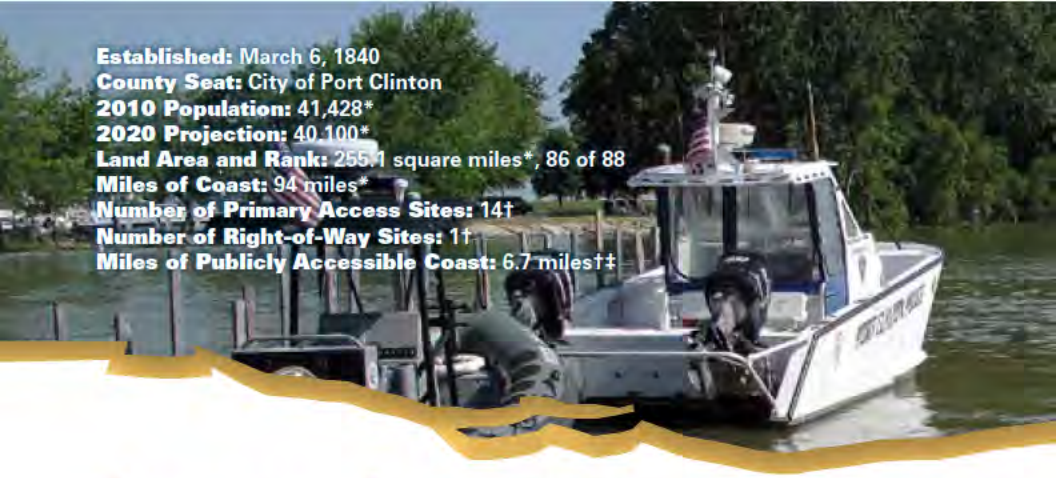

Established: March 6, 1840
County Seat: City of Port Clinton
2010 Population: 41,428*
2020 Projection: 40,100*
Land Area and Rank: 255.1 square miles*, 86 of 88
Miles of Coast: 94 miles*
Number of Primary Access Sites: 14†
Number of Right-of-Way Sites: 1†
Miles of Publicly Accessible Coast: 6.7 miles†‡

Ottawa County

Ottawa County boasts 94 miles of combined Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay shore, more than any other Ohio coastal county. Ottawa County is adjacent to Lucas, Wood, Sandusky and Erie counties. The eastern portion of the county is well-defined geographically by the Catawba Island and Marblehead peninsulas. Catawba Island Peninsula juts north into Lake Erie while Marblehead Peninsula extends east between Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay to the north and south. The Bass Island Archipelago, which includes South Bass (1,523 acres), Middle Bass (771 acres) and North Bass (677 acres) islands and several smaller islands (each less than 100 acres), is located north of Catawba Island.

Ottawa County is named after the Ottawa Indians, a Native American tribe that once inhabited the area. "Ottawa" is an anglicized spelling of the word "adawe," which means "trader" or "to trade."

On September 29, 1812, the first War of 1812 battle on Ohio soil was fought in Ottawa County at Crystal Rock on the south side of Marblehead Peninsula. An Ohio Historical Marker commemorating the skirmish is located at Battlefield Park in Danbury Township. In September of 1813, the Battle of Lake Erie was fought between American and British naval fleets. The battle took place near Rattlesnake Island, northwest of Put-in-Bay, and proved to be the pivotal War of 1812 clash. Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry led the Americans to victory over the Robert Heriot Barclay-commanded British fleet. The decisive victory secured the Americans' control of the Great Lakes and the Northwest Territory during the war.

During the Civil War, a prisoner-of-war camp was built on Johnson's Island to incarcerate captured Confederate officers. The island was selected as the prison site due to its isolation in the Sandusky Bay and because it would be difficult to escape. The prison opened in April 1862. It housed prisoners until its decommissioning in September 1865. Camp Perry (named in honor of Commander Perry), located on the Lake Erie shore in Erie Township, is an Ohio National Guard training facility. It features the largest outdoor rifle range in the world. During the First World War, Camp Perry was a training center for Army officers and marksmanship instructors. The facility also housed German and Italian prisoners of war during the Second World War. Camp Perry hosts annual shooting matches and the NRA's National Outdoor Rifle & Pistol Championships.

