

# Edenville Township gets floating dock for freer river access

BY STEVE GRIFFIN

*For the Daily News*

Edenville Township residents will have freer access to its rivers, and river travelers will be able to hike to area businesses, thanks to a floating dock, fishing pier and trail.

The project will take shape, probably by spring, with help from a \$191,500 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Local matching money will come from the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, and the Midland Area Community Foundation. Alice Sias donated the land, and Global ReLeaf of Michigan also provided support.

The six-foot-wide asphalt trail and barrier-free ramp, to zig-zag down to the level of the Tittabawassee River, will be universally-accessible.

The project was one of 99 authorized by Gov. Rick Snyder's signing of House Bill 5364, providing \$38 million in grants for recreation and land acquisition projects. The projects had been recommended by the MNRTF board.

Township Supervisor Bob Johnson told the Daily News Friday that although the state announcement included the grant, details and contracts remained to be worked out. "It's not official until everything is signed," he said.

Johnson, a native of the area, said, water access for residents is scarce. "We have this impressive waterway the full length of our township, with very limited public access." He remembered his childhood, when a hardware store rented out boats and river access was virtually unlimited. "But the easy access has kind of disappeared."

Johnson said besides drawing people from the shore to the water, the site is expected to encourage boaters to come ashore and perhaps visit the ice cream stand, grocery, or restaurant/gas station at the top of the hill.

The pathway from the site will cross Water Street, and M-30, and lead to the township offices and Grandson Park, beyond it.

The new facility will be named Charles and Ida Harper Memorial Park, said Mary Beth Seasholtz, for the donor's parents. Seasholtz chairs the township's parks and recreation subcommittee, on which also serves Johnson, Bill Page, and Catherine Sias, daughter of Alice Sias.

The site idea was already in play when the subcommittee was formed, she said in a phone interview, to pursue the state grant. "People who were aware of the (grant) program said, 'This is a great opportunity.'"

Johnson said a goal of improved access became a higher priority as lands along the lake and river became more and more developed.

When Alice Sias, like Johnson an area native, offered to donate land she owned along the river, the project was set into motion.

When it's completed, shore anglers will be able to walk (or wheel, in the case of wheelchair or motorized chair users) down a five-percent-sloped ramp to the pier and dock, for easy casting into the Tittabawassee just below its confluence with the Tobacco River.

(Some consider the rivers to meet within Wixom Lake, a two-lobed impoundment into which both flow. On the Tittabawassee side of the lake, waters flow through a hydroelectric dam facility; waters on the Tobacco side can be directed over a spillway, into the tail-waters that flow a short distance to the outflow of the hydro dam.)

Seasholtz said details drawings will be created and submitted to state officials for approval. Those and other details attended to, construction can begin. "I expect it will be ready next spring," she said.