

Introducing... the  
Saugatuck Harbor

For the first time in a century, the duneland south of the Kalamazoo River Channel is open to all members of the public for hiking and the enjoyment of its outstanding scenic and natural features.

Protecting the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area's biological and historical resources was a goal of the Saugatuck-Douglas community and its conservation partners for decades. With grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation Program, along with generous donations from over 600 private donors, this goal was achieved in 2011.

Now, families, school groups, hikers, bird-watchers, artists, and tourists from around the world can learn about and enjoy this distinctive West Michigan landscape.

Be part of protecting this rare and beautiful landscape - please respect the rules of use for the Natural Area.



City of Saugatuck  
102 Butler Street,  
Saugatuck, MI 49453  
(269) 857-2603  
[www.saugatuckcity.com](http://www.saugatuckcity.com)



*Produced in partnership  
with the Land Conservancy  
of West Michigan*

Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area  
Rules of Use

- ☉ **Sunbathing** is permitted ONLY on the Lake Michigan beach or the shoreline of the Kalamazoo River. **SUNBATHING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE DUNES.**
- ☉ **Alcohol is not permitted.**
- ☉ **Hiking trails** are marked. To protect fragile dune and wetland ecosystems, we ask that you stay on the designated trails.
- ☉ **Trash must be packed out** — there are no trash receptacles on the property.
- ☉ **No fires or camping.**
- ☉ **Swimming is not permitted in the Oxbow Lagoon.**
- ☉ Natural Area **closes at 10 PM.**
- ☉ **Dogs are not allowed** in the Natural Area, to protect rare wildlife populations.\*

**\*Please note: Between Labor Day and Memorial Day, leashed dogs are permitted ONLY along the Lake Michigan shoreline.**

Cover photo: E. Scholtz

Saugatuck Harbor  
Natural Area  
Trail Map & Guide



# Trail Guide

You are invited to explore the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area's wonderful landscape of dunes, forest, and wetlands bordered by miles of natural shoreline. Here is a brief description of what you can expect as you hike.

## Oval Beach parking lot to ①:

As you walk up the beach you'll pass by the remnants of the original Kalamazoo River pier. After the new pier was finished in 1906 it took only a few years for sand to blow across the natural river mouth, creating the Oxbow Lagoon.

## ① to Dune Overlook ② & ③:

After crossing the foredune you will be able to see into the Natural Area's interior and the central dune formation around the large interdunal wetland. This dune formation was badly eroded by years of foot traffic on the dune ridge and sunbathing – both of which are no longer permitted.

## ② to ⑧ and loop extension:

Dropping into the interior, the trail skirts the interdunal wetland and central dune formation. The loop trail follows a wooded edge and is a particularly rich habitat for migratory warblers and other birds.

## ⑧ to ⑦:

The trail skirts the back of the highest dune. In the Jack and Black Pines, listen for the buzzy, ascending scale of the Prairie Warbler, listed as "Endangered" by the State.

## ⑦ to ⑥:

A short climb up the back of a smaller dune gives a view of an interdunal wetland. Whether or not these wetlands hold water depends more on Lake Michigan water levels than on seasonal rainfall. In the spring and summer, listen for calling frogs. When the trail nears the "Basin" area, it passes through a sedge meadow – a great place to see butterflies.

## ⑥ to the Oxbow Lagoon overlook area:

The trail follows willows and rushes lining the basin area and heads over a low dune to a clearing with a view of the lagoon backed by the forested hills and dome of Mt. Baldhead Park. The marshy shoreline of the lagoon is critical habitat for the tiny State-threatened Blanchard's cricket frog.

