



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Spring 2019

River Walk County Park to Take Shape This Summer



This spring, a \$665,300 contract was awarded to Raymond Excavating of Marysville to construct phase one of the Blue Water River Walk park improvements. The park is located just north of the County Wetlands and next to the Blue Water River Walk.

Park improvements will include a picnic pavilion, a shade trellis, walkways, landscaping, an artificial turf activity area, picnic tables, grills and benches. Construction is expected to start in June and should be completed by the end of September.

The project is being funded in part by a \$75,000 DNR Recreation Passport grant and a \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Both grants are being matched with funding from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

Wetlands Wanderings

Join Friends of the St. Clair River on the fourth Wednesdays of the summer months (June 26, July 24, August 28 & September 25) at 6:00 pm for Wetlands Wanderings at Wetlands County Park. Explore the diverse life in this unique, urban ecosystem. All are welcome to this free and family-friendly event. Park by the south end of the wetland or at Grayfox docks. Contact the Friends Environmental Educator at education@scriver.org.



What's Inside

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

- 6 Fort Gratiot Light Station
- 7 Trail News
- 8 On the Web

Park News

Friends of the St. Clair River

Do you love putting your passion for the planet into practice? The Friends of the St. Clair River volunteers gather for social, fun, hands-on work and citizen science to manage habitats and green infrastructure projects for people, plants and wildlife. Attend a regularly scheduled stewardship



session or organize your own group work day at Wetlands County Park, Columbus County Park or another habitat site that Friends help manage.

Contact Friends Stewardship Director at stewardship@scriver.org or (810) 294-4965 to learn more.

Staffing Changes

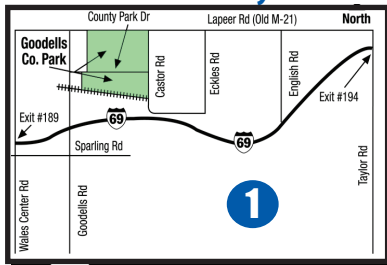
This spring saw the retirement of long time Office Coordinator, Lynn Wilton. Lynn was the first employee hired by the new County Parks and Recreation Department in 1995 and helped fashion many of the policies and procedures that regulate the department today.

The new Office Coordinator is Kelly Gardner. Kelly was previously an employee of the County's Library System and most recently worked in the County Administration Department as an Administrative Assistant. During the month of April, Kelly received a crash course in the operations of the Parks and Recreation Office.



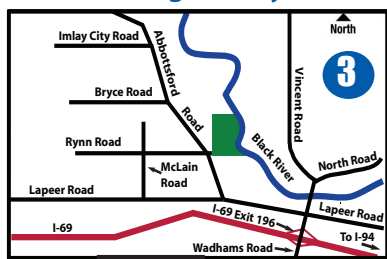
Directions to all Seven St. Clair County Parks

Goodells County Park



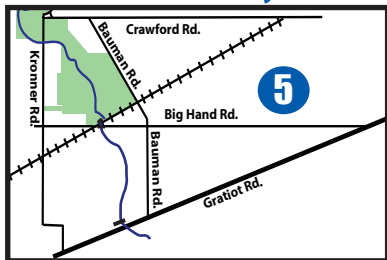
8264 County Park Drive, Goodells, MI

Woodsong County Park



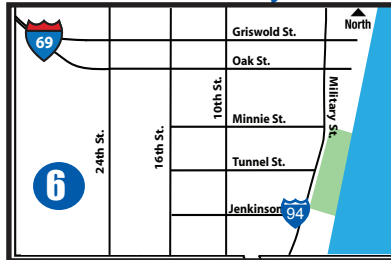
5980 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI

Columbus County Park



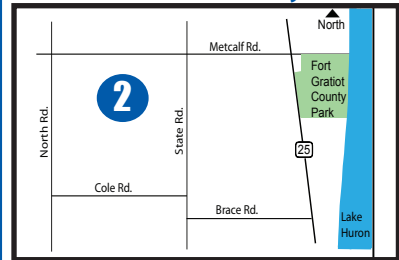
1670 Bauman Road, Columbus, MI

Wetlands County Park



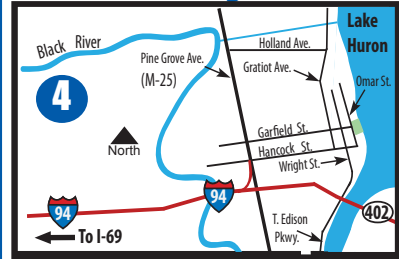
2200 Military Street, Port Huron, MI

Fort Gratiot County Park



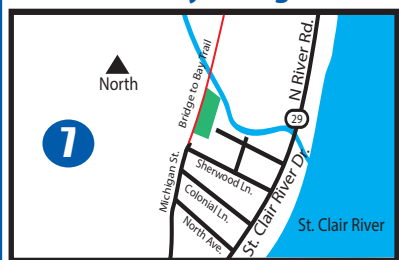
3325 Metcalf Road, Fort Gratiot, MI

Fort Gratiot Light Station

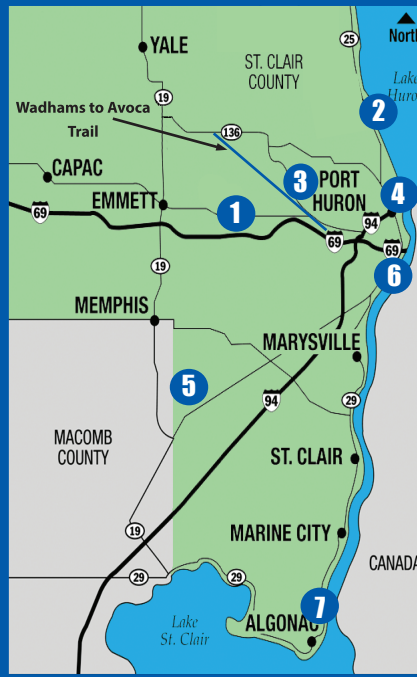


2800 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI

Marine City Dredge Cut



402 Sherwood Lane, Algonac, MI



Park News

County Park Connections : CISMA

In 2015, the Lake St. Clair (LSC) Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) was established within the Macomb and St. Clair County portion of the Lake St. Clair watershed. The LSC CISMA works to prevent, detect, monitor and control invasive species within its boundaries. The LSC CISMA works cooperatively by partnering with local government agencies, non-profit organizations and volunteers to help stop the spread of five priority invasive species and reduce their associated ecological, public safety and economic stressors.

The LSC CISMA coordinated treatment efforts along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail in 2018. Phragmites australis, commonly known as phragmites or common reed, was the target plant managed. Phragmites is an aggressive perennial grass that can grow over 15 feet tall. Stems are hollow and leaves are a dull, blue-green in summer. When dormant or dead, phragmites stems will remain standing and turn yellow-brown. Dense phragmites are difficult to eradicate. Controlling it before it becomes established is critical to reducing environmental impacts and treatment costs. Contact us today to learn more about invasive species management in your community and how you can become involved!

LSC CISMA Coordinator: McKenzie Bergmoser Email: CISMA@macombgov.org

Office: (586) 469-2304 Website: www.sixriversrlc.org/lsc-cisma Facebook: www.facebook.com/LSCCISMA

Community Service Award

Volunteers are critical to the success of operations within our St. Clair County Parks. Recently we were able to honor one of our local groups by nominating them for a mParks Community Service Award. The program recognizes volunteers from around the state of Michigan who donate their time and resources to Parks and Recreation. This year, Master Gardeners of St. Clair County received a Community Service Award at a ceremony in East Lansing. Master Gardeners recorded over 200 volunteer hours last year. The hours were spent maintaining numerous flower beds, managing the native plant garden at Goodells County Park and removing invasive species at multiple parks. Congratulations to the Master Gardeners on receiving the 2019 mParks Community Service Award!



