

January 21, 2021

Benzie County
448 Court Place
Beulah, MI 49617

RE: Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 2021-2025

Enclosed is a copy of the Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 2021-2025 which was developed in 2020 with guidance and input from the Weldon Township Planning Commission and with assistance from Networks Northwest. The Weldon Township Board adopted the Recreation Plan on January 12, 2021. This plan will serve as a guide for recreation projects in the Township over the next five years.

Please contact me at the information below with any questions about the process or documents.

Sincerely,



Mathew Cooke
Community Planner

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Traverse City MI 49685-0506
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COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

By Authority of Parts 19, 703 and 716 of Act 451, P.A. 1994, as amended, submission of this information is required for eligibility to apply for grants

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete, obtain certification signatures and submit this checklist with a locally adopted recreation plan.

All recreation plans are required to meet the content and local approval standards listed in this checklist and as outlined in the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans* provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Plans must be submitted to the DNR through MiRecGrants **with** a completed checklist that has been signed by an authorized official(s) of the local unit of government(s) submitting the plan. Plans may be submitted at any time of the year, but no later than February 1 of the year the local unit of government is applying for grants.

PLAN INFORMATION

Name of Plan:

Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 2021-2025

List the community names (including school districts) that are covered under the plan and have passed a resolution adopting the plan.	County	Month and year plan adopted by the community's governing body
Weldon Township	Benzie	1/21

PLAN CONTENT

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check each box to certify that the listed information is included in the final plan.

1. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

- Roles of Commission(s) or Advisory Board(s)
- Department, Authority and/or Staff Description and Organizational Chart
- Annual and Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements and Recreation Programming
- Current Funding Sources
- Role of Volunteers
- Relationship(s) with School Districts, Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations

Recreation Authorities or Trailway Commissions Only:

- Description of the Relationship between the Authority or Commission and the Recreation Departments of Participating Communities
- Articles of Incorporation

3. RECREATION INVENTORY

- Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory
- Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Location Maps (site development plans recommended but not required)
- Accessibility Assessment
- Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Waterways Inventory (if applicable)

4. RESOURCE INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Description of the Method(s) Used to Solicit Public Input Before or During Preparation of the Plan, including a Copy of the Survey or Meeting Agenda and a Summary of the Responses Received

Copy of the Notice of the Availability of the Draft Plan for Public Review and Comment

Date of the Notice November 4 & 18, 2020

Type of Notice Benzie County Record Patriot

Plan Location weldontwp.org

Duration of Draft Plan Public Review Period (Must be at Least 30 Days) 30 days

Copy of the Notice for the Public Meeting Held after the One Month Public Review Period and Before the Plan's Adoption by the Governing Body(ies)

Date of Notice December 30, 2020

Name of Newspaper Benzie County Record Patriot

Date of Meeting January 12, 2020

Copy of the Minutes from the Public Meeting

7. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

8. ACTION PROGRAM

9. POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT(S)

APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION: For multi-jurisdictional plans, each local unit of government must pass a resolution adopting the plan. Prepare and attach a separate page for each unit of government included in the plan.

- 1. Official resolution of adoption by the governing body dated: January 12, 2021
- 2. Official resolution of the Weldon Township Planning Commission Commission or Board, recommending adoption of the plan by the governing body, dated: January 4, 2021
- 3. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to County Planning Agency dated: January 21, 2021
- 4. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to Regional Planning Agency dated: January 21, 2021

NOTE: For multi-jurisdictional plans, Overall Certification must include the signature of each local unit of government. Prepare and attach a separate signature page for each unit of government included in the plan.

I hereby certify that the recreation plan for

Weldon Township

(Local Unit of Government)

above and as set forth by the DNR.

Jan Griffin includes the required content, as indicated
Jan Griffin/Weldon Township Clerk
Authorized Official for the Local Unit of Government

1/26/2021
Date 1/26/2021

This completed checklist must be uploaded in MiRecGrants.

Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 2021-2025



RECEIVED

FEB 01 2021

WELDON TOWNSHIP

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Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 2021-2025

Weldon Township Board

Adopted: January 12, 2021

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Consultant

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**Networks
Northwest**

Talent / Business / Community

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Introduction

Weldon Township, located in the northwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, is a rural, thickly forested township scattered throughout with beautiful, high-quality lakes and rivers. One of the Township's greatest assets is recreation, with countless year-round opportunities for activities like hiking, fishing, golf, hunting, biking, snowmobiling, cross-country and downhill skiing, or simply enjoying nature. The seasons provide for a wealth of outdoor activities and arts and cultural opportunities. These recreation opportunities, along with the Township's rural character, are key elements in the area's economy and quality of life.

Recreation activities and events bring residents and visitors together, fostering opportunities for cultural activities, education, and civic engagement. They promote public health and wellness by encouraging opportunities for physical activity, which is critical in staying healthy, reducing stress, fighting obesity, and preventing chronic health conditions. Parks and trails are also safe options for non-motorized transportation – which is especially important for those that do not own a car or cannot drive due to age, disability, or income.

Parks also act, increasingly, as economic drivers, raising property values, drawing new residents to the community, and encouraging new development and tourism. This plan indicates that cultural activities and pursuits in the region frequently overlap with recreational activities and pursuits. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the residents of Weldon Township, as well as visitors from outside the Township, for the Planning Commission to plan for both their cultural and recreational needs. Cultural facilities – such as historic sites, museums, galleries, libraries, and event venues – also play an important role, increasing tourism and contributing to communities' sense of place and quality of life. Because of these important contributions, recreation and cultural improvements and enhancements support and encourage – and in some cases, create – new investment and economic development.

To help guide future cultural and recreation improvements and enhancements, the Weldon Township Planning Commission initiated the development of this Recreation and Cultural Plan. The plan uses the latest update to the Benzie County Recreation and Cultural Plan as a planning template.

Recreation and Cultural Plan Purpose and Intent

The Plan's intent is to identify the Township's recreation priorities and to offer an action plan for the recreation goals and objectives identified by the community throughout the various planning efforts. The Plan provides a comprehensive inventory of parks, recreational facilities, and cultural entities in Weldon Township, and makes Weldon Township eligible for recreation grants through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Through its recreation grants program, the DNR provides financial assistance to communities that would like to purchase land for parks, or are planning to improve or develop recreation facilities. Weldon Township has not been the direct recipient of DNR monies to date. To be eligible to apply for most of these grant programs, a community must have a 5-year recreation plan, approved by the DNR that meets certain requirements. This Recreation Plan was developed to comply with all DNR requirements for recreation plans.

Chapter 1: Community Description

Weldon Township is one of twelve townships located in Benzie County in Northwest Lower Michigan. The 36.6 square mile township is located in the southern portion of the County where it is bordered by Benzonia and Homestead Townships to the north, Colfax Township to the east, Joyfield Township to the west, and Springdale Township in Manistee County to the south. The Village of Thompsonville, located in the southeastern corner of Weldon Township, is the focal point of commerce in the township and has a rich history, particularly in lumbering and the railroad industry. The Village shares its border with Weldon Township to the west and Colfax Township to the east.

Similar to the surrounding Benzie County, Weldon Township is host to a wealth of natural resources including the Betsie River, a State-designated Natural River System and 14,280 acres of forestland, much of which is part of the Pere Marquette State Forest. The natural resources and area's topography have made Weldon Township a recreation destination, providing plentiful opportunities for fishing, boating, alpine and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and hiking.

The Township is also home to the Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa, a prominent attraction in the region. The 1,125-acre resort hosts a number of year-round activities and features a walkable and compact village area, and four home site communities for resort-style living. With over 500 employees in the winter and summer, Crystal Mountain is Benzie County's largest Employer. The resort campus is also home to the Michigan Legacy Art Park. Located on a wooded 30-acre preserve, the park features 1.7 miles of hiking trails, over 40 sculptures, and an outdoor amphitheater for concerts among other features.

Benzie County and Weldon Township are rich with recreation and cultural activity and potential. These opportunities contribute to the quality of life here and attract visitors and seasonal residents.

