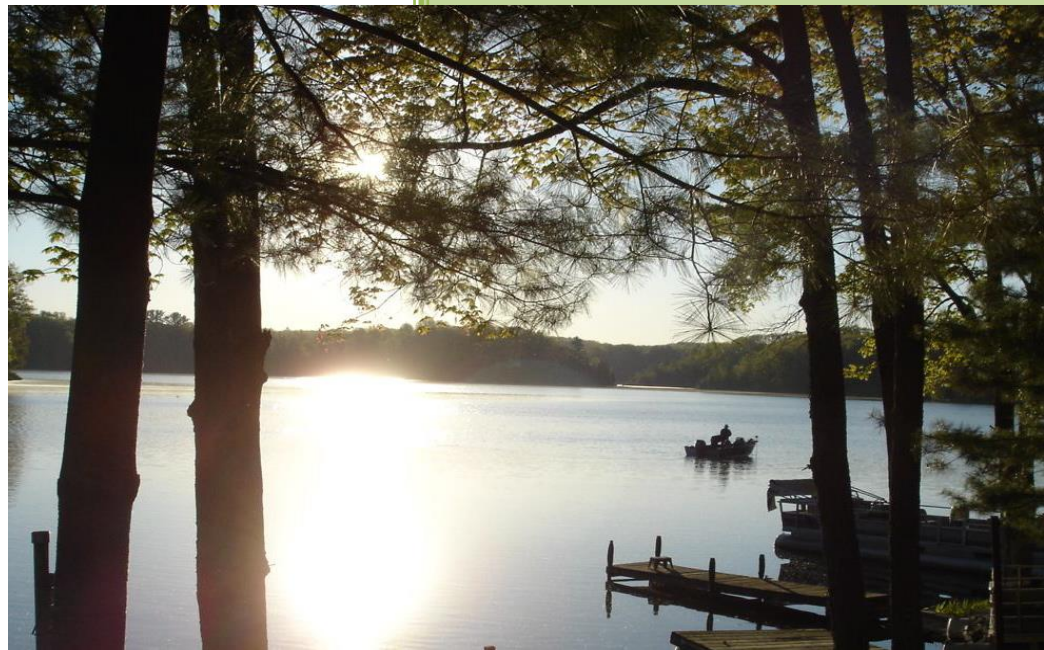




2022

# MERRILL TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Newaygo County, Michigan



*Prepared by the*  
**Merrill Township  
Planning Commission**

# MERRILL TOWNSHIP

NEWAYGO COUNTY, MICHIGAN



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*\*Cover photo:* Looking East Lake towards East Lake Channel at sun rise

## ***DEDICATION***

This land is not ours but only on loan to us. We only borrow it for a short period of time and then leave it. Our responsibility is to leave this land to our future generations, in a state where the air, water & soil are cleaner, purer, richer, and less polluted than we received it. With this responsibility, we submit this Master Plan for the future of our township and its residence.



**Final Draft:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Public Hearing:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Adoption Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2010 Merrill Township Planning Commission**

**Mark A. Bates, Chair**

**Alger Cline, Vice Chair**

**Bonnie St. Amour, Secretary**

**Peter Morgan, Board Liaison**

**Venola Walton-Stanciel**

The Merrill Township Planning Commission would like to extend its sincerest gratitude to all of those who came before us, particularly those former township officials whose tireless efforts have shaped our community and whose shoulders this plan stands on. Special recognition is extended to Newaygo County MSU Extension Land Use Educator Ryan Coffey who provided extensive technical assistance during the rewrite of this plan.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide for the future growth and development of Merrill Township intended to encourage rational and consistent zoning and development decisions based on community character, the capability of the land, and the needs and desires of the community.

### LEGAL BASIS OF PLANNING

The State of Michigan authorizes local municipalities to develop community planning through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008 (formally authorized under the Township Planning Act 168 of 1959). Under this act, townships have the responsibility to develop and adopt a plan development of their community. The Merrill Township Planning Commission followed the directives of this act in the preparation of this Master Plan.

### PLANNING HISTORY

The Merrill Township Master Plan was last updated in 1995 and reviewed in 2001. Under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act the Township is required to review its plan every five years. Upon review of the previous plan, the planning commission determined that a new plan was needed to address a changing community and changes in laws that regulate land use. In addition, the planning commission desired to incorporate best practice principles that would provide for the social, economic, and environmental well-being of its residents and landowners while providing opportunities for innovative solutions with its zoning ordinance.

This plan is both a continuation of the past and the foundation for the future. As this plan guides decision-making in the years to come, it too will require review every five years and possibly additions or amendments.

### UNDERSTANDING THE MASTER PLAN

A master plan acts as a guide for the future development of the Township. Although it is not a binding, legal document, the master plan serves as the basis for the zoning ordinance, which is the law and must be followed by the Township and its residents. Implementation of the plan is realized through the zoning ordinance. Its purpose is to promote public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

## **HOW THE MASTER PLAN AFFECTS YOU AS A RESIDENT OR PROPERTY OWNER**

As a resident or property owner, it is important that you understand how this plan works and how it may affect you. For most community members, the plan will not have any immediate or direct impact: it may never even affect you.

As a member of Merrill Township, this plan will help you to understand:

- Vision for the future of Merrill Township
- Proposed land uses for your property and neighboring properties
- Overall direction and development of the Township including housing density and land division, commercial and industrial development, open spaces, natural resources, environmental protection, roads, infrastructure, utilities, and services
- Protection of natural resources including lakes, rivers and creeks, groundwater, wetlands, forests, and soils

## **PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

This plan is based on a long process by the planning commission that considered various aspects and characteristics of the community that were collected, analyzed, and processed before being integrated into the plan. These included community character, community feedback because of the community survey, census and other data, community needs, land capability/environmental restrictions, maps, studies, and reports, availability of services, existing land uses and development, and regional issues.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Merrill Township Board and Planning Commission should use and reference this document on a regular basis in their decision-making and policy development processes to ensure that the community vision provided in this plan is implemented. Officials should refer to this plan in all zoning decisions to provide justification for land use decisions and encourage other decision-making bodies (such as the Newaygo County Road Commission, school districts, neighboring townships, etc.) to review this plan for compatibility, coordination, and consistency.

This plan is developed to guide the daily decisions of Township officials while guiding the development of the community over time toward its vision. This plan is designed to be implemented over time and should be followed by officials while remaining flexible. All officials should read this plan in its entirety as decisions should be guided by the plan.

## CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

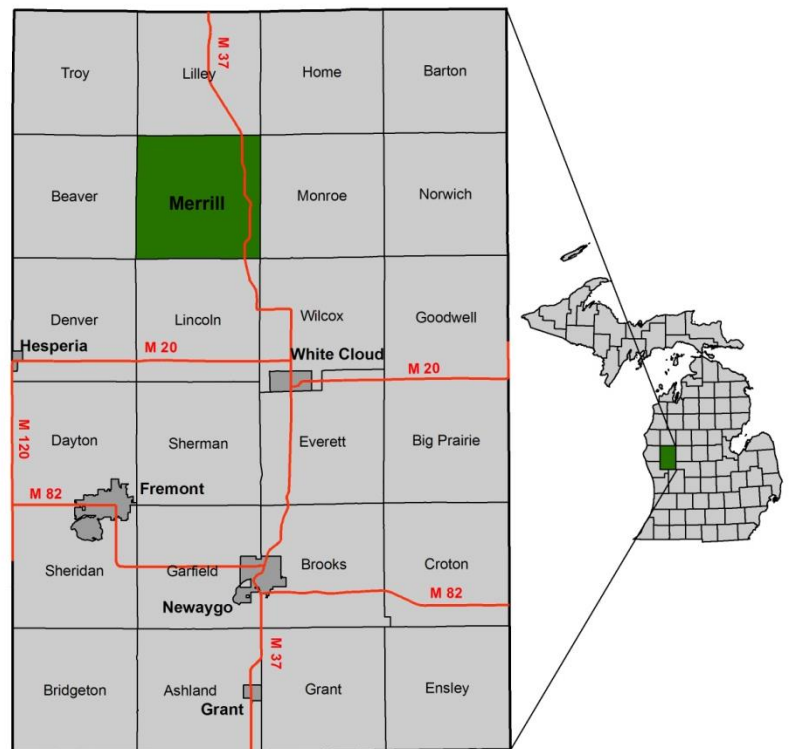
Understanding the fabric of a community is vital to direct future land use. A strong understanding of our community tells who we are, where we live, work, and play, what makes us unique, what we value, and what challenges we face. This understanding of our community also provides a snapshot of where we came from and where we are today, providing a solid foundation for the development of a vision providing future direction.

### LOCATION

Merrill Township is a very rural residential community located in the north-central region of Newaygo County, Michigan approximately 10 miles north of the City of White Cloud. Merrill Township has access to larger metropolitan cities including Big Rapids (24 miles to the east), Grand Rapids (54 miles to the south), Muskegon (51 miles to the southwest), and Ludington (45 miles to the northwest).

### DESCRIPTION

Established after 1884 from part of Monroe Township, Merrill Township comprises an area of 35.8 square miles, with 34.9 square miles in land area and 0.9 square miles (2.5%) of water. The Township lies entirely within the Manistee National Forest, and federally owned public lands account for 19.2 square miles (54%) of the entire township. The majority of Merrill Township is heavily forested, and prominent natural features include several lakes, vast wetlands, and the South Branch Pere Marquette River. Given its abundant natural resources and wildlife, miles of trails, public lands, campgrounds, and other recreational opportunities, Merrill Township provides a rural, tranquil atmosphere and relaxed way of life, as well as year-round recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

*\*Demographic data is based on the 2020 Census.*

### Population

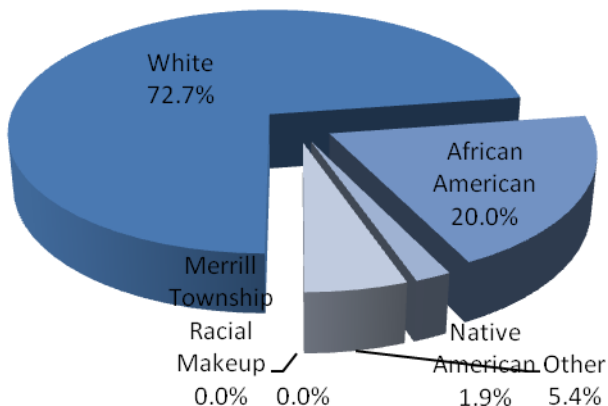
Merrill Township’s population is comprised of diverse individuals that tend to have a strong sense of community. The Township serves as a vacation and retirement community to many and sees a significant population increase in summer months due primarily to those who have vacation homes in the Township and seasonal residents (“snowbirds”) who go south for the winter months. The Township has a greater percentage of veterans and a significantly greater percentage of individuals reporting a disability than the national average. The acreage of undevelopable lands held in National Forest and relatively unimproved roads in large segments of the township have helped keep the township’s population low. The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission has projected very modest population increases in the coming years for Merrill Township.

1970	376
1980	508
1990	451
2000	590
2010	641
2020	667
2030*	727

\* Projected

There were 667 people (339 males, 328 females), 262 households, and 163 families residing in Merrill Township.

The population density was 16.9 per square mile. The racial makeup of Merrill Township was 507 White, 115 African American, 15 Native American, 22 from another race and 14 Hispanic or Latino.



Merrill Township’s population was spread out with 212 under the age of 18, 38 from 18 to 24, 88 from 25 to 44, 157 from 45 to 64, and 74 who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 43 years. The Township has a decrease in youth who leave the area after high school to seek out employment in nearby cities and has a substantial senior citizen population due to the Township’s attractiveness as a retirement community and low cost of living for those on fixed incomes.

Of the total households in Merrill Township, 69 had children under the age of 18 in the home and were composed of married couples living together, 7 had a male householder with no wife present, 10 had a female householder with no husband present and 85 households with someone 65 years or older living alone.



## Housing

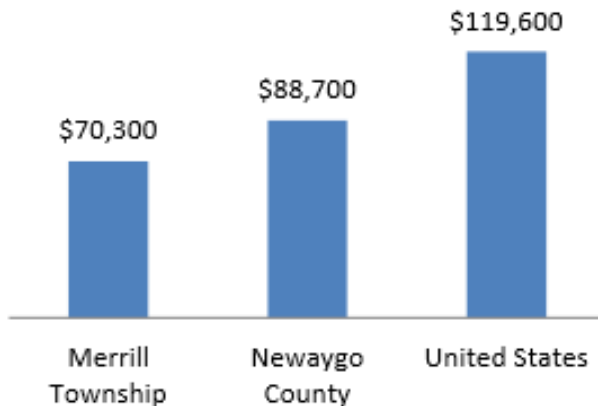
The housing stock in Merrill Township is an aging stock of modest means and is composed of a significant percentage of mobile homes. Housing values are lower than that of the county. Most homes are single family dwellings. The Township also has a substantial number of abandoned homes that pose a potential safety hazard to the community. The Township has seen a significant increase in the transformation of seasonal homes into year-round residences in the past 20 years, particularly along lakefront parcels.

There were 849 housing units in Merrill Township. Of the total housing units, 216 were occupied, of which 172 were owner-occupied. Of the 633 unoccupied housing units were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### 1990-2000 Population Growth

Troy 40.5% (+70)	Lilley 39.5% (+223)	Home 29.2% (+59)
Beaver 45.8% (+191)	Merrill 30.8% (+139)	Monroe 31.2% (+77)
Denver 28.7% (+439)	Lincoln 38.1% (+369)	Wilcox 37.8% (+314)

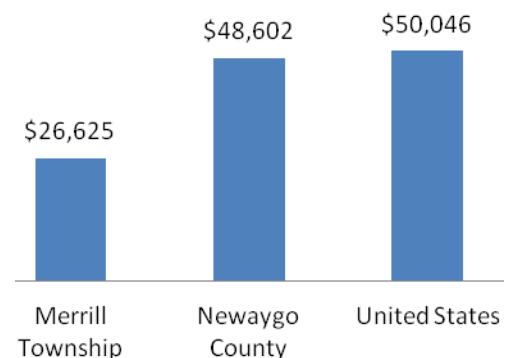
### Median Housing Value



mortgage of those who held them was \$609 per month with 27.1% reporting that their mortgage represented 30% or more of their household income. The median rental payment was \$436 with 32.4% reporting that their rent represented 35% or more of their household income.

Most housing units (69.4%) were built prior to 1970. These housing units were heated by bottled, tank, or LP gas (79.2%), wood (10.1%), fuel oil or kerosene (6.9%), or utility gas (2.8%). 6.6% of these units had no telephone service.

Most housing units (84.7%) were valued at less than \$100,000. The median housing value was \$70,300. The median



## Economic

The people of Merrill Township are generally of modest means. Income levels are lower than that of the county and poverty presents a serious challenge to the community. Employment opportunities in the immediate area are few, and most people in the Township face significant commuting times to their places of employment.

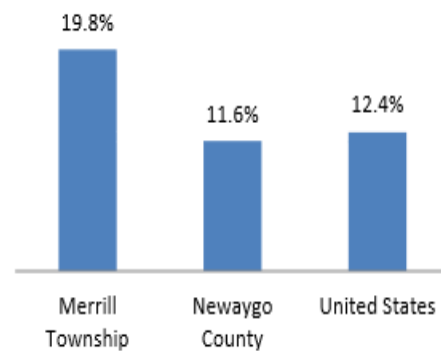
The median income for a household in the Township was \$26,500, and the median income for a family was \$38,214. The per capita income for the Township was \$15,788.

107 Persons below the poverty level in the past 12 months, 451 population used to determine the poverty level, 14 families in the poverty level in the past 12 months, 112 total families and 14 households in poverty in the past 12 months.

Employment by occupation of those 16 years and over are: 29.0% production, transportation, and material moving occupations, 24.0% service occupations, 17.5% construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, 17.0% sales and office occupations, 10.5% management, professional, and related occupations, and 2.0% farming, fishing, and forestry occupations. 77.5% of workers worked in the private sector, 12.5% worked in the government, and 10.0% were self-employed in their own not incorporated business. Those that commuted to work had a mean travel time to work of 50.9 minutes.

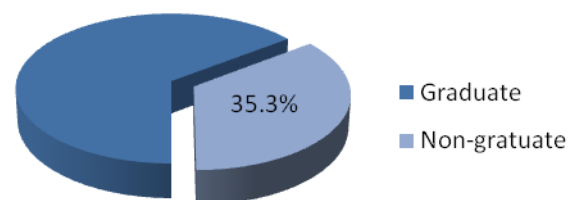
Unemployment, which averaged 4.6% for Newaygo County in 2000 (5.2% for Merrill Township), has increased dramatically to 14.9% for Newaygo County in July 2009. Although the exact unemployment rate for Merrill Township is unknown currently, it tends to be slightly higher than the unemployment rate for the county.

Percent of Individuals Below the Poverty Line



## Education

Educational attainment in Merrill Township is significantly lower than the national average. There were 110 children aged 3 years and older enrolled in school. The educational attainment for those 25 years of age or older is: 2 less than high school diploma, 26 with a bachelor's degree or higher.



## PLACES

**Brohman** is a small unincorporated community in the eastern part of the Township, between sections 13 and 24 on M-37, about ten miles north of the City of White Cloud. Brohman is the primary commercial area in the Township, offering a gas/convenience store, restaurant, and lodging.

**Woodland Park** is an unincorporated community in the northern part of the Township, situated mostly between sections 3 and 4 on the north side of Woodland Lake, although settlement extends around the south side of the lake into sections 9 and 10. Woodland Park is approximately two miles south of Bitely and four miles northwest of Brohman. The community is approximately four-square miles and contains several hundred small parcels (many are only 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep), however most of these parcels are undeveloped.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Topography

The Township is primarily composed of gently rolling terrain in its eastern half and gently rolling to relatively flat terrain in its western half. The Township has an average elevation of 850 feet above sea level.

### Geology

Merrill Township's bedrock geology is composed primarily of Michigan Formation across approximately 86% of the Township. The remaining 14% (approximate) is composed of Bayport Limestone and is located along the east and northeast edge of the Township.

Merrill Township's quaternary geology is composed of approximately 48% glacial outwash sand/gravel/postglacial alluvium (west, central, and north-central sections) and 48% end moraines of course-textured till (northwest corner, eastern sections) with the remaining 4% (approximate) composed of dune sand in two isolated areas in the Township's southwest corner.

### Soils

Merrill Township soils are predominantly sandy and there exists a considerable amount of wetlands soils in the western half of the Township. These types of soils are very susceptible to erosion and environmental damage and can severely limit productive agriculture.

