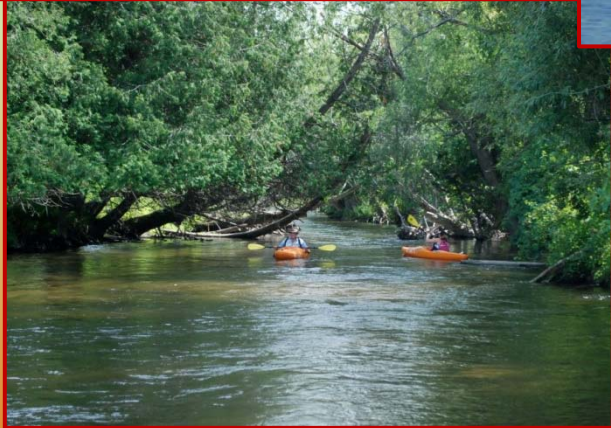


# ***Water Trail Plan***

*Inland Waterway and Straits Area  
Cheboygan and Emmet Counties*



Funded by: Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce and the Michigan Coastal Management Program, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality with support from the Emmet County, Cheboygan County, Mackinaw City, and volunteers.

June 2014



# Inland Waterway and Straits Area Water Trail Plan

## Introduction

The Inland Waterway is a 40 mile long historic water route that connects Lake Huron by way of Cheboygan, Indian River, Alanson, and Conway and with series of long portages at the headwaters to Petoskey State Park and Lake Michigan. A coastal route, part of the Huron Shores Blueways, connects the City of Cheboygan to Mackinaw City and the Straits of Mackinac. Like the interior water trails, the coastal waters have been used for transportation for thousands of years.

The Inland Waterway has long been marketed as the motor boating paradise. Sitting along the banks of the Indian River on a summer afternoon and watching a steady stream of motored craft pass by, attests to the marketing success. There has never been a multi-community effort to organize and promote a paddle trail. Human-powered quiet water sports are among the fastest growing outdoor recreation activities. Combined with other active sports facilities such as the North Central State Trail, North Western State Trail and the North Country Trail, the water trail will bring visitors to the area, add to the quality of life for residents and enhance the rural-recreation sense of place.

Furthermore, development of the water trail represents a regional, multi organization effort and will support economic development in the region of the state dependent upon recreational visitors. While the focus of the project will be paddle sports, motor boat enthusiasts as well as land travelers will benefit. The Huron Shores Blueways/US-23 Heritage Route has been successful marketing tourism and not only bringing visitors to the coastal regions, but also in providing recreational opportunities to residents. The Inland Waterway Trail will complement existing efforts and expand recreational opportunities.

## Location and Regional Setting

Located in Cheboygan and Emmet Counties, in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan, the Inland Waterway has served as a water trail for thousands of years. This historic route extends up the Lake Huron coastline, connecting inland communities to the Straits of Mackinac and Upper Peninsula.



## Purpose of Plan

The project organized a water trail along the inland waterway and refined the water trail from Cheboygan to Mackinaw City. The regional effort involved communities, agencies, organizations, businesses and general public in the trail development process.

Development of the water trail extends a water route into the interior of both counties along with providing a link to Lake Huron and Lake Michigan Coastal Water Trails. Tasks included an inventory of access sites, routes and route assets, such as cultural, business,

recreational, historic and natural resources. The trail connects two great lakes, two coastal water trails, seven state parks, numerous other parks, such as Maple Bay State Forest Campground and Camp Petosega, two river locks and several communities.

The plan will summarize the inventories, provide recommendations to communities, and provide guidelines for future development of the water trail. The primary end product will be to incorporate the trail and amenities into statewide Great Lake Water Trail web site.

### Steering Committee

A project steering committee was formed for the development of the Inland Waterway – Straits Area Water Trail. The committee had representatives from local governments, organizations, state and federal agencies, businesses, paddle clubs and individuals, Little Traverse and Burt Lake Bands of Odawa. The committee met at key points in during the project development process to provide oversight and guidance.

#### *Committee Meetings*

- 1) *Committee - Kick-off meeting to introduce project scope to SC, review preliminary project maps, request information and volunteer paddlers*
- 2) *Committee - Review completed inventory and discuss planning elements*
- 3) *Committee - Review completed plan*
- 4) *Committee – Review Web Site*

### Project Partners

The following is a list of project partners who participated in the project. Several individuals and entities provided information and assistance to the project that went beyond the steering committee participation. These include the following:

Primary Partners	
Emmet County	Cheboygan County
Village of Mackinaw City	NEMCOG
Secondary Partners	
NWMCOG	MDNR State Parks
US-23 Heritage Route	Little Traverse Band of Odawa
Mackinac State Historic Parks	Bio Station
Village of Alanson	City of Cheboygan
Indian River	Top of Michigan Trails Council
Audubon local chapter	Little Traverse Conservancy
Inland Water Route Historical Society	Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Kayak & paddle businesses	Mackinaw Area Historical Society
Chambers of Commerce	Burt Lake Band of Odawa Indians


Volunteers and Organizations	
Sandy Planisek	History of Mackinac Straits
Eric Hemenway	Native American History
Mathew Friday	History of the Inland Waterway
Sheree and Richard Lincoln	Inventory of routes and access sites
David Van Slembrouck	Paddle inventory
Darrell Schwalmie	Paddle inventory
Cynthia Donahey	Paddle inventory
Art Schoolmaster	Paddle inventory
Charles Dawley Little Traverse Land Conservancy	Nature Preserves/ GIS data
Dan Myers , TOMWC	Water features and natural features
Emmet County Staff	Marketing strategies
Cheboygan County Staff	Inventory of access sites in Cheboygan County
University of Michigan Students	Inventory of assets




### Planning Area

The Inland Waterway is a 40 mile long historic water route that connects Cheboygan, Indian River, Alanson, Conway and Petoskey to Lake Huron. It is a Federal Designated Navigation Route under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, the Huron Shores Blueways connects the City of Cheboygan to Mackinaw City and Wilderness State Park.

### Communities along the Waterway

Although the natural beauty along the Inland Waterway Water Trail is its draw, it is the communities along the trail that will secure the trip in your memory. The communities were historically built along this the rivers because they were transportation routes and then later, the communities also faced the railroad (now highways). These unique towns provide natural stopping points along the water trail to stretch your legs while providing all the amenities a paddler would need. These communities are small, unique and steeped in history.

-  *Alanson*, on the Crooked River, is nestled between the river and the former Grand Rapids and Indiana line of Pennsylvania Railroad as well as US-31. At one time the town faced the river and the railroad; now it faces US-31. Alanson has great restaurants, a bakery, one hotel, unique historic sites and parks. The former railroad is now the North Western State Trail (NWST), a multi-use non-motorized trail from Petoskey to Mackinaw City.

-  *Indian River* which is situated along its namesake river between Burt and Mullett Lakes and along the former Michigan Central Railroad, Old 27 and I-75. The town is long and narrow developed along the railroad and Old 27. It has a unique charm being on the connection between two of the largest inland lakes in Michigan. Indian River has restaurants, hotels and cabin rentals, shops and beaches. The former railroad is now the North Central State Trail (NCST), a multi-use non-motorized trail from Gaylord to Mackinaw City.
  
-  *Cheboygan*, the largest town along the inland waterway is on the Cheboygan River. It is situated at the mouth of the river at Lake Huron making it a strategic safe port. The city again developed between the River and the Michigan Central Railroad, but is much larger than the other communities on the inland waterway. The city has all the typical city services, and connections to the NCST and North Eastern State Trail (NEST) that goes from Alpena to Cheboygan. The two trails merge at the Cheboygan Trailhead.
  
-  *Mackinaw City*, at the tip of northern Lower Michigan, is well visited tourist town with all the facilities a visitor would need. The village has many historic sites and parks to visit as well as a ferry ride away from Mackinac Island. The town's population is small but its tourist facilities many including hotels, shops and restaurants. Being at the strategic tip, two major railroads came into Mackinaw City and both are now multi-use trails. The NWST and the NCST meet in Mackinaw City at the Mackinaw City Trailhead.

These four communities are the most developed communities along the trail with full array of services; but many other smaller communities exist including Conway, Oden, Topinabee and Aloha; creating more places to explore along the route.

### **Geological History**

As the Wisconsin glacier retreated from the northern Lower Peninsula some 12,000 years ago, a drainage way of lakes and streams was created through the interior land area, connecting what are today Lakes Michigan and Huron. Several times over the last 12,000 years, pre and post glacial lakes rose to high levels covering parts of the northern Lower Peninsula. Lake Algonquin (10,000 to 12,000 years before present) and Lake Nipissing (4,000 to 6,000 years ago) flooded extensive areas, covering the inland waterway. During these high water periods the Inland Waterway was more like an open water system than a river system. High points in the landscape became islands within the shallow inland seas and are referred to as Riggsville Island, Pellston Island, Royal Oak Island, Griswald Island, Campbell Island and Burt Island. Boyne Highlands and Nubs Nob ski resorts are located on two of the prominent islands.

