



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995

Winter 2009

Progress Continues at Columbus County Park

Phase 1 construction at Columbus County Park is almost completed. Phase 1 included constructing the main entrance on Bauman Road, a park roadway, a 100 car parking lot, erosion control and drainage improvements, electrical work, a water well and development of a lighted sledding hill.

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission intends to open the new entrance on Bauman Road as soon as DTE installs a new electrical service that will operate the gate and provide lighting.

Next year, plans are to construct a park lodge with modern restroom facilities, a picnic pavilion, a meeting room, offices and storage rooms.

All improvements at Columbus County Park are paid for with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage Funds.

For more information on Columbus County Parks, check out the County Parks website at www.stclaircountyparks.org or call (810) 989-6960.



Winter Focus:

Columbus County Park Sledding Hill

This winter, St. Clair County Parks and Recreation plans to open the park for winter activities including sledding, ice skating, cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

The new sledding hill features two runs, one for beginners and one for more experienced sledders. The hill is lighted and will offer winter excitement to all county residents and guests.

All winter activities will be announced in the local newspapers.



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Park News

Painting Donated to Goodells County Park

This past fall, a painting that once hung in the St. Clair County Medical Centre returned to Goodells County Park.

Jean Waddell, who taught painting classes at the Centre and whose husband Tom was the administrator, painted a landscape of the Medical Centre to hang in Toms office. When the Medical Centre was torn down in 1993, the painting was returned to Jean.

Jean donated the painting to the County in honor of the local Ottawa Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The painting was presented by DAR to the County so it could be enjoyed by all who come to Goodells County Park. The painting will soon be displayed in the Visitors Center, not to far from where the picture once hung.



Pictured from left to right: Jean Raymo (DAR), Jean Waddell and Dennis Delor (County Parks)

Eagle Scouts Restore Poor Farm Cemetery

When the County "Poor Farm" moved from Smiths Creek to Goodells in 1873, the need for a cemetery came with it. Many of the residents who lived and worked at the Poor Farm also died there. The cemetery was established in the late 1870's and remained an active cemetery until 1944.

The cemetery has always been a simple potter's field, nestled among the giant pines that mark its original boundaries.

Recent efforts to restore the cemetery included two Eagle Scout projects, which were completed earlier this fall.

The first project organized by Scout Jameson Eisele with Troop 141, replaced the split rail fence that defines the outer boundaries of the cemetery.

The second project, organized by Scout Austin La Broski with troop 205, collected and prepared field stones for a new archway that will mark the entrance to the cemetery and honor those who rest beneath the pines.

The archway is scheduled to be completed in the Spring.



Bringing the Importance of Parks To Life: Ken Burns

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission recently purchased seven sets of Ken Burns' television documentary series entitled "The National Parks, America's Best Idea" for the St. Clair County Library system.

The Parks and Recreation Commission invites St. Clair County residents to reserve the DVD series from their local branch of the St. Clair County Library and enjoy watching the Ken Burns series with their friends and families. Timothy Egan of the New York Times writes "***The National Parks, America's Best Idea*** is stunning and restorative, like the parks themselves."

The Parks Commission believes that anyone that enjoys visiting their County Parks will surely enjoy this wonderful television series!

Fort Gratiot Light Station Transfer Update

This fall, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has been working with an environmental consulting company to investigate and document the environmental condition of the Fort Gratiot Light Station. A Baseline Environmental Assessment (BEA) was just completed and submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) for review and action. Once the BEA process is completed, St. Clair County's attorney will make a recommendation to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and PARC whether to accept the deed for the property from the Federal government.

The Fort Gratiot Light Station is located next to the new Coast Guard Station in Port Huron and includes the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse (1829), which is the oldest lighthouse in Michigan. The Light Station also includes the Light Keeper's Duplex (1874), Fog Signal Building (1900), Single Keeper's Dwelling (1932), former Coast Guard Station (1932), Equipment Building (1939), and a three bay garage (1970's).

PARC is currently negotiating a partnership agreement with the Port Huron Museum. The agreement will designate what functions will be handled by PARC and what functions will be assigned to the Port Huron Museum when the Light Station is transferred to St. Clair County.

This fall, a grant application was submitted to the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (MLAP) requesting \$40,000.00. The grant program is funded from the sale of the State of Michigan's lighthouse specialty license plates. The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light have pledged \$20,000.00 for the required local match. If the MLAP grant is awarded, \$60,000.00 will be spent to repair leaking building roofs and perform masonry repairs to some of the six buildings on the site.

