



## MIDLAND COUTY PARK . . . *The Rest of the Story*

We have received questions regarding a recent newspaper article headline ***“Midland County, Four Lakes Task Force pursuing grant for Sanford Lake Park, boat launch”*** published by the Midland Daily News on March 18, 2025. (an excerpt of the article is attached for your review).

While the reporter summarized a recent Midland County Commissioner Board meeting, the article left out key points regarding the FLTF story. We made an inquiry with FLTF to learn more . . . here is the rest of the story.

**Reminder:** FLTF can and does only use funds from the Four Lakes Special Assessment District (FLSAD) required to restore, meet permit requirements, operate or maintain the Four Lakes dams and lake levels. This has been covered in many webinars, including the January 22, 2025 webinar, and that is the case in this situation.

When it comes to construction projects, often adjacent land is used (with the owner’s permission) to stage equipment, construction offices and materials. This is sometimes referred to as a construction property easement. The requirement is to leave the property, roads, or parking lots in a useable condition after construction. Typically, this means the same if not better condition than before the property was used to aid construction. We see this all the time on highway and bridge projects for instance.

At each of the dam construction sites, property adjacent or near the site is used to stage heavy equipment and materials (think thousands of tons of rocks, steel sheet pile along with trucks and cranes).

At Secord, the property to the east side of the dam was purchased to provide area for the embankment restoration along with space for construction trailers, parking and storage for materials (remember the huge piles of rock and stacks of sheet piling).

Continuing with Secord, County property is being used on both the east and west side of the dam for construction (the portable cement plant on the west side). The areas were cleared of trees with gravel parking lot and service roads installed. After construction is complete, the large temporary gravel parking lot and roads will be removed to leave a more suitable natural footprint behind. As this is required for construction, this is funded by the construction budget.

In the case of Sanford, the County is providing the parking lot of the boat launch in the Midland County Park for use to stage heavy equipment / materials and providing access to the dam construction site.

While this parking lot now is primarily made up of gravel, the reporter failed to mention the boat launch parking lot prior to construction staging was asphalt.

FLTF is required as part of the construction process to return the parking lot to the same or better condition after construction is completed. Same as with the property on either side of the Secord dam.

**That's the parking lot, what about the boat launch?** The article explains Midland County initially scheduled the boat launch to be rebuilt in 2020, but that plan was delayed due to the dam failure.

To submit for a grant, the County needs to provide a planning estimate. Today, the planning estimate for the entire project to rebuild the boat launch area and the parking lot restoration is estimated at \$630,000.

The County is seeking a grant from MI DNR for the maximum amount of \$400,000 to help pay for the project. The grant application is due April 1<sup>st</sup>, and the County Commissioners voted to submit the application for the grant. The County will not find out until late 2025 or perhaps early 2026 if their grant request was approved and what the dollar amount of the grant is.

At that time, the Midland County Commissioners will decide on a path forward with the project. If there is no grant, or the grant amount is lower than expected, the current plan will likely be adjusted.

The article goes on to explain the remainder of costs will be borne by FLTF as part of the parking lot restoration. FLTF is responsible for restoring the parking lot, whether the boat launch grant is awarded or not. Like the Secord property this cost is part of the overall construction budget.

According to FLTF, the grant request is for the boat launch and parking lot. FLTF went on to report that if the County is successful in being awarded the \$400,000 grant, more than \$100,000 will be allocated toward resurfacing the parking lot. **Meaning, this will create a reduction in the FLSAD of at least \$100,000.**

FLTF believes partnering with Midland County to rebuild this boat launch area will provide an opportunity for FLTF to secure either private donations or public grants for the parking lot. Partnering also enhances the odds of the MI DNR grant will being approved for Midland County.

As we move into 2026, after the MI DNR decides on the grant request from Midland County, there will be more information shared by Midland County. FLTF will be able to provide additional perspective on their role in parking lot restoration as well. FLTF continues to seek grants that offset the cost of the total project.

**Midland County Park is in FLSAD.** Another question we received. **YES**, Midland County Park is in the FLSAD. The projected capital assessment is \$195,691 and the annual operations and maintenance assessment is \$1,452.

**Will there be a park built on the County property at Secord dam? NO.** There is **no** requirement or plan for a park. In 2023, Secord Township did apply for a DNR Sparks Grant with the idea to explore a family-oriented park with a picnic pavilion, handicap accessible fishing pier and kayak portage. The grant was denied in the early stages of the submittal process and **the project is no longer being pursued.**

We will continue to provide accurate, timely information for the Secord Lake community. We will continue to do our best to keep you informed. To learn more, please [www.four-lakes-taskforce-mi.com](http://www.four-lakes-taskforce-mi.com) or [www.secordlakeassociation.org](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org)

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# Midland County, Four Lakes Task Force pursuing DNR grant for Sanford Lake Park, boat launch

By [Isabelle Pasciolla](#), Staff writer March 18, 2025

Midland County and the Four Lakes Task Force are pursuing a grant from the State of Michigan to rebuild the Sanford Lake Park parking lot and boat launch following the construction of the Sanford Lake dam.

The Four Lakes Task Force has taken responsibility to rebuild the parking lot and boat launch as they are using the park to access the dam with their heavy equipment.

On Tuesday, the Midland County Board of Commissioners approved a request from County Parks and Recreation to pursue a Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to help fund the project. The total project cost is estimated at \$630,000 and the County will request the maximum \$400,000 grant from the DNR.

The rest of the project cost will be covered by the Four Lakes Task Force.

The project will include rebuilding the boat launch parking lot and paving it with asphalt. The parking lot is currently gravel. It will also involve rebuilding and extending the boat launch as well as some dredging as needed.

The boat launch was initially scheduled to be rebuilt in 2020, but was postponed after the dam failure. Midland County Parks and Recreation Director John Schmude said now will be an opportune time to rebuild the launch while the lake is empty.

The grant application deadline is April 1, but the County will not know if they are awarded the grant until December.

Vice President of the Four Lakes Task Force Dave Rothman said the organization looks forward to this grant and this project as one of the final pieces of the Sanford Lake dam process.

"If we start work on the parking lot and and start the work on the boat ramp, you'll know that we're done with Sanford Dam's restoration," Rothman said. "This has been a long project and I'm looking forward to the end of this when we can actually have a lake again."

The Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the request to apply for the grant.

"I appreciate what you're doing to try to get additional funding for the work there at the Four Lakes," said Commissioner Larry Schuelke.

*Isabelle Pasciolla is a Midland County reporter at the Midland Daily News. Email her at [Isabelle.Pasciolla@hearst.com](mailto:Isabelle.Pasciolla@hearst.com).*

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