

# PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT

## Monthly Newsletter



Headwaters Trail, photo: Bill Graham

March 2 | 2023

Greetings!

This month we share a warm welcome to our new Board member, learn about invasive species control at Towner's Woods, and encourage you to share why you love YOUR Portage Parks with our team.

Coming up this month in programs: Birding Club, Portage DD Hike Club, Full Moon Hike, Vernal Pool Exploration and so much more. Explore all programs on our [Things to Do page](#).

## In the Parks



## Welcome to the Board of Commissioners, Renee Ruchotzke!

Portage Park District has a new Board Commissioner, Renee Ruchotzke (ruh-HUT-skee), sworn in on February 28, 2023. Renee lives in Kent and currently serves on the boards of the Kent Environmental Council (president), Kelly's Working Well Farm, the Kent League of Women Voters, and the Portage County NAACP. She formerly served as president of Kent Natural Foods Co-op (helping them transform their governance) and chair of the City of Kent's Sustainability Commission.

She and her husband Randy practice sustainable living with solar panels, two electric cars, a backyard permaculture food forest, and a front yard pollinator garden on their city lot. They are both avid hikers and tent campers. (Renee names Shaw Woods as her favorite PPD park.)

[Read more about Renee's background here.](#)



## Forestry Mulcher used to Remove Invasive Shrubs at Towner's Woods

Author: [Bob Lange, Natural Areas Steward](#)

Portage Park District's Natural Areas team has been busy out at Towner's Woods over the last few weeks. Visitors to the park may have noticed things changing along Ski Trail and Butterfly Loop. Large infestations of non-native, invasive shrubs are being controlled using a forestry mulcher.

The Park District is a long-time member of the [Crooked River Cooperative Weed Management Agreement](#). This cooperative is dedicated to controlling and reducing invasive plant populations throughout the Cuyahoga River watershed by sharing staff, knowledge, resources, and equipment, such as the forestry mulcher being used at Towner's Woods. The vegetation being cleared consists of non-native, invasive shrubs and vines. These primarily include multiflora rose, Oriental bittersweet, glossy buckthorn, tree of heaven, bush honeysuckle, and autumn olive, to name a few. Between Ski Trail and Meadow Link, these plants have dominated the site to a point that the natural succession of native forest species had been severely hindered.

The goal of this work is to reduce the populations of invasive shrubs and reduce their continued spread into the adjacent mature, native forest habitats at Towner's Woods. In addition, the removal of these plants serves to foster the site's long-term succession to a mature, native forest. Thankfully, there are promising patches of great native shrubs and trees within the site, which have been avoided with the mulcher. Native woody plants spared include gray dogwood, black elderberry, wild black cherry, and oak, along with several others.

[Read More about this invasive management process.](#)

## Share Your Story



Do you feel passionate about YOUR Parks?

[Take this survey](#) and share your testimonial with our engagement team. Testimonials will be used to learn more about what you love about the Portage Park District and will help us share our message with others.

## Upcoming Programs

Would you like to see webinar programs offered year-round?

Yes

Select

No

Select

Try our [self-guided hikes](#) at Trail Lake Park and Seneca Ponds!

All programs and events can be found on our [Things to Do page](#). Make sure you check out all the great ways to engage with nature!



## The Art of Skunk Cabbage

Skunk cabbage is one of our first spring wildflowers and it is so unique that it deserves its own program! Its striking colors and elegant shape also make it a perfect artistic subject. We invite you to bring your own sketchbook or nature journal and practice drawing this interesting plant while we learn about its unique life cycle and role in our wetland ecosystems.

[Register here.](#)



### Bird Family Bog Preserve Peek -

Join us on a sneak peek hike of Bird Family Bog Preserve! This property is currently not open to the public due to planning and development. Our hike will go over uneven surfaces and natural trails, so caution and proper footwear are suggested.

[Register here.](#)



### Spring Equinox Hike-

The Spring Equinox is the half-way point between winter and summer and will happen at exactly 5:24 p.m. Come walk with us as we celebrate longer days, warmer temperatures, and the start of spring! Dix Park has mostly natural surface trails that will lead us through meadows and woods and past wetlands where we will look for signs of spring.

[Register here.](#)



### Exploring Vernal Pools-

Vernal pools are unique and important wetlands that are necessary habitats for our local salamanders, frogs, and other creatures. With increasing temperatures, all forms of life are starting to emerge and become more active and we are excited to explore them with you!

[Register here.](#)

Our education programs require registration - this helps us keep an optimal staff to participant ratio. Join us and learn about the natural world around us.

### Upcoming Senior Hikes:

[Senior Hike - March 2](#)

[Senior Hike - March 16](#)

Visit our [YouTube channel.](#)

# Portage Park District Foundation

## Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner - Nominations Accepted until March 3

There is still time to nominate your favorite environmental hero for the 25th Annual Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner. Award categories are:

- Environmental Education
- Green Business
- Green Building/Development
- Environmental Activism
- Stewardship

[Download a nomination form](#)

Want to attend the dinner on Earth Day, April 22? The Portage Park District Foundation will be sending out invitations in the mail, or you can visit our website and download a reply card today!

[Download your reply card.](#)



Learn more about the Headwaters Race and register here!



## Wild Hikes Challenge

Our 2023 theme is **The Year of the Wood frog!** You'll even find some Wood frog facts on your hiking form this year.

To participate, download your [Wild Hikes form](#), and complete hikes before December 31st to earn a hiking staff and/or a 2023 Wild Hikes medallion. Dogs can earn rewards too!

Our office is open for rewards pick-ups. [Email Eric](#) to schedule a time to get your rewards.

Visit our website

