

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, last year Friends of Big Creek approached the trustee of two Brooklyn parcels that contained forested land crossing Big Creek. With the assistance of West Creek Preservation Committee, an urban land conservancy, the parcels were successfully acquired in December, ensuring the conservation of these key parcels and their permanent protection as a natural area!

At over 3 acres, with a width of 100 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.

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 page 2*.) 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.

To complete the acquisition of the parcels, FOBC was granted a loan to bridge the gap in funding. To fulfill this loan and to establish additional seed money to conserve other parcels along Big Creek, FOBC has formed a Land Conservation Fund. A fundraising effort is in full force in advance of our deadline of June 30th of this year.

Big Creek Balanced Growth Plan receives State endorsement

5TH ENDORSED PLAN, MOST URBAN TO DATE

The Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan received State Endorsement from the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) in June of 2011. In honor of this accomplishment, the Commission, Friends of Big Creek, and the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization (CRCPO) held a special meeting of the Big Creek Partnership on November 2nd at Parma City Hall. John Watkins, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources (ODNR) Office of Coastal Management, offered congratulations and presented certificates to the mayors of the five Big Creek watershed cities of the Partnership recognized as Ohio Balanced Growth Communities.

Ohio's Balanced Growth Program is a voluntary, community-based effort and incentive-based strategy to promote sustainable growth and conservation development. It was developed by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in 2004 and expanded to a statewide program in 2009. The Program uses watersheds as the key organizing feature for land use planning. Watershed-scale land use planning has become an accepted approach in Ohio and throughout the nation because collaboration across the watershed allows coordinated, regional decision-making about how growth and conservation should be promoted by local and state policies and investments.

Big Creek is a sub watershed of the Cuyahoga River. Its Balanced



Certificates awarded last fall. Back row L to R: Richard Balbier, Mayor of Brooklyn; Dean DePiero, Mayor of Parma. Front row L to R: Gail Hesse, OLEC Executive Director; Mark Elliott, Mayor of Brook Park; Michael Byrne, Mayor of Parma Heights; Darnell Brown, Chief Operating Officer for the City of Cleveland representing Mayor Jackson; Bob Gardin, FOBC Project Manager; Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC Environmental Specialist/Balanced Growth Coordinator, John Watkins, Chief of ODNR Office of Coastal Management representing ODNR Director & OLEC Chair David Mustine.

Growth plan was developed as a multi-year effort of the five
(See *PLAN page 2*)

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 Preservation Committee, an urban land 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 WCPC 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 on page 1.)



We all owe a debt of gratitude to Al Penko for making the choice to save some of our remaining natural areas with his generous donation. It made a difference in two locations!

Big Creek Watershed Stormwater Retrofit Ranking project

To better select and develop potential stormwater retrofit projects from the 156 potential sites identified in the Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan, FOBC implemented the Big Creek Stormwater Retrofit Ranking Project. Funding was secured through the Lake Erie Protection Fund, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District and Freshwater Future. Completed in March of this year, the project assessed, prioritized and developed conceptual plans and cost estimates.

Stormwater retrofits are a series of green structural practices for watersheds designed to intercept, slowdown and treat stormwater before it reaches our streams and waterways. They are intended to mitigate existing flooding, erosion, and water quality problems.

FOBC and its technical advisory committee selected Tetra Tech, Inc. as the project consultant, and a project intern was hired to assist with the overall project, including data collection, geographic information system desktop analysis, and field reconnaissance. Criteria used to conduct the first level of screening included identifying the drainage area, determining what percentage of it is impervious,

estimating its pollutant load, and determining the site area that can be used to treat the drainage.

The next task included contacting the property owners, examining detailed site plans and performing field assessments on 20-30 of the top ranked sites. Based on additional criteria including property ownership interest, site constraints, and potential as a demonstration project, conceptual plans were developed for three sites:

City of Parma: Upper Ridgewood Lakes Basin. The proposed retrofit includes increasing the amount of flood control, adding pretreatment cells to capture sedimentation and to allow for routine maintenance, and removing the existing concrete steps and replacing them with an aquatic bench to improve water quality. The drainage area of the Upper Ridgewood Lakes Basin is approximately one square mile. Therefore, to further mitigate flooding, erosion, and water quality problems throughout the tributary, the consultant recommended conducting a study to first identify and evaluate the benefits of providing additional stormwater control measures upstream of the basin.

General Motors: East Parking Lot. The concept design includes realigning the parking spaces in the 20 acre parking lot with improved pedestrian flow and installing bioswales with trees between the parking rows. Three larger bio-retention areas are also proposed to treat run-off delivered from the bioswales. The plan also includes pervious pavers at the far end of the parking lot to serve overflow parking.

General Motors is receptive to the plan and, if certain funding opportunities are realized, may have the plan further developed and implemented.

