

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



A Separate Political Subdivision of the State of Ohio

Mill Creek MetroParks is a separate political subdivision of the state of Ohio and is not part of any local or other political subdivision.

It was established on January 1, 1989, under Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code, as the successor to the Youngstown Township Park District subsequent to the voters' approval of the conversion. Mill Creek MetroParks serves all of Mahoning County.

The MetroParks currently operates Mill Creek Park, located in Boardman Township and the City of Youngstown; Yellow Creek Park in Struthers; the MetroParks Farm in Canfield Township; Vickers Nature Preserve in Ellsworth Township; MetroParks Bikeway, which traverses Austintown Township, Canfield Township, and the City of Canfield; Sebring Woods in the Village of Sebring; Cranberry Run Headwaters in Boardman Township; Sawmill Creek Preserve in Canfield Township; Collier Preserve in Boardman Township; McGuffey Wildlife Preserve in Coitsville Township; Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary in Beaver Township; Egypt Swamp Preserve in Green Township; Hawkins Marsh in Smith Township; and Springfield Forest in Springfield Township.

MetroParks revenue is derived from three main sources: receipts of a tax levy upon all real estate within the District, receipts from the Local Government Fund, and income from other activities (greens fees, facility rentals, recreation rentals, and programs).

Mill Creek MetroParks Mission Statement

The Mission of Mill Creek MetroParks is to provide park, recreational, educational, and open space facilities of regional significance.

In fulfilling this mission our objectives are:

- To be **responsive** to community needs
- To be **environmentally sound**
- To be **adaptable**
- To be **economically responsible**

Board of Park Commissioners

Mill Creek MetroParks is governed by a board of park commissioners consisting of five residents of Mahoning County appointed by the Probate Court of Mahoning County and serving without remuneration of benefits.



APPOINTING AUTHORITY
The Honorable Judge Robert N. Rusu, Jr.
Mahoning County Probate Judge



Lee Frey
President



Germaine Bennett
Vice-President



Tom Frost



Jeff Harvey



Paul Olivier



Aaron Young
Executive Director



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The MetroParks actively participated in a wide range of outreach programs, events, and speaking engagements throughout the year, fostering connections and promoting awareness.

Notable activities included:

The Big Sit, YSU Welcome Week, Catholic Nurses Council of Youngstown, visits to senior living facilities, Step-On Tours, and engagements with local high schools.

Staff from the Operations Department made significant contributions to the Canfield Fair, showcasing their commitment to community involvement.

Key Canfield Fair activities included:

Sponsorship of picnic area enhancement through planting and landscaping, assisting with the setup of picnic tables, and providing timbers for the Old-Fashioned Sawmill Exhibit.

The Community Engagement Department staff and volunteers also played a crucial role in ensuring visitors had access to essential information.

They regularly stocked the information kiosk with literature and resources about MetroParks facilities, encouraging community participation and enjoyment of the park.

THE METROPARKS USES VARIOUS PLATFORMS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC:

PRESS RELEASES TO LOCAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK



Total followers as of December 31, 2024.



Likes, comments, or shares of content as of December 31, 2024.

INSTAGRAM



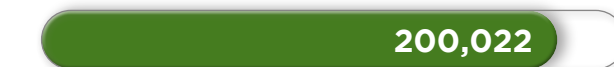
Total followers as of December 31, 2024.



Likes, comments, or shares of content.



WEBSITE



Total visitors to MillCreekMetroParks.org as of December 31, 2024.

MOST POPULAR PAGES INCLUDED:

Mill Creek MetroParks Programs, Visitor Guide & Maps, Fellows Riverside Gardens, Mill Creek Golf Course, Fellows Riverside Gardens Weddings & Rentals, Reserve a Facility, and Lanterman's Mill.

EMAIL MARKETING



Email subscribers as of December 31, 2024.