As the post glacial Great Lakes fell, sand dunes at the eastern end of Little Traverse Bay blocked the flow of water from Lake Michigan into the Inland Waterway. With portages in the upper sections, the Native Americans still used the inland water route to travel

between the Great Lakes, cutting off the more difficult and dangerous coastal route north around Waugoshance Point and the Straits.

### **History**

This route has a rich history worth celebrating, having been used as long as people have lived in Michigan, perhaps 9,000 years. The indigenous people of the Great Lakes; the Anishnaabek (Odawa, Ojibway and Potawatomi) used the waterways as a primary of transportation network. When European settlers arrived on the scene, the Inland Waterway became an important water route moving raw materials to market and hauling supplies inland to new pioneer communities. As the region grew into a summer resort destination, smaller steamships served as the primary mode of passenger transportation on the inland waterway. Cheboygan and Conway were the primary entry points for passenger service.

The Inland Waterway Trail and connecting Huron Shores Blueways Trail will enable paddlers to explore historic canoe routes of the Native Americans, early missionaries and explorers; and the steam ship routes of the early settlers and resorters. Of course the route today is plied by more “urgent” day trippers in their motor boats and cabin cruisers; however, there’s plenty of room for quiet water travel to satisfy the growing interest in paddle sports.

The following three narratives provide historic glimpses of the importance of the Inland Waterway and Straits of Mackinac Coastal water trails.

### ***The Inland Waterways of Northern Michigan: An Indigenous History of Michigan’s Most Valued Resource.*<sup>1</sup>**

The inland waterways that stretch across Cheboygan and Emmet Counties in northern Michigan, effectively connecting Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, today are known for their beauty, recreation opportunities and resource of fresh water. Fishing, motor sports enthusiasts and paddlers from all regions take advantage of this rich resource. Summer homes dot the shorelines of Crooked Lake, Burt Lake and Mullet Lake. But the inland waterway route has a history that spans thousands of years, starting with the indigenous people of the Great Lakes; the Anishnaabek (Odawa, Ojibway and Potawatomi). The Anishnaabek history on the water route is one filled with war, struggle to maintain resources and sense of place.

The Anishnaabek relied heavily on the fresh water of the Great Lakes and the many inland lakes, rivers and streams for their livelihood, economics, traditions, beliefs and a critical food source. Game would often dwindle on the main lands of Michigan but the lakes and streams were a more reliable source of food. Lake Michigan and Huron would supply fishermen, who were daring enough to venture on their waters, with a bounty of whitefish, sturgeon and lake trout. Inland waterways and lakes held large supplies of not

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<sup>1</sup> *Eric Hemenway*

only fish but game, such as beavers and muskrats. And of course is the obvious resource of fresh water, which no population can be sustained without. The northern Michigan inland water route is like thousands of others in the Great Lakes but yet has its own unique history, mainly in relation to the Odawa.

The Odawa have lived in the Great lakes for thousands of years but came to occupy northern Michigan at the expense of other tribes; the Mushcodesh and Assegun. Through a terrible war, the Odawa expelled these two from Emmet County during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Coming from Odawa Minnis (Odawa Island/ Manitoulin Island), the great war chief Sagima and his war party travelled by canoe to wage this war. One of the battles took place at the mouth of the Cheboygan River, as Odawa warriors ambushed a party of Assegun warriors. According to legend, the war was waged over the killing of Odawa women planting corn at the straits of Mackinac and insults directed towards Sagima and his war party upon an unsuccessful venture west.

War would visit northern Michigan several times in the course of the next three centuries. The root of all of these conflicts would be control of the natural resources that resided in Michigan and other areas in the Great Lakes. The Iroquois would wage a terrible war from 1640-1701 throughout the Great Lakes starting east by destroying the Huron. Large war parties of Iroquois, which were primarily the Senenca and Mohawk of the confederacy, pushed as far west as Wisconsin, driving the Odawa from Michigan. This is the only war that displaced the Odawa from northern Michigan. By 1670, the Odawa, Ojibway and other Anishnaabek banded together and began defeating the Iroquois. In 1670, Odawa re-established villages at the present day St. Ignace. The Huron, effectively refugees at this point, were permitted to have villages at Mackinac as well. The war did not end in 1670. Anishnaabek war parties began taking the fight to the Iroquois in their lands in New York. By 1695, attacks by the Odawa, Ojibway and their allied forces became so severe in New York, peace was negotiated. In 1701, the Great Peace of Montreal ended one of the most horrible wars in the Great Lakes.

The resources the Iroquois wanted so desperately were beaver pelts and people. Beaver pelts were the main trading commodity of the day and control of their habitats translated into control of economics. Beaver pelts were used in trade to acquire firearms, metal goods and cloth. All of these new technologies becoming more desired every year by tribal communities. War parties used firearms against enemies whom did not had a huge advantage. Controlling the trade and areas of natural resources also meant controlling alliances and politics as well. The Iroquois also waged a war for people, to replenish their dwindling numbers they suffered from disease and warfare. Women and children also became objects of conquest.

An area such as the inland waterway would have been a prized possession during this war. It offered an abundance of habitats where fur bearing animals could thrive. Also, it was important in travel, as it offered an alternate route west. The Straits of Mackinac can be an unforgiving nautical journey, especially by canoe, which was the primary



mode of transportation during the time. The inland water route could offer a safer alternative during harsh weather and the element of surprise in war. The Odawa fought hard with the Anishnaabek kin to keep the waterway, and many other like it, in their control. It is very likely this waterway was used by the Odawa on their way east to raid Iroquois villages and to trap beavers to use in trade. A beaver caught in the Crooked River could be traded for kettles brought from Europe. The beaver pelt would make the trip to France, where it would be used as a hat. The kettle it was traded for very likely could make its way far west as Manitoba, where the Odawa had trading partners with the Cree tribe. Such natural resources as the inland waterway were part of an intricate cultural, political and economic system.

War would come again in 1754 but on even larger scale. The French and Indian war saw thousands of Great Lakes tribes, northern Michigan Odawa included, fight with the French to drive the British out of the upper Great Lakes. Again, the fight to control land and resources was at the heart of the war. Beaver pelts were still in high demand, as was land for expanding European nations in North America. And again, the inland waterway would have been a prime area, based on the same reasons in the Iroquois war. Only by 1760's, Mackinac had grown to become the preeminent trading center in the Great Lakes, making the real estate that much more valuable. The French would concede to the British eventually but tribes did not.

Great Lakes Indians would fight for the next 60 years to control their ancestral lands. Pontiac's War, American Revolution, North West war and War of 1812 all saw tribes fight, primarily against the Americans. The warriors won many battles but lost the overall war to keep the Americans out. Upon the conclusion of the War of 1812, life for the Odawa in northern Michigan would quickly shift.

A chief for the Odawa, Chingmasso (Big Sail) would have his village site along the Cheboygan river in 1830, near Mullet Lake. Fearing his band's removal to Kansas as part of the Indian Removal Policy under President Andrew Jackson, Chingmasso would move his village to Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Several other Odawa chiefs from Little Traverse had already relocated to Manitoulin by 1840, such as Assignack and Mookmanish. The remaining Odawa at Little Traverse and Burt Lake during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century fought to have their treaty rights recognized by both federal and state officials. The Burt Lake Band of Ottawa Indians would be victim to one of the worst violations of human rights in Northern Michigan history. In 1900, timber speculator John McGinn and Cheboygan County Sheriff Fred Ming went to the Odawa settlement at Burt Lake. Finding the men gone to work and the small village inhabited by women, elderly and children, the two men proceeded to evict all the Odawa from their homes. Personal belongings were thrown into the street and all the Odawa cabins were set ablaze. Dozens of homeless Odawa watched their homes burn and could do nothing about it. The survivors of this atrocity walked the thirty plus miles to Cross Village, to seek help from relatives.



John McGinn argued that he bought the property from back taxes and the land was rightfully his. The Odawa of Burt Lake argued the land was part of a reservation and was exempt from taxes. The Odawa argument would not be heard and McGinn was free to claim the lands as his. The Burt Lake Odawa would assert the lands were reservation well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Burt Lake burnout is one of the most brutal land grabs in Michigan history and the descendants of this horrible act still live with this legacy in their families.

The history of this unique water route goes well beyond transportation and recreation. Ancient tribal wars were waged along this route. It has a history that has international ties during the French and Indian War. It has the darker side of human nature with the Burt Lake burnout. All of this history is directly interwoven with the Odawa of northern Michigan.

