



Oct 1, 2021 - Sep 30, 2022

# ANNUAL REPORT

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Ottawa County  
Parks & Recreation

*Hike. Bike. Ski. Explore.*



# PARKS & RECREATION

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission was created in 1987 to oversee the management and operation of the county parks system. Since then, we've grown from 9 parks and 400 acres!

## 2022 AT A GLANCE

**27** County Parks      **7,353** Acres

**150+** Miles of Trail      **15** Open Spaces

## GROWTH IN 2022

We acquired two open spaces and 96 additional acres in 2022.

## MISSION

The Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission enhances quality of life for residents and visitors by preserving parks and open spaces and providing outdoor and natural resource-based recreation and education experiences.



## GOALS

- 1** Preserve and manage park and open space lands which protect and enhance significant landscapes and natural communities, to benefit both people and wildlife.
- 2** Provide high quality outdoor and natural resource-based recreation opportunities for residents and visitors of all levels of ability.
- 3** Promote understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural history of Ottawa County, and awareness of Commission-operated facilities, programs, and services.
- 4** Ensure organizational sustainability.



"We are so proud of the growth in 2022 and look forward to the many exciting projects coming up in 2023!"

**JASON SHAMBLIN**  
Director

# Grand River Greenway



## The Greenway Vision

The Grand River Greenway is a model ecological and cultural corridor along the Grand River. It will preserve significant natural, historical and cultural features as well as promote healthier and more vibrant communities.

## Constructing Connections

With the construction of two major connections in the Jenison Area, significant progress was made on the Idema Explorers Trail in 2022.

The Bill Idema Moraine Nature Segment connects Grand Ravines to Grand River Park. This beautiful segment of trail includes ADA-accessible boardwalk, as this area is often susceptible to high water levels.

The Jenison Mill segment connects Ottawa County trails to Kent County trails and honors the late Peter Secchia! The final installation of the arch happened in FY23.

For more detailed information about the trail, visit: [grandrivergreenway.org](http://grandrivergreenway.org)

## Spoonville Trail Addition

This year, Ottawa County Parks & Recreation assumed ownership and maintenance of the Spoonville Trail in Robinson Township. This award-winning 4.2-mile trail links the north and south sides of the river with a multipurpose path along the M-231 bridge. It also connects the Idema Explorers Trail and north side of the river to the North Bank Trail, closing the gap on the 24-mile Grand Crossings loop.



Bill Idema Moraine Nature Segment



Jenison Mill Segment



Spoonville Trail

# Pigeon River Greenway

## Observatory Groundbreaking



Over the summer of 2022, our long-time program partner, the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association, worked on installing West Michigan's first public observatory.\* The site will house a 16-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope and will be open to the public for programming in FY23.

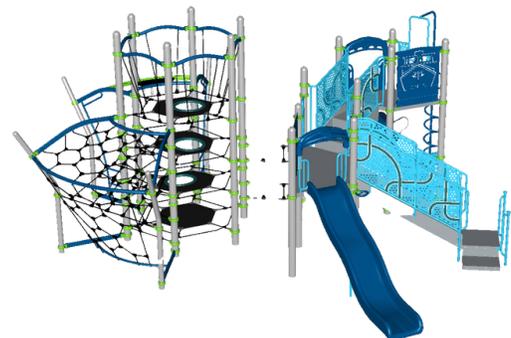
For more info and a video of the construction, visit: [news.miottawa.org/public-observatory](http://news.miottawa.org/public-observatory)

\*The observatory opened in early FY23.

# Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

## Kirk Park Renovation

A Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant was approved to provide improvements at Kirk Park. This renovation project will begin after the Summer of 2023 and includes restroom updates, an addition of swimsuit changing stalls, and a NEW playground! This project also includes the development of trailhead amenities for regional bike and water trails.



# Community Engagement

Throughout this fiscal year, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation partnered with several groups to provide programs and events that benefit our community.

## Ottawa County Sherrif's Department

Cops and Bobbers was a fishing event designed to bring Ottawa County Sheriff's and Parks employees alongside local youth, with a goal of introducing kids to fishing, conservation, and water safety, while building relationships with the people we serve.

