
2019 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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BONNEYVILLE MILL COUNTY PARK

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

DEAR COMMUNITY,

On behalf of the Elkhart County Park & Recreation Board, we are proud to bring you the 2019 Annual Report for Elkhart County Parks. This publication highlights the amazing accomplishments of staff, volunteers, and community partners.

Our dedicated employees strive to provide vast open spaces and trails that connect our community to the environment and history of Elkhart County. Whether it is planning a public program, preparing a rental shelter, or welcoming a tour bus we are here to serve our community.

Volunteers are truly an extension of our staff. More than 782 people dedicated at least 2,449 hours to the Elkhart County Parks in 2019 (but we know there are even more hours that were not tracked by faithful volunteers)! A HUGE thank you to each of them whether they gave an hour of their time or spent each week with us.

Many of the things we accomplish would not be possible if it weren't for our partners. The beautiful Quilt Garden that graces the front lawn at the Elkhart County Historical Museum is diligently cared for by Michiana Master Gardeners. The popular rugged mountain bike trails at Bonneyville Mill County Park are maintained by the Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association. These are just a few examples of partners dedicated to enhancing your Elkhart County Parks system.

We have many large plans and projects on the horizon such as completing the feasibility study for the Ox Bow Museum of History and Nature and the development of Corson Riverwoods County Park. If you would like to be a part of our progress as a volunteer or partner for 2020 and beyond we would be happy to talk to you or your organization.

Parks are essential now more than ever and we appreciate your support.

Sincerely,



Ronda DeCaire
Director

2019 HIGHLIGHTS

CORSON RIVERWOODS COUNTY PARK

Corson Riverwoods County Park was pre-awarded a **\$250,000 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANT** to establish a trail and parking lot at the future 75 acre park. Funds will be awarded by the National Park Service in 2020 and will be matched by the gift of the land from the late Thomas Corson.



CORSON RIVERWOODS COUNTY PARK SITE PLAN

SECURITY SYSTEM UPGRADES

Security systems were enhanced at **OX BOW COUNTY PARK**, **DEFRIES GARDENS**, the **ELKHART COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM**, and **BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE**. The upgraded systems include video monitoring, remote access, and improved fire detection capability.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS

OX BOW MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURE

Elkhart County Parks contracted with Boyle and Associates to begin a **FUNDRAISING FEASIBILITY STUDY** for the future Ox Bow Museum of History and Nature. The study will assess the community's capacity to support a capital campaign. Results are expected in 2020.



CONCEPT BUILDING EXTERIOR BY ANCON CONSTRUCTION

EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

Elkhart County Parks debuted an **UPDATED SCHOOL PROGRAM MENU** with a new Education Resource Guide. Guides were distributed to all public school teachers in Elkhart County and are available on elkhartcountyparks.org.



2019 BY THE NUMBERS

51 MILES OF
TRAILS
MAINTAINED

7579 PROGRAM
AND EVENT
PARTICIPANTS

2000 OX BOW
COUNTY PARK
PASSES SOLD

5 PARKS HOME
TO STATE-
ENDANGERED
BLANDING'S
TURTLE

215 SPECIES
RECORDED
IN SPRING
BIRDING
CHALLENGE

10589 PREK-12 STUDENTS AND
TEACHERS REACHED
WITH FIELD TRIPS AND
IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

1571 ACRES OF
LAND
PROTECTED

2449
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

400+
HOURS OF K-12 SERVICE
PROJECTS IN THE PARKS

117 NEW OBJECTS ADDED TO THE
ELKHART COUNTY HISTORICAL
MUSEUM COLLECTION

8215 FROM
BONNEYVILLE MILL
VISITORS

35 **17**
STATES COUNTRIES

25 COMMUNITY
EVENTS HOSTED
IN AN ELKHART
COUNTY PARK

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

LONG-TIME MUSEUM VOLUNTEER RETIRES

Steadfast Elkhart County Historical Museum volunteer **ALICE HESSERT** retired in 2019. For 13 years, Alice assisted with archival projects including transcribing handwritten notes from hundreds of postcards. During her tenure, she logged more than 1800 hours. Her long-term dedication is greatly appreciated.