## Land Cover

Prior to extensive logging in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Merrill Township was composed of vast white pine-white oak forests in the eastern half of the Township and hemlock-white pine forest, shrub swamp/emergent marsh, white pine-red pine forest with patches of cedar swamp, mixed conifer swamp, mixed hardwood swamp, and shrub swamp/emergent marsh in the western half of the Township. Today, most of these swamps and forests still exist, although the forest cover has changed with secondary growth after the logging era. These swamps and forests provide habitat for our substantial deer and black bear populations. They also provide a beautiful landscape for rural, country living and areas for ample outdoor activities including hunting, hiking, biking, and snowmobiling. Small areas of crop cover (primarily alfalfa) exist in pockets of limited agricultural production.



## Hydrography

Merrill Township is situated in the heart of Newaygo County's vast abundance of water resources. These lakes, rivers and creeks, wetlands, and groundwater are part of a complex and dynamic natural system whose scale is greater than the Township.



The Township's many small and mid-size lakes are relatively shallow, provide good to excellent fishing, and are heavily utilized. Several lakes in the Township have medium-to-dense residential development around them and allow motorized boating, including Brookings Lake and East Lake (collectively called Woodland Lake), Benton Lake, and Nichols Lake. Also, Benton Lake and Nichols Lake have federal campgrounds that experience heavy use. Other lakes include Loon Lake, the northern tip of Loda Lake, Nagek (Indian) Lake, Moonbeam and Spring lakes, Merrill Lake, Winnepesaug Lake, Bub and Sis lakes, Perch, Bass, and Bluegill lakes, Shelley Lake, and Richmond Lake.



Morel mushrooms & ferns

Merrill Township is entirely within the Pere-Marquette - White River Watershed. The Township's southern and eastern borders are within the South Branch of the White River Sub-Watershed and its northeastern corner is within the Little South Branch of the Pere Marquette Sub-Watershed. The overwhelming majority of the Township is within the Big South Branch of the Pere Marquette Sub-Watershed. The primary river in Merrill Township is the South Branch Pere Marquette River (originating in the Township), with notable Tank Creek (coming into the Township from the north) flowing into it. Also, the East Branch of Held Creek (originating in the Township) flows southwest out of Merrill Township, eventually joining into the White River. Most of these river's flow on federal land in wetland areas.



Tank Creek

Wetlands cover nearly a quarter of all the land within Merrill Township. Although a majority of these are within federal lands, a substantial number of large wetland areas exist on private lands. These wetlands act as sponges and filters for our vast supply of groundwater, playing an integral role in the hydrological process and providing unique habitats for many plant and animal species.

Merrill Township has an excellent groundwater resource that has been the subject of several known inquiries regarding the feasibility of groundwater withdrawal activities. As part of the larger hydrological cycle this natural resource plays an important role in sustaining the vitality of the Township's water resource and those things which are dependent on it such as ecological systems (including fisheries), recreation and tourism.

## **POLITICAL**

Merrill Township is part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Congressional District, 34<sup>th</sup> State of Michigan Senatorial District, and the 100<sup>th</sup> State of Michigan Representative District. At the county level, Merrill Township is represented by the district 1 Newaygo County Commissioner. Other elected officials at the county level include Circuit Judges, District Judge, Probate Judge, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Clerk, Treasurer, Register of Deeds, Drain Commissioner, and Surveyor.

Merrill Township has a five-member Township Board consisting of a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, and two Trustees. All members of the Township Board are elected officials serving



four-year terms. The Township Planning Commission consists of five Board-appointed members serving on three-year staggered terms. The Zoning Board of Appeals consists of five members on three-year staggered terms. The Township also has an appointed Assessor, Zoning Administrator, and Sexton.

Merrill Township shares its borders with Lilley Township (north), Lincoln Township (south), Beaver Township (west), and Monroe Township (east). Additionally, the Township shares common corners with Troy Township (northwest), Home Township (northeast), Denver Township (southwest), and Wilcox Township (southeast).

Merrill Township recognizes that as society has advanced and developed, the scale on which we interact daily has dramatically expanded, leading to a greater need for services. Conversely, trends in the amount of available fiscal resources have led to a need for creative uses of funds and a sharing of common resources. The Township should, when appropriate, work with neighboring townships and Newaygo County on projects that benefit residents and property owners of the Township.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Police Protection**

Primary police protection is provided by the Newaygo County Sheriff's Department (located in White Cloud). Additionally, the Township is serviced by the Michigan State Police (located in Newaygo). The Newaygo County Jail and Animal Control are in White Cloud and are under the supervision of the Newaygo County Sheriff.

Federally owned public lands are under the jurisdiction of federal law. The Newaygo County Sheriff's Department is contracted to respond to incidents on these federal properties.

### **Fire Protection**

Merrill Township is serviced by the Lilley Fire Department (located in Bitely). Additional departments from surrounding communities may be called in as needed to aid. One local water intake point (10 inch well, 300 gallons/minute) is in the Township at 7566 N. Woodbridge Dr. (M-37, Brohman One-Stop property) for local fire departments to provide quicker, more efficient service.

### **Emergency Services**

Newaygo County provides an Emergency Services Department whose efforts include the prevention of, preparedness for, response to, and recovery from emergencies, disasters, and threats within the County of Newaygo with the goal of saving lives, preventing property

damage, and minimizing damage to the environment. Under direction of the Chairperson of the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners, the Emergency Services Department provides support to the jurisdiction's emergency services system by coordinating necessary planning, training, exercising, and resource management.

### **Emergency Medical Services/Ambulance Services/Emergency Shelters**

Merrill Township is serviced by Lilley/Merrill Rescue (located in Bitely) and EMS services (located in Baldwin and White Cloud).

The Merrill Township Hall, located on 11 Mile Road, serves as the area's emergency shelter and the parking lot has a designated helicopter landing site for emergency services.

### **911 Emergency Service**

Merrill Township's 911 emergency telephone services are routed through Newaygo County's Central Dispatch in White Cloud, located in the Newaygo County Complex.

### **Neighborhood Watch**

An active neighborhood watch program services the Woodland Park Community.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Roads**

Merrill Township has relatively few paved roads. M-37 runs along a north/south route through the eastern sections of the Township, passing through Brohman and providing the primary route in to and out of the Township. The Township has five additional primary paved roads including: 8 Mile Road (west of Crosswell), Pierce Drive (east of M-37), 11 Mile Road, Woodland Park, and Bingham Avenue. Several roads around Woodland Lake and Lincoln Street are maintained as locally paved roads. Pierce Drive (west of M-37) is a primary gravel road



(scheduled to be straightened and paved in 2010) and Croswell Avenue, 6 Mile Road, Hayes Street, and Grant Street are local gravel roads.

Road maintenance along M-37 is managed by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Other road maintenance is provided by the Township and the Newaygo County Road Commission. Road maintenance remains a key priority for the Township and continues to utilize a significant percentage the Township's annual budget. The Newaygo County Road Commission plows snow on M-37 and other county roads (excluding seasonal roads).



Open woods along 11 Mile Road

### **Railroads**

The CSX Railroad - Pere Marquette Line runs north/south through eastern Merrill Township. These tracks are used frequently, connecting Grand Rapids and Ludington.

### **Public Transportation**

Merrill Township does not have public transportation services. Currently, the Newaygo County Commission on Aging and several religious organizations provide limited transportation services to the Township.

### **Airports**

White Cloud, Baldwin and Big Rapids have small municipal airports. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport located in Grand Rapids services the West Michigan region.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Early Childhood**

There are several early childhood educational programs available to Merrill Township residents. NCRESA's Neway Center located in Fremont, 5 CAP in Bitely, various Head Start programs, and private pre-school programs are available throughout the area.

### **K-12 Schools**

Merrill Township is comprised of four K-12 school districts: White Cloud Public Schools (southern 2/3 of the Township), Baldwin Community Schools (northern 1/3 of the Township),

Walkerville Rural Community School District (small section in the northwest corner of the Township), and Big Jackson Public School (K-6 only, very small section in the northeast corner of the Township). Additionally, high school students may enroll at the Newaygo County Career Technical Educational Center and Quest in Fremont, or the Career Technical Program offered through the Baldwin Community Schools at West Shore Community College in Scottville (Mason County).

Private schools and a charter school are in Big Rapids, and private schools are located in the Fremont and Grant areas.

### **Home schooling**

Many parents choose home schooling as an option to institutional schools for their children's education. Exact numbers across Newaygo County and Merrill Township are unknown.

### **Colleges/Universities**

Area community colleges include Muskegon Community College in Muskegon (Muskegon County) and West Shore Community College in Scottville (Mason County). Montcalm Community College and Baker College maintain satellite campuses in Howard City (Montcalm County) and Fremont, respectively. Ferris State University is in Big Rapids. Additional technical schools, colleges, universities are in the Mt. Pleasant and Grand Rapids areas.

### **Lifelong Learning**

Various programs are offered by agencies (such as NCCS, MSU Extension, etc.) in the region offering continuing lifelong learning opportunities for adults.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Telephone**

Telephone service is provided by a variety of carriers across Merrill Township with lines maintained by AT&T. The Township is completely within the 231 Area Code.

### **Cellular Telephone**

Cellular telephone service is provided by a variety of carriers across Merrill Township; however, coverage is not consistent. Areas of "dead zones" and poor reception exist, and there is a need for more complete coverage in the Township. Additional cell towers may be needed to provide better cellular phone service in the Township.

## Television

Existing television options include the use of digital antennae, choosing from a variety of satellite providers, or internet television viewing. Digital antennae offer an inexpensive television viewing option but supply a very limited choice of channels where reception can be weak due to distance from transmission towers. Satellite can be affected by tree cover and landscape variations (large hills) but offers the most variety of channels and choice of service providers. Internet television viewing is limited by connection availability and speed. There is currently no cable television service available in the Township. Studies and inquiries into cable service indicate that Merrill Township does not currently have the housing density required for cable service expansion into the Township. There is a need for additional television service options in the Township.

## Internet

Internet connectivity in Merrill Township is available through various dial-up and high-speed Internet service providers. Dial-up offers a low-cost option but has become practically inefficient due to the size of data transfer required by most websites. High speed Internet service is available through satellite service providers and wireless service is available in some areas by various providers. No cable, Wi-Fi, or DSL is currently available in the Township. High speed Internet service in across the Township is, in general, limited in access and is cost prohibitive. There is a need for additional high speed Internet service options in the Township.

## Newspapers

The newspaper of general circulation is the *Times Indicator*, a weekly paper located in Fremont. *Big Rapids Pioneer* (daily, located in Big Rapids) and *Lake County Star* (weekly, located in Baldwin) are other local papers. *Hi-Lites Shopper's Guide* (located in Fremont) and *Tri-County Shopper* (located in Big Rapids) publish free weekly shopper's guides.

## UTILITIES

### Electric

Merrill Township receives its electricity services from Great Lakes Energy Cooperative.

### Sewer/Water/Natural Gas

The Township does not provide sewer, water, or natural gas services. These services are provided using septic systems, wells, and propane tanks installed and maintained by the property owner. Due to the very rural nature and low population and housing density in the Township, there is no foreseeable need in the coming decades for the municipal provision of these services. This lack of need does not, however, exclude the potential for sewer systems around particular lakes to protect surface water quality.



## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

### **Hospitals**

The nearest hospitals from Merrill Township are Gerber Memorial Health Services in Fremont (26 miles) and the Mecosta County Medical Center in Big Rapids (27 miles).

### **Medical and Dental Services**

Medical services, pharmacies, and dental services are available in White Cloud, Baldwin, Fremont, Big Rapids, and Newaygo.

### **Health Department**

Merrill Township is serviced by the district 10 Health Department located in the Newaygo County Complex in White Cloud. They provide a wide variety of health-related services to residents of Newaygo County.

### **Veterinary Services**

Private medical and dental services are available in White Cloud, Baldwin, Fremont, Big Rapids, and Newaygo.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

### **Libraries**

Merrill Township is part of the White Cloud Community Library service area. Located in White Cloud, the library includes a local history room, PC computers with high-speed internet access and a printer, and video rentals.

### **Courts**

Merrill Township is serviced by the 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court, 78<sup>th</sup> District Court, and County Probate Court. These courts are in the Newaygo County Complex in White Cloud.

### **Commission on Aging**

Merrill Township's senior citizens have access to the services provided by the Newaygo County Commission on Aging including meals, meals-on-wheels, activities, and local transportation. The agency is in White Cloud.

### **Postal Services**

Merrill Township is serviced by U.S. Post Offices located in White Cloud and Bitely. The Township is comprised of the 49349 and 49309 ZIP codes.

## **Zoning**

Merrill Township maintains, enforces, and regularly reviews its zoning ordinances to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. The Merrill Township Zoning Administrator issues township zoning permits and enforces the zoning ordinances.

## **Building/Electrical/Mechanical/Plumbing Inspection**

All permit and inspection services for Merrill Township are contracted through Newaygo County's Department of Building Safety and Permits and may require a Township Zoning Permit prior to application.

## **Township Buildings**

Merrill Township maintains the Merrill Township Hall located on 11 Mile Road. This hall provides offices for Township officials, records storage, and a public meeting room for various Township meetings, including Township Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings. In addition, the main meeting room is available for rental and is designated as an emergency shelter for the area. The building also has a large garage attached that once housed the Merrill Fire Department.



Merrill Township Hall

## **Waste Disposal and Recycling**

The Merrill Township Transfer Station located on Bingham Avenue offers waste disposal and recycling services to the Township. Additionally, drop-off sites for recyclables are maintained by Recycling for Newaygo County in White Cloud and Recycle! of Mecosta County in Big Rapids.

## **Cemeteries**

Merrill Township maintains the Merrill Township Cemetery, located on Centerline Rd. The Township Sexton is responsible for the upkeep and management of the cemetery. A caretaker is contracted to maintain the grounds.

## **Veteran's Affairs**

The Newaygo County Complex in White Cloud houses a veteran's affairs office servicing all of Newaygo County.

### **Fremont Area Community Foundation**

Newaygo County is fortunate to have the Fremont Area Community Foundation (located in Fremont) serving Newaygo County. This organization provides grants to communities and other organizations for community development, environmental protection, recreation, education, and other vital issues. Merrill Township should make use of the Foundation in appropriate projects and encourage other community organizations to do the same.

### **LAND FRAGMENTATION**

Understanding the division of land (including development patterns and parcel size, scope, and scale) in a township is crucial to developing and implementing policy that best serves the needs of the community.

#### **Federal Lands**

Federally owned public lands in the Manistee National Forest account for 19.2 square miles (54%) of the entire township. Almost every parcel is very large, ranging from 400 to 640 acres per parcel (most of these are equal to one section - one square mile). There are only a few federally owned large parcels between 100 to 400 acres, and very few smaller than 100 acres.

These federally owned lands include most of the rivers and creeks, lakes, and wetlands in Merrill Township. Although these lands are relatively well protected because of Federal ownership, it is possible, however unlikely, that they could be traded or sold off. To protect these lands policy should be developed and implemented to severely restrict future division and allowable uses.

#### **Private Lands**

Merrill Township's privately owned parcels have significantly fragmented the township along the eastern and northeastern boundaries of the Township. A significant portion of privately owned parcels are 10 acres or smaller (excluding the Woodland Park Plats) and most of these parcels are "bowling alleys" with width-to-depth ratios at 1:4.



**Spring Lake**

There are substantial numbers of parcels in the 10 to 40 and 40-to-100-acre ranges. Conversely, there are very few (only ten) remaining large parcels of privately owned land greater than 100 acres. Township policy should encourage the continuation of all larger parcels, particularly those that are 40 acres or more in size.

### **Lakefront Properties**

A significant portion of the parcels along lakes in Merrill Township are small lots with seasonal and year-round homes. These parcels can no longer be divided, but present zoning challenges resulting from the legacy of their development prior to the implementation of zoning.

A small number of existing parcels around lakes are still large enough to subdivide into lakefront properties. The Township should adopt reasonable regulations to ensure appropriate development around these lakes.

### **Woodland Park Plats**

The Woodland Park Plats encompass nearly 4 square miles (Sections 3, 4, 9, and 10) of small lots around Woodland Lake in the north central part of Merrill Township. These lots (as small as 25 feet by 100 feet) are unique in Newaygo County and have created significant problems for the Township and the County at the expense of the taxpayers.



Merrill Township should work in conjunction with Newaygo County and the State of Michigan to develop a multifaceted program that encourages the joining of parcels and addresses problems such as property boundaries, ownership, and taxation. This program must consider the historical and cultural significance of the Woodland Park area to preserve its meaning and value to the residents.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

The attraction of parks and recreation opportunities is a major economic driver for Merrill Township and the surrounding area, providing year-round enjoyment to residents and visitors.

Merrill Township is home to Benton Lake Federal Park and Nichols Lake Federal Park. The Township is also bisected by snowmobile/multiuse trails and the North Country Trail. Merrill Township Park, a local park with playground equipment and basketball courts, is located on the northwest corner of 11 Mile Road and Bingham Avenue in Woodland Park. The surrounding

Manistee National Forest with its vast public lands and many lakes, rivers, and creeks provide hiking, fishing, hunting, and other recreational opportunities.

## **AGRICULTURE**

Due primarily to poor soil quality, Merrill Township has very little agricultural activity and only a small area of prime farmland. Most of this activity is done on a part time, hobby farm basis. Township policy should protect both the rights of agriculture and surrounding residents by implementing policies that limit potential conflicts between differing land uses.

## **CONTAMINATED SITE**

On February 4, 1978, a Dow Chemical train carrying toxic chemicals derailed near Woodland Park's East Lake causing an approximately 30,000-gallon chemical spill. Recent tests conducted by 24 Hour News 8 in the area show chemical levels of the potential carcinogen 1,1-DCE (used to make plastics and flame-retardant coatings) to be more than twice the level for safe drinking water and that the chemical has spread to the southwest, toward East Lake. Additional tests conducted by a consultant hired by CSX have found traces of vinyl chloride in East Lake. Vinyl chloride is a known carcinogen and is created when 1,1-DCE breaks down in the environment. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says 1,1-DCE might cause cancer in humans. This chemical can damage the nervous system, liver, and lungs. Unconfirmed anecdotal evidence shows that many people who lived around the train derailment site died of cancer within a few years of the derailment.

The biggest concern for Merrill Township is human exposure through drinking the groundwater. Clean-up efforts on the groundwater were stopped in 1998 after it became apparent that they were not working. Since this time, monitoring wells are showing chemical levels up to 137 times higher than the safe level for drinking. Another investigation several years ago indicated that the contamination had spread uphill and upstream to the north, crossing 11 Mile Road.

