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COORDINATOR'S REPORT

July 2014

MERS of Michigan Annual Service Project

On Friday, June 13, thirty-one employees of the Municipal Employees Retirement System turned out for a day of volunteer labor at Francis Motz and Clinton Lakes County Parks. The weather was great and the volunteers full of enthusiasm and energy. Over the span of five hours the group mulched more than 50 shade trees in Francis Motz County Park as well as manage Autumn olive shrubs found in Clinton Lakes



MERS of Michigan Lansing-based employees provided 155 cumulative hours of volunteer labor at Francis Motz and Clinton Lakes County Parks.

County Park. The shrubs, which were cut prior to June 13, were collected and stacked to create a number of large brush piles benefiting wildlife. Projects of this type are rarely undertaken by the summer Park Rangers whose daily building and grounds maintenance tasks are pretty well defined. The Park Rangers have very little time to spend on park improvement projects.

Thank you MERS of Michigan employees!



Mid-Michigan Community Pathway Group (M-MCPG)

This nonprofit organization is working to create an off-road non-motorized trail to link the communities of Clare, Rosebush, Mt. Pleasant, Shepherd, Alma, Ithaca and St. Johns. The trail would also link three regionally important rail-trails: Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, Fred Meijer Heartland Trail and Fred Meijer CIS Trail. At the organization's July 1 meeting, it was announced:

- M-MCPG was recently awarded a Saginaw-Chippewa Indian Tribe "2% grant" of \$70,00 for engineering the trail segment from the City of Mt. Pleasant to the Village of Shepherd.
- The City of Mt. Pleasant to Village of Shepherd segment has been pre-approved to receive a MDOT TAP development grant funding.
- The Village of Shepherd has applied for a \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund development grant for the segment that runs through the village. Trails are a priority of the Trust Fund Board and this project is expected to score well.
- M-MCPG was recently awarded a \$30,000 Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) grant to construct an observation platform along the trail that overlooks a significant wetland.
- Approximately \$200,00 remains to be raised to complete development budget funding for the Mt. Pleasant to Shepherd segment of the trail. A committee is working to close the gap by seeking contributions from area units of government, foundations and regional businesses.
- If funding is in place, construction of the Mt. Pleasant to Shepherd trail segment is proposed for 2015.
- M-MCPG is coordinating with MDOT trail development strategies for the Alma to Ithaca segment. MDOT will be reconstructing US-127 (timetable was not given at the meeting) between the two cities. It is proposed to place the trail corridor within the existing road right-of-way.

I will attend future M-MCPG meetings and will continue to report on the progress of trail development towards the City of St. Johns.

Naming of Park Lakes

At its June 24 regular meeting, the Clinton County Board of Commissioners adopted by Resolution the following names for county-owned geographical features:

- Clinton Lakes County Park - 272-acre property acquired November 2013. Property is located at 4665 North DeWitt Road, St. Johns, MI west of Francis Motz County Park
- Big Clinton Lake - 90-acre lake found within Clinton Lakes County Park
- Little Clinton Lake - 12-acre lake found within Clinton Lakes County Park
- Searles Lake - 15-acre lake found within Francis Motz County Park

The names of the lakes have been submitted for to the *US Board on Geographical Names* for approval. Approval is required for the names to be used on federal and state maps and publications.

Eagle Scout Projects

Justin Hallead and Nick Stahl plan to satisfy requirements for Eagle Scout rank by completing development projects at the two county parks. I met with both boys at the parks on June 24 to discuss potential projects. They would like to pursue the following developments:

- Stairway Development - Construct stairway to connect the high ground around the 12-vehicle gravel parking lot serving Francis Motz County Park with the park's fishing pier. Searles Lake



Eagle Scout project proposes to install a stairway in Motz County Park on the slope seen in this photo to link the fishing pier with the park's 12-vehicle gravel parking lot.

receives a lot of fishing use during the winter months. Anglers parking in the 12-vehicle lot generally take the shortest route to the lake shore which is down a steep gradient above the fishing pier. The route can be slippery due to wet soils and/or icy ground surface. Development of a stairway with handrails would significantly improve cold weather access to Searles Lake. Building Inspector Al Hoard has agreed to work with the boys in the design of the stairway.

