New Parks Brochure!

An updated version of the Parks Brochure will be available in June! Stop by the Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing or the Parks Office to pick up a copy.

Beach wheel chair at North Beach Park

Thanks to a donation from the Friends of Ottawa County Parks, an accessible beach wheel chair is available for the public to use free-of-charge at North Beach Park. The wheel chair was designed to navigate the sand and can also float in the water.

The Mobi Chair is available Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day during park hours. Anyone interested in using it should speak to the Park Attendant on duty.

Parks Passes

Parking fees are collected from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day at the following parks:

- Tunnel Park
- Rosy Mound Natural Area
- Olive Shores
- North Beach Park
- Kirk Park

An annual motor vehicle permit is required at the Riverside Park boat launch Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

Annual Pass Pricing

- Resident: $15 / Resident Seniors (60+): $7
- Resident multi-vehicle: Annual pass + $5
- NEW! Resident hang tag: $20
- Resident senior hang tag: $12
- Non-resident (incl. seniors): $25

Annual permits may be purchased at the Nature Education Center, the Parks Office, and most lakeshore park entrance gates during the summer. The Oaklea Store (near Riverside Park) also sells permits. The Michigan State Recreation Passport is not valid at Ottawa County Parks.

Activities and programs are brought to you by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

Greg DeJong, Chair
Roger Bergman, Vice Chair
Joe Baumann
Matthew Fenske

Francisco C. Garcia
James Holtvluwer
Kelly Kuiper
Philip Kuyers

Allen Dannenberg
Mike Haverdink
Don Disselkoen
**Potential New Park**

Property along Stearns Creek is being explored

Important progress has been made in an effort to expand the Grand River Greenway in Robinson Township. For a number of years, Ottawa County Parks has explored options to purchase an ecologically important property with over 6,000 feet of frontage on Steams Bayou and Steams Creek. This 117-acre property features exceptional floodplain and wetland areas with rare stands of wild rice, a state-threatened species. It also includes small traces of old growth forest and scenic views of the Steams Creek floodplain as well as abandoned farmland which has good potential for restoration as oak savannah habitat. If successfully acquired, the current plan is to create a park at the site, with natural surface trails, overlooks, and fishing and kayak access on Steams Bayou.

A grant was submitted in fall 2016 to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) to fund a portion of the acquisition cost. Ottawa County Parks was recently informed that the CELCP grant has been awarded. In order to complete the purchase, however, additional grant and private funding is needed. Therefore, a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application was submitted to help match the CELCP grant. If the Trust Fund grant is successful and additional private funding is identified, it is possible that the Steams Creek property could be purchased in summer or fall of 2018.

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**Park Maintenance Updates**

**North Beach Park Sidewalk**

My Barefoot Wedding in Spring Lake recently donated $2,400 to repair sidewalk North Beach Park. Repairs were completed in the spring, and the park is ready for summer. Don’t forget your park pass!

**Riley Trails Parking Lot**

The Riley Trails parking lot is scheduled to be paved mid-June. The specific dates are weather dependent; keep an eye on Facebook for the closure notice. The project will be completed during the voting season, which is expected to take about a week.

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**Ottawa County Parks Foundation**

The Ottawa County Parks Foundation is off to a successful start! In May, the group hosted their first fundraising event, raising nearly $35,000. We are so grateful to have their support.

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**Grand Ravines Suspension Bridge**

In April, the Ottawa County Parks Foundation celebrated its official launch as a 501(c)(3). To demonstrate the impact private donations can have on the park system, the Parks Commission made a major announcement: the construction of a suspension bridge at Grand Ravines Park.

When the master plan was created for Grand Ravines, those beautiful deep ravines made it challenging to design a viable hiking trail system. We were fortunate to get a permanent trail easement donated by neighboring landowners Ray and Alma Statema, which helped in navigating the steep terrain. Crossing a major ravine with a trail was unavoidable and a suspension bridge was added into the plan, but we knew it was an amenity that may never be financially feasible,” said David VanGinhoven, President of the Parks Foundation and board member of the Parks Foundation.

Beatrice Aldrich Idema very generously donated $350,000 to construct a suspension bridge across this major ravine allowing a trail connection between the north and south sides of Grand Ravines Park. The suspension bridge will be 275 feet long and 70 feet in the air. It will be fully ADA accessible, with a paved path leading to one side of the bridge. The cost of this pathway will be covered by a generous donation from Ray and Alma Statema.

Construction on the bridge will begin this spring. The bridge is anticipated to be ready for the public to use in fall of 2017.

