



GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT
Year in Review
2025



Photos at left by Tom Malinchak

Photo by Sunny Williams

In 2025, your parks received great care from our Natural Resource Management team and Ranger Department...

- Used prescribed fire to improve 36+ acres of native meadow/wildflower habitat that is critical for pollinators and songbirds, and participated in regional efforts to assist other local educational and conservation organizations in their burns.



- Thanks to the generous donation of greenhouse space by Kent State Geauga, grew 1,000+ native trees and wildflowers from

- Stocked 2,200+ fish for anglers to enjoy at three different parks; 1,000+ of them were 12+” Rainbow Trout provided for free by the Ohio Division of Wildlife.



- Treated 646 acres for invasive plant management and control, targeting 55 different invasive species.

- Continued to guide/monitor a unique cold-water stream restoration project at Veterans Legacy Woods, which was totally funded through an Ohio EPA grant.
- Led numerous local college and university field trips, government agencies, non-profit conservation organizations and Park District events to restoration sites at Veterans Legacy Woods.
- Successfully completed in-house reforestation projects at Orchard Hills Park, Veterans Legacy Woods, Claridon Woodlands and Sunnybrook Preserve with the help of generous volunteers, planting native trees and shrubs for improved habitat and wildlife food.



collected seed; 200 individuals/families then purchased them at a nominal cost to improve wildlife habitat at home in honor of Earth Day.

- With volunteer assistance, successfully monitored and managed 4,000+ hemlock trees for the non-native invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid insect.
- Led several new projects: to enhance meadows at Swine Creek Reservation and Frohring Meadows, improve wetland/forest habitats through invasive plant control at Burton Wetlands, implement new seeding efforts at Beartown Lakes Reservation, and conduct mowing and reforestation at Veterans Legacy Woods.
- Guided and managed the horticultural maintenance of bioswales, native landscaping and stormwater basins at many parks including Veterans Legacy Woods, Orchard Hills Park and Frohring Meadows.
- Continued to collaborate regionally with conservation partners on important habitat restoration/wildlife management projects, including one devoted to our State Endangered native Brook Trout.

- Performed daily ranger patrols and handled 1,425 incident reports.
- Conducted firearm, archery and muzzleloader pre-qualifications for 200 resident hunters, hosted hunter safety courses, and oversaw hunting-related park closures.
- Patrolled 576 miles of Park District trail on foot.

FINANCE

Opening Cash Balance as of 1/1/2025

\$5,591,787

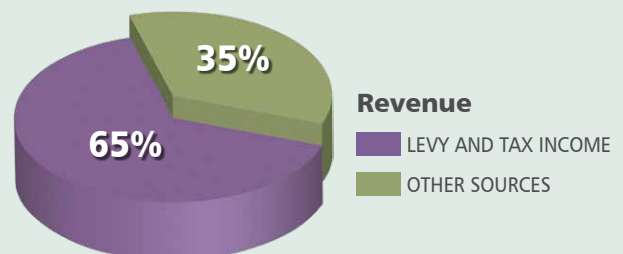
Revenue & Other Sources

Levy and Tax Income
Other Sources

6,120,207
3,259,775

Total Source of Funds

\$9,379,982



...and these investments were made in your parks' future by our skilled planning, construction, and grounds and facilities staff.

- Completed a 2025 Strategic Plan to guide decision-making, goals, priorities, and how we address future challenges during the next five years.



- Completed The West Woods bridge replacement at a total cost of \$907,378.03; this project received \$852,000 in Ohio Department of Transportation funding.



- Added a second "tree house" campsite and additional lean-to campsite at Big Creek Park, both built internally by construction staff.

- Completed improvements to

The Maple Highlands Trail-North at the Lake County line: new signage, a new information board, and a new trail node with seating.

- Conducted trail maintenance and parking lot resurfacing at Sunnybrook Preserve.
- Paved the parking lot at Tupelo Pond in Big Creek Park; a picnic shelter will also soon improve access to this portion of the park.



- At Veterans Legacy Woods, completed a large-scale reforestation project costing \$159,360, which was totally funded through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant, that planted 1,900+ native trees and shrubs over 13 acres; Planning & NRM also secured \$475,197 of H2Ohio funding for multiple stream and wetland restoration projects scheduled here in 2026.
- Along with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, obtained Clean Ohio grant funding for the purchase and protection of 59 acres along Ellison Creek in Chardon and Concord townships.



