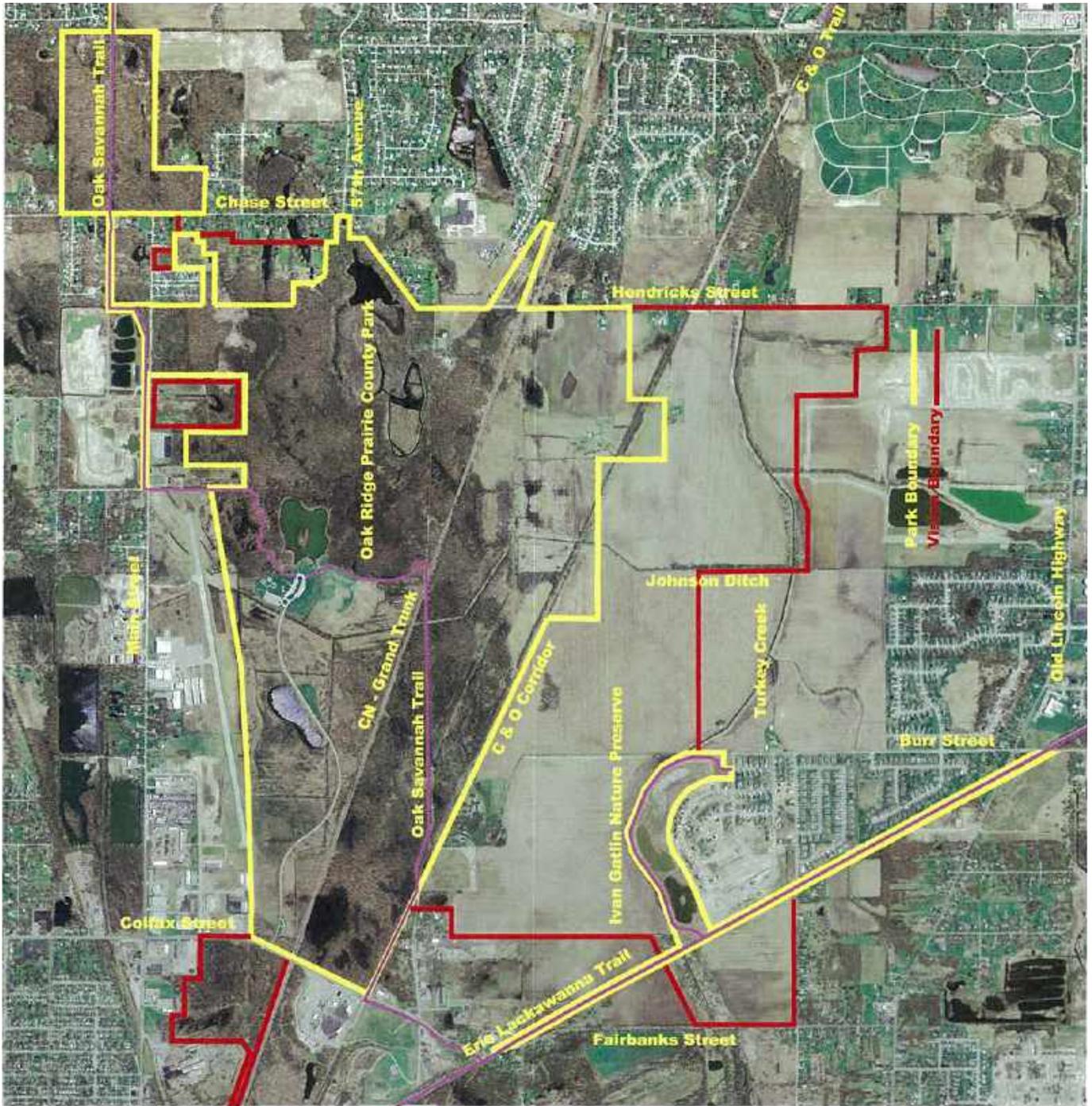


FIGURE 3.9: Oak Ridge Prairie County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## **Oak Ridge Prairie County Park**

301 South Colfax Street, Griffith, Indiana 46319

997 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.51769,-87.413623

### **Park Description**

Oak Ridge Prairie County Park had its humble beginnings as a truck farm. While much of the acreage on the west side of the park had been tilled, significant areas of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park are classified as pristine prairie. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department, through a land-management plan which includes prairie plantings and prescribed burnings, has restored hundreds of acres of the prairie. Oak Ridge Prairie County Park offers a variety of year-round activities, including a sledding hill and cross-country ski rentals in the winter, hayrides in the fall, and picnicking, playgrounds, volleyball, open play fields, and fishing in the spring and summer. The stocked fishing lake provides fishing from spring to November. The passive recreation aspects of Oak Ridge Prairie provide an excellent opportunity for bird and nature hikes as well as other educational activities.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To preserve existing significant natural areas and to restore designated disturbed areas;
- To utilize open space for passive and active recreational activities;
- To serve as the trailhead for the Oak Savannah Trail, a cross-country hiking and biking trail;
- To serve as a linking connector between the Erie Lackawanna and the Oak Savannah Trails.

### **Current Programs**

Special programs include the annual Woodcock Watch in the spring. In addition to the regular hayrides offered in September and October, Oak Ridge Prairie, through use of a specially designed handicap accessible ramp system and a custom locking mechanisms, is able to offer hayrides where participants remain in their wheelchair. The Lake County Parks, along with several other park and recreation department and volunteer organizations, is a member of the Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative (CSRI) dedicated to offering recreational opportunities to families with special needs.

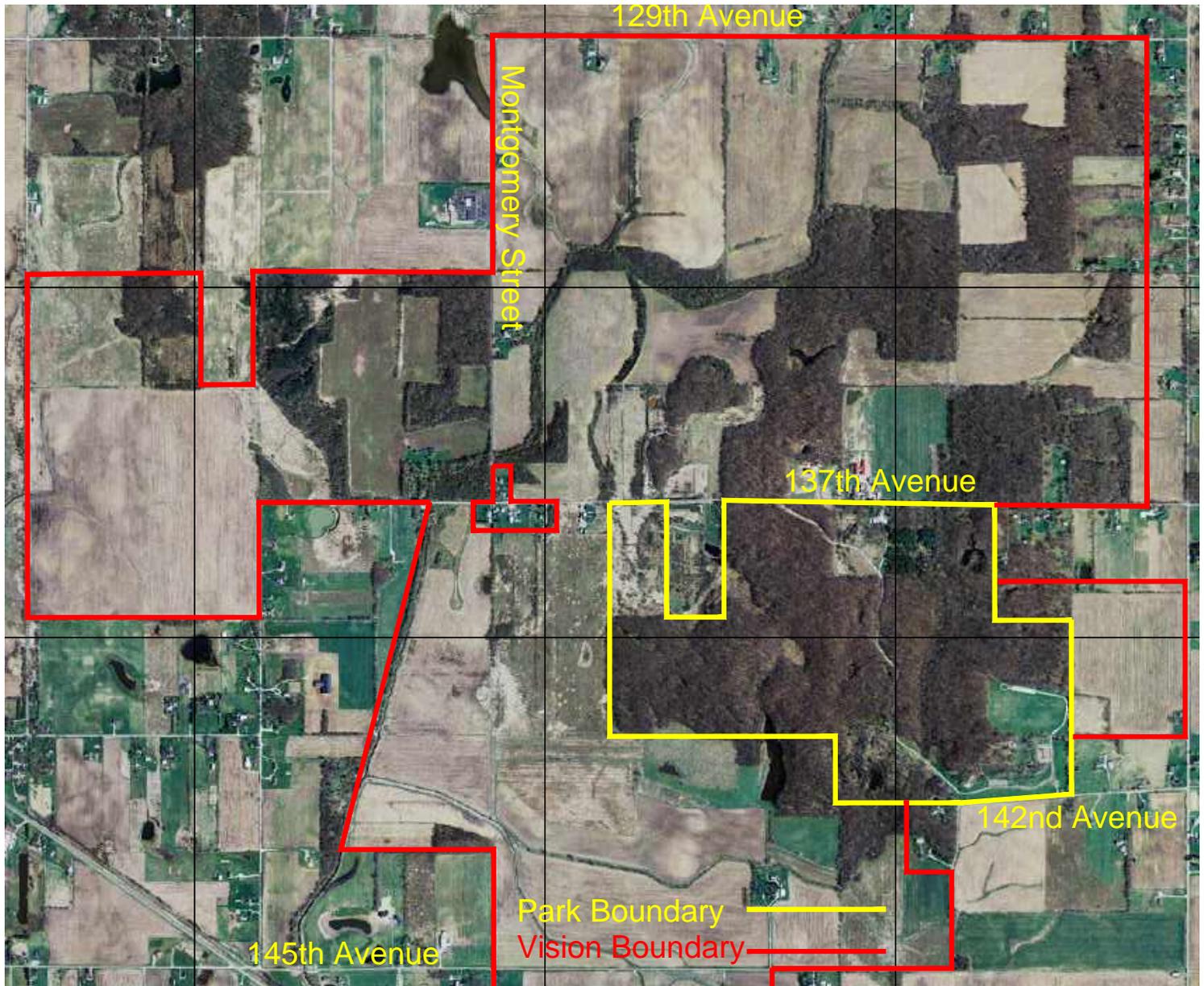


FIGURE 3.10: Stoney Run County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## **Stoney Run County Park**

9230 East 142nd Avenue, Hebron, Indiana 46341

317 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.359999,-87.225063

### **Park Description**

The great interior trails in the park provide a quiet opportunity for walking, hiking, or skiing in the winter. The perimeter trail provides an opportunity for equestrians to experience the beauty of this rural park site. It is the only park in the system where overnight group camping is permitted. A major attraction at the park is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, one of the oldest publicly owned monuments dedicated to Vietnam Veterans. A variety of recreational opportunities are available at Stoney Run County Park, including primitive group camping, picnic shelters, barbecue facilities, volleyball standards, a creative playground, fishing, horseback riding on the perimeter trail, and cross-country skiing.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To provide a variety of recreational opportunities, including overnight camping for not-for-profit reserved groups;
- To promote recognition of veterans at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

### **Current Programs**

Stoney Run County Park has cross-country ski rentals in the winter, geocaching, and services at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Volunteers host annual Memorial Day services in May and a Veterans Recognition Service on the Saturday prior to Veteran's Day in November.

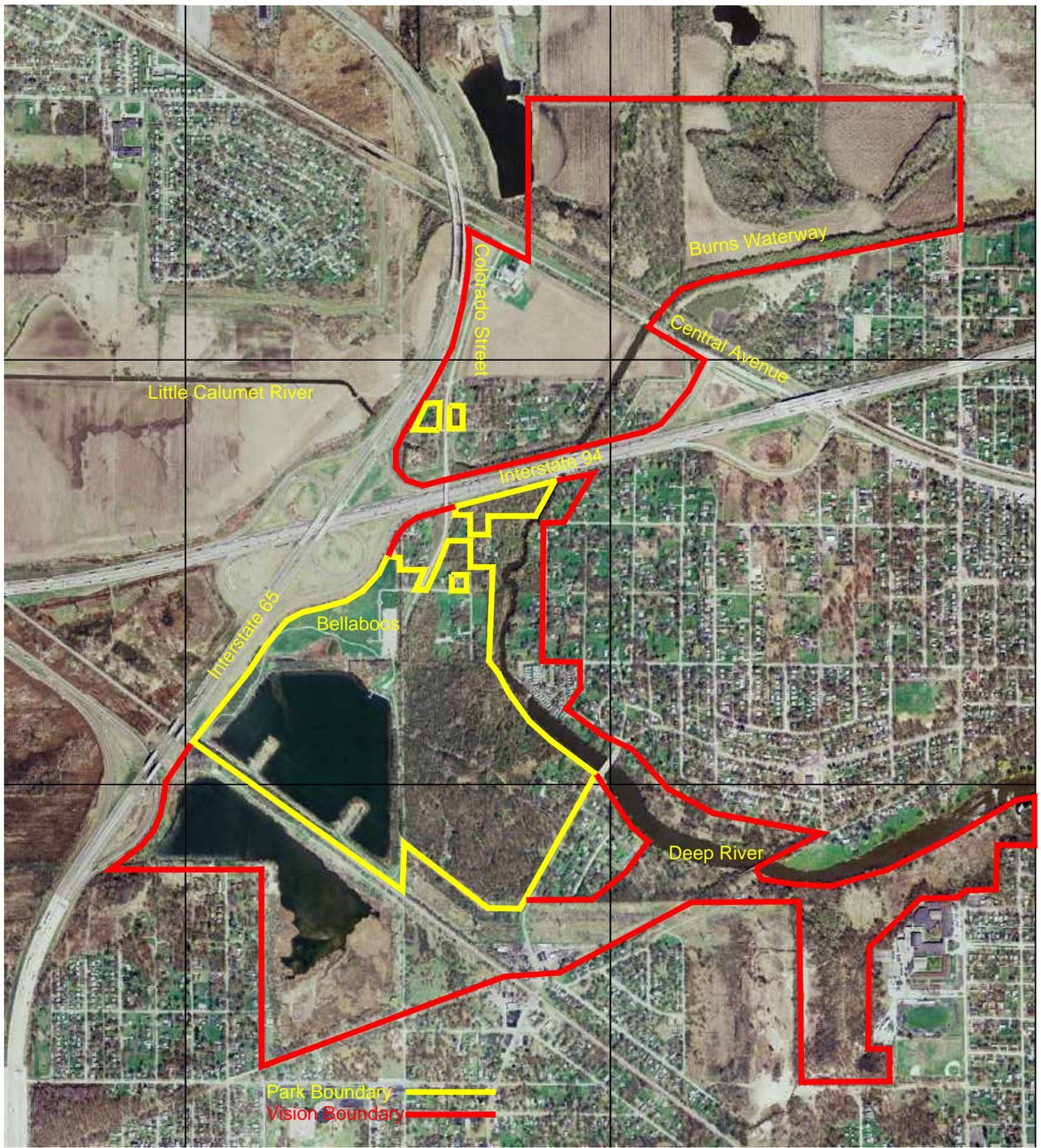


FIGURE 3.11: Three Rivers County Park, current and vision boundaries.

