

Acknowledgements

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

Oscoda County Board of Commissioners

Oscoda County Planning Commission

Oscoda County Municipalities

Big Creek Township
Clinton Township
Comins Township
Elmer Township
Greenwood Township
Mentor Township

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

United States Forest Service

Steve Goldman, District Ranger

Oscoda County Chamber of Commerce

Northeast Council of Governments

*Includes concepts and information from previous Master Plans,
Including the Master Plan for 2007-2011, for which
planning services were provided by:*



Gosling Czubak Engineering Sciences, Inc.
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Traverse City, MI 49686-8607

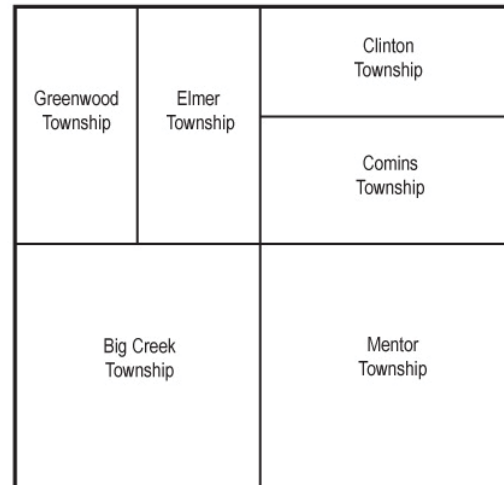
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Preface

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

Oscoda County is a unique part of Northeast Lower Michigan, and is home to some of the best natural resource based recreation in the State; recreation that includes multi-use trails, camping, hiking, fishing, and horseback riding. These trail systems paired with thousands of acres of unspoiled Jack Pine Forest, the Au Sable River corridor, and numerous inland lakes, streams and wetlands create a highly desirable recreation and leisure time destination.



THE MASTER PLAN “TOOL BOX” CONCEPT

On behalf of Oscoda County, the Planning Commission offers the 2014 Master Plan as a “tool box” for regional (county-wide) growth. The Planning Commission recognizes the importance of planned growth and smart growth tactics, which lays the ground work for this plan. The “tool box” theme was developed as means to provide the local jurisdictions (townships) with a resource for land use planning and development. The county recognizes that township master plans are essential at a local level to ensure a consensual planning among residents, and chooses not to enforce county zoning or ordinances that might conflict with township master plans. In conclusion, the county’s wish is to provide a tool for growth that townships and communities will pick-up and utilize.

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CHAPTER 1 – The Planning Process

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

- 1.1 – INTRODUCTION
- 1.2 – PLAN CREATION
- 1.3 – HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan is intended to guide policy and decision making for future land use, infrastructure and public service decisions within Oscoda County. The Plan identifies key planning issues, existing land use, guiding principles, policies, and action steps that are instrumental to its implementation as a resource. Background information, analysis and recommendations provide a context for informed decisions.

Proposed future land uses and policies presented in this Plan were developed based on a combination of the natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of development; the important natural functions of unique land and water resources in the area; the future need for residential, commercial and industrial land uses; the existing land use distribution, including the State and Federal Forest areas; the relationship of undeveloped lands to existing community character; and the desires of local residents and public officials as expressed throughout this process.

This Master Plan is adopted pursuant to the authority of the County Planning Act, PA 282 of 1945, as amended. This Act provides for the preparation of a basic plan to promote the community health, safety and welfare through provision for the use of land and resources and the assurance of adequate public facilities and services. The Oscoda County Master Plan is prepared as a foundation for, and depends primarily on, the County's desire to promote smart growth. It is hoped that cooperation with local planning commissions within the County will result in compatible local land use plans so that a coordinated approach will be achieved.

1.2 PLAN CREATION

The Oscoda County Planning Commission is responsible for this document. Working together with planning consultant, Gosling Czubak, the Planning Commission gathered key stakeholders together and began the process of seeking public input. Two public input meetings have been held, the first focusing on existing land use and visioning for the future. The second public meeting was a joint meeting that focused more specifically on recreational goals.

1.3 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

ORGANIZATION & COORDINATION

COUNTY LEVEL

Utilize the PLAN for organizing plans to develop County Program Expenditures including solid waste and recycling facilities; utility and sewage disposal sites; large-scale developments; fire and emergency services; and affordable housing.

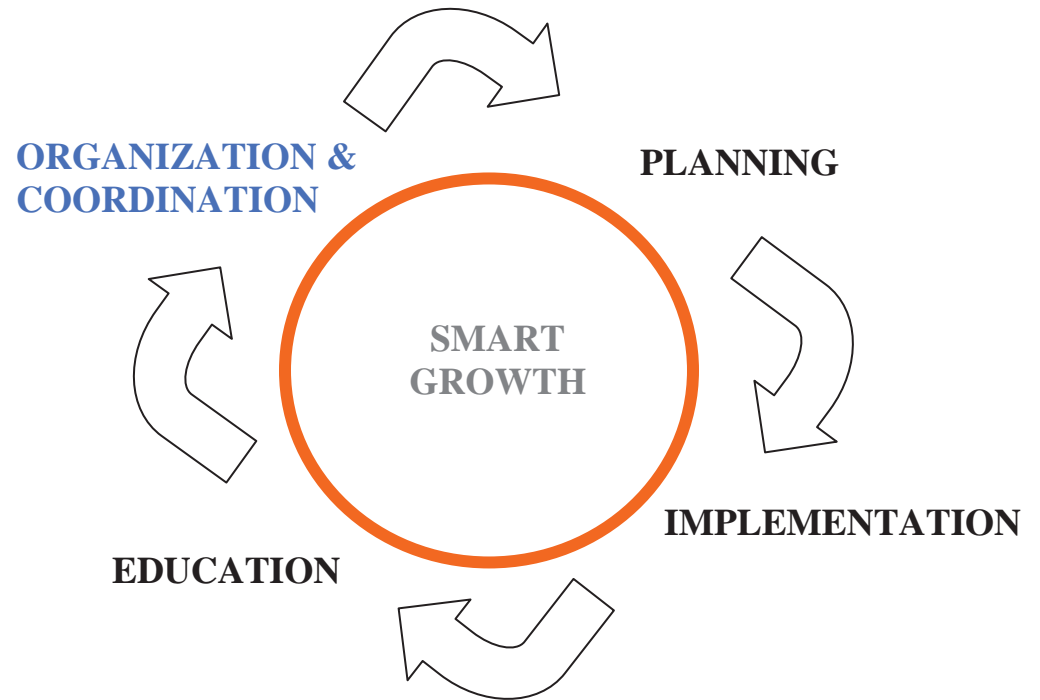
Utilize every time the Oscoda County Planning Commission meets.

TOWNSHIP LEVEL

Utilize the county PLAN as a “tool box” for land use decisions and organize township planning in the greater County context.

JOINT LEVEL (County & Township)

Utilize the PLAN to stimulate and facilitate intergovernmental cooperation (i.e., among not only the County and local units of government, but also private and semi-private organizations, area schools, the DNR, the Soil Conservation Service, adjoining county of governments, etc.).



PLANNING

COUNTY LEVEL

Utilize every time the Oscoda County Planning Commission meets.

Utilize when reviewing proposed public facility expenditures for consistency.

Utilize when fulfilling the statutory responsibility to review township plans and zoning amendments

Utilize the PLAN to identify Transportation Issues

TOWNSHIP LEVEL

Utilize the PLAN when developing township master plans, land use plans, or sub-area plans.

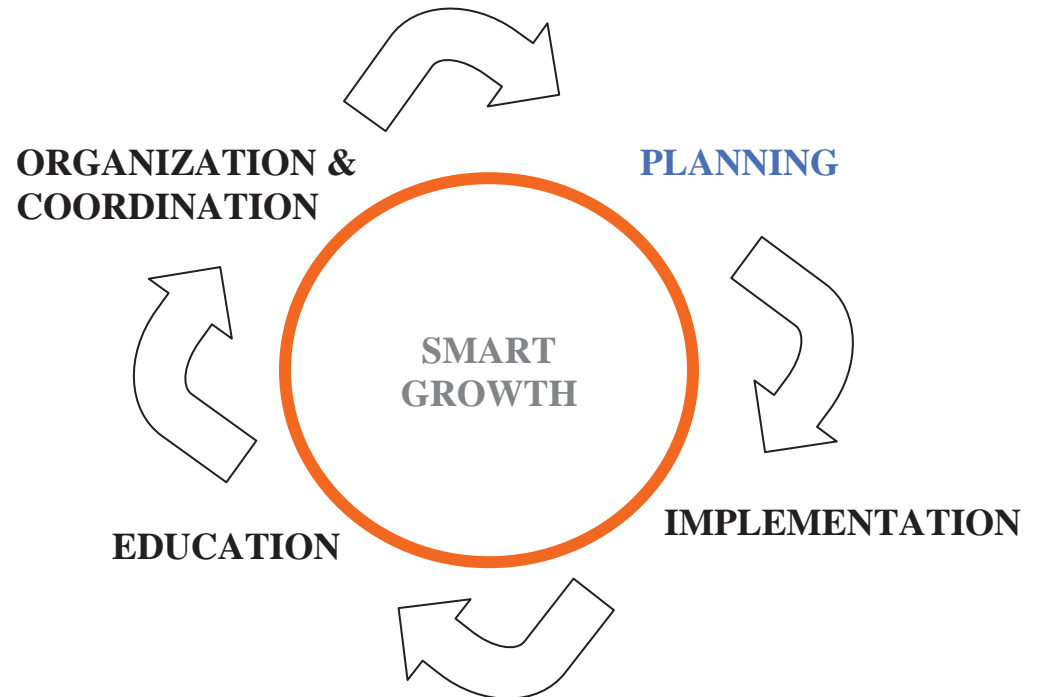
Utilize when reviewing, coordinating, or preparing specialized plans that address a particular subject, including housing.

JOINT LEVEL (County & Township)

Utilize when preparing and reviewing capital improvement programs and the public works projects of other local agencies.

Utilize when making township and County public facility and infrastructure decisions.

Utilize the PLAN when preparing measures to protect sensitive environmental areas, protecting air and water quality, and identifying long term resource management decisions, especially with regard to renewable resources, and critical plant and animal habitats.



IMPLEMENTATION

COUNTY LEVEL

Utilize every time the Oscoda County Planning Commission meets.

TOWNSHIP LEVEL

Utilize when reviewing applications for re-zonings, subdivisions, variances, and special use permits.

JOINT LEVEL (County & Township)

Use as a base reference for joint or separate community, township, and County grant activities as a frame of reference for private investment in the County.

EDUCATION

COUNTY LEVEL

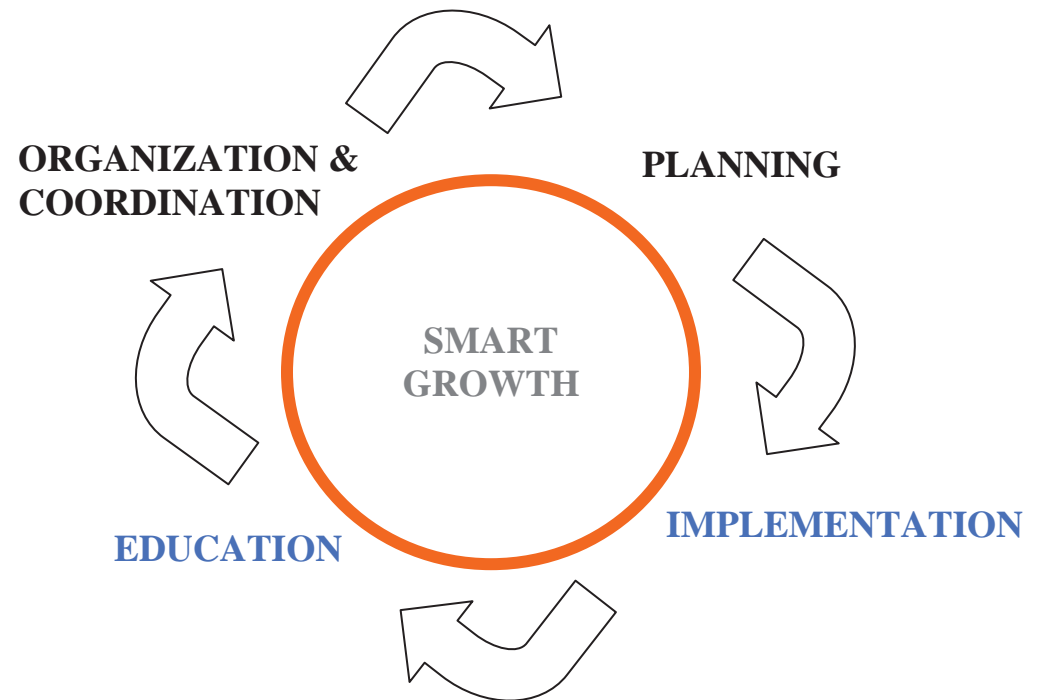
Utilize every time the Oscoda County Planning Commission meets.

TOWNSHIP LEVEL

Utilize when reviewing applications for re-zonings, subdivisions, variances, and special use permits.

JOINT LEVEL (County & Township)

Utilize the PLAN for education of the public at large; promote the understanding or the planning process and plan implementation





CHAPTER 2 – Guiding Principles

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

2.1 – OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

2.2 – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

We have identified opportunities and challenges in Oscoda County through a series of planning commission meetings with a primary focus of updating the 2007-2011 Land Use Plan. County stakeholders, public officials, and the general have taken part in an ongoing forum to discuss current land use issues and to envision the future of the region over the next 5 to 10 years. We have also utilized recent studies and planning documents from the County, the townships, and private organizations, gaining valuable insights with regard to land use, transportation, and public improvements. The information, summarized below, provides the basis for the development of the guiding principles in the Oscoda County Master Plan.

Opportunities

The opportunities gathered from the public and stakeholders have not seen a dramatic change from the time when the 1996 Land Use Plan was developed. Those surveyed continued to exemplify the friendly people and small town atmosphere of the County. They pointed to the clean and beautiful environment, and the abundance of natural resources as the things they liked most about the County. Not only does the public recognize the County's potential as a center for tourism, resorts, and outdoor recreation, but also public officials, who have now undertaken the task to work towards providing support to the private sector with regard to economic development.

Respondents from the survey done prior to 1996 also pointed to the potential for expanding forestry and attracting light industry, thereby attracting more jobs into the County. Since the inclusion of the 1996 Plan, light industry or "cottage industry" has emerged as a viable industry in the County.

Managing the County's natural resources through sound land use planning and zoning was also a concern in the 1996 Plan. Residents see smart planning and zoning as one way to harness the economic potential of forestry, mining, outdoor recreation, and other resource based activities in the County.

The more recent survey conducted in Oscoda County focused primarily on growth and development, natural resources, and public facilities. Those surveyed answered the call with, "Growth should be guided in order to protect the quality of life." Planned growth and smart growth are important and critical to the abundance of natural resources within the County.

General attitudes are in favor of development in the County; however, it depends on the type of development and location. Light manufacturing, small business, and health care services are of extreme interest with regard to development. Farming, schools, movie theaters, vocational centers, and outdoor recreation also are of medium to high interest. Racetracks, jails, casinos, mining, landfills and heavy manufacturing are of little interest.

Preferred commercial development includes retail stores, restaurants, grocery stores, and office stores. The County is split in favorability towards soliciting a large commercial chain; however, residents are in favor of large retail stores of 30,000 square feet plus.

With regard to residential development, County residents prefer single-family development, senior citizen housing, and apartment buildings to mobile homes and mobile home parks; however, manufactured housing is of some interest. Making seasonal housing available and providing affordable housing are important to County residents.

Location of development is also important to the residents of Oscoda County due to the isolation of communities that are scattered throughout the County. More than half of the residents surveyed favor smart growth through marketing the County's assets, not through tax incentives such as tax abatement. Clustering and concentrating commercial development along the County's two bisecting major road corridors, M-33 and M-72, is preferred over spreading development along these corridors and secondary roads. Protecting scenic roads and scenic views along these corridors is important to residents of Oscoda County.

The preferred location of residential development differs from that of commercial, except for the fact that both types of development require infrastructure. Residents expressed that initially residential development should occur where the infrastructure and services already exist and close to existing communities; however, some residents did express they would like residential development to occur anywhere they want.

Challenges

The Oscoda County Planning Commission has identified the following list of challenges (or areas of concern):

- 1. Lack of Public Sewer and Water**
- 2. Lack of Land Use Planning**
- 3. Loss of Agricultural Land**
- 4. Unemployment and the Lack of Job Opportunities**
- 5. Other Problems include:**
 - Inadequate maintenance of County roads
 - Aging public facilities
 - Too few recreational opportunities
 - Inadequate public school funding
 - The need to incorporate Mio
 - Lack of medical facilities
 - Social problems: (drug abuse, welfare, community apathy, low civic pride)

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Planning Commission has developed the guiding principles statements based on opportunities and challenges gathered by County stakeholders. The guiding principles will inform and facilitate decision making relative to land use, transportation, and public improvements. This chapter offers a description of each principle in a manner that will provide the County with a tool to guide future land use.

The following guiding principles provide a reference for use in reviewing development proposals, administering or amending ordinances, and considering public input.

Each principle includes:

- **County Standard Operating Procedures** – Standard operating procedures guide the County with operation and management. Identifying the operating procedures also informs the townships and communities of inventory and planning in progress or already completed.
- **Best Management Practices “Tool Box”** – The Tool Box identifies the best management practice or practices that townships and communities could undertake in order to work towards achieving the overall guiding principle.
- **Joint Procedures & Policy** – Joint procedure and policy starts to identify action steps to implement at a township level. The action steps are general; townships and communities need to work out actual policy and ordinances to provide a “best-fit.”

Guiding Principle #1.

Promote and enhance the existing character in each community throughout Oscoda County in order to protect the natural environment, community appearance, unique natural features, and quality of life.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Continue to identify and map natural features that we can utilize as a basis for protection against development.

Identify scenic roads as Natural Beauty Roads (PA 150 of 1970) or seek Heritage Route designation.

Potential designation:
(Galloway Road, North and South River Road, Mack Lake Trail, Mount Tom Road.)

Protect and maintain rural character along the existing road corridors.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Encourage and educate developers, township planning commissions, and community leaders on the benefits of “site-context” site design.

Refer to State and Federal guidelines to evaluate proposed development in areas identified as having environmental concerns or other limitations. Modify the guidelines to “best-fit” the County, township, or community affected.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Implement an ordinance that limits approval for development if the natural features and site character are at risk.

Regulate signs, disposal and storage of junk, substandard dwellings, and other potential sources of blight.

Regulate outside storage at commercial and industrial operations.

Adopt procedures and regulations that control storage and disposal of hazardous substances.

Limit tree and vegetation removal when developing commercial and residential sites.

Guiding Principle #2.

Encourage the conservation and development of Oscoda County’s natural resources through management procedures that minimize environmental impact while maximizing productivity of renewable resources for future generations.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Continue to identify and map prime forestland for management and forest production.

Continue to identify and map oil/gas and sand/gravel deposits in the County to protect against future land use conflict.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize national and state sustainable forest management techniques and model existing forest management.

Provide literature on the different Land Conservation options including Conservation Easements, Land Donation, and Planned Giving.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Encourage townships, the County, state (MDNR), and federal (NPS) landowners to work together with regard to forest management.

Adopt policy and implement zoning that would protect low density residential in prime forest and agricultural land use areas.

Guiding Principle #3.

Promote active citizenry through public input and community-based workshops to develop and maintain a clear vision that satisfies local officials and concerned citizens.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Continue to update the Oscoda County Master Plan and Future Land Use Map every five years.

Consistently measure and report on changing community service and facility needs.

