

LAKE METROPARKS

An integral part of Lake County's

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

LAKE METROPARKS HAS ENJOYED A STRONG RELATIONSHIP with its community partners over the past five decades, enhancing the quality of life of Lake County residents and protecting unique natural resources. We trust you consider us a friend that delivers on promises made. In the following pages, please enjoy a snapshot of the scope and services of your park district.

We take public accountability seriously and understand the need to remain sensitive to the ever-changing economic conditions and demands we all face. Lake Metroparks will never take the support of the people we serve for granted. We have a remarkable track record of augmenting local tax monies with outside grants, private contributions and sponsorships. Lake Metroparks has been recognized on the local, state and national levels for its fiscal responsibility with...

- Numerous awards from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States & Canada including 21 Certificates of Excellence in financial reporting and awards for workers' compensation, safety & health programs
- Numerous Auditor of State Awards including "Making Your Tax Dollars Count"
- Governor's Excellence in Workers' Compensation Award
- Consistent "clean" compliance audits from the Auditor of State's office

In 2011, a ten-year strategic plan was completed to identify how to best continue to serve our constituents. Additional input and participation will be sought as we continue planning to meet the community's changing needs and expectations so that Lake Metroparks remains relevant to you and your family.

Anchored in the results of an opinion survey of Lake County residents, the ten-year strategic plan is a blueprint for the park district to follow into the next decade. We remain committed to fulfilling expectations to protect the county's natural resources, connect greenspaces with trails and strengthen partnerships with like-minded agencies and neighbors.

J. DELL PHOTOGRAPHY



Expanding access through Park Improvements

Through an ongoing planning process, Lake Metroparks carefully identifies land for protection and improvement projects that preserve unique natural resources and give park visitors safe, appropriate access. Here are just a few examples of recent projects:

GULLY BROOK PARK

In 1990, the Lake Metroparks Openspace Opportunities Master Plan (1990-2010) identified Gully Brook as property that should be protected by Lake Metroparks. In the 1990s, Willoughby Natural Areas Conservancy supported the conservation of Gully Brook. With federal and local funding, the park was completed and opened in 2011.

More than a mile of Gully Brook and its watershed are protected within this park, providing a refuge for a variety of plants and wildlife species. Gully Brook Park protects a valley, stream, wetland and forest. Its unique natural features, ravines and wild places are intertwined with local history. For nearly 100 years, nature enthusiasts of all ages have sought inspiration and knowledge in the Gully Brook valley.

Today, visitors can enjoy more than a mile of improved trails (pictured bottom left) and the chance to reconnect with nature. The park also features picnic areas, a reservable shelter, playground (pictured bottom right) and restrooms.

GIRDLED ROAD RESERVATION

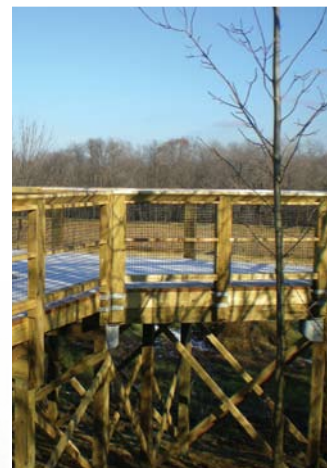
For much of the last century, the property now called Skok Meadow had been in agricultural production. This area, situated along Girdled Road Reservation's western boundary, was home to prized cattle and a large expanse of cool season grasses on which they would graze. Agricultural lands represent an important piece in the regional habitat puzzle, and are important to bobolinks, meadowlarks and numerous butterfly species. Lake Metroparks is actively managing the grassland habitat at Skok Meadow by enhancing it with a mix of warm season grasses and flowering plants (pictured top left). Hikers are invited to explore the one-mile loop pedestrian-only trail that traces the perimeter of Skok Meadow and features a pond, views of the Big Creek Valley, and a new wooden observation deck (pictured top right) that overlooks the meadow.

PLEASANT VALLEY PARK

In 2007, with financial assistance from the Ohio Division of Wildlife, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the Ohio EPA, the park district acquired Pleasant Valley Park. After an extensive clean-up operation and intensive planning, Lake Metroparks is in the process of restoring this section of Chagrin River floodplain. By expanding the riparian forest, restoring a three-acre wetland and creating a meadow, this effort will improve water quality, offer increased floodplain storage to the Chagrin River and improve wildlife habitat. This project is another example of your park system protecting a unique natural area for this and future generations.



