

# COVERT TOWNSHIP COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



PREPARED BY THE

COVERT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
IN COOPERATION WITH THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*IN COOPERATION WITH:*

COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND SERVICES DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

*AND WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF*

LANGWORTHY, STRADER, LEBLANC & ASSOCIATES  
GRAND RAPIDS & ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

ADOPTED AUGUST 10, 2004



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# **CHAPTER ONE DEVELOPING THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**



## **COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Covert Township Coastal Management Plan is to provide a policy and decision making guide regarding future land use and infrastructure development within the Coastal Management Area.

The Coastal Management Plan identifies a set of key planning issues, outlines a clear set of goals and policies, describes and maps future land uses; and recommends specific implementation measures.



## **PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

All future land uses and policies presented in this Coastal Management Plan were developed based on blending the natural capability of the land to accommodate certain types of development; identification of the role played by unique land and water resources, which includes important sensitive shoreline resources; the future need for various shoreline land uses; the existing land use distribution; and the desires of local residents and public officials as expressed through public open houses, workshops, township meetings, and public hearings.

This Plan was prepared by Langworthy, Strader, LeBlanc & Associates under the direction and assistance of Covert Township Planning Commission and the Michigan Coastal Management Program. Funding for the Coastal Management Plan was provided by Covert Township and the Michigan Coastal Management Program, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.



# COASTAL MANAGEMENT

## PLAN PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE



The Plan covers a wide range of topics related to the shoreline area including the people who live within the Covert community, shoreline housing, public access, transportation, existing land uses and implementation. The Coastal Management Plan is divided into eight chapters.

- ☐ CHAPTER 1 EXPLAINS THE PURPOSE BEHIND THIS PLAN AND HOW IT SHOULD BE USED.
- ☐ CHAPTERS 2 AND 3 PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK WITHIN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA.
- ☐ CHAPTERS 4-6 HIGHLIGHT SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES, PUBLIC ACCESS, AND SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL LAND USE WITHIN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA.
- ☐ CHAPTER 7 REVEALS THE FUTURE LAND USE OBTAINED THROUGH THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS.
- ☐ CHAPTER 8 DEALS IN DETAIL WITH IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.

### INTENT

The Coastal Management Plan is intended to serve as a decision making tool for both public and private decision makers, including the Township administration.

Ultimately, the Plan is intended to provide some degree of certainty regarding land use along Covert's shoreline for the next 20 years.

**" CONSIDER THE NEXT SEVEN  
GENERATIONS FUTURE...  
LEARN FROM THE SEVEN  
GENERATIONS PAST"**

-ATTRIBUTED TO THE GREAT LAW OF THE IROQUOIS  
CONFEDERACY

As a policy guide, not law, the Plan must be viewed as part of an overall process of attaining the form and character of a shoreline community that will provide a safe and attractive environment and a high quality of life for its citizens.



Continued cooperation between Covert Township and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will provide the best opportunities to achieve common long range planning goals. The Coastal Management Plan is designed to achieve the most desirable management for sensitive shoreline resources based on community input and provide a common vision of the desired future land use for the area and the required actions necessary to meet that vision.

## THEMES OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

- ☐ THE END RESULT OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN WILL BE TO MINIMIZE ENCROACHMENT ON SIGNIFICANT SENSITIVE RESOURCES ALONG THE SHORELINE (HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS, CRITICAL DUNE AREAS, ETC.)
- ☐ PROTECT AND PROMOTE SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL AREAS WHICH ENHANCE THE EXISTING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS' QUALITY OF LIFE.
- ☐ PROMOTE THE USE OF EXISTING PUBLIC LANDS ALONG THE SHORELINE FOR PARKS AND RECREATIONAL USE.

## COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Although this Coastal Management Plan states specific land use development policies and proposes specific land use arrangements, it has no regulatory power. It is prepared as a foundation for, and depends primarily on, the Covert Township Zoning Ordinance for its implementation. Just as the Master Plan is the policy guide for land use, zoning is the principal legal enforcement tool. The implementation of the Plan itself will depend upon the existence of supporting community services and activities. The following activities will be of primary importance in realizing the Plan's goals and objectives:

- ☐ PROVIDING APPROPRIATE UPDATES TO THE COVERT TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE
- ☐ IMPROVING CIRCULATION SYSTEMS AND DESIGN OF PRIVATE ROADS
- ☐ ACTIVELY PURSUING IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES
- ☐ UPHOLDING THE POLICIES AND LAND USE PRACTICES OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



Covert Township may use different methods and processes to accomplish Plan objectives, but the overall purpose of the Plan is to have a common means of reaching the shared development vision and objectives represented in this Plan. Covert Township has committed to, and will work towards, achieving these objectives.

## STATE AUTHORIZATION FOR THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the State of Michigan, Township Master Plans are authorized by the Michigan Township Planning Act (168 of 1959, as amended). This Act describes the basic purposes and requirements of a Master Plan, including the need to:



- ☐ PROMOTE THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND GENERAL WELFARE;
- ☐ ENCOURAGE THE USE OF RESOURCES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR CHARACTER AND ADAPTABILITY;
- ☐ AVOID THE OVERCROWDING OF LAND BY BUILDINGS OR PEOPLE;
- ☐ LESSEN CONGESTION ON PUBLIC ROADS AND STREETS;
- ☐ FACILITATE PROVISIONS FOR A SYSTEM OF TRANSPORTATION, SEWAGE DISPOSAL, SAFE AND ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY, RECREATION AND OTHER PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS;
- ☐ CONSIDER THE CHARACTER OF EACH TOWNSHIP AND ITS SUITABILITY FOR PARTICULAR USES JUDGED IN TERMS OF SUCH FACTORS AS THE TREND IN LAND AND POPULATION DEVELOPMENT.

The dedication of community leaders and the desire of Covert Township officials to preserve the quality of life for residents in the Coastal Management Area was achieved by demonstrating the principles of the above planning process.



## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN AND THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The relationship of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood. Stated concisely, the Master Plan is to be used by Covert Township officials as a guide for future land use decisions; the Covert Township Zoning Ordinance regulates the use of land in the present. The Plan is not a binding, legal document; the Zoning Ordinance is a law that must be followed by the Township and its residents.

## A LAWFUL ZONING ORDINANCE NEEDS A COASTAL MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN

In order for a community to have a legally defensible Zoning Ordinance, the Master Plan is needed to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare; to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability; and to limit the improper use of land... to name only a few reasons prescribed by the Township Zoning Act.

THE MASTER PLAN CAN BE USED  
IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, BUT  
ABOVE ALL IT SHOULD BE  
CONSULTED WHENEVER LAND USE  
DECISIONS ARE TO BE MADE.

Use of this Plan ensures that the Township's desires regarding future development are translated into action; one rezoning, site plan review, special land use approval, and variance at a time. It is those every day decisions, added together, that create the future land use pattern for Covert Township.

## ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT TO USE THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN

The Coastal Management Plan is intended to assist other government agencies that work with Covert Township officials. The planning and development programs of other agencies involved in future land use decisions, such as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Transportation, Van Buren County Road Commission, Van Buren County Public Works Department, and adjacent communities, can help in the implementation of the Master Plan.



## HOW TO USE THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

USE OF THE PLAN DEPENDS ON YOUR INTEREST IN THE FUTURE OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA, BUT GENERALLY, HERE IS THE PROCEDURE THAT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED.

### STEP 1 DETERMINE WHAT LAND USE IS PROPOSED FOR A PROPERTY, OR THE AREA SURROUNDING YOUR PROPERTY.

YOU WILL FIND THIS INFORMATION ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP. THIS MAP IS DIVIDED INTO SEPARATE LAND USE CATEGORIES. FIND THE CATEGORY OF LAND USE IN WHICH YOUR PROPERTY IS LOCATED.

### STEP 2 DETERMINE HOW THE PLANNING COMMISSION VIEWS DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR AREA.

THE TEXT OF THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN WILL INDICATE TO YOU THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN YOUR AREA; IT MAY BE FAIRLY SPECIFIC, OR IT MAY BE SOMEWHAT GENERAL. THE FUTURE LAND USE TEXT IS MEANT TO PROVIDE A GENERAL DIRECTION TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION AS TO DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP.

### STEP 3 DETERMINE THE MEANING OF THE LAND USE DESIGNATION FOR YOUR PROPERTY.

IN STEP 1 YOU WERE ASKED TO DETERMINE THE LAND USE CATEGORY INTO WHICH YOUR PROPERTY IS DESIGNATED. FIND THE FUTURE LAND USE DESCRIPTION THAT APPLIES TO YOU (THE CATEGORY IN WHICH YOUR PROPERTY IS CLASSIFIED ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP) AND READ THE DISCUSSION ON THE MEANING OF EACH LAND USE DESIGNATION.

DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN, THIS MAY BE AS FAR AS YOU CARRY YOUR INITIAL INVESTIGATION. IF YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL WHICH DOES NOT FIT THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN, YOU MAY WANT TO INVESTIGATE THE PLAN IN MORE DETAIL, BEGINNING WITH THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER 7.

### STEP 4 DETERMINE HOW THE PLAN AFFECTS YOUR PROPERTY.

THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION WILL INDICATE HOW YOUR PROPERTY IS PLANNED (LONG TERM) FOR IN THE FUTURE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU CANNOT CONTINUE THE USE THAT YOU CURRENTLY HAVE. LAND USE WITHIN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA IS PRIMARILY AFFECTED BY THE ZONING DISTRICT FOR YOUR PROPERTY.



## KEEPING THE PLAN CURRENT

The Planning Commission should conduct an annual review of the Coastal Management Plan to ensure that it is kept current. Any amendments to the Plan can be done at that time to make it consistent with changing community philosophies and needs.

Amendments to the Township Planning Act now require communities to undertake a comprehensive review of their plans every 5 years. If the annual review takes place as described above, the comprehensive review should be relatively easy to complete.



## CHAPTER TWO COMMUNITY PROFILE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

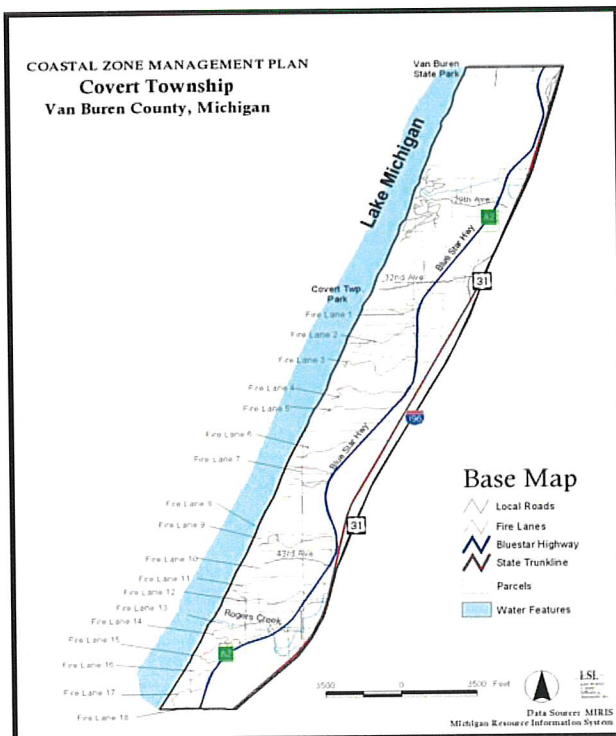
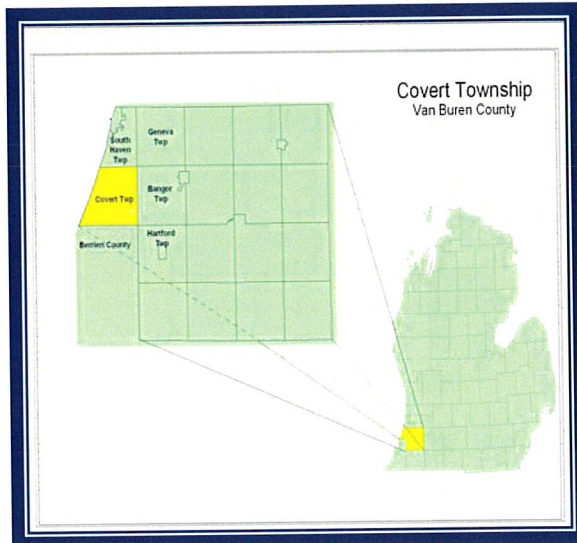


### SPATIAL LOCATION

Covert Township is located in Van Buren County along the shores of Lake Michigan in southwest Michigan, 36 miles north of the State of Indiana border. The nearest Michigan metropolitan communities are as shown below.

#### DISTANCE FROM COVERT TOWNSHIP

SOUTH HAVEN	10 MILES
BENTON HARBOR/ST. JOSEPH	20 MILES
KALAMAZOO	37 MILES
HOLLAND	40 MILES



### COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA BOUNDARIES

The boundary lines of the Coastal Management Area are easy to denote by two major landmark features, Lake Michigan and I-196. The Coastal Area is located along the entire western portion of Covert Township in Van Buren County. The western boundary line is the shoreline of Lake Michigan. The Coastal Management Area extends east from the shoreline ending at I-196. The boundaries of the Coastal Management Area are shown in the adjacent map.



## EXISTING LAND USE

An existing land use inventory is a necessary first step in planning the future of the Coastal Management Area. The collection and analysis of existing land use and natural features information represents one of the most important steps in the development process of the Coastal Management Plan.

THE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LAND USE AND NATURAL FEATURES INFORMATION REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The analysis of this information not only identifies what and where particular uses exist, but also provides insight as to where future development might occur, as well as where conflicts may exist or develop. Land use conflicts can occur when incompatible uses are allowed to develop adjacent to one another, such as a manufacturing plant next to a residential neighborhood, which can have various negative short and long-term impacts on a community.

The existing land use patterns and growth trends are analyzed as part of the process to identify potential or existing conflicts. This process not only provides the basic framework upon which all future land uses proposals will be developed, but will also provides a framework for future land use and development decisions.

## METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this Coastal Management Plan, a collection of 2003 land use and land cover data was obtained from a visual field survey conducted throughout the Coastal area. This information was compiled and analyzed in order to give an account of land use and development patterns in the Coastal area today.

The Existing Land Use Map presents a generalized picture of existing land use and development patterns in the Coastal area. The existing land use classifications and their definitions are listed and explained in more detail on the following pages.



## EXISTING LAND USE CLASSIFICATION BREAKDOWN

LAND USE CATEGORY	ACREAGE	% OF AREA
SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL	2,418	70%
INDUSTRIAL	428	12%
EXTRACTIVE	201	6%
PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC AREAS	400	12%
TOTAL ACRES	3,449	100%

SOURCE: 2003 FIELD STUDY, LSL PLANNING

## LAND USE CATEGORIES

As part of the planning process, it is essential to define the existing land uses within the Coastal Management Area. A clarification on individual areas is crucial in understanding the character of the area.

### SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL

A Shoreline Residential area is defined as any dwellings and their accessory buildings which occupy the major portion of the private land holding.

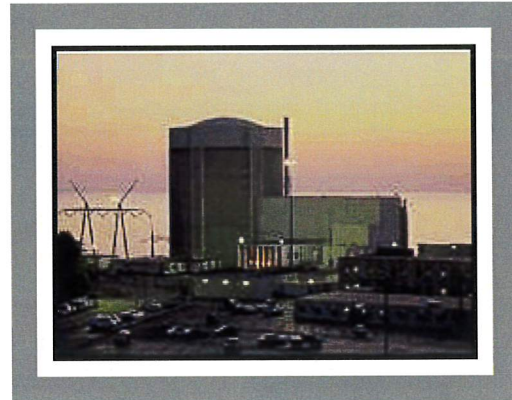
The Shoreline Residential category also includes areas that are currently open spaces/ forested land, which can be covered with deciduous and coniferous species of trees or shrubs. Lands in this category consist of both suitable and unsuitable areas for development.





