



*Lake Michigan, Thirteen Mile
Road End, Pierport*



Celebration of Lights, Farr Center



*Butterfly Chair in Memorial Garden,
Farr Center*

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Community Description

The Portage Lake Community

The Portage Lake Community, for the purposes of the Five-Year Plan for Parks and Recreation, consists of Onekama Township, the Village of Onekama, and the Onekama Consolidated Schools. Onekama Township is in the western part of Manistee County. Beginning on the Lake Michigan shore and completely encircling Portage Lake, the Township extends northward to Arcadia Township. It is bordered on the east by Bear Lake Township and on the south by Manistee Township (see maps on page A-1).

The Village of Onekama is on the northeast shore of Portage Lake and is the only municipality in the Township. In 2000, its population was 562 people, whereas the Township population was 952. A business district runs through the Village for a mile along M-22 (First Street and Main Street). Many parks and recreational facilities can be found along M-22 both in the Village and in the Township south of the Village.

The Onekama School of the Onekama Consolidated Schools is within the Village of Onekama. Although its address is 5016 Main Street, most of the campus is off of Main Street and is along Baker, Spring, and Brandt Streets. Onekama Consolidated Schools is included in the Plan because of the recreational facilities provided for the public that are not duplicated elsewhere in the Community. The Warren Vaughan Tennis Courts are for public use; indoor facilities are available for the use of the public for exercising, and holding meetings or events that require computer facilities, or auditorium and stage facilities.



A \$14.1 million building project was started in 2008 and will include a new gymnasium (with a projected cost of \$4.6 million) and a new cafetorium (with a projected cost of \$1.9 million). Athletic fields are being renovated at a projected cost of \$725,000. All of these projects will enhance the Community's use of the School facilities.

There are five churches within the Village—St. Joseph Catholic Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, and St. John-by-the Lake (an Episcopal chapel only open during the summer).

Many residents of long standing and seasonal residents who have come

here for many years have deep feelings regarding Onekama as home; and whether it is the Village or the Township they reside in or speak of, they just call them "Onekama," as if they were all in one.

Lakes, the Channel, and Shores

Portage Lake is the central feature of the Township, being an inland lake covering 2,116 acres. It, the Channel connecting it to Lake Michigan, and Lake Michigan itself provide residents and visitors with fishing, boating, swimming and other activities. Portage Lake is fed with clear, fresh water by many small streams and springs. The shores of Portage Lake are around 10 miles in length while Lake Michigan shores extend more than 16 miles. The Lake Michigan shores extend northward to Pierport, a former Lake Michigan port and lumbering town, which also has shoreline recreational facilities that are included in the Five-Year Plan. Most of the parks and recreational facilities of Onekama Village and Township are along or near the shores of Portage Lake and Lake Michigan.

The Four Seasons

The beautiful seasonal changes afford an opportunity for all to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities the entire year amid much scenic splendor. Spring brings fishermen. Trilliums cover the wooded hillsides, and orchards are in bloom! Summer heat draws people to the beaches and boating activities. The tremendous influx of people during the summer is evidence that the Portage Lake Community is a very desirable location.

M-22 is part of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour. The fall color spectrum is breathtaking along M-22 and many of the side roads. The appreciation that residents and visitors have for a glimpse of such beauty is apparent in the repeated requests for viewing areas and accessibility to both lakes.

Well into the fall, there is also the possibility for fishermen to experience the thrill of charter boat fishing with licensed captains operating from Portage Lake. Late fall and winter see hunters; cross-country skiers; snowmobilers; and a growing village of shanties, as the ice fishermen find bountiful supplies of perch and numerous other varieties of fish.