Merrill Township must take the chemical contamination into consideration for any plans on or near the derailment site. The Township should consider pursuing professional, scientific, and legal assistance when addressing issues related to the contaminated site.

## **BUSINESS**

Local businesses are the lifeblood of Merrill Township, providing access to basic provisions, services, and social interaction. The business climate in the Township always has been, is, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future, a difficult one. Many of these businesses rely on seasonal residents, tourists, and those in the area for hunting/fishing/recreation, and M-37



passers-by to sustain their operations. Yet residents are a mainstay, and these “regulars” can often be seen frequenting many of these establishments daily.

**Current Known Business Establishments in Merrill Township:**

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| VandenToorn’s Body Shop         | Bliss Auto Machine            |
| Alpine Tree Service             | Busy Lizzie’s Barbecue        |
| Post Bridge Inn                 | Woody’s Bar                   |
| Woodland Park Manor             | Eagle’s Storage               |
| Bar’s Appliance Sales & Service | Shangri La Resort             |
| Bushido Martial Arts Academy    | Thrift Store                  |
| AmeriGas                        | Brohman Post Office           |
| Jackson’s Septic Service        | Custom Heating & Cooling      |
| M & M Plaza                     | Brohman One Stop              |
| Hershey’s Bargain               | Complete Mobile Movers &      |
| Treasure Custom Homes           | Old Store Bakery & Restaurant |
| Grandma’s Attic                 | The Mobile Home Center        |
| River City Technology Services  |                               |

## CHAPTER 3

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

#### ***Community Vision***

*In the years to come, Merrill Township continues to remain a quiet, peaceful, rural community surrounded by its beautiful and bountiful natural resources, wildlife, and year-round recreational opportunities. Residential development remains low density while blending with the surrounding natural environment; commercial business development remains focused along M-37 in Brohman and 11 Mile Road and Bingham Avenue in Woodland Park with buildings whose facades reflect the nature that surrounds them; and industrial development is directed toward the White Cloud Industrial Park. Natural and historical areas of special value to the community are identified, protected, and preserved. Natural resources, including lakes, rivers and creeks, wetlands, groundwater, forests, and soils, are protected and preserved through appropriate policies.*

#### **AGRICULTURE**

##### **Goal:**

**Preserve farmland for agricultural uses, especially lands with prime agricultural soils.**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Develop ordinances that encourage agricultural production and avoid potential conflicts with agricultural producers and landowners over the Right-to-Farm Act and GAAMPS (Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices).
2. Permit flexibility for agricultural tourism and other agricultural related activities.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

##### **Goal:**

**Protect natural resources such as rivers, lakes and creeks, wetlands, forests, and soils from the negative impacts of development.**

## Objectives:

1. Combat blight, abandoned/dangerous homes, junk, and visual clutter in the township. Through zoning, cleanup days,
2. Ensure environmentally sound development through the utilization of the site plan review process that minimizes disruption to natural features including lakes, rivers and creeks, wetlands, forests, and soils.
3. Develop a wetlands ordinance for wetlands under 5 acres in size that protects the natural functions of wetlands and prevents alteration of their natural state.
4. Maintain low to medium density development around lakes and low-density development along rivers and creeks by developing a lake overlay district and a river overlay district that extends protections provided by the Natural River Act.
5. Consider requiring a certain percentage of open space for all development. Open space requirements could range from 15-50%, depending on the nature of the development.
6. Develop zoning provisions to prevent the clearing of land for development without proper review and approval.
7. Work with local agencies to educate landowners on the benefits of implementing best practices when developing land.
8. Work with the U.S. Forest Service, the Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, other local agencies, and landowners with large, private tracks of land to encourage land management practices that promote natural resource and wildlife habitat protection.
9. Promote the development of greenways throughout the Township by utilizing the site plan review process to coordinate the interconnection of open spaces between parcels.

- 10.** Develop an asset inventory of natural areas within the Township.
- 11.** Require a natural features inventory assessment in the site plan review process.
- 12.** Work with organizations associated with the White River and Pere Marquette River to protect rivers and creeks in the Township.
- 13.** Encourage septic tank maintenance within 300 feet of lakes, rivers, and creeks.
- 14.** Develop regulations that prohibit the export of water resources from the Township.
- 15.** Require native plantings and other landscaping buffers on new developments.
- 16.** Require natural vegetative buffer strips along lakes, rivers, and creeks.
- 17.** Encourage design which considers and incorporates elements of a rural and quiet lifestyle, providing open space viewing opportunities for as many residents as possible.
- 18.** Limit development in floodplain and wetland areas.
- 19.** Develop regulations to prevent destruction and erosion of lake, river, and creek banks and work with organizations to restore and improve those with damage.
- 20.** Consider requiring a 100 foot no clear setback along roads to protect the natural, rural character of the Township.
- 21.** Develop regulations that prevent direct discharge of storm water and melt water into surface water.
- 22.** Develop beautification routes along targeted Township roads.

23. Work with area conservation groups to educate property owners about nonregulatory incentives for preserving wildlife habitat and open spaces (including conservation easements).
24. Incorporate conservation design options for land development that utilize open space preservation.

## **GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT**

### **Goal:**

**Preserve rural character through growth management by limiting density and determining appropriate locations for various types of development.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Concentrate commercial, multi-family, trailer park, and denser single-family development in and around Brohman and Woodland Park and prevent commercial growth from sprawling along M-37.
2. Implement adequate lot width-to-depth requirements which prevent long, narrow “bowling alley” lots.
3. Provide zoning options for land divisions that allow smaller lot splits in exchange for preserving larger tracts of parent parcels for agriculture and open space preservation.
4. Consider requiring planned unit development review or conservation design for developments with over 3 dwelling units.
5. Require site plan review if more than 3 land splits are being created.
6. Promote conservation design and conservation easements to help protect large tracts of open space.
7. Encourage residential development that is of a scale and design that blends well with adjacent land use and existing natural features.

- 8.** Evaluate the scope and appropriateness of permitted uses allowed in the rural residential district.
- 9.** Develop a Township subdivision ordinance to reflect rural design objectives.
- 10.** Develop a rural sign ordinance to regulate signs in a manner appropriate to the rural nature of the Township.
- 11.** Evaluate the amount of commercially zoned land in the Township to ensure the amount is appropriate in relation to need.
- 12.** Provide flexibility for tourism-based businesses in the Township.
- 13.** Provide for limited home-based businesses that are appropriate in a rural community.
- 14.** Require minimum commercial development standards including landscaping, screening, minimal pavement, minimal “light pollution”, and parking lot connectivity between adjacent commercial businesses.
- 15.** Incorporate form-based design into commercial development standards to ensure buildings that fit with the rural, natural character of the Township.
- 16.** Encourage commercial developments to provide beautiful, natural landscaped open space, bike racks, and outdoor seating.
- 17.** Because of a lack of public services and infrastructure to support industrial development in the Township, industrial uses are not contemplated in this plan. Neighboring cities have vacant industrial parks with the supporting public service and infrastructure to support industrial development. The Township should seek out an agreement with Neighboring cities to direct industrial development into their industrial park.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Goal:

**Preserve existing road infrastructure, maintain quality of existing roads, and control access, land use options, and development densities along township roadways to protect their character and traffic carrying capacities.**

### Objectives:

1. Minimize development density along non-paved roads.
2. Avoid sprawling of commercial development along M-37.
3. Limit the number of splits that can be placed on a public road with direct access to that road.
4. Coordinate road projects and access management efforts with the Newaygo County Road Commission and Michigan Department of Transportation.
5. Develop standards that require review and approval by the township for private roads.
6. Minimize curb cuts, access near intersections, and encourage turn lanes and shared access points to improve safety and traffic flow.
7. Limit county road access for residential developments or land splits that create more than 3 parcels.
8. Increase setback requirements for all properties along M-37 to permit future turn lanes.
9. Protect the view-scape and scenic corridors along roadways to maintain the natural, rural character of the Township.
10. Encourage the addition of 3-foot shoulders on all county road improvement projects.



11. Avoid the improvement or upgrade of seasonal or sparsely populated roads as means to control growth in the Township and preserve rural character.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

### **Goal:**

**Collaborate with Newaygo County, the City of White Cloud, neighboring townships, and federal, state, and local agencies when appropriate to expand and improve community services, protect natural resources, and more effectively utilize limited financial resources.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Regularly meet with surrounding communities on an informal basis to discuss issues of mutual concern and to explore opportunities for collaboration.
2. Provide public safety and other services through intergovernmental service agreements.
3. Participate in regional recreation planning to share limited community resources and increase state funding opportunities.
4. Promote intergovernmental and interagency coordination and cooperation to develop regional trails and recreational facilities.
5. Support the development of industrial facilities in the City of White Cloud.

## **RECREATION & TOURISM**

### **Goal:**

**Maintain and expand recreational and tourism opportunities that positively impact the local economy and enhance quality of life.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Maintain existing parks in prime condition.
2. Maintain open public access points to federal (U.S. Forest Service) lands.
3. Develop parks, natural areas, and trails to provide access to natural resources including lakes, rivers, and unique natural areas.

4. Provide, when possible, connecting access from existing parks, natural areas, and trails to existing recreational resources (such as the North Country Trail and federal parks).
5. Encourage local businesses to work with the Newaygo County Convention & Visitors Bureau to promote the area's recreational and tourist attractions.
6. Encourage local businesses to provide amenities that attract tourists.
7. Utilize signage along M-37 to direct people toward recreational and tourist locations.
8. Work with the Newaygo County Economic Development Office (NCEDO) and the Newaygo County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) to encourage economic growth and development.

## CHAPTER 4 FUTURE LAND USE

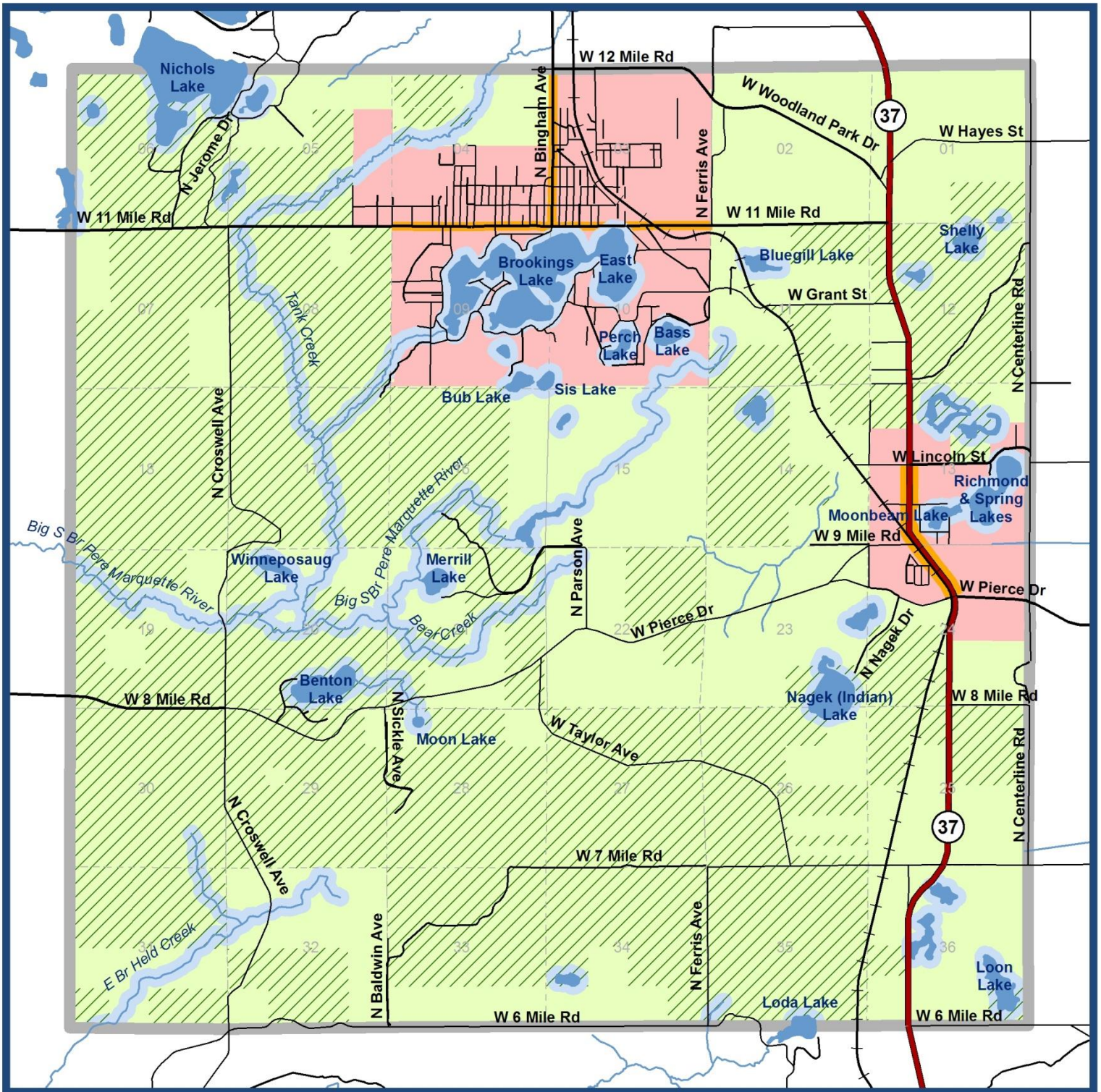
As reflected on the Future Land Use map, the majority of Merrill Township has been planned for low density rural residential development. Lands along M-37 (from Pierce Drive to Lincoln Street), 11 Mile Road (Sections 3 and 4) and Bingham Avenue (Sections 3 and 4) are planned for commercial and medium density residential development. Higher density development may be considered if communal sewer and water service are provided for by the developer(s). Industrial uses are not considered on the Future Land Use map as these uses are to be directed toward the City of White Cloud, whose infrastructure can support such development.

Should existing public federal lands become available for private use, they shall have limitations on the number and size of land divisions that can be created in these areas to protect their natural resource management values. Zoning techniques will be employed to limit the number of land divisions in existing public federal lands to one split per 40 acres of land. Uses on these lands shall also be limited to residential use by right and very limited other uses by special use permit. The Township should consider a zoning overlay district to address existing public lands.

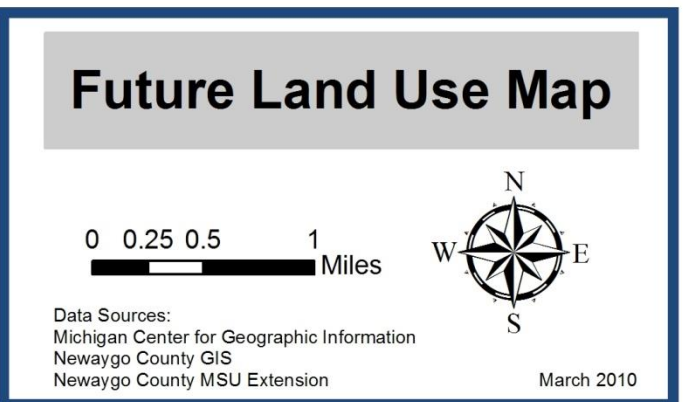
Lands along lakes and river corridors (and their tributaries) shall have limitations to protect water quality, shorelines and high bank areas, natural corridors, floodplains, and wetlands. Zoning techniques will be employed to maintain natural buffers and lot widths along lakes, rivers, and creeks. Zoning overlay districts should be used to address these water bodies. The river/creek overlay district shall incorporate regulations equal to or greater than the Natural Rivers Act.







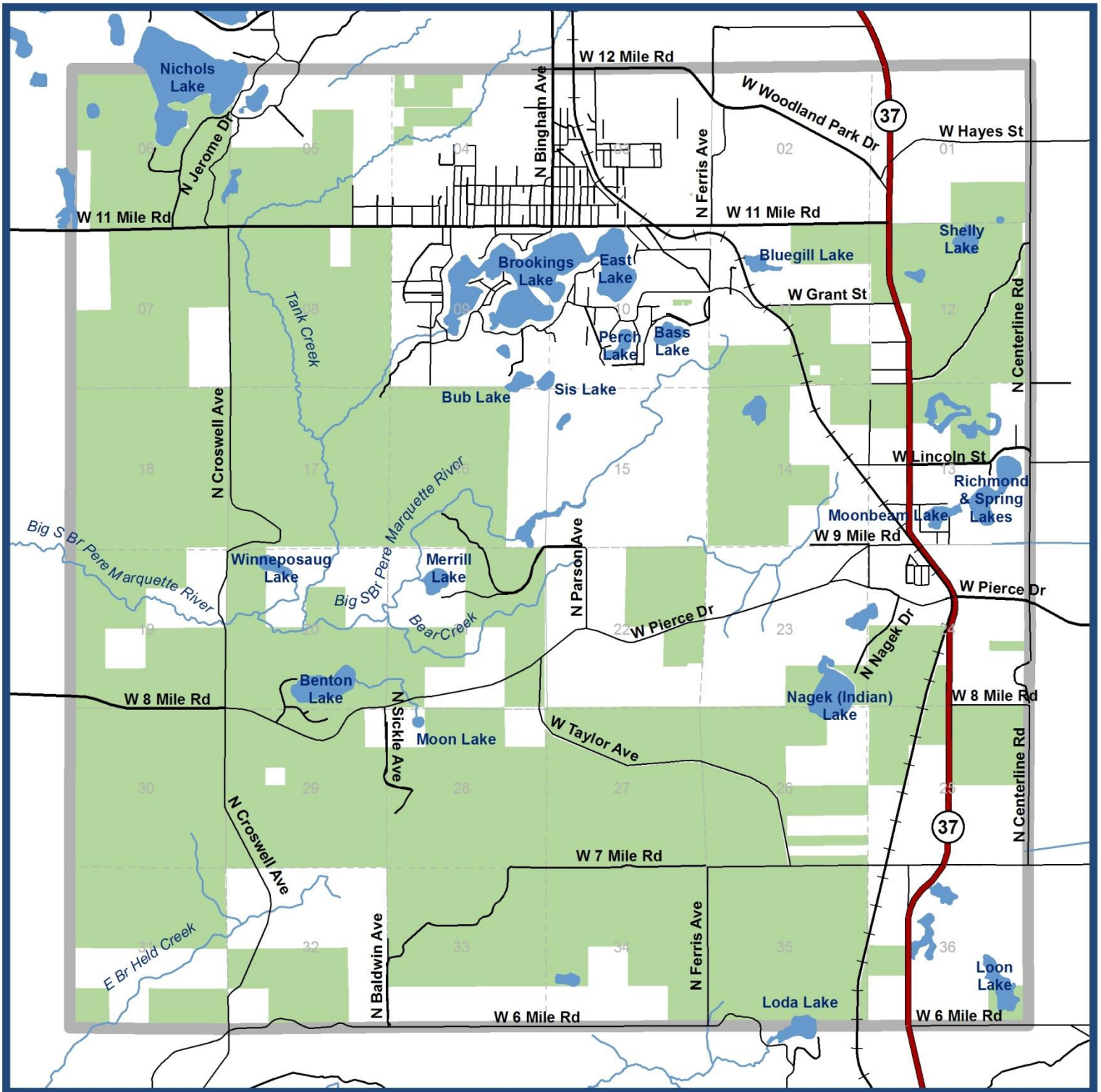
## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI



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## Map Suite





## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |   |                 |   |              |
|---|-----------------|---|--------------|
|  | Township Limits |  | Railroad     |
|  | Section Line    |  | Lake         |
|  | State Highway   |  | River/Creek  |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Federal Land |
|  | Unpaved Road    |   |              |

### Base Map

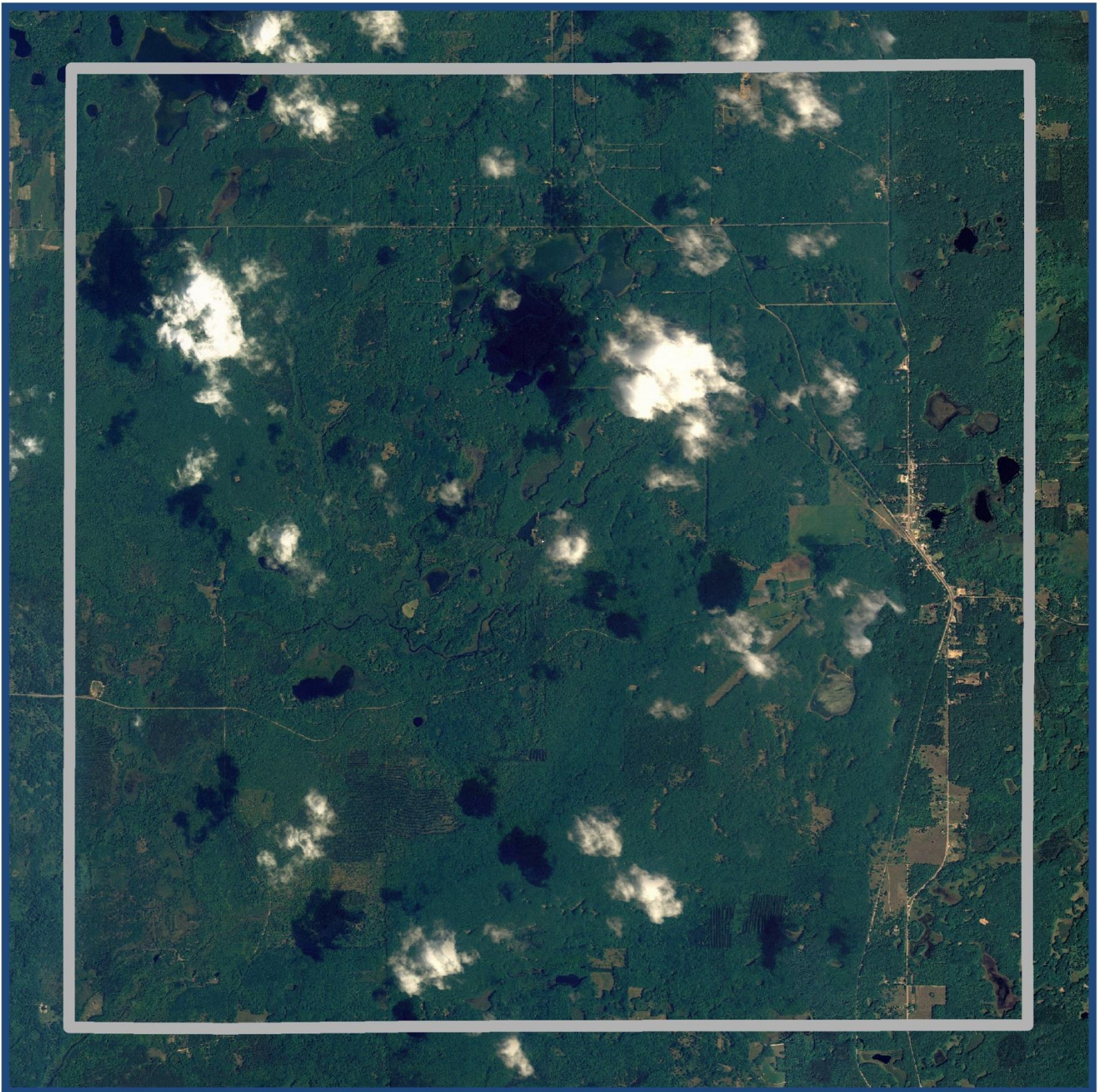
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Data Sources:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Newaygo County GIS  
 Newaygo County MSU Extension

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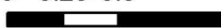


## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

 Township Limits

### 2005 Ortho Quads

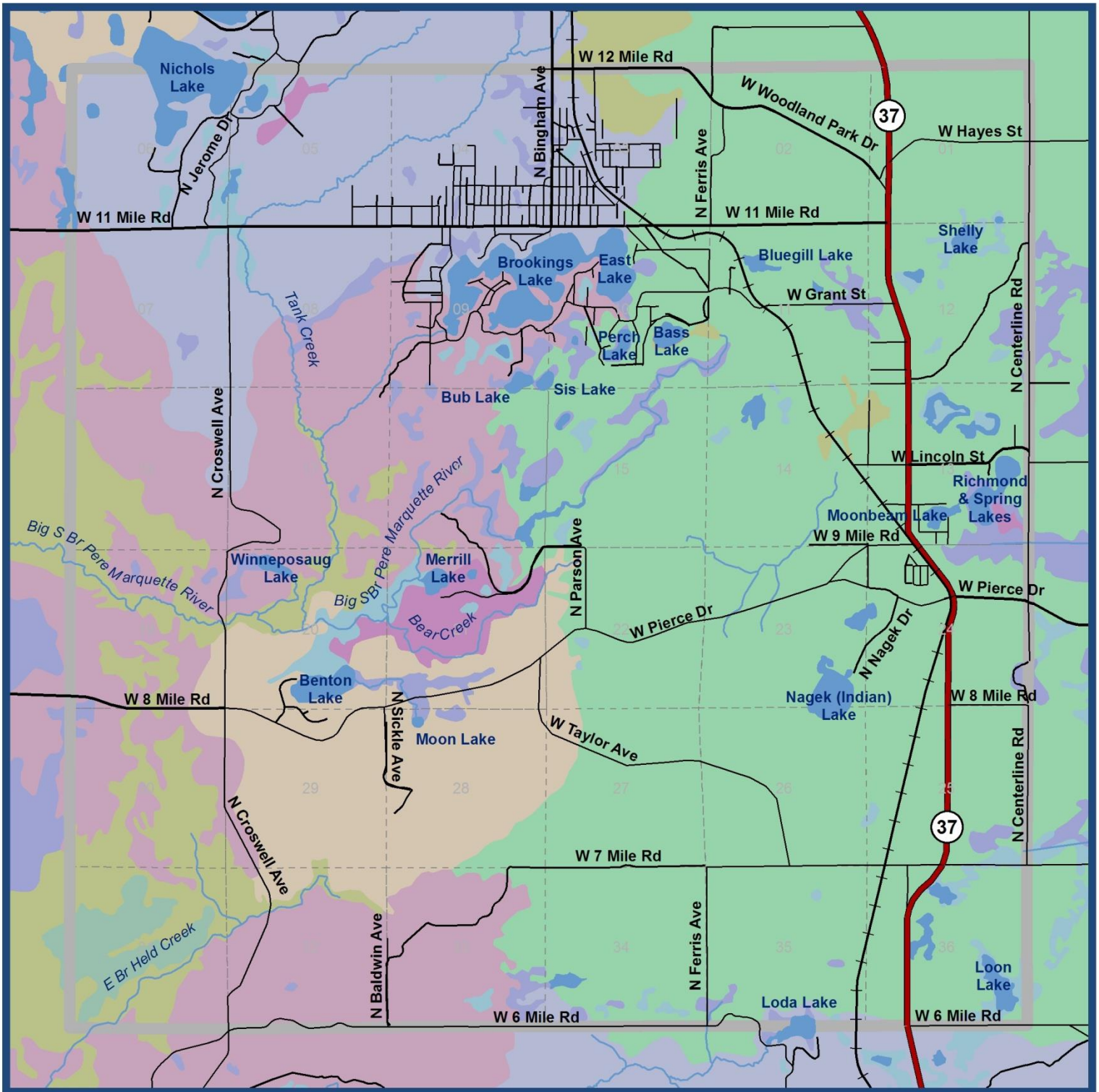
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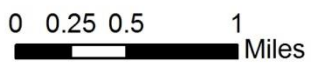




## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI



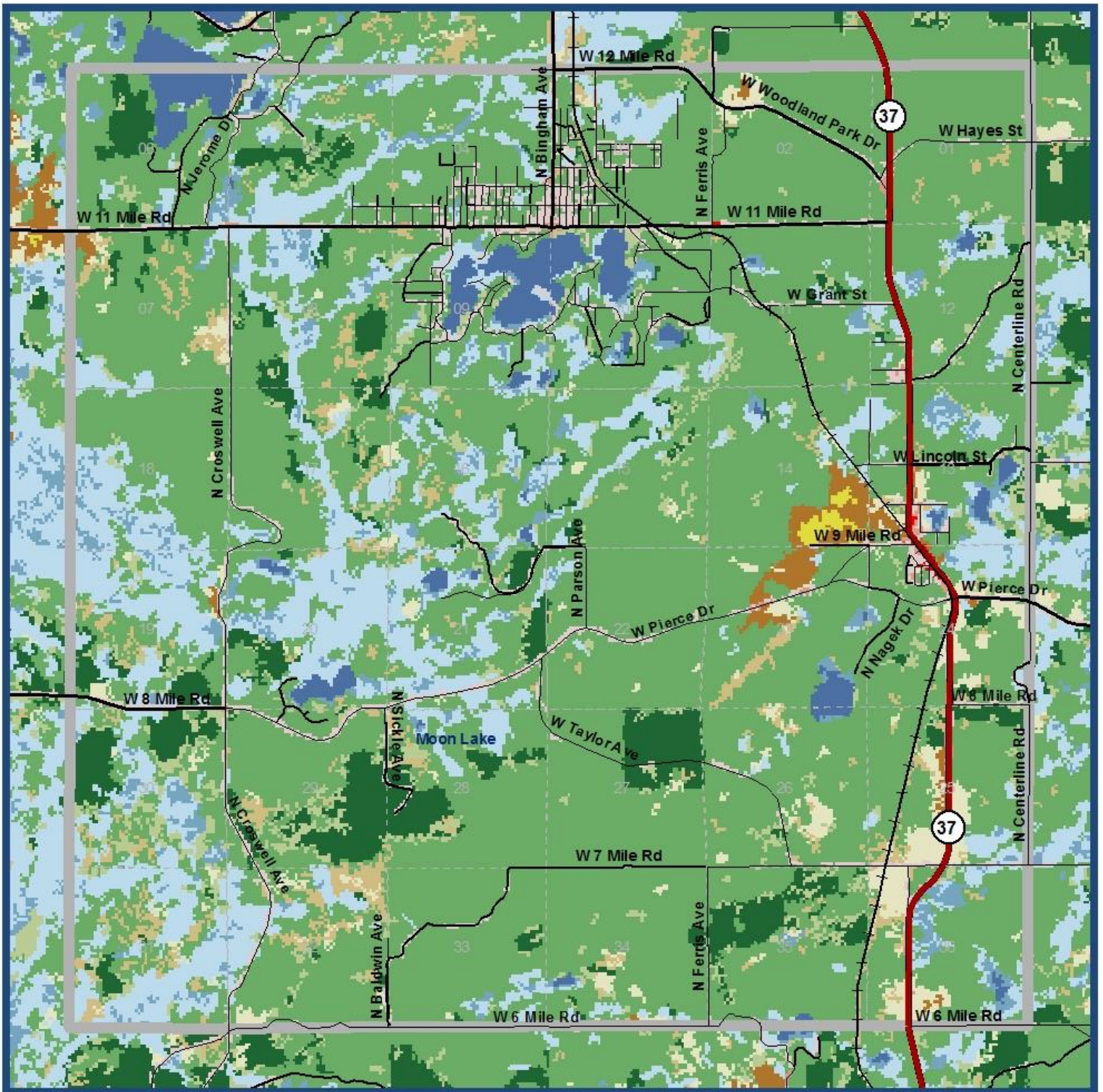
### Land Cover circa 1800



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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI



## Land Cover

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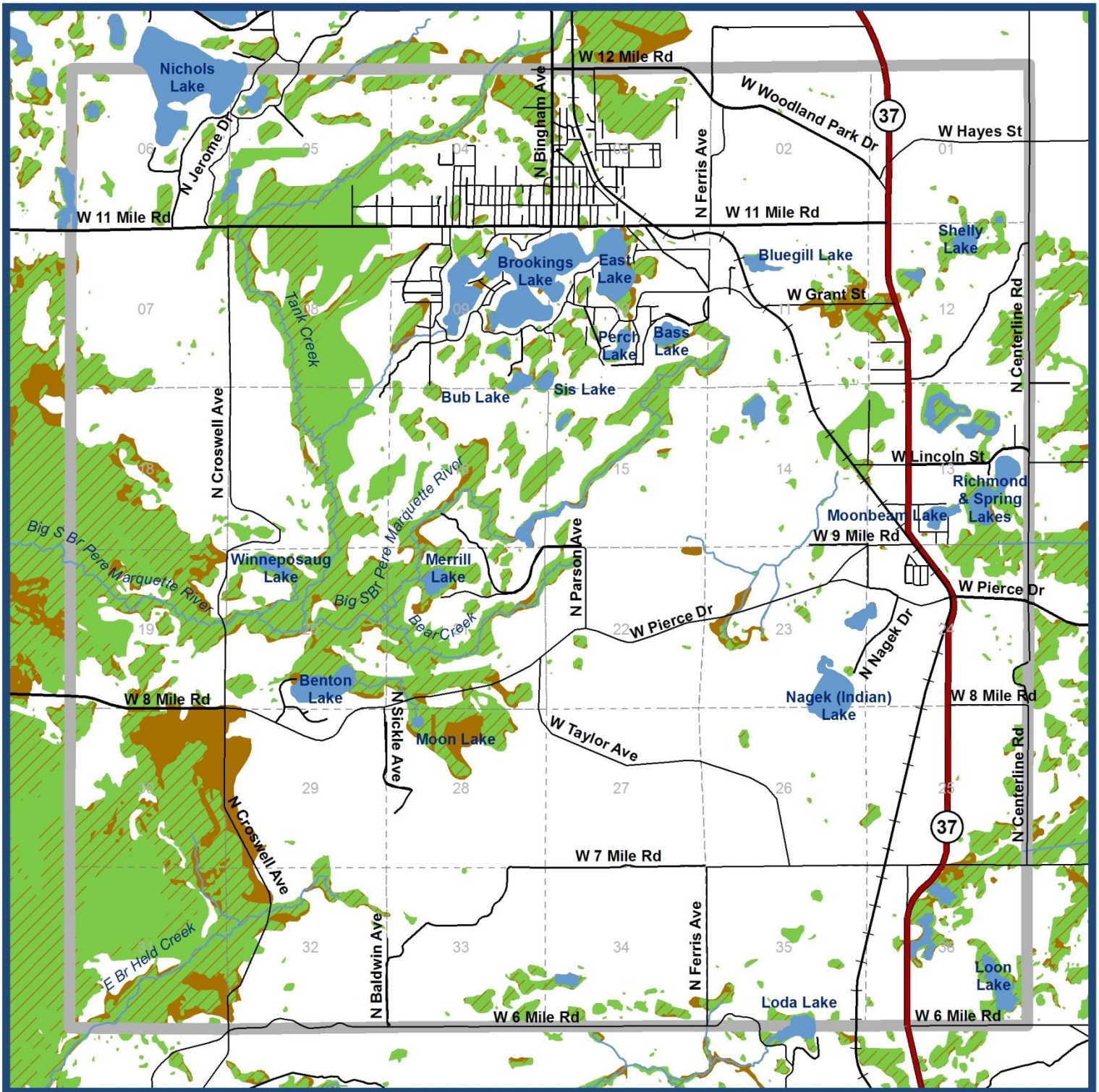


Data Sources:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Newaygo County GIS  
 USDA NRCS Geospatial Data Gateway  
 Newaygo County MSU Extension

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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |  |
|--|-----------------|--|--|
|  | Township Limits |  | Lake                                   |
|  | Section Line    |  | River/Creek                            |
|  | State Highway   |  | Wetlands                               |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Soil areas which include wetland soils |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  | Wetlands which include wetland soils   |
|  | Railroad        |  |  |

