



**Houghton County Five Year Recreation Plan**  
**2024-2028**

# Acknowledgments

The purpose of this plan is to set forth a recreation strategy for Houghton County that addresses the forces of change, confronts future challenges, and provides direction for decision-making regarding investment in recreation projects within the County. This plan was developed in accordance with the guidelines for a five-year, DNR-approved Recreation Plan that is necessary for governmental entities to pursue DNR-administered grants.

## **Houghton County Board of Commissioners:**

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Joel Keranen —Commissioner, District 2

Glenn Anderson – Commissioner, District 3

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John Larson, Calumet Township-Education

Erik Kiilunen, Torch Lake Township-Local Governmental Planning and Zoning

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Benjamin Larson, County Administrator

Joel Keranen, District 2, Franklin, Osceola, Schoolcraft and Torch Lake Townships, Houghton County Board of Commission

Steve Aho, Hancock Township-Economic Development & Tourism

Michael Erickson, Osceola Township-Environment

Mark Larson, Portage Township-Recreation & Culture

This plan was prepared by the County of Houghton Administration.

# Introduction

Recreation plays an important role in the daily life of Houghton County residents, and it is a spark plug and vital component of the broader economy. Houghton County, like much of the Upper Peninsula, is blessed with an abundance of clean air, natural outdoor amenities, world class motorized and non-motorized recreation trails, scenic forestland and shorelines, crystal clear Lake Superior water, a myriad of streams and inland lakes for boating and fishing, and so much more. This environment offers residents and visitors unparalleled, year-round opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in a one-of-a-kind natural setting. This experience has continued to entice a growing number of tourists to what has become a **Destination Location** for our area, and stimulates the economy with spending activities on items such as Lodging, Restaurants, motor sports, silent sports, and at a variety of our other local Merchants and Businesses. Recognizing the value of these amenities and what our area has to offer, economic development organizations and many employers are leveraging our outdoor recreation assets to attract and retain employees to our region. With the pandemic changes to the workplace, a growing number of remote and work from home residents have infused another segment of the growing population that wants to call Houghton County home.

Houghton County is one of many local and regional recreation asset stewards, with the broader network of assets owned and maintained by local governments, nearby counties, state and federal agencies, conservancies, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, recreation organizations, and private entities. It is home to Michigan's F.J. McLain and Twin Lakes State Parks, the Keweenaw National Historical Park, the Isle Royale National Park Visitor Center and Ranger III staging and boat dock, the Copper Country Trail National Byway, and numerous parks, trail systems and conservation lands. The combination of these assets affords residents and tourists with an abundance of recreational opportunities, and makes Houghton County an incredibly unique destination for outdoor enthusiasts. It also emphasizes the importance of regional partnerships and collaborations, particularly on projects which cross Municipal, County, State, and Federal boundaries.

Because recreation is important to local livelihoods and lifestyles, Houghton County has developed this 2024-2028 Houghton County Recreation Plan to consider and guide future recreation development and improvements.

## Part 1: Community Description

This Five Year Recreation Plan is designed for all of Houghton County, and in support for the Cities, Townships, and Villages within the County. Houghton County is located on the Keweenaw Peninsula, and in the Western Upper Peninsula of the State of Michigan. It is made up of 667,900 acres (1,044 square miles), with 139 inland lakes and 51 miles of Lake Superior shoreline. The county's population is 37,361 as of the 2020 U.S. Census data. Houghton County is made up of 14 townships, two incorporated cities, and five incorporated villages. It has numerous unincorporated small former copper mining communities ("locations"), which are remnants of past larger settlements.

The county's population is concentrated in the northern half of the county. This includes two primary population centers, 1) the Cities of Houghton and Hancock, opposite each other on Portage Lake/Canal near the center of the county, and 2) the Villages of Calumet and Laurium in the northern tier of the county. The City of Houghton is the County seat.



*Houghton County Courthouse*

The population of the Western Upper Peninsula reached its peak in the 1920s and 1930s when mining and lumbering activities were booming. Since that time there has been a considerable out-migration of residents in response to the decline of those industries. Houghton County's population stabilized around 1970 and achieved moderate growth due to the continued expansion of Michigan Technological University (MTU), along with government and service sectors. This trend has continued in recent decades, with Houghton being the only Upper Peninsula County to see population growth from 2010 to 2020. The County also has a relatively youthful population by Western Upper Peninsula standards. The largest employers in the area are comprised of K-12 and Higher Education, Healthcare, Government, and mid-sized to smaller businesses. Tourism is a growing and also major contributor to the area's economy.

Commercial air service is available at the Houghton County Airport, with twice daily flights to Chicago on United Airlines. The Cities of Houghton and Hancock and the Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Community Action Agency operate public transit systems serving the large communities. Transportation by boat to Isle Royale National Park is available on The Ranger III, making round trips to the island during the park season. Isle Royale Seaplanes are flying a growing number of passengers out of Hancock, and this mode of transportation offers a much quicker commute to the Island.

While the landscape varies greatly within the county, northern hardwoods characterize the predominant forest cover, covering approximately 338,155 acres, or 50 percent, of the county. This supports a strong forest products industry while also providing for numerous recreational pursuits such as camping, mountain biking, hiking, ATV riding, and snowmobiling in areas permitting them.

