



Produced by the Ludington Daily News for Ludington State Park

DNR website:
www.michigan.gov/dnr

Ludington State Park • (231) 843-2423
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A New Season at Ludington State Park, With More to Explore

After reopening last summer following months of major improvements, Ludington State Park is entering a new season with strong demand — reinforcing its place as one of Michigan's most visited state parks.

Early reservations and returning campers point to a familiar pattern. The park, which typically draws visitation approaching 1 million people annually, has seen steady growth over the past decade, including more than 953,000 visitors in 2021 — one of its busiest years on record, according to Meetings + Events Magazine.

“For many of our visitors, this park is an important part of their lives,” said Ludington State Park Manager Jim Gallie. “They’ve camped here for years or regularly walk its trails.”

That sentiment extends beyond long-time campers. According to online reviews, visitors regularly describe Ludington State Park as one of Michigan's top outdoor destinations, citing its combination of beaches, trails and inland waterways — while also noting that securing a campsite during peak season can be a challenge.

That level of interest is not new.

Spanning more than 5,300 acres, the park brings together a range of land-



scapes — sand dunes, forest, inland lakes and seven miles of Lake Michigan shoreline. Visitors might spend a morning on the dunes, an afternoon on Hamlin Lake and the evening watching the sunset along the Lake Michigan beach.

Even with that level of use, the park still offers space to step away. While beach areas and campgrounds can be busy during peak times, much of the park's acreage remains quiet, particularly along its trail system and interior wet-

lands. For many visitors, the experience shifts quickly — from crowded shoreline to stretches of forest, river or dunes where the pace slows and the setting feels far more secluded.

More than 20 miles of trails wind through the park, connecting areas like the Big Sable Point Lighthouse and the Big Sable River, which remains one of the park's most active corridors for wildlife and recreation.

The park's history is layered into that

landscape.

Before it became a state park, the area was home to the lumber town of Hamlin, located along the Big Sable River. That historic settlement — distinct from present-day Hamlin Township — declined after major floods in the early 1900s. The land was later designated as Ludington State Park in 1927, as the region transitioned away from its lumbering roots.

In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps helped define much of what visitors see today, constructing the Lake Michigan Beach House and several trail shelters that remain in use.

Today, with updated infrastructure and improved access following the 2025 reopening, the park continues to balance high use with the natural experience it is known for. Beaches, trails and campgrounds remain central to that draw, with many visitors returning year after year.

Additional improvements are planned, including a rebuilt Skyline Trail and a renovated amphitheater through a project supported by the Friends of Ludington State Park.

Whether for a few hours or a longer stay, Ludington State Park continues to offer a mix of recreation, history and natural features that make it one of Michigan's most recognized outdoor destinations.



Best trails by season at Ludington State Park

With more than 20 miles of trails winding through dunes, forest and shoreline, Ludington State Park offers a different experience depending on the time of year.

Each season brings subtle changes to the landscape, and knowing where to go can help visitors make the most of what the park has to offer.

In the spring, as the snow melts and the forest begins to green, trails along the Big Sable River can be among the best places to experience early-season changes. The Sable River Trail and nearby wooded paths often provide shaded conditions where spring wildflowers may emerge, including trillium, spring beauties, trout lilies, violets and bloodroot. These species tend to bloom before the

tree canopy fully leafs out, making early spring one of the more rewarding — and quieter — times to explore interior trails. The Island Trail around Lost Lake also offers a mix of forest and water views during this period.

By summer, visitors often seek out the park's signature destinations. The Lighthouse Trail, which leads to Big Sable Point Lighthouse, provides a mix of forest, dune and shoreline scenery and is among the most frequently used routes in the park. Trails near Hamlin Lake tend to offer flatter terrain and easier access to the water, making them a popular choice for families and casual walkers. Shaded forest sections can also provide relief from summer heat.

As temperatures cool, the park shifts

into fall color season, when the composition of the forest becomes more noticeable. Trails such as the Skyline Trail — when open — and the Lost Lake Trail pass through a mix of hardwood species that may include maple, oak, beech and aspen. These trees typically produce a range of fall colors, from bright reds and oranges in maples to deeper reds and browns in oaks, golden tones in beech and yellow hues in aspen. The contrast between forest color, open dunes and Lake Michigan often makes this one of the most visually striking times of year.

Winter brings a dramatic transformation. Snow covers the dunes and forest floor, and the park becomes a destination for cold-weather recreation. Trails such as the Logging Trail are often used

for cross-country skiing when conditions allow, while routes like the Ridge Trail can offer more variation in elevation for those exploring on skis or snowshoes. With fewer visitors and less foliage, winter can also make it easier to see the structure of the landscape and spot wildlife.

Each trail highlights a different part of the park's landscape, from river corridors and inland lakes to dunes and shoreline. Because conditions can change quickly — particularly in spring and winter — visitors are encouraged to check trail conditions before heading out.

At Ludington State Park, the trails themselves may not change, but the experience of walking them often does.



Explore Nature Through Hands-On Programs at Ludington State Park

Interpretive programs focus on outdoor recreation, ecology and park history

Visitors to Ludington State Park can explore Michigan's natural resources through a variety of interpretive programs led by park interpreter Brandon Griffith.

Griffith joined the park in late 2024 after working with outdoor education and interpretive programs in Michigan, Indiana and Colorado. A Michigan State University graduate and certified interpretive guide, Griffith has experience leading environmental education, outdoor recreation and community engagement programs.

Programs offered at the park include:

- **Archery Experience** (ages 8+) — Learn range safety and shooting basics. Equipment provided; closed-toe shoes required.
- **History of Ludington State Park** — Explore the history of the former town of Hamlin, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the development of the park.
- **Fishing for All Skill Levels** — Fish the Big Sable River with provided bait and limited equipment. Participants ages 17 and older need a Michigan fishing license.
- **River Investigation Discovery Table** — Examine aquatic insects and learn about ecosystem health in the park's waterways.
- **Dune Ecology: Michigan's Center of Biodiversity** — Guided walks exploring the park's dune habitats and native species.
- **Tree ID and Me** — Learn to identify native Michigan trees and better understand local ecology.

State park entrance fees

All vehicles entering Michigan State Park and Recreation Areas and boating access sites are required to display a Michigan Recreation Passport.

SAVE MONEY AND TIME. PURCHASE YOUR PASSPORT AT THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The easiest way to purchase the Recreation Passport is to do so when renewing your vehicle registration at the Michigan Secretary of State.

Doing so also saves you \$5 off the at-park purchase price. Let

the SoS know that you want to purchase the passport and they will add the fee to your plate renewal.

PURCHASE AT THE PARK

If you didn't have the Recreation Passport added to your license plate when renewing it, you can still buy a Passport for your windshield at the park.

Non-Michigan residents can purchase a passport, to be displayed on the passenger's side of the windshield, at the park. Non-residents can purchase year-

ly or daily passports.

The Recreation Passports can be purchased at the park entrance or camper registration buildings during the busy seasons. During the slower seasons, passports are available at the park office.

