



Portage Park District

May 2019 Newsletter

In the parks

Prescribed fire at Portage Park District

Author: Bob Lange, Natural Areas Steward

Naturally occurring fires, often in combination with other disturbances, have always played a role in shaping the Earth's plant communities and ecosystems. Many of the original vegetative communities on this planet occur, in part, due to fires. In general, most natural fires are caused by lightning strikes, with spontaneous combustion being another potential source of ignition. Prescribed fire, or controlled burning, is the practice of intentionally igniting fires in natural areas under a specific set of conditions to achieve a desired management objective. Prescribed fire has been used by humans in this country and worldwide for thousands of years. Native Americans utilized controlled burning to manage land for game, open areas for agriculture and to clear land for travel. Land managers continue using the practice today in efforts to restore and maintain ecological communities.



Locally, several land managing agencies routinely conduct prescribed fires. Most of this activity occurs in the fall or

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May Programs

Walk with a PT

May 8, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Cooking with Herbs

May 14, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Park Rx Group hike

May 19, 1-2 p.m.

Eat locally, eat seasonally

May 22, 9:15-10:15 a.m.

Park Rx Group hike

May 30, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

For detailed information and registration on all events and programs, [click here.](#)

Upcoming events

spring seasons. Many of these fires aim to manage open habitats like meadows and restored prairies. Spring fires tend to promote grass species and burning in the fall can increase populations of wildflowers. In either case, fires reduce the amount of woody species occurring in these open habitats, thus maintaining open, herbaceous stands.

[Read more](#)

Education Program Coordinator hired

Introducing Jennifer White

Hello nature lovers and Park District advocates! My name is Jennifer White and I am so excited to be the new Education Program Coordinator for the Portage Park District! Joining this team is like "coming home" in many ways! I spent over a decade working with landowners in Portage County at the Soil & Water Conservation District and I am eager to reconnect with the people and the natural resources in this special part of the world. My degrees are in Environmental Science and Biology, but my true passion lies in connecting people to our natural world. I am looking forward to meeting YOU and sharing ideas about how we can expand the opportunities for learning and enjoying our Portage Park District properties. Let the adventure begin! - Jennifer



Foundation news

21st Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner

The 21st Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner was recently held at the American Legion Hall in Kent. 275 people attended the reception to recognize awardees for their dedication to protecting the environment. Guests enjoyed live music,



hors d'oeuvres featuring local foods, a silent auction, and a presentation on the State of the Portage Park District. Members of the dinner committee included

Beth Buchanan, Stevie Byrne, Jay Byrne, Christine Craycroft, Eileen Fitzsimmons, George Rose, Jane Preston Rose, Linda Seeman, Marilyn Sessions and Karen Wise.

View photos from the dinner on our [Facebook page](#).

Perfect Pooch Contest Ends

May 8, 11:59:59 p.m.

[View contest](#)

Perfect Pooch Partypalooza

May 11, 12-2 p.m.

[More information](#)

Headwaters Adventure Race

July 13, 8 a.m.

Run 2 miles, Pedal 10 miles, Paddle 5 miles. Canoe and kayak rental available.

[More information](#)

Volunteer needs

Volunteer opportunities

- Mascot costume
- Special events
- Group hike attendees
- Trail ambassadors

If you are interested in volunteering in 2019, fill out an [application](#) to get started!

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Wild Hikes Challenge 2019 - Year of the Pollinators



This year, we celebrate pollinators for the essential role they play in supporting life, and recognize the need to promote pollinator health across the landscape.

To participate, just walk, hike, skip, jog, run or stroll on 8 of the following trails before December 31st to earn a hiking staff (1st year) and/or a 2019 Wild Hikes medallion. Forms can be downloaded [here](#).

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Visit our website | portageparkdistrict.org

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