



STEPPING UP TO CHANGE

2010 Annual Report

DestinationOakland.com

Message from the Executive Officer

Daniel J. Stencil



We like to tell people we're in the "fun business." For Oakland County Parks and Recreation, this is the very real business of providing fantastic parks, programs and services to more than 1.5 million annual visitors.

We are currently in the third year of a 10-year strategic master plan that guides planning efforts at all levels of the organization. The plan is summarized into five initiatives that focus staff efforts and guide future direction. The initiatives, highlighted in this report, are: **Urban Recreation; Rural Recreation; Natural Resources and Environment; Healthy Living;** and **Sustainability.**

By a record-breaking affirmative vote of 76.46%, Oakland County residents chose to once again renew the parks system's 10-year millage on August 3, 2010. We are beyond thrilled and incredibly humbled by this support. This endorsement by Oakland County voters speaks volumes about the value residents place on the benefits of parks and recreation, the protection of natural resources and quality of life in Oakland County.

We continually look for ways to create additional operational efficiencies. Business plans and master plans are helping us make financially sustainable decisions and prioritize future efforts so we can continue to provide high quality parks, programs and services. Innovative funding, partnerships and sponsorships help us continue growing the parks system.

We also recognize there is more we can do to assist local communities and we have increased our efforts to provide recreation assistance grants to Oakland County's 62 cities, villages and townships.

The entire parks staff, 67 full-time and 700 part-time employees, has taken pay cuts the last two years. To the credit of these dedicated employees, the parks system continues to operate at a world class level, providing memorable, quality recreation experiences for the residents of Oakland County and regional visitors 365 days a year.

Volunteerism is also becoming an important component of the way we do business. We are learning that not only do we benefit greatly from their time and expertise, but that these individuals are also some of our biggest advocates. The addition of a horticulture program at the new Waterford Oaks County Park's greenhouse spiked our volunteer count to nearly 400, an increase of more than 100 volunteers in less than a year, showing us yet again how our residents support and value what we do. We are so grateful for their commitment and dedication.

This annual report provides a sampling of the many projects and programs implemented in 2010. We earnestly welcome your observations, suggestions and feedback about how we're doing. Check out our national award-winning Web portal at DestinationOakland.com or find us on Facebook. And most importantly come and visit us at any of *your* 13 Oakland County Parks and Recreation locations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Daniel J. Stencil".

Daniel J. Stencil
Executive Officer

OUR MISSION

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission is dedicated to providing quality recreation experiences that encourage healthy lifestyles, support economic prosperity, and promote the protection of natural resources.

URBAN RECREATION

Addressing the challenges and opportunities in creating access to recreation in urban environments



Sunny with a chance of marshmallows

Catalpa Oaks County Park may be the smallest of the 13 Oakland County Parks, but its 25 acres open a world of opportunity. Since its acquisition in 2007, Catalpa Oaks has hosted more than 45,000 annual visitors through the regular use of soccer fields, ball diamonds and open green space for walking and picnicking. Its proximity to Southeast Oakland's historic urban core communities make the park an ideal spot for hosting special events close to a large population of residents.

In 2010, Oakland County Parks and Recreation brought back one of its oldies but goodies - the spring marshmallow drop. Waiting on the ground to catch marshmallows dropped from a helicopter were 3,500 enthusiastic kids and parents. The result was an egg hunt in overdrive as kids of all ages raced to collect the sugary puffs to redeem for prizes.



Crying kids and other signs of success

Day's end at Red Oaks Waterpark is signaled by olfactory and auditory cues—the scent of sunscreen and sound of crying kids.

You know you've provided a great recreation experience when, at closing time, they do not want to leave. They are the most vocal of the day's 3,500 guests, pleading for just "one more time in the waves."

Our waterparks don't just give guests a way to cool off; they also allow our visitors to create summertime memories and traditions.

Redefining recreation assistance in a time of financial crisis

During the economic downturn, Oakland County Parks and Recreation heard from the county's 62 cities, villages and townships, many of which had to limit or eliminate parks and recreation services.

For more than 30 years, OCPR has provided recreation assistance grants at no cost including outreach programs, bus transportation, mobile stages and its "recreation on wheels" units.

