

## Draft – Version 2.6, March 17, 2023

### Section 3, Principles, and Values for Land Management Blueprint for the Keweenaw Heartlands

*This draft will be incorporated into the final Blueprint but is being released online in draft form in the interests of transparency. Some information about survey methodology is included here for clarity but will be moved into a separate methodology section of the final Blueprint. This and other sections completed before publication of the final Blueprint will be subject to at least one additional round of editing to ensure consistency, clarity, accuracy and flow in the final document.*

This section outlines the key findings and recommendations for land management of the lands making up the Keweenaw Heartlands. These findings are based on a highly participatory community input process. The process included interviews with 58 key stakeholders, 10 community and interest group meetings with over 400 participants, and over 1,885 completed online surveys. It also included creation of a local planning committee of 17 individuals representing a wide range of interests related to the future uses and management of 32,600 acres of mostly undeveloped forestland located in Grant and Eagle Harbor Townships, Keweenaw County, Michigan.

The charge for the planning committee is to develop a management Blueprint that will guide, inform and in some cases constrain the ongoing public uses of the unique physical, cultural and environmental assets this property contains. This governance and management structure is also expected to result in management of the lands to provide benefits for generations yet unborn, which requires a fundamentally different approach than the typical planning process that focuses on a three-to-five-year time horizon.

While there are dozens of visions of how the world may look one hundred or more years from now, no one can say for sure what economic, social and political structures will be in place. Nor can we predict what prevalent, society-defining technologies, new commercial uses of natural resources or what outdoor recreational practices will predominate at that time. Electrical transmission, the telephone and the automobile were all invented in the 1880's, less than 150 years ago. In addition, with an expected rapidly changing climate, long term natural resource management decision making processes need to be both informed and adaptable.

Fundamental principles and related values<sup>1</sup> tend to change much more slowly than technologies or social practices. They provide a basis for creating a Blueprint that can endure for generations and guide land management decisions over such a long horizon. Therefore, this Blueprint and all the implementation work to follow is built on a set of enduring principles and values derived from this highly participatory and inclusive planning process.

The values discussed emerged from interviews, stakeholder group sessions and public meetings which together involved more than 450 Keweenaw Peninsula residents, with the majority from Keweenaw

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<sup>1</sup> Formal definitions generally focus on principles as being constants that do not change based on viewpoint, and values as being driven by viewpoints and moral or belief systems. The distinction between the two can often become blurry. We do not make the distinction in this Blueprint and use the terms together or separately to state a set of fundamental tenets that should undergird all future planning and management for these lands.

County. In addition, an online survey collected 1,885 responses: 22% from the Keweenaw Peninsula, 8% from the rest of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, 29% from lower Michigan, and 41% from elsewhere across the United States.<sup>2</sup> There was remarkable consistency across all sources concerning desired principles and values for land management.

The Planning Committee for this process reviewed a summary of the interviews, group and survey results and engaged in a group process exercise to refine principles. RES Associates organized the results of that process and validated them with the Planning Committee before arriving at this summation. A discussion of the stakeholder input and relevant descriptions of current circumstances is provided in this section to help future decisionmakers understand the context and rationale for these principles.

Overall, the principles and values for land management fall into four meta-categories. Each meta-category will be discussed in detail, including related values that will help clarify them and provide a more detailed background. The four meta-categories include:

1. Adopt and Adhere to a Plan
2. Protect Resource Health and Values
3. Ensure Access and Balanced Use
4. Maintain Economic Contributions

In this section and the next (Governance Principles and Values), the order should not be taken as a hierarchy of importance. While there is a certain flow to the order in which they are described, and some principles may be dependent on others, each principle or value expressed is important on its own as well as in relationship with the others. ***All the expressed principles are necessary and none alone is sufficient to guide the management and governance of The Keweenaw Heartlands.***

### 1. Adopt and Adhere to a Plan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Predominantly Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois, in that order.

<sup>3</sup> By “plan,” we are referring here to this Blueprint, in conjunction with the results of the additional planning activities called for in the implementation section.

## MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

1. **Adopt and Adhere to a Plan**
  - a. Plan inclusively
  - b. Focus on the long-term
  - c. Ensure sustainable revenue to cover operations and maintenance
2. **Protect Resource Health and Values**
  - a. Maintain and increase environmental health and benefits
  - b. Protect cultural and historic assets
  - c. Sustain quality of life
3. **Ensure Access and Balanced Use**
  - a. Preserve and balance historic uses
  - b. Maintain and improve connectivity
  - c. Separate incompatible activities
  - d. Flex with changing times
4. **Maintain Economic Contributions**
  - a. Prudently support the visitor economy
  - b. Maintain a working forest
  - c. Balance economic and other values
  - d. Increase governmental revenues

The principle of adopting and adhering to a plan was a consistent theme among interviewees and also emerged from survey comments. Stakeholder comments about this principle can be summarized as: “Adopt a plan, publicize it and stick with it.” Interviewees and some survey comments also expressed a fear that the management of the land could become politicized and change direction with elections, or with changes in governing board composition, which underscores the need for a principles-based Blueprint and plan, which will be specifically addressed later in the section on Governance Principles.

Digging into the details of stakeholder comments, three related values emerged concerning the planning process and the resulting plan. They are:

- Plan inclusively
- Focus on the long-term
- Ensure sustainable revenue to cover operations and maintenance

**a. Plan inclusively**

Nearly all interviewees who mentioned the need for a plan also emphasized that the planning process should be inclusive of all stakeholders’ voices. Inclusivity was also a major theme emerging in group and public meetings. Interviewees identified many stakeholder groups whose involvement was considered critical, including organized and unorganized groups of users, elected representatives, landowners, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community members, public safety service providers, business owners, economic development organizations and conservation groups, to name just the most commonly mentioned.

When discussing types of user groups, most interviewees differentiated activities like snowmobile, ATV, hunting and mountain bike uses from other uses. The differentiator seemed to be the possibility that a use could create noise, a hazard, or other conditions that could disrupt the enjoyment of uses that were more contemplative, requiring quiet, solitude or similar conditions for their full enjoyment – activities typically referred to by interviewees as “quiet uses.”

