

For Fun, For Health, For LIFE!


BIRDING HOTSPOT
HIKE, BIKE OR SKI ACROSS BERLIN RESERVOIR
SHORELINE FISHING ACCESS TRAILS



BERLIN LAKE TRAIL

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  DEERFIELD, OHIO


WOODLANDS, WETLANDS & MEADOWS
SPRINGS, STREAMS & VERNAL PONDS
A BEAUTIFUL SHOW OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS




DIX PARK

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  RAVENNA, OHIO

**HISTORIC RAILROAD LINE
TURNED TRAIL**
CROSS THE LAKE ERIE & OHIO RIVER WATERSHED DIVIDE
EXPLORE FORESTS, WETLANDS & RIVERS




HEADWATERS TRAIL

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  MANTUA, HIRAM, & GARRETTSVILLE, OHIO

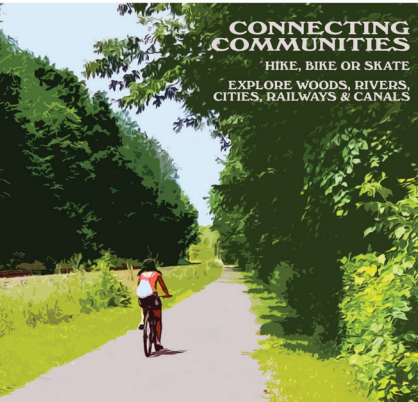
OPEN MEADOWS, DIVERSE FOREST & SUPERB WETLANDS
POLLINATOR GARDEN & SUNNY PICNICKING




MORGAN PARK

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  SHALERSVILLE TWP., OHIO

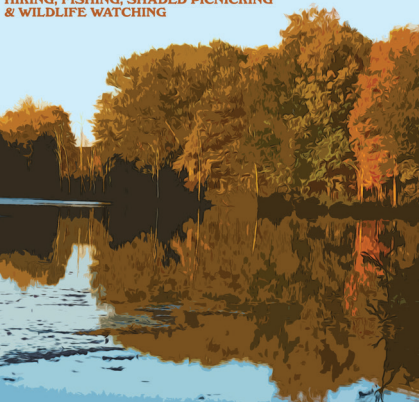
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
HIKE, BIKE OR SKATE
EXPLORE WOODS, RIVERS, CITIES, RAILWAYS & CANALS




THE PORTAGE HIKE & BIKE TRAIL

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  RAVENNA & KENT, OHIO


OASIS OF WOODS, WETLANDS & PONDS
HIKING, FISHING, SHADED PICNICKING & WILDLIFE WATCHING




SENECA PONDS

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  STREETSBORO, OHIO

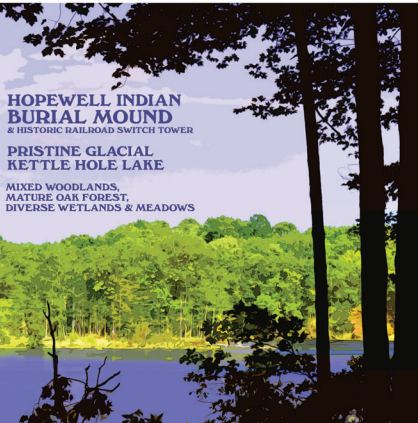
MATURE WOODS & BEAUTIFUL WETLANDS
HIGH QUALITY HEADWATER STREAMS
EQUESTRIAN TRAILS




SHAW WOODS

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  RAVENNA, OHIO

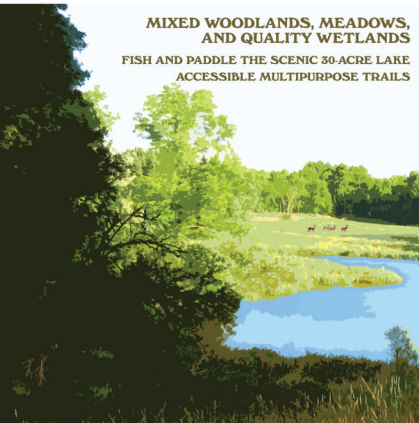
HOPEWELL INDIAN BURIAL MOUND & HISTORIC RAILROAD SWITCH TOWER
PRISTINE GLACIAL KETTLE HOLE LAKE
MIXED WOODLANDS, MATURE OAK FOREST, DIVERSE WETLANDS & MEADOWS




