

Chapter 2: Park Background

The Region

Location and Access

Midway State Park is in OPRHP's Allegany region. It is located in Chautauqua County on the east side of Chautauqua Lake in the Hamlet of Maple Springs, in the Town of Ellery. (Figure 1) The park has two points of vehicular access. The first through the main park entrance on Route 430, the second, limited access from Chautauqua Avenue through a gate at the southwest part of the park. Access is also possible from the lake side by small boats and docking is currently available for free to day users. Currently there are no safe, convenient entrances to the park by pedestrians. Bicyclists can enter the park at the vehicular entrances.

Economic Contribution

Factors Affecting Calculations

Calculating a figure for the economic impact of Midway State Park presents a number of challenges. The park has only been part of the state park system since 2006 and it is unique among OPRHP facilities in terms of the amenities it provides to visitors. Complicating matters further, no survey data is available to assist in determining visitor origins and expenditures. In order to be consistent with the methodology used for other OPRHP parks in the state system where the National Park Service Money Generation Model (MGM1) has been applied, an attempt has been made to estimate the missing information from other data that is currently available.

Visitor expenditures are estimated from a number of sources including surveys at similar parks and data available from the concessionaire's reports to Albany. The number of visitors from outside the community is estimated from the signatures with location information in the visitor "Guest Book", bearing in mind the tendency for locals not to sign a guest book, especially if they are repeat visitors during the same season.

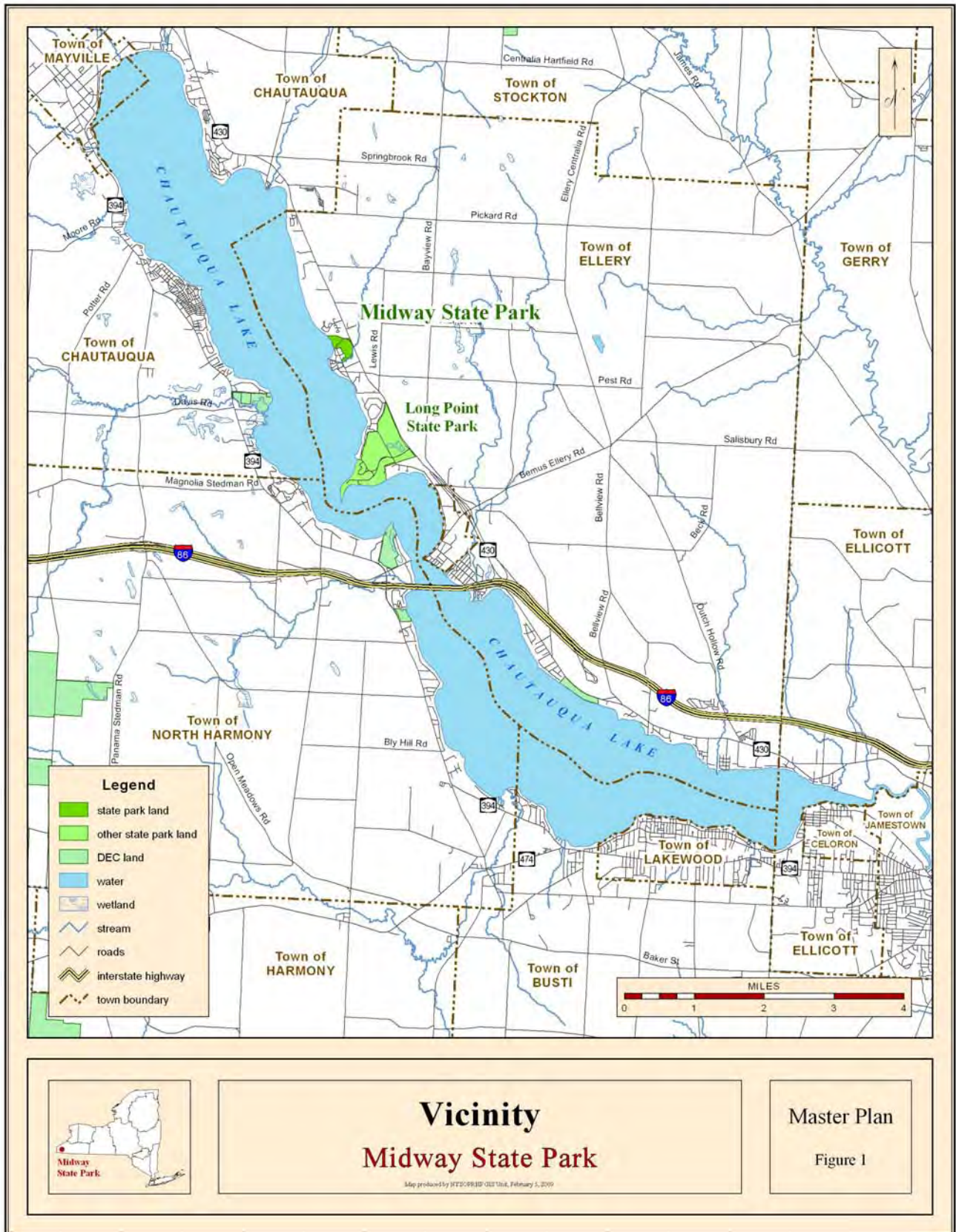
Midway State Park is a seasonal park open from May to September. As such, it should be expected that the economic impact of the park is seasonal, and probably less in magnitude than a four-season facility. Some of the recreational amenities at Midway State Park such as an historical trolley park museum, arcade games, amusement rides, miniature golf and go-carts, are atypical of the amenities at most New York State parks. Therefore, certain estimates and assumptions were made for this assessment that differ from those that would appear in a report dealing with a "typical" park. Also, since the park was acquired by OPRHP in 2006, there is a lack of historical data for attendance and revenue to assist in estimating the economic impact of the park.

