

CHASSELL TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

2018 - 2023



**Chassell Township Recreation Committee
Chassell Township Planning Commission
Chassell, MI 49916**

March 30, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Chassell Township is fortunate to have an excellent assortment of outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities available to its residents and visitors to the “Copper Country.” This includes nearby recreational lands and facilities of Michigan Technological University, that typically would only be available in larger cities. Furthermore, there are remarkable outdoor recreation resources available throughout Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw Counties.

The Chassell Township Recreation Plan describes the community, and provides a basic inventory of existing recreation facilities, goals and objectives, and a five-year action program for future recreational development. A public hearing was held on March 9, 2018 to elicit comments on a Review Draft of the Plan. The 2018-2023 Recreation Plan was adopted by the Township Board on March 14, 2018 (Appendix A – Resolution of Township Board).

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Chassell Township is located in Houghton County in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. A portion of the Township borders Baraga County and Portage Lake, the Portage River, and Lake Superior’s Keweenaw Bay (Figure 1 – next page). The total land area for the Township is approximately 48 square miles.

During the 1880s, the site of the village of Chassell was purchased by the Sturgeon River Lumber Company for a sawmill and town site. The village and surrounding area grew in population, resulting in the Township of Chassell being chartered in 1888 by the State of Michigan. The village of Chassell served as a regional lumber processing center into the early 20th century. During the 1900s, the Worchester Lumber Company of Chassell was the largest sawmill in the Great Lakes region (Figure 2). Extensive lumbering operations ended by 1920.



Figure 2. Worchester Lumber Company sawmill site circa 1909-10 and today.

