



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Fall 2020

North Channel Property to Become Next County Park

Last spring St. Clair County submitted an application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for an acquisition grant to purchase four parcels of land on the North Channel of the St. Clair River in Clay Township. The four parcels totaling approximately ten acres are located between the Algonac Harbour Club and the DNR Boat Launch on M-29. The application seeks a \$1,425,300 grant that will be matched with \$500,800 from the County Parks and Recreation Millage. The Trust Fund Board will meet in December to award the 2020 grants. If the County is awarded a grant, the soonest the County could buy the property will be in the fall of 2021.

The project is a partnership with Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Clay Township and the City of Algonac. The proposed County Park will be developed in phases and will include a swimming beach, a kayak launch, shoreline fishing, walking trails, pavilions, a children's playground and a paved parking lot.



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Park News

River Restoration Award

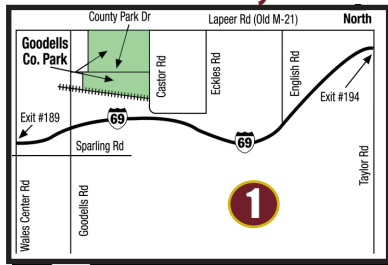
The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) proudly accepted the 2020 St. Clair River Restoration Partner award from Friends of the St. Clair River and the St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council at their August meeting. PARC joins a prestigious line-up that has worked tirelessly towards the goal of restoring the health of the St. Clair River. The award recognizes PARC as a longtime partner for fish and wildlife habitat restoration at the Blue Water River Walk County Park. PARC contributed match for the grant to construct the 1-mile paved path along the River Walk and purchased adjoining land south of the River Walk to turn an industrial wasteland into a thriving native habitat and green space. PARC continues to support these projects by providing maintenance and monitoring to these sites which guarantees their success. PARC's collaboration with the St. Clair River international community is an example of how community investment can create environmentally successful places and are a significant step towards restoring the St. Clair River.

Watch the award presentation by searching "St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission" on YouTube or visit "Friends of the St. Clair River" YouTube channel.



