

# **ALMIRA TOWNSHIP**

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## **RECREATION PLAN**

**ADOPTED APRIL 11, 2011**

### **ALMIRA TOWNSHIP BOARD**

**Vance Bates, Supervisor**

**Mary Dort, Clerk**

**Dawn Campeau, Treasurer**

**Kirt Giddis, Trustee**

**Diana Nolan, Trustee**

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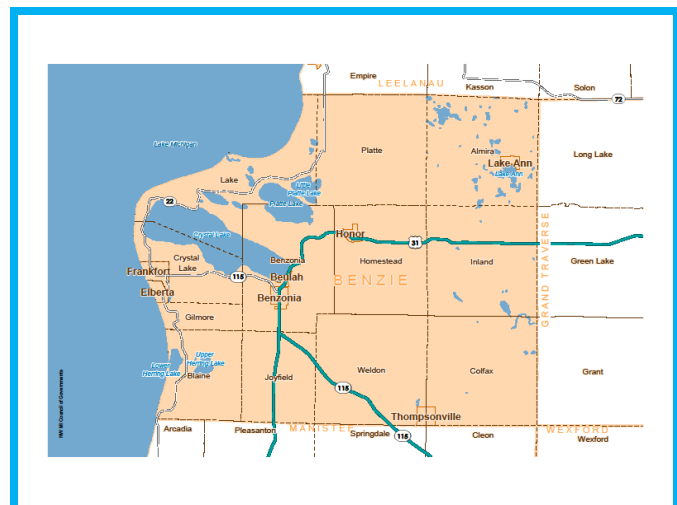
## I. PURPOSE

How healthy are you? What does your family do for recreation? Where do you and your family play? What would make you and your family more active? Today sports, leisure and recreation are a mainstay in American life. This Plan addresses these questions to help Almira Township become a healthier community, offer a better quality of life and provide its citizens recreational opportunities.

This Plan provides a concise description of the current and future recreational opportunities in the Township. This Plan is also meant to be a dynamic document that can respond to changing conditions. This Plan will help establish a foundation for the Township to apply for State grants through the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF), other grants and private donations to make physical improvements to the recreation system.

### A. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Almira Township is a rural community located in Benzie County in northern Lower Michigan. It is bordered by Platte Township on the west, Inland Township on the south, Long Lake Township (Grand Traverse County) on the east, and Kasson Township (Leelanau County) on the north. The incorporated Village of Lake Ann is within the Township's physical boundaries. Increased development has caused Almira Township to continually assume new responsibilities, including providing a sufficient amount of recreational opportunities.



## 1. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

One of the most important components in developing a recreation plan for a community is understanding its social make-up as well as the surrounding areas. Neighboring properties have an impact on the recreational needs of a community; therefore, Township data are compared to Benzie County and the Village of Lake Ann to provide a broader picture of the social characteristics. Information from the 2000 United States Census Bureau offers a picture of the Township and of the community as a whole. It should be noted that the Census data does not reflect the actual number of persons residing or visiting the Township during the summer months.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Almira Township in 2010 was 3,645 persons, including 268 in the Village of Lake Ann. **Table 1** provides population statistics for Benzie County, Almira Township and the Village of Lake Ann for the period 1970 to 2007. As can be seen, the entire Township experienced tremendous population growth between 1970 and 1980, when the combined growth of the Township and Village of Lake Ann was more than 130 percent. From 1980 to 1990, the total Township growth rate slowed to 34.4 percent and grew to 113 percent between 1990 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2010 the combined growth rate was 29.7% The Township growth rate between 2000 and 2010 comprises more than 54 percent of the County's growth. The population of Benzie County has experienced substantial growth each decade since 1960. **Table 2** illustrates population change for permanent residents of Almira Township and other Benzie County communities from 1980 to 2010.

**Table 1**  
**Population Change**  
**Almira Township, Village of Lake Ann and Benzie County**

	<u>1970</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>2010</u>
Benzie County	8,593	30.4	11,205	8.9	12,200	31.1	15,998	9.5	17,525
Almira Township	296	184.8	843	46.1	1,232	105.8	2,535	33.2	3,377
Village of Lake Ann	172	36.6	235	-7.7	217	27.2	276	-2.9	268
Total Township	468	130.3	1,078	34.4	1,449	94.0	2,811	29.7	3,645

