

In This Issue...

- Conservation Partnership..... 2
- Website and Reservation System Upgrades 2
- Spring Programs 3
- Birding in MWCD 4
- Trails Investment 5
- Employment 5
- Master Plan Improvements 6

Lake Views

SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 44 - ISSUE 1

Expanding Outdoor Recreation: New Camping and Lodging Opportunities Coming to MWCD

In 2023, MWCD embraced the growing national trend in outdoor recreation by exploring new and innovative camping and overnight accommodations near its scenic lakes. As more outdoor enthusiasts seek unique and immersive experiences, MWCD began evaluating how to integrate these new trends into its portfolio of recreational offerings.

The growing popularity of alternative camping experiences, such as glamping and eco-friendly lodging, inspired MWCD to consider new ways to enhance the visitor experience. In 2024, this vision became a reality with the identification of two exciting projects at Tappan Lake Park and Atwood Lake Park. These developments are designed to offer guests the chance to experience nature in a whole new way while enjoying the comforts of luxury accommodations.

MWCD is set to introduce treehouses and small luxury cabins that provide both seclusion and stunning lake views at both of these parks. The unique lodging options will immerse visitors in the natural beauty of the lakes, offering a perfect balance of adventure and relaxation. The treehouses will be nestled in the treetops, providing guests with a serene and elevated perspective of the surrounding landscapes, while the luxury cabins will feature modern amenities and panoramic views of the lakes, creating a truly unforgettable experience.

These new accommodations are designed with sustainability and functionality in mind, incorporating eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient features to minimize their environmental footprint. By blending creativity, comfort, and environmental stewardship, these projects will enhance MWCD's mission to expand recreational opportunities and foster a deeper connection between visitors and nature.

The introduction of treehouses and luxury cabins marks an exciting chapter in MWCD's efforts to diversify its recreational offerings. These distinctive lodging options are expected to attract a wide range of outdoor enthusiasts, from families and adventure seekers to those looking for a peaceful retreat in nature.

MWCD's commitment to enhancing its parks and lakes continues to shape the region's recreational landscape, providing residents and visitors with new and innovative ways to connect with the outdoors. As these projects come to life, MWCD remains focused on enriching recreational experiences.

**Photos are conceptual and are not actual representations of MWCD projects.*



Partnership Results in Conservation of Over 3,990 Acres in Coshocton County

In multiple stages over five years, Western Reserve Land Conservancy and MWCD have partnered to forever protect over 3,990 acres in Coshocton County. The land is now owned by MWCD. Starting with the 1,827-acre Coshocton Forest acquisition in January 2020, these efforts continued with acquiring the 933-acre Coshocton Forest Extension in December 2021 and the 609-acre Turkey Ridge Preserve in November 2023. Most recently, the 622-acre Turkey Creek Preserve acquisition was finalized in August 2024.

Located in the Muskingum River Watershed, the conserved properties span a reclaimed coal mining area and boast successional hardwood forests, old field habitat, almost 400 acres of sprawling ponds and high-quality wetlands, and over 50,000 linear feet of streams. More than 450 plant and animal species call the properties home, including several rare and state-listed species. An Ohio endangered moss and two Ohio endangered bat species have been documented as well.

In addition to preserving these natural spaces, these projects also conserved a

significant portion of publicly accessible recreation land. MWCD will manage these properties in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), which owns two large preserves within seven miles of the property, including the 14,615-acre Woodbury Wildlife Area and the 844-acre SIMCO Wildlife Area. Hiking, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, and other passive outdoor recreation activities will be allowed on the property.

Previously, the land was owned by Ohio Franklin Realty, a subsidiary of American Electric Power (AEP). After mining activity ended in the mid-1900s, ODNR managed much of the area for public access as a component of the AEP public recreation lands. The conserved area contributes to an approximately 9,600-acre corridor of protected land owned by MWCD in Coshocton County. Applications for additional funding are underway for Phase V of the project, which will help connect the corridor to the SIMCO Wildlife Area.

Together, the Land Conservancy and MWCD submitted four successful funding

applications to the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund through the Ohio Public Works Commission. As a result, \$10.4 million was awarded for the acquisition of these properties, which are permanently protected by Clean Ohio deed restrictions.

These land conservation efforts highlight the commitment to preserving Ohio's natural beauty and biodiversity. By protecting this land in Coshocton County, Western Reserve Land Conservancy and MWCD have ensured that these vital habitats remain intact for future generations. The conservation of these lands not only benefits the local ecosystem but also enhances public access to outdoor recreational opportunities. With continued support and further development of the conservation corridor, this project exemplifies the power of collaboration between organizations, government agencies, and communities to safeguard natural spaces and wildlife. As the project progresses, the region will continue to thrive as a haven for both nature and those who seek to enjoy it.

Website Upgrades Improve User Experience

If you haven't noticed, we've made major upgrades to our website, which reflect our commitment to embracing updated technology to improve visitors' experience. The result is a streamlined site that makes it easy to find the information you're looking for, and planning your trip a breeze.

Make Reservations Online Seamlessly

Our new online reservation system simplifies the way you plan and book your outdoor adventures at MWCD properties.

