



River Country

Recreational Authority

*Parks & Recreation Plan
2025*

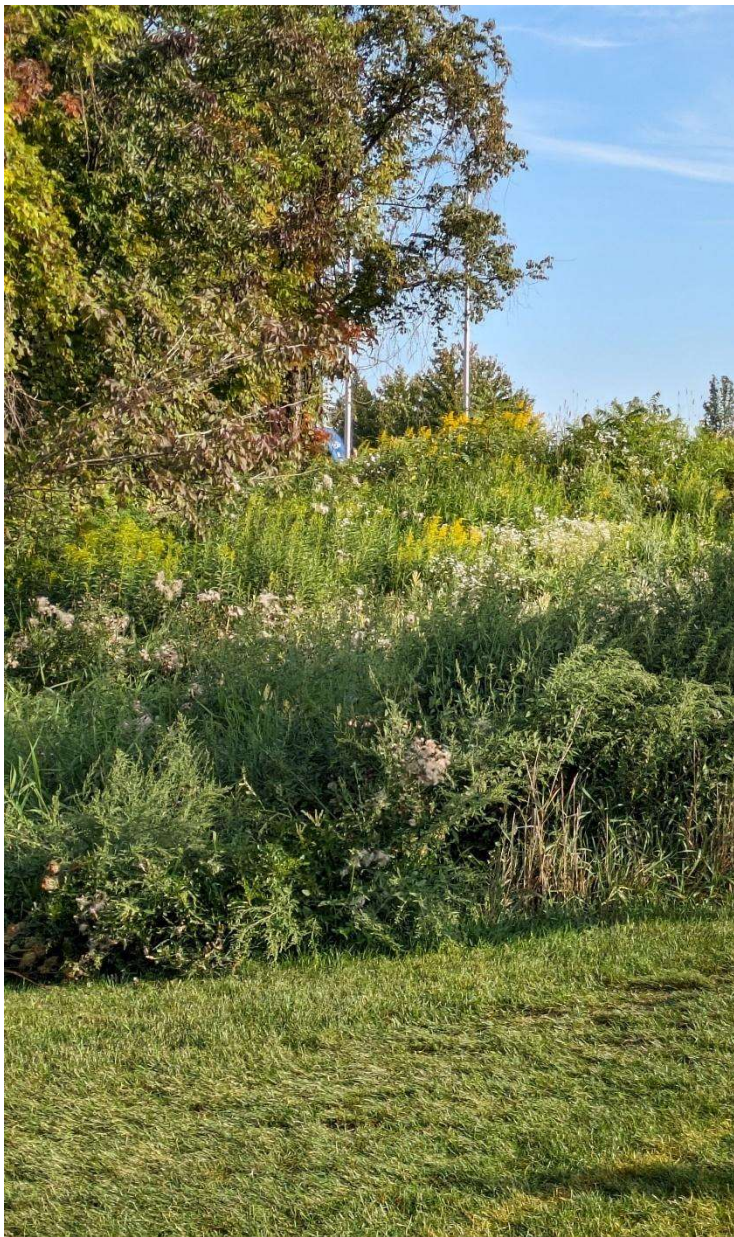


TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Administrative Structure	3
2. Community Description	4
3. Recreation Inventory	5
4. Natural Resource Inventory	6
5. Planning and Public Inputs	7
6. Goals and Objectives	8
7. Action Plan	9
8. Resources	11

I. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The River Country Recreational Authority (RCRA) is a joint effort between the City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township. The Authority is governed by a board of trustees whose members include:

- Chair Chad Ely, City of Three Rivers
- John Kroggel, Fabius Township
- Jon Rice, City of Three Rivers
- Jaymes MacDonald, St. Joseph County Parks & Recreation Director
- Vacancy, Fabius Township

Three Rivers City Clerk Leslie Wilson serves as the clerk of the Authority, and Finance Director Bobbi Schoon serves as the treasurer of the Authority.

