

# RECREATION PROGRAMMING PLAN 2020-2022



### PLAN OVERVIEW

The primary purpose of the Recreation Programming Plan is to provide the Huron-Clinton Metroparks with an overview of all programs and services. The plan addresses all of the Metroparks programming functions, including activity selection, type and scope of programs and outreach initiatives. This Recreation Programming Plan is intended to be concurrent with an amendment to the Community Recreation Plan and the recent completion of master plans for each of the 13 Metroparks, all of which are located on the Planning and Development Department website at the following link: [www.metroparks.com/about-us/planning-department-2/](http://www.metroparks.com/about-us/planning-department-2/). The amendment and creation of these long-range planning documents concurrently promotes and strengthens the Metropark system-wide assets in a way that illustrates how these assets are interrelated.

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### SUPPORTING PLANS AND REPORTS

#### Community Recreation Plan

The Recreation Programming Plan is aligned with the Metroparks Community Recreation Plan 2018-2022 that creates an inventory of existing facilities and resources, identifies community and recreation and open space needs and sets a plan of action for a 5-year period. To be eligible to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and Waterways grants, a community must have an approved 5-Year Plan on file with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by February 1 of the year they intend to apply.

#### Huron-Clinton Metroparks Individual Master Plans

The Recreation Programming Plan follows the recent completion of individual master plans created for each of the 13 Metroparks. Between 2016 and 2018, each park was given a planning window of six months, with overlap between parks. Each master plan includes a list of projects, plans, and studies to serve as a blueprint for the future of the parks over the subsequent ten years.

#### Marketing Plan

Realizing the importance of marketing and communication, the Recreation Programming Plan will coincide with updates to the Marketing Plan 2019 Goals and Strategies, developed annually by the Marketing and Communications Department. Both are live documents that will closely follow both present and future marketing trends and work in collaboration amongst various departments.

#### ADA Transition Plan

The Metroparks Board of Commissioners approved the updated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan in November 2019. The transition plan is a living document and will integrate the programming actions identified in the Recreation Programming Plan action plan. Staff will engage in a self-evaluation of all Metroparks programming and services offered by Interpretive Services, Operations, Natural Resources, Golf, Police and Marketing. Each department will categorize its programming into groups of similar types of activities (eg. programs, events, activities) and then analyze each activity in terms of vision, hearing, and mobility barriers that may exist.

#### Interpretive Services Reports

The Interpretive Services Department develops monthly and annual reports to inform the Board of Commissioners and other stakeholders of the progress made by the Interpretive Services staff. The formation of the report provides leadership an opportunity to reflect on prior year's performance and make recommendations moving forward.

#### Staff Organizational Chart

The Community Recreation Plan includes an amended organizational chart including administrative structure for the Administrative Office and the Eastern, Western, and Southern Districts. The Interpretive Department's staff have a minimum qualification for Interpreters to have an Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree in nature interpretation, environmental education, biology or natural resources management or a related field. The Metroparks also recognizes years of experience in related service in lieu of a degree. For Interpreters that work in the Farm Centers, a background or education in agriculture, animal science, or horticulture can also be recognized towards minimum qualifications. Experience is required in interpretive, education or a related field for all positions. All Interpretive staff must complete Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) certification within a year of hire. Most positions also require knowledge and ability to design science education programs that support the NGSS and Michigan Science Standards set by the Michigan Department of Education.



## SYSTEM-WIDE PROGRAMMING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives listed in the Community Recreation Plan stem from the Metroparks mission statement, vision statement, and core values. In order to ensure recreation programming aligns with the same overall five goals system-wide, specific and measurable objectives were created for this Recreation Programming Plan.