Once the property is transferred to the County, plans will be finalized on the repair and restoration of the lighthouse tower using a National Parks Service Save Our Treasures Grant and a local match supplied by the City of Port Huron.

It is hoped that the repair and restoration work on the lighthouse and buildings will begin in 2010.

Spotlight: Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light

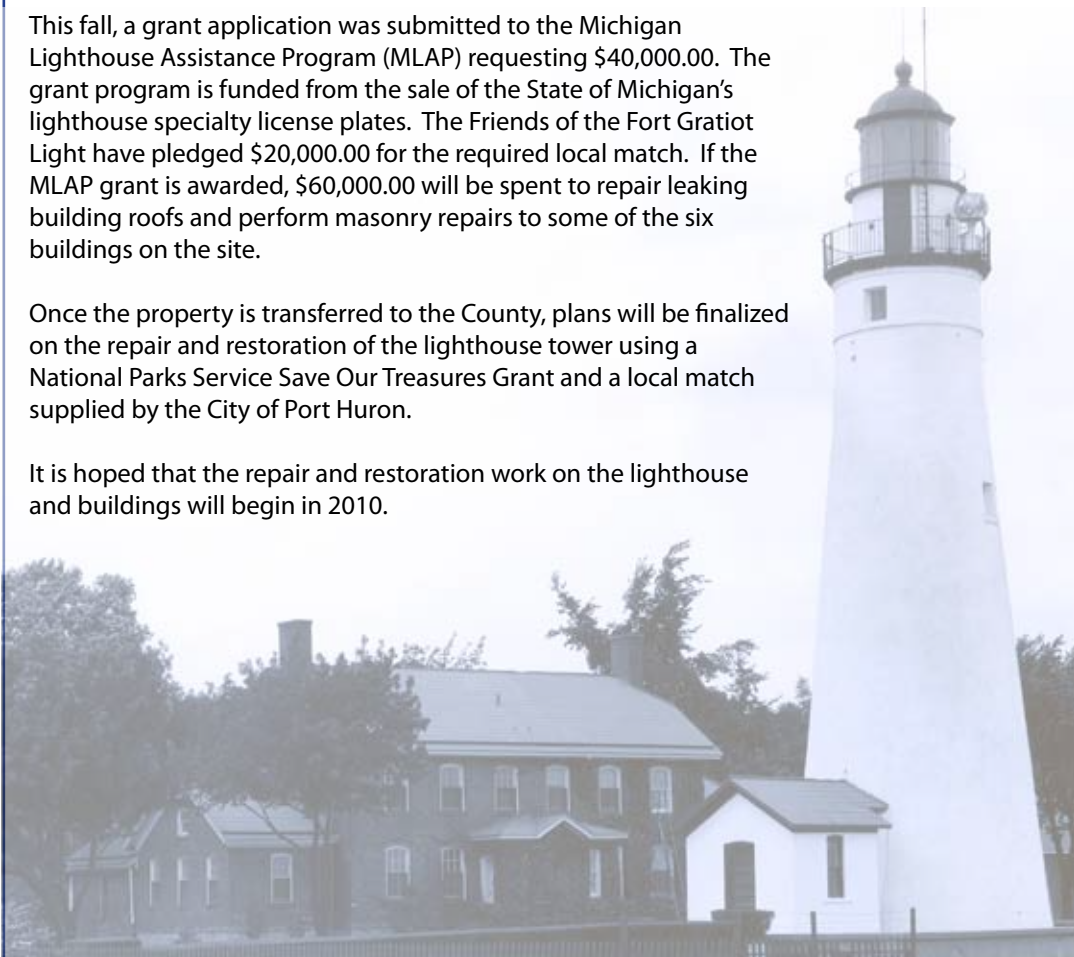
The FRIENDS of the FORT GRATIOT LIGHT is a group of concerned citizens, preservationists, and local business leaders. The group was organized in early 2009 to dedicate efforts and funds to restore and renovate the entire light station.

A gala fundraiser in April 2009 raised \$30,000 toward the project. The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light held a benefit concert at McMorran Auditorium on November 13, 2009 to raise additional funds. After expenses, the concert raised over \$10,000 for the project. The funds are designated for the restoration and preservation of the lighthouse.

The next fundraising event will be the 2nd Annual Lighthouse Gala, planned for May 1, 2010. To participate in the planning of the event, please call the Port Huron Museum at (810) 982-0891 for details.

For complete FRIENDS and Museum membership criteria, please see the websites:

www.phmuseum.org
www.fortgratiotlighthouse.org
 1115 Sixth Street
 Port Huron, MI 48060
 (810) 982-0891



Fort Gratiot County Park

This past summer, the new pavilions at Fort Gratiot County Park were an instant hit with park users. In the short time that they have been available for use, 65 pavilion reservations were issued to families, organizations and businesses.

