



# Richfield HERITAGE PRESERVE

JULY eNEWSLETTER

Photo courtesy of Michelle Merolla

## A Message from Your Park Director David Green

PARK or PRESERVE . . .

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In this issue, we focus on the many ways we are continuing to work to PRESERVE our park. One such effort is the rehabilitation of the dams...



## REHABILITATING RHP DAMS

Phase II Commences Mid-July

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The work in Phase II will be executed by Northstar Contracting out of Cleveland under the supervision of Gannett Fleming, Engineers and Architect, P.C. The completion of this work will bring the dams into full compliance with

the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

### THE TIMELINE

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- Partial demolition of the existing...

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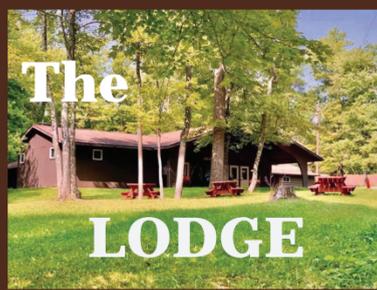
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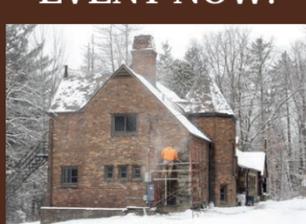
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Blue Bird Trail  
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Programming



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Park Program  
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## A Message from Your Park Director David Green

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### PARK or PRESERVE . . .

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In 2014, Richfield voters wanted to preserve our 336-acre property for its extraordinary, rich natural resources and historic landmarks by saving it from development. This same ground is also utilized for recreation such as kayaking, hiking, jogging and birding. Knowing these definitions, and the reasoning behind Richfield Heritage Preserve, it's easy to see why both definitions apply.

In this issue, we focus on the many ways we are continuing to work to PRESERVE our park. One such effort is the rehabilitation of the dams at the Upper and Lower Lakes. In fact, Phase II of the work commences this month and will continue into the Fall. This is the largest project undertaken at RHP and is supported with capital fund finances to bring the dams into full compliance with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Once the dams are repaired, the Lower Lake's basin will once again be filled with water and returned back to its intended state.

The ripple effect of the dam rehabilitation continues with our iconic Kirby Mill entering the next phase of its restoration with the removal and reconstruction of the mill wheel. If you want to support this effort, please read more about the 100 Days of Summer - double your impact

campaign headed up by the Friends of Crowell Hilaka - at Richfield Heritage Preserve in this issue! In addition, details about the ongoing preservation efforts spearheaded by FoCH include the Historic Home Stabilization Task Force and the Invasive Species Management Program featured as well.

One easily overlooked preservation effort that continues to be a priority is our effort to maintain the park's Perimeter Fence Program. Having the entire property fenced off over the past 50 years has limited the deer population which in turn enables native plants to flourish. We are currently looking for ways to fund this program to continue to repair damaged fencing from fallen trees. Another effort to support that diversity is a new volunteer-run Bluebird Monitoring Program which began this spring and runs until late fall which we talk more about as well.

As the first park director for RHP, I have spent the past 7 months learning much about where it all started, what has taken place and how we've been operating. Soon, we will begin a new strategic planning process to create a plan for Richfield Heritage Preserve that will prioritize new goals and objectives moving forward. We will be seeking community input and will keep all stakeholders of RHP informed as this plan develops.

I hope as you read this issue you will see all that we are doing to preserve this magnificent property and ensure that it is open, enjoyable and safe for everyone.

I'm looking forward to seeing you on the trails!

*David Green*



## REHABILITATION OF RHP DAMS Phase II Commences Mid-July

It's been a **L O N G** time-coming! The second phase of Richfield Heritage Preserve's dam rehabilitation project begins in a few short weeks. Phase I was completed in October 2019 and Phase II is expected to take about three months. Weather could impact the completion date of this project.

