



**METROPARKS  
TOLEDO**

# **ROOTS & BRANCHES**

**2021**

# It Begins & Ends With **Conservation**



Metroparks Toledo is rooted in conservation and continuously branching out in new ways to connect people with nature.

New parks and experiences are attracting more Lucas County residents to their Metroparks than ever before. Over 6 million people a year visit 19 parks to play, learn, relax and enjoy the physical, mental and emotional benefits nature provides.

In this era of historic growth for the park system, nature has benefitted most of all.

The last 20 years have been a golden age of conservation in our state and here at home. Voters overwhelmingly approved the Clean Ohio Fund in 2000. In 2002, two-thirds of Lucas County voters approved a land acquisition levy. These landmark decisions led to an increase of 5,497 acres of park district land. About 90 percent of the 12,700 acres that make up the Metroparks today is reserved for natural areas.

Memorable experiences in parks – a leisurely kayak float on a scenic river, daily walks on a familiar trail or a family getaway in a treehouse village – can be the spark that ignites a lifelong passion for the outdoors and a commitment to conservation.

The many ways people enjoy their parks has evolved over time. Currently, they include mountain bike trails, a climbing wall – even a microbrewery. But the Metroparks formula for success has been the same for 93 years: Conservation plus activation is what makes a park a *Metropark*.



# Restoration is Worth the Effort



Howard Marsh Phase 2



H2Ohio wetland project Oak Openings



U.S. Senator Rob Portman visited Howard Marsh this summer to raise awareness of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which helped fund the wetland project

Natural areas help clean our air and water, shelter wildlife, protect rare plants and preserve our region's natural heritage. With a Metropark just five miles from every Lucas County residence, nature is now close to home for everyone.

Sustaining these natural areas is critical to maximize their benefits.

Projects nearing completion in the eastern and western ends of the county are contributing to the health of the region's most prominent natural feature, Lake Erie. In Jerusalem Township, a 243-acre addition to Howard Marsh will complete a vision for 1,000 acres of restored coastal wetland. A 48-acre wetland restoration at Oak Openings in Swanton and the 226-acre expansion of Secor in Sylvania Township will filter water flowing into streams that eventually makes its way to the lake.

Bringing back functioning wetlands, removing non-native invasive species, managing an overpopulation of deer, conducting prescribed fires and fostering native plants are techniques that enhance the quality of our natural landscape.



Each white tube is a new tree planted to reforest a former golf course and expand Secor Metropark

## *It's Working!*

A long-term vegetation plot survey, most recently completed this summer totaling 17 acres across the park district, tracked changes in ecological condition. The results showed a dramatic increase in the number and variety of plants.

Studies like this one confirm again that Lucas County is a hotbed of diverse plant life. A longer-term survey team identified 854 plant species, including 60 state-listed species. That number equals nearly a third of all the fauna in Ohio. For comparison, that is more than half the number of species documented in Yellowstone National Park, which totals 2.2 million acres sprawled across three states.

# Reconnecting in 2021

If 2020 was the “virtual year,” 2021 was a time to reconnect. With the pandemic still looming large, the community was learning to socialize safely again.

Jeep Fest returned and Metroparks was there with a climbing wall and paddling pool, temporarily turning Hensville Park downtown into “Hensville Metropark.”

The annual Outdoor Expo at Blue Creek in Whitehouse, and “Meet Me” events at Glass City Metropark and the City of Toledo’s Cullen Park provided opportunities for people to try new outdoor activities, such as rock climbing, slacklining, stand up paddleboarding and archery.





Metroparks Hikers explored new parks and trails, while conservation-themed tours took visitors behind the scenes of ongoing conservation projects. Summer campers made friends and memories as they learned new skills. Local backpackers even conquered a portion of the Appalachian Trail.

Jazz at Toledo Botanical Garden, folk music at Brookwood and the unique stylings of Sista Strings at Glass City brought beautiful sounds to scenic settings.

Volunteers decorated the Manor House for the holidays, as they have done for four decades, and “snow people” returned to Glass City for a festive winter drive-through event.



