

ALCONA COUNTY  
GREAT LAKES SPORTS FISHING FACILITIES STUDY

--

LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
AND  
TOURISM PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

August 1982

*Prepared for:*

Alcona County Economic Development Corporation  
Harrisville, Michigan

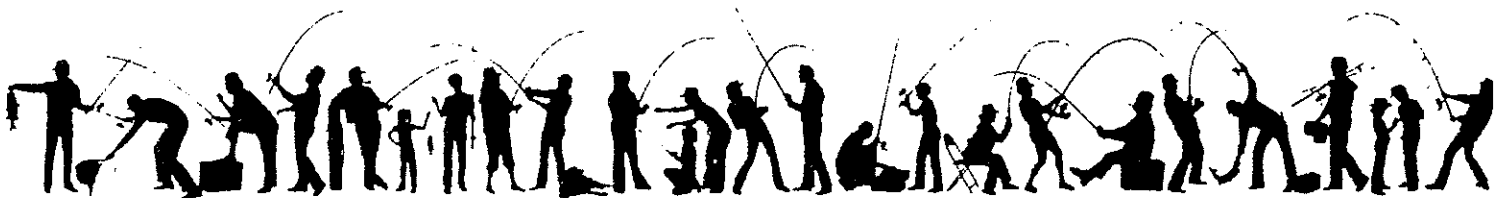
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## I. MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The Great Lakes fisheries resource off Alcona County has perhaps the finest Lake Trout fishery in the State. The county also has an excellent Steelhead Trout, Rainbow Trout, Coho and Chinook Salmon fishery. Alcona County should strongly support continued fish plantings in their Lake Huron waters by the DNR Fisheries Division.
2. The Great Lakes fishery in Alcona County is currently being under-fished due to lack of promotion and inadequate shore facilities.
3. Harrisville is the established sports fishing center in Alcona County and will most likely remain the primary area of fishing activity.
4. Improvements which enhance Harrisville's position as the leading sports fishing community in the county should be given serious consideration for priority implementation. Additional parking is the most needed improvement in Harrisville's shoreline area.
5. Sedimentation at the mouth of the Black River is preventing the northern Alcona County shoreline from developing into a significant sports fishing recreational area.
6. The Greenbush area has the complementary services to cater to the Great Lakes angler but lacks boat launching facilities.
7. Sturgeon Point Lighthouse property does not directly contribute to the sports fishing industry of Alcona County but rather offers other coastal recreational opportunities.
8. Development of Negwegon State Park in conjunction with improvements at the mouth of Black River would greatly enhance the Lake Huron sports fishing attraction of northern Alcona County and would relieve congestion at Harrisville Harbor. At minimum, the DNR Parks Division should be encouraged to acquire the remaining private inholding (South Point property located in Alpena County) of the Negwegon State Park boundary and should develop a prioritization of implementation phases, including an expected timetable for development.

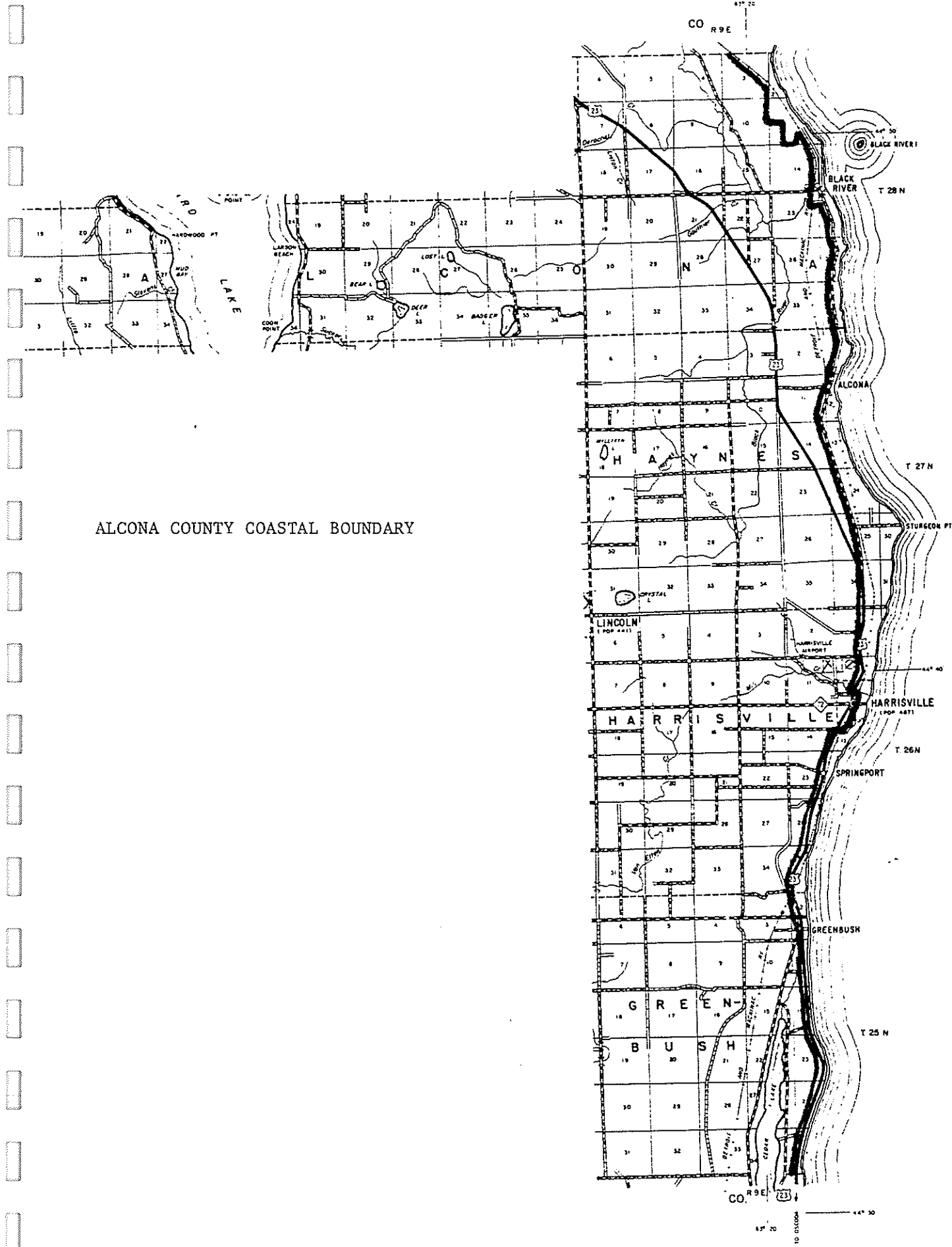
## II. INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

In early 1982, the Alcona County Economic Development Corporation received funds from the Michigan Coastal Management Program to undertake an implementation study to guide improvements for the Great Lakes sports fishing industry within the county. The purpose of this study is to plan for and provide perspective designs for possible improvement to the necessary facilities that accommodate this industry. This study is also intended to recommend certain measures that may be implemented by either the public or private sector, through a cooperative partnership, that will satisfy the need of anglers, businessmen and residents which are impacted by sports fishing activities. Finally, this study is to take a detailed look at the Harrisville community to analyze specific issues and problems relative to this industry.

### Coastal Boundary

The Alcona County Coastal area includes the entire Lake Huron shoreline extending north to south within the county. The inland boundary varies in width, but usually conforms to specific cultural features such as roads or legal boundary descriptions for ease of identification. The map on the next page illustrates this inland coastal boundary in Alcona County.



ALCONA COUNTY COASTAL BOUNDARY

### III. COASTAL AREA ANALYSIS

#### REGIONAL SETTING

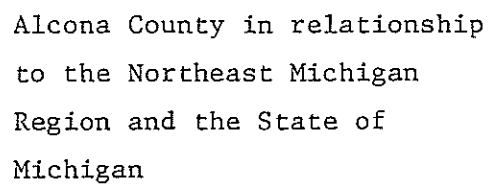
Alcona County is situated in the southeast corner of the northeast region of Michigan's lower peninsula. The other seven counties in the region are Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego and Presque Isle. Four of these eight counties boarder Lake Huron with a total of 192 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, with Alcona County having about 27 miles (or about 14% of the region) of coast. The region's relatively low population density combined with the extensive forest cover and abundant water resources makes it an excellent area for recreational activities, particularly those which are water-based or water dependent.

#### SHORELINE CHARACTERISTICS

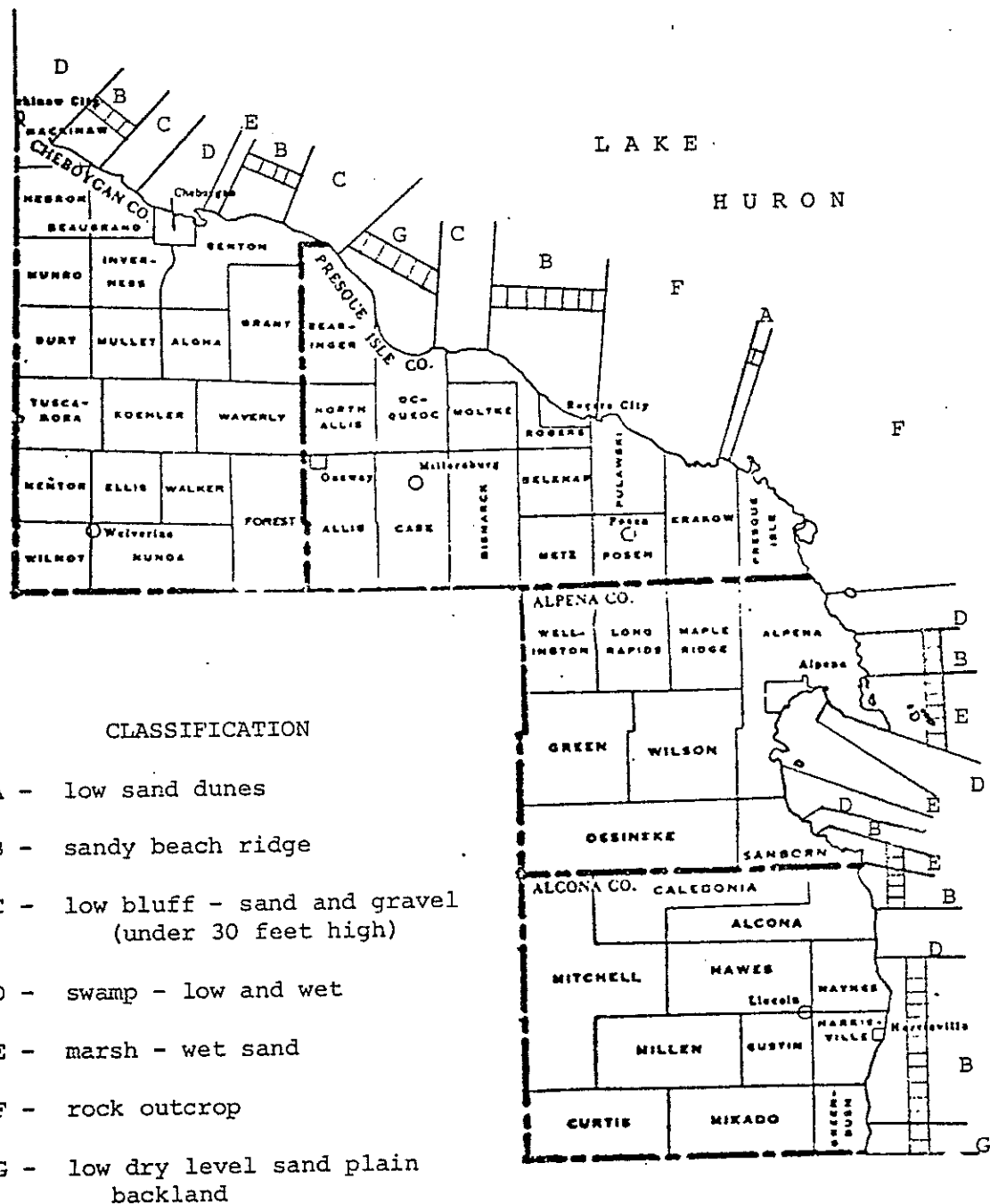
The region has a total of 191.6 miles of Lake Huron shoreline. The variety of shore types -- ranging from sand beaches and dunes to marshes and rock outcrops -- creates aesthetic and recreational interest. However, public access is minimal. Private ownership has claimed 90% of shoreline property, either in the form of residential developments or quarry operations.

At present, Lake Huron serves a vital function as an excellent source of municipal water supply. The next 20 years will bring intensive pressure to utilize the undeveloped stretches of shore. The state and local regulations must be fully employed as tools to preserve the quality of the water.

The AuSable, Cheboygan and Thunder Bay River basins are the major drainage systems for the region. Generally, water quality in these basins is classified as good, with occasional exceptions downstream from municipal discharges.



# REGIONAL SHORETYPE



Data from "Lake Shore Classification of Southern Penninsula of Michigan"  
 Department of Resource Development, Michigan State University  
 Andrew Gifford and C. R. Humphrys, 1966

## ALCONA COUNTY

### History

Originally, Alcona County, as well as the rest of Michigan, was the homeland of the Indians. In the early 1600's the French explored the area setting up missions and carrying on a lucrative fur trading business. By its very nature, the fur business did not encourage the establishment of communities and settlements. In the mid-1700's both the British and the French courted the friendship of the Indians. Control of the Michigan Territory "see-sawed" between the French, the British and the Indians for about 100 years. Fur merchants wanted the west to remain uninhabited, except by Indians and traders; while farmers and speculators wanted the lands opened and settled.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 formed the region between Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers and the Great Lakes into the first organized territory. Even so, very little development took place in northern Michigan due to insufficient land surveys, Indian disputes and unstable governments.

It was not until the Treaty of Saginaw (1819) that the land area of Alcona County was acquired from the Chippewa Indians. The value of the area was first realized by Lewis Cass in his explorations in 1820. He encouraged settlement of the area, particularly by former soldiers looking for land to homestead.

