

Discover your Outdoor Experience at

Richfield HERITAGE PRESERVE

MAY eNEWSLETTER

A Message from Your Park Director David Green

Hiking, or walking in the out of doors, is an activity that for some is a way of life. Getting outdoors and unplugging in nature has many benefits. Studies show that this one activity can relieve stress, elevate one's mood, and provide beneficial movement for longevity as well as improved cardiovascular health.

In 2020, throughout the pandemic, people were drawn to the outdoors to unpack their thoughts, release stress, and do some good, mindful reflection. In fact the Outdoor Industry Association reported that big changes were observed in the hiking world during this unprecedented time. With gyms closed early on in the pandemic and social distancing in order, there was a significant bump in the number of hikes, the number of users recording hikes on apps, and overall hikes by individuals. The sheer volume of people hitting the trails was up 171% and the number of individual hikers also skyrocketed with 134% more hikers than the previous year. In real numbers, hiking was up from 405k people in 2019 to 951k in 2020...



A 336-ACRE WOOD Full of Trails and Opportunity

Richfield Heritage Preserve is a beautiful 336-acre wood with approximately 5 miles of trails that criss cross the property. In addition to a variety of hiking trails, RHP is home to a portion of the Buckeye Trail and 2 miles of Bridle Trails. Whether on foot or horseback, the Preserve's vast and varied terrain provides for very good hiking and hoofing.

During the pandemic we saw a significant uptick in the numbers of people coming to the park to get out for a breath of fresh air and some exercise. Being utilized as an important outlet for the mental and physical well-being is very reaffirming that RHP is a vital resource in the community and the region.

That being said, with many more miles being traveled on our trails and the beating they receive from the elements make ongoing upkeep of the trails a very important priority and a challenge.

Trail maintenance is vital for safety which is why RHP organizes trail Work Days to remove tripping hazards, eliminate wet spots, divert water, attend to natural erosion, remove fallen trees, trim back overgrowth and more!

Read on for some of what was accomplished by RHP, Buckeye Trail and OHC volunteers...

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READ MORE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SELECTS RHP

NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Richfield Heritage Preserve is pleased to announce its acceptance into the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program for FY21 (May 2021 – April 2022). The goal of the grant is to focus on RHP community engagement, programming and trail improvement.

Every year, the NPS-RTCA program works with hundreds of communities, nonprofits and land agencies on proposed projects through an annual applica-



tion process. Successful awardees are then partnered up with NPS staff who are invited to assist in turning these conservation and outdoor recreation visions into a reality.

RHP Park Director David Green updated a proposal to the RTCA program in January and reapplied for the grant for 2021-22. The original grant request was submitted in 2019 by past RJRD Board Member Meg Slifcak and Friends of Crowell Hilaka for Richfield Heritage Preserve...

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Calling All Citizen Scientists



Apply Online



Hike the 44286



5 Questions in 5 Minutes



Hike the Trails



Volunteer Perception Results

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Joint Recreation District

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JOIN RHP'S EMAIL LIST

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We're not surprised by this data as we have observed a significant uptick in the numbers of people venturing out to Richfield Heritage Preserve. Our trails have been an asset to so many as they endeavored to improve their physical and mental being during this challenging time.

This month, our eNewsletter clearly focuses on hiking. In this issue we share some heartwarming stories about the impressive support we get from RHP Volunteers and partner groups to maintain and improve our trails. We are also very pleased to announce a new grant we received from the National Park Service specifically meant to benefit our trails project.

You may recall our first interest survey indicated that 80% of our visitors come to Richfield Heritage Preserve to hike. So, as we move forward and fine-tune our ideas to improve our trails, we are once again looking to you for input. Please take a moment to participate in this month's "5 Questions in 5 Minutes" survey on hiking. This will enable us to gather the impressions and insights from a sampling of our park goers and utilize this information for future improvements.

Be sure to check out our list of upcoming programs on our new calendar found on our website. We are excited to create opportunities for everyone to hike and learn more about the wonders we have here at The Preserve.

Hope to see you out on the RHP Trails!

