



# ST. CLAIR COUNTY, MICHIGAN MASTER RECREATION PLAN 2017-2021



**Adoption Date:**  
February 8, 2017: St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission  
February 16, 2017: St. Clair County Board of Commissioners

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Volunteer Coordinator

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Kara Schrader, Associate Planner  
Penny Guyette, Administrative Assistant

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1 Introduction & Community Profile.....	Page 1
2 Administrative Structure.....	Page 17
3 Recreation Inventory.....	Page 33
4 Public Input & Planning Process.....	Page 63
5 Planning Goals & Strategic Actions.....	Page 79
Appendix: Plan Documentation .....	Page 103



# INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

# 1





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## ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION: MISSION

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The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is dedicated to providing positive recreational opportunities for the citizens of St. Clair County and their guests.

The Commission will do so by:

- Preparing a Master Recreation Plan for St. Clair County;
- Advising the County Board of Commissioners on matters related to the execution of the Master Recreation Plan;
- Working cooperatively with local, state, and national recreational providers; and
- Acquiring, maintaining, and operating quality parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

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## PARC PROFILE

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- The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) was formed in 1994 as a department within St. Clair County government.
- PARC is not just about parks. PARC is involved with trails, greenways, blueways, and other recreational projects that serve all St. Clair County citizens.
- PARC properties and projects include Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Bridge to Bay Trail, Wadhams to Avoca Trail, Columbus County Park, Woodsong County Park, the Fort Gratiot Light Station, Wetlands County Park, the Marine City Dredge Cut Access, and the Blueways of St. Clair.



- PARC owns two accessible portable stages, called “Showmobiles,” along with two sets of portable bleachers. These are rented out at a reasonable price to organizations hosting musical, cultural, and community events.
- PARC is currently not involved with campgrounds, golf courses, marinas, boat launches, and other such activities that are adequately provided by the state, local units of government or by private citizens and businesses.
- PARC has ten members who represent all parts of St. Clair County, who possess a diverse skill set, and who serve on seven advisory committees: Acquisitions, Finance, Goodells County Park, Columbus County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Trails.
- PARC works closely with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners (BOC), the St. Clair County Administrator/Controller’s Office, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the Road Commission, and the Drain Commissioner’s Office.
- PARC enjoys a cooperative relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), the St. Clair County 4-H Council and Fair Board, the Farm Museum, Propbusters remote control model airplane club, Earthkeepers, Can-Am BMX bicycle club, mountain biking and road biking organizations, hiking groups, and equestrians.
- PARC interacts with parks and recreation personnel, as well as elected officials, within local townships, cities, and villages.
- PARC interacts with parks and recreation advocates throughout Michigan, especially with officials in neighboring counties and Southeast Michigan Greenways.
- PARC activities are funded through a 0.4956 mil tax, which was approved by County voters in 1994 and renewed in 1999, 2004, 2010, and 2016. The margin of passage in 2004 was 68.5%. The margin of renewal in 2010 increased to 71%. In 2016, the renewal passed with nearly 70% approval

- PARC uses 75% of the millage funds for countywide projects. The other 25% is distributed to townships, cities, and villages. Local units of government must demonstrate “maintenance of effort” to assure the funds are used to expand recreation opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding.
- PARC obtains government and foundation grants and donations from businesses, groups, and individuals. PARC helps local units of government obtain grants for local parks and recreation projects.
- The preceding PARC Master Recreation Plan was effective from 2012 through 2016. This updated plan will be submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in March 2017 to be eligible for continued grant funding.
- This updated Master Recreation Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives for recreation in the St. Clair County Master Plan, adopted by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners on November 17, 2016.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND FORMAT

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### Philosophy

This Master Recreation Plan is an update of the 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.

This update incorporates the primary philosophies of the original 1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan:

- To offer workable solutions; and
- To be objective, yet incorporate legitimate subjective views of local residents, County visitors, and appointed and elected government officials.

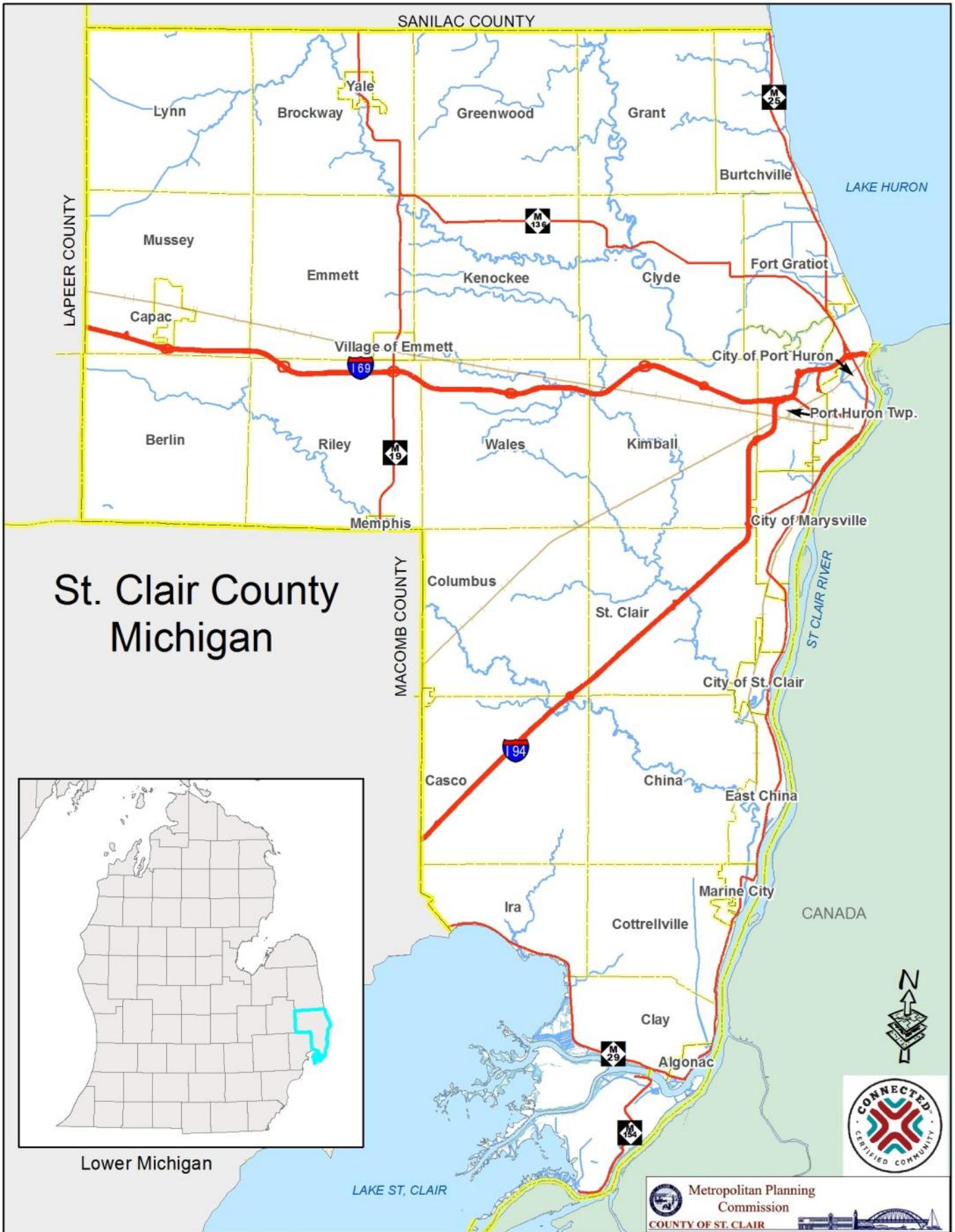
In addition to those basic philosophies, this Master Recreation Plan update strives to continue PARC’s long-standing tradition of innovation and originality when it comes to County Parks and Recreation.

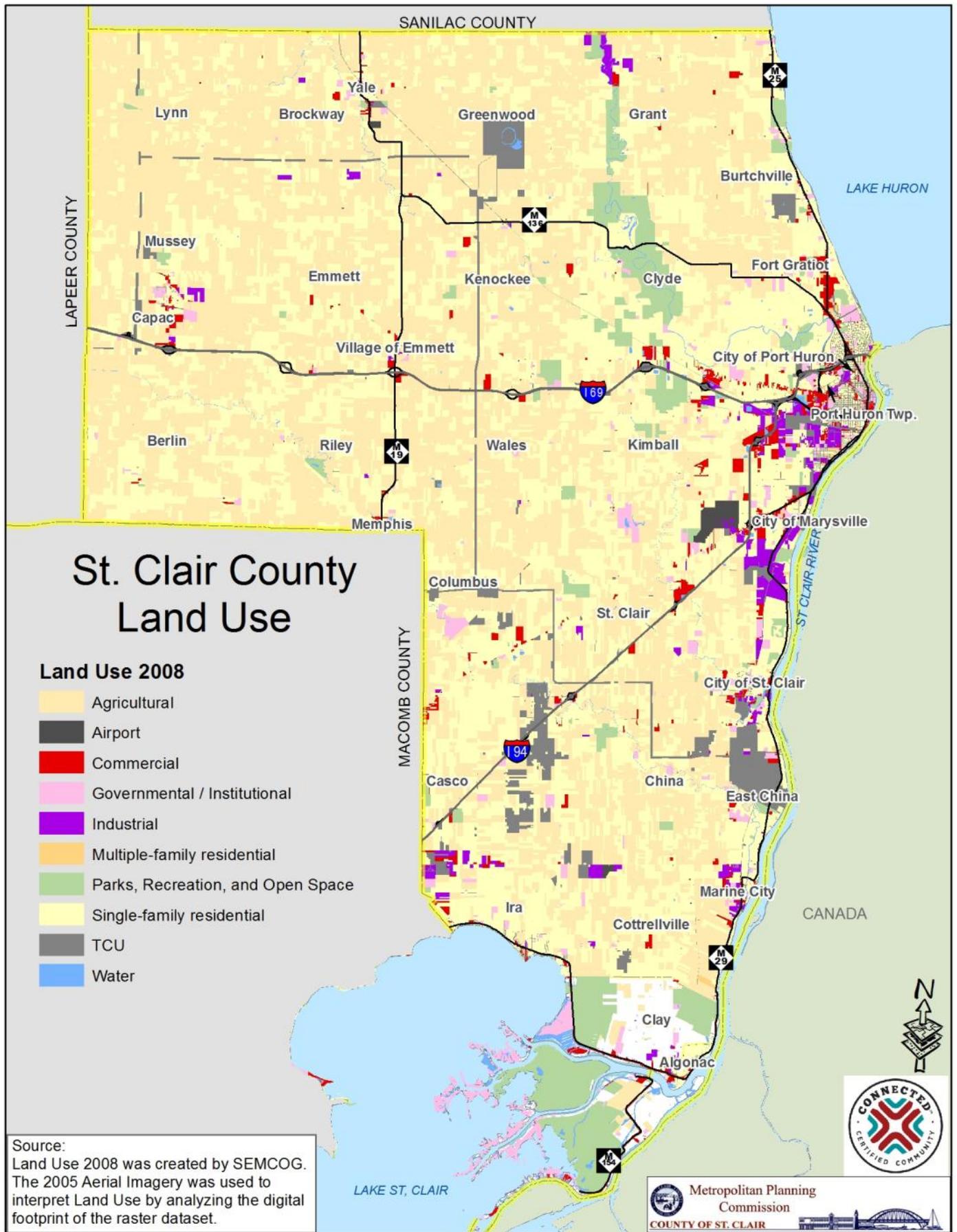
### Format

This 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan update follows the format and content required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans, IC 1924*, revised March 19, 2015. Sections for this Master Recreation Plan update are titled based on the required plan sections as detailed under “Preparing the Plan and Plan Content” in the MDNR Guidelines. The DNR requires all recreation plans to include the following sections:

- Community Description
- Administrative Structure
- Recreation Inventory
- Description of the Planning and Public Input Process
- Goals and Objectives
- Action Program

PARC has made every attempt possible to comply with the MDNR requirements. Moreover, PARC has included additional information beyond the MDNR requirements to better frame the recreational needs and opportunities of St. Clair County citizens.





Land Use in St. Clair County, 2008		
Classification	Acres	Percent
Agricultural	218,808	46.9%
Single-Family Residential	179,825	38.6%
Multiple-Family Residential	580	0.1%
Commercial	7,273	1.6%
Industrial	5,790	1.2%
Government/Institutional	9,647	2.1%
Park, Recreation, and Open Space	22,731	4.9%
Airport	1,069	0.2%
Transportation, Communication, and Utility	17,840	3.8%
Water	2,578	0.60
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>466,140</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Source: SEMCOG 2008 Land Use Data.</i>		

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## MASTER RECREATION PLAN: JURISDICTION AND PLAN FOCUS

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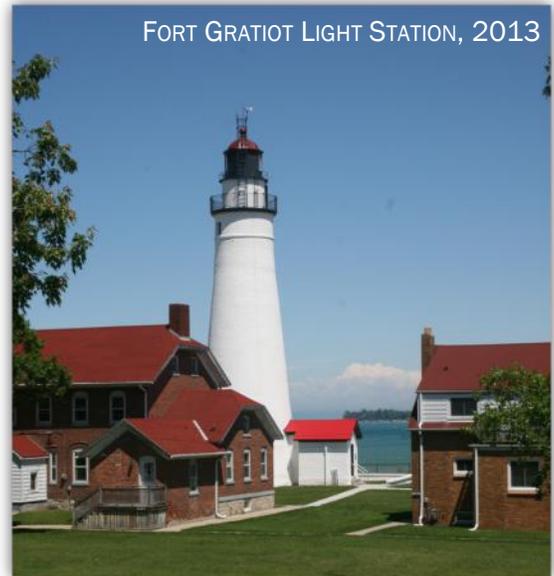
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This 2017-2021 St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan covers all parks and recreation facilities and programs owned and operated by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, spanning all of St. Clair County and serving all County residents. These facilities include:

- Goodells County Park
- Fort Gratiot County Park
- Fort Gratiot Light Station
- Columbus County Park
- Woodsong County Park
- Wetlands County Park
- Wadhams to Avoca Trail
- Bridge to Bay Trail
- The Blueways of St. Clair (in conjunction with the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission)

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has the responsibility to review and update the Master Recreation Plan every five years and to consider the conditions and trends affecting recreation. A wide variety of planning processes and techniques have been utilized in crafting the plan in years past; however, every update to the plan has been grounded in a desire to document current trends in St. Clair County, to meet the recreational demands and desires of St. Clair County residents, and to set a promising course for recreational opportunities for future generations. With each new rendition of the St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan comes an opportunity to proactively improve the quality of life for St. Clair County’s citizens.

The St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan is intended to have a lasting impact on the community. Relying on a strong foundation of data, research, and public input, it is reflective of a county with significant recreational assets and significant natural resources. While the plan identifies a number of goals and strategies meant to



positively influence the overall quality of life in St. Clair County, it is built on a framework that focuses on action strategies that can actually be implemented. The vision, goals, and strategies identified in this plan will require cooperation and collaboration among community leaders and dedicated stakeholders in all sectors of the community.

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

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### ABOUT ST. CLAIR COUNTY

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Located at the base of the thumb area of the lower peninsula of Michigan, St. Clair County is the easternmost of Michigan's 83 counties. It's known as the Blue Water Area because its eastern and southern boundaries are formed by the waters of Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and Lake St. Clair. The St. Clair River forms a natural boundary separating Michigan from Ontario, Canada. The river flows south from Lake Huron with its mouth under the Blue Water Bridge. It continues south to the City of Algonac and the river's delta which enters Lake St. Clair. It is also one of the heaviest traveled rivers in the world and is part of the world's longest shipping canal, the 2,347 mile St. Lawrence Seaway.

Greatly influenced by Lake Huron, St. Clair County offers a temperate climate which has cold winters, hot summers, and moderate springs and falls. There are 140 miles of shoreline in the county. Within the county there are a wide-range of land types and uses, from rural agriculture to urban development to expansive and beautiful coastline; there is even an international border. Wetlands are scattered throughout the county, covering approximately 62 square miles, or 8.6% of the county's land area, but are most prevalent along the eastern and southern coastlines and along inland rivers. Local governments are comprised of eight cities, including Port Huron which is the county seat, 23 townships and two villages: Capac and Emmett. Each municipality maintains its own master plan and zoning ordinance. The various jurisdictions within the county, along with many other organizations, have proven to be willing to cooperate with one another for the overall benefit of the region.

St. Clair County is a major international trade gateway between the United States and Canada for the movement of people and goods across the St. Clair River via the Blue Water Bridges and the international train tunnel. St. Clair County's stunning waterways as well as its diverse annual events makes it a tourist destination all year long. Residents and visitors alike, are attracted to its vast water resources, its scenic landscapes, beautifully maintained parks, miles of trails, neighborly communities, and its mix of traditional downtowns, and unique rural character.



The total area of the county is approximately 836.63 square miles, of which 724.37 square miles is land and 112.26 square miles is water. An agricultural/village pattern of land use exists in the western portion of the county, supporting a rural lifestyle that residents would like to preserve. The predominant land use is agricultural, which covers almost 47% of the land area. This is followed by a substantial amount of single-family residential land at 38.6%, then park, recreation, and open space is the next largest use with only 4.9%. This part of St. Clair County offers diversity, a change of view and a change of pace from populated commercial communities that have proliferated along the County’s eastern and southern waterfront.

More intense land uses such as commercial, industrial, institutional and transportation are primarily found in the Port Huron area and to a lesser extent in village areas and in small parcels on major corridors throughout the county. Commercial land is the largest intensive use category in the county with 7,273 acres. Residential uses are found scattered throughout the entire county.

St. Clair County has 34 units of government including St. Clair County government, 23 townships, eight cities, and two villages. In addition, the County has seven school districts within its borders. From a regional perspective, St. Clair County is the northernmost of seven counties in the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). SEMCOG conducts planning studies and maintains a comprehensive database that offers detailed demographic information to its member communities. These materials have proven to be an authoritative source for statistical and population-related data that pertains to recreational activities in St. Clair County.

Additionally, St. Clair County is an active partner in the I-69 Thumb Region (Michigan Prosperity Region 6) along with Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola counties.

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## TOPOGRAPHY

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Topography refers to the elevations, relief features, or surface conditions of a geographic area. The understanding of topography is critical for a number of reasons. In terms of environmental quality, agriculture, and hydrology, understanding the topography of a region enables the understanding of watershed boundaries, drainage characteristics, water movement, and impacts on water quality.

The land surface of the county is a glacial landform, with characteristic slopes, substrata, soils, and drainage conditions, and as a result of these physical factors, certain vegetation evolved and now exist. According to the United States Geological Survey, St. Clair County is part of the landform called Washtenaw-Maumee Lake Plain. The county consists primarily of clay soils, along with several one to three mile wide end moraines that have been reshaped by water and runoff. Beach ridges and small sand dunes are common on the sand channels, which are visible from Fort Gratiot Township to St. Clair, running parallel to the shoreline.

Elevations throughout the county range from 580 feet to 800 feet above mean sea level. The highest points are in the glaciated area in the western part of the county, along the Black River in the northern part of the county, and along Lake Huron and the northern part of the St. Clair River. The lowest part of the county is in the south in an area known as St. Clair Flats, which is within the Lake St. Clair floodplain.



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## WATER RESOURCES

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St. Clair County is blessed with water resources. The most noticeable of these are Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair, all of which are part of the Great Lakes system. While there are no inland lakes of significant size, St. Clair County has a bounty of inland rivers. These include:

- 149 miles of primary rivers
- 810 miles of tributaries

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission recognizes the County's abundance of inland rivers and streams as recreational opportunities for water trails on which canoeists and kayakers can paddle through miles of riparian scenery and silence. In 2010, PARC partnered with the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission to develop *The Blueways of St. Clair*. See [www.BluewaysofStClair.org](http://www.BluewaysofStClair.org) for more information.

### Lake Huron

Lake Huron is the largest neighboring watercourse. It creates a 12.5-mile shoreline boundary on the northeast corner of the county and is an integral recreational and economic factor. The cities of Detroit (60 miles south), Flint (75 miles west), and 90 other communities pump 400 million gallons of water per day from Lake Huron. Awareness of the quality of the water from Lake Huron and the Great Lakes has been a concern since the mid-1970s.

### Lake St. Clair

Lake St. Clair borders 11.3 miles on the southern corner of St. Clair County and is a recreational haven for boaters, anglers, and sightseers. The largest fleet of pleasure boats on the Great Lakes is on Lake St. Clair, and about one-third of all the fish caught on the Great Lakes are caught there.

The largest remaining marshland in the Great Lakes Basin is located in Clay Township and Canada's Walpole Island near Lake St. Clair. Environmental concerns abound in this area and are evidenced by beach closings due to bacterial contamination, visible changes in the lake, and changes to lake plants and animal populations.

### **St. Clair River**

The St. Clair River is 34.3 miles long and borders most of the east side of St. Clair County. The St. Clair River extends from Lake Huron in the north to Lake St. Clair at the south, where it has an average flow rate of 182,000 cubic feet per second. The City of Port Huron gets its water from the St. Clair River.

Except for a few drains that flow into Lake Huron or Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair River is the receptor of all drainage basins within St. Clair County and water level fluctuations of two to three feet are common. This fluctuation, along with rapid currents, causes tree mortality, shoreline erosion, and major alterations to the composition and habitat of marshes and wet prairies. Six locations along the St. Clair River and one location along Lake Huron are monitored monthly to determine water level fluctuations. Water levels are usually lowest in February, then rise through July and decline through the rest of the year.

The St. Clair River's current and the frequent passage of large lake freighters provide for unique sightseeing and tourism opportunities. Shipping has brought infestations of non-indigenous aquatic species that are potentially detrimental to the environmental health of the river. The St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) is having noteworthy success in improving the quality of both water and habitat in and along the river.

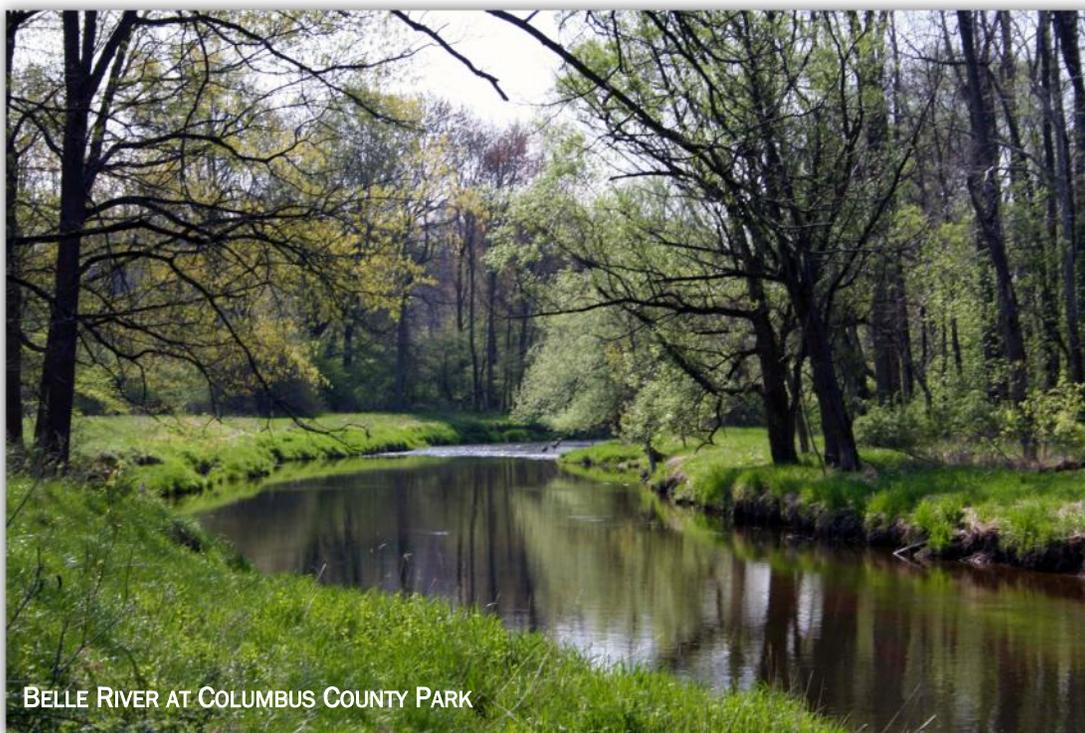
### **Black River and Mill Creek**

The Black River is the major tributary of the St. Clair River. It flows south from the Minden Bog in Sanilac County and through Port Huron. Along with its major tributary Mill Creek, the Black River drains almost all of the northern and western parts of St. Clair County.

