



# St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Summer 2020

## Summer Recreation is On!

Increasing access to outdoor recreation areas is very important for our health and wellbeing. While many are emphasizing safe return to work environments, how we exercise and play will also have a big role in managing the transmission of the COVID virus. Notice that I did not say “stop” the transmission...we do not anticipate that COVID will just disappear as the summer rolls on...but rather we are striving for a manageable rate of virus transmission so that entire segments of a population (a school, a factory or a hospital) won't be incapacitated by a rapid, large increase in cases.

So as you go out to our beautiful parks, trails and playgrounds, remember there are a few ground rules that will really make a difference:

- wear a mask especially when you are within 6 feet of someone who is not from your household
- try to stay 6 feet or more apart from other people overall
- if you're sick, don't go out and don't share your things (balls/sports equipment)
- wash your hands (or use sanitizer) before and after you use equipment, when possible wipe frequently touched objects with disinfectant wipes
- signage or surveillance to keep crowds greater 100 (per EO) should be followed....if it's crowded come back another time



These conditions are intended to reduce the risk of you and others from being infected with COVID, and subsequently passing it along to other people. Remember it is possible to have the virus and spread it without feeling ill. It will be highly impractical for this to be enforced (by law enforcement or public health). We are counting on every person to do the right thing. The lack of voluntary compliance from each individual will ultimately put everyone at greater risk. So do the right thing and have a great summer! - Annette Mercatante MD, MPH

### Summer Park Hours

Beginning Memorial Day weekend (May 24), the park hours in Fort Gratiot County Park and Columbus County Park were extended to 9:00 pm. The park closing times will return to 8:00 pm on Labor Day (September 7). Both parks open at 8:00 am all year long.



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## Millage Distribution

This year marks the 26th year that the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) will distribute 25% of the County Parks and Recreation millage funds collected back to the local units of government.

The 2020 Local Millage Distribution table (located to the right) includes the 2010 census figures used to calculate each community's share, the amount of millage funds distributed to each community over the past twenty four years, and the amount of funds that will be distributed to each local unit of government this year.

In order for the 33 local units of government to receive their annual share of the County Parks and Recreation millage funds, each community's governing board must approve the submission of an annual Local Millage Distribution request form that outlines how the community has spent their share of the millage funds during the past year.

## County Parks: Smoke-Free

Just a reminder, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners approved a smoking ban in all County parks and on County trails. The 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!



Community	2010 Population	Total Distribution 1995 - 2020	2020 Distribution
Algonac	4,110	\$ 448,725.73	\$ 19,296
Capac	1,890	\$ 181,521.18	\$ 8,874
Emmett	269	\$ 27,136.42	\$ 1,263
Marine City	4,248	\$ 456,099.55	\$ 19,944
Marysville	9,959	\$ 974,216.93	\$ 46,755
Memphis	360	\$ 35,666.57	\$ 1,691
Port Huron	30,184	\$ 3,233,601.41	\$ 141,706
Richmond	2	\$ 123.35	\$ 10
St. Clair	5,485	\$ 565,106.26	\$ 25,751
Yale	1,955	\$ 204,140.23	\$ 9,179
Berlin Township	3,285	\$ 312,258.73	\$ 15,423
Brockway Township	2,022	\$ 192,626.88	\$ 9,493
Burtchville Township	4,008	\$ 397,156.70	\$ 18,817
Casco Township	4,105	\$ 454,382.05	\$ 19,272
China Township	3,551	\$ 334,951.44	\$ 16,671
Clay Township	9,066	\$ 951,914.07	\$ 42,563
Clyde Township	5,579	\$ 532,406.08	\$ 26,192
Columbus Township	4,070	\$ 402,845.57	\$ 19,108
Cottrellville Township	3,559	\$ 368,466.41	\$ 16,709
East China Township	3,788	\$ 367,792.67	\$ 17,784
Emmett Township	2,385	\$ 220,564.08	\$ 11,197
Fort Gratiot Township	11,108	\$ 1,070,686.57	\$ 52,149
Grant Township	1,891	\$ 169,723.41	\$ 8,878
Greenwood Township	1,538	\$ 139,800.15	\$ 7,221
Ira Township	5,178	\$ 612,774.22	\$ 24,310
Kenockee Township	2,470	\$ 237,612.99	\$ 11,596
Kimball Township	9,358	\$ 880,449.35	\$ 43,934
Lynn Township	1,229	\$ 118,390.68	\$ 5,770
Mussey Township	2,316	\$ 205,448.64	\$ 10,873
Port Huron Township	10,654	\$ 937,778.16	\$ 50,018
Riley Township	3,353	\$ 305,029.85	\$ 15,742
St. Clair Township	6,817	\$ 634,666.51	\$ 32,004
Wales Township	3,248	\$ 290,983.28	\$ 5,249
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>163,040</b>	<b>\$ 16,265,046.12</b>	<b>\$ 765,442</b>