To learn more about the Recreation Passport, visit www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport.

RECREATION PASSPORTS

Resident Motor Vehicles: \$20
Resident Motorcycles: \$12
Non-resident annual: \$42
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DO YOUR PART: DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD!

Ludington's Campground Hosts

The campground hosts at Ludington are experienced campers who are motivated to share their knowledge of the park and area. Visitors with questions about the weather, favorite local eateries, rainy day activities and shopping opportunities would be well served by stopping at

the host site.

The host site keeps a stocked library of paperbacks for lending, provides shovels, rakes and brooms, and is the site of the Friends of Ludington State Park bottle and can return station.

Once a week, the host site also provides coffee for the park's

visitors. For the park's younger visitors, hosts will provide weekly activities. Check the bulletin board at the site for dates and times.

However long your stay, make sure that you stop by this hub of activity in the Cedar Campground and say hello.

Action Track Chairs

The Friends of Ludington State Park (FLSP) has now donated two Action Track Chairs to Ludington State Park, once again improving accessibility options for all visitors to the park. These motorized chairs can handle trails, gravel roads, and beach sand better than standard wheelchairs and mobility devices.



PHOTO BY STEVE BEGNOCHE

The track chairs can be reserved by contacting the park office Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at (231) 843-2423. The chairs can also be reserved in person.

Reservations are highly recommended to ensure that the chair is available on the day you want to use it. The res-

ervation and use of the chair is free of charge.

On the day of the reservation, staff will provide a short orientation and safety talk to help you become familiar with the chair's operation and guidelines. Additional track chair information and a video orientation can be found at www.friendsofludingtonstatepark.org under the Track Chair header.



PHOTO BY STEVE BEGNOCHE

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Please help us recycle

Ludington State Park's staff recycles a lot of waste that is created while maintaining the park. Cardboard, paper, batteries, lightbulbs, oil, empty plastic containers, concrete and scrap metal are a few of the items recycled at the park.

You can help us reduce the amount of waste heading to landfills by using our recycling center. The recycling center is located next to the Cedar Campground store. Plastics, aluminum, clear glass and water bottles are accepted. Make sure containers are clean before recycling. This eliminates smells for campers and doesn't draw unwanted insects and animal pests to the recycling bins. Please do not put trash, such as food

waste, fishing line, plastic bags or returnable bottles and cans in the recycling bins; instead, use the dumpsters located near the recycling bins.



RETURNABLE BOTTLES AND CANS

Michigan places a ten cent deposit on all carbonated beverage containers. By dropping off those containers at the Campground Host campsite, at dumpsters in Cedar, Pines, and Beechwood campground entrances, and at the park's beaches, you will be helping the Friends of Ludington State Park. The park's campground hosts and Friends members sort and return these "returnables" to area beverage distributors, funding the entertainment and education series held at the park's amphitheater each week.

Don't drop your returnables in the trash; donate them to the Friends group! Help the Friends of Ludington State Park continue this successful program.

Trail etiquette

While outdoors enjoying Ludington State Park's trail system, please follow these guidelines so the park remains enjoyable for all.

- **PACK** out what you pack in. Carry out and dispose of all of your trash, including cigarette butts and fruit peels.
- **PLEASE** leave wildflowers, wildlife and historic objects undisturbed so that all visitors may enjoy them.
- **PETS** must be leashed at all times. Please clean up after your pet using the provided pet clean-up bags located at trailheads.
- **BICYCLES** are only permitted on paved paths and the Lighthouse Road.

- **THE** soft, sandy soils of Ludington State Park erode easily. Please stay on designated trails and avoid taking shortcuts across steep slopes.
- **TO** avoid spreading seeds from invasive plants, please use the boot brushes provided at trailheads to clean your footwear before and after hiking on park trails.
- **HUNTING** is allowed in the park. During hunting seasons, wear bright orange clothing while in designated hunting areas.
- **HIKE** safely. Check the weather forecast before heading out and dress appropriately. Carry a trail map and let an acquaintance know your hiking plans.



Biking in Ludington State Park

At times it seems that there are more bikes in the park than cars. To have a safe and enjoyable biking experience, we ask that visitors:

- Avoid riding after dark. If you must, bike slowly and use a light.
- Yield to pedestrians. If approaching from the rear, slow down and let them know which side you will pass by them.
- Keep speeds down, especially on paved footpaths and boardwalks.

- Be alert for moving vehicles, especially in parking lots. Yield to all vehicles.
- Do not ride or leave bikes in breezeways or in front of doorways.
- Please use bike racks and lock up your bikes when left alone.
- Stay on paved areas, except for the Lighthouse Road and your campsite.
- Biking is NOT allowed off-road or on dirt or woodchipped trails.

Shopping and rentals at the Park Dune Grass Concessions

DUNE GRASS CONCESSIONS

There are three locations within the Ludington State Park that are operated by Dune Grass Concessions. For more information regarding Dune Grass Concessions call 231-843-1888 or visit www.dunegrassludington.com.

THE CEDAR CAMP STORE

Ice cream, wood, ice, groceries, toys, apparel, and souvenirs are all available at the Cedar Camp Store. Bicycles are available for rent by the hour or day.

Open mid-May through late October. Hours: 8 am – 10 pm

THE HAMLIN LAKE CONCESSION

At this Hamlin Lake location, visitors can rent canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards, and inflatable tubes. Snacks and beverages are also available.

Open every day late May through early September; weekends through October. Hours: 10 am – 7 pm

THE LAKE MICHIGAN BEACH HOUSE

The perfect place to treat yourself to a hand dipped ice cream cone while experiencing brilliant sunsets each night. The beach house offers pizza, subs, hot dogs, snacks, sun protection, clothing and souvenirs.

Open Memorial Day through Labor Day. Hours: 11 am – 9 pm

Standing watch: Big Sable Point Lighthouse remains a defining landmark

Rising above the dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline, Big Sable Point Lighthouse has stood as a guidepost for mariners — and a destination for visitors — for more than a century.

Located about two miles north of the Ludington State Park entrance, the lighthouse is accessible by foot or bicycle along a flat, tree-lined trail that gradually opens to sweeping views of the lake and surrounding dunes.

The original Big Sable lighthouse was constructed in 1867, at a time when shipping traffic along Lake Michigan was rapidly increasing. The stretch of shoreline near Ludington was considered particularly hazardous, and the light was established to help guide vessels navigating the area.

In 1900, the current steel-clad tower replaced the original brick structure, providing greater durability against the elements.

Standing approximately 112 feet tall, the lighthouse remains one of the most recognizable features along Michigan's west coast.

For many visitors, the journey to Big Sable Point is as much a part of the experience as the destination itself.

The roughly 1.8-mile trail from the parking area — about 3.6 miles round trip — begins in shaded forest before transitioning to more open terrain, where the sound of Lake Michigan becomes more noticeable with each step. The final approach reveals the lighthouse rising above the dunes, often framed by sky and water.

Because the trail is relatively flat and wide, it is accessible to a range of visitors, though the distance can make it a longer outing, particularly in warm weather.