The wildlife within the county consists of whitetail deer, and a wide variety of smaller animals and bird species. Outside the developed areas species such as black bear, fox, otter, cougar, and beaver are also present. Less common, but occasionally seen, are wolves and moose. The region's many lakes and streams offer abundant habitat for many types of fish and other aquatic animals. Fishing enthusiasts delight in catching lake trout, walleye, perch, pike, whitefish, salmon, and many others species of freshwater fish.

## Part 2: Administrative Structure

The five-members of the Elected Houghton County Board of Commissioners are responsible for all County-owned recreational facilities. The County Administrator has responsibility for day-to-day operations and budgeting for these facilities and activities.

Houghton County occasionally provides financial support to and serves as a grant applicant for local recreation development projects. The County also encourages and supports the efforts of local governments in addressing their recreational objectives. There is no County Parks and Recreation Commission nor Committee at this time. The County Board of Commission has the sole authority to commit funds for parks and recreation, accept grants, and purchase and sell land on behalf of the County.

With the sale of the Houghton County Arena property to the City of Hancock in January of 2023, the only County owned Recreational Facility is the Houghton County Marina. The County run Marina is located in Ripley, and it is adjacent to the Portage Lake Lift Bridge on the “Hancock” side of the main population center of Houghton/Hancock. The County Marina is described in greater detail later in this document. The Board of Commission approves the County Marina budget and operations. There are no County run parks or facilities to report on. The County works closely with the State Parks and National Parks groups, and all of the municipalities and local recreation groups, but has no ownership nor oversight for any of them.

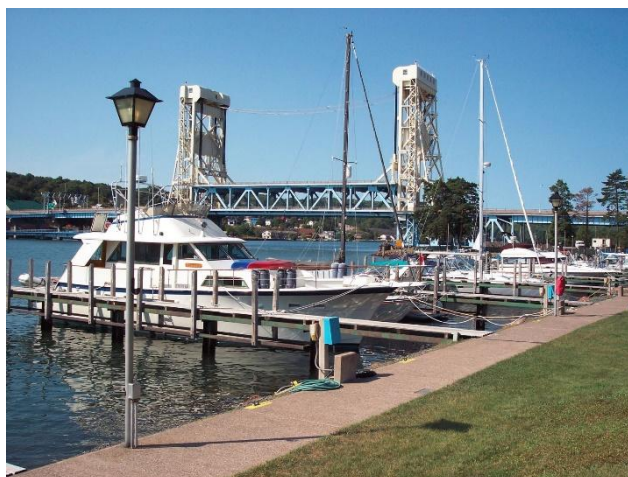
## Part 3: Recreation Inventory

The following section examines and inventories the recreational facilities that are currently available in Houghton County. While Houghton County only owns one recreational facility, the public has access to a wide variety of parks, other sites, and trails through the villages, townships, cities and state and federal government properties (see inventory beginning on page 9).

Accessibility assessments and rankings are provided for each County-owned site based on the parameters outlined in the “DNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans” as follows:

- 1=none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2=some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3=most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4=the entire facilities/park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5=the entire facilities/park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

More than just an item on a checklist, universal design is an integral part of recreation facility development. The approach helps to maximize the return on investment in recreation by making facilities as safe and user-friendly as possible. Assessments were completed by members of the Houghton County Recreation Committee with support by WUPPDR staff.



*Houghton County Marina*

### Facilities Owned by and Located in County

#### **Houghton County Marina**

The Houghton County Marina is located on Portage Lake, part of the Keweenaw Waterway, a body of water connected to Lake Superior at the Northwestern and Southeastern access points. The County marina is situated on the north side of the waterway, just east of the Portage lake Lift Bridge that connects the cities of Houghton and Hancock. It is located immediately off of

DNR Multi-Use Trail #3, which connects Hancock to the nearby communities such as Dollar Bay and Lake Linden, and is near the historic Quincy Smelter.

- Accessibility Rating: 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- Type: Marina (boat docking/storage)
- Size: Approx. 2.25 acres
- Service Area: Houghton County; seasonal tourists

The following information provided below is intended to remain eligible for grants from the DNR Waterways Program.

- General Purpose: The marina is full-service, offering 54 slips, gas and diesel fuel, transient slips, a pump-out station, concrete boat launch ramp, picnic facilities for boaters and the public, laundry facility, restroom and shower facilities, and nautical charts and a lounge area. The site allows for parking (both vehicle and trailer), and the Harbormaster is on duty from May 1st through October 31st.
- ADA: The facilities on site are still in need of upgrades to comply with ADA standards and improve individuals' access to site amenities. Reducing on-site access barriers has been identified as a priority for the County. The County will be seeking DNR and EGLE Grant opportunities Deficiencies include:
  - Lack of access space at doorways into the restrooms
  - Lack of an accessible shower and toilet stall
  - Lack of wheelchair lifts for watercraft users
- Right Sizing: The Houghton County Marina was last expanded in 1976. Historically, the marina has a long waiting list for seasonal slip rentals, and past surveys indicate growth in Lake Superior and local waterway boating and boat ownership. An improved marina facility would definitely attract additional seasonal slip rentals. Any major expansion of the Marina would require Grant Funding, and the County will be exploring both DNR and EGLE Marina Development grants to look at ADA compliance issues, and the possibility for expansion if funds are available. Adding slips by considering additional piers that would extend out into the Waterway, and then parking smaller boats to the pier and not the shoreline would provide for additional users and slip leases. This would require a study, and if Grant Funds are received also the local matching dollars from the Marina budget.
- Dredging: A storm-water outlet/intermittent stream flows between slips 25 and 26. This has resulted in the accumulation of sediments and shallow water depths at these piers, especially since the Father's Day Flood of 2018 from unstable ground on the hillside above the Marina. During the summer flood of 2018, debris and sediment were



deposited, and required dredging to regain use of the slips. Through great partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and EGLE, a six year permit to take care of this annual issue has been obtained. The State of Michigan DOT has partnered with the County Road Commission, and as they have licensed contractors for other digging work they have offered dredging services free of charge to the County along this storm water outlet and spillway.

