

Bates Township, MI

MASTER PLAN 2019-2039



Adopted by:

Bates Township Planning Commission, April 29, 2019
Bates Township Board of Trustees, June 12, 2019

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Foreword

This document is the initial comprehensive master plan for Bates Township. In 2014, the Bates Township Board of Commissioners and subsequently its Planning Commission committed to develop a new 20-year Master Plan to guide growth in conjunction with our existing zoning ordinance. This document serves that purpose.

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With a mission to foster stable and diversified economies in the Western Upper Peninsula, WUPPDR provides technical assistance, information services, and grants administration and implementation in the counties of Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon.

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Note on capitalization: The word “township,” when used alone in lowercase, refers to Bates Township and its characteristics generally. When capitalized and used alone, “Township” refers to the Bates Township government specifically.

1. Purpose and Basis for Planning

Urban Planning

Urban or city planning has evolved over the course of hundreds of years. The field began with artistic physical design of cities in antiquity, a paradigm that continued on and off through the 1800s. Modern urban planning began around the turn of the 20th century, when the focus shifted toward support of legal control of development with the advent of zoning.

Today's comprehensive or "master" planning, which is the focus of this document, consists of broad guidance of future development through a tiered implementation system. Generally, issues are identified, broad goals are set, and several manageable objectives are identified to satisfy each goal (in some cases, not all three tiers are necessary). Then specific actions are identified to implement the objectives. Any actions pertaining to public works infrastructure such as roads become part of a capital improvements program. This is where the initiatives in a master plan become visible to the public and have a direct impact on budgeting.

Master planning is usually conducted over a 20- to 30-year horizon, with smaller updates more frequently. This helps communities make decisions that are best for the long term.

Zoning

As a practical matter, a plan is often developed primarily to be the basis of a zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is a legal mechanism to control land use along with characteristics of lots and buildings. In some cases, use zoning has been displaced or supplemented by form-based zoning, which regulates external building characteristics rather than the activities that take place inside the buildings. Regardless of the type, zoning promotes stability in a community, especially where land values are concerned. Studies have shown that zoning tends to increase land value.

Zoning is implemented through law and gives local officials the police power to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of residents and landowners. Though zoning can be controversial in regulating activities of landowners on their own property, it is generally accepted as necessary to protect the rights of others.

Basis in Michigan

City planning was first authorized by the State of Michigan in the 1931 Municipal Planning Act. In 2008, this antiquated law, which existed alongside separate laws authorizing township and county planning, was replaced by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Zoning, first authorized in 1921, was reauthorized in the 2006 Zoning Enabling Act. A master or comprehensive plan is required in order to conduct zoning. A Planning Commission is required by statute to develop a master plan.

2. History of Bates Township and Surrounding Area

The area of present-day Bates Township was occupied by Native Americans prior to the arrival of White settlers, who were drawn to the area *en masse* by opportunities for farming, logging and iron mining in the late 1800s.

Iron County, Michigan, was originally the hunting and fishing grounds for the Ojibwa Indians who migrated here from the New England states area. The development and admission of states to the Union ultimately led to the establishment of Michigan, which in 1836 was carved out of the Northwest Territory. The severance of the Upper Peninsula from the territory of Wisconsin was important to the border county of Iron. Captain Cram made early boundary surveys in 1840 and was followed by William Burt and his crews to complete town and range lines in the late 1840s and early 1850s. These surveys found outcroppings of iron ore and dense forests, both of which would become essential elements to the economy of the county.

Iron ore was first discovered by Harvey Mellon in Stambaugh in 1851. Extension of an important rail line facilitated migration of prospective miners to the region. Unlike the predominantly Cornish miners who flocked to Houghton County (Houghton, Hancock, Calumet, Laurium, Red Jacket, *et al*) to what quickly became known as the “Copper Country”, Bates Township was settled by a diverse group of settlers who were eager to farm as well as to work in mining or logging. This ethnic diversity set the tone for generations to come.

As with many districts in Michigan and other developing American states, Upper Peninsula county and municipal boundaries shifted over time as populations expanded and the demand for land, with a corresponding desire for representation in local and regional government, developed. The southwest portion of Marquette County was originally Ely Township, but when Baraga County was formed in 1875, the land now forming Iron County was placed in the new Township of Republic.

Logging also began in 1875 in what now is Iron County, and lumber mills soon were another important contributor to the area’s economy. Iron ore exploration commenced in 1880, and the first iron mine, the Iron River Mine, opened soon after. The name of this mine subsequently was changed to the Riverton Mine. The location of this mine, which had several pits, shafts and drill holes across the span of its life, was between the current M-189 highway to the west and the Iron River to the east. (Several drill holes were made to the east of the Iron River as well.)

Railroads, particularly the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, responding to requests for passenger and freight service for the rapidly expanding, two-pronged economy, in 1882 completed northern lines from Stager to Iron River (to the west) and Crystal Falls (to the east). The village of Iron River was platted on the west bank of the Iron River and was the first settlement platted on the west side of Iron County.

In 1880, two important ore strikes were made: the first was by John Armstrong, who opened the Crystal Falls Mine along the Paint River, and the second was by Donald C. MacKinnon, who opened the Iron River (later renamed Riverton Mine) along the Iron River. These two mines were the economic foundation of the

fledgling county, and the success of the mines drew more workers, speculators and prospectors to the area, with 70 mines eventually producing ore in the county. In 1881, the first mine in the Bates area, an open-pit operation called the Nanaimo Mine, opened just west of what would become Bates Township and south of the Iron River with underground workings developed from one shaft in 1882 and a second open pit opened in 1884. Using modern landmarks, the location is roughly equidistant between the river, County Road 653, and major employer The Oldenburg Group. A settlement known as Nanaimo opened its post office on April 21, 1882; that post office was renamed Iron River on September 8, 1882.

Also in 1882, Crystal Falls Township and Iron River Township were formed after petitions were made to the Marquette County Board of Supervisors for representation. Pat E. Dunn, of Crystal Falls, and Daniel J. Lay, of Iron River Township, took their respective seats on the Marquette County Board of Supervisors on May 29, 1882. Economic development was primarily based on the mining and logging industries and was enriched by the diverse ethnic mixture of its citizens.

Iron County was established in September 1885, having been severed from Marquette County's Ely Township, established in 1871, and a small portion along the Brule River was taken from Menominee County. When Iron County was formed, five townships were created: Bates, Crystal Falls, Iron River, Felch, and Mastodon. Hematite and Mastodon townships were added during separate reapportionment efforts.

The following excerpt from Walter Helgemo's *Bates Township Legacy Book 1885-1985*, a comprehensive citizen history of the township with dozens of family remembrances compiled by a member of a pioneering family that still lives in and serves the township, describes the process by which Bates Township was founded:

The Township enjoyed the greatest early concentration of permanent farm settlements when good lands became available through an over-selection of grant lands. The settlers were mainly of sturdy Scandinavian stock that made their way to the frontier stopping center at Norway, Michigan in 1882. Several Polish families settled a short time later, as did one French family.

The families were large as a rule and many hardships were endured in carving the homes out of the wilderness. The head of the family usually worked in the mines and cleared lands and built buildings on weekends, when not working in the mines.

An election of temporary officers was held in the home of Olaf Helgemo on April 5, 1885; their purpose being to organize a Township. **One of the most remarkable things at that time is that these early settlers could not speak fluent English or read and write, but they were still able to organize a Township and keep records.** According to these early records, the same people held all the offices at different times, as there were not enough people available who had experience, which was learned as years passed and as they held offices.

The early years were very difficult and most food was taken from the soil. Land had to be grubbed by hand to plant a meager garden. Later, horses were used as the farmers cleared more land to raise livestock, grain, and vegetables.

It is noted in the early minutes that in 1885, ten births were listed; eight of Swedish parentage, one German and one French. Also regardless of how hard times were, the Township always had a Poor Fund to provide some type of help for the needy. Another note of interest: The Township Hall was built in 1907.

Two of the most prominent men in our Township who held many offices in the Township and later held offices of high esteem are Carl Lindquist, who has given a lot of information on the history of the Township and the late Victor Benson. Both were state representatives at one time.

There are many relatives and descendants of former office holders and pioneer families still living in the Township.

Although Iron County grew rapidly in the 1880s and early 1890s, the nationwide economic Panic of 1893 stifled further growth for some time. From 1889 to 1900, no ore was mined on the entire west side of the county, including in the mines near Bates Township and Iron River. During this period, residents turned to logging, which was less affected by external economic factors than was iron mining, and farming for employment and sustenance. Small logging railroads penetrated parts of western Iron County, allowing for harvesting of hardwood stands after the original pine had been removed in massive clear-cut operations.

The turn of the century saw the greatest period of growth for both Bates Township and Iron County, with a steady increase in the production of pig iron using the soft, phosphoric ores found around Iron River. New mines were developed at a rapid pace after ore was discovered outside of the Iron River valley at the James Mine in 1905. This area later became Mineral Hills. From 1905 to 1912, the number of mines increased from six to 16. The Village of Iron River installed a sewer system in 1905 and electric light facilities in 1908. The 1910 census showed a population of 7,816 on the west side of Iron County.

Table 2.1. Bates Township Census History

Census Year	Bates Twp.	Michigan	U.S.
1890	594	2,093,890	62,947,714
1900	402	2,420,982	76,212,168
1910	573	2,810,173	92,228,496
1920	1,181	3,668,412	106,021,537
1930	1,263	4,842,325	122,775,046
1940	1,278	5,256,106	132,164,569
1950	1,109	6,371,766	150,697,361
1960	1,224	7,823,194	179,323,175
1970	980	8,875,083	203,302,031
1980	1,003	9,262,078	226,545,805
1990	966	9,295,297	248,709,873
2000	1,021	9,938,444	281,421,906
2010	921	9,883,640	308,745,538

In the same vein, the Bates Township population, which had held at between 400 and 600 souls between 1890 and 1910, surged dramatically following World War I. In 1910, the U.S. Census showed a total of 573 residents in Bates Township; in 1920, that number was 1,181, nearly doubling in one decade. See **Table 2.1**. While this phenomenon was mirrored in many Northern locales and states, especially Detroit and Chicago, as the “Great Migration” of rural White Americans and Black Americans moved from Southern states for better-paying factory jobs, it is noteworthy that it occurred in small and distant places such as Bates Township as well.

After mining resurged in the early 1900s and logging remained steady and viable, Bates Township, Iron County and Iron River underwent a period of great prosperity during and after World War I, and the City of Iron River formally was incorporated in 1926. Swollen with a working population, the smaller communities that had developed around other area mines also were incorporated. The cities of Caspian, Gaastra, and Stambaugh were located just south of Iron River, and the Village of Mineral Hills was immediately north.

The cluster of towns around Iron River — Caspian, Stambaugh, Gaastra and Mineral Hills — were united by public transportation in 1913 when a street railway franchise was granted to the Iron River and Crystal Falls Street Railway Company. This 4½-mile line operated until 1921. The quick construction and decommissioning of this streetcar line (eight years of total service) reflected a nationwide pattern in the post-World War I era, where streetcar lines established in the 1900s and 1910s fell out of favor and were replaced by automobiles and road development. For example, in the 1910s, the Los Angeles metropolitan area boasted a comprehensive network of electric streetcars that had been entirely eradicated by 1930, giving rise to the “California car culture” in its absence.

Mineral Hills, located directly west of Bates Township, was a unique case – a wide-ranging village incorporated to encompass six distinct clusters of 12 houses each; each cluster was developed as housing for miners at a particular mine. These mine housing developments were known as “locations.” However, a business district never developed in Mineral Hills, and the community has changed little since its creation.

After the mining period ended, Iron County’s main industry became logging. While logging still plays an important role, general retail and service activities, largely in support of tourism, have become dominant. The City of Iron River attained, and retains to this day, unchallenged status as the area’s commercial center.

Unfortunately, as with the United States as a whole, the peak period of prosperity in Bates Township and surrounding environs was short-lived. The October 1929 stock market crash and the ensuing Great Depression forced the closing of most mines. Although some reopened at the beginning of World War II, the mining industry never again regained its earlier high level of production.

In 1935, Bates Township began the effort to establish a municipal water system. Work commenced the following year under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” make-work programs that provided sustenance wages in exchange for labor by otherwise unemployed citizens. Much of the Upper Peninsula’s infrastructure was developed by the WPA and sister agency Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). With all digging and pipe-laying performed manually,

the Bates water system took several years to construct, with Water Tank #1 built in 1937 and Tank #2 in 1958. According to *The Bates Township Legacy*, work on the project was "...completed some time after the end of the WPA program," which was terminated as all Americans joined the war production effort in 1942. As noted in *The Bates Township Legacy*, "**Bates Township is believed to be the first rural township in the State to have a piped water system.**"

Innovation and Bates Township were again hand-in-hand in the late 1970s, when township leaders discussed the possibility of creating a sewer ordinance and seeking the bonding capacity and available grants to design and construct a municipal sewer system. Bonds were accepted and grant funding was secured in 1977 and construction ensued in 1978. The Bates Legacy notes that "this project is believed to be the first rural sewer line in the State of Michigan".

In more recent times, it is important to recognize the impact the evolution of the cities near the southwest corner of Bates Township has had on the West Iron County economy. In 2000, after many years of study and piecemeal sharing of municipal services, the predominant City of Iron River consolidated with the City of Stambaugh and Village of Mineral Hills, resulting in a reduction from five to three adjoining municipalities. Iron River is now the overwhelming economic center of the county and has seen positive and negative impacts from consolidation, but regardless of the results it remains the first and only consolidated city in Michigan.

Meanwhile, adjacent to this urban environment, Bates Township, has evolved from a farming, mining and logging community with several small businesses and manufacturers to a comfortable bedroom community and prime destination for recreation, especially boating on its many lakes and snowmobiling on its network of trails that connect with other trails across the Upper Midwest.



Fantastic water resources and destination parks such as Sunset Lake (left) and the Township's Campground and Beach (inset) provide superlative recreational amenities for residents and visitors alike.

3. Planning Process

In spring 2012 the Bates Township Planning Commission discussed the need for a master plan for the township. It was determined that a master plan would be beneficial to justify and legally support any future zoning updates. It was ultimately decided that a survey of the landowners would be a good basis to begin this activity.

In July of 2012 a survey was sent to 1,120 property owners in Bates Township. The questionnaire contained 16 questions with 103 possible responses, not including any written notes. As many as 31,000 pieces of data could be captured.

By October 2012, we had received 304 returns – about a 27% rate, which is a better than average response rate. We separated sections of the returns and distributed them in early 2013 to Planning Commission members to review and comment. The results analysis was a topic of Planning Commission meetings for more than a year. For the most part, there were no major outstanding issues detected; most responses indicated the population generally was satisfied with the current state of the township.

We began discussions with WUPPDR for assistance with this project in 2014, with a target completion date in 2016. However, as unforeseen complications delayed the process, the new target date was moved into 2017.

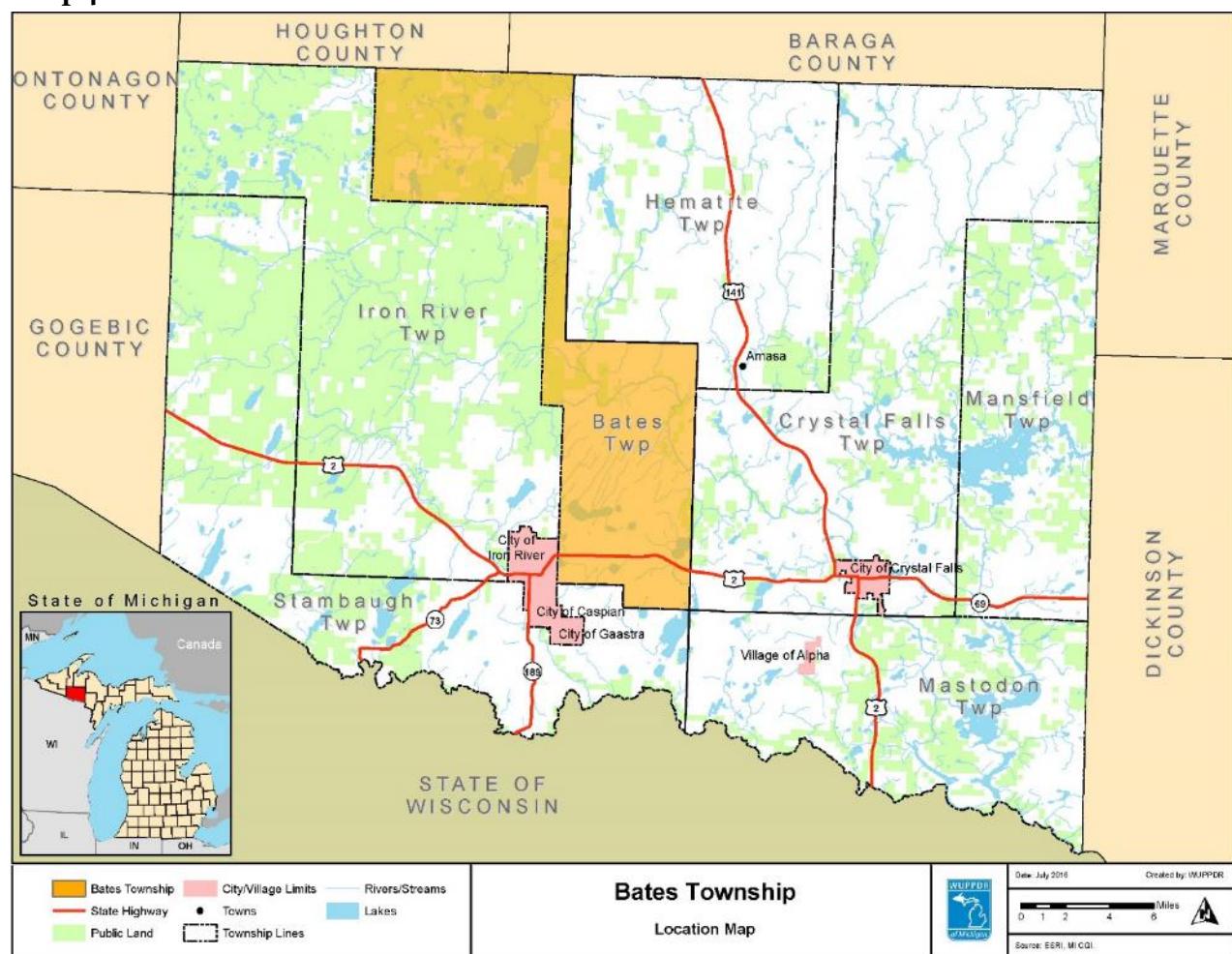
On July 26, 2017, the Planning Commission approved submission of the proposed master plan to the Township Board for review and comment. On August 9, 2017 the Bates Township Board approved distribution of the proposed plan and notified the Secretary of the Planning Commission, and required notifications were distributed to begin the 63-day review period.

