

2013 Stronach Township Master Plan



Approved by the
Stronach Township Planning Commission
and
Adopted by the Stronach Township Board
3/13/2013



TOWNSHIP OF STRONACH
(Manistee County)
2471 Main St RR3
Manistee Michigan, 49660

Township of Stronach
County of Manistee, Michigan
Resolution No: 2

Township Board Resolution to Adopt the
2013 Stronach Township Master Plan and 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed new (OR updated) Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on September 9th, 2012 the Stronach Township received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Stronach Township Board held an advertised public hearing on March 13th, 2013 after passing resolution asserting control over adoption of the Master Plan to consider public comment on the proposed new Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed new Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board finds that the proposed new Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation and development of goals and strategies of the Township;

WHEREAS, the MPEA authorizes the Township Board to assert by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Adoption of the 2013 Stronach Township Master Plan and 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan: The Township Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed 2013 Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 the Township Board has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore the approval granted herein is the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843 and therefore the plan is effective as of March 13th, 2013.
2. Distribution to Notice Group: The Township Board approves distribution of adopted plan to the Notice Group.
3. Findings of Fact: The Township Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of the existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, input received from the Planning Commission and public forum and surveys, and with the assistance of the Manistee County Planning Department and finds that the new Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation and development of lands in Stronach Township.
4. Effective Date: The Master Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution.

The foregoing resolution offered by Board Member: Phil Landis

Second offered by Board Member: Rick Gerber

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye" Jenni Tans yes
Phil Vadeboncoeur
Rick Peters
Phil Cantus
Barbara Rishel
(list of names voting "aye")

"Nay" NONE

(list of names voting "nay")

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Barbara Rishel
Barbara Rishel, Stronach Township Clerk

Acknowledgements

A Thank You is extended to all those who participated throughout the process by attending the public forum, answering surveys and attending planning commission meetings. Your input was very important to the production of this Master Plan.

A Special Thank You is given to the Township Board Members, Planning Commission Members, and Advisory Committee Members. Your hard work and diligence in working through the Master Planning process has provided you with a strong policy guideline for the land use decision making process in Stronach Township.

Stronach Township Planning Commission

Robert Rishel, Chairman
Annie Hooghart, Vice-Chair
Norman Herman, Secretary
Phil Landis, Twp. Board Rep.
Carl Lacki, ZBA Rep.

Larry Thompson, Zoning Administrator

Stronach Township Board

Phil Vadenboncoeur, Supervisor
Jenny Jans, Treasurer
Barbara Rishel, Clerk
Phil Landis, Trustee
Rick Gerber, Trustee

Stronach Township Advisory Committee

Eillen Iler
Ted Batzer
Terry Riley
Tom Waldon

Manistee County Planning Department

Robert Carson, Planning Director
Nancy Baker, Planning Assistant

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Sec. 1 Executive Summary

Creation of the Stronach Township Master Plan was a process that relied upon the participation of residents, elected officials, planning commission members and the county planning department among the many local jurisdictions which must participate in the period of review before formal adoption. This cooperative effort was the backbone of the plan and the many interested residents that continually attended meetings to ensure that input from the community was received was extremely beneficial to the process.

The previous master plan dated back to 1985 and after consideration and efforts for a plan revision, it was decided to move forward with an entirely new master plan. Bits and pieces were drawn from the existing master plan but the content, information and findings within the new plan did not mimic the previous plan and the process was separated from the characteristics of the 1985 plan from the beginning.

Data contained within the plan consisted of many sources such as public input, 2010 US census, existing on ground land use conditions, zoning ordinance text and mapping, and a multitude of information that was derived from existing and digitized Manistee County Geographic Information System (GIS) spatial data. High importance is placed on the data captured within the plan, as the development of a quality product depends heavily upon the accuracy and strength of the data that supports it.

The use of this Master Plan as a policy guideline necessitates quality accurate information as well as the input of the residents to truly ensure that the desires of the community are captured. Public input is an important key to success. As portions of the plan were developed from public input in turn the goals and objectives were shaped to meet the wants of the community. Implementation of strategies to achieve the goals is more apt to occur when the goals are community developed and driven.

Goals and objectives in this plan strive to seek solutions to issues with zoning, land use, recreation, natural resources, transportation and the economy. As time passes and land uses take new forms while a community grows and changes, adjustments are needed to keep pace with the surrounding region and the desires of the residents. The Stronach Township Master Plan creates a new vision for the community, keeping the core essential values that are held dear to the residents such as the pristine natural resources, rural community feel and recreational aspects, while moving towards more user friendly land use policy, marketing of tourism and recreation aspects and setting into motion a series of steps that will allow implementation of the plan and its goals.

The plan itself is meant to be a functioning document that is to be used extensively when determining land use policy. Periodic revision of the plan is necessary to keep abreast of the ever changing conditions of the Township and to keep the goals and objectives up to date as strategies are developed and practiced.

Sec. 2 Purpose

Development of a Master Plan is an important task that has been undertaken by the Stronach Township Planning Commission. A Master Plan is the policy guideline that the township will use to develop and manage zoning ordinance regulations and the decision process for issues pertaining to land use. The authority for the Planning Commission and the drafting of a Township Master Plan is derived from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended , M.C.L. 125.3801 et seq.)

A Master Plan shall be a guide to development and land use issues; collection of relevant data about the community, current land uses, assets and challenges as well as sound gathering of resident input are all important features to the plan. The plan will develop goals and objectives derived from the collection of data and information, and will ultimately produce a vision for the future of the community through a Future Land Use Plan. The implementation of the goals and objectives and future land use plan by community leaders is critical to ensure that the hard work and vision of the community is instituted.

The Master Planning Process took into account the current standing Manistee County Plans, including:

- Envision Manistee (2006)
- Manistee County Master Plan (2008)
- Manistee County Recreation Plan (2008)

Other information pertaining to land use policy and regulations from neighboring jurisdictions were explored and accounted for including those of Filer Township, The City of Manistee, Manistee Township, The Village of Eastlake, Brown Township and Norman Township. Mason County was notified of the Planning Process and their County policy and zoning were reviewed as well.

It is the hope of the Stronach Township Planning Commission that residents and visitors alike will use this plan to familiarize themselves with the community and the policy for land use decisions that are presented in the plan. State Statute mandates that a Master Plan undergo a minimum 5-year review from date of adoption. Issues pertaining to current policy contained within the Master Plan should be directed to the Stronach Township Planning Commission for inclusion during a mandatory review period. It is suggested that Stronach Township re-visit the Master Plan on an annual basis for review, and that a revision process take place every 3 to 5 years.

Sec. 3 Methodology

The master planning process for Stronach Township was initiated by the Stronach Township Planning Commission with approval of the Township Board for the procurement of services of the Manistee County Planning Department. Begun in late September 2011, the planning process, through guidance of the Manistee County Planning Department, started with several goals in mind:

- 1) To create a sound Master Plan that utilizes relevant data and information for development of land use policy that can be used to guide land use decisions.
- 2) To work with and receive input from as many residents of Stronach Township and surrounding areas as possible.
- 3) To ensure that the Master Plan provides a foundation for a balance between regulatory measures and private property rights.
- 4) To create a document that is easy to read and highlights Stronach Township as a wonderful place to live and recreate.

Upon initiation of the process a scope of work was developed along with a draft outline and time line. These documents would be the guide that would be followed throughout the planning process, making modifications to each as necessary.

