

HURON-CLINTON METROPARKS VOLUNTEER SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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[METROPARKS.COM](https://www.metroparks.com)

OVERVIEW

The Metroparks Volunteer Program supports the Metroparks mission, vision and Strategic Plan by engaging individual and group volunteers in meaningful activities and projects that help sustain the parks.

In 2023, volunteers assisted Metroparks staff with various needs across the Metroparks – from land management and invasive species removal, to lending support to Interpretive Centers' programs and recreation events, on the golf courses, and through Eagle Scout service projects.

Dedicated volunteers play a vital role in helping the Metroparks remain a distinguished and treasured regional destination.



Volunteers from UMAISE lead adaptive kayak clinics at Kensington Metropark West Boat Launch

BY THE NUMBERS

In 2023, the Metroparks engaged **1608** volunteers who put in **8,932** hours of work.

When valued at an entry level wage, volunteer work represents **\$103,164 worth of labor benefit** (\$11.55/hour).

When valued at independent sector wages, this work provides a **\$284,037 labor benefit** (\$31.80/hour).



Volunteers from Nordic Ski Racers lead cross country field trips for DPSCD students

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

Avian-Count volunteers: The avian-count volunteers have been assisting the Metroparks since April 2021 to count the population of geese and gulls in 6 different zones along the beach at Lake St. Clair Metropark. These volunteers help supplement staff-time to conduct these counts at least 3x/week from April 1 – November 30th, since 2021. The purpose of this program is following our quality assurance project plan from EGLE on our Non-point source pollution grant to deter avian populations from settling on the beach. This program helps support the goal to improve water quality at Lake St Clair Metropark’s beach, by reducing E. coli from avian sources.

Cross Country ski field trips with Detroit Public Schools Community District: In partnership with the Nordic Ski Racer ski club, volunteers taught high school students basic country ski skills and led them on the Buck’s Run loop for winter field trips at Huron Meadows Metropark.

DiversAbility Days & Adaptive Recreation Clinics (Lake St. Clair, Stony Creek, Kensington, and Lower Huron Metroparks): In partnership with the Disability Network of Eastern Michigan, Oakland County Parks, RIM Foundation- SportAbility, and UMAISE, DiversAbility days and adaptive recreation clinics were held throughout the summer to offer recreation activities for participants with disabilities. Participants were able to enjoy adaptive sports such as kayaking, cycling, and pontoon boat rides. Volunteers helped with all activities on-site and making sure the events were a positive experience for participants.

Eagle Scout Projects: Multiple scouts chose to do their community service project at the Metroparks as part of their rank certification. Scouts are responsible for the planning, fundraising, and building of the project using volunteers under park supervision. One such project was Sam Ferrell, who completed the renovated backstop at Huron Meadows Metropark for his Eagle Scout Project.



Natural Resources volunteer days: The Natural Areas Crew hosted monthly public volunteer days, as well as group volunteer days for corporate and community organizations. Volunteers helped with the removal of invasive species such as garlic mustard and autumn olive throughout the Metroparks. Volunteers also assisted with native seed collection that will be planted in habitat restoration efforts and plug and tree plantings in various park areas throughout the year.

New Recreation programs & events: The Metroparks partnered with multiple organizations and company volunteers to provide support on-site at the event for the newly established recreation-focused programs and events. Volunteer partners included local National Honor Society members, Fjallraven, Moosejaw, Black to the Land Coalition, and Detroit Outdoors.

Planet Award Grant to heal the headwaters of the Huron River: The Metroparks received grant funding from the Consumers Energy Foundation through their Planet Awards grant program to complete work to heal the headwaters of the Huron River. The work included invasive species removal, tree plantings, and native prairie/meadow plugs and seed plantings at the river's headwaters at Indian Springs Metropark. This restoration effort will substantially improve important habitats that have been impacted by the loss of ash and oak trees and the subsequent expansion of invasive species to replace them. Volunteers helped with seed collection, invasive species removal and plantings.



Shelden Mountain Bike Fest (Stony Creek Metropark): In collaboration with local mountain bike organizations, CRAMBA, MiSCA-BRAVE, and REI Co-Op, Stony Creek Metropark held its annual Shelden Mountain Bike Fest and offered beginner mountain bike lessons and group rides. This year's event held the biggest attendance yet, estimating over 1,500 attendees.

Community Partnerships

FAIR Play Coalition: The FAIR (Fun Accessible Inclusive Recreation) Play Coalition, is a volunteer advisory committee developed by the Metroparks that advocates for accessibility in recreation. It has supported the design and marketing for ongoing project developments for accessibility throughout the Metroparks since 2019.

New Horizon Rehabilitation Services & Work Skills Corporation: The Metroparks was pleased to partner again with both New Horizons Rehabilitation Services (Michigan Rehabilitation Services- Macomb Co) and Work Skills Corporation, organizations 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 Hudson Mills Metropark, volunteers from New Horizon Rehabilitation Services at Lake St. Clair Metropark and Wolcott Mill Metropark Farm Center. Volunteers worked on minor maintenance activities, invasive species removal, and farm chores.

National Honor Society: The National Honor Society members at multiple high schools throughout the five-county region support programs, events, and Natural Resources through volunteer efforts to help fill their community service requirement.

Warren Astronomy Society: The Warren Astronomy Society hosts stargazing programming regularly at Wolcott Mill Camp Rotary on the 4th Saturday of the month. In 2023, members from WAS supported multiple recreation programs to provide the event attendees with guided stargazing opportunities at other events.



Volunteers from Disability Network of Eastern Michigan assist participants at DiversAbility Days held at Lake St. Clair Metropark and Kensington Metropark

LOOKING FORWARD

We will continue to work to expand the volunteer opportunities and create a stronger volunteer services program in 2024. We will continue to implement new programs, partnerships and ideas, such as:

Communication: Increase regular communication to the public about volunteer opportunities and needs within the Metroparks through a monthly Volunteer e-newsletter and other efforts.

Community and Corporate Partnerships: Continue to expand partnerships with community and corporate groups to support volunteer services, grant funded projects, and recreation programming.

Inclusion: Identify and outreach to organizations and schools in the five counties with the goal to engage new volunteers of diverse backgrounds and all abilities.

Natural Resources: Strategically expand community partnerships and regular engagement activities to increase the total area serviced by volunteers throughout the Metroparks.



National Honor Society volunteers help in the craft area at Holiday Lights at Wolcott Metropark