TOWNER'S WOODS

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  KENT, OHIO

MIXED WOODLANDS, MEADOWS, AND QUALITY WETLANDS
FISH AND PADDLE THE SCENIC 30-ACRE LAKE
ACCESSIBLE MULTIPURPOSE TRAILS



TRAIL LAKE

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  STREETSBORO, OHIO

FOR GENERATIONS TO COME,
YOUR PORTAGE PARKS!

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



2021: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PORTAGE PARKS



It’s been another great year for your Portage Park District, celebrating our 30th anniversary growing and improving your parks and trails. We’re happy to be able to help conserve Portage County’s exceptional natural heritage while providing places for all to enjoy--especially important when so many other recreational opportunities were unavailable during the pandemic. Whether or not there’s a need for social distancing, your parks are common ground for all to freely experience the beauty, peace, solace, and joy that comes from communing in nature.

We are fortunate to have the dedicated and excellent staff, board of park commissioners, volunteers, donors and foundation trustees who believe in our critical mission and are willing to lean-in to make our vision a reality. A special welcome to Judge Patricia Smith who appoints our Board of Commissioners, including our newest member in 2021, Kurt Ruehr.

In 2021, we completed Phase VII of the Headwaters Trail at the edge of Mantua Village, setting the stage for the next phase heading west towards Aurora.

Our newest major acquisition, the Eagle Creek Greenway Phase I in Hiram Township, conserves 325 beautiful acres protecting and improving the Eagle Creek and Silver Creek corridors and their associated wetlands, forest and meadows. Miles of trails are possible, including connections between the Headwaters Trail and Hiram College properties.

Portage Parks’ Natural Areas Stewardship team continues to manage and restore parklands for healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Our Operations team ensures safe, clean, well-maintained parks and trails year-round, while making ongoing trails and amenities improvements. Our Public Engagement team provides a multitude of creative, interesting opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to connect, learn, enjoy and engage in our parks, both in-person and virtually.

There is tremendous potential and need for parks, trails and conservation in Portage County in the coming years, and time is of the essence. We’re planning for a bright, green future--we hope you’ll join us in Your Portage Parks!

Yours in conservation,

Chris
Christine Craycroft, Executive Director

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2021

ALL FUNDS			
Beginning Cash Balance	\$ 1,658,643		
REVENUES		EXPENDITURES	
Levy (1/2 mill property tax)	\$ 1,757,214	Personnel	\$ 784,648
Donations	\$40,000	Contract Services	\$119,684
Grants	\$ 1,116,713	Materials & Supplies	\$ 126,426
Interest	\$ 9,229	Land Purchase	\$ 1,116,398
Rentals & Royalties	\$ 28,388	Engineering & Construction	\$ 246,715
Fees, Fines, Services & Sales	\$ 1,492	Equipment & Vehicles	\$ 78,216
Refunds, Rollbacks, Credit Card Incentives	\$ 39,056	Property Taxes	\$ 14,211
TOTAL	\$2,992,093	TOTAL	\$ 2,486,297
		Ending Cash Balance	\$ 1,981,172



ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS

The job of the engagement team is to ensure there are plenty of opportunities for the public to hear about the great things we are doing and share their feedback. We also work with dedicated volunteers who share their time and talents to extend our reach. Volunteers help monitor trails, clean up litter, fill kiosks with brochures, assist with education programming and lots more!

You can find our team online, in the parks, at community events and speaking to groups about the great work being doing in Portage County.



