

**R**ecreation opportunities in Ottawa County are extensive and varied in character. The State operates three state parks along Lake Michigan which provide camping, swimming, nature interpretation and related activities. The County operates 23 improved parks, 2 undeveloped parks, and 14 open space properties, which take advantage of the diverse natural features of the area and provide opportunities for swimming, picnicking, hiking, interpretive programs, cross-country skiing, and more. The various townships, cities and villages within the County further bolster the recreation opportunities with over 120 smaller neighborhood and community-oriented parks, including several large regional facilities. The local private sector provides recreation opportunities as well, including marinas, campgrounds, and golf courses.

The purpose of this section is to identify what recreation facilities and services are currently provided throughout Ottawa County to establish a basis for evaluating needs. The following recreation inventory review has been divided into two sections. The first section presents a classification of park and recreation areas which can be applied to all communities and municipalities. The second section reviews the various providers of recreation programs and facilities specific to Ottawa County including both public and private providers. Included is a review of the particular resources and facilities offered by each recreation provider. A complete listing of park and recreation areas offered by all levels of government is included along with a summary of the facilities available.

#### **CLASSIFICATION OF PARK AND RECREATION AREAS**

Park and recreation services are most effective when provided through a system in which governmental agencies at all levels as well as the private sector combine to provide a variety of facilities and services. Planning for recreation services must therefore consider the roles and the inter-relationships between each provider in the system. Park and recreation areas are classified to reflect the scope of facilities offered and the approximate service area of each park. Below is a review of this classification system.

- a) **Sub-neighborhood** - This category includes tot-lots, mini-parks, playfields and other small recreation areas (usually less than five acres), located within and serving high-density residential areas. Provision of these areas is considered the responsibility of the city, village, township government or school district.
  
- b) **Neighborhood** - Neighborhood parks are generally designed as "walk to" parks of approximately five acres and larger serving the neighborhood unit. Typical facilities include play apparatus, multi-purpose courts, field games area, etc. Neighborhood parks are often planned in conjunction with elementary schools because of the similarity in the service areas of both facilities. This type of park is normally provided by the city, village, township government or school district.

c) **Community** - Community parks are located to serve a group of neighborhoods and be accessible by either bicycle or automobile. Acreage varies from 5-50 acres and the park usually includes a much broader range of facilities than what is normally provided at the neighborhood level. Typical facilities might include playfields, ball diamonds, tennis courts, swimming, ice-skating, a community building, or a wide range of other facilities. As with neighborhood parks, programs, and facilities should be adapted to the particular needs of the community being served. Community parks are the responsibility of city, village or township governments.

d) **Area Wide and Regional** - Area wide and regional scale parks differ primarily in the size of their service areas, with area wide parks serving a radius of 10-20 miles as opposed to an approximate service area of 20-40 miles for regional scale parks. Parks in these classifications are usually large (100-500+ acres) and are located to take advantage of unique land and/or water resources. Park development emphasizes preservation of the natural environment and typical facilities might include picnic areas, swimming and boating facilities, camping areas, nature interpretation facilities, winter sports areas and a wide variety of other facilities. Responsibility for parks of this scale generally lies with the County or specially created park districts.

e) **State/National** - State and National Parks and Recreation Areas are most often located where outstanding natural resources of state or national significance exist. Development is designed to facilitate primarily passive recreational uses geared to utilize the natural features of the site. In addition to park and recreation areas, the state and federal government also maintain forests, wildlife areas, public access sites and other special-use areas which serve a wide range of public recreation uses.

In addition to the five principal categories of park and recreation areas outlined above, two additional categories are included to round out the total recreation system. These categories include facilities that are not necessarily an integral portion of the five major categories but can play an important role in the total recreation delivery system. They are:

f) **Greenway Corridor** - Greenway corridors often provide trail systems (e.g., foot, bridle, bicycle, canoe), and may maintain, protect or preserve existing lineal, natural and cultural features such as watercourses (rivers, streams, shorelines), abandoned transportation rights-of-way (railroad and highway), utility rights-of-way, and scenic drives. The greenway corridor can function as an entity in itself or more ideally as a connecting link to one or more of the five categories listed above. The major recreational use of greenway corridors is typically oriented towards various trail systems; however, other supporting activities can be included at strategic points along the corridor, e.g., picnicking, camping, etc. Greenway corridors often straddle multiple political jurisdictions and require combined efforts of governmental units at all levels.

g) **Special Use Facility** - The special use facility classification is provided to accommodate separate facilities not included in the categories listed above. The development program of such a facility will many times include only a single activity, although it may accommodate several separate closely related activities. Among the more common special use areas are golf courses, sports centers, zoos, group camps, swimming and racket clubs, off-road vehicle areas, horseback riding stables and others.

## **RECREATION PROVIDERS**

### **Federal Government**

The federal government does not actively manage any recreational lands within Ottawa County. It does, however, operate a regional Coast Guard facility in Grand Haven on the Grand River's south side and a Coast Guard substation in Holland. The nearest National Park Service sites are Sleeping Bear Dunes in the northwest lower peninsula and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore just south the state line along Lake Michigan. Other nearby federal lands and facilities include the Manistee National Forest in Muskegon and Newaygo Counties and the North Country (hiking) Trail, which runs through Kent and Newaygo Counties.

### **State Government**

The State of Michigan owns and operates a number of recreation facilities throughout the County. It is primarily through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment (MDNRE, formerly MDNR) that these facilities are managed. The exception is three rest areas along state roadways in the County which are managed by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The MDNRE owns and operates three parks, two game areas and numerous boat launches in Ottawa County. All three state parks are located along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The State also owns a large undeveloped recreation area on the Grand River and the Musketawa Trail, a linear trail park located in the northeast section of the County, maintained by Ottawa County Parks.

Though the entrance to P.J. Hoffmaster State Park is in Muskegon County, the southernmost portion of the park is located in the far northwest corner of Spring Lake Township. The total park consists of 1,100 acres devoted to modern camping facilities - including 293 sites, the Gillette Visitor Center (a sand dune interpretive center), picnic areas, playgrounds, swimming and beach house, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

Grand Haven State Park, located several miles south of P.J. Hoffmaster State Park at the mouth of the Grand River, is comprised of 48 acres devoted to modern camping facilities including 174 sites, picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing, swimming beach and related facilities. This park is ranked second in the state for total attendance due to its high quality swimming beach.

Holland State Park, located in the far southwest corner of the County in Park Township, consists of 142 acres, and provides facilities similar to those of Grand Haven State Park. Also a beach attraction, Holland State Park is ranked first in visitor attendance of all the state parks in Michigan.

In addition, the State manages 1,665 acres in Robinson and Allendale Township in central Ottawa County for future development as a State Recreational Area. 550 acres was added to the 1,115 acre Bass River Recreation Area in 2002. This purchase includes expansive riverine wetlands, floodplain forest, bayous and approximately 2.25 total miles of frontage on the Grand and Bass Rivers. With such a large expanse of river frontage, this site can be expected to provide significant recreation opportunities in the future. Although a master plan identifying

specific park plans has not yet been developed, a management plan designating various use zones is in progress. Currently the site is used primarily for mountain biking, horseback riding and hunting.

The Grand Haven State Game Area, with 1,139 acres in Robinson and Crockery Townships, provides opportunities for waterfowl hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. The Ottawa Mini-Game Areas consist of five separate properties totaling 396 acres in Blendon and Olive Townships. These properties were purchased with hunters' funds to help bolster pheasant populations.

The MDNRE operates eight public boat launch facilities located throughout the County. These launches are all constructed of concrete, and all have restroom facilities. Four are located on bayous along the western half of the Grand River; two are on the Grand River itself, one on Lake Macatawa and one on Pigeon Lake providing access to Lake Michigan.

The Musketawa Trail, which runs from Marne to Muskegon, is a linear park developed on an abandoned rail line. The 12-mile paved section that runs from Marne to Conklin and to the west county line is managed by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission under an agreement approved in 2002. The basis for Ottawa County's involvement in operation of the east half of the trail stems from a commitment made in 1991 whereby the County agreed to operate the trail if the state would acquire and develop the trail corridor. The remaining 16-mile paved section that runs between Ravenna and the outskirts of Muskegon is currently managed though the West Shore Snowmobile Council under a grant from the MDNRE. The Musketawa Trail is a barrier-free trail that features opportunities for walking, running, biking, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, rollerblading, and nature observation.

## **County Government**

Ottawa County, through the Parks and Recreation Commission, owns and operates 23 parks comprising 3,360 acres and 2,619 acres classified as open space.

Ottawa County's parks, as might be expected, have a strong natural resource orientation. Six parks are located on Lake Michigan, five are on the Grand River, two are located on the Pigeon River and another is situated on Crockery Lake. In addition to water frontage, many of the parks feature mature forests, dune formations, wetlands, high quality native plants and other natural resource features.

In addition to its parks, Ottawa County also owns and manages several large open space lands for conservation and recreation purposes. These properties tend to feature fewer improvements and less restrictive rules (e.g., more hunting opportunities and dogs allowed off-leash). The 1989 County Parks Plan noted Ottawa County's unique situation in that it owned 2,000 acres of undeveloped land - much of it having been acquired as tax-reverted land in the 1930s. Based upon the Plan's recommendations, the properties were formally reviewed by the County as to their public value. Some of the smaller properties with less unique natural features were recommended for sale (total 324 acres) with the proceeds used to establish funds for land acquisition and park development. A total of 1,184 acres were dedicated as Open Space and put under management of the Parks Commission. Since then, 1,435 additional

acres of open space land have been added. There are 19 separate Open Space properties currently managed by Ottawa County Parks.

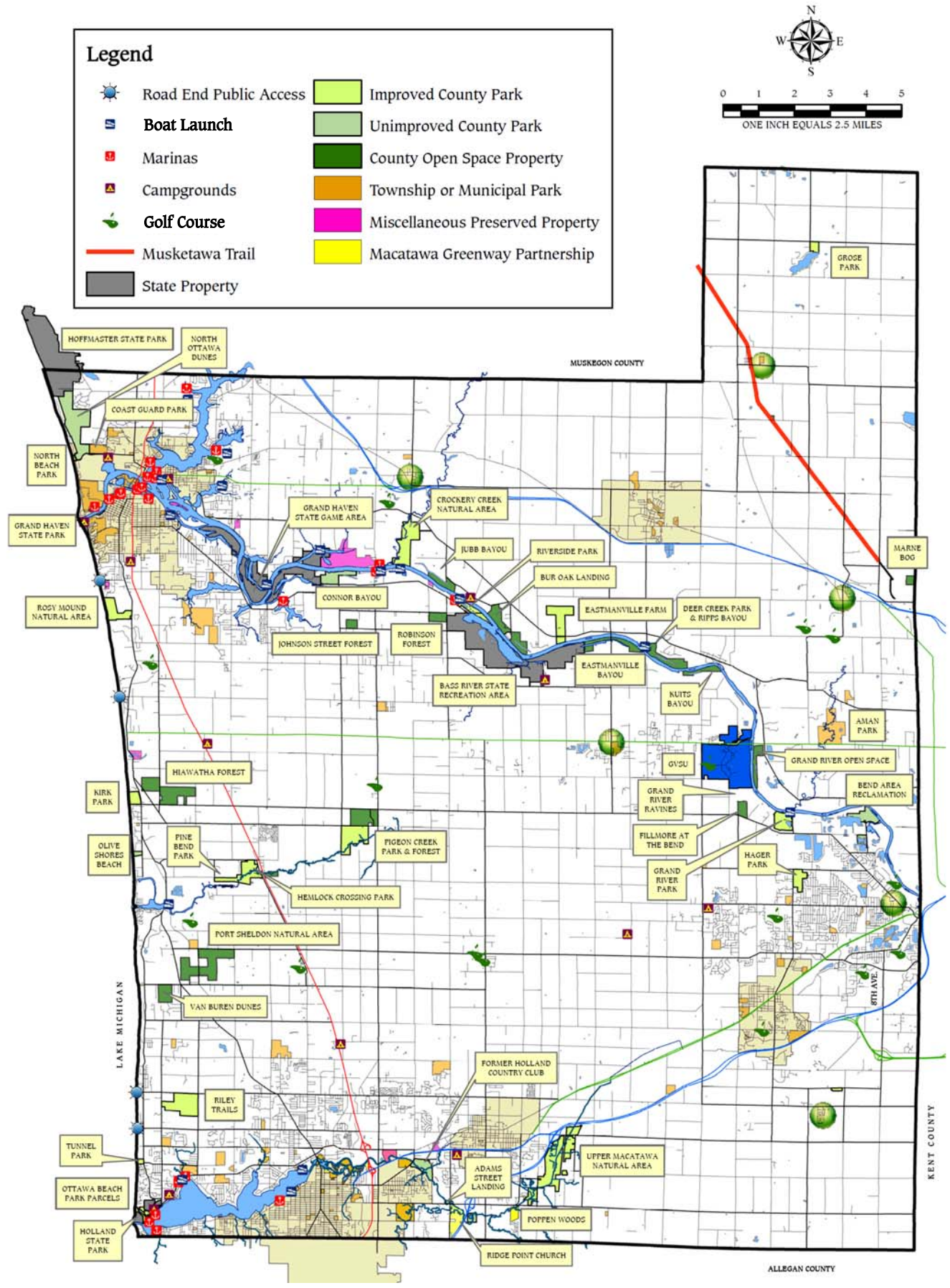
According to the *Ottawa County Open Space Management Plan*, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 1992, Open Space lands are to be maintained in their natural state for future generations except "when their development for expansion of County facilities is considered to be in the County's best interest." The plan listed the following management goals for Open Space lands:

- Promote the natural character and diversity of each site.
- Allow and promote safe, non-intensive recreational uses with an emphasis primarily on activities that require minimal facility development and have limited impact on the natural character of the land.
- Manage timber for recreation, wildlife, and aesthetic purposes as opposed to maximum timber yield.
- Enhance wildlife habitat through conservation measures where feasible.