- Completed a new Nature-based playground and boardwalk, site lighting and restroom improvements at Beartown Lakes Reservation costing \$440,000; \$337,194 of this was funded by

a State Capital Improvement award through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

- Finished plans for new restrooms with running water at Big Creek Park's Deep Woods Lodge, a new West Operations facility, and upcoming improvements to The West Woods Nature Center's exhibit area.
- Replaced entry signage at Beartown Lakes Reservation, Orchard Hills Park, The Maple Highlands Trail-North and Hambden Hills, as well as informational kiosk and wayfinding/interpretive signage throughout 28 parks.

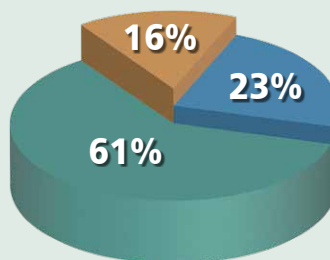
- Provided day-to-day maintenance and support to all 28 parks and more than 92 miles of trails, 12 lodges, 27 shelters and 35 campsites for valued reservation-holders and visitors.

Expenditures & Other Uses

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Personnel and Benefits | 4,750,924 |
| Operating | 1,789,581 |
| Capital Improvements | 1,283,974 |

Total Uses of Funds **\$7,824,479**

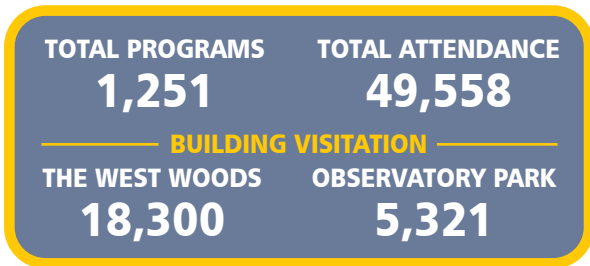
Year End Cash Balance as of 12/31/2025 **\$7,147,290**



Expenditures

- PERSONNEL AND BENEFITS
- OPERATING
- CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

In 2025, Geauga Park District's naturalists, visitor representatives, volunteers and marketing team helped you connect with Nature.



- Responded to 1,096 public Nature inquiry contacts via our Ask a Naturalist website, social media posts, emails, phone calls and in person.



- Held our first-ever WILD About Winter Nights event at Big Creek Park with 435 attending.
- Led 60 archery programs with 1,259 attending.
- Created 24 natural history videos for social media and 40 seasonal displays for the Nature Center.



- Facilitated 1,500 boat rentals and 787 high ropes course climbs.
- Led 107 campers entering grades 3 through 10 on week-long summer day camp adventures.
- Welcomed 17,656 visitors to our building at The Great Geauga County Fair.
- Engaged 820 fifth-graders from 11 local schools through our Nature Scopes Binocular Program during the 2024-25 school year.

- Partnered with the Foundation for Geauga Parks to financially support our summer camps, Nature Writing Contest and Nature Scopes Binocular Program.

- Hosted 1,025 people at our annual Winter Solstice Celebration — the event's highest attendance since debuting in 1989 — as well as 1,389 people for maple sugaring programs including Sap's-a-Risin'!



- Facilitated 571 plays of the app-based exploration game Agents of Discovery, resulting in 30.5 miles traveled.
- Facilitated 2,627 facility reservations (attended by 111,417) and 1,391 camping reservations for Geauga residents and others enjoying our county's natural areas.
- Created an exhibit plan for the upcoming West Woods Nature Center renovation in 2027.
- Hosted three mentorship students from Kenston and West Geauga.

Volunteerism

In total, 139 active volunteers generously provided 5,566.25 hours of support to programs, events, trail maintenance, natural resources and more. Among them, our 43-member Volunteer Trail Team gave 1,255.75 hours for trail maintenance, and our 24-member Bike Patrol spent 214.5 hours patrolling The Maple Highlands Trail.

- Reached 42,747 households with each quarterly Park Explorer Activity Guide.
- Engaged Facebook users 787,272 times with an active social media presence, as well as 4,368 followers on X and 6,370 followers on Instagram.
- Hosted 410,256 website views by 255,367 users online.
- Inspired writers of all ages to compose 230 pieces of Nature-inspired poetry and prose through the 30th Annual Nature Writing Contest.