



Great Lakes
History Trail





NO CAMPING

Explore the Shores

Winding its way through thick forests since the last ice age, the Manistee River has supported life since prehistoric times.

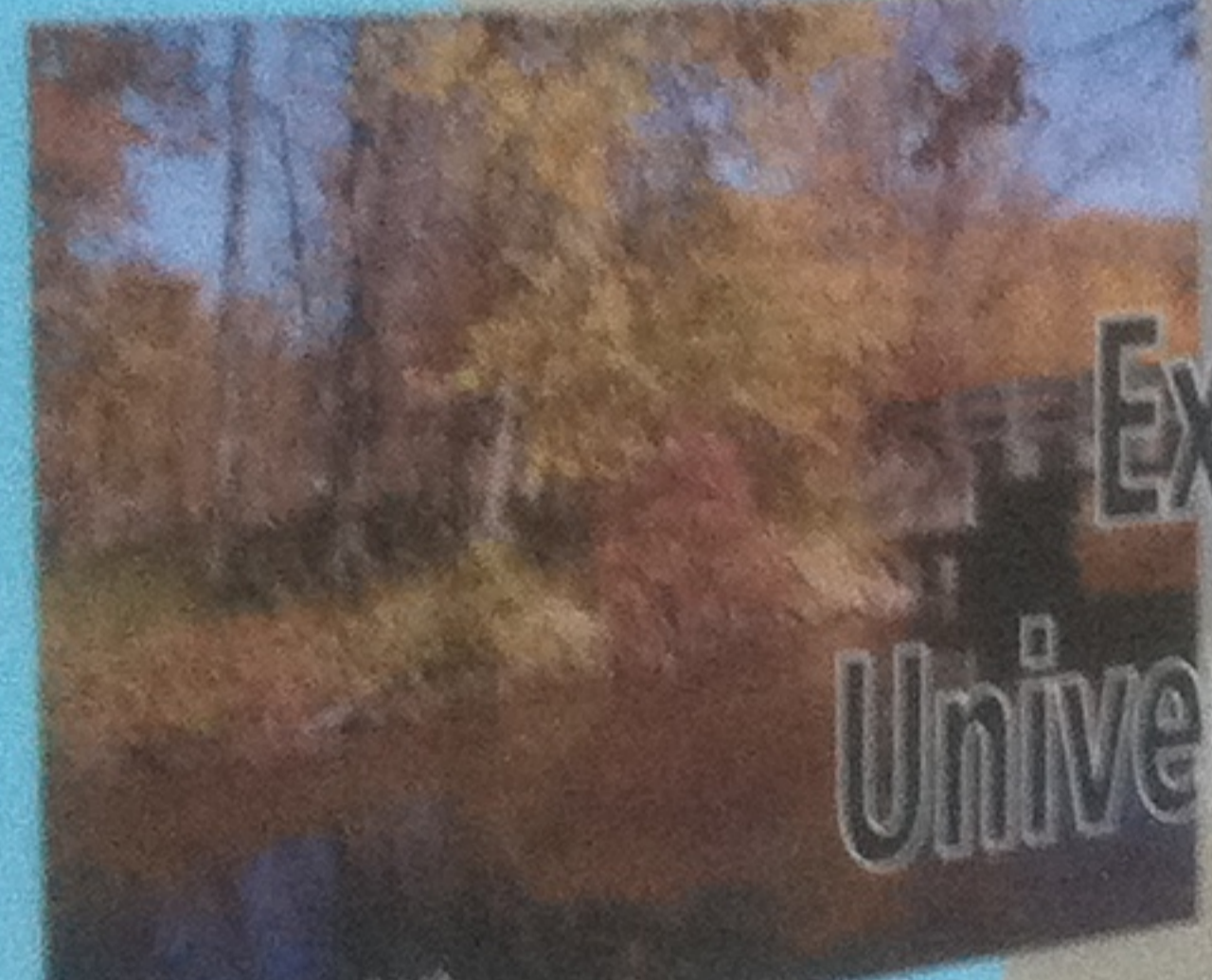
This spot, where Bear Creek flows into the big Manistee, is an example of why Explore the Shores was founded. Previously the rugged terrain and shifting banks of the river were difficult for people with limited abilities to navigate. But with the addition of the fishing piers and concrete paths built through the collaborative efforts of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and the U.S. Forest Service, everyone is able to fish these waters or simply enjoy having a front seat to the splendors of nature.

