



## **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**

### **Develop a Parkwide Community Access Plan and General Management Plan Amendment**

#### ***Civic Engagement Comment Analysis Report and Recommendations***

**Final**

**July 2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service (NPS) has embarked on a process to develop a parkwide Community Access Plan (plan) at Cuyahoga Valley National Park (park) that would address issues affecting the park experience such as congested areas, ease of flow, and equitable access. The plan would also identify solutions that protect and improve the visitor experience and the park's natural and cultural environment. A long-term approach for managing visitor use at the park and on the Cuyahoga River would provide NPS' managers with the guidance necessary to address current challenges and identify future opportunities.

The park released a newsletter for the plan on March 8, 2021. The newsletter provided the public with background on the project, potential management actions the park may consider, key issues and opportunities, and a timeline for the planning process. The newsletter also solicited comments from the public on five (5) questions pertaining to visitor use and experience at the park. The newsletter was published on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=92300>.

Any comments entered into PEPC by the public, e-mails sent to park staff, written comments mailed to park headquarters, and comments collected from social media platforms were considered and included in the overall project record. This *Civic Engagement Comment Analysis and Recommendations Report* provides a summary of the concerns expressed during the public comment period.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Correspondence:** A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter and includes letters, e-mails, social media posts, comments entered directly into the PEPC database, and any other written comments provided either at the public meetings or in person at the park.

**Comment:** A comment is a portion of text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject such as "Camping Opportunities." The comment could also question the accuracy of the information provided in the newsletter, question the adequacy of any background information, or present issues other than those presented in the newsletter.

**Code:** A code is a grouping centered on a common subject, such as "Equitable and Inclusive Access." The codes were developed during the civic engagement process and are used to track major subjects found in the newsletter. In cases where no comments are received on an issue, the code is not identified or discussed in this report.

**Concern Statements:** Concern statements summarize the issues identified by each code. Each code was characterized by concern statements to provide a better focus on the content of the comments. Some codes require multiple concern statements, such as those concerning park "Amenities."

## COMMENT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Comment analysis is a process used to compile and correlate similar comments into a usable format for decision makers and the project interdisciplinary planning team. Comment analysis assists the NPS in organizing, clarifying, and addressing information pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act

regulations. It also aids in identifying the topics and issues to be evaluated and considered throughout the planning process.

The process includes five main components:

- developing a coding structure
- employing a comment database for comment management
- reading and coding of comments
- interpreting and analyzing the comments to identify issues and themes
- preparing a comment summary report.

A coding structure was developed to help sort comments into logical groups by topic and issue. The NPS derived the coding structure from an analysis of the range of topics discussed during civic engagement, past planning documents, and the comments themselves. The coding structure was designed to capture the content of the comments rather than to restrict or exclude any ideas.

The NPS PEPC database was used to manage the comments. The database stores the full text of all correspondence and allows each comment to be coded by topic and issue. The database tallies the total number of correspondences and comments received, can sort and report comments by a particular topic or issue, and provides demographic information on the sources of each comment.

Analysis of the public comments involved assigning codes to statements made in correspondences uploaded to the NPS PEPC database. All comments were read and analyzed, including those of a technical nature, opinions, suggestions, and comments of a personal or philosophical nature.

Under each code, all comments were grouped by similar themes, and those groups were summarized with a concern statement. Although the analysis process attempts to capture the full range of public concerns, this report should be used with caution. *Comments from people who chose to respond do not necessarily represent the sentiments of the entire public.*

## CONTENT ANALYSIS TABLES

The following tables were produced by the NPS PEPC database and provide information about the numbers and types of correspondence received, organized by code and by various demographics. Data on the number of correspondences received by correspondence type, organization type, state, and country are presented.

Also included below is a table detailing the number of comments identified by code. Approximately 1,034 individual comments were derived from the 394 correspondences received on the newsletter for the plan.

Correspondence Distribution by Correspondence Type	
Correspondence Type	Correspondences
Web Form	390
Social Media	1
E-Mail	2
Letter	1

Correspondence Distribution by Organization Type	
Organization Type	Correspondences
Unaffiliated Individual	393
Town or City Government	1

Correspondence Distribution by State	
State	Correspondences
OH	384
PA	3
Unknown	2
FL	1
TX	1
AZ	1
MD	1
MI	1

Correspondence Distribution by Country	
Country	Correspondences
USA	394

Comment Distribution by Code			
Code	Description	Comments	Percentage
AM1000	Amenities	146	14.1%
CA1000	Camping Opportunities	79	7.6%
TR1000	Trail Management Strategies	73	7.1%
OS1000*	Out of Scope	69	6.7%
WA1000	Wayfinding	57	5.5%
TR3000	Towpath Trail Comments	57	5.5%
PC1000	Partners and Communities	57	5.5%
CS1000	Commercial Services and Concessions	56	5.4%
AC1000	Equitable and Inclusive Access	49	4.7%
DU1000	New Day Use Opportunities	42	4.1%
IE1000	Interpretation and Education Strategies	40	3.9%
TR2000	Trail Connectivity	40	3.9%
RA1000	River Access Points	37	3.6%
IT3000	Impacts: Visitor Use and Experience	36	3.4%
ER1000	New Recreational Opportunities	33	3.2%
ER4000	Biking/Cycling	31	3.0%
OP2000	NPS Staffing	31	3.0%
MC1000	Miscellaneous Comments	21	2.0%
DU2000	Site Closures	20	1.9%

ER3000	Equestrian Use	16	1.5%
OP1000	Park Fees	12	1.2%
IT2000	Impacts: Natural Resources	12	1.2%
NE1000*	NEPA Process	10	1.0%
ER2000	Waterfalls and Creeks	6	0.6%
IT1000	Impacts: Cultural Resources	4	0.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,034</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*These codes were marked non-substantive in PEPC and are not contained in this report. The following correspondence ID is an example of an out of scope comment: “**Correspondence ID: 131** - I'm very concerned about the approved and proposed property development taking place adjacent to the Cuyahoga River and in the vicinity of CVNP.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations from the public on management strategies and actions to inform the development of the plan. The top three issues identified by commenters were park amenities, camping opportunities, and trail management strategies. However, there were several issues identified as concerns by commenters. Recommendations are ordered based the most common themes or issues that arose, and include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Examine potential upgrades to existing amenities at various locations, such as restrooms and trash receptacles at trailheads, or placing maintenance stations and hitching posts for cycling and horseback riding, respectively. Consider new facilities where needed.
2. Provide a wide range of camping opportunities, from primitive tent camping to recreational vehicle (RV) camping. Suggested areas for improvement include at Brandywine Golf Course and along the Buckeye Trail.
3. Several trails may require maintenance. Through trail condition surveys, explore options for trail infrastructure enhancements that could alleviate issues associated with muddy trails, rutting, and flooding. Create new trail connections to assist with overcrowding, traffic at trailheads, and ease of travel.
4. Install more directional signage, maps, and trail markers across the park. The wayfinding infrastructure should include both terrestrial and aquatic routes for hikers and kayakers, as well as for motorists along roadways.
5. Improve safety issues on the Towpath Trail, such as limiting speeds at which bicyclists travel or by increasing trail widths.
6. Use social media platforms and other online sources to enhance the visitor experience and ease of access to park information.
7. Upgrade or improve river access points, including installing steps or constructing natural roadways. Create new river access points at popular locations, such as at Peninsula.
8. Enhance the equestrian visitor experience by providing more horse trails, limiting hiking and biking on horse trails, and providing more parking for horse trailers.
9. Augment cycling experiences in the park by installing or improving bicycle lanes and providing more trails for mountain bikers, including trails with varying levels of difficulty and types of mountain biking experiences.
10. Add more travel options to enhance visitor movement within the park, such as shuttle services to mitigate vehicular congestion.