## Department of Public Health

In partnership with the Department of Public Health, we offered Step it Up, a free 8-week program designed to help residents get active and visit new parks. Over 70% of participants reported an improvement in their physical and mental health as a result of participating in the program.

## Historic Ottawa Beach Society

Visitors to the Nature Center at Hemlock Crossing County Park learned the story of the SS Michigan through a partnership with the Historic Ottawa Beach Society and the Pump House Museum and Learning Center. Thank you for sharing the excellent Icebound exhibit with us!

## Zee Bus

We collaborated with Zee Bus, a traveling library that rolls through the Zeeland area in the summer. Outdoor educators engaged children with nature activities and story time.

## StoryWalks

Local libraries collaborated with Ottawa County Parks to continue offering StoryWalks to residents. People could walk and read the posted signs during park hours.

# 13,691

Visitors to the Nature Center at Hemlock Crossing Park



Youth at Cops and Bobbers



Family enjoying a StoryWalk



Kids working with an outdoor educator at a Zee Bus stop

## Socials Stats

# 3,367

Followers on Instagram



# 15,139

Followers on Facebook



## Follow us!

Instagram

@OttawaCountyParks

Facebook

@OttawaCountyParksandRecreation

# 383

Total Private & Public programs offered

# Natural Resource Management

## Ottawa Sands BioBlitz



Our second annual BioBlitz was held at Ottawa Sands in May. Scientists and the public scoured the park to document as many species as possible in one day to get a snapshot of the area's biodiversity while collecting monitoring data. Scientific experts from Michigan State University/Sea Grant, Encompass Socio-ecological Consulting, Great Lakes Audubon, Owashtonong Islands Audubon, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, and Martinus & Associates, volunteered their time to help monitor Ottawa Sands.



# 27

Total Taxa

# 154

Species

Includes plants, birds, macroinvertebrates, amphibians, fish, and reptiles.



■ Bluegill ■ Largemouth bass ■ Yellow Perch



Ottawa Sands shoreline that will undergo restoration in 2023.

## Improving Habitat



With a \$400,000 subaward agreement for a Sustain Our Great Lakes grant through the National Audubon Society, an exciting project is underway at Ottawa Sands! This project aims to restore historic wetlands and create new wetlands for a total of 42 acres of high priority marsh. These areas represent some of the highest potential for Great Lakes marsh bird habitat creation and are in desperate need of restoration. Upon completion, visitors will see benefits such as fishing opportunities, bird watching, and photography.

## Biodiversity Management

**3,641** Acres managed for biodiversity

Nearly 50% of park property was actively managed for biodiversity throughout the Parks system. As a result of these efforts, seven park properties are effectively invasive free, now including North Beach!

# Volunteering

## Student Research



Ottawa County Parks and Recreation has been working with Karina White, a science teacher from Jenison High School, for almost a decade through the Adopt-A-Park program. White sought a project that would involve her students in research and benefit the parks. She landed on creating a citizen science-based protocol that can help monitor upland restoration sites. While wetland restoration can be monitored with programs like MiCorps, there isn't a comparable protocol for restored upland ecosystems.

White intends to continue monitoring the park to provide long-term data that will be used to inform management decisions such as prescribed fire schedule and invasive species management. This innovative project could be used by other organizations within Michigan and beyond.



In Spring of 2022, 40 volunteers from Jenison High School identified and counted plants and insects at Grand Ravines to help provide long-term monitoring data.

# 536



Hours of labor worked by Park Stewards



Volunteers are critical. In FY22, we had many volunteers that helped keep our parks in great condition.

## Eagle Scouts

Eagle Scout candidate Quinten Burlew cleaned up the Jenison Mill site in anticipation of the Idema Explorers Trail construction and candidate Beth Tenbrink installed hammock posts at Pigeon Creek Park.

