

Is 'Inner Ring' Of Parks The Answer?

By TIM RICHARD

On one hand, the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is planning three Kensington-sized metroparks in the outlying reaches of Washtenaw, Oakland and Macomb counties.

On the other, Wayne County officials are trying to get HCMA to either take over Detroit's Belle Isle or at least contribute to its upkeep and programs.

There's a middle ground. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is proposing an "inner ring" of metroparks, closer to Detroit and its suburbs than HCMA's outer ring along the Huron and Clinton rivers.

What's more, SEMCOG is putting a higher priority on parks close to the urban area than it is on HCMA's proposal for the outlying parks.

Dan Snyder, program coordinator for land use planning at SEMCOG, says, "We don't specify that HCMA develop the inner ring, but it's understood that they should be mostly HCMA projects."

SEMCOG, as the chief overall land use planner and

coordinator for the six-county region, passes judgment on all requests for federal grants. There's no law that the federal government must take SEMCOG's advice when deciding whether to aid HCMA's Mill Creek metropark proposal for western Washtenaw County — but there is a rule that Washington must at least listen to SEMCOG.

Four of SEMCOG's proposed inner ring parks are close to Observatory: The forthcoming Maybury State Park in Northville Township, a northeastern Novi park, the Salem-Superior site between Plymouth and Ann Arbor, and a site in southwestern Canton Township.

Maybury, a former Detroit hospital site, was sold to the state, which will open it as a park in 1974. The interesting thing about Maybury, Snyder points out, is that there is no river or lake. SEMCOG planners reject the old notion that a major park must be on water.

That is a tender point around HCMA. State Sen. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth) strongly urged HCMA to buy and develop the site when

Detroit had it up for sale three years ago. HCMA said Pursell and HCMA ever since. The senator even voted against allowing HCMA to ask voters for a property tax increase in 1972, so miffed was he at the five-county authority's sense of priorities.

A second site SEMCOG staffers suggest is northern Novi, west of Haggerty Rd., east of Walled Lake, between 12th and 14th Mile Roads.

While SEMCOG's general assembly has yet to vote on this site, Snyder points out that it's within an hour's drive of 90 per cent of southeastern Michigan's population — an essential criterion.

The site was picked in consultation with Novi's planning department, Snyder said. The city council, however, opposes both this site and an earlier one in the north-central park of the city (shown on map).

Who should develop the Novi site? Snyder answered: "It could be Oakland County, HCMA or the state. Most likely the county or HCMA."

In either case, SEMCOG's recreation and open space plan designates the site for "regional public recreation."

The third nearby site is referred to as "Salem-Superior," for the two townships in eastern Washtenaw County whose border it straddles.

It's east of Dixboro Road and south of the M-14 freeway, and Snyder calls it "our alternative to Mill Creek, which is 16 miles to the southwest."

Salem-Superior is within an

hour's drive for the area west of Woodward Ave. in mid-Detroit.

In contrast, Mill Creek is within an hour's drive only for the western edge of Wayne County and the western side of Farmington.

A fourth site proposed by SEMCOG is in southwestern Canton Township.

HCMA Director David Laidlaw doesn't like the idea. He calls it too expensive for HCMA's tastes, and too close to the old-fashioned idea of a parkway split by a road.

Snyder replies that SEMCOG's idea is for a 500 to 1,100 acre facility — "truly regional." HCMA has been thinking in terms of 4,000 acre parks, and Snyder says "the agency should stop fulfilling the state function and get closer to regional needs."

Other links in the "inner ring," says Snyder, should be: An addition to the Rochester-Utica State Recreation Area, the highest priority; a Clinton Forks park west of Mount Clemens; expansion of the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak; and the lower Huron River area.

One HCMA priority is the so-called "Indian Springs" area in northern Oakland County, a low-intensity, nature-type area. Snyder says SEMCOG sees that as a state

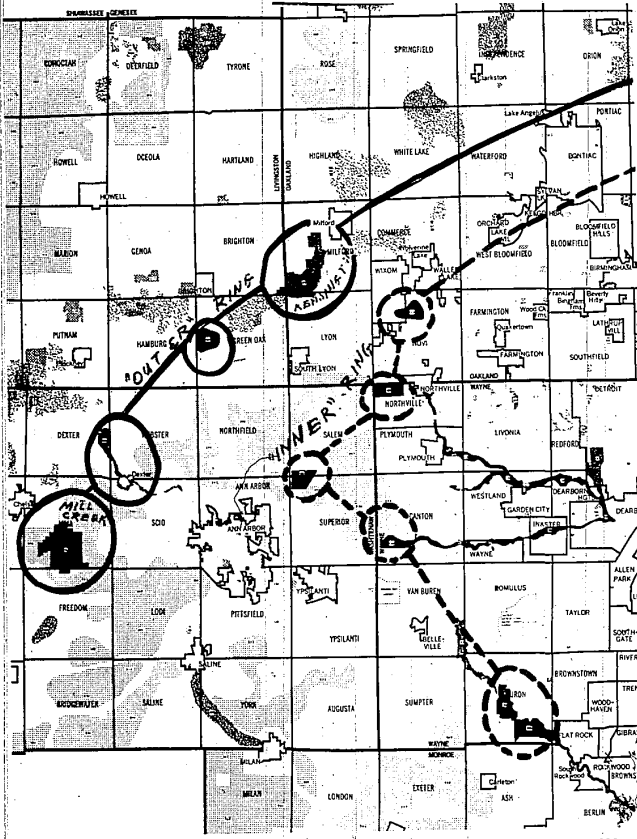
facility, not a HCMA metropark.

Meanwhile, SEMCOG has downgraded the series of urgency it's putting in HCMA's Mill Creek project. The most recent (1972) recreation plan places Mill Creek below the Rochester-Utica addition, the Canton and Novi sites, and the Clinton Forks park.

What is a "regional" recreation facility?

SEMCOG's plan defines it as having a minimum of 500 acres, as compared to four acres for a city playground and 100 acres for a county park.

Access to a regional park should be "mainly" or more "for highways" rather than secondary roads, and its "service distance" is gauged at 20 miles.



SEMCOG PLANNERS propose an "inner ring" of regional parks, lying closer to Detroit and its suburbs than the existing Huron-Clinton metroparks. This is part of the 1990 regional recreation and open space plan for southeast Michigan.

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Show Chairman Tony Byrd says "the 1974 queen will also be invited to participate in various winter sports promotions throughout the state during the year."

The snowmobile competition is open to all single women 18-24 years of age who are Michigan residents. Entrants should send a glossy photograph along with name, address, phone number and other pertinent information to: Michigan Snowmobile Queen Committee, P.O. Box 534, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. 48301. Deadline for entries is Friday, Aug. 10.

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