



METRO PARKS

Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District



Community Update 2007



Robert Shunk

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Board of Park Commissioners

Metro Parks is a separate political subdivision of the state of Ohio organized under Ohio Revised Code Section 1545 to conserve natural resources and provide natural area parks for people to enjoy. Setting Metro Parks' policy and directing the course of the park district is a three-citizen Board of Park Commissioners appointed to three-year terms by the Judge of the Probate Court of Franklin County.

2007 Board Members:

Kenneth F. Danter, Chair

Robert H. Jeffrey

Ellen L. Tripp,

Established in 1945, Metro Parks features 15 outstanding natural area parks and protects more than 23,500 acres of land and water in seven Central Ohio counties. Open 365 days a year, your Metro Parks offer free educational and recreational experiences that will excite your senses and rekindle your spirits.

Metro Parks is funded principally by a 10-year Franklin County property tax levy along with state and local government funds, grants and earned income. The current 0.65-mill levy, which expires in 2010, generates about 60 percent of the income for the park system. On average, this costs a property owner about \$12 per \$100,000 of home value.

Levy funds are used primarily to operate and improve existing parks and acquire additional land for trails and new parks. During the current levy period, Metro Parks has opened 5 new parks, added more than 7,500 acres of land and 75 miles of trails, expanded and enhanced its school and youth programming initiatives and developed a senior citizen outreach program while continuing to maintain clean and safe parks for more than 6.5 million visitors each year.



Director's Report

This has been another wonderful year for Metro Parks and its visitors. With a 7 percent growth in park visitation in 2007, the community continued to show great interest in spending time in the Metro Parks. More than 6½ million visitors enjoyed free outdoor recreational and educational activities. The parks and facilities continue to be clean, safe and well maintained even as new facilities are opened for public enjoyment.

Scioto Audubon Metro Park on the Whittier Peninsula remained a planning and construction focus for the Metro Parks team. Progress was made in addressing impacted soils and the area surrounding the boat ramps was greatly improved. Audubon Ohio anticipates beginning construction of the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in May 2008. The City of Columbus has delayed development of the adjoining lands on the Whittier Peninsula but is making progress on relocating facilities as required for completion of the park.

We initiated the Metro Parks Urban Conservation Corps to provide jobs, training and conservation education for at-risk youth. The Urban Conservation Corps members were selected from area high schools and helped to complete projects in the Metro Parks while learning skills and gaining exposure to conservation careers.

Good progress was realized in constructing the regional Greenway Trail system. Trails north of Three Creeks along Alum Creek were paved all the way to Livingston Avenue, with only a small gap in the trail at Petzinger Road. Additional trail mileage was completed along Blacklick Creek. Construction of the Darby Creek Greenway Trail in Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park was initiated. Additional trail improvements were made throughout the park system.

Metro Parks hosted more special events in 2007 than ever before. The Big Bugs exhibit was a tremendous success with 600,000 visitors to Inniswood to see the sculpture exhibit. Programs and activities for seniors continue to be popular and well received. The Students Exploring Ecosystems school initiative was expanded to include more schools. Metro Parks hosted the Special Park District Forum, which showcased our facilities and operations to park leaders from across the nation.

The park system grew by 325 acres, with an additional 152 acres under contract. These new park properties bring Metro Parks' total conserved acreage to over 23,500 acres.



Conservation of land and restoration of wildlife habitat remains a strong focus of the Metro Parks system. The population of Central Ohio continues to grow and spread out, consuming ever more land for homes, businesses and shopping centers. The opportunity to protect the best remaining natural landscapes is dwindling. The slowdown in the housing market has created some potential to acquire property at more favorable prices.

Five habitat restoration projects are underway that will be completed in 2008 in our parks along Big Darby Creek. These conservation projects will help to improve water quality, provide homes for wildlife including many rare species, and add to the beauty and serenity of your Metro Parks. Restoring habitat is an important way for Metro Parks to achieve its goals of providing opportunities for people to discover nature close to home.

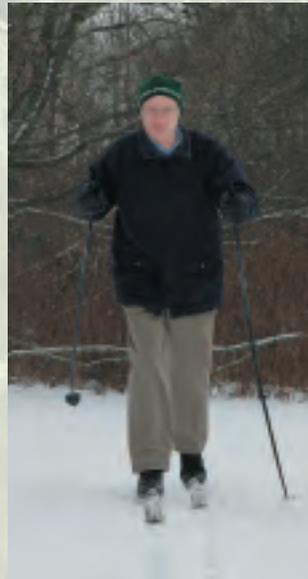
An agreement will be signed in February 2008 to establish a new Metro Park in the Rocky Fork Creek headwaters area of Plain Township. Funds are allocated in the 2008 budget to begin acquiring land in the Rocky Fork area. The City of Columbus, the Village of New Albany and Plain Township are partnering with Metro Parks to create this new park. Metro Parks has also been awarded a grant from Ohio EPA to begin land acquisition along Hellbranch Run in western Franklin County.

Metro Parks' ten-year levy expires next year. Plans will be formulated and public discussions will continue in 2008 in anticipation of placing a levy on the ballot in May 2009. A key question to be answered is "Should Metro Parks undertake major new conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives during the next ten years, or should we focus on maintaining the great park system as it exists now?" We will be asking for your continued support for the Metro Parks. We hope that you agree that your Metro Parks are a great value and an important part of our community. See you in the Metro Parks!

John O'Meara



Executive Director



Mission Statement

The Mission of Metro Parks is to conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature.

To achieve this mission we strive to:

- Provide clean, safe parks to meet the open space needs and interests of present and future generations
- Serve park visitors with a professional, well-trained and helpful staff
- Fulfill our commitments to acquire and protect desirable park land
- Create awareness and understanding of our natural heritage and the importance of conservation through educational programming
- Conserve and restore natural areas to sustain communities of native plants and animals
- Offer healthful and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities
- Cooperate with communities and other park, recreation and conservation agencies in furthering our mission
- Provide leadership on conservation issues that impact Central Ohio
- Preserve sites of beauty that inspire people and renew their spirits

Resource Management



Ted Stone



As one of Central Ohio's largest landowners, Metro Parks is a leader in restoring, protecting and enhancing the area's rich natural and cultural resources. Our community's livelihood, quality of life and future depend on how well we tend to these duties entrusted to us by the voters of Franklin County. To this end, Metro Parks' resource management program administers a broad range of conservation and preservation activities to protect more than 2,300 plant and animal species by managing natural areas for optimal habitat.

2007 Highlights

- Initiated efforts to restore and replant over 600 acres of bottomland and upland forest along Little Darby Creek including the restoration of five vernal pool wetlands.
- Implemented a public use area tree planting and replacement plan by planting 145 trees in five park areas to improve the quality and diversity of trees and prepare for the potential impacts of the emerald ash borer.
- Removed approximately 3,000 feet of levees along Big Darby Creek at Battelle Darby Creek and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks to reconnect Big Darby Creek and its floodplain, in part funded by two restoration grants from the Ohio EPA, at a total project cost of \$426,500.
- More than 8,000 fish including bass, bluegill, crappie and catfish were stocked at Battelle Darby Creek, Slate Run, Clear Creek, Sharon Woods and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks. This project will increase opportunities for anglers and benefit the water quality of the lakes.
- Restored 300 feet of a tributary of Big Darby Creek to a natural stream channel. Funded in part by the Ohio EPA, the project cost \$54,770.
- Discovered a breeding population of the federally endangered Indiana bat along Big Darby Creek at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park.
- Conducted surveys for birds, butterflies, fish, dragonflies, mussels and amphibians to monitor population trends and evaluate management efforts throughout the Metro Parks. The state endangered rabbitsfoot mussel was found in Big Darby Creek at Prairie Oaks Metro Park. A new or undocumented species of river cruiser dragonfly was also discovered in the park.

- Documented an initial phase of success at re-establishing woodfrogs to Blacklick Woods Metro Park. In partnership with The Ohio State University and Ohio EPA, three woodfrogs were found in pools where eggs were introduced in 2006. Woodfrogs disappeared from Blacklick Woods in the late 1960's.
- In partnership with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, successfully suppressed a local population of Gypsy Moths at Blendon Woods by 80 percent using a non-chemical agent targeted specifically at this species.
- In partnership with the The Ohio State University, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and Ohio Division of Wildlife relocated individual northern riffleshell mussels that were surviving three months after reintroduction. The northern riffleshell is a federally endangered mussel occurring in Big Darby Creek.
- Metro Parks mowed nearly 1,000 acres of habitat as part of its controlled succession program to maintain mid-successional level habitat for a wide diversity of species.
- Continued efforts to control non-native invasive species of plants throughout the Metro Parks.
- Continued to manage and restore native Darby Plains prairies at Battelle Darby Creek and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks.
- Management efforts were continued at the 20-acre W. Pearl King Prairie Savanna to manage one of the last two old-growth deep-soil tall-grass prairie savannas in the midwest.



Skye Zuza

Visitor Services

More than 6.5 million people visited a Metro Park in 2007. Fifteen Metro Parks are conveniently located throughout Central Ohio providing free educational and recreational opportunities 365 days a year.

Highlights from 2007

Battelle Darby Creek

Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park is situated along the Big and Little Darby Creeks, designated State and National Wild & Scenic Rivers. Its 6,000-plus acres contain land management areas and a variety of ecosystems including prairies, wetlands and woodlands, as well as Big and Little Darby Creeks.

- Hosted 15 different interest groups for the Annual Darby Creek Day with 1,088 visitors.
- Park staff joined with the Central Ohio Folk Music Society for the annual Folk Music Festival with nearly 4,000 visitors enjoying this 2-day event.
- Naturalist led a visit with Mayor Coleman and other Darby Accord dignitaries to celebrate the efforts by everyone involved in the Accord. The mayor and dignitaries enjoyed a short hike followed by seining in Big Darby Creek.

Blacklick Woods

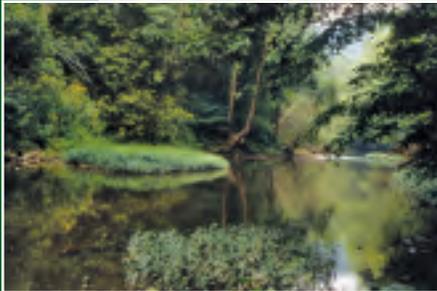
Blacklick features one of the best remaining beech-maple forests in Franklin County along with a mixed forest and buttonbush swamp.

- Naturalist staff gave a series of programs to the 5th-grade MRDD class at Waggoner Road Middle School in Reynoldsburg.
- Assisted parks and agencies with programs and workshops including COSI, Ohio Historical Society, Ohio Farm Bureau and Senior Camp.
- Blacklick Woods staff worked diligently to provide a clean and safe park with routine park maintenance, visitor services and educational programming.

Blendon Woods

Spectacular stream cut ravines surrounded by beech-maple and oak-hickory forests highlight this 653-acre Metro Park. The 118-acre Walden Waterfowl Refuge with its 11-acre Thoreau Lake provides a sanctuary for hundreds of birds and other wildlife.

- Blendon Woods accomplished green initiatives by continuing the recycling program, switching over to bio-diesel fuel for equipment, using energy efficient light bulbs throughout the park and making a conscious effort to set thermostats at a level to conserve energy.
- The Nature Center welcomed 23,963 visitors. Naturalists conducted 304 public programs attended by 6,435 visitors, led group walks, held 38 impromptu/roving programs and went off-site 141 times for 5,794 people. Naturalists presented another 375 programs to schools and community groups.



David Henderson



Jason Dale



Linda Parker

Chestnut Ridge

This 486-acre Metro Park includes beautiful woodlands, open fields and outcrops of blackhand sandstone. A two-mile nature trail and boardwalk provides a view of some of the most beautiful scenery in Central Ohio.

- The interpretive program at Chestnut Ridge includes a substantial number of off-site presentations.
- Approximately 175 seniors from a local care facility enjoyed the fishing pond during several outings, while Dublin 6th-graders visited Chestnut Ridge and participated in varied activities including pond studies and hiking.

Clear Creek

Home to the state's largest nature preserve, the 5,252-acre park features 15 miles of rugged trails. More than 800 species of plants and 150 species of birds have been identified at Clear Creek.

- 450 high school students participated in the Division 5 Envirothon at Clear Creek.
- The Ohio Division of Wildlife released 3,500 brown trout in Clear Creek.
- Ohio Canine and the Fairfield County SWAT team conducted various training exercises at the park during the year.

Glacier Ridge

This 1,037-acre park features open grasslands, rolling woodlands and a 200-acre restored wetland with an observation tower overlooking the park.

- Glacier Ridge hosted 14 events in 2007, including Union County United Way 5k, Columbus Half Marathon, Turkey Trot, Honda Health Fair, Ohio Wildlife Center Festival and Green Energy Ohio's Solar Tour.
- Two Eagle Scout projects were completed: construction on a third bridge on the disc golf course and construction of a small program amphitheater just off the Red Oak Nature Trail.

Highbanks

Named for the massive 100-foot high shale bluffs that border the park along the Olentangy State Scenic River, Highbanks is noted for its outstanding geological formations.

- Naturalists conducted a pilot program with Olentangy Schools Physical Education Department. Instead of traditional gym class, students learned about various activities they can do in Metro Parks. Topics included: hiking, compass and map reading, safety and using a GPS.
- Hosted the annual Senior Olympics (senior citizens) sponsored by Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.
- For the fourth year in a row, Highbanks hosted and conducted, along with Metro Parks Human Resources department, Ground Hog Job Shadow day for Columbus City Schools. This educational, one-day program exposes high school students to different job classifications and career opportunities in Metro Parks.
- A recyclables only dumpster, provided by the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio, is now available at Highbanks for the community to use.



Robert Shunk



Ken Browne



David Tipton



Virginia Gordon



Robert Shunk



Tim Daniele



Kim Graham



Heather Stark

Inniswood Metro Gardens

Nestled within a scenic nature preserve, the 123-acre Inniswood Metro Gardens boasts more than 2,000 species of plants, specialty collections of hostas, daffodils, daylilies and several theme gardens including the rose, herb and woodland rock garden.

- David Rogers' Big Bugs traveling botanical garden exhibit of giant sized, hand carved wooden sculptures of insects, bugs and spiders were installed throughout the gardens for a three-month tenure.
- Big Bugs brought in an extra 600,000 visitors, doubling attendance to a record 864,938 visitors.
- Three interns from the Urban Youth Initiative assisted the Inniswood staff with programs, planting and maintenance projects, as well as assisting David Rogers with the installation of the Big Bugs.
- In addition to Big Bugs, other special programs and events included: Winter Hike, Valentine's Day, Children's Garden Day, Stroller Stroll program, Annual Plant Sale, Mother's Day Tea, Healthy Hike, Herb Fair, Halloween Party and Holiday Luminary programs.
- Inniswood volunteers donated 12,550 hours of service assisting with garden maintenance, tours, greenhouse activities, special decorations, programs and a myriad of other activities.

Pickerington Ponds

The combination of seasonal ponds and rich wetland vegetation with bordering woodlands at the 1,616-acre park serves as a magnet for migrating waterfowl, shore birds and land birds.

- Nesting ospreys were big attractions while other rare bird sightings included bald eagles, barn owl, American avocet and American golden plover.
- Area school students were presented with in-park and in-school programs.

Prairie Oaks

The 1,734-acre park features more than 400 acres of restored prairies and the first ever off-leash pet swimming area in the park system.

- Opened the Upper Darby Creek Canoe access and Beaver Lake area for public use while also actively involved with the Darby Bend levee removal which is accompanied with weekly inspections and erosion monitoring.
- Hosted WAG, a dog-friendly festival, which included a wilderness walk, training seminars and demonstrations, as well as a costume contest and micro-chipping. More than 3,750 people attended.
- Opened a new tall-grass trail through grassland area at Sycamore Plains for public use.

Scioto Audubon

The park on the Whittier Peninsula in downtown Columbus is not yet officially open, but a park manager was appointed in 2007 and visitors have been allowed to fish and hike trails.

- The first Commit To Be Fit Hike of the 2007 series was held at the new park on August 26.

Sharon Woods

The 761-acre park includes meadows, oak-hickory and beech-maple woodlands, swamp forests and ravines. A 4-mile paved trail is popular with bikers and joggers.

- Metro Parks employees donated close to \$400 to send cookies to a part-time ranger and his unit, now in Iraq on active duty.
- The naturalist staff continued to provide excellent programming to our visitors. Overall park attendance was up by 4 percent with just over 786,000 visitors this year.
- Sharon Woods continues to provide Ranger dispatching operations for the entire park district.

Slate Run

More than 70 species of birds have been recorded at the park's 156-acre wetland and each year hundreds of school children on field trips learn about the value of wetlands.

- Resurfaced 2.5 miles of gravel trail.
- Installed new "You Are Here" signs at trailheads and key park locations.

Three Creeks

The 1,049-acre park features more than 14 miles of trails and is a partnership between the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and Metro Parks.

- The park's annual "Three Creeks Fest" attracted 250 visitors who participated in crafts, a canoe float, bike ride and creek clean up.
- Three Creeks staffed a booth at the Smith Farms Fall Harvest Jamboree, an event attended by 6,000 visitors.

Blacklick Woods Golf Course

A dedicated Audubon Sanctuary Golf Course, Blacklick Woods features two challenging courses and has been rated one of the top 10 bargain courses in Central Ohio.

- In 2007 a total of 48,826 paid rounds of golf were played on the two 18-hole golf courses.
- The golf course now offers on-line tee-time reservations via openteetime.com to better serve our customers.
- The golf course began to offer expanded golf outing and league opportunities for local golfers.

Heritage Trail

This 6.1-mile trail converted from an abandoned right-of-way starts in Old Hilliard off Main Street and continues toward Plain City. It features a 3.3-mile parallel trail for horses.

- Highbanks Rangers continued to work cooperatively with the City of Hilliard Police Department and Parks and Recreation Department to host 10 Thursday Night Family Bike Ride programs along the trail.
- Park staff participated in the Annual Valentine Walk held by the Heritage Rails to Trails Coalition.



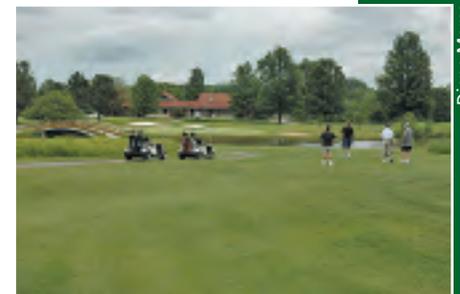
Eugene Barnes



Jason Dale



Diana Blue



Diana Morse



Shelters and Lodges

There is no better place to picnic with your friends and family than at one of your favorite Metro Parks. We supply tables, grills and picturesque settings and the rest of the fun is up to you.

Metro Parks has hundreds of picnic tables and more than 70 picnic areas and shelters to enjoy.

Located throughout the Metro Parks, reserved group picnic areas and shelters are available for a nominal fee.

2007 Reserved Facility Use

	Number of Reservations	Number of People
Shelters	1,619	79,449
Lodges	1,089	33,788
Camps	184	10,992
TOTALS	2,892	124,229

More than \$250,000 was collected in fees for shelters, lodges and camps.

2007 Metro Parks Visitor Statistics

Park	Visitors
Battelle Darby Creek	.694,400
Blacklick Woods	.842,300
Blacklick Woods Golf Course	.57,500
Blendon Woods	.449,900
Blendon Woods Camp	.7,500
Chestnut Ridge	.167,500
Glacier Ridge	.261,200
Heritage Bike Trail	.34,400
Highbanks	.974,000
Inniswood	.864,900
Pickerington Ponds	.202,200
Prairie Oaks	.327,100
Sharon Woods	.786,500
Slate Run	.211,200
Slate Run Daycamp	.3,900
Slate Run Farm	.47,200
Three Creeks	.593,000
Totals	.6,524,700



Virginia Gordon

Capital Improvements and Renovations

Battelle Darby Creek

- Significant progress on the Darby Greenway trail from Cedar Ridge to the Darby Dan Farm area completed and will continue through 2008.
- Renovation funds were used for reconstruction of the Dyer Mill Trail bridge as well as repair and replacement of shelter roofs.

Blacklick Woods

- A new sewage lift station was installed in the maintenance shop area.
- New plumbing and fixtures added in the reserve restrooms as well as new roofs on park restrooms and shelter.

Blacklick Woods Golf Course

- 15 Yamaha golf carts and a Jacobson rough mower were purchased to meet the needs of the golf course.
- Turf repairs and maintenance issues were addressed, including removal of old equipment and up-grades in the mechanical storage area.

Blendon Woods

- Completed exterior staining projects including the Nature Center, two reserve shelters and reserve restrooms.
- Replaced seven old park benches by private donations and Eagle Scout projects.

Chestnut Ridge

- The public restrooms required the installation of rodent barriers around the bottoms of each of the four buildings.
- The wetland observation deck received a thorough cleaning and a new coat of stain.
- The nature trail was maintained and additional surface water management features were installed.

Clear Creek

- Two renovation projects were budgeted for Clear Creek in 2007 and both were completed. A new garage door was installed at the maintenance shop. The new door is insulated and has windows to let natural light into the building. Four new replacement doors were installed at the Starner House Office. They will reduce energy costs and increase building security.
- Park staff built a new boardwalk and footbridge for the Lake Ramona access from Clear Creek Road.

Glacier Ridge

- With assistance from the Roving Crew, five significant drainage problems were solved: each site required grading to ensure positive drainage into nearest swale.
- Site work for the Wind and Solar Learning Center is almost complete.

Heritage Trail

- The parking lot was sealed and re-striped.

Highbanks

- Construction was completed on the new Dragonfly Daycamp and the new fishing deck. Organized youth groups can now rent this area.
- Constructed two replacement trail bridges near Dripping Rock and Scenic River nature trails.
- The Urban Youth Initiative students assisted with the completion of the following projects: installation of new plastic signage, staining of 11 trail bridges and three wood decks and the painting of all picnic tables.
- Raising and crowning of 800 feet of the Coyote Run Trail was completed along with wetland spillway reconstruction to improve drainage.



Steve Brown



Bill Buescher



Bill Buescher



Inniswood

- The construction of a new entrance structure and 675 feet of decorative fence delineates a single entry and orientation location to the formal gardens.
- In the Sisters' Garden, a woodland fort was created with an accompanying concrete base, the "Sky Woman" statue was reinstalled and a grassy paver walkway was installed in the prairie, as well as a stone walkway at the edge of the Memorial Garden.
- Planting projects include a new mixed border of double beds at the new garden entrance, new mixed sunny border along the Brookwood Trail, perennial gardens at the back edge of the Rose Garden trellis and removal and renovation of planting around the Innis House.

Pickerington Ponds

- The maintenance barns' exterior was painted and a concrete floor was poured in the old barn.
- Split rail fencing was installed at the Stevenson Cemetery as part of an Eagle Scout project. Fencing was also installed in the Wright Road parking area.
- Ickes property demolition was completed.
- Rawn property, located on Gender Road, was purchased.

Prairie Oaks

- The Darby Bend Lakes restrooms were opened for public use in May.
- A cold storage building was constructed in the maintenance compound.
- A parking lot was installed in the Beaver Lake area.
- Renovation projects included roadway improvements and installation of interpretive signage.

Sharon Woods

- Completed the installation of a new playground in the Schrock Lake picnic area.



Steve Brown

- Resurfaced the 1-mile Edward Thomas trail as well as a portion of the Oak Openings Trail while maintaining the shape of the nature trail.
- Five students from Columbus City Schools completed the Urban Youth Initiative program. The students worked alongside our staff primarily in the area of maintenance, but also with law enforcement and naturalists. The students did a great job and left with a long list of accomplishments and completed projects.

Slate Run

- Started the timber-frame shelter at group camp.
- Completed an extension of the Farm parking lot to accommodate overflow bus parking.

Three Creeks

- A new cathedral-style program area was constructed and will be used for a variety of programs including movie night and campfire programs.
- The Confluence restroom floor was painted and re-calked and the doors were replaced.
- Parking lots at Confluence and Heron Pond were sealed and striped.

2007 Greenways

Alum Creek Greenway Trail

- Phase 2 of the trail from Three Creeks Park to north of I-70, including an underpass and bridge over Alum Creek, was completed in 2007. An additional project at Petzinger Road and S.R. 33 was bid late in the year with construction scheduled to be completed in early 2008.

Blacklick Creek Greenway Trail

- Phase 8 of Blacklick Creek Greenway Trail, the section from Ebright Road south to S.R. 33 is now complete and open to the public.
- Design and construction planning will continue for phase 7, 9 and 10.

Darby Creek Greenway Trail

- Approximately 50 percent of the Darby Creek Greenway Trail between S.R. 40 and the Cedar Ridge Picnic Area has been constructed. A separate contract was bid for supplying stone products for the project and a 30-foot long wooden trail bridge was completed.



Cherie Tolliver

Scioto Audubon Metro Park

The redevelopment of the Whittier Peninsula continued to evolve in 2007 through the efforts of Metro Parks and its partners the City of Columbus and Audubon Ohio. The name of the new Metro Park on the peninsula was confirmed as Scioto Audubon Metro Park in September. A renovated boat ramp area was completed and made available to anglers, boaters and nature lovers. Environmental clean-up efforts continued and the first phase of wetland development was completed. A park road was constructed, setting the stage for major efforts in 2008 with Metro Parks taking an expanded role in site development and utility relocation and other improvements on the peninsula. Metro Parks assigned a manager and rangers to increase visitor safety and enjoyment at Scioto Audubon Metro Park which will share Whittier Peninsula with the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, which will have its groundbreaking in April 2008.



Community Outreach



Andrea Haslage

Public Programs

Metro Parks provides programs and educational activities on natural and cultural history for Central Ohio students, teachers, scouts and others from pre-K through senior citizens. Programs can be aligned to Ohio's academic content standards and are available in the parks or at a school or other off-site location. In 2007, Metro Parks provided 1,698 pre-registered programs to 68,993 people. About 81,000 people attended the more than 1,500 open public programs.

Homeschool, Preschool and Youth (Scout) Groups: Metro Parks makes every effort to accommodate the needs of local homeschool, preschool and scout groups. Metro Parks offers a variety of programs specifically for these groups. More than 53,000 people attended pre-arranged park visits with naturalists.

Metro Parks Explorer: This program was created to replace the Budding and Junior Naturalist and the Heritage Explorer programs and to be easier for children to earn a patch and certificate. Response to the program has been positive, with more than 200 patches awarded in 2007.

Tram Tours: Tram program attendance for the year reached 6,869. With the addition of the tram in 2002, Metro Parks has been able to offer educational programs to those who may not be able to access the trails, such as senior citizens, people with physical disabilities and preschoolers.

Heritage Nature Center: Metro Parks naturalists conducted 38 public programs at the center in Groveport, attracting more than 450 participants.

Nature Centers: Metro Parks has three nature centers, open 364 days of the year and offering a variety of interactive natural and cultural history displays, wildlife viewing areas and naturalist offices. In 2007, nature center visitors numbered 58,565 at Highbanks, 47,445 at Blacklick Woods and 23,963 at Blendon Woods.



David Tipton

Seniors: Metro Parks offers many programs geared toward senior citizens exclusively. Programs are presented in the parks and at offsite locations. More than 3,400 seniors participated in these types of programs, including 71 programs requested by seniors groups.

- **In-Park Programs:** Walks and brown bag lunch programs for seniors were offered throughout the year, with coffee or hot chocolate provided in winter. Many seniors rode the open-air tram on park visits, while learning about park histories.
- **Outreach Programs:** Understanding that not all seniors can travel to our parks, we bring the “parks” to them. Seniors in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior centers and other locations can enjoy this type of program. Seniors can still feel like they are in the parks through the use of their five senses, along with artifacts brought in.

Special Events

In addition to regular programming, Metro Parks hosted special events and participated in many community events. Special events attract an audience of several hundred to several thousand people and often involve staff from multiple agencies. Several parks offer one or more special events during the year.

Winter Hike Series: For more than 30 years, visitors have joined naturalists for Metro Parks annual winter hike series. More than 4,400 visitors participated in 12 hikes through winter wonderlands in January and February.

Fall Healthy Hikes Series: The Commit To Be Fit Healthy Hikes Series continued in 2007, with hikes at 10 Metro Parks in August through October, led by park rangers.

WAGFest: This dog-friendly festival was held at the Darby Bend Lakes area of Prairie Oaks Metro Park on Saturday August 25, 2007. Almost 4,000 visitors attended the festival, not counting more than 1,000 of their doggy friends. The event itself was free, although it was preceded by a WAG! Wilderness Walk along the pet trail, with proceeds from the \$20 per dog registration benefiting the Capital Area Humane Society.

Volunteers

Volunteer Programs

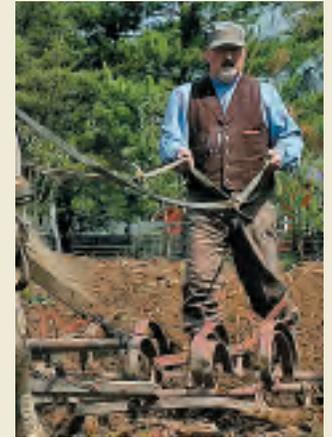
Volunteers prove invaluable to Metro Parks. Naturalist and trail volunteers aid program staff and rangers by assisting with programs, building displays and participating in biotic surveys and special events. A total of 770 volunteers contributed more than 27,155 hours of time during the year. In an exceptional effort 11 people volunteered more than 200 hours this year. Dave Pritchard, a 26-year volunteer, spent a record 1,054 hours helping out at Slate Run Living Historical Farm.

Inniswood

Inniswood relies on its 280 volunteers for its day-to-day operations. Inniswood volunteers assist with programs and special events such as Big Bugs, flowerbed maintenance and plantings, tours, plant sales and monitoring blue bird boxes. Inniswood volunteers worked 12,551 hours last year. Twenty-nine volunteers recorded more than 100 hours.

Slate Run Farm

Slate Run Farm volunteers help create a typical 1880's working farm experience for Metro Parks' visitors. Volunteers assist with farm chores and programs that help educate the public about Ohio's past. In 2007 dedicated, hardworking volunteers logged 3,104 hours in 558 visits.



Karl Francis



Dan Bissonette



Lou Thalheimer

Big Bugs: Inniswood Metro Gardens was taken over by 10 gigantic big bug sculptures from July 14 to October 14, 2007. The three-month exhibit featured a 1,200-pound praying mantis, a 7-foot assassin bug, a 60-pound spider on a 12-foot by 12-foot web constructed of willow, plus other insects carved from hardwoods, including three ants, a dragonfly and damselfly, a ladybug and an 11-foot-long grasshopper. The exhibit attracted more than 600,000 visitors over the summer.

Community Events: Metro Parks staff participated in special events that took place outside of the district and/or were sponsored by other agencies. These events included:

- Riverfest
- Lancaster Festival
- Ohio State Fair
- Family Fun Fest
- Fall Harvest Jamboree
- Reynoldsbug Safety Town

Camp Programs

Youth Camp

Metro Parks organized Nature Adventure Camps for the 11th year, offering 29 camps at seven Metro Parks. A total of 603 campers attended these one-week camps. Campers ranged in age from preschool through 9th grade. A theme of wildlife animals ran through many of the camps, with campers creating their own animal costumes and learning about habitats and survival. The grandparent/grandchild camp was run for a second year and proved very popular.

Senior Camp

More than 600 senior citizens attended a day of camp at Blacklick Woods in the fall. Seniors came from many of the LifeCare Alliance Dining Centers, Columbus Recreation and Parks Senior Centers, church groups and day care facilities. The campers enjoyed live animal programs, walks, fishing, crafts, nature bingo with prizes, tram rides around the parks and meeting new friends.



Virginia Gordon

Education

Education Initiative Mission Statement: To provide Central Ohio students with a positive, memorable environmental experience that supports the academic goals of school districts and provides teachers with resources to expand awareness of Metro Parks' natural and cultural resources.

School Programs: Metro Parks offers a variety of one- to two-hour natural and cultural history pre-registered programs to students of all ages. Programs are available to classroom and youth group leaders for no charge. Metro Parks' staff works with groups at a park or at a school.

Students Exploring Ecosystem Dynamics (SEED): A large-scale education program with partner, Columbus City Schools, SEED is a nine-week standards driven science curriculum, that includes in-class and in-park lessons for students. This year, Metro Parks served 2,950 5th-grade students from Columbus City, Westerville City, South-Western City and Groveport Madison school districts. Sponsor dollars from AEP and National City helped fund the cost of transportation for students.



Susan Boggs



Andrea Haslage

Roving Crew



The Roving Crew worked on numerous projects in 2007, including the fishing deck at the Highbanks Dragonfly Day Camp. One of their more unusual projects was the reconditioning of the original Sky Woman statue at Inniswood, eliminating the need to have a replica made of the damaged statue. Also at Inniswood, the crew did extensive work on the new gardens entrance and laid the concrete pad for the program tent, used for programming.

The crew also reconditioned the boat ramp boardwalk and deck at the new Scioto Audubon Metro Park, and worked on the Darby Creek Greenway Trail extension extending from the Cedar Ridge area of Battelle Darby Creek northward to the former Darby Dan property. The team also resurfaced other trails at Battelle Darby Creek, Highbanks and Sharon Woods Metro Parks.

Information Systems

With 15 parks spread over 7 counties, solid telecommunications are vital to managing the Metro Parks. The year 2007 saw cost-effective improvements in the telecommunications infrastructure become available to many of our parks. Currently, most of the parks have some form of digital access to the internet, including satellite telecommunications at two of the more isolated parks.

Improved telecommunications give the staff at the parks access to information resources that are shared across the park system. In the past year we have been putting in place systems to process, organize and share financial records and photographic libraries. These systems were designed so that we will be able to expand our processing and access to many more kinds of information.

Also in 2007 we took the reservation of facilities and registration for educational programming online. While offering the public a more convenient way to sign up for programs and reserve facilities for themselves, the online system has also improved the way staff work together to create and publish the program listings you see in the Parkscape and on the Metro Parks web site. This has proved quite popular, with about one-third of all reservations and registrations being done online.

Human Resources

Our team of 137 full-time and approximately 100 part-time employees works diligently to provide park visitors with an educational, safe and enjoyable experience at the Metro Parks. The staff is focused on providing customer service and strives to ensure that our park district is recognized locally as well as nationally.

The Maintenance team works diligently to ensure parks are very clean and well maintained. Our Park Managers, Assistant Park Managers and Park Rangers, who are commissioned Ohio Peace Officers, ensure that the more than 6.5 million people who visit the Metro Parks each year have a safe and enjoyable visit. Our commissioned staff is supported by a team of part-time Rangers who help carry out this important responsibility. A highly trained and skilled staff of Interpretive Naturalists and Educators provide Metro Parks' visitors with a better understanding of the need to preserve and conserve. Support staff from various other disciplines are focused on customer service and providing our visitors with a memorable experience.

We are very proud of the highly talented and dedicated team of employees at Metro Parks. More than 19 percent of Metro Parks employees have been with the park district for more than 15 years.

Employees have attended various internal and external conferences and training classes on subjects ranging from diversity to ethics to ensure and better develop their skills and areas of expertise. Metro Parks' continues to attract highly skilled employees who are interested in joining the Metro Parks team.

Employee participation and teamwork is encouraged throughout the district and community. Our Employee Recognition program continued to provide a number of opportunities to recognize and reward employees and teams within Metro Parks.

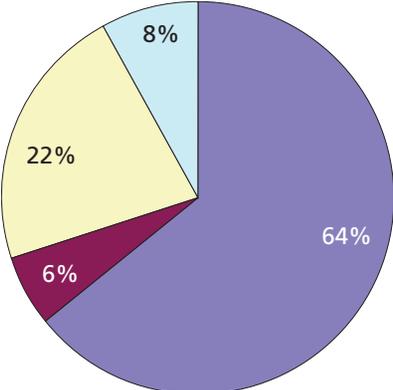
Financial Highlights for 2007

Metro Parks is entrusted with public funds from a 10-year 0.65-mill levy, which generated \$13,904,474 in 2007. In addition, we received \$4,913,937 from local government funds and \$1,284,372 in government grants. Metro Parks received \$1,757,615 from other sources such as donations, interest income, program fees and reimbursements for land purchases.

The revenues that Metro Parks receives are used for operations, capital improvements and land acquisition. The operations budget is used to maintain the current park facilities and also includes personnel, administration, education, interpretive programs, equipment, resource management, promotion and safety and law enforcement. Capital improvements expenditures are for long term improvements such as picnic shelters, playground areas, trails, roads and parking infrastructure.

Metro Parks operates the Blacklick Woods Golf Course as an enterprise fund. This means that this facility is accounted for like a private business and works to be self-sufficient. The golf course had a deficit this year due to capital expenditures that were expensed in 2007 but have a useful life for more than one year. The golf course is continually working to improve the product that it offers to its Central Ohio visitors. The expectations for 2008 season are very high.

Overall, Metro Parks is in a very good financial position. The levy provides a secure source of funding and tight control over the growth of expenditures has helped Metro Parks maintain its ability to provide the community with clean, safe parks.

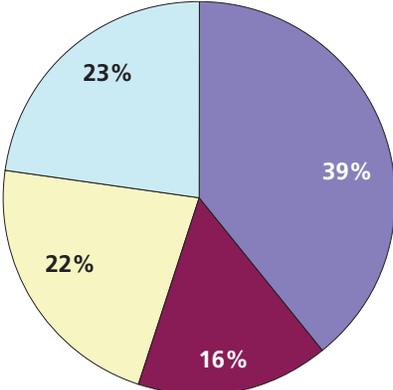


2007 Revenues

- Property Tax Levy
- Government Grants
- Local Government Funds
- Other

Revenues

Property Tax Levy	\$13,904,474
Land Acquisition Reimbursement	\$385,000
Local Government Funds	\$4,913,937
Income from Operations	\$410,574
Investment Income	\$763,390
Donations, Sponsors, Bequests	\$37,966
Government Grants	\$1,284,372
Miscellaneous	\$160,986
Total Revenues	.\$21,860,699



2007 Expenses

- Personnel
- Operating Expenses
- Capital Improvements
- Land Acquisition

Expenditures

Personnel	\$9,083,290
Operating Expenditures	\$3,692,764
Capital Improvements	\$5,260,572
Land Acquisition	\$5,463,499
Total Expenditures	.\$23,500,125

Blacklick Woods Golf Course

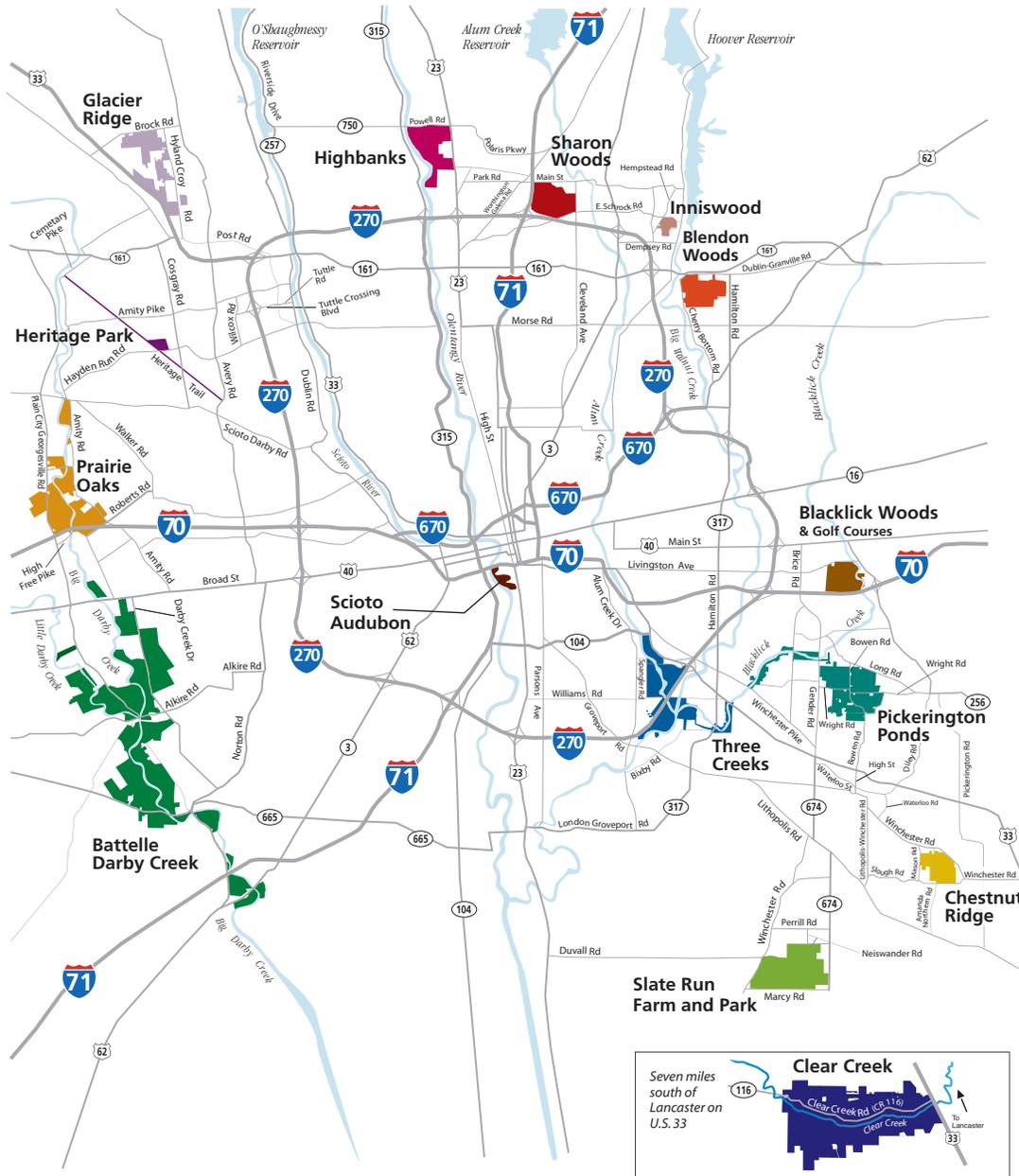
Revenues	\$1,121,445
Personnel	\$764,996
Operating Expenditures	\$230,485
Capital Improvements	\$144,041
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	.\$(18,077)

Metro Parks 2007 Donor List

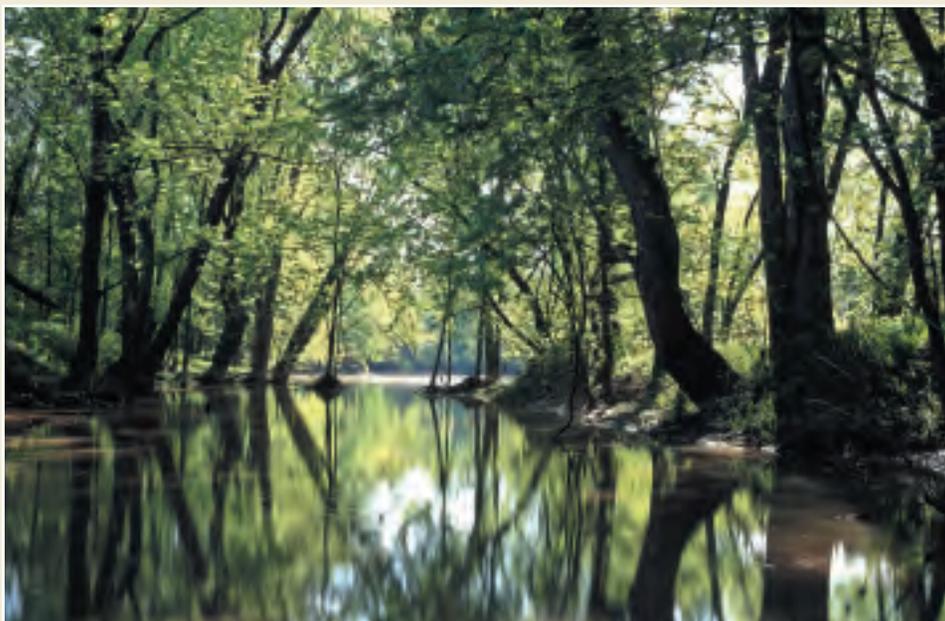
Metro Parks would like to thank the following people and organizations who, through their generous gifts, help citizens of Central Ohio appreciate and enjoy our natural areas.

Barry Adelman	Shelton Kang	Matt Simonds	Ohio Cheviot Breeders Association
Helen Altick	Pat Kearns-Davis	Matt Simpson	Ohio Wetlands Foundation
Louise Avidon	Mr. & Mrs. Boyd Kesselring	Erika Sites	Olde Orchard Garden Club
Vivek Bettada	Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Kunselman	Dorothy Smith	Perennial Plant Association
Andrea Booth	Jeannette Lampron	Ron Stein	Poggemeyer Design Group
Mr. & Mrs. John Clark	Bill Leggett	Steven Still	Squire, Sanders & Dempsey
David Clemens	Mary Lewis	Dorothy Talbert	URS Corporation
Sharon Converse	Michael Logsdon	Juanita Thacker	Vorys, Sater, Seymour & Pease LLP
Jennifer Cuneo	Sue Lusk-Gleich	Ellen Tripp	Wheel Lumber
Kenneth Danter	Ron Mann	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Van Dyne	David Williams & Associates
J. Thomas Davis	Joan M. McElroy	Herb Wasserstrom	
Mary DeMattia	James McQuire	Kenneth Weissman	James R. and Dorothy A. Burchfield
Charles Draine	J. Mackenzie Shaw	Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Wellner	Fund for Metro Parks of The Columbus
Kenneth Evans	Thomas Mignery	Carol Whiteley	Foundation
Barbara Fortkamp	Marjorie Mullaly	Karen Wise	
Jane Fraytet	Mr. & Mrs. Paul Newhouse	Roger Zody	Marcella Lois Crane Fund of The
Martha Gordon	Elmer Orndorff		Columbus Foundation
Ida Gossett	Carlene Paquette		Joseph A. Jeffrey Fund of The Colum-
Beverly Gottschalk	Kim Pareso	American Electric Power	bus Foundation
Barbara Grandberg	Nancy Peebles	Troop 471 Boy Scouts of America	David B. Owens – Metropolitan Park
James Hackett	Cindy Peterson	Burgess & Niple	Fund of The Columbus Foundation
David Hames	Daria Piliczuk	Corazón Club & Spa	
George Haney	Angie & Mike Platt	Evans, Mechwart, Hambleton & Tilton	Arthur E. Shephard Family of The
Mr. & Mrs. John Harwick	Terry Priest	Floyd Browne Group	Columbus Foundation
Ellen Hasbrouck	Stephen Ralston	Fuller, Mossbarger, Scott & May	Marian K. and Albert H. Thomas Fund
Mary Hibbs	William & Connie Ray	Girl Scout Troop 527	of The Columbus Foundation
Sally Hoffman	Barbara Seesholtz	Half Price Books	Inniswood Fund of Metro Parks of The
J. Lawrence Hutta	Bill Sefcek	Inniswood Garden Society	Columbus Foundation
Tad Jeffrey	Anand Shah	ME Companies	
Mark Jerman	Susan Siderman	National City Bank	

Metro Parks Locations Map



Your 15 Metro Parks are conveniently located throughout Central Ohio. Whether you walk, jog, bike or drive, you can usually find a Metro Park within 15 to 20 minutes. At every Metro Park you will enjoy miles of meandering trails through beautiful prairies, forests or wetlands. Picnic amid scenic backdrops with a chance to see more than 2,200 species of plants and animals. Metro Parks are open daily and don't cost a penny.



Cover: Big Darby Creek is one of the healthiest and most diverse streams in Central Ohio. Metro Parks protects and preserves more than 18 miles of the Big and Little Darby Creeks in Battelle Darby Creek and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks. Photo by Richard Baumer



METRO PARKS

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For More Information and Directions

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