- Maintenance and Infrastructure Replacement Schedule:

- *Annual maintenance schedules:* the Houghton County Harbor Master is responsible for the regular maintenance and operations of the marina Annual maintenance includes updating or maintaining existing equipment, picnic areas, walkways, restroom and shower facilities, and grounds.
- *Capital improvements schedule:* Several items of concern have been addressed, and more work will be completed soon.
  - A new roof was installed on the Harbormaster's Building in 2021.
  - LED light upgrades have been installed throughout the Marina Facility.
  - Upgrades to high speed Internet and Security Cameras have been installed to completely cover the property, parking lots, and slips. This included tunneling under the parking lot to connect the Harbormaster building with UP.net high speed fiber in 2021. Connecting the WIFI to both ends and the middle of the Marina happened in 2023, and Security cameras were also installed to provide coverage to the whole Marina in 2023. Credit card payments are now secured, and the old way of getting them from across the water through cellular networks has now been stopped.
  - Cyber security is now completed on all transactions, and monitoring of the internet and security cameras has turned into a 24/7 operation with live and taped footage.
  - The bathhouse roof is starting to show its age, and this roof is also being considered for replacement.
  - The ADA compliance issues for the restrooms and shower facilities persist, and the County hopes to address this in the near future. A reinvestment of the annual surplus generated from the Marina can provide the local match to hopefully get this addressed.
  - A wheelchair lift assist for those who have compliance issues is being considered, and grant funds will be required for such an improvement. With the DNR and EGLE Marina Development Grants available, the County will be pursuing funds to expand our services to these boaters.

- The future of electric recreational vehicles should also be considered, and possibly adding some charging stations-if grant funds become available-for motorized vehicles.

## Non-County Owned Facilities Located within Houghton County

**Table 1:** Adams Township recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>           | <i>Ownership Entity</i> | <i>Type/Facilities</i>  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Atlantic Mine Playground       | Adams Township          | Playground  |
| Baltic Recreation Center       | Adams Township          | Indoor ice rink, basketball court, and senior citizens center |
| Jeffers High School Playground | Adams Township Schools  | Playground (located behind post office)                       |

**Table 2:** Calumet Village recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>       | <i>Ownership Entity</i> | <i>Type/Facilities</i>                            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Agassiz Park               | Calumet Village         | Basketball court, picnic area, restrooms, benches |
| Calumet Theatre Park       | Calumet Village         | Historical marker                                 |
| CLK Football Field – Track | Calumet School District | Football/track stadium                            |
| Italian Hall Park          | National Park Service   | Benches & historical markers                      |
| Red Jacket Road Park       | Calumet Village         | Benches   |

**Table 3:** Calumet Charter Township recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>                 | <i>Ownership Entity</i>                    | <i>Type/Facilities</i>                            |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Calumet Colosseum & Community Center | Calumet Township                           | Indoor ice rink, event room, and concession stand |
| Calumet Dam Area                     | Calumet Township                           | Campsites & walking trails & disc golf            |
| Calumet Schools                      | Calumet School District                    | Gymnasiums (4) & playground                       |
| Centennial Heights Playground        | Calumet Township                           | Playground  |
| Centennial School                    | Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Child Development | Playground & future nature trail                  |
| CLK School Forest                    | CLK S                                      |   |
| Copper Country Curling Rink          | Copper Country Curling Club                | Indoor curling facility                           |

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Douglas-Houghton Falls      | State                          | Waterfall   |
| Legion Field                | Calumet Township               | Soccer/baseball field   |
| Railroad Depot              | Calumet Township               | Historic site   |
| Lions Club Park             | Calumet Township               | Picnic site, walking trail, greenspace, paddle craft launch   |
| Gardenview Garden           | Private                        | Assisted living center facility for senior citizen use  |
| Swedetown Ponds             | Calumet Township               | Fishing & picnic tables   |
| Swedetown Trails            | Calumet Township               | Cross-country ski, snowshoeing, hiking and mountain biking trails, sledding, lights, toilets, concession  |
| Waterworks Park             | Calumet Township               | 16 acre park with 1,600 feet of Lake Superior shoreline, pavilions (3), picnic sites, playground, horseshoe pits, baseball field, basketball court. Site includes a 43 acre wooded parcel adjacent to lake frontage with nature trail, primitive campsite |
| Wolverine Ballfield         | Calumet Township               | Baseball field, toilets, concession   |

**Table 4:** Chassell Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>        | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>    | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Chassell Ski/Snowshoe Trails       | Chassell Township                 | 10+ km ski & snowshoe trails (1-km lighted)   |
| Chassell Township Centennial Park  | Chassell Township                 | Boat launch, docks, fishing, picnic area, pavilion, playground, horseshoe pits, toilets |
| Chassell Township Schools          | Chassell Township School District | Playground & multi-purpose field  |
| Ice Rink                           | Chassell Township                 | Ice rink with warming shack   |
| Misslitz Field                     | Chassell Township                 | 4-acre grounds; ballfield & playground  |
| Sturgeon River Sloughs Access Site | State                             | Boat launch, pier, picnic area, nature trail  |

