



# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

*Conserving the environment  
Connecting the commUNITY*



# We're here for Portage County, for generations to come



Your Portage Park District plays a vital role in protecting Portage County's natural heritage and contributing to the health, safety and resiliency of our communities. It seems like every day we hear stories about our changing climate and its effects, threats to our drinking water and more, we're here to help.

In 2019 our excellent team of park staff, volunteers, commissioners, park foundation and multiple partners, aided by over \$325,000 in grants and donations, made great progress in parkland acquisition, development, stewardship and public engagement.

By conserving and restoring land, we're protecting our irreplaceable biodiversity and habitat, protecting water quality and reducing flooding, mitigating air pollution and providing open places for recreation in the beauty of nature to recharge our physical and mental health. We're building our community through expanded educational programming and health partnerships across the county and throughout the year with new volunteer opportunities for all.

It's easy to despair when hearing dismal news about the state of our environment, health and communities, especially when faced with the daunting changes that need to occur on a larger scale. With hope and support of local efforts, including those of Portage Parks, we can continue to protect our resources and enhance resiliency in a changing world.

Yours in conservation,

*Chris*  
**Christine Craycroft**  
Executive Director

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2019

<b>ALL FUNDS</b>			
Beginning Cash Balance	\$ 1,571,431		
<b>REVENUES</b>		<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	
Levy (1/2 mill property tax)	\$ 1,737,715	Personnel	\$ 657,300
Donations	\$ 520	Contract Services	\$155,138
Grants	\$ 324,907	Materials & Supplies	\$ 93,092
Interest	\$ 37,581	Land Purchase	\$ 637,732
Rentals & Royalties	\$ 9,879	Construction	\$ 263,624
Fees, Services & Sales	\$ 827	Equipment & Vehicles	\$ 53,019
Refunds and Insurance Settlements	\$ 2,578	Property Assessments	\$ 6,384
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,685,438</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,866,308</b>
		<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$ 1,819,129</b>

# DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

Conservation is the forefront of the Portage Park District mission and plays a crucial role in ensuring the protection of some of the most rare eco-systems in Ohio. 2019 was an exciting year for land acquisition, development and construction, adding 116 acres to the park district properties.



## LAND CONSERVATION

With the help of partners, grants and donations, we've added over 16 acres of parkland to Towner's Woods in Franklin Township and 60 acres to the future Trail Lake Park in Streetsboro. These properties include high quality wetlands and forest that conserve habitat and water quality while satisfying the desires of the former landowners to see the land they've loved be conserved forever.

## MORGAN PARK

The Park District acquired the 40-acre former farmstead with agricultural buildings surrounded by parkland in 2018. The buildings are being re-purposed to serve as our Operations Center, efficiently consolidating field offices, workshop and equipment storage to meet the needs of your growing park district in a more central location. Staff constructed an additional 3 miles of woodland trails through the park to access beautiful forest and rare wetlands.



## TRAIL LAKE PARK DEVELOPMENT

Engineering for the development of the future Trail Lake Park in Streetsboro was started, with plans for a 50-car parking lot and handicapped-accessible trail and boat launch to the 30-acre lake.



## TOWNER'S WOODS GAZEBO

When the former 40+ year-old gazebo at Towner's Woods needed to be replaced, its original designer and longtime park commissioner Allan Orashan took the lead with local architect Rick Hawksley, who was married in the gazebo decades ago. The new gazebo is larger and features a handicapped accessible walkway from the main path and additional seating opportunities for a variety of uses, including performance spaces.



# PARK AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Portage Park District manages over 2,000 acres of land with 17 miles of multipurpose trails. Our focus is to ensure our parks protect natural environments while also encouraging recreation and enjoyment by the surrounding community. In 2019, 70 signs were installed or replaced along the Headwaters Trail and the PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail to help visitors navigate the trails. Additionally, trash and recycle containers were installed at five locations in our parks.

## SIGNAGE

**70** Wayfinding signs installed throughout our parks and trails

**Headwaters Trail** sign improvements - New trailhead posts have been installed with signage which includes street identification and mileage.