The Authority budget is comprised of contributions made by the City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township to cover minimal costs including audits as required by State law.

The Recreational Authorities Act provides the Authority with the ability to acquire, construct, operate, maintain, and improve public parks, including non-motorized pathways and levy voter-approved taxes.

City of Three Rivers

Mayor Thomas J. Lowry

1st District Commissioner Pat Dane

2nd District Commissioner Steven Haigh

3rd District Commissioner Chris Abel

4th District Commissioner Carolyn McNary

At-Large Commissioner Torrey Brown

At-Large Commissioner Lucas Allen

City Manager Joseph A. Bippus

Fabius Township

Supervisor Dan Wilkins

Clerk Carol Wilkins

Treasurer Cindy Haradine

Trustee Judy Holman

Trustee April Wooden

The purpose of the Authority is to acquire, construct, operate, maintain, and improve parks and trails with a focus on non-motorized trails.

2. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The River Country Recreational Authority was created by a vision from a 2007 Project Steering Committee led by Bruce Snook. The Authority was created to focus on pathway development and pedestrian connectivity, representative of a greater effort to establish a collaborative environment in the Three Rivers area. The first project was to explore the possibility of a non-motorized pathway connection between the Three Rivers Health Medical Center located in the City of Three Rivers and Meyer Broadway Park located in Fabius Township. Previous planning efforts had included the 2007 Three Rivers Area Non-Motorized Study which revealed communitywide interest in a regional pathway system for overall quality of life improvement. An overall mission of the planning and implementation of a recreational authority was to foster expanded cooperation between cities, townships, and villages to develop and carry out local land use policy contributing to the pathway development.

- **Opportunity:** The recreation authority provides a toolset to enable the City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township along with other project partners to plan, design, and establish funding for non-motorized pathways including bicycle lanes, shared use paths, bike routes, shared roadways, sidewalks, and trails.
- **Ownership:** The City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township make up the authority, but additional project partners include the Three Rivers Area Community Foundation, the St. Joseph County Road Commission, St. Joseph County, BHSJ Community Health Agency, and multiple businesses and organizations.
- **Expected returns:** Increase capacity for projects. State enabling legislation supports local governments in Michigan working across jurisdictional boundaries to provide for and finance a wide range of park and recreation services.

