

Crucial Natural Areas Along Big Creek in Brooklyn

HELP FRIENDS OF BIG CREEK SAVE SPECIAL AREAS WITHIN THE HEART OF GREATER CLEVELAND

95 years ago Cleveland Metroparks founder William Stinchcomb had a vision of conserving Big Creek's green corridor north of its current terminus at Brookpark Road. The *Big Creek Greenway and Trail Plan*, completed in 2009, does just that! Now, as a major first step toward this goal, Friends of Big Creek and West Creek Conservancy (formerly West Creek Preservation Committee), an urban land conservancy, have protected a crucial 3-acre natural area noted in the plan along a stretch of Big Creek in the City of Brooklyn. See our story below.

Opportunities to acquire land are rare and short-lived. What's not short-lived is the contribution these acquisitions will make towards the preservation of their natural features, their investment in our region, and their enjoyment by future generations. With 88% of the funding in place, FOBC received a loan to complete acquisition of this property. Nearly all of the remaining 12% has been raised and we are now trying to raise additional seed money to conserve adjacent properties.

Please support our effort to purchase greenway parcels with a financial contribution NOW.

Important Big Creek parcels in Brooklyn acquired

BIG CREEK LAND CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHED

In our ongoing effort to conserve and enhance the natural resources of Big Creek, Friends of Big Creek approached the trustee of two Brooklyn parcels that contained forested land crossing Big Creek. With the assistance of West Creek Conservancy the parcels were successfully acquired in December 2011, ensuring the conservation of these key parcels and their permanent protection as a natural area!

At over 3 acres, with a width of 110 feet and a depth of about 1400 feet, the parcels had in the past been sought by developers interested in building a roadway off Biddulph Avenue to develop housing along Big Creek. Currently, most housing in the area is situated a distance from the creek, helping to preserve a vegetated "buffer" along most of the creek. River or "riparian" buffers are vegetated areas next to water resources that protect them from polluted run-off, provide bank stabilization and enhance aquatic and wildlife habitat. This acquisition helps assure that most of the stretch of Big Creek between Biddulph and Memphis Avenue, remains in its natural, vegetative state.

The parcels were recognized in the *Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan* as Priority Conservation Areas. They could also be key in implementing the *Big Creek Greenway Trial and Neighborhood Connector Plan*, the 2009 study that seeks to connect the Cleveland



Metroparks' Brookside and Big Creek Reservations with a 3-mile all-purpose trail through the City of Brooklyn. Visit friendsofbigcreek.org to learn more about both these plans and the Lower Big Creek plan to continue the trail to the Cuyahoga River and the Towpath Trail.

The purchases of the parcels were made possible largely due to the donation of a 3-acre property in North Royalton owned by FOBC Board Member Al Penko (see *article below*). With a conservation easement being placed on his Big Creek "headwaters" property, most of the proceeds from the sale of Al's property went towards the purchase of the Biddulph Avenue parcels, several miles downstream.

Board member donates "headwaters" property in North Royalton

Al Penko, a FOBC board member, had a vision. He hoped that the largely undeveloped stretch of Big Creek running from his property on Ridge Road near Albion Road north to the Snake Hill Conservation Area in Parma could be preserved. That's when he decided to put a plan in motion. Al donated his property to West Creek Conservancy so they could place a conservation easement on the property's riparian area, ensuring its permanent protection as a natural area. Through the efforts of WCC and FOBC volunteers, his historic home was restored and it, along with the property, was sold. Proceeds from the sale helped us acquire and conserve more natural area downstream in Brooklyn (see *article above*).



Al received the 2012 Conservationist of the Year award from the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District. We owe him a debt of gratitude for making the choice to save some of our remaining natural areas with his generous donation. It made a difference in two locations!

Friends of Big Creek

friendsofbigcreek.org