Idema Explorers Trail

We are pleased to announce a landmark $2 million gift from the Bill and Bea Idema Foundation for the Grand River Greenway Campaign!

To recognize this incredible gift, the trail connecting Grand Rapids to Grand Haven will be named in honor of Bill and Bea Idema.

Two major gifts totaling $860,000 from the Wege and Frey Foundations, $50,000 granted by the Consumers Energy Foundation, and $10,000 granted by the Hudsonville-Jenison Community Foundation further boosted our fundraising efforts for the greenway. In total, the Grand River Greenway campaign has raised $5.5 million of the $7.2 million needed to complete this major project in the next four to five years. See page three to learn more about the planned construction this year.

Important announcement!

This year, Ottawa County Parks will be transitioning to a new system for facility reservations, program registrations, and annual permit purchases. This system will make facility reservation and program registration much easier, but it will look different. Please contact us if you have any questions or difficulty: (616) 738-4810.

All aboard! Grand Lady excursions are scheduled for 1:30 and 4:00 pm on Tuesday, May 15!

Schedule a special spring outing and support the Friends of Ottawa County Parks at the same time! Sign up early to secure your seat.

Reservation forms are available at: www.friendsofocp.org
Print, complete, and return the form, along with payment. Cost is still only $10 per person.

Excursions will be held rain or shine (sorry, no refunds). If you are unable to attend, you may transfer your reservation to a friend. Notify us of any changes. Funds raised from these trips support Friends’ projects.

Friends’ is dedicated to connecting people with nature, recreation, and community by partnering with Ottawa County Parks. Organized in 2005, Friends sponsors programs to build public awareness by providing information about Ottawa County parks and open spaces.

COMMIT TO FIT BY APRIL 2
Sign up: miOttawa.org/StepItUp

Previous participants are welcome but must sign up online for this season!
Ottawa Sand Acquisition

In an unexpected development, a significant piece of dune property has become available in the cities of Ferrysburg and Grand Haven. Ottawa County Parks is hoping to purchase the 353-acre parcel over the next two years with the help of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant program.

The site is bordered by publicly owned land, including North Ottawa Dunes and open space dune property owned by the City of Grand Haven. The addition of this property would complete a 2,400-acre coastal corridor of Lake Michigan dunes that also includes P.J. Hoffmaster State Park and the Kitchel-Lindquist-Hartger Dune Preserve.

Although the site has been an area of interest to Parks, it was not expected to be available for years to come. This changed last fall when the property owner offered to sell the property based on an appraised value of $11.2 million and donate 25% of the land value to serve as match in a grant proposal to the MNRTF.

Parks made the unprecedented step of submitting an $8.4 million grant application to MNRTF outside of the typical grant cycle. In December 2017, the Trust Fund Board recommended that a $4.2 million grant be awarded with an informal commitment to recommend the remaining amount in 2018 (depending on funding availability). The current grant recommendation must also be approved by the State Legislature and Governor.

While it’s not a done deal, we are incredibly excited for the opportunity. Take a look at our concept plan on the right.

More about the property:

- 219 acres of state designated critical dunes
- 5,585’ of Grand River frontage
- 80-acre, man-made inland lake
- 2,400-acre Lake Michigan coastal corridor
- Potential for an inter-park trail along the Lake Michigan coast

Join us for public comment:
March 7 at 4 pm
Fillmore Complex, Room F
12220 Fillmore St, West Olive, 49460

Pump house at Historic Ottawa Beach

The Parks Commission recently approved a short-term lease to the Historic Ottawa Beach Society (HOBS) for the pump house building. The organization plans to operate a museum focused on local area history.

This year, The Pump House Museum will host a new interpretive exhibit, Big Red: From Aid to Navigation to Cultural Icon. The exhibit will focus on Big Red, the lights, the fog signals, and its lighthouse keepers.

The exhibit will highlight all Lake Michigan lighthouses and how museum visitors can help preserve them. Also featured will be a recent donation to the Museum, the only surviving original guest register from the Hotel Ottawa.