**Table 5:** Copper City Village recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Village Hall                | Copper City Village            | Community building            |

|              |                     |                      |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Village Park | Copper City Village | Playground equipment |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|

**Table 6:** Duncan Township recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>      | <i>Ownership Entity</i> | <i>Type/Facilities</i>                        |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Lower Dam Lake            | U.S. Forest Service     | Waterfront access (former campground) & bench |
| Sparrow Rapids Campground | U.S. Forest Service     | Rustic campsites (5) & access to river        |
| Sparrow-Kenton Wayside    | U.S. Forest Service     | Picnic area, access to river, toilet          |

**Table 7:** Elm River Township recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>               | <i>Ownership Entity</i> | <i>Type/Facilities</i>                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Clear Lake Access Site             | State                   | Boat launch & toilet                                 |
| Elm River Township Public Access   | Elm River Township      | Boat launch & playground                             |
| Emily Lake State Forest Campground | State                   | Campsites, boat launch, toilet                       |
| Pike Lake                          | State                   | Boat launch & toilet                                 |
| Sandy Lake                         | State                   | Boat launch & toilet                                 |
| Twin Lakes Recreation Center       | Elm River Township      | Indoor basketball court (summer) & ice rink (winter) |
| Twin Lakes State Park              | State                   | Campsites (62), restrooms, swimming, boat launch     |
| Wyandotte Hills Golf Club          | Private                 | Golf course & club house                             |

**Table 8:** Franklin Township recreation assets

| <i>Establishment</i>         | <i>Ownership Entity</i> | <i>Type/Facilities</i>   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Boston Pond                  | State                   | Boat access & swimming   |
| Mount Ripley                 | Michigan Tech           | Downhill skiing, chairlift, t-bar, terrain park                    |
| Paavola Wetlands Nature Area | Keweenaw Land Trust     | 215 acre nature preserve with walking trails and historic features |
| Quincy Mine Historical Site  | National Park Service   | Mine Hoist and underground tours, walking tour                     |
| Ripley Location              | Franklin Township       | Future waterfront park (fishing, swimming, picnic facilities)      |

**Table 9:** City of Hancock recreation assets

| <b><i>Establishment</i></b>           | <b><i>Ownership Entity</i></b>              | <b><i>Type/Facilities</i></b>   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Driving Park                          | City of Hancock                             | Baseball/adult softball field, little league field  |
| Houghton County Arena and Fairgrounds | City of Hancock                             | Athletic Facility and adjacent Fairgrounds  |
| East Hancock Stairway Park            | City of Hancock                             | Scenic view, benches, flag display  |
| Hancock Beach                         | City of Hancock                             | Volleyball courts (3), horseshoes, swimming, pavilion   |
| Hancock Campground                    | City of Hancock                             | 72 campsites (58 RV sites with electric access and 14 tent sites) & restroom/showers                                    |
| Hancock Elementary School             | Hancock School District                     | Playground, outdoor basketball court, soccer field, small pavilion, gymnasium, nature trail                             |
| Hancock Trail                         | State                                       | All-season recreation trail   |
| Copper Country I.S.D. Playground      | Copper Country Intermediate School District | Playground  |
| Klondike Park                         | City of Hancock                             | 0.1-acre lot  |
| Laurin-Grove Park                     | City of Hancock                             | Outdoor ice hockey rink with warming shelter, playground, basketball court, tennis court, roller hockey, horseshoe pits |
| Maasto Hiihto Trails                  | Private landowners                          | Cross-country skiing/biking/hiking/snowshoeing trails (connects to Churning Rapids Trails)                              |
| McAfee Field                          | Private                                     | Football/soccer field & restroom/shower facility  |
| Memorial Park                         | City of Hancock                             | Tables, benches, war memorial   |
| Montezuma Park                        | City of Hancock                             | Playground, benches, open field, picnic facilities  |
| Paavo Nurmi Center                    | Private                                     | Gymnasium and fitness center  |
| Pine Park                             | City of Hancock                             | Open area, table, benches, playground   |
| Porvoo Park                           | City of Hancock                             | Pavilion, restrooms, volleyball, fishing piers  |

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>      | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ryan School                 | Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Head Start | Playground   |
| Terrace Park                | City of Hancock                     | Softball sandlot, picnic facilities, playground, tennis/basketball/volleyball courts |
| Third Street Park           | City of Hancock                     | Basketball, playground, picnic facilities  |

**Table 10:** Hancock Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Churning Rapids Trails      | Private                        | Cross-country skiing/biking/hiking/snowshoeing trails (connects to Maasto Hiihto Trails) |
| McLain State Park           | State                          | Campsites, restrooms, beach, swimming, playground, lighthouse, picnic area, and trails   |
| Swedetown DNR Lake Access   | State                          | Boat launch  |
| Lily Pond Boat Launch       | State                          | Boat launch  |

