

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Heliopsis helianthoides
(Early/False Sunflower),
The PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail



THANK YOU

The mission of the Portage Park District is to conserve Portage County's natural heritage and provide opportunities for its appreciation and enjoyment.

Dear Park Friends,

2017 was another exciting year of growth for your Portage Parks! Thanks to grants, donations and partners that leverage our levy dollars, we've increased our managed parklands by over 25% with the addition of three properties in Kent, Brimfield and Streetsboro that have critical conservation value, (bringing our total to over 2,000 acres). We've acquired over a mile of additional trail right of way for a future extension of the Headwaters Trail in Mantua.

Our park family is growing too. In 2017 we welcomed two new full time staff, three seasonal staff and one intern along with a new Park Commissioner on our governing board. Our primary partner in park support, the all-volunteer Portage Park District Foundation, continues to raise friends and funds on our behalf, and of course we still rely on dozens of volunteers and partners--we couldn't do it without you!



Besides the new acquisitions, we're improving our parks and trails in various locations, including a couple of special projects by Eagle Scouts and their troops. 2018 will be just as dynamic, as we create plans for our new parks, build more trails, replace old structures and energize our public education and recreation program offerings. The occasional growing pain is worth it as we witness people of all ages and abilities enjoying our parks and know that we're all making a priceless contribution to our community. For Fun, For Health, For LIFE! That's what it's all about.

Hope to see you on the trail!

Christine Craycroft
Executive Director



Portage Park District Board of Commissioners
L to R: Scott McKinney, Deborah Petrone, Allan Orashan, Thomas Hrdy, and Charles Engelhart. The board is appointed by Judge Robert Berger, Portage County Probate Court.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2017 ALL FUNDS

Beginning Cash Balance	\$1,542,696		
REVENUES		EXPENDITURES	
Levy (1/2 mil property tax levy)	\$1,701,546	Personnel	\$447,541
Donations	\$39,307	Contract Services	\$153,539
Grants	\$2,754,118	Materials & Supplies	\$71,563
Interest	\$21,112	Land Purchase	\$3,417,464
Rentals & Royalties	\$10,572	Construction	\$70,315
Fees & Sales	\$5,344	Equipment & Vehicles	\$85,174
Refunds & Insurance Settlements	\$7,040	Property Assessments	\$5,782
TOTAL	\$4,539,039	TOTAL	\$4,251,377
		Ending Cash Balance	\$1,830,358