Built in 1821, the Marblehead Lighthouse is the oldest continuously-operating lighthouse on the Great Lakes. It is located at the eastern tip of the Marblehead Peninsula in Marblehead and is one of the most visited and most photographed landmarks in Lake Erie's Western Basin. Fifteen lighthouse keepers, two of whom were women, have tended the beacon. The first keeper was Revolutionary War-veteran Benjamin Wolcott. The U.S. Coast Guard assumed the operation and maintenance of the light in 1946. Its beacon was automated in 1958. Today, the lighthouse's 300mm lens projects a green signal that flashes every six seconds and is visible eleven nautical miles away.

Ottawa County features many popular Lake Erie-based tourist attractions, including the Lake Erie Islands, Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial and Marblehead Lighthouse. Ottawa County also offers exceptional fishing in the Western Basin, birding opportunities and many marinas.

** Includes islands*
† Mainland only; see also Lake Erie Islands chapter
‡ Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and Magee Marsh Wildlife Area are inventoried as Ottawa County sites, although portions extend into Lucas County. Miles of publicly accessible coast for these sites are broken down by county; see Lucas County chapter

Ottawa County Public Access Sites

OT1	Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
OT2	Magee Marsh Wildlife Area
OT3	Camp Perry Beach
OT4	Waterworks Park
OT5	Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve
OT6	Port Clinton City Beach
OT7	Catawba Island State Park
OT8	East Harbor State Park
OT9	Mazurik Access Area
OT10	Marblehead Lighthouse State Park
OT11	Lake Point Park
OT12	Johnson's Island Confederate Soldier Cemetery
OT13	Dempsey Fishing Access
OT14	Sandusky Bay Bridge Access – North

(see Lake Erie Islands chapter)

LEI1	South Bass Island Lighthouse
LEI2	South Bass Island State Park
LEI3	Alfred Parker Park
LEI4/5	West Shore Ice Ramps
LEI6	Stone Laboratory Peach Point Campus
LEI7	Oak Point State Park
LEI8	DeRivera Park
LEI9	Put-in-Bay Village Marina
LEI10	Put-in-Bay Public Boat Launch
LEI11	Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial
LEI12	Scheeff East Point Nature Preserve
LEI13	Put-in-Bay Village Beach
LEI14	Middle Bass Island State Park
LEI15	Petersen Woods
LEI16	Kuehnle Wildlife Area
LEI17	Middle Bass Island East Point Preserve
LEI18	Honey Point Wildlife Area
LEI19	North Bass Island State Park
LEI20	Fox's Marsh Wildlife Area

Ottawa County Right-of-Way Sites

(see pages 40-41)

ROW20	NE Catawba Road (State Route 53), Catawba Island Township
ROW21	East Point (State Route 357), Put-in-Bay Township

Coastal Cities

Port Clinton

Coastal Villages

Marblehead
Put-in-Bay

Coastal Townships

Bay Township
Carroll Township
Catawba Island Township
Danbury Township
Erie Township
Portage Township
Put-in-Bay Township

Public Access Management

State	7
Local	4
Federal	3

Top: Waterworks Park (OT4), Port Clinton

LUCAS COUNTY
OT 1
OT 2
OT 3
Lake Erie
Krause
Division
Duff Washa
Walbridge East
Zenser
Lemon
Velliquette
Toussaint River
Trowbridge
Licket-Harder
Toussaint North
Leutz
Rider
Toussaint East
Fick
Genzman
Stange
Benton-Carroll
Toussaint-Portage
Camp Perry Western
True
Rocky Ridge
Bier
Salem-Carroll
Toussaint South
Carroll-Erie
Brokate
Rymers
Tetlow
Kolb
Vogel
Oak Harbor
Behlman
Leutz
Atwater
Portage River
Ottawa County
Dewitt
Portage River S
Schau
Streeter
Dam-Hopfinger
Oak Harbor Southeast
Smith
Weis
Slammer Portage
Harris Salem
Four Mile House
Portage South
Woodrick
Mud Creek
Mulcahy
Little Portage East
Elmore Eastern
Hetrick
Lattimore
Yeasting
Bloom
Boysen
Public Access Site
Public Access Entrance
Alternate Entrance

