

## Chapter 8.0 Recreation

### 8.1 Introduction

Outdoor recreation opportunities abound in Republic Township. Republic Township is blessed with inland lakes, ORV/Snowmobile trails, campgrounds, cross country ski trails, hiking trails, wildlife observation facilities, canoe/kayak rivers and streams, and an abundance of scenic beauty.

Information provided in this chapter is intended to provide current and comprehensive data to guide Republic Township decision makers regarding future park development and/or acquisition. Existing parks and other recreational facilities and events are discussed in the context of location, features and use. This information was obtained from the Republic Township Recreation Plan adopted in 2007.

There are both private and public recreational facilities within Republic Township. Recreation related to tourism is vital to area economics and is an expanding industry nationwide. Attractions and facilities located in the Township present many opportunities for active and passive recreation. Republic Township is rich in natural resources, which draw a growing number of visitors each year. Heritage based tourism and ecology based tourism are becoming increasingly popular. Having adequate recreational facilities to meet the needs of visitors and as well as residents, is vital to the community.

### 8.2 Recreation Administration

Recreation coordination, program development and planning are the responsibilities of the Planning Commission appointed by the Township Supervisor and approved by the Township Board. The Planning Commission reports to the Township Board and makes recommendations. Policy and funding decisions concerning parks and recreation in the Township are the responsibility of the elected members of the Township Board. Seasonal workers are hired to maintain recreation facilities.

The Township Board has the power to recommend, administer and update recreation facilities for the Township. The Recreation Plan is regularly reviewed by the Planning Commission and will be updated as necessary.

### 8.3 Recreation Inventory

The following inventory of recreation sites was collected using Township records and local knowledge of Township officials and is also presented in the Republic Township Recreation Plan 2007-2011.

## Republic

**Republic Beach** is located at the intersection of County Road LG and M-95 in Republic. This 21-acres facility was acquired by the Township in 1996 through a land swap with the Koeber Mining Company. The Township would like to continue to develop the property.

The beach which is on the north side of County Road LG is sand, sloping down gradually to a water depth of approximately 15 feet. The Township has installed:

- Floating dock
- Two (2) swimming rafts
- Public changing house
- Several pieces of playground equipment
- Small pavilion with a concrete floor
- Paved circular drive
- Regulation sized fenced basketball court
- Regulation sized volleyball court
- Twelve (12) lighted horseshoe courts on the south side of County Road LG

Lifeguards are paid by the Township and patrol the beach area eight (8) hours a day beginning mid-June and ending generally in the second week of August. Swimming lessons are coordinated through Republic Community Services and Republic-Michigamme School.

**Paul's Park** is a playground equipped for children 12 years of age and younger. The park is sponsored by the Republic Lions Club and managed by the Lion's Club members and Township employees. The area is used for sledding during the winter. The park contains:

- One (1) adult-sized 6-swing set
- Several spring loaded teeters totters
- Junior sized climbing sets
- Children's basketball court

**Munson Park** is located at the intersection of County Roads LLK and 601 on the Michigamme River. The park has been developed by the Republic Lions Club as a community park. Picnic tables, various flowering shrubs and an assortment of shade trees have been planted. The Sportsmen's Club maintains a seasonal dock.

**Moose Rapids Campground** is located about 5 miles northwest on County Road LG from the M-95 intersection. The Township has developed a rustic eleven (11) site campground. At present, payment for use is on the honor system. Maintenance at the

campground is handled jointly by the Republic Sportsmen's Club and Township employees. Limited facilities include a hand pump well.

[Moose Country Snowmobile Trail](#) is maintained and groomed by the Moose Country Snowmobile Club under contract with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The trail is approximately 150 miles long, interconnecting across the Upper Peninsula in Marquette and surrounding counties. Access by trail is provided to surrounding areas such as: Amasa, Big Bay, Gwinn and Ishpeming. The club headquarters are located in Republic.

[School Lake/Republic Town Square](#) consists of land owned by the Township adjacent to and east of Munson Park. This property includes nearly one city block for future development as a festival site and Iron Ore Heritage Trail head. Property south of the Town Square and east of Munson Park surrounds School Lake, a popular fishing lake on all but the south side.

