

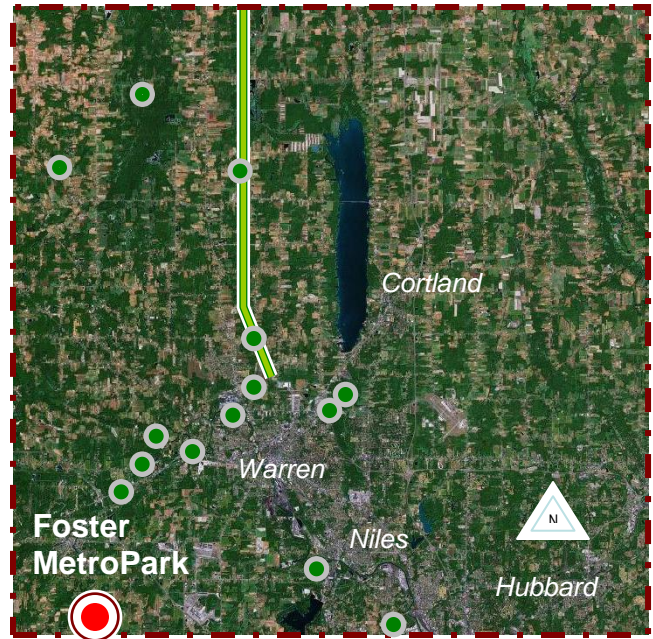
# FOSTER CANOE PARK

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

## Introduction

Foster Park, at one time known as Canoe Trails Park, sits on 3 acres of serene lawns and woods in Newtown Township between the Mahoning River and the lightly traveled East River Road/Newton Falls Damascus Road, which also serves as Bicycle Route J. Though it is MetroParks' smallest open park, Foster offers an abundance and charm and serenity. The pleasantly landscaped park offers a pair of shaded picnic tables and fire-rings, a portable lavatory, as well as the first river access point on the Mahoning River beyond the Lake Milton Dam.

Visitors can park in one of the 16 spaces available or take their vehicle and trailer down a paved driveway to a canoe launch at the riverbank. The bank grows steep immediately north of the canoe launch where stairs lead up from the ramp to the canopy-sheltered picnic area. A gravel and dirt pathway continues from the woods to an arched footbridge before leading back into the main parking lot. Bicycle racks are also available.



### Foster MetroPark

- The 3-acre park is the start of the Mahoning River Water Trail and features parking and a picnic area
- Future plans include providing potable water on-site and seeking to maintain existing amenities and repair launch
- Annual Fall Foliage Tour & Located along Bicycle Rt J



## History

MetroParks received its second park as a donation from the Trumbull Canoe Trails Club in 1984. At the time, the park was known as Canoe Trail Park in honor of the organization which had worked to raise funds for its acquisition. Several improvements were made throughout the mid 1980's that included clearing existing scrub, installing a parking lot, building a small hiking trail, digging a small water well, and installing the river's first canoe launch past the Lake Milton



Dam. The projects were funded through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. MetroParks had also targeted a parcel of land to the south that comprised the corners of East River Road and Countyline Road in order to provide camper pads, restrooms, and additional access for the park. However the land acquisition never came to fruition. Since its original construction, the parking lot has been expanded, and the property features a portable lavatory. Route J was established along East River Road in Newton Township, delineating a network of bicycle-friendly roads between Marietta along the Ohio River and Conneaut on Lake Erie. Additionally, the well was capped amid concerns about water quality.

The park was renamed in 2000 in honor of Mr. Preston Foster, who gave 14 years of volunteer service to the MetroParks and also served as a Park Board Commissioner as well as a member of the Trumbull Canoe Trails Club. With little change over the years, most of the land uses surrounding the park remain wooded, vacant, minimal commercial consisting of storage, and low-density rural residential.

