



Otsego Lake



Hartwick Pines



Kitch-iti-kipi

100 YEARS OF MICHIGAN STATE PARKS

Celebrating a century of growth, prosperity and protecting natural resources for the public's pleasure, a series of events are planned.

Fueled by thriving automotive and tourism industries in 1919, Michigan residents (nearly 3.9 million) and visitors were anxious to get outside and explore the state's woods and waters. It became important to not only provide spaces for such outdoor activities but also to set policies to preserve and protect them. And with the passage of Public Act 218 signed by Gov. Albert Sleeper on May 12 of that year, the Michigan State Park Commission officially was organized.

One hundred years later, Michigan's well-established state park system, with 103 properties in its portfolio, is being commemorated



Holland State Park



E. Genevieve Gillette

"Genevieve really was a shining example for every woman, man and child who values, respects and seeks to steward Michigan's exceptional natural environment."

— Lawrence Falardeau

by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Centennial events are planned at state parks all around the state.

"The centennial is more than a milestone to recognize that 100 years ago a document was signed," said Maia Turek, recreation programmer for the Michigan DNR. "It's the celebration of 100 years of lifelong memories of Michigan's most beautiful places. For a century, Michigan state parks have defined communities, hosted family vacations, family reunions, romantic getaways and after-work workouts for generations — and will continue to do so for generations to come."

Among the newest state parks are Belle Isle in Detroit (2014) and Watkins Lake State Park and Country Preserve in Brooklyn (2017). The DNR also expanded Ludington State Park in 2018 by acquiring a 100-acre parcel of sand dunes, wetlands and forests adjacent to the park.

Many of the early parks were acquired through land donations from private individuals including D.H. Day in Leelanau County (now part of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore), P.H. Hoeft in Presque



Laughing Whitefish Falls

Isle County, Carrie Mears (in honor of her father Charles) in Oceana County and J.W. Wells in Menominee County. They still bear the names of those early supporters and their wishes to preserve the land for public use.

By 1922, state park management was placed under the newly created Department of Conservation (now the Department of Natural Resources). Percy James (P.J.) Hoffmaster was named Michigan's first superintendent of state parks, serving until 1934 when he was promoted to director of the Department of Conservation (until his death in 1951).

E. Genevieve Gillette, a former classmate of Hoffmaster's from the Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University) and the first woman to graduate in the landscape architecture class in 1920, was enlisted to help find new parks, solicit land donations and secure funding for their development. She was instrumental in the founding of about 30 state parks, including Ludington, Hartwick Pines in Grayling and Porcupine Mountains Wilderness in the Upper Peninsula.

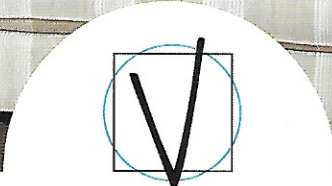
"Genevieve really was a shining example for every woman, man and child who values, respects and seeks to steward Michigan's exceptional natural environment," said Lawrence Falardeau of the Friends of Highland Recreation Area, which has honored Gil-

lette's legacy with the establishment of a site interpretive marker at its 5,900-acre park.

Today, the Gillette Visitors Center at P.J. Hoffmaster State Park in Muskegon pays tribute to these early leaders and their com-

bined dedication to Michigan's park system. For more about the history of and celebrations around Michigan's State Parks, visit michigan.gov/stateparks100.

— Dianna Stampfler



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