Directions to all Seven St. Clair County Parks

Goodells County Park



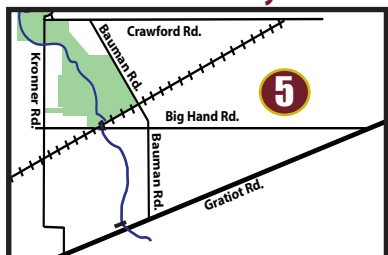
8264 County Park Drive, Goodells, MI

Woodsong County Park

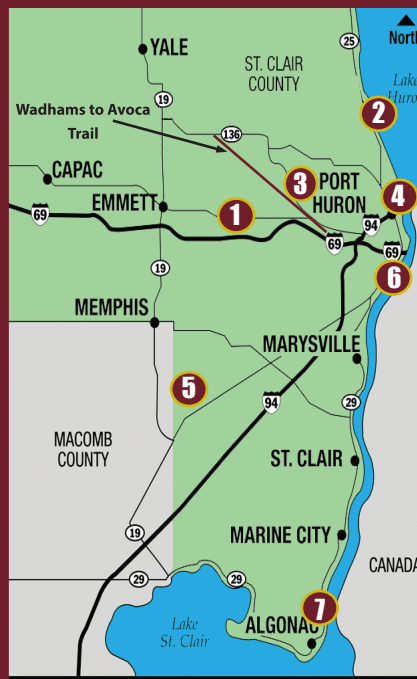


5980 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI

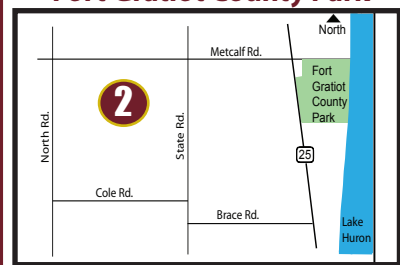
Columbus County Park



1670 Bauman Road, Columbus, MI

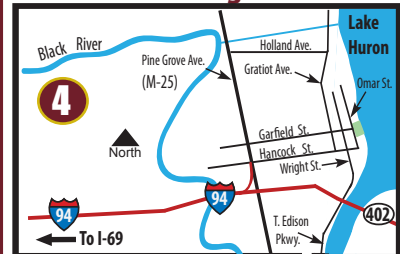


Fort Gratiot County Park



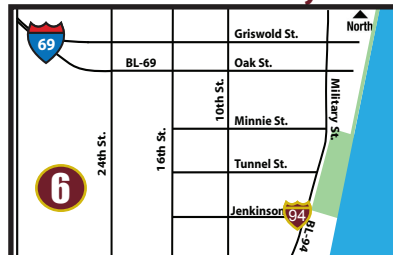
3325 Metcalf Road, Fort Gratiot, MI

Fort Gratiot Light Station



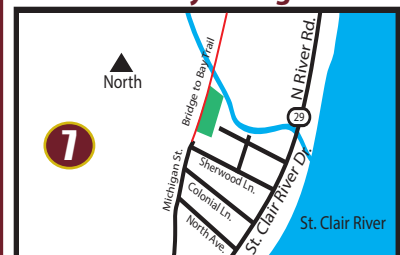
2800 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI

BW River Walk County Park



2200 Military Street, Port Huron, MI

Marine City Dredge Cut



402 Sherwood Lane, Algonac, MI

Park News

COVID-19 and Parks Update

This year has been challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continues into 2021, we continue to accept reservations for county park facilities. All reservations are processed with the understanding that the Health Department regulations in effect on the day of a reservation will regulate if or how the event is run. The Parks and Recreation Commission will continue its policy that any reservation that has to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions will have the option to receive a full refund or reschedule the event to another date.

We share everyone's frustrations in dealing with the ongoing restrictions and appreciate everyone's cooperation in getting through the pandemic.

On a positive note, 2020 has been a record year for the day use of all of the County Parks and Trails. We hope that residents and families will continue to enjoy the use of the parks and trails long after the pandemic has passed.

Sweater Weather Stewardship

Friends of the St. Clair River volunteers gather virtually and in person year-round for training, field work and citizen science to manage habitats and green infrastructure in St. Clair County parks. The cool seasons offer comfortable field conditions and a peaceful environment. Friends also offers "armchair" volunteering opportunities to enjoy from home. Join online or at Blue Water River Walk County Park, Columbus County Park or Fort Gratiot County Park to dive into these unique and diverse parks all winter long. Contact Friends Stewardship Director at stewardship@scriver.org or (810)294-4965 to learn more.

Blue Water River Walk

Mapping Invasives

Explore the EDDmapS invasive species mapping and tracking tool with Friends of the St. Clair River to help manage habitats around our watersheds. EDDmapS (eddmeps.org) is a free app used by land managers, researchers and citizen scientists. EDDMapS training and volunteer opportunities are provided throughout the year. Reach out to stewardship@scriver.org for more information.



15 Trees, 1 Day: A Tree Planting Event

Friends of the St. Clair River, in partnership with ReLeaf Michigan and the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, welcomed 45 volunteers on Saturday, October 17 to assist in planting 15 Michigan native trees on the Blue Water River Walk. Sponsored by DTE Foundation, this left an environmental legacy adding to the beauty of the shoreline and protecting the integrity of this federally funded habitat restoration project.



Goodells County Park

Event Marquee

A construction contract for an event marquee in Goodells County Park on Lapeer Road near Fargo Road was awarded in August. The two sided sign will feature 4 foot by 13 foot LED programmable panels that will promote events that are being held in the park. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of the year. The sign is being funded by the County Parks and Recreation Millage.



Flooring Projects

Last spring, the nearly sixty year old urinals in the Community Center restrooms had to be replaced. That in turn required that the surrounding "original" floor tiles needed to be replaced.

Ropposch Brothers Flooring was awarded a contract to replace the ceramic tile floors and add wall tiles in the Community Center Restrooms. We are hoping that the new tiles last as long as the old tiles!

Ropposch Brothers Flooring was also awarded a contract to replace the twenty year old carpet in the Visitor's Center with new commercial grade carpet tiles. The carpet will be walked on by literally thousands of guests each year.