## Present Conditions



MetroParks hires Newton Township to maintain the grounds at Foster Canoe Park, keeping the park in great shape. Most park improvements are in good condition, including an arched wooden bridge, picnic tables, parking lots capable of holding 20 vehicles, two bicycle racks, and the asphalt driveway which allows boaters to bring their watercraft from the parking lot to the river's edge. A portable lavatory is also available at the site along with fire-rings. The park continues to serve bicyclists along Route J, residents in Newton Township and its vicinity, as well as the starting point for the annual Trumbull Canoe Trails Mahoning River Color Run, an autumn foliage tour via water.

One of the park's few areas of concern is the existing canoe ramp, where asphalt gives way to railroad ties that descend into the water. The launch itself is uneven, steep, and at times quite slippery. The existing well is another item needing attention, as it is capped and the roof covering the utility is aging and in need of repair.

The park's landscaping is presently maintained by Newton Township Trustees. The MetroParks' maintenance staff addresses all other issues, including the recent work to re-plank the footbridge. Services for refuse removal and lavatory cleaning are contracted out.



## Future Development Plans

Despite its success, Foster Park also has had a few infrastructural issues to contend with, particularly the capped well and a difficult canoe launch that has been deteriorating due to bank settlement, and the slippery surface of the aging railroad ties. Repairs to either the well or launch are not imminently needed; however, their conditions should be monitored to make any repairs before circumstances worsen. Additionally, MetroParks will want to curtail the growth of weeds through cracks in its existing parking lot to prolong its useful life.



### ***Well Inspection & Repair***

With its position along Bicycle Route J and as the starting point of the Mahoning River Water Trail, a working well would be a welcomed and useful amenity for park visitors. MetroParks could test the quality of the well-water. If the water is suitable for drinking, it would be best to have it repaired prior to establishing an adjacent water trail. In any event, MetroParks should repair the aging roof covering the well in order to protect the utility and maintain aesthetics.

### ***Canoe Launch Improvement***

The existing canoe launch could be improved with new rail road ties or replaced with a more gradually-graded earthen, paved, or gravel launch. Additionally, the canoe launch could be improved with signage regarding the Mahoning River Water Trail and a list of downstream destinations.



### ***Fire-Ring Replacement***

As with MetroParks' other properties, Foster Canoe Park remains closed from sunset to sunrise. The existing fire rings, however, are popular for nighttime bonfires and could encourage individuals to remain at the park beyond daylight hours, posing a risk to their safety. Additionally, the fire rings are difficult to cook on and encourage the use of wood and other materials for heat, materials which may be taken from the park itself. It would be best if MetroParks replaced the fire rings with cooking grills, which work best with charcoal and are easier to use.

### ***Additional Considerations***

MetroParks will consider expanding the park by acquiring nearby vacant parcels. The space would allow for extending existing walking trails and field recreation rather than the originally proposed camper pads, which may be considered incompatible with the park. Although the patronage does not yet warrant the construction of permanent restroom on site, popular usage of a future Mahoning River Water Trail might provide a need for such a facility.

## **Implementation Strategies**

Because Foster MetroPark remains in such good condition, no immediate repairs are needed. However, the park district will want to remain attentive to the conditions of the park's amenities. Below is a schedule of options that are available for future development.

### ***Implementation Checklist***

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

#### ***Phase I – Enhancements***

- Inspect existing well to determine if water is potable, in which case, repairs may be conducted to make the well operable
- Repair the shelter over the well, including adding a new roof
- Enhance park entrance signage**
- Improve uneven canoe launch**
- Install directional and destination signage for canoeists at or near canoe launch**
- Replace fire rings with standard park cooking grills

#### ***Beyond Phase I – Expansion & Restrooms***

- Explore opportunities to expand the park to extend existing walking trails, place signage educational signage, and provide space for field sports and other recreation
- Install composting or vault restroom if warranted by demand

## **Foster Canoe Park Statistics**

Acreage: 3.00  
Parking Spaces: 16  
Trailer Spaces: 4  
Picnic Tables: 2  
Ground-Rings: 2  
Trails: Pathway

\* Mahoning River Color Run  
\* Fishing Location  
\* First Canoe Access Beyond Dam  
Daily Traffic Counts:  
Leavitt Road: 5,847  
W. Market Ave: 10,750