Established: February 12, 1820
County Seat: City of Fremont
2010 Population: 60,944
2020 Projection: 58,670
Land Area and Rank: 409.2 square miles, 66 of 88
Miles of Coast: 13 miles
Number of Primary Access Sites: 1
Number of Right-of-Way Sites: 0
Miles of Publicly Accessible Coast: 3.5 miles

Sandusky County

Sandusky County is Ohio's only coastal county that does not touch Lake Erie. Rather, the northeastern portion of the county borders 13 miles of the Sandusky Bay shore. Sandusky Bay is an extension of Lake Erie situated between Ottawa, Sandusky and Erie counties to the north, southwest and southeast, respectively. The entire shore of Sandusky Bay is low-lying. In Sandusky County, marshy wetlands and low banks are prominent. Much of the shore is protected with dikes. The Sandusky River and many small tributaries flow into the western portion of Sandusky Bay.

Sandusky County is adjacent to Ottawa, Wood, Seneca, Huron and Erie counties. The name "Sandusky" is a Native American word meaning, "at the cold water." Lower Sandusky (now the city of Fremont) on the Sandusky River traces its beginning to a village of the Wyandot tribe.

Much of Sandusky County was once covered by the Great Black Swamp, a vast wetland ecosystem directly connected to Lake Erie. The glacially-derived wetland included marshes, poorly-drained soils and lush forest cover. It covered nearly 900,000 acres in northwest Ohio and greatly hindered settlement in the area. In 1825, the first road through the swamp was completed. The Maumee and Western Reserve Road, as it was called, was a corduroy road that linked Sandusky County's seat, Fremont, then known as Lower Sandusky, with Perrysburg in Wood County. The placement of the road caused a damming effect and obstructed the swamp's natural drainage. Increased flooding near the road was widespread. The wooden planks that made up the corridor frequently submerged into the muddy ground. The 31-mile road would sometimes take weeks to travel and was once dubbed the worst road in the country. In 1838, it was paved with gravel. Ditches and canals were constructed in the 1850s to drain the Great Black Swamp. Today, the four-lane US Route 20 follows the route of the Maumee and Western Reserve Road.

Spiegel Grove, the former home of President Rutherford B. Hayes is located in Fremont. Construction of the house was completed in 1863. Hayes's uncle and guardian, Sardis Birchard, was the estate's original owner. Hayes inherited Spiegel Grove in 1873 and made it his permanent residence. He died at the home in 1893. Today, the 25-acre estate and 31-room house are part of the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center and open to the public for tours. Founded in 1916, the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, a National Historic Landmark, includes a museum and the nation's first presidential library. Hayes served as the nineteenth President of the United States (1877-1881).

