



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Spring 2013

## Blue Water River Walk

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County and its many partners are scheduled to begin the extensive work of phase 2 of the Blue Water River Walk. In 2012 the Community Foundation used a \$250,000 grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to conduct a pilot phase shoreline restoration in front of the YMCA. That pilot phase restored and naturalized about 500 lineal feet of shoreline.

The work planned in phase 2 will make substantial progress towards the master plan for the River Walk that was created in late 2010. The key components of phase 2 include:

- Shoreline restoration along almost 4,000 feet of shoreline beginning just south of the Great Lakes Maritime Center and extending south to the Military Street underpass. This is the most intensive and expensive component of phase 2 work and is being funded through a \$2 million grant the Community Foundation received in 2012 from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative of NOAA.



- **Railroad Ferry Dock:** The Community Foundation has assembled a task force of local residents and partners who have developed plans to restore and re-open the old railroad ferry dock on the northern end of Desmond Landing. The ferry dock was used in the middle part of the 1900's to move train cars back and forth to Sarnia.

The Foundation raised \$120,000

in private gifts to cover the restoration costs. The ferry dock is expected to be completed and open in conjunction with the trail.

The Community Foundation received the shoreline property as a gift from James Acheson in 2011. The gift by Mr. Acheson was made with the contingency that the Community Foundation develop a sustainable plan to restore and rehabilitate the shoreline and guarantee public access in perpetuity. More information about the River Walk and the Community Foundation can be found at [www.stclairfoundation.org](http://www.stclairfoundation.org)

### River Walk to Maintain Heritage

From the very early stages of planning for the Blue Water River Walk, the feedback the Community Foundation heard loud and clear was that the River Walk should appreciate, respect and preserve some of its industrial heritage. While much of the costs of the River Walk will go towards plant and habitat restoration costs, along with removing hundreds of tons of debris along the shoreline, some components are just about restoration and preservation. Such



is the case with the old railroad ferry dock. A group of local residents have formed a Ferry Dock Restoration Committee and have raised funds and created a vision for restoring the old ferry dock. The plans call for new decking and a safety railing, but the beautiful heavy architecture of the a-frame counterweights will stay. The committee also plans to reinstall three sets of train rails on the deck, which is how it was originally configured. New signage on the ferry dock will help visitors understand the history of railroading on the site and the powerful impact that the railroads had on the nation's economy.



### What's Inside

- 2 Park News/Fort Gratiot County Park
- 3 Fort Gratiot Light Station
- 4 Columbus/Woodsong County Parks

- 5 Goodells County Park
- 6 Bridge to Bay Trail
- 7 Wadhams to Avoca Trail
- 8 Commissioner Notes/On the Web

# Park News

## MI Big Green Gym Initiative

The MI Big Green Gym initiative is a partnership between the Michigan Recreation and Park Association, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The program is designed to promote overall well-being and a healthy lifestyle through the use of parks and recreation facilities. Simple concept, big idea. Michigan has some of the country's premier parks which, along with local recreation departments, provide unique and fun ways to stay active and spend time with family and community. To see what events are coming to your area, go to-

<http://www.mrpaonline.org/Programs/MI-Big-Green-Gym>



## MI Healthier Tomorrow

The Michigan Department of Community Health launched a new initiative called MI Healthier Tomorrow on Wednesday, January 23 that works to encourage every Michigander to adopt health as a personal core value.

MI Healthier Tomorrow invites Michiganders to take a pledge to lose 10 percent of their body weight, because losing just 10 percent can yield significant improvements in both physical and mental health. After taking the online pledge, residents can receive a free Getting Started Kit in the mail along with the option to sign up for healthy texts and/or emails with motivational messages, reminders, tips, or recipes to help keep them focused on reaching their goal of losing weight and becoming healthier.

To make your pledge, visit- <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch> and look for MI Healthier Tomorrow logo.



# Fort Gratiot County Park

## Beach Clean Up

This winter, record low Lake Huron water levels and Mother Nature's storms uncovered a whole new crop of concrete debris at the Fort Gratiot County Park beach. The previous owners of the property attempted to stabilize the beach by placing concrete on the shoreline to catch and hold sand.

Each spring, under a MDEQ maintenance permit, park staff and contractors remove all of the exposed concrete and level the sand to make the beach as safe as possible. During the summer, staff members remove any new debris that surfaces. Park patrons are asked to notify staff of any debris that they find on the beach or in the water.

This year, the beach boardwalk will be re-adjusted to accommodate the ever-changing beach conditions.

## Park Reservations

A sure sign of spring is the telephones ringing at the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Offices with inquiries about reserving facilities at Fort Gratiot County Park.