[Republic-Michigamme School](#), located in Republic Township provides schooling for children ages Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Enrollment is approximately 150 students with 23 staff members. Extra-curricular activities include:

- Junior High basketball for boys and girls
- Junior Varsity basketball for boys and girls
- Varsity basketball for boys and girls
- Junior Varsity and Varsity football (cooperative program w/Ishpeming High school)
- Junior Varsity and Varsity track (cooperative program w/Ishpeming High school)
- Choir
- High School Bowl
- Band

The school also has an extensive playground system and sports equipment. Equipment includes:

- Three (3) sets of adult sized 6-unit swings
- Ladder and snail shaped climbing unit
- Regular teeter totter
- Jungle gym climbing system
- Two (2) fenced tennis courts
- Two (2) single basketball backboards with hoops attached to tennis court fence
- Regulation quarter mile track including long jump and pole vault pit (may be used for school athletic events and by the general public)

The playground was recently updated to State of Michigan guidelines.

The [Township baseball field](#) is located on 10.8 acres of Township land, directly behind the Marquette County Road Commission District Garage. The field was originally designed for softball but the field attracted a wide-range of teams due to the quality of the field. The Township Department of Public Works employees maintain and monitor the field during the summer months. The field is used regularly for scheduled slow-pitch softball league games by the local team and by two local Little League teams. The field is kept locked to prevent vandalism but is available to the public on a “request,” first-come, first serve basis. In the winter, an outdoor ice rink is located east of the baseball field. The Township, with assistance from the Lions Club maintains the rink.

The [Moto-Cross Track/Golf Driving Range](#) is owned by the Township and is situated on 26.5 acres. With the assistance of local contractors, the Republic Lions Club and the volunteer fire department members, an AMA approved regulation Moto-cross track and a full functional golf driving range have been developed.

The [Oasis Youth Center](#) utilizes a building once used as a coin Laundromat and has been completely renovated into a youth center. The center is supervised by volunteers and residents can use the facility for private functions such as birthday parties. The building is handicapped accessible and has the following amenities:

- Pool table
- TV/VCR
- Computers
- Ping pong table
- Fully equipped kitchen

The [Sledding Hill](#) is a former abandoned ski hill that has been renovated to be used for sledding. The hill is located at the intersection of M-95 and County Road LLI approximately ½ mile south of South Republic. The sledding hill is located on Township property and is the location for the annual Epiphany Bon Fire.

The [Republic Township EMS Building](#) is a fully accessible facility that has been made available for public and private functions. The building can accommodate up to 200 people for various events.

### Witch Lake Area

[Witch Lake Playground](#) is maintained on Township property on the Fence River Road (County Road LH). Playground equipment consists of:

- One (1) adult-sized 6-unit swing set

- Snail shaped climbing unit
- Merry-go-round
- Spring based teeter totter
- Two (2) Euclid truck tires for climbing

#### **8.4 Handicapped Accessibility**

The Township makes every effort to make all recreational activities available to those with disabilities. The Township Hall and Youth Center are barrier-free. Accessibility is provided at the Republic Beach; the beach house is handicapped accessible and a hard surface walkway allows those with disabilities access to the beach and dock area at Republic Beach.

Improvements need to be made at Republic Beach to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. The Township needs to install handicapped accessible picnic tables at Republic Beach. Handicapped accessible vault toilets and picnic tables need to be installed at Moose Rapid Campgrounds.

#### **8.5 Future Recreational Developments**

After discussion with various community groups and interested residents, the following have been identified as possible recreation facilities to be developed:

- The Township has recently purchased the majority of an entire block in Republic across from Munson Park and would like to develop a town square. The facility would serve as a welcome center to visitors and include facilities for group gatherings and serve as the southern hub of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail system expected to extend from Republic Township to Chocolay Township in Marquette County. During the winter months the site will enable snowmobilers to use the facility as a warming and gathering place.
  - Republic Township received a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant in 2009 to acquire the former Republic State Bank building to serve as the trailhead facility for the Iron Ore Heritage Trail system. At this time, purchase and renovations have not yet been completed.
- Republic Township, in conjunction with the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority, is developing a multi-use Iron Ore Heritage Trail. This trail will link the Township with other communities within the proposed trail system and will highlight Marquette County's rich iron ore heritage. Cliffs Natural Resources owns a 2,300 acre wetland preserve adjacent to the former Republic Mine. The Township and Cliffs Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Iron Ore Heritage

Recreation Authority, will attempt to create a system of barrier free non-motorized trails consistent with the stipulations of the conservation easement in place. The system of non-motorized trails within the Preserve will link with multi-use trails outside of the preserve. This system of trails as part of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail system will enhance the quality of life of the residents of Republic Township, encourage outdoor recreation, facilitate economic activity within the community and draw visitors and tourists from around the country to Republic Township.