The river's watershed (159,930 acres) is the largest in Southeast Michigan and is primarily a broad, flat plain bounded on three sides by hills ranging from 20 to 100 feet high.



BELLE RIVER AT COLUMBUS COUNTY PARK, 2009



The Black River offers limited recreational use due to easily eroded clay soils. Traditionally, the river has afforded high-quality fishing, but fish populations have diminished and become almost nonexistent in recent decades.

#### **Pine River**

The Pine River is a tributary of the St. Clair River and is the largest watershed (126,110 acres) contained within St. Clair County. It flows through relatively flat land from the central part of the county and through the City of St. Clair.

#### **Belle River**

The Belle River is also a tributary of the St. Clair River. With its headwaters in Lapeer County, it begins in the west central part of St. Clair County, passes a short distance through a corner of Macomb County, then continues southeast through Marine City, draining 83,000 acres of relatively flat land.

#### **Clinton River**

In addition to these watercourses within St. Clair County, the North Branch of the Clinton River drains 8,600 acres in the southwest part of the county, even though the river does not physically flow through the county.

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## SHORELINE

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St. Clair County has a total of 58 miles of shoreline along Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair. Most of this shoreline either has been developed or is not suitable for development. Much of this shoreline, especially along the St. Clair River, has been stabilized with seawalls.

The undeveloped or recreational parts of the shoreline provide places for walking and/or fishing. Most walkways along the river are developed and stabilized.

The Lake Huron shoreline is 12.5 miles, just over a mile of which is accessible through state and municipal parks. The St. Clair River shoreline is 34.3 miles, most of which lacks natural beaches, but is good for scuba diving, boating, waterskiing, fishing, paddling and sailing. A significant amount of the shoreline has local parks and walkways for walking, rollerblading, and biking.



The 11.3 miles of Lake St. Clair shoreline is densely populated with residential development and limited public access beaches. However, more than 20 public boat ramps and marinas provide boaters with access to Lake St. Clair.

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## WETLANDS

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According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Water saturation largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species.

Wetlands are scattered throughout the county covering approximately 62 square miles, or 8.6% of the county's land area, but are most prevalent along the eastern and southern coastlines and along inland rivers. They are often covered with lowland-hardwoods, lowland-conifers, shrub or scrub growth, or aquatic beds. Wetlands are essential to St. Clair County communities as they help to maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem. Wetlands serve as sponges, absorbing excess runoff during rain events. As the water infiltrates, it is cleansed using the natural filtration capability of the plants and soils. Wetlands also retain moisture for much of the growing season, endowing nearby plant communities with water and recharging underlying groundwater supplies.

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## CLIMATE

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The climate of St. Clair County is temperate with cold winters, hot summers, and moderate springs and falls.

- January average low temperature: 17 degrees Fahrenheit
- January average high temperature: 30 degrees Fahrenheit
- July average low temperature: 62 degrees Fahrenheit



- July average high temperature: 82 degrees Fahrenheit
- Average days below 0 degrees: 5
- Average days above 90 degrees: 13
- Average Heating Degree Days: 7,200 HDD per year
- Average annual rainfall: 31 inches
- Average annual snowfall: 36 inches
- Growing season: 170 days

Climate refers to the weather pattern that can be expected in a geographical region, based on the average weather for a month or season in previous years. Weather conditions affect the community's economic base. Variations in average conditions, especially during the summer months, can cause fluctuations in tourism and outdoor recreation activities, upon which the local economy is dependent. Prevailing winds determine lakeshore and sand dune erosion patterns, which impose limitations on development along the Lake Huron shore. The Great Lakes are a major control factor on the climate for the Midwest; however, St. Clair County is generally affected less by climate because of its southeastern location in the state. The most obvious effect of the lakes on the county is the increased percentage of cloud cover in late fall and early winter, when prevailing westerly winds move cold air across the warmer lake water. In addition, the county's southeastern location within Michigan provides it with five to ten percent more sunshine than those counties at the same latitude on the western side of the state.

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## WILDLIFE RESOURCES

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St. Clair County's wetlands, shoals, open waters, rural areas, woodlands and some urban land provide ecosystems that have appropriate soils and food to support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Certain animal species spark the interests of hunters, trappers, and people who enjoy viewing wildlife. Wildlife species in St. Clair County include whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, raccoon, skunk, fox coyote, **PAGE 14**



beaver, muskrat, badger, opossum, pheasant, quail, ruffed grouse, crow, woodcock, wild turkey, ducks, geese, eagles, crows, swans, and others.

The Great Lakes Basin is also a major flyway for thousands of North American waterfowl and a breeding territory for several hundred species. For this reason, bird watching is a popular recreational activity in St. Clair County. The fact that many bird species are highly visible and easily documented within St. Clair County indicates the county is rich with wildlife habitat, not only for birds but for less noticeable vertebrate, invertebrate and micro-organic species. This is especially true in aquatic places, on publicly-owned land and along the edges of agricultural acreage.

### **Fishing**

Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair are the most popular fishing sites in St. Clair County. Here anglers catch brown trout, lake trout, steelhead, salmon, smelt, walleye, perch, bass, pike, muskellunge, carp, catfish, and panfish. The inland rivers have also been historically good fishing areas and continue to be a source of recreation for many anglers.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

Rare plant communities and many threatened or endangered animals can be found in wet, moderately wet, and dry sand prairies of St. Clair County. Originally, such land forms ranged extensively throughout the county but have been supplanted by commercial and residential development. Now, such plants and animals are found primarily on state-owned land.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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## PARC BACKGROUND

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Most cities, villages, and townships in St. Clair County provide park areas and open spaces that are designed to meet their community’s basic recreational needs. However, most communities would face considerable financial and personnel challenges if asked to satisfy recreational needs that require expansive and natural settings, special use facilities, or “resource-oriented” parks outside their corporate limits. As a result, such facilities are generally the responsibility of county and state government.

For this reason, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners (BOC) formed the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) in 1993 to serve as an advisory group for countywide recreation endeavors.

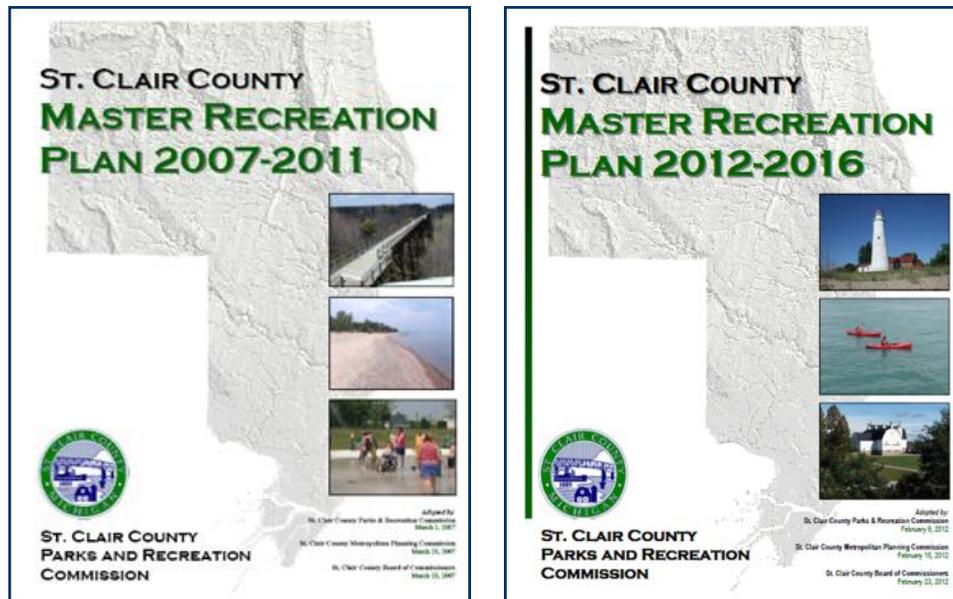
In 1994, the St. Clair County government took further steps to structure how it would deliver parks and recreation services when it converted PRAC from advisory status to commission status by creating the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC).

County government also secured voter support for a one-half (.5) mill property tax in 1994 and made a commitment to distribute 25% of the parks and recreation millage revenue to local units of government to help finance local recreation efforts.

In 1995, St. Clair County hired a full-time parks and recreation director.

In 1997, PARC developed an ambitious - yet realistic - Master Recreation Plan to provide park services to all county residents. The Master Recreation Plan has subsequently been reviewed and updated in 2002, 2007, and 2012.






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## ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER RECREATION PLANS

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### 1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan

The St. Clair County 1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan identified essential issues, defined the County’s role in parks and recreation programs, and established PARC’s goals and objectives. It placed a primary emphasis on improving the year-round functionality of Goodells County Park, which, at that time, was the only public park property owned by St. Clair County. It gave secondary, yet significant, status to two County trail projects: the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.

With a few minor exceptions, all of the 1997-2001 plan’s goals and objectives were met. PARC initiated projects beyond the specific details, yet well within the prescribed scope, of the Master Recreation Plan. PARC listened to citizen suggestions and communicated and cooperated with government agencies within St. Clair County and neighboring counties in order to accomplish its goals.

### 2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan

In 2002, PARC went to the public and asked for suggestions for parks and recreation activities and projects. Those comments, as well as recommendations by PARC members and other members of St. Clair County government, were the backbone of the plan update. The plan detailed PARC goals defined by six categories: Administrative, Financial, Goodells County Park, Bridge to Bay Trail, Wadhams to Avoca Trail, and Acquisitions.

### 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan

The 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan was considered a “light” update of the 2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan. In 2007, PARC facilitated a series of public input events to validate existing goals and objectives, as well as to develop goals for newly acquired properties that ultimately became Fort Gratiot County Park and Columbus County Park.

The 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan had six categories of goals: Administration, Financial, Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Greenways and Trails, and Acquisitions. In general, the plan focused on continuing the master development plans for Goodells County Park and Fort Gratiot County Park, and had an increased emphasis on the development of greenways and trails.

**2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan**

The 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan included ten categories of goals: Administrative, General Facilities, Financial, Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Columbus County Park, Woodsong County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, Greenways and Blueways, and Acquisitions. The plan was focused on newly acquired park properties (Columbus, Woodsong, and the Fort Gratiot Light Station). It was also a plan developed with heavy public involvement, including a countywide survey managed by the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA).

Priority capital improvement projects in the 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan included the Blue Water River Walk land acquisition and trail development, the Light Station entrance and parking lot improvements, and the replacement of the Quonset Hut building at Goodells County Park.

**2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan**

Now, as PARC enters the next five years of operation, it continues to work in concert with the St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS), St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), local government officials, and the general public to garner input and suggestions for PARC facilities and countywide trails and greenways to further define the county’s role in parks and recreation programs. Public involvement for the development of this plan included a local leadership survey, an online countywide survey, two public visioning workshops, and the use of social media. More information on the public planning process can be found in Chapter 4.

The 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan includes goals for six strategic focal areas:

- Administration
- Finance
- Parkland
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Greenways and Blueways
- Places and Spaces

For more information on these strategic focal areas and current PARC goals, see Chapter 5.

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## **PARC FUNCTIONS**

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Throughout the years prior to the establishment of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, many local units of government allocated funding for parks and recreation facilities and programs. This was especially true of the cities and villages. A few townships gave parks and recreation a low or non-priority status.

Since the passage of the countywide millage to support parks and recreation functions, the County has returned 25% of the millage money to the local units of government to be used, at the discretion of local officials, for parks and recreation activities within their respective communities.

When communities receive these funds, they must show evidence of “maintenance of effort” to assure the funding is used to expand opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding. In many cases, the local units of government have utilized a portion of their local distribution as local match money to leverage grants from state and federal agencies or private philanthropic foundations.

While it is necessary to acknowledge the recreational endeavors of local units of government, the primary focus of this Master Recreation Plan document will be on countywide activities falling under the administration of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.



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## PARC RESPONSIBILITIES

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The general purposes of the Parks and Recreation Commission are:

- To study and determine the extent of need for parks, preserves, parkways, recreation and other conservation facilities within the county.
- To develop cooperative planning efforts with the various cities, villages, townships and school districts concerned with parks, recreation and conservation services.
- To serve as an information center for local parks and recreation commissions.
- To prepare and recommend to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, the adoption of a comprehensive, coordinated countywide parks and recreation plan.
- To assure that acquisition and development consistently strive to include all citizens through attention to ADA guidelines.

The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners has charged the Parks and Recreation Commission with the responsibility for development and stewardship of recreational areas that serve a countywide population. PARC has chosen to place primary emphasis on spaces and facilities that, because of cost, location, or nature, are beyond those that can be reasonably provided by individual cities, township, and villages.

In that regard, PARC is responsible for:

- Identifying park, recreation, open space, and conservation needs in St. Clair County.
- Acquisition, development, operation, and stewardship of lands and facilities designated for parks and recreation uses by all county citizens or visitors.
- Developing cooperative planning efforts with, providing technical assistance to, and serving as an information center for 33 local units of government and St. Clair County government departments.

PARC currently is not involved with projects and activities that are already being adequately provided by local communities and private entities, such as golf courses, marinas, boat ramps, campgrounds, baseball and softball diamonds, soccer fields, and other traditional athletic facilities.

PARC financially supports endeavors that are designed to serve a countywide constituency, including out-of-county visitors and tourists.

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## PARC MEMBERS

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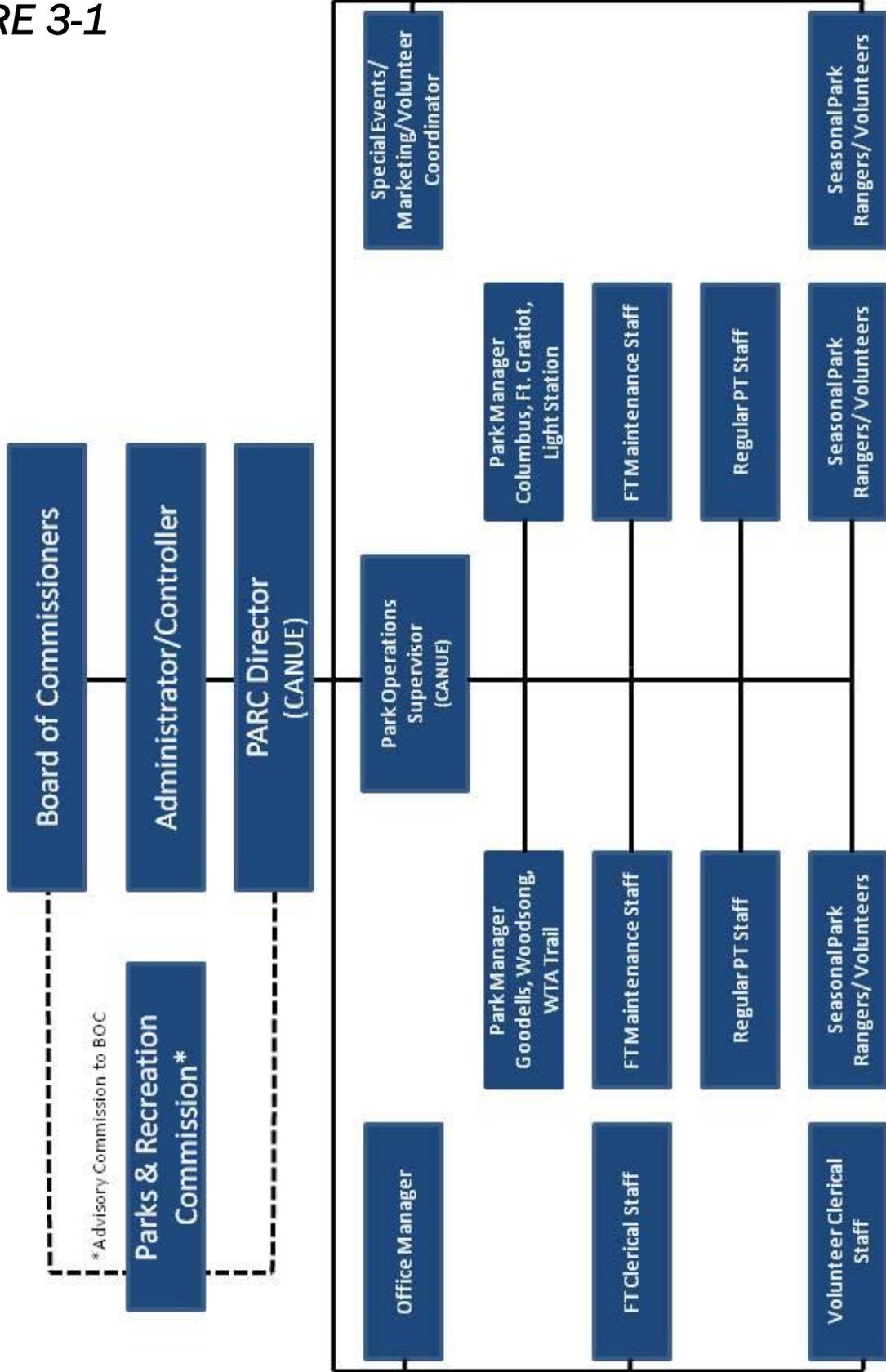
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PARC is a policy making body comprised of ten members. Four of the ten members are designated appointees, or their delegates, by statute. These are:

- Chairperson or member of the St. Clair County Road Commission;
- Chairperson or member of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission;
- St. Clair County Drain Commissioner; and

FIGURE 3-1

PARC Organizational Chart



- One County Commissioner appointed by the chairperson of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners.

The six remaining members are citizens appointed by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. Four of these six citizens represent one or more of the county's seven County Commissioner districts and two serve "at-large."

The County Treasurer is the PARC treasurer and an ex-officio member.

PARC's citizen members reside and work in communities throughout St. Clair County, providing a broad representation of countywide issues and points of view. PARC encourages citizens representing diverse backgrounds and interests to participate on its advisory committees, attend and seek membership on the commission. The current members' professional expertise includes education, engineering, real estate, homemaking, and public and government service.

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## PARC COMMITTEES

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PARC has seven standing committees:

- Acquisitions Advisory Committee
- Columbus County Park Advisory Committee
- Goodells County Park Advisory Committee
- Fort Gratiot County Park Advisory Committee
- Fort Gratiot Light Station Advisory Committee
- Trails Advisory Committee
- Finance Committee

These committees consist of members of the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as other citizens who are appointed at-large. Ad hoc committees are formed to fulfill certain short-term tasks, as necessary.

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## PARC DIRECTOR

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St. Clair County has a full-time parks and recreation director who reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

PARC Director Mark Brochu was hired in May 1995. At that time he became the first person to hold the director position since the mid-1970s. Mr. Brochu assumed parks and recreation management duties previously handled by the St. Clair County Administrator/Controller and the Purchasing, Metropolitan Planning, and Buildings and Grounds departments.

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## PARC PERSONNEL

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On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission, St. Clair County currently employs:

- One full-time director
- One full-time office manager
- One full-time clerical staff
- One full-time special events/marketing/volunteer coordinator
- One full-time park operations supervisor
- Two full-time park managers
- Four full-time maintenance staff
- Eight part-time park rangers
- 16 Seasonal park rangers
- Volunteers



Goodells County Park is the maintenance hub of the St. Clair County park system, but maintenance facilities are also operated at Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Columbus County Park.

### Volunteers

Volunteers assist PARC in non-skilled activities, such as trail clean-up campaigns and planting flower beds through its Adopt-A-Park program. PARC also has a successful Adopt-A-Trail program through which volunteers have invested numerous hours removing litter and lightweight debris from the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.

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## PARC MEETING SCHEDULE

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The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission meets on the second Wednesday of every month at public meetings in the St. Clair County Administration Building, 200 Grand River Ave, Port Huron.

The Finance Committee meets on a monthly basis. The rest of the committees (Acquisitions, Goodells County Park, Columbus County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Trails) all meet as needed.

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## PARC DECISION MAKING PROCESS

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The Parks and Recreation Commission makes decisions regarding parks and recreational activities that affect all citizens of St. Clair County. PARC makes decisions according to bylaws that govern PARC's authority, geographic area, members, officers, duties and responsibilities, meetings, committees, and compensation.

According to their knowledge and expertise, the director, committees, and consultants present information on which decisions are based to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. PARC staffing decisions are governed by the personnel policies established by the BOC and purchases are governed by the BOC's purchasing policies.

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## PARC'S WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

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The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission enjoys a good working relationship with:

- The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and other County government agencies, such as the Road



Commission, the Drain Commissioner, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

- Officials in local units of government, particularly those in positions with local parks and recreation responsibilities.
- The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA).
- Individuals and groups who engage in recreational activities.
- Officials from neighboring counties.
- State, regional and national agencies involved with parks and recreation activities.

#### **Relationship with County Government**

The PARC director and PARC members work closely with the County Administrator/Controller and report to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, who are responsible to the voters in St. Clair County. While PARC does not share employees with other County departments, the director and his staff do interact frequently with, obtain information from, and provide information to other pertinent agencies, especially the Administrator/Controller’s office, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Road Commission, the Drain Commissioner’s Office, and the Buildings and Grounds department.

#### **Relationship with Local Units of Government**

PARC enjoys a good working relationship with officials from municipalities and townships throughout the county, each of which receives a share of the countywide parks and recreation millage money. Local officials are at liberty to use their share of the millage money in any way they deem necessary to serve the recreational needs of their local constituents. Local units of government must show, however, that the millage funds allocated to them are used to expand recreation opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding of recreational facilities and programs.

#### **Relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency**

PARC has a special relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency that involves swapping in-kind services. PARC receives graphic arts and public opinion polling assistance from RESA’s Communications and Marketing Department in exchange for providing maintenance staff and equipment to RESA’s Pine River Nature Center, which is adjacent to Goodells County Park. PARC was one of several voices that encouraged RESA to acquire the property on which the nature center sits.

#### **Relationship with Individuals and Groups**

Several boards and organizations within St. Clair County also offer suggestions and advice to PARC even though they are not technically or formally affiliated with County government. These include the 4-H Council, the St. Clair County Agricultural Society, the Farm Museum Board, Propbusters remote control model airplane club, Earthkeepers, Can-Am BMX, mountain biking and road biking organizations, hiking groups, and equestrian enthusiasts. Other partnerships include the Community Foundation of St. Clair County for the Blue Water River Walk and “Access to Recreation” programs and the Port Huron Museum for tours and programming at the Fort Gratiot Light Station.