The Recreation Assistance Partnership Program granted \$150,000 in no-cost services to help local communities provide recreation opportunities to residents.



NOTEWORTHY

- Campfire Nights, in partnership with the Madison Heights Nature Center, brought the backwoods to the city for 100 community members with storytelling, a marshmallow roast and campfire sing-a-long.
- The Mobile Recreation fleet delivered "recreation on wheels," including a climbing tower, portable stages and inflatable bouncers to 160,000 individuals.
- The new Red Oaks Dog Park provides five acres of socialization and off-leash fun for dogs and their owners.
- A new playground at Red Oaks Youth Soccer Complex was dubbed "worth a visit" by *Metro Parent Magazine*.



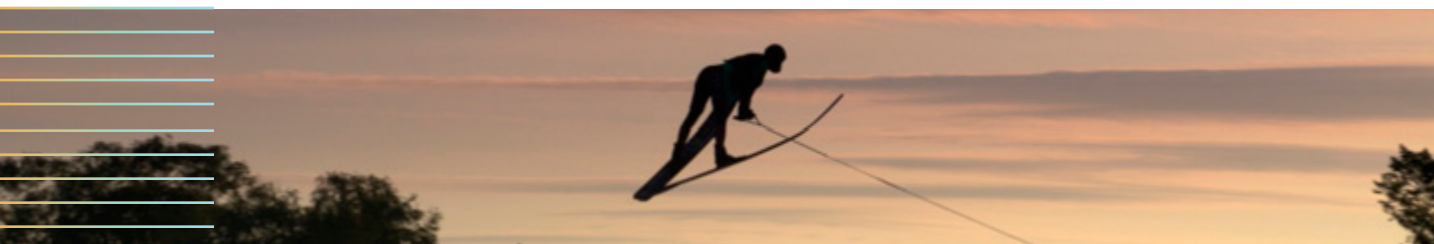
The Big Bang Theory

The value of cooperation

Oakland County Parks and Recreation's operational staff is extremely proud of the exceptional partnerships that were forged around special events at Addison Oaks and Groveland Oaks county parks.

With assistance from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, parks staff accommodated capacity attendance at Fourth of July fireworks at its two campgrounds.

The Skiers Pier King of Darkness event at Groveland Oaks highlighted the critical role of private-sector partners. Skiers Pier and OCPR hosted a national waterskiing competition in Oakland County on a lake in the dark. It doesn't get much cooler than that.



RURAL RECREATION

Promoting access to recreational opportunities that are tied to the landscape of rural Oakland County



A valuable conversation: Managing recreational hunting

In partnership with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, a deputy patrolled the five parks that offer archery deer hunting.

Hunters told the deputy about trees that had fallen on trails or fence lines and which trail signs were obscured by branches. Their conversations led to bigger things like the prosecution of a poacher and bait ban infractions.

Compliance with state regulations was confirmed, such as the possession of a current hunting license, and GPS locations of temporary tree stands was noted.

Oakland County Parks and Recreation is taking care of the things that impact the enjoyment of parks by hunters and non-hunters alike.

Are cow tongues scratchy?

Whether it's petting farm animals at the annual county fair or watching trebuchets launch pumpkins, Facebook and Twitter friends remind everyone why Oakland County Parks and Recreation is in the fun business.

NOTEWORTHY

- Staff doubled attendance at the Ellis Barn Festival by providing pony and carriage rides plus horse, cider and rope-making demonstrations.
- The parks commission purchased 186 acres adjacent to Independence Oaks County Park in part with a \$945,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant.

Preserving parkland for tomorrow

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission acquired 186 acres in northern Oakland County, a natural jewel that has been on its radar for more than 30 years.

Located adjacent to Independence Oaks County Park, the property is one of the most significant high quality green spaces in Oakland County.

The purchase of this land would not have been possible without a collaborative funding approach, including a \$945,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant plus donations from the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (\$16,000), the Carls Foundation via Ducks Unlimited (\$105,000)—plus \$1.74 million from the parks system.