Following is a location map and brief description of each county property divided according to that property's location within the county greenway system. Several other properties not located within these greenways are also included.

Finally, it should be noted that many of these properties were purchased or improved with state and federal grant funds. A listing of these grants is provided in **Appendix B**.

Figure 4.1 - Ottawa County Recreation Inventory Map



## Grand River Greenway

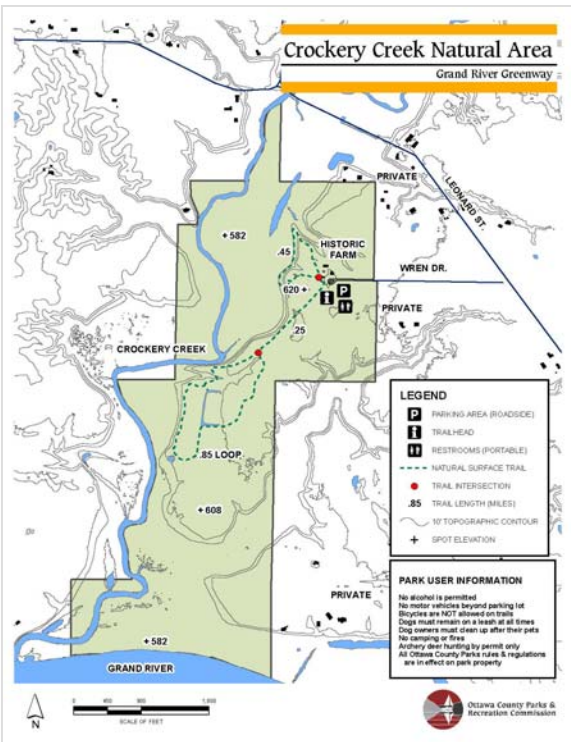
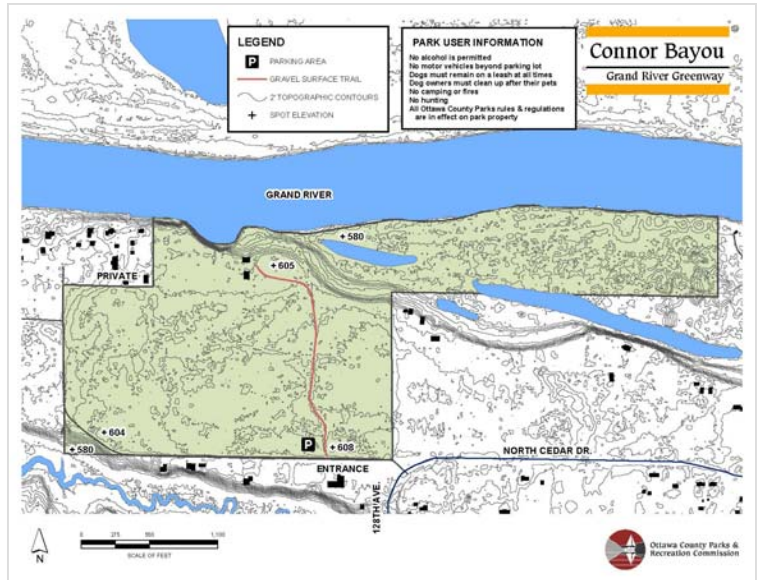
### CONNOR BAYOU Robinson Township

**Size:** 142 acres

**Natural Features:** Floodplain with extensive wetlands and high quality natural land with high ground and a fairly mature deciduous-coniferous upland forest. Views from the site are outstanding and encompass the river, Connor Bayou and associated wetlands plus an expansive marsh located immediately across the river. The site provides nearly one mile of Grand River frontage.

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped. Preliminary plans for the site call for a variety of resource-based recreation opportunities including hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, picnicking, and canoe/kayak access. An existing log home will be utilized for public rental and other events.

**Site Notes:** The Parks and Recreation County Commission purchased a portion of this riverfront property with assistance from a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant.



### CROCKERY CREEK NATURAL AREA Crockery Township

**Size:** 306 acres

**Natural Features:** Diverse mix of wet meadows and buttonbush swamp, floodplain forest, mixed deciduous and coniferous woods. The site is a nesting location for bald eagles and has nearly two miles of Crockery Creek frontage and approximately ½ mile of frontage on the Grand River.

**Facilities/Activities:** Minimally developed. Two trail loops provide access to the northeast portion of the site from a trailhead at the end of Wren Drive. An historic farmstead (not restored) is also part of the site.

**Site Notes:** The site has been open to archery deer hunting by permit since 2003.

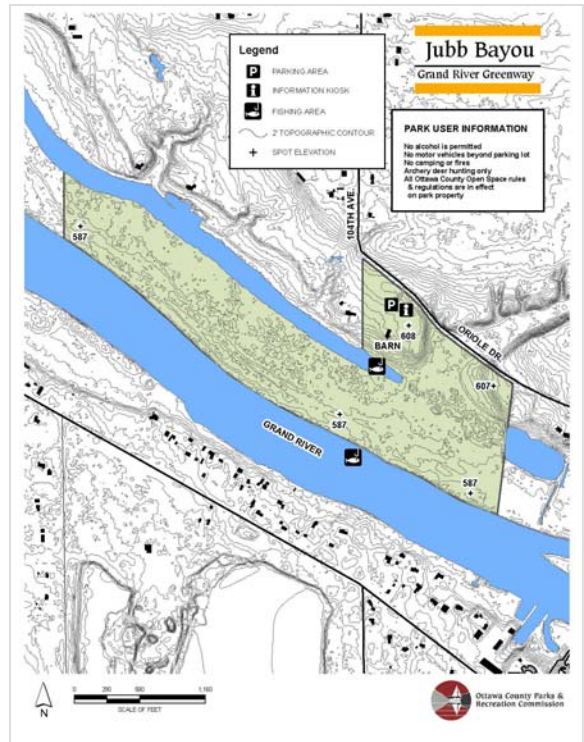
## JUBB BAYOU Crockery Township

**Size:** 97 acres

**Natural Features:** Inland bayou with associated wetlands and floodplain. Site also contains mixed woods and old farm fields.

**Facilities/Activities:** Undeveloped except for small gravel parking area with information kiosk. A barn remains from previous agricultural use. Bayou is a very good fishing location.

**Site Notes:** Canoes, kayaks and other small boats can be carried to bayou from parking area.



## RIVERSIDE PARK Robinson Township

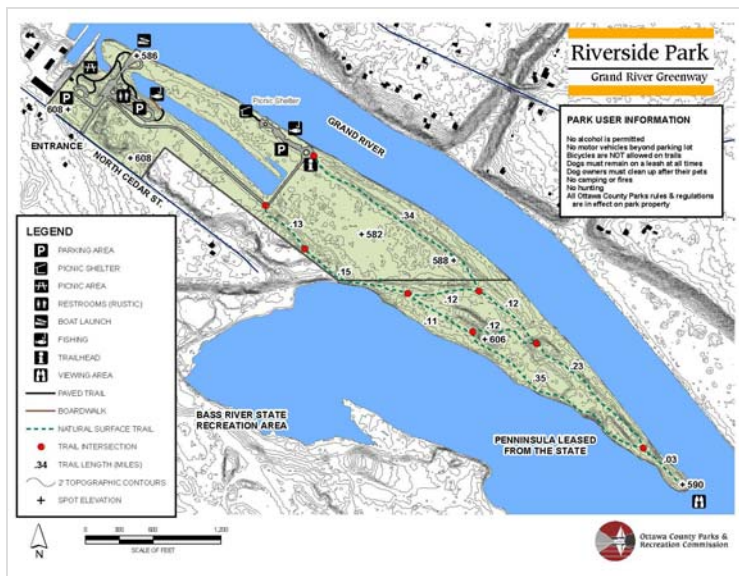
**Size:** 95 acres (includes 31 leased from the State)

**Natural Features:** Approximately 6,737 feet of waterfront, with much of the park in a natural state with large wetlands paralleling the Grand River.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities include a large boat launch with four concrete ramps and two docks and associated trailer parking. Additional

parking for 80 cars is located near a waterfront picnic shelter east of the boat launch and in the upland at the west edge of the park. The park also features pit toilets, barrier-free fishing, and recently signed trail system, including links to the adjacent Bass River State Recreation Area.

**Site Notes:** There are no entrance fees to the park; however, there is a self-serve boat launch fee. The park is open year around but is not plowed during the winter.





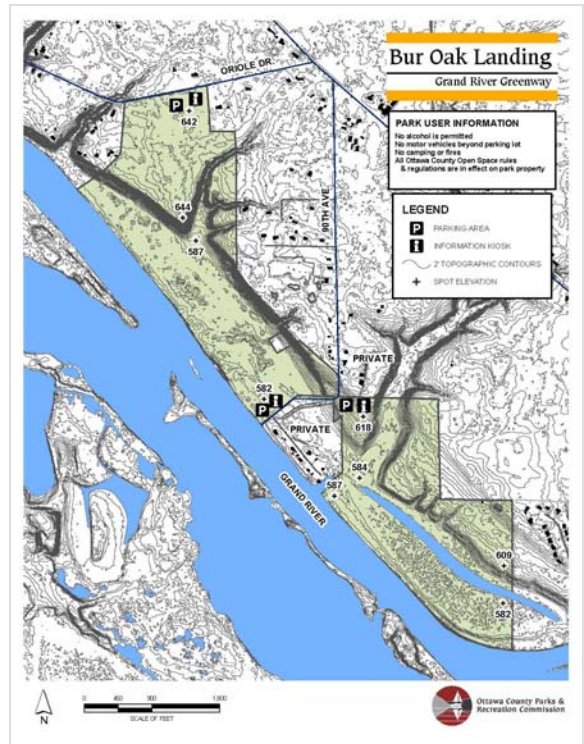
## BUR OAK LANDING Polkton Township

**Size:** 261 acres

**Natural Features:** Floodplain forest, shrub/scrub swamp, inland bayou, ravines and bluffs above the floodplain.

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped except for small gravel parking areas with information kiosks at three locations. Trail system is currently being planned. Archery hunting is allowed on entire site. General hunting is allowed on the portion east of 90th Ave.