**Table 11:** City of Houghton recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>             | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>       | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Bridge Street Basketball Courts         | City of Houghton                     | Basketball courts (2)  |
| Bridgeview Park                         | City of Houghton                     | Boat mooring facility, pavilion, viewing deck  |
| Central Houghton Greenspace Nature Area | City of Houghton Keweenaw Land Trust | 4.5 acre park, walking trail, wildlife habitat   |
| College Avenue Park                     | City of Houghton                     | Scenic site with seating   |
| Danielle Heights Playground             | Michigan Tech                        | Children’s playground facilities   |
| Dee Stadium                             | City of Houghton                     | Ice rink for hockey & figure skating, event space (all indoors)                            |
| East Houghton Greenspace Park           | City of Houghton                     | 0.77 acre park with wildlife habitat and walking trail                                     |
| East Houghton Waterfront Park           | City of Houghton                     | Pavilion, boat docks, restrooms/showers; adjacent boat slips, fishing piers, picnic tables |
| Franklin Square and Mott’s Park         | City of Houghton                     | Planters, statue, and welcome sign   |
| Garnet Street Park                      | City of Houghton                     | Tennis court, playground, picnic area, and horseshoe pits                                  |

| <b><i>Establishment</i></b>                             | <b><i>Ownership Entity</i></b>    | <b><i>Type/Facilities</i></b>  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Gates Tennis Center                                     | Michigan Tech                     | Tennis courts (5)  |
| Houghton Elementary School                              | Houghton-Portage Township Schools | Playground & gymnasium   |
| Houghton High School                                    | Houghton-Portage Township Schools | Track/football field, gymnasium, pool; Bugni Park adjacent   |
| Houghton RV Park  | City of Houghton                  | Campsites (25) with hookups; picnic tables; park host  |
| Houghton Skatepark                                      | City of Houghton                  | Opening in Spring 2019; Facilities for skateboarding including ramps, rails  |
| Huron Street Fishing Piers                              | City of Houghton                  | Fishing piers, picnic tables, gazebo   |
| Isle Royale National Park                               | National Park Service             | Boat dock at park headquarters   |
| Lakeshore Drive Boardwalk                               | City of Houghton                  | A 0.5 mile boardwalk with fishing piers, picnic facilities, boat slips, and paddle craft ramp  |
| Michigan Tech Football Field                            | Michigan Tech                     | Football stadium/track   |
| Michigan Tech Softball Fields                           | Michigan Tech                     | Ballfields   |
| Michigan Tech Student Development Center                | Michigan Tech                     | Indoor recreation center   |
| Michigan Tech Trails                                    | Michigan Tech                     | 35k Cross-country/biking/hiking trails (7k lighted trails), adjacent disc golf course  |
| Nara Nature Park  | City of Houghton                  | 115 acre park offering cross-country skiing/biking/hiking/snowshoeing trails (connecting to Michigan Tech trails), boardwalk, fishing piers, chalet building |
| Prince's Point Park                                     | Michigan Tech                     | Beach, picnic table, fire pit, volleyball court  |
| Raymond C. Kestner Waterfront Park & Chutes and Ladders | City of Houghton                  | Play area, swimming beach, fishing piers, boat docks, picnic area, pavilion  |
| Waterfront Trail  | City of Houghton                  | 4.5-mile paved multi-use trail (summer non-motorized/winter snowmobile)  |
| West Houghton Park                                      | City of Houghton                  | 0.7 acre park with outdoor hockey and skating rink and warming facility  |
| Woodhaven Park  | City of Houghton                  | Playground equipment and soccer field  |
| Veterans Park   | City of Houghton                  | Memorial site with scenic views  |
| Verna Mize Park   | City of Houghton                  | Scenic site  |

**Table 12:** Laird Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>       | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>                                     |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Bob Lake                          | State                          | Camping, boating, canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking              |
| Echo Lake                         | State                          | Walk-in canoeing, fishing, hunting                                |
| Ed Tossava Ice Rink               | Laird Township                 | Pavilion/ice rink, warm-up shed, bathrooms, grills, picnic tables |
| Mike Jylha Stadium Baseball Field | Laird Township                 | Ball field, grandstand, concession, playground, picnic facilities |
| North Country Trail System        | State                          | Hiking trail access   |
| Penegor Lake                      | State                          | Walk-in canoeing, fishing, hunting                                |
| Prickett Lake Access Site         | State                          | Boating, canoeing, fishing, hunting                               |
| Silver Mountain                   | State                          | Hiking & hunting  |
| Six Mile Lake                     | State                          | Fishing, hunting, walk-in canoeing                                |
| Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness   | Forest Service                 | Hiking & hunting  |
| Triangle Falls                    | State                          | Hiking, fishing, hunting  |

**Table 13:** Lake Linden Village recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>      | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Lake Linden Recreation Area | Lake Linden Village                 | Inline skating rink, volleyball, swimming, bathroom facilities, tennis court, basketball court, baseball field, climbing wall, tot lot |
| Marina                      | Lake Linden Village                 | Boat dock & 12 slips (8 seasonal & 4 electric)   |
| School Playground           | Lake Linden-Hubbell School District | Playground   |
| Village Campground          | Lake Linden Village                 | Campsites (20 electric & 6 rustic) with picnic tables & fire rings; restrooms; showers; pavilion; nature trail                         |

**Table 14:** Laurium Village recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>                                  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Park Daniell                | Laurium Village                | Band shell, concession stand                                   |
| George Gipp Recreation Area | Laurium Village                | Ice arena, baseball fields (4), playground, tennis courts (2), |



|                                  |                 |  |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--|
|                                  |                 | basketball court, bocce court, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts |
| Gipp Memorial Park               | Laurium Village | Fountain   |
| Laurium Ball Fields & Playground | Laurium Village | Ballfields (3), playground, concessions                          |

