

# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



## Summary of Public Input Survey

The DNR recognizes that public input is a critical component of park planning, thus input is sought through multiple venues in hopes of gathering the opinions of a variety of users. One of the methods the Planning Team used to gather input from park users was an online survey. This survey was advertised through a press release, an email to previous users of the Cheboygan State Park (CSP) overnight accommodations, and a local newspaper article.

Three hundred and forty-eight individuals responded to the survey, though 58 of those were screened from taking the entire survey because they had not visited the park in the last five years. The largest age group represented was users over 60 years old (38%), with results steadily decreasing with the younger age groups. The majority of respondents were from the Cheboygan area and surrounding region, but many were also distributed around the state. This indicates that Cheboygan State Park is both locally loved as well as a destination park within the State Park system.

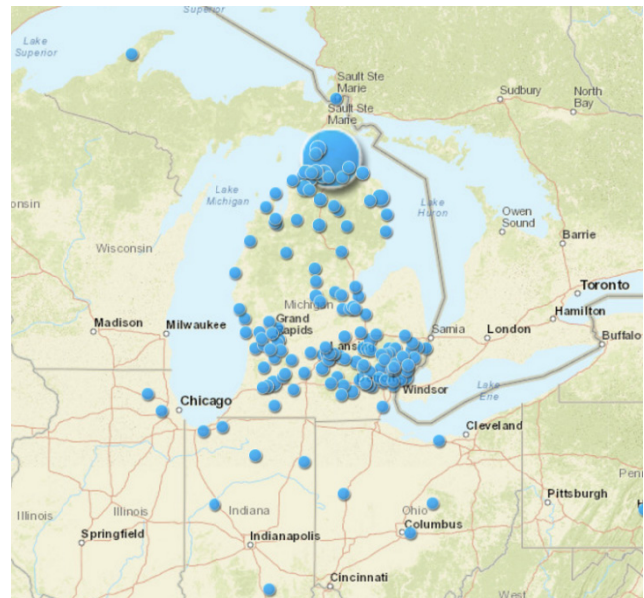


Figure 1: Location of survey respondents

The survey was broken down into several categories to gather targeted input:

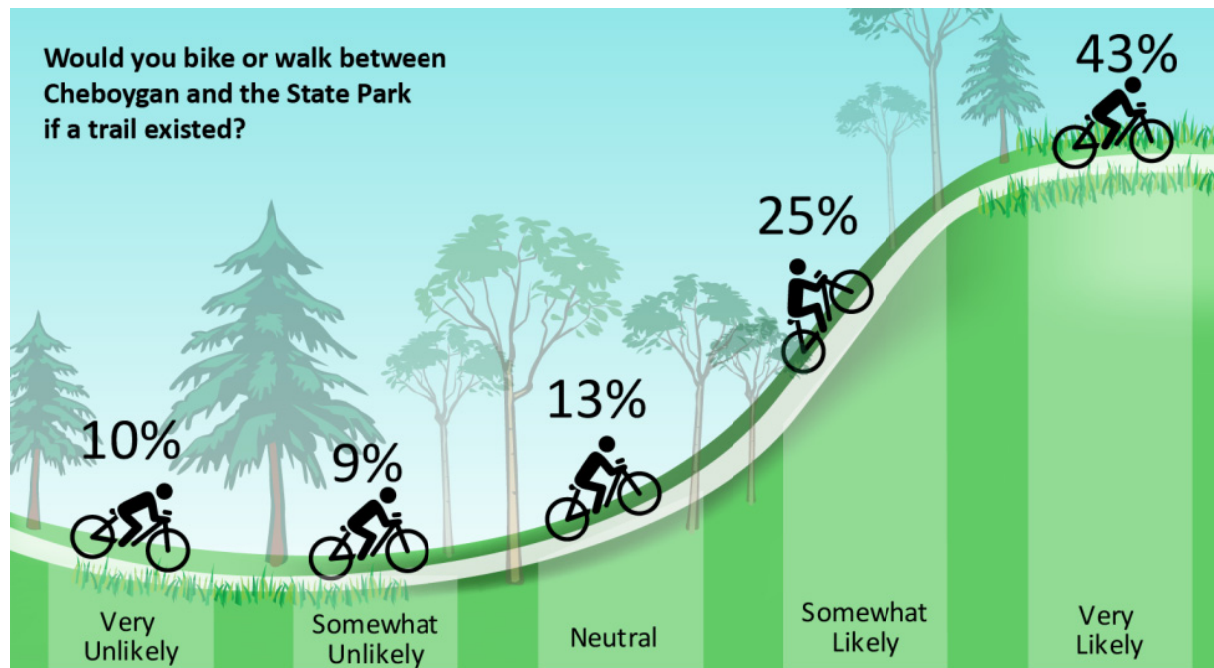
Category	Input received
Your Visit	General information about how frequently users visit, how they travel to the park, other attractions visited in the area, and activities participated in during the visit
Day Use	Whether the day use facilities meet the needs of users and any other comments about the day use facilities
Overnight Accommodations	Whether the overnight accommodations meet the needs of users, how long they stay, and what improvements could be made
Fishing	Preferred fishing location and method, targeted fish species, and any other comments about fishing at CSP
Hunting	Targeted species for trapping and hunting, and any other comments about hunting at CSP
Overall Satisfaction	A rating of overall satisfaction with a recent visit and an explanation, how users describe the park, what changes could be made, and any other comments about CSP or the plan process
Tell Us About Yourself	Demographic data

# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



## Your Visit

The survey responses indicate that visitors to CSP tend to most frequently visit the park once (25%) or one to two times per year (45%), commonly in the summer months (63%), though many of the respondents (22%) visit the park year round. Visitors travel to the park mainly by car, but a few arrive by other means such as a bicycling, a motorized boat, walking, and a very small number by non-motorized boat. Visitors are open to the idea of traveling to the park using a non-motorized trail, with 43% saying they were very likely to travel to CSP using such a trail and 25% saying they were somewhat likely.



The survey also asked what would encourage users to visit the park more often. The majority of reasons given were related to improvements or changes to the park, such as improving cabin availability, improving the access to the beach and water, connecting the park trails to other nearby trails, building an updated playground, building more and modern restrooms, and upgrades to the campground. Other respondents said simply that they would visit more frequently if they had more time or if the park were closer to home.

# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



The Cheboygan State Park staff knows that many visitors use the park as a “home base” from which to explore other area attractions. The survey investigated this idea, showing that 68% of visitors frequent other area attractions when visiting the park. The most common responses were downtown Cheboygan and its shops and restaurants, Mackinaw City, and Mackinac Island, along with a plethora of other attractions. A word cloud of the responses is below, with the most frequently mentioned destinations appearing larger.

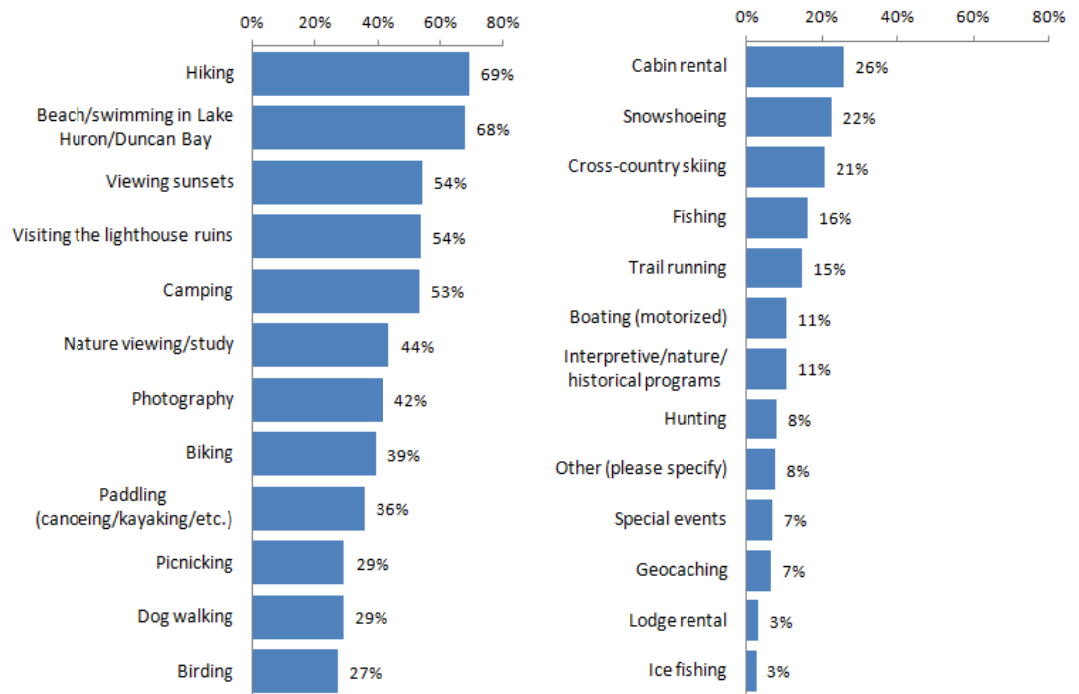


The Planning Team was interested in knowing what visitors like to do while at Cheboygan State Park. The survey revealed that visitors participate in a large variety of activities during their stay, with the most popular activities reported to be hiking, going to the beach or swimming in Lake Huron and Duncan Bay, viewing sunsets, visiting the lighthouse ruins, and camping. When asked what one activity makes them choose to visit CSP, the top responses were camping (25%), going to the beach and swimming (13%), cabin rental (13%) and hiking (11%). The graphics on the next page illustrate these results.

# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



## What are all the activities in which you participated in at Cheboygan State Park?



## What ONE activity makes you choose to visit Cheboygan State Park?

**25%**  
Camping



**13%**  
Beach /  
Swimming



**13%**  
Cabin  
Rental



**11%**  
Hiking



# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