However, the public input process clearly documented that membership in any particular stakeholder group is not exclusive, and most people use the land in multiple ways.<sup>4</sup> The 1,885 respondents to the survey identified an average of 5.48 uses apiece which did not break cleanly along expected lines.

A manual scan of survey respondents’ answers showed that most who participate in motorized uses, mountain biking, or hunting also participate in several quiet uses. The response rate for motorized uses, mountain biking and hunting averaged 23 to 37 percent of respondents. The five most popular quiet uses were: tent camping, gathering (berries, mushrooms, etc.), kayaking, hiking and sightseeing, which averaged between 36 and 59 percent of respondents. Despite the potential conflict between these uses, significantly curtailing current uses was suggested by only one interviewee, no public or group meeting participants, and only a handful of the 1,885 survey comments.

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<sup>4</sup> The survey and interview processes asked respondents how they used the land but did not ask them to prioritize among their uses or pick a most important use.

Another measure of Keweenaw Heartlands users valuing inclusivity in planning for the land's management can be seen in survey respondents' ranking the importance of potential benefits of the acquisition and conservation project. Among 19 benefits ranked by recipients, "protecting pre-settlement indigenous sites" and "protecting culturally important sites for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community" (KBIC) ranked third and fourth, behind only protecting ecosystems, habitats and wildlife corridors and maintaining the tourism economy. Clearly respondents' sense of inclusivity extends well beyond recreational users and recognizes the importance of including the land's Indigenous people.

As discussed in earlier sections, this Blueprint focuses on high-level, long-term principles. Additional, detailed implementation planning will be required to flesh out the operational details. To remain current and relevant despite social and environmental changes, operation and management plans and practices must be reviewed on a regular basis. There was a strong desire expressed in interviews and stakeholder meetings for continued inclusive involvement in this ongoing planning. One interviewee summed it up by saying that trust is essential for successful ongoing management, and continued engagement of stakeholders in ongoing planning is one of the most effective ways to maintain trust.

Clearly, most stakeholders use and appreciate the Keweenaw Heartlands in a multitude of ways. They recognize the need to adhere to the principle that all stakeholders must be represented in the initial and ongoing planning as well as the governing processes.

#### **b. Focus on the long-term**

A frequent sub-theme among more than half of the interviewees who called for plan-driven management was the need for it to focus on the long term. This theme also emerged repeatedly in the survey comments. It was often in discussion around this issue that concerns emerged about the potential for rapid changes in direction that might be caused by political decisions or changing membership of the ultimate governing body.

One interviewee summed the need for a long-term approach by pointing out that, across 9,000 years of history since the glaciers of the last ice age retreated, the overall character of and the human uses for the Keweenaw Peninsula have remained remarkably consistent. Hunting, gathering, fishing and extraction of its forest and mineral resources have been the predominant uses for millennia. The land has always held a spiritual significance, first to its Indigenous peoples, and more recently to countless residents and visitors who come to commune with its natural environment and restore a sense of balance and inner peace.

Other interviewees pointed out that the climate-adapted ecosystem is dominated by slow-growing hardwood forests that can take generations to fully regenerate when harvested in an overly aggressive manner. Residents with a forestry background point out that the highest-value products of the forest are its slow-growing hardwoods, which require patient, long-term management practices to grow to maturity. Environmentalists point to this long-term growth cycle as a management approach that can maximizing carbon sequestration and storage.

One realization inherent in these interview comments was the concern that a private for-profit ownership and management structure with investor pressure to manage for short term gain would not protect these long-term values. Virtually all interviewees expressed, in some fashion, the need for a public or nonprofit management and governance structure to ensure management for long-term value rather than short term profits.

A fundamental principle in investment planning is that sources should match uses to maximize returns over time. In other words, the time horizon for making an investment should match the life of the asset securing the investment. The same principle applies equally to planning for environmental and cultural assets. Assets with a long-term value, like the cultural and environmental assets of the Keweenaw Heartlands, demand a long-term planning approach.

### **c. Ensure sustainable revenues to cover operations and maintenance**

Another frequent theme among interviewees can be summed up in a comment from one participant: “It really doesn’t matter what ends up in the plan if there aren’t enough resources to implement it.” Others called for a “sustainable revenue model,” or “a viable business plan.” How to pay for management was clearly on the minds of many stakeholder interviewees.

In addition, “How are you going to pay for management,” was a significant topic of discussion in every public and group meeting. Many participants expressed concern that the forests had been overharvested and, even if retained in a working forest, would need time to recover enough to generate sustainable returns for land management and maintenance costs.

The specific revenue streams used for management will undoubtedly vary based on the type of governmental or nonprofit entity that ultimately holds and manages the land. Each type of entity has access to a different set of tools for generating revenue. Nevertheless, a sustainable, viable business model that ensures revenues cover costs is an essential principle for this Blueprint and subsequent implementation planning.

## **2. Protect Resource Health and Value**

The second overarching principle that emerged strongly from all sources of public input can be summed up in the comments of one of the planning committee members. “Put the land first. Protecting and preserving it is a prerequisite to everything else.”

In stakeholder input about protecting Keweenaw Heartlands, three related values emerged:

- Maintain and increase environmental health
- Protect cultural and historical assets
- Sustain quality of life

### **a. Maintain and increase environmental health and benefits**

Protecting and maintaining important ecosystems, habitats and corridors for wildlife was the single most important benefit ranked by survey respondents. It was the only benefit ranked as “very important” (the highest ranking) by more than 50% of the 1608 survey respondents who completed the questions about importance of benefits (1,037/1,608 = 64.5%).

Interviews and group meetings provided a more nuanced view, not only of the importance of maintaining existing environmental health, but also of the clear opportunity to increase the environmental benefits of Keweenaw Heartlands.

Interviewees discussed the critical importance of the Keweenaw Peninsula as a stopover point for migratory birds crossing Lake Superior. Interviewees noted that these forests are home to some threatened plant and animal species, reportedly including some plant species that may not be found anywhere else.