## **Three Rivers County Park**

2600 Nevada Street, Lake Station, Indiana 46405

146 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.567336,-87.297520

### **Park Description**

Because of its proximity to major highways and its high visibility from the roadways, Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center within Three Rivers County Park attracts the interest of passersby who are unaware of the special facility within the park site. The lake, trail, and surrounding areas remain active for general park visitors. Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center is designed especially for children from infancy through age nine, fitting play apparatus and facilities to appropriate sizes utilizing universal-design concepts. The colorful and imaginative center features 23,000 square feet of indoor hands-on activities with adjoining outdoor play areas. Self-guided play in child-sized supermarket, construction zone, and pizza parlor, for example, provide areas for children not only to interact with others, but to participate in dramatic play that stimulates intellectual growth. Additional elements include block play, do-it-yourself face painting, an art studio, dress-up, water tables, soft-contained play equipment, a reading room, children's do-it-yourself cooking, a performance area, and space just for infants and toddlers with developmentally-appropriate play activities. Separate from Bellaboo's are fishing, picnicking, and a hard surface walking trail open to the public.

### **Park Site Objectives**

Park site objectives include the following:

- To develop a varied passive and active recreational program in an urban park utilizing the resources of the lake and Deep River;
- To provide an opportunity specifically designed for children ages nine and younger leading to early learning experiences through play.

### **Current Programs**

Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center is heavily programmed throughout the year. Guided and self-guided group activities are available, and an annual summer camp is available.

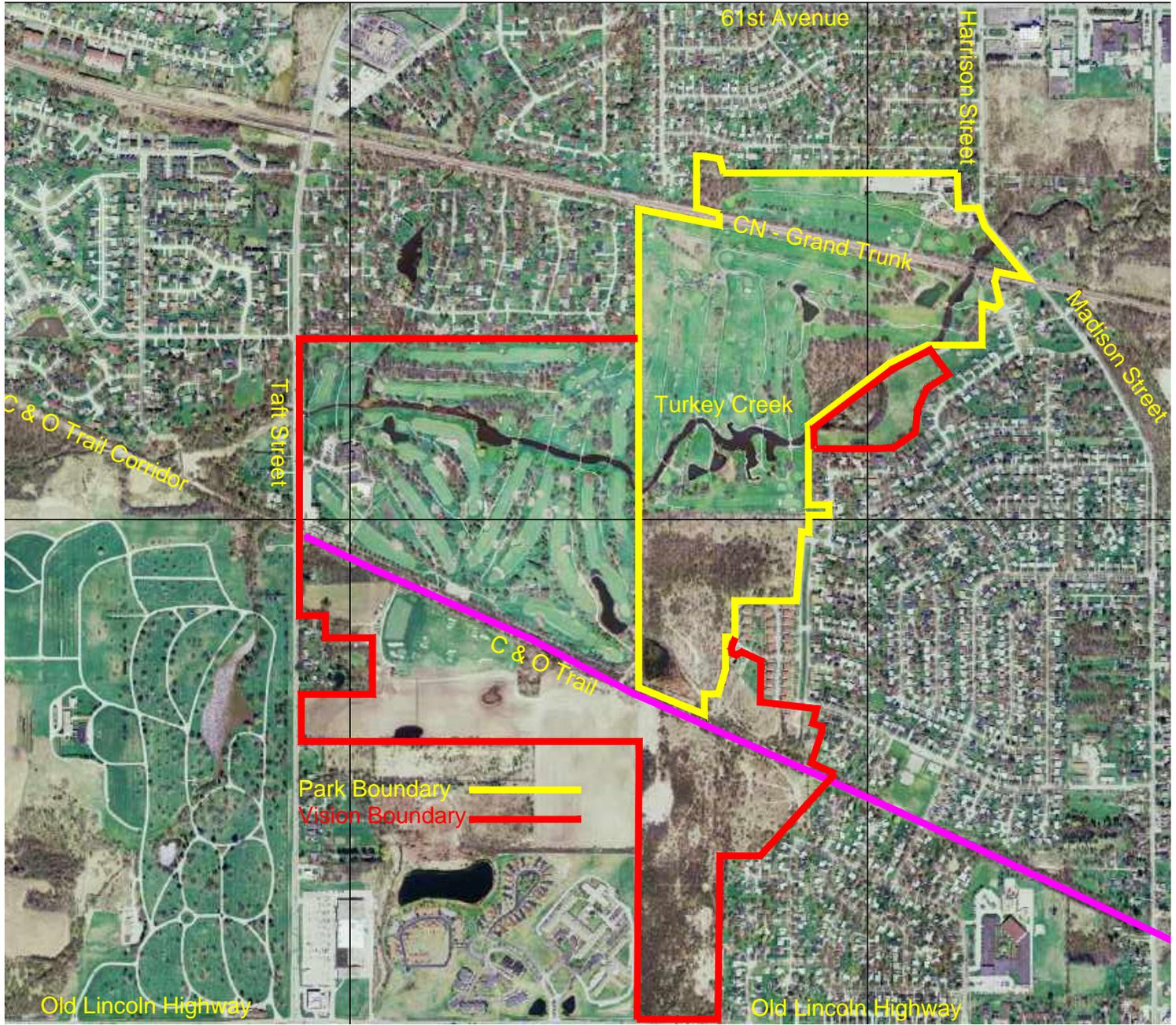


FIGURE 3.12: Turkey Creek Golf Course, current and vision boundaries.

## Turkey Creek Golf Course

6400 Harrison Street, Merrillville, Indiana 46410

153 Acres

GPS Coordinates: 41.502877,-87.345754

### Park Description

Turkey Creek is an 18-hole championship golf course with a pro shop, bar and clubhouse, food concession, and full-service catered banquet hall. The course rents electric golf carts and has an on-site cart and grounds maintenance facility.

### Park Site Objectives

Park site objectives include the following:

- To operate a public golf course designed to challenge low-handicapped golfers while introducing new golfers to the sport.

### Current Programs

Twilight walks are currently available in addition to the golf programming that happens on site.



## **Erie Lackawanna Trail**

56 Acres; 17.9 Miles

### **Trail Description**

The Erie Lackawanna Trail begins at the Grand Calumet River in Hammond near the Sibley Street crossing of the Norfolk & Southern Railroad and ends near Summit Street in Crown Point. The Erie Lackawanna Bike Trail is a rails-to-trails project measuring 17.9 miles and passing through the municipalities of Hammond, Highland, Griffith, Schererville, and Crown Point. The trail can be used for hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, rollerblading, and is ADA accessible. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department manages 1.5 miles of the trail. The Towns of Griffith and Schererville and the City of Hammond manage other sections.

In the north, the bituminous trail travels through neighborhoods, passes by several schools, through several old town centers, and crosses active railroads and multi-lane streets. In the south, the trail has a different character as it passes through tranquil fields, wetlands, and neighborhoods. The width of the property in this section allowed the trail to be designed in a slightly sinuous pattern.

## **Oak Savannah Trail**

196 Acres; 10.25 Miles

### **Trail Description**

This multi-use trail begins at the Oak Ridge Prairie County Park in Griffith and extends north to former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad right-of-way. The Oak Savannah Trail proceeds east, straddling the Gary/Merrillville border into Hobart at Wisconsin Street. The current gap in Hobart is expected to be constructed within the next few years. From Route 130, Oak Savannah Trail proceeds northeast and ends at County Line Road. Here the trail connects with the Prairie Duneland Trail which continues northeast through Porter County.

The Oak Savannah Trail is aptly named in that it passes through historically oak dominated savannas that were maintained by periodic fires. Significant natural areas remain along the trail and are a huge asset to its character. The Oak Savannah Trail passes through Black Oak savannas, remnant prairies, wetlands, the Hobart Prairie Grove Unit addition of the Indiana Dunes National Park and Lake George. This ten-mile trail is used by hikers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, rollerbladers, and is ADA accessible.

Lake County Parks and Recreation System Summary Chart		Buckley Homestead Living History Farm	Cedar Creek Family Golf Center	Deep River County Park-North	Deep River County Park-South	Gibson Woods County Park	Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park
	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>1,959</b>
Active Recreation Facilities	Camping (Group)						
	Children's Play & Discovery Center						
	Cross Country Skiing						
	Disc Golf Course						
	Dog Park						
	Driving Range		x				
	Equestrian Trails			x			x
	Farm Animals	x					
	Fishing			x			x
	Golf Course		x				
	Hay Rides	x		x			
	Hiking Trail	x		x		x	
	Hunting						x
	Ice Skating				x		
	Miniature Golf Course		x				
	Playground			x			
	Sledding Hill						
	Sleigh Rides	x					
	Softball Field						
	Swimming						
	Trails (bicycling)						
Trails (walking)						x	
Volleyball Court							
Waterpark					x		
Passive Recreation Facilities	Historic Areas	x		x			
	Memorial						
	Natural Area Exhibits					x	
	Observatory	x					
	Picnic Areas	x		x	x	x	x
Recreation Support Facilities	Banquet Hall						
	Boat Launch						x
	Clubhouse		x				
	Concession Stand				x		
	Gazebo			x			
	Picnic Shelters	x		x	x		x
	Restrooms	x		x	x		x

Lake Etta County Park	Lemon Lake County Park	Oak Ridge Prairie County Park	Stoney Run County Park	Three Rivers County Park	Turkey Creek Golf Course	Erie Lacka- wanna Trail	Oak Savannah Trail
103	402	997	317	146	153	56	196
			x				
				x			
		x	x				
	x						
	x						
			x				
x	x	x	x	x			
					x		
		x	x				
	x	x	x				
x	x	x	x				
		x					
x							
		x		x		x	x
	x	x		x		x	x
	x						
			x				
		x					
x	x	x	x	x			
x					x		
					x		
x	x	x	x	x			
x	x	x	x		x		

## **Other Recreational Opportunities**

### **National Parks**

There is one national park in Lake County: the Indiana Dunes National Park. This national park hugs 15 miles of the southern shore of Lake Michigan and has much to offer. The 15,000 acre park has 45 miles of trails over rugged dunes, mysterious wetlands, sunny prairies, meandering rivers, and peaceful forests.

### **Indiana State Nature Preserves**

Hoosier Prairie in Schererville is a large remnant of the prairie landscape that was once common in northwest Indiana. This 1,547 acre site preserves the topographic and biotic diversity of the sand plains north of the Valparaiso Moraine. Plant diversity is exceptionally high here due to a wide range of moisture conditions. Sand rises support dry black oak savannas. Mesic sand prairie openings can be found on slopes between the rises and swales. Wet prairies, sedge meadows and marshes are scattered throughout the preserve in depressions and flats. Its size and plant diversity make Hoosier Prairie an excellent place to see native birds and other animals in their natural surroundings. Many of these animals are now rare in Indiana due to the disappearance of their native habitats. Prior to European settlement, fire was a normal part of prairie ecosystems. Fire killed the forest trees, but prairie plants were adapted to frequent fires and survived. When settlers suppressed wild fires, woody plants invaded the prairie. Now carefully controlled fires are used to maintain the prairie as it was before settlement.

McCloskey's Burr Oak Savanna Nature Preserve is 54.6 acres in size and located in Hobart. Bur oak savannas once covered thousands of acres in northwestern Indiana, primarily on loamy soils. This natural community type is currently one of the rarest communities in the state. Former bur oak savannas still occur, primarily in Lake County around Crown Point and Hobart. Due to fire suppression over many decades, the open savanna aspect and their associated complement of prairie plants in the understory have been lost at nearly all these sites. McCloskey's Burr Oak Savanna protects bur oak savanna and tallgrass prairie habitats. Although it too is degraded, it offers great opportunities for restoration. This site has pockets of prairie vegetation, and the reinstatement of fire is already showing results.

### **Municipal Parks**

There are several municipal parks systems available in Lake County. These parks satisfy the recreational needs of the immediate population, whether it is a town or city. The following cities in Lake County offer municipal park systems: Crown Point, East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Hobart, Lake Station, and Whiting. The following towns in Lake County offer municipal park systems: Cedar Lake, Dyer, Griffith, Highland, Lowell, Merrillville, Munster, New Chicago, Schererville, and St. John.

