



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Summer 2011

## Columbus Bible Church Retakes Shape

In June, the exterior renovations to the Columbus Bible Church (1860) were completed with several coats of white paint and the installation of a 30" bell in the restored 50+ foot tall tower.

Interior restorations are set to begin in August with the installation of a new electrical system, HVAC system, wall and ceiling insulation, drywall, finish trim and wood flooring. Once the interior renovations are completed, the original church pews, pulpit and chairs will be reinstalled in the church.

At this time, the church is expected to be available for public use in May of 2012. Reservation fees have not been established for the church at this time.

Anyone interested in reserving the church in 2012 should send a letter of interest to the Parks and Recreation Office.



## Heritage Day a Success

On June 25th, the Historic Village at Goodells County Park literally opened the doors to the past. The first annual Heritage Day was held to celebrate the two newest (and oldest) additions to the park, the Mudge Log Cabin (1863) and the Columbus Bible Church (1860).

Visitors to the event learned about 19th century woodworking, quilt making, log cabin living and life in a one-room schoolhouse. "Hands-on" activities for children included a real archeology dig, corn shucking and hand pumping water from a well. Wagon rides, site tours and food rounded out the event. Special thanks to the Wales Historical Society and the St. Clair County Farm Museum for their help making the event a big success!



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## Millage Distribution

This year marks the seventeenth 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 2011 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 seventeen 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.

## Master Plan

This fall, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission will work with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission 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 for the next five years. Several public visioning workshops and a citizen survey are planned for this fall to obtain citizen input for the Master Plan.

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

Community	2010 Population	Total Distribution 1995 - 2011	2011 Distribution
Algonac	4,110	\$287,875.02	\$20,774.18
Capac	1,890	\$107,552.68	\$7,993.54
Emmett	269	\$16,607.97	\$1,130.35
Marine City	4,248	\$289,848.53	\$20,949.82
Marysville	9,959	\$584,460.01	\$43,610.93
Memphis	360	\$21,576.63	\$1,450.09
Port Huron	30,184	\$2,052,317.36	\$145,630.95
Richmond	2	\$43.52	\$4.50
St. Clair	5,485	\$350,443.79	\$26,128.73
Yale	1,955	\$127,627.70	\$9,290.51
Berlin Township	3,285	\$183,695.30	\$14,239.75
Brockway Township	2,022	\$113,492.51	\$8,556.46
Burtchville Township	4,008	\$240,298.63	\$17,815.45
Casco Township	4,105	\$293,727.89	\$21,377.64
China Township	3,551	\$195,978.42	\$15,041.36
Clay Township	9,066	\$597,105.33	\$44,232.39
Clyde Township	5,579	\$314,065.24	\$24,872.28
Columbus Township	4,070	\$243,561.20	\$20,783.19
Cottrellville Township	3,559	\$229,180.12	\$17,175.97
East China Township	3,788	\$219,544.41	\$16,347.34
Emmett Township	2,385	\$127,224.03	\$10,155.17
Fort Gratiot Township	11,108	\$635,962.28	\$48,145.85
Grant Township	1,891	\$95,716.00	\$7,507.17
Greenwood Township	1,538	\$79,608.35	\$6,183.17
Ira Township	5,178	\$410,126.55	\$31,370.68
Kenockee Township	2,470	\$140,946.72	\$10,911.74
Kimball Township	9,358	\$514,212.40	\$38,855.34
Lynn Township	1,229	\$70,291.50	\$5,345.54
Mussey Township	2,316	\$114,809.68	\$8,849.18
Port Huron Township	10,654	\$520,821.19	\$38,796.79
Riley Township	3,353	\$173,806.40	\$13,717.36
St. Clair Township	6,817	\$367,875.32	\$28,925.34
Wales Township	3,248	\$163,868.46	\$13,447.15
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>163,040</b>	<b>\$9,884,271.14</b>	<b>\$739,615.91</b>

# Park News

## China Township Park

China Township has added a new park with access to the Belle River. The park was made possible with assistance from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission Millage distribution.

Located on the west side of King Road just north of the Belle River, the new 23 acre park provides opportunities for fishing, kayaking and picnicking. The park is open from dawn to dusk. For more information, call the China Township office at (810) 765-1145.

## County Parks Staffing Changes

Due to the growing County Parks system, there have been several changes to the park staff roster.

Timothy May was hired as the department's second Park Operations Supervisor at the beginning of summer. Tim previously worked as the Construction Director for Blue Water Habitat for Humanity. Tim has 10 years experience as a carpenter and has an associates degree from Delta College in Construction Management. Tim is responsible for supervising the park operations staff at Columbus County Park and Fort Gratiot County Park and advising the Director on building related matters.

Matt Sharp has worked for the department as a Park Operations Supervisor since 2007. Matt is supervising the park operations staff at Goodells County Park and is also responsible for overseeing the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and use of the County's portable bleachers and stages. Matt is advising the Director on equipment and grounds maintenance matters.

Dennis Delor has moved his office from Goodells County Park to the Fort Gratiot Light Station's Single Keepers house. As the parks and recreation department's history expert, Dennis will monitor the upcoming restoration work at the Light Station and work with the Port Huron Museum on reopening the site to visitors and guided tours. Dennis is still responsible for the department's marketing, special events and volunteers.