# Park News

## Commission Appointment: Peter Leto

This winter, the County Board of Commissioners appointed Peter Leto of Marysville to the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission to represent County Commissioner Districts 4 & 5 (Marysville, Kimball Township, St. Clair and St. Clair Township) for a three year term. Mr. Leto is a Commercial Insurance Broker and has been active with community projects in Marysville for several years. The Parks and Recreation Commission is a ten member board that oversees the policies and priorities of the County Parks and Recreation Department.

## North Channel Park Property

This 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 to include a swimming beach, a kayak launch, shoreline fishing, walking trails, pavilions and a children's playground. In addition, modern restrooms will be built along with a paved parking lot.



## Museum to Resume Light Station Tours

Public tours at all PHM sites will be open to visitors weekly, Wednesdays through Sundays 12:00 to 4:00 pm, starting June 17. This includes the Fort Gratiot Light Station and the Museum Store.

Visitors will be required to wear masks to enter buildings for their own safety and for the safety of our volunteers and staff. Limited masks will be available for purchase to those visitors that come without. We ask that visitors practice safe social distancing while in our buildings and around our staff and volunteers. Guided tours of the Fort Gratiot Light Station and Fort Gratiot Hospital will be offered as frequently as our staffing permits, and group sizes will be limited to ensure social distancing.

Along with our increased cleaning procedures, Lighthouse Tower climbs will include a routine of cleaning the handrail on the way up, as every group ascends, and on the way down. Hand sanitizer stations will be set up throughout the buildings for everyone's use.

For any questions or concerns, please call (810) 982-0891 or email [info@phmuseum.org](mailto:info@phmuseum.org). We look forward to welcoming you back to the Fort Gratiot Light Station!



# Goodells County Park

## Event Marquee

Plans are being finalized for the bidding and construction of an event marquee in Goodells County Park on Lapeer Road near Fargo Road. The two sided sign will feature 4 foot by 13 foot LED programmable panels that will promote events being held in the park. Construction is expected to take place in August or September. The sign is being funded by the County Parks and Recreation millage.

## Event Cancellations

Many regular events at Goodells County Park have been cancelled this year due to the COVID pandemic including the County 4H & Youth Fair which is going digital this summer. In addition, many private events have been cancelled or rescheduled. Please double check any events that you are planning to attend at Goodells County Park.

## Horse Barn Repairs

Every year, a Goodells County Park building is improved. This year the stalls in the Blue Horse Barn next to the Community Center are being rebuilt. The interior posts are being repaired with the installation of 42 inch concrete bases so the columns do not frost heave each winter. After the columns are in place, the horse stalls will be rebuilt with replacement boards so that they are ready for many more four legged visitors.