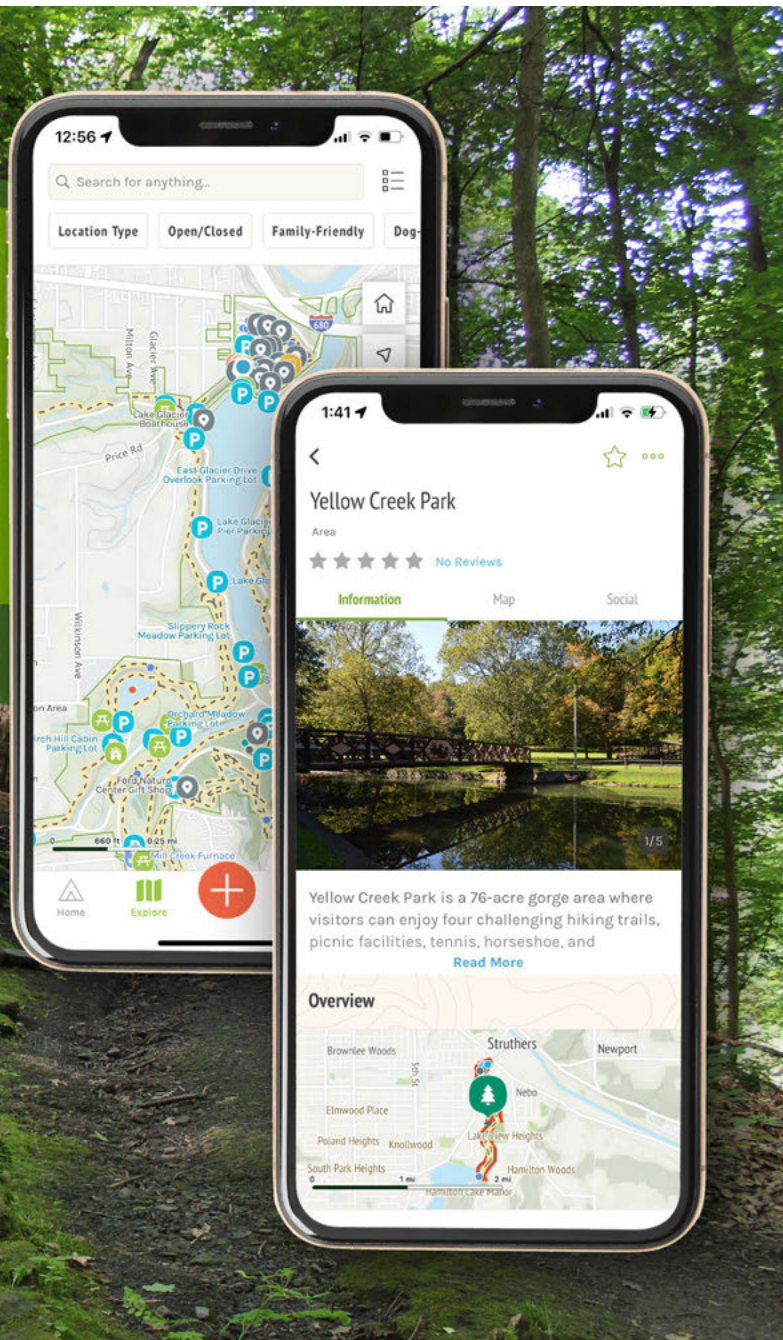


Total emails sent as of December 31, 2024.



Open rate as of December 31, 2024.

GET THE MILL CREEK METROPARKS MOBILE APP



Powered by OuterSpatial

ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCE WITH A NEW MOBILE APP

In July 2024, Mill Creek MetroParks introduced a new mobile app to make visiting the park and trails more accessible and convenient for the public.

The mobile app empowers users with instant access to essential park information and navigation tools. Designed to enhance trip planning and improve the visitor experience, the app serves as a reliable resource both before and during visits. Users can access accurate, real-time updates on trails, closures, and recreational opportunities across the MetroParks system.

Powered by OuterSpatial, the app is free to download and available for both iPhone and Android devices. One of its standout features is offline mapping and navigation, ensuring uninterrupted access even in areas without a cell signal. Key features of the app include:

- Navigating while on trails
- Discovering new places
- Locating parking, restrooms, picnic areas and other park amenities
- Accessing information about ecological, geological and historical points of interest
- Receiving notifications about hazards, closures, and other timely information
- Receiving special event information

- Sharing experiences and photos and connect with others who love the outdoors
- Reporting conditions, hazards, and incidents at visited locations

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting various areas of park operations. Their efforts bolster staff initiatives by assisting with events and programs, educating and engaging the local community, and ultimately fostering greater support for our parks. The contributions of volunteers are invaluable to both Mill Creek MetroParks and Mahoning County.

In 2024, volunteers recorded an impressive 3,973 hours of service, contributed by 120 active park-wide volunteers and 12 organizational groups. Their time and talents supported a wide range of events, exhibits, and activities, including gardening and horticulture, conservation and preservation efforts, community service projects, Citizen Advisory Committees, Field Trips, Ready, Set, Grow Gardening Program, Adopt-a-Crag, trolley tours, tractor wagon tours, hikes, kayak guiding, kiosk stocking, programs, and special events. Some notable events where volunteers made a significant impact include the Farm Animal Baby Shower, Pumpkin Carving, Pumpkin Walk at Twilight, Old-Fashioned

Christmas at the Mill, Bug Day, and Winter Celebration.

The dedication of our volunteers was celebrated at the annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner, held in September in the Rossi Auditorium at Fellows Riverside Gardens. Volunteers who met a specific hour criteria received a complimentary Mill Creek MetroParks volunteer t-shirt to be worn during volunteering.

Each year, efforts are made to recruit and grow the volunteer program. The Community Engagement Director remains actively involved in outreach and collaboration to promote volunteerism. In 2024, the Director continued to serve on Youngstown State University's Community Partner Advisory Committee, focusing on engaging YSU students in volunteer opportunities. Participation in the Youngstown State University Volunteer Fair and visits to various local public schools helped educate area youth about Mill Creek MetroParks and the available volunteer roles. Additionally, the Director renewed membership with the Forum for Volunteer Administrators and attended various workshops and meetings to stay informed on best practices in volunteer management.

The dedication, time, and energy of our volunteers make a profound difference in the success of Mill Creek MetroParks, and we are deeply grateful for their continued support and commitment.





MILL CREEK METROPARKS POLICE 2024

The MetroParks Police Department provides 24-hour patrol coverage across Park District lands and facilities.

The department offers comprehensive law enforcement services, including proactive enforcement, facility security, land and resource preservation, and a visible presence at park events. The MetroParks Police have full police powers to enforce laws, park rules, make arrests, and issue summonses.

The department consists of both sworn and non-sworn staff. Sworn personnel include both full-time and part-time officers. Additionally, a non-sworn Auxiliary staff is maintained who assist with traffic direction and event security. The department also employs non-sworn Rangers who support officers in various tasks and patrol functions throughout the parks.