Public input was important to the process, and there were several methods employed to ensure that it would be captured through as many avenues as possible. A survey was developed with questions pertaining to recreation, transportation and land uses. Special meetings of the Planning Commission were scheduled through May of 2012 and placed on a single sheet denoting the date, time and location. A public forum date was scheduled in early December and a letter outlining the importance of the public forum and survey was mailed to each property owner and resident in the Township. The mailing contained the survey and meeting schedule as well, with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

By February of 2012 the public forum and survey data had been received and tallied. Interested residents were attending and participating in planning commission meetings, and the gathering of data from the 2010 U.S. census was complete. Portions of the 2010 census data were less than desirable in terms of accuracy with some standard deviations for an error reaching 90%; the information was reviewed carefully and discarded in some instances. Inventory of the Park and Recreation Sites was also accomplished during this time frame.

Plan drafting began in March with all relevant data gathered. The drafting of text for the plan was divided up among Planning Commission members as well as advisory committee members and the county planner. All completed sections were turned over to the Planning Department for review and placement in the master plan files. Geographic Information System (GIS) draft mapping was completed during this period and provided to the Planning Commission members for review.

The majority of draft sections of the plan were completed by the end of April 2012, with the exception of the goals and objectives, future land use plan and implementation strategy. Work sessions through May saw the completion of these tasks and the beginning of formation of the document. The Draft Stronach Township Master Plan and 5-Year Recreation Plan was completed by the end of July and made available for public comment and jurisdictional review shortly thereafter.

Sec. 4 Introduction

Stronach Township is located along the southern boundary of Manistee County bordering the east side of Manistee Lake. The Township is considered a double township with almost twice the normal amount of 36 sections creating a larger than standard township from east to west.

Stronach Township is bordered by Filer Township to the west, the Village of Eastlake, Manistee Township and Brown Township to the north, and Norman Township to the east. The southern boundary of Stronach Township borders Mason County to the south.

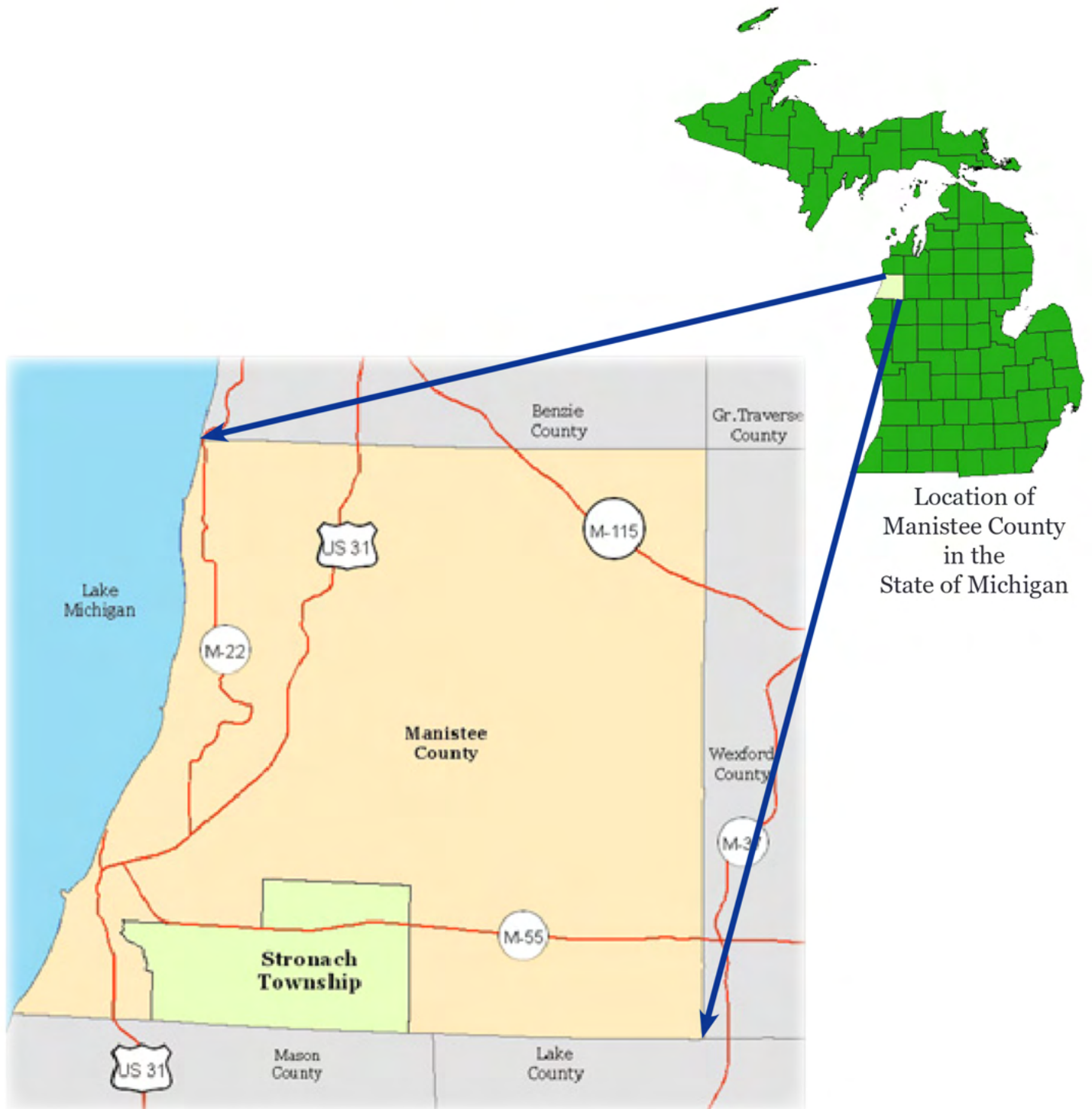
The Township has vast expanses of forested area that are contained within the Manistee National Forest managed by the United States Forest Service. The large amount of public land is utilized by an array of outdoor recreational enthusiasts.

Land uses in Stronach Township consist primarily of rural residential with, to a lesser extent, some industrial and commercial uses. Most of the higher density development is located in the vicinity of Manistee Lake.

The Township is served by M-55, a primary arterial highway which runs east to west through the Township, providing connection to US 31 and the City of Manistee to the west and Wexford County to the east. There is a rail line running north from Mason County along the shoreline of Manistee Lake that can cater to industry located along Manistee Lake. Manistee Lake itself is a deep water port and is utilized by Great Lakes freighters for the transport of materials to industries located on the lake.

The residents of Stronach Township take great pride in the history, natural beauty and rural residential feel that is encompassed within the township. There is an evident need to display all that Stronach has to offer to potential new residents and visitors alike. Stimulating growth while maintaining the character of Stronach Township is the vision of many residents, as well as being a key component within this Master Planning Process. The development of this Master Plan will create a guide to meeting the goals of the residents, elected and appointed officials through the formation of policy to guide land use decisions.

Stronach Township Location Map



Location of Manistee County in the State of Michigan

Location of Stronach Township in Manistee County

Sec. 5 History

Stronach Township is located in the southwest corner of Manistee County, Michigan. At approximately 55.3 square miles, Stronach is a rather large township. It consists of a full congressional township in the east and a fractional congressional township in its western portion.

The Township was purchased from the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians through the 1836 treaty by the United States Government. A portion of the treaty was to create an Indian Reservation, which was unsuccessful and was later abandoned. Michigan was also inducted as a State of the Union in the same year.

