

# VOLUNTEER SERVICES 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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# OVERVIEW

The Metroparks Volunteer program supported the park system's missions in education, recreation, and stewardship by engaging individual and group volunteers in meaningful activities and projects.

As 2020 was an unprecedented year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping people safe and healthy was the top priority for the Metroparks. Our Volunteer Services program adjusted to do so by creating a responsive volunteer services program plan (Appendix 1). Limiting capacity and taking safety precautions, volunteers were able to help on the golf courses, with land management (by removing invasive species with our Natural Resources team on 24.56 acres systemwide), and by doing select Eagle Scout and collaborative projects throughout the parks. This year we also introduced remote volunteer programs, and we plan to continue to expand this effort to support Natural Resources, Interpretive Services and sustainability efforts.

Although this year looked and felt different than previous ones, the Metroparks continued to be a very popular destination for parkgoers and we are especially grateful for our dedicated volunteers and appreciate all they do to help make the Metroparks a distinguished park system.



Photo 1: Metroparks volunteer, Issac, made native seed balls at home. He then visited the designated area to plant them at Kensington. The native seeds used were collected by Metroparks volunteers from within the parks in 2019 and then dried by Natural Resources department staff.

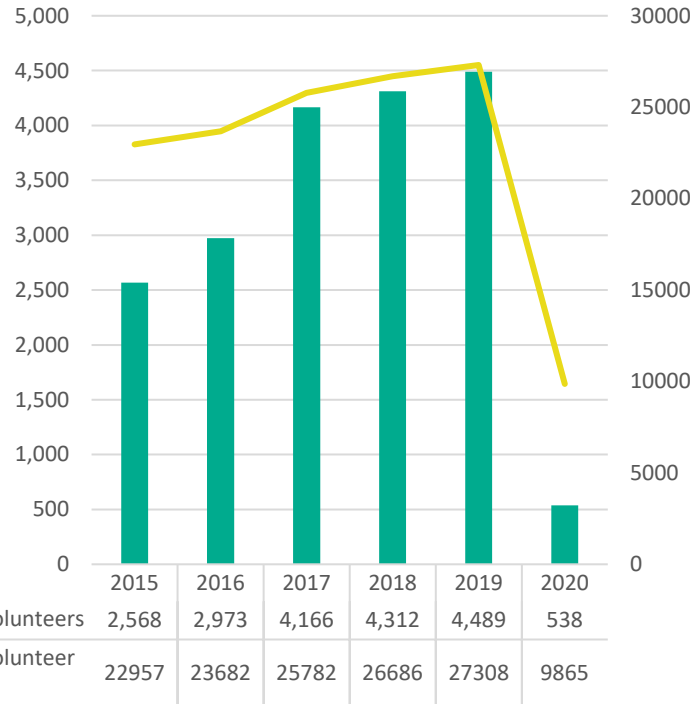
# OVERVIEW

In 2020, HCMA counted **538** extraordinary volunteers, who put in **9,865** hours of work during a global pandemic.

