

# GREEN ISLANDS

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Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

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Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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## BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

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The park district's governing body is appointed by the Summit County Probate Judge. Commissioners serve overlapping three-year terms and are assisted by the executive director, who oversees the work of full-time and part-time employees, seasonal workers and volunteers.

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Your Metro Parks are funded by a small Summit County  
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public dollars at work.

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## VISIT OUR NATIVE PLANT FESTIVAL!

Kick off summer by welcoming wildlife into your yard with beautiful, beneficial native plants. Join Summit Metro Parks staff and local native plant nurseries on Saturday, May 28 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Himelright Lodge in Cascade Valley Metro Park (1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron) to learn about the vital role of native plants in our ecosystem. Browse a wide variety of plants available for purchase, or attend an educational session to better understand how to incorporate native plants into your landscaping. Summit Metro Parks is offering a free plant to all attendees, while supplies last.

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## DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

Trail treasures

### WETLAND WILDLIFE AT LIBERTY PARK

By Janean Kazimir, Interpretive Naturalist

Misty morning fog hangs low over the water, a bald eagle floats lazily overhead and the haunting calls of sandhill cranes echo in the distance. This picturesque scene can be found at Tinkers Creek State Nature Preserve (1230 Old Mill Rd., Aurora), part of Liberty Park.

From the observation platform at the end of Eagle Point Trail, look straight ahead over the wetland to view the iconic birds' massive nests high in a tree. Below, scan for the brilliant white feathers of the state-threatened trumpeter swan swimming with its newly hatched cygnets.

Across the road, continue your exploration along Seven Ponds Trail. Created by duck hunters decades ago, these ponds are now an oasis for migratory birds from waterfowl and warblers to swallows and sparrows. The

surrounding wetlands provide clean water to support mink, beaver, otters and a myriad dragonfly species. Stop and sit a while, you never know what you may discover.

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## A LOOK AHEAD FOR SMP LAKES

Claire Merrick, Marketing & Public Relations Manager

Fifty years ago, going to a swim lake in the summer was the place to be. Munroe Falls Metro Park and Silver Creek Metro Park bustled with activity, drawing crowds of 10,000 to 15,000 on a hot summer day. By the early 2000s, however, there was a significant decrease in visitation that continued to dwindle over time.

Unfortunately, regardless of the number of swimmers, most operating costs remain unchanged. As revenues decreased alongside visitation, the park district sought cost-saving solutions, which included reducing concessions staffing, implementing special promotions, decreasing the size of swim areas, and finally, limiting operating hours.

Additional concerns included lifeguard staffing challenges at both parks. Swimmers' safety is a top priority for the park district, and lifeguard recruitment has become increasingly difficult in the previous five to 10 years. Many of the returning seasonal lifeguard staff dissipated when the pandemic shut down the swimming areas in 2020.

One thing remained clear: people were still using these parks, only in different ways. The parks boast ample opportunities to hike, bike and kayak. Despite swimming closures in 2020 and 2021, visitation to the two parks reached record highs. While the pandemic is a likely catalyst for the 2020 increase, visitation remained higher than average throughout 2021.

With any challenge comes opportunity, and Summit Metro Parks sees this as a time to reallocate resources toward activities the public is more likely to enjoy.

Camping, mountain biking and disc golf have brought a considerable increase in visitation in recent years. Attendance isn't the only indicator; public feedback showed favorable desire toward more trails and multipurpose trail connections, environmental restoration, public events and family-friendly programming.

As stewards of Summit County's green spaces and your public dollars, Summit Metro Parks takes its responsibility to taxpayers very seriously. After careful consideration, the Board of Park Commissioners determined at their February meeting that Summit Metro Parks will no longer operate its swim areas at Munroe Falls Metro Park and Silver Creek Metro Park. While we understand that this news may be difficult for some of our visitors, the park district is encouraged by the community's passion and investment in the future of our parks.

As our community grows and evolves, we will evolve with it. The master planning process for Munroe Falls and Silver Creek is ongoing and improvements like trails around both lakes are already slated to begin in 2022. There will be additional opportunities for visitors to share their feedback surrounding these parks. Now more popular than ever, Summit Metro Parks is confident both of these beloved parks have a bright future ahead!

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PLAN A VISIT TO F.A. SEIBERLING NATURE REALM TO SEE THE SUMMIT METRO PARKS CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT AT 1828 SMITH RD., AKRON 44313

A Celebration 100 Years in the Making

The exhibit features a video with audio under a sound cone, vintage park footage, trivia and historic facts, while

interpretive panels highlight the four themes of the centennial with interactive displays.

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## SMP CENTENNIAL TIME CAPSULE

By Mark Szeremet, Park Planner/Land Acquisition Specialist

What is a time capsule? A time capsule is a vessel filled with items designed to be opened on a specific date in the future. The idea is to provide a later generation with a physical link to the past. Ancient tombs, sunken ships and even old landfills provide us with a glimpse of life in former times, but they are not time capsules because they were not placed with the specific intention of future retrieval.

Almost from the moment humans began to build, they tossed keepsakes into a building's foundation. Small clay figures have been found in Stone Age brick walls built before written language was developed to explain why they were put there. Cornerstones of buildings are still filled with notes, coins and various items, although the motivation is more for luck than to send a message to the future. And recently in Richmond, Virginia, two different time capsules were found during the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue.

What is our message for the future? The park district celebrated 100 years with a public birthday celebration on December 31, 2021 at Cascade Valley's Himelright Lodge. Attendees enjoyed listening to music, watching ice carving, viewing the time capsule display, and getting outside to explore the newest park area. Visitors submitted birthday messages and memories to include in the time capsule. Some of the notes included the following:

- "Happy Birthday. May the next 100 years be even better than the last..."

- “Best Wishes from 2021. I hope the parks are still as nice in your time.”
- “Ben asked me to marry him on the ‘bird bridge’ at Firestone — (heart illustration)”
- “The Parks have brought my family so much fun. Thanks for being here ...”

Memories and keepsakes from 2021 will live on for 50 years when park staff install the time capsule later this year at Summit Lake Nature Center. The time capsule features items from the park district and community. Some of the items in the capsule include:

- Stories shared by community members during the centennial year
- Ranger badges and patches
- Letters and photos to future employees
- Endangered plant seeds (in the hopes that they can be brought back)
- Plans for future park areas
- Centennial merchandise and giveaways
- Pandemic signs and safety equipment
- Newspaper articles

A plaque with an inscription on the wall of the nature center will remind visitors that the time capsule waits inside, scheduled to be opened in 2071. Only 49 and a half more years to go!