## INDUSTRIAL

Industrial areas are places where raw or unfinished materials or commodities are used to produce a product or service. There is one major industrial use in the Coastal area that fits this description. Palisades Nuclear Plant is located along Blue Star Highway in the northwest corner of the Coastal Management area. The plant property is over 400 acres and comprises 12% of the of the shoreline area.



## EXCAVATION



Excavation is specified as areas used for the purposes of cutting, digging, or scooping materials from the ground. Techni Sand is a sand extraction operation located off Blue Star Highway in the southeast portion of the Coastal Management area. This operation consists of 201 acres and makes up 6% of the Coastal Area.

## PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC

Public/Quasi- Public areas in the Coastal area represent 12% of the existing land use. These areas can be any facility used by Covert Township, Van Buren County, or any State of Michigan agency to meet the needs of the community. The areas denoted on the existing land use map as public/quasi- public include land conservancy organizations, state and local parks, and related activities.





## NEW CONSTRUCTION IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA

BUILDING PERMITS	
YEAR OF BUILDING IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA	NUMBER OF PERMITS ISSUED
1993	0
1994	3
1995	2
1996	1
1997	2
1998	2
1999	2
2000	2
2001	2
2002	4
TOTAL	20

SOURCE: 2003 COVERT TOWNSHIP

The above table represents newly constructed residences between the years 1993-2003. As the table shows, the number of building permits issued for new shoreline residential construction in the Coastal Management area has been relatively low over the past nine years, partly due to the fact that there are few residential lots along the lakeshore which are not occupied or taken up by other uses, or are available for sale.

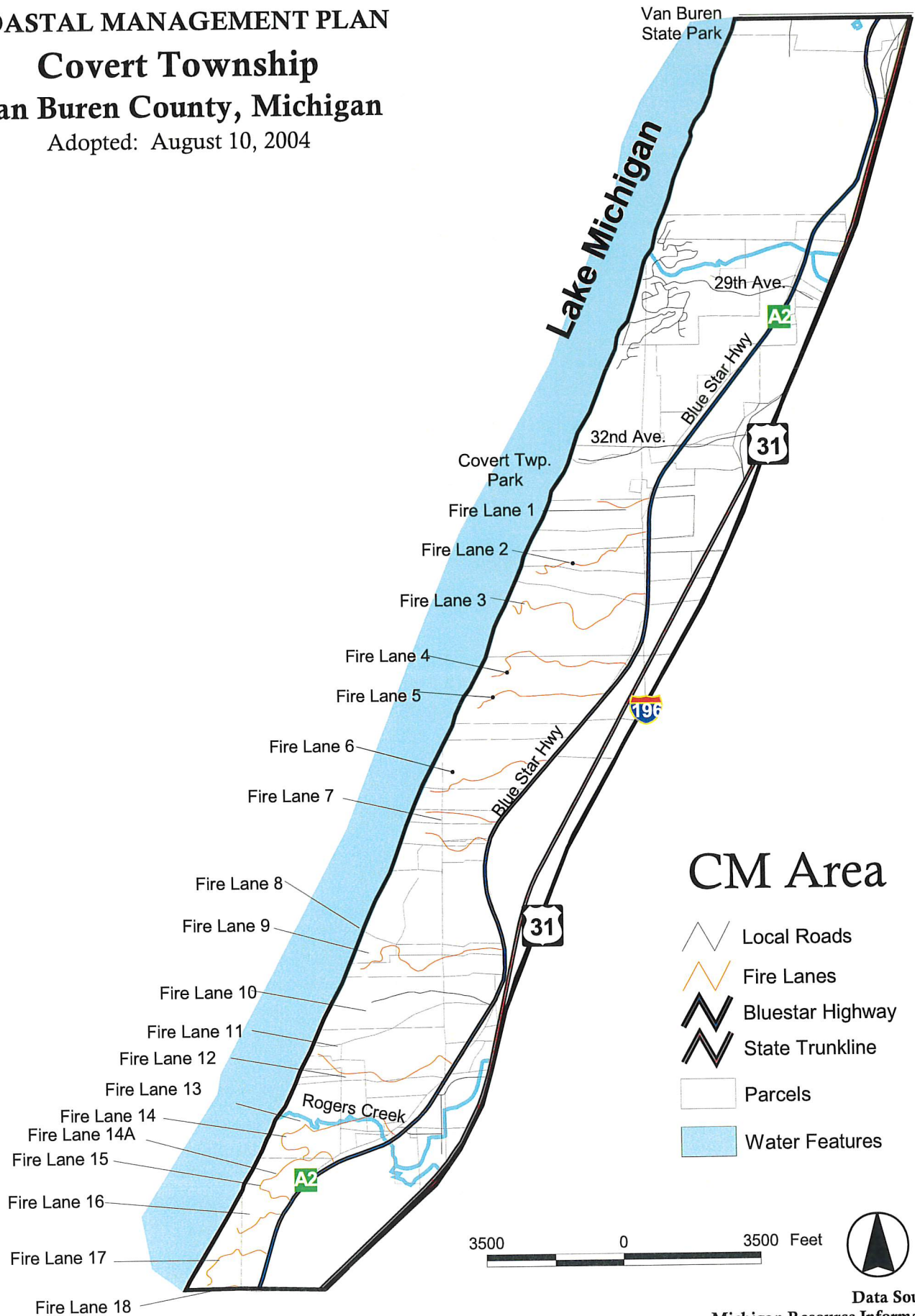


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



LSL  
LANGFORTH  
STRIDER  
LEBLANC &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System

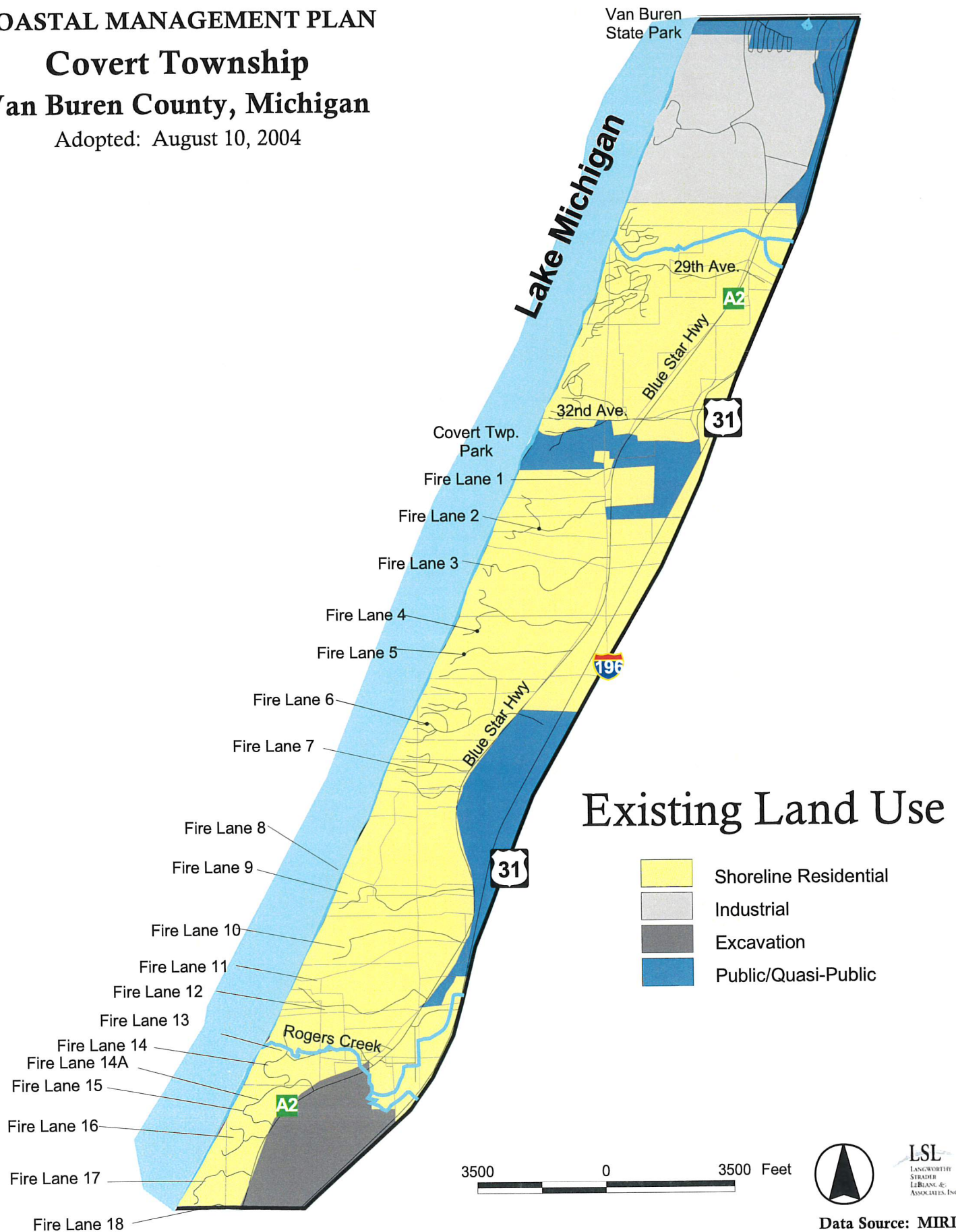


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004





## CHAPTER THREE TRANSPORTATION COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



### TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

The quality of life for residents within the Coastal Management Area is partially dependent upon the transportation system. Roads have two basic roles in the transportation system: providing a way for efficient movement of traffic area and providing access to abutting land uses. To help manage the road network, a functional classification or hierarchy of roads is created as needed. The National Functional Classification (NFC) is a planning tool which federal, state, and local transportation agencies have used since the late 1960s to help organize this hierarchy. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed this system of classifying all streets, roads, and highways according to their function.

### EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA



The current roadways within the Coastal Area are intended to move traffic and provide access to adjacent property. Most of the existing roads serve both of these purposes to a varying degree.



## PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL

Principal Arterials generally serve long distance, through-travel movement. I-196 is the primary arterial that traverses north to south within the Coastal Area. Access to the I-196 freeway interchange is found at 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (County Road 378). The freeway provides an efficient route to the major cities surrounding Covert Township. Northern destinations include the cities of South Haven, Holland, and Grand Haven. Southern destinations include the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph.

PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL	TOTAL MILES IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA
I-196 GERALD FORD FREEWAY	6 MILES

## STATE ROUTES

This category includes major roadways under the State of Michigan jurisdiction, serving trips between communities and other major activity centers throughout the region. Roadways of this type are designed to provide the highest level of traffic mobility, usually traveling at speeds of 55 miles per hour (non-interstate). Blue Star Highway is the primary road used daily by the residents of the shoreline, providing access to I-96 and the nearby cities of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Saugatuck, and Holland.

STATE ROUTES TRUNK LINES	TOTAL MILES IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA
BLUE STAR HIGHWAY (A2)	6 MILES



## COUNTY PRIMARY ROADS

County Primary roads are those which serve longer trips, sometimes extending beyond municipal boundaries to connect to adjacent population centers or longer arterials. County Primaries are designed for moderate to large traffic volumes and speeds of 35 to 55 mph. County Primary roads contained within the Coastal Management Area are C-376, C-378, and C-703. These roads provide access for residents of the coastal area to the I-196 freeway interchange and is a major route running through Covert Township east to west.



## FIRE LANES /PRIVATE STREETS

Along the shoreline in Covert Township, there are 19 established fire lanes which are private roads that lead to the shore of Lake Michigan. Along these narrow fire lanes are several shoreline residential dwellings. The graph below details the approximate number of existing shoreline residences along fire lanes (1-19) in Covert Township.

FIRE LANE #	NUMBER OF SHORELINE RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #1	2 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #2	2 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #3	4 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #4	3 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #5	1 RESIDENCE
FIRE LANE #6	1 RESIDENCE
FIRE LANE #7	5 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #8	2 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #9	27 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #10	4 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #11	4 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #12	2 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #13	15 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #14	16 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #14A	3 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #15	2 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #16	7 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #17	11 RESIDENCES
FIRE LANE #18	3 RESIDENCES
19 TOTAL FIRE LANES	114 EXISTING FIRE-LANE RESIDENCES
SOURCE:: 2003 LAND USE SURVEY, LSL PLANNING	



## HISTORY OF FIRE LANES

The 19 fire lanes in the shoreline area were created during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These narrow fire lanes were constructed in the midst of beautiful coastal woodlands and provide a scenic drive leading towards Lake Michigan. Over the past several decades however, the value and number of lakeshore residential properties on Lake Michigan has greatly increased. Many residents along these fire lanes realize the degrading impacts that new residential development can impose and have taken measures to ensure the protection of wooded lands adjacent to the fire lanes.

## FUTURE FIRE LANE DESIGN

The future design of any newly created fire lane needs to provide access and personal security to shoreline residences. Currently, there is a total of 114 existing homes on 19 fire lanes. With more shoreline residences being occupied year-round, there is a need to provide safe and efficient access routes to shoreline residences on any newly created fire lanes.

Adequate steps should be taken to require improved private road design standards for new development in order to avoid potential fire and safety issues for residents and their homes. A cooperative effort between governmental agencies should adopt acceptable private road width and turning radius requirements based on the number of homes per fire lane.



## CHAPTER FOUR

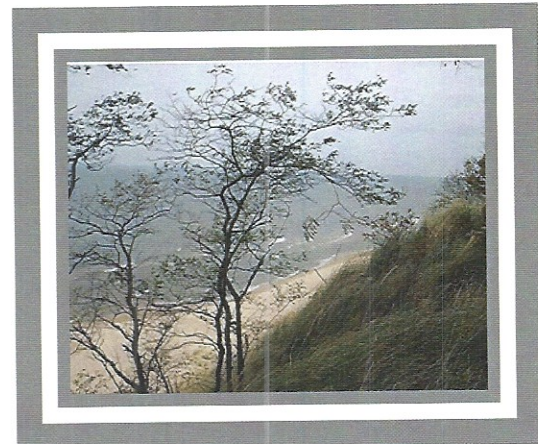
# SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES

### COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN VISION



## SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES

Nearly every property in the entire Coastal Area in Covert Township, from Blue Star Highway to the sand dunes, is occupied by single family homes overlooking scenic sand bluffs and Lake Michigan. Not unlike many communities along Lake Michigan, the shoreline in Covert Township is exposed to high winds and water erosion caused by frequent storms and fluctuating lake levels producing consequent wave action. These natural processes can have detrimental effects on the stability of the dune and the lakefront residential homes that reside within the dune system.



### STATE OF MICHIGAN



**REGULATORY ACTS IN MICHIGAN -ENACTED FOR THE PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES.**

#### CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

THE SAND DUNE REGULATIONS ARE FOUND UNDER PART 353, SAND DUNE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT, OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1994 PA 451 AS AMENDED.

#### HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS

REGULATION OF HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS ARE FOUND UNDER PART 323, SHORELANDS PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT, OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1994 PA 451 AS AMENDED.

## REGULATION OF SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES

Through the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), PA 451 of 1994, policy was enacted to protect the environment and natural resources of the state. NREPA consolidated and classified laws related to the environment and natural resources, and provided the legal authority to state agencies and local government bodies for its implementation and administration. There are two specific parts of Michigan's NREPA that provide regulations for Covert's Coastal Areas, Part 323, Shorelands Protection and Management, and Part 353, Sand Dune Protection and Management.



## PURPOSE OF REGULATION

Michigan has approximately 300 miles of Great Lakes shoreline that is classified as high risk erosion area. The Shorelands Protection and Management provisions are designed to promote setbacks for construction projects that are a safe distance from the eroding shoreline in order to prolong the life of the structure. These areas, called High Risk Erosion Areas, are currently under the regulatory authority of the Department of Environmental Quality for the Covert Township area. Covert Township utilizes Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality to administer the Shorelands Protection and Management provisions.

