



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Summer 2012

## Fort Gratiot Light Station Opens to the Public

On June 16th, the Fort Gratiot Light Station re-opened to the public with much anticipation. Several hundred people attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the newest county park and the oldest lighthouse in Michigan. In celebration of its re-opening, Senator Carl Levin, Congresswoman Candice Miller and other guest speakers shared a few words about the lighthouse's significance. Guests heard details about the site's past, the work being done at the present and what lies ahead in the future. After the ribbon was cut, guests had the opportunity to tour the site, climb the tower and participate in boating safety programming provided by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and YMCA.

Before the re-opening, work wrapped up on two projects funded by grants that made significant improvements to the site. Last fall, work began on repairs to the lighthouse tower that were completed earlier this spring. The work was funded by a \$370,000 Save America's Treasures Grant from the National Park Service and a \$370,000 local match provided by the City of Port Huron.

Another project was completed with a \$40,000 Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (MLAP) grant for the repair of two light station building roofs and Fog Signal Building doors. The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light donated the \$20,000 for the required local match. Funds for the state grant are collected from the sale of the State of Michigan's lighthouse specialty license plates. The Fort Gratiot Light Station will be eligible for another MLAP grant in 2013.

Future restoration work on the light station will be funded by state, federal and private grants and donations. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds will be used to maintain and operate the grounds as a County Park.



### Lighthouse Tours

The park is open seven days a week, 7 am to 10 pm. Admission to the grounds is free. Tours of the station and tower are available 10 am to 6 pm daily. Admission is \$5.00. The gift shop is open daily. Get your favorite lighthouse gear today!



### What's Inside

- 2 Millage Distribution
- 3 Fort Gratiot County Park
- 4 Columbus County Park

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

## Millage Distribution

This year marks the eighteenth year that the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) will distribute 25% of the County Parks and Recreation millage funds collected back to the local units of government.

St. Clair County is the only county in the state of Michigan that systematically distributes parks and recreation millage funds to its local units of government.

The 2012 Local Millage Distribution Table (located to the right) includes the 2010 census figures used to calculate each community's share; the amount of millage funds distributed to each community over the past eighteen years; and the amount of funds to be distributed to each local unit of government this year.

In order for the 33 local units of government to receive their annual share of the County Parks and Recreation millage funds, each community's governing board (Township Board, City or Village Council) must approve the submission of an annual Local Millage Distribution Request form that outlines how the community has spent their share of the millage funds for the past year.

The County Parks and Recreation office maintains a file of each community's report forms. The information is available to any resident interested in finding out how their community has invested its share of the County Parks and Recreation millage. To obtain this information, please call (810) 989-6960.

## Winners of Survey Gift Cards

Last December, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation contracted with the St. Clair RESA to conduct a community survey for the St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan update. As an incentive to participate in the survey, we informed residents that everyone that participated in the survey would be entered into a drawing for gift cards.

434 residents completed the survey. Four \$25.00 Visa gift cards were awarded to the following residents: Gary Bratt of Columbus, Ken Belanger of St. Clair, Shannon Boughner of North Street and Erin McNeely of China Township.

Thank you to everyone that participated in the survey!

Community	2010 Population	Total Distribution 1995 - 2012	2012 Distribution
Algonac	4,110	\$305,725.57	\$17,850.55
Capac	1,890	\$115,761.33	\$8,208.65
Emmett	269	\$17,776.29	\$1,168.32
Marine City	4,248	\$308,298.44	\$18,449.91
Marysville	9,959	\$627,713.94	\$43,253.93
Memphis	360	\$23,140.18	\$1,563.55
Port Huron	30,184	\$2,183,412.51	\$131,095.15
Richmond	2	\$52.21	\$8.69
St. Clair	5,485	\$374,266.24	\$23,822.45
Yale	1,955	\$136,118.66	\$8,490.96
Berlin Township	3,285	\$197,962.71	\$14,267.41
Brockway Township	2,022	\$122,274.46	\$8,781.95
Burtchville Township	4,008	\$257,706.18	\$17,407.55
Casco Township	4,105	\$311,556.73	\$17,828.84
China Township	3,551	\$211,401.12	\$15,422.70
Clay Township	9,066	\$636,480.78	\$39,375.45
Clyde Township	5,579	\$338,295.95	\$24,230.71
Columbus Township	4,070	\$261,238.02	\$17,676.82
Cottrellville Township	3,559	\$244,637.57	\$15,457.45
East China Township	3,788	\$235,996.45	\$16,452.04
Emmett Township	2,385	\$137,582.56	\$10,358.53
Fort Gratiot Township	11,108	\$684,206.55	\$48,244.27
Grant Township	1,891	\$103,928.99	\$8,212.99
Greenwood Township	1,538	\$86,288.19	\$6,679.84
Ira Township	5,178	\$432,615.64	\$22,489.09
Kenockee Township	2,470	\$151,674.42	\$10,727.70
Kimball Township	9,358	\$554,856.07	\$40,643.67
Lynn Township	1,229	\$75,629.29	\$5,337.79
Mussey Township	2,316	\$124,868.53	\$10,058.85
Port Huron Township	10,654	\$567,093.64	\$46,272.45
Riley Township	3,353	\$188,369.15	\$14,562.75
St. Clair Township	6,817	\$397,482.91	\$29,607.59
Wales Township	3,248	\$177,975.17	\$14,106.71
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>163,040</b>	<b>\$10,681,317.81</b>	<b>\$708,115.33</b>