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**Step it Up this summer & fall!**

Join us as we “virtually walk” 210 miles along regional trails in Michigan. The challenge begins Monday, August 14. This free program is designed to help you stay active and explore new parks. Participants of all fitness levels are invited to join.

Simply track and report your steps each week to be eligible for weekly prizes (a FitBit fitness tracker will be awarded each week).

Join us for one or all of our optional group walks as we explore different county parks. Each walk will be led by a naturalist guide, and different pace groups will be available.

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**GROUP WALK SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 14</td>
<td>5:30-6:30 pm</td>
<td>Pigeon Creek Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 19</td>
<td>10-11 am</td>
<td>North Ottawa Dunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24</td>
<td>5:30-6:30 pm</td>
<td>Paw Paw Park (East)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>5:30-6:30 pm</td>
<td>Grand River Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>10-11 am</td>
<td>Rosy Mound Natural Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>5:30-6:30 pm</td>
<td>Upper Macatawa Natural Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>6-7 pm</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volunteer Spotlight: Park Stewards

The Park Stewards program was created last year because of a number of particularly enthusiastic volunteers who had the time and desire to volunteer more frequently. Caring for our natural resources is a high priority for Ottawa County Parks, but one that could use an infinite amount of staff and financial resources. Tasking dedicated volunteers with some of these projects seemed like a perfect fit. Spring through fall, we offer a project once during the work week and once on a weekend. Park Stewards aren’t required to attend every workday, but many of them do! The Park Stewards program isn’t connected to a specific property or project, so it balances the consistency of other programs, where groups return to one park many times per year. Park Stewards projects have included tree planting, bank stabilization, surveying for and pulling invasive plants, planting monarch waystations, and constructing blue bird boxes. In the last year, they have worked in various parks and open spaces all over the county. Park Stewards agree that variety is a draw. Estelle Charroud, who often volunteers with her children, said, “We love the diversity of projects that are offered. Every year we get to explore new parks and help with new projects. It has been a delight bonding and learning with my family. My son likes to say that he goes on many adventures with his family.” We hope to soon offer web-based training to Park Stewards. Investing in additional training will build the capacity of the program by allowing these amazing volunteers to take on leadership roles for future workdays. By creating more natural resources experts, the Park Stewards program contributes to the bettering of our community. Tena Hop, a volunteer who also maintains a portion of the North Country Trail with her husband, said, “Seeing how well the parks are taking care of invasive species has had an impact on me. I see these pests all through the woods, and a couple of weeks ago I pulled six bags of garlic mustard off our section of trail. It spurs me to be more vigilant.” Charroud agreed, “My children have gained a wealth of knowledge about nature, wildlife, and conserving the environment. They have learned what it is to work and try and make a difference. We also have been so fortunate to have met friends who we consider part of our family.”

Citizen scientists make a difference... help us find HWA!

Out for a walk in the park? Take a look at the hemlock trees! If you notice anything unusual, drop a pin on your phone and share the GPS location with us. Another option is to mark the tree branch with a ribbon.

- You can identify HWA by looking for a white woolly substance found on the base of the needles. This woolly substance is actually a mass of eggs.
- Check the underside of the branches.
- The adelgids are mobile this time of year. Make sure you give your hiking clothes and the bottom of your boots a good scrub before heading out again.
- Eggs and young adelgids can be spread during spring bird migration, so often infestations are at the very top of the tree. If you’re checking your trees, be safe.

Find out more information and print a membership form.

HWA Task Force Update

Pest detection

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) was confirmed at Silver Lake, Muskegon State Park, Př Hoffmaster State Park, Holland State Park, and Historic Ottawa Beach Parks. Six other county lakeshore parks were surveyed and currently they are free of detectable HWA.

What can you do at home to help?

We recommend removing bird feeders between the months of April and July, especially if your feeders are near hemlock trees. During these months, the adelgids can be easily picked up and spread by migrating birds.

Report HWA to saveMIhemlocks.org

New: Parks Sustainability Plan

The Parks Commission and staff have been working to complete a Sustainability Plan for the park system, which is nearly complete. Preserving and restoring parkland, protecting critical watersheds, maintaining native wildlife and plant species, and providing high quality recreational activities are important for the future of the parks. The purpose of a Sustainability Plan is to ensure that Ottawa County will be able to maintain its current practices and develop a strategy for future opportunities with an ever-growing population and increasing park use. The plan identifies goals Ottawa County Parks aspires to accomplish within five years, at which time the plan will be reviewed. The goals are organized into Environmental, Economic, and Social Sustainability. Objectives and actions will be included to specify the exact steps that must be taken in order to reach the indicated goals. The plan will be available to the public to review later this year.

