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Newaygo and Mecosta Counties to Offer Regional Recreation Pass

Regional Recreations Pass will allow entrance to the Newaygo County and Mecosta County Park Systems

Newaygo and Mecosta County, MI: The Newaygo County Parks and Recreation Commission and Mecosta County Park Commission are joining forces to provide a Regional Recreation Pass in 2023 to give Park Visitors a way to enjoy both Park systems while saving \$10. Each organization offers a \$35 annual vehicle pass that gets visitors into their respective parks, but in 2023 those who want access to both park systems will have the option to buy one pass for \$60.

Newaygo and Mecosta County Park Commissions have worked closely for the past 5+ years developing Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam, a 40+ mile natural-surface multi-use trail system around Hardy Pond. This has increased demand by visitors who want to visit parks and trailheads operated by both entities.

"Since starting the Dragon Project, there have been many requests for a joint pass allowing access into multiple trailheads, working together we found it best to showcase both park systems and create a pass that gets people into all of our parks, not just those around the Dragon Trail and Hardy Pond," said Newaygo County Parks Director Nick Smith.

The Regional Recreation Pass will provide visitors access to five Mecosta County Parks and seven Newaygo County Parks, two of which in each county are official trailheads for the Dragon Trail. "Both of our park systems offer a wide variety of amenities such as boat launches, beaches, trails, playgrounds, campgrounds, day-use areas, and additional opportunities. We hope that visitors who have traditionally frequented just one park system will consider progressing to a regional pass to evaluate what the neighboring park system can add to their recreational experience." Said Jeff Abel, Mecosta County Parks Superintendent.

Both Park Commissions offer various outdoor recreational opportunities, many of which are along the Muskegon River, including Hardy Pond. Campers, boaters, trail users, and visitors can still purchase a traditional annual vehicle permit from either county or invest in the new regional recreation pass and expand their recreational options while saving money.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, both County Park systems have seen an influx of visitors to the Parks, which has increased the use of their recreational facilities. Both agencies are self-



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funded, paying for park operations and improvement through the sale of vehicle permits and campsites; they hope that teaming up will increase revenue. “We are unique agencies since we are self-funded. Most Park and Rec agencies around the state rely on tax dollars to operate, whereas we rely on sales to operate and improve. We hope this will increase sales to continue improving our park facilities and offerings for our park customers and residents.” Said, Director Smith

Starting in late December 2022, the 2023 Regional Recreation Passes will go on sale. At that time, park visitors can buy the pass over the phone or in person at each Park Administrative Office or through one of the many self-registration stations throughout both park systems. Please follow Mecosta County Parks and Newaygo County Parks on Facebook to learn when Regional Recreation Pass sales start. When the campgrounds open for the season, Regional Recreation Passes can also be purchased at campground offices.

ABOUT The Regional Recreation Pass

The Newaygo/Mecosta Regional Recreation Pass is an annual motor vehicle permit allowing access to all parks and properties owned or operated by the Mecosta and Newaygo County Park Commissions. Vehicle passes are required to enter parks in both Counties as these organizations rely on vehicle passes and other sales for their parks' operation, maintenance, and improvement. Newaygo County Parks can be reached at 231.689.7340, and Mecosta County Parks can be reached at 231.832.3246.

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