### **Shirley Heinze Land Trust Properties**

The Miller Dunes Nature Preserve is a 16 acre collection of small noncontiguous properties located in the Miller section of the City of Gary. The sites provide a good example of the diversity of habitats found in the "high dunes" region: dry oak forest, blowouts, interdunal wetlands, mesic interdunal coves, and ravines. The properties harbor rare plants.

The Bur Oak Woods Preserve is an 84 acre nature preserve is located in the City of Hobart. The preserve is an example of one of Indiana's rarest natural communities: the bur oak savanna. The property features mesic woodland areas and open sedge meadow. The property is a haven for birds and amphibians.

The Cressmoor Prairie in Hobart is the largest protected example of a silt-loam or “black soil” prairie in Indiana at 41 acres. Black soil prairies were once the most common prairies in Indiana. However, their rich, fertile soil was among the very finest agricultural ground anywhere in the world, so most were plowed under for farming. As a result, black soil prairies are exceedingly rare. Over 250 species of plants have been found at Cressmoor Prairie. Typical prairie species occurring here in great numbers include wild quinine, dense blazing star, rattlesnake master, prairie dock, and compass plant.

The Gordon and Faith Greiner Preserve is a 73 acre nature preserve located in the City of Hobart. It is characterized by a transitional landscape that ranges from black oak savanna to wet prairie to swamp. The southern portion of the property was formerly used for agriculture and is currently being restored to prairie. Wetlands fed year-round by groundwater occur in the north end of the property and support a rich plant community that includes several sedges, wildflowers, and rare plants like poison sumac.

The Green Heron Pond Preserve is a 12 acre property located in the Miller section of the City of Gary. The diverse site features a range of habitats from interdunal wetland to high dune. Black oak savanna and woodland grade into mesic oak forest, providing habitat for numerous woodland and savanna wildflowers. The dominant wetland feature is a permanent pond which supports fish, frogs, turtles, muskrats, and waterfowl. Smaller seasonal ponds also occur at the site.

The Hidden Prairie and Ivory Preserve is a 61 acre property located in the City of Hobart. The preserve consists of two parcels bisected by railroad tracks. The northern portion is characterized by an ecotone that ranges from wet-mesic prairie to swamp to marsh to open water. The wetlands host great egrets, great blue herons, green herons, wood ducks, and other water birds. The southern half of the property is a large marsh under restoration. A short trail allows access to the northern half of the preserve; the southern portion is undeveloped for visitors.

Ivanhoe South Preserve is a 50 acre property located in the City of Gary. The site protects globally rare dune-and-swale topography. The black oak savanna and interdunal wetland communities provide habitat for a diverse variety of flora and fauna. A hiking trail begins at the parking lot on Colfax Street.

The Seidner Dune and Swale Nature Preserve is 43 acres in size and is located in Hammond. This preserve features “dune and swale” topography, with the associated wetlands and oak savanna, and a floodplain marsh along the Grand Calumet River. Over 250 species of plants have been identified on the site, including several rare species that have strict habitat requirements. Notable plants include wild lupine, harebell, fringed gentian, blue-flag iris, white wild indigo, side-oats grama grass, prairie lily, blazing star and many others. This portion of the site is managed by the Shirley Heinze Land Trust to maintain biological diversity and to preserve the fire dependent communities that occur here.

#### The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy helps manages several sites in Lake County, including the German Methodist Cemetery Prairie is located near the Town of Lowell. The grand tallgrass prairie once covered most of northwest Indiana’s silt loam soils. These “black soil prairies” were extremely fertile and almost all of these prairies succumbed to agriculture. Fortunately all is not lost. The German Methodist Cemetery Prairie is the

finest black soil prairie remnant in not only the state, but in all of the Midwest. It is also one of the most diverse sites in the state with over 200 species of native plants in it's less than three acres.

Ivanhoe Dune and Swale Nature Preserve, located in Gary, is a remnant of a globally unique natural community known as “dune and swale,” formed as the ancient glacial Lake Chicago receded thousands of years ago. A series of linear sandy beach ridges alternate with long narrow wetlands in parallel bands to form this rare community, a total of 120 acres. Rapid and intense industrial and residential development of the lakeshore destroyed all but tiny fragments. Scattered black oaks dominate the dune ridges, with an understory of prairie grasses and wildflowers, such as puccoon, spiderwort, and prairie phlox. The swales are dominated either by buttonbush swamp or sedge meadows.

#### Porter and Newton County

To the east, Porter County offers a county parks department. The mission of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Board and Department is to preserve, protect and manage the natural, cultural and recreational resources within a diverse park system. The Board and Department is committed to delivering youth, adult and school programs to the residents of Porter County, while also providing a gateway into the natural beauty of our area through its unique parks and trails. The Porter County Parks and Recreation System offers two county parks: Sunset Hill Farm County Park and Brincka Cross Gardens for a combined acreage of 263 acres. The park system also offers a 9.1 mile trail, called the Calumet Trail.

There are also several Shirley Heinze Land Trust properties in Porter County, including the Coulter Preserve, Walner Nature Preserve, Great Marsh, Ritchie Nature Preserve, Wykes-Plampin Nature Preserve, Dale B. Engquist Nature Preserve, Meadowbrook Nature Preserve, Walnut Woods, and the Father Basil Moreau Nature Preserve. Total, there are approximately 872 acres in Porter County that are managed by the Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

The Nature Conservancy manages approximately 815 acres in Porter County at the Moraine Nature Preserve.

To the south, a variety of Indiana State Fish and Wildlife Areas and Nature Preserves are found in Newton County. The LaSalle Fish and Wildlife Area is located in northwestern Newton County and contains approximately 3,797 acres. The Willow Slough Fish and Wildlife Area is also located in northern Newton County. The property supports a broad diversity of fauna, including furbearers, waterfowl, upland game bird, shorebirds, song birds, and whitetail deer. The 9,956 acre site is also managed by the Indiana Department of Recreation, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The Conrad Savanna Nature Preserve is located in the northern part of Newton County near the community of Lake Village. The 453 acre preserve is managed by the Indiana Department of Recreation, Division of Nature Preserves, and is an example of the landforms and associated plant communities that were characteristic of the area south of the Kankakee River at the time of settlement. Prescribed fires are used to maintain the area.

The Nature Conservancy manages several properties in Newton County, including the Kankakee Sands Preserve, Holley Savanna, and the Conrad Station Savanna. Together these properties total approximately 8,839 acres.

# Accessibility and Universal Design



## Accessibility and Universal Design

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department continues to work toward greater accessibility in its parks and facilities. As new projects are constructed or facilities updated, the Department works to ensure improvements meet the most up-to-date guidelines are followed. Accessibility is an issue that affects every community in the United States as the majority of the population will have a temporary activity limitation or permanent disability at some point during their lives. Disabilities can range from impairments in vision, speech, and hearing, to learning disabilities, mental health disabilities, and cognitive disabilities. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department are aware of the positive physical, psychological, and social benefits of those who participate in public recreation programs and services, and strive to be as inclusive as possible.

### Federal Legislation Affecting Park Systems

Park and recreation master plans are affected by three pieces of federal legislation regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities:

- the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA);
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

The Architectural Barriers Act was the first federal law created requiring facilities designed, built, altered, or leased using federal funds be accessible to the public. Facilities built before the law was passed are usually not covered, but alterations undertaken after the law took effect are required to comply with the Act.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ensures access to programs and activities that are federally funded. The Act states that “no individual can be excluded from the participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by an Executive Agency.” The act requires specific actions from agencies, including a self-evaluation of its policies, facilities, programs, and services.

The most recent act to be passed affecting park plans is Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This Act extends the prohibition of discrimination in federally assisted programs established by Section 504 to all activities of State and local governments. This includes those activities that do not receive Federal financial assistance, such as providing modifications to policies, practices, and procedures.

This Act requires that local governments having 50 or more employees in the entire governmental unit, including Lake County, to complete the following requirements:

1. Complete an accessibility self-evaluation or update a previous self-evaluation created under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
2. Provide notice to the public about the entity’s ADA obligations, non-discrimination requirements and accessible services and facilities.
3. Designate an individual to coordinate ADA compliance.
4. Develop a transition plan identifying the physical changes or modifications that will be made to achieve program access.
5. Develop an ADA grievance procedure for those who feel that they have been discriminated against because of their disability or their friends or family with disabilities.

There are two accessibility standards to follow when evaluating the built environment.

They include the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and the newer 2012 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Both have been used in the evaluation of the Lake County Park System.

### **Universal Design**

To eliminate physical and social barriers, the IDNR, DOR strongly recommends the use of Universal Design concepts as a best management practice. Universal Design is the design of products and environments for all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The concept is based on these seven principles:

1. Equitable Use;
2. Flexibility in Use;
3. Simple and Intuitive Use;
4. Perceptible Information;
5. Tolerance for Error;
6. Low Physical Effort;
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use.

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department strives to integrate Universal Design principles in both the built environment and park programming.

### **Grievance Procedures**

A grievance concerning the accessibility of the Lake County Parks System's services, programs, or activities should be directed to:

Mr. Jim Basala  
Lake County Parks and Recreation Department  
8411 East Lincoln Highway  
Crown Point, Indiana 46307  
Phone: 219-769-7275  
Fax: 219-945-0452  
Email: jimbas@lakecountyparks.com

### **Accessibility Self-Evaluation**

An ADA Self-Evaluation was performed in 2020 for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. Both the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and the newer 2012 ADA Standards for Accessible Design were used in the evaluation of the Lake County Parks System. The following areas were evaluated:

- Policies
- Programs and Activities
- Sites and Facilities

#### **Policies**

An ADA Policy Statement is posted on the Lake County, Indiana website that describes the availability of ADA-compliant accessible amenities, programs, and services for the public. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department website has been designed to comply with Section 508 as well as 2.0 A and AA referring to website accessibility standards. Any materials that are found on the website are available in alternative formats, if requested. For users who need additional accessibility assistance, Lake County Parks and Recreation Department can be contacted by phone through the Federal Information Relay Service. At several park sites, regulatory

signage is lacking a tactile surface.

#### Programs and Activities

The programs and activities offered by the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department are designed with ADA compliance in mind. Programs and activities are minimally ADA compliant with additional access modifications as needed or requested.

#### Sites and Facilities

The Lake County Parks Department consists of several properties that were built and constructed prior to ADA legislation being in place. The Department is committed to working towards compliance and is mindful of incorporating ADA accommodations when properties are remodeled or upgraded. Although the Department has been diligent about ADA upgrades, it is a slow transition as funds are limited.

Many of the upgrades needed to come into compliance include restroom, parking lot, and entrance modifications. The parking lot and entrance modifications are typically at a lower cost, so priority should be to work on these modifications first, then to work on the more expensive modifications in the restrooms. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department should continue the best practices of removing barriers and performing ADA upgrades as capital improvement projects happen at park sites and structures.

# Public Participation



## Public Participation

Public participation is an essential component of a credible, quality plan. Although the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department have specialized knowledge on the development of parks and park planning issues, it is impossible to recognize all the issues important to local residents and park users. To help solicit public input, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department used several outreach methods, including stakeholder interviews, a public input forum, and a survey.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Lake County Parks and Recreation completed stakeholder meeting with the Southshore Convention and Visitors Authority. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department thought it was important to hear what this entity had to say in terms of what visitor's to Lake County are looking for, what they thought were strengths of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department, as well as weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The Visitors Authority noted that visitors to Lake County are looking for something unique, something unlike what they have at home. They noted that Bellaboo's and Buckley are especially unique, as well as the Deep River Waterpark at Deep River County Park. Usually, people reach out to the Visitors Authority are seeking activities that are free or inexpensive for families, pet-friendly spots, campgrounds, and of course, the dunes.

The following were identified by the Visitors Authority as **STRENGTHS**:

- Breadth, quantity and variety of parks;
- Parks feel clean and safe;
- Good focus on kids;
- Many unique offerings;
- Good family spaces, and;
- Ability to accommodate large groups.

The following were identified by the Visitors Authority as **WEAKNESSES**:

- Seasonality;
- Dunes competition;
- Lack of technology
- Lack of awareness of public of what properties are Lake County Parks;
- Promotion of events internally (school fairs, festivals, etc.), and;
- Clearer information and signage.

The following were identified by the Visitors Authority as **OPPORTUNITIES**:

- Emphasize educational opportunities in the Park System and align with area museums;
- Capitalize on fitness and competitive nature of visitors (ie., 10 mile park challenge, etc.);
- Improve park maps;
- Improve advertising;
- Develop innovative ways to engage people year round;
- Continued/enhanced alignment with SSCVA brand, and;
- Improve clarity. For example, highlight the rentals that are available and good birding spaces.

The following were identified by the Visitors Authority as THREATS:

- Competition, and;
- Weather.

### **Public Forum**

A public forum was held on November 7th, 2019 from 2 pm to 6 pm at Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center located at 2800 Colorado Street in Lake Station. The public forum was advertised using a variety of advertising outlets, which included the following:

- Z107.1 Radio Calendar Public Forum;
- NWI Times Calendar Public Forum;
- NWI Life;
- Lake County Parks and Recreation Department website;
- Lake County Parks and Recreation Facebook page, and;
- Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center Facebook page.

