



MILL CREEK  
METROPARKS

**2023**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Mill Creek MetroParks is to provide park, recreational, educational, and open space facilities of regional significance. In fulfilling this mission our objectives are:

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

## A SEPARATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE OF OHIO

Mill Creek MetroParks is a separate political subdivision of the state of Ohio and is not part of any local or other political subdivision. It was established on January 1, 1989, under Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code, as the successor to the Youngstown Township Park District subsequent to the voters' approval of the conversion. Mill Creek MetroParks serves all of Mahoning County.

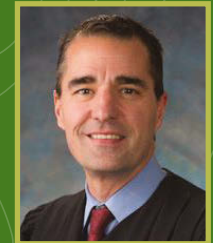
The MetroParks currently operates Mill Creek Park, located in Boardman Township and the City of Youngstown; Yellow Creek Park in Struthers; the MetroParks Farm in Canfield Township; Vickers Nature Preserve in Ellsworth Township; MetroParks Bikeway, which traverses Austintown Township, Canfield Township, and the City of Canfield;

Sebring Woods in the Village of Sebring; Cranberry Run Headwaters in Boardman Township; Sawmill Creek Preserve in Canfield Township; Mill Creek Preserve in Boardman Township; McGuffey Wildlife Preserve in Coitsville Township; Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary in Beaver Township; Egypt Swamp Preserve in Green Township; Hawkins Marsh in Smith Township; and Springfield Forest in Springfield Township.

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

## BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

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



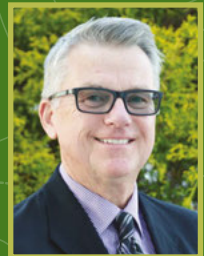
Appointing Authority  
**The Honorable Judge Robert N. Rusu, Jr.**  
*Mahoning County Probate Judge*



**Lee Frey**  
*President*



**Germaine Bennett**  
*Vice-President*



**Tom Frost**



**Jeff Harvey**



**Paul Olivier**



**Aaron Young**  
*Executive Director*



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The MetroParks participates in various outreach programs, events, and speaking engagements throughout the year. Some of these include: The Big Sit, Success by Six, Western Reserve Back to School Bash, YSU STEM Honors Summit, MCCTC Safety Fair, YSU Welcome Week, and the Friends of the Mahoning River Riverfest.

MetroParks staff from the Operations Department continued to maintain a picnic area at the Canfield Fair and participated with the Old-Fashioned Sawmill Exhibit. They contributed plantings to the picnic area, assisted with the set-up of the picnic tables, and provided timbers for the sawmill exhibit. The Community Engagement department staff and volunteers stock the information area kiosk with various literature of the facilities throughout the MetroParks.

**THE METROPARKS USES VARIOUS PLATFORMS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC.**

**PRESS RELEASES TO LOCAL MEDIA** **38**

**FACEBOOK**  
**38,208**  
 Total followers as of December 31, 2023.

**88,100**  
 Likes, comments, or shares of content as of December 31, 2023.



**INSTAGRAM**  
**9,300**  
 Total followers as of December 31, 2023.  
**6,500**  
 Likes, comments, or shares of content.

**WEBSITE**  
**119,634**  
 Total visitors to MillCreekMetroParks.org as of December 31, 2023.  
**MOST POPULAR PAGES INCLUDED:**  
 Fellows Riverside Gardens, Mill Creek Golf Course, Fellows Riverside Gardens Weddings & Rentals, Reserve a Facility, and Lanterman's Mill.

**EMAIL MARKETING**  
**10,281**  
 Email subscribers as of December 31, 2023.  
**344,903**  
 Total emails sent as of December 31, 2023.  
**37%**  
 Open rate as of December 31, 2023.

**“Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.”**

**- HELEN KELLER**



## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are an important supporting component in many areas of park operations.

Volunteers support staff efforts in offering events and programs to the community; they play a part in educating and engaging our local community, and ultimately increasing support for our parks. Volunteers make a vital contribution to both Mill Creek MetroParks and to Mahoning County!

A volunteer Meet & Greet was held in March 2023. Volunteers gathered together to reconnect and meet new friends prior to the season, while learning about the different opportunities scheduled for the year.

Volunteer time recorded in 2023 was 3,353 hours from 132 active park wide volunteers and 11 organization groups. Some of the specific events, exhibits, and activities where hours were recorded are: gardening/horticulture, conservation/preservation, community service projects, Citizen Advisory

Committees, Veggie Gardens/Green Thumbs, Adopt-a-Crag, trolley tours, tractor wagon tours, hikes, kayak guides, kiosk stocking, programs, and special events such as the Farm Animal Baby Shower, Pumpkin Carving, Pumpkin Walk at Twilight, Old Fashioned Christmas at the Mill, and Winter Celebration. Volunteers were recognized at the annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner held in September. The dinner was held in the Rossi Auditorium at Fellows Riverside Gardens. Those volunteers who met a specified hour criteria in 2023 also received a complimentary Mill Creek MetroParks volunteer t-shirt.

Each year efforts are made for recruitment and the future growth of the volunteer program. The Community Engagement Director continues to serve on Youngstown State University's Community Partner Advisory Committee which focuses on volunteerism from YSU students. The Youngstown State University Volunteer Fair and various local public schools were attended in an effort to educate area youth on Mill Creek MetroParks and the volunteer opportunities available. The Community Engagement Director also renewed the Forum for Volunteer Administrators membership and attended various workshops and meetings in 2023.

**“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”**

**- ELIZABETH ANDREW**

## MILL CREEK METROPARKS POLICE 2023

The MetroParks Police provide 24-hour patrol coverage of Park District lands and facilities. The department provides complete law enforcement services which include proactive enforcement, facility security, preservation of land and resources, and maintaining a presence at park events. The department maintains full police powers to enforce laws, park rules, and make arrests, as well as issue summonses.

