



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Summer 2013

Coming Soon: New Parks

Algonac

In June, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation acquired three tax reverted vacant parcels of land totaling 0.34 acres in the City of Algonac, east of the Bridge to Bay Trail and just south of the Marine City Dredge Cut. Current plans for the property include developing a parking lot for the Bridge to Bay Trail and partnering with the Drain Commissioner to use the adjacent 1.22 acre parcel for an ADA trail to the Marine City Dredge Cut and the installation of an accessible canoe and kayak launch.

Clay Township

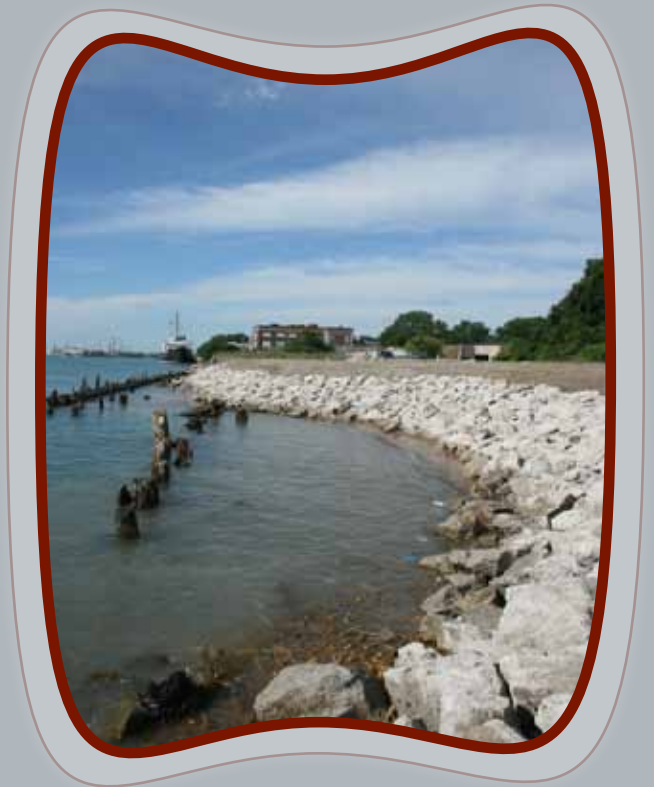
Last spring, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation submitted an application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for an acquisition grant to purchase approximately 9.4 acres of land on the North Channel of the St. Clair River in Clay Township. The \$400,000 acquisition project proposes to match the \$300,000 state grant with \$100,000 from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage.

The property is located on the south side of M-29 between the Algonac Boat Harbor and the DNR's boating access site. If acquired, the property could be developed to include a swimming beach, a canoe and kayak launch, shore fishing, paved pathways, restrooms, picnic pavilions and a parking lot. The park will also serve as a trailhead for the Bridge to Bay Trail.

The Trust Fund Board will make a decision on St. Clair County's application in early December. If a grant is awarded for the project, acquisition efforts will begin in the summer or fall of 2014.

City of Port Huron

At the time of printing, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation is working with Acheson Ventures to finalize the purchase of 2.75 acres of vacant land located just north of the Seaway Terminal and adjacent to the Community Foundation's Blue Water River Walk. Following completion of the land acquisition, PARC hopes to secure funding to restore the property to wetlands as proposed by the Community Foundation's Blue Water River Walk Master Plan.



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Millage Distribution

This year marks the nineteenth 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.

The 2013 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 nineteenth 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 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.

2013 Millage Revenues Decrease

In 2013, revenues from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage continued to decline. This year's budget included \$2,742,807 in tax revenue, which is a 3.3% decrease from 2012 and a 7.3% decrease from 2011. The lower millage revenues still represent 83% of this year's County Parks and Recreation budget.

As a result of the declining tax revenues and increasing operating costs, fewer capital projects are being pursued in 2013. The highest budget priorities in 2013 are building maintenance, energy efficiency and ADA access projects. The largest project in this year's budget, the Blue Water River Walk expansion on page 6, is being funded by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant (50%) and millage funds (50%) set aside for the project in 2011.

