

3.0 Management Zone Plan

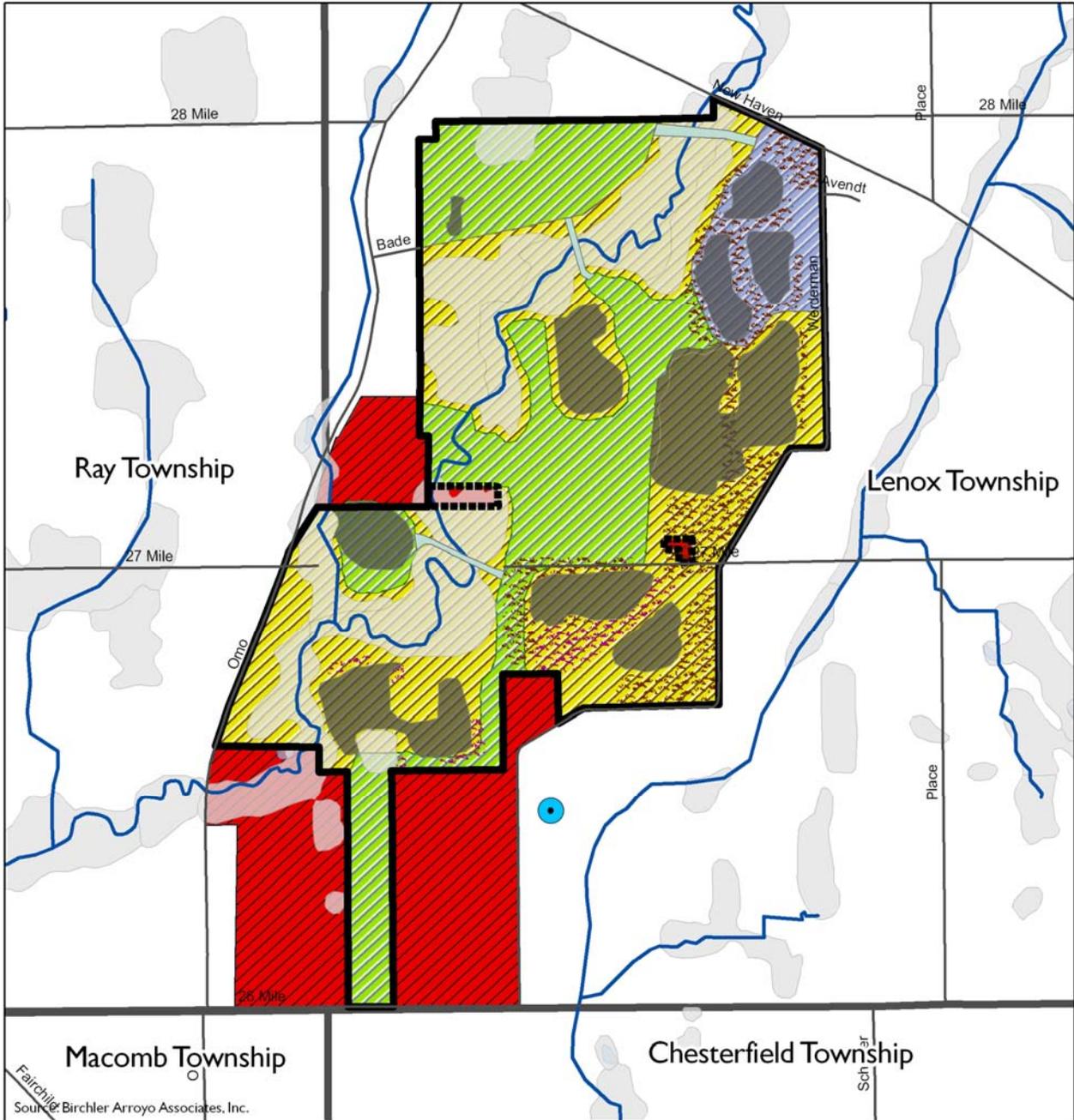
With guidance of the Wetzel SRA Planning Team and input from our stakeholders and the public, the Recreation Area “Purpose and Significance” statements were formulated. This established an identity for Wetzel SRA as a place to learn about unique natural features and enjoy a rustic outdoor experience. Wetzel SRA contains unique prairie potholes, naturally-occurring and mitigated wetlands, Coon Creek tributary and wooded areas. The Management Zone Plan seeks to preserve and protect these resources, while allowing for educational and interpretation opportunities.