Interested in volunteering?

There are a variety of ways you can get involved with Ottawa County Parks! Become a volunteer or gather a group to do a workday! The volunteer application is online: mtottawa.org/Parks

Also consider joining the Friends of Ottawa County Parks! They support the parks system in many ways including volunteering at parks, promoting the parks at community events, leading hikes, and more! Recently they applied for grants to assist WMEAC with costs of the Grand River Clean Up, to expand the stewardship program model for middle school age students, and to promote kayaking training and excursions. All of these endeavors are undertaken through cooperative plans involving multiple groups or organizations in our communities. Visit foOCP online: friendsOCP.org to see more information and print a membership form.

Success!

Parks staff was excited to find trout lily and bloodroot this spring at Eastmanville Bayou! These wildflowers were found in an area where Allegan Public Schools students have been working to pull garlic mustard and other invasive plants for multiple years. Parks staff had never seen wildflowers growing in this area before this year. This is truly a testament to the hard work of our volunteers. The fight against invasive species can be exhausting, but these are the moments that we celebrate and know our work makes a difference.
**SUMMER PROGRAMS**

**PRAIRIE WILDFLOWER WALK**
- **3-4 pm** - Hemlock Crossing
  - The dazzling colors of the restored native prairie are a delight to experience!
  - **June 11** - August 6
  - **July 2** - September 3

**FISHING FOR DRUM**
- **June 17, 8-10 am** - Historic Ottawa Beach, Black Lake Boardwalk-West
  - Registration required; adults and children 12+
  - Learn to catch big fish from shore! The drum is a hard-fighting native fish that eats invasive species also known as “sheephead,” it is related to prized saltwater fish that eats invasive species. Also known as “sheephead,” it is related to prized saltwater
  - **June 22** - August 26

**THINGS WITH WINGS**
- **July 1, 1-2 pm** - Hemlock Crossing
  - Recommended for children ages 8-12
  - Butterflies, dragonflies, and birds, oh my! Can you think of all the creatures that use wings to get around? You’ll investigate how they do it on this fun hike.
  - **July 8**

**PIGEON RIVER KAYAK TRIP**
- **9:30 am - 1:30 pm** - Hemlock Crossing
  - Registration required; $8 per person (+$26 for kayak rental)
  - Enjoy the sights and sounds of the Pigeon River by kayak as you paddle the 3.5-mile stretch to Sheldon Landing. Return transportation is via carpool.
  - Each trip includes a basic kayaking lesson; no experience needed.
  - **July 9, 3-4:30 pm** - Hemlock Crossing

**BREATHING BATS**
- **July 9, 3-4:30 pm** - Hemlock Crossing
  - Registration required for adults and children 12+
  - Become a bat ambassador! Learn about Michigan’s brown bat and how you can make a positive impact on their population.
  - **July 12**

**MACATAWA WATER FESTIVAL**
- **July 15, 9 am-1 pm** - Windmill Island
  - Adventure on the Macatawa River like a voyager in the huge Gabagabau canoe! Arrive early and get a ticket to ensure you’re on the boat!

**DISCOVER THE DUNES**
- **3-4:30 pm** - North Beach Park (park permit required)
  - The iconic dunes of Lake Michigan are at their peak for exploration during summer. Encounter what life abounds in this harsh environment and discover the story of how these dunes came to be. Registration for the kid’s hike is required; recommended for ages 8-12.
  - **July 16** - For Kids!
  - **July 13**

**VISIT THE WEAVER HOUSE**
- Friends of Ottawa County Parks will be hosting open houses on June 18, July 16, August 20, and September 17 from 1-3 pm.
  - Enjoy a stroll around the gardens, see the inside of historic buildings, view photos and artifacts, and hear some stories about its past. Could this be the location to reserve for that family reunion, wedding, or seminar?
  - **Hemlock Crossing**

**VISIT THE OTTAWA BEACH PUMP HOUSE**
- June, July, and August every Thursday evening from 4 pm-7 pm
  - July and August every Saturday morning from 9:30 am-12 pm

**Special Programs**
- **June 22, 7:30 pm** - Black Lake movie showing
  - July 6, 7-7:30 pm - Fun with Utilities at Ottawa Beach by Valerie van Heest
  - August 10, 7:30 pm - Fron in Time: The Shipwreck John Moore by Valerie van Heest & Craig Rich