All of the Saturdays and Sundays in July and August have already been reserved for family reunions, church picnics, graduation open houses and weddings. More and more families are now reserving pavilions on Friday nights and weekday evenings. Pavilions are still available on most weekends in September.

For more information on reservation opportunities, please contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960.

## Summer Park Hours

Beginning Friday, May 24, park hours at Fort Gratiot County Park will be extended to 9:00 pm. Park summer hours (8:00 am to 9:00 pm) will stay in effect through Labor Day (September 2).



# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## CZM Grant Projects Completed



This winter, work was completed on a \$60,000 Coastal Zone Management Grant administered by MDEQ. The project included construction of new five-foot wide concrete walkways as well as the widening and repair of existing walkways so that there is now an ADA accessible route that connects the parking lot by the retired Coast Guard Station to the Lighthouse and then on to the Duplex and Fog Signal Buildings. In addition to the walkways, a full circle plaza and a half-circle

plaza were constructed. Both plazas include accessible benches and interpretive panels that explain the history of various parts of the Light Station. In addition to the text and graphics on the interpretive panels, QR codes will allow smartphone users to directly access additional information on each topic from the cell phone.

The project was funded with a \$30,000 Coastal Zone Management grant that was matched by \$30,000 from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

## Light Station Grounds Open

The Light Station grounds are open to the public daily from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm unless the grounds are reserved for a special event. The Port Huron Museum will resume tours on May 4. The gift shop hours and guided tours will be offered daily from 10 am to 5:00 pm.

## Another Roof Repair Grant

Earlier this year, a grant application was submitted to the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (MLAP) for funding to re-roof the Retired Coast Guard Station. If funded, the \$40,000 MLAP grant will be matched by a \$20,000 donation from the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light. The grant will be used to remove the asphalt shingle roof and install a sawn cedar shingle roof as well as flashing and chimney repairs.

## Friends Group Recognized

The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light were recently awarded a community service award from the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA). The "Friends" were nominated for their continued support of the Fort Gratiot Light Station. The nomination was based on their success providing grant matches, recruiting volunteers for programs and conducting fundraisers. The community service award recognizes advocates dedicated to improving parks in their communities. Congratulations to the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light!

## Museum to Host Sandfest

The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light will be holding the inaugural "Blue Water Sandfest" on July 4 – 7, 2013 at the Fort Gratiot Light Station grounds.

The event will feature master sand sculptors from across the country, in this first-event-of-its-kind in Michigan.



This four day event will have a variety of family and adult activities including vendors, demonstrations, music, sculpting classes and sand sculpting competitions. For more information call the Port Huron Museum at 810-982-0891.

## Light Station Rentals

The Port Huron Museum is now accepting bookings for the use of the Equipment Building and the Light Station grounds for private events. For Light Station booking information, please contact Anita Varty at (810) 982-0891 ext. 118.



# Columbus County Park

## Lodge Improvements Continue

This spring, contractors installed two display cabinets in the Lodge's Inner Lobby. The built-in wooden display cabinets have glass doors and shelves as well as LED lighting. The cabinets will be used to display artifacts from Columbus County Park and surrounding areas. Some of the items on display are items on loan from RESA's Pine River Nature Center.

The Lodge's Multi-Purpose Room also received some improvements this spring. The sink and countertop has been reinstalled in a wall alcove to free up floor space for users. Wainscoting made of lumber salvaged from Columbus County Park has been installed around the room. Tree species featured on each wall include Red Oak, Black Walnut, White Ash and Black Cherry.



## Controlled Burn

The controlled burns scheduled for Columbus County Park on April 13 and April 20 were both cancelled due to wet conditions. Park staff members will work with the Richmond Fire Department to schedule controlled burns next winter.

The results of the 2012 controlled burn were very positive. Controlled burns enable native seeds in the soil to germinate and thrive, while reducing the invasive vegetation that commonly takes over former farm fields. Native plant species such as switchgrass and prairie dock provide food and cover for animals of all sizes, from honeybees to pheasants.

Controlled burns are just the first step of the process that will provide park visitors with a natural and varied wildlife experience. In the following months and years, park staff and outside help will continue to mow, treat and burn areas in the park to return it to a natural state.

## Shoe Years Day Event

On January 1, the first annual Shoe Year's Day at Columbus County Park was a big success. Over 100 participants started the new year by enjoying beautiful winter weather at the park. Many participants waited patiently to try snowshoeing while others enjoyed walking or cross country skiing along the park trails. Afterwards everyone enjoyed displays about healthy lifestyles, YMCA activities and County Parks while drinking a hot beverage or cold water in the Lodge.

## More Snow, More Sledding in 2013

The Columbus County Park sledding hill hosted many more sledders in 2013 compared to 2012! Staff members expect to construct a few more stairs to make the climb back to the top of the hill a little easier in 2014.