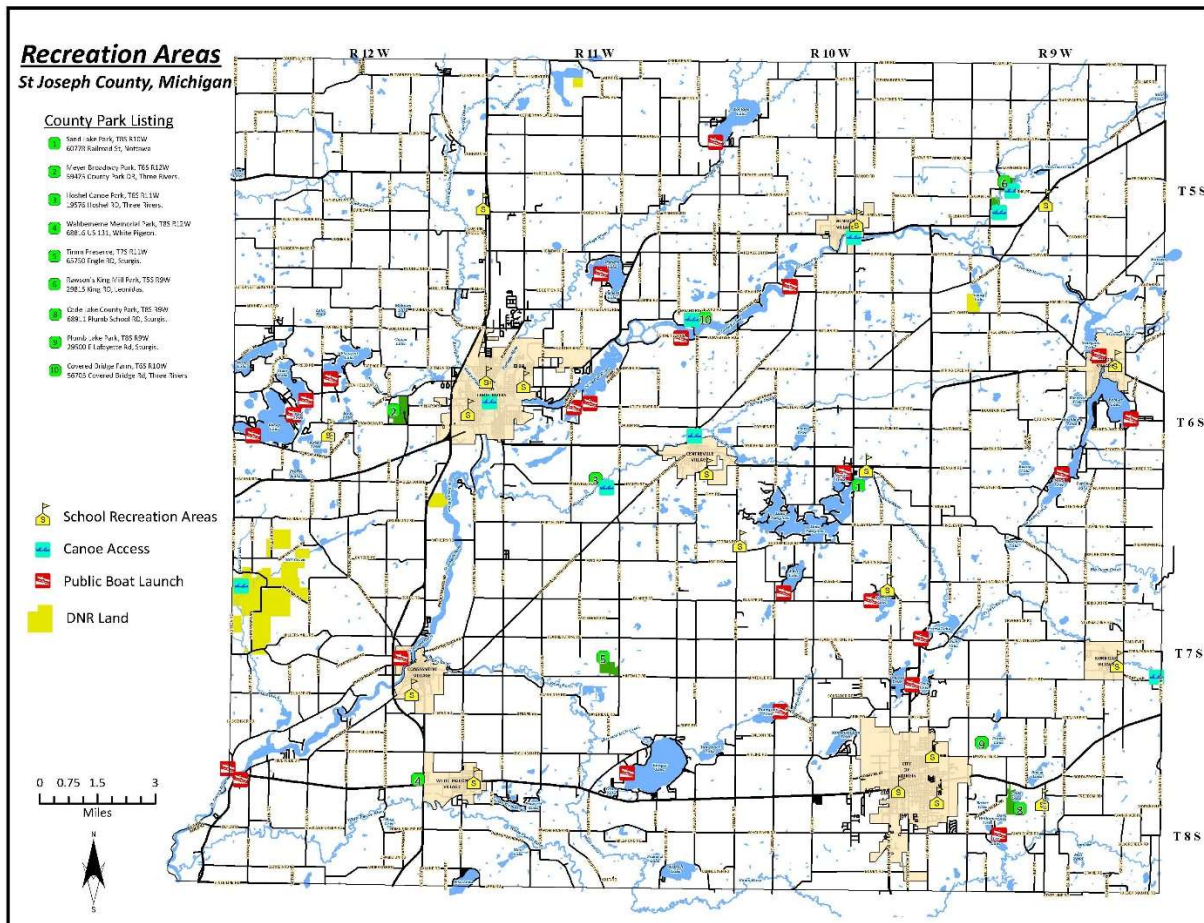
The River Country Recreational Authority is located in the southern part of the lower peninsula traversed by US-131. The area is roughly halfway between the Chicago and Detroit metropolitan areas. Land use includes farmland, a historical downtown, lake front properties, and several residential areas. The 2020 US Census estimates the population at 11,284 for the area with approximately 70 percent living within City limits.

3. RECREATION INVENTORY

The Authority worked with the City of Three Rivers, Fabius Township, St. Joseph County, the Three Rivers Area Community Foundation, Three Rivers Health (now Beacon), and the State of Michigan to build the Meyer Broadway Connection Pathway from South Health Parkway to Meyer Broadway Park.

- Ownership: City of Three Rivers, St. Joseph County
- Maintenance: City of Three Rivers
- Funding Sources: Municipal, private, and grants

Other area resources include City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township parks and great areas as well as St. Joseph County Parks in the map below:



4. NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

There are several outdoor recreation opportunities in the Authority's footprint of Fabius Township and the City of Three Rivers, and the resources are augmented by additional opportunities throughout St. Joseph County. Activities include canoeing, kayaking, hunting, trapping, and fishing. The water quality supports biodiversity and wetlands as well as the crop irrigation infrastructure to the farmlands.

5. PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT

The RCRA held a special meeting on November 16, 2023 for public input as part of the development of the master plan. Desired trails were documented on large maps.

A public input survey was available from June 2023 to June 2025 on the Fabius Township website and was shared to the River Country Recreational Authority's Facebook Page and website.

A public hearing was held at the August 21, 2025 Authority meeting, and the master plan draft was placed on file. The resolution to adopt the plan was passed at the August 21, 2025 Authority meeting.

6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The River Country Recreational Authority does not plan to create any parks or acquire land in the next five years. Efforts will be toward developing a network of multi-use recreational trails and related infrastructure and facilities.

