General Management Plan
Long-range management guidance focused on the specific natural resources, historic-cultural resources, recreation opportunities and the education-interpretation opportunities of…

Bald Mountain Recreation Area

The project was directed by Paul N. Curtis, Management Plan Administrator Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Division with assistance from Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.;

PLAN APPROVALS:

Chief, Parks & Recreation Division  
Date

Deputy Director, Natural Resources  
Date

Director, Department of Natural Resources  
Date
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Bald Mountain Recreation Area, with 4,637 acres spread across three separate units (North Unit, South Unit and West Unit), is located in Oakland County, Michigan. The Phase I General Management Plan (GMP) process for Bald Mountain Recreation Area was made possible by funding provided by Michigan’s Park Improvement Fund. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Parks & Recreation Division (PRD) oversaw the planning process. The endeavor represents a new planning philosophy of the PRD. “Management Planning,” a comprehensive, resource-based process is the PRD’s adaptation of National Park Service planning methodology. During Phase 1, the GMP focuses on the four principles of the PRD Mission Statement: to acquire, preserve, and protect; (1) natural resources, (2) cultural resource, (3) provide public recreation, and (4) provide education opportunities. The process includes a thorough inventory of Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s natural and historic/cultural resources, recreational opportunities and education and interpretation opportunities.

With this base of knowledge, the Core Values for Bald Mountain Recreation Area were developed by the Planning Team (made up of DNR staff) with meaningful input from government officials, recreation partners, stakeholders and the public. Bald Mountain Recreation Area was determined to be significant for the following reasons:

- Bald Mountain Recreation Area is a 4,637-acre day-use recreation and fitness park for the Southeast Michigan population that offers visitors a variety of year-round recreational opportunities with land area appropriate for expanding these activities.
- Bald Mountain Recreation Area features year-round fishing and its two trout streams make it one of the few places in southeast Michigan that offers this unique trout fishing opportunity.
- The park features a modern outdoor shooting range offering rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery activities.
- Bald Mountain Recreation Area, home to 3,000 acres of public hunting land, constitutes a significant public hunting resource within the State’s most populated region.
- There are 15 miles of marked, designated use trails within the park that also serve as a potential link between the Polly Ann and Paint Creek Trails. This inter-connected
regional trail system ties together surrounding communities such as Orion Township, Oakland Township, Lake Orion and Auburn Hills.

♦ The north unit of the park has an undeveloped and natural feel that provides visitors a glimpse of their natural heritage and the chance to get away from suburban life.

♦ Bald Mountain includes significant historic resources, featuring some of the earliest known development in Southeast Michigan, including Rudd Mill, one of Orion Township’s first sawmills, and the Decker Settlement, the first settlement in Orion Township.

♦ Bald Mountain Recreation Area features diverse plant and animal life, and a wide variety of rare, exemplary or important natural species and habitats within the park. The terrain, wetlands, lakes, swamps, forests, prairie fens, flowers and plants allow for interaction with nature.

♦ Current and future utility easements cross much of the park, which may limit recreational opportunities in some areas or provide opportunities in others.

A key goal in the development of this General Management Plan is to establish a clear, recognizable and distinct identity for Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Formulating an identity for Bald Mountain Recreation Area allows the DNR to manage the park in a way that optimizes the user’s experience, increases the chances of attracting new visitors, and generates more awareness of the importance of protecting the park’s resources. Taking this into account, the Planning Team, with stakeholder and public input, established appropriate Management Zones. From a palette of nine standard zones, 5 were applied to Bald Mountain Recreation Area. The Management Zone map and a thorough review of each Management Zone are found in Section 3 of this Plan. A condensed view of the Management Zones is as follows:

♦ **Backcountry Zone** comprises 3,236 acres (63.8%) of the park and emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for modification of the landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses. The Administratively Recognized Natural Areas within the recreation area are found in the Backcountry Zone. Much of Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s extensive trail system is located in this management zone.

♦ **Natural Resource Recreation Zone** comprises 1,178 acres (23.2%) and allows active recreation with medium-high density of use conducted in natural areas. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. In Bald Mountain Recreation Area, this zone is mainly comprised of the rustic cabins in the North Unit, the Paint Creek Trail segment in the South Unit, and most of the West Unit north of Greenshield Road.