North Bass Island
N
Sugar Island
Rattlesnake Island
Fox
Middle Bass Island
Ballast Island
357
Green Island
Put-in-Bay
LAKE ERIE ISLANDS
South Bass Island
Kelleys Island
575
ROW20
OT 7
Mouse Island
53
OT 8
OT 9
OT 10
OT 11
OT 5
OT 6
OT 4
NW Catawba
NE Catawba
Main
Marblehead
Sand
163
269
Lightner
Church
Engelbeck
Harborn
163
State
Bayshore
Port Clinton
Gypsum
Lockwood
Wornell
2
269
OT 13
Johnson's Island
OT 14
Sandusky Bay
Bay View
OT 12
Sandusky
Barrett
SANDUSKY COUNTY
ERIE COUNTY
6
4
Wahl
Interior Access Site
Right-of-Way Access Site
3 Miles

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Location:
14000 West State Route 2, at Lickert-Harder Road

Jurisdiction:
Jerusalem Township (Lucas County)
Benton Township (Ottawa County)

Main Entrance:
Lat: N 41° 36.14′
Long: W 083° 12.18′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie
Crane Creek

Site Type:
Natural
Outdoors
Educational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore

Location Map:

Amenities:

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex comprises almost 10,000 acres of managed land in both Lucas and Ottawa counties. It is the largest Lake Erie public access site in Ohio. The main entrance is located on State Route 2 at the intersection of Lickert-Harder Road in Benton Township (Ottawa County). The refuge is situated between Metzger Marsh (northwest) and Magee Marsh (east) state wildlife areas. These three contiguous sites were once part of the vast 900,000-acre Great Black Swamp, which bordered most of western Lake Erie and once covered much of northwest Ohio and extended into Indiana. Today, these sites exhibit some of Ohio's finest remaining coastal wetlands. The refuge provides habitat for many waterfowl and other migratory birds as well as flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species. This site is a prime location for wildlife viewing and photography. It was listed as one of the country's top ten birding locations. Hunting is allowed by permit only. The refuge also features a visitor center, gift shop and wildlife observation platforms. Indoor and outdoor education programs and staff-guided walking tours are offered throughout the year.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

OT1.1 Crane Creek Estuary Trail Access

Location:
Accessible from Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

Lat/Long:
N 41° 37.81′
W 083° 11.59′

Shore Access: Yes
Path to Shore

Amenities:

The lakefront portion of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is accessible from Magee Marsh Wildlife Area via the Crane Creek Estuary Trail, which opened in 2012. The estuary trail begins near the west end of the Magee Marsh Bird Trail and loops through open woods and along the beach.

OT1.2 Grimm Prairie

Location:
Krause Road, east of State Route 2

Lat/Long:
N 41° 36.73′
W 083° 15.40′

Amenities:

Grimm Prairie is an interior roadside site that does not provide access to Lake Erie or the visitor center.

OT1.3 Stange Prairie

Location:
Stange Road, south of Krause Road

Lat/Long:
N 41° 36.62′
W 083° 14.42′

Amenities:

Stange Prairie is an interior roadside site that does not provide access to Lake Erie or the visitor center.

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

including Turtle Creek Access

Location:
13229 West State Route 2, at Benton-Carroll Road

Jurisdiction:
Jerusalem Township (Lucas County)
Benton Township (Ottawa County)
Carroll Township (Ottawa County)

Main Entrance:
Lat: N 41° 36.72′
Long: W 083° 11.32′

Turtle Creek Access:
Lat: N 41° 36.25′
Long: W 083° 9.46′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie
Turtle Creek

Site Type:
Natural
Outdoors

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

The 2,202-acre Magee Marsh Wildlife Area is located in Benton and Carroll townships in Ottawa County and also contains the easternmost tip of Lucas County (Jerusalem Township). The wildlife area includes the former Crane Creek State Park and is adjacent to the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (west). The main entrance is located on State Route 2 in Benton Township. Magee Marsh features the Sportsmen's Migratory Bird Center, the Hawkwatch Tower observation platform and multiple trails, including the Magee Walking Trail, Wildlife Beach Trail, Bird Trail, Gallagher Memorial Trail and the Ottawa-Magee Partnership Trail, which connects to Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. The wood-planked and handicapped-accessible Bird Trail is a popular pathway for birders, especially during spring and fall migration. The Turtle Creek Access, which offers small boat and fishing access, is located within Magee Marsh Wildlife Area and located on SR 2 about 1.5 miles to the east of the main entrance.