HOBS is working with Park Township students who are researching the history of Big Red. This research will be presented in a multi-media presentation to the general public this spring. Date is TBA. Learn more: www.historicottawabeachsociety.org

Construction of the addition to the pump house building, which includes a restroom, will soon be complete!
Stearns Creek Acquisition
Funding for a future park property with over 6,000 feet of frontage on Stearns Bayou and Stearns Creek was approved by the MNRTF. This 117-acre property features floodplain and wetland areas with rare stands of wild rice, a state-threatened species. It also includes small traces of old growth forest and abandoned farmland which has potential for restoration as oak savannah habitat. If successfully acquired, the plan is to create a park at the site, with natural surface trails, overlooks, and fishing and kayak access on Stearns Bayou.
A portion of this property will be funded by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) awarded in 2017, as well as with funds from a private donor. Acquisition is expected this summer or fall.

Eastmanville Barn Repairs
Additional restoration work will begin this spring on the Eastmanville Farm barn. Barn Cats, the company that completed restoration work on the Grand Ravines barn in 2016, will be improving framing, siding, and support posts, as well as fixing leaks in the cupola vents.

Property purchase
A small parcel of land will be purchased this spring in partnership with the Outdoor Discovery Center. This parcel is a critical link in the future greenway trail on the Macatawa River.

Macatawa River Greenway
Playground coming soon!
This spring a new playground will be constructed at Paw Paw Park in Holland!
HWA Task Force Update

There has been a lot of progress in funding to fight Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. In addition to the $600,000 in GLRI funds we reported last quarter: The Nature Conservancy was awarded $363,000. In partnership with the Michigan Dune Alliance, they will conduct an HWA detection survey outside of the four known infested counties to determine the presence of additional outbreaks. The span will cover an additional ten counties. The Ottawa Conservation District was awarded $200,000 for survey work and $299,400 for treatment in the four infested counties. In partnership with the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, they will be mapping the distribution of HWA within the four infested counties and will deploy treatments to stabilize hemlock trees.

Task force objectives:
- Preventing new introductions of HWA through outreach and education.
- Monitoring for HWA and the expansion of existing HWA populations.
- Responding to and conducting eradication efforts for new findings and range expansions.
- Strategically managing and controlling HWA within West Michigan.

Interested in learning more?

SAVE MI HEMLOCKS RALLY
Sunday, April 15 • 2–4 pm
Nature Education Center, Hemlock Crossing

Join us for...
- Progress updates and local success stories
- What you can do and how to be a Hemlock Hero
- What’s next locally and state wide

Light refreshments and snacks will be provided. Public welcome, bring a friend!

Tips to stop the spread this spring:
- Remove 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.
- Give your hiking clothes and the bottom of your boots a good scrub before and after hitting the trails.

saveMIhemlocks.org

In 2017, Ottawa County Parks completed its first Sustainability Plan. The plan is divided into three equally important parts:

1) Environmental Sustainability
   Protecting our natural land
2) Social Sustainability
   Keeping our community engaged & healthy
3) Economic Sustainability
   Ensuring that funds exist for the future

Throughout the year, we will highlight some of the ways we have committed to sustainability as a Parks Department. Some are more traditional and others may surprise you. View the full five-year plan online: miOttawa.org/Parks/park-plan.htm

Focus: Economic Sustainability
Improving and expanding our volunteer plan will allow us to increase capacity within our parks as we grow, without increasing operational costs. The month of May is one of the busiest times for volunteers. In addition to implementing improvements, we'll share more information on social media about the work they're doing.

Take a peek at some of the feedback from our volunteer survey on the next page.

Volunteer Feedback
Focus: Social Sustainability
In March, we will be recruiting participants for the Step it Up! program. Step it Up! encourages participants to be more active and get outdoors. Providing places and programs that help keep our community active and healthy lowers health care costs over time and connects more people to nature. Learn more about Step it Up! on page one.

