



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Spring 2012

## Columbus County Park Lodge Nears Completion

The mild weather allowed contractors to work on the Columbus County Park Lodge throughout the winter. Brown Builders of Lexington expects to complete work on the building by the end of April after the storm water drainage system and walkways are installed. Park staff will install the landscaping around the building in May.

Residents now have the opportunity to reserve the Lodge's multi-purpose room and the attached pavilion beginning on May 26. The multi-purpose room is 18' x 20' and includes a sink and counter. The pavilion is 40'x 40' and residents will have the option of reserving the adjacent 10' x 12' serving kitchen. For reservation information, contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960.



A grand opening will be held on Saturday, June 9, as part of St. Clair County's River Day activities. Stay tuned for announcements after Memorial Day weekend. Activities will include a ribbon cutting ceremony, building tours, light refreshments and nature related programs.

### Other Lodge Construction Contracts

Two Lodge-related construction projects were also completed this spring. Siegel Sand and Gravel of Emmett constructed the septic system that will handle waste water from the Lodge. Ed Birkmeier Well Drilling of New Lothrop installed eleven, 200 foot deep wells and connecting piping that will provide geo-thermal heating and air conditioning for the Lodge. The geo-thermal wells were funded by a \$52,000 energy efficiency grant from the federal government. Construction of the septic field was funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage.



### What's Inside

- 2 Columbus County Park & Park News
- 3 Fort Gratiot County Park
- 4 Fort Gratiot Light Station

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



# Columbus County Park Continued from page 1.

## Controlled Burn at Columbus County Park

On April 7, the Richmond Fire Department conducted a controlled burn in Columbus County Park. The controlled burn was conducted on the east side of the park along the railroad tracks and on both sides of the park entrance road off of Bauman Road.

Controlled burns enable native seeds in the soil to germinate and thrive while reducing the invasive vegetation that commonly takes over former farm fields. Native plant species such as switchgrass and prairie dock provide food and cover for animals of all sizes, from honeybees to pheasant. The controlled burn is just the first step of the process that will provide park goers with a natural and varied wildlife experience.

In the following months and years, park staff and outside help will continue to mow, treat and burn areas in the park to return it to a natural state. Keep your eyes peeled for new wildlife taking advantage of these natural areas as they grow.



## Park News



### State Parks Passport Program



Residents of the State of Michigan can now purchase a \$10 Recreation Passport as part of their annual vehicle license plate registration. The Passport replaces the \$24 annual and \$6 daily State Park and Recreation Area entrance fees as well as the State Boat Launch fees.

Citizens that choose to take advantage of the Passport deal will be issued a special license plate tag that identifies their vehicle as being exempt from park fees for that year. However, the Passport does not replace campsite reservation fees which are still in effect.

Proceeds from the sales of the Passports will finance badly needed infrastructure improvements and repairs to State Parks, Recreation Areas and Boat Launches. Please note that these state facilities do not receive any State General Fund tax support.

For more information on the State Parks Passport program visit [www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport)

### Master Recreation Plan

Last fall and winter, the St Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) worked with the St. County Board of Commissioners and the St. Clair County Planning Commission to update the St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan for 2012-2016. The County Master Recreation Plan is an outline for the county parks and recreation initiatives and improvements for the next five years.

Public input sessions were 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 contracted with RESA to conduct a community survey regarding county parks and trails.

The St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan 2012-2016 was approved in February. The Master Plan is posted on the county web site at <http://www.stclaircounty.org/Offices/parks/plan.aspx>

# Fort Gratiot County Park

## New Summer Hours

Beginning Memorial Day weekend (May 25), Fort Gratiot County Park will be open each day until 9:00 pm. The new summer hours (8:00 am to 9:00 pm) will stay in effect through Labor Day (September 3rd).

The change in hours will allow park users to enjoy Fort Gratiot County Park for another hour each day during the “dog days” of summer.

## Reservations

The picnic pavilions at Fort Gratiot County Park have already been reserved for all of the Saturdays and Sundays in June, July and August for family reunions, church picnics, graduation open houses and weddings. More and more families are now reserving pavilions on Friday nights and weekday evenings. Pavilions are still available on most weekends in September.



For more information on reservation opportunities, please contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960.

## Beach Clean up

Each winter, Mother Nature’s storms uncover a whole new crop of concrete debris at the Fort Gratiot County Park beach. The previous owners of the property attempted to stabilize the beach by placing concrete on the shoreline to catch and hold sand.

Each spring, under an Army Corps of Engineers permit, park staff and contractors remove the exposed concrete to make the beach as safe as possible. During the summer, staff members remove any new debris that surfaces. Park patrons are asked to notify staff of any debris that they find on the beach or in the water.

New this year, excess sand from the Fort Gratiot Light Station will be moved to the upper beach at Fort Gratiot County Park.



