

**Stanton Township**  
**5-Year Recreation Plan**  
**2024 – 2028**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**(For Review and Comment Only)**

**Stanton Township Board**  
**[www.stantontownship.com](http://www.stantontownship.com)**

**November 9, 2023**

## PREFACE

The Stanton Township Board approved a project to prepare a 5-Year Recreation Plan during its June 2022 business meeting, with the aim of better managing recreation opportunities in Stanton Township. The project included background research, an inventory of Township-owned recreation properties and facilities, and a community recreation survey of Township residents and non-resident property owners.

On November 1, 2023, the *final draft Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan 2024 - 2028* was approved for posting on the Township website for a required 30-day public review. It was approved during a special meeting of the Township Board, prior to its regular November 2023 business meeting.

Relevant comments will be incorporated into the *final draft* Recreation Plan after the 30-day public review period. In addition, the Stanton Township Board has scheduled a public hearing as part of its January 2024 business meeting. The public hearing provides an opportunity for final comments prior to formal adoption of the Recreation Plan by the Township Board. The document can then be submitted to the State of Michigan MiGrants website for review and approval by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Comments can be submitted online at [www.stantontownship.com](http://www.stantontownship.com) (follow directions on the webpage) or by postal mail addressed as follows:

Stanton Township Clerk  
5-Year Recreation Plan  
50960 Canal Road  
Houghton, MI 49931

**Please submit your comments by Monday, December 11, 2023**

**Reference the section and page number when making comments.**

**Thank you for participating in this important Township planning initiative!**

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**NOTE:** A detailed table of contents, and list of figures and tables will be prepared after the 30-day public review period.

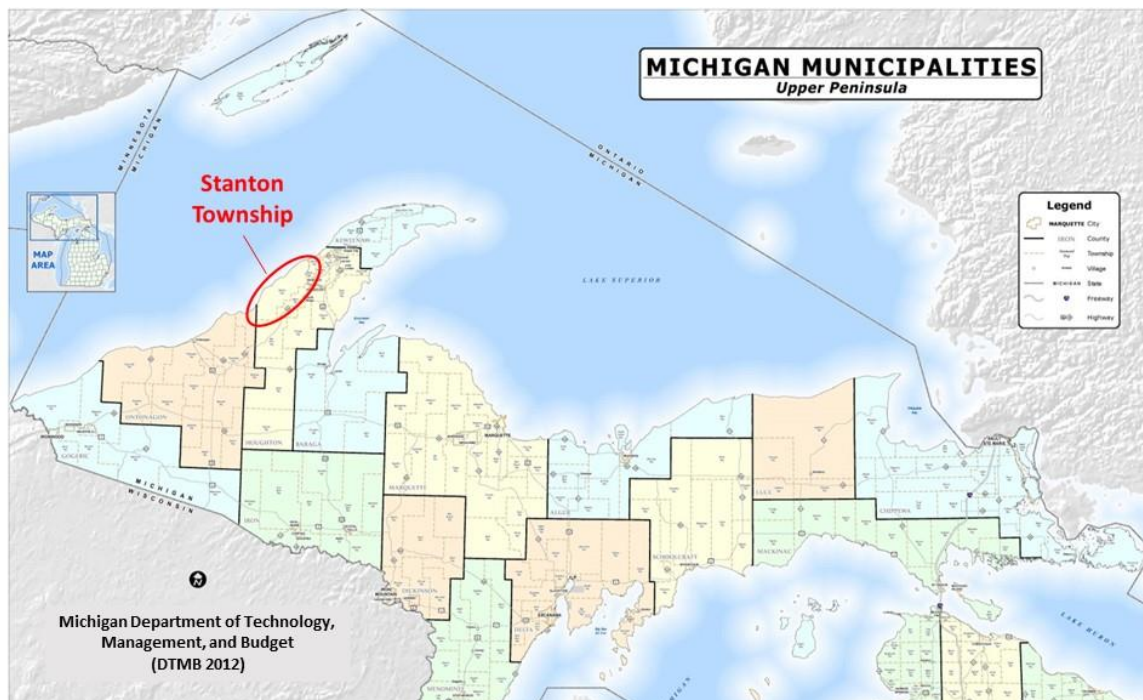
## Section 1.0 - Community Description

In 2022, the Stanton Township Board approved the preparation of a 5-Year Recreation Plan for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The previous plan expired in 2014, and is no longer an adequate representation of current conditions and issues associated with the Township's recreation properties and facilities. Therefore, all aspects of community recreation need to be re-assessed by the Township.

In order to professionally address this need, the Township Board approved a survey of Township residents and non-resident property owners, which was completed in 2023. The results of the community recreation survey are discussed further within this plan, and are the foundation of the Township's *Goals and Objectives*, and *Action Program*. The following information describes the current physical and social-economic conditions of Stanton Township.

### General Description

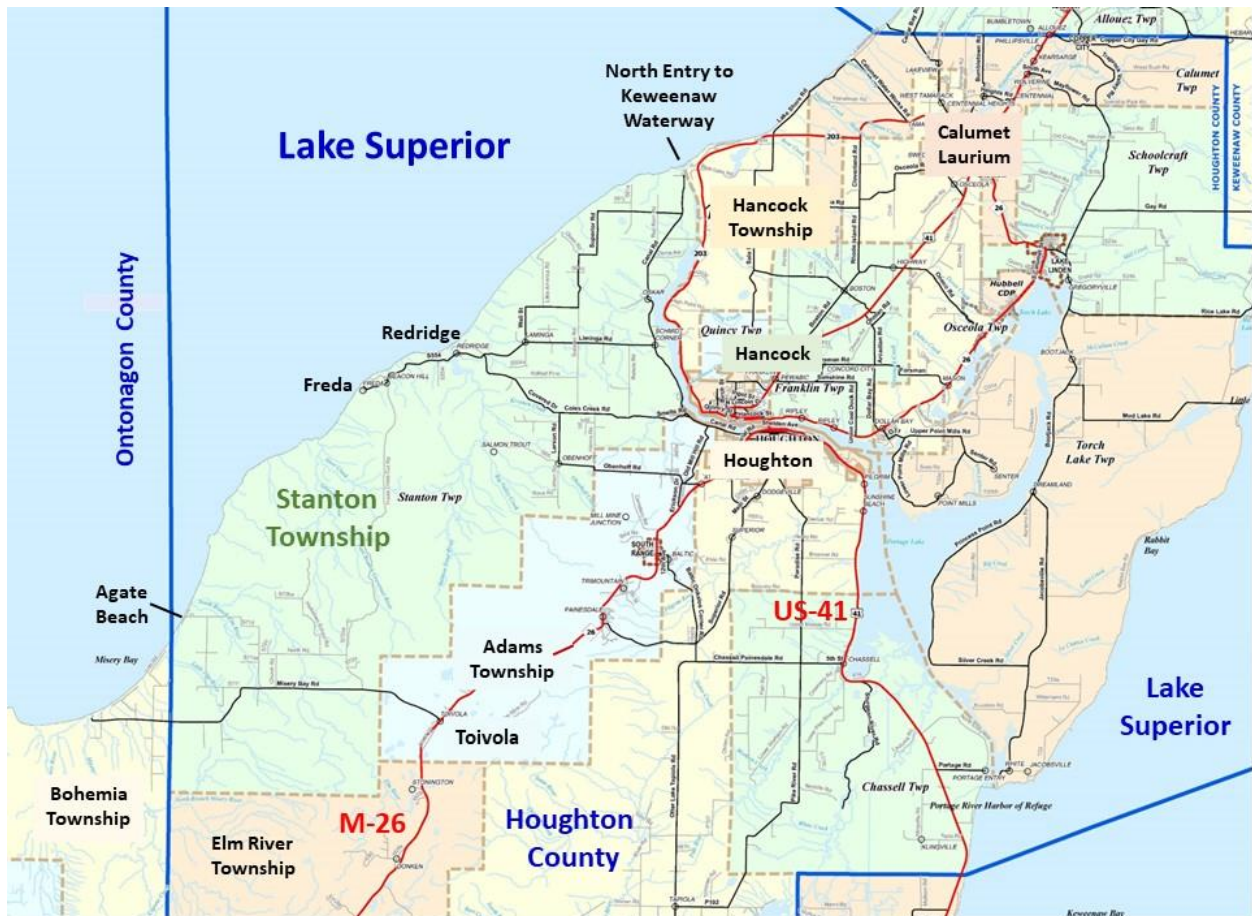
Stanton Township is a local unit of government within Houghton County, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (**Figure 1**). It was named for John Stanton, a prominent civil engineer, copper mining entrepreneur, and former co-founder and director of the Copper Range Company ([www.mininghalloffame.org/hall-of-fame/john-stanton](http://www.mininghalloffame.org/hall-of-fame/john-stanton)). The Township Hall is located on the (Houghton) Canal Road, near its junction with the Liminga – Freda Road. Township business meetings are also held occasionally at the Toivola Recreation Center or the Agate Beach Park.



**Figure 1.** Location of Stanton Township, Houghton County, Upper Peninsula, Michigan.

The entire northerly boundary of the Township is the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) along the shoreline of Lake Superior (**Figure 2**). The official elevation for the OHWM on Lake Superior is 602.6 feet above sea level (Michigan EGLE 2023a). Great Lakes bottomlands (or submerged lands) lakeward of the OHWM “are held in trust by the State of Michigan for use and enjoyment by its citizens. The State, as the owner and trustee, has a perpetual responsibility to the public to manage these bottomlands and waters for the prevention of pollution, for the protection of the natural resources and to maintain the public's rights of hunting, fishing, navigation, commerce, etc.” (Michigan EGLE 2023b).

The easterly boundary is along the Keweenaw Waterway (also called the Portage Canal) and Adams Township. The southerly boundary is adjacent to the Township of Elm River, and Bohemia Township in Ontonagon County (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2.** Boundaries of Stanton Township within Houghton County, Michigan. (Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget 2017)

The Township land area is 122.4 square miles (78,336 acres) and features about 21.5 miles of Lake Superior shoreline and 8.3 miles of shoreline along the Keweenaw Waterway (Google Earth Pro 2023). The Township land and water area is 123.6 square miles or 79,104 acres. Therefore, only 1% (1.2 square miles or 768 acres) of total land and water area is comprised of inland lakes and streams.

Based on a total population estimate of 1,383 persons from the 2020 U.S. Census, the Township has an overall population density of 11.3 people per square mile. (The overall population density of the State of Michigan is 178 people per square mile.) The primary concentrations of population are along the Houghton Canal Road; within the Liminga area and lakeshore communities of Redridge, Beacon Hill, and Freda; and within the Misery Bay - Agate Beach area, west of the small village of Toivola. The nearest incorporated cities are Houghton and Hancock.

The commute from most locations within Stanton Township requires about 30 – 45 minutes to access work, shopping, and entertainment venues in Houghton and Hancock. Main highway links to population centers south of the Keweenaw Peninsular are M-26 towards Wisconsin and Minnesota, and US-41 to the city of Marquette, and the lower peninsula of Michigan.

## Geology

The western Upper Peninsula of Michigan consists of ancient igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks of Precambrian age and is part of the Canadian Shield, which has rocks estimated to be at least 3.5 billion years old. The igneous rocks are hard, crystalline, resistant to erosion, and are largely made up of granite, basaltic, and metamorphic rocks (i.e., rocks that have been changed through heat and pressure). The higher areas of the western Upper Peninsula are the remnants of ancient peaks that have been worn down over millions of years by the erosive action of wind, water, and moving ice. (Schaetzl 2005a).

The bedrock geology of Stanton Township was classified by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources as *Freda Sandstone* (MDNR 1999; Reed and Daniels 1997). It is a sedimentary formation comprised of sandstones and mudstones from the Middle Proterozoic, and is associated with the Mid-Continent Rift system that forms the Lake Superior basin. The sandstone is typically red, fine-to-medium-grained, with prominent white streaks and blotches. Structurally, the sandstone dips to the north at a low angle and has two distinct joint sets. (Vitton, personal communication 2023).

Regionally, the Freda Sandstone is part of the Oronto Group of northern Michigan and Wisconsin, including the Copper Harbor Conglomerate and the Nonesuch Formation, with the Freda Sandstone lying conformably between these two formations. The contact between the Freda and the Copper Harbor formations is distinct, while the contact between the Freda and Nonesuch Formations is gradational in character. (Vitton, personal communication 2023).

The bedrock of Stanton Township is covered with an uneven blanket of unconsolidated material deposited during glacial-interglacial periods that ended about 9,000 years ago. This material consists of a mixture of sand, gravel, clay, and boulders called *glacial drift* (WUPPDR 2010:11). The quaternary geology of Stanton Township was classified by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources as primarily (1) *course-textured glacial till* in the northeast half of the Township, and (2) *lacustrine clay and silt* in the southwest half of the Township (Farrand and Bell 1982). Quaternary geology is a branch of geology that studies change on earth's surfaces during the glacial-interglacial periods (commonly called the ice age) to present.

The geology of the "copper country" was a crucial factor in the social-economic development of the counties and townships comprising the Keweenaw Peninsula. Additional information on the geology of Stanton Township is available from:

Keweenaw Geoheritage ([www.geo.mtu.edu/KeweenawGeoheritage](http://www.geo.mtu.edu/KeweenawGeoheritage))

Michigan Geological Survey (<https://wmich.edu/geologysurvey>)

U.S. Geological Survey (<https://mrdata.usgs.gov/geology/state/state.php?state=MI>).

### Forests and Forestry

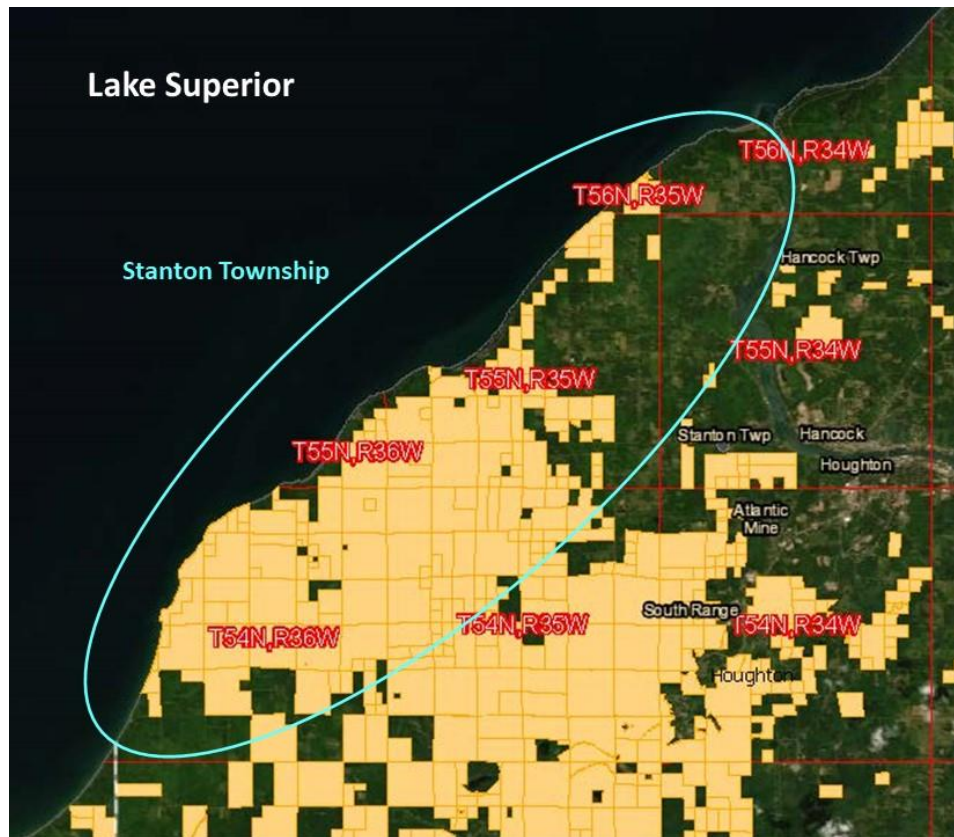
*Northern Hardwoods* are the predominant forest cover in Stanton Township and Houghton County. Sugar maple, red maple, hemlock, basswood and yellow birch are the most common trees in Michigan's northern hardwood forest. Typical secondary species are beech, black cherry, quaking aspen and white ash (MSU Extension 2014). The general forest type of this area prior to European settlement can be characterized as a Laurentian Mixed Forest, composed primarily of Maple – Birch – Hemlock (Schaetzl 2005b).

Northern hardwood forests occupy the better upland soils, and also occur in poorer quality on lighter soils. The large areas of sandy plains found in many parts of the Upper Peninsula mostly support pines. Spruce, balsam, cedar, and tamarack (larch), the swamp conifers, generally occupy the poorly drained sites, while extensive areas of aspen occur throughout, principally on burned-over lands. (Schaetzl 2005b). Wildlife communities of Stanton Township are typical for northern hardwoods and other forest types of the upper Great Lakes region (Benyus et al. 1992).

In Michigan, the term northern hardwood forest specifically applies to stands dominated by sugar maple. High quality logs, especially sugar maple, command some of the highest prices in the region. Logs that have birds-eye or curly grain patterns are particularly valuable. Low quality material makes excellent pulp for papermaking and energy where markets are available (MSU Extension 2014).

Logging continues to be an important economic activity in Stanton Township, and about 57% of the Township land and water area is currently owned by forest product companies and enrolled in the Michigan Commercial Forest Act (CFA). There are 253 active CFA enrollees in Stanton Township totaling 45,298 acres (Maidlow, personal communication, 2022). This equals about 2% of all CFA lands in Michigan, which total 2.2 million acres. CFA lands are concentrated in the southwestern half of the Township (i.e., west half of T55N, R35W; T55N, R36W; T54N, R35W; and T54N, R36W) (**Figure 3**). Forest product companies with the largest acreages of land holdings in Stanton Township are currently Lake Superior Timberlands, LLC; Verdant Timber Michigan, LLC; Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, LLC; and Sage Timber Michigan, LLC (Willis, personal communication 2023).

The CFA provides a property tax incentive to private landowners “to retain and manage their forestland for long-term timber production and to provide foot access to the public for hunting, trapping, and fishing. Any other activities require landowner permission. CFA lands are not posted or signed as commercial forests and may be fenced and/or gated. The presence of a fence or gate does *not* prohibit public access by foot to these lands for fishing or hunting. However, the owner may restrict public access during periods of logging to ensure public safety” (Michigan DNR 2023).



**Figure 3.** Commercial Forest Lands enrolled in the Michigan Commercial Forest Act (yellow). Source: MDNR (2023)



In 2021, Stanton Township approved the *Forest Stewardship Plan* prepared by Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. of Pelkie, Michigan for five parcels of Township lands (Green Timber, Inc. 2021). The parcels total 481 acres and included the Agate Beach Property, Fire Hall Property, Ball Field Property, North Canal Property (north and south), and the Townhall Property. In terms of landowner goals and objectives, Stanton Township “placed a high priority on publicly-accessible recreation and education through the implementation of exemplary forest management practices” (Green Timber, Inc. 2021:18).

## Land Use

The Keweenaw Peninsula has been a source of copper as well as the hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds of ancient peoples for thousands of years. New research suggests that “the Old Copper Culture emerged at least 9,500 years ago, and peaked between 7,000 and 5,000 years ago, when the evidence suggests copper use began to decline” (*Archaeology* 2021). The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) maintains the records of archaeological sites that date prior to and after contact between Native Americans and European peoples. Currently, there are several pre-contact and post-contact sites that have been recorded within Stanton Township (Surface-Evans, personal communication 2023). However, there also appears to be few professional archaeological surveys completed with the Township.