**The PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail** - Additional trailhead signs including street identification and mileage have been installed at intersections along the Portage Hike and Bike.



Trash and Recycling Container

## TRASH AND RECYCLING

Trash and Recycle containers are now in place at five locations:

- Shaw Woods Park
- Morgan Park
- Towner's Woods Park
- Dix Park
- Red Fox Boat Access

## RANGER PATROL

**752** Patrol hours      **29** Warnings issued

**776** Visitor contacts



Chief Ranger, Doug Shepard

# CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Restoration and conservation of our natural areas help to protect water quality and protect native habitats for the health and enjoyment of our community into the future. In 2019, conservation and restoration projects include non-native invasive plant management on 125 acres, native pollinator habitat creation and tree planting funded by the Clean Ohio Fund at Morgan Park, 240 milkweed plants provided by Project Monarch Watch planted at Dix Park, 60 trees planted at Dix Park as a windbreak in partnership with Portage Soil and Water Conservation District, and 30 volunteers participating in our annual BioBlitz at Towner's Woods.



## By the numbers

**400**

Species documented at Towner's Woods

**200**

Trees planted at Morgan Park

**14**

Acres planted with native meadow

**1096**

Species observed in iNaturalist



Morgan Park

## PRESCRIBED BURN AT MORGAN PARK

March 2019 marked the first use of prescribed fire at Portage Park District. The Park District collaborated with Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Geauga Park District, Hiram College and Western Reserve Land Conservancy to conduct prescribed fires at Morgan Park and several other sites for participating agencies.

## THE CUYAHOGA RIVER WATER TRAIL BECOMES OHIO'S 13TH STATE WATER TRAIL



The Portage Park District, a managing partner of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail (CRWT), along with dozens of other organizations in Northeast Ohio celebrated the designation of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail as the culmination of 50 years of environmental reinvigoration of the river. Unveiled during the designation event was a brochure for the CRWT which includes a map of public access points along the nearly 100 miles of water trail. The Cuyahoga River Water Trail is managed by the City of Akron, City of Cuyahoga Falls, City of Kent, Cleveland Metroparks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Geauga Park District, Mantua Village, Portage Park District, Summit Metro Parks and Village of Silver Lake.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

The core mission of our education program is connecting the public to the natural heritage at our park properties and increasing appreciation of our natural resources. The first Portage Park District Education Program Plan was implemented in mid-2019, offering a range of in-person programming. Nearly 700 individuals participated in events that included guided group hikes, low-mobility walks, children's programs, nature-based activities, technology-focused workshops, and history talks. In addition, over 350 students were introduced to our park system at special events.

**59** Public education programs

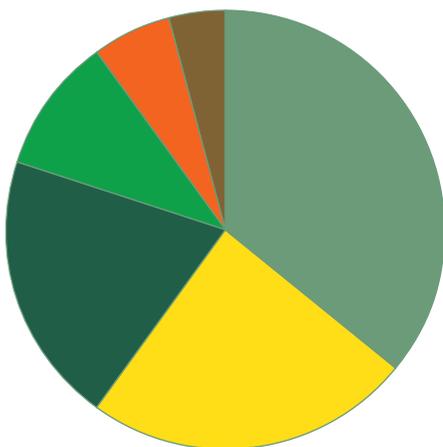
**664** Public education participants

**4** Youth special event programs

**356** Youth special event participants



## Breakdown of attendance



- History
- Activities/Hobbies
- Kids Programs
- Park Rx
- Citizen Science
- Group Nature Hikes

### Top Five Programs

- Butterfly Hike
- Apple Cider Hike
- Lichen Walk
- Solstice Walk
- Preserve Peek - Kent Bog Expansion

# ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS

Sharing our mission through engagement with the public is essential as the Portage Park District grows. Our volunteers play a key role in helping to increase our capacity to reach the community. Volunteers assist with education programs, hike the trails as Trail Ambassadors, attend special events, and more. In addition to individual volunteers, in 2019, corporate groups Anderson Windows and OMNOVA Solutions Foundation both sent volunteers to help maintain our parks.



