



PLANNING FOR A **GREENER FUTURE**



2014
ANNUAL REPORT

Orange trail in fall at Twin Creek MetroPark

© Alexis Larsen

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE FUTURE, CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

YEAR IN REVIEW

I am pleased to present the 2014 Five Rivers MetroParks' annual report. We began the year with the implementation of a five-year strategic plan that serves as our guide for a sound and sustainable future. As part of that plan, we're engaging the community and key stakeholders to give area residents a park system that serves everyone in our community. The plan helps us grow as the region's conservation leader, allows people of all ages to experience nature, and will ensure that Five Rivers MetroParks remains a major source of pride for the people of Montgomery County.

For more than 50 years, Five Rivers MetroParks has provided the region with high-quality parks, programs, outdoor experiences and facilities. Five Rivers MetroParks appreciates all of the citizens of Montgomery County who support us with the property tax levy that constitutes the bulk of our funding, and we are committed to being a responsible steward of these funds.

In response to the challenging economic times, staff has become more creative and resourceful in diversifying our income stream and conducting business in new ways that allow us to continue our commitment to maintaining the high-quality parks, programs and services that the community deserves.

As part of our strategic plan, we're also busy developing a comprehensive master plan that will align with the overall

mission and vision for the organization. In addition, it will provide direction for implementing short-term and long-term strategies and actions that will best meet the needs and priorities of our community in the next 10 years.

The master planning process will be completed in 2015. It is also a requirement for CAPRA accreditation. CAPRA is the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, which oversees a systematic evaluation of an agency's management and operation practices in 10 major categories of best practice standards. It is a quality assurance and improvement process that demonstrates the commitment to the agency's employees, volunteers, patrons and community. Our official application was submitted in April 2015. Throughout the country, only 136 agencies have completed CAPRA accreditation. We look forward to joining this prestigious list!

Five Rivers MetroParks is proud to continue our long tradition of providing clean, safe, enjoyable parks; protecting our region's natural heritage; and providing outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature. This past year was an incredible one, and we look forward to serving our community this year — and for many more to come.

Rebecca A. Benná Executive Director



Children develop a personal connection with nature during a program at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark.



Volunteers help maintain the beauty of Five Rivers MetroParks' facilities by providing gardening and other support.

MISSION

Protect the region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature

VISION

To be the conservation leader of a vital, active, nature-based community

PURPOSE

Protect natural areas, parks and river corridors and promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people in the region

VALUES

- Excellence
- Community
- Innovation
- Fun
- Integrity
- Commitment
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Respect
- Collaboration
- Professional Growth
- Diversity
- Sustainability



TRAIL RUNNING

© Elzora.com Photography

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS **INCLUDES**
15,803 ACRES OF LAND MANAGED BY FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

**YOUR
PARKS:
BY THE
NUMBERS**



STILLWATER RIVER SHORE

© Art Fabian

- 235** acquired acres of protected open space in 2014
- 90%** maintained in natural state
- 3,000** acres in conservation easements
- 11** conservation areas
- 25** facilities (18 parks, the 2nd Street Market and portions of six regional bikeways)
- 270** miles of river corridors
- 160** miles of managed trails (hiking, biking, mountain biking and horseback riding)

For more on park amenities and locations, visit metroparks.org/parks.

IN 2014, FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS SUPPORTED
3.3 MILLION VISITORS

- 118,364** participants in Five Rivers MetroParks programs and events
- 156,302** hours of interaction with the public through outreach programs, speaking engagements and tours
- 1,756** public programs, including:
 - 675 nature programs, reaching 18,814 participants
 - 924 programs targeted specifically at youth and their families, reaching 34,415 participants
- 1,464** shelter and camping permits
- 10,411** children served through tours
- 202** speaking engagements and appearances, reaching 14,243 participants

IN 2014, PARK SERVICES STAFF SPENT MORE THAN:

- 17,931 hours** opening and cleaning parks
- 11,654 hours** on horticulture
- 8,287 hours** maintaining vehicles and equipment
- 2,924 hours** maintaining our recreational trails
- 2,402 hours** talking to the public about our parks
- 2,335 hours** taking care of trees
- 2,331 hours** working with volunteers

Figures compiled by Five Rivers MetroParks staff on a monthly basis.

THE THREE PILLARS OF FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Five Rivers MetroParks' programs and services focus on three key areas: CONSERVATION, EDUCATION and RECREATION. Together, they maintain Five Rivers MetroParks' commitment to protect our region's natural resources while providing outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature.

This oriole singing in a sycamore tree is just one example of the wildlife who call Five Rivers MetroParks' facilities home.



Miami Valley School students at a prairie in Germantown MetroPark.

CONSERVATION

FIGHTING INVASIVE HONEYSUCKLE

Honeysuckle may add color to the landscape, but it ravages our environment. In Ohio, Amur is the most most common variety of honeysuckle. It kills seedlings, saplings and wildflowers and carries toxins in its roots that prevent plants from growing. It also keeps plants from thriving in our forest understory and makes the once-open woods nearly impenetrable.

A \$58,292 Clean Ohio grant aimed at restoring natural areas was awarded in 2014 to eradicate this decades-old invasion that has blocked the view of the Stillwater River from Ridge Avenue to Siebenthaler Avenue. This mile-long stretch along the river covers 58 acres, including a large portion of the city of Dayton's DeWeese Park. To aid in this effort, the city gave Five Rivers MetroParks a conservation easement on the land, so it is now protected property that cannot be developed.

Starting in summer 2015, chain saws and mulching mowers will be used to take out the shrubs. Follow up in the fall will be done to kill any re-sprouts. By spring 2016, the area should be ready for volunteers to plant native trees and shrubs. In the end, these measures will not only restore a view of the river, but also provide a friendlier habitat for wildlife and improve our water quality.