TOM ADAIR



J.DELL PHOTOGRAPHY



J.DELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Lake Metroparks enhances visitor experiences and expands access to parks with carefully maintained trails, scenic overlooks, shelters, playgrounds, picnic areas, restrooms and parking areas.

Protecting unique Natural Resources

Lake Metroparks continues to manage Lake County's unique natural resources with an eye toward biological diversity and the protection of critical habitat. We strive to balance the needs of recreational park users with careful planning and active resource management. Evolving methods including state-of-the-art technology are used. Geographic information systems and digital mapping utilize a multitude of physical and biological data sets.

Through the year, professional natural resources staff actively manage diverse habitats throughout the county. Techniques like prescribed burning of meadows and GPS mapping have greatly increased both effectiveness and efficiency in managing and tracking resources.

The construction, maintenance and monitoring of several hundred artificial nest structures continues to be an important part of wildlife habitat enhancement and a source of unparalleled wildlife watching opportunities for park visitors. In addition, Lake Metroparks continues to stock ponds throughout the park system with fish and has continued its annual stocking of Paine Creek and Veterans Park pond.

The monitoring and treatment of invasive, exotic plant species is a high priority. Efforts to control the spread of these species have been important in stabilizing biological diversity in our parks. Although it will never be possible to completely eliminate these invaders, we can have very positive impacts by managing exotic plant infestations, especially in critical habitats.

BIG CREEK STREAM RESTORATION

Work was completed at Helen Hazen Wyman Park to stabilize and restore a severely impacted and potentially unsafe section of stream bank along the Big Creek. To mitigate the effects of erosion, the stream bank was sculpted with reinforced rock structures and newly-planted trees. The result is a protected, ecologically diverse area for the enjoyment of park visitors and an improved stream habitat (pictured in background).

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORIES

Park staff conduct annual surveys of the 8,000 acres of park properties. These surveys consist of visually monitoring all park land and management projects. Studies are conducted to examine the presence of all types of plants and animals from breeding birds, mammals and insects to common reptiles and amphibians as well as rare plants and invasive species.

As a result, Lake Metroparks has extensive biological inventories that help staff determine how best to manage natural areas and design programs for visitors that illustrate the natural wonders in the parks.



Kirtland's warbler

JOHN POGACNIK



Paine Creek at Indian Point Park

Enjoying the outdoors

Hit the Trail!

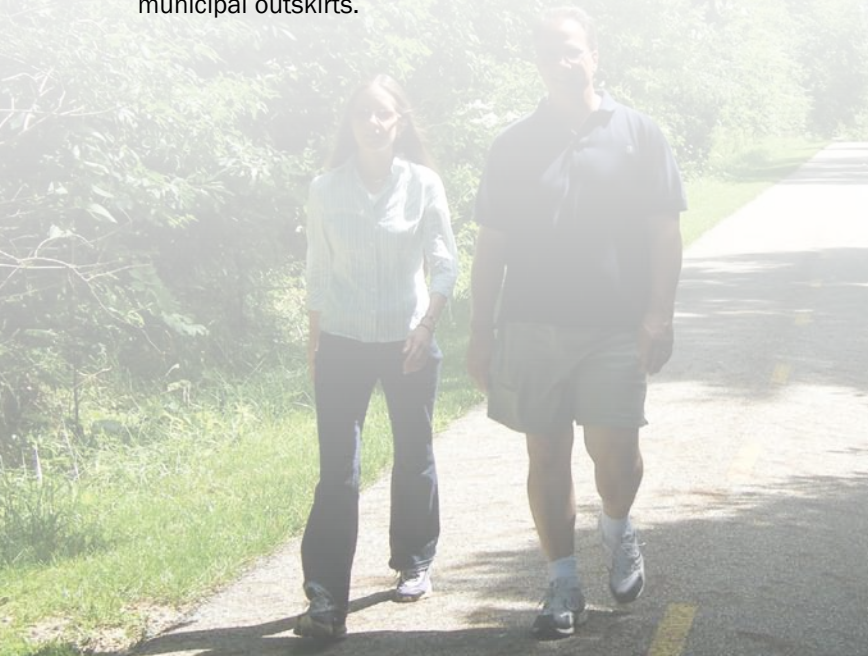
Lake Metroparks maintains nearly 50 miles of multipurpose trails spanning through parts of nearly every township and municipality in Lake County, providing countless opportunities for walkers, hikers, joggers, bikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders. Not every trail is suitable for all activities; each trail is carefully evaluated and designated for appropriate activities for the safety of all users.