Big Sable Point Lighthouse is managed by Lakeshore Keepers, which oversees operations and public access.

The lighthouse is typically open for tours from early May through late Oc-

tober, with hours generally running 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during the peak summer season. Early- and late-season hours may be reduced depending on staffing and weather conditions.

During the operating season, the lighthouse is open for interior tours, allowing visitors to climb the tower and take in panoramic views of Lake Michigan and the surrounding dunes.

For those unable to make the walk, Lakeshore Keepers occasionally offers bus transportation along the access road during peak visitation periods, providing an alternative way to reach the site.

Visitors are encouraged to check current schedules and availability in advance, as hours and transportation options can vary.

Lakeshore Keepers is also beginning an update to the historic keeper's house at Big Sable Point, continuing ongoing efforts to preserve and improve the site.

The keeper's house, which sits adjacent to the lighthouse, has long served as part of the historic complex and supports operations at the site. The planned updates are intended to maintain the structure and enhance its long-term use while preserving its historic character.

Today, Big Sable Point Lighthouse serves not only as a historic structure, but also as a symbol of the park itself.

It connects the area's maritime past with its present-day role as a recreational destination, drawing visitors who come to experience both the history and the landscape.

Whether approached for its history, its views or the walk required to reach it, Big Sable Point remains one of Ludington State Park's most enduring and recognizable features — a place where the past and present meet along the Lake Michigan shoreline.



PHOTO BY STEVE BEGNOCHE

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Enjoying Ludington State Park with your pet

Pets can be an important part of one's family and they are welcome at Ludington State Park. While visiting the park with your pet, be aware that there are rules in place for the safety and courtesy of park guests and other pets.

For all pets visiting Ludington State Park, the following rules apply:

- **PETS** must be always on a 6 foot leash
- **PET** owners must clean up their pet's waste

- **PETS** cannot be left unattended anywhere in the park

- **PETS** cannot be allowed to bark excessively, exhibit aggressive behavior or cause a disturbance

- **PETS** are not allowed on park beaches, unless designated as a "Pet Friendly" beach. It is the responsibility of pet owners to follow the park's rules regarding pets. Failure to comply with the rules may result in a warning, citation or the eviction of the pet from the park.



Pet Friendly Water Access in Ludington State Park

Many pets love playing in water. With so many miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, it seems that Ludington State Park would have plenty of places for pet owners to take their pets swimming. Unfortunately, it isn't so simple as to let pets swim anywhere along the shore. Endangered piping plovers nest along much of the shoreline and pets and plovers don't do well together. Most park beaches are closed to pets, but here are a few "pet friendly" water access points in the park, including the park's designated pet beach. Leash rules still apply and cleaning up after your pet is mandatory.

- **ALONG** Lake Michigan, north of the Big Sable River, as signed – may be subject to closure if piping plovers nest in the area
- **PINEY** Ridge Lake, one half mile north of Piney Ridge Road's intersection with M-116
- **LOST LAKE**, north of the Beechwood Campground
- **THE SANDY** shoreline of Hamlin Lake on the south side and east of the dam

Pet Friendly Locations in Ludington

- **THE CITY DOG** beach, near the Loomis St. boat launch, a short walk from downtown
- **CENTRAL BARK**, a leash free dog park located in Cartier Park, five miles south of LSP

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Ludington State Park FAQs

WHERE ARE THE NEAREST GROCERY STORES?

Family-Fair Marketplace, Aldi, Wal-Mart and Meijer are all on U.S. 10, east of Ludington.

WHERE CAN WE GET OUR PROPANE TANK FILLED?

Tanks can be filled at AmeriGas, 2985 W. US 10; Ponchos's Pond RV Park, 5335 W. Wallace Road (behind McDonald's); Vacation Station RV Park, 4895 W. US 10; and at Hamlin Grocery, 3611 N. Jebavy Drive. Tank exchanges are also offered at several businesses in the area.

IS ALCOHOL ALLOWED IN THE PARK?

Yes, in Michigan you must be over 21 to possess or consume alcoholic beverages. General state laws concerning possession/consumption apply in Ludington State Park. No glass bottles are allowed on beaches. Some state parks may have other restrictions posted.

NOW THAT MARIJUANA IS LEGAL IN MICHIGAN, CAN I USE IT IN THE PARK?

No, it is prohibited by law in public places. The Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act, which legalizes the consumption of marijuana in Michigan, **prohibits smoking or consuming of marijuana in public places.** If park staff become

aware of the consumption or smoking of marijuana in the park, appropriate law enforcement action will be taken.

ARE FIREWORKS ALLOWED IN THE PARK?

It is unlawful to use or ignite fireworks in Ludington State Park.

WHERE CAN WE RENT A BOAT?

Canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards can be rented at the Hamlin Lake concession and Cedar Campground Store. To find out about other boat rentals on Hamlin Lake, pick up a brochure from the campground registration station. For Lake Michigan charter boat trips, check with the Ludington Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.pure-ludington.com

MAY WE GATHER DEAD WOOD ON THE GROUND FOR OUR FIRE?

No, dead wood provides food and homes for wildlife, helps prevent erosion and creates valuable topsoil in the forest. Campfire wood can be purchased at the park store.

CAN WE COLLECT SNAKES, FROGS AND TURTLES?

No. It is illegal to collect frogs, snakes, turtles or any other wild creatures in the

state park. Many of these animals are declining in population. You can help protect them by keeping leaving them in the wild.

AFTER I CHECK OUT, CAN I LEAVE MY VEHICLE ON THE CAMPSITE WHILE I VISIT THE BEACH?

No. All equipment and vehicles must be off your site by the 1 p.m. check-out time. If you want to spend time at the beach, after check-out, try to clear your site before 11 a.m. This will give you a better chance of finding a double length parking space in one of the day use lots designed for motorhomes and cars pulling trailers. You may also park on the west side of M-116. We do not allow large camping units to park in areas not designated for them.

WHERE IS THE SANITATION STATION?

The sanitary dump station is located at the campground registration office, two miles south of the park entrance booth. There is a \$10 dump fee for non-campers. There are also sanitation stations for portable waste tanks located in the Pines, Cedar and Beechwood campgrounds.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO MY CAMPSITE BEFORE I LEAVE?

To leave a clean and safe site for the next campers, put out your fire in the fire ring with water, pick up any litter on the site and clean and wipe down the picnic

table. Remember to always leave the site cleaner than when you arrived.

WHERE CAN I CONNECT TO WIFI?

Unfortunately, Ludington State Park does not have WIFI available and connectivity to cell networks can be spotty. If you need a network connection, we recommend visiting one of the local coffee shops in Ludington. Cell service may also be available at the Hamlin beach and south of the river along M-116.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR E-BIKES AND ELECTRIC SCOOTERS?

Only Class 1 e-bikes are allowed on the park's paved bicycle trails. Class 1, 2 and 3 e-bikes are allowed on park roads and parking lots. Electric scooters, one wheels, powered skateboards, golf carts and other unlicensed motorized and electric vehicles are prohibited on park roads and trails. These can only be ridden on the owner's campsite.