**Site Notes:** Purchased with Michigan Natural Resources Trust grant funds.

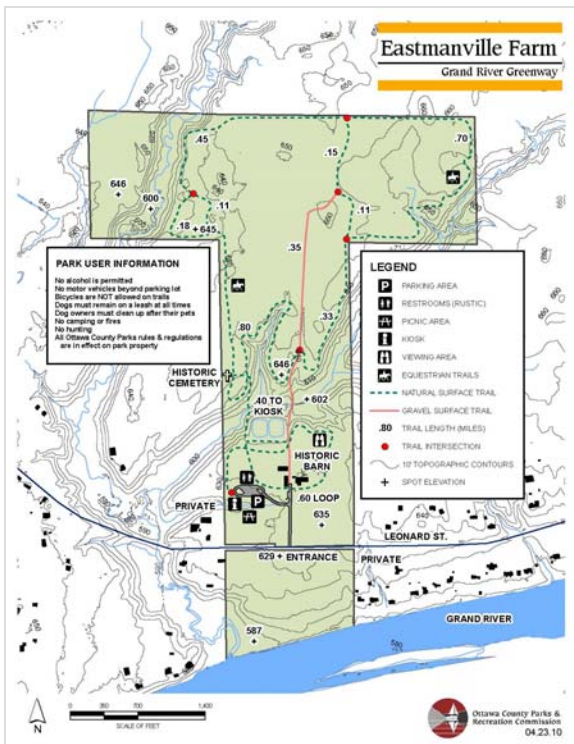


## EASTMANVILLE FARM Polkton Township

**Size:** 229 acres

**Natural Features:** 29 acres of rolling grassland on the south side with forested riverfront. The acreage north of Leonard includes approximately 30 acres of relatively flat ground where the farm and housing facilities used to be. North of that is approximately 50 acres of rolling terrain with a stream channel. Beyond that is relatively flat pasture land bordered on the east and west by forested ravines.

**Facilities/Activities:** Gravel parking areas, a pedestrian trail loop and over three miles of equestrian trails. A farm education center is part of the site master plan. This center would be funded and operated by a non-profit group leasing land from Ottawa County Parks.



**Site Notes:** The site was the former County Poor Farm. An historic barn and cemetery from that era have been restored.

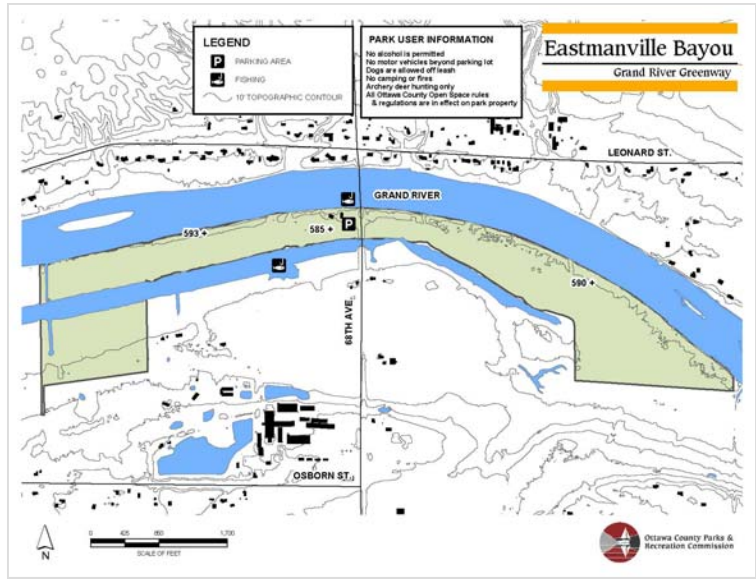
## EASTMANVILLE BAYOU Allendale Township

**Size:** 157 acres

**Natural Features:** The property includes 1.75 miles of river frontage, heavily wooded floodplain forest, and supports a variety of native flora and fauna including excellent displays of Virginia Bluebells.

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped. Parking, pit toilets, boat launch to the bayou, a canoe/kayak launch on the Grand River, and a connection under the bridge to the east half of the site are scheduled for construction in 2011.

**Site Notes:** A previous owner (west end of site) had dredged a channel from the Bayou to the Grand River which has filled in over time.

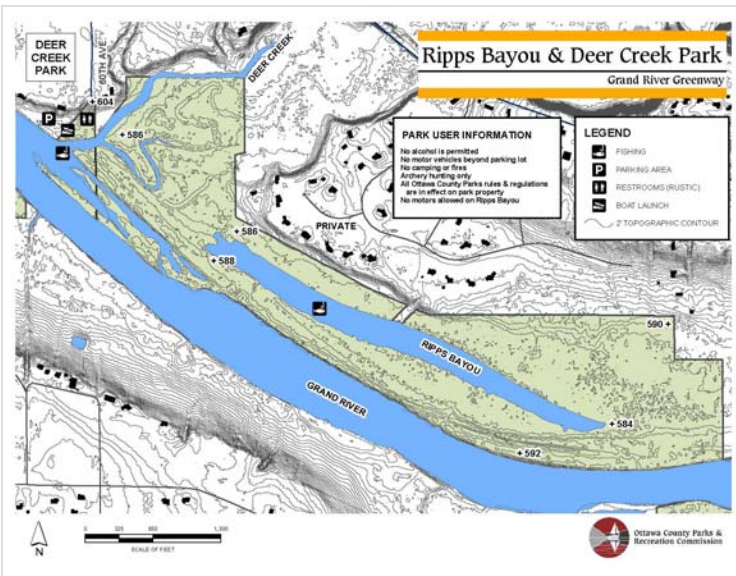


## DEER CREEK PARK Polkton Township

**Size:** 2 acres

**Natural Features:** Located at the mouth of the Deer Creek on the Grand River.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities include a small hard surface boat launch with car/trailer parking for eight, car-only parking for six vehicles, plus picnic areas and pit toilets.



**Site Notes:** There are no entrance fees and the park is open year around. The park is not plowed in the winter. This is the smallest of Ottawa County's parks.

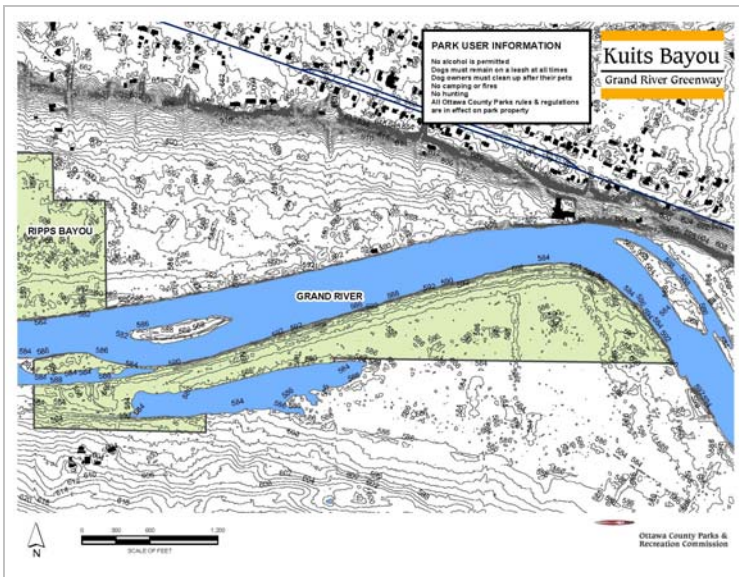
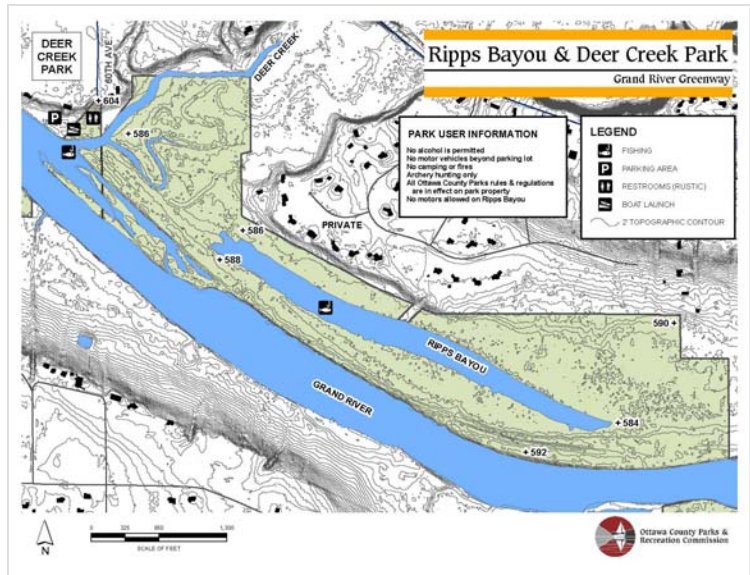
## RIPPS BAYOU Polkton Township

**Size:** 161 acres

**Natural Features:** Undeveloped property with approximately one mile of river frontage. It is floodplain forest and encompasses the majority of the Ripps Bayou.

**Facilities/Activities:** Undeveloped

**Site Notes:** The only public access to the bayou is via portage from the Grand River and only non-motorized water craft are permitted on the bayou.



## KUITS BAYOU Allendale Township

**Size:** 80 acres

**Natural Features:** Floodplain forest with portion of inland bayou

**Facilities/Activities:** Undeveloped

**Site Notes:** Access is currently by boat only.

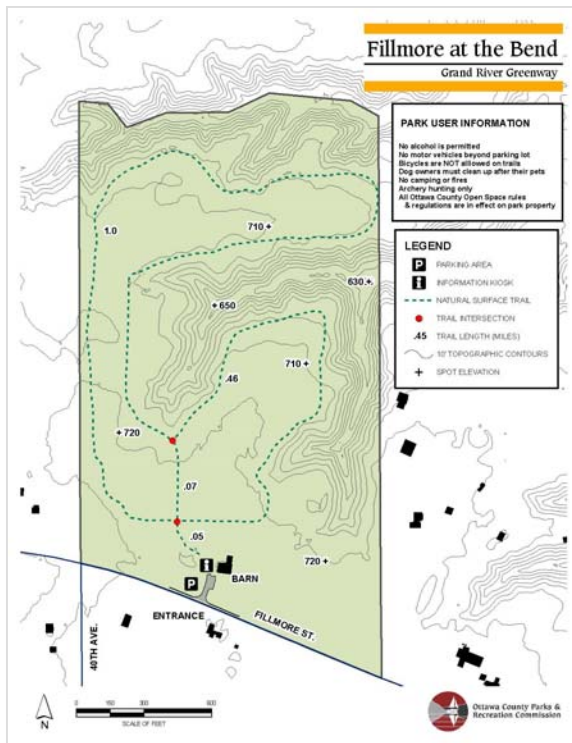
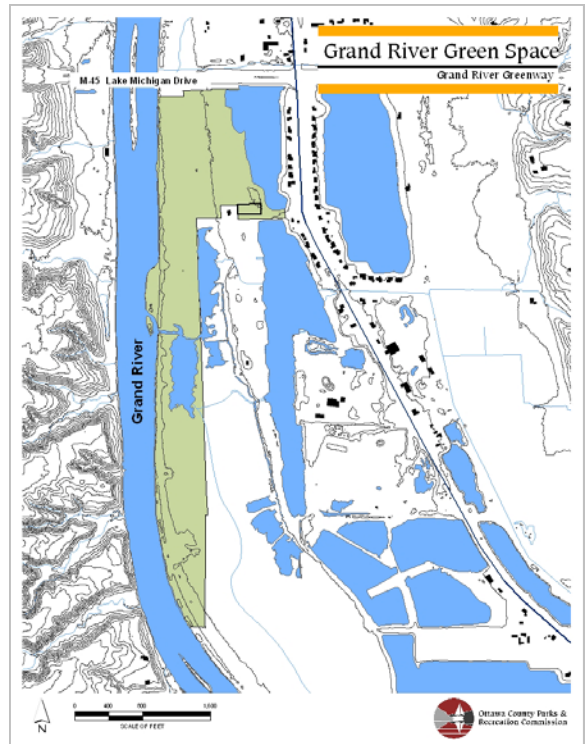
## GRAND RIVER GREEN SPACE (formerly the Bolthouse Property) Tallmadge Township

**Size:** 111 acres

**Natural Features:** Floodplain forest and wetlands

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped

**Site Notes:** Large area of site that was formerly farmed has been restored with tree and shrub plantings in conjunction with the USDA and local conservation office.



## FILLMORE AT THE BEND Georgetown Township

**Size:** 68 acres

**Natural Features:** This formerly farmed property includes a deep wooded ravine on its northern border.

**Facilities/Activities:** A small paved parking area with information kiosk provides access from Fillmore Street. 1.5 miles of mowed trails loop through former farm fields.

**Site Notes:** A barn on the site was inspected by a restoration specialist in 2004 to determine its quality and potential for alternative use. The other buildings on the site were demolished in 2006. The site is bordered on the north by the future Grand River Ravines property purchase.