The Management Zone Plan was developed according to the identity, and drafted and adopted with stakeholder and public support, and is provided as Figure 1. Responsive to the Memorandum of Understanding between the DNR and Township, the GMP limits mitigated wetlands to those that currently existing within the Recreation Area. The plan for Wetzel SRA is to have a significant focus on the Area’s natural resources while affording a pleasant visitor experience with opportunities for low impact recreation uses and education and interpretation. To achieve this, Wetzel was divided into the following zones:

- ◆ Primitive. The Primitive Zone emphasizes the natural resources, and is managed to allow dispersed and low frequency use for low impact recreation purposes. This zone will protect the integrity of the wetlands, Coon Creek and tributary, floodplain and warm and cool season prairie uplands and grasses. Hunting and trapping are allowable uses in the Primitive Zone.
- ◆ Natural Resource Recreation. The Natural Resource Recreation Zone emphasizes resource quality over recreation, but allows for medium to high levels of active recreation uses. Activities that could occur in this zone include hiking trails, hunting and trapping, rustic camping, an outdoor classroom, and other complementary uses. The activities should allow visitors to experience nature at a variety of levels.
- ◆ Developed Recreation: The Developed Recreation Zone emphasizes active recreation with a high density of use. While typically this zone is associated with areas that offer little natural resource significance, the Developed Recreation area serves a different purpose in Wetzel. Many of the natural features are located near the main entrance. This presents a special educational opportunity; paving trails and providing interpretive signage near the location provides an opportunity for those with limited mobility to enjoy and learn about the unique features of Wetzel.

Other Considerations

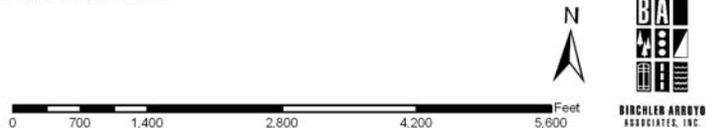
- ◆ Future Purchases. The Management Zone map includes a ‘Future Purchase’ category. These parcels were identified for purchase in the near future, given their adjacency to areas of Wetzel that have recreation limitations due to the placement of the mitigated wetlands. Expanding the boundary in these areas is beneficial for several reasons: 1) expansion opens the realm of uses provided and increases visitor experience; 2) the original purpose of Wetzel was to provide an active recreation facility in this region, which was pre-empted by the location of mitigated wetlands and 3) expansion will provide more points of access, which will be needed as the visitor rate increases. The Future Purchase areas are not zoned. A purchase would prompt an amendment to this plan.
- ◆ Access and Parking. There are currently two points of access to Wetzel State Recreation Area. The access points do not adequately serve the park and the need for more parking is anticipated as visitor attendance increases. This Management Zone Plan considers temporary parking at Omo Road and Bade Roads, until such time as property purchases may allow for alternative access points and parking areas.
- ◆ Stewardship Plan. Detailed descriptions of each zone provided on the following pages include references to a Stewardship Plan. A Stewardship Plan for Wetzel SRA has not yet been developed. Recommendations of a future Stewardship Plan are anticipated to coincide with the intent of the management zones.



Source: Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

- Wetzel SRA Boundary
 - Inholding Parcel
 - NRC-Approved Dedicated Boundary (2004)
 - Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team
 - Potential Connection
 - Mitigated Wetlands
 - Naturally-Occurring Wetlands
 - Prairie Grasses
 - Cool Season Grasses
 - ITC Substation
 - Rivers & Streams
- Management Zones**
- Primitive Zone
 - Natural Resource Zone
 - Developed Recreation Zone

Management Zone Plan Wetzel State Recreation Area Lenox Township, Michigan



PRIMITIVE ZONE

The majority of the Recreation Area acreage is designated Primitive Zone. In general, land was identified within this Zone for the sensitive natural features contained within it: wetlands, prairie grasslands and Coon Creek and its tributaries. Figure 2, below, presents the Primitive Zones.