11. Improve the cultural relevance of the park by developing more interpretative media that focus on people of color and indigenous people of the region.
12. Assess access-related issues associated with parking infrastructure at popular areas within the park such as at Blue Hen Falls.
13. Survey various businesses and organizations in the area on their interest to work with the park to further benefit visitor use and experiences. These partnerships could include working with local Metroparks to increase trail connectivity, or concessionaries to develop a kayak livery within the park.
14. Prioritize, actively reach out to, and create equitable park access opportunities for schools and community groups from surrounding communities to promote environmental justice.
15. Consider promoting new day-use activities within the park such as a trail open to off-leash dogs, guided hikes, cross-country ski trails, organized river clean-ups, and mushroom foraging.
16. Provide wider spectrum of recreational opportunities, such as rock climbing, special events, concerts, and trail races.
17. Develop strategies to improve interpretation in the park, such as offering tours, workshops, children's programs, and campfire talks.

## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

The following concern statements summarize the comments received during the comment period and are organized by code.

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### AC1000 Equitable and Inclusive Access

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters stated that marginalized visitors, particularly people of color and indigenous people, should encounter stories and experiences in the park that connect to their identities in ways that help them feel welcomed and comfortable. These stories should be central to park interpretation, not marginalized. The park should work with representatives of these minority groups, as well as reach out to community centers, libraries, and schools in order to reach marginalized communities. Specifically, the park could work with tribal representatives to better communicate the park's American Indian stories, Cleveland Metroparks to explain the significance of Harriet Keller and the Harriet Keller Memorial Woods to early park establishment in Cuyahoga Valley, Western Reserve Girl Scouts to daylight the stories of black girl scouts in Cuyahoga Valley, and the Phillis Wheatley Association to make Camp Mueller and the association's founder, Jane Edna Hunter, more visible to the public. One commenter also suggested the park provide viewing access to the black-owned nightclub, the Cabin Club, to provide access to a black-history site. Another commenter suggested a trail connection off the Hale Farm Connector that leads to the former Camp Freedom site.

The park should examine the material shown and sold in their visitor centers for insensitive content. The park needs to acknowledge the history of exclusion in Cuyahoga Valley, including American Indian removal, Black Laws and policies, and the displacement of valley residents during the establishment of the park. The park needs to include interpretation of these stories.

One commenter suggested converting the M.D. Garage into an accessible community engagement drop-in venue that welcomes new and more diverse visitors.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested the park should be more accessible to persons with

disabilities. People with disabilities should be able to enjoy the spectrum of park experiences available to able-bodied visitors and be as independent as possible in doing so. Currently, park programming is geared towards children or adults and the content isn't adapted for persons with cognitive or other impediments. The park should collaborate with organizations in the community that service individuals with a variety of disabilities to understand how you can better serve individuals with disabilities and make the park more accessible. The park could create a committee of individuals with disabilities to judge accessibility features for effectiveness.

Common facilities such as bathrooms, kayak/canoe launches, picnic shelters, and fishing locations need to be wheelchair accessible. In addition, one commenter requested handicap accessible shuttle options. One commenter requested wheelchair accessibility to the picnic shelter at Horseshoe Pond. Another commenter requested wheelchair accessibility to the Horseshoe Pond pier and Kendall Lake pier to improve accessibility to fishing. Trails through the park should be more accessible to those with mobility issues (e.g., the Towpath Trail should be paved, more rest stops and benches should be present along trails, pull-outs or small parking areas should be present where trails and roads intersect, and free track chair or golf cart rentals should be considered), or accessibility levels should be noted at trailheads or on maps.

Accessibility for those with hearing or visual impairments needs to be considered as well. Visual aids (i.e., braille and larger font) should be installed around the park. One commenter noted that assistive technology navigation aids are not reliable on park trails, and that braille is safe and reliable. Multi-sensory signage that interacts with mobile apps could also be considered. Tactile experiences and audio descriptions should be incorporated around the park for interpretation for those with visual or hearing disabilities.

Additionally, commenters stated that disabled visitors should encounter stories and experiences in the park that connect to their identities in ways that help them feel welcomed and comfortable. Offering more meaningful volunteer opportunities for people of all abilities would increase individuals' chance to see others like themselves.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Downloadable materials designed for education in easy-access areas, such as scavenger hunts to teach students about local flora and fauna, should be available for individuals with disabilities.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested that there are no barriers preventing anyone from enjoying the park, nor mistreatment of visitors. More signs, rules, and regulations would deter from positive park experience. The commenter speculates there may be an ulterior motive in the attempt to make the park more 'diverse and inclusive'.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted the park should prioritize, actively reach out to, and create equitable park access opportunities to schools and community groups from surrounding environmentally burdened communities. Specifically, the cost of travel or recreational equipment may be a barrier to access for these communities, and should be removed.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted accessibility difficulties, particularly in older park visitors. The commenter suggested training ambassadors in prioritizing dealing with older visitors, arranging ranger talks that focus on senior visitors and their interest, and stocking more materials in the visitor centers that senior visitors would enjoy (such as books or collection items).

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the park take into consideration how individuals' comments on this project may negatively impact individuals with disabilities. Specifically, the commenter noted the public's lack of understanding surrounding how e-bikes assist those with mobility barriers.

## **AM1000 Amenities**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted there are challenges with parking (i.e., congestion, lack of parking spaces) at the following locations:

- Blue Hen Falls
- Brandywine
- East Rim Mountain bike trail
- Oakhill Parking on Riverview Road
- Buttermilk Falls
- Everett Road Covered Bridge
- Horseshoe Pond
- Red Lock

Commenters requested new or additional parking at the following locations:

- Blue Hen Falls (e.g., the old lot could be expanded or parking moved further away, but left at the top of the hill)
- Adjacent to Brandywine
- Side of road parking (where trails/roads intersect and trailheads)
- Boston Store (river take out)
- Beaver Marsh
- Lock 29
- Off Everett Road (around Covered Bridge)
- Brandywine Falls
- Red Lock
- Open Everett Road Extension and put parallel parking on road
- Oakhill Road
- Directly at the east end of the Covered Bridge to Wheatley
- Pine Lane
- Between Hathaway and Stones Roads
- Stanford House

Commenters additionally suggested the park implement a reservation system similar to Acadia National Park, or close parking lots once they are full.