Trails Study Update

Last June, St. Clair County received a \$39,288 grant from SEMCOG, as well as a \$24,453 grant from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, to update the County's Trails Strategy and Action Plan that was last developed in 2008. Since that time, the County has worked with its consultant SmithGroup to identify all remaining gaps between existing trail sections and has worked collaboratively with local communities to identify route connections to close those gaps. Through this process, over 130 trail segments have been identified and mapped in order to complete the Bridge to Bay Trail and connect it to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Macomb Orchard Trail in Richmond.

SmithGroup is wrapping up the Trails Strategy and Action Plan in May. In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Commission has completed its conditions analysis of the existing trail network, evaluating pavement conditions and long-term maintenance needs that will be crucial for ensuring sustainability of our trail system. Parallel to this work, the Community Foundation hired Public Sector Consultants to complete an economic impact study on regional trail systems that will help St. Clair County implement our Trails Strategy and Action Plan in a manner that utilizes best practices and lessons learned from other successful regional trail systems. Stay tuned for more information on all three of these exciting projects!

County Parks Are Smoke-Free!

Last fall, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners approved a change to the park rules regarding smoking in all County parks and trails. The new rule is an extension of the playground and Splashpad smoking ban that was put into place a few years ago. The rule covers all tobacco and vaping products. We appreciate everyone's cooperation in making our parks and trails smoke-free!

Goodells County Park

New Pavilion Work Completed

Construction of the new pavilion near the Goodells County Park Splashpad has been completed along with landscaping. The \$90,000 wood pavilion is 40 ft. by 44 ft. and has ten picnic tables, two buffet tables, a group picnic grill and electricity. The construction of the pavilion was funded entirely by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage. For reservation information, please contact the Parks and Recreation office at (810) 989-6960.



Earth Fair a Success

Earth Fair continued for its 17th straight year on April 26 & 27 at Goodells County Park, remaining Michigan's largest Earth Day celebration. This 2-day event inspires 6,000 visitors every year to learn about the significant role we play in the health of our economy and environment by challenging visitors to participate in its low-waste, low-emission, smoke-free setting. This year Earth Fair hosted 80 vendors, demonstrations, workshops and activities and 1,200 students on a free field trip to promote and augment the science lessons taught in the classroom.



By the Numbers: Goodells County Park

1908	366	15	5
Year the Park Opened	Acres in the Park	Indoor/Covered Rental Spaces	Number of Buildings in the Historic Village

Columbus County Park

Playground Expanded

Phase two of the Columbus County Park nature-themed children's playground was completed in December. Three additional play elements were added to the playground including a log crawl tunnel, a step climber and a rock climber. The rock climber has 14 life-like creatures hidden in the rocks. Park staff members are handing out checklists and pencils to families at the park to see how many of the 14 hidden creatures they can find.



Water Bottle Fountain Added

This spring, a new refrigerated drinking fountain was installed in the outer lobby of the Columbus County Park Lodge next to the vending machine. The fountain has a feature to fill re-usable water bottles and an extra filter cartridge.



By the Numbers : Columbus County Park

411	5	45	1.5
Acres in the Park	Miles of Hiking Trails	Species of Mussels in the Belle River	Miles of the Belle River in the Park

Fort Gratiot County Park

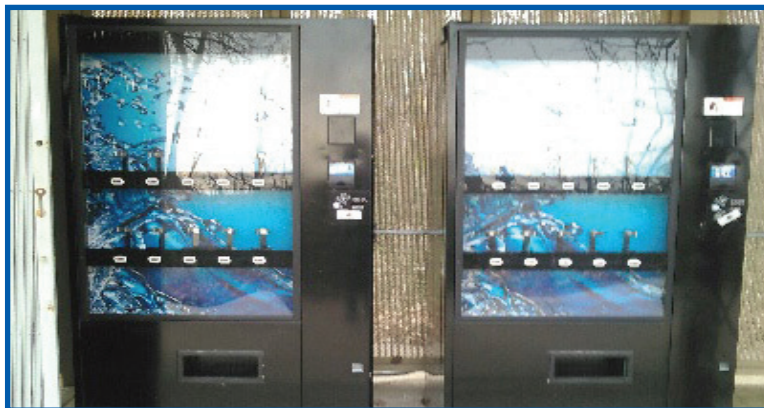
Canopy Rental Area

Based on the demand for the picnic pavilions at Fort Gratiot County Park, the 40 ft. by 40 ft. canopy will be available again this summer. It is located on the aggregate pad next to the west parking lot. The canopy includes ten picnic tables, a picnic grill and a food prep table along with electricity and water. For reservation information, contact the County Parks and Recreation office at (810) 989-6960.



