

Introduction

The University of Michigan's Alumni Association is exploring how more University of Michigan alumni can enjoy the Camp Michigania experience. Camp Michigania, a family camp on Walloon Lake run by the University of Michigan Alumni Association, currently functions at its maximum capacity, facing long camper waitlists due to sustained demand and infrastructure constraints. Currently, approximately 5,000 people visit Camp Michigania each summer. In order to allow more guests to experience Camp Michigania and to expand on opportunities for donor development, administrators are exploring options for expanding capacity in a variety of locations within and adjacent to the current property. Important considerations regarding any expansion include critical shared facility thresholds (e.g. dining hall), environmental suitability, camper experience, and overall circulation and logistics within the property.

This report seeks to provide the initial framework for this expansion by enumerating the physical context of the camp and its surroundings. It provides a brief analysis of the site context and offers general recommendations for potential expansion options. Moreover, this report demonstrates the importance of maintaining natural landscapes as a crucial component of the camp aesthetic and experience. Ultimately, this report is meant to serve as a starting point to assess the viability of different expansion alternatives for Camp Michigania.

Area Context

Camp Michigania is located in Bay Township, Michigan and sits on the western edge of Walloon Lake, just over five miles from both Boyne City and Petoskey. This proximity to both towns enables campers to easily travel to either location in less than 20 minutes, but is far enough away to avoid the traffic around the towns. Lake Charlevoix is just over two miles west of the camp, with Charlevoix on the other side of the lake. The one-mile radius around the camp consists primarily of farms and low-density, scattered housing. The town of Walloon Lake has an estimated population of less than 300 people¹ and sits over a mile from the edge of Camp Michigania. Walloon Lake itself is a relatively large lake with a shoreline of approximately 30.5 miles, surface area of approximately 4,600 acres, and a maximum depth of about 100'.² Development around the lake consists mostly of lake cottages and seasonal homes. Camp Michigania is situated between the West Arm and Wildwood Basin. Private residences sit to the north, south, and west of Camp Michigania's property, but the camp's nature trails and natural

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2016). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2012-2016)*. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Walloon Lake, MI

<<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2683140-walloon-lake-mi/>>

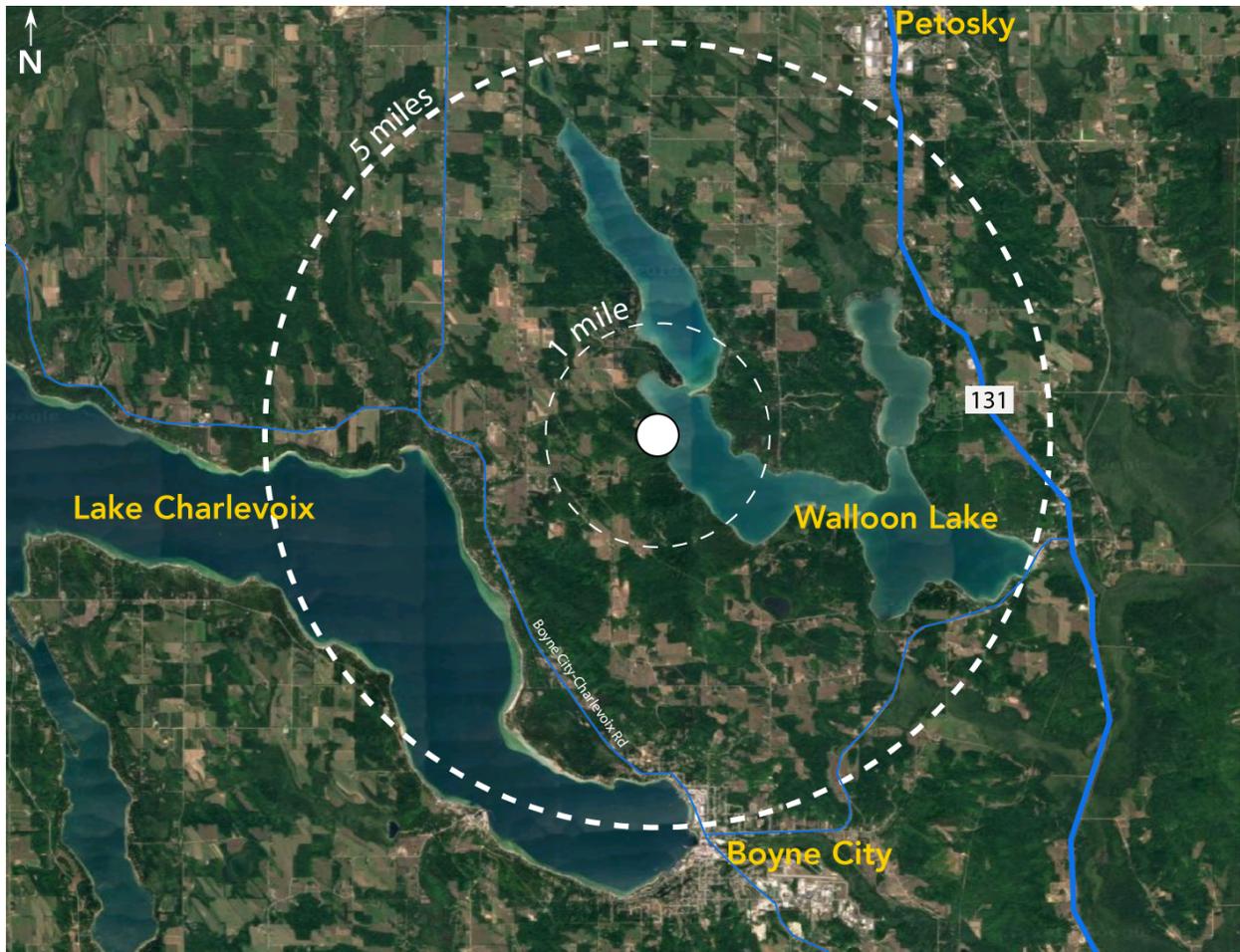
² Claucherty, Matt. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. Walloon Lake Shoreline Survey 2016.

