

Junction Grand Opening

The newest park in Allegan County is opening to the public this October! The River Junction Preserve, located at the mouth of the Rabbit River in Manlius Township, will have its grand opening on Saturday, October 7th at 10am. Managed by the ODC Network in Holland, the park represents the organization's largest property acquisition to date at over 260 acres.

Situated along the Kalamazoo and Rabbit Rivers, the property has nearly two miles of river frontage along the two streams, one of the largest tracts in Allegan County still in private hands. The land was acquired with funds from the Kalamazoo River Trustees, a partnership of state and federal agencies tasked with providing funding and supporting natural resources and recreation opportunities impacted by PCB contamination in the Kalamazoo River. Other local projects supported by the Trustees include the Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve in Allegan and restoration work at Saugatuck Township's River Bluff Park. The site is surrounded on three sides by the Allegan State Game Area, making it a prime location for preservation.

The River Junction Preserve previously was used as a pine plantation for local timber production and was most recently a private hunting reserve. While there are still numerous non-native pines on parts of the upland portion of the property, there are large stands of native trees, including hemlocks, oaks, and white pines. A majority of the property is located within the floodplain, with important habitat for birds, reptiles, and amphibians that also provide flood water storage. The property will be actively managed by ODC Network conservation staff to selectively thin non-native species and promote high-quality native habitat. ODC naturalists and educators are already planning school and community programming at the site.

There will be nearly 2.5 miles of trails through the property. Dogs are welcome on 6-foot leashes. ODC staff will be at the site from 10-2 on Saturday the 7th to answer questions about the property with limited free refreshments. The site is located at 5403 132nd Avenue in Hamilton at the end of 132nd Avenue off 53rd Street. Regular hours for the site will be from sunup to sundown seven days a week, subject to seasonal closures.