The Shorelands Protection and Management provisions in NREPA is the key state statute providing consumer protection from the natural hazards of coastal erosion and flooding as well as environmental protection of the fragile coastal areas. High Risk Erosion Areas are regulated under this provision in order to reduce the amount of physical and economic damage caused by inappropriate development. Although erosion is a natural process, many high risk erosion areas suffer accelerated loss through poor land use decisions associated with residential developments trying to locate as close as possible to available water bodies.

Also under NREPA are provisions for Sand Dune Protection and Management, which designate Critical Dune Areas throughout the state and regulate activities within those designated areas. Of the nearly 250,000 acres of dunes along Michigan's coast, approximately 70,000 acres are designated as Critical Dune Areas subject to state regulation.

Sand dunes are prone to movement because of their unstable sand structures, creating natural hazards for building and construction, and in areas where critical slope are located, uses are regulated to recognize the fragile nature of these sites. Through the Sand Dune Protection and Management provisions, uses requiring a permit in identified CDA areas include development, silviculture, and recreational activities. By requiring a permitting process, minimal alterations to the natural contour changes can be achieved while protecting valuable natural resources.

### Types of Sand Dunes

While sand dunes are created through sand, wind and water action, there are different types of dune systems that are unique due to their proximity to water. The characteristic zones for dunes found on the west side of Michigan, where a majority of Michigan's critical dunes are located, are beach foredune, interdunal wetlands and the backdune. Because of the influence of the water actions, the beach and foredune zones are ever-changing, and where development is particularly damaging, requiring additional regulatory oversight.



## WHAT IS A CRITICAL DUNE AREA?

Critical dune areas represent some of the most spectacular dunes extending along much of Lake Michigan's shoreline and the shores of Lake Superior, totaling about 70,000 acres in size. Many of these critical dune areas have "high profile" locations, and other areas designated as critical dunes include forested dunes.

### IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

Lining the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, freshwater sand dunes are considered to be one of Michigan's most defining natural features. The Great Lakes Dunes comprise a rare set of extensive freshwater dunes. Serving as natural barriers to Great Lake storm surges, these sand dunes also are home to unique and rare ecological habitat and federally threatened and endangered plants, birds and insect species.



#### SAND DUNE PROTECTION ACT

**THE SAND DUNE PROTECTION ACT OF 1976, STRENGTHENED IN 1989, PROTECTS IDENTIFIED CRITICAL DUNE AREAS WITHIN 2 MILES OF THE GREAT LAKES, MUCH FARTHER THAN THE 1,000 FEET JURISDICTION PROVIDED BY THE SHORELANDS PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT ACT (SPMA) FOR HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS.**

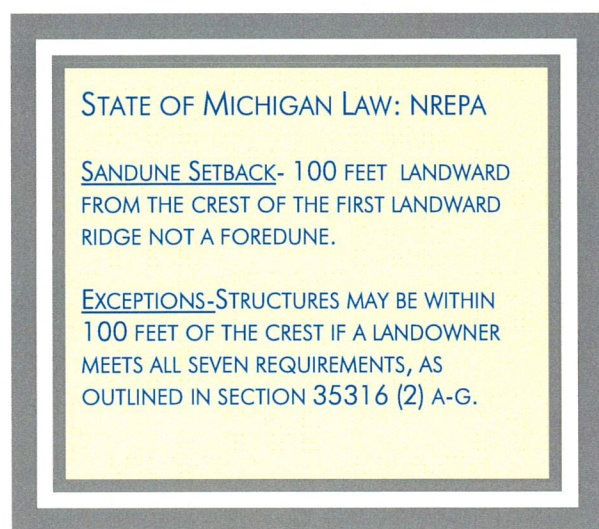
### PURPOSE OF SETBACK LAWS FOR CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

Setback laws for Michigan's Critical Dune Areas were enacted to recognize critical dune areas as unique, irreplaceable, and fragile resource that provide numerous significant benefits ranging from ecological to economic, scientific to educational for people of, and visitors to, this state.



And because Critical Dunes are of a significant slope, over 33 percent in most cases, specific regulations are necessary because of their highly erosive condition. Uses are prohibited on slopes measuring greater than 33 percent without a variance, and structures are prohibited on the first lakeward facing slope of a critical dune area. Environmental impact assessments are required for special use projects (subdivisions, site condominiums, etc.).

Implementation of these coastal laws in Michigan reduces the number and size of the new structures that can be built on the shoreline to assure that the protection of the environment and the ecology of the critical dune area is realized.



## DEVELOPMENT IN CRITICAL DUNE AREAS

The sand dune legislation imposed by the State of Michigan requires certain standards on construction and site design in critical dune areas. Site design and construction standards for sand dunes in Covert Township should be addressed and planned to prevent further deterioration of these fragile environments. In most cases, projects can be designed to conform to dune protection requirements. In Sensitive Shoreline Areas needing special attention, standards must be provided for vegetation, drainage, and erosion protection.



## STRENGTH OF REGULATIONS

The strength of the individual setback or coastal construction control laws vary considerably depending on setback distances, activities permitted, exceptions allowed, reconstruction provisions, and the level of government regulating development.

The provisions under Part 353, Sand Dunes Protection and Management, require permits for new construction, additions to existing structures, sand removal, driveways and parking areas, changes to any contour areas, removal of vegetation and any industrial or commercial projects. In most cases, projects that are designed with respect to the landscape and its areas of concern can meet the critical dune requirements.

However, depending on the degree of difficulty of conditions on the lot, and the location of the critical dune area, limitations on development can occur if there are no safe building sites located on that property.





#### WHAT IS COASTAL EROSION?

COASTAL EROSION IS LANDWARD DISPLACEMENT OF THE SHORELINE.

#### WHAT IS A HIGH RISK EROSION AREA?

AREAS CLASSIFIED AS HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS ARE THOSE SHORELANDS ALONG THE GREAT LAKES AND CONNECTING WATERS WHERE RECESSION OF THE ZONE OF ACTIVE EROSION HAS BEEN OCCURRING AT A LONG-TERM AVERAGE RATE OF ONE FOOT OR MORE PER YEAR. – MDEQ

### STATE OF MICHIGAN SETBACKS AND STANDARDS FOR SURROUNDING COASTAL AREAS

The regulation of the areas surrounding critical dunes may extend inland 250 feet from the landward boundary of the critical dune area if the lands are determined to be essential to the hydrology, ecology, topography, or integrity of a critical dune area.

Any dune area that is not regulated under the cda, and is not within the jurisdiction of a local shoreline protection ordinance, is not protected from increasing development pressure and poor land use decisions.

#### WHAT CAUSES SHORELINE EROSION?

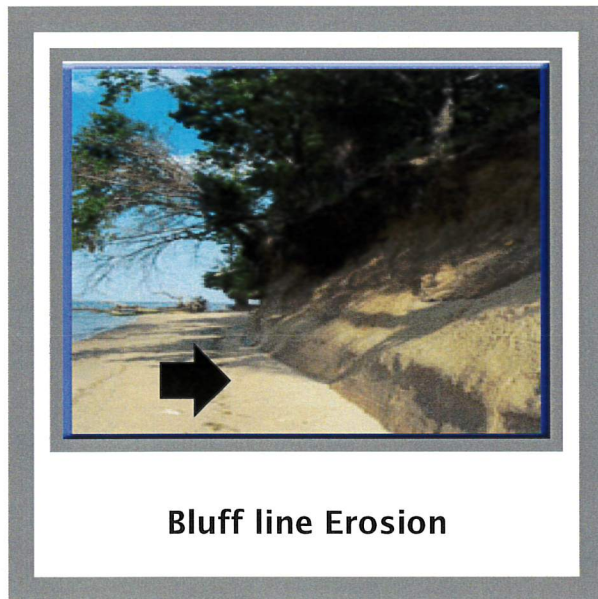


Typically, coastal erosion is accelerated by severe storm events, fluctuating water levels, high winds, and frost. Some types of development influence erosion as well, including ground water seepage and surface water runoff.

Shoreline residences are highly susceptible to structural damage due to the erosion process. Erosion over a period of years can and will result in the serious financial loss to the community at large and private property owners.



## HOW OFTEN ARE HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS MEASURED?



Under Michigan law, the Department of Environmental Quality is required to conduct erosion studies to document the long-term rate of shoreline movement. The first determination of High Risk Erosion areas in the State of Michigan was done by the MDEQ on a county-by-county basis in 1986. Since 1986, the research on coastal erosion patterns is assessed on a county-by-county basis, approximately every ten years.

Once the data is compiled on a county-by-county basis, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality establishes the future development setbacks in these sensitive areas under State requirements.

## What Determines an Area to be a High Risk Erosion Area?

The determining factor on whether a shoreline area is 'High Risk' is the rate at which erosion is occurring. Shoreline areas that are eroding greater than one foot per year for fifteen years are classified as High Risk Erosion Areas. These high risk erosion areas can be extended inland from the Ordinary High Water Mark as far as 1,000. The MDEQ calculates recession rates and subsequently establishes required setback distances measured from the erosion hazard line to protect new structures from erosion for a period of 30 to 60 years, depending on size, number of living units and type of construction. The erosion hazard line is typically the line of stable vegetation. Setback distances are not measured from the present day water's edge. New structures must be located landward of the required setback distance.



## REPAIRING DAMAGED STRUCTURES IN SENSITIVE SHORELINE AREAS

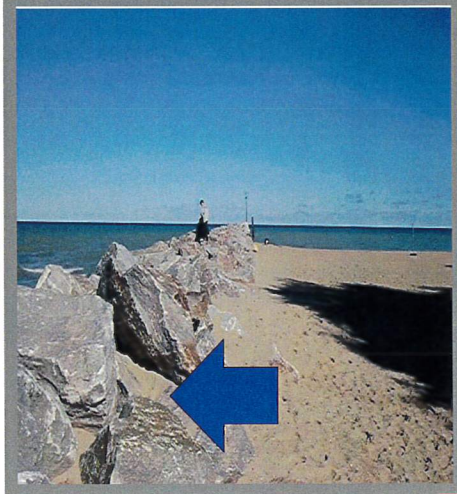
Setback requirements are applicable for home restoration projects and additions to existing structures. Any person, business or local government agency proposing to erect, install, move or enlarge a permanent structure on a parcel must obtain a permit prior to the commencement of construction. Existing structures lakeward of the setback line cannot be moved more lakeward and any addition must be located landward of the setback line.

Additions to existing structures can sometimes be permitted lakeward of the required setback distance provided that meet the required provisions outlined within the High Risk Erosion language as found in R.281.22 (13) or (14) .

If a nonconforming structure deteriorates or becomes damaged, it may be restored to its condition before the deterioration or damage if the repair cost is not more than 60% of the replacement value. If the cost of the repair is more than 60%, but less than 100% of its replacement value, it may be reconstructed if the permanent structure was damaged by a force other than erosion, if rebuilt in its existing location, and be not less than 20 feet landward of the erosion hazard line and if the reconstructed building would be a readily moveable structure.

If a building is 100% destroyed or declared a total loss for insurance purposes, the requirements for new permanent structures are applied.

For structures in immediate danger of erosion with an access route too narrow or steep to relocate the structure, shoreline stabilization permits may be granted but only after all other reasonable options are exhausted and sewer and engineering requirements are met.



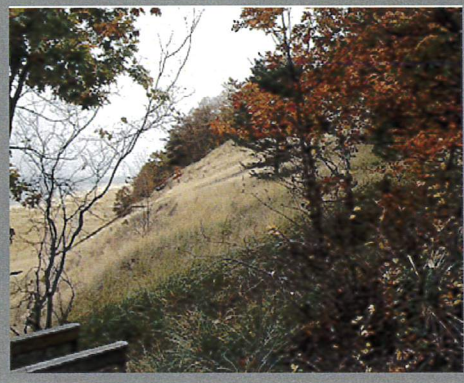
**Shoreline Stabilization**



## SHORELINE STABILIZATION STRUCTURES

The primary purpose of shoreline stabilization structures is to protect upland structures affected by coastal erosion. Attempts to prevent coastal erosion are rarely effective long-term solutions to beachfront erosion. Many attempts to protect residential properties from natural coastal erosion may actually create severe erosion problems on adjacent properties. Boulders and sea walls are popular options for landowners, however, the best way to work with a natural system such as coastal erosion is to follow proper building setbacks and allow the natural system of the dunes to handle the wave and wind action.

Typically, most types of shoreline stabilization structures impede natural sand migration and fluctuating water levels cause additional erosion resulting in an increased loss of natural beach. In the State of Michigan, shoreline stabilization structures typically require a permit. To relax the required setbacks, the structures must be designed to meet and/or exceed a 20 year storm event for small structures and a 50 year storm event for large structures, as well as additional conditions. Also, shoreline stabilization structures must be at least 30 feet from the proposed building. Limitations are placed on the use of shoreline stabilization in favor of non-permanent structures.



STEEP TOPOGRAPHY ALONG  
SHORELINE IN COVERT TOWNSHIP



SCENIC BLUFF IN COASTAL  
MANAGEMENT AREA



## TOPOGRAPHY

Changes in topography are not always readily identified as a natural resource. Steep slopes and rolling hillsides-unlike other resources such as groundwater-do not have clearly defined public benefits. If disturbed, these natural systems can rarely be restored. Topography exists in a balance with vegetation, precipitation, and wind.

A permit is required from the State of Michigan when proposing any changes or use to areas of steep topography in critical dune areas. Any development, tree clearing, and/or recreational land use activity has the potential to create contour changes. As regulated by the State of Michigan, building is not allowed on slopes between 25-33% without a registered plan and for slopes greater than 33% without approval of a special exception.

## FLOODPLAINS

Construction and fill may be permitted in the portions of the floodplain that are not in the floodway, if local ordinance and building standards are met, and compensating excavation is provided equal to the volume of fill placed in the floodplain. New residential construction is specifically prohibited in the floodway.

### WHAT IS A FLOODPLAIN?

A RIVER, STREAM, LAKE, OR DRAIN MAY, ON OCCASION OVERFLOW THEIR BANKS AND INUNDATE ADJACENT LAND AREAS. THE LAND INUNDATED BY WATER IS DEFINED AS A FLOODPLAIN.

IN MICHIGAN, AND NATIONALLY, THE TERM 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN HAS COME TO MEAN THE LAND AREA THAT MAY BE INUNDATED BY THE OVERFLOW OF WATER RESULTING FROM A 100-YEAR FLOOD (A FLOOD WHICH HAS A 1% CHANCE OF OCCURRING IN ANY GIVEN YEAR). IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 6% OF MICHIGAN'S LAND IS FLOOD-PRONE.

-MDEQ



## STANDARDS FOR CONSTRUCTION

The minimum standard for residential construction within the 100-year floodplain requires that the lowest floor of a structure be located at least one-foot above the 100-year flood elevation. Some communities in Michigan have a higher standard relating to elevation requirements. A floor of a structure that is below grade on all sides is considered a basement and must be at or above the 100-year flood elevation.

## COASTAL WETLANDS

**WETLAND: LAND CHARACTERIZED BY THE PRESENCE OF WATER AT A FREQUENCY AND DURATION SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT, AND THAT UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES DOES SUPPORT, WETLAND VEGETATION OR AQUATIC LIFE AND IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS 'A BOG, SWAMP OR MARSH.' - PART 303 OF NREPA.**

There is an abundance of coastal wetlands in the Coastal Management Area. Most are contiguous to, or hydrologically connected to the Great Lakes, streams, or creeks. Wetlands are valuable in storing floodwaters, recharging groundwater, and removing sediment and other pollutants. The past practice of draining and filling wetlands to place homes closer to the Great Lakes created a serious threat to coastal wetlands, which are highly valuable to both humans and wildlife. Of the estimated 11 million acres of wetlands that stood in Michigan 150 years ago, only 3 million acres remain. Only 1/4 of the original 400,000 acres of coastal wetlands now line Michigan's shores.

### STATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

#### WETLANDS

PART 303, WETLANDS PROTECTION, OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1994 PA 451, AS AMENDED, REQUIRES PERMITS FOR CERTAIN ACTIVITIES IN REGULATED WETLANDS.



Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the NREPA, requires permits for certain activities in regulated wetlands. Specifically, a permit is required from the MDEQ to dredge or remove soil or minerals from a wetland; to deposit or place fill material in a wetland; to construct, operate, or maintain a use or development in a wetland; to construct, operate, or maintain a use or development in a wetland.



Section 30301 of Part 303 defines regulated wetlands as those contiguous to the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair, or any inland lake, pond, river, or stream; and as those noncontiguous wetlands larger than five acres in counties with population of 100,000 or more (Van Buren County does not qualify).

## WOODED AREAS

In the State of Michigan where regulations have been developed to protect other critical natural resources, woodlands have been relatively ignored despite their important public benefits as buffers and moderators of flooding, shoreline and soil erosion, noise, and air pollution. In addition, the scenic qualities of woodlands add greatly to the quality of life in Covert Township.



Woodlands provide a varied and rich environment supporting numerous plant and animal species. The different layers of tree tops, branches, trunks, shrubs, and plants on the forest floor provide breeding, feeding, and refuge habitat for a wide variety of insects, birds, and mammals. The environmental diversity of woodlands is important for wildlife conservation, general environmental health and recreation.

Forest vegetation moderates the effects of winds and storms, stabilizes and enriches the soil, and slows runoff from precipitation, thereby allowing it to be filtered by the forest floor as it soaks down into groundwater reserves. By decreasing runoff and increasing groundwater infiltration, woodlands help to moderate flooding. Woodlands can mitigate noises from Blue Star Highway along the shoreline in Covert Township.

Woodland are also moderators of climate extremes. Shading of the sun by the tree canopy and the transpiration of water from leaves moderates temperatures during the heat of the day. Forest temperatures are generally cooler in the day and warmer at night than the more widely fluctuating temperatures of unforested areas. Woodlands, therefore, act as natural air conditioners.

Areas where woodlands are expected to be affected by development should be protected during the construction period by providing tree protection standards within both site plan and subdivision plat reviews. Tree inventories should be conducted to identify woodland areas to be preserved prior to any changes made to individual sites. This will have a positive influence on both woodland and steep slope preservation by maintaining existing root structures on properties.





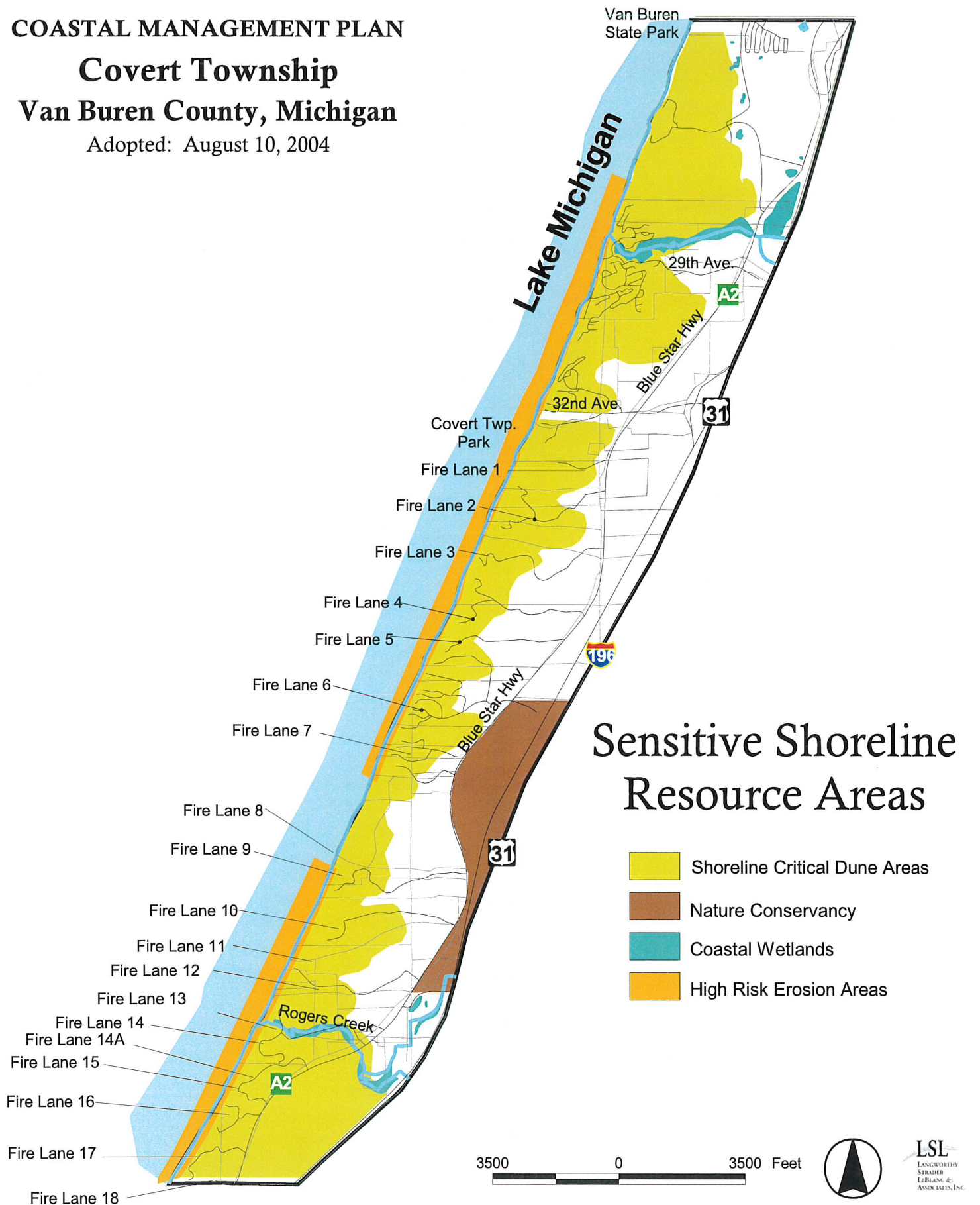


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System

LSL  
LANGWORTHY  
STRIDER  
LEBLANC &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

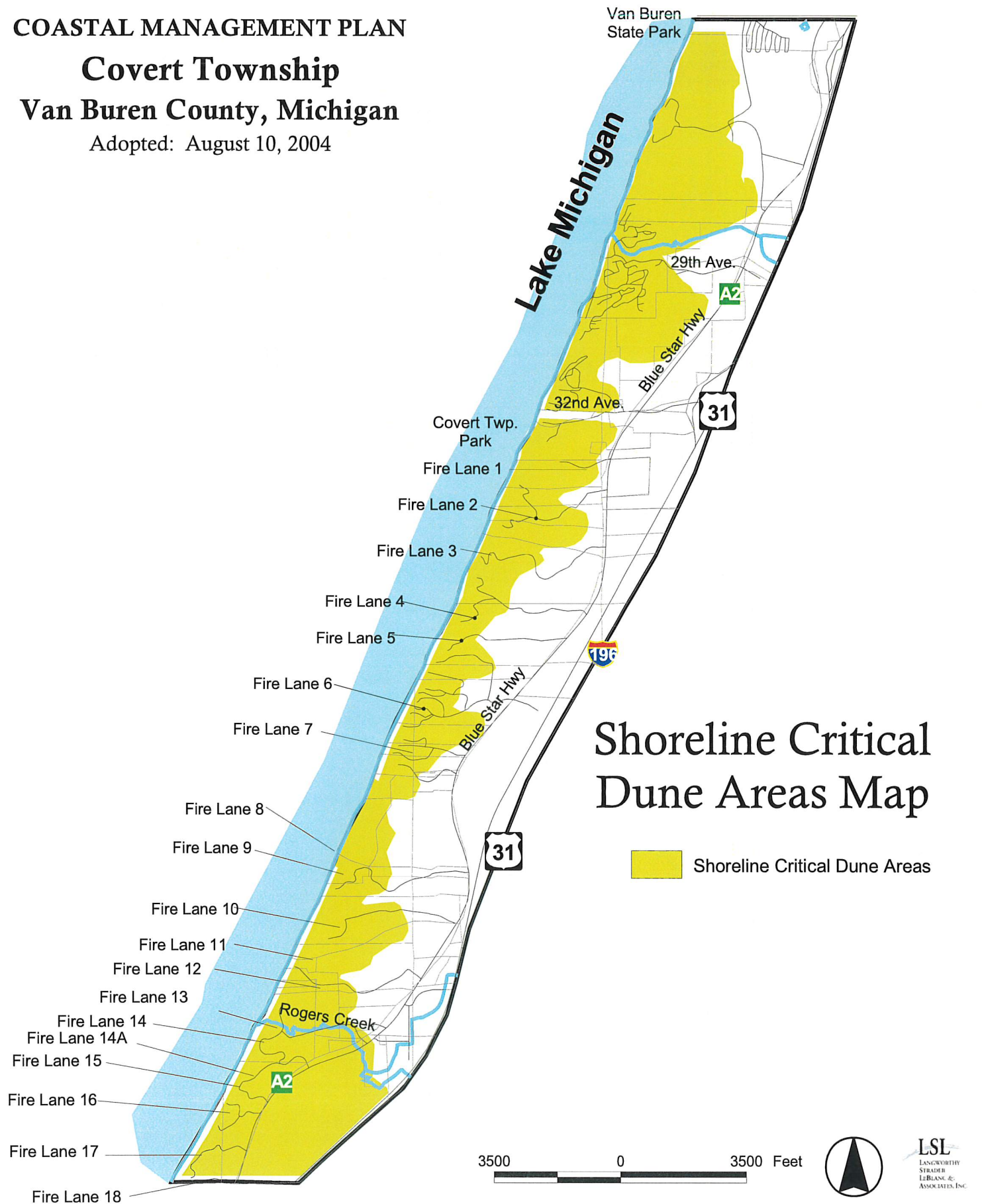


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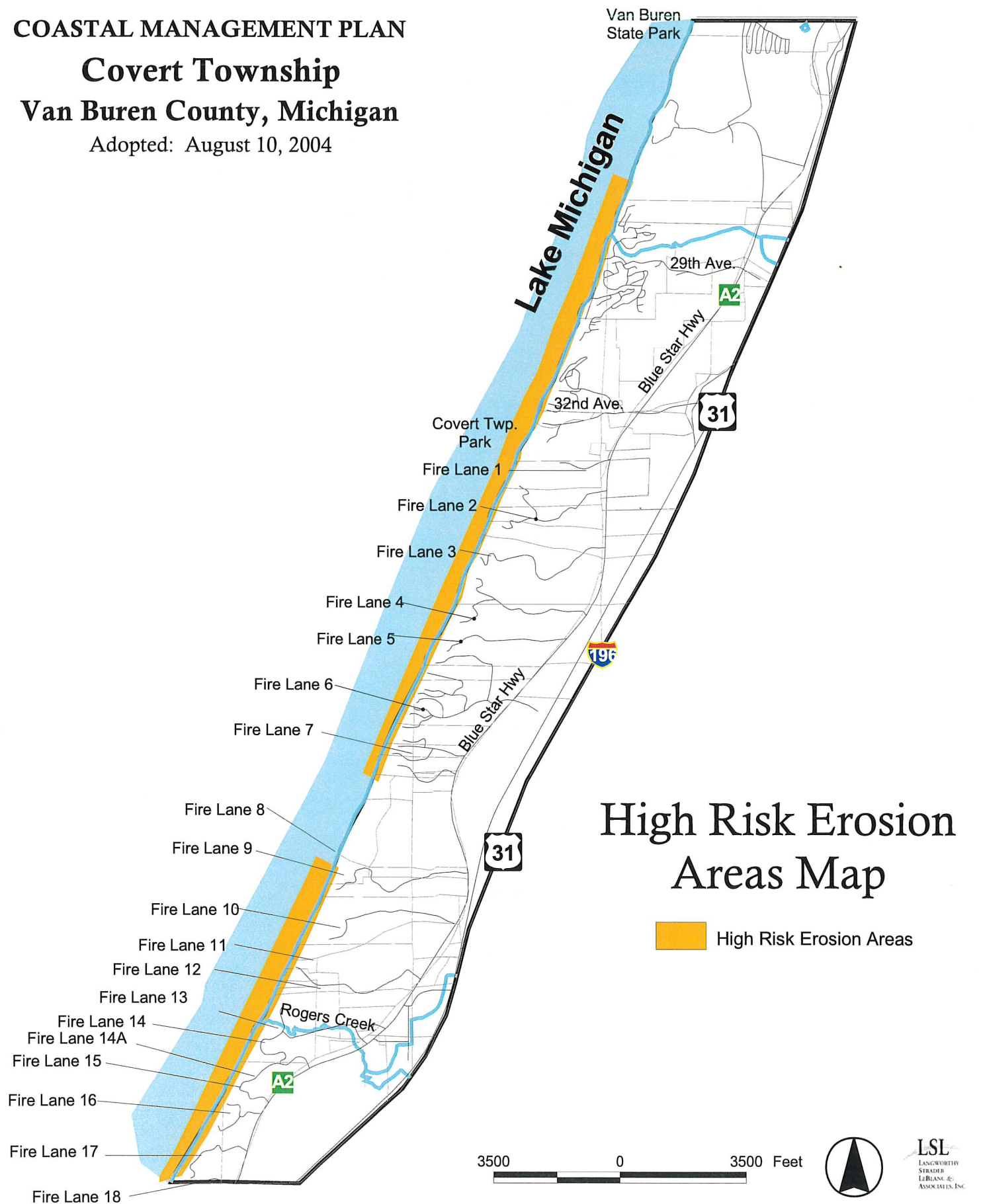


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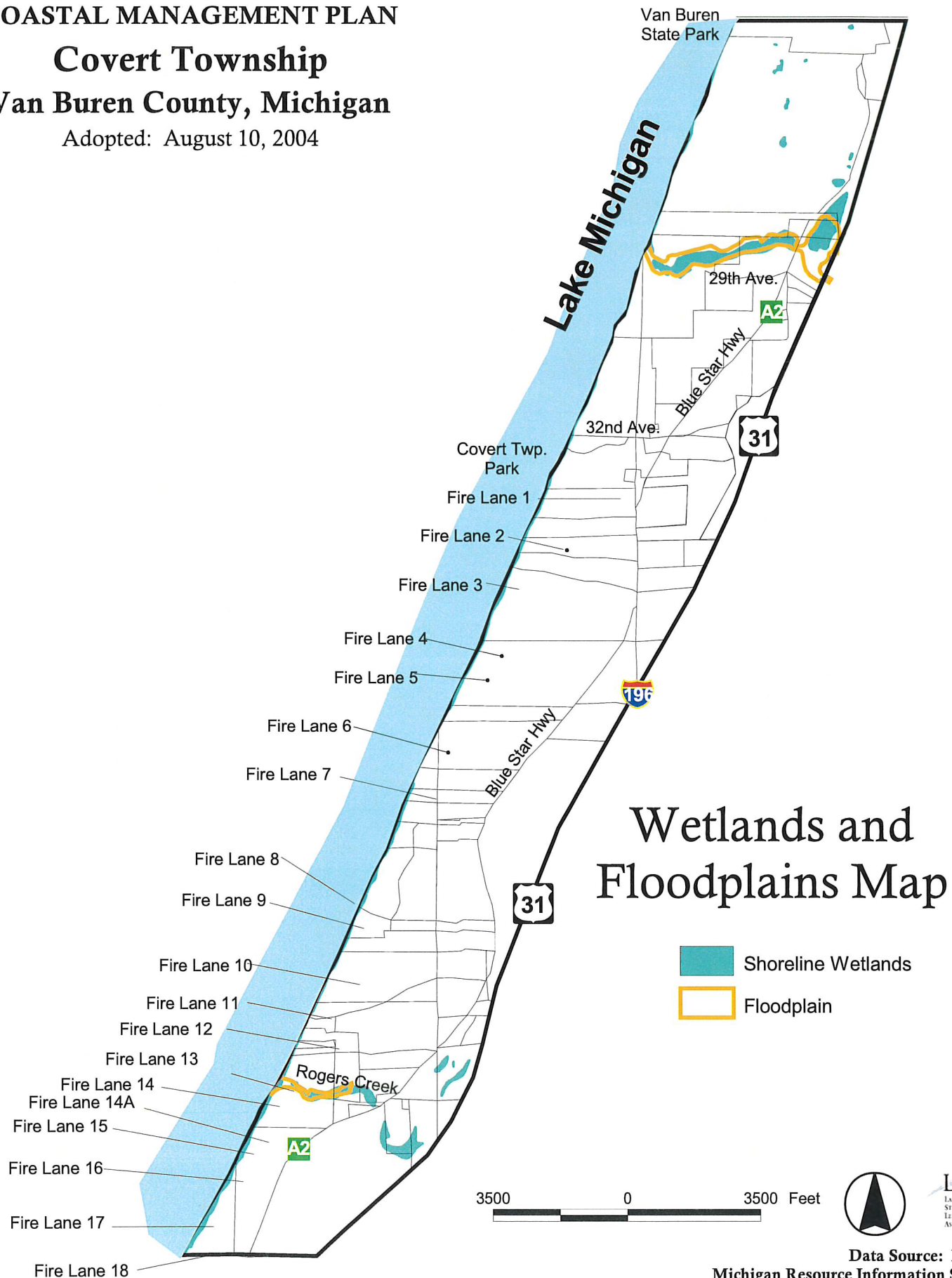