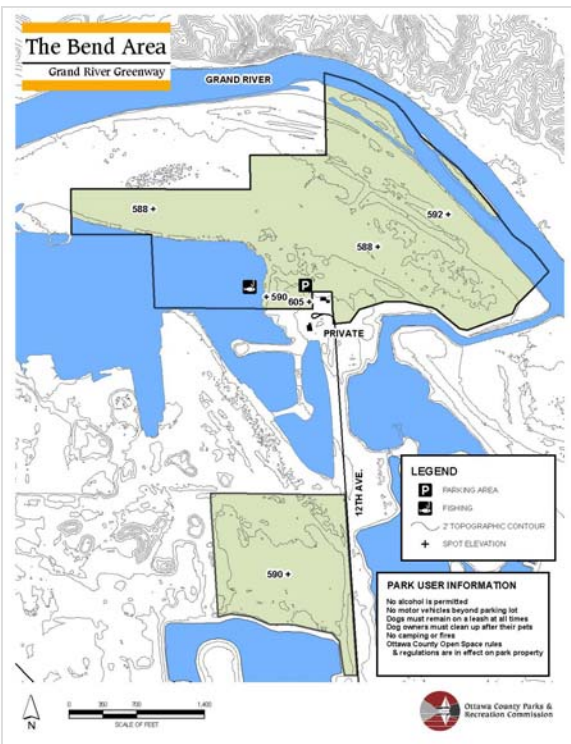
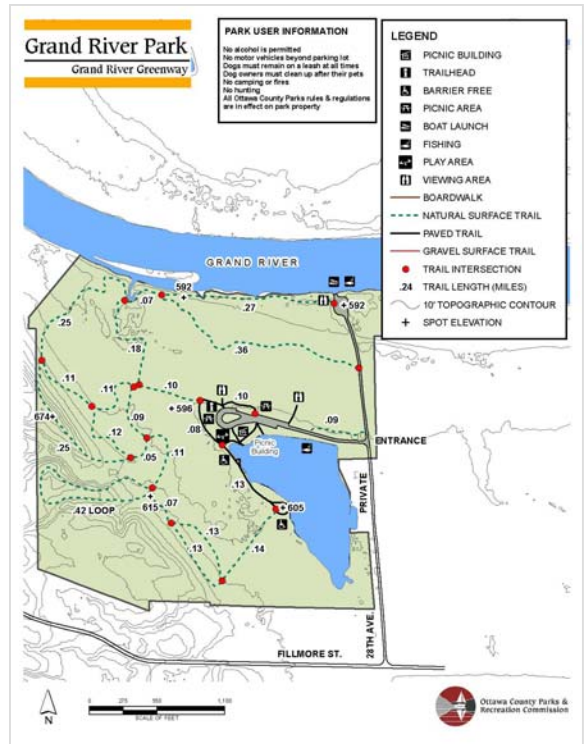
## GRAND RIVER PARK Georgetown Township

**Size:** 162 acres

**Natural Features:** Acquired in 1999 from Georgetown Township, the park features wooded hills, floodplain forest, wetlands, a small man-made lake and approximately one half mile of frontage on the Grand River.

**Facilities/Activities:** The park offers opportunities for hiking, mountain biking and skiing on the nature trails as well as fishing from a wooden dock/boardwalk or from the shore of the lake and the Grand River. The park also features a boat launch at the Grand River, overlook decks, a fully enclosed picnic building and a barrier-free children's playground.

**Site Notes:** There are no entrance or boat launch fees and the park is open year around. In 1999 Ottawa County Parks and Recreation received a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to restore approximately 22 acres of existing farmland to native grassland.



## BEND AREA Georgetown Township

**Size:** 188 acres

**Natural Features:** Mixed floodplain vegetation including wooded areas, wetland and former gravel mining areas.

**Facilities/Activities:** A gravel parking lot provides access from the end of 12th Avenue. The site is popular for hunting and fishing.

**Site Notes:** The site contains several active oil wells that will likely remain in use for the foreseeable future.

## Pigeon River Greenway

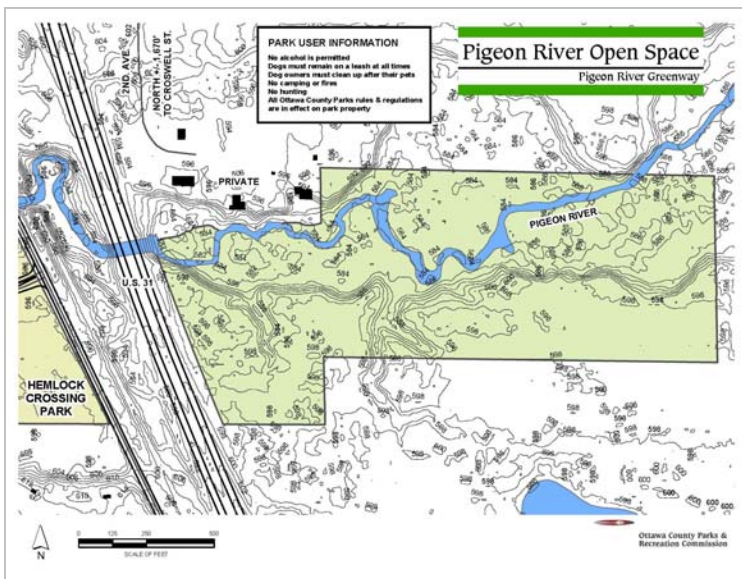
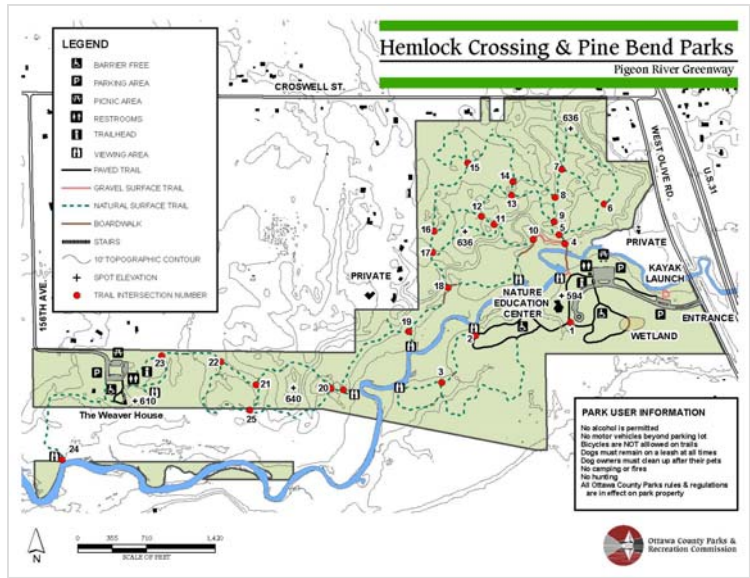
### HEMLOCK CROSSING/ PINE BEND Port Sheldon Township

**Size:** 239 acres

**Natural Features:** Woods and wetlands meander through bottomland and upland forest, old pine plantations and along the river.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities include two small picnic shelters, a kayak/canoe launch and over a mile of paved trail. There are over 6 miles of trails for hiking and cross-country skiing. Pine Bend is a secondary access on the west end of the property that offers parking and a trail head. A pedestrian bridge and numerous overlooks offer scenic views of the river corridor, wetlands, natural springs and woods. Pine Bend is also the site of the Weaver House, a restored residence available for event rental.

**Site Notes:** There are no entrance fees at Hemlock Crossing or Pine Bend and both are open year around.



### PIGEON RIVER OPEN SPACE Olive Township

**Size:** 30 acres

**Natural Features:** Floodplain forest with over 2000' of frontage on the Pigeon River.

**Facilities/Activities:** Undeveloped

**Site Notes:** Site was donated to Parks Commission from a private citizen.

## PIGEON CREEK PARK & FOREST

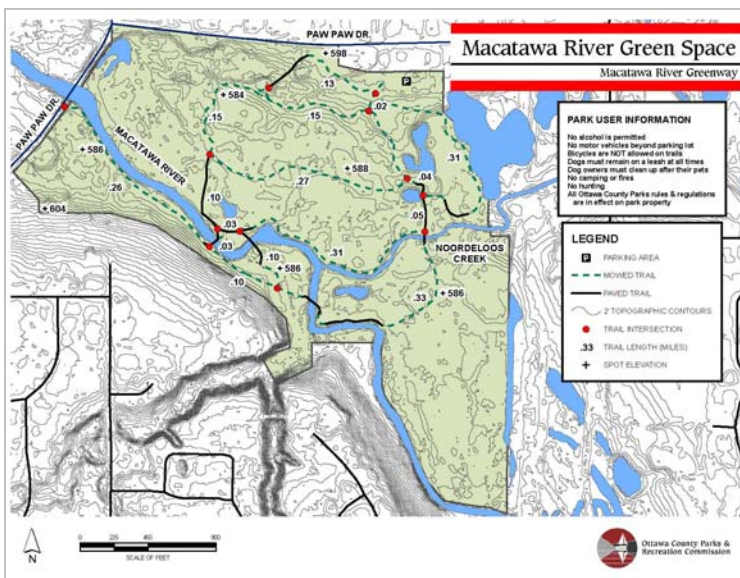
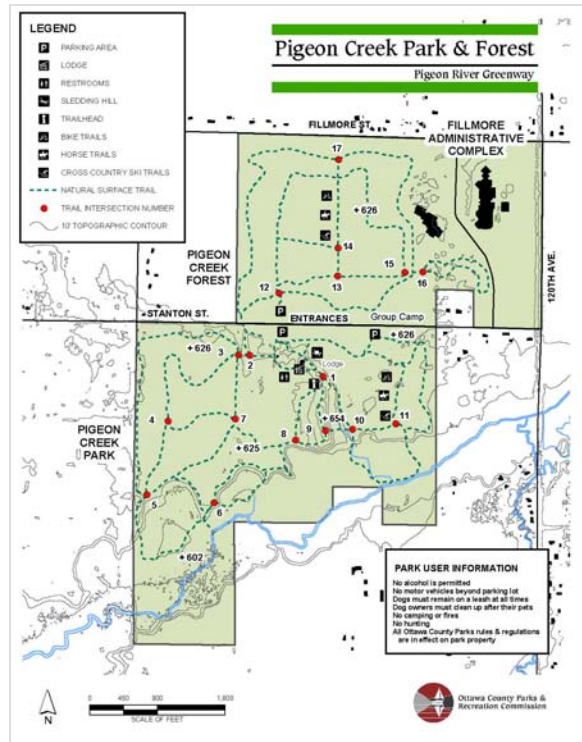
### Olive Township

**Size:** 412 acres

**Natural Features:** The majority of the park is heavily wooded with a diversity of habitat types including upland deciduous forest, pine plantations, floodplain forest, and wetlands.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities at the park include the Pigeon Creek Lodge, group camp area, sledding hills, picnic areas and over 10 miles of trails used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and equestrian use. There are three miles of cross country trails that are lighted for evening skiing. There is approximately a one-mile trail loop that generally meets barrier-free standards. During the winter, the lodge offers ski rental and concessions. The lodge functions as a picnic building which can be reserved in the non-winter months.

**Site Notes:** There are no entrance fees and the park is open year around, with the bulk of use occurring in the winter months. On the corner of 120th Avenue and Fillmore Street is the Ottawa County Fillmore Complex where county offices are located, including the Parks and Recreation Office.



## Macatawa Greenway

### MACATAWA GREEN SPACE (former Holland Country Club) City of Holland

**Size:** 122 acres

**Natural Features:** The site contains some natural floodplain forest. Most of the remainder of the site is former golf greens and fairways with scattered large trees.

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped.

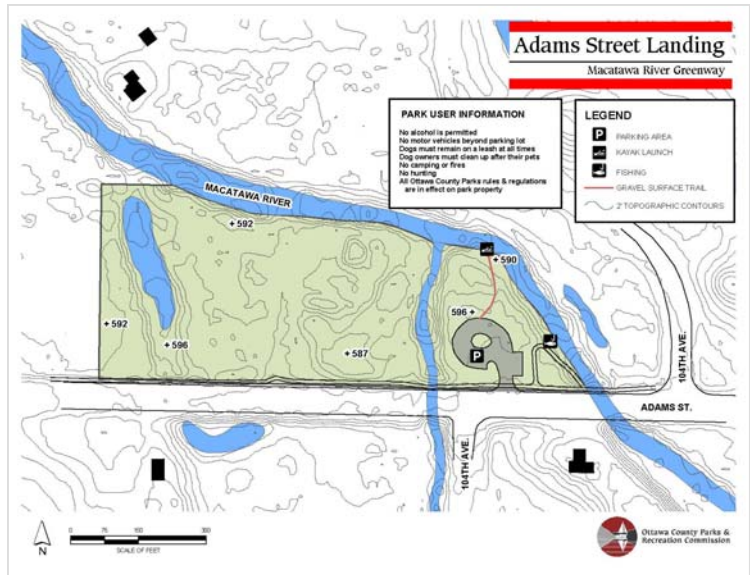
**Site Notes:** Twenty-four acres of floodplain forest were restored in 2010 as part of an agreement to provide space to Request Foods, Inc. for required wetland mitigation. Additional restoration funded with an EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant is planned for 2011.

