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ANN ARBOR'S ARGO CASCADES PARK SELECTED AS A "FRONTLINE PARK" BY CITY PARKS ALLIANCE

Washington, D.C. – Argo Cascades Park in Ann Arbor, Michigan has been named a "Frontline Park" by the national urban park advocacy organization City Parks Alliance.

Each month, City Parks Alliance recognizes a "Frontline Park" to promote and highlight inspiring examples of urban park excellence, innovation, and stewardship across the country. The program also seeks to highlight examples of the challenges facing our cities' parks as a result of shrinking municipal budgets, land use pressures, and urban neighborhood decay.

"We selected Argo Cascades for recognition because it exemplifies the power of partnerships to create and maintain urban parks that build community and make our cities sustainable and vibrant," said Catherine Nagel, Executive Director of City Parks Alliance. "We hope that, by shining the spotlight on this park, we can raise awareness about both the necessity and the promise of these kinds of partnerships to spur investment in our nation's urban parks."

Canoeing and kayaking the Huron River has long been a beloved pastime in Ann Arbor, and a canoe livery has been in operation there since the late 1800s. The most popular river trip is a 3.7 mile course that travels through the heart of the city. Prior to 2012, this river trip required boaters to paddle through a quarter-mile stagnant millrace that ended in a concrete barrier and a difficult portage. The portage made the trip difficult and inaccessible to many people.

The project that became the Argo Cascades began as an attempt to address structural deficiencies along the dam embankment and to improve river recreation opportunities. The city pursued two options to mitigate infrastructure deficiencies: soliciting bids to repair the dam's earthen embankment, and issuing an RFP for an entire embankment reconstruction that would provide boat passage. The Parks Advisory Commission and City Council ultimately approved a recommendation to build a boat bypass. The proposed design removed the millrace and replaced it with a series of drop pools, improved accessibility of the adjacent path, and addressed problems in the embankment that were identified by state officials. The design also preserved Argo Pond and Argo Dam, while greatly improving the river trip experience for canoers and kayakers, and included paving 1,500 feet of the Border-to-Border trail that was previously not ADA accessible.

Not only did Argo Cascades address a multitude of environmental and recreational issues, it has also had an immediate, positive effect on the local economy. The visitor count rose from 36,000 in 2011 to more than 50,000 in 2012, with a corresponding 58 percent increase in

revenue. With the portage gone, tubing and rafting have now been added to the list of activities that can be enjoyed on the river, attracting visitors who would rather float than paddle. Tubing rentals alone accounted for \$20,000 in new revenue in the first season.

The success of the project has had a ripple effect on other sites along the river. Today the trails, the rock drops and grassy banks are utilized by many to picnic, walk, bicycle, relax, and to listen to the water cascading over the rocks.

“We are so pleased to have Argo Cascades recognized as a ‘Frontline Park’ by City Parks Alliance,” said Colin Smith, Manager, Ann Arbor Park & Recreation Services. “This park is a testament to the opportunities that can be carved out of municipal challenges that extended beyond the Parks & Recreation Department. Argo Cascades is a partnership effort that has already proven to have far-reaching benefits, economically, environmentally and for the enjoyment of all its visitors — now and into the future.”

Argo Cascades is being featured on CPA’s website, www.cityparksalliance.org during the month of March. The “Frontline Parks” program is made possible with generous support from DuMor, Inc. (www.dumor.com) and PlayCore (www.playcore.com).

About City Parks Alliance

City Parks Alliance is the only independent, nationwide membership organization solely dedicated to urban parks. It unites and serves a growing network of hundreds of civic and community leaders, government agencies, park and recreation authorities, funders and others working to create healthy and sustainable parks and green spaces. CPA’s vision is that everyone in urban America will live within walking distance of a park that is clean, safe and vibrant.

www.cityparksalliance.org

About Ann Arbor Park & Recreation Services

Parks & Recreation Services proudly serves Ann Arbor residents by providing more than 2,000 acres of park land at 157 park sites. Employing 59 full-time persons and 300 part-time persons, the Service Unit oversees the acquisition, development, maintenance and programming of park facilities. City of Ann Arbor voters approved a six-year park millage in November 2012 that funds current, ongoing improvements to Ann Arbor’s park system, which span 2,090.78 acres.

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