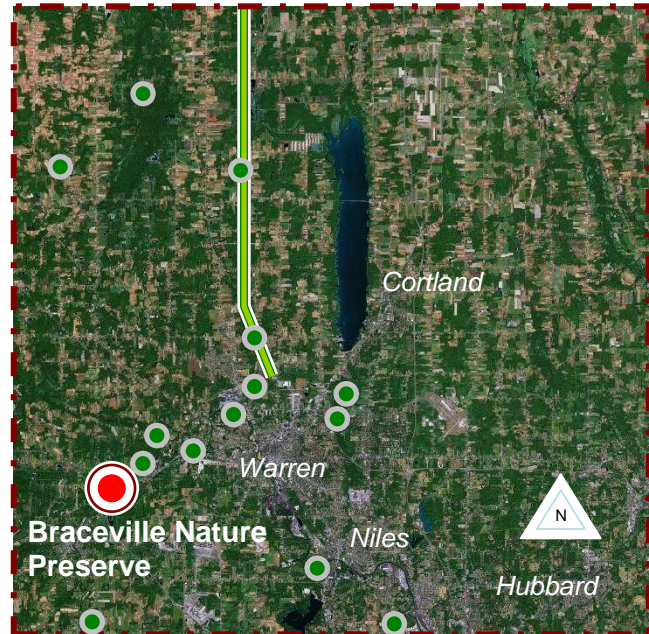


BRACEVILLE NATURE PRESERVE

Introductions • History • Present Conditions • Future Development Plans • Implementation Strategies • Statistics

Introduction

Braceville Nature Preserve is one of MetroParks' largest preserves. Located between the Mahoning River and State Route 5, near the Ohio Turnpike, it is also one of the most visible and accessible park sites in the county. Featuring over 71 acres of generous woods, open meadows, and an oxbow lake with delicate wetlands, the flat and gently rolling landscape along the Mahoning River offers great opportunities for exploration, education, and exercise. The property is located about 8 miles in either direction from Foster MetroPark and Canoe City MetroPark. The Braceville Nature Preserve is a critical trailhead for the proposed Mahoning River Water Trail.



Area Attributes

Surrounding land uses include a gas-tank refill store, a lumber and hardware retailer, a golf course, and undeveloped woodlands. Nearby infrastructure enhancements in the State Route 5 and Ohio Turnpike interchange area have enabled the recent development of a new multi-storey hotel about a half mile from the site. It is expected that development pressures may grow in the area, particularly with a rebounding regional economy. Running along the southern end of the property is State Route 5, a four-lane divided highway traversed by an estimated 12,850 vehicles daily.



Braceville Nature Preserve

- 71 Acres of woodlands and marshes nestled along the Mahoning River in Braceville Township.
- Diverse environments, rolling terrain, bisected by a tributary and featuring an oxbow lake.
- Future plans include a southwestern canoe launch site with parking and a picnic area, extensive nature trails with educational signage and special gardens, and a second picnic area and parking and possible primitive camping.
- Acquired in 2006 with Clean Ohio Funds, development restricted to ecologically sensitive improvements.



History

The Braceville Nature Preserve site was purchased in 2006 by the Trumbull County Commissioners through the county's Planning Commission, which had targeted the land for conservation because of its riverfront and wetland qualities. The property was purchased in part through a Clean Ohio grant provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Shortly thereafter, it was donated to the MetroParks so that it could be properly protected. Deed restrictions placed on the property allow only ecologically sensitive improvements to be made for the purposes of creating public access, passive recreation, and educational opportunities.

Present Conditions

Not only are the types of developments limited by deed restrictions, which were placed on the land as a result of its being purchased with Clean Ohio funds, future improvements need to be made while avoiding the 100-year floodplain that comprises the western half of the property and the riverbank areas. Additionally, the riverbank tends to overflow inland for 60 feet or more annually. The southeastern area of the park is outside of the flood plain and consists of very few wetland areas while areas bordering State Route 5 along the southwestern edge are generally dry, but still exist within the 500-year floodplain.

