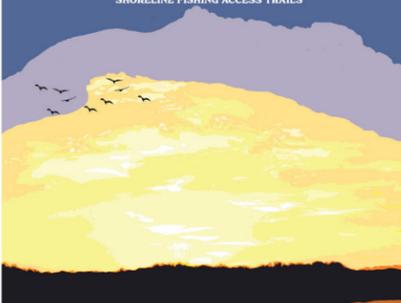


**For Fun, For Health, For LIFE!**

The designs below are available in poster or postcard form from our Portage Park District Foundation (PPDF). PPDF is a 501(c)3 non profit organization established in 2010 with the purpose of supporting the Portage Park District. Learn more at portageparkdistrict.org

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



**BERLIN LAKE TRAIL**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  DEERFIELD, OHIO

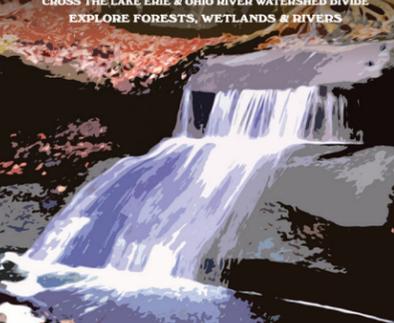
WOODLANDS, WETLANDS & MEADOWS  
SPRINGS, STREAMS & VERNAL PONDS  
**A BEAUTIFUL SHOW OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS**



**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

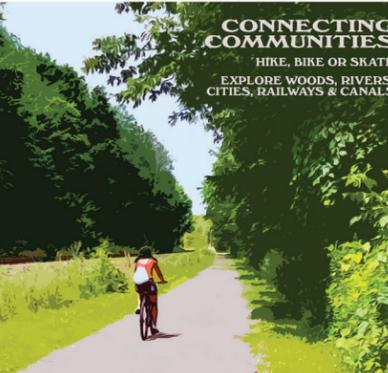
**OPEN MEADOWS, DIVERSE FOREST & SUPERB WETLANDS**  
POLLINATOR GARDEN & SUNNY PICNICKING



**MORGAN PARK**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  SHALERSVILLE TWP., OHIO

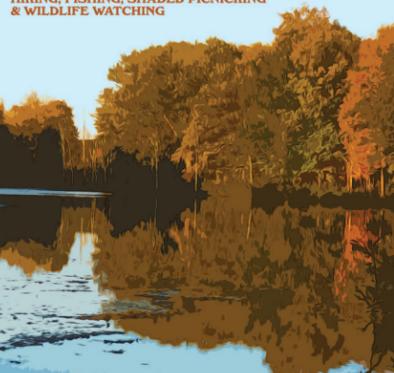
**CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**  
HIKE, BIKE OR SKATE  
EXPLORE WOODS, RIVERS, CITIES, RAILWAYS & CANALS



**THE PORTAGE HIKE & BIKE TRAIL**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  RAVENNA & KENT, OHIO

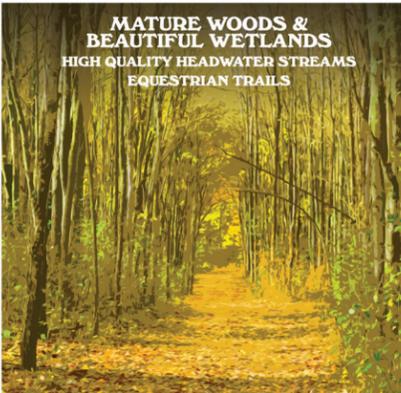
**OASIS OF WOODS, WETLANDS & PONDS**  
HIKING, FISHING, SHADED PICNICKING & WILDLIFE WATCHING



**SENECA PONDS**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  STREETSBORO, OHIO

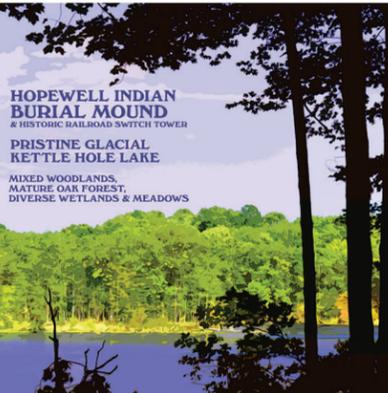
**MATURE WOODS & BEAUTIFUL WETLANDS**  
HIGH QUALITY HEADWATER STREAMS  
EQUESTRIAN TRAILS



