



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Fall/Winter 2011

## Restoration Begins on the Fort Gratiot Light Tower

Work is progressing nicely on the restoration of the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse. National Restoration of Keego Harbor, Michigan, expects to complete the replacement of the crumbling exterior red brick in early November along with tuck pointing the Milwaukee Cream brick (yellow) that is still in good condition after 100 plus years.

The project electrician has completed upgrades to the lighthouse wiring and painters have stripped and repainted the copper top of the lighthouse. After the masonry work is completed, the lighthouse will receive two coats of white paint and the storehouse (also known as the dog house) will receive a new red metal roof, window and door.

All of the work on the lighthouse is being funded by a National Park Service grant and a local match provided by the City of Port Huron. Most of the work is expected to be completed by early December. At this time, the Port Huron Museum expects to resume public tours of the lighthouse next summer.



### Roof Projects Slated for November

Renaissance Restorations of Birmingham has been awarded a contract to replace two Light Station roofs. The work is expected to start by early November and be completed by December. The asphalt shingle roof on the Equipment Building, located just inside of the entrance gate, will be replaced with a cedar shingle roof and the red metal roof on the Fog Signal Building, located by Lighthouse Park, will be restored and re-painted.

The roof repairs are being funded by a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program grant and a local match provided by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light.



### Time Capsule Set in Tower

On October 13, 2011, a reminder of the past was sent to the future. A time capsule was set in the wall of the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse, to help future generations understand the work that was done in 2011. Documents related to the restoration work were placed in the time capsule as well as information about the Lighthouse transfer to St. Clair County and a daily newspaper. The time capsule's location will be marked on construction documents that will be sent to the Port Huron Library and the State of Michigan. Park staff documented the time capsule with photographs and video. Hopefully the time capsule will remain hidden for another 182 years!



### What's Inside

- 2 Park News
- 3 Fort Gratiot & Woodsong County Parks
- 4 Columbus County Park

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



# Park News

## Fort Gratiot Light Station Interpretive Master Plan

Work on the Light Station Master Interpretive Plan and Master Site Plan is wrapping up this fall after three public input sessions and work by the Light Station Advisory Committee. Anyone interested in receiving a copy of the plans should contact the parks and recreation office at 989-6960.



## Master Plan 2012-2017

This fall, the St Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has been working with the St. County Board of Commissioners and the St. Clair County Planning Commission to update the County Master Recreation Plan for 2012-2016. The current Master Plan expires at the end of 2011.

The County Master Recreation Plan will be an outline for the county parks and recreation initiatives and improvements for the next five years. Public input sessions are being held on October 13 in Port Huron, November 10 in Marine City, and December 8 in Goodells. In addition to the public input sessions, PARC has contracted with RESA to conduct a community survey regarding county parks and trails.

A draft of the Master Recreation Plan is expected to be completed by early January. Copies of the draft plan will be available for review throughout January. Public Hearings on the Master Recreation Plan will be held in February.

## Trust Fund Celebrates 35 Years

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund is celebrating its 35th anniversary. Funded by royalties paid for mineral development on state land, the Trust Fund has granted over \$900,000,000 for acquisition of land and development of recreational facilities. Virtually every county of the state has received funding under the program for land acquisition for public parks and/or development of existing parks. Development projects include everything from lake access to playground equipment to rest rooms on recreational properties. Grants money has split almost equally between the Department of Natural Resources and other units of government.



All St. Clair County units of government have received a total of \$10,541,749.00 in grants. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation has received \$4,173,300.00 from the Trust Fund to purchase the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, Fort Gratiot County Park, Columbus County Park, and Woodsong County Park.

## Port Huron Township Develops Baker's Field

This summer and fall, Teltow Contracting of Casco Township has been busy transforming Baker's Field into a modern park complete with walking trails and fishing and boating access to the Black River. The park is located at the end of Strawberry Lane. Park improvements are being funded by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and Port Huron Township's share of the County Parks millage. Next spring, the Township will install an accessible canoe and kayak launch that will be funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.





# Fort Gratiot County Park

## New State Marker Recognizes Tunnel Explosion

December 11, 2011 will mark the 40th anniversary of the single-most deadly day in St. Clair County's history. It was on this day in 1971 that an explosion tore through an intake tunnel being constructed under Lake Huron. The explosion left a path of destruction that killed 22 miners. The tunnel, located under the grounds of Fort Gratiot County Park, was being constructed to provide drinking water to the city of Detroit and surrounding metro area.