The land survey of the County, then called "Newegon", was completed in 1840, thus paving the way for orderly settlement. Alcona County was attached to Mackinac County, then to Cheboygan County and finally to Alpena County, prior to its formal organization in 1869.

On May 8, 1869, Alcona County was organized and Harrisville was designated as the County Seat. The first Board of Supervisors included: L.R. Dorr (Harrisville), E.R. Haynes (Alcona) and W. Conklin (Greenbush). Between 1869 and 1881 the County program included building the courthouse, the County infirmary and the jail. The latter burned in 1904 and rebuilding it was delayed for seven years because the citizenry of Alcona were in the midst of a political feud over moving the County Seat to Barton City (the geographical center of the County).

Commercial fishing was the first industry in Alcona County and accounted for most of the original settlements. Fishing stations were established at Black River, Harrisville and Sturgeon Point during the 1840's. In 1867, the yearly catch was 5,000 barrels valued at \$40,000.

The "lumber boom" exploited the region's most valuable resource and greatly influenced the future of the area. Towns were originated and inhabited, transportation systems developed, and local



governments instituted. By 1881, there were 22 companies engaged in logging operations in the county. R.A. Alger & Co. was the largest and had headquarters at Black River. Some of the others were: James Beard & Co. (Alcona), Weston Colwell & Co. (Harrisville), D.B. Mudgett (Harrisville Twp.) Jos. Van Buskirk (Springport), McDougal Co. (Greenbush) and Loud & Co. (Curtis Twp.). The "sticks" measured 75 to 100 feet in diameter. Approximately 142 million feet were cut in 1881. At the City of Harrisville, a large dock stretched out into Lake Huron to accommodate steamers loading up with timber. Lumbering peaked in the early 1890's and then began a rapid decline after 1910, which resulted in a population shift and a reduction in the number of lumbering towns for the next twenty years.

Next, agriculture became the primary economic activity because the cleared lands were easily converted to farming. Creamery stations were operated in almost every village. In 1899, the County had 576 farms, totaling 43,197 acres with an average of 75 acres per farm.

The first railroads were built by the lumber companies about 1885 for hauling logs to the coast for shipping on the Great Lakes. In 1886, track was extended connecting Detroit to Bay City and Alpena. The Railroad was sold in 1895 and the line became the Detroit and Mackinac Railway. The western portion of the County was serviced by the AuSable-Northwestern Railroad which began operation in 1887, and later became the Loud Line.

#### Great Lakes Sports Fishing Industry Characteristics of Alcona County

Before this study examines the various land use problems associated with the influx of the non-resident sports fisherman into Alcona County, it is important to have a better understanding of the industry itself. In the fall of 1981, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University published a report on the economic impacts associated with the sports fishing business in Alcona County along Lake Huron. This study reported that the non-resident angler spent an average of \$23.78 daily with a higher daily average for the fall salmon fishery than the spring-summer lake trout fishery.

Another important observation was that the predominate fall angler was composed of adult males while the spring-summer clientele had a larger percentage of women and children, thereby suggesting a more family oriented fishery during this time of year. Additionally, only 4.1% of all anglers fishing along Lake Huron in Alcona County were residents of the county, with the remaining 95.9% primarily from southeast Michigan or Ohio. During the spring-summer fishing season, only 3.4% of the anglers were Alcona County residents while the vast majority of fishermen came from the Michigan counties of Bay (34.9%), Wayne (14.8%), Oakland (12.1%) and Genesee (6.7%).

Another important characteristic of this industry is the active fishing areas themselves. In the fall, the Chinook Salmon is the major fishing attraction in Alcona. The heaviest used area is the Harrisville Harbor when the Chinook move into the streams. Because the Salmon return to home waters, many of them are found inside the harbor breakwater where they are planted from Mill Creek. The Black River also provides a good, but less intensive, Salmon fishery in the fall.

The other major sports fishing season along Lake Huron in Alcona occurs in the spring and summer with the Lake Trout and Steelhead fishery. This is almost exclusively boat oriented fisheries. In the early spring, the Lake Trout and Steelhead will cruise the shoal waters only 100 yards or so off shore as long as the water temperature remains cool. This is especially true in the Greenbush area where temporary boat launching facilities during this time may allow for greater accessibility to this fishery. Currently, the only notable boat launching facilities in Alcona County for this fisheries resource are located in the Harrisville Harbor. Similar early springtime fishing for the Lake Trout and Steelhead is also offered in the nearly open waters off of the Black River area in Alcona County.

These observations should be considered in any land use recommendations which examine potential recreational improvements to better accommodate the sports fishing industry.

#### Demographic Characteristics

The 1981 population of Alcona County is estimated to be 9,903 by the Michigan Department of Management and Budget and represents a 1.68% increase over the 1980 census population of 9,740. The 1970 population figure for Alcona County was 7113 and shows the rapid growth in this area over the past decade while still being considered a rural county.

	1970 Census	1980 Census	% Change 1970-1980	1990 Estimate	% Change 1980-1990
Alcona County	7,113	9,740	36.9%	11,429	17.3%
Alcona Twp.	486	811	66.9%	952	17.4%
Greenbush Twp.	760	1,292	70.0%	1,506	16.6%
Harrisville City	541	559	3.3%	665	19.0%
Harrisville Twp.	416	569	36.8%	667	17.2%
<hr/>					
Total Population of Coastal Commu- nities	3,305	4,324	30.8%	5,075	17.4%
% of Total County Population	46.5%	44.4%		44.4%	

An examination of this table shows that nearly one half of Alcona County's total population resides in one of the five coastal political subdivisions and will most likely continue to be the center of the County's population density for some time. This pattern is very similar to that recorded at the beginning of the twentieth century during the lumbering era when the population was also concentrated along the shore of Lake Huron.

### Transportation and Circulation

Transportation has long been influenced by the assets of the Lake Huron shoreline in Alcona County. In the early days, the County was accessible only by Great Lakes water because a connecting shoreline roadway between Alcona County and the Saginaw Bay region did not exist until 1867. In the late 1800's, the lumbering communities of Black River, Alcona and Harrisville joined with Alpena and others to urge the construction of a shore rail line. As a result, in 1886 the Detroit, Bay City and Alpena Railway connected Alcona County with southern Michigan cities and by 1895 the present Detroit and Mackinac Railway Company was formed. By the 1920's, Alcona County became much more accessible via sandy state roads as the automobile began to replace rail and water as the predominate transportation mode along Lake Huron.

This brief history illustrates that transportation improvements in Alcona County closely parallel the development of its Lake Huron shoreline. Consequently, the protection and promotion of the County's Great Lakes fisheries and other coastal resources require an identification of the quality and type of transportation sources in the shoreland area.

A local airport exists in Harrisville. The Harrisville Air Field contains a 2,140 foot grass landing strip that is suitable for single engine aircraft and some light twin engine aircraft. Only minimal services, such as fuel and minor repairs, are available. Current flight patterns at this air field have a negligible impact on the coastal area and therefore, does not create the need for any special land use restrictions in the shoreland area. Additionally, the average non-resident angler is not perceived as a "fly-in fisherman", but rather as a less affluent visitor. The airport services available in Harrisville could, however, play an increasingly important role in attracting the sports fisherman and should not be completely overlooked.

The highway and road network along Alcona County's Great Lakes shoreline is a vital link to the area's sports fishing industry. By far, the predominate accessible transportation mode used by the non-resident angler is the highway system. US-23 is the backbone to the state trunkline system in Alcona County and is located within one-half mile of Lake Huron through a large portion of the County. M-72, which terminates at Harrisville as its eastern end point and which runs westerly across the entire width of northern lower Michigan before terminating on the shores of Lake Michigan in Leelanau

County, serves as the other major state highway serving the coastal region. These two state trunklines provide the major arteries to, from and along the Lake Huron shoreline in Alcona County.

The Table below illustrates the average weekday daily traffic counts for both 1979 and 1980 along US-23 north and south of Harrisville and M-72 west of Harrisville.

#### HARRISVILLE AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC FLOW

	<u>U.S. 23 North Station</u>	<u>U.S. 23 South Station</u>	<u>M-72 West Station</u>
1979	3,700	4,300	2,100
1980	1,600*	4,300	2,000

\* NOTE: In 1980, the Michigan Department of Transportation eliminated its U.S. 23 North counting station from within the Harrisville City Limits and only used the station located five miles north of Harrisville. This station recorded an ADT count of 1,600 in 1979 as well.

The County system of primary roads consists of a rather well developed network tying rural areas into the State and Federal system. There are two significant County primary roads situated within the Alcona County coastal zone and they are located in the two northern most townships of Haynes and Alcona. Lakeshore Drive parallels the Lake Huron shoreline, branching off of US-23 about two and one-half miles north of Harrisville. This County primary road continues along the shoreline for a little more than eight miles, providing access to such coastal locations as Sturgeon Point, the community of Alcona and terminates at Black River. The other major county primary road in the shoreland area is Black River Rd., which travels in an east-west direction connecting the rural center of Black River with Highway US-23 located some three miles inland. Both of these roads are paved and road weight restrictions are in force during the spring freeze-thaw season. Limits are reduced from the normal 18,000 lbs. per axle to 13,000 lbs. during this time of the year.

There are numerous local roads which are either bituminous surfaced or gravel that provide direct access to coastal waterfront properties. Several of these roads terminate as road ends on the shores of Lake Huron and are under the jurisdiction of the Alcona County Road Commission providing unimproved public access points to the coastal area.

## Current Land Use Patterns

Alcona County has a variety of land uses within its coastal area. The northern portion of the county, notably in Alcona and Haynes Township is predominately forested with scattered residential development. Most of these homesites are located in the rural centers of Black River and Alcona although there are residential lots along most of the Huron lakefront. Additionally, local zoning regulations in both Alcona and Haynes Townships have significant lakefront property in their residential zoning district. The extreme northern end of Alcona County's shoreline is the site of the undeveloped Negwegon State Park which has the potential of becoming a major recreational attraction facility in the Black River area. Other potentially significant attractions in the northern half of Alcona County is the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse site which is now being leased to the Alcona Historical Society by the DNR Parks Division and where restoration efforts are now underway.

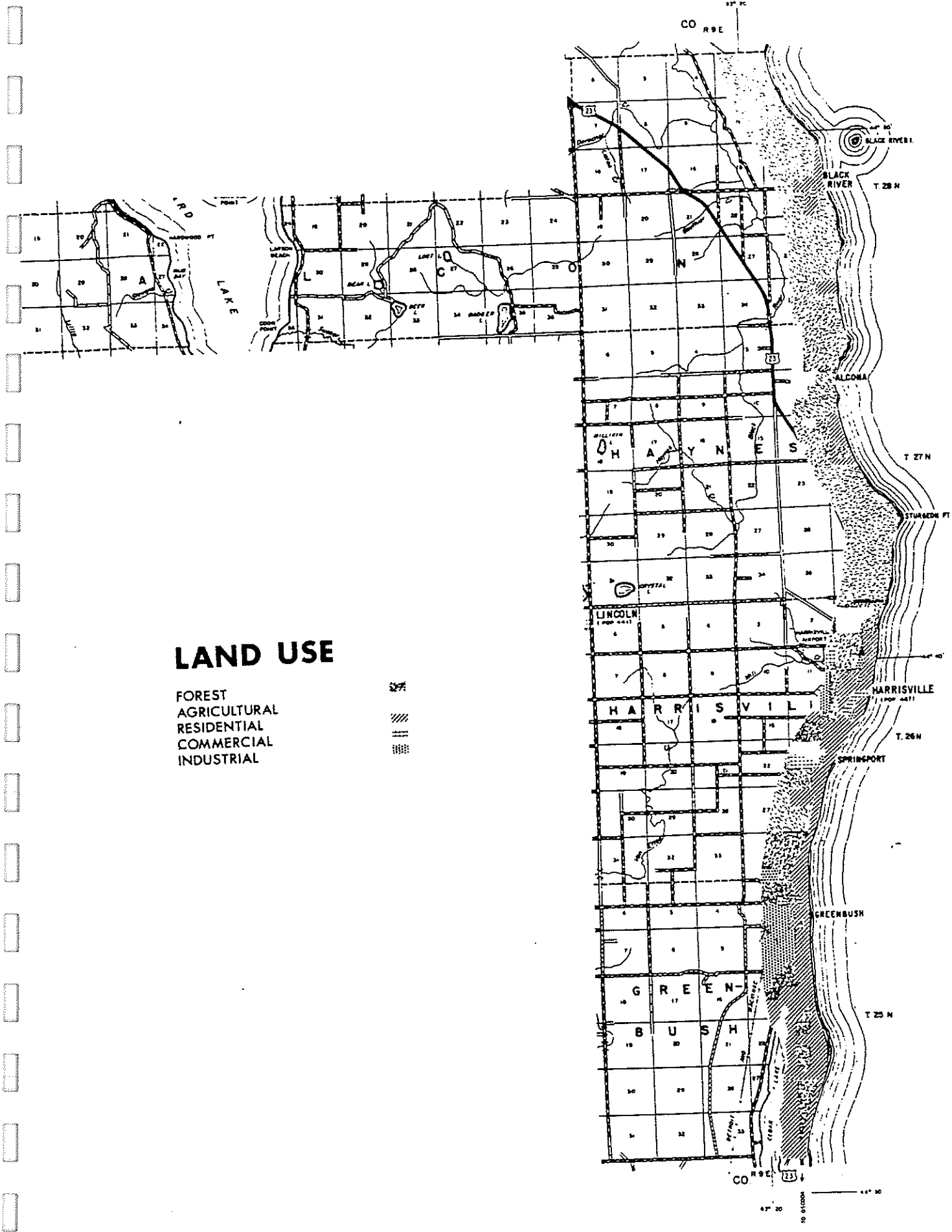
The shoreline in Harrisville and Greenbush Townships is, for the most part residentially developed. There are a few commercial activities in and near the City of Harrisville and a number of lakefront resorts in the Greenbush area. The County's largest industrial installation is located in Highway US-23 at the northern limits of the City of Harrisville. This is the site of several large, privately owned jet fuel storage tanks which is used by the U.S. Air Force at its Wurtsmith A.F.B. in the City of Oscoda (Isoco County). Lake vessels unload the fuel at a connecting point out in Lake Huron and the jet fuel is pumped to the Air Force Base by means of a pipeline. Nearly all of the lakefront property in the southern half of the county is zoned for residential development by the local zoning authorities in Harrisville and Greenbush Townships.