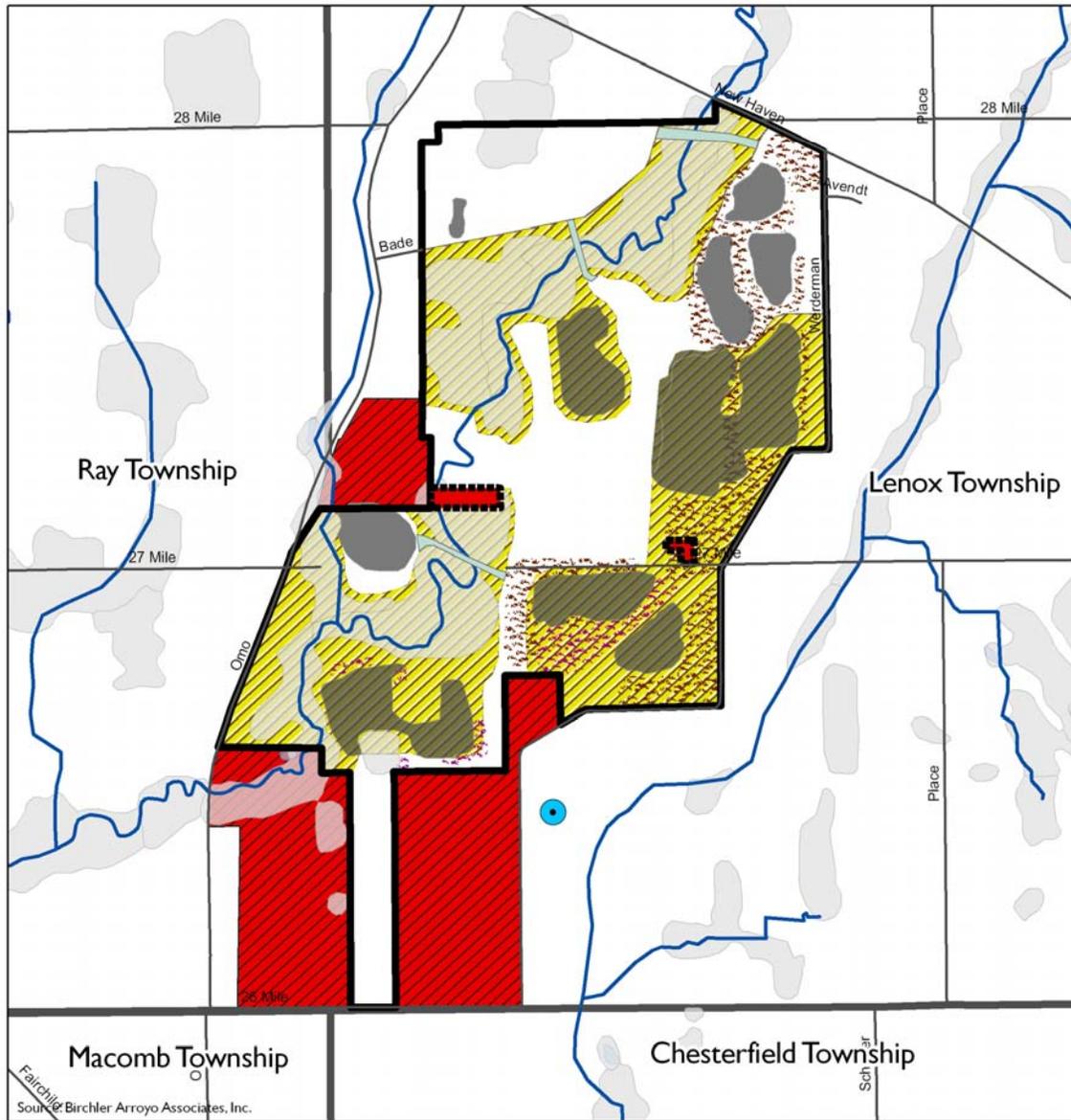


Figure 2: Primitive Zone
Wetzel State Recreation Area
Lenox Township, Michigan

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- Management Zone**
- Primitive Zone



In this 566-acre zone (approximately 62% of the Recreation Area), only foot traffic will be allowed. There will be no mountain bike or equestrian uses permitted. Prescribed qualities for the Primitive Zone are:

Natural Resources – This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Within this Primitive Zone are naturally-occurring wetlands, mitigated wetlands, cool and warm season prairie uplands and grasses, and floodplain surrounding the Coon Creek and its tributaries. The Management Plan promotes the on-going maintenance and enhancement of these natural resources to ensure their continued success in the long-term.

