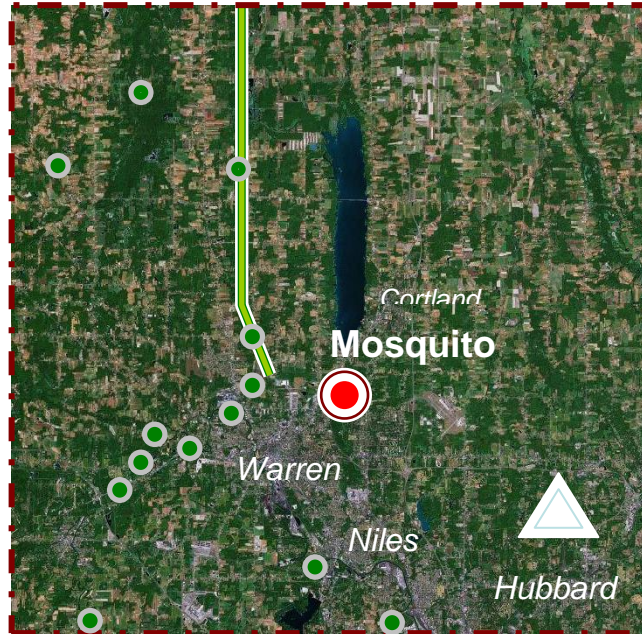


MOSQUITO CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

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

Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve

- One of Trumbull County MetroParks' most centralized and largest parks with over 130 acres of relatively flat woodlands with frontage along Mosquito Creek in Bazetta Township.
- The park presents numerous opportunities for walking trails, educational exhibits, an arboretum, gardens, possibly a dog run area, and could eventually serve as a trailhead for the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk Trail originating in Howland Twp.
- Though purchased with Clean Ohio Funds, pavilions are acceptable developments, allowing for sheltered land laboratories.
- Once reasonable access can be created, MetroParks will establish a canoe launch and picnic area at the riverbank to compliment the



Introduction

Nearly a mile wide with over 136 acres of young forest, Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve is easily one of Trumbull County's largest parklands. Located between Warren and Cortland along busy State Route 5, it is also one of the most visible and accessible parks MetroParks has to offer. An existing gas well road, generally not traversable by passenger cars during the early spring, runs along the southern edge of the property and branches off in three locations to individual gas wells. The remainder of the property is comprised of thick second-growth woods, small meadows, and patches of wetlands, particularly near the southwestern portion of the property. Contributing to the wetland environs is the mostly flat terrain and a small creek which traverses the western end of the property. The extreme eastern portion of the site, running alongside Mosquito Creek, contains slightly steeper terrain and is located in the floodplain.

Ample recreation opportunities are already offered nearby at Mosquito Lake State Park and at Bazetta Township Park. As a result of its proximity to the large and popular parks, traditional passive recreation amenities at Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve may be underutilized by the public. Still, there are many development opportunities available for the site.

Area Attributes

To the south of the property exists a residential home and a wide strip of undeveloped woodlands with ample wetland areas that eventually give way to suburban retail outlets near the intersection of State Route 5 and the Warren Bypass. To the west of the site are several small businesses, while additional commercial structures and two residential



subdivisions border the property from the north. Across Mosquito Creek along the eastern end of the site are vacant woodlands with clusters of wetland areas.

Future developments could include a trailhead for the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk, a partially developed limestone and boardwalk trail leading from Howland Township Park to Mosquito Lake. Unlike other MetroParks' properties purchased with Clean Ohio Funds, deed restrictions for Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve permit pavilions, enabling the creation of land laboratories. Other concepts for the park include an off-leash dog park, an arboretum, and a series of walking trails, all of which are complimentary to one another and could be implemented with relative ease.

History

MetroParks received the 135 acres as a donation from the Trumbull County Commissioners in 2006. Shortly before the donation, the land had been targeted and procured in part through a Clean Ohio Grant written by the Trumbull County Planning Commission. As with other properties attained through Clean Ohio Grants, a set of restrictive covenants was attached to the deed of the real estate dictating that the land be kept as open space as required by the Clean Ohio program. Starting in 2008, Howland Township began construction on a boardwalk and limestone trail along Mosquito Creek about a mile south of the preserve. The Mosquito Creek Property could host a section of the same trail should it continue northward to Mosquito Lake in the coming years.