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### ***Boating history of the Straits<sup>2</sup>***

The boating history of the Straits began thousands of years ago and continues its evolution today. Even as you read this, the boats and boat companies change. The first people to visit the Mackinac region came just after the glaciers retreated about 10,000 years ago. They were summer hunters stalking the big game of mastodons and mammoths, trudging by foot over 200 miles north and then back. With the development of birch bark canoes, coming and going got much easier and faster, prehistoric families paddled up to Mackinac to enjoy the fresh summers. They planted gardens along the shores of the lakes, and then went off on trading expeditions, returning in the fall to harvest their crops. In spring and fall they supplemented their agricultural life by fishing and storing food for winter. This pattern of life continued for thousands of years until the Europeans arrived in the early 1600's.

Europeans arrived in much larger sailing vessels and immediately discovered the problems of docking a boat with a substantial draft in the shallow, shoreline waters. They soon invented the Mackinaw boat, a shallow draft sailing vessel with a removable centerboard so it could be dragged up onto the shore. These boats were small and could be managed by just two men. They became the workboats of the Straits.

The first Europeans were the French, who came to harvest the fur and ship the products to Quebec via the French, Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers. The timing of daily life centered around the comings and goings of fur trade boats, which in turn centered on the timing of the melting of ice in the spring and freeze-up in the fall. The English and then the Americans supplanted the French but the fur trade persisted until the 1840's. Then fishing became the economic engine of the Straits, another water-based lifestyle.

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<sup>2</sup> *By Sandy Planisek*

In the 1880's the railroads arrived, coming from the south to Mackinaw City and coming from the west to St. Ignace. The water gap between these two towns created the need for different types of boats. The railroads built large ferries to carry rail cars across the Straits, between Mackinaw City and St Ignace. Wanting even more profits from their investment the railroads also partnered to build the Grand Hotel as a tourist destination. This created the need for passenger ferries as well. Today's ferryboats are the offspring of those first passenger ferries. In the peak of summer three ferry lines spew forth an arriving and departing ferry every 15 minutes. Kayakers beware!

In addition to local boat traffic, the Straits have long been a passageway for long-distance shipping. Starting just after the Blackhawk War, in the 1830's, massive numbers of people and goods moved from the east coast to Chicago by boat. Soon lighthouses were popping up to orient this flood of shipping. Today international shipping still passes daily through the Straits. Products vary by season with winter transport of salt, spring and summer transport of the building materials of cement, limestone and iron ore, and fall transport of the foodstuffs grown in the Midwest.

On top of the continued Great Lakes shipping, we now add recreational boating. Long distance vacation cruises, day trip fishing outings, and kayaking are enjoyed by a large group of hearty descendants of those first canoers of 9,000 years ago.

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### ***Northern Michigan's Beautiful and Historic Inland Route***<sup>3</sup>

The Inland Route is a series of interconnected lakes and rivers at the tip of the mitt. With Cheboygan as a starting point, the route travels down the river and into Mullett Lake, connecting with Indian River and sailing through Burt Lake, then into the Crooked River and Crooked Lake. It touches the communities of Cheboygan, Mullett Lake Village, Aloha, Topinabee, Indian River, Burt Lake, Alanson, Ponshevaing, Oden, and Conway. In days past, a quick voyage by land from Conway or Oden (typically train) brought travelers to Bay View, Petoskey and finally the Little Traverse Bay.

In its earliest days, the Inland Route was of pivotal importance to Native Americans, and later, European fur traders. Native Americans used the Inland Route to move back and forth between communities and to trade with each other. The mouth of the Cheboygan River was of particular use to Ottawa and Chippewa Indians who met there to trade. In 1778, British trader Samuel Robertson was the first European to live for any period of time in what would become Cheboygan. He spent two winters here trading with the local natives. Other permanent Indian settlements existed along the route, including the mouth of the river at Mullett Lake, and along the southwestern portion of Mullett Lake, Indian Point in Burt Lake, and others.

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<sup>3</sup> *Matthew J. Friday*

Still, portions of the waterway were only of use to the very smallest craft. The mouth of the Cheboygan River was shallow due to a large sand bar as it spilled into Lake Huron. Moreover, the rapids just a mile downriver were a great hazard to would-be travelers as well. In fact, most of the Cheboygan River was only passable for a canoe, and it is probably because of this that we get the name "Cheboygan;" it likely derives from the Annishinaabe (Ojibwa) *zhiibaa'onan*, meaning a channel or passage for a canoe.

But times were changing. In 1844 the first sawmill was built in Cheboygan, constructed by Alexander McLeod, at the present location of Great Lakes Tissue Company. The next spring an employee of his, Jacob Sammons, built the first house in Cheboygan a few hundred yards up the river.

In order to best utilize the power of the river for his sawmill, McLeod and his brother Ronald built a dam at the Cheboygan rapids in 1846. Still, the river was essentially impossible to navigate for a vessel of any considerable size. But as Cheboygan's potential to become a major lumbering community was gradually realized, locals decided to make improvements to what would become their major artery. In 1869, the Cheboygan Slack Water Navigation Company completed a canal and lock at the rapids measuring eighty feet long and eighteen feet wide with a lift of nine feet. Beginning in the early 1870s, dredging work began; this included clearing out the mouth and widening portions of the river. In 1877 the Sturgeon River, which emptied into the Indian River, created a large sand bar in the latter. To prevent this from happening again in the future the Sturgeon was rerouted and diverted to empty directly into Burt Lake. Major dredging efforts would continue along the route into the twentieth century, all with the goal of utilizing its potential for commerce.

But there were other areas of the Inland Route that needed improvement as well. At Indian River, where the river meets Burt Lake, another sand bar prevented navigation. Beginning in 1874 and continuing on for the next several years, the bar there was removed, making the waterway more navigable.

The Inland Route was most important for early lumber barons. They could cut trees along the route, then put their logs in the water come springtime, and then have them float downriver to any of the numerous mills along the route. Mill owners could also use the route to send supplies to their camps, and the practicality of the route allowed for the easy delivery of mail along the way. In fact, one of the main reasons the Inland Route was improved was to provide an easy way to get mail to and from Petoskey. Without a doubt the Inland Route proved essential for the settlement and prosperity of the early north.

With the introduction of the railroads beginning in the early 1880s, however, the Inland Route took on a less essential role. But with the influx of people to the area the industry had made possible, another took its place along the Inland Route waters: tourism. Travelers came from all over Michigan and the United States to experience the natural

beauty and fresh air of northern Michigan. Pleasure cruises on the Inland Route became a popular way to relax, see the natural sites, and relax at any number of the resorts along the route. In many lumbering communities new accommodations catering to travelers sprouted up, and other settlements were created to especially accommodate vacationers' needs. As one place along the Inland Route was described, "It is an unnatural paradise, and the people are such as would naturally assemble at such a place before being supplied permanently with wings."

Numerous companies were created to bring those seeking relaxation the respite they deserved. Passenger boats frequently left from Cheboygan at a dock on the west side of the Cheboygan River just south of what is today the Lincoln Avenue Bridge. From here voyagers could sail the entire route, or stop off at any one of nearly a dozen resort communities. Ships such as the *Ida L* and *Ida L II*, *Topinabee*, *Northland*, and *Buckeye Belle*, to name a few, steamed along the route. Ships were owned by individual companies such as the Inland Navigation Company, New Inland Route, Liebner-Davis Line, or by some of the individual resorts along the way. At nearly all of the stops along the voyage, passengers could disembark, have a bite to eat, dance, relax, and spend a night taking a break from their otherwise busy lives. Major stopping-off points were Mullett Lake, Topinabee, Indian River, Burt Lake, and Alanson. Back in Cheboygan, vacationers wanting to cross the Straits could complete a scenic trip of the north by taking a cruise from the mouth of the river to Bois Blanc Island, Mackinac Island, or even St. Ignace.

The Inland Route flourished until about 1920. In the face of rapid depopulation of the area, and the increased use of rail travel, boat traffic diminished. As the area continued to suffer economically, fewer and fewer people traveled the Inland Route. But despite the decline of the steamers which frequented the route, individuals soon began to take to the water.

Today, thousands of boats every year make the journey to and from Cheboygan along the Inland Route. Boaters can still stop off at places all along the way, from the comfort and warmth of the Hackmatack Inn to the quaint downtown of Indian River to the beautiful riverfront of Alanson. Unsurpassed for natural beauty and "up north" hospitality, the Inland Route as relevant today as it has ever been.