## Local Steward



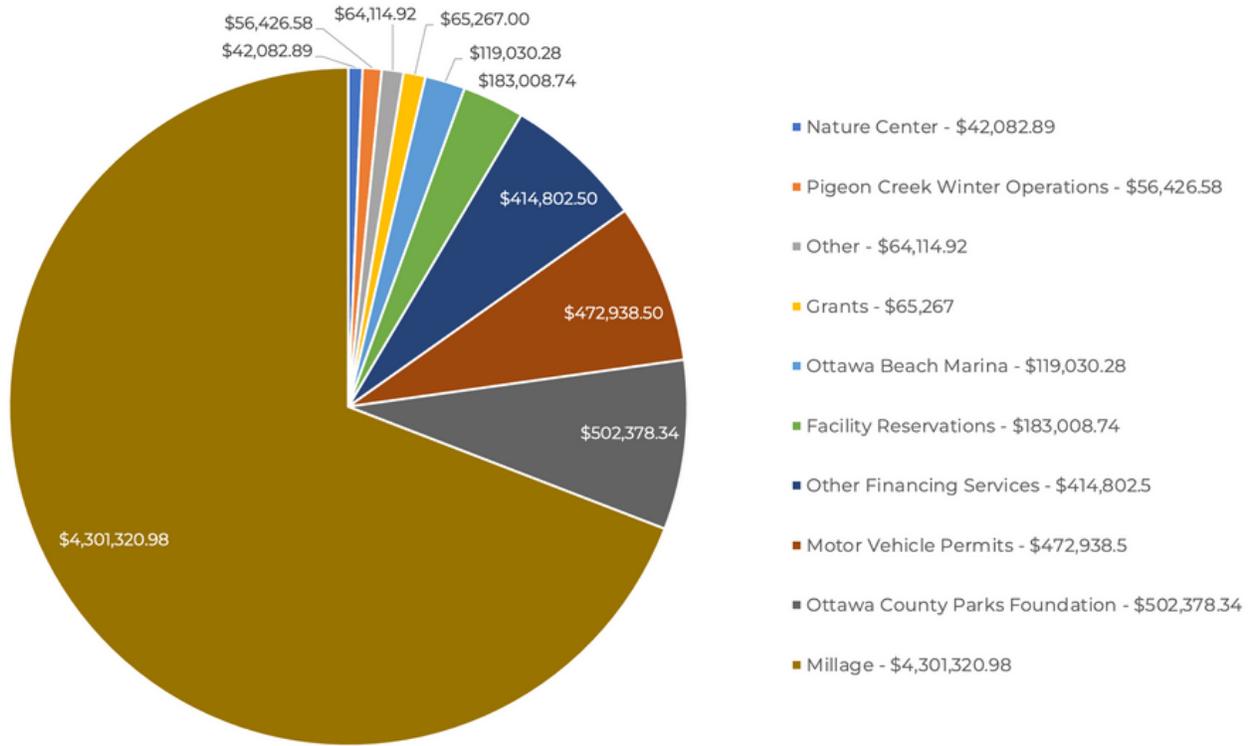
Rich Bosch's initiative and leadership has greatly improved the ecological health of Paw Paw Park by almost daily monitoring and removing invasive species; planting native species; and working with various volunteer groups.