# Park News

## Summer 2012 PARC Funding

This spring has been busy with the grand openings of the Columbus Bible Church, the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse and the Columbus County Park Lodge.

In all three projects, the plans for the buildings were underway as far back as 2009. In the case of the Columbus Lodge, County Parks and Recreation millage funds were set aside for the project over three years. In the case of the Lighthouse, the City of Port Huron secured the National Park Service grant and committed the local match.

During the next two or three years, residents will see fewer projects undertaken by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission due to budget constraints.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation is funded almost exclusively by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage. In this year's budget, 91% of the budget is funded by local property taxes. Over the next three years, the revenues from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage are expected to decrease by another 5%.

Due to the lower millage revenues, future capital projects will be limited to projects with prior commitments and repairs to existing facilities. A special emphasis will be placed on investments that increase the energy efficiency of current facilities and equipment. Renovations to the Fort Gratiot Light Station will depend on grants and donations.

# Fort Gratiot County Park

## New Summer Park Hours

Fort Gratiot County Park is now open until 9:00 pm. The new summer hours (8:00 am to 9:00 pm) will stay in effect through Labor Day (September 3rd).

## Movies in the Park

This summer, Fort Gratiot Township and the Fort Gratiot Business Association held two free movies in Fort Gratiot County Park. On July 17, "A Dolphin's Tale" was shown in the park and on July 20, "Jaws" got everyone out of the water. Thank you to both organizations for bringing family fun to the park!

## Poison Ivy

Park visitors are cautioned to be on the lookout for poison ivy in the natural areas of Fort Gratiot County Park. Park staff members work to remove poison ivy from areas around the pavilions, walkways and playground. However, poison ivy still grows in the natural areas of the park.

## Beach Sand Work

In June, under an Army Corps of Engineers permit, park staff and contractors removed exposed concrete from the beach to make it as safe as possible. Since then, commercial divers were contracted to remove additional re-bar that was discovered by staff members. Park patrons are asked to notify staff of any debris that they find on the beach or in the water.

New this year, excess sand from the Fort Gratiot Light Station was moved to the upper beach at Fort Gratiot County Park.





# Columbus County Park

## Columbus Lodge Open and Available

Beautiful weather greeted state, county and township officials, as well as residents and guests that attended the grand opening for the Columbus County Park Lodge on Saturday, June 9. The day's activities included a ribbon cutting ceremony, a half hour program, building tours and a picnic lunch in the pavilion that overlooks the sledding hill.

Residents can now reserve the Lodge's multi-purpose room, inner lobby and the attached pavilion. The multi-purpose room seats twenty while the inner lobby has a capacity of fifty people. The pavilion has nine picnic tables and a group picnic grill. Residents also have the option of reserving the adjacent 10' x 12' serving kitchen.

So far, the Lodge has already been reserved for a retirement party, family reunions, a baby shower, a graduation party, meetings and two weddings. For reservation information, contact the Parks and Recreation office at (810) 989-6960.



## 2nd Annual Run and Walk

On August 18th, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church will hold its second annual five kilometer (3.1 miles) cross country run at Columbus County Park starting at 9:00 am. The event is not a fund-raiser. The event is intended to promote exercise and being healthy. Registration can be made on-line at [www.raceracerace.com](http://www.raceracerace.com) and will also be held on site starting at 8:00 am.



# Goodells County Park

## South Playground Completed

The new playground near the equestrian facilities at Goodells County Park is now ready for children of all ages. The playground has a rubberized safety tile surface under a Little Tikes Max Play 2 playground and an accessible "BIGGO" swing.



## Columbus Bible Church is Popular

The restored Columbus Bible Church has already become a popular facility! Many weddings, a christening, a church service, a musical recital and meetings have already been booked for the facility.

Based on the seating available in the church, the capacity of the building has been set at 100 guests. For reservation information, please contact the Parks and Recreation office at (810) 989-6960.