Seven members of the public attended the Forum. A series of stations were set up throughout the main activity area of Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center. As participants arrived, they were asked to sign in and then indicate on a map all the Lake County Parks they have visited. Participants were then given sticky notes and asked to answer the question posed on a presentation board at each station. There was also an area set up with display boards where participants could learn what the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department have accomplished over the past five years.

The following is a summary of the questions posed and the answers received by the participants.

- **What do you see as Lake County Parks and Recreation Department's role as it relates to the environment?**  
Participants noted that LCPRD's role as it relates to the environment should be similar to National and State Parks. LCPRD should be stewards and protectors of the environment and should also educate visitors on how to coexist with nature. Safe places to enjoy nature should be provided by LCPRD.
- **What do you think of when you think about Lake County Parks?**  
Common themes participants identified included outdoor time and family.
- **What do you value most about parks and recreation in your community?**  
Participants most valued safe, clean, outdoor spaces for families, as well as the unique ecology of Lake County that LCPRD is protecting.
- **What do you feel needs improvement within the current Lake County Parks and Recreation system?**  
Several participants noted a need for a campground and campsites. Additional improvements suggested included promotion of the smaller parks, offering more activities, recycling, and general improvements of existing park sites.
- **What are the strengths of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department that we can continue to build on going forward?**

Participants noted that LCPRD could continue to build on the diversity of the parks, continue to keep costs reasonable for families, and continue to build on the collaborations and partnerships with other organizations in Lake County.

- If you could change or add just one thing within Lake County Parks over the next 10 years, what would it be?  
Much of the feedback suggested improvements to Deep River County Park and Deep River Water Park, including a campground, a water roller coaster, a surf feature, Participants also requested LCPRD continue to grow programming at other parks, such as Gibson Woods, Oak Ridge Prairie, Turkey Creek, and Buckley Homestead. Specific activities suggested for the Park System included disc golf courses, more places to fish, and mountain bike trails. Participants also requested more parks on the west side of the county.
- As you see the community evolving and changing what services, programs, or facilities can Lake County Parks provide to accommodate our growing Region?  
Several responses included to expand on local historic and educational opportunities, to have a greater emphasis on local artists, to keep costs low for families.

### Survey

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department conducted an online survey designed to gather information about recreation patterns, interests, and general opinions of the residents of Lake County. This survey was available to the public from May 7, 2019 to December 1, 2019. A link to the survey was made available online at the following locations:

- The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department website;
- Survey link was posted on the Lake County Parks and Recreation Facebook Page, the Deep River County Park Facebook Page, the Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center Page, the Gibson Woods Nature Preserve Facebook Page, the Cedar Creek Golf Course Facebook Page, the Grand Kankakee Marsh Facebook Page, the Lake Etta County Park Facebook Page, the Stoney Run County Park Facebook Page, Buckley Homestead Park Facebook Page, and Oak Ridge Prairie Park Facebook Page, and the Lemon Lake County Park Facebook Page a total of 30 times between May 10th, 2019 and November 5, 2019. There was 27,973 views on these posts and 570 link clicks recorded;
- Survey link was included on staff email signatures for six months;
- Survey cards were passed out at events throughout the summer of 2019 and;
- Survey cards were available at Bellaboo's throughout the summer of 2019;

Lake County Parks and Recreation Department received 189 completed surveys. A little over 75% of the respondents were females, and approximately 62% of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 45. Respondents lived all over the county, but most responses were derived from Griffith (19%), Crown Point (13%), and Lowell (12%).

When asked how users got information about Lake County Parks and the programs and events offered, most respondents indicated they received information by word of mouth, Lake County Parks social media pages, the Pathfinder (the biannual parks program guide), and the website.

When asked what the top reasons were for visiting a Lake County Park, the top three choices selected by respondents included to enjoy time outside, to visit with people outside, to exercise, and to relax. When asked why respondents did not visit parks more often, the survey indicated that most visit as often as they like and some simply do not have enough time. Top programs indicated by respondents include Fall Fest, Maple Syrup Time, and Deep River Grinders events.

When asked what type of sports respondents participate in, top answers were Adult Sports, Youth Sports, Golf, and Disc Golf. When asked what types of programming was needed, respondents indicated that more programming for all ages was needed, followed by programming for kids younger than seven, followed by programming for adults only. Overall, respondents did not suggest new programming ideas, but wanted to see more of what was already offered. Most requests for new programming included more programs at Buckley Homestead, more programs for kids, more historic programs, and more nature hikes.

In regards to activities and amenities, the top activities requested by survey respondents included aquatics/watersports, dog parks, and expanded trail offerings. Many respondents indicated a desire for more splash pads, places to rent paddling or tubing equipment, and there was also a desire by the respondents for more community pools. Dog parks and dog access was also a top request. Specifically, dog parks were desired, but also increasing the dog friendliness at existing parks. Trails were also a top desire by survey respondents. Overall, respondents indicated they wanted more paved trails and better access on natural trails.

When asked about areas in the park system that needed maintenance, there was a common theme from respondents that indicated that each park site was in need of maintenance. The top three areas system-wide included more maintenance needed on trails, playgrounds, and restrooms. Approximately 25% of respondents indicated that natural trail access could be improved through improved trail grooming, improved trail markers, and improved trail maps. Playground updates were requested at every park location, with the exception of Lake Etta. Restroom updates were common across park sites with Deep River receiving the largest volume of requests.

#### **Public Presentation of Plan**

The 2020 - 2024 Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan was presented to the public on April 8th, 2021 at the regularly scheduled Lake County Parks and Recreation Board meeting. There was no additional feedback from the public at the meeting.



# Needs Analysis



## Needs Analysis

For the purposes of this Master Plan Update, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department used a combination of the Level of Service Method and the Issue Analysis Method to analyze the recreation needs of the planning area. The Level of Service (LOS) Standards for Parks and Open Space were developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and guides communities to set local standards based on need, values, and expectations. This method is expressed in acres per 1,000 people. This method requires an assessment of existing facilities, public input, and the ability to measure and prioritize needs. The Issue Analysis Method uses information collected for the master plan to identify and resolve needs, problems, and conflicts. Some issues are evident to the park board and the park administration, or they may appear in the public participation process.

### Level of Service Standards

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation updates the Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years. This document provides standards for outdoor recreation opportunities in the State of Indiana. Specifically, the SCORP outlines the number of acres per person per planning area. Determination of acreages amounts is based on publicly owned lands and excludes private (not open for public use), commercial, and school corporation acreage. These acreages are as follows:

- Counties: 20 acres per 1,000 people
- Indiana Regions: 35 acres per 1,000 people
- State: 55 acres per 1,000 people

At the county level, the 2021 - 2025 Indiana SCORP indicates that Lake County should have approximately 9,688 acres of park and open space acres available to the public based on its 2018 projected population. The SCORP also indicates that there is approximately 10,862 acres of park and open space acres currently available to the public, meaning there is a surplus of 1,174 acres. Although Lake County currently meets the State recommendation, this number could fluctuate depending on the migration of residents into or out of the county.

The Indiana SCORP also examines the supply of State and Federal public outdoor recreation acres per county. Although Lake County meets recommendations for local public outdoor recreation acres, it does not meet recommendations for State and Federal acreage. The SCORP indicates that Lake County is deficient in acreage by 11,577 acres. Although Lake County Parks and Recreation Department landholdings contribute to local acreage, the Department has the unique opportunity to assist the State and Federal government in acquiring or making partnerships to help acquire acreage to meet recommendations.

From the perspective of total statewide acres per county, the Indiana SCORP also indicates that Lake County is deficient in total outdoor recreation acreage when local, State, and federal acreage is combined. The SCORP shows that Lake County should have approximately 26,642 acres of total outdoor recreation acreage, and there is currently only 16,238, meaning Lake County is deficient by 10,403 acres.

### Issue Analysis Method

The Issue Analysis method uses information collected for the master plan to identify and resolve needs, problems, and conflicts. Some issues are evident to the park board

and park administration, or they may appear in the public participation process. For this analysis, issues were gathered from the following sources:

- Lake County Park staff gathered demographic and economic data in regards to Lake County from the US Census Bureau;
- Public input was solicited through public meetings, focus group meetings, and a public survey;
- Lake County Park staff solicited input from staff members and board members through regularly scheduled meetings.

Common issues appeared throughout the planning process and were categorized into the following themes: Accessibility, Safety, and Maintenance; Land Acquisition; Capital Improvements and Programming; and Public Awareness and Communications.

#### Accessibility, Safety, and Maintenance

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Board and Department should continue working to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Where possible, Universal Design concepts should be used to improve inclusion.

The Department should also continue working on updating and maintaining facilities, especially at some of the aging parks. As evidenced through the public input process, there are multiple routine maintenance updates and upgrades that are needed for each park site, including parking lots, restrooms, and playgrounds.

#### Land Acquisition

As Lake County continues to be developed, opportunities to purchase lands for open space or future regional parks will become more and more difficult. Although the SCORP shows a surplus at a county-wide level, these numbers could fluctuate based on the migration of residents into the county. The Department should continue land acquisition for trails, future park sites, and open space.

#### Capital Improvements and Programming

There are several capital improvement projects the Parks Department needs to continue to be a viable parks system, including a new visitors center at Buckley Homestead and a new maintenance building for Deep River Waterpark. Each park site should be re-evaluated for programming and activity opportunities.

#### Public Awareness and Communications

A theme throughout the public input process was the need for more public awareness of the programs and activities available through the park, as well as clearly marked trails and trail maps. The Parks Department should continue growing their social media presence and refining their website presence, as both are prime areas the public go for information regarding the parks department and programming.



# Priorities and Action Schedule



## Priorities and Action Schedule

### Priorities

Priorities and Action Schedule items were developed based on the findings of public input, administrative staff input, and park board input.

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department is a progressive parks department with multifaceted responsibility in managing natural resources that range from the shore of Lake Michigan to the waters of the Grand Kankakee Marsh. With this Action Schedule the Department can continue making progress towards improving the quality of life in Lake County by being alert to the opportunities to acquire, reclaim, and preserve significant natural systems and open space resources and expand its recreational, cultural, and educational programs.

A number of initiatives are underway throughout the Lake County Parks and Recreation System to make improvements for ADA accessibility, modernization of facilities, and enhancement of user experiences. Development of facilities that generate revenue for the Lake County Parks Department also continues to be a priority as these facilities help fund other initiatives for the agency.

Land acquisition also continues to play an important role as a priority for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department developed a long-range vision for future land acquisition that the Department has been pursuing for several years. While the vision plan for land acquisition identifies sites that will expand the department's current holdings, it will also create partnerships with other agencies for management of lands held in ownership outside the Department. The vision map in Figure 8.1 illustrates the land acquisition priorities for the Department. Although not listed in the Action Schedule, land acquisition opportunities are closely monitored by the Department and action is taken to acquire targeted properties as opportunities arise. Detailed maps of targeted properties are included in this chapter.

### LAKE COUNTY PARKS VISION PLAN

- Existing Parks & Facilities
- Vision Plan Elements & Facilities
- L CPRD Trail
- Non L CPRD Trail

1. Whihala Beach Park Site
2. Gibson Woods Nature Preserve
3. Lake Etta County Park
4. Little Calumet River Corridor
5. Three Rivers County Park
6. Oak Savannah Trail
7. Oak Ridge Prairie County Park
8. Erie Lackawanna Trail
9. Turkey Creek Golf Course
10. C & O Trail
11. Deep River County Park
12. Lake Hills Park Site
13. Beaver Dam Park Site
14. Cedar Creek Golf Course
15. West Creek Park Site A
16. West Creek Park Site B
17. West Creek Park Site C
18. West Creek Park Site D
19. Lemon Lake County Park
20. Cedar Lake Marsh Park Site
21. Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail
22. Stoney Run County Park
23. Buckley Homestead County Park
24. Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park
25. Pennsy Greenway Trail

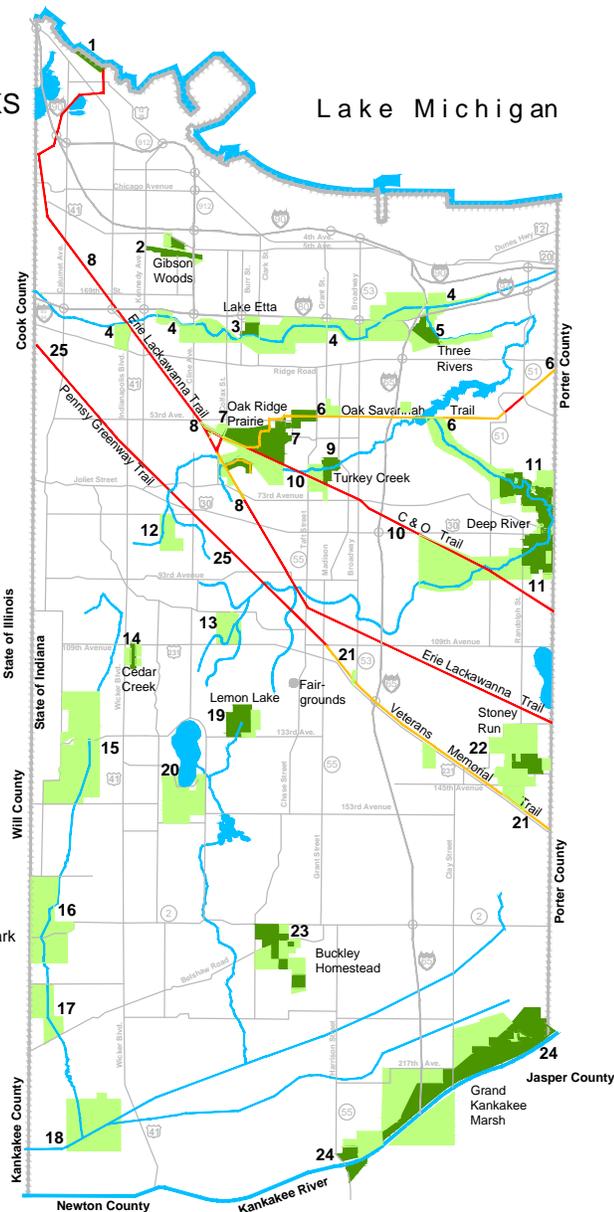


FIGURE 8.1: Vision Plan for Land Acquisition for the Lake County Parks System.