CHASSELL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

Copper Country ISD

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

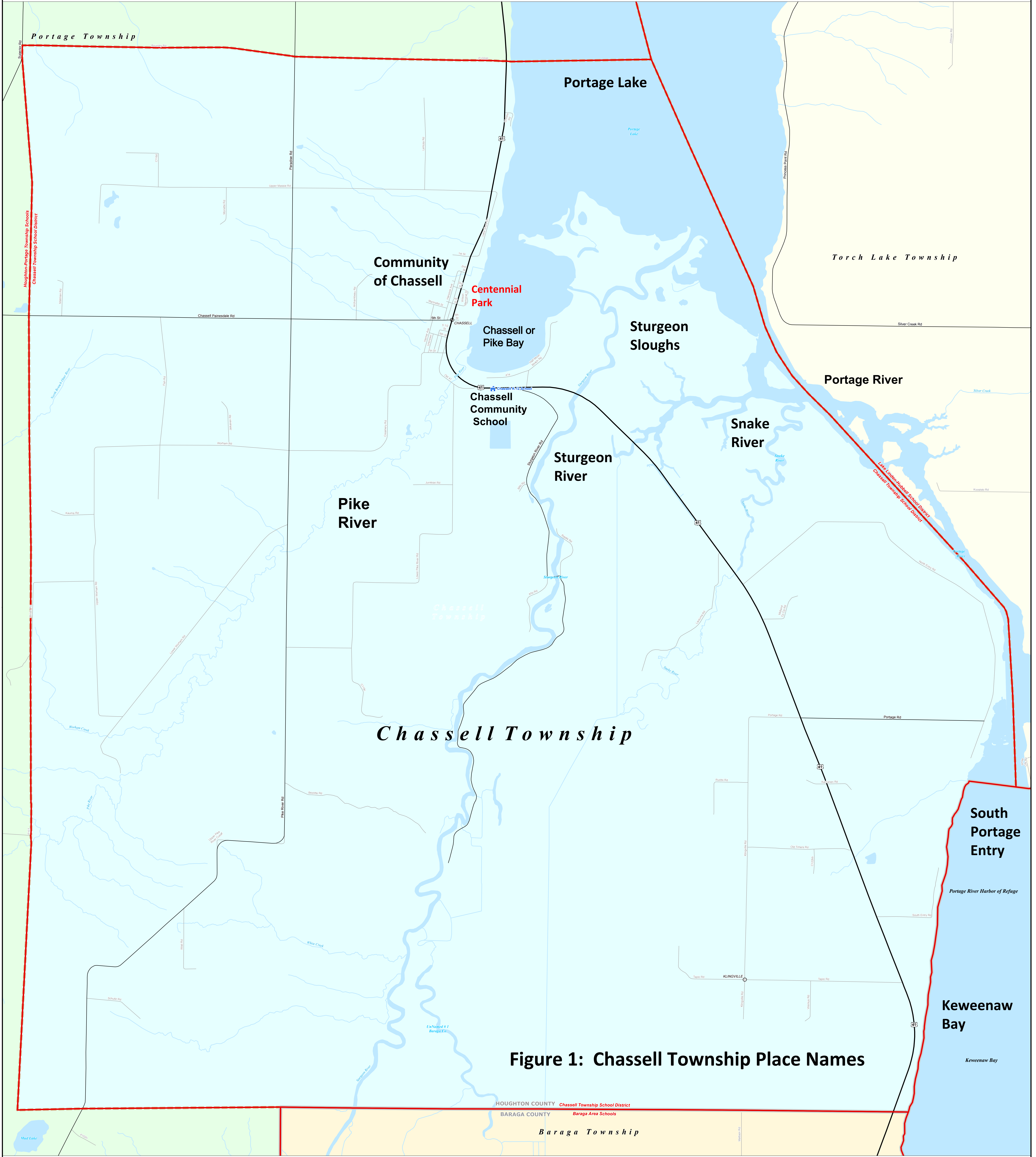


Figure 1: Chassell Township Place Names

Note: Non K-12 School Districts identified with Asterisk () in Name

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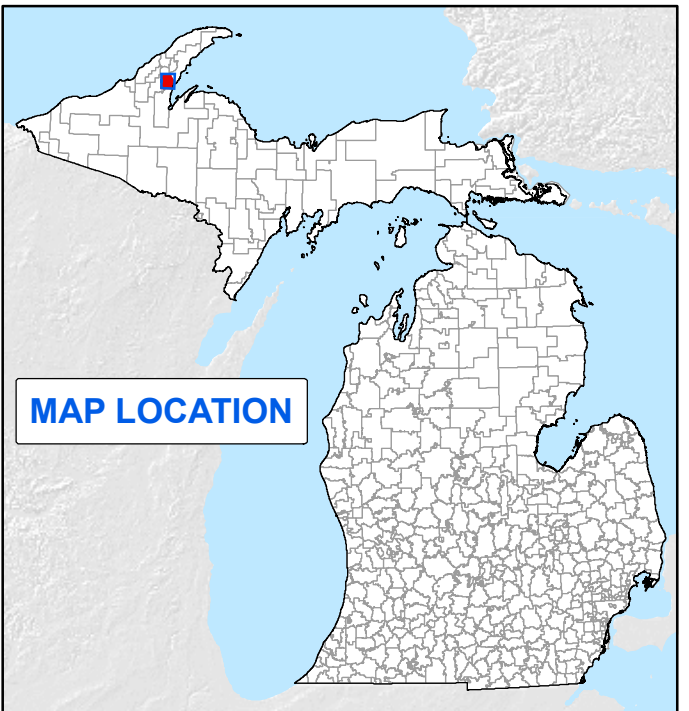
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FW Colors Vary

- School District
- County
- City
- Township
- Village
- Census Designated Place

Legend

- Unincorporated Place
- School
- Freeway
- Highway
- Primary Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Water Feature
- River, Stream, or Drain



Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, v13a

The population of the western Upper Peninsula reached a peak in the 1920s when mining and lumbering activities were booming. Since that time, there has been considerable out-migration of residents in response to the decline of those industries. The population of Houghton County and Chassell Township also followed this trend, decreasing 51.8 percent (71,930 to 34,652) in the period from 1920 to 1970. Since 1970, Houghton County's population has stabilized due to the presence of Michigan Technological University (MTU), government and service sectors. Chassell Township's population is further characterized by seasonal influxes of tourists. The 2010 U.S. Census recorded 1,812 residents with 1,330 residents age 20 or older.

The lands of Chassell Township are now largely rural in character with one main population center – the community of Chassell. The community is located on Chassell (Pike) Bay in the northwestern part of the Township and is predominantly residential, with many homes located along the east, west, and south shorelines of Chassell (Pike) Bay. Immediately north of town along Portage Lake is a concentration of year-round and seasonal homes, some of which are rented to tourists in the summer.

The community of Chassell is not incorporated, and therefore, is governed by the Chassell Township Board of Supervisors. The commercial character of the community is primarily roadside commercial, and composed of a service station, small bulk and specialty food store, small general store, bank, post office, small retail shops/professional services, and a few small lodging establishments (Figures 3 - 4). Within the town are several vacant lots, and additional large open space is located north and east of town.



Figure 3. Downtown Chassell heading south on US-41.



Figure 4. Downtown Chassell heading north on US-41.

East of town, along Chassell (Pike) Bay, is a large vacant tract of land which was previously occupied by the Worchester Lumber Company. A portion of this tract was acquired by the Township and dedicated to the public as Centennial Park (Figure 5). The Chassell Township School District operates a K-12 public school south of Chassell along US-41. Among recreation facilities on school district lands are a baseball field, an outdoor ice facility, and ski trail.



Figure 5. Centennial Park looking southeast toward Chassell (Pike) Bay.

Many Chassell residents are employed by Michigan Technological University in Houghton, or work in commercial establishments of the surrounding area. Most local residents and the summer tourist population go to the Houghton-Hancock area to do their shopping.

Chassell Township is well suited for agricultural purposes due to its unique micro-climate conditions. The soils and climate are especially well-suited for strawberries and blueberries, and most of the approximately 650 acres planted in Houghton County are in Chassell Township (Figure 6). Chassell is the home of the Copper Country Strawberry Festival, held in July. However, farming activity has declined over the years.



Figure 6. Chassell Township's maritime micro-climate supports agricultural fruit production, and its annual Copper Country Strawberry Festival.

Chassell Township's climate is affected by Lake Superior, moderating temperatures and generating large amounts of snow during the winter months. Average snowfall in the area exceeds 200 inches annually. The coldest month is January, when temperatures average 14.6°F. The hottest month is July, with an average temperature of 65.6°F. Prevailing winds are southerly during warm weather and northwesterly during the rest of the year.