## Day Use

A majority of survey respondents reported that the day use facilities meet their needs (60%), and only 9% of respondents said that the facilities were in some way inadequate (the remaining respondents do not use those facilities). When asked to explain why the facilities did not meet their needs, respondents most frequently mentioned the desire for an improved play area or lamented that the beach is too far away from the campground. Several comments mentioned the beach area specifically; that it was too small, had broken glass, or was too wet.

When asked about the park's trails, 76% of respondents said that the trails met their needs, and 15% felt that they did not. Most of the unsatisfied respondents wished that there were more trails or that the trails were better connected to other trails in the area. Others desired the trails to be better groomed for particular activities such as bicycling or skiing or found sections of the trails to be too sandy or too wet.

## Overnight Accommodations

A majority of survey respondents said that they use the overnight accommodations at CSP (61%). Most of these visitors stay at the park for two to three nights (58%), but another 27% stay four to six nights. When asked what one thing could be done to improve the overnight experience, respondents had wide ranging suggestions, but the most commonly desired changes were to upgrade the electric service in the campground to better provide for RVs, and to modernize the bathrooms and/or to have more of them.

## Fishing

Although most of the survey respondents do not fish at CSP (81%), the respondents who do fish provided some insight. The most popular fishing location at the park is Duncan Bay (47%) followed by Elliot Creek (33%). Respondents reported commonly fishing from the shoreline or motorized boats and slightly less frequently fishing from creek-side or non-motorized boat. Although most respondents reported targeting no specific species, pan fish, smallmouth bass, walleye, and brook trout were popular targets. A slight majority of respondents also fish at other locations near the park (57%), such as the Cheboygan River, Lake Huron, Mullet Lake, Black Lake, and the Black River. Most comments about fishing at the park mentioned a positive experience due to the quiet and rustic atmosphere of the park.

## Hunting

The input of hunters was not significantly gathered by the survey; only 21 respondents (8%) reported hunting at the park. Those that did hunt mainly target small game (71%), waterfowl (58%), and white tailed deer (43%). There were even fewer respondents who trap at CSP. Two respondents said that they water trap, and one land traps. Out of twelve comments, about half were positive, and half mentioned some criticisms or suggestions. Those include that the forest needs to be rejuvenated, the deer and small game populations are low, that garbage needs to be picked up by park users when leaving, and that recent changes have not improved the hunting or fishing experience.



# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



## Overall Satisfaction

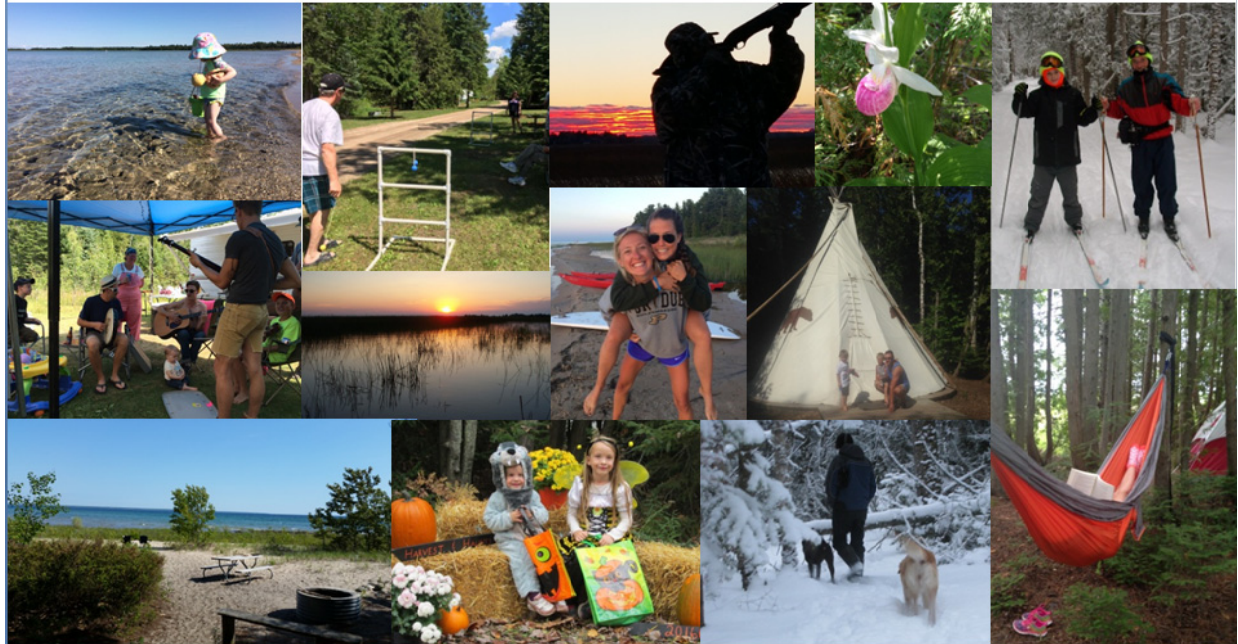
When visitors think about Cheboygan State Park, they would describe it as beautiful, quiet, peaceful, clean, rustic, and a host of other positive adjectives that can be seen in the word cloud below.

Most survey respondents are satisfied with their experience at Cheboygan State Park. On a scale of zero to ten, where zero is least satisfied and ten is most satisfied, the average response was an eight. In fact, only six respondents rated their experience lower than a five.

There were plentiful comments about how beautiful and enjoyable the park was, but some wish that the park were improved. The vast majority of suggestions were campground and cabin improvements, such as upgrading the electrical service at the campground, making the campsites larger, or having more of them. Many also suggested playground, trail, and beach improvements as noted in the day use questions, as well as paving the park roads.



# Cheboygan State Park General Management Plan



To end the survey, respondents were given the chance to leave any other comments as well as upload a photo of their experience at Cheboygan State Park. The photos that were uploaded show the many ways that visitors enjoy the park, and some are featured above. There were 84 comments left, which were wide-ranging and generally reflected the other results in the survey, and 32 photos uploaded that showed many park users enjoying all facets of the park. Below are two comments that well encapsulate the visitors' sentiments about this serene park.

"We love the rustic cabins. I think they are one of the highlights of the park for visitors from out of town like us...They are key to us returning to Cheboygan State Park every year."

"This park is a gem, particularly because of the wilderness feel, in spite of close proximity to the town. It would be important to those that enjoy nature study to maintain this feeling of being able to get away from the rat race."