#### **Water Resources<sup>4</sup>**

The year is 1840. Two surveyors gaze out through the underbrush at the expansive, crystal-blue waters of Michigan's fourth largest inland lake. Their names are William Austin Burt, who the lake is named after, and John Mullett, who Mullett Lake is named after. Lakes along the Inland Waterway include: Round Lake, Crooked Lake, Pickerel Lake, Burt Lake, and Mullett Lake, while rivers associated with the water trail include: Crooked River, Maple River, Indian River, Black River and Cheboygan River. See

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<sup>4</sup> *Dan Myers, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council*

Appendix A for a table listing water features, size, water quality, fishery, maximum depth of lakes and flow rates of rivers, and invasive species.

Over a century and a half later, the scenic Inland Waterway is one of the prominent boating and fishing destinations in Michigan. The Inland Waterway has over 40 miles of navigable lakes and rivers, including Pickerel Lake, Crooked Lake, the Crooked River, Burt Lake, the Indian River, Mullett Lake, and the Cheboygan River. These water resources are both expansive and magnificent; however, they are still vulnerable to activities which can impair the water quality. The amount of enjoyment they generate is directly related to the amount of care they receive. Two factors that can affect the health of these resources are watershed activities and invasive species.

A watershed is the area of land that, during rain or snowmelt, will drain surface water into a specific water body. A classic example is America's Continental Divide: water to the east flows to the Atlantic Ocean, and water to the west flows to the Pacific Ocean. Activities in the watershed influence the health of the lakes through pollution called runoff or stormwater. Common types of runoff that negatively impact water quality are sediments from erosion or sand on roads, nutrient pollution from fertilizers and manure, and oils and chemicals from leaky cars. Can you think of any other types of pollution that occur on land, but could become runoff when it rains? Maybe dog poop and trash by the boat launch, sediments from eroding banks, or washing a car by a storm drain? Nutrient pollution can be particularly harmful because it causes nuisance algae blooms, while sediments can cover cobble spawning grounds. The watershed of the Inland Waterway is over 900,000 acres and stretches from eastern Emmet County to central Presque Isle County; northern Cheboygan County to central Otsego County.

Invasive species are plant or animals that are not native to the Inland Waterway, but when introduced can impair ecology or recreation. Zebra mussels are an invasive species that have lowered the productivity of lakes in the Inland Waterway, outcompeted native mussels, and created a human hazard with their razor sharp edges that cut feet. Eurasian watermilfoil is another invasive species that, if left uncontrolled, will clog the shallow parts of lakes, impairing swimming and boating. *Phragmites* and purple loosestrife can take over marshes and ditches along the lake with large monocultures, thereby reducing plant and animal diversity. Although there are ongoing efforts to control invasive species in the Waterway, the best way to keep them out is prevention. When boating between lakes or transporting a boat or kayak from lake to lake, always check that there are no plant fragments attached to the boat or trailer. Also be sure not to transport water from lake to lake because it can include larval zebra mussels and other small invaders. Drain or dry your kayak before transporting between lakes! Also don't release fishing bait because it could include invasive animals or diseases.

Be mindful of water quality impairments while enjoying these spectacular lakes and rivers. For more information about how you can protect the Inland Waterway, visit the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's webpage at [www.watershedcouncil.org](http://www.watershedcouncil.org).

### **Conservancy and Public Lands**

Access to natural undeveloped areas, whether visual or physical, is available at many locations along the waterway. There are 22 Little Traverse Land Conservancy nature preserves located on or close to the inland waterway. A majority (fourteen) of the preserves are found in the upper reaches of the water trail on Round, Crooked and Pickerel Lakes. Nature preserves protect important plant communities and water quality while providing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. Preserves have been entered into the Inland Waterway water trail web site for paddlers to find, explore and enhance their experiences.

State parks, public campgrounds, and community parks are located at varying intervals along the route. In addition, public lands such as state forests, township, city, village and county parcels are located along the waterfront. All of these sites provide resting stops and water access. In combination with nature preserves, the public lands give recreationist a chance to explore the wild side to the waterway.

### **Access Sites**

Prior to commencing the field inventory, existing digital data sets, plans, books and reports were reviewed to identify access sites and potential routes. Public boat launch sites, parks, and campgrounds were mapped. Each county road commission provided locations of official public road endings. To provide consistency between on-going statewide efforts, Michigan's Great Lakes Water Trails Asset Record Form was used when conducting the access site inventory, which included information such as ownership type, surface type, accessibility issues, launching capability, amenities, and parking were gathered. Field surveys were completed by Cheboygan County staff and a consultant. The inventory was digitized into NEMCOG's GIS and incorporated into a web asset geo-database. While conducting access site inventories, assessments of key communities in relation to water trail town support facilities were completed.

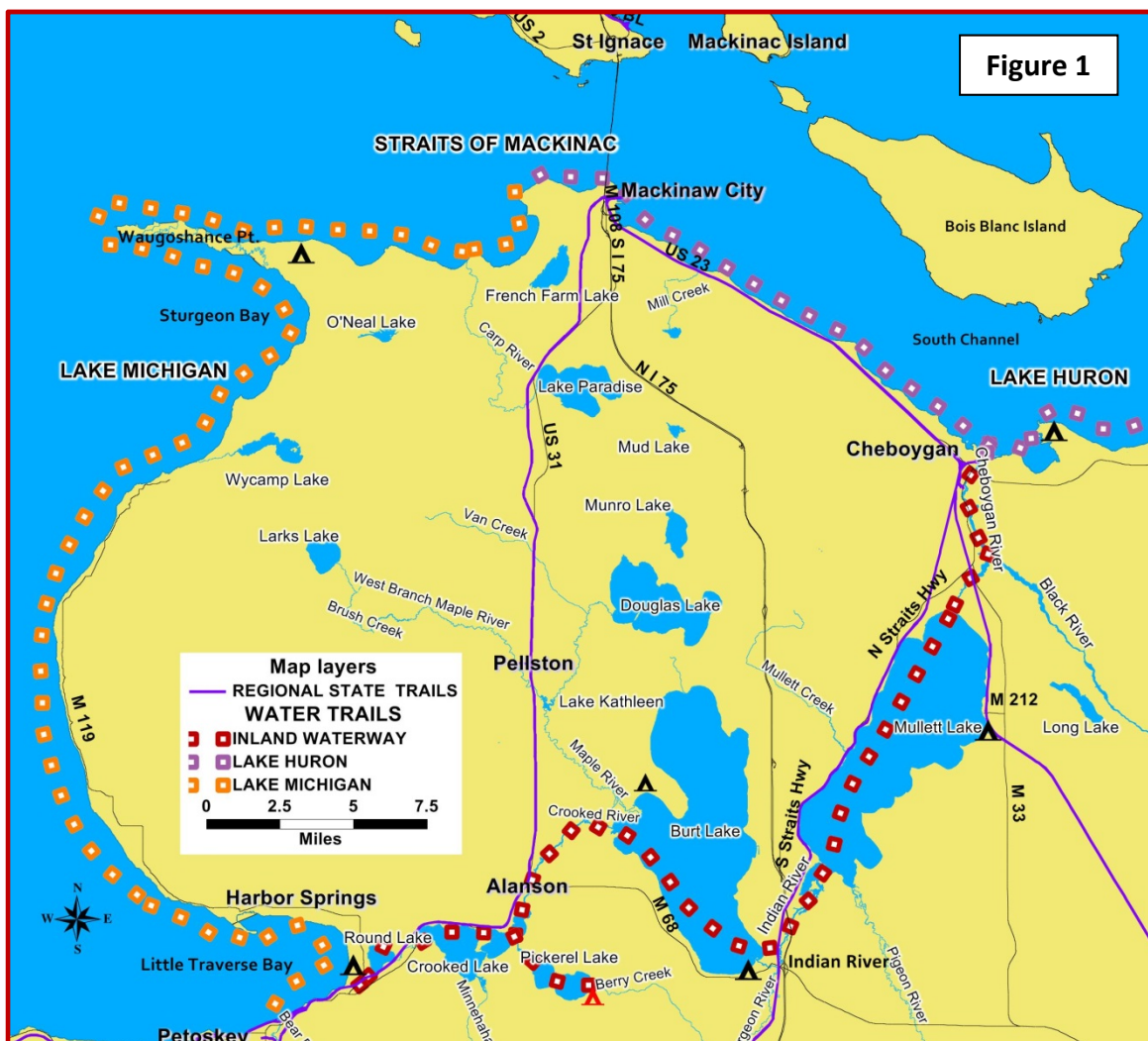
Access sites were grouped into four categories, campgrounds, parks, launches and road ends. A total of 117 access sites were identified and inventoried along the Inland Waterway. In addition, 10 access sites were identified along the Straits Area Water Trail, from Cheboygan to Mackinaw City and Cecil Bay. See Appendix A for a summary table of access sites.

