

Big Creek Watershed News & Notes

Partners undertake Big Creek Trail Alignment study through the City of Brooklyn

Friends of Big Creek, Cleveland Metroparks, and the cities of Cleveland and Parma join the City of Brooklyn as co-sponsors for a \$75,000 trail alignment study funded by the federal Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) grant program through the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency. The \$60,000 grant (with a \$15,000 local match) was awarded on August 10, 2007. The City of Brooklyn will administer the grant.

The Big Creek Greenway Trail Alignment and Neighborhood Connector Plan will develop preferred alignments for a three mile all-purpose trail expansion that will connect the Metroparks Brookside Reservation to the Big Creek Reservation south of Brookpark Road. This trail alignment, first envisioned by Metroparks founder William Stinchcomb in 1916, will create a major link in the Metroparks greenway system and increase access for more

than 40,000 Brooklyn, Cleveland and Parma residents and employees living or working within one mile of its route. The trail network would provide a safe alternative mode of transportation for its users and identify opportunities for interpretive exhibits and ecological restoration.

In 2004 the City of Brooklyn commissioned the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission to undertake a Citywide Master Plan. The plan incorporated the Planning Commission's Greenspace Plan concept of the trail expansion through the city with linkages to its neighborhoods. By 2005 the non-profit Friends of Big Creek (FOBC) was formed to advance this concept and to act as the watershed stewardship organization for Big Creek. After a series of public meetings and deliberation with its partners, FOBC asked the City of Brooklyn to act as the administrator for the TLCI grant program.

The local match requirements

for the grant are from the cities of Brooklyn (\$4,500) Cleveland (\$2,000) and Parma (\$2,000), Cleveland Metroparks (\$6,000), and Friends of Big Creek (\$500). Other project partners include Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan, Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, and West Creek Preservation Committee.

The trail alignment, when combined with a potential lower Big Creek valley trail

connection from the Zoo to the Towpath Trail, will enable users to access the amenities of the outer reaches of the Big Creek Parkway on one end, and the Towpath Trail and other destinations via the other. The Lower Big Creek Valley Greenway Redevelopment and Restoration Plan, currently studying the lower connection, is being administered by the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation. Watch for our Winter Newsletter to find out more about both these projects.

See illustration on back page.



Left to right: Bob Gardin, FOBC Chair; Donna Thompson, Administrative Assistant to City of Brooklyn's Mayor Patton; Mary E. Samide, First Vice President, NOACA Governing Board; Howard R. Maier, Executive Director, NOACA; Jim Kastelic, Senior Park Planner, Cleveland Metroparks

Parma's Evergreen Lake residents begin water quality monitoring

Between Pearl Road and Big Creek Parkway, north of Snow Road, is the charming Evergreen Lake neighborhood. In May several area residents interested in learning about good lake management practices met with Ohio State University Extension Watershed Team's Dana

Oleskiewicz, and representatives from Friends of Big Creek and West Creek Preservation Committee.

Oleskiewicz introduced the Citizen Lake Awareness and Monitoring (CLAM) program sponsored by the Ohio Lake Management Society. CLAM provides an opportunity for

Ohio citizens to take an active role in learning about aquatic ecology, lake and stream water quality, and watershed management. Volunteer participants document water conditions and changes, providing valuable information to state agencies and interested organizations.

Oleskiewicz demonstrated monitoring procedures. CLAM lake monitors record water temperature, color, and water transparency in inches using a simple instrument called a Secchi disk. They also note climatic conditions at the time of measuring.

Big Creek communities undertake Watershed Management Plan

The Big Creek watershed communities of Brooklyn, Parma, Parma Heights, Brook Park, and the southwest Wards of Cleveland are partnering with Friends of Big Creek and the Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) to develop a comprehensive community plan for the Big Creek Watershed. Community based watershed management helps reduce flood damage, decrease the loss of greenspace, reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.

There are more than 172,000 residents in the Big Creek watershed. Water quality of Big Creek, a Cuyahoga River tributary, is the most severely impacted of the tributaries within the lower Cuyahoga River Watershed. And as recent storm events have shown, flooding can be a major problem. In 2005 Friends of Big Creek (FOBC) was formed to act as the Big Creek Watershed stewardship organization. The Cuyahoga River RAP

was chosen as the organization's fiscal agent and the entity to prepare a comprehensive watershed plan for Big Creek.