Chassell Township has a variable topography with ridges and valleys which generally run southwest to northeast. Slopes along the ridges range from 8.1 to 15 percent, and exceed 15 percent in several small areas. However, most of the land in the township is quite flat, with slopes of less than 8 percent. The northwestern portion of the Township is the most rugged with elevations exceeding 1,000 feet above MSL (mean sea level datum). In the central portion, elevations decrease to almost 600 feet along Chassell (Pike) Bay and the valleys of the Sturgeon and Snake Rivers. Extensive swampy areas are found between these two rivers and on the delta,

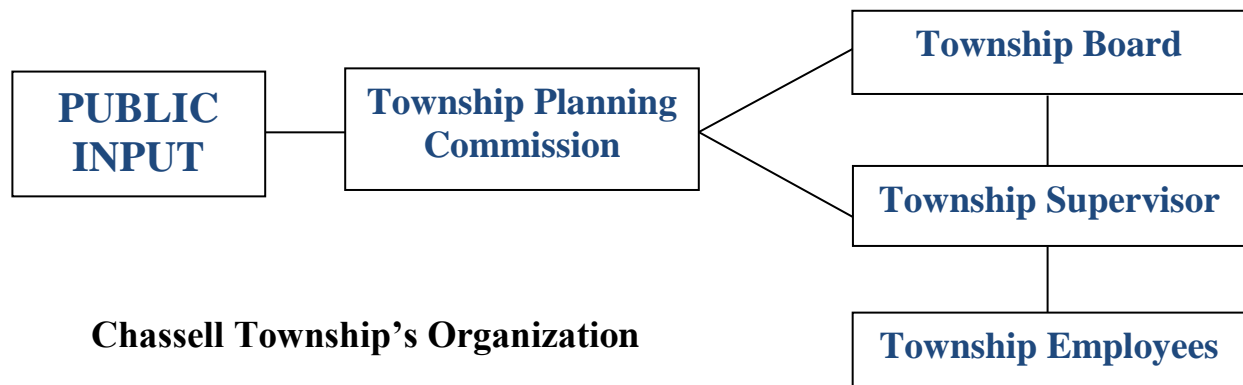
which forms at their mouths. East of the river valleys, elevations again rise to 757 feet on a small ridge in the east central portion of the Township. Elevations along Keweenaw Bay range from 606 to 670 feet above sea level.

Chassell Township lies in the Sturgeon and Portage drainage areas, both of which flow into Lake Superior. The Sturgeon River basin includes the Snake River, the Pike River, Sturgeon River, Otter River, and several small tributaries. This basin drains western Baraga County and southern Houghton County, and empties into Portage Lake at Chassell. There are no known sources of industrial waste discharging into the basin, but runoff from agricultural activities near the mouth may have a minor influence on water quality. The Portage drainage area includes Portage Lake and River, the Trap Rock River, and numerous creeks in northern Houghton County. The Portage River and Lake serves as a shipping channel.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Park and recreation properties/facilities within Chassell Township are administered primarily by the 5-member Township Board of Supervisors, with exception of school district-related properties/facilities. Township ski trails are managed by volunteer groups. The Recreation Committee of the Chassell Township Planning Commission assists the Board in the preparation of action plans and proposals associated with recreation opportunities in the Township. Major initiatives are discussed and voted on by the Township Board before implementation. A basic organization chart is included below.

Chassell Township supports and maintains park and recreation facilities through annual budget appropriations. For fiscal year 2017 (April 1 – March 31), Chassell Township expended approximately \$12,480 for maintenance and upgrades of facilities (this includes \$3,680 for new security cameras at Centennial Park). Additional funds are budgeted for development of new recreation projects and facilities, as funds are available. The maintenance of park and recreation facilities are carried out primarily by Township employees.



Chassell Township's Organization

DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the 2018-2023 Chassell Township Recreation Plan included (1) solicitation of initial public comments at regular business meetings of the Chassell Township Planning Commission in 2017; (2) design and implementation of a community survey about recreational opportunities in Chassell Township; (3) review and assessment of public comments and survey results for integration in the new Recreation Plan; (4) preparation of a review draft of the 2018-2023 Chassell Township Recreation Plan for final public comment (March 9, 2018), and; (5) presentation of a final draft plan to the Chassell Township Board of Supervisors for approval.

The results of the Chassell Township Recreation Plan Survey (2017) were especially important in identifying priority recreation improvements in Chassell Township over the next five years. Chassell Township mailed a postcard notice of the recreation plan survey to all recorded households and post office boxes in the Township in late July 2017. Residents and a few adjoining non-residents were encouraged to complete a SurveyMonkey questionnaire online, or pick-up a hard copy of the questionnaire during the month of August 2017. A total of 165 residents of Chassell Township and 9 non-residents completed the questionnaire.

