Calling all county residents!

We are preparing our five-year Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Plan that will be released in 2021. The completion of this plan ensures that we are eligible for state grant funds and provides a road map for park and trail development. Part of that process is surveying both our residents and park users. If you are an Ottawa County resident, please help us improve and plan for the future by taking our survey before May 1: [bit.ly/2020-parks-survey](https://bit.ly/2020-parks-survey)

You can find the plan that was released in 2016 online: [miottawa.org/Parks/park-plan.htm](https://miottawa.org/Parks/park-plan.htm)

We are hiring

We are searching for candidates interested in working outdoors this spring and summer. The opportunities are perfect for students (18+) who are home on break, retirees who want to spend more time outside, or anyone interested in parks. Apply online: [miOttawa.org/apply](https://miOttawa.org/apply)

Motor Vehicle Permit pre-sale

For the first time ever, Annual Motor Vehicle Permits are available to purchase online through May 15. Even though we anticipate much smaller beaches this season (more info on page 2), we will still have them open to provide access to Lake Michigan. To purchase your pass online, visit us here: [countyofottawaparksandrec.perfectmind.com](https://countyofottawaparksandrec.perfectmind.com)

Visit us on the water

We are taking reservations for transient boat slips at the new Ottawa Beach Marina! It’s a great way to access Lake Michigan while camping at Holland State Park or enjoying a stay-cation. Reservations can be made on the DNR website: [midnrreservations.com](https://midnrreservations.com)

In April, the Ottawa County Parks Nature Center turns 10! We’ll celebrate this special milestone on Saturday, April 25.

While you visit that day, please share your suggestions on what the next decade of nature education should look like.

Native Gardening Presentation, 10 am-12 pm - $5/person

Increase sustainability in your backyard! Learn more about this presentation on page 7. This presentation is hosted by the Ottawa Conservation District.

Nature Center Scavenger Hunt, 12-4 pm - free

Join us anytime for a self-guided, family-friendly scavenger hunt. Complete all of the activities to earn a special badge. At 1 pm, we’ll enjoy birthday cake!

This event is sponsored by the Ottawa County Parks Foundation

Thank you for continued support! If you have not yet joined us for a nature program or guided activity, please consider it this season. Summer camps and program information can be found on pages 5-7. The Nature Center is located at Hemlock Crossing County Park on the Pigeon River Greenway.
The development of a master plan for Ottawa Sands has begun with our consultant Viridis Design Group! The planning process will include multiple opportunities for public comment throughout 2020, including meetings, events, and an online survey. The survey and a schedule of events will be posted online, and a sign up for real-time updates may be found at: miOttawa.org/ottawasands

Save the date for a special public input event at Ottawa Sands on June 13, 2020! Time is TBA.

In the spring and summer, we will be working with partners to conduct a natural features inventory (NFI), including a marsh breeding bird population and wetland assessment in partnership with the Great Lakes Audubon.

- The NFI was funded in part by a Coastal Zone Management Grant and will be conducted by local botanist and volunteer, Bill Martinus, and state herpetology expert, Dave Mifsud.
- The wetland/marsh assessment was funded by the Sustain Our Great Lakes Program through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

As you are surely aware, the water level on Lake Michigan is extremely high. This will continue to affect our lake shore parks by drastically reducing the size of our beaches, eroding dunes (and trails), limiting special uses, and in some cases, removal of wood stairs and boardwalks.

We are committed to providing safe beach access to all of our Lake Michigan properties, even under trying conditions. Here are things to keep in mind as you plan a visit to the beach:

- Trails may be closed! In some places, dune erosion has affected trails and boardwalks. Be sure to read posted signs when you arrive at these parks to see if there are any new closures.
- With the closure of the Kirk Park Dog Beach stairs and the increasingly shrinking beach, we are going to do our best to balance both pet owners and sun bathers. Pet owners can use the north stairs to get to the dog beach and should follow signs and fencing south. Dogs must remain on-leash until you reach the dog beach area.
- Visitors should not dig into or sit directly on or under the sand cliffs at the beach. Collapsing sand can be very dangerous.
- Rental facilities at Tunnel Park, Kirk Park, and North Beach Park will still be available.
- Please be respectful to each other and to neighbors. Make room for other beach goers and be mindful that your spot in the sun is on park property, not private property.