www.watershedcouncil.org/uploads/7/2/5/1/7251350/walloon_lake_shore_survey_2016_-_report.pdf

areas create a buffer (between 1,500 and 3,000 feet) from the camp's main facilities to other properties.

The camp's location between these two lakes creates a quiet alcove wherein most traffic travels on the expressways on the opposite sides of the lake. Moreover, the main road that leads to the camp serves very few other properties, ensuring that the camp itself is separated from the noise of the surrounding properties. The camp's location and wooded surroundings serve to isolate the camp from the surrounding world and help create a serene and natural atmosphere. Even though campers can easily and quickly get to Boyne City and Petoskey, the main routes between the two towns are along the opposite side of Walloon Lake, further enhancing the feeling of isolation and quiet.

Figure 1: Context Surrounding Camp Michigania



Site Inventory and Analysis

Kevin Lynch's 5 Elements

Using Kevin Lynch's mental mapping strategy from the *Image of the City*, we analyzed the camp's current use by identifying districts, edges, nodes, landmarks, and paths of the site. This framework helps to quickly understand the spatial organization of a site while facilitating a grounded understanding in how a place is perceived by its users.

Figure 2: Camp Michigania Site Analysis



- Landmarks
- Districts
- Edges
- Paths
- Nodes

Camp buildings are concentrated within walking distance of Walloon Lake and are generally divided between North Camp, Central Camp, and South Camp. Family cabins are located in North and South Camp, while shared facilities like dining, education, and recreation make up the majority of Central Camp. Hubs of activity (nodes) include these shared facilities, particularly the Dining Hall, Flagpole Hill, and the Education Center, all of which are easily

accessible from both South and North Camps. While circulation paths link family cabins with the shore and camp facilities to each other, tree buffers form view corridors that create continual change in the visual experience. The many different districts reinforce the camp activities, which provide many options yet remain close and draw guests through the camp. Lake Walloon is a key landmark, as it remains visible from almost all parts of the camp, even the pole barn. Densely forested areas and wetlands create natural edges north of North Camp and south of South Camp. These edges allow for a distinct experience on nature trails. These natural edges are important to create a feeling of isolation within a natural landscape, acting as a sound and sight barrier that enables the camp to maintain its character.