The Ojibwa peoples migrated to the upper Great Lakes region from the North American east coast during the 1500s – 1600s, while the region was being explored by France and other European nations (Cleland 1992). Monette (1994:5) mentions “when people arrived in Redridge in 1888, there were five wigwams on the west bank of the Salmon-Trout River, which belonged to members of the Chippewa [Ojibwa] Tribe. These people were relocated some years later to the reservation near L’Anse.” However, the western Upper Peninsula (including Stanton Township) is located within the ceded territory of the U.S. Treaty of Washington (1842) with Ojibwa bands. Federally recognized tribal members retain the rights of hunting, fishing, and gathering on tribally-owned and public lands within this ceded territory (GLIFWC 2023).

Although there are historical accounts of fur trapping and trading in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan during the later 1600s through 1800s, European settlement of the Keweenaw Peninsula began in earnest with the “copper boom” of the mid-1800s (Murdock 1976). Stanton Township and the Stanton Township School Board were subsequently established in 1902. That year also marked the completion of the Redridge Steel Dam and a road connecting the villages of Redridge and Freda (Koski 2011). These projects were associated with the construction and operation of five copper stamp mills and associated “company towns” along the western shore of Lake Superior during the 1890s through the mid-1900s. The stamp mills processed copper ore from the South Range of the Keweenaw mining district, and provided employment for many Stanton Township residents during the first half of the 20th century. The primary historic copper mines of the South Range were located in what is now Adams Township, adjoining Stanton Township to the southeast.

Other prevalent economic activities in Stanton Township during the “copper era” included logging and agriculture. Forests and commercial forestry were summarized in the prior section. Most historic agricultural activity was in support of industrial-scale copper production in the Keweenaw mining district. However, many of the farms along the Keweenaw Waterway (Houghton Canal Road) and within the Liminga and Misery Bay - Agate Beach areas of Stanton Township went out of production with the end of the copper era in the 1960s. The remaining farm fields are now devoted primarily to hay production with some subsistence and small-scale animal production.

With the exception of Markham’s Marina and Schmidt’s Corner Bar & Grill on Canal Road, a small automotive repair shop in Liminga, and a couple small farms selling produce, there are no “storefront” retail businesses within Stanton Township. However, there is an unknown number of home-based businesses or consulting services within the Township. In this regard, the Township can be characterized primarily as a residential extension of the cities of Houghton and Hancock (i.e., “bedroom community”) as well as a retirement location for those who enjoy rural and wildland settings. Over half of the resident population are aged 55 or older, and 34.1% are aged 65 or older.

The current and projected land use within Houghton County was originally mapped by the Houghton County Road Commission, based on data from the former GEM Center for Science and Environmental Outreach at Michigan Technological University. This land use map was revised by UP Engineers & Architects, Inc. of Houghton, Michigan in 2006, and by the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR 2012). Projected land use in Stanton Township is portrayed in **Figure 4**. A comprehensive economic development strategy for Houghton County was prepared by WUPPDR in 2021.

The following publications provide additional historical background on Stanton Township:

*Range of Opportunity: A Historic Study of the Copper Range Company*. Richard A. Fields. 1997. Book Concern Printers, Hancock, MI.

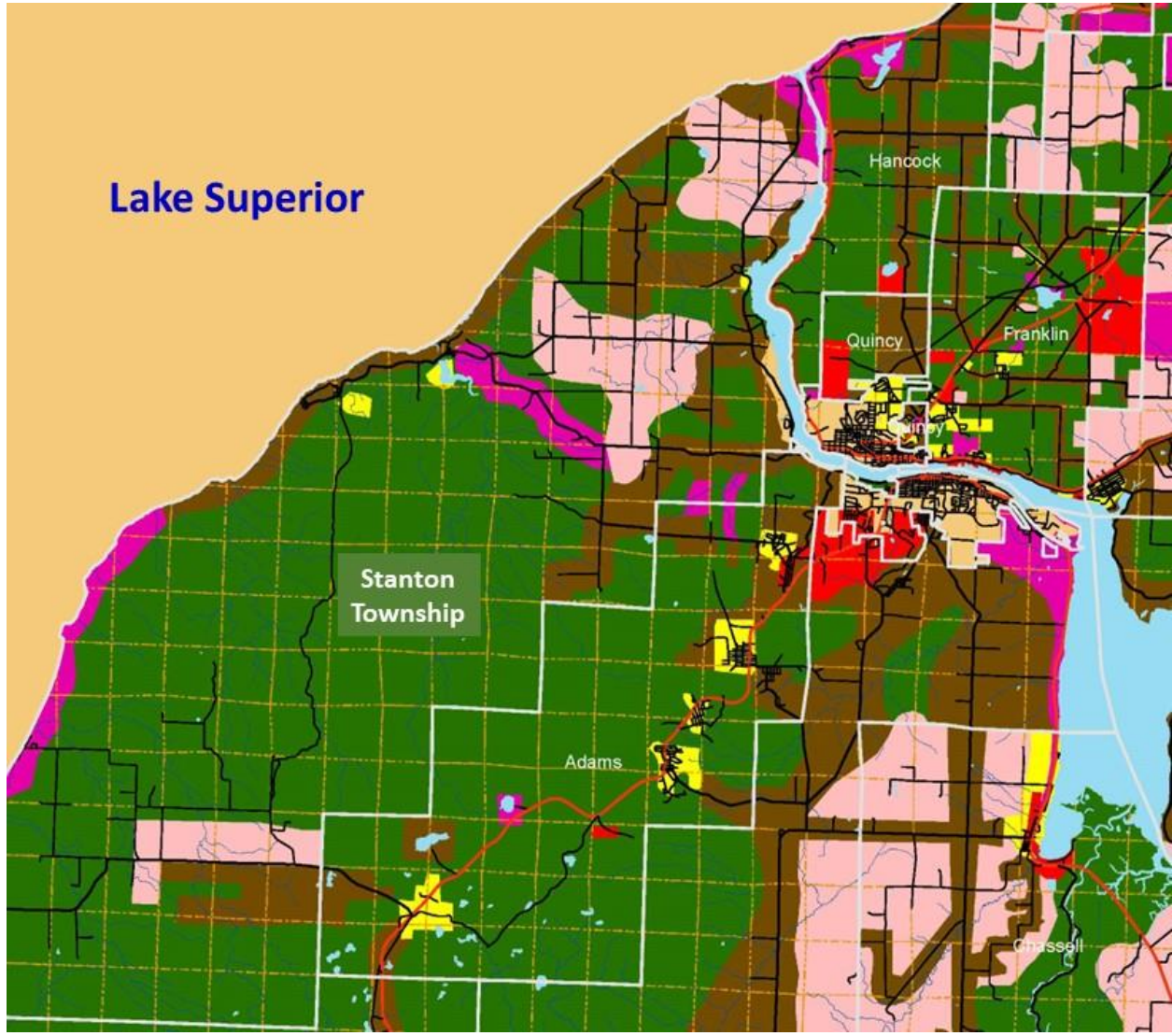
*Freda, Michigan: End of the Road*. Clarence Monette. 1989. Greenlee Printing, Calumet, MI.

*Redridge and Its Steel Dam*. Clarence Monette. 1992. Greenlee Printing Co., Calumet, MI.

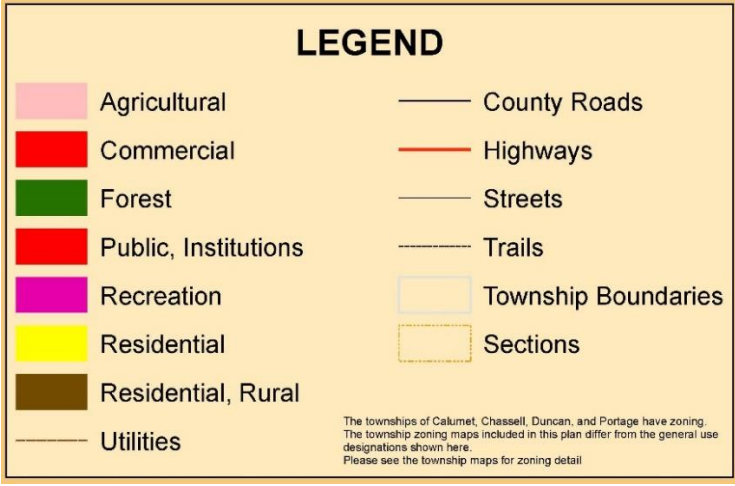
*Tall Timber Tales*. Jingo Viitala Vachon. 1973. L’Anse Sentinel, L’anse, MI.

*Finnish Fibles: Sketches and Stories*. Jingo Viitala Vachon. 1979. L’Anse Sentinel, L’anse, MI.

In addition, the Michigan Technological University (MTU) Archives maintain document and photo collections associated with copper mining and milling on the South Range, including the photographic collection of William F. Brinkman, formerly of Redridge ([www.mtu.edu/library/archives/collections](http://www.mtu.edu/library/archives/collections)). The Copper Range Historical Museum in South Range, MI also maintains a collection of artifacts, documents and photos (<https://pasty.com/crhm>).



**Figure 4:** Projected Land Use in Stanton Township (WUPPDR 2012).



## Physiographic Region

The western Upper Peninsula is classified as *Superior Bedrock Uplands*, one of ten major physiographic regions of Michigan (Schaetzl et al. 2013). Stanton Township is located within a subdivision of this region, termed *Lake Superior Incised Plain*, which runs from approximately the North Entry of the Keweenaw Waterway to the Porcupine Mountains (**Figure 5**).

General characteristics of the Lake Superior Incised Plain include (Schaetzl et al. 2013):

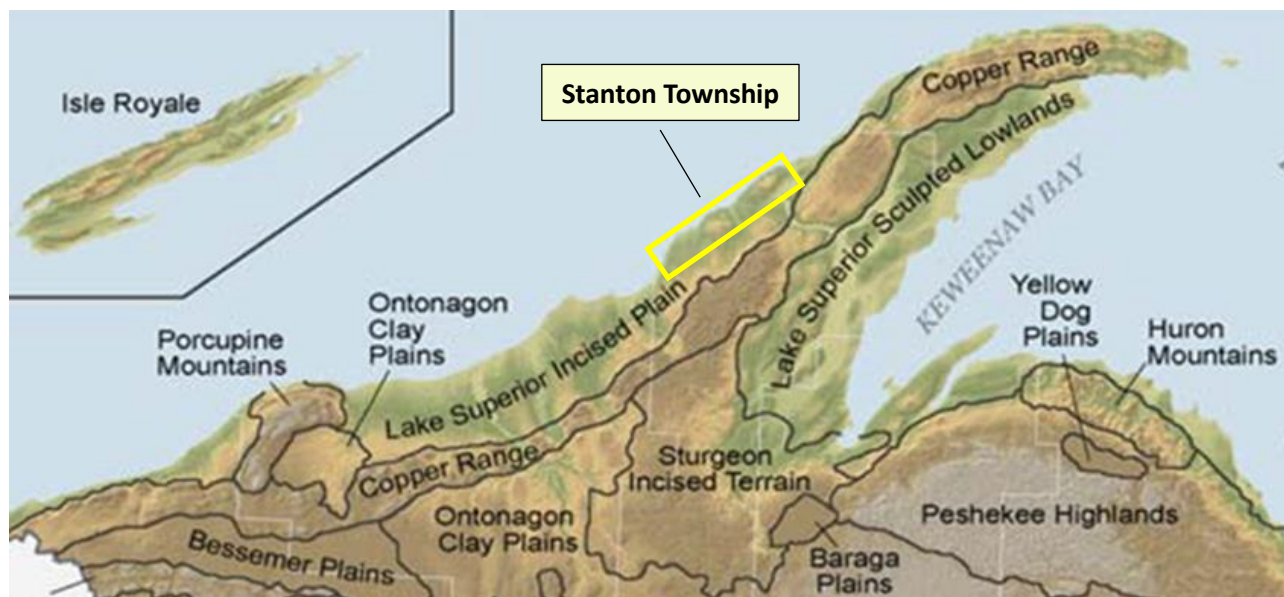
*Physiography/Relief:* High elevation, largely bedrock-controlled landscapes that have been modified by glacial scour and deposition, with areas of high hills and low mountains formed on bedrock. Low-moderate relief plain, some of which was associated with Glacial Lake Duluth, and generally sloping toward Lake Superior. In some areas, small, deep stream valleys exist, draining to Lake Superior, parallel to each other.

*Soil/Sediments:* Upland soils are moderately well to somewhat poorly drained silt loams, loams and fine sandy loams. Parent materials are silty-sandy.

*Hydrology:* Series of parallel streams draining to Lake Superior; heavy snow in winter. Few or no inland lakes.

*Pre-settlement vegetation:* Sugar maple-hemlock-yellow birch forest.

*Land use:* Forest; small patches of open land



**Figure 5.** Location of Stanton Township in the *Lake Superior Incised Plain* Physiographic Region.

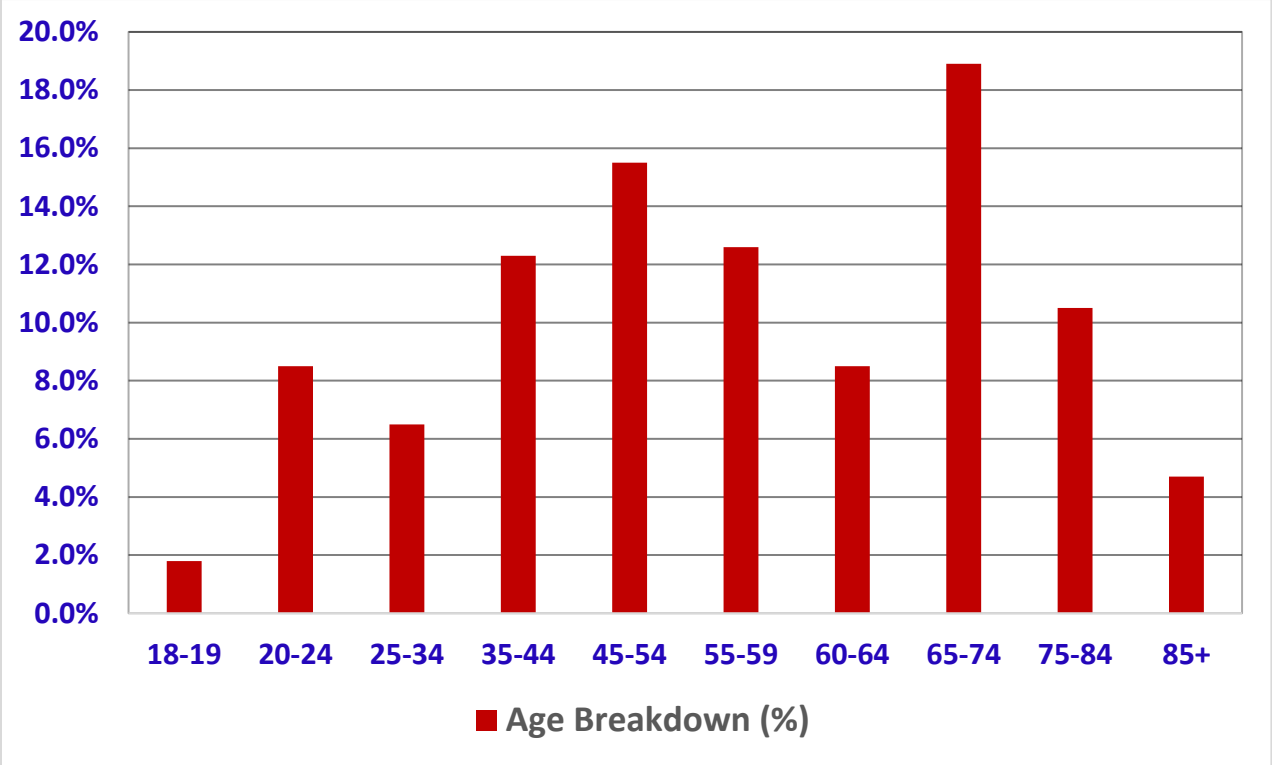
Physiographic regions can be considered a means of delineating the earth's landforms, based on one or more scientific criteria. Several criteria were used in delineating the boundaries of Michigan's physiographic regions, including topography and local relief, bedrock and quaternary geology, landscape fabric, sediment types, soils, water table, land cover and use. (Schaetzl et al. 2013).

### Social-Economic Profile

The following social-economic profile for Stanton Township was prepared from final baseline data of the 2020 U.S. Census:

- Total population of 1,383 ± 234 persons (i.e., range of 1,149 - 1,617 persons)
- Township population has remained stable for over a decade, based on a population estimate of 1,338 in 2008 by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- The population 15 years and older was estimated at 1,096 ± 153 persons (i.e., range of 943 - 1,249 persons)
- The voting age population 18 years and older was estimated at 1,050 ± 146 persons
- An estimated 76.6% of the Township's total population is 18 years of age or older, and 23.4% are under the age of 18 (**Figure 6**). The median age is 49 ± 8.7 years of age.
- An estimated 55.2% of the resident population are age 55 or older, and 34.1% are age 65 or older (**Figure 6**). Only 18.7% of Michigan residents are age 65 or older.
- Females comprise about 52% of the population, and males comprise about 48%
- About 59% of the total population are married
- Total number of households is 529 ± 77 with an average household size of 2.6
- Over half of households (52.9%) contain one or more persons aged 60 or older
- Total number of families is 375 ± 64 with an average family size of 3.1
- 95.1% of people attained a high school diploma or greater; 29.7% attained a college undergraduate degree or higher
- 14.6% of the population has veteran's status, more than double the rate for the State of Michigan
- Stanton Township has the largest percentage of people of Finnish heritage in the United States (52.5%)
- People 25 years and older have median earnings of about \$44,107 ± 8,233.

- 5.9% of people are below the poverty line (lower rate than Houghton County and the State of Michigan)
- Nearly all housing is owner-occupied (95.5%); rental units comprise only 4.5% of housing
- 90% of housing are single unit structures
- Travel time to work, shopping, and entertainment venues in Houghton and Hancock is about 30 – 45 minutes.



**Figure 6.** Age Profile of Stanton Township Residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2020)

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## Section 2.0 - Administrative Structure and Budget

Stanton Township was officially created in 1903 by Act No. 287 of the Michigan Legislature. This Local Act “legalized the action of the [Houghton County] board of supervisors in detaching certain lands from the township of Hancock in said county, and organizing the same into a new township, known as the township of Stanton.” It is considered a *general* township (i.e., it is *not* a charter township under Michigan Law).

The Stanton Township Board is responsible for policy and management of recreation properties and facilities owned by Stanton Township. The Township Board has the authority to commit funds for parks and recreation, accept grants, and purchase land on behalf of the community. It also has an obligation to prepare annual and projected budgets for operations, maintenance, capital improvements and recreation programming.

The E. B. Holman Elementary and Middle School is responsible for recreation properties, facilities and equipment located on its premises in the Liminga Area, just off the Freda Road (<https://www.stpsd.us>). Most of these students continue their education at Houghton High School or Jeffers High School in Painesdale (Adams Township). The focus of extracurricular recreation activities at the E.B. Holman School is athletics. There are no formal programs in outdoor and environmental learning.

The Stanton Township Board is composed of five locally-elected members (**Figure 1**). The members include the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, and two Trustees. The term of office for Board members is 4 years. Stanton Township’s planning, management, and operational responsibilities are carried out by several *less-than-full-time* employees and volunteers. The Township does *not* have a full-time employee on its payroll.