Community Needs

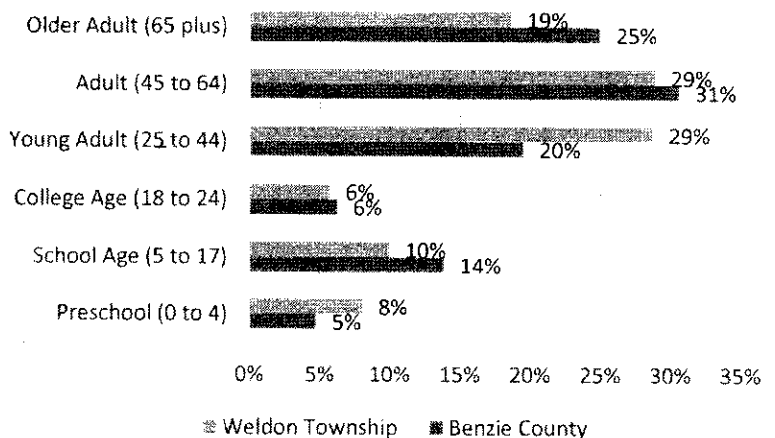
A community's recreation needs depend on the age, income, and other needs of its residents.

Age

The age of a community's residents is an important factor in determining recreation needs: facilities should accommodate the varying abilities and interests of residents at different stages of life. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, the median age in Weldon Township is 41.1, which is slightly higher than the state median age of 39.1 years. Whereas the median age in Benzie County is 49.6, over ten years above the state average.

These trends have significant impacts on recreation needs: seniors represent an important and growing segment of the population, necessitating new recreation facilities and features. The provision of barrier-free access is becoming an increasingly high priority. Passive recreation opportunities, such as walking paths, are also becoming more important as the population ages. However, almost 20% of the Township's population is below the age of 18, so to focus solely on the aging population leaves many residents' recreation needs unmet. Ensuring that the recreation needs of youth are

2018 Population Estimates by Age



addressed can make the community more attractive to families, helping to reverse the decline in younger populations, while also improving opportunities for physical activity and social development among the region's children and adolescents.

Community Health

Providing access for all residents to safe and enjoyable recreational facilities is important in ensuring a high quality of life and personal health. The 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) reports that 16.9% of Weldon Township's population has some type of disability. Disabled individuals have specific community needs relative to public spaces, with significant challenges related to accessibility. Many recreation opportunities in this region are focused on natural resources that may be difficult to access due to terrain and other environmental features. Encouraging accessibility features in parks and recreation facilities can increase safe access for all.

Similar to the rest of the nation, state, and region, Benzie County is contending with a rise in obesity. Nearly one-third of residents living in Benzie County are obese and another one-third are overweight (2019 County Health Rankings, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). Obesity is caused by many different factors, including physical inactivity, and it is associated with many chronic conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and stroke, poorer mental health, and a reduced quality of life. Obesity among those in poverty is of particular concern, as national studies show that those in poverty are more likely to experience obesity and related disease.

Physical activities and exercise play an important part in preventing and addressing obesity. Improving access to parks and recreation opportunities, and incentivizing and encouraging physical activity, can promote physical fitness and improved health outcomes.

Income

When planning for recreation, it is important to ensure that activities and amenities in the community are within the financial means of the majority of residents. The 2018 median household income was \$40,139 in Weldon Township, compared to \$56,639 in Benzie County and the state's median income of \$54,938. In Weldon Township, 36.5% of full-time, year-round workers are earning less than \$25,000. The poverty rate for Weldon Township is 23.4% and 33.9% for people under 18. The poverty rate for the County is 9.5%; the poverty rate for people under 18 is 12.1%.

Lower-income residents may have greater challenges in accessing recreation: parks may be less prevalent or offer fewer amenities in low-income communities, which often have fewer public revenues that can be used to develop and maintain recreation facilities. In addition, the costs associated with a wide variety of recreation activities, such as biking, golfing, skiing, paddling, and even organized sports, can prevent many households or individuals from participating.

Obesity is closely connected with lifestyle issues such as physical activity, and higher rates of obesity and diabetes among those in poverty may reflect issues associated with recreation access and costs. While public recreation facilities are often available at low or no cost, many individuals are priced out of recreation opportunities like fitness programs or facilities or by the cost of equipment for participation in activities.

Seasonal Population

Benzie County's recreation and cultural opportunities contribute to a significant seasonal population. Tourists and seasonal residents alike travel to the County for day trips, hotel stays, camping, or vacation homes to take advantage of the abundant recreational opportunities and thriving arts and cultural scene. A 2014 Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Analysis, conducted by the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute, found that Benzie County's population grows by over 8,000 people during the summer months, representing 40% of the County's total population at that time.

The large influx of seasonal residents has a tremendous impact on the County's economy, and on its recreation needs and opportunities. Activity at and demand for recreation facilities region-wide climbs dramatically, with boat launches, beaches, open spaces, and other outdoor facilities often experiencing large crowds. This increased activity brings added visitor spending at the region's businesses, but also comes with community costs in the form of added maintenance for trash removal, landscaping, and other activities. Transportation, too, is impacted, as traffic volumes increase and some parking lots overflow. With limited recreation budgets and staff in many communities, some communities struggle to plan for, budget, and address seasonal usage patterns at local parks.

Economy

Benzie County's recreation and cultural assets are vital to its economy, employing residents, generating tourism, capturing visitor spending, and supporting related economic activity. In addition to direct dollars in the economy, recreation acts as one of the regions most important and recognized quality of life assets, which draws millions of visitors annually and attracts both new residents and visitors.

For many people, access to arts and culture are at the heart of their quality of life. Even beyond the impacts to residents' quality of life, communities that offer arts and cultural opportunities also stand to benefit economically and socially: from drawing more tourists to the community and building a vibrant environment that is attractive to entrepreneurs and knowledge workers, the arts can be an important tool in a community's economic toolbox.

Tourism & Economic Impact

Benzie County's recreation and cultural scene has an enormous indirect economic impact, forming the foundation of the County's thriving tourist economy. Visitors who come for recreation and cultural activities spend dollars on hotels, restaurants, and related expenses, supporting a significant number of related jobs and additional economic activity. While data is not available to identify the indirect economic impacts of recreation in the County, state and national studies highlight the impact of specific recreation activities and parks. The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore alone contributed more than \$130 million in total visitor spending to the economy in Northwest Michigan. The National Park Service also provides jobs, both year-round and seasonal, and visitor spending at the park supports a significant number of jobs locally.

Data reflecting the indirect economic impact of arts and culture in the County is also lacking, however, national arts organizations (such as Data Arts and Americans for the Arts) indicate that for every \$1 invested in arts and culture, \$51 is returned in economic development. Michigan's cultural tourism generated \$1.86-billion or 12.7% of direct tourism spending. Further statistics support the sector's impact on education, quality of life and community vitality.

Talent Attraction

Communities with a high quality of life and a variety of cultural and recreation opportunities for all ages are needed to attract an educated and skilled workforce. In today's knowledge-based economy, the presence of a skilled, knowledgeable, and educated workforce is critical in attracting new business, entrepreneurial activity, and subsequent economic growth.

A high-quality natural environment provides for a wealth of four season activities including hiking, skiing, biking, swimming, boating, and other activities that contribute to a high quality of life. Providing opportunities for personal enrichment and social interaction, arts and cultural activities are also important contributors to a high quality of life.

Chapter 2: Administrative Structure

Weldon Township Administrative Structure:

The ultimate decision-making authority and responsibility for all park related projects resides with the Township Board. The Township Board is comprised of five members, including the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, and two Township Trustees. The maintenance of the parks is contracted out, as well as the township paying for trash removal. Local volunteers have been assisting with landscaping projects.

The Planning Commission suggests improvements and items of repair and maintenance to the Township Board. The Township is exploring the possibility of a special committee made up of volunteers to work more closely on Day Use Park & Walking Trail responsibilities.

