

Friends of Big Creek

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 - James McCall, Parma Heights City Council
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 - Garrett Ormiston, GIS & Stewardship Specialist, Natural Areas Division, Cleveland Museum of Natural History
 - Kathleen Pucci, Brooklyn City Council
 - Dave Ritter, Continuing Planning / Sustainability, Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency
 - Rory Robinson, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance, National Park Service
 - Janine Rybka, District Administrator, Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Laura Travers, Sanitarian, Cuyahoga County Board of Health

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sat. Apr. 28	Cuyahoga ReLeaf—Brooklyn Riparian Re•Forest Planting, Brooklyn Memorial Park. Plant young trees along Stickney Creek.
Sat., May 12	RiverSweep - Ohio Canal Corridor's 23d annual environmental cleanup.
Sat., May 19	RiverDay - <i>Historic Lower Big Creek Valley Tour</i> : Learn about 2 of Cleveland's earliest settlements & industry along Big Creek, under Pearl Rd. (Brooklyn-Brighton Bridge) & the Greenway Plan for the valley. During Pop UP Pearl—complete street fair. Tour under Pearl, visit our booth above.
Sat., Jun. 2	14th Annual Big Creek Watershed Clean Up. Cleveland & Brooklyn locations.
Wed., Jun 6	Greater Cleveland Trails & Greenways Conference, Independence.
Mon., Jun. 18	Brooklyn Rain Barrel Workshop, Grand Pavilion, Memorial Park (FOBC in partnership with Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District)
Sat., Jul. 21	BrookStock - A Celebration of Music & Nature, Metroparks Brookside Reservation. Visit our booth.
Tue., Aug. 14	Big Creek Clean Up. Cleveland Metroparks Zoo & FOBC at the Zoo.
Thu., Aug. 23	Parma Rain Barrel Workshop, Parma Senior Center (FOBC in partnership with Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District).

Visit friendsofbigcreek.org for the latest information on clean-ups, hikes, meetings and more.

Big Creek is the 3rd largest tributary of the Cuyahoga River. Its watershed contains over 130 miles of streams and culverts. Together they drain nearly 39 square miles from 8 municipalities - Cleveland, Brooklyn, Linndale, Parma, Parma Heights, Brook Park, Middleburg Heights, and North Royalton. Over 90% of the watershed's area has been developed and 39% of the land surface has been made impervious, making Big Creek the most heavily urbanized watershed of any major tributary in the Cuyahoga River Watershed. This degree of urbanization provides tremendous challenge ... and opportunity.

Friends of Big Creek is a community-based greenway advocacy and watershed stewardship group, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Friends of Big Creek

Spring/Summer 2012

Big Creek Watershed News & Notes

Important Big Creek parcels in Brooklyn acquired

BIG CREEK LAND CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHED

In our ongoing effort to conserve and enhance the natural resources of Big Creek, last year Friends of Big Creek approached the trustee of two Brooklyn parcels that contained forested land crossing Big Creek. With the assistance of West Creek Preservation Committee, an urban land conservancy, the parcels were successfully acquired in December, ensuring the conservation of these key parcels and their permanent protection as a natural area!

At over 3 acres, with a width of 100 feet and a depth of about 1400 feet, the parcels had in the past been sought by developers interested in building a roadway off Biddulph Avenue to develop housing along Big Creek. Currently, most housing in the area is situated a distance from the creek, helping to preserve a vegetated "buffer" along most of the

creek. River or "riparian" buffers are vegetated areas next to water resources that protect them from polluted run-off, provide bank stabilization and enhance aquatic and wildlife habitat. This acquisition helps assure that most of the stretch of Big Creek between Biddulph and Memphis Avenue, remains in its natural, vegetative state.

The parcels were recognized in the Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan as Priority Conservation Areas. They could also be key in implementing the Big Creek Greenway Trial and Neighborhood Connector Plan, the 2009 study that seeks to connect the Cleveland Metroparks' Brookside and Big Creek Reservations with a 3-mile all-purpose trail through the City of Brooklyn. Visit friendsofbigcreek.org to learn more about both these plans.

The purchases of the parcels were made possible largely due to the donation of a 3-acre property in North Royalton owned by FOBC Board Member Al Penko. (See *article page 2*.) With a conservation easement being placed on his Big Creek "headwaters" property, most of the proceeds from the sale of Al's property went towards the purchase of the Biddulph Avenue parcels, several miles downstream.

To complete the acquisition of the parcels, FOBC was granted a loan to bridge the gap in funding. To fulfill this loan and to establish additional seed money to conserve other parcels along Big Creek, FOBC has formed a Land Conservation Fund. A fundraising effort is in full force in advance of our deadline of June 30th of this year.

Big Creek Balanced Growth Plan receives State endorsement

5TH ENDORSED PLAN, MOST URBAN TO DATE

The Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan received State Endorsement from the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) in June of 2011. In honor of this accomplishment, the Commission, Friends of Big Creek, and the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization (CRCPO) held a special meeting of the Big Creek Partnership on November 2nd at Parma City Hall. John Watkins, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources (ODNR) Office of Coastal Management, offered congratulations and presented certificates to the mayors of the five Big Creek watershed cities of the Partnership recognized as Ohio Balanced Growth Communities.

Ohio's Balanced Growth Program is a voluntary, community-based effort and incentive-based strategy to promote sustainable growth and conservation development. It was developed by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in 2004 and expanded to a statewide program in 2009. The Program uses watersheds as the key organizing feature for land use planning. Watershed-scale land use planning has become an accepted approach in Ohio and throughout the nation because collaboration across the watershed allows coordinated, regional decision-making about how growth and conservation should be promoted by local and state policies and investments.

Big Creek is a sub watershed of the Cuyahoga River. Its Balanced



Certificates awarded last fall. Back row L to R: Richard Balbier, Mayor of Brooklyn; Dean DePiero, Mayor of Parma. Front row L to R: Gail Hesse, OLEC Executive Director; Mark Elliott, Mayor of Brook Park; Michael Byrne, Mayor of Parma Heights; Darnell Brown, Chief Operating Officer for the City of Cleveland representing Mayor Jackson; Bob Gardin, FOBC Project Manager; Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC Environmental Specialist/Balanced Growth Coordinator, John Watkins, Chief of ODNR Office of Coastal Management representing ODNR Director & OLEC Chair David Mustine.

Growth plan was developed as a multi-year effort of the five (See *PLAN page 2*)