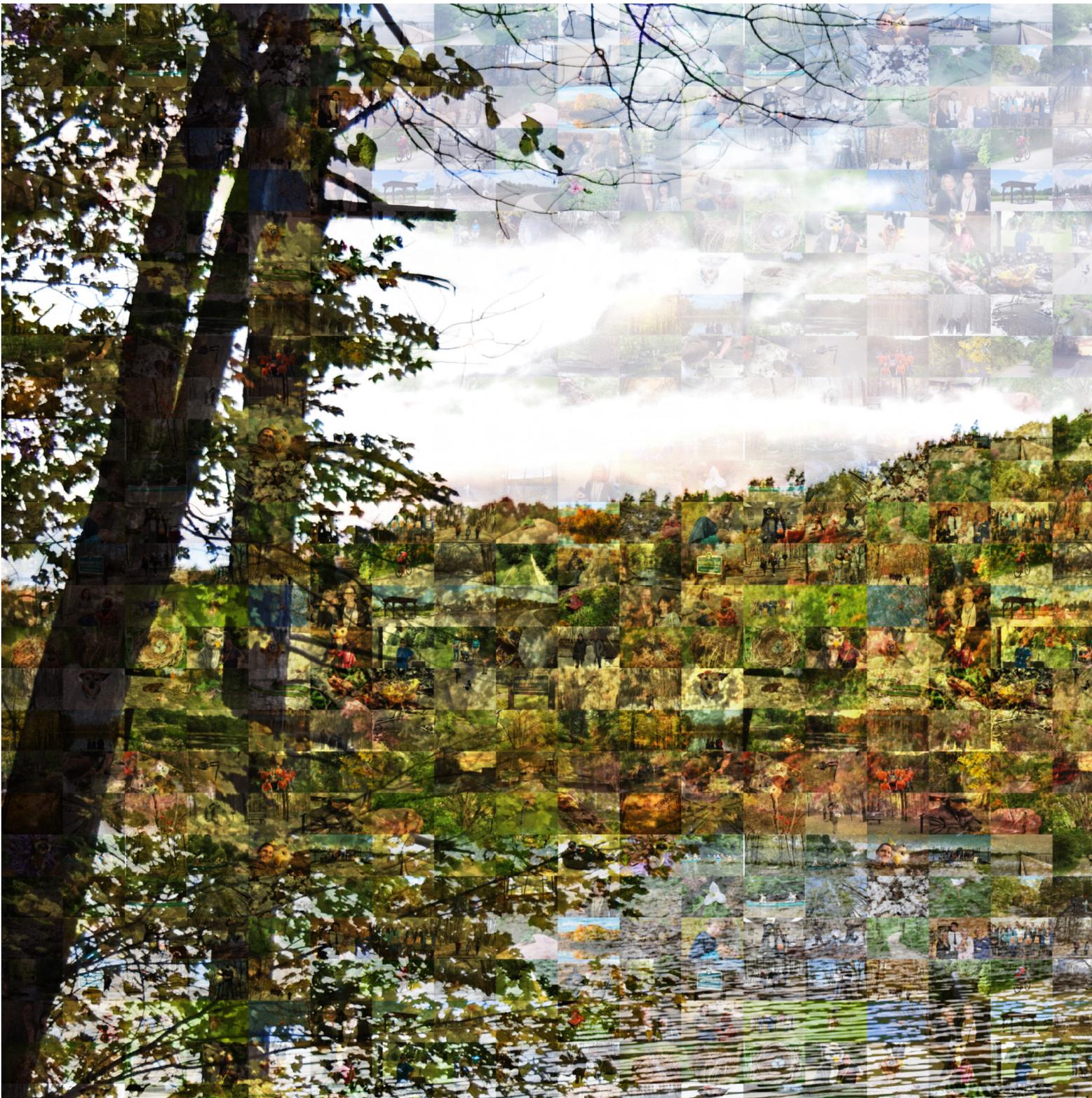
## By the numbers

**141** Wild Hikes Challenge participants

**92** Active volunteers

**183** percent increase for the Wild Hikes

**155** Volunteer service hours



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 the Portage County Probate Judge according to Ohio Revised Code Section 1545.



**For Fun, For Health, For LIFE!**

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