Since 25% of the parks and recreation millage collected each year is shared with local units of government, the distributions to cities, townships and villages have also declined.

St. Clair County officials predict that tax revenues will stabilize in 2014 before increasing modestly in succeeding years.

Community	2010 Population	Total Distribution 1995 - 2013	2013 Distribution
Algonac	4,110	\$323,576.12	\$17,285.73
Capac	1,890	\$123,969.98	\$7,948.77
Emmett	269	\$18,944.61	\$1,131.33
Marine City	4,248	\$326,748.35	\$17,865.81
Marysville	9,959	\$670,967.87	\$41,884.57
Memphis	360	\$24,703.73	\$1,514.05
Port Huron	30,184	\$2,314,507.60	\$126,944.85
Richmond	2	\$60.90	\$8.41
St. Clair	5,485	\$398,088.69	\$23,068.26
Yale	1,955	\$144,609.62	\$8,222.14
Berlin Township	3,285	\$212,230.12	\$13,815.72
Brockway Township	2,022	\$131,056.41	\$8,503.93
Burtchville Township	4,008	\$275,113.73	\$16,856.45
Casco Township	4,105	\$329,385.57	\$17,264.40
China Township	3,551	\$226,823.82	\$14,934.44
Clay Township	9,066	\$675,856.23	\$38,128.88
Clyde Township	5,579	\$362,526.66	\$23,463.60
Columbus Township	4,070	\$278,914.84	\$17,117.20
Cottrellville Township	3,559	\$260,095.02	\$14,968.09
East China Township	3,788	\$252,448.49	\$15,931.19
Emmett Township	2,385	\$147,941.09	\$10,030.59
Fort Gratiot Township	11,108	\$732,450.82	\$46,716.92
Grant Township	1,891	\$112,141.98	\$7,952.98
Greenwood Township	1,538	\$92,968.03	\$6,468.37
Ira Township	5,178	\$455,104.73	\$21,777.11
Kenockee Township	2,470	\$162,402.12	\$10,388.08
Kimball Township	9,358	\$595,499.74	\$39,356.94
Lynn Township	1,229	\$80,967.08	\$5,168.81
Mussey Township	2,316	\$134,927.38	\$9,740.40
Port Huron Township	10,654	\$613,366.09	\$44,807.53
Riley Township	3,353	\$202,931.15	\$14,101.71
St. Clair Township	6,817	\$427,090.50	\$28,670.26
Wales Township	3,248	\$192,081.88	\$13,660.11
Grand Total	163,040	\$11,300,500.95	\$685,697.33

Park News

Spotlight: Cottrellville Township

In July, Cottrellville Township purchased 1.5 acres of property with 320 feet of St. Clair River shoreline using a \$337,700 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant and funds from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage. The property is located on both sides of S. River Road (M-29) just south of Roberts Road and north of Algonac State Park. In addition to the shoreline property, the parcel extends west of River Road to the Bridge to Bay Trail.



Cottrellville Township's new park will also benefit from federal funding through the E.P.A.'s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to naturalize the shoreline and improve fish habitat.

25 Years of Senior Olympics

Twenty Five Years! That says a lot about an event and its popularity. Senior Olympics is an event that was created in the late 80's by a few local recreation departments and volunteers dedicated to keeping seniors active.



Since that time, it has expanded into a fun day with over a dozen events and 200 competitors.

This year's event was hosted by the YMCA of the Blue Water Area. Although it rained, it did not dampen the spirit of the participants. Every year, one participant is nominated for the Spirit of the Games award. This year's winner was Kathy Snarey of Harsens Island. Congratulations Kathy!

Columbus County Park

New Interpretive displays

Work is under way to install new Interpretive displays in the Columbus County Park Lodge. This past winter, new display cases and wainscot were installed to enhance the lodge. The park's natural environment is so dynamic that an interpretive plan was put in place to tell the story.



