



Comprehensive Trail Management Plan

Scoping Information

Purpose of and Need for a Comprehensive Trail Management Plan

The National Park Service, in cooperation with Cleveland Metroparks and Metro Parks, Serving Summit County, is developing a new Comprehensive Trail Management Plan (TMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP). This Plan is needed as a strategic tool to guide the future course of trail management and development in Ohio's only National Park. The park's original 1985 plan is outdated and largely implemented. Regional trail networks have blossomed across Northeastern Ohio, increasing demands for additional trail connections, new trail uses and expanded recreational opportunities. Lessons have been learned regarding trail design, best management practices and the devastating effects of flooding. The broad purpose of the TMP is to identify management objectives and strategies to guide the development, protection, management, operations and use of the trail system within Cuyahoga Valley National Park over the next 15 years to meet new challenges and opportunities.

Existing Conditions and Issues

In 2009, over 160 miles of trails in CVNP provide for biking, hiking, equestrian and cross-country skiing recreation opportunities. Ranging from easy to challenging, some trails require you to cross streams with stepping stones or log bridges, while others like the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, are nearly level and accessible to all visitors. Four major multi-purpose trails occur in and around the Cuyahoga Valley: the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, the Metro Parks' Bike & Hike Trail, and the All Purpose Trails in Cleveland Metroparks' Brecksville and Bedford Reservations. The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath, with 20 miles in the park, extends into the Ohio & Erie Canalway both north and south of the park. Recreational bicycling in the park is limited to those trails and all roads. Bicycling is prohibited on all other trails. No motorized vehicles are permitted on park trails. More than 30 miles of equestrian trails provide a natural riding experience for the horse community. A portion of Ohio's Buckeye Trail also passes through more remote sections of the park.

Maintaining such a large trail network and related facilities (e.g., parking lots, signage, restrooms, etc.) provides many challenges from both a fiscal and labor perspective. Volunteers have played an increasingly important role in maintaining park trails.

Numerous plans for additional trail connections to neighboring communities and nearby trails are underway or envisioned. One example is the Hemlock Trail in Independence which will soon extend a connection from Brecksville Road to the Towpath Trail and may eventually connect Cleveland Metroparks' West Creek Reservation in Parma with the park.

Requests for new trail uses in national parks, including CVNP, to meet the needs of growing user groups have become more frequent in recent years. Technologies exist today (e.g., personal mobility devices) that may provide new means to enjoy trails. Walk-in camping is a desired amenity that was recently approved for the first time at one site in the park. Mountain biking has grown into a major recreational opportunity in recent decades. Trail running is also increasing in popularity.

Attention to the sustainability and environmental effects of trail design, placement and various trail uses continues to grow. Several trails established in flood-prone areas have faced repeated costly repairs or remain closed years after their destruction by floods (e.g., Dickerson Run and Tabletop Trails). Some trails were established on old farm lanes and are not necessarily located in an environmentally-sensitive manner. Changes in alignments, new trail sections, closures (permanent or seasonal), and changes in use have all been suggested remedies.