- Group Camping Area - Construct a camping area in Clinton Lakes County Park for use by youth-serving organizations such as Scouting and 4-H. The group camping area would not be available for use for individual or family camping. The proposed development is located in the north central area of the park; an area generally outside of normal pedestrian travel. Development would include shaping the ground to provide good surface water run-off, 10-15 tent sites, a central campfire ring and an access drive. Future improvements would include two vault toilets and a rotary-pump water well. Motz County Park hosts several youth day-camp and/or over-night camp outs each year. Currently, youth and their adult supervisors set up camp in an area located at the east end of Searles Lake. Leon Searles has expressed an interest in working with the boys to prepare the ground for the proposed development.

Since development of the group camping area proposes future county expenditures for construction of vault toilets and installation of a water well, a preliminary development plan will be submitted to the Parks and Green Space Commission for review at the July 14 meeting. If approved by the Commission, the plan will be forwarded to the County Board of Commissioners for adoption consideration.

Maple River Public Access Site

It appears the St. Clair Road bridge replacement project has been completed. So too the reclamation of the county-owned public access site located adjacent to the bridge. The overall appearance of the access site is good. The slope gradient from French Road to the riverbank has been reduced, making it easier to carry a canoe to the Maple River. As soon as the grass on the slope



is stable, I will instruct the Park Rangers to mow the area every two weeks to keep vegetation in check. In 2013, prior to the start of the bridge replacement project, Friends of the Maple River expressed interest in doing a service project to make the site more user-friendly. It was agreed to delay the service project until the new bridge was in place. It's time to inquire how we might partner with Friends of the Maple River to improve the site. One improvement would be to install an identification sign. Naming the access site will be placed on the July 4 meeting Agenda.

The appearance and utility of the county-owned public access site to the Maple River was recently enhanced following the replacement of the St. Clair Road bridge.

Water, Water Everywhere

Late June is generally the beginning of the dry season when grass, unless irrigated, goes dormant and turns brown. Not this year. There has been an abundance of rain, including several recent storm events that have kept shorelines on all three park lakes much above their normal seasonal elevations. More time will be spent on mowing grass this summer. The green vegetation probably helped to advert a more serious fire when on Saturday, July 5 a carelessly tossed cigarette or



The heavy rain event of Sunday, July 6 caused the swimming beach to flood. This photo taken on Tuesday, July 8 shows a partially submerged wheelchair transfer platform situated at the end of the concrete pedestrian walk to the shoreline.

illegal use of fireworks ignited a field fire inside Clinton Lakes County Park. The slow-burning fire at the east end of Big Clinton Lake only scorched 100 square feet of ground before it was extinguished by Clinton Area Fire and Rescue.

I'm pleased to report that in spite of all the rain received during the past couple of weeks, there has been no serious amount of erosion damage to the swimming area's sun beach. What minor damage did occur was quickly repaired by park employees. The ground may be a bit soggy, but the trees are well watered and the park is open to visitors.

Cub Scout Day Camp

Francis Motz County Park is the site of a Monday to Thursday, July 7 to 10 Cub Scout Day Camp program for 32 area Scouts. This is the third year for the camp. The boys participate in games, nature instruction, BB-gun and archery practice, fishing, hiking and other outdoor activities. Everyone seems to be having a good time in spite of rain for at least part of the day on Monday and Tuesday. Weather should improve for the balance of the week.



Cub Scouts from around Clinton County take shelter under the Motz County Park pavilion during a mid-morning rain storm. The Scouts are participating in a week-long Day Camp program.

Fishing Violations

There have been reports of anglers catching and keeping sub-legal size fish. One park visitor reported that upon noticing a man in possession of sub-legal largemouth bass, he informed him that they were violating Michigan fishing rules and asked him to release the fish. The angler complied. Although Michigan fishing rules and regulations apply to park waters, I am not unaware of visits by the local Conservation Officer. A call was made to Lt. Chandler at the Department of Natural Resources Field Office, Rose Lake Wildlife Area requesting assistance. Lt. Chandler, who supervises area Conservation Officers, indicated she would have Conservation Officers from Clinton and Gratiot counties include Motz and Clinton Lakes County Parks in their patrol schedules. Additionally, signs are currently being made to inform visitors that Michigan fishing rules and regulations apply.



----- Nothing Follows -----