### 1 INNOVATION

Goal	Objective	Measurable Indicator	Current Status
1. Modernize the Metroparks and develop new revenue streams	A) Create and strengthen partnerships to enhance recreational opportunities and to build a greater park visitor base that reflects the demographics of Southeast Michigan.	Partnerships/Visitor Counts annual growth by 1%	Annual monitoring to be performed
	B) Collect and utilize data: Evaluate recreational programming based on survey data, resources, and whether the program meets the stated program objectives in the event/program development form (Appendix J).	Evaluation tool collects positive feedback on programs growth rate by 1%	Annual monitoring to be performed



## 2 MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal	Objective	Measurable Indicator	Current Status
2. Repair, maintain, and improve core park infrastructure.	A) Ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to provide programming services to cater to a variety of needs.	Actual cost spent annually on improvements.	2020 Budgeted Projects amount implemented

## 3 EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Goal	Objective	Measurable Indicator	Current Status
3. Develop and enhance programming, communication, and outreach efforts.	A) Use marketing as a tool to reach new audiences, build relationships, and reinforce communications with current park users.	Annual marketing statistics compiled by social media (ie. reach and likes)	Annual monitoring to be performed
	B) Support equitable access to the parks, and remove barriers to park use.	Cost of ADA and universally accessible improvements/ barrier removals	Budgeted amount of \$25,000 per park in 2020
	C) Commitment to community education for the general public on the benefits of leisure and recreation.	Measurable goal of programs implemented	Annual monitoring to be performed

## 4 STEWARDSHIP

Goal	Objective	Measurable Indicator	Current Status
4) Protect and restore natural biodiversity while balancing resource management with recreational activities.	A) Create comfort level of outdoors for all participants with focus on outreach to diverse and underserved populations	Number of visitors from diverse and underserved populations based on number of groups and organizations visiting	Annual monitoring to be performed

## 5 MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Goal	Objective	Measurable Indicator	Current Status
5) Streamline organizational management to improve recreational offerings. Prioritize employee development, environmental health improvements, and financial stability. Become a leader for the region in sustainable practices	A) Develop standard operating procedures and define responsibilities for recreational programming and events to manage capacity and resources.	Evaluation tool generates positive feedback from respondents (qualitative assessment)	Annual monitoring will be performed.



## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Metroparks offers a variety of programming for all ages in the community and establishes specific program objectives for each program. To ensure that all programs offered by the Metroparks continue to be successful for program participants and meet goals established by staff leadership, all programs are evaluated annually. The Programs and Service Matrix (Appendix K) provides a summary of the current programs and services defined by program area along with system-wide goals and objectives. Each program will also be evaluated based upon the program area objective below using the Event and Program Evaluation Tool (Appendix J).

### Arts

- Active participation
- Support and expansion of creative art skills
- Development of physical, emotional, and social skills.

### Athletics

- Participants becoming more active
- Promoting health and wellness.
- Participants are provided with an ability to learn new sports
- Instill the enjoyment of an active lifestyle.

### Aquatics

- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Build a foundation of knowledge, skills, and safety for aquatic participants.

### Crafts

- Provide individuals opportunity for achieving personal goals
- Facilitate participants with encouragement and assistance when needed for personal confidence

### Health and Fitness

- Provide high quality classes that are fun and enjoyable for participants
- Enhance a healthier lifestyle

### Hobbies

- Provide convenient and easily accessible hobbies
- Assist with the development of physical, emotional, and social skills with participants

### Interpretive Education

- Provide high quality and enjoyable learning experience
- Promote artistic enrichment
- Encourage physical activity
- Offer unique experiences

### Literary Programs

- Provide exciting and engaging literary programs
- Consider natural and cultural assets of Metroparks when developing content to programs
- Provide cognitive development to educate participants

### Outdoor Recreation

- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Provide safety for both active and passive recreation
- Promote fitness

### Performing Arts

- Promote confidence amongst participants
- Provide unique experience and activities

### Self-Development

- Promoting health and wellness.
- Participants are provided opportunity for achieving personal goals

### Social Recreation

- Promoting health and wellness.
- Development of physical, emotional, and social skills

### Youth Recreation

- Promoting fit lifestyle for health and wellness.
- Provide participants the fundamentals of new activities while having fun, gaining confidence, and learning a new skill

### Wellness

- Promoting health and wellness.
- Enhancing a healthier lifestyle

### Volunteer Services

- Promoting a gathering place for social interaction.
- Participants learn new skill sets and benefit the community



### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND PUBLIC INPUT

The Community Recreation Plan provides regional demographics and socioeconomic data to understand population trends and consumer spending trends. Recent demographic profiles specific for each park is also provided in the individual master plans. One of the most important factors contributing to the Recreation Programming Plan is the public input collected through meetings, questionnaires, and online comments (see appendix I. Public Input Summary).

