



St. Clair County Parks

PROGRESS REPORT

Providing Recreational Opportunities since 1995



Photo Credit: Marty Victor

Summer 2026

North Channel County Park Phase I Nears Completion

Exciting progress continues at North Channel County Park, where Phase I development is nearing completion. What was once a largely undeveloped stretch of shoreline along the North Channel of the St. Clair River is quickly transforming into one of St. Clair County's newest and most anticipated waterfront destinations.

Phase I has focused on establishing public access, including a paved parking lot, rentable picnic pavilion, park benches, and a new trailhead with a kiosk and bike rack. The trailhead connects directly to the Bridge to Bay Trail, linking the park to one of the region's most popular trail systems.

Environmental stewardship has also played an important role in early development. A variety of trees have been planted across the property through the generous support of a grant from the DTE Foundation. These efforts were brought to life with the help of volunteers and members of the local community, reinforcing the park's strong foundation of partnership and public involvement. In addition, the on-site house is being renovated to serve as the park's operations center.



Beyond these improvements, the park's natural setting offers opportunities for wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and outdoor recreation along the St. Clair River. Visitors will be able to enjoy walking, biking, fishing, and picnicking in a unique shoreline environment.

Phase II is anticipated to begin in late 2027 and will include an ADA-accessible restroom, boardwalk and walking paths, a fishing pier, and a kayak launch.



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Millage Distribution

This year marks the 32nd year that the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) will distribute 25% of the County Parks and Recreation millage funds collected back to local units of government.

The 2026 Local Millage Distribution table (located to the right) includes the 2020 Census figures used to calculate each community's share, the amount of millage funds distributed to each community over the past 32 years, and the amount of funds that will be distributed to each local unit of government this year. In 2028, St. Clair County Parks will seek a millage renewal to continue the success of the past 32 years since the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission was first established. An updated Master Plan will also be implemented in 2027. This plan is critical for County Parks to remain eligible for grant funding.

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

Community	2020 Population	Total Distribution 1995 - 2026	2026 Distribution
Algonac	4,196	\$ 606,651.73	\$ 26,321
Capac	1,983	\$ 256,161.18	\$ 12,440
Emmett	258	\$ 36,850.42	\$ 1,619
Marine City	4,079	\$ 609,627.55	\$ 25,588
Marysville	9,997	\$ 1,350,476.93	\$ 62,710
Memphis	315	\$ 47,522.57	\$ 1,976
Port Huron	28,983	\$ 4,324,443.41	\$ 181,807
Richmond	3	\$ 237.35	\$ 19
St. Clair	5,464	\$ 770,756.26	\$ 34,275
Yale	1,903	\$ 275,768.23	\$ 11,938
Berlin Township	3,115	\$ 429,498.73	\$ 19,540
Brockway Township	1,897	\$ 264,026.88	\$ 11,900
Burtchville Township	4,077	\$ 550,606.70	\$ 25,575
Casco Township	3,990	\$ 604,556.05	\$ 25,029
China Township	3,509	\$ 467,023.44	\$ 22,012
Clay Township	8,446	\$ 1,269,800.07	\$ 52,981
Clyde Township	5,523	\$ 740,282.08	\$ 34,646
Columbus Township	4,112	\$ 557,615.57	\$ 25,795
Cottrellville Township	3,406	\$ 496,662.41	\$ 21,366
East China Township	3,704	\$ 507,202.67	\$ 23,235
Emmett Township	2,257	\$ 305,512.08	\$ 14,158
Fort Gratiot Township	11,242	\$ 1,493,806.57	\$ 70,520
Grant Township	1,829	\$ 238,567.41	\$ 11,474
Greenwood Township	1,490	\$ 195,882.15	\$ 9,347
Ira Township	4,967	\$ 799,722.22	\$ 31,158
Kenockee Township	2,405	\$ 328,134.99	\$ 15,087
Kimball Township	9,609	\$ 1,242,105.35	\$ 60,276
Lynn Township	1,117	\$ 160,432.68	\$ 7,007
Mussey Township	2,251	\$ 290,174.64	\$ 14,121
Port Huron Township	10,792	\$ 1,343,960.16	\$ 67,697
Riley Township	3,199	\$ 425,431.85	\$ 20,067
St. Clair Township	7,085	\$ 901,330.51	\$ 44,444
Wales Township	3,180	\$ 410,671.28	\$ 19,948
Grand Total	160,383	\$ 21,295,426.12	\$ 1,006,076