Despite the previously mentioned concerns about overharvesting of the timber resource, stakeholders communicated that the forests of the Keweenaw Heartlands are still well stocked by a diversity of tree species. If a forest management regime that allows the forest to regrow and be managed for an older overall stand age can be implemented, these slow-growing forests are an ideal vehicle for sequestering carbon.

Just as their economic value will increase by allowing the forests to rest and regenerate, stakeholders highlighted that a sustainable forestry plan focused on strategic harvesting and selective cutting to maintain the diversity of age and species will increase the forests resilience in the face of disease, pests and a changing climate. In addition, implementing a thoughtful and appropriately designed forest management plan written for the area will maximize the forest’s value for wildlife and rare and threatened species; provided that it reflects the ecological services provided by the forest, provides a diversity of habitats and includes tailored management regimes that protect and enhance ecological values.

Stakeholders clearly embrace the environmental benefits of the Keweenaw Heartlands as being critically important and see preserving and increasing these benefits as a driving principle for their management.

#### **b. Protect cultural and historical assets**

Protection of cultural and historical assets is a critical principle, identified by a large majority of stakeholders in interviews, meetings and surveys. One interviewee very succinctly summed this up by saying, “There is 9,000 years of history in just three inches of topsoil.” Another pointed out that the Keweenaw Heartlands have not been surveyed since recent high-value archeological finds on Isle Royale, and likely host similar undiscovered sites.

The mining era of the peninsula is well documented by the Keweenaw National Historical Park and its 21 partner sites. However, the earliest post-colonization mining and early European settlement sites are likely on the lands preserved by this project. These sites have not yet been fully inventoried or protected. Some stakeholders noted that even the tailings left behind from mining have significant

value. They are popular with rock-hounds and are reportedly the source of at least one mineral specimen not found elsewhere.

Protecting pre-European settlement Indigenous sites, culturally important sites for the KBIC, historical sites from the mining era and sites from early European trading and settlement ranked third, fourth, fifth and sixth in importance among 19 benefits ranked by survey respondents. No lower ranked benefit achieved an average ranking of “important” or above (3.0+ on a scale of 0.0-4.0).

Protecting cultural and historical assets is therefore a high priority value for managing the land. Interviewees with a historical, environmental or geological background all emphasized the need for a detailed site survey before any project proceeds which will disturb the land.

### **c. Sustain quality of life**

Sustaining the quality of life, often described as preventing overdevelopment or maintaining the character of the area, was the single most-cited concern of survey respondents. It was cited by 69.3% of survey respondents as a major concern. The same value came through strongly in interviews with more than two thirds of the interviewees mentioning it as a major concern. It was also a significant, but not quantifiable, theme in group and public meetings.

The term overdevelopment, or the principle of sustaining quality of life, were also used as shorthand for describing patterns of development that would significantly restrict historical and cultural uses of the land – like hunting, fishing, gathering, hiking and back-country camping.

While the concepts of “quality of life” or “overdevelopment” are subjective, interviewees were relatively consistent in their descriptions of what it could look like. “We don’t want another Disneyland,” was the single most consistently used expression of this principle. The development of large resorts, waterfront homes and condos, chain hotels, and fast-food restaurants were also cited as signs of overdevelopment.

The issue of overdevelopment or overuse was also conflated with the problem of not enough amenities to support the current level of visitors. Some of the impacts, like visitors leaving behind garbage or using roadside ditches as latrines, can be addressed by investments in visitor amenities as discussed later. However, development of visitor amenities might attract even more users as the experience becomes more positive and inconveniences are removed.

Development that would force significant reduction or cessation of traditional uses was also viewed as overdevelopment that affects quality of life. Hunters, for example, mentioned how lots leased or sold for cabins significantly restrict their ability to safely hunt in certain areas. Snowmobilers and ATVers also mentioned the impact when a business sale or expansion forces them to reroute developed trails. All would say that activities and uses like these reduce their enjoyment of the lands and diminish their quality of life.

Among all the principles and values expressed, sustaining quality of life is likely the most subjective and most subject to change over time. There are currently many residents who are fine with life without

smartphones and oppose construction of cell towers that might mar their view. However, many users, particularly visitors, are more dependent on the technology. There are new and better ways to camouflage towers. Also, local Emergency Responders see better coverage as a public safety necessity, rather than an unsightly convenience.

To safeguard quality of life, most interviewees saw the need for a highly representative local governance structure for the lands. The general view was that a governing body composed of a diverse group of local stakeholders could best balance quality of life with development pressures and tourism impacts – if it is guided by principles that include sustaining the quality of life.

### **3. Ensure Balanced Access**

The third overarching set of principles and values for management of the land can be summarized with “Ensure Balanced Access.” Significant loss of the extensive, and mostly unregulated, use of these lands by community members and visitors was an overarching concern and yet the impacts of unrestricted and increasing use of the lands was an equal, albeit conflicting concern. Balancing use with conservation was acknowledged as a necessary and challenging desired outcome.

Virtually everyone interviewed or surveyed cited multiple ways they use the Keweenaw forests. Many of those uses depended upon the unusual degree of public access tolerated by the former landowners. The access granted goes far beyond the hunting and fishing foot-access required by the State for lands taxed at reduced commercial forest rates. This level of access appears to be unique among large tracts of land in Michigan and rare anywhere in the United States, and the landowners tolerance of it appears to be largely based upon the fact that these uses didn’t significantly impair their commercial use and economic returns and likely would have not been so casually tolerated if they had. Even so, there were occasional references to gates, road and trail closures when previous landowners deemed them necessary to protect their interests.

Nearly unrestricted access to the land for multiple uses has been a feature of its management for generations, and the culture and economy of the area have become rooted in that access. Many of the most popular coastal features located on current State land can only be accessed by the public by crossing the Keweenaw Heartlands land, so maintaining access to and through this forest is viewed as critical to the people’s use and enjoyment of the area’s most popular sites and features.