## Tunnel Committee Receives Community Service Award

On March 14, the Water Tunnel Explosion Memorial Committee was honored with a Michigan Recreation and Park Association Community Service Award. The Community Service Award recognizes the committee’s significant work in raising funds and constructing the beautiful memorial that is the centerpiece to Fort Gratiot County Park. The committee was comprised of family members and co-workers of the victims, as well as staff from the Port Huron Museum, the Detroit Water Board and local media. Over the last decade, the 14 member committee was instrumental in raising over \$75,000 to build a permanent memorial for the victims. Representing the Tunnel Memorial Committee at the awards ceremony was T.J. Gaffney and Debbie Comeau.



# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## Overnight at the Light

In partnership with St. Clair County Parks, the Port Huron Museum proudly announces that the "Overnight at the Light" program will be held at the historic Fort Gratiot Light Station in the Lightkeepers Duplex.

Based on the successful USCG Cutter BRAMBLE Overnight, this is an opportunity for 20 or more people to spend the night, bunk room style in this notable building on a remarkable campus.



This unique activity is well-suited for scouts, youth groups, school groups and families. The "Overnight at the Light" includes a tour of the entire facility, highlighting the historic uses and the current renovation plans. A planned program relating to the site will also be presented, then a snack and lights out! Sleep in the newly renovated Duplex and enjoy breakfast the next day. Tickets are \$25 per person. Minimum of 20 people required to reserve a date.

Call 810-982-0891 ext.118 or email [avarty@phmuseum.org](mailto:avarty@phmuseum.org) for more information.



## Light Station Grounds Open to the Public

Now that the re-construction of the lighthouse tower and the repairs to the roofs have been completed, the Light Station grounds will be open to the public daily from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. unless the grounds are reserved for a special event.

## Tower Restoration Work Wrapping Up

National Restoration of Keego Harbor, Michigan, has completed the replacement of the crumbling exterior red brick and tuck pointed the Milwaukee Cream brick (yellow) that was still in good condition after 100 years. A new red metal roof, window and door were installed on the lighthouse storehouse and the metal balcony on the tower has been repaired.

After the masonry work was completed last fall, the lighthouse received two layers of white coating. Unfortunately the coatings did not properly adhere to the brick. The good news is that the contractor has restripped the coating from the lighthouse and will re-apply the coatings in May when the air temperature is higher and the moisture level in the bricks is below 13%. To insure that the moisture level in the lighthouse is kept lower, County Parks installed a power ventilator in the base of the tower.

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.

## Roof Repairs Grant

The contract to replace two Light Station roofs is expected to be completed by early May. Renaissance Restorations of Birmingham replaced the asphalt shingle roof on the Equipment Building, located just inside of the entrance gate, with a sawn cedar shingle roof and new gutters and downspouts were installed. The red metal roof on the Fog Signal Building, located by Lighthouse Park, was repaired and re-painted and the chimney was rebuilt.

Since the roof repairs did not require more extensive work, the remaining \$7,700 under the \$60,000 grant budget is being used to construct and install six wooden exterior doors on the Fog Signal Building. The doors will be replicas of the doors that were on the building in the 1930s.

The project is being funded by a \$40,000 Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program grant and a \$20,000 local match provided by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light.

## Coastal Management Grant

St. Clair County recently signed a grant contract with the MDEQ for a Coastal Management construction grant to construct ADA accessible walkways at the Fort Gratiot Light Station 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 and the installation of three benches and five interpretive panels. Construction of the \$60,344 grant project is expected to begin in August or September.

# Goodells County Park

## Columbus Bible Church

The restoration of the interior of the Columbus Bible Church was completed this winter with the installation of pine flooring and light fixtures, and painting and installation of the restored pews and doors. On the outside, a new stained and stamped concrete walkway to the front doors has been installed along with landscaping.



The church is now available for reservation for private events. So far, seven weddings have been booked for the church. Based on the seating available in the church, capacity has been set at 100 guests. For reservation information, please contact the Parks and Recreation office at (810) 989-6960.

## Judges Barns for Riding Rings

This winter, instead of shoveling and plowing snow, park staff members replaced the windows and siding on the "red" and "green" judges barns overlooking the riding rings at Goodells County Park. During the "off-season" park staff members keep busy by maintaining and upgrading buildings and equipment.

## Roof Replacements Taking Shape

Five failing asphalt shingle roofs in Goodells County Park have been replaced with charcoal grey raised seam metal roofs. Reasonable Construction of Port Huron Township re-roofed the Bull Barn, Horse Barn, Dairy Barn, "T" Barn and Visitors Center. Funds from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage paid for the work.



## South Playground Being Replaced

In late April, construction of the new south playground near the equestrian facilities at Goodells County Park began. The new playground will have a rubberized safety tile surface under a Little Tikes Max Play 2 playground and an accessible "BIGGO" swing. Plans are to have the new playground ready for use by the 4th of July.

## Speaking of Roofs...

The Garden Center house, located between the Operations Center and the Garden Pavilion, also received a new roof this spring. Gates Roofing of Port Huron replaced the failing t-lock shingles with dimensional asphalt shingles. The Garden Center is home to the Earthkeepers environmental education program.