Camp Perry Beach

Location:
1000 Lawrence Road, at Scorpion Road

Jurisdiction:
Erie Township

Latitude:
N 41° 32.79′

Longitude:
W 083° 00.81′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Stairs to Shore (over wall)
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

The publicly accessible Camp Perry Beach is located on the grounds of the 640-acre Camp Perry Military Reservation. The main entrance to Camp Perry is on Niagara Road, north of the State Route 2/State Route 358 intersection. The beach is situated behind the Camp Perry Lodging & Conference Center facility on Lawrence Road. Public amenities include a swimming beach, fishing pier and restroom facilities. The military grounds also include a museum and self-guided tours with interpretive signage.

Waterworks Park

including Jefferson Street Pier

Location:
East Perry Street (State Route 163) at Jefferson Street

Jurisdiction:
Port Clinton

Latitude:
N 41° 30.86'

Longitude:
W 082° 56.13'

Waterbody:
Lake Erie
Portage River

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Shore Structure

Location Map:

Amenities:

Waterworks Park in downtown Port Clinton borders both Lake Erie and the southeast bank of the Portage River. Fishing access is available along the river and from the Jefferson Street Pier, which extends into the lake at the river's mouth. Derby Pond, a small pond located in the eastern part of the park, is stocked with fish to provide a third angling option. Some of the park's other amenities include a handicapped-accessible trail, picnic area, playground, skate park and baseball/softball field. Waterworks Park is adjacent to the Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve (east).

Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve

Location:
East Perry Street (State Route 163) at Lincoln Street

Jurisdiction:
Port Clinton

Latitude:
N 41° 30.85′

Longitude:
W 082° 55.85′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

The Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve is located in Port Clinton between Waterworks Park (west) and Port Clinton City Beach (east), totaling nearly one mile of publicly accessible Lake Erie shore. The preserve was purchased in 2009 with funding from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) administered by the ODNR Office of Coastal Management, and a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund grant. The city of Port Clinton, the Trust for Public Land and the Black Swamp Conservancy were integral partners in the land acquisition. The city owns the property and Black Swamp Conservancy holds a conservation easement over the preserve, requiring that the land be permanently maintained as a nature preserve. The preserve includes wetlands, marsh and a one-third mile sand beach. A crushed-stone walking trail through the preserve was completed in 2014. The trail connects to both adjacent access sites.

Port Clinton City Beach
including Lakeview City Park

Location:
East Perry Street (State Route 163), between Ash and Cedar streets

Jurisdiction:
Port Clinton

Latitude:
N 41° 30.84'

Longitude:
W 082° 55.49'

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore

Location Map:

Amenities:

Beach

Lakeview City Park

Port Clinton City Beach is located on East Perry Street (State Route 163) across from Lakeview City Park. The access site features a 2,180-foot long swimming beach and benches to enjoy scenic views of Lake Erie. Fishing is also permitted. Parking is located at Lakeview City Park. A crosswalk with a pedestrian-activated traffic signal connects the parking lot to the beach. Additional recreational amenities, including picnic areas and shelter, restrooms, basketball court and playground are located at the city park. Port Clinton City Beach is also adjacent to the Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve (west).

Catawba Island State Park

Location:
4049 East Moore's Dock Road, west of NW Catawba Road

Jurisdiction:
Catawba Island Township

Latitude:
N 41° 34.45'

Longitude:
W 082° 51.41'

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Shore Structure
Boat Ramp

Location Map:

Amenities:

The nearly 10-acre Catawba Island State Park is a day-use park primarily used for Lake Erie fishing and boating. The park is located on East Moore's Dock Road on the west side of Catawba Island Township. The park features a large fishing pier, a three-lane public boat ramp, a 120-vehicle/trailer parking lot, restrooms, picnic shelter and playground. A 400-foot cobble beach stretches to the northwest from the pier. A historic marker on site denotes the westernmost boundary of the Connecticut Western Reserve, which crosses just to the east of Catawba Island State Park.