HUFFMAN PRAIRIE

HUFFMAN PRAIRIE GRANT

A grant by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for \$11,717 was awarded to make the Huffman Prairie State Natural Landmark more visitor-friendly through interpretive signs, plant identification markers and informative brochures. Managing the lush, 109-acre natural prairie, located northeast of the original Wright brothers flying field at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, is a collaboration between Five Rivers MetroParks, the 88th Air Base Wing Civil Engineering Group and the Dayton Aviation National Heritage Historical Park. The project includes prairie walks, bird-watching events and botanical programs that will reach more than 5,000 people.



Natural Areas Conference attendees took field trips throughout the Dayton region.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS SELECTED AS HOST FOR NATIONAL CONSERVATION EVENT

A testament to our conservation work, Five Rivers MetroParks served as host of the 41st annual Natural Areas Conference in October. The international conference with the theme “Deeply Rooted in Restoration” covered environmental challenges stemming from climate change, invasive species and habitat fragmentation, and included speakers, workshops, field trips and an award dinner. The plenary session was webcast for public viewing, and the presentations by keynote speakers Guy Denny, Emma Marris and Hugh Safford are available to view at metroparks.org.

SHILOH WOODS HEADWATER STREAM PROTECTION

Funds from this Clean Ohio Grant allowed Five Rivers MetroParks to purchase 20 acres of land adjacent to the Shiloh Woods Conservation Area in spring 2014. Managing the property for conservation will help protect the headwaters of a feeder stream as it flows through the conservation area to the Stillwater River, improving river quality and wildlife. Invasive honeysuckle will be removed and 500 trees will be planted.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS ACQUIRES LARCH TREE GOLF COURSE

Five Rivers MetroParks was awarded a Clean Ohio Grant for \$1,079,708 in late March 2014. The funding was used toward the purchase and cleanup of the Larch Tree Golf Course, which spans approximately 190 acres. Five Rivers MetroParks closed on the property in October. The property had been unused for a few years after the former golf course closed.

The property was appraised at \$1.2 million, and Five Rivers MetroParks was able to purchase it for \$1 million. The total project cost for property acquisition, cleanup and site improvements was \$1,439,611. In addition to the Clean Ohio Grant, \$200,000 was donated from the private sector, reducing Five Rivers MetroParks’ total contribution to \$159,903.

As the Dayton region’s conservation leader, Five Rivers MetroParks wanted to obtain the former Larch Tree Golf Course property because of its strategic location adjacent to the Great Miami Wetland Mitigation Bank, already owned by Five Rivers MetroParks, and to Sycamore State Park. Together, these areas create more than 3,000 acres of open space — one of the largest blocks of open space in the region.

Five Rivers MetroParks will transition the former golf course to land managed for conservation purposes, primarily to support a variety of wildlife habitats. The property contains large areas of hydric soils that can easily be converted to wetlands. Non-wetland areas will revert to a large grassland, also enhancing habitat. A land use plan is being developed for the property, providing more detail on how it will be managed to best meet the needs of wildlife and our community.



FORMER LARCH TREE GOLF COURSE



Five Rivers MetroParks staff and volunteers planted approximately 90,000 seeds at Carriage Hill MetroPark in fall 2014 as part of the agency’s reforestation efforts.

REFORESTATION CAMPAIGN

Our forests face many stressors, including climate change, deer overpopulation, the emerald ash borer and invasive species, such as honeysuckle. Through our continued reforestation campaign, Five Rivers MetroParks and our volunteers have grown more than 60,000 seedlings during the past four years, planted in various locations throughout MetroParks facilities. Volunteers participate in seed collection, tree and shrub planting, tree monitoring and more. Five Rivers MetroParks oversees all of the seedlings, checks mortality and ensures they have limited competition to grow. Healthy natural areas are critical to a healthy environment, and every seed collected and planted helps to protect the future of our natural spaces.

2014 Highlights:

- 971 volunteers participated in reforestation efforts
- 6,314 hours were contributed by those volunteers
- 4,000+ first year trees were repotted by volunteers into larger pots for a second growing season and higher survival rates. Planting is scheduled for spring 2015.
- 86,992 nuts were collected and spread over 13 acres at Carriage Hill MetroPark. and 6,000 more nuts were collected to propagate seedlings for future plantings.
- 63.4 acres of reforestation plantings representing more than 11,000 seedlings were maintained by staff and volunteers.

CONSERVATION: 2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 235 new acres of land were protected in 2014.
- Clean Ohio Open Space Grant funding was awarded for the purchase of four properties.
- A project along the Stillwater River will restore the area by removing invasive plants and planting native trees.



Gabriella Fitch was the first child to complete the Conservation Kids series of programs, which guides children through a series of outdoor experiences to become protectors of nature.

EDUCATION

CONSERVATION KIDS PROGRAM LAUNCHED

In March, Five Rivers MetroParks launched a new tiered program designed to teach kids about the natural world while they play and learn outdoors, and ultimately to become stewards of the environment and advocates for conservation. The program, Conservation Kids, includes a series of age-appropriate programs that allow kids ages 3 to 13 to progress through four levels that start with discovering nature to sharing what they've learned.

Children learn the proper steps to take and have the opportunity to view the environmental impact of their actions. Activities include planting pollinators, collecting seeds to plant a forest, creating their own wildlife habitat, serving as a naturalist for their classmates, and helping to protect and promote wildlife.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS' GARDENING SURVEY: YOU ANSWERED. WE LISTENED.