ABOUT PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT

OVER **2,000 ACRES**

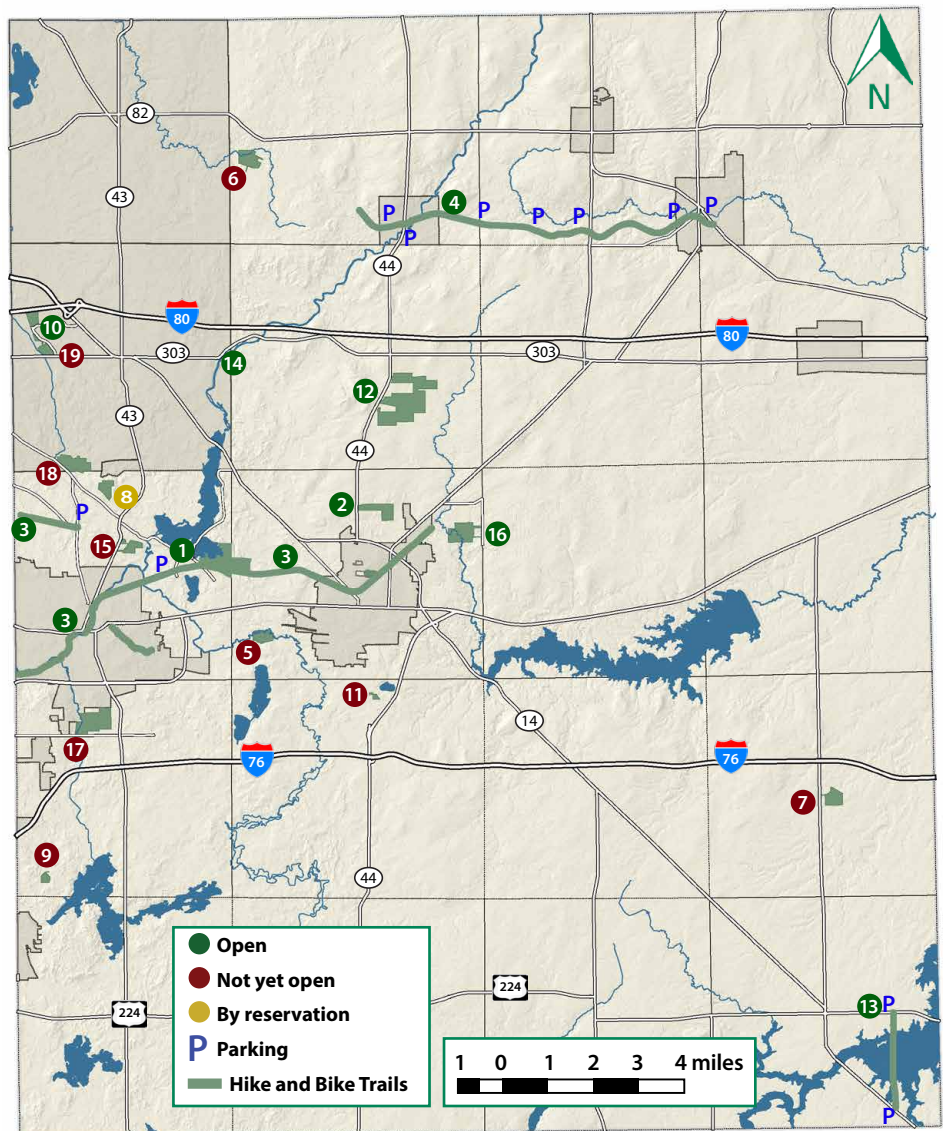


9 MILES
OF EQUESTRIAN TRAILS



14 MILES
OF HIKE & BIKE TRAILS

- 1 TOWNER'S WOODS PARK**
2264 Ravenna Rd., Franklin Twp.
- 2 DIX PARK**
7318 ST RT 44, Ravenna Twp.
- 3 THE PORTAGE HIKE AND BIKE TRAIL**
535 Cleveland Rd., Ravenna; 1557 Lake Rockwell Rd., Franklin Twp.; 784 Judson Rd., Franklin Twp.
- 4 HEADWATERS TRAIL**
4633 Mill St., Mantua Village; 10480 ST RT 700, Hiram Twp.; 10647 Freedom St., Garrettsville Village; 10482 South St., Garrettsville Village
- 5 BREAKNECK CREEK PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 6 CHAGRIN HEADWATERS PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 7 WALTER PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 8 CAMP SPELMAN**
Open only by permit for group camping or special events
- 9 GRAY BIRCH BOG PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 10 SENECA PONDS PARK**
515 Mondial Pkwy, Streetsboro
- 11 DIX PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 12 MORGAN PARK**
8828 ST RT 44, Shalersville Twp.
- 13 BERLIN LAKE TRAIL**
10228 ST RT 224, Deerfield Twp.; 232 Kirkbride Rd., Deerfield Twp.
- 14 RED FOX BOAT ACCESS - UPPER CUYAHOGA STATE SCENIC RIVER**
9263 Price Rd., Shalersville Twp., Parking and safe access for paddlers
- 15 FRANKLIN BOG PRESERVE**
Open only for guided hikes
- 16 SHAW WOODS**
7075 Beery Rd., Ravenna Twp.
- 17 18 19 NEW PARKS IN PROGRESS**
Open only for guided hikes



Visit portageparkdistrict.org for more information on park amenities and accessible trails.

HERE WE GROW

Property Acquisitions

Portage Park District works to acquire properties that will protect and preserve important natural areas and provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Portage County. In 2017, over 425 acres were acquired for conservation and recreation.

Kent Bog Expansion*

Adjacent to the Tom S. Cooperrider Kent Bog State Nature Preserve, Portage Parks acquired 215 acres spanning Kent and Brimfield protecting over 50 acres of high quality sphagnum peat bog. This property features old fields, mature woods, and over a ½ mile of Plum Creek, a tributary to the Cuyahoga River. Park staff, interns and KSU students have already been at work with conservation research and tree planting projects to restore the floodplain. Potential uses include hiking and mountain biking trails, natural play areas and picnicking.



Tinkers Creek Greenway*

In Streetsboro, 189 acres in 2 tracts were acquired within the Tinkers Creek Greenway, a complex system of high quality bogs, fens, forests and the headwaters to Tinkers Creek, the largest tributary to the Cuyahoga. The protected lands help to buffer existing state nature preserves but also have great potential for education and recreation, including accessible trails, primitive camping, fishing and paddling on a 30 acre lake.