### **Routes**

The Inland Waterway Route consists of a series of lakes with connecting rivers. When the route enters a lake it splits, following shorelines, again merging together to enter the connecting river, repeating this until it enters Lake Huron at the City of Cheboygan. Potential routes have been designed to connect to primary access sites such as

campgrounds, parks, and trail towns. The Straits Area Water Trail follows the Lake Huron coast from the City of Cheboygan to Mackinaw City. Volunteers paddled several segments, however, most of the route segments were analyzed with GIS. In order to strengthen the connection with the Straits of Mackinac, Huron Shores Blueways from the City of Cheboygan to Cecil Bay was examined and updated where necessary to incorporate additional information related to the water trail such as launch sites, amenities, and historic sites. **Figure 1** depicts the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula and water trails. Offering a unique opportunity found nowhere else in the state, the Inland Waterway Trail will connect the Huron Shores Blueways and proposed Lake Michigan coastal water trail (with a one mile portage from Little Traverse Bay to Crooked Lake) thus creating a 110 mile loop water trail.

Inland Waterway is approximately 38 miles long, if paddling the shortest route across the major lakes. However, if paddlers follow the south shore of Crooked Lake, north shore of Burt Lake and east shore of Mullett Lake as well as exploring Pickerel Lake, the distance will greatly increase. **Appendix A** has a series of detailed paddle maps that





show all access sites, route segments with distances, trails towns and nature preserves. Note how designated trails split at the inlet of connecting rivers to follow each lake shoreline, and then merge at the outlet to follow the connecting rivers.

The Huron Shores Blueways water trail from Cheboygan to Mackinaw City is approximately 16 miles long. Paddlers can continue under the Mackinac Bridge westward to Headlands, Cecil Bay and Wilderness State Park.

### **Other Trail Assets**

Cultural, historic, recreational, business, and natural resource features were incorporated into an asset database. Staff, volunteers and organizations provided information for the project. During the summer of 2013, students at the University of Michigan Biological Station (UMBS) in Dr. Phillip D'Anieri's summer class program assisted with the trail asset inventory.

The water trail will connect seven state parks; numerous campgrounds, day use parks, and motels; twenty Little Traverse Conservancy Nature Preserves, and six Communities. Another unique opportunity associated with the Inland waterway, will be paddle and pedal trips. The North Central State Trail parallels the waterway from Indian River to Mackinaw City and the North Eastern State Trail runs through Aloha State Park north to the City of Cheboygan along Mullet Lake and the Cheboygan River. Additionally, the proposed North Western State Trail parallels the Inland Waterway from Alanson to Spring Lake at the headwaters near Petoskey.

### **Water Trail Towns & Parks**

Communities and parks along the water trail function as primary access points along with offering amenities to paddlers. The following section provides summaries of key amenities and features within and near water trail towns and major parks.

#### Spring Lake Park/Petoskey

Spring Lake Park is just three miles from the beautiful resort community of Petoskey and lies adjacent to both the North Western State Trail that goes from Petoskey north to Mackinaw City and across the street from the Little Traverse Wheelway that links non-motorized users between Petoskey and Harbor Springs. Petoskey is a full service community and a great place to begin or end a trip. The Petoskey State Park is just down the road from this official starting point of the Inland Waterway. The waters of Spring Lake, just a ¼ mile from Lake Michigan, are part of the Lake Huron watershed following the Inland Waterway; even if a trip doesn't start at this location; it is a nice place to contemplate the history and natural resources of the area. The park itself has modern restrooms and water, a picnic area and small boardwalk interpretive trail.

### Conway/Oden/Ponshewaing

All three of these towns are basically resort stops along the railroad line (now the NWST). None of the communities have a full array of services but all have something to offer a paddler. The official beginning of the navigable portion of the waterway would be in Conway, utilizing Little Traverse Township Park where a small sandy beach is a good place to launch. Don't miss the great breakfast spot just across from the Little Traverse Boat Launch. Located between Conway and Oden, the Michigan Fisheries Visitor Center has educational and historic displays such as a glass-walled cut away of a functioning stream and exhibits on the history of fish stocking in Michigan.

and in Oden a small park that has a natural spring and a place to land your boat. A few antique stores and a pie shop await. In Ponshewaing you will find a full service marina, Ryde Marine & Canoe Hut that serves paddlers.

### Camp Petosega/ Springvale Township Park

If you want to start in Pickerel Lake and paddle through to Crooked Lake through the Pickerel Channel known as the "black hole", Camp Petosega is a wonderful County Park with modern campground facilities, cabins and a nice beach to launch/land a boat. Also, a nice launch spot for a day trip is Springvale Township Park off of Channel Road with a nice sandy beach where you can explore Oden Island, the Pickerel Channel and the mouth of the Minnehaha River.

### Village of Alanson

Alanson, a quaint small town nestled along the Crooked River just downstream from the Crooked River Locks (operated by Emmet County, go to [www.emmetcounty.org](http://www.emmetcounty.org) for hours of operation). *It is possible to paddle around the locks as the drop is very minimal; but use caution as there are rocks.* Once you pass through the locks the lure of the waterway begins as boat houses begin to line the river. Soon you will get to Alanson's Swinging Bridge that literally rotates and swings to open for motorized craft. You will have no problem going under the bridge. Just past the bridge there are community docks, but keep going and you will see a grassy road end, the perfect place to land your kayak or canoe to explore the town. When you get out here, be sure to check out Sanctuary Park where there is boardwalk around an island in the waterway. Town is just a block west with restaurants, stores and facilities. Don't miss the Inland Waterway Museum on River Street (just up from the swinging bridge).

### Maple Bay Campground & Boating Access Site

At the end of the Crooked River a small bay to the north houses a wonderful DNR State Forest Campground and Boat Launch. It is a good place to stop if the winds make it difficult to cross Burt Lake or it makes for a great end of a day trip along the Crooked River. Maple Bay Campground and access site has a nice grassy area along the sandy shore with vault toilets, picnic facilities and water. It also connects to the Burt Lake Trail which will eventually take you around the north end of Burt Lake; for now you could walk along the trail to the Chaboiganing Nature Preserve and Colonial Point Forest.

### Burt Lake State Park/Devoe Beach

Burt Lake State Park is a full service modern park with a wonderful beach lies on the other side of Burt Lake from Maple Bay; it is a good place to camp for the first night of the trip. The park is just south of the mouth of the Indian River and at the mouth of the Sturgeon River. If you are looking for a side trip, the Sturgeon River is a great trip with fast moving, twisty paddle route; various outfitters will shuttle you from the park.

Devoe Beach at the mouth of the Indian River is a great place to stop if you want to go for a swim and have a picnic before continuing your journey.

### *Indian River*

When you enter the Indian River, the experience along the waterway slows down with a no wake zone and development along the river. Again, steeped in history, this community has been around for a while. There are many public access points as well as dock that you will want to get out at, but keep going past the bridges (one road and one rail-trail) and take the first right up the Little Sturgeon River, at this point you will see a culvert, go through it and there will be an easy place to land your boat along a grassy shore. This is Marina Park, not yet fully developed. Walk across the grassy area towards town; you will cross the NCST and you will find the Chamber of Commerce and public restrooms. From here there is ice cream, restaurants and plenty of shops to keep you busy. Arts and Adventure Paddlesports, a full service paddle sport shop, at BrassWind Landing in Indian River offers hourly, daily and weekly rentals of kayaks, canoes and paddle boards. Rentals and guided tours are available for local rivers as well as Burt and Mullett Lakes.

### *Topinabee*

Topinabee has a beautiful small park with a sandy beach and playground a great place for a break and to stretch your legs. Go up the stairs and across the NCST and you will find restrooms, water, picnic area and interpretive signs. The small park is adjacent to the former depot which is now the community's library. Across the street is a store and down the road there are two restaurants. A nice day trip in mostly protected waters would be from Burt Lake State Park to Topinabee which takes you through the Mullett Lake Spreads.

### *Aloha & Aloha State Park / Boy Scout Park*

Aloha is a small community that is directly adjacent to Aloha State Park. The State Park is a full service park with modern campground facilities. The town of Aloha has a store to buy supplies. The North Eastern State Trail runs through the park and town connecting north to Cheboygan or southeast to Onaway and beyond. The campground has a grassy shore and a hard sandy lake bottom. There is a modern boat launch in the campground's boat basin but a better place to land is at the north end of park at the day use area and dock. At this location you can picnic, use the restrooms or walk to the

store. Upon approval, you can leave a car at the park overnight. A nice day trip (depending on winds) would be to paddle from Aloha to Cheboygan, pulling out at Gordon Turner Park on Lake Huron.

A nice alternative to Aloha State Park is Mullett Township's Boy Scout Park. Camping is allowed but a stairway carry-in is required at this time. Vault toilets and water is available as well as a kwanza hut if the weather is bad; improvements to the park are planned.