Input and comment by these organizations through the committee structure and at PARC meetings indicates a

strong cooperative effort among parks and recreation enthusiasts in the county. PARC works with local agencies and environmental groups in hosting the annual Earth Fair and with local community recreation departments to put together programs and activities.

**Relationship with Federal, State, and Regional Agencies**

The Parks and Recreation Commission has a good working relationship with federal, state, and regional agencies, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has received funds from the Federal Government through previous and current transportation bills, the Save Our Great Lakes program, and also the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through the U.S. National Park Service.

PARC has received funds for County recreation projects from the State of Michigan through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI). PARC has also received private funding the St. Clair County Community Foundation, the Greenways Initiative, and the Access to Recreation grant program.

PARC has utilized grant money from these agencies for the purchase and development of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, Fort Gratiot County Park, Columbus County Park, and Woodson County Park. PARC has also helped local units of government obtain state and federal grant money to finance sections of the Bridge to Bay Trail and to secure additional waterfront property.

**Relationship with Neighboring Counties**

The Bridge to Bay Trail is a symbol of PARC’s good working relationship with local units of government. Over one-half of the proposed 54-mile trail along the county’s eastern and southern shores is now complete. When finished, it will extend from the county’s northern border with Sanilac County to the southern border with Macomb County. It will also link with lateral spurs that reach inland, including the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, to better serve inland county residents.

The next step is working with neighboring Macomb County to link the Bridge to Bay Trail with the Macomb Orchard Trail in Macomb County as part of the Great Lake to Lake Trail.

**Relationship with Citizens**

PARC receives many telephone calls from citizens asking questions about parks and recreation facilities, programs, and events. Some of these questions pertain to PARC endeavors, but many others relate to programs and facilities offered by townships, municipalities, private or non-profit organizations, including organizations outside St. Clair County.

PARC staff maintains a file of all activities and programs known to them and provides answers as completely as possible, based on this information. When appropriate, PARC staff directs the caller to a more appropriate information source.

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**PARC FUNDING SOURCES**

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The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission receives money from:

- Countywide parks and recreation millage
- State and federal project grants
- Foundation grants
- Donations
- Fees and charges

**Countywide Parks and Recreation Millage**

In April 1994, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners authorized a parks and recreation millage issue to be placed on the countywide general election ballot the following August. Voters were asked to approve an increase in the limitation of the amount of property taxes that could be assessed each year by fifty cents per one thousand dollars (.5 mil) of the state equalized valuation.

The special levy was to be placed on all taxable property in St. Clair County for a period of five years, 1994 through 1998. The millage, if approved, would allow for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities in St. Clair County in accordance with the County’s Master Recreation Plan.

St. Clair County voters approved the millage request by a 52% to 48% margin. The greatest approval margin occurred in those areas of the county where residents already had quality parks and recreation services.

In 1999, a millage renewal was placed on the ballot. The voter approval margin jumped to 63.5% countywide.

A six-year millage renewal was placed on the ballot again in 2004 and passed by a 68.5% to 31.5% margin. Millage renewals were approved by 71% of the voters in 2010 and again by nearly 70% of the voters in 2016.

From 1994 through 2016, the County has collected over \$50.6 million in parks and recreation millage revenue.

**Millage Distribution**

For Countywide Projects

PARC dedicates 75% of the millage revenues to parks and recreation facilities that serve a countywide audience. PARC projects are those that are best suited to a County government agency or open to all St. Clair County residents and visitors.

PARC does not participate in parks and recreation projects that do not serve a countywide audience or in facilities and endeavors that can be adequately provided by local units of government or private enterprises.

To Local Units of Government

PARC distributes 25% of the County Parks and Recreation Millage revenues to local units of government to enhance or expand local parks and recreation programs and facilities.

Since 1994, the amount of money distributed to local communities has totaled more than \$12.6 million. This distribution has had a positive impact on the delivery of local parks and recreation services in every community in St. Clair County.

**TABLE 2-1: MILLAGE DISTRIBUTION 1994-2016**

Community	Amount
<b>Cities and Villages</b>	
Algonac	\$357,559.25
Capac	\$139,597.26
Emmett	\$21,168.81
Marine City	\$361,872.51
Marysville	\$753,312.87
Memphis	\$27,680.35
Port Huron	\$2,564,080.98
Richmond	\$77.44
St. Clair	\$443,440.86
Yale	\$160,774.34
<b>Townships</b>	
Berlin	\$239,391.81
Brockway	\$147,775.11
Burtchville	\$308,253.47
Casco	\$363,327.35
China	\$256,184.91
Clay	\$750,817.54
Clyde	\$408,656.06
Columbus	\$312,567.23
Cottrellville	\$289,522.26
East China	\$283,769.19
Emmett	\$167,661.22
Fort Gratiot	\$824,296.20
Grant	\$127,777.53
Greenwood	\$105,684.83
Ira	\$497,918.51
Kenockee	\$182,825.07
Kimball	\$672,875.43
Lynn	\$91,128.94
Mussey	\$154,077.00
Port Huron	\$701,457.63
Riley	\$230,655.10
St. Clair	\$483,456.18
Wales	\$218,937.64
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$12,648,580.88</b>

Source: St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, 2016

Table 2-1 shows the amounts distributed to each unit of government from 1994 through 2016. The amount of local distribution is based on the number of residents living in each municipality or township, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The per capita distribution in 2016 was \$4.23 per resident.

In order to receive these funds, communities must submit an annual report and show evidence of “maintenance of effort” to assure the funding is used to expand opportunities rather than to supplant existing local funding. In effect, local units of government must document that they have maintained their local financial support for parks and recreation services at a level equal to or greater than the amount they spent prior to the 1994 millage election.

Local Parks and Recreation Projects

Each local unit of government determines how its share of the County Parks and Recreation Millage funds is spent. Local projects have included:

- Developing local master recreation plans.
- Planning and engineering park improvements.
- Landscaping improvements.
- Purchase and installation of playground equipment.
- Constructing and improving athletic fields.
- Property purchases.
- Recreation programs and equipment.
- Trail development.

Many communities have used their local shares of the County Parks and Recreation Millage for the required local match for state and federal grants. This money has been used for development of parks, facilities, and trails.

**State and Federal Grants**

PARC has been awarded over \$5 million in grants from state and federal agencies since 1994. PARC continues to seek grant opportunities from all agencies and sources that provide funding compatible with the county’s parks and recreation endeavors.

**Other Grants**

Since 2002, PARC has received grants from:

- The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan – Greenways Initiative
- The Community Foundation of St. Clair County
- The Wadhams Council of Commerce
- Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station
- National Park Service (SAT)
- Michigan Department of Transportation

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan – Greenways Initiative has provided PARC with multiple grants since 2002. In 2002, it provided a \$56,250 grant to purchase right-of-way for the Wadhams to Avoca Trail extension. In 2005, it put forth \$30,000 to conduct a Wadhams to Avoca Trail – Bridge to Bay Trail connection study. In 2006, the Greenways Initiative provided PARC with \$10,000 to host a series of trails and greenways visioning workshops, which were also used to garner stakeholder input for the development of the Master Recreation Plan update.

In 2007, the Community Foundation of St. Clair County granted \$20,000 to PARC to acquire a second portable stage. Back in 1997, the Charles and Margaret Anderson Fund, acting through the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, donated a portable stage, known as the “Showmobile.” While PARC no longer owns the original Showmobile, it acquired another Showmobile in 2009. Organizations throughout the County use the Showmobiles for their intended purpose of musical and cultural events. The Community Foundation also granted PARC \$5,000 for improvements to the BMX track at Goodells County Park.

### **Donations**

Businesses, organizations, families, and individuals have donated memorial trees and benches for Goodells County Park.

The 4-H Fair Board, St. Clair County Agricultural Society and the Bereaved Parents of the Blue Water Area have sponsored an adopt-a-brick program with proceeds to be used for additional Goodells County Park improvements.

Organizations, families, and individuals have donated their time and labor to maintain sections of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail or to maintain flower beds at numerous County parks.

PARC has received donations of five buildings for the Historic Village at Goodells Park including the Lynn Township Schoolhouse, the CC Peck Bank Building, the Murphy/Ryan Farmhouse, the Mudge Log Cabin and the Columbus Bible Church. All five buildings have been fully restored.

PARC continues to look for other historic buildings, especially those that are endangered by changing land use patterns.

### **Fees and Charges**

PARC annually adopts a graduated fee schedule for use of the County's Showmobiles, portable bleachers, PARC facilities and grounds by groups, businesses, and organizations.

Under the graduated fee schedule:

- Private groups, non-residents, and businesses pay the highest fees
- Nonprofit organizations pay lesser fees

Reservation fees guarantee exclusive use of the designated facilities for the group's event.

There is no charge for use of the Bridge to Bay Trail or the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Outdoor areas of Goodells County Park are also available for citizen use anytime at no cost. Likewise, certain outdoor park structures, such as the picnic pavilions, are available for individual use on a first-come basis, free of charge, when not reserved in advance by others.

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## **PARC BUDGETS**

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### **Budget History**

From 2012 to 2016, millage revenue experienced some fluctuations due to the county's slow climb out of the recession. Millage revenue decreased from 2012 to 2014 before increasing in 2015 and 2016. Interest income from investments has ranged from \$5,000 to \$12,864 per year from 2012 through 2016. See Table 2-2.

Responsible financial planning by PARC will ensure that the favorable relationship between revenues and costs is maximized.

### **Budget Projections**

PARC financial projections for the next five years reflect a stable budget that will see slight gains in revenues and expenditures that generally mirror the past five years. See Table 2-3.

With the economy continuing to slowly recover and real estate prices continuing to go up, millage revenue is projected to grow and fees and charges are expected to slightly increase over the next five years as new recreation facilities are reserved and fees are adjusted to cover costs. Interest income will continue to be minimal due to historically low interest rates and lower fund balances.

Expenditures are expected to rise slowly over the next five years. Wages are expected to remain stable for the next several years and fringe benefits costs have stabilized as medical benefits have been reduced for full-time staff. Operations and maintenance costs are expected to rise slightly as new facilities have come on line over the past five years. Rising utility expenses are expected to be offset by aggressive energy conservation and efficiency programs.

Millage distributions to local units of government will continue to be 25% of the PARC millage funds collected each year.

The net result of more conservative budgeting will be the reduction in the number of capital projects that can be pursued each year. Capital projects for trails, land acquisitions and the restoration of the Fort Gratiot Light Station will be dependent on public and private grants and donations. For the purpose of the five-year budget projection, only grants already secured and donations already received are listed as revenues.

The County Parks and Recreation Millage revenue is projected to increase each year from 2017 to 2021, reaching \$3.14 million in 2021. For total revenues, it is projected there will be a \$247,000 increase over the next five years.

PARC's ability to do additional park and trail improvements will be dependent on public and private grants, as well as donations. Potential grants are available from agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program, the Coastal Zone Management Program funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).



<b>TABLE 2-2: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION BUDGET HISTORY</b>					
<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>
<b>Revenues</b>					
Millage	\$2,837,282	\$2,751,385	\$2,686,455	\$2,716,321	\$2,765,100
Grants – Government & Private	\$51,850	\$149,229	\$138,372	\$922,998	\$220,300
Fees & Charges	\$99,925	\$114,580	\$108,196	\$109,407	\$98,000
Interest Income	\$6,843	\$6,228	\$12,864	\$7,155	\$5,000
Other Income	\$24,023	\$11,626	\$15,734	\$24,218	\$11,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$3,019,923</b>	<b>\$3,033,048</b>	<b>\$2,961,621</b>	<b>\$3,780,099</b>	<b>\$3,099,400</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Wages & Fringes	\$961,415	\$993,637	\$1,010,953	\$1,065,636	\$1,182,000
Operations & Maintenance	\$584,933	\$393,996	\$500,953	\$550,705	\$535,700
Special Grants to Locals	-	\$200,914	\$193,645	\$10,499	\$60,000
Local Millage Distributions	\$683,876	\$685,697	\$671,372	\$676,698	\$690,000
Capital Outlays	\$1,762,825	\$393,994	\$305,972	\$1,190,976	\$784,000
Cost Allocation	\$162,801	\$234,077	\$175,401	\$89,642	\$130,300
JASP	-	\$29,158	\$31,856	-	-
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$4,155,850</b>	<b>\$2,931,473</b>	<b>\$2,890,152</b>	<b>\$3,584,155</b>	<b>\$3,382,000</b>
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$1,135,927)	\$101,575	\$71,469	\$195,944	(\$282,600)

<b>TABLE 2-3: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION BUDGET PROJECTION</b>					
<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>FY 2018</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>
<b>Revenues</b>					
Millage	\$2,900,000	\$2,958,000	\$3,017,000	\$3,077,000	\$3,139,000
Grants – Government & Private	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Fees & Charges	\$101,000	\$103,000	\$105,000	\$107,000	\$109,000
Interest Income	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Other Income	\$2,100	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$3,056,000</b>	<b>\$3,116,000</b>	<b>\$3,177,000</b>	<b>\$3,239,000</b>	<b>\$3,303,000</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Wages & Fringes	\$1,159,000	\$1,183,000	\$1,219,000	\$1,244,000	\$1,269,000
Operations & Maintenance	\$480,000	\$516,000	\$550,000	\$600,000	\$650,000
Special Grants to Locals	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Local Millage Distributions	-	\$739,500	\$754,500	\$769,000	\$785,000
Capital Outlays	\$520,000	\$500,000	\$471,000	\$440,500	\$411,500
Cost Allocation	\$125,000	\$130,000	\$135,000	\$138,000	\$140,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$2,334,000</b>	<b>\$3,118,500</b>	<b>\$3,179,500</b>	<b>\$3,241,500</b>	<b>\$3,305,500</b>
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$722,000	\$(2,500)	\$(2,500)	\$(2,500)	\$(2,500)



# RECREATION INVENTORY

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## ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION PROPERTY

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### OVERVIEW

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St. Clair County currently owns eight properties devoted to parks and recreation activities that total 1,010 acres. These are:

- Goodells County Park                    366 acres
- Columbus County Park                411 acres
- Fort Gratiot County Park              30 acres
- Woodsong County Park                33 acres
- Fort Gratiot Light Station            5 acres
- Wetlands County Park                5 acres
- Marine City Dredge Cut Access      .34 acre
- Wadhams to Avoca Trail              160 acres (12 miles long)

For the purposes of comparing the County’s Parks and Recreation property inventory with the recommended standards, it is also valuable to mention the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency’s 111-acre Pine River Nature Center, which is adjacent to Goodells County Park. By adding that acreage to the parks and trails inventory above, PARC property totals 1,121 acres.

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### GOODELLS COUNTY PARK

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On January 1, 1996, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners gave the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission responsibility for maintenance, development, and operation of the County-owned **Goodells County Park**. At that time, the property was commonly known as “the poor farm” or “the fairgrounds” because of its previous uses as a residence for indigent senior citizens as well as the ongoing site of the 4-H County Fair.

Facilities at the park include the Visitors Center, two playgrounds, river and fishing access, a seasonal ice skating rink, trails, four picnic shelters, a community center, historic buildings, a BMX track, a radio-controlled **model airplane airfield and truck track**, a **butterfly garden**, **five special events buildings**, the “**Splashpad**,” equestrian facilities, and areas for outdoor events.

The “**Splashpad**” has 11 spray features that include two water cannons, five dumping buckets, ground geysers, and a rainbow water tunnel. The “**Splashpad**” is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and

admission is free. In February 2006, the County received a Facility Design Award from the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) for the Goodells County Park Splashpad. This award recognized the Splashpad as the first water play facility in the state that uses and recycles water that is supplied by a well rather than a municipal water system.

The Historic Village at Goodells County Park contains the Lynn Township Schoolhouse (1885), and the C.C Peck and Company bank (1908). Visitors will also see the Columbus Bible Church (1860), the Murphy/Ryan farmhouse (1872) and the Mudge Log Cabin (1863). The latest addition to the Historic Village is the Columbus Bible Church. The Church was moved to the park and restored, complete with its twelve-foot tall windows and spectacular bell tower.

Goodells County Park is not just facilities and infrastructure. It is also a place where the community meets for many annual events, such as the St. Clair County 4-H Fair, dog shows, auctions, sewing bees, the Blue Water Humane Society Vaccination Clinic, regional cross country meets, Can-Am BMX bike racing, the Earth Fair, and Earthkeepers. The facilities are used throughout the year by dozens of organizations and families alike. On any given day at the park, one may see a wedding, family reunion, birthday party or day camp. The St. Clair County Farm Museum stores and demonstrates antique farm equipment at the park. The property is an essential part of the history and the future of St. Clair County.

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## COLUMBUS COUNTY PARK

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Through five separate transactions, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) owns 411 acres of property in Columbus Township. PARC used a \$65,800 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant in 2016, to secure the final 26 acres. In 2007, PARC used a \$1.4 million MNRTF grant to secure 291 acres for the park.



COLUMBUS COUNTY PARK



PARC contracted with Landscape Architect, Pamela Blough, to develop the park master plan. PARC held a public visioning session to get citizen input into the development of Columbus County Park on November 27, 2007 at the Columbus Township Hall. A second session was held in January of 2008 and in June, the Parks and Recreation Commission formally adopted the Columbus County Park Master Plan.

Phase 1 construction at Columbus County Park was completed in early 2010. Phase 1 included constructing the main entrance on Bauman Road, a park roadway, a 100-car parking lot, erosion control and drainage improvements, underground utilities, a water well and development of a lighted sledding hill.

Other facilities at the park include mountain biking trails, walking trails, horse trails, fishing access, and permit-only hunting. The Belle River runs through the park, totaling 1.6 miles of frontage. A historic gambrel roof barn is located at Columbus County Park near Bauman Road and is used for maintenance and storage. The barn was restored by Columbus Township.

Construction of an energy efficient park Lodge with modern restroom facilities, a picnic pavilion, offices and storage rooms was completed in 2012. The Lodge uses geothermal technology for heating and cooling as a **result of funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG)** program.

Activities at the park include picnics, weddings, educational programs, and meetings.

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## FORT GRATIOT COUNTY PARK

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Fort Gratiot County Park is located in the northeast part of St. Clair County, just off M-25 on Metcalf Road. This 30-acre park offers breathtaking views of Lake Huron and 852 feet of shoreline and beach. It also includes **picnic areas, restrooms, a children's playground, and paved walking trails.**

In Fall 2005, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission purchased 16 acres of property from Citizens First Bank for \$3.1 million using a \$2.2 million grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Natural Resources. PARC also purchased a beach easement from an adjacent property owner to move forward with the development of Fort Gratiot County Park.

PARC formally approved an updated Fort Gratiot County Park Master Plan that incorporated the use of the adjacent 14 acres leased from the Great Lakes Water Authority.

**Phase 1 of the park's development began in 2006 and included the installation of water and sewer lines, underground electrical lines, roads, paved trails, and parking areas.**

Fort Gratiot County Park is also home to the 1971 Tunnel Explosion Memorial which commemorates the construction accident that took the lives of 22 men working on the water intake tunnel located beneath the park. The 1971 Water Tunnel Explosion committee raised funds for the memorial which was erected in 2007. The Michigan Historic Commission dedicated a State Historical Marker at the site to mark the 40th anniversary of the tragedy.

Other improvements at the park include ADA-accessible restrooms and a playscape in 2007, as well as an overflow parking area in 2008. In early 2009, two picnic pavilions were completed and additional sections of boardwalk were installed on the beach. An information kiosk was built, as well as a vending machine shelter and a beach gateway pavilion. All park improvements and equipment were funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.

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## WOODSONG COUNTY PARK

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On December 30, 2008, St. Clair County purchased the 33-acre Camp Woodsong site from the Michigan Waterways Council of the Girl Scouts of America. The property is located off of Abbottsford Road, at the east end of Rynn Road, in Clyde Township.

St. Clair County purchased the property for \$400,000 using a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Under the grant, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund reimbursed St. Clair County for 64% of the purchase price and eligible costs. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage funds were used to fund the balance of the purchase costs.

The western half of the property features existing buildings that include a garage, pavilion, two vault toilets and group camping areas. The eastern half of the property has scenic, steep slopes that travel down to 2,800 feet of Black River shoreline. The site also has a rustic parking lot, and an ADA trail and kayak launch on the Black River is planned for the future.

The preservation and acquisition of land for outdoor recreational use is the highest priority in the County Master Recreation Plan. The purchase of Camp Woodsong allows the County to preserve it for continued outdoor recreation use, including nature study, hiking, biking, and water activities such as canoe, kayak and fishing access to the Black River.



WOODSONG COUNTY PARK



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## FORT GRATIOT LIGHT STATION

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The Fort Gratiot Light Station is the oldest lighthouse in Michigan. As the shipping needs on the Great Lakes increased in the 1820's, so did the need for a navigational aid at the mouth of the St. Clair River. In August of 1825 the first lighthouse in Michigan was built at Port Huron. The original tower was located near the base of the present day second span of the Blue Water Bridge. It was 32 feet high above ground level, 18 feet in diameter at the base, and tapered to nine feet across at the top. The original tower did not last long, as poor construction and September storms would lead to its demise when it crumbled in November of 1828.

In the 1850's, the Lighthouse Board began a series of reforms that would affect the Fort Gratiot Light Station. The first such change was the addition of a Fresnel lens. From the 1860's to the 1930's, the property expanded with the addition of the Keeper's Duplex (1874), the Fog Signal Building (1900), the Single Keeper's Dwelling (1932), the Coast Guard Station (1932) and the Equipment Building (1938).

When most of the Great Lakes lights were automated in the 1930's, the need for light keepers faded into the sunset. The Coast Guard maintained the Fort Gratiot Light Station from the 1930's until they moved next door into the new station that was built in 2004.

The property was officially transferred to St. Clair County in 2010. Restoration of the lighthouse was completed in 2013, and other property repairs and additions have been made using Michigan Coastal Zone Management Grant funding. The restoration of the tower was made possible by the "Save America's Treasures" grant program and a match from the City of Port Huron. The tower reopened for tours in the summer of 2012. The Port Huron Museum serves as a partner in leading tours of the site, programming, and private reservations. Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station raise funds for building restoration projects and provides volunteers.






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## PINE RIVER NATURE CENTER (RESA)

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The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency's Pine River Nature Center is an educational facility whose mission is to promote the awareness, understanding and stewardship of the Blue Water Area's natural and cultural heritage. The center provides programs for local schools to enhance their science and mathematics curricula with outdoor-based field studies correlated with the Michigan Curriculum Framework and offers outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities for area residents.

The Pine River Nature Center opened to the public in the May of 2003. The Nature Center sits on 111 acres of property, with over 4,800 feet of the Pine River meandering through it. Since opening, over 21,900 students from around St. Clair County have visited the center for programs. Activities and events at the center include the following:

- Opportunities to hike over two miles of trails (open daily from dawn to dark).
- Browse the indoor displays and live animals.
- Read about nature or do research in the library.
- Attend public programs, including star gazing parties and nature walks.
- Volunteer to help with special events and school programs.
- Adopt-a-Trail.
- Visit the universally-accessible (ADA) tree house.