A Rich Historical Past

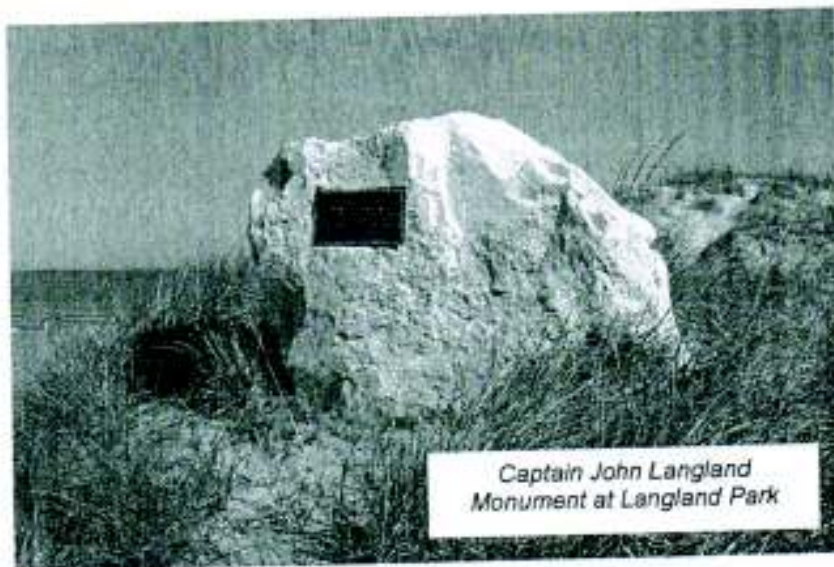
The field notes of the original surveyors identified the inland Lake as "O-nek-a-ma-engk" or "Portage." The settlers were told by the Indians still remaining in the area that "O-nek-a-m-engk" meant to Portage or carry across, which is exactly what the Indians had to do when traversing the land between the lakes. The first certificate for land purchased in what is now Onekama Township was issued to James Stronach in 1845 by the United States Government.

His land included the original outlet (later known as "Portage Creek") from Portage Lake into Lake Michigan. At what was to become the settlement of Portage, Joseph Stronach, James' uncle, built a water-powered lumber mill. The area where the settlement was located was included in Manistee Township in 1855, when Manistee County Government was organized with Manistee as the County seat. Onekama Township became a separate entity in 1867.

On May 7, 1871, homesteaders from around Portage Lake completed at the site of the present Lake Michigan-Portage Lake Channel the digging of a ditch that lowered the level of Portage Lake 8 to 14 feet, after the owners of the water-powered mill on Portage Creek, the only outlet of the Lake, kept raising the dam on the Creek causing the waters of the Lake to rise higher and higher, and flood farming lands surrounding the Lake. The homesteaders also were not happy with the high toll charged by the mill owners for the use of their Lake Michigan pier.

The lowering of Portage Lake left the water-powered mill and around 3,000,000 feet of logs high and dry. A steam-powered mill continued operating at Portage until it was moved by Augustine W. Farr in 1880 to the site of the present-day Onekama Village Park in what became the Village of Onekama. Portage then was known as "Old Portage," which is the location of Portage Park Resort today. Village Government in Onekama was established in 1891.

In the late 1800's near the end of the lumbering era, Portage Lake developed into a significant resort community. In the 1880's, the first bona fide resort in Manistee County was established at the Glen Springs that are in today's Glen Park. Accommodations at several large resort complexes were in great demand in the first half of the twentieth century. Only one, the Portage Point Inn, is currently serving the public. Fruit farms



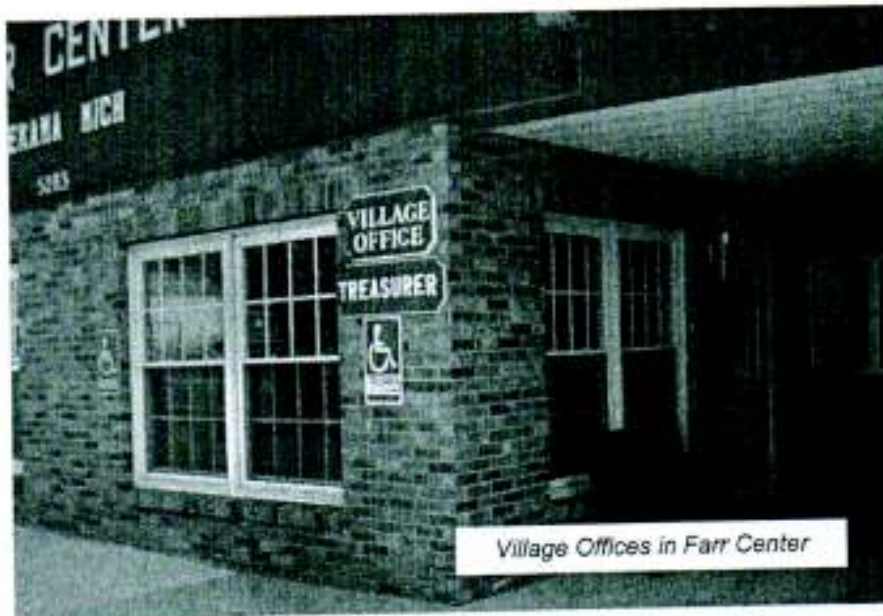
supplied a local cannery. Both rail and boat services were plentiful, predating the roads, cars, and trucks that are known today.