### Cheboygan

Once you enter the Cheboygan River again things slow down and resort homes are built along the river's edge nearer to Mullett Lake before becoming less dense as you move north toward Cheboygan. Just past the railroad trestle bridge, now the NEST, there is a private campground and then a wonderful restaurant on the river. Soon you will pass a well-developed DNR boating access site called The Forks near the fork of the Black River (another nice day trip for exploration) and it will be evident that you are arriving again in a developed community. Cheboygan has a lot to offer. Just after you go under the Lincoln Street Bridge there will be a DNR access point on the right. This is the last place to get out before the Cheboygan River Locks. The boating access site and lock facility have vault toilets, water picnic area and interpretive signs, well worth taking a look. Portaging the locks would be difficult at this time as there is not a launch spot below the locks. For information on the hours of operation for the locks go to [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) or [www.irchamber.org](http://www.irchamber.org).

As you continue north you will see a pedestrian bridge with a welcome to Cheboygan sign, there is the City of Cheboygan boat ramp just under the bridge on the east side of the river. Pull out here and walk over the bridge where there is the Chamber of Commerce, restrooms, water and facilities. Cheboygan is a great town with hotels, restaurants and shops. Take time to explore it. If you want to leave a car in Cheboygan, you can leave it at the city park/boat launch with a permit from the Cheboygan Public Safety department (fee required); call 231.627-4321.

If you want to make it out to the Straits and Lake Huron continue north under the draw bridge past the County Marina and turn west around the lighthouse and you can land safely on a sandy beach at the City's Gordon Turner Park.

### MDOT Roadside Park

The only developed public access along the Straits is the MDOT roadside Park where there is a picnic area, vault toilets and water. Two private campgrounds are available between the MDOT Park and Mackinaw City. Paddling along the Straits of Mackinac can be incredibly fun or incredibly difficult, depending on wind. Please take caution.

### Mackinaw City

Getting into Mackinaw City can be a bit tricky with all the boat traffic (ferries to Mackinac Island). In the summer, three different ferry companies run ferries about every 15 minutes! When coming into town a sandy beach is lined with private hotels; if you are staying at one, landing there is fine; otherwise continue past the sandy beach and you will see the DNR's Straits State Harbor where you can use the public boat launch which is at the end of the marina near Mackinaw City's Conkling Heritage Park. The easiest way to paddle it to look for the Coast Guard Cutter (Big Red Boat) that is now a museum; paddle between it and the marina break wall, going around it and back into the marina past the busy marina entry; head inland toward the ramp and park. The marina has modern restrooms and facilities; overnight parking is available upon approval of the marina manager. At this location you are a block south of the Central Business District.

If you are continuing your trip west along the Lake Michigan Water Trail, an alternative stopping point would be Wawatam Park which is just past the City Marina and Shepler's Ferry line; the park is at the water tower. You can land your boat here, use the restrooms, get water and walk to town to stretch your legs before continuing your trip.

There is much to do in Mackinaw City, many overnight options, restaurants, stores, historic sites and parks. Options abound as you could have left a bike here in Mackinaw City at the Mackinaw City Trailhead and ride back to your car accessing the NCST, the NEST (via the NCST) or the NWST, depending on where you left it. Or alternatively, you can leave a car at the trailhead or at the MDOT Welcome Center.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Based on input from the water trail planning team, the following goals and objectives were developed.

1. Support economic development by marketing recreation, natural resource, historic and cultural assets of the waterway.
  - Build public-private partnerships
  - Create trail towns to improve user experience and encourage economic wellbeing
  - Incorporate trails into community brands/image
  - Partner w/ Travel MI for marketing and tourism
  - Develop branding for Great Lakes water trails
2. Improve public access and expand recreational opportunities
  - Connect people to village and town centers
  - Maintain access sites, launch sites and water trail
  - Connect land trails with water trail
  - Promote paddle sports as a healthier, low impact, and less expensive alternative to power boating

3. Instill greater stewardship and conservation of our rivers and lakes
  - Combat spread of invasive species
  - Get more people on the water – build public awareness and stewardship of MI rivers/waters
  - Build community support for river conservation
  - Provide place-based educational opportunities through interpretation
4. Improve public information/mapping for water trails
  - Maintain water trail information website
  - Pursue funding for water trail and trail town development
  - Improve paddling/paddler safety

### **Route Level Recommendations**

When inventorying the access sites and paddling water trails it is well noted that access sites are hard to find when driving to them and often even more difficult to find when paddling. In order to know you are on a designated water trail, signs or logos are needed to provide cohesion and consistency of a trail that can be seen from the water, as well as from the roads. The needs at access sites vary depending on their use. In order to determine their use, it is recommended that sites be listed as “primary access site”, “access site”, and “local use site”. The differences between the sites are as follows:

*Primary Access Site:* One to two primary access sites will be listed on each body of water; these sites are where trail users will be directed to enter and exit the water in publications. For people not familiar with the trail, signs along highways and roads will direct them to these particular sites. Primary sites will provide more amenities than other access sites.

*Access Site:* These are developed access sites along the water trail that are not designated as primary access sites for the non-motorized water trail. Often these may be boat launches used primarily by motorized water craft that can be utilized if chosen by a paddler. Often these sites have some limited facilities such as vault toilets.

*Local Use Site:* These are road ends that are not developed access sites or small local parks that do not have good access to the water from the road. These are sites that are good for a quick break along the water, emergency landing, or local access to the water trail

The access sites and primary access sites need to be identified. Local Use Site sites can be determined on an as needed basis if they need identification. Once a marketing plan is completed a small logo sign could be utilized to mark public sites from the water and be on the signs directing people to primary access sites.

*Recommendations for Access Sites:*

1. Logo sign facing the water so a paddler knows it is part of the water trail
2. "You are here" sign at the site that show the entire trail, other access sites and facilities.
3. Any local information if needed.

*Recommendations for Primary Access Sites*

1. Logo sign facing the water so a paddler knows it is part of the water trail
2. "You are Here" sign at the site that show the entire trail, other access sites and facilities with a large designation on the sign of your current location (i.e. Burt Lake State Park or Village of Alanson)
3. Any local information if needed.
4. Directional signs to get to the site from highways and local roads that also identify the site as part of the water trail (could have the logo on the directional signs).
5. Bathroom/pit toilet/ porta-potty
6. Potable water
7. ADA accessible water access, at least one per body of water.
8. Overnight parking or a sign that shows where to leave a car nearby, overnight.

*Recommended Primary Access Sites are as follows:*

1. Pickerel Lake: Camp Petosega
2. Crooked Lake: Little Traverse Township Park  
Crooked Lake Boating Access Site (DNR)
3. Crooked River: East Street Road End, Alanson
4. Burt Lake: Maple Bay Campground & Boating Access Site (DNR)  
Burt Lake State Park
5. Indian River: Marina Park
6. Mullett Lake: Aloha State Park  
Jewell Road Boating Access Site (DNR)
7. Topinabee: Woodruff Street Road End
8. Cheboygan River: Forks Boating Access Site (DNR)  
City of Cheboygan Boat Launch
9. Straits: Gordon Turner Park, Cheboygan  
MDOT Roadside Park  
Straits State Harbor, Mackinaw City

**Community Level Recommendations**

When paddling into a community it can be difficult to find or see even see a place to exit the water trail into town. Also, paddlers may stop at the first public access site rather than the best public access site to get to the town's amenities and businesses. It suggested, just like on a road or land based trail, that directional and welcome signs be added at key locations to direct water trail users to the best trail town access. Most trail town access sites are also Primary Access Sites.



*Recommendations for Trail Town Access Sites:*

1. All recommendations for primary access sites unless noted otherwise.
2. “Welcome to X Town” sign at the access site.
3. Larger Communities (Alanson, Indian River, Cheboygan and Mackinaw City) should have welcome sites and wayfinding signs when getting closer to the community that says “water trail access X minutes ahead”. Some may need directional signs with arrows if the access site is slightly off the water course (see site specific recommendations)
4. Directional signs to community assets (businesses downtown, historic site of interest, etc.)
5. Boat Racks to store/lock boats

**Specific Trail Town Recommendations**

While looking at each community from a paddlers perspectives ideas were formed on how to best get paddlers to town facilities. In addition, in each larger community, community leaders looked at the water trail from a new perspective and solidified the following recommendations:

Conway

Little Traverse Township Park on US-31 just across from West Conway Road is the perfect location for a true launch site of the non-motorized water trail. From this point on, the entire route is navigable. There is a small park with a sandy beach, parking area and picnic spot.

1. It is suggested that this be the Conway’s Trail Town/primary access site and it be signed as such.
2. Directional signs could be added to the NWST trail, hotels and restaurants.

Oden

Little Traverse Township Park on US-31 in Oden is the best location for Trail Town connection, although it is not a primary access site.

1. In this case a “Welcome to Oden” sign and “You are here” sign would be appropriate with directional sign to the NWST, Michigan Fisheries Visitor Center, restaurant and shops.
2. Oden may want to consider a porta-potty at this location.