WHERE ARE THE RECYCLING BINS IN THE PARK?

The recycling center is located next to the Cedar Campground Store. Plastics, aluminum, and clear glass are accepted if clean. Please use general waste bins for garbage and food waste. And don't forget to donate your 10 cent returnables to the Friends of Ludington State Park – see Returnable Bottles and Cans article.

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Wondering where to start for your visit to Ludington State Park? Here are eleven must see places & attractions

1. Lake Michigan

Enjoy swimming, sunbathing and sunsets along seven miles of sugar sand beaches that line the Lake Michigan shoreline in Ludington State Park. More than three miles of these beaches are but a short walk from your vehicle, providing easy access to Lake Michigan's waters.

2. Big Sable Point Lighthouse

A two mile hike or bike-ride north of the park entrance, this iconic structure stands watch over Lake Michigan and the freighters that ply its waters. Tour the museum or climb to the top for breathtaking views of the park's dunes and waters.

3. Skyline Trail

An elevated boardwalk guides visitors for a half mile along the ridge of a large sand dune south of the Big Sable River. South facing vistas overlook the southern half of the park, its dunes and jack pine barrens, and the community of Ludington.

4. Big Sable River

Gently gliding through the park for a mile from Hamlin Lake to Lake Michigan, this short stretch of tree-lined river is home to some of the best wildlife viewing in the park. Fishing is a popular activity on the Big Sable and tubing the river is a wonderful way to spend a hot summer day.

5. Lost Lake

Shallow Lost Lake is separated from Hamlin Lake by a series of islands and peninsulas. The Lost Lake and Island Trails circumnavigate this kayak friendly lake, allowing hikers to experience its serenity. Fishing can be good, so bring along a pole!

6. Hamlin Dam

Holding back the waters of Hamlin Lake, this popular location is an excellent place to begin a short kayak or tubing trip downstream during the summer. Boardwalks below the dam are fine fishing spots and the walkway across the top of the dam provides a great view of salm-

on fishing action in the fall.

7. Canoe Trail

Want to get away and discover one of the quieter areas of the park? This four mile trail takes paddlers along Hamlin Lake and into the wetlands, ponds and marshes that line its shore. Signs guide paddlers through the waterways and over four short portages. Wildlife abounds!

8. Amphitheater

After a day spent enjoying the park's beaches and trails, unwind during the evening while enjoying programs at the park amphitheater. Musicians, magicians, storytellers and wildlife rehabilitators provide entertainment for visitors of all ages at this outdoor stage set in the pines on the south side of the river.

9. Trail Shelters

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps as the park's trails were being created, these stone structures provide visitors with a sheltered place to rest while

exploring the park's interior.

Three shelters remain of the original seven. Can you find them all?

10. Lake Michigan Beach House

In 1935, Camp Ludington Civilian Conservation Corps members built the Lake Michigan beach house just north of the Big Sable River outlet using Mason County lumber and repurposed bricks from the old Morton Salt factory in Ludington. Their work has stood the test of time, as this beautiful building continues to provide views of Lake Michigan sunsets at the end of the day.

11. Historic Town of Hamlin

Before there was Ludington State Park, there was the small lumber town of Hamlin. Founded by lumber baron Charles Mears, this community thrived along the Big Sable River before floods destroyed it in the early 1900s. Remnants of the town are still present. Join up with one of the park's guided hikes through this area to learn about the town's fascinating history.

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Camping at Ludington State Park

WHAT IS THE COST FOR CAMPING?

Rates vary based on amenities.

Base Rates When restrooms are open:

50 amp sites: \$50
20/30 amp sites: \$45
Tent Loop: \$40
Weekends and Holidays: Add \$3

Jack Pine: \$20
Mini-cabins: \$80

When restrooms are closed:

20/30 amp sites: \$40
Tent Loop: \$20
Jack Pine: \$20
Mini-cabins: \$60

Exact nightly rates vary by campsite and date and are available through the Michigan DNR reservation system.

HOW DO I MAKE A RESERVATION?

Reservations can be made for all Michigan State Parks by calling the Central Reservation System (CRS) at (800) 44 PARKS or going online to www.midnr-reservations.com.

HOW MANY SITES ARE RESERVED?

At Ludington State Park, 100 percent of the sites may be reserved in advance. It is very important to make reservations in advance.

HOW EARLY CAN I MAKE MY RESERVATION FOR NEXT YEAR?

You can make reservations six months in advance for campsites and the park's mini-cabins.

HOW MANY NIGHTS CAN I STAY?

You may stay up to 15 consecutive nights.



PHOTO BY STEVE BEGNOCHE

WILL I LOSE MY RESERVATION IF I DON'T GET THERE ON TIME?

We will hold your site for 24 hours beyond check-in time, which is 3 p.m. on the date you are due to arrive.

Arrival after that time will result in a "no-show," resulting in the loss of the first two nights' and reservation fees, a \$10 cancellation fee and a percentage of unused nights.

Requests to the park to hold the sites beyond this time will be denied. If you plan on arriving more than 24 hours after the check-in time, you must contact CRS to modify your reservation to avoid the loss of your site.

HOW OLD DO YOU HAVE TO BE TO REGISTER A CAMPSITE?

At least one member of the camping party must be 18 years of age or older.

IS THERE WATER AVAILABLE AT THE CAMPSITES?

There are no water hook-ups on the

sites. Water is available within walking distance at several locations throughout the campground or at the park sanitation station located at the campground registration building.

WHAT TIME IS CHECK-OUT?

Campers must be packed up and off of their campsite by 1 p.m.

CAN I GET A REFUND IF I LEAVE EARLY?

After staying the minimum required nights, you can get a refund for unused nights. You must clear your campsite and be at the reservation office before 1 p.m. to receive a refund for that night and all subsequent nights, minus cancellation fees and penalties.

IF I DECIDE TO STAY LONGER, CAN I GET AN EXTENSION?

Due to the park's popularity, it is very difficult to extend your stay. To see if sites are available and to extend your stay, contact CRS at (800) 44 PARKS or go online to www.midnr-reservations.com.

midnr-reservations.com

HOW MANY VEHICLES MAY WE HAVE PARKED ON OUR SITE?

You may have two full-size vehicles in addition to your camping units. Motorcycles count as half-size vehicles, so two motorcycles take the place of one full-size vehicle.

WHERE CAN I PARK MY BOAT TRAILER OR EXTRA VEHICLES?

The park has very limited overflow parking for extra vehicles or equipment that won't fit on your site. Overflow parking is not guaranteed for boat trailers or extra vehicles.

Availability of overflow parking will depend on the Skyline Trail and Amphitheater construction schedules. Once construction starts, the entire south side of the river will close to vehicle traffic, and no overflow parking will be available.

We recommend limiting the number of vehicles brought to the park.

MAY OUR FRIENDS VISIT?

Yes, as long as they visit between the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Remember, you can't have more than two vehicles on your site, so your friends may need to park in one of the day use lots outside of the campground.

WHEN IS QUIET TIME IN THE STATE PARK?