Conceptual Development Framework

This camp is bounded on the north, west, and south by thick, old growth forests and by Walloon Lake to the east. The land on the northern border of the camp consists of wetlands, forest, and swamp, particularly along the coast of Walloon Lake. It is a key ecosystem for the health of the lake and the surrounding environment. The south side comprises of dense forest, creek, and steep topography. It was historically home to an old Saw Mill, whose foundation and remains are still visible off the shoreline.

While these areas would likely provide the largest expansion potential, it would damage surrounding ecosystems, increase erosion to Walloon Lake, and fundamentally alter the form and character of the camp. Camp Michigania's emphasis on natural preservation would conflict with development in the wetlands to the north of North Camp. Protecting and restoring these would improve water quality, preserve natural features of Walloon Lake, and protect vulnerable species in the Walloon Lake ecosystem. Due to these historical and ecological factors, along with a steep topographical landscape, building substantial structures or expansions in this area is not recommended.

Critical to Camp Michigania's character is the respect and enjoyment of the natural environment. The dense tree cover provides the opportunity for campers to immerse themselves in the outdoors, enjoying the peacefulness of the forest and lake environment. The forested area provides a barrier between Camp Michigania and its neighboring communities, and it creates the sensation of being surrounded by nature. For this reason, the Camp Michigania experience could not exist in Ann Arbor or closer to the University of Michigan's main campus. A large part of the Michigania experience is the natural landscape and the ability for campers to "unplug and unwind,"³ to disconnect from their everyday lives. The thinner the natural forested buffer becomes, the softer the edge will become. The hard edges that the old growth forest create are crucial in maintaining this natural atmosphere that brings campers back year after year.

Additionally, building an expansion to the camp in any direction would strain existing camp infrastructure and increase the distance between new cabins and main camp

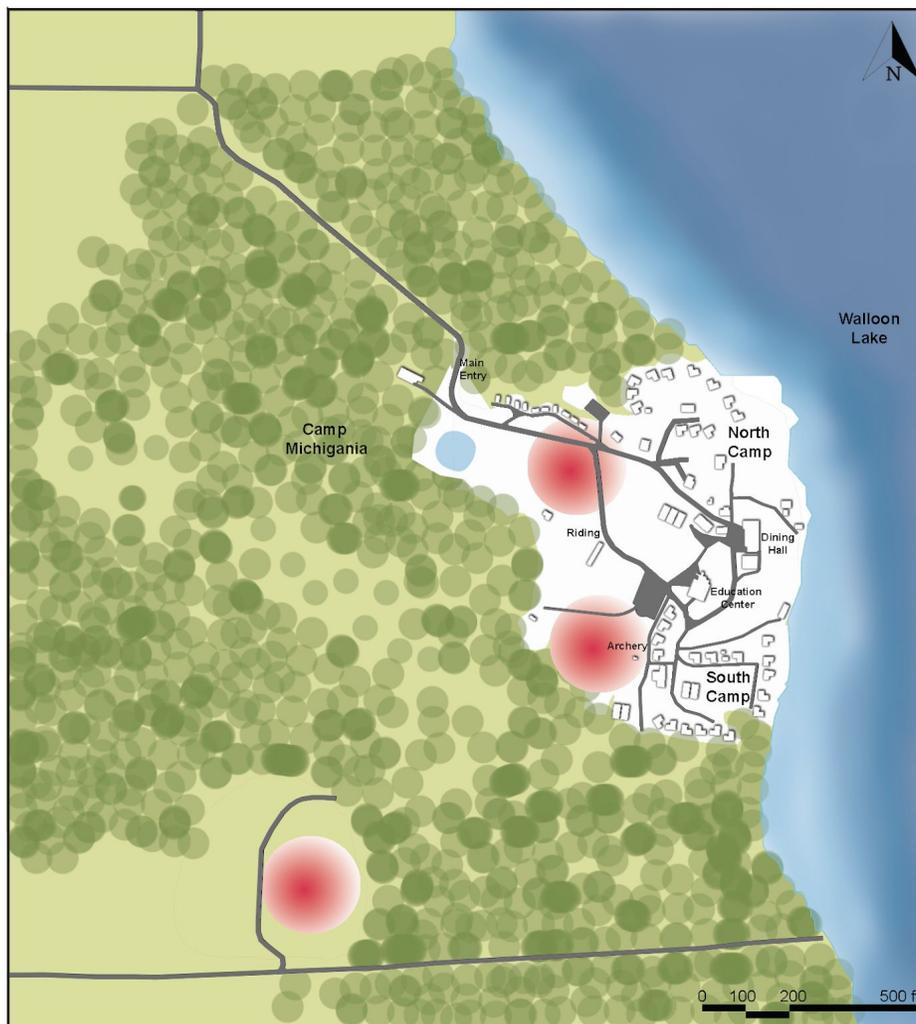
³ Camp Michigania, About. <https://alumni.umich.edu/camp-michigania/>.

