

Natural resources fuel park improvement plans

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Natural gas under Kensington Metropark is helping the 13-park system repair some of its 60-year-old facilities.

William P. Sherman, director of the five-county Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, revealed in the biennial report that drilling revenue has helped build up a special fund of \$2.2 million.

"We have been very fortunate in non-development gas-oil leases located under Kensington Metropark," Sherman said. "The royalty revenue from this new, temporary source of income has been dedicated to infrastructure repairs throughout the authority."

Kensington is the largest (4,300 acres), most popular and one of the oldest parks in

HCMA's system. Straddling the Livingston-Oakland County line and I-96 freeway, Kensington surrounds Kent Lake, a 1,200-acre impoundment of the Huron River.

Underneath it lies an ancient formation called the Antrim Shale that bears oil and natural gas.

David Moilanen, spokesman for HCMA, said drilling by West Bay Exploration Co. over the last two and one-half years has yielded HCMA a 20 percent cut of the revenue.

Instead of putting the money in the \$42 million general fund budget, HCMA's board set up a "supplemental major maintenance reserve" fund, dedicated to large repair projects. The fund supplements the general fund's "major maintenance" account.

So far, said Moilanen, HCMA has completed a \$160,000 repair job on Kensington's sewer and pump station. Second project, scheduled for 1997 and beyond, will be a \$2.5 million replacement of the water system at Metro Beach Metropark on Lake St. Clair in Macomb County.

Similar projects will be undertaken in future years, depending on productivity of the gas and oil wells.

West Bay has found natural gas at three sites:

- East of and outside the park property, southwest of Milford and Maple roads. The company drilled on a slant to capture reserves underneath park property.
- West of the winter sports area on the west side of the

park.

- In an isolated and unused triangle of the park south of I-86, north of Grand River Avenue and east of Kensington Road.

Early in 1996 another company, Wolverine Gas and Oil, drilled further north, under Kensington's group camp site between Dawson and General Motors roads. That exploration produced nothing.

HCMA has prohibited any development on its property, allowing only drilling and transportation.

HCMA was formed in 1940 by voters in Livingston, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Wayne counties. All its parks are located along the Huron and Clinton rivers. HCMA's unpaid,

seven-member board has one appointee from each of the counties and two gubernatorial appointees.

To understand the Antrim Shale, think of Michigan's lower peninsula as a set of cook's mixing bowls. The newer, smaller bowls are in the center of the peninsula. The older, larger bowls are on the outside.

Look at the palm of your right hand and visualize it as a map of Michigan. The Antrim shale is the bedrock on the tip of your little finger, the knuckles of your first three fingers, and the thick muscle of your palm.

Professors Dorr and Eschle-

man, in their *Geology of Michigan*, told how the Antrim shale was formed:

"In the Late Devonian, vast quantities of black mud were swept into the Michigan Basin from the east as a result of uplift in the Appalachian Region. These muds formed the Antrim Shale..."

"The black muds, rich in organic matter, indicate deposition on a oxygenated sea floor where decay was slow...The Antrim Shale...is a sedimentary deposit that accumulated during a span of time that included parts of two geologic periods."

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