Vehicle permits will still be required Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Revenue from these permits will help support restoration of these properties when the water levels return to normal. Thank you for considering an annual or daily pass, even if the conditions are not optimal.

What is a Greenway?

A connected and ecologically-related corridor of park or protected green space, set aside for recreational use or environmental protection.
Paw Paw Park Improvements

Macatawa River Greenway

Park improvements will continue at Paw Paw Park (West) this year, including the complete removal and repaving of the main parking loop along with new curbing and pavement markings.

Did you know?
Paw Paw Park is located on the Macatawa Green Trail 1.0. This initial effort provides trailhead maps and wayfinding along a designated route. It utilizes existing paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks to provide a safe cycling route through the Holland area.

Did you know?
Paw Paw Park Improvements

Macatawa River Greenway

In December, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) board recommended $300,000 in development funds to be allocated to the development and construction of a one-mile segment of the Idema Explorers Trail in Jenison.

The Jenison Mill segment will connect a portion of the Idema Explorers Trail along Cottonwood Drive to existing trail in Kent County. It allows users easier access to the Grand River; to great recreation areas like Millennium Park, which has 20 miles of paved pathway; and to many miles of regional trail, including seven miles of riverfront trail in Kent County, the Grand Rapids bike lane network, Kent Trails, and the Fred Meijer Standale Trail.

Did you know?
The Idema Explorers Trail is a key feature of the Grand River Greenway which is comprised of 9,000 acres of public land between Grand Haven and Grand Rapids. This trail will connect these two great cities and many communities in between!

GET TO KNOW YOUR GREENWAY

Ottawa County Parks offers programs, events, and camps all year-long. Check out pages 6-7 for more details about opportunities to Get to Know Your Greenway.

Learn more about this $41 million initiative: grandrivergreenway.org

Grand Lady Riverboat Trip

May 12, 1:30 pm & 4 pm

Schedule a spring outing and support the Friends of Ottawa County Parks at the same time! Enjoy interesting speakers, great scenery and wildlife, live music, and the fun of a paddle wheeler experience. This trip is an excellent way to Get to Know Your Greenway from a special perspective.

Reservation forms are available online: friendsofocp.org

- Print, complete, and return the form (with payment)
- $15 per person
- Provide a name and email address for your group confirmation

Trips depart and return to the boat launch at Grand River Park. Excursions will be held rain or shine (no refunds). If you are unable to attend, you may transfer your reservation to a friend; notify Friends of any changes.

Funds raised from these trips support Friends of Ottawa County Parks’ projects, including a Grand Lady Riverboat field trip for students! Friends is dedicated to connecting people with nature, recreation, and community by partnering with Ottawa County Parks.

More events hosted by our Friends!

Grand Ravines Lodge
Open House, 1-5 pm

- April 5
- April 19
- April 26
- May 3
- May 10
- May 17

Pine Bend Weaver House
Open House, 1-4 pm

- May 17
- June 21
- July 19
- August 16
- September 20

These facilities (and more!) are available to rent for special events and meetings. Learn more about renting a park facility: miOttawa.org/parks
This free, 8-week program is designed to help you get active and visit new parks. Step it Up! begins on April 20. Registration opens on March 20; visit us online to sign up for alerts.

**STEP IT UP! GROUP WALKS**

- April 20 6 pm  Hemlock Crossing
- April 24 6 pm  Saugatuck Dunes
- April 28 6 pm  Pigeon Creek
- May 6 6 pm  Connor Bayou
- May 14 6 pm  Grand Ravines - South
- May 18 6 pm  Riley Trails
- May 20 6 pm  Outdoor Discovery Center (Allegan County)
- May 26 6 pm  Hager Park*
  *Family Fun Walk + Playground Meet Up

- June 2 6 pm  Bysterveld Park (Allegan County)
- June 6 6 pm  Eastmanville Farm
- June 11 6 pm  Upper Macatawa Natural Area
- June 13 10 am  Hemlock Crossing