EXPANDING OUR REACH

Engagement staff work to answer the public’s questions about the park district, provide timely updates about park improvements or closures, share education program offerings, and enthusiastically encourage the exploration of our parks!

Our newsletter is read monthly by over **4,000 park users** to get up to date park and program information. Social media channels reach **4,720 users** to share our excitement about the natural world and encourage exploration of Portage Parks.



71 ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS 611 VOLUNTEER HOURS

During 2021 our volunteers served in a variety of areas to help beautify parks and enhance visitor experiences. Volunteers shared expertise and knowledge by presenting educational programs on invasive species, Portage County history, native species such as moths and bees, and engaging programs for young learners. Our volunteers also got their hands dirty conducting trash cleanups, installing tree tubes to protect new seedlings, and planting native plants in our pollinator garden. On a regular basis, our Trail Ambassadors (dedicating **355 volunteer hours** in 2021) serve as the eyes and ears of PPD by monitoring trail conditions and reporting areas where assistance is needed. Some of our volunteers remain behind the scenes by photographing plant and wildlife, interpreting data, and voicing over videos for public enjoyment. Whether they are marching in a parade, waving to you as Owlbert our mascot, or maintaining geocaches hidden for your enjoyment, our volunteers care for Portage Parks in unique and valuable ways!

350 WILD HIKERS

The Wild Hikes program encourages participants to explore Portage Parks by offering rewards for each years designated hikes when complete. The program continues to grow annually and many complete the challenge year after year.

Photo: Jane Preston Rose



EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

Connecting you with the natural wonders in your Portage Parks and offering programs that teach our rich natural heritage is the core of our education mission. In 2021, we continued to follow and adjust to public health guidelines to keep you safe as we returned to in-person programming. The fellowship of exploring our natural world with others is good for both the body and soul! Virtual programming will continue to have a place in our education program, as it enables us to connect with park friends who may be unable to attend our on-site events.

Our education program was enhanced this year with the addition of Becca Rodhe to our team! She has developed monthly Owlbert Adventures for our young naturalists ages 3-6 that are designed to instill a sense of wonder and feed their curiosity about our natural world with hands-on experiences.

YOUR FAVORITE PROGRAMS

In-person Programs

- Tree Identification
- A Concert of Crickets & Katydid
- Stream Exploration
- Bird Walk at Morgan Park
- Owlbert's Adventures

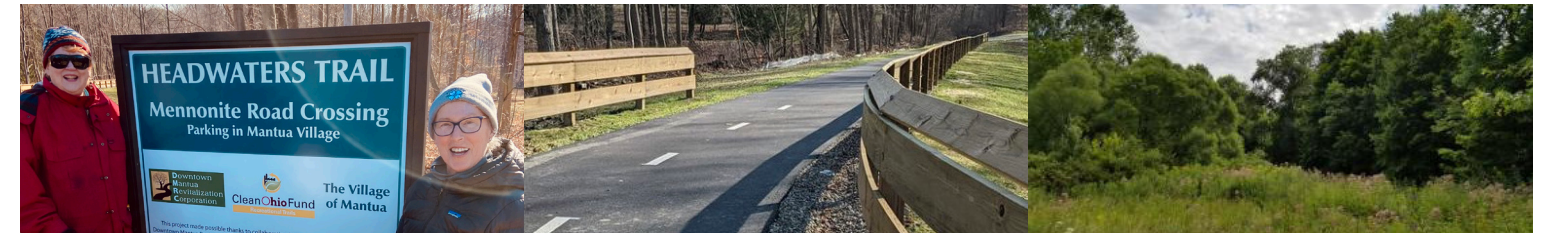
Virtual Programs

- Hiding in Plain Sight: Amazing Camouflage
- Despicable Weeds
- Tackling Invasives
- Creating Habitat at Home
- Ohio's Prehistoric Cultures

1,847 PROGRAM ATTENDEES 94 IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

We expanded our **partnerships** to engage new park friends this year.