## Existing Recreational Facilities

The following is an inventory of private and public recreational facilities and/or sites within the coastal area of Alcona which to some degree serve the sports fishing industry. The inventory is categorized into the five separate governmental units with jurisdiction along the Lake Huron shoreline.

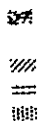
### Alcona Township:

1. Negwegon State Park (public) - currently undeveloped, proposed improvements include rustic camping, picnicking, hiking, nature study and swimming.
2. DNR Waterways Boat Launch (public) - located on north bank at mouth of Black River, currently maintained in primitive conditions.
3. Alcona Township Park (public) - immediately north of the mouth of Black River adjacent to DNR property and less than two acres. No improvements but does have swimming beach area.



## LAND USE

FOREST  
AGRICULTURAL  
RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
INDUSTRIAL



Haynes Township:

4. Sturgeon Point Lighthouse (public) - open park area surrounding historic lighthouse structure.
5. Trout Ponds (private) - located at intersection of Lakeshore Drive and US-23, provides fishing in privately stocked trout ponds.

City of Harrisville:

6. Harrisville Recreation Area (public) - community recreation primarily used as ball diamonds.
7. Harrisville Harbor of Refuge (public) - boat launch facilities, mooring, shore fishing, fish cleaning stations, playground equipment, benches. Center of sports fishing activities in Alcona County.
8. Downtown District (private) - provides services such as fishing supplies, gas service stations, restaurants, liquor store, food markets, taverns, and charter boats.

Harrisville Township:

9. Harrisville State Park (public) - DNR camping facility.
10. Springport Inn (private) - historic restaurant and overnight lodging accommodations.
11. Roadside Park (public) - picnicking and rustic toilet facilities.
12. Resorts and Cottages (private) - five lakefront resorts offer lodging, small boat rentals, swimming beaches and associated opportunities.

Greenbush Township:

13. Resorts and Cottages (private) - twenty lakefront resorts providing lodging, swimming, small boat rentals, limited fishing supplies and other passive recreational activities.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

### Soils

The predominant soil type in Alcona County's coastal area is the Rubicon-Eastport-Roscommon Association. This association is comprised of well-drained sandy soils and is accompanied by a nearly level topography which borders Lake Huron. These soils are usually found in a network of old lake beaches as low ridges with poorly drained, organic and sandy soils in the intervening valleys between ridges. The soils in this association have low natural fertility with native vegetation that is dominated by conifers with some mixed hardwoods, such as white birch, aspen and poplar for forest cover.

The Grayling-Rubicon-Croswell Association is a very well drained sandy soil which is quite suitable for residential development as well as most recreational activities. It is found mostly in and around the Harrisville area and has many of the same characteristics as the Rubicon-Eastport-Roscommon Association.

A portion of the coastal land area in northern Alcona County is made of soils from the Brevort-Iosco-Linwood Association. These are poorly drained sandy soils found on nearly level to undulating lands which are dark colored due to the high organic matter in the soil. It is not uncommon to find an underlayer of heavier, clayey material in this association. There are severe limitations for both residential development and recreational activities because of high water tables. Natural vegetation consists of cedar and wetland shrubs.

The remaining soil association found in the coastal area of Alcona County, Carbondale-Lupton-Tawas Association, does not comprise a significant amount of land area. Like the soils in the previous association, it also is made up of poorly drained, organic soils which are wet most of the year and have dense vegetation consisting of cedar and wetland shrubs.

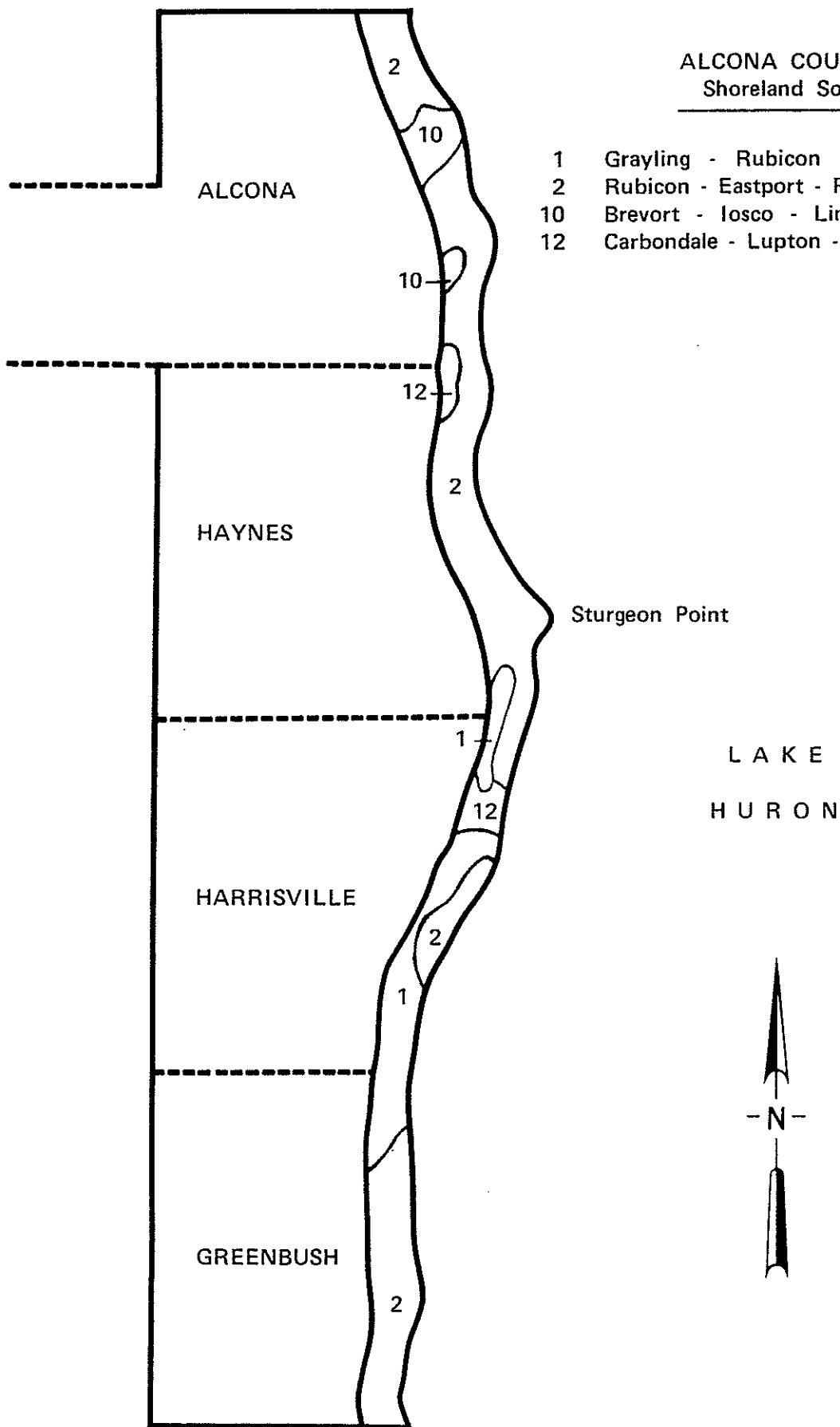
### High Risk Erosion Areas

In April of 1982, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, under the authority of Public Act 245 of 1970, as amended (The Shorelands Protection and Management Act), formally designated certain parcels in Alcona and Greenbush Townships and in the City of Harrisville as High Risk Erosion Areas. This designation required establishment of a minimum building setback for permanent structures and septic systems as well as additions to existing structures. The setback from the bluffline of Lake Huron was determined to prevent damage from erosion for a period of at least 30 years. The program imposes a state permit which is required before new construction, in any designated area, can begin. However,

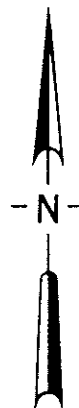


ALCONA COUNTY  
Shoreland Soils


- 1 Grayling - Rubicon - Croswell Assoc.
- 2 Rubicon - Eastport - Roscommon Assoc.
- 10 Brevort - Iosco - Linwood Association
- 12 Carbondale - Lupton - Tawas Association