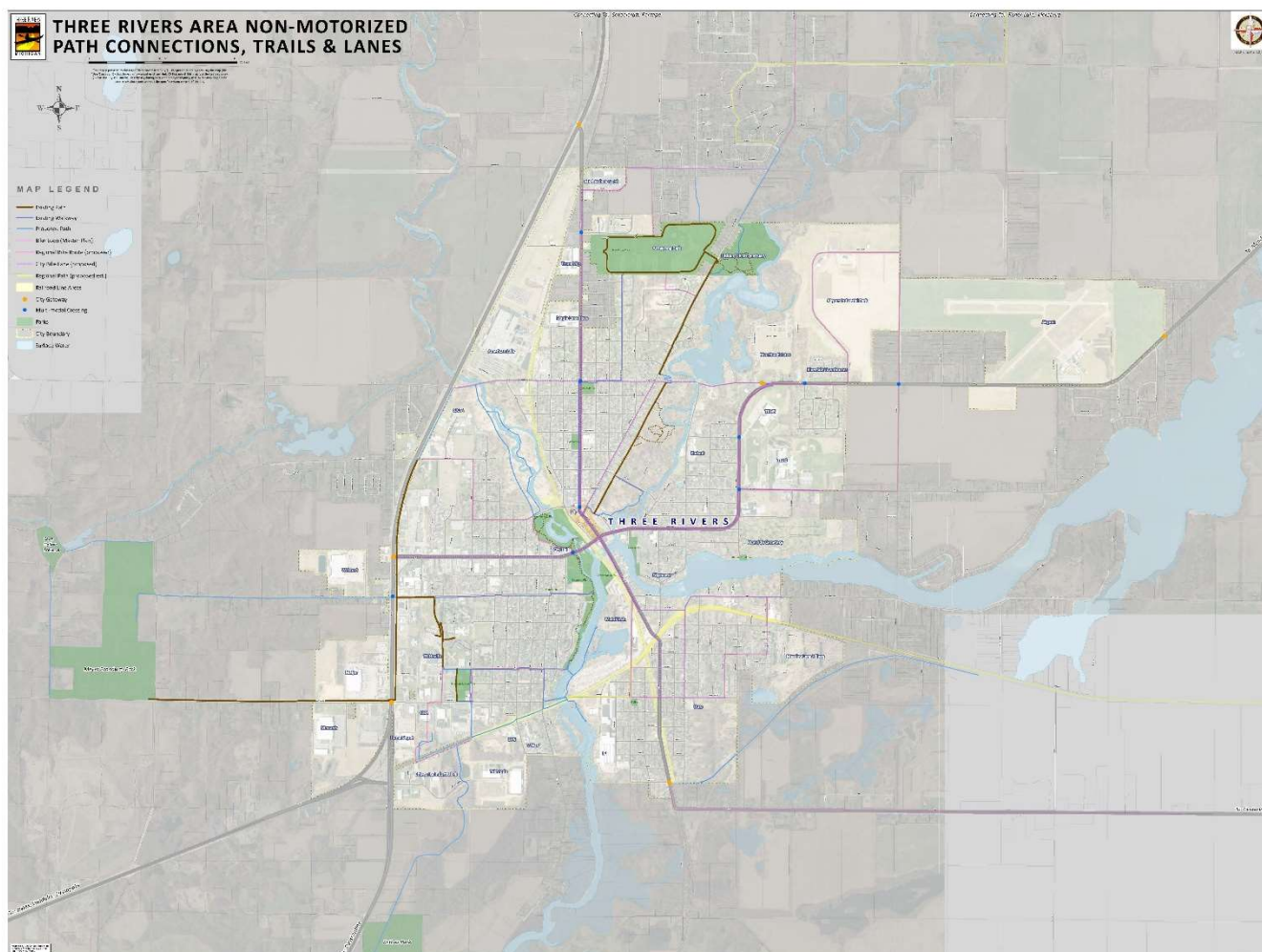
- **Non-motorized trail development:** Increase the number and distance of non-motorized trails. Increase connection points within the City of Three Rivers, Fabius Township, and surrounding natural areas and parks. More people walking and bicycling means fewer cars on the road and motor-traffic noise out of neighborhoods.
- **Park improvements to support non-motorized trail development:** Improvements to promote efficient use of public facilities and funds.
- **Low maintenance cost recreational opportunities:** Work toward lower cost construction options such as surface negatives (not compacted surfaces, limited to vegetation and erosion costs).
- **Accessibility:** Ensure accessible opportunities for all residents. Provide opportunities in convenient locations in both geographical areas and to meet current needs and demands of the residents.
- **Foster community relationships:** Continue developing relationships between the Authority, municipalities, support groups, and County Parks & Recreation. Assist as able and request assistance when needed.
- **Improved public health and safety:** Increased levels of exercise opportunities for citizens of all income levels in a safe environment.