Discussion of Economic Impact

With these caveats in place, a discussion of the economic impact of Midway State Park follows.

One factor in determining the economic impact that the park or facility has on the surrounding area is how many people are attracted to the park from outside the local community. For the purposes of this plan, the local community is defined as a fifty-mile radius around Midway State Park. Only patrons from beyond the fifty-mile radius are included in the economic impact analysis. The total yearly attendance at Midway State Park is available for only one fiscal year (2007-08) and was 146,000. The attendance for 2008-2009 is on track to be a slight increase but not much more than 150,000. For purposes of this plan, the figure 148,000 will be used. No visitor surveys are available,

Figure 1 Vicinity



nor have any license plate counts been done. The only documentation of visitor origins is the “guest book” in which visitors could indicate the date of their visits and location of residence. This cannot be considered particularly reliable but, at present, it is the best we have. The results extracted from the guest book showed that 23.4% of visitors were local, 25.7% were from New York State but not local, 48.4% were from out-of-state and 2.5% were of unknown origin.

The above figures might seem to indicate that non-local visitors to Midway State Park constitute 75% of total visitation. However, considering that out-of-state visitors might be more likely to sign a guest book than the locals, and that locals would be more likely to visit repeatedly during the season without signing the guest book on repeat visits, the 75% figure would have to be considered an absolute high limit, with a much lower figure more likely to be closer to the true value. Another consideration is the low population density of the surrounding communities – making it difficult for locals to provide enough visitors to raise their share of total attendance. Considering the data from other surveys of New York State Parks, it may be a reasonable first estimate to say that about 60% of the visitors to Midway State Park originate from outside the fifty-mile radius.

Determining the level of visitor spending at Midway State Park is difficult for the same reasons, but a great deal of spending within the park reverts to Albany and does not have an affect on the local economy. This is true of the arcade games, rides and passes. A percentage of spending on food remains within the community; a portion is returned to Albany as part of the concessionaire’s agreement with the State. Although one might expect a higher level of spending for visitors to Midway because of the nature of the park, in the final analysis, the level of spending per visitor that would impact the local economy is probably not very different from the spending at more typical State Parks. For that reason, for purposes of this report, the same figure of \$47 will be used.

The current economic impact of Midway State Park is estimated to be \$5.8 million. This amount should generate approximately \$217,500 (local sales tax rate is 3.75%) in local tax revenues and 146 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs.