Weldon Township Recreation Budget

Funding for Day Use Park & Walking Trail comes directly from the Township General Fund. Grants and donations have largely been used to cover capital projects. The following chart includes the current and projected park budget.

2020-2021: Adopted Budget	2021-2022: Projected Budget
\$ 14,741*	\$2,700

*Total includes MDHHS Grant Money and Applicable Matching Funds

Collaborating Organizations

A number of organizations, public agencies, and community groups are involved with recreation activities and facilities in the Township. The following list is some of those that have assisted with recreation opportunities in the Township:

Benzie County Road Commission (BCRC) – Is in charge of all road-ends in the County and has made a commitment to keep them open to the public. One BCRC member is seated on the County Parks & Recreation Commission.

Benzie County Historical Society (BCRC) – The non-profit seeks to educate and celebrate the Benzie County area through exhibits at the museum and programs held throughout the area. The Society recently helped place a historical marker in Thompsonville to recognize its history as a busy railroad junction with a diamond-shaped railroad track.

Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA) - The stewardship organization has been involved in watershed management and River Care projects focused on the Betsie River, and partners with local organizations and agencies in doing so.

Crystal Mountain Resort – Located west of Thompsonville, this four-season family resort is a major employer and an active partner in community development planning and projects.

Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail – This 501(c)3 organization helps maintain the Betsie Valley Trail through fundraising and management activities that ensure the long-term maintenance of the trail.

Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) - Lands owned, protected, and/or managed by GTRLC are enjoyed by citizens of Weldon Township for recreational use. GTRLC has helped protect land for preservation and recreation purposes in the Township and County.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) – The state owns significant public lands used for recreation within the Township. The MDNR also oversees the Natural Wild and Scenic River designation on the Betsie River. The MDNR maintains a working relationship with the Township.

SEEDS – Specializing in after school programs, a youth conservation corps, and energy and environment analysis. Local youth with the SEEDS program put in the trail and benches at the Township's Day Use Park.

Volunteers – Volunteers also play a vital role in both the development and upkeep of facilities, as well as fundraising activities for projects.

Chapter 3:

Recreation & Cultural Inventory

The following inventory includes a detailed description and assessment of Weldon Township's park and a broader inventory of recreation and cultural facilities owned by non-profit organizations, other governmental units, and some privately owned facilities. For the Township facility, information is included relative to the accessibility of each facility to people with disabilities, based on criteria provided in the MDNR guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans (MDNR, 2018). The assessments were informed by Township representatives and other key stakeholders involved in managing the properties. The accessibility ranking system used in this document required that each entity be compared to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

ADA Ranking System

- 1 - None of the site elements meet accessibility guidelines.
- 2 - Some of the site elements meet accessibility guidelines.
- 3 - Most of the site elements areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 - All of the site elements meet accessibility guidelines.
- 5 - The facility meets the Principals of Universal Design

Betsie River Day Use Park & Walking Trail

Park Type: Community Park
Size: 10 acres
Ownership: MDNR under lease to Weldon Township
Service Area: Weldon Township, Benzie County

Description: The Day Use Park and Walking Trail is a community asset located just outside of Thompsonville along the Betsie River. The Park includes a handicap accessible walkway to the Betsie River with a kayak/canoe launch site and parking for seven (7) vehicles. There are toilet facilities available. The Park is within easy bicycling range of the Betsie Valley Trail, the Village of Thompsonville, and Crystal Mountain Resort. Hiking, snow shoeing, birding, nature watching, kayaking and canoeing are activities to be enjoyed at the Park. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are allowed in accordance with State of Michigan regulations.

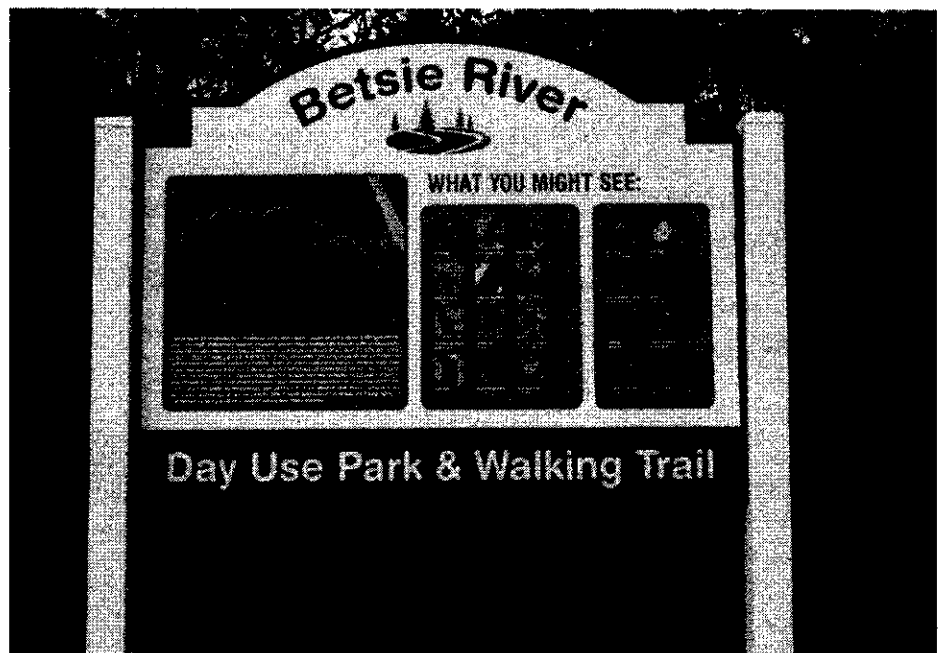
The park was initially established in the early 1990's with funding from the DNR Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. On May 15, 2011 Weldon Township signed a 15-year renewable lease with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to protect and maintain the Park. In 2019 and again in 2020 additional funding was procured by Weldon Township from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Building Healthy Communities Grants, to enhance the recreational opportunities afforded by the Park by creating an approximately .25 mile walking and nature observation trail. The labor for the construction of the trail was provided by Seeds EcoCorps, in Traverse City.

The Park is an example of a floodplain forest community, with some elements of hardwood conifer swamp, shrub thicket, and residual effects of remote disturbance by previous homesteading. Being situated adjacent to the Betsie River and surrounded by a large area of forested undeveloped DNR property, the Park demonstrates multiple species of flora and fauna. A resident wood turtle (*Glyptenys insculpta*) population has been documented in the Park for years. There are a number of resident and migratory bird species that can be observed throughout the year and a variety of insects, including various dragonflies and damselflies, (odonata), and butterfly, (lepidoptera), species. Signs of deer, bear, and other mammals are abundant. A list of plant species observed to date is available for review at the Betsie Valley District Library in Thompsonville.

Accessibility Assessment: 4

Public and Stakeholder Input:

Results from the 2020 questionnaire indicate the township park is the most frequently used recreational facility. Respondents expressed a strong interest in expanding the existing walking trail. Results from the 2019 questionnaire indicate that the park is most frequently used in the summer, with steady use in the spring and fall as well. Responses were positive about maintenance of the park.



Weldon Township Community Garden

Park Type: Community Garden

Size: .25 acres

Ownership: Weldon Township

Service Area: Thompsonville Area / Weldon Township

Description: A community garden that is free and open to all Thompsonville area residents on a first-come first-serve basis. The garden is located behind the Township Hall. The garden's purpose is to encourage families to garden with their children and educate them on how food is grown. Fifteen plots are available including four above-ground planters; all plots are watered twice daily. Further enhancements are planned including development of a fairy garden and sitting area.

Accessibility Assessment: 1

Public and Stakeholder Input:

Results from the 2020 questionnaire indicate the Community garden is used among respondents, but also had the lowest overall reported use among public facilities. Discussion indicated making an effort to raise awareness about the availability of the garden plots to area residents.