♦ **Developed Recreation Zone** comprises 653 acres (12.9%) and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The Upper and Lower Trout Lake day use and beach areas, the shooting range, and the model airplane flying field are found within the Developed Recreation zone.
♦ **Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone** comprises 58 acres (1.1%) of Bald Mountain Recreation Area. In this overlay/zone, preservation of the historical and cultural resources is the primary management focus. The Cultural Landscape Overlay allows the uses in the underlying zone but addresses the cultural and historical resources found within the park. The Decker’s Settlement and Rudd’s Mill are two important historical features found within this zone.

♦ **Visitor Services Zone** comprises 7 acres (0.1%) and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. This zone will include the park headquarters, maintenance facilities and all related land required to conduct the business of running a state recreation area.
1.0 Plan Process Overview

A General Management Plan (GMP) guides the management of resources, visitor use, and general development at Bald Mountain over a 20-year horizon. The GMP provides the foundation for protecting park resources while providing for meaningful visitor experiences. The long-range vision and management objectives for the park are derived from applicable legal directives, the purpose of the park, and the park’s significant natural and cultural resources.

GMPs develop as a result of a series of planning steps. Each step builds upon the previous, and action decisions focus on (1) the mission of the Parks & Recreation Division (PRD), and (2) the specific Purpose and Significance of the park. There are four phases of planning, implemented in the following order:

♦ **Phase 1**: General Management Plan (GMP) that presents long-range goals (20-year).
♦ **Phase 2**: Long-range Action Goals Plan that identifies 10-year action strategies to attain the GMP (requires review of Phase 1)
♦ **Phase 3**: Five-Year Implementation Plan, which outlines specific actions to implement (requires review of Phase 1 and Phase 2)
♦ **Phase 4**: Annual Action Plan and Progress Report to answer what will be done this year, and what progress was made on last year’s plan.

This Plan represents **Phase I**. In this phase of planning, a 20-year vision for the park is defined, and critical questions are answered, such as: What will be the condition of flora and fauna? How will we address historic and cultural resources? What recreational opportunities could be provided? What education and interpretation efforts will meet the visitor? What will guide the manager’s operational decisions? What will be the visitor’s overall experience?

**Phase I determines management zones, and describes a variety of activities that may be appropriate within each zone. Phase I does not determine specific uses. Identifying specific uses within each management zone is a function of Phase 2. Management Plans do not guarantee future PRD funding to achieve them. PRD will seek internal funding, alternative funding sources, partnerships, grants and other potential mechanisms for implementing the desired future conditions defined in this plan.**
The tool used by this plan is the designation of “Management zones.” Management zones define specific characteristics of the land, addressing management for:

- Natural features
- Historic/cultural features
- Education/interpretation
- Recreational opportunities

These four elements represent the primary goals of the PRD Mission Statement, and provide guidance for both planning and management decisions. Appendix A presents a detailed account of each of these elements. In addition, management zones prescribe values for:

- Visitor experience
- Management Focus
- Development

Within the parameters of this guidance, “Purpose” and “Significance” statements are developed for the park that establish its unique identity and focus. No two parks are the same and emphasis is directed at ensuring that the differences found from park to park are acknowledged, highlighted and celebrated.

1.1 Planning Objectives

The objective of this General Management Plan was to bring together Parks & Recreation Division staff, stakeholders, and the public who use the park into a planning process that will define and clarify the unique “Purpose” and “Significance” of Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Collectively, those attributes will be reinforced in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan. Future action plans, whether focused on a development proposal, a resource improvement initiative, an interpretive program, or day-to-day management of the park will be guided by this General Management Plan.

Extensive input was sought throughout the planning process. The Planning Team met several times to review, develop, and comment on the plan elements (see Section 1.2). In addition, the DNR hosted two focus group meetings with recreation partners from the region, a stakeholder workshop and a public participation workshop. Both the stakeholder and public participation workshops involved solicited written and verbal comments. The draft plan was available for review on a website and the public was invited to email, call or mail questions or comments concerning this initiative. The results of the public participation program are provided in Attachment B.
1.2 Planning Team

Accomplishment of our planning objectives was and is dependent upon the valuable input provided by all members of the “Planning Team.” The names listed below are those who were critical participants in this planning process. Agendas, meeting minutes and attendance at Planning Team meetings is provided in Appendix C.