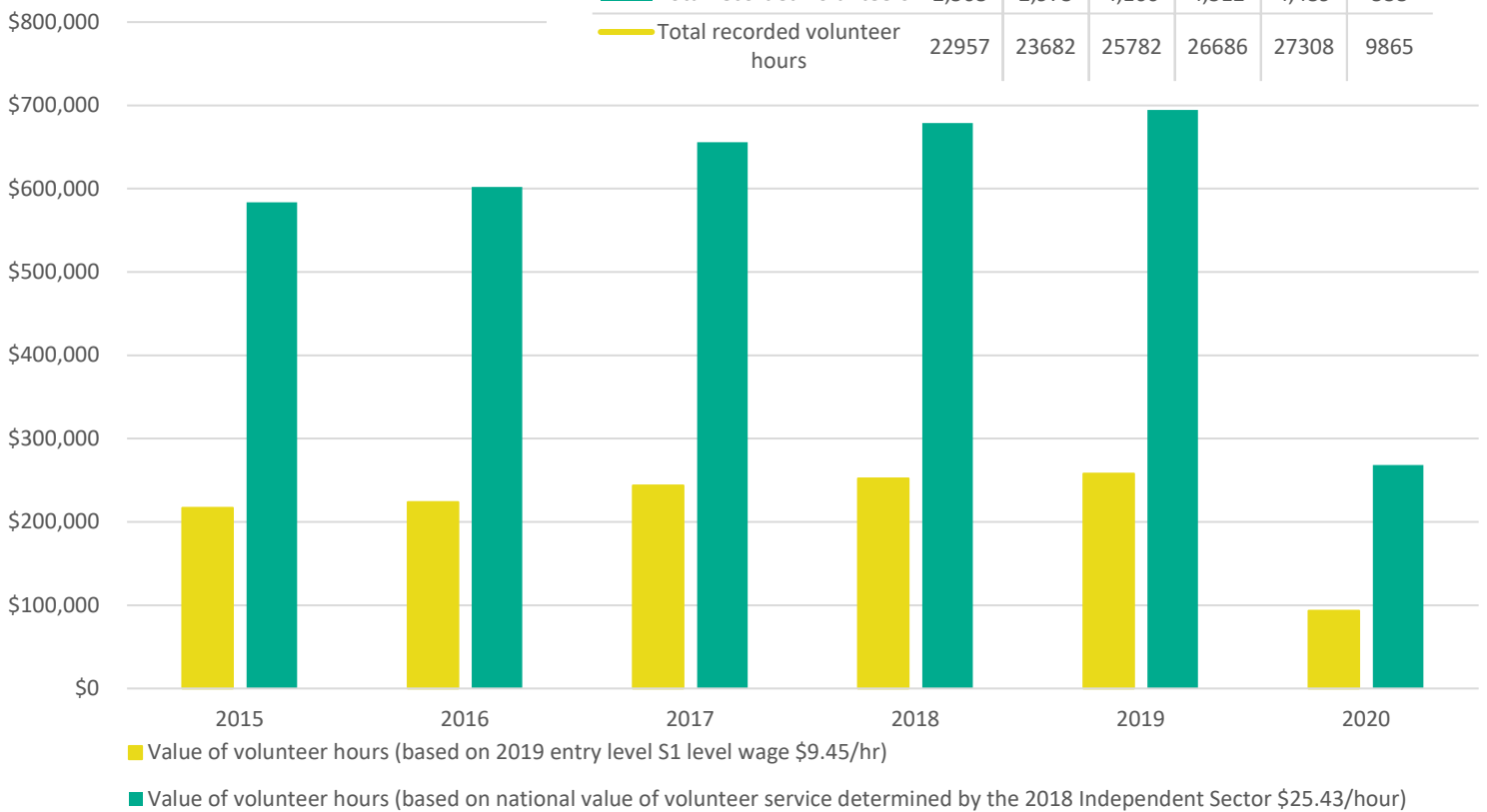
When valued at an entry level wage, this volunteer work represents **\$93,224** worth of labor benefit.

When valued at independent sector wages, this work provides a **\$268,328** labor benefit to HCMA.

2015-2020 Volunteer Numbers



2015-2020 Volunteer Value





# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Metroparks volunteers support a wide variety of programs and activities throughout the year. Individuals, groups, one-time and regular volunteers support staff in a variety of capacities. Some examples from this past year include:

## Events and Projects

**Earth Day BINGO (remote):** In celebration of Earth Day, the Metroparks asked volunteers to participate in Earth Day BINGO to encourage conservation from the safety of their own home. Volunteers who participated were sent an Earth Day Fun patch. (Appendix 2)

**Native seed balls (remote):** Volunteers were asked to make native seed balls throughout the month of October, using native seeds collected from the Metroparks in 2019. The seed balls were planted in specific native areas in Kensington, Stony Creek, and Lower Huron. (Appendix 3)

**Haybale cover (Wolcott Mill):** Eagle Scout, built a haybale cover for his project at Wolcott Mill Metroparks. Nate was responsible for raising the funds and working with volunteers to build and install the haybale cover.

**Little Free Libraries (Lake St. Clair, Kensington, Stony Creek, Wolcott Mill):** Girl Scouts have built and installed Little Free Libraries, a book-sharing box, at popular locations in the Metroparks. The volunteers raised funds, built and installed the box, and stocked it with books to share with park patrons.

**Labyrinth restoration project (Dexter-Huron):** Girl Scouts who helped built the initial labyrinth in 2008 at Dexter-Huron came back this October to do restoration work in celebration of their scout leader and friend.



*Photo 3 (left): Earth Day BINGO encouraged conservation from home this year. Lochlann participates by planting seeds.*

*Photo 4 (middle): Isaac makes Native seed balls for planting in the Metroparks.*

*Photo 4 (right): Girl Scout, Ava, built a Little Free Library that was installed at Stony Creek Metropark Eastwood Beach.*

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Community Partnerships

**Work Skills Corporation:** The Metroparks was pleased to partner with Work Skills Corporation, an organization that works with people with disabilities to help them develop the skills they need to find full and lasting employment. Volunteers from Work Skills Corporation helped at both Hudson Mills Metropark and Kensington Metropark Farm Center. Volunteers worked on minor maintenance activities, invasive species removal, and farm chores. We look forward to expanding this partnership in 2021 by adding additional volunteers for Willow Metropark.

