



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Winter 2017

Beach Restoration Completed At Fort Gratiot County Park

In October, a contractor installed five sheet pile groins on the Fort Gratiot County Park beach above the ordinary high water mark in accordance with permits that were issued by the MDEQ and USACE. The groins are intended to stabilize the upper portions of the beach and prevent erosion damage to the park buildings caused by the high water levels and storm waves. Most of the groins are below the sand and cannot be seen. Large concrete blocks were also installed in front of the beach gateway pavilion to accommodate the reinstallation of the ADA accessible boardwalk down to the lake. The project was funded with \$188,400 from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.



Spring Projects For 2018 at Fort Gratiot County Park

Last spring, a second overflow parking area was created by park maintenance staff in Fort Gratiot County Park between the incoming and outgoing park roadways. Park maintenance workers removed many undesirable trees and shrubs to create about 30 new parking spaces. PARC plans to pave an access drive through the new parking area in 2018. The work is being funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

In June of 2018, a 40 foot by 40 foot canopy will be installed at Fort Gratiot County Park. Reservations for the canopy are currently being accepted for the 2018 season. The canopy will be located near the west parking lot and will include ten picnic tables, a grill, and electricity. For reservation information, please contact the parks and recreation office at (810) 989-6960.



What's Inside

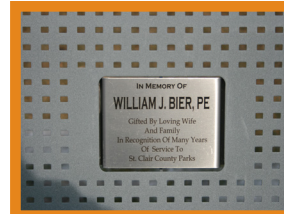
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Park News

Memorial Bench, Brick & Tree Program

This past summer, the St. Clair County Parks Commission added another option to the Memorial Bench, Brick and Tree Program. A larger granite tree plaque, which is 8" x 16", is available with the adoption of a tree. The price for the larger plaque and tree is \$530. The cost to adopt a tree and standard plaque (8" x 12") is \$500. St. Clair County Parks has several options when it comes to recognizing a friend or family member. St. Clair County Parks offers bricks, benches and trees, as well as brass tree leaves at Goodells County Park. If you were married at Fort Gratiot County Park, there are wedding commemoration bricks available to celebrate your special day. The Memorial Bench, Brick and Tree Program is currently available at Goodells, Columbus, Fort Gratiot and Wetlands County Parks. For information, download the brochure from the web at www.stclaircountyparks.org or call the parks office at (810)989-6960.



Directions to all the St. Clair County Parks

<p>Goodells County Park</p> <p>8264 County Park Drive, Goodells, MI</p>		<p>Fort Gratiot County Park</p> <p>3325 Metcalf Road, Fort Gratiot, MI</p>
<p>Woodsong County Park</p> <p>5980 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI</p>		<p>Fort Gratiot Light Station</p> <p>2800 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI</p>
<p>Columbus County Park</p> <p>1670 Bauman Road, Columbus, MI</p>		<p>Wetlands County Park</p> <p>2200 Military Street, Port Huron, MI</p>

Wetlands County Park

Wetlands Boardwalk Dedication

On September 27, a ribbon cutting ceremony officially opened the coastal wetlands interpretive boardwalk. The interpretive boardwalk features two concrete entrance plazas, a boardwalk across the wetland and the central pond, a river overlook, three interpretive signs, five concrete benches and five metal benches. In order to weather the wet climate in the wetland, the boardwalk was constructed with steel helical piles, cedar lumber and composite decking. The project was funded in part with a \$100,000 Coastal Zone Management grant and \$200,000 in St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds.



Friends of the St. Clair River

Every week, a group of volunteers walk the Blue Water River Walk and the coastal wetland to clean up litter and debris. Another group of volunteers spends a morning each week during the warmer months removing unwanted non-native plants and replaces them with preferred native wetland plants. A third group of volunteers give tours of the River Walk and the wetlands to school groups and visitors. All three groups are members of the Friends of the St. Clair River. If you would like to volunteer or would like more information about the Friends, visit their website at www.scriver.org.

On October 28, the Friends participated in "Make a Difference Day" by holding a volunteer event at the wetlands. Over 50 volunteers collected and planted preferred native seeds and pulled non-native seedlings. Most of the volunteers were members of high school honor societies.



Woodsong County Park

Kayak Launch & Trail Work Progresses

The ADA accessible canoe and kayak launch was installed at Woodsong County Park in September. As part of our permit with the MDEQ, the launch has been removed for the winter and will be reinstalled in May. It is important to note that the trail down to the launch is not ADA accessible due to the very significant elevation change between the parking lot and the river. PARC will be working over the next several years to improve the trail to the launch to make it easier for everyone to use. The purchase and installation of the launch was funded by a \$50,000 grant from the MDEQ.



Columbus County Park

Playground Progress

After Thanksgiving, a new nature-themed children's playground was installed at Columbus County Park. The playground is located on the new terrace that was constructed last spring just west of the sledding hill. The playground is being installed in phases. Phase one includes a three-level play structure and a two-level structure with four different slides and many climbing elements. In future years, additional play elements will be added to the playground. The \$170,000 playground project is being funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.



Trail Improvements Continue

Park staff members have been busy making improvements to the trails along the Belle River west of Kronner Road. This winter, staff will begin installing trail markers that will help visitors navigate the vast network of trails in the park.

Columbus Cross Country Skiing

Again this winter, cross country skiing trails will be groomed at Columbus County Park, weather permitting. The park trails and the sledding hill will be open from 8:00 am to 7:30 pm daily.



3rd Annual Cabin Fever Event Returns

The third annual Cabin Fever Festival will be held at Columbus County Park on Saturday, February 24th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Weather permitting, ice skating and sledding will be featured along with horse drawn sleigh rides. If there isn't any snow, wagon rides will be offered along with group hikes. More information about the event will be published in mid-January.