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## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

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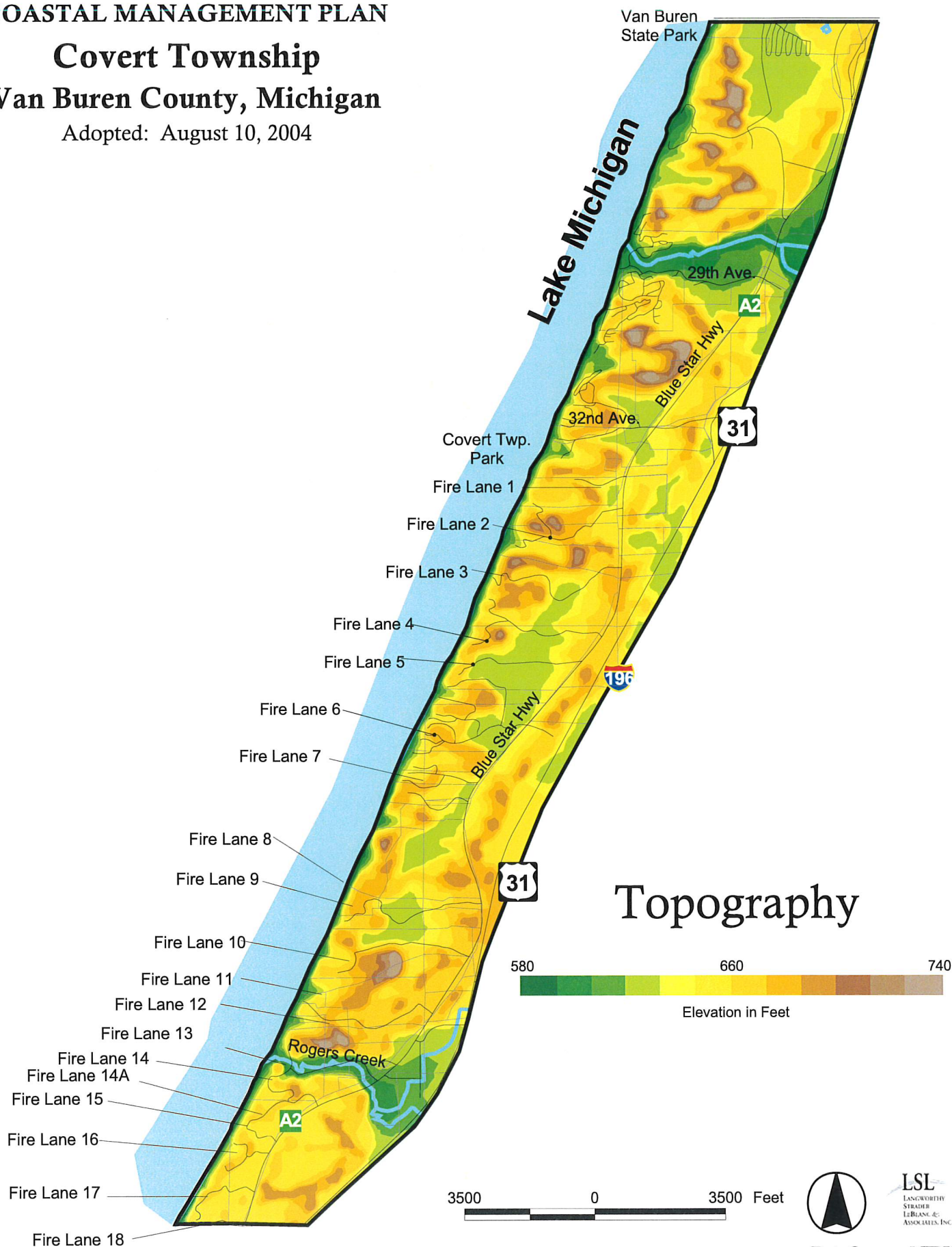


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System

LSL  
LANGFORTH  
STRADER  
LEBLANG &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.



# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004





## CHAPTER FIVE

### SHORELINE PUBLIC ACCESS

#### COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



## Recreation Inventory for Coastal Management Area

An inventory was made to evaluate existing park and recreational activities in the Coastal Area. The inventory provides a baseline evaluation of current recreational offerings, identifies deficiencies and under-served areas, and helps form the basis for future land use recommendations. A map of existing parks within the area is included at the end of this chapter.

### Existing Shoreline Public Access in Covert Township

Within the Coastal Area, land devoted to public access represents 3.2% of the area (112 acres). The two main locations where residents can retreat for recreational opportunities and public access to Lake Michigan are Van Buren State Park and Covert Township Park.



#### PROTECTING YOUR COMMUNITY'S GREATEST ASSET

FROM MICHIGAN LAND USE INSTITUTE

LAZY DAYS AT THE BEACH ARE A CENTRAL PART OF MICHIGAN'S SOUL. WITH MORE COASTLINE THAN ANY STATE BUT ALASKA, MICHIGAN IS A LAND OF PEOPLE WHO BUILD SAND CASTLES, WHO WATCH SUNSETS ON A REGULAR BASIS, AND WHO SAVOR MEMORIES OF WALKING THE WATER'S EDGE COLLECTING STONES OR SITTING BY A BONFIRE UNDER THE STARS.

BECAUSE THE SHORELINE DRAWS PEOPLE, HOWEVER, IT ALSO DRAWS BULLDOZERS, WHICH MAKE WAY FOR HOMES THAT OVERLOOK THE VAST INLAND SEAS THAT SURROUND THIS STATE. SOME OWNERS BUILD HOMES WITH RESPECT FOR THE QUIET, WILD, MAGICAL SHORELINE. TOO OFTEN, HOWEVER, THOSE WHO BUILD HOMES ON THE COASTS OF THE GREAT LAKES BRING THEIR FAMILIAR LANDSCAPES WITH THEM. THEY BUILD CONCRETE PATIOS ON TOP OF COASTAL MARSHES, CLEARCUT TREES FOR STRAIGHT-SHOT VIEWS, AND BLAST DRIVEWAYS THROUGH DUNES.

THIS KIND OF DEVELOPMENT HARMS THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, THE LOCAL ECONOMIES THAT RELY ON CLEAN WATER AND LAND, AND NEIGHBORING RESIDENTS WHO WANT A NATURAL SHORELINE. PROPERTY VALUES DECLINE AS BACKYARDS SPRAWL ONTO DUNES AND PORCH LIGHTS HIDE THE STARS. WILD ANIMALS THAT ONCE ROAMED COASTAL WOODLANDS AND WETLANDS RETREAT TO LESS DISTURBING PLACES. STORMWATER, WHICH RUSHES OFF NEW ROOFS AND DRIVEWAYS, ERODES BLUFFS AND CONTAMINATES THE WATER.



## Van Buren State Park

Van Buren State Park is located in the northern region of the Coastal Management Area. The Park is 3 miles south of South Haven on the dead end of Ruggles Road. Ruggles Road is accessed either by old Blue Star Highway (A2) or County Road 380. Both Blue Star (A2) and CR 380 are intersected by M- 140 and M- 43. The nearest freeway is I-196 and the park entrance is signed from exit 13.

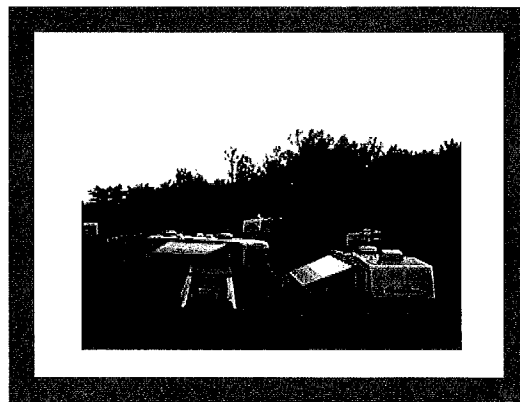
Van Buren State Park is located in both Covert Township and South Haven Township and offers approximately 400 acres of Lake Michigan shoreline access. Focal points of the park include high dune formations and one mile of sandy beach.

## Van Buren Recreational Trails

The Van Buren State Park offers trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. The Park administers both the 14 mile long Van Buren Trail and the Kal-Haven State Park Trail. The Kal-Haven State Park Trail is a 33 mile trail located on a former railroad bed and has a limestone/slag surface. The trail links the city of South Haven to the city of Kalamazoo. The trail user will pass through small towns and villages, cross over bridges, pass points of historical interest, and go through some of Michigan's most beautiful countryside. Both trails are open in the winter and snowmobiling is allowed when there is a 4-inch snow base.

## Van Buren Campground

The campground in Van Buren State Park has 220 modern campsites located so that both sunny and shady sites are offered. Each site has electricity, a picnic table, and a fire ring. The day use camping area provides a picnic area with tables and grills and picnic shelter.







View of Lake Michigan from Covert Township Park



Stairs leading to Covert Township Beach

## Covert Township Park-Description

Covert Township Park is located along Blue Star Highway (A-2) in the northern region of the Coastal Area. Currently, the majority of visitors to the park are long-term campers. The park is open year-round to visitors and long-term or daily passes are available.

The Park is nestled in the sand dunes along Lake Michigan, and provides campers with scenic amenities including wooded lots with tree cover for shade and enjoyable lakeside access to swimming and hiking.

## Goal Formulation for the Future Covert Township Park

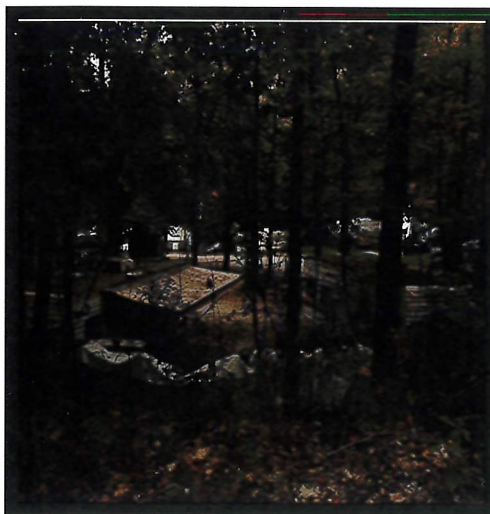
ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF A COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN IS TO ATTAIN INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC ACCESS NEEDS TO COASTAL AREAS OF RECREATIONAL, HISTORICAL, AESTHETIC, ECOLOGICAL, OR CULTURAL VALUE.

**MICHIGAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**





## PUBLIC INPUT ON COVERT TOWNSHIP PARK



### PUBLIC WORKSHOP COMMENT AUGUST 16, 2003

- ☐ UN-LEASE THE PUBLIC PARK
- ☐ NEED TO BE SELF-SUPPORTING
- ☐ NEED TO FIND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES  
ACCESS GRANTS
- ☐ BALANCE OF OCCUPANT STAYS
- ☐ NO PERMANENT TRAILERS OR CAMPERS
- ☐ ACCESS TO THE LAKESHORE
- ☐ CHANGE LENGTH OF STAY  
REQUIREMENTS
- ☐ EXAMINE OCCUPANCY RULES DAY VS  
LONG TERM USE
- ☐ BETTER PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO THE  
LAKE DEFINED
- ☐ MOVE LONG-TERM STAYS TO LESS  
SENSITIVE AREAS
- ☐ SHORELINE CROSSING/EASEMENTS VS.  
EXISTING ACCESS ADEQUATE
- ☐ PROTECT TREES TO EXTENT  
POSSIBLE
- ☐ REDEVELOP A PLAN



## STEPS TO ACHIEVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### PARK DESIGN PROCESS

Parks and public gathering spaces commonly start as vacant spaces, that through a design process, can be transformed into active community assets. Well designed parks and public gathering spaces respond to the needs of people of different genders, ages, and recreational interests. The design process involves more than aligning walkways and trails and selecting landscape. Understanding community concerns about a particular site is also crucial. An overview of the design process for Covert Township Park is detailed below:

#### 1. ESTABLISH PUBLIC ACCESS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS REGARDING THE AREA TO BE SERVED, THE TYPE OF PARK TO BE DESIGNED (ACTIVE OR PASSIVE RECREATION PARK, CAMPING, ETC.) AND THE TIMELINE FOR PARK DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ESTABLISHED AT THIS POINT.

#### 2. CONDUCT A SITE AND NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY

BASIC SITE DATA INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO; SITE DIMENSIONS, SOILS, TOPOGRAPHY, WETLANDS, WOODLANDS, WATER BODIES AND OTHER EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES WILL BE EVALUATED AT THIS POINT. THIS DATA WILL BE USED TO DETERMINE FEATURES TO BE PROTECTED AND INCORPORATED INTO THE PARK DESIGN AND OVERALL SITE LAYOUT.

#### 3. ASSESS ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO THE SITE WILL BE EVALUATED BASED ON SITE CHARACTERISTICS, EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES, AND OVERALL COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CHARACTER.

#### 4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

THE PUBLIC WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN CONCEPT FOR THE PARK. THE DESIGN CHARRETTE TECHNIQUE IS OFTEN USED TO COLLECT COMMUNITY PREFERENCES AND GRAPHICALLY ILLUSTRATE PREFERRED PARK FEATURES AND OVERALL LAYOUT.



5. DETERMINE PARK ACTIVITIES

THE TYPE OF ACTIVITIES TO BE OFFERED IN THE PARK WILL BE DEFINED AT THIS POINT. PARKS GENERALLY CAN OFFER A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:

- A. LEARNING ACTIVITIES
- B. ABILITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES
- C. PROGRAMMED ACTIVITIES
- D. UNPLANNED PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES
- E. TEAM PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES
- F. PASSIVE RECREATION ACTIVITIES

6. GENERAL SITE LAYOUT

AFTER DETERMINING ACTIVITIES TO BE OFFERED, THE OVERALL LAYOUT OF THE PARK AND ITS ELEMENTS WILL BE PREPARED. UP TO THREE ALTERNATIVE SITE LAYOUTS MAY BE DEVELOPED TO EXAMINE DIFFERENT LOCATIONS FOR PARK ACTIVITIES AND PARK FACILITIES. AFTER EVALUATION OF THE ALTERNATIVES, ONE WILL BE SELECTED TO INCORPORATE SPECIFIC PARK DESIGN STANDARDS.

7. PARK ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

BASED ON THE SELECTED SITE LAYOUT VEHICULAR, PEDESTRIAN AND MAINTENANCE CIRCULATION PATHS WILL BE DESIGNED. PAVING MATERIAL, COLORS AND PATTERNS WILL BE SELECTED AT THIS POINT.



# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



## Parks

 Parks

3500 0 3500 Feet



LSL  
LANGWORTHY  
STRADER  
LEBLANC &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System



## CHAPTER SIX

# SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

### COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



## OVER THE YEARS IN COVERT TOWNSHIP

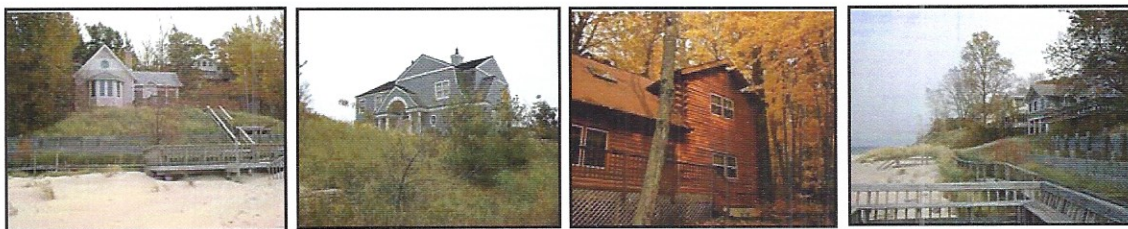


Land use patterns tell a story about a community. How did it develop? Why are certain buildings or residential uses where they are? What will the community look like in the future? Answers to these questions are all around, it is simply a matter of recognizing past and present land use trends and understanding the story they tell.

## HOUSING CHARACTER

As a reflection of its predominant residential character, land use consists mostly of single-family detached homes on medium to large sized lots. The area's oldest housing is found along the shoreline of Lake Michigan, and consists of a mixture of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century cottages and other Midwest vernacular styles. Most of these homes remain in excellent condition, despite the weathering effects of the lakeshore, and represent a scale and style of many shoreline communities throughout the State of Michigan.





**COVERT TOWNSHIP - SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL HOUSING IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA CONSISTS OF A VARIETY OF STYLES LOCATED ON MEDIUM TO LARGE SIZED LOTS.**

## COASTAL MANAGEMENT SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL

The predominate land use in the Coastal Area is shoreline residential, accounting for 2,418 acres, 70% of the Coastal Management Area. The lakeshore area is laced with Fire Lanes serving as access roads to individual residences and subdivisions. Several of the private subdivisions are governed by homeowners associations.

The design and appearance of housing in the area along the lakeshore suggest that many homes were constructed prior to the 1970s for seasonal use.

Infill development in more recent years has diminished the amount of vacant land along the lakeshore, while new homes are being constructed as year-round residences, oftentimes of greater size than the existing homes. This includes the construction of two-story homes with large, attached two and three car garages as opposed to single story cabins with perhaps a one stall garage or carport. These new homes also build larger accessory uses, such as garages and sheds to store recreational vehicles and water craft.





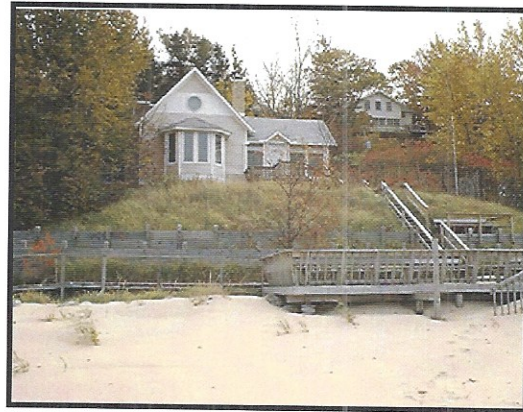
## SHORELINE SUBDIVISIONS

There are five existing residential subdivisions in the Coastal Area which were built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The development of these shoreline subdivisions occurred because of a high demand for summer cottages and seasonal homes. A breakdown of individual subdivision lots is shown below.

SUBDIVISION NAME	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF HOMES
BEACHWOOD HILLS	5 HOMES
COVERT RESORT ASSOCIATION/LINDEN HILLS	54 HOMES
PALISADES PARK	201 HOMES
THUNDER MOUNTAIN HEIGHTS	13 HOMES
WILDERNESS DUNES SUBDIVISION	16 HOMES

## SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The lakeshore of Covert Township has historically been a seasonal community; the cottages and cabins bordering Lake Michigan is an obvious sign of this. In many cases, homes can be identified as a seasonal use due to the lack of "winterizing" done to them, for example there are no storm windows on many cottages and homes.



BEACHFRONT HOME IN PALISADES PARK



### SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL TRENDS

- ❑ LOT SIZES ARE BECOMING LARGER. INDIVIDUALS ARE NOW BUYING ADJACENT PARCELS AND COMBINING THEM INTO ONE LOT. THIS ALLOWS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF LARGER HOMES WITH GREATER WATER FRONTAGE.
- ❑ ORIGINAL CABINS AND COTTAGES ARE DECREASING IN NUMBER. ON LOTS WHICH ALREADY HAVE A CABIN OR COTTAGE, THESE STRUCTURES ARE BEING REMOVED AND REPLACED BY LARGER, MORE EXPENSIVE HOMES.
- ❑ SEASONAL HOMES ARE BEING CONVERTED FOR YEAR-ROUND USE. AS THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WHO TRAVEL SOUTH EVERY WINTER IS DECLINING, THE PERCENT SHARE OF HOMES USED FOR YEAR-ROUND LIVING IS GROWING.

These new development trends have increased the value of lakefront properties significantly. As demand increases for waterfront property, particularly among those who plan to remain in the township as year-round residents, the shoreline 'cottage' character of Covert Township will change. Efforts to reduce any negative effects which new growth and redevelopment would have along the lakeshore should be evaluated to preserve community character and those qualities which make Covert Township a desirable place to live.

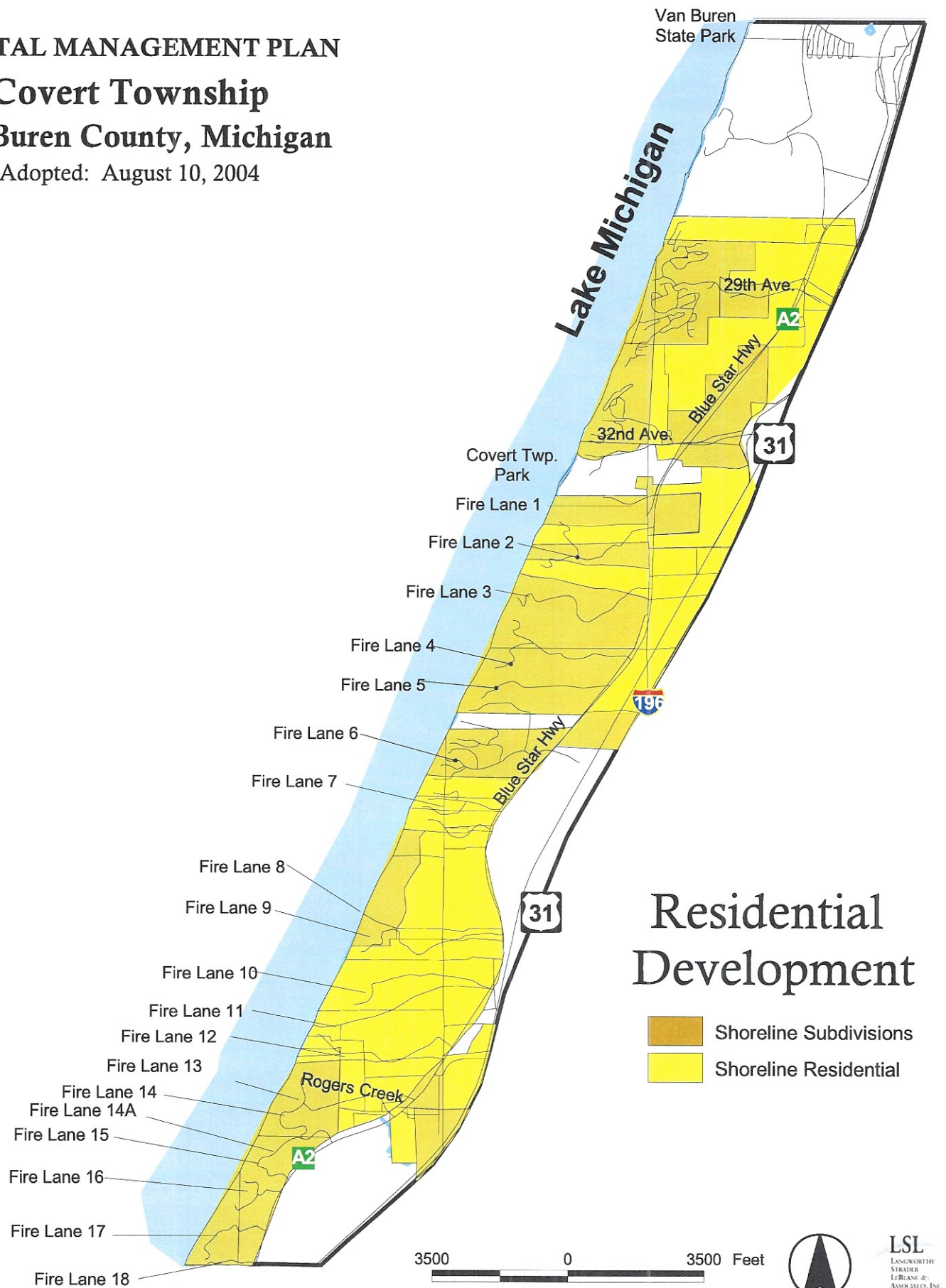


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



## Residential Development

- Shoreline Subdivisions
- Shoreline Residential



LSL  
LANGWORTH  
STRADER  
LEBEAN &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System

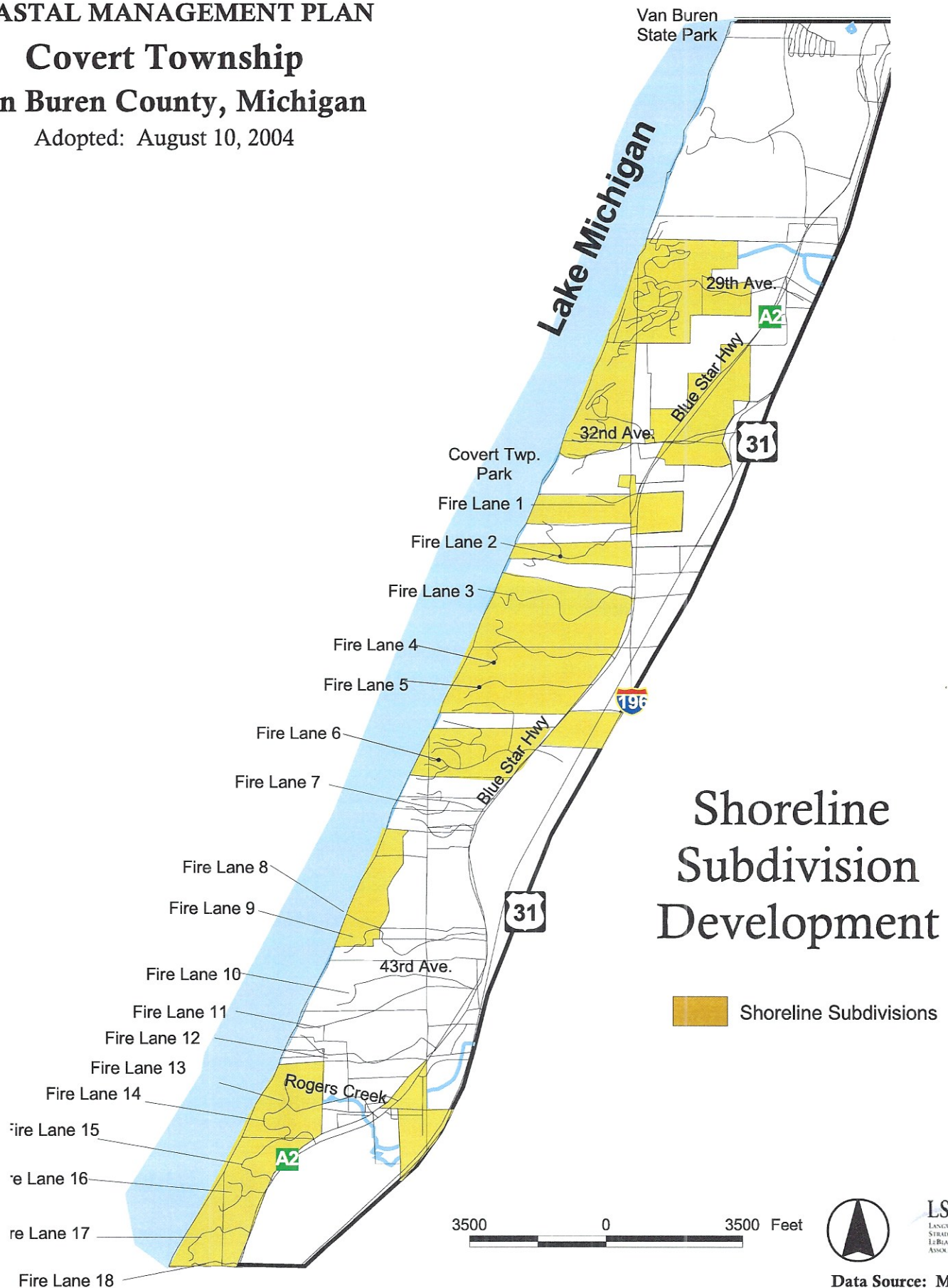


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



## Shoreline Subdivision Development

Shoreline Subdivisions

Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System

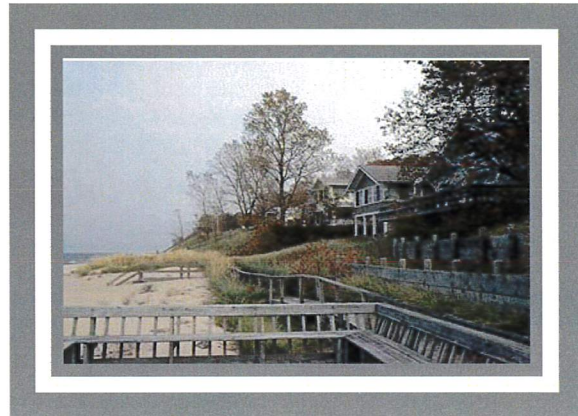


## CHAPTER SEVEN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



### Future Land Use in the Coastal Management Area

The form and vitality of any shoreline community is defined largely by how its citizens see the way land is used and how that relates to their daily life. As a result, the use of land in the CM area is linked directly to the quality of life for shoreline residents. The future land use element of this Plan is designed to recognize existing development patterns, relevant demographic trends, and the Township's Vision and Goals for the lakeshore.



As growth occurs, it will be necessary for the Township to address difficult zoning issues brought on by the pace and increasing complexity of development plans by residents and property owners. The need to provide protection for sensitive shoreline resources, coupled with the Township's desire to manage residential growth, may create the need for innovative zoning techniques such as a Shorelands Management Overlay District and Landscaping Standards.

**FUTURE LAND USE DECISIONS FOR COVERT TOWNSHIP WILL BE GUIDED BY THE VISION, GOALS, AND POLICIES DEVELOPED IN THIS MASTER PLAN.**

It is also important for the Plan to be used consistently. A plan which is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the Township in the future. Failure to consistently follow the Plan may help discredit any attempt to use it as a defense for actions which may be challenged by property owners or developers. Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the Coastal Management Plan will lend credibility to the Township's actions on rezonings or other zoning decisions to which it is related.



## CHAPTER EIGHT STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A variety of land control ordinances and guidelines have been adopted by the Covert Township Board over the years. The ordinances have become more elaborate over time with introduction of such provisions as the Shorelands One-Family Residential District and specific site landscaping standards.

"REGULATORY TOOLS ARE THE  
MOST SIGNIFICANT TOOLS  
EMPLOYED NATIONWIDE TO  
PROTECT SHORELINE  
RESOURCES."

-COASTAL MANAGEMENT  
PROGRAM

For those sensitive shoreline resource areas where extensive detailed analysis or expertise was lacking, guidelines were developed and employed as a supplement to future ordinance provisions.

