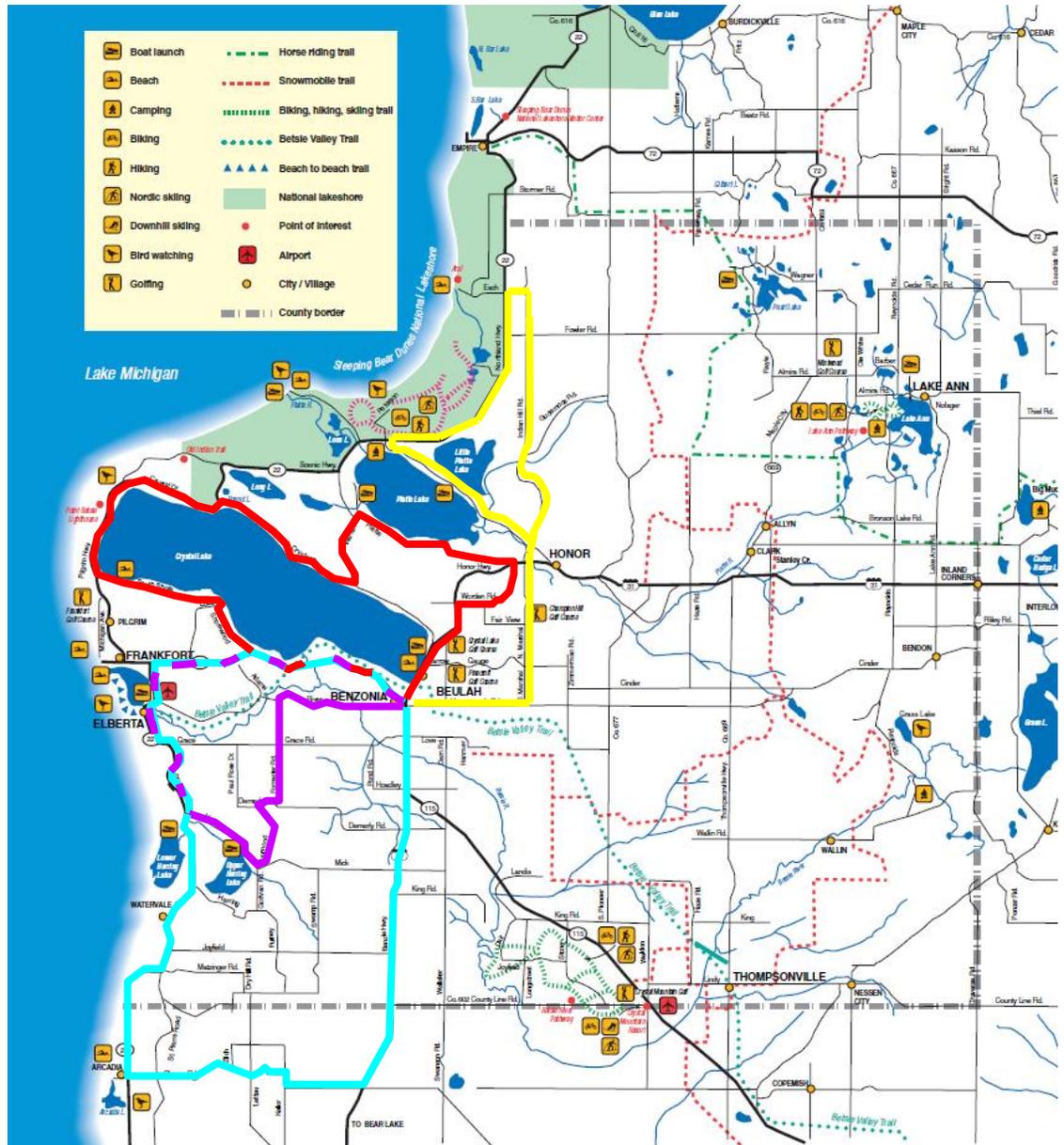# COLOR ME BENZIE

Fall arrives in Benzie County like a fireworks display. Trees become burning embers of color, with their leaves ablacze in a multitude of yellow, orange, rust, and red shades. Benzie County's back roads meander through valleys dotted with inland lakes, and rise up to hilltops affording awesome views of the surrounding countryside. Even the breezes coming in off lake Michigan seem to applaud the fall finery as the wind rustles the leaves.

