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After years of work, 42-acre sanctuary set to open in Southfield

BY GINA DAMRON
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The lake has been stocked with largemouth bass, sunfish, minnows and channel catfish. Great blue herons, owls, red-tailed hawks and deer have made homes in the wooded preserve, nestled among Southfield's urban landscape.

Even mink and coyotes have been spotted in the Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve, which -- after more than five years of planning and work -- will open to the public Tuesday.

Within three years, residents will likely be allowed to fish in the lake, and kids could learn about the environment at a nature center expected to be built by 2010, said Merrie Carlock, the city's park planner and landscape architect.

She said the 42-acre preserve has cost about \$3.5-million, from engineering to construction to park development. It was paid for partly with federal and state grants.

Mayor Brenda Lawrence said the preserve compliments what Southfield already offers.

"We have rural horse farms ... we have high-rise housing, we have cookie-cutter subdivisions, we have very large custom-built estates," she said. "When it comes to environment, we have that beautiful piece of land that's wooded."

The city acquired the Carpenter Lake Park property in 2003 and, in 2005, demolished an old dam and dredged the lake, which had been washed in silt, Carlock said. The manufactured lake, which Carlock said was created decades ago, went from about a foot deep to 12 feet deep in some areas.

And last year, the city started focusing on developing the park, which has forested wetlands, meadows, oak and maple trees, and wildflowers and prairie plants, Carlock said.

"It's totally different from any of the other park facilities the city has because it's got the lake," said Gail Mazey, president of the Oakland Village Civic Association, which is made up of 14 subdivisions on the city's west side. "It's going to be kept a natural area."

Contact **GINA DAMRON** at 248-351-3293 or gdamron@freepress.com.



WILLIAM ARCHIE/DFP

Visitors can survey the Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve from this lookout point. "It's totally different from any of the other park facilities the city has because it's got the lake," said Gail Mazey, who lives nearby. "It's going to be kept a natural area."



WILLIAM ARCHIE/DFP

The preserve has nature trails, a variety of birds and wildlife, wetlands and woodlands. Soon, residents could be able to fish there. More than 14,000 native game fish species were released into the lake last fall.

IF YOU WANT TO GO

The opening ceremony of the Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve will be at 1 p.m. Tuesday at the preserve, on 10 Mile just east of Inkster in Southfield.

The preserve is open year-round from dawn to dusk. Entry is free.