The department consists of both sworn and non-sworn staff members. The sworn staff includes both full and part-time officers. The department maintains non-sworn Auxiliary staff who assist sworn officers at park events with traffic direction and event security. In addition, the department utilizes non-sworn Rangers to work various locations and support the police officers with a variety of tasks and patrol functions.

In 2023, the MetroParks Police Department maintained certification from the Ohio Collaborative. Staff also attended various training programs which included: Axon Taser Instructor, LEADS Training, Computer Training, Public Records Training, Traffic Stop Training, Weapons Instructor, Defensive Tactics Instructor, OC Instructor, Field Training Officer Program, State Mandated Weapons Qualification, Crisis Intervention Training, Policy Reviews, and Daily Training Bulletins (DTB's) from Lexipol. In addition, all sworn

officers completed approximately 24 hours of training mandated by the State of Ohio as continuous professional training (CPT). All Lexipol policy updates were processed in a timely manner.

Officers complete Daily Training Bulletins on a variety of topics. These DTB's address many of the Ohio Collaborative Standards. The Bias-Based Policing policy is reviewed annually by all staff. Officers have maintained demographic statistics concerning self-initiated traffic stops.

2023 SELF-INITIATED TRAFFIC STOPS TOTAL:

481

**VARIOUS OFFICERS SERVE ON THE FOLLOWING:** Ohio Law Enforcement Foundation Certified Law Enforcement Advisory Board (CLEE), the Mahoning County OVI Task Force, the Mahoning County Homicide Task Force, and the Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Executives Association.

Both positive and negative concerns can be addressed by filling out the Police Customer Satisfaction Survey Form posted on the MetroParks website. As always, supervisory staff are available to speak with anyone concerning police department issues.

The MetroParks police continued to be proactive in 2023. Law enforcement contacts totaled 5,736, arrests, citations and warning

citations totaled 248, and dispatched events totaled 820. Patrol miles totaled 171,117.

The department also received the Lexipol Gold Performance award for the highest levels of policy compliance and completion during 2023.

The department continues to strive in the effort to meet our mission statement:

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





# GOLF & RECREATION

## MILL CREEK GOLF COURSE

In 2023, the golf facility experienced several capital improvement projects.

The purchase of a new oncourse CTX restroom facility for the South Course with grant funds and Stream Restoration project on the North Course from grant funding were completed in the fall of 2023. The architecture design of the Irrigation System for the North & South Courses was also completed during the summer months for future construction as part of the department's 10-year capital improvement plan. Additional maintenance equipment upgrades included the purchase of a new John Deere spray unit for the golf grounds. To end the year, the Indoor Player Development Center, located on the second floor of the Fieldhouse, was completed.

Over the winter months, the Mill Creek MetroParks PGA staff continued their approach for aggressively growing the customer base by attending the Cleveland, Columbus, Michigan, New York, and Pittsburgh Golf Shows through a tourism grant from the Mahoning Valley Visitors and Convention Bureau. The golf shows equated to an additional 4,000+ rounds of golf with overnight stays in Mahoning County. The travel show attendance continues to make a positive impact in growing rounds of golf along with creating new tourism opportunities for Mill Creek MetroParks and the golf operation.



Mill Creek Golf Course hosted three collegiate tournaments in 2023. April brought the Presidents Athletic Conference (PAC) NCAA Division III Championship to Mill Creek for the first time in history for both men's and women's collegiate golf programs. September showcased 19 collegiate women's golf programs heading to the Mahoning Valley for the NCAA Roseann Schwartz Invitational presented by Youngstown State University. The event was held the week after Labor Day where the Youngstown State University team took home the crown. Mill Creek also hosted the NCAA Kick Off Classic presented by Youngstown State

University, which encompassed 9 teams from 7 neighboring states.

In June, Mill Creek hosted the 8th Annual AJGA Junior All Star National Invitational and AJGA Preview Tournament on the South Course. This year exhibited title sponsor and an ongoing partnership with the Mercy Health Foundation with their four-year \$100,000.00 commitment. The financial impact to the Mahoning Valley in 2023 was \$436,087.02 in hotel stays, dining, recreational spending, green fees, and shopping. Since 2016, the financial impact for the Mahoning Valley surpassed \$2,663,578.02, as well as

\$109,000.00+ to local charities over the past eight years.

The year also brought two U.S. Kids Cleveland Junior Tour events to the Mahoning Valley. Mill Creek Golf Course hosted the Junior Optimist International East Coast Regional Qualifier in May and October for kids ages 5 - 18 years old. This was the third national junior event hosted at the MetroParks over the past eight years. In

August, Mill Creek hosted the 4th Annual Notah BeGay III Tournaments state and regional qualifiers. The tournament played host to players with their families from 42 different states and 3 different countries.

In July, Mill Creek hosted its 12th Drive, Chip & Putt Local Qualifier at the Mill Creek Outdoor Practice Facility. This produced the third time in which Mill Creek sent a local qualifier to the National Championship at the Augusta

National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia during Masters week. Mill Creek's own Preston Tolnar qualified as 1 of the final 10 players competing for the Championship in April of 2024.

Preston joined the likes of Anna Swan of Erie, PA and Gianna Clemente of Warren, OH who have qualified at Mill Creek Golf Course and represented the United States.

Mill Creek continued their national programming by hosting the 4th Annual PGA Hope (H-Helping O-Our P-Patriots E-Everywhere) Program. The program is part of the PGA of America's PGA REACH Foundation which gives current military members, retired military veterans, and disabled veterans the opportunity to learn and play the game of golf. The program included free instruction, golf, lunch provided by Mission Bar Barbeque, and prizes for area military veterans.

The PGA staff at Mill Creek was awarded the prestigious "Game Changer Award" by the PGA of America in 2023 for their support of the PGA Reach Foundations flagship programming. The award signifies offering a place to participate in programs such as: PGA Junior League, PGA Hope, PGA Family Cup, PGA Coach and hosting the National Drive, Chip & Putt Program. Brian Tolnar, Mill Creek's PGA Director of Golf, was awarded the 2023 Northern Ohio Golf Professional of the Year Award in November at Westfield Country Club.