Trails

Trails are pathways that are used recreationally or for transportation by a variety of users, including bicyclists, horseback riders, snowmobilers, or hikers. Motorized trails include those that were designed to accommodate motorcycles, ORVs, or snowmobiles, while hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are among uses permitted on non-motorized trails. Multi-use trails are those designed to accommodate multiple user types simultaneously, such as pedestrians and cyclists. Other trails might be designed and designated for certain uses, such as motorcycles or snowmobiles. Understanding regional trail systems is important in identifying opportunities for trail linkages and enhancements.

The following are major trail systems owned and/or managed by non-Township entities in Weldon Township.

Non-Motorized Trails

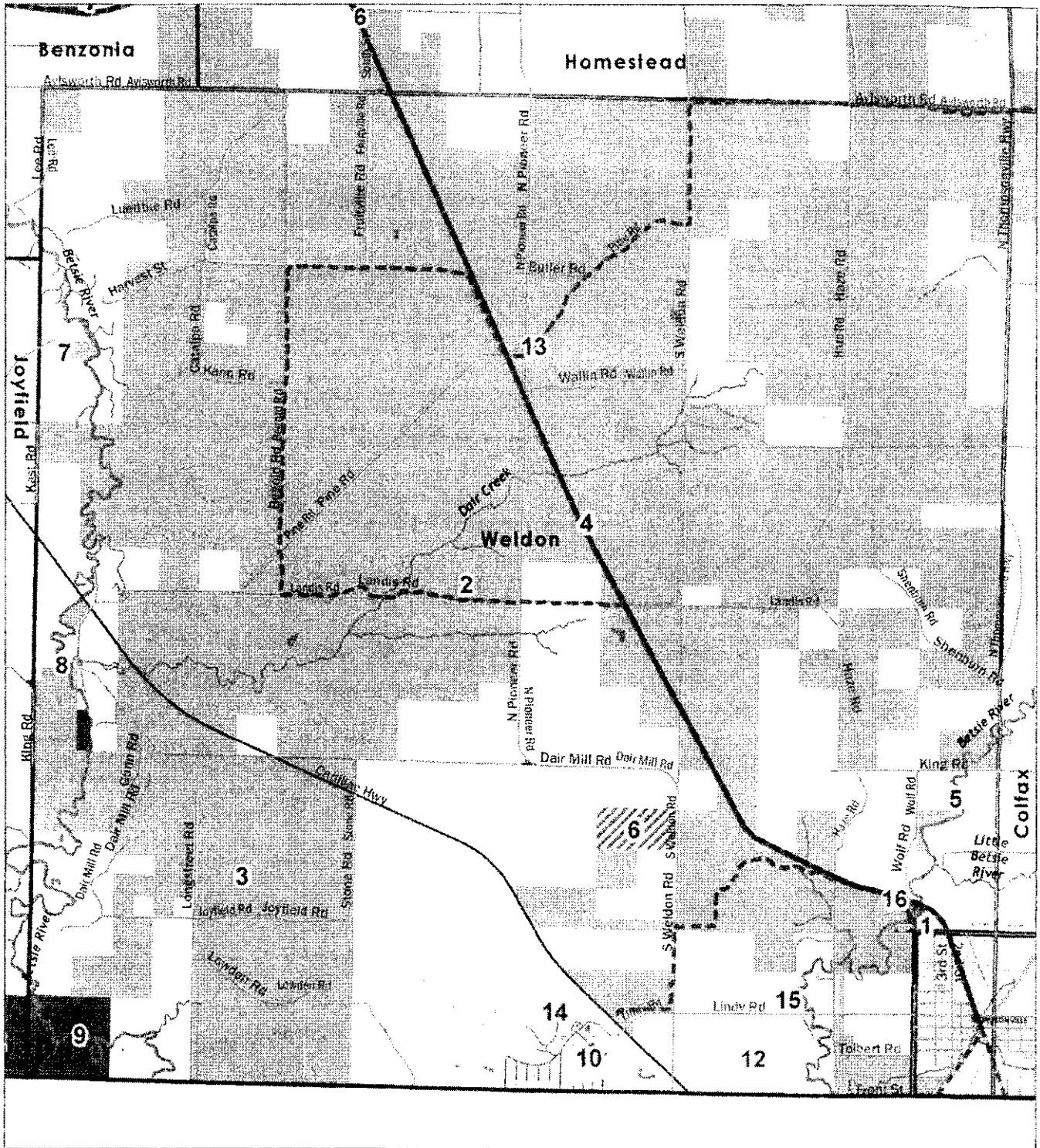
Betsie Valley Trail: The Betsie Valley Trail is a 22-mile multiuse trail located along the former Ann Arbor Railroad. The trail extends from Frankfort through Elberta and Beulah to Thompsonville all through Benzie County. The 13-mile section from Beulah to Thompsonville is compacted aggregate and runs through pine and hardwood upland forests and the Pere Marquette State Forest.

Betsie River Pathway: The Betsie River Pathway is a ten-mile hiking, biking, and cross-country ski trail located next to the Betsie River, roughly six miles west of Thompsonville, and just east of the Betsie River. The trail consists of two loops with varied terrain. The trail is owned by the Department of Natural Resources.

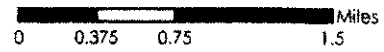
Motorized Trails

Platte River Snowmobile Trail: A designated snowmobile trail system, the Platte River Snowmobile Trail follows seasonal roads, trails, and easements throughout the County. The trail is maintained and groomed with state funds.

Betsie River Snowmobile Trail: The trail runs between Beulah and Thompsonville and contains a large loop connecting to the Platte River Trail. The parts of the trail along the old railroad bed are the Betsie Valley Trail, used for hiking and biking during the other seasons



Weldon Township



- Village
- Township
- Benzie County
- County Road Commission
- DNR/State
- Thompsonville Consolidated Schools
- GTRLC
- Grand Traverse Band

- Non-Motorized Trails
- Snowmobile Trails (DNR Designated)
- City/Village
- Municipal Boundary
- Parcels



WELDON TOWNSHIP						
Map	Facility	Type	Description and Activities	Size	Ownership	Service Area
1	Betsie River Day Use Park	Community Park	Located on Wolf Road, just outside of Thompsonville. The trail is around 1/3 of a third of a mile long and views of the Betsie River	10 acres	MDNR	
2	Platte River Snowmobile Trail	Trail	Designated snowmobile trail system maintained and groomed with state funds. It follows seasonal roads, trails, and easements.		MDNR	County, Region, State
3	Betsie River Pathway	Trail	Cross-country ski trail located on the east side of the Betsie River in southeastern Weldon Township.		MDNR	County, Region
4	Betsie Valley Trail	Trail	<i>See Benzie County Inventory</i>			
5	Betsie River Water Trail	Water Trail				
6	Benzie County Central School District Forest	Forested Area	Forested property.	80 acres	Thompsonville Consolidated Schools	County
7	Fred's Landing	Water Access	Betsie River access with primitive camping.		MDNR, BCRC	County, Region
8	Dair Mill Fishing Access	Water Access	On the south side of M-115, between the Betsie River and Dair Mill Road.	10.8 acres	MDNR	County, Region
9	Misty Acres: The Borwell Preserve	Natural Area	Includes a working farm, 10,000 feet along the Betsie River, and a short nature trail. 309 acres are in Benzie County.	627 acres	GTRLC	County, Region
10	Michigan Legacy Art Park	Art Park	An outdoor sculpture park and amphitheater with close to 50 art works installed along 1.6 miles of trails. Provides cultural, artistic, and educational services to the public. Open year round during daylight hours. Enter through Crystal Mountain's main entrance.	30 acres	Michigan Legacy Art Park	Region
11	Weldon Township Hall	Municipal Building	Meeting space and township offices. Community Garden is behind the building.		Weldon Township	Township
12	Thompsonville Airport	Airport	General aviation airport with two runways, one paved and one grass strip, an administration building, pit toilets, and water.	220 acres	Village of Thompsonville	County
13	Weldon Township Cemetery	Cemetery	Located on the corner of Pioneer and Pine Streets.	5 acres	Weldon Township	
14	Crystal Mountain Resort	Private Facility	Year-round resort with 36 holes of golf, downhill skiing, ski lodge, restaurant and lodging for 1,000+ people, indoor and outdoor pools, tennis courts, mountain biking trails, cross-country skiing trails, conference center, summer luge run, mountain bike trails, outdoor art park, fitness center and spa.		Private	
15	Betsie River Campground	Private Facility	Year-round RV camping facility located on the NW corner where the Betsie River crosses Lindy Road.		Private	
16	Betsie River Sportsman's Club	Private Facility	Includes a clubhouse. Located on Egan Road.		Private	

