



For Fun. For Health. For LIFE.
Parks Yes!

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Portage Park District?

Portage Parks is a government agency serving all of Portage County that conserves parkland and develops trails and facilities for people to use and enjoy. It is independent of county government and state and local parks, though it often partners with them. It is governed by a board of 3-5 unpaid Park Commissioners who set policy and budgets and oversee the Executive Director. In addition to the full-time Director, the Park District only employs 2 part-time maintenance workers. The Park District has grown to 14 miles of hike and bike trails and 1300 acres of parkland, although 835 acres are still not open to the public due to lack of funding.

2. What is Citizens for Portage Park District?

We are an all-volunteer group working to pass the park levy in May. Advisory Council members include Carol Cartwright, Wayne Enders, Janet Esposito, Iris Harvey, Jack Kohl, Mike Kostensky, Ann Womer Benjamin. Steering committee members can be found at www.citizensforportageparks.com.

3. Does the Park District have a levy now?

No

4. How is the Portage Park District currently funded?

Portage Parks' sources for operating funds are shown below. Funding from the state and county has declined by 50% over the last two years creating more reliance on donations to meet basic operations. For 2014, operating fund revenues total approximately \$99,500.

Operating Fund Revenues 2014 (to fund one full time and one part time staff, supplies, services, fees, etc)

- Donations: \$45,000
- Local Government Funds from the State: \$26,000
- Portage County General Fund: \$18,000
- Rentals, Royalties and Interest: \$10,500

Capital Improvement Funds are used for park acquisition and construction and come from specific grants and donations which vary by project and year. Portage Parks can't take advantage of most grants because we lack the 20%-50% matching funds required for local match--so millions of dollars in grants that could improve our parks and trails are going to other Ohio counties instead.

5. What's the return on investment?

Portage Parks has proven that they are wise managers of public monies. Even though it has never had a tax levy to support it, over the past 15 years Portage Parks has worked with public and private partners to bring in over \$8.5 million worth of grants and donations, a significant return on a very minimal local investment. Our operations and construction projects support local businesses. Parks and trails increase property values and spur economic development and tourism. Parks provide places for free healthy recreation for all ages, year-round. Investments in parks, trails and conserving our natural resources last for generations.

6. Who oversees the funding of the Portage Parks?

The Portage Park District is responsible for getting and spending funds, however it works with the County Treasurer, Auditor and Prosecutor who certify its budgets, purchasing and contracting. The Park District has successfully passed all of its biennial State Audits. As a public agency, all meetings are open to the public and budgets are available for inspection.

7. How does Portage County compare with neighboring counties?

These other counties **ALL** have property tax levies in addition to other revenues to support their park districts.

Neighboring Park Districts' Revenues

Summit County	\$17 million per year	(~\$32 per person)
Mahoning County	\$11 million per year	(~\$46 per person)
Geauga County	\$9 million per year	(~\$96 per person)
Stark County	\$7 million per year	(~\$19 per person)
Portage County	\$99,000 per year	(~\$0.61 per person)

8. What is being proposed?

A ½ mill operating and improvement levy for the Portage Park District on May 6, 2014. A ½ mill levy is projected to cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$17.50 per year or less than \$1.50 per month. If you do not own property, you will not pay anything

9. How would additional funding be used?

- To maintain what we have: Provide the staff, equipment and supplies to operate and maintain your parks and trails.
 - Replace roofs and repair structures
 - Resurface and/or pave hike and bike trails; improve hiking trails
 - Manage natural resources
 - Provide recreation and education programs for all ages
- To open parkland: Develop 835 acres of parkland that we already own but can't afford to open, starting with:
 - Chagrin Headwaters Preserve 95 acres, Mantua Township
 - Breakneck Creek Preserve 63 acres, Ravenna Township
 - Morgan Preserve 504 acres, Shalersville Township
 - Walter Preserve 80 acres, Palmyra Township
- To plan and create new parks and trails: Funds to match grants and pursue opportunities before it's too late.
 - Extend the PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail to West Branch State Park
 - Link the Franklin Connector Trail with the rest of the PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail
 - Extend the Headwaters Trail to Aurora
 - Accept the donation of Shaw Woods Equestrian Park/Buckeye Trail Link
 - Plan and partner for the "Suffield-Brimfield-Kent Trail"
 - Conserve critical natural areas for wildlife habitat and water quality protection



10. More questions?

Please see our campaign website to learn more about this issue and/or to become involved with supporting our beautiful Portage Parks: www.citizensforportageparks.com or email us at: citizensforportageparks@yahoo.com