

# Michigan Natural Resources Trust fund has provided \$900 million for rec projects, land

BY STEVE GRIFFIN

*For the Daily News*

The Charles and Ida Harper Memorial Park in Edenville Township is one of 99 approved for funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Statewide, of \$38 million in grant money, \$16 million will go to development projects, and \$23 to land acquisition.

Matching money, generally from the areas in which the projects will take place, adds \$27 million for a total of \$65 million across the 99 projects.

Several \$300,000 grants were awarded, including one for Cole Park within the Saginaw County village of Chesaning, to build a bridge and pathway, and restore the site.

Two bridges on the abandoned railroad line that has become the Great Lakes Bay Region Trail in Bay County's Frankenlust Township will be renovated, also with a \$300,000 grant.

A 1.4-mile trail connector will be created, in Saginaw County, between an existing trail and a pathway along Center Road, aided by a \$251,500 MNRTF boost.

Among acquisition grants is \$400,000 for 106 acres including a quarter-mile of Saginaw Bay frontage within the DNR's Wigwam Bay State Wildlife Area in Arenac County; a news release says that will provide ice fishing access and waterfowl, deer, turkey and small game hunting.

Tied for largest grant is \$3 million to help the DNR purchase 440 acres on Harsens Island in St. Clair County. A DNR news release said the project would "protect globally-imperiled natural habitat, create buffer for the St. Clair Flats State Game Area, establish a wildlife corridor, and provide recreational opportunities."

Also drawing \$3 million is a newly created River Raisin Recreation Area in southern Jackson and Washtenaw counties. The purchase of 2,000 acres would boost hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.

The DNR was awarded \$950,000 to help purchase properties within the northern Lower Peninsula to eliminate in-holdings within dedicated state project areas. In western Michigan, \$1 million will serve the same end, as will \$1.45 million in southeastern Michigan and \$950,000 in the Upper Peninsula.

The DNR's Forest Resources Division will receive \$1 million to buy lands or rights to lands to enlarge or enhance the state's Rail-Trail program.

Of local and state grants, Snyder said in a news release, "These projects allow us to preserve the places that make Michigan such a special place to live, work and play. They provide diverse, high-quality recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike."

The Trust Fund, given constitutional protection by voters in 1985, had been established as a restricted fund in 1976. Royalties from the sale and lease of state-owned mineral rights flow into it, to create a funding source for public acquisition of lands for resource protection and outdoor recreation.

Since its creation, MNRTF has awarded more than \$900 million for land acquisition and public outdoor recreation development projects in all 83 Michigan counties.