Social Characteristics of Onekama Township and Village

Some of the social characteristics of Onekama Township and Village have been used in the rationales for the goals, objectives, and action programs that appear later in this Plan, so a brief presentation of these characteristics only will be made here. The 2000 census figures are shown in charts included in the Appendix on pages A-3-A-9.

Community Population

The 2000 census has some interesting statistics. Onekama Township and Village had a total population of 1,514 people. This is an increase of 20 percent since the 1990 census. Of this population count for the 2000 census, 562 people are in the Village and 952 people are outside of the Village in the Township (see page A-2).



Village Offices in Farr Center

Number and Location of Households

There are 603 households in the Township and Village. (See page A-3.) There are approximately 1,115 residential addresses in Onekama Township (see map on page A-11). Aside from the obvious concentration of population shown by these addresses in the Village of Onekama, there is a general concentration around Portage Lake, with centers of density in the resort areas at Portage Point, North ("Andy's") Point (Bayview), Hilltop/Clark Road (Little Eden Camp area), Easy Street (Sandy Point), Wic-a-te-wah, Red Park, and Pierport. (See map on page A-12.)

Population Distribution (Breakdown by Age, Gender, Race, and Income Level)

The median age of Onekama Township and Village is 45.3. There are more residents above 65 years and over (366 or 24.1 percent) than school-age children from 5 to 19 years of age (282 or 18.7 percent). Males (763 or 50.4 percent) slightly outnumber females (751 or 49.6 percent). White people (1,405 or 92.8 percent) are predominate. Hispanics or Latinos (of any race) are listed at 150 or 9.9 percent of the population (1,514 people) in the figures for 2000. There is no apparent concentration of any ethnic group. (See page A-3.)

The 2000 per capita income figure for the Township and Village is \$20,919. Based on census information taken from 605 households, the median income is \$39,792 while the mean income is \$52,170. Out of 1,443 persons at all income levels, 139 (9.6 percent) were considered below the poverty level. (See pages A-4, A-5 for additional figures.)

Locations of Populations with Unique Needs

Though there are no obvious concentrations of populations with unique needs—disabled persons, low-income people, minorities, or senior citizens—in the Township or Village, the needs of these people have been taken into consideration in developing the goals, objectives, and action programs of this Five-Year Plan. Disabled persons 5 years and over in Onekama Township numbered 278 or 18.9 percent out of a population of 1,470.

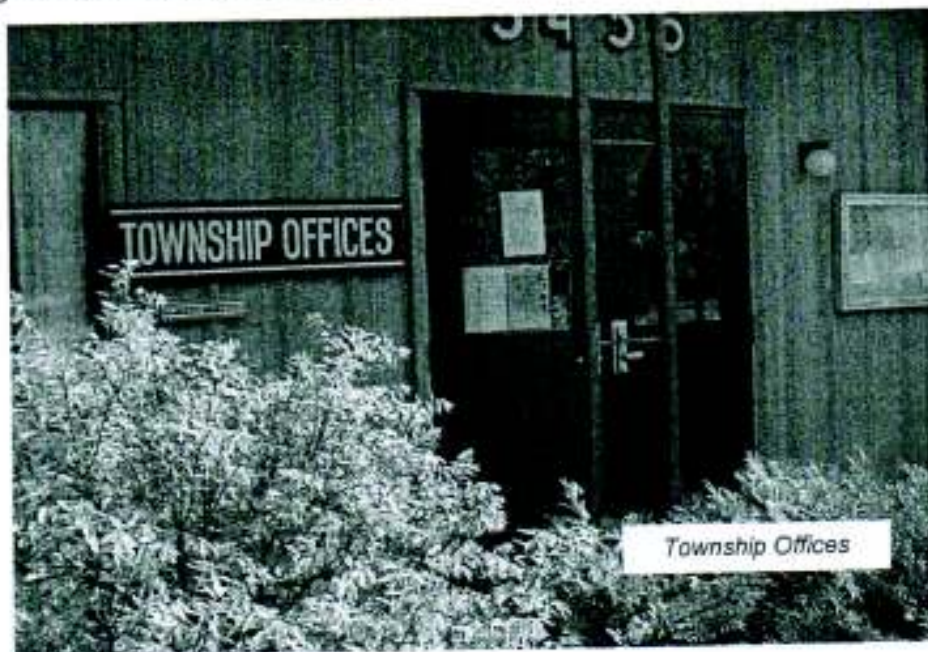
(See page A-6 for additional figures.) Those 65 years and older (334) with a disability numbered 119 or 35.6 percent, according to the 2000 census information.