**DNR Staff**

- Paul N. Curtis PRD Park Management Plan Administrator
- Paul Yauk PRD Lands Manager
- Kristen Bennett PRD District Planner
- Luba Sitar PRD Metro Detroit District Supervisor
- Ray Fahlsing PRD Stewardship Unit Manager
- Lisa Gamero PRD Cultural Resource Analyst
- Andrew Cole PRD Bald Mountain RA Park Manager
- Tim Payne WD Southeast Region Manager
- Julie Oakes WD Wildlife Biologist
- Jim Francis FD Fisheries Biologist
- Liz Hay-Chmielewski FD Fisheries Supervisor
- Tom Hoane FMD FMD – Geologist
- Bruce Miller FMD Fire Officer
- David Malloch LED Law Enforcement Lieutenant
- Karen Gourlay M&O Park Interpreter
- Aiden McLearon MOD Shooting Range Supervisor
- Pat Lieske MSC Shooting Range Concessionaire

**Consultants**

- David Birchler, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.
- Jill Bahm, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.
- Susan Roble, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.
- Sheila Starks, Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

1.3 Recreation Partners

The input of regional Recreation Partners is also critical when evaluating the need for facilities and programs while avoiding unnecessary duplication of facilities and services. Bald Mountain Recreation Partners included: Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Oakland County Parks & Recreation, Orion Township Parks & Recreation, Oakland Township Parks & Recreation, Auburn Hills Parks & Recreation, Lake Orion High School, Addison Oaks Park, Orion Oaks Park, Paint Creek Trailways Commission, Polly Ann Trailway Management Council, Inc., Clinton River Canoe and Kayak Rentals, Macomb County Parks Commission, Stony Creek Metropark.
1.4 Management Plan Planning Process

Management Planning is a defined strategic process within the Parks & Recreation Division Strategic Plan (2009), reflecting the following Goals and Objectives:

- Goal 1, Objective 1.2: Strengthen, update, and implement Management Plans.
- Goal 3, Objective 3.1: Perform landscape level assessment of recreation opportunities in decision making.
- Goal 8, Objective 8.1: Continue to use the MSPAC (Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee), MSWC (Michigan State Waterways Commission), NRC (Natural Resources Commission), SWC (Statewide Council), and Ecoregion Teams and partners to advise in Parks & Recreation Division planning, policy development, and issue resolution.
2.0 Core Values

Core values are the foundation upon which the park management plan is based. Core values are derived from the mission statements of the DNR and PRD, as well as the priorities of the Director to ensure that the State will acquire, preserve, and protect (1) natural resources and (2) cultural resources, and continue to provide (3) public recreation and (4) educational opportunities throughout the State park system.

2.1 Mission Statements

Guidance for the General Management Plan stems from the Mission Statements of the Department and its Parks & Recreation Division, and the Purpose and Significance Statements that have evolved through the planning process. The core values found in these statements must be reflected in this long-range General Management Plan for Bald Mountain Recreation Area, and subsequently reflected in any shorter range action plans:

**DNR Mission Statement**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state’s natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

**PRD Mission Statement**

The Parks & Recreation Division’s Mission is to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan’s unique resources, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities.

**DNR Priorities Related to State Parks**

- Renewed emphasis on providing top-notch customer service
- Broaden the base of support for outdoor recreation by continuously promoting the Recreation Passport
- Increase participation in outdoor recreation in our state, and reverse the trend of declining participation in hunting and fishing
- Foster the growth of Michigan’s resource-based economy and be recognized as the leader in trail-based recreation.

2.2 Park Purpose

Park purpose statements are based on park legislation, legislative history, special designations and DNR policies. These statements reaffirm the reasons for which Bald Mountain Recreation Area was identified as part of the state park system.
1. To be used as a public park, pursuant to the intentions of the State Legislature when it created the park and authorized its purchase, beginning in 1944.