Design the Oscoda County Capital Improvements Plan based on the Master Plan's Guiding Principles, Future Land Use Plan, and Implementation Chapters.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Consistently seek public input at both the township and County level.

Develop a clear vision that County residents will utilize as a vehicle for land use development.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Township and community officials can work together to provide the County with the “nuts and bolts” of existing and proposed land use issues.

Guiding Principle #4.

Provide for the diverse housing types for area residents while protecting and improving the quality of existing residential areas.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Provide quality inventory mapping for township planning commissions and boards to utilize when developing or updating zoning maps with regard to site suitability (e.g., Soils, Steep Slopes).

Conduct the feasibility of expanding basic infrastructure within the communities to promote infill development.

Continue to update changing demographics to better understand what type of housing is needed.

Educate township and political leaders and key stakeholders about the most up-to-date information affecting Residential Land Use issues.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize existing models for site plan review such as **New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook.**

Educate waterfront homeowners about the benefits of Shoreline Greenbelts.

Encourage good design beyond legal restrictions and minimum standards.

Provide affordable housing alternatives.

Respect historical development patterns.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Encourage Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Mixed Use Developments

Pursue property maintenance and housing code ordinances to protect housing value, community character, and overall quality of life.

Consider policies that regulate manufactured home sites and mobile home parks.

Pursue specific Greenbelt and Waterfront zoning to protect the County's water resources and scenic beauty.

Guiding Principle #5.

Encourage quality commercial development that will provide for residents and visitors and will sustain a viable and lasting economy in Oscoda County.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Explore the feasibility of expanding basic infrastructure within the communities to promote infill development.

Promote renovation of existing sites prior to Greenfield Development.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize existing models for site plan review such as New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook.

Provide better alternatives for conventional development practices.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Encourage Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Mixed Use Developments.

Establish zoning districts to promote development with a more compact environmental and land use footprint.

Do not over-zone for commercial land use.

Establish urban service boundaries that are consistent with existing and planned capacity of public utilities.

Provide consistent policy for site design, including signage, parking, and lighting.

Guiding Principle #6.

Provide land appropriate for new development of light industrial activities only after evaluating all potential existing sites for reuse or redevelopment.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Conduct the feasibility of expanding basic infrastructure within the communities to promote infill development.

Promote adaptive reuse of existing Brownfield sites before developing Greenfields (rural undeveloped areas).

Investigate the feasibility of developing a light industrial / commercial park as outlined in the **Oscoda County Economic Development Revitalization Plan.**

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize existing models for site plan review such as **New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook.**

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Encourage Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Mixed Use Developments.

Establish zoning districts to promote development that is more compact.

Do not over-zone for industrial land use.

Establish urban service boundaries that are consistent with existing and planned capacity of public utilities.

Provide consistent policy for site design, including signage, parking, and lighting.

Guiding Principle #7.

Provide a variety of transportation choices that are safe, efficient, cost effective, sustaining, and most importantly protect the natural and rural landscape character.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Conduct a feasibility study and identify unimproved secondary roads that would benefit the County if improved.

Pursue all available funding for County road improvements.

Maintain a working relationship with MDOT.

Continue to monitor heavy traffic points and traffic conflict points for safety.

Continue to maintain and repair County roads.

Provide enough time for a sufficient amount of public input – *Involve the Public.*

Develop not only motorized transportation, but also non-motorized.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize state and federal models for transportation.

Encourage good design beyond legal restrictions and minimum standards.^{9.3}

Evaluate each transportation issue for site context.

Understand *traffic calming* and its benefits.

Promote shared drive access and service drives.

Be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and understand the impact transportation has on growth patterns.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Modify existing County residential road standards to be more context-sensitive.

Allow flexibility in design to provide a “best fit” for a specific site.

Encourage townships and communities to monitor transportation and report to the County.

Investigate policy for site plan development that would facilitate and expedite for the purpose of non-motorized transportation pathways.

Guiding Principle #8.

Continue to monitor Oscoda County sewage and water systems for safety, sufficient volume and capacity, and protection against groundwater contamination.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Conduct a feasibility study to identify the possibility of implementing municipal sewer and water.

Conduct sufficient Public Input from stakeholders and the public before proceeding with major infrastructure improvements.

Seek funding after sufficient public input, preliminary design, and cost analysis has been completed.

Support Wellhead Protection Programs.

Support water resource protection with regard to waterfront development.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Become familiar with environmentally friendly or “Green” design with regard to water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

Utilize existing municipal sewer and water infrastructure models.

Be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and understand the impact sewer and water infrastructure has on growth patterns.

Learn about **Wellhead Protection Programs**

Utilize State and County Health Department guidelines.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Townships and communities must work together with the County to implement a regional plan that best suits the residents.

Continue to implement well and septic policy language that safeguards against groundwater contamination and watershed protection.

Establish urban service boundaries that are consistent with existing and planned capacity of public utilities.

Guiding Principle #9.

Provide for safe and efficient solid waste disposal and management program.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Continue to provide safe and efficient solid waste disposal.

Prepare an outline for the desired solid waste management in Oscoda County.

Gather public input with regard to solid waste disposal sites, transfer stations, recycling programs.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Support composting and recycling programs.

Research new technology and alternative bio-engineering techniques to provide creative and sustaining solutions for solid waste management.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Guiding Principle #10.

In order to sustain a strong economic base we need to understand state and national economic development patterns and their relationship to existing and future land use in Oscoda County.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Update, publish, and utilize the Oscoda County Economic Development Revitalization Plan as a guide for the next 5 years.

Work together with the State of Michigan Economic Development Council (EDC).

Identify areas suitable for commercial and industrial land use based on a variety of factors including:

- Environment
- Transportation
- Existing Land Use

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Foster a working relationship between the County EDC, the Planning Commission, and local organizations involved in economic development efforts.

Guiding Principle #11.

Preserve the existing rural character and work towards building a more sustainable rural community that includes a strong agricultural and forestry economy.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Provide the general location of primary agricultural land use areas on the Existing Land Use Map.

Advocate for residential conservation design, cluster developments, and infill development to protect against unwanted land consumption and fragmentation.

Promote the practice of sustainably managed forestry on Federal, State, and private land.

Protect and maintain rural character along the existing road corridors.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Educate agricultural landowners about the benefits of land conservation - **PA 116.**

Evaluate existing “sustainable rural community” literature models:

- **Sustainable Rural Community**
- **Rural by Design**

Model existing Mennonite Communities in Oscoda County.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Work together with local conservation and farmland preservation groups to create proactive procedure to help educate farmers on sustaining rural community.

Work with farmland preservation groups to obtain low interest loans and grants for barn, silo, and farmland restoration

Establish incentives to encourage the incorporation of desirable views and vistas, woodlands, farmlands, and the protection of ridgelines into development plans.

Guiding Principle #12.

Provide adequate recreational facilities and continue to expand and develop recreational opportunity and management that are both passive and active.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Continue to provide residents of the County with an updated 5-year Recreation Plan.

Be familiar with State (MDNR) and Federal (NPS) Land Use Policy.

Investigate Eco-Tourism as means for economic development.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Utilize Recreation Plans when making land use decisions and acquiring land for public use.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Implement policy that will protect open space for recreation including viewshed protection, water resources, wildlife protection, and forest preservation.

Maximize available resources including:

- local and regional land conservancies
- Northeast Michigan Council of Governments
- MDNR and NPS

Guiding Principle #13.

Provide residents with renewable energy that will ensure natural resource protection and bring a higher quality of life to Oscoda County residents.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Initiate a renewable resource task force to investigate alternative energy options and conduct public input forums.

Support clean energy campaigns.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Educate County residents on the benefits of renewable energy.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Bring incentives to renewable energy stakeholders / companies.

Guiding Principle #14.

Provide watershed planning best management practices by developing a watershed plan.

COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Develop Watershed Plan to complement existing Master Plan.

Develop a stormwater code that is flexible and dynamic, instead of zoning.

Outreach to a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g., watershed groups, homebuilders, public works departments, interested local businesses). Also, invite economic development representatives, developers, growth management groups, and regional planning groups (i.e. NEMCOG).

Consult a professional stormwater engineer, planning & zoning expert, and landscape architect throughout the process.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

To be developed as a product of the Watershed Plan.

JOINT PROCEDURES & POLICY

Develop ordinances or other regulatory mechanism (e.g., zoning and land development regulations).

Consider sub-area plans and the possibility to include watershed planning.



CHAPTER 3 – Demographics

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

- 3.1 – SUMMARY**
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- 3.7 – HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

3.1 SUMMARY

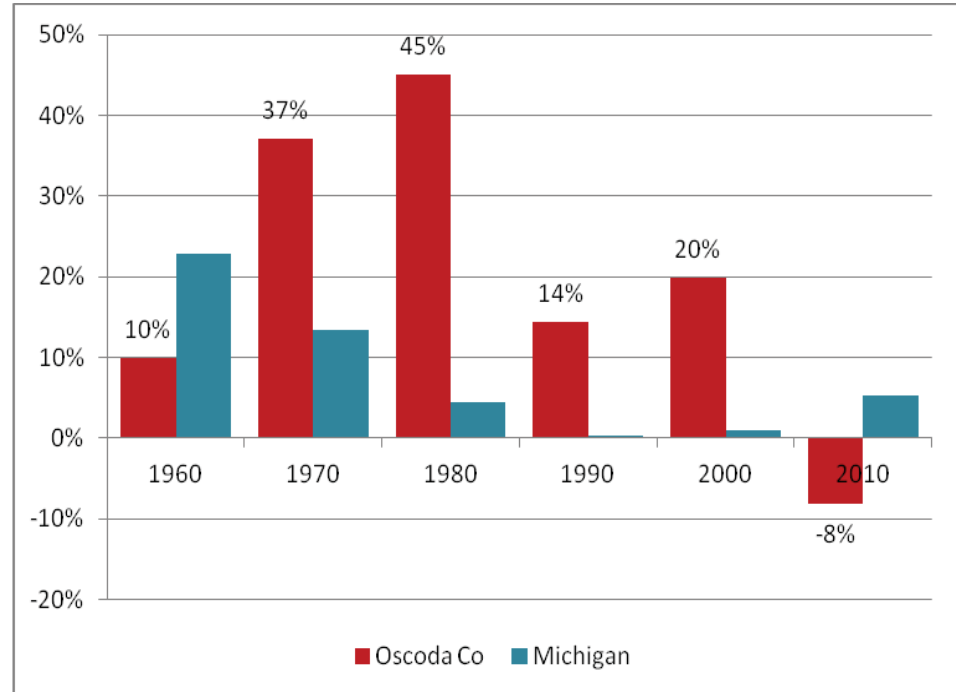
The demographic portion of this master plan provides background data and trend information as a basis for planning future land uses. When planning for a community, we must understand and consider who will be affected by the plan and their characteristics. People provide the resources required to manage and develop all aspects of the county; people also place demands on resources for housing, employment, and recreation. Demographic and trend information can provide insights into future demographics – the resources provided and required by residents in coming years.

Over the last century, Oscoda County has had ups and downs in its population and economy, with a general overall upward trend, and significant growth since the 1950's and 60's. Even when a slowing economy and a general shift of population out of the industrial states dampened Michigan's growth rate, Oscoda County continued to have robust population increases from census to census.

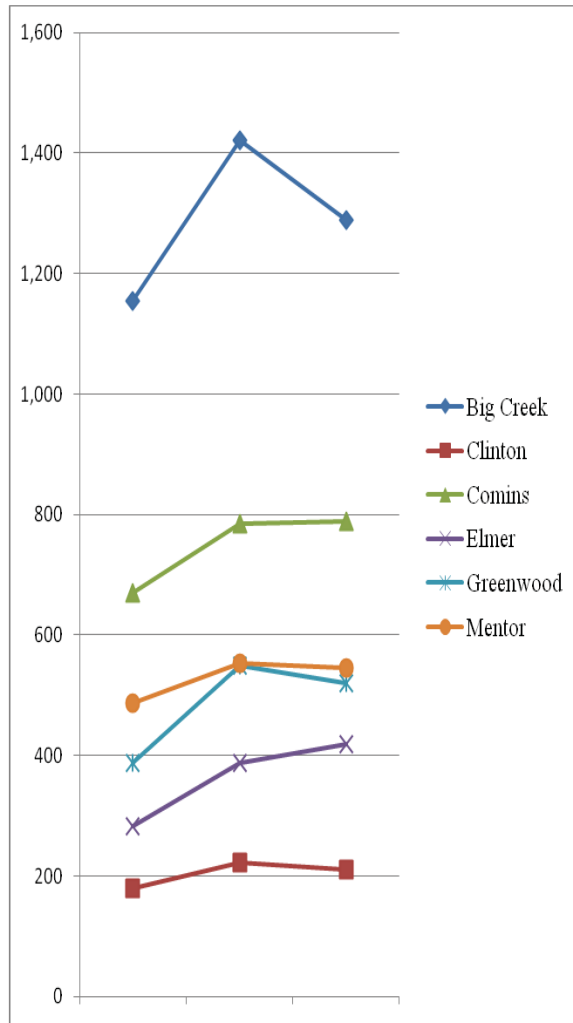
In the decade of the 2000's, this growth came to a sudden halt. Population in the county declined by over 8% in the 2010 census, and estimates since then indicate a continuing drop (from 8,640 in 2010 to 8,592 in 2012, according to US Census estimates). The decline in population has included a significant flight of working age adults and youth – families leaving the area to seek work opportunities. As a result, the segment of the population over 65 has increased relative the state and national levels.

Oscoda County has never had a dense population, owing in large measure to the significant portion of Federal and State land, including National and State forests. Michigan has a population density of about 175 people per square mile of land; in Oscoda County, that rate is 15.3. But even excluding public land (about 2/3 of the county), the rate is only 45.8, a population density less than 1/3 of the state average, and lower than any of the surrounding counties.

A declining population places a variety of burdens on a community. It makes it more difficult to attract economic interests – investors, retailers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs – and it gives young families and graduating seniors an incentive to seek greener pastures. Community leaders, including government, business, and nonprofit interests, must work together to stabilize and reverse this trend. At the same time, decisions about public facilities and programs must reflect the changing needs of the community.



3.2 HOUSEHOLD POPULATION



Source: US Census

	1990	2000	2010
Big Creek Township	1,155	1,422	1,289
Clinton	180	223	210
Comins	669	785	788
Elmer	282	388	419
Greenwood	387	550	520
Mentor	487	553	546
Total	3,160	3,921	3,772

Source: US Census

3.3 POPULATION PROJECTION

The 2007 Master Plan included the following statements:

- *To properly plan for the future development of Oscoda County, it is important to estimate future population and its impact on land use.*
- *Michigan’s economic future, aging population, the local birth/death rate ratio, development density, availability of infrastructure, location of job centers, and natural features will impact the County’s population growth rate.*
- *Although most of the Townships experienced a population decline from 2000 to 2006, it is expected that there will be some population growth resulting from the economic initiatives Oscoda County is investigating. It is expected that this growth will begin after 2010.*

	Population Projections				
	US Census 2000	Estimated 2005	Projected 2010	Actual 2010	Projected 2020
Big Creek	3,380	3,315	3,300	2,827	3,350
Clinton	511	513	515	441	520
Comins	2,017	1,989	1,985	1,970	2,000
Elmer	1,095	1,092	1,090	1,138	1,200
Greenwood	1,195	1,176	1,175	1,121	1,250
Mentor	1,220	1,213	1,210	1,143	1,300
Total	9,418	9,298	9,275	8,640	9,620

The chart at the right shows actual census results in 2010 alongside the projections from the previous Master Plan. Clearly the anticipated population growth did not materialize, and the trend noted in the first half of the decade continued and accelerated. A number of factors worked to make that projection wrong, including the devastating housing crash and recession in 2008. Oscoda County’s major industries have strong ties to manufacturing companies downstate, and suffer when the industrial economy stalls. A depressed economy and high gas prices keep tourists close to home

3.4 SEASONAL POPULATION

- Like much of Northern Michigan, Oscoda County is a tourist destination; therefore, it is important to consider seasonal residents in the population projection. This is especially true for Oscoda County, where there are more housing units for seasonal versus year round use.
- U.S. Census defines a seasonal home as, “a housing unit held for occupancy only during limited portions of the year, such as, a beach cottage, ski cabin, or time-share condominium. “
- In 2010, there were a total of 9,118 housing units in the County. Of these, 3,772 were occupied year round, while 4,704 were occupied only for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. This represents 52% of housing units. The remaining houses were classified as being vacant.
- In 2000, there were 8,690 housing units in the County. Of these, 3,921 were occupied year round, while 4,769 were occupied only for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. This represents 55% of housing units.
- In 1990, there were 8,112 housing units (either owner or renter); 3,160 were occupied year round, while 4,952 were occupied only for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. In 1990, this represented 61% of the housing units.
- From these facts, it is likely that the number of seasonal homes will continue to decrease – in some cases through conversion to year-round housing - but remain approximately 50% of the total number of homes over the next decade.

3.5 HOUSING TYPES

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 8,690 housing units of various types in Oscoda County.

- 6,826 (78.6%) detached single family
- 96 (1.1%) single family attached (duplex units)
- 23 (0.3%) contain 3 to 4 units
- 27 (0.3%) contain 5 to 9 units
- 4 (0.05%) contain 10 to 19 units
- 101 (1.2%) contain 20 or more units
- 1,476 (17%) are mobile homes
- 137 (1.6%) classified as boat, RV, or other

	Oscoda Co.	Michigan	USA
Housing units, 2011	9,101	4,525,480	132,312,404
Homeownership rate, 2007-2011	84.00%	73.50%	66.10%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2007-2011	2.20%	18.10%	25.90%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2007-2011	\$88,800	\$137,300	\$186,200
Households, 2007-2011	3,987	3,825,182	114,761,359
Persons per household, 2007-2011	2.19	2.53	2.6
Per capita money income in the past 12 months (2011 dollars), 2007-2011	\$18,706	\$25,482	\$27,915
Median household income, 2007-2011	\$32,838	\$48,669	\$52,762
Persons below poverty level, percent, 2007-2011	20.10%	15.70%	14.30%

Source: US Census

3.6 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

As humans progress through life, they pass through stages that generally correspond to their age levels. Life-cycle analysis is used to anticipate future changes in items, such as consumption, housing, medical care, education, and recreation.

People QuickFacts	Oscoda Co	Michigan	USA
Population, 2012 estimate	8,592	9,883,360	313,914,040
Population, change, April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2012	-0.56%	0.00%	1.67%
Population, 2010	8,640	9,883,640	308,745,538
Population, percent change, 2000 to 2010	-8.26%	-0.55%	9.71%
Population, 2000	9,418	9,938,444	281,421,906
Persons under 5 years, percent, 2012	4.70%	5.80%	6.40%
Persons under 18 years, percent, 2012	19.50%	22.90%	23.50%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2012	24.60%	14.60%	13.70%
Persons under 18 years, percent, 2000	23.30%	26.10%	25.70%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2000	20.20%	12.30%	12.40%
Female persons, percent, 2012	49.10%	50.90%	50.80%

- The preschool and early school age (9 and younger) should be thought of as continuing students for the next five years.
- The young adult should be thought of as future workers. To keep this vital population group in Oscoda County (they represent 14% of the population), higher education facilities and job centers will be needed.
- The Family Formation age group (20-44) includes workers and family creators. This population group is needed to sustain a community.
- People who are raising older children (typically the 10-19 age group) and are preparing to retire are in the 45-64 age classification.
- Retirees typically begin at the age of 65. This is an active age group that will need medical facilities.
- People aged 75 and older typically need senior care facilities, medical centers, and mass transit.

