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Ottawa County Parks &
Recreation Commission
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Summer 2008 OUTDOORS OTTAWA COUNTY

The quarterly newsletter of the
Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission



Photo by Ed Post

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New Land Acquisitions

First Purchase for Bend Area Project

In April, county parks acquired 188 acres along the Grand River in Georgetown Township for the first purchase in what the parks commission hopes will become a future 500 acre park. The purchase price was \$871,955 with funding from the parks millage.

The groundwork for this purchase was laid in 2000 when the parks commission approved the Bend Area Master Plan calling for the expansive park located at the large bend in the Grand River. It was a highly unusual step for the commission to approve a master plan without actually owning any of the land. It all started when five gravel miners were approached with the idea of working with Ottawa County Parks to develop a master plan for their properties with the final plan to also serve as the township's approved mine reclamation plan. The end use was to be a future riverfront park with a large inland lake for swimming, riverfront trails for hiking and a range of other outdoor recreation uses. Ottawa County Parks agreed it would negotiate for purchase of the land over time as the land was mined out and shaped for park use.

All agreed it would be a long-term process so it was no surprise that the first purchase took eight years to complete. Additional acquisitions are expected in coming years, pending successful negotiations, with the finished park still many years away. Preliminary plans call for development of a small parking area with trails in 2009 to provide interim access to the recently acquired property.

Macatawa River Land Acquired

Ottawa County Parks and Holland Charter Township partnered in April to purchase 40 acres for \$200,000 along the Macatawa River in Holland Township. The land, which is important to the emerging greenway, is heavily wooded and includes a six acre lake. County parks and the township are working closely with the Macatawa Greenway Partnership to establish an interconnected system of parks and natural lands along the Macatawa River corridor. Holland Township will oversee the future park which is expected to include passive recreation activities including fishing, walking trails and picnic areas plus the future greenway trail.

Park Projects Nearing Completion

These park projects will be ready for park users in July 2008

North Beach Park - This project extends stairs and boardwalks to the top of the large dune overlooking the park and also includes a trail and stairs linking to the adjacent 500 acre North Ottawa Dunes property.

Kirk Park -Upgrades to the popular Dune Ridge Trail include stairs and boardwalks to prevent erosion of the dune and an additional beach access stairway at the south end of the park.

Riverside Park - Improvements include the addition of a parking area with picnic sites and paved pathways on the west end of the park, upgrades to the picnic shelter and parking area near the river plus the addition of a new trail loop along the river at the east end of the park.

Riley Trails - Improvements include upgrades to the existing parking area and the addition of an entrance sign, trail head kiosk and rustic toilet.



New beach access
at Kirk Park



Upper Macatawa Natural Area Dedication

Please join Ottawa County Parks and its project partners for the dedication of the 583 acre Upper Macatawa Natural Area in Zeeland Township at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 19. After a brief dedication ceremony, there will be refreshments and hikes (optional) to view this large restoration project. Meet at the 84th Street entrance located on 84th Street north of Adams Street.

Coming Soon to Your County Parks

Watch for these new improvement projects scheduled for completion this fall

Mount Pisgah Dune Protection Project - This towering dune overlooks Holland State Park and is located in the county's Historic Ottawa Beach Parks. The dune crest provides tremendous views of Lake Michigan, the Holland lighthouse and Lake Macatawa. This project will provide stairs, boardwalks and viewing decks with displays plus restoration plantings to protect the dune and provide a unique recreational attraction.

Black Lake Boardwalk Extension - Also located in the Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, the Black Lake Boardwalk project will be extended to the east along Lake Macatawa with a waterfront walkway, viewing areas and shoreline stabilization.

North Ottawa Dunes - First phase improvements to provide access to this 500 acre dune property will occur at Coast Guard Park thanks to cooperation and support from the City of Ferrysburg. A parking area will be expanded, picnic sites added and a trail head constructed. Donor recognition signage will acknowledge over 600 donors that made the large dune acquisition possible.