Several commenters requested more parking for horse trailers because of limited space and visitors in cars using the parking spots. Commenters specifically noted difficulty parking horse trailers at Wetmore Trailhead. One commenter requested trailer parking around restaurants, such as the overflow lot behind the Lizard; however, the commenter noted that overflow lot is commonly full. Commenters suggested the following locations for horse trailer parking:

- Everett Covered Bridge
- Pine Lane or Old Orchard (e.g., for access to Riding Run and Perkins Trails)
- Robinson Field

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the following amenities be provided in the park:

- Mountain Bikes / Cycling
  - maintenance stations (e.g., stand, tools, pump)
  - Locations to park/lock up bikes (at Peninsula, Boston, Red Lock, and Station Road)
  - Storage barns (for a monthly storage fee)
  - Electric bike power stations
- Dogs
  - Dog bag stations (e.g., bags for waste and trash cans) at trailheads
  - Dog-friendly water spigots
- Trash
  - Trash receptacles at trailheads, in parking lots, and near bathrooms
  - Pack-in-pack-out is not feasible, particularly with dog waste
- Restrooms
  - Reopen bathrooms / keep bathrooms open in summer
  - More public bathrooms (i.e., either full service or portable restrooms)
  - More, expanded, or upgraded bathroom services at: trailheads, Happy Days parking lot at Boston Run, Jaite, Botzum, Sand-Run, Brandywine Falls, and Solvay's Farm
  - Portable restrooms are not enough for the current number of visitors; need full-service restrooms
- Garbage Cans
- Recycling Bins
- Picnic Areas / Pavilions
  - Picnic Shelter at Oak Hill Trailhead
  - Pull-off picnic areas along Riverview Road (Brecksville area)
  - More picnic areas and lookout points that face the river
  - Picnic table along Valley Trail
- Drinking Fountains (e.g., at Brandywine Falls, Oak Hill, trailheads)
- More benches / soft landscape areas along trails
- Equestrian
  - Hitching posts by Boston Store
  - Stables at Wetmore
  - Picnic tables and hitching posts at horse trailer parking locations
- First aid kits and emergency contact numbers at trailheads
- Additional lighting
- Additional visitor centers (e.g., historical farm-based visitor center) / museums for cultural heritage
- More bed and breakfast locations

## **CA1000 Camping Opportunities**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Most commenters desired primitive tent camping, backcountry camping, or RV camping. Commenters noted volunteers could be used to help maintain backcountry campsites, and fees could be implemented to help with any additional cost to the park. However, several commenters stated they did not want RV camping in the park. One commenter specifically requested the park evaluate the utilization of Robinson Field as a RV camping area. Commenters stated that they would like the park to provide the following types of camping experiences:

- Primitive tent camping (Brandywine Golf Course; reservations, similar to Metroparks at Brecksville Reservation)
- Hammock camping (Brandywine Golf Course)
- Backcountry camping
- Backpacking camping (along long distance trails, such as Buckeye Trail)
- Car camping
- RV camping (Brandywine Golf Course Rockside Lot; Truxell Road side; Robinson Field)
- River camping
- Glamping
- Lean-tos for winter trips
- Adirondack-style shelters (Buckeye Trail)
- Cabins (Brandywine Golf Course, back nine)
- Hike-in or boat-in
- Car camping

In addition to the locations recommended for camping above, commenters noted the following locations for potential camping use:

- Brandywine Golf Course (specifically, par-18)
- Southern part of the park (away from Interstate 80)
- Jaite village houses near Vaughn Road
- Site of Richfield Coliseum
- On hills on either side of the valley (big rig camping)

Most commenters wanted the park to consider the use of Brandywine Golf Course. The area could be used for different types of camping (e.g., tent or RV) and is an ideal location (i.e., close to town; a cleared space; electricity to the property; a tunnel across the road to the old par-3 course).

## CS1000 Commercial Services and Concessions

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the park consider providing rental equipment for recreation, such as mountain biking, water activities (i.e., canoes, kayaks, fishing, or paddle boards), or winter activities (i.e., snow shoes, cross-country skis). Many visitors do not have, or cannot bring, their own equipment. Renting equipment would allow visitors to participate in these activities and could generate revenue for the park. The use of local businesses should be considered for renting this equipment. One commenter suggested providing on-site kayak storage facilities and designated parking for kayak livery vehicles at Rockside, Brecksville, and Boston.

For equestrian use, one commenter suggested adding a horse stable for horse riding, which would increase access and knowledge of the activity. For biking, one commenter suggested providing bike rentals at both ends of the park. For paddlers, commenters suggested the old par-3 at the Brandywine Golf Course, or Brandywine Golf Course as feasible locations for a kayak/canoe livery. One commenter also requested a shuttle service to transport paddlers upstream from their vehicles. Another commenter requested parking for a livery and on-site storage facilities at Rockside, Brecksville, and Boston.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the following public transportation options to access the park:

- A shuttle service around the park and to popular locations in the park:

- To trailheads
- From Boston Mill Visitor Center to Blue Hen Falls, Brandywine Falls, and other popular areas
- The use of the railroad as transportation between locations with events or activities, such as Hale Farm
- Transit from locations outside the park:
  - Buses from Akron
  - Bus program to bring people in from the city
  - Train from downtown Cleveland
- Park and Ride options:
  - Visitors park on the outskirts of the park and are shuttled in

Commenters suggested that public transportation to the park could alleviate parking and vehicular congestion issues.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted that there are limited locations to buy food and drink, particularly at the Boston Mill Visitor Center. Commenters suggested the park offer concessions, such as restaurants, coffee shops, ice cream parlors, and snacks in gift shops.

One commenter praised the value of the farmer's market and requested that the park continue to allow similar opportunities. One commenter suggested the use of the restaurant/shop at par-18 of the Brandywine Gold Course. Another commenter noted the potential use of a train car as a concession stand). Another commenter suggested the Railroad Brecksville Station area be upgraded to include a visitor center and concessions.

Commenters noted that while the options for food and drink in Peninsula helps alleviate this issue, it does not cover the major areas people visit in the park. Commenters noted that there needs to be more food and beverage stops in the park because Peninsula is overcrowded in the summers; it is not a very enjoyable location to stop for food. One commenter requested the park work with Peninsula to provide more infrastructure for concessions.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested that the park provide a way to sell native plants, because it would promote native plant knowledge, increase the number of native plants in the area, and provide a source for otherwise difficult-to-find plants.