Historic/Cultural Resources – There are remnants (e.g. foundations, fence lines, apple trees) of farmsteads within the Recreation Area. The locations are not known, however, any remnants within the Primitive Zone will be protected, noted with interpretive signage, or allowed to waste away in accordance with the Stewardship Plan.

Recreational Opportunities – The focus of this zone is to maintain and protect the forested, scrub-shrub, emergent and mitigated wetlands and potholes of prairie grasses. As a result, only low impact recreation will be allowed. This is characterized by dispersed recreation, such as hunting, trapping, birding, and the development of foot trails for hiking and backpacking only. No equestrian or mountain bike trails will be allowed in this zone.

Education Opportunities – The forests, wetlands and prairie potholes are ecologically significant and present an excellent opportunity for educational kiosks at the points of entry to the zone and along designated trails. Additionally, off-site educational materials could be developed. Specific planning recommendations for resource-based education and interpretation will require input from the DNR-Office of Communications and others.

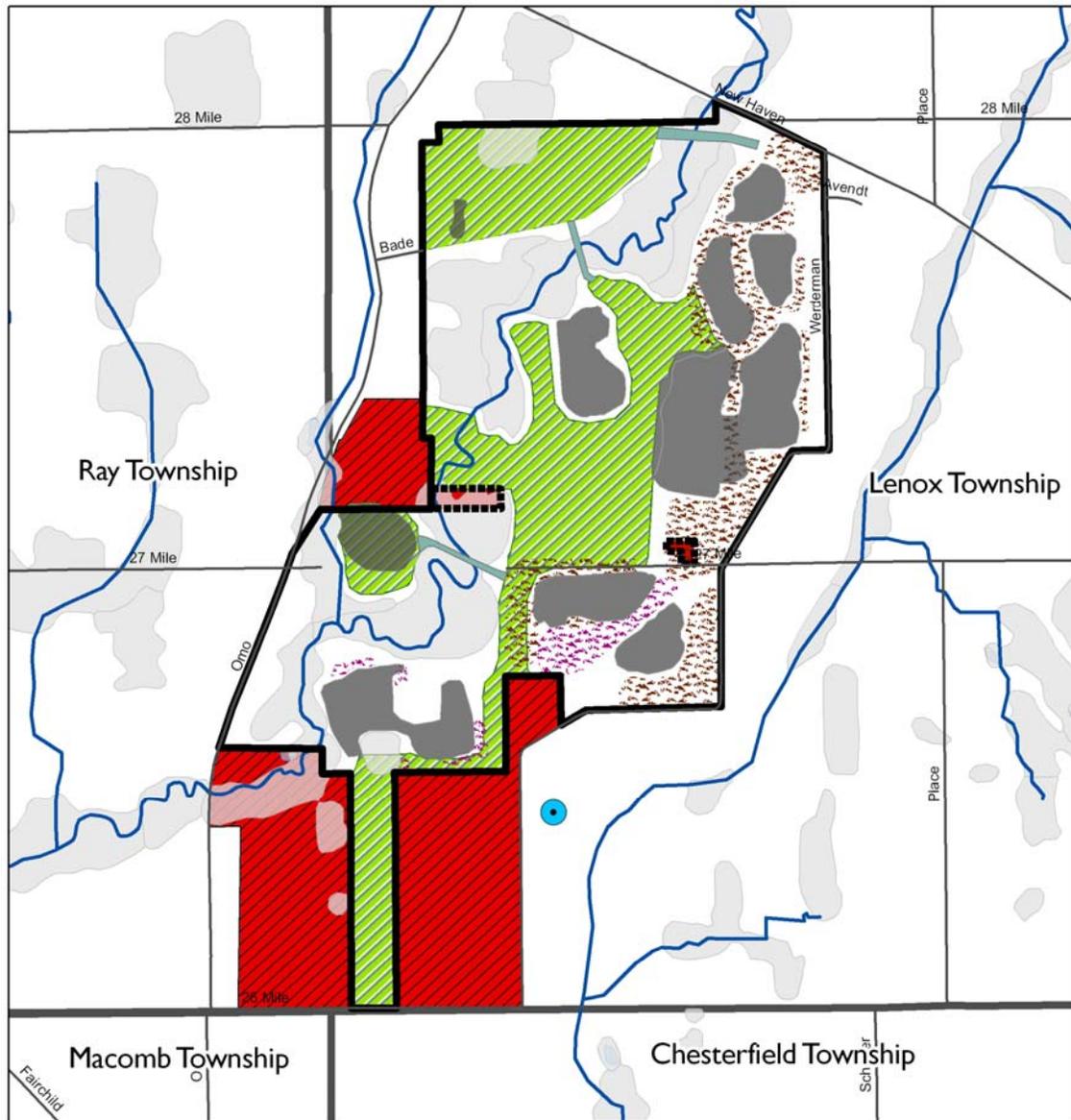
Visitor Experience – This will reflect the high degree of 'natural' feel of the zone, a significant sense of solitude, and a lack of man-made improvements.