Focus: Environmental Sustainability
In April, Parks staff will be visiting the single-stream recycling facility in Kent County to learn how to improve our current system. An example of how we can turn good intentions into action is metal recycling. We tried to offer limited metal recycling but didn’t provide instructions or a place to clean the metal first. Recycled metal that hasn’t been cleaned contaminates other recycling and then it all must be thrown away.

90% will volunteer again
75% felt their work made a positive impact on the community
80% felt a sense of accomplishment after volunteering in a park
80% increased their understanding of Ottawa County Parks
100% of teachers who participate in service-based learning projects...

• feel the project(s) supported their classroom goals
• believe it helped their students understand complex subjects such as ecosystems or biodiversity
• believe the experience helped their students increase their appreciation for nature
• think the project made their students more comfortable in natural settings

Join us for a Volunteer Workday!

Never volunteered for a stewards workday before? No problem! Here’s what you should know:
• Bring work gloves (preferably leather), insect repellent, and appropriate outdoor gear.
• All tools, drinking water, and snacks will be provided.
• No preregistration is required.
• All ages welcome; those under 16 must be supervised by an adult.
Work days are cancelled if raining.
Questions? Contact Gray Gogolin at (616) 994-4748.

Spring Workdays
Hager Park Garlic Mustard Pull
April 28, 10 am-12 pm

Historic Ottawa Beach Parks
Garlic Mustard Pull
May 12, 10 am-12 pm

Spring Grove Garden Clean Up
April 28, 2-4 pm

Hemlock Crossing Garlic Mustard Pull
May 12, 2-4 pm

**Pest to Pesto Program, 4-5 pm

Last year, 25% of the mowed turf area at Riverside Park was eliminated without negatively affecting recreational opportunities.

This saved over 100 hours of labor and 150 gallons of fuel (~$1,500) in the first year alone!

Next season we will be switching to biodegradable/compostable cups at the Pigeon Creek Lodge. We plan to use the current supply of polystyrene but will not be ordering more.

We have been replacing old incandescent lighting with LEDs to lower energy use.

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ASTRONOMY AT THE NATURE CENTER
Hemlock Crossing; ages 12+
After the presentation, the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association will have telescopes available for observing the spring skies (weather permitting.)
- March 10, 7-8:30 pm - The Spring Sky
- April 14, 8-9:30 pm - Astronomy in Music
- May 12, 8-9:30 pm - The Summer Sky

NEWCOMB’S WILDFLOWER GUIDE WORKSHOP
March 17, 1-2:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Learn how to use the Newcomb’s guide to identify wildflowers.

EQUINOX EXPEDITION
March 17, 3-4 pm • Hemlock Crossing
The days are getting longer, and the last day of winter is only a few days away! Help celebrate the “Vernal Equinox” and St. Patrick’s Day by joining this expedition to find signs of spring along the Pigeon River - don’t forget to wear green!

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS
Hemlock Crossing
The Wildlife Encounters series introduces participants to wildlife found in our region. These presentations are followed by an optional guided hike or outing. Each kids’ program includes activities, walk, and take-home craft. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Registration required; ages 5-12.
- Bald Eagles
  - March 18, 3-4:30 pm - For Kids!
  - March 24, 3-4 pm
- Frogs & Toads
  - April 21, 3-4 pm
  - April 22, 3-4:30 pm - For Kids!
- Great Lakes Piping Plover
  - May 20, 3-4:30 pm - For Kids!
  - May 26, 3-4 pm

WOODCOCK WALK
Registration required, $5 fee/person; ages 12+
*Fee refundable upon participation
Learn more about Woodcocks with a short presentation, then enjoy watching the sun set to the twitter of displaying Woodcocks! Bring a small outdoor chair to carry along.
- March 23, 7:30-9 pm • Hemlock Crossing
- March 24, 7-9 pm • Grand Ravines (North)