## 2023 GOLF ROUND BREAKDOWN

### NORTH & SOUTH GOLF COURSES

<b>Total 9 Hole Rounds:</b>	57,481
<b>Total 18 Hole Rounds:</b>	35,667
<b>TOTAL ROUNDS PLAYED:</b>	93,148

### WICK RECREATION PAR-3 COURSE

<b>Total 9 Hole Rounds:</b>	17,999
<b>Total 18 Hole Rounds:</b>	9,402
<b>TOTAL ROUNDS PLAYED:</b>	27,401

*\*Closed for a total of 58 days due to rainouts/weather.*

## RECREATION

The Mill Creek MetroParks Recreation Department offered recreational programs which included: kids Par-3 golf leagues, youth soccer leagues, sand volleyball leagues, youth NHL DEK hockey leagues, Tiny Tikes soccer league, recreational hikes, Metro Mutts, Metro Cyclers, Youth NFL Flag Football, Adaptive Sports, Youth Cheer Squad, and archery camps. Recreational programming was structured to appeal to a range of demographics from toddlers, youth, adults, and seniors.

The Wick Recreation Area continued to see new improvements throughout the year including the construction process of the Recreation Center at the Wick Recreation

area. This project is set to be completed in Spring 2024. This project includes a complete restoration on the previous Ice Rink Warming House and will be used to house new restroom/locker room facilities, food and beverage kitchen, rental room for banquets, parties and recreation classes, staff offices, team merchandise shop, outside seating areas, and new storage space. In addition to the Recreation Center, construction began on the new cross-country course at the Mill Creek MetroParks Farm. This new cross-country course will provide a NCAA regulation sized facility for hosting Collegiate, High School, Junior High, and Elementary cross country events, as well as marathons and races. The cross-country facility is projected to open in Spring of 2024.

The Glacier Boathouse opened for the summer season and continues to provide visitors with water recreation activities. Annually, the recreation department conducts the boater safety training course each spring in conjunction with ODNR. Boaters also made use of the rentable boat racks at Lake Glacier and Lake Newport to store over 65 kayaks and canoes for the boating season. The department is planning for 40 new additional racks to become available on the Westside of Lake Newport in 2024.

**“He that will make good use of any part of his life must allow a large part of it to recreation.”**

**- JOHN LOCKE**





# EDUCATION

## FORD NATURE CENTER

The Ford Nature Center redevelopment project was completed and open to the public on Earth Day, April 22, 2023.

The redeveloped Ford Nature Center was designed to improve, enhance, and expand the existing structure to better serve the community's nature education needs.

Reconfiguration and expansion of interior spaces has increased public programming and educational opportunities with new interactive exhibits, interchangeable displays, and interpretive signage.

Accessibility throughout the facility has been improved both indoors and outdoors, and new public spaces have been added.

**GRAND TOTAL PARTICIPANTS:** 7,019

### GENERAL PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

**Programs:** 272

**Participants:** 3,870

### VIDEOS:

**Total Videos:** 54

**Average Views Per Video:** 25,403

### FIELD TRIPS:

**Total Field Trips:** 61

**Participants:** 2,829

**Revenue:** \$38,451.95



### EVENTS:

**Total Attendance:** 12,000

### INTERPRETIVE TOURS:

**Total Interpretive Tours:** 14

**Participants:** 320

### NATURE CAMPS:

**Participants:** 20 children/2 weeks

**“The best education does not happen at a desk, but rather engaged in everyday living - hands on, exploring, in active relationship with life.”**

**- VINCE GOWMAN**



### LANTERMAN'S MILL

Lanterman's Mill is one of Mahoning County's most historic landmarks which brings high visitation during its seasonal operation. Lanterman's Mill is open seasonally to the public from May 1 - October 31. In addition to daily visitation, the Mill hosted school field trips, programs and special holiday events which included Christmas at the Mill and A Holiday Night at Lanterman's Mill.

### LANTERMAN'S MILL VISITORS PER MONTH

May.....	<b>1,078</b>
June.....	<b>1,321</b>
July.....	<b>1,514</b>
August.....	<b>1,206</b>
September.....	<b>871</b>
October.....	<b>679</b>

**TOTAL: 6,669**

### LANTERMAN'S MILL VISITORS DURING EVENTS

Christmas at the Mill, Day 1.....	<b>3,000</b>
Christmas at the Mill, Day 2.....	<b>2,070</b>
Holiday Night at the Mill.....	<b>400</b>

**TOTAL: 5,470**

**GRAND TOTAL FOR 2023 SEASON: 12,139**

### HORTICULTURE

The total attendance for the D.D. and Velma Davis Education & Visitor Center at Fellows Riverside Gardens in 2023 was 265,000. Fellows Riverside Gardens staff and volunteers added the following plants to the grounds in 2023:

- **50** roses replaced
- **500-700** perennial bulbs added to parking lot medians
- **75** perennial plants added to parking lot medians
- **300** mums grown from seed
- **25** trees and shrubs added/replaced
- **30,000 - 40,000** annuals grown in greenhouse from seed and then planted

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

- Pumpkin Walk at Twilight
- Winter Celebration: Festival of Trees
- Festive Finds
- Winter Nights
- Four art exhibits on display in the Weller Gallery
- Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens presented On the Terrace at 5 and the Summer Garden Party







# OUR PEOPLE

## Our staff play a critical role in carrying out the mission of Mill Creek MetroParks.

Our people provided the community with park amenities, activities, events, and engagement throughout the 2023 year. Our staff play a critical role in carrying out the mission of Mill Creek MetroParks. The MetroParks staff consists of 69 full-time, 41 part-time, and 38 seasonal employees. Internships were also available in the fields of Horticulture, Environmental Education, and Natural Resources.