2. To preserve and protect Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s unique natural resources for current and future generations.

3. To provide diverse recreational opportunities to nearby populations.

4. To provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public that reflect the DNR mission and the unique qualities of Bald Mountain Recreation Area.

2.3 Draft Statements of Significance

Park Significance statements capture the essence of the park’s importance to our state’s natural and cultural heritage. These statements demonstrate the distinctiveness of Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Understanding the park’s significance helps managers make decisions that preserve those resources and values necessary to accomplish the park’s purpose.

1. Bald Mountain Recreation Area is a 4,637-acre day-use recreation and fitness park for the Southeast Michigan population that offers visitors a variety of year-round recreational opportunities with land area appropriate for expanding these activities.

2. Bald Mountain Recreation Area features year-round fishing and its two trout streams make it one of the few places in southeast Michigan that offers this unique trout fishing opportunity.

3. The park features a modern outdoor shooting range offering rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery activities.

4. Bald Mountain Recreation Area, home to 3,000 acres of public hunting land, constitutes a significant public hunting resource within the State’s most populated region.

5. There are 15 miles of marked, designated use trails within the park that also serve as a potential link between the Polly Ann and Paint Creek Trails. This inter-connected regional trail system ties together surrounding communities such as Orion Township, Oakland Township, Lake Orion and Auburn Hills.

6. The north unit of the park has an undeveloped and natural feel that provides visitors a glimpse of their natural heritage and the chance to get away from suburban life.

7. Bald Mountain includes significant historic resources, featuring some of the earliest known development in Southeast Michigan, including Rudd Mill, one of Orion Township’s first sawmills, and the Decker Settlement, the first settlement in Orion Township.

8. Bald Mountain Recreation Area features diverse plant and animal life, and a wide variety of rare, exemplary or important natural species and habitats within the park. The terrain, wetlands, lakes, swamps, forests, prairie fens, flowers and plants allow for interaction with nature.

9. Current and future utility easements cross much of the park, which may limit recreational opportunities in some areas or provide opportunities in others.
2.4 Legal Mandates

For all park General Management Plans, all legal mandates are identified that serve to further guide the development of the General Management Plan and subsequent Action Plans. For our planning purposes, the term “Legal Mandates” refers to not only state law, but also the administrative tools of “Policy” and “Directive” of the Natural Resource Commission, the Department, and the Parks & Recreation Division. Examples include Wildlife Conservation Orders, Orders of the Director, and all other laws, commission orders, and rules or directives that apply to the park. Specific to Bald Mountain Recreation Area, several legal mandates have been identified, which are listed below. Please refer to Appendix A: Supporting Analysis for a more detailed summary of these mandates.

DNR Policy 26.04-04 - Use of State-Owned Lands Administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (ISSUED: 02/01/2006)
♦ The NRC will manage state-owned lands in a manner that protects and enhances the public trust while providing for the use and enjoyment of those lands as outlined in the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.
♦ Established to protect and promote the public health by establishing health code requirements specifically addressing campgrounds.
♦ All public (including DNR) and private campgrounds must comply with these regulations
♦ Mandates that a campground wastewater system must meet the construction permit, design, and operation requirements under Michigan’s Public Health Code.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit, including Storm Water Runoff Discharge Authorization
♦ The purpose of this permit is to control the discharge of pollutants into surface waters of the state to protect the environment; administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

PA 35 of 2010, Part 741 (“Recreation Passport”)
♦ This act amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to provide for a State Park and State-operated public boating access site “Recreation Passport” that a Michigan resident may obtain by paying an additional fee when registering a motor vehicle.
♦ The Recreation Passport is required for entry into all PRD administered facilities and takes the place of the Motor Vehicle Permit (MVP).

♦ Established to protect and promote the public health by establishing health code requirements and regulations that all public (including DNR) and private campgrounds must meet.
♦ Campground wastewater system must meet the construction permit, design, and operation requirements under Michigan’s Public Health Code.