A tribute to those men was established in the park by family members in 2007, when a statue of a miner was placed to honor those killed in the explosion.

With the 40th anniversary approaching, another tribute has been bestowed to the park in the form of a Michigan State Historical Marker. Plans for the marker began shortly after the 30th anniversary in 2001, to install a marker at the entrance to the Detroit Water Plant on Metcalf Road. However, once St. Clair County purchased the property that became Fort Gratiot County Park, the application for the marker was resubmitted to the state proposing to install the marker in the park next to the new memorial. After a decade of hard work by the Port Huron Museum and family members, the marker was installed in the Park last June. The marker will be informally dedicated on the 40th anniversary by a small group of family and friends of the victims.



# Woodsong County Park



## Park Information

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.



# Columbus County Park

## Controlled Burn Training

In order to reduce the cost to remove the white house to make way for the Lodge, several steps were taken to recycle materials that would otherwise end up in the landfill.

Habitat for Humanity was given permission to remove all usable building materials and fixtures from the building including doors, paneling, light fixtures and plumbing fixtures.

Park staff removed all recyclable metals from the building including siding, window frames and pipes. Finally, the Richmond Fire Department which services Columbus Township, conducted a controlled burn training exercise for fire fighters from both the Richmond and Memphis Fire Departments.

When the fire went out, all that remained to the white house was the concrete blocks from the foundation and chimney and ashes. The concrete and ashes were taken to Torello Trucking for processing and re-use as construction material.



## Lodge Work Begins

Work is proceeding on the construction of the Columbus County Park Lodge. The basement foundations and walls have been poured as well as the foundations for the pavilion pillars. As soon as the structural steel is delivered, work on the first floor walls can begin. Brown Builders still expect to have the building enclosed before winter weather sets in so that work on the interior can continue through the winter. Weather permitting, construction is expected to be completed by May.

## Other Lodge Construction Contracts

In November, two Lodge-related construction projects should be under way. Siegel Sand and Gravel of Emmett will construct the septic system that will handle waste water from the Lodge. Ed Birkmeier Well Drilling of New Lothrop will install eleven, 200 foot deep wells and connecting piping to provide geo-thermal heating and air conditioning for the Lodge. The geo-thermal wells are being funded by a \$52,000.00 energy efficiency grant from the federal government.





# Goodells County Park

## Columbus Bible Church Interior

The Columbus Bible Church is closer to being completely restored. Electrical, heating and cooling, insulation, drywall and finish carpentry were near completion by the end of October.

Once the general interior work is completed, paint, flooring and the re-installation of the restored church pews will wrap up the restoration. When completed, the church interior will look similar to what it did in the late 19th century.

Built in 1860, The Greek Revival Style Columbus Bible Church was dismantled and moved to the historic Village and re-assembled last spring.

The church will be available for rentals in late spring 2012.



## South Playground Update

Last spring, the south playground near the equestrian facilities at Goodells County Park was removed because it did not meet current playground safety standards. Plans are now being finalized to construct a new playground in the same general area. The new playground will have a rubberized safety tile surface and include an accessible "BIGGO" swing. Plans are to have the new playground ready by the summer of 2012.

## Barns to Get New Roofs

This winter, five failing asphalt shingle roofs in Goodells County Park will be replaced with charcoal grey raised seam metal roofs. Reasonable Construction of Port Huron Township has been awarded a \$179,696 contract to re-roof the Bull Barn, Horse Barn, Dairy Barn, "T" Barn and Visitors Center. Funds from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage will pay for the work.

The metal roofs are expected to last up to 50 years which is more than twice as long as traditional asphalt shingles. Earlier in their long lives, the Horse Barn and Dairy Barn were covered with metal roofs.

## Cross Country Events Held at GCP

This fall, Goodells County Park hosted three high school cross country running events. On October 12, Port Huron High School held a four school meet with at the park. On October 18, the Blue Water Athletic Conference held an eight team league jamboree meet at the park. On October 29, Algonac High School hosted the Michigan High School Athletic Association Regional Cross Country meet at the park that included 9 races and 64 teams.



St. Clair County Parks was recently awarded a tree grant from DTE Energy. The grant allows for the purchase of trees to add to the County Parks.

Trees planted this fall included ( from left to right), Red Maple Eastern Redbud, Swamp White Oak, Sugar Maple, Red Oak and White Pine.

# Bridge to Bay

## Bridge to Bay Trail Grant Applications Pending

The City of Port Huron is waiting for final word on the trail development grant application that it submitted 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 the trail construction is expected to begin in 2012.

