

Management Zones

Opportunities and Constraints

Based on information provided in previous chapters (soils, natural features surveys, existing vegetation, existing development) and committee discussions an opportunity and constraints map has been developed. This map will help guide the establishment of management zones and identification of potential projects. The property offers access to coastal resources, both terrestrial and aquatic. Opportunities include an existing trail system, access to El Cajon Bay sinkholes for diving and access to Misery Bay for kayaking and canoeing. Existing small openings with additional site development can be used for parking and picnic areas. Clearly the greatest opportunity is to provide a quiet natural place for hiking and exploration of intact coastal ecosystems that abound with natural beauty. The property also provides opportunities to view rare plants and animals. Constraints include extensive wetlands, high water table, mucky soils, rare plant communities, and extremely fragile coastal fens and shorelines. Due to the fragile nature of the property, snowmobile and ORV use would have detrimental impacts and should not be allowed on the preserve. Vehicle use should be restricted to existing trails and directed to parking areas. The challenge will be installing barriers to stop vehicles from driving to the point and onto beaches. Another major constraint is an organizational constraint; the Township does not have staff to oversee day-to-day operations and policing of the preserve. Vehicle access onto the preserve will have to be carefully monitored and management options may have to be altered depending upon how users treat the property. **Figure 5.1** is an opportunity and constraints map of the property.

Overall Approach to Property Management

The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and a Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Grant all contributed to making the purchase possible. As part of the grant agreement Alpena Township was charged with providing long-term management that will protect conservation values of the property such as habitat for fish, wildlife, waterfowl and other birds, amphibians, insects and native plants. Secondly, the property is to provide a place for passive recreation and access to Lake Huron for non-motorized watercraft such as canoes and kayaks. Access to coastal resources can be interpreted as both physical and visual access. Access does not mean complete access to everyone, for all possible uses, on every square foot of the property.

The primary purpose of the property is to provide low to moderate levels of natural resource related recreation (passive recreation) while protecting the native plant communities, rare plants and rare animals. Hunting/trapping and fishing are compatible uses. Timber harvest or vegetative management should be restricted to controlling invasive species and re-establish native systems. Exotic species will need to be monitored and removed. Snowmobiles and ORV's are NOT compatible with the overall purpose of the property and are not allowed anywhere on the property.