Present Conditions

The Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve is located within a ten minute driving time of about 70 percent of Trumbull County's population. Its location along State Route 5, with 16,920 vehicles passing by daily, makes it the most visible parkland in the MetroParks' inventory. Another 34,900 vehicles traverse the Warren Bypass less than a mile away.

Substantial wetlands along the southwestern portion of the site make trail development difficult. Additionally, bothersome insect populations tend to swell during warmer months. Three gas well areas are present near the center of the property and along its southern edge. Though a private owner retains ownership of these facilities, MetroParks does collect royalties on the revenues generated by them. The wells are infrequently accessed by gas company trucks via an unpaved service road which runs from State Route 5 along the southern end of the property for about 4,500 feet. A steel gate presently limits access to the road to MetroParks' authorized personnel. Any future development would have to consider that the gas trucks would need to utilize the service road and that restrictive covenants prohibit creating impervious trails or parking areas.



Future Development Plans

Although several great parks and wildlife areas are located close by, the Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve could still offer unique opportunities for activities. Most notably, the park could serve as an off-leash dog area made up of wide trails which could also comprise an arboretum while picnic areas, a land laboratory and a trail head for the proposed Mosquito Creek Boardwalk could also be established. Most of the possible developments for the preserve may fall outside the time frame of the plan, depending upon MetroParks' staff resources and funding. In order to be successful, the park must host an activity unique to the area. Two primary demand generators for the park could include the establishment of a dog park and a trailhead for the possible extension of the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk trail. Prior to making substantial investments, MetroParks should also carefully consider the environmental features of the property and how insect populations, such as aggressive deerflies, could discourage visitors during wetter months within certain areas of the park.

Signage

Although Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve will be a moderate-to-low-development priority, prominent signage should be established for the park with the MetroParks' logo along State Route 5. Not only could such signage serve to inform motorists of coming attractions or that the area has been set aside for conservation, but it would also serve to enhance the park district's visibility and recognition. Once open to the public, directional signage from the Warren Bypass, or at least the State Route 5 exit ramps, would be ideal.



Walking Trails

With relatively flat land and substantial dry areas, MetroParks could consider establishing nature trails throughout the park for joggers or sightseers. With substantial wetlands present along the western end of the site, however, it would be best to establish more trails throughout the central portion of the park where the bothersome insect population is less pronounced. Walking trails by themselves may not warrant the investment in time and money. However, coupled with other amenities, they could provide visitors with a relaxing activity.



Dog Park

With 135 acres, there is ample room available for wide running paths and recreation areas for area residents and their canine friends. The concept of broad pathways would allow more light to reach the ground and provide dogs with a general direction in which to run. However, thick vegetation would be needed along the sides of the trails to encourage pets to stay along the pathways. A similar park opened in Austintown Township, Mahoning County, in early 2008. As with walking trails, it would be best to establish more of the dog paths within the central and northern portion of the preserve.

Option A: Riverbank Roadway Connection & Parking

An optimal riverbank connection would consist of a public road to Mosquito Creek from State Route 5, which would negate the need for a parking area at the park's western edge. MetroParks could consult with local government entities to develop the road, which would be about a mile in length and likely require grant funding to complete. Portions of the road could utilize the existing gas well road. A parking area could be constructed at the terminus of the road near the riverbank where the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk trail may pass through. A picnic area could also be set up nearby along with a primitive canoe launch and entrances for a dog park, land laboratory, and/or an arboretum. Due to the fast and moderately dense traffic along State Route 5, it may be necessary to modify the existing service road entrance to improve ease of access and safety.

Option B: Riverbank Pathway Connection & Parking

A parking area along State Route 5 would be relatively inexpensive. A picnic area could be created further east of the parking area where trees and vegetation would serve to lessen the noise of road traffic. A pedestrian trail of crushed limestone or another reliable pervious surface could offer a durable connection to the riverbank. In order to avoid existing wetlands, the proposed riverbank pathway connection should be routed through the east-west axis of the property at least to the center of the site before deviating south to link up to the gas road. This would keep visitors away from wetland populations and limit their exposure to deerflies and other aggressive insects.