Cleveland Metroparks: Fernhill Wetland. The proposed retrofit is designed to intercept a stormwater outlet that drains about 50 acres west of the park by creating a wetland that will capture its flow and provide water quality treatment. The project would contain a trail between a pre-treatment cell and the wetland and, in addition to creating wildlife habitat, act as a demonstration project with interpretive signage.

In support of the concept, Metroparks and the City of Parma recently partnered with

(See RANKING page 3)

(PLAN - Continued from page 1)

municipalities working with the CRCPO and the Friends of Big Creek. The communities are now eligible for state support for plan implementation through special incentives.

The Plan identifies numerous priority conservation and development areas, as well as opportunities for storm water retrofits. Considering the urban nature of Big Creek, storm water retrofits are the primary means for improving watershed

function and expanding green infrastructure. The plan also contains data, tools, recommendations and strategies the partnership will use for implementation. The plan was developed by the CRCPO with assistance from Cuyahoga County Planning staff and, due to its comprehensive and effective mix of practices, has been recognized throughout Ohio as a model for other urban watersheds.

As the stewardship organization for the

watershed, Friends of Big Creek will act as plan managers and as liaison between the Partnership communities and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission. The OLEC is comprised of the directors of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio departments of Natural Resources, Transportation, Development, Health and Agriculture. The commission was created to preserve the lake’s natural resources and protect the quality of its waters and ecosystems.

When you join FOBC you support 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. **We gratefully acknowledge** these Friends who have joined, renewed or donated to FOBC from last summer to March 2012.

Individual

- Nidia Arguedas
- Harry Arnold
- Karen Baumiller
- Karen Blackshire
- Greg Cznadel
- Linda Cznadel
- Dean DePiero
- Maria Dimengo
- Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells
- Steve Giroski
- Irvin and Dorothy Hazel
- Chris Hixson
- Maria Lightbourn
- Maria Isabel Martins-Vaccaro
- Cal Ochendowski
- Michael Patterson
- Alfred Penko
- John Rakauskas
- Antoinette Rivera
- Tamara Sims

Michell Spoden

- Tom Stanton
- Mary Ellen Stasek
- Martin F.W.J. Szutter

Sustaining

- Parma Area Morning Kiwanis
- Christina Lee Sarson

Supporting

- Dean Bredenbeck
- Catherine Ciha and John Despina
- Bob Gardin
- Joseph Germana

Steward

- Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Donations

- Chris Ellicott
- Hugo Gardin

Donation of Gift

- Memberships**
- Greg Cznadel

**Join FOBC or renew your membership
Support our Conservation Fund
TODAY!**

Your support really does make a difference—helping FOBC in outreach, education, planning, watershed restoration through stormwater management practices, driving development of trail enhancements and greenway projects, preserving our precious natural areas.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Annual dues:

- ___ \$ 15.00 Individual
- ___ \$ 25.00 Sustaining
- ___ \$ 50.00 Supporting
- ___ \$100.00 Steward
- ___ \$250.00 Partner

Conservation Fund:

- ___ Friends (up to \$99)
\$ _____
- ___ Contributors (\$100-249)
- ___ Patron (\$250-999)
- ___ Benefactor (\$1000 & more)

Make checks payable to to:
 Friends of Big Creek, P.O. Box 609272, Cleveland, OH 44109

Secure online payment is available at www.friendsofbigcreek.org

Conservation Fund contributors

Conservation Land donation

- Alfred Penko

Benefactor (\$1000 & more)

- Anne Brosnan & Dean Bredenbeck

Contributors (\$100-249)

- Holly Clemens
- Tim Donovan
- The Erskine Fund
- Bob Gardin
- Hugo Gardin
- Terry E. Greathouse
- Jeff Lennartz

- Rakauskas Architecture
- Mary Ryan & Jim Quigley
- Mary Ellen Stasek
- The Trust for Public Land

Tributes

In memory of Barbara E. Brennan
 by Parma City Council President
 Sean Brennan

Friends (up to \$99)

- Anonymous
- Harry W. Arnold
- Helen V. Azusenis

- Mayor Richard Balbier
- Leonora Boergert
- Mayor Mike Byrne, City of Parma Heights
- Catherine Ciha & John Despina
- Maria Dimengo
- Lynette E. Filipis
- Karen Gardin
- Joseph Germana
- Jennifer Grieser
- Al Guolo
- Barbara Hermes
- John A. Jenkins
- Louann R. Lauer

- Steve McQuillin
- Ann Pallotta Nagin
- Parma Area Morning Kiwanis
- John Petcher
- Anthony T. Petti
- Linda Sperry
- Irene D. Toth
- Kristen Wilson

Tributes

In memory of Dorothy Hessoun
 by Jan Rybka
 In memory of Nancy Lee Hixson
 by Greg Cznadel

THANK YOU!

FOBC would like to acknowledge our friends and supporters who have donated to the Conservation Fund.