A final draft survey report was distributed to the Chassell Township Recreation Committee prior to the business meeting of the Chassell Township Planning Commission on November 2, 2017. After review and discussion, the Commission accepted the report without substantive change. Preliminary conclusions and recommendations included the following:

- The development of a dog park adjacent to Centennial Park received the most support of respondents in terms of enhancement of facilities and services at the Park. Although the other possible enhancements (i.e. public marina, rustic campground, recreational vehicle campground) received majority support, the large number of undecided responses indicate that the Township should further engage residents to discuss these potential enhancements in greater detail.
- Of all recreation enhancements and improvements presented in the survey questionnaire, the concepts of a fitness trail and water trail(s) received the most support by respondents (almost 3:1 in favor). In addition, the control of Milfoil in Chassell Bay was favored by respondents by a ratio of over 2:1. The control of Milfoil can also be viewed as an enhancement of water quality and aesthetics that benefit any recreational activities making use of Chassell (Pike) Bay. However, the Township should be cautious about devoting more resources to maintenance of Misslitz Field until the underlying reasons for the strong opposition is better understood by Township leadership.

- As for recreation program development, respondents indicated the greatest support for more resources for youth and teen recreation programs. This may reflect current societal concerns about the lack of youth and teen involvement in the outdoors as well as the lack of recreation opportunities for this age group in general. Additional resources for adult and senior programs were much less favored by respondents than youth and teen program development. The respondents were also supportive of more resources devoted to tourism marketing and development (if economically beneficial), and collaboration with the Chassell Heritage Center, which is located within walking distance of the Centennial Park.

Previously, several Chassell Township residents participated in a strategic community planning process during the 1990s. This program helped the Township identify issues and opportunities in the community, and defined specific projects and actions. Recreation facilities, specifically the Centennial Park, were identified as very important to the community, contributing significantly to the quality of life. A majority of the improvements to Centennial Park recommended in the strategic community planning process have now been completed (i.e. Pavilion expansion, swimming beach, dredging). However, some improvements were not completed and are included in this Recreation Plan.

The Township Board later recognized the importance of recreation opportunities to the quality of life in Chassell Township by hosting a public hearing to assist in the preparation of the 2012 - 2017 Chassell Township Recreation Plan. The Township solicited other public input by inserting a note to landowners in December 2010 property tax bills, encouraging them to participate in an online-survey (SurveyMonkey.com). Ideas and recommendations generated from public input for the previous Recreation Plan are also represented in this Plan.

RECREATION INVENTORY

CHASSELL TOWNSHIP RECREATION FACILITIES

A variety of outdoor and indoor recreation facilities are found in Chassell Township and the surrounding area, as summarized below.

Chassell Township School

The Chassell Township School System consists of a K-12 school building (1991) located near the community of Chassell. Facilities on the school grounds include a gymnasium and playground. A multi-purpose field is under construction.



Misslitz Field

The Misslitz Field ballpark is located west of the old high school property. The 4-acre site includes a little league/softball field and the Township's cross-country ski trailhead.

MDNR Rail-Trail

The old Soo Line Railroad grade is currently owned by the State of Michigan and managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The public easement runs from the south end of Chassell (Sturgeon River Bridge) to the north end of the Township, paralleling US-41. The MDNR trail provides local opportunities for walking and bicycling. It is currently open to snowmobile use during winter, but is closed to ATV (4-wheel) use (Figure 7).



Figure 7. MDNR Rail-Trail in Centennial Park – looking north in summer and south in winter.

Centennial Park

The Chassell Township Centennial Park is located on Chassell (Pike) Bay (Figures 8 - 10). This facility was developed with the assistance of MDNR Waterways Division, LAWCON and MNRTF funding, and is continually being improved as funds become available. Several improvements recommended by the Master Shoreline Plan for Pike Bay, Portage Lake (U.P. Engineers & Architects, Inc., prob. 1995) were made in recent years by the Township. Of special importance was a new fishing dock accessed by a boardwalk from the Centennial Park parking lot, thereby expanding fishing opportunities for youth and adults. In addition, a new fish-and-game-cleaning station is now available to the public at Centennial Park. The project was funded by the Township, donations, and a MDNR Land and Water Conservation Grant.

The Park includes:

- two boat launching ramps with trailer parking
- fishing and mooring docks
- swimming beach (improved during the winter of 2004-2005)
- small picnic area
- playground equipment
- horseshoe courts
- vault toilet
- three-season restroom facilities (installed 2014)
- ice skating rink (winter months only)
- open air pavilion
- community center building and pavilion

The community center building includes a kitchen, walk in cooler, restroom/ changing rooms, and a meeting room. The building is designed for multi-seasonal use, including summer activities, the skating rink, and the staging of year-round fishing tournaments.



Figure 8. Fish-and-game cleaning station in foreground; community center building and pavilion in background.



Figure 9. Centennial Park parking lot in foreground; playground and picnic area in background with Chassell (Pike) Bay.



Figure 10. Fishing dock in winter; ice fishing on Pike Bay with access through Centennial Park.

Ski Trail Loop

Chassell Township has cooperated with a volunteer group for the development and maintenance of ski trails. A 10-kilometer groomed ski trail loop is located near the Chassell Heritage Center (Figure 11). The Township supports improvements that would make the ski trail more usable as a nature trail for non-winter months; there is also support for expanding the ski trail.