To avoid disturbing neighboring campers, quiet time is all the time. Official quiet hours are from 10 p.m. until 8 a.m. During these hours, rangers will be particularly strict about loud voices, electronic devices, motor vehicles and late-night camp setup that may disturb the peaceful atmosphere other campers expect to enjoy.

Lake Michigan Water Safety

Each year, Ludington State Park's visitors are drawn to the coastal dunes and sandy beaches of Lake Michigan. On a hot summer day, there is nothing better than jumping into this wonderful, unsalted sea to cool off.

The big lake can be dangerous. Conditions can change with little notice. Throughout the day, all summer, park staff monitors the lake conditions and fly flags indicating the swimming hazard. These flags are located at the park entrance and on the beach side of the Lake Michigan

beach house.

In addition to the beach flags, a large LED sign broadcasts current swimming conditions at the entrance to the Lake Michigan parking lot. This sign is updated as beach flags are changed.

When conditions get particularly dangerous, park staff may close the main designated beach and the Big Sable Rivermouth.

The park's beaches do not have life guards and all visitors swim at their own risk. Rescue throw buoys and life jackets are located at points along the designated

swim beach in the event of an emergency. A limited number of loaner life jackets are also available for use by visitors. In 2024, an EMILY (Emergency Integrated Lifesaving Lanyard) rescue robot was generously donated to Ludington State Park. This is an additional rescue tool for professional rescuers.






Days when waves are large can be fun, but they come with the possibility of long-shore or rip currents being present. Before entering the water, visitors should learn how to react to getting caught in one of

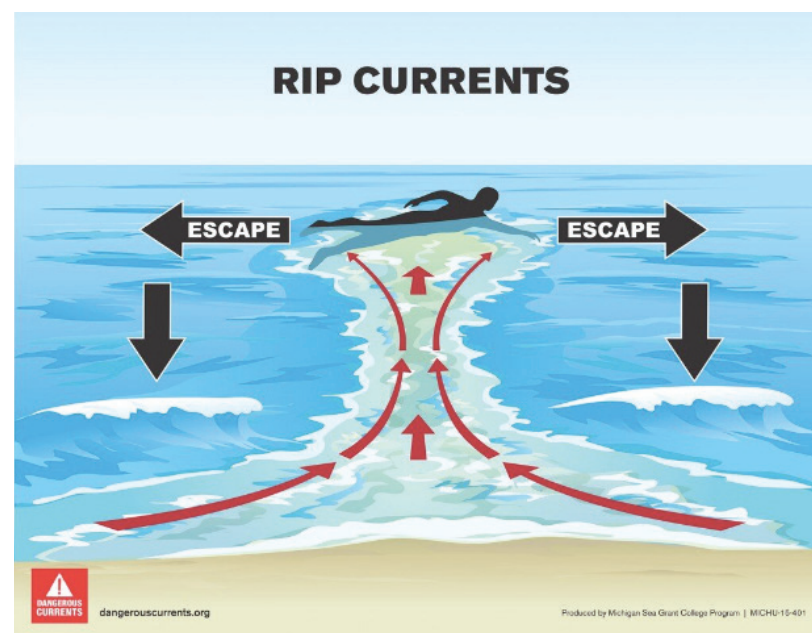
these currents. Signs located along the beach and at life-saving equipment kiosks explain the best methods for getting out of rip or long-shore current. See sidebar for more details.

To learn more about Great Lakes beach safety, visit www.dangerouscurrents.org and to learn the latest beach forecast for Ludington State Park, visit the beach forecast page of the Grand Rapids National Weather Service Office.

Have an enjoyable and safe beach season!

Great Lakes flag warning system at state-designated swim beaches

 			
<p>Red</p>	<p>Red</p>	<p>Yellow</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Double red flags = water access closed</p> <p>Do not enter the water, dangerous conditions. <i>Respect the new law (find info below) that prohibits water access and do not enter the water.</i></p>	<p>Red flag = high hazard</p> <p>High surf and/or strong currents. It's recommended that you stay on the beach.</p>	<p>Yellow flag = medium hazard</p> <p>Moderate surf and/or currents. Watch for dangerous currents and high waves.</p>	<p>Green flag = low hazard</p> <p>Calm conditions. Enter the water, but exercise caution.</p>



If caught in a rip current

STAY CALM: Don't panic. Focus on breathing and keeping your head above water.

SWIM TO the side, parallel to shore, then back to the shore: If tired, switch between swimming and floating until you reach shore.

If in danger: Face the shore and call for help.

IF SOMEONE else is caught in a rip current, call 911 and use the rescue equipment to assist them. Wear a life jacket if you must enter the water.

Know the Rules: E-Bike Use at Ludington State Park

With the growing popularity of electric bicycles, or e-bikes, Michigan has updated its regulations to guide their use in state parks. At Ludington State Park,



these rules are being implemented as part of a statewide initiative to expand trail access while preserving natural resources and ensuring safety for all users.

Under Michigan law, e-bikes are categorized into three classes. Class 1 e-bikes

provide assistance only while the rider is pedaling and stop assisting at 20 mph. Class 2 e-bikes have a throttle and also stop assisting at 20 mph. Class 3 e-bikes are pedal-assist only but provide power up to 28 mph. All e-bikes must have a motor no more than 750 watts and a clearly visible classification label.

As of July 2024, Class 1 e-bikes are permitted on both improved and natural-surface non-motorized trails within Michigan State Parks, including Ludington State Park. This means riders can use their Class 1 e-bikes on the park's designated 2-mile bicycle trail as well as other qualifying multi-use pathways.

Class 2 e-bikes are allowed only for in-

dividuals with mobility disabilities and require a free permit issued by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). With a valid permit, these riders are granted the same trail access as those using Class 1 e-bikes.

Class 3 e-bikes, however, are not permitted on any non-motorized trails in state parks. At Ludington State Park, this means Class 3 riders are limited to paved park roads and cannot use the bicycle trail or any hiking or boardwalk paths.

The goal of these rules is to balance increased accessibility with environmental stewardship and trail preservation. According to the DNR, early studies suggest that Class 1 e-bikes cause similar trail impact as traditional bicycles. The department has launched a one-year pilot program to monitor e-bike usage and gather public feedback through trail signage and surveys.

Park visitors should note that all e-bike riders under the age of 18 must wear a

helmet when operating a Class 3 e-bike, and those under 14 are not allowed to operate a Class 3 e-bike at all.

To ride responsibly at Ludington State Park, visitors are encouraged to:

- Confirm their e-bike's class and ensure it is properly labeled.
- Apply for a Class 2 permit if needed for mobility access.
- Use only designated trails and park roads according to their e-bike classification.
- Follow posted trail signage, observe safe speeds, and yield to pedestrians.

For more information on e-bike rules or to obtain a Class 2 permit, visit the Michigan DNR website or contact the park directly.

As e-bike use continues to grow, understanding and following these regulations ensures a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone exploring Michigan's parks and trails.



