

PROBLEMS OF LAND UTILIZATION IN ANTRIM COUNTY, MICHIGAN

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ABSTRACT

Antrim County is situated on the east shore of Grand Traverse Bay, which is an arm of Lake Michigan located in the northwestern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan.

The topographic features of Antrim County, glacial in origin, may be classified into four physiographic provinces: (1) The lake benches and valley flats which border the inland lakes and extend into the interior valleys; (2) the rolling uplands, or rolling hills that occupy the high areas of the western townships; (3) the hilly uplands, which are the high recessional moraines of the central townships; and (4) the high plains, which are the barren outwash plains of the southeastern townships.

Antrim County was originally covered with excellent stands of hardwood forest along with a little white pine. The western part of the county has been cleared for about eighty years and is now farmland of relatively good quality.

The central and eastern parts of the county have been cleared of virgin timber and are now covered with a dense second growth of hardwood. These sections are poorly suited for agriculture but the second growth should be of value when mature.

The manufacturing industry has practically ceased to exist with the decline of the lumber industry. One large lumber, iron, and chemical plant is now in operation.

Recreation has become of major importance in Antrim County, where a splendid chain of lakes, numerous streams, large forested areas, a favorable summer climate, and ready access give this area unusual advantages. While resort development is fairly extensive along some of the lakes, no lake has approached its potential development. Hunting is apparently the one use for which the wastelands of the southeastern townships are suitable. The value of these lands for recreation will be increased when they are better stocked with game, and when the fire hazard is reduced.

Much of the area of Antrim County which formerly was utilized for lumbering or other industrial purposes is now utilized for recreation. The loss of population following the exhaustion of the forest resources is made up in part by the annual influx of tourists and resorters during the summer. Farms which once supplied forest and industrial workers with food products, now supply summer visitors with fresh garden, orchard, dairy, and poultry products, thus supplementing the income from crops. Taxes paid by owners of summer homes make up in part for the taxes once paid by industry. The problem of land utilization, arising from the loss of the most important resource of the county, the forests, may be met, in part, by the development of the recreational resources along with specialization of agriculture to meet the particular demands.