The first land purchase by a resident of the area was on June 29th, 1841 by John Stronach. The property was located in section 22 and consisted of 80 acres purchased at a price of \$1.25 per acre for a total of \$100. This later became the site of the first camp settlement in Stronach Township with an operating sawmill by the year 1845 on the Little Manistee River property.

In 1864, what is considered Stronach Village today, was called Paggeotville. Charles Paggeot was the founder of this community located in western Stronach Township on the banks of what is now known as Manistee Lake. A post office was established at Paggeotville in 1866 and closed in 1954. A more recent post office known as the Stronach Post Office closed in 1981.

The high density residential, industrial and commercial area along Manistee Lake was later subdivided and was called the Village of Stronach but was never incorporated. Thus, for historic purposes only, it is referred to as the “Village of Stronach”.

In 1855 Stronach Township was part of a three-parent township in Manistee County which included both Brown and Manistee Townships.

Originally Stronach Township included what is known today as Filer Township. Filer split from Stronach in 1868 and was soon thereafter organized as a township itself.



Logging and timber operations were the primary industry with over 60% of the land area considered to be “cream of the crop” for logging purposes. Approximately 90% of the mature good timber was cut from the township by 1870.

About 30 farms occupied Stronach Township by the 1900’s, with minimal land coverage primarily due to the poor farming conditions attributed mainly to the soil types present.

Most industry in the early days of the township was centered on Manistee Lake due to access to shipping routes of the Great Lakes. Waterways were the most utilized method of transportation, and were the easiest way of receiving goods, products and necessary equipment for industry and growth during that time.

As times changed and transportation methods increased in variety, the Township saw the development of railroads and roadways. This occurred from the time of the establishment of the first lumber and sawmill on the banks of Manistee Lake to modern day.

Today, some industry and a few commercial businesses exist in Stronach Township. Tourism and sporting activities have developed as the most wide spread economic driver for the township. The natural resources continue to play a major role in the attractiveness of Stronach Township and what is locally known as the “Big Woods”. The large span of forested area is a portion of the Manistee National Forest, managed by the United States Forest Service. Forested land is the predominant land cover of the majority of the township.

In the higher density area, sometimes referred to as “The Village” located in western Stronach Township along the banks of Manistee Lake, one will find the majority of Stronach Public Services. This service area provides the Township Hall and Fire Department, and most community gatherings and happenings take place within the confines of the “The Village”. There is also a fire substation located in the eastern portion of the township along highway M-55, known as the Fire Barn.

Stronach Township has abundant sandy soils which are not conducive to good farming practices and production. The sandy soils support Pinewood and to a lesser extent Hardwood Forestry. Stronach is home to the “Udell Hills”, a unique glacial feature of large hills and terrain protected within the confines of the Manistee National Forest.

Stronach Township is fortunate to have a State-listed Blue Ribbon Trout Stream within its boundaries, “The Little Manistee River”. This stream is nationally known for world class trout, steelhead and salmon fishing. Stronach Township has a wide array of exciting attractions for almost anyone looking for a pleasant place to recreate or make a home.



The historic White Star Tavern which was located on the SW corner of S. Skocelas Road and M-55.

Sec. 6 Land Use

Developed land uses in Stronach Township comprise three primary categories: residential, commercial and industrial. Other present types of developed land uses include Civic or Institutional, which are found to a much lesser extent within the jurisdictional boundaries. It is important to categorize and account for developed land uses as it provides a snapshot of the existing character of the community and can provide valuable information on determining land use policies for areas that vary throughout the Township. The land use section of this plan provides information on three main categories of developed land uses and provides a brief summary of existing civic land uses as well. The information regarding civic uses could be expanded further and may be an option that the Township Board and Planning Commission would wish to pursue through the development of a Capital Improvement Plan in the future.

6.1 Residential Land Use

Stronach Township is dominated by forested land cover with residential development making up the largest share of developed land. Residential land uses in Stronach Township can be divided into 4 general categories. Each of these categories is described below:

- Residential homes built around the “Village of Stronach” in the western portion of the township near Manistee Lake. This area has developed into a village-like community with small lot sizes and higher density development. The area provides the location for township services such as the Township Hall, Fire Station, Community Center and one of the two township parks.
- Recent residential strip development along paved roads within the township. This linear strip development of residential homes along roads such as M-55 and Pine Creek Road is characteristic of fractionalization of larger parcels of land along roadways creating smaller land divisions most often 10 acres or less in size.
- Seasonal residential development is a characteristic of developed residences that are used by fisherman, hunters, skiers and other recreational users of lands within the township and surrounding areas. This type of housing includes permanent hunting, fishing and vacation cabins, small modular homes and trailers for temporary use.
- Subdivision development is characterized by larger tracts subdivided to create neighborhoods of residential homes clustered in close proximity to each other, often on small lots. There are currently six subdivisions scattered throughout the township. These subdivisions were recorded prior to the “Michigan Subdivision Control Act of 1967”. The largest higher density subdivision within the township is located in what is referred to as the “Village of Stronach”. Lots located in the “Village of Stronach” are often small and sometimes smaller than what would be allowed under the Manistee County Sanitary Code. Most other Subdivisions in the Township have larger lot sizes (100’ x 200’ or larger) which are adequate in most cases. The Timber Ridge Ranch Subdivision located along the Little Manistee River contains some lots with odd shapes and occasional septic percolation issues.

A variety of residential density types are available within Stronach Township. The various zoning districts and density allowances are important in maintaining the variety of opportunities for those seeking to live within the Township. Current higher density allowances for suburban-type development should be maintained within the “Village” of Stronach and the areas currently contained within the Udell Hills Residential District.

Rural areas within the Township should afford some variety for densities, ranging from medium to low. Protection of larger tracts should be pursued in those lands encompassed or bordering national forest lands, but allowances for medium density development (i.e. greater than

10 acres, but less than 40 acres) could provide more opportunities to purchase property and build within these rural areas. Foresight should be given to ensure that land divisions in rural areas won't allow for oblong shaped parcels that are often created to fit as many lots as possible with limited road frontage but extremely lengthy lot depths. Similar consideration should be given to limit the creation of parcels of land that are located off of seasonal roads, with limited services and difficult access.

The manipulation of zoning districts to higher densities than what was previously allowed for an area in order to provide buildable lots for residents isn't a practice that should be undertaken outside of a Master Plan Revision Process. The utilization of this technique within this Master Plan is meant to eliminate some non-conformities and to provide an avenue for the division of lots within areas that are currently suitable. The Township should explore the implementation of a subdivision ordinance which will allow for the utilization of conservation based design. Conservation based design works on the premise of maintaining a low density, but allowing incentives for increased densities through the preservation of open space when platting and building a subdivision. This equates to preserving a certain percentage of open space usually 40-50%, for the opportunity to create more buildable lots in a zoning district where it would not be allowed. All open space should be permanently preserved through conservation easements. This type of development will only work in areas where services area available or where infiltration rates will allow for greater density of septic systems and lots. Other options can be explored such as community septic systems and wells.

Conventional Development



Conservation Based Design



The images above display a typical subdivision design on the left with a conservation based designed subdivision on the right. Through using conservation based design, the lot sizes decreased while still maintaining the same number of lots, land area was preserved as open space and all lots have scenic views with road frontage. This can be accomplished through a subdivision ordinance.

