



Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

project update

This summer the Land Conservancy of West Michigan has been busy preparing the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area for use by the public.



- A management commission was set up by the City of Saugatuck to establish the rules for the property (see page 10)
- On numerous workdays volunteers cleaned the property, removing trash and old fencing
- Guided hikes introduced visitors to the special characteristics of the property (see back cover for info on a moonlight hike on Oct. 22)
- Trail signs were installed
- A trail map was created and is available in Saugatuck and on-site (see page 9)



Above: Earth Day Celebration attendees embark on a guided hike through the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. *Photo: Michelle Harris*

Left: Fencing being removed from the property. *Photo: April Scholtz*



You Can Help

If you are interested in helping with the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, there is still more to do! Fundraising and volunteers are both still needed.

Contact us at 616-451-9476 or online at www.naturenearby.org.

Bottom left: A Hope College professor and his students install trail signs throughout the property. *Photo: Melanie Manion*

Bottom middle: Volunteers help to remove garbage from the property at a workday. *Photo: Melanie Manion*

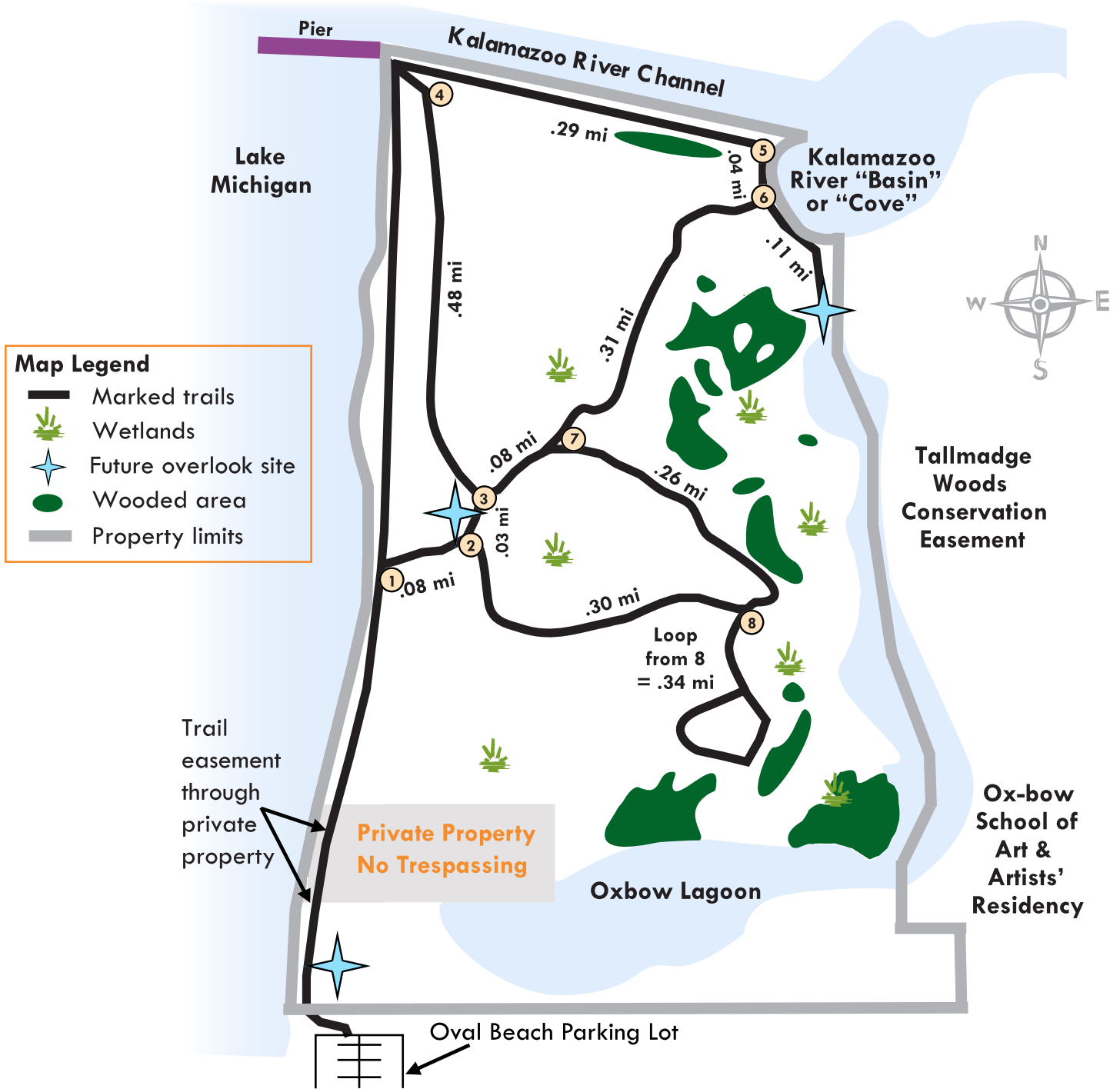
Bottom right: Newly installed signs and trail markers. *Photo: Melanie Manion*





Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

We encourage you to visit the 171-acre Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area and explore the duneland and natural habitat of the property. Bring this map with you - the reverse side explains what you might expect to see as you hike this natural landscape!



Beach Trail Mileages:	
Parking lot to ①	= 0.42 mi
① to Pier	= 0.41 mi
Parking lot to Pier	= 0.83 mi

Created by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan.
All boundaries and mileages are approximate.



Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

hiker's guide

The newly-opened Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area is a work in progress, but you are invited to explore this wonderful landscape of dunes, forest, and wetlands bordered by miles of natural shoreline. Below is a brief description of what you can expect as you hike, with reference to the map on reverse.

Oval Beach parking lot to **1**:

As you walk up the beach you'll pass by the remnants of the original Kalamazoo River pier. After the new pier was finished in 1906 it took only a few years for sand to blow across the natural river mouth, creating the Oxbow Lagoon.

1 to Dune overlook **2** & **3**:

After crossing the foredune you'll be able to see into the Natural Area's interior and the central dune formation around the large interdunal wetland. **This dune formation was badly eroded by years of foot traffic on the dune ridge and sunbathing – both of which are no longer permitted.**

2 to **8** and loop extension:

Dropping into the interior, the trail skirts the interdunal wetland and central dune formation. The loop trail follows a wooded edge and is a particularly rich habitat for migratory warblers and other birds.

8 to **7**:

The trail borders the back of the highest dune. Near the pines in the spring, listen for the buzzy, ascending scale of the Prairie Warbler, listed as "endangered" by the State.

7 to **6**:

A short climb up the back of a smaller dune gives a view of an interdunal wetland. Whether or not these wetlands hold water depends more on Lake Michigan water levels than on seasonal rainfall. In the warmer months listen for calling frogs. When the trail nears the "Basin" area, it passes through a sedge meadow – a great place to see butterflies.

6 to the future Oxbow Lagoon overlook (near northeast corner of the property):

The trail skirts willows and rushes and heads over a low dune to a clearing with a view of the lagoon backed by the forested hills and dome of Mt. Baldhead Park. The marshy shoreline of the lagoon is habitat for the tiny State-threatened Blanchard's cricket frog.

5 to **4**:

Please Note: This trail will not be marked until the channel reconstruction project is finished. It is possible to walk off-trail, just south of the construction zone.

4 to **3**:

This trail follows a line of poplars on the foredune and gives you a wonderful shoreline view.

Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Rules & Regulations

- Sunbathing is NOT permitted on the Dunes.
- Alcohol is not permitted.
- Hiking trails are marked. To protect fragile dune and wetland ecosystems, we ask that you stay on the designated trails.
- Trash must be packed out.
- No fires or camping.
- Swimming is not permitted in the Oxbow Lagoon.
- Natural Area closes at 10 p.m.
- Dogs are not allowed in the Natural Area, to protect rare wildlife populations. *Please note: Between Labor Day and Memorial Day, leashed dogs are permitted on the Lake Michigan shoreline, only.*