- Our first annual Halloween in the Park with the **Autism Society of Greater Akron** was such fun!
- We launched bi-monthly guided senior hikes in cooperation with the **Portage County Senior Center**.
- Our Park Rx health partners including **Portage County Health District, University Hospitals, Sequoia Wellness, NEOMED, and WIC** continue to provide support and programming to help you reach your physical and mental health goals.
- **Reed Memorial Library's** mascot Cornelius teamed up with Owlbert to promote reading and new trail discovery this fall.
- The **Streetsboro Fire Department** used Trail Lake for ice safety training and reminded park visitors that no ice is safe ice.
- Law enforcement professionals from across the county taught kids to fish at our Fish with a Cop event.



OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Along with our routine maintenance, cleaning and inspection of facilities, 2021 was another exciting year for growth and development at the Portage Park District. We integrated new property acquisitions and their maintenance and security needs with our ongoing efforts at improving existing parks and facilities.

Our work included management of the Headwaters Trail VII development, installing additional wayfinding and trail confidence markers at Morgan Park, trailhead improvements at Dix Park, benches and tables added to Headwaters Trail and Trail Lake as well as continued planning and trail improvements at all parks.

HEADWATERS TRAIL PHASE VII

The ribbon was cut on the Winter Solstice on a short but critical link in the Headwaters Trail in Mantua. Phase VII extends the trail and connects it to Mennonite Road, 25 feet above trail grade, via an accessible ramp with railings.

This connection allows users to safely access the trail to and from Mennonite Road and sets the stage for the next phase of trail extending to Chamberlain Road, about 2.7 miles away.

The project was made possible with a \$161,000 grant from the **Clean Ohio Trails Fund** and a matching \$10,000 cash contribution from the **Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation** along with Park District funds.





CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The park district continues to monitor, improve and restore our natural areas to protect our water quality and native habitats for generations to come.

Kent State University's Conservation Biology and Local Flora students, along with other researchers from **Kent State** and **Miami Universities** utilized our natural areas for study, providing meaningful contributions to our conservation efforts. The **Ohio Department of Natural Areas and Preserves** aided us in our continuing effort to inventory and document plant species occurring in the park district. Public use of iNaturalist continues to grow, further deepening our knowledge of the biodiversity harbored by our parks.

4,433 OBSERVATIONS

4,433 observations of living organisms have been made at PPD on iNaturalist by 222 users. **867 total plant species** documented at PPD to date, including over 200 plant species documented for the first time at PPD in 2021.



15,770 TREES PLANTED

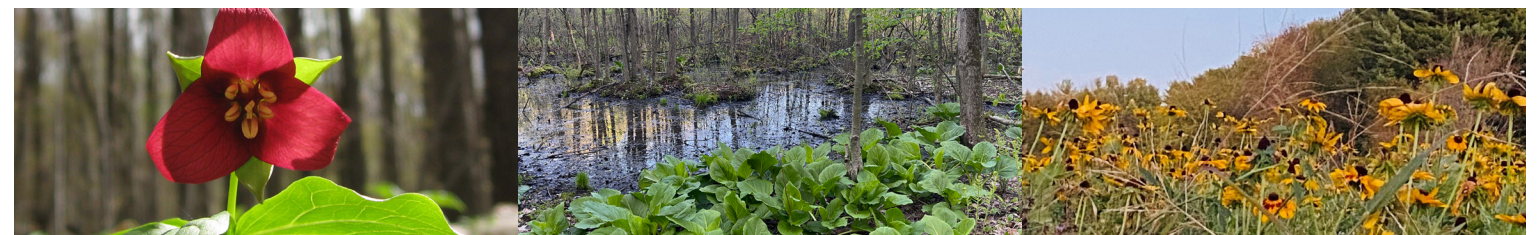
15,770 trees planted in 2021 to reforest over 30 acres at Eagle Creek Greenway Preserve and Trail Lake Park through generous donations from the **Portage Park District Foundation** and **Portage Soil and Water Conservation District**.