Vending and Food Services

Based on the popularity of their products last summer, the Odda Da Box food trailer and Community Mental Health vending machines will be back in the park this summer serving food and beverages to Fort Gratiot County Park visitors. The food trailer will be located near the information kiosk on Saturdays and Sundays weather permitting. The vending machines are located in the vending shelter by the restrooms.



Yoga Classes & SUP Rentals

This summer, under an agreement with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, Happy Dog Yoga and Happy Dog Rentals will be offering recreational opportunities in Fort Gratiot County Park. Happy Dog Yoga will offer classes on the Ceremony Plaza overlooking Lake Huron on Sunday mornings from 9:30 – 10:30 am. Happy Dog rentals will also offer kayak and stand-up paddleboard (SUP) at the beach on Saturdays and Sundays, weather permitting, from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. For more information on the yoga classes and SUP rentals visit www.happydogyogastudio.com or call (866) 853-9274.



Summer Park Hours

Beginning Memorial Day weekend (May 24), the park hours in Fort Gratiot County Park and Columbus County Park will be extended to 9:00 pm. The extended hours will return to 8:00 pm on Labor Day (September 2). Both parks open at 8:00 am all year long.

Free Little Library

The Free Little Library, sponsored by Bob and Nancy LePla, is back in the park vending shelter. Books for children and adults will be stocked in the weather proof box. For more information on the program, visit www.freelittlelibrary.org.

By the Numbers: For Gratiot County Park

30
Acres in the
Park

852
Feet of
Shoreline

4
Picnic
Pavilions

1971
Year of the
Tunnel Explosion

Fort Gratiot Light Station

1st Floor Duplex Work Wrapped Up

Collaboration is a great way to describe the work completed in the south half of the Keeper's Duplex. This winter, contractors, park staff and volunteers wrapped up the restoration of the parlor, sitting room and hallway. The major restoration project included demolition of all renovations that were done back in 1966.

R & D Foglesong construction moved interior walls back to their original locations then added historically accurate windows, doors and detailed trim. They also returned the stairwell banister to its original wrap around configuration. TNT Electrical re-routed and replaced the electrical wires and outlets. Soulliere Drywall did repairs to the original plaster and installed replacement drywall. Superior Heating and Cooling removed the modern baseboard heaters and added historically accurate radiators. Park staff carefully restored the original red oak flooring and, volunteers from the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light painted the walls and trim. The replicated banister was painted by Donnelly Painting with a beautiful faux finish to match the original colors.

The work was capped off with the Port Huron Museum adding historically accurate furnishings. The project was funded by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light.



Digging Up the Past: CMU Archeology

This summer, students from Central Michigan University will conduct an archeological dig on the grounds of the Fort Gratiot Light Station. The students will be targeting several areas that may provide clues related to life at the station in the 19th Century. One particular target is the foundation of the original Keeper's Dwelling that was built in 1829 and demolished for the Duplex in 1873. The artifacts collected will be analyzed, documented and then returned to County Parks for future interpretation.

The Community Foundation is accepting donations to support costs associated with the dig. Checks should be made payable to the Community Foundation and note "CMU Dig" on the memo line. Mail to 500 Water Street, Port Huron, MI 48060.

Friends Focus: Fund-Raising

Mackinaw Watercraft, located in Grand Ledge Michigan, was commissioned by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light to create this one-of-a-kind 14' Wooden Looking-Glass Touring Kayak, weighing only 28 lbs. with a 23" beam. This kayak is valued at \$5,150.00. The kayak will be raffled off to support the restoration efforts at the Fort Gratiot Light Station. Raffle tickets are just \$20 each, and the raffle is limited to 500 tickets. The drawing will be held at SandFest on July 14, 2019 at 3:30 pm.