### RECREATION AND LEISURE TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Metroparks conduct trends analyses in a variety of ways within the system. As it relates to recreational and leisure trends, analyses include park visitation counts, budget forecasting, and the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Park visitation counts over the past 10 years are available for review on the Metroparks website and have been based on an assumption of average passengers per vehicle, and also non-motorized visitation (people using bikes, or walking into the parks). More recently, the Metroparks are moving towards a more data-driven approach to programming efforts. During the summer of 2018, three data collection days were set up at designated data collection sites at each of the 13 Metroparks. Each visitor entering the Metroparks on those days using a motor vehicle was stopped and asked to provide their ZIP code, the number of persons per vehicle (PPV), whether the car used an annual pass and whether the visitor had a dog with them on their visit. At the same time, an online questionnaire was developed to gather visitor information on demographics, user experiences, and recommendations for park improvements. Most recently in 2019, the Metroparks began scanning annual and daily passes at toolbooths with a bar code on the pass that park staff scans when visitors enter. Monthly reports are created to analyze the data gathered. The scanning of park passes will continue in an effort to gain a better understanding of its visitors and how it can better meet their needs as they use the Metroparks.

Budget forecasting is a process that has been recently refined by our finance department to include broad input and participation from staff. Every line item in the budget is reviewed for the previous three years and then analyzed by

staff on whether it's expected to follow the previous years' trends or shift due to one or several factors.

This Plan and complimentary plans utilize GIS for analyzing and displaying the extensive amount of data that was collected to develop sound plan recommendations. The GIS enables demographic and spatial data to guide programming efforts. Demographic data looks at the density, age, race, income, language, and other factors of the regional population that the Metroparks serve. Spatial data, usually analyzed through GIS software, looks at the physical location of the parks in relation to other recreation opportunities, transportation facilities, population centers, important natural resources, and more.

Park policies and rules are also evaluated as needed with recreation and leisure trends. Relatively recent trends include drones, e-bikes, and segways, and how they are used in public parks. The Metroparks consider these trends and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners, who will vote on the ruling or policy. The first and foremost consideration is the safety of all park patrons. Park and administrative staff work together to recommend policies that consider the highest and best experience for all park users and nearby residents.





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**COMMUNITY INVENTORY**

As part of the recently completed Metroparks master planning processes, which takes place every 10 years, the Metroparks performs an inventory of the facilities, programs and services. In order to best serve the residents of southeast Michigan and use resources wisely, the Planning and Development Department has also identified the location of similar facilities and programs within a 5-mile radius of each park. Additionally, as part of the Community Recreation Plan, which is updated every 5 years, an inventory of programs and activities, facilities and trails is developed for each of the 13 Metroparks.

**PROGRAM AND SERVICE DETERMINANTS**

A systematic and studied approach is taken by the Metroparks to determine what programs and services are provided in consultation with the following categories.

**Conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure**

The creation of the Metroparks in 1940 was based on a strong foundation of overwhelming support for public recreation. The development of parks and recreation programming has continuously followed the theme of worthwhile programs and services with a focus on excellent recreational and leisure opportunities. Promoting recreational programs are complimented by stakeholders and public input throughout the development process to ensure the social, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of individuals.

**Organizational agency philosophy, mission, and vision, and goals and objectives**

The Metroparks philosophy of providing excellence in recreation and public service ethic is reflected in the mission, vision, and core values of the Metroparks as stated in the Community Recreation Plan found on page 12.