In August, Five Rivers MetroParks launched an online survey that invited gardeners of all skill levels to share their personal behaviors, experiences and attitudes toward gardening and landscaping. The survey results are being used to understand local interests and needs, to evaluate our gardening programs and services, and to provide local residents with the information and services that will help them become better and more sustainable gardeners.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES IMPROVED

Interpretive planning identifies the ways to make the park experience comfortable, informative and meaningful for those visiting our parks. During the past three years, teams of cross-departmental MetroParks staff have worked to develop the interpretive plans for Germantown, Twin Creek and Taylorsville MetroParks.

This planning process has given a clearer direction for the management and development of these parks, and park visitors will see changes in future years. For example, the Nature Center at Germantown MetroPark will be renovated to better meet the needs of the hikers in the Twin Valley.

OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARD ESTABLISHED

Funded through the James M. Cox Jr. Arboretum Foundation's Kettering Grant, 2014 saw the launch of MetroParks' OUTstanding Teacher Award. The award was established to recognize classroom educators who connect students with inspiring outdoor experiences that shape positive attitudes toward nature. These teachers foster a community at their school that encourages kids to get outside and active in natural spaces.

A winner was selected from each of the following categories: Rising Star (less than 10 years of experience), Leader (10-20 years of experience), and Lifetime Achievement (more than 20 years of experience).

Winning teachers received a prize package worth \$800 that included a plant kit with plants selected for the winning teacher's school, Environmental Education Council of Ohio membership and \$500 worth of tools for their school.

Meet our Winning Teachers

Rising Star: Katie Henry, 4th Grade Teacher, Brookville Intermediate School

Leader: Robert Erwin, Environmental Science Teacher, Centerville High School

Lifetime Achievement: Becky Stroh, 3rd Grade, Ruskin PreK-8 (Dayton Public Schools)



Students experience the outdoors at Adventure Central.

ADVENTURE CENTRAL: PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

Adventure Central is a community-based youth development partnership serving at-risk children and their parents in the West Dayton community since 2000. This nationally recognized program utilizes nature and life-changing activities that strengthen values, build lasting life skills and empower youth to explore life's possibilities. Programs include after-school, day camp, overnight camp, teen and activity night programs, with a specific focus on ongoing contact with youth. Five Rivers MetroParks is pleased with this successful partnership with The Ohio State University Extension and 4-H.

2014 Highlights:

- Adventure Central engaged more than 250 urban Dayton youth ages 5 to 18 and more than 90 parents/guardians in programming totaling nearly 71,000 contact hours.
- 21 teens participated in the Job Experience and Training program, holding volunteer or paid positions in park-related summer jobs at Five Rivers MetroParks facilities.
- 100% of parents agreed that Adventure Central has supported their children's academic efforts, with 90% noting a marked improvement in their child's academic results.
- Nearly 150 volunteers contributed more than 15,000 hours to the program at Adventure Central.
- A continued relationship with The Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener program delivered a garden club for participating youth.



THE ADVENTURE SUMMIT

RECREATION

THE ADVENTURE SUMMIT

Held at Wright State University in February 2014, approximately 5,000 people attended this event, the Midwest's largest expo of outdoor skill and culture. This free event included hands-on activities, presentations by world-renowned and local adventurers, competitions and an expo with more than 50 vendors. Participants could discover all the recreation opportunities available locally at this event that fosters an environment that encourages people to get out and pursue outdoor recreation.

2014 Highlights:

- David Cornthwaite and Jon Turk, both award-winning and well-recognized world adventurers, were keynote speakers.
- New to the featured competitions in 2014 was the kayak polo tournament, a cross between water polo, basketball and hockey. Others included the popular bouldering competition, the Frosty Cheeks 5K and canoe battleship.
- Attendees could try such activities as kayaking, climbing, slacklining and yoga.
- In 2014, The Adventure Summit included special opportunities just for college students, including discounted campus housing and free pizza and pool parties on Friday night.

MIDWEST OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE: ADVENTURE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Five Rivers MetroParks' Midwest Outdoor Experience offers something for everyone, from the budding weekend warrior to the hardcore outdoor enthusiast. With more than 17,000 visitors during the October 2014 event, the Midwest Outdoor Experience is the largest festival celebrating the outdoor lifestyle in the Midwest.

Held at Eastwood MetroPark, 2014's Midwest Outdoor Experience was presented by Wagner Subaru. The two-day event featured outdoor activities, an exhibitor village, competitions, music, a craft beer garden and food, weekend camping, and exciting adventure demos.

Visitors tried their hand at fly fishing, canoeing, kayaking and more than 25 other outdoor activities, ranging from backpacking and bouldering to in-line skating, stand up paddleboarding, snow tubing, and zip lining. Attendees could visit the IMBA Bike Village and learn skills at the REI Outdoor School. Kids participated in outdoor activities at the Subway Fresh Fit Youth Adventure Zone – and even the family dog could get in on the action at Zuke's Bark Zone.



MIDWEST OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

2014 Highlights:

- Nearly 2,000 individuals tried at least one experience area.
- 201 individuals joined the Outdoor Adventure Connection Club and made a commitment to pursue their love of outdoor recreation.
- More than \$1,000 worth of gear was swapped or sold in the used gear area.
- 219 volunteers gave 897 hours of volunteer service to set up, tear down and help the event run smoothly.
- 13 competitions yielded more than 1,600 competitors.



More than 500 people attended Five Rivers MetroParks' Bike to Work Day event.

NATIONAL BIKE TO WORK DAY

May is National Bike Month, when communities nationwide showcase the many benefits of bicycling – and Five Rivers MetroParks hosted the region's largest celebration on May 16. More than 500 cycling enthusiasts gathered at RiverScape MetroPark to enjoy a free pancake breakfast, live music and more. Businesses, organizations and community groups were encouraged to enter the team challenge prior to the event.