Recreational Needs Assessment

Midway State Park has unique historic, natural, cultural and recreation resources that make it of interest to a wide variety of users. Patrons may come from all parts of the state, country and world to see and use these facilities. Its historic characteristics put it into a very small group of surviving trolley parks and small amusement parks that have become destinations for enthusiasts and tourists, as well as local and regional users whose families have been coming to the park for generations.

This historic status does not overshadow the importance of Midway State Park as a regional resource. The park’s lakefront is one of a few public access points on Chautauqua Lake, a resource that was highlighted in the Chautauqua County Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) (Chautauqua County, 2007). Midway’s pavilions and picnic areas are enjoyed by many organizations and families. Relaxing and strolling in the park are also available activities. Many patrons from the immediate and larger surrounding areas come to enjoy these amenities. These people are often the second or third generation of western New York citizens who continue the tradition of family recreation at Midway Park.

While users come from long distances to visit Midway State Park, this plan defines the service area to be Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Erie and Niagara Counties. This analysis relies on the 2009 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and OPRHP visitor analyses to provide an estimate of the recreational needs for the service area for the park. SCORP assesses the statewide supply and demand for recreational resources. Relaxing in the park (which also includes picnicking, playground use and other generic day use), is the recreational activity most enjoyed by

New York residents, followed by walking/jogging, visiting museums and historic sites, swimming, and biking. SCORP cites that the highest total number of activity days is for walking/jogging followed by relaxing in parks, swimming, visiting museums and historic sites, and biking.

The Relative Index of Needs data (RIN) in SCORP assigns a number to each type of recreational activity by considering the supply of recreation facilities and the demand for those facilities now, and estimating how that demand, compared to the current supply, will change in the future. (In SCORP, the target year for the future is 2025). Numbers are calculated for each county in the state.

The Recreation Index of Need for the Service Area of Midway State Park shows the RIN numbers for the four counties in the service area. Using a formula that includes the RIN numbers and the activity days within each county, a weighted average score is produced for each activity. These weighted scores illustrate that the activities with highest relative index of need in the service area are, in descending order: hiking, cross-country skiing, equine activities, swimming, walking, fishing, biking, and golf. These are the activities that will, over the period 2005 to 2025 experience the greatest growth in the four county region relative to the existing supply of resources.

Because of its unique nature, Midway State Park cannot address all the needs cited for the service area for the park. It is possible to meet the need for increased levels of walking, fishing and biking. It may be possible to address the need for cross-country skiing by providing a connection with Long Point State Park. It is not possible to meet the need for hiking, equine activities, swimming or golf at Midway State Park.

The LWRP identifies the lack of public access to Chautauqua Lake as an important matter to be addressed. This point is echoed in the State's Open Space Conservation Plan (DEC 2008) which identifies public lake access as an acquisition priority for the state to consider. Access in this case may mean any number of recreation opportunities such as boating, shore fishing, ice fishing, swimming, and picnicking. Of the 42 miles of shore line on Chautauqua Lake, most are already developed for public and private interests. According to the LWRP, passive viewing of the lake, power boating, swimming, and fishing top the list of the recreational activities engaged in most frequently by lake users. Some of these uses could very well be accommodated at Midway State Park. Other recreational activities available in the LWRP study area were golf, camping, picnicking, field sports, biking, hiking, tennis, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, ice fishing, ice boating, and bird watching and wildlife observation.

The Park

Park Boundaries

The park consists of approximately 42.6 acres of land. The park is bounded in the west by Chautauqua Lake and Chautauqua Avenue and on the east by NYS Route 430. The park shares a boundary line on the north with the Viking Club and on the south with residential properties in Maple Springs. (Figure 2)