**SHAW WOODS**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  RAVENNA, OHIO

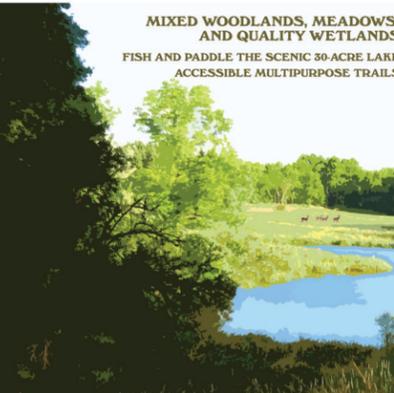
**HOPEWELL INDIAN BURIAL MOUND & HISTORIC RAILROAD SWITCH TOWER**  
PRISTINE GLACIAL KETTLE HOLE LAKE  
MIXED WOODLANDS, MATURE OAK FOREST, DIVERSE WETLANDS & MEADOWS



**TOWNER'S WOODS**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  KENT, OHIO

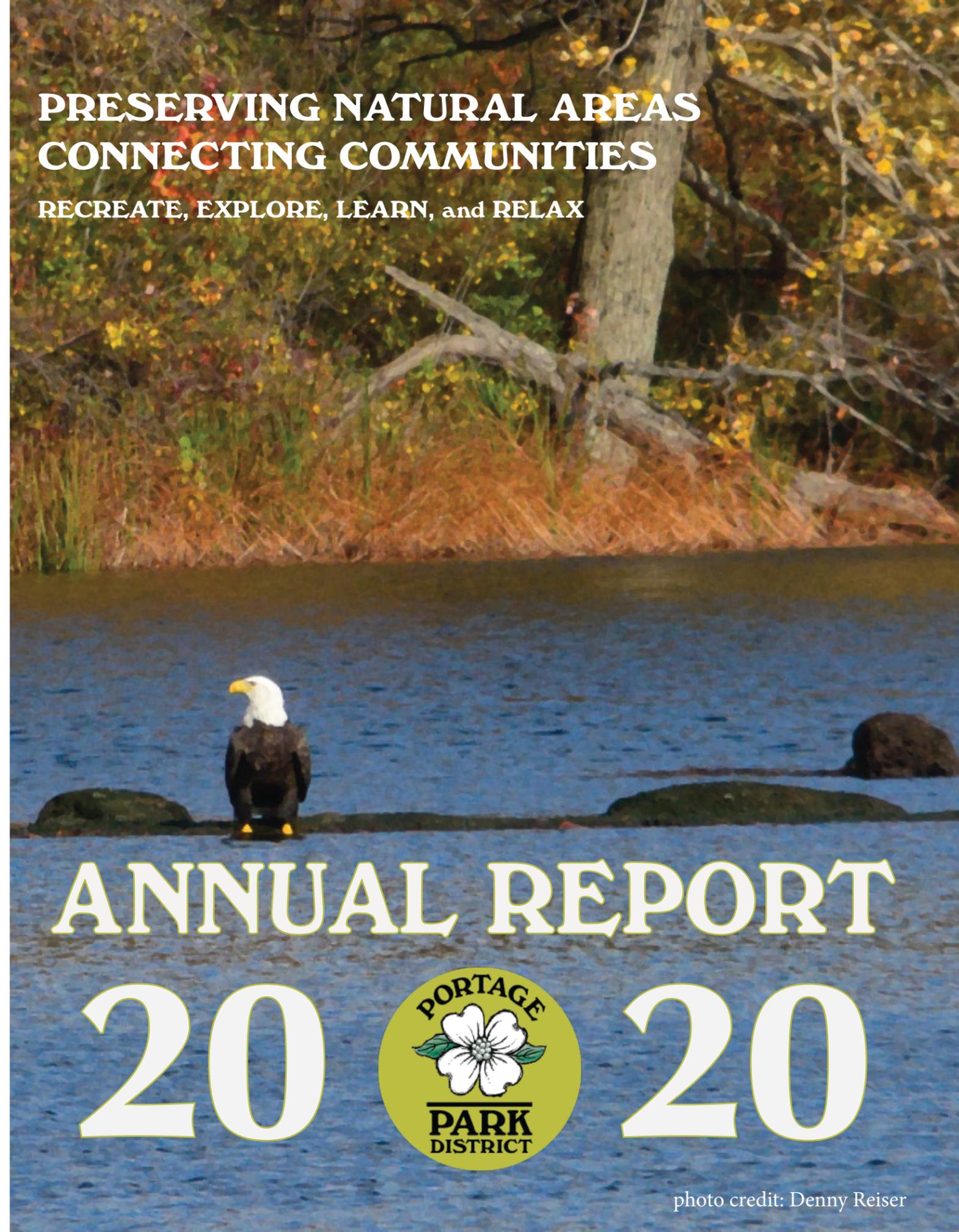
**MIXED WOODLANDS, MEADOWS, AND QUALITY WETLANDS**  
FISH AND PADDLE THE SCENIC 50-ACRE LAKE  
ACCESSIBLE MULTIPURPOSE TRAILS