**Table 2**  
**Population Trends of Benzie County Communities**  
**1980-2010**

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	Number Change 1980 – 2010	Percent Change 1980 -2010
Almira Township	1,078	1,449	2,811	3,645	2,567	238.1
Benzonia Twp	2,461	2,405	2,839	2,727	266	10.8
Blaine Township	449	424	491	551	102	22.7
Colfax Township	340	415	585	657	317	93.2
Crystal Lake Twp	753	759	960	957	204	27.1
Frankfort City	1,603	1,546	1,513	1,286	-317	-19.8
Gilmore Township	794	794	850	821	27	3.4
Homestead Twp	1,290	1,477	2,078	2,357	1,067	82.7
Inland Township	843	1,096	1,587	2,070	1,227	145.6
Joyfield Township	573	626	777	799	226	39.4
Lake Township	387	508	635	759	372	96.1
Platte Township	256	253	342	354	98	38.3
Weldon Township	378	448	530	542	164	43.4
<b>Benzie County Total</b>	<b>11,205</b>	<b>12,200</b>	<b>15,998</b>	<b>17,510</b>	<b>6,320</b>	<b>56.4</b>

### Age Distribution and Racial Make-Up

Information on age distribution within a population can assist the community in matching public services such as recreation to community characteristics by determining the special needs of specific resident groups. **Table 3** compares the age distribution of Almira Township, the Village of Lake Ann, and Benzie County based on the 2000 Census while **Table 4** illustrates the changes in the Township's age composition between 1990 and 2000.

During this time period there was a substantial amount of growth in the number of residents between the ages of 25 to 54. This population is considered to be in their prime working years and is likely to have school-age children at home. Almira Township is known as a "bedroom" community to Traverse City, and the number of families with young or school age children is expected to continue to increase. Recreational amenities that allow for family-oriented recreation such as ball fields, walking and bicycle trails, and parks with modern facilities and equipment are essential to this population segment. Based on these Tables, it should be noted that 30% of the Township's population is under the age of 20, suggesting the need for recreational amenities such as "tot" yards, neighborhood parks, skateboard parks, sporting fields/facilities, and public beaches.

Another population segment that grew and is expected to increase is the "retiree" - ages 65 and older. As this segment of the population increases, so does the demand for low-impact active recreation, such as walking and bicycle trails, parks, shuffleboard courts, board and table games, and other leisure time activities.

The racial make-up of the population for Almira Township is relatively homogeneous. Of the total 2,811 persons listed in the 2000 census, 2,746 were white, 17 were of Native American decent, six were African American, and two were of Asian descent and the remainder of another race or recorded two or more races.

**Table 3  
Age Distribution by Jurisdiction – 2000**

	Almira Township	Village of LakeAnn	Benzie County
Under 5	217	10	948
5 to 9	221	18	1,060
10 to 14	222	17	1,100
15 to 19	174	17	950
20 to 24	139	20	679
25 to 34	397	21	1,815
35 to 44	545	53	2,516
45 to 54	399	31	2,274
55 to 59	106	16	927
60 to 64	111	19	926
65 to 74	183	31	1,587
75 to 84	75	17	909
85 & Over	22	6	307
<i>Totals</i>	<b>2,811</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>15,998</b>
Median Age	35.7	42.3	40.8

**Table 4  
Almira Township  
Change in Population**

	1990	Percent Change	2000
Under 5	156	39.1	217
5 to 9	119	85.7	221
10 to 14	119	86.6	222
15 to 19	64	171.9	174
20 to 24	62	124.2	139
25 to 34	275	44.4	397
35 to 44	258	111.2	545
45 to 54	120	232.5	399
55 to 59	69	53.6	106
60 to 64	65	70.8	111
65 to 74	107	71	183
75 to 84	29	158.6	75
85 & Over	6	266.7	22
<i>Totals</i>	1,449	94	2,811

Population Size and Projections

The future projected population of Benzie County will be 19,250 persons by 2020, based on a study done in December 2007 by the University of Michigan Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations for the Michigan Department of Transportation. **Table 5** projects the Township population to 2020 using two methods:

- 1) The Township population as a percentage of the County population growth and
- 2) The Township population as a percentage of the total County population.

This assumes a degree of correlation between the growth rates of the County and the Township. Using these associations, the population of the Township will range between 3,489 and 4,014 -by 2010 and between 3,913 and 5,195 by 2020 assuming the conditions, which have fueled growth in the region, remain reasonably constant and the supply of land in the Township is adequate to accommodate such growth. Neither approach is likely to capture the actual outcome, but **Table 5** does provide a reasonable range of possible future populations for use in local and county planning.