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## GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

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Greenways are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places together. According to the EPA, greenways promote outdoor recreation, catalyze economic development, increase adjacent property values, celebrate historical and cultural assets, promote conservation and environmental education and improve quality of life.

Greenways have multiple purposes, but from a recreation perspective they have two major functions:

1. To link and facilitate hiking and biking access between residential areas and parks.
2. To provide opportunities for the linear forms of outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian riding, and walking) in which many St. Clair County residents engage today. These recreation activities require the development of trails along the greenways.

There are two primary trail systems within St. Clair County: the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail.



### ***Wadhams to Avoca Trail***

In 1999, PARC purchased the surface rights to 9.82 miles (100 acres) of right-of-way from CSX Railroad and began developing it as the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. In 2001 and 2004, PARC purchased two additional properties totaling 17.65 acres adjacent to the trail north of Imlay City Road for a trailhead and parking. In 2003, PARC purchased the surface rights to an additional two and a half miles of CSX Railroad right-of-way totaling 17.66 acres from Wadhams Road to Griswold Road. The trail is over 12.4 miles long and contains 160 acres.

To date, the 640-foot Mill Creek Trestle has been decked and railed for pedestrians and bike riders. Three acres of land southeast of the Trestle was purchased to create a horse crossing at Mill Creek.

At the south end of the trail in Kimball Township, over five miles of trail have been paved starting at McLain Road running southeast to Griswold Road. The paved section of the trail passes through a developing residential area and is heavily used by residents.

In a joint effort with the St. Clair County Road Commission, a hybrid pedestrian signal was installed in 2010 where the trail crosses Wadhams Road. It was the first time this type of signal has been used for a trail crossing in Michigan. The signal prompts flashing lights to stop traffic when a pedestrian wishes to cross the road.

Designated parking areas are located at the Wadhams Road, Imlay City Road, Lapeer Road and Avoca Road trailheads. The non-motorized trail is open to walkers, bicyclists and equestrians.

### ***Bridge to Bay Trail***

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is working in conjunction with 13 local units of government to develop a 54-mile paved trail from Lakeport State Park to New Baltimore. St. Clair County helps



BRIDGE TO BAY TRAIL IN PORT HURON

to plan and promote the trail while each local unit of government is responsible for constructing their section of the trail. Even though PARC plays an instrumental coordinating role in the development of the Bridge to Bay Trail, the property that makes up that trail is owned by various municipalities and townships. Most trail construction projects are funded by grants. PARC usually helps to fund the local match required for trail construction grants.

**The Bridge to Bay Trail extends from St. Clair County's northern border; under the Blue Water Bridge; through Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City, and Algonac; and past state and municipal parks, museums, gazebos, and lighthouses. Sometimes the trail is within reach of the water's edge and sometimes a few miles inland.** It connects communities together for walkers, joggers, strollers, and bicyclists of all ages. The trail varies from a ten-foot wide separated paved pathway in the right of way along a road, or a five-foot wide dedicated bike lane.

The trail can potentially link to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail within St. Clair County, the Discover Michigan Trail, the Macomb Orchard Trail, and the St. Clair Parkway Trail in Lambton, Ontario, Canada via ferry. As of 2016, roughly 25 miles of the 54-mile Bridge to Bay Trail is complete.

Funding for the Bridge to Bay Trail comes from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage, local government funds, and grants. Grant money for the trail has been provided by the United States government through federal transportation grants, and by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF).

### ***Blue Water River Walk and Wetlands County Park***

The Blue Water River Walk is almost one mile long and runs along the St. Clair River shoreline immediately south of the mouth of the Black River in Port Huron. It is less than a mile downriver from the Blue Water Bridge to Sarnia and the southern end of Lake Huron. Owned by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, the Blue Water River Walk is open to the public year-round. The river walk features an observation deck, a pedestrian trail, an outdoor classroom, shoreline and habitat restoration, a fishing pier and public art.

BLUE WATER RIVER WALK ALONG THE ST. CLAIR RIVER IN PORT HURON. SOURCE: MICHIGAN SEA GRANT



The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission purchased 4.85 acres of land using two MNRTF grants and received a \$1,039,500 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a 2.75-acre wetland on the very southern end of the river walk.

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## THE BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR

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One of the goals included in the 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan was to explore developing a system of water trails in St. Clair County. The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, in partnership with PARC, applied for and was granted a Michigan Coastal Zone Management Grant to create a Blueways Vision website for the shoreline of St. Clair County.

Research began in 2009 to find all the public access points along waterways in the county. Next, public input was gathered for popular paddling routes and put-ins. The website was built up with paddling routes, access pictures, information on restaurants, motels, museums and other points of interest. One will find information on the major rivers in the County, including the Black River, Belle River, Pine River, Lake Huron, St. Clair River, and the St. Clair River delta, which is the largest freshwater delta in North America.

The Blueways website lists 17 different paddling routes, totaling 151 miles, in nine unique bodies of water and lots of valuable information related to paddling and shoreline recreation. The website is very dynamic, with driving directions between favorite points, aerial imagery maps, weather report links, and a “Birds Along the Blueway” section for birding enthusiasts.

Check out St. Clair County’s Blueways website at [www.BluewaysOfStClair.org](http://www.BluewaysOfStClair.org).

### *Island Loop National Water Trail*

The 10.2-mile Island Loop National Water Trail was the first national water trail to be designated in Michigan and the 14th in the United States. The trail makes a loop from the Black River, to the Black River Canal, to Lake Huron, into the St. Clair River and back to the Black River. It also passes the oldest lighthouse in



KAYAKING ALONGSIDE FREIGHTERS ON THE ST. CLAIR RIVER NEAR MARINE CITY

Michigan, the Thomas Edison Museum, the Huron Lightship Museum, and the Acheson Maritime Center. It also navigates between the United States and Canada for 2.5 miles and meanders through Fort Gratiot Township, Port Huron Township, and the City of Port Huron.

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## RECREATION STANDARDS

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Two recreation standards are applicable to parks and recreation facilities within St. Clair County:

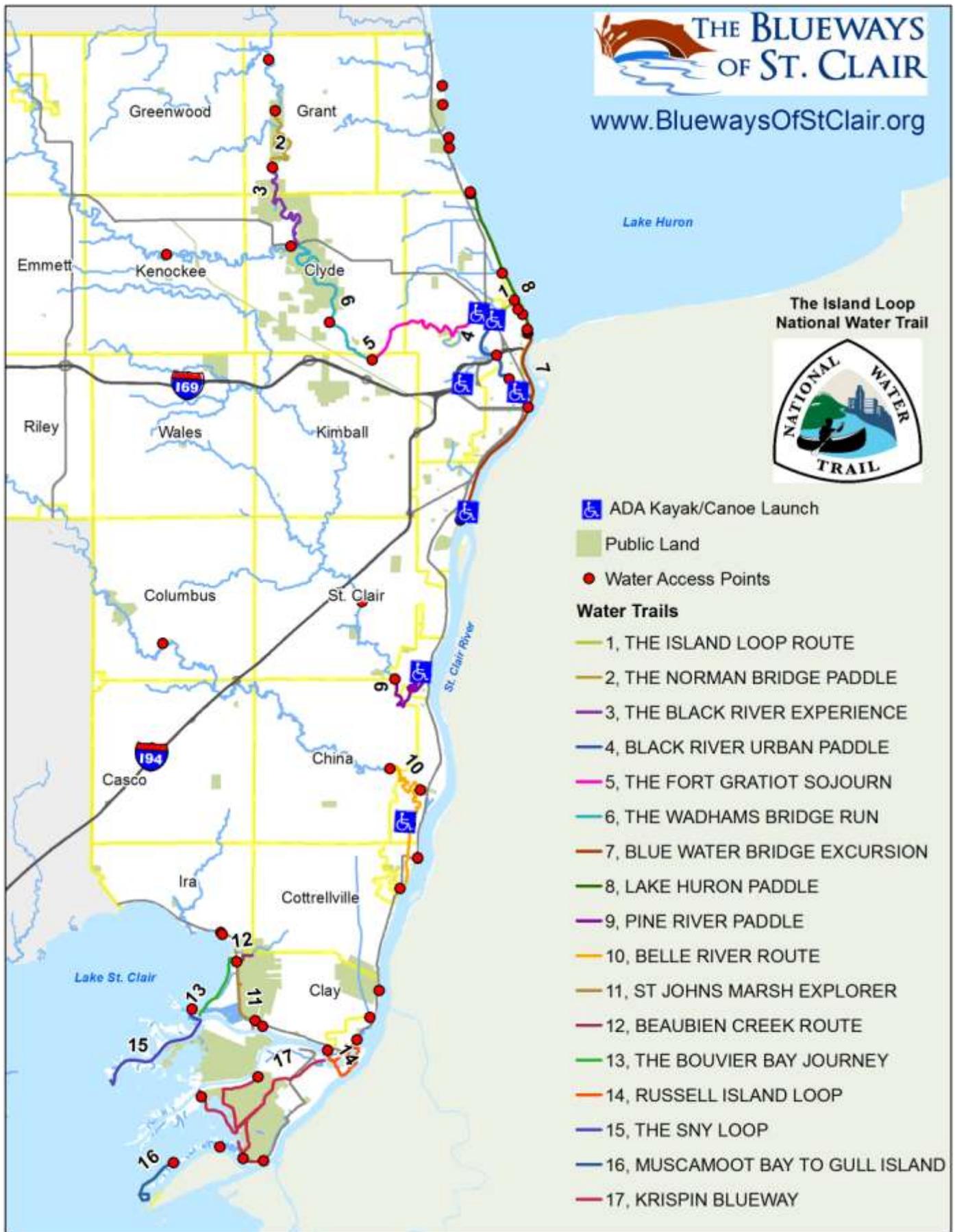
1. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), which relate to park acreage requirements.
2. Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards, developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which relate to a variety of park facilities and features as well as acreage requirements.

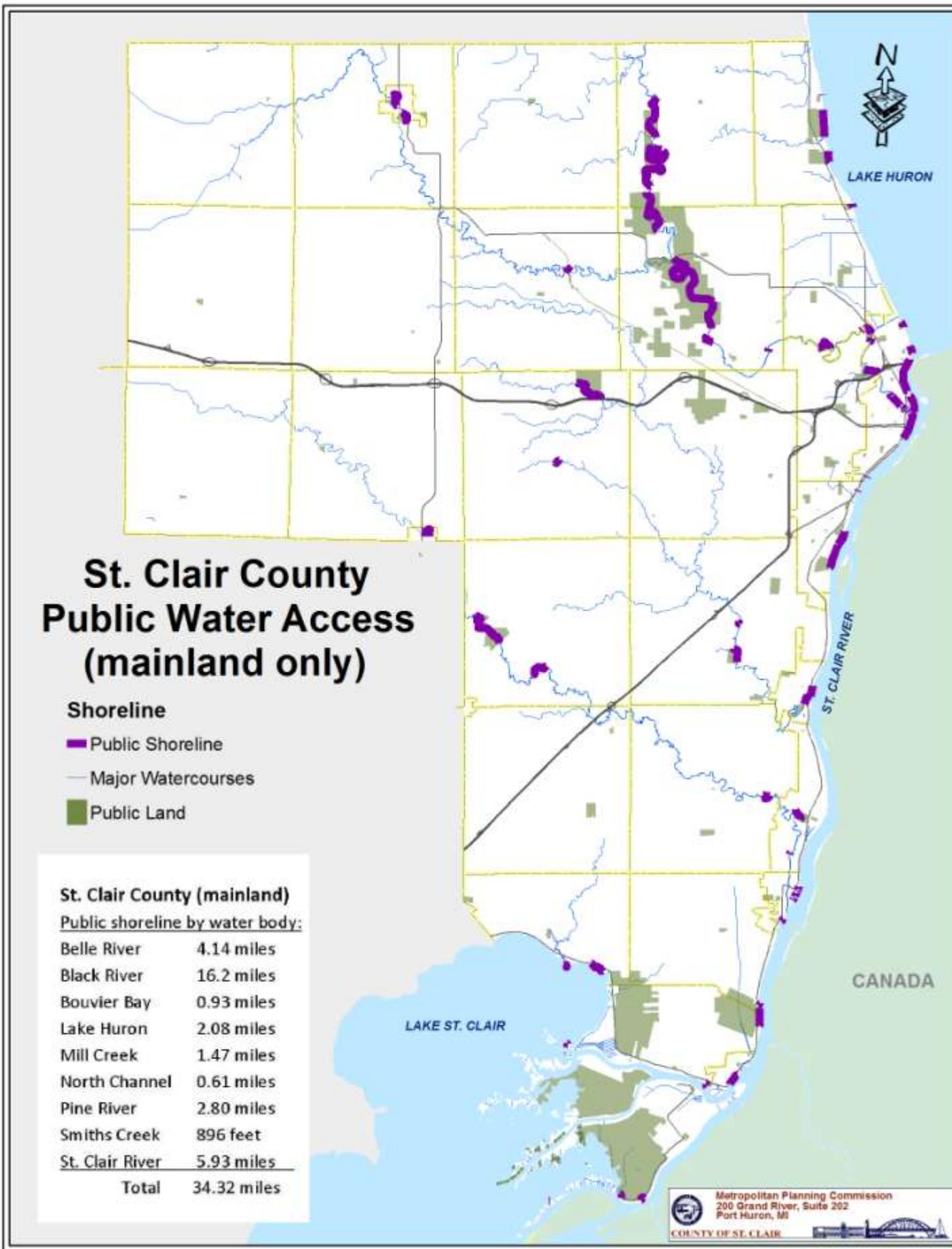
### *National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards*

National Recreation and Park Association's Open Space Guidelines and Standards, known as the NRPA Standards, are used by many state, regional, and county parks and recreation agencies throughout the United States to aid in the development of master recreation plans.

The sections of the NRPA Standards that are relevant to properly assessing the amount of parks and recreation acreage and facilities in St. Clair County are:

- Mini-Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Community Parks
- Regional Park
- Regional Park Reserves





**TABLE 3-1: ST. CLAIR COUNTY, REGIONAL PARK NEEDS - ACREAGE**

REGIONAL PARK NEEDS: CURRENT POPULATION (BASED ON 2010 CENSUS) - 163,040		
5 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
815	1,121	+306 over
10 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
1,630	1,121	-509 deficit
REGIONAL PARK NEEDS: PROJECTED POPULATION (2040 SEMCOG FORECAST) - 167,621		
5 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
838	1,121	+283 over
10 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
1,676	1,121	-555 deficit

All three of these types of parks and recreation facilities can be found within St. Clair County, and all are included in the recreation inventory on the previous pages and defined in the following text.

**Mini, Neighborhood, and Community Parks**

Mini, neighborhood, and community parks are small parks, designed to satisfy the recreational needs of a local community within a service radius of up to two miles.

These parks are under the ownership of, and considered the responsibility of, local units of government. While these properties are listed in the recreation inventory matrix on pages 53-61 and a share of the **County’s Parks and Recreation Millage is distributed to the local units of government, plans for mini, neighborhood, and community parks lie outside the realm of this countywide Master Recreation Plan.**

**Regional Parks**

Regional parks are culturally significant, ecologically significant and/or large parks (over 200 acres) that typically result from the need to protect a cultural, natural, or historical resource of regional significance, or to provide a new regional attraction. They are designed to serve several communities within a service radius of **up to one hour’s driving time.**

Regional parks within St. Clair County are the primary subject of this Master Recreation Plan.

**Regional Park Reserves**

Regional park reserves are parks of 1,000 acres or more, designed to serve several communities within a **service radius of up to one hour’s driving time.**

All regional park reserves in St. Clair County are Michigan State Parks and Michigan State Game Areas. **These are the responsibility of, and managed by, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Parks and Recreation Division and Wildlife Division.**

Though many St. Clair County residents use these state-owned facilities, the one-hour service radius of these properties also serve residents in all or part of Macomb, Oakland, Wayne, Lapeer, Genesee, Sanilac, Tuscola, and Huron counties as well as international visitors from Canada.

The Michigan State Parks within St. Clair County attract campers, bird watchers, boaters, and anglers. The vast majority of State Game Area property in the county is dedicated for wild game management and hunting purposes.

Since these regional park reserves are state-owned property and are the responsibility of state government, plans for how these properties are used and managed are not included in this Master Recreation Plan.

**St. Clair County's Regional Parks**

The purpose of the “Regional Park” category in the NRPA Standards is to help identify whether a certain geographic area or unit of government – in this case, St. Clair County – possesses sufficient park acreage to satisfy the recreational needs of its citizens.

Both the 366-acre Goodells County Park and the 411-acre Columbus County Park specifically fit the NRPA standard for a regional park.

Due to its adjacent location to Goodells County Park, the County Parks and Recreation Commission has also listed RESA’s 111-acre Pine River Nature Center as part of the County’s required total parks and recreation acreage.

Fort Gratiot County Park (30 acres), Woodsong County Park (33 acres), and the Wetlands County Park (five acres) are considered regional parks due to their significant frontage along important bodies of water. **Woodsong’s location along 2,800 feet of Black River shoreline and the existence of threatened flora are two factors that make it very valuable.** The shores of Lake Huron and the State Historical site at Fort Gratiot County Park classify it as a Regional Park. Wetlands County Park provides access to the St. Clair River.

Finally, the park at Fort Gratiot Light Station (five acres) is a regional park due to its historic significance in the Great Lakes system.

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail is technically classified as a linear park. However, since the County Parks and Recreation Commission has acquired trailhead property and intends to acquire more land for that purpose, **the total trail acreage (currently 160 acres) is included within the county’s regional parks inventory.**

The total acreage for these properties currently stands at 1,121 acres.

The acreage devoted to the Bridge to Bay Trail is not included because that land is owned by the various local units of government through which the trail passes.

**Park Acres Needed**

The recognized NRPA Standard for Regional Parks is at least five to ten acres for every 1,000 persons in the **service area. Based on St. Clair County’s current and projected population, Table 3-1** shows how much additional park acreage the County should acquire to meet current and future standards. It is the policy of the Parks and Recreation Commission to meet the higher acreage standard - ten acres of regional park space per 1,000 people.

***Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Standards***

In addition to the NRPA Standards, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has identified 30 Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards.

Like the NRPA Standards, these MDNR standards identify acres required for parks and recreation purposes. They also identify the number of units, such as boat launch sites or feet of fishing access, needed to serve the population within a defined area.

The MDNR Standards also recognize that no one agency, such as a county parks and recreation commission or department, is responsible for meeting all of the recreational standards in a given region. Therefore, the MDNR suggests that facilities managed by state and county governments, as well as those owned and managed by cities, townships, and villages, be included in a comprehensive inventory and be measured against the numerical standard.

**Of the 30 standards identified by the NRPA and MDNR, 16 are considered to be “resource-based” facilities as opposed to “activity-based” facilities.** Resource-based facilities are more likely to be used by all citizens throughout a county or region. Swimming beaches and nature trails are examples of resource-based facilities. Tennis courts and ball diamonds are examples of activity-based facilities; these are more likely to be used by residents within a community, neighborhood, or locale.

### Subjective Interpretation of Standards

Recreation standards are often used to test the validity of information gained from surveys and through direct citizen input. Therefore, city and county planners in Michigan have historically used numerical standards as a means of determining the number of park acres and/or facilities needed to serve a given population. These standards were originally expressed only in terms of open space, but later were expanded to include a list of basic park amenities.

The strength of the standards approach to planning has been that these formulas are officially accepted by most state and federal plan review agencies.

However, even though recreation planning standards are generally constructive, they must also be used intelligently in concert with other information because they tend to either understate or overstate actual citizen needs due to regional interests, demographics, citizen mobility, unique natural areas, and the impact of tourism.

Recognizing the value of public opinion, standards, and intelligent analysis, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission has relied on both quantitative data as well as public comments, citizen surveys, input from numerous government officials and on subjective and objective interpretation of all data sources.

This balance of subjective and objective interpretation is the basis for all St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission decisions and actions.

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## BARRIER-FREE ENDEAVORS

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The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that over 53 million Americans – one out of every five adults – are disabled. While these numbers are broad estimates, it is clear that the number of people nationwide who have disabilities is large and is growing significantly as the American population continues to age. The incidence of disability rises sharply as individuals reach their sixth and seventh decade of life. In St. Clair County, the disabled population is roughly 24,580 persons - nearly 16% of the total population (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009-2013).

PARC is dedicated to providing positive recreational opportunities for all citizens. With that dedication comes recognition of the importance of providing for the special needs of disabled members of the community.

To that end, PARC has removed barriers from existing facilities.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), PARC is working to ensure that all future parks and recreation projects adhere to specifications for access, inclusion, emotional well-being, and physical fitness that provide increased independence and improved quality of life for disabled individuals.

Each PARC facility was compared to the *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design* and given a ranking from 1-5, where:

- 1=none of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 2=some site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 3=most site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 4=all site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, and
- 5=the facility meets the Principals of Universal Design

### Goodells County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 4

**Access issues have been addressed for each activity area. Both the Community Center and the Visitor's Center** have paved sidewalks and pathways for easy entrance and egress as well as convenient parking areas with a more-than-adequate number of handicapped-accessible parking spaces. These buildings also have electrically-operated handicapped-accessible doors, proper signage for direction and location, and completely accessible bathroom and shower facilities.



Paved pathways connect these buildings to other park areas, including the children’s playground, the historic village, exhibit barns, Farm Museum, and picnic pavilions. PARC has also provided handicapped and wheelchair access to the Special Events Arena. All historic buildings are barrier free with earth ramps to create "at-grade" entrances.

There are paved handicapped parking spaces in the north gravel parking lot, as well as the east gravel lot. The Splashpad is also barrier-free, so that all residents and visitors can enjoy it during the summertime. Additionally, the main play structures at Goodells County Park are handicapped-accessible.

**Columbus County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 3**

Currently, there are handicapped-accessible parking spaces. The park Lodge includes an ADA-accessible family restroom and an elevator shaft, in the event that the basement will include a public use in the future. PARC is also in the process of developing a new playground at Columbus County Park that, when completed, will feature a fully handicapped-accessible play structure.

**Fort Gratiot County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 4**

Accessible parking has been addressed by dedicating handicapped parking spaces by the beach area and near both pavilions. The main picnic shelter is equipped with an ADA-accessible family restroom. Clear signage has been put in place to assist with wayfinding.

**A boardwalk leading to the beach provides access to the water. A transfer bench is located near the water’s edge, and a beach wheelchair is available for use for free. PARC’s accessible beach wheelchair is equipped with large, wide wheels which can roll across the sand without sinking.**

**Woodson County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 1**

At this time there are no developed facilities in this park. Future plans call for an ADA-accessible walkway down to the Black River and an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch.

**Fort Gratiot Light Station | Accessibility Ranking: 4**

The Fort Gratiot Light Station includes handicapped parking spaces. PARC also used Michigan Coastal Zone Management Grant funds in 2012 to build interpretive signage and accessible walkways near the Light Station. Barrier-free restrooms have been constructed in the Fog Signal building and the equipment building.

**Trails | Accessibility Ranking: 3**

Barrier-free access is an important component of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission trails projects as well.

For both the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, PARC has specified and is working toward:

- Adequate accessible parking spots and restrooms at trailheads.
- Adequate, legible signage for ease of understanding by people with visual or cognitive impairments .
- Proper substrate and finished trail surface for ease of wheelchair and ambulatory mobility.