In 2024, the MetroParks Police Department maintained its certification from the Ohio Collaborative. Staff participated in a variety of training programs, including:

- Axon Taser Instructor
- LEADS Training
- Computer Training
- Public Records Training
- Traffic Stops Training
- Weapons Instructor
- Defensive Tactics Instructor

- OC Instructor
- Field Training Officer Program
- Physical Fitness and Wellness Instructor
- State Mandated Weapons Qualification
- Crisis Intervention Training
- Policy Reviews
- Daily Training Bulletins (DTBs) from Lexipol

All sworn officers completed a minimum of 24 hours of continuous professional training (CPT) mandated by the State of Ohio. Additionally, all Lexipol policy updates were processed promptly.

Officers complete Daily Training Bulletins (DTBs) on various topics, many of which align with Ohio Collaborative Standards. The department reviews its Bias-Based Policing policy annually with all staff. Officers maintain demographic statistics on self-initiated traffic stops.

2024 SELF-INITIATED TRAFFIC STOPS TOTAL:

413

Several officers serve on notable boards and task forces, including:

- Ohio Law Enforcement Foundation Certified Law Enforcement Advisory Board (CLEE)

- Mahoning County OVI Task Force
- Mahoning County Homicide Task Force
- Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Executives Association

Residents and visitors can address both positive feedback and concerns by filling out the Police Customer Satisfaction Survey, available on the MetroParks website. Supervisory staff are also available to discuss any police department-related issues.

In 2024, the MetroParks Police continued to focus on proactive policing. The department recorded:

- **Law enforcement contacts:** 26,219
- **Arrests, citations, and warnings:** 146
- **Dispatched events:** 2,353
- **Patrol miles:** 190,125

Additionally, in 2024 the department earned the prestigious Lexipol Gold Performance Award for achieving the highest levels of policy compliance and completion throughout the previous year.

THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO STRIVE IN THE EFFORT TO MEET OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

“Professional Excellence, Every Day, In All We Do.”





GOLF & RECREATION

MILL CREEK GOLF COURSE

In 2024, Mill Creek Golf Course saw several important capital improvements.

The South parking lot underwent significant upgrades, including new drainage basins, fresh asphalt, and enhanced entryway landscaping. Additionally, the architectural design of the irrigation system for both the North and South Courses was finalized over the summer, paving the way for future construction as part of the department's 10-year capital improvement plan. Equipment upgrades included the purchase of three new fairway mowers, while new cart barn fencing was added near the Fieldhouse.

January marked the opening of the new Indoor Golf Player Development Center, located on the second floor of the Fieldhouse. The center features three golf simulator bays, a putting green, a club fitting area, staff office, restrooms, and storage. Later in the year, the Wick Recreation Center at Wick Recreation Area opened in September. This 4-season, multi-functional space offers a team shop, equipment rentals, concessions, a community room for public programming and private events, an outdoor patio, recreation offices, and newly renovated restroom facilities.

During the winter months, Mill Creek MetroParks PGA staff worked diligently to expand their customer base by attending major golf shows in Cleveland, Columbus,



Michigan, New York, and Pittsburgh, supported by a tourism grant from the Mahoning Valley Visitors and Convention Bureau. These efforts led to an additional 6,400+ rounds of golf and overnight stays in Mahoning County in 2024. The travel show participation continues to foster growth in both golf rounds and tourism for Mill Creek MetroParks.

Mill Creek Golf Course was proud to host three collegiate tournaments in 2024. In April, the Presidents Athletic Conference (PAC) NCAA Division III Championship brought men's and women's collegiate golf programs to Mill Creek. September saw the NCAA Roseann Schwartz Invitational, presented by Youngstown State University, featuring 20 collegiate women's golf programs. The event,

held on Labor Day, saw the Youngstown State University team secure the title for the second consecutive year. Mill Creek also hosted the NCAA Kick Off Classic, presented by Youngstown State University, with 12 teams from nine neighboring states.

In June, the course hosted the 9th Annual

AJGA Junior All-Star National Invitational and AJGA Preview Tournament on the South Course. This year, the tournament enjoyed continued sponsorship from the Mercy Health Foundation, who committed \$100,000 over four years. The financial impact to the Mahoning Valley in 2024 reached \$408,268,

thanks to hotel stays, dining, recreational spending, green fees, and shopping. Since 2016, the total economic impact exceeds \$3 million, with over \$119,000 raised for local charities.

Mill Creek also welcomed three U.S. Kids Cleveland Junior Tour events, including the Junior Optimist International East Coast Regional Qualifier, and the 5th Annual Notah BeGay III Tournaments in August, which brought players and families from 47 states and 11 countries. In July, the 13th Drive, Chip & Putt Local Qualifier was held at the Mill Creek Outdoor Practice Facility, sending another local qualifier to the National Championship at Augusta National Golf Club.

Mill Creek continued its national programming with the 5th Annual Co-Ed PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere) Program, part of the PGA of America's PGA REACH Foundation. The program offers military members and veterans the opportunity to learn and play golf. A record-breaking turnout for the program made Mill Creek the leading site in Ohio for attendance. Additionally, Mill Creek's PGA staff was honored with the prestigious "Game Changer Award" by the PGA of America for their support of the PGA Reach Foundation's flagship programs.

Mill Creek Golf Course also received the Platinum Award for Exceptional Customer Service, and both the North and South Courses ranked in Golf Week and Golf Digest Magazines' 2024 National Rankings: North Course #11 and South Course #14.

