

March 23, 2007

The Highland Conservancy E-Newsletter

HIGHLAND OAKS PARK - HOT OFF THE PRESS!

There has been a lot of recent news coverage about our soon to be official Highland Oaks Park in Highland Township. This will be an excellent new park located in a key hub of our new Greenway Plan in the north central area of our township by Milford and Clyde Roads. The idea for this park began with a simple desire of Ron and Beth Flannery to do something to protect this unique parcel from development. Each time they drove by this beautiful parcel of property they wondered what they could do to save it. At one of our earliest Highland Conservancy meetings, they brought up the matter for discussion, wondering if it might be a good candidate for a conservation easement or some other form of protection? Sharon Greene, who was then a member of our conservancy, suggested to Ron that he seek a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase the property and he did. Just recently the purchase agreement was signed and soon we hope this beautiful property will be preserved as a park for all of Oakland County to treasure. Click the link below for more information

<http://www.hometownlife.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070315/NEWS11/703150712/1028>

A VICTORY FOR CONSERVATION!

Good News for the Residents of Commerce and surrounding townships - a 500+ acre section of Proud Lake Recreation Area will hopefully remain in public ownership!

DNR Reaches Tentative Agreement with Commerce Township to Keep Former Nike Missile Site in Public Ownership

The Department of Natural Resources has reached a tentative agreement with Commerce Township in Oakland County to keep 564 acres known as a former Nike Missile launch site in public ownership. The property had been reviewed under the DNR's land consolidation process and was identified as state-owned property to dispose of because of unique circumstances that prevent the DNR from providing hunting and other recreational opportunities, which was the original intent in managing the property.

"We are pleased to have a tentative lease-to-own agreement with Commerce Township that will keep this very large, undeveloped piece of property in public ownership," said Mindy Koch, DNR deputy director for resource management. "The DNR very much wanted to keep this property undeveloped so that proper recreational facilities related to hunting and fishing could be developed by local units of government."

The tentative agreement, which will meet funding criteria based on how the property was originally purchased in 1945, includes multiple use of the property as an outdoor recreation site. The tentative agreement includes a proposed competitive archery range, creation of access to fishing for "learn to fish" activities, instructional programs for youths and adults on wildlife conservation and wildlife habitat education areas. The township would lease the property from the state for a period of 25 years, with a down

payment of \$1 million. Under the agreement, Commerce Township could purchase the property at the end of the lease agreement. The value of the property would be based on an appraisal with recreation use restrictions.

The site was first purchased by the state in 1945 with a mix of state game and fish funds and General Funds. It was acquired at the time to provide hunting opportunities in a part of southeast Michigan that was largely undeveloped. In 1949, the U.S. Department of Defense took over the site to establish a Nike Missile launch site as a part of Detroit's air defense system. Three underground missile launch silos and support buildings were constructed. The site remained an active Department of Defense site until 1974.

The buildings on the property were used by the Michigan Conservation Corps program from 1984 to 1990. The most recent use of the buildings was by Oakland County, which leased the buildings for a boot camp and at-risk boys' shelter. As of January, none of the buildings were being leased or were in use.

By making an agreement with Commerce Township, the DNR will meet its land consolidation goal of offering the property to a local unit of government to manage and maintain. The DNR is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural resources for current and future generations.

In Oakland County, 196 parcels totaling 1174.45 acres will be retained, while 42 parcels totaling 28 acres were recommended for a government unit or ACO. A total of 89 parcels totaling 612.39 acres are slated for disposal. The parcels retained have boating and water access, recreation opportunities, natural features, mineral values and provides access to other state land. The parcels for disposal are isolated subdivision lots, have no significant recreational opportunities, or are limited in size. The commission also reviewed numerous boundary adjustments to DNR projects in Oakland County including Bald Mountain Recreation Area, Dodge No. 4 State Park, Highland Recreation Area, Holly Recreation Area, a portion of Island Lake Recreation Area in Lyons Township, Ortonville Recreation Area and Pontiac Lake Recreation Area.

Questions? Contact: Mary Dettloff 517-335-3014
Agency: Department of Natural Resources

"This is an historic effort by the department to review our holdings and determine if parcels outside of our project boundaries should be retained for future outdoor recreational use and enjoyment," said DNR Director Rebecca Humphries.

[From an article emailed from the Michigan Conservation Stewards Group]

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HI-WHITE PARADE

It's time again for the annual Hi-White Parade on Saturday, May 19, 2007. Once again, the Highland Conservancy plans to participate in the parade and pass out free pine tree seedlings. We are looking for volunteers to march in the parade (children and dogs are

welcome!) and also to help pass out trees at our booth. All volunteers (including dogs) will get a free t-shirt and the knowledge they are helping out a good cause! If you can help, please call Jim Lloyd at 248-887-3952.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SENT IN THEIR RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP! We really appreciate your continued support!

Katheryn Krupa
Editor
Highland Conservancy E-Newsletter
artfingers@comcast.net
www.HighlandConservancy.com