Sandusky County Public Access Sites

SA1 Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area

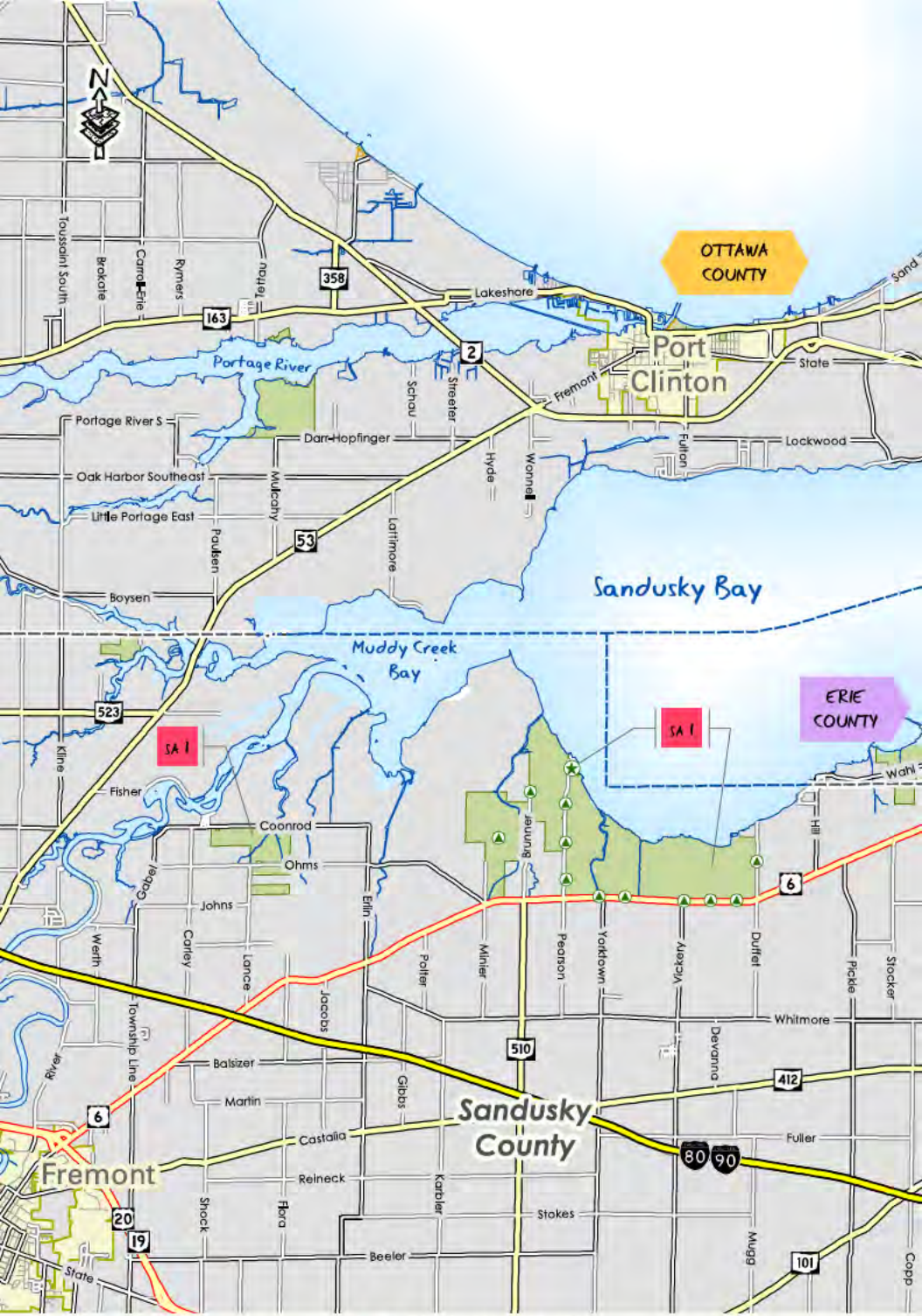
Coastal Townships

Rice Township
Riley Township
Townsend Township

Public Access Management

State 1

Top: Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont


N
OTTAWA COUNTY
Port Clinton
Lakeshore
Portage River
Fremont
State
Lockwood
Fulton
Wonnell
Hyde
Streeter
Schau
Darr-Hopfinger
Portage River S
Oak Harbor Southeast
Little Portage East
Mulcahy
Paulsen
Lattimore
Boysen
Sandusky Bay
Muddy Creek Bay
ERIE COUNTY
SA 1
SA 1
Wahl
Hill
Brunner
Pearson
Yorktown
Vickery
Duffet
Pickle
Stocker
Whitmore
Devanna
Fuller
Mugg
Copp
Stokes
Beeler
Karbler
Gibbs
Jacobs
Erlin
Polter
Minier
Coonrod
Ohms
Johns
Fisher
Kline
Gabel
Carley
Lance
Werth
Township Line
River
Balsizer
Martin
Castalia
Reineck
Shock
Flora
Sandusky County
Fremont
State
Toussaint South
Brokate
Carroll-Erie
Rymers
Tettau
358
163
2
53
523
6
510
412
80
90
20
19
101
Public Access Site
Public Access Entrance
Alternate Entrance
3 Miles

Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area

Location:
3451 County Road 256 (Pearson Road), north of US Route 6

Jurisdiction:
Riley Township
Townsend Township

Check Station:
Lat: N 41° 25.98′
Long: W 082° 57.69′

Donald Thompson Wetland:
Lat: N 41° 24.55′
Long: W 082° 56.90′

Waterbody:
Sandusky Bay
Pickerel Creek

Site Type:
Outdoors

Shore Access:
Yes
Path to Shore
Terrain

Location Map:

Amenities:

The 3,200-acre Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area in Townsend and Riley townships includes 3.47 miles of Sandusky Bay's southern shore. It is Sandusky County's only public access site on Lake Erie, but accounts for over one quarter of its 13-mile shore. Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area is intended for fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing. The majority of this site has been restored to wetlands with other areas comprised of woods, brush and native grasses. A dike system is maintained and is accessible for walking/hiking. The wildlife area is named after Pickerel Creek, which flows through the site's western portion. Multiple parking lots are located throughout the area, including four along US Route 6 and three on CR 256. An observation tower located at one of the US 6 lots near County Road 260 is open year-round for viewing wetland wildlife.

Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area

SA1.1 Donald Thompson Wetland

Amenities:

The Donald Thompson Wetland is a 112-acre marsh at Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area. It is dedicated to wildlife biologist and former ODNR Division of Wildlife and Ducks Unlimited administrator, Donald Thompson. In 1991, Thompson played an instrumental role developing a model wetlands restoration project, which secured the necessary funding to reestablish wetlands and other habitats at Pickerel Creek. An observation tower with benches overlooks the wetland. The Donald Thompson Wetland was the first tract of land funded under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. It is located on US Route 6 near County Road 260 in Townsend Township.

SA1.2 Check Station

Amenities:

Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area headquarters and check-in station are located on County Road 256.