2024 GOLF ROUND BREAKDOWN

NORTH & SOUTH GOLF COURSES

Total 9 Hole Rounds:	58,021
Total 18 Hole Rounds:	36,537
TOTAL ROUNDS PLAYED:	94,558

WICK RECREATION PAR-3 COURSE

Total 9 Hole Rounds:	17,009
Total 18 Hole Rounds:	9,097
TOTAL ROUNDS PLAYED:	27,106

**Closed for a total of 41 days due to weather-related cancellations.*

RECREATION

In 2024, the Mill Creek MetroParks Recreation Department provided a variety of programs catering to different age groups and interests, including cross-country meets, marathons, youth golf leagues, soccer leagues, sand volleyball leagues, NHL DEK hockey leagues, Tiny Tikes soccer, recreational hikes, and more. These programs were designed to appeal to a wide demographic, from toddlers to seniors.

Significant improvements were made at the Wick Recreation Area, including new rooftops, fresh paint, and new fencing at the Wick Par-3 building. The newly opened Wick Recreation Center became the hub for



restrooms, concessions, community room rentals, recreation offices, team merchandise, and outdoor seating areas.

The NCAA-regulation cross-country course at the Mill Creek MetroParks Farm opened in September and hosted multiple collegiate and high school events. Available for general public use when not reserved, the course provides a new venue for marathons and races throughout the year.

Mill Creek's Glacier Boathouse opened for the summer season, providing water recreation

activities to record numbers of visitors. Additionally, 48 new boat racks were unveiled at Lake Newport in November, with rental availability starting in early 2025.

Recreation staff completed certifications in CPR, First Aid, and AED training, and represented Mill Creek MetroParks at the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association (OPRA) Conference in Sandusky, Ohio, for continued education and professional development.





EDUCATION

GRAND TOTAL PROGRAMS: 448

GRAND TOTAL REVENUE: \$61,351.00

GRAND TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 11,392

Adults: 5,245

Youths: 5,568

Volunteers: 579

*Includes Field Trips, Interpretive Tours, Nature Camp, General Public Programming.

GENERAL PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

Programs: 346

Participants: 5,977

FIELD TRIPS:

Field Trips: 102

Total Participants: 5,415

Participating Schools: 45

Participating Counties:

- Mahoning County (60%)
- Trumbull County (24%)
- Columbiana County (10%)
- Mercer County (2%),
- Portage County (2%)
- Stark County (2%)

INTERPRETIVE TOURS:

Interpretive Tours: 20

Total Participants: 378

*Adult groups including nursing home residents, garden groups, disabled adult groups, businesses, and more.

EVENTS:

Total Attendance: 10,000 (approximately)

*Includes Farm Animal Baby Shower, Bug Day, Music at the Mill, Pumpkin Carving, Pumpkin Walk at Twilight, Christmas at the Mill, and Holiday Nights. Event attendance is not included in the GRAND TOTAL PARTICIPANTS.

TROLLEY TOURS:

Trolley Tours: 116

Total Participants: 1,558

NATURE CAMPS:

Participants: 45 children ages 5-9/3 weeks

VIDEOS:

Videos: 58

Total Views (as of 12/12/24): 169,075



PICTURED BELOW: Sharpening and Dressing of the Millstone



LANTERMAN'S MILL

Lanterman's Mill is one of Mahoning County's most cherished historical landmarks, attracting significant visitation during its seasonal operation. Open to the public from May 1 to October 31, the Mill welcomes visitors daily and hosts a variety of events, including school field trips, educational programs, and special holiday celebrations such as Christmas at the Mill and Holiday Nights at Lanterman's Mill.

VISITORS PER MONTH

May.....	1,535
June.....	1,090
July.....	1,484
August.....	1,164
September.....	1,284
October.....	1,922

TOTAL: 8,479

VISITORS DURING EVENTS

Christmas at the Mill, Day 1.....	717
Christmas at the Mill, Day 2.....	1,016
Holiday Nights at the Mill, Night 1.....	69
Holiday Nights at the Mill, Night 2.....	183

TOTAL: 1,985

GRAND TOTAL FOR 2024 SEASON: 10,464

HORTICULTURE

The total attendance for the D.D. and Velma Davis Education & Visitor Center at Fellows Riverside Gardens in 2024 was approximately 143,000.

Fellows Riverside Gardens staff and volunteers added the following plants to the grounds in 2024:

- **1,500** perennials and shrubs planted in parking lot island
- **100** new roses planted at gazebo and in formal rose garden
- **25,000** spring annual bulbs planted in gardens
- **300** mums grown
- **6** new trees planted
- **25,000** annuals grown and planted
- **100** perennials grown and installed at Maze Garden
- **100** plants installed in Fragrance Garden
- **50** perennials grown and installed in perennial garden

VARIOUS EVENTS WERE HELD AT FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

- The Flea at Fellows
- Pumpkin Carving
- Pumpkin Walk at Twilight
- Winter Celebration: Festival of Trees
- Festive Finds



- Winter Nights
- Four art exhibits in the Weller Gallery
- Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens On the Terrace at 5

- Summer Garden Party
- Additionally, Kravitz's Banquet and the Garden Café Services contributed \$48,000 in revenue.



OUR PEOPLE

Our people are committed to the long-term success of Mill Creek MetroParks.