People QuickFacts	Oscoda Co	Michigan	USA
White alone, percent, 2012 (a)	97.40%	80.10%	77.90%
Black or African American alone, percent, 2012 (a)	0.30%	14.30%	13.10%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2012 (a)	0.70%	0.70%	1.20%
Asian alone, percent, 2012 (a)	0.10%	2.60%	5.10%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, 2012 (a)	0	0	0.20%
Two or More Races, percent, 2012	1.50%	2.20%	2.40%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2012 (b)	1.20%	4.60%	16.90%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2012	96.40%	76.20%	63.00%
Living in same house 1 year & over, percent, 2007-2011	88.40%	85.40%	84.60%
Foreign born persons, percent, 2007-2011	1.30%	6.00%	12.80%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent age 5+, 2007-2011	7.40%	9.00%	20.30%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2007-2011	80.90%	88.40%	85.40%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2007-2011	9.70%	25.30%	28.20%
Veterans, 2007-2011	1,216	711,613	22,215,303
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2007-2011	22.5	23.9	25.4

3.7 HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The total number of people in the civilian labor force in Oscoda County is 3,610.

The average commute time is 23.5 minutes.

The median earned income for a male, full-time year round worker is \$30,013.

The median earned income for a female, full-time year round worker is \$20,202.

	Oscoda Co.	Michigan	USA
Households, 2007-2011	3,987	3,825,182	114,761,359
Persons per household, 2007-2011	2.19	2.53	2.6
Per capita money income in the past 12 months (2011 dollars), 2007-2011	\$18,706	\$25,482	\$27,915
Median household income, 2007-2011	\$32,838	\$48,669	\$52,762
Persons below poverty level, percent, 2007-2011	20.10%	15.70%	14.30%



CHAPTER 4 – Physical Environment

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

- 4.1 - SUMMARY**
- 4.2 - TOPOGRAPHY**
- 4.3 - GEOLOGY**
- 4.4 - SOILS**
- 4.5 – WATER RESOURCES**
- 4.6 – DRAINAGE AND FLOODING**
- 4.7 – WATERSHEDS**
- 4.8 – WETLANDS**
- 4.9 – FISH & WILDLIFFE**

4.1 SUMMARY

A summary of Oscoda County's climate includes an average annual precipitation of nearly 29 inches (including the water equivalent of snow), an average snowfall of 56.5 inches, and a mean annual temperature of 42.2 degrees. The temperature records show extremes higher in the summer and lower in the winter than in counties bordering Lakes Michigan and Huron, due to the micro-climates produced by the Great Lakes. The average frost-free season, as shown by the average dates of the last killing frost (June 5) to the first (September 14), is 101 days. Killing frosts have been recorded in every month of the year, especially in the lower lying areas along the Au Sable River.

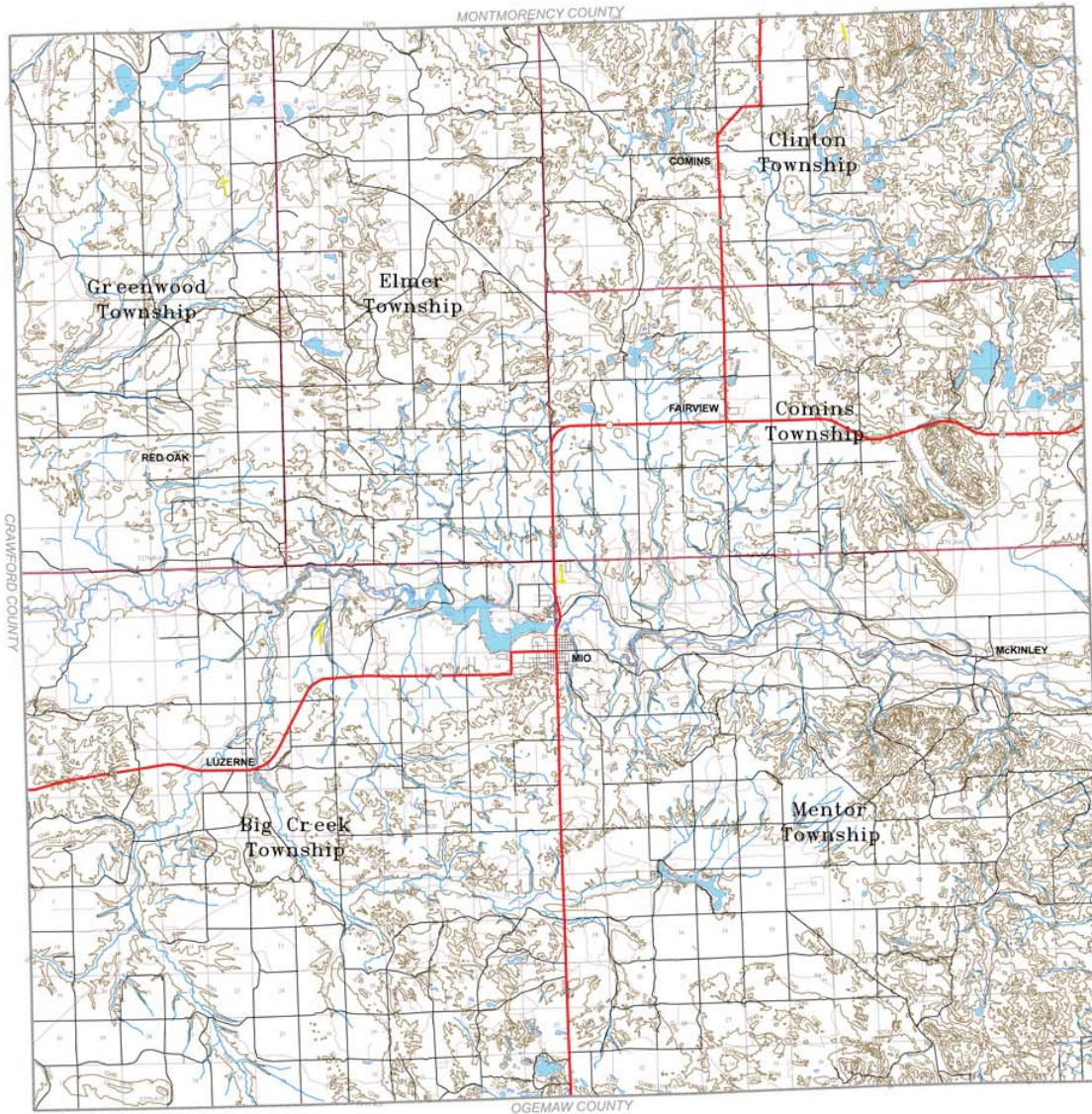
Mio, the County seat, holds the record high temperature for the State of Michigan (112 degrees), which was recorded July 13, 1936. This temperature, however, is far from normal for the area. The low temperature is normally recorded at -30 degrees, during isolated periods of the winter months. Average snowfall varies from 60 inches along the southern boundary of the County, to a high of 90 inches in the extreme northwest corner. The snowfall is heaviest from November to March, but light amounts have been recorded as late as May and as early as September.

4.2 TOPOGRAPHY

Oscoda County is part of a highland plain built up by glacial deposits (see **Map 4.1**). Within the County, the highland plain is bisected north and south by the Au Sable River, which flows through a terraced valley about three miles wide and lying from 200 to 400 feet below the highest parts of the upland. Both the northern and southern plateaus have much the same character and surface configuration. On each there are three major relief features and land divisions, namely, smooth sand and gravel plains, broad swells and hills of sandy land, and level or undulated wet and dry clay plains. The greater part of the land is comprised of high, dry, sandy and gravel plains, most of which are level and lack any conspicuous surface features or local differences in elevation; however, in places they are broken by pits and by long dry valleys or swales. The higher lying masses of hilly plateau land rise gradually or abruptly from the sandy plains and they consist of broad swells with long, smooth slopes. Locally, they are rough in aspect as the land is characterized by domes, knobs, ridges and comparatively deep potholes, lake basins and valleys. The clay plains are smooth or undulating and they include shallow swales and hummocky swells of sandy land with some stream dissection and some small irregular spots of wetlands.

The Au Sable River is bordered by three narrow sandy and gravel terrace plains. The first lies from 10 to 15 feet above the river; the second, from 35 to 40 feet; and the third, at approximately 70 to 80 feet. The terrace plains are composed of beds of loose stratified sand and gravel, ranging from six to more than 15 feet in thickness and resting on clay.

The average elevation of Oscoda County ranges from 1,000 to 1,200 feet above sea level. Small areas in the central and northern parts of the county lie between elevations of 1,300 to 1,400 feet, while the lowest elevation of 900 feet is found on the Au Sable near the east boundary of the County.



TOPOGRAPHY - Map 4.1

Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

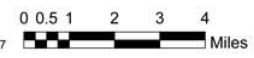
Contour Legend

Contours (ft.)

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
 Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83
 Contours: 100k Digital Line Graph (DLG)



Revised: 01/10/2007

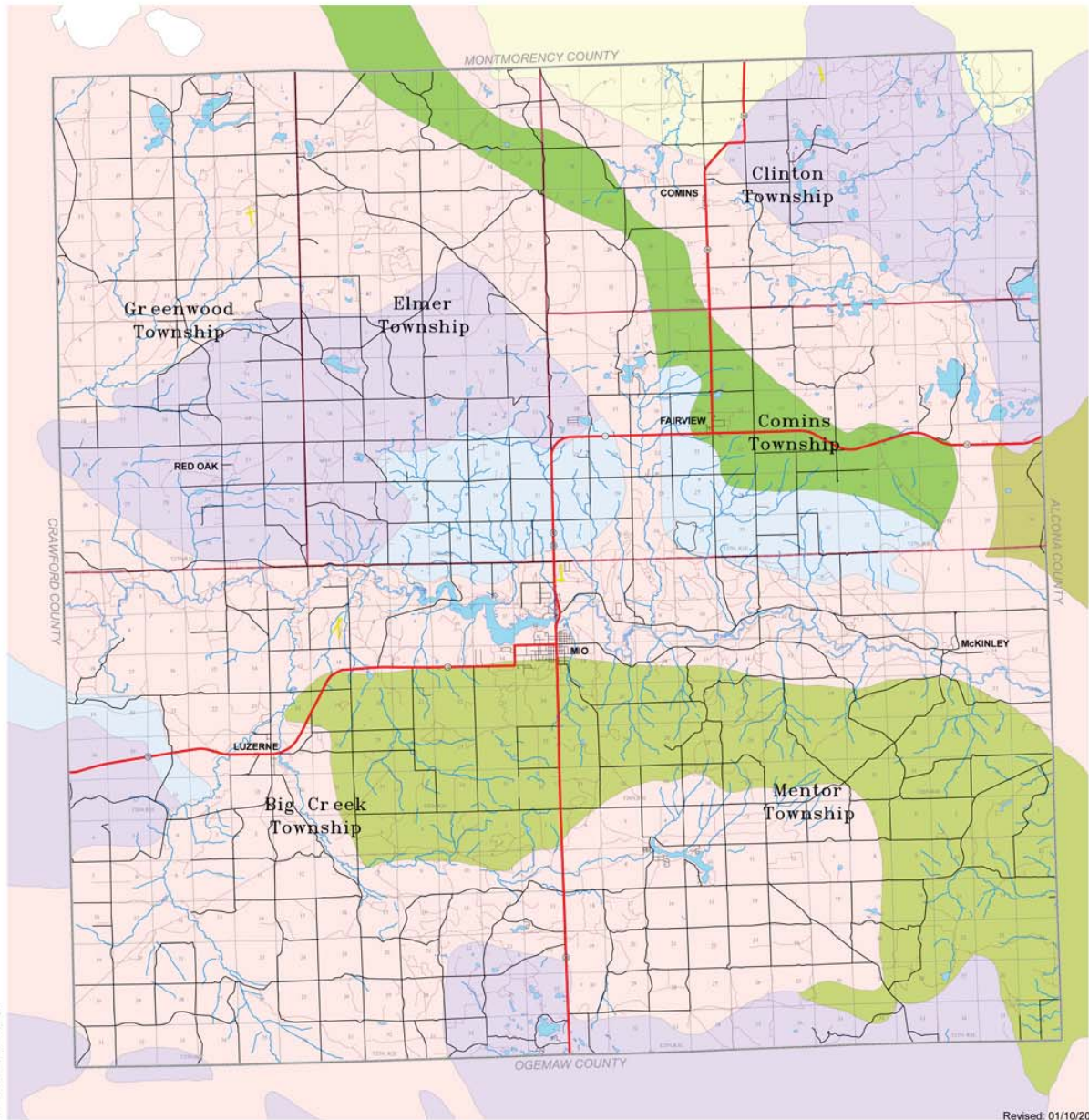


4.3 GEOLOGY

The geology of Oscoda County can be described in terms of surface geology (referring to material deposited by glacial action) and bedrock geology (referring to sedimentary rock underlying glacial drift).

Surface geology of Oscoda County, as with topography, is directly related to the advancing and retreating of glaciers thousands of years ago (see **Map 4.2 & 4.3**). Four geologic features can be used to describe the surface geology of the County: moraines, till plains, outwash plains and lacustrine plains. Moraines (linear hilly ridges) were formed by the deposition of unconsolidated sand, gravel, rock and clay at the margins of a glacier. A moraine represents the former position of a glacier's edge. Moraines are scattered throughout the county as well as till plains to the north of Mio, which formed from deposition by ice. They are level areas between moraines consisting of the same type of material. Outwash and lacustrine plains are water laid deposits from the melting glacier. Outwash plains are stratified deposits consisting of silt, clay and fine sediments in glacial and post-glacial lakes that have since been drained. Outwash and lacustrine plains are interspersed throughout the county. Thickness of glacial drift ranges from 200 to 400 feet in Oscoda County.

Bedrock geology underlying the County was formed from ancient seas that covered the area some 250 to 600 million years ago. The shallow marine seas deposited layers of sand, silt, fine sediments, marine animals, plants, coral and other calcareous material. These deposits lithified to form primarily shales, with associated limestone and dolomite deposits. Occasional oil and gas deposits are found in columnar coral formations within the county.



SURFACE GEOLOGY

Map 4.2

Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

Quaternary Geology

- Lacustrine clay and silt
- Glacial outwash sand and gravel & postglacial alluvium
- Ice-contact outwash sand and gravel
- End moraines of fine-textured till
- Medium-textured glacial till
- End moraines of medium-textured till
- Coarse-textured glacial till
- End moraines of coarse-textured till

General Legend

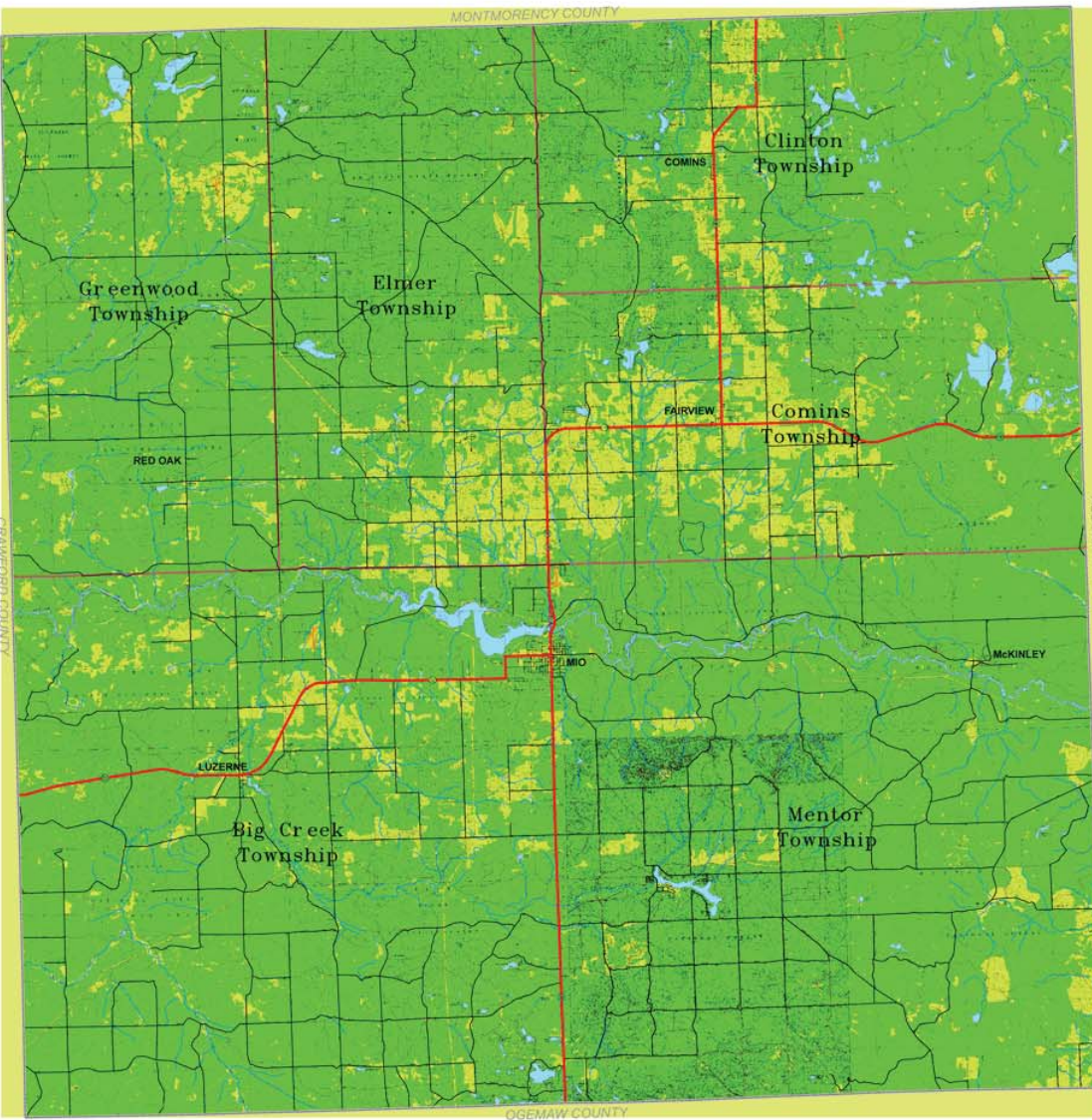
- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
 Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83
 1982 Quaternary Geology of Michigan
 Department of Natural Resources



Revised: 01/10/2007



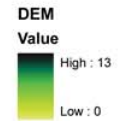


ELEVATION - Map 4.3 Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

Elevation Changes based on DEM



General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83
24k Digital Raster Graph (DRG)



0 0.5 1 2 3 4

Revised: 01/10/2007 Miles

4.4 SOILS

The content of organic matter in the upper layer of the County's soils is comparatively low. Most of the county's soils are fairly well drained, as the water table is not high and the slope is sufficient to provide run-off. Much of the soil is poor because of the combination of low or medium content of plant nutrients and a deficiency of moisture as in the pine-plain sands.

The overall characteristics of soils in a community help to define the limitations on land uses and development. Excessively steep soils, wet soils or soils with poor bearing capacity can limit development while soils with high nutrient and good drainage characteristics can be an advantage to agriculture and forestry; therefore, it is important to identify and refer to the following soil associations.