6.2 Commercial Land Use

Commercial land uses within Stronach Township are minimal when compared to other uses. According to land use classification through the Manistee County Equalization Department, commercial classification only applies to seven parcels. The location of these commercially classified parcels is unique to 3 areas within the township; one parcel located at the corner of M-55 and King Rd., two parcels situated on Water St. between 2nd and 3rd streets in the "Village of Stronach" and four parcels off of Camp Road at the Republic Services landfill site.

Promotion of further commercial development may be an aspect that the Township might want to pursue. Directing commercial development to certain "nodes" within Stronach Township could be explored as a practical means of containing commercial uses within a desired area. The

population of Stronach is not conducive to supporting extensive linear commercial development along primary corridors, i.e. M-55 and Stronach Road. Rather placement of commercial districts at primary intersections along M-55 such as at Skocelas or King Road or within established higher density developments which permits a mix of commercial and residential uses such as in the “Village of Stronach” would be more practical.

Districts which allow both commercial and residential development should be reviewed to ensure that regulatory measures provide protections for residential uses such as buffering, management of stormwater from neighboring properties’ impervious surfaces and the containment of lighting within the boundaries of the commercial property. Mix of uses is desired by some residents, and this new urbanism approach can be successful for developing walkable communities. Looking towards a specific nodal type commercial district or creation of overlays which can be placed over areas that are desired for commercial development but primarily consist of existing residential development can be a method of ensuring that regulatory measures capture and provide for sound commercial development that protects the neighboring residential developments. (View the Parcel Assessment Classification Map on page 13 for information on parcel classification.)



Commercial area within the unincorporated “Village of Stronach”.

6.3 Industrial Land Use

Stronach Township’s industrial area is located in the western portion of the Township along Manistee Lake. Parcel Assessment Classification through the Manistee County Equalization Department shows that both vacant and occupied parcels classified as industrial are mainly located in sections 17 and 18, and to a much lesser extent section 29. Similarly the Current Zoning Map for Stronach Township places the Industrial District in sections 17 and 18, contained within the western, northern and eastern section boundaries and extending south to Steinberg Road and southwest to the CSX rail line.



Martin Marietta

The major industry in Stronach Township is Martin Marietta Co. located in section 18. There are several well houses located in the immediate vicinity of this industrial site. Water, sewer, rail lines and access to Manistee Lake can be found in the vicinity of sections 17 and 18, providing the necessary infrastructure to further promote industrial use within this area.

Another industry located in Stronach Township is that of the Manistee County Landfill. The landfill is operated by Republic Services LLC. and is located in the southwestern portion of the Township. The landfill provides income to the Township in the form of tipping fees, as well as jobs to

area residents. The landfill is currently located on land zoned Residential Forestry.

There is certain small scale, and natural resource-based activities which could be allowed in other areas within the Township. Exploration of allowing possible cottage industries and yet-to-be-discovered technical and medical industries could prove useful as well. The allowance of certain provisions for these types of home based occupations within residential districts of the township could prove beneficial to the local economy. Provisions within residential districts allowing for these light industries should contain regulatory protection for neighboring residential uses with provisions for proper lighting, signage and parking. The assurance that these light industries would not endanger the public health, safety and welfare of the residents or conflict with the purpose and intent of the district in which they are located should also be a priority.

(View Map on page 13 for the classification of currently assessed properties)

6.4 Civic Land Use

Civic land uses within Stronach comprise two primary properties, that of the Stronach Township Hall on Stronach Road and the Stronach Fire Barn located on S. Skocelas Road. Each of these public facilities serves the community residents by providing two locations for the storage of fire and emergency response equipment, as well as providing a location for Township Government events and meetings. The Planning Commission and/or Township Board may want to create a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in the future to identify, categorize and rate the condition of various government property and structure holdings. A CIP is a method to organize and plan for government facilities into the future, to ensure that the needs of the residents are met and maintenance and improvements are made on a gradual scale to circumvent large expenditures that can be a result of allowing structures and assets to dilapidate over time.



Stronach Township Hall



Stronach Fire Barn

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Stronach Township Parcel Assessment Classification

Legend

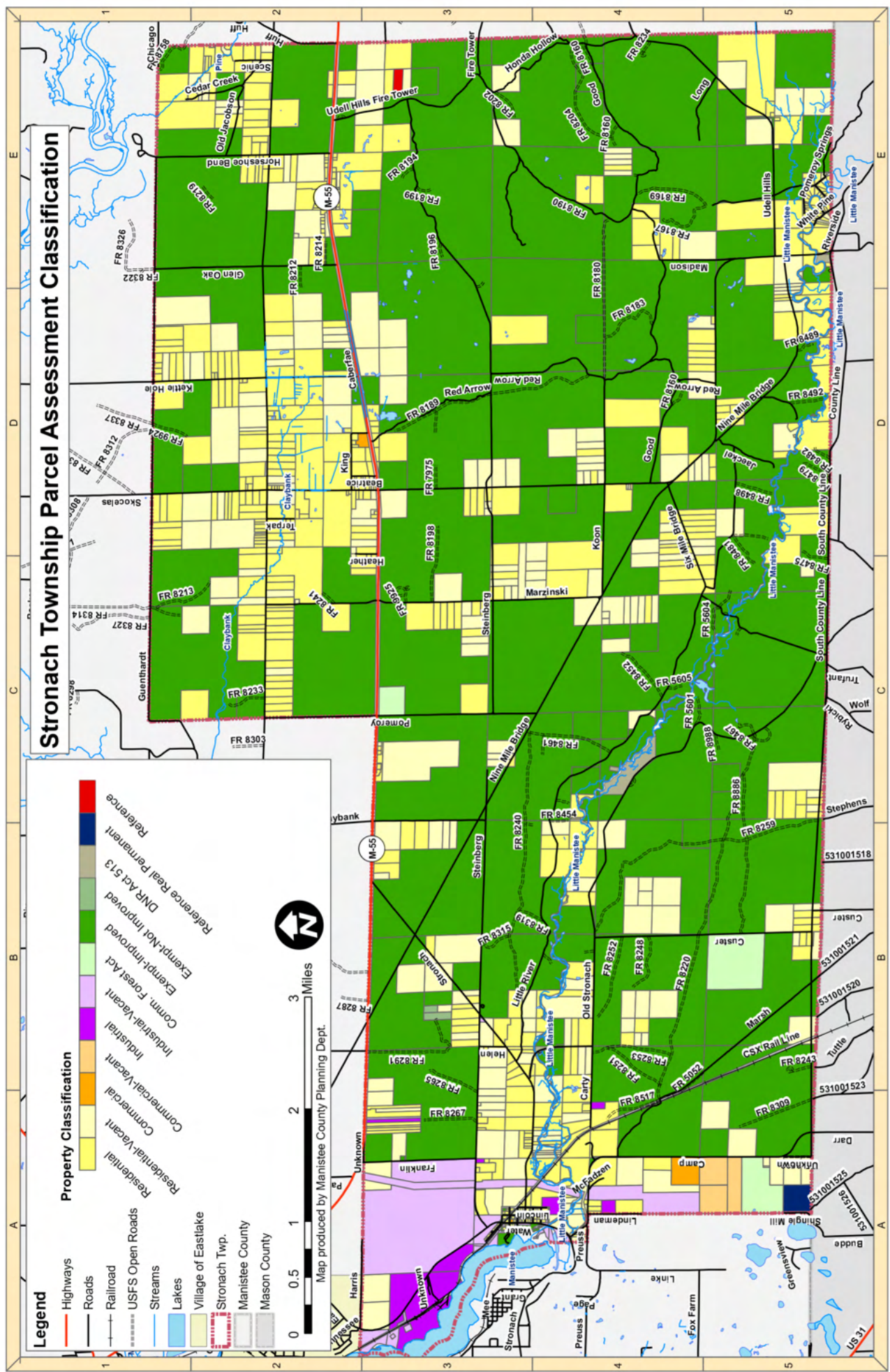
- Highways
- Roads
- Railroad
- USFS Open Roads
- Streams
- Lakes
- Village of Eastlake
- Stronach Twp.
- Manistee County
- Mason County

Property Classification

- Residential
- Commercial-Vacant
- Industrial-Vacant
- Industrial
- Comm. Forest Act
- Exempt-Improved
- DNR Act 513
- Reference Real Permanent

Map produced by Manistee County Planning Dept.