Figure 11. Chassell traditional cross-country ski trail.

Sturgeon River Sloughs and South Portage Entry

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains a public access site at the Sturgeon River Sloughs. This access site is located two miles south of the community of Chassell. The Sloughs is known for hunting and fishing opportunities, as these wetlands provide excellent fish and waterfowl habitat (Fig. 12). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operate an access site at the South Portage Entry (Fig. 13). This site is located five miles south of Chassell, and includes a boat launch, a large concrete pier used to tie-up large craft, and a picnic area with vaulted toilets. Portage Lake and the Keweenaw Waterway are included in the larger Keweenaw Water Trail, marketed and managed by the Keweenaw Water Trail Association (<http://kwta.org>).



Figure 12. Kayaking the cut from Pike Bay to Sturgeon River and Sloughs.



Figure 13. Looking north to South Portage Entry and Lake Superior.

In addition to Chassell Township recreational facilities, the City of Houghton and Michigan Technological University (MTU) offer facilities for Chassell Township residents. The MTU campus provides extensive indoor/sports facilities, including an ice arena, ball fields, Student Development Complex (e.g., basketball courts, indoor running track, indoor pool, racket ball courts, fitness equipment), and tennis courts. These facilities are available to the public on a fee basis. The nearest indoor swimming pools are at Finlandia University (Hancock), MTU (Houghton), and the Houghton-Portage Township High School in Houghton.

OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES

In addition to the facilities described above, there are numerous other recreation opportunities in the Keweenaw Peninsula. This includes several state and national parks that are easily accessible to residents of Chassell Township, including Isle Royale National Park, McLain State Park, Fort Wilkins Historic State Park, Twin Lakes State Park, and Baraga State Park. The Keweenaw National Historical Park is preserving important cultural heritage sites in the region associated with historical copper mining, milling, and smelting. Included among these sites is the Chassell Heritage Center, located within the former Southwell Elementary School.

Ice skating and hockey are popular winter sports in the region. Indoor ice facilities are located at the Houghton County Arena in Hancock, the Dee Stadium in Houghton, and the MTU Student Development Center in Houghton. Downhill skiing can be experienced at MTU's Mont Ripley Ski Hill, near Hancock; at Mt. Bohemia in Keweenaw County; and at the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Ontonagon County.

Cross-country skiing has long been a traditional winter activity within the Keweenaw region, and its growing popularity in the Midwest has benefited regional tourism. In addition to the Chassell Trail, groomed and tracked trails are found north of Chassell at Copper Harbor, Eagle Harbor, Calumet (Swedetown Trails), Hancock (Maasto Hiito Trails), Houghton (Michigan Tech Trails), and south of Chassell at Twin Lakes, Courtney Lake (Ottawa National Forrest), and near L'Anse (Pinery Trails). More trails are needed in the area to attract/accommodate visiting skiers.

The Keweenaw Peninsula is rich in water-orientated recreation opportunities. In addition to the Sturgeon River and Sloughs, Chassell (Pike) Bay, Portage Lake, Portage and Snake Rivers, and Lake Superior, the region contains numerous inland lakes and streams.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the 2018-2023 Chassell Township Recreation Plan is to meet the primary recreation needs of full-time and seasonal residents of Chassell Township in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The objective of this Recreation Plan is to provide a list of priority recreation development concepts for Chassell Township, to be pursued by the Township Board of Supervisors through grants, contributions, and internal funds.

Based on the review and assessment of public comments and survey results in 2017-18, the Recreation Committee recommends four priority development concepts: **(1) enhancement of the recreational trail system** (i.e. establishment of a trail authority for the MDNR Rail-Trail, re-establishment of a snowmobile trail link from Chassell to the Nichols Trail at Painesdale, and mapping of the existing trails), **(2) fitness trail**, **(3) water trail**, and **(4) dog park**. (The priority ranking of these projects has not been determined.) In addition, the Township should continue to pursue funding for a **marina feasibility study** and **campground feasibility study for Centennial Park**, as recommended in the previous Recreation Plan. A summary of these recreation development concepts is provided in the next sections.

Enhancement of Recreational Trail System

Discussions are underway with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Portage Township on the (1) establishment of a trail authority for the MDNR Rail-Trail that runs through Chassell Township and Portage Township, and (2) re-establishment of a snowmobile trail from Chassell that would connect with the Nichols Trail at Painesdale. A trail authority would allow greater managerial control of the Rail-Trail by local government and community members.

Chassell Township should also consider the funding of interpretive signage describing the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The interpretive signage should be incorporated into the recreational trail system and Centennial Park, as funding opportunities become available. In this regard, discussions are underway to establish an historic interpretive trail on the former site of the Worcester Lumber Company sawmill, through a private land owner's easement. The Recreation Committee also supports the preparation of trail maps for winter and summer seasons. An initial cost estimate for trail mapping was provided by Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. in January 2017 at an overall cost of \$2,000.