The League of American Bicyclists has designated Dayton a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community, and Dayton is home to the nation's largest connected bikeway network, with more than 300 miles of paved bikeways to explore.

A Waste-Free Event

- 19% of all registrants biked to work for the first time
- 6,274 miles were traveled by bike to and from participants' workplaces
- 251 gallons of gas were saved from consumption
- 105 pounds of compost, 30 pounds of recyclables and less than one pound of landfill waste drastically reduced the event's carbon footprint



METROPARKS MOUNTAIN BIKE AREA

MOMBA GRANT

The MetroParks Mountain Bike Area (MoMBA) will be getting some great improvements for riders of all ages and skill levels. A 1.5-mile beginners trail and a skills loop will be added to the more than eight miles of trail already existing at MoMBA. Other improvements include restroom facilities and upgrades to the parking lot and entrance drive. This project will be paid for primarily with funds from a \$144,000 Recreational Trails Project grant received in 2014 from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the first to be granted for a mountain biking facility.

Also at MoMBA in 2014, a .33-mile trail was added to the Hawk's Lair trail for more advanced riders.

METROPARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

Designed to position Five Rivers MetroParks for a sustainable future, the strategic plan was launched in 2014. It focuses the agency on five goals:

- Create Great Parks
- Engage the Community
- Be a Model of Fiscal Responsibility and Integrity
- Achieve Operational Excellence
- Empower and Prepare the Team

Together, these goals set the foundation for Five Rivers MetroParks' 2015 comprehensive master plan effort, which includes an extensive community engagement process. The strategic plan and comprehensive master plan ultimately will provide an even better park district that serves everyone in the community and provides a great value for the Montgomery County region.

Bird watching at Great Miami
Wetland Mitigation Bank



CREATE **GREAT PARKS**

MAD RIVER RUN GRAND OPENING

On May 5, a grand opening event celebrated the new Mad River Run at Eastwood MetroPark. Part conservation and part recreation, the Mad River Run includes a kayak and canoe whitewater feature in the Mad River, river access points and an area for observing and enjoying the many sights and sounds of the river. Construction was funded in part by a \$100,000 donation made by the Rotary Club of Dayton, a grand gesture during their 100th year of serving the local community.

The project not only enhances a four-mile paddling experience from Eastwood MetroPark to RiverScape MetroPark, it provides deep fishing holes above and below the run. The whitewater feature is used for swift water rescue instruction and advanced paddling and maneuvering training programs.



RIVERSCAPE MODIFICATIONS BRING NEW BENEFITS AND STRENGTHEN PROJECT

One of the most impactful projects planned for the region, the RiverScape River Run, includes improved access to the Great Miami River, a better experience for whitewater paddlers and a great hangout spot on the downtown riverbank. The Dayton community raised \$4 million to fund the project. Partners in the project, a priority project of the Greater Downtown Dayton Plan, are the Downtown Dayton Partnership, Miami Conservancy District, the City of Dayton and Montgomery County.

TRAIL EXTENDED AT GERMANTOWN METROPARK

On Nov. 15, Five Rivers MetroParks celebrated the official opening of a new section of trail. Part of Five Rivers MetroParks' Strategic Trail Initiative, the extension creates a scenic, 2.6-mile hiking loop. It also is a new route for the Twin Valley Trail, a 22-mile backpacking trail, that replaced a section that was damaged due to the flooding of the Twin Creek. The trail extension keeps hikers above portions of the trail regularly closed due to flooding.



FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS' YOUTH AND FAMILY INITIATIVE

Children ages 8 to 18 are spending an average of more than seven hours a day in front of a screen or engaged with audio media, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Research by the Children & Nature Network shows only 6 percent of children ages 9 to 13 play outdoors on their own.

The result is an effect dubbed "nature deficit disorder" by Richard Louv, co-founder of the national nonprofit Children & Nature Network. This cultural shift has contributed to increased rates of childhood obesity, diabetes and a number of other maladies. Studies consistently show that children who have access to frequent, unstructured play in the outdoors are less stressed, more creative and perform better in school.

As part of our strategic plan, Five Rivers MetroParks established a Youth and Family Initiative to address this disconnection with nature. In 2014, MetroParks staff began developing a plan for the initiative, conducting research and holding focus groups to better understand obstacles to kids playing outdoors.



Children explore the nature play area at Englewood MetroPark.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS PLAYS KEY ROLE IN NATIONAL REPORT FOR HELPING CHILDREN CONNECT WITH NATURE

The National Wildlife Federation and Natural Learning Initiative released new guidelines to help U.S. communities create natural play areas and outdoor learning spaces, and Five Rivers MetroParks was a key player in guideline development, along with 20 other national organizations.

The report, Nature Play & Learning Places: Creating and Managing Places Where Children Engage with Nature, defines nature play places; explains how to plan, design and manage these spaces; and outlines how to bring them to children and families in every community. Included in the report were 12 national case studies, one of them being the nature play area at Hills & Dales MetroPark. Natural play areas also can be found at Sugarcreek, Englewood, Possum Creek, Wegerzyn Gardens and Wesleyan MetroParks.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS A LEADER IN MIAMI VALLEY LEAVE NO CHILD INSIDE

Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside (MVLNCI), a chapter of the statewide Leave No Child Inside initiative, continued to engage the community in 2014. Participants work to connect children and families with nature and gain new resources, action steps and connections.