## **DU1000 New Day Use Opportunities**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters want the ability to forage for mushrooms within the park. Other state parks in Ohio allow the collection of wild fungi for personal use. It could bring additional revenue to the park and the impacts would be limited. Hikes or educational activities could also help teach the public about fungi and correct harvesting techniques. One commenter suggested providing clear rules on the website for what is, or is not, allowed to be gathered in ways that do not harm the ecosystem and what could potentially encourage more growth or limit the spread of invasive species.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters want the following new day-use activities to occur within the park: a trail open to off-leash dogs; guided hikes; a natural amphitheater (e.g., concerts, naturalist talks, shows); marathons; festivals, playgrounds; a beginners cross-country ski trail with signs asking visitors

to stay off ski trails, organized river clean-ups, and day events, such as living history. One commenter suggested the park renovate the building at Kendall Lake to rent out for events, such as weddings.

## **DU2000 Site Closures**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted that the closure of the Blue Hen Falls parking lot prevents access to the area. Many visitors are not willing to hike to the falls. One commenter described the section of the buckeye trail between the visitor center and Blue Hen Falls as a difficult hike, in which children and older visitors may be at risk for injury. The parking lot also needs to be reopened for visitor safety.

In addition to Blue Hen Falls, one commenter noted that the closure of Everett Road / Everett Extension sends an unwelcoming message to visitors and hinders access to nature photographers who used to photograph along the road. Commenters also noted other locations that were commonly closed and requested that they be reopened:

- The Howe Meadow area should provide more access to visitors
- Visitor Center or certain buildings on certain days or during less popular times of the year—open Canal Exploration Center and Boston Mill Visitor Center seven (7) days a week, especially in spring, summer, and fall; and on weekends in winter
- Summit Metroparks Conservation Areas (such as the area surrounding Columbia Run)—open to visitors of the park

Commenters stated that these closures detract from visitors' enjoyment of the park. One commenter noted that closures do not always match the website, and suggested the park find a way to better advertise closures.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Some commenters noted that, in certain instances, they felt site closures were warranted. These closures include the following areas:

- Restrict access in time-limited rotations to natural areas of the park to allow them to recover
- Close Truxell after heavy rain events
- Shut down mixed-use bridle trails, such as Wetmore, when trails are badly damaged so visitors do not create new side trails
- Close roads at specific times to allow visitors (i.e., hikers, runners) access without cars

## **ER1000 New Recreational Opportunities**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the following new recreational opportunities:

- Groomed trails (e.g., cross country skiing)
- Ice skating rink
- Rock climbing / Ice climbing
- Paddle-boarding
- Archery
- Off-road opportunities (i.e., a venue to hold a 'Jeep Jamboree')
- Dog park
- Ropes course
- Disc golf
- Swimming pool / designated swimming beach

- Replica canal boat (Canal Exploration Center)
- Online eagle camera to observe eagle nests
- Evening trails that are illuminated (ex. Chapin Forest)
- Use a portion of the canal for a boat ride and travel through a lock
- Adult-centered activities
  - beer-tasting and hiking; wildflowers and wine
  - date night (e.g., painting, Shakespeare in the Park)

Several commenters noted that the park should take part in special events, concerts, and programs at Happy Days. Events such as summer concerts at Howe Meadow and trail races should resume at the park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested rock climbing and ice climbing as new recreational opportunities because the park is home to rock formations that could be used for rock climbing. One commenter specifically requested top-roping or bouldering.

Limiting wildlife and vegetation damage should be considered if rock climbing is provided, such as avoiding certain sections of cliff, limiting the distance between routes, prohibiting hammocks, and promoting lead climbing (i.e., keeps climbers off the top of cliffs). Careful trail planning and construction would be expected. One commenter noted that ice climbing creates very little damage, as the ice melts away when it warms.

## ER2000 Waterfalls and Creeks

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested more trails to the waterfalls in the park. One commenter specifically noted more trails should go to Twin Sisters Falls. One commenter requested the park close Blue Hen Falls until a proper overlook can be built; otherwise, the park should station a ranger at Blue Hen Falls to keep visitors out of the water and off the fragile ecosystem surrounding the falls.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested that the park better mark, or remove the remnants of, the Peninsula low-head dam to improve paddling conditions. One commenter requested that the park remove the pipes south of the Rockside put-in/take-out location for safety.

## ER3000 Equestrian Use

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested equestrian users be required to clean up after their horses or use dung bags. One commenter noted that the Covered Bridge is unpleasant due to horse droppings. Another commenter suggested fining riders if they do not clean up after their horse. The commenter further suggested that equestrian access to the park should be lowered to one weekend day per month.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted that horseback riders can sometimes feel unwelcome in the park. Commenters noted the following areas of conflict for equestrian use:

- Cross country skiers can make it difficult for equestrians to ride in winter
- Walkers and cyclists yell at horseback riders
- Portions of certain horse trails are impassible or dangerous
  - horses cannot walk on gravel patches
  - large stones are slippery and can cause stone bruises in hooves (ex. The section of the Towpath before Vaughn Road)

- access road long the turnpike limits access to the trail because of large stones
- horses must go on the towpath in certain locations where the trail splits but there is no signage stating horses are allowed on that section and have the right of way (Boston trailhead of the Towpath headed toward Vaughn Road)
- Mountain bikers commonly use horse trails
- Complaints about mountain bikers to NPS staff feel ignored

Commenters provided the following suggestions regarding equestrian trails:

- Make accessible bridle trails in the old golf course
- Create horse trails that loop
- Lessen or prohibit hikers from horse trails, as hikers have more locations to hike in the park than equestrians do to ride
- Provide better signage to note horses have the right-of-way on shared sections of trail, and that bikes are not allowed on bridle trails; educating the public on the use of bridle trails
- Consider posting a ranger in areas of common bike and horse complaints
- Make another bridge/water crossing behind Szalay's and further down the road, as bikers do not provide enough time for horses to cross the bridge and they cannot cross simultaneously
- Have a trail planner walk or ride the Brecksville Stables to Boston Store trail, and determine how to make it safe for beginner riders and hikers

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested horse riding clubs and horse use could be better promoted in the park by having “equestrian days” or an area set up for public access to horse activities. The commenter further explained that an area such as Brecksville Stables could be used for vendors, horse education, pony rides, concession, and donations. All funds raised would go to the park.