### Wetlands

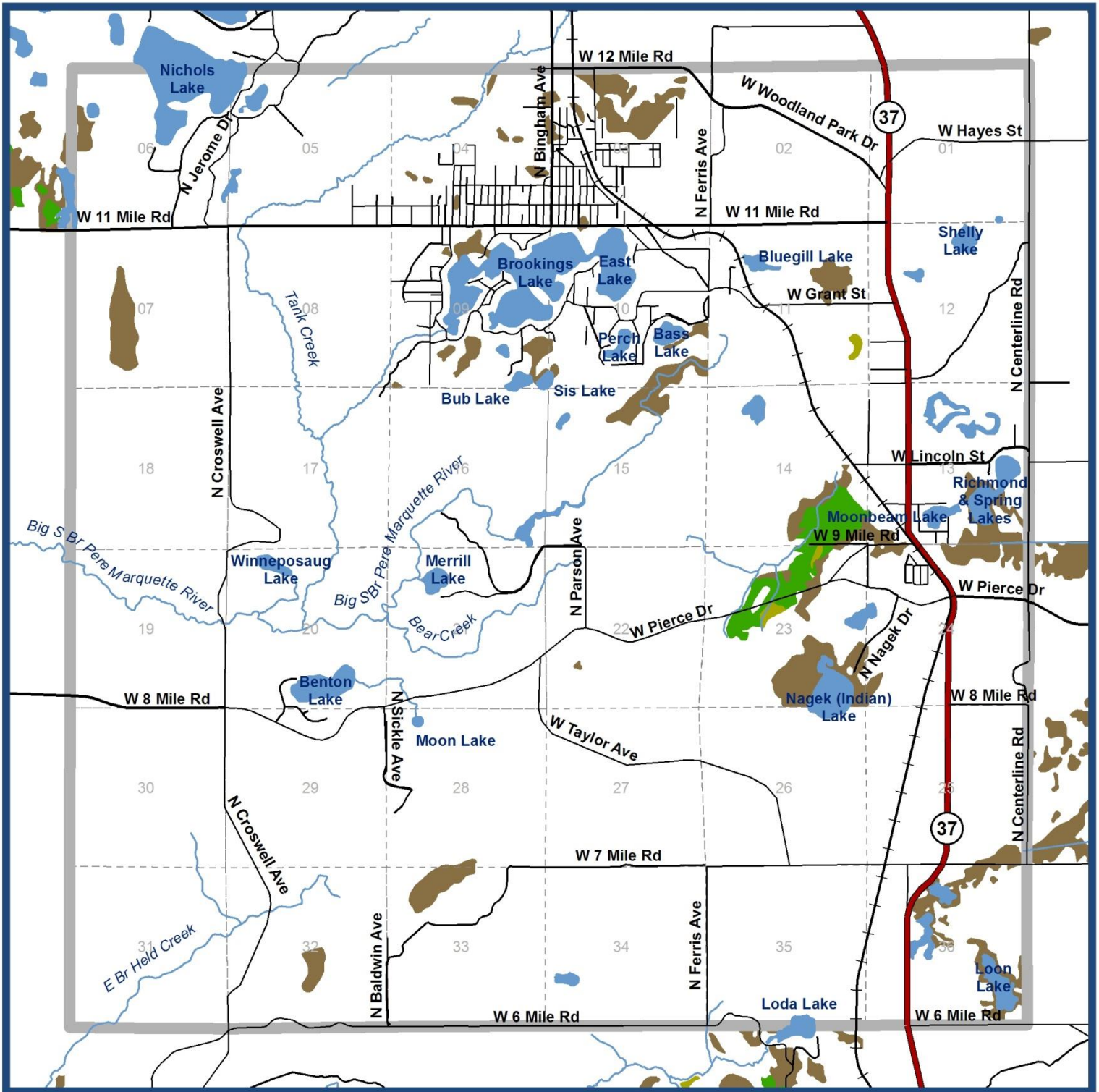
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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |                              |
|--|-----------------|--|------------------------------|
|  | Township Limits |  | Lake                         |
|  | Section Line    |  | River/Creek                  |
|  | State Highway   |  | Prime farmland               |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Farmland of local importance |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  | Prime farmland if drained    |
|  | Railroad        |  |                              |

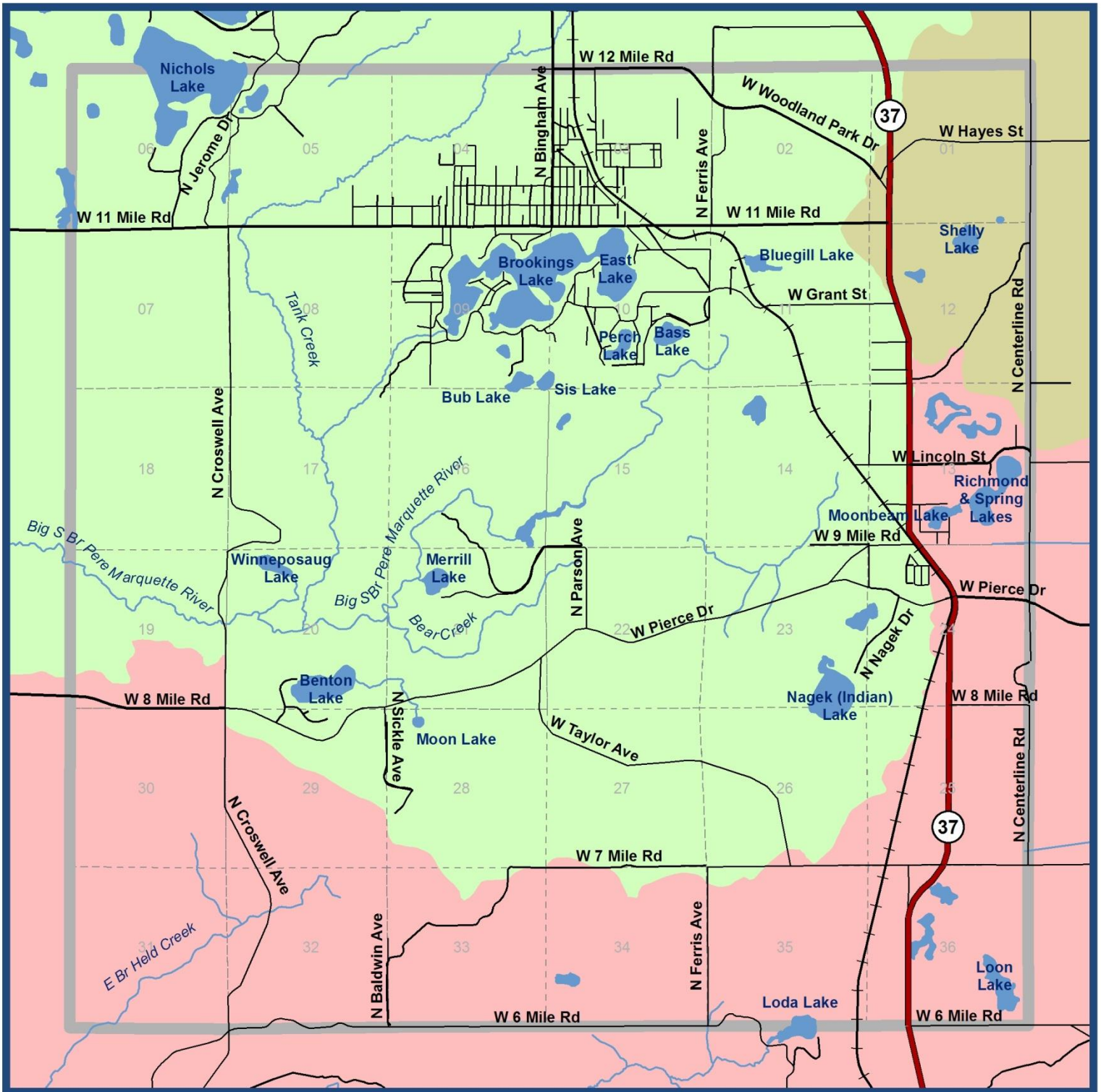
### Prime Farmland

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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

-  Township Limits
-  Section Line
-  State Highway
-  Paved Road
-  Unpaved Road
-  Railroad
-  Lake
-  River/Creek
-  Big S Br Pere Marquette R
-  Little S Br Pere Marquette
-  S Br White River

### Subwatersheds

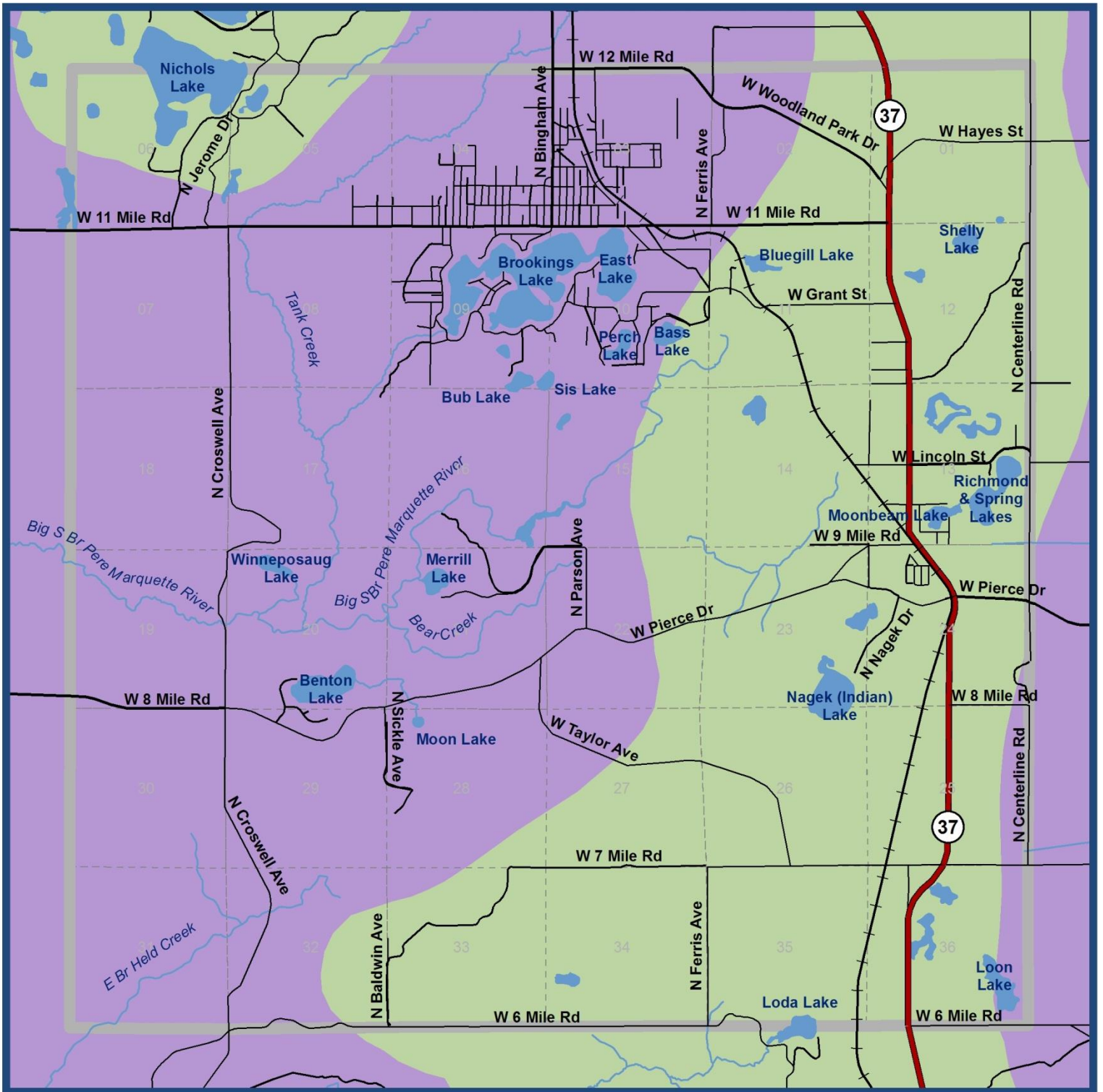
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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

-  Township Limits
-  Section Line
-  State Highway
-  Paved Road
-  Unpaved Road
-  Railroad
-  Lake
-  River/Creek
-  Ice-Contact Outwash
-  Proglacial Outwash

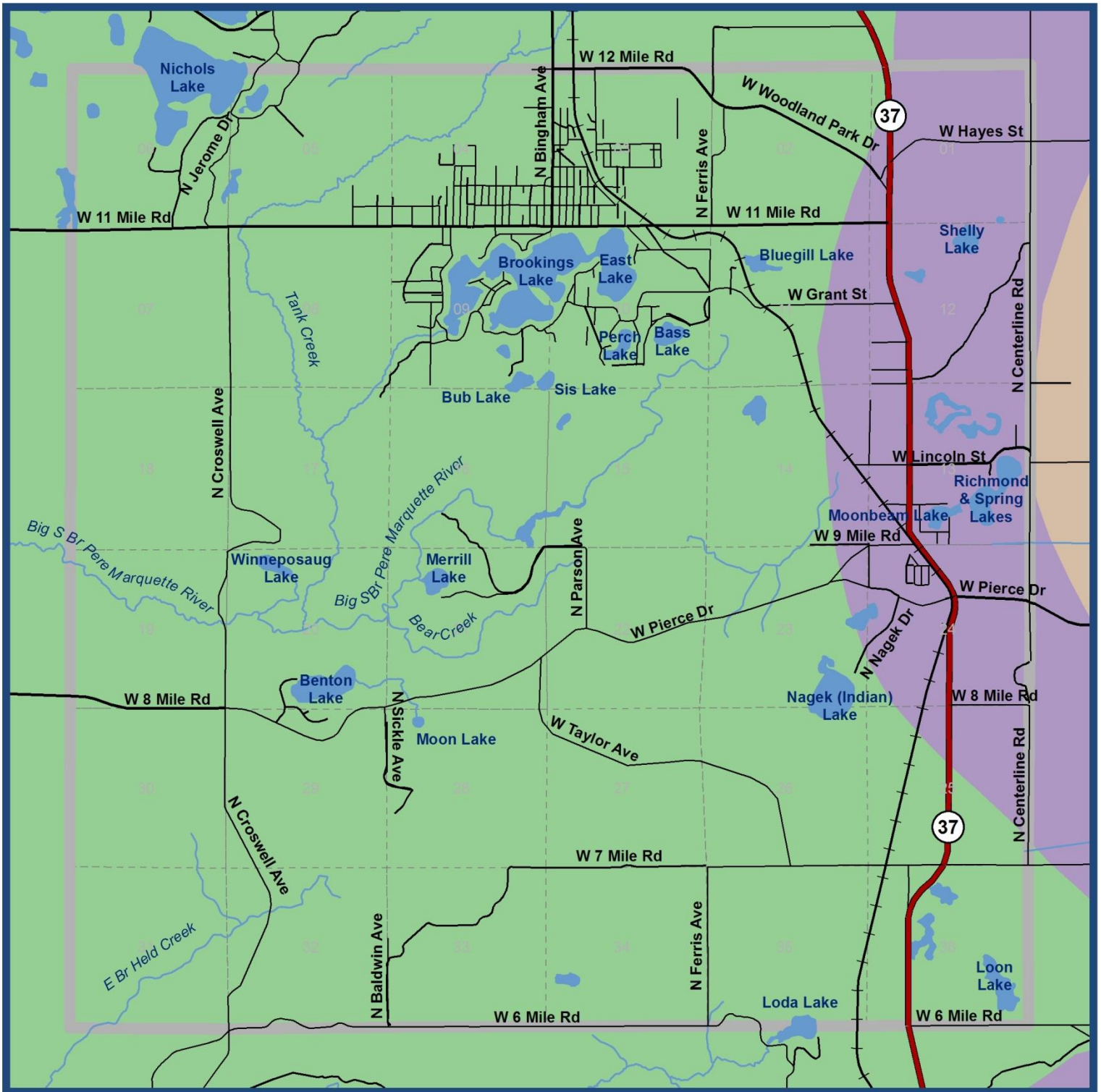
## Land Systems

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## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

-  Township Limits
-  Section Line
-  State Highway
-  Paved Road
-  Unpaved Road
-  Railroad
-  Lake
-  River/Creek
-  Bayport Limestone
-  Michigan Formation
-  Saginaw Formation

### Bedrock Geology

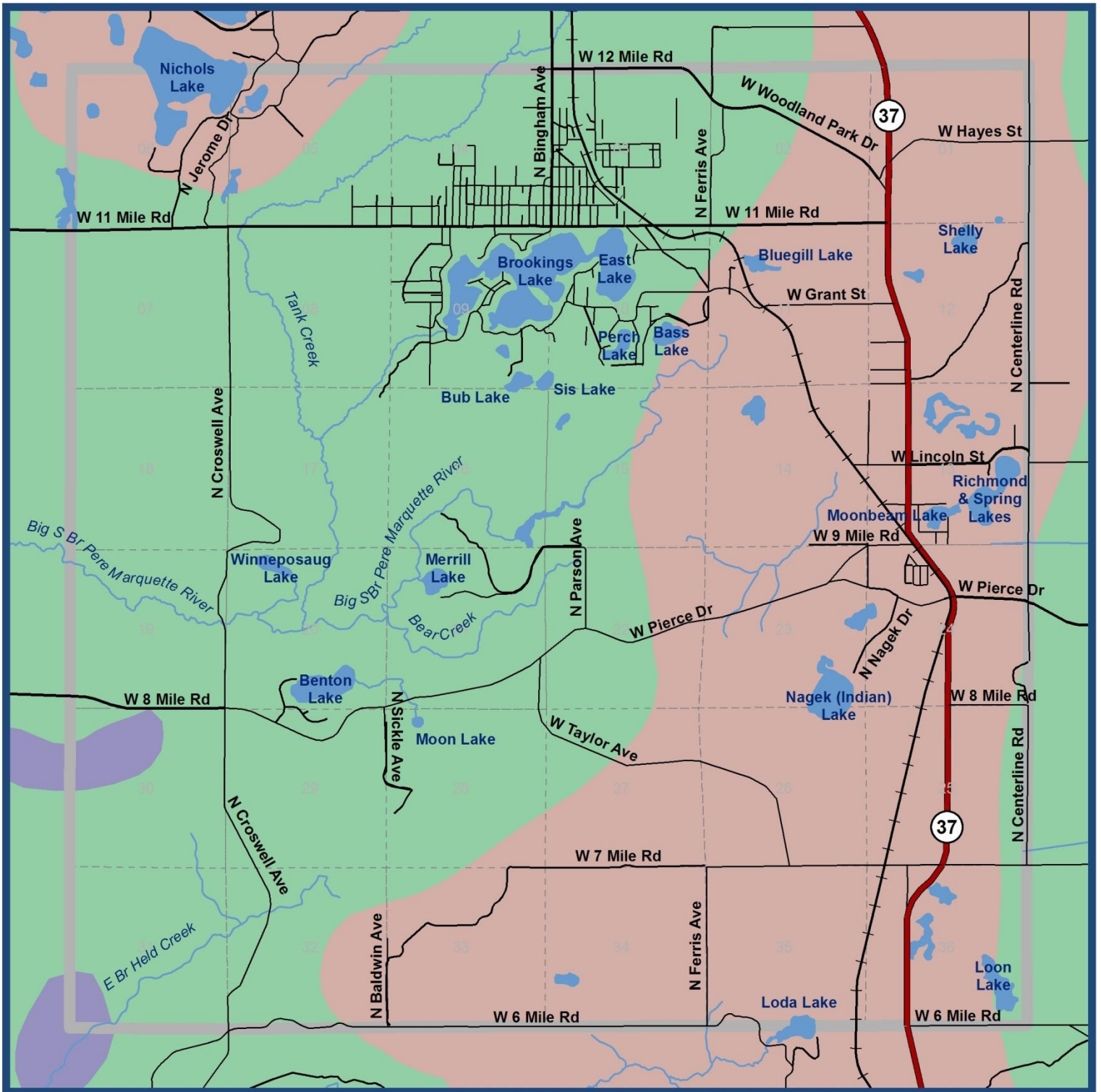
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March 2010





## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |  |
|--|-----------------|--|--|
|  | Township Limits |  | Lake   |
|  | Section Line    |  | River/Creek  |
|  | State Highway   |  | Dune sand  |
|  | Paved Road      |  | End moraines of coarse-textured till                     |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  | Glacial outwash sand and gravel and postglacial alluvium |
|  | Railroad        |  |  |

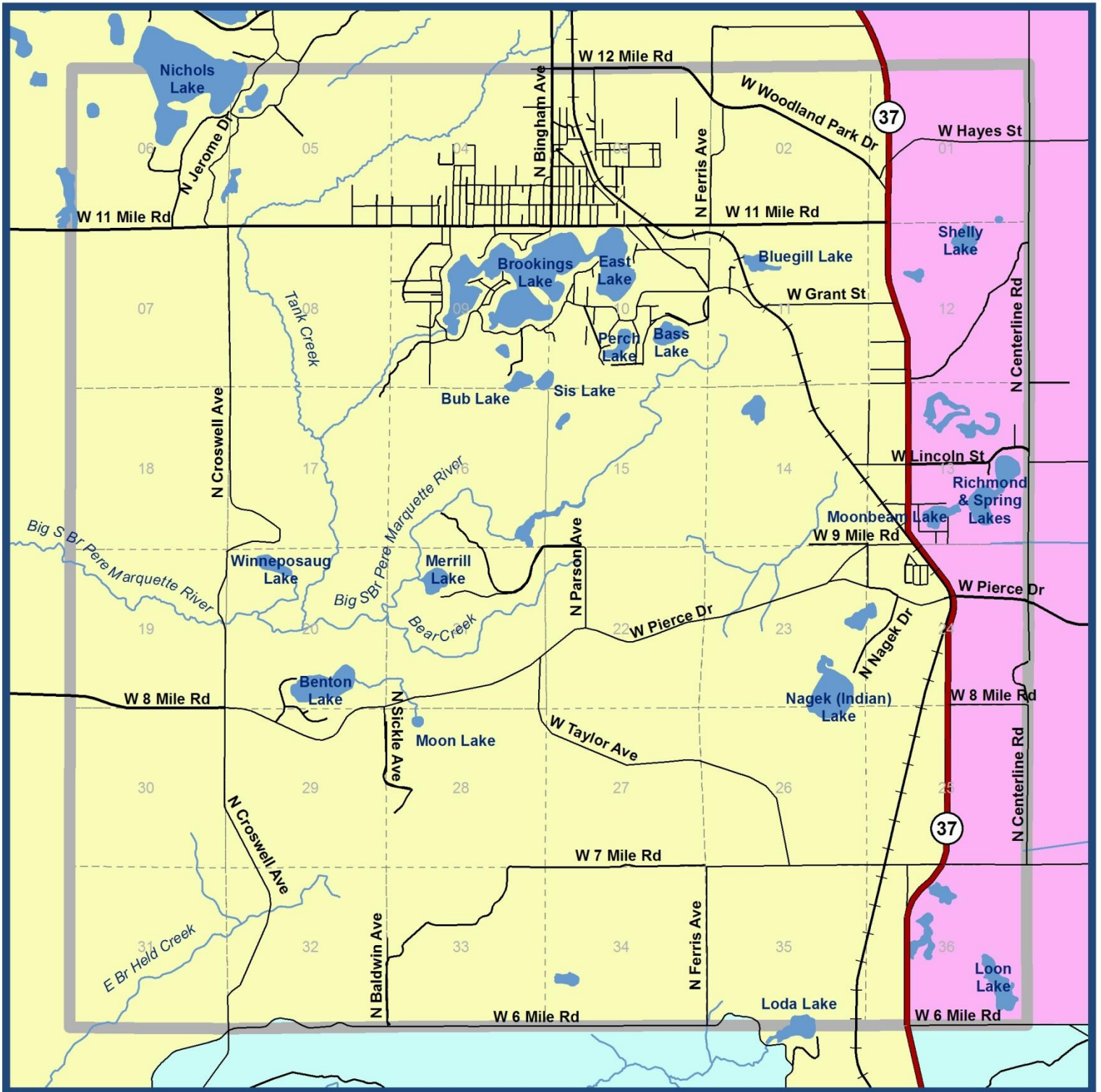
## Quaternary Geology

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Newaygo County MSU Extension

March 2010



## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |                         |
|--|-----------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Township Limits |  | Lake                    |
|  | Section Line    |  | River/Creek             |
|  | State Highway   |  | Census Track 9701, BG 2 |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Census Track 9701, BG 3 |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  | Census Track 9703, BG 1 |
|  | Railroad        |  |                         |

## Census Tracks

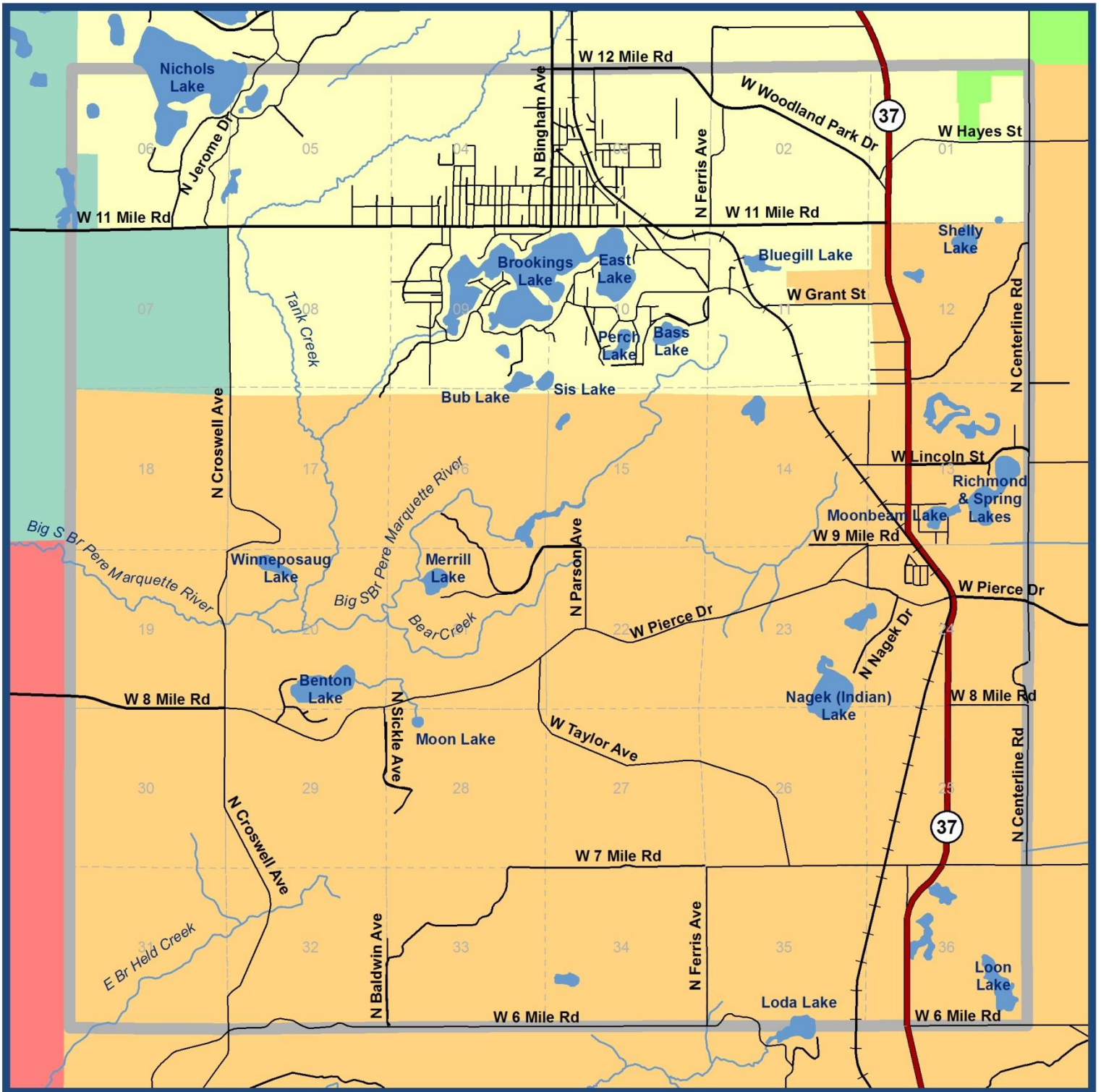
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March 2010





## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

	Township Limits		Baldwin Community Schools
	Section Line		Big Jackson Public School
	State Highway		Hesperia Community Schools
	Paved Road		Walkerville Rural Community S/D
	Unpaved Road		White Cloud Public Schools
	Railroad		
	Lake		
	River/Creek		

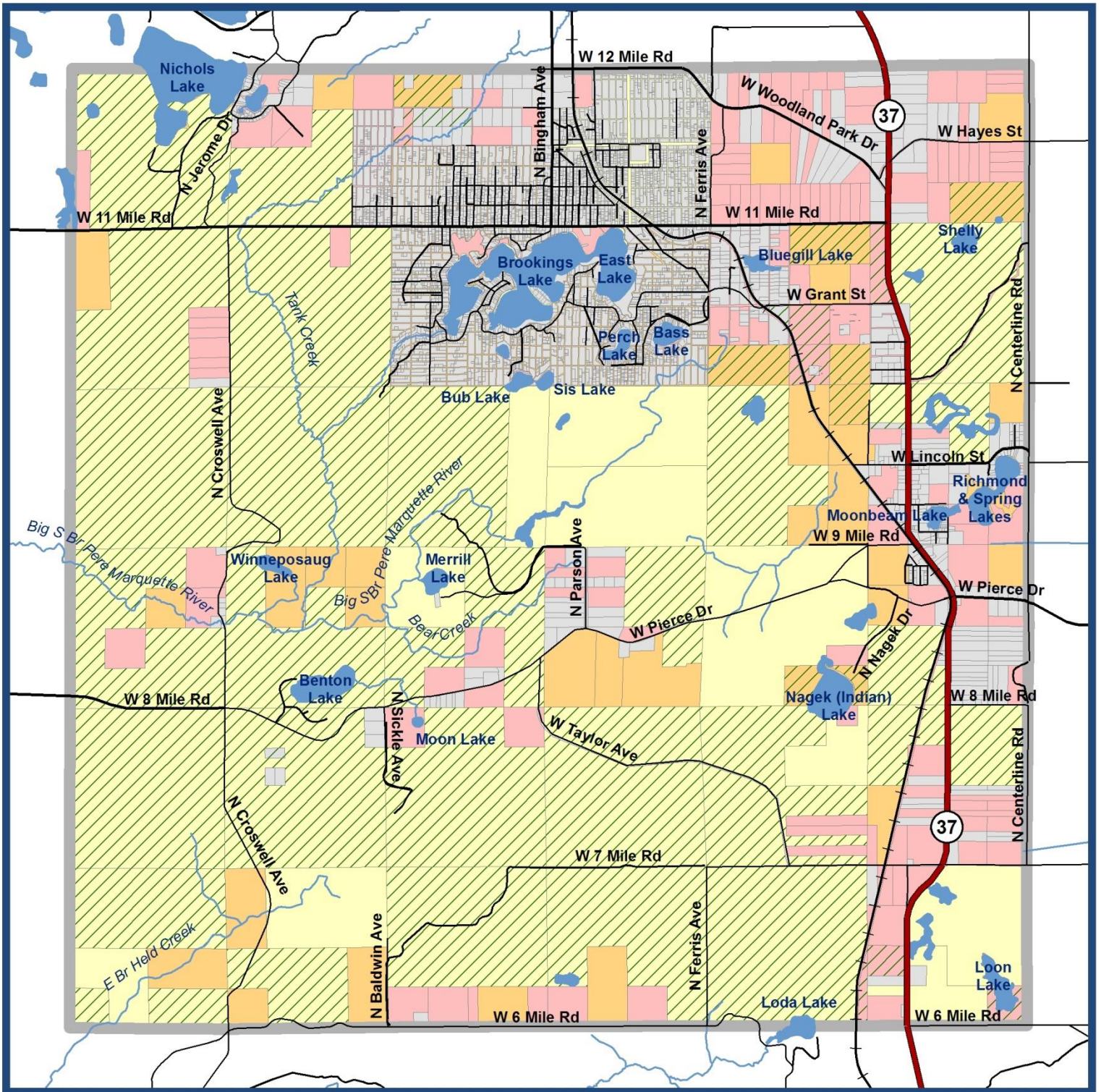
### School Districts

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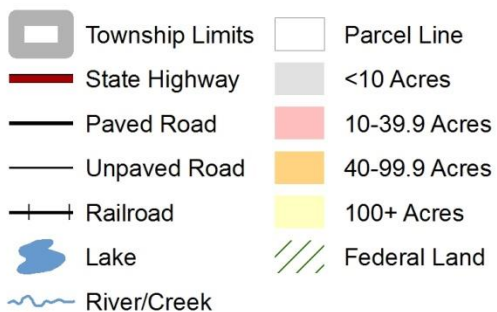
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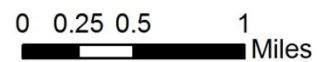




## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI



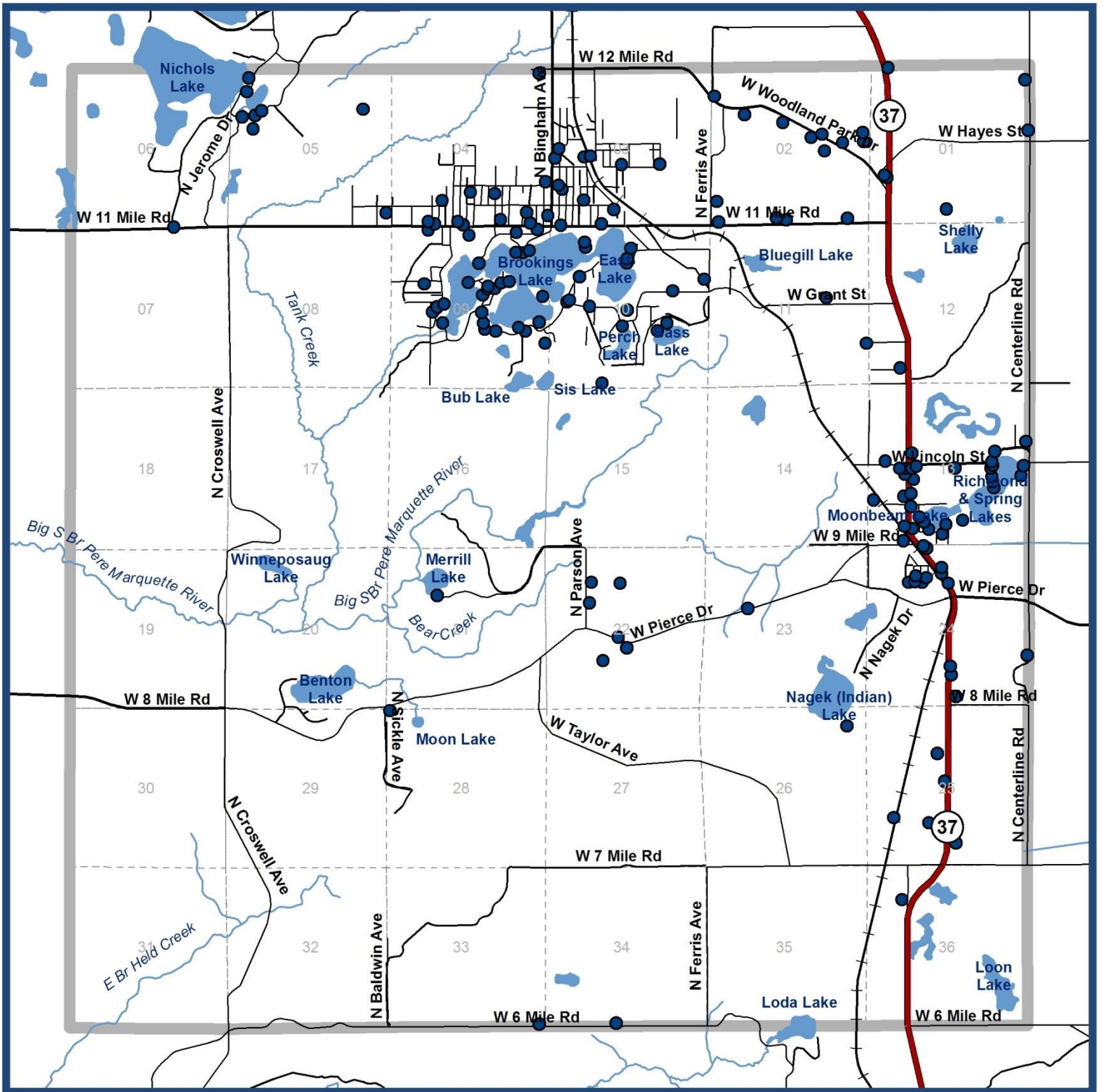
### Parcels












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March 2010





## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

-  Township Limits
-  Section Line
-  State Highway
-  Paved Road
-  Unpaved Road
-  Railroad
-  Lake
-  River/Creek
-  Well