Explore the Shores is a program designed to provide universal accessibility to the area's waterways — and with 276 miles of rivers, 25 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, three Great Lakes harbors, nine inland lakes and 73,000 acres of wetlands, Manistee County is where life meets water.



Where Life Meets Water

Explore with Universal Access



Bridge at Bear Creek



Water is a necessity of life. But access to the resources it provides to those who have physical disabilities is the U.S. 30 percent of the population is disabled. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this accounts for nearly 50 million people, two-thirds of whom have severe disabilities.

For those people to use the millions of beautiful waterways in Michigan and the countless parks, the difficulty will provide an easier, more enjoyable experience for many more to enjoy.

Explore the Heritage and History



A short distance from this site, a prehistoric mound marks the area where a small settlement existed from the Mississippian Period to the late Woodland Period (approximately 800 to 1500s AD). These early settlers set up camp here for the same reason many visit to this day — to take advantage of the area's wealth of resources.

The area where Bear Creek flows into the Manistee River continued to be used by the Anishinaabek people from their earlier settlements to modern times. The native people spent their winters in Northern Michigan, hunting and trapping along the Manistee River, before traveling downstream to live in the summer.

When European explorers arrived, the Anishinaabek served as navigators and guides. They became the stewards of commerce since the local resources began to draw French fur traders from halfway around the world.

In the mid- to late-1800s, the logging industry boomed in Manistee County, bringing more people to the area. Many of the lumberjacks used the site

for a launch for rafting rafts up down the Manistee River. Years of fire and logging dramatically changed the landscape until the establishment of the Manistee National Forest in 1938, when the natural state of the lands began to be restored.

Conservation efforts continue, with the U.S. Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Environment Quality and Michigan Department of Natural Resources working on both rehabilitation and restoration projects to ensure the health and well-being of the Manistee River system and the life and wildlife whose life depend on it. Other projects include the Bear Creek Watershed Council and the Conservation Resource Network.

Explore the Species

A wide variety of wildlife species share the forest with you, including:

- Birds:** Bald Eagle, Downy Woodpecker, Marsh Wren, Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Great Blue Heron
- Mammals:** Common Gray Squirrel, Chipmunk, Eastern Chipmunk, Eastern Skunk, Gray Squirrel, Muskrat, White Squirrel
- Reptiles and Amphibians:** Common Frog, Toad, Salamander, Northern Spring Salamander, Painted Turtle, Red-spotted Newt



See more of the Species at Shores and contact the Forest Service at 800-888-8888.

Water Stewardship

Bear Creek is the largest tributary of the Manistee River basin. Topp (2006) identified it has a large impact on the lower river system.

A group of concerned citizens formed to create the Bear Creek Watershed Council, which has been in existence for over 20 years. The council works with many other partners, including the Manistee River Watershed Plan, with the goal of maintaining current and future threats to the health of the system as well as determining the best long-term water use, management and protection on the watershed.



Angling & Boating

Explore the Shores also works with the Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Environment Quality and the Manistee County Charter Area Association and the Manistee County Charter Area Association to determine ways to place the river to give anglers the best chance of success.

Anglers enjoy the site in large part because Bear Creek is a tributary of the Manistee River, which has been listed as a trout stream. In addition, the site has a variety of other fish species, including steelhead, rainbow trout, brook trout, and brown trout. The site also has a variety of other fish species, including steelhead, rainbow trout, brook trout, and brown trout.

ANGLING FOR STEELHEAD

The U.S. Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources are working together to improve steelhead habitat in the Manistee River watershed. This includes installing spawning structures, riparian zone revegetation, and stream bank stabilization. These efforts are designed to improve the quality of the habitat and increase the number of steelhead that survive to spawn.

For more information on steelhead angling in the Manistee River watershed, visit the website at www.exploretoshores.org.





Funding
Support
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By



Explore the Shores

There's something about the words "Rainbow Bend" that sparks images of magic, beauty and a shifting glimmer of the otherworldly. This site is fittingly named, as it encompasses a little bit of all these.

In September 2009, after launching from Rainbow Bend, Tom Healy caught a little bit of magic from the Manistee River while fishing with a local outfitter — in the form of a world-record brown trout weighing 41 pounds 7 ounces and measuring 43.75 inches.

This site brings that opportunity to everyone. The purpose of Explore the Shores is to provide access to Manistee County's bountiful reserve of fresh water. Through the collaboration of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and the U.S. Forest Service, these barrier-free fishing piers and the concrete walkways allow people of all abilities to experience the magic firsthand.