## ER4000 Biking/Cycling

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted that bicycling is an important recreational opportunity within the park but stated that the existing bike lanes are in poor condition and that it is unsafe due to the proximity to cars and speed of other bikers. Commenters stated that there should be a speed limit implemented on cyclists to improve visitor safety. Commenters also noted that the trails are overly crowded. Commenters requested new bike lanes and bike lane improvements (i.e., routine sweeping, consistently paved, maintained striping) to increase safety and connectivity, specifically at the following locations:

- Along the valley floor and the roads leading into the valley;
- Along the central roads leading into and out of the park;
- Along other main roads within the park (Riverview, Akron-Peninsula Road, Truxell, etc.)
- Between Boston and Station Road;
- Along major trails (Towpath, Valley Bridle, Buckeye); and
- At Bath/Richfield.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters provided suggestions for future bike usage in the park. Some commenters expressed a need for more mountain bike trails within the park. One commenter suggested opening the Buckeye Trail for mountain bikes, while other commenters suggested opening all trails to mountain bike users. Commenters requested the park consider a sustainable trail system with multiple access points and extended linear distance. One commenter suggested working with Cleveland Area Mountain Bike Association to help structure the layout of this idea.

Commenters requested routes with varying levels of difficulty and types of mountain biking experiences, such as downhill, endurance, pump tracks, and flow trails. One commenter noted that mountain bike trails in the park were too technical for most riders, and suggested providing more than single tracks. The commenter suggested that the rolling hills under power lines would provide good opportunities for mountain bike trails. One commenter requested trail connectivity for mountain bikes between Boston and Brecksville, while another commenter requested bike access for Bath and Richfield. One commenter also suggested allowing night-riding in the park, while another commenter suggested opening bridle trails to bikes a few days a week. Finally, one commenter requested maps with recommendations for cyclists.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter wanted the park to consider the trail system scaled to the level of interest of particular activities. The commenter noted that there is an over-investment in horse trails compared to level of use and an under-investment in mountain bike trails.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted that e-bikes are dangerous and should not be allowed on trails; however, there should be an exemption for persons with disabilities. Other commenters requested allowing class 1 e-bikes or “low-speed, pedal-assisted electric bicycles” (i.e., a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling), potentially on separate, off-road trails. One commenter requested that the park allow class 1 e-bikes on mountain bike trails.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted that street traffic and large hills were barriers to reaching parts of the park. One commenter noted another barrier was that there is too much noise on the existing Ohio Turnpike bike route.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested the park allow dirt bikes and small four wheelers. These forms of recreation would have trails designated for their use and would have strict limitations to assure the trails are established routes and there is no damage to the area. The commenter noted that these trails are possible to create, as they have been done in places such as Wayne Forest in Southern Ohio or in national parks out west.

## **IE1000 Interpretation and Education**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested additional activities park staff could use for visitor education:

- BARK Ranger Program for dogs
- Campfire talks
- Leave No Trace
- Week-long or weekend-long guided hikes and camping
- Tours of conservancy farms
- Adult education programs (workshops)
- Programs for children (e.g., orienteering activities, storybook trail [at Haskell Run or Forest Point], scavenger hunts, sprints)
- More ranger-led or guided activities (e.g., history tours, nature hikes, bicycling trips, kayak floats, pioneer cooking)
- More themed train excursions and stations enhanced
- Education on sustainable land use
- Education on shared stewardship and climate challenges

One commenter suggested the park enlist more volunteers who are suitably trained and knowledgeable to lead guided tours or walks, which would add to the number of outings conducted and visitor engagement.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested installing more educational signs and plaques, both history and nature related. These signs could include information on the original peoples who used the valley, different types of wildlife and vegetation, or why certain plantings or maintenance is occurring. One commenter specifically noted that TerraVista needed more signage about the history of the area and graveyard.

Additionally, information tables, pamphlets, touch-tables, story boards, and worksheets could be present along main paths to support education in the area. One commenter suggested providing educational material on off-leash animals, while another commenter requested more information posted about protecting the environment and recycling. Another commenter also suggested posting photos in the park that show damage to the landscape due to visitors going off-trail. A commenter suggested the park promote trail use beyond the boundaries of the park (such as the Buckeye Trail) through information on a website, mobile application, or map.

Commenters suggested the use of a mobile application to provide interactive information about the park. One commenter suggested the application provide the park's history based on the visitor's location. Another commenter suggested the application show a visitor's current position and guides them to points of interest (e.g., geology, native American history, waterfalls). The application should have information on industrial sites and cleanup actions taken.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested that the park explore more relationships of intersectionality with nature, municipalities, and educational institutions to help link the community to the broader natural systems around them.

### **IT1000 Impacts: Cultural Resources**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the park determine if the Harriet Keeler Memorial Woods is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Another commenter requested the park preserve the segment of rotating kiln as a historical resource in the northern portion of the park as staff naturalize the Haydite Mine area.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the park take a comprehensive look at viewshed management along key parts of the Towpath, Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, Cuyahoga River Water Trail, Ledges Overlook, Brandywine Falls (north and south rims), Village of Boston, Everett Covered Bridge, and Station Road Bridge.

### **IT2000 Impacts: Natural Resources**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters expressed their concern surrounding invasive species, wildlife, and development. These concerns are listed below:

#### **Invasive Species**

- The park needs to actively remove invasive species and aim to create more diverse habitat(s).
  - Encourage volunteers to work with park staff to remove invasive species
- For every invasive species removed, a native species should be planted.

- Focus on native shrubs and bushes. The park should create more native grasslands.

#### Wildlife

- Assess the impacts of increased traffic and visitor use on wildlife. Increased traffic has led to increased fatalities of wildlife. The park should work with local authorities to encourage the placement of speed limit and wildlife crossing signs.
- Assess the impact to wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) along the Towpath Trail from increased visitor use.

#### Development

- Development near the park needs to be contained / monitored for any impacts it may have on the park (e.g., pollution or erosion)
- Any increase of impervious surfaces through new parking lots needs to be assessed for its impact to the natural environment

### IT3000 Impacts: Visitor Use and Experience

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted several issues that affect their visitor experience in the park, and provided solutions to these issues:

- Traffic danger
  - Roads are dangerous for visitors viewing wildlife or entering trailheads; provide pedestrian-protected crosswalks/areas
  - Cars slow or stop on the roadway to view the valley (e.g., high bridge on Route 82); provide raised platforms or clearings for better viewing
- Park is too crowded
  - Too many people detract from the natural feeling of the park and the visitor's ability to 'escape to nature'; park needs to buy connected green space to alleviate
  - Parking is limited and difficult to come by
  - Trails are overcrowded and difficult to share between hikers, bikers, dog-walkers, and equestrians; consider high-use, low-use management zones
  - The park should develop a sustainable use/visitor plan that includes crowd/traffic management
- Noise
  - Cannon noise at Szalay's Farm for bird control disrupts visitor experience
  - High-speed wheeled devices and snowmobiles should be banned in the park due to noise disturbance
  - Visitors playing loud music on trails is an issue
- Limit the development of the park; keep the park natural
- High amounts of littering and dog feces detracts from enjoyment of the park
- Cuyahoga River is difficult to enjoy due to lack of access points
- Vandalism (such as at the old barn off Stanford Road) is unsightly
- Visitors smoking on the trails detracts from positive visitor experience
- Lights at Boston Mills ski area on Riverview Road ruin park ambience
- Cars have been broken into; providing surveillance of parking lots is needed
- The park is missing viewing areas, including a clear view over the entire valley; elevated viewing areas along hiking trails or handicap accessible decks

One commenter noted that visitors should feel like visitors when they come to the park, and not like clients or customers of a business.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters noted that it is difficult for visitors to know where to start their visit or know what experiences the park offers because there is no central visitor center or welcome center. One commenter noted that visitors may go to the headquarters building by Vougan and Riverview, which does not meet these needs. Commenters suggested providing information on the specific location of recreational opportunities (e.g., where to rent a bike for scenic bike ride) through Google Maps or the park website. One commenter further suggested having addresses for popular locations (e.g., trailheads, museums, picnic areas) so they can be easily located on a GPS. Another commenter noted the website should be more interactive when providing information on what to do in the park.