Barn Repairs

This summer, park maintenance workers repaired the doors and window frames on the three Exhibit Barns on the north side of Goodells County Park. Eason Painting then finished the project by painting the Exhibit Barns. Eason also power-washed and painted the Fort Gratiot County Park pavilions earlier in the summer. Each year, PARC awards contracts to keep the park buildings looking good and protected from water damage.



Fall Colors 2020



Columbus County Park

Cross Country Races

This fall both Columbus County Park and Goodells County Park hosted several school cross country running races. Columbus County Park accommodated runners competing in the dual meets organized by Marine City High School, New Life Christian Academy, Immaculate Conception Church and St. Clair Middle School. Algonac High School hosted the Blue Water Athletic Conference League Meets and Austin Catholic organized the MHSAA Class D Pre-Regional Meet at the park.

Goodells County Park hosted dual meets and an invitational held by Yale High School, while Cardinal Mooney High School organized a Catholic League Meet and Algonac High School held an MHSAA Regional Meet.



The cross country meets use the parks' rustic trails and mowed lawn areas to create challenging 3.1 mile (5 Km) race courses for high schoolers and shortened distances for middle schoolers. If you are in the parks and come across a painted white line on the ground, you are on part of a cross country race course.

Opt Outside: Black Friday

Ditch the shopping, grab your boots and discover something new on Black Friday, November 27th.

Friends of the St. Clair River have created a unique, fun and safe way to participate in #OptOutside with self-guided challenges and activities at Columbus County Park. This event is free however you must register to receive the Quest. Register at www.scriver.org.

Fall/Winter Hours at Columbus and Fort Gratiot County Parks

Columbus County Park has reduced hours of operation for the fall/winter. The park is open daily from 8:00am to 8:00pm. The park will be on this schedule until Memorial Day. The park is a popular winter activity park and will have sledding, ice skating and cross country skiing opportunities (weather permitting). The sledding hill is open 10:00am to 7:45pm and the Lodge restrooms will remain open through the winter.

Fort Gratiot County Park also has reduced fall/winter hours of operation. The park is open daily from 8:00 am to 8:00pm. The park restrooms have been winterized and will be open again in May of 2021.

Fort Gratiot County Park

Story Book Trail

Take a Walk, Read a Book, and Have an Adventure with StoryWalk.®

The St. Clair County Library System in collaboration with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation invite families to enjoy our new StoryWalk® installation at Fort Gratiot County Park. Take time to enjoy the sights and smells of the outdoors and read a wonderful children's book. The StoryWalk® starts near the entrance to the playground equipment and circles around the trail, just follow the numbered signs. Ready? Lets go! A second story is planned for later this year.



Fort Gratiot Light Station

10 Years: County Park Reflection

On September 9, 2010 the Fort Gratiot Light Station was transferred to St. Clair County, under the care of the Parks Commission. This began an amazing ten-year journey of research and restoration projects, fund-raising, tourism and partnerships. The Historic Structure's Report (HSR) recommends a course of action for restoration and site use to be developed over 25 years. The plan ensures the preservation of the oldest lighthouse in Michigan while providing access to the public as a County Park.

Over the last ten years restoration projects have been completed due in large part to a partnership with the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light. The friends group has donated hundreds of hours of volunteer work, completed fund-raising events and provided general community outreach to secure funding for multiple projects. Another important partnership that is critical to the site is with the Port Huron Museum. The museum provides tours, interpretive exhibits with artifacts and maintains a gift shop on site.

Since 2010 over a million dollars in grants and donations, with the assistance of the County Park Millage, have been used to complete numerous projects to ensure the preservation of the site for future generations.



Volunteers Keep Moving Ahead

What drives historic restoration projects at the Light Station are the dozens of volunteers who are committed to seeing site progress continue. These volunteers donate time on the site and help raise funds behind the scenes. Recently park staff repaired the pavilion, and a small group of volunteers shingled the roof and repainted the gable ends. The pavilion is a popular spot for visitors to picnic after touring the site and it also serves as the headquarters during the Sandfest fund raiser event. Special thanks to the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light volunteers that helped to complete the project!



Retired Station Roof Project

This fall MIHM enterprises replaced the roof on the Retired Coast Guard Station building. When the building was constructed in 1932, the roof was covered with cedar shingles and is now restored to its original appearance. Work included removing the leaking asphalt shingles, installing new flashing and installing the sawn cedar shingles.

