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### **Independence Oaks County Park receives national forest designation**

*Addison Oaks County Park also inducted into Old-Growth Forest Network as community forest*

**OAKLAND COUNTY, MI – Nov. 7, 2025** – Locals know Independence Oaks County Park as the largest Oakland County Park, and now this 1,286-acre property has been recognized nationally for its preservation of mature forests during a ceremony at Wint Nature Center on Thursday, Nov. 6.

Oakland County Parks (OCP) officials, staff and volunteers gathered to celebrate the parks induction to the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN), the only national network of “protected, old-growth, native forests where people of all generations can experience biodiversity and the beauty of nature.”

Independence Oaks County Park is the 24<sup>th</sup> location recognized in the state of Michigan and joins more than 315 forests recognized nationwide.

“Old-growth forests are more than a collection of trees simply unimpacted by logging, agriculture or modern development. Their mature, undisturbed characteristics are intricate ecosystems centuries in the making,” Oakland County Parks Director Chris Ward said. “These natural gems contribute to health and wellness of Oakland County communities through their climate resilience, quiet stability and stately beauty. We are proud to be a part of the Old-Growth Forest Network and play our part in preservation efforts.”

Independence Oaks County Park contains 14 acres of rare true old-growth conditions, with the oldest trees being more than 300 years old.

“Standing along the border of the old-growth forest and the area that was previously an agricultural field and seeing the stark contrast really highlights the beauty and ecological importance of old-growth,” said Leona Addie, Great Lakes Regional Manager for OGFN.

Additionally, the park has over 73 acres of maturing second growth forest on rolling glacial topography and contains the headwaters for the Clinton River.

“Old-growth forests are particularly good at filtering rainwater from their dense canopies that slow rain down, to their vast root networks that prevent erosion and filter rain, storm and ground water,” Addie said.

Addison Oaks County Park was also inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network as a community forest, recognizing the role it plays in connecting people with nature. A 1,140-acre natural oasis located north of Rochester, this popular park and campground is known for its pristine natural beauty.

“Protecting old-growth forests within Addison Oaks and Independence Oaks preserves the past while safeguarding future impacts on our environment for generations to come,” OCP Chief of Natural Resources and Sustainability Sarah Cook-Maylen said. “Old-growth forests support unique, complex ecosystems of plants, animals and fungal species. They are natural climate stabilizers that quietly work to protect our water sources and keep Oakland County communities healthy.”

OGFN’s goal is to identify and ensure the preservation and recognition of at least one forest in every forested county in the United States, creating a roadmap of family-friendly hikes that showcase the beauty, complexity and diversity of our nation’s oldest forests. A full list and map of OGFN forests may be viewed at [www.oldgrowthforest.net](http://www.oldgrowthforest.net).

For information on other events, visit [OaklandCountyParks.com](http://OaklandCountyParks.com). Join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).