Wildwood Preserve

*Reconnecting in*  
**2021**



Outdoor Expo, Blue Creek



Ability Center Program, Wildwood Preserve



Evening on the Water, Glass City



Ability Center Program, Wildwood Preserve



Sista Strings, Glass City



Sista Strings, Glass City



# *Metroparks Wouldn't be the Same Without Volunteers*



Since the 1930s, people have pitched in to create parks for the community, by the community.

Boy Scouts blazed trails at Oak Openings that fellow Scouts still hike to this day. Grandfathers take their grandchildren to forested areas where they helped plant trees in the 1950s. Students from PENTA Career Center will return years from now with their children to show them a cabin they helped build on a Maumee River island.

Working alongside the Natural Resources staff, volunteers this year participated in reforestation projects and removed invasive plants to help native species thrive. Other volunteers lent their expertise monitoring plants and animals for research projects. Owens Corning employees planted trees, and Dana employees picked up litter at Glass City. Ardagh Group, Asphalt

Materials Inc., Chemtrade Refinery Solutions LP, Fed Ex, Key Bank, William Vaughan Company, Toledo Edison employees, and even more businesses, community groups and schools rolled up their sleeves to make a difference in the parks, too.

Volunteers played important roles in the Outdoor Expo, Holidays at the Manor House, and other events. Members of the youth Conservation Club learned about nature through hands-on workdays.

The Volunteer Trail Patrol – more than 300 strong – walked the parks in pairs, greeting visitors, providing information and assisting the staff.

Volunteers leave their imprint on every park for visitors to enjoy every day. The Metroparks would not be the same without them.

# Members & Donors

## Made More Possible

From a refreshed Window on Wildlife at Oak Openings to a renovated Green Garden at Toledo Botanical Garden, Metroparks visitors enjoy the many contributions of donors and members.

A new bridge over Swan Creek will soon connect the Brookwood Area with the Andersons property in South Toledo, and fresh landscaping at the historic locks at Side Cut will be the backdrop for countless wedding, family and senior portraits. They are examples of projects funded by donors that will be enjoyed by generations of park visitors.