When field checked, the eastern portion of the site offered the greatest accessibility. Approaching the center of the property where a stream runs from the oxbow lake to the Mahoning River, existing trails terminate, and the terrain becomes very difficult to navigate. A bridge would be required in order to provide visitors with a way to cross from east to west.

State Route 5, which makes up the southern boundary of the property and features a daily traffic count of 12,850 vehicles, is very flat and straight, offering good sight distance. Presently, four highway crossings exist along the stretch of roadway adjacent to the park, allowing westbound motorists to turn around or turn into existing establishments to the south. Such crossings could provide good spots for park entrances depending upon engineering study results. Additionally, the westernmost crossing is already aligned with an old and unpaved property entrance, which leads to an area outside of the 100-year floodplain that could serve as a parking lot for a canoe launch.



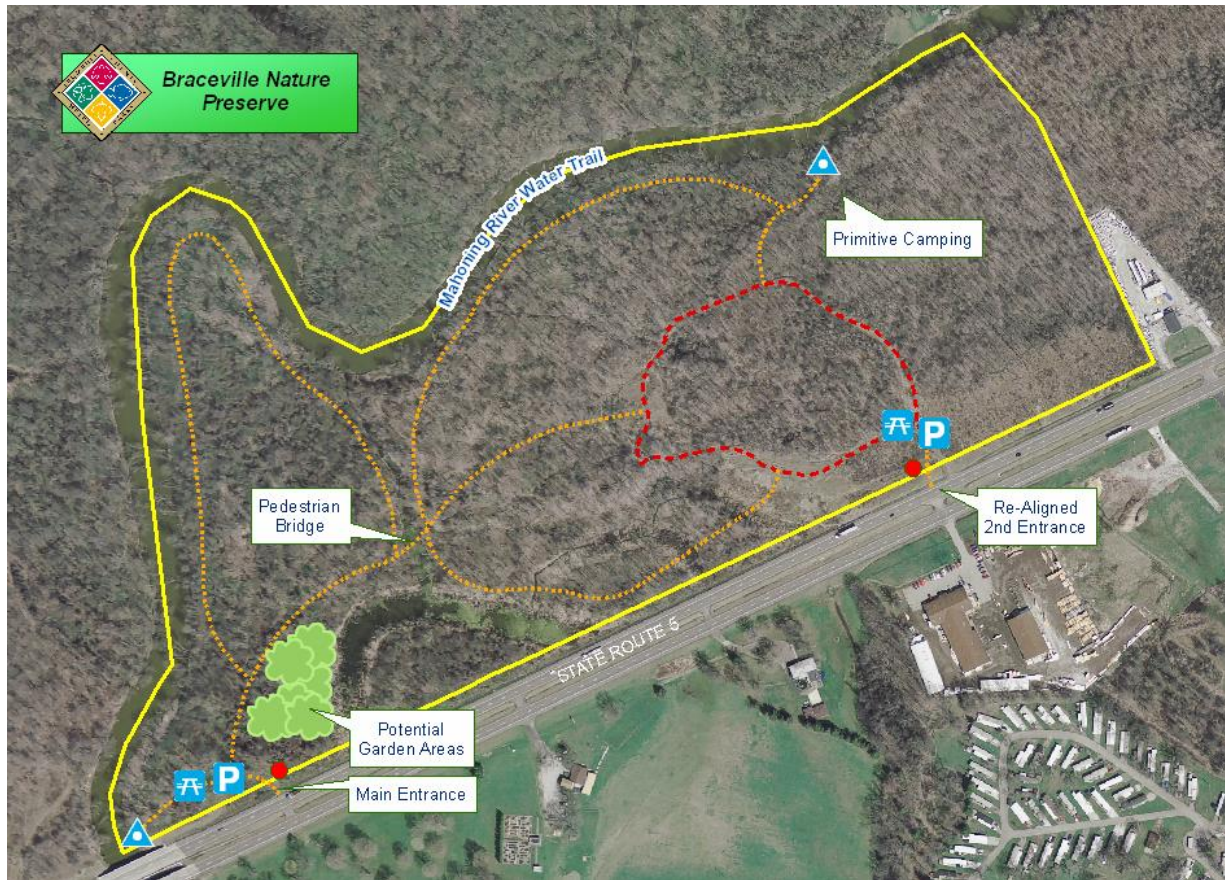
Braceville Nature Preserve (Eastern End)