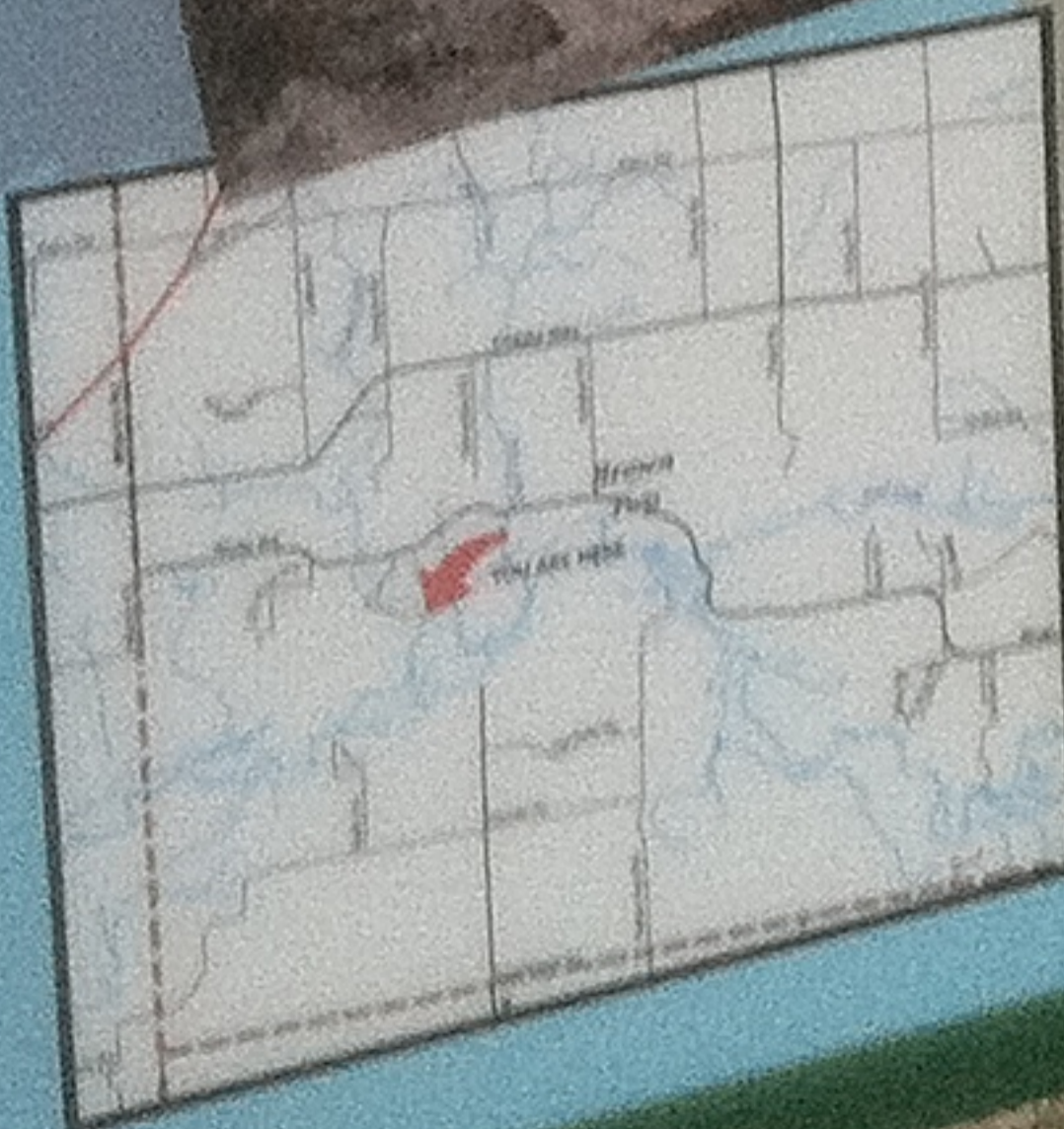
Where Life Meets Water



Explore with Universal Access

A growing number of people in the United States have a disability, while another significant portion of the population have physical limitations that make it difficult to get around. On the opposite end of the spectrum, children and parents with strollers often have trouble navigating uneven terrain.

Explore the Shores seeks to provide access for everyone to Manistee County's 276 miles of rivers, 25 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, three Great Lakes harbors, nine inland lakes and 28,000 acres of wetlands because this is where the magic lives.