### REGULATORY CONTROLS

Coastal states such as Michigan utilize a wide variety of tools to achieve the protection of sensitive shoreline resource areas. These include regulatory setbacks and controls over shoreline development in combination with coastal plans, stewardship of state lands, coastal land acquisition, and public education for residents on shoreline properties.

### REGULATORY CONTROLS IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA

Regulatory controls, primarily through zoning, is the most significant tool employed by local government to protect shoreline resources and property values. The majority of the Coastal Management Area, up to 70%, is shoreline residential and owned by private landowners and will remain subject to development pressures. Protection is best achieved through consistent enforcement of the zoning ordinance provisions.

COMPILATION  
OF  
ORDINANCES

COVERT TOWNSHIP

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF  
TOWNSHIP BOARD



## REGULATORY TOOLS-ZONING ORDINANCE

- ☐ SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES OVERLAY DISTRICT
- ☐ LAKESHORE RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT/CONSTRUCTION AND SETBACK CONTROL AREAS.
- ☐ PROVISIONS FOR SHORELINE STABILIZATION-PLACE LIMITATIONS ON THE USE OF SHORELINE STABILIZATION STRUCTURES IN FAVOR OF NONSTRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS.
- ☐ PROVISIONS FOR PEDESTRIAN OR VEHICULAR ACCESS- ACCESS RESTRICTION WITH REQUIREMENTS FOR BOARDWALKS OR DUNE CROSSOVERS TO MINIMIZE ADVERSE IMPACTS ON DUNES AND AREAS DESIGNATED WHERE PEDESTRIAN AND/OR VEHICULAR ACCESS IS RESTRICTED TO PROTECT RESOURCES.
- ☐ REQUIRE A TREE SURVEY BE CONDUCTED FOR ALL SITE PLAN REVIEWS.

## NON-REGULATORY PLANNING TOOLS

Planning tools, when combined with regulatory actions, improve protection of sensitive shoreline resources by offering a range of site-specific actions for the protection and development of selected coastal areas.

Stewardship of coastal lands, through state land management and acquisition, is also an important component of all state coastal programs. Adopted plans offer a long-range vision-or site specific goals for the protection and development of selected coastal areas and resources.



- ☐ COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
- ☐ STEWARDSHIP OF STATE LANDS
- ☐ COASTAL LAND ACQUISITION



- ❑ PERMIT COMPLIANCE PROGRAM-USED TO MONITOR PERMITS AND VIOLATIONS

## COASTAL LAND ACQUISITION

Acquisition programs convert private lands into public holdings. Along the Covert Township Shoreline, these coastal acquisitions tend to serve both recreational use demands and some resource protection goals. Acquisition of large resource systems, or acquisition of lands adjacent to existing holdings can afford improved natural resource protection opportunities.

THE SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY (SWMLC) PERMANENTLY PROTECTS THE NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND SCENIC LANDSCAPES TO INSURE THE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN.

TOTAL ACREAGE IN CM AREA

84 ACRES

## NON-PROFIT AGENCIES IN THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREA

There are two non-profit agencies which are actively acquiring land in the Coastal Management Area that include the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy.

### SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY (SWMLC)

- ❑ SWMLC WORKS TO MAINTAIN THE SCENIC CHARACTER OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN BY PRESERVING SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND SCENIC LAND AND OPEN SPACE.
- ❑ SWMLC OBTAINS LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS FROM WILLING LANDOWNERS.
- ❑ SWMLC HELPS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS OBTAIN OPEN SPACE AND PARKS.
- ❑ SWMLC WORKS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATION TO PRESERVE OPEN SPACE.
- ❑ SWMLC OFFERS FIELD TRIPS TO THE PUBLIC.





## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IS A PRIVATE, NONPROFIT CONSERVANCY THAT WORKS TO SAVE THE LAST GREAT PLACES IN MICHIGAN AND AROUND THE WORLD.

-NATURE CONSERVANCY ORGANIZATION

TOTAL ACREAGE IN VAN BUREN COUNTY	1,449 ACRES
-----------------------------------	-------------

### HOW DOES THE NATURE CONSERVANCY WORK?

The Conservancy protects habitat through land preservation accomplished through land gifts, exchanges, conservation easements and purchases, as well as management agreements and partnerships with large private and public landowners to protect the important natural features of their land.

### THE NATURE CONSERVANCY LAND DONATIONS IN COVERT TOWNSHIP ROSS COASTAL PLAIN MARSH PRESERVE



This preserve is located along CR-376 and was made possible by the generosity of H. Stewart Ross and his family. The 1,254 acres was one of the first land donations in Van Buren County. Part of the settlement of their family estate included this wonderful site. The family gave the Conservancy approximately half of the funds necessary to acquire the acreage and the Conservancy provided the rest. Four purchases from other land owners in Van Buren County have totaled 1,449 acres protected by the Conservancy.

### HOW CAN LAND BE DONATED TO NON-PROFIT AGENCIES?

#### LAND DONATION

Donating land is often attractive to landowners whose land has significant natural, scenic, or historical values. It may be the best strategy if the land owner no longer wishes to maintain ownership; if property sold would result in large capital gains tax; or if there are substantial



real estate holdings and there is a desire to reduce estate tax burdens.

## CONSERVATION EASEMENT

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land conservancy or other similar organization that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect its natural, scenic, or historic values. Agricultural, forestry, and wildlife management activities are the only allowed uses.

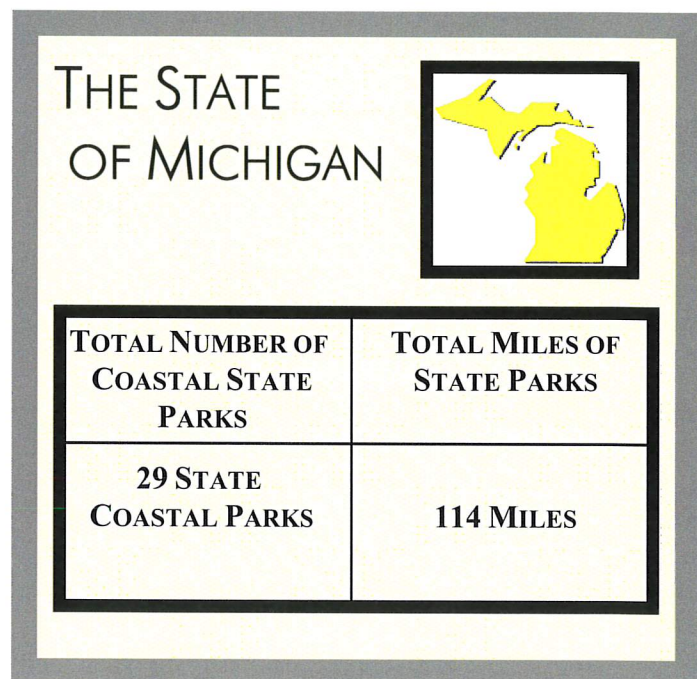
A conservation easement allows continued ownership and use of the land and it can be sold or passed on to heirs. Easements are a practical way for landowners to protect their property and still retain ownership.



## KEY ROLE OF STATE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Most State of Michigan beachfront parks were acquired and placed under state park management prior to enactment of the State CM program.

Although state land acquisition programs were in existence prior to enactment of formal programs, some State CM programs have played a major role in creating new land acquisition programs and in helping the state set priorities for coastal land acquisitions.



Since the adoption of State CM programs funding has been provided for land inventories, land appraisals, negotiated purchases and land swaps. Land inventories have included both high value sensitive shoreline resource properties and vacant coastal lands suitable for



recreation. State CM programs have served as advocates for state acquisition of shoreline properties.

Stewardship of coastal lands, through direct land management and acquisition, is an important component of all state coastal programs. Many coastal states, including the State of Michigan, own state parks along the lakeshore that encompass one or more beaches, dunes, and high scenic bluffs.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

### OUTREACH AND TRAINING

#### MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) sponsors conferences and workshops to educate local governments and residents on environmental requirements, pollution prevention practices, and other topics related to the protection of Michigan's natural resources. Speakers on environmental programs and services are also available upon request.

The Education and Outreach Speakers Bureau coordinates requests for environmental speakers. Each inquiry is carefully evaluated to identify the needs of the audience and determine the most suitable presenter.

## DESIRED INDICATORS OF PLAN EFFECTIVENESS

- ☐ NO FURTHER OR REDUCED RATE OF ENCROACHMENT INTO COASTAL RESOURCE AREAS.
- ☐ NO FURTHER OR REDUCED RATE OF HARDENING OF UNDEVELOPED BEACHFRONTS THROUGH SHORELINE STABILIZATION.
- ☐ ACTIVE PUBLIC NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP OF COASTAL LAND HOLDINGS
- ☐ ACHIEVEMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING.



## COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN ENFORCEMENT

An area which enjoys such an abundance of outstanding views as found in the Coastal Management Area is faced with finding a proper balance between protection and development. This Plan suggests an aggressive approach to protection of sensitive shoreline resources for the enjoyment of future generations. However, in order for the Coastal Management Plan to be an effective document for the next twenty years, community leaders need to continue to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan through implementation and enforcement of zoning regulations.



While the State of Michigan does not recognize the absolute authority of Master Plans, such as the Coastal Management Plan, the State does lend much more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those which appear to be taken arbitrarily against an individual property owner.

Finally, it is critical that the Coastal Management Plan be read in its entirety. Rather than attempting to isolate individual statements that may appear to support one position or another regarding the Future Land Use for the Coastal Management Area, the Planning Commission and others must consider the intent of the Plan as a whole. This requires a careful reading of the Plan to ensure that all of its considerations are included in the evaluation of any proposed change in the community.

## COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE SHORELINE



What will the shoreline of Covert Township look like in 50 to 100 years? Will there be open space with parks and recreation along the shoreline? Will the natural features and scenic beauty of the shoreline remain? What kind of quality of life will there be?

The Coastal Management Plan presents a VISION for future land use and development. The Vision is detailed and described through the use of goal and objective statements and a description of future land uses. The VISION for the Future Plan is intended to be used by both public and private sectors in decisions involving land use.



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Covert Township is a shoreline community located along Lake Michigan, full of natural beauty and scenic amenities that have attracted people to the area for generations.

Covert's cultural heritage and its future security are rooted in its wealth of natural resources, which prompts the need for a clear direction for the future development of the Coastal Area in order to ensure protection of these natural features are translated into action.

The intent of this Coastal Management Plan is to provide the means by which Covert Township may plan for the use of land and protection of the character of the shoreline for the future. In order to set a direction for this period, Covert Township established a series of Goals and Objectives covering the primary elements of the CM Plan.

### DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Developing effective Goals and Objectives is the key to a successful Coastal Management Plan. They provide specific direction for the future of Covert Township, and serve as the backbone of the Master Plan. Goals and Objectives are similar in that they are both actions that the Township should strive to take, however they differ in definition.

#### WHAT ARE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES?

A GOAL IS A DESTINATION, A FINAL PURPOSE WHICH A COMMUNITY SEEKS TO ATTAIN. A GOAL SHOULD BE A BROAD GENERAL STATEMENT.

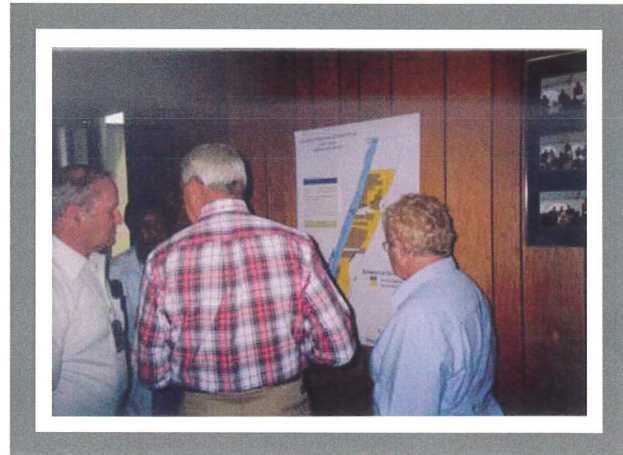
AN OBJECTIVE IS A MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL. IT MAY BE VERY SPECIFIC OR DETAIL A FUTURE ACTION THAT SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN.



## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To help produce these goals and objectives Covert Township conducted two public open house forums. The forums were used to help formulate the intent and purpose of the Coastal Management Plan and obtain additional information through graphic representations and public discussion.

Those attending the first forum were given the opportunity to comment on the future of Covert Township Park, and to identify those values related to the Coastal Area that were most important to them (see comment sheet below). A second forum was used to conduct small discussion groups concentrating on three primary areas related to the CM Plan: Residential Development, Public Access and Sensitive Shoreline Resources.



The discussions were wide ranging, dealing with the very specific, such as sand mining activities in the dunes, to the very general. The results from these discussions regarding these important issues were used to derive the following goals and objectives for the Coastal Management Plan.



FINDINGS OF COMMENT SHEETS,  
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE, SATURDAY JULY 12, 2003, 10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

**WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD  
YOU SUGGEST TO BE DONE AT  
COVERT TOWNSHIP PARK?**

1. Improve public park for Covert Twp. residents.
2. Remove campers.
3. Remove permanent campers and develop more like Warren Dunes Park for daily camping. Have nice pavilion with restrooms, some grocery store, short ordered food station.
4. Advertise location availability, provide convenience store.
5. Make park truly for Covert. Free public access facilities for picnicking, toilet facilities, parking area. No overnight camping.
6. Make Covert Township Park very accessible for the residents of Covert.
7. Free public access.
8. Make public picnic area and child play area.
9. Parking area.

**WHAT DO YOU VALUE THE  
MOST ALONG THE  
SHORELINE IN COVERT  
TOWNSHIP?**

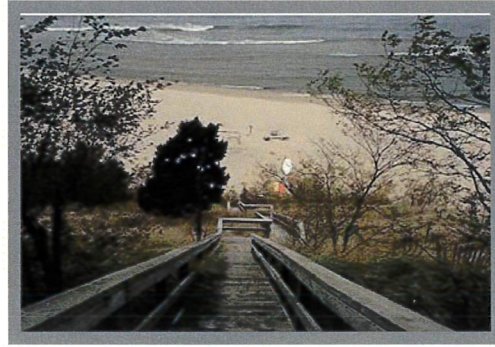
1. Peace, quiet, and beauty.
2. Develop a roadside park, rest area along Blue Star Highway.
3. The Overlay Zoning is a sure fire way to improve residential uses.
4. The park if it were used more readily by Township Citizens.
5. Beauty of the land preservation/ natural unspoiled environment.
6. Improve public access.

**COMMENT BOX RESULTS**

1. How does the overlay fit into the presentation today?
2. How many of your planning board members live in the shoreline area?
3. More notices of public meeting.
4. Existing cottages should be allowed to rebuild with better built foundations.



## GOALS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS



1	PROTECT AND MAINTAIN EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS
2	PROTECT, MAINTAIN, AND ENHANCE EXISTING PUBLIC ACCESS
3	RETAIN, MAINTAIN, AND IMPROVE ALL EXISTING PUBLICLY OWNED PARKS SO THAT THEY CONTINUE TO MEET THE DIVERSE RECREATION NEEDS OF AREA CITIZENS AND VISITORS.
	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
1	ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE SCENIC EASEMENTS WHEREVER PUBLIC VALUES DICTATE THE MAINTENANCE OF VISUAL ACCESS TO THE WATERFRONT AND THE PROPERTY IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.
2	LIMIT THE HEIGHT AND INTENSITY OF NEW DEVELOPMENT ALONG WATERFRONT AREAS TO PRESERVE VISUAL ACCESS AND THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE WATERFRONT FOR THE BROADER PUBLIC.
3	EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RELAXATION, ACTIVITY, AND EDUCATION THROUGH A WELL BALANCED SYSTEM OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES SERVING IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF THE AREA.
4	EXAMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING LOW COST OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC BEACH AND CAMPGROUND FACILITIES.



