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RIVER AND LAKEFRONT GRANTS AVAILABLE



Communities in Michigan that have river or lakefronts like the idea that people will sail into their town and park their boats while shopping, eating or just enjoying other recreation amenities in the downtown area.

Ideas become a reality with a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Waterways Program Grant.

The City of Saugatuck recently received a \$90,000 Waterways grant, half the cost of converting a single metal dock at Coghlin Park into a 20-slip Shoppers Dock. The city also received a \$20,000 grant for the dock plan study.

“Waterways grants are important,” said Kirk Harrier, Saugatuck’s city manager. “We also built a boat launch with one. We couldn’t do these types of projects if we didn’t get this type of assistance.”

The new daytime floating dock on Kalamazoo Lake is 129 feet long with finger piers accommodating boats up to 30 feet at the park’s south shore. One boat slip is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible.

The new docks have received good reviews from the locals and those visiting the area.

“There was no delineation for slips with the old dock,” Harrier said. “It was like having a parking lot without any parking lines. Separate slips now make it easy to get more boats in there. We’re maximizing the space so everybody can park.

“It’s absolutely beautiful and has exceeded all my expectations.”

DNR FUNDS ALL KINDS OF PROJECTS

Waterways grants are just one way your community can expand or improve recreation opportunities and help boost tourism. Their grants provide assistance for engineering studies and infrastructure improvement projects at Grant-in-Aid harbors as well as other boating access sites.

Approximately \$1.75 million will be available to applicants in FY2020. Eligible applicants include local units of government (city, village, township and county) and state colleges and universities.

“I’ve applied for millions of dollars of grants over the years and I would say that the Waterways grant process is one of the easiest,” Harrier said. “The process is very user-friendly.”

The Michigan DNR (MDNR) serves as a primary source of recreation funding, offering grant programs to communities to acquire land for parks and open spaces or to develop public recreation facilities.

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has the most extensive funds available, with average awards of \$200,000 for development, renovations and redevelopment, and no limits on land acquisition. Minimum local match requirements are 25 percent. Based on current projections, the NRTF has approximately \$15-20 million available each year.

Recreation Passport Grants also help pay for renovating facilities that have outlived their useful life expectancy. This program offers \$7,500 – \$150,000 grants for indoor and outdoor renovations.

PUBLIC INPUT, MASTER PLANNING REQUIRED

Creating launches, parks and recreational facilities take time, public involvement and money. The first step is to adopt a five-year recreation plan including an Action Plan identifying projects slated for the upcoming years. It is a requirement for state funding.

When evaluating grant applications, the MDNR favors projects where collaboration is taking place. Did you know that if you complete a formal agreement with a neighboring community, such as an operating agreement, intergovernmental agreement or memorandum of agreement, 30 points may be given to your project? If you collaborate with a non-profit, school, or similar agency, 15 points may be given to your project. These few extra points can make the difference in the competitive scoring process.

Timing is also critical to developing parks and recreation master plan. It is recommended to involve the public early in the process, through public meetings, written/on-line surveys, social media, newspapers and flyers. Depending on the complexity and amount of public input, preparation of a master plan can take up to six months to complete.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR PLANNING

Create the recreation plan	Now
Draft plan available for public comment	Dec. 20, 2019
Public hearing to adopt plan	January 2020
DNR submittal of adopt rec plan	Feb. 1, 2020
Grant application deadline	April 1, 2020

To learn more about funding or brainstorming your recreation project or developing a Parks & Recreation Master Plan, contact Steve Czadzeck at 800.494.5202 or via email at sczadzeck@fveng.com.

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