2023 brought ten employee promotions and eighty-six hiring actions. All full-time and part-time employees received a three-percent general wage increase in 2023. Several full-time and part-time positions were also adjusted based on merit and added duties.

Employees across all six departments focused on professional growth and development by attending conferences and continuing education courses throughout the year. These dedicated individuals ensure that the MetroParks remains ahead of the curve on the latest knowledge, trends, and skills needed to perform duties and preserve Mill Creek MetroParks' natural resources. Mill Creek MetroParks also held all-staff meetings throughout 2023. These meetings included MetroPark updates and open table discussions. Meetings also included educational opportunities on topics such as



Drug Free Workplace, anti-harassment, and natural resource management.

A job analysis was conducted on positions throughout Mill Creek MetroParks. The job analysis identifies the essential functions of each position. This information will allow Mill Creek MetroParks to create updated job descriptions and facilitate safe and effective return to work procedures after accident or injury.

The Employee Association is a MetroParks employee-run group, sustained by employee donations. In 2023, the Employee Association sent flowers and cards to employees during times of celebration and offered sympathy and condolences during times of sickness and bereavement. The Association also helped the community by making charitable contributions to seven local non-profit organizations.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS:

### Annual Road Improvements, Repairs, and Maintenance

- Chestnut Hill Drive Infrastructure and Resurfacing project included repairs to existing stormwater infrastructure (catch basins, culverts, curbing, etc.) along with repairs to aggregate road base and patching and repair of existing asphalt pavement, pavement planing, installation of new courses of asphalt, and placement of pavement markings.
- West Park Drive Resurfacing Phase II project included patching and repair of existing asphalt pavement, pavement planing, installation of new courses of asphalt, and placement of pavement markings.

**2023 Expended:** \$382,323.60

### Annual Parking Lot Improvements

- East Golf Hike & Bike Trail South Parking Lot project included expansion of parking lot from a vehicular capacity of 22 to 50. Trailhead improvements included new concrete pavements, signage, bollards, and safety improvements. Work included a newly relocated entrance drive, additional disabled parking, expanded asphalt surfaces, excavation and embankment.

**2023 Expended:** \$245,806.26



### Annual Trail Improvements

- East Cohasset Hiking Trail improvements included repairs to existing and installation of new stormwater infrastructure including drain inlets, underdrains and culverts, restacking of existing sandstone retaining walls, new aggregate surfacing, improved signage and trailhead features.
- New section of trail through the Flats connecting East Cohasset Hiking Trail and East Gorge Hiking Trails

- New section of trail connecting East Cohasset Hiking Trail to the Cohasset Dam overlook on West Cohasset Hiking Trail
- -MetroParks Bikeway improvements from Kirk Road to Mahoning Avenue (bid unsuccessfully 3 times with funds reallocated to drive and parking lot improvements).

**2023 Expended:** \$222,790.00



### Annual Signage Improvements

- Mill Creek Park Drive and Wayfinding Signage project continued with installation of signs throughout the Newport and Golf Course areas of Mill Creek Park. Project consisted of sign and pole installation, concrete footer construction, and excavation.
- Miscellaneous signs at regional facilities include Springfield Forest and the MetroParks Farm.

**2023 Expended:** \$24,635.00

### Annual Pavilion/Structure Improvements

- Upgrades to the kitchen and restrooms were implemented at Chestnut Hill Pavilion.
- Miscellaneous repairs to the existing structures at Vickers Nature Preserve.
- Repairs to the existing structures at the Bears Den Service Facility.
- Miscellaneous repairs to existing pavilion and cabins throughout the MetroParks.

**2023 Expended:** \$22,000.00

### Comfort Station/Restroom Improvements

- East Golf Hike & Bike Trail North (Shields Road) restroom replacement project includes demolition of the existing comfort station and construction of a precast concrete vault restroom structure.
- Restroom is fabricated; EPA permitting is ongoing.

**2023 Budgeted:** \$75,000.00

### Golf Course Indoor Training Facility

- Project to redevelop the second floor of the Golf Course Fieldhouse into a year-round training facility with 3 golf simulators, a putting green, club fitting area, restrooms, offices, and storage. Project scope includes demolition, removal of hazardous materials, upgraded utilities including HVAC, electrical service and internet/telecommunications, new spaces with new finishes, construction of three simulator bays and associated spaces, improved stairwell access.
- Project ribbon-cutting held on January 8, 2024.

**2023 Expended:** \$749,035.00





### Vickers Nature Preserve Improvements

- Implementation of Phase II of the master plan for Vickers Nature Preserve included excavation, grading, and placement of aggregate surfacing for improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation throughout the stable area; construction of a new trailer parking area; construction of a new car parking area.
- Hiking/Equestrian trail improvements including an overlay of the existing aggregate trail/service drive.
- Project suspended until Spring 2024.

**2023 Expended:** \$234,833.73

### Lanterman's Mill Site Improvements

- Improvements to the electrical service to Lanterman's Mill.

**2023 Expended:** \$5,500.00

### MetroParks Farm Improvements

- NCAA Cross Country Course construction included regrading and placement of new aggregate surfacing along sections of trail; excavation and linear grading of trailside swales for stormwater management, preparation of soils, fertilization, seeding and mulching; preparation of signage and other course-related items.

**2023 Expended:** \$50,000.00

### Collier Preserve Improvements

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

**2023 Expended:** \$20,000.00

### Fellows Riverside Gardens Davis Center, Rose Garden, Site Improvements

- Improvements included purchase of shade structures for the café terrace, lighting and ceiling replacement, electrical and utility upgrades, interior painting, irrigation and stormwater drainage improvements, replacement plants, installation of new roses in Rose Garden, and demolition of 104 McKinley and site restoration; funding encumbered for purchase of new terrace tables and chairs.