Over the course of the review period and at the meeting initially held by the Planning Commission to adopt the plan, numerous comments were received from members of the public that warranted changes to the document. Following substantial modification of the proposed plan and further review, the Planning Commission approved the plan on April 29, 2019 contingent on minor changes. Final adoption of the plan was on June 12, 2019 by the Bates Township Board of Trustees, after which it was distributed to required parties.

4. Social Geography

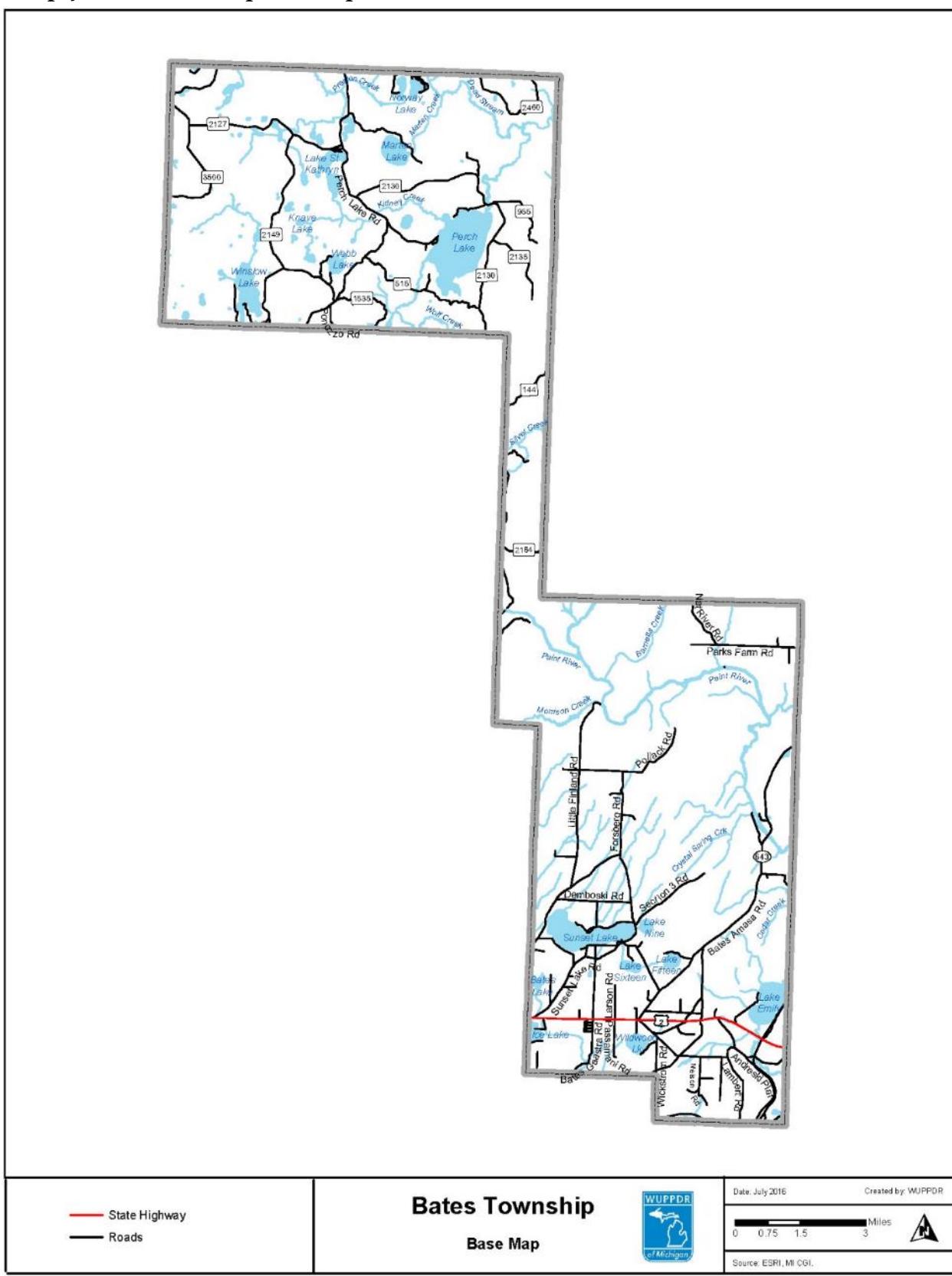
Bates Township is located in central Iron County in the southwestern Upper Peninsula of Michigan (U.P.) (see **Maps 4.1** and **4.2**). The Township is bordered by Houghton and Baraga Counties on the north; Iron River Township and the City of Iron River, which is the area's nexus of shopping, healthcare, and professional services, on the west; Stambaugh Township on the south; and Crystal Falls and Hematite Townships on the east. With a population of approximately 3,000, Iron River is the largest of four cities in Iron County (population 11,817) and the thirteenth-largest U.P. city. Crystal Falls, the population hub of the county's east side, is the county seat.

Map 4.1. Location and Context



Bates Township is located a long distance from major population centers. Green Bay and Wausau, Wisconsin, the nearest metropolitan areas, both are approximately a two-and-a-half-hour drive from the southern edge of the township.

Map 4.2. Bates Township Base Map



General Demographics

The 2010 U.S. Census population of Bates Township was 921 (population density of 8 persons per square mile), a decrease of 9.8 percent from the 2000 population of 1,021. Within Iron County, a similar decline of 10.1 percent occurred from 2000 to 2010. All other nearby local governments also lost large percentages of population, led by Iron River Township, which fell 35.2 percent from 2000 to 2010. Bates and Stambaugh townships and the City of Caspian lost slightly smaller percentages. The only local jurisdictions in the county that did not see a net reduction in residents during this time period were Crystal Falls Township, with a 1.2 percent gain, and the City of Gaastra, with a 2.4 percent gain. The 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) placed the Bates Township population at 1,055, but since ACS is an estimate based on a population sample, it is not directly comparable to the actual population counts of the 2000 and 2010 Census.

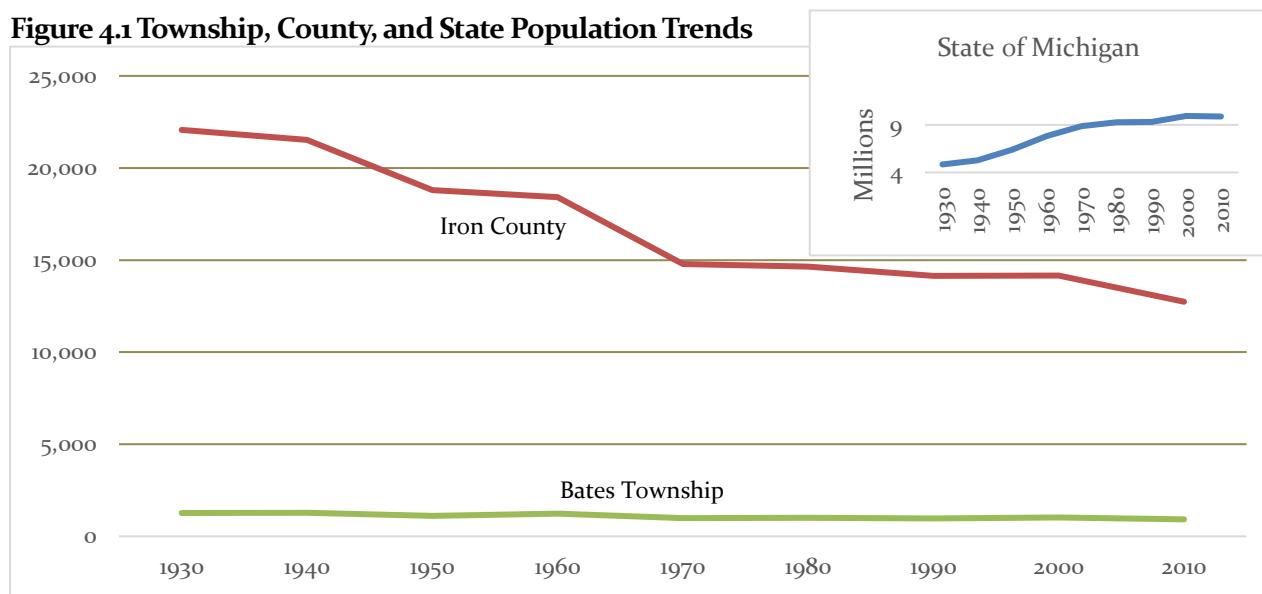
The Iron County population peaked in 1920. In Bates Township, the population more than doubled from 1910 (573) to 1920 (1,181) and peaked in 1940 at 1,278. In both the township and the county, populations declined steadily from 1960 to 2010, with 24.8 percent and 31.2 percent respective declines. The sharpest declines, of approximately 20 percent in both the township and the county, occurred from 1960 to 1970 at the close of the iron mining era. From 1930 to 2010, Michigan's population grew by 104.1 percent whereas Bates Township's dropped by 19.2 percent and Iron County's by 43.2 percent. See **Table 4.1** and **Figure 4.1**.

Table 4.1. Township, County, and State Population Trends

		1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Total Change
Twp.	Population	1,263	1,278	1,109	1,224	980	1,003	966	1,021	921	-252
	Chg. from Prev. Yr.	X	1.2%	-13.2%	10.4%	-19.9%	2.4%	-3.7%	5.7%	-9.8%	-19.2%
Co.	Population	20,805	20,243	17,692	17,184	13,813	13,635	13,175	13,138	11,817	-8,988
	Chg. from Prev. Yr.	X	-2.7%	-12.6%	-2.9%	-19.6%	-1.3%	-3.4%	-0.3%	-10.1%	-43.2%
MI	Population (1,000s)	4,842	5,256	6,372	7,823	8,875	9,262	9,295	9,938	9,884	5,042
	Chg. from Prev. Yr.	X	8.6%	21.2%	22.8%	13.4%	4.4%	0.4%	6.9%	-0.5%	104.1%

Iron County's population is projected to be fairly stable in the foreseeable future. The Michigan Department of Transportation in 2017 predicts a population declining to 11,380 in 2020; increasing to 11,496 in 2025, 11,619 in 2030, and 11,630 in 2035; and then declining to 11,469 in 2040 and 11,202 in 2045. This suggests a net decline of only 178 persons over the course of 38 years. Another source projects that Iron County's population will decline to 10,615 in 2030 and 9,208 in 2060.¹ Projections are not available at the township level.

¹ ProximityOne: Retrieved February 14, 2017 from <http://proximityone.com/demographics2060.htm>

Figure 4.1 Township, County, and State Population Trends

The township's age profile is disproportionately old. Bates Township residents age 65 and older comprise 26.1 percent of the township's population (see **Table 4.2**) and the median age is 52.3 – virtually the same as Iron County, where 26.3 percent are 65 or older and the median age is 51.9. In the State of Michigan, only 11.7 percent of the population is 65 or older, and the median age is 38.9. This disparity has **significant implications for the township**, which faces continuing aging of the population as younger residents leave for job opportunities elsewhere. It is important to consider differing policy priorities for the township and the state based on the age factor.

Table 4.2. Population by Age (2010)

Age (Years)	Bates		State %
	#	%	
Under 5	37	4.0	6.0
5-19	139	15.1	20.5
20-34	96	10.5	20.8
35-49	152	16.5	20.5
50-64	257	27.9	20.4
65-84	219	23.7	9.8
85 or more	21	2.3	1.9
Total	921		

Another indication of the township's relative age is the fact that 77.3 percent of owner-occupied homes in the township contain no children aged 18 or under. This reflects the proportion of homes owned by residents past child-bearing age.

The township's population is 97.2 percent White; minority races are far less prevalent than in the state and nation. (Ironically, the township's first voting settlers nearly all were immigrants. Historical records of the first meetings in 1885 contained no native English speakers.) The remaining single-race categories are tied among American Indian and Alaska Native (0.4 percent), Asian (0.4 percent), and Some Other Race (0.5 percent). Thirteen residents, or 1.4 percent, are classified as Two or More Races. See **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3. Population by Race (2010)

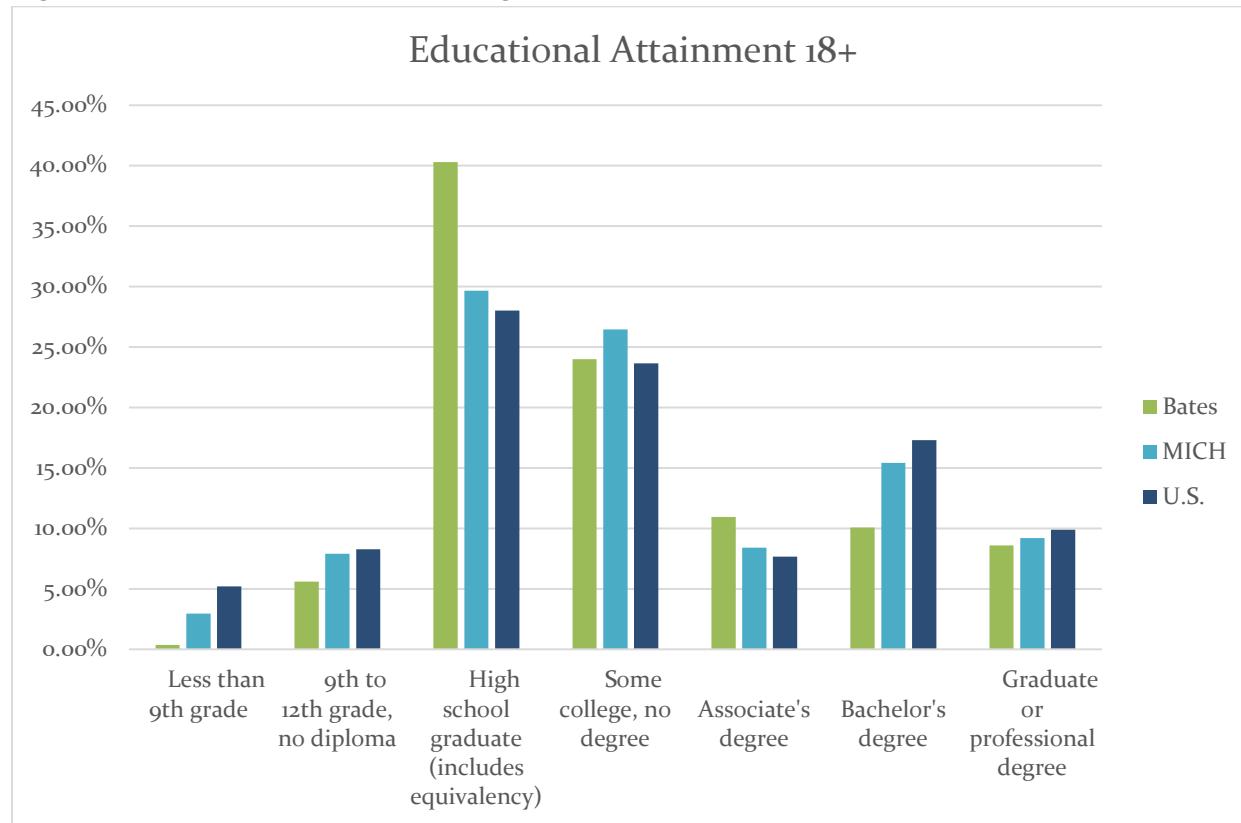
Race	Bates Township		State %	U.S. %
	#	%		
One Race	908	98.6	97.7	97.1
White	895	97.2	78.9	72.4
Black or African American	0	---	14.2	12.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	4	0.4	0.6	0.9
Asian	4	0.4	2.4	4.8
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	---	0.0	0.2
Some Other Race	5	0.5	1.5	6.2
Two or More Races (White + race indicated)	13	1.4	2.3	2.9
American Indian and Alaska Native	4	0.4	0.6	0.5
Asian	1	0.1	0.4	0.5
Black or African American	1	0.1	0.7	0.6
Some Other Race	0	---	0.2	0.6
Total	921			
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	15	1.6	4.4	16.3
Not Hispanic or Latino	906	98.4	95.6	83.7

Education

As of 2015, the population 18 years old and over in Bates Township is 804. Of these, 756, or 94.0 percent, have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and 151, or 18.8 percent, have a bachelor's degree or higher. The latter figure is significantly lower than the state, where 26.6 percent have a bachelor's degree or above, and lower still compared to the U.S., where degreeed adults total 29.2 percent of the population. However, the percentage of residents with at least a high school diploma (94.0%) is considerably higher than the state (89.1%) and even more so the U.S. (86.5%). See **Figure 4.2** and **Table 4.4**.