7. ACTION PLAN

The action plan identifies key priorities for 2025-2029 in meeting the goals and objectives presented in section 6.

- **Support City of Three Rivers Easements:** Support city efforts to acquire easements along rivers.
- **Support Fabius Township Preservation:** Fabius Township Planning Commission is working to retain open space and preserve potential parklands in the northern part of the township.
- **Coon Hollow Trail:** Contract engineering and design services for a trail from Meyer Broadway Park to Coon Hollow Preserve.
 - Determine the funding level needed for the project.
 - Possible funding from the City of Three Rivers, Fabius Township, St. Joseph County, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, and the Three Rivers Area Community Foundation grant process. Project funding available from DNR grants once planning is in place.
- **Encourage Ordinance Updates:** Work with the City Manager and Director of Public Services and Fabius Township Supervisor to consider ordinances that prohibit camping and littering along trails and within parks. City ordinances already prohibit use from sunset to sunrise within any City park or recreational area.
- **Support County Programming:** Work with the County to determine needs to support youth mountain biking programs in Meyer Broadway Park.
- **Downtown Trail:** Work with the City to determine signage necessary to tie the downtown to existing pathways.
- **Tamarac Trail:** Contract engineering and design services for trail from Armstrong Park to Tamarac neighborhood in Lockport Township.
 - Present project to Lockport Township Board.
 - Possible funding from the City of Three Rivers, Fabius Township, Lockport Township, and the Three Rivers Area Community Foundation grant process.
- **Online Presence:** Create more updated online content to engage the community and increase awareness of community activities in parks and conservation areas.

Current and Proposed Trail Development



8. RESOURCES

2025 Budget Adopted October 17, 2024

RIVER COUNTRY RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET GENERAL FUND

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2022-23 ACTIVITY	2023-24 AMENDED BUDGET	2023-24 ACTIVITY THRU 6/30/2024	2023-24 PROJECTED ACTIVITY	2024-25 PROPOSED BUDGET	% CHANGE	LINE ITEM DETAILS
101-000-504.000	LOCAL GRANT REVENUE	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-626.000	SERVICES RENDERED	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-665.000	INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS	2	-	26	26	-		Interest
101-000-676.100	CONTRIBUTION FROM PUBLIC AGENCIES	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500		Contribution from City & Fabius Twp
101-000-688.000	MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-694.000	OTHER REVENUES	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES		\$ 2,502	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,526	\$ 2,526	\$ 2,500	0.00%	
101-000-727.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-740.000	GENERAL PLANT SUPPLIES	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-801.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	420	2,500	2,920	2,920	500		Website \$420, Audit \$2,000, Misc.
101-000-936.000	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	3,330	-	-	-	-		
101-000-970.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS		\$ 3,750	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,920	\$ 2,920	\$ 500	-80.00%	
NET OF REVENUES/APPROPRIATIONS		\$ (1,248)	\$ -	\$ (394)	\$ (394)	\$ 2,000		
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE		13,674	12,426	12,426	12,426	12,032		
ENDING FUND BALANCE		12,426	12,426	12,032	12,032	14,032		
AVAILABLE UNRESERVED, UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE		\$ 12,426	\$ 12,426	\$ 12,032	\$ 12,032	\$ 14,032		