Currently, there are handicapped parking spaces at every trailhead parking lot along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Accessible vault toilets are located at the Avoca, Imlay City and Lapeer Road trailheads.

Trails are built to the dimensions specified by the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow trail access for wheelchairs, while preventing passage by motorized vehicles. All bollards at road crossings are placed according to the standard.

People with disabilities encountering barriers to their enjoyment of any St. Clair County park are encouraged to contact PARC regarding the issue and are invited to make suggestions to reduce or eliminate the barrier.



*ADA-ACCESSIBLE KAYAK LAUNCHES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY, FUNDED BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION*



**ADA access in St. Clair County:**

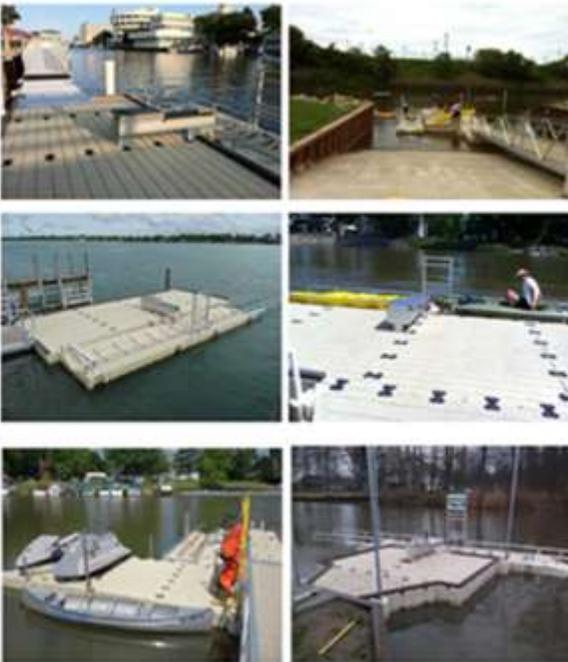
- Seven ADA Launches thanks to St. Clair County PARC.

**Along the National Water Trail:**

- 7<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge – City of Port Huron
- Bakers Field- Port Huron Twp.
- North River Road Park- Ft. Gratiot

**Existing south of Port Huron:**

- Chrysler Beach – Marysville
- St. Clair Boat Harbor – St. Clair
- Springborn/Belle River Road- East China Township
- 40<sup>th</sup> Street Pond, Port Huron Twp.





## PARKS AND RECREATION PROPERTY HELD BY MUNICIPALITIES, TOWNSHIPS, STATE AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

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### OVERVIEW

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The maps and matrix that appears on the following pages show an inventory of municipal and township recreational facilities within St. Clair County. The Metropolitan Planning Commission conducted this inventory to determine the number of parks and recreation facilities and their acreage and features. The inventory was developed through the examination of community recreation plans and through discussion with local government officials.

MPC staff examined information about playgrounds, ball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, access to ponds, rivers and lakes, marinas, boat ramps, fishing access (other than by boat), ice skating, camping, trails, golf courses, picnic shelters or pavilions, community centers, hunting access, and any other special facilities.

In addition to these items, several communities indicated the existence and availability of tennis courts, volleyball courts, boardwalks, park benches, viewing vistas, landscaped areas, concession stands, track and football fields, indoor tracks, golf ranges, and golf domes. Some facilities are lighted for use at night.

The inventory also shows that several communities own vacant park land that is planned for recreational development at some point in the future. Some of this vacant land is wetland and is, therefore, not intended for development of any kind.

School facilities are not included even though all or most of those have playgrounds that are open to the public.

**CITY OF ALGONAC**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Smith Field	2.0	Skate park
Riverfront Park	5.0	River access, boat launch, fishing access, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching
Water Tower Park	1.0	Playground
Scout & Columbia St. Park	0.25	Playground
Lions Field	10.0	Playground, soccer fields, basketball/volleyball courts, swimming pool, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, community center, restrooms

**VILLAGE OF CAPAC**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Capac Lions Park	6.0	Playground, ballfields, picnic areas, restrooms

**MARINE CITY**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Marine City Beach	1.2	Bathing beach, river access, playground, fishing access, restrooms, pavilion, freighter watching
Broadway Park	0.75	River access, fishing access, battleship gun deck display, freighter watching
Lighthouse Park	1.0	Volleyball courts, river access, fishing access, Peche Island Lighthouse, freighter watching
Civic Women's Club River Park	0.5	River access, fishing access, picnic area, freighter watching
Drake Memorial Park	0.75	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Nautical Mile Park	1.2	River access, fishing access, picnic areas, freighter watching
Tot Lot	0.5	Playground
King Road Park	14.0	Playground, ballfields, picnic areas, restrooms, basketball/volleyball courts, ice skating, sledding hill, drinking fountain
Ward Cottrell Park	5.5	Ballfields, tennis courts, playground, running track
St. Clair Park	0.5	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Water Works Park	1.63	Playground, river access, fishing access, picnic areas, freighter watching

**VILLAGE OF EMMETT**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Emmett Village Park	10	Playground, ballfields, picnic areas, restrooms

<b>CITY OF MARYSVILLE</b>		
<b>Park</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Amenities</b>
Marysville City Park	58.0	Playgrounds, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms, amphitheater, picnic shelters, ball diamonds, sledding hill, freighter watching
Marysville Boardwalk	1.4 miles	River access, boat ramp, bathing beach, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Morton Park	10.0	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating, inline skating, picnic areas, restrooms, picnic shelters, skate park
Mermaid Park	0.7	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
4th Street Park	35	Trails
Chrysler Beach	2.0	Playground, bathing beach, river access, fish cleaning station, concessions, restrooms, charging stations, fishing pier, gazebo, trail, picnic areas, ADA-accessible kayak launch, boat launch
Ravenswood Road Park	39.0	Ice skating, trails
Washington Road Park	5.4	Native trees
Huron Road Park	1.4	Ice skating
New Hampshire/6thStreet Park	1.0	Ice skating
Delaware Road Park	0.3	Ice skating
Connecticut Road Park	0.3	Ice skating
Municipal Golf Course	152.7	Golf course, freighter watching

<b>CITY OF MEMPHIS</b>		
<b>Park</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Amenities</b>
Musial Road Park	5.0	Playground, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, water fountain

<b>CITY OF ST. CLAIR</b>		
<b>Park</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Amenities</b>
Greig Park	29.5	Playground, basketball/volleyball courts, ice skating, trails, tennis court, skate-bike park, Fix-It station, pavilion
Klecha Park	4.9	Playground, ballfields, trails, concessions, restrooms
Palmer Park	5.9	River access, fishing access, boardwalk, freighter watching
Patrick Sinclair Park	0.6	River access, marina, fishing access
Harbor Walk	0.52	River access, fishing access, boardwalk, boat slips, freighter watching
Diamond Pointe Park	0.7	Benches (mini-park), freighter watching
Community Center	-	Community center
Outdoor Community Pool	0.7	Outdoor swimming pool
Pine Shores Golf Course	51.0	Golf course
St. Clair Harbor	6.2	Marina, boat ramps, camping, restrooms, ADA-accessible kayak launch, pavilions
St. Clair Little League	52	Ballfields, pond access, fishing access

CITY OF PORT HURON		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Lakeside Park	17.7	Playgrounds, volleyball courts, lake access, concessions, bathing beach, restrooms, splash pad, freighter watching
Lighthouse Park	7.9	Playgrounds, lake access, bathing beach, restrooms, freighter watching
Blue Water Bridge Park	3.7	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Thomas Edison Park	9.0	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Pine Grove Park	13.7	Playground, ballfields, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, concessions, pavilion, freighter watching
Lincoln Avenue Turnout	0.5	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Kiefer Park	0.9	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Municipal Office Grounds	1.8	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Wastewater Treatment Plant	1.1	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Lincoln Park Turnout	0.6	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Fort Street Dock	0.8	River access, marina, fishing access, trail, restrooms
Quay Street Dock	1.0	River access, marina, fishing access, ADA-accessible kayak launch, restrooms
Southside Dock & Park	1.25	River access, fishing access
River Street Dock	9.1	River access, marina, fishing access, restrooms
12th Street Dock	1.8	River access, boat ramps, fishing access, restrooms
Riverside Boat Ramp	5.7	River access, boat ramps, fishing access, restrooms
Sanborn Park	41.7	Playground, ballfield, basketball court, swimming pool, trails, tennis courts, restrooms
Palmer Park	7.8	Playground, ice skating, trails, community center, restrooms
Gratiot Park	1.8	Playground, basketball courts
Mansfield Park	0.8	Playground
Optimist Park	3.2	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating, picnic areas
White Park	3.4	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating
20th & Court Street Park	2.5	Swimming pool, restrooms
11th & Division Tot Park	1.0	Playground
19th & Division Tot Park	0.5	Playground
Knox Field	6.5	Ballfields, basketball courts, restrooms
Lincoln Park	9.8	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating, picnic areas, freighter watching
16th & Dove Park	14.5	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, restrooms
Haynes Park	1.17	Playground, ice skating

**CITY OF PORT HURON (CONTINUED)**

Park	Acres	Amenities
12th & Jenks Tot Park	0.44	Playground
Heritage Park on the Quay	0.21	River access, marina, fishing access
Flag Plaza Park	1.20	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
McMorran Place		Special events, performances, concessions, restrooms
Renaissance Tot Park	0.47	Playground

**CITY OF YALE**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Yale City Park	16	Playground, ballfields, river access, fishing access, picnic areas, special facilities, restrooms

**BERLIN TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Berlin Township Memorial Park	11.0	Playground, soccer fields, basketball courts, ice skating, trails, picnic areas, community center, special facilities

**BROCKWAY TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Brockway Township Park	38.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, skate park, restrooms

**BURTCHVILLE TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Burtchville Township Park	18.0	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, lake access, bathing beach, fishing access, skate park, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching

**CASCO TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Casco Township Park	97.0	Undeveloped

**CLAY TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Pearl Beach Pier	0.5	River access, fishing access, fishing pier
Clay Township Hall Park	6.6	Playground, basketball courts, ice skating/inline skating, trails, picnic areas, volleyball court, splash pad, pavilion, concessions, horseshoe pits, 'Little Libraries,' restrooms

<b>CHINA TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Indian Trail Road Site	62.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, restrooms
Neiman Park	3.5	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, picnic areas, community center, horseshoe pits, restrooms
King Road/Belle River Site	14.0	Playground, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, fire pit, restrooms
Recor Road Site	5.3	Undeveloped

<b>CLYDE TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Bill Bearss Park	20.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, basketball court, concessions, restrooms
Firefighters Park	1.0	Playground, basketball court, picnic facilities, ice skating
Clyde Township Hall Park	1.0	Playground, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, restrooms
Jake Simpson Wilderness Park	17.0	Basketball courts, inline skating, playground, pickle ball court
Riverfront park	1.8	Undeveloped

<b>COLUMBUS TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Belle River Roadside Park	23.0	River access, fishing access, picnic areas

<b>COTTRELLVILLE TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Cottrellville Township Park	17	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball/volleyball courts, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching
Riverside Park	2.8	River access, fishing access

<b>EAST CHINA TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
East China Park	81.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, ice skating/inline skating, trails, tennis courts, pickle ball courts, picnic areas, dog park, restrooms, pavilions, freighter watching
River Park	0.20	Playground, river access, fishing access, picnic areas
Manor Park	1.6	Playground
Springborn Park	0.2	River access, fishing access, picnic tables, ADA-accessible kayak launch
Township Hall Site	13.0	

<b>EMMETT TOWNSHIP</b>		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Emmett Township Park	3.0	Playground, basketball courts

**FORT GRATIOT TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
North River Road Park	7.0	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, tennis courts, picnic areas, ADA-accessible kayak launch, restrooms
Robert E. Crawford Ball Fields	18.0	Playground, ballfields, restrooms
McIntyre Park, Fort Gratiot Canine Commons	9.0	River access, fishing access, trails, dog park
Keewahdin Road Beach	0.25	Lake access, fishing access, freighter watching
Fort Gratiot Pond	40.0	Playground, pond access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, covered fishing deck
Kettlewell Pond		Pond access, fishing access, paved trails, large observation dock

**GRANT TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park	10.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, shuffleboard court, pavilion, restrooms

**GREENWOOD TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Greenwood Township Park	24.8	Playground, ball fields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, special facilities, restrooms

**IRA TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Ira Township Municipal Pak	33.0	Playground, basketball courts, lake access, fishing access, ice skating/ inline skating, trails, picnic areas, disc golf, gaga ball pits, restrooms
Water Works Park	2.5	Lake access, fishing access, trails

**KENOCKEE TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Hall Park	16.4	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas, sledding hill

**KIMBALL TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park #1 - Sutherland	46.0	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, pond access, fishing access, bathing beach, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park # 2 - Smiths Creek Park	3.0	Playground, basketball courts, ice skating, trails, picnic areas

**LYNN TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Ohmer Township Park	4.0	Playground, picnic shelter area

**MUSSEY TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Capac Schools Property	12	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, trails, pavilion, restrooms

**PORT HURON TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park #1 - Lions Club	10.0	Playground, river access, boat ramps, fishing access, picnic areas, sledding hill, restrooms
Township Park #2 - Port Huron Township RV Campground	18.4	Playground, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, ice skating/inline skating, camping, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #3 - Memorial Park	58.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, camping, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #4 - 40th Street Pond	65.0	Playground, pond access, ADA-accessible fishing piers, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, ADA-accessible kayak launch, boat launch
Township Park #5	56.0	Undeveloped
Township Park # 6 - Hoover School	1.5	Playground, basketball courts, picnic areas, restrooms
<b>Baker's Field Park</b>	61.5	River access, boat ramps, fishing pier access, trails, pavilion, restrooms, ADA-accessible kayak launch
Michigan Road Little League Park	10.6	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, river access, restrooms, concessions
Water Street Property	32.6	Undeveloped

**RILEY TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Riley Township Park	19.0	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas
Egling Road Pond	20.0	Pond access, fishing access, trails

**ST. CLAIR TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Fred Meiselbach Township Park	5.0	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, picnic areas, pavilion, restrooms

**WALES TOWNSHIP**

Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park	26.7	Playground, picnic shelter area, restrooms, water pump

## OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY

**STATE OF MICHIGAN PROPERTY: 22,178 ACRES OF RESOURCE-BASED FACILITIES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY.**

Facility	Acres	Location
Algonac State Park	1,450 Acres	Cottrellville & Clay Townships
Lakeport State Park	1,215 Acres	Burtchville Township
Port Huron State Game Area	6,627 Acres	Grant, Clyde, & Kimball Townships
St. Clair Flats State Wildlife Area	10,300 Acres	Clay Township
St. Johns Marsh Recreation Area	2,477 Acres	Clay & Ira Townships
Mini Game Area	109 Acres	St. Clair Township

**GOLF COURSES: ST. CLAIR COUNTY CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING GOLF COURSES**

Golf Course	Holes	Public/ Private	Location
Belle River Golf Course	18	Public	Riley Township
Black River Country Club	18	Public	Port Huron Township
Deer View Golf Club	9	Public	Lynn Township
Elks Club Golf Course	18	Private	Port Huron Township
Fair Haven Golf Course	9	Public	Ira Township
Golden Hawk Golf Course	18	Public	Casco Township
Holly Meadows Golf Course	18	Public	Mussey Township
Leaning Tree Golf Course	18	Public	Wales Township
Marysville Municipal Golf Course	18	Public	Marysville
Michigan Meadows Golf Course	18	Public	Casco Township
Middle Channel Golf & Country Club	18	Public	Clay Township
Pine Shores Golf Course	9	Public	City of St. Clair
Port Huron Golf Club	18	Private	Fort Gratiot Township
Rattle Run Golf Course	18	Public	China Township
Solitude Links Golf Course	18	Public	Kimball Township
St. Clair Golf Club	18	Private	St. Clair Township
White Oaks Golf Course	9	Public	Wales Township
Willow Ridge Golf Club	9	Public	Fort Gratiot Township

<i>PRIVATE RECREATION FACILITIES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY</i>	
Facility	Location
Four Square Conservation Club	Grant Township
<b>Blue Water Sportsman's Association</b>	Kimball Township
Perch Point Conservation Club	Casco Township
Friendship Rod and Gun Club	Wales Township
Fort Trodd Campground	Clyde Township
KOA Campground	Port Huron and Emmett Township
Thousand Trails	St. Clair Township
Camp Otsikita	Columbus Township
Cross Fire Creek Paintball Course	St. Clair Township
Pine River Riding Stables	St. Clair Township
Clover Driving Range	Wales Township
Golf Country	Kimball Township
Krafft Road Driving Range	Clyde Township
Full Quiver & More (archery)	Wales Township
Silver Trails Boy Scout Camp	Grant Township
Pine River Nature Center	Wales Township
Glacier Pointe Ice Complex	Port Huron Township
YMCA Blue Water Area	Port Huron

## ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION GRANT HISTORY

**TABLE 3-2: ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARC, MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND GRANTS SINCE 1976**

Grant Number	Grant Project	Year	Amount	Type
TF96-195	Wadhams to Avoca Rail Trail	1996	\$161,000	Acquisition
TF03-129	Lake Huron Shoreline Acquisition	2003	\$2,312,000	Acquisition
TF06-099	Belle River Property Acquisition	2006	\$1,408,000	Acquisition
TF07-171	Camp Woodsong Fee Simple Acquisition	2007	\$291,800	Acquisition
TF11-116	Blue Water River Walk Expansion	2011	\$150,000	Acquisition
TF15-0063	Pine River Property Acquisition	2015	\$97,500	Acquisition
TF15-0064	Belle River Property Acquisition	2015	\$65,800	Acquisition



# PUBLIC INPUT & PLANNING PROCESS

# 4



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## THE PLANNING PROCESS

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The success of any planning process is reliant upon stakeholder involvement. St. Clair County has committed itself to pursue a proactive public outreach effort throughout the development of this plan. Efforts focused on soliciting community involvement to maximize awareness of the recreation planning process.

### 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan Development

The process that led to the development of this 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan included:

- A decision by the Parks and Recreation Commission to update the Master Recreation Plan in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines.
- Contracting the services of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission to manage the project and complete the update.
- A review of the existing Master Recreation Plan by the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- Discussion among all PARC committees regarding 2017-2021 goals and objectives.
- A leadership survey distributed to members of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Commission, PARC Committees, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- An online, countywide survey, allowing residents to provide input from June through November in 2016. The survey was completed by 258 respondents.
- A public visioning workshop held on August 24, 2016 at Goodells County Park.
- A public visioning workshop held on September 29, 2016 at the Algonac Banquet Center.
- A joint Board of Commissioners/Parks and Recreation Commission workshop held on November 3, 2016 to present an overview of public input and discuss future goals and objectives.
- Drafting of the Master Recreation Plan document.
- Review of the Master Recreation Plan document by the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners.
- A 30-day public review and comment period that began on January 4, 2017 and ended on February 2, 2017.
- A public hearing held on February 8, 2017 to receive additional citizen comments.
- A presentation of the Master Recreation Plan to all members of PARC, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- Adoption of the Master Recreation Plan by PARC.
- An update on the Master Recreation Plan to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, Environment and Public Works Committee on February 2, 2017.
- Adoption of the Master Recreation Plan by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners at its February 16, 2017 meeting.
- Transmission of the Master Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).
- Transmission of the Master Recreation Plan to SEMCOG.

## OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC INPUT

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### LOCAL LEADERSHIP SURVEY

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At the start of this planning process, members of the Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Commission, Metropolitan Planning Commission, and PARC committees were given a survey to establish a framework on key planning issues related to parks and recreation in St. Clair County. A summary of the leadership survey can be found on the following pages.

## Leadership Survey Highlights

- 100% think parks are critical for quality of life.
- 93% think that PARC should assist local communities in developing additional non-motorized trails.
- 93% feel that PARC should assist local communities in developing additional kayak/canoe launches.
- 91% feel that St. Clair County parks are in good condition and are well-maintained.
- 88% feel that parks are important for economic development.
- 79% think that PARC should explore new opportunities to collaborate on community and/or waterfront revitalization initiatives.
- 77% are satisfied with recreation opportunities available to residents.
- 72% feel that PARC should develop additional parks in appropriate locations.
- 35% agree that PARC should assist local communities in developing additional skate parks. Another 35% are unsure.
- 23% feel that PARC should assist local communities in developing additional dog parks, while 47% are unsure.

### *What Improvements or other Amenities are Needed?*

- Install Internet/Wi-Fi access at St. Clair County parks.
- Invest in and improve existing parks.
- St. Clair County needs a park with access to the St. Clair River.
- A waterfront park is needed in southern St. Clair County.
- A new County park in the western part of St. Clair County.
- Link the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to the Bridge to Bay Trail.
- County needs additional hike/bike trails along rivers and streams.
- Explore the feasibility of indoor recreational facilities.

### *Issues to Address in the Master Recreation Plan Update:*

- Development of a five-year vision.
- Improved technology to communicate with residents.
- Long-term maintenance plan and budget projections.
- Age-appropriate facilities for seniors and children.
- More collaboration with local parks and recreation departments.
- More indoor activities and winter activities.
- Look for acquisition opportunities in the southern and western parts of St. Clair County.

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## COUNTYWIDE ONLINE SURVEY

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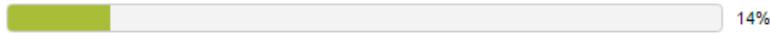
From June through December 2016, an online survey was available to any resident to provide input on parks and recreation in St. Clair County and the update of the Master Recreation Plan. Respondents were presented with 17 questions on the survey, covering such topics as park visitation habits, preferred method of receiving information, recreation preferences, and open ended questions that allowed for written answers and open idea submittals. In total, there were 258 respondents to the online survey. While the responses came from all parts of the county, the largest percentage (47.6%) of respondents lived in Port Huron and its surrounding communities - Port Huron Township, Fort Gratiot Township, Kimball Township and the City of Marysville. Just over 43% of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 49. Another 35% were between ages 50 and 65. Roughly 13.5% of respondents were age 29 or younger.

## Online Public Survey Highlights...



### St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission Master Plan Survey

#### We Want to Hear From You...



The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is updating its 5-year Master Recreation Plan. An important part of the planning process is getting community input on what facilities and services the residents would like the County to provide. Residents can give their input by completing this brief online survey.

Additionally, residents will have the opportunity to attend two public input sessions. The first session will be held on **Wednesday, August 24, at 6:00 pm at the Goodells County Park Community Center** at 8345 County Park Drive. The second session will be held on **Thursday, September 29, at 6:00 pm at the Algonac Banquet Center** at 1905 Mill Street.

The 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan will be used to guide the ongoing development and operation of the St. Clair County parks and non-motorized trails.

Click the "NEXT" button to begin the survey.

Next

There were 254 responses to the question, "Have you visited any of the following St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) parks and/or recreation facilities?"

- **78.0%** visited Goodells County Park
- **63.8%** visited Fort Gratiot County Park
- **61.0%** used the Wadhams to Avoca Trail
- **55.5%** visited the Fort Gratiot Light Station
- **39.8%** used the Bridge to Bay Trail
- **30.3%** visited Columbus County Park
- **16.9%** visited Woodsong County Park
- **7.9%** have never visited a county park

Another **33.9%** indicated that they had visited or paddled one of the 16 Blueways of St. Clair water trails.