While each has an established trail system where most of their use occurs, ATVers, snowmobilers and mountain bikers enjoyed off-trail access to almost all of the former TRG acreage without enforcement of any restrictions established by owners, laws or regulations. For instance, it was common for hunters to use their ATVs to access hunting camps and blinds and haul out harvested game almost anywhere in the forest. At the same time, quiet users report that motorized, hunting and mountain bike use can imperil them or diminish their enjoyment of the land, suggesting that some uses do not go well in the same places.

While these uses when confined to the trail network generally do not have a negative impact on natural resources, off trail use appears to be the primary cause of negative impacts to sensitive ecological sites,



cultural sites as well as the most common form of trespass onto adjacent private property. Also, increased off trail use is an increasing burden on public safety and first responders. Finding and rendering aid to a resident or visitor who needs assistance on the trail network is a much simpler task than finding someone who is off the network. Effectively curtailing unsafe behavior, while challenging on the trail network, is virtually impossible off the network. It is highly unlikely and inconsistent with responsible management for all uses to be continued exactly as they are now. To balance uses and reduce conflict, some will likely have to be modified or limited as to where they may occur.

In addition, the interview responses clearly show that previous management scheme for the land did little to balance its various uses with resource protection. Relatively unrestricted access to the entire area, coupled with the lack of any comprehensive survey of critical environmental, cultural, historical and geological assets, provided little or no protection for these resources.

Four related values emerged from the interviews, group and public meetings and surveys, as refined by the planning committee. They are:

- Preserve and balance historic uses
- Maintain connectivity
- Separate incompatible activities
- Flex with changing times

**a. Preserve and balance historic uses.**

The range of current and historic public uses for the Keweenaw Heartlands is unusual across the US. A prepopulated list of sixteen common categories of use was provided to survey respondents. All 1,885 respondents answered this question and only 15 selected “none of the above,” but 369 (20%) listed some other use or a refinement of the uses listed. On average, respondents used the land in 5.5 different ways. The survey was not designed to determine which use might predominate for a specific user, or, for visitors, whether a specific use precipitated their trips to the Keweenaw Heartlands, leading to the additional uses selected. The survey also did not identify where on the lands the respondent was engaging in their preferred activity. The prepopulated uses and their response rates are listed in Table 1, below.

Interviews, group and public meetings and surveys also established a strong desire that the land be managed in a way that preserves as much of the historic access and related uses as possible. This topic was brought up without prompting in more than three-quarters of the interviews (46/58). In the survey, loss of access was divided into four questions related to quiet uses, motorized uses, mountain biking and hunting/fishing/trapping/gathering. Protecting these uses was cited as a major concern by 54%, 45%, 40% and 33% of respondents, respectively.

Group and public meeting opinions cannot be quantified; however, concern for maintaining and balancing access was raised by participants at every meeting and was the predominant topic of conversation in meetings with user groups. In fact, across the entire range of interviews and meetings

<b>Table 1, Uses of Keweenaw Forest Lands by Survey Respondents</b>		
<b>Use of Land</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>
Hiking, geocaching or orienteering	60%	1,127
Sightseeing	59%	1,118
Mountain biking	37%	703
Kayaking or canoeing	37%	695
Gathering - berries, mushrooms, firewood, medicinal plants, etc.	37%	688
Tent camping	36%	682
Riding off-road vehicles like 4x4s, ATVs or side-by-sides	32%	597
Amateur or professional nature photography	30%	570
Snowshoeing	29%	543
Hunting, fishing or trapping	27%	515
Cross-country skiing	23%	431
Snowmobiling	23%	429
Motorhome, trailer or pop-up camping	22%	407
Birding	21%	399
Downhill skiing	17%	311
Rock climbing	7%	140
None of the above	1%	15
Other	20%	369
<b>TOTAL RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,885</b>
<b>Total Responses</b>		<b>10,339</b>
<b>Average per Respondent</b>		<b>5.5</b>

only one of the 400+ participants publicly expressed a desire to have most allowed existing uses curtailed or eliminated. There were, however, some participants that expressed concerns about negative impacts of specific currently allowed uses or that made comments suggesting that destructive or illegal uses like defacing landmarks, roadside camping, unpermitted cutting of timber and collecting Indigenous artifacts are problems that should be addressed.

An important nuance of stakeholder discussion was that, while the allowed current uses should be valued and maintained, they can and should not be accommodated everywhere within the property. Most participants that discussed this said something like: “There’s plenty of room to allow all the current uses, just not all in the same places.” The same discussions often also cited lack of resources for enforcement of existing rules.

Despite the nearly universal support for maintaining as much access as possible, planning committee members expressed surprise at one outcome related to access to the land. Nearly 90% of all survey respondents either definitely (66.3%) or potentially (23.6%) supported levying a modest user fee to help cover costs of developing, operating and maintaining facilities and services used by visitors. In the associated comments, potential supporters of a fee wanted to know how large a “modest” fee might be, specifically how it would be used and if it would be levied on those whose property taxes now support nearly all visitor services.

In addition, many stakeholders expressed concerns that at some point, the cumulative impact of visitors may exceed the capacity of the land’s ecosystems to regenerate over time. One planning committee

member and several survey comments suggest that, as is the case with many of the more popular National Parks, some form of a quota system may have to be created eventually if the impacts of visitor use continue to grow.

The principle of preserving a balanced mix of all current uses comes through loud and clear in all forms of stakeholder input. Moreover, a vast majority supports charging users a modest fee to help support management and use of the lands. However, since many popular features, trailheads, and other attractors are accessed from public highways, it may be difficult to design an effective user fee system. An entry fee like the one used by Michigan's State Parks is unlikely to work, so other models must be found to implement this concept. Other models, such as parking fees, or app-based fee collection might be more amenable to this situation but will require further research.

#### **b. Maintain and improve connectivity**

Interviewees and group and public meeting participants repeatedly stressed that part of what makes the Keweenaw Heartlands unique is its interconnections. Trails connect not just communities, but outstanding natural vistas, environmental gems and world-class geological and cultural heritage sites. The large tracts of land and surrounding waters also provide interconnections vital to the health of various species of plants, animals, fish and birds native to or migrating through the area.