Kent Roosevelt High School's Forestry and Landscape Management, Kent State University and park district volunteers planted over 3,300 tree seedlings to reforest 5 acres at Trail Lake Park.

Hiram College students and **James H. Barrow Field Station** staff, along with park district volunteers, helped to plant over 12,200 tree seedlings in the spring at Eagle Creek Greenway Preserve, including 170 potted trees planted by the 2022 class of **Leadership Portage County**.

120 ACRES IMPROVED

Over 9 acres of major invasive shrub populations were controlled at Dix Park, Towner's Woods and Trail Lake Park through PPD's membership in the **Crooked River Cooperative Weed Management Agreement**. 120 acres were managed to control of invasive plants, improving native biodiversity and protecting sensitive habitats.



EAGLE CREEK GREENWAY PRESERVE CONSERVATION

The Park District was fortunate to be able to partner with the Carlisle family in Hiram Township to acquire and conserve 325 acres of important natural areas. The property lies between SR 82 and the Headwaters Trail and adjacent to 137 acres of conserved land owned by Hiram College. Silver Creek and Eagle Creek course through the future park which includes diverse forests, meadows and wetlands.

325 ACRES CONSERVED; including 134 ACRES OF FOREST, 59 ACRES OF WETLAND

In true collaborative fashion, conservation-minded landowners and siblings, Jane Hill, Stan Carlisle, and Gayle Lane on behalf of Gary Miller, sold their property below appraised value to help match the \$1.14 million grant from the **Clean Ohio Greenspace Fund** and other funds from the Park District, **Park District Foundation** and in-kind volunteer hours from **Hiram College**.

While the property is not yet open, you can learn more by attending a Preserve Peek and take a staff guided hike.

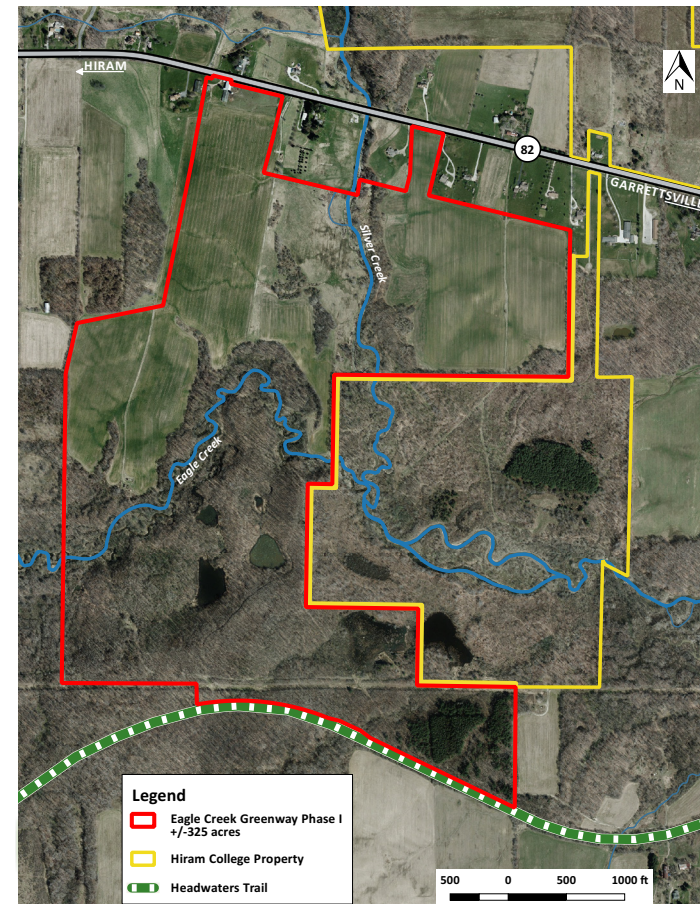


Photo: George Rose

Eagle Creek Greenway



Photo: Bill Graham

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