**Showcasing the DNR: Mural, mural on the wall**

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From kitchens and hotel rooms to libraries and living quarters almost everywhere, humans often use images or souvenirs from visits to nature for decoration, remembrances of captivating experiences and inspiration.

We also plant beautiful gardens around our homes and workplaces to attract birds and other animals to bring nature closer to us.

Many people also spend a great deal of money to purchase camps or cottages to find places within the outdoors to recreate and relax that are situated on scenic rivers or lakes.

We live close to nature in the physical sense and oftentimes in our hearts and minds.

All these human idiosyncrasies would certainly be noted by naturalists from any extraplanetary society studying Earth. It would be interesting to discover what their rationale would be for why we do these things.

At the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, given the nature of the work we do, it is perhaps more likely that our offices might be decorated with reminders of the great times and great woods around us.

Indeed, many DNR customer service centers and other offices display outdoor artwork or taxidermy mounts of animals that inhabit our state.

A couple of recent projects to create murals on the outside walls of two DNR facilities in Delta County are beautiful works of art that take this concept a few steps farther.

These murals help to remind visitors and passersby of that close connection we at the DNR, Michiganders and visitors and humans in general have with the wonderful world of nature around us.

Both the murals were created in cooperation with the [Bonifas Arts Center](https://bonifasarts.org/) of Escanaba.

The most recent artwork was put in place and revealed this summer at the DNR’s Pocket Park on the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds in Escanaba.

“The mural is a wonderful backdrop, which otherwise was a faded building wall, that enhances the Pocket Park’s natural, wooded, parklike setting,” said the DNR’s Kristi Dahlstrom, who helps administer activities at the Pocket Park. “It also provides a great search-and-find feature for children, with many insects, wildlife and a secret fairy door to find.”

[The Escanaba Daily Press published an article](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailypress.net%2Fnews%2Flocal-news%2F2022%2F07%2Fcollaboration-creates-mural-at-pocket-park%2F&data=05%7C01%7CPepinJ%40michigan.gov%7Cce4f28a4f70a437c339408da666d4445%7Cd5fb7087377742ad966a892ef47225d1%7C0%7C0%7C637934916726970492%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Myazki5YKHOgdwwQax4MKY8pfnrUyD9YTzs5%2BFE%2Bbp4%3D&reserved=0) on the Pocket Park mural unveiling, which was attended by about 30 people. Local [television stations](https://www.upmatters.com/news/special-unveiling-held-for-new-mural-at-michigan-dnr-office/) also broadcasted [the news](https://abc10up.com/2018/06/26/mural-unveiled-at-dnr/).

In 2018, the Bonifas Art Center and the DNR first partnered to have a large-scale mural painted on the DNR’s customer service center, located along U.S. Highway 2 east of Escanaba.

The cost of that project was about $2,500, funded by the DNR’s Finance and Operations Division. The Pocket Park mural cost around $5,000 and was paid for from the facility’s budget funded through the DNR’s Marketing and Outreach Division.

“I am very happy and excited to continue this wonderful partnership with the DNR to bring together our incredible natural resources, the community spirit and the arts,” Irina Bruno, executive director of the Bonifas Art Center, told the Daily Press.

The Pocket Park mural was part of siding and carpeting improvements being made to the facility, which is used to educate the public about Michigan’s natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities like fishing, archery and target shooting.

Eleven local high school and middle school students helped paint the mural at the Pocket Park, under the direction of Staci Berg, education coordinator for the arts center, and James Finlan, the main mural artist on the project for the center.

The mural took more than a month to paint.

Jo Ann Alexander works with Dahlstrom to co-administer activities at the Pocket Park. She also works the front desk at the DNR’s Escanaba customer service center where the other mural is located – a pleasant nature scene depicting several animals, birds and water.

Like the office at the Pocket Park, the DNR customer service office in Escanaba is adorned with artwork and taxidermy mounts.

“I feel like my office lobby, the mural, the Pocket Park lobby and mural are hidden gems within the community,” Alexander said. “I would love the secret to get out and have the public enjoy the natural resources and see what an educational experience we have to offer at the facilities.”

The mural at the Pocket Park was unveiled in time for this month’s U.P. State Fair.

“We are so pleased with the outcome. The beauty of our great outdoors is now on display for all to enjoy,” Dahlstrom said. “We are grateful for the talent, time and determination of the artist and students who created this masterpiece for the Pocket Park.”

Find out more about the [DNR’s Pocket Park](https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=754&type=SPRK) and the [DNR’s customer service centers](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/about/contact/csc).

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