# Woodsong County Park

## County Parks Works With MSU On Design Ideas

Recently a team of landscape architecture students from Michigan State University in the School of Planning, Design & Construction completed a term long research and design project for Woodsong County Park. The student team, with the assistance of County and Michigan Department of Natural Resources staff, designed new native planting solutions to reduce erosion on the Black River banks, increase fish habitat, and integrate outdoor recreational facilities within the park. The new facility concepts include an ADA accessible canoe & kayak launch, accessible pathways, river overlooks, pathways, and shelters.





# Goodells County Park

## Splashpad Water Treatment System Repairs

The Splashpad at Goodells County Park has been serving county residents and visitors since 2005. Since then, literally millions of gallons of water have been pumped and treated in the pump-house.

In order to insure reliable service for many more years, staff dis-assembled and removed the main water distribution manifold and had it re-welded and repainted. Meanwhile, the 7.5 h.p. feature pump and 3 h.p. circulation pump were removed and replaced. Finally, the two spray cannons were removed and shipped to Vortex for remanufacture.

## Roof Replacements Continue

Reasonable Roofing recently finished installing two additional metal roofs under a contract signed in 2011. Asphalt shingles were replaced on the Exhibition Hall and Middle Exhibit Barn. Based on the Goodells Roof Replacement Plan, the roofs on the East and West Exhibit Barns will be replaced in 2014. All roof replacements have been funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage.



## Building Repairs Continue

Each winter, the park maintenance staff at Goodells County Park is busy making repairs to park buildings. Many doors were either repaired or replaced on the Dairy Barn, Horse Barn and Bull Barn. Meanwhile, the south wall of the Middle Exhibit Barn was re-built due to water damage.

This spring, staff finished building a 24 by 24 foot storage area under the north end of the Open Pavilion. The storage area will be used to store portable horse stalls when they are not being used in the Quonset Hut. The south wall of the storage area features new electrical outlets and a built-in buffet table for Open Pavilion users.

## Community Center Landscaping

Late last fall, park staff removed the landscaping in front of the Community Center and gave the area a badly needed facelift. Improvements included replacing the shrubs with large stones and ornamental grasses and surfacing the beds with stones from the Fort Gratiot County Park beach. The brick pavers were removed and reinstalled and all memorial bricks were cleaned and repainted. This spring, grass was sodded between the walkways and the planters to complete the project.



## Log Cabin Heritage Day

Every year, the State of Michigan celebrates Log Cabin Day during the last weekend in June. In honor of Log Cabin Day, Goodells County Park will host the third annual Heritage Day in the Historical Village on Saturday June 29, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Visitors can tour the historic village and learn about each building's unique history. Children's programs will include hands-on learning, like 19th century woodworking and digging for artifacts in an simulated archaeological exploration. Other activities will include wagon rides, food vendors and of course, all you ever wanted to know about life in a 19th century log cabin! The free event is sponsored by the St. Clair County Farm Museum, Wales Historical Society and St. Clair County Parks.



# Bridge to Bay Trail

## County Park Acquisition Grant

This summer, St. Clair County expects to purchase approximately 2.75 acres of vacant land located just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures using a \$150,000 acquisition grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The property will connect the City of Port Huron's trail to the Blue Water River Walk. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds will be used for the local match for the project.



## Trail Signs

This past winter, a contract was awarded to MLS Signs of Chesterfield Township to produce and install new signage for the Bridge to Bay Trail from Yankee Road in St. Clair Township, south to Chartier Road in Cottrellville Township. Sign installations are expected to begin in early May and be completed by the beginning of summer.

Additional contracts will be awarded in future years to improve other sections of the Bridge to Bay Trail. The trail signage contract is funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

## St. Clair Township

Work has resumed on St. Clair Township's \$597,164.94 contract to construct a ten-foot wide asphalt trail on the west side of M-29, from Yankee Road north to the existing trail in front of the axle plant on Davis Road. The nearly two-mile trail is expected to be completed by this summer. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission has committed \$20,000 in St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds to project.

## City of Port Huron

The City of Port Huron expects to begin construction in September of an asphalt trail along the former railroad right of way from 10th Street to Military Street using a Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The 0.33 mile trail will connect the concrete trail that runs from the City of Marysville to the Blue Water River Walk.

## Community Foundation Trail Grant

The St. Clair County Community Foundation partnered with the St. Clair County Road Commission to secure a \$200,000 Transportation Enhancement grant from MDOT for the construction of almost one mile of non-motorized path along the St. Clair River from the Military Street underpass to the Great Lakes Maritime Center. The Community Foundation raised \$191,000 in donations and PARC provided \$20,000 to fund the required local match for the grant project. Trail construction is expected to begin in September.





# Wadhams to Avoca Trail



## Trail Maintenance

Over the past five years, the double dose of exotic pest infestations from Emerald Ash Borer and Dutch Elm Disease has wreaked havoc on the trees in St. Clair County. Unfortunately, the conditions along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail are ideal for the growth of both host trees, and these trees have borne the brunt of the damage.

In an effort to provide a safe recreational experience and reduce frequent unplanned maintenance trips to the trail, St. Clair County Parks staff and members of the JASP program have started the removal of standing dead trees along the trail. Areas with especially high concentrations of these trees, generally low lying or swampy areas, will be addressed first as the addition of water speeds root rot.

St. Clair County Park's staff would like to remind trail users to be careful in areas where staff is working on the removals. If a section of trail is signed as closed please obey the signage for your safety and the safety of the staff working on the removal. Trail users are also encouraged to contact the St. Clair County Parks office at (810) 989-6960 to alert the department of any trail problems.

## Did you Know?

The trail is 10 feet wide, and over 12 miles in length. Over 5 miles of the trail are paved, starting at Griswold Rd. and ending at McLain Rd. The remainder of the trail (7.0 miles), between Avoca Rd. and McLain Rd. is surfaced with limestone fines.

Mileage markers and road crossing signs are installed along the trail's entire length. Markers designate each 1/2 mile from the middle of the Mill Creek Trestle.

The 640-ft Mill Creek Trestle is the showpiece of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Built in the late 1800's, the 60 ft. high trestle has been decked and railed to provide safe access for trail users. Four overlooks provide spectacular views perfect for photo opportunities. The trestle is located between Beard Rd. and Imlay City Rd.



## Volunteers Make a Difference

Twice each year, Adopt-A-Trail groups cleanup their assigned sections of the WTA Trail. The Spring cleanup was held on April 27th. The fall cleanup for 2013 will be held on October 5th. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation would like to thank the following Adopt-A-Trail groups:

- Avoca Elementary
- Team Sandbag
- The Lachon Family/Maritime Title
- The McCalmon/Price Families
- Impact ARC Garden Group
- DTE Energy Greenwood Plant
- Port Huron Hospital Helmet Safety
- The Home Depot Fort Gratiot
- The Oberski Family
- The DeView Group
- Chain Gang Bicycle Adventure
- Blue Water Outdoor Club
- Rock-N-Riders 4H Club
- The Stammers Family
- Port Huron KOA
- The Govere Family





St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission  
 200 Grand River, Suite 107  
 Port Huron, MI 48060  
 Telephone (810) 989-6960

PRESRT STD  
 US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 PORT HURON MICHIGAN  
 PERMIT #995

\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*

Local  
 Residential Customer

Printed on 20% post consumer recycled fiber.

**SPRING 2013**

## Commissioner Notes

### New Commissioners

Lynne Secory was recently appointed as the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission's representative to the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission. Lynne attended the Mercy Central School of Nursing in Grand Rapids and has been actively involved in local historic preservation initiatives for many years. Lynne is a resident of Port Huron and previously served as an alternate member.

William Foster was appointed to the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission in January as an "at large" member. Bill is a retired administrator and educator with the Algonac School District. Bill is a resident of East China Township.

Terrel Wallis was appointed to the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission in January and represents County Commission Districts 6 & 7. Terry is a retired educator for the Algonac School District. Terry is a resident of Algonac and previously served as an alternate member.

### Retiring Commission Members

Frederick Swegles, a local attorney, served on the Commission for 19 years. Rick was an original member of the Commission when it was created in 1994 and served as the Finance Committee Chairman the entire time.

Dennis Basinski, a retired educator, served on the Commission for 11 years. Dennis served as the Chairman of the Commission for four years.

Thomas Sass, a retired engineer, served on the Commission for three years. Tom was a dedicated member of the Fort Gratiot Light Station Committee.

**Check Out St. Clair County Parks & Recreation  
 On The Web! [www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org)**



### St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commissioners

- John Cooper.....Chair
- Timothy LaLonde.....Vice-Chair
- James Bier.....Secretary
- William Foster.....Commissioner
- Charles S. Mathews .....Commissioner
- Steve Cooper..... Commissioner
- Robert Wiley ..... Commissioner
- Lynn Secory ..... Commissioner
- Terrel Wallis ..... Commissioner
- Howard Heidemann.. ..... Commissioner

### Parks and Recreation Staff

- Mark Brochu, CPRP.....Director
- Lynn Smith ..... Office Manager
- Matt Sharp.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Tim May.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Dennis C. Delor .....Special Events,  
 Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator

*A Progress Report* is published by  
 St. Clair County Parks and Recreation  
 Commission