## Volunteer Groups

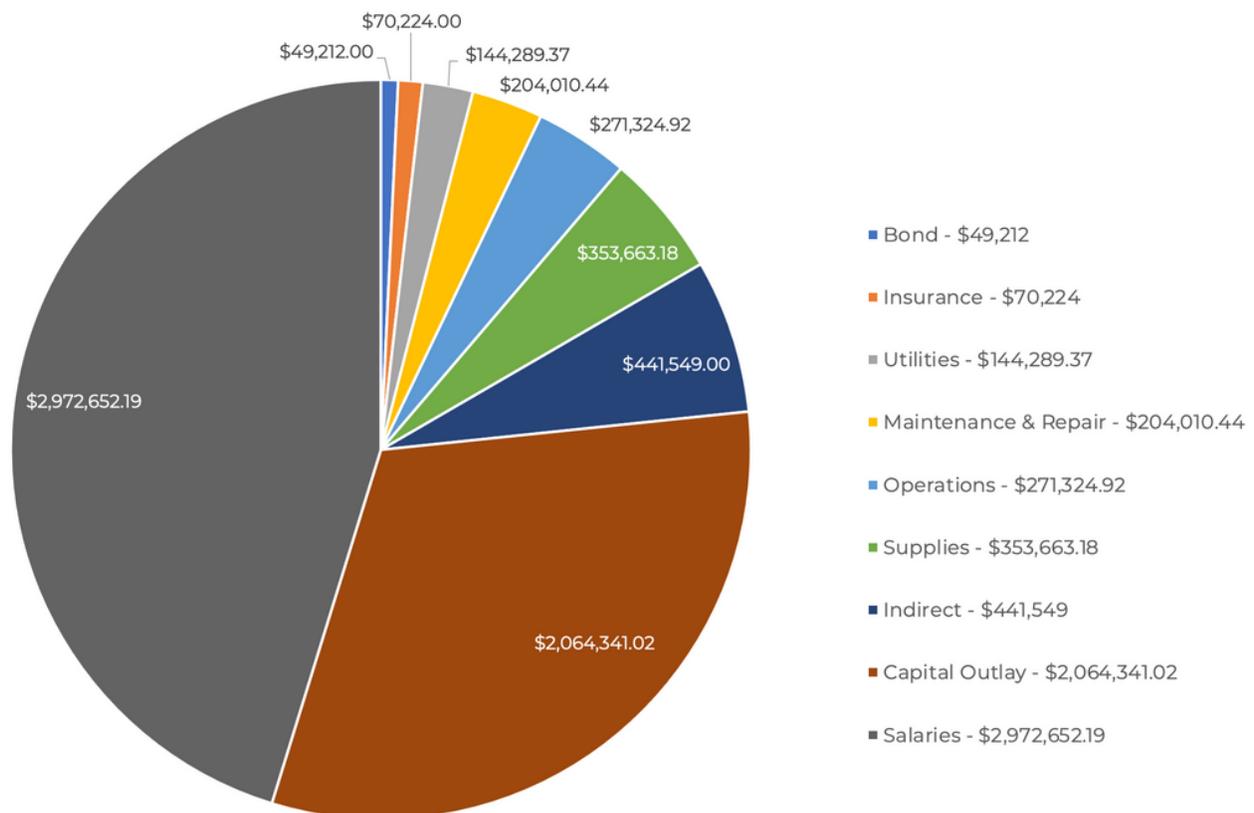
In total, we had 29 (schools/businesses/organizations) groups volunteer in our parks. They cleaned up beaches, removed invasives, and much more. We appreciate their time and dedication!

