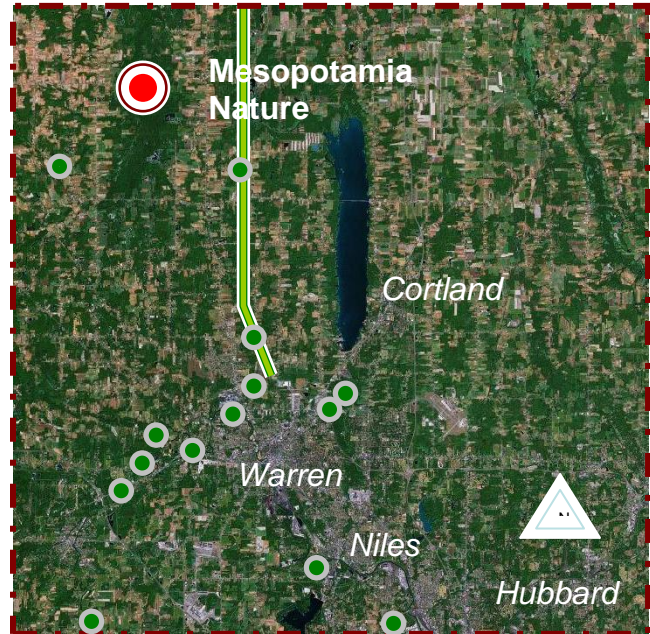


MESOPOTAMIA NATURE PRESERVE

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

Introduction

The nearly 100 acres of Mesopotamia Nature Preserve feature thick woodlands, sprawling marshes, scrubland, and a collection of winding tributaries and wide, slow-moving rivers. The property is located along the lightly traveled State Route 87 in rural Mesopotamia Township. The entire park resides within a 100-year floodplain and nearly half of the property has been designated as part of Ohio's protected wetland inventory. Streams and creeks bisect the property and eventually flow to the Grand River and out into Lake Erie. As with MetroParks' other Clean Ohio properties, development of the land is limited to improvements for public access and passive recreation. While much of the land is not walkable due to the marshland, certain areas do lend themselves to trail development and could also feature observation decks.



Mesopotamia Nature Preserve

- Featuring almost 100 acres of meadows, marshes, and wetland forests in the Grand River watershed along State Rte 87.
- Future improvements could include the establishment of an observation area, bird house installations, and gravel parking.
- The property's primary function will remain as a wildlife habitat and conservation area.

History

The property was given to the MetroParks in late 2007 from the Trumbull County Commissioners after securing the land through the county's Planning Commission. The land was purchased by the county with assistance from the Clean Ohio Fund in order to protect and preserve its critical wetland and floodplain areas, as the existence of such wetlands serves to minimize flooding. The property had been split from an existing home presently bordering the northeast end of the park.

Present Conditions

The most significant portion of land accessible from State Route 87 rests along the northeastern end of the park, where a flat and open field flows toward one of the many tributaries in the area. To the west, there is an access road along the property's western end to service the property's

