

# St. Joseph County Parks

Master Plan Update • 2009 – 2013



Inventory

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## General Program Inventory

St. Joseph County Parks provide leisure services and interpretive programming year-round at several of its parks. Most programs are fee-based, although several programs are free of charge. Leisure services focus on activities that highlight natural resources and teach life-long skills. Interpretive programs for the public promote the natural and cultural heritage of our region. An offshoot of the interpretive programming is the environmental education program providing curriculum-based natural history or cultural history programs for schools and home-schoolers.

### Year-Round Programs or Multi-Seasonal Programs

#### *Interpretive Programs for the Public*

These programs are often held on weekends or weeknights at a variety of county park locations, and range in seasonal topics for programs on raptors, spinning and weaving, beginning bird ID, wildflower folklore, herptile programs, night hikes, insect programs, macro-invertebrate surveys, nature photography, animal tracking, nature art series, etc.

#### *Leisure Services Programs for the Public*

These programs are often held on weekends and include such programs as boomerang fly-ins, beginning fishing, canoe lessons, geocaching and orienteering.

#### *Outdoor Elements*

This weekly nature show is produced by St. Joseph County Parks in partnership with WNIT Public Television. It features segments on hands-on nature activities for families, information on regional plants, animals or habitats and things people can do to improve the environment.

#### *Nature Munchkins*

This monthly pre-school program is offered at St. Patrick's Park and introduces 3 and 4-year olds and an accompanying adult to nature activities and projects.

#### *Women Experience the Outdoors*

This quarterly program provides outdoor adventures and experiences for women ranging from kayaking to outdoor cooking.

#### *Picnicking*

Bendix Woods, Ferrettie-Baugo Creek, and St. Patrick's County Parks offer rentable open-sided and enclosed shelters for company picnics and family gatherings.



*Disc Golf*

An 18-hole disc golf course is available at Ferrettie-Baugo Creek County Park. A pro shop sells discs and bags, and occasional workshops and tournaments are also held there.

*Canoeing the St. Joseph River*

Canoe and kayak rentals are offered from St. Patrick’s County Park along a 14-mile stretch of the St. Joseph River. This week-end operation includes a shuttle service and short (6- to 7-mile) or long (14-mile) trips beginning in May and continuing through the first weekend in October.

*Manion Cabin*

The historic Manion cabin in the woods at St. Patrick’s County Park is available for weekend rentals March through December. The log cabin sleeps eight and has an accompanying picnic shelter.

*Garden Work Days*

Volunteers gather to tend the native gardens at Spicer Lake Nature Preserve and Bendix Woods County Park.

*Star Programs*

These programs, often held in conjunction with the Michiana Astronomical Society invite the public to view stars and learn about the constellation folklore.

*Teacher Workshops*

Workshops on Project Learning Tree and Project Wet (curriculum supplements) are offered seasonally. In addition, the staff periodically design special educator training workshops.

*Environmental Education (Interpretive programs designed for schools)*

These programs are geared for specific grade levels and are tied to the Indiana State Science Standards. Many programs can be adapted to various grade levels. Pre-visit packets include projects and background material for use in the classroom. Several, including the Maple Syrup Program and the Paddles from the Past (voyageur living history with 34-foot replica birch bark canoe), have won regional interpretive awards. Program examples include:

*Preschool through Second Grade –*  
Nature’s Shapes and Sizes  
Animals Around Us  
Sniff, touch, Taste and Listen  
Sugar Camp Safari

Ponder a Pond  
Habitats Up Close  
Swamp Stomp  
Maple Syrup  
Six-legged Science  
Hooray for Herptiles

*Elementary Students –*  
Track It  
Tree ID

*History Programs –*  
Maple Syrup

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Pioneer Skills

Paddles from the Past

## Seasonal Programs & Special Events

### Winter (December – February)

#### *Cross-Country Skiing*

Ski rentals are available at St. Patrick's County Parks. Trails at St. Patrick's are linked to adjacent Madeline Bertrand County Park (MI) and a joint trail pass allows access to both sites.

Special programs include nature ski hikes and Candlelight and Cocoa nighttime skiing.

#### *Innertubing*

Tubing hills are located at Ferrettie-Baugo Creek and St. Patrick's County Parks. Each site has a warming shelter and a small snack food concession. The hills are staffed with safety staff and the department has a modest snow-making capability.

Special programs include private tubing parties.

#### *Snowshoe Rentals/Programs*

Snowshoe rentals are available at Ferrettie-Baugo Creek County Park. Special interpretive programs on the history of snowshoeing and observing nature in winter on snowshoes are also available.

#### *Maple Syrup Programs*

In February, the sugar bush at Bendix Woods gears up with a series of programs on tapping trees for maple syrup. Tapping Day is a large volunteer-based program usually held the first Saturday in February when scores of volunteers help the staff string the tubing lines and tap trees.

Special programs include Twilight Tapping tours and the Rent-a-Sap Bucket program. The latter is a fundraising program that obtains sponsors for buckets hung on the trees.

#### *Science Alive*

Each February, St. Joseph County Parks participates in Science Alive at the main county library. Dozens of science educators and science practitioners set up booths, demonstrations and activities for the public. In addition, St. Joseph County Parks provides similar programming at branch libraries during the Science Alive week.

### Spring (March – May)

#### *Sugar Camp Days*

Annual event that features the making of maple syrup, music, Lions Club pancake and sausage breakfast and horse-drawn wagon rides. Over 40 volunteers assist with the event.



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## Summer (June – August)

### *Outdoor Adventures Day Camp*

Week-long sessions at St. Patrick's County Park for various age groups to get kids into the outdoors, from fishing lessons, to hiking, to overnight camps.

### *Festival of Art and Music*

A celebration of music, sustainability demonstrations, and art in partnership with WVPE public radio.

### *Outdoor Concerts*

The Fischgrund Center for the Performing Arts at St. Patrick's County Park provides a venue for a range of musical and theatrical performances.

### *PaddleFest*

An annual event celebrating the St. Joseph River. Event includes canoe and kayak races and informational activities at St. Patrick's County Park.

### *Big Trees of St. Joseph County*

This biennial program coordinated by St. Joseph County Parks seeks nominations for the largest trees for any native species in the county. An award celebration is held in January. Partners for the event include St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District, Rum Village Nature Center, University of Notre Dame and St. Joseph County Cooperative Extension Service.

## Fall (September – November)

### *Pow-Wow*

An annual multi-tribal event featuring native dance, drumming and vendors.

### *Hayrides*

Held at Bendix Woods County Park, these tractor-drawn hayrides include Fall Fun Hayrides for individuals and families, evening hayrides for private parties, daytime hayrides for schools, and cooperative hayrides with local radio stations.