Management Focus – Routine maintenance of any trails or routes of access will be provided, and care taken to eliminate any detrimental opportunities for erosion, sedimentation or incursion of invasive species. Other management strategies will be based on recommendations in the Stewardship Plan.

Development - The focus is to maintain as little evidence of human activity as possible. Only trail improvements, which can include boardwalks and/or overlooks, and educational or interpretive signage will be the evidence of man-made elements in this zone. Any improvements needed for resource protection, such as erosion control, shall be 'natural' in character. Development of mitigated wetlands in Primitive Zones is limited to those that currently exist.

NATURAL RESOURCE RECREATION ZONE

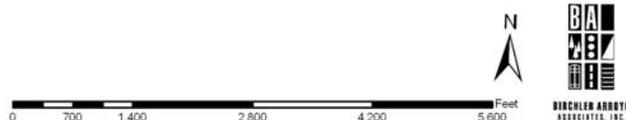
With approximately 283 acres, the Natural Resource Recreation Zone is the second largest zone within Wetzel. Land was designated Natural Resource Recreation due to the natural features within it: forested areas, wetlands, prairie grasslands and Coon Creek and its tributaries. Figure 3, below, presents the Natural Resource Recreation Zones.



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- Wetzel SRA Boundary
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- ITC Substation
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- Management Zone**
- Natural Resource Zone

Natural Resource Recreation Zone Wetzel State Recreation Area Lenox Township, Michigan



General recreation activities are allowed in this zone: hunting, fishing, trapping, birding, rustic camping, and trail use for hiking and cross-country skiing. The Natural Resource Recreation Zone is described as follows:

Natural Resources – This zone will reflect natural processes, with vegetative management only allowed to restore and maintain natural ecological structure and processes (such as removing of invasive species), to address hazard trees, and to manage pests and disease. Vegetation may also be managed to facilitate recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape. In general, the natural resources can be modified to support visitor activities, provided modifications are within the guidance of the Stewardship Plan. Much of this zone is currently unforested, open area and was selected because impacts to natural resources would be minimal.

Historic/Cultural Resources – There are remnants (e.g. foundations, fence lines, apple trees) of farmsteads within the Recreation Area. The locations are not known, however, any remnants within the Natural Resource Recreation Zone will be protected, noted with interpretive signage, or allowed to waste away in accordance with the Stewardship Plan.

Recreation Opportunities – This zone is utilized for general recreation, which includes; hunting, fishing, trapping, birding, model airplane flying and trails for hiking and cross-country skiing. Other potential features of this zone to be considered may be rustic cabins, which would provide hikers and groups with an overnight experience. Snowmobiling will not be permitted in the Recreation Area. While equestrian use and biking are allowable activities in the Natural Resource Recreation Zone, the size of Wetzel State Recreation Area at the time of the preparation of this Management Plan is such that it cannot support these uses.

Education Opportunities – Given the natural features on-site, Wetzel SRA must include outlets for resource-based educational forums. Informational kiosks at trail heads and along the trails at critical locations are appropriate for self-guided visitors.

