

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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Rev. Dr. Curtis T. Walker Sr.

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
real-estate tax. This magazine is an example of your
public dollars at work.

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ENJOY MUSIC BY THE LAKE

This summer, the Metro Parks Ensemble is celebrating 25 years of music in your Metro Parks!

Treat yourself to FREE musical performances like Music by the Lake by the Ensemble, the park district's volunteer band. This family-friendly concert series allows visitors of all ages to experience summer evenings outdoors while enjoying music from the big band era, Broadway musicals, films, TV themes and more. Visit summitmetroparks.org for more information on these and other musical performances.

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DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

PLANNING FOR NATIVE BIODIVERSITY ... AND A GREENER GENERATION

By Christopher Chaney, Biologist

At Summit Metro Parks (SMP), we know the long-term success of our mission is dependent on our connection to the younger generation. One of the ways we inspire today's youth is by inviting students to make meaningful contributions to our work.

In the spring of 2025, Dr. Randy Mitchell invited us to develop a final project for his Restoration Ecology students at The University of Akron. One group elected to put together a series of native garden design templates for our Wild Back Yards initiative. They collaborated with multiple SMP departments, and their project is now published on our website as a resource for anyone who wants to support biodiversity but doesn't know where to start.

Throughout this project, the students had to consider impacts to biodiversity and how to effectively mitigate

these impacts in a human-centered landscape. They synthesized different viewpoints and constraints into a tangible and digestible way for the public to engage in conservation. We encourage you to visit bit.ly/WildBackYards to explore the students' garden templates.

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DIRTY WORK FOR A BETTER RIVER

Claire Merrick, Marketing & Public Relations Manager

The first time I saw the barge, which would hold the necessary equipment needed to remove contaminated sediment from the Cuyahoga River and make dam removal possible, I wasn't fully focused on the barge itself. I was watching my colleague, who has dreamed of (and worked toward) the Gorge Dam removal for decades. "Wow," she murmured, awestruck. When you consider the mechanics of the operation, plus the years of overcoming challenges, planning and logistics that made it possible, "wow" is right!

Sediment remediation is achieved using a hybrid system of dredging mechanically and pumping hydraulically. An excavator removes sediment from the Cuyahoga River and places it into a mixing tank on the barge. Inside the tank, augers mix the material with just enough water to make it pumpable. Then, pumps pull it from the tank and send it through a pipeline to the sediment placement site on Peck Road where it's discharged into a containment area. It holds about 6,000 cubic yards.

Next, Portland cement is added. The sediment and cement are mixed thoroughly using a pug mill or augers. The cement dries and strengthens the material to prevent it from slumping when placement cells are built.

Of course, there's more than sediment at the bottom of the dam pool. That's where filtering comes in — this, too, occurs on the barge prior to pumping. When the

excavator empties material into the mixing tank, the material passes over an angled screen. Sediment and water pass through, while debris hits the screen and gets diverted into a separate bin. When the bin is full, the debris is unloaded and sampled to determine where it goes; it could be recycled, diverted to a landfill or, in some cases, sent to the Peck Road site, depending on size, material type and sampling results.

Among the sediment, organic debris like sticks and vegetation is expected. Unexpectedly, dredging operations have also uncovered freshwater mussel shells. Because freshwater mussel shells are slow to decay, they can provide a 100-year ecological record of mussel presence in the Cuyahoga River and exciting new research opportunities for Summit Metro Parks staff.

Dredging operations could also uncover artifacts contained within the sediment. Experienced equipment operators, the sediment screening process and characterization help flag archaeological discoveries like these.

In the event of an archaeological discovery, project staff follow an Inadvertent Discovery Plan, which provides guidelines for the onsite contractor and project management staff if unanticipated artifacts are discovered. Through careful planning, Summit Metro Parks staff, project stakeholders and contractors can work together to ensure that important cultural resources are handled properly and get the care they require. The fate of such artifacts depends largely on their nature. Some items that have been submerged for a long time can deteriorate quickly once they're removed from the water or mud, making them difficult to preserve. Other objects may be too large or not feasible to add to a collection. When possible, the park district may share photos or 3D models of items of interest so there's a record of these pieces of history that can be shared with the public. We also have established procedures in

place if an item requires collection and permanent curation.