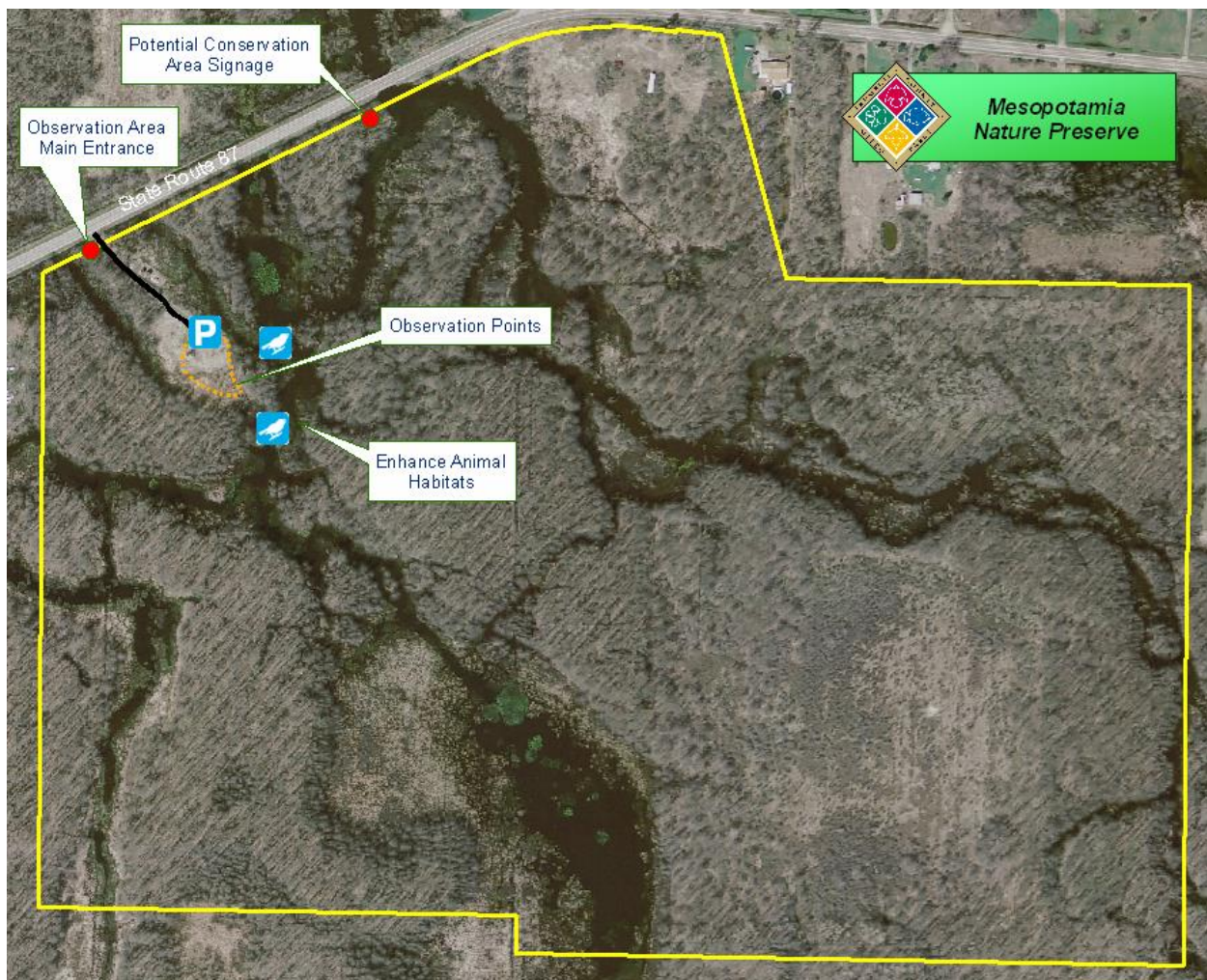


existing gas wells located less than 300 feet from the road. Just beyond the gas wells is a small clearing that opens to a view of the river and tributaries.

With little elevation change, the area is prone to seasonal flooding. As with the nearby Grand River Wildlife Preservation, a variety of wildlife is present on the property. With its many streams and marshlands, the park also hosts an ample supply of amphibian creatures and aquatic plants. In warmer months, swarms of biting insects are not uncommon due to the wetland habitat.

Future Development Plans

The Mesopotamia Nature Preserve is a natural wetland area rich with wildlife. Because of its environmental features, the park could certainly be advertised as a conservation area. However, considering the small population and proximity to similar parks, it may not warrant the investment of creating public access at the preserve, particularly bearing in mind MetroParks priorities.





Should MetroParks have the funds to open the park to the general public in the future, creating access would be easiest along the existing gas well road, although improvements would have to be made as the pathway is in poor condition and is particularly hazardous to those in smaller vehicles. An entrance to the property from the northeast would likely offer greater aesthetic qualities. However, there is a significant amount of wetlands and access to the actual river may be difficult.

Signage

Whether opened or closed to the general public, signage is an important element in establishing the conservation area. Even if left strictly as a conservation area without general public access, signage along State Route 87 would still serve to advertise MetroParks and advocate the importance of conservation.

Bird Sanctuary & Observation Area

MetroParks could further enhance the conservation area by adding bird houses for endangered native species in the field and marsh areas. The park district could also collaborate with the local Audubon Group in designing the bird houses, finding the appropriate placement within the preserve, and promoting the effort. MetroParks could then consider an observation deck, which could be built out from any parking area. The least expensive area to install an observation point is likely to be along the northwestern end of the property, which has access to State Route 87 via the gas well road. The observation deck could feature educational signage regarding the area bird populations and the proposed bird house project. Signage could also be installed to discourage visitors from straying beyond the observation deck without MetroParks' approval.

Implementation Strategies

Because of the limited population that can be served, the proximity of similar parks nearby, and the lack of security, developments other than signage at the Mesopotamia Nature Preserve should be made a low priority. If left strictly as a conservation area closed to the public, signage along State Route 87 would work to advertise the park district and its mission of conserving natural lands for the future. Naturalists and students could gain access to the property with permission from MetroParks, akin to how neighboring park districts operate their conservation areas.

Mesopotamia Nature Preserve Implementation Checklist

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

Phase I – Signage

- Install prominent parkland signage at site along State Route 87

Phase II – Bird Sanctuary

- Collaborate with the local Audubon Society and other naturalists to install bird houses in appropriate areas



Phase III – Public Access

- Improve entrance and gas well road and establish gravel or other natural parking area
- Install observation deck overlooking water and bird sanctuary area and place signage at park entrance
- Install appropriate educational signage

Mesopotamia Nature Preserve Statistics

Parkland Attributes:

Acreage: 99.00

Land Cover: Marsh & Forest

Surrounding

Land Uses: Farmland-Vacant

Topography Flat

* Potential For Observation Deck

* Gas Wells To Be Maintained

* Possible Wetland Mitigation Site

Daily Traffic Counts:

SR 87 - SR 45

2,770 - 4,022

Permitted Uses / Restrictions:

- Facilities to Make Open Space Accessible
- Park Facilities - Picnic Tables
- Composting or Portable Restrooms
- Pervious Entrance Road & Parking
- Canoe Livery
- Camping Areas
- Natural Trails / Boardwalk Trails
- Observation Decks / Signage
- Education / Nature / Research Programs
- Easements Given To Sanitary Engineer
- Arboretum / Riparian / Wetland Creation



*Mesopotamia from the air looking northwest
(Pictometry 2006 Aerial from Microsoft Virtual Earth)*