

## **Teamwork Improves Green Pine Lake Pathway For Hikers**

### ***Beavers may have a different priority***

The Green Pine Lake Pathway is one of Clare County's hidden treasures. The Pathway—really three loops and one connector trail—is located in Freeman Township in the western part of the county. Two of the loops are accessible from a parking lot on the south side of M-115, just west of Lake Station Ave., while the connector trail leads to a state forest campground and the nature trail on Big Mud Lake.

In the past, the overgrown trails and lack of markings have posed challenges to those venturing on the trails. Now, thanks to the hard work of numerous volunteers during the last weekend in April, visitors can focus more on the beauty of their surroundings, and less on determining where the trails are.

According to Gerry Schmiedicke, president of Friends of Clare County Parks & Recreation, a local non-profit that seeks to improve and promote the county's parks and recreational opportunities, his group wanted to get the word out about the wonderful hiking experience available to residents and visitors. "However, we did not want to promote the Pathway until the trails looked better, and people could use them safely," he said. The group's small number of members meant it could not accomplish all the tasks. (Increasing numbers is something the Friends group is working on.)

Enter the North/Central Branch of Hiking Michigan, an organization that encourages and invites people to explore and better the natural environments with similar like-minded outdoor people. "Their Director, Mark Wilson, contacted us and said his group was interested in re-marking and clearing the trails," Schmiedicke said. "We were happy to partner with them and much appreciate everyone's efforts."

"The trail system has a lot of potential and appeal," Wilson said, talking about what attracted his group to the project. "The small loop off the M-115 parking lot skirts Pike Lake and offers a nice little day hike; that trail is now well defined. The same is true for the nature trail at the Mud Lake State Forest Campground. And those looking for more of a challenge should enjoy the hike to the campground via the connector trail," he added.

While Wilson credits the volunteers and staff from the DNR for the progress thus far, more work remains. A few of the bridges and boardwalks need work; and signage is needed at a few intersections. (The signage, an Eagle Scout project, is currently being restored.) "We hope to complete those tasks this summer," said Wilson. He admits there is one project that might not get done—at least not for a while and that's the complete 5-mile-long southern loop around Green Pine Lake. That's because a beaver dam has flooded a portion of the trail. But Wilson isn't going to complain, "There are plenty of other trails for those of us who like terrain that's...a bit on the drier side," he said.

A parking lot on the south side of M-115 just west of Lake Station Road provides access to the Green Pine Lake Pathway and its two lakes. Mud Lake State Forest Campground is off Brown near Garfield Road. To learn more about Hiking Michigan, go to [www.hikingmichigan.com](http://www.hikingmichigan.com). For

Hiking Michigan's free downloadable map of the trail, go to [www.hikingmichigan.com/PDFinfo/GreenPineLake.pdf](http://www.hikingmichigan.com/PDFinfo/GreenPineLake.pdf).

Friends of Clare County Parks & Recreation invites you to their annual Gateway Event on June 1, to help raise funds to improve recreation in Clare County. Learn more at [clarecountyrecreation.org](http://clarecountyrecreation.org).

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