West Iron County Public Schools serves roughly the western half of the county, including Bates Township, Iron River, and its contiguous cities. The closest bordering school districts in Michigan are Watersmeet Township School District in Gogebic County to the west and Forest Park School District, which covers the eastern half of Iron County including Crystal Falls. The Michigan Schools of Choice program allows students the option to attend public schools outside of their district of residence.

West Iron County Public Schools is a consolidated system composed of the former Bates Township School, Iron River Public Schools, and the Stambaugh Township Schools. The district was consolidated in 1967. The school district encompasses the cities of Iron River, Caspian, Gaastra, and the townships of Bates, Iron River, and Stambaugh. There are approximately 560 square miles in the district, which requires a considerable amount of transportation, especially when calculated on a cost-per-pupil basis.

Figure 4.2. Educational Attainment, Age 18 and Older (2015 ACS)

Enrollment in the school system has steadily declined for years in rough parallel with the overall population decline in Iron County and Bates Township. At various times in its history, Bates Township was the site of up to 12 different schools, most of them one-room schools instituted in the peak mining industry years (1890-1915) and closed in the Great Depression era if not before. For example, the onetime Benson School, which was located at the junction of Section 14 Road and Bates-Amasa Road, was built in 1893 and closed in 1931. This is indicative of the severe economic decline in rural America at the onset of the Great Depression, when families left established homes to find any form of employment.

Table 4.4. Educational Attainment (2015 ACS)

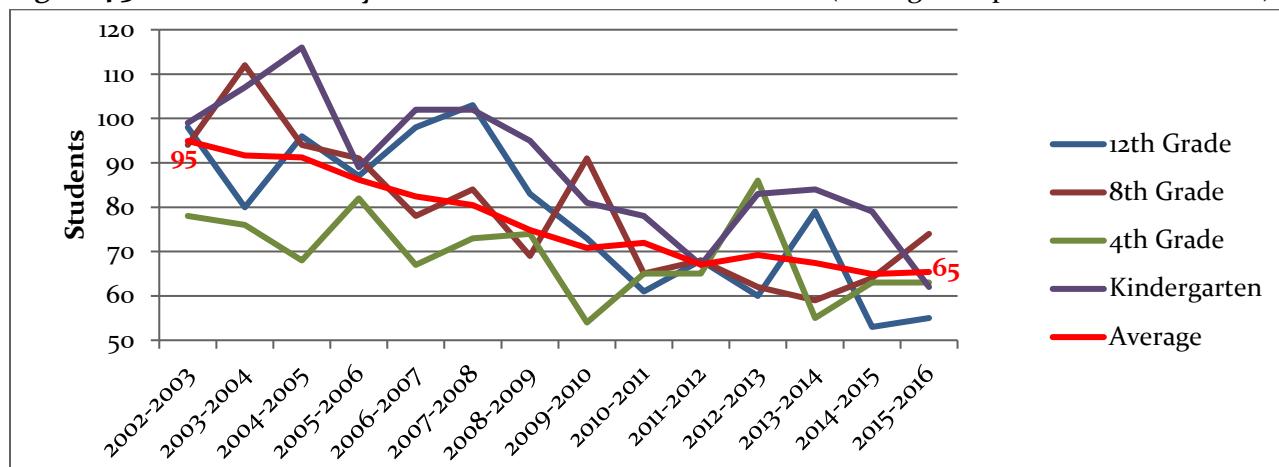
Highest Level of Attainment	Bates		State %	U.S. %
	#	%		
Less than 9 th grade	3	0.4	3.0	5.2
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	45	5.6	7.9	8.3
High school graduate/ equivalency	324	40.3	29.7	28.0
Some college, no degree	193	24.0	26.5	23.7
Associate's degree	88	10.9	8.4	7.7
Bachelor's degree	81	10.1	15.4	17.3
Graduate or professional degree	69	8.6	9.2	9.9
Total persons 18 and older	804			

The size of the average K-12 grade class in West Iron County Schools dropped from 95 in 2002-2003 to 65 in 2015-2016 – a loss of 31.6 percent of students. Students in 12th grade have fluctuated during that time period, but the long-term loss in that grade has been 43 students or 43.9 percent, sliding most significantly between 2007 and 2011. Continuing declines in enrollments are to be expected in parallel with a decline in the general population and aging of the population. See **Figure 4.3**.



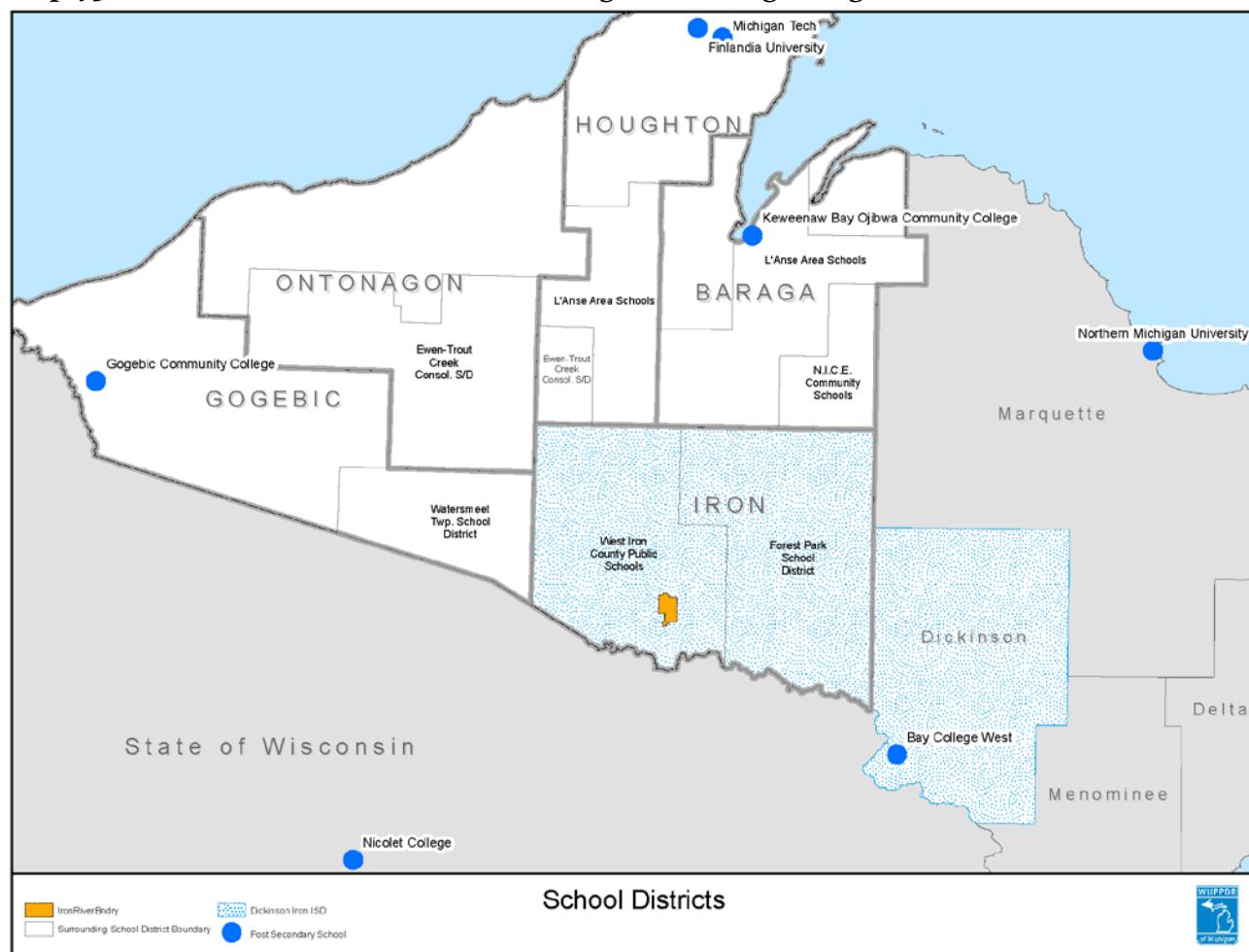
The Bates Township School property opened in 1959 and has continued in use since that time. It is used for early childhood education, township functions, and other economically beneficial uses now.

Figure 4.3. West Iron County Public Schools Enrollment Trends (Michigan Department of Education)



The township is located a long distance from institutions of higher education. The closest are community and technical colleges: Bay College West in Iron Mountain, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College in L'Anse, and Nicolet College in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Others a longer distance away include Bay College's main campus in Escanaba, Finlandia University in Hancock, Gogebic Community College's main campus in Ironwood and Copper Country Center in Houghton, Michigan Technological University in Houghton, and Northern Michigan University in Marquette. See **Map 4.3**.

Map 4.3. School Districts and Institutions of Higher Learning in Region



Housing and Household Characteristics

As of the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS), there are 775 housing units in the township, 442 (58.1 percent) of which are occupied. Of occupied units, 426 (96.4 percent) are owner-occupied, and 16 (3.6 percent) are renter-occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate is 4.7 percent, and the rental vacancy rate is 15.8 percent.

The township's housing stock has a desirable cross-section of aged and contemporary properties, with 27.9 percent of units built since 1980 and 15.0 percent built in 2000 or later. In Iron River, only 1.7 percent were built in 2000 or later. In Bates Township, 41.3 percent of homes serve as seasonal housing. See **Table 4.5**.

Table 4.5. Housing Year Built and Occupancy (2015 ACS)

Characteristic	Bates Township		State %	U.S. %
	#	%		
Total Units	775			
Year Built				
1939 or earlier	137	17.7	15.2	13.2
1940-1959	151	19.5	23.3	16.0
1960-1979	155	20.0	27.5	26.6
1980-1999	216	27.9	22.9	27.7
2000-2009	113	14.6	10.3	14.9
2010 or later	3	0.4	0.8	1.6
Units in Structure (Occupied)				
1 unit, detached	677	87.4		
1 unit, attached	0	---		
2 units	6	0.8		
3 or 4 units	0	---		
5 to 9 units	0	---		
10 to 19 units	0	---		
20 or more units	0	---		
Mobile home	92	11.9		
Total Units	775			
Occupied	442	58.5		
Vacant	333	44.1		
For rent	3	0.4		
Rented, not occupied	0	---		
For sale only	21	2.8		
Sold, not occupied	0	---		
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	282	37.4		
All other vacant units	27	3.6		

The median value of owner-occupied units in Bates Township is \$99,100. This is lower than the Michigan median of \$122,400 but compares favorably with neighboring Iron River Township (\$81,500) and the cities of Caspian, Gaastra, and Iron River (\$56,900, \$43,800, and \$46,700, respectively). Approximately half of owner-occupied units in Bates Township are valued \$100,000 or more. See **Table 4.6.** Median gross rent in Bates Township is \$688, higher than most neighboring districts and Iron County but lower than the state's \$783.

Table 4.6. Housing Value (2015 ACS)

Value	Bates Twp.		State %	U.S. %
	#	%		
Less than \$50,000	67	15.7%	15.2	9.1
\$50,000-99,999	147	34.5%	24.3	15.3
\$100,000-149,999	50	11.7%	19.7	15.8
\$150,000-199,999	67	15.7%	15.9	15.1
\$200,000-299,999	48	11.3%	14.1	18.3
\$300,000-499,999	27	6.3%	7.4	15.8
\$500,000-999,999	14	3.3%	2.3	8.4
\$1 million or greater	6	1.4%	0.6	2.2
Total Owner-Occupied Units	426			

The State Equalized Value (SEV) of real property in Bates Township for tax year 2017 is \$71,641,708. This accounts for 11.6 percent of Iron County's SEV of \$619,659,110.

The township's average household size is 2.3 persons. One or more vehicles are available in 97.5 percent of households, and three or more vehicles are available to 22.4 percent of households.

Bates Township's median household income is \$41,458 and per capita income is \$27,052. The township per capita income is \$445 higher than the state's, a difference of 1.6 percent. See **Table 4.7**.

Table 4.7. Income (2015 ACS)

	Bates	State	U.S.
Median Household Income	\$41,458	\$49,576	\$53,889
Per Capita Income	\$27,052	\$26,607	\$28,930

5. Physical Geography

Iron County is one of only two Upper Peninsula counties (adjacent Dickinson County being the other) that have no Great Lakes frontage. However, Iron County is similar to the rest of the U.P. in most other physical respects. The county is primarily forested and includes a great deal of federal, state, and commercial forestland used for both recreation and timber harvesting. The county also is interspersed with lakes of a wide range of sizes, as well as hundreds of miles of streams, many of which are regionally renowned for trout fishing. Land cover in the township is shown in **Map 5.1**.

Bates Township is composed of 80,990.12 acres or 131.4 square miles in central Iron County, of which 125.4 square miles (95.5 percent) is land and 5.9 square miles (4.5 percent) is water. The township is composed of three segments: a rectangle at the south which contains the township's U.S. 2 corridor; a one-mile-wide, eight-miles-long north/south corridor; and another rectangle to the north. The north rectangle is staggered to the west of the south rectangle. The reasons or logic for this irregular shape are not recorded and are beyond the scope of this project. However, it is reasonable to presume that the irregular borders stem from land section boundaries and quarrels among prominent landowners in the late 1800s, at the time when Iron County was apportioned from Menominee and Marquette counties.

Weather and Climate

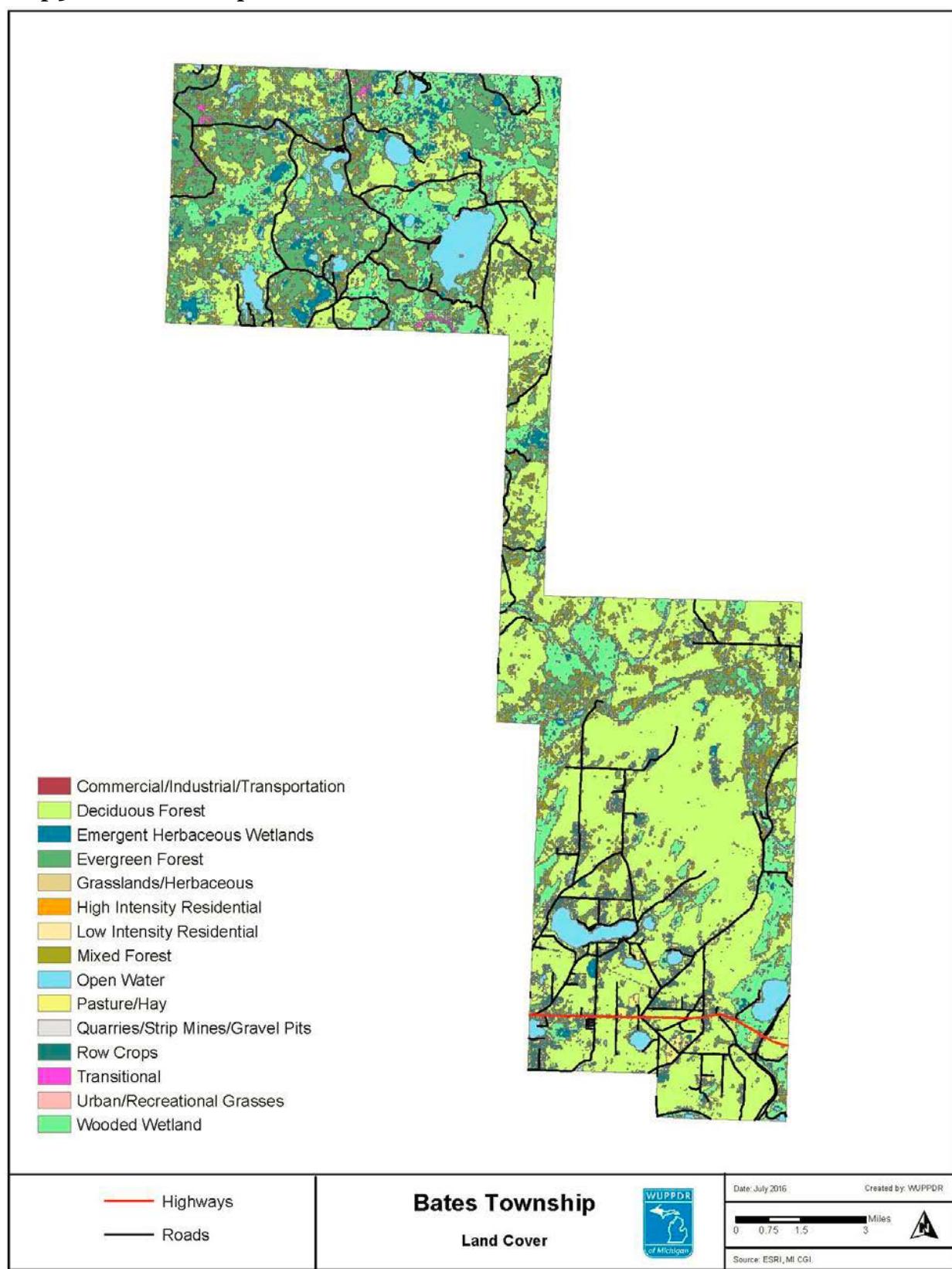
Bates Township lies within the Lake Michigan and Lake Superior watersheds, which have a typical humid continental climate characterized by cold, dry winters and warm, humid summers. Despite the long and cold winters, the township has a growing season of 84 days. Average temperatures in January are a low of -1 degree Fahrenheit and high of 21 degrees Fahrenheit. In July average temperatures are a low of 50 and high of 77. The township receives an annual average of 32 inches of rain and 102 inches of snowfall. Weather data is measured at the nearby NOAA Weather Station located in Stambaugh, south of Bates Township. See **Table 5.1**. Unlike many other areas of the Upper Peninsula, Bates Township generally is not subject to weather patterns affected by Lake Superior or Lake Michigan because of its inland location. However, that inland location subjects the township to a relatively extreme range of temperatures.