*Less-than-full-time* employees associated with Stanton Township’s recreation properties and facilities include caretakers for the North Canal Park and Agate Beach Park, and a rink manager for the Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome) (**Figure 1**). Volunteers maintain the Stanton Ballfield, located near the E.B. Holman School off Freda Road, the Toivola Recreation Center on the Misery Bay Road, and other locations as needed.

In the past, the Township Board approved *ad hoc* citizen committees for the Agate Beach Park and Redridge Dam Site. The Agate Beach Committee appoints a director that coordinates with the Township Board on issues affecting local residents and visitors to the Park, and associated Township property and facilities. The Redridge Dam Committee has focused on resolving several issues associated with the historic dams, and potential development of the site as a “community heritage park” (Redridge Dams Study Group 2009).

The Road Committee provides advice to the Township Board regarding construction, repair, and maintenance of local roads, including the entry roads to the North Canal Park, Agate Beach Park, and other recreation-related properties. However, the Houghton County Road Commission has the primary authority for construction, repair, and maintenance of public roads and bridges in Stanton Township. “Townships do not have jurisdiction over roads and do not receive any funding directly from the state. Instead, county road commissions maintain roads in townships with road commission funds” ([www.houghtoncountyroads.org](http://www.houghtoncountyroads.org)).

The Stanton Township Board is considering the creation of a *Park and Recreation Committee*. This type of advisory group would be beneficial in evaluating and developing collaborations and more formal partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies as well as nonprofit organizations and private businesses to enhance recreational opportunities in Stanton Township. As an example, the Township Board is exploring partnerships with private entities to maintain and operate the North Canal Park Campground and other services and amenities at the Park. The Township Board is also exploring partnerships with several agencies and organizations on historic preservation of the Redridge Dams, protection of the stream fishery, and recreational development of the Redridge Dams Site.

Currently, the Township does *not* have formal partnerships with outside organizations for the planning, maintenance, and operation of its recreation properties and facilities. However, there are several reasons for the Township to collaborate with Houghton County, cities of Houghton and Hancock, Adams Township, and Bohemia Township (Ontonagon County). In particular, it appears that a relatively large percentage of residents from Houghton/Hancock and adjoining Townships visit Stanton recreation properties and facilities. There is also a deep and extensive historical connection between Adams and Stanton Township related to copper mining and milling, and logging.

In addition to its responsibilities for parks and recreation, Stanton Township maintains two cemeteries and a volunteer fire department. One of the cemeteries is located in the Liminga Area near Redridge, and the other on the Misery Bay Road near Toivola. The Stanton Township Volunteer Fire Department is organized into two precincts. The Liminga Fire Department operates out of its firehall located just off the Canal Road at Schmidt's Corner, and a small fire station at Redridge ([www.limingafire.org](http://www.limingafire.org)). The firehall for the Toivola Fire Department is located next to the Toivola Recreation Center, on the Misery Bay Rd. ([www.facebook.com/ToivolaVFD](http://www.facebook.com/ToivolaVFD)). Expenses for the operation of Township cemeteries are budgeted separately from parks and recreation-related expenditures. The Stanton Township Volunteer Fire Department funds its operations through several sources, including grants, loans, donations, and reimbursements.

*Reference Cited:* Redridge Dams Study Group. 2009. Final Report of the Redridge Dams Study Group. Stanton Township, Michigan.



**Figure 1.** Stanton Township Organizational Chart for Recreation Properties and Facilities

Stanton Township Annual Budget

Stanton Township collected **\$350,365** in revenues during April 2022 – March 2023. State revenue-sharing and property taxes were the primary sources of revenue to fund all operations of the Township (**Table 1**). State revenue-sharing comprised about 56% of Township revenues, followed by property taxes (32%), camping fees from Agate Beach Park (5%), and Commercial Forest Act (CFA) revenue (3%). The total dollar amount of fees collected at Agate Beach Park was **\$17,801**.

Park and recreation-related expenditures totaled **\$47,425** during April 2022 - March 2023 (**Table 1**). This is 13.5% of the total revenues collected by Stanton Township during this 12-month time period. Salaries comprised about 33.0% of the total expenditures, followed by Repairs and Maintenance (31.0%), Utilities (11.5%), Park Sanitation and Trash (9.5%), Capital Outlays (8.0%), Operating Supplies (4.0%), and Plowing and Miscellaneous (3.0%).

**Table 1.0** Summary of Stanton Township Revenues and Park and Recreation-Related Expenses.  
Source: Income Statement, April 2022 – March 2023

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**REVENUES (INCOME)**

Property Taxes:	\$ 112,108	
Licenses and Permits:	3,071	
Charges and Misc. Revenues		
Camping Fees – Agate Beach Park:	17,801	
CFA Revenue:	9,540	
Misc. Revenue:	3,723	
Charges for Services	2,780	(\$1,675 for cemetery services)
Interest and Dividends	4,551	
<b>Revenue Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$ 153,574</b>	
State Revenue-Sharing:	\$ 196,807	
Donations:	255	
<b>Total Revenues:</b>	<b>\$ 350,635</b>	

**PARK & RECREATION-RELATED EXPENSES**

Salaries:	\$ 15,568	(Caretakers for Agate Beach Park, North Canal Park, and the Kenner Dome; labor for Agate Beach Park fee collection and repairs)
Repairs and Maintenance:	14,732	
Utilities:	5,486	
Park Sanitation / Trash:	4,544	
Capital Outlays:	3,633	
Operating Supplies:	1,878	
Plowing and Misc.:	1,585	
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 47,425</b>	
<b>Percent of Total Revenues:</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	

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## Section 3.0 - Recreation Inventory

Stanton Township owns and manages two parks on Lake Superior featuring sand beaches; a small memorial park in Freda, overlooking Lake Superior and the ruins of the Champion copper mill; a historical site on the Salmon-Trout River that is listed in the National Register of Historical Places; two all-season recreation centers featuring ice rinks for skating and hockey; a ball field that hosts community baseball games; and a modern boat launch on the Keweenaw Waterway, near North Canal Park (Figure 1). The Township also owns and maintains an office building on Canal Road; two firehalls (Canal Rd and Misery Bay Rd.) and a small fire station in Redridge; and two cemeteries (one near Redridge, the other on the Misery Bay Rd.).

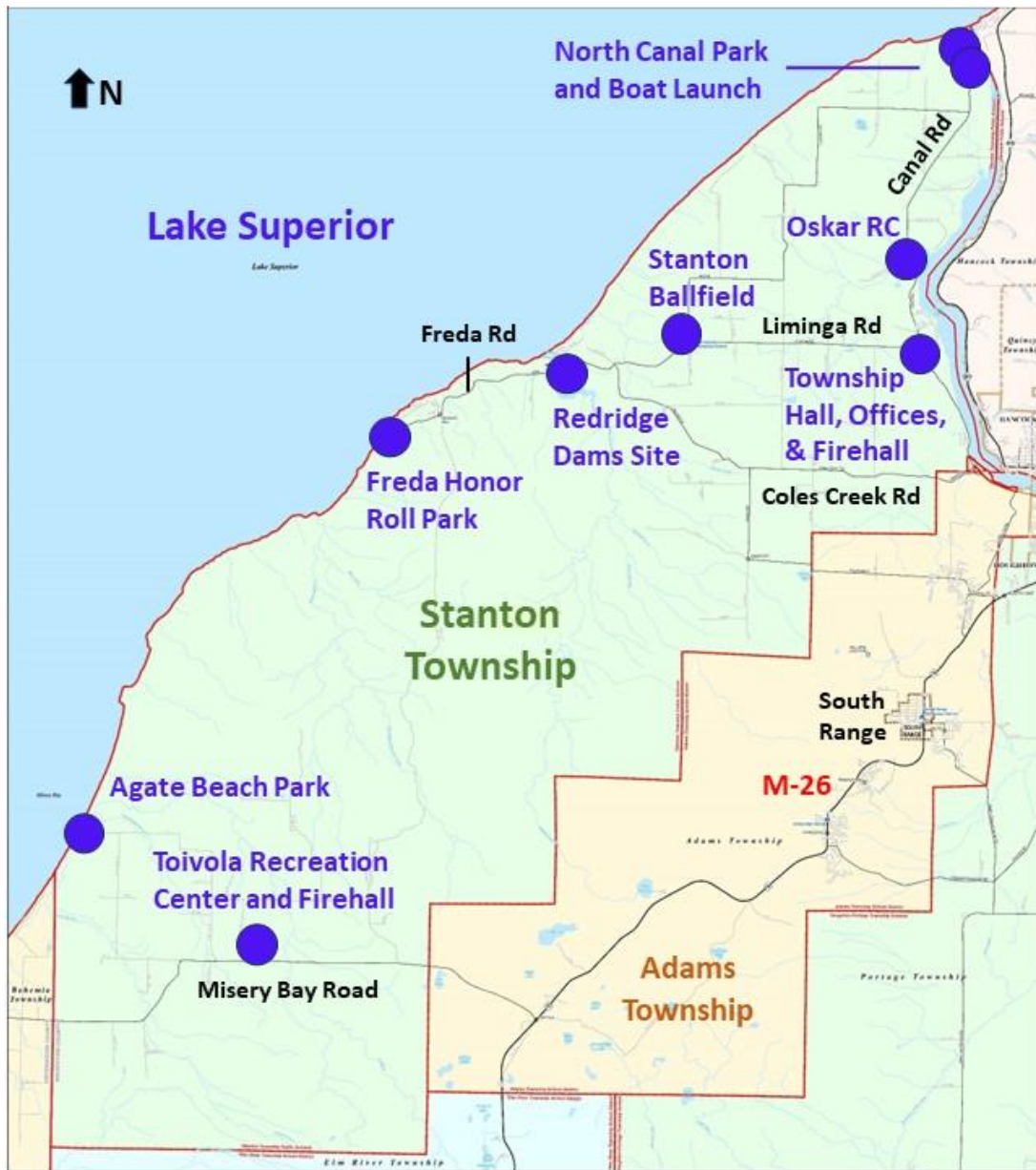


Figure 1. Stanton Township-owned park and recreation properties, Houghton County, MI.

In order to conduct the inventory, Stanton Township provided maps of registered land parcels that include the Township recreation properties of interest, and other surrounding properties. Google Earth Pro was also used to visualize the Township properties in relation to regional topography, road networks, and population centers. Site visits were made to each of the Township's recreation properties during summer 2022 through spring 2023. The purpose was to observe and record the general condition of Township properties and facilities over a full calendar year. These recreation properties (in alphabetic order) are described in more detail in the following pages:

### Agate Beach Parcel

**General Description:** This 247-acre parcel of land includes the Agate Beach Park, and is primarily forested lands managed by Stanton Township under a *Forest Stewardship Plan* (Green Timber, Inc. 2021) (**Figures 2 - 3**).

**Primary Service Area:** Rural areas of Toivola, and the Misery Bay - Agate Beach Area. The park is also receiving relatively large numbers of summer visitors from Houghton County and several states other than Michigan.

**Amenities:** The lakeshore park features a white sand beach that extends southwest for about .3 miles to the Little Elm River mouth (**Figure 4 - 5**). In addition, visitors can walk the sandy beaches of Misery Bay for several miles northeast and southwest of the Agate Beach Park. Common beach activities during the spring – fall seasons are picnicking, swimming and rock-collecting. The park has also hosted an annual *Agate Beach Jamboree* of folk music.

**Facilities:** Currently, the park provides 25 primitive campsites, most with a level area for tenting or small campers, a picnic table, and a fire ring (**Figure 6**). Drinking water is available from a well and manual pump. Overnight camping is \$20/per site, paid on an honor basis. The park also includes a large playground area, outdoor pavilion, two vault toilets, eight handicap parking places, and two storage buildings (**Figure 7**). The smaller building formerly housed a concession stand; the larger "lodge" building has a banquet and meeting room, and kitchen. These buildings have not been in regular use for several years, and are currently in disrepair.

**Past Projects:** In 2013, The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) awarded a grant of \$45,000 to Stanton Township for Agate Beach Park improvements "to include a pavilion, improve existing access road to pavilion, ADA and regular parking areas, ADA picnic tables, and vegetation planting for erosion control." Construction of the lodge building was funded, in part, by the MDNR Land & Water Conservation Fund several decades ago. A Master Plan for Agate Beach Park was prepared and submitted by Hitch, Inc. in 2008 to the former Stanton Township Recreation Committee. The project was funded in part by the Michigan Coastal Management Program. The plan recommended extensive development of the Park to include 23 tent sites, 37 modern RV sites, a toilet and shower building, and improvements

to the existing kitchen, lodge, and concrete boat ramp. However, the Master Plan was “tabled” by the Stanton Township Board, after being rejected by community members in the Toivola - Misery Bay - Agate Beach areas.



**Figure 2.** Agate Beach Park area, within a 247-acre parcel of coastal forest.

**Figure 3.**  
**Agate Beach Parcel**

Section 31, T54N, R36W

**Property #131-005-00**

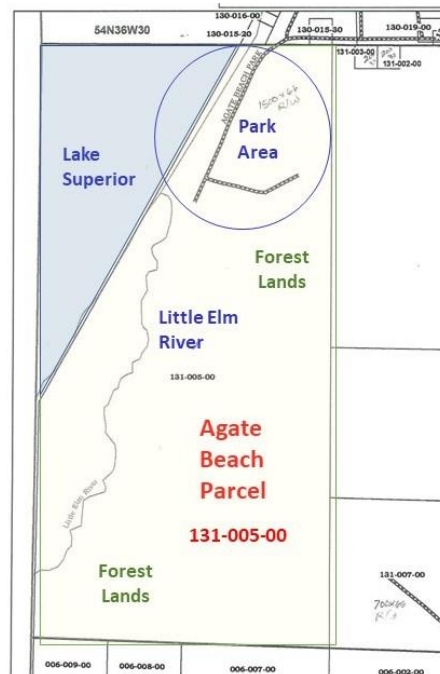
247 Acres

Special Features:

Agate Beach Township Park

Little Elm River

Lake Superior Shorelands





**Figure 4.** Agate Beach, looking northeast from the Park.



**Figure 5.** Agate Beach, looking southwest from the Park.





**Figure 6**  
**Agate Beach Park**  
Primitive Camping Sites Near Lake Superior



**Figure 7**  
**Agate Beach Park**  
Facilities including "Lodge" Building, Concession Stand, Pavilion, Vault Toilets, Handicap Parking, and a Playground

## Important Issues:

**Boat Launch:** In the recent past, the Agate Beach boat launch (concrete ramp) provided direct access to Lake Superior by local residents and other visitors aboard small watercraft, to engage in recreational fishing and sight-seeing. The boat launch has served Stanton Township well up to about 4 - 5 years ago, when it began deteriorating due to age and high-water levels in Lake Superior. The water levels have receded over the past few years; however, the old launch ramp is now considered a safety hazard to boaters, swimmers, and waders (**Figure 8**).

*Note:* The MDNR maintains a boat launch site on the Misery River in Bohemia Township, Ontonagon County. The boat launch site is 5.0 miles by road from the junction of the Misery Bay Road with the Agate Beach Road, and 8.5 miles from Agate Beach Park (**Figure 9**). However, anecdotal information from local residents indicate that the Misery Bay boat launch is often unusable due to limited depth at the river mouth from sand migration. In addition, overnight camping is not allowed at this MDNR launch site.



**Figure 8.** Agate Beach Boat Launch (currently in disrepair). Looking northeast.

The Stanton Township Board believes that a project to renovate the boat launch (and possibly install a docking system) would be well-received by residents of Houghton and Ontonagon Counties as well as an increasing number of non-resident visitors to the Agate Beach

Park. In 2022, over 70% of registered campers resided in locations other than Houghton County, including 18 other states. Over 40% of campers were out-of-state residents (Mattila, personal communication, 2023). Most respondents in close proximity to Agate Beach Township Park selected “Renovation of the boat launch” as the most important need for the Park, in a recent community recreation survey (Stanton Township 2023).

In addition, the Fisheries Biologist of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Natural Resources Department expressed a need for a boat launch along this stretch of Lake Superior coastline (Mensch, personal communication, 2022). Such a launch would be beneficial in conducting nearshore fisheries research, in collaboration with the MDNR and USFWS.

In response to this issue, the Stanton Township Board submitted a MDNR SPARK Grant proposal in December 2022, and re-submitted an updated proposal in June 2023 for the renovation of the Agate Beach Boat Launch. The design includes a kayak launch system.



Figure 9. Road Access to Agate Beach Park and the Misery River

**Protection of Shorelands:** Stanton Township has three *High Risk Erosion Areas* (HREAs) along its Lake Superior shorelands (**Figure 10**). Two areas are just northeast of Rockhouse Point, in private ownership. The other HREA is along the shorelands of Agate Beach Park and the beach southwest of the park (MDEQ 2018). This stretch of shorelands is classified as HREA B, with an estimated average erosion rate of 1.4 feet per year.

Stanton Township has taken several steps to protect the shorelands and sand beach of Agate Beach Park. In particular, the beach is closed to camping, fires, and ATV use. Dogs must be leashed and under the control of its owner. Swimming at the Agate Beach Park is at the visitor’s own risk -- no lifeguards are provided by the Township or other organizations.

**Lodge Building and Concession Stand:** These buildings are currently in disrepair and have not been used on a regular basis for several years (**Figure 7**). The “lodge” building was formerly available for banquets, parties, community meetings, and special events such as the Agate Beach [Music] Jamboree. Stanton Township does not have any recent, written plans for the lodge building, concession stand, and other facilities on the Agate Beach parcel. However, there has been interest expressed by the Agate Beach Committee in renovation of these facilities. The Agate Beach Committee is composed of local residents in the Misery Bay – Agate Beach Area, and provides advice to the Stanton Township Board regarding the Park and associated lands.



**Figure 10.** Shoreland erosion within the HREA.

**Agate Beach Road:** Many respondents to the recent community recreation survey expressed concern about the condition of the Agate Beach Road, from its junction with the Misery Bay Road to the dirt entrance road to the Park (**Figure 9**). This asphalt road has many filled and often unfilled potholes and only a small shoulder to accommodate use by bikers. The situation is known to the Stanton Township Board and its Road Committee. Plans to improve Agate Beach Road is the responsibility of the Houghton County Road Commission, in consultation with Stanton Township.

## Freda Honor-Roll Park

**General Description:** This small (.545 acre) parcel of land includes an Honor-Roll memorial to local residents who have served in the nation’s wars, and is the only current public access to the shorelands of the Freda area (**Figures 11 - 15**). Most Freda shorelands are sandstone bluffs, which transition to beach just southwest of the mill ruins to the Graveraet River.