The interconnections were cited as multiplying the value of every use of the land. The wildlife corridors enhance the natural experience of users and assure the health and resilience of wildlife populations. The sheer variety of the experience builds, layer on layer, into a whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Maintaining connectivity will also require a constant balancing of interests. The ideal routing of a motorized trail for ATVs or snowmobiles could disrupt connectivity between critical habitat for species that do not adapt well to the associated noise and activity. This points to the need for a better inventory and study of the various environmental and ecological systems in play in the area. If we do not understand the interconnections, we cannot consider them when balancing interests.

In addition, stakeholders report that access to some major points of interest has been lost, and in some places, existing roads and trails may disrupt wildlife migration and species propagation. Improved connectivity may need to be created, where appropriate, in areas that have previously been blocked from public access. In other areas, building new trails should be considered to connect communities and points of interest via hiking and possibly other uses. Meanwhile, changes to existing use patterns or new connections may be needed to address barriers to wildlife migration and species propagation identified by inventories of ecological systems.

All these activities must be balanced to respect the needs of all stakeholders – including the Keweenaw Heartland's environment. In addition, maintaining connectivity and separating incompatible uses (described in section 3.c., below) will require careful balancing, especially if certain sections are set aside for uses limiting access for other types of uses. The balancing of these interests must be conducted

through a process that involves all stakeholders – and provides equal voice for the environment and native species.

Maintaining connectivity is a principle that supports and enhances many other principles in this Blueprint. It is foundational to the value derived from all the uses of the land.

### **c. Separate incompatible activities**

The idea that not every use should be permitted everywhere or all the time was a prevalent principle. It was proposed primarily in interviews, public meetings and the meeting of south-shore residents. It also shows up in various places in the survey comments but was not a specific subject of the survey. The principle of balancing uses is inextricably linked to this principle. Balancing uses requires attention to their compatibility.

One example reinforcing this concept was expressed by an interviewee. He told the story of his mother was walking along a street that also serves as a common snowmobile route and was run into by a snowmobiler who left her lying in a snowbank with a broken leg. As a snowmobiler himself, the storyteller wasn't blaming the snowmobiler for the accident (although he was clearly upset by its hit-and-run aspect). He was citing it as an example of how some uses don't mix.

Other frequent themes about incompatible uses concerned:

- Hikers who barely escaped being run over by mountain bikers using trails that are not part of their separate trail network,
- Birders who mentioned that motorized users disrupt their birding,
- Foragers and hikers who don't feel safe anywhere in the woods during deer season, and
- Motorhomes that trek the unimproved road to High-Rock Bay and spoil the view for everyone else.

Nor are quiet users the only ones reporting conflicts. Hunters express concerns about hikers who take to the woods in deer season without donning high-visibility clothing. Groups with organized trail networks mention conflicts when visitors on foot take the "easy path" of the dedicated trail and risk collisions when vehicles or bikes come upon them quickly in areas of limited visibility.

Nearly everyone endorsed the principle that there is room for balancing every currently allowed use, but that some uses should be separated as much as possible. A related corollary is that the full range of users should be afforded access to the most popular places where possible and consistent with protecting the land.

### **d. Flex with changing times**

Twenty years ago, mountain biking was almost unheard of on the peninsula, and today it is one of the most prevalent attracters of tourism. Twenty years from now, snowmobiles and ATVs may run on quiet electric drivetrains rather than gasoline engines, likely affecting their range and requiring charging

stations, but this may also have other impacts like reducing impact on wildlife and increasing the enjoyment of quiet users.

As stated at the beginning of this section, we cannot know what society will look like or what technologies will be in use generations or centuries from now. Nor can we know what forms of recreation will be popular. The principle of maintaining flexibility about how the land is accessed and used was repeatedly suggested in interviews and was an undercurrent in comments in meetings and the survey.

Clearly, stakeholders want to avoid creating an immutable set of rules and lists of allowed uses for all times. The process for developing detailed management plans for the land should adhere to the principle that it must adapt to changing times, technologies and cultural practices.

#### **4. Maintain Economic Contributions**

The lands of the Keweenaw Heartlands have provided major economic benefits to the people who lived in the area, as well as the people who controlled decision making related to the use and management of those resources. Copper traded from the peninsula in pre-historic times has been found as far south as the Gulf of Mexico, and archeological records from Isle Royale indicate that the forests provided a variety of products supporting its Indigenous people. During the industrial mining era, in addition to the copper that was mined, the forests provided timber for the mines, firewood for homes and berries, mushrooms and game for people's tables.

As a working forest, the land has provided jobs in the timber industry and, because of the broad public access, has been a catalyst for the development of the region's tourism industry. The outdoor activities and quality of life afforded by the forests help Michigan Technical University and other major employers attract and retain staff. If the forests were locked away from economic uses, such as supporting the visitor and forest products sectors, it would devastate the economy of the area.

In addition, one of the key principles for sustaining and building rural economies, especially when those economies are natural resource dependent, is to build local ownership and control.<sup>5</sup> Local ownership and control allows a rural economy to capture the profits generated by its local assets, such as natural resources or scenic beauty. In addition, when ownership and control are in local hands it substantially increases the likelihood that rural assets will be managed to maximize long-term value and reduce degradation.

Extensive research into impact of resource extraction on rural communities has documented an often-repeated pattern of distant investors maximizing their financial gain by externalizing associated environmental and social costs.<sup>6</sup> Local residents, or society as a whole are then left with the costs of

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<sup>5</sup> The Ford Foundation, in cooperation with The Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group and others, has researched and developed a systematic framework for building rural economies called WealthWorks. A central tenet of the framework is to address the historic pattern of exploitive extraction of rural wealth by building more local control of the assets that support rural economies.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, and many others

environmental remediation, reforestation, rebuilding a viable local economy, etc. Rural people have a strong incentive to protect the value of the assets that support their economy and way of life over the long term and to prevent the degradation of vital assets.