2014 Highlights:

- With partner assistance, the third annual Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside (MVLNCI) Summit was presented on Feb. 22.
- Five Rivers MetroParks partnered with the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission and MVLNCI partners to provide a 2014 Safe Routes to Play Workshop Series to assist the larger community in building access to nature for youth.
- Our work with MVLNCI was presented at the 2014 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and Miami Valley Zoning and Planning conferences.
- In November, Five Rivers MetroParks hosted the first Ohio Leave No Child Inside meeting since 2011 to discuss ways regions can better work together.



DISCOVERING NATURE

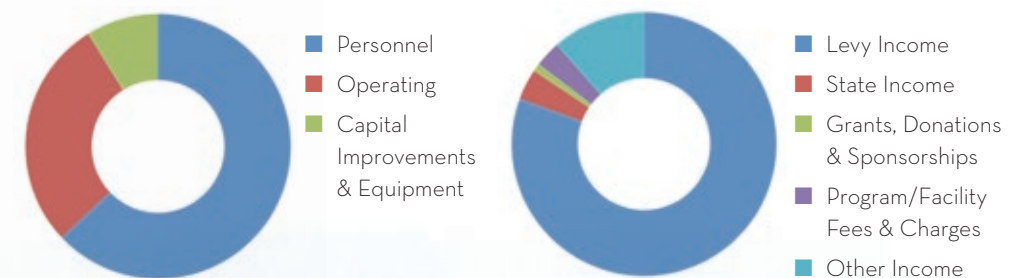


In 2014, all 44 Five Rivers MetroParks shelters were available to rent for visitors' exclusive use.

BE A MODEL OF FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INTEGRITY

The majority of Five Rivers MetroParks' funding comes from a property tax levy supported by Montgomery County taxpayers. Five Rivers MetroParks takes its responsibility as steward of the public's funds very seriously and is committed to providing quality and value for the community.

It has become increasingly critical that Five Rivers MetroParks diversify its revenue streams to fill the gap created by eroding property tax revenues and state incomes. Taxpayer dollars need to be supplemented for us to continue to provide and improve the high-quality parks and programs our community deserves. Therefore, Five Rivers MetroParks is increasingly focused on developing new partnerships and implementing efficiencies and cost reductions that maximize levy dollars and create more balanced and sustainable finances.



NEW FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS FOUNDATION

In 2014, a new foundation was created to provide Five Rivers MetroParks with a 501(c)3 entity for securing philanthropic funding for special projects, programming and an endowment.

This new foundation provides a way for donors to support Five Rivers MetroParks with charitable contributions that benefit all parks or a specific park. Donations also can be directed to support our educational and recreational services, as well as conservation initiatives. The foundation is led by a volunteer board committed to the mission, master plan and strategic plan for Five Rivers MetroParks.

For more information: Visit metroparks.org/donate or contact Beth Redden, Five Rivers MetroParks Director of Development, at (937) 277-4369 or beth.redden@metroparks.org.

2014 REVENUE: \$20,556,228

- **Levy Income:** \$16,572,369
- **State Income:** \$774,355
- **Grants, Donations & Sponsorships:** \$204,121
- **Program/Facility Fees & Charges:** \$649,943
- **Other Income:** \$2,355,440
Includes \$1,234,600 from grant funds

2014 EXPENSES: \$18,757,407

- **Personnel:** \$11,779,497
- **Operating:** \$5,279,721
- **Capital Improvements & Equipment:** \$1,656,013

For more on the agency's funding, visit metroparks.org/funding.



A variety of locally grown foods are sold year-round at the 2nd Street Market.

© Dwelling Moments Photography

ACHIEVE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS OPERATES SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES

Five Rivers MetroParks not only partners with businesses, it operates several successful businesses of its own. Those include the 2nd Street Market, Carriage Hill MetroPark Riding Center, and MetroParks Ice Rink and food concessions, in addition to shelter rentals and RiverScape Rentals. These businesses help Five Rivers MetroParks meet its mission by providing opportunities to connect to the outdoors through various activities. The 2nd Street Market provides convenient access to locally grown and produced food, which is less taxing on our environment and often much healthier. These businesses provide additional revenue that is part of Five Rivers MetroParks' cost recovery model.

In 2014:

- Attendance at the 2nd Street Market increased by 4 percent from 2013 to 2014.
- *Ohio Magazine* readers voted the 2nd Street Market the Best Farmers Market in Ohio.
- 2,092 people attended trail rides, pony rides or lessons at the Carriage Hill Riding Center.
- 18,467 people skated at the MetroParks Ice Rink, and 593 people rented bikes and attachments.
- 891 people rented Five Rivers MetroParks' picnic shelters in 2014.
- Five Rivers MetroParks made all 44 shelters available to rent for exclusive use and implemented an online reservation system.



PARK SERVICES IN ACTION

PARK MAINTENANCE STANDARDS DEVELOPED

To ensure continued safety and enjoyment of our parks, strict standards have been set to provide goals and achievable benchmarks by which staff can assess the condition of all Five Rivers MetroParks' park amenities. Conditions are checked monthly using a checklist and conditions are noted to ensure such things as:

- amenities are clean, intact, well-mounted and in good repair
- facilities are free of graffiti and litter
- painted surfaces are smooth and rust-free
- all hardware is intact and operational
- wood is not rotted, splintering or excessively warped
- grounds and paths are mowed and vegetation is trimmed



Five Rivers MetroParks staff conduct land mapping activities to catalog the plants, trees, topography and more on the land the organization manages.

EMPOWER AND PREPARE THE METROPARKS TEAM

STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS & AWARDS

Brent Anslinger, outdoor recreation manager, became a Certified Festival and Event Associate (CFEA) with the International Festival and Event Association (IFEA).

Lauren Stayer Asquith, education specialist, was recognized with the "Outstanding Environmental Educator" award by Environmental Education Council of Ohio.