Goodells County Park

New Trail Being Developed

This fall, Goodells park staff members began building more than a mile of new trails through the recently acquired Way property.

The rustic trails will run from the Pine River Pavilion, along the Pine River and then head north to Lapeer Road. The trail will be surfaced with wood chips after all the stumps are removed and the surface is leveled. Walkers will enjoy the rustic alternative to the current paved pathways.



Canopy Sees Heavy Use

Last spring, a 40 foot by 40 foot canopy was installed just north of the Goodells County Park Splashpad. The canopy, including ten picnic tables, a grill, and electricity, was very popular for reunions and parties.

Due to the popularity of the location, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) plans to construct a permanent pavilion at that location in the spring of 2018. The current canopy will be moved to Fort Gratiot County Park for use during 2018.



Ice Rink Returning

Park staff will soon begin construction of the ice rink in the Show Arena at Goodells County Park. This winter tradition will allow skaters to enjoy a lighted and covered ice surface that can be used for open skate and pick-up hockey.

Hours of operation and rules for each activity are posted at the arena and are enforced by park staff. Please note that the ice rink depends on below freezing temperatures, and requires more than a week of freezing temperatures before it will be open to the public. For ice conditions, call (810)989- 6960 or check for status updates on facebook.



Reservations Being Accepted for 2018

If you are having an event and need a special place to make memories, discover St. Clair County Parks. Facilities can be reserved up to one year in advance and are booked on a first come, first serve basis.

For more information, visit our website at www.stclaircountyparks.org or call the Parks office at (810)989-6960.

Fort Gratiot Light Station

Duplex Work Continues

The restoration of the south unit of the Lightkeeper's Duplex continued this year with the restoration of the kitchen and the pantry. The period of interpretation for the Light Station is the 1930s. Therefore, all restorations need to return the building to their appearance in the 1930s. Last spring, volunteers demolished and removed the modern kitchen cabinets and the bathroom fixtures. Instead of a modern bathroom, a closet pantry and a butler's pantry were recreated based on historic plans, pictures and physical evidence.

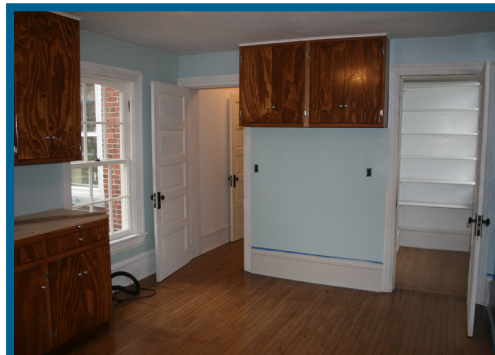
Once the volunteers completed their work, contractors repaired the plaster walls and ceilings; repaired and refinished the wood floor; installed historically accurate cabinets and windows; updated the electrical wiring, and installed a refurbished heating radiator. During the restoration, volunteers painted the ceiling and walls with historically accurate paint colors.

The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light donated \$22,500 to fund the restoration project. PARC millage funds paid \$5,912.70 for the changes to the electrical and heating systems. Next year, the Light Station tours will expand to include the kitchen and a broader discussion of what it was like for the lightkeeper's family to live in the Duplex.

Building on the success of the restoration of the formal dining room (2016), porches (2017) and kitchen (2017), the Friends have already committed to the restoration of south unit's family room and parlor in 2018. PARC appreciates the Friends' volunteer work and donations that make these restorations possible! For more information on the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light, visit www.fortgratiotlight.org.

A Call For Artifacts

The Port Huron Museum is busy identifying and acquiring vintage domestic items to show exactly how the kitchen and pantries would have been stocked and furnished in the 1930s. If you have artifacts from the 1930s that you would like to donate to the museum, please contact Lauren Nelson at (810) 982-0891.



Bridge To Bay Trail

Gratiot Road Connector Trail

Last summer, SEMCOG awarded a \$159,500.00 Transportation Enhancement Program (TAP) grant to St. Clair County to construct a paved trail along the north side of Gratiot Road in Kimball Township from the I-94 Park N Ride, under I-94 to Pickford Road. This fall, Project Control Engineering of Clay Township developed construction plans and specifications for the trail. Construction of the trail is expected to start in the summer of 2018. The project is the first phase of a plan to connect the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Macomb Orchard Trail in Richmond. In turn, the trail will be part of the Great Lake to Lake Trail running from the City of Port Huron to the City of South Haven.



Gratiot Road north shoulder, west of I-94.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Trail Maintenance

In September, a licensed contractor sprayed herbicide on the large stands of Phragmites along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. The invasive Phragmites grass chokes out native plants, clogs drainage ditches and limits visibility along the trail. Next year, the dead plants will be cut down and herbicide will be sprayed on the surviving Phragmites. Once the invasive plants are under control, the cattails and other native plants will return to compliment the trail.

Each fall, after the grass stops growing and before the snow starts falling, park maintenance crews spend a lot of time removing the dead trees along the 12.5 mile trail and trimming back the trees and brush. In the spring, the trees and brush along the trail will be healthier and continue to provide a relaxing environment and shade along the trail.



Trek the Trestle 2017 a Success

This past fall, the annual "Trek the Trestle" event held on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail celebrated its 10th year.

Over 200 people attended the event, where participants cross the 640ft. Mill Creek trestle as part of a five mile walk held on Labor Day. The bridge walk was originally started as a satellite event to mimic the Labor Day bridge walk held on the mighty Mackinaw Bridge.

Whether it's your first time or your tenth time, it is always a thrill to Trek the Trestle!





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Winter 2017

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- www.fortgratiotlightstation.org
- www.woodsongcountypark.org

Trails

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

We are on Facebook & Instagram !
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 Recreation On The Web!**



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