TWILIGHT HIKES
Registration required, $5 fee/person; ages 10+
*Fee refundable upon participation
Experience your parks in a whole new way as you explore by moonlight!
- March 30, 8-9:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
- April 27, 8:30-10 pm • Grand River Park

PIGEON RIVER KAYAK TRIP
12:30-4:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Registration is required; $8 per person (+$26 for kayak rental)
Enjoy the sights and sounds of spring along 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 is needed.
- April 7
- May 19

ISLE ROYALE: TREASURED
April 8, 3-4:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Certain places just seem to exude a pull... they are full of treasured moments, connections, and experiences that keep us coming back. Share the experience with parks naturalist, Kelly Morrissey, as she re-visits her third season as a Park Ranger for Isle Royale National Park and returns to the backbone of what makes a place special.

GRAND RAVINES LODGE OPEN HOUSE & NATURE WALK
The Grand Ravines Lodge will be open to the public on the dates below from 1-5 pm. Nature walks are available from 3-4 pm.
- April 8
- April 22
- May 6
- May 13
*Eagle Hikes, registration req’d, see below

EAGLES OF GRAND RAVINES WALK
Grand Ravines (North); registration is required, multiple afternoon walks on each date
Bald Eagles frequent areas along the Grand River and have nested at Grand Ravines for a number of years. Join us on a hike to learn the story of the park’s resident eagles and view their nest.
- April 15
- May 13

ART WORKSHOPS WITH NANCY BERG
10 am-12 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Registration required, $20 per person (incl. materials); ages 12+
- April 14, Trillium Treasures Acrylic Painting
- June 2, Wildflower Splendor Plein-Air Pastel Painting

EARTH ENCOUNTERS GEOLOGY! IDENTIFYING ROCKS
April 14, 3-4:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Do you or your children like to collect rocks? Have you ever wondered what the rocks you find are? Learn how to begin to identify rocks and minerals and some ways to organize and display your collection.

OLD TIMES, PLACES, & FACES ALONG THE GRAND RIVER GREENWAY
April 21, 10-11 am • Hemlock Crossing
Ottawa County Parks Foundation board member and local historian, Marjorie Viveen, will present stories from the Grand River Greenway. Hosted by the Ottawa County Parks Foundation.
TURKEY HUNTING IN OTTAWA COUNTY

May 5, 3-4:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing

Learn about the conservation of the wild turkey and how it relates to Michigan’s hunting heritage. Plus, more information about where to hunt in our parks and why it’s crucial for our local ecosystems (we hope to debunk some myths as well!).

Presenter: Steve Sharp, NWTF

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

April 28, 2-4 pm • Hemlock Crossing

Learn about the value of planting native wildflowers, site selection, plant selection, planting techniques, and maintenance of native landscapes. Pick up your own native plants at a special sale in May! Presenter: Vern Stephens, Designs By Nature

CONSERVATION DISTRICT NATIVE PLANT SALE

May 9, 2-4 pm • Hemlock Crossing

Purchase native plants for your garden and support the conservation district!

FROG CALL CHORUS

Registration required, $5 fee/person*; ages 8+

*Fee refundable upon participation

As night falls on wetlands in spring, experience the overwhelming sounds of the frog call chorus! We’ll see how many different kinds we can find and try to watch them sing.

- May 5, 8:30-9:30 pm • Hemlock Crossing
- May 11, 8:30-9:30 pm • Grand River Park

GREENWAY BIRDING BLITZ

May 12, 7 am-4 pm

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by documenting birds along the common birds in our parks. Binoculars and field guides provided.

- Historic Ottawa Beach (West) & Holland State Park, 7-9 am
- Paw Paw Park (West), 10-11:30 am
- Paw Paw Park (East), 12-1:30 pm
- Upper Macatawa Natural Area (84th St), 2-4 pm

BIG DAY BIRDING FIELD TRIP

May 18, 7 am-4 pm; registration is required, fee varies

How many bird species can we find in Ottawa County in one day? Several locations will be searched for waterbirds, raptors, songbirds, and more.