Table 5.1. Climate (Stambaugh NOAA Weather Station)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Ann.
Temp. (°F)	Avg	10.1	13.1	23.2	38.2	50.4	59.6	63.6	61.6	53.0	41.4	29.0	15.7
	High	21.4	26.1	36.3	51.1	64.0	72.9	76.9	75.0	66.1	53.0	37.8	25.1
	Low	-1.2	0.1	10.1	25.3	36.7	46.3	50.3	48.2	40.0	29.9	20.1	6.4
Precip. (in.)	0.98	0.85	1.53	2.24	3.03	3.73	4.17	3.10	3.55	3.08	1.88	1.29	29.43

Waters and Wetlands

Bates Township is home to numerous lakes, ponds and streams. Perch Lake, in the northern rectangle of the township, is the largest water body, with 994 acres. Sunset Lake, with 530 acres, is the largest in the southern

Map 5.1. Bates Township Land Cover

rectangle and second-largest in the township. The most prominent stream in the township, and the recipient of many small tributaries, is the Paint River, a blue-ribbon trout stream. The township contains no flood zones mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and thus the township does not participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

The aquifer underlying the township is composed of glacial deposits, has generally moderate yield, and is the source of the township's drinking water. Groundwater is an integral natural system, impacting factors such as water suitability of area streams for fish species and serving as the basis for sensitive wetland areas and land cover types overall.

Wetlands are present throughout the township and are most prevalent in the northern rectangle. Most wetlands throughout the township are of the wooded variety, but there are many pockets of emergent herbaceous wetlands as well, predominantly in the northern rectangle. In the southern rectangle, the "Chicagon Slough" is the most prominent wetland area.

Geology and Soils

The glacial veneer of Bates Township contains a great variety of mineral materials, arranged in many topographic expressions, under all conditions of drainage, and modified by long-term variations in cover and climate. In general, glacial deposits are composed of poorly consolidated sands and gravels covered by relatively stable boulder till. The glaciated subsurface is the main determinant of the water table, which, as earlier mentioned, is sufficient for production of water for drinking and other human uses.

Myriad soil types have evolved from the heterogeneous glacial parent material and the individual conditions governing soil profile development. The soils of Bates Township generally can be defined as the Amasa-Stambaugh Organic Type, which is deep, nearly level, and gently sloping with medium and moderately coarse textured subsoils and poorly drained organic soils. Soil is predominantly silt loam that varies from stony to very stony. Despite its stoniness, this soil type is fertile enough to support crop cultivation in many areas of the township.

Metal and Mineral Resources

Bates Township is located on the west end of the Menominee Iron Range, which was a major source of the nation's iron ore in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This range has been inactive for many decades but potentially could become economically viable again if the value of iron ore rises significantly. Underground mines, prevalent in the vicinity of Iron River, are not comprehensively documented in other areas and could be present in areas of the township. Thus, subsidence is an ongoing risk in historic mining areas in and near the township. Indeed, in 1996 an opening 12 meters in diameter and about 27 meters deep to bedrock suddenly appeared in the vicinity of several homes in Amasa Location near the township.

Topography

With a large land area spanning a variety of geographic features, and owing to the terrain's glacial heritage, topography varies widely within the township. Elevation ranges from 1,512 to 1,637 feet. In planning for land development, consideration of topography is important to reduce risks and environmental impacts associated with construction on steep slopes. See **Map 5.2**.

Vegetation

Woods are the dominant vegetation in most of the township. The most common trees are northern hardwoods, pine, balsam, fir, and spruce. Deciduous hardwoods are predominant in the southern rectangle and evergreen conifers in the northern rectangle. Agriculture consists mainly of feeder cattle and raising of grains. Opportunities exist for the expansion of agricultural production of locally distributed foods.

Wildlife

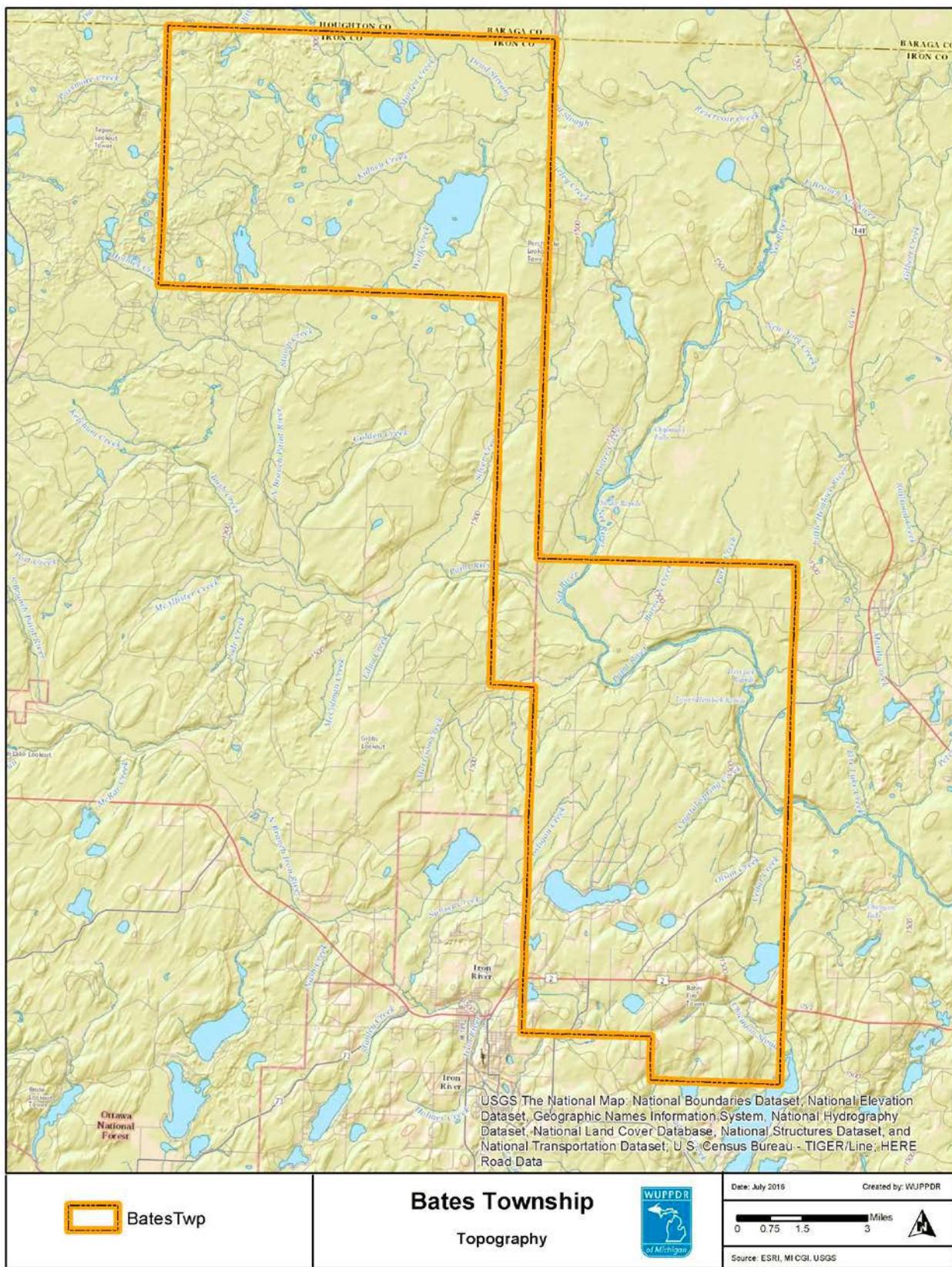
Wildlife species found in Iron County are similar to those found in other Western Upper Peninsula locales. Large mammals such as white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, wolf, and bobcat live in the area, as well as small mammals such as squirrel, rabbit, chipmunk, raccoon, otter, beaver, skunk, and fox. Seasonal and year-round bird species are seen in the area including songbirds, shore and water birds, and game birds. The rural nature of most of Bates Township offers an environment in which many species of mammals and birds can live, with deer-vehicle interactions a steadily increasing problem on township roads. Dominant fish species in the township include brook trout in the Paint River and bass, muskellunge (muskie), walleye, crappie, pike, and bluegill in Emily Lake. Webb Lake in the township's northern section is one of the Brook Trout Better Fishing Waters as designated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The southern branch of the Paint River is one of six Blue Ribbon Trout Streams designated by the Michigan DNR in Iron County. To earn this designation, a stream must be one of Michigan's best trout streams; be able to support excellent stocks of wild resident trout; has the physical characteristics to permit fly casting yet shallow enough to wade; produce a diverse insect life and good fly hatches; has earned a reputation for providing an excellent trout fishing experience; and has excellent water quality. The 18-mile-long Paint River also is designated an official Wild and Scenic River by the DNR, one of 13 such rivers in the Upper Peninsula.

Environmental Contamination

No significant incidences of contamination are known in Bates Township. According to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality database of leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs), there are no open cases for underground storage tank leaks in the township.

Map 5.2. Bates Township Topography



6. Land Use/Zoning and Development

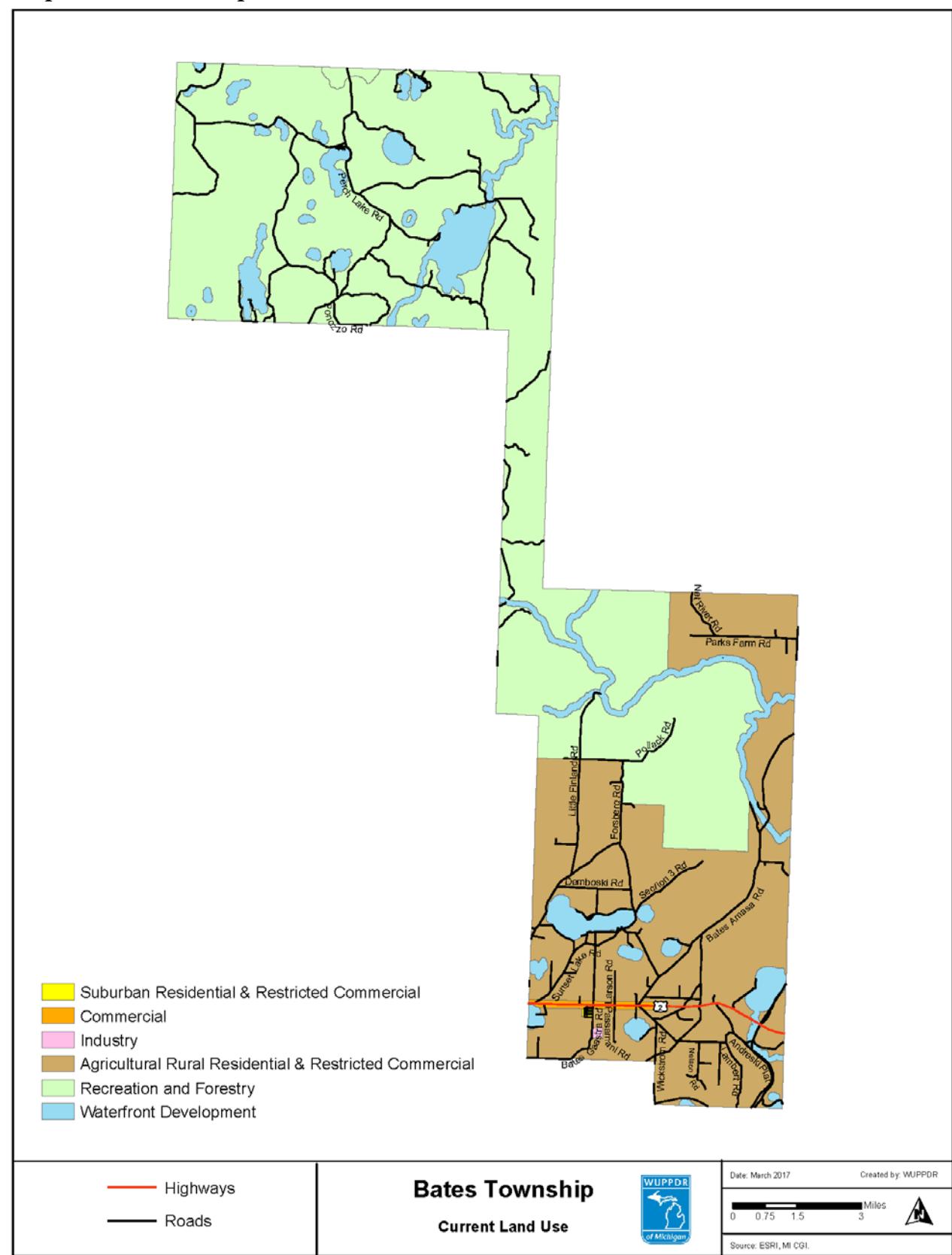
General Composition

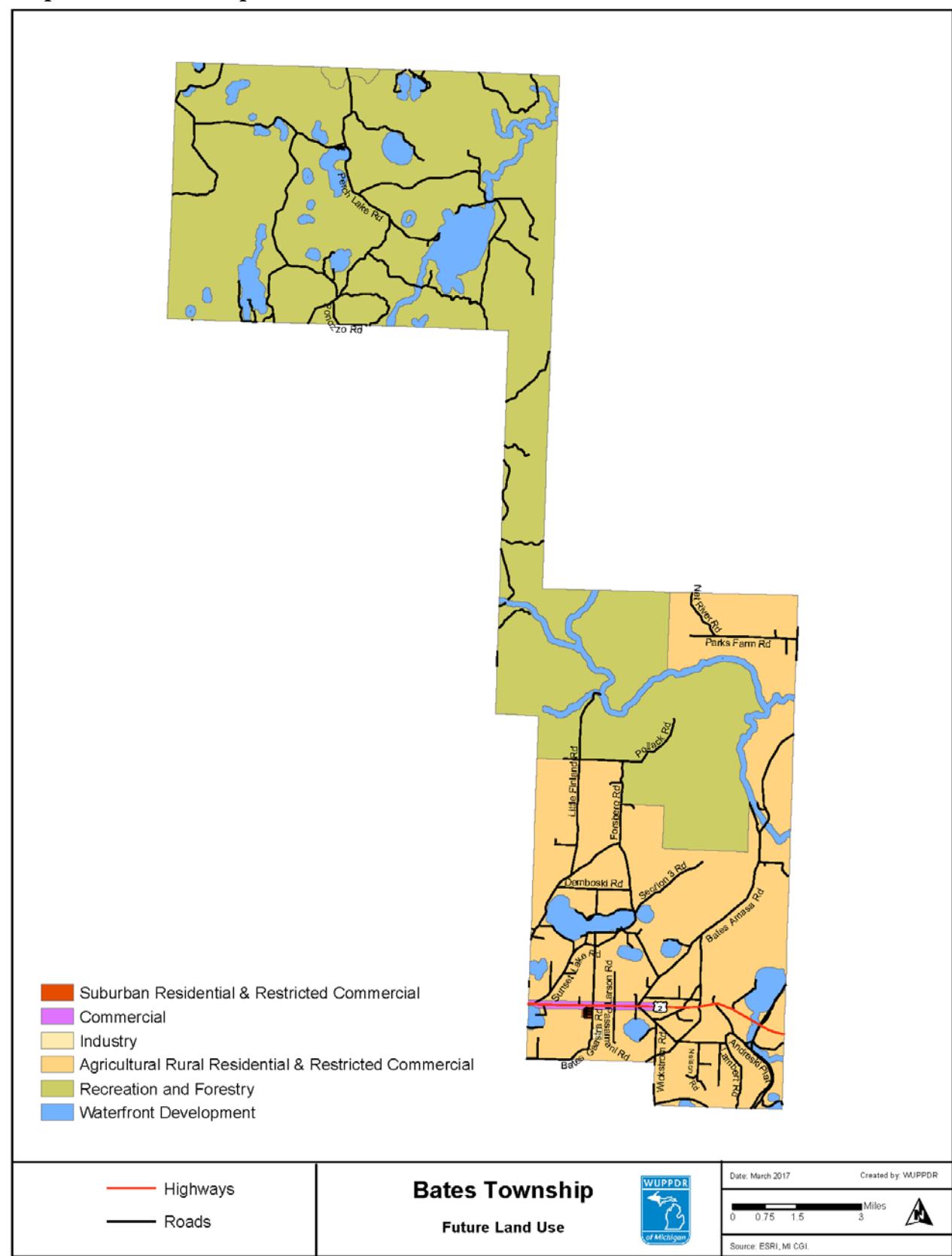
Bates Township's irregular shape makes for an uncommon variety of land development within the township. The two rectangles are distinct districts: the heavily forested and largely rural and recreational northern section and the somewhat more developed and populated southern section. Current and future land use are depicted in **Maps 6.1** and **6.2** respectively.