During 2024, Mill Creek MetroParks staff provided services to the community and visitors from around the world.

The MetroParks staff consists of 72 full time, 37 part time, and 31 seasonal employees. 2024 brought 9 employee promotions and 89 hiring actions. All full time and part time employees received a 2.5 percent general wage increase in 2024.

Our staff provided many recreational and educational program and events for all ages in 2024. A new Recreation Manager was hired this year, operating out of the newly opened Wick Recreation Center. The MetroParks looks forward to contributing to the health and wellness of the community by continuing to offer recreational programming and opportunities for physical activity.

Employee well-being and health remains a top priority for Mill Creek MetroParks. In 2024, the employee-led committees met on multiple occasions to plan and discuss concerns and beneficial activities to improve employee experience. In addition to physical health and safety the MetroParks also continues to support general well-being by offering an Employee Assistance Program for unexpected life events and stress management.



Each year our staff continues to invest in learning and professional development opportunities to strengthen our ability to provide services to the community and preserve Mill Creek MetroPark's natural resources. All MetroParks staff members meet quarterly to participate in trainings on topics such as emergency action plans, MetroParks updates, and anti-harassment.

Additional staff certifications earned in 2024 include ISA Arborist, Certificate of Interpretive Guiding (CIG), Playground Safety Inspector, CPR Instructor, Entomology, and NFL Flag Football. The MetroParks has also implemented a tuition reimbursement policy in 2024. This policy allows eligible employees to improve job skills and enhance opportunities for advancement within the MetroParks.



INFRASTRUCTURE

GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS:

Annual Parking Lot Improvements

- Mill Creek Golf Course South Parking Lot project included stormwater improvements and asphalt resurfacing. Stormwater work included installation of new catch basins and culverts, regrading, and demolition of existing impervious surfaces. Asphalt work included new asphalt surfacing, parking blocks, improved cart path connectivity including a new crosswalk and connection to the East Golf Hike & Bike Trail Fording parking lot. Additionally, trailhead improvements included new signage, bollards, and safety improvements.

2024 Expended: \$212,716.00

Annual Trail Improvements

- West Newport Hiking Trail (Newport Dam to Covered Bridge) Improvements included repairs to existing stormwater infrastructure and new installation. This included drain inlets, underdrains and culverts, restacking of existing sandstone retaining walls, new aggregate surfacing, improved signage and trailhead features.
- MetroParks Bikeway improvements from Kirk Road to New Road, including the Fox Chase Spur Trail involved existing pavement planing, installation





of new asphalt courses, new topsoil and aggregate shoulders, seeding, and mulching.

- Vickers Nature Preserve equestrian trail improvements included repair to existing stormwater infrastructure including culverts and swale crossings, along with aggregate overlay of existing trail and installation of over 0.10 miles of new trail.

2024 Expended: \$236,940.800

Annual Pavilion/Structure Improvements

- Vickers Nature Preserve existing infrastructure upgrades included replacement of exterior siding and trim, along with painting of stables, picnic pavilion, office, and storage barns
- Wick Recreation Area Batting Cage and Par 3 Building roof replacements. Additionally, soffit, fascia, and lighting upgrades, along with utility fence replacement.
- Roof Repairs and replacements including Lanterman's Mill, Morely Pavilion, Golf Course Fieldhouse, Slippery Rock Pavilion, and Administration Office.
- Miscellaneous repairs to existing pavilions and cabins throughout the MetroParks.

2024 Expended: \$102,000.00

Mill Creek Golf Course Improvements

- Landscape bed and planting upgrades targeted areas around the newly improved south parking lot, new cart paths, and main Mill Creek Park facility sign at West Golf Drive and Route 224

2024 Expended: \$11,000.00

Vickers Nature Preserve Improvements

- A new 2,600sf 4-season, indoor/outdoor facility with banquet hall, kitchen, restrooms, and covered porch to support rentals, programs, and park use at Vickers Nature Preserve was designed and awarded in 2024.
- Project to commence in 2025.

2024 Budgeted: \$625,000.00

Lanterman's Mill Site Improvements

- Improvements and repairs roof of Lanterman's Mill along with repairs to the existing restroom facilities

2024 Expended: \$11,000.00

Collier Preserve Improvements

- A section of wetlands approximately 15 acres in size was treated by removing woody and herbaceous invasive plants.

2024 Expended: \$20,000.00





Fellows Riverside Gardens Davis Center and Rose Garden Site Improvements

- Improvements to the Davis Center included purchase and installation of tables for the lower Auditorium terrace, lighting and ceiling replacement, HVAC and electrical upgrades, and interior painting.
- Improvements to the Rose Garden include irrigation and stormwater drainage improvements and installation of new, replacement roses in Rose Garden.
- Improvements to the general Fellows Riverside Gardens included restoration of paver walkways, fountain maintenance, and replacement of the vegetation within the islands of the existing parking lot with new plant selections.
- The existing outdoor restroom was rehabilitated to facility year-round use with upgrades including heating, insulation, new utility service and equipment. The project also included a new metal roof, siding, and storefront vestibule.

2024 Expended: \$318,500.00

CONTRACTED DESIGN / CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION:

Annual Infrastructure Improvements

- Preliminary and conceptual design work, cost estimating, and consultant coordination for the East Gorge Boardwalk, a new pavilion at the MetroParks Farm, and the Fellows Riverside Gardens service area greenhouse relocation.