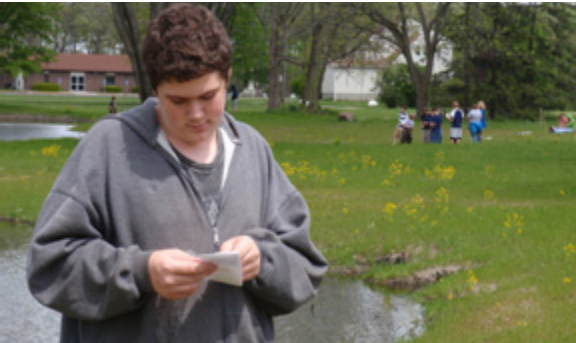
Now called Independence Oaks–North, the property contains a 31-acre pristine lake that will open to the public for the first time ever in spring 2011.

The addition makes Independence Oaks the largest of the 13 county parks at 1,274 acres.



NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

Promoting access to high quality natural areas through the stewardship of green infrastructure vision



A quick return on investment

Say “prescribed burn” and people are likely to picture scorched earth. Give it a week... or two. Then a carpet of new green plants literally shoots up overnight. After two years of conducting burns, parks staff hit pay dirt and collected seeds from more than 20 species of prairie plants at Highland Oaks County Park. The seeds will be cultivated into plants at the system’s greenhouses and returned to the park to aid in efforts to restore natural areas to pre-settlement conditions.

Fighting nature’s invasives

By working with neighboring land owners, both public and private, the parks system is helping to prevent the spread of invasive species or their reintroduction to areas that have already been treated. Black Swallowwort, one of the top threats to Michigan’s natural areas, was eliminated from hundreds of sites, including Oakland County Parks and Recreation property, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Springfield Township and the Michigan Nature Association.

Trading text books for waders

Students from Waterford Mott High School were introduced to the science behind water quality monitoring while knee-deep in detention ponds at Waterford Oaks County Park. The information they collected helped demonstrate the effectiveness of a grant-funded storm water management project.

NOTEWORTHY

- An AmeriCorps service grant provided student labor valued at \$13,510 for natural resource stewardship on 30 plus acres.
- Prescribed burns were conducted on 187 acres to control invasive species and restore natural habitat.
- Staff hosted 10 educational days for nearly 350 people on natural resources topics, including the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Michigan’s only venomous snake.

Putting accessibility

into practice



The grand opening of Paradise Peninsula Playscape at Waterford Oaks County Park, a nature-themed playscape, celebrated the parks system's first project based on the concept of universal design. Staff went beyond requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide recreation opportunities for all abilities.

The playscape was constructed from materials and play elements that promote inclusive play. Its design was inspired by the native Michigan landscape, including simulated rock, water and fossil features.

Aging and under-used tennis and horseshoes courts were removed to make way for this new type of play. The project was funded, in part, by an Access to Recreation Initiative Accessible by Design Grant—funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (\$250,000), a Clean Michigan Initiative Grant (\$190,000) and \$310,000 from Oakland County Parks and Recreation.

Measuring value by a cup of coffee

For more than three decades, Oakland County Parks and Recreation has hosted recreation programs designed to address the skills and limitations of residents with special needs.

Wheelchair basketball, goal ball and sled hockey promote physical fitness and provide opportunities to develop discipline and self-confidence. Day camps and special events create access to a wide variety of experiences.

There is no debating the value of providing these opportunities for participants. But it is easy to overlook the value caregivers receive.

Parents on the sidelines can chat, drink coffee or read a newspaper while their children recreate and learn.

In a very real sense, these programs strengthen families by giving everyone a rejuvenating breather.



HEALTHY LIVING

Promoting the role of recreation in supporting quality of life and active lifestyles of residents and visitors



A new take on the family outing

Oakland County Parks and Recreation plays a unique role in creating memorable experiences for multiple generations.

The annual Senior Tour Series invites mature children to take their parents on park outings.

The Oakland County Express, using its buses, trained staff and volunteers, meets the challenges of transporting and entertaining adults with limited mobility. For many residents, the tours are the first time that a 60-year-old can take a 90-year-old parent to see the fall colors or on a pontoon boat ride.

An equation for recreation

Recreation planners are good at recycling. The bicycle motocross track was created in 1976 with excess soil from construction of a wave pool. In 2010 the Family Sledding Hill was pumped up to 27 feet high with surplus fill from a playground project. In the parks and recreation business, dirt does equal fun.