FRIENDS RECOGNIZE MAC BOYER

The Friends of the Elkhart County Parks recognized board member Mac Boyer for **MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF SERVICE** to the Friends and the Dahlia Garden at Bonneyville Mill County Park. An engraved rock was placed at the Dahlia Garden in honor of his service.

CONCORD HIGH SCHOOL BUILDS KIOSKS

Concord High School **INDUSTRIAL ARTS STUDENTS** partnered with Elkhart County Parks and **HORIZON EDUCATION ALLIANCE** to build two kiosks for Ox Bow County Park and Boot Lake Nature Preserve. Volunteers also constructed the double-sided brochure rack housed in the welcome kiosk at Boot Lake.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

JOHN YODER RETIRES FROM FRIENDS OF THE PUMPKINVINE

John Yoder, a founding member and volunteer of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail retired from the Friends of the Pumpkinvine. John dedicated 30 years and countless hours to create one of the **MOST POPULAR RAIL-TO-TRAIL PROJECTS** in the region. His dedication to the Pumpkinvine is greatly appreciated by all the municipalities who now own and manage the trail system, including the Elkhart County Parks.



JOHN YODER

RACCOON PROOF TRASH CANS

A generous volunteer built six raccoon-proof trash cans at Boot Lake Nature Preserve. The cans were **BUILT FROM RECLAIMED LUMBER** from the old wetland pier removed in 2018.

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

Eagle Scout **NOAH HAAS FROM TROOP #122** resealed the ceiling woodwork on the Cobus Creek County Park pavilion and completed trail upgrades throughout the park.



COBUS CREEK COUNTY PARK

TO THE MORE THAN 782 VOLUNTEERS WHO SUPPORTED ELKHART COUNTY PARKS IN 2019 - **THANK YOU!**

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

GLPTI SCHOLARSHIP

For the second year in a row, Elkhart County Parks staff received a scholarship to attend the Great Lakes Park Training Institute at Pokagon State Park. In 2019, Interpretive Naturalist **PHELICIA JOZWIAK** received a scholarship to attend her first GLPTI.

CERTIFIED INTERPRETIVE MANAGER

Deputy Director of Interpretive Services **DR. KELBY ROSE** became a Certified Interpretive Manager with the National Association for Interpretation.



PARK SERVICES I WILMA HARDER



INTERPRETIVE NATURALIST PHELICIA JOZWIAK

NEW MASTER NATURALIST

Bonneyville Mill County Park staff member Park Services I **WILMA HARDER** completed the Indiana Master Naturalist course in 2019.

PROMOTION

Ox Bow County Park service staff member **TRACI STICKLER** completed her career development objectives and was promoted to Park Services II.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

STAFF PICNIC

The annual Elkhart County Parks staff picnic was extra special this year and catered by the **ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**. The department was nominated by the **ELKHART COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** in recognition of the vibrancy we bring to the community.

RESEARCH TRIP TO OKLAHOMA

With a grant from the **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF ELKHART COUNTY**, museum manager **JULIE PARKE** continued important research on the Trail of Death and its aftermath with a trip to the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Citizen Potawatomi Cultural Heritage Center in Shawnee, OK.

NAI REGIONAL WORKSHOP

Several Elkhart County Parks staff helped facilitate the National Association for Interpretation's Annual Region IV Workshop in South Bend. **KRISTA DANIELS, PATRICK MCGUIRE**, and **KELBY ROSE** served on the organizing committee and **COURTNEY FRANKE, JULIE PARKE**, and **MICHELLE NASH** led tours of the Elkhart County Historical Museum and Bonneyville Mill.



PARTNERSHIP STORIES

ADEC DOG BISCUITS

The staff at Bonneyville Mill partnered with **ADEC** to produce a special batch of Bow Wow Dog Biscuits. Bow Wow Dog Biscuits are baked by the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities ADEC serves. The ADEC bakers also helped grind 50 pounds of rye flour that went into the pet treats. The **LIMITED EDITION BISCUITS** were sold at the **GAINING GROUNDS COFFEE SHOPS** in Goshen and Bristol and at Bonneyville Mill.



NEW BOTTLE FILLING STATION

GOSHEN ULTIMATE FRISBEE LEAGUE sponsored the installation of a new water bottle filling station at the Ox Bow County Park concessions building. The filling station is an eco-friendly way to stay hydrated while visiting the park.