Ponshewaing

The Lake Street Road end is only a local access site but this small community has the paddle outfitter, Ryde Marine, directly on the water trail and it is at the mouth of the Crooked River.

1. This local access site may serve those wanting to do the Crooked River portion of the trail or are renting from Ryde Marine.
2. A “Welcome to Ponshewaing” sign and a “You are here” sign would be appropriate with directional signs to Ryde Marine.

### Alanson

The Village of Alanson primary access site/trail town access site will be located at the end of East Street which is also the parking area for Island Sanctuary Park where there will eventually be restroom facilities.

1. This would be an excellent location for an ADA launch if possible (may be too congested of an area on the river) and a boat rack.
2. Improvements at the site should include welcome sign; you are here sign and a sign to local amenities such as parks, sites, museums, NWST, stores and restaurants.
3. It is also suggested that wayfinding signs along the river be added as follows: "Welcome to Alanson; water trail access x minutes ahead". Suggested locations are on the locks, the bridge and at the Village Public Docks.

### Indian River

The community of Indian River's primary access site/trail town access site will be located at Marina Park on the Little Sturgeon River. Arts and Adventure Paddlesports at BrassWind Landing in Indian River offers hourly, daily and weekly rentals of kayaks, canoes and paddle boards. Rentals and guided tours are available for local rivers as well as Burt and Mullett Lakes.

1. This would be an excellent location for an ADA launch site as the water is calm and there is no motorized traffic (you have to go through a culvert to get to the site).
2. Boat rack with ability to lock items is suggested at the site
3. Access site needs include: "Welcome to Indian River" sign; "You are here" sign; directional signs to town facilities, restrooms, visitor information, trail connections from the water to town and the NCST and a boat rack.
4. Wayfinding is also needed along the river.
  - o "Welcome to Indian River" signs on the pier and bridge
  - o "Water trail access x minutes ahead" sign at the Green Docks and bridge
  - o Directional arrow sign pointing up the Little Sturgeon River at the retaining wall of the motorized ramp
  - o "Water trail access just ahead" sign on the culvert on Little Sturgeon River.

### Topinabee

Topinabee Community Park is the best trail town connection although the primary access site is at Woodruff Street just north of the park where a car can pull down to the water.

1. The park is a better location for those paddlers just wanting to use the facilities or get a bite to eat.

2. A “Welcome to Topinabee” sign, “You are here” sign, and a map of park amenities, connections to NCST and local establishments are needed as well as a boat rack.

### Aloha

The Primary Access Site and Trail Town connection will be at the Aloha State Park Day Use area which is also adjacent to the Main Street Road End. This location has good access to park facilities as well as the Aloha General Store (which has kayak rental) and the NEST.

1. A “Welcome to Aloha” sign, “You are here” sign and directional signs to park and community facilities are needed.
2. Suggest having water access only camping sites near the day use area and a boat rack.

### Cheboygan

The Primary Access Site and Trail Town connection will be at the City of Cheboygan Boat Launch, right downtown at the pedestrian bridge. At this site you can access downtown, visitor information, restrooms and water all via the pedestrian bridge. Currently there is one narrow launch which is useable but difficult for non-motorized boats.

1. It is recommended that the City incorporate a pull out for non-motorized via steps in the retaining wall along the park
2. There is no room for an ADA launch at this site; better location would be to develop the Garfield Road Access Site, see recommendations below.
3. Consider a camping spot in the woods near this location for non-motorized access.
4. Add canoe/kayak signs, welcome signs, you are here signs and wayfinding signs to the community assets, NCST and various accommodation choices.
5. Overnight parking is allowed at the City Boat Launch with approval by the Department of Public Safety; have a sign with information and contact phone number.
6. In addition, many directional signs along the river need to be added starting at the Lincoln Street Bridge where it can say “Welcome to Cheboygan, downtown x miles ahead” and a sign pointing to the boat launch saying water trail town access here with an arrow.

### Mackinaw City

The Primary Access Site and Trail Town connection in Mackinaw City will be Straits State Harbor Boat Launch. At the harbor there is overnight parking, restrooms, showers, picnic facilities, etc. and it is adjacent to Conkling Heritage Park.

1. Install “Welcome to Mackinaw City” signs, “You are here” signs and directional signs to the various parks, historic sites, NCST and NWST, commercial areas and accommodation choices.

2. There is potential to add an ADA launch at this site and better landing/pull-out for non-motorized craft.

Other Site Specific Recommendations at Access Sites:

1. Spring Lake Park
  - a. Work with Township to make a designated access
  - b. Interpretive sign about the water trail (an inland waterway sign exists already)
2. Little Traverse Township Park
  - a. Interpretive sign about the beginning of the water trail (navigable)
  - b. Find overnight parking
  - c. Sign to potable water (just up West Conway Road)
3. Camp Petosega
  - a. "Welcome to Camp Petosega" sign on the water.
  - b. You are here sign on the water trail and of the park.
  - c. Rust water access only campsite
  - d. Better designation for water trail landing (beach would be better than the road)
4. Springvale Township Park – Crooked Lake
  - a. Good place for a local access or day trip, suggest a you are here sign
  - b. Add an interpretive sign potentially about the area and the Minnehaha River.
5. Crooked River Lock/Lake Street Access
  - a. Can non-motorized craft get through without the lock?
  - b. LTC has two preserves adjacent to this location; an on-water/water access rest stop could be made or overnight camping platform. Currently LTC does not allow overnight use at their preserves.
6. Snider Road/Mission Road end on Crooked River
  - a. Only stopping point between Alanson and Maple Bay, suggest having an Inland waterway sign at this location on the Mission Road side which has better access and maybe an interpretive sign (replace existing sign)
7. Mullett-Burt Road End
  - a. Bust location but nice access on the north end of the lake.
  - b. Add a "You are here" sign, kayak/canoe rack, picnic area.
8. Burt Lake State Park
  - a. Install "Welcome to Burt Lake State Park" signs with a "You are here" water trail sign and "You are here" park sign.
  - b. Consider adding water access only camping sites.
  - c. Kayak/Canoe racks.
  - d. Overnight parking area.
9. Devoe Beach
  - a. Need welcome and wayfinding signs.
10. Jeannie Johnson Property

- a. Although not an access point, the newly acquired DNR property on Mullett Lake and the North Central State Trail would be a good rest stop/overnight spot for trail users. Consider working with DNR to develop water access, overnight camping/cabins, trails and facilities.
11. Polish Line Road End Park (Also called Bayshore Road End)
    - a. Sign on road and water that it is public access site
    - b. Porta-potty
    - c. Consider racks for local use along fence line.
  12. Fred M Socha Park
    - a. Better signs to get to this park and identifying it is needed, as well as on the water. Good local access.
    - b. Inverness Township should look at this or Polish Line Road End Park (above) as a potential local access and have a sign and kayak racks.
  13. Inland Route Road End
    - a. This is a beautiful spot and next to a private marina with facilities and overnight lodging.
    - b. Work with marina to put in an interpretive sign and path connector to the facility and better signs to find this local access.
  14. Boy Scout Park
    - a. Beautiful Mullett Township Park that with some improvements could be a huge asset to the water trail. Suggested improvements could include:
      - i. Canoe/Kayak racks for local use and overnights
      - ii. Rustic camping spots.
      - iii. Better bathhouse.
      - iv. Slider to get the water craft down the embankment to the water.
      - v. Potential overnight in kwanza hut?
      - vi. Signs on water and road to get there
      - vii. Interpretive water trail sign.
    - b. Suggest trail connection to the DNR boat launch, which could be used instead of putting in a slider ramp.
  15. Garfield Road DNR Access Site.
    - a. This site is very difficult to find and farther from town although it is on an eddy along the river and could be developed for non-motorized craft only. Could be a site for an ADA launch for Cheboygan area, water access camping and directional signs/trail connections to town.
  16. Cheboygan Lock & Dam and Lincoln Street DNR Access Site
    - a. Create a portage between the boat ramp and below the dam for non-motorized craft to get around the locks. Signs and path could easily be created (it is partially already there).
    - b. For access below the dam add a slider ramp down the stairs and add a non-motorized access in the rock wall as far down stream as possible from the dam to allow for a launch.
    - c. Have a picnic shelter and potable water.

- d. You are here sign for the water trail with a better understanding of distance to downtown (current wayfinding sign is confusing).
- 17. Cheboygan County Marina
  - a. This may be a better location for overnight accommodation since it already serves motorized boaters.
- 18. Gordon Turner Park
  - a. Need welcome and wayfinding signs.
- 19. MDOT Roadside Park
  - a. Need welcome and wayfinding signs
- 20. Wawatam Park
  - a. Secondary Primary access has facilities.
  - b. Need welcome and wayfinding signs/part of Lake Michigan Water Trail.