**Table 5  
Population Projection  
(As % of County Population Growth)**

	1970	Incr	1980	Incr	1990	Incr	2000	Incr	2010	Incr	2020
Benzie Co.	8,593	2,612	11,205	995	12,200	3,798	15,998	2,002	18,000	1,250	19,250
% of growth/ decade		30.3%		8.9%		31.1%		12.5%		6.9%	
Almira Twp.	296	547	843	389	1,232	1,579	2,811	678	3,489	424	3,913
% of County Growth		20.9%		39.1%		41.6%		33.9%		33.9%	
<b>Population Projection (As% of Total County Population)</b>											
Benzie Co.	8,593		11,205		12,200		15,998		18,000		19,250
Almira Twp.	296		843		1,232		2,811		4,014		5,195
%	3.4%		7.5%		10.1%		17.6%		22.3%		27.0%
		4.1%		2.6%		7.5%		4.7%		4.7%	
<b>Projected Population Ranges</b>						<b>2010</b>			<b>2020</b>		
						3,489 – 4,014			3,913 - 5,195		

## Households

Census data from 2000 show Almira Township containing a total of 1,054 households (occupied housing units) of which 808 (or 76.7 %) are family households and 246 (or 23.3 %) are non-family households. A family household is defined as a household in which a person is living with one or more persons related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. A non-family household is a household where a person is living alone or with non-relatives only.

Single parent households comprise a relatively small portion of the households in the Township. In 2000, there were 81 single parent family households, comprising 7.7 percent of the family households in the Township. The Township has 2.67 persons per household in 2000, down from 2.78 persons in 1990. This compares to 2.42 and 2.56 persons per household in the County and State, respectively. Household size will likely continue to decline during the 20-year planning time horizon, consistent with national trends.

**Table 6**  
**Almira Township**  
**Households**

No. of Households	1990		2000		% Increase 1990 - 2000
	#	Size	#	Size	
	443	2.78	1,054	2.67	137.9%
Household Types					
Family Households	338	76.3%	808	76.7%	
Non-Family Households	105	23.7%	246	23.3%	
Total Households	443	100%	1,054	100%	



## Gender

The gender distribution in the Township, County, and Village is relatively even between males and females. All three communities have more females than males, reflecting the State and national averages.

**Table 7  
2000 Gender**

	Male	Female	Total
Benzie County	7,923	8,075	15,998
Almira Township	1,384	1,427	2,811
Village of Lake Ann	132	144	276

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Disabled Persons

Approximately 358 persons or 13% of the Township population five years of age or older were classified as disabled in 2000. As the population increases, it could be expected that the number of disabled citizens will continue to increase. If park and recreation facilities are not barrier-free, many of these residents will be prevented from participating in recreational activities. Almira Township has been actively working to meet the needs of the disabled citizen, such as adding barrier-free parking areas in Almira Township Park.

**Table 8  
Disability Status**

Population	Benzie County	%	Almira Township	%	Village of Lake Ann	%
5-20 years	306	9.5	64	9.5	14	17.5
21-64 Years	1,633	18.3	212	12.8	28	16.5
65-Over	1,041	38.7	82	28.5	19	38

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Income, Education and Employment

Income statistics for the 2000 Census reflected information from the 1999 calendar year because the Census was taken in April of 2000. Generally speaking, income levels for northern Michigan fall below those found in the State as a whole. **Table 9** compares 2008-2009 estimated income statistics for the year-round population of Almira Township, Village of Lake Ann, Benzie County, and the State. Households in the Township have a higher median income than the County and the State as a whole. *All Tables and data will be updated to 2010 as soon as the 2010 Census information is available*

**Table 9**  
**Estimated Income Statistics – 2008-2009**  
**Village, Township, County and State**

Governmental Unit	Median Household Income
Almira Township	\$50,464
Village of Lake Ann	\$49,054
Benzie County	\$37,841
State of Michigan	\$48,591

Education is one important factor in analyzing the capabilities of the local work force. The U.S. Census Bureau tracks educational attainment. Statistics from the 2000 Census indicate that 90.3 percent of residents in Almira Township are high school graduates or higher, as compared to 85.4 percent in Benzie County and 83.4 for the State as a whole. Township residents with a bachelor's degree or higher comprise 22.1 percent of the population compared to 20 percent countywide and 21.8 percent Statewide.

Michigan Works provided employment data for the Township. The available employment data does not separate the Village from the Township; therefore, the Township level data presented below includes the Village of Lake Ann. Employment data for the civilian labor force is presented below in **Table 10**, comparing the Township and Benzie County for the years 1992, 1996, and 2001.

**TABLE 11** compares the labor force, employment trends and unemployment rates of Benzie County and the State of Michigan, for the years 2004, 2006 and 2008. The unemployment rate for Benzie County is somewhat higher than that of the State as a whole.