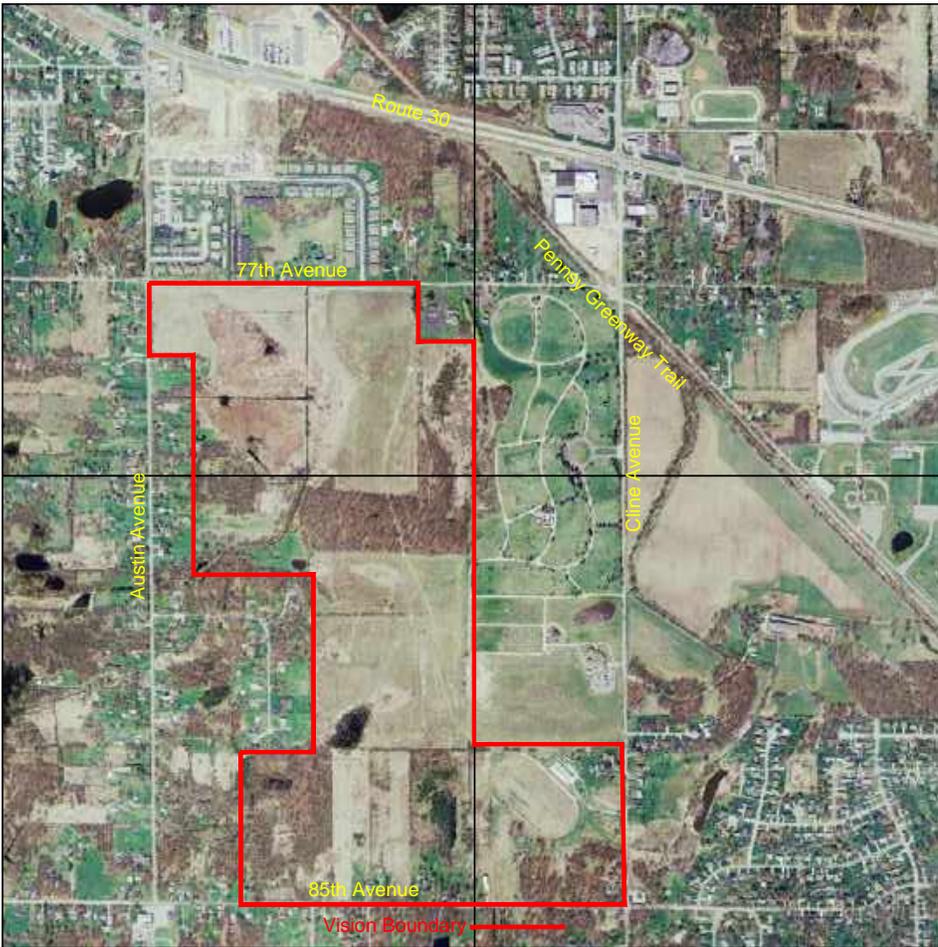


FIGURE 8.2: Land Aquisition Plan for the Lake Hills Park Site (#12).



FIGURE 8.3: Land Aquisition Plan for the Beaver Dam Park Site (#13).



FIGURE 8.4: Land Aquisition Plan for the West Creek Park Site A (#15).

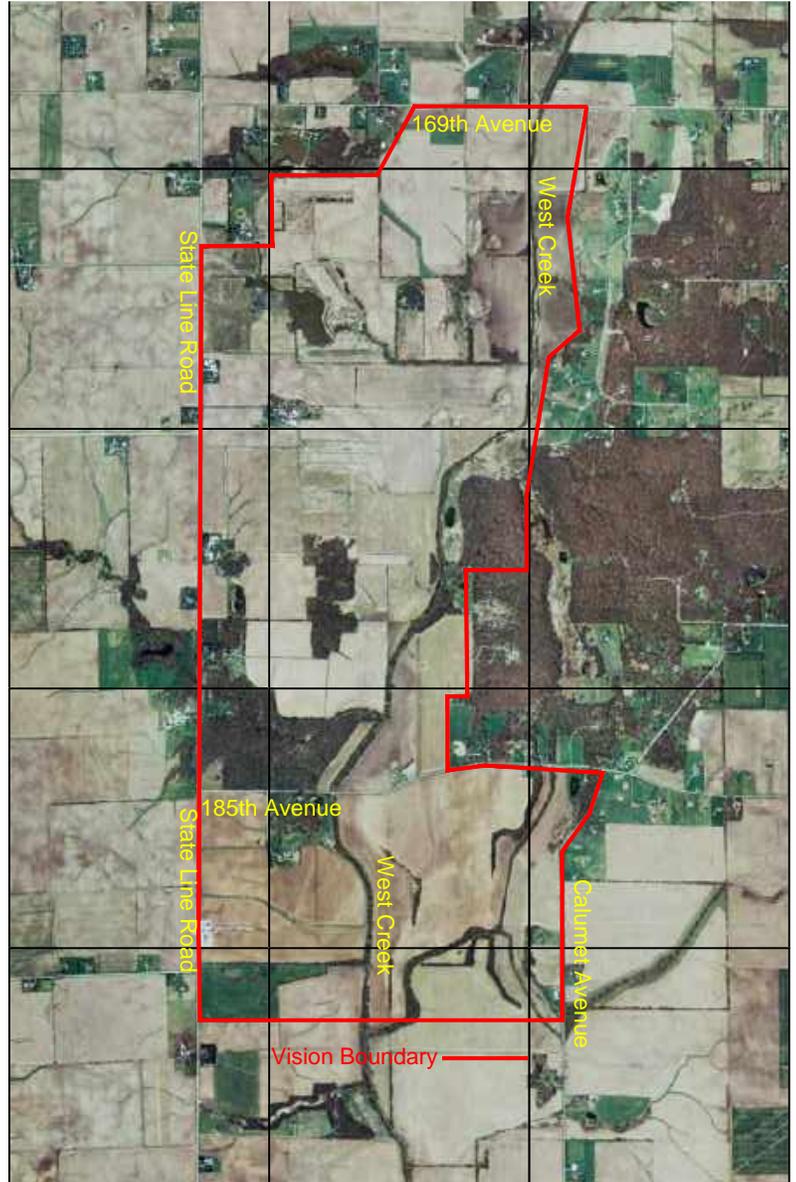


FIGURE 8.5: Land Aquisition Plan for the West Creek Park Site B (#16).

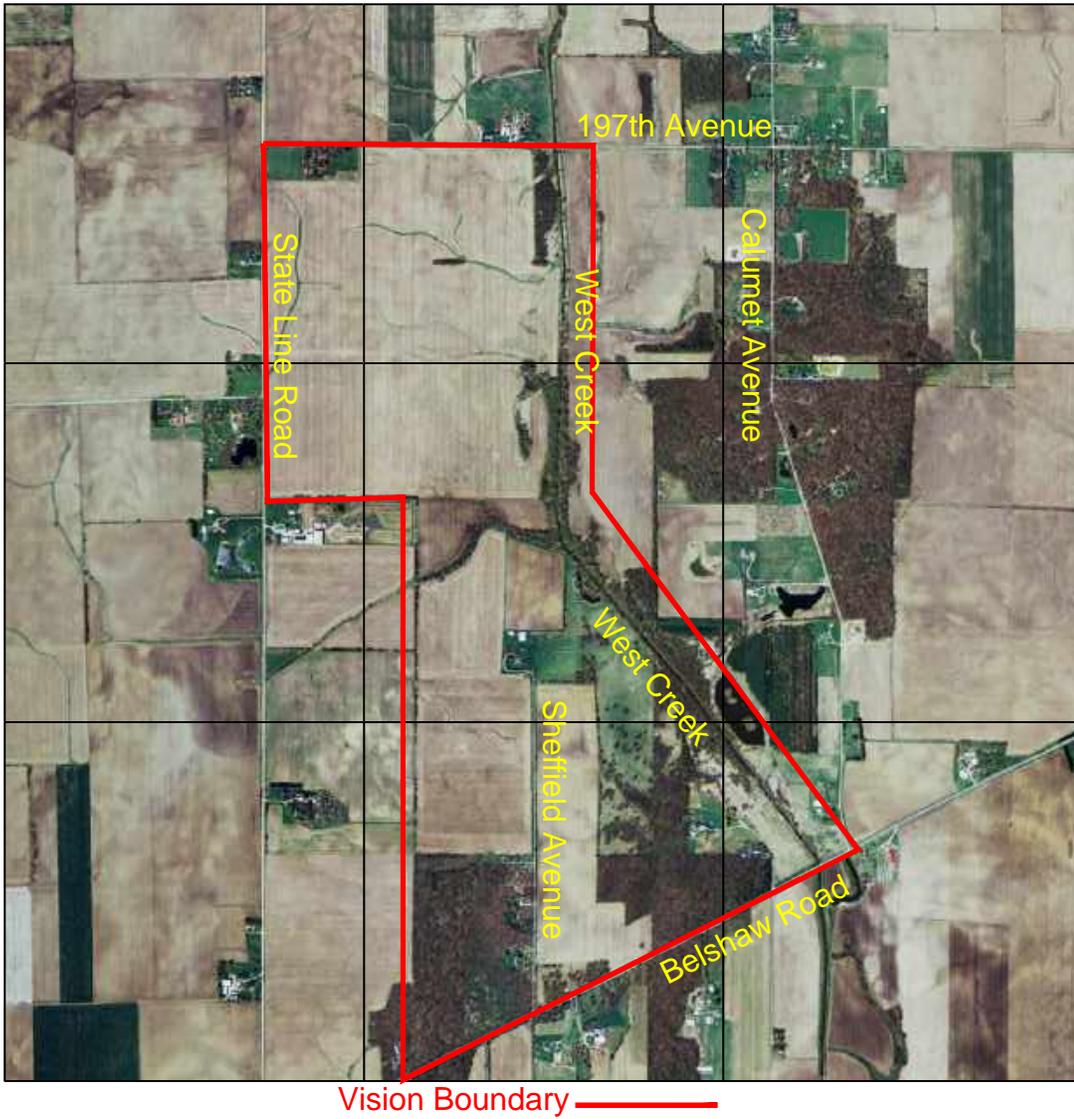


FIGURE 8.6: Land Aquisition Plan for the West Creek Park Site C (#17).