- The baseball field fencing in Republic needs to be moved out 10 to 15 feet or the present fencing needs to be elevated.
- Acquisition and improvements to the Republic Mine Dam located near Republic is of recreational interest to the Township. Maintenance of the reservoir during the operation of the mine provided a body of water that homes and camps were developed along and the community centered many recreational activities near the reservoir. The reservoir is viewed as an asset to the community and refurbishing the dam will maintain this asset. Eventual Township ownership of the dam and surrounding property would give clear title and access in recognition of the multiple ways in which the community benefit, including:
  - Fishing is greatly improved with the help of water being held back by the dam;
  - The annual Fishing Derby sponsored by the local Sportsmen's Club is a big draw for the community, attracting many people from outside the area;
  - Without the spillway/dam, the tournament would not be possible;
  - Without the spillway/dam, Republic Beach would be lost;
  - A number of campgrounds and resorts have been established along the river and rely on water levels made possible by the spillway/dam
  - Homes and camps have been established along the river and rely on water levels made possible by the spillway/dam. Property values would be greatly reduced without the dam for these and other developments; and
  - Wildlife viewing is enjoyed by many area residents. Water levels made possible by the dam serve to attract wildlife to the area.
- To complement the Moose Rapids rustic campground, a sanitary dumping station could be constructed in Republic. The dumping station would connect to the existing municipal sewer system in place.

- To provide for an increased sense of community between Republic and South Republic, a bike path/pedestrian walkway could be constructed. The route could be located along the Michigamme River, along M-94 or at another location.

### Action Plan

- Acquire historic “Republic State Bank” on the northeast corner of the Town Square site and renovate as a trail head for the Iron Ore Heritage Trail and to provide support facilities for Munson Park and School Lake.
  - Utilize Township Funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants
- Develop pavilion on Town Square site; develop handicapped access to School Lake with fishing pier and viewing platforms.
  - Utilize Township funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants
- Non-motorized trail system for hiking, biking and bird watching within the Cliffs Natural Resources wetland preserve including parking, landscaping, bathroom facilities and a kiosk with information and maps.
  - Utilize Township funds, private funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants
- Sewage dumping station
- Improvements to Republic Beach facilities
  - Utilize Township funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants
- Ensure historic water level of the Michigamme River basin through stabilization of water flow.
  - Utilize Township funds, private funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants
- Bike/pedestrian path connecting Republic and South Republic
  - Utilize Township funds and MDNR Trust Fund Grants or MDOT Transportation Enhancement Grants

## 8.6 Historic Sites

Heritage tourism, or tourism oriented toward the cultural legacy of an area, is becoming increasingly popular. Heritage tourism involves visiting historical sites to gain an appreciation of the past. Special historical significance is recognized through listings of the State or National Register of Historic Places. Properties may receive designation from both. Identification and preservation of historical sites can enhance a community’s awareness of its past. There is one Township historical site currently on the State and National Register of Historic Places listed below.

- [M-95 \(old\) /Michigamme River Bridge](#)

The Michigamme River Bridge is located about two miles south of Witch Lake. This concrete arch bridge spans the Michigamme River on an abandoned segment of M-95. The crossing is situated immediately west of the current alignment of the highway, immediately north of the Dickinson County line. The structure is comprised of two filled

spandrel arches, with elliptically shaped, continuous arch rings. The date "1910" is inscribed on one of the guardrails. Now situated on a private road, the Michigamme River Bridge is in unaltered, though deteriorating condition.

## **8.7 Issues and Opportunities**

Natural features throughout Republic Township provide a variety of year-round active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Republic Township has an updated 5-year recreation plan approved by the MDNR, which allows the Township to apply for MDNR Trust Fund grants. The Township has identified several priorities for recreational development. Grant funding has been secured for the purchase of the old Republic State Bank and further funding should be pursued to begin the proposed improvements.

The Township should continue its support of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail and the Republic Wetlands to provide a wide array of recreational opportunities to residents and visitors in Republic Township.

All current and future recreation sites should be developed to achieve maximum benefits for all users, including compliance with the ADA. This could include the upgrade of play areas, removal of uneven surfaces and sidewalk obstructions, and procurement of additional wheel-chair accessible picnic tables. Creation of new recreation areas to address the interests of the younger and senior generations and those with special needs is necessary.

The Township possesses numerous historical sites, several recognized by the State Historic Registers. Grant funding could be pursued to restore and preserve these pieces of cultural history. With the increasing popularity of heritage tourism, promotion of cultural attractions could bring a boost to tourism and to visits from residents.

Environmentally safe recreation via responsible behavior should be promoted throughout the Township, in order to preserve recreation and natural areas.

Republic Township and its abundance of natural and recreation areas could become a popular destination for eco-tourism with proper promotion.