## ⑤ to ④:

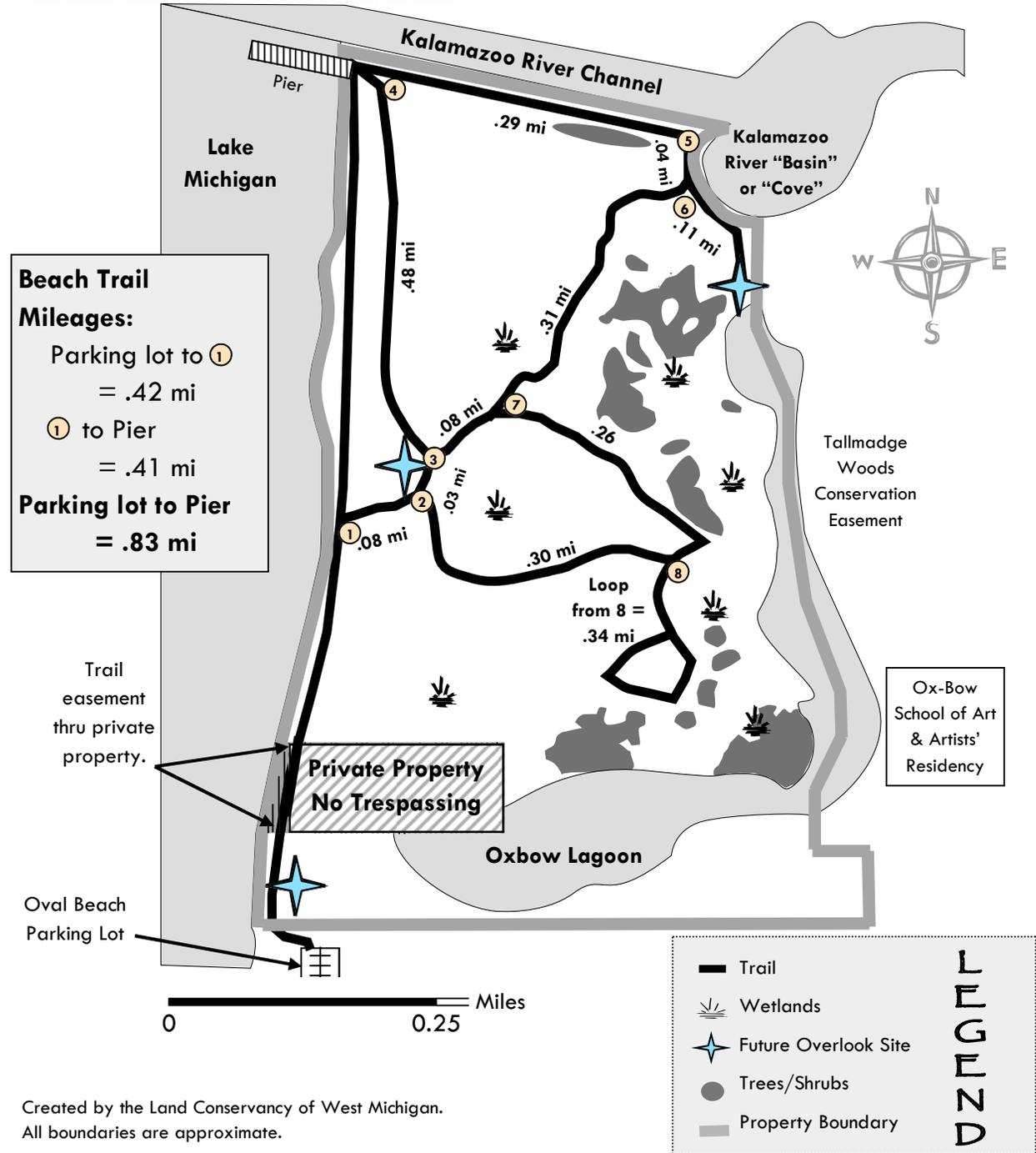
The trail runs parallel to the Kalamazoo River just before it ends its 178-mile westward journey to Lake Michigan from Jackson County in southeast Michigan.

## ④ to ③:

This trail follows a line of poplars on the foredune. Thick marram/beach grass lining the trail has stabilized the dunes.

# Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

# Trail Map



Created by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. All boundaries are approximate.