**Table 15:** Osceola Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>      | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>                      | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Calumet Golf Course              | Private   | Golf course, driving range, clubhouse/restaurant                     |
| Centennial Park                  | Osceola Township                                    | Sitting area   |
| Dollar Bay Community Garden      | Osceola Township                                    | 0.3-acre lot and future home to a community garden                   |
| Dollar Bay Recreation Facility   | Osceola Township                                    | Ice rink, warming hut, tennis court, basketball court, horseshoe pit |
| Dollar Bay Head Start Playground | Dollar Bay/Tamarack City Area Schools               | Gymnasium, playground and basketball court                           |
| Electric Park                    | Osceola Township                                    | 40-acre historic site and former public recreation area.             |
| Gooseneck Park                   | Osceola Township                                    | 4-acre green space located on M-26 just outside of Dollar Bay        |
| Hungarian Falls                  | Keweenaw Land Trust                                 | 10 acres of hiking trails, waterfalls, scenic views                  |
| Quincy Dredge                    | Osceola Township/Houghton County Historical Society | 6.4-acre site featuring a partially submerged dredge and smokestacks |
| Sandy Bottom Park                | Osceola Township                                    | Swimming beach, picnic area, pavilion, boat launch, fishing          |
| Tamarack Hill Location           | Osceola Township                                    | 0.5-acre lot with electricity access.                                |
| Tamarack Mill Park               | Osceola Township                                    | Basketball court, playground, and pavilion                           |
| Tamarack City Recreation Area    | Private/Osceola Township                            | 2-acre area, undeveloped green space near Tamarack Mill Park         |
| Veterans' Field                  | Veterans of Foreign Wars                            | Baseball/soccer field & barbeque pit                                 |

**Table 16:** Portage Charter Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i> | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Dodgeville Recreation Area  | Portage Township               | Covered and lighted ice rink/pavilion with warming shack, playground equipment, basketball court, horseshoe pits, restrooms |

|                              |                  |   |
|------------------------------|------------------|---|
| Hurontown Recreation Area    | Portage Township | Playground equipment, benches, restroom (summer 2012), softball field, soccer fields, 2 tennis courts, 4 horseshoe courts |
| Portage Lake Golf Course     | Michigan Tech    | Golf course, pro shop, restaurant   |
| Otter Lake Recreational Area | Portage Township | Pavilion/ice rink, softball diamond & dugout, playground equipment, vault toilets   |
| Pilgrim Estates Tennis Court | Portage Township | Tennis court  |
| Tapiola Recreation Area      | Portage Township | Pavilion, ballfield, playground equipment, covered ice rink   |

**Table 17:** Quincy Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>               | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>   |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Maasto Hiihto Trails                      | Private landowners             | Cross-country skiing/biking/hiking/snowshoeing trails (connect to Churning Rapids Trails) |
| Hancock Middle School/Central High School | Hancock School District        | Gymnasium & sports fields   |

**Table 18:** Schoolcraft Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>    | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Big Traverse Boat Launch       | Schoolcraft Township           | Boat launch, restroom, parking           |
| Big Traverse Campground        | Schoolcraft Township           | Rustic (tent) campsites, water, restroom |
| Big Traverse Picnic Grounds    | Schoolcraft Township           | Picnic facilities                        |
| Schoolcraft Township Ball Park | Schoolcraft Township           | Ballfield, playground equipment          |

**Table 19:** South Range Village recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>       | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Range Town Veterans Memorial Park | South Range Village            | 40-acre site; softball & baseball fields                               |
| South Range Community Park        | South Range Village            | Playground equipment, picnic tables, tennis court and basketball court |
| South Range Elementary School     | Adams Township School District | Gymnasium, outdoor basketball court, playground                        |

**Table 20:** Stanton Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>               | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i> | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>  |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| E.B. Holman School                        | Stanton Township Schools       | Playground, basketball court, gym, baseball diamond  |
| Freda Tennis Court                        | Stanton Township               | Tennis court   |
| Heikkinen School                          | Private                        | Playground   |
| Kenner Dome & Oskar Bay Recreational Park | Stanton Township               | Ice rink, basketball court, sand volleyball court  |
| North Canal Park                          | Stanton Township               | Primitive campsites, picnic facilities, playground equipment, horseshoe pits, beach, toilets |
| Stanton Township Ball Diamond             | Stanton Township               | Ball diamond   |
| Stanton Township Community Center         | Stanton Township               | Skating rink with building (warming shack)   |
| Stanton Township Park/Agate Beach         | Stanton Township               | Campsites (30 including 6 electric), pavilion, fire boxes (20), picnic facilities            |

**Table 21:** Torch Lake Township recreation assets

| <i><b>Establishment</b></i>       | <i><b>Ownership Entity</b></i>                                  | <i><b>Type/Facilities</b></i>   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Bootjack Boat Launch              | State   | Boat launch & toilet  |
| “Ernie” Poisson Hubbell Park      | Torch Lake Township   | 7.3 acre park, boat launch, docking facilities, beach area  |
| Lake Linden-Hubbell School Forest | Lake Linden-Hubbell School District                             | 400 acre forested lot with hiking, cross-country, and snowshoeing trails, log cabin, archery range, fire pit area, and geocache sites |
| Rice Lake Boat Launch             | State   | Boat launch & toilet  |
| White City Park                   | Army Corps of Engineers (owner); Torch Lake Township (operator) | Beach, picnic facilities, DNR boat launch   |

**Pilgrim River Forest Project**

South of Houghton along and between Superior and Paradise Roads is more than 1,300 acres of prime recreational land with trails, a trout stream, and peaceful woods open for public recreation. The Pilgrim River Forest Project (also referred to as the Pilgrim River Conservancy Project) is next to the Pilgrim River Community Forest and located just a few miles away from Houghton. The property includes over three miles of the Pilgrim River, including a good portion

of the River's headwaters. In addition to the stretch of Pilgrim River corridor, the project area includes 1,295 acres of prime forestland with varied topography. Most of this land offers public outdoor recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, hiking, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, and snowshoeing. The project is a result of a partnership between DNR, the Keweenaw Land Trust, private landowners, Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited and several others.