Andrew Alderdyce has been hired as a permanent part time Park Ranger position to fill a staff vacancy. Andy worked previously as a plumber. Andy now works the second shift at Goodells County Park and Columbus County Park.

Deborah O'Neill and Vicky Ames have been hired as permanent part time Office /Clerical employees. Debbie and Vicky answer the office phones, handle facility reservations and help handle the extensive paperwork that keep the parks and recreation department running.

## Re-bar on the Beach

St. Clair County Parks Staff recently discovered several pieces of metal re-bar protruding from the water line at Fort Gratiot County Park. An employee from Commercial Diving and Marine Services (pictured right) removed the metal re-bar from the beach.



## Marysville Kayak Launch

The third accessible canoe and kayak launch in St. Clair County was recently installed for the City of Marysville on the St. Clair River just north of the City's Water Filtration Plant. The launch was purchased and installed with funding from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission and funding assistance from the St. Clair County Community Foundation and its Access to Recreation Fund. Use of the launch is free for all St. Clair County residents and visitors.



## Blueways Website

The new Blueways of St Clair website is enjoying great success! Presentations about the canoe and kayaking information website have been made to community groups around the county and at several canoe/kayaking events this summer. The website has averaged around 880 hits a day for the month of July. We welcome feedback from website users, so please, get out and enjoy the beautiful rivers and lakes in St. Clair County! Then, add a paragraph or picture on the site under 'Memories along the Blueway'. Check it out at [www.bluewaysofstclair.org](http://www.bluewaysofstclair.org).



# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## Sails at Sunrise a Hit

The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light held the first annual Sails at Sunrise event on July 23 at the Fort Gratiot Light Station. Over 300 friends and family enjoyed the views of freighters and sailboats heading up to the starting line for the Port Huron to Mackinac sailboat races while enjoying breakfast and games. Over \$ 3,500.00 was raised to benefit the Light Station. Plans are already in the works for next year's event!



## Restoration Work Set to Begin

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has received State Historic Preservation Office approval for the architectural plans and specifications for the replacement of the Fog Signal Building roof and the Equipment Building roof. Construction bids will be solicited in August and work is expected to start in September and finish by the end of October. The roof replacement project is funded by a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program Grant and the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light.

The City of Port Huron has awarded a contract to National Restoration Inc. for the restoration of the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse. Work is expected to begin in early August and be completed by next May. The project is funded by a Save Americas Treasures grant from the National Park Service. The required grant local match for the project is being provided by the City of Port Huron.

The Light Station grounds are expected to be opened to the public in June of next year.

## Coastal Management Grant

St. Clair County has submitted an application to the MDEQ for a Coastal Zone Management 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.

## Interpretive Master Plan

Work over the past several months has resulted in the development of a draft Master Site Plan and a draft Master Interpretive Plan for the Light Station. Drafts of both plans will be available for public review and comment in September prior to being considered for final 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

The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners has approved a contract with low bidder Brown Builders to construct a Lodge to serve Columbus County Park. The building will include modern restrooms, 1,600 s.f. attached pavilion, 400 s.f. activity room, a 300 s.f. warming lobby, a 900 s.f. central entry hall for displays and activities, and a basement for mechanical equipment, storage and future activity spaces.

In order to lower the construction costs, the 1,600 s.f. meeting room wing was removed from the construction contract. The construction contract requires that 75% of labor must be done by St. Clair County residents and 75% of materials for the building must be provided by St. Clair County businesses.

The 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.

Construction of the Lodge is expected to start in August and will be completed by May. The building will be funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

## Cross Country Event

On Saturday, August 13, St. Andrews Lutheran Church of Memphis held the first special event ever held at Columbus County Park. The church organized a five kilometer cross country race that was run entirely in the park. Community groups are welcomed to contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960 to propose other events for Columbus County Park.



## For the Birds

Columbus County Park is home to many species of birds. This Red-Tailed Hawk recently visited the sledding hill.

# Goodells County Park

## Septic Tank Replacement Completed

Just before this year's St. Clair County 4H & Youth Fair, phase two improvements to the park's main septic system were completed by Siegel Sand and Gravel of Emmett. Phase two included new

pumps and controls for the septic system that services all the park facilities located north of County Park Drive. Last year, the same contractor re-constructed the engineered septic field located east of the Visitors Center. The project was funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.



## Log Cabin Restored

After three years of work by park staff, the 1860's Mudge Log Cabin has been restored. The cabin, built in Wales Township by Civil War Surgeon Isaac Mudge, has been furnished with

donated items from the St. Clair County Farm Museum and the Port Huron Museum. The cabin will be available to school groups and for tours this fall.



## Sawmill Shelter Added

The Farm Museum's Port Huron Manufacturing Company Sawmill is now protected from the weather. In July, R & D Foglesong Construction of Lakeport completed the construction of a 68 foot by 36 foot roof over the sawmill. In addition to protecting the equipment, the shelter's poles will hold fencing that will keep spectators back while the sawmill is in operation.