2026 Budget Adopted June 19, 2025

RIVER COUNTRY RECREATION AUTHORITY 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET GENERAL FUND

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2023-24 ACTIVITY	2024-25 AMENDED BUDGET	2024-25 ACTIVITY THRU 6/16/2025	2024-25 PROJECTED ACTIVITY	PROPOSED 2025-2026 BUDGET	% CHANGE	LINE ITEM DETAILS
101-000-665.000	INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS	25.92	0.00	25.85	25.85	0.00		Interest
101-000-676.100	CONTRIBUTION FROM PUBLIC AGENCIES	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00		Contribution from City & Fabius Twp.
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES		2,525.92	2,500.00	2,525.85	2,525.85	2,500.00	0%	
101-000-801.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	2,920.00	500.00	420.00	420.00	5,000.00		Website, \$420, Audit \$3,500, Master Plan up to \$1,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		2,920.00	500.00	420.00	420.00	5,000.00	900%	
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES		(394.08)	2,000.00	2,105.85	2,105.85	(2,500.00)		
BEG. FUND BALANCE		15,437.63	15,043.54	15,043.54	15,043.54	17,149.39		
END FUND BALANCE		15,043.55	17,043.54	17,149.39	17,149.39	14,649.39		
AVAILABLE UNRESERVED, UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE		15,043.55	17,043.54	17,149.39	17,149.39	14,649.39		

RIVER COUNTRY RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
2024 PROPOSED BUDGET
GENERAL FUND

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2021-22 ACTIVITY	2022-23 AMENDED BUDGET	2022-23 ACTIVITY THRU 6/30/2023	2022-23 PROJECTED ACTIVITY	2023-24 PROPOSED BUDGET	% CHANGE	LINE ITEM DETAILS
101-000-504.000	LOCAL GRANT REVENUE	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-626.000	SERVICES RENDERED	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-665.000	INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS	2	-	19	19	-		Interest
101-000-676.100	CONTRIBUTION FROM PUBLIC AGENCIES		2,500	1,250	2,500	2,500		Contribution from City & Fabius Twp
101-000-688.000	MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-694.000	OTHER REVENUES	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES		\$ 2	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,269	\$ 2,519	\$ 2,500	0.00%	
101-000-727.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-740.000	GENERAL PLANT SUPPLIES	-	-	-	-	-		
101-000-801.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	2,585	420	420	420	2,500		Website \$420, Audit \$2,000, Misc.
101-000-936.000	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES		3,330	253	253			
101-000-970.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS		\$ 2,585	\$ 3,750	\$ 673	\$ 673	\$ 2,500	-33.33%	
NET OF REVENUES/APPROPRIATIONS		\$ (2,583)	\$ (1,250)	\$ 596	\$ 1,846	\$ -		
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE		13,674	11,091	11,091	11,091	12,937		
ENDING FUND BALANCE		11,091	9,841	11,687	12,937	12,937		
AVAILABLE UNRESERVED, UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE		\$ 11,091	\$ 9,841	\$ 11,687	\$ 12,937	\$ 12,937		

Adoption of this plan includes support and adoption by reference of:

- Three Rivers City Parks and Recreation Plan.
- Fabius Township Parks and Recreation Plan.
- Three Rivers Area Community Foundation Trail Master Plan.

Attachments included are:

- Agenda and minutes for the special meeting to request input.
- Notice of the public hearing.
- Minutes from the public hearing.
- Minutes from the meeting adopting the plan.
- Adopted resolution adopting the plan.
- Transmittal letters to St. Joseph County Planning Commission and Regional Planning Agency.



City of Three Rivers

333 West Michigan Avenue • Three Rivers, Michigan 49093

Phone: 269.273.1075 • Fax: 269.273.3132

www.threeriversmi.org

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING NOTICE

The River Country Recreation Board will hold a special meeting for **Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** The purpose of the meeting is to seek public input for a parks and recreation master plan.