**Table 10  
Civilian Labor Force Comparisons  
Almira Township and Benzie County  
1992-2001**

	Almira Township			Benzie County		
	1992	1996	2001	1992	1996	2001
Labor Force	750	825	950	6,375	7,000	8,075
Employ	675	775	900	5,650	6,500	7,575
Unempl	75	50	50	725	500	525
Unempl Rate	10.1%	6.3%	5.2%	12.6%	7.4%	6.4%
Note: All numbers rounded to the nearest 25 Source: Michigan Works						

**Table 11  
Civilian Labor Force Comparisons  
Benzie County and State of Michigan  
2004-2008**

	Benzie County			State of Michigan		
	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008
Labor Force Trends	8,875	9,175	8,950	5,043,000	5,068,000	4,936,000
Employment Trends	8,200	8,475	8,125	4,687,000	4,719,000	4,519,000
Unemployment Rates	7.6%	7.6%	9.2%	7.1%	6.9%	8.4%
Source: Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives U.S. Bureau of the Census						

## Tourism

Almira Township is located in Michigan's prime tourist and recreational wonderland. Tourism is considered by many to be a major component of the Benzie County economy with such industries as retail trade, the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services. Recreation improvements are needed to strengthen the tourist attraction and, therefore, the economy of the region while satisfying the needs of the seasonal and year-round resident population.

## Quality of Life

According to a 2001 study by the American Planning Association, 70% of adults in the United States do not achieve the recommended amount of activity each week. The U.S. Surgeon General recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity at least five days per week. The sedentary lifestyle is a primary factor in up to 200,000 deaths annually.

Approximately 64% of Americans are overweight; and one in three is obese. More than a third (36%) of young people in grades 9-12 do not participate in vigorous recreation activities three or more days a week, and one fourth (25%) of those aged 6-17 years are already overweight.

Although these statistics do not specifically represent Almira Township, they do show how critical it is to encourage active lifestyles and provide recreation opportunities for all age groups. As the Township's population grows, this need also increases.

## Transportation

Almira Township does not have any state trunk lines passing through the jurisdiction. Approximately forty miles of paved roads and sixty-five miles of gravel roads, of which approximately thirty miles are county roads, serve the community. The Benzie County Road Commission is responsible for maintenance of the public roads within the Township. Almira Township does have to provide funding assistance for road improvements within the Township.

In April of 2006 the Benzie Transportation Authority was formed and in January of 2007 the Benzie Bus opened its doors to the public. The Benzie Bus offers service within the county, also offers service to the Traverse City BATA transfer station and can make connections with the Manistee Transit System. Popular destinations in Almira Township are the Village of Lake Ann, Almira Township Library and Almira Township Park.

Commercial air transportation is available from the Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City, approximately sixteen miles from Almira Township. Additionally, there is a small private airport designed for "ultra light type" aircraft located on County Road 669, between Hooker Road and Oakley Road.

## 2. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Natural features of an area may affect the types of recreational amenities a location can offer. To understand the physical environment, comprehensive knowledge of the surrounding area is necessary. For this purpose, the geology, topography, bodies of water, soils, fish and wildlife resources, and climate descriptions focus on Almira Township's natural features.

### Geology

According to geologists, the bedrock underlying Almira Township was laid down during the Devonian age of the Paleozoic Era. The bedrock in the Township consists of Antrim Shale in the northwest portion and Ellsworth Shale in the remainder of the Township.

The surface geology of the Township was formed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago by glacial activity. Numerous advances and retreats by the glaciers resulted in the locally complex pattern of erosion and deposition. The Township's surface geology consists primarily of glacial pale brown to pale reddish brown fine to coarse sand, alternating with layers of mixed small gravel/heavy cobbles, and is three to sixty-five feet in thickness. A narrow strip north of Lake Ann to the north-central Township boundary is made up of gray, grayish brown or reddish brown, non-sorted coarsely textured glacial till, and is thirty to ninety feet in thickness.

In the northwestern portion of the Township, the outwash landform is pitted with ice-block depressions. These depressions are frost pockets. Some of the largest ice-block depressions in the outwash are seasonally or permanently flooded.

### Topography

Almira Township is characterized by a diversity of topography from relatively flat expanses to gently rolling to some areas with steep slopes. A relatively flat area extends north south in the western portion of the Township with much of the remainder of the township consisting of rolling topography. Additionally, a number of steeply sloped areas are scattered across the Township, often in proximity to one of the lakes. The lowest point in the Township is in the southeast portion, near Sanford Lake, at 803 feet above sea level. The highest points are Varney Hill and Warner Hill in the north-central portion of the Township at approximately 1,122 feet above sea level.

### Bodies of Water

The largest body of surface water is Pearl Lake, with approximately 543 acres in surface area located in the northwest quarter of the Township. Ann Lake, the second largest lake in Almira Township at 527 acres, is located in the southeast quarter. More than 30 other smaller lakes can be found in the Township. These lakes and their associated streams and creeks offer scenic and recreational amenities to Township residents and visitors.