Employment Trends

Of 1,243 people 16 years and older in Onekama Township and Village, 608 (48.9 percent) were employed, 55 (4.4 percent) were unemployed, and 580 people (46.7 percent) were not in the labor force. (Additional figures are on page A-7.) Of the 608 employed persons, 220 (36.2 percent) were in management, professional, and related occupations; 95 (15.6 percent) were in service occupations; 132 (21.7 percent) were in sales and office occupations; 32 (5.3 percent) were in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations; 63 (10.4 percent) were in construction, extraction, and maintenance operations; and 66 (10.9 percent) were in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations. (See pages A-8, A-9 for additional figures.)

Onekama Township and Village are both a retirement community and a "bedroom community" to the Manistee area. However, the area is changing more toward a retirement community. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. This trend is attributable to both the decline of manufacturing jobs in Manistee and the bulk of new residents looking for resort and retirement homes.

The economy of Onekama Township and Village is based on three major areas: tourism, agriculture, and related jobs. Many Township and Village residents work outside of the Community. The impact of tourism and seasonal residents can be seen by looking at the increase in summer employment at restaurants, resorts, and marinas. Several businesses are only open in the warmer months of the year.



The Village of Onekama is primarily a "convenience shopping location," with a full-scale grocery store; two convenience stores with gasoline stations; a building supply center; a seasonal gallery specializing in art; a seasonal art and gift shop; a video store; a wine shop; a bait shop; and a store stocking games, toys, and souvenirs.

Service-related businesses in Onekama Village include two real estate agencies; a full-service bank; two beauty and appearance salons; a spa; a Laundromat; six restaurants (two serving liquor); four motels; two bed-and-breakfast establishments; two marinas; an interiors shop; two building contractors; and one plumbing, heating, and electrical firm. Service-related businesses in the Township are a well-driller, two marinas on Portage Lake (one of which also operates the two locations in the Village of Onekama), a trailer and RV campground, a restaurant (also serving liquor), two church camps, and an inn providing dining (with liquor) and accommodations. There is one industry also located in the Township.

Meeting the Challenge of Providing Recreation for All

A great many people live here for months each year but have permanent residences elsewhere and are not listed in the local census. The 2000 census shows that 41.9 percent of the houses are homes for seasonal, recreational, and occasional use (see page A-3 for additional information). Thousands of visitors are here for shorter times at Portage Point Inn, the summer campgrounds, motels, religious camps, and bed-and-breakfast establishments. Therefore, the challenge is to provide quality recreational opportunities for the permanent

residents as well as for the flood of seasonal residents and visitors (tourists). In this Five-Year Plan, are listed projects that will hopefully meet this challenge. Since tourism is an important factor in the economy of this community, some of the goals, objectives, and action programs are specifically targeted to interest and serve these visitors.

Physical Characteristics of Onekama Township and Village

Much of the material regarding the physical characteristics of Onekama Township and Village has been used in the rationales for the goals, objectives, and action programs that appear later in this Plan, so a brief presentation of these characteristics will only be made here.