A new twist on family tradition

With more than 18,000 visitors annually, the Waterford Oaks bicycle motocross track provides a unique recreation experience for kids, their parents and even some grandparents. Second and even third generations of BMX riders are passing along the addiction to competitive racing. It's a family tradition that builds character and muscles. With kids as young as three decked out in protective gear pedaling their hearts out to the finish line, what's not to like?

NOTEWORTHY

- The annual Wright & Filippis Wheelchair Daze Picnic hosted 2,500 visitors.
- Donations totalling \$5,250 were secured from 16 sponsors to print 15,000 OakRoutes trail maps, encouraging residents to use the county's 114 miles of multi-use trails.
- More than 126,000 18-hole rounds of golf were played at five courses.



Moving forward— providing more with less

Parks staff is perpetually challenged with seeking the most efficient and cost effective way of getting things done.

After many recent retirements, the number of full-time positions has been significantly reduced from 97 in 2006 to 67 in 2010. Many full-time vacancies will not be filled or transitioned to part-time jobs.



As a result, key changes were instituted:

- Created regional districts (North and South) to optimize regional oversight, sharing of resources and standardization within the 13 parks distributed over the county's 910 square miles to share staff and equipment resources
- Implemented an organizational work order processing system that allows for project evaluation, coordination and tracking
- Instituted a customer survey program to guide the prioritization of major maintenance and capital improvement projects
- Established maintenance standards based on industry best practices and business-guided outcomes
- Utilized technology to better track revenue and expenditure in calculating cost of service

Staff has also promoted interdepartmental collaboration, developed a comprehensive position-based training program and empowered staff to address issues of capacity. These steps have allowed Oakland County Parks and Recreation to reduce costs without reducing the quality of recreational experiences provided.

SUSTAINABILITY

Implementing environmental, social and fiscal practices that will help ensure long-term viability



NOTEWORTHY

- Biolubricants for park equipment were purchased, reducing risk to the environment and improving worker safety.
- A base of 2,800 fans on Facebook was built creating an online community of park and program users.
- A total of \$1.2 million was invested to implement and launch several projects identified in the Technology Roadmap including a nationally award winning recreation and conservation web portal, enterprise-wide recreation management system that includes point-of-sale, registration and reservations, and network expansion and improvements.
- A Communications Plan garnered nearly \$100,000 in free promotions via TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and online publications.

Making the case for nature education

The Wint Nature Center celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2010. To celebrate its more than one million guests, a Memory Tree was created on which guests could post remembrances. Stories submitted described the nature center's role in introducing their children to the outdoors. Now the program is sparking an appreciation for the natural world for second generations of visitors.

Taking little green steps

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Green Initiative Team recommends new green strategies. To date, all five golf courses and Groveland Oaks County Park have been environmentally certified by the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program.