### Freda Parcels

Section 25, T55N, R36W

“Honor Roll” Lot  
Property #600-035-00

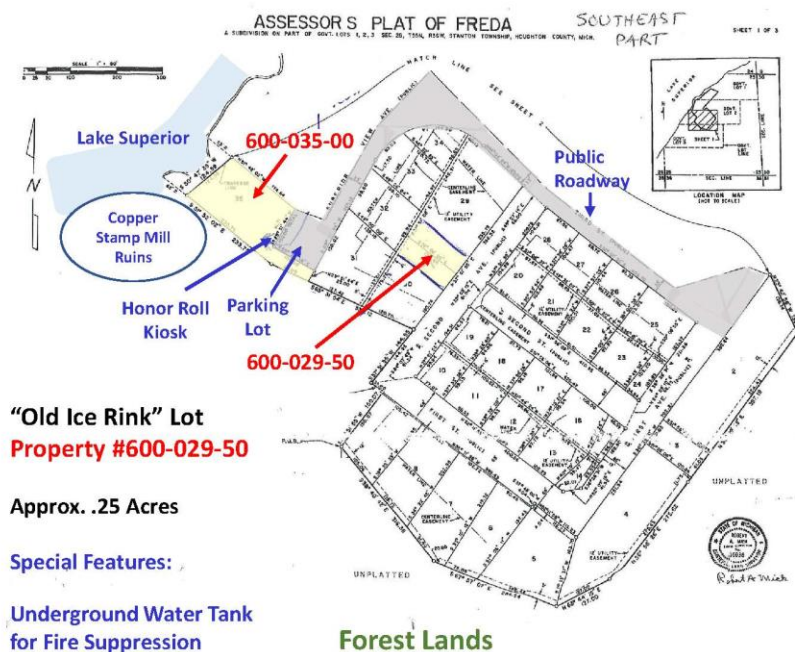
.545 Acres

Special Features:

Lakeshore Veterans  
Honor Roll Kiosk

View of Historical  
Copper Stamp Mill  
Ruins

Lake Superior  
Shorelands



“Old Ice Rink” Lot  
Property #600-029-50

Approx. .25 Acres

Special Features:

Underground Water Tank  
for Fire Suppression

**Figure 11.** Perspectives of the Freda area. Park location on Google map is approximate.

The Township also owns a small, vacant lot within the village proper (Parcel 600-029-50). The lot formerly served as a community park with a playground area, shuffleboard court, and a concrete pad used as a basketball court and an outdoor ice rink in the winter. It is still referred to as the “old rink” property. An underground water tank is currently buried on the property for fire suppression in the Freda and lakeshore areas. Stanton Township does not have any recent, written plans for recreational use of this lot.



**Figure 12.** Freda Honor-Roll Memorial on the east end of the Park. Looking southwest toward ruins of the Champion Copper Stamp Mill (smokestack and Lake Superior in background).



**Figure 13.** Freda Honor-Roll Park and adjoining parking lot. Looking west toward Lake Superior.



**Figure 14.** Looking toward Lake Superior shorelands and wooded acreage of the Freda Honor Roll Park. The Memorial is not visible in the upper right of the photo.



**Figure 15.** Looking toward a sight-seeing and picnic location at the boundary of the Freda Honor-Roll Park with the parcel of land containing ruins of the Champion Copper Stamp Mill.

**Primary Service Area:** Local lakeshore communities. It is visited regularly by Township residents as well as others who enjoy views of Lake Superior and historical sites.

**Amenities:** Views of Lake Superior to the southwest and west of Freda, especially evening sunsets. The ruins of the Champion Copper Mill can also be viewed from this parcel. Some visitors explore these privately-owned ruins and the Lake Superior beach southwest of Freda, on foot (**Figure 16**).

**Facilities:** Small memorial and parking area maintained by Stanton Township.

**Past Projects:** None



## Important Issues:

### Access to Lake Superior Shorelands

Current public access to Lake Superior shorelands below the elevation of the Freda Honor-Roll Memorial is by way of a steep, often slippery foot trail (**Figure 17**). Ropes attached to trees have been added by unknown persons to aid in walking down and back up this foot trail to the Memorial and adjoining parking lot.

In the past, visitors to shorelands of the Freda Honor-Roll Park and adjacent ruins of the Champion Copper Mill traveled on a former mill road along the shorelands. That former mill road and footpath is currently blocked by a private property owner (**Figure 18**).

In a recent community recreation survey, the “creation of a safe, public access to the Township’s Lake Superior shorelands in Freda” was selected by the largest percentage of residents (41%) and non-resident property owners (39%) from a list of five other Township recreation needs *Note:* This question excluded Agate Beach Park, North Canal Park, and Redridge Dams Site, which were covered in other questions (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).





**Figure 18.** Former access route to shorelands of the Freda Honor-Roll Park and ruins of the Champion Copper Mill. This route is currently closed to the public.

## North Canal Park

**General Description:** North Canal Park is located at the north end of two parcels of Township land that total 116.86 acres (**Figures 19 - 20**). It is commonly referred to as “The Breakers.” The actual acreage of the parcel containing the Park (328-001-00) has not been confirmed (**Figure 21**). It is connected to the other parcel of land (328-003-15) containing the North Canal Boat Launch by a thin corridor of public land along the Keweenaw Waterway. Records of the Stanton Township Assessor indicate that parcel #328-003-15 is about 80 acres in size. This indicates that the actual size of North Canal Park parcel #328-001-00 is about 36.86 acres, as indicated on Google Earth Pro.

The boat launch is a little over one mile by road from the Park. Based on Google Earth, these two Township parcels and associated public land include approximately 8,715 feet (1.65 miles) of shoreline along the Keweenaw Waterway, and approximately 4,275 feet (.81 mile) of shoreline along Lake Superior.

The gravel entrance road to the Park is located at the end of the (Houghton) Canal Road, near the north entry of the Keweenaw Waterway (or Portage Canal) to Lake Superior. The Park area contains an approximately 15-acre parcel of land shoreward of the west breakwater into Lake Superior. This parcel is owned by the U.S. government, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and has been leased to Stanton Township on a 25-year basis for public recreational access. The lease is being considered for renewal in 2023 by the Township Board.

**Primary Service Area:** Northeast portion of Stanton Township. The Park is also popular with Houghton County residents and visitors to the “Copper Country.” It does not appear that any visitation surveys have been completed for Park, either prior to or after environmental remediation of the stamp sands in the early 2000s.

**Amenities:** North Canal Park features two beach areas, one along Lake Superior and the other inside the west breakwater (i.e., “breakers beach”) (**Figures 22 - 23**). Based on Google Earth, the length of Lake Superior beach within the Park is about 1,300 feet (.25 mile). This stamp sand beach extends another 3,000 feet (.57 mile) southwest of the Park boundary. The length of breakers beach is about 1,450 feet (.27 mile). The shoreline along Keweenaw Waterway extends another 7,265 feet (1.38 miles) south of breakers beach. Beach walking, swimming, picnicking, and sightseeing are common recreational activities within the Park. It is also a popular destination for sunsets and northern lights over western Lake Superior.

The copper stamp sands lakeward of the ordinary high-water mark are owned by the State of Michigan in a “public trust,” and managed by the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) under the Great Lakes Submerged Land Act and other state law (EGLE 2023). The darker-color “stamp sands” are

composed of crushed rock and slag from historical copper stamp mill operations along the Lake Superior shoreline southwest of the North Entry (at Redridge, Edgemere, Beacon Hill, and Freda). The stamp sands have been deposited in the vicinity of the North Entry breakwaters by the northerly long-shore lake currents along the western shore of the Keweenaw Peninsula ([www.geo.mtu.edu/KeweenawGeoheritage/Lake/Beach\\_Rocks.html](http://www.geo.mtu.edu/KeweenawGeoheritage/Lake/Beach_Rocks.html)). The forest lands of both Township parcels are managed by Stanton Township under a *Forest Stewardship Plan* (Green Timber, Inc. 2021) (**Figure 19**).



**Figure 19.** Township parcels containing the North Canal Park and North Canal Boat Launch.

## North Canal Parcels

116.86 Acres Total

Section 28, T56N, R34W

Property #328-001-00

Special Features:

North Canal Township Park

Lake Superior Shorelands

Property #328-003-15

Special Features:

North Canal Boat Launch

Trail to North Entry

Keweenaw Waterway



Figure 20. North Canal parcels on Township assessor's map.



Figure 21. North Canal Park and Surrounding Properties



**Figure 22. Northeast Area of North Canal Park and Associated Stamp Sand Beaches**



**Figure 23. North Canal Park Beaches**

**Facilities:** The North Canal Park formerly provided primitive campsites, picnic tables, box toilets, playground equipment, water pump, barbecue grills, and horseshoe pits. However, the campground and other amenities were closed in 2005 to accommodate environmental mitigation of the stamp sands that comprise a large percentage of the nearby Lake Superior beach. The Park is currently open, but only provides a pavilion with picnic tables and one vault toilet (**Figure 24**). The vault toilet and a portion of the pavilion appear to be located on leased U.S. Government property (i.e., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

**Past Projects:** Agate Beach Park lands were originally acquired by Stanton Township through the *Federal Lands to Parks Program* of the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service. In 1989, the Michigan DNR awarded a grant of \$37,500 to Stanton Township for construction of two vault toilets, pavilion/changing house, and a boat launch at “breakers beach.” A master plan was completed in 1997 to guide future development at North Canal Park, including ADA accommodations (WUPPDR 2010). However, no action has been taken on that master plan by Stanton Township. Instead, the Stanton Township Board is currently considering its options to renovate and re-open the former campground at North Canal Park.



## **Important Issues:**

### **Renovation and Re-Opening of Campground**

The North Canal Park campground was closed in 2005 to accommodate environmental remediation of the stamp sands in the vicinity of the North Entry. The campground was located on forested shorelands, about .25 mile from the stamp sand beach on Lake Superior (**Figure 21**). Resident respondents to the recent community recreation survey identified the re-opening the campground and preparing a master plan as the two most important needs for the North Canal Park (Stanton Township 2023a).

In response, the Stanton Township Board is considering its options for renovation and re-opening of the campground, including contracting with a third party to provide campground services and manage park operations. A site development plan and assessment of operational feasibility would benefit the Township Board in decision-making on the future of Park facilities.

In addition, many respondents to the community recreation survey provided written comments about the need to upgrade the existing toilet facilities at the Park. Presently, there is only one vault toilet available to Park visitors, located nearly a quarter mile from the Lake Superior beach and about .15 mile from breakers beach. The existing pavilion appears structurally stable, but needs upkeep soon to protect it for future use. Any plans for facility development should verify whether the vault toilet and pavilion are actually located within the area leased from the U.S. Government, and potential implications of the lease.

### **Protection of Beach Areas**

In 2005, 32 acres of stamp sand southwest of the North Entry were capped with soil and selected species of vegetation (US EPA 2023, 2003). This work was completed as a component of the *Torch Lake Superfund Project* to remediate (i.e., reduce or eliminate) environmental damage from the stamp sands deposited during historical copper mill operations along Lake Superior. The remediation work in the vicinity of North Entry was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the former Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

There was strong support expressed for continued “protection of shorelands” by both Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners in the recent community recreation survey (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). It is assumed that respondents were considering the stamp sand beach areas as well as the upland area containing the pavilion, vault toilet, and former campground facilities. The U.S. EPA continues to monitor the environmental quality of the beach remediation area (US EPA 2023).

## **Visitor Safety and Enjoyment**

Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners also strongly expressed concerns about the safety and experiences of visitors to the North Canal Park area (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). The large majority of these concerns involve depreciative behavior at the beach areas. Depreciative behavior is defined as “actions that degrade park resources or experiences of other visitors” (NPS 2023). Of most concern were the burning of wood pallets, furniture, and other materials that contain nails and other metal fasteners; beach parties that disturb the character and atmosphere of the place; broken glass and trash left on-site; and reckless use of ATV and vehicles.

The Stanton Township Board recently responded to these concerns by authorizing the placement of large fire rings and related signage at the beach areas (i.e., fires in designated areas only). Currently, there are no trash receptacles within the Agate Beach Park area. Additional signage to remind visitors to respect others by cleaning-up and packing-out their trash may also assist in reducing depreciative behavior. More serious behavioral issues may require intervention by the Houghton County Sheriff Department.

Due to multiple governmental entities present within the Agate Beach Park area, collaboration with the U.S. Corps of Engineers, State of Michigan, and Houghton County is important in resolving operational issues at the North Canal Park area. However, Stanton Township appears to be in the best position to “take the lead” in engaging various stakeholders on planning for the future of this popular destination for coastal recreation. An important stakeholder is Michigan Technological University, based on the observed regular use of the Park by its students.

## **Canal Road and Park Entrance Road**

Only 11% of residents and 7% of non-resident property owners selected “Pave the entry road to North Canal Park” as an important recreation need in the recent community recreation survey (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). However, many respondents provided written comments about the poor condition and safety of the (Houghton) Canal Road, especially from its junction with the Liminga - Freda Road to the gravel entry road of Agate Beach Park. The most common concerns were the large number of potholes and decaying asphalt; small width of the shoulders along Canal Road for biking and walking; and perceived increases in traffic and speeding.

Some respondents believe that road traffic and concerns about safety will increase with further development of the Keweenaw Waters Resort on Canal Road, just outside the boundary of Stanton Township near the mouth of Coles Creek (<https://keweenawwatersresort.com>). Development plans include up to 24 rental cabins, a 46-site recreational vehicle (RV) park, and 23 tent sites (City of Houghton 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). The Resort currently has six rental cabins available that can house up to 60 people per night. The opening of an RV park with electric and sewer hook-ups, swimming area, and other amenities is planned for 2025.



## North Canal Boat Launch

**General Description:** The North Canal Boat Launch and its gravel access road are located within a parcel of Township land (328-003-15) that is connected to the Agate Beach Park (328-001-00) by a thin corridor of public land along the Keweenaw Waterway (**Figures 19 – 20**). The boat launch parcel is sometimes referred to as the “old gravel pit” property. The boat launch is located within a small cove on the Keweenaw Waterway, a little over one mile by road from the Park, and about 1.3 miles from the mouth of the North Entry into Lake Superior (**Figure 25**).

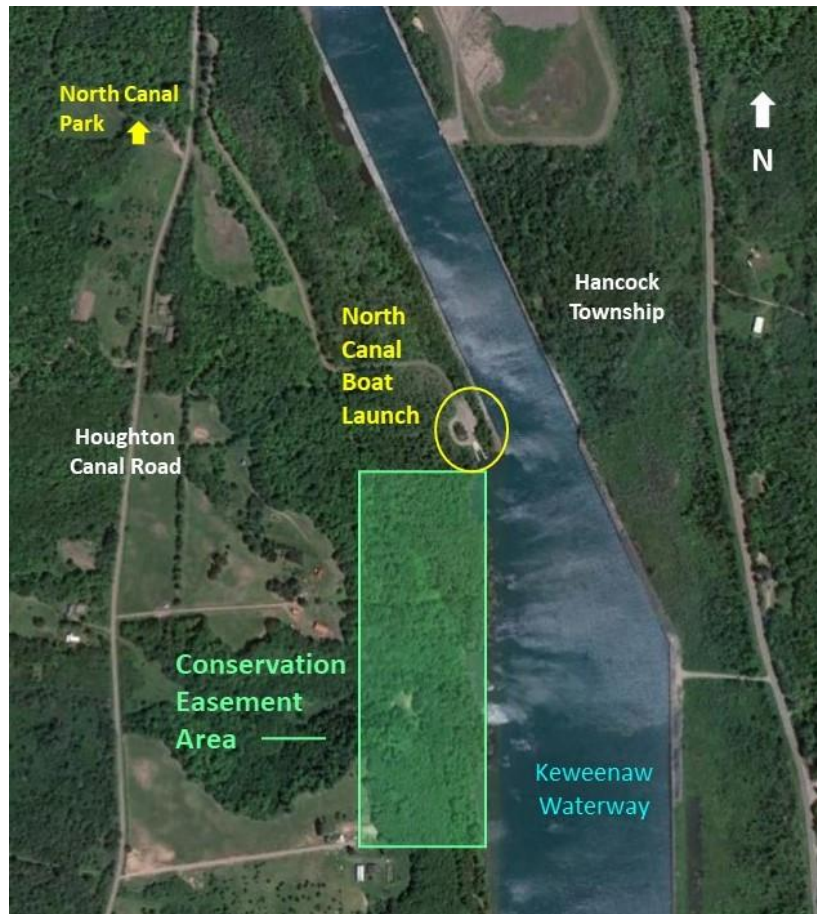
The two parcels of Township land at the north end of the Canal Road total 116.86 acres. Records of the Stanton Township Assessor list indicate that #328-003-15 is about 80 acres in size. Based on Google Earth, these two parcels of Township land and associated public lands feature approximately 8,715 feet (1.65 miles) of shoreline along the Keweenaw Waterway, and approximately 4,275 feet (.81 mile) of shoreline along Lake Superior.

**Primary Service Area:** Northeast portion of Stanton Township. The Park is also popular with Houghton County residents who enjoy fishing and sight-seeing on Lake Superior. It does not appear that any visitation surveys have been completed at the boat launch.

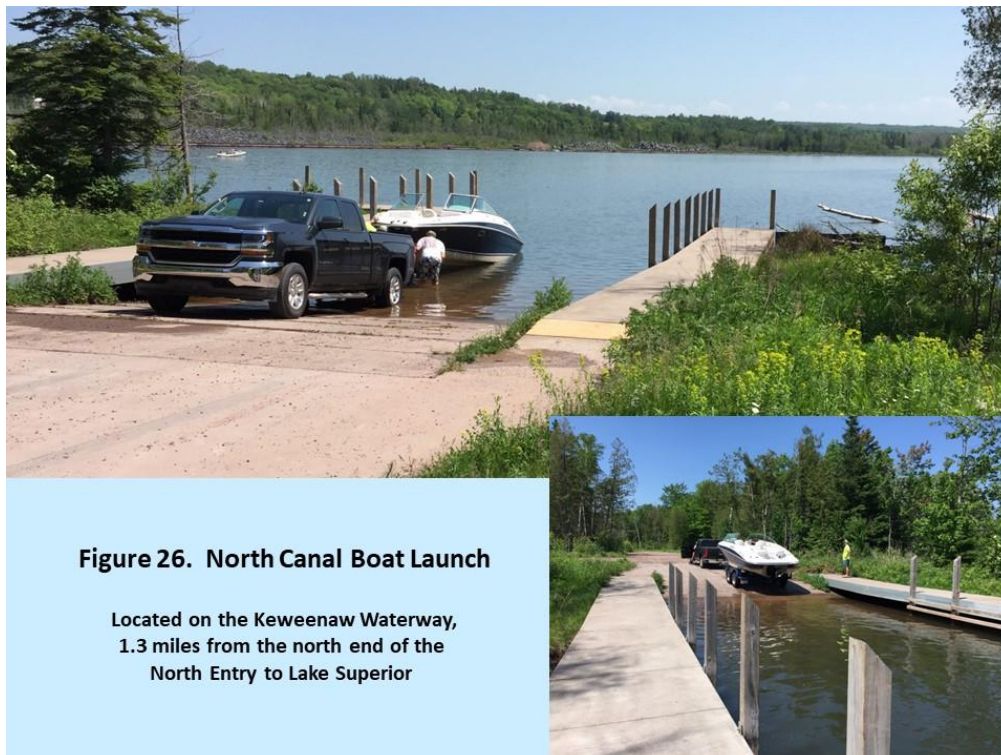
**Amenities:** The boat launch is located within a remote, forested area of land bordering the Keweenaw Waterway (also called Portage Canal). The site provides relatively close access to Lake Superior and the northern section of the Keweenaw Waterway for recreational boating and fishing. The northern shoreline of the Keweenaw Waterway within Stanton Township is largely undeveloped. A substantial stretch of this shoreline is held within a seawall of steel sheet pilings, maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**Facilities:** This modern boat launch was constructed about 10 years ago to replace an obsolete boat launch formerly located at breakers beach within the North Entry. Facilities include a gravel entrance road, parking lot, concrete ramp and two temporary docks, and a portable toilet (**Figures 26 – 27**).