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles



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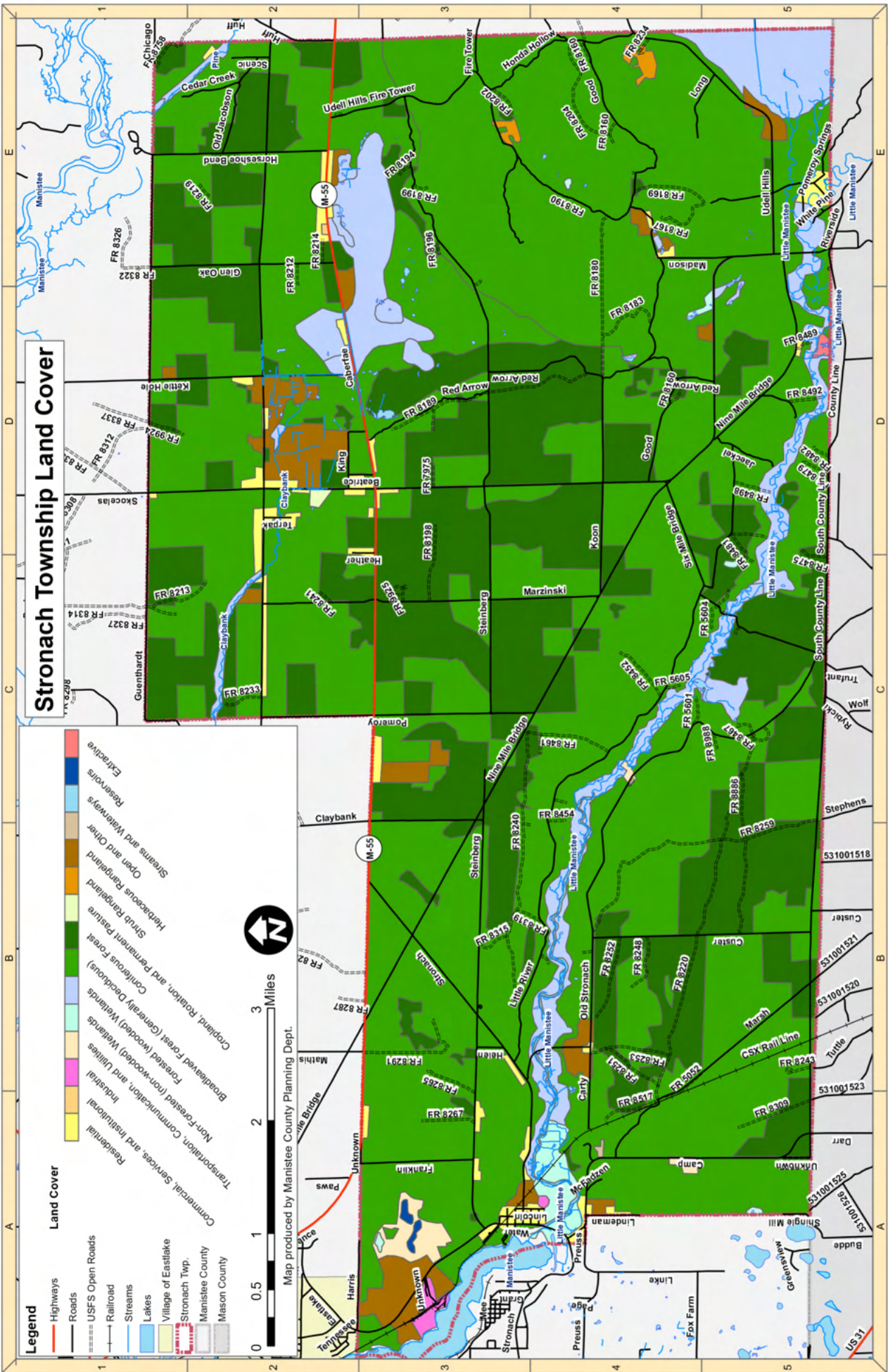
Sec. 7 Land Cover

Land cover differs from land use in that land cover provides information on the type of cover associated with a land area rather than the use that is associated with a land area. Land cover provides important information on vegetation type that occupies a land area such as fields, deciduous or coniferous trees and/or crops. Land cover also identifies impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots and buildings, as well as wetlands and areas covered by surface water.

The Land Cover Map on page 17 provides information on the land cover found within Stronach Township. This information coupled with land use information and other relevant data contained within this plan will help to identify and shape various land use policies for the Township.

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Stronach Township Land Cover

Legend

- Highways
- Roads
- USFS Open Roads
- Railroad
- Streams
- Lakes
- Village of Eastlake
- Stronach Twp.
- Manistee County
- Mason County

Land Cover

- Commercial, Services, and Institutional
- Residential
- Industrial
- Non-forested (non-wooded) Wetlands
- Forested (non-wooded) Wetlands
- Cropland, Rotation, and Permanent Forest
- Broadleaf Forest (Generally Deciduous)
- Shrub Rangeland
- Herbaceous Rangeland
- Open and Other
- Streams and Waterways
- Reservoirs
- Extracive

Map produced by Manistee County Planning Dept.

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

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Sec. 8 Education System

Stronach Township is served by three separate school districts that offer curriculum for students from kindergarten through twelve grades. Manistee Public Schools offer and manage the programs preparing the local children for advancement in career opportunities or further education through technical schools or college. The three separate school districts serving Stronach Township are Freesoil, Manistee Area and Kaleva Norman Dickson. (See the Stronach Twp. School District Map on page 21).

The area school districts also provide many extracurricular activities and sports programs for children to pursue many different interests. There is always something to help grow and nurture the interests and hobbies of the children of Stronach Township.

Graduation rates from area schools are high and all public school systems within Stronach Township and Manistee County have passed the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), which meets federal (Annual Yearly Progress) educational requirements.

Located between the City of Manistee and the City of Ludington approximately 20 minutes southwest of Stronach Township is West Shore Community College. This community college offers excellent vocational education programs and is quick to respond to community needs for specialized training for new businesses and industry needs. West Shore Community College also operates an off-campus program at West Shore Medical Center Manistee.¹ Other opportunities for continued education within the region can be found in Traverse City at Northwestern College.