Fitness Trail

Most fitness trails typically consist of a 0.5 to 2-mile trail or pathway designed as a loop, with about 10 to 20 exercise stations spaced relatively evenly alongside the trail. Generally, the path consists of either pavement or gravel and each station is surrounded by a bed of wood chips. Additionally, each station always has some type of signage designating the station's purpose and how to use it. Many community-level fitness trails are accessible to people of all fitness levels

and motorized vehicles are usually not allowed. Lastly, most fitness trails have some sort of "scenic" element.

Based on these characteristics, the recommended location of the fitness trail is the old Soo Line railroad bed (i.e. MDNR Rail-Trail) that runs through Centennial Park. This railroad bed runs continuously from the Portage Township line north of Chassell to the Sturgeon River crossing of US-41 south of town (approximately 2.5 miles). The fitness trail would be designed on the southernmost 1.5 miles of railroad bed, with easy access within Centennial Park. The railroad bed could accommodate about 15 distinctly different exercise stations spaced about 1/10 mile apart. However, some stations might best be combined or even clustered together if available space is an issue. The existing base of stamp sand on the railroad bed could eliminate the need for costly pavement or gravel.

The railroad bed runs through and overlooks a variety of scenic habitats, including wooded areas, the more open areas of Centennial Park, and Chassell Bay. The layout of the railroad bed is not a loop as are most fitness trails, but in most places the trail is wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic, and there are multiple entry points to the trail. Trees and brush could be cleared to set-up exercise stations where the trail is narrower in width (within wooded areas).

Water Trail

Public access sites and publicly available information are commonly recognized as very important aspects of water trail development. Water trails should also be clearly marked, designated for non-motorized watercrafts, and integrated with other forms of recreation, such as public parks and areas for wading and fishing. It is important for landscapes surrounding the water trails to be aesthetically pleasing (whether the lands are in private or public ownership, developed or undeveloped) and for there to be little or no environmental pollution.

The large amount and variety of publicly available surface waters in Chassell Township make the area a prime location for development of water trail(s), with the potential of associated business and local economic development. Initially, the priorities for water trail development should be on the Sturgeon and Pike Rivers, as well as the Sturgeon Sloughs. Recreationists of all skill levels may paddle down these natural, aesthetically pleasing rivers during summer, when the water is not flowing quickly. During spring, when the water levels rise from snow melt, more experienced paddlers may enjoy the increased current flow.

However, there are currently few public access or pull-out sites along either river. Therefore, public access or pull-out sites need to be developed at strategic locations along the shorelands. There are many potential locations for such sites along both rivers using publicly-owned lands that could be developed on a relatively inexpensive basis (e.g., Township land near the Sturgeon River Bridge on US-41). The tragic winter 2018 vehicle/fuel tanker fatality accident resulting in a 5,000-gallon fuel spill at the Sturgeon River Bridge has made the development of this riverside site a top priority. Toward this end, the Township has initiated discussions with the MDNR

about funding to develop a combination motor boat launch and canoe/kayak launch site on the northwest side of the US-41 Sturgeon River Bridge.

Centennial Park is also a prime location for development as a water “trailhead.” The parking lot and swimming area in the Park can be used for easy access to Chassell (Pike) Bay, which connects to other local waterways. Use of the water trails, if associated with a Centennial Park “trailhead,” may also bring additional use to the proposed fitness trail, dog park, and other Park facilities. Information boards and maps should be installed at Centennial Park and any access points along the water trails. The Centennial Park Community Center, Chassell Heritage Center, and local businesses could assist in marketing the water trail by distributing pamphlets that include maps and information about the water trails and other local recreation opportunities.

If user demand justified its consideration, water trails could be expanded along Portage Lake and River, Snake River, and into Keweenaw Bay. These routes would provide paddling opportunities not found within local river systems, especially in terms of open water navigation and exposure to varying shoreland scenery.

Dog Park

Currently, there are no publicly available dog parks in Keweenaw, Houghton, and Baraga Counties. The primary design needs of dog parks in the United States are adequate parking, surface material, fencing, signage with park rules, and waste bag stations. People are generally more likely to visit a dog park with nearby parking and easy access from a main road. The recommended surface material is a grass and soil mixture, or a wood mulch. These materials are easy to maintain and are relatively inexpensive over time. Fencing around an off-leash dog park needs to be high enough that no dogs can jump the fence. The reported minimum fencing heights ranged from 4.5 – 6.0 feet. Drainage was the most common problem found within the dog parks. High traffic areas, like the entrance to the park, get worn down faster than other areas. This allows for water to pool and create wet spots that take time to dry up.

Concerns expressed about dog park development during the public hearing included the potential of spread of Parvo or other diseases, dog bites, and control of entry. These concerns could be alleviated with a fee-based key pass purchased locally to help support the maintenance of the dog park. The key pass would be provided upon proof of current vaccinations and other criteria. The site with the greatest potential for an off-leash dog park is a portion of shoreland just south of the Centennial Park boat ramp (southeast of the community center pavilion). This was the former site of a large sawmill owned by the Worchester Lumber Company. This area does not currently receive much use and meets many of the requirements for an off-leash dog park. The sawdust surface of this site is consistent with recommended surface materials – it is assumed that the existence of this surface material will save time and money associated with construction of the dog park. The area is also large enough and near adequate parking for many visitors to use the dog park at the same time. One weakness to this location is the presence of a line of trees

blocking the site from the rest of the Park. These trees would need to be thinned, or some removed, to make an entrance path to the dog park.

