

SUMMER 2007

NATURALLY SPEAKING

LAKE METROPARKS

Keeping Lake County Green... and Blue *Lake Metroparks Protects Land and Water*

By Vince Urbanski, Environmental Planner

Established 49 years ago, Lake Metroparks maintains a genuine commitment to the community and is an integral part of Lake County. Portions of two state designated wild and scenic rivers – and many tributaries – flow through and are protected by Lake Metroparks. In addition to protecting watersheds and open space, Lake Metroparks annually provides more than two million visitors with countless recreational and educational experiences at diverse facilities including an agriculturally themed park, a nature center, a cross-country ski center, a state-of-the-art education and wildlife rehabilitation center, two golf courses, a 4.8-mile paved bike/hike trail, and five parks on Lake Erie's shoreline.

The Lake Erie shoreline is of particular interest to the park district. A 1990 strategic planning initiative made it clear that one of the world's largest bodies of freshwater was under-represented in the agency's programming and conservation efforts. To correct this, Lake Metroparks entered into cooperative agreements with local communities to enhance or create four lakefront parks to add to an already existing park. Currently, these parks represent over two miles of publicly accessible lakefront.

Lately, park district staff have been participating in the Lake County Coastal Development Project spearheaded by the county's planning commission. The Coastal Planning Committee has been meeting since 2001 to develop a plan that will maximize Lake Erie's environmental, economic and recreational value for Lake County. The major achievement of the project to date has been the publication of a Coastal Development Plan – essentially a road map to projects that the group believes will improve Lake County's coastal environment.

*Lakeshore Reservation
Photos by Jolene Pilarczyk*