**TRAIL LAKE**

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT  STREETSBORO, OHIO

**PRESERVING NATURAL AREAS  
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**  
RECREATE, EXPLORE, LEARN, and RELAX



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**20**  **20**

# 2020: A YEAR FOR PARKS



Amidst all the challenges and troubles of 2020, one comfort for many has been spending more time outdoors in the parks, with many people appreciating their value for perhaps the first time. We've seen huge increases in visitation, with many discovering that parks are some of the safest, healthiest places to be for fresh air, exercise and reducing stress in the beauty of nature.

Our fantastic staff stayed on the job and adjusted as needed—increasing the cleaning and maintenance of facilities to meet demand, and completing construction on new projects, such as the beautiful new gazebo at Towner's Woods. Our Operations Center was converted from former agricultural buildings that we acquired at Morgan Park to serve as home base for maintenance, stewardship and ranger staff.

Our public engagement staff have been creatively developing virtual programs of all types as a substitute for in-person programming and a fun and engaging supplement for at-home schooling. We've seen great interest in these programs, which will continue to have value beyond the pandemic times.

Our newest park, Trail Lake, was opened in November and has been wildly popular, serving as an easily accessible, safe gathering place for healthy recreation. The 222-acre park in Franklin Township and Streetsboro, was enlarged by 30 acres in 2020 and will continue to be improved upon over the coming years with native plants, trees, new trails and picnic areas. As we continue to plan for the future of Portage Parks, please review our progress and give your suggestions for updating our Master Plan for the next five years and beyond.

Yours in conservation,

*Chris*  
**Christine Craycroft**  
Executive Director

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2020

| ALL FUNDS                         |                    |                            |                     |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Beginning Cash Balance            | \$ 1,819,229       |                            |                     |
| REVENUES                          |                    | EXPENDITURES               |                     |
| Levy (1/2 mill property tax)      | \$ 1,757,077       | Personnel                  | \$ 653,894          |
| Donations                         | \$38,798           | Contract Services          | \$174,437           |
| Grants                            | \$ 859,043         | Materials & Supplies       | \$ 85,608           |
| Interest                          | \$ 20,935          | Land Purchase              | \$ 332,605          |
| Rentals & Royalties               | \$ 6,100           | Construction               | \$ 1,590,558        |
| Fees, Services & Sales            | \$ 752             | Equipment & Vehicles       | \$ -                |
| Refunds and Insurance Settlements | \$ 791             | Property Assessments       | \$ 6,982            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      | <b>\$4,502,727</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>\$ 2,844,084</b> |
|                                   |                    | <b>Ending Cash Balance</b> | <b>\$ 1,658,643</b> |

# 411

## WILD HIKES CHALLENGE



The Wild Hikes Challenge was established in 2008, and has had 80-100 participants annually on average. This year, the program saw an enormous increase as new park users found and used the challenge as a way to enjoy our natural heritage in Portage County. The challenge gives park patrons an opportunity to explore our trails while earning rewards.



Trail Ambassador, Jane Preston Rose

# 23

## TRAIL AMBASSADORS

Our Trail Ambassadors provide reports on parks and trails that help our staff better serve our constituency. In 2020, Trail Ambassadors volunteered 285 hours to visiting our parks.

## ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS

Our team is devoted to offering a variety of ways to engage with the Portage Park District. 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!