One commenter noted scheduling was a barrier to visitors. Commenters requested a better way to plan a day trip through the park website. One commenter suggested providing itineraries on the park website with suggestions of how to spend a day in the park (e.g., A map to follow to visit all the waterfalls in the area).

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the consideration of limiting dogs in the park because their presence detracts from the trail experience of others (e.g., jumping up on visitors). The commenter recommended limiting dogs to certain trails, such as bridle trails, or building a dog park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted that there are negative reactions and resentment toward the park from the land acquisition process to create the park. The commenter noted it would be worthwhile to acknowledge this history and work toward alleviating that resentment.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested limiting visitors in the following areas to protect natural resources:

- Brecksville Reservation that is off limits during bald eagle nesting should remain off limits due to a family of otters in the residence
- Wetland area south of Station Road Bridge on Brecksville should be avoided due to it being the only known breeding location of least bitterns in Cleveland Metroparks.
- Do not encourage additional activity or trails that bound the creek in Sagamore Creek Valley. Consider boardwalks to reduce bootleg trails.
- Manage ledges with unique habitat impacted by human use similarly to Hocking Hill. This includes elevated boardwalks and other traffic-steering techniques.
- Do not add additional use to Snowville Road as the location is one of the few drainages with redbelly and southern redbelly dace. Consider improvements to Buckeye Trail.
- Do not add additional use to Chippewa picnic area, because Deer Lick Cave tributary (high quality primary headwater) drains through the location. Fix the bridle trail to reduce sediment input.
- Preserve high quality areas, such as Tinkers Creek gorge.
- Drainages around Bedford, Sagamore, and Brecksville, and other high quality natural resource values in the area, such as:
  - Powers Road slump (Bedford Reservation)

- Sensitive habitat and rare species hotspot
- Wet/loose substrate is easily disturbed
- Wood Creek (also known as Hemlock Creek) / Joni's slip (Bedford Reservation)
- Rich forest with diverse herbaceous flora
- Sensitive habitat and rare species hotspot (Joni's slip)
- Loose, sandy/gravelly substrate is unique and easily disturbed

## MC1000 Miscellaneous Comments

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested the use of social media and other online sources to enhance park popularity and visitor experience. Suggestions included creating video blogs, creating a park mobile phone application (e.g., partnering with Alltrails), installing webcams for real-time updates, and upgrading the park website to be able to search and filter results of hikes based on features (i.e., location, ability of hiker, elevation, length, current condition and usage of trail)..

Other commenters suggested offline options to enhance park visitation and visitor experience. Suggestions included installing suggestion boxes throughout the park, and mailing advertisements for the park (e.g., a post card telling of the Jr. Ranger program).

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested that the abandoned houses on park property either be demolished or turned into something useful for the park, such as visitor centers, museums, or temporary lodging.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the ability to lease land in the park for agricultural use. Short-term leases (i.e., 3-5 year) could assist the park with mowing costs and allow local farmers to use the land.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter discussed the park's interest in attendance and tracking numbers of visitors. The commenter suggested collecting the information through either a test or pilot program, in which a random sample of attendees are asked where they were and what they did in the park, or using parking lot tallies as an indicator.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the production of a master plan that protects the park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested implementing a fundraising goal that could assist with maintenance and conservation challenges in the park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested the ability to locate sponsored NPS land by latitude/longitude. The commenter noted that if people could visit the land they are sponsoring, they may be more inclined to sponsor more acres.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter encouraged the park to obtain new properties within, and adjacent, to its borders.

## OP1000 Park Fees

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested that a fee be implemented for parking to reduce congestion and high visitation. Commenters also suggested the fees collected from parking could be used to protect park resources.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested charging a fee to enter the park. Commenters noted that entrance fees could improve park infrastructure and reduce local traffic. One commenter suggested using an annual park pass or volunteer work as form of payment.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested providing donation boxes or QR/text codes throughout the park for users to make suggested donations. The commenter further noted that, due to the potential difficulty of installing entrance gates to collect payments, paid parking machines or a parking fee could be implemented, particularly in high use areas.

## OP2000 NPS Staffing

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters stated that rangers, volunteers, and law enforcement need more visibility in the park, including at trailheads. Commenters noted that the increased presence by staff and volunteers would increase safety, reduce vandalism, and increase educational interpretation opportunities. Commenters also noted that staff, volunteers, and law enforcement should enforce pet leash laws, right-of-way rules on trails, and speeding on roadways. Commenters also noted that parking reservations were not being honored and that trailers often park in the car parking spots. Furthermore, parking etiquette should be enforced by rangers. One commenter requested park staff monitor and manage river hazards.

## PC1000 Partners and Communities

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Several commenters stated that strategic collaboration with schools in the area would encourage students and their families to become involved with the park, help train them for positions in green infrastructure, and provide educational and recreational opportunities that would promote special event permits for schools. One commenter suggested the park prioritize schools and community groups within the region's environmental justice areas for recreational opportunities and special event permits.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested that the park partner with Cleveland and Summit Metroparks to improve signage, trailheads, parking, facilities and branding. One commenter noted that the old golf course near Akron Northside—owned by Summit Metroparks—should be considered for a potential campground for the park.