Chapter 4:

Planning Methods & Public Input

The Recreation and Cultural Plan was developed by the Weldon Township Planning Commission with assistance from Networks Northwest. The Plan was developed using the Systems Approach to Planning (MDNR, 2018), a three-part planning method that first examines the information already available; collects public input; and develops goals and objectives based on areas of need from public input and the existing information. This is one of the recommended planning methods by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The 2020 Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural plan served as a template for this plan. Information and feedback were collected with assistance from the Weldon Township Planning Commission; public input received through questionnaires, stakeholder input, and a public hearing; prior planning efforts including the Weldon Township Master Plan 2020 and the Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural Plan; and additional research and analysis conducted by Networks Northwest. Data and public input were used to develop an effective set of goals and objectives to reflect the needs of Weldon Township residents and visitors, while not duplicating existing facilities and services.

Public Input

2020 Weldon Recreation and Cultural Plan Questionnaire

The Weldon Township Planning Commission released an online survey based on the questionnaire developed for the County's 2019 joint planning process, and to further inform the development of the Township's goals, objectives, and priority action plan. The survey was open for two weeks in October of 2020. Just over twenty surveys were received. The following report summarizes the results and feedback received from respondents.

- Betsie River Day Use Park and Walking Trail and State/DNR owned property are the most frequently used; the Community Garden and school recreation facilities had the lowest reported use among public facilities
- The most important activities and facilities were walking/hiking, canoeing/kayaking, beaches, wildlife viewing, libraries, and biking.
- A strong interest in expanding the trail at the Betsie River Day Use Park
- An interest in the development of pickle ball and hiking opportunities

2019 Community Recreation and Cultural Plan Questionnaire

As part of the 2020 Benzie County Recreation & Cultural Plan update, the Benzie County Parks and Recreation Commission, along with the support of Weldon and Benzonia Townships, developed and released an online and hard copy survey designed to help inform the development of the plan and community goals, objectives, and priority actions. The survey was open for over two weeks in August of 2019. One hundred seventy-one (171) surveys were received. High priority areas identified in the survey results and that are most relevant to Weldon Township include:

- Important and frequently used activities/facilities include walking/hiking, wildlife viewing, libraries, biking, canoeing/kayaking and non-motorized water access.
- A strong interest in trails. Trail suggestions focused largely on improving and paving more of the Betsie Valley Trail, and developing trail opportunities for motorcycle use.
- The public values and uses public water access sites, and maintenance, improvement, and development of water access is important.
- Responses specific to Weldon Township indicate an interest in improved access to the Betsie River and both non-motorized and motorized trail development.

2019 Master Plan Public Workshop

To help guide the 2020 Weldon Township Master Plan, the Planning Commission hosted a public workshop on January 23, 2019, where attendees were asked how they felt about their community, the activities residents would

like to see on the vast amount of state lands, priority zoning issues, the recreational activities enjoyed by residents, and what types of recreational improvements residents would like to see in the Township. This input was collected on boards and shared with the attendees at the end of the meeting. The five priorities from the public workshop were:

- Protect the area's natural beauty and the Betsie River.
- Preserve the community's rural character.
- Leverage the outdoors for recreational opportunities and community enjoyment.
- Develop and implement reasonable blight controls.
- Permit and encourage the development of a variety of housing options including workforce housing.

Public Comment Period

A draft of the Recreation and Cultural Plan was released for a 30-day public review period in November. Notice was provided in the Benzie County Record Patriot issues on November 4 and 18, 2020. All comments had to be submitted for consideration before, or could be heard at, the public hearing on January 12, 2021 at the Township Hall. Copies of the plan were available on the Township website, and hard copies were available at the Township offices. Notices for the public hearings were posted at the Township Hall and published in the Benzie County Record Patriot.

Public Hearing and Adoption

As part of their regular meeting on January 4, 2021, the Planning Commission approved a resolution to recommend adoption of the plan by the Weldon Township Board. On January 12, 2021 the Township Board held a public hearing on the plan. Following the public hearing, the Township Board approved the plan, approving it for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at their regular meeting on January 12, 2021. Please see Appendix B for the approval documents.

Chapter 5: Goals, Objectives, & Action Plan Priorities

The goals, objectives, and action program developed as part of the Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities. These goals were developed based on the review of existing facilities, demographics, plans, and public input obtained through:

- 2019 Benzie County Joint Recreation and Cultural Plan
- 2020 Weldon Township Master Plan
- Demographic data collection and analysis
- Regular meetings of the Weldon Township Planning Commission
- Public hearing conducted as part of the recreation planning process

In addition to public and stakeholder input, other local and regional plans and strategies have been reviewed to ensure that the goals, objectives, and actions are consistent with and aligned with other local, county, and regional initiatives.

Shared Goals

Below are common Goals shared by Benzie County, Benzonia Township, and Weldon Township. The associated objectives and actions are identified on the following pages for Weldon Township.

1. Establish and support community structures for recreation maintenance, planning, and improvement oversight
2. Maintain and improve existing parks
3. Provide a variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, that meet the community's existing and future needs.
4. Develop and promote an interconnected system of motorized, non-motorized, and water trails to enhance access to additional recreation opportunities.

Weldon Township

Objective Maintain, improve, and expand on existing Township facilities as needed

- Action 1.1 Provide improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities as needed
- Action 1.2 Develop a fairy garden and sitting area at the Community Garden
- Action 1.3 Pursue the expansion of the state property around Betsie River Day Use Park and Walking Trail (See trail objective actions)
- Action 1.4 Pursue partnerships and work with volunteers, community groups, and public agencies to assist with park maintenance, planning, and development projects

Objective Ensure a diverse range of recreation and cultural opportunities throughout the Township

- Action 2.1 Regularly identify, with public input and community planning, recreation needs and gaps
- Action 2.2 Encourage rehabilitation of historic structures for public recreational and cultural uses
- Action 2.3 Encourage the private sector to develop recreation and cultural facilities and programs that will complement public uses
- Action 2.4 Ensure that park and recreational facilities and opportunities are available and affordable to all residents
- Action 2.5 Collaborate with partner organizations, local schools, and public agency partners such as the Village of Thompsonville, Benzie County, and MDNR to enhance the area's access to recreation and cultural opportunities for all population groups.
- Action 2.6 Strengthen and provide educational outreach and activities by encouraging community based opportunities offered by groups like the DNR, SEEDS, 4-H, Michigan Legacy Art Park, MSUE, and other university and extracurricular programs
- Action 2.7 Explore opportunities to establish a dark sky designated areas

Objective Increase access to all public lands and waters

- Action 3.1 Encourage the acquisition of lands on lakes, rivers, and streams
- Action 3.2 Identify potential locations for additional water access, including launches for kayaking
- Action 3.3 Support and stay informed about efforts to develop, improve, and maintain water access along the Betsie River, and participate when possible
- Action 3.4 Support the completion of a water access assessment of the Betsie River, including the segment of the river that flows through the Township
- Action 3.5 Continue to provide access for all by improving barrier-free features at facilities as needed
- Action 3.6 Consider and incorporate universal access features at Township facilities

Objective Support the development and maintenance of trails

- Action 4.1 Explore and pursue opportunities to expand the trail at the Township's Day Use Park
- Action 4.2 Coordinate with the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail and other partners to maintain, improve, and expand the Betsie Valley Trail and connections with the BVT
- Action 4.3 Work with Crystal Mountain Resort to develop a non-motorized pathway connecting the resort and downtown
- Action 4.4 Explore opportunities and pursue funding to create trail connections that link parks, existing trails, and other community, recreational, and cultural assets

Action 4.5 Work with local and regional organizations, citizens, and business owners to enhance connectivity between downtown Thompsonville and nearby neighborhoods, trail-heads, parks and community amenities

Action 4.6 Encourage the placement of bicycle racks in appropriate locations

Objective: Explore and pursue opportunities for the acquisition and development of recreational facilities, sites, open spaces, and programs

Action 5.1 Collaborate with public and private partners, such as the MDNR and Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, to fund the purchase and maintenance of recreational properties

Action 5.2 Manage parks and recreation to protect and enhance natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas

Action 5.3 Continue coordination efforts between local units of government, government agencies and community organizations that contribute to the management and oversight of environmentally sensitive areas.