**FAIR Play COALITION:** This advisory committee composed of volunteers who are advocates for accessibility in recreation, has supported the design, marketing, and fundraising efforts for the accessible playground at Kensington Metropark Maple Beach area. They also assessed other project developments for accessibility throughout the Metroparks.

***Recognition:** The FAIR (Fun Accessible Inclusive Recreation) Play Coalition was selected for the Public Outreach award for the 2020 Planning Excellence Awards by the Michigan Association of Planning, the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association!*

**City of Detroit and Friends of Rouge Park:** The Metroparks, in collaboration with the City of Detroit and Friends of Rouge Park, have partnered with REI Co-Op to help with the Prairie Restoration project at Rouge Park in Detroit. The Metroparks received a \$10,500 grant in 2020 to help fund this project and has supported trailhead improvements including a trash can, benches, and concrete slabs at both the North and South. Additional volunteer help for the prairie restoration will be supported by the GM Cares program, engaging GM employees as part of their commitment to the Cody neighborhood. Scheduled volunteer days were postponed due to COVID-19.

**Ford Motor Company Volunteer Corps:** The Metroparks partners with Ford Motor Company for volunteer services by their employee base. In 2020, we were awarded a \$4000 grant for prairie restoration work at Oakwoods Metropark. This prairie is part of the imperiled Oak barrens habitat and the only contiguous prairie of that size in the area. Ford volunteers will work with the Metroparks Natural Resources staff to plant native species, scheduled for Spring of 2021.

**Clinton River Area Mountain Biking Association (CRAMBA):** Members of CRAMBA have supported the Shelden Trails redevelopment project at Stony Creek Metropark and continue volunteer efforts in maintaining the trails.

# LOOKING FORWARD: 2021

We are excited about expanding the volunteer opportunities and creating a stronger volunteer services program in 2021 and beyond. We will be implementing new programs, partnerships and ideas, such as:

**Expand remote volunteer engagement:** Develop and expand remote and independent volunteer engagement programs. Activities will include; asking volunteers to make wildlife nest boxes such as bee hotels, bat boxes and kestrel owl boxes, using technology applications such as iNaturalist and Survey123 to monitor and track invasive species and birds throughout the Metroparks, and sustainability focused items such as large and personal sized Recycling bins for fishing line.

**Garden volunteer program:** Garden volunteer solicitation to support the new Lake St. Clair Metropark beach restoration project and others.

**Collaborative projects:** Expand support for the parks by growing the project list and increasing Eagle Scout and collaborative project engagement.

**Inclusion:** Strategic diversity engagement with organizations and schools in the five counties to provide volunteer activities and events to engage volunteers of all abilities.

**Trail Ambassador program:** Engage volunteers to help maintain the trails by observation and light maintenance work. The program is anticipated to run from May - October.

**Volunteer data management and surveys:** Implement a consistent volunteer management system to track volunteer characteristics, hours, reporting and to better understand the volunteer experience.

**Natural Resources:** Partnering with the City of Detroit Parks & Recreation for volunteer engagement in natural areas. Expanding the river clean-up by canoe efforts.

**Community and Corporate Partnerships:** Expand partnerships with community and corporate groups to support volunteer services and grant opportunities.

**Volunteer Services Development Plan:** Creating a comprehensive Volunteer Services program plan will include; a three-year projection for program goals and milestones, a communication and event schedule to share information with park staff and volunteers, and a forum for feedback, recognition, and a standardized process for data collection and information sharing. (Volunteer t-shirt design can be seen in Appendix 4)



"Thank you for leading the Earth Day Virtual Challenge. My step daughter Ava kept talking about Earth Day and how she wanted to participate so when I received this notice from Metroparks, I thought it was the perfect opportunity for her so THANK YOU"

- Louchrisa, Metroparks volunteer





## APPENDIX 1

### **Volunteer Days with respect to COVID 19/Social Distancing**

Guidelines We will continue to monitor and adjust guidelines for volunteer engagement to adhere to the Michigan Public Health Department and CDC recommendations for the safety & well-being of our volunteers.

