



# Antrim County Parks Department

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*"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."*

— Theodore Roosevelt

## Introduction

2021 was a great start to a grand endeavor. This year the Board of Commissioners established the Parks system by deciding to hire a Parks Director to join the Antrim County team with the goal of providing excellence in service to our residents and visitors. This year was a grand experiment of sorts as we learned to navigate old problems, utilize solutions and establish the organization. We are happy to report this year was a very successful year in every criteria.

There were no written "how to's" for the prior existing parks facilities, prior relationships etc. Goals were set based on the need to identify standard operating procedures, written procedures & established planning. These were all set with three primary goals: working toward a strategic goal from the Parks and Recreation Plan, providing excellent customer service to our community and visitors while making fiscally responsible decisions.

Several of the Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 goals were met and or worked toward this year. The following goals were based on the overarching expectations of improving the parks system and organization.

### Goals for the year;

1. Identify current Parks and Natural Areas needs and develop future capital improvements. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 1.
2. Establish department SOP, policies and internal/external departmental communications. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 6.

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3. Establish & implement department training. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 6.
4. Establish & utilize start up/shut down procedures for Barnes Park Campground. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 1.
5. Establish & implement a maintenance & replacement program for the Parks. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal.
6. Establish & implement a plan for making the park system financially 'self-sufficient'. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 6.
7. Establish & communicate a vision/mission statement for the organization. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 6.

### **Park Needs**

Our first goal was to establish the current state of the parks and catalogue them based on needs. The list is longer than it was short. Ultimately the goal is the same for each park: to provide a safe, well maintained space thoughtfully presented for residents and visitors to enjoy Antrim County's precious natural resources.

The approach was simple; Identify which parks have the least amount of needs and capitalize on bringing them as close to a 'Finished' status as possible while remaining financially responsible. The following is a list of tasks accomplished along with goals completed. This is a brief summary and is just a snapshot. We stayed very busy this year!

### **Barnes Park Campground**

- A high amount of building and grounds maintenance. We are still several years behind on grounds/building maintenance at the rate we were able to accomplish things this year due to equipment and personnel limitations.
- Improved the aesthetic presentation of the Park through increasing access & presenting the park in a professional manner. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 4.
- Removed in excess of 60 dead or dying trees and 142 stumps, most of whom were impeding the functionality and access to campsites.

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- Hired out the replacement of all bath house facility faucets and repair of broken toilets along with a broken shower in the Bath House 2003. Fixed water heaters, both of whom were not functioning at the start of the season. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 1.
- Park entranceway renovation & improvement. Recreated the ‘employee parking’ area. Replanted a large amount of yard and updated the flower beds surrounding the entryway to be more welcoming & inviting for visitors. (See Attachment A). Revitalized soil in those areas by applying compost.
- Improved the ‘Visitor welcome center’ to be warm and inviting. Items for sale are now displayed for sale in an organized and thoughtful manner, with an inventory system in place to ensure every dollar is tracked.
- Partnered with Grass River and purchased some of their books to sell at Barnes Park.
- Now displaying brochures for other Antrim County Parks.
- The only revenue producing park in the system. Exceeded \$360,000 in revenue this year from Camping, Ice, Firewood, Pay to use Showers and Clothing Sales. This is a record in several categories.
- Total cost for operating the park was approximately \$220,000.
- We saved on employee wages, overtime, travel and in multiple other categories while spending more for maintenance of vehicles, grounds and buildings than the previous year. Several large projects were able to be completed.

### **FY21 Barnes Major Improvements and their costs;**

| <u>Cost</u>         | <u>Item</u>               | <u>Completion</u>      |
|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| \$400               | Retail Space Organization | June                   |
| \$2,200 (Estimated) | Shower Repair             | July. Tile in October. |
| \$4,000             | Front Entrance Landscape  | August                 |
| \$2,000 (Estimated) | Faucet replacements       | October                |

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|                |              |                 |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <u>\$8,600</u> | <u>Total</u> | From Parks Fund |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|

**Antrim Creek Natural Area (ACNA)**

- In conjunction with the ACNA Commission, Parks was able to hire an additional employee whose primary function is maintenance/improvement of Antrim Creek.
- Completed a Southern Parking Lot Expansion (See Attachment B). Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 4.
- Plan for roof repair on existing kiosks.
- Bear proof trash cans at trail heads. \$1,800 donation given to assist in the project from the Michigan Bear Hunters Association (MBHA).
- Waypoint signage & trail head welcome signs. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 4.
- Improvement of North driveway. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 4.
- Purchase of the Antrim Creek School House. This was an original goal of the ACNA which has been unobtainable for in excess of 20+ years! Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 5.
- General maintenance and appearance improvements. Far too much to expound upon while remaining brief.
- Friends of Antrim Creek was restarted & is now actively helping.

