

Stronger Rape Law Need Cited

By LEONARD POGER

WESTLAND
The problem of criminal assaults in Westland - growing in increasing numbers - has taken on a new and serious dimension.

The latest problem is that there are more and more mentally retarded girls who are rape victims.

Because some victims are technically over the age of consent (16 in Michigan), police departments are having troubles getting arrests and convictions.

There are two ways to help resolve the problem, said Mrs. Laura Moore, Westland police woman for four years. One is to change the state law to protect mentally retarded girls 17 and older.

Another is to warn parents of retarded girls that there is no protection for those 17 and older.

The only law protecting retarded girls is for those in institutions.

But with social workers and agencies working hard to have those persons released from institutions, there is no

protection for the girls on the outside "and they are at the mercy" of sex offenders, Mrs. Moore said.

The officer feels strongly enough about the issue to spend her own time to talk to groups of parents whose daughters are retarded to warn them of the problem and support a change in state laws.

The problem surfaced recently in Westland with the arrest and prosecution of a man with the criminal assault of a 17-year-old retarded girl from Southfield.

The man, who was ordered to stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court by Westland District Judge Thomas Smith on the rape charge, said that no force was used - a requirement by law to convict a man of rape.

But Mrs. Moore points out that the girl has the mental age of a seven- to nine-year old, according to her parents and a doctor who testified at the preliminary exam.

A key problem in prosecuting charges of rape of a retarded girl over 16 is that they have trouble testifying

particularly under cross-examination by the defense attorney - because of their retarded condition.

Mrs. Moore feels the law should be revised so that force doesn't have to be proven, just that the girl involved has a mental age of 16 or younger.

There was a similar case in Michigan in the early 20th century resembling the recent incident in Westland, and the defendant was acquitted because it couldn't be proven in court that force was used on the retarded woman.

Mrs. Moore said that the Westland case to come up in circuit court soon may be a "test case."

She said that there were 20 reported rapes in the city last year, a 150 per cent increase over the eight reported the previous year.

The 1973 figure will be much higher than the previous year although there are two months left in the year, she said.

Of the rapes reported, most involve girls 16 and under with defendants prose-

cuted for statutory rape, in which proof of force isn't required.

Westland police prosecute about 55 per cent of reported rapes with convictions coming in about 90 per cent of those going to court.

The assault victims know the assailant in at least half of the reported cases, Mrs. Moore said.

There are also many rapes reported by adults which are unfounded.

Mrs. Moore said that young girls are warned to avoid running away from home and hitch-hiking with strangers.

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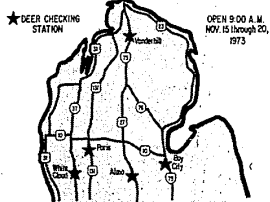
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Metroparks Adopt Vehicle Fee Plan As '74 Experiment

Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority officials announced that visitors to the major parks will be charged \$1 parking fee per vehicle for a period of four to five months starting May 1 rather than beginning on Jan. 1 as originally stated last August.

The announcement was made by HCMA Chairman Eugene J. Ellison, a governor appointee, and William E. Kreger, who represents Wayne County on the HCMA Board of Commissioners. Ellison pointed out "that while the board had approved the concept of parking charges in August - the policy as an operational plan had not yet been finalized." There are nine metroparks serving the citizens of Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Livingston and Washtenaw Counties.

HCMA Director David O. Laidlaw stated that some details may change, but the

general policy will be as follows:

Metropolitan Beach near Mt. Clemens, Stony Creek Metropark near Rochester, Kensington Metropark near Milford and possibly Lower Huron Metropark near Belleville will charge for parking next year. Willow Metropark near New Boston will add charges when a new swimming pool - games complex opens in 1974 or 1975.

At the present time no charges will be made for vehicles parking at Marshbank Metropark near Pontiac or at Hudson Mills, Dexter-Huron and Delhi Metroparks, each of Ann Arbor, since these four picnic-playground parks do not offer the wide variety of facilities as the major metroparks.

The fee will be \$1 daily per vehicle for parking, with a reduced - rate book of five coupons for \$4 and a senior citizen vehicle parking rate of 50 cents.



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