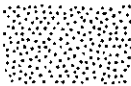


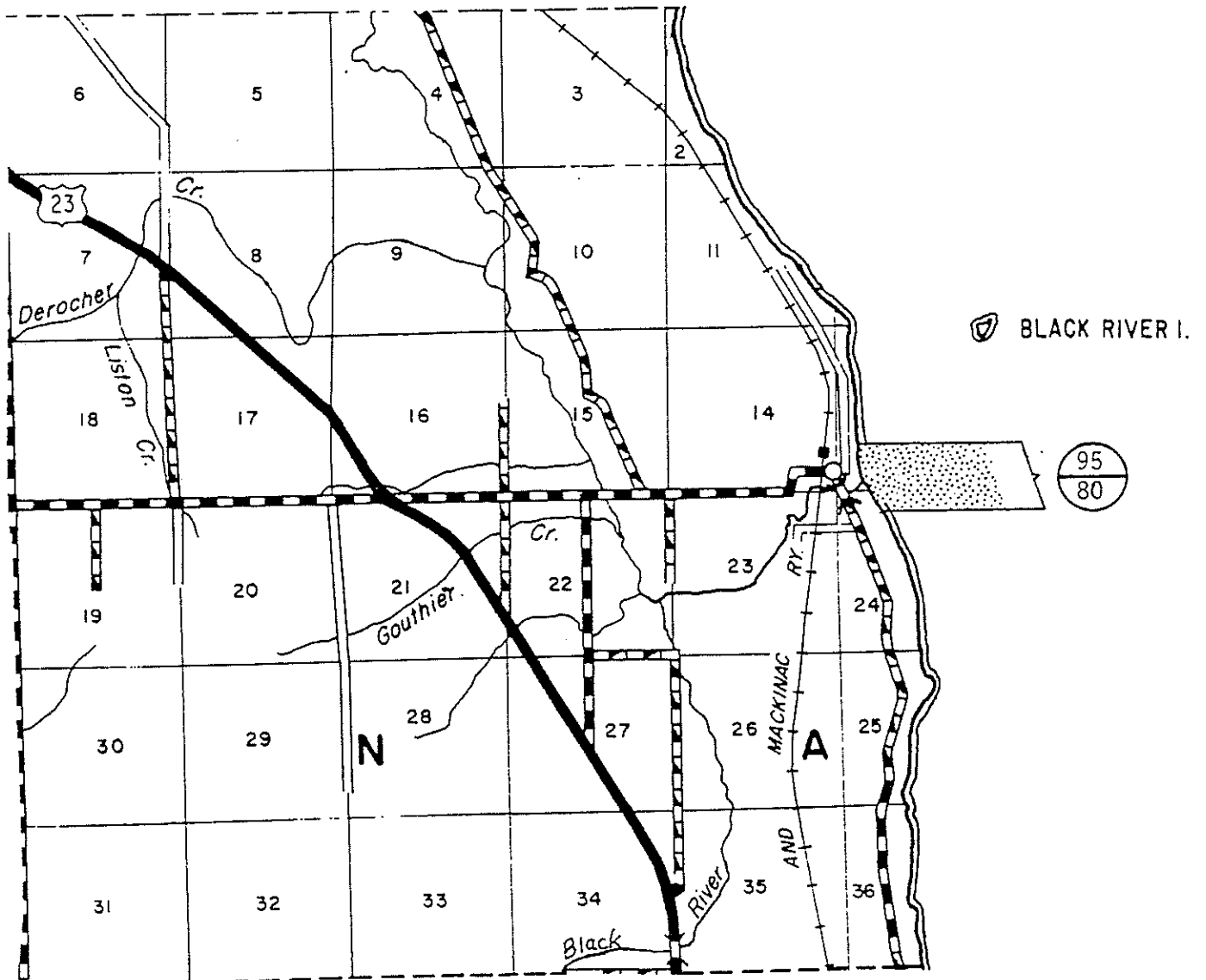
L A K E  
H U R O N



ALCONA COUNTY  
ALCONA TOWNSHIP  
T. 28N R. 9E

 RECOMMENDED SETBACK  
MINIMUM REQUIRED SETBACK

 WIDE SHADED BAND  
DEMARKS HIGH RISK  
EROSION AREA



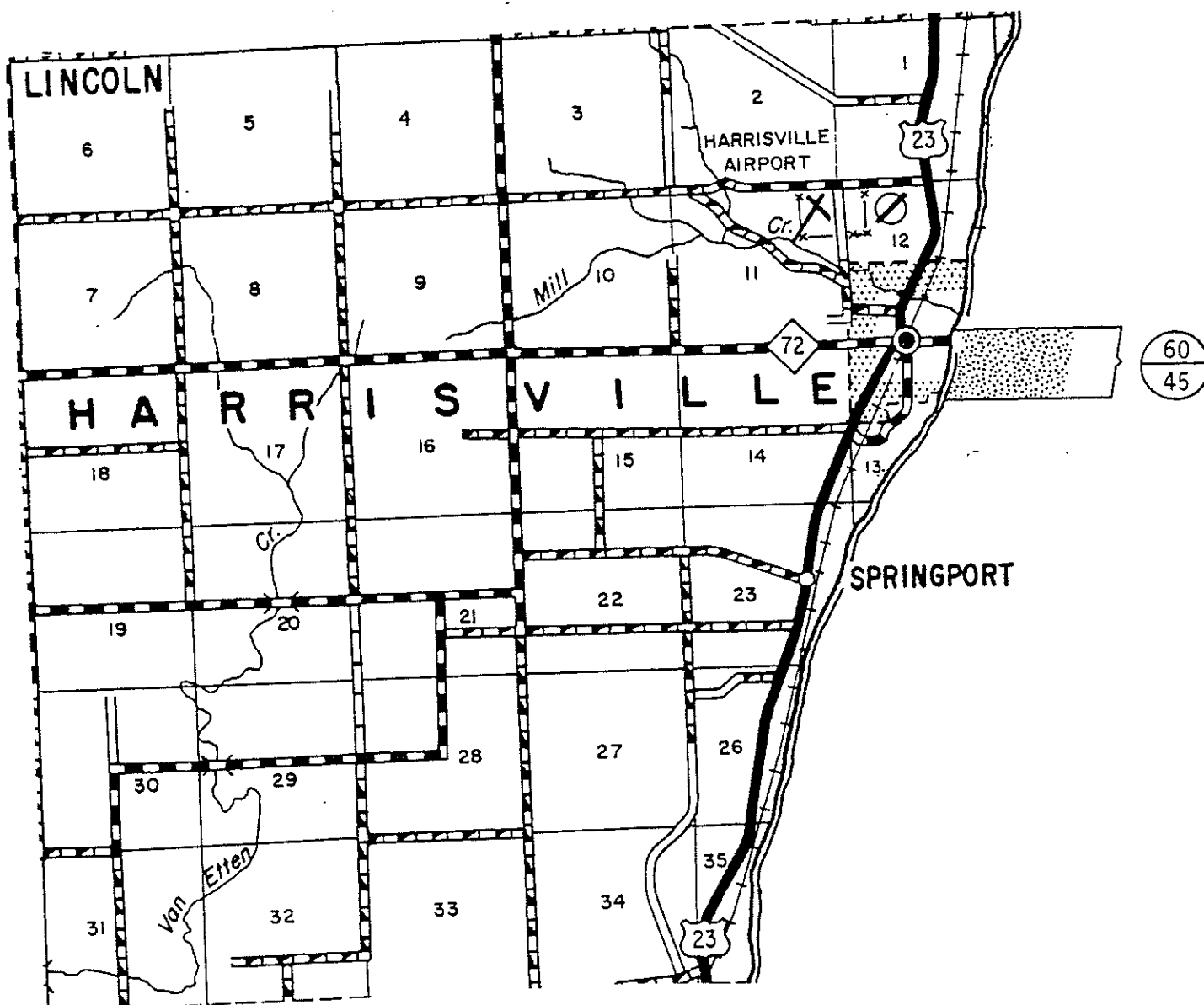
ALCONA COUNTY  
HARRISVILLE TOWNSHIP  
T.26N R.9E and R.10E



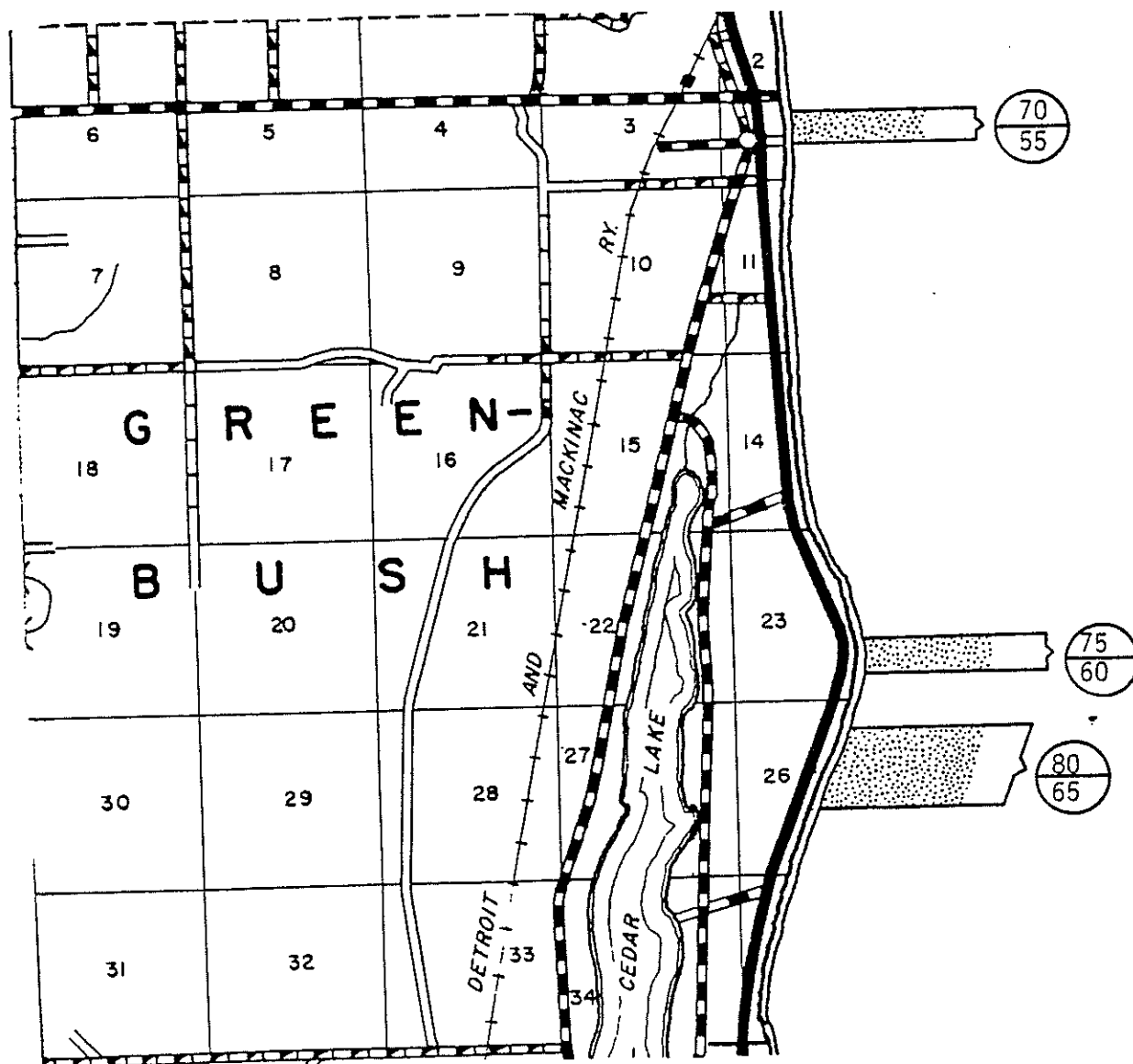
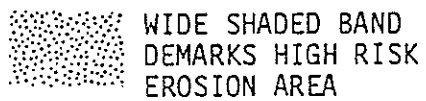
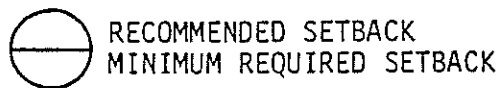
RECOMMENDED SETBACK  
MINIMUM REQUIRED SETBACK



WIDE SHADED BAND  
DEMARKS HIGH RISK  
EROSION AREA



ALCONA COUNTY  
GREENBUSH TOWNSHIP  
T.25N R.9E



there are provisions which allow, at the option of the local governing bodies, local administration of the permitting procedure through establishment of local regulations which conform to the state requirement.

The program may have some impact on the County's sport fishing industry because certain properties discussed in this study lie within some of the designated area. The maps on the next three pages identify the specific geographical area along Lake Huron in Alcona County. The recommended and minimum required setbacks are in feet.

### Geology and Topography

In order to understand the topographical features of the land of Alcona County, it is first necessary to consider the geologic history of the State and some of the processes which brought about the various land forms.

In Michigan's lower peninsula, the bedrock formations are a result of the paleozoic and mesozoic eras. During these two time periods, the area had a climate quite different from that which we know today. For some time the area was covered by a warm tropical sea; then a dense tropical swamp; and finally it was covered by great glaciers. Sediments from the warm seas settled to the bottom and formed layers or strata of sedimentary rock. As the seas began to dry up and decrease in size, many strata were deposited in a layered pattern, somewhat resembling a stack of saucers. The upper most bedrock in Alcona County consists of both the upper and lower Mississippian series of the paleozoic era.

During the latter stages of the paleozoic era, the northern hemisphere was invaded by four tremendous glaciers. The landscape and terrain were altered each time the giant glaciers moved into the area. As the last glacier melted and gradually receded, it left behind:

- huge heaps of rock debris (some of which are 1000 ft. deep)
- a great variety of soils that were scraped from many regions far to the north
- the Great Lakes, world's largest bodies of fresh water
- thousands of beautiful inland lakes and,
- a flow pattern whereby the rivers and streams either flowed into Lake Michigan or Lake Huron, making it easy to reach the interior of the state.

Plants, fish and animals, now extinct, gradually moved in behind the withdrawing ice and are found from time to time as fossilized skeletons.

The debris dumped by glaciers and the streams flowing from them are called "glacial drift or till". This drift has characteristic and easily recognized surface forms:

Moraines - the ridges or heaps of earth, stones, etc. carried by a glacier and deposited on adjacent ground, either along the course or at the edge of the glacier.

Ground moraines - the irregularly scattered till, not concentrated into definite ridges.

Outwash and glacial channels - the finer glacial debris that is deposited in rudely stratified layers by the melt-water streams emerging from the ice.

The surface geology of Alcona County consists primarily of moraines, till plains and outwash-glacial channels, except for the eastern side near Lake Huron where lake beds of clay and sand are found. Extending inland from Lake Huron are the well defined, nearly flat plains and beaches representing high stages of Lake Huron at the end of the glacial period. The hills are for the most part of morainic origin, while the plains are primarily sand and gravel.

A brief overview of the County indicates a total relief of about 600 feet with the high point being the 1,250 foot contour which lies in the westerly portion mid-way between the north and south boundary lines. From this point the terrain slopes toward Lake Huron which is approximately 550 feet above sea level. Significant deviations from the gently rolling terrain can be found in the northwest corner of the County, south and west of Hubbard Lake, and northeast of the Glennie area.

### Vegetation

Coastal vegetation in Alcona County varies widely, being primarily influenced by topography, soils and water level. In general, the northern coast of the County, roughly from Harrisville north, is dominated by cedar swamps. These swamps are characterized by organic soils, high water table and cedar, aspen, birch and spruce trees. The beaches in this area has considerable vegetation consisting of dune grasses, sedges, and starry solomons seal. At least two different types of orchids are present. This area provides appropriate habitat for endangered species such as Butterwort, Lake Huron Tansy, Pitcher's Thistle and the Ramshead Lady Slipper orchid. At this time, however, no official documentation of any coastal endangered species exist for Alcona County.

The area from Harrisville to Greenbush is much higher ground of sandy soils. It is dominated by maples, pines, and aspen. The beach, because of steep slopes and wave action, has very little vegetation.

The area from Greenbush south is much flatter terrain with sandy soils and occasional high water table. This area is characterized by intensive lake shore development. Birch, aspen and pine are the major trees. Beach vegetation consisting of dune grasses and Starry Solomons Seal are abundant only on vacant property.

### Coastal Streams and River Mouths

Alcona County has very few streams or river mouths on Lake Huron. The only rivers or streams of significance include Black River, Mill Creek and Cedar Lake Creek. The other half dozen creeks or streams have such small watersheds that they are only important during the smelt runs.

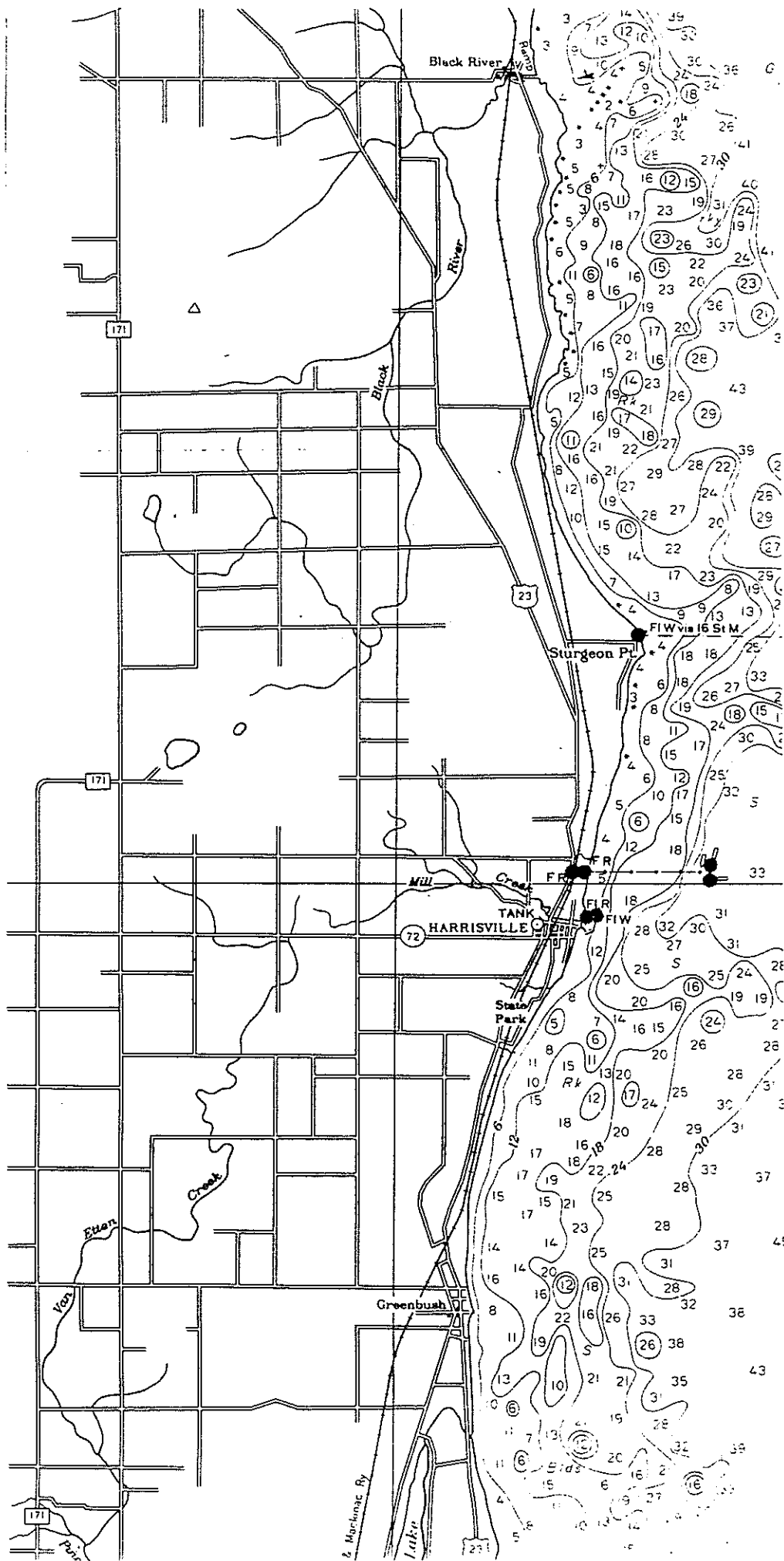
The watershed of the Black River, the only major watercourse emptying into Lake Huron, is divided into a north branch which drains a large cedar swamp and a south branch which drains agricultural areas. The river and many of its tributaries are spring fed. The confluence of the north and south branches is approximately 1 and 3/4 miles from the coast. One mile from the coast to the mouth of the river passes through extensive wetlands. While the river mouth has historical siltation problems, it appears this problem results more from Lake Huron littoral drift than from the rivers sediment load. The rivers ability to provide excellent habitat for the reproduction of Steelhead Trout characterizes its high water quality.