PA 451 OF 1994, PART 22 – CAMPGROUND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS
♦ These rules apply to all campground wastewater systems and regulates discharges to groundwater; administered by the Water Division, Groundwater Discharge Unit.
PA 451 of 1994, PART 303 - WETLANDS PROTECTION (formerly Act No. 203, P.A. 1979 Wetland Protection Act)
♦ Administered by the DNR and part of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, this legislation provides clarification and guidance on interpreting Part 303 by defining specific rules for the regulation of wetlands in Michigan.
♦ The law requires that persons planning to conduct certain activities in regulated wetlands apply for and receive a permit from the state before beginning the activity.

PA 451 OF 1994, PART 419 - HUNTING AREA CONTROL
♦ Administered by the DNR, this part of PA 451 establishes the powers of the Department to establish safety zones for hunting.

PA 451 OF 1994, PART 504 - STATE LAND USE RULES / LAND USE ORDERS OF THE DIRECTOR
♦ Administered by DNR Law Division.
♦ States that the department shall promulgate rules for the protection of the lands and property under its control against wrongful use or occupancy.

PA 451 OF 1994, PART 741 - STATE PARK SYSTEM - NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT
♦ Notable in this law is Section 324.74102, which identifies the duties of the DNR and reinforces those core values concerning preservation, protection and management cited above.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDERS
♦ Established by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC).
♦ Describes hunting and trapping regulations including methods of take, bag limits, license quotas, and season dates are established by the NRC and are described in the Wildlife Conservation Orders.

PA 45 OF 2010 - NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT
♦ Amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (PA 451 of 1994) to require the DNR to establish a plan for a statewide trail network that includes Michigan trailways, pack and saddle trailways, and other recreational use trailways, and to permit pack and saddle animals on designated trailways managed by the DNR.

PA 46 OF 2010 - NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT
♦ Amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (PA 451 of 1994) with a finding that a statewide system of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways is in the best interest of the state; requires the DNR to establish an “adopt-a-trail” program that allows volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing Michigan trailways, pack and saddle trailways, and rail-trails; and creates the Michigan snowmobile and trails advisory council within the department.
2.5 Land Acquisition & Funding Sources

Bald Mountain Recreation Area was obtained, piece by piece, over several years. Various funding sources have been used for acquisition of land in Bald Mountain Recreation Area. The following descriptions relate to the fund source map and legend below for Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Those lands were acquired by the state through a variety of funding sources and/or transactions. Often, conditions attached to the original funding source or other details of the property transaction encumber the future use or disposition of the land. Please refer to Appendix A: Supporting Analysis for a complete detailed list of all State Park funding sources.

![Bald Mountain Recreation Area Funding Source](image)

**Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)**

The trust fund was established in 1976 to provide a source of funding for public acquisition of lands for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. Funding is derived from royalties on the sale and lease of state-owned mineral rights. It is utilized for general program purposes.

The State Constitution was amended in 1984 to provide for a "Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund" which was implemented in 1985. Most rentals, royalties, and other revenues derived from mineral, coal, oil, and gas interests on State-owned land are credited to the fund. Public Act 451 of 1994 redirected a portion ($10 million per year) of these revenues previously committed to this fund, to the Michigan State Parks Endowment Fund. Appropriations are used to fund grants to local units of government, as well as State agencies, to acquire or develop outdoor public recreation facilities.

**Game and Fish Funds (now known as the State Game and Fish Protection Fund)**

This fund was established in 1921 and is financed principally by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The license fees are set by statute and their purpose is to support the conservation program for preservation and control of fish and wildlife. The fund also
receives revenues from the investment earnings of the Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund. The fund provides financial support for state-wide hunting and fishing programs, including resource management, research, enforcement of hunting and fishing laws, and acquisition of lands to be used for hunting and fishing purposes.

**State Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund**
The State Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund was created under the provisions of Public Act 73 of 1986. The Game and Fish Protection Fund provides revenues for the operation of the Fish, Wildlife, and Law Enforcement programs in the Department of Natural Resources. Management, research, enforcement of fishing and hunting laws and acquisition of lands to be used for hunting and fishing purposes are examples of uses of this fund.

**Special Legislation**
Acquisitions for park purposes through this source are tied to specific funding established by the legislature.