When asked about visitation frequency over the past 12 months:

- **31.1%** said they had visited a St. Clair County park more than 10 times
- **26.8%** said they had visited a St. Clair County park between 3-6 times
- **15.0%** said they had visited a St. Clair County park between 7-10 times
- **17.3%** said they had visited a St. Clair County park once or twice

When asked how often they used a St. Clair County non-motorized trail over the past 12 months:

- **22.1%** said they had used a trail more than 10 times
- **19.0%** said they had used a trail once or twice
- **18.6%** said they had used a trail between 3-6 times

In terms of the furthest distance people would travel to a park:

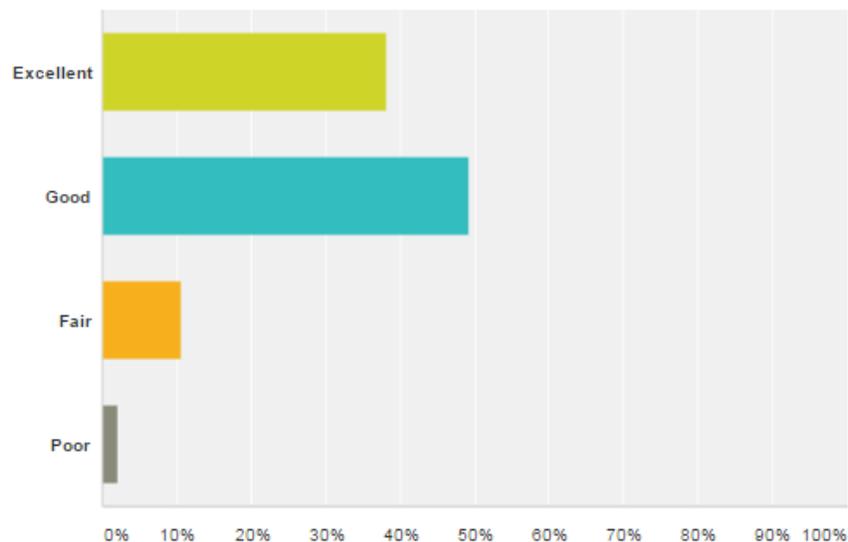
- 43.3% said they would travel 30 or more minutes
- 24.0% said they would travel between 20-30 minutes
- 20.1% said they would travel between 10-20 minutes

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of operation and maintenance of St. Clair County parks. Here is how they rated various aspects of county park facilities:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown/Not Applicable	Total
Condition of Buildings	32.24% 79	46.94% 115	9.80% 24	1.63% 4	9.39% 23	245
Natural Areas Stewardship	28.75% 69	45.00% 108	7.92% 19	1.67% 4	16.67% 40	240
Mowing/Tree Trimming	28.69% 70	51.23% 125	6.15% 15	2.05% 5	11.89% 29	244
Parking	29.10% 71	47.13% 115	12.30% 30	2.46% 6	9.02% 22	244
Restroom Cleanliness	22.13% 54	42.62% 104	11.89% 29	5.74% 14	17.62% 43	244
Signage and Information	24.08% 59	46.53% 114	14.69% 36	3.27% 8	11.43% 28	245
Nature Trails	30.33% 74	40.16% 98	9.02% 22	1.64% 4	18.85% 46	244
Trash Removal	26.75% 65	44.44% 108	10.70% 26	2.88% 7	15.23% 37	243
Security	13.58% 33	32.10% 78	19.34% 47	6.17% 15	28.81% 70	243

**Rate the OVERALL QUALITY of recreational opportunities made available to St. Clair County residents.**

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



Respondents were then asked what initiatives should be a high priority for PARC:

Answer Choices	Responses
Acquiring land for future development	31.09% 74
Acquiring waterfront land for water-based recreation	47.90% 114
Developing and improving existing facilities	50.42% 120
Developing more active recreation (canoeing, fishing, etc) opportunities	51.26% 122
Developing more passive recreation (hiking, picnicking, etc) opportunities	46.64% 111
Developing more indoor recreation (recreation center, active field complex, etc) opportunities	34.87% 83
Preserving natural areas	47.90% 114
Developing nature and historical programming	37.82% 90
Working with local communities to expand and connect non-motorized trails	52.94% 126
Total Respondents: 238	

Respondents were also asked about what trail initiatives the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission should be investing in as a priority:

Answer Choices	Responses
Paved trails within our parks	43.81% 99
Nature trails	62.39% 141
Water trails	42.48% 96
Bridge to Bay Trail network	37.17% 84
Extending the Wadhams to Avoca Trail north to Yale	42.04% 95
Funding local trail projects	39.82% 90
Equestrian trails	16.37% 37
Mountain bike trails	23.45% 53
Total Respondents: 226	

When asked how they would like to receive information about PARC activities and events, the response was:

Answer Choices	Responses
Brochures	40.69% 94
Social Media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)	64.50% 149
St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission Newsletter	60.17% 139
Print Media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, etc)	22.94% 53
Website ( <a href="http://www.stclaircounty.org/offices/parks/">http://www.stclaircounty.org/offices/parks/</a> )	58.44% 135
Other (please specify) <span style="float: right;">Responses</span>	9.52% 22
Total Respondents: 231	

Respondents were then asked the open question, “What other suggestions/comments do you have relative to the future of parks and recreation opportunities in St. Clair County? Following is a summary of input received:

- Trail connections (parks, new trails to existing trails)
- Natural hiking trails/mountain biking trails
- Updating and maintaining existing amenities is a must
- More marketing/increased messaging for people to get outside
- More water parks/beaches and increased waterfront access
- Improve beach at Fort Gratiot County Park
- Increase accessibility (special needs, seniors, etc)
- More camping space/rustic camping
- Expansion of equestrian trails
- Need more to appeal to kids and young adults
- Need indoor facilities
- More dog parks
- Disc golf is a growing sport in St. Clair County and there is a need for more courses
- More educational opportunities
- Greater security presence

Word Cloud Summarizing Frequent Topics from the Online Survey Comments and Suggestions:

Kayak Launch Growing Riding Points Communities  
 House Beach Adults Love Continue Water  
 Doing a Great Job Trail Encourage County  
 Waterfront Disc Golf Courses PH Twp  
 Facilities Easier Place Newsletter Think Far  
 Opportunities Sport Good Work

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## PUBLIC VISIONING MEETINGS

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The Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission held two public visioning meetings - one on August 24, 2016 at Goodells County Park and another on September 28, 2016 at the Algonac Banquet Center. At each meeting, county planners gave a background presentation highlighting county growth trends, demographic and economic information, and recreation trends. Attendees were then broken into small groups and asked to brainstorm together in a series of visioning exercises using three basic questions. Following is a summary of the input received during the two public visioning meetings.

## ***Visioning Meetings: What's Great at St. Clair County Parks?***



- No fees
- Open land
- Variety of recreation
- Splashpad
- Hiking paths/trails
- Well-maintained
- Pace and progression
- In tune with current trends
- Something for everyone
- Significant acquisitions
- Fort Gratiot Light Station (tourists)
- Leadership
- Wetlands park
- Water trails

## ***Visioning Meetings: Room for Improvement?***



- Freshen older buildings
- No Wi-Fi/Charging Stations
- More ADA parking
- Parks in western and southern St. Clair County
- Need fitness stations
- Invasive species control
- Need recreation programs
- Need more rustic benches
- Perception of millage inequity
- Need to diversify our income
- Lack of public involvement

## *Visioning Meetings:*

### *What Would You Like to See in the Future?*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connect Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Bridge to Bay Trail</li> <li>▪ Zip lines/ropes course</li> <li>▪ Park marquee</li> <li>▪ Disc golf</li> <li>▪ Amphitheater/band shell</li> <li>▪ Children’s self-guided trails</li> <li>▪ Signature event for each park</li> <li>▪ Bridge across Belle River</li> <li>▪ Tunnel or bridge from Goodells Park to the Pine River Nature Center</li> <li>▪ Water park</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ferry to Bay bike tour</li> <li>▪ St. Johns Marsh walkway</li> <li>▪ Trail to Yale and Richmond</li> <li>▪ Man-made rapids in a city</li> <li>▪ More kayak outfitters</li> <li>▪ Pocket parks</li> <li>▪ Bus service to County parks</li> <li>▪ Fishing ponds</li> <li>▪ Archery</li> <li>▪ Zoo or aquarium</li> </ul> |
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## JOINT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS/PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

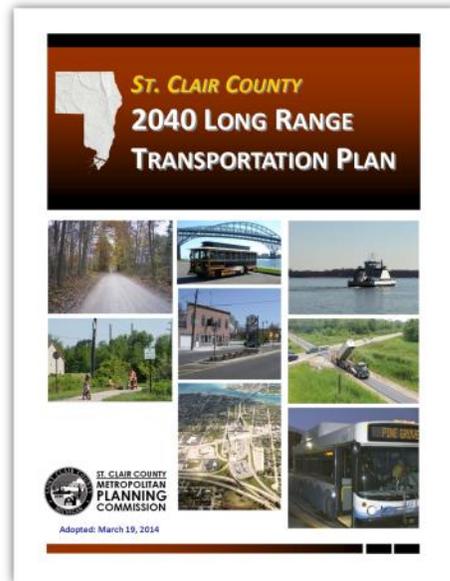
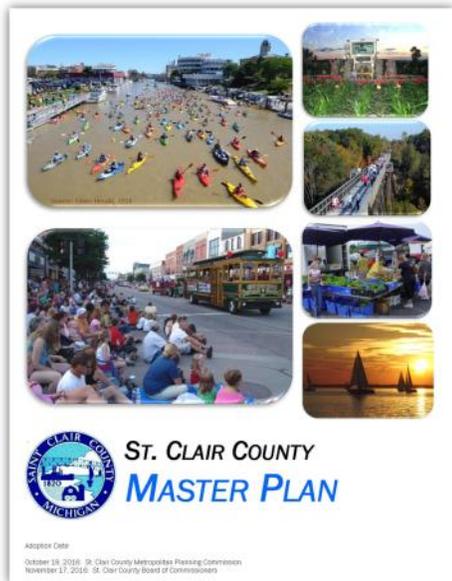
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The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the Parks and Recreation Commission held a joint planning workshop on November 3, 2016 to have an open discourse about the Master Recreation Plan update, discuss public input received via the online survey and the visioning meetings, and identify ways the two bodies can collaborate more effectively.

County commissioners and PARC members had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions and to brainstorm new endeavors that the county may want to pursue from a recreation standpoint - both programmatic and administrative.

Key themes resulting from this joint workshop included:

- Improving information sharing between the BOC and PARC on park plans and projects;
- Improving how capital projects are planned;
- Looking for new opportunities for partnerships and collaboration;
- Exploring creating a signature event for each park as an ‘entry point’ into recreational programming;
- Continuing existing acquisition practices;
- Establish a focus group to look at potential for new county parks in western and southern St. Clair County;
- Undertaking an evaluation of the current condition of parks and facilities;
- Focusing on maintaining existing infrastructure and facilities; and
- Developing business plans and a long-term maintenance plan for PARC facilities.



## RELATION TO THE ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER PLAN (2016)

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and the Board of Commissioners adopted the St. Clair County Master Plan in November 2016.

The MPC identified numerous goals of the County Master Plan that are directly related to the County's recreational needs, including:

- **Recreation Opportunities:** Continue development of high quality parks and recreation facilities, community facilities, and public infrastructure.
- **Walkable Communities:** Promote greater access to complete, walkable neighborhoods. Connect people to healthy food, parks, shops, transportation options and other core services.
- **Focused Placemaking:** Make great places in our local communities by capitalizing on unique assets. Ensure that residents and visitors have multiple options for housing, transportation, recreation, and entertainment.
- **Healthy People and Places:** Create a healthy environment for people, decrease chronic and acute diseases, and promote access to fresh, healthy food in all St. Clair County communities.
- **Resource Protection:** Create a cleaner and greener built and natural environment - more trees, better air and water quality, and lower carbon emissions.
- **Efficient Public Services:** Reinvent and continually improve how effective and efficient public services are delivered to the public. Seek innovative ways to improve the quality and depth of public services.

Specific planning objectives and strategic actions related to parks and recreation in the St. Clair County Master Plan include:

- Work with community partners and stakeholders to develop and implement a Blueways of St. Clair Strategic Master Plan.
- Promote the special features within the county including forests, parks, trails, lakes, rivers, and other physical amenities.
- Link new and existing recreation facilities with non-motorized trails.
- Link new and existing trails and greenways with new and existing trails and greenways in neighboring counties.
- Promote county attractions in order to stimulate awareness that St. Clair County is a great place to live, work, and play, and enhance business attraction efforts.

- Create a prioritized list of areas underserved by parks and recreation spaces and develop a schedule for addressing each one.
- Help create a private operation/association to plan, promote, and support both Blueways and greenways, coordinating with business and government efforts.
- Continue to build upon the momentum of the Blue Water Trail Towns program and the Blueways of St. Clair to maximize economic development opportunities along trails and waterways.
- Work with partners to develop a bike share program in downtown Port Huron, integrating assets such as the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Blue Water River Walk.
- Participate in local, regional, and statewide initiatives to connect hike-bike trails and water trails.

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## RELATION TO THE 2040 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

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The St. Clair County 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan includes a Non-motorized Plan Elements section that highlights potential non-motorized improvements and trail expansion. Since the adoption of the 2030 LRTP, St. Clair County has taken a proactive approach in planning and constructing non-motorized facilities throughout the county.

In 2005, the county began the Bridge to Bay Trail project, which eventually evolved into a broader countywide plan that identified future trail connections. Since then, specific guidelines for the St. Clair County non-motorized network have been adopted and plans are in place to implement future non-motorized improvements.

The following summarizes non-motorized-related recommendations in the 2040 LRTP:

- Promote alternative transportation options for area residents and employees that are reliable and accessible to all users.
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities within major new residential and commercial developments.
- Encourage “Complete Streets” in planning and constructing major transportation improvements.
- Place a high priority on serving the needs of transportation disadvantaged including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low income residents.
- Maximize bicycle and pedestrian access to roadways and transit facilities.
- Encourage transportation choices that benefit the environment including transit, carpooling, bike and pedestrian movement.
- Support alternative transportation modes to improve air quality.

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## BLUE WATER CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING - PLAN REVIEW

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The Blue Water Center for Independent Living/Team Access has been requested to review the draft Master Recreation Plan and to comment on and make recommendations on issues of accessibility and usability by people with disabilities.

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## PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (PARC) WEBSITE

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Once the draft Master Recreation Plan update was complete, each chapter was placed at PARC’s website, <http://www.stclaircounty.org/Offices/parks/>, allowing residents and other visitors to the website to access the Plan and thoroughly read through its content. The draft Plan was accessible on the website beginning on January 3, 2017, in advance of the February 8, 2017 public hearing.



**I want to...**  
*Apply, Pay, Report, Volunteer*

**I'm looking for...**  
*Property, Court, or Other Info*

**I need to contact...**  
*Depts, Officials, Local Govts*

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Search

- Calendar
- Blue Water Sand Fest
- Brochures
- Newsletters
- Reservations
- Columbus County Park
- Fort Gratiot County Park
- Fort Gratiot Light Station
- Goodells County Park
- Woodsong County Park
- Trails
- Memorial Bench, Brick and Tree Program
- Master Recreation Plan
- St. Clair County Earth Fair
- Labor Day Bridge and Trail Walk



### St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is funded by a special 0.49 mill property tax for the purpose of improving parks and recreation services in St. Clair County.

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission currently operates the 327-acre Goodells County Park, 385-acre Columbus County Park, 30-acre Fort Gratiot County Park, 45-acre Woodsong County Park, 5-acre Fort Gratiot Light Station and the 12-mile long Wadhams to Avoca Trail. The Commission also assists local units of government with the development and promotion of the Bridge to Bay Trail.

The Parks and Recreation Commission also provides specialized mobile recreation units for use at community events including two portable stages, two portable bleacher units, and crowd control barriers.

St. Clair County Parks offers a wide range of recreational opportunities including, but not limited to:

- biking



[Forgot account?](#)



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

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- About
- Photos
- Likes
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Like
 Share
 More

Photos See All

City in Port Huron, Michigan  
 4.9 ★★★★★ · Open Now

## PARC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In the past few years, PARC has increasingly leveraged social media to expand its reach and keep the public informed. The prolific utilization of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter by the general public make it a communication medium that cannot be ignored.

PARC has developed and maintains a Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Clair-County-Parks-and-Recreation-Commission/114026198441>) where people with Facebook accounts can go and “Like” the page in order to receive updates and announcements from PARC in their Facebook newsfeeds. It has proven to be an effective way to spread the word about the great projects and activities in which PARC is involved.

Additionally, the MPC administers a Facebook fan page for The Blueways of St. Clair project, aimed at keeping citizens and visitors up-to-date on Blueways-related events, paddling information, and other news related to St. Clair County waterways. That page can be accessed at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Blueways-of-St-Clair/111881135522468?v=wall>. The Blueways of St. Clair is also on Twitter (@BluewaysStClair).

Beginning in June 2016, PARC and the MPC utilized their social media pages to send out links to the online public survey, as well as follow up reminders for people to complete the survey.

## MASTER RECREATION PLAN: PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines, PARC finished drafting the text for the Master Recreation Plan three weeks prior to the public hearing and notified the public by means of a news release and media coverage, that the draft copy was available for public review for at least 30 days. The draft document was available to be read at the PARC office, as well as on the PARC website. The public hearing was held during a regular PARC meeting on February 8, 2017.

### Survey Says: The preferred social media platforms of survey respondents...

Answer Choices	Responses
Facebook	92.31% 192
Twitter	21.15% 44
Snapchat	17.31% 36
Instagram	24.04% 50
Tumblr	0.96% 2
Pinterest	31.25% 65
Other (please specify)	4.81% 10
Total Respondents: 208	

## PARC'S MARKETING AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

PARC hired a full-time Special Events/Marketing/Volunteer Coordinator in 2004, which was a goal of the 2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan.

PARC employs a variety of marketing efforts, with each park and trail in the park system having its own dedicated website and brochure. Attractive brochures are distributed to every chamber of commerce in St. Clair County, to several Michigan welcome centers, Main Street Port Huron, and to various tourism boards. They are also distributed to all 32 municipalities in the county.

The PARC newsletter goes out to 69,037 households in St. Clair County, tri-annually in the spring, summer and fall. It is also distributed in the same manner as the brochures, as described above.

### St. Clair County Trail System

**Trail System Information**  
St. Clair County Parks and Recreation also operates several trails. For more information, visit [www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org) or call 810-989-6960.

### St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission

200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 205  
Port Huron, MI 48060 • 810/989-6960  
[www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org)

### Bridge to Bay Trail

St. Clair County, Michigan

Funding for the construction of Bridge to Bay Trail sections comes from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage, local government funds, and grants. Grant funds for the trail have been provided by the United States Government through the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA 21) program administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR); and the GreenWays Initiative program administered by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan.

### St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission

200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 107  
Port Huron, MI 48060 • 810/989-6960  
[www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org)

### Woodsong County Park

St. Clair County, Michigan

Woodsong County Park is located at 7 Byrn Road, Clyde, MI 48039. For a large print brochure, call 810/989-6960.

8100-1040 Revised 2012

### St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission

200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 107  
Port Huron, MI 48060 • 810/989-6960  
[www.stclaircountyparks.org](http://www.stclaircountyparks.org)

### Columbus County Park

St. Clair County, Michigan

Discover Columbus County Park!  
[www.columbuscountypark.org](http://www.columbuscountypark.org)

### About Columbus County Park

Columbus County Park is a 316-acre park that offers breathtaking views of the Belle Isle, and provides fishing, boating, hiking, birding, kayaking, tubing and equestrian opportunities. Reservations are required for the exclusive use of any party facility for recreation and/or entertainment.

#### Funding

Funding to purchase Columbus County Park was made possible with a \$12.1 million grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage provided funding for the grant local match and ongoing development of the park.

#### Park Rules

- Columbus County Park is open from 8 am to 5 pm Memorial Day through Labor Day (9 pm during the rest of the year).
- Trails in the park are for non-motorized use only.
- The highest climbing hill is open daily from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, weather permitting.
- Swimming is kept on a leash. Swimmers must clean up after their pets.
- Hunting is allowed by permit only.
- Admission is free.

#### County Parks Information

St. Clair County is home to five county parks: Columbus County Park, Port Huron County Park, Port Huron Light Station, Cassville County Park and Woodsong County Park. St. Clair County also operates the Walkway to Anisa Trail and works with local units of government to develop the Bridge to Bay Trail.

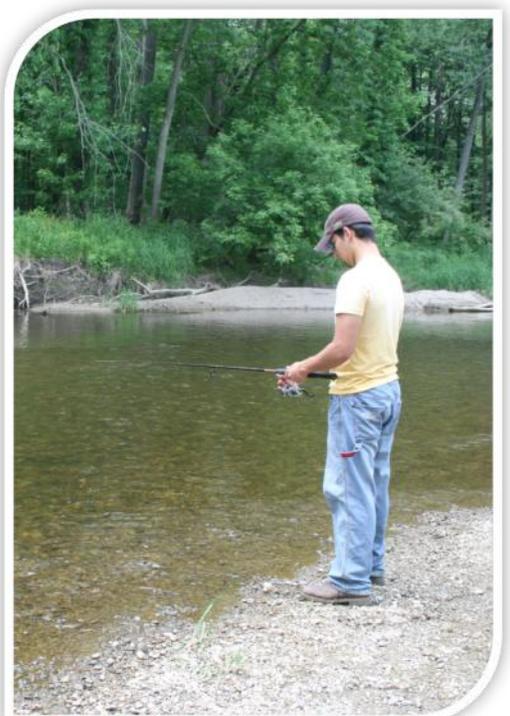
Columbus County Park is located at the southeast part of St. Clair County, just northeast of Cruise Road. The park is located at 1400 Bayview Road, Columbus, MI 48062.

For a large print brochure, call 810/989-6960.



# PLANNING GOALS & STRATEGIC ACTIONS

# 5





## INTRODUCTION

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### THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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St. Clair County is a vibrant, growing community with a great citizenry and a high quality of life. This is an exciting time for the county, and parks and recreation should be an integral part of the county's image, character, and quality of life. Specifically, strong parks and recreation programs have the ability to:

- **Provide social benefits** by connecting people with neighbors of other ages, incomes, backgrounds, and abilities. Parks and recreation build community pride and spirit.
- **Provide economic benefits** by improving the quality of life in the community and helping to attract businesses and residents to the county. Top-rate parks and recreation facilities are a competitive advantage for St. Clair County in economic development.
- **Provide benefits to the environment** by connecting people with and educating them about nature. In addition, greenways can provide alternative transportation opportunities. Parks and open space are essential weapons in the county's arsenal against sprawl and environmental degradation.
- **Provide benefits to individuals** by promoting physical fitness and self-improvement. Opportunities for exercise and being outdoors result in greater physical fitness, emotional well-being, and connectivity to nature.

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### EMERGING ISSUES

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Over the next five, ten, and even 20 years, there are some emerging issues unfolding in St. Clair County that will have numerous implications for recreation planning, including:

#### **An Aging Population**

The first issue is that the county will continue to be the home for an ever-increasing aging population. The median age of county residents is 43.4 years and more than half (53.8%) of the county's population is at least 40 years old.