## ADAMS STREET LANDING Holland Township

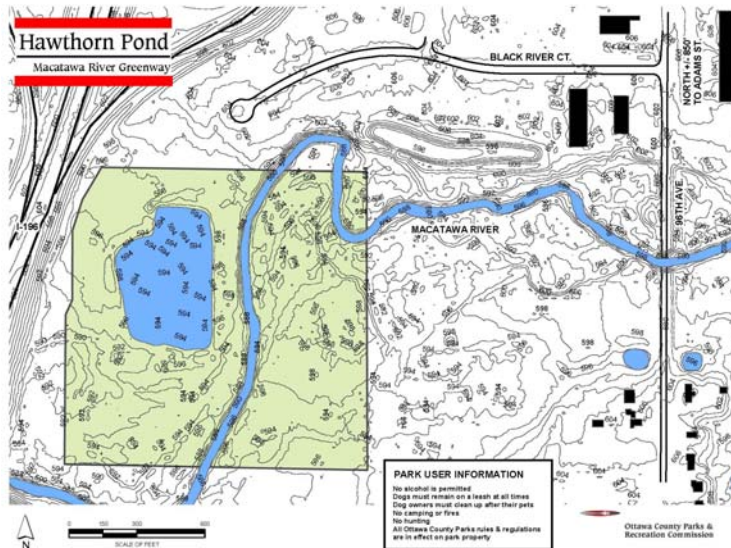
**Size:** 10 acres

**Natural Features:** The site is covered with mature trees and floodplain forest. There is approximately 1,200 feet of frontage on the Macatawa River.

**Facilities/Activities:** This small park provides hiking and picnicking. It also serves as a staging location for canoes and kayaks. A separated non-motorized pathway runs past the property on Adams Street. The location is a very popular fishing spot.



**Site Notes:** In 1999, Ottawa County Parks received a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Hazard Mitigation Grant to purchase and remove flood-prone structures in the floodplain of the Macatawa River. With the assistance of the grant funds, Ottawa County purchased 10 acres including two houses in Holland Township and removed them in 2002.



## HAWTHORN POND NATURAL AREA Holland Township

**Size:** 40 acres

**Natural Features:** Five-acre pond with deep water, wetlands, and forest along almost 1800 linear feet of Macatawa River shoreline.

**Facilities/Activities:** Currently undeveloped, but plans for vehicle access, a walking path around the pond, and other amenities are planned for 2011.

**Site Notes:** This site was purchased jointly with Holland Township, who is responsible for management and development.

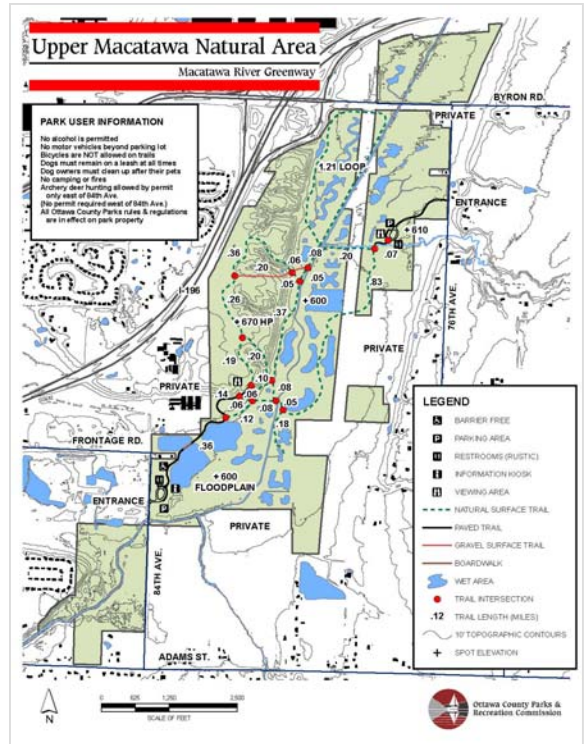


## UPPER MACATAWA NATURAL AREA Zeeland Township

**Size:** 612 acres

**Natural Features:** Located on the upper reaches of the Macatawa River, the property includes a variety of restored wetlands, associated grasslands and an extensive system of deep wooded ravines that support native vegetation and a variety of wildlife.

**Facilities/Activities:** Improvements include a system of trails, boardwalks, overlooks, interpretive displays, a native grass and wildflower planting, and a paved trail through the upper portion of the site as part of the Macatawa Greenway Trail intended to link to Holland. Access points are located in two locations. Each provides gravel parking, pit toilets, and picnic tables.



**Site Notes:** The Parks Commission began issuing a limited number of special permits for bow hunting deer on the property in 2004. The permits are issued on a lottery basis each fall.

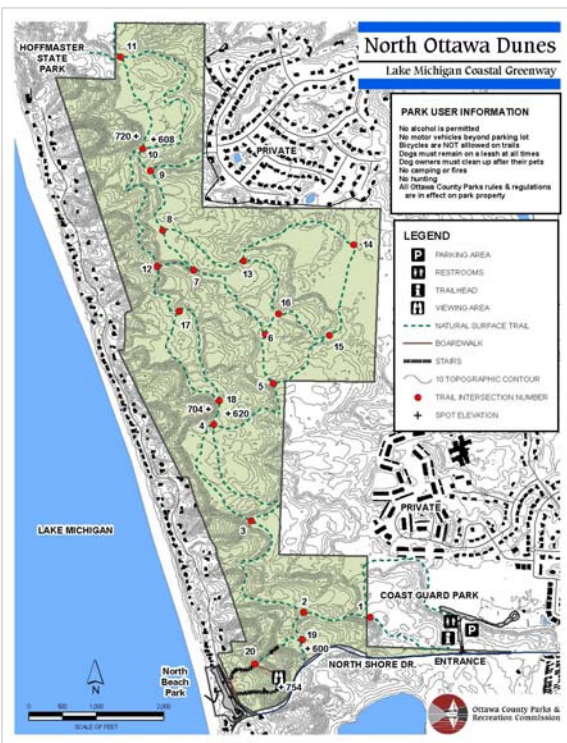
## Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

### NORTH OTTAWA DUNES City of Ferrysburg

**Size:** 500 acres

**Natural Features:** Extensive undeveloped dunes and forestlands, and although it does not have frontage on Lake Michigan, it does provide views of the lake and an experience of the unique Lake Michigan shoreline environment.

**Facilities/Activities:** Over eight miles of natural surface trails provide access to the entire site and a connection to Hoffmaster State Park and North Beach Park. The North Beach Park connection includes extensive boardwalks, stairs, and overlooks through the largest dunes on the site. Access is provided by a paved parking area in adjacent Coast Guard Park (City of Ferrysburg).



Amenities include a restroom, picnic tables, donor recognition plaza, and trailhead kiosk.

**Site Notes:** Purchase of this site was made possible by extensive private fundraising and an MDNR Trust Fund grant.

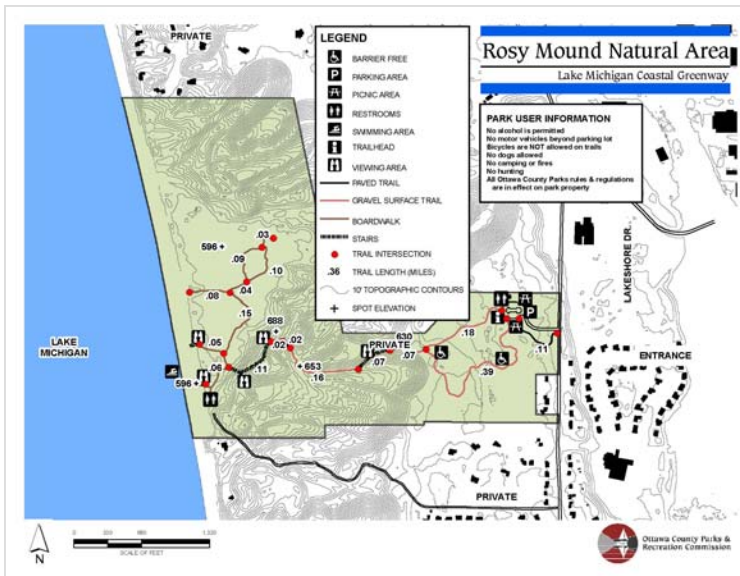
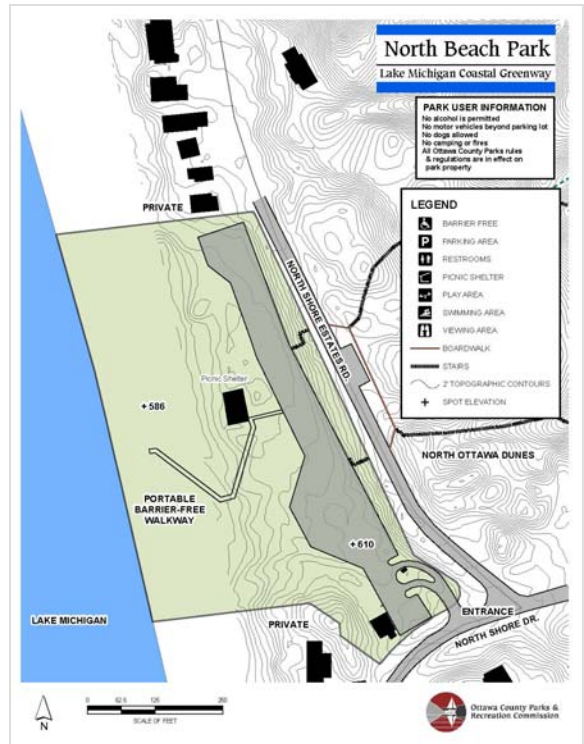
## NORTH BEACH PARK City of Ferrysburg

**Size:** 20 acres

**Natural Features:** Large open, sandy beach with almost 750' of Lake Michigan shoreline.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities include parking for 187 cars (including six barrier-free spaces), a large picnic shelter, play area, volleyball court, restrooms, vending machine concession, a dune climb stairway with viewing deck, and a seasonal boardwalk for barrier-free access to the beach and Lake Michigan.

**Site Notes:** The park is open year around and vehicle parking fees are in effect between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend.



## ROSY MOUND NATURAL AREA Grand Haven Township

**Size:** 164 acres

**Natural Features:** Rosy Mound is a classic Great Lakes dune system including high wooded dunes, foredunes, a dune blowout, and 0.65 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.

**Facilities/Activities:** 0.7 mile hiking trail from the parking area to the Lake Michigan shoreline, including 1,000 feet of stairs up and down the dune and scenic views of the woods, dunes and

Lake Michigan. A unique shade canopy, dune boardwalk trail and restrooms are located near the beach. A parking lot, restroom building and picnic facilities were constructed on the east side of the dune as well as a crushed stone looped trail installed through the woods and open dune area.

**Site Notes:** A connection was made to the Lakeshore Drive bike path by a paved path extension through the park. Motor vehicle parking fees are in effect from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, and the park is open year around.