The northern rectangle of Bates Township is composed mainly of federal forestland. Along with forest, this area includes numerous wetlands, lakes, and streams. The northern rectangle has little population, especially by year-round residents, but there are a number of private camps. These characteristics extend down the corridor that connects the township's northern and southern rectangles and are also fairly prominent within the southern rectangle.

In addition to undeveloped forest and wetlands, the northern half of the southern rectangle includes some agricultural and less densely forested lands. This area is intersected by many streams, dominated by the Paint River and a major tributary, the Hemlock. The southern half of this rectangle is the most developed part of the township, being transected west-east by Highway U.S. 2. The township's only significant commercial development, including the single largest employer in the township, manufacturing concern Lester Detterbeck Enterprises Ltd., is located on the west end of this highway segment. Most year-round residents also live in this southernmost area. Many residents live along the numerous lakes here, which are more highly developed than the northern lakes that are mainly surrounded by public land.



Map 6.1. Bates Township Current Land Use

Map 6.2. Bates Township Future Land Use

Building Trends

Table 7.1 shows building permit activity for Bates Township in 2012-2016 and for Iron County in 2012-2013. No clear pattern is indicated in the township over the course of the five years. The township's percentage of total 2012-2013 county building permits, at 10.8 percent, compares to the township's 2010 percentage of county population at 7.8 percent and the township's 2012-2013 average percentage of county state equalized value at 11.5 percent.

Table 7.1. Building Permits Issued

Year	Residential Home Construction		Commercial/Agricultural		Other*	
	Township	County	Township	County	Township	County
2016	3	Not available	1	Not available	27	Not available
2015	1		2		32	
2014	2		0		23	
2013	0	22	1	12	20	190
2012	4	34	1	10	28	231
2012-2016 Total	10		5		130	

* Mobile homes, room additions/remodels/repairs, recreational buildings, and outbuildings

Zoning

Zoning is a type of regulation of urban land development. The practice began in the early 1900s to combat problems such as congestion and pollution associated with urbanization. Zoning was institutionalized in 1926 when a Village of Euclid, Ohio ordinance was upheld as constitutional by the United States Supreme Court. Now known as *Euclidean zoning*, this type of ordinance dictates placement of properties within a municipality based on use – primarily commercial, residential, and industrial.

The premise for Euclidean zoning is that such uses are incompatible and thus must be restricted to separate geographic areas. This type of zoning also usually includes dimensional requirements such as lot size, setbacks (distance between structures and lot lines), and floor area ratio (total floor area of structures in proportion to lot size). Euclidian zoning is currently in effect in Bates Township, and it is by far the most common type of zoning in the United States.

Current Zoning in Bates Township

Bates Township's existing zoning ordinance was mostly recently revised in June 2010, in accordance and compliance with Public Act 110 of 2006, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, as amended. Descriptions of each current zoning district follow, and locations are shown in **Maps 6.3** and **6.4**. Each district also has dimensional requirements and restrictions for lots and buildings which are best reviewed within the zoning ordinance itself. In essence, the 2010 zoning ordinance is relatively straightforward. Bates Township is largely rural and non-industrial with a small range of land uses, and the ordinance reflects these characteristics.

The following zoning districts are currently in effect in Bates Township:

- ♦ Suburban Residential and Restricted Commercial District (R-1)
- ♦ Agricultural Rural Residential and Restricted Commercial District (R-2)
- ♦ Lake Areas (L-1) & (L-2)
- ♦ River Areas (S-1)
- ♦ Recreation & Forestry (R-F)
- ♦ Industry (I)
- ♦ Commercial (C)

Suburban Residential and Restricted Commercial District (R-1)

The stated purpose of the Residential and Restricted Commercial District zoning (**R-1**) in Bates Township “is to provide areas dedicated primarily to residential uses in which each dwelling is located on an individual lot or premises adequate in size and shape to provide for safe water supply and sewage disposal facilities, to minimize hazards of spreading fires, and to require setback from the public thoroughfare to facilitate safe exit from and entrance to the premises.”

This district further holds that “since various other uses of land, buildings and structures for retail stores and shops, commercial enterprises, professional and other services are generally accepted as compatible with residential use, if properly integrated, the inclusion of such uses is provided by Special Approval.”

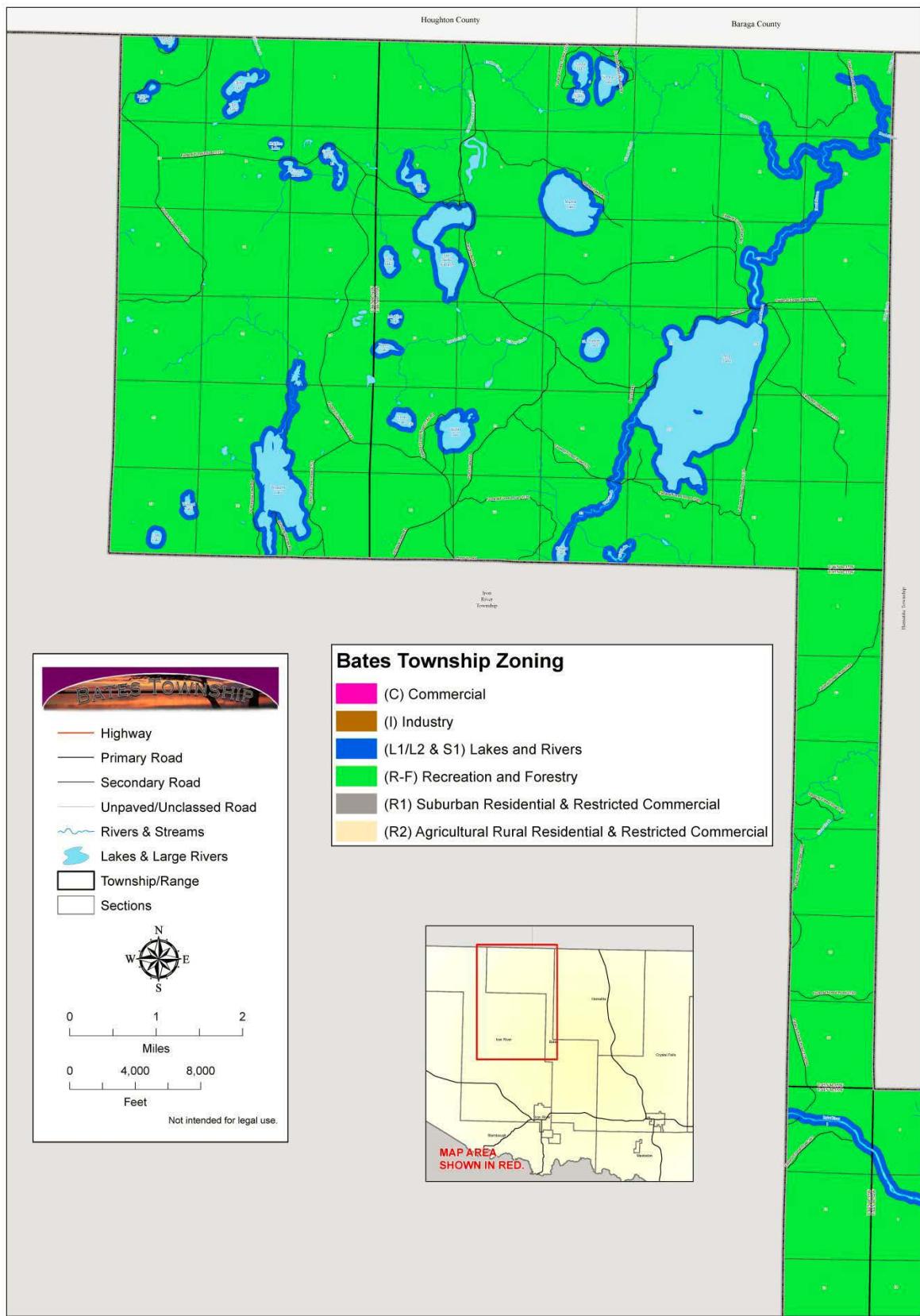
Unrestricted uses within this category are single-family dwellings and associated garages; publicly owned parks and campgrounds; and traditionally home-based businesses.

The only R-1 zoning in the township is an area of approximately four blocks at the southwest corner of the U.S. 2/Bates-Gaastra Road/Bates-Amasa Road intersection, known as Rogers Location. Most homes in this area are on two and one-half fully built-out suburban-style residential blocks. One additional platted block is mostly undeveloped.

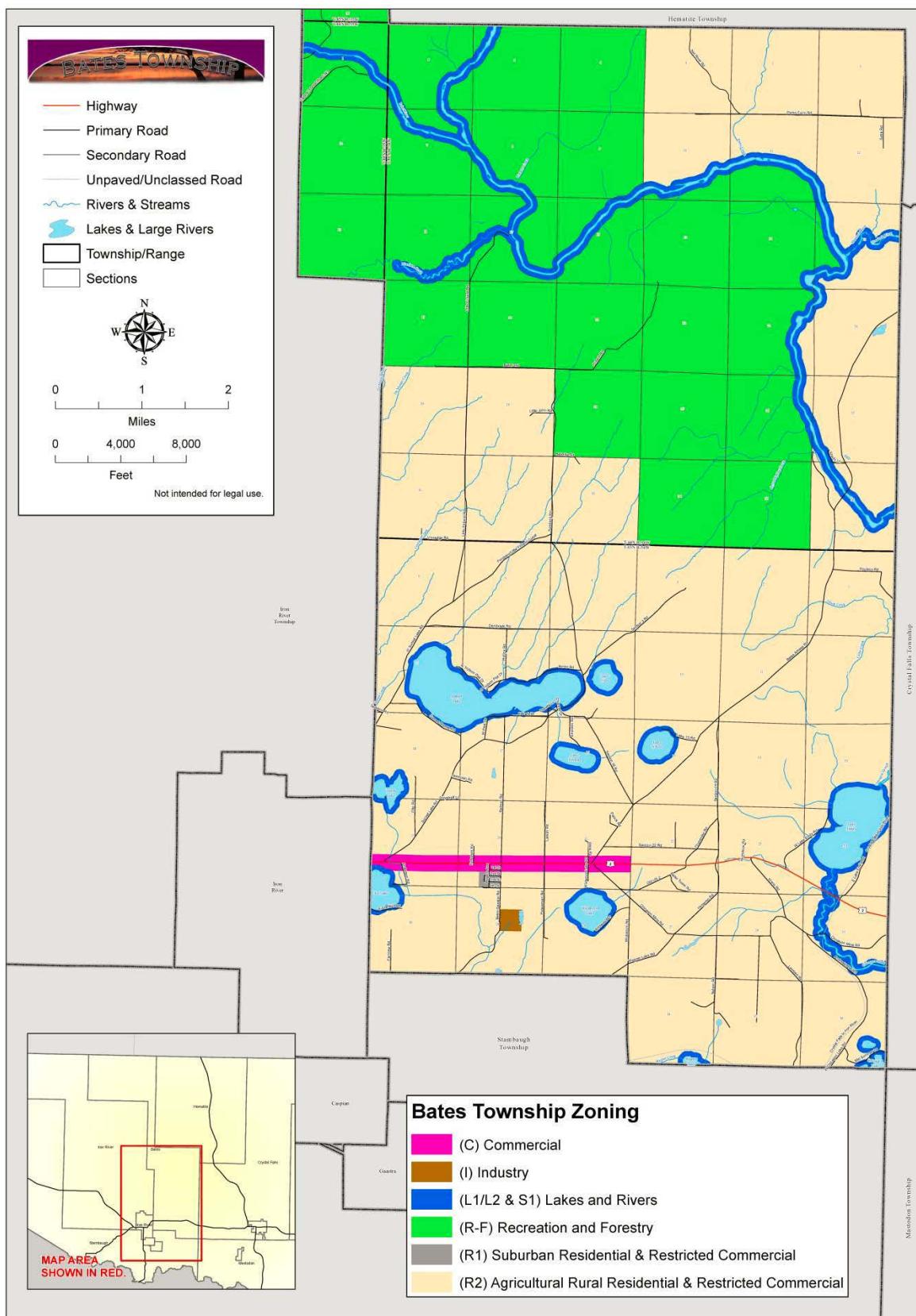
Agricultural Rural Residential and Restricted Commercial District (R-2)

The stated purpose of the Agricultural and Rural Residential and Restricted Commercial district zoning (**R-2**) in Bates Township “is to provide areas, other than lake properties...dedicated primarily to Agricultural Rural Residential uses.” This category offers a far wider range of uses, including restaurants, mobile homes and public buildings, than does the R-1 category. As with R-1, certain other uses are permitted by Special Approval. The primary difference between R-1 zoning and R-2 zoning involves the accepted primary uses and special approval uses within the two categories, with R-1 being the more restrictive. Opportunities exist for the township to promote and market the agricultural development component available within properties zoned R-2. The majority of the southern rectangle of the township is zoned R-2.

Map 6.3. Bates Township Zoning (Northern Section)



Map 6.4. Bates Township Zoning (Southern Section)



Lake Areas and River Areas Restricted Commercial District (L-1), (L-2), & (S-1)

There are three separate zoning classifications for waterfront properties in Bates Township. Such properties are defined as “any property or lot that is fronting a lake, river or stream, extending to the 300-foot minimum lot depth requirement, or to a neighbor’s existing property line or a public road crossing, when less than the required 300 feet.” One common characteristic is the prohibition on locating multi-family buildings on any waterfront property. Brief descriptions of these districts follow.

The two identified types of Lake Areas (**L-1**, **L-2**) are generally similar in their zoning ordinances, with primary differences involving minimums of no less than 150 feet (**L-1**) and 200 feet (**L-2**) of lake frontage on lots located in these districts. The districts differ by geography, with **L-1** covering the more populated southern section of the township (defined as “the area south of Baker Road, (and its East – West Section line extensions)” and **L-2** having dominion above the area north of Baker Road. Zoning for River Areas (**S-1**) is

operationally identical to that for Lake Area **L-2**, with **S-1** in force for properties in proximity to a river and **L-2** in force for properties in proximity to lakes and ponds. Greenbelt requirements, sanitary waste system prohibitions, and setback requirements are among the noted restrictions.

The stated purpose of these zoning districts in Bates Township is “to promote the integrity of the lakes and rivers within Bates Township while preserving the quality of recreational use of the inland waters; to protect the quality of the lakes by discouraging excess uses; to promote the ecological balance of the waters by limiting incompatible land use, protection of wetlands associated with the waters; to maintain the natural beauty of the lakes and streams by minimizing man-made adjustments to the established shorelines, and to prevent all funneling type waterfront developments.”

Zones **L-1**, **L-2**, and **S-1** include a total of 7,945 acres for waterfront development, with 4,239 of this being land and the remainder being water body acreage, and 106.8 miles of linear water frontage.

Recreation and Forestry Areas District (R-F)

As depicted in **Maps 6.3** and **6.4** and detailed elsewhere in this chapter, all non-waterfront areas of the northern section of Bates Township, and roughly 40% of the southern section, are zoned for Recreation and Forestry (**R-F**). As stated in the 2010 zoning ordinance, “These districts are designed to promote the proper use, enjoyment and conservation of the forest, water, land, topographic, geologic, historic, and other resources of the township, peculiarly adapted to recreational uses and/or forest industries. To facilitate such uses, certain commercial and other services may be permitted by Special Approval.” Another intent of this district is to encourage good forest practices.

Industry District (I)

The use of **I** is predicated on “Performance Standards” detailed later in that section of the zoning ordinance. These standards prescribe that “Before the issuance of any building or occupancy permit

in this Zone, the applicant shall sign an agreement that the use of the property will meet the following Performance Standards, or that any violation of these standards in subsequent operation will be corrected." The standards include instructions on storage and handling of flammable materials; prohibitions against "deleterious effects" resulting from property usage; restrictions regarding liquid and solid waste; and a restriction on glare in excess of 1.5-foot candles. Other restrictions, covered in the "Prohibited Uses" section of this ordinance, prohibit the storage of bulk chemicals, petroleum products, and other materials. Only one parcel, along Bates-Gaastra Road south of Rogers Location, is zoned I.