PUMPKINVINE GAP 1 COMPLETE

An important segment of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail was completed in 2019 that increased the safety of the trail by removing users from the roadway. The **TRAIL BETWEEN COUNTY ROAD 33 AND COUNTY ROAD 20** opened the day of the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride and traverses through **SCENIC WETLANDS AND PASTURE**. A special thank you to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Community Foundation of Elkhart County, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and the donations of many individuals and corporate sponsors for partnering to accomplish this project.



PUMPKINVINE NATURE TRAIL

GREEN THINGS

Bonneyville Mill hosted York Elementary School's Better World Day activity where students helped with native plantings, making suet cakes for birds, and removing invasive plan species.

All lights in the Ox Bow County Park service center, Ox Bow County Park concession building, Bonneyville Mill County Park shop, and Bonneyville Mill County Park restrooms were upgraded to eco-friendly LED lights.

The wood-burning stove at Bonneyville Mill County Park's Briar Patch Shelter was replaced with a new EPA certified stove.

The Baintertown hydro plant turbine and generator were removed. The hardware will be refurbished and installed at a site in Wisconsin to continue producing hydroelectricity more than 100 years after it was first used in Elkhart County.

The future Corson Riverwoods County Park site plan was completed. The project will restore 35 of restored prairie pollinator habitat and protect one mile of coldwater trout stream.

34 acres of prairie at Boot Lake Nature Preserve were maintained with a prescribed burn, managed by Blue Heron Ministries.

Nearly a mile of new burn break was created at Boot Lake Nature Preserve. Burn breaks function as a hiking trail and help protect the prairie during future burns.



BAINTERTOWN HYDRO TURBINE

PRESERVING THE PAST

MUSEUM COLLECTION OBJECT TO BE FEATURED

Curator of Collections Michelle Nash escorted **US NAVAL AVIATOR JACK COOPER'S WALLET** to Arizona, where it was featured in an interview with a WWII veteran. The footage will be used in an **UPCOMING MEDAL OF HONOR** video game that intends to marry virtual reality, video games and real-life storytelling to give users a fully immersive experience of WWII. The individual film may also be distributed independently as a mini-documentary.

NEW PODCAST DEBUTS

Staff from the Elkhart County Historical Museum debuted local history podcast "**A SENSE OF PLACE**" in partnership with The Goshen News.

CROSSROADS OF ELKHART COUNTY: CLAIMING THE LAND OPENS

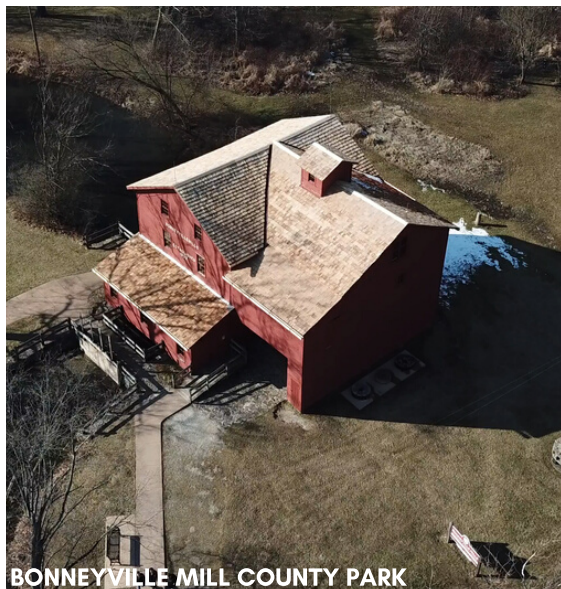
Phase II of the Elkhart County Historical Museum's **THREE-PHASE EXHIBIT REVAMP** explores life in the region from the 1670s to the 1850s. The exhibit features the stories of the Miami, Potawatomi, French, British, and American settlers.



PRESERVING THE PAST

COVERLETS FROM THE COLLECTION

The Coverlets from the Collection exhibit allowed a **GLIMPSE INTO A RARELY-SEES SEGMENT OF THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION** and highlighted an early Elkhart County industry. It focused on the work of two local weavers, Josiah Slaybaugh and Samuel Snider, whose intricate coverlet designs were made possible by the development of the Jacquard loom attachment.