Hiking is one of the most popular forms of outdoor leisure—surveys suggest that one in three Americans rate it as one of their three favorite forms of outdoor recreation. Hiking combines several pursuits—interests in scenery, wildlife, discovery and solitude—all in a low-impact form of healthy activity.

Lake Metroparks' ten-year strategic plan identifies priorities to add trails and create trail linkages. Last year, Lake Metroparks installed a 1.36-mile loop trail at the new Gully Brook Park, and added 2.36 miles of trail at Girdled Road Reservation (a 1.82-mile loop trail with shortcut at Skok Meadow and a .54-mile section in the southern section of the park). A need often mentioned in outdoor recreation surveys is for multi-use trails and "connections"—trails that connect to each other, trails that connect parks within communities and connections from communities to municipal outskirts.

Lake Metroparks has sought to meet these needs with developments like the Greenway Corridor hiking/biking trail system. With its 4.8-mile length from Painesville to Concord Township, the trail system provides a link to the neighboring 12.4-mile Maple Highlands Trail in Geauga County, helping to link these important resources together. The Kirtland Connector Trail, a 1.5-mile trail, is another great example of a trail providing a connection. This trail allows hikers to travel from Penitentiary Glen Reservation through to City of Kirtland municipal property. Last year, a short (.16-mile) connector trail was added between two shelters at Chapin Forest Reservation. Future Lake Metroparks trail development plans include the construction of an approximately half-mile-long connector trail from Helen Hazen Wyman Park on the Concord Township/Painesville Township line to the Greenway Corridor.

Lake Metroparks places a very high priority on the needs of special populations. We are particularly interested in providing recreation opportunities for the economically disadvantaged, physically disabled and the growing elderly population. Many of the trails throughout Lake Metroparks were designed and constructed with special populations in mind. This is evident in the location, layout, grade and surface material that the park system uses in developing trails where they are feasible.



Learning about nature

Educational Services

With fascinating nature-related subjects from astronomy to wildlife and outstanding venues ranging from Farmpark to the Children's Schoolhouse to the Environmental Learning Center and Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park, Lake Metroparks offers a wide range of educational programming to children and young adults in northeast Ohio. Programs are developed with the advice of local teachers and are aligned with state academic standards. Park staff also visit schools if students cannot come to the parks. Subjects range from backyard critters, seasonal discoveries, geology, soils, stars and much more.

- Children's Schoolhouse Nature Park is celebrating 20 years of environmental education having presented programs to almost 300,000 guests! Last year alone, more than 5,000 children visited the schoolhouse or had one of the park naturalists visit their school.
- Annually, more than 70,000 students participate in specific educational programs throughout the parks and countless others learned about the outdoors through less structured programs.

- Last year, Lake Metroparks Farmpark offered 30 different programs and more than 31,000 children learned about where their food and fiber come from by visiting this award-winning facility. Additionally, 595 summer campers enjoyed the facility last year.
- Environmental programs at the Children's Schoolhouse reached more than 9,300 students in 2010 and almost 1,000 children participated in day camps at the historic schoolhouse.
- The 3,400 visitors to Bug Day at Penitentiary Glen Reservation last year learned about the importance of insects of all shapes and sizes.
- Through the Trees for Wildlife program, park naturalists have visited approximately 3,000 first graders every year for 24 consecutive years. The program teaches the importance of trees—for all the animals that use them as food and shelter and for people too! Each child receives a tree seedling of their very own to take home and plant.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

Outdoor education is the focus of Lake Metroparks' state-of-the-art Environmental Learning Center (pictured below). Research continues to find correlations between exposure to nature and academic achievement, increased creativity, cooperation, social skills, problem-solving and self-esteem. Working with public and private school systems serving preschool through college students, this facility is dedicated to discovery-based education in both science and local history for students throughout the region. It is equipped with high-tech laboratories, classrooms and an observatory. This facility is open for scheduled classes, pre-registered programs or by appointment only.