Eastmanville Farm Equestrian Facilities - Implementation of the first phase master plan improvements will include an equestrian parking area, trail head, trails, picnic sites, restroom and other support facilities.

Nature Education Center Update

Plans are moving forward on the Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing. The center will provide a year-round home for nature education programs and will serve as an information center for the entire parks system. Development Strategies has completed a fundraising feasibility study and is coordinating the fundraising campaign with a goal of \$1,050,000. A public fundraising effort will begin in the near future. The parks commission would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support of the Nature Education Project.

- The Marion A. and Ruth K. Sherwood Family Fund of The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation (\$20,000)
- The Greatest Needs Fund (\$15,000) and the Youth Fund (\$5,000) of The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
- The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area (\$20,000)

We would also like to thank Elaine Gould for her contribution to the project. Elaine's mother Lillian spent part of her childhood in the house at Pine Bend and they have been generous supporters of parks projects.

For more information on this project, please call the parks office at (616) 738-4810.



News and Summer Events
www.friendsofocp.org

FRIENDS REUSE RESALE A HUGE SUCCESS

Despite rain followed by bitter cold, the Reuse Resale at the Eastmanville Farm barn in April raised approximately \$4,500, according to sale chairpersons Mike and Char Cary who headed a team that gathered and priced donations for the Friends of Ottawa County Parks fundraiser. Proceeds are dedicated to the Nature Education Center project at Hemlock Crossing.

The Carys and Friends of the Parks thank everyone who helped make the event such a success, especially the many generous donors and shoppers who braved the elements to support the sale.



Sale items filled the barn at
Eastmanville Farm

SUMMER FRIENDS EVENTS

FAMILY FISHING DAYS (2 events) Thursdays June 26 and August 21 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Friends has scheduled two of the popular Family Fishing Days this summer at Grand River Park in Georgetown Township. Friends members will be on hand to help youngsters bait hooks and to show them the basics of fishing. There is no fee and advance registration is not required. Snacks and bait will be provided. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring a fishing pole (some loaners available) and register in the picnic building when you arrive. Parents, be sure to bring your cameras!

FRIENDS PICNIC IN THE PARK Sunday, July 20 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Kirk Park's picnic shelter will again be the site of a Friends' picnic and hike this summer. Friends, parks staff and anyone thinking of joining the Friends are invited to attend. This year's theme will be "Christmas in July." Beverages, grilled meats, chips and condiments will be provided. Bring a dish to pass. Please call (616) 837-8244 by July 18 if you plan to attend.

FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING

The third Annual Meeting of Friends of Ottawa County Parks is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 17 at the Ottawa County Fillmore Street Complex. Members will vote on a new board of directors and honor the 30 park monitors for their year of service. Parks director John Scholtz will present a program on park developments and acquisitions. Refreshments will be served.

Get the New Parks Brochure

Ottawa County Parks is growing and a new parks brochure highlights 22 county parks and 10 open space lands. The brochure includes a location map as well as information on each property. For a free copy, call the parks office at (616) 738-4810 or send your mailing address by email to parks&rec@co.ottawa.mi.us.



Summer 2008 Interpretive Programs and Field Trips



- A program fee, vehicle parking fee and/or advanced registration is required for some programs and field trips. Check the program or field trip description for details.
- Space is limited on some programs and field trips.
- Directions to parks are included in this newsletter.
- All programs are led by parks naturalist Chip Francke unless otherwise noted.

For programs that require advance registration, call (616) 738-4810

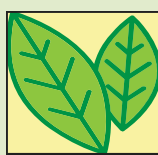
“Pick A Park” Nature Walk Series

Enjoy Ottawa County’s extensive parks system by attending these evening naturalist-led walks for adults and families. All walks begin at 6:00 p.m. Each walk will focus on the natural features of a different county park. There are no program fees and advance registration is not required. Walks last about 2 hours and are canceled if raining. Bring binoculars (if you have them), insect repellent and dress for the weather. All walks meet in the parking lot of each park.