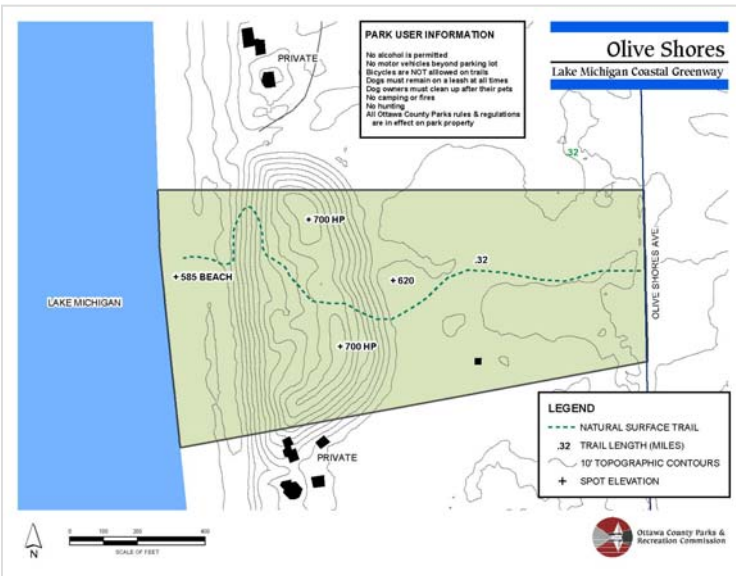
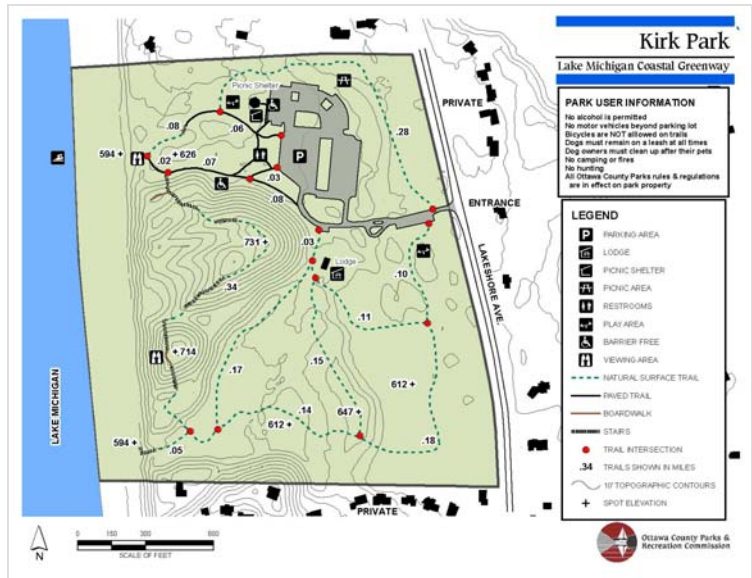
## KIRK PARK Grand Haven Township

**Size:** 68 acres

**Natural Features:** Rugged, forested dunes and 1,850 feet of sand beach.

**Facilities/Activities:** Facilities include extensive picnic areas with a large picnic shelter and a park lodge used as a picnic building. The lodge is also used for overnight outings in the off-season. Over two miles of well-marked trails include many boardwalks and viewing decks overlooking Lake Michigan. Hard surface walkways lead to interpretive displays at the waterfront and stairs to the beach. Other facilities include a modern restroom building with an attached concession, vending machine enclosure, two playgrounds, and parking for 314 vehicles.

**Site Notes:** Motor vehicle parking fees are in effect Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend.



## OLIVE SHORES Port Sheldon Township

**Size:** 20.5 acres

**Natural Features:** A very high, steep dune is the dominant natural feature of the property along with 750 feet of shoreline on Lake Michigan. The dune is a classic beech-maple-hemlock dune with mature woods. Inland sections of the site include red pine plantation and dune savannah.

**Facilities/Activities:** This property is currently undeveloped. Master

planning and construction drawings have been completed to provide parking, a restroom, walkways, stairs and boardwalks. Construction is expected in 2011.

**Site Notes:** Although not easily accessible, the dune ridge offers great views of Lake Michigan and the surrounding woods. An interesting note about the property is that it was a filming location for the movie "The Road to Perdition" starring Tom Hanks.

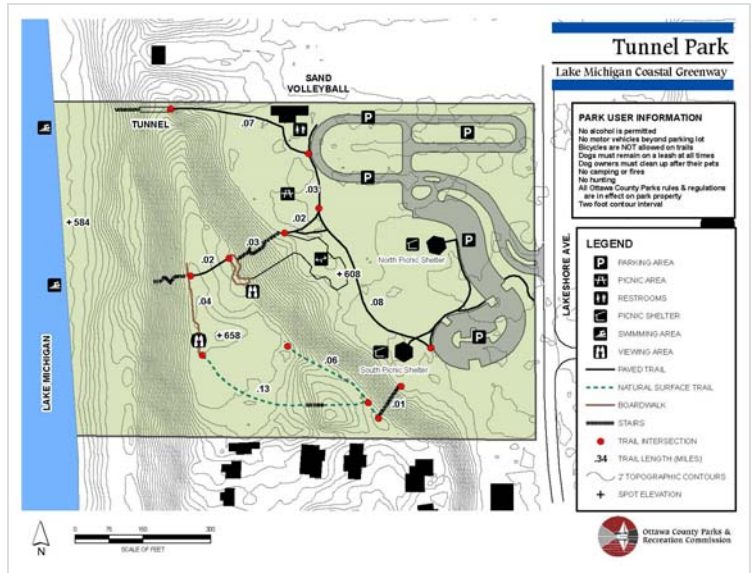
## TUNNEL PARK Park Township

**Size:** 22.5 acres (includes approximately 5 acres leased from the City of Holland)

**Natural Features:** Open and forested dune including 950 feet of Lake Michigan beach.

**Facilities/Activities:** Named after its unique tunnel through the dune providing beach access, Tunnel Park provides parking capacity (including overflow) for over 400, Tunnel Park has the most parking capacity of any County Park and is typically the busiest park during prime beach season. Facilities include four sand volleyball courts, extensive picnic areas including two covered shelters, modern restrooms, a large playground with an adjacent dune climb, and a dune-top viewing area.

**Site Notes:** Vehicle parking fees are required between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend and the park is closed between November 1 and March 31.



## HISTORIC OTTAWA BEACH PARKS Park Township

**Size:** 12 separate parcels of land near Holland State Park that total 58 acres

**Natural Features:** The property features 700 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline, Mount Pisgah, (a large migrating dune), and approximately one half mile of Lake Macatawa shoreline.

**Facilities/Activities:** Recent improvements include a separated bike

path along Ottawa Beach Road, trails through the dunes including the Mt. Pisgah dune climb stairs, and Lake Macatawa waterfront improvements including parking, picnic tables, benches and fishing piers. Additional extensive lakefront access will be provided with the completion of the Holland Harbor Fishing Access Project with its large boardwalks and fishing piers on the Lake Macatawa shoreline.

**Site Notes:** Unique site location requires continuing cooperation with Holland State Park and the West Michigan Parks Association, the local homeowners association.

## General Parks, Open Space Lands and Trails

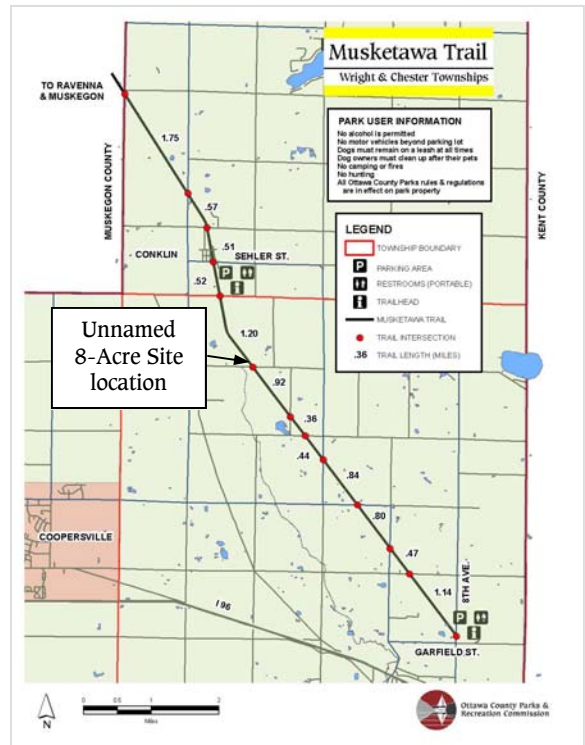
### MUSKETAWA TRAIL Wright & Chester Townships

**Size:** 26-mile linear park in Ottawa and Muskegon Counties

**Natural Features:** The trail traverses mostly agricultural lands with scattered forest.

**Facilities/Activities:** This multi-use trail is barrier free and used by several groups such as bikers, horseback riders, rollerbladers, cross country skiers, hikers and even snowmobilers when the snow conditions are favorable.

**Site Notes:** The trail is owned by the State of Michigan. Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission currently manages the trail from Marne to the Muskegon/Ottawa County line and the West Shore Snowmobile Council manages the remaining trail. Plans are in progress to extend the Musketawa trail east to connect to the White Pine Trail and southeast, connecting it to the Walker Highland Trail, ultimately creating a link to Millennium Park in Kent County.



### UNNAMED SITE Wright Township

**Size:** 8 acres

**Natural Features:** Wet woods

**Facilities/Activities:** There are no park facilities on the site.

**Site Notes:** This property is adjacent to the Musketawa Trail in the northwestern corner of Wright Township (See map above). The land was donated to the Parks Commission in 1995.

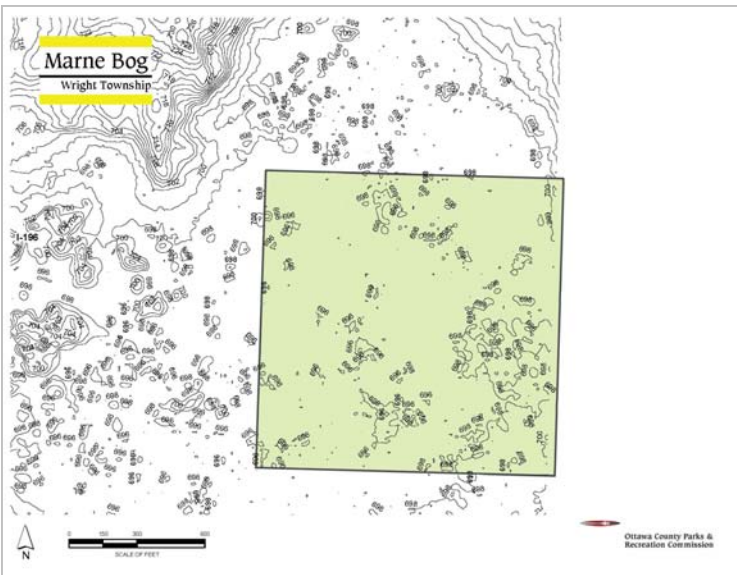
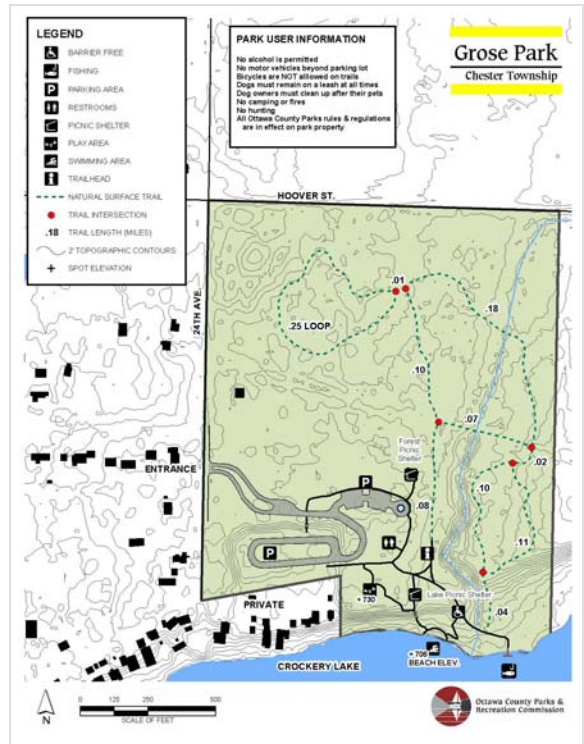
## GROSE PARK Chester Township

**Size:** 40 acres

**Natural Features:** The park overlooks the north side of Crockery Lake with over 820 feet of shoreline. It also includes a large area of mature hardwood forest with exceptional wildflowers and native plants.

**Facilities/Activities:** There are facilities available for the entire family including a fishing deck, small swimming beach, two picnic shelters, sand volleyball courts, a children’s playground, horseshoe pits, and hiking trails.

**Site Notes:** There are no entry fees and the park is closed between November 1 and March 31.



## MARNE BOG Wright Township

**Size:** 40 acres

**Natural Features:** 25-acre natural bog which was determined to be notably significant in the 1988 Natural Features Inventory of Ottawa County.