David Green



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Here's some of what was accomplished by RHP, Buckeye Trail and Ohio Horseman Council volunteers:

BUCKEYE TRAIL WORKDAY

Buckeye Trail and Richfield Heritage Preserve volunteers worked collaboratively to accomplish the following:

- Added several inches of crush and run to the turnpike section near Mable Smith
- Cut several fallen trees along the Buckeye Trail between the meadow and the cobblestone dam
- Re-benched several sections of the trail
- Cut new drainage ditches
- Cleaned out existing drainage ditches

- Cut back overhanging vegetation
- Removed roots from the trail.
- Installed eight Buckeye Trail carsonite posts.

BRIDLE TRAIL WORK DAY

In preparation for the riding season, the Ohio Horseman's Council and Richfield Heritage Preserve volunteers worked collaboratively to accomplish the following:

- Reroute sections of the bridle trail near Wonken Tonken and Fernwood.
- Cut and moved several fallen trees.
- Removed overhanging branches.
- Raked and blew leaves off the rerouted sections of the bridle trail.
- Removed small connecting trails as well as the carsonite posts and corresponding bridle trail signage.

These work days were very successful and the number of volunteers who turned out reaffirms our knowledge that RHP is becoming a hot spot for local hikers and walkers. As we head toward peak season with summer on the horizon, more work days will be scheduled to tackle other trails throughout the park.

As part of an ongoing series of surveys being offered in his first year as RHP Park Director, David Green is asking park-goers to take part in this month's hiking survey to see how the trails can be improved. The idea is to compile the information from this survey and share the data with the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; with future park Taskforce committees, as well as for the Strategic Plan for RHP.

Be sure to take the survey yourself at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6CFRZPP>

VOLUNTEER for TRAIL WORK DAYS
Those interested in helping out on Trail Work Days, please contact our volunteer coordinator at volunteer-info@rjrd.org



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SELECTS RHP NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

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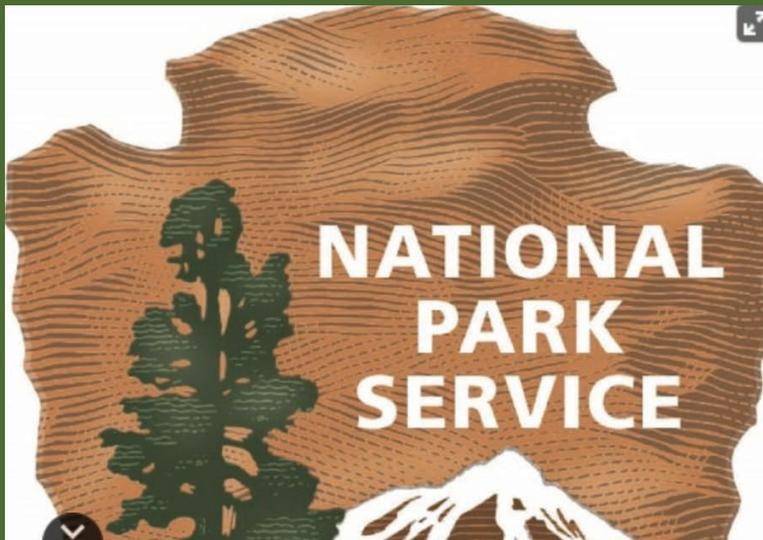
Member Meg Slifcak and Friends of Crowell Hilaka for Richfield Heritage Preserve's Vice President Beth Sanderson. Although

the grant was approved, the pandemic stalled out all of the awardee projects from moving ahead in 2020.

When asked about this opportunity, Green said, "I am looking forward to this opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and professionals from the National Park System and have our park benefit from their expertise."

Being able to continue with this grant is timely as RHP moves forward under the direction of Green. The grant will build upon his ongoing efforts to engage with the RHP park community through his monthly electronic newsletter, online surveys,

online program and events calendar, as well as leading his own monthly hiking event.



Richfield Heritage Preserve

The National Park Service will work with Richfield Joint Recreation District to reactivate a recently acquired former girl scout camp. The NPS will facilitate community meetings and events to engage and develop support for the redevelopment of the park, convene a wide variety of regional partners to explore and strategize programming opportunities, explore local and regional connections of trails to the park and assess the existing trails for conditions and use, and explore the vision for the future of Richfield Heritage Preserve.



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iNATURALISTS Connect with Nature at RHP

iNaturalist is a crowd-sourced, citizen science-based program where you can:

- Share your nature observations by taking photographs on your smartphone or camera and uploading them to our park's project page.
- Connect with experts who can identify your observations.
- Learn by connecting with other naturalists and helping others.
- Help scientists and resource managers understand where species occur.