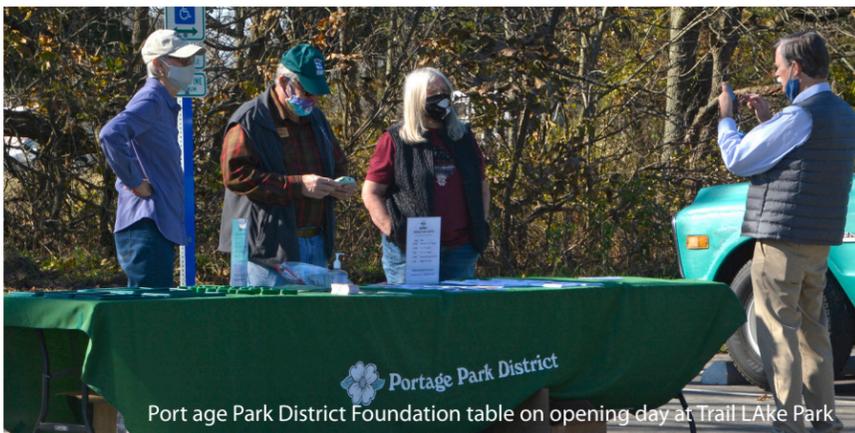
This work wouldn't be possible without the support of our volunteers. Volunteers help monitor trails, clean up litter, fill kiosks with brochures, assist with education programming and lots more!



# +1,111

## SOCIAL MEDIA

As the district grows, it's crucial to share this growth and information about our parks, trails and programs with our patrons. This year our social media platforms gained 1,111 followers. Also, as of November 2020 - PPD is on Instagram!



Portage Park District Foundation table on opening day at Trail Lake Park

# 520

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

Despite the year being quite different, our volunteers still offered much assistance to the Park District. These hours translate into dollars too. One volunteer hour is worth \$27.20\*, making the total hours worth **\$14,144** to our parks! \*According to independentsector.org, the value of volunteer time is \$27.20 in 2020.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

We strive to provide opportunities for people of all abilities to connect with the environment, appreciate the natural wonders at our park properties, and learn about Portage County's rich natural heritage. In 2020, our educational programming was re-imagined to achieve these goals in a virtual world. Park friends learned about our natural world through virtual hikes, educational videos, online resources, social media, self-guided activities, and even a new park podcast! We look forward to a return to on-site programming, however we are excited to continue to provide these virtual resources for our park friends that are unable to visit us in person. Archives of many programs can be found on our YouTube channel.



Kingfisher at Trail Lake Park, photo credit: Donna Beery

# NOV. 6 TRAIL LAKE PARK OPENED



Aerial view of Trail Lake Park, photo credit: Bill Rudlosky

# DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

Each year, under the guidance of the Director, the Operations Department develops a work plan for the upcoming year. These plans may include development of new properties and improvements to existing properties. Our existing properties are often reviewed for additional improvements and new properties are closely evaluated before they reach planning stage.

2020 was an exciting year of growth despite challenges presented by the pandemic. Efforts focused on the completion of the Towner's Woods Gazebo, opening of Trail Lake Park and transitioning the Operations and Natural Areas Staff to the Morgan Operations Center, as well as the ongoing maintenance of parks and trails as visitation soared throughout the year.



**125 PROGRAMS**

Topics included group nature hikes, streams and wetlands, local wildlife, native plants, history, health and wellness, and citizen science. Both virtual and in-person programs were developed for the community.

**6,383 PARTICIPANTS**

The desire for nature education and recreation was evident in the number of participants in our program offerings! Park friends of all ages and abilities engaged in our content.

**367 LISTENERS**

The Portage Park District Podcast was launched this year! Listeners were connected with park partners and staff to learn about wildlife, spring wildflowers, Towner's Hopewell mound, park safety, and even guided meditation.

# WELCOME TO THE FAMILY TRAIL LAKE PARK!

In November 2020, Portage Park District opened Trail Lake Park, located in the city of Streetsboro. Trail Lake Park is 222 acres, boasting a 30-acre lake, 1.62 miles of ADA accessible trail, and 1.42 miles of natural trail. In 2020, Trail Lake was a popular destination, welcoming over 12,000 visitors to hike, bike, paddle and fish.

Trail Park patrons can also enjoy a fishing dock and accessible kayak launch, made possible by a donation from the Portage Park District Foundation in memory of Helen Gregory. The park includes land from the Gressard family, the Krierhoff family, the Nature Conservancy and the Brotje family. The property neighbors the Herrick Fen State Nature preserve, another particularly rare habitat in the area.