Luci Beachdell, community gardening supervisor, completed Growing Power's commercial urban agriculture training. Luci participated as part of a collaboration with the University of Dayton.

Becky Benná, executive director, was elected as the President Elect for the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration that includes distinguished professionals and scholars from across the country who are committed to the advancement of the field of parks and recreation.

Katherine Berg, Carriage Hill MetroPark Riding Center manager, achieved a Level 4 out of 4 in both English and Western riding instruction and was selected to apply to become an Assistant Clinic Instructor with CHA (Certified Horsemanship Association), allowing her to assist in certifying other instructors.

Amy Dingle, director of Outdoor Connections, was named "Regional Boating Educator of the Year" by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators.

Carrie Scarff, deputy director, completed the National Recreation and Park Association's Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP).

Paul Williams, regional park manager, earned Certified Playground Safety Inspector status.



Dave Nolin, Five Rivers MetroParks director of conservation, was honored for his decades of work protecting the region's natural heritage.

DAVE NOLIN NAMED CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Five Rivers MetroParks conservation director Dave Nolin received the Wallace I. Edwards Conservationist of the Year Award from the Three Valley Conservation Trust. Dave has dedicated himself to preserving, protecting and restoring natural spaces in the Miami Valley for almost 30 years. His achievements have included extensive work on the 109-acre Huffman Prairie; establishing Ohio's first prairie nursery, which allowed Five Rivers MetroParks to plant more than 800 acres of native prairies; and other accomplishments too numerous to mention. He is also an advocate for conservation on both the state and national levels and is often consulted for his expertise. Thanks to his many efforts, thousands of acres of native habitat have been protected and restored.

GREEN CERTIFICATION AWARDED FOR HEADQUARTERS

Five Rivers MetroParks' office at 409 E. Monument Ave. in downtown Dayton received Green Business Certification through the Dayton Regional Green Initiative. This certification demonstrates our commitment to a brighter, greener future for the Miami Valley. The Green Business Certification Program reduces environmental impact and helps identify cost-saving measures through energy efficiency, waste reduction, product selection and program incentives. Green Businesses have saved thousands of dollars via enhanced rebates and energy audit subsidies.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS WINS STATE AWARD FOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Five Rivers MetroParks' volunteer program won an Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Award of Excellence in the category of management innovation. The awards are judged on project purpose, goals and objectives, evaluation, community engagement and use of external resources, challenges and creative solutions, and the overall impact of the project. Park districts submit their best projects from the previous year and leaders from park districts statewide judge the contest.

SERGEANTS GRADUATE FROM RIGOROUS TRAINING PROGRAMS

Sergeant John Rieder graduated from the 66th Police Executive Leadership College (PELC) and Sergeant Ken Shaffer graduated from the 7th Supervisor Training and Evaluation Program (STEP). Both are intensive three-week training programs completed during a three-month period. The programs are supported by the Law Enforcement Foundation and the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. These challenging courses are designed to improve supervisory skills and help students become better supervisors and leaders.

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

While Five Rivers MetroParks' mission is to protect our region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature, this work cannot be done by one organization alone. Partnerships with businesses, organizations, volunteers and others provide support that is critical to the success of Five Rivers MetroParks.



Ongoing interaction with nature is a key part of the Adventure Central experience.



Bonbright Distributors is a major supporter of Five Rivers MetroParks.

BUSINESS SUPPORT INCLUDED:

Five Rivers MetroParks is honored to have numerous partners in the business community who support our agency and help us fulfill our mission and vision. These partners provide critical sponsorships for events and programming, donate products and services and give us financial support for our many projects. Five Rivers MetroParks' Development Department has seen an increase in these partnerships, a vital part of our commitment to financial responsibility. Listed below are our community partners who have contributed \$5,000 or more through sponsorships and donations.

DP&L

The annual volunteer event Adopt-a-Park was again supported by a donation from DP&L, which provided funding for T-shirts and lunch for the volunteers.

DP&L FOUNDATION

A \$20,000 grant from the DP&L Foundation to the James M. Cox Jr. Arboretum Foundation supported Cox Arboretum MetroParks' butterfly educational programs.

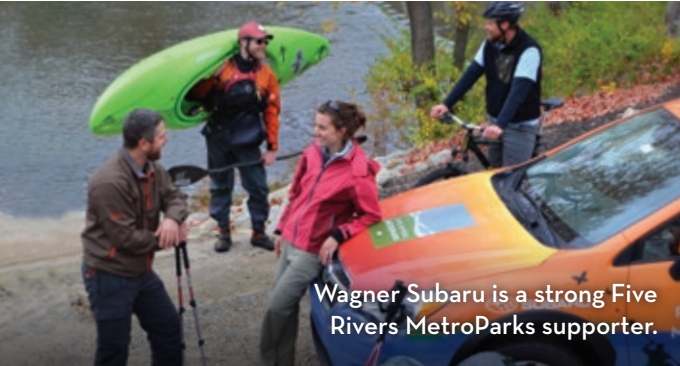
VIRGINIA W. KETTERING FOUNDATION

The foundation provided a \$15,000 grant to support the school tours education program.

BONBRIGHT DISTRIBUTORS

Bonbright Distributors made a substantial donation to Five Rivers MetroParks to help build the culture of outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship in the region. This donation was the result of a long, positive relationship between Five Rivers MetroParks and Bonbright, which included Bonbright's support of the Midwest Outdoor Experience and The Adventure Summit. This donation also was the result of Bonbright's partnership with New Belgium Brewing Company, which has a long history of supporting outdoor lifestyles, environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

In 2014, Bonbright Distributors' total contributions added up to \$83,150.