The aging of the “baby boom” generation is changing the age structure of communities across the state of Michigan. Those born during the baby boom of 1946 to 1964 created a bulge of persons in their forties and fifties. In the 2010 Census, the largest age group was persons aged 45 to 54. As the largest age cohort moves into their fifties and sixties in the next decade and their seventies and eighties in the following decade, there will be a significant increase in the already large elderly population.

PARC should be cognizant that as more and more county residents retire, there will be an increased number of older residents with the time and income to spend on leisure. This is true for a number of reasons. More people are living longer, more people are retiring earlier, and retirees are more active in lifestyle than ever before.

### “Brain Drain”

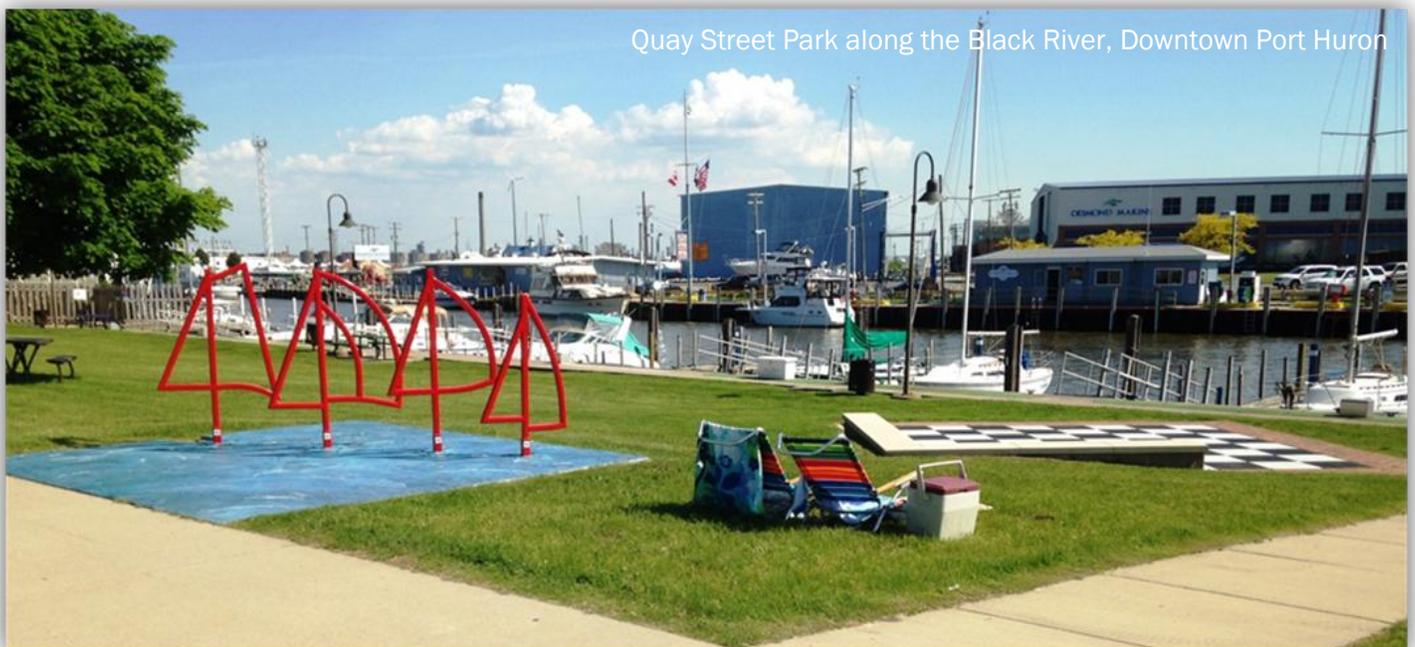
There are very few 20 to 24 year olds in the county. This information suggests that few persons this age stay after high school graduation. That means few young workers, college students, young singles or young married couples live in the county. The loss of young adults in the State of Michigan has been well-documented in recent years. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, there were 9,592 residents (6%) between the ages of 20 to 24. The exodus of young adults is continuing in the present decade. This loss of college-aged young adults and college graduates has been nicknamed the “brain drain.”

### Recreational Opportunities for Youth

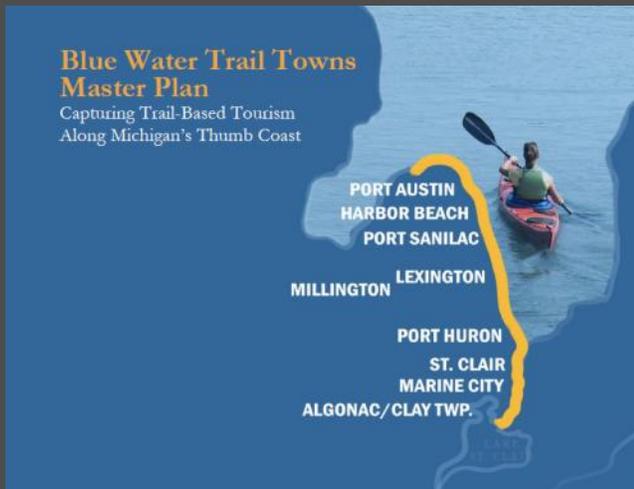
The greatest percentage of the county’s population, 36.5%, is within the 45 to 64 age group. The next largest percentage of the population, 29.8%, is under 24 years of age and 10.7% are under 10 years old, which suggests that, in addition to providing more services for the elderly within the community, the County and its communities may also need to target more recreational opportunities toward young children and teenagers.

### Economic Development and Placemaking

Quality of life can be defined in many ways; however, most definitions are likely to include parks and recreation opportunities as a major component. On a global scale, there are no great communities that do not have great parks and recreation amenities. In today’s world, economic development efforts start with being able to market a high quality of life. Companies now look beyond simple infrastructure concerns when deciding where to locate. They look for areas that offer recreational, cultural, and entertainment amenities – all things that factor into a high quality of life. Companies go where talented individuals are located. Talented individuals choose where they live based on quality of life issues.



## PLACEMAKING IN SCC: BLUE WATER TRAIL TOWNS



One of the most important drivers of economic development in the Blue Water Area is tourism. Many communities throughout the Thumb are working to increase their share of visitation by enhancing local attractions and amenities, or placemaking. Central to these efforts is an emphasis on the region's extensive blueways and greenways trail systems. According to the American Trails organization, "a trail can bring at least one million dollars annually to a community, depending on how well the town embraces the trail."

In 2013, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), along with regional partners in the Thumb and the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), kicked off a project to help local communities build on existing bike trail and water trail assets by developing a comprehensive "Blue Water Trail Towns Master Plan." The Trail Towns approach identifies trails as the focal point of a tourism-based strategy for economic development and revitalization. The Blue Water Trail Towns Master Plan provides community leaders and business owners with detailed guidance on ways to capitalize on greenways and blueway connections for a more vibrant tourist trade.





The term “placemaking” can mean many different things. When it comes to community planning, it often means simply creating better community spaces in our cities, villages, and townships. St. Clair County and its local units must work to create places that will draw people in – places that make residents and visitors alike feel as though that particular town is the place to be. By creating more functional, interesting places, shops and businesses in our downtown areas can thrive, jobs can be created and sustained, and the already high quality of life in the county will increase. Recreation plays a huge role in effective placemaking, because people want to live in places that have options for recreation, options for entertainment, and other options for how they spend their time.

### The Tourism Industry in St. Clair County

Most of St. Clair County’s tourist attractions are along the eastern and southern coastline in the form of beaches, parks, and marinas. There are few recreational areas inland. Local communities offer special events, such as parades and annual or semi-annual festivals.

St. Clair County is in a prime position to attract even greater amounts of tourism dollars thanks to the park and trail facilities, historical features, eco-tourism, agri-tourism, cruise ship tourism, and a trend for families and aging citizens to take vacations closer to home. St. Clair County’s position as a semi-rural area with public beaches on Lake Huron, the St Clair River, and Lake St. Clair within an hour’s drive of the Detroit metropolitan area makes it a desirable, recreational “nearby getaway.”

The Blueways of St. Clair features 17 paddling routes along St. Clair County waterways, which serve as a tourist attraction for water enthusiasts from throughout Southeast Michigan. Kayaking and canoeing are continuing to grow in popularity and PARC expects increased use of the county’s paddling routes.

In addition, the ongoing development of new “greenways” trails will help connect the communities of Southeast Michigan through the creation of a connected green infrastructure, including biking and hiking paths, conservation corridors and habitats among and between communities. Greenways are linear open spaces, including habitats and trails, which link parks, nature preserves, cultural features or historic sites with each other, for recreation and conservation purposes.

## PEOPLE, PLACE AND PROSPERITY

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### POPULATION OVERVIEW

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Because of its location at the base of Michigan’s Thumb, St. Clair County is an amalgamation of rural heritage and metropolitan influence.

- The county population is heavily concentrated along the St. Clair River. Port Huron, the seat of St. Clair County government, is located 160 miles west of Toronto and 60 miles northeast of Detroit.
- Over 62% of St. Clair County workers that live within the county, also work in St Clair County. The percentage of the labor force that travels to jobs outside St. Clair County (36%) is higher than the state average of people who work outside their home county. Throughout Michigan, 69.5% of the labor force work in their county of residence. Most of the St. Clair County residents who are leaving the county to work are commuting to jobs in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties.
- Residents in northern St Clair County enjoy country scenes and lifestyles more aligned with rural Sanilac, Tuscola, and Huron counties. Likewise, St. Clair County is a commerce and service center for rural residents of Sanilac County who come, primarily to the Port Huron area, for groceries, commodities, and healthcare services.

#### Population Trends

St. Clair County is among the 15 most populated counties in Michigan. US Census Bureau statistics show that St Clair County had:

- 145,607 people in 1990
- 164,235 people in 2000
- 163,040 people in 2010
- 161,008 people in 2014

SEMCOG projects that 167,261 people will live in the county by 2040.

The county’s population had been increasing steadily since at least 1960. In the 2010 Census, that steady growth in population came to an end and the county actually lost about 1% of its population.

Within St. Clair County, most of the communities that lost population from 2000 to 2010 were located in the southern part of the county. Ira Township experienced a 25.7% decrease, Casco Township lost 13.5%, Columbus Township lost 11.8%, and Algonac lost 11.3% of its population. Additionally, all of the cities in the county lost population except for Marysville, which experienced a 2.8% increase.

Nearly 90,000 people left the State of Michigan between 2005 and 2008, with 63 of 83 counties losing population. Michigan experienced a 0.6% population loss from 2000 to 2010 – the only state to lose population during that time.

#### Population Distribution

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, the profile of general demographic characteristics for St. Clair County shows population distribution according to categories of gender, age, and household types.

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	79,793	49.6%
Female	81,215	50.4%

Age	Number	Percent
0 to 9 years	18,445	11.7%
10 to 19 years	21,707	13.5%
20 to 44 years	46,085	28.6%
45 to 64 years	49,245	30.6%
65 years & older	25,126	15.6%

The median age is 42.4 years. Almost half of the St. Clair County residents (46.2%) are at least 45 years old. Since 2010, the county’s population of those 45 and older has increased while the population of those 19 years and under has decreased, which has numerous implications for recreation planning.

Race	Number	Percent
White	150,979	93.8%
Black/African American	3,614	2.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	337	0.2%
Asian	857	0.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Some other race/Two or more races	5,221	3.2%

In 2014, St. Clair County also had a Hispanic or Latino population of 4,888 persons, who are included in one or more of the race categories above. The U.S. Census Bureau does not designate Hispanic or Latino as a race category, but as “a point of origin” or “ancestry type.”

**Population with Disabilities**

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, there were 25,917 residents five years of age and older who were disabled in St. Clair County. This is 16.2% of 159,840, the total civilian non-institutionalized population. Disabled persons are not located in specific areas, but live in all areas of the county.

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## HOUSEHOLDS OVERVIEW

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U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that St. Clair County had:

- 62,072 households in 2000
- 63,841 households in 2010
- 64,182 households in 2014

SEMCOG projects that St. Clair County will have 68,960 households by 2040. Through 2040, SEMCOG projects that:

- The number of households with elderly citizens will *increase*.
- The number of households with children will *decrease*.
- The number of households of non-elderly persons with no children will *decrease*.

**Building Permit Activity**

Between 2005 and 2016 there were 2,114 building permits issued in St. Clair County. The top five communities with the most building permits issued were Kimball Township with 279, Fort Gratiot Township with 194, Clay Township with 179, St. Clair Township with 130, and Port Huron Township with 129 permits.

The five communities with the fewest permits issued were the Village of Emmett with one, the City of Memphis with two, the City of Yale with three, Marine City with 12, and Brockway Township with 22 permits. All communities within St. Clair County experienced a significant decline in the number of building permits issued between 2006 and 2011. Since 2012 the majority of the communities’ building permits have leveled off and stopped declining or have seen modest increases, but not to the levels prior to 2006. The average number of permits issued in St. Clair County between 2005 and 2016 is 176.

## INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

The median household income in St. Clair County was \$48,703 in 2014. This was slightly lower than the Michigan median household income of \$49,087. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey there are 43,466 families, of which 11% have an income that is below the poverty level. Of the total number of families in the county, there are 18,895 with children under the age of 18 with 18.3% below the poverty level. Compared to the State of Michigan as a whole, the county has a lower percentage of both families living below the poverty level and families with children under 18 years below the poverty level. Moreover, there are 4,775 families headed by a single female head of household with related children under 18 years old in the county, of which 45.9% is below the poverty level.

County Income Distribution	Households	Percent
Less than \$10,000	4,327	6.74%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3,922	6.11%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	7,334	11.43%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7,396	11.52%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	9,895	15.42%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12,797	19.94%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8,315	12.96%
\$100,000 and higher	10,196	15.89%

ESRI, Inc., reports that the largest employer categories in St. Clair County in 2016 were, in order: Services, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Construction, Transportation/Utilities, Finance/Insurance/Real Estate, Public Administration, Wholesale Trade, Information, and Agriculture/Mining.

The six-county *Economic Growth Alliance* region (St Clair, Macomb, Oakland, Lapeer, Genesee, and Livingston counties) gained 22,521 jobs in 2015. Between 2010 and 2015, the region gained a total of 94,273 jobs. This is a big turnaround since 2009 when the region lost 109,369 jobs that year alone. As a region, the unemployment rate was 9.6% in 2013, 8.1% in 2014, and 6.1% in 2015.

For St. Clair County, the annual unemployment rate in 2015 was 7.1%, which was 2.6% lower than the annual unemployment rate for 2014, which was 9.7%. As of August 2016, the unemployment rate in St. Clair County was 6.5%.

The Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget’s Labor Market Information reports that the average monthly labor force in St. Clair County for the year 2015 totaled 72,335. Of those, an average of 67,169 were employed and 5,166 were unemployed each month.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure is our system of natural resources that provide the critical ecological services necessary to maintain a healthy environment for humans and wildlife. Parks and open space are important components of green infrastructure. This includes local, state, and federal parks, land conservancy properties, and other natural areas. Open space that extends across community boundaries provides opportunities for parks and recreational use. It can also conserve natural features such as habitat for plants and animals.

Land that has major development constraints can be targeted as future protected open space or parks. Areas with steep slopes, poorly draining and unstable soils, and poor access should be identified to help plan future land acquisition priorities. A community’s open space and greenway network should connect to the network of neighboring communities to create a connected regional network. This will help ensure ecological health as well as expand recreational opportunities for all residents.

## SEMCOG GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN: HIGHLIGHTS

In May 2014, SEMCOG completed the “Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan.” The vision, for the first time:

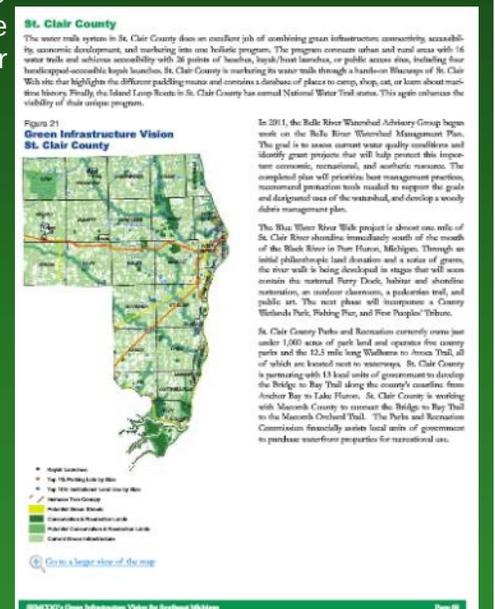
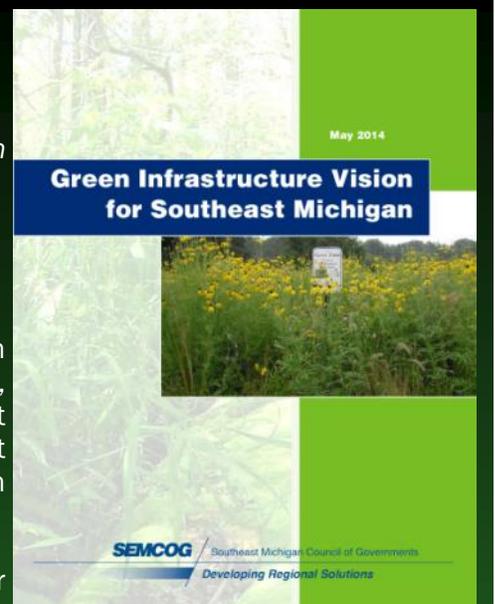
- Benchmarked green infrastructure in Southeast Michigan,
- Established a regional vision for where we want to go, and
- Identified regional policies on how to get there.

Among other things, the Green Infrastructure Vision examined green infrastructure’s impact on the economy, tourism, transportation, infrastructure, water quality, air quality, vacant land, and health. It also zoomed in on each of the seven counties in Southeast Michigan, including St. Clair County, and identified existing green infrastructure assets, connections, and goals.

Among the highlighted green infrastructure assets in St. Clair County, the document focuses on the Blueways of St. Clair, the Belle River Watershed Plan (and other watershed planning efforts), the Blue Water River Walk, and the numerous assets of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC).

Regional policy areas identified in the Vision include:

- Increasing tree canopy in Southeast Michigan;
- Protecting existing high quality wetlands through land use regulation;
- Using green infrastructure to manage storm water runoff;
- Increasing public green infrastructure in local and regional parks;
- Encouraging preservation of high-valued agricultural lands and development of community gardens to provide a quality local food network and continue the economic vitality of the agricultural industry;
- Increasing green infrastructure along riparian corridors and connecting these corridors to parks and other natural areas;
- Seeking opportunities to construct green infrastructure in priority areas such as roadways, institutional properties, parking lots, riparian corridors, and downtown areas;
- Ensuring natural areas have maintenance plans to maintain quality;
- Increasing public access to public parks in small towns within rural areas;
- Using access to green infrastructure as a means to attract young professionals;
- Increasing public access along the Great Lakes and connecting channels, including the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair;
- Prioritizing funding for trail improvements to fill gaps within the Southeast Michigan trail network;
- Integrating water trails with public green infrastructure along riparian corridors to the extent possible, including canoe/kayak launch areas;
- Coordinating nonmotorized trail planning with green infrastructure planning to assist in meeting the needs of a green infrastructure network that uses trails as a linkage;
- Incorporating green infrastructure elements into publicly-funded projects;
- Promoting the use of complete and green streets as appropriate in transportation improvements; and
- Using vacant land to increase protected green infrastructure around existing parks and natural areas.





## PLANNING GOALS AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

### 6 STRATEGIC FOCAL AREAS

1	<p><b>ADMINISTRATION</b></p> <p>The Parks and Recreation Commission aims to continue its history of providing quality recreational experiences through effective management, innovative service delivery, and collaboration with community stakeholders.</p>
2	<p><b>FINANCE</b></p> <p>PARC’s long-term financial directive is to maintain strong financing strategies to address the need for park acquisition, park development, facilities and infrastructure maintenance, and environmental stewardship.</p>
3	<p><b>PARKLAND</b></p> <p>In terms of property acquisition and maintenance, PARC’s focus is to rectify current acreage deficiencies by acquiring lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future citizens.</p>
4	<p><b>FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p> <p>PARC’s overarching facilities and infrastructure goal is to ensure quality, safe, and functional amenities at each of its facilities and along the countywide non-motorized trail network.</p>
5	<p><b>GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS</b></p> <p>PARC’s primary greenways and blueways focus is to provide for a multi-use regional trail and blueways system that connects to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems.</p>
6	<p><b>PLACES AND SPACES</b></p> <p>A community’s sense of place is tied to its well-being and prosperity. PARC strives to work with community stakeholders to bolster placemaking efforts that highlight the waterfront, cultural and historical resources, and the natural environment.</p>

# 18 PRIMARY PLANNING GOALS

<b>Administration</b>	<p><b>STRONG COLLABORATION</b> Network with federal, state, county, local and nonprofit recreation providers. Collaborating with community partners allows for resource sharing, community awareness, economies of scale, innovative problem solving, and access to funding.</p>	<p><b>EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT</b> Work to continually innovate and deliver a high quality recreational experience for St. Clair County citizens and visitors. Provide outstanding customer service in all aspects of PARC's service delivery.</p>	<p><b>LEADERSHIP IN RECREATION</b> Stay abreast of the latest trends and best practices in parks and recreation, trail planning, and public service delivery.</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<p><b>EFFICIENT FUNDING MECHANISMS</b> Ensure that PARC has adequate financial resources for park and trail acquisition, development, and maintenance now and into the future.</p>	<p><b>COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING</b> Create short-term and long-term business and operations plans for each PARC facility in order to understand financial opportunities and liabilities and to establish a new system for data collection and analysis.</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT</b> Continue to identify and evaluate long-term capital maintenance needs for PARC assets and incorporate those needs into the County's Capital Improvement Program.</p>
<b>Parkland</b>	<p><b>STRATEGIC PROPERTY ACQUISITION</b> Acquire lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future county citizens.</p>	<p><b>PARKS FOR ALL PEOPLE</b> Understand the changing demographics in St. Clair County and the Southeast Michigan region. Plan parks and facilities that serve our aging population and attract young professionals and families.</p>	<p><b>PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES</b> Support the conservation and stewardship of land, water, and natural resources. The quality of life for every person in St. Clair County is improved by clean, accessible parks and open space.</p>
<b>Facilities &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<p><b>WELL-MAINTAINED INFRASTRUCTURE</b> Provide a continued high level of service to residents and visitors in a safe, clean manner that protects the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the county.</p>	<p><b>MODERN FACILITIES &amp; AMENITIES</b> Maintain and update existing parks and facilities before constructing new facilities. Ensure that PARC officials have a strong understanding of the current and coming trends in parks and recreation and build modernization activities into asset management plans and individual park business plans.</p>	<p><b>QUALITY USER EXPERIENCE</b> Develop and maintain recreational facilities that draw people in to experience nature, experience their communities, and to be active outdoors. Create experiences that make people want to keep coming back to the parks.</p>
<b>Greenways &amp; Blueways</b>	<p><b>CONNECTED GREENWAYS/BLUEWAYS</b> Connect land and water trails within the county to natural areas, recreation areas, riparian corridors, community centers, and other trail systems within the region.</p>	<p><b>MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION</b> Promote and support multimodal solutions that address the long-term mobility needs of St. Clair County residents and businesses.</p>	<p><b>ACTIVE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES</b> Ensure PARC participates in efforts to promote individual and community well-being and promote parks as a means to combat negative health trends throughout the county.</p>
<b>Places &amp; Spaces</b>	<p><b>INCREASED MARKETING &amp; TOURISM</b> Position PARC facilities as a key economic engine that provides unique destinations and attracts visitors to experience St. Clair County. Partner with tourism organizations in the region to cross-promote PARC assets and other tourist draws in St. Clair County.</p>	<p><b>LIVABLE COMMUNITIES</b> Highlight the impact of parks and recreation on creating highly desirable communities that provide residents with a high quality of life and economic prosperity.</p>	<p><b>CULTURAL &amp; HISTORIC PRESERVATION</b> Continue to develop and promote cultural and historic resources at the Fort Gratiot Light Station and other PARC facilities, including the Historic Village at Goodells County Park.</p>

# ADMINISTRATION

One of PARC's primary focal points is to continue to expand and build upon a solid administrative foundation that has allowed the organization to effectively and efficiently carry out its mission of providing recreational opportunities to St. Clair County residents. Over the years, PARC has demonstrated a high degree of organizational effectiveness - the ability of an organization to utilize its knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively fulfill its mission. The Parks and Recreation Commission, in conjunction with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and PARC administration, have a proven track record of delivering innovative parks and recreation services through strong management, broad-based collaboration, and providing leadership in parks and recreation.