**Constituent interests and desired needs**

Survey tools implemented during the individual master plans and the Community Recreation Plan planning process provide an excellent opportunity for stakeholder and individual interests and desired needs to be fulfilled. A specific example is survey monkey utilized for public surveys. This includes program participants having the opportunity to provide feedback on Metroparks programs. In part, the surveys provide valuable input on the fitness, play, and leisure trends that meets the desires and needs of the community. An

online survey tool is also used to monitor success rates to ensure the programming offered is appealing to the communities served. All programs that are not successful can be divested while successful programs can be expanded and researched further by the Marketing Department for program trends, as well as, department staff in their areas of expertise. During the 2017 Community Recreation Plan planning process, the consultant firm of ETC Institute was retained to administer a needs assessment survey of the regional population served by the Metroparks. The survey was administered as part of the efforts to establish priorities for recreational opportunities for residents. The survey results were included in the Plan (pages 113-118) and guide decisions that will enrich the future of the community. Top priorities identified in the ETC survey included beach activities and music events. Metroparks programming has reflected these popular types of programs with signature events involving beaches and music events scheduled for 2020.

**Creation of a constituent-centered culture**

The Metroparks has developed a constituent-centered culture through a number of initiatives with a large emphasis on public participation. Both master plans and the Community Recreation Plan rely heavily on stakeholders and public input throughout the planning process. Stakeholders on projects include advisory groups such as local mountain bike chapters and the Fun Accessible Inclusive Recreation (FAIR) Play Coalition. Individuals are encouraged to volunteer and lead an assortment of events and programs.

**Experiences desirable for clientele**

The Metroparks develops every program with input on the desires of the community. This includes developing facilities and programs that are universally accessible where feasible to ensure inclusion for all participants with respect to age, race, and ability. One example is the recent completion of the ADA Transition Plan update that sets out a timeline and estimated costs. Furthermore, outreach to underserved populations and ethical responsibility of the diversity of visitors has been achieved through various initiatives. Outreach to underserved populations is described in detail further below on page 160. One example of ethical responsibility includes the Metroparks accommodation for the growth in population of households speaking languages other than English. The Metroparks have addressed this by providing more universal signage design for park wayfinding with the use of symbology.

### Community opportunities

Creating good working relationships with communities surrounding the Metroparks are essential in improving recreation programs within the park and with the community. The master plans identify recreational facilities and programs within the competitive five-mile radius of each park. This may present opportunities for unique and significant programs to meet the recreational needs of the area in new ways distinct from other recreational opportunities moving forward. Also, various government and agencies work in partnership with the Metroparks for the benefit of the surrounding communities for each park. Regionally, the Metroparks have an ongoing working relationship with Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) that has continued to successfully flourish over the past few years. SEMCOG supports the Metroparks in a variety of work including technical, data, and intergovernmental resources, and improvement of water quality, transportation, and economic development.

### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Standard Operating Procedures also involve administrative staff to support events and programs as needed. The procedures provide guidelines on how surveys are conducted to evaluate a programs or event's success. In the flow chart below it directs Metroparks staff on the steps to take in order to execute a program or event. If the event is external, held by a third party, staff must first make sure that the third party has all the appropriate insurance requirements and revenue sharing agreements signed. If the event is internal, held by the Metroparks, staff can start with the next step, which is to fill out the form for Planning and Marketing for Events and Programming. This form is sent to both the Recreation Programs Coordinator and the Marketing Department at the Administrative Office. This step in the process allows for administrative office to start building graphics as needed, start marketing the event, and also help plan and/or identify ways to help make the event or program more successful. After the program or event takes place, evaluation forms are due one week after the event to the Recreation Programs Coordinator. Evaluation forms will be reviewed to understand if the programs and events are meeting their intended goals, and how to address any issues when planning for the future. The forms used can be found in the Appendix J. Forms.