At **Crystal Mountain** on M-115, a chairlift ride treats spectators to a patchwork quilt of colors, with bright swatches of reds and yellows parked nex to dark evergreen forests. The lift operates (fee) late afternoons on Saturdays in October.

Fallfest, an event not to be missed, is held in Beulah and Frankfort the first two weekends of October. Fun things include parades, giant pumpkin carvings, hayrides, soup contests and much more.

The Benzie Chamber and Visitors Bureau at the intersection of US-31 and M-115 at the 'top of the hill' in Benzonia is a starting point for endless fall color tours because anywhere in Benzie county offers a dazzling display of autumn color. Arm yourself with a map, and venture out to the shoreline side of autumn.
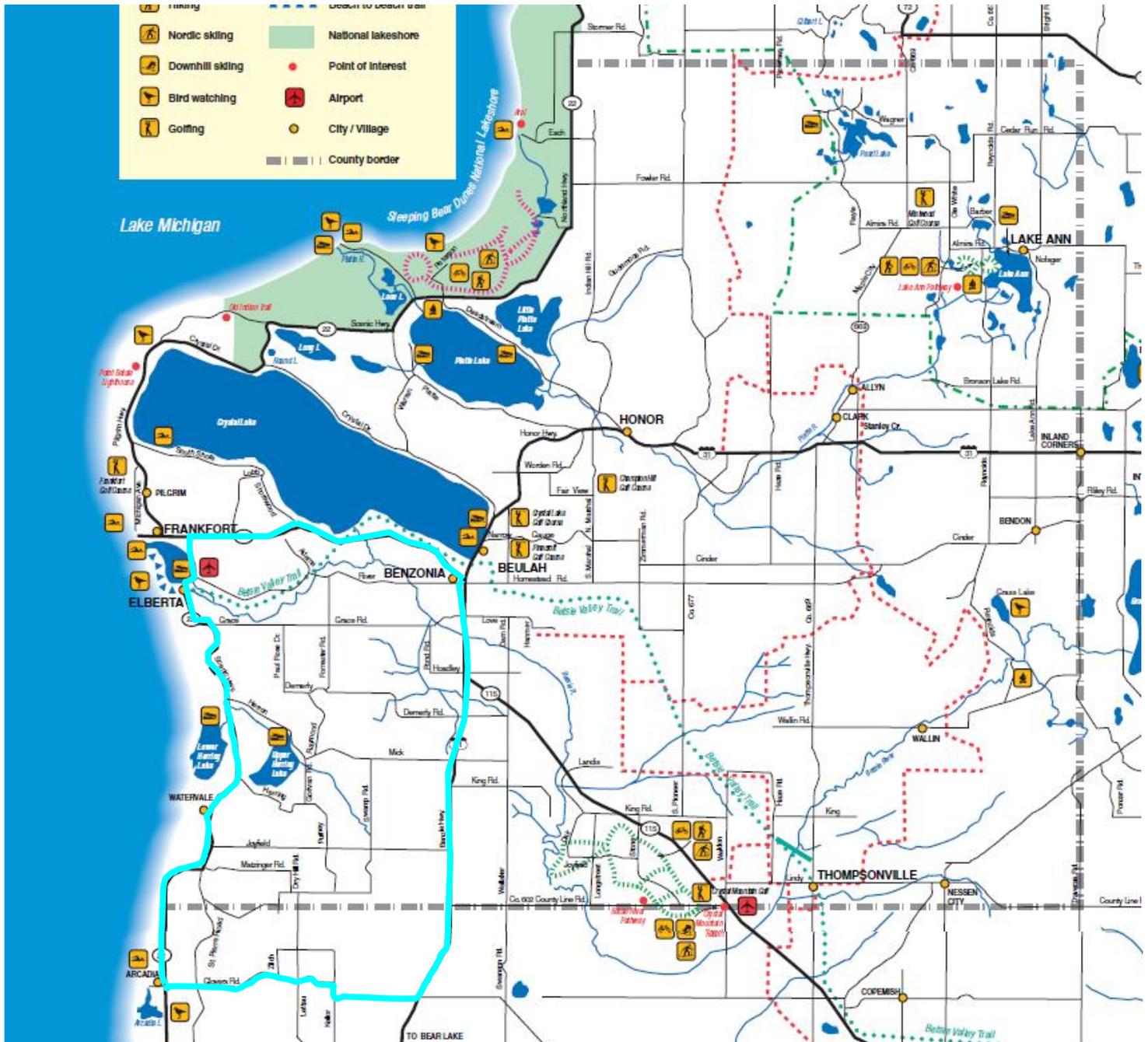
Peak color time usually begins around the end of September, and continues through mid-October.
The following pages contain driving directions and highlights of each Color Tour Loop in Benzie County.