The first phase of the Watershed Management Plan will enable data collection and analysis of information that will be used to identify and create a Watershed Inventory of the Big Creek Watershed and an Assessment and Problem Definition. Phase I costs are estimated at \$40,000.

In May of 2007 the RAP was awarded \$20,000. from an Ohio Coastal Management Assistance Grant that required a 50% local match. The local match was met after FOBC gained commitments from the five watershed communities making up 95% of the watershed area: Cleveland (\$6,000) Parma (\$5,000) Brooklyn \$2,500) Parma Heights (\$2,500) and Brook Park (\$2,500).

Community based watershed management helps reduce flood damage, decrease the loss of greenspace, reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.

Other project partners include Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, Cuyahoga County Board of Health and Cleveland Metroparks.

Phase II of the plan is designed to develop a comprehensive State Endorsed Watershed Action Plan that would incorporate data and analysis developed in Phase I and also include a detailed implementation plan for improving the Big Creek Watershed. Phase II costs are estimated at \$80,000.

Environmental inventory and assessment of Brooklyn "Oxbow" area



Left to right: Brooklyn's Regis Barrett, Renee Boronka, FOBC's M. E. Stasek, and Judy Semroc at the "Oxbow" in winter.

At the request of Friends of Big Creek, a field inventory of the Brooklyn "Oxbow" natural area is being conducted as part of a Conservation Outreach Program at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Conservation Specialist Judy Semroc has made two visits to the site to identify and document species and to conduct an environmental assessment.

On an initial visit in winter, Semroc was joined by Renee Boronka, Associate

Director of the Center for Conservation & Biodiversity. Larry Rosche, Conservation Specialist, joined Semroc on a second visit in August.

One discovery on the summer visit was documentation of the westernmost siting of a Mocha Emerald (*Somatochlora linearis*) dragonfly and damselfly in Cuyahoga County.

A benefit of the field inventory will be advice on enhancement of native species on the property.

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Big Creek River Day event: *Where the Waters Meet*



Hikers listen as Cleveland Ward 15 Councilman Brian Cummins explains potential trail expansion plans.

On Saturday, May 19 FOBC held its second annual RiverDay event with more than a dozen hikers exploring the hidden beauty of BigCreek at its confluence with the Cuyahoga River and learning about planning underway to enhance the area and connect it with all-purpose trails from the Towpath Trail to the Metroparks Zoo and beyond.

RiverDay is an annual day of service and celebration in the Cuyahoga Watershed, sponsored by the Friends of Crooked River. RiverDay aims to raise awareness

and understanding of the policies and practices that improve water quality and wildlife habitat in the watershed. It is also a day to celebrate the vast recreational, cultural, historic and natural resources of the Cuyahoga, our American Heritage River.

Thank you to our members and community supporters.

Please consider joining or renewing. Your membership in Friends of Big Creek will enable us to continue our mission to conserve, enhance, and bring recognition to the natural and historic resources of the Big Creek Watershed and develop a recreational trail network that joins these resources to each other and the community.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
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- Annual dues:
 \$15.00 Individual
 \$25.00 Sustaining
 \$25.00 Organization
 \$50.00 Supporting

Make checks payable to CRCPO and mail to:
 Cuyahoga River Community Planning
 Organization - FOBC
 1299 Superior Avenue
 Cleveland, OH 44114

Secure online payment is available online at www.friendsofbigcreek.org

CRCPO is a 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

Conserving Busch "Snake Hill" natural area

A portion of Big Creek runs through the natural area known to locals as "Snake Hill," located behind the Busch Funeral Home on Ridge Road in Parma. The West Creek Preservation Committee (WCPC) has offered to partner with Friends of Big Creek (FOBC) to protect this environmentally significant area — 13 acres owned by the Busch Family and 47 acres owned by the City of Parma.