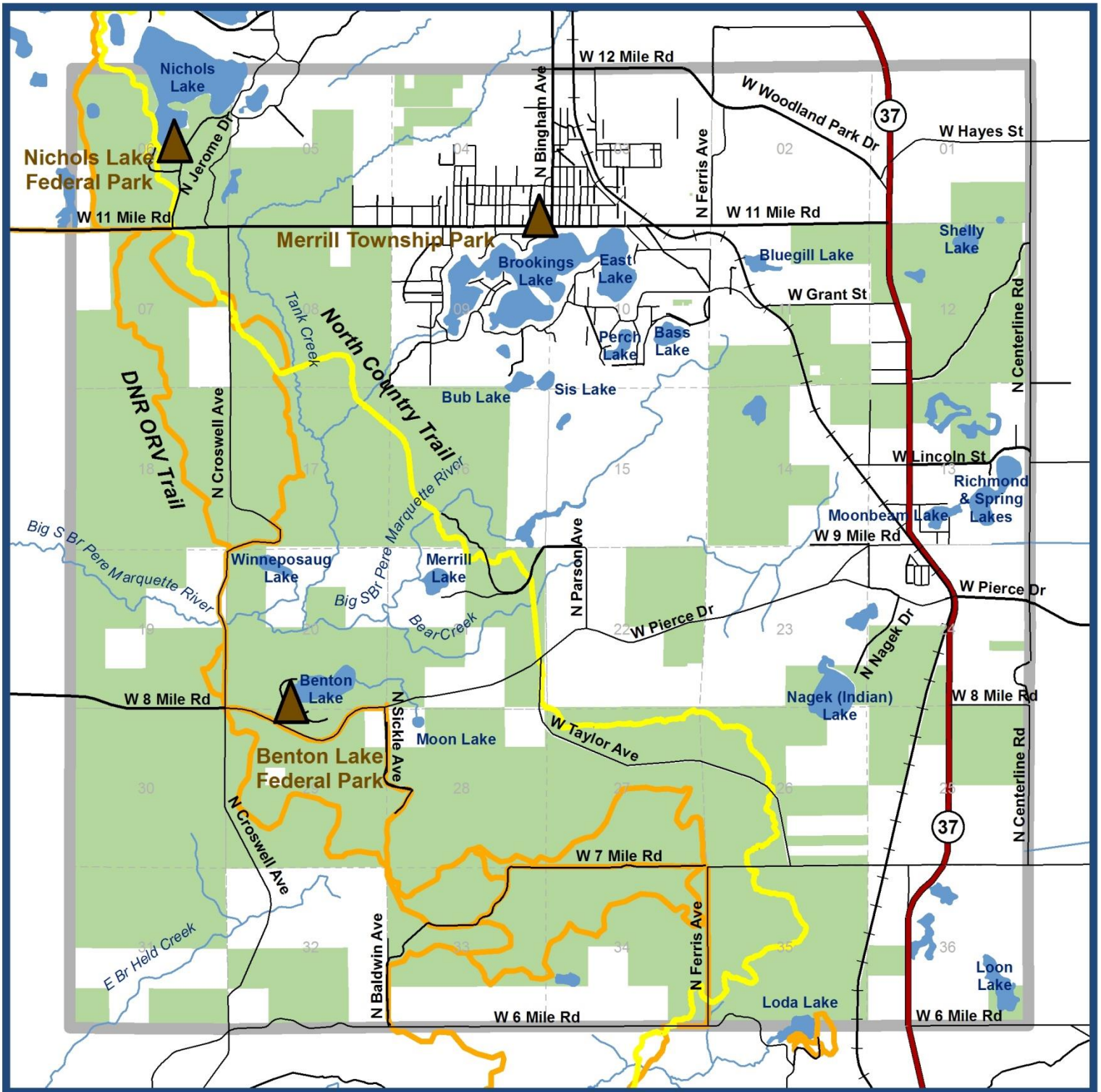
### Well Locations

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 Newaygo County MSU Extension

March 2010



## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |              |
|--|-----------------|--|--------------|
|  | Township Limits |  | Railroad     |
|  | Section Line    |  | Lake         |
|  | State Highway   |  | River/Creek  |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Federal Land |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  |              |

### Parks & Trails

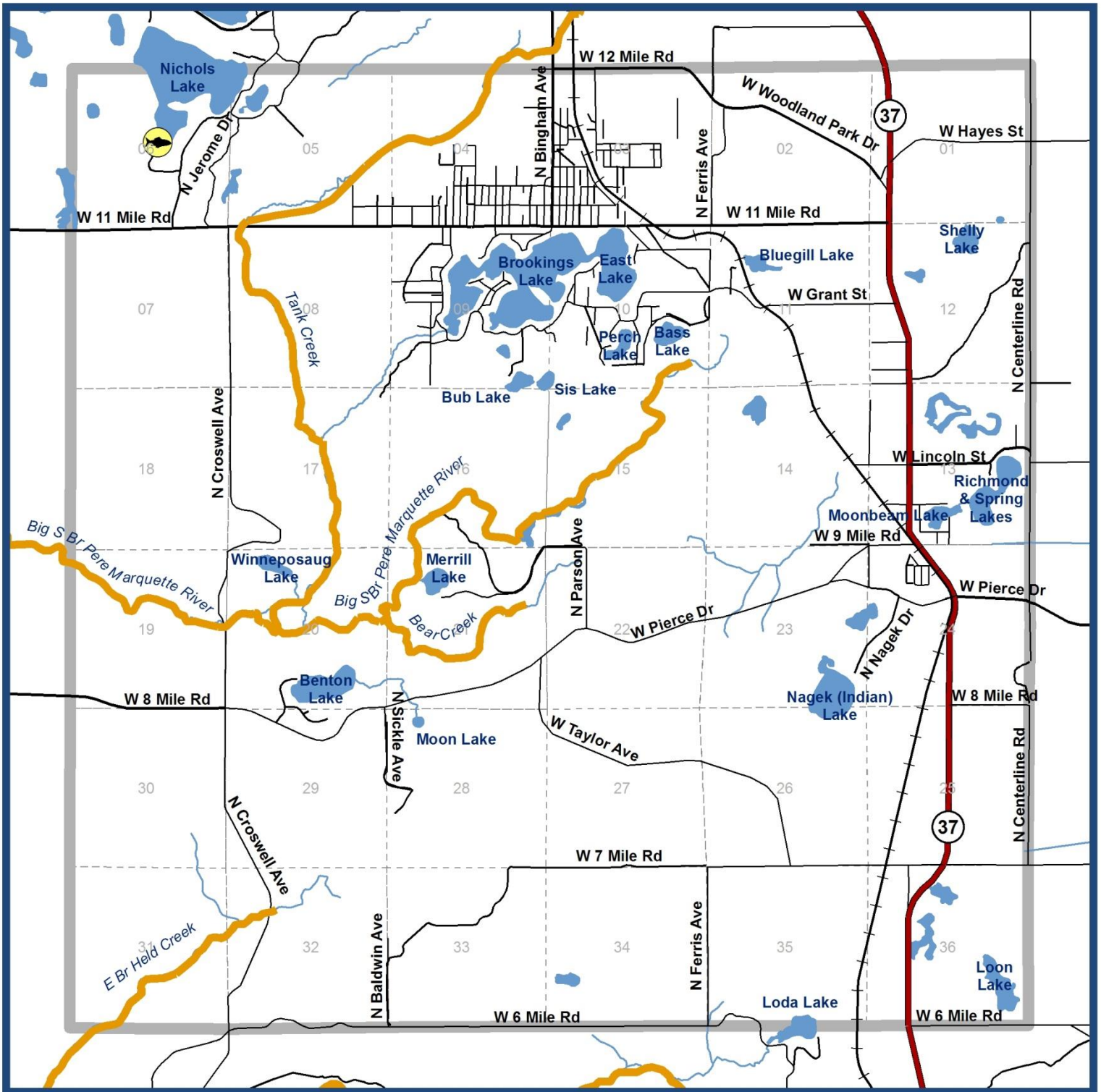
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 Newaygo County MSU Extension

March 2010





## Merrill Township - Newaygo County, MI

- |  |                 |  |                         |
|--|-----------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Township Limits |  | Railroad                |
|  | Section Line    |  | Lake                    |
|  | State Highway   |  | River/Creek             |
|  | Paved Road      |  | Designated Trout Stream |
|  | Unpaved Road    |  | Fish Stocking Site      |

## Fish Management

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



Data Sources:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Newaygo County GIS  
 Newaygo County MSU Extension

March 2010

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## **Appendix A**

### **Merrill Township History**



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## Merrill Township History

Taken from: *Newaygo County History and Genealogy Book*

Published by: The Newaygo County Society of History & Genealogy

Merrill Township was formed after 1884 from Monroe Township. Five settlements once inhabited this township, two still exist today. The settlements were Brohman (also called Otia and Dingman), Woodland Park, these two still exist, Brookings, Park City and Shaw. The Township contains several lakes including Nichols and Benton which have public parks. The Pere Marquette River runs through the area. It has a railroad and abandoned rails and a stagecoach line.

### Settlements

Shaw once had a post office from 1887 to 1909 and the area is now a field. Brookings developed around a sawmill and was a station on the Pere Marquette Railway. Twice it had a functional post office.

Woodland Park was established as a black resort by promoters from Chicago before the advent of the civil rights laws. It had connections with Idlewild, to the northeast. Many famous black entertainers visited this area in its heyday. Entertainers found rest in Woodland Park and were welcomed there if they did not perform.

Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis liked to rest here. There is a lake directly to the south of the area with a park. The area is full of empty resort homes, yet a community still exists with a church and a bar/restaurant.

Brohman was originally called Otia as that was the name of the post office. The post office was opened June 1882, named after Otia Gibbs, a daughter of James Gibbs, who operated a mill there. It had the nickname of "Woods" also. Jarret Dingman was the first postmaster in his store in 1882. The area was called Dingman in 1883 and back to Otia in 1885. After it changed back to Otia, the postmasters were: Annie Sherlock in 1885, Harvey Pierce in 1890, Anna Definey in 1890, Anna McPherson 1892, Philo Bowerman 1896, John Murray 1897, and Wm. Cantrell in 1914.

Mr. Gibbs, who was a woods foreman in the employ of G.W. Crawford, a lumberman from Big Rapids, told the following story about early Brohman:

"Myself, 36 men, seven pair of horse and four yoke of oxen started for what is now called Brohman. (It was then called Woods). It was north of Dingman's Crossing. My father was the



manager, and we were sent to build camps and lumber mills. This was in the year 1883. We landed at the place at 7 o'clock in the morning of May 6. After the first chip flew from Al Smith's axe, I picked it up and sent it to Mrs. C. Crawford. As time went on, trees were felled and cut into logs, land was cleared, and shacks were built. After this, a boarding house was built, men's shanties, a store, blacksmith shop, a barn, and lastly, a lumber mill.

On August 22, 1883, we commenced to cut lumber. By that time there were about 150 people living there, and a lively place it was! We were a nice lot of men to begin with, but it wasn't long before we could out-cuss the toughest of the newcomers. South of us, down at Dingman's Crossing, old Uncle Dingman had a hotel and a ballroom. We used to have some great times there! A schoolhouse was built in 1884."

The town took on the name of Brohman in 1920. The post office still operates. In the 1970's, the town had a grocery store, restaurant, bottled gas store, gas station, two home builders, a beauty shop, church, car drag strip, antique shop, archery dealer and Kaley's bar and grill. Kaley's burned in the early 1980's and was rebuilt yet burned again in 2006. The area in 2006 continues to operate with new businesses in the past 10 years.

## **Brohman**

**Written by: T.L. VanLiew, 2006**

Brohman had its beginnings yet another humble little whistle-stop along the railroads of Newaygo County, bearing the name Otia. The tale behind the names goes back as far as 1883, when the Dingman family first settled in the area, giving a tiny hamlet its name and its first postmaster for the equally tiny post office. Dingman at the time boasted a lone motel for travelers and its post office, which at that time made the wide spot in the road an actual place to be, as mail in those days was the best indicator of one's existence.

But Dingman wasn't meant to last very long, and another wide spot appeared just up the railroad tracks, and that spot was named Otia, for the first postmaster's daughter. By the standards of the day, Otia didn't have much more to offer than Dingman, but it managed to acquire a general grocery, a post office of its own, and across the rutted two-track that saw a bit of coach traffic from time to time, a man-made lake was cleared out, a deep channel hewn from the soil to connect two bodies of water, and Moonbeam Lake was born in the hopes of creating a resort area.

Otia was never exactly a booming town, but it served as a useful stop for the railroad. People tended to travel even then, and the main trunk road from Hart to Big Rapids, listed on old maps

as the State Road, carried folks back and forth, and the remains of that road still exist today. Back then, it was just around the corner from the little place called Otia.

The Chamberlain lumber camp, which was located about three miles west of Otia, was hot during the late 1800's timber boom. Several old rail spurs can still be found, linking the logging camps with the railroad for the transportation of wood from Michigan's towering forests. Business was pretty good and plenty of folks made a decent living in the timber industry, though even Otia experienced at least one incident when the lumber train derailed across from the old motel. The picture is somewhat grainy, but the overturned log car is identifiable and can be found in the collection of Blaine and Delores VanLiew.

In the 1920's a wealthy contractor named E. Mike Brohman bought a chunk of land on the State Road and built a large, grand home, planted a veritable forest of lilac bushes, and decided to invest some of his money in the area. The old-timers who knew Mike Brohman are long gone now, and nobody is left to tell if anything was built, but the name Otia was changed to honor Mike Brohman for his philanthropic efforts.

During that time, however, Brohman started hopping a bit. The motel was a popular place, the post office and general store was the spot for mail and sundries, and the local farmers even came to town to host their own Fair, which included displays of their agricultural abilities. The lumbering in the area continued, and the trains thundered by carrying their payloads of timber and goods, occasionally stopping in Brohman for a spell. An old platform existed behind the general store, which is now gone and is the current site of Brohman's Ole Store Bakery & Restaurant, and as a child, the writer would play beneath the platform and dig out quantities of coal. Was the coal for the trains or for heat for the residents of Brohman? Either way, Brohman was a place to sit a while and chat with folks who were just passing through.

W.C. Cantrell owned the general store for many years, and old photographs show how the store and post office looked in the days of horses and buggies, dirt roads and trains. One photograph is so clear, you can see the brand of flour Mr. Cantrell sold in his store. The writer recommends you check it out if you happen to visit the restaurant in town.

After a time, Brohman saw the same changes that were happening everywhere else: the horses became fewer, the cars became more common. And while the resort of Moonbeam Lake never materialized, Brohman saw the growth as the main road called M-37 marched its way north alongside the railroad tracks. The Olesons purchased the general store and ran the post office, seeing this tiny hamlet through the 1950's and early 1960's. Then, as people traveled more and more by car, it was decided that the old general store and post office was to make way for a

newer building, bigger and better, and boasting, of all things, gas pumps for the Studebakers and Oldsmobiles that passed through on their way to all points north. The original buildings were torn down and the site became a parking lot. All that remains now of Mr. Dingman's little grocery, and his post office is the ancient ice shed way back near the railroad tracks. The current owners of the property, Blaine and DeLores VanLiew, intend to keep the shed, if possible, for it also has sentimental value ... Where else will you find construction that lasts for nearly 100 years—on an ice shed, no less?

Moving forward, the VanLiew's purchased the property where the general store stood in 1971 and has remained ever since. DeLores made the acquaintance of William Puff during the 70's and it was through him, as the grandson of one of the original founders of Dingman/Otia/Brohman, that many of the photographs and postcards on display in the town restaurant were acquired. Other residents, many of whom are gone to us now, provided pictures and stories and even old maps from their personal collections, which are also framed and on display. The writer wishes to remember their names here and to thank them for many years of good stories and laughter: Jim Gerber, Lee Slater, Mr. Sweeney, Mary Brown, J.B. Martin, Bill Puff, Gaylord, and Leta Eames, Ferman Kaley, and others the writer never knew, but who told their stories to those who passed them on.

Since 1971, many changes have taken place in Brohman. For one, M-37 was overshadowed by other highways that skirted the little towns and made more direct lines to the north and south. Tough times have hit the area more than once, and somehow Brohman manages to hang on to that post office (which is now located up the road a way, next to the newer Brohman One Stop, owned by Dave and Jan Weaver). The post office is rather like a measurement, the standard by which a town becomes a spot on the map. Without the tiniest area on an envelope where one prints the Zip Code 49312, Brohman would cease to exist. Yet the little village carries on and has its own road signs now. The old general store became a restaurant and gift shop and is still owned by the VanLiew family. There is a hardware and variety store and an auto machine shop, a gas station and a bargain hunter's thrift store, too. Some of the oldest names in the area are around yet: Millie Jackson still owns the family farm that has stood for close to a century. And folks who like to poke around can still find the bits of history that hide along overgrown two-tracks.

And the State Road from Hart to Big Rapids? Well, that's Pierce Drive now, and Mike Brohman's old homestead caved in on itself. It was torn down some years back, not leaving much to remember it by ... except for the forest of lilac bushes that bloom every year. Brohman goes on, too.

## **Woodland Park**

**Excerpts from: *The Muskegon Chronicle*, Saturday, July 4, 1925**

**Headline: Woodland Park, South of Bitely, Unique Resort Owned,  
Operated by Colored People**

**Article written by: Harry T. Spooner**

**Article Title: Rare Foresight Shown by Project's Founders**

Site formerly Occupied by Old Lumber Town of Brookings Most Beautiful in County; Formerly on Property Yielded Fortunes.

Bitely, Michigan July 4. ---- The big Fourth of July celebration at this colored summer resort at Woodland Park, three miles south of here in which several hundred colored persons are participating, calls attention to the fact that Newaygo County has one of the most unique resorts in the state.

This resort project involves the planning and administration of one of the most extensive places of its kind in the state, all of which is handled entirely by members of the colored race. Nobody outside of the ebony-hued race can own property in the colony.

With rare foresight, the founders of the project secured what is undoubtedly the best possible site in the county from the point of beauty. Less than four years ago the project was conceived and within that time the property was purchased and surveyed into lots. 2600 in number of which 1900 have been sold, and a hotel, clubhouse, and forty cottages built. Prejudiced persons have been forced to admit that the founders of the project are the equal in intelligence and foresight of the best brains of the white race.

### **Plotted Resort**

Several years before the opening of Woodland Park, Marion E. Auther of Cleveland, Ohio and Alvin E. Wright of Chicago, colored Real Estate dealers, after many calls in their line of business from colored people for resort property, bought a track of land in Lake County four miles east of Baldwin, and platted Idlewild Resort. Suitable land in this vicinity was scarce and the lots there were entirely sold out in a short time.

The demand was so great that they began looking around for another suitable location. It was necessary to find a place that is accessible to the big cities of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Toledo.



After much investigating, they hit upon the present site at Woodland Park. It occupies the site of the old lumber town of Brookings on the main line of the Pere Marquette Railroad between Chicago and Traverse City. It is fourteen miles north of White Cloud, the county seat, of Newaygo County, and twelve miles south of Baldwin, the county seat of Lake County. The country was originally covered in big pine trees, but since the lumbering was abandoned thirty years ago, it has grown up to a dense and beautiful tract of hardwood.

### **History Like Others**

The history of the old lumber town is practically the same as the other lumber towns similarly situated in the heart of the pine country, for years it was the scene of industry and then, when the big trees had been converted into lumber and shipped away, it was abandoned as worthless, and left until nature repaired the wrongful damage wrought by saw and axe and produced an effect that promises to make the section valuable to a degree that would have satisfied the wildest avarice of the lumbermen.

The abstract of title to the property shows some interesting facts. The first transfer was from the United States government to Eber B. Ward who secured it on a homestead claim. He transferred it to Catherine B. Ward, and she sold it to Thomas R. Lyon, a capitalist, who invested extensively in pine lands in Newaygo County. He paid \$300,000 for the tract, thus making one fortune for the Wards.