White Oak Playground



Connections Camp



Oak Openings Window on Wildlife



Green Garden at TBG

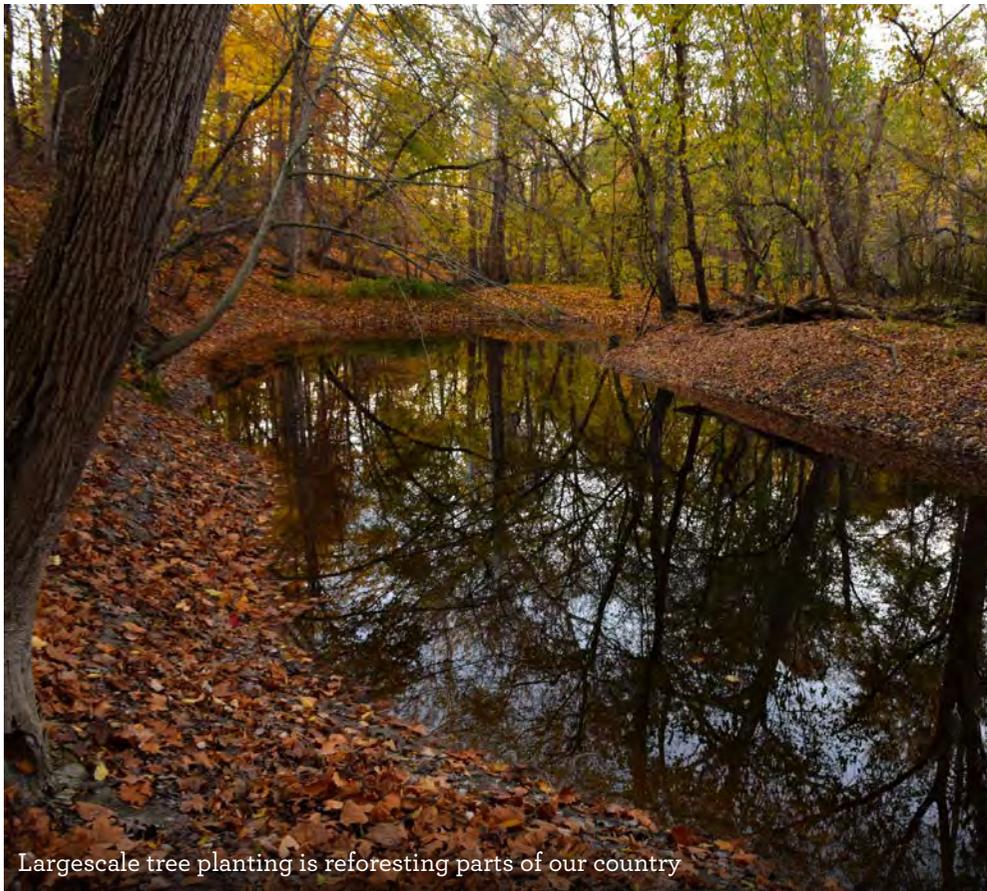


Bend View Camping Platforms

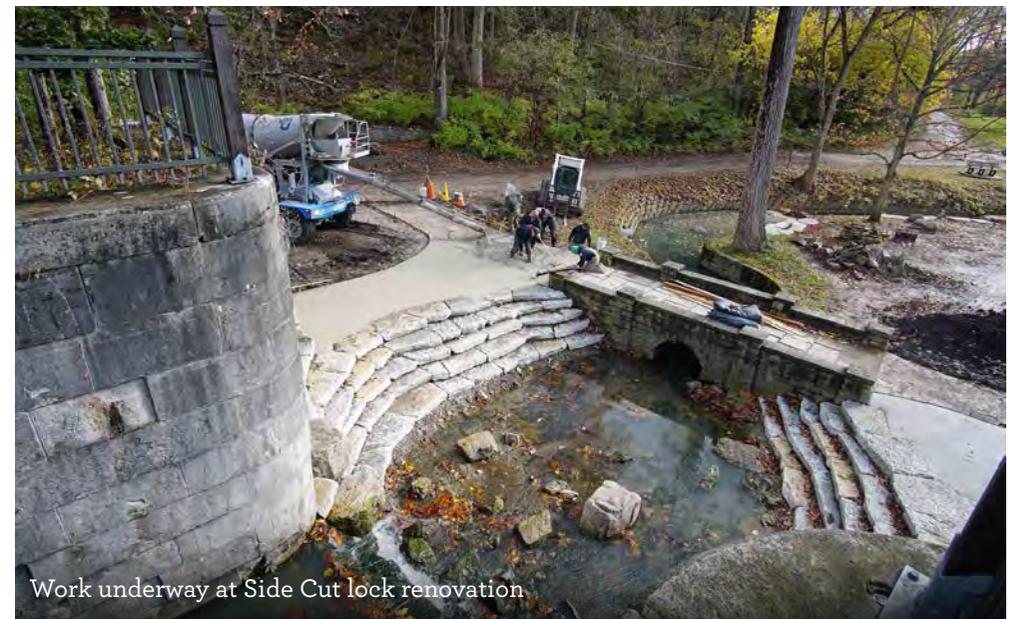
Thanks to major donations from some of the region's largest companies, Glass City Riverwalk is on the way to becoming a reality (see related story).

Soon, camping platforms at Bend View will provide places for overnight stays with a scenic view, courtesy of Members, who also contributed to a new playground at the White Oak Campground at Oak Openings, Connections Camp, and the planting of over 34,000 trees.

Members and donors stretch taxpayer dollars and provide amenities to the community that otherwise might not have been possible.