To purchase a ticket, mail a self-addressed envelope along with cash or check (made out to Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light) and include your name, address, email and phone number. The actual ticket(s) will be mailed back to you in your self-addressed envelope. For more information, call (810) 385-4951.

Mail to :
 David Brooks, President
 Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light
 P.O. Box 610518
 Port Huron, MI 48061-0518



By the Numbers: FGLS

190

Age of the Light Tower

99

Stairs in the Light Tower

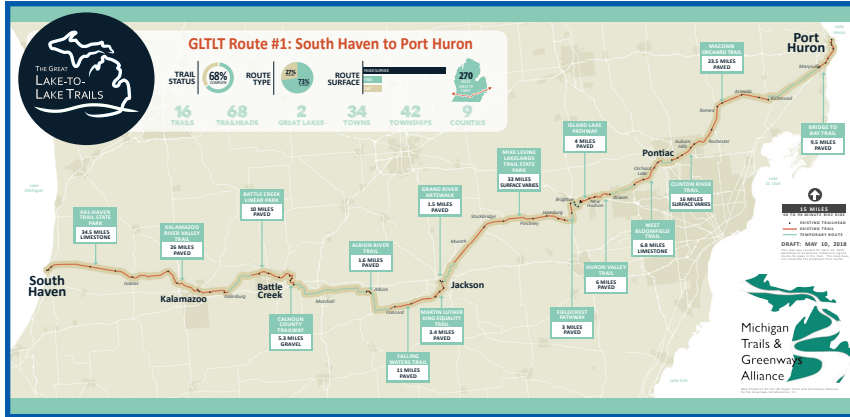
82

Height of the Light Tower (ft.)

6

Historic Buildings

Bridge to Bay Trail



Great Lake to Lake Trail

St. Clair County is one of nine Michigan counties working together with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, MDOT and MDNR to create and manage the Great Lake to Lake Trail Route #1. The route will connect 16 local trails including the Bridge to Bay Trail and will run from South Haven on Lake Michigan to Port Huron on Lake Huron. The eastern endpoint for the trail will be Port Huron's Lighthouse Park. For more information, visit <https://michigantrails.org/trails/great-lake-to-lake/>

Gratiot Road Connector Trail

The construction of the new Gratiot Road trail extension from the Park-N-Ride lot under I-94 to Pickford Road is expected to start in May and be completed by July. The nearly \$219,000 construction project is being funded by a \$159,500 Transportation Alternatives Program grant from MDOT and the local match is being funded with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Trail Maintenance

Park work crews were back on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail last fall and winter trimming back aggressive underbrush and trees. The Phragmites plants that were not killed in previous treatments were treated again in September. Some areas of the tall dead grasses were mowed to allow the native plants to return to the trail corridor.

If trail users see any downed or leaning trees along the trail, they are encouraged to call the parks and recreation office at (810) 989-6960 to report the location of the trees.



Celebrating 20 Years: 1999-2019

Twenty Years. Time flies when you are blazing a Trail! The year was 1999 when St. Clair County Parks began the mission of developing a unique rail trail for multi-use. The list of accomplishments in the last 20 years include extending the trail to Griswold Road, adding three trail heads with parking and vault toilets, a state of the art crossing light at Wadhams Road and a bike repair station at Lapeer Road. The trail's growth will not end there. The future may include an extension to Yale and connections to the Bridge to Bay Trail.





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

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Spring 2019

Parks

- 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!**



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

- John Cooper.....Chair
- Timothy LaLonde.....Vice-Chair
- James Bier.....Secretary
- Steve Cooper.....Commissioner
- William Foster.....Commissioner
- Melissa HannersCommissioner
- Howard Heidemann.....Commissioner
- Geoffry Kusch.....Commissioner
- Terrel WallisCommissioner
- Robert WileyCommissioner

Parks and Recreation Staff

- Mark Brochu, CPRP.....Director
- Kelly Gardner.....Office Coordinator
- 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