**STEP IT UP! ADVENTURES**

- May 3 12-2 pm  Healthy Eating at Grand Ravines
- May 9 10 am-2 pm  Nature Navigation at Hiawatha Forest
- May 23 10 am-2 pm  Kayaking at Grand River Park
- May 30 10 am-2 pm  Mountain Biking at Riley Trails

**EARLY SPROUTS - AGES 3-5 (w/caregiver) • $5/session**

Activities in this camp will engage caregiver and child interactions in the outdoors. Caregivers will play an active role during camp. Sessions run from 9:30-11 am at Hemlock Crossing.

**NATURE BUDS - AGES 6-8 • $5/session**

Explore and engage with nature! Activities may include using dip nets in our wetland, scooping up butterflies in insect nets, and searching for salamanders. Sessions are 9:30-11:30 am and are offered at both Hemlock Crossing and Hager Park.

**OUTDOOR ART CAMP! - AGES 5-10 • $25/session**

Use nature as a material to create with, a space to create in, and as inspiration for painting, drawing, printmaking, papermaking, sculpting, and more. Three-day sessions offered in afternoons at Hemlock Crossing.

**JUNIOR NATURALISTS - AGES 9-11 • $10/session**

Explore nature through various outdoor recreational activities. Children will increase their knowledge and appreciation of nature while engaged and active in the outdoors. Sessions are generally 9 am-12 pm (although we have one special evening camp!) and are offered at a variety of locations.

**PARKS EXPLORER - AGES 12-16 • $40/session**

Explore parks and develop your leadership potential through outdoor recreation. Activities include hiking, kayaking, fishing, wilderness skills, and navigation. Every day is a new adventure! Sessions are 9 am-5 pm at a variety of locations; optional early drop-off at 8 am is available for an additional $5 per session.

Join us for a workday
Help us care for the parks you love! Here’s what you should know about Stewardship Workdays:
- Bring work gloves (preferably leather), insect repellent, and appropriate attire for the outdoors.
- All tools, drinking water, and snacks will be provided.
- No preregistration is required.
- All ages welcome; 16 and under must be with an adult.

Work days are cancelled if raining (or snowing).
Questions? Contact us: (616) 994-4748

Garlic Mustard Pull
Saturday, May 2, 2020, 9-11 am, Hemlock Crossing

Monarch Waystation Garden Clean Up
Saturday, May 2, 12-2 pm, Grand River Park
These programs are hosted at the Ottawa County Parks Nature Center, located in Hemlock Crossing Park, (unless otherwise noted). They are designed for ages 12 and older. For younger child and family programs, see the next page.

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS
Learn more about the natural history of local wildlife.
Presentations are followed by a guided hike.
• March 21, 3-4 pm - Frogsicles - Wood Frogs & Winter
• April 18, 3-4 pm - Woodpeckers: Peck’n Out a Liv’n
• May 23, 3-4 pm - Watching Wildlife Walk

EQUINOX EXPEDITION
Celebrate the Vernal Equinox with a hike along the Pigeon River!
• March 28, 2-3:15 pm

LESSONS FROM A PARK RANGER
Join a National Park Service Ranger as she shares a final installment of stories and lessons learned from five seasons as a Ranger at Isle Royale and Grand Teton.
• March 27, 7:30-9 pm • Grand Ravines (North)
• May 2, 8-9 pm • Grand River Park
• April 4, 8-9 pm • Hager Park
• May 3, 2-3:30 pm • Grand River Park
• May 16, 10-11:30 am • Rosy Mound Natural Area
• May 17, 2-3:30 pm • Grand Ravines (North)
• May 31, 2-3:30 pm • Stearns Creek

WILDFLOWER WALKS
Woodland flowers, called spring ephemerals, bloom in early spring. Join us for a walk to enjoy them.
• April 19, 2:30-3:30 pm • Grand Ravines (North)
• April 23, 2-3:30 pm • Hager Park
• May 3, 2-3:30 pm • Grand River Park
• May 16, 10-11:30 am • Rosy Mound Natural Area
• May 17, 2-3:30 pm • Grand Ravines (North)
• May 31, 2-3:30 pm • Stearns Creek