## Fish and Wildlife

Sport fishing is popular on several inland lakes in Almira Township. The Fisheries Department of Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, conducts periodic fish inventories at selected lakes. An inventory was conducted in 1992 at Ann Lake. Sixteen species of fish were collected at eleven sites. They were brown trout, northern pike, small mouth bass, largemouth bass, blue gill, rock bass, Lake Perch, Cisco, white sucker, pumpkinseed, green sunfish, black bullhead, brown bullhead, yellow bullhead, blunt nose minnow and common shiners. Snapping and painted turtles were also collected during the inventory. According to the MDNRE report, anglers reported good fishing for northern pike and small mouth bass.

A fish inventory of Sanford Lake was conducted at eight sites in 1989. Species collected were blue gill, large-mouth bass, green sunfish, rock bass, white sucker, yellow bullhead, and brown bullhead. Painted and snapping turtles and bullfrogs were observed along the shoreline. The report indicates, "Some anglers complained about the poor fishing, while others say that it has only decreased slightly. Based on the results of the survey, it appears that Sanford Lake contains one of the best blue gill populations in the area."

A fish inventory of Pearl Lake was conducted at twelve sites in 1983. Species collected were northern pike, blue gill, rock bass, perch, largemouth bass, and assorted pan fish. Turtles and clams were also noted.

Habitat for populations of songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, muskrat, beaver, otter, mink and raccoon are provided by the wetlands, lakeshores, and forests within the Township. Predominant mammal species found in the Township's forest and wetlands are squirrel, rabbit, fox, coyote and deer.

## Climate

The Township's climatic conditions are similar to those across northern Lower Michigan: long cold winters, and moderate warm summers. However, the proximity to Lake Michigan serves to moderate temperature extremes as compared to more inland communities of northwestern Michigan. The average date when temperatures drop to freezing is in the fall and is typically several weeks later than the areas further inland, with the first frost in the township occurring as late as the middle or end of October. According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, Frankfort Station, Benzie County, for the year 2000, **Table 12** illustrates some important weather statistics for Benzie County, including Almira Township.

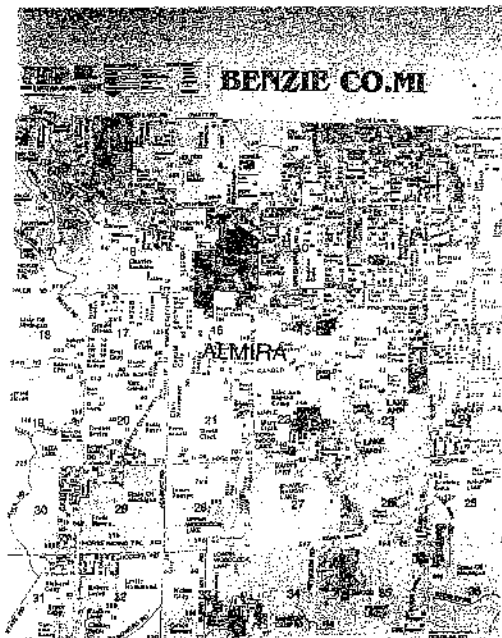
**Table 12**  
**Average Weather Statistics**  
**Benzie County**

January average minimum temperature	18.9 degrees F
January average maximum temperature	30.6 degrees F
July average minimum temperature	57.5 degrees F
July average maximum temperature	76.4 degrees F
Average annual rainfall	30.25 inches
Average annual snowfall	122.4 inches

From a recreation viewpoint, the climate is sufficiently diverse to support a variety of outdoor activities. Summer temperatures are warm and conducive to swimming, sun bathing, hiking, boating, and the like. Winter brings annual snowfall depths of over 100 inches, which complements the region's popularity for skiing, snowmobiling, and other winter activities.

Land Cover

According to the 2000 Census, Almira Township's land area is 33.8 square miles. A consultant mapped existing land use in the Township in March 1998. The map of existing land use illustrates the distribution of land uses throughout the Township. Michigan Resource Information Systems (MIRIS) land cover/use classification categories were used to map the existing land use. The original State MIRIS mapping (1978) was updated with 1987 aerial photographs in combination with extensive field checking (conducted in March 1998). The updated information was then computerized to produce the existing land use map and statistics. **Table 13** presents the land uses in current rank order, showing the number of acres and percent of the Township in each of the land use categories.



Current Land Use Map

**Table 13**  
Almira Township Existing Land Use Statistics

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Number of Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Township</u>
Upland Forest	12,393.4	53.8
Non-Forested/Undeveloped/ Open	4,511.4	19.6
Wetlands/Lowland Forest	1,464.1	6.4
Water	1,421.1	6.2
Residential	1,324.2	5.8
Agricultural	1,227.8	5.3
Institutional/Recreation	327.0	1.4
Village of Lake Ann	276.7	1.2
Industrial/Extractive/Utilities	52.9	0.2
Commercial	37.9	0.2
TOTAL	23,036.5	100.1

Note: Due to rounding, the total percentages of land uses do not equal 100 percent.

