



HURON-CLINTON METROPARKS **MOW PLAN**

2025-2027

Administrative Office
13000 High Ridge Drive
Brighton, MI 48114



METROPARKS.COM

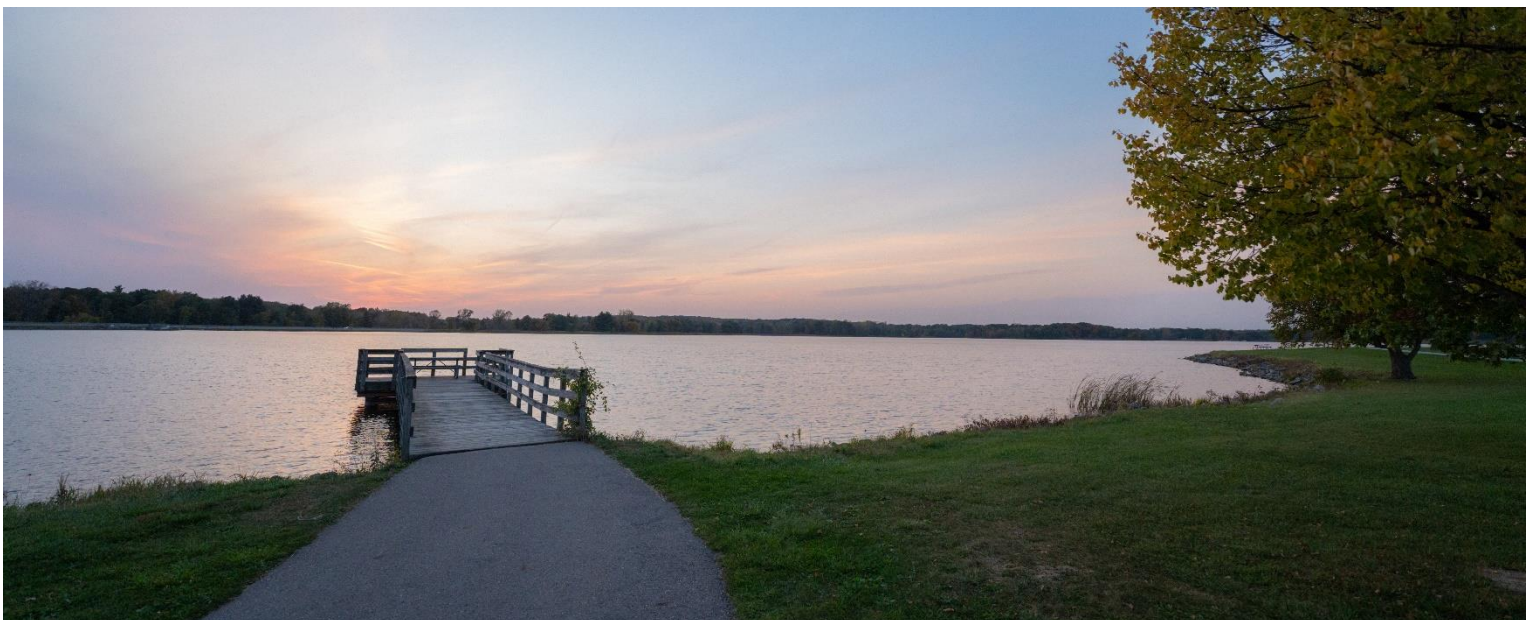


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction.	5
Implementation.	7
Access to Maps	8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mowing Plan was created in response to the need for clarification on mowing and natural resource policies at the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority properties. It designates areas as the following classifications: regular mow areas, annual spot mow areas, and natural areas. The Mowing Plan also addresses how mowing should be accomplished in each of these classifications. This plan is the result of meetings and field visits with Natural Resources Staff, Interpretive Staff, Park Operations Managers, Park Maintenance Supervisors, and the public. The plan should be revisited and revised after its initial implementation and then regularly once every three years. The goal of the Mowing Plan is to clearly delineate areas as their designation, to provide staff with easy-to-use maps and mowing procedures for each classification.



INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the Natural Resources, Planning, and Park staff identified areas that were potential for mowing reduction. This planned reduction in mowing was instituted to reduce the cost of maintaining park areas. This action was taken in response to the severe economic downturn that took place the same year and resulted in a loss of tax revenue coming to the Metroparks system. When mowing reductions were implemented in 2009, they were not well received by park users who utilize the Metroparks many picnicking and gathering areas.

In 2014, Metropark staff noticed that many annual mow areas were becoming overgrown with invasive species such as thistle and autumn olive and affecting the professional standards of the Metroparks. As such, many of these no-mow areas were mowed to reduce weeds and increase the professional appearance of the Metroparks. This mowing took place in July. However, July is a peak period for nesting of grassland birds and this mowing was not received well by some park users. This mowing plan was created to balance the needs of these different user groups and institute a balanced approach between natural areas and other park uses.