**2023 Expended:** \$127,000.00

### Hawkins Marsh Site Improvements

- Improvements include new entry drive and aggregate parking lot, improved trails, ecological restoration areas; facility and interpretive sign preparation and installation.
- Project suspended until Spring 2024.

**2023 Expended:** \$88,587.20

### Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary and Expansion Improvements

- Improvements include new entry drive and aggregate parking lot, improved trails, tree, shrub, and prairie restoration areas with installation of deer enclosure fencing.
- Clean Ohio application was approved in 2023; funding encumbered for use in 2024.

**2023 Budgeted:** \$56,250.00

### CONTRACTED DESIGN / CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION:

#### Kirk Road Trailhead Site Improvements Design

- Preliminary and conceptual design work, cost estimating and consultant coordination for redevelopment of the Kirk Road Trailhead.
- Work is ongoing.

**2023 Budgeted:** \$25,000.00

### Fellows Riverside Gardens Site Improvements Design

- Preliminary and conceptual design work, cost estimating, consultant coordination, and construction drawing preparation for development of the Fellows Riverside Garden Children's Garden.
- Work is ongoing.

**2023 Expended:** \$32,706.25

### Golf Course: North and South Course Irrigation Design

- Design development and construction drawings preparation for replacement of irrigation throughout both North and South Golf Courses.
- Work is ongoing.

**2023 Budgeted:** \$100,000.00





# NATURAL RESOURCES

## CANADA GOOSE MANAGEMENT

Canada goose management efforts were continued in 2023. Various MetroParks departments carried out Canada goose harassment efforts at key locations throughout the MetroParks using pyrotechnic launchers, lasers, and exclusionary fencing. Following harassment activities, a nest destruction permit was obtained through ODNR. USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services was contracted to perform nest inspection and egg addling activities at these same key locations. In total, thirty-two (32) nests containing 183 eggs were located – of those located, twenty-three (23) nests and 138 eggs were treated (no addling took place at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary). The 6th annual Canada goose count performed by the local Audubon Society produced a 2023 population count of 211 individuals throughout the park, a slight increase from the 2022 count of 192 individuals. Public outreach efforts, including signage, public service announcements, brochures, enforcement, and education programs were also continued to further the “Do Not Feed Wildlife” campaign throughout the MetroParks.

## 16TH ANNUAL “BIG SIT”

In October, volunteers participated in the 16th annual “Big Sit” event at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary. This annual international birding competition provides the opportunity for sites around the world to battle against each other, with participants hoping to record the highest number of bird species observed



from one location within a 24-hour period. This year a total of 71 bird species was observed during this event at the Wildlife Sanctuary, ranking the sanctuary the second best birding location in Ohio. Separate from the “Big Sit”, numerous volunteers contribute to an annual species count at the Sanctuary, which documents the total number of different bird species encountered at the Sanctuary for a given year. The all-time species count for the Sanctuary has risen to an all-time high of 261 species.

## NON-NATIVE/INVASIVE PLANTS

Efforts continued this year to reduce and control non-native/invasive plants throughout areas of the MetroParks, most notably the Collier Preserve, Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, and Hawkins Marsh, where a combined 46.5-acres were treated. Herbicide applications and/or physical removal of undesirable species were also conducted at facilities such as the Lily Pond, Ford Nature Center, Mirror Pond, Lake Newport Wetlands, and the MetroParks Farm.

## HEALTHY STREAMS INITIATIVE

The MetroParks continued the Healthy Streams Initiative, an annual project aimed at restoring natural flow patterns and reducing erosion along Mill Creek and its tributaries by removing fallen trees and woody debris from the stream. In 2023, the project focused on Mill Creek as it flows through the southern portions of Mill Creek Park, beginning at the Fording Bridge and continuing north towards Shields Road. This year's project successfully improved 3,301 linear feet of stream and

throughout the lifetime of this program, Mill Creek MetroParks has improved over 9 miles of stream including portions of Mill Creek, Indian Run, and Anderson Run.

## LILY POND IMPROVEMENTS

The Lily Pond was the focus of numerous improvement projects in 2023, most notably the continued plantings to enhance the overall biodiversity of the site, including the establishment of a new pollinator waystation. The Lily Pond also received ongoing



management efforts focusing on algae treatments, invasive species treatment, and invasive species removal.

## SUMMER ALGAL BLOOMS TREATED AT LAKE NEWPORT

Lake Newport was treated in July of 2023 with an algaecide to help combat late summer algal blooms that are typical of Lake Newport. This is the third year of treatment and Lake Newport has responded well.

## FISH STOCKING EFFORTS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE METROPARKS

The MetroParks' spring fish stocking efforts continued in 2023 with stockings taking place at Lake Glacier (in partnership with ODNR), Yellow Creek Park, Vickers Nature Preserve, and the MetroParks Farm. This program ensures high-quality fishing opportunities for anglers throughout the MetroParks.

## TREE PLANTING INITIATIVES CONTINUED AT COLLIER PRESERVE AND THE METROPARKS FARM

Through partnerships with FirstEnergy, Boardman Subaru, and the YSU Legacy Forest Committee, the MetroParks continued tree planting initiatives at the Collier Preserve and the MetroParks Farm, successfully planting approximately 1900 native trees in an effort to reforest areas of reverting farmland. In total, these partnerships have resulted in over 5,000 trees being planted since 2021.

## MANAGEMENT OF HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID CONTINUED

Through continued partnership with The Nature Conservancy, management of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a non-native insect that threatens Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) populations, took place throughout Mill Creek Park. Additional surveys and treatments were completed in 2023 to combat the adelgid in the areas surrounding Slippery Rock Trail, East Cohasset Trail, Artists Trail, Birch Hill Cabin, Bears Den Cabin, and Cascade Run.

## WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES REINTRODUCED AT VARIOUS FACILITIES WITHIN THE METROPARKS

In 2023, the MetroParks reintroduced white-tailed deer management activities at various facilities for the first time since the late 1990s. The list of facilities included Mill Creek Park, Huntington Woods, Hitchcock Woods, Sawmill Creek Preserve, Vickers Nature Preserve, MetroParks Farm, Hawkins Marsh, Springfield Forest, Collier Preserve, and the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary. As detailed in the MetroParks' White-tailed Deer Management Plan, a two-pronged approach was selected to include targeted removal and controlled hunting. The program to manage white-tailed deer populations was based upon scientific research and the options permitted by the Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODOW), with the goal of achieving long-term ecological restoration within the forest



ecosystems. Additional population monitoring and habitat assessments will take place in preparation for future management seasons to evaluate harvest goals and program impacts.

Both the targeted removal and controlled hunting portions of the deer management program were a success for the 2023-2024 management season. Each portion effectively reduced deer populations within the targeted areas, while also demonstrating that the programs were conducted safely.

In total, 204 deer were removed from MetroParks properties. Of the 204 deer removed, the 38 deer taken as part of the targeted removal program were donated to local food banks with 1,071.5 pounds of venison going to the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley and 284.3 pounds of venison going to the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio. These donations resulted in over 1,100 meals (1.2 pounds per meal) to families in need.



# STEWARDSHIP

## GRANT STEWARDSHIP:

### Annual Trail Improvements

- East Cohasset Hiking Trail project included repairing existing stone walls, replacement and installation of new stormwater drainage, resurfacing of trail surface, installation of new sections of trail, and new signage.

**Expended:** \$97,790.00

### Bikeway Phase III

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

**2023 Budgeted:** \$249,000.00

### Clean Ohio Property Acquisition

- An application to the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund for improvements to Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary Expansion was awarded in 2023 with funding encumbered for use in 2024.

**2023 Budgeted:** \$55,250.00

### Annual Road Improvements

- Resurfacing of West Park Drive through the ODOT Park District Road Improvements program; funds were encumbered from 2022.

**2023 Expended:** \$104,161.50

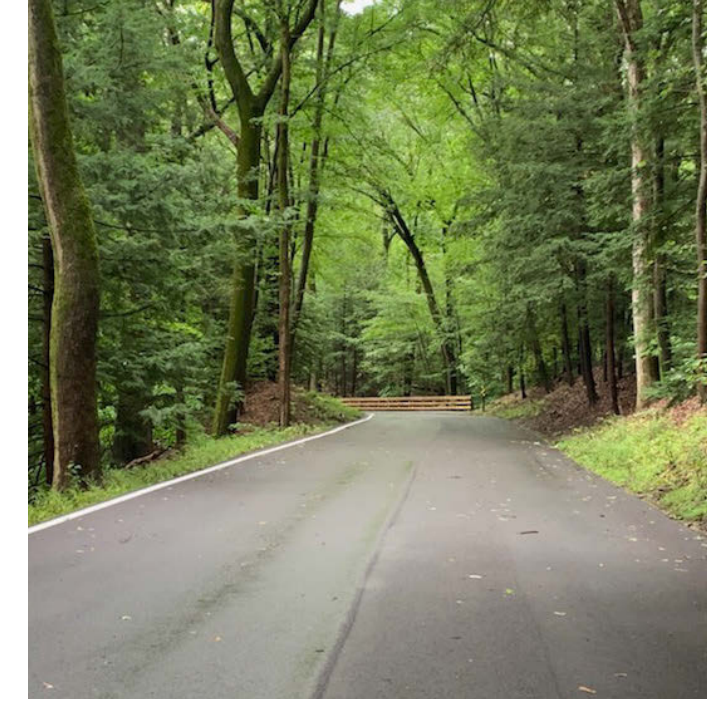
### H2Ohio Stream Restoration Grant

- Improvements to a tributary and adjacent riparian areas and wetlands at the Mill Creek Golf Course; construction activities to restore the function and physical state of this natural corridor included necessary excavation and embankment of soils, regrading of floodplains and wetlands, incorporation of natural stone, installation of native shrubs, trees, and seed mixes.

**2023 Expended:** \$146,645.96

## LAND ACQUISITION:

- **Total Acres Acquired in 2023:** 0.21 acres





### MILL CREEK METROPARKS FOUNDATION

Since 1980, the Mill Creek MetroParks Foundation has served as the philanthropic arm of Mill Creek MetroParks through raising funds for structured endowments and capital improvements throughout the MetroParks system.

#### GENERAL GIFTS

Kelley & Scott Moff  
*In Honor of Charles & Sandra McCabe*

George Stevens

William Brenner

Reid Schmutz

Jeffery Doinoff

Paul Olivier

Youngstown Clothing Co.

#### CHILDREN'S GARDEN CAMPAIGN

Sandra Basista

Carolyn Stoneburner  
*In Memory of Carolyn Stoneburner*

Judi Hanna  
*In Memory of Janet Peterson*

David Watson

Colleen & Michael Robek  
*In Memory of Richard Carlson*

David Carlson

Susan Rubesa

Susan Marrie

John & Martha Dorrance  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Brenda Nagel

