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Ohio EPA Awards Grants to Restore Portions of Chagrin State Scenic River

Restoration efforts in the Chagrin River watershed will receive a big boost thanks to two major grants awarded by Ohio EPA. The Geauga Park District will receive \$400,000 to restore headwater streams in Geauga County and Lake Metroparks will receive \$349,584 to reestablish floodplain along the main stem in Lake County. The grants are two of seven grants Ohio EPA issued statewide totaling nearly \$2.9 million.

Partnering with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Geauga Park District will use its grant and a \$425,000 local match to turn the 212-acre former Orchard Hills golf course in Chester Township into a natural riparian area. They also will remove two lowhead dams and use natural channel design and native plantings to restore 1,325 feet of headwater streams, two acres of wetlands and two acres of riparian forest. An additional 175 feet of culverted stream will be “daylighted” and 40 acres of high quality riparian areas will be permanently protected through a conservation easement.

Lake Metroparks will use its grant and a \$233,056 local match to reconnect the Chagrin River’s main stem to its natural floodplain on 45 acres in Willoughby Hills. In addition to removing a 650-foot earthen levee, they will restore 3.9 acres of previously existing wetlands and six acres of wet meadow area. They also will control invasive plants on 11.4 acres and plant native trees and shrubs on 17 acres.

When complete, both projects are expected to improve overall water quality in the watershed.

In 1987, Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act created a national program to control nonpoint source pollution. Ohio EPA administers the program for U.S. EPA and distributes millions of federal dollars to projects proposed by local governments and community organizations such as watershed groups. To be eligible, grant recipients must contribute at least a 40 percent match consisting of cash or in-kind contributions or services. Grants of up to \$500,000 are awarded for three-year periods.

Nonpoint source pollution is the leading cause of water quality impairment in Ohio’s streams and lakes. There are many sources of nonpoint pollution including runoff from farm fields, urban areas and abandoned coal mines. Typical grants help pay for stream restoration, lowhead dam removal, abatement of acid mine drainage and protection of wetlands and riparian areas.

The Chagrin River watershed — comprising approximately 267 square miles — flows through dozens of communities in Portage, Geauga, Cuyahoga and Lake counties before emptying into Lake Erie. In 1979, part of the Chagrin River was designated as a state scenic river. In 2002, the scenic designation was extended to include additional streams in the watershed.

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Ohio 319 Program Information:
www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/nps/319Program.aspx

Chagrin State Scenic River Information:
www.ohiodnr.com/dnap//sr/chagrin/tabid/982/Default.aspx

Gauga Park District:
www.geaugaparkdistrict.org

Lake Metroparks:
www.lakemetroparks.com