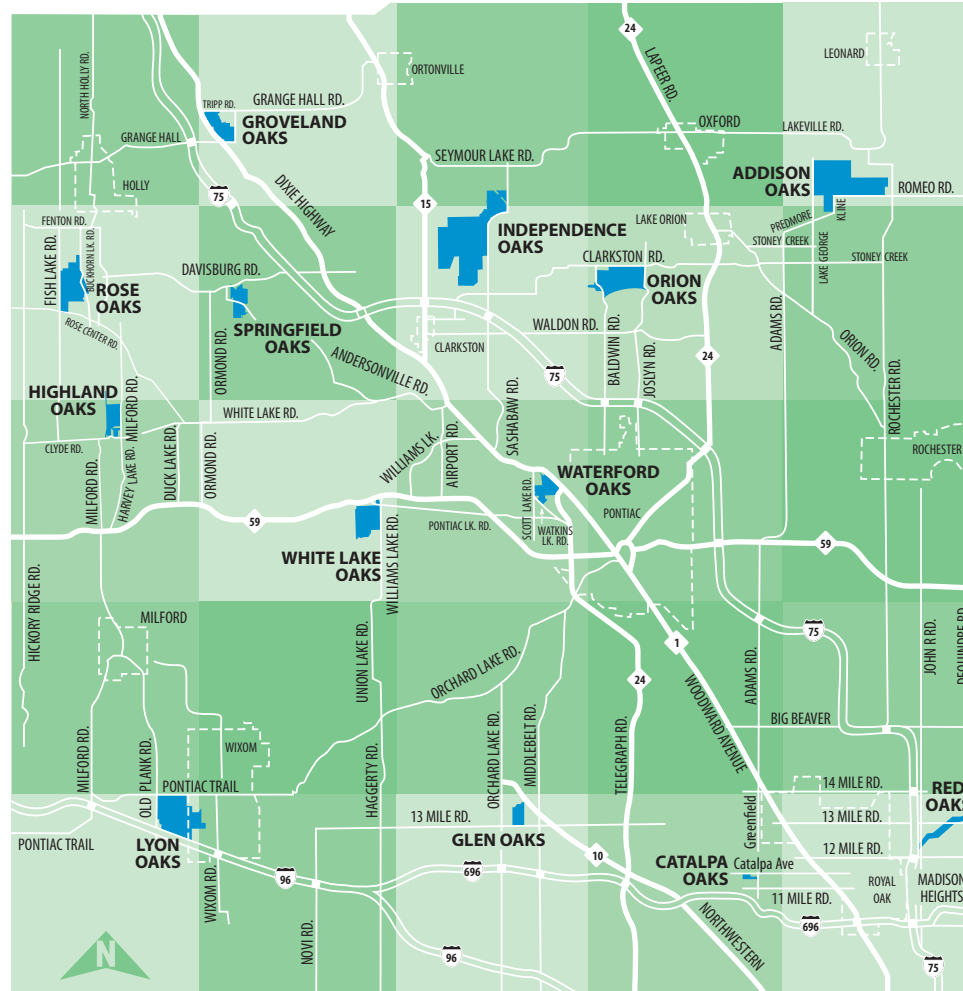


Parks

- ADDISON OAKS**
W. Romeo Rd., Leonard
248.693.2432
Conference Center: 248.693.8305
- CATALPA OAKS**
Greenfield Rd., Southfield
For information—248.858.0906
- GROVELAND OAKS**
Dixie Highway, Holly
248.634.9811
- HIGHLAND OAKS**
Milford Rd., Highland
For information—248.858.0906
- INDEPENDENCE OAKS**
Sashabaw Road, Clarkston
Park: 248.625.0877
Nature Center: 248.625.6473
- LYON OAKS**
Pontiac Trail, Wixom
For information—248.858.0906
- ORION OAKS**
Clarkston Road, Lake Orion
For information—248.858.0906
- RED OAKS WATERPARK**
13 Mile Road, Madison Heights
248.585.6990 (summer)
- ROSE OAKS**
Fish Lake Rd., Holly
For information—248.858.0906
- SPRINGFIELD OAKS**
Andersonville Rd., Davisburg
248.634.7899
- WATERFORD OAKS**
Activity Center
Watkins Lake Road, Waterford
248.858.0913
Waterpark
Scott Lake Road, Waterford
248.858.0918 (summer)

Golf Courses

- GLEN OAKS**
13 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills
248.851.8356
- LYON OAKS**
Pontiac Trail, Wixom
248.437.1488
- RED OAKS**
John R, Madison Heights
248.541.5030
- SPRINGFIELD OAKS**
Andersonville Rd., Davisburg
248.625.2540
- WHITE LAKE OAKS**
Williams Lake Rd., White Lake
248.698.2700



Parks Commission

Founded in 1966, the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission is the policy-making board that oversees the system's 6,700 acres. Commissioners are tasked with allocating resources over 13 parks, and making decisions about purchasing park land, constructing facilities, preserving maintenance standards and developing innovative programs and services.