**SUMMER NIGHT SOUNDS**
- When darkness falls on the forest, unfamiliar sounds can become clearer. Bring a flashlight, and join a naturalist to explore some of the sounds of nocturnal critters in the woods.
  - **August 4, 9-10 pm, Grand River Park**
  - **August 5, 9-10 pm, Hemlock Crossing**

**MOUNTAIN BIKING**
- **August 5, 1-2:30 pm** - Riley Trails
  - Registration required; recommended for adults & children 10+
  - Learn basic mountain biking skills through a step-by-step process, beginning on the easiest trail loop. Participants will need a hybrid mountain bike with six or more gears and are required to wear a helmet. Velo City Cyclery will provide helmets and mountain bikes for $10, if requested during the registration process.

**ADVENTURE SUMMER CAMPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAMP</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayaking the Pigeon</td>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting with Nature</td>
<td>June 29</td>
<td>9 am-12 pm</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish ‘n Paddle Camp</td>
<td>June 29</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Connor Bayou</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival Camp (12-2 day)</td>
<td>July 11-14</td>
<td>9 am-12:30 pm</td>
<td>Pigeon Creek</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art in the Outdoors</td>
<td>July 11-14</td>
<td>1 pm-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Biking</td>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>9 am-12 pm</td>
<td>Riley Trails</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayaking the Grand</td>
<td>July 27</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Connor Bayou</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberries &amp; Bikes</td>
<td>August 3</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Riley Trails</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Hike</td>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>8:30 am-12 pm</td>
<td>Grand Ravines North</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting with Nature</td>
<td>August 8</td>
<td>9 am-12 pm</td>
<td>Hemlock Crossing</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival Camp (inc only)</td>
<td>August 9-10</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Pigeon Creek</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Hike</td>
<td>August 14</td>
<td>9 am-4:30 pm</td>
<td>North Ottawa Dunes</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SHOREBIRDS FIELD TRIPS**
- Registration required; fee varies
  - Shorebirds are on their way south for the winter. Intercept and identify a variety of them on these half-day field trip options. Each date will have two parts. Part one will begin at Holland State Park, followed by a visit to the Ass Sod Farm in Hudsonville. Part two will begin at the Coopersville Wastewater Facility before travelling to Mushkegon Wastewater Facility. Register for only one date.
  - **September 1**
    - Part 1: 7:30-11:30 am, Shoreline & Sod Farm
    - Part 2: 12:30-4:30 pm, Wastewater Shorebirds
  - **September 15**
    - Part 1: 7:30-11:30 am, Shoreline & Sod Farm
    - Part 2: 12:30-4:30 pm, Wastewater Shorebirds

**COOPERSVILLE WASTEWATER SHOREBIRDS**
- Registration required: $5 fee per participant
  - The Coopersville Wastewater Facility is a magnet for migrating shorebirds. This facility is not generally open to the public but has granted special permission for us to access the grounds for shorebird viewing. Only register for one date.
  - **August 26, 9-10 am**
  - **September 9, 9-10 am**

**WEDGEFIELD WILDFLOWERS WALK**
- Registration is required for all camps. Register online: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents

**Questions about programs or camps? Contact the Nature Education Center: (616) 786-4847**

**Weekly Camp Themes**

**June 14: Our Tiny Earth**
- **June 21: Outdoor Survival**
- **June 27: Outdoor Survival**
- **June 28: Feathered Friends**

**August 9: The Buzz about Bees**
- **August 15: Down ‘n’ Dirty (Decomposers)**
- **August 16: Down ‘n’ Dirty (Decomposers)**
  - Only Nature Birds and Young Discoverers will be offered on these dates at a different park location. See online calendar for details.

**Art in the Outdoors**
- **July 11-14 1 pm-4:30 pm** - Hemlock Crossing
  - Recommended for children ages 6-8

**Early Sprouts**
- **July 12**
  - Slime and Scales
  - Habitat Hunt
  - Buggin’ Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAMP</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>AGES/GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Sprouts</td>
<td>9:30-11 am</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>3 yrs-pre-K; caregiver required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Bugs</td>
<td>9:30-11:30 am</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>Grades K-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Discoverers</td>
<td>9:30-11:30 am</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>Grades 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Naturalists</td>
<td>9 am-12 pm</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>Grades 4-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All weekly camps are located at Hemlock Crossing Park, unless otherwise noted.