



Mecosta County Park Commission
22250 Northland Drive, Paris, MI 49338 (231) 832-3246
WEBSITE: www.mecostacountyparks.com FAX: (231) 832-2078

2021 Millage Proposal Questions and Answers

What is the amount and term of the proposed millage?

The Park Commission is asking for a millage of up to .5 of one mill (\$.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value), for a period of five years, 2021 through 2025 inclusive. If approved and levied in full, the millage will raise an estimated \$716,089 for the Mecosta County Parks in the first calendar year of the levy.

How do I calculate my additional costs if the millage is approved?

To calculate the cost for your home, simply take the "Taxable Value" (Not "Assessed Value") of your most recent "Notice of Assessment" and multiply that figure by .0005. For example, if the "Taxable Value" of your home is \$50,000, the annual cost of this millage would be \$25.

Why do the Mecosta County Parks need a millage?

The Park Commission would like to both continue to offer, and enhance day use recreational opportunities to Mecosta County Residents. The park system has operated without a tax appropriation for more than 55 years, however not all park and recreation areas generate enough revenue to pay for their operating cost. Failing parks have been supplemented using revenue from other county parks to remain in operation. As extensive maintenance projects have been continuously deferred, project and renovation needs have compiled to a level that is not feasible to uphold through revenue sharing alone. It is inevitable that some of the county parks, recreation areas and amenities will require an additional funding source to remain publicly available.

What is the current revenue vs. expenses outlook?

Though the Parks have seen record numbers of visitors and, in turn, increases in revenue, the revenue generated will not cover the necessary anticipated expenses of the parks in the next 5-years. The Park Commission has evaluated current assets and estimates that close to 4 million dollars in non-operating expenses are necessary within the next 5 years to ensure amenities are not cut from the system. Over recent years the Park Commission has been able to fund \$300,000-\$350,000 per year in capital projects and renovations. If current trends continue the parks could fund 1.5-1.75 million dollars in major repairs over the next 5 years leaving a deficit of approximately 2.25 million dollars in additional funding requirements.

If passed, what will the millage funds be used for?

Key elements of the parks and recreation millage proposal include:

- Keeping existing parks, recreation areas and amenities available that are currently under consideration to be closed.
- Providing additional year-round availability to park facilities such as boat launches, trailheads, picnic areas, playgrounds, parking areas, and winter sport opportunities.
- Enhancement/Replacement of day use amenities such as playgrounds, boat launches, swimming areas, beaches, picnic areas, restrooms, and parking areas.
- Increase in community events and programs provided by the parks.
- Overhaul to ADA accessibility accommodations throughout the parks.
- Enhancement and upkeep of existing trails and trailheads within the park system.
- Renovation and addition of community use facilities such as picnic pavilions and the Paris hatchery building.
- Renovation of deteriorating buildings and park grounds.
- Re-branding as a Parks and Recreation entity with community first priorities.
- Historic Paris Fishponds to be renovated and available to residents, school groups and day users at no charge.
- Partnering with non-profits and local organizations to improve park grounds, services and program offerings.
- Updating facilities to provide services such as water, bathrooms, showers, and charging stations in emergencies.
- Evaluation and possible implementation of facilities such as mini golf, a spray park or winter sport complex.

As a County Resident how will I benefit if this proposal is approved?

In addition to the proposal enhancements listed above, if approved, county residents would be given a discount on season vehicle and seasonal boat permit fees when visiting the parks. Fees for residents would be held at a rate of \$20 each through the term of the millage. The millage proposal is based on funding park improvements that will directly benefit county residents such as improving and expanding day use park amenities, outdoor recreation opportunities, community support initiatives and community events.



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Are most County Park and Recreation organizations supported by tax appropriations?

Yes, the vast majority of County Park Commissions in the State of Michigan receive funding through tax appropriations to provide services to their communities. The Mecosta County Park Commission has historically been structured to operate with a more business-like plan of operation, which considers return on investment and revenue generation as a primary factor when evaluating capital project and renovation funding allocations. Most county park systems operate with less of a business focus and a more community-oriented focus. This proposal, if approved, would allow for the enhancement of community related projects and bring the focus back to “county park” related services vs campground-oriented priorities.

How will County Park operations change if the proposal is voted down?

Though it is the goal of the Park Commission to keep as many recreational opportunities available as possible for residents in our community, some facilities that are unable to cover operating expenses, or where renovation costs are too great for the Park Commission to absorb, may be closed or removed. Facility closures may include operation of the historic fishponds, hatchery building and trail systems in Paris, the White Pine Valley Recreation Area including trail systems and youth group camping areas and re-evaluation of current partnerships with the DNR Wildlife Division at Haymarsh and Martiny State Game Areas (Tubb’s Lake.) Length of park operating seasons will remain condensed to peak use periods without additional program offerings. Some recently expanded recreational opportunities may be rescinded. Capital project and renovation funding will be prioritized by return on investment and business outlook vs. community-oriented improvements to ensure long term sustainability of the park system.

Was public input taken into consideration regarding this proposal?

Yes, the Park Commission just completed a new 5-year Master Plan. As part of that plan an extensive survey was completed along with multiple public review meetings to gain community input toward the priorities of improvements throughout the park system and provide a vision for what residents would like to see prioritized. The most recent survey information was compiled with an even more extensive public engagement survey completed in 2017 by the Park Commission. Both surveys were advertised through newspaper, social media, the county parks website, and radio. In 2019 four Park Master Plan public comment sessions were held within the county parks. These sessions were advertised through local newspaper, internet and throughout the parks. The sessions provided additional feedback that when combined with multiple surveys ensured this millage proposal was created in accordance with what the local community is seeking from your park system.

What are some of the additional benefits of having a well-maintained, community-oriented park system?

There are many benefits to having quality park services and outdoor space available within your community. Outdoor recreational opportunities have been brought to the forefront of importance during the recent pandemic and park use has increased substantially. There has been a significant resurgence and renewed perspective on the importance of available outdoor space and recreational opportunities close to home. Real Estate is proven to be more valuable in areas with quality park offerings with parks being a draw toward bringing working families into the community. The county parks are a tremendous economic driver. Many businesses benefit substantially within the county through visitor traffic that the parks draw into our communities.

Most recently, personal health related to outdoor recreation has shown to be extremely important from both a physical exercise and mental stress benefit. Parks are a place to reset and recharge your internal batteries from the stresses of daily routine. Parks provide a venue for families to spend time together away from technology and for school friends to meet, play and exercise together. High quality, well maintained parks bring a sense of togetherness to those who visit and are a source of pride to community members and businesses.

We hope you visit soon to recreate, relax, recharge, and create lasting memories with friends and family.

Where can I find additional information on the Mecosta County Parks?

Information on your County Parks is available online at www.MecostaCountyParks.com or by visiting any of our park offices during the operating season.

Additional questions regarding this proposal may be submitted to the Park Commission Administrative Office at:
Mecosta County Park Commission, 22250 Northland Drive, Paris MI 49338.
E-mail – admin@MecostaCountyParks.com Phone 231-832-3246.