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### **Community partnerships focus of Oakland County Parks Annual Report**

*Healthy Communities Park and Outdoor Recreation Investment Plan implementation continues*

**OAKLAND COUNTY, MI – Feb. 7, 2024** – In 2022, the \$20 million Healthy Communities Park and Outdoor Recreation Investment Plan provided funding for Oakland County Parks (OCP) to invest in local communities by creating sustainable parks and public spaces.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners and County Executive Dave Coulter approved \$15 million for OCP from pandemic relief funds the county received as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Combined with a \$5.2 million match from OCP, this provided the parks system with substantial funds to revitalize and enhance parks located in or servicing residents of communities most impacted by the pandemic.

One year later, historic investments are being made throughout Oakland County thanks to partnerships with local communities. During 2023, OCP developed agreements with local entities identified in the plan, conducted public engagement sessions to gather feedback from residents and introduced design and engineering plans. In some cases where needs were already clearly identified, improvements began immediately.

These projects, programs and other developments are highlighted in OCP's 2023 Annual Report: *Shaping Equitable Recreation with Community Partners*, which can be viewed online at [OaklandCountyParks.com](https://OaklandCountyParks.com).

One highlight from 2023 is Pontiac Oaks County Park, formerly Hawthorne Park in Pontiac, where a new fishing dock was constructed and new programming launched.

Other community investments in 2023 included:

- Approving \$658,166 in grant funds to 11 communities as part of the Community Grant Program. These monies assist local municipalities with planning, preliminary engineering/design and construction costs for park improvements and trail projects
- Expanding of the Free Entry Day program from six to 12, providing increased access to health and wellness activities in the parks

- Partnering with Huron-Clinton Metroparks to offer free swim lessons at Waterford Oaks Wave Pool. These lessons removed financial barriers to swim instruction in order to increase safe water recreation
- Participation in Welcoming Week with two events that highlighted immigrant inclusion in the community
- Providing free recreation opportunities through the Recreation Assistance Partnership Program (RAPP), serving 117,983 participants

Throughout 2023, residents and visitors continued to venture outdoors in large numbers to focus on their physical health, emotional wellbeing and social connectivity. OCP parks provided peaceful places to enjoy quiet moments, explore nature and boost moods.

OCP operates a waterpark, wave pool, two beaches, two campgrounds, five golf courses, three dog parks, two nature centers, a farmers market, an off-road vehicle park and day-use parks that are visited by nearly 2 million guests annually. The system also provides outreach recreation services, mobile unit rentals, adaptive recreation programming and more.

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