The "North" and "South" picnic pavilions are 44 feet by 44 feet in size and have 12 picnic tables, electricity, water and a group picnic grill.

The picnic pavilions may be reserved for family picnics and private parties for \$65.00 by contacting the parks and recreation office at (810) 989-6960. Reservations for 2010 will not be processed until January. Interested users can send a letter of interest to the Parks and Recreation Office, at 200 Grand River Avenue #107, Port Huron, MI 48060. Requests for 2010 reservations will be processed in the order that they are received.

In 2010, parking improvements are planned as well as the installation of additional sections of beach boardwalk, picnic grills and picnic tables. All the park improvements are funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

The park is open year around. However, the roads, parking lots and walkways are not plowed in the winter. When snow accumulates on the road, the park entrance will not be opened for vehicle traffic. Pedestrians will still have access to the park and the walking trails.



December 11, 2009 marked the 38th anniversary of the tunnel explosion that killed 22 men below what is now Fort Gratiot County Park. A memorial in their honor can be seen at the park.

Woodsong County Park

On September 23, a public meeting was held at the Clyde Township Hall to give citizens a chance to share their ideas for the future use and development of Woodsong County Park. Two dozen residents attended the session that included Clyde Township officials, neighbors and interested residents. Generally, residents stated that they wanted to keep the park as natural as possible and provide access to the Black River.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation's landscape architect has tabulated the citizen comments and concerns and is working with parks and recreation staff on a preliminary park master plan. In February, a second public meeting will be held to review the preliminary master plan.

Meeting notices will be given to local newspapers and radio stations. For more information, or to give us your ideas, please contact the Parks and Recreation Office at (810) 989-6960.

Woodsong County Park is open everyday from dawn to dusk. A temporary parking lot has been constructed just inside of the park gate. Dogs are welcomed in the park as long as they are kept on a leash. Hunting is currently not allowed on the property.



Goodells County Park

Equestrian Rings

In order to accommodate speed and agility riding events, riding ring #2 was recently reconstructed. Ring improvements include realigning and lengthening the ring; moving the green judge's barn; installing new fencing and gates; installing a compacted gravel base and edge drains; and installing ten inches of mason sand riding surface. Next spring, landscaping outside of both riding rings will be completed to finish the project.

All park improvements were paid for with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage funds.



Historic Village Landscaping

Late this fall, work began on re-contouring the land around the Historic Village to provide ADA access to the bank, schoolhouse, farmhouse, log cabin and future church, without the need for wooden ramps. When completed, the grounds around the historic buildings will look more natural and will be gently sloped to accommodate both ADA access and drainage.

At this time, plans are moving forward to move the Columbus Bible Church to Goodells County Park in late January. In the spring, the building will be moved onto a new foundation.



More Replacement Trees Planted

In December, 43 trees were purchased and planted in the park by park staff members with the help of the Jail Alternative Sentencing Program (JASP) crew to replace lost ash trees and to enhance treeless areas of the park. A diverse mix of Maples, Honey Locust, London Plane, Hackberry, Oak and Elm trees are being planted to provide years of shade in the park.



A Winter Tradition: Ice Skating at Goodells County Park

Dust off those skates, it's almost time for the ice rink! The ice rink will be in the covered Show Arena located behind the Community Center on the south side of the park. The 60' x 120' rink will accommodate open skating and pickup hockey. For safety reasons, hockey and open skating are restricted to designated times. Slap shots are not allowed and soft pucks are required. For ice conditions and the open skate/hockey schedule call (810) 989-6960.

Bridge to Bay Trail

Trail Etiquette

The Bridge to Bay Trail is a multi-purpose trail that is open to walkers, cyclists and rollerbladers. Trail users are asked to follow all posted trail rules and adhere to the following rules of etiquette:

All trails users:

- Make sure that you can hear other trail users; we recommend that if you are listening to music, please make sure that it is low enough to still hear other trail users.
- Keep to the right side of the trail.
- Wear proper safety equipment.
- When coming up behind another trail user, politely let them know in advance that you will be passing them on their left side.
- Slow down when passing other trail users.
- Slow down when the trail surface is wet or slippery.
- Stop at all road intersections.
- Dispose of any litter in a waste container.
- Notify the trail owner if you notice a safety hazard.

All bicyclists:

- Bicycles must yield to all other trail users.
- Slow down when passing other trail users.
- Ride single file when passing other trail users.

