



Great Parks of Hamilton County

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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Mission

To preserve and protect natural resources and to provide outdoor recreation and education in order to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

Greetings From Great Parks

2018 proved to be another outstanding year for Great Parks of Hamilton County, as we strived to fulfill our goals of creating memorable outdoor experiences and being a recognized leader in conservation.

In the spring, our talented team at Adventure Outpost embarked on a new program designed to foster greater engagement in nature. The Women in the Outdoors series provided women and girls opportunities to learn to canoe, kayak, try archery and hone their skills in long-distance hiking and backpacking. Another new program established in 2018 was our Take It Outdoors podcast, where listeners can enjoy the outdoors even from the indoors.

This past year also saw the park district grow with the acquisition of an additional 158 acres of parkland. Great Parks now actively preserves and protects 17,666 acres of green space across the region, including 25 miles of river frontage on our four major rivers: The Little Miami, Great Miami, Whitewater and Ohio rivers.

On December 31, Park Commissioner DeVere Burt retired from the Board of Park Commissioners after six years of service. We are extremely grateful for Mr. Burt's dedication and commitment to the mission of Great Parks. On January 3, 2019, Mr. Marcus Thompson was appointed to the Board by Probate Court Judge Ralph Winkler. Mr. Thompson, a resident of Anderson Township, is the HYPE (Harnessing Young Professional Energy) programs leader at the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber.

On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, I'm pleased to present this 2018 annual report and invite you to visit your Great Parks in 2019!

Jack Sutton, Chief Executive Officer



Jack Sutton

Established in 1930, Great Parks of Hamilton County is a separate political subdivision of the State of Ohio. The five members of the Board of Park Commissioners serve without compensation and are appointed by the Judge of Probate Court, the Honorable Judge Ralph E. Winkler.



2018 Board of Park Commissioners

2018 Board of Park Commissioners from left to right:

Joseph C. Seta
HC Buck Niehoff
Geraldine Warner
DeVere E. Burt
William J. Burwinkel



Judge Winkler Swears in New Board of Park Commissioner Marcus Thompson

BY THE NUMBERS

9,896

geocaching finds
during Great Parks
GeoTour



25

miles of river
frontage protected



12,422

people who
viewed Great Parks
Facebook posts daily



11,076

pounds of holiday
lights recycled



26

ArtWorks bike racks
created by James
Billiter



145,200

feet of trails improved
by volunteers



CONSERVATION



Little Miami Scenic River Celebrated With 50th Anniversary of Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which protects vital waterways throughout America, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2018. The act preserves mileage of 208 out of 250,000 rivers in the U.S. that have natural, cultural and recreational value. In Ohio, the Little Miami Scenic River was the first waterway in the state to be protected under this act in 1968. It is one of three in the state designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

Rivers like the Little Miami would not be safeguarded without effective preservation efforts. Of the river's more than 100 miles, Great Parks protects approximately six miles of shoreline with ongoing invasive species and conservation practices. These projects help Great Parks encourage biodiversity, protect water quality and provide recreational opportunities.

The shoreline protected by Great Parks include woodlands, wetlands and prairies at Lake Isabella, Kroger Hills, Avoca Trailhead, Little Miami Golf Center and Otto Armleder Memorial Park.

Less than one-fourth of one percent of the nations' rivers are protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, making the Little Miami Scenic River one of the most primitive and culturally valued waterways in America.

Historic Flooding Impacts Parks

Preserving land in river corridors and along lake edges is an important part of the Great Parks mission. Providing access to these areas also means that many times trails and other types of park infrastructure are impacted by floods.

On February 26, 2018, the Ohio River reached a high flood crest of 60.53 feet. This flood was the result of a series of rain events that saturated the Ohio River basin.

Spring of 2018 floods caused closures and repairs at several Great Parks: damage to campground infrastructure at Winton Woods and Woodland Mound, damage to playground safety surface at both Winton Woods and Fernbank Park, and turf damage on the golf course at Little Miami Golf Center. Lastly, floods brought the usual closures and silt clean up at Fernbank Park, Little Miami Scenic Trail, Miami Whitewater Forest, Otto Armleder Memorial Park, Sharon Woods and Winton Woods.



Holiday Lights Recycling Partnership Heads Into Fifth Year

Since 2014, Great Parks and Cohen Recycling have partnered to offer holiday lights recycling to the community. Each year, large bins are placed at six park locations across the county, from November through January, to collect the lights. The lights are then processed and refined into materials that will be made into new products.

This year was a huge success, collecting over 44,300 strands of lights, more than 11,000 pounds, a nearly 600% increase over 2017 totals!