Pine Bend Tuesday, June 17

This park features views of the Pigeon River corridor as well as trails through mature beech-maple-hemlock, lowland and oak forests. Pine Bend also has some interesting cultural history including a turn-of-the-century resort and a dance hall.



Grand River Park Tuesday, July 1

The trails at Grand River Park meander through several natural communities including the river, floodplain forest, hardwoods, native grasslands and shrub-scrub. Each community hosts its unique wildlife species.



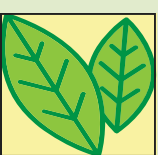
North Ottawa Dunes Thursday, July 17

This park is 500 acres of backdune beech-maple-hemlock forest with some of the highest dunes in the entire county. This two mile walk will traverse the base of these high dunes to observe clues of past dune formation.



Hemlock Crossing Monday, July 28

Located along the Pigeon River, this park offers great views of the river corridor and trails that travel through forest and wetlands. This is also the site of a current grassland/wetland restoration project and of the proposed nature education center.



Pigeon Creek Park Wednesday, August 13

After walking through the hardwoods, most of the time will be spent exploring the lowland forest and wetlands along the Pigeon River. This area is lush with ferns, skunk cabbage and many other plants.



Crockery Creek Natural Area Wednesday, August 27

Crockery Creek is a major tributary of the Grand River. This park was a Centennial Farm and includes expansive areas of buttonbush swamp, large shagbark hickories and open fields.

An Introduction to Dragonfly Watching Saturday, July 12

The observation and identification of dragonflies is becoming more popular every year. Greg Swanson will lead this field workshop to identify dragonflies as the group visits different habitats, searches for a diversity of dragonfly species and observes their behavior. This workshop will be held at Grand River Park from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. No prior experience or special equipment is required. **There is no fee, however, advance registration is required.** This workshop is for adults and older accompanied children. A letter with details will be sent in advance to those registered.



“The Beach Zone”



Everyone enjoys a day at a Lake Michigan beach. Have you ever wondered how the lake was formed? Or where the massive amounts of sand came from? Or what kinds of birds and other animals are also hanging around the shoreline? If so, visit the parks new Beach Zone, a tent canopy that will be set up on the beach at Kirk Park where parks staff will interpret the shoreline and provide a variety of activities for kids and adults of all ages. Adults must supervise their children during these activities. **There are no program fees, however, there is a vehicle parking fee required at Kirk Park.** Advance registration is not required.

The Beach Zone will be at Kirk Park between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays July 9, July 23 and August 6. The Beach Zone will be canceled if raining or if there are strong winds.

Newsletter Photo Credits: cover photo and dragonfly by Ed Post; eyed-brown (butterfly) by Larry West; Caspian tern by Charles Dewitt; fawn by Grant Jones; all other photos and graphics are from parks staff or public domain.



Ottawa County Butterfly Counts



Participating in a butterfly count is a great way to learn about our native butterflies. No experience or equipment is needed for these counts for adults and older children. Come for half the day or the whole day (bring a lunch). Transportation is via personal vehicles and there is a \$3 per person count fee (children under 12 free). Wear socks, do not wear sandals and bring drinking water. Advance registration is not required. For more information, call (616) 738-4811.

â : **Lakeshore Count** - Thursday, July 10 beginning at the Pigeon Creek Park lodge at 9:00 a.m.

â : **Grand River Count** - Friday, July 18 beginning at the Grand River Park picnic building at 9:00 a.m.

Summer Birding Field Trips



These trips are for beginning and experienced adult birders, transportation is via personal vehicles and binoculars are required (some loaners available). There are no fees for these trips, however, a state park vehicle permit may be required. **Advance registration is required.** A letter with details and meeting location will be sent in advance to those registered.

