



# Review of the Benefits of Parks and an Inventory of Parks in Benzie County, MI



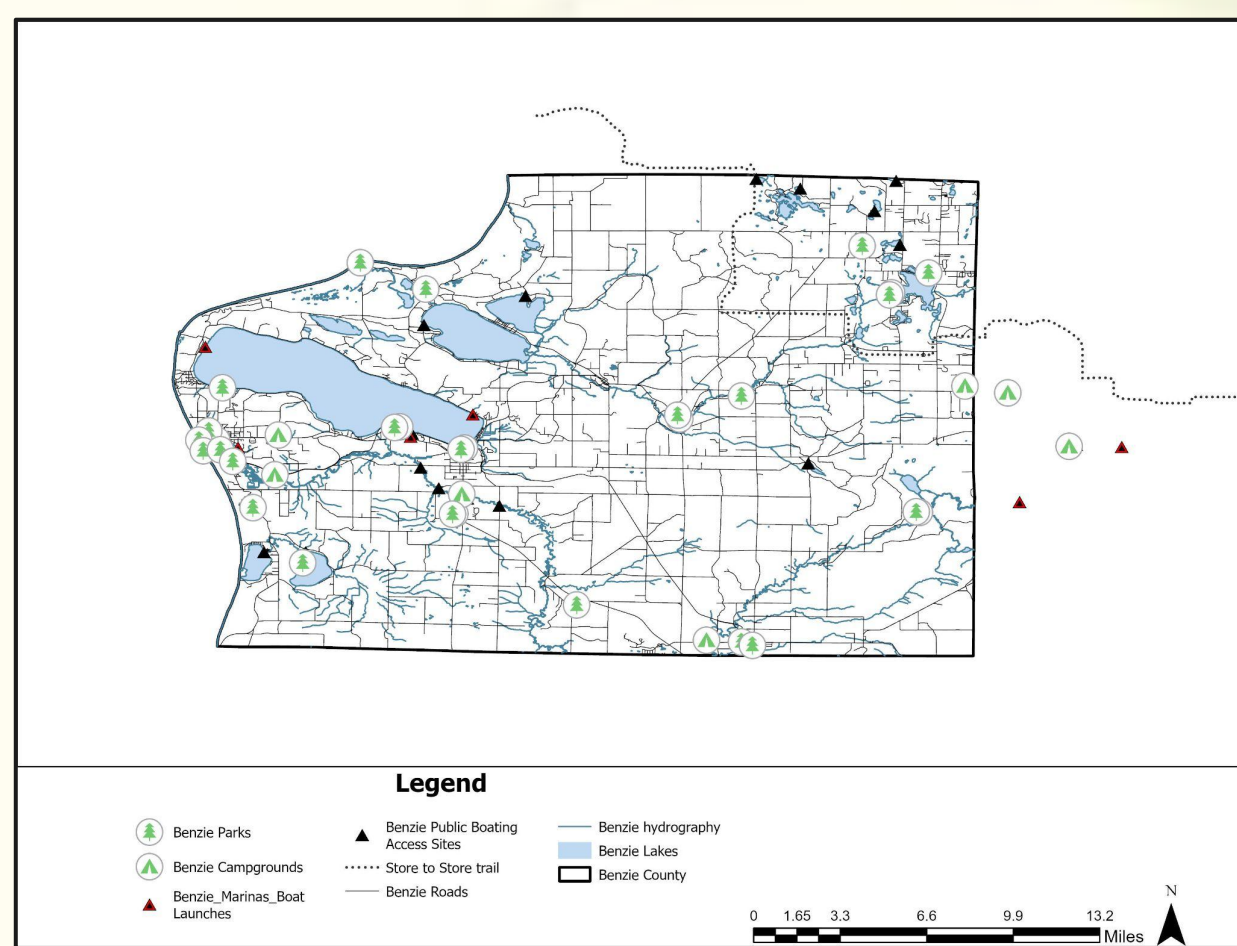
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## Introduction

Benzie is located in north west Michigan and has 25 miles of lake Michigan coastline. The county would like to utilize its natural beauty to promote tourism and recreational activities for long term residents and seasonal visitors alike.