# Revenue & Expenses

## FY22 Revenue = \$6,234,831.22



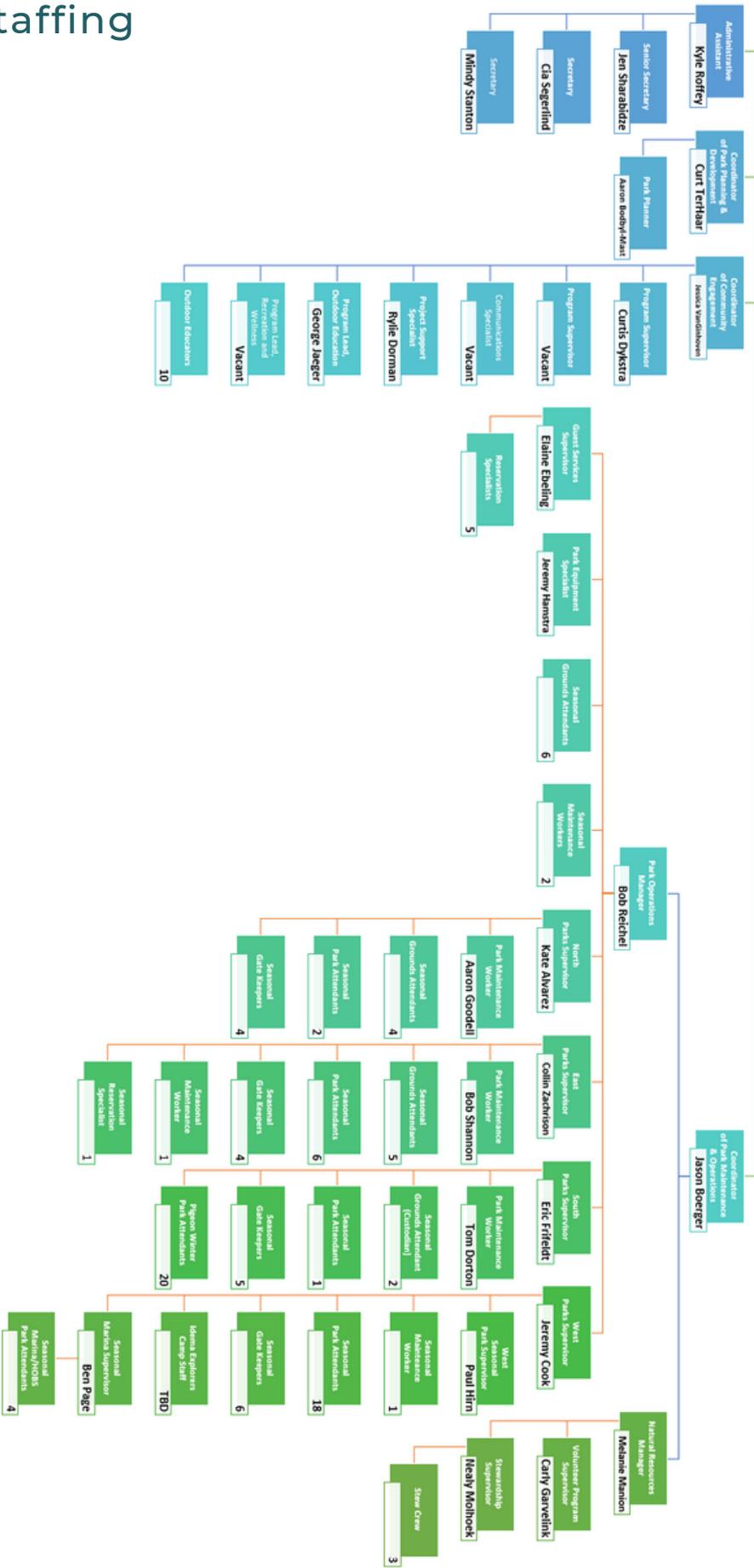
## FY22 Expenses = \$6,605,646.42



# Property Data

Parks and Open Spaces	Acreeage	Lake Michigan Frontage (feet)	River Frontage (Grand River, Pigeon & Macatawa) (feet)	Tributaries (Bass, Crockery, Deer, Rush, Sand) (feet)	Bayou & Inland Lake Frontage (feet)	Hiking Trails (miles)
<b>Grand River Greenway</b>						
Idema Explorers Trail	0	0	0	0	0	9.19
Stearns Creek	146	0	0	0	7,730	1.7
Connor Bayou	142	0	4,563	0	1,687	3.39
Crockery Creek Natural Area	334	0	2,640	12,762	0	1.75
Sheridan Landing (Other)	4	0	0	957	0	
Jubb Bayou (Open Space)	97	0	4,589	0	4,026	
Riverside Park	95	0	6,737	0	0	2.24
Bur Oak Landing (Open Space)	263	0	7,392	0	5,267	0.97
Bass River Open Space	47	0	0	3,090	0	
Eastmanville Farm	229	0	1,365	0	0	4.75
Eastmanville Bayou Open Space	157	0	9,364	0	8,300	1.49
Deer Creek Park	2	0	530	0	0	
Ripps Bayou (Open Space)	173	0	7,550	7,706	7,992	
Kuits Bayou (Open Space)	80	0	6,191	0	2,650	
Grand River Open Space	279	0	7,890	0	0	
Grand River Ravines	202	0	2,640	0	0	5.52
Grand River Park	162	0	2,505	0	0	3.43
Bend Area (Open Space)	421	0	10,032	0	33,263	4.41
Un-named Site - Georgetown Twp East	17	0	647	0	0	
Un-named Site - Georgetown Twp East	3	0	0	0	0	
Un-named Site - Georgetown Twp East	5	0	215	0	0	
Un-named Site - Georgetown Twp East	6	0	405	0	0	
	<b>2,863</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75,255</b>	<b>24,515</b>	<b>70,915</b>	<b>38.84</b>
<b>Pigeon River Greenway</b>						
Hemlock Crossing/Pine Bend	239	0	7,920	0	0	6.25
Pigeon River	46	0	2,354	0	0	
Pigeon Creek Park	282	0	3,200	0	0	6.19
Pigeon Creek Forest (Open Space)	189	0	0	0	0	3.94
	<b>756</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13,474</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16.38</b>
<b>Macatawa River Greenway</b>						
Paw Paw Park						
West	50	0	2,063	0	0	1.33
East	122	0	4,815	0	0	3.16
Adams Street Landing	10	0	1,100	0	0	0.03
Hawthorn Pond	40	0	1,792	0	0	0
Black River Court Property	5	0	523	0	0	0
96th Ave Property	5	0	1,471	0	0	0
Upper Macatawa Natural Area	612	0	13,100	0	0	12.86
	<b>844</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24,864</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17.38</b>