Their gifts have helped protect 3 acres of natural area in Big Creek's green corridor in the city of Brooklyn. **We thank them for showing that they care about local conservation and value this special place!**

If you care...we hope you will show it...by helping FOBC raise the remaining 20% of the needed funding, along with additional seed money for the conservation of nearby properties.

(RANKING Continued from page 2)

FOBC in an application through the Ohio EPA's Surface Water Improvement Fund to construct the project. To view the three conceptual plans visit friendsofbigcreek.org.

Considering the successes of the Big Creek Stormwater Retrofit Ranking Project, FOBC is now in the process of seeking funding to perform further field assessments to the remaining sites identified in the initial plan and to develop additional conceptual plans.

Wed., June 6, 2012
 Independence Civic Center
gctrails.org

2nd Biennial
Greater Cleveland Trails & Greenways Conference
Pathways to Successful Communities

Friends of Big Creek

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



Board of Trustees

Mary Ellen Stasek, Chair
 Jeffrey Lennartz, Vice Chair
 James A. Gazda, Secretary
 David McBean, RLA, Treasurer
 Thomas Coyne
 Greg Cznadel
 Roger J. Kalbrunner, Esq.
 Ann M. Kuula
 Donald C. Martin
 Alfred Penko, P.E.

Project Manager

Bob Gardin
 216.661.7706 office
 216.269.6472 mobile
 bgardin@friendsofbigcreek.org

Office

4352 Pearl Road, Suite C
 (2d floor, entrance on
 Brooklyn Ave.)
 Cleveland, Ohio 44109

Advisory Committee

Gayle Albers, Conservation Coordinator, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
 Regis Barrett, Chair, City of Brooklyn Zoning Board of Appeals
 Sean Brennan, President, Parma City Council
 George Cantor, Chief City Planner, Cleveland City Planning Commission
 Brian J. Cummins, Cleveland City Council Ward 14
 Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Manager of Environmental Programs,
 Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
 Mary Galinas, Parma City Council Ward 1
 Jane Goodman, Director, Cuyahoga River Community Planning
 Organization / Remedial Action Plan
 Kevin Kelley, Cleveland City Council Ward 13
 David Lincheck, Executive Director, West Creek Preservation Committee
 James McCall, Parma Heights City Council
 Melissa Miller, Planning and Safety Coordinator, Bellaire-Puritas
 Development Corporation
 Garrett Ormiston, GIS & Stewardship Specialist, Natural Areas Division,
 Cleveland Museum of Natural History
 Kathleen Pucci, Brooklyn City Council
 Dave Ritter, Continuing Planning / Sustainability, Northeast Ohio
 Areawide Coordinating Agency
 Rory Robinson, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Rivers, Trails, and
 Conservation Assistance, National Park Service
 Janine Rybka, District Administrator, Cuyahoga Soil and Water
 Conservation District
 Laura Travers, Sanitarian, Cuyahoga County Board of Health

Produced with financial assistance from:



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sat. Apr. 28 Cuyahoga ReLeaf—Brooklyn Riparian Re • Forest Planting, Brooklyn Memorial Park. Plant young trees along Stickney Creek.
 - Sat., May 12 RiverSweep - Ohio Canal Corridor's 23d annual environmental cleanup.
 - Sat., May 19 RiverDay - *Historic Lower Big Creek Valley Tour*: Learn about 2 of Cleveland's earliest settlements & industry along Big Creek, under Pearl Rd. (Brooklyn-Brighton Bridge) & the Greenway Plan for the valley. During Pop UP Pearl—complete street fair. Tour under Pearl, visit our booth above.
 - Sat., Jun. 2 14th Annual Big Creek Watershed Clean Up. Cleveland & Brooklyn locations.
 - Wed., Jun 6 Greater Cleveland Trails & Greenways Conference, Independence.
 - Mon., Jun. 18 Brooklyn Rain Barrel Workshop, Grand Pavilion, Memorial Park (FOBC in partnership with Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District)
 - Sat., Jul. 21 BrookStock - A Celebration of Music & Nature, Metroparks Brookside Reservation. Visit our booth.
 - Tue., Aug. 14 Big Creek Clean Up. Cleveland Metroparks Zoo & FOBC at the Zoo.
 - Thu., Aug. 23 Parma Rain Barrel Workshop, Parma Senior Center (FOBC in partnership with Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District).
- Visit friendsofbigcreek.org for the latest information on clean-ups, hikes, meetings and more.

Big Creek is the 3rd largest tributary of the Cuyahoga River. Its watershed contains over 130 miles of streams and culverts. Together they drain nearly 39 square miles from 8 municipalities - Cleveland, Brooklyn, Linndale, Parma, Parma Heights, Brook Park, Middleburg Heights, and North Royalton. Over 90% of the watershed's area has been developed and 39% of the land surface has been made impervious, making Big Creek the most heavily urbanized watershed of any major tributary in the Cuyahoga River Watershed. This degree of urbanization provides tremendous challenge ... and opportunity.

Friends of Big Creek is a community-based greenway advocacy and watershed stewardship group, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.