A simple fence with wood posts, metal chain-link, and a double-gated entrance should be adequate in design of the dog park. Creating a gap in the tree line surrounding the site would allow for a short trail to be constructed leading into the dog park. This would provide the feeling of being slightly secluded from the rest of the Park and make the dog park more private. The tree line could also be thinned to provide a better view of Pike Bay from the dog park. More parking may eventually be needed near the Community Center to accommodate an increase of visitors to the dog park.

A letter of inquiry has recently been sent by the Recreation Committee to the Portage Health Foundation regarding potential support of the dog park. Funding would provide for a boundary survey along private property and materials for a perimeter fence (including posts) with a separate internal fenced area for smaller dogs. Funding would also provide for needed gates and signage for the off-leash dog park as well as trail development (excavation and materials) and interpretative signs for a historical trail which would be both within and extend outside of the off-leash dog park (Figure 14). The entrance to the historical interpretive trail would be located just outside of the off-leash dog park.

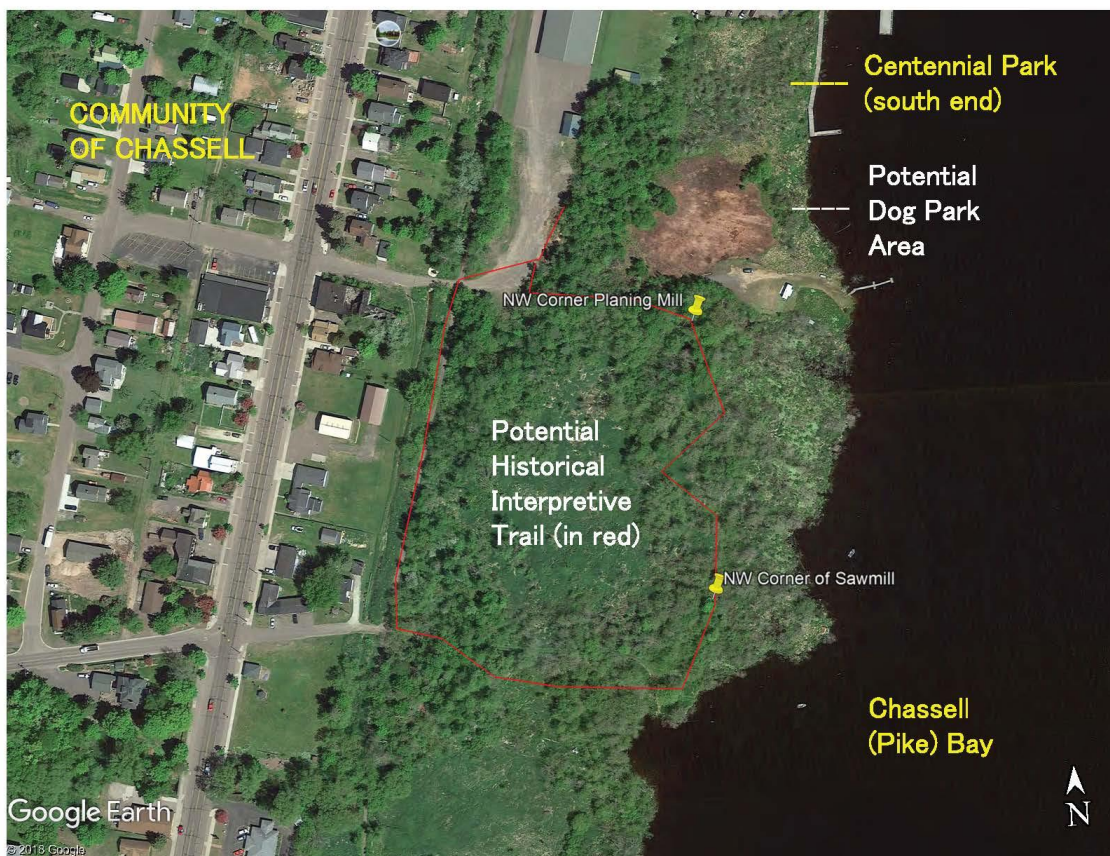


Figure 14. Potential location of dog park and historical interpretive trail.

ACTION PROGRAM

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

The priorities for recreation-related capital improvements by Chassell Township during 2018-2023 are a **fitness trail**, **water trail(s)**, and **dog park**. The control of Milfoil growth in Chassell (Pike) Bay would be of benefit in development of the water trail(s). These three recreation development concepts and the control of Milfoil received the strongest support of respondents to the Chassell Township Recreation Plan Survey (2017). These recreation development concepts are summarized in the previous section of this Plan, and would best be designed in association with an updated master plan for Centennial Park. In the current fiscal environment, Chassell Township must partner with businesses, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and community groups in completing recreation-related capital improvements.

