

2020

State of the County Report



2020 County Parks Board

Larry Catanzarite, President
 Donna Pfeil, Vice President
 Virginia Calvin, Secretary
 John Ferrettie // Thomas Panzica
 Rachel Rawls // Timothy Sexton

2020 County Commissioners

Andrew Kostielney, President
 Deb Fleming, Vice President
 Dave Thomas, Member

2020 County Council

Rafael Morton, President
 Joseph F. Canarecci // Mark A. Catanzarite
 Diana Hess // Robert Kruszynski, Jr.
 Corey D. Noland // Richard Pfeil
 Mark Root // Mark Telloyan

2020 Parks Foundation Officers

Michelle Kuehn, President
 Joel Bowers, Vice President
 Erin Bonin, Secretary
 Andrew Szczechowski, Treasurer

The St. Joseph County Parks

Bendix Woods County Park
 Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park
 St. Patrick's County Park
 Spicer Lake Nature Preserve

Partnered Sites:

Chamberlain Lake Nature Preserve
 Jasinski Canoe Launch
 Beverly D. Crone Restoration Area



Our Mission

The St. Joseph County Parks Department enriches the community and the lives of St. Joseph County residents. We...

- ▲ Conserve and care for significant natural areas.
- ▲ Promote stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage through quality programs and services.
- ▲ Enhance visitor experiences through well-maintained park facilities.



1

What We Do...

The County Parks provide benefits to community public health and economic development by managing over 1,300 acres of public access, greenspace, river and stream corridors, wetlands and woods, and providing space for gatherings, hiking, biking, canoeing, paddling skiing and learning.

Despite the global coronavirus pandemic throughout the majority of 2020, visitation at the County Parks and off-site events exceeded **395,000** users, a 29% increase from 2019 visitation. The County Parks remained open and accessible during the pandemic. We are proud to offer the community a place to safely recreate, find respite, and seek peace and restoration, especially during times of stress and uncertainty, such as we faced in 2020.

2020 Highlights!

- ▶ Evie Kirkwood received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Indiana Park and Recreation Association prior to her retirement on May 1, 2020. We thank her for her 40-plus years of service with the County Parks!
- ▶ Program staff came up with new ways to offer programs safely for visitors. A few included self-led hikes, mystery hikes, and moving canoe/kayak operations from St. Patrick's County Park to Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park. (2)
- ▶ Work continued on the River Ramble, a 1.5-acre natural playscape at St. Patrick's County Park. The St. Joseph County Parks Foundation raised the funds for this project with support from Visit South Bend Mishawaka, Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, Indiana Housing and Development Authority, and other local foundations, businesses and donors. A Sneak Peek event was held for donors in October, as COVID-19 pushed the opening of the River Ramble to 2021. (3)
- ▶ Park leadership changed in July, when former Deputy Director Steve Slauson and former Interpretive Services Manager Leslie Witkowski became the new director and deputy director, respectively. Former Park Interpreter Amal Farrough stepped into the role of interpretive services manager in August. (4)
- ▶ Drainage work was completed at Bendix Woods County Park to alleviate the amount of stormwater runoff from park property to Navistar Proving Grounds buildings and property. Underground pipes were installed on both properties, and a drainage swale and rain garden were installed on park property to manage the stormwater runoff. (5)
- ▶ Virtual programs became a new way to offer interpretive school programs for the interpretive naturalist staff during the pandemic. (6)
- ▶ The failing bridge and abutments where one of our trails crosses the St. Patrick's Ditch at St. Patrick's County Park was removed and a new culvert was installed along with wooden posts and handrailing. (7)
- ▶ New sugaring equipment was purchased by the Friends of Bendix Woods and Spicer Lake for maple syrup programs at Bendix Woods County Park. (8)



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

▲ Four 2020 Ford F-250 pickup trucks, complete with plows, were purchased to replace three 1-ton dump trucks in poor condition. ▲ Using funds for COVID-19 related expenditures, a large LED display and associated equipment were purchased to be used for virtual meetings and programs. ▲ ND-LEEF completed construction on two new watersheds at St. Patrick's County Park, which will allow for more research capacity at the LEEF site.

Numbers To Be Proud Of...

12,000: people participating in leisure services activities. **6,900:** people participating in park naturalist programs; **294** were students participating in virtual school programs. **2:** eaglets fledged by the bald eagles at St. Patrick's County Park. **97:** interpretive programs were provided for Title One schools and organizations serving under-resourced children with funding from the Donna Pfeil Interpretive Program School Scholarship Fund and the Parks Foundation. **1,795:** hours of support provided by volunteers to the County Parks. **22:** organizations partnered with us for events and programs.