The soil types of the County are grouped as follows (see Map 4.4):

Nester-Kawkawlin Association

Nester Association

Montcalm-Emmet Association

Pinconning-Ingalls-Hettinger Association

Montcalm-Leelanau-Blue Lake Association

Montcalm-Kalkaska-Graycalm Association

Leelanau-Kalkaska-Emmet Association

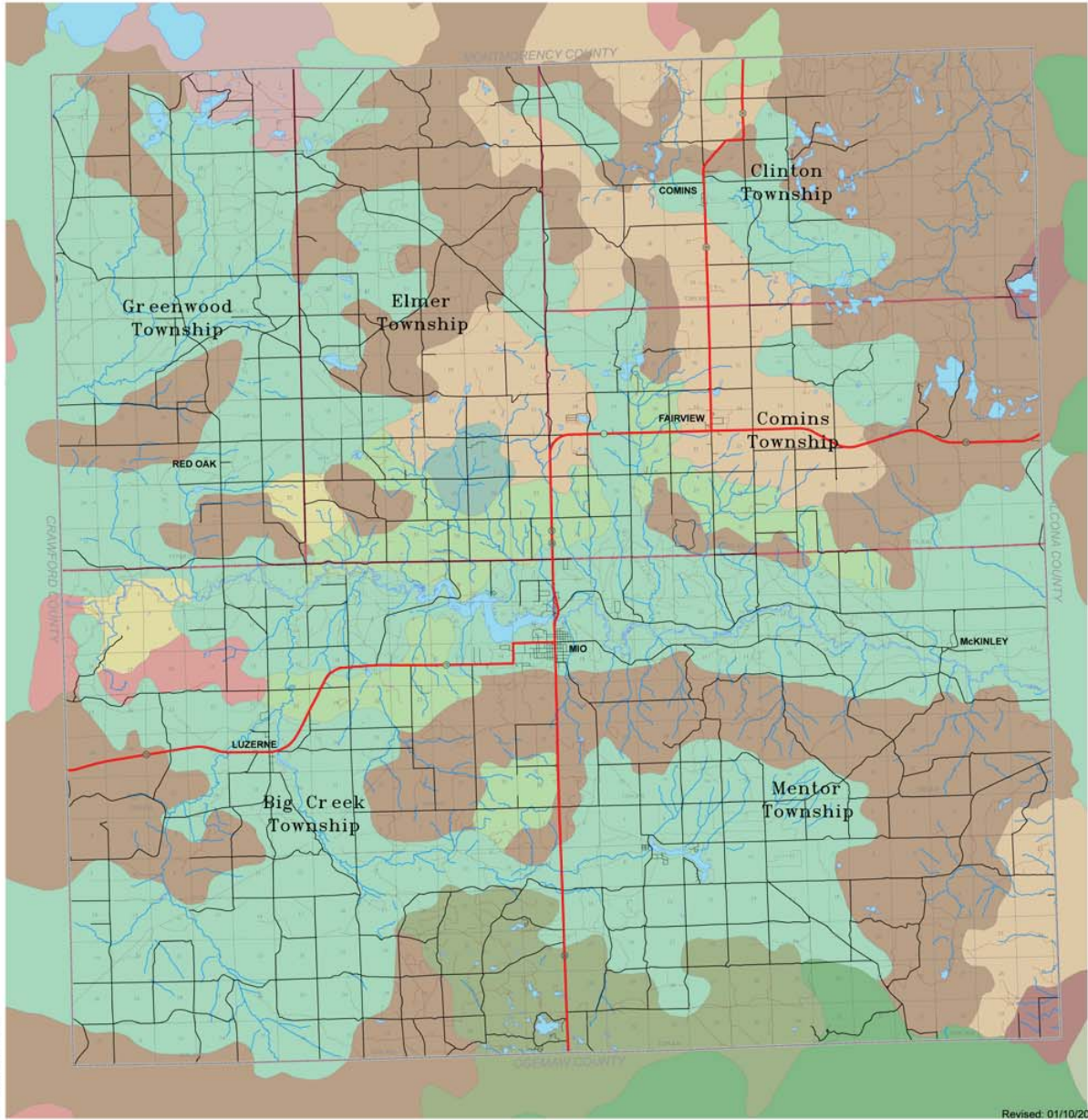
Grayling-Graycalm Association

Tawas-Roscommon-Au Gres Association

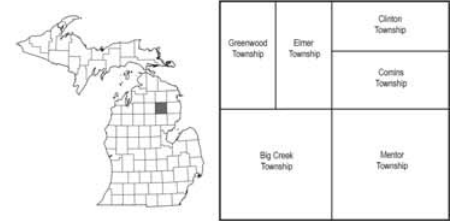
Rubicon-Montcalm-Graycalm Association

Rubicon-Grayling Association

Tawas-Lupton-Carbondale-Au Gres Association



SOILS - Map 4.4 Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

Soils Legend

- Water
- Nester-Kawkawlin
- Nester
- Montcalm-Emmet
- Pinconning-Ingalls-Hettinger
- Montcalm-Leelanau-Blue Lake
- Montcalm-Kalkaska-Graycalm
- Leelanau-Kalkaska-Emmet
- Grayling-Graycalm
- Tawas-Roscommon-Au Gres
- Rubicon-Montcalm-Graycalm
- Rubicon-Grayling
- Tawas-Lupton-Carbondale-Au Gres

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83
Soils: National Soil Survey Center
Natural Resources
Conservation Services, U.S.D.A.



Revised: 01/10/2007



4.5 WATER RESOURCES

Water plays an important part in the recreation industry of Oscoda County. There are 358 natural or artificial bodies of water in the County, which makes up 3,937 acres of surface water, and 219 miles of streams and river frontage (see **Map 4.5**). There are 136 man made water impoundments in the County, including the largest, Mio Pond. Construction work was completed on the Mio Dam in 1916. The back waters extend six miles upstream and cover 860 surface acres. The dam has a head of 28.5 feet. Approximately 23,000 acres or 6.5 percent of the County land area is classified as flood plains or wetlands. The rivers and lakes in particular support much of the tourist industry in the County. Fishing is very popular for trout on most streams, with several lakes also having trout populations. The warmer lakes normally have bluegill, bass, perch and pike. Tiger musky have also been stocked in several lakes.

The Au Sable River is probably the best known tourist attraction in the County. This river system is virtually undeveloped because nearly all of the property along the river was previously owned by a public utility company. The property has since been purchased by the State and Federal government and the section of river east of Mio has been designated as a Natural Scenic River Systems Corridor.

The Au Sable River and Big Creek Watershed provide excellent trout fishing, with the Au Sable being rated one of the ten best trout streams east of the Rocky Mountains. The Au Sable flows 31 miles through Oscoda County and the Big Creek Watershed furnishes over 15 miles of world class trout fishing. Other streams along with the Au Sable and Big Creek Watershed provide over 219 miles of available trout fishing.

Groundwater aquifers in the County are very productive in the predominant gravels and sands of the glacial drift. The groundwater aquifers are recharged by precipitation, which is readily absorbed by the permeable soils. Individual wells near the lakes and streams are usually quite shallow due to the high water table. The County drains into the Au Sable River and the Thunder Bay River Watersheds.

NAME OF LAKE, LOCATION, ACRES	DESCRIPTION OF LAKE
Loon Lake Sec. 35 T25N, R2E 90.4 acres	Public access. Panfishing. 98% mineral shoreline; 2% organic, maximum depth 50 feet.
Mio Pond T26N, R2E 944 acres	Panfish, pike, trout and other species; public access. 100% mineral shoreline.
Mack Lake Sec. 4,9,10 T25N, R3E 175 acres	Maximum depth 5 feet. 95% mineral shoreline, 5% organic.
Muskrat Lake Sec. 6,7,8 T27N, R2E 86 acres	Residential development around lake; shoreline is 50% mineral, 50% organic
McCollum Lake Sec. 1 T27N, R4E 143 acres	Panfish, pike; shoreline is 50% mineral, 50% organic. Residential development around lake.
North Lake Sec. 2, 11 T 27 N, R4E 75 acres	Undeveloped, natural lake
Indian Lake Sec. 5 T27N, R4E 55 acres	Undeveloped natural lake. 80% mineral shoreline, 20% organic
Shamrock Lake T27N, R4E 220 acres	Panfish, pike; maximum depth 12 feet. Residential development around eastern half of lake.
Island Lake Sec. 13, 14 T27N, R4E 105 acres	Undeveloped natural lake with 50% mineral shoreline, 50% organic
Tea Lake Sec. 2,3,10,11 T28N, R1E 216 acres	Trout fishing, panfish, public access; residential development; 99% mineral, 20% organic shoreline
Snyder Lake Sec. 4,9 T28N, R1E 135 acres	Some residential development around lake. 80% mineral, 20% organic shoreline
(Little) Bear Lake Sec 9 T28N, R1E 52 acres	Some residential development; 50% mineral, 50% organic shoreline
Woodbury Lake Sec. 23, 24 T28N, R3E 55 acres	Residential development around much of lake
Island Lake Sec. 7,8,17 T28N, R4E 125 acres	Residential development around south and western side of lake.

4.6 DRAINAGE AND FLOODING

The County has 258 water bodies and 219 miles of rivers and streams.⁸ About 23,000 acres (6.5%) of the County are classified as floodplain or wetland.⁹ Property along the main branch of the Au Sable River and the Big Creek tributary are the areas most prone to flooding in the County. A detailed floodplain study has not been completed for the County. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has estimated the boundaries of the 100 year floodplain near Mio, Luzerne, and McKinley for the purposes of this plan. The results of this DNR study are shown in Figure III-2. A map indicating p drainage routes, steep slopes, and significant wetlands is on file with the County Planning and Zoning Commission.

4.7 WATERSHEDS

The County's major watersheds are the Au Sable River and the Thunder Bay River systems. Both rivers offer excellent fishing and canoeing and are among the County's most valued natural resources.

Au Sable River

The Au Sable River is closely protected by both the state and federal government. The Michigan Natural Rivers Act of 1970, administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, prescribes special use and development regulations for 400 feet on either side of the river and designated segments of its tributaries (see **Figure 4.1**). Refer to the **Au Sable River Natural River Plan**, on file with the County Planning Commission, for mapped boundaries and regulations that are more detailed.

Mentor Township has adopted and is administering state natural rivers zoning regulations.

The Au Sable was also designated a National Scenic River by the federal government in 1984. This designation extends for 23 miles in Oscoda and Alcona counties and extends from the Federal Power Commission boundary one mile below Mio Pond east through McKinley to the upper end of Alcona Pond. Most of this land is in federal ownership, but some areas including the village of McKinley, remain in private ownership. The purpose of the Act is to retain the river in a scenic state, that is "free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads." (Public Law 90-542, 90th Congress, S. 119, October 2, 1968)...

Administration of the **Au Sable National Scenic River Plan** is designated as follows:

"Vegetation, erosion, and public access are managed along this portion of the river by the Forest Supervisor of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The District Ranger for the Mio Ranger District, Huron National Forest, is responsible for daily administration of the lands and waters within the corridor. The District Ranger at Harrisville is responsible for management of the Shore-to-Shore Trail, the McKinley Trail Camp, dispersed recreation sites at O'Brien Lake, and the timber management and inventory activity within the administrative boundary of the Harrisville Ranger District." ¹⁰

Thunder Bay River

The Thunder Bay River system enters the northeastern corner of the County and connects to Shamrock Lake. It is encompassed by huge tracts of privately owned land used for hunting camps. This serves to protect the natural qualities of the River; however, if portions of this land are sold for private development, inappropriate development practices could damage this beautiful river.

The Department of Natural Resources maintains that the Thunder Bay River meets all of the qualifications of a Natural River under the Act, but a limited budget has prevented the Department from preparing a plan for it. They hope to do so in the future. In the meantime, the County would like to protect this unique natural resource from harmful development practices, which would cause erosion, sedimentation, destruction of wildlife habitat, and compromise the quality of water that makes this river so unique.

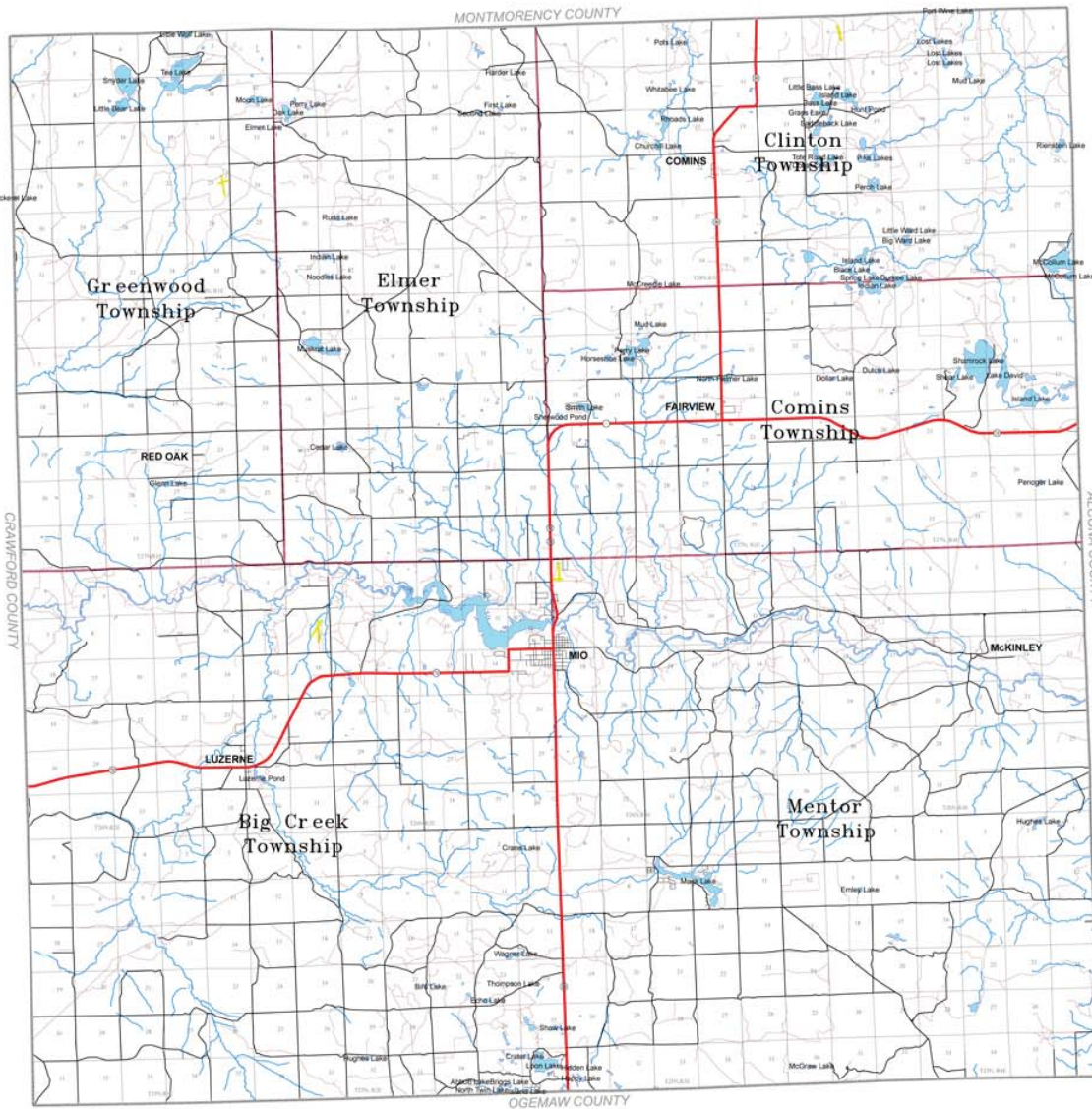
4.8 WETLANDS

Oscoda County contains large wetlands that serve as habitat for a wide range of plants and animals. Wetlands also have a role in recharging aquifers. These qualities make wetlands a valuable environmental resource and the Michigan legislature has adopted the Goemere-Anderson Wetlands Protection Act, PA 203 of 1979, to protect them from careless destruction. Fortunately, most of the County's wetlands are on public land and are already protected. The County supports protection of those wetlands that are currently on private land. The Wetlands Protection Act protects all swamps, bogs, and marshes which are connected to existing waterbodies either above or below ground and all wetlands over 5 acres in size in counties over 100,000 population. Oscoda County, which is unfortunately less populated, is subject to the "5 acre" minimum; however, a more recent survey has been completed by the Department of Natural Resource that officially certifies to the Natural Resource Commission that it has substantially completed its wetlands inventory of the County. An inventory of wetlands that fit the DNR's wetland classification system has been completed for Oscoda County and these wetlands are shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

Anyone wishing to alter or fill a regulated wetland for development purposes must apply for a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Permits will not be issued if a feasible or prudent alternative to developing the wetland exists, if substantial degradation to aquatic resources will occur, or if the proposed activity is not primarily dependent upon being located in a wetland. A fine of up to \$10,000 per day plus injunctive remedies is imposed for unknowingly violating the Act and up to \$25,000 per day for willful or reckless violation of the Act.

Some activities exempted from the provisions of the act include farming, grazing of animals, farm or stock ponds, lumbering, maintenance of existing nonconforming structures, maintenance or improvement of existing roads and streets within existing rights of way, maintenance or operation of pipelines of less than 6" in diameter, and maintenance or operation of electric transmission and distribution of power lines.

Wetlands have significant value to Michigan's environment and ecological system and the County discourages destruction of these resources. The County supports state protection of wetlands and will cooperate with the Department of Natural Resources in whatever way is possible to help ensure that permits are obtained for altering those wetlands that meet the criteria for protection under the Wetlands Protection Act.



WATER RESOURCES

Map 4.5

Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
	Big Creek Township	Mentor Township

Water Resources

- Lakes
- Rivers
- Streams

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83



0 0.5 1 2 3 4

Revised: 01/10/2007 Miles

4.9 FISH AND WILDLIFE

Oscoda County provides abundant habitat for many species of wildlife. Whitetail deer are abundant and attract a large number of hunters during the hunting season. A variety of other game animals also attract hunters, such as woodcock, wild turkey, snowshoe hares, and ruffed grouse. Rare and endangered species in the County are the bald eagle, spruce grouse, and Kirtland Warbler. Oscoda County is one of the few remaining nesting areas for Kirtland Warbler and many visitors come each year to view these rare birds. Kirtland Warblers nest primarily in the Muskrat Lake area, Mack Lake area, and around Luzerne. The Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been successful in preserving and managing the young jack pine habitat which these birds prefer. A "Kirtland's Warbler Festival" is being held annually at the Kirtland Community College (near Roscommon) as a tribute to this bird. This weekend festival includes many activities for individuals and families designed for better environmental awareness and appreciation. A small population of spruce grouse inhabits the Mack Lake area and is also protected by the DNR.

Waterfowl, beavers, otters, mink, and muskrat inhabit the Au Sable River and surrounding watershed. Red fox, Coyotes, bobcats and bear also inhabit the County.

Fishing is another primary tourist attraction in the County. Although the legendary Grayling have been extinct for many years due to the loss of shade and habitat along the riverbanks, the Au Sable River and many stream systems still offer excellent trout fishing. Northern pike, Large-Mouth Bass, Bluegill, and Perch can be found in the County's many lakes.

Wildlife attracts hunters, bird watchers, and vacationers. The role of wildlife in attracting tourism makes wildlife an important component of Oscoda County's economic base; moreover, the County Planning Commission supports land and wildlife best-management practices in order to sustain fish and wildlife in Oscoda County.



CHAPTER 5 – Natural Resources

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

- 5.1 - FORESTRY
- 5.2 – SAND & GRAVEL
- 5.3 – OIL & GAS

5.1 FORESTRY

An issue of The Great Lake Reporter called forestry "*the biggest growth industry in the states of the upper Great Lakes...*".¹¹ The primary challenge, according to the article, is to sustain the forests through wise management to protect both jobs and watersheds leading into the Great Lakes. Of particular significance to Oscoda County was a comment by U.S. Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson. Robertson said that the national demand for timber is expected to increase 60% by the year 2030 and that fishing, hunting, and other recreation activities will increase similarly.¹²

This represents a prime opportunity for Oscoda County, where forests occupy 84% of the total land area. This entire expanse of forests is classified as commercial forest, with 54% in federal and state ownership, 4% in County and municipal ownership, and 42% in private ownership.¹³ While only 9.2% of the total is classified as prime forestland, much of this is in private ownership. Another 51.5% of this forest land is classified as "locally important."¹⁴

The most common tree type in the County is pine (106.4 thousand acres), then aspen/paper birch (88.8 thousand acres), oak/hickory (67.1 thousand acres), and maple/beech/birch (27.1 thousand acres).¹⁵ General forest cover types are shown on the Existing Land Use Map in Chapter 8.