Experiencing adventures

Outdoor Pursuits

Nature has a restorative impact on the body and spirit. It provides a setting for life-long educational and recreational pursuits and priceless personal experiences to be shared with others. Even with time at a premium in our modern world, Lake Metroparks offers these experiences to fit into your schedule.

Lake Metroparks offers an extensive variety of nature-based programs throughout the year, available for just about any group of people, individual or outdoor interest. In fact, more than 86,000 people participated last year in more than 3,000 programs. Several of these, like the many boating education and safety programs offered during the summer at Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park, have received national awards and have been recognized as models to be emulated. In 2011, Lake Metroparks Farmpark was voted by readers of *The News-Herald* as the Best Family Destination in Lake County. If you like to be outdoors, we've got a program for you! On top of that, Lake Metroparks hosts various special events every year and welcomed more than 162,000 visitors last year for great outdoor experiences like Country Lights, Earth Day, Halloween Hayrides and Bug Day.



BLAIR BROS. PHOTOGRAPHY



J.DELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Lake Metroparks' golf courses are A Cut Above the Rest

Lake Metroparks has two golf courses where visitors play more than 60,000 rounds annually—Pine Ridge Country Club in Wickliffe and Erie Shores Golf Course in Madison. The two courses provide a fair challenge to any golfer, boasting plush fairways with manicured greens and continuous cart paths. In 2011, Pine Ridge was selected as the best golf course in Lake County by readers of *The News-Herald*. Pine Ridge offers the public an affordable golfing experience in a beautiful country club setting in western Lake County. Its eastern counterpart, Erie Shores Golf Course, has undergone major upgrades to include irrigation and drainage systems, bringing the facility up to par.

The 120-acre Erie Shores course has many features of a natural setting often associated with a public park. The course provides open space for a variety of plants and animals and has received the National Wildlife Federation Habitat Certification for its butterfly gardens and is a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. Several holes wind their way around a wetland at the south end of the park and complement the

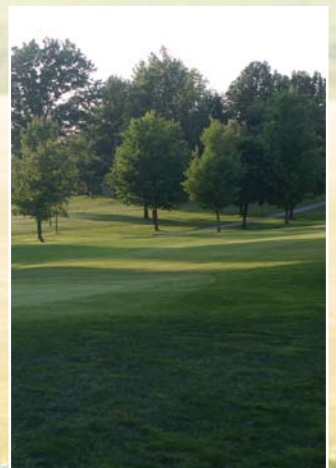
rolling landscape. Breezes off Lake Erie cool this course in summer and keep it playable in the winter and continuous cart paths, irrigated greens, tees and fairways, and a comprehensive yardage marking system throughout the course enhance the golf experience.

Lake Metroparks has planted a number of flowering meadows throughout both courses to further enhance an already beautiful environment. Both courses provide clean, safe, friendly and well-manicured facilities. Fees are very affordable and reduced rates are available for seniors, students and active military. Specials throughout the year offer added value.

Like so many plants and animals, golfers throughout Lake County are happy to say goodbye to our annual blanket of snow and welcome the warmer temperatures of spring. So come on out and hit the links!



J.DELL PHOTOGRAPHY



J.DELL PHOTOGRAPHY

LAKE METROPARKS

Now and for future generations

Wherever you are in Lake County, you're never more than 10 minutes from exploring and enjoying Lake Metroparks.

Quality outdoor experiences and family-oriented fun are available every day of the year. With miles of trails, picnic areas and visitor centers located within more than 8,000 acres of fields, streams and forests, Lake Metroparks offers endless opportunities for all ages.



Contributors: Tom Adair, Ann Bugada, Ken Kleppel, Steve Madewell, Nancy Martin, Sharon Metzung, Meredith Nicoletti, John Pogacnik, Paul Palagyi, Sharon Sharpnack, Eric Stechshulte, Kathy Terrell, Vince Urbanski, Tom Weiss

LAKEMETROPARKS.COM