The initiative not only keeps these types of decorations out of landfills, it also generates support for Great Parks through a matching donation from Cohen Recycling of up to \$2,000 (based on scrap value). These donations go through Great Parks Forever, the philanthropic partner of Great Parks.



Electronics Recycling Day With Mount St. Joseph University

Great Parks established a new partnership in 2018 with Mount St. Joseph University to help expand their Electronics Recycling Day opportunities. The initiative, which the college has hosted for nearly seven years, collects unwanted or broken TVs, computers and other electronics to be recycled properly using a regional nonprofit called RecycleForce.

Hosted at the Mill Race parking lot at Winton Woods in October, the four-hour event brought in 14,328 pounds (almost 7.2 tons) of electronics, most of which were TVs and monitors. The materials filled a box truck with 18 double-stacked pallets.

This new partnership benefits the community by providing a means of discarding electronics sustainably. It supports Mount St. Joseph's mission in providing learning and service opportunities to others, and it supports Great Parks mission of protecting natural resources.

Monarchs Reign Again

For 33 years, Great Parks has conducted an annual butterfly count in western Great Parks every July. This year was special in that participants tallied 54 individual monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*), the fourth-highest number in the count's history and vastly increased from last year's 15 individuals!

Before monarch butterflies make their way back to Ohio, they fly south. There are roughly a dozen mountaintops in Mexico where the climate stays ideal for the monarchs to survive the winter. They gather by the millions on oyamel fir trees (*Abies religiosa*). Historically, the numbers in Ohio have correlated with the number of over-wintering monarchs in Mexico. A higher number counted here in July could mean a higher number of individuals over-wintering in Mexico.

What accounts for the higher numbers? One major factor is the abundance of milkweed plants, which is the monarch's host plant. Great Parks and many individuals have taken up the challenge of creating pollinator spaces that include milkweed and other nectar plants for the monarch butterflies.

Partnerships & Collaborations



- COHEN RECYCLING
- GENERAL ELECTRIC
- GREEN UMBRELLA
- HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
- MADTREE BREWING
- REI
- STANTEC
- TRI-STATE TRAILS
- TURNER CONSTRUCTION



Fulfilling William Morris Mitchell's Legacy

River Hill is flourishing as a result of one man's vision. With recent land acquisitions, including 47 acres acquired in 2018, Mitchell Memorial Forest now includes more than 1,582 acres. Why is this important? In the 1960s, William Morris Mitchell established a plan to ensure his 456-acre property located along Buffalo Ridge Road in Miami Township, known as River Hill, be dedicated for park purposes. He further directed that it be forever known as Mitchell Memorial Forest in memory of his mother and father. In his last will and testament, Mr. Mitchell expressed his "... desire that the Board (formerly Hamilton County Park District) eventually obtain sufficient real estate for a park of approximately 1,500 acres or more"

Mr. Mitchell was born in Cincinnati on April 13, 1917, to Lucile Morris Mitchell and William Henry Mitchell. During his childhood, the family enjoyed many outings to the River Hill area. Many summer evenings were spent on the very site where the stone shelter house stands today. It was during Mr. Mitchell's formative years that he grew to love and respect nature and the outdoors.

Following his passing in 1974, the park district worked closely with his estate to implement his vision. By 1977, the park district's 12th park was established with an initial donation of 644 acres. In addition to his real estate holdings, the park district also inherited financial assets that established the Mitchell Fund. For the past 40-plus years, the Mitchell Fund has enabled the acquisition of additional acreage as well as the development and operation of Mitchell Memorial Forest itself.

EDUCATION



Art in Root Connects Art and Nature for Local Students

The Art in Root program connects local junior and senior high school students to nature and art. It began in 2018 and included 347 students from eight high schools across Hamilton County, who were encouraged to create original artwork that depicted their view of nature.

Thanks to funding from Charles H. Dater Foundation, Susan Kathleen Black Foundation, John A. Schroth Family Charitable Trust, PNC Bank Trustee and Louis & Melba Schott Foundation, each school received a \$1,000 stipend from Great Parks for art supplies, busing for a field trip to a park for a program with a nature interpreter and a visit from a nature interpreter (with animals and artifacts) to their art classes. The nature interpreter component was important in educating the students about various aspects of the environment for artistic inspiration.

Once students created their artwork, teachers at each school were encouraged to choose their top 10 pieces to be placed on display in March at two Great Parks on the east and west sides of Cincinnati. The pieces were then judged by local artists who selected the top 10 winners. Those chosen received a ribbon and were displayed alongside nationally-recognized artists at a public art exhibition hosted in April by Great Parks Forever, the philanthropic partner of Great Parks. The students and their families were invited to the event to be recognized for their accomplishments and to meet some of the featured artists. Three of the winning student artists were featured in The Cincinnati Enquirer.