### **Regional Recommendations**

A joint effort needs to be made by all the communities along the trail to implement the plan. It is suggested that a working committee representing chambers of commerce and interested parties be formed to move plan implementation forward.

Recommendations for the entire route include things that all sites and communities will benefit as follows:

1. Logo development
2. Trail map and trail publication
3. Webpage design (that all groups can link to)
4. Smart phone application
5. Logo signs being made and installed at all access sites
6. You are here signs and kiosks being designed and specifications determined.

Once these are determined the groups should consider funding options to implement the “you are here” signs and directional signs. Then work with local communities and the DNR to complete site specific recommendations.

### **Implementation**

Plan recommendations range from regional level to community level and site specific. As detailed in previous sections of the plan, the planning effort brought together numerous organizations and individuals. While the planning team worked cooperatively to organize the water trail, there was no interest in forming a water trail group to oversee implementation. Therefore, counties, cities, villages and townships will take the lead to implement recommendations within their own jurisdiction.

1. As a first step, communities should address water trail development in their master plans and recreation plans. If communities want to apply for trust fund and recreation grants to support site development, the water trail plan must be incorporated into their recreation plan.

2. Cheboygan and Emmet Counties have county planning commissions and staff planners that can facilitate incorporation of the water trail plan into county plans and community plans of minor civil divisions.
3. State parks and community parks will be responsible for development of facilities within their own properties. Community recreation entities should coordinate with their planning commission and the county planning commission to apply for funding to support launch site developments.
4. Marketing the trails - Chambers and tourism bureaus will provide links to the Water Trails web sites. Emmet County has developed marketing strategies that can be used all communities. Emmet will incorporate marketing of the Inland Waterway and coastal water trails into its existing marketing activities with a special emphasis on water trails in connection with Camp Petosega and The Headlands.
5. Trail Towns – With the completion of the trio of state rail-trails in the northern Lower Peninsula, communities have begun to employ economic development activities related to trail town concepts. Many of those same communities have been identified as water trail towns along the Inland Waterway and Great Lakes Water Trails. The communities will expand their trail town related development activities to incorporate water trails. Providing connections between land and water trails will create new marketing opportunities.
6. Public-Private Partnerships – Communities, chambers of commerce and tourism bureaus will work with businesses to promote water related recreation tourism. Economic development activities can include incorporating paddle events into current community festivals, creating new water based festivals and incorporating water trails into future community promotions.
7. Water Resource Stewardship – Conservation organizations and lake associations will target this new group of people who are exploring quiet water paddle sports to educate users on water resource protection and invasive species.
8. NEMCOG and NWMCOG have planning staff that can assist with grant writing.

*Potential Grant Sources*

Michigan Trust Fund

Michigan Recreation Passport Grants

Community and private foundations

**Marketing Plan Outline for Inland Waterway Heritage Route and Coastal Water Trails**

The Inland Waterway that travels through Emmet and Cheboygan Counties is a natural feature that draws thousands of visitors to our area, and also serves as a vast recreational and educational resource for the residents of Northern Michigan. With the Heritage Route plans and designation, we foresee a number of very valuable marketing opportunities to increase the usage of the Inland Waterway and also opportunities to improve communications to the public and its users about the



importance of this water route and its place in our local history. We will also emphasize through these efforts the importance of caring for and protecting this invaluable resource that is an important part of our landscape in many ways.

Our marketing objectives are outlined below. We envision carrying out these proposals in the 12 months following announcement of the designation of Inland Waterway Heritage Route:

1. Media releases and photos describing the waterway and the impact of the new Heritage Route designation, spelling out what it means and how the public will benefit. High-quality professional photographs will be disseminated as well.
2. Media releases will be sent to the current media contact list utilized by Emmet County, which represents local, regional and statewide publications. In addition, it will be sent to regional Chambers of Commerce, Lake Associations, area yacht clubs and it will be included annually in the County's promotional and economic development-oriented publication, the magazine *Imagine*. It will also be included in the County Newsletter, published four times annually.
3. Establishment of an Inland Waterway Facebook page where regular updates about this resource, including its history and numerous photographs, will be established and maintained by Emmet County and our partners in Cheboygan County and the Inland Water Route Historical Society Museum. This Facebook Page will be updated on a very regular basis to promote this resource and the activities taking place under this grant.
4. An existing brochure and map about the Inland Waterway will be updated to include information from the Heritage Route designation, such as any historical markers that are installed or additional put-in sites that are identified as part of the project.
5. Technology will play a role. We envision developing an App for the Inland Waterway specifically. Within this app, we would like to utilize "beacons" that will trigger historical and geographical locations as the user navigates past these on the route. They would also be accessible within a certain distance for shoreline users at certain locations, such as parks along the route. This would be an ideal way to educate the public about the historical and natural features of this route and make their journey an interactive adventure as they travel this route.
6. The Inland Water Route Historical Society Museum in downtown Alanson will be a main hub for information about the activities related to the Heritage Route designation and information that is distributed regarding activities. We have a well-established relationship with this organization already, including having one

of its founding members serving on the Essence of Emmet organization, a collaboration of about a dozen regional historical organizations that work together to promote and preserve the region's history.

7. With an existing advertising budget established in Emmet County, we would foresee including the Inland Waterway in a series of spots we have created and which we are continually creating that portray various natural amenities of Emmet County. These are professionally filmed advertising spots that are played in the Grand Rapids and Chicago-area markets during the summer months (as well as some winter spots, though this would not apply to the Inland Waterway).
8. Emmet County's Department of Communications and IT Departments work very closely at this time creating our own videos of the beautiful and unique resources throughout the county. These include "Blasts from the Past" features about historical points of interest. Additionally, we often do "just for fun" videos from around the county that we post on existing Facebook pages (Emmet County, Dark Sky Park, Camp Petosega which is part of the Inland Waterway, McGulpin Point Lighthouse and others). We would start creating these types of short, fun, entertaining and educational videos also about the waterway to post. These types of videos are often widely shared by our pages' "fans" and are among our most-liked posts.
9. An important part of the marketing effort of the Inland Waterway Heritage Route will include creation of a logo to be used on all signage and materials when referencing the water route. This logo will be attractively designed by a professional graphic designer with input from Emmet and Charlevoix County staff members involved in this project.
10. Signage will need to be developed along the route that is non-obtrusive to the landscape but which allows visitors and residents to access important historical, educational and natural resources information about the route as part of this effort. Early conversations about what would be appropriate for signage include small post-type signs that have the newly created logo on them that could serve as "trigger images" (like QR codes) along the routes; or more traditional signage that could be accessed on one sign by boaters/kayakers/waterway users and the other side by shoreline readers. We do feel that signage will be an important part of marketing this project. Roadway signs directing visitors to the access points and educational signage is another component to be considered.
11. An important aspect of the sign creation will be to consult with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, particularly about the historical facts along the route that involve Native Americans. This is an area sensitive to the history of the local tribe, and we work closely with tribal members on our many educational and historical projects already; we would do the same here.

12. Because three state bike trails crisscross the Inland Waterway – the North Western State Trail, the North Central State Trail and the North East State Trail – we envision marketing “Pedal and Paddle” adventures that have the potential to draw large numbers of people to this area. We think this is a unique opportunity, given the juxtaposition of the trails and the waterway, which will really put this area on the map once promoted appropriately. We would like to create maps that “connect the dots” for users about where they can paddle, then exit to bike along existing roads and routes to connect to the trails, and also suggest routes for various journeys and levels of experience. We envision working with the Top of Michigan Trails Council on this aspect of this project; we already work very closely with this organization on a number of promotional efforts in the county and enjoy a very good working relationship with their staff.
13. Regular events throughout the year, when appropriate, will also help us to market the Inland Waterway. We feel we have a number of fun, adventuresome and unique event ideas that could lead to tremendous economic development in the region and renewed interest in protecting and using the Inland Waterway as a recreational resource. Ideas for events include kick-off party celebrating the Heritage Route plans and designation; Pedal and Paddle events; collaboration with the local tribe on Jiimaan (large canoes) excursions;
14. Business partnerships would become another marketing opportunity for this effort. We would like to approach businesses about offering Waterway and Trail users transportation for their vessels and bicycles, for example, from certain predetermined locations. Because Emmet County owns and operates Camp Petosega on Pickerel Lake, which is located along the waterway, this would be one natural area for visitors to drop vehicles to explore the waterway and trails; transportation back to their vehicles at the park would be a terrific way to make this trip easier for them. There are numerous businesses and sites along the route that we would like to approach about working with us in this manner. It may also spur economic development as businesses could develop based on the usage demands of increased visibility of the many amenities available along the route and in this region, catering to the needs of these visitors.