

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



## 2023: Heralding a new chapter for Portage Park District

The past year saw significant changes for Portage Parks, including land transfers and expanded programming and partnerships. 2023 was also the last year of its ½ mill levy, originally passed in 2014, that provides essential operating and development revenues. With campaign support from Citizens for Portage Parks, the voters of Portage County showed

they value our work and heartily supported the 10-year, 1-mill replacement/additional levy on the November ballot. The funding protects previous investments made and keeps your park system growing with new land conservation, education programs, parks and trails for all—thank you Portage County!!

### Land Transfers

The Portage County Commissioners officially transferred ownership of Towner’s Woods Park and the Franklin Connector Trail properties to the park district, who has previously leased them from the county. Ownership ensures the Park District’s long-term control over the properties and opens the door to more opportunities for conservation and trail development.

After much consideration, including public comment, the park district determined that it was not in the public interest to invest in mandated improvements to Lake Spelman. The Camp Spelman property was offered for sale and transferred to the Lake Spelman Preservation Society, LLC who will manage it under state regulation. The public was spared the cost of repairs, and a permanent conservation easement was placed on the entire property to ensure it will never be developed or divided.

The Park District acquired right-of-way for the Headwaters Trail in Mantua Township that sets the stage for Phase VIII of development. FirstEnergy granted a trail lease on almost a half mile of the former railroad corridor starting at Chamberlain Road, and another section was purchased west of Diagonal Road from a private owner. With access secured, the Park District applied for and was granted a \$500,000 grant for development of almost 1.4 miles of trail from the Clean Ohio Trails Fund.

### Ecological Restoration

Our Natural Areas staff are always working to manage and restore healthy natural areas, but occasionally we have larger projects that require outside help. The “Seasons Road Fen” is a 112-acre property along the Tinkers Creek Greenway in Streetsboro acquired by the Park District in 2022, and the grant-funded ecological restoration project includes restoring wetlands, forest and meadows, along with the closure of an abandoned oil well and removal of a trash dump.

### Dix Park Shelter and Trail

Thanks to a generous donation from our Portage Park District Foundation, a new reservable picnic shelter with grill was installed at Dix Park next to the Nature Play Area created with volunteer workers. The new ½-mile Bunting Trail was created in the meadows to provide hiking closer to the park entrance, and accessibility to trailhead facilities and shelter was improved.

Thank you for your support!

*Christine*

**Christine Craycroft, Executive Director**



**Headwaters Trail**

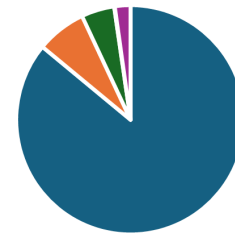


**Franklin Connector**



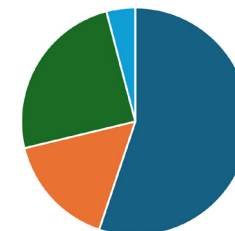
**Towner’s Woods**

## Financial Statement 2023



**Revenues**  
**\$2,104,926**

- Property Tax 1/2 mill \$1,809,934
- Grants & Donations \$147,944
- Investment Income & Royalties \$98,358
- Fees, Services & Sales \$1,986
- Refunds & Intergovernmental Revenue\* \$46,704



**Expenditures**  
**\$1,608,023**

- Personnel \$886,680
- Materials, Supplies & Services \$258,869
- Land & Capital Improvements \$396,664
- Intergovernmental Expenses\* \$65,810

\*Intergovernmental Revenues include state tax rollbacks  
\*Intergovernmental Expenses include Auditor & Treasurer fees and property taxes



# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## NATURAL AREAS

### iNaturalist 2023:

1,958 observations of living organisms; 365 additional species identified

- iNaturalist totals: 7,857 observations; 2,307 species
- Over 40 acres of native meadow seeded at **Eagle Creek Greenway** and **Bird Family Bog Preserves**
- Over 565 species documented at the **2023 Bird Family Bog Preserve Bioblitz**

Bird Family Bog Preserve Bioblitz Totals

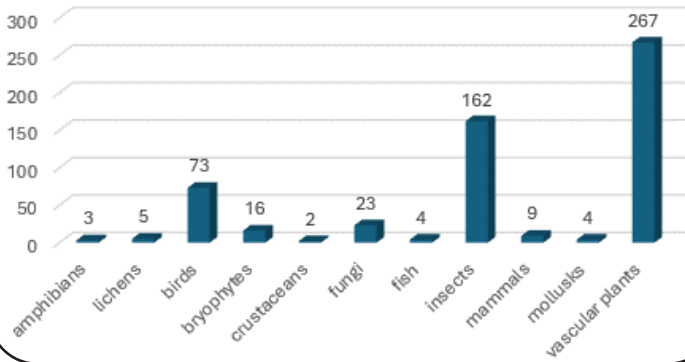


Photo: Judy Semroc

## PARK STAFF



## EDUCATION & OUTREACH

### Education Program

- 227 programs with over 5,000 participants
- Commissioned 10 Junior Rangers in the first year of the program
- Expanded programming with preschools, 4-H groups, and senior living facilities.



### Volunteer Program

- Park volunteers contributed over 843 total hours!



## RANGERS

**Conducted 852 miles of foot patrols and 820 miles of bike patrols**

- 2,147 visitor contacts
- Issued 39 warnings, conducted 21 building checks, and took 13 reports



## OPERATIONS

The Operations Department continues to maintain and care for our parks to provide outdoor spaces that everyone can enjoy!

- **Trail Lake Park:** completed maintenance drive and ADA accessible picnic overlook
- **Dix Park:** completed ADA accessible timber frame pavilion with tables and built-in grill, reworked trailhead and restroom area