BONNEYVILLE MILL ROOF REPLACED

A brand-new **CEDAR SHAKE ROOF** was installed on Bonneyville Mill. The bright new cedar shakes will weather to the familiar gray color and preserve the historic character of Indiana's oldest continuously operating grist mill.

BONNEYVILLE MILL VISITOR UPGRADES

2019 brought many changes to the Bonneyville Mill **RETAIL EXPERIENCE**. Improved product display and point of sale technology upgrades resulted in an increase of sales by 39% over 2018.



INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

BRICKS REPAIRED ON THE DEFRIES HOUSE, WINTER BUILDING, AND SIDEWALK

BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE ADA TRAIL (0.4 MILE) REBUILT WITH 600 TONS OF GRAVEL

NEW ENTRY GATE AND TURNAROUND INSTALLED AT BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

NEW PERMANENT RESTROOM FACILITY INSTALLED AT BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

COBUS CREEK COUNTY PARK STREAM RESTORATION WORK WITH RECLAIMED MATERIALS

NEW CLIMATE CONTROL SYSTEM INSTALLED AT OX BOW HAUS SHELTER

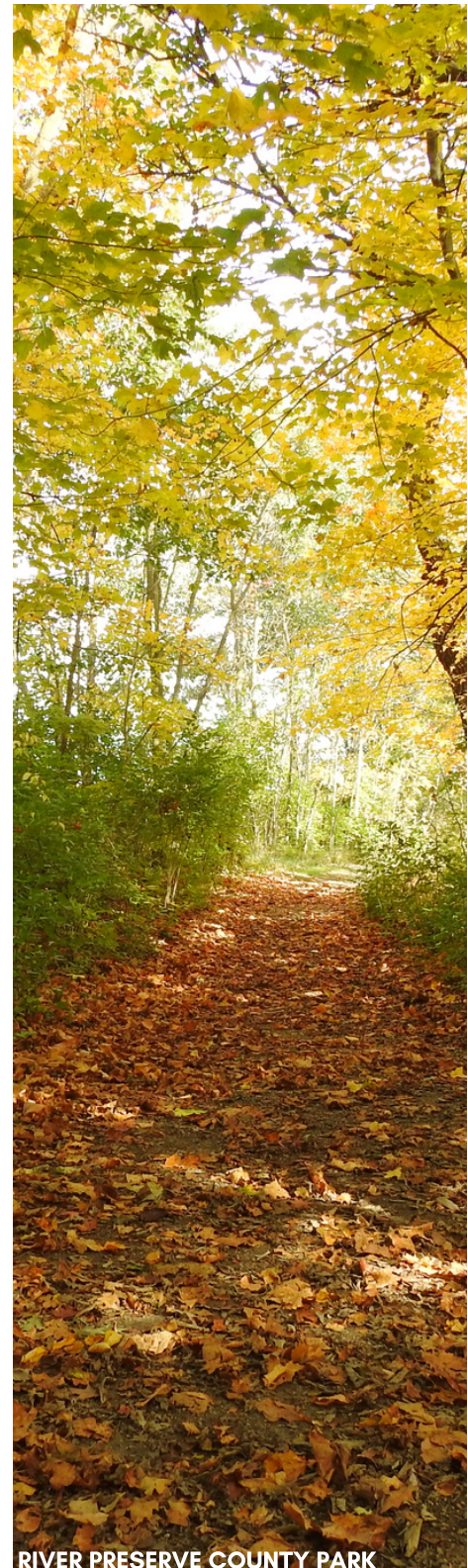
ELECTRICITY INSTALLED AT DEFRIES GARDEN GARAGE



PARTNERS

The Elkhart County Parks prides itself on the strength of its partnerships. These vital community partners contributed to a great 2019.

- ADEC
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Concord High School
- Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Elkhart County Food Council
- Elkhart County Genealogical Society
- Elkhart County Historical Society
- Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalists
- Elkhart County Museum Association
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Elkhart County Waterways Alliance
- Elkhart Morning Rotary
- Elkhart Public Library
- Friends of the Elkhart County Parks
- Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail
- Goshen Ultimate Frisbee League
- Greater Regional Environmental Educators Network
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- MACOG
- Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association
- Pumpkinvine Advisory Committee
- Secret Door Games
- The Goshen News
- Vibrant Communities
- York Elementary School



RIVER PRESERVE COUNTY PARK