programming. Part of the camp experience is walking through a natural landscape, but if the distance gets too large, it becomes less accessible. Expanding camp beyond its existing borders to the north or south would place future campers farther away from camp activities and would create an entirely different experience than the camp provides in its current configuration. This means that development in a previously untouched area of the site must also consider how the camp can maintain and expand current levels of service with additional families on site.

Expansion Concepts

Based on a two-day site visit to Camp Michigania in October of 2018 and subsequent research, we have developed a handful of recommendations and concepts for the camp's expansion. These concepts seek to demonstrate both where expansion is possible and where it is most desirable.

Figure 3: Approximate Location of Expansion Concepts



Concept 1: South Camp Infill

One option for expanding the capacity of the camp is a more incremental, infill style approach around South Camp. This option prioritizes the fact that a large part of the camp experience is proximity to camp facilities and Walloon Lake, providing both convenience and views of beautiful landscapes. Under this framework, new cabins would be built just west of South Camp in an underutilized clearing and could be connected to the rest of the infrastructure in camp. Moreover, it would expand the south camp community as opposed to trying to create an entirely new one.

As part of this expansion, archery would need to be moved to a new location, potentially closer to riflery. Three to five cabins could be built on the existing road between the tennis courts and the parking lot, leaving ample room for a buffer on either side of the cabins and the parking lot and tennis courts. This smaller scale option requires very little infrastructure investment and would be ideal as an initial pilot to determine the effect of expansion on the camp's ability to provide a high level of service to more campers. It would also enable Michiganiana to determine how longtime campers perceive incremental changes to the camp's built environment.

Another way to add capacity would be to add another road in this area to create room for eight to fifteen new cabins. This could be achieved in the same location as the smaller intervention and would require only a new pathway to be created that would connect these cabins to the rest of the circulation system on site. This approach would add two to three times more cabins than a more incremental approach along the existing roads without requiring any changes to existing activities. However, this would require more investment in additional infrastructure and would likely require the camp to expand common facilities and activities. The scope of expansion required should be the subject of further analysis for this alternative.

Both of these approaches are minimally invasive, limiting the amount of activities and facilities that need to be moved. They also begin to address the camp's expansion needs without drastically altering the fabric of camp. These approaches are also scalable and can be phased over a period of years to make it more palatable to campers who want the camp to remain the same. Importantly, this approach maintains the edges of camp by increasing capacity in the existing clearing.

This concept does require some careful consideration to ensure that the cabins are adequately separated from other uses, specifically the south parking lot. Any new development needs to be buffered from the existing and non-complementary land uses through vegetation or other means. As some activities are shuffled to make room for this expansion, Michiganiana must ensure that all of the camp's activities are accessible but placed in locations that don't contrast with the overall character and aesthetic of the camp.



Concept 2: West Camp Expansion

Another option to expand the camp involves creating a new “West Camp” that could contain a new grouping of cabins. An important consideration in constructing a new camp is that it should be built on an existing clearing rather than on an entirely new site. As discussed above, there are few, if any, locations adjacent to the site that are feasible or desirable to build new cabins in a previously wooded area. Moreover, the uncleared land to the west of the camp is also quite steep and is composed primarily of old growth forest. Building substantial structures in this area would be costly financially, environmentally, and aesthetically. A small amount of infrastructure could be built on the edge of the existing campground and the forest, but substantial development is not recommended in the undeveloped areas to the west of camp.

This concept is predicated on the belief that there is ample room to build a new “West Camp” on existing clearings. As such, this new camp could be built on a portion of the Steak Ride area or on the horse pasture between Lake Forman and the golf range. This option could increase the camp’s capacity to house campers substantially while providing a slightly different experience to future campers than the current facilities.