# Columbus County Park

## Naturalist Orientation

This one hour Zoom workshop will introduce you to Friends of the St. Clair River's programs we provide for the community. We will cover the basics of nature interpretation and watershed education and steps for joining our volunteer education team. Once you have completed the application process, volunteer naturalists will be provided with hands-on training in the field. Naturalist Orientation is Tuesday, June 23 from 3:30 – 5:00 pm. Participation in this Zoom workshop is free and registration is required. Register at [www.scriver.org/events](http://www.scriver.org/events).



## Friends of the St. Clair River

Do you love putting your passion for the planet into practice? Friends of the St. Clair River volunteers gather for hands-on field work and citizen science to manage habitats and green infrastructure for people, plants and wildlife. Attend one of their regularly scheduled stewardship sessions at Blue Water River Walk County Park, Columbus County Park or Fort Gratiot County Park. Contact Friends Stewardship Director at [stewardship@scriver.org](mailto:stewardship@scriver.org) or (810) 294-4965 to learn more.





# Fort Gratiot Light Station

## Unique Roof Installed on the Keeper's Duplex

The long process of installing a unique metal roof on the Keeper's Duplex has been completed.

In the 19th century, many lighthouses were built in remote places around the Great Lakes. Ironically, most keeper dwellings were designed with cisterns to collect rain water, even though the buildings were a short distance from the freshest water in the world.

The Fort Gratiot Keeper's Duplex, built in 1874, was designed with a "Yankee" Gutter System and had two cisterns for rainwater collection.

On the roof, a "Yankee" gutter above the eave captured the rainwater and sent it through downspouts connected to the cisterns below. The cisterns were brick lined tanks that were in the cellar of each half of the duplex. The tanks sat directly beneath the kitchens and had hand pumps to draw the water. The cisterns were not used long however, because city water lines were connected to the station shortly before the turn of the 20th century.

The original metal "fish scale" Victorian shingles and "Yankee" gutter system were removed in the 1940s. It was re-roofed several times over the next five decades with asbestos and asphalt shingles. This past winter the roof was returned to its 1930s appearance, which included the bright red metal shingles and the "Yankee" gutter system. The \$95,860 project was funded in part by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light and the St. Clair County Parks millage.



## Friends Update

In addition to fund raising for the Light Station through events like SandFest, the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light also perform volunteer projects to aid in the ongoing restoration of the site. Their current project is getting the Retired Station building ready for restoration. Volunteers are currently helping to carefully remove "modern" layers and cleaning up debris. In the future, additional help will be needed for painting and decorating. If you would like to volunteer your time or donate funds to the Friends projects, contact them via Facebook at Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light.

## Sandfest Cancelled

Due to the Covid pandemic, Sandfest 2020 has been cancelled. Organizers fully expect for the event to return in the summer of 2021. The event, which has been held annually since 2013, is scheduled to return bigger and better August 6-8, 2021. The organizers of the event, the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light, is a non-profit partner that provide funding for restoration projects at the Station. For more information about the Friends or Sandfest, contact them on Facebook at Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light or email at [info@bluewatersandfest.com](mailto:info@bluewatersandfest.com).

## Sturgeon Fest - Still On!

Mark your calendars, August 2nd is the night of the Sturgeon Moon! The August full moon is the focus of the Sturgeon Festival's Full Moon Lighthouse Climb., hosted by the Friends of the St. Clair River.

Sturgeon Festival is a free, family-friendly event centered on providing encounters with Lake Sturgeon, the symbol for Great Lakes recovery. Visit [www.SturgeonFestival.com](http://www.SturgeonFestival.com) for details.



# Blue Water River Walk

## Shoreline Repaired

In May, Malcolm Marine, Inc. of St. Clair completed the placement of approximately 62 tons of heavy rip rap stone along the St. Clair Riverbank adjacent to the Blue Water River Walk wetlands. The work armored the bank from further erosion due to the historic high water levels in the river. The location of the work required that the stone had to be placed from a barge in the river since the equipment could not cross the wetlands. The \$25,000 project was funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.