**Past Projects:** In 2008, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) awarded a Waterways Grant of \$335,125 to Stanton Township for construction of a boat launch along the Keweenaw Waterway. The project took place in 2012 - 13, after mitigation of wetlands lost or negatively impacted by the construction. In that regard, Stanton Township entered into a conservation easement in 2012 with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to preserve 20.4 acres of land (including 13.6 acres of wetlands) within the Township parcel south of the boat launch (MDEQ 2012) (**Figure 25**). The Township also agreed to abandon former trails and to not build any new “paths, trails, or roads” within the conservation easement area as well as other land use restrictions.



**Figure 25.** North Canal Boat Launch and Conservation Easement Area.



**Figure 26. North Canal Boat Launch**

Located on the Keweenaw Waterway,  
1.3 miles from the north end of the  
North Entry to Lake Superior



## Important Issues

**Trail Development:** An “unofficial” ATV and walking trail formerly extended from the southern end of the boat launch parcel to the Agate Beach Park. In 2012, Stanton Township entered into an agreement with the State of Michigan to abandon the old trail and to *not* build new “trails, paths, or roads” within the conservation easement area south of the boat launch (**Figure 25**). Instead, the concept of a walking trail connecting the boat launch with the Agate Beach Park was suggested at a 2022 business meeting of the Stanton Township Board. However, fewer respondents to the recent community recreation survey considered “Creation of a walking trail from the North Canal Boat Launch to North Canal Park” as the most important need for the Park than “Prepare a Master Plan for the North Canal Property,” “Re-open the North Canal Park Campground,” and “Protection of the beach and shorelands” (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).

**Entry Road:** Paving the entry road to the North Canal Boat Launch was selected by only 11% of resident respondents and 7% of non-resident property owners in the recent community recreation survey (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).

## Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome)

**General Description:** The Oskar Recreation Center is located on 1.88 acres of Township land in the unincorporated village of Oskar (**Figure 28**). It is commonly called the “Kenner Dome,” in memorial to a former resident who was instrumental in the construction and operation of the facility. The parcel features the grounds of the Recreation Center, and a portion of Schlot Creek and associated wetlands. It is located on Canal Road, about 1.5 miles north of its junction with the Liminga – Freda Road.

**Primary Service Area:** Northeast portion of Stanton Township. The Center also receives an unknown amount of use by residents of the Houghton - Hancock area.

**Amenities:** Access to Schlot Creek, a freshwater stream flowing into Oskar Bay on the Keweenaw Waterway. The stream and nearby wetlands provide an opportunity for fishing kayaking/canoeing, and wildlife viewing.

**Facilities:** This parcel of Township land contains a large, wood-frame building that houses the ice rink, gravel access road and parking lot, outdoor basketball court, sand volleyball, and level area near Schlot Creek for picnicking (**Figure 29 - 31**). The ice rink includes a locker room, and a portable toilet is available for visitor use. Based on the community recreation survey, the facilities are still well-used by local residents as well as some non-resident visitors (Stanton Township 2023a). Access to the facility could use improvement for ADA (1) accessible.

**Past Projects:** In 1993, the MDNR awarded a \$26,100 grant to Stanton Township to “provide additional recreation opportunities at the Oskar Bay Recreation Center, including a fishing pier, canoe launch, and day use facilities” (including two restrooms).

### **Important Issues:**

**Facility Maintenance:** There were several written comments by respondents to the recent community recreation survey about the lack of routine maintenance and general upkeep of the ice rink building (Stanton Township 2023a). In particular, the vault toilets installed in the restrooms are not working correctly.

**Visitor Enjoyment:** There were also several written comments by respondents about instances of depreciative behavior at the Center that decreased their enjoyment and use of the facilities. In particular, rude behavior by youthful visitors was mentioned (Stanton Township 2023a).

**Entry Road and Parking Lot:** Respondents to the recent community survey considered “Paving the parking lot and entry road” to the Oskar Recreation Center as the least important need from a list of five other important needs for Township properties and facilities (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).



**Figure 28.** Location of Oskar Recreation Center within the Village of Oskar.



**Figure 29.** Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome)



**Figure 30.** Ice Rink within the Oskar Recreation Center.



**Figure 31.** Other Recreation Opportunities at the Oskar Recreation Center Area

## Redridge Dams Site

**General Description:** This historical site is adjacent to the unincorporated village of Redridge, on the paved road to Freda. It is comprised of two parcels of land deeded to Stanton Township by Mead Corporation in 1992. The two parcels total about 14 acres in size and feature two historic dams on the Salmon-Trout River and a portion of the associated impoundment (**Figure 32 - 33**). The site also includes a 3-acre “triangular” parcel of remnant land on the south and north side of the Freda Road. Prior to construction of the current roadway over the River, this parcel contained the historical overflow channel from the Salmon-Trout River impoundment. A small Township fire station is located on a village lot near the Redridge Dams Site.

**Primary Service Area:** Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners. Based on anecdotal information and observations, the site is also popular with other Houghton County residents and visitors to the Copper Country who are interested in the history and heritage of the copper mining era in the western Upper Peninsula. It does not appear that any visitation surveys have been completed at the site.



## Redridge Parcels

Section 21, T55N, R35W

Redridge Dams Site

Property #221-006-10  
#220-003-10

14 Acres

Special Features:

Historical Wood Crib Dam  
and Steel Dam

Salmon-Trout River

Township Fire Station Lot  
Property #328-003-15

.328 Acres

Remnant Property  
Property #220-001-00

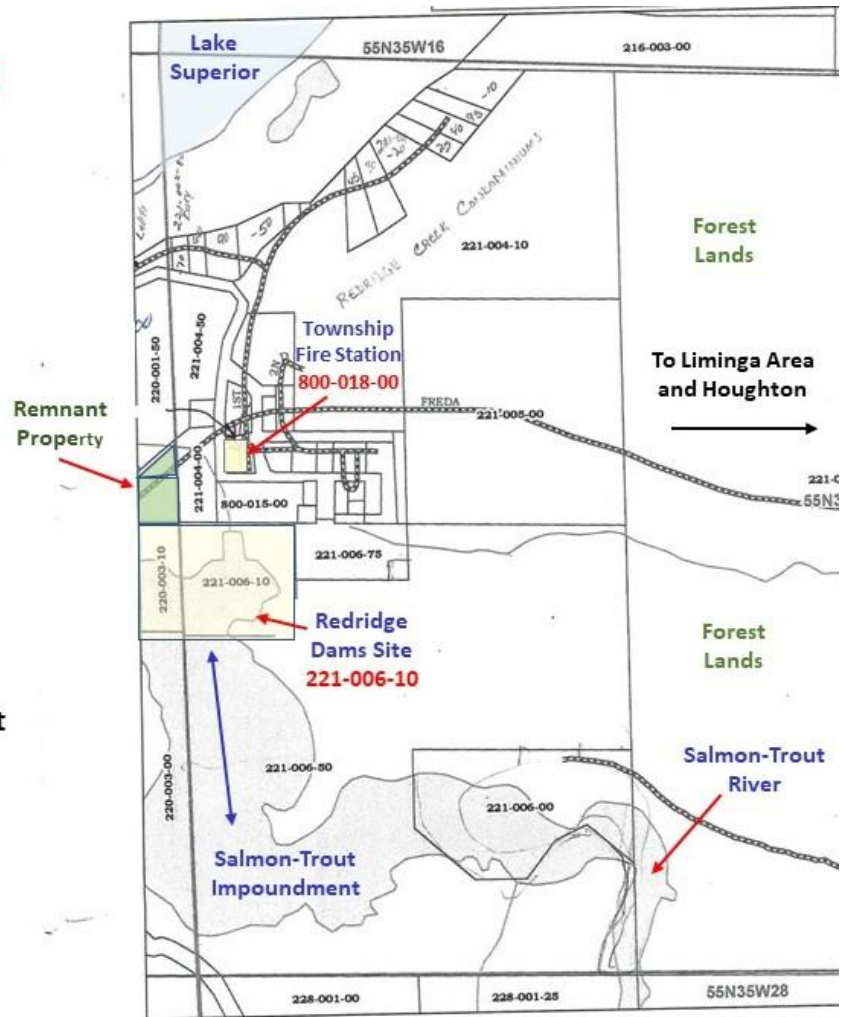
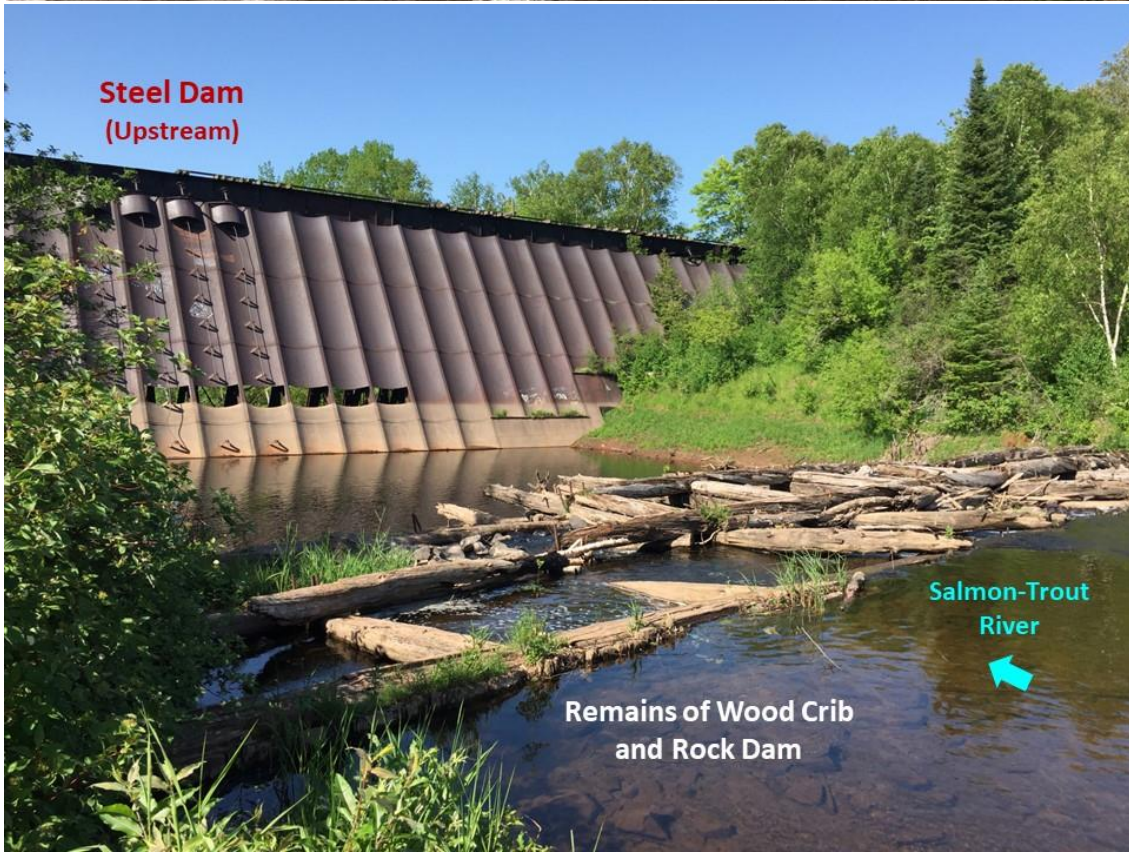


Figure 33. Stanton Township-owned parcels in Redridge.

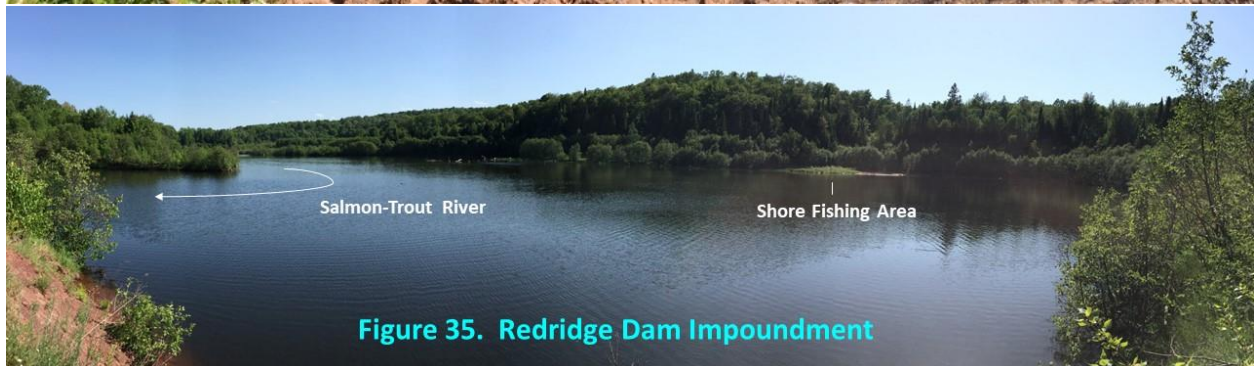
**Amenities:** The two dams on the Salmon-Trout River are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the National Park Service (Rutter 1990) (Figure 34). The timber crib and rock dam was built in 1893 -94. It was replaced by a steel dam in 1900 - 01, the largest existing dam of this type in the world (Reynolds 1989). The dams are historically associated with the operations of the Atlantic and Baltic copper stamp mills on nearby Lake Superior shorelands. The current unincorporated village of Redridge was originally established as a “company town” engaged in work at these lakeshore stamp mills. In 1986, the Michigan Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers dedicated the steel dam as a Michigan Historic Civil Engineering Landmark (Monette 1992:72).

The site also contains a portion of the Salmon-Trout River impoundment (Figure 35), and is commonly visited by residents and non-resident property owners of Stanton Township for walking, sight-seeing, wildlife viewing, and fishing (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). However, there is limited direct access to the River for kayaking or canoeing.





**Figure 34.** Redridge Steel Dam on the Salmon-Trout River.



**Facilities:** Stanton Township does *not* maintain any roads, trails, or facilities at the Redridge Dams Site. However, the site is commonly visited by Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b), and provides significant, year-round outdoor recreation opportunities to visitors. (It is the only area of public lands along the Township’s Lake Superior coastal zone extending from North Canal Park to Agate Beach Park.) An unimproved, dirt parking area is located adjacent to the Freda Road, about 400 - 500 feet from the steel dam (**Figure 36**).



**Past Projects:** The Stanton Township Board authorized a Study Group for the Redridge Dams Site in 2007. The Study Group engaged stakeholders from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, Michigan Technological University (MTU), and local residents to conduct studies of the dams, impoundment, and Salmon-Trout River from 2007 - 2010 (Redridge Study Group 2009). The site development concept recommended by the Study Group was a *community heritage park*, with a research component in collaboration with MTU. Additional site studies after 2010 were conducted under the supervision of Dr. Stanley Vitton, professor, MTU Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (Stanton Township 2023c).

The timber crib dam and rock dam is currently listed as a *significant hazard dam* by the Dam Safety Office of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). The steel dam is *not* considered a regulated dam by EGLE. However, the 130-year-old timber crib and rock dam has been deteriorating significantly during recent years, compounded by the Father’s Day Flood of 2018, which damaged both dams. In response, Stanton Township secured funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to remove debris from the “pool” between the dams, and to stabilize the concrete foundation on the downstream side of the steel dam. Most of the stabilization work has been completed, but the FEMA project is still on-going.

## Important Issues

### Dam Safety:

In 2023, Stanton Township submitted a full proposal to the Michigan EGLE Dam Risk Reduction Grant Program with the goals to (1) eliminate a significant hazard dam, (2) return the Salmon Trout River to a free-flowing condition, while preventing sea lamprey migration upstream, and in turn (3) allow formal consultations about the development of other public benefits at and near the Redridge Dams Site. Although the proposal was *not* funded with 2023 grant funds, the Michigan EGLE Dam Safety Office encouraged Stanton Township to re-submit the proposal in the next funding cycle. The proposal is on file with Stanton Township, and provides the most comprehensive assemblage and review of past studies on the Redridge Dams and impoundment (Stanton Township 2023c).

Stanton Township believes that resolution of the dam safety issue and return of the Salmon Trout River to a free-flowing condition will provide important opportunities to provide other substantive public benefits at the site. This could include interpretation of the historic dams and their role in copper stamp mill operations; sea lamprey control; fishery and stream restoration and protection; and provision of recreation facilities to enhance visitor experiences.

### Visitor Safety and Enjoyment:

Stanton Township does not currently provide recreational trails or facilities at the Redridge Dams Site. To deter automobile access and camping, the Township has blocked an old dirt road down to the area upstream of the steel dam as well as the new roadway to the downstream portion of the site. During 2007 - 08, volunteers with the Redridge Dams Study Group enclosed both ends of the Copper Range railroad trestle over the steel dam with wire mesh and barbed wire, to discourage access onto the trestle by visitors. However, the trestle may be considered an “attractive nuisance,” requiring additional attention by the Township.

The Salmon-Trout River downstream of the steel dam is a popular destination for anglers, especially trout fisherman. In addition, the impoundment provides year-round opportunities to fish for rainbow trout, brook trout, perch and other species in a “lake-like” setting. However, visitors must portage a kayak or canoe from the parking area along Freda Road in order to access the Salmon-Trout River (i.e., there is no road access down to the River).

The sandy area near the wood crib and rock dam has served as a “party spot” for local youth and MTU students for many decades. The resulting trash and old campfires have required occasional clean-up of the area by Township residents. In addition, the steel dam has become a popular “easel” for graffiti art, some of which might be considered offensive by visitors (Figure 37).



**Figure 37.**  
**Campfires,**  
**Trash, and**  
**Graffiti**

**Future Site Development:**

The preparation of a master plan would be an important next step in protection and development of this unique historical site, after resolution of the dam safety issue. In that regard, about half of Stanton Township residents (48%) and non-resident property owners (59%) who responded to the recent community recreation survey selected “Retain the property, resolve current dam safety issues, and prepare a Master Plan for the Site” as the most important current need. Nearly 30% of those respondents selected “Transfer the Redridge Dams Site to another governmental agency or nonprofit organization willing to assume current dam liabilities.” Only 7% of residents and 9% of non-resident property owners selected “Sell the property to a private entity willing to assume current dam liabilities” (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).

