
2018 ANNUAL REPORT

ELKHART COUNTY PARKS





MISSION

Enhance the quality of life, preserve the County's cultural, historical, and natural resources; and provide educational and recreational opportunities

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2018 HIGHLIGHTS

CORSON RIVERWOODS COUNTY PARK

A major gift to the department came in the form of a 75-acre land donation to create the future **CORSON RIVERWOODS COUNTY PARK**. The property was donated by Mr. Tom Corson, one of the founders of Coachmen Industries. The site protects over 1-mile of cold-water trout stream and riparian habitat along the Little Elkhart River.



CORSON RIVERWOODS COUNTY PARK

2019-2023 FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN

Lehman & Lehman began the process of creating a **2019-2023 FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN** on behalf of the Elkhart County Parks and Recreation Board. During 2018 more than 1,000 citizens were surveyed, three public meetings were held as well as a SWOT analysis with the staff and park board. An Action Item Agenda with more than 200 needs were identified. Information was compiled to create a draft of the Master Plan to submit in early 2019 to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The full plan is available online at www.elkhartcountyparks.org.

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

PUMPKINVINE NATURE TRAIL GAP

Major work on the **PUMPKINVINE NATURE TRAIL GAP** Phase I began in the fall of 2018, with an expected completion date in mid-2019. This .8 mile extension of the trail is a small but important project as it moves bike traffic off of county roads and onto the safety of trails.



PUMPKINVINE NATURE TRAIL

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

NEW VEHICLES

Several **NEW VEHICLES** were purchased for the department including a new education van for programs and school visits. The education van was enhanced with a colorful wrap featuring several local native species of animals. Staff showcased the van in the annual 2018 4-H Fair Parade. A special thank you to the Friends of the Elkhart County Parks and ZWrapz for sponsoring the wrap.



ELKHART COUNTY PARKS EDUCATION VAN

EAGLE SCOUT GRANT HARMON

EAGLE SCOUT GRANT HARMON, Troop 744, earned his Eagle Scout Award by designing and constructing a wooden fence on top of the sledding hill at Ox Bow County Park. This permanent structure was a much needed improvement to the snow fencing used as a backdrop in the past.

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

BONNEYVILLE: A RIVER'S LEGACY

For several years, the Elkhart County Parks staff worked with local filmmaker Larry App to film the **BONNEYVILLE: A RIVER'S LEGACY**. Bonneyville Mill staff provided historical research and narrated the documentary. A preview was held at the Lerner Theater and included over 50 guests. The documentary is available for sale at Bonneyville Mill.



BONNEYVILLE MILL

FACES OF MIDDLEBURY TOUR

Bonneyville Mill became a part of the **FACES OF MIDDLEBURY TOUR** organized by Middlebury Then and Now. This project encourages visitors to tour various businesses and locations and take photographs with unique hand-painted cutout boards. The Mill's board features a farmer gathering wheat.

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE began receiving many improvements in 2018 including a new wetland boardwalk, renovated education kiosks, and regular maintenance to enhance visitor experience. The Preserve has seen an increase in park users who feel safer using the facility since the Elkhart County Parks began managing the site with regular open hours.



2018 HIGHLIGHTS

CROSSROADS OF ELKHART COUNTY

The Elkhart County Historical Museum celebrated the opening of the first phase of three-phase series of new exhibits. The **CROSSROADS OF ELKHART COUNTY: FORGING A PATH** exhibit was completed in December 2018. The exhibit features a narrative that begins with the Paleo people and continues through the Archaic and Woodland periods bringing the local story of the Miami and Potawatomi to visitors. Phase two will open in November 2019 and phase three will open in May 2020.



TED DRAKE

ART | COMMERCE | HISTORY

JUNE 1 – JULY 27, 2018

Ted Drake spent more than 50 years as an illustrator, cartoonist, and fine artist based in Elkhart. This exhibit draws on the Elkhart County Historical Society collection to showcase Drake's creativity and hard work in advertising and beyond.

Curator's Talk
Thursday, July 12, 6 p.m.