¹ Source: Manistee County Master Plan

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Stronach Township School Districts

Legend

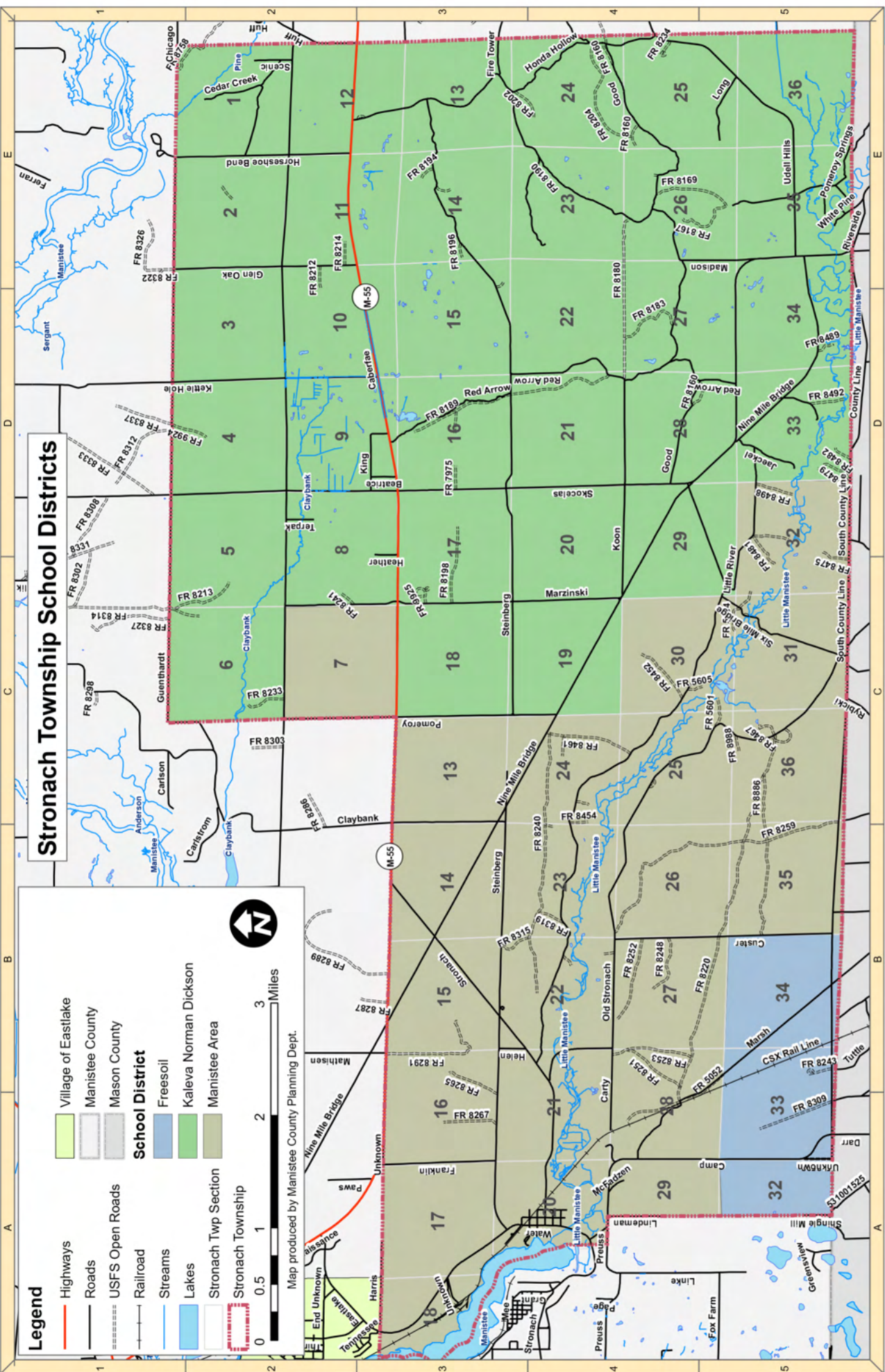
- Highways
- Roads
- USFS Open Roads
- Railroad
- Streams
- Lakes
- Stronach Twp Section
- Stronach Township

School District

- Village of Eastlake
- Manistee County
- Mason County
- Freesoil
- Kaleva Norman Dickson
- Manistee Area

Map produced by Manistee County Planning Dept.

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Sec. 9 Transportation

Transportation is fundamental to the location, design and layout of developed and rural land uses within Stronach Township. Routes and methods of transportation shapes the way industry, commercial business, residents and visitors access various locations, transport goods and operate successful businesses within the Township. The position of Stronach Township provides access to various classifications of transportation including major and minor roadways, freight shipping by rail and Great Lakes freighters and access to air transport via a localized airport. (View the Transportation Map on page 25 for a comprehensive look at the transportation network)

9.1 Roads

9.1.1 State Highway

Stronach Township has one major arterial highway, M-55, crossing East to West through the Northern portion of the township. The primary function of this “trunk line” is to transport medium to high volumes of traffic to and through the township. Access to M-55 for new homes and businesses is handled through a permit process operated by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).



State Hwy M-55

9.1.2 Manistee County Collector Roads

Urban collector roads, such as Stronach Road, carry moderate volumes of traffic for shorter distances. This particular road also serves as a connection between M-55 and US 31 south of the City of Manistee, thus providing a route to bypass the City helping to alleviate the potential for traffic congestion. New access permits for driveways to homes and businesses are obtained through the Manistee County Road Commission.

Rural collector roads, such as Pine Creek and Skocelas Road, carry lower volumes of traffic over longer distances within the township where rural development exists. New access permits for driveways to homes and businesses are obtained through the Manistee County Road Commission (MCRC).

Stronach Township and the MCRC co-fund improvements and maintenance for all roads within the township that are considered County Roads. All roads outside of USFS designated Forest Roads, State Highway M-55 and several private roads, are maintained and owned by Manistee County.

9.1.3 Local Roads

Urban local roads are primarily intended to carry neighborhood scale traffic to and from homes and businesses to collector roads. In most cases businesses should be sited on collector roads to alleviate unneeded traffic volumes into residential neighborhoods. The roads located in the unincorporated “Stronach Village” are primarily considered local roads as well as those roads found within other established subdivisions within the township. These roads are under ownership of the

County and thus are maintained by the MCRC.

9.1.4 Forest Roads and Private Roads

The United States Forest Service (USFS) is in charge of the many Forest Roads comprised of two-tracks and dirt roads throughout their vast land reserves contained within the Manistee National Forest. The expanse of National Forest Land within Stronach Township contains many of these roads and most are maintained primarily as seasonal only without maintenance activities such as plowing of snow during the winter. Roads on USFS lands are subject to being classified as either open or closed and may rotate periodically. It is important to obtain the most current Motor Vehicle Use Map from the Forest Service office in order to keep up-to-date on what roads are open to the public.

There are some private roads that exist in Stronach Township that are subject to the Michigan Subdivision Control Act. These roads that are in private ownership are maintained as such.

9.2 Public Transit

Public Transportation is available and provided by the Manistee Transportation Authority, a private non-profit corporation. They receive funding from State and Federal sources as well as county tax revenue from a transportation millage. This public transportation system is named Dial-a-Ride and provides pick-up to area residents through scheduling via a phone call. Dial-a-Ride also provides scheduled pickups and drop-offs to several priority destinations within the region. The Manistee Transportation Authority should be contacted for the latest information on scheduled pick-ups and drop-offs to these destinations.