All dog owners:

- Dogs must be kept on a leash no more than 6 feet in length.
- Dog owners must pick up after their pets.
- When passing other trail users, do not allow your dog to approach other users without their permission.

Trail Route Signage System

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has developed a unified trail signage format for the Bridge to Bay Trail. PARC is working with MDOT and the Road Commission to obtain formal approval for the new style of signs before beginning to work with local communities to identify the specific signs needed for each section of trail. PARC will contract with one company to install the new signage next year as phase one of the signage project. The sign project will be funded with St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage Funds.

City of St. Clair/ St. Clair Township

The City of St. Clair and St. Clair Township have completed construction of their 1.2 mile trail that runs from Brown Road, north along the Jordan Creek, behind St. Clair Middle School, and then to Yankee Road. The project is funded by a High Priority Project – Transportation Enhancement Grant secured by Congresswoman Miller and St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage Funds. The final piece of the project will be the construction of a new railroad crossing on the north side of Brown Road just east of Range Road.



Trail Maps Available

Two different trail/bicycle maps are now available at the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation office.

The “St. Clair County Bicycle and Travel Information” map is published by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and features St. Clair County off-road bicycle trails and roadways that have paved shoulders. The opposite side of the map shows bicycle travel facilities in Southeast Michigan.

The “MDOT Road and Trail Bicycling Guide” is published by the Michigan Department of Transportation and shows bicycle travel information in St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties.

Both maps are free and can be picked up in the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Office in the St. Clair County Administration Building, 200 Grand River Avenue suite 107, Port Huron.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Wadhams Road Trail Crossing

The Hybrid Pedestrian Signal, also known as a HAWK (High-intensity Activated crossWALK) was developed by the City of Tucson to increase pedestrian safety at school crossing locations.

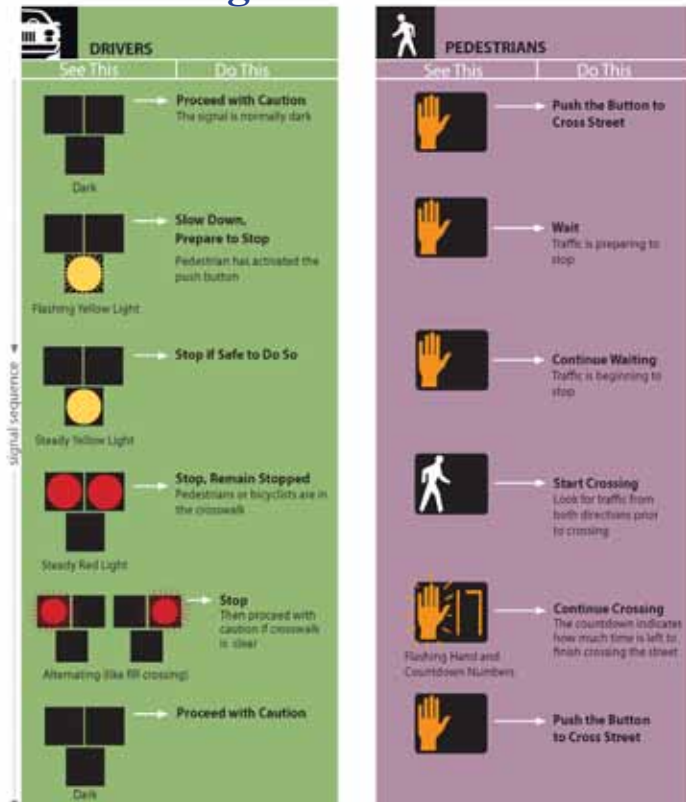
Studies have shown that the devices substantially improve motorist stopping behavior as compared to flashing overhead crossing beacons.

The Hybrid Pedestrian Signal was funded through the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission Millage. The signal installation was a joint effort of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission and the St. Clair County Road Commission. The Road Commission manages and maintains the signal.

If you have questions about the Hybrid Pedestrian Signal or other traffic-related questions, please contact the St. Clair County Road Commission at (810)-364-5720.



How the Signal Works



****Important Note****

When the crosswalk signals are alternately flashing red, motorists can proceed with caution through the crosswalk after stopping, if the crosswalk is clear.



2010 Wadhams Trail Paving

Next spring, work will begin on paving the last unimproved section of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Raymond Excavating has been awarded a contract for \$80,914.48 to improve and pave approximately 1/2 mile of trail from Bartlett Road to Wadhams Road.



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WINTER 2009

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

www.stclaircountyparks.org

County Parks

- www.goodellscountypark.org
- www.columbuscountypark.org
- www.fortgratiotcountypark.org

Trails

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

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