Commercial Zoning (C)

A relatively small land area in the southern section of Bates Township is zoned C, or commercial, and most commercial development conforms to the zoned district, which "is intended primarily for shopping and merchandising activities." This area is limited to a strip "within 500 feet of each side of the established right of way of Highway U.S. 2" that runs from the township's western edge at the

intersection of Ice Lake Road and U.S. 2 past Rogers Location, Mapleton and the Township Hall to just east of County Road 643, also known as the Bates-Amasa Cutoff, at the western boundary of Larson Park, also known as the Larson Memorial Rest Stop on U.S. 2.

Despite the unique designation of this district, little commercial activity actually occurs within it. Several onetime and current businesses display advertising along the district; status of occupancy and business operations, however, requires field evaluation. Some vacated buildings and facilities previously provided retail and dining services as well as machining and small engine repair.

Zone Plan

Though the Zoning Ordinance should be evaluated on an ongoing basis, this plan serves as a one-time guide for zoning changes. The township intends to continue traditional land use zoning in accordance with this plan, though newer zoning trends such as mixed-use designations and physical form standards will be considered. The existing ordinance, adopted in 2010, is consistent with the township's current goals for development. New development should be planned in accordance with existing zoning districts and the zoning map at time of this plan's adoption, as these represent both the current state of and future intentions for land use.

➤ Issues, Goals, and Actions

Following are several land use and development issues identified by residents, township officials, and other stakeholders, followed next by actions that may be taken to address them.

Issue: The township seeks to maintain and strengthen its position against blighted and vacant properties.

- *Goal:* Actively take steps to eliminate or revitalize long-term blighted properties, especially along the Highway U.S. 2 corridor.
 - Action: Maintain our structured mechanism and staffing to enforce nuisance regulations.
 - Action: Locate, contact, and, if necessary, take legal action against negligent absentee property owners.
 - Action: Seek funding from agencies such as MSHDA, MEDC, and Michigan Land Bank for blight elimination.
 - Action: Explore formation of, and active participation in, a county or regional land bank, which allows for acquisition and demolition of blighted properties.
- *Goal:* Promote highest and best use of lots that are vacant and/or have had blight eliminated.
 - Action: Develop an inventory of vacant commercially zoned properties.
 - Action: Consider temporary tax incentives/abatements for property owners willing to construct new facilities or to rent facilities to new businesses, especially entrepreneurs
 - Action: Seek funding from agencies such as United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for housing rehabilitation.
- *Goal:* Ensure public properties are adequately maintained and attractive.
 - Action: Improve appearance of public properties via municipal efforts or volunteer beautification.
 - Action: Provide acceptable funding levels for upkeep of local parks, lakes and streams.



The roadside park on U.S. 2, also known as Larson Park, is (according to some sources) the very first roadside park and rest stop in the United States and perhaps the world. Its highway location makes it an important historical marker in Bates Township.

Issue: The township would like to promote housing types suitable for all population groups.

- *Goal:* Promote the township to firms and agencies that develop and administer senior citizen housing.
 - Action: Seek partnerships with government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to develop housing for senior citizens on available township properties.
 - Action: Retain the services of a grant writer to identify and pursue funding for innovative housing development opportunities.

Issue: Local food access and production is a priority and can be supported by policies for the use of land located within the township.

- *Goal:* Support growing and processing more food within properties in the township.
 - Action: Solicit existing farms, especially Michigan Centennial Farms, located within the township to grow and market crops for human food consumption, especially organics.
 - Action: Encourage establishment of a facility for processing dairy and other products.
 - Action: Establish, develop and promote community gardens that are highly accessible to township residents. Begin with a pilot project on a suitable vacant lot to gauge interest, then expand that program (presuming initial success) using other township properties.



Farms, including and especially the five Michigan Centennial Farms (one shown at left, inset) in Bates Township, could be incented to grow and sell food locally to connect with and capitalize upon the sustainable, locally grown/sourced foods movement.

7. Community Services and Facilities

In Bates Township, public services are provided by a combination of the county and township governments and through contractual arrangements with other units of government. Community services and facilities to deliver them are inventoried and described below and displayed in **Map 7.1**.

General Government

Bates Township is a Michigan general law township operating under an elected Board of Trustees that meets once a month. As with most rural Michigan townships, with a limited tax base and few truly local resources, the township is reliant on Iron County for many services, including law enforcement and social services. The following commissions and committees are responsible for particular aspects of local government:

- **Board of Review:** state-mandated appointed body that meets at least annually to reevaluate property tax assessments upon the requests of individual taxpayers.
- **Planning Commission:** formed under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 and responsible for developing this Master Plan, as well as zoning; meets quarterly
- **West Iron County Fire Board:** independently oversees the West Iron County Volunteer Fire Department; includes representatives of the local units of government in the district
- **West Iron District Library Board:** independently administer the West Iron District Library; includes representatives of the local governments in the district
- **Zoning Board of Appeals:** meets as needed

The Bates Township Hall, the headquarters of township government, is located at the corner of U.S. 2 and County Road 643 (Bates-Amasa Cutoff). This is the location of several offices: Zoning Administrator, Clerk, Supervisor, and Treasurer. Public Works operations and offices are housed in a nearby building on the same property. The Township Hall building, constructed in 1907, is a wooden structure that has been continually renovated and upgraded to extend its useful life.

Services and Facilities

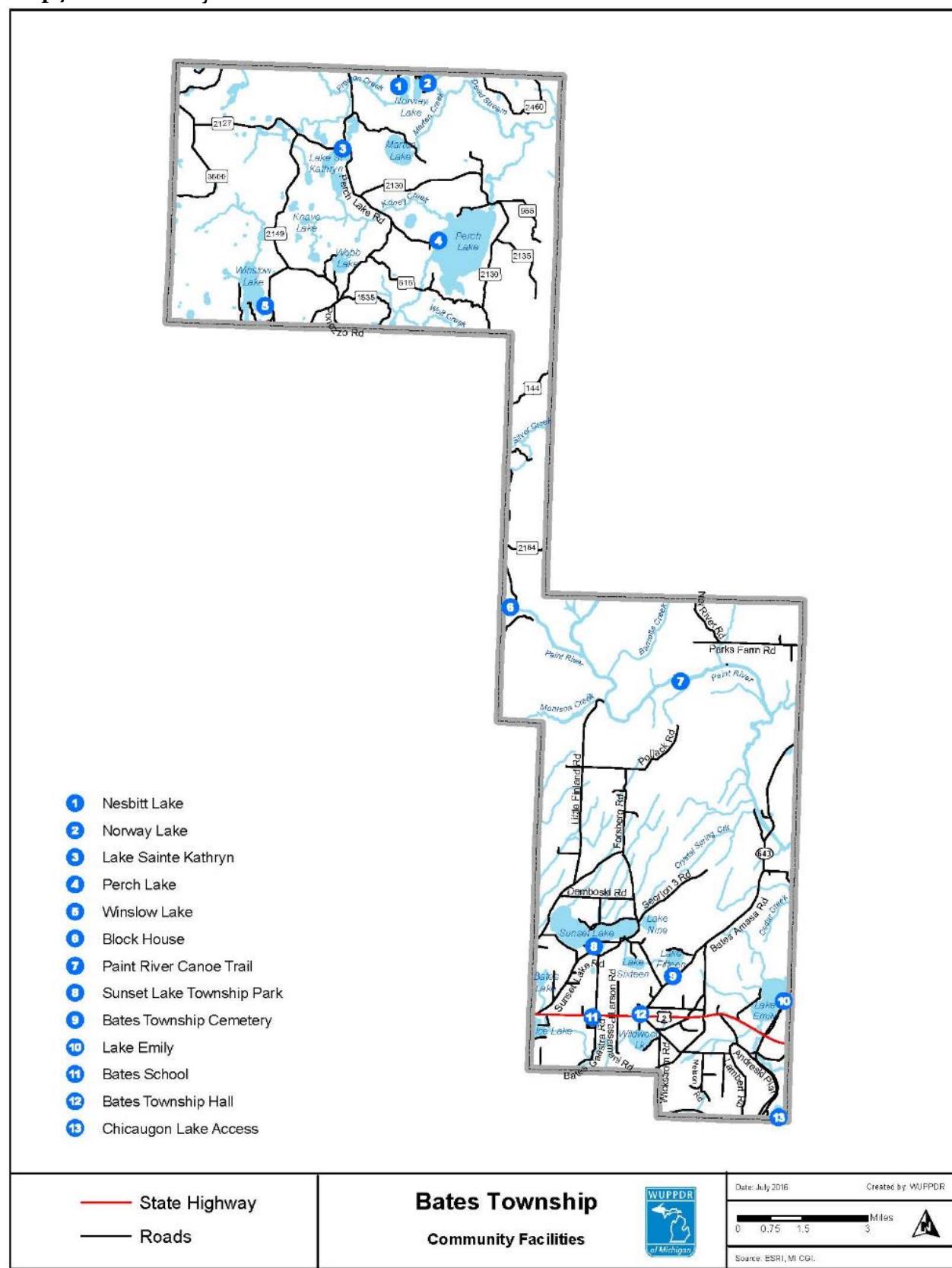
Public Works

The Department of Public Works is located behind the Township Hall at the intersection of U.S. 2 and County Road 643, the Bates-Amasa Cutoff. Responsibilities of the department include property maintenance, water and sewer system operations and maintenance, parks and recreation, and maintenance of the cemetery and other grounds.

Solid Waste Collection and Recycling

Solid waste collection is not provided by Bates Township. Individuals may contact Great American Disposal or Waste Management Inc. to arrange their own solid waste and recycling services.

Map 7.1. Community Services and Facilities



Water and Sewer

As noted earlier in this plan, Bates Township is perhaps the first rural township in the state to offer its own water service and sanitary sewer service. These utilities, which the Water and Sewer Department is responsible for, are available in the southern part of the township and serve the majority of the township population. The water and sanitary sewer systems are stable and provide sufficient capacity for foreseeable growth. The water and sewer systems are continually being maintained and updated as needed.

Areas of the township that lack water and sewer service are served by wells and septic systems regulated by the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department.

Emergency and Medical Services

Police

By statute, the main law enforcement provider in Bates Township is the Iron County Sheriff's Department, based in Crystal Falls. Michigan State Police, with a post in Iron Mountain, also provides services. Operating near the township is the municipal police departments of Iron River.

Ambulance

Ambulance service in Iron County and a large surrounding area is provided by Aspirus MedEvac. The service employs 20 professionally trained staff members: 11 Paramedics certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Pediatric Advanced Life Support and trained in First Trauma Care as well as 9 Emergency Medical Technicians certified in Basic Life Support and trained in First Trauma Care. Four fully equipped Advanced Life Support ambulances are maintained in Iron River and Crystal Falls. Air ambulance is also available.

Hospitals

Aspirus Iron River, located within that city, includes a full-service hospital, clinic, and other facilities. The hospital offers 25 inpatient beds, including three intensive care beds; six outpatient beds; two operating room suites; an emergency department and walk-in clinic; and a variety of diagnostic services. The health system employs 18 active and 34 consulting physicians. Regional medical centers are located in Marquette, Michigan and Wausau, Wisconsin (Aspirus' main facility).

Fire

The West Iron County Volunteer Fire Department is based in Iron River. The department provides fire response to an area of 569 square miles in the western part of the county and has a staff of approximately 35. Nearby is the Caspian-Gaastra Volunteer Fire Department, which provides fire response to those two cities and has approximately the same level of staffing as West Iron County. The two departments, as well as three others in the county and others in surrounding areas, have mutual aid agreements to bolster each other's capacity.

Utilities

AT&T

AT&T provides voice telephone service and DSL broadband internet within the township.

DTE Energy

DTE is the natural gas utility serving the township. Service is available along the U.S. 2 corridor.

Fast-Air Internet, Inc.

Fast-Air Internet, Inc. is a broadband provider that utilizes fixed wireless technology to broadcast signals between access points on local towers and residential subscriber units. Service is available anywhere there is a line of sight between a tower and a subscriber location.

Iron River Co-Op TV

Iron River Co-Op TV, based in that city, provides cable television, internet, and digital telephone within the township.

Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO) and Upper Michigan Energy Resources Corporation (UMERC)

UPPCO and UMERC are electrical utilities operating within the township.

Other Services and Facilities in the Area

Dickinson-Iron Community Services Agency

DICSA is a Community Action Agency formed under federal law to administer programs promoting self-sufficiency of those in the community. Programs include housing assistance, food assistance, and transportation. Many of these services are offered at senior centers in Iron River and Crystal Falls. DICSA's main office is located in Iron Mountain. DICSA is operated by U.P. Community Services, Inc.

Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

The Health Department's Iron County office is located in Iron River. The Health Department is responsible for community health services, such as immunizations and testing; environmental health, including food inspection; and preparedness for public health emergencies.

Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District (ISD)

Intermediate School Districts in Michigan are special district governments that provide supporting programs and services for local school districts. Iron County is paired with Dickinson County in its ISD, and the main office is located in Kingsford.

Iron County Fairgrounds

The fairgrounds are located just north of downtown Iron River. The fairgrounds host several annual events including the Iron County Fair and the regionally significant Upper Peninsula Championship Rodeo, both in summer.

Michigan State University Extension

The Extension provides a wide variety of programs and services to counties throughout the state, covering topics from agriculture to economic development. The 4-H youth development organization is one of the Extension's best-known and most popular functions. Iron County is located in Region 1, which covers the western half of the Upper Peninsula. The county's 4-H coordinator is based in the Iron County Courthouse in Crystal Falls.

Each county has access to all Extension services throughout its region, but counties have some flexibility in selecting which service(s) are based locally. In order to maintain services, counties must appropriate funds in amounts set by the Extension. Currently Iron County receives services from a 4-H coordinator shared with Dickinson County, as well as various education programs.

United States Forest Service (USFS) – Ottawa National Forest – Iron River Ranger District

Roughly 65 percent of Bates Township rests within the Ottawa National Forest. The entire northern rectangle of the township and the one-mile-wide corridor are in the Forest, along with a small sliver of the southern rectangle.

The United States Forest Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, administers 155 national forests in the United States. One of two national forests in the Upper Peninsula, the Ottawa National Forest is made up of nearly one million acres of land spread over five counties in the Western Upper Peninsula and Marquette County to the east.

The forest is administered by five ranger districts, one of which is the Iron River Ranger District. The office of the Iron River district is combined with that of the Watersmeet Ranger District and is located in Watersmeet, along with the official Visitor Center of the Forest.

Numerous national forest campgrounds and access sites are located throughout the county. Roughly 4 miles southwest of the Bates Township's southwestern edge, and within the Iron River Ranger District, is the Lake Ottawa Recreation Area. Located within are Lake Ottawa, Brule Lake, Hagerman Lake, Brule River, Bass Lake, the Historic Mile Post Zero/Treaty Tree, The Ge-Che Trail, and miles of hiking trails. The Lake Ottawa Campground is surrounded by National Forest lands and offers a picnic shelter with two stone fireplaces and original log picnic tables, and two log toilet buildings, which were constructed in the late 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). A pressurized water system and sewage dump station are located in the campground. Adjacent to the campground is a CCC-era day use recreation building, with flush toilets, swimming beach, accessible fishing pier, playing field, picnic areas, and boat launch.

United States Post Offices

Addresses within the township are associated with Iron River zip code 49935; the post office is located in that city.

Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR)

WUPPDR is the State Designated Planning Region and federal Economic Development District with which the six Western Upper Peninsula counties, including Iron, are affiliated. WUPPDR has a mission to foster stable and diversified economies in the Western Upper Peninsula. In addition to administering and implementing a variety of grant programs and serving as a regional coordinator for many purposes, the agency is available to provide various forms of technical assistance and information services within the Iron River area. WUPPDR's office is located in Hancock.

West Iron County Schools

The school district covers roughly the west half of Iron County, an area of approximately 560 square miles. More statistics are provided in the Human Geography section. The district was consolidated in 1967 from the districts of Bates Township, Iron River, and Stambaugh Township. Today the district has three facilities, all of which are located within Iron River: Stambaugh Elementary, the Junior/Senior High School, and the Administration offices.

West Iron District Library

The library, which provides an extensive collection, is located in an existing building in Downtown Iron River. The library district includes the Cities of Iron River, Caspian, and Gaastra, as well as Iron River, Stambaugh, and Bates townships.

8. Transportation

Numerous entities provide transportation services across Bates Township. Some of these are operated and partially funded locally, while others operate at the state and federal levels; their details follow.

Public Transit

Iron County has no dedicated public transit service. Within Iron County, U.P. Community Serves, Inc., operating as Dickinson-Iron Community Services Agency (DICSA), offers limited service to senior citizens and persons with disabilities in and around the township. Of the two cities, Iron River's level of service is higher than that of Crystal Falls. Operating out of the Iron River Senior Center, DICSA offers wheelchair-capable demand-response transportation for several hours daily from Monday through Thursday. A trip from Iron River to Iron Mountain is offered monthly.

State-subsidized intercity bus transportation through Bates Township is provided by Indian Trails. The route travels along U.S. 2 through Bates Township, terminating at Ironwood to the west and Escanaba to the east, with one daily stop in each direction at the Iron Inn Motel in Iron River. From Ironwood, a connection can be made to Duluth, and from Escanaba, connections can be made south into Wisconsin and east to St. Ignace and ultimately the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

Iron County has no local taxi service. The nearest taxi operators are located in Eagle River, Wisconsin; Iron Mountain; and Kingsford.