Thanks to the overwhelming success and positive impact, the Art in Root program is continuing in 2019.



Women in the Outdoors

Humans benefit from time spent together and moments in nature. In 2018, the Women in the Outdoors Series provided women and girls 18 opportunities to recreate together in four Great Parks. Moms and daughters, co-workers, girlfriends and long-distance best friends developed their archery accuracy, learned to canoe and kayak, practiced skills necessary for backpacking, discovered how to survive in the wilderness and took time to slow down and meditate. With this program series, women from the tristate and beyond deepened their understanding of the natural world, met new hiking partners and enhanced their overall well-being.



Healthy Kids Day With YMCA

Great Parks sponsored and hosted YMCA Healthy Kids Day at Parky's Farm. The event drew more than 5,000 participants from around the region for a day of fun, healthy activities. From a bounce house and ga-ga pit, to visiting the farm animals and birds of prey, children and adults alike sampled a variety of activities and learned different methods to live and support a healthy lifestyle. This free-for-the-public event was packed with fun as kids experienced new activities: reached the top of the climbing tower; tried out Zumba, line dancing and yoga; relaxed on a wagon ride around the farm and celebrated outdoor play.

Solar Monitoring Kiosks

Together with Great Parks Forever, Great Parks provided touch-screen kiosks at Winton Woods and Glenwood Gardens. After Great Parks Forever received a grant and sponsors for the solar array to fund the kiosks, the Great Parks web team built and installed the kiosks. These interactive, accessible kiosks include live monitoring of the solar panel array at Winton Woods. They also feature educational nature games and videos. Since being installed in July, there have been 989 sessions with more than 6,279 pageviews.



Out of This World

In March, Sharon Woods launched a space-themed program aimed at getting guests to the park after dark. More than 300 people took part in the festivities, which included star gazing, a planet walk, an indoor planetarium, crafts, water bottle rocket launching and more. Thanks to staff and volunteers, guests left with a pocketful of memories and appreciation for all things out of this world.

Adventure Outpost Meets Adventure Crew

On June 29 and 30, Adventure Crew (formerly Outdoor Adventure Club of Greater Cincinnati) visited Adventure Outpost in Winton Woods for their annual campout, funded by the Great Parks Forever Caleb Simpson Fund. Forty-nine teens from Adventure Crew and their families enjoyed a live animal presentation, fishing, rock climbing, kayaking and a tour of the lake on the Winton Queen. It was a weekend of smiles, laughs and discovery in the great outdoors.

An Inside Podcast for the Outdoor Enthusiast

Take It Outdoors is a podcast designed to educate listeners about the nature they can not only find in Great Parks, but all over Hamilton County. Podcasts are available anywhere, anytime, making them an ideal tool for distributing information to a wide audience on their terms. The more people understand nature, the more comfortable they become, and ultimately, the more they desire to be in nature. The goal of Take It Outdoors is to create that level of comfort and connection, especially for those people who may not have ever stepped foot in their local parks.



Partnerships & Collaborations

- CINCINNATI CARVERS GUILD
- CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER
- CINCINNATI RECREATION COMMISSION (CRC)
- LEAVE NO TRACE
- SOCIETY OF NORTHWEST LONGHUNTERS
- UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI
- UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
- YMCA OF GREATER CINCINNATI

RECREATION



Great Parks Hosts Popular Kids Outdoor Expo

Great Parks has participated in nearly every one of the 13 years that Kids Outdoor Adventure Expo has been held, providing outdoor recreation and nature education to thousands of children. The event, held in July, is recognized as one of the largest free outdoor recreation and nature education events for kids in the region, featuring dozens of local like-minded organizations and interactive activities.

2018 was the first year Great Parks took sole ownership of the event. The expo attracted nearly 4,000 attendees, including groups from the YMCA, Cincinnati Recreation Commission, youth organizations and the general public. Approximately 2,300 guests were provided free bus transportation thanks to support from Mayerson Foundation, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Oxbow Inc. and Hayden Family Foundation.

Over a dozen organizations participated in the event, including Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati Museum Center, Ohio EPA and REI. Morgan's Canoe & Outdoor Adventures provided 20 rafts so thousands of kids could enjoy their first paddling experience on Winton Lake. Other activities included a climbing wall, fishing (for many, this was a new experience), live animals, science experiments and yoga.