**Facilities/Activities:**

**Site Notes:** This parcel was donated to the County in 2004. There is no access at this time to the public.

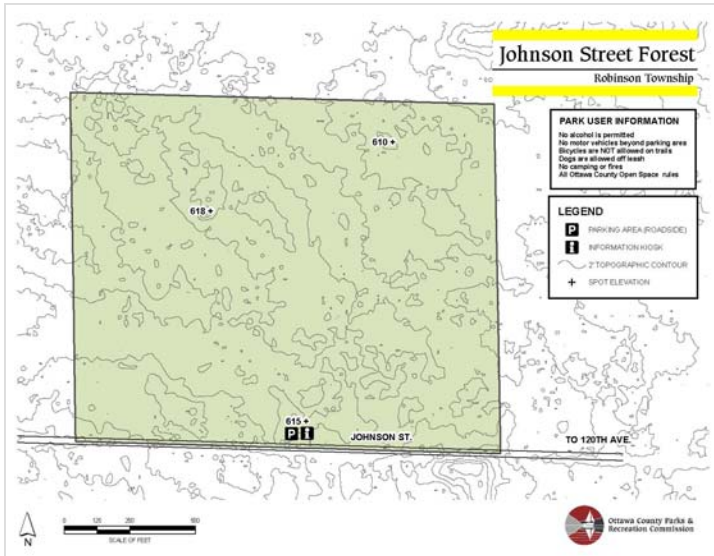
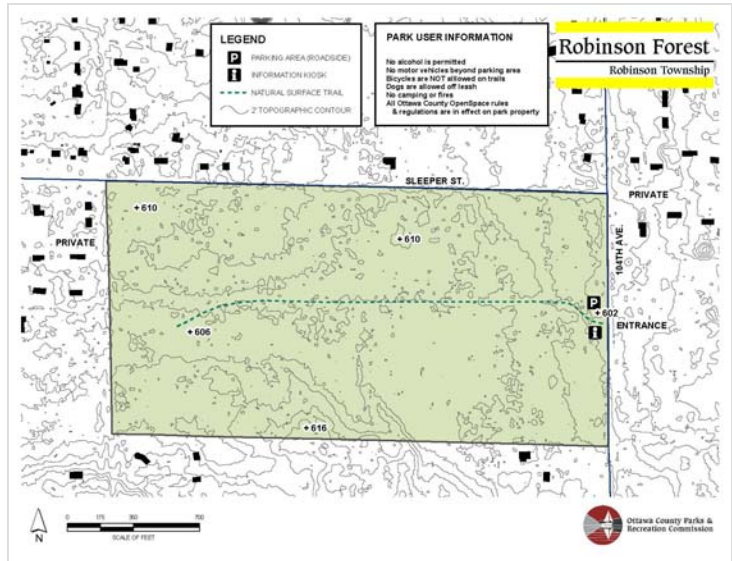
## ROBINSON FOREST Robinson Township

**Size:** 80 acres

**Natural Features:** A large portion of this relatively flat site is covered with a 40- to 50-year old red pine plantation with the remainder combination of oaks and white pines. Management removed significant numbers of red pines to spur natural forest regeneration in 2009.

**Facilities/Activities:** Roadside parking and an information kiosk are provided on 104th Avenue.

**Site Notes:** The site has been closely monitored by forest researchers at Grand Valley State University and is considered an excellent red pine demonstration area.



## JOHNSON STREET FOREST Robinson Township

**Size:** 50 acres

**Natural Features:** Vegetation consists of mixed hardwoods.

**Facilities/Activities:** Roadside parking and an information kiosk are provided on Johnson Street.

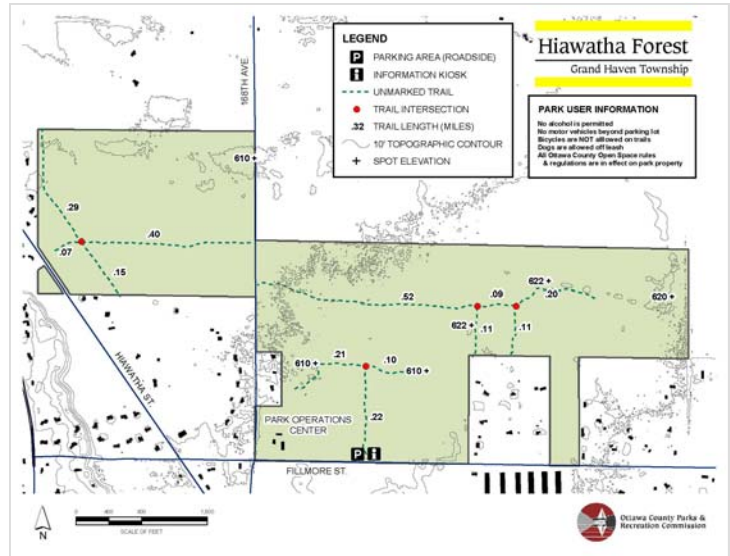
**Site Notes:** Forest management for wildlife has been a priority in the past.

## HIAWATHA FOREST Grand Haven Township

**Size:** 365 acres

**Natural Features:** The site is flat and heavily forested with both hardwood stands and red pine plantations.

**Facilities/Activities:** An undeveloped road/trail easement connects the property with Kirk Park. A marked trail system is in early stages of development. Roadside Parking and an information kiosk provided on Fillmore Street.



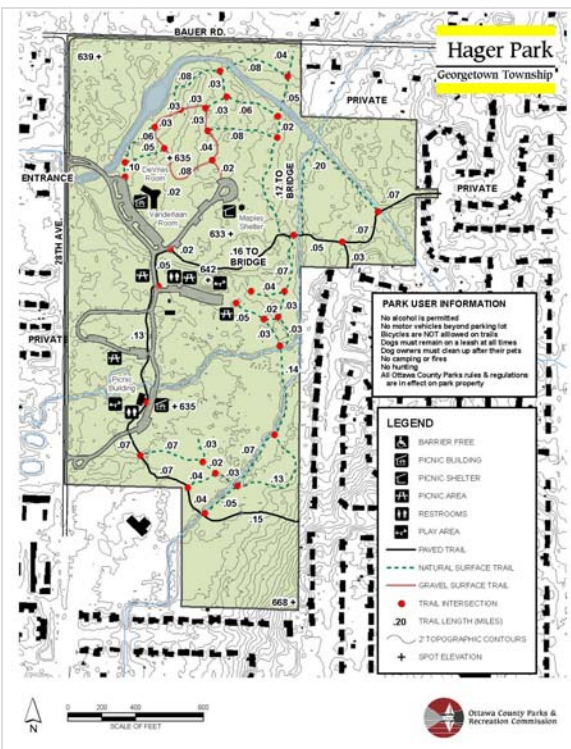
**Site Notes:** This is the second largest of the Open Space Lands, and the Park Operations Center for Ottawa County Parks occupies approximately two acres on the southwest corner of this site on Fillmore near the intersection with 168th Avenue.

## HAGER PARK Georgetown Township

**Size:** 104 acres

**Natural Features:** A former arboretum covers approximately 40 acres and displays a large variety of trees and shrubs. A system of park trails winds throughout the arboretum and into the park's old-growth beech/maple forest.

**Facilities/Activities:** The park features a wide variety of recreation opportunities. Numerous picnic facilities exist in the park including a picnic shelter, a picnic building, and two multi-purpose rooms available for reservations. The huge Age of Discovery community-built playground is a major attraction for families. The unique play area incorporates a terrain map of the United States exhibiting state boundaries, major water bodies and mountain ranges. Near the play area, there is



also a restroom, plaza area with concessions and picnic tables, and a small shelter. A paved path provides barrier-free and bicycle circulation through the park, connecting the park to the neighborhoods on the northeast and southeast sides.

**Site Notes:** Hager Park is one of the most popular of the County's parks. In addition to the park facilities being improved in 2004, Hager Creek itself was restored utilizing a Clean Michigan Initiative grant. Best Management Practices (BMPs) including rock riffles, new diversion structures and stream bioengineering were established to repair past erosion damage and prevent future damage. There are no park fees and the park is open year around.



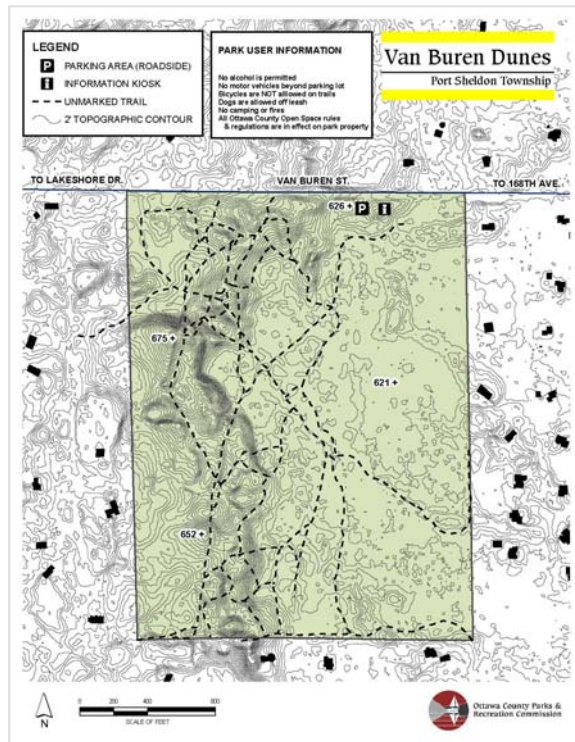
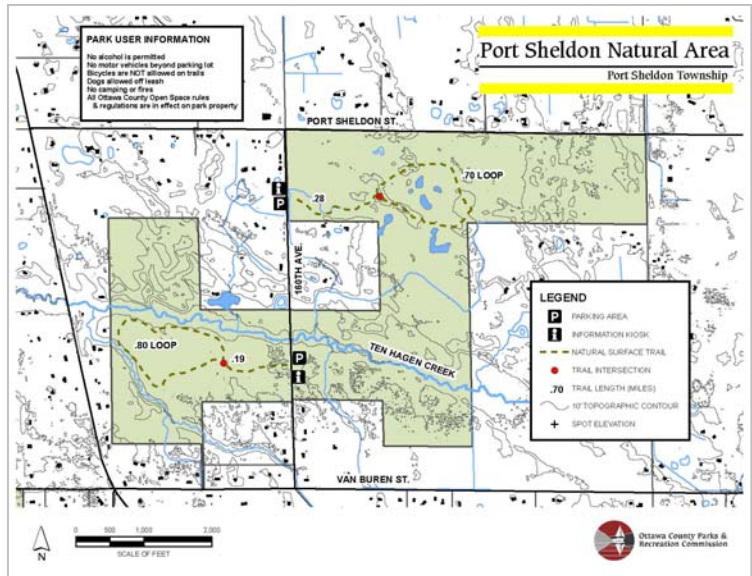
## PORT SHELDON NATURAL AREA Port Sheldon Township

**Size:** 440 acres

**Natural Features:** This site has gently rolling terrain, a diversity of vegetation including hardwood forest and pine plantations, five wildlife ponds, and is bisected by Ten Hagen Creek.

**Facilities/Activities:** Two small gravel parking areas with trailhead kiosks provide access from 168th Avenue. New marked trails have recently been constructed.

**Site Notes:** Red pine thinning occurred on this site in 2009.



## VAN BUREN DUNES Port Sheldon Township

**Size:** 120 acres

**Natural Features:** This site has the most topographical relief of the Open Space lands. Vegetation consists of red pine plantations with scattered pockets of deciduous forest.

**Facilities/Activities:** Recently developed trail system provides access around the site. Roadside parking and an information kiosk are located on Van Buren Street.