**FY21 ACNA Major Improvements and their costs;**

| <u>Cost</u> | <u>Item</u>                | <u>Completion</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| \$3,409     | S. Plot & Road Improvement | June              |
| \$2,311     | N. Plot & Road Improvement | August            |
| \$31,144    | Schoolhouse Acquisition    | September         |
| \$4,473     | Bear Proof Trash Cans      | October (Est)     |

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|                                  |                        |   |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| \$4,000                          | Waypoint sign upgrades | October (Est)                           |
| <b><u>\$45,337</u></b> (\$2,673) | <b><u>Totals</u></b>   | <b><u>ACNA Fund,</u></b> (General Fund) |

**Elk Rapids Day Park**

- Significant trail maintenance and improvements.
- Slated for bathroom renovations & improvements. (Est. completion in November)
- Installation of two new stair cases which will last in excess of thirty years (Nice work Jeremy Scott for coordinating & completing this project). Cost: \$9,760 Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 1.
- Donation & installation of permanent hand rails for the new stairways. Parks & Recreation Plan 2021-2025 Goal 1.
- Collaboration with local government and Art Rapids! To improve communication, maintenance and events involving the park.

**Mohrmann Natural Area (MNA)**

- Installed dog waste bag dispenser and trash can.
- Communicated with local and state environmental officials to identify methods required for permitting work to repair existing bridges and trails threatened by the MNA stream.
- Began design for bridge update.
- Began design for trail waypoint update.
- General maintenance and upkeep.
- Will require significant driveway repair and improvements to correct grading and parking area.
- Will see improvements in FY22.

**Noteware's, Willow Day Park & Murphy Park**

- Each of these parks have large needs which include rethinking their use, access & management.
- Currently, these are being maintained weekly along with our other parks.

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- For example, Noteware's needs nearly 80 yards of material to fix the current driveway if we do not "rethink" the parking/driveway. These plans are underway but will require public input.
- These parks will be reconfigured to improve access in FY22 so a plan is in place prior to making decisions.

### **Wetzel Lake**

- Wetzel Lake is currently a leased property. There were plans to make it into a rustic campground in the early 2000's.
- Plans are being explored once more for a trail network around the lake and the possibility of following through with the previous plan.
- This will be a major project and will require a dedication of time in FY22 to plan.

### **Lake of the Woods**

- Custer Township has asked for the County to take this park back over.
- Plans are being made of how to facilitate this in a low cost manner.
- Previously was deeded as logging land from the State of Michigan.
- Legal issues which will need to be tackled.
- Plans will be made for this possible park or natural area in FY22.

### **Goal Recap: Did we accomplish our seven goals for FY21? Yes, and then some.**

1. Identified current Parks and Natural Areas needs. Developed several future capital improvements.
2. Established department SOPs, policies and internal/external departmental communications.

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3. Established & implemented department training along with a training “binder” for new employees to review as needed to increase communication by giving the same message to all employees.
4. Established & utilized start up/shut down procedures for Barnes Park Campground. Previously, there were no written plans. This has now been memorialized in a binder complete with checklists etc.
5. Established & implemented a written maintenance & replacement program for the Parks.
6. Established & implemented a plan for making the park system financially ‘self-sufficient’.
7. Established & communicated a vision/mission statement for the organization.

### **In addition to our goals we:**

- Networked with Universal Access, a disability access organization who advises governments and nonprofits to increase access to public programs and lands.
- Networked with local government leadership in support of projects and to build future partnerships.

### **Grants:**

- Established relationship with M.A.C. Grants coordinator.
- Established relationship with DNR leadership and grant organizers.

Too many other items to list.

**Parks Director**

James M. Hunter

**DISTRIBUTION:**

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COMMISSIONERS AGENDA, NOVEMBER 4th, 2021

ADMINISTRATORS OFFICE

PARKS DEPARTMENT