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**Metroparks Prioritizes Trail Projects**

**Connecting Communities to Local Parks and Providing More Accessible Trails**

[Southeast, Mich.] – There’s nothing quite like clearing your head by spending some time on a trail. In fact, when conducting surveys, the Metroparks have found that respondents almost always rank trails and trail improvements as the top recreational priority in our region. Metroparks kept that in mind when budgeting for projects in 2022, and visitors will see trail and trail related projects taking place across the park system this summer.

In June, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks presented a Trail Connection Feasibility Study after working with local consultant PEA Group. This study was conducted to determine a safe and efficient non-motorized trail connection between four large regional parks in Livingston County: Brighton State Recreation Area, Huron Meadows Metropark, Island Lake State Recreation Area, and Kensington Metropark.

Thanks to grant funding from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan this study has prepared agencies to construct a trail connection that will provide access and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Routes for the project were evaluated on seven different criteria and narrowed down to a final recommended route, the Central Route.

“We know that connectivity is important to trail users and communities alike” says Metroparks Director, Amy McMillan. “Having a network of interconnected trails allows users to safely enjoy multiple parks plus local businesses in the surrounding communities. It’s a benefit for those users, the parks their visiting and the local economy. It’s a win for everyone, but connections like these aren’t always easy to design and construct. It has been great having grant dollars to allow us to work with an expert consultant that brought partners and communities together to find the best solution.”

Public input showed this as the favored route because it is safe, connects all the parks, connects to existing trails, and provides neighborhood access and options for longer trips. You can read the full study report at [https://www.metroparks.com/planning-and-development/#DOCUMENTS](https://www.metroparks.com/planning-and-development/%23DOCUMENTS).

Although funding is not yet available to construct this trail connection estimated to cost more than $11 million, it is a top priority for communities and these organizations as they seek to find funding opportunities utilizing grants and existing budgets.

The Metroparks are also working on non-motorized trail connections in other communities including a section extending the statewide Iron-Belle Trail and connecting Lower Huron Metropark to East Huron River Drive and a section to connect Stony Creek Metropark hike-bike trail to the 26-mile Road sidewalk connection and improve trail access to this park.

The Metroparks have 13 unique parks, with over 400-miles of trails, so in addition to looking for ways to connect parks to communities, the Metroparks have prioritized trail improvements within the parks on their list of 2022 projects. Work to improve accessibility on several pathways and trails throughout the Metroparks system over the next few years has begun. One such project will create an accessible nature trail at Oakwoods Metropark.

Grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund will allow renovations for accessibility using universal design principles on the Split Log Trail at Oakwoods Metropark. Located near the nature center, the project will encompass parking lot improvements, resurfacing the walkways, building entry and restroom modifications, an upgraded observation deck and much more. Once completed, the improvements will provide an enhanced experience for those who may not have had the chance to explore natural trails previously.

 “We’re super excited about all the ongoing and future projects around trails. All of this work will lead to even better experiences for all visitors, and we’re excited to see more people becoming healthier and making memories in the Metroparks because of it,” Said Amy McMillan.

Metroparks will be working on projects through the summer in multiple parks, and visitors are reminded to obey construction signs they may come across because they are there for their safety.

To learn about many of the current projects and grants at the Metroparks visit [https://www.metroparks.com/current-projects/.](https://www.metroparks.com/current-projects/)

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**About Huron-Clinton Metroparks**One of America’s premier metropolitan park systems, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks have served the people of Southeast Michigan since 1940. Managed by the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, the Metroparks are made up of 13 properties in Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. The Metroparks are open 365 days a year and encompass 25,000 acres of nature and recreational facilities. Each year more than 1.5 million people engage with the Metroparks to enjoy amenities such as picnicking, fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, nature study, biking, golf, disc golf, cross country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing and a diversity of outdoor programs and special events. The Metroparks also provide educational resources on science, nature, history and the environment. Learn more at Metroparks.com.

**About The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan**

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan is a full-service philanthropic organization leading the way to positive change in our region. Ad a permanent community endowment built by gifts from thousands of individuals and organization, the Foundation supports a wide variety of activities benefiting education, arts and culture, health, human services, community development, and civic affairs. Since its inception, the Foundation has distributed more than $1.1 billion through more than 74,000 grants to nonprofit organizations throughout Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Washtenaw, St. Clair, and Livingston counties. For more information, please visit [www.cfsem.org](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Chilary.simmet%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CBZLI4Z1O%5Cwww.cfsem.org).