<b>Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway</b>						
North Ottawa Dunes	593	0	0	0	0	9.37
North Beach Park	7	745	0	0	0	0
Ottawa Sands	345	0	5,740	0	8,400	3.5
Rosy Mound Natural Area	164	3,450	0	0	0	1.87
Kirk Park	68	1,850	0	0	0	2.01
Olive Shores	21	738	0	0	0	0.57
Tunnel Park	23	950	0	0	0	0.57
Historic Ottawa Beach Parks	58	756	0	0	2,560	0.96
	<b>1,279</b>	<b>8,489</b>	<b>5,740</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,960</b>	<b>18.85</b>
<b>General Parks, Open Space and Trails</b>						
Musketawa Trail	0	0	0	0	0	10.83
Un-named Site - Wright Township	8	0	0	0	0	0
Grose Park	45	0	0	0	823	1.58
Marne Bog (Open Space)	83	0	0	0	0	0
Robinson Forest (Open Space)	80	0	0	0	0	0.44
Johnson Street Forest (Open Space)	50	0	0	0	0	0
Hiawatha Forest (Open Space)	365	0	0	0	0	1.89
Hager Park	104	0	0	0	0	2.99
Port Sheldon Natural Area (Open Space)	440	0	0	0	0	2.55
VanBuren Street Dunes (Open Space)	120	0	0	0	0	1.51
Spring Grove Park	16	0	0	0	0	0.31
Riley Trails	300	0	0	0	0	10
	<b>1,611</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>32.1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,353</b>	<b>8,489</b>	<b>119,333</b>	<b>24,515.40</b>	<b>82,698</b>	<b>123.55</b>

# Current Staffing





## THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER GREAT YEAR!

### “ Quotes from the Community about Parks

“Ottawa County has wonderful parks.”  
-Joanne Holmquist-Dewinter

“Love the trails! Keep them coming.”  
-Sherly VanStedum about Jenison Mill Trail Construction

“These walks are so much fun! Gets you outside, guides share great nature insights, and you meet new people!”  
-Juddy Tuttle about Step it Up

“Very exciting. I believe some of the yurts and tree houses will be universally accessible, too!” – Lukey Dukey about the Ottawa Sands Development

“I’m very excited for this. Such a great addition to our community”  
-Daniel J Kroll about Jenison Mill Trail Construction

“Yay for invasive species removal!”  
-Jackie C French

“All three grandkids said, “that was fun” when we finished our story walk!”  
-Debra Evelyn about StoryWalks

“Thank you! I was there last week and was so happy to see so much beach back!” – Julie Molewyk about Parks employees grading North Beach