**Other Funds**
Included in this category are “General Fund,” defined as properties that were purchased with monies from the state’s General Fund, and not associated with a specific revenue stream or bond program. Also included in this category are “Exchanges.” These land transactions result in acquisition of lands in return for disposition of land to the offering party.

Another fund source represented in this category is the “Recreation Bond Fund.” This fund was established in 1988 and operates under Parts 196 and 715 of P.A. 451 of 1994, as amended. The fund was created from the proceeds and investment earnings of a bond package approved by the voters in November 1988 to finance state and local public recreation projects.

**Multiple Funds**
Often, more than one funding source is designated for successful completion of a real estate transaction. In those cases, this ‘Multiple Funds’ designation is made. Specific information for these must be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

**Gift**
These properties were provided to the state as a donation from private individuals or entities. In some cases, specific requirements may be associated with the gift of land (e.g. the land may be gifted to the state as a “Wildlife Viewing Area”) which would lend certain guidance to the management of the gifted land. Specific information for these must be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

2.6 **Easements**

Bald Mountain Recreation Area is significantly impacted by easements that favor the following:
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Gas Storage
- Consumers Power
- Detroit Edison Company
- GTE Telephone Company
- The Buckeye Pipeline Company
- Michigan Bell Telephone Company
3.0 Management Zones

With guidance of the Planning Team and input from the park’s stakeholders and the public, the “Purpose and Significance” statements were formulated for Bald Mountain Recreation Area. This established an identity for Bald Mountain Recreation Area as a place to be valued for its unique natural features, multi-use recreational trails, and opportunity for natural resources education.

The Management Zone Plan was developed in keeping with the park’s unique Identity. Similar to the Purpose and Significance statements, the Management Zone Plan was also drafted with Planning Team, recreation partners, stakeholder and public support. The Management Zone Plan seeks to preserve and protect the park’s natural resources, while creating opportunities for recreation, education and interpretation. To achieve this, the 4,637-acre park was divided into the following zones:

- **Backcountry Zone** comprises 3,236 acres (63.8%) and emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for modification of the landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses. Much of Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s extensive trail system is located in this management zone.

- **Natural Resource Recreation Zone** comprises 1,178 acres (23.2 %) and allows active recreation with medium-high density of use conducted in natural areas. There is still an emphasis on resource quality over recreation, but in this zone, higher levels of use are allowed. In Bald Mountain Recreation Area, this zone is mainly comprised of the rustic cabins in the North Unit, the Paint Creek Trail segment in the South Unit, and most of the West Unit north of Greenshield Road.

- **Developed Recreation Zone** comprises 653 acres (12.9%) and allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. The Upper and Lower trout Lake day use and beach areas, the shooting range, and the model airplane flying field will be found within the Developed Recreation zone.

- **Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone** comprises 58 acres (1.1%) and encompasses the natural, cultural, historical resources within the park that are protected and interpreted for visitor understanding. The Decker’s Settlement and Rudd’s Mill are two important historical features found within this zone.

- **Visitor Services Zone** comprises 7 acres (0.1%) and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. This zone will include the park.
headquarters, maintenance facilities and all related land required to conduct the business of running a state recreation area.
3.1 Backcountry Zone

Approximately 3,236 acres (63.8%) of Bald Mountain Recreation Area will be designated Backcountry Zone. This zone allows for modification of the landscape to allow for moderate levels of active recreation uses. Most of the North Unit is zoned Backcountry along with a significant portion of the South Unit and half of the West Unit.

A. Natural Resources: This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Within the Backcountry Zone, natural resources may be modified slightly to support visitor use, but the tolerance for natural resource impacts is low. This zone is home to the recreation area’s Administratively Recognized Natural Areas.

B. Historic/Cultural Resources: There are several historic structures or resources in this zone including historic dam locations, farmsteads, and cemeteries.

C. Recreational Opportunities: Moderate levels of recreation are allowed in the Backcountry Zone, provided the activities are compatible with the natural character. Non-motorized outdoor activities could be permitted, including hiking, backpacking, backcountry camping, canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and hunting/trapping/fishing. Most of Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s extensive trail system, which includes biking and hiking trails, are found within the Backcountry Zone. However, due to the intensive events that periodically take place on trails in the South Unit, these trails are zoned Natural Resource Recreation.