9.3 Railroad

Railroad lines owned and operated by CSX Transportation were leased in 2005 by Marquette Railroad. A branch of this rail line traverses Stronach Township through “Stronach Village” along Manistee Lake. Manistee County was the primary shipper moving 57% of the regions freight along CSX lines in Northwest Michigan. The location of this rail line in proximity to industrial areas along Manistee Lake and the Deep Water Port could allow for the transfer of freight to industry and Great Lakes freighters as well as transfer of freight from the industrial sites and freighters to the rail lines.

9.4 Shipping

The deep water port accessibility of Manistee Lake is a major asset to Stronach Township. Industrial uses along Manistee Lake have access to the port facilities for the transfer of freight. The use of freighters allows the transfer of products and raw materials from Stronach Township to destinations within the Great Lakes and beyond. The harbor needs to be maintained to a dredged depth of 23 feet to allow commercial ships the ability to navigate the channel and Manistee Lake.¹

9.5 Air Travel

Stronach Township doesn't contain an airport within its boundaries but is in close proximity to Manistee-Blacker Airport located a short distance northwest in neighboring Manistee Township.

1 Source: Manistee County Master Plan

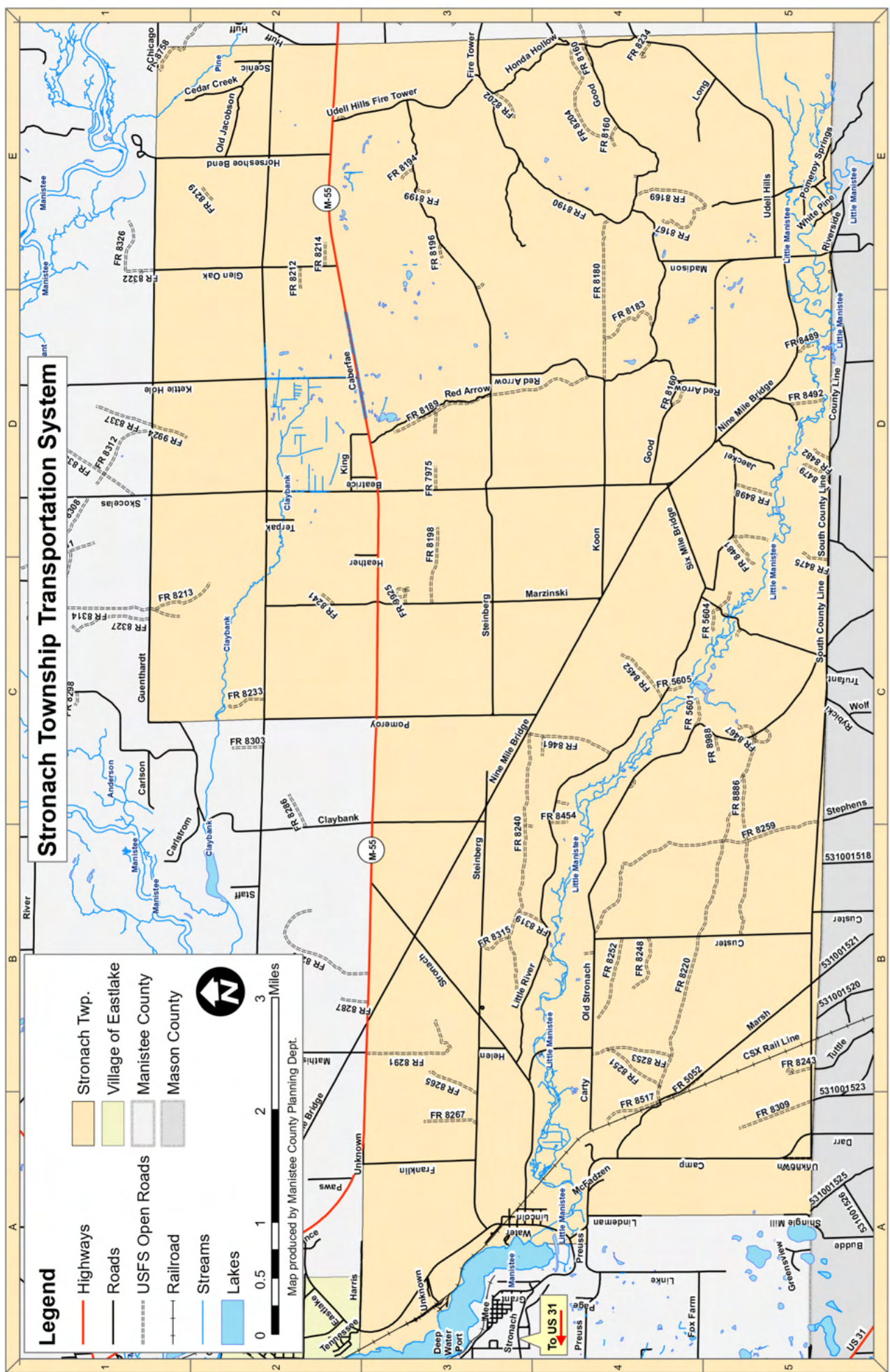
Stronach Township Transportation System

Legend

- Highways
- Roads
- USFS Open Roads
- Railroad
- Streams
- Lakes
- Stronach Twp.
- Village of Eastlake
- Manistee County
- Mason County

Map produced by Manistee County Planning Dept.

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Sec. 10 Natural Resources

Stronach Township has an abundance of natural resources. From the 1,000 foot heights of the Udell Hills to the lowland wetlands of the Little Manistee River, the Township has an array of natural features which provide a unique place to live and recreate. Protection of these natural resources is of utmost importance to maintain the character of the township that is beloved by so many residents. With the large land reserves held by the United States Forest Service in the form of the Manistee National Forest, many of these natural areas are currently protected. (Please view the Environmental Inventory Map on page 31.)

10.1 Watersheds

Watersheds are important features to recognize during a planning process. Watersheds are drainage boundaries dictated by changes in elevation. They maintain overland water flow within certain confines allowing the water to reach a common destination. Overland water flow is confined within specific watersheds that drain to naturally occurring streams, rivers, wetlands and low lying areas. For the purpose of land use planning, watersheds are important to recognize due to adjustments in increased overland water flow that occurs due to changes in land cover. As land clearing or development occurs, so do increases in impervious surfaces (i.e. land cover that is unable to allow natural infiltration of stormwater) as impervious surface increases stormwater flow increases which can lead to degradation of land areas and streams through the erosive forces of water. It is important to monitor land use to see that development appropriately handles stormwater runoff so as to not further impact natural drainage corridors and land areas.

There are 8 watersheds located within Stronach Township. The boundaries of these watersheds do not end at the Township jurisdictional lines. This drives an important point that land use decisions made within Stronach Township impact neighboring jurisdictions; likewise, the decisions made regarding land use in bordering jurisdictions impact Stronach Township. The watersheds wholly or partially contained within Stronach Township are:

- Big Sable River below Freeman Creek
- Gurney Creek
- Little Manistee River at Manistee Lake
- Manistee River Outlet-Manistee Lake
- Manistee River above Bear Creek
- Manistee River above Pine Creek
- Manistee River below Clay Bank Creek
- Manistee River below Fletcher Creek

10.2 Wetlands

Wetlands are an important aspect of the natural hydrologic cycle of water. They help to absorb, infiltrate, cleanse and retain water in our natural environment. The definition of a wetland under the authority of the State of Michigan is: “Wetland means land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp or marsh....”