- 48 parks located in Benzie County
- Parks cover 410.53 acres in total
- 17 lakes located in Benzie County
- 14,948.6 acres of land are covered by lakes



## Socio-Economic Profile

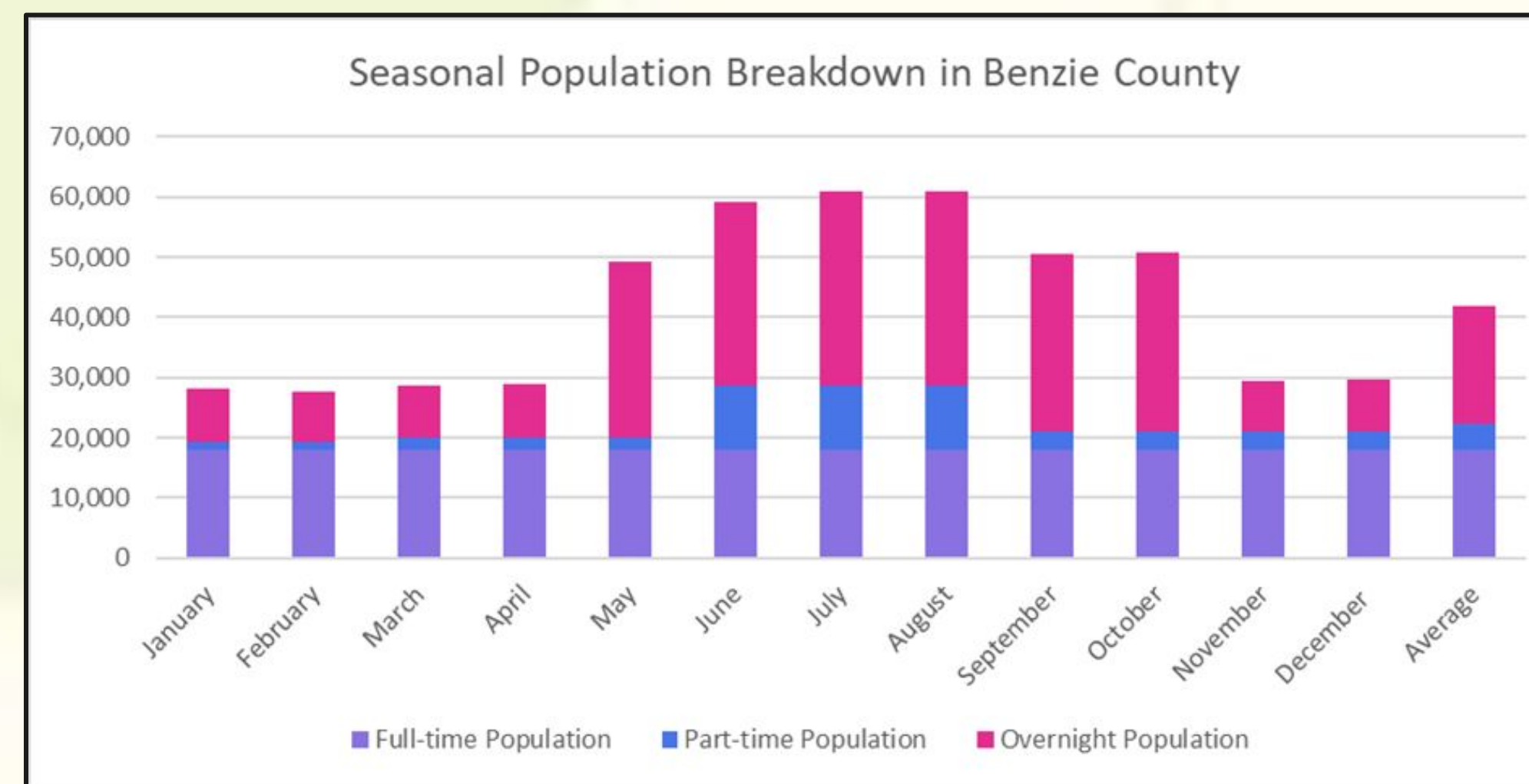


Figure 1: Seasonal Population Breakdown in Benzie County

With over a quarter of Benzie County's population being over 55 years old, we notice an annual fluctuation in population during the summer months. The large influx of seasonal residents has a tremendous impact on the County's economy, and also on its recreation needs and opportunities.