## Quonset Hut Replacement

By early May, the old Quonset Hut that has been the site of many community events since the 1940s will be demolished to make way for a new and improved Quonset Hut. Nolan Construction of Wales Township has been contracted to demolish the old structure and replace it with a similar sized building that will have concrete block walls and a corrugated metal Quonset Hut roof. The building will also have improved access and lighting. The construction contract calls for the new Quonset Hut to be completed in time for the 2012 St. Clair County 4H and Youth Fair.

## Fun Fact:

Where does the name Quonset Hut come from? Answer: The lightweight prefabricated galvanized steel buildings were first manufactured in the US at Quonset Point, Rhode Island.

# Bridge to Bay Trail



## Blue Water River Walk

The St. Clair County Community Foundation partnered with the St. Clair County Road Commission to submit a grant application to MDOT for the construction of almost a mile of non-motorized path along the St. Clair River from the Military Street underpass to Water Street.



The grant application has made it through the first stage of the Transportation Enhancement application process. The second stage requires St. Clair County to meet all the federal requirements to prepare for project implementation and

formally secure their share of the cost of the project. If they meet these requirements and Transportation Enhancement funds are available, the grant will be awarded. If the grant is awarded, we hope that construction of the trail will take place in 2013.

## County Park Grant

In December, St. Clair County was awarded a \$150,000 acquisition grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase approximately three acres of vacant land located just north of the Seaway Terminal from Acheson Ventures.



The property purchase is expected to be completed before the end of the year and will connect the City of Port Huron's proposed trail to the Blue Water River Walk. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds will be used for the local match for the land acquisition.

## City of Port Huron

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

## Launches Installed

Due to the mild winter weather and an early spring, the accessible canoe and kayak launches were re-installed a month earlier than usual. The fully accessible launches are located on the Pine River at the St. Clair Boat Harbor, on the St. Clair River just north of the Marysville Water Filtration Plant, and on the Black River at Fort Gratiot Township's North River Road Park.

This year, two new launches are expected to be purchased and installed on the Black River. Port Huron Township is expected to install a launch at their new Bakers Field Park and the City of Port Huron is expected to install a launch at their Riverside Boat Launch.

Under the Accessible Launch Partnership Program, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation purchases the launch and the local partner provides a safe and accessible launch site. The local partner also maintains the site and provides free use of the site for all paddlers.

## Blueways Website

All paddlers should visit the website called "the Blueways of St. Clair" at [www.bluewaysofstclair.org](http://www.bluewaysofstclair.org). The website gives "paddlers" of canoes & kayaks a one-stop source for information on waterways and public and private facilities that will allow them to enjoy St. Clair County's rivers and lakes.

The website currently has 16 different paddling routes using eight different bodies of water. Each route has a webpage with an interactive map, complete with assets such as places to eat, shop and sleep. Each route also includes other things to do like museums, parks, beaches and camping.

# Wadhams to Avoca Trail



## YMCA Earth Day Walk

On Sunday, April 22, the YMCA of the Blue Water Area held their first annual 5K Earth Day Walk on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Fifty-three walkers started on the west side of Wadhams Road at the Speedy Q trailhead and walked 2.5 kilometers (1.55 miles) northwest to the halfway mark located just north of Lapeer Road, and then back to the starting point. Participants even took part in a scavenger hunt along the way.



## Phragmites Control

In an effort to eradicate the invasive Phragmites that have been taking over the ditches along the WTA Trail, park staff members and the Jail Alternative Sentencing Program crew sprayed the Phragmites grasses along the WTA Trail with Round Up in the fall and cut down the giant plants during the winter. Hopefully, this second year of control measures will substantially eliminate the invasive species along the trail and allow native plants and wildlife to re-populate the trailsides!



## Mill Creek Equestrian Crossing

After many hours of hand work and the use of a new Ditch Witch trail building machine, equestrian trail riders can now use the new creek crossing under the Mill Creek Trestle. The project included the construction of a switch back trail down the south hillside and under the trestle, construction of approach ramps on both banks, and construction of a trail straight up the north hillside.

Horses are not allowed on the Mill Creek Trestle for safety reasons and riders are asked to use the new creek crossing.



## Spring Trail Clean Up

Again this spring, the Adopt-A-Trail groups cleaned up their sections of the WTA Trail. The groups conduct two clean ups during the year, with the second clean up taking place in October. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission appreciates the work of the sixteen dedicated volunteer groups that keep the 12.5 mile trail so clean!





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

PRESRT STD  
 US POSTAGE **PAID**  
 THORPE PRINTING SERVICES  
 PORT HURON MICHIGAN  
 PERMIT #28

\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*

Local  
 Residential Customer

Printed on 20% post consumer recycled fiber.

**SPRING 2012**

**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)



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

- John Cooper.....Chair
- Frederick F. Swegles.....Vice Chair
- James Bier.....Secretary
- Dennis Basinski.....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