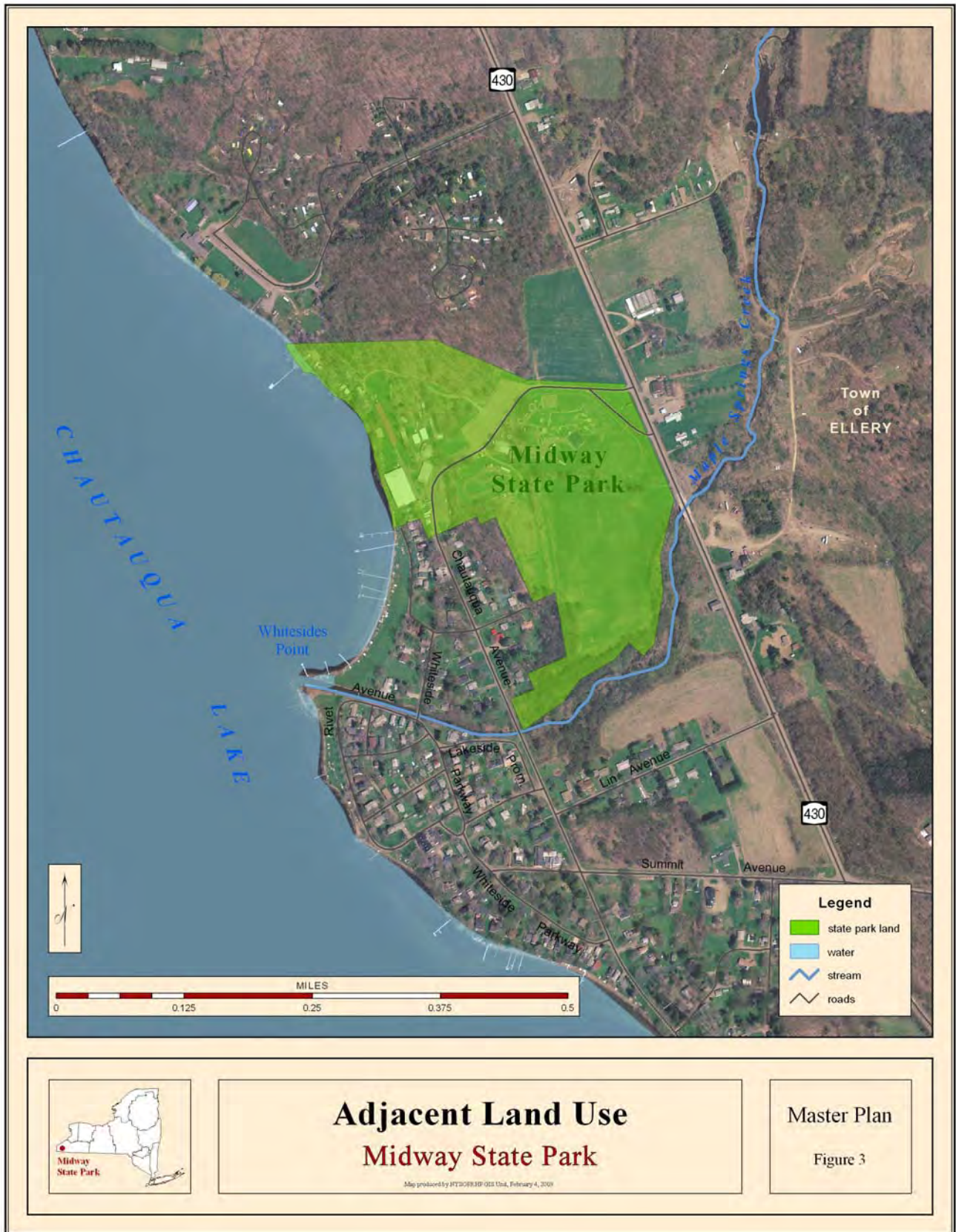
Adjacent Land Uses

The land immediately adjacent to Midway State Park is residential on the south, private club on the north and commercial on the west. The immediate region of the park, within 1 mile or so is a mix of residential, roadside type commercial and agricultural. The residential properties along the lake shore are characteristic of the second home type with many houses being occupied in the summer months only. Other, year-round residential uses occur further from the lake, with well established homesteads and farms. (Figure 3)

Figure 2 Park Boundary



Figure 3 Adjacent Land Use



Commercial development along NYS route 430 is typical of a rural state highway with gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants and general service establishments such as car repair, hardware, and etc.

Legal Constraints, Designations and Other Programs

Easements

There are utility easements on the property.

Designations

There are no park designations for Midway State Park. However the Audubon Society has identified Chautauqua Lake as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The lake is significant because it is an important stopover location for migratory birds, particularly waterfowl. At least 270 species have been documented. (National Audubon Society 2009)

Partnerships

Currently, due to the fact that this park is new, there are no friends groups or other partnerships with local organizations. This would be an important aspect to encourage in the future.