2024 Expended: \$25,000.00

Vickers Nature Preserve Improvements

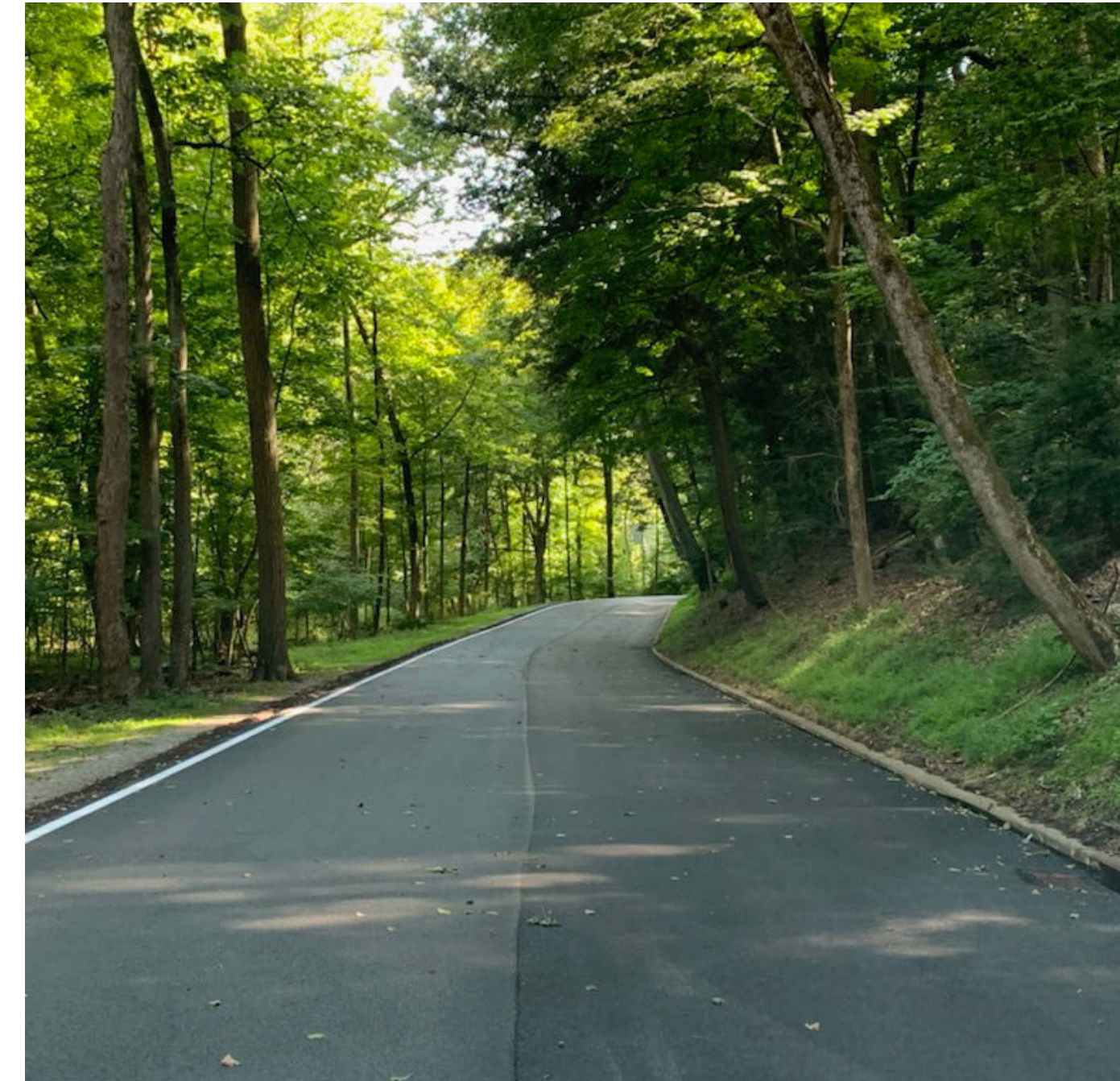
- Preliminary and conceptual design work, cost estimating, consultant coordination, and construction drawing preparation for development of the Vickers Nature Preserve Pavilion.

2024 Expended: \$74,900.00

Annual Road Improvements Design

- Environmental studies and surveying, along with design development and construction drawings preparation for rehabilitation of Slippery Rock Bridge.
- Work is ongoing.

2024 Budgeted: \$50,000.00





NATURAL RESOURCES

CANADA GOOSE MANAGEMENT

Canada goose management efforts were continued in 2024. Various MetroParks departments carried out Canada goose harassment efforts at key locations throughout the MetroParks using pyrotechnic launchers, lasers, and exclusionary fencing. Following harassment activities, a nest destruction permit was obtained through ODNR. USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services was contracted to perform nest inspection and egg adding activities at these same key locations. In total, thirteen (13) nests containing 53 eggs were located and of those, twelve (12) nests and 46 eggs were treated. No addling took place at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary. The 7th annual Canada goose count performed by the local Audubon Society produced a 2024 population count of 257 individuals throughout the park, a slight increase from the 2023 count of 212 individuals. Public outreach efforts, including signage, public service announcements, brochures, enforcement, and education programs were also continued to further the **“Do Not Feed Wildlife”** campaign throughout the MetroParks.

WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT

The 2023-2024 management year marked the inaugural year for the MetroParks’ deer management program. In total, 197 deer were harvested, 38 of which were donated to local food banks, resulting in 1,355.8 pounds of venison and over 1,100 meals to those in



need. Assessments of both forest health and deer populations throughout the MetroParks will continue annually, and the program will adapt to meet management objectives as we move towards ecological recovery.