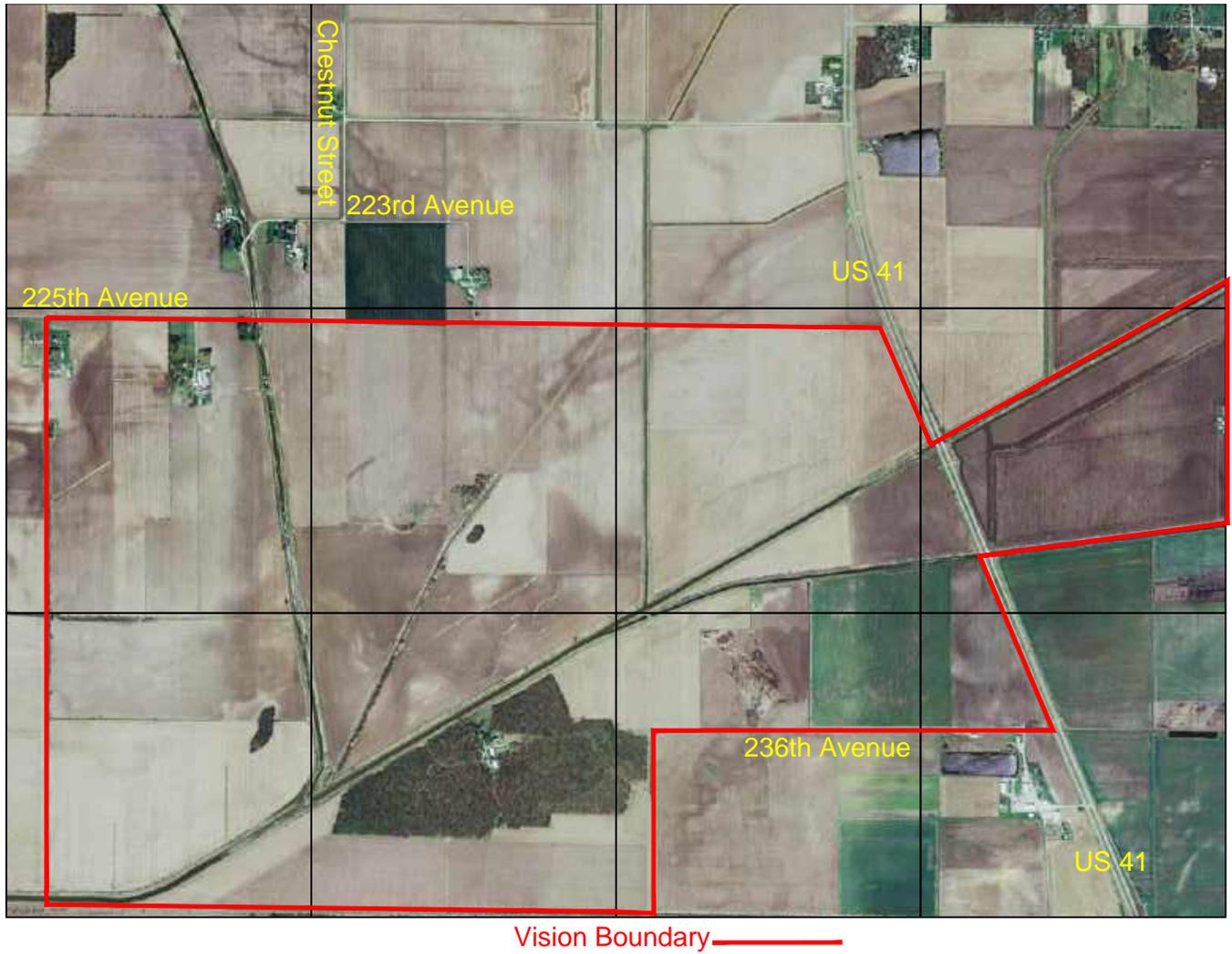


FIGURE 8.7: Land Aquisition Plan for the West Creek Park Site D (#18).

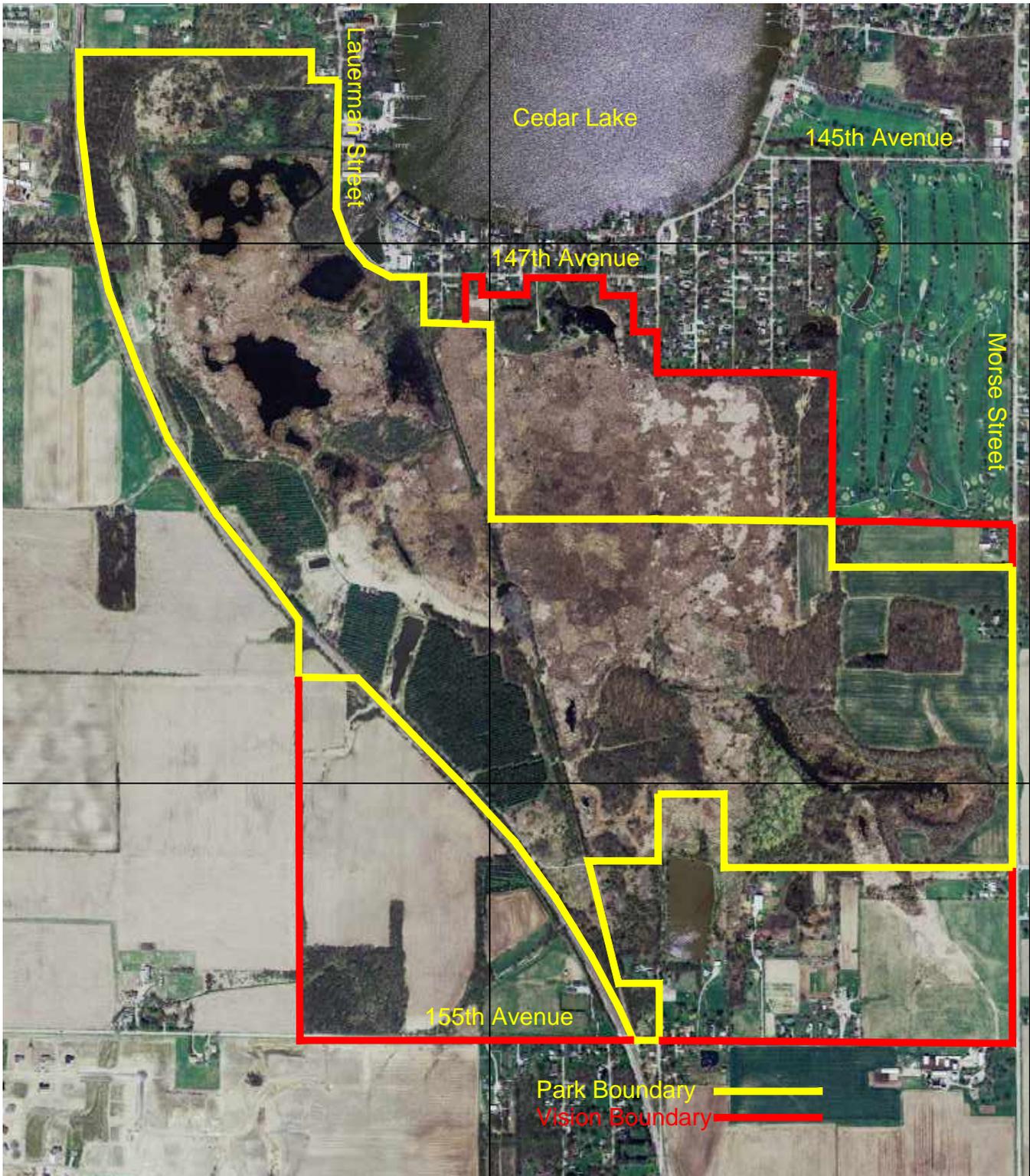


FIGURE 8.8: Land Aquisition Plan for the Cedar Lake Marsh Site (#20).



## Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail

FIGURE 8.9: Land Aquisition Plan for the Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail (#21).

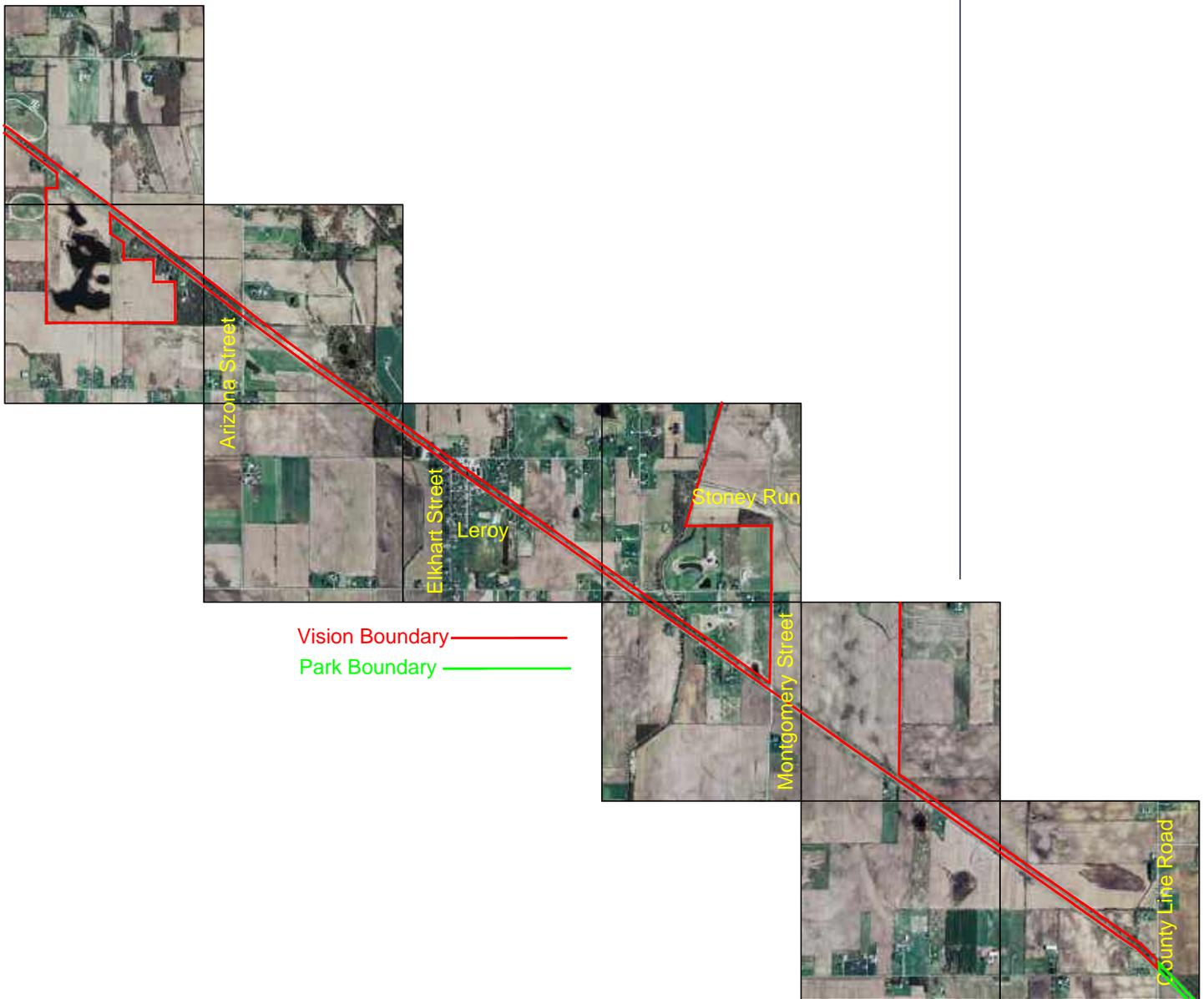


FIGURE 8.10: Land Aquisition Plan for the Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail - East (#21).

**Action Schedule**

An overall Action Schedule for the Parks Department has been developed to show capital expenditures at each park site for the next five years. The Action Schedule has then been broken down by park site to show specific action item, year of implementation, and estimated costs.

The following table identifies the overall capital expenditures that have been identified for the parks and facilities through the year 2024. Additional projects have been identified past the year 2024, but denoted as long-range projects. The capital expenditure items listed do not include items under \$15,000 in cost as these items are considered general maintenance.

**Buckley Homestead**

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Continue Restoration and Repair of Historic Buildings	\$30,000	GPI/Grants
2022 - 2023	Restore Milkhouse/Windmill	\$30,000	GPI/Grants/Donations
2022 - 2023	Continue Restoration of Log Cabin	\$75,000	Grants/Donations
2024	Construct Playground	\$100,000	Bond
2025 +	Construct New Visitor Center	\$2,500,000	Bond
2025 +	Construct West Parking Lot, Improve Accessibility	\$500,000	Bond

**Cedar Creek Golf Course**

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Golf Driving Range Distribution Center	\$30,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Drainage and Golf Course Improvements, Addition of Two New Holes and Irrigation	\$150,000	GPI/Bond
2024	Facility Entry Enhancements	\$40,000	Bond
2024	Indoor Training Facility	\$300,000	Bond

### Deep River

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
In Process	Mill Water Wheel Restoration	\$20,000	Donation/GPI
In Process	Big Maple Lake Development	\$100,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Construct and Rebuild Four County Line Shelters	\$160,000	GPI/Bond
2022 - 2023	Big Maple Lake Restoration (Natural Edges)	\$15,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Sugar Shack Reconstruction	\$75,000	GPI/Grant
2024	Crist Mill Parking Lot Restroom	\$150,000	Bond
2025 +	New Maintenance Facility for DRWP	\$200,000	Bond
2025 +	South Park Camping/Cabins	\$8,000,000	Bond
2025 +	Pave Waterpark Delivery Entrance from Randolph Street	\$250,000	Bond
2025 +	Relocate Bridge to River Ford	\$200,000	Bond
2025 +	Ainsworth Road Underpass between Sulky Track and Big Maple Lake	\$1,000,000	Bond

### Deep River Waterpark

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2020 - 2021	Cabanas	\$35,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Rebuild Paddles Play Zone	\$75,000	Bond
2024	Flow Rider Attraction	\$3,000,000	Bond
2024	Replace Existing Water Filters	\$1,750,000	Bond
2025 +	Water Treatment Expansion	\$400,000	Bond
2025 +	Corporate/Private Areas Addition	\$100,000	Bond
2025 +	New Wave Pool	\$8,000,000	Bond

### Gibson Woods

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration/Enhancements in Nature Preserve	\$250,000	Grants/Operating Budget
2022 - 2023	Boardwalk Improvements	\$30,000	GPI
2024	Entrance and Parking Lot Mill and Resurface	\$100,000	Bond
2024	Modernize Exhibits	\$100,000	GPI, Grant