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS
Registration required via Conservation District: ottawacd.org
• Gardening with Native Plants: April 25, 10 am-12 pm
• Native Plant Installation Workshop: April 28, 6-8 pm
• Native Plant Sale: May 6, 1-6 pm

EAGLES OF GRAND RAVINES WALKS
Registration required - these walks always fill quickly
Meet at the Grand Ravines (North) Lodge
Join a naturalist to learn the story of the resident pair of Bald eagles and for a chance to view these majestic birds!
• April 26 - Walks begin every hour: 1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm, 4 pm
• May 10 - Walks begin every hour: 1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm, 4 pm

MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES GROUP WALK
Registration required, $5/person
Have you ever carried stress with you into the woods? Learn some techniques designed to get you in touch with nature.
• May 9, 10-11:30 am

ART WORKSHOP
Registration required, $30/person
With an emphasis on nature, explore both the creative and technical aspects of photography: composition, editing, and basic camera operation. Designed for newer photographers using SLR cameras. Weather permitting, plan on an outdoor photo shoot.
• April 11, 10 am-3 pm

PHOTOGRAPH LIKE THE PROS
Registration required, $25/person
This workshop will aid participants in using Newcomb's Wildflower Guide to identify native wildflowers found in our Parks. Bring your own Newcomb's Wildflower Guide or place an order for one to purchase when registering.
• April 18, 10 am-12 pm • Grand Ravines (North)

IDENTIFYING WILDFLOWER WORKSHOP
Registration required
This workshop will aid participants in using Newcomb's Wildflower Guide to identify native wildflowers found in our Parks. Bring your own Newcomb's Wildflower Guide or place an order for one to purchase when registering.
• May 23, 10 am-12 pm

PIGEON RIVER KAYAK TRIP
Registration required, $8/person + $12 kayak rental (if needed)
Enjoy the sights and sounds of the Pigeon River by kayak as you paddle through the park with a guide. Each trip includes a basic kayaking lesson. No experience is needed.
• May 30, 9:30 am-1:30 pm

EARTH ENCOUNTERS: AMAZING AGATES
Agates are a naturally occurring mineral formation. Learn about their history, how they are formed, and where you can find them. You'll get to take home your own hand-crafted agate!
• June 6, 3-4:30 pm

TWILIGHT HIKES
Registration required, $5/person; ages 12+
In spring, as light of day turns to dark of night, wildlife springs to life! Come experience your favorite parks in a whole new way as you explore them by the light of fading day!
• April 17, 8-9:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
• May 1, 8:30-10 pm • Grand River Park
• May 15, 8:30-10 pm • Hemlock Crossing

WHISTLE OF THE WHIP-POOR-WILL
Registration required, $5/person; ages 12+
Introduce yourselves to this summer whistler of the moonlit woods! A short presentation at the Nature Center will be followed by a moonlit field trip to a few of its local haunts to experience this bird first-hand.
• June 5, 9-11 pm • Hemlock Crossing
• June 12, 9-11 pm • Hemlock Crossing

In the parks... after dark!

ASTRONOMY
Ages 12+
Presented by the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association, each indoor program is followed by outdoor night sky observation with telescopes at Hemlock Crossing.
• April 4, 8-9 pm - Astrophotography
• May 2, 8-9 pm - Summer Sky
• June 6, 9-11 pm - Star Gazing (no indoor program)

WOODCOCK WALK
Registration required, $5/person; ages 12+
Introduce yourselves to these birds with a short presentation, then enjoy watching the sun set to the twitter of displaying woodcocks.
• March 27, 7:30-9 pm • Grand Ravines (North)
• April 3, 7:30-9 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Family fun

Family-friendly programs are hosted at the Ottawa County Parks Nature Center located in Hemlock Crossing County Park. Information about summer camps can be found on page 5.

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS - for kids! ☺ ☛ ☑
Registration required; ages 5-12, with a caregiver
This series introduces children to wildlife found in our own yards, parks and region. Each program includes activities, a guided walk, and a craft.