BREEDING BIRDS FIELD TRIP Friday, June 20

This trip will focus on finding and identifying a variety of breeding birds including waterfowl, gulls, raptors, shorebirds and songbirds in west Michigan. The trip is from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

SHOREBIRD FIELD TRIP Saturday, August 23

Shorebird migration will be underway for this trip to find and identify a variety of shorebirds migrating from the far north to their wintering grounds. The trip is from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

STEWARDSHIP WORK DAYS

Volunteers are needed to assist parks staff with the following stewardship projects. Organized groups, adults and older children are encouraged to participate. Workdays are held rain or shine and advanced registration is not required. Dress for the weather and bring gloves. Tools, water and snacks will be provided. For more information, call (616) 738-4810.

Spotted Knapweed Control at the Rosy Mound Natural Area

Spotted knapweed is an aggressive invasive plant that is displacing the native vegetation in the fragile dunes. Volunteers will pull knapweed near the parking lot and in the open dunes near the lakeshore. The plants will be placed in supplied garbage bags. Parks staff will transport the filled bags back to the parking areas at a later time. Meet parks staff in the parking lot (vehicle fee will be waived) on the following dates and times:

â : Wednesday June 25 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

â : Saturday June 28 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

â : Monday June 30 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Hiking at Rosy Mound is somewhat strenuous due to stairs up and down the steep dunes.

DIRECTIONS TO OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS

Go to www.miottawa.org/parks for directions to other parks and open space lands

Crockery Creek Natural Area (Crockery Township) From the intersection of Leonard Road and Wren Drive, travel west on Wren Drive to the parking area at the end of the road. (open year-round)

Deer Creek Park (Polkton Township) Where 60th Avenue meets the north bank of the Grand River. (not plowed in winter)

Grand River Park (Georgetown Township) From the intersection of Fillmore Street and 28th Avenue, travel north on 28th Avenue to the park entrance. (open year-round)

Grose Park (Chester Township) Take Hoover Street to 24th Avenue then travel south to the park entrance. (closed in winter)

Hager Park (Georgetown Township) From the intersection of 28th Avenue and Bauer Road, travel south on 28th Avenue to the park entrance. (open year-round)

Hemlock Crossing (Port Sheldon Township) From US 31, travel west on Croswell Street to West Olive Road. Travel south on West Olive Road to the park entrance. (open year-round)

Kirk Park (Grand Haven Township) On Lakeshore Avenue about 2 miles south of Lake Michigan Drive (M-45). (open year-round)

Musketawa Trail Ten mile linear park with paved path. Parking access on 8th Avenue near Marne and on Sehler Street near Conklin. (open year-round)

North Beach Park (City of Ferrysburg) From US 31, take the Ferrysburg exit and go west on 3rd Street to Northshore Drive. Turn west on Northshore Drive and travel about 2 miles to the park entrance. (open year-round)

North Ottawa Dunes (Spring Lake Township and City of Ferrysburg) From US 31, take the Ferrysburg exit and go west on 3rd Street to Northshore Drive. Turn west on Northshore Drive and travel about 1 mile to Coast Guard Park. The trail head is in the first Coast Guard Park parking area. (open year-round)

Pigeon Creek Park (Olive Township) On Stanton Street between 128th and 120th Avenues. (open year-round)

Pine Bend (Port Sheldon Township) From the intersection of Croswell Street and 156th Avenue, travel south on 156th Avenue and follow signs to the park entrance. The Weaver House is located at Pine Bend. (open year-round)

Riley Trails (Park Township) On Riley Street between 160th and 168th Avenues. (open year-round)

Riverside Park (Robinson Township) On N. Cedar Drive east of 104th Avenue. (not plowed in winter)

Rosy Mound Natural Area (Grand Haven Township) On Lakeshore Avenue south of Rosy Mound Drive. (open year-round)

Spring Grove Park (Jamestown Township) On Greenly Street between 24th and 16th Avenues. (closed in winter)

Tunnel Park (Park Township) On Lakeshore Avenue just south of Lakewood Boulevard. (closed in winter)

Upper Macatawa Natural Area (Zeeland Township) Access on 84th Avenue north of Adams Street or access on 76th Avenue south of Byron Road. (open year-round)



The activities and programs of this department are brought to you by the members of the **Ottawa County Board of Commissioners**
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