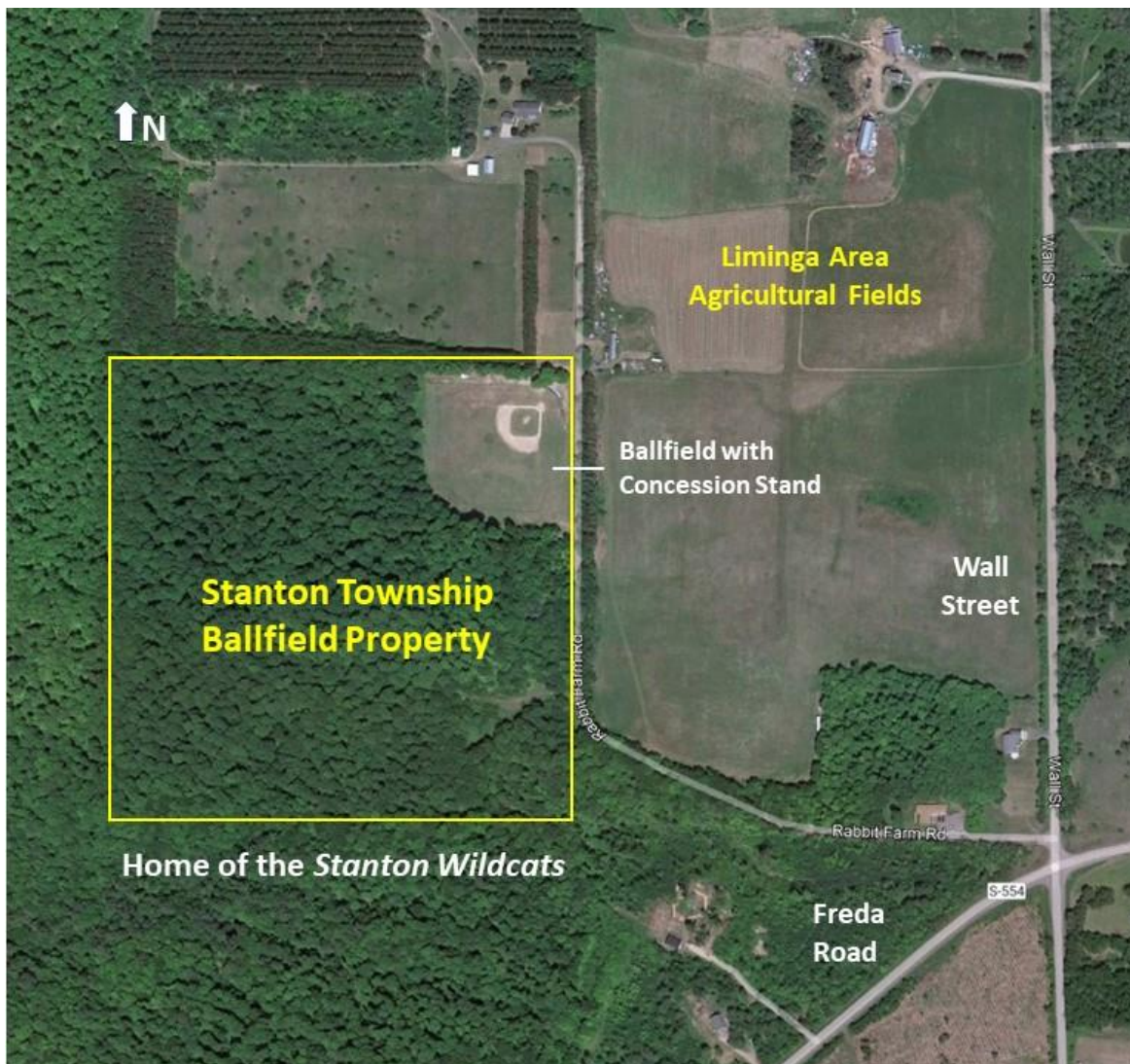
About 17% of Stanton Township residents and 20% of non-resident property owners indicated on the community recreation survey that they participate frequently in “visiting historical sites.”

## Stanton Ballfield

**General Description:** This 40-acre parcel of Township land contains a baseball field and associated facilities (**Figures 38 - 39**). The remaining acreage of forest lands is managed by Stanton Township under a *Forest Stewardship Plan* (Green Timber, Inc. 2021). The ballfield is located on a gravel road near the Liminga – Freda Road, and adjacent to agricultural fields.

**Primary Service Area:** Northeast portion of Stanton Township, including the Liminga area and lakeshore communities of Redridge, Beacon Hill, and Freda.

**Amenities:** A well-maintained ballfield with forest land behind the outfield fence. The facility is home to the Stanton Wildcats community baseball team. During the copper mining era, many communities in the region hosted baseball teams. The ballfield also hosts high school and twilight league games.



**Figure 38.** Stanton Township ballfield property.

# Stanton Ball Field Parcel

Section 15, T55N, R35W

Property #215-015-00

40 Acres

Special Features:

Home field of Stanton Wildcats community baseball team



Figure 39. Township parcel including the Stanton Township Ballfield.

**Facilities:** Baseball field with dugouts, seating for spectators, picnic tables, concession stand, storage shed, scoreboard, and portable toilet (Figure 40).

**Past Projects:** The ballfield and associated facilities are maintained by Stanton Township and community volunteers.

**Current Issues:** None



Figure 40. Stanton Township Ballfield



## Toivola Recreation Center

**General Description:** The Toivola Recreation Center is located next to the Toivola Firehall on the Misery Bay Road (**Figures 41 – 42**). These facilities were constructed on the southwest corner of a 20-acre parcel of Township land. The remaining acreage of forest lands is managed by Stanton Township under a *Forest Stewardship Plan* (Green Timber, Inc. 2021).

**Primary Service Area:** The Toivola – Agate Beach – Misery Bay Areas in the southwest portion of Stanton Township. The building and grounds are available for a variety of community activities, including ice skating and hockey during the winter season. The facility is commonly used by local residents (Stanton Township 2023a) as well as visitors from Adams Township.



**Figure 41.** Location of the Toivola Recreation Center and Firehall.



**Toivola Recreation Center  
and Fire Hall Parcel**

Section 03, T53N, R36W

**Property #003-015-00**

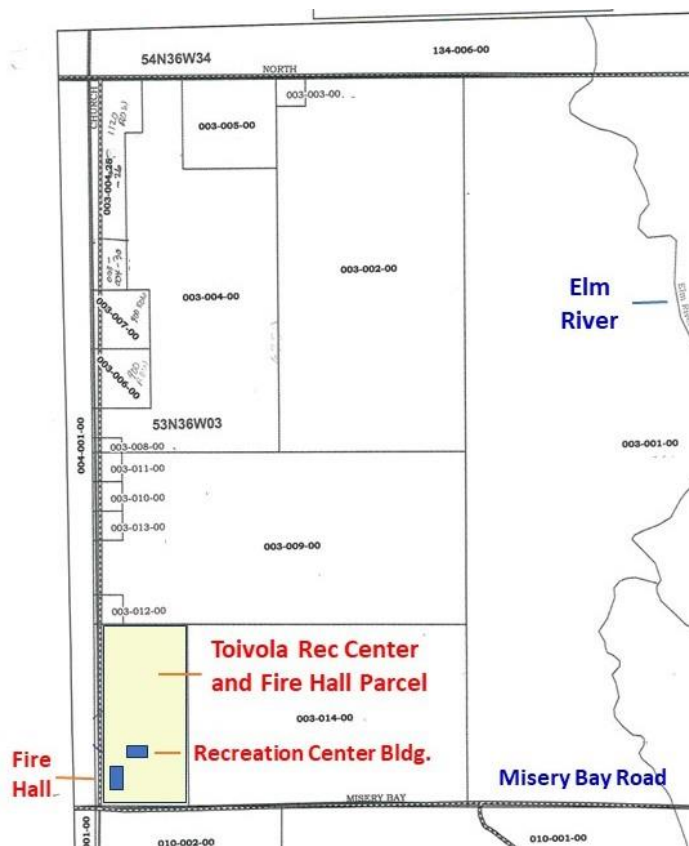
20 Acres

**Special Features:**

Ice Rink for Hockey  
and Skating

Meeting Room and  
Kitchenette

Fire Hall for Agate  
Beach – Misery Bay Area



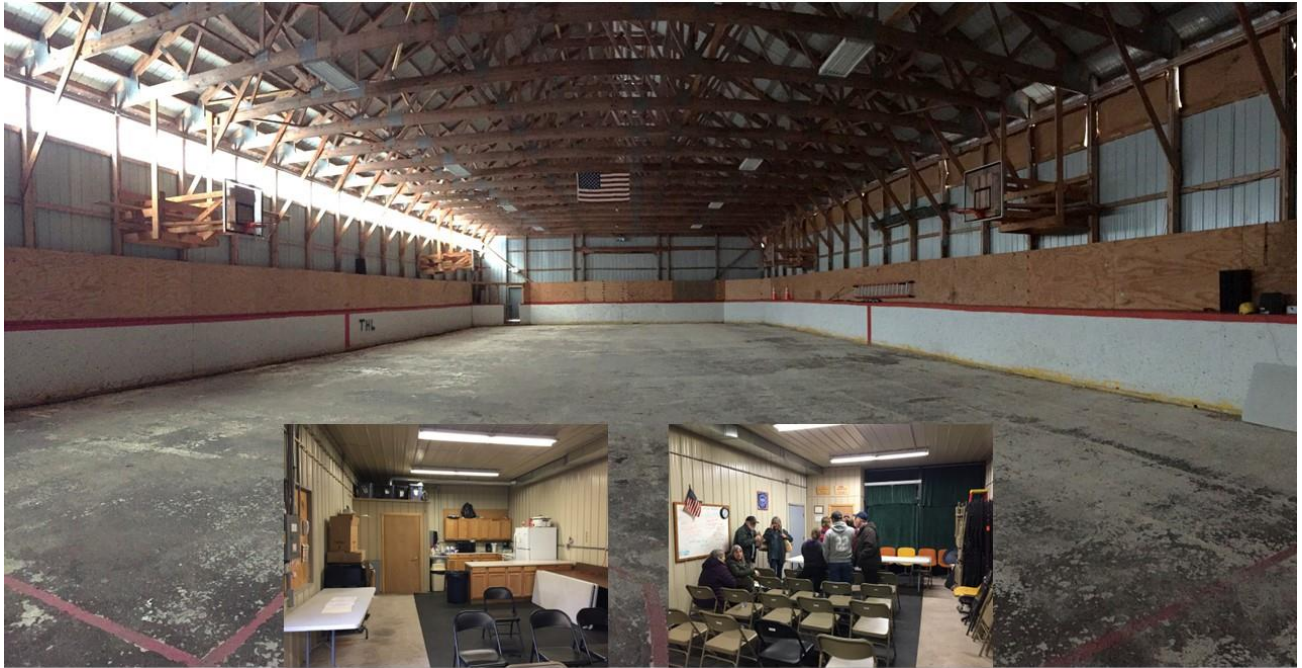
**Figure 42.** Parcel of land containing the Toivola Recreation Center.

**Amenities:** The only indoor community recreation center within a region extending from South Range south toward Ontonagon. It is surrounded by forest lands.

**Facilities:** Wood-frame building housing an ice rink that can also be used for other recreational activities or community purposes (**Figure 43**). The building also contains a kitchenette and small meeting room. The Recreation Center is easily accessible from Misery Bay Road and has a level parking lot with ADA (3) accessibility.

**Past Projects:** In 1999, the MDNR Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) awarded a \$25,000 grant for construction of a multi-purpose, indoor recreational facility to provide for ice skating, hockey, basketball, and other recreational activities. The facility is maintained by Stanton Township and local residents.

**Important Issues:** The only prominent issue identified during the recreation inventory and survey was the poor condition of flooring in the Toivola Recreation Center. Local residents have suggested replacement of the flooring with concrete at past business meetings of the Township Board.



**Figure 43.** Interior of Toivola Recreation Center, with inserts of meeting room and kitchenette.

### Other Township-Owned Recreation Facilities

#### *Township Hall and Firehall (Houghton Canal Road)*

The Township Hall contains offices and a public meeting room to conduct Township business. The other buildings on this 10.8-acre parcel of land are the main Firehall and a Fire Practice Building (**Figure 43**). The Township Hall and Firehall occasionally host community recreational events. The facilities are easily accessed from the Houghton Canal Road and include a parking lot that is ADA (3) accessible. The Township Board maintains a website about Stanton Township at [www.stantontownship.com](http://www.stantontownship.com).

#### *E.B. Holman School*

The E.B. Holman School is the only K-8 community school in Stanton Township. Students usually continue their education at either Jeffers High School in Painesdale, or Houghton High School. Certain facilities and grounds of E.B. Holman School are available to Township residents for recreational use during specific days and times. The grounds include playground equipment, swings, outdoor basketball court, baseball field, and indoor gym with a basketball court. The parking lot is ADA (3) accessible. Additional information on E.B. Holman School is available at [www.stpsd.us](http://www.stpsd.us).



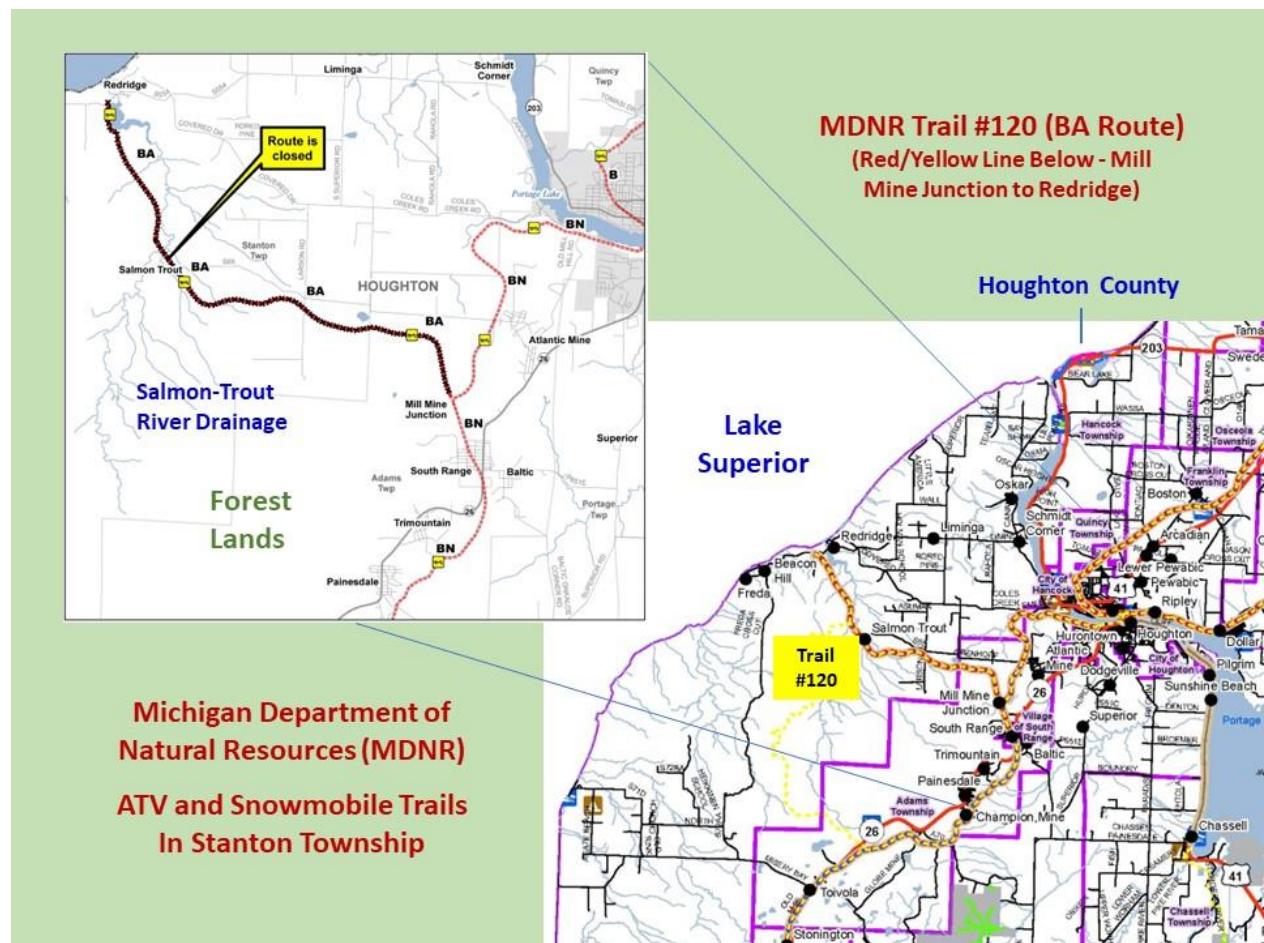
Figure 43. Stanton Township Hall and Firehall.

## Other Recreational Opportunities within Stanton Township

### *MDNR Snowmobile / ATV Trails*

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) formerly maintained ATV/snowmobile Trails #120 and #121 within Adams and Stanton Township (“Freda Loop”). The route of Trail #120 includes the Beacon Hill – Toivola Road. It connects with Trail #121, which runs from Mill Mine Junction (near Atlantic Mine) to Redridge. It is also called the BA Route (**Figure 44**). These trails run along the railbeds of the former Copper Range Railroad, which was the primary transportation link between the copper mines on the South Range and the copper stamp mills along Lake Superior in Stanton Township.

These trails are currently closed by the MDNR due to maintenance needs, and to assess the benefits, costs, and public support for continued upkeep by the State of Michigan. Several respondents to the recent community recreation survey provided comments in support of re-opening the trails to ATV and snowmobile use.



**Figure 44.** MDNR ATV and Snowmobile Trails in Stanton Township.

### *Western U.P. Water Trail*

The Western U.P. Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR) has promoted the Western U.P. Water Trail for several years, in coordination with the EGLE Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program and Michigan Sea Grant Program ([www.michiganwatertrails.org/uptrails.asp](http://www.michiganwatertrails.org/uptrails.asp)). The Western U.P. Water Trail extends from the Wisconsin border along the western and southern shore of Michigan's Upper Peninsula (**Figure 45**).

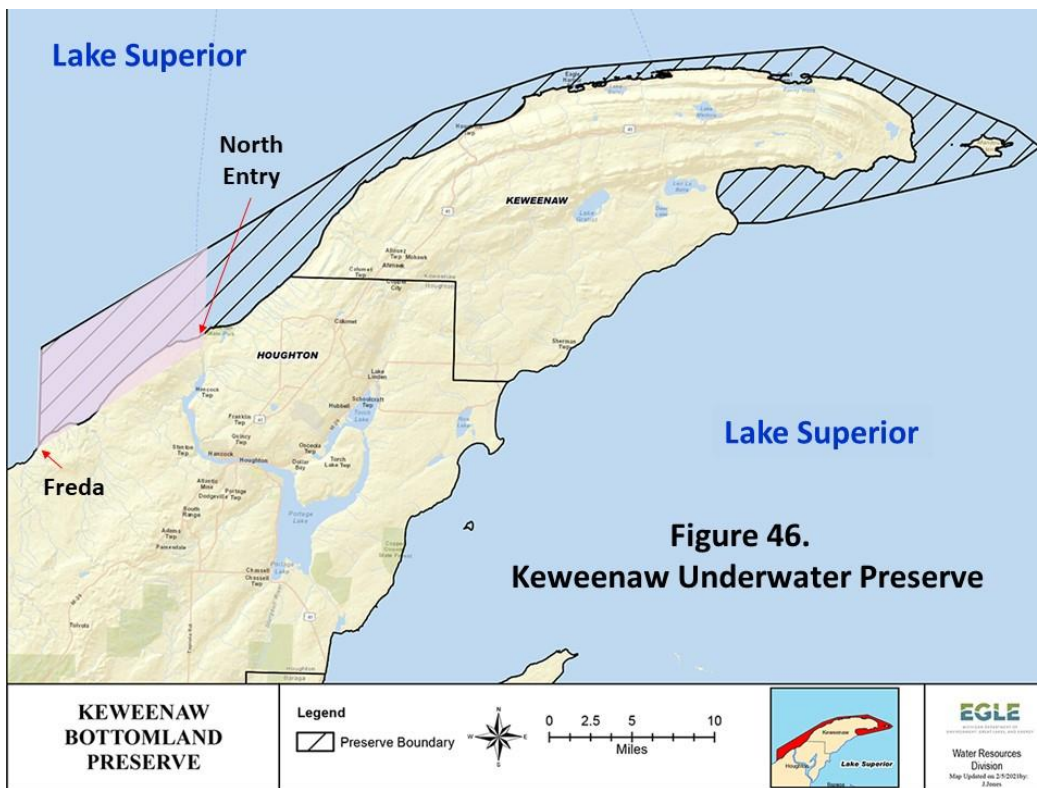


**Figure 45.** Kayaking western Lake Superior (Keweenaw Peninsula).

### *Keweenaw Underwater Preserve*

The Keweenaw State Bottomland Preserve (commonly known as the Keweenaw Underwater Preserve) was established in 1991 under Part 761 Aboriginal Records and Antiquities of Michigan Public Act No. 451 of 1994, as amended (MCL 324.76101 et seq.) (**Figure 46**). The Keweenaw Underwater Preserve includes Lake Superior submerged lands extending from the North Entry (of the Keweenaw Waterway) to Freda. It contains several historical shipwrecks, remains of the copper stamps mills, and other underwater cultural resources and geological features.