Want to learn more about Ted Drake, one of the Midwest's exceptional talents and the designer of the Notre Dame leprechaun? Curator Amy Christiansen will discuss Drake's life and work at this free event in the Elkhart Public Library's downtown atrium.

presented by
**ELKHART COUNTY
HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

EXHIBIT AT
**ELKHART PUBLIC
LIBRARY**
300 S. 2ND STREET, ELKHART
MYEPL.ORG

TED DRAKE

The Elkhart County Historical Museum partnered with the Elkhart Public Library to feature an off-site exhibit entitled **TED DRAKE: ART, COMMERCE, HISTORY**. The Library is home to an original Ted Drake mural and was the perfect place to highlight the works of this local artist who is most famous for his design of the Notre Dame leprechaun.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

1. NEW WEBSITE

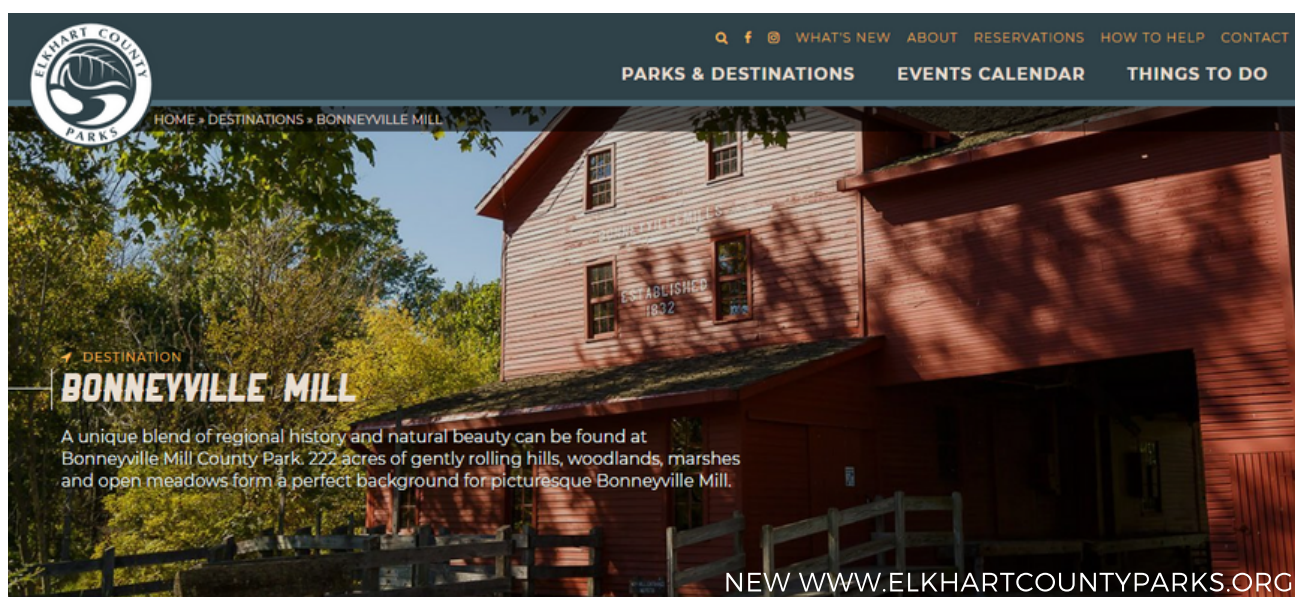
After nearly two decades, the Elkhart County Parks launched a completely new website (www.elkhartcountyparks.org) which features information on parks, activities, and the most up-to-date park and facility information. Since its launch in July of 2018, the site has reached an average 3,000 users each month.

2. ONLINE RESERVATIONS

On October 1, 2018, the Elkhart County Parks debuted its new on-line reservation system to the general public. To date, more than 2,600 individuals have used the system to reserve a shelter and register for programs and events. The process provides easy access for visitors to make reservations 24/7 and also gives staff access to important reservation information, increasing operational efficiency.

3. STAFF SCHEDULING

Another technology upgrade in 2018 involved an app-based employee scheduling system. The new scheduler streamlines internal communication and staff schedules.



2018 BY THE NUMBERS

500 YEAR FLOOD

Several parks were affected by the major flood event in February but Park Services staff did an excellent job in revitalizing after the waters receded.

1,750: ANNUAL PASSES SOLD

Ox Bow County Park annual pass sales assist in providing capital funds to the department for much needed projects.