The meeting will be held at the Three Rivers Commission Chambers, 333 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, MI 49093

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice

The City of Three Rivers will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) day notice to the City Clerk's Office. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the City of Three Rivers at the address found below.

Any interested person may also participate by submitting written comments to the City Clerk's Office at the address found below.

The meeting is open to the public.

Leslie Wilson
City Clerk
City of Three Rivers
333 W. Michigan Avenue
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-1075 Ext. 108
lwilson@threeriversmi.org

RIVER
COUNTRY
RECREATIONAL
AUTHORITY



Agenda November 16, 2023, at 8:00 a.m.
Three Rivers City Hall

1. Call to Order & Roll Call
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Minutes
4. Finance Report
5. Public Comment (2-minute limit)
6. Business
 - a. Recreation Plan
 - b. Recreation Survey
7. Recreational opportunities, volunteer/sponsorships, and events – All
8. Adjournment

RIVER
COUNTRY
RECREATIONAL
AUTHORITY



Special Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2023
6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Mr. Ely called the Special Meeting for Public Input on the Five Year Recreation Plan for the RCRA to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission Room at Three Rivers City Hall.

Present: Chad Ely
John Kroggel
Jon Rice

Absent: Jaymes MacDonald

2. Approval of Agenda

The purpose of the meeting was to seek public input, so there was no agenda to approve.

3. Mr. Ely introduced Ms. Oswald

4. Public Input

City Manager Joe Bippus, along with RCRA board members present and Lindsay Oswald discussed future trail pans and opportunities. Ms Oswald will compile the information and incorporate it into the Five Year Recreation Plan.

8. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m..

John Kroggel for Leslie Wilson
Recording Secretary



City of Three Rivers

333 West Michigan Avenue • Three Rivers, Michigan 49093

Phone: 269.273.1075 • Fax: 269.273.3132

www.threeriversmi.org

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING NOTICE

The River Country Recreation Board will hold a special meeting for **Thursday, August 21, 2025 at 8:05 a.m.** The purpose of the meeting is to seek public input for a parks and recreation master plan.

The meeting will be held at the Three Rivers Commission Chambers, 333 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, MI 49093

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The meeting is open to the public.

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lwilson@threeriversmi.org

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

State of Michigan
County of St Joseph
County of Cass

R. Michael Wilcox, being duly sworn, says he is one of the principal clerks of the Three Rivers Commercial-News, a weekly newspaper published and circulated in said counties. The annexed is a printed copy of a notice which was published in said newspaper on the following date(s), to wit: 7/25

R. Michael Wilcox
R. Michael Wilcox

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

25 day of July A.D. 2025

Arteria C. Taylor
Arteria C. Taylor

Notary Public, State of Michigan,
County of Saint Joseph

My commission expires 05/11/2030

WILCOX NEWSPAPERS, LLC
DBA WILCOX NEWSPAPERS
P.O. Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010 - (269) 657-5080

PUBLIC NOTICE

There will be a public hearing on Thursday, August 21, 2025, at 08:05 a.m. in the Commission Chambers at City Hall, 333 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, Michigan (49093). The purpose of the public hearing is to seek public input for a parks and recreation master plan.

Any interested person may participate or submit written comments to City Clerk, at the address above. Please call 269-273-1075 for any questions.

Additional bid information may be acquired from the City of Three Rivers website www.threeriversmi.org.

Leslie Wilson
City Clerk

RIVER
COUNTRY
RECREATIONAL
AUTHORITY



Meeting Minutes
August 21, 2025
8:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Mr. Ely called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. in the Commission Room at Three Rivers City Hall.

Present: Chad Ely
John Kroggel
Jaymes MacDonald

Absent: Jon Rice

2. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Kroggel, seconded by MacDonald, moved to approve the agenda. By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Minutes

Mr. Kroggel, seconded by MacDonald, moved to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2025, meeting. By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Hearing

a. Recreation Master Plan

Mr. Ely opened the floor for public comment at 8:05 a.m.