Stronach Township has four primary wetland locations as indicated by the National Wetland Inventory. The location of these areas is noted on the following page:

Large wetland locations within Stronach Township:

1. Wetlands in the headwaters of the Claybank Creek east of Skocelas Rd. along M-55 to Udell Hills Fire Tower Rd.
2. The wetlands of the unnamed tributary of the Little Manistee River in the SE corner of the Township south of Udell Hills Rd.
3. The wetlands SW of the Udell Hills located on both sides of S. Skocelas Rd. west of Madison Rd.
4. The wetlands of the Little Manistee River from the drowned river mouth at Manistee Lake to the southern boundary of Stronach Township where the river flows from Mason County.

There are many more “pocket” wetlands located within the township that are denoted on the environmental inventory map. Each of these wetland locations is an important characteristic of the natural environment and should be preserved if possible.

10.2.1 State Authority

The State of Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) manages wetlands within the State. Wetlands falling under the authoritative blanket of the DEQ have to meet one of the following characteristics within Stronach Township:

- Connected to one of the Great Lakes, an inland lake, pond, river or stream.
- Located within 500 feet of an inland lake, pond, river or stream.
- Not connected to one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair, or an inland lake, pond, stream, or river, but are more than 5 acres in size.
- Not connected to one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair, or an inland lake, pond, stream, or river, and less than 5 acres in size, but the DEQ has determined that these wetlands are essential to the preservation of the state’s natural resources and has notified the property owner.

The DEQ requires that persons planning to conduct certain activities in regulated wetlands apply for and receive a permit from the State before beginning the activity. A permit is required from the state for the following:

- Deposit or permit the placing of fill material in a wetland.
- Dredge, remove, or permit the removal of soil or minerals from a wetland.
- Construct, operate, or maintain any use or development in a wetland.
- Drain surface water from a wetland.

10.2.2 Local Regulation and Authority

A local unit of government can regulate wetlands by ordinance as granted by State Statute in Part 303, Wetlands Protection of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, 1994 PA 451. Criteria must be met for a local ordinance to be enforceable under the DEQ. The criteria include continued exemption of activities listed under Part 303, the use of the same definition as in Part 303, a wetland inventory must be published before adoption of the ordinance, and the local unit of government must notify the DEQ of an adopted wetland ordinance.

Wetlands that can be regulated by local ordinances are those under 5 acres but greater than 2 acres. Wetlands under 2 acres can be regulated, but a permit must always be issued unless it can be determined that the wetland is essential to the preservation of the communities resources. Stronach Township does not currently regulate wetlands through a local ordinance.

10.3 Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides information pertaining to designated floodplains. Stronach Township was included in the FEMA mapping program which indicates flood zones according to the potential for flooding to occur. As denoted on the Environmental Inventory map along the main stem of the Little Manistee River, the 100 year Floodplain is visible. The requirements of FEMA mandate that structures built within the 100-year floodplain must obtain flood insurance, for protection against highly probable flooding.

Wetlands, Floodplains and the Permitting of Development Activities

The 100-year floodplain displayed along the Little Manistee River (as determined by FEMA) mimics closely the boundaries of the wetlands also found along that river as identified through the National Wetlands Inventory. (See map on page 31) Before any structures can be built within the 100-year floodplain or wetland areas, permitting may have to be received from the State of Michigan DEQ if there are wetlands located on the site planned for development or permitting from the Army Corps of Engineers if the area is within the 100-year floodplain.

Development within wetlands and designated floodplains is not wise and can cause damage to both structures and the natural environment. Stronach Township **does not support or encourage** these types of development activities, although in very rare cases there may be cause for such development. To begin the process of seeking permitting for development activities within a wetland or floodplain, please contact the Stronach Township Zoning Administrator to begin a preliminary discussion. Permits from the State of Michigan DEQ, the Federal Army Corps of Engineers, and a land use permit from the Township will be needed in most cases.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality:

For wetland and floodplain permitting information in Stronach Township please contact the State of Michigan Permit Consolidation Unit at 517-373-9244.

Stronach Township Zoning Administrator:

For land use permits for all development activities please contact the Stronach Township Zoning Administrator (Larry Thompson) at 231-590-9967.

10.4 Rivers and Streams

Northwestern Michigan has an abundance of beautiful rivers and streams and Stronach Township is no exception. From small intermittent feeder creeks to a small to medium sized river, high quality waters abound. Within the Township boundaries there are approximately 120,000 linear feet of streams, of which 94,074 linear feet are designated trout streams by the State of Michigan.

Stronach Township is home to a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) designated Blue Ribbon Trout stream the Little Manistee River. The Little Manistee flows into Stronach Township in the southeast corner from Mason County. The Little River then flows west-northwest traversing almost the entire length of the Township on its way to empty into Manistee Lake.



A world class trout stream, the Little Manistee

Little Manistee River in Winter.

trout fishing is only overshadowed by the larger migrating salmon and steelhead that ascend the river each fall and spring on their annual spawning run. The high quality stream allows for completely natural reproduction, which alleviates the need for stocking by the State. The large presence of salmon and steelhead each fall and spring, respectively, allows the DNR to operate a weir found in the lower stretches of the river for harvesting of eggs and milt. These fertilized eggs are used within Michigan and sold to other Great Lakes States for stocking programs.

Several smaller streams and creeks are located within the Township. In the NE corner, Pine Creek flows through Stronach for a very short distance before eventually emptying into the Big Manistee River in southern Brown Township. Located a little further to the west of Pine Creek is Claybank Creek. The headwaters of Claybank Creek can be found in the wetlands along M-55 between Skocelas Road and Udell Hills Fire Tower Road. Both of these creeks are designated trout streams and receive runs of salmon and steelhead from the Big Manistee River. The last notable creek system within the township is the unnamed tributary to the Little Manistee River found in the SE corner of the township. This tributary drains the wetlands found south of Udell Hills Road, and likely due to water temperature and stream structure has not been designated a trout stream by the State.

10.5 Lakes and Ponds

Along the northwestern boundary of Stronach Township is Manistee Lake. Manistee Lake is a deep water port and is created by the confluence of the Little Manistee River and the Manistee River. The lake that is created then flows through the channel located in the City of Manistee which empties into Lake Michigan. Manistee Lake is the largest water body in Stronach Township, and immediately adjacent to the lake is higher density development.

There are other smaller water bodies located in Stronach Township, with the vast majority being small ponds that are found on USFS property. Some of these ponds are contained within larger wetland areas and creek drainages while others stand alone without any obvious surface water connection.

10.6 Udell Hills and Forested Lands

The topography of Stronach Township is unique. Lowlands and relatively flat terrain gives way to bluffs along the Little Manistee River and one of the more unique aspects of topography within the Township, the Udell Hills. The Udell Hills are a glacial deposit or moraine that occurred during the retreat of glaciers from the Great Lakes region towards the end of the last ice age. The Hills once stood much taller than they currently are, but have been weathered and eroded over time. Almost entirely enclosed within the Manistee National Forest, the Udell Hills were the location of a regional fire tower that offered views of the surrounding countryside and forested areas and at one time a ski resort operated in the area. The Udell Hills now offer various passive recreational opportunities and provide a unique feature to the character of the township. Forested areas of the Township are important to the wildlife and character of the land, and the recreational opportunities that draw people to the area. Wildfire is a real threat to the forest and homes and residents should familiarize themselves with community wild fire plans and the Fire Wise Program.



Udell Hills in Summer