Maintaining the economic contributions of the forests was a major concern that emerged across the interviews, group and public meetings and surveys. It emerged as a central principle for ongoing land management. Four related values clarifying this principle surfaced when analyzing this input:

- Maintain and prudently build the visitor economy
- Maintain a working forest
- Balance economic and other values
- Increase governmental revenues

**a. Prudently Support the visitor economy**

In 2020, the most recent year on record, the visitor economy (retail, accommodations and food service and recreation sectors) provided just over half (54%) the jobs in Keweenaw County and tied with the construction sector for total payroll. However, employment in all other fields provided significantly more compensation to their workers, ranging from 150% to nearly 300% additional average annual income per job.<sup>7</sup>

This data does not reflect the contribution of business profits from the county's 33 tourism-dependent businesses (56% of all private businesses) to the County's economy. Owner income has a disproportionate impact on the county economy given that tourism businesses in the County are mostly locally owned and averaged just five employees, increasing the relative contribution to the economy compared to an area with a higher proportion of larger or absentee-owned firms.<sup>8</sup>

Visitor contributions to the overall economies of Keweenaw and Houghton Counties are very significant as shown in Table 2. Since Keweenaw County lacks sufficient lodging, eating or retail establishments to service visitor demand, a significant portion of the visitor revenues and tax collections in Houghton County are likely a direct result of visitors attracted primarily due to Keweenaw County visitor attractions. At the same time, without the lodging, dining and other amenities available in Houghton County, Keweenaw County could not service current tourism volume, and would likely see a major reduction in visitors. Clearly both would suffer irreparable economic harm without the contributions of the other.

While the reported figures for the two counties do not break out visitors attracted to Houghton County for activities that do not involve recreation in Keweenaw County, the relative draw of the two counties can be inferred by the ratio of direct recreation expenditures between the two. Assuming that direct recreational expenditures in the two counties is a reasonable proxy for their proportionate attraction of

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<sup>7</sup> Some higher-paying jobs essential for tourism, such as park ranger or forester, are reported under other sectors, so the impact of tourism on wages is not fully reflected in these figures.

<sup>8</sup> Source: US Census, County Business Patterns, 2020

**Table 2, Visitor Contributions to Keweenaw and Houghton County Economies, 2021**

Expenditure Type	Houghton County (millions)	Keweenaw County (millions)	Total (millions)	Keweenaw Percentage of Total	Houghton Multiple of Keweenaw
Lodging*	\$27.75	\$8.49	\$36.24	23.4%	3.27
Food and Beverage	\$19.81	\$4.34	\$24.15	18.0%	4.56
Retail	\$14.03	\$2.77	\$16.80	16.5%	5.06
Recreation	\$7.42	\$2.85	\$10.27	27.7%	2.60
Transportation**	\$15.20	\$3.10	\$18.30	16.9%	4.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$84.20</b>	<b>\$21.55</b>	<b>\$105.75</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>3.91</b>
State & Local Tax Revenue	\$8.7	\$2.2	\$10.9	25.3%	3.95

Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 2021 Tourism Economic Impact - Region and County

\*Includes second homes

\*\*Includes local and air transportation

visitors, then Houghton County benefits from Keweenaw County-attracted tourism by approximately \$28.17 million per year.<sup>9</sup> By this estimate, Houghton County receives about 31% more visitor income from demand generated by Keweenaw County attractions than does Keweenaw County.<sup>10</sup> While this calculation is imperfect, it does demonstrate the scale of the interdependence of the two counties' visitor economies and the economic importance of the counties to each other.

Perhaps in recognition of these economic contributions, survey responses among Houghton and Keweenaw County respondents ranked maintaining the tourism economy as their most important economic concern, with a score of 3.13 on 4-point scale (between important and very important, n=223). No other economic concern reached the level of importance (3.0) on this question.

Interview and public and group meeting responses were less clear on the importance of maintaining the visitor economy. Only 3 of 58 interviewees spontaneously mentioned maintaining the visitor economy as a concern, however, the interview protocol did not specifically include this question. The top concern cited – maintaining access for the range of current activities – suggests that maintaining access for visitors is very important among interviewees. Notes and recollections from group and public meetings suggest that maintaining the visitor economy did not directly come up, however it was certainly implied by the many comments about maintaining public access to the land.

Concerns of Keweenaw County landowners<sup>11</sup> completing the survey (n=247) provide a more nuanced look at the visitor economy. The second, third, and fourth most highly-expressed landowner concerns

<sup>9</sup> Calculated as follows: \$21.55 million Keweenaw County visitor contribution times a Houghton County recreation expenditure multiple of 2.6 = \$56.06 million in expenditures likely due to direct attraction by Houghton County attractions. Subtracted from Houghton County total of \$84.20 million = \$28.17 million in likely Houghton County derived economic benefits due to Keweenaw attractions.

<sup>10</sup> The method used for these calculations is a proxy that illustrates the issue and not a scientific way to quantify it. The research required for a more reliable estimate is beyond the scope of this Blueprint process.

<sup>11</sup> Respondents owing land in Keweenaw County regardless of the address of their primary residence.

(after increases in property taxes) all related to the possible impact of increased tourism. They included: increased tourism making it less pleasant to live and work in the area (41.7%), increased traffic making it harder to get around (38.1%) and increased demand for public services like law enforcement, emergency medical services and fire protection (32.9%). Interview respondents reinforced the significance of these concerns by citing overdevelopment as their single biggest concern for the future of the Keweenaw Heartlands, as discussed in section 4.c., below.

Taken together, the economic importance of Keweenaw Heartlands to the two counties, the ranking of maintaining the visitor economy as the most significant economic concern of survey respondents, and the major concerns about the potential impacts of increased tourism or overdevelopment, suggest that a measure of caution is required in steps that may be made to increase the tourism economy. This is why we qualified the principle by including “*prudently support*” in stating this principle. Clearly, the economic benefits of additional tourism must be balanced with careful planning to minimize any related negative impacts.