Action 5.4 Provide public access to special and unique areas within the community

Objective Raise community awareness of and appreciation for recreational and cultural opportunities

Action 6.1 Build awareness and encourage use of the Township's Day Use Park and Community Garden by township residents

Action 6.2 Partner with schools, visitor's bureaus, and other organizations to promote and celebrate the natural and cultural resources in the Township

Action 6.3 Partner with volunteers and other public and private entities to organize and/or promote activities and events, such as guided hikes and educational events, that showcase parks, recreation, and cultural facilities

Action 6.4 Encourage healthy active lifestyles through recreation

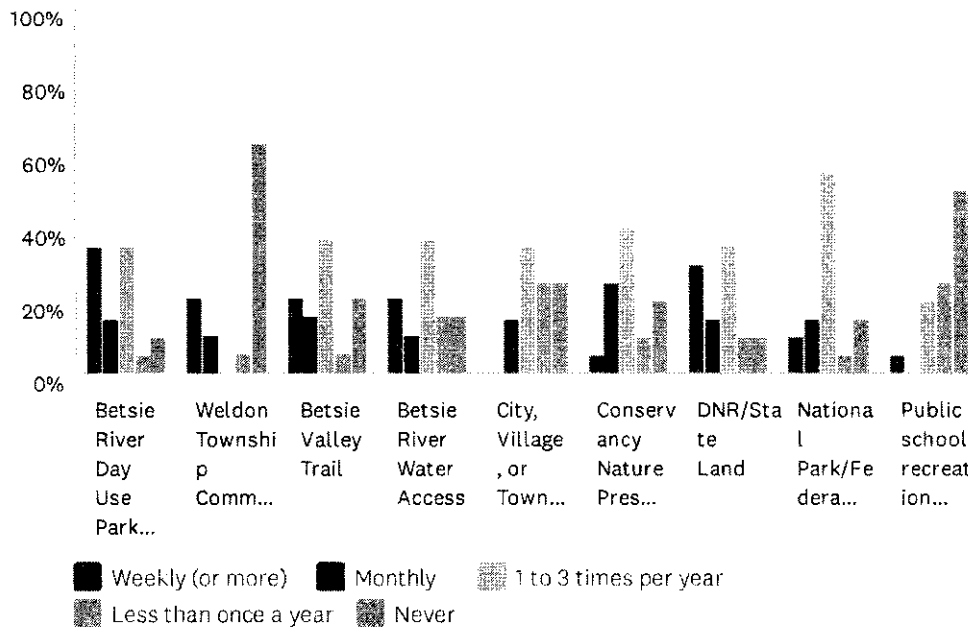
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Appendices

<i>2020 Survey and Survey Results</i>	19
<i>Public Comment and Review Affidavit</i>	26
<i>Planning Commission Resolution</i>	27
<i>Public Hearing Affidavit</i>	28
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<i>MDNR Checklist</i>	37

Q1 How often do members of your household use or visit the following recreation facilities in Weldon Township and Benzie County?

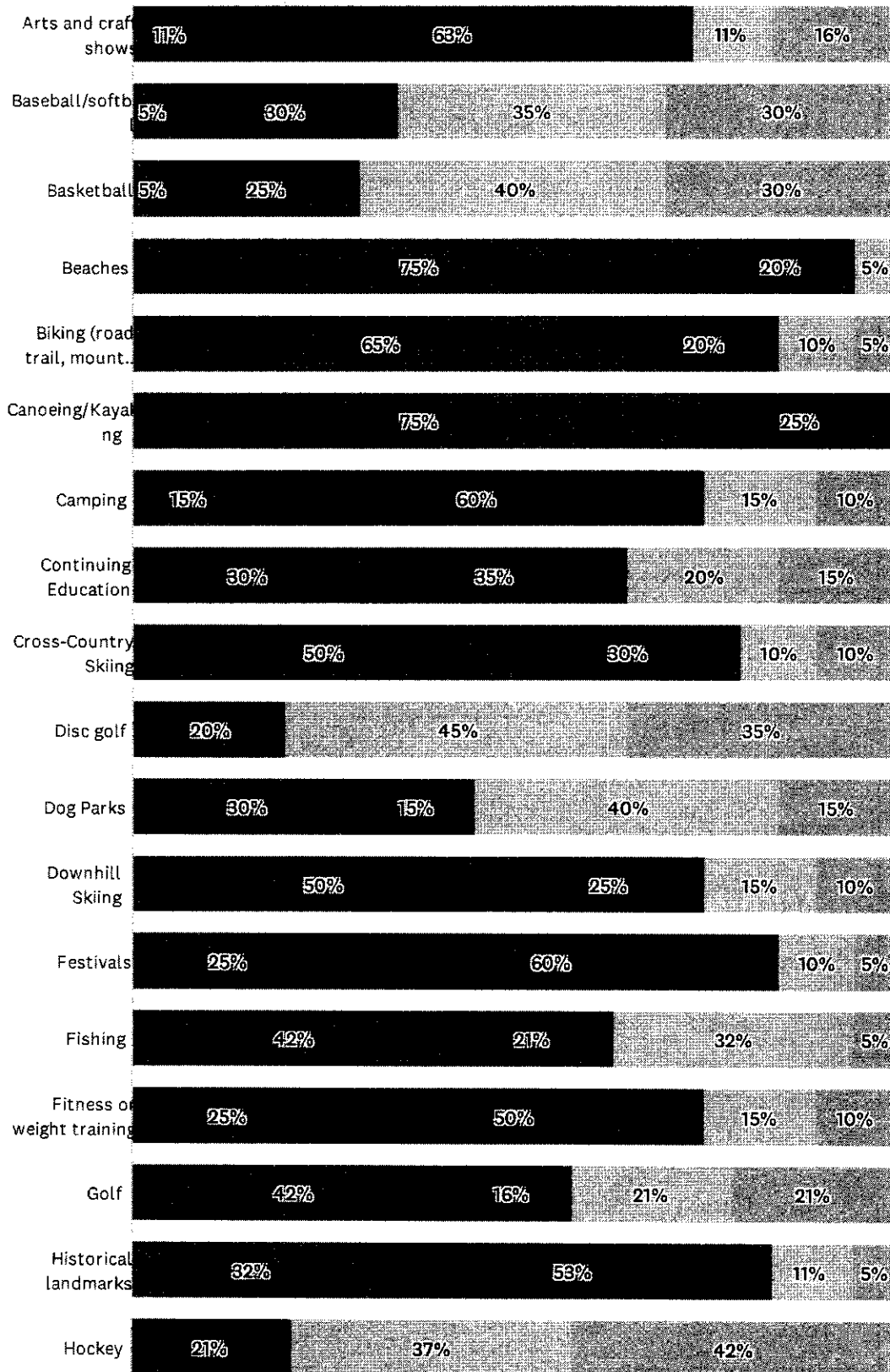
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