Currently, a total of 13 Michigan underwater preserves have been designated on Michigan's Great Lakes submerged lands. The Preserves are designated by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE); Great Lakes submerged lands are managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources ([www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/shipwrecks/michigan-underwater-preserves-system](http://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/shipwrecks/michigan-underwater-preserves-system)). Other stakeholders include the Michigan Underwater Preserves Council, Inc. ([www.michiganpreserves.org](http://www.michiganpreserves.org)), and the Michigan Sea Grant Extension ([www.canr.msu.edu/resources/msu-extension-water-programs-lakes-streams-and-watersheds](http://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/msu-extension-water-programs-lakes-streams-and-watersheds)).



### *Heikkinen School*

The former Heikkinen School has been preserved in a relatively intact condition by a private owner (**Figure 47**). It represents an important historical era of life in the Toivola - Agate Beach Area, especially to residents of Finnish ethnicity.



**Figure 47.** The historical Heikkinen School in the Toivola – Agate Beach Area.

## *Marsin Preserve*

The 40-acre Marsin Preserve was established in 1999 by the Keweenaw Land Trust. It features walking trails through forested areas and a white cedar swamp. The Preserve's trailhead is on the Red Brick Road about 1.0 miles by road from the Oskar Recreation Center. It is open year-round to the public for low impact recreational or educational purposes.

## Nearby Recreational Opportunities

### *Misery Bay Boat Launch (Bohemia Township)*

This Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) boat launch is located at the end of the Misery Bay Road. The facility is comprised of a concrete ramp (without docks), parking lot, and a vault toilet (**Figure 48**). Overnight camping is prohibited.



**Figure 48.** Misery Bay Boat Launch on the Misery River, Bohemia Township.

Other nearby recreational opportunities include:

- Lake Superior and the Keweenaw Waterway for boating, fishing and sightseeing
- Numerous Commercial Forest Act lands for fishing, hunting, and trapping
- McLain State Park (Hancock Township)
- Houghton / Hancock for indoor recreational and athletic venues

In addition, there are many historical, cultural, natural, and environmental attractions and associated hospitality facilities throughout Houghton County and the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan ([www.visitkeweenaw.com](http://www.visitkeweenaw.com)).

## **ADA Statement**

A full ADA assessment was not completed as part of the Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan. However, the number of ADA accessible parking spots are provided in this recreation inventory for the various Township recreation facilities. A comprehensive ADA assessment should be considered by the Stanton Township Board at a later date. ADA assessments are also recommended prior to any future improvements to Township recreation properties and facilities. The assessments should include comparisons with the 2010 *ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, and *Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas* (MDNR 2021), as appropriate. ADA assessments are especially important because of the relatively aged population of Stanton Township. An estimated 55.2% of the resident population are age 55 or older, and 34.1% are age 65 or older (U.S. Census Bureau 2020).

## **Natural Resource Inventory**

An inventory of natural resources was not completed as a component of the Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan. Guidelines for the development of community park and recreation plans state that a natural resource inventory would “typically be conducted by creating a map of each type of resource or feature considered important for conservation purposes, such as wetlands, soils, surface water, forests, and wildlife habitat as well as maps of political boundaries, roads and parcel maps. These individual maps (or data layers) are usually incorporated into a geographic information system (GIS). They then can be combined with each other to determine the relative conservation value of different lands and the relationship of these lands to each other” (MDNR 2021:8).

An important purpose of natural resource inventories is “to identify open-space land that may be desirable for future protection and/or public access through acquisition or other means due to the natural features present, as well as an accounting of land that is already protected” (MDNR 2021:8). In the case of Stanton Township, the recent community recreation survey found that a significant percentage of residents identified the need for public access to Lake Superior near Freda, and to the Salmon-Trout River mouth at Redridge (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). Currently, all Lake Superior shorelands are in private ownership from North Canal Park to the Agate Beach Park.



Geographic information system (GIS) services are available to Stanton Township from the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) and Houghton County, as needed for the purposes of the Township. These services would be especially beneficial in developing natural resource inventories.

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## Section 4.0 - Description of the Planning Process

Stanton Township does *not* currently have a Planning Commission, or a dedicated Park and Recreation Committee. In addition, its most recent 5-Year Recreation Plan is nearly 14 years old (WUPPDR 2010). In response, the Stanton Township Board approved the preparation of a 5-Year Recreation Plan during its June 2022 business meeting, with the aim of better managing recreation opportunities at Township properties and facilities. The Plan is required to apply for several different grants administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

To accomplish this aim, the Township Board approved a proposal from Maritime Heritage Consulting (MHC) of Sagola, Michigan to prepare and submit a *final draft* 5-Year Recreation Plan by early 2023. However, the deadline was extended for the park and recreation consultant to assist Stanton Township with a MDNR SPARK grant proposal for renovation of the Agate Beach Boat Launch as well as a major proposal for resolution of dam safety issues at the Redridge Dams Site. The full proposal was submitted in January 2023 to the Michigan Dam Risk Reduction Program, administered by the Dam Safety Office of Michigan EGLE.

The steps in the process to complete the *Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan* are summarized below, including a brief update on progress:

- Background research for the community description and other sections of the Plan, including primary documents on file at the Stanton Township Hall, finalized data from the 2020 U.S. Census, and trusted on-line sources.

(Completed throughout the project)

- Qualitative survey of the Stanton Township Board to assess perspectives of local government leadership regarding recreation opportunities in the Township. The responses also assisted in preparation of questions for a community recreation survey.

(Completed during October 2022)

- Inventory of Township-owned recreation properties and facilities as well as nearby recreational opportunities.

(The consultant conducted site visits to all Township-owned properties and facilities over the period of one calendar year, from late summer 2022 through summer 2023. The site visits included conversations with residents and visitors as well as photographic documentation of these properties and facilities. Google Earth Pro was used to visualize the properties in relation to regional population centers, roadways, and other recreation opportunities.)

- Scientific survey of Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners, in coordination with Stanton Township. The MDNR considers a community survey to be a key component in the process of park and recreation planning (MDNR 2021).

(The final draft report on the mail survey of Stanton Township residents was submitted to the Township Board on May 19, 2023. The final draft report on the mail survey of non-resident property owners was submitted on September 5, 2023.)

- A *final draft* 5-Year Recreation Plan was submitted by email to the Stanton Township Board for review and comment, prior to its regular business meeting on October 3, 2023. The consultant then met with Township Board members at a special meeting on November 1, 2023 (prior to the scheduled monthly business meeting) to discuss comments from Board members. The resultant final draft version of the Plan will be posted by Stanton Township on its website, for the required 30-day public review period.

The final steps in the process to complete the Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan are as follows:

- *30-Day Public Review Period:* Stanton Township will inform the public through a variety of means about the public review period, and how to submit comments about the document.
- The Township Board will schedule, advertise, and conduct a public hearing to elicit final comments about the document. This step is required before the Stanton Township Board can formally adopt the Plan.
- Upload the final version of the Plan adopted by the Township Board onto the MiGrants website for review and approval by Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). If the MDNR approves the Plan by February 2024, Stanton Township will be eligible to submit project proposals to several different MDNR and State of Michigan grant programs for 2024.
- After approval by the MDNR, the *Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan: 2024 - 2028* will be posted on the Stanton Township website for reference by Township residents, non-resident property owners, and others interested in the recreational opportunities and issues of Stanton Township. The consultant will provide access to imagery from the Plan for incorporation into the Township website at [www.stantontownship.com](http://www.stantontownship.com).

#### References Cited

MDNR. 2021. Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks & Recreation Plans. Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lansing, MI.

## Section 5.0 - Description of the Public Input Process

The Stanton Township Board approved the preparation of a 5-Year Recreation Plan during its June 2022 business meeting, with the aim of better managing recreation opportunities at Township properties and facilities. A scientific survey of Township residents and non-resident property owners was preferred by the Township Board as the primary means of public engagement and input. (The prior recreation plan is nearly 14 years old and did not include a community recreation survey.)

Questions for the community recreation survey were prepared by the park and recreation consultant in consultation with the Stanton Township Board, and after review of *Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans* (MDNR 2021). The initial survey questions were also based on a review of selected professional recreation surveys and discussions with Township residents and visitors throughout the recreation inventory phase of the project.

A qualitative survey of the Stanton Township Board was then conducted by the park and recreation consultant during August - September 2022. The purposes of this email survey were to assess the perspectives of local government leadership regarding recreation opportunities in the Township, and to pre-test initial survey questions for the larger community recreation survey. The survey results for the Township Board are summarized below (MHC 2022:5).

All board members agree that Stanton Township provides great opportunities for outdoor recreation as well as hockey and ice skating at the Kenner (Oskar) Dome and the Toivola Recreation Center. Township property used for outdoor recreation by residents and visitors include two Township Parks that adjoin Lake Superior (Agate Beach, North Canal), the boat launch on the Keweenaw Waterway, the Redridge Dam Site on the Salmon-Trout River, and the Stanton Ball Field. However, many of the facilities at the Township parks and other properties are either in disrepair or in need of regular maintenance. Vandalism and littering are an associated issue at these Township properties.

In addition, most board members believe that the focus of park and recreation operations should be the needs of the local community (i.e., Township residents and property owners who pay taxes). A couple board members indicated that Stanton Township should consider tourism as well as community needs in decision-making. Currently, the Agate Beach Park is the only Township property that generates enough revenues to offset operational costs. Supervision and maintenance of Township parks, the boat launch, Redridge Dams Site, Stanton Ball Field, Kenner (Oskar) Dome, and the Toivola Recreation Center are provided by both paid and volunteer caretakers.

The final questionnaire for the community recreation survey included general questions about the respondent, several park and recreation-related questions, three questions about support for certain actions by the Township Board, and space for additional comments. The method chosen for administering the survey was a mail questionnaire delivered by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). This survey method was preferred due to the lack of reliable Internet access in many locations of the Township, and because 2020 U.S. Census data indicates that a relatively large percentage of the Township's total population are seniors (42.1% age 55 or older), many of whom may not be comfortable with responding to online questionnaires.

The survey of Stanton Township residents was conducted during March - April 2023. The response rate for residents was an impressive 42% (472 returned questionnaires / 1,112 adjusted mailings). The survey of non-resident property owners was conducted during late June - August 2023. The household response rate for non-resident property owners was 35% (69 returned questionnaires / 197 households). Findings in social research commonly indicate that decision-makers can confidently generalize the results of mail surveys with return rates over 35% to the entire target population.

The interpretation of results from the community recreation survey is based on information reviewed during preparation of the community description; the field inventory of Township recreation properties and facilities; and other documents referenced in the *final draft* 5-Year Recreation Plan. The full *final draft* reports on the recreation survey of Township residents and non-resident property owners are provided in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

Other opportunities for public engagement and input will be provided during the required 30-day public review period and a public hearing to be scheduled during Fall 2023. These opportunities for additional public review and comment are summarized in Section 4.0 - Description of the Planning Process.

#### References Cited

MHC. 2022. Report on the recreation survey of the Stanton Township Board, dated October 4, 2022. Maritime Heritage Consulting, Sagola, MI.

MDNR. 2021. Guidelines on Preparation of Community Parks and Recreation Plans. Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lansing.

## Section 6.0 - Goals and Objectives

An important responsibility of the Stanton Township Board is to provide recreation opportunities to the residents and non-resident property owners of Stanton Township. However, the Township's park and recreation properties and associated facilities are receiving substantial visitation by other Houghton County residents as well as people from throughout the Great Lakes region and beyond.

An important question arising from this situation is "What should be the focus of future park and recreation development by Stanton Township? The results of the recent community recreation survey provide an important perspective for the Township Board (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). About one-half of residents (46%) and non-resident property owners (51%) responded that the focus should be on "The needs of residents and property owners." A little over one-third of residents (36%) and non-resident property owners (37%) responded with "Finding a balance between tourism opportunities and development based on community needs." Only 1% of residents and non-resident property owners responded with "Attracting tourists to increase economic impact in the region."

It should be noted, however, that a significant percentage of residents (17%) and non-resident property owners (11%) responded with "Leave things like they are – I don't favor additional development." There were also many written comments by survey respondents in favor of little or no additional park and recreation-related development. Survey comments and anecdotal information from Stanton Township residents during the recreation inventory indicate that concern over property tax increases and increased visitation by tourists would negatively impact their recreational experiences.

### Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of Stanton Township's 5-Year Recreation Plan can now be better defined, based on the results of the recent community recreation survey and anecdotal information from attendees of Stanton Township board meetings over the past two years:

To assist the Township Board in delivering the recreation experiences of most need to residents and non-resident property owners of Stanton Township, while better understanding the implications of tourism-related development on property taxes and quality of life.

The following pages provide a listing of goals, associated objectives, and their rationale for completion over the next five years or more.

## Goals and Objectives

Goals are defined for this 5-Year Recreation Plan as broad statements about the desired outcomes of certain actions. The MDNR *Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks & Recreation Plans* recommends that “Goals should be based on the demographic characteristics of the population served and the physical and environmental characteristics of the area ... Goals should be broad enough and have one or more objectives associated with them. Objectives will be more specific actions to help accomplish the goal” (MDNR 2021:11).

The following goals and objectives are offered in accomplishing the purposes of the Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan. They are based primarily on results of the recreation survey of Stanton Township residents and non-resident property owners during spring - summer 2023. Other sources of information include the comments of attendees at the business meetings of the Stanton Township Board.

**Goal A:           Improve maintenance and repair of Township properties and facilities, in general.**

**Objectives:**   Assess current conditions and develop a preventative maintenance plan; increase the budget for caretaking services and associated expenses at the parks and other recreation sites, and recruit additional volunteer caretakers.

**Rationale:**    Respondents to the recent community recreation survey overwhelming supported “more attention to the maintenance and repair of Township properties and facilities” (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). In that regard, 83% of residents and 81% of non-resident property owners were in favor of this action. Only 3% of residents and no non-resident property owners opposed this action. The remainder of respondents had no opinion. About one-half of residents (57%) and non-resident property owners (53%) also supported the “Hiring of additional staff for management of Township properties and facilities.” However, 15% of residents and 20% of non-resident property owners did *not* support this action, and a large percentage (27%) of all respondents had no opinion.

**Goal B:           Develop walking, hiking and biking trails wherever the need and opportunities exist at Township properties.**

**Objectives:**   Contract with a private business or nonprofit organization familiar with outdoor trail design and maintenance to assess and provide options for development of formal walking, hiking and biking trails at the Township properties. The trail assessment should also include options to link these properties and other recreation opportunities. An initial focus of the contracted services will be assessment of a trail system linking the North Canal Park (Parcel 328-001-00 ) with the North Canal Boat Launch (Parcel 328-003-15 ). The consultant should



consider several design criteria, including land ownership and easements, foci of visitor use, available parking space, ADA considerations, visual qualities, recreational amenities, and options for trail construction in assessing Township properties.

**Rationale:** Respondents to the recent community recreation overwhelming selected *walking* as the outdoor recreational activity in which they *most often* participate in Stanton Township (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). In addition, over three-quarters (77%) of residents and 70% of non-resident property owners indicated that they participate in *walking* frequently in Stanton Township.

Recreational activities in which *about 30% or more* of respondents indicated that they participate frequently are listed in **Table 1.0** (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). Over half of the activities selected by residents are associated with recreational trails and pathways (i.e., walking, snowshoeing, biking, wildlife viewing, sight-seeing, ATV riding). Nearly all of the activities selected by non-resident property owners are associated with recreational trails and pathways (i.e., walking, day hiking, wildlife viewing, sight-seeing, ATV riding).

**Table 1.0** Outdoor recreational activities in which respondents participate frequently in Stanton Township.

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<b>Residents:</b>	Walking	77%	Wildlife Viewing	33%
	Fishing	46%	Hunting	32%
	Boating	43%	Sight-seeing	30%
	Snowshoeing	36%	ATV Riding	29%
	Biking	33%	Kayaking	29%
<b>Non-Resident</b>				
<b>Property Owners:</b>	Walking	70%	Kayaking	34%
	Day Hiking	37%	Sight-seeing	33%
	Wildlife Viewing	37%	ATV Riding	30%

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On the recent community recreation survey, only 16% of residents and 14% of non-resident property owners selected “Create a walking trail from the North Canal Boat Launch to North Canal Park,” from a list of five *most important current needs* at North Canal Park. However, anecdotal information from Stanton Township board meetings and local residents indicates that a former trail beginning at the southern end of Township Parcel 328-003-15 was well-used in the past. This informal trail was blocked and abandoned south of the boat launch by Stanton Township, as part of an *Agreement for Conservation Easement* with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) in 2012. The easement was provided to mitigate the loss of wetlands in construction of the North Canal Boat Launch.

**Goal C: Retain the Redridge Dams Site, resolve current dam safety issues, and prepare a master plan for the Site.**

**Objectives:** Complete a professional survey to confirm the boundaries of Township land parcels comprising the Redridge Dams Site.

Continue coordination with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), National Park Service, and other stakeholders in resolution of dam safety-related issues at the Redridge Dams Site.

Revise and re-submit the 2023 proposal to the EGLE Dam Risk Reduction Program to remove the central portion of the timber crib and rock dam and alter the steel dam, in order to return the Salmon-Trout River to a free-flowing condition.

Continue to explore and assess opportunities to transfer this Township property to a government agency or nonprofit organization willing to assume current dam liabilities.

**Rationale:** The historic timber crib and rock dam is listed by Michigan EGLE as a *significant hazard dam*. It was built in 1893-94, and then submerged after construction of the steel dam in 1901-02. The top 12-feet of the timber crib were removed in 2005 because of concerns over its structural integrity. The timber crib portion of the dam continues to deteriorate and could become a very expensive facility to repair and maintain. These costs may increase with bills currently under consideration by the Michigan Legislature to revise dam safety laws.

An important benefit of the project proposed by Stanton Township to Michigan EGLE in 2023 is to de-classify the timber crib and rock dam as a state-regulated dam. The project would return the Salmon-Trout River to a more natural, free-flowing condition, and include construction of barriers to prevent sea lamprey migration upstream as well as historic preservation of the steel dam and portions of the timber crib dam. It would also provide the Township with an opportunity to seriously evaluate the Redridge Dams Site for development as a “community heritage park” or other such recreational property (Redridge Dams Study Group 2009).

Nearly one-half (46%) of residents and 19% of non-resident property owners who responded to the recent community recreation survey visited the Redridge Dams Site in 2022. About one-half of those residents (48%) and non-resident property owners (59%) selected “Retain the property, resolve current dam safety issues, and prepare a Master Plan for the Site,” from a list of three *most important current needs* for the Redridge Dams Site. Another 29% of residents and non-resident property owners selected “Transfer the Redridge Dams Site to another governmental agency or nonprofit organization willing to assume current dam liabilities.” Less than 10% of residents (7%) and non-resident property owners (9%) favored sale of the Redridge Dams Site to a private entity. However, 16% of residents did not respond to this survey question.

