

Newaygo Community Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan Planning Process and Plan Amendment - Executive Summary

In November 2004, the City of Newaygo and Brooks, Everett and Garfield Townships adopted formal resolutions articulating a strong, clear commitment to the cooperative development of a joint recreation and natural resources conservation plan. The effort was initiated by local leaders who expressed concern over the limited availability of recreation facilities throughout the Newaygo Community. Previous planning efforts also revealed community-wide interest in new sports facilities (soccer and baseball), paved trails and nature areas. In addition, local officials acknowledged the strong connection between the natural resources, community identity and quality of life of Newaygo residents. With a grant of assistance from the *Partnerships for Change Program*, and the *Fremont Area Community Foundation*, the four municipalities agreed to develop the *Newaygo Community Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan*.

To meet this goal, officially designated representatives from each jurisdiction participated in guiding a planning process that encouraged citizen participation and open dialogue. This core working group of public officials convened several public meetings giving citizens the opportunity to shape a community-wide plan unique to the Newaygo Community.

During the planning process, official representatives from each jurisdiction met to discuss the creation of a new inter-governmental body capable of both raising the necessary funds and providing for the construction, operation and maintenance of new and existing recreation facilities. After carefully considering several options, representatives from each jurisdiction determined that establishing a *Recreation Authority* under *Public Act 321 of 2000* would provide the most flexibility in which park updates, maintenance, improvements, development, negotiations and programming could be administered and funded. After a lengthy development process that included legal council and public hearings, the four jurisdictions adopted the *Articles of Incorporation*, thereby establishing the *Newaygo Community Recreation Authority* in May of 2006.

After an extensive public review and comment period, the *Final Plan* was adopted by the *Newaygo Community Recreation Authority Board* on September 14, 2006. A copy of the Plan was officially approved and filed with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on October 5, 2006.

Over the past year, the Recreation Authority has initiated a number of initiatives in support of this multi-jurisdictional recreation improvement program. However, in the summer of 2007, Everett Township officially withdrew from the Recreation Authority. In response, the three remaining jurisdictions adopted *revised* Articles of Incorporation. At the same time, the Recreation Authority began to pursue a number of grant opportunities to help fund park improvements and the development of additional non-motorized trails including an ADA accessible *Riverside Pedestrian Pathway* that would connect a new mixed-use development to the City of Newaygo's Business District along the Muskegon River.

Due to these very positive developments, the Recreation Authority took official steps to amend the *Newaygo Community Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan*. The amendments highlight new efforts to coordinate and guide future efforts and investments that will provide: improved recreational facilities, greater access to nature-based recreation and more effective programming for the citizens of the Newaygo Community and their guests. After another public review and comment period, the *Amended Plan* was adopted by the *Newaygo Community Recreation Authority Board* on December 12, 2007. A copy of the Amended Plan was submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval in January 2007.

Please note, due to the location of the Winter Sports Park and the potential for new non-motorized trails, Everett Township remains part of the geographic area of interest as illustrated in the maps of this amended plan.