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### THE TIMELINE

Phase II project consists of "concrete" rehabilitations of the Lower Lake dam concrete spillway, the Lower Lake mill house, and the Upper Lake dam concrete spillway. Work beginning in Mid-July will include:

- Removal of lake sediment from the upstream face of the spillway
- Partial demolition of the existing concrete spillway
- Replacement of a slide gate lake drain
- Mass concrete fill of the demolished spillway
- Surficial concrete repairs along the spillway and mill house
- Cast in place buttress walls at the mill house

Improvements of the Upper Lake dam, begin in September and will include:

- Mass concrete placement under the existing spillway
- Drilling and grouting along the spillway apron
- Surficial concrete repairs to the spillway
- Erosion control, dewatering, and other appurtenant items are also required for the completion of the project

In July 2019, Black Horse Bridge Construction, Inc., under the supervision of Gannett Fleming, Engineers and Architects, P.C, began work on Phase I of the lower lake dam rehabilitation.



Improvements included earthwork along the dam and auxiliary spillway, installation of a reinforced concrete retaining wall, reinforced concrete slab, metal staircase and an articulating concrete block (ACB) revetment system to provide erosion protection.

The ACB system was chosen as an economical design solution. It is a matrix of individual concrete blocks placed together to form an erosion-resistant overlay. The ACB system has proven to be an aesthetic and functional alternative to traditional solutions such as dumped stone riprap, structural concrete and other heavy-duty erosion protection systems. Not only is the ACB system state-of-the-art, it also gives us a savings of close to 60% over traditional methods. This system is tried and tested in other states, but this was the first time the armoring system was used in Ohio.

Completion of this project fulfills what voters requested at the time the property was purchased and in public meetings, that the lakes be **SAVED** and brought back into compliance. Failure of the dams would potentially bring serious loss of property and potential injury to those living nearby. This work will be completed nearly 100 years after the Lower Lake dam was built by inventor James Kirby to turn his mill wheel to generate hydroelectricity for his workshop and home.

For more information on the rehabilitation of Kirby's Mill Wheel, please read "Restoring Kirby's Mill Wheel" in this issue.



## PRESERVING KIRBY'S MILL WATER WHEEL Work Begins This Month!

Kirby's Mill is Richfield Heritage Preserve's iconic, most recognizable structure. It was built in 1922 by the prolific inventor James B. Kirby to generate electricity for his home and workshop in Richfield. Kirby's design may have been partly nostalgic and based on the picturesque, water-powered mills used from ancient times up through the 19th century. However, he added his own innovative twists that made the mill work efficiently using only a small stream of water. Kirby's Mill is an example of creative engineering and energy production and was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1978.



disassemble the old Kirby Mill wheel and once restored, reinstall it sometime in late September of this year.

Ideally, while the wheel is being rebuilt, FoCH would like to have the concrete support structures for the Mill wheel fortified prior to the newly restored wheel being reinstalled. If funding goes even better than expected during their "100 Days of Summer" campaign they hope to not only cover the expense for the rebuilding of the water wheel but the concrete work done as well.

Restoring and preserving this nearly 100 year old mill is a priority for RHP and its friends group, Friends of Crowell Hilaka (FoCH) for Richfield Heritage Preserve. Over the years, FoCH has restored the existing windows with plexiglass protection and a new roof (no repairs) with new sheathing, new ice and water shield to handle any future shifting if the mill needed to be lifted for concrete repairs, as well as new shingles.



The next steps are well underway to get the water wheel working again. FoCH has taken on this task with the approval of the Richfield Joint Recreation District and engaged premier millwright Ben Hassett to restore the water wheel. With his expertise, Hassett has rebuilt several historic water-powered mills throughout the country. In July, he plans to

Eventually, the master plan is to restore the entire Mill once the needed funding is secured. This includes the repair of the swinging bridge, the exterior stairs near the spillway, the water wheel deck, an accessible pathway to the deck, landscaping and benches. The final phase of restoration is to purchase the hydroelectric power generation equipment required to demonstrate how the water wheel worked in Kirby's time.