We are requiring persons volunteering to practice necessary safety precautions:

- Volunteers will register and fill out application, waiver online and it would be entered in DonorPerfect (automatically), with an email notification it was received
- Staff will continue to record volunteer hours (check-in/check-out)
- Volunteer groups will be limited to 10 people, includes all volunteers & leader(s)
- A screening questionnaire form should be completed by all volunteers before being permitted to volunteer and shall comply with any required screening process required by the state or local jurisdiction. It will ask to verify they are feeling well and do their own wellness check (making sure temperature is below 100.4, no cold-like symptoms including cough/sneezing, etc) each day they volunteer. If any symptoms are present or volunteers think they are sick, if they have been knowingly exposed to or have been a caregiver for someone that has been diagnosed to COVID 19, volunteers will not be allowed to volunteer within a 14-day exposure period. Completed questionnaires will be filed with the volunteer paperwork.
- If a volunteer has returned from foreign travel, cruises or traveling from out of state, we require that they refrain from volunteering for at least 14 days while they monitor their health.
- During a work shift, if a volunteer should develop any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 they will alert their supervisor immediately and follow the directions for self-quarantine or self-isolation on the health screening form.
- If a volunteer has a confirmed case of COVID-19, they agree to immediately notify their on-site supervisor of their diagnosis and will not volunteer until they are cleared to return.
- Volunteers will be asked to bring their own PPE (gloves, face masks) and tools to limit exposure. All volunteers are required to wear a face mask when entering or exiting their work space or whenever they are within 6 feet of another person or in communal areas (i.e. breakrooms, bathrooms, etc.). Volunteers may only remove their face mask while alone in their work space. If volunteers do not bring their own PPE, the Metroparks will supply masks and disposable gloves.
- Volunteers are instructed to wash their hands frequently, to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissue or use their elbow and avoid touching their faces. In the absence of appropriate hand washing equipment, hand sanitizer will be made available. Signs regarding proper hand washing methods have been posted in all restrooms. Hand shaking is also prohibited to ensure good hand hygiene
- If volunteers are from the same household and work together in a small group, social distancing is not necessary

PHASE ONE : Golf volunteers, Eagle Scout/Collaborative projects, Work Skills programs, Natural Resources

Start date: July 8, 2020

### **GOLF (Some golf courses have volunteers already helping, following these guidelines)**

- Volunteers will be asked to wear disposable gloves and face masks while volunteering, disposed of when finished
- Any tools & golf carts used will be sanitized before/after each use by Golf Course staff
- Volunteers will meet the golf course manager/assistant manager to check-in and receive assignment, as well as the PPE.

### **EAGLE SCOUT/COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS**

- Volunteers will be asked to bring their own tools and materials that will be used
- Volunteers will be asked to wear masks and gloves
- We will have an understanding of how many volunteers are needed to complete the project, and work the Scout to have a safe volunteer day, taking the necessary precautions to adhere to social distancing as best as possible including stagger volunteer schedules to limit the number of volunteers on-site, etc.
- Volunteers will have a Metroparks staff point person that is understanding of the project and will be able to meet on-site to help with oversight and daily check-in. Volunteer hours are also recorded by the Scout and submitted with final project report.

### **Work Skills programs (small group of volunteers with their own job coach)**

- Volunteers will check-in, receive their assignment and pick-up tools/materials from the park office. Tools will be sanitized by park office staff with bleach water
- Volunteers will be required to wear disposable gloves and face masks while volunteering, gloves disposed of when finished

### **NATURAL RESOURCES** invasive species removal

- All Metroparks-owned tools (loppers, saws) will be cleaned/sanitized before and after each work day with bleach mixture spray or disinfectant wipes (cleaned by NR staff)
- Volunteers will be working 6 ft apart
- Have hand sanitizer, masks and disposable gloves on-site for volunteers
- Volunteers will receive the confirmed meeting location, contact information to check-in and receive instructions for their assignment by email 24-48 hours before volunteer day

## PHASE TWO

Garden, Litter/Clean-up, Farm & Nature Center

Start date: to begin when Interpretive programming resumes

### **GARDEN**

- Volunteers will be asked to bring their own gloves and garden tools. If tools are provided- all tools will be cleaned/sanitized before and after each work day with bleach mixture spray or disinfectant wipes (cleaned by Metroparks staff at park office or interpretive enter)
- Volunteers will be working individually, or at least 6 ft apart

- Volunteers will receive the confirmed meeting location, contact information to check-in and receive instructions for their assignment by email 24-48 hours before volunteer day

#### **LITTER/CLEAN-UP**

- Volunteers will be required to wear disposable gloves and face masks while volunteering, to be disposed of when finished
- Trash bags will be provided outside the park office on the day of the clean-up; full bags will be left in designated areas to be picked up by Metroparks maintenance staff
- Volunteers will check-in to get assignment and tools (if needed) by calling their point person at the Park Office to meet them

