



# Orion Oaks park targets handicapped

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Orion Oaks, the undeveloped county park, will be something different. The ninth Oakland County park will have much of its area reserved for "special populations" — the handicapped, church groups, band camps, school groups and possibly corporate groups.

The rest will be for "day use" — picnicking, fishing and cross-country skiing.

"You're going in the right direction," said Jack Olson, a member of the nine-member parks and recreation commission. He is a former county commissioner from Huntington Woods.

ALL-YEAR cabins and a pool are strong possibilities, according to a consultant's preliminary plans.

The parks commission last week spent more than an hour listening to, quizzing and giving feedback to its consultant — Schmidt-Copeland and Associates of Cleveland.

Greg Copeland of the firm has advised other parks agencies, in Grand Rapids and across the country, on parks for the handicapped. The Oakland panel approved a motion designating Orion Oaks for "special populations and limited day use."

Some members, however, were uncertain whether special popula-

tions really were interested in the facility.

"We should hear from these people. We don't know what they're gonna say," said member Thomas Law, a county commissioner from West Bloomfield.

"I don't know where the enthusiasm is," said member Richard Vogt, a member of the County Road Commission.

CONSULTANTS, on the other hand, projected a response to an informal mail poll to conclude that the park could be filled the entire year. As many as 20,000 users are expected.

Frances Greenbaum, executive director of the Oakland Parks Foundation, a private fund-raising group, said development funds could be sought from the federal government, the state's Natural Resources Trust Fund and private foundations.

The foundation held a Dec. 10 benefit for the parks system.

"I have no doubt the support is out there," added Jean Fox, a member from Farmington Hills.

THE PARKS commission reserved part of the property for day use in deference to Orion Township residents. Members of the department staff and commission had met with local people the prior evening.

"They're like everybody else," said Ralph Nelson, a commission member from Rochester Hills. "They don't want a jail. They want to use it (parkland) like it's their own."

Orion Oaks covers 927 acres north of Pontiac. It is reached by the John Road exit from I-75.

It was once part of a 2,400-acre parcel owned by Chrysler Corp. Oakland County and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources acquired it a few years ago.

Chief water feature is the 91-acre Lake Sixteen, which has an unpaved boat launch.

## Parenting, diabetic health classes open

Free classes for expectant parents and diabetics are being offered to those who pre-register by the Oakland County Health Division's Southfield office at 27725 Greenfield. The schedules:

• **Expectant parents** — beginning Tuesday, Jan. 13, from 7 to 9 p.m., taught by public health nurses. Topics: maternal physical changes, good nutrition, growth of the fetus and

baby, labor, delivery, infant care and parenting.

• **Diabetics** — beginning Thursday, Jan. 21, from 7 to 9 p.m., for adult diabetics and family members, taught by a public health nurse and registered dietitian. Topics: nature of the disease, diet, medications and coping with everyday problems.

The telephone number to register is 424-7042.

Shaded areas show Oakland County's parks, with a total of 4,000 acres. Orion Oaks (arrow) has almost one-quarter of the land area.

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