Wagner Subaru is a strong Five Rivers MetroParks supporter.

SUBARU OF AMERICA AND WAGNER SUBARU

Five Rivers MetroParks has developed a partnership with Subaru of America and local dealer Wagner Subaru, which chose to sponsor Five Rivers MetroParks with the donation of two Subarus to use for promotional appearances, program support and daily driving, in addition to the businesses' support of the Midwest Outdoor Experience. Since 2010, Subaru has been the presenting sponsor of this outdoor recreation showcase, which helped keep the event free and open to the public. Subaru's corporate commitments to the environment make it an ideal partner for Five Rivers MetroParks.

COMPOSITE ADVANTAGE

This Dayton-based manufacturer donated a 20-foot fiberspan bridge that was installed over a creek on the new pink trail at Germantown MetroPark.

ROTARY CLUB OF DAYTON

Construction of the Mad River Run in Eastwood MetroPark was funded in part by a \$100,000 donation to help mark the club's 100th anniversary.

VICTORIA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

In partnership with the Victoria Theatre Association and a sponsorship by Fifth Third Bank, the second National Geographic Live! speaker series showcased the importance of nature and our environment through the eyes of National Geographic explorers, photographers and filmmakers.



Five Rivers MetroParks commissioner Irv Bieser and longtime Five Rivers MetroParks supporter Bob Siebenthaler are joined by other Rotary Club of Dayton members during a grand opening celebration for the Mad River Run at Eastwood MetroPark.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM FOUNDATIONS AND FRIENDS

Five Rivers MetroParks is fortunate to receive support from our partnering nonprofit foundations and organizations led by volunteer boards. These foundations are committed to the organization's mission and help raise funds for programs, services and special projects.

FUNDING IN 2014 INCLUDED:

James M. Cox Jr. Arboretum Foundation

- Allée trees & arbor
- Audio visual system in the Zorniger Education & Visitor Center
- Barbara Cox Center for Sustainable Horticulture Design
- Bulbs for spring displays
- Kitchen appliances

Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation

- Message board
- North Plaza resurfacing and furniture
- Restoration of benches
- Skeeter's Garden resurfacing
- Splash pad

Friends of Carriage Hill

- Country Fair
- Historical-themed educational events
- Materials and equipment for historical educational activities
- Supplies for restoration of the historical Daniel Arnold Barn

Thank you to other businesses and organizations that supported Five Rivers MetroParks in 2014, including:

- Montgomery County Solid Waste District grant for recycling containers in our urban parks (\$6,700)
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources \$25,000 Watercraft grant for boating education equipment
- The Ohio River Road Runners Club held a 5K "Build a Bridge" run that raised \$3,986 toward the construction of a new bridge over the lagoon at Eastwood MetroPark.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Five Rivers MetroParks. Thousands of dedicated volunteers make our accomplishments possible and are the very heart of our efforts to promote and accomplish our mission of conserving the Dayton region's natural heritage. Working side-by-side with staff, our volunteers make tax dollars go farther.

In addition, Five Rivers MetroParks is supported by the hard work of volunteers at the James M. Cox Jr. Arboretum Foundation, the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation and the Friends of Carriage Hill. All work to support the mission of Five Rivers MetroParks.

In 2014:

- Total number of permanent volunteers: 1,503
- Estimated number of episodic volunteers 4,500
- Volunteer Hours: 47,170
- Value of Volunteer Service: \$754,729

For more on volunteering, visit metroparks.org/volunteer.



LIZ BOLENDER

LIZ BOLENDER RECEIVES SERVICE AWARD

Liz Bolender of Kettering was awarded the Joan and Bob Siebenthaler Bridge to the Community Award, Five Rivers MetroParks' most distinguished service award, in February 2014. Liz has been volunteering for Five Rivers MetroParks since 1970. She served as the area chair of the Rock Garden Group at Cox Arboretum MetroPark for more than three decades and as Plant Sale chairwoman for more than two decades. Bolender was nominating chair for the Cox Arboretum Associate Board for many years, and her leadership helped raise critical funds for the 1979 Visitor Center and present Zorniger Education Campus at Cox Arboretum MetroPark.

VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATE EARTH DAY WITH THE 2014 ADOPT-A-PARK

At the 27th annual Adopt-a-Park event on April 19, a diverse crew of volunteers of all ages, accessibility levels and backgrounds joined forces to make our parks and river corridors healthier, more attractive and friendlier places to visit.

Volunteers participated in projects aimed at improving the environment at more than two dozen sites throughout the Dayton area by cleaning up along one-mile stretches of our waterways or removing litter and doing other Earth-friendly tasks. In addition to cleanup, volunteers planted trees, prepared garden beds, removed invasive species and painted. Adopt-a-Park volunteers also helped with conservation efforts to restore our forests by checking on tree seedlings planted in past years, repairing protective tubes and making sure the seedlings were growing as planned.



Building a new fence at Carriage Hill MetroPark during Make a Difference Day.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

At this event, held Oct. 25, community members worked at various sites throughout the Dayton area, including:

- Planting seeds at Cox Arboretum MetroPark
- Pruning and planting at Hills & Dales MetroPark
- Preparing for the upcoming skating season at RiverScape MetroPark
- Rebuilding pasture fences at Carriage Hill MetroPark
- Painting, mulching and trail work at Germantown MetroPark
- Planting trees at the Medlar Conservation Area
- Collecting seeds at Wesleyan MetroPark
- Removing invasive honeysuckle at Aullwood Garden MetroPark and Englewood MetroPark



Five Rivers MetroParks' Executive Director Becky Benná (left) is joined by other staff and volunteers at the ribbon cutting for the new pink trail extension at Germantown MetroPark.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

By Ohio law, Five Rivers MetroParks is governed by a three-member volunteer Board of Park Commissioners who are appointed by the probate judge of Montgomery County. The board establishes all policies and rules, approves developments and land acquisition, and controls all funds. Each commissioner serves without pay for a three-year term, with one member's term expiring each year. Commissioners can be reappointed for successive terms. Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.