#### **FARM & NATURE CENTERS**

- volunteers performing daily chores and tasks that can be done as an individual or with social distancing
- All tools will be sanitized before and after each use by Interpretive staff with bleach mixture spray or disinfectant wipes
- Volunteers will check-in to get assignment and tools (if needed) by calling their point person at the center to meet them

#### **MAINTENANCE** (ex. pulling staples out of picnic tables)

- Volunteers will pick up tools & materials from maintenance yard- tools will be sanitized before and after each use by maintenance staff with bleach mixture spray
- Volunteers will practice social distancing and wear masks/disposable gloves
- Volunteers will check-in to get assignment and tools (if needed) by calling their point person to meet them

#### PHASE THREE (DATE TO BE DETERMINED)

Volunteer activities that engage with the public, such as programs and events

Minor construction projects like picnic table building (multiple people closer together)

Volunteer activities that are indoors



# METROPARKS EARTH DAY

# BINGO

TURN OFF LIGHTS WHEN YOU LEAVE THE ROOM	TAKE A SHORT SHOWER AND USE BAR SOAP	MAKE THE SWITCH TO LED LIGHTING OR CFL LIGHT BULBS	SPRING CLEAN-UP, BY CREATING A DONATION PILE	USE A REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE
TURN DOWN THERMOSTAT ONE DEGREE	MAKE A HANGING PLANTER	MEND YOUR CLOTHES	INSTALL A RAIN BARREL	REMOVE AN INVASIVE SPECIES <i>(Such as garlic mustard)</i>
DO A LITTER CLEAN-UP IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD	USE A REUSABLE STRAW		PRACTICE COMPOSTING	TAKE A WALK OR GO ON A BIKE RIDE
HANG DRY YOUR LAUNDRY	SHOP LOCAL FOR GROCERIES	CREATE ZERO FOOD WASTE FOR ONE DAY	PLANT A TREE	CREATE AN UP-CYCLED ART PROJECT
FIND A MOMENT TO BE AWED BY NATURE	PLANT A FOOD GARDEN FOR YOU OR A PET	FILL IN WHAT YOU DID TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT	OPEN A DOOR OR WINDOW	PRACTICE RECYCLING



## Planting Your Native Seed Balls

### Huron-Clinton Metroparks

*After you've made and dried your seed balls, come back to the Metroparks to plant them! Planting begins at Kensington, Lower Huron, and Stony Creek Metroparks on November 8th, 2020. Please return to the same park you picked up your supplies from. You may return to plant your seed balls any time between Saturday November 7th and Sunday December 13th.*

**When:** Saturday November 7th, 2020 - Sunday December 13th, 2020

**Where:** Kensington Equestrian Staging Area, Stony Creek Nature Center, or Lower Huron Group Camp

### 1. Inform the tollbooth attendant you are here as a seed ball volunteer

Volunteers receive free entry to the park!

### 2. Find the planting location

#### Lower Huron

Proceed to Group Camp/East Bend from the toll booth. Park in the first parking lot on the left. Walk towards the main road and look for the sign and pink flags designating the planting area. Please watch your feet as there is uneven terrain and stumps that are trip hazards.

#### Kensington

You will not need to enter the main park to access the planting area. The Equestrian Staging Area is located off Martindale Road north of the park. To get there from the Milford Road park entrance: go north on Milford Road past the Kensington park entrance, take the first left on Dawson Road (dirt road), take the first right onto Martindale Rd and continue down until you see the sign for the Equestrian Staging Area on the left. Park in the parking lot and then head towards the mowed grass. To your left, near the standing posts bordering the field, you will see the mowed field with pink flags and a sign designating the planting area. Please watch your feet as there is uneven terrain and stumps that are trip hazards.