# Bridge to Bay Trail

## Bridge to Bay Trail Sign Upgrade

This fall, bids will be solicited for the installation of improved signage along the Bridge to Bay Trail from Yankee Road in St. Clair Township south to Chartier Road in Marine City. The project will include new Bridge to Bay Trail logos, safety signs, mileage signs, directional signs, and signs directing visitors to local attractions. The sign project will be funded completely by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage. Additional sections of the Bridge to Bay Trail will receive improved signs in future phases.

## Back Road Bike Routes

In an effort to allow bicyclist to ride between the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Macomb Orchard Trail in Richmond, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is exploring the use of "Back Road Bike Routes" as interim trails until permanent trails can be developed. The concept is to use local roads with low traffic volumes as bike routes. In the case of unpaved roads, an additional application of dust control and additional road grading will be needed to make the gravel roads easier to ride from June thru November.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is working with the St. Clair County Road Commission and Columbus Township to determine if Big Hand Road can be used on an experimental basis in 2012 to determine if the concept is feasible.

## Blue Water River Walk

The City of Port Huron has submitted a grant application to MDOT for a Transportation Enhancement Grant to pave and light a trail from 10th Street, where the trail from Marysville currently ends, along the former railroad right of way, through the recently completed Military Street underpass, to the Seaway Terminal. If funded, trail construction is expected to begin in 2012.

St. Clair County has submitted an acquisition grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase approximately 2.75 acres of land just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures to provide a connection between the City of Port Huron's trail and the Community Foundation's proposed Blue Water River Walk along the St. Clair River. Trust Fund grants will be awarded in December. If funded, the land is expected to be purchased sometime in the summer or fall in 2012.



## St. Clair County Trails Grow

In June, MDOT constructed just under one half mile of paved trail along the northwest side of Gratiot Road from Range Road to the new Park N Ride next to I-94. The short section of trail was funded by a Congestion Management and Air Quality grant. The trail links to the Marysville and Port Huron trails that run north to Mercy Hospital.



The newest section of trail in St. Clair County is under construction along County Line Road in Ira Township and is expected to be completed before school starts. The one mile trail runs along the east side of County Line Road from Anchor Bay High School south to Crapo Creek. The trail project is the result of a partnership involving Ira Township, Anchor Bay Schools, City of New Baltimore, Macomb County Road Department, MDOT and St. Clair County Parks and Recreation. Phase two of the trail project will extend the trail further south to M-29 in New Baltimore when grant funding is secured.



# Wadhams to Avoca Trail

## Phragmites Control

This fall, park staff and a licensed contractor will continue to mow and spray Phragmites plants along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. The goal is to control the invasive plant that has been crowding out native plant species and reducing food and habitat for birds and mammals. As the Phragmites plants are controlled, native plants and wildflowers will return to the trailside ditches.

## Equestrian River Crossing

Hand construction of the Mill Creek horse crossing under the Mill Creek Trestle is expected to begin in mid-August when water levels in the creek are expected to be at their lowest. Under a MDEQ permit, park work crews will hand dig both river banks to allow horses and riders to safely enter and exit the creek.



## Trails Good for Heart Health

On July 25, 2011 the American Heart Association (AHA) issued a new policy statement that stated "Preventing heart disease before it starts is a good long-term investment in the health of our nation. Every dollar spent on building trails for walking or biking saves \$3.00 in medical costs."

The AHA also stated that "Although individual responsibility and lifestyle changes are crucial first steps in disease prevention, policy changes that make the environment more favorable to sustaining healthy behavior have an even greater impact in the long run."

## Get Ready to "Trek the Trestle"

On Labor Day morning, the fourth annual Trestle Trek will be held on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail beginning at 9:00am. The event is free and will start and end at the Avoca trailhead parking lot located on M-136. Participants will walk about 2.5 miles south, across the 640 foot Mill Creek Trestle, to Imlay City Road and then walk back to Avoca.



## Lyme Disease

Be aware of Lyme disease and ticks, but do not be so concerned that you cannot enjoy the outdoors. Lyme disease is a preventable illness, and information is your most valuable tool. There are some easy ways to help prevent ticks from biting. If you are planning to recreate, hunt, or work in Michigan's "out-of-doors", here are some considerations:

- Ticks can be active in Michigan any time the temperature is greater than 45 degrees F. This is often from March to November.
- Pets can become hosts for ticks and also become infected with Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases. Topical flea and tick treatments are recommended, and a Lyme disease vaccination is available. Consult your veterinarian for more information.

If you are planning to enjoy a rustic trail or park setting, we suggest that you use the following preventive measures:

- Light colored clothing
- Long pants tucked into socks and long sleeved shirt
- Closed-toe shoes
- Insect repellents that contain DEET (5% or lower concentration for children, and 30% or lower for adults) Do NOT apply any repellents directly to children. Apply to your own hands and then put it on the child, avoiding hands, eyes, nose and mouth
- Permethrin repellents can be used on clothing NOT on bare skin
- Perform regular tick checks

For more information, please contact your health care provider.



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**SUMMER 2011**

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

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- Matt Sharp.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Tim May.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Dennis C. Delor .....Special Events,  
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