Upland Forest

The forested lands are the most predominant land cover in the township and account for 53.8 percent, or 12,393 acres, of the Township. Of the forested lands, northern hardwoods comprise approximately three-quarters of the upland-forested lands, with pine as the second most common upland forest type, followed by aspen-birch associations. Large upland-forested areas are noted along the southern and western regions where State forestland exists. Mapped woodlands include such tree types as beech, maple, aspen, birch, white pine and red pine.

Non-Forested/Undeveloped/Open

The non-forested land category consists of herbaceous open and shrub land. As shown in **Table 13**, more than 19 percent of the Township is in the non-forested category. Non-forested areas are scattered throughout the Township and are found in nearly all sections of the Township, except Sections 26 and 17.



## Wetlands

Wetlands include land that has sufficient water at, or near, the surface to support wetland or aquatic vegetation. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, and bogs. The identified wetlands include areas that support lowland hardwoods and conifers, such as northern white cedar, willow and aspen species, as well as lowland brush and grasses. Wetlands and lowland forests comprise 6.4 percent of the Township area. Due to past draining and development, this amount has decreased from what was originally classified as wetland. The majority of the wetland areas can be noted on the Existing Land Use Map in the southwest portion of the Township, in the vicinity of Ann Lake, and many of the other smaller lakes and streams in that portion of the Township (Sections 21,22,24-28,31, and 35). A few additional wetland areas are clustered in the northeast portion of the Township (Section 1, 11-13).

## Water

Open water comprises over six percent of Almira Township. Included in this category are Ann Lake, Pearl Lake, and more than 30 other smaller inland lakes.

## Residential

As can be seen on the Existing Use Map and table, residential use ranks fifth in the amount of land currently in this use. Residential use occupies more than 5 percent (1,324 acres) of the land in the Township. Residential development on various size parcels is distributed throughout the Township and in the platted subdivisions. This category would also include multiple family housing, although none was identified during the field checking.

## Agricultural

Agricultural lands currently comprise approximately 1,227 acres or 5.8 percent of the Township. The agricultural land is clustered in the central and north central portion of the Township with a few scattered parcels located in the southwest portion of the Township.

## Institutional/Recreation

This category includes both institutional and recreational land categories, which cover 1.4 percent of the Township's land area. Included in this category are Township offices, Township fire and ems facilities, parks, campgrounds, public access sites, cemeteries, the Lake Ann Camp, and a 27 hole golf course and a 9 hole 3 par golf course. These sites are shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

## Industrial/Extractive/Transportation

Land in this use category covers less than 1 percent of the Township and includes the landing strip in Section 32, just off Maple City Highway. Additionally, two other areas are mapped as this land use: a sand and gravel excavation operation off Almira Road (East of Maple City Highway), and a saw mill on the South side of Almira Road.

## Commercial

A small commercial area is located along Maple Street, which includes a waterscape business, self-storage units, auto repair, restaurant and all purpose storage. Although not mapped, limited commercial activities are located in the Village of Lake Ann. For most shopping needs, residents travel to large regional commercial areas, such as Traverse City. Land used for commercial purposes comprise less than one percent of the Township's area.

## **B. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

### Structure

As a small rural community Almira Township's administrative structure is relatively simple. The Almira Township Board has the responsibility of providing recreational facilities for Township residents. In this capacity, they listen and work with citizens to learn of recreation deficiencies and needs.

In the summer of 2009, the Almira Township Planning Commission conducted a survey of Township residents for use in updating the Master Plan. Survey results are used by the Board to plan what recreation facilities are needed, when they can be built or provided, and how to fund them. In addition, the Recreation Resources Committee, an appointed citizen's group, assists in the management of existing recreation facilities.

In December 2002, the Township purchased a 220 acre parcel of land referred to as Ransom Lake Natural Area, with assistance from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, a citizens' group called Almira Citizens for Preservation, and with support from many individual citizens.

In March of 2010, the Township purchased property within the Village of Lake Ann known as Almira Township Lakefront Park, again with assistance from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment Trust Fund, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Almira Citizens for Preservation and with support from many individual citizens.

### Funding

Almira Township receives most of its funding from State Revenue Sharing and property taxes. The General Fund for the Township for 2009-2010 was \$355,347. The Township also receives a specified millage for maintenance of the Township Park. The Parks & Recreation Fund for 2009-2010 was \$38,451 and the Township has one full time employee who provides maintenance to the recreation facilities.