- March 15, 3-4:30 pm - Frogcicles: Wood Frogs & Winter
- April 19, 3-4:30 pm - Woodpeckers: Peck’n Out a Liv’n
- May 17, 3-4:30 pm - Watching Wildlife Walk

TOT TIME ☻ ☛ ☑
Registration required, $5/child; ages 0-3, with a caregiver
Our littlest visitors are invited to explore nature through books, music and movement, activities, and a group walk along a stroller and wagon-friendly path.

- March 19, 9:45-10:45 am
- April 16, 9:45-10:45 am
- May 21, 9:45-10:45 am

FAMILY DAYS - ART IN NATURE ☻ ☛ ☑
Registration required, $2/person; ages 5+
Bring the whole family to explore nature through creative artmaking, stories, and a short guided walk. This program is led by a local artist & naturalist who will guide fun experimenting with many art processes like papermaking, painting, felting, sculpting, and more! Each session will offer a different theme and activities.

- April 26, 2-4 pm
- May 31, 2-4 pm

FAMILY FUNGUS DAY ☻ ☛ ☑
Registration required via Conservation District: ottawacd.org
Free; ages 12+
Celebrate one of the most peculiar features of forests in spring, the mushroom! Join Conservation District Forester Ben Savoie as he guides you and your family through all of what fungi provide to the forests of Michigan. All participating families will “plant” their own mushroom log to take home and grow.

- May 16, 1-3 pm

TWILIGHT HIKES - for kids & families! ☻ ☛ ☑
Registration required, $5/person; ages 5+
In spring, as light of day turns to dark of night, wildlife springs to life! Come experience your favorite parks in a whole new way as you explore them by the light of fading day!

- May 29, 8:30-10 pm

Contact the Nature Center:
(616) 786-4847
Register for programs, classes, & camps:
miOttawa.org/OCPEvents

WHAT’S THIS SYMBOL?
This is the Idema Explorers Trail logo, the trail connection along the Grand River Greenway – a $41 million initiative spearheaded by Ottawa County Parks. Programs with the logo next to it are perfect opportunities to Get to Know Your Greenway. Learn more about the greenways in Ottawa County on pages 2-3.

Birding

BIRDING WALKS
Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of spring bird migration! At the beginner walks, participants will be introduced to binocular use, bird identification, field guides, and common birds in our parks. Binoculars and field guides provided.

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>April 1</td>
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<td>Pine Bend</td>
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<td>April 8</td>
<td>8-10 am</td>
<td>Crockery Creek</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td>10-11:30 am</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing - Beginner</td>
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<td>April 15</td>
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<td>Paw Paw (East)</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
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<td>April 29</td>
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<td>Upper Macatawa Natural Area (84th St)</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
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<td>Hemlock Crossing - Beginner</td>
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<td>Grand Ravines (North) - Beginner</td>
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<td>May 6</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
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<td>Lakeshore Birding*</td>
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<td>May 23</td>
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<td>Pigeon River Greenway Birding Blitz*</td>
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<td>Hemlock Crossing - Beginner</td>
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<td>May 27</td>
<td>8-10 am</td>
<td>Connor Bayou</td>
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*Multiple locations; more information can be found in the program description on the right.

LAKESHORE BIRDING
Join us for a stationary lake watch from the pier looking for migratory waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds or take a hike on the dunes in search of migratory sparrows, warblers and more on May 9.

- Lake Watch: 8-9:30 am • Grand Haven North Pier
- Shoreline Dunes: 10 am-12 pm • North Beach Park

GREENWAY BIRDING BLITZ!
Celebrate the migration by birding along the Pigeon River Greenway! Join us at one or more locations on May 23.

- 7-9 am • Pigeon Lake
- 9:30-11 am • Pine Bend
- 12-2 pm • Hemlock Crossing
- 3-5 pm • Pigeon Creek Park

BIG DAY BIRDING FIELD TRIP ☻ ☛ ☑
Registration required, $20/person
How many bird species can we find in Ottawa County in one day? Several county parks, as well as other locations, will be searched for waterbirds, raptors, songbirds, and more.

- May 15, 7 am-4 pm • Locations TBD