OT8

East Harbor State Park

Ottawa County

Location:
1169 North
Buck Road
(State Route 269)

Jurisdiction:
Danbury Township

Alternate Entrance:
Trail access from
Buck Road

Main Entrance:
Lat: N 41° 32.71′
Long: W 082° 49.05′

Buck Road:
Lat: N 41° 33.55′
Long: W 082° 48.56′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie
West Harbor
Middle Harbor
East Harbor

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Terrain

Location Map:

East Harbor State Park in Danbury Township features a range of natural settings and recreational opportunities for day-use and overnight visitors. Natural features at the park include sandy beaches, wooded areas and East and Middle harbors, which are wetland marshes that attract an abundance of waterfowl, shorebirds and other wildlife species. Middle Harbor is a game sanctuary where wildlife can find refuge. Hunting is not permitted in Middle Harbor. The park affords many wildlife viewing opportunities. Fishing is permitted in Lake Erie and in the harbors.

Amenities:

See right for more

Campground use only

East Harbor State Park

OT8.1

East Harbor State Park Marina

Location:
2188 North Buck Road

Lat/Long:
N 41° 33.48′
W 082° 49.19′

Waterbody:
West Harbor

Shore Access: Yes
Boat Ramp

Amenities:

The marina offers a boat ramp, seasonal and day-use dock rentals, boat fuel, a full-time mechanic and boat supplies. A fee is required to use the marina launch.

The 1,831-acre East Harbor State Park boasts 11 hiking trails and one multi-use trail. The Middle Harbor Trail and Middle Harbor Extension, totaling 1.25 miles, follow the bank of Middle Harbor and lead to two observation platforms. The Channel Dunes Loop, South Beach Trail, Water's Edge Trail and Wetlands Trail total 6 miles and intertwine on a natural strip of land located between Lake Erie and the East Harbor. The 0.75-mile West Harbor Trail follows the West Harbor boat entrance channel and connects to the swimming beach. Its trailhead is located at the northern terminus of Buck Road. The Channel Dunes Loop, Meadows Trail, Middle Harbor Trail, South Beach Trail and Wetlands Trail are all available for snowmobiling in winter.

The park's accessible Lake Erie shore is nearly 2.5 miles long and includes a 1,500-foot long public swimming beach. Picnic tables, the North Bathhouse and vending machines are available at the beach. The swimming beach is not dog-friendly, however pets are allowed on the South Beach, or Boater's Beach. East Harbor State Park also offers two boat launches – a free ramp within the campground that provides access to East Harbor (for campers only), and a ramp at the park's marina, which provides access to West Harbor. Both harbors have channels with direct access to Lake Erie.

East Harbor State Park's 571-site campground includes an amphitheater, camp store and nature center, among other amenities. Overnight guests may reserve one of two camper cabins or a Yurt. Glacial grooves can be found in the camp area.

Mazurik Access Area

Location:
8957 North Shore Road

Jurisdiction:
Danbury Township

Latitude:
N 41° 32.46'

Longitude:
W 082° 45.81'

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Boat Ramp

Location Map:

Amenities:

The 15.9-acre Mazurik Access Area is located on the north side of the Marblehead Peninsula on North Shore Boulevard just west of Lakeside. This site provides boaters and anglers direct access to Lake Erie. The Mazurik Access includes a four-lane concrete boat ramp, a 215-space vehicle/trailer parking lot with 40 car-only spaces and a handicapped-accessible fishing pier. The parking lot is lighted and accessible 24 hours. Additional amenities are limited, but include restrooms.

Marblehead Lighthouse State Park

Location:
110 Lighthouse Drive, east of East Main Street (State Route 163)

Jurisdiction:
Marblehead

Latitude:
N 41° 32.18

Longitude:
W 082° 42.75'

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational
Cultural

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

Built in 1821, the Marblehead Lighthouse is the oldest continuously-operating lighthouse on the Great Lakes. It is also one of the most visited and most photographed landmarks in Lake Erie's Western Basin. The lighthouse is the centerpiece attraction and namesake for the 13.5-acre state park located at the eastern tip of the Marblehead Peninsula. The park offers picnicking and scenic views of Kelleys and South Bass islands and also of Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky. Other amenities at Marblehead Lighthouse State Park include a handicapped-accessible paved path to the lighthouse, restrooms and viewing binoculars. Fishing is permitted along the limestone bedrock shore. Guided tours of the lighthouse are offered for a fee between Memorial and Labor days, and the on-site Keeper's House includes a museum. The lighthouse is not handicapped accessible.