### **C. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

The original Almira Township Recreation Plan was written in 1996 re-written in 2005, updated and amended in 2001 and 2008 respectively. A community survey was conducted in the summer of 2009 by the Almira Township Planning Commission. The Almira Recreational Resources committee reviewed and approved the Recreation Plan at their October 25, 2010 meeting, sending it on to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on November 3, 2010. After the public hearing the Planning Commission sent the Plan to the Almira Township Board with suggested changes. The Township Board held a public hearing on February 14, 2011 and approved the Plan. The Almira Township Recreation Plan was adopted by the Almira Township Board on April 11, 2011.

## D. RECREATION INVENTORY

### EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES IN ALMIRA TOWNSHIP

The recreation inventory is a basic step in the planning process. The recreational facilities and parks inventory includes areas owned and/or maintained areas by the Township, State, or other municipalities located within Almira Township. These facilities serve both local and regional needs.

<b>Facility:</b>	<u>RANSOM LAKE NATURAL AREA</u>
<b>Description:</b>	This property is 220 acres, which includes 3,500 feet of Ransom Creek frontage. This property is used for hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation, snowmobiling, etc.
<b>Condition:</b>	This property is to be kept in its natural state, open to the public for hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, and nature study. The property has been improved and now includes a bridge, fishing dock, rest area, two handicap accessible bathrooms and a handicap accessible trail.
<b>Barrier Free:</b>	There is a barrier-free parking area.
<b>Owner/Status:</b>	Almira Township

<b>Facility:</b>	<u>ALMIRA TOWNSHIP PARK</u>
<b>Description:</b>	The Park is a 42-acre park located at 7276 Ole White Drive. It has three baseball diamonds, basketball courts, volleyball courts, two tennis courts and a one mile paved walking trail. It also has a pavilion area with indoor plumbing. There are numerous playscapes and swingsets which are open during the summer months. There is a Veteran's Memorial pavilion located in the Park.
<b>Condition:</b>	The majority of the Park is in good condition; however, some of the playground equipment is dated and needs to be improved. Facilities for older residents such as shuffleboard courts and table and board games are being planned.
<b>Barrier Free</b>	The Park is barrier-free and accessible to all residents
<b>Owner/Status:</b>	Almira Township.

**Facility:** ALMIRA TOWNSHIP LAKEFRONT PARK

**Description:** Newly acquired 1.65 acre waterfront property located on Maple Street in the Village of Lake Ann, intended for use as a public park and swimming beach.

**Condition:** In the development stage

**Barrier Free** The Park will be barrier free

**Owner/Status** Almira Township.

**Facility:** MISTWOOD GOLF COURSE

**Description:** This is a one hundred sixty (160) acre golf course with twenty-seven holes and a nine hole 3 par course. It also contains a restaurant and a pro golf shop.

**Condition:** The golf course is in good condition.

**Barrier Free** Provisions have been made to make the golf course accessible to everyone.

**Owner/Status:** The golf course is privately owned.

**Facility:** BURNETT PARK

**Description:** This Park is located in the Village of Lake Ann, and contains two (2) basketball hoops, playground equipment, picnic tables, and restrooms. This is a known gathering area for the community and hosts many events.

**Condition:** The Park is in good condition.

**Barrier Free** The Park is barrier free

**Owner/Status:** Village of Lake Ann

**Facility:** STATE FOREST CAMPGROUND/CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRAIL

**Description:** The State Forest Campground is rustic camping with pit toilets and no running water.

**Condition:** Good.

**Barrier Free** Yes.

**Owner/Status:** State of Michigan

**Facility:** STATE OWNED LAND

**Description:** This land is heavily forested to open land and is used for hunting, hiking, and other outdoor activities.

**Condition:** Good

**Barrier Free:** Yes.

**Owner/Status:** State of Michigan

**Facility** MICHIGAN SHORE-TO-SHORE TRAIL

**Description:** This trail is part of a statewide equestrian trail.

**Condition:** Adequate.

**Barrier Free** Yes.

**Owner/Status:** This is a statewide trail system that is maintained by the State of Michigan.

**Facility** BOAT LAUNCHES

**Description:** Almira Township contains eleven (11) public boat access sites. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources operates eight (8) boat launches. The boat launch sites are on Ann Lake, Stevens Lake, Davis Lake, Gary Lake, Pearl Lake, Brooks Lake, Herendeene Lake, and Lime Lake. The Benzie County Road Commission has two (2) boat launches: one on Pearl Lake and one on Bronson Lake.

**Condition:** Varied

**Barrier Free** Yes.

**Owner/Status:** Varied

## INFORMATION REGARDING EXISTING FACILITIES IN SURROUNDING AREAS

In addition to those in the Township, there are many recreational facilities and parks located in surrounding Townships. These areas provide local residents and tourists regional opportunities for recreation. The following listing describes recreation resources owned by Benzie County or that cover more than one governmental jurisdiction.