Few nearby areas offer significant passive recreation. With a proposed Mahoning River Water Trail and 71.50 acres of forest, meadows, and marsh, Braceville Nature Preserve has the opportunity to offer area residents hiking and canoeing opportunities that do not exist for miles. If developed, it would also become the closest major passive-recreation park to the City of Warren and Newton Falls.



Future Development Plans

Many factors support making the development of Braceville MetroPark a priority of the MetroParks. Because of its location and the access that could be provided to the Mahoning River, the Braceville Nature Preserve could be a major component in establishing a viable canoe trail. Furthermore, the size of the park lends an opportunity to hikers, particularly considering that a network of trails already exists on site. As a property purchased with Clean Ohio Funds, deed restrictions exist which dictate that any pavement installed for trails or parking areas be pervious in nature, such as gravel, limestone, or pervious concrete.



Southwestern Canoe Launch Area

A canoe launch along the southwestern end of the property would require the least amount of construction materials while offering great visibility from State Route 5. A highway crossing exists in line with an old property entrance nearby, leading into an area just outside of the 100-year floodplain where a parking lot could be created. Widening of the existing entrance would likely be necessary to create a two-vehicle drive. Prominent entrance signage would attract the attention of the thousands of motorists who pass by the site daily. The canoe launch itself could be located within 200 feet of the parking lot. A path leading to and from the lot could be reinforced with gravel or woodchips to prevent visitors carrying equipment and boats from slipping on wet soil. Because it would be located in an area that is routinely flooded, however, the launch should be primitive in



nature, or otherwise constructed with easily replaceable materials. Additionally, amenities such as picnic tables, restrooms, a kiosk, and grills, should be installed closer to the parking area. Should future demand warrant the investment, a composting or vault-style restroom could be built to replace portable lavatories.

Establish Trails & Connections

New trails could be constructed from the parking lots to the land laboratory, oxbow lake, and meadows. The 1-mile loop trail already exists along the eastern portion of the site, but would have to be cleared shortly if it is to remain viable. A smaller trail near the oxbow lake exists along the western edge of the oxbow lake. Due to the steep terrain near the tributary bisecting the park, a small footbridge will need to be installed. Paths will have to be constructed to connect the southwestern parking lot with the canoe launch and the existing trail network. Additional trails could be considered along the riverbank. Also, in the pursuit of encouraging healthy lifestyles, MetroParks could create strenuous work-out paths by designing trails which crisscross elevation contours. Such an amenity would be a unique attribute to the relatively flat region.

Inventory & Garden Establishment

The environmental features throughout the park could provide great sites for wildflower, butterfly, and rain gardens. In creating additional attractions at the park, MetroParks could conduct a wildflower and tree inventory and place educational signage accordingly. The rich environment along the oxbow lake and in the meadows would likely offer the best areas for such gardens. Organizations such as the Master Gardeners or Boy Scouts of America could assist with the creation of certain types of gardens. Using information gathered from the tree inventory, an arboretum could be created out of the existing forest along the trails.



Wildflowers

Educational Signage

Aside from signage at garden locations, MetroParks could also take advantage of the opportunity to elaborate upon the park's animals, fauna, and trees along the natural areas trails will cross, including the oxbow lake, riverbanks, and tributaries. Not only would signage pursue to the mission of educating the public about conservation, it would add another critical attraction element to the park. Area school districts, naturalist volunteers, and special tree inventory programs could be utilized to collect the data required for the signage.

Land Laboratory

The oxbow lake and its surrounding land features, including wetlands, coupled with the park's ease of access and proximity to major populations, make the area ideal for a land laboratory. One area particularly worth exploring is the tributary flowing from the oxbow lake out to Mahoning River. Noise from State Route 5 can become loud, particularly between the late fall and early spring, so it would be best to place any educational area



designated for lectures north of the oxbow lake. Such a laboratory should feature ample educational signage along with picnic tables for students and a pavilion.