## Example Map

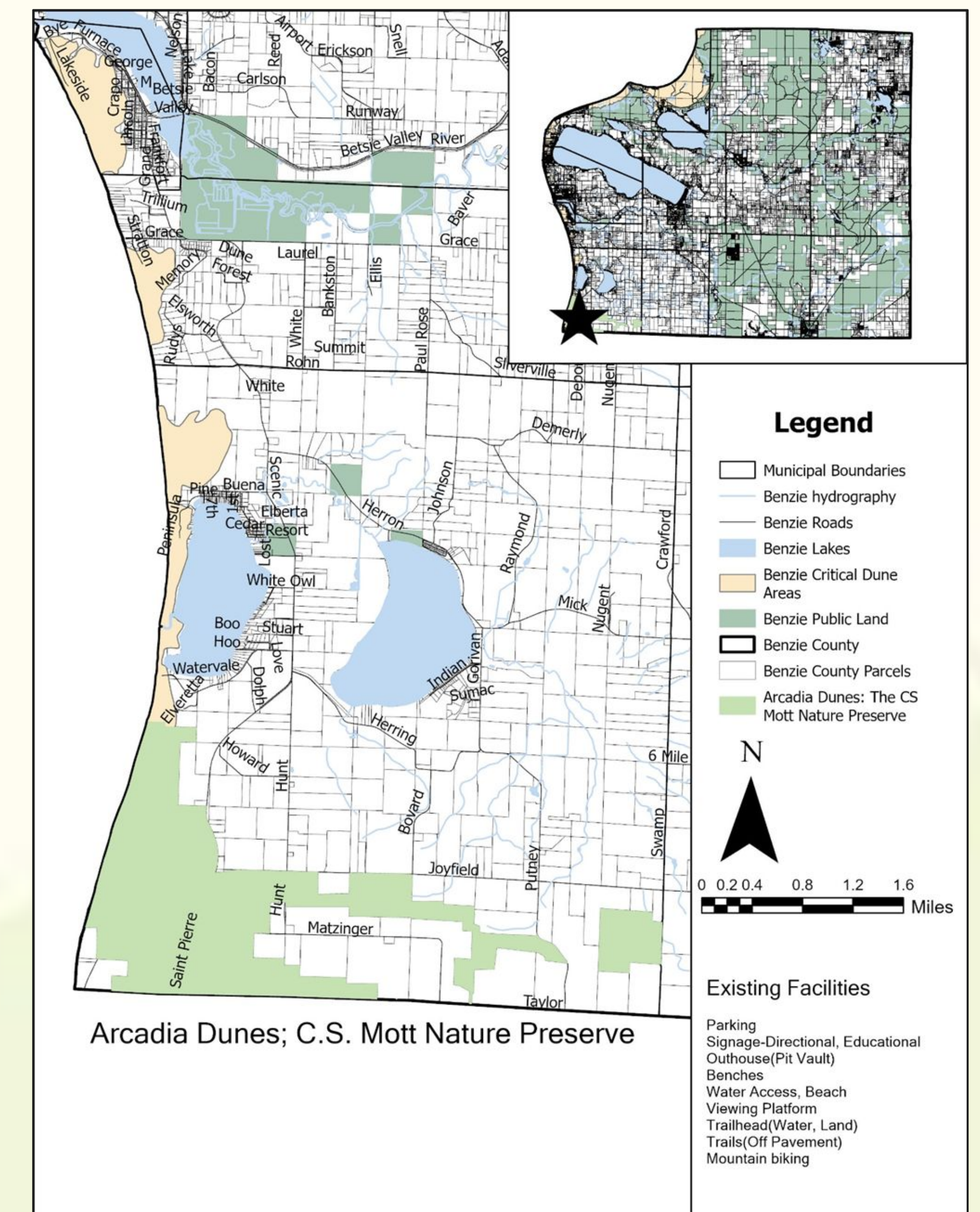


Figure 2: Example Map from Brochure

Our team made around 115 maps in GIS to create a brochure of all Benzie's Parks for Public Use. By having a current inventory of park parcels in the county, it can speed up the development of position description.

## Benefits of Parks and Recreation



As a part of the team's report, a comprehensive review of the benefits of having an organized parks and recreation department in your region were compiled.

- Physical
- Mental
- Public/Social
- Environmental
- Economic

These benefits range from the lessening of respiratory diseases, to the increased tourism and economic activity within the region created from these parks.

Tourism creates jobs, strengthens the local economy and contributes to the development of local infrastructure.

Michigan's tourism industry in 2021:

- 117.3 million tourists
- \$24.0 billion from direct visitor spending
- \$43.1 billion in total economic impact
- 298,818 total jobs created
- \$3 billion state and local taxes generated

### Strengths

- Species habitats: Piping plovers.
- Amenities: Picnic tables, boat launch sites, self-wash boat station, baseball fields, tennis/pickleball courts, playground, dog park.
- Local schools use parks for games and classes
- Over 20 parks and campgrounds which provide good views.

### Weaknesses

- Both of Sports Fields Parks and Waterfront Parks have no high maintenance.
- Lack of ramps for the physically disabled to use to enter the water.
- Walking and biking trail (15 mph speed limit) crosses road (35 mph speed limit). There are no signs or lights to warn people.
- No lights and benches for parks and trails.

### Opportunities

- In summertime, Benzie County attracts visitors for boating and family vacations.
- Government has received a grant to hire the landscape architect for developing.

## SWOT

### Threats

- Climate Change:
  - In Academy Park, the naturally forming ice rink has ice less frequently due to the inconsistent weather.
  - The lake doesn't completely freeze over in winter, and many activities like ice fishing can't occur.

## Budget Recommendations

- Consider using a Millage to raise funds for a Parks and Recreation Department.
- Consider allocating American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars towards establishing a parks and recreation department.
- Raise money by hosting low-cost, locally specific events such as water events/races, 5K runs, farmers markets, or food truck festivals.
- Implement educational signs and programs to increase interaction with the park.
- Allow to rent space in the park (i.e. camping or activities) but submit a form and charge a small fee (\$15- \$25).