Mill Creek is a small coastal watershed draining both cedar swamps and agricultural land. The creek has at least two impoundments which were originally used in DNR fish hatchery operations in Harrisville. The creek is now primarily known as the planting and return site of Chinook Salmon in Harrisville Harbor.

Cedar Lake Creek is the natural drain for Cedar Lake in Greenbush Township. The creek passes through extensive wetlands at the north end of Cedar Lake. Past sampling of Cedar Lake by NEMCOG indicates this shallow lake has good water quality. The creek, upon leaving the wetlands, enters Lake Huron near Beach Drive. The creek is probably a good smelt run site in better years. The area where the Cedar Lake Creek empties into Lake Huron has a very sandy beach and is subject to wave action and littoral drift, causing considerable meandering and shifting of the creek mouth.

### Climate

The prevailing weather conditions of an area have a direct bearing on human behavior, animal behavior and the growing characteristics of various forms of vegetation. Fluctuations in the weather can significantly affect recreation, agriculture, transportation, construction, the demand for fuel, etc. In short, climatic factors are an extremely important part of the natural environment and it is for this reason that they must be considered in a planning program.



Coastal Streams and  
Rivermouths

Alcona County



Climatically, Alcona County is situated in a humid, temperate, continental area of the United States. There are a few local variations during the year, and average temperatures in the coldest months are under 32°F., and those in the warmest are over 71°F. The month of January usually receives the lowest mean temperature of the year, and July the highest. As is typical of the central United States, Alcona County has a wide range of temperatures from summer to winter. The highest temperature ever recorded was 105°F., and the lowest -21°F. Other statistics based on "yearly averages" include:

Average:

January temperature	23.2°F
July temperature	67.6°F
Date of last killing frost in spring	April 29
Date of first killing frost in fall	October 15
Length of growing season	138 days
Annual precipitation	27.97 in.
Annual snowfall	53.60 in.

Ice usually forms on the lakes and ponds by the end of December and leaves by the middle of April. The winds of Alcona County, being part of the Westerly Wind Belt System, are not often of high velocity. However, tornados have occurred in the County, especially during the spring and fall seasons of the year.

Fish and Wildlife

Alcona County's varied topography, climate and abundance of water and forests provide the basis for extensive fish and wildlife habitats. Unique species found in the area include the wild turkey, which range the entire County, and the bobcat that ranges in the northwest portion. The County is noted for its variety of wild game and fish, and thousands of sportsmen are attracted to the County each year to hunt and fish.

To understand the management of Alcona County's fish and wildlife, it is important to review the jurisdictions involved. The U.S. Forest Service is responsible for the management of habitat on Federal forest land, while the Michigan Department of Natural Resources manages habitat on State forest land. The DNR also manages all fisheries on both State and Federal land and is responsible for maintaining desirable populations of fish and wildlife through harvest or protection.

Both agencies have worked together in preparing a fish and wildlife management plan. This program seeks to increase wildlife populations by improving habitat, while at the same time allowing adequate harvest. It is estimated that there are over 200 species of birds, 55 mammals, 60 fish and 30 reptiles and amphibians that now inhabit the forest lands at varying population levels. Efforts

have been directed toward protecting the endangered species (Kirtland's Warbler), the threatened species (Lake Sturgeon), and the unique species (Northern Bald Eagle, Osprey, Great Blue Herron). There is a Double-crested Cormorant rookery on Black River Island, an identified endangered species within the coastal zone area of Alcona County.

Forest habitat management is accomplished by developing and maintaining permanent forest openings, harvesting timber, developing logging roads and skid trails, protecting and restoring the winter deer range and the adjacent upland areas, and developing impoundments and potholes. Emphasis is also being directed toward protecting and improving the inland lake and stream habitat to meet the projected demands for recreational fishing.

Development of boating access facilities on Lake Huron at Black River and Harrisville, coupled with DNR planting of salmon and lake trout has greatly increased the boating and fishing potential of Lake Huron. Further discussion of these facilities and plantings will be addressed in more detail in a later section of this report.

#### Great Lakes Fisheries

The Lake Huron fisheries resource of Alcona County is one of the best fisheries in the state. This fact comes as a surprise to many people and perhaps that is why it is often referred to as a sleeping giant. The successful development of the fishery can be attributed to the efforts of the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Natural Resources' program of stocking predator game fish such as Lake Trout, Coho and Chinook Salmon, Steelhead and Rainbow Trout has paid off in a resource that has been under-utilized and under-publized.

Current Department of Natural Resources planting efforts include stocking of 75-100,000 Lake Trout annually. The Lake Trout fishery in Alcona County has responded exceptionally well, having one of the best survival rates of any stocking area in the State. A good fishery of Steelhead and Rainbow Trout also exists. Steelhead used to be planted in Black River even though the area is one of the few areas having good natural reproduction of Steelhead. Rainbows were traditionally planted in Harrisville. Because of their unavailability, recent plantings of either fish have not been possible. The Department of Natural Resources still has the County listed as a priority stocking area of Steelhead and Rainbow Trout when they are available. Approximately 250,000 Chinook Salmon are planted annually in Harrisville's Mill Creek. This fish has also responded well, returning to Mill Creek in the fall each year. Coho Salmon are not planted in Alcona County but they do migrate into the area to provide another good sports fishing opportunity.

These fish make up the major attraction for fishermen, but several other species should not be overlooked. Perch fishing can

be very productive in the Greenbush area depending on water temperature. The perch quite often migrate from the warm waters of Saginaw Bay. Summer months can warm the coastal waters enough in the Greenbush area to attract perch. As a result, the perch fishery is restricted to southern Alcona County and can be sporadic, but it should be highlighted when possible. Smelt has historically been a spring outing the whole family could enjoy. Although surveys of this fishery indicate good populations, in the past few years smelt runs have been poor. Smelt runs respond to spring weather and maybe with a little better spring the runs will improve in the future. Menominee population are also very good. The Menominee does not appear to be a desirable game fish probably because of the Lake Trout abundance.

When considering land based developments to enhance fishing opportunities, it becomes necessary to take into account fish migration patterns. Lake Trout are primarily found in the cold deep waters of the lake. This requires the fishermen to have adequate watercraft to venture well out into Lake Huron. Only in the spring of the year can Lake Trout be found near shore. At this time of year the fish are spawning and are sometimes only 100 yards offshore. The angler now has the opportunity to fish from shore or smaller boats. Steelhead and Rainbow Trout are again similar to Lake Trout in that they seek deep cold water during summer. However, they migrate to rivers to spawn in the fall, again allowing fishing from shore or smaller boats. Coho Salmon do not migrate too much and the best fishing for them is in August offshore. Chinook Salmon migrate into Harrisville Harbor and Mill Creek in October, providing a good fall fishing season from shore. As stated previously, smelt runs in the early spring and perch fishing can be quite good during the summer in the southern waters of the county. Menominee are found in very deep cold water and are caught occasionally.

#### IV. COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

##### HARRISVILLE

The Harrisville area (Springport) was first settled by the white man in 1845 as a new base for fishing operations. But Alcona County also had a reputation for the pine along its shore and in 1854 a small water driven sawmill was built on Mill Creek in Harrisville. This was the beginning of a great lumber industry that flourished through the early 1890's. The original owners of this mill sold out to a firm known as Harris and Sons of West Bloomfield, New York, for whom the village was named. The mill was improved and expanded, including docks and a railway to transport logs and lumber. Most of these products were shipped to lumber yards in Chicago and Omaha.

During the prosperous years of the lumbering era, the village experienced many major improvements and cedar swamps were cleared where Harrisville now stands. The settlement was incorporated as a village in 1887 but during the next three years a number of natural disasters, including a fire, a Lake Huron storm and a washout on Mill Creek destroyed nearly all of the reminders of the area's lumbering industry. Harrisville became a city in 1905 as it became a focal center for development of outlying areas in Alcona County. Fires continued to destroy a number of homes and businesses during the early 1900's.

In 1920, a number of decisions were made which have contributed to the modern day Harrisville. The State Fish Commission assured the City that a hatchery would be built and the Michigan State Park Association took control of a six acre tract of lake frontage now known as the Harrisville State Park. Then in 1923, many cottages were built in the area and, by the fall of 1924, new modern buildings had replaced the old ones on Main and Lake Streets which were destroyed by a disastrous fire the previous year.

Harrisville really became a tourist-oriented community in 1936 with the completion of US-23 as the Huron Shore Scenic Highway from Detroit to Alpena. Many business changes took place in 1945-46 with the end of World War II, most of which have shaped the Harrisville downtown district today. The year 1948 was another time of building for Harrisville, as many new businesses opened along US-23, including a fish market and other tourist-oriented enterprises. During the same year, the State closed its fish hatchery and gave the property to the City of Harrisville.

The Harrisville Harbor was constructed in 1960-61, setting the stage for the area's growth as a fishing and boating center. Then, in the early 1970's the Department of Natural Resources began fish plantings in the Harrisville area. This has continued annually, with 225,000 Chinook Salmon planted in the Harrisville/Mill Creek area in 1982. As a result, the Harrisville area has become and will continue to be popular for fishing, boating, camping and other recreational activities.

The harbor facility at Harrisville serves as the major access point to Lake Huron within Alcona County. Harrisville also offers the widest variety of goods and services available to fishermen in the county. Several areas of concern relating to the sports fishing industry have been identified within Harrisville. These are outlined below.

#### Traffic and Parking

Traffic to the Harrisville Harbor from US-23 has been routed along a residential street. This leads to unnecessary non-local traffic in the neighborhood during peak use periods. Additionally, non-residents tend to park along these residential streets, adding to traffic congestion.

Off-street parking is limited in the city, forcing people visiting the city during peak seasons to park on scattered sites and along streets throughout the town.

During peak periods, many visitors live out of recreation vehicles parked in the city. This occurs even though the state park and private overnight facilities are not filled. This condition adds unnecessary congestion to local streets.

#### Lake Access

Existing facilities in the city are geared toward visitors and tourists using the lake for fishing. Facilities for complementary activities along the lake, such as swimming, picnicking, etc., are lacking.

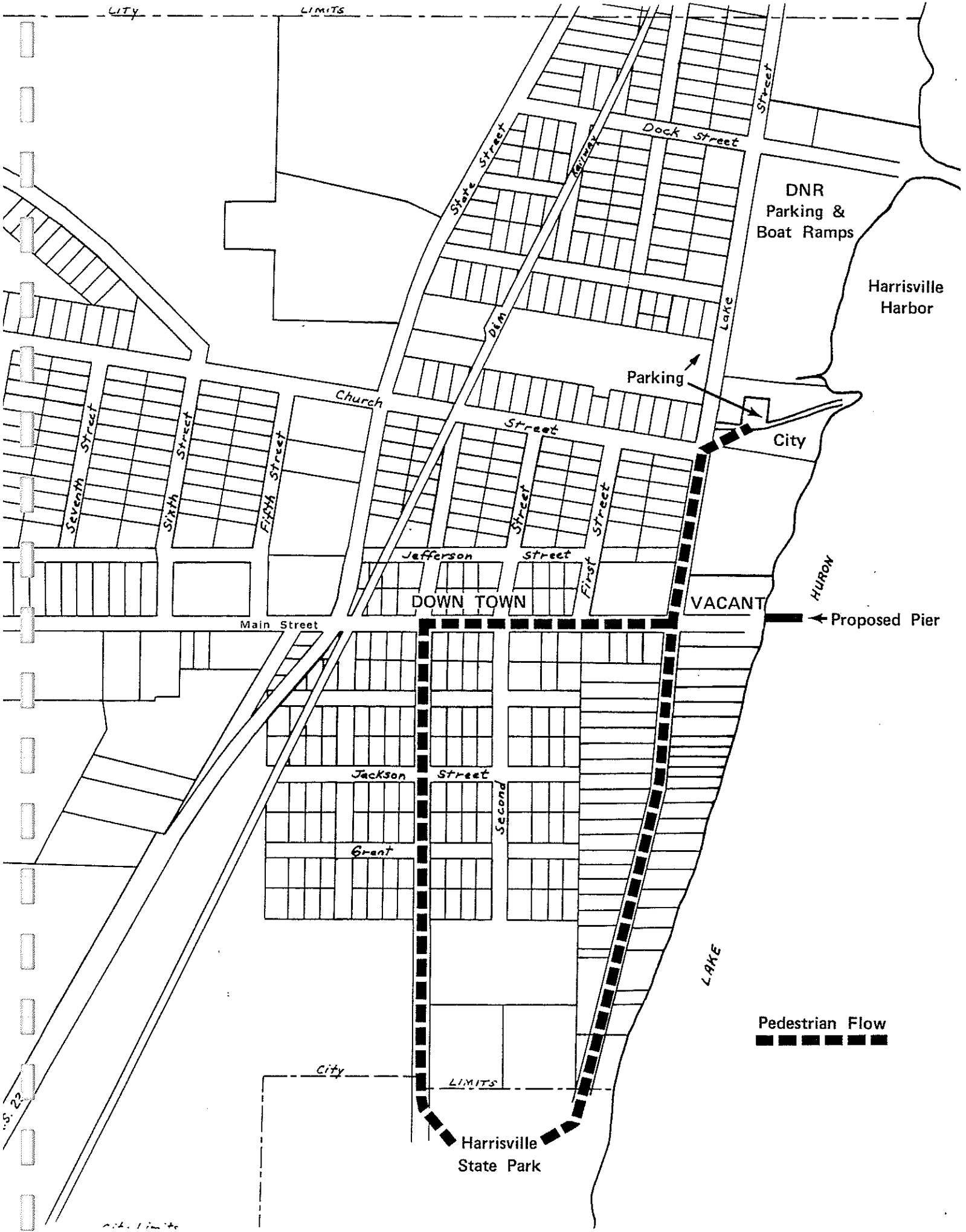
Access to Lake Huron for fishing is available by boat, but limited for shoreline fishing. A walking pier into the lake would serve residents as well as visitors to the area.