Marlene & Tom Dailey

Carol Sacherman

#### ENDOWMENT FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

PNC

Christopher & Anna Newman  
*In Honor of Marc Tunno*

Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens

Nancy Sprockett

Paul Olivier

Dr. Elena Rossi

David & Diana McDonald

Anna Klejka

The Youngstown Foundation

Glen Gardeners

Sue & Jim Davies - Herhold

Daniel P. Schiavone Sr. Family Trust  
*In Memory of Sharon DeAngelo*

Grace Lee Smith

Dr. Elena Rossi

Charles & Barbara McCrudden  
*In Memory of Richard Carlson*

David Watson

*Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens*



Theodore Schmidt

Bruce Willner, DO

Betty Sue Rich  
*In Memory of Alyce DeMarco*

Give Livley Foundation

Jeffery & Tracy Mottice  
*In Memory of Robert Conway*

John & Linda Cifalde

Walter & Laura Aviday  
*In Memory of Eileen Necastro*

Mark Allen Brown

Nicholas Necastro  
*In Memory of Eileen Necastro*

Mahoning Garden Club

Maria Muraca  
*In Memory of Anna Marie Pizzoferrto*

Seth Sart  
*In Memory of Connie Forand-Sarty*

Holly Conway  
*In Memory of Robert Conway*

Dorothy & Richard Bodnar

Neal & Melissa McNally

Donald Necastro  
*In Memory of Eileen Necastro*





Robert & Anna Nischwitz  
*In Memory of Don Brooks*

Mildred Campean  
*In Memory of Larry Tooker & Shirley Megown*

Robert & Cheryl Russell  
*In Memory of Audrey Cataline*

Aura Ragozine  
*In Memory of Lynda Goldner - Markos*

Margaret M. Necastro

Scott Schulick

Centofanti Foundation

Marianne Klein

Justine & Christopher Lawson  
*In Memory Aunt Anna Marie Petracci Brogley*

Thomas Shipka

Frank & Joyce Restaino  
*In Memory of Eileen Necastro*

Amy & Lance Barret  
*In Memory of Connie Forand-Sarty*

Michael & Chryann Mitzel  
*In Memory of Connie Forand-Sarty*

Patti & Michael Sabo

MS Consultants

P. Michael & Sharyn McConnell  
*In Memory of Rose Montwori*

Adam Stansbury  
*In Memory of Cindy Sciarra*

Sandra McDevitt

Collen & Robert Rivera  
*In Memory of Steven Ylonen*

William & Helen Simcox  
*In Memory of Connie Forand-Sarty*

Youngstown Clothing Co.

Larry & Martha Helle  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Jennifer McLaughlin  
*In Memory of Lottie Matasich*

Sandra McDevitt  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Humble Hands Maintenance, LLC  
*In Memory of Connie Forand-Sarty*

Dan & Kelly Gallmeyer  
*In Memory of Judge Edward Cox*

Sandra McDevitt  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Cynthia Huffstetler

William Mangano  
*In Memory of Eileen Necastro*

Zonda L. Haase  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Craig & Robin Barron  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Peggy & Richard Jones  
*In Memory of Donald Dyce*

Farmers National Bank

Mayo Realtors

AEY Electric

Thomas P. Danko

AJGA

ZID Realty & Associates

Mahoning Valley Hospital Foundation

RC Equine  
*In Memory of Phil Smrek*

Donna Sublett  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

David Bowen  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Robin Taylor  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Susan & Dennis Donner  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Mill Creek MetroParks  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Marilyn Williams  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Cheryl Case  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Wade & Nancy Smith  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

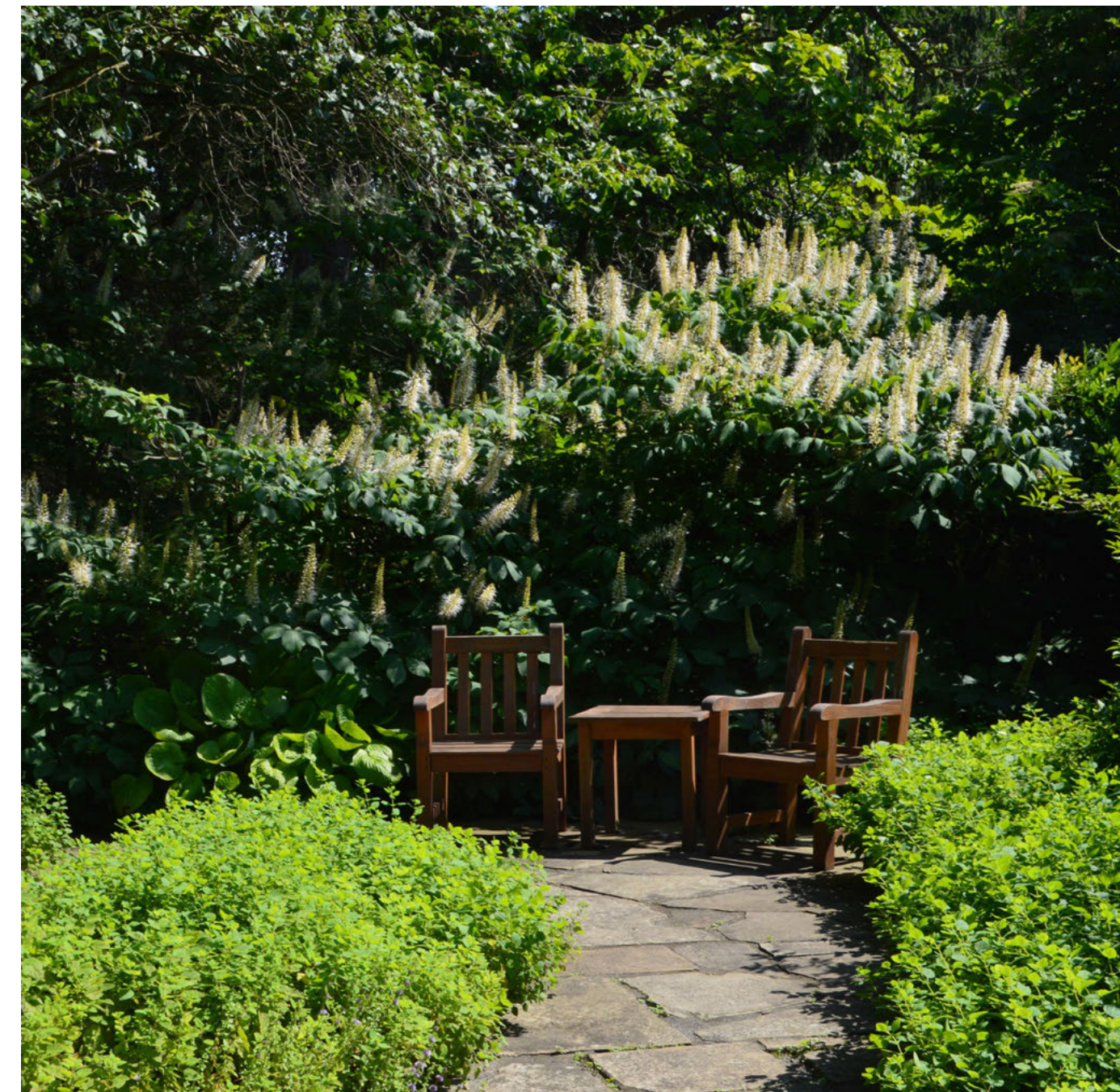
Sue Latessa  
*In Memory of Greg O'Neal*