D. Education Opportunities: The ecological significance of the resources in the park presents a tremendous educational opportunity. Information can be relayed through the use of kiosks at trailheads and interpretive signage along trails and other appropriate locations. The Michigan State Park Explorer Program (also known as the Outdoor Explorer Program) offers campers and day visitors the opportunity to learn about a wide range of topics including forests, insects, and pond studies.

E. Visitor Experience: A moderate level of visitor encounters can be accommodated in the Backcountry Zone. Visitors will engage in self-reliant, non-motorized outdoor activities that may require a fairly high time commitment. Low noise tolerance and low interaction with others can be expected.

F. Management Focus: Management will focus on maintaining the low-impact character of the zone, with emphasis on natural resource quality. Routine maintenance, including maintenance for trails or access routes, will be provided. Care will be taken to eliminate any detrimental impacts such as incursion of invasive species.

G. Development: A low level of development is allowed to support visitor access to activities offered in the zone. Development would be unobtrusive and blend in with the natural environment.
3.2 Natural Resource Recreation Zone

Approximately 1,178 acres (23.2%) of the land comprising Bald Mountain Recreation Area is designated Natural Resource Recreation Zone. The zone allows for active recreation with medium to high density of use conducted in natural areas. The rustic cabins of the North Unit, as well the entire northern half of the West Unit are zoned Natural Resource Recreation.

A. Natural Resources: This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape.

B. Historic/Cultural Resources: Cultural resources preserved, rehabilitated, removed or allowed to waste away. Historic structures could be adaptively used for operational uses or educational purposes.

C. Recreation Opportunities: In this zone, visitors engage in outdoor activities in diverse land and water natural settings (i.e. hiking, backpacking, back-country and rustic camping, bicycling, canoeing, kayaking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing). Hunting/trapping/fishing are permitted in designated areas. Snowmobiling is permitted on designated routes. Moderate to high levels of recreation compatible with natural character of the zone. However, due to the intensive events that periodically take place on trails in the South Unit, these trails are zoned Natural Resource Recreation. The South Unit trails have been designated for snow mobile use for a transitional period of time. It is the intent of this General Management Plan that a sustainable area and/or new network of sustainable snow mobile trails will be designated at an alternative location with the Bald Mountain Recreation Area.

D. Education Opportunities: Interpretive signage at trail heads, on the trail, and at overlooks.


F. Management Focus: Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD’s mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and universal access are management priorities.

G. Development: A moderate level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include walkways and parking, trails, benches, and picnic tables. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities and protect natural resources.
3.3 Developed Recreation Zone

Approximately 653 acres (12.9%) of Bald Mountain Recreation Area is designated Developed Recreation. This zone allows active recreation with high density of use conducted in areas not designated for natural resource significance. This zone includes the Lower Trout Lake day use and beach area, Upper Trout Lake day use and beach area, and the shooting range, which are all located in the South Unit. Furthermore, the area used primarily by the model airplane enthusiasts in the West Unit is also zoned Developed Recreation.

A. **Natural Resources**: Vegetative management in this zone will address hazard trees, invasive species, and pests and disease, and will also be allowed for purposes of facilitating development and recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape. Natural resources are actively managed and modified to support visitor activities. Water quality is maintained or restored.

B. **Historic/Cultural Resources**: Resources in this zone could be preserved, adapted or rehabilitated. Non-utilized or non-stabilized structures are removed.

C. **Recreational Opportunities**: High levels of recreation in a highly structured environment are found in this zone. Visitors engage in recreation activities in diverse and modified land and water settings: hiking, bicycling, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, nature observation, cross-country skiing, shooting and archery, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, day-use beach, picnicking, and other day-use activities.

D. **Education Opportunities**: Interpretive signage and information could be provided at the campground, registration building, trailheads, and/or along trails and overlooks.

E. **Visitor Experience**: A high level of visitor encounters can be accommodated. Activities for visitors to engage in could offer a variable time commitment, challenge and adventure. Moderate to high noise tolerance and moderate to high interaction with others can be expected.