## PARC's ADMINISTRATION GOALS:

- STRONG COLLABORATION
- EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
- LEADERSHIP IN RECREATION



### **ADMINISTRATION GOAL 1: STRONG COLLABORATION**

The importance of strong organizational collaboration to the success and well-being of a community cannot be overstated. Working with other stakeholders and organizations with common goals is strategically advantageous and, in current times, it is essential for securing funding, building capacity, and carrying out projects. Collaborating with community partners allows for resource sharing, community awareness, economies of scale, innovative problem solving, and access to funding.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Network with federal, state, county, local and nonprofit recreation providers.
- Encourage and promote use and support from the community, nonprofit conservation organizations, local businesses, and citizens. Continually work to expand PARC's volunteer network.
- Communicate and meet regularly with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to ensure ample time for project planning, gathering information, and project review.
- Work with all law enforcement agencies to provide security for all county-owned parks and recreation facilities, grounds and trails.
- Continue working with the Sherriff's Department to provide cost-effective patrol of county-owned parks and recreation facilities, grounds and trails.
- Actively collaborate with SEMCOG and the I-69 Thumb Region on matters pertaining to parks, recreation and tourism.
- Collaborate with government, businesses, economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to support parks, trails, and other environmental stewardship efforts.

### **ADMINISTRATION GOAL 2: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

Work to continually innovate and deliver a high quality recreational experience for St. Clair County citizens and visitors. Above all else, all PARC commissioners and employees share the primary job of ensuring citizens' (aka 'customers') recreational needs are met. To ensure PARC is managed well, PARC officials must understand customer needs, communicate effectively, and be aware of PARC's vision and mission at all times.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Attend parks and recreation conferences, workshops, training programs, and other educational classes to expand PARC's knowledge base.
- Regularly engage the public to find out what citizens need/want in terms of parks and recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of PARC's vision and mission. Provide staff with the necessary training and resources to do their jobs well.
- Promote sustainability and efficiency practices at PARC facilities to the extent that it is feasible, cost-effective, and practical.
- Provide outstanding customer service in all aspects of PARC's service delivery.
- Provide adequate funding for operational needs and adequate staffing for PARC facilities.

### ADMINISTRATION GOAL 3: LEADERSHIP IN RECREATION

Staying abreast of the latest trends and best practices in parks and recreation, trail planning, and public service delivery is imperative for PARC going forward. PARC strives to be a model county park system within the state of Michigan.

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Ensure that PARC commissioners, managers, and staff stay abreast of the latest trends and best practices in parks and recreation.
- Advocate for parks and recreation through participation in local, regional, state, and national recreation organizations and committees.
- Ensure St. Clair County Parks and Recreation is considered a model when it comes to the delivery of parks and recreation services to residents.
- Provide project planning support and assistance to local units of government to ensure they have the necessary resources to achieve local goals.

## FINANCE

PARC's financial focus is to maintain solid financing strategies to address the need for park acquisition, development, maintenance and stewardship. Funding is a critical component for communities trying to develop or improve parks. During (and after) the recession of 2008-2011, many local units of government saw diminished recreation budgets. PARC is fortunate to be funded by a special 0.49 mill property tax for the purpose of improving parks and recreation services in St. Clair County and must continually demonstrate effective stewardship of those millage funds. In order to do this effectively, PARC must pursue specific financial goals that will continue to provide value and quality services to citizens and local units of government.

#### OUR FINANCE GOALS:

- EFFICIENT FUNDING MECHANISMS
- COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING
- STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT



### ***FINANCE GOAL 1: EFFICIENT FUNDING MECHANISMS***

Ensuring that PARC has adequate financial resources for park and trail acquisition, development, and maintenance now and into the future. Moreover, working with the Board of Commissioners and County administration to develop functional and accurate budgets and forecasts.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Continue to distribute 25% of the annual millage revenues to local units of government - based on the latest U.S. Census figures - for planning, maintenance, and development of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- Work with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to seek renewal of the countywide Parks and Recreation millage in 2022.
- Research and recommend, as appropriate, potential income-generating mechanisms to support county parks.
- Continue to aggressively pursue public and private grants and donations.
- Work with the Community Foundation to maintain and expand agency funds for county parks and trails.
- Maintain grant programs for local units of government to assist in the acquisition of small parcels for waterfront preservation, skate parks, dog parks, trails, and canoe/kayak launches.

### ***FINANCE GOAL 2: COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING***

Create short-term and long-term business and operations plans for each PARC facility in order to understand financial opportunities and liabilities and to enhance park usage tracking and metrics. Begin multi-year planning for maintenance, development, acquisition, and capital improvements.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Develop a business plan for each county park.
- Develop a five-year financial plan identifying major investments and funds dedicated to priority goals.
- Integrate planned major investments into the St. Clair County Capital Improvement Program on an annual basis.
- Analyze the financial liabilities of existing assets and PARC's ability to maintain and support those assets.
- Regularly evaluate PARC's fee structures and establish an acceptable level of cost recovery through user fees.
- Regularly conduct an evaluation of PARC's plan implementation efforts - for both the Master Recreation Plan and individual park plans.
- Establish a mechanism to monitor and record facility usage and begin using those metrics in order to inform future decision-making.
- Track the income and expenses of each site and program.

### FINANCE GOAL 3: STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

Continue to identify and evaluate long-term capital maintenance needs for PARC assets and incorporate those needs into the County’s Capital Improvement Program. Business and operations plans for each park will identify recurring renovation needs, projected lifecycles for infrastructure and equipment replacement, immediate project needs, and projected costs for capital assets.

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Continue to identify and annually plan for capital improvements for all PARC facilities. Maintain an accurate inventory of major park assets and improvements (amenities and features valued at greater than \$5,000 and having an ordinary useful life of ten years or more) maintained by PARC.
- Identify the current condition of park assets, identify benchmarks for industry accepted cyclical maintenance standards, and provide criteria to prioritize needs for renovation or replacement of assets.
- Use the County’s Capital Improvement Program to guide PARC’s annual budgeting and capital maintenance project submittals.
- Plan and schedule capital projects to coincide with the availability of funds to finance needed improvements.
- In order to preserve county assets, maintenance and repair projects should be a higher priority than the construction of new facilities.

## PARKLAND

PARC’s focus for existing parks is to continue development activities that allow for Goodells, Columbus, and Fort Gratiot County Parks to be used as multi-purpose facilities that can be used year-round. PARC’s focus for Woodsong County Park is to continue its development as a natural area for all county citizens and their guests. Acquiring land for parks and recreation use in order to rectify acreage deficiencies is a high priority for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission. It is also a priority that cannot be assigned a specific schedule because, by their nature, land acquisitions are hard to predict. PARC must be flexible enough to aggressively pursue appropriate land acquisitions whenever they become available. Land acquisitions are usually “one-shot” opportunities that, if missed, are unlikely to ever come around for a second chance.

#### OUR GOALS FOR PARKLAND:

- STRATEGIC PROPERTY ACQUISITION
- PARKS FOR ALL PEOPLE
- PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES



### **PARKLAND GOAL 1: STRATEGIC PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

Acquire lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future county citizens. Property acquisitions should be targeted in underserved areas and in locations that will allow PARC to rectify acreage deficiencies based on per capita standards.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Explore the acquisition of a culturally or naturally significant property or properties in both the southern and western part of St. Clair County for the eventual development of county park facilities.
- Identify appropriate waterfront properties that could be acquired and developed and integrated into St. Clair County's existing green infrastructure network.
- Explore other potential locations for acquisition of significant property or properties, such as:
  - Significant properties in conjunction with the *Southeast Michigan Greenways Plan* and the *Michigan Natural Features Inventory*.
  - Properties up and down stream from Columbus County Park, particularly riverfront properties.
  - Properties adjacent to existing PARC facilities.
  - Opportunities for extending the Wadhams to Avoca Trail from Avoca to Yale to the county line.
- To the greatest extent possible, property acquisition and park development projects should reflect the master plans of the local municipality, the county, the state and adjoining regions.
- Understand the financial implications of acquisition through the use of financial analysis tools. Build potential acquisitions into the individual business plans developed for each facility.

### **PARKLAND GOAL 2: PARKS FOR ALL PEOPLE**

Understand the changing demographics in St. Clair County and the Southeast Michigan region. Our population is aging and parks and recreation amenities and programs will need to adjust to population shifts. Additionally, recreation opportunities that appeal to young professionals, families, and children must also be provided to attract new residents and maintain St. Clair County's high quality of life.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Anticipate the needs of the changing community and structure PARC facilities accordingly.
- Bring children and families into St. Clair County Parks and provide them with reasons to become lifetime patrons.
- Explore the potential for adding amenities that promote physical activity for senior citizens and other features that appeal to an aging population.
- Examine potential opportunities to develop indoor recreation amenities that will promote year-round facility usage, especially during colder winter months.
- Regularly engage stakeholders of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and ask for their input on future parks and recreation amenities and future planning activities.
- Serve an aging population with social, recreational, active and healthy opportunities.
- Construct a children's playground near the Columbus County Park Lodge. Ensure that all PARC playgrounds are regularly inspected and safe.

### **PARKLAND GOAL 3: PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES**

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the mission of public parks and recreation at all levels should support the conservation and stewardship of land, water, and natural resources. Parks serve an essential role in preserving natural resources and wildlife habitat, protecting clean water and clean air, and providing open space for current and future generations. The quality of life for every person in St. Clair County is improved by clean, accessible parks and open space.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Control and/or mitigate the impacts of invasive species on the biodiversity of plants and animals. Plant additional plant species as needed.
- Manage the former farm fields at PARC facilities to re-establish native wildlife and plant communities.
- Develop and implement a plan to manage large woody debris in rivers flowing through PARC properties and stabilize the shoreline to reduce soil erosion and improve fish habitat.
- Encourage the propagation of species of plants and animals that are native and indigenous to St. Clair County.
- Protect and maintain the quality of water resources both on and associated PARC facilities.
- Develop programs to interpret the natural, cultural and physical resources and educate the public of their importance.

## **FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

When it comes to PARC's general facilities and infrastructure, the focus is to ensure quality, safe, and functional amenities at every county park and along its non-motorized trail network. Paramount in this focus is ensuring that all county residents and their guests have a great experience using St. Clair County parks. Great experiences come from having access to nature, being active outdoors, making memories with loved ones, and learning new things about the community or environment. This focal area goes hand-in-hand with the identification of long-term capital maintenance needs and ongoing business planning for individual facilities. Each PARC property is unique and provides a different user experience for residents and visitors.

#### **OUR FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS:**

- **WELL-MAINTAINED INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **MODERN FACILITIES & AMENITIES**
- **QUALITY USER EXPERIENCE**



### ***FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 1: WELL-MAINTAINED INFRASTRUCTURE***

Provide a continued high level of service to residents and visitors in a safe, clean manner that protects the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the county. Ensure that PARC infrastructure functions properly and contributes to a patron’s overall enjoyment of a facility.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Replace high maintenance items with more sustainable, low maintenance items.
- Maintain existing and explore new partnerships for maintenance and operation of PARC facilities.
- Provide and maintain appropriate public access to areas designated for public use.
- Explore opportunities to utilize green infrastructure over older, traditional infrastructure when possible. Look for ways to implement recommendations in SEMCOG’s *Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan*.
- Incorporate rain gardens, bioswales, porous pavement, and other techniques used to manage storm water runoff when improving PARC facilities. Explore other low-impact development (LID) tools that can be implemented in PARC facilities.
- Address recurring maintenance needs based on the priorities identified in individual park business plans.

### ***FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 2: MODERN FACILITIES & AMENITIES***

Maintain and update existing parks and facilities before constructing new facilities. Ensure that PARC officials have a strong understanding of the current and coming trends in parks and recreation and build modernization activities into capital improvement projects and individual park business plans.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Work to develop each park following the goals and objectives of each individual park master plan and business plan.
- Develop permanent parking lots with vault toilets off Big Hand Road and Kronner Road.
- Develop ADA-accessible walkways and trails to enhance connectivity in PARC facilities.
- Install ADA-accessible canoe/kayak launches in appropriate locations, including on the Belle River at Columbus County Park, on the Black River at Woodsong County Park, and at the Marine City Dredge Cut in Algonac.
- Continue working with the Michigan Mountain Biking Association to develop a looped mountain biking trail system west of Kronner Road at Columbus County Park.
- Investigate the potential for developing a disc golf course at PARC facilities.

### **FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 3: QUALITY USER EXPERIENCE**

Develop and maintain recreational facilities that draw people in to experience nature, experience their communities, and to be active outdoors. Ensure that all PARC facilities are well-designed and well-maintained. Make sure equipment and infrastructure is safe and functional. Create experiences that make people want to keep coming back to the parks.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Continue Bridge to Bay Trail signage improvements and wayfinding.
- Pursue the year-round usage of PARC facilities and trails.
- Enhance informational and directional signage to all park and trail facilities. Improve entrance and events signage on main roads.
- Advocate and facilitate barrier-free access to all PARC facilities, trails, and greenways whenever feasible.
- Work to make programs, features, and special exhibits more accessible to the general public.
- Work with regulatory agencies to maintain and protect swimming beaches at PARC facilities.
- Establish a signature event for each PARC facility as a gateway to additional programming and seek partners to eventually run those events.
- Provide for overflow parking where needed at PARC facilities.
- Construct additional picnic facilities as needed.

## **GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS**

PARC's overarching focus for greenways and blueways is to provide for a multi-use, regional trails and blueways system that connects to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems. Greenways and blueways provide our residents with an abundance of benefits, including personal health, economic prosperity, increased property values, environmental health, and community connectivity.

#### **OUR GOALS FOR GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS:**

- **CONNECTED GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS**
- **MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION**
- **ACTIVE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**



## **GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 1: CONNECTED GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS**

Connect land and water trails within the county to natural areas, recreation areas, riparian corridors, community centers, and other trail systems within the region. Connectivity enhances the quality of life in St. Clair County while at the same time reducing habitat fragmentation and encouraging additional recreation opportunities. Connecting the network of greenways and blueways will require a coordinated effort of local, regional, state, and federal stakeholders, as well as private landowners.

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Develop a Griswold Road trailhead in conjunction with the proposed new Amtrak Station in Port Huron Township.
- Add a connector trail between New Baltimore and Ira Township along M-29.
- Connect the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Macomb Orchard Trail along Gratiot Road as part of the statewide Great Lake to Lake Trail.
- Connect the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail in Port Huron and Port Huron Township.
- Assist Fort Gratiot Township in connecting the Bridge to Bay Trail system to Fort Gratiot County Park, including a safe M-25 pedestrian crossing at Metcalf Road.
- Connect to other land and water trails owned or operated by neighboring counties.
- Extend the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Yale.
- Work with transportation agencies to provide non-motorized access to trail, parks, and greenways consistent with the *St. Clair County Non-Motorized Guidelines*, the *Regional Trails and Greenways Vision for St. Clair County* and the *Southeast Michigan Greenways Plan*.
- Consider acquiring abandoned railroad rights-of-way for future trails.
- Coordinate with local units of government to complete the Bridge to Bay Trail by providing technical assistance and funding support for the required local matching funds for acquisition and development grants.
- Research and pursue grant opportunities from a variety of public and private sources.
- Continue to develop and promote the *Blueways of St. Clair* and partner with local units of government to provide additional canoe and kayak launches along the Blueways.
- Ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) along all trail routes.
- Develop rustic walking/hiking trails throughout PARC facilities.
- Work with equestrian stakeholders to develop equestrian trails in appropriate locations. Provide adequate parking and river crossings for equestrian activity at PARC facilities.

## GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 2: MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Now, more than ever, multimodal solutions are critical in addressing the long-term mobility needs of St. Clair County residents and businesses. Our residents are getting older and our communities are working to attract new residents who desire a variety of mobility options. Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. Parks and trails play an important role in the provision of multimodal transportation options.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Work with local communities to encourage their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right-of-way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.
- Collaborate with local partners to secure Safe Routes to School funding for implementation of trail extensions in appropriate areas.
- Work with local units of government and law enforcement on educating people on bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Actively participate in non-motorized planning and implementation activities with groups such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and other agencies.
- Assist local communities, county departments, and other community organizations in developing strong grant applications seeking funding for multimodal projects that will benefit St. Clair County.
- Encourage cost effective trail patrols throughout the county.
- Explore opportunities to integrate non-motorized transportation infrastructure within existing transit routes.
- Work with and support local adoption of Complete Streets policies and bicycle and/or pedestrian mobility plans.
- Support the creation of bike share programs in St. Clair County downtowns that utilize existing and future segments of county trails.



### GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 3: ACTIVE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

St. Clair County ranks 50th out of 83 Michigan counties in terms of overall health according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 13% of our population is in fair or poor health and 32% of St. Clair County adults are obese. 24% of St. Clair County residents who are age 20 or older report they have no leisure-time physical activity. About 17% of St. Clair County adults smoke and another 20% have indicated they participate in binge or heavy drinking. County and local parks are in a prime position to afford residents with an accessible and inexpensive means for changing their lifestyle behaviors. A healthy population enhances the overall quality of life and economic prosperity of a community.

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Work with community partners to develop plans and guidelines that offer incentives to create walkable and bikeable communities and increase the demand and awareness for physical activity.
- Work with local road agencies to develop Complete Streets policies that can be integrated in to local master plans.
- Work with the St. Clair County Health Department and other partners on initiatives to combat alarming county health trends and build upon positive momentum.
- Include articles and information on health and fitness in the PARC Newsletter that is distributed to all residents.
- Promote active living and healthy initiatives in PARC marketing materials.
- Explore amenities and/or programming that could be implemented in PARC facilities to promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness.
- Promote walking as a means of transportation and highlight alternatives to vehicle transportation.
- Increase public awareness about where people can walk, bike, or paddle.



# PLACES AND SPACES

A community's sense of place is tied to its well-being and prosperity. PARC strives to work with community stakeholders to bolster placemaking efforts that highlight the waterfront, cultural and historical resources, and the natural environment. Bringing people and place together, parks and trails play a key role in creating desirable spaces and contribute to St. Clair County's overall quality of life. Parks bring vitality to communities and enrich the lives of residents.

## OUR GOALS FOR PLACES AND SPACES:

- INCREASED MARKETING AND TOURISM
- LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
- CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION



### ***PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 1: INCREASED MARKETING AND TOURISM***

Position PARC facilities as a key economic engine that provides unique destinations and attracts visitors to experience St. Clair County. Partner with tourism organizations in the region to cross-promote PARC assets and other tourist draws in St. Clair County.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Actively participate in the *Blue Meets Green* economic development group that works to bolster people, places, and prosperity in St. Clair County.
- Work with the Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau on marketing and promotion of the county and ensure that PARC facilities are highlighted and promoted in countywide and regional marketing materials.
- Through the development of facility-specific business plans, track usage and activity to more strategically market and promote PARC facilities to certain user groups.
- Partner with other tourism-related businesses and organizations to cross-promote and pool resources.
- Work with the Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County and other stakeholders to enhance PARC's impact on business attraction and retention. Capitalize on parks and recreation being an economic engine for St. Clair County.

### ***PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 2: LIVABLE COMMUNITIES***

Highlight the impact of parks and recreation on creating highly desirable communities that provide residents with a high quality of life and economic prosperity. According to the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University, America's local and regional public park agencies generated nearly \$140 billion in economic activity and supported almost one million jobs from their operations and capital spending alone in 2013. Truly livable communities have a sense of place. Parks and trails provide green space and open space that contributes to the community's identity.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Participate in local and regional placemaking initiatives aimed at revitalizing downtowns and creating vibrant community spaces. Understand the important role parks and recreation can play in placemaking.
- Incorporate arts and cultural activities into recreation planning.
- Work with local units of government and other partners to implement the recommendations of the *Blue Water Trail Towns Master Plan*.
- Continue to seek opportunities for local organizations to host community events within PARC facilities.
- Consider how trail extension projects can help to connect neighborhoods and provide residents with additional access to services.

### ***PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 3: CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION***

PARC's focus on cultural and historic preservation is centered on the full restoration of the Fort Gratiot Light Station buildings in accordance with the deed requirements put forward by the federal government and to increase access to this historical treasure. Additionally, Goodells County Park is home to a Historic Village that highlights St. Clair County's past.

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- Work with local tourism and marketing partners to promote the Light Station as a destination and to increase public access to and awareness of the facility.
- Construct a modern parking lot in accordance with the HSR and site plan.
- Reconstruct the 1913 gate at the end of Garfield Street.
- Protect the Light Station buildings from weather damage in accordance with the deed, which includes:
  - Replacing the roof on the Duplex Keeper's Building.
  - Addressing the tuck pointing on buildings as needed.
  - Replacing the roof of the retired Coast Guard station.
  - Replacing the roof of the Single Keeper's building.
  - Reactivating the heating system for the retired Coast Guard station.
- Work with the Port Huron Museum to facilitate programming at the Fort Gratiot Light Station site, including:
  - Providing access to the equipment building for a gift shop, ticketing and displays.
  - Providing access to the retired Coast Guard station for programming, displays, and overnight programs.
  - Providing access to the Duplex Keeper's Building for exhibits and museum offices.
  - Providing access to the Light Station grounds for special events and programs.
  - Accommodating archeological digs on the Light Station grounds.
- Collaborate with the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station to benefit the restoration of the Light Station buildings and grounds, and site interpretation.
  - Solicit donations and raise funds to financially support restorations.
  - Maintain an Agency Directed Fund with the St. Clair County Community Foundation.
  - Assist with grant writing and historical research.
  - Provide competent volunteers to aid with restoration projects.
  - Recruit volunteers to assist with the maintenance of flower beds and grounds.
  - Promote the Light Station through social media.
- Preserve and expand the Historic Village at Goodells County Park.
- Seek outside funding assistance to construct an arena building near the exhibit barns at Goodells County Park and a third pavilion at Fort Gratiot County Park.
- Seek outside funding assistance for a historic farm equipment display/demonstration facility for the machines that are already owned by the Farm Museum.

# APPENDIX: PLAN DOCUMENTATION