Explore the Heritage and History



Young Sturgeon

The Manistee River and the surrounding forests have provided a vast array of resources for thousands of generations. From prehistoric nomadic people to more recent settlements, the abundance of fish and game in this area has been a valuable resource.

The Anishinaabek people, and later French fur traders, used these waters for trapping and fishing as well as a highway along which they traveled and transported goods. The land surrounding this site was also dotted with cornfields and grazing cattle.

The landscape changed dramatically once the forests were harvested for lumber and the Manistee River was used for many years to ferry logs downstream. During this era, a mill operated at Rainbow Bend, but later burned to the ground.

Logging left the forest a cutter-wasteland until the 1930s, when the Civilian Conservation Corps came through and planted the rows of red pines that are still visible along the entrance road to the site. In 1936, the Manistee National Forest was established and efforts to restore the environment continue to this day.

In 2004, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians began a program to preserve one of the area's oldest inhabitants. Between the destruction of their habitat during the logging era, over-harvesting and dam construction, the lake sturgeon population dwindled alarmingly. The tribe established a stream-side sturgeon rearing facility at Rainbow Bend, which was the first of its kind. Now, there are three others in Michigan and two in Wisconsin, all working together to save these relics of the dinosaur age, whose ancestors date back approximately 500 million years.

By raising them with water from the Manistee River, the young sturgeon which are captured when they're tiny larvae and released a few months later with a much better chance of survival, prosper on the local waters. In 20 years or so when they're of age to spawn, they will come back to these waters and the cycle will continue.

This project and many others continue to successfully ensure the health and well-being of the plants, fish and wildlife that live in these forests and waterways.

Explore the Species

A wide array of wildlife species share this forest with you, including:

Birds

- Barred Owl
- Great Blue Heron
- Northern Flicker
- Red-Winged Blackbird
- Tree Swallow
- White-Browed Nuthatch

Mammals

- Common Raccoon
- Deer Mouse
- Eastern Cottontail
- Meadow Vole
- Snowshoe Hare
- Striped Skunk

Amphibians and Reptiles

- Common Garter Snake
- Eastern American Toad
- Northern Blue Toad
- Northern Water Snake
- Wood Turtle



Common Raccoon



Wood Turtle



Barred Owl

See more of the Explore the Shores per located at the Forest Service site at Bear Creek.

Water Stewardship



The planning and design of Explore the Shores site incorporates the best use of the fishing resources while limiting the impact on the environment. For example, the pier here at Rainbow Bend were specifically placed so as not to disturb the nesting grounds of wood turtles.

At the ribbon cutting for this site, a nest of wood turtles had laid eight eggs in the pier, proof positive that the planning and design for the site was well worth it.

Waterfowl management efforts in the area also include bank stabilization projects and repairs to road-stream crossings that have been undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service, the Manistee County Road Commission, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The Bear Creek Watershed Council and the Conservation Resource Alliance are also partners working to restore and protect the environment.



Angling & Boating

While not everyone is seeking a world-record catches, anglers have a very good chance of success from this site. Directly in front of the pier there is spawning gravel that is used heavily in the fall by Chinook salmon and in the spring by walleye, rock bass, and white suckers.

This site is also just downstream from Tackle Creek, a small trout stream tributary that has natural reproduction of Chinook salmon, rain stream, steelhead, brown trout and brook trout.

At the Rainbow Bend access site, anglers are most likely to find Chinook salmon, white sucker, rock bass, brown trout, walleye, northern pike, smallmouth bass, rock bass, white sucker, steelhead rock bass, and silver suckers in the end of their line.

The U.S. Forest Service maintains Rainbow Bend for recreational use and allows it open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. From the boat launch, which accepts such as canoes, kayaks and fishing boats on regular electric or gas motor boats less than 25 feet can enter the waters of the Big Manistee. The user fees for this site help with the operation and maintenance.

The pier and walkway bring the benefits of Rainbow Bend to everyone, regardless of age, abilities or physical limitations, including children and staff of more than 50 outdoor guides.



SALMON & STEELHEAD LURES

Salmon and steelhead anglers using small spoons, spinners and lindy bugs are often successful. Cast from the pier and work the artificial lure slowly through holes and in and around log jams and undercut banks. Be sure to experiment with lure color, size and size.



Learn about Explore the Shores locations by going to www.exploretshores.org