To learn more about the history of Kirby's Mill, please go to <https://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org/kirbys-mill.html#/>

Find detailed information about the restoration of Kirby's Mill at <https://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org/kirbys-mill-restoration.html#/>



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# Richfield HERITAGE PRESERVE

## RESTORE KIRBY'S MILL Two is Better Than One Campaign

This summer, the Friends of Crowell Hilaka for Richfield Heritage Preserve is actively raising funds to get Kirby's Mill wheel turning again! For the 100 days of summer, now through Labor Day, their campaign offers what they are calling "Two is Better Than One". For every dollar donated, a generous

donor will match dollar for dollar up to \$10,000. This means you **DOUBLE** your impact by donating now! For more information about the campaign and how you can support this important project, please click on the image below.

RESTORE KIRBY'S MILL AT RICHFIELD HERITAGE PRESERVE 4374 BROADVIEW ROAD, RICHFIELD, OH 44286

ONE IS GOOD  
**TWO IS BETTER**

# DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!

For the 100 days of summer, your gift can make twice the impact to help restore Kirby's Mill. Thanks to a generous donor, every dollar donated is matched by a dollar (up to \$5,000) from now until Labor Day.

*Let's get the mill wheel turning again.*

**DONATE at [friendsofcrowellhilaka.org/donate](https://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org/donate)**

 **Friends of Crowell Hilaka**  
for RICHFIELD HERITAGE PRESERVE

    Friends of Crowell Hilaka is a non-profit advocacy group promoting Richfield Heritage Preserve. Follow us on social media: [friendsofcrowellhilaka.org](https://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org).



**RICHFIELD**  
Joint Recreation District

## BLUEBIRD MONITORING PROGRAM UNDERWAY Helping a Species Thrive

Invasive species not only come in the form of plants, but many animals can also be invasive. House Sparrows are non native to North America and are an aggressive species that take over the nesting sites, territories, and food sources of native birds and are very difficult to manage.

From 1920-1970 there was a major decline in the eastern, western and mountain bluebird populations. Not only was the House Sparrow a threat, but loss of habitat due to agriculture, pesticide use, weather changes, snag (dead tree) removal, and even house cats contributed to the bluebird's decline. Due to these threats the bluebird went from being as common as the robin, to being so rare that birders were sure of its inevitable extinction.

Today, bluebird numbers are healthy but will always be threatened by the House Sparrow, agriculture, climate change and other environmental impacts making continuous intervention important. In fact, according to the Audubon Society, a high percentage of bluebirds in North America today nest in birdhouses put up especially for them along "bluebird trails."

Naturally, the success of any bluebird trail program relies heavily on their constant monitoring from early March through the end of September. It takes time, experience, knowledge and someone to oversee the program. Enter Joe Blanda, a retired physician from Peninsula. Building bluebird boxes and attracting the threatened species was something special he shared with his father. For more than 30 years, Blanda annually tends to the bluebird trail at his home and helps others set up bluebird boxes on their properties. He believes that nature is very therapeutic and enjoys spending time in it helping the bluebirds.

Under the charge of RHP Park Director David Green, RHP Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Czaplicki worked behind-the-scenes to find interested individuals who share a similar interest as Blanda. Each volunteer signed a Bluebird Position Agreement and attended online training in February. In our first year we have five teams of volunteers monitoring 17 bluebird boxes.

According to Blanda, bluebirds typically raise between two and three broods each year, and they will often reuse old nests. It could take a couple of seasons of careful, vigilant monitoring and patience for the bluebirds to start using the nestboxes. But, once the bluebirds are successful in their nesting pursuits, they generally return to the same area each year.

An important detail in the monitoring of bluebirds is collecting data. The group uses the NestWatch app to log their bluebird observations. When completed for the birding season, the final data is sent to Cornell Lab of Ornithology for research as well as to the Ohio Bluebird Society for overall population counts.