County soils which are best suited for forestry in descending order are: Emmet sandy loam; Emmet loamy sand; Roselawn sandy loam. The general location of Oscoda County's prime forestland is represented in Figure 5.1.

Prime forestland should be maintained at very low residential densities wherever possible to ensure that commercial forestry remains viable in these areas. Not all of the County's prime forestland, however, is planned for commercial forestry. Some of these areas are reserved for agricultural use or have already been heavily subdivided.

5.2 SAND & GRAVEL

Sandy soils, some containing gravel, are abundant in the County and have good potential for sand and gravel. Soil ratings indicate where to look for probable sources and are based on the probability that soils in a given area contain sizable quantities of sand or gravel. A soil rated as a probable source of sand and gravel has a layer of suitable material at least 3 feet thick, the top of which is within a depth of 5 feet. Coarse fragments of soil bedrock material, such as shale and siltstone, are not considered to be sand and gravel. Fine-grained soils are not suitable sources of sand and gravel.

The following County soils have been identified as being probable sources for sand and gravel: Rubicon sand (gravelly phase), Grayling sand (gravelly phase), and Granby gravelly sand.

The following County soils are probable sources for sand only: Grayling sand, Rubicon sand, Grayling loamy coarse sand, Kalkaska loamy sand, Emmet loamy sand, Newton sand, Saugatuck sand, and Griffin sandy loam.

The location of sand and gravel pits (existing extraction sites) are shown on the Existing Land Use Map in Chapter 8.

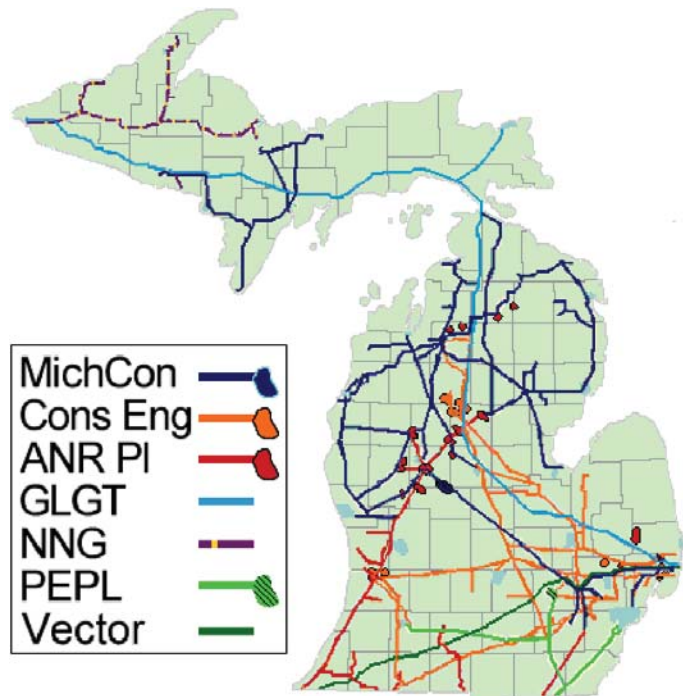
5.3 OIL & GAS

The exploration and development of natural gas reserves of the Antrim Shale formation has significantly changed the mineral situation in Oscoda County since 1992.

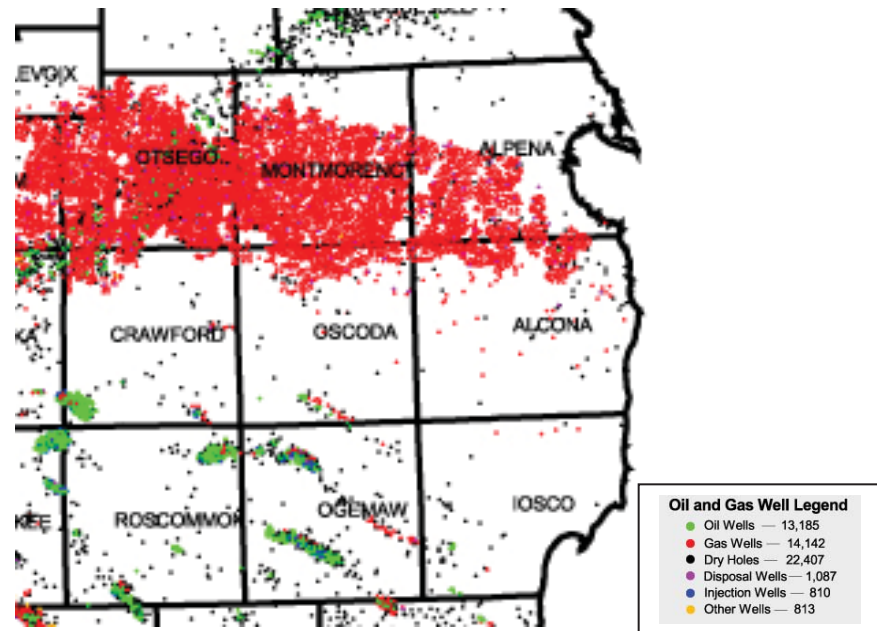
As of January 1, 1995, approximately 390 Antrim gas wells were permitted with about 80 being actively developed. This is generally taking place in Greenwood, Elmer, Clinton and Comins Townships. Pipeline and processing capacity associated with the gas development in Montmorency County provides the opportunity for continued aggressive activity in Oscoda County.

The Michigan State Mineral lease Auction of December 6, 1993 saw Oscoda County attract the highest per acre bid. This seems to be reasonable evidence that interest and activity will continue for at least the next few years.

This intensive development offers unique planning and policy challenges to both state and local governments. Included are potential local concerns of road maintenance, wildlife habitat impact due to fragmentation, stream sedimentation associated with pipeline and road development, emergency response to accidents and toxic material spills, and aesthetics related to noise and visual impacts.



Produced by the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Department of Information Technology, from information provided by the office of Geological Survey, Department of Environmental Quality



Produced by the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Department of Information Technology, from information provided by the office of Geological Survey, Department of Environmental Quality



CHAPTER 6 – Transportation

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

6.1 – STATE HIGHWAYS

6.2 – COUNTY ROADS

6.3 – SCENIC DRIVES

6.4 – OSCODA COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT

6.1 STATE HIGHWAYS

Oscoda County is served by two state highways: M-33, which runs north and south, and M-72, which runs east and west and connects the County with Interstate Highway 75—the major north-south route in the northern half of the state (see **Map 6.1**).

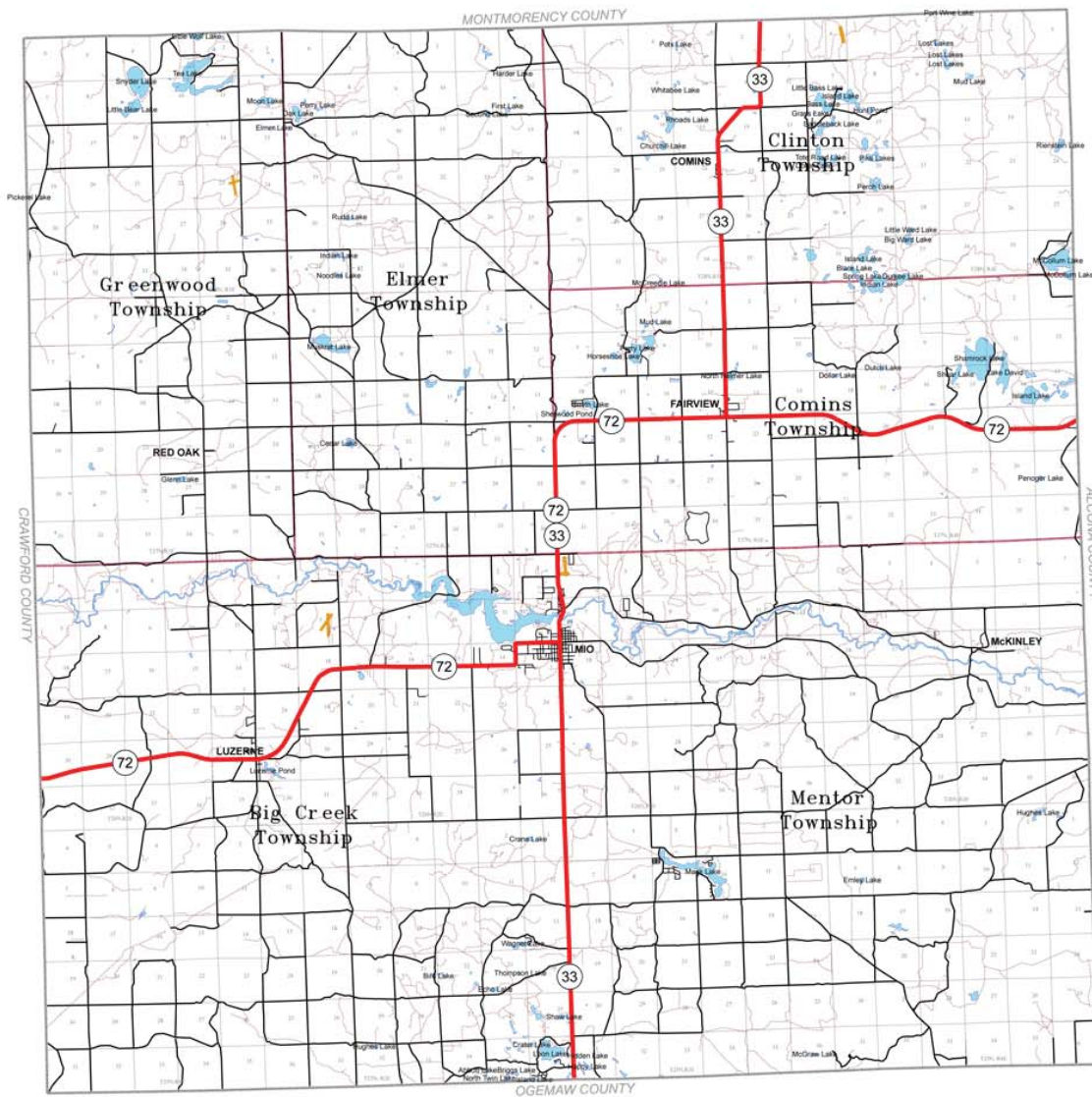
Planned/Proposed Improvements

No planned or proposed improvements were available throughout the duration of creating this master plan.

6.2 COUNTY ROADS

The County is composed of primary, secondary, and local roads. Major primary roads include County Roads 489, 608, 600, and 609.

Plan/Proposed Improvements



TRANSPORTATION

Map 6.1

Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- ✈ Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83



Revised: 01/10/2007

The Oscoda County Planning Commission would like to preserve some of the County's scenic rural roads. Concerns have been raised not only in Oscoda County, but also throughout the United States with regard to the destruction of scenic rural drives due to development and urban sprawl. As a result, the Michigan legislature passed the Natural Beauty Roads Act in 1970 for the purpose of identifying and preserving the viewsheds along county roads. Local County roads with outstanding natural beauty, or other unique natural features within the road right-of-way, would qualify for protection under the Act. The minimum amount to be considered for designation is usually a 1/2 mile.

Natural Beauty Roads may be established by the County Road Commission upon local petition. The Board of County Road Commissioners acts on the petition request following a public hearing. Widening, mowing, spraying, and other activities associated with road maintenance will be restricted or prohibited as determined by the County Road Commission. The road will continue to be maintained according to the criteria before designation and at a level that is safe for public travel. (For further information on the Natural Beauty Roads Act visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website).

County roads that might qualify for this designation include North and South River Road, Galloway Road, Mack Lake Trail, and portions of Mount Tom Road.

The Jack Pine Wildlife Auto Tour is currently the only auto tour in the County. The auto tour is a success with regard to an inter-agency and community project. The auto tour was officially opened on June 11, 1994.

6.4 OSCODA COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT

The Oscoda County Regional Airport, located just north of Mio, was recently upgraded to a tier II airport facility; therefore, qualifying for Federal annual allocations of \$150,000 for capitol improvements. The County recently built hangars on the site for plane owners to rent. Plans are in the works for paving over 2000 feet of runway in place of the existing grass landing strip. Daily operation and management are the responsibility of an Airport Zoning Commission and Airport Management Board.



CHAPTER 7 – Water, Sewage, & Solid Waste

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014 - 2018

7.1 – WATER RESOURCES

7.2 – PROBLEMS

**7.3 – SEPTIC SYSTEMS & WATERFRONT
RESIDENTIAL LAND USE**

7.4 – SOLUTIONS

7.5 – SOLID WASTE

7.1 WATER SOURCES

Public water system plans are currently underway to supply the downtown Mio area. The rest of Oscoda County will remain on individual well systems.

Wells are classified as private or public. Public wells are further classified as either community or non-community Type I, Type II and Type III. Private wells supply water for drinking or household purposes to the immediate family. All other wells are considered public drinking water supplies.

Groundwater is the only source of potable water for Oscoda County and it lies in the County's deep sand and gravel deposits. These sand and gravel soils are very permeable and leave the aquifer extremely vulnerable to surface and subsurface discharges. According to residential well logs, depths to groundwater range from 15-200 feet more or less, depending on the perched water tables and springs.

7.2 PROBLEMS

All of the existing villages are on sandy soils, leaving the aquifer unprotected. Oscoda County Health Department officials report that there has been some contamination of well water from iron bacteria, fecal and total coliform bacteria, and nitrates, which they feel are coming mostly from the septic systems and other subsurface and surface runoffs; chlorides from road salting, toxic and hazard substances, such as volatile organics, and other contaminants from varying pollution sources.

7.3 SEPTIC SYSTEMS and WATERFRONT RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Most septic systems are over 30-years old and are located on small lots; moreover, these systems have often been a source of ground and surface water pollution. Similarly, properties previously used as cottages are now being converted to year round residences with corresponding increases in the usage of many older septic systems.

The impact of private septic systems on water quality is a growing concern in Oscoda County; consequently, monitoring will be required to prevent contamination in the future. Likewise, future development around inland lakes and streams should be at a lower density to prevent contamination; development should occur on an adequate-sized lot with suitable soil conditions.

7.4 SOLUTIONS

In order to protect the health of its inhabitants and to protect water quality, specific criteria is used to determine jurisdiction by the District Health Department #2, including the Oscoda County office, Environmental Health Regulations, Michigan Department of Public Health, water, sloping terrain and pump and haul systems.

- Regulate and enforce sewage disposal permitting process at the time of application through final construction phase.
- Update the regulating codes as mandated necessary for an effective enforcement tool.

All of the villages are on sandy soils and groundwater contamination from septic effluents is a potential hazard due to small lots and poor well isolation. Oscoda County has formally organized the Big Creek Mentor Utility Authority to properly plan and operate the public sewage disposal system for a significant part of the Mio area.

Wellhead Protection Programs

Wellhead protection programs have become more popular and many counties have become actively involved in these programs. Wellhead protection is a set of activities and management practices for protecting public groundwater supply systems from contamination. Phases of the wellhead protection program include delineating the wellhead protection area; developing a well location plan; implementing best management practices; educating the public; and providing for various outreach opportunities.

7.5 SOLID WASTE

A complete description of solid waste management for Oscoda County is available in the **Oscoda County Solid Waste Management Plan**.



CHAPTER 8 – Existing Conditions & Land Use Patterns

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

8.1 – HISTORY

8.2 – LAND USE/OWNERSHIP

8.3 – GENERAL LAND USE CATEGORIES FROM 1978

8.4 – LOCATION AND JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

8.5 – ZONING

8.6 – LAND USE PATTERNS

8.7 – EXISTING LAND USE MAP

8.1 HISTORY

Oscoda County was officially incorporated in 1881. The area now known as Oscoda County was first relinquished to the United States by Native Americans in 1819 under the Treaty of Saginaw. Settlers entered the County following the Homestead Act of 1863 hoping to take part in the growing lumber industry. Across Michigan, the State's virgin pine forests were harvested and between 1870 and 1890, Oscoda County's virgin pine stands disappeared. The lumber industry continued to prosper with the logging of hardwoods and other conifers through 1920. The town of McKinley, supported by these large lumbering companies, grew to an estimated 2,000 residents during this period. But as the lumber industry began to subside, McKinley decreased in size to the small community it is today.

The abundance of cleared land attracted farmers to the County, but much of the soil had only thin layers of top soil and was too permeable; consequently, many of these early farms failed. Settlers unable to pay taxes on non-productive land were forced to vacate their property, which eventually reverted to government ownership. This explains how so much of the County came into public ownership. Some of the soils, especially the belt north of Mio and across to Fairview, were better suited for farming. The combination of cheap land and suitable soils attracted Amish and Mennonite farmers, who began to settle this area in the early 1900s, and continue to farm the area successfully to this day.

8.2 LAND USE / OWNERSHIP

The Huron-Manistee National Forest occupies most of the southern half of Oscoda County, while the northwest corner of the County is in state ownership (see **Map 8.2**). Primarily due to these two large holdings, 57 percent of the land is in public ownership and 83 percent of the County is forested. There are 258 natural and artificial bodies of water and 219 miles of rivers and streams in the County. The major waterway is the Au Sable River, which bisects the County on an east-west course. Approximately 34,113 acres or 9.3 percent of the County's total acreage is classified as a wetland or lowland forest. Lowland forests are usually swampy in nature and often are classified as wetlands. Wetlands are found throughout the County, clustered along or near the rivers.

As would be expected, residential and commercial development is found mostly in or near the community of Mio, with lesser amounts of similar development in the communities of Fairview, Luzerne, Comins and McKinley. Many residential dwellings are also found at the Garland Resort in Greenwood Township, and in other scattered sites along major roads and near the lakes and rivers. Very little industrial land is found within the County.

A majority of the agricultural land, as well as non-forested land (probably used as agricultural land at one time) are found concentrated in the center of the County, just north of Mio. The townships with the greatest percentage of agricultural land are Elmer, Comins and Clinton, with smaller amounts found in Big Creek and Mentor.

8.3 GENERAL LAND USE CATEGORIES FROM 1978 OSCODA COUNTY, MI

Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources - MIRIS: 1978

The more recent GIS land use mapping (1992) was developed using imagery and does not provide total percent land for each land use category; however, **Map 8.3 – Existing Land Use** shows the most recent land use categories.

CATEGORY	ACRES	% TOTAL
Residential	6,401.1	1.75%
Commercial	147.6	.04%
Industrial	868.8	.24%
Institution/Recreation	835.3	.23%
Agricultural	12,092.0	3.31%
Non-forest	27,898.5	7.63%
Upland forest	279,371.2	76.40%
Lowland forest	22,621.3	6.18%
Wetlands	11,491.5	3.14%
Surface water	3,937.5	1.08%
Total	365,664.8	100%

8.4 LOCATION AND JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

Oscoda County is located in the northeastern region of Michigan's lower peninsula. It occupies 568 square miles and is composed of *six political townships*:

- Big Creek Township
- Comins Township
- Clinton Township
- Elmer Township
- Greenwood Township
- Mentor Township

Typically, Michigan counties are divided into sixteen separate townships occupying 6 by 6 miles; however, Big Creek and Mentor Township are each the size of four geographical townships.