The new site is designed to make information easier to find, and provide

seamless online reservations for camping, boat rentals, and cabins, ensuring that your next getaway is just a few clicks away.

Book a weekend camping trip, fun-filled day on the water, or a cozy cabin retreat. Reservations can be made up to 340 days in advance, so there's no reason to procrastinate. Make your 2025 plans now at reserve.MWCD.org.

Need Help Finding Information? Let Bryce do the Work.

Named in honor of our visionary founder, Bryce Browning, Bryce is our new intelligent

chatbot appearing in the bottom right corner of our website. Just click on the icon that pops up and ask him a question or tell him what you want to do. Bryce is here to provide real-time, friendly support.

Visit our updated website today at www.MWCD.org and start planning your next adventures.



Make Spring More Fun With MWCD Lake Park Programs

Spring is here and we're all looking forward to warmer weather and programs at the lake! Our programs are open to campers, boaters, day visitors, and community members. Mark your calendars for these fun events and be sure to follow us on social media to stay up to date with our program calendar.



Welcome Back Camping

April 1 marks the first day of the official camping season! Camp with us in April to meet staff, prepare your camper, and enjoy a variety of programs at Atwood, Charles Mill, Pleasant Hill, Seneca, and Tappan Lake Parks.



Meet the Easter Bunny and Hunt for Eggs!

Celebrate Easter and springtime with Easter egg hunts and more.

- **April 12:** Atwood and Charles Mill Lake Parks
- **April 19:** Pleasant Hill, Seneca, and Tappan Lake Parks

Details for each location can be found at www.MWCD.org/calendar.

Join Earth Day 2025 Cleanup Challenge

Raise awareness for litter prevention and celebrate Earth Day at all parks and campgrounds. All you need to do is grab gloves and trash bags to pick up litter at a MWCD lake from Saturday, April 19 through Sunday, April 27. Post photos of the cleanup on MWCD Facebook and Instagram pages using #MWCEarthDay2025 and tag the park or marina. Or visit a park on the date listed below to earn coupons for a free night of camping by filling a trash bag. Details for each location can be found at www.MWCD.org/calendar.

- **April 12:** Pleasant Hill Lake
- **April 19:** Atwood, Charles Mill, Piedmont, and Seneca Lakes
- **April 26:** Clendening and Tappan Lakes

Get a Jump on Summer Camp Registration

Day camps are designed to provide a fun and safe place for kids, ages 5-16, to explore nature, have fun, and learn new skills. Camps are offered at Atwood, Charles Mill, Pleasant Hill, Seneca, and Tappan Lake Parks, with a special theme and age-appropriate activities for a full day at the lake. Camp information and registration is available at www.MWCD.org/tickets.

Attend an Ohio Boater Education Course

Spring is the perfect time to get ready for boating season. Make sure to renew your registration through ODNR, purchase a new MWCD docking decal, if needed, and take the Ohio Boater Education Course. While this course is required for those who will operate a boat over 10 horsepower and were born after January 1, 1982, it is a great course for all boaters. There are many ways to complete the course – online, home study, or in-person classes. MWCD Rangers will be offering in-person courses at the following locations (registration required online).

- **April 26:** Seneca and Tappan Lake Parks
- **May 3:** Atwood Lake Park
- **May 31:** Pleasant Hill Lake Park



Take a Hike

MWCD Lakes offer a variety of hiking trails for beginners or experienced hikers. Get outside and search for signs of spring and get rid of the winter blues. Follow our social media pages for guided hike announcements or explore the trails on your own. View hiking maps at www.MWCD.org/trails.

Some programs require pre-registration. Program details can be found online at www.MWCD.org/events

Vendors and Sponsors Wanted!

Do you have a business that would benefit from sponsoring weekly program schedules or setting up a vendor table at an event throughout MWCD lakes and campgrounds? We would love to have you join us to offer the best events for our visitors! Call 330-343-6647 for more information about our Second Saturday, Market in the Park, and Craft Show events.



Birding in the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District

Bailey Miller, Water Quality Intern



Bird watching, or “birding,” is a growing hobby in the U.S., with an estimated 96.3 million bird watchers. Enthusiasts travel far to see rare birds, such as the Steller’s Sea Eagle, which unexpectedly migrated through New England in 2022. Birding also has a significant economic impact, contributing over \$41 billion annually. It’s a calming and intellectually stimulating way to connect with nature, reducing stress and anxiety while promoting heart and lung health through gentle exercise. MWCD parks provide diverse habitats for bird watchers, offering a variety of species along shorelines and hiking trails.

Along the shoreline, you can spot shorebirds and waterfowl, such as the Killdeer, known for its protective “injury display” to guard its nest. Ducks may be seen dabbling in the shallows, and ospreys soar above in search of fish. In the woodlands, you’ll encounter bright and easily recognizable songbirds like Northern Cardinals, American Robins, and Blue Jays. At night, listen for the distinctive calls of owls.