For those curious, The data collected thus far for the 17 bluebird boxes (with three months to go) is:

- 22 nesting attempts
- 54 total eggs
- 28 young

Anyone interested in volunteering for the RHP Bluebird Trail Monitoring Program next year, please contact our RHP Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer-info@rjrd.org](mailto:volunteer-info@rjrd.org)



Kurt Grenig

### BLUEBIRD TRAIL BOXES

Why is the bluebird important? Diversity in species positively impacts the environment and helps maintain a healthy balance. Bluebirds are also good for agriculture by feeding on insects and helping to ensure a reliable food source for people.

Attracting this beautiful, beneficial species has been an interest of many groups, especially scouting. As past service projects at Richfield Heritage Preserve, scouts built and installed numerous bluebird boxes at the preserve. They are as listed:

Girl Scout Troop 650 built 8 bluebird boxes in February 2018.

Fairview Park Boy Scout Troop 421 installed the 8 boxes built by Girl Scout Troop 650 in April of 2018.

Eagle Scout Jackson Perisutti installed 9 additional bluebird boxes in August of 2019.

Thanks to these young individuals for their contributions to our Bluebird program.



## THE HISTORIC HOME STABILIZATION TASK FORCE Helping Preserve Park Structures

Saving a 336-acre property from development and turning it into a public park is an ambitious goal. But with dedicated volunteers and an active friends group, Richfield Heritage Preserve has come a long way!

Following the successful purchase of the former Girl Scout Camp Crowell Hilaka, the newly community-formed, recreation district's (RJRD) board began making decisions to determine where resources should be focused and funds from the bond issue and levy allocated.



In 2017, the Richfield Joint Recreation District hired architect Tim Franklin to assess the historic structures in RHP. Franklin's written report prioritized structures that could be restored. He stressed that Amity House, a French Normandy-style historic "cottage" close to the main parking lot, was in danger of collapse citing issues of moisture in the basement and rotting wood supports. If not repaired he felt the entire home would be lost.



RJRD enlisted the help of the Friends of Crowell

Hilaka (FoCH) to head up the Historic Home Stabilization Task Force and provided the group with a list of structures to focus on.

Unlike the full restoration of a historic structure, "stabilization" is limited to stopping and reversing deterioration of a building. Once stabilized, potentially valuable structures can be "mothballed" and protected indefinitely until restoration funding can be secured and plans made for sustainable adaptation that aligns with the community's vision.

In 2018, RJRD approved FoCH's developing work plans and fundraising to stabilize

North, Kirby, and Amity Houses. According to Corey Ringle, FoCH president, the Dorn Foundation has taken the lead in contributing funds for stabilization projects. With their help and the help of other significant donors,

the Task Force has accomplished the following without spending any tax dollars:

- Installed protective window boards at Kirby house
- Created swales at Amity and North Houses to direct rain runoff away from the foundations

- Replaced deteriorating rim joist at Amity House

- Braced Amity floor beams and sistered floor joists

- Removed soil and debris from Amity and North House basements

- Purchased fans and dehumidifiers to keep the basements dry

- Advised on Kirby's Mill restorations

- Repaired cracked masonry at Amity's southeast porch and corrected underlying problems



This year, the Task Force is currently working with the park director to repair or replace joists, and install appropriate gutters and downspouts at North House. Also, they are working on bracing basement structures and redirecting water away from the foundation of Kirby House.

Looking to the future, these historic homes as well as other existing structures at RHP will be reassessed through an updated strategic plan which will be underway sometime in the fall.



## SURVEY SAYS! Park Programming

We love knowing what people think and what they want from their park. Last month's survey focused on Park Programming and the results are enlightening and helpful to us as we look to fill the calendar through 2021 and begin planning spring and summer 2022.



95

percent of people  
polled are interested  
in Park Programs &  
Events!



While individuals from every age group responded, most were over 50 and about a third were in their 30s or 40s.



Most of those surveyed requested educational and recreational programs and programming for families and couples.



64

percent of those surveyed want to engage in Community Events at RHP.



87

percent of people surveyed are willing to pay a fee to attend programs.



78

percent of people polled want weekend programs in the afternoons & evenings.