#### Stony Creek

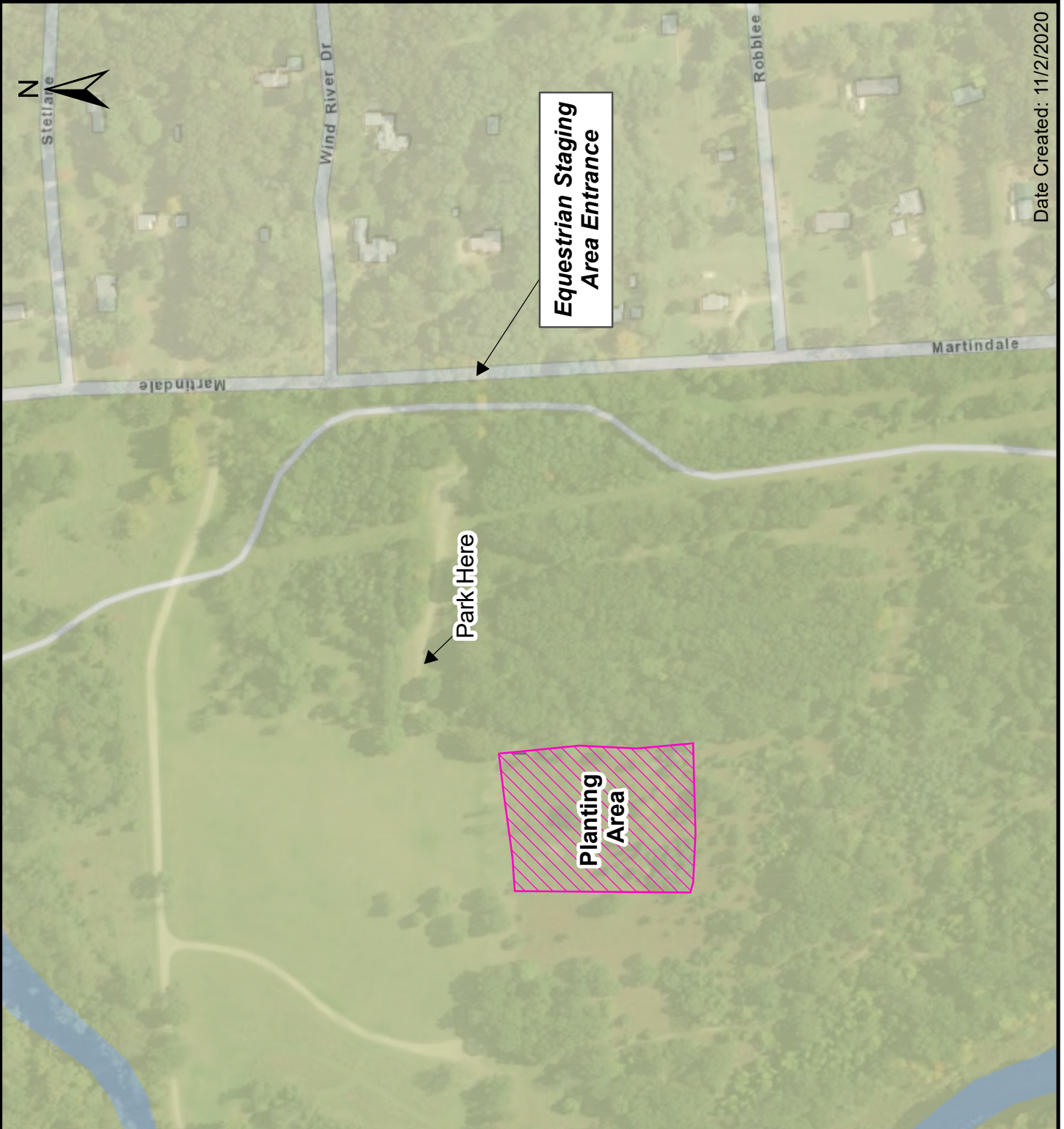
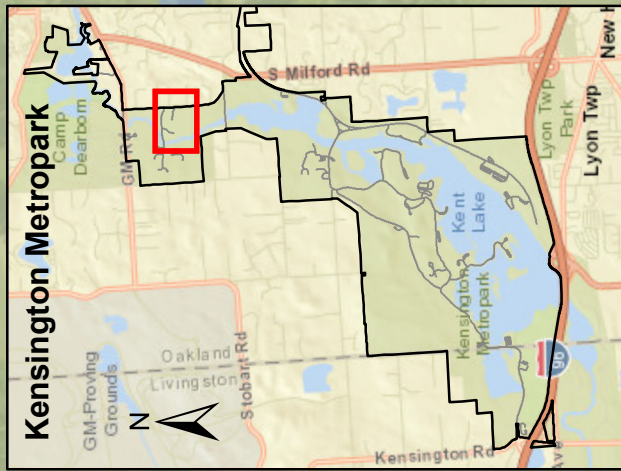
From the toll booth, follow the park signs to the Nature Center. Once parked, head towards the Nature Center. You will see pink flags and a sign designating the planting area as the field to the right of the paved path as you look down at the Nature Center. Please watch your feet as there is uneven terrain and stumps that are trip hazards.

### 3. Plant your seed balls!

Seed balls can be planted anywhere within the boundaries of the pink flags. Walk through the mowed field/planting zone and try to randomly distribute the seed balls over the whole area. When planting, look for areas of bare ground, drop the seed ball, and step on it so it makes good contact with the soil. Seeds have a better chance of surviving when they have good seed to soil contact! You can also kick grass away to create an area of bare soil to plant in. If you would rather not walk through the field, throw or toss the seed balls into the planting zone.