Commissioners

- Pecky D. Lewis, Jr., Chairman
- Richard Skarritt, Vice Chairman
- J. David VanderVeen, Secretary
- Tim Burns
- Gerald A. Fisher
- Robert Kostin
- Christine Long
- John P. McCulloch
- Charles Palmer
- John Scott
- Daniel J. Stencil, Executive Officer

Administrative Offices

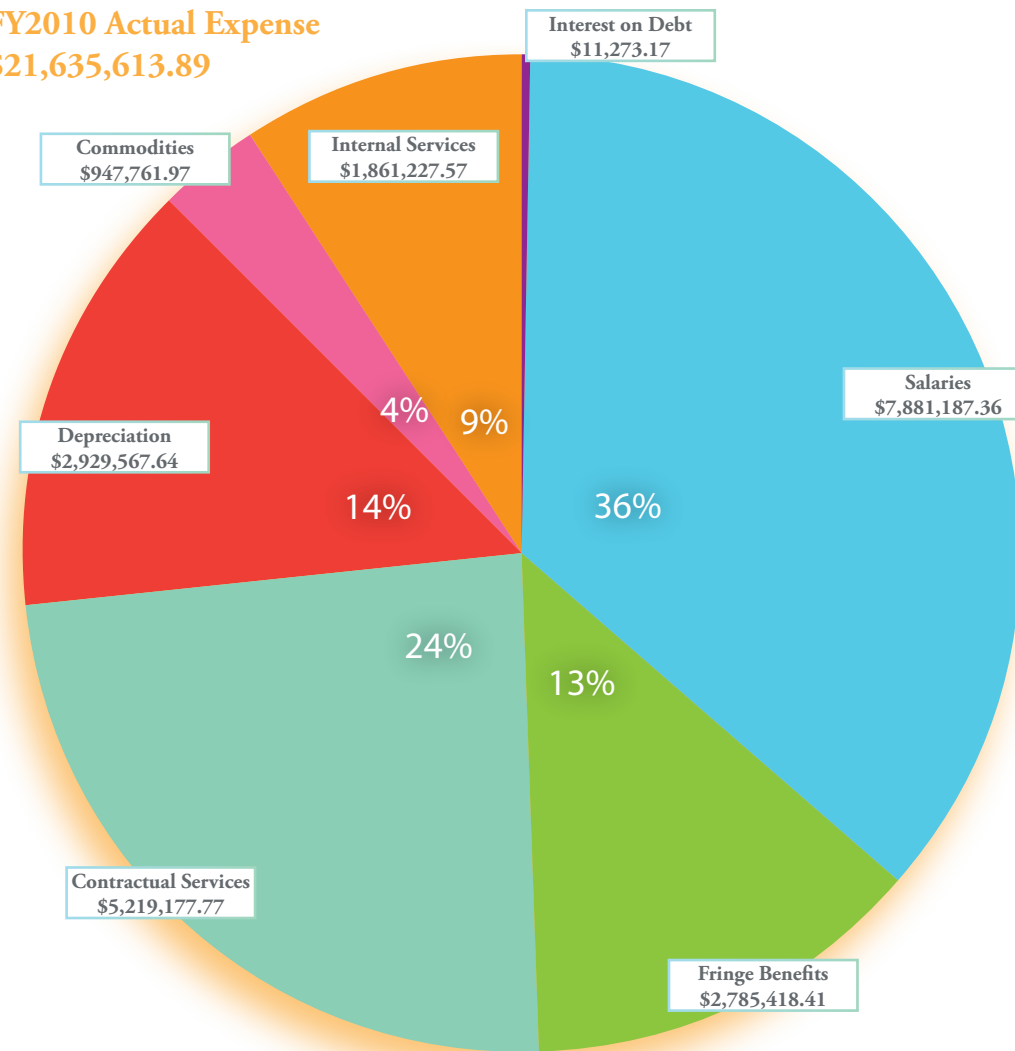
2800 Watkins Lake Road
Waterford, MI 48328-1917
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1.888.OCPARKS