This option requires significant infrastructure investment and necessitates the rearranging of some uses around the site. The cabins would need to be connected to the rest of

camp with new paths, and all of camp's common facilities and services would need to be expanded to accommodate the significant influx of new campers. If the site is built on the current horse pasture, Michigania needs to consider how to buffer this new camp from existing and non-complementary uses such as Lake Forman. However, locating West Camp on the pasture would enable Michigania to simply expand the current form of the cabins, orienting everything towards Walloon Lake and Central Camp.

If West Camp is built on the Steak Ride location, entirely new infrastructure would likely be needed due to the distance between that location and the rest of camp. The new West Camp, assuming it is built on the Steak Ride location, would also likely need to be a different style than North or South Camp due to the increased distance between the new cabins and Walloon Lake. The current pattern is to direct attention towards the lake, but the distance between the new camp and the forest between it and the lake would make it more insular and inward focused. Campers would still be able to use existing camp facilities, but it would be a smaller part of their experience compared to campers in North or South Camp.

This concept would provide a significant capacity increase for Michigania, enabling an expansion of camp services and activities. However, this concept requires significant infrastructure and systems investment, including parking, activities, common facilities, and staff. Moreover, a new West Camp built far from Central Camp requires a comprehensive and careful design that recognizes that the experience of campers will be different than those staying in South or North Camp.



Concept 3: Tent Camp

One option to expand the capacity of the camp is to provide an option for tent camping. A more rustic alternative, this concept would provide a more natural experience for campers, allowing them to disconnect from everyday life and fully absorb the landscape around them. Tent camping serves a very specific population, so this concept does not significantly increase the current capacity of camp. However, this concept will increase the capacity of camp to serve a multitude of different populations with different preferences and desires. This concept can also be a way to attract new families to Michigania who had not previously considered joining the Michigania family.

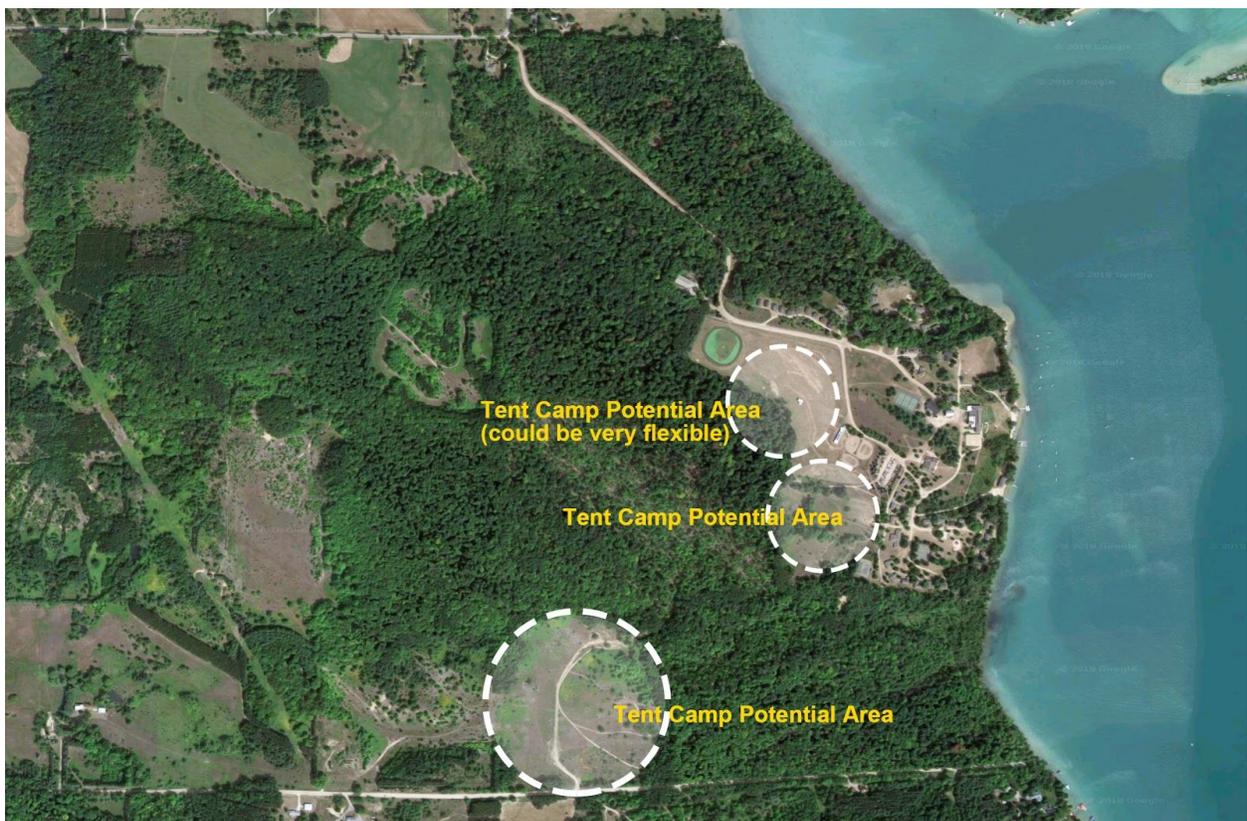
This option is possible on both of the sites available to the previous option. In this expansion option, Michigania can create a tent camping community for campers who want a more rustic experience. This expansion method would involve laying the infrastructure for a large campsite and inviting families to use the site as a tent camping site while giving them access to all of the other camp facilities. This concept requires a relatively small amount of infrastructure investment compared to the construction of a new camp. Moreover, some of the existing facilities, such as bathrooms, could be shared between a larger group of campers.