Arcadia Loop

        Head south on US-31 to Glovers Lake Road (marked "To Arcadia") in Manistee County, where you'll turn right. Stay on Glovers Lake as it winds westward past farms and deciduous woods into the village of Arcadia. Turn right on 6th Street (M-22) heading north. Several miles up M-22 is the Arcadia Scenic Turnout (Inspiration Point) back in Benzie County, a mandatory stop on this tour. One of the highest elevations along lake Michigan's eastern shoreline, this popular rest stop includes paved parking, restrooms and an incredible shoreline vista well worth the climb to the viewing deck.

        Continuing north on M-22, further scenic vistas abound. Keep your eyes open for Watervale Road on your left, across from the cemetery. Go left on Watervale Road, and you'll spot Lower Herring Lake straight ahead on the public access dirt road, which veers right off the paved road. Returning to M-22, continue north through Elberta and angle right to stay on M-22. Rounding the east side of Betsie Bay, turn left at the sign indicating Frankfort's business district and take time to browse through this picturesque lakeside village. Take M-115 (east) to return to Benzonia.
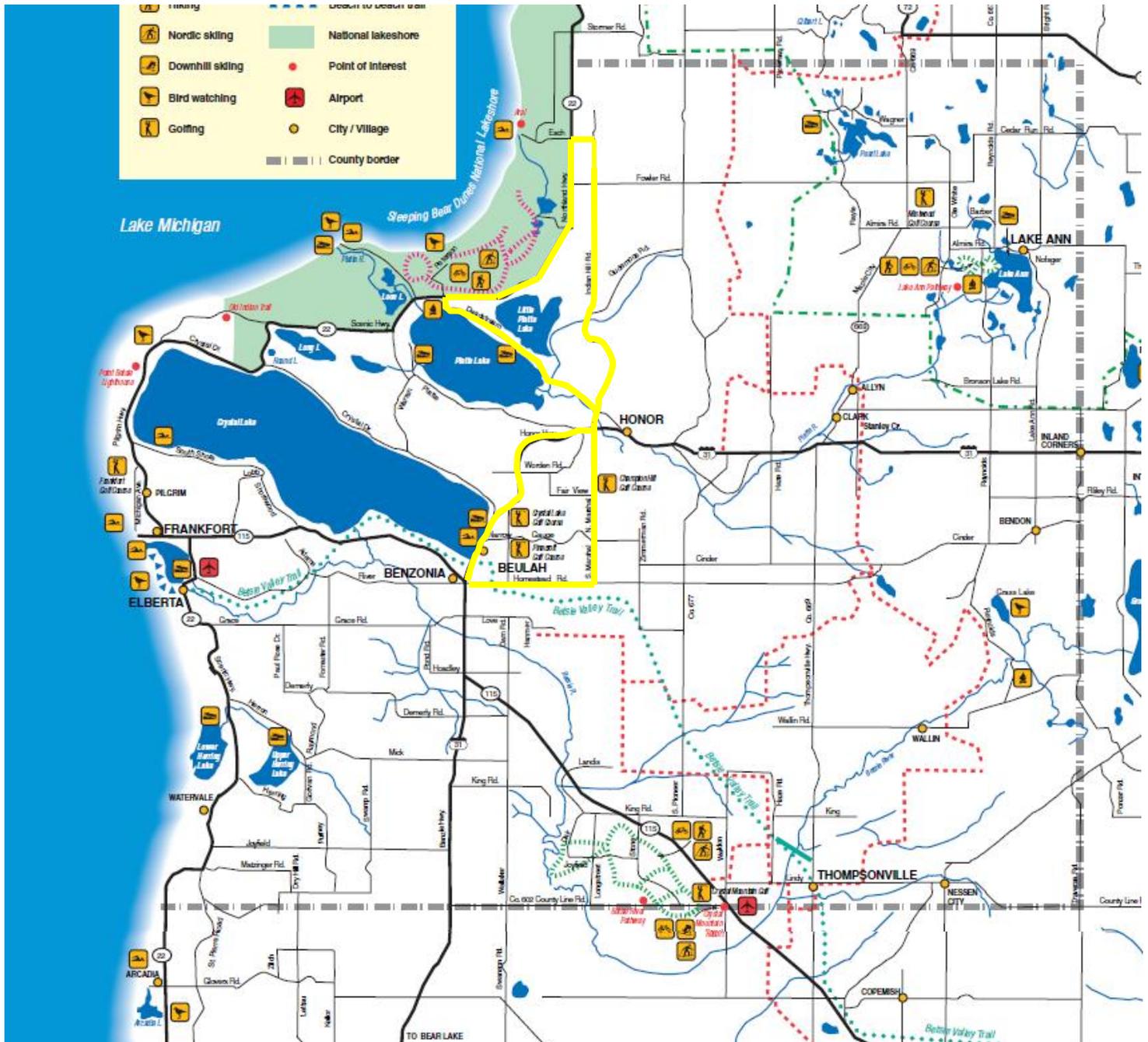
Inland Loop