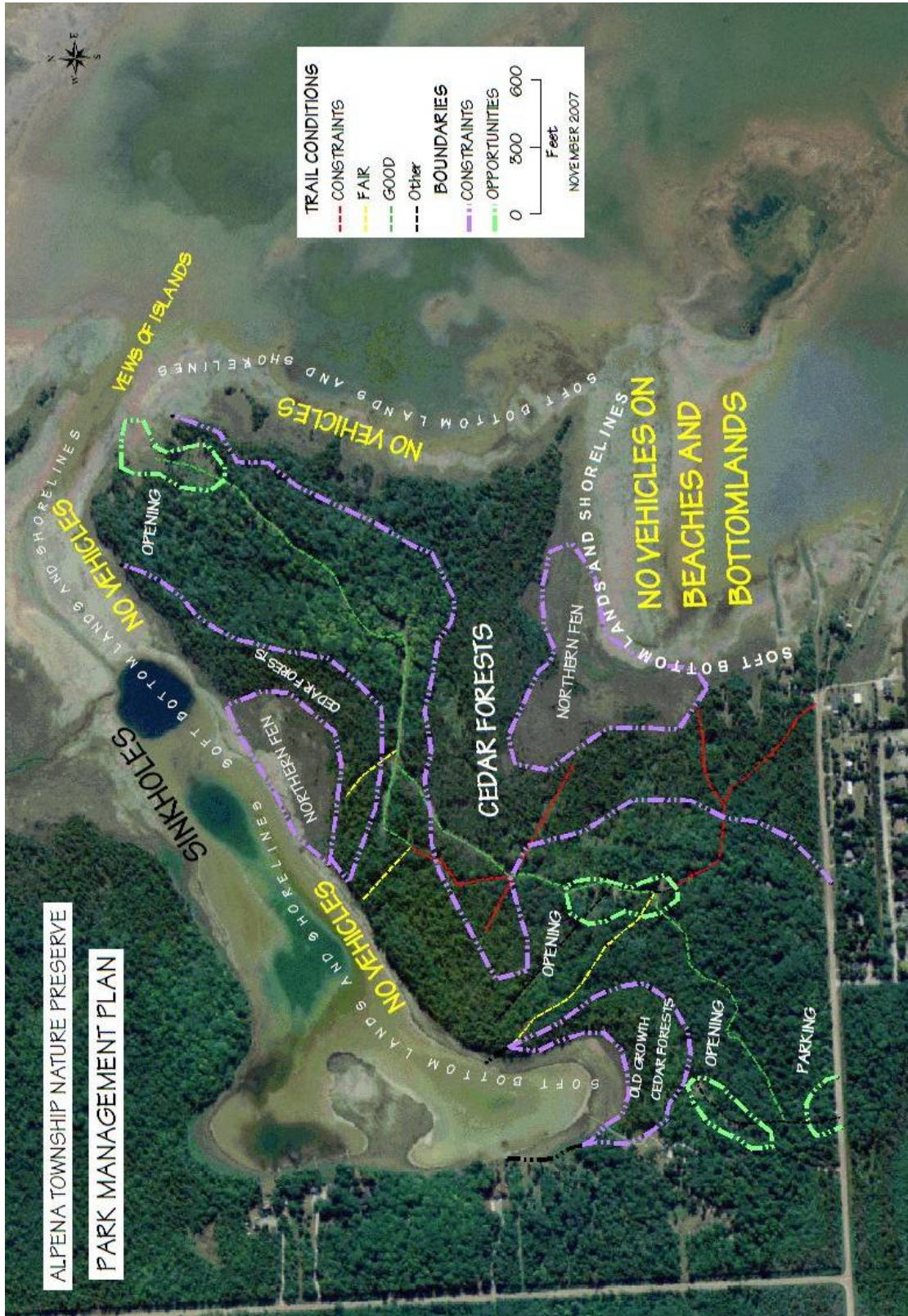
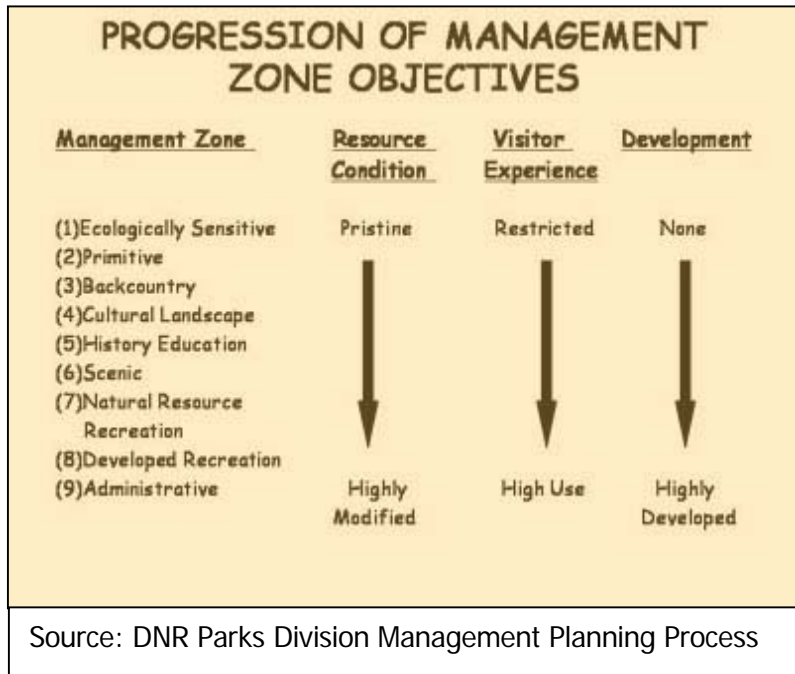