### Planning and Marketing of Programs and Special Events



### MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION WITH DATA COLLECTION

Interpretive programs have collected evaluations since 2013, and a standardized evaluation method is being developed collaboratively across several Metroparks departments. Current and past evaluations look at the demographics of who is attending, how attendees found out about the program, opinions on program satisfaction, and an area for open comments or feedback. The Metroparks goal for evaluations is to standardize them in terms of questions asked, method of collection, and consistency in analysis. Evaluation is the final step in the planning process for programs and special events.

### OUTREACH TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

The interpretive department has been doing outreach programming for over 40 years. Within the past three years, the outreach program has expanded in many ways. The Metroparks now have three educational outreach vehicles that provide programming opportunities to communities, schools, and various groups. They bring aspects of Michigan's natural and cultural heritage as well as leisure and recreation to those who don't have the ability to get out to their Metroparks as well as raise public awareness of the opportunities to enjoy their Metroparks.

Since 2016, the Metroparks has offered "Summer Fun", which just finished its fourth season. This is an opportunity for religious institutions, non-profits, and governmental agencies to provide their members a full day of enjoyment at the

Metroparks for free. Transportation to the parks, entry into the park, facilities and programming are fully covered.

Another program that targets diverse and underserved populations is the Get Out and Learn scholarship (G.O.A.L.). This scholarship is available for teachers at schools with at least 50 percent of the students enrolled in the federal reduced/free lunch program. G.O.A.L. targets low-income schools that have difficulty finding off-site educational trips for their students in support of their curriculum goals. It overcomes the barriers of financing transportation and program fees by covering 100 percent of these expenses.

The Marketing Department works with the Metroparks Chief of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to ensure Metroparks messaging is representative and understood by all audiences in the diverse region the Metroparks serve. Additionally, the Marketing Department utilizes zip code data to identify areas of Metro-Detroit to target for programs and outreach, and the Marketing Plan includes a section on outreach and relationship building with community organizations and groups that operate in and serve underserved populations as well as niche groups. In regards to accessibility, programs are evaluated in terms of physical infrastructure. In addition, more care is being taken to better suit the needs of families' with sensory-friendly activities.

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROMOTION

The Metroparks Interpretive Department has offered several programs focusing around physical health, for example, disc golf camp, stand-up paddle boarding, and kayaking. Other wellness programs such as yoga have been offered. The Metroparks Foundation has offered a "Good form walking" clinic in conjunction with AAA. The Metroparks typically looks to partner with organizations that focus on a particular aspect of health and wellness to offer park patrons.

Marketing and promotion for programs and events is determined and set on a per program/event basis. Programs and events are evaluate based on staff's goals for the event to determine to correct target audience and most effective marketing channels. The revenue and attendance goals are then compared to budget constraints to determined how much to spend on marketing and promotion for each program or event. The marketing department then uses an integrated marketing mix of the proper channels to promote the

program or event within that budget, making sure that it fits into the overall organizational marketing plan and meets the goals of the program or event. Results of marketing and promotion are evaluated based on ad engagement, conversions and actual attendance at the event or program.

### PROGRAM AND SERVICE STATISTICS

The Metroparks provides a variety of programs and services (see Appendix K. Program and Services Management Matrix). These can be categorized as followed:

- Self-Directed Programs and Services
- Leader-Directed Programs and Services
- Facilitated Programs and Services
- Cooperative Programming

The Metroparks tracks data on participation of programs and park visitation, which is collected on a monthly basis and aggregated into a report. The results are shared at Board of Commissioner meetings in the board packet. This information is also put into an annual summary and posted on our website. Program participation is also tracked for revenue-producing facilities and programs, grant-funded programs and some signature programs at the park level.

Tracking progress toward meeting overall plan goals and objectives is included earlier in this plan. In addition, the Programs and Services Matrix contains a column to indicate whether the specific objectives have been achieved for the program areas offered by the Metroparks. The recreation programming staff reviews programs and service statistics on an ongoing basis. A report for the Board of Commissioners will be updated at the end of each calendar year with the annual results of each action program and relation to goals and objectives.