## Wetland Wanderings

Wander the wetlands with Friends of the St. Clair River! The wetlands at Blue Water River Walk County Park are full of life! During this outdoor exploration program, you'll get your hands in the water digging for macroinvertebrates, the important little aquatic bugs that are part of the wetland food web.

Wetland Wanderings will be held on June 17, July 15 and August 19 from 6:00 – 7:00pm at the wetlands at Blue Water River Walk County Park. Wetland Wandering events are free, but registration is required. Register at [www.scriver.org/events](http://www.scriver.org/events).



# Fort Gratiot County Park

## Beach Shower Added

The newest feature in the park is an ADA accessible beach shower located next to the foot washes at the beach gateway pavilion. Use the shower to rinse off sand or to just cool off before you head home.

A new ADA beach access chair is also available for free use by park visitors. Just contact a park ranger to use the new chair.

## Vending Services

Community Mental Health vending machines are back this summer serving beverages to Fort Gratiot County Park visitors. The vending machines are located in the vending shelter by the restrooms.



## Happy Dog Yoga Classes

Again this summer, under an agreement with the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, Happy Dog Yoga is holding yoga classes on the Ceremony Plaza overlooking Lake Huron on Sunday mornings from 9:30 – 10:30 am, June 7, 21, July 5, 19, August 2, 16 & 30. For more information on the yoga classes visit [www.happydogyogastudio.com](http://www.happydogyogastudio.com) or call (866) 853-9274.





# Bridge to Bay Trail

## Trail Study Follow up

An unprecedented opportunity has begun to build a blueprint for a regional trail system that will complete the 54-mile Bridge to Bay Trail as a continuous, collaborative system. Two years worth of efforts have commenced, focusing on trail gaps in seven communities. When completed another 18 miles of trailways will be added to the Bridge to Bay Trail. These targeted segments will redirect Bridge to Bay trail connections back into downtowns and to recreational assets along the waterfront. Attention is also being given to the existing twenty-six miles of trail infrastructure, as some segments are twenty years old. Funding is being pursued to rehabilitate and reconstruct over two and a half miles of existing segments. The regional trails effort to complete the Bridge to Bay Trail system will be a multi-year, multi-million dollar initiative.

The Bridge to Bay Trail is the major artery for other connecting trails in Southeast Michigan, including the Great Lake to Lake Route 1, the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, and at the southern end of St. Clair County, the Bridge to Bay Trail and it will provide a critical link into northern Macomb County. While this ambitious plan will boost our region's economic prosperity and tourism, it is also about building a culture for trail use, encouraging healthy lifestyles and a sense of community. There is uncertainty how COVID will affect funding for trail development, but the outlook is promising.



# Wadhams to Avoca Trail

## Trail Use and Social Distancing

This spring, the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail, as well as the park pathways had a significant increase in usage due to the COVID pandemic and the Governor's Executive Orders that allowed the use of trails and park pathways throughout the Stay At Home orders subject to social distancing requirements.

Health professionals all encourage walking and biking as an excellent activity to improve everyone's mental health and physical wellness during these unusual times.

For the foreseeable future, social distancing should be practiced in all public spaces including keeping a minimum spacing between non family groups of at least 6 feet and wearing a mask in any congested areas. The vault toilets are open on the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and park restrooms have been opened. Users should use caution when utilizing public restroom facilities by washing their hands, limiting touching surfaces and social distancing.

## Save The Date - Trek the Trestle!

**What: 12th Annual Labor Day Community Walk**

**Where: Wadhams to Avoca Trail**

**When: Labor Day, September 7th, 9:00 am**

**For More Information call**

**(810) 989-6929**





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Summer 2020

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- [www.fortgratiotcountypark.org](http://www.fortgratiotcountypark.org)
- [www.fortgratiotlightstation.org](http://www.fortgratiotlightstation.org)
- [www.woodsongcountypark.org](http://www.woodsongcountypark.org)

**Trails**

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

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**Questions?**

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

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



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