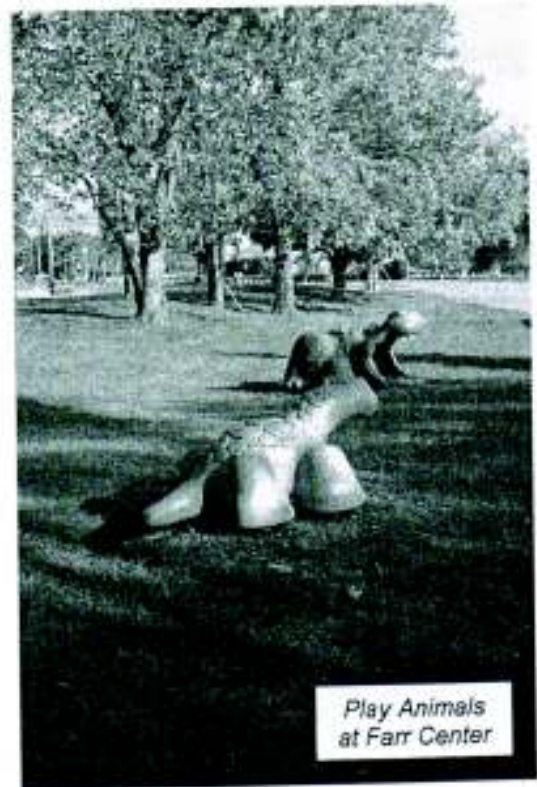
Geography

The surface geography of Onekama Township and Village is a product of glaciations, which last occurred about 10,000 years ago. The geology of the Township and Village is relatively complex, consisting of three major glacial features: (1) end moraine, (2) ground moraine, and (3) glacial outwash plain; and two dominant post-glacial features: (1) sand dunes and (2) exposed ground moraine formerly under Portage Lake. "Moraine" is a deposit of glacial till at the edge of a glacier. One might view moraine as either a ridge of earth pushed up in front of an advancing glacier or earth deposited from the runoff of a stationary glacier.

Generally, the area from Manistee City extending north along Lake Michigan is the Manistee Moraine. It has the locations of better farm soils than found elsewhere in the County. The good soils, combined with hilly terrain that enables frost drainage (as frost seeks low areas), provide excellent land for fruit growing. In addition, the area's proximity to Lake Michigan provides a lake-effect moderate climate that contributes further to the ability to grow fruit and season-sensitive crops. This results in large areas of Onekama Township that are considered to have unique farming conditions. Those conditions favor fruit growing, and broccoli and cauliflower crops. The large, flat area in the northeast corner of Onekama Township is an outwash plain, which is a plain formed when water moving away from a glacier deposits sand and silt, creating flat areas and fluvial fans. This land is poor for farming.

Portage Lake, the dominant natural feature of the Township, was once a bay of glacial Lake Nipissing (predecessor to Lake Michigan about 3,000 to 4,000 years ago with an elevation of about 604 feet above today's sea level). The development of sand dunes is thought to have closed Portage Lake off from Lake Michigan. Around Portage Lake is an area similar to a lacustrine plain. A major characteristic of lacustrine plains in Manistee County is the presence of a lot of wetlands and poorly drained soils. Though the Portage Lake area is not a lacustrine plain, it has many of the same characteristics. Specifically, the area referred to here is a ground moraine, surrounded on all sides except the west by the Manistee Moraine. After the retreat of the last glaciers, Portage Lake's waters submerged this area. In 1871 when the Channel was put through connecting Lake Michigan and Portage Lake, the water level was artificially lowered, exposing former Lake bottom.

Characteristics of the area around Portage Lake include it being laced with many spring-fed streams; a lot of wetlands; soils associated with wetlands (marl, organics, clay, etc.); and a relatively high water table with a predominate horizontal movement close to the surface. Many artesian or flowing wells have been established around the middle to eastern shores of Portage Lake. The soil is relatively infertile and poor for agricultural purposes.



*Play Animals
at Farr Center.*

Kettle lakes or potholes, created by a block of glacial ice buried with sediment in a moraine or plain that later melts, are common in Onekama Township. Generally, local kettle lakes do not appear to be connected to a surface-water drainage pattern or to a river. Their drainage basins are usually small, and they might include wetland pockets. Gordon Lake in Section 24 is a notable well-known kettle lake.

Sand dunes are found predominantly along the existing Lake Michigan shoreline, from the Township's southern boundary to about the middle of Section 16. The dunes separate Lake Michigan and Portage Lake. They are the basis of much of the recreational activity (swimming, sunbathing, and viewing the waters) associated with Portage Lake and Lake Michigan.

