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SUMMIT METRO PARKS AWARDED \$370,000 FEDERAL GRANT TO CONTINUE RESTORATION WORK AT VALLEY VIEW

The recent award of \$370,000 to Summit Metro Parks by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Commission is a significant step towards the goal of returning the Valley View property to its natural state, linking together three area Metro Parks and creating the second largest area managed by the park district. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding allows Summit Metro Parks to build on work begun with a previous \$1.15 million grant from the Ohio Public Works Commission.

“We are eager to move forward with our plans to bring residents 1,700 acres of connected green space in the heart of Summit County,” said Summit Metro Parks Executive Director Lisa King. “This grant will fund critical restoration work on the Cuyahoga River, improving water quality and allowing the community to better access and enjoy the waterway.”

River work in this section will include floodplain excavation and instream habitat improvements for fish and aquatic wildlife. In addition, the project will make the river more accessible for water-based recreation such as canoeing, kayaking and shore fishing.

Acquired in 2016 from Valley View Golf Club, the land that will become the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park has already undergone a significant transformation. Phase I of the project, which began last year, involves the

removal of non-native vegetation and restoration of streams and wetlands that were covered to create the golf course. Last fall, 500 volunteers spent two days planting tens of thousands of walnut and oak nuts to lay the groundwork for a forested area within the new park. Plans also include a reservable shelter, Towpath Trail connector, parkway and parking areas, water access points, hiking trails and an event center.

Serving as a critical link between Gorge Metro Park, Cascade Valley Metro Park and Sand Run Metro Park, the 200-acre Valley View property is also home to a rich history:

- Historical evidence suggests that a boatyard once existed along this stretch of the Cuyahoga River that produced small vessels for Commodore Perry during the War of 1812. Park historians and archaeologists will begin ground-based investigations this fall to confirm the presence of this site.
- From the late 1800s until the mid-1950s, the area operated as the Himelright Farm, which became Akron's last dairy.
- The Olmsted Brothers, renowned landscape architects of their day, identified the property as land worth preserving when drafting the park district's first master plan in the 1920s.
- In an example of Akron's segregated past, in the 1940s part of the site was marketed to potential homeowners as the city's first racially integrated neighborhood.
- The Valley View Golf Club opened in about 1956, first as nine holes and eventually expanding to 27.

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Summit Metro Parks manages 14,300 acres, including 16 parks, several conservation areas and more than 125 miles of trails, with 22.4 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance averages 5 million visits. Visit us online at summitmetroparks.org.



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