Figure 5.1: Opportunities and Constraints Map

Alpena Township Nature Preserve

Management Zones

An important step in the management planning process is the identification and delineation of Management Zones. The Nature Preserve Committee used an approach similar to the Michigan State Parks and National Park Service. Information provided in the background studies guided the committee's decision to designate three management zones on the property. Management zones are areas with defined characteristics and qualities for which there are related user expectations, management guidance and defined levels of development. **Figure 5.2** is a graphic from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources State Parks management zone planning approach.



Ecologically Sensitive Zone

The purpose of the ecologically sensitive zone is enhancement and protection of the native community and natural process over and above any other uses (including recreational) that might be contemplated. This zone restricts public use and development. The Ecologically Sensitive Zone is used when critical habitat must be protected, such as a coastal fen or where federally protected species are found, such as the Dwarf Lake Iris, the Lake Huron tansy or the piping plover. Native species and natural processes dominate and the overall character is pristine. Pre-European ecosystem components and processes should be maintained, restored and protected. Recreational activities such as hiking trails, picnic areas and observation points should be limited within these zones and in the case of the coastal fens restricted. One exception might be x-country skiing. Hunting/trapping/fishing and other low-impact dispersed recreational use can occur, however these usages should be monitored. Educational opportunities would typically be off-site for general public, with allowance for highly controlled access where appropriate and feasible for researchers/scientists. The zones would support ecological research and monitoring. Due to the sensitivity of sites, visitor use should be directed away from these zones. There will be no interpretation signage on-site; off-site interpretation will focus on the resource. The management focus should be protection for the resource. There should be no development except as needed for resource protection. There will be little evidence of human activity.

Scenic Zone

The Scenic Zone recognizes that there are aesthetic qualities to be preserved and protected. The Scenic Zones offer views of El Cajon Bay, Misery Bay and the Thunder Bay Island Group. The observation points are located along the shoreline and in existing open areas. Select removal of trees and shrubs to improve views would be acceptable. To keep the Native greenbelts intact, filtered views through shrubs and trees are preferred. This zone is only accessible by foot traffic

Alpena Township Nature Preserve

and other non-motorized activity. Low level of development to support visitor access, interpretive activities and sightseeing such as trails, small picnic areas and interpretive media would be acceptable. Interpretive signage could be placed at key viewing points, as well as benches, picnic tables and viewing platforms. All activities or developments in this zone must be compatible with the over-riding purpose of view quality. Development should blend with the natural environment. Site hardening such as boardwalks, barriers and fencing would be allowed to protect sensitive resources.

Natural Resource Recreation Zone

The character of the Natural Resource Recreation Zone is natural with minimal evidence of human impact while allowing for low to moderate levels of recreation use, and modifications of the landscape (i.e., trail development) to accommodate that use. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation. This zone allows for increased use, including bicycle and equestrian, and modifications of the landscape (i.e., trail development) to accommodate that use. Exotic species should be removed. Protection of water quality should be a priority. Timber harvest and vegetative management, including controlled burns, can occur on a limited, short-term basis for habitat improvement. Moderate levels of recreation compatible with natural character of the zone are acceptable. Non-motorized outdoor activities are allowed and would include the following: hiking, backpacking, bicycling, canoeing, diving, kayaking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hunting/trapping/fishing). Interpretive signage would be allowed at trailheads, on the trail and at overlooks. Low level of development is acceptable to support visitor access to outdoor activities: trails, trailhead parking, marked routes, and educational opportunities. Development would be unobtrusive and would blend with natural environment. Site hardening (i.e., boardwalks, fencing, pedestrian paths) may be necessary to protect sensitive resources. Clearly the overriding approach to this zone is to maintain its low-impact character, with an emphasis on natural resource quality.