Topography

The map on page A-13 depicts the topography of Onekama Township and Village. There is significant rolling terrain in areas, which adds much character to the Township and Village, and is a sharp contrast to the flatter terrain just to the south. The areas on the map that have moderate to extreme slopes have limitations for high-density residential development.

Water Resources

The surface water for Onekama Township and Village is shown in the map on page A-15. The predominate body of water besides Lake Michigan is Portage Lake in Sections 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, and 36. The second largest body of water is Gordon Lake, a kettle pond in Section 24. Onekama Township encompasses three watersheds: Portage Lake, Big Bear Creek (and Bear Lake), and the Lake Michigan shoreline. The Portage Lake watershed is the major drainage pattern in Onekama Township and Village. The watershed extends into Bear Lake, Brown, and Manistee Townships. (See map on page A-36.)



Sunset House on Lake Michigan

Wetlands in Onekama Township are mainly former pothole lakes or those associated with the lowlands of existing lakes. Significant wetlands are shown on page A-16. The wetlands are highly complex natural systems in the ecological balance of nature that provide productive areas for breeding, nesting, and rearing of birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles. Wetlands also play an important part in sediment control and wastewater treatment. This is particularly true with the wetlands at the east end of Portage Lake, where they act as a major sediment filter. Also, the wetlands play an important role in maintaining and improving the water quality of the Lake.

Portage Lake, the Channel, and Lake Michigan are the key resources for recreational activities in Onekama Township and Village. The cycle of nature in the wetlands brings abundant wildlife for viewing and enjoyment, hunting, fishing, and trapping, which in turn also provide an important contribution to recreation in Onekama Township.

Vegetation

Understanding the vegetative character of the Portage Lake area is important as concern has been expressed about the protection of the area's environmental features as well as the fact that the vegetative cover is an important aesthetic element of any region and plays an important role in natural environmental systems and processes.

The primary vegetative cover in the Portage Lake area, excluding residential and agricultural areas, consists of northern hardwood forests. Forestry for Onekama Township is an important industry, especially due to its proximity to Packaging Corporation of America, a corrugated medium paper and pulp mill, and various loggers and handlers.

Forestlands also contribute significantly to recreation in the Township by providing areas to observe wildlife and wildflowers that thrive profusely in their shaded and often damp, even wet areas. Glen Park (west side of Fourth Avenue above Main Street in Onekama), is an excellent example of a wooded tract offering opportunity to see wildlife and wildflowers while hiking along Glen Creek to Glen Springs.

In the non-forested dunes can often be seen a totally different vegetation that thrives under arid conditions and enjoys growing in the sand. Beach grasses of various varieties offer a green contrast to the desert-like sand. Wildflowers grow here, too. The pitcher's thistle, which is said to be locally common, is considered to be quite rare and threatened on the State and National levels.

Climate

The climate in Onekama Township and Village is tempered by the westerly winds over the waters of Lake Michigan (lake effect), the shore of which borders the Township on the west. In the summer, the breezes off of Lake Michigan have a cooling effect, especially along the shoreline. Summer day temperatures often fluctuate between 65 degrees and 85 degrees. Extremes have seen the temperatures rise into the nineties. Summer night temperatures, of course, fall back. The air is relatively humidity-free during most summer days, making the heat "dry." These weather conditions are ideal for many outdoor recreational activities. And, watching the sun "disappear" into Lake Michigan as night comes on is an experience that only can be equaled by seeing the moon set into the Lake during early morning.



Winter winds pick up moisture from the lake water, bringing lake-effect snow as the winds deposit the moisture onto the land in a frozen form. The average snowfall for Manistee County, according to the Manistee County Road Commission, is around 116 inches, with the highest being 188 inches in the winter of 1996-1997 and the lowest being 50.5 inches during the 1982-1983 winter. These figures are according to recent records kept by the Road Commission. The problem of measuring the snowfall is often compounded by the winds blowing the snow into drifts. The blowing snow also sometimes creates white-out conditions, causing visibility problems similar to those created by fog.

