

**BERRIEN COUNTY
ADMINISTRATION CENTER**



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Berrien County Parks & Recreation Commission
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Niles, Michigan, June 11, 2021 – The Berrien County Board of Commissioners has approved the acceptance of a \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grant. Grant funds will be used for the acquisition of 32.2 acres of land adjacent to Madeline Bertrand County Park in Niles, Michigan, along the St. Joseph River. The Berrien County Parks Department match for this grant is \$110,800 to complete the sale.

Madeline Bertrand County Park is a very popular natural resource area. The park has seen a continual increase in visitors and use of its hiking and cross country ski trails, disc golf course, pavilions, and playground. Ideas that have been discussed for the additional park acreage stem from the current Park Master Plan and include expanded hiking and biking trails through the pine and hardwood forests; added cross country ski opportunities with incredible views of the St. Joseph River; expansion of the regionally revered Disc Golf course; access to a variety of terrain for Naturalist-lead educational groups; and potential for access to the St. Joseph River through a kayak launch area.

“Berrien County has benefited greatly from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund which has supported natural resource protection, access to our natural areas, park expansion, recreation opportunities, tourism and the local economy throughout the region. Without the state programs, we wouldn’t have one of the best county park systems in the state. Congratulations to our staff”, said Dick Schinkel, Berrien County Parks Commission Chairman.

“We extremely appreciate the support of the Berrien County Board of Commissioners and the Park Commission Board Members towards these endeavors and commend their interest in expanding and improving our county park system”, said Jill Adams, Director, Berrien County Parks Department.

The MNRTF receives its funding from royalties from the lease and sale of State owned mineral rights. No tax dollars are used for the MNRTF grants that are funded. All grants are required to provide 25% in local matching funds.

The next step for Berrien County Parks is to continue to work with the current land owner and the State of Michigan in completing the sale of the property, ultimately allowing the land to remain in the public domain.