4,544: VISITORS TO THE GATHERING AT FIVE MEDALS

607: PLACES OF ELKHART SERIES ATTENDEES

379: HIKING CLUB HIKERS

400: STARGAZERS AT THE PERSEIDS PARTY

241: BUG NIGHT ATTENDEES

699: HALLOWEEN CAMPFIRE & HAYRIDERS

180: ST PATRICK'S DAY TREASURE HUNTERS

178: BIRD SPECIES SPOTTED IN THE SPRING BIRDING CHALLENGE

1,411: ACRES MAINTAINED BY PARK STAFF

25,000: VISITORS TO THE PARKS BOOTH AT THE 4H FAIR

GREEN THINGS

- The Ox Bow County Park service center building received a new 9,000 square foot white metal roof. White roofing can reduce energy costs by up to 20%. A 50 year life-span of the metal roof made it an eco-friendly choice.
- With improvements in efficiency including a new on-line reservation system and staff schedules, paper waste has been greatly reduced in the Administrative office.
- Cobus Creek County Park continues to manage native grasses and forbs through an annual mowing. The prairie is home to many native pollinators including a variety of sparrows, finches, bees, and butterflies.
- Boot Lake Nature Preserve received a sustainable storage unit which is a repurposed shipping container. This eco-friendly building has solar lighting for staff's maintenance needs at the site.
- The Park Services staff expanded its recycling resources and efficiency by adding recycling pickup services at Ox Bow and Bonneyville and recycling bins for park patrons at a majority of the Elkhart County Parks.
- The Interpretive Staff updated the landscape of the 4H Fair Booth by removing invasive species and replanting with natives wildflowers.



GREEN THINGS

- Staff at River Preserve County Park have been testing alternative herbicides using natural ingredients such as vinegar and cedar oil.
- Park Services staff are purchasing environmentally friendly bar oils for use in chain saws. These oils are vegetable based and highly biodegradable making them better for our ecosystems.
- As suggested by visitors during our Five Year Master Plan survey, Interpretive Services staff are increasing the number of sustainability-focused programs presented. New additions include a Farm-to-Fork series along with other topics such as worm composting and recycling.
- River Preserve County Park staff installed a monofilament fishing line container at a popular fishing site. Fishing line is collected and sent to a company for recycling, reducing this type of litter which can endanger wildlife.
- Ox Bow County Park staff created an initiative to combat invasive species such as Tree of Heaven and Siberian Elm in its understory. Native trees will be planted to replace some of the removed trees.



PARTNERS

The Elkhart County Parks prides itself in being involved with many partnerships. Staff members have met on a regular basis with the following community entities in 2018:

- **Friends of the Elkhart County Parks**
- **Pumpkinvine Advisory Committee**
- **Vibrant Communities: Community Champions Roundtables**
- **Group of Regional Environmental Educators Network (GREEN)**
- **Elkhart County Historical Society**
- **Elkhart County Genealogical Society**
- **Elkhart County Museum Association**
- **Elkhart County Food Council**
- **Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District**
- **Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalists**
- **Elkhart County Waterways Alliance**
- **MACOG Regional Trail Branding & Wayfinding**



AWARDS AND HONORS

FACILITY AWARD FOR DEFRIES GARDENS

In February 2018, the Elkhart County Parks was honored with a Facility Award from Great Lakes Park Training Institute for the establishment of DeFries Gardens. The award highlighted the growth of this small botanic garden within River Preserve County Park that was gifted by Elisabeth DeFries and designed by Jon Cutrell.

GPLTI SCHOLARSHIPS

Park Services staff Wilma Harder and Traci Stickler were awarded scholarships to attend the 2018 Great Lakes Park Training Institute at Pokagon State Park. Wilma and Traci attended a full week of conference with the assistance to these scholarships.

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY GRANT

The Elkhart County Historical Museum was awarded \$37,000 via a grant from the Indiana Historical Society to the partner agency, the Elkhart County Historical Society. The grant supported research and writing of a digitization strategy for the Society's extensive collections. The grant funded a contractual employee for the Society to aid in the design of the process.

COLLECTIONS ASSESSMENT FOR PRESERVATION GRANT

The Elkhart County Historical Museum and Elkhart County Historical Society was awarded a \$7,400 Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) grant via the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation. The grant assists small to mid-size museums in contracting collections and building assessors to study the institution's collections, buildings and building systems, as well as policies related to collection care.



AWARDS AND HONORS

HISTORY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Patrick McGuire, Curator of Education at the Elkhart County Historical Museum, was accepted into the History Leadership Institute, a three-week residential professional development seminar led by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). A special thank you to the Community Foundation of Elkhart County for sponsoring this capacity building training to ensure the collections of the Elkhart County Historical Society is managed with the highly trained staff.

CERTIFIED PARK AND RECREATION PROFESSIONAL

Dr. Kelby Rose, Deputy Director of Interpretive Services, became a Certified Park and Recreation Professional with National Recreation Parks and Association.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF ELKHART COUNTY

The Community Foundation of Elkhart County granted the Elkhart County Parks with a \$5,000 gift to be used towards programs and events in 2018-2019. The grant allowed the department to expand the capacity of programs and number of people reached through increases in marketing, purchasing quality supplies, and enhancing special events.



STABLE SHELTER OX BOW COUNTY PARK



WWW.ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS.ORG