Park News

Ira Township Park Creating Habitat for Pollinators and People

With support from St. Clair County Parks millage distribution funds, Ira Township Parks and Recreation is beginning work on a new Pollinator Meadow at Ira Township Park. The long-term restoration project will transform an open field into a thriving native habitat for pollinators, wildlife, and park visitors.

The meadow will feature a diverse mix of native Michigan flowers, grasses, and shrubs that provide blooms from spring through fall, creating an important food source for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators while improving biodiversity and soil health. A naturally occurring wet area within the field will also be enhanced as a small wetland habitat using water-tolerant native species to help absorb stormwater, reduce runoff, and support additional wildlife.



Designed to complement existing park amenities, the meadow will coexist alongside the park's disc golf course while maintaining open sightlines, walking paths, and accessibility for visitors. The project is expected to develop over the next two to four years as the habitat matures.

The Pollinator Meadow is one of several improvements supported through St. Clair County Parks millage funding in Ira Township, alongside projects including pickleball courts, trail improvements, the kayak launch, Veterans Memorial, mud kitchen play area, and disc golf course enhancements.



New Native Plant Gardens Coming to Fort Gratiot Pond

Fort Gratiot Township has approved a new native planting project at Fort Gratiot Pond designed to help reduce Canada Goose activity along the north side of the pond. This section of the Dockside Loop has experienced the highest concentration of goose droppings, a concern frequently identified by park users. Fort Gratiot Township is using a portion of its St. Clair County Parks millage distribution funding to help support the project.

The project will use a combination of native sedges, flowers, grasses, and shrubs to create a more natural shoreline habitat that discourages geese while maintaining open views of the pond. Low-growing sedges and native flowers will be planted along the pond side of the walkway this spring, while taller native grasses and shrubs will be added along the outer edge of the trail to create a natural barrier. Many of the plants will come from local native plant sources, donated plants, and volunteer-grown seedlings.

In addition to helping reduce goose droppings and improve visitor experience, the project will enhance pollinator habitat, improve shoreline stability, and support the long-term ecological health of the pond area. Minimal maintenance will be needed once the native plantings become established.



Blue Water River Walk County Park

Restoring a Historic Riverfront Landmark

A familiar piece of Port Huron's waterfront history is being revitalized at the Blue Water River Walk County Park as work nears completion on the historic transfer dock. Once used to transport railroad cars across the river and later home to the ship *Gray Fox*, the southern transfer dock is receiving nearly \$300,000 in improvements that will preserve the structure while creating a more welcoming public space.

Led by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, with support from generous local donors, the project includes a new paved connection to the main trail, updated lighting, and new decking with ADA-accessible railings. The restored dock offers residents and visitors another beautiful place along the riverfront to watch freighters, fish, enjoy the scenery, or host special events through St. Clair County Parks & Recreation.



Columbus County Park

A Renewed Focus on Habitat, Sustainability, and Park Operations

Columbus County Park is undergoing an exciting transformation as work continues on the Grasslands Project, a long-term initiative aimed at restoring and enhancing natural habitats throughout the park. This project represents a significant step forward in promoting biodiversity, improving ecosystem health, and creating a more sustainable landscape for both wildlife and visitors to enjoy.

The Grasslands Project focuses on converting sections of the park into native grassland habitat through a multi-phase process. Initial work includes forestry mulching and invasive species removal to prepare the land for future restoration. Over time, these areas will be replanted with native grasses and wildflowers, creating vibrant, low-maintenance landscapes that support pollinators and local wildlife while improving overall environmental quality.

This effort will not only enhance the park's natural beauty, but also provide educational opportunities and a unique experience for visitors to observe Michigan's native ecosystems in action. The project will continue over the next year, with noticeable changes already taking shape across the park.