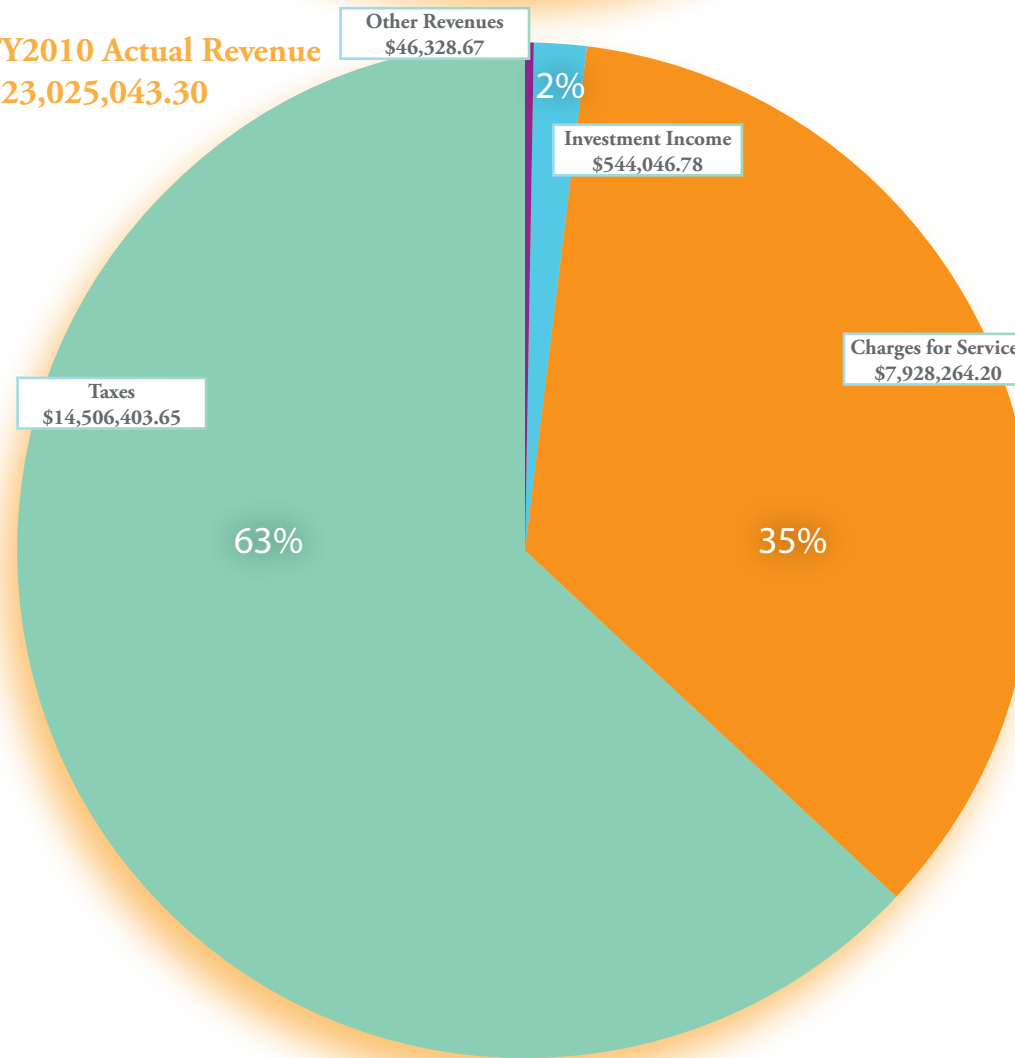
2010 Awards

- Michigan Recreation and Park Association's "Grand Award" for providing outstanding leadership, service, education and support to public recreation in Michigan.
- Digital Government Achievement Award for "Outstanding Agency Website" for DestinationOakland.com by the Center for Digital Government
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association "Best Video" for boardwalk construction over wetlands at Independence Oaks County Park
- National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials' Program Award for "Tuning Your Tot", a favorite of visitors to the Wint Nature Center during the last 25 years
- National Association of Counties Award for the Recreation Assistance Partnership Program offering \$150,000 in free services to Oakland County's 62 cities, villages and townships

FY2010 Actual Expense
\$21,635,613.89



FY2010 Actual Revenue
\$23,025,043.30



Graphic Design:
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Cover:
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Page 2:
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Page 8:
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Printed with vegetable-based inks on recycled paper by Dearborn Lithograph, Livonia MI

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission provides equal opportunity employment, programs and activities without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, marital status or handicap.

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities.

The owner of a \$175,000 home pays \$21 annually to support Oakland County Parks and Recreation.



The Clinton River viewed from the River Loop Trail at Independence Oaks County Park.

 **OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS**