



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Fall 2019

## Blue Water River Walk County Park Work Completed

On October 9, St. Clair County and its partners celebrated the opening of the new Blue Water River Walk County Park with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The new park features a 30 x 30 foot picnic pavilion, shade trellis, 100 foot diameter Forever Lawn area, landscaping, picnic tables, benches, an interpretive panel, signs and park equipment. The \$687,000 construction project was funded by a \$75,000 DNR Recreation Passport grant, a \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

In addition to the new park, the department maintains the adjacent wetlands and boardwalk and recently signed an agreement with the Blue Water Land Fund of the Community Foundation to maintain and operate the one mile long River Walk. The new park pavilion and the Ferry Dock may be reserved for events and private functions by calling (810) 989-6960.

To date, St. Clair County has received just under \$5 million in grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources that were matched with funds from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage!



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# Park News

## Friends of the St. Clair River

Friends of the St. Clair River's volunteer stewardship program has contributed 2,400 hours of service in 2019 to County Parks, green infrastructure projects and natural habitats! Their stewardship work includes managing and monitoring plant and animal habitats, delivering environmental education programs, hosting volunteer trainings and restoring and protecting land and water resources.

Do you love putting your passion for the planet into practice? Friends of the St. Clair River volunteers gather for social, fun, hands-on field work and citizen science to manage habitats and green infrastructure for people, plants and wildlife. Contact the Stewardship Director at [stewardship@scriver.org](mailto:stewardship@scriver.org) or (810) 294-4965 to learn more.

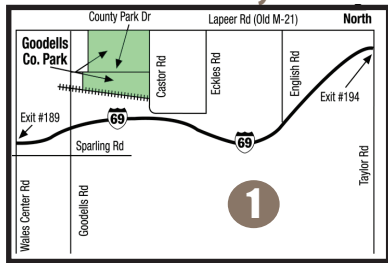
## Trail Planning Initiative

SmithGroup completed the newest edition of the St. Clair County Trails Plan that will guide efforts to fill the gaps in the Bridge to Bay Trail and make connections with the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Macomb Orchard Trail. The plan is the blueprint for soliciting government and private grant funding to move trails construction forward for the next five to ten years. As soon as the plan is available, it will be posted on the County Trails webpage at [www.bridgetobaytrail.org](http://www.bridgetobaytrail.org).

In the meantime, local trail committees are being organized for each of the riverfront communities to work with city and township officials to develop specific trail projects in their communities. If you are interested in participating on one of the committees (Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City, Algonac/Clay/Ira), contact Dave Struck at the Metropolitan Planning Commission at (810) 989-6950 or [dstruck@stclaircounty.org](mailto:dstruck@stclaircounty.org).

## Directions to all Seven St. Clair County Parks

### Goodells County Park



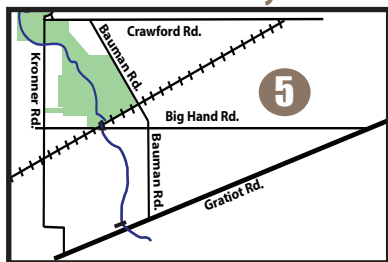
8264 County Park Drive, Goodells, MI

### Woodsong County Park

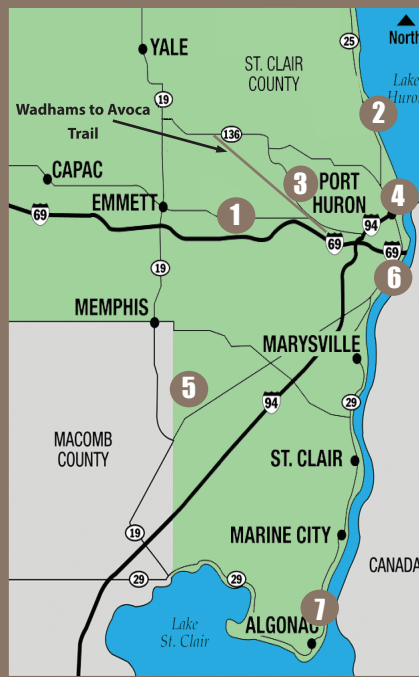


5980 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI

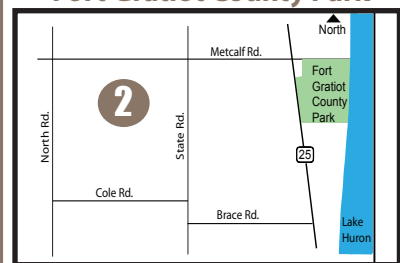
### Columbus County Park



1670 Bauman Road, Columbus, MI

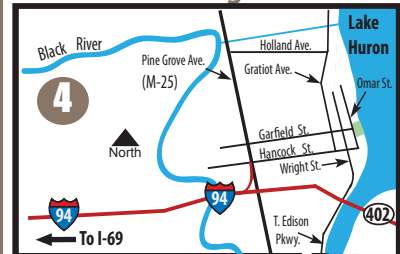


### Fort Gratiot County Park



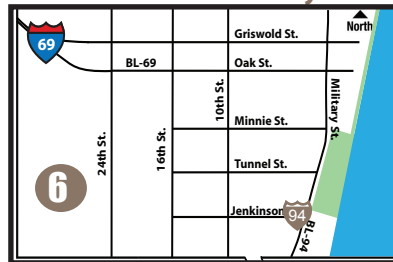
3325 Metcalf Road, Fort Gratiot, MI

### Fort Gratiot Light Station



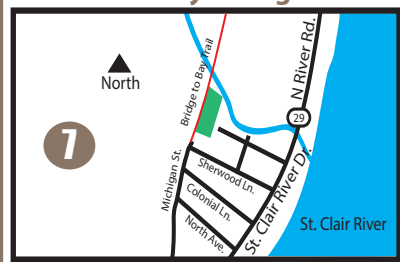
2800 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI

### BW River Walk County Park



2200 Military Street, Port Huron, MI

### Marine City Dredge Cut



402 Sherwood Lane, Algonac, MI



# Park News

## Volunteers Needed!

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail features over 12 miles of varied natural features for residents to enjoy. With continuous growth and change comes the need to trim and clear the pathway. Park staff could use help, and a trail stewardship program is in the making. It would entail basic hand tool work including loppers, hand saws, shovels and rakes. Volunteers would provide minor labor clearing the edges of overhanging brush, smoothing ruts or filling holes, allowing park staff to address larger issues. If you have a group that's interested in this community service project, contact Dennis Delor at (810) 989-6929 or [ddelor@stclaircounty.org](mailto:ddelor@stclaircounty.org).

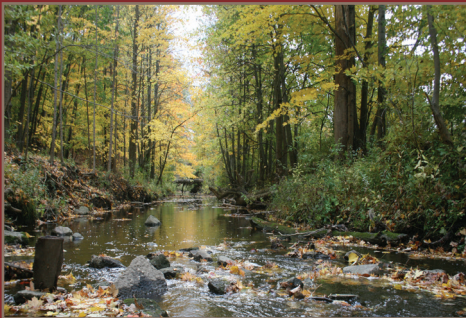


## Multi-Purpose Sports Courts

This summer, several St. Clair County communities were awarded grants from the St. Clair County Community Foundation for \$10,000 each to rehabilitate or construct multi-purpose sports courts thanks to the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission also pledged \$5,000 grants to those parks and recreation agencies that successfully completed their projects. So far, Capac, Marine City, Marysville, Port Huron Township and Wales Township have completed their grant projects.



## County Park Fall Colors





# Goodells County Park

## BMX Rolling Along

This past year, Can Am BMX (bicycle motocross) was re-energized with improvements to the BMX track in Goodells County Park and 32 new riders discovering the family-friendly fun of BMX racing. If your family is interested in joining in the fun, contact Curtis Brown, President & Track Director of Can Am BMX, at (586) 612-1814.



## Community Center Floor

This fall, Biernot's Carpet One replaced the tile floors in the Goodells County Park Community Center including the main room, kitchen, lobby and vending room. Staff plans to paint the main room and install wainscoting this winter. To reserve the Community Center for an event or a private function, contact the parks office at (810) 989-6960.



## Runners Invade the Park

Goodells County Park was the site of this year's three division MHSAA regional cross country meet on October 26. Hosted by Algonac, the meet consisted of 52 schools competing on the 5 kilometer course with a trip to the state finals at stake. The course featured a new loop into the woods of the newly acquired property on the west side of the park. With 1,126 runners competing, the four parking lots were jammed full of spectator cars. Fans and runners alike wandered around the barns, village and meadows. This is the fourth cross country meet hosted at the park this fall, following the Algonac Muskrat Classic, the Blue Water Area Conference League Meet and St. Clair County Community College 8K Invitational.

# Fort Gratiot County Park

## Pavilion Update

Construction of the third pavilion at Fort Gratiot County Park has been delayed. However, the canopy in that location will continue to be available for reservations. The Parks and Recreation Commission is in the process of completing a Capital Asset Repair and Replacement Plan for the park prior to moving forward with construction of the pavilion.





# Columbus County Park

## Historic Barn Repaired

This summer, Columbus County Park staff members replaced the north wall of the big white barn near Bauman Road to make it weather tight. The “community icon” previously received extensive repairs by Columbus Township in 2010.

Since then, park staff and contractors have been upgrading the interior of the barn for park equipment maintenance and storage.



## Nature Walks

Take a walk in the park with Friends of the St. Clair River! Explore Columbus County Park’s flora, fauna and ecosystems; engage in citizen science activities, and discover the many ways you can help with local conservation efforts. Each 90-minute session starts from the Lodge at 10 a.m. on Thursdays.

Contact the Friends Stewardship Director at [stewardship@scriver.org](mailto:stewardship@scriver.org) or (810) 294-4965 for more information.



## Opt Outside: Black Friday

Ditch the mall, pull on your hiking boots! Opt Outside was started by outdoor retailer REI in 2015 to reduce overconsumption and offer an alternative to Black Friday shopping. Friends of the St. Clair River is participating in Opt Outside by leading a Woodsy & Wild Nature Hike on Friday, November 29 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Columbus County Park. The guided hike will move through woods, meadows, wetlands and river shorelines winding up and down hills. This event is free and family-friendly, and takes place rain or shine. For more information, contact Friends of the St. Clair River at [stewardship@scriver.org](mailto:stewardship@scriver.org), on Facebook or [www.scriver.org](http://www.scriver.org).





# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## 190 Years: Michigan's First Lighthouse!

In early 1829, Congress appropriated funds to build the second Fort Gratiot Lighthouse (the first was built in 1825, but crumbled in 1828). Plans called for a 65 foot high tower of stone or brick, 25 feet wide and 5 feet thick at the base tapering to 12 feet wide and 2 feet thick at the top, with an octagonal iron lantern. The plans also called for the construction of a brick or stone keeper's dwelling. The contracted price was \$4,445, with an extra \$55 budgeted for adding the old lamp in the new tower.

In 1862, the tower was raised to 82 feet, so the Fresnel lens could be seen further out on the lake. From the 1860's to the 1930's the property expanded with the addition of the Keeper's Duplex (1874), the Fog Signal Building (1900), the Single Keeper's Dwelling (1932), the Coast Guard Station (1932) and the Equipment Building (1938).

The Coast Guard maintained the Fort Gratiot Light Station from the 1930's until they moved next door into the new station in 2004. The property was officially transferred to the County in 2010.

The tower turns 190 years old in December of this year. Samuel Heitzelman, a military officer from the nearby Fort Gratiot, noted in his journal, *December 20th, 1829 - "The glass has been set in the new lighthouse, but it has not been lit."*



## Unique Roof Project Coming

This winter, crews will replace the failing asphalt shingle roof on the Keeper's Duplex. The new roof will be constructed with metal Victorian shingles and a "Yankee" gutter system. This unique architectural feature includes a raised standing seam that collects water above the eave. Downspouts travel through the eave and run down to a cistern located in the basement. This design simulates the roof installed during the 1930's, the time period to which the building is being restored. Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light and the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage are funding this \$100,000 project.



## Adopt a Step Program

In addition to their annual SandFest fundraiser, the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light are raising funds for ongoing building restorations by making lighthouse steps available for adoption. The 99 steps and 10 rung stair/ladder that leads to the lantern room are available, with over a dozen steps already adopted. Donors are recognized in the tower on the main plaque at the base of the stairs with the numbered step they adopted. Each step has a brass plaque with the number to match the main plaque. For more information or to adopt a step, please contact the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light at (810) 385-4951.





# Bridge to Bay Trail

## Great Lake to Lake Trail is Now Open!

St. Clair County is one of nine Michigan counties working together with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, MDOT and MDNR to create and manage the Great Lake to Lake Trail Route #1. The route will connect 17 local trails, including the Bridge to Bay Trail, and will run from South Haven on Lake Michigan to Port Huron on Lake Huron. The eastern endpoint for the trail is Port Huron's Lighthouse Park. The inaugural trail ride was held from September 13 to 18 and included unveiling the trail endpoint monuments.



## Gratiot Trail Work Completed

The construction of the new Gratiot Road trail extension from the Park N Ride lot under I-94 to Pickford Road has been completed. The nearly \$219,000 construction project was funded by a \$159,500 Transportation Alternatives Program grant from MDOT and the local match was funded with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds.

# Wadhams to Avoca Trail

## Fall Trail Maintenance

Park work crews are back on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail this fall and winter trimming back aggressive underbrush and trees. The Phragmite plants (tall reeds with fluffy seed heads) along the trail were treated again in October.

If trail users see any fallen trees along the trail or trail surface issues, they are encouraged to call the parks and recreation office at (810) 989-6960 to report the exact locations of the problems.

## Trek the Trestle: 2019

The annual Trek the Trestle event did not disappoint this year, with an all time high walker turn out and near perfect weather. The 12th annual walk, held every Labor Day, was a hit with walkers, both new and old to the event. Many walkers have made it their Labor Day tradition, as away to say goodbye to summer and hello to fall. The event wraps up with volunteers from DTE Energy providing hotdogs, pop and chips, with donation proceeds going to the local United Way.







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Fall 2019

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- [www.columbuscountypark.org](http://www.columbuscountypark.org)
- [www.fortgratiotcountypark.org](http://www.fortgratiotcountypark.org)
- [www.fortgratiotlightstation.org](http://www.fortgratiotlightstation.org)
- [www.woodsongcountypark.org](http://www.woodsongcountypark.org)

**Trails**

- [www.bridgetobaytrail.org](http://www.bridgetobaytrail.org)
- [www.wadhamstoavocatrail.org](http://www.wadhamstoavocatrail.org)
- [www.bluewaysofstclair.org](http://www.bluewaysofstclair.org)

**We are on Facebook & Instagram ! *St. Clair County Parks***  
**Questions?**

**Email us at [countyparks@stclaircounty.org](mailto:countyparks@stclaircounty.org)**

**Check Out St. Clair  
 County Parks &  
 Recreation On The Web!**



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- Dennis C. Delor .....Special Events,  
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*A Progress Report* is published by  
 St. Clair County Parks and Recreation  
 Commission