	WEEKLY (OR MORE)	MONTHLY	1 TO 3 TIMES PER YEAR	LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR	NEVER	TOTAL
Betsie River Day Use Park & Walking Trail	35.00% 7	15.00% 3	35.00% 7	5.00% 1	10.00% 2	20
Weldon Township Community Garden	21.05% 4	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	5.26% 1	63.16% 12	19
Betsie Valley Trail	21.05% 4	15.79% 3	36.84% 7	5.26% 1	21.05% 4	19
Betsie River Water Access	21.05% 4	10.53% 2	36.84% 7	15.79% 3	15.79% 3	19
City, Village, or Township Parks	0.00% 0	15.00% 3	35.00% 7	25.00% 5	25.00% 5	20
Conservancy Nature Preserves	5.00% 1	25.00% 5	40.00% 8	10.00% 2	20.00% 4	20
DNR/State Land	30.00% 6	15.00% 3	35.00% 7	10.00% 2	10.00% 2	20
National Park/Federal Land	10.00% 2	15.00% 3	55.00% 11	5.00% 1	15.00% 3	20
Public school recreation facilities	5.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 4	25.00% 5	50.00% 10	20

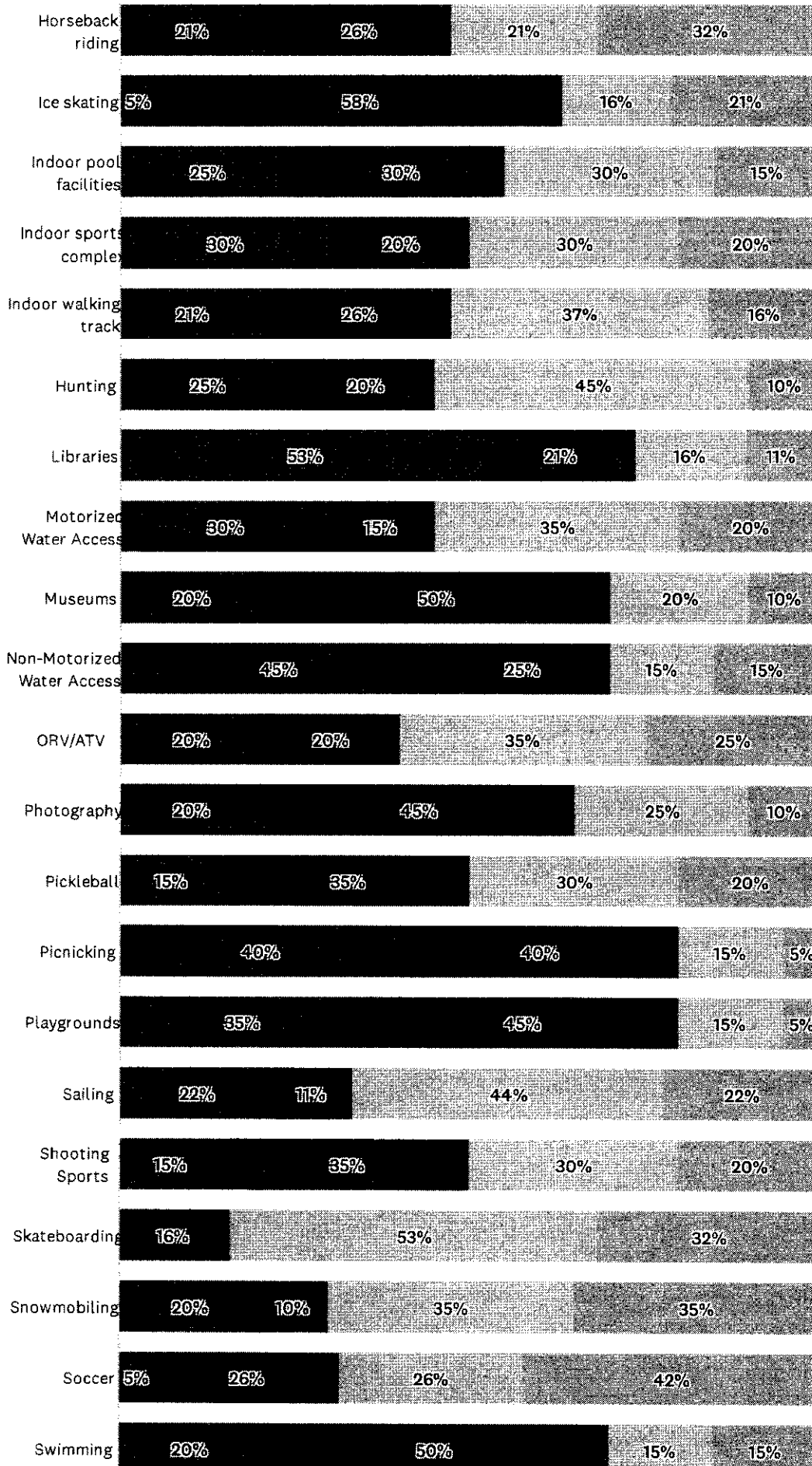
Q2 How important are the following activities and facilities to you or members of your household?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



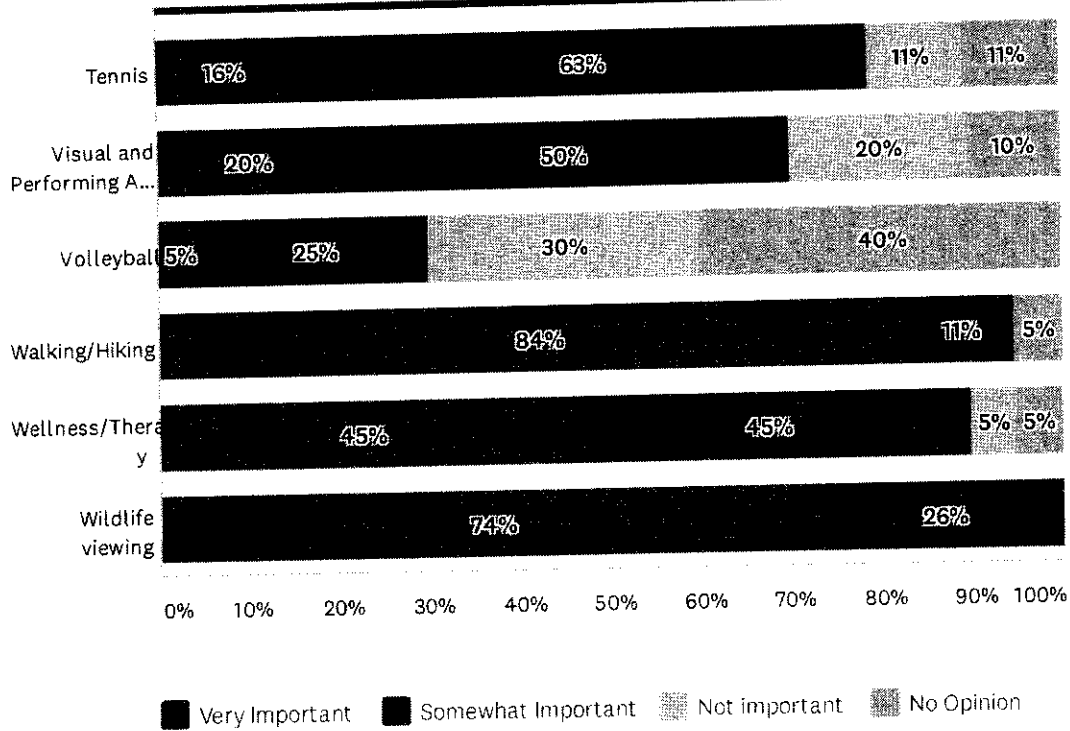
Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Questionnaire

Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 21



Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Questionnaire

Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan 22



OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

DATE

1 Trapping be allowed

10/19/2020 1:52 PM

Q3 Are there any improvements you would like to see at the Township's Day Use Park & Walking Trail?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 12

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	More park property to explore	10/29/2020 11:55 AM
2	More direct access to the river. Extended trail!	10/29/2020 11:21 AM
3	More awareness that the park exists.	10/20/2020 10:04 AM
4	No opinion	10/20/2020 9:00 AM
5	Trail made longer	10/15/2020 9:08 AM
6	Better job at it being taking care of More access to longer trail More seating for viewing river and wildlife	10/13/2020 9:35 PM
7	Maybe a longer trail. Identification tags for wildflowers and trees.	10/9/2020 5:04 PM
8	Expand trail	10/9/2020 4:37 PM