BIRDING WALKS

Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of spring bird migration. Beginner bird walks will introduce you to binocular use, bird identification, field guides, and the common birds in our parks. Binoculars and field guides provided.

Date Time Location
April 4 8-10 am Hemlock Crossing
April 7 10 am-12 pm Hemlock Crossing - Beginner
April 11 8-10 am Paw Paw East
April 14 8 am-12 pm Lakeshore Birding - more information online
April 18 8-10 am Crockery Creek
April 25 8-10 am Grand River Park
April 28 8-10 am Pine Bend
May 2 8-10 am Riley Trails
May 5 10 am-12 pm Hemlock Crossing - Beginner
May 9 8-10 am North Beach Park
May 12 Times vary Greenway Birding Blitz - more info above
May 16 8-10 am Grand Ravines (South)
May 20 10 am-12 pm Grand Ravines (North) - Beginner
May 23 8-10 am Riverside Park
May 26 8-10 am Grand River Park
May 30 8-10 am Port Sheldon Natural Area (West loop)

WILDFLOWER WALKS

Woodland flowers, called spring ephemerals, bloom before the trees leaf out. Join a parks naturalist to look for these spring beauties in bloom.

Date Time Location
April 12 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing
April 13 9:30-11 am Hager Park
April 27 9:30-11 am Grand Ravines (North)
May 4 9:30-11 am Grand River Park
May 11 9:30-11 am Rosy Mound
May 19 9:30-11 am Hemlock Crossing
June 2 1-2 pm Hemlock Crossing

WEEKLY SUMMER CAMPS

Date Time Location
Date Time Cost Location Age*
April 11-15 9 am-4:30 pm $150 Hemlock Crossing 10-13
April 19 9:30-11 am $100 Pigeon Creek 11-14
May 10 am-12 pm $15 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
May 17 9 am-3 pm $45 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
May 24 9 am-4:30 pm $150 Hemlock Crossing 10-13
June 1 9 am-4:30 pm $50 Pigeon Creek 11-14
June 8 9 am-12 pm $25 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
June 15 9 am-4:30 pm $150 Hemlock Crossing 12-14

ADVENTURE SUMMER CAMPS

Date Time Cost Location Age*
Birding Camp June 11-15 9 am-4:30 pm $150 Hemlock Crossing 10-13
Cruisin’ the Pigeon River June 19 9 am-4:30 pm $40 Hemlock Crossing 11-14
Helping Hands* Designed for children w/ disabilities & a caregiver June 25 9-11:30 am $3 Hemlock Crossing 6-11
Crafting with Nature July 10 9 am-12 pm $25 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
Crafting with Nature + Art in the Afternoon July 10 9 am-3 pm $45 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
Survival Camp July 18-20 9 am-4:30 pm $100 Pigeon Creek 11-14
Hike, Bike, Paddle July 24 9 am-4:30 pm $35 Pigeon River Greenway 11-14
Biking Adventure! July 26 9 am-12 pm $15 Riley Trails 9-12
Survival Camp Aug 1-3 9 am-4:30 pm $100 Pigeon Creek 11-14
Hike, Bike, Paddle Aug 7 9 am-4:30 pm $35 Grand River Greenway 11-14
Crafting with Nature Aug 10 9 am-12 pm $25 Hemlock Crossing 9-12
Girls Adventure Program Aug 13-17 9 am-4:30 pm $150 Hemlock Crossing 12-14

Register online: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents, search “summer camps”

Or, call the Nature Education Center: (616) 786-4847

CAMP THEMES

Underwater Wonders
Circles of Life
Nature’s Engineers
Move it-Move it
Habitat Hunt
Patterns in Nature
Take Flight

Camp dates & more info can be found online: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents. To register multiple children or for multiple camps, call us: (616) 786-4847

*Children must be the age listed for camps by June 1, 2018.