To honor that natural heritage, the Pine River Nature Center has loaned a wide variety of migratory birds and animals that are native to the park for a new static display.

The Belle River is home to many different species, from fish to mussels. There are over two dozen species of mussels found in the Belle River alone! A new exhibit on mussels was created and donated by Dave Dortman, who is very familiar with the Belle River watershed.

In the multi-purpose room, the new wainscot is also being highlighted with interpretive panels. The new panels tell the story of where and why the wood was harvested and fun facts about each species. The exhibits will be completed next month.

Trail Re-routed

This spring, high water washed out about 100 feet of trail next to the Belle River. Park staff and contractors removed dead ash trees and undesirable vegetation inland from the washout to create a replacement trail. Finally, the ash tree trunks were anchored along the riverbank to protect it from further erosion and to create fish habitat.

Park visitors are asked to notify park staff whenever they find any hazards along the park trails so that repairs can be made as soon as possible.



Fort Gratiot Light Station

Four Bay Garage Work

Work is underway to restore the inside of the Four Bay Equipment Garage. Blueprints from when the building built in 1938 are providing important details for replicating original doors and trim. A new restroom is being added to the building in what was once the mechanic's shop. Electrical and plumbing upgrades will be completed as well, while adhering to historic restoration standards. The Port Huron Museum will use the building for special events, temporary exhibits and event rentals.

Fence Work Completed

This spring, Loxton Fence repaired 160 feet of fencing that has defined the Light Station property since the 1930's. Over the last several decades, sand had buried the fence, causing damage. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation worked with the City of Port Huron to remove the sand from the fence line, restoring the landscape in that area to its 1930's appearance.

SandFest a Huge Success



The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light held the first ever master sand sculpturing event in Michigan at the Fort Gratiot Light Station on July 4-7. About 8,300 paid guests attended the event which featured five "Master" sand sculptors from Quebec, Ontario, Mexico, Ohio and Florida along with five "Advanced Amateurs" from New York, Ohio and Michigan.

The Friends event raised \$37,000 for repairs and restorations to the Light Station buildings. Congratulations to the Friends for putting on such a great event and for their continued support for the Light Station. Thank you to all the sponsors and volunteers that made the event a huge success.



Fort Gratiot County Park

Fort Gratiot County Park Hosts another Movie in the Park

On July 16, Fort Gratiot County Park played host to a movie in the park put on by Fort Gratiot Township Parks and Recreation and the Port Huron City Recreation Department. This year's family friendly movie, "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey", was projected on a large inflatable screen adjacent to the beach. This was the third year that a movie has been held in the park.

Goodells County Park

Memorial Benches

St. Clair County Parks is proud to offer the Memorial Bench Program for three of the county parks and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park and Columbus County Park all have designated areas for park benches.

Please note that requests for placement locations are subject to approval by the Parks Commission. Some areas in the parks and on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail may not be available. County Parks will maintain the memorial gift during its normal lifespan. If a memorial gift is damaged by nature, vandalism or accident, County Parks will replace the item at no charge to the donor.



Memorial Benches give donors permanent recognition of a family member, friend, or business and will honor the legacy of a special individual or group. For pricing and available locations call (810) 989-6929.

Thank you to the following individuals that have purchased memorial benches over the past year:

Ronald T. Legree • Beverly Wolozyk • Jacklynn Krzak

Log Cabin Heritage Day

Every year, Log Cabin Day is celebrated across the country on the last weekend in June. This year, St. Clair County Parks, the Wales Historical Society and the St. Clair County Farm Museum partnered to celebrate the Mudge Log Cabin during Log Cabin Heritage Day.



The event had a children's archeological dig, steam tractor demonstrations, wagon rides, saw mill demonstrations and tours of the historical village. Several hundred people came to the event and learned about St. Clair County's rich rural history.

The main feature of the event was the Mudge Log Cabin. Built in 1863 by Isaac Mudge, the cabin was donated to the Historic Village by Isaac's great-great-great grandson, David Mudge. The cabin was dismantled log by log and moved from Card Road in Wales township to the village in 2008.