## Roof Replacements Completed

Reasonable Roofing recently finished installing the fifth and final metal roof at Goodells County Park under a contract signed last winter. Work on the Farm Museum's Horse Barn roof included structural repairs to the northwest side of the building and installation of a gable roof over the entrance to the Farm Museum store.



## New Quonset Hut Completed

Construction of the new Quonset Hut in Goodells County Park was completed shortly after the 4th of July and will be used for this year's St. Clair County 4H & Youth Fair. The new building is eleven feet taller than the old Quonset Hut that it replaced. The new building is designed to be easier to set up and remove portable horse stalls for equestrian events. The building has large skylights and modern lighting and is available for a wide range of other uses.



## Green Thumbed Volunteers Make a Difference



Every year, when the spring weather starts to warm, the ladies from Master Gardeners work to make the flower beds ready for summer at Goodells County Park. From early spring prep work, to summer watering and the endless weeding, these dedicated volunteers give the park color and class. They can often be seen on their hands and knees working in the hot summer sun making sure that the plants they tend can mature and flourish. St. Clair County Parks would like to recognize the St. Clair County Master Gardeners for a job well done, year after year. Pictured from left to right, Sue Powers, Bette Gall, Jan Clark, Jeanne Mackay and Shirley Boike.



# Bridge to Bay Trail



## Waterfront County Park Grant

St. Clair County is still waiting for the state legislature to pass an appropriation bill to fund the \$150,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund acquisition grant that was awarded to St. Clair County to purchase approximately three acres of vacant land located just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures. The property purchase is still expected to be completed before the end of the year and 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

After years of work, Parks and Recreation will begin soliciting bids from sign companies to install improved signs along the Bridge to Bay Trail from Marine City to St. Clair. Depending on the bids received, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation hopes to install the improved signs in Marine City, East China Township, China Township, St. Clair and St. Clair Township.



The signage contract will be funded entirely by St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds.



## Blue Water River Walk

The City of Port Huron now expects to construct an asphalt trail from 10th Street to Military Street in 2013 at the same time that the Community Foundation expects to construct its section of trail from the Military Street Bridge north along the St. Clair River to the Great Lakes Maritime Center. Both trail projects expect to use separate Federal Transportation Enhancement grants provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Together the two projects will add over 1.2 miles of paved trail to the Bridge to Bay Trail system. The City and Community Foundation hope to save some project expenses by constructing the trail projects simultaneously.



# Wadhams to Avoca Trail

## Mill Creek Equestrian Crossing

After numerous delays due to rain, equestrian trail riders are now using the new creek crossing under the Mill Creek Trestle. Additional work is ongoing to refine the switchback trail down the south hillside.

Horse riders are not allowed on the Mill Creek Trestle for safety reasons and are asked to use the new creek crossing.



## Sheriff Deputies Patrol the Trail

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation continues to contract with the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department to provide bicycle patrol for the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Trail patrols are conducted on random days and times.

## Volunteers Make a Difference



Twice each year, volunteers scour over 12.5 miles of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to keep it free of debris.

Special thanks to the following Adopt-A-Trail groups for keeping the trail clean:

Avoca Elementary  
 Team Sandbag  
 Maritime Title Agency  
 McCalmon/Price Families  
 Impact ARC Garden Group  
 DTE, Greenwood Energy Center  
 The Oberski Family  
 The DeView Group

Chain Gang Bicycle Adventure  
 Blue Water Outdoor Club  
 Rock n Riders- 4H Club  
 The Stammers Family  
 Howard Stein/ KOA  
 The Govere Family  
 PH Hospital Helmet Safety  
 Home Depot Fort Gratiot

## Labor Day Walk 2012

Once again, county residents will not have to go all the way to Mackinac to join the annual Labor Day Bridge Walk. A Labor Day Community Walk will be held in St. Clair County!

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is hosting the fifth annual Mill Creek Trestle Walk on Labor Day (September 3) at 9:00 am. The five-mile walk will be on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail as part of the Labor Day Community Walks. These walks are held throughout the state in conjunction with the Mackinac Bridge Labor Day Walk to support "Getting Michigan Moving." The walks link communities together in the name of health, fitness and active living, similar to the way the Mighty Mac links Michigan's two peninsulas.

The event will start at 9:00 am at the Avoca trailhead on M-136. The five-mile walk on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail will be highlighted by a trip across the 640-foot Mill Creek Trestle, which is the longest rail trail bridge in the State of Michigan. For more information, call (810)989-6929.





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**SUMMER 2012**

**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)
- [www.fortgratiotlightstation.org](http://www.fortgratiotlightstation.org)



**Trails**

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

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