



Holly Oaks ORV Park

14451 Shields Road
Holly, MI 48442
248-653-0710



Park Information

After a decade of planning, Holly Oaks ORV Park opened Sept. 17. Part of a long-term goal of the Statewide Trail ORV Plan, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), together with Oakland County Parks and Recreation (OCPR), has created an opportunity for legal, public off-road vehicle recreation.

Oakland County was selected as a prime area to develop such an opportunity because it has the highest percent of licensed ORVs in the state, but no legal public riding areas, up until now. The park is a joint State-County project, operated by OCPR in partnership with the DNR via a 20-year operating agreement (with a 10-year renewal).

Consisting of former and active sand and gravel mines, Holly Oaks welcomes all types of ORVs, including full-size vehicles, side-by-sides, all-terrain vehicles or ATVs, and motorcycles. Approximately 113 acres opened this year with additional acres coming online as mining is completed on the remaining property. The full 235 acres is expected to be operational by 2023. The daily entry fee is \$15/vehicle and an ORV license and trail permit are required.

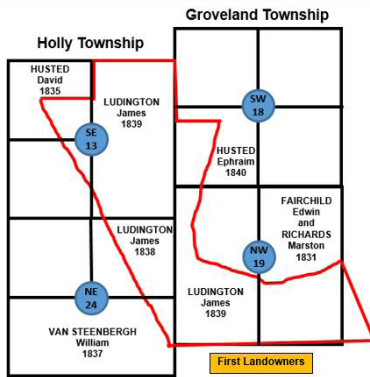
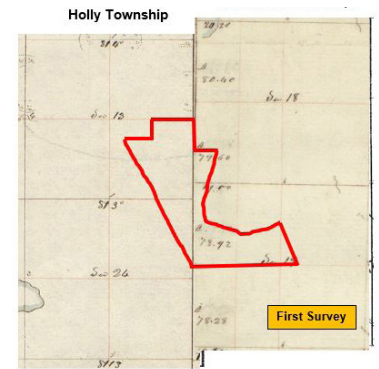


Natural Resources

- Holly Oaks has been extensively mined and none of the original natural features can be found on the site.
- Pooling of water and seed introductions have resulted in small ponds and vegetated areas across the property which are monitored by natural resources management staff.
- The park was likely a combination of Black Oak Barren and Oak Hickory Forest prior to the 1800s.

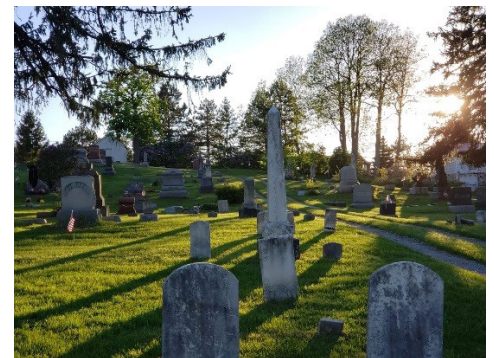
History

Holly Oaks ORV Park is located in Holly and Groveland townships. This land was first surveyed in 1816 by Joseph Wampler as part of his survey of the two townships. His surveyor notes that describe the land provide a glimpse into the pre-settlement landscape. He noted Sections 13 and 24 of Holly Township as having rolling land with white, black and red oak. He described Sections 18 and 19 of Groveland Township as also having rolling land but with white and black oak and hickory. The fact that the land was heavily timbered was no doubt a challenge to early settlers.



Despite its potential challenges people began to purchase land in Holly and Groveland townships in the 1830s. Most had traveled out the Saginaw Trail (now sections of Dixie Highway) from Detroit. Edwin Fairchild and Marston Richards of Monroe County, New York, made the first purchase in 1831 in the area that would become Holly Oaks ORV Park. Their property was in the southeastern area of what is now Holly Oaks. They likely paid the federal government less than \$2.00 an acre for the 80 acres they purchased. It appears that both were just land speculators and never actually lived on the land.

By the 1840s John Hadley had purchased the Fairchild and Richards properties. He and his wife Margery had been born in Northumberland, England, traveling to the United States around 1820 to settle in New York. Some 20 years later they relocated to Groveland Township. Historical records suggest they had 10 children but two died very young. It was John Hadley who donated land for Hadley Cemetery which borders Holly Oaks. By 1860 John and Margery had moved into Holly Village, and their son David took over the farm. His residence was located just south of Hadley Cemetery on the Saginaw Turnpike which later became Dixie Highway.



Sometime around 1925 Julius H. Haass, a wealthy banker from Detroit, purchased what had been the Hadley farm as well as additional land that eventually became Holly Oaks. He was president of the Detroit Bankers Company, a prominent financier and patron of the arts. Later in life he developed an interest in wildlife protection, which is likely why he purchased the land in Groveland Township. In 1914 he had purchased the land known as Waterford Hill in Independence Township. This hill, which rises about 1,200 feet above sea level and about 200 feet above the surrounding land, was a well-known Oakland County landmark. Haass had hoped to build a wildlife sanctuary and estate on the hill but there is little evidence that this occurred.

Beginning in the 1960s companies interested in sand and gravel mining began to purchase the land that would become the ORV Park. These included VanFleet Excavating and Bit-Con Corporation. What had been farmland and recreational land was now being mined. By 1979 Oakland County had become one of the leading sand and gravel producing counties in Michigan, and by 1994 it had become the leader. Today it has one of the largest sand and gravel operations in the world, much of it centered in Groveland and Holly townships.



1940



2019