As progress continues on land and water, we look forward to sharing more updates on this exciting project to Free the Falls!

[Find links to the Free the Falls podcast, view project updates and more at bit.ly/freethefalls.]

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THE PACK IS BACK ... WITH NEW FRIENDS

(and names chosen by YOU!)

Back in 2008, Summit Metro Parks introduced a group of animal characters — later dubbed “The Metro Pack” — to the community. We asked visitors like you to help name them, and you delivered! That’s how we ended up with Whiff the skunk, Sir Pent the garter snake, Sunflower the chickadee, Cheeks the chipmunk and Ruckus the raccoon.

Since then, The Metro Pack has become a familiar (and friendly) part of your Metro Parks. They’ve helped us connect with visitors of all ages and share the stories of the wildlife and natural spaces that make Summit County special. And now, as the park district continues caring for these places and finding new ways to connect people with nature, The Metro Pack is growing! We’re welcoming three new animal characters to the crew and, once again, we’d love your help naming them.

How to enter:

Whether your idea is clever, funny or inspired by the outdoors, we can’t wait to hear it. Read about our new critters below to spark your creativity. Who knows? Your name might be the next one that sticks.

Submit your ideas at bit.ly/SMPcritters (case sensitive) or mail in the form by August 15.

The naming contest is open to Summit County residents only. Winners will be chosen by Summit Metro Parks staff. In the event of a tie, the winning name will be selected by random draw. Summit Metro Parks staff are not eligible to participate. Winners will be announced in December.

RIVER OTTER

Splash! I'm a playful swimmer who loves rivers, lakes and streams, using my strong tail and webbed feet to glide through the water. I was born not knowing how to swim, but my mom taught me (thanks, mom!). I have whiskers that give me the power to sense the movement of my prey. Fish are my favorite snack, but I'll also munch on frogs and crayfish. In winter, I don't hibernate — I slide, swim and explore all season long, even through icy water. When I'm with my friends on land, we're called a romp. When we're together in the water, we're called a raft!

RAINBOW DARTER

Blink and you might miss me! I'm not "The Rainbow Fish" you grew up with. I'm a tiny fish with big color, though you might not see it from above the water. They don't call me a darter for no reason! I'm a little shy, but you can usually find me zipping along the rocky stream or river bottom, hiding between stones — unless it's time to eat or look for love! Each spring, I show off my brightest colors to impress my neighbors. Clean, fast-moving water is my home, so if I'm around, it's a sign the stream is healthy.

INDIANA BAT

Did something small just swoop past your head? It might have been me, out on my nighttime bug hunt! I use special sounds (you can't hear them!) to find tasty insects in the dark. On summer days, I tuck myself under tree bark like a secret superhero hiding out. I can do that because I'm small, but my wingspan can be more than twice my size! When winter comes, I curl up in a cave

with lots of friends like me and sleep for months. Don't worry; I'll be back in spring, hungry and ready to help keep pesky bugs away!

NAME THE CRITTERS CONTEST FORM

After reading about the new critters, fill out the form completely and mail it to the address below, or scan the QR code to provide your submission electronically.

the river otter name

the rainbow darter name

the Indiana bat name

Last Name

First Name

Middle Initial

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Age

Phone Number

Email

NOTE: If submitting this form on behalf of a minor,
please provide the parent's or guardian's phone number
and email on the appropriate lines above.

Mail to: ATTN: Marketing
Summit Metro Parks
975 Treaty Line Rd.
Akron, OH 44313

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TOUCH-A-TRUCK
At Munroe Falls Metro Park / Lake Area

Presented by: Wayside Furniture

Saturday, AUGUST 1, 2026 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Sensory and autism-friendly hour – 10 to 11 a.m.
Touch-a-Truck continues – 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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