One commenter requested that the park become the climate change adaption leader in partnership with Metroparks to create awareness and educate the next generation. One commenter also stated that the park should not work with these Metroparks because they do not care about the park's aims.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Several commenters recommended the park partner with the community and specific organizations to enhance the park. Recommended partnerships are provided below:

- Improve bike connectivity and provide cycling education and community rides through partnerships with various cities, organizations, and individual cyclists

- Work with the Ohio Climbers Association to establish climbing opportunities in the park
- Partner with public transit providers in nearby urban centers to provide easy access to trailheads and other park facilities
- Provide additional and enhanced advertising for themed train excursions in conjunction with Brecksville Historical Association, as themed excursions provide a venue for the Association
- Partnering with an outside group to offer trail rides on horseback
- Contact the Trumbull Canoe Trails Club to discuss river issues
- Consider a plein air art weekend in collaboration with the Cleveland Institute of Arts or Cleveland Museum of Art
- Create a Special Event Committee to establish a third party event and partnership platform
- Collaborate with Syatt to curate a cultural trail and to work on programming activities to include texting as a way to engage visitors
- Bring on kayak rental companies as consultants to assist with starting up a kayak livery
- Partner with Boston Mills, Brandywine, and Hale farm for parking
- Form a citizens advisory panel
- Partner with non-governmental organizations, Audubon, and National Geographic for birding-related issues
- Collaborate with local corporations, event planning teams, or human resource teams for the corporate use of park assets
- Collaborate with local farms to create a program to develop a nursery of native plants or foraging materials for the park and for sale to the public
- Enlist young volunteers, such as Eagle Scouts looking to fulfill their projects
- Invite the Crooked River Gang to the park for art exhibits
- Partner with Buckeye Trail Association to finalize a memorandum of understanding that would address volunteer management, trail promotion, trail maintenance, and improvement of the buckeye trail experience as part of statewide trail
- Discuss the use of nearby hotel parking lots for park visitors. The hotels could promote visitor packages and shuttles
- Discuss a cultural landscapes study with Cleveland Metroparks
- Manage consistent trail rules and enforcement between agencies, including off-trail violations and pet waste on bridle trails and mountain bike trails

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter encouraged the park to engage with local municipalities on updates to zoning codes in order to promote sustainable development, coherent land use(s), and buffer zones around the park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter suggested partnering with organizations, businesses, and video bloggers to generate online media to generate interest for the park. As an example, the commenter suggested enlisting celebrities for video blog episodes around the park.

### **RA1000 River Access Points**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters stated that current kayak launch sites should be upgraded or improved since many are dilapidated; commenters also offered several recommendations for developing these sites. Recommendations included installing step systems and constructing natural roadways to drop-off paddle equipment. The step system would consist of precast, reinforced, oversized concrete stairs embedded in the bank that adjust to water level for docking and are resilient to ice, flooding, and debris.

One commenter suggested the installation of a floating Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant paddle sport launch; digging a recess on the downriver side of bridge abutments (i.e., Rockside pedestrian bridge, Brecksville pedestrian bridge, Bolanz Road) would protect the paddle sport launch from river debris.

Commenters also supported the construction of new access points and improvements of existing access points. Commenters noted the following locations for either new access points or access point improvements:

- **New Access Points**
  - Put-in area for kayakers at Peninsula
  - Better access at Red Lock to the river steps
  - Add water trailhead at confluence of Tinker's Creek and Cuyahoga River to access from Canal Road
  - Move Brecksville launch farther north, closer to train depot
  - Add kayak livery launch at Boston (i.e., old train depot location)
  - Between Oxbow and Peninsula
  - Between Station Road and Rockside
  - Takeout at Bath Road or Ira Road
  - Takeout at the Canal Visitor Center
  - At Boston Store by circular parking lot
  - Below Brecksville train depot by trail bridge
  - Multiple launch facilities near Kayak Abroad stations
  - Put in/take out at Merriman Valley
  - Put in/take out that provides access to the City of Akron, Merriman Valley, Great Streets District (Partner with City of Akron, City of Cuyahoga Falls, Summit Metroparks, and Merriman Valley Neighborhood Association)
- **Improvements**
  - Launch area with the train station in Brecksville (difficult to pull equipment up the hill and through the field to the parking lot)
  - Station Road (dilapidated and potentially dangerous)
  - Peninsula launches (dilapidated and potentially dangerous)
  - Facility at south end of Brecksville parking lot
  - Station Road, install smooth, well-defined path to the river
  - Easier, safer access to the river in Peninsula

Commenters requested that additional launch sites be created with restrooms available nearby.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters stated that river access is often impeded because the river contains downed woody debris that requires cleaning and affects emergency access.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters, particularly paddlers, felt waterway information, access, and resources were lacking. A commenter noted they were unable to find a map with water trails or access points, and requested more access to water trail information. One commenter noted that they felt paddlers were not welcome in the park. Another commenter noted that they often go kayaking elsewhere because of the level of difficulty to access the river in the park. Commenters requested signs to direct visitors to access points and parking lots for river access.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested water safety programs and river hazard mitigation, in addition to better water trail access points.

## TR1000 Trail Management Strategies

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters identified trails that require maintenance, the level of maintenance need, and potential solutions:

- There are mud issues at Horseshoe Pond Trailhead for Tree Farm Trail; the park should provide additional drainage on the trail
- Trail at TerraVista is eroded
- Buckeye Trail is maintained by volunteer organization which can lead to sporadic maintenance and unresolved maintenance issues (i.e., fallen trees on the trail for months) and a general lack of maintenance budget. The park should develop a comprehensive trails plan to repair trails (i.e., Buckeye and others)
- At Blue Hen Falls / Brandywine Falls, visitors go off-trail. Barriers should be improved to prevent visitors from going off-trail
- Path heading south out of Peninsula is in disrepair and there are dangerous ruts
- Visitor Center to Blue Hen Falls face dangerous conditions; substantial infrastructure repairs are needed
- Boston Area Stanford Trail is in disrepair; the area should be repaired with rocks and trail mix fill and may need additional water bars or dips
- Carriage Trail; improvements needed in areas bridges were removed; add short, sturdy wood bridges
- Route 303 NT Happy Days; shabby; improve appearance and encourage more visitors to hike there
- Hampton Hills / Salt Run Trail is muddy in spring; a few 20 foot sections should be installed with gravel until it is possible
- Riverview / Vaughan; storm flooding and slippery slopes; redesign
- Creek crossing from Wetmore that passes the golf course

One commenter noted the overuse of all trails. The commenter suggested that the park develop a Trails Sustainability Plan. One commenter recommended prioritizing well-maintained trails (e.g., Oak Hill and Carriage Trail) while letting others become more natural (e.g., Buckeye Trail).

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested the park inventory their trails for common issues, such as erosion, mud, ruts, and trampled areas. Commenters provided the following maintenance options for trails in the park:

- Make some trails one-way permanent (e.g., Brandywine, Ledges, or loop trails)
- More volunteers are needed for trail maintenance
- E-bikes should not be allowed on trails
- Hikers should not be allowed on mountain bike trails
- Use stone, mulch, or drainage technologies for muddy or rutted trails
- Add bridges at river and creek crossings to prevent shore erosion
- Widen the trails (1 to 3 feet)
- Enhance enforcement on issues such as off-leash dogs, not cleaning up dog waste, littering, and off-trail visitors
- Encourage visitors to clean up dog waste if seen
- Build boardwalks over areas prone to mud

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter requested an easy way to report trail conditions. The commenter noted that visitors would contribute that information more readily if there were a simple platform to do it.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted that there is an adequate number of trails and access to them in the park. Additional trails should only be considered for highly affected locations, such as the mine near Hemlock Creek.