Mr. Ely closed the public comment at 8:05 a.m.

Mr. Kroggel, seconded by MacDonald, moved to approve the 5 year master plan. By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

5. Finance Report

6. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

7. Business

8. Recreation Opportunities

Discussion was held about a future event at Meyer Broadway Park.

8. Adjournment

Mr. MacDonald, seconded by Mr. Kroggel moved to adjourn. By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 a.m.

Leslie Wilson

Leslie Wilson
Recording Secretary

RIVER COUNTRY RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-1

2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the River Country Recreational Authority has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2025 through 2029, and

WHEREAS, the River Country Recreational Authority began the process of developing a 5-year parks and recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of the St. Joseph County were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on August 21, 2025 at Three Rivers City Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the 2025 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and

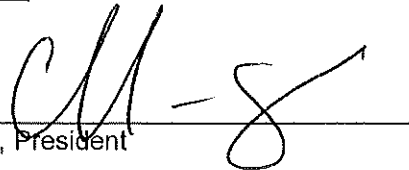
WHEREAS, the River Country Recreational Authority has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for St. Joseph County, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the River Country Recreational Authority voted to adopt said 2025 Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the River Country Recreational Authority hereby adopts the 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Resolution approved and adopted this 21 day of August, 2025.

Signed:


Chad Ely, President

Attest:


Leslie Wilson, Secretary

Subject: Request for Review: River Country Recreational Authority Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I am writing to formally request the Planning Commission's review of the proposed 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

This comprehensive plan, developed over the past 24 months with public input, outlines our vision for recreational authority. with a plan for improvements over the next five years.

We believe this Master Plan is essential for guiding future investments, securing grants, and ensuring that our parks and recreation offerings continue to meet the evolving needs of our residents.

We are seeking the Planning Commission's review and input on the plan's consistency with the community's overall land use goals and its alignment with existing or future development plans. The draft plan is attached [or "can be accessed at [link to document]"]. Please let us know if you require any additional information.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important community document.

Sincerely,

Chad Ely

River Country Recreation Authority President



Outlook

Subject: Request for Review: River Country Recreational Authority Parks and Recreation Master Plan

From Leslie Wilson <leslie@threeriversmi.org>**Date** Tue 6/24/2025 2:23 PM**To** info@smpcregion3.org <info@smpcregion3.org>

1 attachment (3 MB)

RCRA MP 06.19.25 1.pdf;

Dear Planning Commission Members,

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Thank you for your time and consideration of this important community document.

Sincerely,

Leslie Wilson, on behalf of the River Country Recreational Authority



Leslie Wilson

MIPMC Level 1

City Clerk/Deputy Director of
Finance/Administration

☎ +269-273-1075 select 0, x108

✉ lwilson@threeriversmi.org

🌐 www.threeriversmi.org

📍 333 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, MI 49093



Outlook

Request for Review: River Country Recreational Authority Parks and Recreation Master Plan

From Leslie Wilson <leslie@threeriversmi.org>**Date** Tue 6/24/2025 2:23 PM**To** planning@stjosephcountymi.gov <planning@stjosephcountymi.gov>

1 attachment (3 MB)

RCRA MP 06.19.25.pdf;

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Leslie Wilson, on behalf of the River Country Recreational Authority



Leslie Wilson

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✉ lwilson@threeriversmi.org

🌐 www.threeriversmi.org

📍 333 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, MI 49093



Request for Review: River Country Recreational Authority Parks and Recreation Master Plan

From Leslie Wilson <leslie@threeriversmi.org>

Date Thu 6/26/2025 1:58 PM

To jholmantrustee@gmail.com <jholmantrustee@gmail.com>

 1 attachment (3 MB)

RCRA MP 06.19.25.pdf;

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I am writing to formally request the Planning Commission's review of the proposed 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

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