One related suggestion that arose in several interviews and a few survey comments is about using education to temper the impact of tourism on the land. There may be significant value in marketing the area based on these principles and values to encourage visitation by people who share them. Including an educational component promoting respectful treatment of the land wherever possible in the visitor experience may be another way of building a more respectful visitor base over time.

#### **b. Maintain a working forest**

Since the decline of the copper mining industry more than 50 years ago, the working forests of the Keweenaw Peninsula have been a mainstay of its economy, providing management and logging jobs as well as providing raw materials to regional industries and craftspeople. And for the century prior, the forests provided the critical building materials and fuel that were needed to support the copper mining industry in this very remote location. Today, forest-related industries, including manufacturing of forest related products, continue to be significant contributors to the Upper Peninsula’s economic output.<sup>12</sup> Survey respondents ranked maintaining a sustainable working forest as the second most important economic benefit desired from the acquisition and conservation of the lands, after maintaining tourism.

The more nuanced information gathered in interviews and meetings clearly shows that most people believe that, in recent years, these forests have been overharvested and will need a different, more sustainable management approach to recover and to regain their economic and environmental value.

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<sup>12</sup> Because of data suppression issues and the export of much of the timber harvested in the area to mills located outside the area, accurate estimates of the effect of forest-related industries on GDP and employment are not readily available. Keweenaw forests are held and harvested by firms with operations in multiple locations across Michigan (and beyond). GDP contributions of firms in an industry that span multiple locations within a state are not reported in a fashion which readily permits localization by county. Similarly, employment is often reported by companies based on payroll office location rather than geographic place of employment, further complicating accurate estimates. The relatively small number of firms physically located in the area also results in data suppression which, in turn, makes segregating economic impact of forest-product related industries very difficult and beyond the capacity of this study.



Stakeholders familiar with the forest industry expressed concern about the ability of the forests to generate sufficient revenue during this period of recovery and regeneration to pay for management expenses, including support of local government through property taxes or payment in lieu of taxes.

In addition, the economic contributions of a working forest are not limited to logging alone. Management for sequestration of carbon and creation of carbon credits was cited as having real economic potential for the Keweenaw Heartlands forests, especially since the recent management of the forest has resulted in a younger, more rapidly growing forest, which creates the opportunity to generate carbon credits under the application of a more balanced management approach known as an improved forest management standard. The use of revenue generated by the sale of carbon offset credits was often mentioned as a possibility to help support management through this period.

Other non-timber forest products were cited as potential contributors to the region's economy. Portions of the forest may be suitable for production of maple syrup, potentially governed by a lease or permitting process that favors local ownership and control.<sup>13</sup> Similar leases or permits could be provided for other non-timber forest product production, such as growing mushrooms or native medicinal or collectible plants. An example of this may be the common practice, in Appalachian forests, of private small-parcel landowners planting ginseng to gain annual income between harvests of mature timber.

Another theme among many commenters was that a well-managed working forest supports both a healthy environment and the tourism economy. If management is unsustainably aggressive, it can affect both the productive capacity and the aesthetic appeal of the lands, potentially impacting tourism, the forest products sector and the environment. Several stakeholders with a forestry background expressed the opinion that the Keweenaw Heartlands forests are nearing or have passed this point.

However, the steady increase in area tourism despite the intensive harvest practices of recent owners demonstrates that forestry and tourism are not necessarily incompatible. DNR experience in other working forests around the state provides additional evidence and shows that forestry and tourism can be highly compatible. Substantial research also concludes that a sustainably managed working forest provides more environmental benefits than a hands-off approach.<sup>14</sup>

The principle of maintaining most of the land as a working forest is therefore an important support for other economic and environmental principles and values for managing the land.

### **c. Balance economic and other values**

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<sup>13</sup> Maple syrup production may also provide opportunities for agro-tourism.

<sup>14</sup> If the regenerative effect of natural processes, such as periodic fire or disturbance by wind is suppressed to protect human development and use and is not replaced by management of the forest in a way that emulates the effect of those natural processes, overmature temperate forests generally enter a degenerative state where forests release more carbon than they trap, they support less wildlife, and biodiversity decreases compared to a younger forest.

Stakeholder opinions about the relationship between the forest and growth of the Keweenaw Heartlands' broader economy are highly nuanced. Maintaining the tourism and working forest contributions to the economy were rated as important in surveys. The critical contributions of both were significant, consistent themes in interviews and group and public meetings.

Growing the tourism economy, while ranked and discussed as important, was also viewed with concern by many, even among its supporters and entrepreneurs dependent on it for customers. There is considerable tension between stakeholders wanting to see more services and amenities to serve visitors, and the potentially damaging effects of overdevelopment and large increases in tourism.

In public meetings, participants expressed a desire for amenities to accommodate current residents and visitors and address the negative effects from lack of basic facilities like trash cans, parking areas and public toilets. However, they were equally expressive of concerns about whether more visitors would come if those amenities were developed.

Similarly, the biggest single concern among survey respondents was overdevelopment. This concern was consistently among the top-rated concerns of both residents and non-residents of the Keweenaw Heartlands and was discussed in more detail previously in the section about the principle: "Protect Resource Value."

Part of the balance stakeholders generally desire for forest management requires use of some land to meet public and economic needs and goals while conserving the bulk of the land for environmental, recreational and managed forest uses. The range of potential uses supported in interviews, meetings and surveys included using some land for workforce housing, for amenities such as parking, campgrounds, trails, and toilets, for public purposes such as water and sewer systems or economic development, and for development of more permanent resident housing, particularly affordable housing.

The consensus appears to be that a percentage of the land can be allocated for such uses if carefully vetted for environmental, scenic, cultural, historical and other potential conflicts. Discussion in the planning committee and some interviews suggested that all the "right" parcels to make available for these purposes could likely not be identified in advance, and no list of pre-approved uses could balance the needs and interests of stakeholders over an extended time horizon. Given the large amount of land involved, permitting development of even a small fraction, perhaps 5 to 10 percent, could meet major local needs for decades to come, if carefully planned and managed.