### Grand Kankakee Marsh

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration/Enhancement of Various Habitats	\$30,000	GPI/Grants
2022 - 2023	New Pumps for Hog Marsh	\$50,000	GPI/Grant

### Lake Etta

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Spray Pad	\$250,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Banquet Hall Improvements, Cold and Dry Storage	\$60,000	GPI
2024	Dog Park Improvements	\$30,000	GPI

### Lemon Lake

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Spray Pad	\$200,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Dog Park Improvements	\$10,000	GPI
2024	Replace Shelter 6, 7, and 8	\$90,000	GPI
2024	West Perimeter Fencing, Chain Link	\$20,000	GPI

### Oak Ridge Prairie

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$50,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Fishing Pond Shoreline Restoration/Enhancement	\$20,000	GPI
2022 - 2023	Maintenance Barn Extension for Natural Areas/Trails Storage	\$30,000	GPI
2024	New Shelter	\$45,000	GPI
2024	Mill and Resurface Entrance Drive and Parking Lot	\$700,000	Bond
2024	C&O Trail Construction into Park	\$1,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Pave Maintenance Drive (Redar Road) and West 58th Avenue East Service Entrance into Park	\$500,000	Bond
2025 +	Multi-Purpose Green Building	\$2,000,000	Bond
2025 +	Snow Making Machine	\$250,000	Bond
2025 +	Electricity/Water/Sewer into Park from Airport	\$400,000	Bond

### Stoney Run

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Trail Improvements	\$15,000	GPI
2024	Pave Camp Road	\$250,000	Bond
2024	Toilet Construction at Warming Shelter	\$200,000	Bond
2024	Pave Main Road	\$350,000	Bond

### Three Rivers

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Bellaboo's Storage Addition	\$15,000	GPI
2024	Expand Bellaboo's Outdoor Adventure Playground	\$2,000	Bond

### Turkey Creek Golf Course

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2022 - 2023	Park Lot Lighting	\$50,000	Bond
2022 - 2023	Yellow Tee Renovations	\$10,000	GPI
2024	Turkey Creek Streambank Restoration	\$80,000	Bond
2024	South Golf Course Expansion	\$500,000	Bond
2025 +	Develop Driving Range	\$250,000	Bond

### Erie Lackawanna Trail

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$100,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Drinking Fountain at Bur Street Trail Head	\$50,000	GPI

### Oak Savannah Trail

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
On-going	Restoration and Enhancement of Natural Areas	\$200,000	Grant

**Veterans Memorial Trail**

Year	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2020 - 2021	Land Acquisition from Broadway to Iowa Street	\$100,000	Grant
2022 - 2023	Construct Trail from 113th Avenue to Broadway	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2022 - 2023	Construction Broadway Bridge	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2022 - 2023	Construction Trail from Broadway to Iowa Street	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Land Acquisition from Iowa Street to Leroy	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Construct Trail from Iowa Street to Leroy	\$2,500,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Land Acquisition from Leroy to County Line Road	\$1,500,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Construct Trail from Leroy to County Line Road	\$2,000,000	Bond/Grant
2024	Acquire and Construct Trail Parking at 145th Avenue and State Road 231	\$500,000	Bond/Grant

# Plan Evaluation and Updates



## Plan Evaluation and Updates

On a yearly basis, it is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Board review and evaluate progress that has been made on the Parks and Recreation Plan. This is necessary to help the Parks and Recreation Board maintain the ability to provide quality services and facilities. A periodic review of the master plan and the consideration of continual public input will help determine where to focus efforts and help to determine future projects.

Sometimes, there are unforeseen circumstances that may change the priorities of the five year planning period. If this happens, a plan amendment may be submitted to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation (IDNR, DOR). Formal amendments to the plan are only required if they involve projects proposed in grant applications requiring a five year plan. These amendments must be approved in writing by IDNR, DOR planning staff. Plan amendments will not extend the five-year eligibility of the master plan. Plan amendments submitted to IDNR, DOR for the purpose of adding or modifying a community's future grant project must be submitted and approved by IDNR, DOR staff prior to the grant program's application deadline. To amend the master plan, the following items must be submitted to IDNR, DOR:

1. A brief explanation of the reason(s) for the amendment.
2. Documentation of the public input which went into the amendment process.
3. The new plan pages, containing any changes or additions.
4. A resolution passed by the parks board adopting the plan as amended. This will make the revised plan an official document of the parks and recreation board.

This Parks and Recreation Plan prepared for the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board is current for the years 2020-2024. To remain eligible for grants through IDNR, DOR after 2024, the Parks Board must prepare an update and submit a draft to IDNR, DOR by January 15th, 2025 and a final draft by April 15th, 2025.

# Appendices





**LAKE COUNTY  
PARKS + RECREATION**

2020-2024 MASTER PLAN

GET OUT. GO PLAY. EXPLORE.



Greg Beilfuss - Chief Planner  
IDNR – State Parks  
402 W. Washington St., W298  
Indianapolis, IN 42204-2782  
(317) 232-4071

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

John Salzeider  
Lake County Parks Board  
8411 E. Lincoln Hwy  
Crown Point, IN 46307

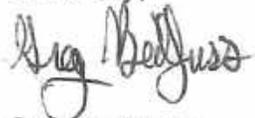
Dear John,

The DNR Division of State Parks planning staff has reviewed the final draft of the 2020-2025 Lake County Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan meets the Department of Natural Resources' minimum requirements for local parks and recreation master plans. This letter certifies that your community **is eligible to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants through this office in the 2021 grant year.** A new plan will be due on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at which time your current LWCF grant application eligibility will expire.

If you haven't already, we strongly recommend that you contact Mr. Bob Bronson, our grant section chief, as soon as possible about future grant applications. Bob and his staff can assist in your grant application process. He can be reached by phone at: (317) 232-4075 or by e-mail at: [bbronson@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:bbronson@dnr.IN.gov).

We support your planning efforts and encourage your participation in the grant programs administered by the Division of State Parks. If you require further information regarding planning, do not hesitate to call me at: (317) 232-4071 or by e-mail at: [gbeilfuss@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:gbeilfuss@dnr.IN.gov).

Sincerely,



Greg Beilfuss  
Chief Planner - IDNR Division of Outdoor Recreation

ECC – Rachel Christenson, Plan Author



Resolution 2021-02

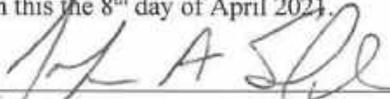
Whereas, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board is desirous of providing a quality parks and recreation system for the citizens of Lake County, Indiana; and

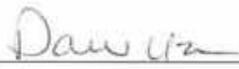
Whereas, in doing so, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board recognizes the importance of sound planning; and

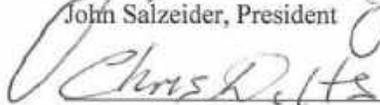
Whereas, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board has sought opinions and input from citizens of Lake County in developing a five-year parks and recreation master plan; and

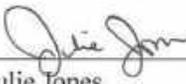
Whereas, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board desires to make itself eligible to meet certain requirements for participation in grant programs.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Lake County Parks and Recreation Board hereby accepts and adopts the 2020-2024 Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan as its official five-year parks and recreation master plan in accordance with guidelines set forth by the State of Indiana, on this the 8<sup>th</sup> day of April 2021.

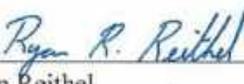
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Salzeider, President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David Uzelac, Vice President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Dilts

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Jones

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carl Floense

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ryan Reithel

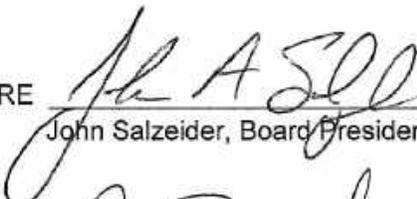
ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Basala, CEO  
and Secretary to the Board



**ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH:  
ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT OF 1968 (As Amended);  
SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (As Amended);  
AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT  
OF 1990 (As Amended)**

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Board (Applicant) has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

SIGNATURE   
John Salzeider, Board President

SIGNATURE   
Jim Basala, CEO  
and Secretary to the Board

DATE: April 8, 2021

## Major Milestones and History

- 1968** Lake County Parks and Recreation Board established on June 1st. First Park Board meeting was held on June 11th. Purchase of first county park land: Lemon Lake (160 acres) and Deep River (69 acres).
- 1970** Received approval of the first Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to purchase 400 acres near Leroy, which later became Stoney Run County Park. The first survey of park and recreation needs was conducted by a 50-member advisory committee.
- 1971** The first "Comprehensive Plan for Parks and Open Space" was approved.
- 1972** Lemon Lake County Park dedicated. Acquisition of additional Stoney Run County Park land completed through LWCF Grant.
- 1973** Received grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, State of Indiana. Acquired an additional 45 acres at Lemon Lake County Park, 40 acres at Stoney Run County Park, and 34 acres at Deep River County Park. Stoney Run County Park officially dedicated.
- 1974** Vietnam Memorial at Stoney Run County Park was officially dedicated. Completed acquisition of Wood's Mill at Deep River County Park and parcels along the Little Calumet park site were acquired for Lake Etta County Park. More than 8,000 trees were planted in the Department's first nursery at Stoney Run County Park. The Recreation Division, in conjunction with the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), completed the first bikeways map.
- 1975** Department receives an "A" rating Accreditation Award from the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association. Legislation was passed allowing the Lake County Council representation on the Lake County Parks Board. The Department began investigation of 1,000 acre area along the Kankakee River as a potential wildlife refuge, which would later be called the Grand Kankakee Marsh. Two hundred fifty-six acres acquired for the Deep River County Park site as the Department's first nature center opens. Twenty acres purchased and added to the Little Calumet River Recreational Corridor, which is later called Lake Etta County Park.
- 1976** An arboretum at Lemon Lake County Park begins with a 40 tree donation and a Touchstone Trail for the handicapped is surfaced. Wood's Mill at Deep River County Park is dedicated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Department receives the National Association of Park and Recreation Officials Award from the National Association of Countries for Outstanding Achievement. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) acquired 238 acres and options an additional 623 acres at the Grand Kankakee Marsh.

- 1977** The Department assumes management of Lake Etta County Park under interlocal government agreement with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.  
Mrs. Rose Buckley Pearce donates a 160-acre homestead near Lowell as a county park.  
This site would later become Buckley Homestead County Park.  
Deep River County Park is dedicated.  
Approval is gained authorizing the sale of \$3.4 million on bonds for acquisition of 1,400 acres and development projects.  
The Department closes on 3.82 acres of Lake Michigan lakefront in the Hammond-Whiting area, which later becomes Whihala Beach County Park.  
A LWCF Grant is received for land acquisition at the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park.  
The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department receives a LWCF grant and acquires 300 acres from TNC at the Grant Kankakee Marsh County Park and acquires remaining parcels (861 acres) through proceeds from a General Obligation Bond Issue.
- 1978** Turkey Creek County Park Golf Course is dedicated.  
Dr. Joseph Jarabek donates 38.5 acres at Deep River County Park.  
Urban and Community Forestry program was initiated through the Northwestern Indiana Regional Plan Commission (NIRPC).
- 1979** Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park dedicated as the only county-managed fish and game area in Indiana.  
Windmill and creative play structure completed at Stoney Run County Park.  
Ninety acres in the Griffith-Merrillville area is acquired, which will later become Oak Ridge Prairie County Park.  
Implementation of Urban Task force which identified projects or future parks that could be used for urban revitalization. This included a botanical garden, marina on Lake Michigan, clean up past industrialized sites.  
The Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park is dedicated.
- 1980** The Touchstone Trail is dedicated at Lemon Lake County Park.  
One hundred forty-seven acres added to Oak Ridge Prairie County Park; Four acres added to Hammond-Whiting Lakefront; 57 acres added to Deep River County Park.  
Grant awarded by the Indiana Department of Tourism and the Northwest Indiana Natural and Human Resources Foundation for promotion of Lake County Parks.
- 1981** Whihala Beach County Park and Gibson Woods Nature Preserve are dedicated and added to the park system.  
LCPRD enters into inter-local government agreement with the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission for the management of Lake Etta County Park.  
The Department receives accreditation as a first-class parks and recreation system from the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association (IPRA).
- 1982** The Department receives LWCF Grant for improvements at Lake Etta County Park and Lemon Lake County Park.  
The Department receives approval for \$5.5 million bond issue for park development.