# TOP PROGRAMS/RECORDINGS

- VIRTUAL HIKES WITH JEN
- PADDLING SAFETY
- PARK UPDATES
- DRESSING FOR WINTER
- REDUCING YOUR WASTE & RUNOFF



Gazebo at Towner's Woods

# TOWNER'S WOODS GAZEBO

The updated gazebo is now accessible to those with limited mobility offering access directly from the main trail. Expanded seating areas and electricity have been added for lighting and speakers, to enhance its potential use for performances and special events.

The gazebo is constructed with recycled plastic decking that should last for many decades with little maintenance. It is available by reservation for private or public events.

## STAFF GROWTH & INCREASED CAPACITY

We are fortunate to have a talented and dedicated essential workforce team working throughout the county to meet the needs of our growing park system. As we navigated the pandemic and increased visitation, having additional staff helped the Park District keep trails and parks open and ready for visitors to enjoy. Additionally, the engagement department was able to transition to offering programming for a virtual environment.

Our staff improved procedures, learned new and valuable skills and continued their dedication to creating meaningful experiences in our natural world for Portage County and beyond.

Craig Alderman, Logan Carpenter, Dan Mars, Andy Hagat



### OPERATIONS

Our Operations staff perform several day to day tasks like mowing, restroom cleaning and trash pickup that help enhance our park users' experience. Staff also perform routine trail maintenance and trail checks on all open park properties. Additionally, they provide in-house construction of many amenities and structures, and work to maintain and service park vehicles and equipment.

2,500

### TREES & PLANTS



Over 2,500 trees, shrubs and plants were planted as part of restoration and development projects at Dix Park, Morgan Park and Trail Lake Park.

## CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Restoration and conservation of natural areas help to protect water quality and protect native habitats for the health and enjoyment of our community into the future. In 2020, the park district partnered with Portage Soil and Water Conservation District, Kent Roosevelt High Schools Forestry and Landscape Management, park district volunteers and others to achieve the goals of the natural areas department. Additionally, species inventory in our parks continued and the utilization of iNaturalist as a tool for the public to document their findings proved to be instrumental in our work.

## RANGER PATROL STATS

Park District Rangers are state-certified law enforcement officers who exercise full police powers in the commission of their duties. Chief Steele is on duty year-round, patrolling parkland on foot, in vehicles, and on bicycle.



304  
VISITOR  
CONTACTS



382  
RANGER  
HOURS



May Apple, photo credit: Ken Christensen



Kent Roosevelt Forestry and Landscape Management class at Trail Lake Park

- 7 acres reforested at Morgan Park aided by volunteers and the generosity of the Portage Soil and Water Conservation District.

- Kent Roosevelt High Schools Forestry and Landscape Management classes worked with PPD to plant 50 evergreen trees and shrubs at Trail Lake Park. The class also installed the landscaping for the park sign.

- Two bio-retention basins were installed at Trail Lake Park and planted with native trees, shrubs, and plants to treat and manage storm water runoff from the parking area.

- Native meadow seed was planted on 2 acres of disturbed soil at Trail Lake Park.

Bob Lange, Lindsay Leightner, Tomas Curtis, Emmet Roberts

Chief Zach Steele

Andrea Metzler, Rory Becker, Jennifer White



### NATURAL AREAS

In 2020 we transitioned Lindsay Leightner, Emmet Roberts and Tomas Curtis from seasonals to regular part-time Natural Areas Specialists to meet our growing obligations for habitat restoration.

### RANGER

As our park visitation continues to increase, so does the need for oversight of activities in the parks and on the trails. Chief Zach Steele took over patrol of our parks from Chief Doug Shepard and is the Park District's first full time Ranger.

### ENGAGEMENT & ADMIN

2020 was a banner year for admin and engagement. As patrons visited the parks in record numbers, our staff answered questions, encouraged engagement and created a variety of education resources.

250  
ACRES

17 types of invasive plant species were controlled on over 250 acres of park land.

iNaturalist

3,563  
ORGANISMS

3,563 organisms have been observed on iNaturalist. Of these, 1,306 species have been identified. Users record findings which are shared to confirm identification.

600  
SPECIMENS

Over 600 plant specimens were collected and curated as part of an effort to document current plant diversity and occurrence at PPD.