#### Pedestrian Flow

Many people travelling to Harrisville to fish are not aware of the facilities available in the town's business district. Improvements to the streetscape and informational signs at the harbor could alleviate this problem.

#### Observations

There is no doubt that Harrisville is the established Great Lakes sports fishing center in Alcona County. It provides most of the necessary services required by the sports angler all in one, fairly condensed, convenient location, including bait and tackle shops, a liquor store, several restaurants, grocery markets and gas stations to name a few. It also provides the most accommodating Lake Huron access facilities between Oscoda and Alpena. The most notable facility is the Harrisville Harbor of Refuge which not only provides for the needs of the off-shore boat anglers via DNR Waterways boat launching ramps within the breakwaters, but also



City

LIMITS

State Street

Dock Street

Street

DNR  
Parking &  
Boat Ramps

Harrisville  
Harbor

Parking

City

Church

Street

Jefferson

Street

DOWN TOWN

VACANT

HURON

Proposed Pier

Main Street

Jackson

Street

Grant

Second

LAKE

Pedestrian Flow

City

LIMITS

Harrisville  
State Park

adequate shoreline within the immediate harbor area for casting from shore. Continued fish plantings by the DNR Fisheries Division has resulted in an excellent fish population annually.

Although Harrisville does offer a broad mix of goods and services, their availability for sports fishermen could be improved. Longer hours during the fishing season for supply stores, food outlets and service stations would better meet needs during peak periods. A wider variety of goods would also be beneficial.

Important steps to be taken, then, to improve conditions for the fishing industry in Harrisville include:

- Providing additional off-street parking and routing harbor traffic away from residential areas to limit congestion during peak periods.
- Enforcing overnight parking and camping regulations to limit congestion and encourage visitors to use public and private overnight facilities.
- Developing additional facilities along Lake Huron for recreation activities to complement sports fishing.
- Providing improved access for shoreline fishing, optimally by means of a walking pier into the lake.
- Improving the city's streetscape and the local information system at the harbor to encourage visitors to take advantage of services and facilities available in Harrisville.
- Extending the hours of stores and service establishments and expanding varieties available during peak periods to better meet the demands of the fishing trade.

#### BLACK RIVER AND NEGWEGON AREA

The mouth of the Black River is a very suitable location for improvements to accommodate the sports fishing public. It offers protection for boaters and has been authorized by the U.S. Congress, since 1959, as a site for a harbor of refuge but is waiting budget appropriations for construction. Breakwater designs have been completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for several years which would correct the sedimentation problem at the mouth. Currently, the channel is continuously being filled in by sandy material which is deposited by lake wave action and littoral drift. This plugs the mouth of the river and prevents boats from gaining access to the open waters from the shelter of the Black River where the DNR Waterways Division has installed a primitive boat launching ramp.

However, there are few businesses in the Black River community to service the sports fisherman. There is a general store and a

sports fishing shop which can provide the basic needs of the angler. The Black River community would also be the approximate location for the entrance to the Negwegon State Park if it is ever developed by the DNR. A campground in this immediate area is very much needed and would significantly help the community to enhance its recreational attractiveness to passing tourists.

Negwegon State Park is a 1,695 acre tract of land located on the shores of Lake Huron at the Alpena and Alcona County line, having portions in both counties. At this time, it is an unadministered unit of the Michigan State Park System and there are no facilities to accommodate the public making use of the area. According to DNR policy, camping is not permitted, but indiscriminate use has and continues to be made of the park and some physical abuse is evident.

The most impressive and significant features of Negwegon State Park are determined by the characteristics of the Lake Huron water frontage. There is approximately six and one-half miles of uninterrupted shoreline included in the boundary of the park, of which about two miles are in Alcona County.

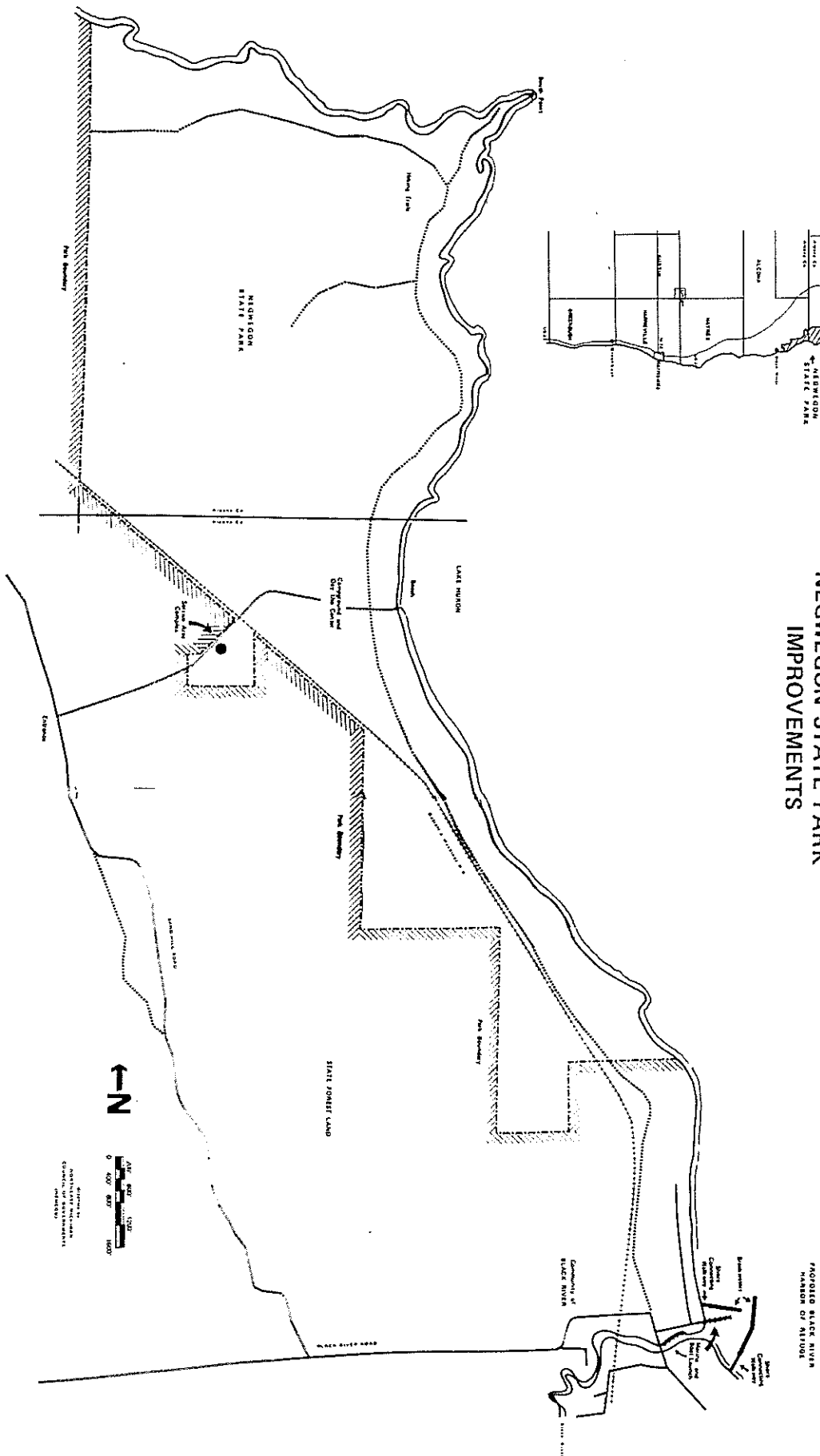
The shoreline is very irregular with numerous "coves" and "points" which greatly enhance the aesthetic qualities of the site. The majority of the frontage is classified as a cobble beach. However, sandy beach areas do exist at various locations. To emphasize the value of the shoreline features, it is pointed out that this site does offer the most intact public frontage on Lake Huron presently available.

Topography variation is generally identified as relatively light within the boundary of the park. There are no depressions or high prominences within the boundary. Surface geology includes relic shorelines interspersed with small depression areas which are generally poorly drained soil types.

Vegetation common to the site is typical of that found in the northern portion of Michigan's lower peninsula. The vegetation is characterized by second growth deciduous hardwoods of relatively young age on the uplands interspersed with typical coniferous species commonly found in low, wet, poorly drained areas. Vegetative cover is identified as being thick and difficult to penetrate in numerous locations. This is especially true in the lowlands. Vegetation does serve as a protective buffer from the elements for the various wildlife populations making use of the area. Some portions of this park do serve as winter deer yarding areas.

Wildlife common to the park consists of those species normally found in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula. Game species consist of, but are not limited to ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, whitetailed deer, woodcock, and migratory waterfowl. Many varieties of songbirds and other non-game species are commonly found within the area. There are no known populations of unique or endangered species found within the boundary of the park.





The master plan for Negwegon State Park, as approved by the Natural Resources Commission in 1973, calls for the following improvements. Access to the park would be made from US-23 easterly along Black River Road, then northerly along Ridge Road. The park entrance would then be along an old logging trail which crosses the Detroit and Mackinac Railroad which would need to be improved and would then become an interior park road. A day use center including a parking lot and toilet facilities would be constructed near the park entrance and located in close proximity to the lake-shore. A 25 site rustic vehicular campground would be constructed south of the day use center with addition hike-in camping areas both to the north and south of the more intensive recreational area. The service area and control facility will be located along the park entrance road before it crosses the railroad tracks. The physical development will occupy approximately 25 acres while the majority of the park will remain undisturbed except for a hiking trail network. The design concept, as illustrated on the proceeding page, is designed to disperse users of the facility rather than concentrate them in an effort to emphasize the natural amenities of the park. This will encourage more passive forms of recreational activities.

#### GREENBUSH

The Greenbush area offers almost as much of a variety of services as Harrisville, but specializes in the resort industry. In fact, there are twice as many resorts along Lake Huron in Greenbush Township than in the remainder of Alcona County. Additionally, there is a perch fisheries just off-shore in Greenbush as a result of Saginaw Bay overflow and in the springtime this area provides an excellent Lake Trout fisheries only 100 yards off-shore. Unfortunately, there are no public access sites within the township that provides boat launching facilities. This is why most of the resorts cater to the non-fishing visitor or perhaps only to the overflow from both Harrisville and Oscoda during the peak fishing season. But there is perhaps good reason why such improvements have not been made in Greenbush Township. The Lake Huron shoreline, in this area, offers little protection for boaters and there are no safe, natural harbors or inlets, particularly during stormy weather. However, with the possible placement of temporary boat launch facilities similar to those operated by the Huron County Road Commission in the Saginaw Bay area, the Greenbush area could capitalize upon the nearby facilities. The Lake Drive site described on pages      and      (adjacent to the Timberlakes property) could be an ideal location for such a facility. This 66 foot road end right-of-way could be developed after acquisition of the vacant, privately owned, 150 foot lot to the immediate north.

Preliminary Recommendation - Efforts should be made to seriously consider and develop the Lake Drive site with possible acquisition of the adjoining lot to provide a temporary boat launching facility during the fair weather season.

## V. SITES FOR POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

### SITE #1 - Newegon State Park

Site Description: Newegon State Park is located in Sections 2, 3 and 11 of Alcona Township, T29N R9E. Designated as a State Park, the site is totally undeveloped with over two miles of lakeshore.

Current Use - Multiple dispersed recreation such as swimming, hunting and off road trail riding. The Parks Division of the DNR has not scheduled any planned improvements for the park.

Existing Services - Nearby services are located in Black River or Ossineke.

### SITE #2 - Black River Access Site - Huron Drive

Site Description: The Black River Access Site is located on the north side of the Black River east of Lakeshore Drive and south of Huron Drive. This 3.5 acre site is managed by the Waterways Division of the DNR. Two outdoor toilets are on the property. While the site offers excellent protection and safety for boat launching, it requires numerous improvements including the dredging of the river mouth to maintain access to the lake. Lake depths in the area are very shallow, not exceeding five feet for a mile offshore. Huron Drive, adjacent to the north side of the DNR site, is managed by the Road Commission and also provides access to the lake.

Current Use - The site is used primarily for boat launching and fishing. Site conditions indicate that boats are launched quite often directly into Lake Huron. This is probably a result of the DNR boat launch site being inadequate and poorly maintained and siltation buildup at the mouth of the river inhibiting boat traffic. DNR Waterways Division has budgeted and planned upgrading of this site but the Corps of Engineers would not provide the necessary maintenance dredging at the river mouth or break walls. DNR currently uses the site for fish stocking.

Existing Services - Services are located in Black River. Gas, bait, restaurant and groceries are all available.