Click the photo for more information about getting the FREE app for your phone OR registering from your laptop. Then, begin adding photo observations to the Richfield Heritage Preserve iNaturalist project.

We thank everyone for getting involved!!

The screenshot displays the iNaturalist mobile app interface. At the top, a large photo of a mantid is shown with an orange overlay box that reads "Connect with Nature" and "Explore and share your observations from the natural world." Below this are "SIGN UP" and "EXPLORE" buttons. A user profile for "Ashutosh Shinde" is visible, along with the text "Mantid from Thane, India". Logos for the California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic are present. Below the main content is a "How It Works" section with three steps: 1. Record your observations (showing a smartphone with a green leaf icon), 2. Share with fellow naturalists (showing two people icons with a green arrow), and 3. Discuss your findings (showing a butterfly icon and a speech bubble).



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VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS WANTED

Share Your Knowledge with RHP Visitors



We are still very young in park years and are operating with little funds to hire on staff. Fortunately, we are making great progress with the help of many AMAZING volunteers who have invested sweat equity in nearly every corner of RHP.

Many volunteers possess expertise in areas that are very helpful to us. That's why we are asking for individuals who are experienced naturalists to GET INVOLVED and help us lead hikes, meet with park visitors and impart their knowledge of the great outdoors while at Richfield Heritage Preserve.

If YOU are an experienced naturalist and want to get involved, please reach out to David Green, RHP Park Director. Unpaid internships for budding naturalists are also available!

David Green
Park-Director@rjrd.org



HIKING THE 44286

Help Protect a Fragile, Natural Area

Whether you visit our park once a month or once a year, there are ways YOU can help protect Richfield Heritage Preserve. Here are a few of the ways:

1) PLEASE STAY ON MARKED TRAILS

It may seem harmless to go off trail but it isn't. In fact it causes all sorts of issues.

WHY?

The Purpose of a Trail is to allow visitors to move through a natural area without disrupting the environment. The main objectives of a trail is for enjoyment and education. Park settings like RHP allow visitors to see, feel, smell and hear living examples of the natural history of their region.

The repercussions of widespread off-trail hiking in heavily trafficked areas include:

- Large scale erosion
- Damaged vegetation
- Disruption to wildlife
- Altered hydrology
- Widening of trails
- Increased muddiness

2) HIKE WITH CLEAN SHOES

It doesn't matter where you hike, whether at RHP or elsewhere, clean shoes matter!

WHY?

According to the Sierra Club, hiking shoes can cause cross contamination from one park to another. It is important to CLEAN your shoes before going on a hike.

The mud caked in the treads of your shoes may contain seeds of invasive plants, which can be transferred from your shoes from one park to another. Non native plants quickly push out native plants and can quickly wreak havoc on an otherwise healthy ecosystem. Your shoes can also track bacteria like leptospirosis from your shoes to the trail. It is spread through the urine of infected animals. It can get into water or soil and survive for weeks to months. Many different kinds of

wild and domestic animals carry the bacterium. Outbreaks have been known to occur for the simple fact that people don't take the time to clean off the treads of their shoes.

3) LOVE & PROTECT FLOWERS

If you love our wildflowers, then please do not pick them.

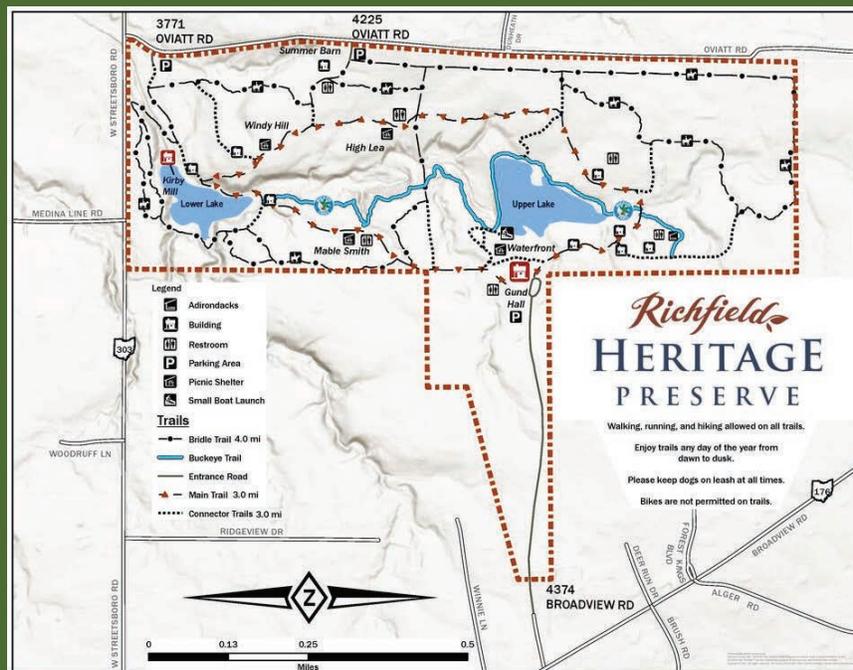
WHY?