The Kids Outdoor Adventure Expo would not have been possible without these generous sponsors: The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation/U.S. Bank Foundation, Interact for Health, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Clif Bar & Company, Morgan's Canoe & Outdoor Adventures, Mayerson Foundation, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Metro Cincinnati, Oxbow, Inc., Cincinnati Family Magazine and Hayden Family Foundation.

Partnerships & Collaborations



- ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION OF GREATER CINCINNATI
- ARTWORKS
- BASS PRO SHOPS
- CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- CINCINNATI RECREATION COMMISSION (CRC)
- FIRST TEE OF GREATER CINCINNATI & NORTHERN KENTUCKY
- FOREST HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT
- GREEN UMBRELLA
- L.L.BEAN, THE CHRIST HOSPITAL HEALTH NETWORK
- OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (OHSAA)
- PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK
- RIDE CINCINNATI
- SOUTHERN OHIO PGA
- THE CAROL ANN AND RALPH V. HAILE, JR./US BANK FOUNDATION, INTERACT FOR HEALTH, CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER, CLIF BAR & COMPANY, MANUEL D. & RHODA MAYERSON FOUNDATION, HAYDEN FAMILY FOUNDATION, GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION, OXBOW, INC., MORGAN'S CANOE & OUTDOOR ADVENTURES, METRO CINCINNATI, CINCINNATI FAMILY MAGAZINE, REINHART FOODSERVICE
- VIBE CINCINNATI/AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Great Parks Reaches New Audience With Treasure Hunting Hobbyists

In May, Coney Island hosted GeoWoodstock, one of the largest gatherings of geocachers in the world, and Great Parks got to share a piece of the event.

Geocaching is a scavenger hunt that combines technology and nature, where hobbyists find and seek containers. Cachers use the GPS on their smartphones to locate and log the containers. The hobby leads them to discover and learn about new places, like parks, trails, monuments and more. Though caches have been hidden in Great Parks for years, in 2018, efforts were ramped up to capture a new audience drawn to the area for GeoWoodstock.

The parks launched an official GeoTour to coincide with GeoWoodstock on National Kids to Parks Day on May 19. The tour included the oldest cache in Ohio, located at Shawnee Lookout, and gives cachers information about the parks they were exploring. A children's tour was also launched to encourage youngsters and their parents to learn about a new hobby that might spur more interest in the parks.

Thousands of people from the Cincinnati area and from all over the world visited Great Parks during May, the first month the tour was in place. During the tour, there were 9,896 geocaching finds throughout the parks.

Little Miami Scenic Trail to Mariemont Connector

In partnership with Columbia Township, Great Parks completed a feasibility study in 2018 for a shared-use trail connection. The trail runs from the Little Miami Scenic Trail at Newtown Road to Pocahontas Avenue and the Mariemont branch of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Approximately 65 percent of this one-mile corridor is currently owned and managed by Great Parks and is adjacent to the Little Miami River, a state and national scenic river. The remaining 35 percent is under private ownership or within the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) public right-of-way for U.S. 50 (Wooster Pike).

A public open house was held in July at Mariemont High School and was attended by township residents and business owners from the corridor, as well as Mariemont residents, cycling enthusiasts and trail advocates. The event featured exhibits and representatives from Great Parks, Columbia Township and ODOT, who engaged attendees on the study's preferred alternative.

The study concluded that the most feasible connection from Great Parks' property would be along Miami Run to U.S. 50 at the Kroger Fuel Center, requiring easements from private property owners and a modified trail design. To minimize the impact on existing pedestrian and vehicular traffic along U.S. 50, ODOT agreed to finalize the study from Miami Run to Pocahontas Avenue. This study includes design options along the north and south sides and will conclude in mid-2019.



New Trail Connects Wetlands to Community

Great Parks extended an existing paved trail and created a new parking area along Baughman Road in Miami Whitewater Forest. These improvements created additional nature education opportunities and recreational access. The trail connects the existing eight-mile Shaker Trace Trail to the Shaker Trace Wetlands and a new subdivision in eastern Harrison. The parking area allows easier access to the wetlands for school field trip busing and the general public.

The project started February 2018 and was completed in May 2018. It consisted of embankment and wetland levee reconstruction, installation of native plants and storm drainage improvements. It also included an approximately 12,000-square-foot paved parking lot near the Shaker Trace Wetlands. The Whitewater Trails subdivision builder, Welsh Development Company Inc., provided funding support of \$73,612 for construction of the new trail from the parking lot to the existing trail.



Google Trekker Captures a New View

This year, people from all over the world began exploring Great Parks' trail system online. The project began in 2017, when Great Parks partnered with Google to capture the park district's network of nature, fitness, horse, mountain bike and paved shared-use trails, as well as blue-ways, from a first-person perspective.

