

## Park Background Information

Olmsted County is located in the southeastern part of Minnesota straddling the transition zone from limestone bluffs and woodlands in the east to prairie farmland in the west. County population is 115,000 and Rochester is the county seat.

The county entered the park business in 1968 when the State of Minnesota turned Oronoco State Park over to county management. From that 33 acre 8 campsite beginning, the system has expanded to 4 major parks and a number of smaller facilities totaling 2100 acres and providing outdoor recreation and educational opportunities to South-eastern Minnesota.



*Chester Woods Park Entrance*

The first major expansion involved the acquisition and development of 570 acres along the Zumbro River north of Byron, Minnesota on the western edge of the county. The river there meanders through wooded hills in a series of bends called “oxbows” because of their resemblance to the yoke worn by ox teams. That name stuck, and the park subsequently developed became known as Oxbow Park.

Chester Woods Park opened in the spring of 1995 and consists of 1335 acres of woods, prairie, and stream bluffs surrounding the Bear Creek Reservoir. Most of the area has been left in its natural state and is accessible only by hiking, equestrian, or cross country ski trails. The headquarters area of the park has been developed to provide a 50 unit campground, informal ball fields, playground equipment, swimming beach, fishing pier, and

paved roads and trails. The reservoir is formed by one of the largest earthen dams in Minnesota and backs water into three deep valleys forming a three fingered lake.

In addition to Oxbow and Chester Woods Parks, the Park Department operates and maintains Graham Park (Olmsted County Fairgrounds) which is located within the City of Rochester and serves as an exhibition center for the city.



*Oxbow Park*

Events hosted run the gamut from antique sales and livestock shows to sporting events and concerts. These events attract thousands of visitors to the city annually.

Each park has permanently assigned staff and is budgeted and managed as a separate unit within the Parks Department. A central maintenance unit provides major repair and equipment fabrication services for all parks, and grounds maintenance and snow removal services for the Government Center and other county facilities. The permanent park staff of 14 is supplemented in the summer by an equal number of seasonal employees.

Olmsted County wants to provide the best county park system in outstate Minnesota. Come visit when you can and let us know how we are doing.

## Park Locations and Facilities



**Chester Woods** - located 7 miles east of Rochester on U.S. Hwy. 14. Facilities: Hiking, picnicking, fishing, camping, swimming, handicapped accessible.



**Graham Park** - located in Rochester between 12th and 16th Streets off of South Broadway. Facilities: 4-H Buildings, livestock shows/sales.



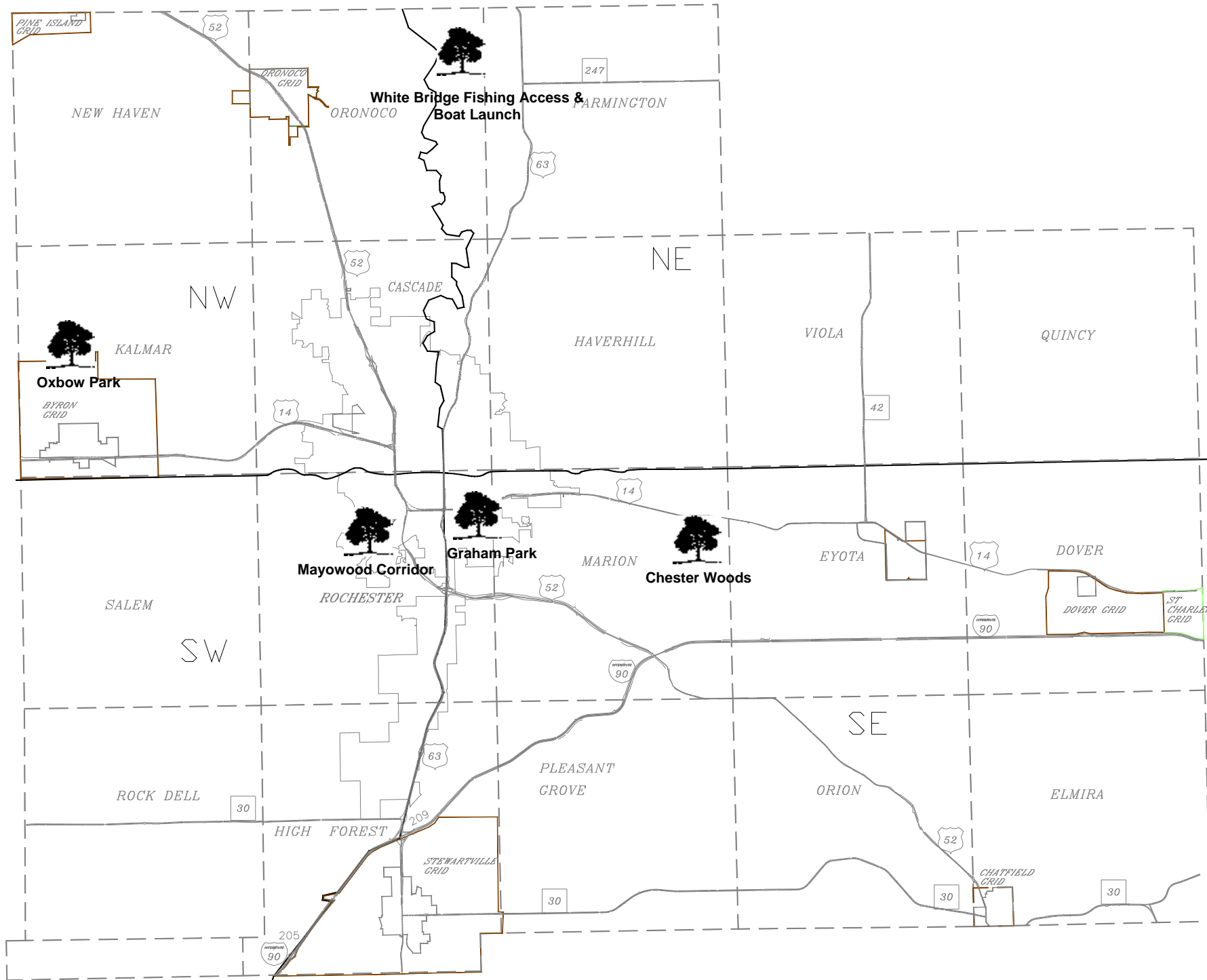
**White Bridge Fishing Access & Boat Launch** - located off Co. Rd. 12 between Oronoco and Sandy Point. Boat Launch is adjacent to Sandy Point Supper Club. Facilities: Picnicking, fishing, restrooms.



**Mayowood Corridor** - 75 acres located near Historic Mayowood. Facilities: Hiking, biking.



**Oxbow Park** - 570 acres, located north of Byron, U.S. Hwy. 14 to Byron, north on Co. Rd. 5 to jct. of Co. 4 and 105, 105 to park. Facilities: Zoo, camping, picnicking, Nature Center, hiking.



# Welcome To The Olmsted County Park System

Parks Open Every Day  
7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

For Information Call  
507 328-7070