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From lumber town to landmark: The origins of Ludington State Park

BY LOIS TOMASZEWSKI
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

LUDINGTON — Long before it became one of Michigan's most visited state parks, Ludington State Park was a working landscape shaped by lumbering, industry and a small but ambitious settlement along the Big Sable River.

The area that now encompasses more than 5,000 acres of dunes, forest and shoreline was once home to the town of Hamlin, a late 19th-century lumber community founded by businessman Charles Mears.

That historic settlement should not be confused with present-day Hamlin Township. While the township carries

the same name and includes portions of the surrounding area, the original town of Hamlin was a separate, now-vanished community that existed along the Big Sable River within what is now the state park.

Hamlin was established in the 1860s as logging operations expanded along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The Big Sable River provided a natural route for transporting timber, and mills and homes quickly followed.

For a time, the settlement thrived, with workers and their families living in close proximity to the river and the mills that powered the local economy.

But its location along the river also made it vulnerable. Seasonal flooding repeatedly damaged the community, and as the surrounding forests were depleted, the lumber industry began to decline. By the early 1900s, the town had largely disappeared.

Today, little remains of the original community beyond subtle traces in the landscape.

Though the town itself is gone, its presence still lingers for visitors who explore the park's river corridor.

While no intact structures remain, traces of the former settlement can still be found along the Big Sable River corridor, where slight depressions, changes in vegetation and occasional artifacts hint at where buildings and activity once existed.

Interpretive signage along the river —

particularly near sections of the Sable River Trail and around the Hamlin Dam area — provides context for the former town, helping visitors understand how the once-bustling lumber community fit into the landscape they see today.

For many, learning that a working town once existed beneath the forest canopy adds a deeper dimension to the experience.

Standing along the river or walking the shaded trails, it is possible to imagine the sounds that once defined the area — logs moving downstream, saws cutting timber and the daily rhythms of a community built around the lumber trade.

That contrast between past and present is part of what makes the park unique: a place where natural beauty has reclaimed a once-industrial landscape.

Following the collapse of the lumber era, the land transitioned through private ownership before eventually becoming part of Michigan's growing state park system.

By the early 20th century, state leaders began recognizing the value of preserving the Lake Michigan shoreline, including its dune systems and forests, for public use and conservation.

Ludington State Park was formally established in 1927, marking a shift from industrial use to recreation and preservation.

Much of what visitors recognize today took shape during the Great Depression, when the Civilian Conservation Corps

Friends of Ludington State Park

Friends of Ludington State Park (FLSP) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established in 1992 and dedicated to promoting wise use and conservation of the gem that is Ludington State Park.

FLSP works to support and improve the park through the funding of projects, recreational equipment, interpretive programs, and by volunteering to assist park staff on projects and trail clean-up. FLSP funded and helped build the accessible playground at the Hamlin Lake Beach House and the new kayak / canoe launch on Hamlin Lake. Additional FLSP funded projects include:

- The accessible beach walkway and wheelchairs;
- The park warming shelter and repairs to the trail shelters;
- Snowshoes and cross-country ski trail groomer;
- Interpretive signage throughout the Park.

FLSP ongoing activities include:

- Funding the summer entertainment programs held on Wednesday and Saturday evenings as well as interpretive programs throughout the year;
- Purchasing and helping with the planting of trees to replace ones destroyed by invasive species;
- Coordinating the recycling of MI returnable bottles and cans;
- Hosting virtual educational sessions during the winter;

Support the programs and volunteer activities provided by the Friends of Ludington State Park by becoming a member or making a donation today via our website www.friendsofludingtonstatepark.org. Memberships or donations can also be made by visiting the Park Office or mailing a check to FLSP, PO Box 123, Ludington, MI 49431.



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Wetting a line at Ludington State Park

Ludington State Park offers many fishing opportunities for people of all ages. Three water bodies in the park provide a variety of fish species to go after. Fishing licenses are required and the Big Sable River does have a special regulation regarding what type of fishing gear can be used.

Read the DNR fishing guide for guidance.

Hamlin Lake

Access: Hamlin Lake fishing platforms, boat launch or four miles of shoreline

Target species: Crappie, bluegill, sunfish, large and smallmouth bass, pike, muskies, perch and walleye

Lake Michigan

Access: Boat launches in City of Ludington, seven miles of surf fishing

Target species: Chinook and Coho salmon, brown trout, lake trout

Big Sable River

Access: Shoreline, Hamlin Dam boardwalks, river mouth

Target species: Coho and Chinook salmon, steelhead, perch

Hunting and trapping in Ludington State Park

Did you know that almost two-thirds of Ludington State Park is open to hunting and trapping? The park boasts opportunities for deer, small game and waterfowl hunting. Standard hunting

regulations and seasons apply. “No hunting/Hunting” areas are clearly posted throughout the park. Visit the park office for maps that show the areas open to hunting and trapping.

Ludington’s Winter Wonderland

Winter is a wonderful time to experience the park’s beauty and recreational opportunities. Wildlife congregate along the Big Sable River, ice mounds form on the Lake Michigan shoreline and sunsets come early. There are many activities to participate in during the winter and the park’s warming shelter is a great place to relax once you get back out of the woods. Check out these opportunities to enjoy Michigan’s unsung season.

Guided Snowshoeing

Each weekend, the park interpreter guides visitors through the snowy forests and dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Afternoon and evening hikes are available, so come prepared with a headlamp if you plan on joining an evening hike. Complimentary snowshoes are provided.

Lantern Lit Trail

On select nights, the park lights over 75 kerosene lanterns and invites snowshoers and skiers to enjoy a self-guided tour along a mile long trail. Fires are maintained at two locations along the trail and hot beverages are available to help keep visitors warm as they chat with park staff. Complimentary snowshoes are available on a first come, first served basis.

Snowshoeing

One of the great things about snowshoeing is that you don’t need trails or special events to lead you to a destination; you can go anywhere! The over 5,000 acres of Ludington State Park are perfect for snowshoe exploration. Wander through tranquil forest or over wind-

swept dunes and enjoy the winter splendor of Ludington State Park.

Cross Country Skiing

Each winter, some of the park’s hiking trails are prepared for cross country skiing. Park staff groom and set tracks to create nearly 10 miles of ski trails. The Logging Trail heads north out of the Pines Campground through a hardwood forest, while the trails south of the Big Sable River take skiers through rolling dunes and jack pine barrens. For the more adventurous, back country skiing knows no bounds.

Bird Watching

You might not think of bird watching as a winter activity, but with some of the only open water in Mason County during the winter, the Big Sable River is a great place to watch waterfowl. Buffleheads, goldeneyes, scoters, and bald eagles can all be seen in the park. Make sure to stop by the park’s warming shelter to view the songbird feeder and record your sightings.

Winter Camping

Getting a campsite at Ludington can be difficult during the summer months, but during the winter, you can almost have the place to yourself. Plowed campsites in Cedar are available for visitors, as are the park’s three mini-cabins. Water and electricity are available in Cedar, but restroom amenities are limited to vault toilets.