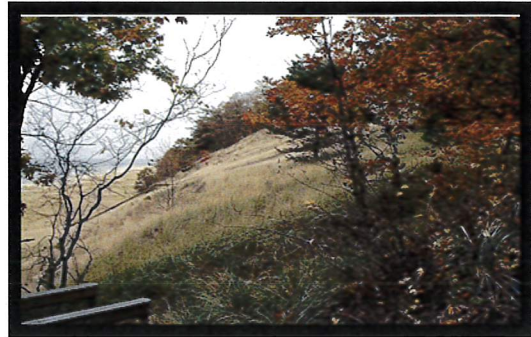
## GOALS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



1	MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF EXISTING SHORELINE RESIDENTIAL AREAS.
2	RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE SHORELINE AREAS WILL BE CONSISTENT WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES OF THIS PLAN.
3	THE TOWNSHIP, THROUGH REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS, WILL ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSISTENT AND SOUND MANNER BY MINIMIZING THE POTENTIAL FOR FLOOD HAZARD, DISRUPTION OF CRITICAL DUNES AND HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS, AND DISTURBANCES TO THE NATURAL DRAINAGE NETWORK, AND PROTECTING THE QUALITY OF SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER RESOURCES.
	OBJECTIVES
1	ENFORCE HEIGHT AND INTENSITY REGULATION OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG WATERFRONT AREAS TO PRESERVE VISUAL ACCESS AND NATURAL BEAUTY.
2	THROUGH ZONING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICIES, THE TOWNSHIP WILL ESTABLISH GUIDELINES TO PROTECT ITS SURFACE WATERS. SPECIFICALLY, A SHORELINE ZONING DISTRICT IN WHICH SUCH GUIDELINES CAN BE ENFORCED.



## GOALS FOR SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES



1	REQUIRE LAND USE STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH PRESERVING LANDS CONTAINING SENSITIVE SHORELINE FEATURES.
2	PROTECT AND PROMOTE COVERT TOWNSHIP'S SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES FOR PURPOSES OF ENHANCING THE LOCAL QUALITY OF LIFE AND ENCOURAGING MINIMAL TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT.
	OBJECTIVES
1	REQUIRE NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SHORELINE DISTRICTS TO INCLUDE A LANDSCAPE PLAN AS PART OF THE SITE PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS.
2	THROUGH THE COVERT TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE, PREPARE AND IMPLEMENT A CONSERVATION CORRIDOR (OVERLAY ZONE) FOR THE SENSITIVE SHORELINE RESOURCES OF LAKE MICHIGAN. REQUIRE ALL NEW PROJECTS TO CONSIDER/RESPECT THE CORRIDOR AS PART OF SITE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT.
3	ENCOURAGE MORE RETENTION OF EXISTING NATURAL VEGETATION (E.G. MATURE TREES) AS A COMPONENT OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.





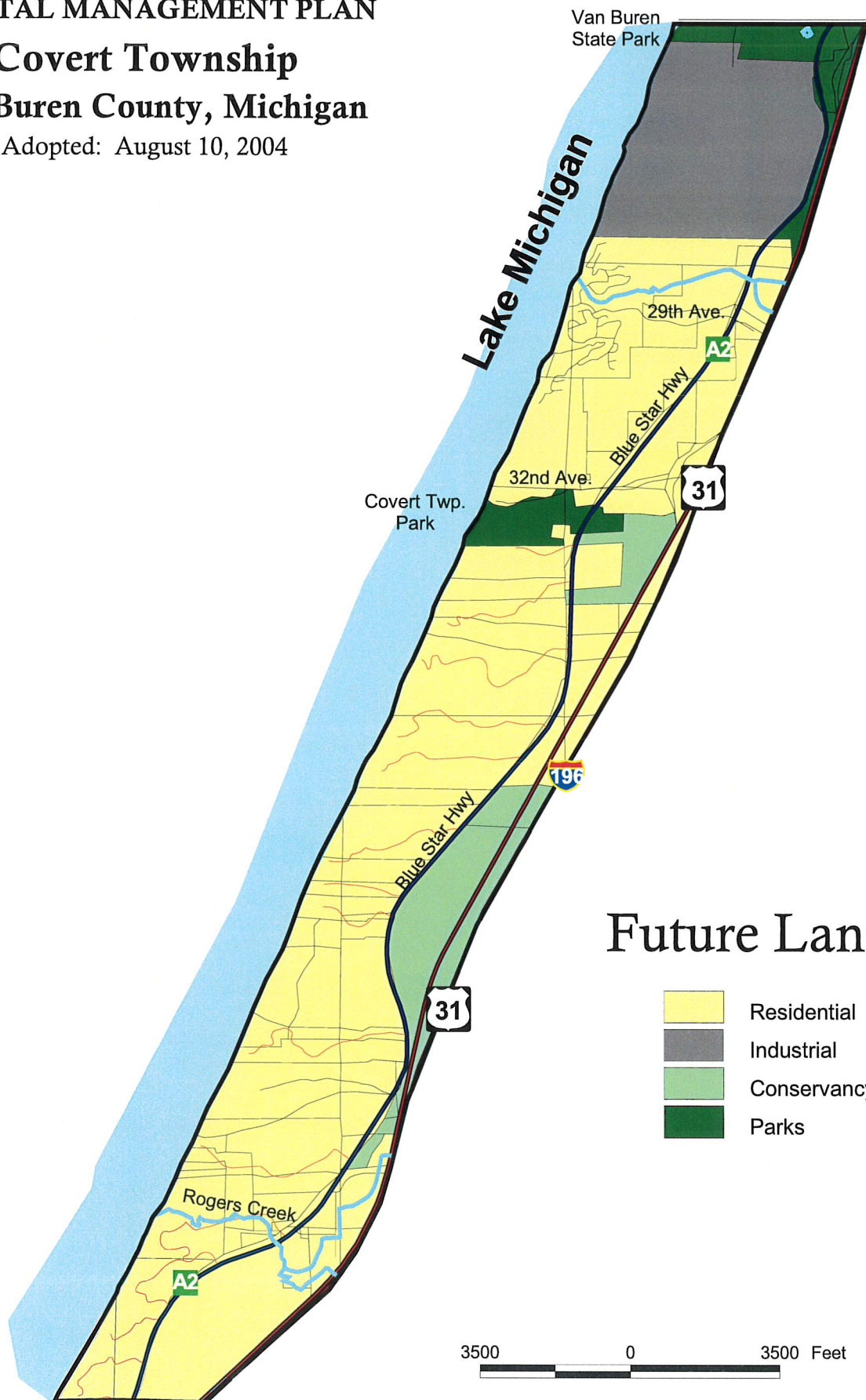


# COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Covert Township

### Van Buren County, Michigan

Adopted: August 10, 2004



## Future Land Use

- Residential
- Industrial
- Conservancy Lands
- Parks

3500 0 3500 Feet



LSL  
LANGWORTHY  
STRADER  
LEBLANC &  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

Data Source: MIRIS  
Michigan Resource Information System



# **APPENDIX**



1. How important to you are the following qualities of Covert Township?		Strongly Agree (1)						Strongly Disagree(5)			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	I am proud to say that I live in Covert Township.	93	31	35	12	123	41	33	11	19	6
b.	There is a strong sense of community in Covert Township.	43	14	43	14	133	44	54	18	31	10
c.	Natural features (trees and open spaces) in my neighborhood are important to me.	256	79	33	10	28	9	5	2	3	1
d.	Covert Township is changing too quickly.	29	10	26	10	119	37	58	18	87	27
e.	Access to Lake Michigan for recreation is important to me.	172	52	48	15	67	20	25	8	16	5
f.	New families moving in are good for the area.	105	33	86	27	93	29	21	7	15	5
g.	I think Covert Township has a strong rural character.	101	34	96	32	72	24	17	6	14	5
h.	I am concerned about how growth might affect me.	124	39	65	20	83	25	32	10	26	8



2.How important are these issues for Covert Township in the next 10 years?		Very Important (1)						Not Important At All (5)			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	Keeping my neighborhood the way it is now	141	44	57	18	75	23	23	7	25	8
b.	Preserving views to open fields, forests, and natural areas	213	66	49	15	47	14	8	2	8	2
c.	Attracting new industrial businesses for jobs	106	33	61	19	65	20	47	15	45	14
d.	Protecting our small town and rural character	143	45	80	25	72	23	13	4	12	4
e.	Encouraging new commercial businesses and services	113	35	79	24	65	20	28	9	39	12
f.	Improving the downtown area	161	51	69	22	56	18	14	4	15	5
g.	Enforcing ordinances against junk	212	75	40	14	17	6	9	3	5	2
h.	Maintaining existing roads	204	71	65	23	14	5	3	3	1	-
i.	Directing growth to planned areas	153	56	58	21	45	18	8	3	5	2
j.	Developing parks and recreational activities	108	40	68	25	67	25	16	6	10	4
k.	Encouraging growth near the I-196 interchange	79	29	57	19	66	24	33	12	35	13
l.	Encouraging growth near the downtown	96	35	67	24	70	25	19	7	23	8
m.	Encouraging more shopping opportunities in the township	96	34	59	21	69	25	34	12	21	8
n.	Preserving our natural features	184	73	40	16	24	10	3	1	-	-
o.	Maintaining high quality public services, such as road maintenance, ambulance response, and fire/police services	215	73	47	16	28	9	3	1	2	1
p.	Preserving farmland	137	47	67	23	68	24	10	3	7	2
q.	Availability of township-wide household refuse pickup	123	44	62	22	56	20	16	6	20	7



3. How concerned are you about the following conditions?		Very Concerned (1)						Not Concerned at All (5)			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	Quality of my drinking water	171	71	33	14	21	9	3	1	14	6
b.	Safety of area roads	173	60	65	23	40	14	1	-	9	3
c.	Junk in people's yards	175	60	63	22	36	12	7	2	9	3
d.	The lack of new businesses to create jobs	103	38	55	20	64	23	29	11	22	8
e.	Current rate at which the area is growing	37	14	62	24	120	46	21	8	21	8
f.	Availability of recreational areas along Lake Michigan	74	27	66	24	75	28	23	8	34	13
g.	Safety of the road on which I live	146	53	45	2	45	2	13	5	27	10
h.	Loss of farmland to new homes	69	25	49	18	90	36	29	11	30	11
i.	Loss of trees and open spaces for new development	121	42	60	21	65	23	20	7	19	7
j.	Lack of commercial businesses in the area	70	26	55	20	83	31	38	12	32	12
k.	Changing large tracts of land into small lots	76	27	64	23	88	31	23	8	30	11
l.	Rising costs of property and homes	125	44	54	19	68	24	20	7	17	6



4. How strongly do you agree/disagree with these statements?		Strongly Agree (1)								Strongly Disagree (5)	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	Lots that are too large are a waste of land	34	11	22	7	49	16	57	18	151	48
b.	Abandoned or poorly kept homes near me reduce the value of my property	182	59	43	14	56	18	15	5	11	4
c.	Having more commercial and industrial businesses can help keep my taxes reasonable	110	34	71	22	89	28	27	8	23	7
d.	Growth and development are acceptable to me as long as natural areas are preserved	157	49	82	26	56	18	15	5	9	3
e.	Allowing too many small lots will cause the area to lose its rural character	120	38	74	23	84	27	22	7	16	5
f.	Covert Township needs more places to shop	108	34	53	17	85	27	36	11	34	11
g.	The shopping areas in other nearby communities are sufficient for my needs	102	34	63	21	80	26	26	9	32	11
h.	Having industrial uses locate here will take away from the rural character of the township	100	31	60	19	94	29	35	11	33	10
i.	I will still live in Covert Township even if new people keep moving into the area	141	47	81	27	54	18	14	5	12	4
j.	Junk and old cars in yards are big problems to me	158	50	51	16	65	21	24	11	19	6
k.	The Township should pass regulations to make it difficult to develop home sites on farmland	49	16	41	13	100	33	54	18	62	20
l.	The value of my home has continued to increase	106	34	79	25	87	28	20	6	18	6
m.	More homes and businesses will cause Covert Township to lose its rural and small town character	71	23	51	16	108	35	37	12	45	14



5. Please select the <u>ONE</u> statement that best describes your feelings about growth in Covert Township.		#	%
a.	Growth should be allowed with as few restrictions as possible.	27	9
b.	Growth in planned areas should be encouraged in the township.	173	56
c.	I am satisfied with the way growth is occurring in the area.	30	10
d.	Growth is inevitable and the Township has little control over it.	6	2
e.	Growth should be tightly restricted everywhere in the area.	56	18
f.	New development should be discouraged as much as possible.	15	5

6. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements about Covert Township?		Strongly Agree (1)				Strongly Disagree (5)					
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	Public sewer should be available to more properties in the township.	119	44	42	16	77	27	7	3	24	9
b.	The Township should devote more resources to improving recreation areas along Lake Michigan.	57	21	53	20	97	36	28	10	34	13
c.	Natural features (trees and open spaces) in my neighborhood are important to me.	200	72	35	13	36	13	3	1	3	1
d.	Protecting the sensitive natural areas along Lake Michigan should be a priority for the Township.	175	61	40	14	55	19	7	2	11	4
e.	I would prefer to have public sewer rather than a septic system.	98	36	37	14	69	26	22	8	43	16
f.	Development near Lake Michigan should be carefully controlled until public sewer is available.	147	56	45	17	40	15	9	3	21	8
g.	Public water should be made available to as many homes in the township as possible.	175	64	33	12	40	15	9	3	15	6
h.	Property owners and developers should be offered incentives to preserve natural areas, like wetlands.	151	54	76	27	36	13	8	3	7	3



7. How important to you are the following qualities of Covert Township?		Very Important (1)								Not Important At All (5)	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
a.	Having family or job nearby	100	37	39	14	58	21	24	9	52	19
b.	Quality of schools	129	48	49	18	45	17	16	6	32	12
c.	Natural features (woods, lakes, open space)	181	66	60	22	25	9	6	2	4	1
d.	Minimal governmental regulation	94	35	59	22	86	32	14	5	16	6
e.	Good air and water quality	220	85	30	12	8	3	-	-	-	-
f.	Low crime rate	239	80	39	13	18	6	1	-	-	-
g.	Rural surroundings	170	57	60	20	57	19	8	3	3	1
h.	Being away from larger cities	172	67	37	14	38	15	6	2	3	1
i.	Farming opportunities	73	28	42	16	68	26	26	10	53	20
j.	Property on/with access to Lake Michigan	144	46	46	15	57	18	30	10	33	11
k.	Being able to find a home I could afford	105	34	80	26	66	21	16	5	41	26
l.	A good place to spend my retirement years	168	55	81	26	35	11	10	3	17	4
m.	Quick access to larger cities	107	34	70	22	80	26	18	6	38	12

## GENERAL QUESTIONS



**A. Which of the following best describes your current home in Covert Township? Please circle the number of all that apply.**

1. Single family homeowner,	221	56%	5. Manufactured home owner or renter	38	10%
2. Single family renter	2	1%	6. Seasonal resident	83	21%
3. Apartment renter	2	1%	7. Seasonal renter	4	1%
4. Farm resident	20	5%	8. Other (please specify)	21	5%

**B. How long have you had a home in Covert Township?**

1. Less than a year	5	2%	5. 15 to 20 years	33	10%
2. 1 to 5 years	41	13%	6. 20 to 25 years	31	10%
3. 6 to 10 years	46	14%	7. More than 25 years	104	32%
4. 10 to 15 years	32	10%	8. My entire life	30	9%

**C. How long have you lived in your current home?**

1. Less than a year	7	2%	5. 15 to 20 years	28	9%
2. 1 to 5 years	49	16%	6. 20 to 25 years	30	10%
3. 6 to 10 years	44	14%	7. More than 25 years	99	31%
4. 10 to 15 years	32	12%	8. My entire life	21	7%

**D. What is your age?**

1. 24 or under		
2. 25 to 44	50	17%
3. 45 to 64	138	46%
4. 65 and older	112	37%