Largescale tree planting is reforesting parts of our country



Work underway at Side Cut lock renovation

# PHASE 1 COMPLETE



# PHASE 2 UNDERWAY





# *Glass City*

## *Coming to Life*

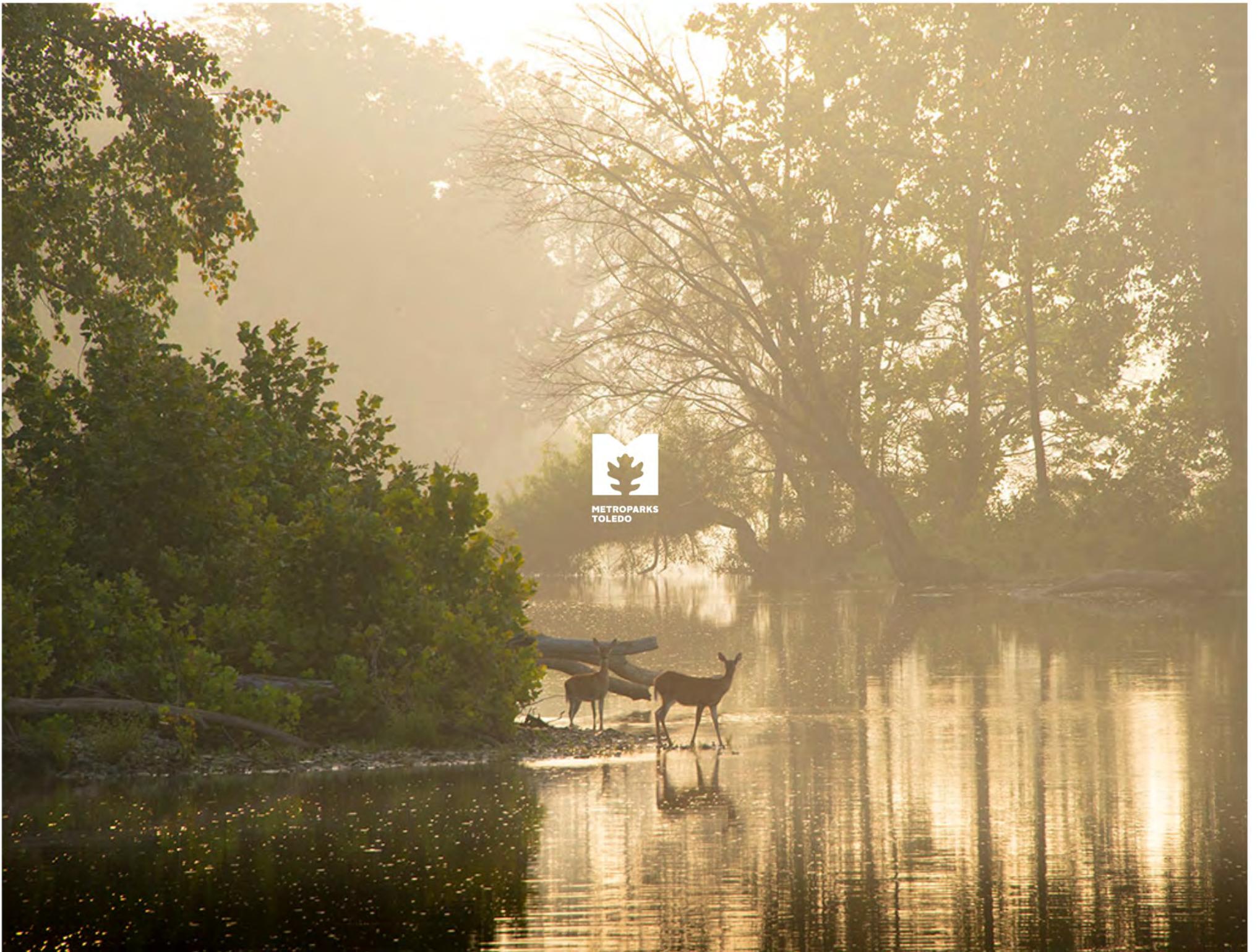
Less than a year after the first phase opened, phase 2 of Glass City Metropark is well underway on the east bank of the Maumee River.

Part of a larger vision for a 5-mile, 300-acre Glass City Riverwalk, phase 2 will complete the new riverfront park between the Craig Bridge and Main Street. A bike and pedestrian bridge over Main Street will connect the new park with International Park, which will also be renovated, completing the east side of the greenway to the Anthony Wayne Bridge.

Taxpayer support, state and federal grants, along with a lead gift from ProMedica, and major support from Owens Corning, Dana, Mercy Health and many other public and private partners, are funding one of the region's most ambitious projects in decades.

When it's completed in early 2023, Glass City Metropark will include unique, nature-based play nodes for children, an ice skating ribbon, All Seasons Plaza and Poco Piatti at the Park, the first full-service restaurant in a local Metropark.

With the support of the City of Toledo, Lucas County, ConnecToledo and many other public and non-profit partners, Glass City Riverwalk will transform the Toledo Riverfront into one of the region's most popular destinations.



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