

ELKHART COUNTY PARKS



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 2017



Boot Lake Nature Preserve

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We had much to celebrate in 2017 including bringing 50 years of outdoor fun to Elkhart County. The 50 Year Festival at Ox Bow County Park (the system's first dedicated park) celebrated this half-century mark in August. Over 2,200 people joined us for cupcakes, a rock climbing wall, live music, food trucks, and many games, displays, and hands-on activities. A highlight of the event was a visit from Dr. Larry Beachy, a founding park board member.

There are many people to thank for the success of the department these past 50 years including park patrons, donors, volunteers, elected officials, and community partners. Most of all a big thank you for the hard work and dedication of past and present full- and part-time staff and park board members.

Another reason to celebrate in 2017 was the transfer of Boot Lake Nature Preserve from the City of Elkhart. This state dedicated nature preserve fits the mission of the Elkhart County Parks. Its 300 acres will continue to be in the public domain while preserving the transformative story of the site.

As we look forward to the future, we will begin the process of a Five Year Master Plan and invite all to take part. Your input will help shape the future of the Elkhart County Parks.

RONDA DECAIRE

Director

PARK BOARD

Klaus Mueller, President
Jeff Burbrink, Vice-president
Karin Frey, Secretary
Larry Andrews
John Hardy
Karen Mackowiak
William Wilson



Staff celebrating 50 Years at Ox Bow County Park

2017 FULL-TIME STAFF

Annie Aguirre
Carrie Anglemeyer
Sherry Bowen
Robyn Buenger
Jim Cripe
Bernard Cunningham
Krista Daniels
Ronda DeCaire
Courtney Franke
Wilma Harder
Krystin Hildebrandt
John Jenney
Andy Langdon
Marlene Lantzer
Glen Leer
Lynn Matthews
Patrick McGuire
John Monger
Michelle Nash
Julie Parke
Gary Plank
Kelby Rose
Nick Steele
Traci Stickler
Natasha Tucker
Jason Woody



Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

2017 BY THE NUMBERS

36: miles of trails maintained throughout the park system including the Pumpkinvine and MapleHeart Trails

300: acres added to the department with the acquisition of Boot Lake Nature Preserve

478: record number of shelters reserved by public for birthday parties, baby showers, graduations, and more this past year

1,482: volunteer hours at the Elkhart County Historical Museum

1,911: annual passes sold at Ox Bow County Park

4,854: school children and weekend visitors to the Gathering at Five Medals living history reenactment at River Preserve County Park

4,571: pounds of flour stone ground and sold at Bonneyville Mill

31,000: people served through educational field trips, public programs, special events, and visitation to historic facilities

320,000: estimated number of visitors to County Parks and trails



PHOTOS:

(Above) The Gathering at Five Medals invites over 190 reenactors from across the Midwest to demonstrate the past at the River Preserve.

(Left) John Jenney, mill manager, leads a group of children during an educational field trip at Bonneyville Mill.

PARKS ARE VIBRANT

With expansive parks, miles of trails, native habitats, gardens, a historical museum and historic grist mill, the **Elkhart County Parks** plays a vital role in making Elkhart County a VIBRANT place to live.

Parks and trails deliver community amenities like these:

- *Improve health and wellness by providing low cost recreation*
- *Provide economic benefits by raising property value and helping to attract business, tourists, and future residents*
- *Protect the environment, beautify our landscapes, increase community engagement, preserve legacies, and provide education opportunities*

We are proud to be part of the Vibrant Community movement in Elkhart County and provide open space and destinations to all residents. **Many future projects are on the horizon**, including partnering with the Friends of the Pumpkinvine to complete .9 miles of trail, addition of a canoe/kayak launch and green space at the Six Span Bridge and the future donation of Corson County Park. Projects such as these will ensure we continue to improve the quality of life for our citizens and connect them with the great outdoors.



Cobus Creek County Park

PARKS

Bonneyville Mill County Park
Boot Lake Nature Preserve
Cobus Creek County Park
Ox Bow County Park
River Preserve County Park
Treasure Island County Park

DESTINATIONS

Bonneyville Mill
DeFries Gardens
Elkhart County
Historical Museum
Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

PARTNER SITES

Lieber Nature Preserve
MapleHeart Trail
Six Span Boat Launch

UNDEVELOPED PRESERVES

Turkey Creek Parcel
Wolf Lake Parcel



SPECIAL THANK YOU

Volunteers
Donors
Eagle Scouts:
- Wesley Stout
- Alex Luft
Large Project Partners/Grants:
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Elkhart County Historical Society
- Friends of the Pumpkinvine
- Indiana DNR
- Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association

Quilt Garden outside of Elkhart County Historical Museum