In addition to the Grasslands Project, construction of the new Operations Center near the front of the park is nearing completion. This modern facility will improve efficiency for park staff and enhance daily operations, supporting the continued growth and maintenance of Columbus County Park.



Photo Credit:
Jennifer Bowman



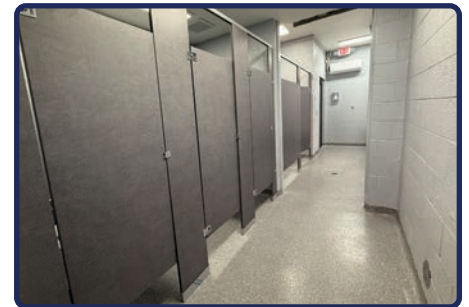
Goodells County Park

Honoring the Past, Growing the Future...

Recent upgrades at Goodells County Park are enhancing both the appearance and functionality of the park's Community Center. Visitors will notice improvements to the building's restrooms, where a complete refresh has been completed. Updates include new flooring, fresh paint, and upgraded stalls, creating a cleaner and more welcoming space for guests. Additional enhancements are still underway, with new sinks scheduled to be installed in the near future.



Looking ahead, St. Clair County Parks is exploring plans to restore the historic concession stand located on the south side of the park. Originally built in 1924, the structure holds a unique place in the park's history. Renovating the concession stand will not only preserve this historic feature but also provide park patrons with an additional gathering space, expanding opportunities for events, relaxation, and community use on the southern end of the park.



During the summer months, the park continues to be a favorite destination for families and visitors of all ages. The park's popular Splashpad offers a fun and refreshing way to cool off for families. The park also serves as a backdrop for countless special moments, hosting family gatherings, graduation parties, and weddings throughout the season.

In addition to these personal celebrations, Goodells County Park will once again serve as the backdrop for many of the community events residents have come to know and enjoy each summer. Familiar favorites like car shows, farmers markets, and the AKC dog show will return throughout the season. The park will also proudly host the long-standing St. Clair County 4-H & Youth Fair, taking place July 20–25, a cherished tradition that continues to bring generations of families together year after year.

Fort Gratiot County Park

Sun, Sand, and Summer Return to the Shoreline

With the arrival of warmer weather, Fort Gratiot County Park is once again preparing to welcome visitors for another summer along the shores of Lake Huron. The park's popular beach will officially open beginning Memorial Day weekend, marking the unofficial start of the summer season and offering residents and visitors a scenic place to relax, swim, and enjoy the waterfront.

Known for its expansive shoreline and convenient location, Fort Gratiot County Park continues to be one of the most visited destinations within the St. Clair County Parks system. Guests can take advantage of picnic areas, playgrounds, and easy beach access, making it a favorite spot for families throughout the region.

Visitors are reminded that St. Clair County residents park for free with valid proof of residency, while out-of-county guests are required to pay a \$20 daily parking fee. This fee structure helps support ongoing park maintenance and improvements while continuing to provide accessible recreation opportunities for county residents.

Looking ahead, St. Clair County Parks is focused on enhancing the visitor experience through future improvements at the park. Plans include replacing aging playground equipment, some of which has been in place for more than two decades, as well as making accessibility upgrades to better serve visitors of all abilities. These improvements aim to ensure the park remains safe, welcoming, and enjoyable for generations to come.

As another summer season begins, Fort Gratiot County Park remains a cornerstone of outdoor recreation in St. Clair County, offering a place where families and friends can gather, unwind, and make lasting memories along Michigan's beautiful Blue Water shoreline.



Fort Gratiot Light Station

Preserving a Landmark: Coast Guard Station

Restoration Moves Forward

Work continues at the historic Fort Gratiot Light Station, where restoration efforts are breathing new life into the former U.S. Coast Guard Station. The Retired Coast Guard Station building is part of a larger complex with structures dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s. Since the property was transferred in 2010, all work has followed a detailed Historic Structures Report to preserve the site's original character.