17TH ANNUAL “BIG SIT”

In October, volunteers participated in the 17th annual “Big Sit” event at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary. This annual international birding competition provides the opportunity for sites around the world to battle against each other, with participants hoping to record

the highest number of bird species observed from one location within a 24-hour period. This year a total of 70 bird species were observed during this event at the Wildlife Sanctuary, ranking among the best birding locations in Ohio. Separate from the “Big Sit”, numerous volunteers contribute to an annual species count at the Sanctuary, which documents the total number of different bird species encountered at the Sanctuary for a given year. In total, 205 bird species were observed at the Sanctuary throughout 2024, with the all-time species count being 260.



NON-NATIVE/INVASIVE PLANTS

Efforts continued this year to reduce and control non-native/invasive plants throughout areas of the MetroParks, most notably the Collier Preserve, Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, and Hawkins Marsh where a combined 65.5-acres were treated. Herbicide applications and/or physical removal of undesirable species were also conducted at facilities such as the Lily Pond, Ford Nature Center, Mirror Pond, Lake Newport Wetlands, and the MetroParks Farm.

HEALTHY STREAMS INITIATIVE

The MetroParks continued the Healthy Streams Initiative, an annual project aimed at restoring natural flow patterns and reducing erosion along Mill Creek and its tributaries by removing fallen trees and woody debris from the stream. In 2024, the project focused on Mill Creek as it flows through the southern portions of Mill Creek Park, beginning at the Fording Bridge and continuing north toward Shields Road. This year's project successfully improved 5,809 linear feet of stream. Throughout the lifetime of this program, Mill Creek MetroParks has improved over 10 miles of stream including portions of Mill Creek, Indian Run, and Anderson Run.

RESTORATION EFFORTS AT MIRROR POND AND ORCHARD MEADOW PICNIC AREA

Mirror Pond and the Orchard Meadow Picnic Area were the focus of restoration efforts, beginning in 2023 and continuing

into 2024. Most notably, Mirror Pond was dredged and restored to its historic footprint (-0.4-acres). The accumulated sediment was utilized to improve grading throughout the Orchard Meadow Picnic Area. Additional work to improve trail connections, add picnic amenities, and native species plantings throughout the area will continue into 2025.

LILY POND IMPROVEMENTS

The Lily Pond was the focus of numerous improvement projects in 2024, most notably continued plantings to enhance the overall biodiversity of the site and the establishment of a new pollinator waystation. The Lily Pond also received ongoing management efforts focusing on algae treatments, invasive species treatment, and invasive species removal.

SUMMER ALGAL BLOOMS TREATED AT LAKE NEWPORT

Lake Newport was treated in July of 2024 with an algaecide to help combat late summer algal blooms that are typical of Lake Newport. This is the fourth year of treatment and Lake Newport has responded well.

FISH STOCKING EFFORTS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE METROPARKS

The MetroParks' spring fish stocking efforts continued in 2024 with stockings taking place at Lake Glacier (in partnership with ODNR), Yellow Creek Park, Vickers Nature Preserve, and the MetroParks Farm. This program

ensures high-quality fishing opportunities for anglers throughout the MetroParks.

TREE PLANTING INITIATIVES CONTINUED AT MILL CREEK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND VICKERS NATURE PRESERVE

Through partnerships with FirstEnergy, Boardman Subaru, and the YSU Legacy Forest Committee, the MetroParks continued tree planting initiatives at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary and Vickers Nature Preserve, successfully planting approximately 1900 native trees in an effort to reforest areas of reverting farmland. In total, these partnerships have resulted in over 6,000 trees being planted since 2021.

MANAGEMENT OF HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID CONTINUED

Through continued partnership with The Nature Conservancy, management of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a non-native insect that threatens Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) populations took place throughout Mill Creek Park. Additional surveys and treatments were completed in 2024 to combat the adelgid in the areas surrounding Slippery Rock Trail, East Cohasset Trail, Artists Trail, Birch Hill Cabin, Bears Den Cabin, Cascade Run, and the Ford Nature Center.





STEWARDSHIP

GRANT STEWARDSHIP:

Annual Road Improvements, Repairs, and Maintenance

- West Cohasset Drive, Valley Drive (Suspension Bridge to Dividing Oak), and Lily Pond Drive Resurfacing project included repairs to existing stormwater infrastructure along with planing and patching existing asphalt courses, installation of new courses of asphalt, installation of aggregate shoulders, and placement of pavement markings.

2024 Expended: \$340,000.00

Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary and Expansion Improvements

- Improvements include new entry drive and aggregate parking lot, improved trails, tree, shrub, and prairie restoration areas with installation of deer exclosure fencing.

2024 Expended: \$183,578.92

Bikeway Phase III

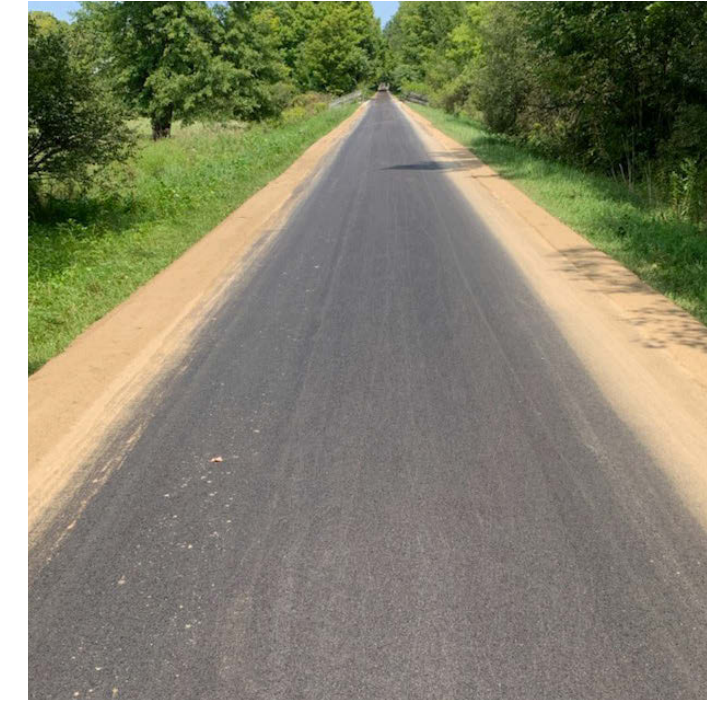
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant funding for right-of-way consultant services and property acquisition. Federal property acquisition process continued throughout the year.
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) CMAQ program grant funding for design & engineering consultant services. Construction drawings were completed.

2024 Budgeted: \$249,000.00

Hawkins Marsh Site Improvements

- Improvements include improved trails, ecological restoration areas, and interpretive sign preparation and installation.
- Project is ongoing.

2024 Expended: \$3,560.92





MILL CREEK METROPARKS FOUNDATION

In 2024, the Mill Creek MetroParks Foundation received \$591,437.36 in charitable donations for the long-term care and improvements at Mill Creek MetroParks.

ENDOWMENT FUND DONATIONS:

Mahoning Valley Hospital Foundation Golf Endowment Fund	\$3,096.29
General Endowment Fund.....	\$2,120.00
Wick Recreation Area Endowment Fund	\$2,335.44
Jack Collier Family Bikeway Endowment Fund	\$4,634.00
Fellows Riverside Gardens Endowment Fund	\$3,551.24
Joanne F. Beeghly Rose Garden Endowment Fund	\$15,175.11
Natural Trail Endowment Fund	\$7,220.00

Ford Nature Center Endowment Fund	\$2,175.00
Mill Creek MetroParks Farm Endowment Fund	\$100.00
Yellow Creek Park Endowment Fund	\$5,500.00

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT DONATIONS:

Vickers Nature Preserve	\$25,249.79
Natural Trails.....	\$1,075.00
Tree Planting Fund	\$12,300.00
Golf Course	\$2,000.00
Cross Country Course.....	\$20,000.00
Children's Garden Campaign.....	\$356,874.07
General Capital Improvement Fund.....	\$66,278.16
Mill Creek MetroParks Farm.....	\$61,753.18





RENTAL FACILITY USAGE

FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS

- **Rossi Auditorium:** 118 rentals
- **Kidston Classroom:** 87 rentals
- **Kidston Pavilion:** 126 rentals
- **Gazebo:** 61 rentals
- **Garden Café:** 53 rentals
- **Radius Room:** 4 rentals
- **Ceremonies (Indoor and Outdoor):** 187

METROPARKS FARM

- **Classroom A:** 40 rentals
- **Kenneth McMahon Hall:** 84 rentals

CABINS

- **Bears Den Cabin:** 145 rentals
- **Birch Hill Cabin:** 222 rentals
- **Old Log Cabin:** 45 rentals

PAVILIONS

- **Chestnut Hill Pavilion:** 48 rentals
- **Pioneer Pavilion:** 73 rentals
- **Scholl Pavilion:** 44 rentals
- **Slippery Rock Pavilion:** 56 rentals
- **Stitt Pavilion:** 45 rentals
- **Thomas J. Bresko Pavilion:** 56 rentals
- **Kirk Road Pavilion:** 8 rentals
- **Vickers Pavilion:** 2 rentals

YELLOW CREEK PARK

- **Capt. John Struthers Pavilion:** 12 rentals
- **Yellow Creek Lodge:** 88 rentals



2024 Annual Report Statistics

Unencumbered Cash Balance January 1, 2024	\$4,275,554.09
Prior Year Encumbrances	\$1,919,262.88

INCOME:

General Property Tax	\$8,382,691.18
Park District Activities	\$2,952,022.27
Mill Creek MetroParks Foundation	\$562,811.20
Local Government Fund	\$418,318.29
Fund Transfer In	-
Gas Royalties	\$27,717.39
Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens	\$124,861.46
Interest	\$368,679.22
Grant Revenues	\$334,649.13
BWC Rebates & Grants	\$13,210.16
Law Enforcement Training Revenue	\$410.00
Total Income	\$13,185,370.30
Total Funds Available	\$19,380,187.27

DISBURSEMENTS:

Salaries & Wages	\$6,267,597.61
Materials & Supplies	\$3,770,134.79
Capital Improvements	\$2,263,451.94
Ford Nature Center Loan Payments	\$470,214.52
Capital Equipment	\$798,737.05
Funds Transfer Out	-
Total Disbursements	\$13,570,135.91

Year End Cash Balance December 31, 2024	\$5,810,051.36
Year End Encumbrances	\$1,744,110.99
Unencumbered Cash Balance	\$4,065,940.37