Land Laboratory

The Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve is one of the few properties in MetroParks' inventory with deed restrictions that permit the construction of permanent pavilions, presenting a great educational as well as recreational opportunity for the site. Key sites for a land laboratory include the area along Mosquito Creek as well as the creek which traverses the western portion of the site.

Inventory & Arboretum

An opportunity exists to create an arboretum out of the existing forest. Detailed educational signage would provide visitors with a description of exhibit trees and environments along walking trails or possible dog paths. Also, a wildflower inventory should also be conducted along the riverbank and corresponding informational signage



posted. Such an arboretum could span the entire park or start out as a small area targeted at those utilizing the proposed Mosquito Creek Boardwalk trail.

Canoe Launch

The winding course of Mosquito Creek is complicated by expeditious oxbows and tributaries and is generally best canoed during wetter months when water levels are high. From the preserve, canoeists could travel south to the City of Niles or paddle north along shallower waters to the Mosquito Lake Dam at State Route 305. Once a vehicle-accessible connection to the riverbank is established, a primitive canoe launch with accompanying signage could be created.

Additional Considerations

MetroParks should explore opportunities to expand the parkland and, upon developing an internal trail network, seek to develop connections with neighboring residential or retail communities. The park district should also consider establishing benches along key scenic locations throughout the park. As a conservation opportunity to pursue before creating public access, MetroParks could also work to establish bird stations at the site, along with bird houses in one of the park's open areas to encourage avian population growth which may serve to minimize insect populations.

Implementation Strategies

As mentioned previously, Mosquito Creek's close proximity to other recreational areas requires that the park develops a unique demand generator, such as a trailhead to the proposed Mosquito Creek Boardwalk Trail or a Dog Park, or possibly a land laboratory, each of which requires substantial investment. The most pertinent and cost-effective improvements that could first be made are the installation of signage along State Route 5 advertising the nature preserve as a conservation area and the creation of bird houses. Although development of the preserve will likely be a moderate-to-low priority of the park district, MetroParks should take all opportunities to develop trails, arboretums, and to make road improvements when possible.

Mosquito Creek 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 – Park Preparation

- Install parkland signage along State Route 5
- Determine best option (A or B) for parking and site access
- Monitor demand and explore opportunities for establishing dog run area

Phase II – Access

- Implement option A or B or other parking
- Place directional signage from Warren Bypass upon establishment of public access
- Coordinate with volunteers to construct walking trails throughout the park, ideally away from wetland areas
- Establish canoe launch along riverbank**
- Install directional and destination signage for canoeists at or near canoe launch**



- Create picnic area – pavilion permissible
- Provide park benches along trails
- Establish bird houses and bird stations as well as observation points

Phase III – Education Enhancements

- Conduct wildlife inventory along site to provide information for educational signage
- Create wildflower gardens
- Establish educational signage along trails and at key sites
- Build pavilion for land laboratory area

Mosquito Creek Nature Preserve Statistics

Parkland Attributes:

Acreage: 135.00
Land Cover: Second-Growth Young Forest
Surrounding Land Uses: High Density Residential, Moderate Intensity Commercial, Vacant Woodland,
* Riverfront - Canoe Access
* Major Exposure, Near Interchange
* Gas Wells To Be Maintained
* Riverfront - Canoe Access
Daily Traffic Counts:
SR 5: 16,920 Vehicles per day
SR 82: 34,900 Vehicles per day

Restrictions:

Permitted Uses / Restrictions:
Facilities to Make Open Space Accessible and 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 / Signage, Education / Nature / Research Study Programs, if Bus Access Created
Easements to be Given To Sanitary Engineer For Proposed Sewer Line, Arboretum / Riparian Forest / Wetland & Floodplain Creation

References:

Based on road network interpolation statistics conducted using ESRI's ArcWeb Services and 2000 United State Census data, the park is within ten minutes driving time from 70% of Trumbull County's population.
Eastgate Regional Council of Governments Traffic Survey (2006)