Exploring Pure Ludington

Known for its magnificent natural resources, sugar sand beaches, small-town charm and fun festivals events, Ludington and surrounding Mason County make a popular vacation destination offering something for everyone.

Outdoor recreation

Mason County is a popular destination for outdoor recreation pursuits, including biking, hiking, golf, fishing and paddle sports. Ludington's parks - from 5,300-acre Ludington State Park to in-town Cartier Park with a one-mile paved loop and access to 10 miles of single-track- supply miles of trails for hiking and biking. For a more rustic experience, picturesque Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area in Huron-Manistee National Forest affords hiking solitude and scenery. Golfers also will love the three public golf courses in the immediate vicinity - Hemlock Golf Club, Lakeside Links and Lincoln Hills Golf Club. If you're more into disc golf, Mason County has seven disc golf courses within a 15-minute radius - including Mason County Park with three 24-hole courses (including Goliath, the third largest course in the world), Leviathan at Ludington School Forest, The Edge at Scottville Riverside Park, Labyrinth at West Shore Community College and the Tinderbox short course at Mason County Campground.

Beaches and waterways

If a day on the water is your idea of the perfect vacation, then you're set! Mason County boasts 28 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, including seven miles within Ludington State Park's boundary - including a small dog-friendly section. Those who want a beach walkable from downtown will enjoy Stearns Park Beach, offering a family-friendly atmosphere perfect for playing in Lake Michigan or building a sandcastle. The park also boasts a grassy area with picnic tables and grills, a playground, skate park, mini-golf, volleyball and shuffleboard. Mason County also has 2,000 miles of streams, three rivers and more than 40 inland lakes, making pad-



dling and fishing a top activity. Ludington is the #1 salmon fishing port on Lake Michigan, with more than 25 licensed charters leading excursions. Fishing on the Pere Marquette River also is popular, and outfitters can help you enjoy a day on the river - whether you need a river guide or a kayak rental.

Camping

Ludington State Park is the place to camp in Mason County. But if you want to camp while the park's campgrounds are closed during the park improvement project, Mason County offers 11 other public and private campgrounds. The Ludington Area CVB can assist visitors looking for alternative recreation amenities in Mason County during this partial closure, or you can visit purludington.com/camping for more information.

Cultural attractions

When it comes to cultural attractions, Ludington has it in spades. Visit the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum and Sandcastles Children's Museum - each offering interactive exhibits to spark imaginations (also ideal for rainy days). Outside the maritime museum is the Maritime Heritage Trail along Ludington's harbor. Waterfront Park, with its collection of nine bronze sculptures, playscape area and

grassy picnic grounds, is another crowd pleaser that educates about the region's history as the primary home of the Mason County Sculpture Trail. It also makes an ideal spot to watch the S.S. Badger, the last coal-fired steamship in the United States, cross Lake Michigan daily to Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Ludington also boasts two historic lighthouses - Big Sable Point Light in Ludington State Park accessible via a two-mile/one-way trail, and Ludington North Breakwater Light in Stearns Park Beach, reachable via a half-mile walkable pier (also celebrating its centennial anniversary in 2024 marked by a series of events). Both are open for tower climbs in the summer. Art lovers can take in exhibits at the Ludington Area Center for the Arts or shop the gift shop stocked with artisan-made wares. Further afield is Historic White Pine Village, an interactive historical experience that lets visitors wander among more than 30 buildings depicting what life was like more than 100 years ago in Mason County. Learn more and buy tickets at the Mason County Historical Society office in downtown Ludington (130 E. Ludington Ave.).

Downtown scene plus food & drink

Looking for a fun downtown scene? Ludington's vibrant downtown district features boutique shops, art galleries, lo-

cal eateries and fun drink spots - including two microbreweries that also serve food (Jamesport Brewing, Ludington Bay Brewing). You can also get a caffeine pick-me-up at Red Rooster or Human-TEA. And don't forget dessert - favorite stops include Kilwin's for fudge and ice cream, KRAVE for frozen yogurt, and third-generation family-owned House of Flavors for its legendary ice cream (plus tasty breakfast, lunch and dinner). You can also enjoy takeout, watch live music or shop the Friday Farmers Market at Legacy Plaza at the intersection of Ludington Avenue and James Street in the heart of downtown. Or grab an adult beverage from participating establishments and enjoy it outside in the Ludington Outdoor Social District (LOSD) in designated downtown areas. Looking for a dining spot closer to the state park? Try STIX Ludington - a two-story, fine dining restaurant featuring an outdoor rooftop, beer garden with bocce and corn hole green plus stage for live entertainment, and a covered patio with fireplace. Park Lanes bowling alley also features 12 state-of-the-art lanes.

Festivals

Providing entertainment for the whole family, Ludington hosts a number of festivals and events all year long. Highlights include the July 4th Freedom Festival, Sunset Beach Bonfires, West Shore Art Fair, Offshore Classic Fishing Tournament and Suds on the Shore craft beer festival. Free, open-air concerts such as Rhythm & Dunes and the Summer Live Music series at Legacy Plaza produce music, dancing and fun.

More information

Visitors of all ages will find plenty to do while visiting the Ludington area. For Ludington news, events and points of interest, visit purludington.com or call 800-542-4600. Or stop by one of Ludington's visitor information centers at 119 S. Rath Ave. (year-round) or 226 W. Ludington Ave. (Memorial Day to Labor Day) for brochures or to speak to a visitor liaison.



Big Sable Point Light Station - Summer 2026 Schedule

Lakeshore Keepers, previously known as the Sable Point Lighthouse Keepers Association, preserves, promotes, and educates the public and gives access to Big Sable Point's Lighthouse in the Ludington State Park.

The Shoreline Keepers will have Big Sable Point Lighthouse open on Monday from 1:00 pm-5:00 pm and Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 am - 5:00 pm through September 10. After September 10, hours at Big Sable will be Thursday to Sunday from 10:00 am-5:00 pm.

Bus Days will be offered throughout the season, allowing guests to ride a shuttle from Ludington State Park to the Light Station. Adults can take the shuttle for \$6.00 for a roundtrip ticket or \$3.00 for a one-way ticket. Students (17 and under)

can take the shuttle for \$4.00 roundtrip or \$2.00 one-way. Guests should purchase shuttle tickets at the tent located near the Park Main Office. Last roundtrip tickets will be sold at 4:00 pm and last shuttle will leave Big Sable at 4:45 pm. Dates include:

June 27, July 9, July 16, July 23
August 13, August 29

New this year, the Lakeshore Keepers, with assistance from the Friends of the Ludington State Park, will offer a live-camera feed from the top of Big Sable Point Light Station. Guests will be able to check the weather conditions of Lake Michigan or see the view for the first time if they haven't before. This camera feed will be available to the public on July 1 at Big Sable Point : Our Lights : What We Do : Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association.

Big Sable Point Light Station was constructed in 1867 to improve safety on Lake Michigan for mariners. At the start of Michigan's lumbering era, Michigan became well known for shipwrecks and loss of life. In 1900, Big Sable's iron cladding was added to the tower to help protect the structure from sand abrasion and winters on the lake shore. The last lighthouse keepers served at the Light Station in 1968.