The seeds will overwinter and then begin to grow in the spring! Thank you for your help in restoring native plants to the Metroparks!

# Kensington Metropark Equestrian Staging Area Seed Ball Planting 2020

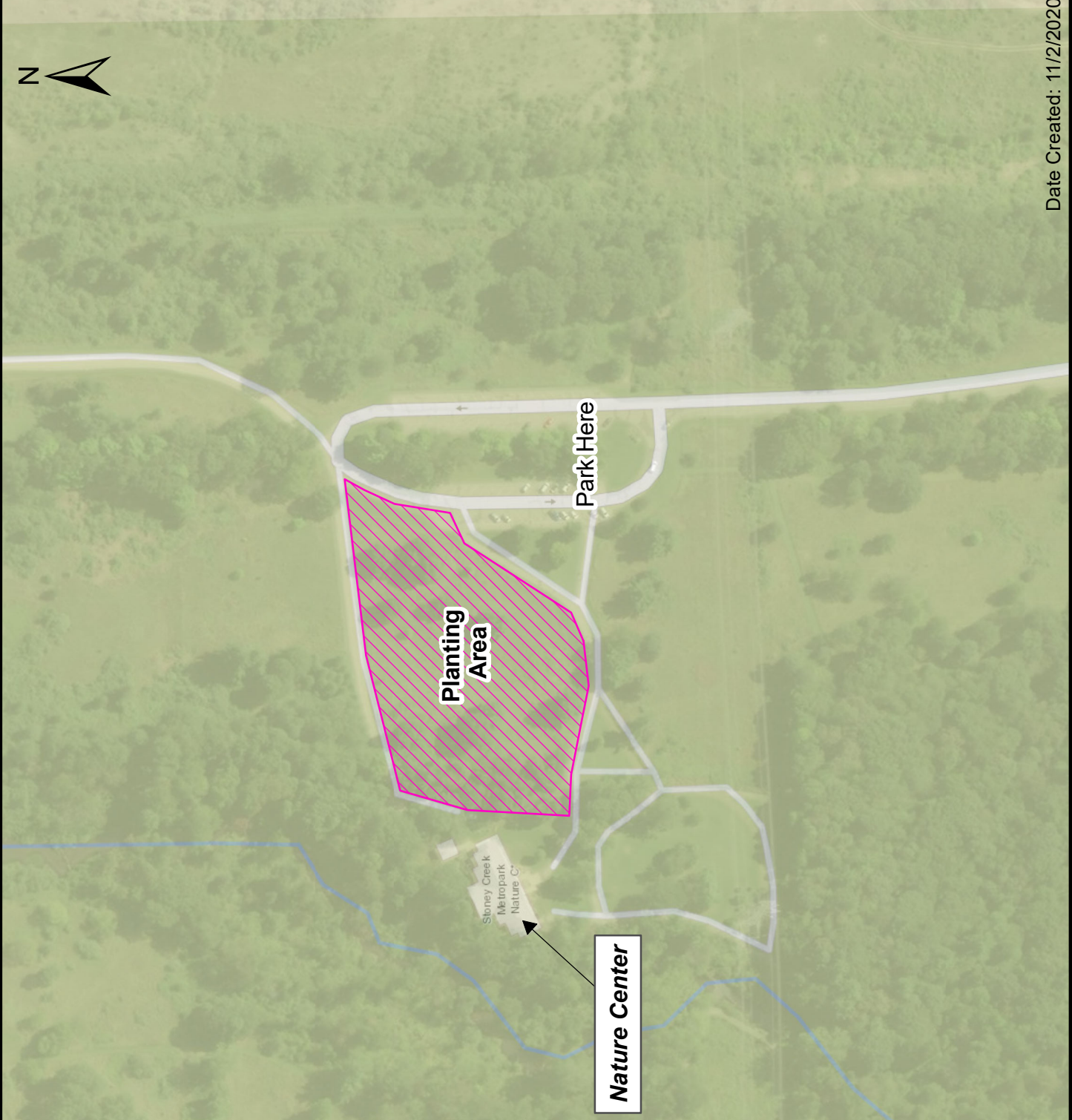
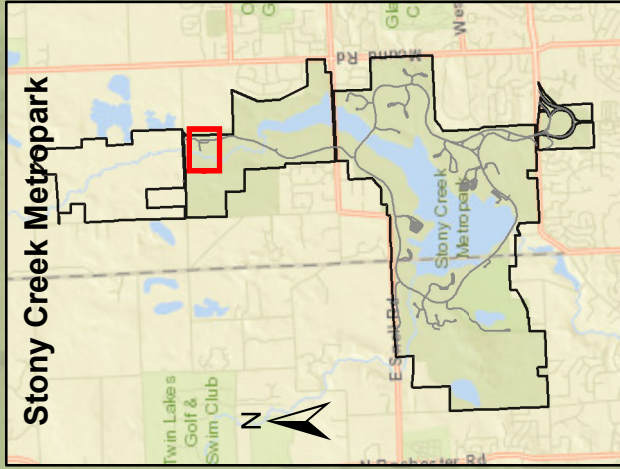