Photo: Brad Bolton

Headwaters Trail Corridor*

Along the Headwaters Trail Corridor, Portage Park District acquired properties with 1.2 miles of future Headwaters Trail right of way in Mantua. The Headwaters Trail is a limestone-paved trail built on the former Cleveland-Mahoning Railroad line between Mantua and Garrettsville which provides a safe and scenic route for hikers, bikers and horseback riders. It passes by beautiful farmland and forests, steep ravines and wetlands, including State Nature Preserves and the Upper Cuyahoga State Scenic River.

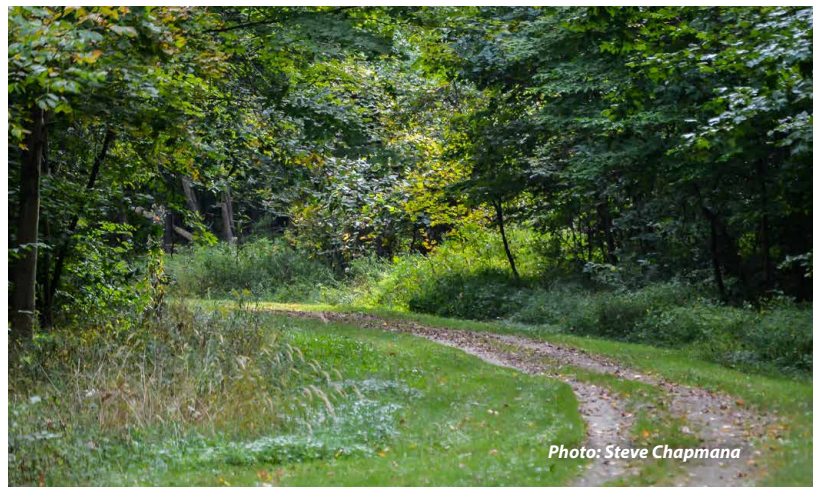


Photo: Steve Chapman

* Park names are not official until approved by the Board of Commissioners. These properties have not been officially named.

CONSERVING & IMPROVING



Volunteers help to clear an area at a new property on National Public Lands Day.



Volunteers clean up Morgan Park on Celebrate Portage Day.



Brady Interlocking Switch Tower at Towner's Woods

Outdoor recreation is a part of our way of life. Protecting our natural areas will ensure that we still have places to hike, bike, fish, see wildlife, or just enjoy the quiet and peace of nature.

In 2017, Portage Park District completed these projects:

- **Shaw Woods:** Created a river side viewing area along the Meander Trail where horse and rider can exit the trail, dismount and enjoy a few minutes by the waters edge.
- **Seneca Ponds:** In conjunction with an Eagle Scout Project, the District improved the complete trail system within the park, which included resurfacing of trails, and the replacement of bridges and boardwalks. Drainage issues were addressed and the parking area was improved.
- **Franklin Connector Trail:** Repaired and replaced approximately 3,900 square feet of asphalt trail that had been damaged by tree roots.
- **Headwaters Trail:** Continued trimming and ditching along 8 miles of the Headwaters Trail in preparation for a 2018 trail resurfacing project.
- **District wide:** Treated approximately 40,000 square feet of paved surface with a vegetable oil based rejuvenator to extend the life of our parking lots and trails.
- **Brady Interlocking Switch Tower at Towner's Woods:** Cleaned and painted the interior of the Switch Tower, completed electrical upgrades and installed new lighting fixtures.

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

Life Scout Mason Seachrist, Troop 252 of Kent Project location: Seneca Ponds

Mason's project was to identify a section of the trail and determine material types and amounts needed to adequately resurface the section. Once he completed his assessment, Mason obtained and installed the materials. Mason used 90 tons of gravel to resurface the trail. He also constructed and installed a section of boardwalk along the trail.



Life Scout Chad Angermeier, Troop 4262 of Garrettsville Project location: Headwaters Trail at State Route 700

Chad's project began early in the summer and involved bringing the memorial for the Jeddo railroad station back to life for visitors to enjoy. Chad researched, rehabbed the site and installed a historically correct interpretive plaque at the location.



NATURAL AREAS STEWARDSHIP

Natural areas stewardship is the long-term management of land and water to sustain natural heritage resources, restore and enhance habitat conditions suitable for rare species, and sustain the inherent biodiversity and beauty of natural communities.