**Site Notes:** Significant damage from past and present off-road vehicle use is evident.

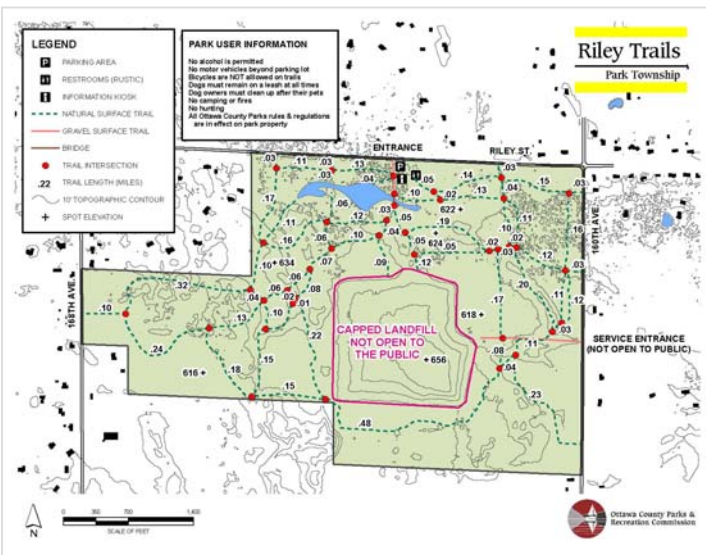
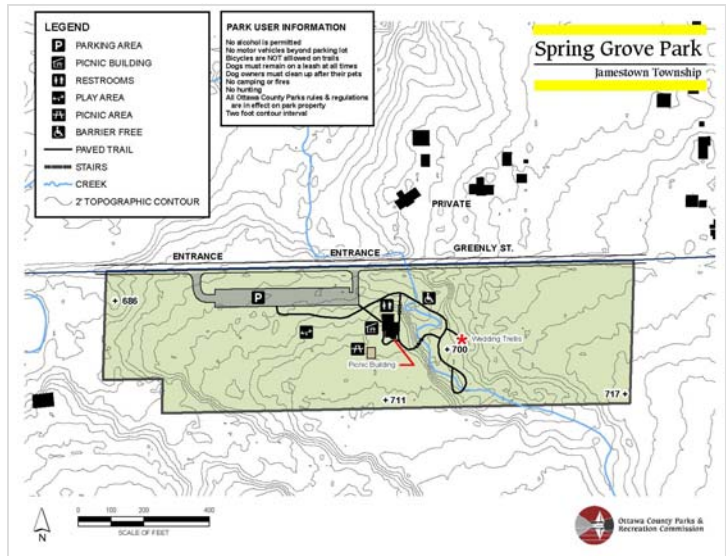
## SPRING GROVE PARK Jamestown Township

**Size:** 16 acres

**Natural Features:** This park features towering beech and maple trees and a flowing artesian spring.

**Facilities/Activities:** The most popular activity is picnicking and a unique rustic picnic building is available to rent. Limited playground equipment is provided as well as a ball field, fire pit, and horseshoes. A trellis-covered gathering spot is also available and is heavily used for weddings and other ceremonies. The site is also popular with photographers.

**Site Notes:** There are no entrance fees and the park is closed from November 1 through March 31.



## RILEY TRAILS Park Township

**Size:** 300 acres

**Natural Features:** With the exception of the old landfill part of the property (a fenced 40-acre mound), the site consists of attractive rolling woodlands including mixed hardwoods and pine plantations. As part of the recent landfill recapping, a 2-acre pond was added in the north central section of the park.

**Facilities/Activities:** The park has a system of hiking and cross-country skiing trails which receive extensive use. Access is provided from Riley Street including gravel parking, pit toilets, and an information kiosk.

**Site Notes:** Ottawa County, through the Road Commission, currently maintains a large system of purge wells and a water treatment facility to mitigate water quality problems from the former landfill. The landfill portion of the site is currently closed to the public. Future plans for this area include trails and sledding hills.

## TOWNSHIPS AND CITY GOVERNMENTS

As federal, state and county governments have traditionally led the way in providing regional recreation facilities based on significant natural resources, local jurisdictions including villages, cities and townships have typically undertaken the provision of more locally oriented recreation facilities such as neighborhood parks, community parks and community centers. Ottawa County exemplifies this scenario as well as any other county in the state.

Local townships and city governments provide a wide array of facilities aimed at meeting the more local recreation needs of their respective communities. These facilities generally vary from less than one acre to more than 60, but most are less than 20 acres in size. Some consist of nothing more than a ball field while others are more intensively developed, including recreation and community centers. Over 120 local park facilities were identified in a detailed inventory completed for Ottawa County (**see Appendix C**).

Although they are the exception, there are a number of local park facilities within Ottawa County that are larger, resource-based parks that attract significant users from outside the local community. Because these facilities may affect Ottawa County's plans, a more detailed description of each park is provided below:

### Mulligan's Hollow, City of Grand Haven

In addition to its conventional local park facilities, this 81-acre park features one of the few downhill skiing and snowboarding facilities in the region. The park also features a unique children's playground, a skate park, and natural areas. The ski facility is operated by a non-profit organization.

### Waterfront Development, City of Grand Haven

Though not a typical park, the waterfront of Grand Haven is certainly a primary recreation resource and attracts both residents and tourists. The piers, waterfront walkways, marinas, and associated facilities all act to create an exciting environment where the urban development interfaces with the Grand River and Lake Michigan.

### Hofma Park, Grand Haven Township

Known for its unique floating boardwalk across Pottawattomi Bayou wetlands, Hofma Park is the largest township park in Ottawa County. It provides hiking trails and natural areas as well as more conventional local recreation facilities including ball fields, soccer, and a playground.

### Aman Park, City of Grand Rapids

Though owned by the City of Grand Rapids, this 320-acre park is situated in Tallmadge Township in Ottawa County, on Sand Creek. Attractions at the park include high quality natural areas, hiking trails, cross-county ski trails and a Rotary-operated camp serving children with disabilities. As one of the larger public parks in Ottawa County with high quality natural features, the site has importance as a County-wide recreation attraction. Because the park is owned by a municipality, Ottawa County should monitor the status of the site and be prepared

to add the park to the County Park system if it requires better management to protect its natural resources.

#### Maplewood Park/Georgetown Community Park

These two popular Georgetown Township parks provide the only swimming beaches in this heavily populated area. They exemplify the excellent recreation potential associated with gravel pit lakes in eastern Ottawa County.

#### Kollen Park, City of Holland

This popular 14.5-acre Holland City park, located on Lake Macatawa, is known for its beautiful lake views, picnic areas, band shell, large boat launch, and fishing opportunities.

#### DeGraaf Nature Center, City of Holland

Although small in size, the DeGraaf Nature Center is one of the only facilities offering formal instruction in outdoor education in Ottawa County. The 11-acre site includes a stream, pond, nature trails, and an interpretive building.

#### Van Raalte Farm, City of Holland

This large 155-acre park contains a century old farmhouse on a hilltop overlooking pastureland and a valley with a stream. The park is known for its three miles of trails, large lighted sledding area, parking areas and picnicking.

#### Hudsonville Nature Center

This 74-acre site contains some of the best displays of spring wildflowers in the county. It includes tables for picnicking, hiking trails, and a scenic overlook.

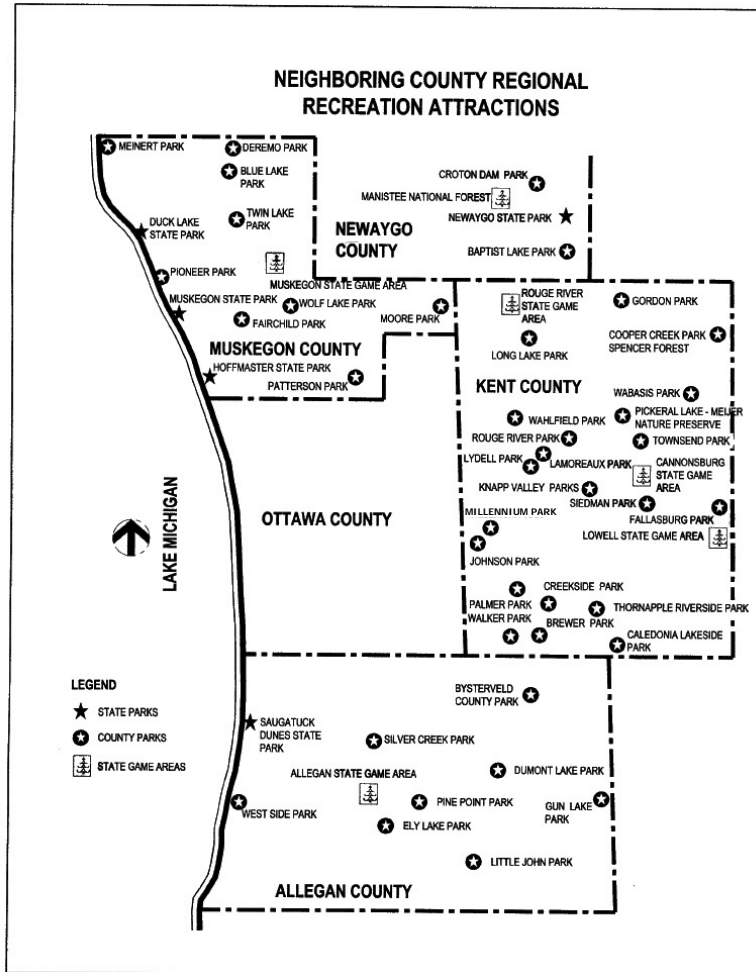
#### Consumers Energy Pigeon Lake North Pier Boardwalk

To mitigate for fish kills at the Ludington Pumped Hydroelectric Storage Facility in Ludington, Consumers Energy constructed a wooden boardwalk with overlook decks and fishing platforms along the north shore of Pigeon Lake. The boardwalk is more than ½ mile long and extends from a public parking lot on the Consumers Energy property westward all the way to the north pier of the Pigeon Lake outlet into Lake Michigan. It offers a nice length hike and good fishing access on the lake.

### **PUBLIC RECREATIONAL PROVIDERS OUTSIDE OF OTTAWA COUNTY**

Although not in the geographical limits of Ottawa County, several facilities in adjacent counties provide services and facilities that draw from a more regional base of users including residents of Ottawa County. **Figure 4.2** shows the location of these and other public facilities in adjacent counties.

**Figure 4.2 - Adjacent County Public Recreation Facilities**



Several of the most significant of these sites are described below.

Millennium Park, Kent County

This project is seeking to reclaim over 1500 acres of heavily used land for public recreation. Current facilities include a 6-acre beach with a splash pad and almost 20 miles of trails. It also is connected to the Kent Trails non-motorized path and touches the local municipalities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, Grandville, and Walker.

Kent Trails

Kent Trails is a 15 mile paved, non-motorized trail running north and south through western Kent County. A spur of the trail connects to Ottawa County in Jenison near their water treatment facility.

Saugatuck Dunes State Park

This approximately 1000-acre park is relatively undeveloped and offers a secluded experience of coastal dunes with over 2.5 miles of shoreline. It offers a day use area, but no camping.

### Allegan State Game Area

At 50,000-acres, this large natural area in Allegan County provides many outdoor opportunities including hunting, fishing, mountain biking, hiking trails, boat launches, camping, and cross-country skiing. It also showcases Oak-Pine Barrens, an unusual plant community suited to dry sandy soils.

### Silver Creek Park

This park offers regionally significant opportunities for equestrians, including a rustic equestrian camping area. It is also a primary staging area to access over 25 miles of trails in and around the Allegan State Game Area, in addition to the 320 acres in the park itself.

### Hoffmaster State Park

Hoffmaster State Park is known for its excellent formations of sand dunes and the Gillette Visitor Center, a regionally important nature center. The 1200-acre park includes dune stairs and overlooks, a modern campground, Lake Michigan swimming area, and three picnic areas. Three hundred acres of the park are located in the northwest corner of Ottawa County, with the remainder, including the entrance and visitor facilities, in Muskegon County,

## **SCHOOLS**

In many areas, school systems serve as the backbone of locally oriented recreation facilities. While rural townships and cities may not have the resources, schools frequently provide neighborhoods with basic recreation opportunities as part of their overriding philosophy of education. Whether it is basketball courts, ball fields or gymnasiums, the schools and their facilities are available to the public at the most basic levels of social structure: the neighborhood.

Colleges, universities and similar advanced education institutions also provide recreation facilities which, though often dominated by the respective student population, are nearly always open to the general public to some extent. Hope College in the City of Holland and Grand Valley State University in Allendale Township provide this service.

## **PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS**

As one moves from a smaller to a larger population area, private and commercial recreation providers play an increasingly greater role in the delivery of area-wide recreational facilities. This is due, in large part, to the fact that larger populations are necessary to support many of the private and commercial recreation providers. Commercial providers play a particularly important role in Ottawa County where tourism increases the demand for many types of recreation-related business.

Private recreation providers in Ottawa County cover a wide spectrum, from bowling alleys to fitness clubs. For purposes of this study, only marinas, campgrounds, and golf courses were considered. Detailed discussion about Ottawa County's role in relation to these private facilities is included in Chapter 5 - Needs Assessment Tools.