### SITE #3 - U.S. Forest Service

Site Description: This parcel of 148 acres is located in Section 24 of Alcona Township, T28N R9E. The site is bisected by Lakeshore Drive and has ½ mile of lakeshore frontage. The land area between the lake and Lakeshore Drive ranges from 500 ft. - 800 ft. in depth covering an area of approximately 50 acres. This land consists of extensive wetlands

with organic soils, poorly drained sandy sub-soils and a high water table. The beach area is sandy underlain by organic soils. The site is 100% forested with predominant species being white birch and white cedar. The site also provides excellent habitat for orchids and possibly endangered species such as Ramshead Lady Slipper Orchid, Pitchers thistle, Butterwort and Lake Huron Tansy. Lake Huron water depths offshore of this site are extremely shallow, not exceeding five feet for over one-half mile. Sand bars and numerous shoals are also common in this area.

Current Use - Limited dispersed recreation.

Existing Services - Nearest services are in Black River.

#### SITE #4 - U.S. Forest Service

Site Description: This site is located in Section 1 of Haynes Township, T27N R9E and comprises 102 acres. This site is also bisected by Lakeshore Drive but has considerable more acreage adjacent to Lake Huron. The beach area is primarily rock although there are a few sandy areas. The shoreline of this parcel forms a small cove offering some protection if utilized as a boat launching site. The soils in the area are predominately upland sands. Water depths are 0-6 feet for the first 1000 feet offshore. Thereafter, water depths are greater than 10 feet. An old two-track road is visible connecting Lakeshore Drive to the beach area.

Current Use - Camping, hunting and swimming on occasion. The site is managed by the Forest Service for low density dispersed recreation.

Existing Services - Black River, approximately three miles north, has the nearest services.

#### SITE #5 - Sturgeon Point and Sturgeon Point Road

Site Description: This site is located in Section 19 of Haynes Township, T27N R10E. This is the home of the historic Sturgeon Point Lighthouse. Also of significance is Sturgeon Point, a narrow band of rock protruding into Lake Huron. Limited public parking is already available at the 60 acre site. Most of the site consists of wetlands, however, the lighthouse and beach area have sandy soils. Sturgeon Point Road is county owned and also provides access to the lake.

Current Use - The primary use is to view the lighthouse with rock hounding and swimming also popular. DNR utilizes the site for fish stocking. The Alcona County Historical Society is presently working to restore the lighthouse.

Existing Services - Nearby services are 3.5 miles away in Harrisville.

SITE #6 - Trask Lake Road

Site Description: This site is a gravelled county road located on the Haynes-Harrisville Townships boundary. The road ends in a cul-de-sac on the beach of Lake Huron.

Current Use - The site obviously recognizes swimming and sun-bathing as current use since signs are in place to direct these activities. It does not appear that any kind of boat launching has occurred at this site.

Existing Services - Services are available in Harrisville, 1.5 miles south.

SITE #7 - Harrisville Area

Site Description - This site includes the Harrisville Harbor, marina, State Park, Dock Street and Main Street. A well developed harbor, marina, boat launch, campground and swimming beach characterize this site. Public parking is also available.

Current Use - This site is the center of the county's fishing and boating activities. The area also provides camping and swimming opportunities.

Existing Services - Existing services include: groceries, restaurants, camping facilities, resort facilities, gasoline, marine fuel, charter boat service, bait, fishing supplies, parking, other recreational facilities (i.e. baseball diamonds, tennis courts) and information readily available at the Chamber of Commerce and County Building.

SITE #8 - Springport Rd.

Site Description - Springport Road is located in Section 23 of Harrisville Township and is another county road which dead ends at Lake Huron. The road is gravel and traverses a steep slope down to the beach.

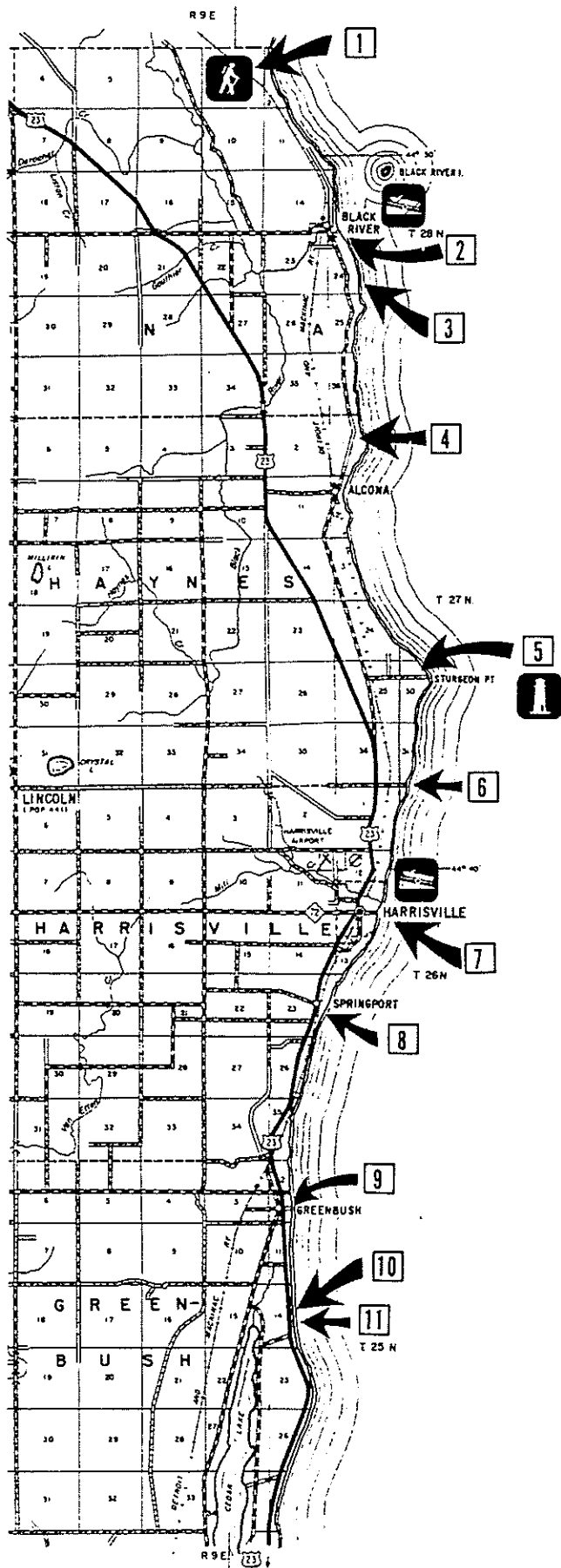
Current Use - The site is used occasionally for swimming.

Existing Services - A restaurant is located on the corner of US-23 and Springport Road. All other services are located in Harrisville.

SITE #9 - Greenbush Area Streets

Site Description - This site consists of Mikado Road, Burton Road and Main Street in Greenbush. Each of these roads dead end at Lake Huron. Mikado and Burton Roads are very narrow gravel roads. They both terminate at the edge

SITES FOR POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



of a steep slope near the shore. Main Street is paved and ends on the lakeshore.

Current Use - There does not appear to be any utilization of these sites by the public.

Existing Services - Services are located in Greenbush.

#### SITE #10 - Lake Drive and Vacant Parcel

Site Description: Lake Drive is a 60 foot wide county road easement located in Section 14 of Greenbush Township, T25N R9E. This easement is adjacent to the Timber Lakes Restaurant. To the north of the easement is a vacant parcel of land currently for sale. This parcel measures 193 x 150 ft. and would be quite significant if added to the existing easement. Soils of the area are sandy. Water depth ranges from 0-6 ft. for the first 1000 ft. offshore and 6 ft. or greater beyond.

Current Use - This site is occasionally used for swimming and sunbathing.

Existing Services - Services are located in Greenbush as well as numerous resorts, gas stations, groceries, the Cedar Lake Marina and restaurants nearby.

#### SITE #11 - Beach Drive

Site Description: Beach Drive is located in Section 14 of Greenbush Township and is a county road managed by the County Road Commission. The site is a well gravelled road to the sand beach and is approximately 60 ft. wide. Water depths in this area range from 0-6 ft. for the first 1000 ft. offshore and 6-11 ft. for the next 4000 ft.

Current Use - The site is used occasionally for sunbathing, swimming and as a boat launching site. The Department of Natural Resources uses the site for fish stocking. County Road Commission policy is to maintain the site in its present state.

Existing Services - Nearby services include access to US-23, numerous resorts, several grocery stores including fishing supplies and bait. The community of Greenbush is two miles north of this site.

#### HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST PROPERTIES

The U.S. Forest Service owns and manages two parcels of land on Lake Huron in Alcona County. Each of these sites were reviewed in the proceeding section as public access sites. Currently, the Forest Service management goal is the same for each site: to provide

dispersed multiple use recreation while protecting the lakeshore ecosystem. Activities under this management goal can include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, swimming, nature study, trapping and timber harvesting. However, none of these activities are encouraged and no site developments or improvements are planned, therefore resulting in limited (or perhaps desired) low density use and the protection of the ecosystem.

Potential developments to either of these sites will first require a change in the management goal. The primary method to achieve a change in the Forest Service management goal is to provide enough public support for the desired change. If the Forest Service determines there is considerable interest and support for a management goal requiring major development of a site then an economic feasibility study must be conducted to determine if the project is warranted. If the project is warranted, the process would require congressional approval of the planning, design and construction phases.

A second method would involve a land trade between the State of Michigan or the county for either parcel. A trade would require that a prospective piece of property be of equal value, be within the Huron-Manistee National Forest boundary and that the parcel further consolidate national forest lands. Two significant drawbacks appear with the trading of land. At this time it does not appear that there are any parcels of state or county land that would qualify for trade. Additionally, the Waterways Division of DNR has indicated they are not interested in developing access sites that are not protected by natural harbors or man-made breakwalls. Neither of these sites provides the necessary protection.

Although each of these sites has positive characteristics for developing a boat launch and parking area, there are numerous disadvantages. The positive aspects include the sizable acreage involved with either site which allows for adequate development along with a complementary service such as a campground. Both sites have access by a county black top road and are primarily forested permitting the maintenance of greenbelts to screen the area from other land uses already existing. The parcel in Haynes Township is more suitable for development since a two track road already exists; there is a large meadow located between the road and the beach; the coastal area of this parcel forms a small cove offering some protection to a boat launch site and safety to boaters landing a boat. The parcel in Alcona Township is primarily wetlands with poor soils for any development. The shoreline of this parcel does not offer any protection and the water depths are so shallow that boating could be very hazardous.

Another major disadvantage of developing either parcel is that the primary sports fishing industry activities and complementary services (i.e. bait, motels, resorts, campgrounds, restaurants, gas and fishing supplies) are concentrated between Harrisville and Oscoda.



## STURGEON POINT LIGHTHOUSE PROPERTY

The lighthouse has long been an important part of the America's heritage and played a major role in the settlement of the Great Lakes region. The primary reasons for construction of lighthouses, including the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse, were to mark navigational dangers and to record and keep track of steamers and sailing vessels.

Sturgeon Point received its name because of the once excellent Sturgeon fisheries which spawned along the nearby reefs. The area became a well known menace to navigation because of these same reefs which reached out  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles into Lake Huron. In 1868, the U.S. Congress approved the purchase of the present site for the sole purpose of building a lighthouse at this site. The following year, construction of the tower and residence was completed and has remained virtually unchanged to the present day. The tower is built on a foundation of limestone  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, 4 feet of which is below the surface. Brick was used in the construction of the base which is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick and 16 feet in diameter. The height of the tower is 70 feet 9 inches.

In 1941, the lighthouse crew was removed as the light itself was automated by an electric flashing beacon, maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard Station out of Tawas City. In 1946, the federal government disposed of the 50 some acres surrounding the lighthouse as federal surplus property to the Alcona Community School District and eventually, title was deeded to the State of Michigan and was administered by the DNR Parks Division out of the Harrisville State Park until recently. In early 1982, the DNR Parks Division leased the property to the Alcona County Historical Society, including the residence (the tower still is maintained by U.S.C.G.), which has undertaken an historical restoration effort for both the interior and exterior of the structure. The Society plans to open the residence to the public shortly as a Maritime Museum. Also, in early 1982, the Michigan Historical Commission listed the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse in the State Register of Historic Sites which, among other opportunities, enables the purchase and display of an official state marker on the property.

Another concept which has been discussed by supporters of the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse restoration efforts, is the reconstruction of an early 1800's fishing village on the property near the lighthouse residence. Historical accounts point to the Great Lakes commercial fishing industry as the first money making endeavor undertaken in Alcona County. Sturgeon Point was originally settled as a fishing community because of the large hauls of fish, most notably Sturgeon, caught in nets along the reefs, salted and packed in half barrels for shipment via Lake Huron to downstate markets. The current lease arrangement between the DNR Parks Division and the Historical Society, however, does not provide for improvements to the open grounds surrounding the lighthouse residence structure. Additionally, while the idea of a reconstructed fishing village in connection with a museum at the lighthouse certainly is a good one, it appears that the concept needs to be thought out in more

detail and given an opportunity to mature. Therefore, the completion of perspective sketches or renderings of a possible streetscape or layout of the proposed fishing village is somewhat premature for inclusion in this study, particularly with the lack of historically accurate information as to the original structures which comprised the first settlement at Sturgeon Point.

#### PLAN OF ACTION

The idea of possible reconstruction of the original settlement at Sturgeon Point as an 1840's fishing village or station has been well received by a number of groups and organizations. The concept appears to be a particularly good idea in conjunction with present efforts to restore the interior of the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse residence quarters as a museum with a strong maritime and Great Lakes fishing theme. Initial contact with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks Division (current owners of the property) has been positive and the idea has been well received. However, current state budgetary reductions has prevented this agency from making any commitment to a restoration project of this nature. The Alcona County Historical Society is also very interested in pursuing this concept. They currently hold a one-year lease to the lighthouse residence quarter and have already began some restoration of the interior. Caution should be made that these efforts not proceed hastily so as to damage any of the original woodworking or wall/ceiling covering of this historical structure.