- 1982** The Park Board adopts a five-year parks and open space plan.
- 1983** Buckley Homestead County Park opens with weekend programs and weekday reserved tours.  
Oak Ridge Prairie County Park dedicated.
- 1984** Gibson Woods Environmental Awareness Center opens at Gibson Woods County Park.  
Church building at Deep River County Park opens as a visitor's center and general store gift shop.  
LWCF Grant awarded for improvements at Lake Etta County Park.
- 1985** Whihala Beached opened and dedicated; boat launch ramp provides access to Lake Michigan.  
Additional LWCF Grant awarded for improvements at Lake Etta County Park.
- 1986** A third LWCF Grant awarded for Lake Etta County Park improvements, including a swimming beach, handicap water ramp, improved fishing areas and additional parking.  
Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Committee completes Phase 1 of memorial restoration at Stoney Run.
- 1987** LWCF Grant awarded at Deep River County Park for the acquisition of three acres and construction of a gazebo.  
More than 12,000 hours of volunteer services was given by the "Friends of the Parks."
- 1988** At Deep River County Park, two bridges over Deep River are installed, the gazebo is completed, and work on a 1837 sash frame sawmill is begun.  
Grant awarded by the Indiana Department of Commerce Tourism Bureau and the Lake Heritage Parks Foundation for the promotion of parks facilities and programs.  
Dove season initiated at the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park.
- 1989** Lake County Commissioners establish the memorial at Stoney Run as the official Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Lake County.
- 1990** Multipurpose building constructed at Lake Etta County Park  
Lemon Lake County Park playground is renovated.  
LWCF Grant awarded for the development of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park.
- 1991** Phase 3 of Vietnam Veteran's Memorial completed at Stoney Run.  
Indiana Waters Grant received to construct a public access site on the Kankakee River at the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park. Special design features include a floating finger pier that "rides" with the 12' high and low levels of the river.
- 1992** Waterfowl USA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Wildlife Program assist LCPRD in developing the 120 acre Little Hickory Unit at the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park. Ducks Unlimited proposes to redesign the hog marsh as a 270 acre Moist Soil Management Unit and finance the project via local Life Sponsors. The project is expanded by 100 acres and constructed for less than the original estimate of \$150,000.

- 1993** Bond issue passes.  
 An additional 320 acres are received to expand Buckley Homestead County Park from the estate of Mrs. Rose Buckley Pearce.
- 1994** The Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project (IGKMRP) becomes the State's first successful North America Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Project and receives \$1,500,000 to begin the ten-year goal of acquiring, restoring, and enhancing 26,500 acres within the eight-county Kankakee River Basin in Northwest Indiana.
- 1995** Deep River Waterpark opens.  
 The 260 acre Hog Marsh at Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park is dedicated. The 888 acre Goose Lake Unit is acquired at Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park with the assistance of IDNR, Indiana Heritage Trust, and NAWCA.
- 1996** Buckley Homestead Museum and Farmhouse is opened to the public. Whihala Beach opened at west beach area and fishing pier. IGKMRP receives a Phase II NAWCA Grant of \$1,000,000 for Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park.  
 Ducks Unlimited develops plans for a 520-acre Moist Soil Unit at Goose Lake at Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park.  
 The Storm, a three dark ride slide complex, was added to Deep River Waterpark.
- 1997** The Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission, the US Army Corps of Engineers Chicago Department, and the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department holds groundbreaking ceremony for Lake Etta recreation enhancements.
- 1998** Groundbreaking for Three Rivers County Park.  
 The Erie Lackawanna Trail opens.  
 Construction begins at Goose Lake at Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park after 18-month permit process is concluded.  
 Mrs. Rose Buckley Pearce donates an additional 84 acres for Buckley Homestead.
- 1999** Three Rivers County Park opens.  
 Dedication of the new Vietnam Veteran's Memorial at Stoney Run.  
 A large group pavilion, canoe launch, trail, and multi-level playground added to Lake Etta County Park.  
 Eighteen hole disc golf course opened at Lemon Lake County Park.  
 "The Dragon" speed slide is added at Deep River Waterpark.
- 2000** The hog barn at Buckley Homestead County Park is renovated.  
 Administrative Division and Planning and Development Division are moved to new office located on Route 30 on the Deep River Campus.
- 2001** Construction began on the Oak Savannah Bike Trail from Oak Ridge Prairie east to Porter County.  
 Birding room was added to the Gibson Woods Environmental Awareness Center.  
 Nine additional holes were added on the Lemon Lake County Park disc golf course.

- 2002** Park Board reorganizes the department adding two new divisions, Park Services and Visitor Services.
- 2003** New playground and sand volleyball courts added to Lemon Lake County Park.  
New irrigation system and reservoirs added to Turkey Creek Golf Course.  
Lake County Council and the State of Indiana Local Government Finance Commission approved \$30.3 million capital development plan to be repaid from revenue-based facilities and programs.
- 2004** Oak Savannah multi-use asphalt trail opened on National Trails Day in June. Trail head is located at Oak Ridge Prairie County Park.  
Dogwood Run, a no-leash dog facility, is added to Lemon Lake County Park.  
Concessions building with restrooms added near playground at Lemon Lake County Park.
- 2005** Deep River Waterpark doubled in size in an expansion that included the addition of an interactive family play area, an action river, dueling bowl slides, and visitor amenities.  
Ice Skating Plaza opened at Deep River Waterpark.  
Eighty-three acres were acquired at Oak Savannah Trail, 30 acres acquired at Deep River County Park, 20 acres acquired at Beaver Dam, and 88 acres acquired at Cedar Creek Golf Course.  
Dedication of the Conway Observatory at Buckley Homestead County Park.
- 2006** Banquet Hall was opened at Lake Etta County Park.  
Water lines extended to Dogwood Run at Lemon Lake County Park.  
Acquisition of 20 acres at Beaver Dam and minimal acreage acquired at both Lake Etta County Park and Three Rivers County Park.
- 2007** Utilities extended and construction began on Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center at Three Rivers County Park.  
Park Services Division and Visitor Services Division moved to the Deep River Campus on the corporate office grounds.  
Eleven acres were acquired at Deep River County Park.
- 2008** Construction continued on Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center at Three Rivers County Park.  
Acquisition of nine acres on the north side of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park.  
Conway Observatory at Buckley Homestead County Park was opened.
- 2009** 38 acres (Ivan Gatlin Nature Preserve) along the Erie Lackawanna Trail at Prairie Estates in Schererville is transferred to LCPRD via an interlocal government agreement involving Schererville Parks, Town of Schererville, Lake County Drainage Board, Lake County Surveyors Office, and the Lake County Commissioners.  
Bellaboo's Discovery Play Center at Three Rivers County Park opened.
- 2010** PDGA World's Professional Disc Golf Tournament held at Lemon Lake County Park.  
New 20 car parking lot for Erie Lackawanna Trail at Burr Street/73rd Avenue in Schererville constructed and opened.

- 2010** New parking lot, playground, .75 mile long trail spur, and 38 acre Ivan Gatlin Nature Preserve was opened along the Erie Lackawanna Trail. Five acres acquired on the east side of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park. Gold (18 holes) and White (18 holes) courses were opened at the existing Disc Golf Courses at Lemon Lake County Park.
- 2011** 14 acres acquired at Deep River County Park on the north side of US Route 30. Oak Ridge Prairie County Park had 28 acres added on the northeast corner of the park.
- 2012** Acquired six acres in Crown Point for future Veterans Memorial Trail.
- 2013** PDGA World's Professional Disc Golf Tournament held at Lemon Lake County Park and one other Lake County course. One acre added to Three Rivers County Park in the center of the park in Lake Station. Three acres added to the Veterans Memorial Trail. Five acres added to Oak Ridge Prairie County Park in the northeast corner the park. 41 acres donated to Buckley Homestead. Oak Savannah Trail 30 car parking lot at Cleveland Street/Route 51 in Hobart was paved. In addition, new drop bollards, fencing, landscaping, signage, and other amenities were installed along nine miles of the trail from Oak Ridge Prairie County Park to County Line Road.
- 2014** Damage to the sub grade cooling system for the Deep River Waterpark ice skating plaza forced its closure of the 2014 skating season. The ninth tee and fairway at Turkey Creek Golf Course is uprooted due to an Enbridge, Inc. project of replacing a pipeline that runs through the course. All damage is repaired as part of agreement with Enbridge. The 97-acre Thomas Farm was acquired at Deep River County Park. Funds from IDNR Bicentennial Nature Trust (created to celebrate the State of Indiana's 2016 bicentennial celebration) money from The Conservation Fund helped fund the acquisition in the northeast corner of the park. 102 acres were acquired in the southwest corner of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park funded through IDNR Bicentennial Nature Trust and IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program Funds.
- 2015** The Lake Heritage Parks Foundation receives grants totaling \$34,000 from ArcelorMittal. The grants were used to support Lake County Park and Recreation Department natural area restoration projects at Gibson Woods Nature Preserve and Oak Ridge Prairie County Park. Some ArcelorMittal employees also volunteered their time to help clean and restore buildings at Buckley Homestead County Park including, the main house, carriage house, hired hands facility, and log cabin. The Flight Center at Lemon Lake County Park named first Regional Development Center by Disc Golf Association. 27 acres adjacent to Deep River Water Park / Deep River County Park are purchased with grant funds from IDNR Bicentennial Nature Trust and The Conservation Fund.

- 2016** 16-million-dollar bond issue passes to purchase land and complete major projects and repairs.  
Buckley Homestead's barn turns 100 years old and is celebrated during a special "Cheers to 100 years" program.  
An additional 131 acres are purchased in the southeast corner of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park utilizing Bond funds. This acquisition includes a portion of the future C & O Trail Corridor between Griffith and Merrillville.
- 2017** The Lake Etta County Park entrance is remodeled with new entry road and new gatehouse.  
The Kraken water slide mat racer is added to Deep River Waterpark  
136 acres are acquired at the future Cedar Lake Marsh Park Site. This project was funded by Bond Funds and The Conservation Fund.
- 2018** 10.5 acres were acquired on the north side of Route 30 at Deep River County Park. This project was funded through Bond Funds, IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program & the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.  
3 acres were acquired in the northeast corner of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park using funds from IDNR Lake Michigan Coast Program, The Nature Conservancy, and the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.  
The Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail Corridor added 7 acres in Crown Point near the SR 231 / I-65 interchange funded largely by federal Transportation Enhancement Funds.
- 2019** Gravel walking path is expanded at the Big Maple Lake section of Deep River County Park including the addition of two-foot bridges. A 70-car gravel lot is installed and the first of two shelters is constructed at Big Maple Lake as part of a Land and Water Conservation Fund project  
Bellaboo's Imagination Garden (The BIG) is completed adding an additional 13 acres of outside play to the facility complete with custom pirate ship, caverns, stream and whale.  
Lemon Lake roads, parking lots and Touchstone Trail are either repaved or paved for the first time.  
Marty Wheeler donated a quarter acre parcel on the east side of Broadway in Crown Point for the Veterans Memorial Parkway Trail.

LAKE COUNTY **2020 Lake County Parks Five Year Master Plan Update**  
**parks & rec** Public Input Open House  
 November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 2 pm – 6 pm  
 Bellaboo's Play & Discovery Center

Name	Address
1. Erika Dahl	7770 Copinne Dr. Hammond
2. Heather Beckna	"
3. Jessica Pierce	
4. Karen Pierce	
5. Brooke Shanks	240 Mary St Dyer
6. Kelly Anze	
7. Desiree Rote	428 Crestwood Dr.
8.	
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19.	

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®**  
**Smart Growth Action Grant Application**  
**2018 Level 2 Application**

**Purpose:** To provide seed funding to enable a state or local association to make the initial efforts to engage local land use public policy issues with other stakeholders and/or elected officials. Such projects should lead to development guided by smart growth principles.

Please check the box of the application deadline for which you are applying.

<input type="checkbox"/> January 15	<input type="checkbox"/> February 15	<input type="checkbox"/> March 15	<input type="checkbox"/> April 15
<input type="checkbox"/> May 15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> June 15	<input type="checkbox"/> July 15	<input type="checkbox"/> August 15
<input type="checkbox"/> September 15	<input type="checkbox"/> <del>October 15</del>		

*(Note: Fields will expand as you type)*

Date: 06/12/18

Amount requested (Max \$4,000): \$4,000

Association name: Greater Northwest Association of REALTORS®

Number of Members: 2242

Address: 800 East 86th Avenue

City/State/Zip: Merrillville, IN 46410

**Application Contact Information:**

Name: Joseph Wszolek, Chief Operating Officer

Phone: 219/795-3600

E-mail: Joe@GNIAR.com

**Association AE Contact Information (if different from above):**

Name: Peter Novak, Jr, Chief Executive Officer

Phone: 219/795-3600

E-mail: Pete@GNIAR.com

Please visit [www.realtoractioncenter.com/sggrants](http://www.realtoractioncenter.com/sggrants) to review the full list of grant regulations and funding criteria.

**1. Dates of Activity, if Applicable: 8/1/18 - 12/1/19**

*Note: NAR will not consider applications for activities that have already taken place or that will occur before applications are reviewed and processed, which takes **approximately six weeks** from the submission deadline.*

**2. Describe the land use/transportation/growth issue(s) with which your association is engaging. Why this issue is of concern to the association?**

The Lake County, Indiana Parks and Recreation Department will be updating its five-year parks and open space plan beginning in 2018 and lasting through 2019. Lake County is in the northwest corner of Indiana, and is a bedroom community for Indiana residents working in the City of Chicago, it's State of

### Smart Growth Principles

Based on the experience of communities around the nation that have used smart growth approaches to create and maintain great neighborhoods, the Smart Growth Network developed a set of ten basic principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

For details about any of these categories, please visit: <http://www.smartgrowth.org/why.php>



**LAKE COUNTY  
PARKS + RECREATION**

2020-2024 MASTER PLAN

GET OUT. GO PLAY. EXPLORE.





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