Airports

The Stambaugh Airport is a general aviation airport in Iron River. The airport is open to the public with no landing fee. The airport is unstaffed and un-towered.

The nearest airport with commercial passenger service and freight service is Ford Airport in Kingsford, which is a 46-mile drive southeast from Iron River. SkyWest Airlines operates Delta flights on regional jet aircraft to and from Detroit and Minneapolis with one arrival and one departure to each location daily. These hubs offer connecting flights to hundreds of airports in the United States and abroad. SkyWest operates under a two-year contract for subsidies from the federal Essential Air Service program.

Rail

The township is no longer served by freight or passenger rail. At one time the local area had access northwest through Watersmeet, Marenisco, and Ironwood; southeast through Stager, Iron Mountain, Powers, and Escanaba; and south to Green Bay, Wisconsin. Rail remains in service from Amasa, in central Iron County, east and south to Green Bay. This line serves an industrial park in Amasa and is used to export finished sports flooring. In a 2013 Michigan Technological University study, Amasa was among three potential locations explored for a regional multi-modal "transload" facility to combine long-distance rail and short-haul truck freight transportation. Such a facility would serve much of the Upper Peninsula.

Roads

Overview

In Michigan, road funding and classification is dictated by Act 51 of 1951. Under Act 51, revenue streams dedicated to roads flow into the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). Most of the MTF goes into the road system. This road system funding is separated into three funding allocations: The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) receives 39 percent, county road commissions or departments receive 39 percent, and cities and villages receive the remainder.

State Roads

MDOT is responsible for road construction and maintenance of roads under its jurisdiction, which are collectively referred to as the state trunkline. This system is comprised of state and federal highways that account for 8 percent of Michigan's road network but carry the vast majority of traffic in the state. The most economically important parts of the state trunkline are designated as the Primary Commercial Network (PCN).

U.S. Highway 2, which passes west to east through the township, is part of the PCN. It is also designated a Regionally and Locally Significant Corridor. Nationally, U.S. 2 is made up of two disconnected segments, with Iron River located on the western segment. The western segment terminates near Seattle, Washington, on the west, and at St. Ignace, Michigan, on the east. As previously explained, U.S. 2 is the focus of commercial development in the city and carries large volumes of thru traffic.

MDOT performs annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts for three segments of U.S. 2 within the township. The west segment, which extends from the western township border to the Bates-Amasa Road intersection, has an AADT (based on data available at the time of this plan) of 4,300. The two east segments, which extend east past the township border, each have an AADT of 2,200 – scarcely half that of the west segment, suggesting that traffic associated with Iron River and its intersecting roads lessens moving farther east of the city through the township.

County Roads

Road Commissions in Michigan are municipal corporations that, in most counties, have the responsibility to maintain county primary and local roads outside of cities and villages (that is, in non-village areas of townships, including Bates). Counties that do not have road commissions take on these responsibilities within the general county government. In most counties that have road commissions, including Iron, the road commission conducts winter maintenance on the state trunkline for reimbursement under contract with the State of Michigan. The Iron County Road Commission's main facility is in Iron River. The Commission maintains 270 primary and 363 local roads, amounting to 224 lane miles.

Federal Classification

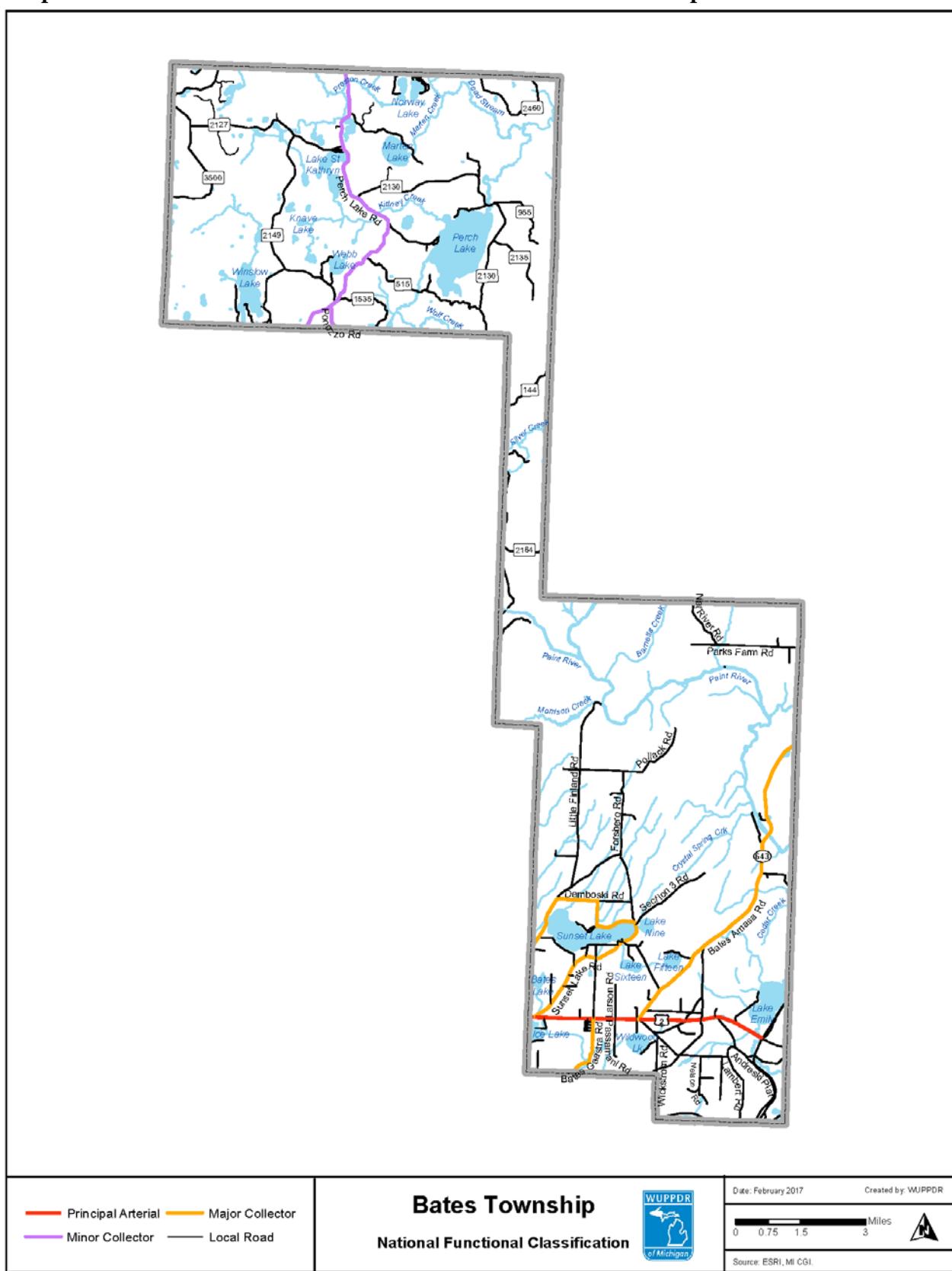
Roads are classified federally according to the National Functional Classification (NFC) developed by the Federal Highway Administration. NFC includes four hierarchical categories based on road function and depending mainly on mobility factors such as trip generation and destination types. Highest in the hierarchy is Principal Arterial, which includes major state trunkline routes and surface streets. Below this are Minor Arterial, which is similar to Principal but carries shorter-distance trips to and from lower-volume generators; Collector, which funnels to arterials and provide greater access to individual properties; and Local, which mainly provides access to individual properties. In urban areas, only 5 to 10 percent of roadway miles are targeted to be Principal Arterial, whereas 65 to 80 percent are targeted to be Local.

Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, and Collectors are designated “federal-aid” roads, which means they are eligible for funding under federal transportation programs. The following roads, depicted in **Map 8.1**, in Bates Township are federal-aid roads:

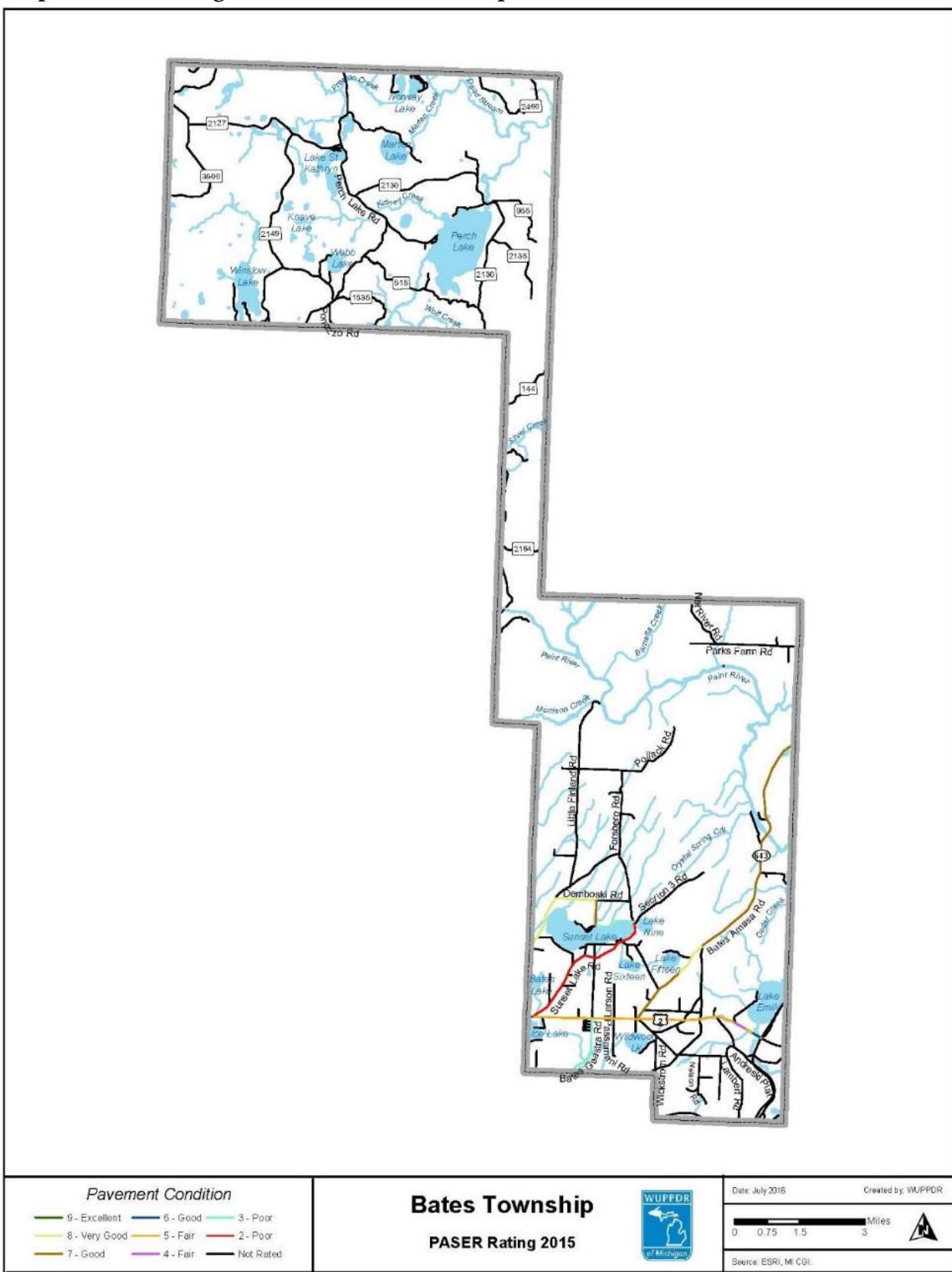
- Minor collectors (all in northern rectangle)
 - Perch Lake Road
 - Ponozzo Road
 - Winslow Lake Road
- Major collectors (all in southern rectangle)
 - Bates-Amasa Road
 - Bates-Gaastra Road
 - Demboski Road
 - Noren Road
 - Phillips Road
 - Sunset Lake Road
 - West Sunset Lake Road
- Principal arterial
 - U.S. Highway 2

Another type of classification for federal-aid roads is through the Pavement Asset Surface Evaluation Ratings (PASER) system. County road commissions, in partnership with regional planning agencies and MDOT, evaluate a sample of federal-aid roads annually to track pavement condition. PASER evaluations of select roads in Bates Township are shown in **Map 8.2**. Most notable are Sunset Lake Road and Bates-Gaastra Road, both of which are rated poor (2-3 of 10).

Map 8.1 National Functional Classification of Roads in Bates Township



Map 8.2 PASER Ratings of Roads in Bates Township



Character and Issues

The structural integrity and age of roads located in Bates Township varies greatly. U.S. 2 receives regular maintenance and, being a trunkline, is a component of MDOT's rehabilitation and maintenance plans. In 2016, the section around the Larson Roadside Park enjoyed a reconstruction as part of a larger road/sewer/water reconstruction project. The preceding year saw a reconstruction of several miles of County Road 643, also known as the Bates-Amasa Cutoff, which connects M-141 with U.S. 2 in Bates Township east of Iron River at the onetime Mapleton Location, where the Bates Township Hall stands. Several lightly traveled roads in the northern portion of the township remain in need of attention.

The Township itself does not own roads, with all rural roads being under County jurisdiction, and thus the Township's interests must be represented through the Iron County Road Commission and Rural Task Force 13B. The latter of these provides a venue for input into the use of federal transportation funds for non-urban federal-aid roads.

Road funding and maintenance in Michigan have suffered from structural funding problems for many years. Trunkline funding alone decreased from a high of \$665 million in 2009 to \$416 million in 2013, and pavement condition ratings have continually dropped as a result. The root of this problem is common to the entire United States: Improved vehicle gas mileage has reduced the volume of fuel purchased and thus reduced the amount of sales and gasoline tax collected. Furthermore, fewer new automobiles are being sold as people keep their vehicles longer than in the past, and this reduces registration fee revenues.

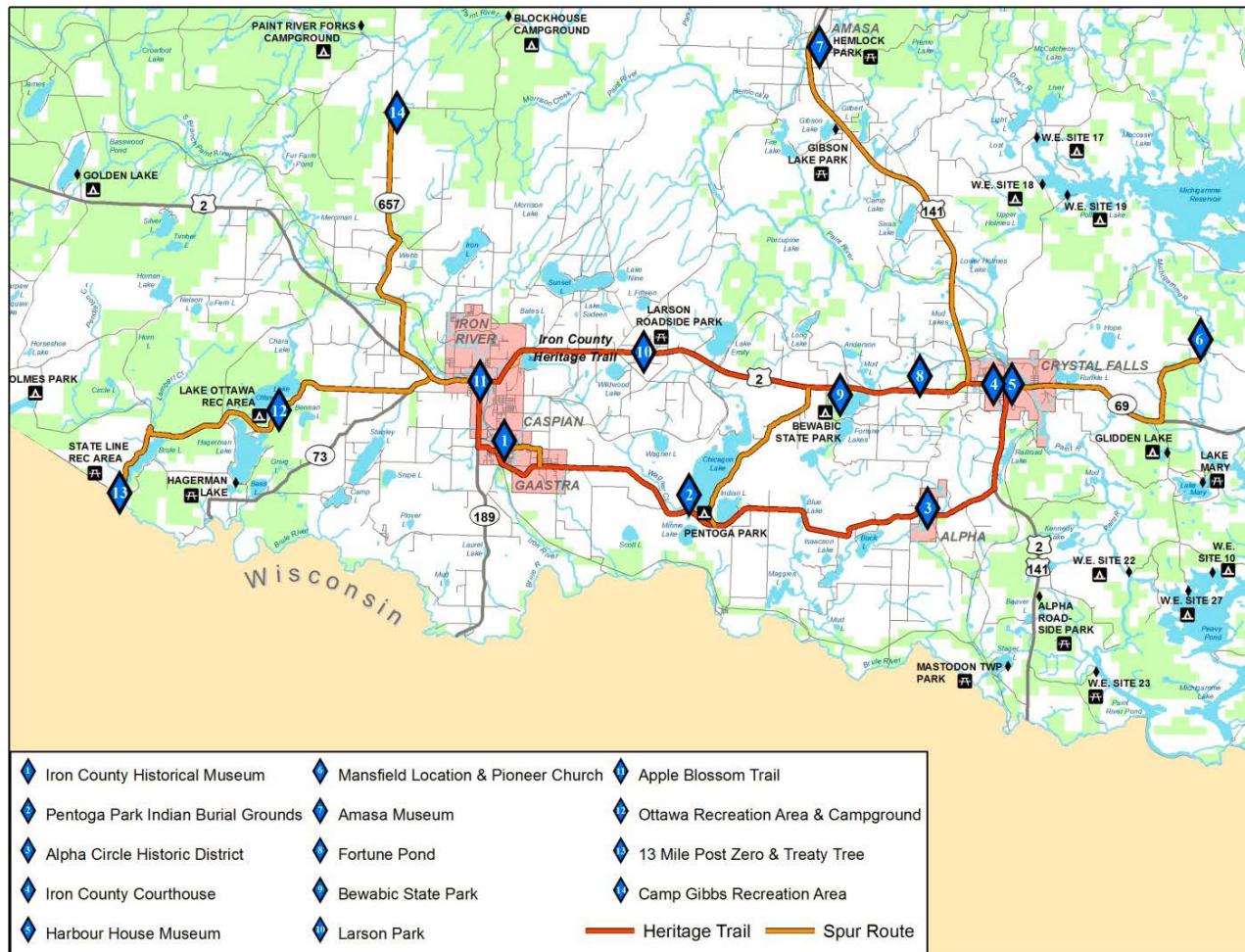
In 2015, after many years of debate over solutions to the funding problem, a new state transportation package was enacted. It is expected to raise \$1.2 billion per year for transportation through registration fee increases, motor fuel tax increases, and budgetary shifts in the General Fund. Much of the initial revenue raised will be directed toward outstanding MDOT bond payments. The full \$1.2 billion in funding will not be realized until after 2021, when shifts from the General Fund are planned to take effect. Before passage of this law, State gasoline and diesel taxes and registration fees had not been altered since 1997.