Along with sustainable forest management and public recreational access, the Pilgrim River Forest Project:

- Ensures habitat for both game and nongame wildlife species, such as black bear, white-tailed deer, bald eagle, fisher, pine marten, mink and otter.
- Protects an area internationally renowned for serving as a portion of the migratory bird flyway for both migrating raptors and songbirds crossing Lake Superior in the spring and fall.
- Protects from development 10 percent of the entire Pilgrim River watershed, including the main channel, several tributaries and streams, and wetlands.

The Pilgrim River Forest Project is important to the County because it fulfills a need for more publicly accessible recreation land, especially near areas of relatively high population. For more information visit <http://pilgrimriverwatershed.org>.

### **Pilgrim Community Forest**

The Pilgrim Community Forest was established by the Keweenaw Land Trust in the fall of 2014. The 276-acre forest is just minutes from Houghton and part of the larger Pilgrim River Conservancy Project. This conservation area has a variety of forest and habitat types, with about one mile of the Pilgrim River's main channel and a 2.5-mile recreation trail. The trail system features both loop trails and down-and-back trail types which take advantage of the area's natural contours and rolling elevation changes. Visitors are welcome to hike, bike, snowshoe, or cross-country ski on the single-track trail that leads through the beautiful forests and riparian corridor. The Pilgrim Community Forest is open for fishing, hunting and trapping.

Currently the property is accessible near the guard rail on the west side of Paradise Road at the intersection with Pilgrim Road, with a Keweenaw Land Trust trail sign identifying the path.



### **Copper Country Trail National Byway**

Copper Country Trail National Byway, first designated as a Michigan State Heritage Route in 1994, joined the America’s Byways collection in 2005. Defined by its historic significance, the Byway highlights the triumphs and tragedies associated with copper mining. The 47-mile stretch of US-41 from Houghton to Copper Harbor follows the copper lode that lies deep underground and is the basis of the Byway’s exciting and turbulent history. The Byway has a guiding document, The Corridor Management Plan, which highlights goals, including those for public recreation; objectives; and action items for projects in the Byway corridor.

### **Trail Networks**

Throughout the region is a network of dedicated snowmobile/off-road vehicle (ORV) and multipurpose trails, and this collection is the biggest in all of the Midwest. Official long-distance trails that traverse multiple jurisdictions include the Bill Nicholls Trail from Greenland (Ontonagon County) to Houghton; the Bergland (Ontonagon County) – Sidnaw ORV Route; the Ottawa East Connector ORV Route; the Lake Linden Route from Hancock to Lake Linden to Calumet, and the Jack Stevens Trail from Hancock to Calumet. The North Country Trail, designed exclusively for hiking, crosses east – west in the southern part of the county. Many local trails are also officially and permanently established.

In the summer of 2018, a series of severe rain events washed out several local trail systems in Houghton County. With support from the Michigan DNR and our legislators, the Dollar Bay to Lake Linden Trail has just reopened, county residents appreciate the support the State of Michigan provided to reopen this important route. There are some grades that remain in states of emergency and that are closed, but the MDNR is looking at these as well, and the county hopes to get them reopened with help from our State.

The remainder of the trail system exists mainly on year-to-year easements granted by private landowners and is in danger of becoming fragmented, jeopardizing access to many popular forms of recreation. The Houghton-Keweenaw Recreation Authority was established in 2012 to

address these issues and to develop a multi-use trail system that connects the region's populated areas and trail amenities.

#### Douglass Houghton Falls Park

With great partnership from the Michigan DNR and our legislators, the Douglass Houghton Falls park is being developed right now. This local gem is the home of the State of Michigan's tallest Waterfall. Through many different hands and ownership in the past, enthusiasts have gone to view this 110 foot cascade. With the State of Michigan purchasing the land from the owner, and now in a state of development and expansion, the County, its residents, and visitors are all excited to see what is possible, and to gain access to better parking, a viewing platform, and better safety and use as it becomes a State holding.

#### ***Regional Facilities***

Southern Houghton County contains large tracts of the Ottawa National Forest, a nearly one million-acre United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service landholding providing a vast area primarily for dispersed and unorganized outdoor recreation. However, facilities for camping, fishing, boating, trails, and other popular recreational activities are also available. Similar opportunities are provided in a smaller area of State-owned public land to the north, designated as the Copper Country State Forest, focused primarily on Elm River Township. Forest Service and State land are shown along with the trails in **Figure 1**.

Outside of Houghton County are numerous facilities that allow for a variety of recreational pursuits—most notably the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness and Fort Wilkins State Park. The Western Upper Peninsula also has countless additional sites offering recreational opportunities, including Isle Royale National Park, museums, mine tours, and scenic drives, hikes, swimming beaches, rockhounding sites, and more.