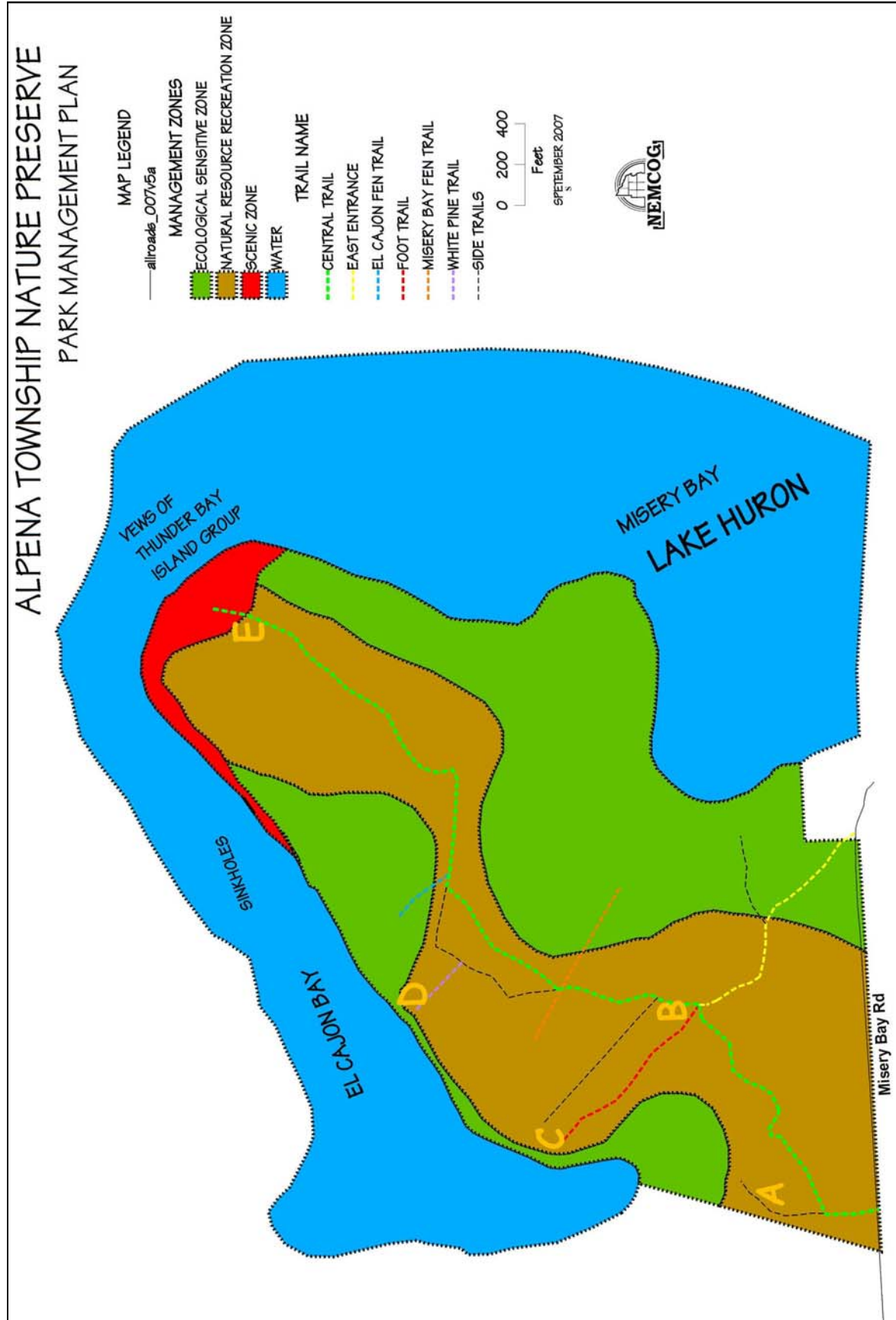


Figure 5.2: Management Zones Map