Additionally, staff of the Jesse Besser Museum in Alpena, Michigan are very interested in this project because of the historical significance of these early fishing stations to the development in this area of the Great Lakes. Efforts should be made to include provisions in the next lease arrangements between the DNR Parks Division and the Alcona County Historical Society to further investigate this possibility. Alcona County, or one of its agencies, should also become more involved in this project. Efforts could be made on the part of Alcona County to secure funding for an archeological dig on the Sturgeon Point property to locate any remains of the fishing station, such as foundations, that may exist. Also, research should be conducted to secure historically accurate information on the construction and material used during this period.

Following these activities, perspective sketches and architectural drawings could be developed to provide a possible layout of the reconstructed fishing station. The necessary management responsibilities must also be identified and agreed upon during this phase as well. This may very well be a lengthy period of negotiation, so steps should be taken as early as possible to begin this process. Most likely, the initiative for this will have to begin locally if the project is to have any hope for success and to receive assistance from state agencies.

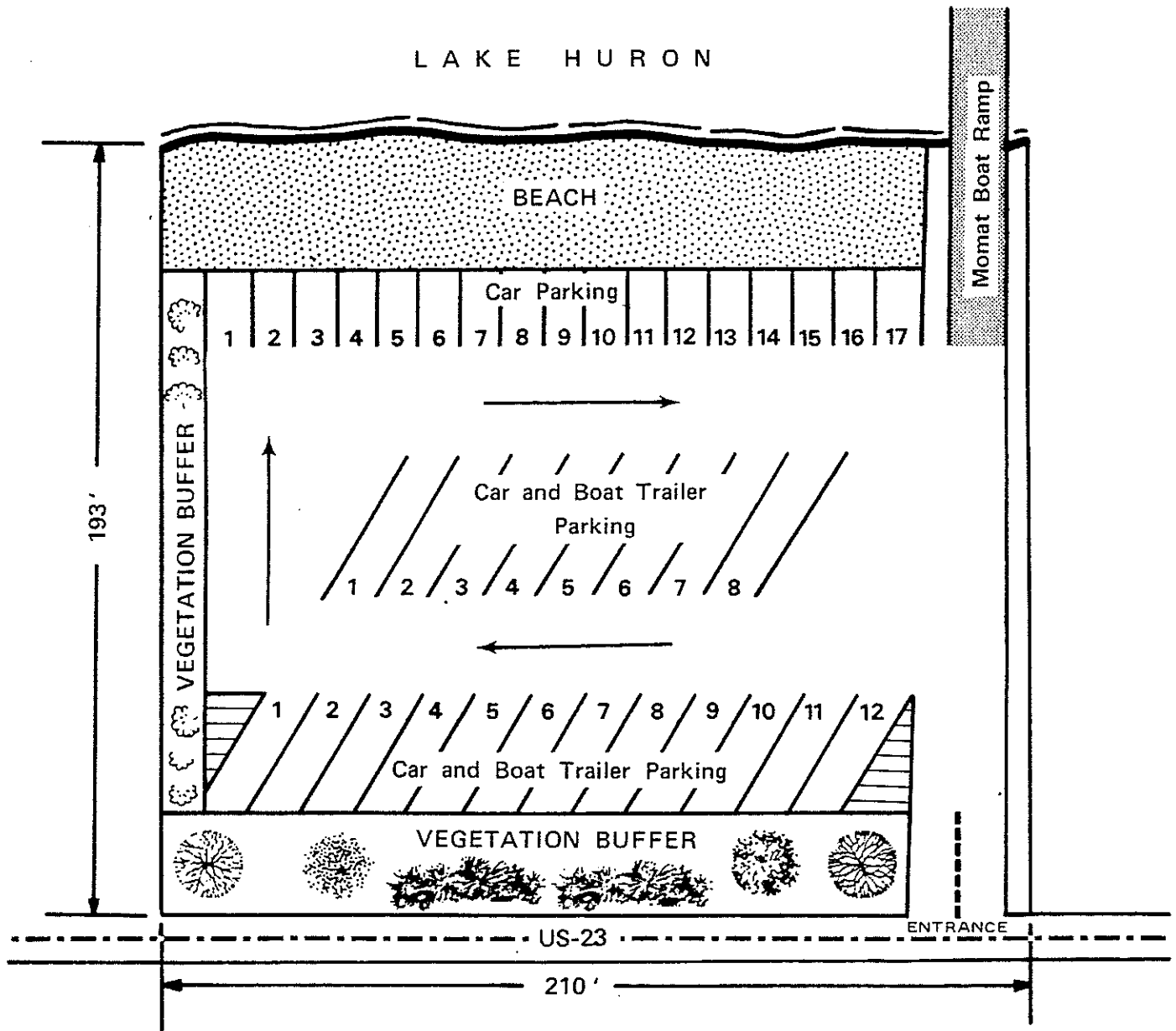
## LAKE DRIVE AND ADJACENT PRIVATE PROPERTY

This proposed site lies in the heart of Alcona County's resort community as well as inbetween the sports fishing communities of Harrisville and Oscoda. Proposed development of this site would require the acquisition of the private parcel immediately north of Lake Drive. The private parcel measures 193 x 150 feet and when added to Lake Drive would measure 193 x 210 feet. The parcel has some fine trees and sandy soils suitable for development. Surrounding land use is primarily cottages and second homes on the lake. Adjacent to the south side of Lake Drive is a closed restaurant.

Proposed development for this site could include a temporary small boat launch access and swimming site with parking. A boat launch access site could do much to enhance the resort industry business during the early spring since fishing for Lake Trout near the shore is very productive. During the summer, the Greenbush area has a rather good perch fishery that could also be used in the fall to go after Coho Salmon. Finally, the access site would provide an identified area to funnel fishermen in, therefore, eliminating problems of fishermen launching boats from other county road easements. The boat launch site would have to be engineered so that the launch itself can be removed during the winter and when severe storms occur from the east. Two alternatives have been investigated that could achieve this goal. The first alternative would be the utilization of a metal grated boat ramp. This type of ramp has shown signs of withstanding wave attack by allowing the wave energy to pass through the grating. This type of ramp would still have to be removed during winter months since the ice would still destroy it. The second alternative utilizes a product called Momat. Momat is a large roll of fiberglass mat which can support such vehicles as Army tanks but can be rolled up out of the water during bad weather. There may be additional alternatives worth consideration but any type of boat launch should be temporary since this site does not offer any protection from wave attack or ice buildup. The only disadvantage of developing this site concerns safety for boaters during storms. If a storm caught boaters on the lake before they could reach the access site it could become quite difficult to land a boat on a trailer in heavy waves or if the boat ramp has been removed because of the impending storm. Boaters would simply have to beach their craft, possibly resulting in damage to the boat.

Preliminary sketches of developing this site indicates that the parking area could accommodate approximately 17 car spaces and 18 car/boat-trailer spaces. The site would have a 15 foot wide boat ramp with a 50 foot approach area and turn around. The site could also have a beach area of about 4500 square feet to provide sun bathing and swimming opportunities.

Proposed Site Improvements for Lake Drive  
Alcona County



## VI. ALTERNATIVE LAND USE PLANS

### Alternative A

The first alternative land use plan identifies several areas along the Lake Huron shoreline in Alcona County that are already providing some degree of service to the sports fishing industry. To begin, any recommended land use strategy would require serious consideration of Harrisville as the center or focal point in that plan because of the major role that community plays in providing services to the non-resident angler.

The most severe land use problems in Harrisville are temporary in nature and are very closely associated with the peak fishing season, particularly the fall salmon run. Additional lands within close proximity to both the DNR Waterways and City of Harrisville properties must be located to accommodate these overcrowding conditions.

Better pedestrian links need to be instituted within the City of Harrisville so that the Downtown District, the Harbor and the State Park can more effectively relate to each other by encouraging people to walk. While this strategy may not totally orient the fisherman who desires to park his vehicle and/or trailer only a few feet from the shore or boat launch facility, it can result in making the walk to the lakefront from the parking facility a more pleasant and enjoyable experience, provided it is not too great a distance. This recommendation is not suggesting that people park their vehicles at the state park and walk to the harbor area. This is indeed somewhat unrealistic, but a pedestrian walkway that does connect these two centers of activity will generate some use and will provide untangible benefits such as a more attractive setting and an appearance of more activity.

Wherever possible, recreation facilities designed to provide area residents with access to the Lake Huron amenities should be established between the lakefront and business district. While the sports fishing industry is important economically to Harrisville, the community should give special consideration to the recreational needs of the non-fishing resident for such activities as picnicking, swimming and other more passive forms of recreation.

The Harrisville community needs to better relate to the potential drawing attraction which the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse area can become. It is an excellent opportunity to provide non-fishing recreational activities for the angler and his/her family during inclement weather. Therefore, this plan suggests development of the historical significance of the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse area. Proposed improvements at this location include not only the restoration of the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse residence quarters which has recently begun under the direction of the Alcona County Historical Society, but also previous consideration of the concept of a

reconstructed fishing village. Such a fishing station would be very unique in the State of Michigan in terms of historical interpretation of early coastal settlements and would be a major attraction for Alcona County if properly developed.

In an effort to relieve congestion at the Harrisville Harbor during certain peak times, it is recommended that efforts to improve lake access facility in the immediate Black River area through the implementation of either approved or modified plans at the mouth of the Black River. While construction of a new harbor of refuge may not be needed, improvements will be required to effectively mitigate the silting problem which annually prevents boat access to the open waters of Lake Huron from the launching ramp inside the river. While improvements to the launching facility itself is also needed, investment of public capital would have no value without first correcting the problem at the mouth. Such a project would most likely be a joint Federal and State venture.

In conjunction with improvements at Black River, Alcona County should also encourage the development of Negwegon State Park. The approved master plan calls for installation of 25 rustic campground sites as well as a day use center and swimming beach. One option which may be desirable to Alcona County would be to request the DNR Parks Division to modify the approved master plan in an attempt to expand the number of campsites within the park and to modernize the camping facilities to provide such services as electricity, flush toilets, showers, and other amenities that may be demanded by the sports fishing visitor. Regardless of the design of the park, the DNR Parks Division should be encouraged to provide Alcona County with plans of development for Negwegon State Park, including prioritization of phases and an expected timetable for each phase. Since the park is located within two counties, Alcona County should establish an open rapport with the appropriate agencies and officials in Alpena County, which have also expressed interest in the future of Negwegon, to coordinate local activities and efforts. Alcona County should also support attempts by the DNR Parks Division to acquire the remaining private inholding, that being the tip of South Point located in Alpena County, within the Negwegon State Park boundary. This would ensure complete control of the interior of the park under the management of one public agency.

The Greenbush area could perhaps best serve the above suggested land use developments by remaining an accommodations community serving Harrisville and Oscoda during periods of overcrowding and providing limited sports fishing services. The twenty or so private resorts that are currently located along Lake Huron in the Greenbush area not only accommodate the overflow of anglers during the peak of certain fishing seasons, but also provides such services as boat rentals from their docks or shores during fair weather. Fishing near shore along the shoreline in the Greenbush area where these resorts are located is not as good as it used to be, but does have the potential of coming back. In fact, this immediate area had an excellent perch fisheries some fifteen to twenty years ago

and many of the resorts were originally built to accommodate the visiting perch sports fisherman. However, heavy commercial fishing severely reduced the perch population and it is only now beginning to come back. Many local residents and businesspeople believe that removal of the weed beds along the lake bottom contributed to this drastic decline while DNR Fisheries biologists argue that relatively low water temperature is the predominate factor. In any event, with the absence of a fisheries management program for warm-water species at the state level, rejuvenation of the perch fishery in Lake Huron near Greenbush may be a slow process. However, launching of small boats from shore during fair weather should continue for the fishery which does exist there. The fishery itself should be re-examined periodically in an effort to detect any noticeable increases in the perch population which may require additional shore facilities to accommodate the sports fisherman of this species. Additionally, these resorts quite easily accommodate the non-fishing tourists as well as abandoned families of the avid angler with excellent swimming beaches and peaceful surroundings. The Greenbush area could enhance this role by avoiding or discouraging boat launching facilities in their community. Such a strategy would strengthen their position as a diversified water-oriented tourism service area without becoming too dependent upon the sports fishing element of the tourism industry.

#### Alternative B

As with the first alternative, this suggested land use plan also gives close consideration to the Harrisville area. However, unlike Alternative "A", this strategy recommends that new, currently unimproved lakeshore properties be considered for recreational improvements designed to better accommodate the non-resident fishermen. These improvements include development of a walking pier or extension of the harbor's south breakwater to the shoreline and surfacing the breakwater for fishing access. Development of an information center near the harbor to better direct the non-resident fishermen to available facilities and services.

Harrisville has had parking problems associated with the sports fishing industry for several years and has not yet effectively remedied the situation. But, this problem exists for only a few weeks out of the entire calendar year and attempts to direct parking away from the shore and encourage more walking has repeatedly failed. Therefore, it is recommended that more intensive development in the form of parking facilities be encouraged near the shore in the harbor vicinity to adequately accommodate these peak seasonal loads. This recommendation would also include enforcement of overnight and street parking laws in the City.

In the area south of Black River, the U.S. Forest Service should be encouraged to conduct an economic analysis of their lakeshore parcels to determine if new fishing oriented developments would better serve the County. Either parcel has the potential to provide adequate parking and camping facilities in conjunction with

a public access site. The residents of the County, as well as organizations, should contact the Forest Service office in Harrisville to encourage a change in the current management of the parcels and initiate the economic analysis.

In Greenbush, the County should purchase the site identified on pages - . The site could be developed as proposed and managed by the Road Commission. This approach has been successful in other counties bordering Lake Huron such as Huron County in the thumb of Michigan. In any case, development of this site would require the boat ramp to be temporary in design. Additional parking facilities may have to be acquired or provided by the private sector.

### Summary

It should be evident that these two alternatives are not the only possible land use strategies available. In fact, the two plans described above are not mutually exclusive, which means selecting one of them does not automatically prevent the consideration of the other. There are elements of each which could be implemented independently or in conjunction with others.

The purpose of these alternatives is to stimulate ideas about possible land use strategies and their impact upon each other as well as to provide general guidelines for new recreational developments which can serve the sports fishing industry in Alcona County.