Lake Point Park

Location:
11257 East Bay Shore Road (State Route 163)

Jurisdiction:
Marblehead

Latitude:
N 41° 31.63′

Longitude:
W 082° 42.77′

Waterbody:
Lake Erie

Site Type:
Recreational
Scenic

Shore Access:
No
Edge of Bluff

Location Map:

Amenities:

The 8.7-acre Danbury Township-owned Lake Point Park, a former roadside park, is located on both sides of Bay Shore Road (State Route 163) in Marblehead. Scenic Lake Erie access is available at the park's eastern portion. Benches overlooking the lake provide panoramic views to the east toward Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky. Fishing access is also available from the eastern section. Lake Point Park's western portion includes all other amenities, including picnic tables, a shelter house, playground, restrooms and trails. A remnant quarry pond provides a scenic backdrop for picnickers and hikers and is also another fishing option.

Johnson's Island Confederate Soldier Cemetery

Location:
South Confederate Drive, on Johnson's Island

Jurisdiction:
Marblehead

Latitude:
N 41° 30.04'

Longitude:
W 082° 43.80'

Waterbody:
Sandusky Bay

Site Type:
Cultural

Shore Access:
Yes
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

Johnson's Island is a 300-acre island located in Sandusky Bay. In 1861, it was chosen to be the site of a Civil War prisoner-of-war camp to incarcerate captured Confederate soldiers. The first prisoners arrived at Johnson's Island in 1862. More than 9,000 (in some estimates up to 15,000) captured soldiers were held at the prison before it was decommissioned in September 1865. The 1.2-acre Johnson's Island Confederate Soldier Cemetery, which is the only remaining vestige of the prison, includes 206 marked grave sites. The exact number and location of all graves is unknown. The bayside cemetery has a parking area and three monuments dedicated to the soldiers who died at the prison. There are no amenities at the site. The island is accessible via Gaydos Road/Johnson's Island Causeway (toll), which is accessible from Bay Shore Road (State Route 163) in Marblehead.

Dempsey Fishing Access

Location:
Bay Shore Road, south of Hartshorn Road

Jurisdiction:
Danbury Township

Latitude:
N 41° 30.46′

Longitude:
W 082° 45.65′

Waterbody:
Sandusky Bay

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Boat Ramp

Location Map:

Amenities:

The 66.8-acre Dempsey Fishing Access is located on the south side of the Marblehead Peninsula on South Bay Shore Road in Danbury Township, south of Hartshorn Road. This site provides boaters and anglers direct access to Sandusky Bay. The Dempsey Fishing Access includes a four-lane concrete boat ramp, a vehicle/trailer parking lot with 45 car-only spaces, small fishing dock and a handicapped-accessible fishing pier. The parking lot is lighted and accessible 24 hours. Additional amenities are limited, but include restrooms.

Sandusky Bay Bridge Access
(North)

Location:
Bay Shore Road, west of Danbury Road

Jurisdiction:
Danbury Township

Latitude:
N 41° 29.05′

Longitude:
W 082° 49.76′

Waterbody:
Sandusky Bay

Site Type:
Recreational

Shore Access:
Yes
Shore Structure

Location Map:

Amenities:

The Sandusky Bay Bridge Access (North) is a state-operated public fishing site approximately 4.2 miles west of the Dempsey Fishing Access in Danbury Township. The nearly one-mile long access extends south into Sandusky Bay and was once the northern approach to the old Sandusky Bay Bridge. In 1965, the majority of the bridge's traffic was rerouted to the new four-lane Thomas A. Edison Memorial Bridge (State Route 2 and State Route 269). The old two-lane bridge, which connected to Bay View in Erie County, was removed in 1985. The southern causeway approach in Erie County is also a popular fishing location (see ER2). A handicapped-accessible fishing deck was added in 2013.