**Goal D: Enhance recreational experiences at the North Canal Park and associated Township land.**

**Objectives:** Complete a professional survey to confirm the boundaries of Township land parcel 328-001-00, containing the North Canal Park.

Continue to evaluate options for re-opening the former North Canal Park Campground, including contracting the campground operations and services to a qualified private business.

Assess the benefits and costs of installing a kayak launch along “breakers beach,” on the inside of the North Entry to Lake Superior.

Coordinate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan EGLE, Houghton County Sheriff Office, and other relevant parties to decrease depreciative behaviors on park shorelands and nearby stamp sand beaches (see Section 3.0 - Recreation Inventory).

Assess funding sources to prepare a master plan for the two parcels of Township land containing North Canal Park and the North Canal Boat Launch, and pursue any promising opportunities. A master plan for the North Canal Park was prepared in 1997 by Hitch, Inc., but it is now considered outdated and obsolete.

**Rationale:** Over two-thirds (70%) of residents who responded to the recent community recreation survey visited the North Canal Park in 2022. Over one-half (57%) of those residents used this Township property *the most* for recreation. However, only 19% of non-resident property owners visited the North Canal Park in 2022. This reflects the relatively large number of non-resident respondents with seasonal camps in the Misery Bay - Agate Beach Area.

There was not a particular “overwhelming” or strong response to a list of five *most important needs* for the North Canal Park. Instead, about one-quarter of residents selected “Prepare a Master Plan for the North Canal property” as well as “Re-open the North Canal Park Campground,” and “Protection of the beach and shorelands.” Over one-third (34%) of non-resident property owners selected “Protection of the beach and shorelands” as the most important need, followed by “Prepare a Master Plan for the North Canal property” (28%), and “Re-open the North Canal Park Campground” (17%).

About one-third of non-resident property owners (34%) and 29% of residents who responded to the recent community recreation survey participated *frequently* in kayaking in Stanton Township during 2022. In addition, kayaking has become a popular water-based recreation activity for other park visitors, including retired “baby boomers” as well as younger generations. There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Portage Health Foundation on the installation of a kayak launch at the North Canal Park.

**Goal E: Enhance recreational experiences at the Agate Beach Park and associated Township land.**

**Objectives:** Coordinate with the Agate Beach Park Committee and the Park Caretaker to monitor the physical condition of Lake Superior shorelands and beaches at Agate Beach Park and southwest to the boundary of the Township’s parcel of land 131-005-00.

Assess funding sources to prepare a *new* master plan for Agate Beach Park and associated Township lands. A *Master Plan for Agate Beach Park* was prepared by Hitch, Inc. in 2008. However, it was “tabled” by the Stanton Township Board, after being rejected by community members in the Toivola - Misery Bay and Agate Beach areas.

Continue to seek funding for renovation of the Agate Beach Park Boat Launch, as per the proposal submitted to the MDNR SPARKS Grant Program in December 2022, and re-submitted in June 2023. The proposal includes installation of a kayak launch system. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with the Portage Health Foundation on the installation of a kayak launch at the Agate Beach Park.

Improve the current primitive camp sites, as funds become available through camping fees and recreational grant programs.

**Rationale:** Over one-half (56%) of residents and 27% of non-resident property owners who responded to the recent community recreation survey used the Agate Beach Park in 2022 (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). About 36% of all Township residents used this Park *the most* for recreation, with about 11.0 average annual visits in 2022. However, about 57% of Township residents *with Toivola post office addresses* used this Park *the most* for recreation, with about 17.0 average annual visits in 2022.

All non-resident property owners with seasonal homes or camps in the Agate Beach - Misery Bay area (56 respondents) used Agate Beach Park in 2022, with nearly 31.0 average annual visits. This reflects the relatively large number of seasonal home and camp owners in this area of the Township.

As for the *most important needs* at the Agate Beach Park, about one-quarter of Township residents (26%) and one-third of non-resident property owners (31%) selected “Protection of the beach and shorelands.” Another 22% of residents and 19% of non-resident property owners selected “Prepare a New Master Plan for the Agate Beach property.” About 19% of residents also selected “Improve the current primitive camping sites.”

“Renovate the boat launch,” “Renovate the kitchen, dining, and meeting buildings,” and “Pave the entry road to Agate Beach Park” were selected by lower percentages of respondents (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). However, 27% of residents *with Toivola post office addresses* selected “Renovate the boat launch” and “Pave the entry road to Agate Beach Park.” In addition, 27% of non-resident property owners from the Agate Beach - Misery Bay Area selected “Pave the entry road to Agate Beach Park.” Only 15% of respondents *with Toivola post office addresses* as well as non-resident property owners from the Agate Beach - Misery Bay Area selected “Renovate the kitchen, dining, and meeting buildings.”

About one-third of non-resident property owners (34%) and 29% of residents who responded to the recent community recreation survey participated *frequently* in kayaking in Stanton Township during 2022. In addition, kayaking has become a popular water-based recreation activity for other park visitors, including retired “baby boomers” as well as younger generations (Outdoor Foundation 2022). There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Portage Health Foundation on the installation of a kayak launch at the Agate Beach Park.

**Goal F: Create a safe, public access to the Township’s Lake Superior shorelands at the Freda Honor-Roll Park.**

**Objectives:** Determine whether there is a public easement on an old mill road that runs through private property down to the Lake Superior shorelands within Township parcel of land 600-035-00. This walking route would be considerably safer than the current informal dirt trails down to the shorelands.

Contract with a private business or nonprofit organization familiar with the design of parks and recreation facilities to assess and provide options for development of this Township parcel of land as a small community park, with safe public access to the shorelands overlooking Lake Superior.

**Rationale:** About 21% of residents, but only 10% of non-resident property owners who responded to the recent community recreation survey used the Freda Honor-Roll Park in 2022 (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b). However, the informal dirt trails from the Honor-Roll Memorial to Township shorelands below can be considered a safety hazard, especially to the elderly and those with limited mobility. A related issue is the lack of any direct public access to Lake Superior from the North Canal Park southwest along the shoreline to the Agate Beach Park.

This public access issue was reflected in results of the recent community recreation survey. All respondents were asked to select *other important needs* for Township properties and facilities, from a list of five actions (space was provided to write-in other actions). The largest percentage of residents (41%) and non-resident property owners (39%) selected, “Create a safe, public access to the Township’s Lake Superior shorelands in Freda.”

**Goal G: Explore opportunities to create public access to the mouth of the Salmon-Trout River and associated stamp sand beaches.**

**Objectives:** Determine whether the former railbed of the Copper Range Railroad along the shorelands near the mouth of the Salmon-Trout River is owned by the State of Michigan, and whether there is a public easement over the railbed. The Copper Range Railroad trestle over the Salmon-Trout River at this location is beginning to “collapse” into the streambed (**Figure 1**).

Explore current opportunities to purchase land or negotiate a public easement along the Salmon-Trout River from the Redridge Dams Site to the mouth of the Salmon-Trout River.

In addition, explore current opportunities to purchase land or negotiate a public easement elsewhere along Lake Superior shorelands in the Redridge area, for access to stamp sand beaches owned by the State of Michigan.



**Rationale:** The mouth of the Salmon-Trout River upstream to the Redridge steel dam is a popular destination for trout-fishing (**Figure 2**). This stretch of river also receives regular treatments by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to control the local population of sea lamprey. (*Note:* There is no evidence of sea lamprey upstream of the historical dams.) In addition, there is a lack of direct public access to Lake Superior from the North Canal Park southwest along the shoreline to the Agate Beach Park.

This public access issue was reflected in results of the recent community recreation survey. All respondents were asked to select *other important needs* for Township properties and facilities, from a list of five actions (space was provided to write-in other actions). Next to creation of safe, public access to Township shorelands in Freda, the second largest percentage of residents (32%) and non-resident property owners (25%) selected, “Purchase a public easement or lands for access to the mouth of the Salmon-Trout River.” Less than 12% of respondents selected other actions.



**Figure 2.** Mouth of the Salmon-Trout River, downstream from the Redridge Dams Site.

**Goal H:** Repair or replace the vault toilets in the Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome)

**Objectives:** The Stanton Township Board will request cost estimates for the repair or replacement of the toilets, and upgrading of the restrooms. In addition, a preventative maintenance plan will be prepared for the ice rink and associated properties. The plan will assist in facility management, including the budgeting of Township funds and grant-writing.

**Rationale:** About one-quarter (25%) of Township residents who responded to the recent community recreation survey used the Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome) in 2022 (Stanton Township 2023a). Only 6% of non-resident property owners used the Oskar Rec. Center in 2022 (Stanton Township 2023b). It is assumed that visitation to the facility will increase with repair or replacement of the vault toilets and modern restroom facilities.

The Stanton Township Recreation Plan for 2010 - 14 placed a high priority on installation of modern sanitation facilities in the Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome), a suitable septic system, and pressured water to accommodate increased usage (WUPPDR 2010). In the early 1990s, two restrooms with vault toilets were installed in the ice rink as part of a MDNR-funded project to provide additional recreational opportunities at the site. However, the vault toilets are currently in disrepair. In addition, the ice rink needs cleaning, repairs, and routine maintenance.

**Goal I:           Coordinate with the Township Road Committee on park and recreation planning in Stanton Township.**

**Objectives:** Request a traffic study of the Houghton Canal Road by the Houghton County Road Commission. The study should determine the volume and speed of vehicles during periods of peak seasonal use by tourists; estimate the impacts on use by pedestrians and bikers; and provide some options for improving the roadway's safety and recreational use.

Provide updates to Township residents in the Misery Bay - Agate Beach Area on the status of any scheduled maintenance, repairs, or re-paving of the Agate Beach Road.

Provide updates Township residents along the Canal Road on the status of any scheduled maintenance, repairs, or re-paving of that road.

**Rationale:** Many residents and non-resident property owners who responded to the recent community recreation survey expressed concerns about the poor condition of the Canal Road, speeding, and the associated safety of bikers and pedestrians, especially from its junction with the Liminga - Freda Road to the North Canal Park. In addition, many respondents expressed concerns about the condition of the Agate Beach Road. However, results of the community survey also indicate that paving the gravel entry roads to the North Canal Park, North Canal Boat Launch, Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome), and Agate Beach Park were selected by only 14% or fewer residents. The result was similar for non-resident property owners.



**Goal J: Improve visitor safety and protection of Township recreation properties and facilities.**

**Objective:** Install security cameras at key locations within the parks and other recreation properties.

**Rationale:** Many respondents to the recent community recreation survey expressed concerns about the depreciative behavior of visitors to Agate Beach Park, North Canal Park, Oskar Recreation Center (Kenner Dome), and the Redridge Dams Site (see Section 3.0 - Recreation Inventory). Security cameras are *not* currently installed at any Township properties and facilities. However, this action is now necessary due to the concerns of Township residents and non-resident property owners, and expected increases in visitation to Stanton parks and recreation sites.

**Goal K: Improve public access to and the security of the Stanton Township Hall and its offices on Canal Road.**

**Objectives:** Pave the driveway and parking lot, and establish ADA-compliant parking.

Upgrade the Stanton Township website to enhance communications among the Stanton Township Board and the Township's residents and non-resident property owners.

Install a security camera(s) at key locations on the property.

**Rationale:** These actions will enhance the knowledge, engagement, and diversity of interactions among the Township Board and stakeholders in the recreational properties and facilities of Stanton Township.

**Goal L: Improve coordination and increase collaborations with government agencies providing park and recreation opportunities, and other stakeholders.**

**Objectives:** Establish connections with professionals in government agencies that have responsibilities for lands and waters adjoining Township properties as well as those agencies with grant programs for the purchase of recreational land, construction and maintenance of facilities, and development of recreation programming. Of general importance are the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan EGLE, and Houghton County.

Stanton Township will also benefit from coordination and collaborations with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, National Park Service, and Michigan State Historic Preservation Office in resolving the dam safety issues at the Redridge Dams Site.

Collaborations with Michigan Technological University and local high schools can also help alleviate depreciative behavior at Township recreation properties and facilities. Actions could include public service messages and educational events for students as well as involving student organizations in the clean-up and maintenance of parks and other recreation sites.

**Rationale:** Improved coordination and collaborations with other agencies can improve the number and quality of recreation experiences in Stanton Township, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. It can also help in better positioning the Township within regional plans for economic development (WUPPDR 2021, Houghton County 2018).

### Other Township Properties and Facilities

There are no specific goals and objectives listed for the North Canal Boat Launch, Stanton Ballfield, and the Toivola Recreation Center. About one-half (52%) of Township residents who responded to the recent community recreation survey used the North Canal Boat Launch in 2022 (Stanton Township 2023a). About 17% of residents used the Stanton Ballfield in 2022. Although only 11% of all residents used the Toivola Recreation Center, a significantly larger percentage of residents (32%) and non-resident property owners (33%) in the Misery Bay – Agate Beach Area used this facility in 2022. Less than 10% of all non-resident property owners who responded to the community recreation survey used the North Canal Boat Launch (9%), Toivola Recreation Center (5%), and Stanton Ballfield (4%) in 2022.

In the case of the North Canal Boat Launch and Stanton Ballfield, no recreation-related improvements are anticipated in 2024 – 28. The only improvement suggested for the Toivola Recreation Center is replacement of the asphalt floor with concrete. The Stanton Township Board is assisting local community members in identifying funding sources for this project.

The prior recreation plan for Stanton Township (WUPPDR 2010:25) also recommended the following:

“Preserve the last stretch of undeveloped Lake Superior shoreline around Rockhouse Point....This is the last shoreline in Houghton County that remains in an undeveloped state. The Township should actively work with outside organizations to seek funding to preserve the shoreline and adjacent forest tracts through public purchase or conservation easements.”

**Note:** The Agate Beach Park, North Canal Park, Redridge Dams Site, and other locations along the Lake Superior coastal zone are eligible for grants from the Michigan Coastal Management Program, administered by Michigan EGLE. “Established in 1978, the Michigan Coastal Management Program is committed to providing substantial technical assistance and strategic grant funding to assist in coastal communities’ ability to understand risks, and options to

mitigate coastal hazards; create healthy habitats that provide for human use and enjoyment; support coastal eco-tourism opportunities while ensuring for safe public access; and support resilient & sustainable coastal economies” ([www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management](http://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management)).

### References Cited

Houghton County. 2018. Houghton County Master Plan. Houghton County Board of Commissioners, Houghton, Mi.

MDEQ. 2012. Agreement for Conservation Easement, March 16. Stanton Township and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Lansing.

MDNR. 2021. Guidelines for Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans. Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lansing.

Outdoor Foundation. 2022. Outdoor Recreation Trends Report. Outdoor Foundation, Boulder, CO.

Redridge Study Group. 2009. Final Report of the Redridge Dams Study Group. On file with Stanton Township, Michigan.

Stanton Township. 2023a. Community Recreation Survey - Residents. On file at Stanton Township Hall, Houghton, MI.

Stanton Township. 2023b. Community Recreation Survey – Non-Resident Property Owners. On file at Stanton Township Hall, Houghton, MI.

WUPPDR. 2021. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022 - 2026. Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, Hancock, MI.

WUPPDR. 2010. Stanton Township Recreation Plan 2010 – 2014. Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, Hancock, MI.

## 7.0 - Action Program

Stanton Township is a small, local government with responsibility for a valuable portfolio of recreational properties and facilities within Houghton County, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Township does *not* currently have a Planning Commission, or a Park and Recreation Committee to advise the five members of the Township Board on matters pertaining to its recreational properties and facilities. However, the preparation of this 5-Year Recreation Plan is an important step toward improving recreation opportunities within the Township.

In order to accomplish as many goals and objectives as feasible within the next five years, the Stanton Township Board will establish and appoint a **Park and Recreation Committee**. In that regard, nearly two-thirds of residents (65%) and non-resident property owners (64%) who responded to the recent community recreation survey supported the “Creation of a Township Park and Recreation Committee to guide future operations and development at Township properties and facilities.” About 14% of residents and 19% of non-resident property owners did *not* support this action by Stanton Township, with others having no opinion (Stanton Township 2023a, 2023b).

The primary responsibility of the Stanton Township Park and Recreation Committee will be to prepare a detailed plan for accomplishing the goals and objectives described in the 5-Year Recreation Plan. The **Action Program** will prioritize the goals and objectives, and identify the specific projects and associated funding sources to accomplish the goals and objectives over the next five years. If beneficial, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources also suggests that the Action Program “include organizational, staffing, programming, public information, operation and maintenance actions, as well as land acquisition and facility development, if applicable. A capital improvement schedule for park development projects is not required, but may be useful for planning purposes and may include the type of improvement, the estimated cost, funding sources and a schedule of construction” (MDNR 2021:11).

A final draft Action Program will be presented to the Stanton Township Board of Supervisors for review and comment, prior to any discussions and resolutions by the Board.

## **8.0 - Supporting Documentation**

Copies of the following documents are required as part of the final, approved Stanton Township 5-Year Recreation Plan:

*Enabling act under which Stanton Township was established - (attached)*

*Notice of the 30 Days of Public Comment*

*Notice of the Public Hearing*

*Minutes from the Public Hearing*

*Minutes from the Meeting to Pass a Resolution of Adoption*

*Transmittal Letters to the County and Regional Planning Agencies*

Based on a review of the MDNR grant history on the MiGrants website, all past grants are closed, and do not require any “post-completion self-certification reports” for projects funded under Land and Water Conservation Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Recreation Passport Grant Program, Clean Michigan Initiative Fund, and Recreation Bond Fund.

Stanton town-  
ship to assume  
obligation.

Proviso.

SEC. 2. That that part of the indebtedness of said township of Hancock existing before said division, apportioned to the said township of Stanton, be and the same is hereby declared to be a valid and subsisting obligation of said township of Stanton, and that the said township board of said township of Stanton be and it is hereby authorized, in addition to all other taxes authorized by law, to assess upon the assessment rolls of said township in each year, such sum as in the judgment of said township board shall be sufficient to provide for a sinking fund for, and for the payment of said indebtedness when the same shall become due and until the same shall have been paid: Provided, That no moneys raised by such assessment shall be used for any other purpose than the payment of the said indebtedness and the interest to accrue thereon.

Approved February 12, 1903.

[No. 278.]

AN ACT to legalize the action of the board of supervisors of the county of Houghton in detaching certain lands from the township of Hancock in said county, and organizing the same into a new township, known as the township of Stanton.

*The People of the State of Michigan enact:*

Organization  
of Stanton  
township  
legalized.

Proviso.

SECTION 1. That the action of the board of supervisors of the county of Houghton in detaching certain lands from the township of Hancock in said county and organizing the same into a new township known as the township of Stanton, which action was had by the said board of supervisors by its resolution passed on the fourteenth day of April, nineteen hundred two, be and the same is hereby declared to be legal and valid in every respect, and that the further action of said board of supervisors in detaching certain other lands from said township of Hancock and attaching the same to said township of Stanton, so organized, which action was had by the resolution of said board of supervisors passed on the ninth day of December, nineteen hundred two, be and the same is hereby declared to be legal and valid in every respect, and that the township of Stanton as organized and as existing by said resolutions of said board of supervisors be and the same is hereby declared to be a legally organized and existing township of the said county of Houghton: Provided, That nothing in this act contained shall be construed as limiting or in any way affecting the power of said board of supervisors hereafter to divide or alter in its bounds the said township of Stanton in the manner provided by law.

Approved February 12, 1903.