Our park is for everyone to enjoy and when someone picks a flower then only he or she can enjoy it. Loving flowers is about appreciation, not possession. Please leave the things you find and love alive at RHP for others to enjoy!

Preservation of Property & Natural Features is one of our park rules which states that no person shall knowingly injure, deface, disturb, or destroy any tree, flower, shrub, rock, building, sign, equipment or any other property or feature within the Park.

NEXT TIME!

Be looking for more interesting facts in Hiking the 44286 in future issues. Until then, we thank you for taking these key facts to heart. Doing so will make ALL the difference at The Preserve!



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NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

June 5th

Richfield Heritage Preserve is making plans to observe National Trails Day® on Saturday, June 5th. This is an annual event sponsored by the American Hiking Society and is now in its 21st year. The spirit of the day is devoted to appreciating all of America's trails, and the hard-working individuals who build and maintain them. Thousands of public events are hosted nationwide to encourage people to come out for the day and hit the trails.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

A Trail Work Day is being planned as part of National Trails Day at our park. Stay tuned to learn more and to sign-up to be a part of this effort!

If you want to reserve YOUR spot or YOUR GROUP'S spot now, please reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Czaplicki at volunteer-info@rjrd.org

National Trails Day

Saturday, June 5th

At Richfield Heritage Preserve



RICHFIELD
Joint Recreation District

SURVEY SAYS!

RHP VOLUNTEER PERCEPTION SURVEY RESULTS

Our Volunteer Perception Survey in the April eNewsletter asked those who took the survey whether or not they have volunteered at Richfield Heritage Preserve in the past five years. Over 52% of those taking our survey have not volunteered. This lets us know their perspective of volunteering at our park is from the outside looking in, which is helpful having unbiased opinions.

When asked if they believed anyone could volunteer at the park or if they believed volunteers had to be Richfield residents, interestingly 21% said volunteers must be Richfield residents or they didn't know. Of course, this isn't the case, but it's helpful to know that there is a perception that could be preventing individuals from getting involved.

When asked if they believed volunteers had to be members to get involved at the park, 22% said yes or they didn't know. This concerns us as a public park and is something we will address. There is no membership fee, nor is anyone ever asked to pay to get involved.

When asked if they wanted to get involved but haven't and to share why, 22% said they didn't realize we needed volunteer help, they didn't know how to contribute, or they didn't know whom to contact. All of these details help us a great deal, and we can correct these misperceptions.

Finally, when asked if those surveyed were interested in getting involved by offering their skills and knowledge, 14% said YES! They offered up their experience as tradesmen, fund-raising and development, special events, grant writing, and secretarial! This was wonderful to know and now we realize we need to promote these types of volunteer opportunities more often.

This survey showed us that there are a few misperceptions out there we will be addressing in order for our volunteer efforts to be inclusive, welcoming, and continue to grow!

Thanks to EVERYONE who took 5 Minutes to answer 5 Questions so we can make RHP a better park for everyone!



5 Q'S in 5 MINS

HIKE THE PRESERVE SURVEY!

Our first interest survey indicated that 80% of park visitors polled come to Richfield Heritage Preserve specifically to HIKE! This month, we are delving deeper by asking visitors to respond to our "For The Love of Hiking" survey. Knowing more specifics of what you like most about hiking The Preserve will help us improve the hiking trails and create programming with you in mind!

Thank you for taking 5 minutes to take our survey!