None of the six existing communities in Oscoda County are incorporated. The largest community is Mio (around 1300 residents), which also serves as the County seat and is located at the southern intersection of M-72 and M-33. Mio straddles two townships: Mentor and Big Creek. The second largest community is Fairview, located at the intersection of the two state highways. Luzerne, located on M-72 west of Mio, is third in size with regard to population. Red Oak and McKinley are the smallest communities and are located just north of Luzerne and along the eastern portion of the County along the Au Sable River, respectively (OCLUP 2006).

8.5 ZONING

Oscoda County has no zoning in force at the County level. Three of the County's six townships have their own zoning ordinances: Comins, Greenwood and Mentor Townships.

Township Zoning

Refer to the appendix for additional information on township master plans and zoning maps.

The County does not wish to enforce zoning at the township level; instead, they would like to be the “linkage” that connects townships together with regard to land use. *The County will provide best management practices and a “tool box” for land use as illustrated in:*

Chapter 3 – Guiding Principles

Chapter 9 – Future Land Use Plan

8.6 LAND USE PATTERNS

The following land use patterns developed from public input and existing land use. The patterns represent how land use has evolved and why they evolved that way. The land use patterns will be a tool with regard to guiding future land use decisions.

The following land use patterns include:

- Natural Resource
- Farming Community
- Resort Community
- Private Land Ownership
- River Corridor

“Natural Resource / Open Space” - Recreation

It is unjust to say that only a portion or “just one township” is devoted to natural resources and open space when the entire County embraces the endless (natural resource based) recreational opportunities that exist there. The area identified on the **Oscoda County Land Use Patterns Map** (see **Figure 8.2**) is generally identifying that area’s abundance of land in public ownership.

Recreation

Outdoor recreation within Oscoda County is undoubtedly a major attraction for local residents and tourists alike. The County is over 80 percent forested, with 56.6 percent of the land owned by the U.S. Forest Service or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; therefore, the County's attraction for outdoor enthusiasts is easily perceived. The National Forest Service owns 147,885 acres or 231 square miles of Oscoda County. This is all within the Huron National Forest, which occupies the entire southern half of the County and stretches into neighboring counties. State ownership in the County equals 55,000 acres or 6 square miles. The existing environment favors future recreational development, but this development must be channeled into constructive avenues or the unique character of the County could easily be destroyed. It is essential to retain the natural characteristics of the land and still provide adequate recreational facilities for the tourists, as well as for the local residents.

First steps towards a regionally based recreation plan were recently completed in the **Oscoda County Multi-use Trail Master Plan** (Gosling Czubak Engineering Sciences, Inc., 2006). The Trail Master Plan provides an extensive inventory, recommends potential projects, and highlights the connections between recreation and economic development.

“Farming Community” – Agriculture

Most of the County is covered by sandy soils with very thin layers of topsoil that are not suitable for agriculture. Selkirk and Nester silt loam are the best for agricultural use in the County and are most suitable for forage crops and corn silage. Emmet sandy loam also has farming potential.

Nester silt loam comprises 0.8% of the total acreage in the County, and Selkirk silt loam comprises 2.2%. These soils are composed mainly of low swells of clay and sandy land with enough natural drainage for agricultural use, but they also show some ponding, and Emmet sandy loam comprises 5.6% of the total County and occurs in fairly large bodies near both Fairview and Comins. These soils represent the better grade of hilly hardwood upland soil.

The Oscoda County Soils Survey describes Selkirk silt loam as being best adapted to grazing and dairy farm operations. Timothy and alsike clover hay are the recommended crops for this soil. Other crops noted in the soils survey are oats, beans, peas, barley, and alfalfa. Selkirk loams have severe limitations on most types of development.

Nester silt loam is suitable for red clover, timothy hay, corn, oats, wheat, potatoes, navy beans, field peas, barley, rye, sweet clover, buckwheat, alfalfa, and rutabagas. Red clover shows good yields on this soil without liming or fertilizer, but fertilizers would increase the yields of grain, potatoes, and beans. Nester silt loam pierces too slowly for septic fields, but has only moderate limitations on residential and commercial development. This increases the potential that the soil could be developed for other uses, other than agricultural purposes.

Emmet sandy loam shows greater productivity than the deeper sands of the Emmet series and is best suited for potatoes and forage and silage crops such as oats, alfalfa, and corn silage. This soil pierces slowly and thus is only moderately suitable for septic fields. It is suitable for both commercial and residential buildings at low to moderate slopes.

The location of farms in the County corresponds roughly to the location of more suitable soils. Most of these farms specialize in raising livestock and growing forage crops. **Figure 8.1** depicts those areas classified as "essential farmland" by the Oscoda County Soil Conservation District Directors.

Figure 8.1



“Resort Community”

Garland Resort, a regional and statewide recreational-based destination in Oscoda County, defines the resort community. The “resort community” land use pattern covers almost half of Greenwood Township which consists mostly of private land ownership tracts. The majority of residents and “snowbirds” live around one of many nearby lakes including Little Bear Lake, Snyder Lake, Tea Lake, and Little Wolf Lake. It is significant to mention that Greenwood Township is the last remaining Township in the County to establish a *public* recreation facility; however, the Township is aware of the need and is working toward developing a Township Park and nature trail.

“Private Land Ownership”

The area on the Land Use Patterns Map identified as “Private Land Ownership” generally shows where the majority of private land ownership is in the County. Other large areas of private land do exist near Garland Resort, in the northwest and northeast corners, and near Luzerne. It is important to see that the majority of residential development and private land ownership is occurring north of the Au Sable River along the major road corridors (M-72 and M-33), in existing communities, and around inland lakes.

“River Corridor”

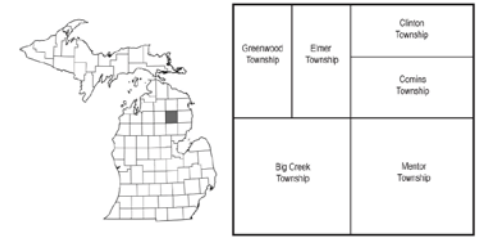
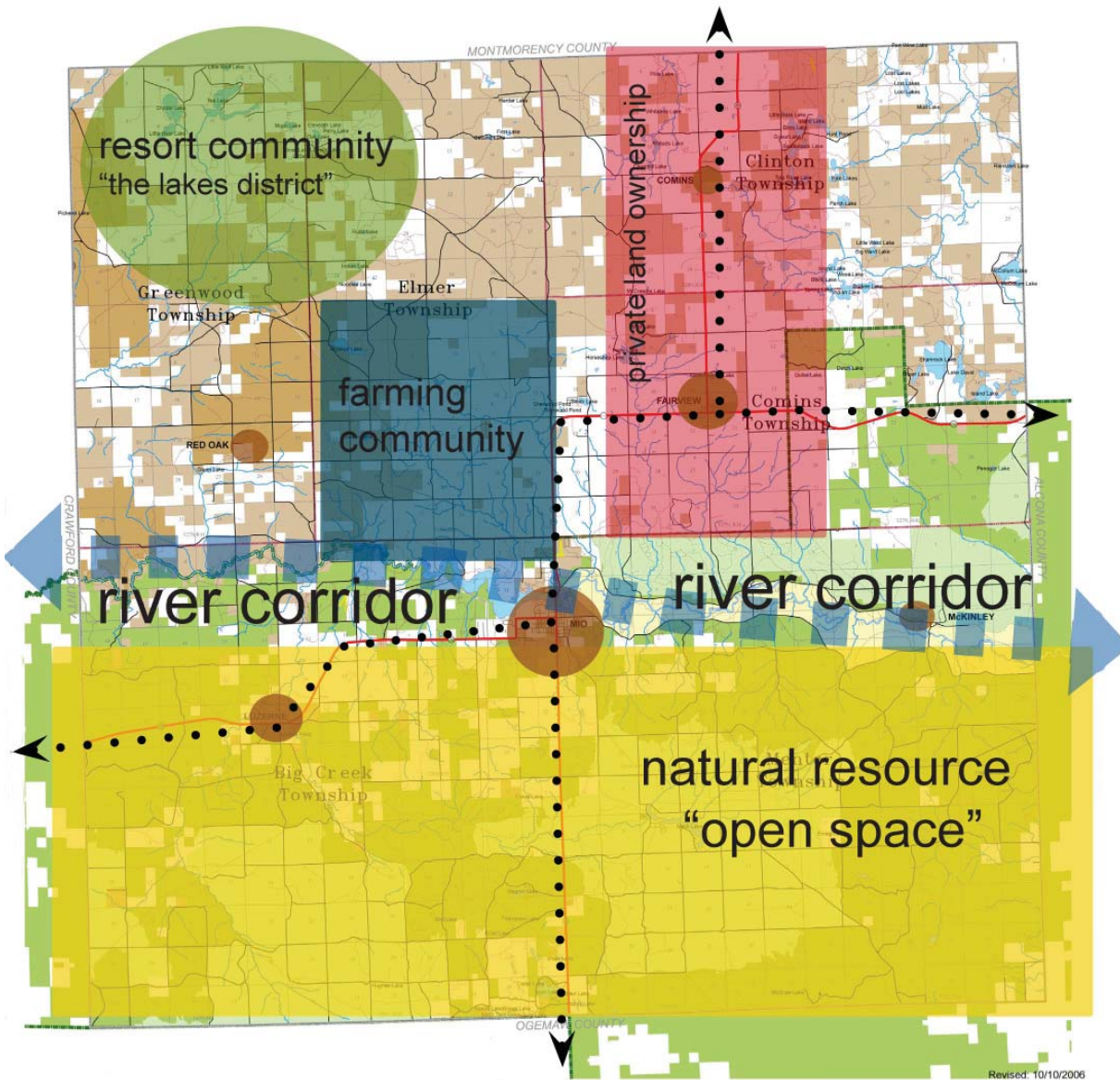
The Au Sable “River Corridor” has been identified as a significant land use pattern due to the orientation of the river running east to west, essentially dividing the County in half. The river corridor is the foundation for the County’s plentiful natural resource base and much of the existing land use patterns are that way today because of the Au Sable River.

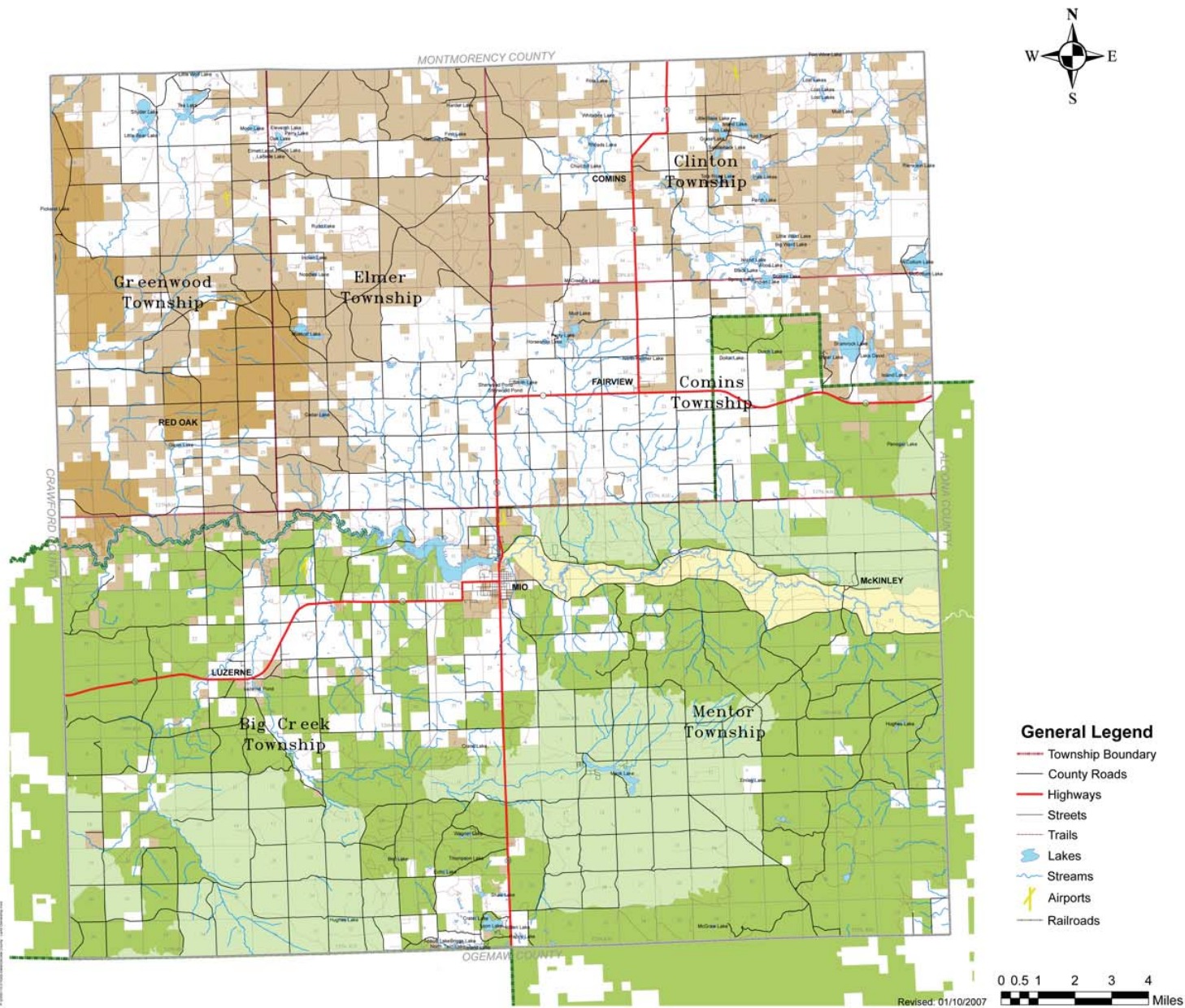
Today, the Au Sable River is designated as a National River by the National Park Service (NPS). The following description was developed by the NPS.

“It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dams and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.”

-National Park Service

LAND USE PATTERNS
Figure 8.2
Oscoda County, Michigan





LAND OWNERSHIP Map 8.1 Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

Land Ownership

- National Wild Scenic River System Corridor
- MDNR Special Management Area
- NFS Special Management Area
- Huron-Manistee Forest Boundary
- Huron-Manistee Forest
- State Ownership

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83



Revised: 01/10/2007



8.7 EXISTING LAND USE MAP

The Oscoda County Land Use Map (see **Map 8.4**) was prepared using Michigan GIS reference library data that is collected by the State. Several detailed land use categories are available for the County; however, we have combined some categories to provide better map legibility. The following existing land use categories include Residential, Commercial-Industrial-Transportation, Extractive, Transitional, Agriculture, Forested Public Facilities, Wetlands, Conservation-Open Space, and Non-Forested.

Residential

The majority of residential property is rural residential on lots of 10 acres or more. The most densely settled residential areas are located in the existing communities, along road corridors, and around inland lakes. A cluster of lakes to the northwest (Tea, Snyder, Moon, Little Bear, and Oak), the northeast (Saddleback, Bass), Mack Lake and Loon to the south, and Smith Lake and Perry Lake towards the central region, are surrounded by homes and seasonal cottages that occupy small lots.

Housing

Over 80% percent of the tax base in the County comes from residential uses (personal property and development property). The majority of the housing in the County is single-family – 97%, while the remaining 3% is multi-family housing. With regard to Michigan land use, single-family housing is the largest consumer of land.

The County's housing stock is relatively new with more than 70% being constructed post-1960. Of this, 4,355 homes were built between 1960 and 1979; just over 1,300 homes were built over the next decade; and from 1990 through March of 2000, more than 1,400 additional homes have been built.

Just over 85% of the housing units in the County are owner occupied, up from 82% in 1990. The state average is lower at 71%. In 1990, the median home value was \$37,000; today median home value has increased more than 80% to \$67,300. Greenwood Township has the highest median home values, while Big Creek Township has the lowest.

Commercial / Industrial / Transportation

Most commercial development is within the vicinity of the community of Mio. Commercial development also occurs north of Mio along the M-72/M-33 corridor. The other communities accommodate some commercial uses, with a small amount scattered near the lake areas and at “commercial nodes.” The commercial nodes have developed at main road intersections near residential development and are scattered throughout the County.

Big Creek, Comins, Elmer, Greenwood, and Clinton Townships house the greatest amount of industry in the County. This light industry or “cottage industry” consists of wood products, building materials, metal fabrication and sand and gravel establishments. At this time, the County has not developed an industrial park; however, the recently completed Oscoda County Economic Development Revitalization Plan locates potential real estate near the Oscoda County Airport. The Revitalization Plan also indicates that first, an industrial park should not be developed until sufficient facilities become available and the County has sufficiently marketed existing vacant buildings in Mio, and second, improvements are made to the airport.

Extractive

Extractive land use is defined by surface mining, mostly sand and gravel operations. Surface mining is not a large sector with regard to industrial development, mostly due to the large amount of land available for mining tied up in public ownership.

Transitional

Transitional land use is defined by logging and forestry operations and management. Transitional lands occur mainly on public land; the national park service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources both manage forests. Forest management provides both revenue dollars and habitat for the Kirtland Warbler. Logging also occurs on private land throughout the County. Private land owners primarily manage these forests as a source of revenue.

Agriculture

Agricultural land use occupies about 7% of the total land area.¹⁹ There are some farms in the southern half of the County, the majority are located in an agricultural belt running from Kittle Road across to Fairview and north to the County line. This belt roughly corresponds to the location of Nester and Selkirk silt loams, which are the most favorable soils for agricultural use in the County.

Forested

Forests are the largest land cover/use category in Oscoda County, covering 84% of the total land area. The entire expanse of forest is classified as commercial forest, with 44% in federal ownership, 14% in state, county and municipal ownership, and 42% in private ownership.¹⁸ The Huron National Forest occupies most of the County's southern half and most of the northwestern corner is Au Sable State Forest. The Au Sable State Forest is not currently engaged in land purchase and exchange; however, the Huron National Forest is engaged in some land purchase and exchange, primarily to consolidate its holdings by buying pockets of land in its interior.

Public Facilities

Public facilities include land that is available for public use including golf courses, parks, township halls, community centers, and other land uses that are open to the public.