Recent progress has been driven in large part by the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light, whose volunteers have taken an active, hands-on role. Crews have assisted with projects like removing outdated aluminum siding, an important step in restoring the building's historic appearance. Their continued support through time, labor, and funding remains vital to the project's success.



1930s photo of Captain Brown and company in front of the U.S. Coast Guard Building

Restoration efforts are funded through a mix of grants, partnerships, and local contributions. Past work has included structural repairs, historically accurate window replacements, and interior improvements across the site, moving the station closer to its long-term vision as a fully restored campus for public use and interpretation.

As work continues, the Friends organization has made the difficult decision to pause the Blue Water Sandfest for 2026 to refocus on its core mission of restoration and preservation. In its place, planning is underway for new and re-imagined events that will continue to engage the community while supporting ongoing improvements.



With each milestone, the Light Station continues to evolve, preserving its past while creating new opportunities for residents and visitors to experience St. Clair County's maritime heritage.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

Improving Accessibility Along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail continues to be one of St. Clair County's most treasured recreational destinations, offering miles of scenic beauty for walkers, runners, bicyclists, and nature enthusiasts throughout the year. As use of the trail continues to grow, St. Clair County Parks is actively planning future improvements aimed at making the trail even more accessible and enjoyable for all visitors.



Grant applications are currently being submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund to support several improvement projects along the trail corridor. One of the primary focuses is the historic trestle bridge near the Avoca Trailhead, where aging decking is in need of replacement, along with updated ADA-compliant railings to improve accessibility and safety for trail users.

Additional proposed improvements include the installation of ADA-accessible benches in several locations along the trail, providing more opportunities for visitors to rest and enjoy the surrounding scenery. Plans also include creating accessible pathways connecting ADA parking spaces to the existing restroom facilities and trail entrance areas, helping ensure the trail remains welcoming and usable for visitors of all abilities.

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail is also home to one of the community's favorite annual traditions, the Trek the Trestle Labor Walk, hosted by St. Clair County Parks each Labor Day. The event begins at 9 a.m. at the Avoca Trailhead, where participants walk approximately 2.5 miles through the trail corridor, across the iconic trestle bridge, to the Imlay City Road trailhead and back, for a total of five miles.



Following the walk, participants can enjoy Michigan-made food products generously donated by local labor unions. Proceeds from the event benefit the United Way of St. Clair County, making the annual walk both a celebration of community and an opportunity to support local families in need.

With continued investment and community support, the Wadhams to Avoca Trail will remain a valued destination for recreation, accessibility, and outdoor experiences for years to come.

Woodsong County Park

Community Partnerships Enhance Recreation and Habitat

New improvements and volunteer-led projects continue to enhance Woodsong County Park, helping expand both recreation and wildlife habitat within the scenic Black River park.



Thanks to the creativity and hard work of three dedicated Girl Scouts, Woodsong County Park now features three new bird nest boxes designed for Eastern Bluebirds and Wood Ducks. Woodsong has a special history as a former Girl Scout camp before becoming part of the county park system in 2008, making the project an especially meaningful connection to the park's past.

As part of their Girl Scout Silver Award project, Avery, Emily, and Evelyn from Troop 89607 researched bird habitats and nesting behaviors, raised funds, built and installed the nest boxes, and created interpretive signs and brochures to help visitors learn about bird conservation. The Silver Award is the highest honor a Cadette Girl Scout can achieve. St. Clair County Parks greatly appreciates the dedication of the girls, their families, and Girl Empowerment Specialist Jennie Davis for bringing new life to Woodsong County Park.

The park's mountain bike trail system also continues to grow thanks to the ongoing partnership with the Bluewater Trail Advocates. Volunteers with the group have added additional trail segments while continuing to assist with routine trail maintenance and improvements, helping make Woodsong County Park a popular destination for outdoor recreation and trail enthusiasts throughout St. Clair County.