Go south on US-31 two blocks to Traverse Avenue (which becomes Homestead Rd._ and turn left (east). go down the steep hill and continue east on Homestead, past Benzie central high School, to Marshall road. Turn left on Marshall Road, driving past champion hill golf Course, to US-31.

Cross US-31, and Marshall Road becomes Indian Hill Road. Stay on Indian Hill, which leads north across Deadstream road, and pass by Saffron, Martin and fowler Roads before the road curves west and becomes Esch Road.
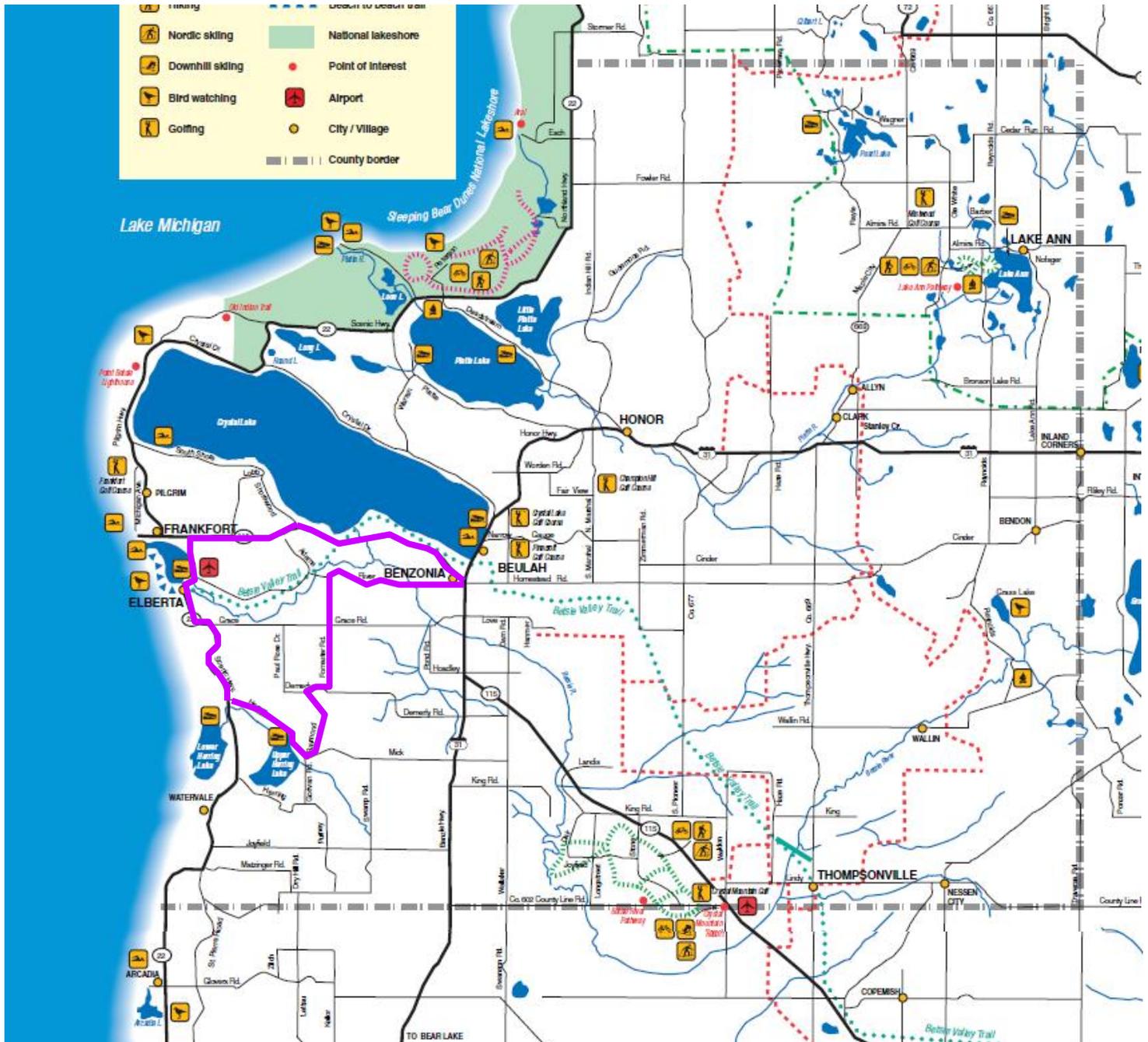
On Esch road, cross M-22, and continue to Lake Michigan, where a public beach is a great spot for a fall picnic. Returning to M-22, turn right (south) and continue to Deadstream Road. Turn left on Deadstream, which travels between Little and Big Platte Lakes then through a Tamarack forested area. Tamaracks are a unique member of the Pine family. In the fall their needles turn gold to rust in color and fall off leaving the trees to appear dead. You will find Tamaracks in boggy or wet areas.