PLANNING

Five steps were involved in the planning process of the 2018 version of this document. First, interpretive staff was contacted and asked to visit sites with Natural Resources staff to help identify sensitive natural areas that should be managed as such and not maintained as a mowed area. Nine interpreters took part in these meetings throughout all three districts. Second, site visits were conducted by vehicle and on foot to delineate areas based on one of the three categories. Data was collected using a handheld GPS device which allowed for conversion of data to usable maps. Third, draft documents were reviewed with Metroparks staff. These reviews involved Parks Operations, District Maintenance Supervisors, and District Park Superintendents. Fourth, public input on the management of Metroparks land was collected from groups that use the Metroparks and volunteers who help maintain the Metroparks.

In late 2017, updates to the original mowing plan were solicited in a meeting with parks operations staff to address deficiencies in the original plan. The updated plan also incorporates new legal requirements such as the EMR CCAA (Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake Candidate Conservation 4 Agreement with Assurances), which encourages sustainable management of EMR habitat, of which the Metroparks is a participant.

In late 2022 and then again in 2024, Natural Resources staff met again with Park Operations and Maintenance staff. In all the 13 parks, areas were designated as able to transition from regular mow to annual spot mow and from annual spot mow to natural area. Additionally, the presentation of the mow maps has changed with the 2025 update to an online web map.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the three classifications is as follows:

1) Regular Mow Areas: These areas will be maintained as they have in the past, as manicured turfgrass for recreation purposes. Also included in this category is right-of-way mowing for trails and roads. Staff should maintain a mower width of finish mow adjacent to all paved roads and trails. Exceptions may be made for special events. Open herbaceous areas outside of right-of-way should be managed as annual spot mow unless specifically designated as another classification. Should any of these areas be removed from recreational use, please notify Natural Resources Staff and we will update the plan accordingly

2) Annual Spot Mow: Annual mowing of grasslands is intended to keep grasslands free of woody invasives and other undesirable species. These grasslands include abandoned recreation areas, among others. Brush hogging or mowing should be limited to the control of undesirable species. It is not necessary to mow the entire area annually if woody shrubs are controlled by partial mowing.

Mowing should be conducted in these areas between October 1st – March 1st unless otherwise noted in the plan. If these areas must absolutely be mowed outside this timeframe to achieve aesthetic or recreational needs, staff should carefully sweep the area and contact Natural Resources Staff before proceeding to mow. Not adhering to this timeframe could result in “incidental take” or unintended killing of an animal which may have regulatory compliance consequences.

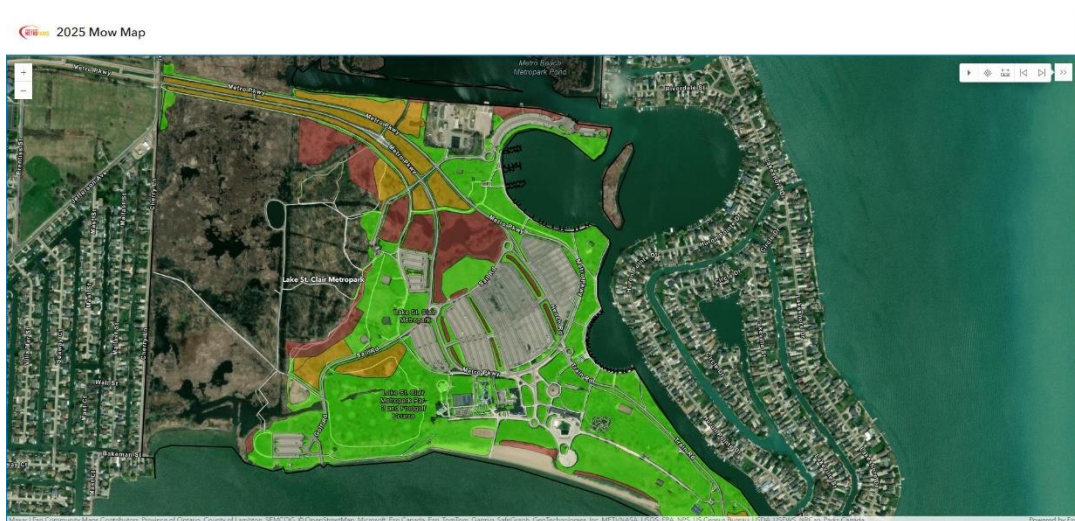
3) Natural Areas: These areas are managed by the Metroparks’ natural resources department. They will be managed to encourage native species using several methods or combination of methods that may include mowing, prescribed fire, seeding, and/or chemical control.

Natural Resources Department staff is happy to clarify any of the information in this document and will be available to perform site visits to clarify delineated boundaries. If any parks operation staff member is unsure if they should mow an area, contact natural resources to confirm mowing plan details.

ACCESS TO MOW MAPS

The mow maps for each park have been updated to an interactive web version. Similar to previous mow maps, the mow areas have been divided into green, orange, and red denoting regular mow (green), annual spot mow (orange), and natural area (red). If park property does not have any color, it can be assumed that it is infrastructure, water, or natural area that is not applicable to this plan.

Below is a screenshot of the Lake St Clair Mow Map. The mouse scroll bar can be used to zoom in or out on the map, or there are + - buttons in the top left that also zoom. Clicking and dragging with the left mouse button or using the arrow keys on the keyboard will move to different areas of the map.



The online map can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/35u6s5uj> on a computer or scanning the QR code below on a mobile device.