**Figure 1:** Regional recreation facilities

## **Part 4: Description of the Planning Process**

In order to develop the County's recreation plan, the Planning Commission and the County Administrator were tasked with reviewing and updating the 2018 Recreation Plan. The Planning Commission met and reviewed the plan, and provided feedback and edits that resulted in the Draft Plan on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and then again on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. These meetings were open to the public, and were publicized and all were welcome.

## **Part 5: Public Input Process**

Public input has been solicited, and we started this process with a great framework and a past plan which was developed in 2018. A few things have changed since then, while the majority of the 2018 plan is still relevant and usable. The Draft Plan will be sent to our partners throughout the County, and adequate opportunities for review and feedback will be considered. Many of our local partners have their own Recreation Plans, so considering what is happening in each of them and how we can support them is the goal and will remain so. A public hearing will be called prior to any adoption by the County, and all Draft feedback will be considered and an open forum will be made available to all. A 30 day public review period will be conducted with the Drafted plan, and publicized and shared at prominent Community and County locations. Once the public has time to review the document, a formal adoption the Recreation Plan will be conducted at the Planning Commission meeting.

## **Part 6: Goals and Objectives**

The overarching goal of Houghton County is to promote an affordable and achievable capital improvement program for the County that will accommodate increasing use and enhance user satisfaction with recreational facilities and opportunities in the County. Houghton County has many recreational opportunities offered by a diverse group of providers (County, townships, municipalities, schools, and private entities) as identified in the inventory. In addition, the County will remain open to acquisition of new recreational sites as they become available in partnership with local governments and the State, and as we have the budget to support these transactions. Houghton County has devised the following goals as ways to best capitalize on these facilities:



- Provide recreation facilities, programs, and opportunities to satisfy recreational desires and promote healthy lifestyles for residents and visitors that provide equity based planning and access for all
- Continue to pursue all viable financial opportunities to expand and update current recreation facilities, in accordance with changing user preferences
- Provide access to recreation facilities for persons with disabilities
- Promote fiscal self-sufficiency through user fees where appropriate
- Actively seek public involvement from as many user groups as possible in planning any new County recreation facilities or projects

The following goals apply to other recreational assets in which the County may play a role:

- Seek to expand and maintain the county-wide motorized and non-motorized trail network for the long term, assisting with conflict resolution between user groups whenever possible
- Promote bicycling and walking as recreational activities and as means to commute, being mindful of safety concerns related to automobile traffic and actively supporting “complete streets” concepts and policies
- Seek to increase public access to land and access to water bodies for recreational activities
- Maintain the integrity of ecosystems and the environment wherever public access is currently provided or newly expanded
- Promote carefully controlled timber management where it occurs in close quarters with recreational activities to benefit forestry and public recreation
- Promote wildlife and habitat management programs that provide sustainable and healthy wild game and fish populations (e.g. whitetail deer, ruffed grouse, and other) to benefit Houghton County sportsmen and women and nature enthusiasts.
- Balance the interests of visitors and residents in considering recreation assets and future opportunities, recognizing the potential economic benefits of recreation development
- Promote preservation of our natural viewsheds and landscapes that give the County its inherent beauty and intrinsic value, including along the Keweenaw Ridge (the spine of small mountains and hills running northeasterly through the County from near Ontonagon toward the Keweenaw Point
- Foster and facilitate private-public partnerships to accomplish the above goals

## Part 5: Action Program

The County has determined that an ongoing need still exists to upgrade the Houghton County Marina. Expansion of the marina would include updating facilities using universal accessibility design principles to eliminate barriers for individuals with mobility challenges. Upgrades are needed for the restroom and showers, and boat/pier wheelchair access. The County will also remain vigilant in the effort to mitigate and continually remove sediment that is ejected out into the Waterway through the spillway that bisects the property.

The County has significant issues with interconnectivity and permanence of trail and pathway routes, both motorized and non-motorized. The following needs have accordingly been identified:

- Repair existing trail networks damaged by 2018 flood event
- Establish new pathways following existing roadway routes within and between population centers in order to make commuting and recreation less dangerous
- Completely connect all compatible long-distance trails by securing permanent easements by working with the Michigan DNR and the landowners
- Educate users by creating and distributing an up-to-date regional map showing trail locations and type

## Part 7: Description of Planning Process

In order to develop the County's recreation plan, the Houghton County Planning Commission and the County Administrator were tasked with reviewing and updating the 2018 Recreation Plan. The Planning Commission met and reviewed the plan, and provided feedback and edits that resulted in the Draft Plan through Open Meetings on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and December 5, 2023. These meetings were open to the public, and were publicized and all were welcome.

Much of the statistical information and historical data was derived from the 2018 Master Plan, and those who contributed to that document.

## Part 8: Summary of Public Review and Comment

Feedback is encouraged and will be included as received from our County partners and municipalities. A Draft of this document was sent to all municipalities to seek input, as well as being posted on the Planning Commission's Webpage on the County Website as the lead story.

### **Written comments**

Calumet Twp Supervisor Tim Gasperich found a typo with the Houghton County Arena being sold to the City of Houghton, and not to Hancock in the Recreation Plan. That change was made and incorporated into the Recreation Plan

District 4 Board of Commissioner Gretchen Janssen had several minor edits and corrections to both the Master Plan and Recreation Plan. Those edits were all incorporated into the Plans.

Summary of Public review and Comment, September, October and December Planning Commission Monthly Meetings, 2023: There was no public participation or comments offered at the time of these public meetings.