Q4 What specific types of recreational and/or cultural facilities, activities, programs, or services would you like to see developed or expanded upon in Weldon Township

Answered: 10 Skipped: 10

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I'm not sure because I don't know enough about what is offered	10/29/2020 11:55 AM
2	Team up with local or regional organizations for programming or at least promote their programs to township residents	10/29/2020 11:21 AM
3	pickelball	10/26/2020 2:23 PM
4	Pickleball/tennis - somewhere to access other players when in area	10/20/2020 5:18 PM
5	No opinion	10/20/2020 9:00 AM
6	Tennis and pickle ball	10/19/2020 11:17 PM
7	More trails for all recreational activities	10/13/2020 9:35 PM
8	Kayaking	10/13/2020 6:39 PM
9	Nature Day Camps for kids Sports leagues for kids	10/9/2020 5:04 PM
10	Hiking club	10/9/2020 4:37 PM

Q5 Please share any additional thoughts you have on recreation and cultural opportunities in Weldon Township

Answered: 2 Skipped: 18

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Really appreciate the upgrades to Day Use Park. Let's keep going!	10/29/2020 11:21 AM
2	No expectations! The blight condition of the residential properties in the city of Thompsonville is shameful, embarrassing, an unabashedly says "The city father's have no power or no pride" in the town..... so why invest money on recreation when clearly that is NOT HIGH on the PRIORITY SCALE for the THOMPSONVILLE residents, slumlords, or City Father's.	10/20/2020 9:00 AM

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

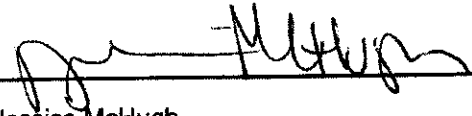
STATE OF MICHIGAN
County of Benzie

WELDON TOWNSHIP
NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC
Recreation Plan
Public Review

Jessica McHugh, being duly sworn, deposes and says that she is one of the editors, publishers, representatives of the Benzie County Record Patriot, a newspaper published and circulated in said County of Benzie, and the annexed notice was duly printed and published in the said newspaper on the following dates:

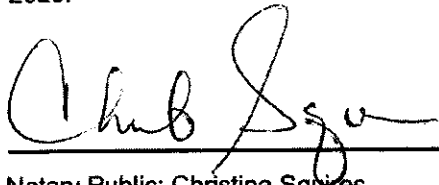
The draft Recreation and Cultural Plan for Weldon Township is available for public review and comment beginning November 5, 2020. A copy of the plan will be available online at weldontwp.org. Please submit all comments to Networks Northwest at mathew.cooke@networksnorthwest.org or to the Township offices by December 5, 2020.
Nov. 4, 18, 2020

November 04, 2020, November 18, 2020



Jessica McHugh

Subscribed to and sworn to me this 18th day of November 2020.



Notary Public: Christina Squires
State of Michigan, County of Benzie
My Commission Expires: February 07, 2022
(Acting in the county of Benzie)

WELDON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF
WELDON TOWNSHIP RECREATION AND CULTURAL PLAN

Resolution Number: 2021-0104

The following resolution was offered by Carrie Aldrich
and seconded by Chris Bobek.

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has undertaken a 5-Year Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities, and goals and actions for improving and maintaining recreational facilities during the five year period covering 2021 through 2025; and,

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has developed the Plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources; and,

WHEREAS, input was received through meetings, a survey, a 30-day public review period, and a public hearing to be held on the January 12, 2021 to obtain input on recreation needs and opportunities, and all other aspects of the recreation plan; and,

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the entire community.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Weldon Township Planning Commission recommends to the Township Board adoption of the Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan.

AYES: 7

NAYS: 0

I, Carrie Aldrich, Secretary of the Weldon Township Planning Commission, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a resolution that was adopted by the Weldon Township Planning Commission at the meeting held on the 4th day of January, 2021.

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

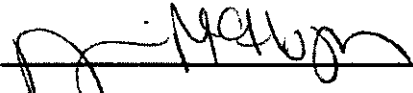
STATE OF MICHIGAN
County of Benzie

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC
Weldon Township
Recreation
and Cultural Plan
Public Hearing
January 12, 2020, 5:00 p.m.
Weldon Township Hall
14731 Thompson Avenue
Thompsonville, MI 49683

Jessica McHugh, being duly sworn, deposes and says that she is one of the editors, publishers, representatives of the Benzie County Record Patriot, a newspaper published and circulated in said County of Benzie, and the annexed notice was duly printed and published in the said newspaper on the following dates:

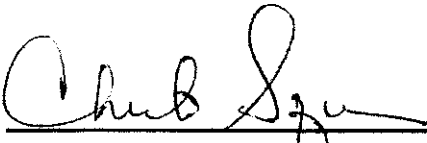
December 30, 2020

Notice is hereby given that the Weldon Township Board has scheduled a public hearing for the Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan on January 12, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Due to Michigan Department of Health and Human Services orders, the meeting will take place virtually utilizing Zoom. The purpose of this hearing is to take public comment on the 2021-2025 Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan. A copy of the plan is available for review online at weldontwp.org. Please use the following link and password to access the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91290069379>
Password: 807180
Dec. 30, 2020



Jessica McHugh

Subscribed to and sworn to me this 30th day of December 2020.



Notary Public: Christina Squires
State of Michigan, County of Benzie
My Commission Expires: February 07, 2022
(Acting in the county of Benzie)

WELDON TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
Weldon Recreational and Cultural Plan
JANUARY 12, 2021, 6:01PM
(ZOOM)

The Supervisor, Ron Hitesman, call the Public Hearing to order at 6:01PM.

Attendance was taken. R. Hitesman, Supervisor, F. Griffin, Clerk, S. Meredith, Trustee, all in attendance. S. Bobek, Treasurer and Scott Williams, Trustee, were absent.

GUESTS: Becky Sharp, Mathew Cooke, Charles Kraus, Craig Meredith

R. Hitesman turned the hearing over to C. Kraus, Planning Commission Chair. He in turn turned it over to Mathew Cooke, Networks Northwest. Mathew gave an overview of what has been happening to this point with the Weldon Township Recreational and Cultural Plan. This is a 5-year Plan from 2021 thru 2025. At the Planning Commission, they passed a resolution to recommend to the Weldon Township Board to pass a Resolution to adopt the Weldon Township Recreational and Cultural Plan.

The public was asked if anyone had any questions. The Plan was previously put on the Website for comments. There was one negative comment. Discussion.

Waited for input. No public comments by ZOOM.

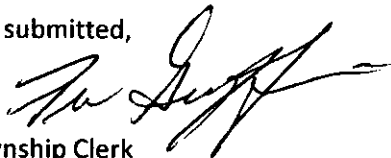
R. Hitesman, Supervisor, made the motion to close the Public Hearing, F Griffin seconded. All ayes.

Public Hearing adjourned at 6:22PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Griffin

Weldon Township Clerk



WELDON TOWNSHIP BOARD

**RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION
WELDON TOWNSHIP RECREATION AND CULTURAL PLAN**

Resolution: 2021-0112

The following resolution was offered by Row Hitesman
and seconded by Scott Williams.

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has undertaken a 5-Year Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities, and goals and actions for improving and maintaining recreational facilities during the five year period covering 2021 through 2025; and,

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has developed the Plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources; and,

WHEREAS, input was received through meetings, a survey, a 30-day public review period, and a public hearing held on the January 12, 2021 to obtain input on recreation needs and opportunities, and all other aspects of the recreation plan; and,

WHEREAS, Weldon Township has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the entire community,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Weldon Township Board hereby adopts the Weldon Township Recreation and Cultural Plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents of the Township.

AYES: 5

NAYS: 0

I, Fran Griffin, Township Clerk, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a resolution that was adopted by the Weldon Township Board at the meeting held on the 12th day of January 2021.