Mahoning Valley Historical Society  
*In Memory of Patrick Timlin*

Farmers Trust

Micro Doctor IT

Akron Children's Hospital





Brian Gorby

Bob Lunn

Jim & Sharon Harpster  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Dominic & Carol Vechiarelli-Cooper  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Anna Marie & Christopher Newman  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Annette & William Kay

Nancy & Jerry Demetra  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

James & Diana Houston  
*In Memory of Richard Carlson*

William McNally  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Charles & Nancy Madonio  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Richard & Kathleen Amendolea

Delmar & Mary Stanley  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Therese Kasnic  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Robert Tunno  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Clifford & Danielle Unterreiner

Mary Jane Walker  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Ted Roberts  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Russell & Diane Miklos  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

L. Calvin Jones  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Frank & Michele Bova  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Shari & Ron Della Penna  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

James & Kathleen Scarnecchia

Edward & Elizabeth DeAngelo  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

William & Joann Scott  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Anthony & Marge Napoli  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Dominic & Carol Vechiarelli  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

William & Annette Kay  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Nancy & Jerry Demetra  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Therese Kasni

Delmar & Mary Stanley  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Kathleen Amendolea  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*

Columbus Foundation

Daryl & Jamey Daugherty

Mary Jane Walker  
*In Memory of Marc Tunno*



Susan & Anthony Kovach  
*In Memory of Glenda Sarisky*

Pat Khumprakob  
*In Memory of Chris Khumprakob*

Terri Lynn Cole  
*In Honor of Dr. Ronald Dwinells*

Dominic & Janice Lattanzio

Fireline Inc.

Susan Rossi-Wilcox  
*In Memory of Joseph & Holly D'Amico*

Charles & Karen Sawyer  
*In Memory of Constance Navy*

Christine D. Anaia  
*In Memory of David Vernon*

Boardman Subaru

Brittany Gene Seman  
*In Memory of Cyrus Seman*

Bresnahan Foundation

Huntington National Bank

Roth, Blair, Roberts, Strasfeld & Lodge

Hill, Barth & King LLC

Rocky Ridge Neighborhood Association



## RENTAL FACILITY USAGE

### FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS

- **Auditorium:** 106 rentals
- **Classrooms:** 62 rentals
- **Ceremonies (indoors & outdoors):** 170 rentals
- **Garden Café:** 44 rentals
- **Radius Room:** 32
- **Wedding Receptions:** 135

### METROPARKS FARM

- **Classroom A:** 44 rentals/  
1,042 attendance
- **Kenneth McMahon Hall:** 106 rentals/9,075 attendance

### CABINS

- **Bears Den Cabin:** 108 rentals/  
5,343 attendance
- **Birch Hill Cabin:** 222 rentals/  
9,293 attendance
- **Old Log Cabin:** 39 rentals/  
818 attendance

### PAVILIONS

- **Chestnut Hill Pavilion:** 50 rentals/  
2,796 attendance
- **Pioneer Pavilion:** 95 rentals/  
5,075 attendance
- **Scholl Pavilion:** 44 rentals/  
1,945 attendance



- **Slippery Rock Pavilion:** 44 rentals/  
3,048 attendance
- **Stitt Pavilion:** 46 rentals/  
2,690 attendance
- **Thomas J. Bresko Pavilion:** 56 rentals/  
1,145 attendance
- **Kirk Road Pavilion:** 8 rentals/  
300 attendance
- **Vickers Pavilion:** 1 rentals/  
60 attendance

### YELLOW CREEK PARK

- **Capt. John Struthers Pavilion:** 7 rentals/  
450 attendance
- **Yellow Creek Lodge:** 100 rentals/  
5,873 attendance

### EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES

- **Equestrian Rings:** 3 rentals/  
205 attendance

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS

Unencumbered Cash Balance January 1, 2023 \$4,210,946.65  
 Prior Year Encumbrances \$2,627,863.20

### INCOME:

General Property Tax \$8,368,237.56  
 Park District Activities \$3,309,978.78  
 Mill Creek MetroParks Foundation \$217,495.51  
 Local Government Fund \$437,629.36  
 Fund Transfer In -  
 Gas Royalties \$69,763.24  
 Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens \$110,905.14  
 Interest \$372,591.00  
 Grant Revenues \$426,968.47  
 BWC Rebates & Grants \$6,350.00  
 Law Enforcement Training Revenue \$795.00  
 Total Income \$13,320,714.06

**Total Funds Available \$20,159,523.91**

### DISBURSEMENTS:

Salaries & Wages \$5,982,891.13  
 Materials & Supplies \$3,503,394.93  
 Capital Improvements \$3,494,270.89  
 Ford Nature Center Loan Payments \$470,214.52  
 Capital Equipment \$513,935.47  
 Funds Transfer Out -

**Total Disbursements \$13,964,706.94**

Year End Cash Balance December 31, 2023 \$6,194,816.97  
 Year End Encumbrances \$1,919,262.88  
 Unencumbered Cash Balance \$4,275,554.09