Wetlands

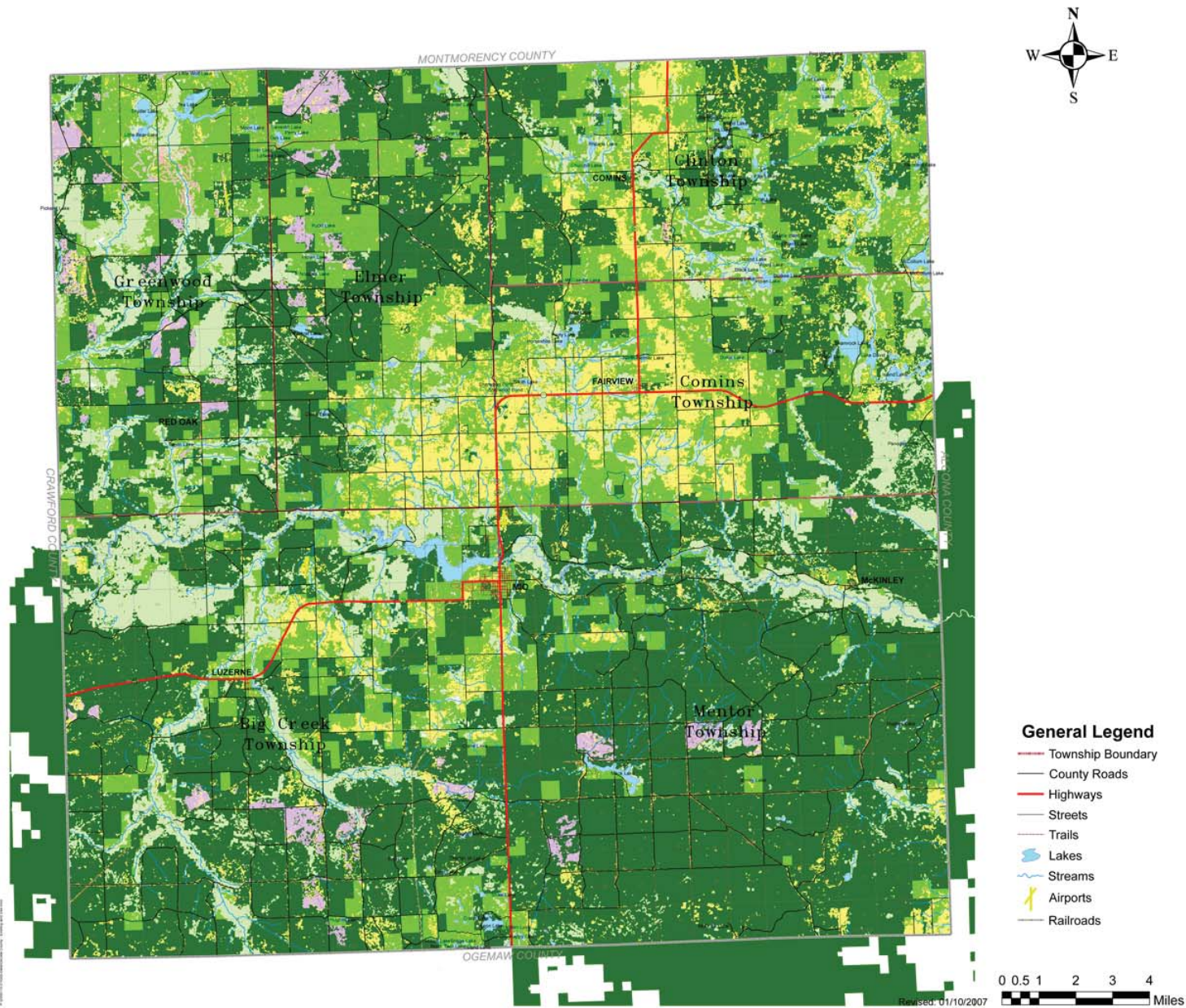
Wetlands are defined as those areas that have significant value to watershed protection and enhancement. Wetland areas identified on the existing land use map occur in both private and public ownership. There are a significant amount of wetlands in the County that feed the Au Sable and Thunder Bay Watersheds. The majority of residents are aware of the sensitive nature of wetlands and work together to educate and protect wetland areas.

Conservation / Open Space

Conservation and open space are all the areas in public ownership. This land use category is defined by land that is available for recreation and lands that are critical for conservation.

Non-Forested

Non-forested areas are all the remaining areas that do not fall under the aforementioned land use categories.



EXISTING LAND USE - Map 8.2 Oscoda County, Michigan



Greenwood Township	Elmer Township	Clinton Township
		Comins Township
Big Creek Township		Mentor Township

Existing Land Use

- Residential
- Commercial/Industrial/Transportation
- Extractive
- Transitional
- Forested
- Agriculture
- Public Facilities
- Wetlands
- Conservation/Open Space
- Non-Forested

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
1992 National Land Cover Dataset
Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83



CHAPTER 9 – Future Land Use

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

9.0 – BACKGROUND

9.1 – RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Rural

High Density

Waterfront

9.2 – COMMERCIAL LAND USE

Retail – Neighborhood Convenience

Retail – Community Centers

**Retail – Highway Development &
Rural Scenic Viewsheds**

Industrial Land Use

Institutional Land Use

9.3 – AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

9.4 – PRIME FOREST LANDS

9.5 – GREENWAYS

Sensitive Ecological Habitats

Recreational Open Space

BACKGROUND

This master plan advances County guiding principles relative to service costs, growing and sustaining an economic base, environmental conservation, preferred densities, and resource management. The plan strikes a compromise between efficient use of the land, resource conservation and management, and the demand for scenic-rural parcels; therefore, the needless destruction of farmland and prime forestlands is prevented and the scenic beauty and small town atmosphere of the townships and communities is preserved. The land uses portrayed on the Future Land Use Map reflect the guiding principles developed by the Oscoda County Planning Commission. The following future land use categories in Chapter 9 are broken down into **Objectives & Priorities** along with **Proposed Efforts**.

The following future land use categories differ somewhat from **Map 9.1- Future Land Use**, in order to provide a more *general land use map* that reveals preferred future land uses and the overall existing land use patterns. **The following future land use categories discussed in Chapter 9 include:**

- Section 1 - Residential Land Use
- Section 2 - Commercial Land Use
- Section 3 - Agricultural Land Use
- Section 4 - Prime Forest Land
- Section 5 - Greenways



FUTURE LAND USE - Map 9.1

Oscoda County, Michigan



Future Land Use

- Community Centers
- Rural Scenic Viewsheds
- Sensitive Ecological Habitats
- Agricultural Land Use
- Recreational Open Space / Prime Forest Lands
- Other Forested Lands

*The future land use map is a graphic representation of general land use. The land use categories are based on existing land use patterns and desired future land use.

General Legend

- Township Boundary
- County Roads
- Highways
- Streets
- Trails
- Lakes
- Streams
- Airports
- Railroads



Revised: 04/06/2007

Base GIS Data: Michigan Framework Data
 1992 National Land Cover Dataset
 Michigan GeoRef, NAD 83



Section 9.1 - Residential Land Use

BACKGROUND

The County understands that different densities exist with regard to residential land use; moreover, that providing a variety of housing types to accommodate people's changing needs is of high regard. Housing types include low to medium to high densities. This section begins to explore three types of residential development density that include **Rural Residential**, **High Density Residential**, and **Waterfront Residential**.

Communities must also remember to provide enough affordable housing and retirement housing that is centrally located to existing service amenities.

It is also important to begin the process of locating future residential developments now, in order to avoid sprawl and provide a full range of housing needs for the future. Creating master plans or zoning can help guide this process so that in the future the appropriate infrastructure will be in place.

The following section offers several **Objectives** and **Proposed Efforts** that can be taken to support residential land use.

Rural Residential

Objectives & Priorities

1. Practice Conservation Planning

Conservation Planning concentrates development into smaller areas to preserve tracts of natural open space over the remainder of the site.^{9.1}

2. Promote the benefits of **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) & Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)** as means to protect valuable open space.

3. Pay close attention to Land Division.

4. Pay close attention to site assessment and design when developing low-density residential.^{9.3}

5. Promote **Cluster Development** in greenfield-type developments in order to protect the physical character of the County.

6. Consider the benefits of **Planned Unit Developments (PUD)**.

7. Educate landowners and landlords on rules and regulations.

Proposed Efforts

1. Identify areas most suited for Conservation Planning Techniques

(e.g., existing large parcel areas; prime agricultural lands; parcels with viewsheds; ecologically sensitive lands; large woodland areas; stream corridors and greenways).^{9.2}

*Cluster development is one type of Conservation Planning

2. Set-up a TDR Program.

*State of MI ACT 228 of 2003

3. Build jurisdictional support to revisit zoning ordinances and establish a minimum lot width-to-depth ratio.

4. Work together with County jurisdictions to establish low-density residential guidelines for development.

5. Demonstrate to realtors, developers, and contractors the benefits of Cluster Development.

(i.e. Benefits can include lower infrastructure costs, protected natural areas, higher home re-sale value)

6. Work towards promoting PUD developments as an option to conventional development.

7. Enforce existing ordinances and County rental codes.

High Density Residential

Objectives & Priorities

1. Continue to support infill development in the County's community centers.
2. Determine which land areas will support high-density development.
3. Support **Mixed-Use Developments** as means to connect residential and neighborhood convenience stores, expand market values, and re-develop underutilized properties.^{9.4}
4. Consider **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)** opportunities.
5. Pay close attention to site assessment & design when developing high-density residential.
6. Educate landowners and landlords of rules and regulations.
7. Support affordable housing.

Proposed Efforts

1. Educate developers, communities, and County jurisdictions about grant opportunities that exist for infill development.

(e.g., Brownfield Redevelopment, Community Block Grants)
2. Prepare sub-area plans for each community to determine which areas should be preserved and which areas support the desired development.
3. Begin to understand the different types of Mixed Use Developments that occur on different scales.

(e.g., Large Scale; Residential Scale; Agricultural Scale)^{9.4}
4. Set-up a TDR Program.
5. Work together with County jurisdictions to establish high-density residential guidelines for development.
6. Enforce existing ordinances and County rental codes.
7. Utilize the State and County Economic Development Corporation and County Housing Commission.

Waterfront Residential

Objectives & Priorities

1. Practice Conservation Planning

Conservation Planning concentrates development into smaller areas to preserve tracts of natural open space over the remainder of the site.^{9.1}

2. Pay close attention to Land Division.

3. Promote the benefits of waterfront associations.

4. Pay close attention to site assessment & design when developing Lakefront & Riverfront Residential.

5. Educate landowners and landlords of rules and regulations.

(See Guiding Principle # 8)

Proposed Efforts

1. Identify areas most suited for Conservation Planning Techniques

(e.g., Existing large parcel areas; prime agricultural lands; parcels with viewsheds; ecologically sensitive lands; large woodland areas; stream corridors and greenways).^{9.2}

2. Build jurisdictional support to re-visit zoning ordinances and establish a minimum lot width-to-depth ratio.

3. Work together with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and local extensions to evaluate existing waterfront association models.

4. Work together with county jurisdictions to establish Lakefront and Riverfront Residential guidelines for development.

5. Enforce existing ordinances and County rental codes.

Section 9.2 - Commercial Land Use

BACKGROUND

In order to begin to think about commercial land use we must look at each commercial activity including **Retail, Industrial, Agriculture, Prime Forest Land (Forestry), and Institutional**. These five commercial categories all have relative similarities and differences that make them unique with regard to land use. Agriculture and Prime Forest Lands are not included in the Commercial Land Use Section; moreover, they are grouped in separate sections in this chapter because of their own exclusive issues that pertain to land use.

Retail commercial establishments can be found in many different forms and at different scales including *Neighborhood Convenience, Community Centers, Regional Centers* (there are no regional centers in Oscoda County), and *Highway Development*. The different commercial establishments all provide goods and services and they all have an economic capability; however, the biggest distinction that divides them is what market the establishment is affecting and how each is developed with regard to land use differences.

Oscoda County is limited in **Industrial Land Use** due to its location to major transportation routes. Oscoda County has seen small cottage industry that has become viable spring up throughout the area and continues to explore the possibility of soliciting the expansion of industrial land.

Agricultural Land Use and Forestry are by far the most different when relating them to other commercial land uses. Agricultural land use is unique with regard to site design, economic development, and site characteristics including soils; moreover, these land uses are divided into their own sections.

Institutional Land Use can include several categories including governmental, medical, educational, airports, and worship sanctuaries.

Retail – Neighborhood Convenience

Objectives & Priorities

1. Support Commercial Developments as means to provide residents with goods and services as well as contribute to the County’s economic sustainability.
2. Promote the development of neighborhood convenience stores.
3. Encourage land use practices that promote access management.
4. Support **Mixed-Use Developments** as means to connect residential and neighborhood convenience stores, expand market values, and redevelop underutilized properties.^{9.4}

Proposed Efforts

1. Begin to understand the different types of Commercial Developments that occur on different scales

(e.g., Neighborhood Scale; Community Center; Regional Center; Highway Development).^{9.5}

Develop creative bonuses to offer developers in exchange for them to follow suggested guidelines.
2. Encourage the development of neighborhood convenience (e.g., gas stations, mini mart, farm market) stores through appropriate zoning.

Identify prospective property in the community and secure purchase option and first right of refusal. Circulate a development proposal region wide.
3. Minimalize new driveway openings and promote shared access.

Consider utilizing service roads to connect commercial business where possible.
4. Begin to understand the different types of Mixed-Use Developments that occur on different scales.

(e.g., Large Scale; Residential Scale; Agricultural Scale)^{9.4}

Retail – Community Centers

Objectives & Priorities

1. Support Commercial Developments as means to provide residents with goods and services as well as contribute to the County’s economic sustainability.
2. Consider the benefits of **Planned Unit Developments (PUD)**.
3. Encourage infill development.
4. Consider all aspects of functionality when redeveloping or considering infill development.

Proposed Efforts

1. Begin to understand the different types of Commercial Developments that occur on different scales

(e.g., Neighborhood Scale; Community Center; Regional Center; Highway Development).^{9,5}

Develop creative bonuses to offer developers in exchange for following suggested guidelines.
2. Develop Planned Unit Development (PUD) guidelines.

Work towards promoting PUD developments as an option to conventional development.
3. Create incentives, other than tax abatement, to offer developers. Incentives such as public and private cooperatives (e.g., Brownfield Redevelopment Grants; Community Development Block Grant).

Utilize Michigan’s Economic Development Corporation (State and County) as a resource.
4. **Key Considerations:** Building Design, Streetscape, Signage, Access and Circulation, Service Elements, Public Transportation, Parking, Landscaping, Stormwater, Lighting, Pedestrian Space.

Retail – Highway Development & Rural Scenic Viewsheds

BACKGROUND

Highway development can have a significant effect on road corridors, both positive and negative. The County understands that careful attention needs to be paid to developing commercial business along existing road corridors. Maintaining the rural and scenic viewsheds along the road corridors is important with regard to preserving the desired community character. The public also spoke with concern that the sprawl-like commercial development along road corridors did not fit with the vision (both character and appearance) they would like to see in the future. It is the County's desire to achieve a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

Refer to **Guiding Principle #3** which begins to look at developing a clear vision that is developed through active citizenry and is consistent across the County.

Guiding Principle #1 and #11 also support and provide best management practices with regard to understanding community character and how to build a more sustainable rural community.

The following section offers several **Objectives** and **Proposed Efforts** that can be taken to support commercial highway development and protect our road corridors from sprawl.

Retail – Highway Development & Rural Scenic Viewsheds

Objectives & Priorities

1. Support Commercial Developments as a means to provide residents with goods and services as well as contribute to the County’s economic sustainability.
2. Promote roadside character protection and enhancement in order to protect our community character.

(See Guiding Principle # 1)
3. Consider the benefits of **Planned Unit Developments (PUD)**.
4. Discourage strip development in areas that have moderate to severe limitations.
5. Encourage land use practices that promote access management.
6. Encourage building design (architecture) and site design to revert back to more traditional development patterns.

Proposed Efforts

1. Begin to understand the different types of Commercial Developments that occur on different scales

(e.g., Neighborhood Scale; Community Center; Regional Center; Highway Development).^{9.5}

Develop creative bonuses to offer developers in exchange for them to follow suggested guidelines.
2. Limit the size of operation and structures.

Regulate parking lot size and placement.

Consider site context and building function when designing parking lots.

Consider setback regulations.
3. Develop a planned unit develop ordinance (PUD).

Work towards promoting PUD developments as an option to conventional development.
4. Limit the amount of commercially zoned land along road corridors.
5. Limit new driveway openings and promote shared access.

Consider utilizing service roads to connect commercial business where possible.
6. Provide guidelines (e.g., buildings close to the street with parking in the rear; visual/architectural appeal along road-facing façade; large windows, signage^{9.6}).

Industrial Land Use

BACKGROUND

Principles for locating industrial uses are similar to those for commercial development. Industries should be near major transportation routes and fire, water, sewer, and solid waste disposal services. They should be separated from residential areas by some combination of open space, parking, commercial uses, or major traffic routes. Because of the potential for groundwater contamination, industries that use dangerous chemical should not be established in areas with very permeable or poorly drained soils. Industries should be grouped together so they may be provided with public services more efficiently, and to minimize the harmful effects on other land uses. Industrial parks with attractive site design and landscaping are the preferred land use arrangement.^{9.7}

The area south of the Mio airport is proposed for future industrial development based on its relatively good soils, accessibility by a state highway, and proximity to Mio and future sewer and water service. This location separates the industrial area from residences to the east by a major highway. Industrial uses which locate in this area will be separated from the residential area to the south by a landscaped buffer and a greenbelt. This area is planned only for light industrial development. The County will conduct a thorough review of the waste disposal plans and procedures of proposed industries to the potential for groundwater contamination due to the sandy nature of the soils in this area.^{9.6}

Over the past few years, Oscoda County has begun to see the potential success with regard to “cottage industry.” The complex, yet small-scale industry is scattered throughout the County; furthermore, consideration for potential job creation and economic expansion of the County’s economic base should not be overlooked.

The following section offers several **Objectives** and **Proposed Efforts** that can be taken to support the initiative to bring more industrial land use in order to provide job security in Oscoda County.

Industrial Land Use

Objectives & Priorities

1. Support Industrial Developments as means to provide residents with job security that would contribute to the County's economic sustainability.
2. Roadside character protection and Enhancement.
3. Consider integration of industrial land use as part of mixed use development.
4. Attract "Clean" Industry in order to sustain both our economy and environment.

Proposed Efforts

1. Begin to understand the different types of Industrial Developments that occur on different scales

(e.g., Cottage Industry (Home Industry), Research & Development, Tech-Industry, Manufacturing & Assembly, Warehouse & Distribution).^{9.8}

Develop creative bonuses to offer developers in exchange for them to follow suggested guidelines.

(See Guiding Principle # 2)
2. Limit the size of operation and structures.

Regulate parking lot size and placement.

Consider site context and building function when designing parking lots.
3. Begin to understand the different types of Mixed-Use Developments that occur on different scales

(e.g., Large Scale; Residential Scale; Agricultural Scale).^{9.4}
4. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to identify land and resources that are available.

As the County become more educated in the Green Revolution and **LEED** Accreditation Programs.

Continue to promote the benefits of "Cottage Industry."

Institutional Land Use

Objectives & Priorities

1. Support Institutional Developments as a means to provide residents with healthcare and educational facilities.

Proposed Efforts

1. Begin to understand the different types of Institutional Developments.

Section 9.3 - Agricultural Land Use

BACKGROUND

It is important to understand that agriculture lends itself to a community's overall character. The rural community is not only culturally rich, but economically as well. Over 1.05 million (direct and indirect) are employed in the agri-food system in Michigan—equal to 24% of all persons working in Michigan (MSU 2005).

The future of agriculture seems to be forming itself around sustainability and small-scale operations that benefit the local region. These small-scale farms are able to creatively market themselves in order to achieve a higher dollar amount for their products. Small farms more commonly also practice best management practices and open space conservation.

The following section offers several **Objectives** and **Proposed Efforts** that can be taken to support agricultural land use.

Agricultural Land Use

Objectives & Priorities

1. Provide local jurisdictions with the most current land use information / mapping.
2. Agricultural conservation.
3. Promote agricultural best management practices.
4. Look to new agricultural markets as a guide to develop new economic strategy.
5. Utilize existing resources.
6. Promote a more sustainable rural community.

Proposed Efforts

1. Develop an accurate inventory of all existing farmlands, land zoned for agriculturally purposes, as well as land that has high agrarian value.
2. Implement **conservation easements** to remove sensitive and fragile lands from agricultural lands.

Encourage and explore **Purchase of Development rights** and **Transfer of Development rights**.
3. Educate agrarian leaders and local farmers of the many benefits of reduced pesticide and herbicide use, pesticide-free, and organic farming.
4. Encourage **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** to support local farmers, provide residents with local produce, and education.

Develop a countywide co-op to ensure a fair market value.