While use of some lands for these public and economic benefits was broadly supported, there was also a clear consensus that procedures must be developed to reduce potential harm. Those with the most detailed expertise about local environmental, historical, cultural and geologic assets all reported that no comprehensive survey of the lands has been completed to determine which sites warrant special protections. A consensus emerged in stakeholder and planning committee discussions that there must be a robust set of procedures in place to vet any future out-sale, development, or land-use management decisions to identify and ensure protection of irreplaceable assets. Over the longer term, as resources become available, detailed surveys should be conducted to identify areas requiring special protection.

Local stakeholders reported a desire for the Keweenaw Peninsula to be a place where their children could envision and build a future that both provides reasonable economic opportunities and maintains the quality of life. The principle of maintaining an appropriate balance between economic and other values, and of carefully and thoughtfully reserving and using a portion of the land to meet long term public needs, may be the most difficult challenge that will be faced long term for the Keweenaw Heartlands.

#### **d. Increase governmental revenues**

A consistent concern raised in most interviews and all group and public meetings was maintaining the current level of revenues that local units of government receive from the land. If the land were to be moved into nonprofit or governmental ownership, local units of government would lose their current tax revenue from it, however other revenue sources, like Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) could be used to replace this tax revenue. Many respondents also looked beyond simply maintaining current revenues, pointing to a severe need for more money to pay for the services that visitors use.

Interviewees and others familiar with the funding of local government operations pointed out that Michigan's revenue model for supporting basic public services doesn't work well for Keweenaw County. This is an issue for most rural areas in Michigan with small populations and significant public or commercial forest lands, particularly if those areas receive large influxes of transient visitors.

The 2020 population of Keweenaw County was estimated by the US Census as just 2,107 people living in 1,079 households.<sup>15</sup> On any given weekend the county may see thousands or tens of thousands of visitors, placing a huge demand on public services and infrastructure such as emergency response, public restrooms, trash removal, road maintenance, etc.<sup>16</sup> For example, the Grant Township Superintendent reported that the toilet paper bill for the only public restrooms in Copper Harbor is larger than that of the largest dormitory at MTU.<sup>17</sup>

Outside of the Fort Wilkens State Historic Park which is supported by entrance fees, camping fees and state appropriations, the predominant funding source for these public services is the local property tax (the exception being road maintenance, which is supported by a blend of state and local resources). However, the property tax base of Keweenaw County is very small, and the tax structure for property

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<sup>15</sup> There are approximately 1,000 additional residences, likely used by seasonal residents or for short-term rentals. Under Michigan law, the taxes rates for these seasonal or short-term rentals are the same as those for permanent residences. Homestead credits are available to Michigan residents for one owner occupied residence, however taxpayers generally apply the credit to the residence with the highest value, making calculation of the difference in tax revenues received imprecise. Local government officials report that taxes on seasonal residences and short-term rentals do not provide sufficient revenues to support visitors' more intensive use of public services like EMS.

<sup>16</sup> Most of the hotel rooms and short-term rentals serving the visitor economy are in Houghton County and provide no tax support for the services that visitors use as they recreate in Keweenaw County.

<sup>17</sup> The Township Supervisor serving at the time of the interview also managed environmental services at Michigan Technological University and had access to the records required to make this comparison. No attempt was made to independently verify this report.

does little to capture the economic activity of the tourism sector. As a result, while visitors enjoy the amenities and services provided by the local units of government, local property owners pay higher taxes to support services that are spread over too-large a demand.

Like many rural areas, critical services like fire and EMS response rely on a small cadre of volunteers. The current volunteer base is not adequate to meet the demands of their fellow residents as well as the increased demands created by visitors to the region and the current tax revenue is inadequate to fund fulltime paid emergency service personnel.

Sometimes this lack of resources leads to unfortunate results. Several interviewees told tragic, but true, stories of residents who died waiting for first responders who were busy addressing emergency needs of visitors.<sup>18</sup> Another mentioned how a volunteer first responder died on the rugged hike to the remote site where a visitor had an accident. While not arguing that local lives are more valuable, it is understandable that local residents whose taxes pay for the services are concerned when they are not available to meet critical needs.

Others cited how an aging population is leading to a declining number of potential volunteers, the high burnout rate among overburdened existing volunteers or how increased training requirements make it difficult for new volunteers to qualify for first-responder roles. This change is likely to drive increases in costs of maintaining the needed level of services and further exacerbates the problem of lack of sufficient financial resources to pay for the additional demand created by visitors.

The burnout and broken revenue model also directly affect services required for some visitor (and local) uses of the land. For example, Keweenaw Peninsula snowmobile trails are longer with fewer access points than most other snowmobile trails in the state; an attribute which makes them an attractive destination for many riders. A single run with a trail groomer can take 12 to 14 hours to go from one access/crew transfer point to the next, making use of unpaid volunteer drivers impractical. However, while the State of Michigan's current system for supporting trail grooming pays for the necessary equipment, the program requires local volunteers to operate that equipment and provides no financial support to pay drivers. As a result, the local cooperating entity in Keweenaw County, the Keweenaw Snowmobile Club has amassed a \$90,000 cumulative deficit and faces a solvency crisis which, if unresolved, could curtail trail grooming with devastating effects on the local economy.

There was some optimism among interviewees that the consolidation of most Keweenaw Heartlands under a common local management structure might provide an opportunity to charge modest user fees to support public services and development of visitor amenities. Survey respondents overwhelmingly supported this concept as well, with 89.9% either supporting (66.3%) or potentially supporting (23.6%) a user fee. Potential supporters were concerned about the amount and how the fee would be used or did not want to see a fee for local taxpayers who are already bearing most of the cost of serving visitors.

Clearly, increasing, not just maintaining government revenues must be a management principle for the Keweenaw Heartlands. .

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<sup>18</sup> The reverse is also likely true as well (insufficient EMS resources to respond to visitors on a timely basis when residents are being served) but it did not surface in interview or survey comments.