

HCMA slowing down at 14 Metroparks

By Lem Meseo
outdoors writer

The 13th Huron-Clinton Metropark is open. How many more will there be? "We're developing what we have," answered James B. Cosgrove, new board chairman of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA).

"There's no money in the budget for more land." By "what we have," Cosgrove meant a 14th park is still to be developed and located in central Macomb County. It will be called Wolcott Mill. The 2,000-acre metropark will feature a historic grist mill showing how grain was made into flour years ago.

The 15th metropark — Mill Creek — is "a dead issue, pretty much," Cosgrove said. Mill Creek, a Huron River tributary in western Washtenaw County, was slated to be impounded into an artificial lake, like Stony Creek Lake and Kent Lake. But vehement local opposition forced HCMA to back down on property acquisition efforts.

COSGROVE, A retired postal inspector from Ypsilanti, sat down for a chat during the recent dedication of No. 13. It's known as Huron Meadows Metropark, six miles south of Brighton. Its chief feature is an 18-hole golf course. The new HCMA chairman has a long history of public service — on his local school board and the Areawide Water Quality Board. He cheerfully admits he finds his recreation interests, and those of the general public, gradually changing.

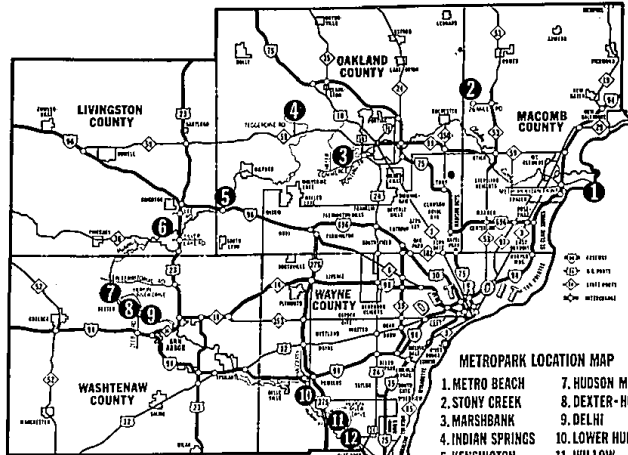
"A large part of recreation is being dictated to us. Walking is popular. Senior citizens activities — now that I am one, they're very important, and you have to have a secure atmosphere. "There are hike-bike-walk trails all around the nation. Ten years ago, if you got out in a pair of shorts and jogged, you would've been arrested," he said, exaggerating to make his point. David O. Laddlaw, director of HCMA since 1989, summed up the board's position: "If we can't maintain it, let's not build it." It seems to mean that, unless there is a big infusion of tax money which no one can force, HCMA will stop at 14 metroparks. Even now, it's the largest regional park system in the United States.

ESTABLISHED BY popular vote in five southeastern Michigan counties in 1940, HCMA envisioned a chain of parks on scenic drives stretching along the Huron and Clinton rivers, much like the 22-mile-long Hines Parkway in western Wayne County. The idea soon

was seen as impractical. First effort was Metro Beach on Lake St. Clair in 1944. The two giants of the system are Stony Creek northeast of Rochester and Kensington in western Oakland County. They are more than 4,300 acres apiece. An odd park for HCMA was Marshbank, just 115 acres on Cass Lake with no beach.

Three parks stretch along the Huron River northeast of Ann Arbor. Four more are on the lower Huron River from Belleville to Lake Erie. Major

features of Lake Erie Metropark are a marina and a wave pool, the latter to be completed in 1985. A fairly new one (1982) is the 2,000-acre Indian Springs Metropark northwest of Pontiac. Unlike the others, which usually feature picnicking and water recreation, Indian Springs is on a swamp — a tribute to the environmental movement. A nature trail bridge built on pontoons rises and falls with changes in the swamp's level. The solar-heated nature center one day may house a telescope and planetarium.



- METROPARK LOCATION MAP**
1. METRO BEACH
 2. STONY CREEK
 3. MARSHBANK
 4. INDIAN SPRINGS
 5. KENSINGTON
 6. HURON MEADOWS
 7. HUDSON HILLS
 8. DEXTER-HURON
 9. DELHI
 10. LOWER HURON
 11. WILLOW
 12. OAKWOODS
 13. LAKE ERIE

Thirteen Huron-Clinton metroparks are already in operation in the five-county region. Mill Creek, the 14th and last, is being developed in central Macomb County as the authority uses more and more of its revenue for operations and major maintenance.

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