



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Spring/Summer 2011

## Get Ready For Summer at Fort Gratiot County Park!!!

### Reservations

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

Both Fort Gratiot Pavilions have already been reserved for every Saturday and Sunday in July and August. 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.



### Beach Clean Up

Each winter, Mother Nature's storms uncover 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, park staff and contractors remove all of the dangerous exposed concrete 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.



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# Park News

## Energy Savings

In recent months park employees have been busy upgrading the dusk to dawn security lighting at Goodells and Fort Gratiot County Parks with new energy efficient LED light fixtures. Using assistance from a Detroit Edison grant, twenty-five 250W mercury vapor lamps were replaced with 20W LED lights, which actually provide more light per fixture than the originals, while using 90% less energy.

In the Garden Center at Goodells Park, staff has replaced decades old kitchen appliances with energy efficient modern appliances and upgraded the lighting to energy star rated fixtures.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation is committed to improving energy efficiency in all its parks and will continue to invest in energy efficient options as fixtures are replaced.

## County Parks Master Plan

This summer and fall, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission will work with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to update St. Clair County's Master Recreation Plan for 2012-2016. The current Master Recreation Plan expires at the end of 2011.

The County Master Recreation Plan is an outline for county parks and recreation improvements that are expected to take place in the next five years. Several public visioning workshops and a citizen survey are planned for this summer and fall to obtain citizen input for the Master Plan.

Residents are encouraged to participate in the workshops so that your opinions can be considered for the Master Recreation Plan.

## New State Parks Passport Program

Residents of the State of Michigan can now purchase a \$10 Recreation Passport as part of their annual vehicle license plate registration. The Passport replaces the \$24 annual and \$6 daily State Park and Recreation Area entrance fees as well as the State Boat Launch fees.

Citizens that choose to take advantage of the Passport deal will be issued a special license plate tag that identifies their vehicle as being exempt from park fees for that year. However, the Passport does not replace campsites reservation fees which are still in effect.

Proceeds from the sales of the Passports will make badly needed infrastructure improvements and repairs to State Parks, Recreation Areas and boat launches. Please note that these state facilities do not receive any State General Fund tax support.

For more information on the State Parks Passport program visit [www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport)

## County Waterways

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission is working with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation to develop a website called "the Blueways of St. Clair" at [www.bluewaysofstclair.org](http://www.bluewaysofstclair.org). The website gives "paddlers" of canoes & kayaks a one-stop source for information on waterways and public and private facilities that will enable them to enjoy St. Clair County's rivers and lakes.

The website currently has 16 different paddling routes using eight different water bodies. Each route has a webpage with an interactive map, complete with assets such as places to eat, shop and sleep. Each route is also associated with other things to do like museums, parks, beaches and camping.

The web site also links to the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Patrol and the National Weather Service to provide information on safety and international border regulations. The site also has general information such as frequently asked questions, paddling etiquette, "Leave No Trace", and local kayaking pictures.

If you are interested in previewing the webpage and giving the web designers feedback, please contact the Parks and Recreation Office at 989-6960.

## River Day

River Day will be held on Saturday, June 11, 2011. River Day is a day to celebrate rivers and to promote the recreational use of rivers and shorelines. River Day emphasizes environmental education and stewardship of St. Clair County's waterways. For more information visit their website at [www.riverdayfun.com](http://www.riverdayfun.com)

# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## Sails at Sunrise

On Saturday July 23, 2011, the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light will hold their "Sails at Sunrise" fund raising event at the Fort Gratiot Light Station grounds, 2810 Omar Street, Port Huron, from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. All proceeds from the event will be used for the restoration of the Light Station historic buildings.

Saturday, July 23, is the start of the Port Huron to Mackinac Race, and the hundreds of racers and pleasure boats will travel up through the St. Clair River, under the bridges, and to the starting line in Lake Huron. They will all pass by the lighthouse, and the views will be spectacular. Event tickets will include a full catered

breakfast, beverages, cash bar, children's activities, musical entertainment, a marine art show by Blue Water Art, and a gift & souvenir outpost. Limited parking will be offered at the site, and guests must have a ticket to enter the grounds.



Gates will open at 8:30 am, and the grounds will be cleared immediately after closing at 1:00 pm.

Ticket prices are:

Adult or child over 13 - \$25.00

Children (aged 4-12) - \$15.00

Family (up to 2 adults /2children) - \$65.00

Tickets are available at the Port Huron Museum sites: Carnegie Center, USCG Cutter BRAMBLE, HURON Lightship, and the Thomas Edison Depot Museum during regular business hours. You may also mail a request with check to Port Huron Museum, 1115 Sixth Street, Port Huron, MI 48060 or purchase online at [www.phmuseum.org](http://www.phmuseum.org).

# Woodsong County Park

Anyone interested in visiting Woodsong County Park can use the temporary parking lot located off of Rynn Road east of Abbottsford Road. An information board with park rules and a park map is located next to the parking lot. Park hours are dawn until dusk.

## Restoration Set to Begin Soon

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has submitted architectural plans and specifications for the repair of the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse tower and replacement of building roofs to the State Historic Preservation Office for final formal approval. Once SHPO approval is received, construction bids will be solicited. Once the construction projects are completed, the Light Station grounds will be opened to public.



## Coastal Management Grant

The lighthouse tower repair project is being administered by the City of Port Huron and is using a Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service. The roof replacement project is being administered by PARC and is using a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program Grant. The required grant local matches for the projects are being provided by the City of Port Huron and the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light respectively.

St. Clair County has submitted an application to the MDEQ for a Coastal Zone Management construction grant to construct an ADA accessible walkway from the Fog Signal Building to the lighthouse. The project will also include the construction of a plaza with views of the lake and lighthouse, benches and interpretive panels. If the \$60,000 grant is awarded, project construction will begin in the spring of 2012.

## Master Plan

Two public input sessions were held on February 7 and on April 11 to discuss the development of a Master Site Plan and a Master Interpretive Plan for the Light Station. Drafts of both plans will be soon be available for public comment prior to being considered for approval. If you are interested in reviewing the draft plans, please contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960.



# Columbus County Park

## Lodge Building Update

On May 4, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioner authorized the Parks and Recreation Commission to solicit bids for the construction of a Lodge to serve Columbus County Park. The 7,500 square foot (sf) building will include modern restrooms, 1,600 sf meeting room, 1,600 sf attached pavilion, 400 sf activity room, a 300 sf warming lobby, a 900 sf central entry hall for displays and activities, and a basement for mechanical equipment, storage and future activity spaces.

The proposed Lodge will be heated and air conditioned to serve park users throughout the year. The building will feature an energy efficient design and “green technology” that will make the building cost effective to maintain and operate for many years.

If a contract is approved by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, construction of the Lodge is expected to start in June and will be completed in January. The building will be funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.



## Community Cross Country Running Event

On Saturday, August 13, St. Andrews Lutheran Church of Memphis plans to hold the first special event ever held at Columbus County Park. The church is organizing a five kilometer cross country race that will be run entirely in the park. The race will start at 9:00 am and will be open to the general public. Watch for additional information in our summer newsletter.

## Sledding Hill

After a mostly snowless December, timely snowfalls and cold temperatures brought large numbers of sledders out to the new lighted sledding hill at Columbus County Park. Sledders took advantage of the new hillside steps that were installed last fall. Before next winter, additional steps will be installed to make the climb back up the hill a little less challenging.



# Goodells County Park

## Columbus Bible Church

The Columbus Bible Church has a new home in the Goodells County Parks Historic Village. This past January, Amish contractors carefully dismantled the 151 year old church and moved it, in pieces, to the park. This spring, the church was reassembled on a new foundation



and nearly 50 years after being removed, a replica square tiered belfry was reconstructed to crown the top of the Church. The exterior restoration is nearly completed and this summer the interior restoration will begin. The Church is on schedule to be completed sometime this fall.

## Celebrate Heritage Day June 25th

History has always been a big part of Goodells County Park. From the history of the 102 year-old park, to the Poor Farm and Farm Museum, a rich past has shaped the park into what it is today. Over the last decade and a half, the Parks Commission has enhanced that rich history by adding a historic village. The village now includes a 1870's farmhouse, a 1880's schoolhouse, a early 1900's bank, and a 1860's church and log cabin. Over the past decade, all the buildings have been carefully restored to their original appearance.



To celebrate their restoration, Goodells County Park will host the first annual "Heritage Day in the Park". This open house event will allow park users to catch a glimpse into the lives of county residents from days long past. Activities will range from "hands on" pioneer chores, living history demonstrations, wagon rides, music, food and more! The free event will take place Saturday June 25th, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. For more information, call Dennis at (810) 989-6929.

## BMX Keeps on Rolling



What is Can-Am BMX? Can-Am is short for Canadian-American BMX and is located inside Goodells County Park. BMX is pedal bike motocross in which riders race bikes against each other on a dirt track composed of a series of challenging hills, jumps, and turns.

This year Can-Am BMX will be hosting two State BMX Qualifiers. The events usually attract over 300 riders along with their family members to Goodells County Park. The events are free to spectators and there is no charge for parking.

Can-Am BMX is always looking for new riders. We have riders of all ages, both male and female. For more information about Can-Am BMX, visit [www.canambmx.org](http://www.canambmx.org) or call John at (810) 310-1491.

## Earth Fair a Success

In April, Goodells County Park was once again home to the 9th annual Earth Fair. The popular event is held annually in celebration of Earth Day. This year's free event featured booths that focused on clean water, wetland importance, animal rehabilitation, energy conservation, sustainability, land preservation, recycling, and pollution prevention. Despite the unpredictable spring weather, several thousand people came out for the two day, "hands on" event.





# Bridge to Bay Trail

## Port Huron Trail Connection

Last year, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation provided funds to the City of Port Huron to acquire the former Canadian National Railroad right of way from Tenth Street to Military Street. Since then, the City of Port Huron has applied for a Transportation Enhancement Grant from MDOT to construct a ten foot wide asphalt trail along the right of way. If the grant application is successful, construction of the paved trail is expected in the summer of 2012.

## Blue Water River Walk

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is partnering with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County to help acquire and develop the Blue Water River Walk along the St. Clair River at Desmond Landing. The proposed walkway will be almost a mile long and will extend the Bridge to Bay Trail from the Military Street pedestrian underpass that was constructed last fall, to the Maritime Center.

Acheson Ventures has donated a strip of land along the St. Clair River to the Community Foundation for the River Walk. St. Clair County has applied for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund acquisition grant to purchase about 2.75 acres of land just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures. St. Clair County will find out in December if the grant application will be funded. If a grant is awarded for the project, the property purchase will take place in the summer of 2012.



## New Bike Route Includes St. Clair County Trails

The Federal government has just approved a new bike route across the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, designated as US Bike Route 20.

The bike route runs from Marine City to Ludington and is the first segment of a route that will eventually extend to the Pacific Northwest. The route allows touring bicyclists to cross the state on a combination of roads and bike trails, and showcases Michigan's natural beauty and many cities and villages.

The route includes portions of both the Bridge to Bay Trail between Marine City and St. Clair, and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail between Range Road and Lapeer Road. It begins at the Bluewater Ferry and goes through Marine City, St. Clair, Marysville, Wadhams and Emmett and several townships within St. Clair County. The route also takes bicyclists directly along the edge of Goodells County Park. The Michigan segment ends at the Ludington-Manitowoc ferry at Lake Michigan where a bicyclist can use the ferry to continue his or her ride into Wisconsin.

Soon maps will be posted on line at [www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs](http://www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs) allowing bicyclists to tour the route across the state, and route signs will eventually be posted all along the route. The route was developed by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, Adventure Cycling Association and the Michigan Department of Transportation with the support of local jurisdictions and agencies, including St. Clair County Parks and Recreation and the Road Commission.



# Wadhams to Avoca Trail

## Mill Creek Horse Crossing

Horses are not allowed on the Mill Creek Trestle for safety reasons. For several years, the Parks and Recreation Commission has been working on plans to build a horse trail down under the trestle to the creek and a water crossing. This spring, the MDEQ issued a permit for the horse crossing. This summer, when the water level in the creek is low, work crews will build steps into both river banks for the water crossing. By this fall, equestrian trail users should be able to use the new crossing.



## Wadhams Road Trail Crossing

The Wadhams Road trail crossing is being used by more walkers and bicyclists using the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Trail users are asked to be cautious while motorists continue to get used to the crossing signals.

Motorists are reminded that when the crosswalk signals are alternately flashing red, they must stop and then can legally proceed with caution through the crosswalk after allowing the pedestrians to clear the walkway.



**DRIVERS**

See This	Do This
	<b>Proceed with Caution</b> The signal is normally dark
	<b>Slow Down, Prepare to Stop</b> Pedestrian has activated the push button
	<b>Stop if Safe to Do So</b>
	<b>Stop, Remain Stopped</b> Pedestrians or bicyclists are in the crosswalk
	<b>Stop</b> Then proceed with caution if crosswalk is clear
	<b>Proceed with Caution</b>

**PEDESTRIANS**

	<b>Push the Button to Cross Street</b>
	<b>Wait</b> Traffic is preparing to stop
	<b>Continue Waiting</b> Traffic is beginning to stop
	<b>Start Crossing</b> Look for traffic from both directions prior to crossing
	<b>Continue Crossing</b> The countdown indicates how much time is left to finish crossing the street
	<b>Push the Button to Cross Street</b>

## Phragmites Control

If you have used the Wadhams to Avoca Trail during the past few years, you have undoubtedly noticed the increasing amount of Phragmites taking over the trail and roadside ditches. Phragmites are the very tall grass like plant with the fluffy seed tassels at the top. Unfortunately, this invasive species is choking off all of the native vegetation and in turn, reducing the food for native birds and mammals.

Last fall, a licensed contractor was hired to spray the Phragmites with herbicide. This spring, trail users should notice the effects of the spraying. In order to keep the Phragmites under control, additional Phragmites spraying and mowing will be done annually along the trail.



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

**[www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org)**

**County Parks**

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

**Trails**

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

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**Questions?**

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- Dennis C. Delor .....Special Events, Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator

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