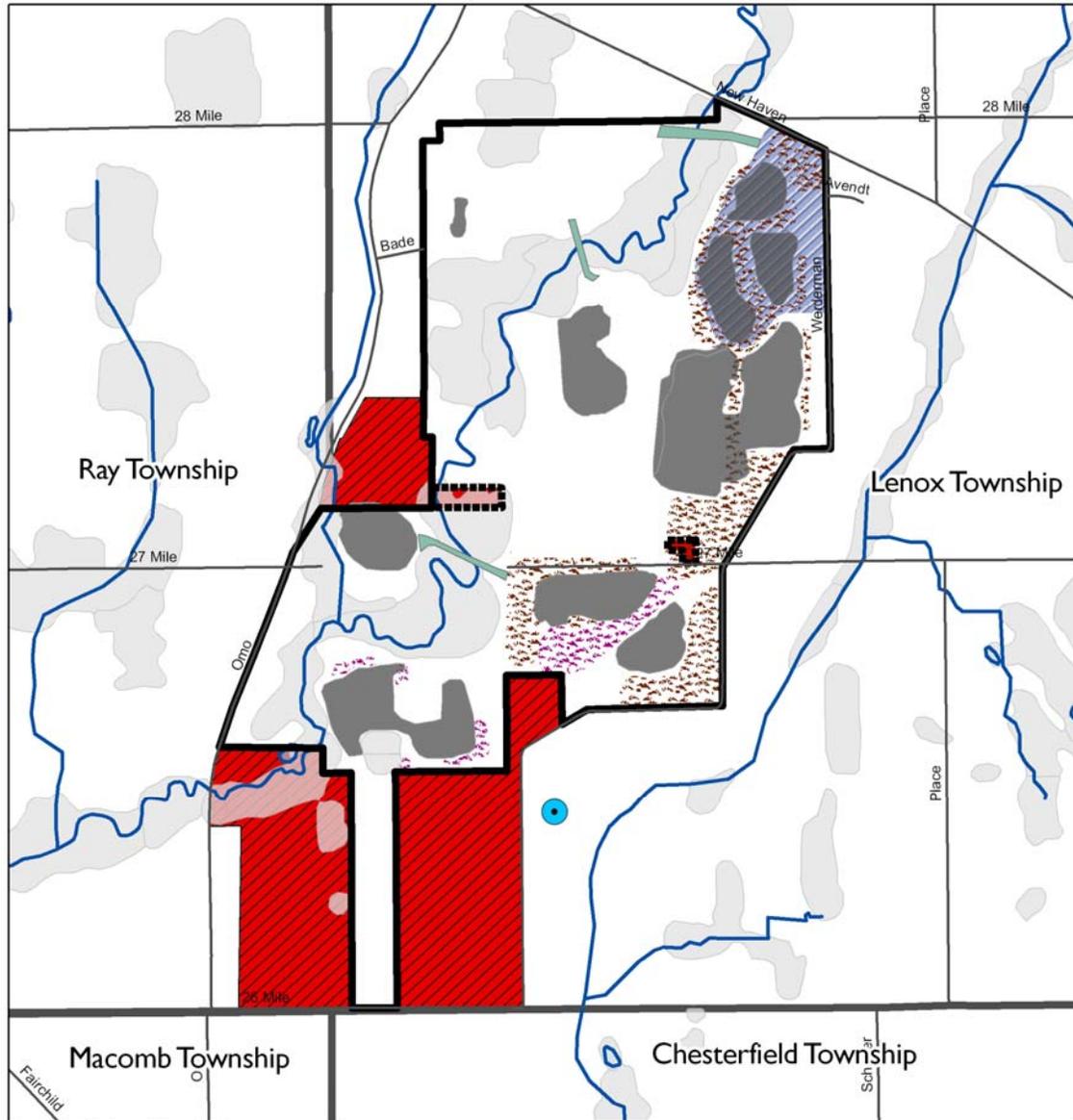
Visitor Experience – More active recreation to allow for appreciation of the natural resources is the focus of this zone. It is noted that high visitor encounters are expected and conflicts can occur as a result.