# Lower Huron Group Camp Seed Ball Planting 2020



# Stony Creek Nature Center Seed Ball Planting 2020





# How-to Make Native Seed Balls

Huron-Clinton Metroparks



## What are seed balls?

Seed balls are a fun way to get your hands dirty while also helping the environment! A seed ball is a small ball made out of soil and clay with a few seeds attached to the outside or placed inside. The seed ball is then dropped in an area lacking native plants (best results on bare soil with low competition) and the soil/clay mixture provides a nutrient rich and moist substrate for the seeds to grow in. Once the seed balls are planted, sit back and watch native wildflowers and grasses appear over the next few years!

## Why are native plants important?

Many natural areas in our world have been disturbed by humans through farming, construction, and resource extraction. These actions encourage non-native or invasive plants to grow by removing native plants and disturbing the soil. Invasive plants, given the opportunity, easily take over an area through their aggressive natures. Native plants are unable to compete with these aggressive species and either disappear or their populations are greatly reduced.

Through their domination of a natural area, invasive plants decrease native plant biodiversity. Biodiversity is an important factor in maintaining healthy ecosystems that are resilient to disturbances, such as disease, extreme weather, and support healthy wildlife populations. Wildlife requires a wide range of foods and nutrients just like humans do. An invasive species provides what amounts to “junk food” for native wildlife, they don’t provide the nutrients wildlife need to thrive. However, *native* plants provide important and diverse food sources for native wildlife and pollinators because that is what they have evolved to consume. Wildflowers and grasses provide seeds for birds and small mammals. Pollinators and other insects depend on native wildflowers and grasses to provide a food source, lay their eggs, and host their young.

The monarch butterfly, for example, requires native milkweed species to lay its eggs on and host its young. Monarch caterpillars are unable to survive on other plants and can only eat milkweed. One invasive species, black swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*), is a relative of our native milkweed but it is 100% toxic to monarch caterpillars. Unfortunately, monarch butterflies can mistake this plant for native milkweed and lay their eggs on it. Any monarch caterpillars that each black swallow-wort will not survive. By planting native plants, we are supporting healthy native ecosystems that are more resilient from invasions of invasive plants like black swallow-wort.



## **How-to make a seed ball**

### *Supplies*

- 100% clay unscented cat litter/clay pellets/potter's clay
- Potting soil
- Native seeds
- Water
- Large bowl
- Rimmed baking sheet or small bowl
- Drying rack, newspaper, or cardboard
- Gloves (optional)

### *Directions*

1. Spread seeds out onto baking sheet making sure they are well spaced
2. Mix soil and clay in a 3:2 ratio in your bowl. Add water a little bit at a time until you reach a consistency where you can form balls that do not easily fall apart. If you add too much water, add more clay or soil. You may have to wait a few minutes to allow the mixture to fully hydrate. (3 cups of soil and 2 cups of clay should require about 1 ¼ cup of water.)
3. Form mixture into small balls, about the diameter of a quarter.
4. Roll ball onto seeds in baking sheet or small bowl. You do not need to cover the ball in seeds, try to pick up 5-10 seeds per ball.
5. Place ball on drying rack or drying area and let dry for at least 24 hours.
6. Place finished seed balls in a labeled paper bag. Include the species name and date they were made.
7. Plant your seed balls! Planting begins at Kensington, Lower Huron, and Stony Creek Metroparks on November 8th, 2020!

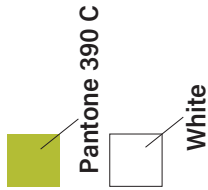
## **Planting your seed balls**

Seed balls do best when they are planted in areas with low competition and bare soil. When planting in a field, look for areas of bare ground, drop the seed ball, and step on it so it makes good contact with the soil. Seeds have a better chance of growing when they have good soil to seed contact! If you want to make more seed balls at home, try planting them in an empty planter, the edge of your yard, or your garden beds!

# Volunteer Shirt



FRONT



BACK