Trail Routes

The township is traversed by the State Line Trail multi-use route that is a state-designated snowmobile trail in winter and primarily an off-road vehicle (ORV)/all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail in other seasons. The Iron River to Crystal Falls Trail, a section of the Iron Range Trails system, transects Bates Township along an old railroad corridor through bogs, lakes and forests and is a preferred route for snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). This trail can be accessed in the township at Lake Emily, where parking is available. See

Map 8.3.

Map 8.3 Iron County Trails Network Map



➤ Issues, Goals, and Actions

Issue: Most township roads are in good condition; the Township along with Iron County Road Commission continue to repair and upgrade roads with a special road millage.

- **Goal:** Influence orderly and appropriate repair of roads by the Iron County Road Commission.
 - **Action:** Work closely with the Road Commission to ensure the ongoing deployment of adequate resources.
 - **Action:** Actively solicit residents' concerns about particular road segments in order to effectively express township concerns and priorities to the Road Commission and Rural Task Force in official meetings.
- **Goal:** Seek additional funding for repairs.
 - **Action:** Ensure legislators are informed about local needs for state and federal road funding.
 - **Action:** Identify grant opportunities for dedicated project funding.

9. Recreation

Iron County is well known for its outdoor recreational opportunities, and Bates Township takes full advantage of these assets. Many of the lakes, streams and trails in the township have long hosted recreational facilities. Sunset Lake, in particular, has enjoyed a rich history of recreational events, including the current township park and a large and well-known dance pavilion that existed in various iterations from the early 1900s into the 1950s.

The Bates Township Park is located on the south shore of Sunset Lake and provides swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, and camping opportunities. Amenities in the Township Park include a pavilion with a large stone fireplace and picnic tables, and a baseball field, basketball court, playground equipment, fishing pier, boat wash station and launch, campground, accessible trails, beach, changing house, and restrooms. The Pavilion can be rented for family or group functions.

Bates Township maintains the Chicaugon Lake Public Access Boat Landing, Paint River Access Site, and Bates School, and is developing a ADA-compliant boat launch and rest area on the Paint River at the Bates-Amasa bridge. The township is traversed by the Paint River Water Trail and is a member of the Windsor Recreation Center, which operates the Windsor Center in Iron River.



Map 9.1 and Table 9.1, developed for the 2018-2022 Recreation Plan, show the various recreation and natural resource sites in the Township.

In addition to its public recreation facilities, Bates Township's waters provide for a variety of recreational activities, and land abutting these waters has considerable development potential. As described in Chapter 6, the township's "Lakes and Rivers" zone contains 4,239 acres of land suitable for waterfront development, with 106.8 miles of linear water frontage.

Map 9.1 Bates Township Recreation Sites

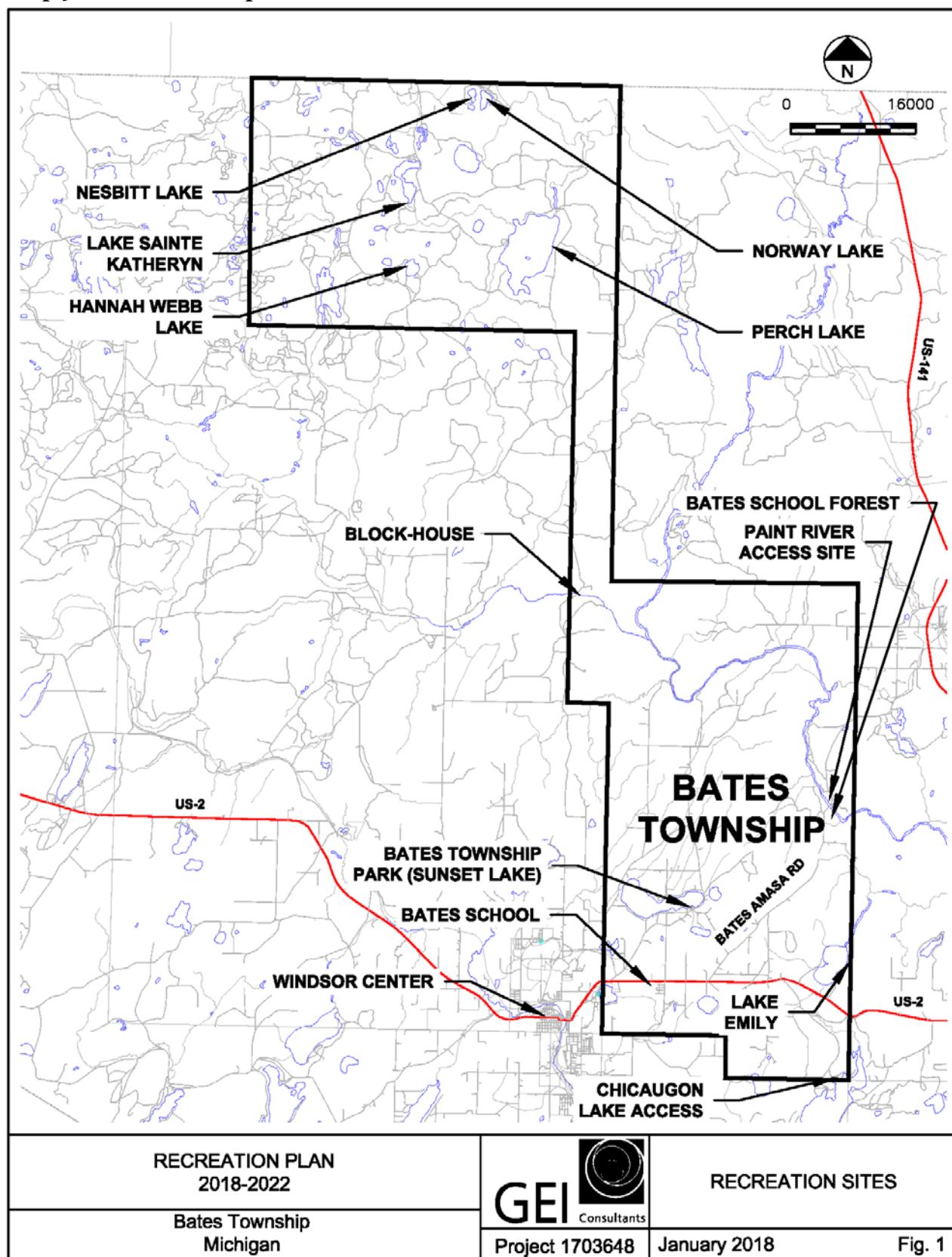


Table 9.1. Bates Township Natural Resource Inventory

Site	Type	Owner-ship	Facilities	Access-ability*
Bates School Forest	Natural Area/Wilderness	West Iron Schools	Forest/Natural Area	1
Block-House	Canoe Access	Federal	Camp units (2), fishing, canoe access	1
Lake Emily	Boat/Fishing Access	State (DNR Access)	Fishing and boat access, toilet	2
Lake Sainte Kathryn	Campground	Federal	Camp units (25), picnic facilities, swimming, fishing, hiking	1
Nesbitt Lake (Camp Nesbitt)	Campground	Federal	Camping, swimming, canoeing (used by schools in the U.P.)	1
Norway Lake	Campground	Federal	Camp units (28), picnic facilities, swimming, fishing	1
Perch Lake	Campground	Federal	Camp units (20), fishing, boat access	1
Winslow Lake	Boat/Fishing Access	Federal	Boat launch	1

* The proportion of facilities that meet Accessibility Guidelines, based on an assessment in accordance with 2010 ADA standards, is denoted as follows: 1)none, 2) some, 3) most, 4) all, or 5) entire facility developed/renovated using principles of Universal Design. Facilities are accessible, 5) accessible according to principles of Universal Design

Bates Township 2018-2022 Recreation Plan

A Recreation Plan is required in order for a community to be eligible for most Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant programs for land acquisition and development, including Land and Water Conservation Fund and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Bates Township's most recent five-year Recreation Plan established this eligibility for the grant years 2018-2022.

That plan's goals focus on development, maintenance, and improvement of facilities; tie-in of facilities to the surrounding area; affordable recreation opportunities; and improvement of access and accessibility.

Projects in the 2018-2022 plan focus on improvements and new facilities at the Paint River Access Site, Township Park, and Bates School and School Forest.

Other Area Facilities

Located in the far southeast corner of the Ottawa National Forest, Bates Township offers access to a million-acre paradise for activities such as boating, camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, kayaking, and many others. The Ottawa contains over 20 campgrounds offering hundreds of campsites, as well as dozens of other recreation facilities including picnic areas, boat launches, and hiking and ski trails. Across the Michigan/Wisconsin border, the Nicolet National Forest offers similar amenities.

DNR owns and administers several boat launches within the township and operates the 315-acre Bewabic State Park approximately three miles from the township's nearest border. The City of Iron River, Iron River Township, and Iron County also operate parks near the township.

➤ Issues, Goals, Opportunities, and Actions

Issue: Development and capitalization on recreation assets is a high priority and competitive advantage in the township but is not meeting its full potential.

- *Goal:* Improve existing recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.
 - Action: Seek out opportunities for local participation in regional and state tourism initiatives, and leverage these to supplement local marketing funds.
 - Action: Allow access to township properties for recreational motorized and non-motorized trail development as needed.
 - Action: Foster collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service through the Good Neighbor Program.
 - Action: Collaborate with the Iron County Chamber of Commerce and the newly formed Economic Chamber Alliance to identify and develop projects of mutual benefit.

10. Economic Development

The economy of Bates Township has changed drastically since modern settlement of the area, but the economy has always been heavily resource-based. Iron mining was predominant in decades around the turn of the 20th century. More recently, forestry has overtaken mining, though the direct economic impact of forestry through jobs and earnings is relatively low compared to other industries. Service industries related to tourism are increasingly important, consistent with the township's interest in promoting its recreation and natural resource assets to visitors. Iron County also has some significant manufacturers, including Lester Detterbeck Enterprises, Ltd., located in the township on U.S. 2. The education, healthcare, and social assistance category, however, employs the most township workers of any industry.

According to the 2015 American Community Survey, Bates Township has 829 persons 16 years and over, with 416 of those (50.2 percent) in the labor force. Of 402 workers who commute, 320 (79.6 percent) drive alone. The mean travel time to work is 20.3 minutes.

Unemployment statistics are measured at the county level. Iron County's estimated annual unemployment rate was 5.3 percent in October 2015 compared with 5.1 percent in the State of Michigan and 5 percent across the USA.

Of the township's occupations, as of 2015, the management, business, science, and arts category employed the largest number of workers, with 110 (see **Table 10.1**). Of the township's industries, the educational services and health care and social assistance category employed the most workers, with 82 (see **Table 10.2**).

Table 10.1. Occupations in Bates Township (2015 ACS)

Occupation	# Employed	% of All Occupations
(Employed civilians 16 years and over)	405	
Services	76	18.8%
Management, business, science, and arts	110	27.2%
Sales and office work	101	24.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving	62	15.3%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	56	13.8%

Table 10.2. Industries in Bates Township (2015 ACS)

Industry	# Employed	% of All Industries
(Employed civilians 16 years and over)	405	
Educational services and health care & social assistance	82	20.2
Retail trade	51	12.6
Arts, entertainment, & recreation and accommodations & food services	30	7.4
Professional, scientific, & management and administrative & waste management services	39	9.6
Manufacturing	56	13.8

Industry	# Employed	% of All Industries
Finance & insurance and real estate & rental & leasing	20	4.9
Other services except public administration	12	3.0
Public administration	13	3.2
Construction	36	8.9
Wholesale trade	3	0.7
Information	16	4.0
Transportation & warehousing and utilities	25	6.2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining	22	4.9

The largest employers in Iron County, based on 2015 year-end employee totals collected by the Northern Michigan University Center for Rural Community and Economic Development, are shown in **Table 10.3**. The two largest are in healthcare. Due to residents' short travel time to work and the distance of commuting that is commonly accepted in rural areas, the location of the employers within the county is not especially important for planning purposes.

Table 10.3. Iron County's Largest Employers

Company/Entity	# Employed
Iron County Medical Facility	344
Aspirus Iron River	280
Ski Brule	150
Lake Shore, Inc.*	-
Connor-AGA Sports Flooring	129
Aramark	103
Angeli Foods Company	102
West Iron County Public Schools	100
Krist Oil Company	73
Iron River Care Center	71
Forest Park School District	53

* As of June 2019; formerly Oldenburg Group

Still, the commuting patterns of workers and residents within Bates Township are useful in assessing its role in the regional economy. Of the 402 township residents who work, the vast majority (392, or 97.5 percent) commute outside the home, whereas only 10 (2.5 percent) work at home. These statistics illustrate the necessity of leaving home in Bates Township to work, usually in another community.

➤ Issues, Goals, Opportunities, and Actions

Issue: Several ideas for industry development within Iron County have been proposed for further research and exploration through regional organizations and ongoing initiatives.

- *Goal:* Draw increased benefit from the U.S. 2 corridor that transects the township.
 - Action: Attract a developer to establish a gas station/convenience store within township boundaries.
- *Goal:* Establish businesses that provide in-demand services to the public as well as desirable employment opportunities for residents.
 - Action: Create brief marketing document showing vacant buildings and sites available for occupancy, reuse, or new development in the township.
 - Action: Evaluate and act upon retail business attraction and entrepreneurial opportunities based on Iron County Retail Target Market Analysis (developed in 2017).
- *Goal:* Support Iron County events and promotion of the area.
 - Action: Monitor and provide input to the Iron County Chamber of Commerce and the newly formed Economic Chamber Alliance.
 - Action: Monitor and provide input to other, economic-centric agencies such as the Iron River Downtown Development Authority.
- *Goal:* Continue working with local broadband internet providers to improve and expand access.
 - Action: Participate in the Iron County Technology Action Plan in cooperation with WUPPDR and Connect Michigan.
- *Goal:* Expand opportunities for career technical and vocational education – both during and after high school.
 - Action: Through partnership between Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District and one or more community colleges, establish a program to allow students in West Iron County schools to work toward college technical degrees.
- *Goal:* Promote the unique features and amenities located within the township.
 - Action: Promote and market the upcoming centennial of the Larson Roadside Park. Target interested entities and individuals and capitalize on the property by means of media events, a parade or motorcade, and other public celebrations.
- *Goal:* Provide access to rail transport to serve existing and potential local manufacturers.
 - Action: Advocate for rail service by participating in the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission at the county level.
 - Action: Support and advocate for establishment of a regional truck/rail transload facility in Amasa.
- *Goal:* Make it easier to find services, amenities and attractions within and near the township.
 - Action: Design and place wayfinding signs for points of interest. Trails, Larson Roadside Park, Michigan Centennial Farms and other longstanding items of interest might be considered for publicity and/or signage purposes.

- Action: Organize businesses to sponsor business district signs, including sponsor logos, to be placed along U.S. 2.

Issue: Fundamental to the character, economy, heritage, and quality of life in Bates Township, agriculture and food production are legitimate and economically integral components of the community.

- *Goals:* Improve the health and sustainability of the Bates Township economy through production, processing, and consumption of local foods, and increase affordability and access to them. Reduce dependence on increasingly expensive imported foods.
 - Action: Seek sources of funding to achieve these goals.
 - Action: Contact the identified Michigan Centennial Farms (five in Bates Township, four in Stambaugh) in the area to discuss potential activities of mutual benefit, such as the production of organic crops for human consumption versus animal feedstocks and develop plans to market those products.
 - Action: Support educational opportunities that teach farming and gardening skills and the importance of the local food system.
 - Action: Support businesses and institutions operating in Bates Township and within Iron County in purchasing local and sustainable foods and composting organic waste.
 - Action: Encourage partnerships between local food producers and institutions such as schools, hospitals, and elder care facilities.
 - Action: Support activities and policies to facilitate food waste recovery, such as composting and bio-digestion programs.
 - Action Group: Support creation of new facilities, as well as adaptation and better utilization of existing facilities, for production of foods including fresh meat and produce.
 - Action: Establish a local food hub cooperative for processing, storage, and distribution of local foods.
 - Action: Establish year-round growing facilities such as hoop houses and other controlled environments.
 - Action Group: Formulate or modify procurement rules, permits and licensing, tax benefits, and other tools to facilitate local food production, processing, and retailing.
 - Action: Support efforts to improve marketing of local food.