1. Benzie County Crystal Lake Park: The Park contains three hundred and twenty (320) feet of Crystal Lake frontage and thirteen (13) acres of hilly and wooded land area, surrounded by no development. This property is owned by the Benzie County Road Commission and is leased to the Benzie County Board of Commissioners with restrictions that it only be used for park purposes.
2. Betsie Valley Trail: This trail is located on the former Ann Arbor railroad right-of-way. The route traverses the County along the Betsie River from Frankfort/Elberta area to Beulah and southerly to Thompsonville Village and the junction with the former C&O railroad. Almira Township residents have expressed interest in connecting to this trail.
3. Betsie River Corridor: The Betsie River is a designated *Natural Wild and Scenic River* that runs from Grass Lake to Betsie Lake and Lake Michigan. It is protected through a fifty (50) foot no-cut vegetative buffer and two hundred (200) foot setback for all manmade structures. This corridor is a major canoeing and fishing resource.

**E. ACTION PROGRAM, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS SCHEDULE, AND RATIONALE**

The Township's Action Program is based on a listing of the community recreational needs gathered, from public input. These recreational needs have been prioritized at a public meeting. The Township used this prioritization list to develop the Capital Improvements Schedule, reflecting citizen's desires and tourism demands.

- **Project Name** Almira Township Lakefront Park Development

Almira Township plans screening for neighboring properties, a changing area, a parking area, a small pavilion (for shelter from the sun and rain), and swimming beach. A specific project plan is needed prior to applying for any grants.

Estimated Cost: \$100,000 - \$150,000

When this should occur: 2011-2012

- **Project Name** Acquisition of Property Adjacent to the Lakefront Park

Estimated Cost: To be determined

When this should occur: To be determined

- **Project Name:** Ransom Lake Improvements Phase II

Extension of the handicap accessible trail from the existing bridge northwest along Ransom Lake around the north end of the lake to Ransom Creek inlet to Ransom Lake.

Estimated Cost : \$100,000.00

When this should occur: Within the next five years



- **Project Name:** Betsie Trail Connection

Construct a connection between the Betsy Valley Trail System in southern Benzie County to the Ransom Lake Natural area, the Almira Township Park, east through Long Lake Township and then to the TART (Grand Traverse Area Trail).

Estimated Cost: To be determined.

When this should occur: To be determined.

- **Project Name:** Almira Township Park Improvements

Although the Township Park is in good condition, some of the equipment is deteriorating. In addition not all of the recreation needs for citizens are being met, especially for children aged six years and younger and residents older than 65. Township residents would like to continue the update of playground equipment, add dugouts and lighting to the baseball fields, build a shuffleboard court, an ice skating rink and tables for games such as chess and checkers. Additionally, construct walking trails on the 17 acre addition to the Park and construct a new concession stand.

Estimated Cost : \$50,000 to \$ 200,000 depending on the amount of improvements.

When this should occur: 2011 – 2016

- **Project Name:** Acquisition of Environmentally Vulnerable Property

Estimated Cost: To be determined

When this should occur: To be determined

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE

The Capital Improvement Schedule details the anticipated acquisition and development of recreation parcels for the next five years. For each item listed, the expected year for that improvement is indicated. Each project has been prioritized based on public input and availability of land. It is the intent of this Capital Improvement Schedule to have flexibility when pursuing a grant for a project. Certain projects were deemed to have the same priority, but their acquisition or development depends on other factors, such as availability of land or the workings of other governmental units. Prior to the pursuit of a grant for a specific project, a special public hearing will be held explaining why a particular project is being selected and to receive input.

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Anticipated Funding Source</u>
1	2011-2012	Almira Township Lakefront Park Development	\$100,000 - \$150,000	MNRETF/Local
2	TBD	Acquisition of Property Adjacent to the Lakefront Park	\$TBD	MNRETF/Local
3	2011-2016	Ransom Lake Improvements Phase II	\$100,000	MNRETF/Local
4	TBD	Betsie Trail Connection	TBD	MNRETF/Local
5	2011-2016	Almira Township Park Improvements	\$50,000 - \$200,000	MNRETF/Local
6	TBD	Acquisition of Environmentally Vulnerable Property	TBD	MNRETF/Local

## **APPENDIX**

- I. RESOLUTION
- II. TRANSMITAL LETTERS
- III. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING – ALMIRA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
- IV. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING – ALMIRA TOWNSHIP BOARD
- V. MINUTES OF TOWNSHIP BOARD, TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION AND TOWNSHIP RECREATION RESOURCES COMMITTEE
- VI. COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST