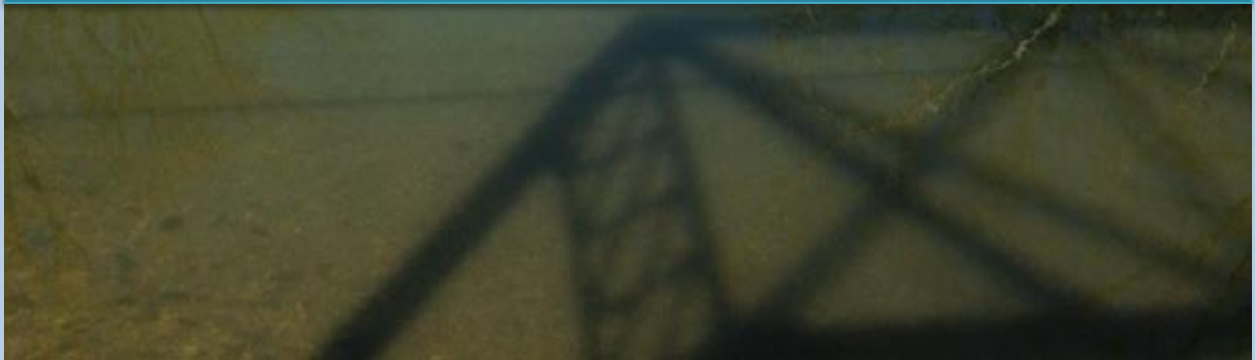




PARK & TRAIL PLAN

2018-2027

PICKAWAY COUNTY PARK DISTRICT



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INTRODUCTION

The mission of The Pickaway County Park District is to “create, preserve and manage a system of parks, trails and natural areas for outdoor recreation.” Although the Pickaway County Park District has been in existence since 2002, funding limitations have led to limited expansion or improvement to parks & trails in the county.

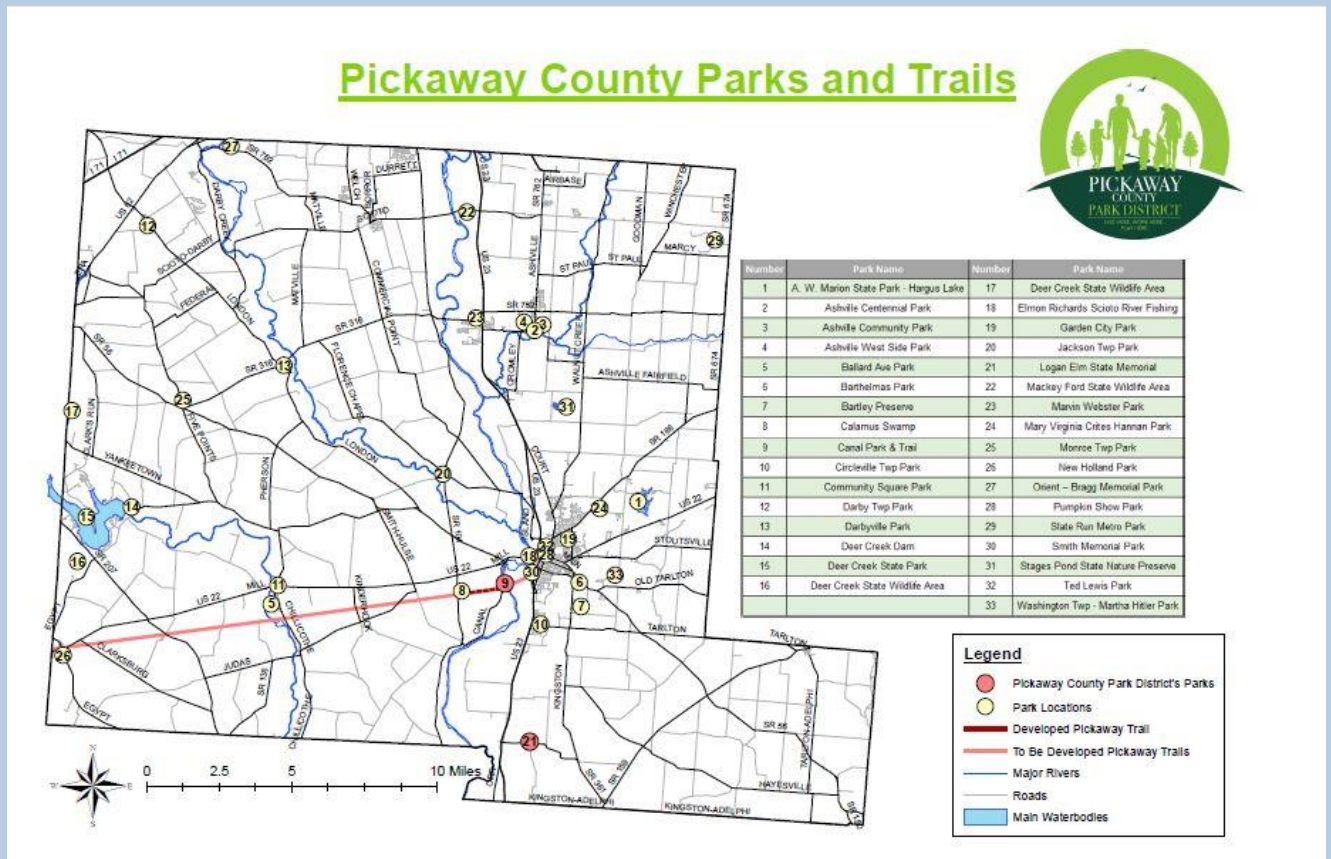
However, the 2 parks and 3 trails the District currently manages, provide rich experiences in nature, places to reflect and explore, trails to get fit and stay healthy, and picnic areas and shelters to enjoy time with family and friends – seven days a week, 365 days a year.



Since its inception, the Park District has never had a stable funding mechanism to allow it to adequately plan for future park and trail projects, and to properly maintain its existing parks & trails. To remedy this inadequacy, the District’s Board of Commissioners approved placing a levy on the November 2017 ballot that asked all Pickaway County property owners to financially assist with the expansion and improvement of Pickaway County parks & trails over the next 10 years. The levy passed with 56% voter approval. The levy will produce approximately \$680,000 per year and will allow the Park District to leverage millions of dollars in matching grants from state and federal programs to expand and improve parks & trails here in Pickaway County. These funds will also be utilized to help maintain the following Park District facilities: Canal Park and

the Towpath Trail, Logan Elm State Historical Park, The Pickaway Trail, and the Roundtown Trail. Also, a significant portion of these revenues will annually be awarded to communities within the county for expansion & improvement of their local parks and trails.

Without the financial support of Pickaway County residents, the Park District could not sustain its current level of operations and certainly could not plan for increased and improved site maintenance, educational programming, land preservation, and natural resource management here in Pickaway County.



Pickaway County is an attractive place to live and its population is growing, especially in the Northern portion of the county. Surveys show that parks and recreational trails are integral parts of Pickaway County, and that parks and trails are good for our health (Community Forests and Community Health paper) and residents want more parks and trails (2015 Circleville, Ohio Revitalization Action Plan and 2014 Pickaway County Park District, County Parks assessment). The 2017 Resident Outdoor Recreation Survey conducted by Ohio University, identifies walking & hiking on trails as the most popular outdoor recreation activity here in Ohio. Almost half of the respondents said their primary reason for participating in trail activities was for Health/Wellness/Fitness.



This Plan has been developed to guide decisions and establish commitments for the next ten-year period, 2018-2027. It is our roadmap to keep pace with the county's growth by acquiring additional land for new parks, enlarging and improving existing parks, constructing and improving trails and facilities, expanding educational programming and outreach, protecting wildlife habitat and water quality, and ensuring that we reach audiences in the most effective ways. These future plans and improvements will continue to solidify Pickaway County's position as one of the best places in Ohio to live, work and play.

PARK & TRAIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since 2002 the Park District has:

- Secured funding, in concert with the Pickaway County Commissioners, to purchase 122 acres of abandoned railroad from Circleville to New Holland to establish the 16-mile Pickaway Trail. Since 2002 approximately 2.5 miles of the trail have been cleared and improved for walking and hiking.



- In cooperation with Roundtown Trail Committee, secured funding for and constructed the Roundtown Trail. This 1.5-mile asphalt trail connects the campuses of Ohio Christian University, Circleville City schools and the Pickaway County Family YMCA.



- Since 2015, the Park District has awarded 30 grants for more than \$75,000 to the following communities for improvements to their local parks and trails: Circleville, Ashville, Williamsport, South Bloomfield, Tarlton, Darby Twp., Jackson Twp., and Scioto Twp.



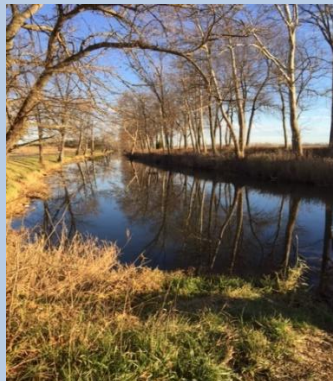
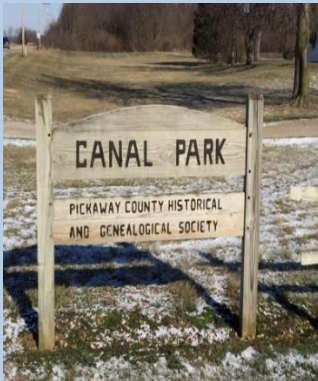
- In cooperation with the Washington Township trustees, secured funding to install a 25 car, asphalt parking lot at Martha Hitler Park. In 2017 installed a trail head parking lot for the Pickaway Trail at Canal Rd.



- Cleared an additional ½ mile of the Pickaway Trail from SR104 to Sisk Rd.



- In 2017, took over ownership and management of Canal Park and the Towpath Trail from the Pickaway County Historical Society.



- Manage Logan Elm State Historical Site for the Ohio Historical Society



PLANNED PARK & TRAIL PROJECTS – 2018-2027

Pickaway County residents value the county’s natural and rural character, often citing the rapid development of open space in the Northern portion of the county. With continued levy support, the Pickaway County Park District will be in a much better position to purchase or lease, or acquire by easements or donation, additional property for passive outdoor recreation in Pickaway County. Also, surveys consistently show that residents want more trails – within parks, as well as multi-use connector trails throughout the county. With levy funding in place, the Park District will have the ability to quickly move forward on state and federal grant applications to assist with improving the existing trail corridors, as well as acquiring additional trail connections through purchase, lease, or easements along rivers, streams, utility corridors, or right-of-ways to expand the county-wide trail system. Some specific projects currently under consideration are:

Acquire & develop new parkland, easements, along the Big Darby Scenic River – Currently there are no public canoe access sites along Big Darby Creek in Pickaway County. The Park District would like to purchase or lease, at least 2 sites in the county to provide paddlers with adequate access and shorter paddling trips.



Clear and pave all 16 miles of the Pickaway Trail from Circleville to New Holland – Currently the Park District owns all 16 miles of the rail trail corridor, but only about 2 miles is open for walking and hiking.



Acquire & develop new parkland, easements along the Scioto River – Currently there are only 2 public canoe, kayak access sites along the Scioto River in Pickaway County. The Park District would like to purchase or lease, at least 1 more site in the county to provide paddlers with adequate access and shorter paddling trips.



Acquire & develop new parkland, easements to connect the Roundtown Trail and Mary Virginia Crites Hannan Park - Acquire/purchase easements/pave approx. ¼ mile of property from Circleville City Schools to St RT 188.

Acquire & develop new parkland, easements to connect Mary Virginia Crites Hannan Park and A.W Marion State Park - Acquire/purchase easements on approx. 1 mile of property to connect the Roundtown Trail, MVCH Park and the 5 miles of hiking trails at A.W. Marion State Park.

Acquire & develop new parkland, easements along the Pickaway Trail EAST – Acquire/purchase easements along the rail trail corridor from Circleville to Bolender- Pontious Rd. to connect Martha Hitler Park with the City of Circleville, and possibly on to Stoutsville, to connect to the Fairfield County trail system.

Acquire & develop new parkland/easements along Congo Creek – Acquire/purchase easements for a natural walking path along Congo Creek from Logan Elm State Historical Site to the Pickaway County Historical Society’s Mt. Oval Farm.

Acquire & develop additional outdoor recreation facilities for Pickaway County residents – Projects currently under consideration, Metzger Preserve in Williamsport, Big Darby Park outside Orient, Cook’s Creek Preserve and Canal Lock 31 in Ashville.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Hire District staff and develop educational programming that provides high quality learning experiences for diverse audiences. This type programming ranges from free public programs in the parks, to classroom programs in the schools, and more. Park District staff and volunteer educators can connect residents to Pickaway County’s natural and historic resources, engage visitors through a variety of enjoyable and educational programs, and inspire them to help protect and conserve natural and historic features for current and future generations to enjoy. Also, long term goals include the planning and development of a state of the art, Outdoor Nature Center.





HABITAT and HISTORIC SITE PROTECTION

Protecting and restoring natural areas and historic sites within Pickaway County is another function of the park district. As Pickaway County was converted to farmland in the 1700s and 1800s, the forests that covered the landscape were cut down and much of the original natural areas like wetlands and prairies were destroyed. These practices dramatically reduced the natural habitat for many plant & animal species.

Now, some of our parks help protect these unique places. The Park District manages the Logan Elm Historic Site in the southern part of the county for the Ohio History Connection. We also own and manage Canal Park just west of Circleville. This park maintains almost a mile of the Historic Ohio to Erie Canal and preserves several canal structures for the public to view.



Future natural and historic site preservation efforts that are on the Park District's radar are:

Purchase/lease/develop Canal Lock 31 at Millport

Working in concert with the Appalachian Ohio Alliance in providing public access to the over 500 acres of natural areas in the county under their ownership.

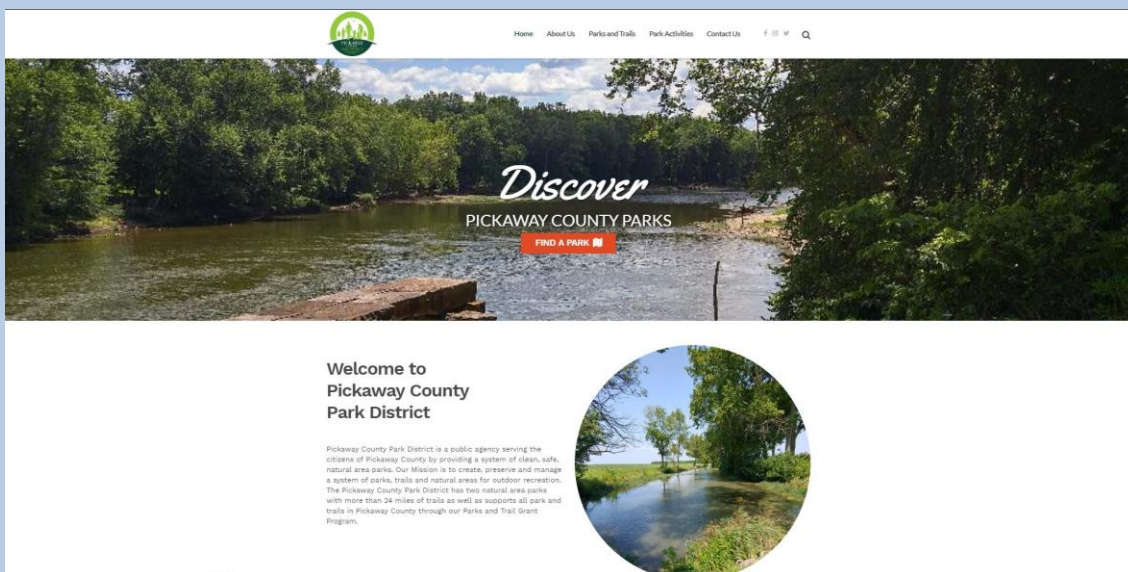
Investigate and research the establishment of a bike path along the Ohio to Erie Canal towpath trail thru Pickaway County.

Acquire/purchase easements for a natural walking path along Congo Creek from Logan Elm State Historical Site to the Pickaway County Historical Society's Mt. Oval Farm.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The public's desire for information about parks and programs has grown significantly over the years. The explosion of social media and other digital communication platforms over this time has allowed the park district to reach many more people in a wide variety of ways, many of which were unimaginable ten years ago. In fact, in 2015 the Delaware County Park District conducted a public survey where respondents were asked to identify the best way(s) to tell them about programs, activities, and events. The data showed that the majority prefer to receive information via social media or the Park District's website.

Currently, the Park District disseminates information in the following ways: traditional print and electronic media news releases; print publications (brochures and program guides); and digital media outlets such as Park District website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages.



Public information activities planned for the District include:

- Conducting periodic public surveys to gauge attitude, awareness, and needs, and most effective ways to share information with Pickaway County residents
- Monitor social media trends and explore new ways to provide information to residents across a variety of digital platforms
- Further expand the Park District presence at community festivals and other events
- Continue to update our website and print material to respond to current social media and print trends

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The success of The Pickaway County Park District to date, can be attributed in large part to the outstanding work of dedicated volunteers. Twelve volunteer Park Board Commissioners throughout the years, dedicated volunteers from the Pickaway County Historical Society, volunteers from generous and invested landowners, and a few part-time staff, have worked to make the county park district what it is today.

In order for the Park District to improve and expand parks and trails in the county, dedicated staffing will need to be hired. These dedicated professionals can:

- assist Pickaway County communities with improving their parks and trails and in establishing some outdoor educational programming for the county.
- maintain existing and future facilities instead of contracting these services out or relying on a weakening volunteer base to accomplish needed facility maintenance and repairs.
- prepare and oversee park and trail grant applications for state and federal park and trail grants
- manage and coordinate the various park and trail projects proposed in this document

These staff will assist the Park District in establishing and maintaining high standards for maintenance, programming and public service.

Volunteers extend the park district's resources in significant ways, and new Park District staff will be able to coordinate and further develop the many volunteers interested in assisting with local or county park and trail projects. This work makes a positive impact on the lives of Pickaway County residents in addition to significant financial savings from thousands of donated hours.



Boy Scout Eagle Project built informational Kiosks on the Pickaway Trail and Towpath Trail.



Dedicated volunteers mow and maintain Canal Park

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE

County Park Districts usually have several different funding sources which allow them to operate effectively and efficiently in their local area. These funding sources usually fall into the following categories: Property tax revenues; County general fund and inside millage revenues; Local Government Fund revenues; District Service fees; and Donations.

Since its inception in 2002, the Park District’s operational budget has consisted of “one-time” funds provided via utility easements, donations, management agreements, or stipends from the Pickaway County Commissioners. The District’s operational budget for the last 3 fiscal years has averaged around \$27,000. Some capital dollars have been received from state & federal grants to assist with the purchase of the Pickaway Trail and for the construction of the Roundtown Trail. However, these grants do not provide monies for the on-going operational costs, or expansion capabilities of the District. Hence, the need for the dedicated tax levy that was approved in November Of 2017.

2015 Park District Financial summary	2016 Park District Financial summary
Cash receipts - \$11,941	Cash receipts - \$23,760
Cash disbursements - \$22,090	Cash disbursements - \$20,152
Fund balance 12/31/15 - \$56,409	Fund balance 12/31/16 - \$60,017
2017 Park District Financial summary	2018 Park District Financial “estimates”
2017 Cash receipts - \$28,340	2018 Cash receipts - \$1,062,500
2017 Cash disbursements - \$34,142	Est. 2018 Cash disbursements - \$933,000
Fund balance 12/31/17 - \$54,215	Fund balance 12/31/17 - \$183,000

Annual Property Tax Funds: \$687,500.00

County general revenue funds: Since its inception the Park District has received several small operational allocations from the Pickaway County Commissioners. However, with the passage of the 2017 park district levy, no funds have been allocated from the county's general fund for park district operations in 2018.

Local Government Funds (LGF). None. The local government fund is a percentage of state general revenues, which largely come from income and sales taxes that are returned to County government to be disbursed to eligible local agencies. Although the Park District is eligible to receive a portion of these funds, it currently does not.

Grants. The Pickaway County Park District has enjoyed some success with grants since its inception. The District/County Commissioner's received \$155,000 from ODNR's Clean Ohio Trail Fund to purchase the 16 mile rail-trail corridor from Circleville to New Holland. It also received \$150,000 from the Clean Ohio Trail Fund, and over \$300,000 from ODOT's Transportation Alternatives Grant Program to assist with the construction and paving of the 1.5 mile, Roundtown Trail. Also, ODOT's Metropark Paving Fund provided the Park District with \$25,000 to assist the Washington Twp. Trustees with building and paving the parking lot at Martha Hitler Park and \$56,000 for planning and constructing the Pickaway Trail, trailhead parking lot on Canal Rd.

District Service Fees. The Park District receives \$4,750 annually from the Ohio Historical Society for the maintenance and upkeep of Logan Elm State Historical Site. Many Districts generate significant revenues from program and facility fees. However, since the District has no educational programming and shelter house reservations are free, there currently is no program and facility fee revenue.

Donations. These funds are from one-time donations/estate gifts, usually for specific project purposes. The Park District/County received over \$70,000 in local contributions from individuals, institutions, groups and businesses to provide the local cash match for the Roundtown Trail project. In 2016 the Park District was fortunate to receive \$10,000 from the Dick & Jane Plum Family Foundation for the purchase and installation of trail amenities along the new Roundtown Trail. In 2017, the Berger Health Foundation provided a \$2,500, three year renewable stipend, to the District for park and trail improvement projects.

ESTIMATED REVENUE & EXPENDITURES 2018-2027

Below are the ten-year projected revenues and estimated expenses based upon the projects outlined in this plan. Local government funds, miscellaneous income, and grant estimates are based on average annual amounts in the current levy period.

Revenue Source	Estimated
Property Taxes	\$7,000,000
Grants	\$2,000,000
Local Government Funds	\$100,000
Miscellaneous Income	\$200,000
Total	\$9,300,000

Grants: While it is anticipated that grants will be available and awarded to the Park District in the future, they are narrowly focused for a specific purpose and fluctuate from year to year. The Pickaway County Park District will continue to pursue grants to achieve our mission; however, specific income is uncertain.

Local Government Funds: As mentioned earlier, although the Park District is eligible, it currently does not receive any Local Government Fund allocation.

Donations: Donations are likely to remain an on-going source of revenue, but amounts are unpredictable.

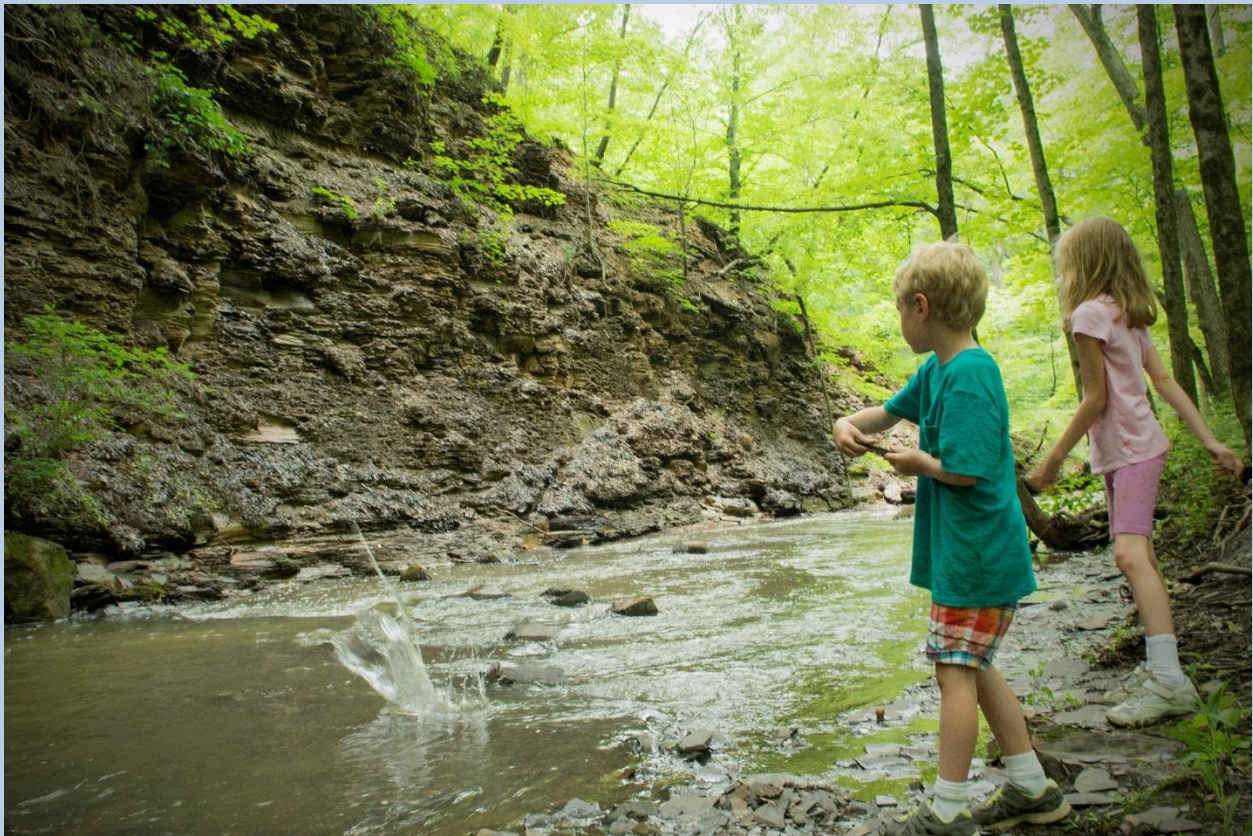
Expenditure Estimated

Pickaway Trail development	\$5,000,000
Local Park Improvement Grants	\$1,000,000
Big Darby/Scioto canoe access	\$150,000
Park/Trail acquisition & development	\$1,500,000
Education/Outreach	\$200,000
Purchase/lease maintenance facility	\$250,000
Purchase/lease maintenance equipment	\$150,000
Salaries & Benefits	\$1,000,000
Equipment replacement fund	\$50,000
Total	\$9,300,000

CONCLUSION

The Pickaway County Park District enhances the lives of Pickaway County residents by providing rich, close to home experiences in nature such as exploring, hiking, biking, kayaking, picnicking and birdwatching.

Great parks, trails, schools and jobs make Pickaway County a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family. The strategic goals described in this plan will guide the Park District for years to come and assist in improving the quality of life here in Pickaway County.



For additional information on the Pickaway County Park District:

Visit the District's website at PickawayCountyParks.org,

Find us on Facebook, Instagram and twitter @PickawayParks,

Email us at pcpd@pickawaycountyparks.org,

Call 740-420-5451

Or visit us at 141 W Main St., Suite 400, Circleville, Ohio, 43113