F. **Management Focus**: Management focuses on maintaining the use of the zone appropriate to the PRD’s mission. Public safety, protection of resources, and universal access are management priorities.

G. **Development**: A high level of development of facilities for support of visitor activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include restrooms, concrete/asphalt/gravel walkways and parking, fishing piers, trails, benches, picnic tables, rustic campsites, cabins and shelters for recreation and educational opportunities. Site hardening is allowed as necessary to facilitate activities, protect natural resources, and provide universal access.
3.4 Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone

Approximately 58 acres (1.1%) of land within Bald Mountain Recreation Area is designated Cultural Landscape Overlay Zone. The management focus of the Cultural Landscape Overlay is the preservation of the historical and cultural resources. The Overlay allows the uses in the underlying zone but addresses the cultural and historical resources found with the area.

A. Natural Resources: This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management focused to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to enhance education/interpretation uses which can include non-native species specific to the era and/or location, and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape that is sensitive to the historical resource and interpretation of the zone.

B. Historic/Cultural Resources: Includes historic buildings, structures, and other landscape characteristics and features, which represent the evolution of the cultural resource, temporal change, and the continuum of time. Bald Mountain Recreation Area’s historic resources include the Decker Settlement and Rudd’s Mill, among others.

C. Recreation Opportunities: Visitors engaged in sightseeing, recreational, and educational activities in a cultural setting (i.e. automobile, bicycle, walking, hiking tour), compatible with and sensitive to the setting.

D. Education Opportunities: Interpretive signage at trail heads, on the trail, overlooks and other points of interest. Off site interpretation as well.

E. Visitor Experience: Visitors engaged in sightseeing, recreational, and educational activities in a cultural setting (i.e. automobile, bicycle, walking, hiking tour). Moderate time commitment. Moderate on-site interpretation, off-site interpretation, noise tolerance, and interaction with DNR staff.

F. Management Focus: The focus of this zone is to maintain the cultural character of the zone, and the underlying zone, which is mainly Natural Resource Recreation and Developed Recreation.

G. Development: Non-historic development and activities that do not conflict with the cultural landscape are tolerated. Moderate level of development to support visitor access and use (i.e. interpretive media, walks, trails, small picnic areas, and restrooms). Development compatible with the cultural landscape.
3.5 Visitor Services Zone

This zone is 7 acres (0.1%), and encompasses the developed areas required for program administration and operations. It includes offices, contact stations, maintenance facilities and all related land required to conduct the business of running a recreation area. The Visitor Services zone is located in the South Unit of Bald Mountain Recreation Area and includes the park headquarters.

A. Natural Resources: Natural resources are actively managed and modified to support administrative and support activities. Vegetative management is allowed (primarily tree removal for safety).

B. Historic/Cultural Resources: Resources in this zone could be preserved, adapted or rehabilitated to support administrative and support activities.

C. Recreational Opportunities: There are no recreational activities permitted in the Visitor Services zone.

D. Education Opportunities: Person to person contact at park headquarters for general information; informational kiosk may be available.

E. Visitor Experience: Business and information only. High noise tolerance and moderate to high interaction with others can be expected.

F. Management Focus: Management focuses on the business of running the park, appropriate facilities for staff, employee safety. Universal access will be provided to the offices.

G. Development: A high level of development of facilities for support of administrative activities is permitted in this zone. Examples of development include office space, meeting rooms, employee locker room, eating area, shop space, and storage space
4.0 Future Plan Inserts

The following are items that will be added to this General Management Plan (GMP) as they are developed. The GMP serves as a guide for each subsequent plan.


Operational/Management Resources: The following categories are established as a guide for the park manager to use to supplement this working document. Other categories can be added as needed.

- Annual Work Plan (This report ties in with Phase 4 – Annual Report of Management Planning)
- Stewardship Plan
- Staffing
- Budget
- Equipment
- Training
- Public Relations / Marketing / Outreach
- Programming (ie. special events, MCCC, volunteers, etc.)
- Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
- Water system
- Wastewater system
- Electrical system
- Law enforcement
- Emergency Access Plan
- Wildfire Management Plan
- CRS
- FOIA
- Raster Image Index
- Raster Images of historic park plans
- Park Infrastructure data