Museum Attendance

All of St. Clair County's Parks saw an increase in visitation during the COVID-19 quarantine, and even though the Port Huron Museum was closed for most it, the visitation numbers to the Light Station were still pretty strong. For the year, the Museum recorded 8,147 visitors to the site, and they did not open until mid June! These numbers do not include the thousands of visitors that visited the Station grounds during the quarantine, which lasted from March to June.

Bridge to Bay Trail

County Wide Trail Projects Announced

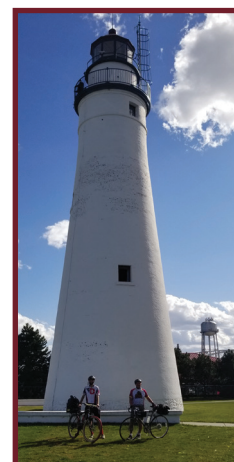
Bridge to Bay Trail Phase 1 projects are underway. This first of three phases encompasses nine projects spanning eleven routes in St. Clair, Marysville and Port Huron. Phase 1 received a boost in July with a \$1.55m grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation. Communities in which the Phase 1 routes pass through have applied for MDNR and MDOT grants to supplement funding. Beyond that, additional funding must be secured by March 31, 2021 in order to complete these projects.

Under the umbrella of the Regional Trails Board, local trail advisory committees have been prioritizing the preferred routes through their communities. The lack of connections into downtowns, rural roadway conditions and lack of desired side paths are challenges with the current trail are being addressed.

This ambitious multi-year, Bridge to Bay Trail plan is about more than just constructing 18 miles in the 54-mile trail; it's about building a culture for trail use. Construction on these routes is anticipated to start summer of 2021. Reach out to Friends of the St. Clair River (scriver.org) if you'd like to learn more about the phases of the Bridge To Bay Trail project.

Lake to Lake Trail Becoming Popular

Riders from all over the Midwest are starting to take on the challenge of Michigan's new Great Lake to Lake Trail (Route #1). An increasing number of bikers were seen this summer dipping their front tires into Lake Huron, the symbolic ending to the long ride. Early this fall, Park staff caught up with two riders that came up from southern Ohio to ride the trail. Bernie and Bill Kingsolver from Mason and Dayton Ohio, completed the 275 mile trip from South Haven to Port Huron in 4 days. They were looking for a unique riding opportunity in Michigan after completing similar trips in Ohio and Pennsylvania. "This was my first real visit to Michigan. By bicycling from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron, I experienced the diversity of Michigan's natural beauty. It was a great trip," said Bernie. To finish the journey, they spent some time exploring the Fort Gratiot Light Station.



Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Volunteers Needed!

St. Clair County Parks has a large network of trails and parks, and we are always looking for dedicated volunteers who want to make a difference.

County Parks are currently accepting applications for our Adopt a Trail Program. There are several openings for groups that want to help keep our Wadhams to Avoca Trail beautiful. The volunteer groups will be responsible for two clean-ups a year (Spring and Fall). Sections available vary in length. For more information on how to apply, contact Dennis Delor at (810)989-6929.



Trek the Trestle to Return in 2021

For the first time in 13 years, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission cancelled the annual Labor Day "Trek the Trestle" Walk on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. The decision was based on safety concerns in relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The event will return as scheduled on Labor Day Monday September 6, 2021.



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Fall 2020

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

Trails

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

We are on Facebook & Instagram ! *St. Clair County Parks*
Questions?

Email us at countyparks@stclaircounty.org

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



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- Timothy LaLonde.....Vice-Chair
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- Steve Cooper.....Commissioner
- William Foster.....Commissioner
- Peter Leto.....Commissioner
- Howard Heidemann.....Commissioner
- Geoffry Kusch.....Commissioner
- Terrel Wallis.....Commissioner
- Robert Wiley.....Commissioner

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- Kelly Gardner.....Office Coordinator
- Debbie O'Neill.....Office Clerk
- Brad Brenske...Parks Operations Supervisor
- Dennis C. DelorSpecial Events,
 Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator

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