PRESIDENT

Irvin G. Bieser Jr. is an attorney, supporter of the arts and nature-lover.



VICE PRESIDENT

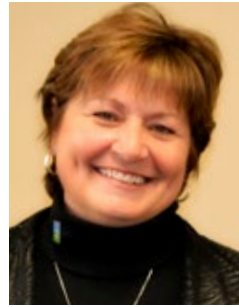
Alan F. Pippenger is a local businessman, supporter of open-space preservation and community leader.



COMMISSIONER AT LARGE

Karen L. Davis is a health care professional, community volunteer and family advocate.

STAFF LEADERSHIP TEAM



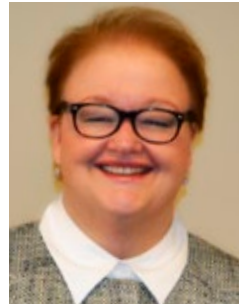
Becky Benná
Executive Director



Carrie Scarff
Deputy Director



Nate Arnett
Director of
Adventure Central



Trish Butler
Director of Marketing
& Public Information



Mark Hess
Chief of Rangers



Karen Hesser
Director of Park Services
& Legislative Affairs



Debra Jackson
Director of Human
Resources

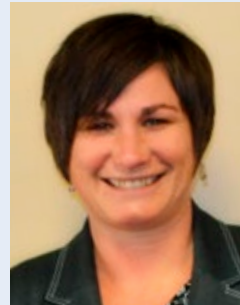


Dave Nolin
Director
of Conservation



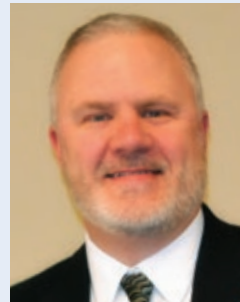
Beth Redden
Director of Development

MEET TWO NEW ADDITIONS TO OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Amy Dingle
Director of
Outdoor
Connections

Amy Dingle leads the Outdoor Connections Department's overall strategy, as well as plans and implements all public engagement efforts that support Five Rivers MetroParks' mission through environmental education, outdoor recreation, community sustainability and entertainment. The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) recently recognized Dingle as Regional Boating Educator of the Year.



Bill Tschirhart
Director
of Business
Services

Bill Tschirhart oversees the agency's financial sustainability and continues to implement the agency's cost recovery plan. Tschirhart comes to Five Rivers MetroParks after 16 years with the City of Kettering's parks, recreation and cultural arts department, the last eight as business services manager. He holds a master's degree in public administration and is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

FOUNDATIONS AND FRIENDS

The following foundations support our conservation efforts, educational and recreational services and guide continued development:

- Five Rivers MetroParks Foundation
- Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation
- James M. Cox, Jr. Arboretum Foundation
- Friends of Carriage Hill

PARTNER WITH US

Along with individual donors who support Five Rivers MetroParks, many area organizations and businesses partner with us to provide financial support, sponsorships and in-kind services.

DONATE

Support our mission and your favorite MetroPark by making a donation to Five Rivers MetroParks Foundation. Your tax deductible gift will be used to support programs and special projects. Donations (made payable to Five Rivers MetroParks Foundation) can be mailed to:

Five Rivers MetroParks Foundation
409 E. Monument Ave., Third Floor
Dayton, OH 45402

You also can support specific parks with a donation to the James M. Cox, Jr. Arboretum Foundation, Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation and Friends of Carriage Hill.

Call (937) 275-PARK (7275) and ask to speak to a member of the development department staff to contribute to any of these foundations and organizations.

VOLUNTEER

Whether it's a year, a month, a week or even a few hours — there's a place for you as a MetroParks volunteer! Call **(937) 275-PARK (7275)** for more information or download and print the volunteer application at metroparks.org/volunteer.

TRIBUTE PROGRAM WITH COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

Honor a loved one or celebrate a holiday, birthday, or other special occasion with a unique, lasting gift located at your favorite MetroPark. We offer a range of options that include benches, trees, and, in some locations, swings. Each is adorned with a commemorative plaque engraved according to the donor's specifications. Items are endowed for a 10-year period.



Jerry Hauer, joined by his dog Eddie, sits on the tribute bench his family purchased in honor of his 80th birthday.

At the end of the 10 years, the donor will be notified and given the option to re-endow the tribute. If the donor chooses not to renew, the plaque will be removed and given to the donor.

GENERAL HONOR AND TRIBUTE GIFTS

Honor someone special by making a general donation to the Five Rivers MetroParks Foundation. It's the perfect holiday gift or way to commemorate a wedding, anniversary, birthday, graduation, retirement or other special event. We'll send an acknowledgment of your gift to you as well as to the honoree or designated contact person.

For additional information, please contact Five Rivers MetroParks' Development Department at (937) 275-PARK (7275) or visit metroparks.org/donate.

MEMORIAL FUNDS

Set up a memorial fund in honor of a loved one to which others can contribute. We are happy to provide contribution envelopes that you can distribute at a memorial service or other commemorative event.

To learn more about how your company or organization can get involved, contact us at (937) 275-PARK (7275).



409 E. MONUMENT AVE. • DAYTON, OH 45402
(937) 275-PARK. • EMAIL@METROPARKS.ORG

WWW.METROPARKS.ORG