

Hardwood Lake Campground

Compiled by Lila Fegan

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Hardwood Lake Campground is located on beautiful Hardwood Lake along Henderson Lake Road in Ogemaw County.

Doing a little research, I found the 40 acres have always belonged to the State of Michigan. Many years ago it was used for a 4-H Camp and also, I believe, scouts and church groups. Eventually the DNR converted it into a campground for public use. After putting a lot of grant money into the grounds with toilets and planned campsites, they found it was not a worthy adventure and closed the gates for a few years.

In the mid 1980's the DNR approached the Richland Township Board with an offer of signing the 20 acre campground over to the township. The DNR planned on keeping the other 20 acres, including the access site, and part of the grounds for their own use and upkeep. At that time the township refused to have anything to do with it. They did not want the liability.

Later, some of the business people and residents of Mills Township approached the Richland Township Board and asked them to accept the offer from the DNR. They indicated they would help to redevelop the grounds to offer camping to the public. After much thought, the Richland Township Board decided to take the offer.

After doing some research and meeting with the DNR Representative, Richland Township discovered it would not be in their best interest to accept the site until the insurance coverage was upgraded. Because the people wanted to get started with cleaning and clearing the grounds, the township approached the Ogemaw County Board of Commissioners and asked if they would accept the 20 acres until such time as the township could get their insurance coverage taken care of.

The people had to get things in order. On September 14, 1987 the first meeting of the Hardwood Lake Campground Committee was held. Those attending were: Elwin Shepard, Dean Thompson, Bill Gibson, Jeanette Woolman, Gary Woolman, John Bradley, Bob Winans, Lila Fegan, Bill Morrison, Ed Roos, Ralph Olds, Joe Oleksiak, Connie Cliff, George West, Bob Staley, & Ira Head.

Action taken at that time include: Ed Roos was elected chairman, Bill Morrison was elected Vice-chairman and Lila Fegan elected secretary-treasurer. It was decided that all present would become committee members. The committee is currently limited to five people with an alternate.

Many of the original members are deceased but there are many times we think of them.

On May 12, 1988 the DNR signed the 20 acres over to Ogemaw County. The committee immediately started cutting, cleaning and trying to shape the grounds, a little at a time. It had grown into a small forest. Bill Morrison & Robert Fegan had tractors and bush-hogs and worked every chance they could.

In the spring of 1988 everyone wanted to really move on with the project. Mary Cline worked with Bell Telephone Co. and donated a half dozen poles along with the equipment to put them in the ground. Consumers was able to, for the first time, run electricity into the campground. The local scouts, along with the Moose Lodge, helped plan a clean-up day with music and hot dogs. Many people wanted to volunteer.

The township decided to apply for grant monies to put in a pavilion, playground equipment and picnic tables so Richland Township could show they owned the property.

On April 25, 1990 Ogemaw County signed the property over to Richland Township. Lila Fegan wrote a grant which was successful in receiving \$20,000.

An attendant was hired to live on the grounds because it had become a party place for young people and we didn't want to have it destroyed. We gave the caretaker a place to stay and half of all income from campers. The caretaker didn't make much those first few years. That is not the case these last few years.

On any given summer weekend the sites are pretty well filled up with 10 seasonal campers there all summer long.

Lila Fegan has again applied for grant money. This time over \$50,000. It is a 25% matching grant the township will have to put up. It will be put to good use. The purpose of the money would be for up-grading the electricity, putting in a shower building, a fishing dock, and more electrical campsites.

There is a large demand for more electric campsites and it is not inexpensive to do this. We are, also, in need of more picnic tables.

The first picnic tables were purchased by local business people and we had their names engraved on the table. Some of the guys put the tables together after we bought the material with the donations. It has just been a great community project to bring tourists to the area and have a place for local people to go and have a good time.

Hardwood Lake Campground has been a very successful adventure and my compliments to all who have made it such a place. We never dreamed it would be in such demand. Our caretakers this year and for next are Doug & Beverly Neveau. If you are in the area during the summer months stop in and say hello.

The campground has brought in \$18,000 - \$20,000 the last few years. The caretakers receive 1/3 of the primitive cost. We bought a new mowing tractor last spring, and are always putting money back into the grounds. We never show much profit, but it is profit when we drive through and see people having a great time.

The Hardwood Lake Property Owners Association asked for a lake board to be formed a few years ago. The township formed the board for the purpose of cleaning up weeds on the lake. The property owners have a special assessment tax for that purpose. It has been quite successful and makes the campground more enticing with a nice beach area and docks for the fishermen.

The current committee members are: Ed Roos, Chairman, Lila Fegan, Secretary, Judy Sheehan, Dawn Johnson, and Debbie Richardson, trustees. Ruth Keeley and Robert Fegan are alternates.

Thanks to all of you who have made the campground a success. We have 40 sites with 3 being group sites. We allow 10 seasonal sites each summer with 2 more available if necessary. We never have a problem filling those sites for the summer months.