Management Focus – The focus of this zone is to protect the natural features, provide a safe and comfortable visitor experience and minimize identified conflicts noted above. Trails and rustic cabins should be compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) where possible. Interpretative signage is an integral part of successful implementation of this zone.

Development – Moderate levels of development to support proposed visitor activities (i.e. picnic tables, benches, rustic cabins, paved/asphalt/gravel walkways). Development activity will be constructed with preservation of natural features and scenic views and educational goals in mind. Development of mitigated wetlands in Natural Resource Recreation Zones is limited to those that currently exist. Future development may also include consideration for parking areas or for an access road within the southern leg. Some parking areas may be interim, until park purchases enable more convenient points of access. For example, a parking area at Bade and Omo Road may be reasonable at the present time. However, if land were to be purchased along 26 Mile Road, it would make sense to close the Bade / Omo Road parking area, while providing access from this location.

DEVELOPED RECREATION ZONE

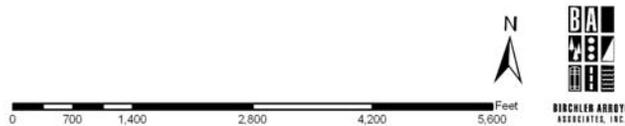
This zone comprises 64 acres, or 7%, of the total Recreation Area. It is the first zone encountered by visitors and will provide passive recreation opportunities with an emphasis on education. The intent is to make the unique natural features accessible to those with limited mobility, as well as introduce such features to those that may choose to delve further into the Recreation Area.



Source: Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Wetzel SRA Boundary | ITC Substation |
| Inholding Parcel | Rivers & Streams |
| NRC-Approved Dedicated Boundary (2004) | Management Zone |
| Addition to the Dedicated Boundary, as Recommended by the Planning Team | Developed Recreation Zone |
| Potential Connection | |
| Mitigated Wetlands | |
| Naturally-Occurring Wetlands | |
| Prairie Grasses | |
| Cool Season Grasses | |

Figure 4: Developed Recreation Zone
Wetzel State Recreation Area
Lenox Township, Michigan



The Developed Recreation Zone provides a barrier-free, educational encounter with mitigated wetlands, prairie grasses and the outdoors in general. While other zones focus on the natural setting, this zone allows for more developed uses. The Management Plan envisions an expanded educational opportunity related to wildlife for this Zone.

Natural Resources – Vegetative management in this zone will address hazard trees, invasive species, and pests and disease, and will also be allowed for purposes of facilitating development and recreational use and maintaining an aesthetically appealing landscape. The wetlands located within this zone will be managed according to State law (see Legal Mandates section and the Management Objectives of the Stewardship Plan), but will allow people with limited mobility the opportunity to see and learn about this great resource.

Historic/Cultural Resources – There are remnants (e.g. foundations, fence lines, apple trees) of farmsteads within the Recreation Area. The locations are not known, however, and any remnants within the Developed Recreation Zone will be preserved, noted with interpretive signage, or allowed to waste away in accordance with the Stewardship Plan.

Recreation Opportunities – This highly structured environment may have paved parking, trails and improvements for interpretation and environmental education. Interpretive signage could be provided, and active programming may occur as visitor use increases. Given high levels of activity expected, hunting will not be allowed within this zone.

Education Opportunities – This zone is anticipated to be the most populated and visited of zones due to its location at the entrance, but also the resource-based educational forum that may be provided. Visitors may do a self-guided tour through interpretive signage along the paved trail, or, for a more formal setting, an outdoor classroom may be constructed. An area to promote education could be used by the Clinton River Watershed Council and other groups that host programs designed to educate visitors about their environment.

Visitor Experience – With the focus of this zone being education and accessibility, the visitor should experience a high level of encounters with other park visitors. Visitors could be engaged in trail use with multiple opportunities to experience interpretive signs or other types of learning devices that engage the public.

Management Focus – Maintain the infrastructure that serves the intense public uses of this zone. Provide educational opportunities, develop and maintain ADA access in the zone, and maintain public safety and good hospitality practices.

Development – Provide ADA improvements - parking, restrooms, paved trails, outdoor classroom - as needed to attain program accessibility. Improve facilities to compliment education. All development should meet the approval requirements of the planning process. Additionally, development of mitigated wetlands in Developed Recreation Zone is limited to those that currently exist.