Earth Fair VIP: Very Important Planet

Our planet is our most precious resource and that's why it was the VIP at this year's Earth Fair on April 26 and 27 at Goodells County Park. At Earth Fair we made "going green" easy for over 7,000 families and school field trip students with over 70 indoor and outdoor exhibits to help educate people about the benefits of green, organic, and eco-friendly products and services. Earth Fair blends companies, artisans, entertainers, and workshops together in a friendly and family-oriented environment.

Highlights of the 11th annual event included a free shuttle to and from the park, workshops in the Visitor's Center, a tree sale by the Sanilac Conservation District, and special guest actor Sheepshank Sam, an old time lumberjack boy.

Earth Fair is St. Clair County's largest Earth Day celebration. Save the date for next year – April 25 and 26, 2014. We hope to see you there!



Bridge to Bay Trail

City of Port Huron

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



County Park Acquisition Grant

By the end of August, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation expects to complete the purchase of 2.75 acres of vacant land located just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures using a \$150,000.00 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 are being used for the local match for the project.

Community Foundation Trail Grant

The St. Clair County Community Foundation partnered with the St. Clair County Road Commission to secure a \$200,000.00 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. PARC provided \$20,000.00 to fund part of the required local match for the grant project. Trail construction is expected to begin in September.

Community Foundation Shoreline Restoration Grants

Phase two of the Blue Water River Walk is well underway. Work to restore almost 4,000 feet of St. Clair River shoreline is expected to be nearly completed by the end of September thanks to a NOAA/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant. Final plantings and fine tuning along the shoreline are expected to be completed in early 2014. Work on restoring the historic railroad ferry dock is expected to be completed by end of October.

Wetlands Restoration Grant Award

St. Clair County has been awarded a \$1,039,500 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to design and construct 2.75 acres of coastal wetlands along the St. Clair River in keeping with the St. Clair Community Foundation's Blue Water River Walk Master Plan. The wetlands will be constructed on the property that is being purchased from Acheson Ventures just north of the Seaway Terminal. The grant project goal is to provide nursery habitat for fish and critical stopover habitat for migratory birds. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds and MNRTF funds will be used for the \$300,000 local match.

Spotlight: St. Clair Township

In July, construction of nearly two miles of 10 foot wide safety path along the west side of M-29 from Old River Road south to Yankee Road was completed. Landscape restoration is expected to be completed in August. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation contributed \$20,000 in County Parks and Recreation millage funds to the project.

"We see the path as a way for all the residents of St. Clair Township and the neighboring municipalities to get out and take advantage of the extraordinary surroundings our area has to offer. Continuing to maintain the green space in this area will provide numerous environmental benefits, which ultimately will lead to a healthier way of life for everyone. In looking forward, it will be exciting to see this path as part of the many others connecting throughout the state of Michigan." -Brian Mahaffy, St Clair Township Supervisor



Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Sheriff Patrol

This summer, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation continues to contract with the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department for bicycle patrol along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Trail patrols are randomly scheduled throughout the week and at varying times. If you see a deputy, please feel free to stop and talk to them! Trail users are also encouraged to notify the Parks and Recreation office at (810)989-6960 of any trail issues that need to be addressed.



Labor Day Bridge Walk

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



The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is organizing the 6th Annual Mill Creek Trestle Walk on Labor Day (September 2nd) 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.

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





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

www.stclaircountyparks.org

County Parks

- www.goodellscountypark.org
- www.columbuscountypark.org
- www.fortgratiotcountypark.org
- www.fortgratiotlightstation.org

Trails

- www.bridgetobaytrail.org
- www.wadhamstoavocatrail.org
- www.bluewaysofstclair.org



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- William Foster.....Commissioner
- Charles S. MathewsCommissioner
- Steve Cooper..... Commissioner
- Robert Wiley Commissioner
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A Progress Report is published by
 St. Clair County Parks and Recreation
 Commission