In 1884, Lyon deeded a right of way to cross it to the Chicago and West Michigan Railway Company and they sold the timber, on the right of way to Hovey & McCracken, a large lumber concern of Muskegon. In 1893, Lyon sold his tract to Hovey & McCracken for \$330,000, thus nearly doubling on his investment. Hovey & McCracken established a large mill and began lumbering.

### **Built Mill on Lake**

The mill was built on the bank of Crooked Lake, which is really four distinct lakes connected to each other by narrow channels. A boarding house, school, store, and post office were built to accommodate the village, which sprung up. The site was extremely beautiful. The village was built right on the banks of the lake, which has a sandy shore for bathing.

For several years, Brookings was one of the important lumber points of the state. Today all that remains of the little village is the schoolhouse, two cottages, one of which has been rebuilt and is in use by the hotel management, and one part of the Royal Breeze Hotel.

The site of the old mill is marked by a depression in the ground containing a few blackened and charred timbers; all that remain to remind the present resorter of the former industry. The old landing dock is also visible in front of the hotel, where a few slabs still project from the moss-covered shore. Through the woods in several places may be seen the railroad grades used for hauling the timber to the mill.

After the village was abandoned, the land went back to the state for taxes, and was finally purchased by George W. Bosman, who attempted to establish a farm and a stock ranch. It did not prove successful, and it was then bought by Brand Brothers, a real estate firm of White Cloud, and by them sold to the present owners.

### **Platted Property**

With the purchase of the land completed, the new owners platted the property into lots. They renamed the station Woodland Park and Crooked Lake was renamed Woodland Lake. They built a hotel, the Royal Breeze, close to the site of the old mill, overlooking the lake.

The old mill boarding house was used as a beginning. They started to tear it down, but when the siding was off, they found the sheeting to be of wide pine boards, free from knots and in the best of condition. So, they went no further with the wrecking, but rebuilt the outside and added a large wing.

It is a structure of fifty-six rooms electrically lighted. There are three family rooms with three beds each. Children are welcome here. The furnishings are entirely new and modern. The lobby has a stone fireplace that adds a very cheerful atmosphere.

The proprietress, Mrs. M. E. Auther is a lady of education and refinement. She keeps a herd of cows and a flock of chickens. Fresh milk, eggs, butter, and broilers are always on hand, and the ice cream is also made on the grounds.

### **Clubhouse Across Lake**

Directly across the lake from the hotel is the clubhouse. It is located on a promontory on a point which affords a view of the lake with its many bays and wooded shores. It is sixty-six by eighty-two feet in size and contains a lobby large enough to accommodate one hundred couples for dancing without crowding: three sides of it are surrounded by a veranda sixteen feet wide, all screened in, and hung with flowers and ferns; there is a large dining room, a refreshment room and kitchen. The latter is equipped with a large electric refrigerator. The building has its own electric light and water system.

A "board-walk" is now in process of construction. It leads from a large platform in front of the clubhouse to the end of the point. It will have seats on both sides its entire length. The point will be laid out in flower gardens among the beautiful natural trees now growing there. The clubhouse cost \$10,000 to build. Connected with it are ten sleeping cottages arranged in a semi-circle in the woods nearby.

Besides the hotel and clubhouse, about forty cottages have been built by lot owners. Alexander Rivers, who was a mail carrier on the Bitely rural route for several years, is the caretaker of the property. He occupies a beautiful cottage near the hotel and lives there the year round.

### **Plan Business Section**

With more foresight than most resort promoters, the proprietors are now planning a permanent business section. Being half-way between White Cloud and Baldwin and there being no other village of any size between these two towns, the promoters hope to establish a permanent village. It will be on the railroad, where the old station of Brookings was located.

A spur from trunk line M-54 is now being built to it. The promoters think that on account of its location it should be a natural trading point for a large area of farming and stock-raising country, and they think the lot owners of the resort would prefer to trade with their own people in their own town.

The main business section platted surrounds a square with is set aside for a Convention Hall. It is hoped to bring many a convention of the colored race here and to use the hall for church and social gatherings. An attempt will also be made to establish industries so that those who prefer to live here the year round will have a means of making a living.

### **Everett Pioneer**

One of the pioneer lot owners is H. Everett. He owns three cottages, two of which he rents, and he lives there the year round. The types of people who have bought property in this resort are the best. They must be intelligent and thrifty to purchase lots here. The establishment of this project of colored people, for colored people and by colored people is unique and its presence in the county will undoubtedly do much to remove the prejudice that has existed among their white brothers.

Special mention is due Mrs. M. E. Auther, the proprietress of the hotel. Her name is significant, as she is the author of several poems each of which shows the poetic touch. One poem describing the beauties of Woodland Park, ending with these words:

"When you're tired of city's toil and strife.  
Pack your grip, take children and your wife  
Hop a train that's bound for Royal Breeze  
Just the place to rest, the crowd agrees  
Here you meet your friends from far and near  
Joy and laughter brighten days most dear  
Not a chance to mope over moments sad  
Come to Woodland Park and be made glad  
Glad that life is coursing in your veins  
Glad you've found a place where God still reigns  
Glad there's hope and faith among our race  
Glad to meet your brother face to face"

Woodland Park has come a long way since the days of this article. Here's hoping, that with this plan and the people of Woodland Park, we will continue to go forward and make this a better place for all.

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## **Appendix B**

### **Community Survey**

# Survey



Township Hall, 1585 West 11 Mile Road, Bitely, MI 49309

**The purpose of this Survey is to help Merrill Township understand the needs of the community and to value your input.**

What is your impression of Merrill Township? \_\_\_\_\_

Do You:	Yes	No
Know where the Township Hall is? .....	[ ]	[ ]
Go to any of the Township meetings?.....	[ ]	[ ]
Know (or have met) any of the Township officials? .....	[ ]	[ ]
How many permanent residents there are in Merrill Twn?.....	[ ]	[ ] _____
Know how many summer residents there are? .....	[ ]	[ ] _____
Know how many elderly are living in Merrill Twn. ....	[ ]	[ ] _____
Read the Township Newsletter? .....	[ ]	[ ]
Know there is a food distribution (NCCS).....	[ ]	[ ]
Know there is a lunch program at the Township Hall for the elderly?	[ ]	[ ]

How long have you lived here? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your primary residence? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you move here: \_\_\_\_\_

What is it about living in Merrill Township you like? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use the park area on 11 Mile road? [ ] Yes [ ] No For what? \_\_\_\_\_

How often? \_\_\_\_\_ Any suggested improvements? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you consider most important: (Rank in order of priority- 1 - 2 - etc. )

- [ ] Road Improvements [ ] Business Development [ ] Park Improvements
- [ ] Health Care Screening [ ] Senior Housing [ ] Cemetery Improvement
- [ ] Enlarging parking lot at Township Hall [ ] Other \_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to see as new businesses in Merrill Township? \_\_\_\_\_

From 1<sup>st</sup> Round w/ Paul @ Transfer Stations

MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
RETURNED SURVEY-RESULTS

QUESTION #1

What is your impression of Merrill Township?

Concession of Opinion

Excellent	Good	Bad	No Answer
9	17	8	12

QUESTION #2

DO YOU:

Question	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
Know where the Township Hall is?	46	0	0
Go to any of the Township meetings?	23		
Know (or have met) any of the Township officials?	40		
How many permanent residents there are in Merrill Twp.?	7		
Know how many summer residents there are?	4		
Know how many elderly are living in Merrill Twp.?	3		
Read the Township Newsletter?	40	3	3 didn't receive it
Know there's a food distribution (NCCS)?	37	7	2
Know there's a lunch program at the Township Hall for the elderly?	41	4	1

QUESTION #3

How long have you lived here?

0-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	16-20 yrs.	21+ yrs.	No Answer
11	6	7	5	13	4

QUESTION #4

Is this your primary residence?

Yes	No	No Answer
35	10	1

QUESTION #5

Why did you move here?

Concession of Opinion

Family And Friends	Like It	Retirement	Peace And Quiet	Get Out Of City	Lakes, Woods And Country Living	No Answer
13	8	4	5	3	4	9

QUESTION #6

What is it about living in Merrill Township you like?

Peace And Quiet	Woods, Lakes And Nature	Family Roots	No Answer
31	9	1	5

QUESTION #7

Do you use the park area on 11 Mi. Rd.?

Yes	No	No Answer
28	18	0

MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
RETURNED SURVEY-RESULTS

QUESTION #7A (from the 28 yeses)

For What?

Recreation (Swimming, Family Reunions, etc.)	Relaxation	BBQ's	Gatherings (Picnic's, Meetings, etc.)	Not Anymore	No Answer
6	2	4	4	1	11

QUESTION #7B (from the 28 yeses)

How Often?

A Lot of Times	A Few Times	Rarely	No Answer
11	6	2	9

QUESTION #7C (from the 28 yeses)

Any Suggested Improvements?

Clean – up Day	Decorations For Holidays	Beach Improvements	Restrooms	No Pets Allowed Signs	Area for Children & BBQ Sales	No Answer
1	1	2	3	4	5	13

QUESTION #8

What would you consider most important: (Rank in order of Priority)

Road Improvements	Business Development	Park Improvements	Health Care Screening	Senior Housing	Cemetery Improvements	Enlarging Parking Lot at Township Hall	Priority's
22	9	4	7	7	3	0	#1
6	11	1	8	6	4	1	#2
1	3	5	6	7	3	2	#3
7	3	6	3	7	3	1	#4
3	1	9	3	5	6	6	#5
0	4	5	2	3	4	2	#6
0	0	2	2	0	3	10	#7

QUESTION #8 (OPTION OTHER)

1. Convenience Store
2. Clear up Township Officials and employees (this was during October 1, 2005 thru October 4, 2006)
3. Basketball Court and Play Area
4. Parcel Split/Combination Requests
5. Landscaping at the Transfer Station
6. Junk and Litter Ordinance Enforced

QUESTION#9

What would you like to see as new businesses in Merrill Township?

1. GROCERY STORE/GAS STATION
2. BOAT RENTAL
3. LUNCH WAGON AT PARK
4. TOURIST ATTRACTION CENTER
5. VACATION RENTALS
6. AUTO SERVICE GARAGE
7. SENIOR HOUSING



MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
**RETURNED SURVEY - RESULTS**

QUESTION #9 (CONT.)

8. RECREATION CENTER
9. PHARMACY/CLINIC
10. LAUNDRY FACILITY
11. CAR WASH
12. ASSEMBLY PLANT
13. RESTAURANT/FAST FOOD
14. WAL-MART/LOWE'S

QUESTION #10

**What would you like to see preserved in Merrill Township?**

1. LAKES/WOODED AREAS/STREAMS
2. SCHOOL BUILDINGS/HISTORICAL SITES
3. PUBLIC BEACH/PARK
4. SERVICES FOR ELDERLY
5. QUALITY OF WATER
6. QUIET/LAX ENVIRONMENT
7. LOG CABIN ON M-37 BY GAS STATION
8. THE CHURCH
9. NATIONAL WILDLIFE
10. CEMETARY
11. TRANSFER STATION
12. POPULATION DENSITY

QUESTION #11

**What changes should occur in Merrill Township?**

1. CLEAN-UP TRASH TRAILERS/DILAPITATED HOUSES
2. TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR SENIORS
3. TO TRY AND GET THE RESIDENTS INVOLVED IN THE TOWNSHIP
4. ACCESS ROADS PUT IN/CONDITION OF ROADS
5. ENFORCE ZONING (PARK/LAKES)
6. PUTTING OFFICIALS IN THAT WE CAN TRUST (OCTOBER '05-'06)
7. MORE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES/RESIDENTS BECOME ACQUAINTED
8. NEW BUSINESSES
9. SPEED UP FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
10. CLEAN-UP JUNK ON 2-TRACKS/ROADS
11. STOP THE SMALL LOT USE ON THE LAKE
12. COMPETITIVE BIDDING ON WORK CONTRACTED BY TOWNSHIP
13. PUBLIC AWARENESS FOR TOWNSHIP MEETINGS

MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
RETURNED SURVEY – RESULTS

QUESTION #12

**What would you consider most important in Emergency Preparation: (rank in order of priority - 1 -2 etc.)**

FIRE DEP'T STARTED	LOCAL AMBULANCE SERVICE	LOCAL RESCUE SERVICE	TOWNSHIP HALL AS A SHELTER	GENERATOR AT TOWNSHIP HALL	PRIORITIES
21	6	7	4	4	#1
1	13	7	9	7	#2
6	6	8	7	0	#3
1	5	4	12	9	#4
7	2	6	1	7	#5

QUESTION #12 (OPTION OTHER)

1. PERIODIC MEDICAL SERVICES
2. COMMUNITY EFFORT AND UNITY
3. A FIRE DEPARTMENT THAT KNOWS WHAT THEY'RE DOING
4. SIREN FOR TORNADOS/WARNINGS

QUESTION #13A

**How often do you use the Transfer Station?**

WEEKLY	MONTHLY	LESS THAN 4X'S YEARLY
38	6	2

QUESTION #13B

**Are any improvements needed at the Transfer Station? (JUST A REMINDER THAT THIS IS QUESTIONNAIRE IS FROM OCT.'05-OCT.'06)**

1. RECYCLING
2. A PLACE TO TAKE BUILDING MATERIALS
3. GET THE NEW BUILDING OPERATIONAL
4. SEPARATED PROPERLY
5. KEEP ATTENDANTS BUSY
6. FINISH PROJECTS ALREADY STARTED
7. GET RID OF LADY EMPLOYEE (RUDE AND WON'T COME OUT OF BUILDING)
8. MORE ASSISTANCE FOR HANDI-CAPPED AND SENIORS
9. BUILDING CLOSER TO DUMPSTERS
10. LANDSCAPING

QUESTION #14

**What would you like to see more of in the Township? (Rank in order of priority 1-2-3etc.)**

JOB OPPORTUNITIES	POPULATION	BUSINESS	INDUSTRY	RECREATIONAL AREAS	PRIORITIES
21	4	6	1	4	#1
7	2	13	0	7	#2
1	1	6	8	2	#3
0	3	0	3	5	#4
1	5	1	3	4	#5

MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
**RETURNED SURVEY - RESULTS**

QUESTION #14 (OPTION OTHER)

1. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
2. REMOVAL OF RUN-DOWN BUILDINGS
3. BEAUTIFICATION

QUESTION #15

**Should the Township grow?**

YES	NO	NO ANSWER
21	20	5

**IN WHAT WAY?**

1. IN DEVELOPMENT (RULES MUST BE ENFORCED)
2. NEW MODERN HOMES/REPLACE DILAPITATED BLDGS.
3. JOBS AND NEW BUSINESSES
4. SUMMER PEOPLE INVOLVED
5. VACATION RENTALS EXPANDED
6. POPULATION
7. MORE PERMANENT RESIDENTS
8. TAX BREAKS
9. APARTMENTS FOR SENIORS

QUESTION #16

**How much of a problem are the following? (1-Big problem, 2-Small problem, 3-No problem)**

PROBLEM	BIG PROBLEM	SMALL PROBLEM	NO PROBLEM	NO ANSWER
ABANDONED JUNK CARS CAMPERS RECREATION VEHICLES	29	6	3	8
POOR CONDITION LACK OF MAINTENANCE OF SOME HOMES	25	6	6	9
OLDER, UNSIGHTLY MOBILE HOMES	18	11	7	9

MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
RETURNED SURVEY - RESULTS

QUESTION #17

How would you rate these services? (1-Good 2-Fair 3-Poor 4-No Opinion)

SERVICE	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NO OPINION	NO ANSWER
ROAD MAINTENANCE	19	12	10	0	5
SNOW PLOWING	18	17	2	1	8
FIRE PROTECTION	6	9	16	1	13
POLICE PROTECTION	3	17	9	4	13
PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT	6	14	12	4	10
LIBRARY SERVICES	3	4	7	14	18
BUILDING INSPECTIONS	4	5	9	11	17
AMBULANCE SERVICES	9	16	2	7	12
CEMETERY LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE	4	10	8	9	15
ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT (Junk cars, trash, zoning, etc.)	3	2	28	3	10

QUESTION #18

How should Merrill Township pay for its improvements?

1. MILEAGE
2. FORM A COMMITTEE
3. CHECK TOWNSHIP EXPENSES AND USES
4. TAXES
5. FUND RAISERS
6. NON-PROFIT
7. TOURISM
8. GRANTS
9. SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS
10. CHARGE RESIDENTS A TOWNSHIP FEE FOR NOT CLEANING UP YARDS
11. ENFORCEMENT OF LOCAL ORDINANCES WITH FINES
12. HONEST BUDGET

QUESTION #19

Which of the following would you like to be involved within the Township?

VOLUNTARY FIRE PERSON	TOWNSHIP BOARD	PLANNING COMMISSION	CLEAN-UP	CEMETERY COMMISSION
4	5	4	14	1

QUESTION #20

May we contact you? (Name, address and telephone #'s of those that said yes)

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE #
Shirley Hall	2311 11mi. rd Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-2197
Sheryl Pease & David Gilmore	8948 N. Bingham Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-2512
George Halicek	1050 Woodland Park Dr. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-9261
Tom Dart	8650 Island Dr. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-8510



MERRILL TOWNSHIP  
 PLANNING COMMISSION  
**RETURNED SURVEY – RESULTS**

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE #
LeRoy & Barbara Butler	8498 N. Lakeshore Dr. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-8495
Bob Teunis	729 Summer St. Spring Lake, MI 49456	(616) 842-3995
Dewey Hundley	2119 Lakeshore Dr. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-3316
Hazel Peace	2660 11 mi. rd. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-9729
Andrew E. Billups	P.O. Box 69 Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-8869
Barbara Lanting	8392 N. Blair Ave. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-3318
Sharon Jones	8383 Blair Ave. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-2065
James & Gail Ware	8942 28 <sup>th</sup> Ave. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-2813
Dan Poling	8143 Holton Rd. Holton, MI 49425	
Shirley Millis	2905 England Muskegon, MI 49445	(231) 744-1067
Dorothy Harrison	2015 Beechwood Blvd. Bitely, MI 49309	(231) 745-2544

QUESTION #21

**Any other issues you see to be addressed? (Just a reminder this is during Oct.'05 thru Oct.'06)**

1. Getting officials out of office, whom aren't doing their job.
2. Correct lighting in the Township Hall.
3. Replace carpeting in Township Hall.
4. Fire female at Transfer Station.
5. Clean-up Pierce and Woodbridge corner.
6. Reachable Officials.
7. Getting more people into the Township
8. Cleaning up dilapidated buildings.
9. Unity of the community
10. Fix Woodland Park Drive and 11 mi. rd.
11. Electrical lines need to be replaced
12. Activities for seniors – especially in the winter time.
13. Dredging the Lake