## **TR2000 Trail Connectivity**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters suggested the following types of trail connections to help with overcrowding, traffic at key trailheads, connections to popular locations, and overall ease of travel through the park:

- Expand collaboration with the local and county park systems to connect trails; more intra-park connections to Summit County Metroparks and Cleveland Metroparks. This includes better promoting of existing connections.
- Better connections between the park and neighboring business districts. Specifically the Merriman Valley
- All mountain bike trails should have two entry points, such that they can be used as a connector between different areas of the park
- More loop trails
- More trails to some of the larger waterfalls in the park
- Less trails centered around the Towpath Trail, Boston Store, and Peninsula
- Converting some trails to double track from single track
- Longer trails in general and trails with longer stretches between trailheads

Commenters further suggested the creation of the following trail connections:

- Ohio & Erie Canal to Towpath and the Summit Metroparks Bike and Hike Trail
- Tree Farm Trail to the city of Peninsula
- Towpath at Szalays and Covered Bridge
- Towpath and Valley View picnic area
- Oak Hill to Furnace Run / Covered Bridge
- From the Boston Store area going north on the Buckeye Trail (Loop trail)
- Brandywine Falls areas going north to Red Lock (Loop trail)
- A trail from Rt. 82 north to the Frazee House on Valley View Road
- Develop the old golf course into a trail system to connect the trails north and east of Peninsula down towards the Virginia Kendall system.
- Install a pedestrian bridge between Szalay's and Peninsula to connect the east and west side of the river
- Lot 29 Overflow Parking Lot to the Main Parking area and Trailhead
- Hemlock Creek Trail in Independence: a loop trail to take visitors around sandstone quarry remnants. This short path could loop back on itself or reconnect a small trailhead on Stone Road to the north
- The old golf course to 303 along Akron-Peninsula road
- East Rim Trail system with the Hampton Hills mountain bike trail
- Valley Trail to the parking lot at Jaite
- Connector trails to nearby residential areas, like the new Hemlock trail in Independence

- Route 82 and Riverview Road
- Columbia Rd/Riverview picnic area to the Buckeye Trail
- Trails to Twin Sisters and Buttermilk Falls
- Trails next to Independence's Hemlock trail that could be developed

One commenter noted that consideration should be given on how to connect trails without relying as heavily on main arteries. One commenter requested more topographically challenging trails.

### **TR3000 Towpath Trail Comments**

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters described safety issues with the Towpath Trail. Specifically, the trail is dangerous due to users' lack of awareness for each other, the popularity of the trail and the large number of visitors it attracts, and the presence of both cyclists and walkers. Commenters noted that the trail is too narrow for hikers and cyclists to co-exist, and cyclists often go too fast along the trail. Commenters requested the park post cyclist/hiker rules and etiquette at each trailhead; require cyclists to walk their bikes across decks (e.g., Beaver Marsh); and widen the trail, designate separate walking and biking lanes, or assign different days for cyclists/hikers to use the trail.

Some commenters noted that e-bikes should not be permitted on the trail due to speed-safety issues. One commenter specifically noted that the current speed limit of 15 mph is too fast for e-bikes to be passing pedestrians; e-bikes going 15mph can cause serious injury or death. The commenter requested that the park reconsider this safety concern.

Commenters further requested that the park post rules for dogs on the Towpath Trail, or restrict dogs from it outright.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested maintenance on the Towpath Trail because it is rutted, washed out, muddy, and/or bumpy. Commenters suggested paving the Towpath, grading it each spring, or resurfacing the trail with limestone. Commenters also suggested widening the Towpath Trail to alleviate congestion.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested additional connections or additions to the Towpath Trail:

- Connect the trail to Szalays Farm Market
- Make the trail a loop to alleviate congestion
- Connect the trail to nearby farms (e.g., Oxbow)
- Create bike paths from the surrounding communities to the Towpath Trail
- Provide more access points from small parking lots
- Signs to TerraVista along the Towpath

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter noted that the plaques/sculptures along the Towpath detracts from visitor experience and do not fit in with the natural scenery.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** One commenter has observed visitors along the Towpath picking plants, catching turtles, littering, and damaging the area by walking off the trail. The commenter stated that more visitor education is needed.

## WA1000 Wayfinding

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested better wayfinding signs, maps, or markings on hiking trails, including:

- Remote trails should have better signage so individuals without the Alltrails application can better follow them
- Old Carriage Road should include maps or blazes
- Continue one-way loops, but improve signage
- Buckeye Trail should include maps
- Include information on the length of trails and trail difficulty
- The markers at Oak Hill and Ledges need to be more noticeable
- Have better consistency between the park's trail markers and those of the surrounding recreation areas
- Trail intersections need to be better marked because they are currently confusing.

Commenters further requested wayfinding signs to water access points and for alternative routes and trails.

Several commenters requested etiquette signs on the trails, online, and on social media. These signs should aim to better educate the public on park etiquette, such as picking up after their dog, keeping dogs on leash, not leaving the trail, moving over for bikes and not taking up the entire trail when walking, and not climbing on rocks/ledges. One commenter noted that their local state park added signs to man-made side trails, encouraging visitors to follow the official trails; this has caused a large improvement in the state park's trail use.

Other commenters requested that wayfinding information should be accessible online, through mobile phone applications, or through the use of Quick Response (QR) codes on the trail.

One commenter noted that the park could work with Cleveland Metroparks and Summit Metro Park to ensure all properties within the park are clearly marked as part of the national park.

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested better signage along roadways. Specifically, commenters requested the following improvements

- Signs directing cars to less-popular areas of the park to help alleviate congestion and crowding
- Signs to and from Merriman Valley and the park to inform visitors of where to find food and drink in adjacent cities
- More signs at the boundaries of the park
- Signs that are larger and more visible
- Signs along major roadways, expressways, and interstates to more easily find the park
  - Major north and south routes
  - Route 21
  - Riverview
  - Akron-Peninsula
  - Route 8
  - Interstate 77

**CONCERN STATEMENT:** Commenters requested signs throughout the park that offered better clarification of issues, including:

- Signs that explain why maintenance was occurring in an area, rather than signs only noting a lack of access
- Signs on whether visitors are permitted in an area or not (e.g., for water-use, hiking, biking, horse-riding)
- Signs that communicate alternative ways to the same location in the park, or provide similar alternatives to the intended location in order to alleviate crowding
- Signs with rules regarding off-leash pets at trail entrances

One commenter opposed the use of signs informing visitors that parking lots close at dusk, because the park should be open to the public at all hours.