Upcoming Events at St. Clair County Parks

FrankenFest

June 27
Fort Gratiot Light Station
frankenfest.com/
porthuron-2026

St. Clair County 4-H & Youth Fair

July 20 - 25
Goodells County Park
stclaircounty4hfair.org

St. Clair County Farm Museum - Harvest Days

August 28 - 30
Goodells County Park
stclaircountyfarmmuseum.org

Trek the Trestle Labor Day Walk

September 7
Avoca Trailhead
Wadhams to Avoca Trail

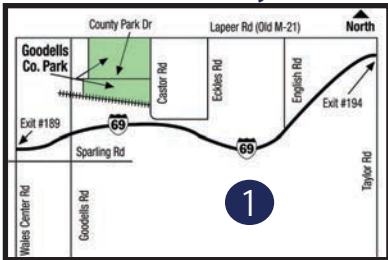
St. Clair Kennel Club AKC Dog Show

September 11 - 13
Goodells County Park
stclairkrc.org

For more upcoming events at St. Clair County Parks visit www.stclaircountyparks.org

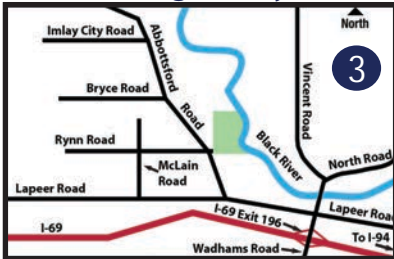
Directions to All St. Clair County Parks and Trails

Goodells County Park



8254 County Park Drive, Goodells, MI

Woodsong County Park



5980 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI

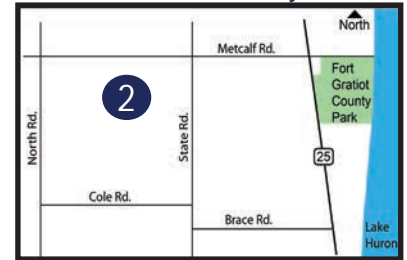
Columbus County Park



1670 Bauman Road, Columbus, MI

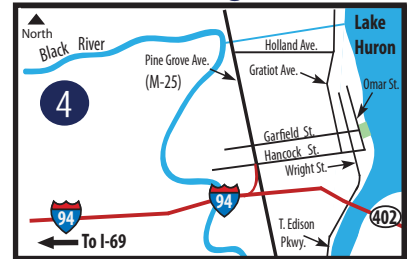


Fort Gratiot County Park



3325 Metcalf Road, Fort Gratiot, MI

Fort Gratiot Light Station



2802 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI

Blue Water River Walk County Park



2200 Military Street, Port Huron, MI

North Channel County Park



2431 Pointe Tremble, Clay Twp., MI
UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Wadhams to Avoca Trail (Green)

Starts at Griswold Road in Port Huron Township just west of I-94 and ends in the downtown area of Avoca at M-136

Bridge to Bay Trail (Blue)

Runs near the eastern border of St. Clair County and links 13 communities from Burtchville Township to Ira Township



St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission
 8254 County Park Drive
 Goodells, MI 48027
 Telephone (810) 989-6960

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ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS

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ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS SUMMER HOURS

Goodells County Park - April through October from 8 am - 10 pm
 Fort Gratiot & Columbus County Parks - Memorial Day through Labor Day from 8 am - 9 pm
 Blue Water River Walk, Fort Gratiot Light Station & Woodsong County Parks
 are open dawn to dusk year round

WE ARE NOW DIGITAL!

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- Cindy Babisz Vice-Chair
- Melissa Hanners Secretary
- T.J. Gaffney Commissioner
- Mike Lauwers Commissioner
- Chris Ruemenapp Commissioner
- Katie Stepp Commissioner
- Linda Taylor Commissioner
- Joi Torello Commissioner
- Anthony Youtsos Commissioner

Parks and Recreation Staff

- Dennis C. Delor Director
- Brad Brenske Deputy Director - Projects
- Kelly Whittington Office Coordinator
- Clerk II
- Jennifer CatanzaroMarketing & Graphic
 Design Coordinator
- Kirsten Lyons..... Park Naturalist - Invasive
 Species Specialist

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

VISIT US @
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Questions? Email us at countyparks@stclaircounty.org