The priority for recreation-related capital improvements in the 2012-2017 Chassell Township Recreation Plan was **enhancement of recreational trails within the Township**. These improvements were to focus on pedestrian, non-motorized as well as motorized trails, depending on the particular project. In particular, the Township identified improvement of the MDNR Rail-Trail running from Chassell's Centennial Park to the City of Houghton as an immediate need. In the long-run, the Township hopes to develop and market Centennial Park as an easily assessable trailhead with existing parking infrastructure, potable water, and public restrooms.

In 2018-2023, Chassell Township will focus on establishment of a trail authority for the MDNR Rail-Trail; mapping of the recreational trail system and preparation of guide maps for the public; installation of interpretive signage about the natural and cultural heritage of the area; and other recreational trail enhancements as funding opportunities becomes available.

2018-2023 Priority Capital Improvement Projects:

Fitness Trail, Water Trail(s), Dog Park
Marina and Campground Feasibility Studies for Centennial Park

Other Priority Recreational Enhancements:

Establishment of a Trail Authority for the MDNR Rail-Trail
Trail Mapping and Interpretive Signage
Other Trail Improvements

OTHER RECREATION ENHANCEMENTS

During the data gathering phase for the 2012-2017 Recreation Plan, Township residents offered many ideas for possible recreation-related projects. Based on the input of residents, Township officials identified the following primary needs and ideas for recreation-related capital improvements.

Marina Feasibility Study

The Township still considers the construction of a public marina at Centennial Park to be a priority recreation-related capital improvement. Therefore, a feasibility study aimed at identifying site development options and construction methods needs to be funded and carried out. The study should also provide estimates of user demand, construction and operational costs, and possible funding and phasing opportunities.

The community of Chassell bears a strong physical, social, and historical relationship to Chassell (Pike) Bay and the Keweenaw Waterway. Historically, Chassell was founded along the water as a lumber town. With logging technology no longer water dependent, the Chassell waterfront is being reclaimed and re-utilized by the local community. Residents recognize the important role water recreation resources can play in the economic prosperity of this quiet, friendly community, and hope to build upon their capacity to attract boaters.

Campground Feasibility Study

The Township is considering overnight use of Centennial Park by constructing a small camping area. Several locations have been suggested for such a facility, which needs to be isolated from nearby residential properties. The Township considering both primitive tenting sites as well as recreational vehicle (RV) sites with power, water and sewer.

Nature Trails

The design and construction of new nature trails in the Township would greatly increase the use of existing natural environments. The Township is interested in exploring any nature trail development concept that the community desires, whether along Chassell (Pike) Bay or inland. The Township believes that the construction of nature trails with boardwalks would allow access to areas currently inaccessible.

Mountain Biking/Snowshoe Trails

Expansion of the ski trail recreation area to include mountain biking and snowshoe trails would expand use of this recreation area. Mountain biking is rapidly becoming a popular activity. The addition of mountain biking trails would attract tourism to the area. The mountain biking trails would be maintained and used for snowshoe trails in the winter.

Skate Board Park

Local skate boarders currently do not have a designated area or facility to pursue their recreational activities. The conversion of the old ice rink concrete slab into a skate board park would expand these recreation opportunities for youth. The old ice rink is currently in disrepair and not utilized by residents.

Lastly, the following list of recreation-related development needs and ideas was generated during a December 8, 2010 public hearing in support of the 2012-2017 Recreation Plan.

- Boardwalk along Pike Bay
- Overnight campground near Centennial Park
- More water recreation opportunities
- Year-round pavilion
- Railroad grade – trail for walking in summer, snowmobile in winter
- Ski trail expansion – night skiing
- Snowshoe trails
- Warming house for ski trails
- Mountain biking trails
- Skate board park
- Full-service marina
- Community garden
- Multi-use trails joining other communities – preferably paved
- Separate the current boat launch from the swimming beach
- Spend more dollars on existing recreational opportunities to add amenities
- Clean up debris from Portage Lake/Chassell Bay
- Can restroom facility at Park be made easier to clean?
- Ice rink expansion
- Publish in print or on a website a map of all recreation opportunities in the Township

REFERENCES

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U.P. Engineers and Architects, Inc. prob. 1995. Shoreline Master Plan, Pike Bay and Portage Lake, Chassell Township. UPEA, Houghton, MI

Vrana, Kenneth J. and Kallan A. Green. 2017. Final Report: Chassell Township Recreation Plan Survey. Special Report FCF-2017-01. Ford Center and Forest, SFRES, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI.

NOTE: An approved copy of the Chassell Township Recreation Plan 2018-2023; Final Report: Chassell Township Recreation Plan Survey (2017); Chassell Township Recreation Plan 2012-17; Shoreline Master Plan, Pike Bay and Portage Lake, Chassell Township (1995); and other information about Chassell Township are available for viewing on the Township website:

www.chassell.net

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Photo Credits: Keith Myers of the Chassell Township Recreation Committee provided all photos with exception of Figure 2 (sawmill historical view from the Chassell Heritage Center), Figures 7 and 10 (winter images of MDNR Rail-Trail and fishing dock from Kenneth J. Vrana), and Figures 11 (young ski racers) and 13 (both open source).

**Chassell Township Recreation Committee
Chassell Township Planning Commission
Chassell, MI 49916**

March 30, 2018