The US Coast Guard still maintains the light at Big Sable, and it is an Active Aid to Navigation for mariners on Lake Michigan.

Lakeshore Keepers welcomes you to take a tour of this historic shoreline landmark on your visit to the Ludington State Park.



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Skyline Trail rebuild, amphitheater upgrades mark next phase for Ludington State Park

BY LOIS TOMASZEWSKI
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

LUDINGTON — Ludington State Park is moving into its next phase of improvements, with a major reconstruction of the Skyline Trail and upgrades to the park's amphitheater highlighting continued investment in both infrastructure and visitor experience.

Skyline Trail

For more than four decades, the Skyline Trail has wound along a narrow ridge of dunes south of the Big Sable River, offering sweeping views of Lake Michigan, open dunes and the river corridor below.

Built in 1979-80 using materials airlifted into place by the Michigan Air Nation-

al Guard, the half-mile trail has long been one of the park's most distinctive features. Crews from the Youth Conservation Corps, Michigan Department of Corrections and park staff have maintained the elevated boardwalk and stairways over the years.

But time and heavy use have taken a toll.

Wooden supports have aged, steps have softened and sections of the trail have settled, creating uneven footing. In some areas, sand has shifted over portions of the structure, while tree growth has gradually obscured once-expansive views.

Now, a \$3.5 million reconstruction project is underway through a partnership between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Friends of Ludington State Park.

The project, announced in July 2025, is expected to move through construction during the 2026 season, with completion anticipated by late summer or early fall.

"This is the most ambitious project in our 33-year history," said Patrick O'Hare, president of the Friends of Ludington State Park. "But we believe in it and our community."

Plans for the rebuilt trail call for significant structural changes while maintaining the experience that has made it a favorite among visitors.

The new design will include two primary access points at the east and west ends of the trail, while the center stairway will not be rebuilt.

Metal support posts

will replace wooden ones, improving durability and reducing long-term maintenance needs. Portions of the trail will also be elevated — in some areas by 3 to 8 feet — allowing sand to move naturally beneath the structure instead of accumulating on it.

Viewing platforms will be adjusted to restore sightlines toward Lake Michigan and the surrounding dunes, and interpretive features, including the EnChroma viewer for colorblind visitors, are expected to be reinstalled.

Ludington State Park Manager Jim Gallie said design work progressed through fall 2025, with final plans prepared for bidding shortly after.

The Friends of Ludington State Park has played a key role in advancing the project, pledging to raise 10 percent of the total cost.

As of fall 2025, the organization had secured more than \$350,000 in donations and pledges, meeting its fundraising goal, with the DNR covering the remaining cost through capital outlay funding.

"We're excited to see this long-anticipated project moving forward," Gallie said. "The Skyline Trail is a treasure, and thanks to the dedication of the park's friends group, we're one step closer to ensuring it remains a part of the park experience for years to come."

Before construction began, fall 2025 offered one of the final opportunities to experience the original Skyline Trail, often compared to a canopy walk above the dunes.

Amphitheater project

Alongside the trail reconstruction, the park's amphitheater is also slated for its first major upgrade since it was constructed in 1998.

The Friends of Ludington State Park approved a \$99,700 renovation project aimed at modernizing the space, according to Patrick O'Hare.

"The area has not seen improvements since it was constructed in 1998," he said.

The project includes replacing the existing concrete stage, adding a canopy to cover the stage and updating portions of the built-in bench seating. Once completed, the amphitheater is expected to accommodate audiences of up to 500 people.

"The covered stage will create a focal point," O'Hare said. "It will change the whole look of the area."

The amphitheater serves as a central hub for seasonal programming, hosting concerts, interpretive programs and community events throughout the summer.

Funding for the project is supported in part by proceeds from the Pure Ludington BRRRewfest, an annual winter festival organized by the Chamber Alliance of Mason County.

Over the years, funds raised through BRRRewfest have supported a range of accessibility and infrastructure improvements within the park, including a handicapped-accessible playground, universal kayak launch, all-terrain track chairs and beach accessibility equipment.

The Skyline Trail and amphitheater projects follow a series of recently completed improvements, including road reconstruction, expanded parking and upgraded pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the park.

Together, the projects reflect an ongoing effort to balance increasing visitation with environmental stewardship and improved visitor experience at one of Michigan's most popular state parks.

How to support Ludington State Park improvements

Visitors who want to support the Skyline Trail reconstruction and other park projects can do so through the Friends of Ludington State Park.

Donations can be made online through the group's website at friendsofludingtonstatepark.org, by joining the organization as a member, by mail or at the park office.



PHOTO BY STEVE BEGNOCHE



FRIENDS OF LUDINGTON STATE PARK

The 2026 FLSP Summer Series schedule

All programs are 7 p.m. at the Amphitheater*. Rain location: the Lake Michigan Beach house While the programs are free, buckets will be passed to accept donations to support FLSP programming. For more information, program updates or to make a donation, visit <https://friendsofludington-statepark.org>

The series is done in conjunction with the Interpretive Program of Ludington State Park.

TUESDAY JUNE 9	Blue Water Ramblers - Music of the Great Lakes
SATURDAY JUNE 13	Eric Engblade and Friends - Folk-Rock with teeth
TUESDAY JUNE 16	Wyatt & Shari Knapp - Americana roots
SATURDAY JUNE 20	Plain Jane Glory - Neo-folk, Americana duo
TUESDAY JUNE 23	80 Cows - Americana, folk, old time fiddle
SATURDAY JUNE 27	Ruth and Max Bloomquist - Roots Acoustic Americana folk
TUESDAY JUNE 30	Eric Henning - Americana, rock and original
TUESDAY JULY 7	Nick Veine - Folk, blues and soul
SATURDAY JULY 11	Salt City Dixie Jazz Band - Dixieland Jazz
TUESDAY JULY 14	Birds of Prey - Nature Discovery Center
SATURDAY JULY 18	Rin Tarsy - Folk, pop and jazz
TUESDAY JULY 21	Pinter Whitnick - 80s and 90s hits
SATURDAY JULY 25	Nimkee-Mukwa - Anishinaabe drummers and dancers
TUESDAY JULY 28	Ravon "Steely" Rhoden - Reggae, steel drum
SATURDAY AUGUST 1	Uneven Ground - Celtic music
TUESDAY AUGUST 4	Birds of Prey - Nature Discovery Center
SATURDAY AUGUST 8	The Langford Lads - Americana Folk / instrumental
TUESDAY AUGUST 11	Third Coast Swing Band - Swing era Jazz, hot club music
SATURDAY AUGUST 15	Christian Larumbe Trio - Latin, jazz, rock, and classical
TUESDAY AUGUST 18	Canopy Spac - Alt Folk Duo
SATURDAY AUGUST 22	The Magic of Kevin - Family favorite!
SATURDAY AUGUST 29	Lee Murdock - Songs of the Great Lakes

**Please Note: The location for the Summer Series Schedule will be moved from the amphitheater to another location when Skyline Trail and amphitheater construction starts.*



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