Tent camping is a spectrum, ranging from completely self-sufficient living to “glamping,” providing a variety of different experiences for campers. The capacity increase facilitated by tent

camping is entirely dependent on the type of camping that Michigania chooses to implement onsite. Similarly, the infrastructure investment required to facilitate tent camping is also dependent on the type of camping desired. As such, Michigania needs to consider what campers and potential campers desire out of their camping experience and develop accordingly.

Given that this concept is a drastic change from the current makeup of camp, existing campers may be hesitant to welcome this addition to Michigania. A social barrier may form between tent and cabin campers as they may feel they are campers at two separate camps. It is thus crucial that these two groups of campers are integrated as much as possible to ease the tension and normalize tent camping as a part of the Michigania experience.

Moreover, more research must be conducted to conclude what kind of tent camping should be developed and what level of infrastructure investment is required to make it feasible. Tent campers may prefer to eat their meals separately or engage in a different set of activities based on their desire to camp in a more natural landscape. Therefore, the camp must carefully consider what tent campers prefer and what needs to be developed to make tent camping a desirable and attractive option.



Key Takeaways

The potential expansion concepts presented in this report are based on preliminary context research and a site visit that occurred in October 2018. These potential scenarios are meant to be conceptual and illustrate the general feasibility of any expansion for Camp Michigania. These concepts do not seek to provide concrete solutions. Rather, these concepts were formulated to demonstrate what types of expansion are feasible and desirable. These concepts aim to illustrate ways in which Camp Michigania can expand while maintaining the character of the camp and without diminishing the current level of service.

Based on our concepts and research, we believe that the forests and wetlands to the north and south of camp should be maintained both for their environmental and aesthetic value. The edges that the forests create are critical to creating and maintaining the natural environment of Michigania and need to be preserved to ensure the longevity of the camp experience. Additionally, we recognize that camp has multiple expansion options, both in terms of location and camping style. As such, any expansion should carefully and critically consider the preferences of current and future campers and aim to increase access to the camp among the University's alumni base. This includes expanding the camping style to include tent camping and other options that are desirable to a diversity of populations.

Further analysis and stakeholder engagement is needed to refine recommendations and determine if and how camp should expand. Camp Michigania's planning consultant, as well as various graduate academic units including the University of Michigan's Ford School of Public Policy, will be valuable resources for those seeking additional information on the project. Michigania should hire professionals to conduct environmental assessments to assess the potential impacts of expansion on the surrounding environment. In general, more research is required to understand where, how, why, and when expansion should occur and what the long-term impacts of that expansion may be.

In sum, this report seeks to assess the physical context of Camp Michigania to understand how and where camp could expand. The concepts delineated above illustrate potential expansion options that increase capacity without diminishing the fundamental character of the camp. We recognize the need for more research to determine how and where Michigania can expand. We hope that this report becomes the initial component of a comprehensive process that considers the political, social, economic, and environmental impacts of expansion.