Southeastern Parking Lot & Picnic Area

A second parking lot could be installed at the southeast end of the park where existing trails and a vehicle entrance converge. With a network of hiking trails linking to different gardens, educational features, and a possible land laboratory, a small parking area with signage would only serve to increase park visibility and access. Additionally, the existing unpaved entrance could be moved westward several yards in order to optimize vehicle access from the eastbound lanes of SR 5. Signage, kiosks, tables, and grills could also be installed to create a picnic area north of the parking lot, where the distance from the highway would help to lessen noise.

Northeastern Canoe Launch & Primitive Camping

After the southwestern canoe launch becomes regularly used, MetroParks could consider building a second primitive canoe launch along the park's northeastern riverbank with a primitive camping area located close by on the higher ground located outside of the floodplain. Though much of the terrain is steep along the northeastern edge of the park, there are areas where the incline is more gradual, allowing relatively easy access for canoeists. The camping area and canoe launch could then be connected with a nearby existing trail which would lead to the proposed southeastern parking lot. The option should only be considered once MetroParks is in a position to frequently monitor the camping area.

Future Land Acquisition

As suggested within its planning committees, MetroParks could target the lands on the opposite side of the river for future acquisition for the purposes of conservation. The majority of the land northwest of the park exists within the 100-year floodplain and contains an ample amount of wetlands.

Implementation Strategies

Because of its design, very little maintenance would be required to keep the preserve open. Restrooms, picnic areas, trash cans, and primitive camping areas require close monitoring and frequent service; however even without portable restrooms or waste receptacles, the park could remain open. Litter control could be provided by community service organizations. With ample funds, however, MetroParks may want to consider limestone paths for certain trails, particularly those within flower, butterfly, or rain gardens. Additionally, limestone may provide a good alternative to a nature trail from the proposed southwestern parking lot to the canoe launch.



Implementation Checklist

Bold text indicates that the listed task is integral to completing other MetroParks' projects. Full checklist available in appendix.

BRACEVILLE NATURE PRESERVE

Phase I - Canoe Launch

- Establish park entrance (place temporary conservation area sign in interim)
- Combine lots into one property
- Improve southwest vehicle entrance**
- Develop southwest parking area**
- Create southwest canoe launch**
- Reinforce southwest canoe launch trail**
- Establish picnic area in southwest quadrant of park

Phase II - Trails & Gardens

- Establish trails, connect to existing trails
- Construct passage over tributary
- Conduct tree inventory
- Conduct wildflower inventory
- Establish garden sites
- Establish educational signage
- Create land laboratory area

Phase III - Southeast Access

- Develop southeast parking lot
- Develop southeast picnic area

Phase IV - Northeast

- Establish primitive canoe launch in NE quadrant of park
- Establish primitive camping nearby NE canoe launch outside floodplain
- Install Informational signage at campground and canoe launch

Beyond Phase IV - Acquisition

- Expand Nature Preserve for Conservational Purposes

Braceville Nature Preserve Statistics

Parkland Attributes:

Acreage: 71.50
 Land Cover: Forest, Marsh, Wetlands
 Surrounding Land Use: Commercial Recreation, Light Commercial, Undeveloped Woodland.
 Topography Flat, Rolling, Steep Banks
 * Riverfront – Canoe Access
 * Great Visibility From Road
 * Possible Wetland Mitigation Banking Site
 Daily Traffic Counts: SR 5 - 12,850

Permitted Uses / Restrictions:

Facilities to make open space accessible/ usable by the public, Park Facilities - Picnic Tables, Composting or Portable Restrooms, Pervious Entrance Road & Parking Areas, Canoe Livery Camping Areas, Natural Trails / Boardwalk Trails Observation Decks / Educational Signage Education / Nature / Research Study Programs Easements to be Given To Sanitary Engineer Arboretum / Riparian Forest / Wetland and Floodplain Creation