These same winds, though, temper the harshness of the winter temperatures, most of which are between 10 and 40 degrees. Extreme temperatures are considered those that are around zero and below. The days lengthen as the shadows shorten during the sun's return north in the winter and spring. The trees leaf out usually in middle to late May.

Zoning

Evidence has been found of zoning in Onekama Township as early as the 1950's. Zoning was not put into effect in the Village of Onekama until the 1990's. A map on page A-17 details the zoning of Onekama

Township. The area zoned agricultural-residential in the northeast quarter of the Township follows strong parallels to existing land use, neighborhoods, and soils particularly suited for farming. Most other areas are resort-residential, which reflects the strong use of Township lands for recreational purposes. Also, the commercial-residential area (Sections 35 and 36), where a restaurant, two marinas, and a trailer and RV park exist, is involved with providing services for those people seeking recreation. Further commercial zoning districts have not been established in the Township, as areas for additional commercial activity are provided within Onekama Village, where this activity is more appropriate because a sewer system exists.

The special and unique residential area along the little-developed portion of the Lake Michigan shoreline in Sections 9 and 16 provides protection for the terrain in an area that has high bluffs, beach, sand dunes, and high-risk erosion, which certainly is preservation directed toward several aspects of recreation.

Fish and Wildlife Resources

Fish abound in the Lake Michigan and Portage Lake waters of Onekama Township and Village. Lake trout, steelhead, coho salmon, chinook salmon, and brown trout entice fisherman in Lake Michigan. The waters have been made more plentiful with fish due to large plants of steelhead and Chinook salmon by the M-DNR. Some of the streams that bring clear spring water into Portage Lake also contain fish. In the inland waters are often found trout, walleye, pike, bass, perch, and a wide variety of panfish.

Fishing draws new tourists to the area annually while also providing relaxing recreation for area residents and resorters. Many fishermen have personal boats from which to throw out their lines; others seek the use of the Channel piers or hire charter boat captains. There are two public boat launches for those who wish to put their boats in the Lake. A marina with several locations also provides facilities for fish cleaning. In the winter, many fishermen take their shanties out onto Portage Lake for shelter while fishing through holes cut in the ice. This activity usually starts when Portage Lake is frozen over in January and lasts until the ice starts thawing in March.

Wildlife in Onekama Township includes deer and turkeys, which are hunted during season. However, hunting does not draw those from other areas seeking recreation in the numbers that fishing does. In the Portage Point and in much of the Portage Park resort areas (portions of Sections 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, and 33), there is a center-fire rifle ordinance (Regulation No. 151 for Manistee County) prohibiting hunting with center-fire rifles. The larger aspect of wildlife for recreation in Onekama Township is the observation of the animals and birds.

Glen Park is an excellent area to observe nature as is North Point Park. Many resorters observe animals and birds from their own cottages. Deer, red foxes, and raccoons are entertaining to watch; but the deer and raccoons have become destructive, with the deer consuming flowers and shrubs, and the raccoons finding any way possible to enter trash cans and garbage bags. Resorters and residents alike often put out bird feeders to attract the many kinds of songbirds, some of which can be viewed in Onekama Township and Village throughout the year. Song sparrows, indigo buntings, brown thrashers, American woodcocks, and northern harriers are among the birds that can be viewed near forested areas.

Transportation Systems

Transportation in Onekama Township and Village is based almost solely on trucks, busses, and automobiles traveling on roads throughout the area. Boating through the use of pleasure craft in Portage Lake and Lake Michigan would be considered another form of transportation in the area. Although vessels can often be viewed in Lake Michigan, Lake freighters and passenger ships do not come into Portage Lake. Manistee County Blacker Airport at 2323 Airport Road (southeast of River Road and US-31 in Manistee Township) is less than 10 miles away from Onekama Village and has two daily flights connecting with other airlines.

Manistee County Transportation, Inc., 180 Memorial Drive in Manistee, is a Federal/State subsidized public bus transportation system, which services all of Onekama Township. Services include handicapped and senior citizen transportation, Dial-a-Ride (door-to-door and demand response), bus routes in and around the City of Manistee, worker commuter service from Onekama Township to employment locations in the Manistee Lake area, and transportation for students going to West Shore Community College south of Manistee. The system also provides door-to-door pickup during scheduled rural service times in Onekama Township.