Portage Park District 2017 stewardship projects included:

Non-Native Invasive Plant Management

- Invasive plants were managed on 325 acres
- A total of 17 different species were controlled
- More than 1 ton of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) was pulled and removed from high quality woodlands by staff and volunteers

Reforestation

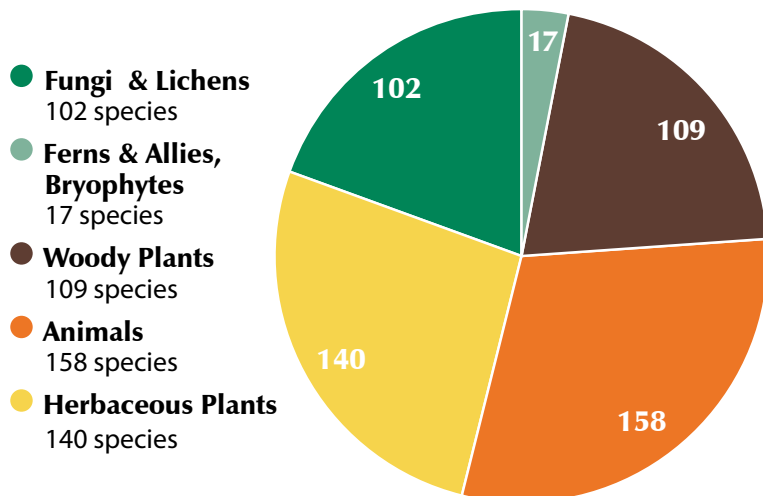
- 410 tree seedling and saplings were planted in three locations
 - » 250 tree saplings were planted along Plum Creek in an effort to restore riparian habitat at the Kent Bog Expansion property
 - » 120 tree seedlings were planted at Seneca ponds
 - » 40 pawpaw saplings and seedlings were planted at Shaw Woods

KSU Conservation Biology Students

Students began conducting numerous research projects at the Kent Bog property in 2017. Projects included the study of mature forests, riparian reforestation, stream quality, wetland evaluation and nature interpretation opportunities. Kent State University students and staff have completed many research projects on Portage Park District lands over the years. This work is invaluable to the management of our natural resources and future park development.

Kent Bog Expansion Bioblitz

- Over 50 people participated including partner agencies, academia, volunteers and staff
- 526 total living species documented to date



Volunteers pull invasive Garlic Mustard on Earth Day.



Tomas Curtis and Lindsay Leightner, Portage Park District seasonal staff planting trees at the Kent Bog.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Engagement with the Portage Park District builds a sense of community and improves quality of life. Parks provide places for people to connect and interact in a shared environment. Portage Park District took great steps in 2017 to grow public engagement opportunities.

Portage Park District Hires Public Engagement Coordinator

The Portage Park District brought on Public Engagement Coordinator, Andrea Metzler in June 2017. Metzler brings 14 years of experience in the nonprofit industry with emphasis on marketing, fundraising and volunteer management. Metzler's responsibilities include coordinating public communications, programming, special events, volunteers and community partnerships.

Formal Volunteer Program Launched

Portage Parks launched a formal volunteer program in November complete with a handbook, database for recruiting and scheduling volunteers, and orientations. So far over 50 volunteers have been recruited and more than half of those volunteers are now active. Volunteers help Portage Parks complete their mission by assisting with special events, trail cleanups, invasive species control, administrative tasks and more.

Volunteers recruited: 54

Active volunteers: 34

Total volunteer hours: over 240

**WILD HIKES
CHALLENGE**

**Over 380
wild hikers
since 2013!**



RANGER PATROL

Part-time Ranger, Chief Doug Shepard connected with 385 people enjoying Portage County parks in his 162 hours of work in 2017.

OWLBERT Mascot Introduced

Portage Park District welcomed Owlbert to its public engagement team to share the mission of the parks and make friends all over Portage County. Owlbert's first event was the Portage County Randolph Fair followed by the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair. He is happy to share with the community what a HOOT it is to spend time in the parks.



KSU Marine officer training and patrol group with Chief Shepard at Towner's Woods.





Your Portage Park District For Fun, For Health, For LIFE!

The Portage Park District is an independent political subdivision of the State of Ohio formed in 1991 with its jurisdiction covering all of Portage County. Although it is independent of County government, the Park District utilizes the services of the Portage County Auditor, Treasurer and Prosecutor. It is governed by an unpaid, three to five-member Board of Park Commissioners appointed by Portage County Probate Judge according to Ohio Revised Code Section 1545.

Portage Park District

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portageparkdistrict.org

Sign up for our newsletter!