WCPC has spearheaded the effort to find funding that will make conservation of the area possible. This project is a one-time opportunity to permanently protect the forested natural area along upper Big Creek that could otherwise be replaced

by impervious surface development. This area, when conserved, will provide new opportunities for watershed residents to experience nature close to home. The community will also benefit from the functions and services a natural area around a creek can provide, such as helping to improve water quality, slowing storm water and reducing flooding.

FOBC is excited to be working with community partners to achieve our watershed goals, and specifically look forward to working with the West Creek Preservation Committee and the City of Parma on the Snake Hill Preservation Project.

Big Creek clean-ups

Volunteers swept through two neighborhood locations Saturday, June 9th, for the 9th Annual Big Creek Watershed Clean-Up. One group worked at Brookfield Park off West 130 which has been the clean-up site in the past. This year they were joined by a group at Archmere Park off State Road and West 41st Street, where a portion of Stickney Creek runs above ground in Cleveland's Ward 16. The event was organized by the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District.

Earlier, on May 12, members of Friends of Big Creek joined other community volun-

teers at Ohio Canal Corridor's Annual RiverSweep Cleanup.

Friends of Big Creek partnered with the MetroParks Zoo for its annual Big Creek Cleanup, held on August 29th. This year, besides cleaning up the stretch of Big Creek that runs through Brookside Reservation, one crew focused on a ravine in the wooded area south of Wildlife Way. The ravine, which winds south to Muriel Avenue, was formerly a city street known to locals as Snake Road. In recent years it has been plagued by illegal dumping of tires and construction materials as well as general trash.

Twenty-five participants at both locations rounded up about 35 tires and 1,400 pounds of scrap metal to be recycled.

Below: Volunteers at Archmere Park in June worked to clear debris from Stickney Creek and area .



Friends of Big Creek

P.O. Box 609272
 Cleveland, OH 44109
www.friendsofbigcreek.org

- CALENDAR -

Public Meeting
Wednesday, October 17, 2007
 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

Vern Hartenburg

Executive Director of Cleveland Metroparks

The history of the Metroparks, its present and future in the community, and opportunities in working with its partners on the Big Creek trail expansion studies.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo Reinberger Education Center
 3900 Wildlife Way (next to the Main Entrance)
 Cleveland, Ohio 44109

Steering Committee

Bob Gardin, Chair
 Mary Ellen Stasek, Vice Chair
 Dale Alan Smith, Treasurer
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 Thomas Coyne
 Patrick Davis
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 Patti Hjort
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Jim White
 Advisory Committee Chair
 Executive Director, Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan

Regis Barrett
 Chair, City of Brooklyn Zoning Board of Appeals

George Cantor
 Senior Planner, Cleveland City Planning

Brian J. Cummins
 Councilman, Cleveland City Council-Ward 15

Sonia DiFiore
 Conservation Coordinator, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Mary Galinas
 Councilwoman, Parma City Council-Ward 1

Kevin Kelley
 Councilman, Cleveland City Council-Ward 16

David Lincheck
 Director, West Creek Preservation Committee

Kathleen Pucci
 Councilwoman, Brooklyn City Council

Carla Regener
 Associate Senior Planner, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

Janine Rybka
 District Administrator, Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District

Lester Stumpe
 Manager of Watershed Programs, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

Andy Vidra
 Senior Environmental Planner, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

Big Creek is the 3rd largest tributary of 12, of the lower Cuyahoga River. The Big Creek watershed drains nearly 40 square miles. It comprises southwest Cleveland, Brooklyn, Linndale, Parma, Parma Heights, Brook Park, and North Royalton. It is the Cuyahoga's most severely urbanized subwatershed—52% of its surface is impervious.

Friends of Big Creek is a community-based greenway advocacy and watershed stewardship group. The Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization, a 501(c)(3) organization, acts as the group's fiscal agent.

Trail Alignment Areas of Study

Conceptual plans for proposed trail alignments connect existing greenways and complete the corridor from the Harvard Road Trailhead of the Canalway Towpath Trail to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo/Brookside Park, to the Big Creek Reservation at Memphis Avenue, along the Tiedeman Road area, on to the Big Creek Reservation at Brookpark Road.

See story on front page.