At the stop sign, turn right on Indian Hill Road. US-31 is the next stop sign. Turn right and take US-31 south to M-115.

River Road Loop

Go south on US-31 two blocks to Traverse Avenue (which becomes River Road). Go right (west) on Traverse Avenue past the Benzie Historical Museum. A little further is the gift shop of artist Gwen Frostic. Look for the sign on the right. Then continue west on river Road to Forrester Road, which will be on the left. Head up Forrester, a steep uphill climb that crests at the top with panoramic views both in front of and behind you. Follow Forrester pst the stop sign at Grace Rd to Demerly Road and you are now in orchard country. Turn right on Demerly. The second paved road on your left will be Johnson Road. Go left on Johnson which winds down through tall hardwoods, ending at Herron Road. Turn right on Herron, which runs west and ends at M-22. Turn right on M-22, and go north into Elberta. Turn left on Furnace Street at the sharp curve in the road and follow it until it dead ends at the public beach. You will pass the park in Elberta which is a great place for a picnic with a playground for children. To return, go back to M-22 and follow it to Frankfort. Turn right on M-115 (at the A&W) to head east back to the Chamber of Commerce.

Point Betsie-Crystal Loop

Turn left on M-115 from the chamber Office. Drive almost 4 miles west and turn right on Shorewood Drive (opposite a big red barn). Drive down to the shore of Crystal Lake, the county's larges inland lake. Proceed west on South Shore Rd to M-22.

Turn right (north) on M-22 and drive a few miles to Point Betsie Road (on the left). This takes you to the Lake Michigan shore and picturesque Point Betsie Lighthouse, a maritime legacy of Benzie County's past.

Returning to M-22, turn left (north) on M-22. Stay on the highway until you spot Sutter Road on your left (look for Crystal Downs Country Club on the left). Sutter Road (a tunnel of trees) climbs a hill and then descends to end at M-22 again. Turn right (south) on M-22 until you see the sparkling waters of Crystal Lake.

Turn left on Crystal Drive, which runs along the north shore of Crystal Lake. After 3 1/2 miles, turn left on Warren Road to climb scenic "Warren Hill" and glimpse Platte Lake and Sleeping Bear's Empire Bluffs in the distance. At the end of Warren Road, turn right on Platte Rd, go to US-31, turn right, and follow it back to the Chamber office at M-115.