This December, St. Clair County will find out if its 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 will be funded. If acquired, the property will 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. If funded, the land is expected to be purchased sometime in the summer or fall in 2012.

The St. Clair County Community Foundation has partnered with the St. Clair County Road Commission to submit a trail development grant to the Michigan Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Program. The proposed grant will fund the development of its paved Blue Water River Walk trail from the Military Street pedestrian underpass, along the St. Clair River, to Acheson Ventures' Great Lakes Maritime Center.



## Bridge to Bay Trail Sign Upgrade

The new logo seen here will soon be posted along the Bridge to Bay Trail as part of the new trail signage program.



# Wadhams to Avoca Trail



## Adjacent Land Purchased

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation recently purchased three acres of vacant land located southeast of the Mill Creek Trestle in Kenockee Township to accommodate an equestrian trail down to the Mill Creek crossing. The property purchase will allow park staff to build a less steeply sloped trail down the hill to the south side of the Mill Creek. The purchase will also simplify property lines in the area.

This is the second time that this adjacent property owner has sold property to St. Clair County for the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. In 2002, the same owner sold six acres of land to St. Clair County adjacent to the trail for the Imlay City Road Trailhead.

## Ditch Witch Purchased

In September, a Ditch Witch was purchased to construct and maintain county trails, beaches and ice rinks. The multi-purpose piece of equipment is tracked and can be fitted with implements for grading, excavating, trenching and sweeping. The Michigan Mountain Biking Association has been using Ditch Witches for trail construction for many years.

In addition to building the equestrian trail down to the Mill Creek, the Ditch Witch will be used to construct mountain biking trails at Columbus County Park, walking trails at Woodsong County Park and grading the beaches at Fort Gratiot County Park and the Fort Gratiot Light Station. In the winter, the Ditch Witch will be used to maintain the ice skating rinks at Goodells County Park and Columbus County Park.

## Trail Benches

Walkers and bikers of all ages and abilities enjoy the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Recently, several trail users have asked that St. Clair County Parks and Recreation install additional benches along the trail. This fall, two memorial benches will be installed between Lapeer Road and Bartlett Road. Additional memorial benches will be installed along the trail in coming years. Anyone interested in donating a memorial bench to honor someone, is asked to contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960 for more information.

## Thank You!

Twice each year, Adopt-A-Trail groups clean up their assigned sections of the WTA Trail. The fall clean up was held on October 1st. The spring clean up for 2012 will be held on April 28th. 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
- 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
- Port Huron Hospital Helmet Safety
- The Debbie Stein Family



## "Trek the Trestle" Walk a Success

On Labor Day 2011, the fourth Annual Trestle Trek was held on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Approximately 200 participants Treked the Trestle, a five-mile walk from Avoca Road to Imlay City Road and back. The highlight of the event for many walkers was crossing the 640-foot long Mill Creek Trestle.

The Labor Day walk is held in conjunction with the more famous walk across the Mackinac Bridge. Labor Day walks are held across the state as part of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness's initiative to get Michigan moving!





St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission  
 200 Grand River, Suite 107  
 Port Huron, MI 48060  
 Telephone (810) 989-6960

PRSRTD STD  
 US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 PORT HURON MI  
 PERMIT #995

Printed on 20% post consumer recycled fiber.

**FALL/WINTER 2011**

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

**We are on Facebook!**

Keyword Search *St. Clair County Parks*  
 Are you a Fan?

**Questions?**

Email us at [countyparks@stclaircounty.org](mailto:countyparks@stclaircounty.org)

**Community Survey**

Are you willing to participate in a community survey about County Parks and Trails?  
 If so, go to the internet site below and answer the 30 questions that will be used to develop County Parks and Recreation goals for the next five years.

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22DDE83LMA5>



**St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commissioners**

- Dennis Basinski.....Chair
- Frederick F. Swegles.....Vice Chair
- James Bier.....Secretary
- John Cooper.....Commissioner
- Charles S. Mathews .....Commissioner
- Steve Cooper.....Commissioner
- Robert Wiley .....Commissioner
- Tom Sass .....Commissioner
- Howard Heidemann .....Commissioner
- Timothy LaLonde.. .....Commissioner

**Parks and Recreation Staff**

- Mark Brochu, CPRP.....Director
- Lynn Smith .....Office Manager
- Matt Sharp.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Tim May.....Parks Operations Supervisor
- Dennis C. Delor .....Special Events, Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator

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