Utilizing a Google Street View Trekker utility backpack, Great Parks' staff photographed the parks with a 360-degree camera. It took 37 employees several months to trek approximately 190 miles of trails and waterways in the park district: 85 by vehicle, 81 by foot and 19 by boat. The imagery was then cleaned and compiled by Google before it was published to Google Maps in February 2018.

Great Parks was the first organization in Cincinnati to partner with Google to tackle this daunting, yet rewarding, undertaking. After completing the parks, Great Parks loaned the equipment and expertise to eight other local organizations to help them get their trails on the map as well.

Bringing the trail experience online is a new way to connect people with parks. Visitors who have mobility issues or small children can head out with confidence, because they already know what to expect from a trail. They can "walk" the trail online ahead of time to get an idea of the level of difficulty, accessibility and features. Someone looking for a new place to hike, fish, kayak, boat, bike or more can now easily discover the beauty of Great Parks through Google Maps.

"This is a really cool way for anyone in the world to visit places on their computer or phone that they may not otherwise get to see," said Great Parks of Hamilton County Chief Executive Officer Jack Sutton. "We are excited for Great Parks to be among those destinations."



Creepy Campouts: a Family Tradition

Creepy Campouts began in 1987 at Winton Woods Campground with a one-weekend campout. Now a four-weekend event, these campouts sell out each year, sometimes in just 45 minutes! It continues to grow in popularity, and many people enjoy the entertainment, the experiences and participating in the activities offered: balloon artists, a puppeteer, a movie, a magician and a wagon ride that takes children and families to pick out a pumpkin.

Families come year after year, creating their own traditions. People bring Halloween and other spooky decorations to participate in the best decorated campsite contest. Ghosts, mannequins and inflatable haunted houses line the campsites at Winton Woods every fall. There is also a jack-o'-lantern contest, where carvers compete to be chosen for Parky's favorite pumpkin. Families enjoy making memories at Creepy Campouts. Some who came as children are now bringing their grandchildren to continue the tradition.



New Camping Opportunities at Lake Isabella

May marked the official opening of Lake Isabella campground. Located between the Little Miami Scenic River and a 28-acre fishing lake, the campground offers a primitive experience with 24 tent-only sites, grouped around fire rings. Campers also have access to a river canoe and kayak launch, a reservable lodge and picnic shelters, a playground and a boathouse.

In its first season, the campground filled nearly 300 sites over the 17 weekends it was open, May 11 through September 3, 2018.

AWARDS

Bill Strausbaugh Award

FROM: Southern Ohio PGA
FOR: PGA Professional Dennis Wells

Patriot Award

FROM: Southern Ohio PGA
FOR: PGA Professional Tom Bach

Top 50 Range

FROM: Golf Range Association of America
FOR: Meadow Links & Golf Academy

Youth Player Development Award

FROM: Southern Ohio PGA
FOR: PGA Professional Mike Deiters



COMMUNITY



REI Grant Improves Access for Bicyclists

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from long-time partner, Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), major improvements were completed on the Mitchell Memorial Forest Mountain Bike Trail in 2018. Upgraded signage and a bike fix-it station were installed, habitat restoration took place and a small section of trail was reforested to mitigate erosion. These efforts help improve access and recreational use for more than 7,600 trail users annually.

The Mitchell Memorial Forest Mountain Bike Trail is 8.4 miles long and spans 170 acres in the 1,582-acre park. It remains the only trail in Hamilton County to be certified to International Mountain Biking Association standards. The mountain bike trail first opened in 2008 with the help of another important Great Parks partner, Cincinnati Off Road Alliance (CORA), that still plays a major role in the trail's day-to-day maintenance. The financial support provided by REI allowed Great Parks to leverage resources and make additional improvements at little cost to the park district.

Since 2012, Great Parks has received more than \$45,000 in grants from REI for reforestation and trail projects. They also support many of Great Parks' community conservation projects through in-store promotions and employee volunteering.

Partnership With ArtWorks Brings Bike Racks, Mural to Great Parks

Two great projects with ArtWorks, the largest visual arts organization in the region, were achieved in 2018, including the installation of five bike parking areas and a 1,000-square-foot mural.

The bike racks were made possible by Great Parks Forever, philanthropic partner of Great Parks, working with local artist James Billiter through ArtWorks. The racks are 21 colorful, nature-themed sculptures that were installed at Sharon Woods (harbor and Sharon Centre), Winton Woods (harbor and Winton Centre) and Little Miami Golf Center (at the Little Miami Scenic Trail). The installation was completed in May 2018 and is an addition to the first bike parking area that was installed at Miami Whitewater Forest in 2016.

The mural, made possible by ArtWorks and the Center for Biological Diversity's national Endangered Species Mural Project, was completed in September 2018 under the Newtown Road overpass along the Little Miami Scenic Trail. The mural was painted by artist Roger Peet and two ArtWorks youth apprentices and depicts the Indiana bat, an endangered species, where maternal colonies can be found in forested areas in Ohio during spring and summer. The image inspires conservation awareness and community collaboration.



Local Food Connection Arrives at Parky's Farm

In August, Great Parks announced Parky's Farm as a new pickup location for Local Food Connection (formerly Ohio Valley Food Connection). Local Food Connection offers employees and the public the opportunity to order fresh, farm food online. A one-stop digital farmers market, Local Food Connection offers more than 300 delicious items from more than 70 farms and food artisans around the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area.

Through this partnership, Great Parks not only connects Hamilton County residents to everything from fresh vegetables to meats, eggs and cheese, but also helps sustain family farms. By supporting local farms, it helps boost the local economy.

Since the program's debut at Parky's Farm, more than \$5,300 worth of goods have been delivered to Winton Woods. A portion of the sales and profit went to Hamilton County farms.

Great Parks' commitment to this program is in tandem with supporting local farms and the park district's belief that having access to nutritious, fresh food is important to our region, our community and our health.



Pops in the Park

The Cincinnati Pops Orchestra has been performing concerts in Great Parks for more than 20 years. Under the direction of John Morris Russell, the orchestra performs concerts at select parks throughout Southwest Ohio.

Great Parks Forever, the philanthropic partner of Great Parks, has been sponsoring these concerts since 2016. In 2018, the Cincinnati Pops in the Park concert was again sponsored by Great Parks Forever and moved back to Miami Whitewater Forest, the largest park in the district. With attendance of approximately 2,800 guests, and the logistics to handle the traffic, parking and attendance, Miami Whitewater Forest served as an ideal location to host the annual concert.

The Pops provided a wide range of music, including classical, marches, popular songs and movie scores such as "Star Wars," "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Bike Helmet Donation to Boys & Girls Club

Great Parks donated 40 bike helmets to the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Cincinnati at its Avondale club location during Bike Helmet Safety Awareness Month in May, thanks to the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) "Put a Lid On It" campaign. Organizations that received helmets were asked to distribute them in a way that created community involvement and spread the message about bike helmet safety.

Great Parks held a special event on May 1, 2018, to donate the bike helmets to the club, which was in need of helmets to use with bikes that had previously been donated to the facility. The event included a few words from Great Parks' CEO, president-elect of the AAP's Ohio Chapter and a Boys & Girls Club representative. Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center staff did helmet fittings and Montgomery Cyclery staff safety-checked bikes.

About 15 to 20 kids from the club had the opportunity to try out the helmets and bikes with a ride at the facility. For some of the children, it was their first time riding a bike.



Partnerships & Collaborations

- BUTLER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, GROUNDWATER CONSORTIUM
- FOREST PARK ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
- FRISCH'S BIG BOY, FIFTH THIRD BANK, ALLEEN COMPANY
- GEOWOODSTOCK, AWAY FROM KEYBOARD (AFK)
- LITERACY NETWORK OF GREATER CINCINNATI
- MILLERCOORS BREWING
- ORSANCO
- RIVERS UNLIMITED
- RUMPKE WASTE & RECYCLING

Little Miami Scenic Trail Connector Bridge

Great Parks is working with the City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering to design the final phase of the trail. This includes widening the existing Beechmont Avenue bridge over the Little Miami Scenic River on the downstream side of the existing structure and physically separating a shared-use trail from vehicular traffic. The design will be completed by fall 2019, and it is anticipated that construction will begin in fall 2020 with project completion in fall 2021. The total estimated cost for the project is \$5,400,000. The Ohio Department of Transportation will manage bidding and construction for this project.

Currently, Great Parks has secured grant funding from the OKI Regional Council of Governments Executive Committee and the Ohio Statewide Urban Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Committee. The grants provide 80 percent of the total cost of the project at \$4,320,000 with Great Parks being responsible for a 20 percent local match. Great Parks has also received an allocation of \$343,000 from the 131st General Assembly of the State of Ohio, which supports Great Parks local match.

Project benefits include local and regional links to numerous parks, preserves and recreational, entertainment and business facilities as well as enhanced regional multi-model transportation options for commuters, easily linking neighborhoods and communities to downtown Cincinnati.



Master Plan Makes Headway

Great Parks made significant progress on an 18-month project to create a Comprehensive Master Plan. The master plan will serve as a guide for planning park facilities, programs and services over the next 10 years. To ensure the plan meets community needs, Great Parks gathered input from as many members of the public as possible.

The first round of community workshops were held in fall 2017, where several high-level strategies and priorities emerged. Great Parks incorporated that feedback into draft recommendations, which were shared with community members for further discussion during the second round of public workshops in May 2018. Approximately 100 people attended the four workshops held at Fernbank Park, Lake Isabella, Miami Whitewater Forest and Woodland Mound. In addition to the in-person feedback, another 73 people gave their input via online surveys.

Community members also gave their input on Great Parks' future at pop-up master plan tables. These interactive tables, hosted by a Great Parks' employee or volunteer, featured information and a map-based activity to give the public a method of contributing to the master plan in a way that was most convenient to them. Over the course of the year, 15 tables were available at popular special events across Hamilton County, both within and outside the park district.

All the feedback collected in 2018 was extremely valuable in refining the master plan's draft and final recommendations. A few of the big takeaways that will be incorporated into the final plan include a desire for the park district to focus on accessibility, conservation, water access and partnerships. The final Comprehensive Master Plan will be presented to Great Parks Board of Commissioners and rolled out to the public in early 2019.



Little Free Libraries Come to Great Parks

Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization that inspires a love of reading by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world. Through the libraries, millions of books are exchanged each year, increasing access to books for readers of all ages and backgrounds.

In 2018, the Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati partnered with Great Parks to expand the presence of these libraries, and by December, five Great Parks facilities became home to Little Free Libraries: Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve Ellenwood Nature Barn; Glenwood Gardens Cotswold Visitor Centre; Miami Whitewater Forest Visitor Center; Sharon Woods Sharon Centre; and Woodland Mound Seasongood Nature Center.

Check Out an MVP

To give people more opportunities to enjoy nature and make parks more accessible, Great Parks partnered with The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Through this partnership, all affiliated library branches were provided with a motor vehicle permit that could be checked out just like a book.

The initiative started in late August and ran through the fall season. During this period, 139 people took advantage of the MVPs. This program will continue to be available in 2019.

Community Volunteers Make an Impact

Sweating it out on the trails, picking up miles of litter, removing pesky invasive plants in one area and planting pollinator friendly plants in another – volunteers really showed up to make a difference this year. More than 500 community members of all ages joined Great Parks for conservation projects in 2018. Their efforts, like helping to resurface the Badlands Trail at Miami Whitewater Forest, will help to improve personal, everyday experiences for park guests.

Other efforts will not only improve the guest experiences and the diversity of habitats in Great Parks, they'll also impact the larger community. Many hands at litter pickups contribute to cleaner Ohio and Great Miami Rivers, for example. More than 2,500 new native prairie plants along the Wetland Loop Trail at Glenwood Gardens will improve the habitat for pollinators, as well as providing resting areas for migrating species like the monarch butterfly. Trees planted at Mitchell Memorial Forest not only transformed a bare area into a more green and peaceful getaway, they'll also contribute to cleaner air, cooler temperatures and food and shelter for wildlife for years to come.

The parks are a greener, cleaner and more inviting place to be, thanks to the many hours of partnerships between Great Parks staff and the community that joins them.

AWARDS

Award of Excellence

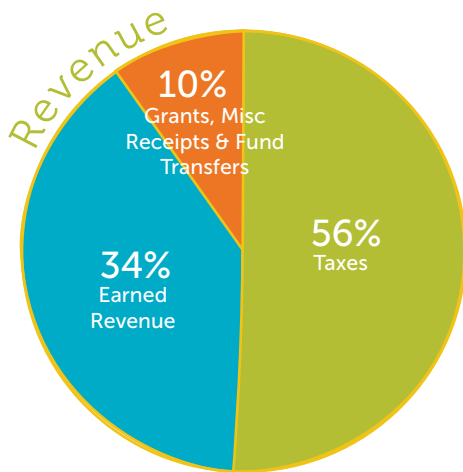
FROM: PRSA Blacksmith Awards
FOR: Great Parks Marketing

MARCOM AWARDS (2 Platinum, 3 Gold, 3 Honorable Mentions)

FROM: Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP)
FOR: Great Parks Marketing



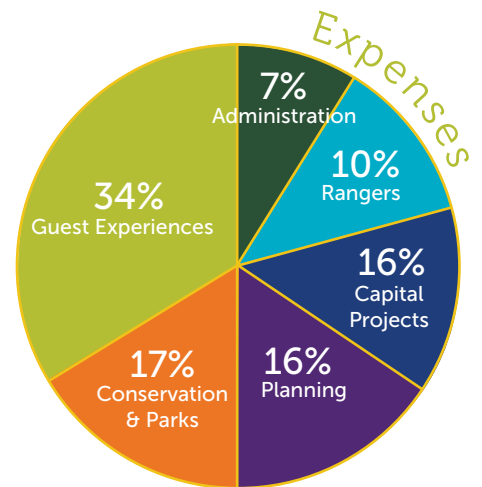
FINANCIALS



2018 Financial Summary

General & Capital Funds

Unencumbered	\$6,524,786
Encumbered	8,430,615
Balance 1/1/2018	14,955,401
Revenue Received	36,817,266
Total Funds Available	51,772,667
Expended	33,838,561
Balance 12/31/2018	<u>\$17,934,106</u>



Revenue

Taxes

Local Government Fund	\$294,425
Real Estate, Public Utilities, & Other	19,903,033

Total Taxes

20,197,458

Earned Revenue

Adventure Outpost	38,559
Athletics	287,781
Education	157,841
Golf Management	6,458,839
Guest Relations	451,735
Harbor	1,272,870
Nature's Niche	216,404
Park's Farm	454,617
Recreation Services	2,423,022
Special Events	155,327
Visitor Centers	434,673

Total Earned Revenue

12,351,668

Grants, Misc Receipts & Fund Transfers

4,268,140

Total Revenue

\$36,817,266

Expenses

Administration

Finance	\$ 1,720,331	7.45%
Human Resources	803,171	5.08%

Capital Projects

5,291,638 15.64%

Conservation & Parks

5,718,967 16.90%

Guest Experiences

34.54%

Education & Events 1,760,916 5.20%

Golf 5,387,085 15.92%

Guest Experiences 4,540,726 13.42%

Planning

15.84%

Facilities & Infrastructure 2,364,102 6.99%

IT & Data Management 988,082 2.92%

Marketing & Public Engagement 1,167,186 3.45%

Design & Land Acquisition 839,729 2.48%

Rangers

3,256,628 9.62%

Total Expenses

\$33,838,561 100%



AWARDS

Auditor of State Award with Distinction

FROM: State of Ohio

Certificate of Achievement

for Excellence in Financial Reporting

FROM: Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) with a special commemoration from the Senate of the 132nd General Assembly of Ohio

2018 Special Revenue Funds

Fund Name	Balance 1/1/2018	Revenue	Interest Revenue	Change in Fair Market Value of Investments	Expenditures	Balance 12/31/2018
Mitchell	\$4,811,071	\$1,142,033	\$10,929	\$(859,541)	\$1,083,162	\$4,021,330
Burchenal	2,490,197	61,598	7,903	864	-	2,560,562
Evergreen	1,557,660	190,200	21,836	N/A	372,286	1,397,409
Health Insurance *	-	2,060,685	2,855	-	1,945,306	118,234
Drug Law Enforcement	30,516	3,595	489	N/A	-	34,600
Law Enforcement	7,050	1,847	131	N/A	72	8,956
Law Enforcement & Education	9,649	90	145	N/A	-	9,884
Totals	\$8,906,143	\$3,460,048	\$44,288	\$(858,677)	\$3,400,826	\$8,150,975

*Health Insurance fund was created in 2018 for self-funding of medical insurance.

2018 Land Acquisitions

Location	Date acquired	Acreage	Grant	Total Purchase Price
Whitewater River Corridor	2/23/18	51.99	\$273,750	\$273,750
Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve	9/26/18	.575	157,500	210,000
Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve	10/4/18	1.128	195,000	260,000
Oak Glen Nature Preserve	10/5/18	57.491	416,182	416,182
Mitchell Memorial Forest	10/29/18	47.2447	708,670	944,894
Total		158.4287	\$1,751,102	\$2,104,826

Total green space preserved and protected by Great Parks of Hamilton County as of December 31, 2018 was 17,666 acres, including fee simple acquisitions, lease agreements, conservation easements, bike trail easements, out-leases and cooperative management agreements.



Great Parks Forever

To clarify its role and amplify its impact, Great Parks Foundation became Great Parks Forever (GPF) in February. As the philanthropic partner of Great Parks of Hamilton County, GPF translates an early conservation promise into everyday experiences and lasting legacies. While independent organizations, GPF works closely with park district staff to identify and prioritize opportunities to achieve their shared vision.

GPF celebrated its 10th anniversary with 160 familiar and new friends at the Root Ball. The event raised more than \$37,000 to advance its mission. With community support, Great Parks Forever is continuing to champion the story of American conservation. Learn more at GreatParksForever.org.



**Great Parks of
Hamilton County**
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HC Buck Niehoff Joseph C. Seta
Geraldine Warner

Chief Executive Officer: Jack Sutton



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