Investigate market-gardening, versus conventional mono-crop production (Utilize agrarian models practiced by the Amish population).
5. Utilize the Michigan State University (MSU) Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Product Center can help develop and commercialize high value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the agricultural and natural food sectors

6. (See Guiding Principle #11)

Section 9.4 - Prime Forest Lands

BACKGROUND

Prime forest lands consist of all the forests in the County that are under private and public ownership. Forestry is a valuable part of Oscoda County's economic and resource base; therefore, prime forest lands are identified so they may be managed for commercial forestry. The area which is best suited for commercial forestry, as indicated by soils analysis, existing forest cover, and ownership, is shown in **figure 5.1**.

The prime forest lands in public ownership are also available for recreational use (**Recreational Open Space**) and are discussed in **Section 9.5 – Greenways**. On the future land use map, the recreational open space and prime forest lands are combined and are portrayed with one graphic representation.

The following section offers several **Objectives** and **Proposed Efforts** that can be taken to support the protection and management of prime forest lands to be utilized for timber management.

Prime Forest Lands

Objectives & Priorities

1. Establish a Conservation and Management Plan.
2. Promote the sustainable harvesting and sales of timber.
3. Protect minimum lot sizes in order to protect prime forest land.
4. Look to new timber markets as a guide to develop new economic strategy.
5. Limit the visual impact of development

Proposed Efforts

1. Work together with local foresters to improve the coordination with the National Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

2. **(See Guiding Principle # 14)**

3. Warrant zoning if applicable with existing township master plans.

If development does occur in prime forest land, then allow for increased density for clustered home sites.

Allow density bonuses of 50% when the undeveloped land is placed in a conservation easement or irrevocable conveyance.

4. Be creative with local marketing of timber products.

Support local business that want to utilize timber.

(e.g., Furniture makers)

Section 9.5 – Greenways

BACKGROUND - What is a Greenway?

“A greenway is a corridor of open space that can vary greatly in scale and purpose, from a narrow ribbon of green that runs through urban, suburban, and rural areas to a wide-open corridor that incorporates diverse natural, cultural, and scenic features. Greenways include both land- or water-based areas, running along streams corridors, shorelines or wetlands. Some greenways follow old railways, canals, ridge tops, or other natural and man-made features, and they can incorporate both public and private property. Greenways often provide for recreational opportunities, while others are established almost exclusively for environmental protection and are designed to limit human passage. Greenways differ in their location and function, but overall, a greenway network will protect natural, cultural, and scenic resources, provide recreational benefits, enhance the natural beauty and the quality of life in neighborhoods and communities, and stimulate economic development opportunities.^{9,9”}

Greenways are important to every community. They provide the buffer between human development and the sensitive ecological areas where the natural world flourishes. It is here nature meets humankind, “the edge,” where we come to recreate and bring ourselves back to the natural world.

It is important to understand the benefits Greenways can provide and most importantly understand how to weigh those benefits against existing and future land use policy. Greenways are not only places to enjoy the outdoors, but more importantly **Sensitive Ecological Habitats** that contain our valuable natural resources, which we need to survive both physically and economically. Greenways are where our most sensitive wetlands, streams, rivers, lake edges, and recharge zones perform. These watershed systems act like a giant sponge filtering the earth’s bi-products as well as our manmade pollutants.

Greenways must be considered for their potential benefits including economic, social, and environmental when developing future land use policy to be included in master plans. The following section is broken into two sections that include **Sensitive Ecological Habitats** and **Recreational Open Space**. Recreational Open Space includes those lands in public ownership.

Sensitive Ecological Habitats

Objectives & Priorities

1. Protect and enhance our rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater re-charge zones.
2. Balance recreation opportunity and Sensitive Ecological Habitats.
3. Protect areas of unique character, historical value and/or high natural value.
4. Continue to provide land for endangered species protection.
5. Provide flexibility when developing land for residential or commercial uses.

Proposed Efforts

1. Utilize Michigan Department of Natural Resources standard guidelines and when possible establish local water resource protection guidelines.

Water Resource Protection Guidelines could include:

Setbacks, Native Vegetation, Lighting, Soil Erosion.

Initiate a Watershed Planning Process (**See Guiding Principle # 14**)

2. Work together with the National Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
3. Work together with State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and local historic preservation groups.
4. Work together with the National Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
5. Establish development guidelines and alternatives that encourage developments to incorporate minimal clearing, woodland protection, and flexibility in siting buildings.^{9,10}

Contact state and local agencies for assistance in habitat protection.

Recreational Open Space

Objectives & Priorities

1. Provide areas for recreation opportunity.
2. Support Conservation Subdivision Planning as means to protect valuable open space.
3. Promote environmental and natural resource protection and encourage best-management practices with regard to natural resources.
4. Consider open space—first and foremost.
5. Consider permanently protecting open space.

Proposed Efforts

1. Utilize the **Oscoda County Community Park, Recreation, and Open Space, and Greenway Plan** as a tool to guide recreational Development.
2. See **Section 9.1 - Rural Residential**.
3. Work together with local foresters and mining companies and improve the coordination with the National Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

(See Guiding Principle # 2)

4. Begin to understand the many benefits of open space including environmental value, aesthetic value and economic value.

Consider the many different types of open space including public, private, and semi-private.

5. Utilize open space protection tools

TOOLS

- Transfer of Development Rights
- Purchase of Development Rights
- Conservation Easements

See **Section 9.1 – Rural Residential**.

CHAPTER 10 – Implementation

OSCODA COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2014-2018

10.1 – SUMMARY

**10.2 – THE ROLE OF LOCAL JURISDICTIONS
(TOWNSHIPS & COMMUNITIES)**

**10.3 – HOW WE LOOK AT ZONING AND RELATED
LAND USE REGULATIONS**

**10.4 – RELATIONSHIP TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAMS (CIP)**

10.5 – NEXT STEPS

10.6 – AVAILABLE RESOURCES

10.1 SUMMARY

As was discussed in the introduction of Chapter 1, a master plan is intended to guide policy and decision making for future land use, infrastructure, and public service decisions. The next step is implementing the plan, which is dependent on multi-faceted coordination and effort between public, private, and governmental bodies. In order for the plan to be a success, implementation also speaks of interaction with regard to the communication that needs to occur between agencies responsible for various components of the plan (e.g., Public Works, Economic Development and Transportation).

The completed Oscoda County Master Plan is an important benchmark; however, in order for the ideas, initiatives, and goals to begin to guide public policy and land use decisions, it becomes the responsibility of elected officials, local and County planners, private business, developers, and other administrative officials to make the Plan a success.

Successful implementation of this Plan will depend upon capital improvement plans, township master plans and zoning ordinances, and the ability of the County, townships, and citizens to work together.

10.2 THE ROLE OF LOCAL JURISDICTIONS (TOWNSHIPS & COMMUNITIES)

This Plan is based on the idea that each jurisdiction (township) will be in a better position to address existing and future land use issues. It is hoped that cooperation with local planning commissions within the County will result in compatible local land use plans so that a coordinated approach will be achieved. This type of interdependence will maximize benefits for everyone through the coordination and cooperation of local governmental units on future land use decisions. The result will be a shared vision for land use planning which will enhance the quality of life for all of the residents of Oscoda County.

With the adoption of this Master Plan as a “toolbox” for smart growth, all local jurisdictions will see the benefits that include knowing the future plans of the County, knowing the future path the County will take to pursue these plans, knowing the priorities being pursued on a County-wide level, and knowing the basis behind planning and physical development decisions.

Utilizing the Plan, local jurisdictions can address local issues on a more informed level. The effects of land use decisions, more often than not, extend far beyond the boundaries of local jurisdictions.

Public interests that relate to land use and are more likely to affect a county or region include, but are not limited to the following:

- Air Quality Protection - protecting the air we breathe
- Watershed Management
- Groundwater Protection
- Protection of Greenways (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, wildlife habitat)
- Protection of Natural Resources in Order to Sustain Resource Based Industry (e.g., Agriculture, Forestry)
- Sustainable Economic Development to Provide Jobs
- Use and Management Issues of Public Access Sites
- Establishment of New Public Open Space & Park Space
- Safe, Efficient, and Environmentally Sound Roads & Highways
- Public Sewer and Water Services that Extend Beyond a Single Jurisdictional Boundary
- Land Use along Municipal Borders
- A Shared Vision that Reflects the Characteristics Desired by the Residents
- Large Scale Developments
- LULUs (Locally Unwanted Land Uses) that Meet a Regional Need (e.g., Salvage Yards, Landfills, Communication Towers)

10.3 HOW WE LOOK AT ZONING AND RELATED LAND USE REGULATIONS

Many of the proposed efforts that were identified in Chapter 9 – Future Land Use, relate to zoning issues and ordinances as the means to solve the problem. The County currently does not wish to enforce zoning and is depending on local jurisdictions to make land use decisions; however, by virtue of PA 184 of 1943, the County Planning Commission does have the responsibility to offer recommendations on individual rezoning or text amendments to those townships possessing their own zoning ordinances.

Zoning can be viewed as either bad or good depending on the land use issue and how the related ordinances are approached. Some ordinances are written in too much detail and tend to become more limiting than flexible with regard to growth and development. For this reason it is important to approach zoning as a tool to guide our envisioned community's growth. For example, most incentives for Planned Unit Developments, cluster housing, and mixed-use developments occur within the context of a zoning ordinance.

In this manner, the County will work toward demonstrating the value of this Plan's objectives and priorities. The County will provide technical assistance to those jurisdictions that already have their own zoning ordinances, and by review and comment the County can assist these communities in also achieving the objectives of his Plan. The County will also work towards influencing those jurisdictions in the County who do not have a common master plan or zoning ordinance by encouraging them to join as partners in the pursuit of the County's common vision, or by offering technical assistance services when requested.

Relationship to Subdivision Regulations

At this time, the County and townships are not seeing significant residential growth; however, it is important to understand the Land Division Act of 1967 in order to protect valuable agricultural land, sensitive ecological habitats, prime forestland, and recreational open space.

The Land Division Act of 1967, also known as PA 288, sets forth the authority of a community to establish design standards and requirements for the orderly layout and parcelization of property within its jurisdiction. Presently, most communities have not adopted subdivision regulations pursuant to this Act. The consequence of this situation is that in townships without their own regulations, subdivisions are being reviewed only from the perspective of satisfying County roadway standards, drain commissioner standards, Health Department Standards and State of Michigan standards. Subdivision orientation; parcel configuration and layout; the relationship between utilities, roads, lots and residences; open spaces; the relationship to external activities; the entry/image and retention of natural features are all subdivision planning and design considerations which cumulatively have a significant impact upon community character.

Currently, proposed subdivisions are not being reviewed with these considerations in mind. Although the authority to regulate these matters rests within each County jurisdiction, it is recommended that a single set of regulations be prepared as a model to encourage individual adoption of local subdivision and related land division regulations and if the County were to adopt subdivision and related land division regulations, it would likely prove beneficial to the successful implementation of this Plan.

Creating PDR and TDR Programs

What does Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) mean?

PDR is a voluntary program, where a land trust or some other agency usually linked to local government, makes an offer to a landowner to buy the development rights on the parcel. The landowner is free to turn down the offer, or to try to negotiate a higher price. Once an agreement is made, a permanent deed restriction is placed on the property which restricts the type of activities that may take place on the land in perpetuity. In this way, a legally binding guarantee is achieved to ensure that the parcel will remain agricultural or as open (green) space forever. This is because the agency involved retires the development rights upon purchase. The deed restriction may also be referred to as a conservation easement, or, since most PDR programs are designed to preserve agricultural use, an agricultural conservation easement. As a result, PDR programs are occasionally called PACE programs (purchase of agricultural conservation easement (OSU 1998).

The establishment of PDR programs begins at the local level, accompanied by enabling and/or funding legislation at the state level. To start, the County would develop an agricultural preservation board to provide oversight. The membership of the board would include volunteers that may be appointed by elected officials. The board should reflect the community and include members from not only the agricultural industry, but other stakeholder groups as well.

What does Transfer of Development Rights (PDR) mean?

Transfer of Development Rights refers to a method for protecting land by transferring the “rights to develop” from one area and giving them to another. What is actually occurring is a consensus to place conservation easements on property in agricultural areas while allowing for an increase in development densities or “bonuses” in other areas that are being developed. The costs of purchasing the easements are recovered from the developers who receive the building bonus (OSU 1998).

Transfer of Development Rights is another method for protecting land and ensuring a more sustainable future for agriculture in the County. Unlike PDR programs, TDR programs are a great tool that can be used to work together with developers when developing for residential or commercial land uses.

It should be mentioned that PDR and TDR programs alone will not protect agricultural land. Members of the agricultural community need to come together with the County and local jurisdictions to review the models and tools available that will support the promotion of a more sustainable rural community.

Protecting Visual Character

Visual character is derived from what you see and how you feel as you move through a place. Visual character is a lasting image that stays with us even after we have left. Relating this to Oscoda County we find that most visual character occurs along the road corridors. It is important to understand that existing main road corridors (e.g., M-33 north of Mio) most often occur on jurisdictional boundaries and are ignored with regard to visual character. The County understands that careful attention needs to be paid to developing and maintaining commercial businesses along main road corridors in order to protect the desired community character.

10.4 RELATIONSHIP TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS (CIP)

A capital improvements program is an annual listing of proposed major improvements to public facilities that will be constructed generally over a fixed time frame. Typically, Capital Improvement Programs include the proposed location, method of financing, time frame, and the parties that are responsible for the specific capital improvement. In some cases, Capital Improvement Programs are integrated as part of the overall budget; however, it would be ideal to separate the mandatory fiscal budget from a Capital Improvement Program. Capital Improvement Programs should be looked at as an implementation tool to support improvements to public facilities.

Many individual agencies and departments within the county prepare annual physical improvement plans for budgetary purposes (such as the County Road Commission for roadway improvements and maintenance). At this point, it is critical the individual agencies make a realistic assessment of improvements based on the Master Plan.

As new growth and development occurs within the County, and as resources for public dollars become more and more limited, it is likely to become critical that individual and countywide Capital Improvement Programs be prepared; and any future plans (e.g. Recreation Plans, Transportation Plans, and Housing Plans) be consistent with the parameters identified in this Master Plan. Moreover, once the Master Plan is adopted, the County Planning Commission should exercise its legal authority to review all proposed public works facilities, whether or not they are included in a capital improvements program.

10.5 NEXT STEPS

The following list includes some general and other more specific follow-up planning efforts and activities the County Planning Commission will work towards over the next 5- and 10-year periods.

Recommended Planning Efforts

1. Distribute copies of the Master Plan to local jurisdictions (townships), regional planning clearinghouses (e.g., Northeast Council of Governments), and relevant County agencies.
2. Initiate review of existing township master plans and zoning ordinances to identify significant differences and similarities to the County Master Plan.
3. Prepare a composite zoning map showing the zoning of all land in the County pursuant to each of the zoning ordinances in effect within the County.
4. Prepare and adopt countywide subdivision and land division regulations and /or prepare a model ordinance that local governments could all adopt.

Future Planning Efforts

5. Prepare a digital parcel map of all parcels within the County in conjunction with the County Equalization Department.
6. Continue to update the land use / land cover map of the County.
7. Prepare sub-area plans for areas in the County that are might be identified as critical with regards to land use.
8. Identify specific state, federal, or privately owned land parcels for possible land exchange or acquisition consideration that would either establish a logical extension of existing community boundaries (i.e. Mio, Fairview) to accommodate new commercial, industrial, or residential development.
9. Establish a County Planning Department with full-time professional planning director.
10. Initiate a full-scale GIS system as part of the new County Planning Department.
11. Initiate a countywide capital improvement program (CIP) that is reviewed and approved annually by the Planning Commission to ensure consistency with the Master Plan.
12. Utilize past planning efforts, plans, and reports
13. Update and amend the Master Plan as needed to ensure the Master Plan is in line with the shared vision of the residents of Oscoda County.

10.6 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

A variety of programs are available for use in implementing this Master Plan. Whereas the focus is on grants from State and Federal sources, these sources are limited and are often targeted to address specific programs or problems. Nevertheless, these programs are summarized below for educational and possible future use.

Community Development Block Grant Program

The Community Development Block Grant program was authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Act had the effect of combining several Federal categorical grants such as Urban Renewal and Model Cities into one program. Grants under the program must principally benefit low and moderate-income families. Limited funds are available to rural communities through the Michigan Department of Commerce.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Programs

To help preserve Michigan's older existing housing, Public Act 130 was passed in 1977 to allow MSHDA to begin a home improvement loan program that offers reduced interest rates to eligible low and moderate income families. Consequently, MSHDA created the Home Improvement, Neighborhood Improvement, and Community Home Improvement Programs (HIP/NIP/CHIP). To obtain a loan, residents need to apply to one of the banks, savings and loans, or credit unions that participate in HIP/NIP/CHIP. Elderly housing programs are also available. MSHDA can be contacted through the Michigan Department of Commerce.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program was authorized by Public Law 88-578, which became effective on January 1, 1965. The purpose of the program is to provide Federal funds for acquisition and development of facilities for outdoor recreation. The LWCF Program is administered jointly by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. To be eligible for support, a Park and Recreation Plan must be submitted to and approved by the DNR every five years.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976 (Public Act 204) was passed by the Michigan Legislature and signed by the Governor on July 23, 1976. This Act created the Michigan Land Trust Fund and provides funds for the public acquisition of recreational lands through the sale of oil, gas, and mineral leases and royalties from oil, gas, and mineral extractions on State lands.

On November 6, 1984, Michigan residents cast their vote in favor a State Constitutional amendment to create the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), Public Act 101 of 1985. The MNRTF officially replaced the Michigan Land Trust Fund on October 1, 1985 and assists State and local governments (including school districts) in acquiring land or rights to land for recreational uses, protecting land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and developing public recreational facilities.

The Recreation Bond

The Recreation Bond calls for money to be spent on DNR and local recreation facilities in four categories:

(Recreation infrastructure; Waterfront recreation; Community recreation; Tourism-enhancing recreation.)

Communities with proposals for projects in which the community is below the standards identified by DNR will get funding priority over similar projects proposed in non-deficient communities. The minimum number or size of selected recreation facilities to be considered toward bond funding is established by specific DNR criteria.

Recreation Improvement Fund

The Recreation Improvement Fund was created from State fuel tax revenue. About \$750,000 per year is being targeted for development of non-motorized trails (hiking, bicycle, cross-country, and nature trails). Contact the Recreation Division of the DNR for information.

Local Facility Development Grants

These grants come from a number of funding sources and are available for planning, design, or development of local recreational facilities. They are administered by the DNR.

Land Acquisition Grants

Land acquisition grants are available for projects aimed at open space preservation; park creation or expansion; acquisition of environmental resources such as sand dunes, woodlots, or wetland areas; waterfront access sites; and many other land acquisition projects intended for (passive or active) recreational purposes. They are administered by the DNR.

Waterways Fund

The Waterways Division of the Department of Natural Resources offers grants for the purpose of developing public boating facilities. The emphasis is on creating boat access sites and supporting facilities.

Road Funds

In 1992, PA 149 was passed to provide a continued source of revenue for cities, villages and county road commissions. PA 149 replaces Act 231, 233 and 237 by changing the State's matching fund from 25 percent to 20 percent. Detailed information on PA 149 can be obtained from MDOT's Transportation Economic Development Office at 517/335-1069.

TEA-21 Funds

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 created a new era of Federal transportation policy, and, as a result, a new opportunity for funding local transportation improvements. Authorized with a 20 percent local match requirement, funds may be sought for construction activities on any Federal aid road, any bridges or other transportation related projects, including but not limited to transit, carpool, parking, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Public Works Financing

In addition to using general fund monies, it is often necessary for a community to bond to raise sufficient funds for implementing substantial public improvements. Bonding offers a method of financing for improvements such as water and sewer lines, street construction, sidewalks, and public parking facilities. Special assessments for benefiting property owners are another common funding mechanism.