Spring brings exciting bird-watching opportunities as male birds sing and display vibrant colors to attract mates. From March to June, millions of birds migrate through Ohio, which lies along two major flyways: the Atlantic Flyway and the Mississippi Flyway. Early migrants include waterfowl

like ducks and geese, followed by songbirds such as warblers and orioles. Peak migration sees shorebirds like herons and killdeer passing through the region.

Bird watching is an easy and affordable hobby to start. Simply sitting in your backyard can reveal a variety of bird species. Binoculars are optional, and many resources help beginners identify birds. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources offers field guides, and apps like Merlin Bird ID make bird identification simple through photos or sounds.

MWCD has partnered with The Ohio State University and other research groups to track migratory birds, using a telemetry tower to monitor their journey north. This project helps researchers understand migration patterns and ensures wind turbines along Lake Erie’s shoreline won’t pose a risk to migrating birds.

You can also participate in bird research through the Audubon Christmas Bird Count in December or the Great Backyard Bird Count in February. These citizen science events let participants count and identify birds in just 15 minutes, making them a fun and educational family activity.

The Muskingum Watershed offers numerous birding opportunities for all levels. With over 40 miles of hiking trails across 41,000 acres

of parkland, there’s ample space to enjoy bird watching in peaceful surroundings. MWCD even offers a unique water trail at Clendening Lake, perfect for getting closer to shorebirds and waterfowl. If you’re lucky, you might witness an osprey diving for fish at Atwood or Pleasant Hill Lakes. The Buckeye Trail, North Country Trail, and Ohio to Erie Trail all pass through the MWCD, allowing you to explore sections of these famous routes within the parks.

From the Charles Mill wildflower area to the Atwood observation tower, each lake offers unique features to enhance your bird-watching experience. Grab a map from the welcome centers of MWCD campgrounds, choose a trail, and start exploring!



For more information, explore these websites:

ODNR Field Guides:

ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/wildlife/documents-publications/backyard-wildlife-documents

Christmas Bird Count:

www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count/join-christmas-bird-count

MWCD Trail Maps:

www.MWCD.org/visit-our-lakes/activities/hiking-biking-trails



Sustainable Trail Network Continues Growth as Master Plan Launches

In 2024, MWCD made significant strides toward creating a comprehensive trail network, central to which was the launch of the Trails Master Plan. This initiative will develop up to 200 miles of trails across MWCD properties, enhancing recreational opportunities while preserving the region’s natural beauty.

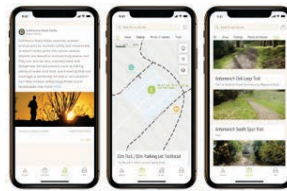
“Public involvement has been key to the planning process,” said Pete Novotny, chief of recreation. “Feedback from the community through the Trail Development Survey will help shape the future of the network, ensuring sustainability and accessibility.”

In addition to planning, 2024 saw the completion of key trail projects, including a 500-foot ADA-compliant boardwalk at Beall Farm (Tappan Lake), 2.13 miles of newly paved trails at Atwood Lake Park,

and trail improvements at Clendening Dam and Pleasant Hill Lake Park. These projects have made the trails more accessible and enjoyable for all visitors.

MWCD’s trail network brings more than recreational benefits; it boosts the region’s environmental, economic, and social well-being, promoting tourism and strengthening community identity.

In 2024, MWCD also partnered with OuterSpatial, an innovative mobile app that will serve as the official platform for MWCD trail information. Whether for trail updates, closures, or challenges like the award-winning Capture the



Canvas, the app will provide easy, real-time access to all trail-related info. The app’s official release is set for early 2025.

**Join us for a hiking kick-off event
March 29 at Atwood Lake Park at 1:00 pm.
Check the online event calendar for
more information.**

Looking ahead, 2025 promises exciting developments, including the Tappan Lake Pump Track, the Atwood Lake Storybook Trail, and the Walhonding River Water Trail. MWCD is committed to enhancing outdoor experiences and creating a connected, sustainable trail network. We look forward to seeing you on the trail!

Employment at MWCD

Join Our Dynamic Team

At MWCD, we offer exciting opportunities for individuals at all stages of their careers—whether you are just starting out, seeking a career change, finishing your education, or looking to stay active after retirement. Our team works across various fields related to flood reduction, recreation, and conservation, and we collaborate both internally and with partners.

From engineering and conservation to law enforcement and administration, we offer a variety of roles to match diverse skill sets. All seasonal, part-time, and full-time employees contribute to the Ohio Public Employee

Retirement System (OPERS) and enjoy paid holidays. Full-time staff also receive health, dental, and vision benefits, life insurance, paid time off, disability insurance, wellness incentives, and more.

We’re a passionate team dedicated to making a difference and providing excellent service to the public and our partners. If you are interested in being a part of our team, visit www.MWCD.org to explore current job openings. And spread the word—you or someone you know might find your next career opportunity is right here at MWCD!





Improvements Continue Throughout the District

Charles Mill Lake Park

Beach Area Campground and Amenities Development:

Improvements include demolition of an existing pit restroom, upgraded RV sites, and pavilion shelters. Campsite renovations include 30 new RV campsites, utility upgrades, new electric service pedestals, water and sanitary hookups, and the restoration/widening of existing roads. Amenity improvements include a new shower/restroom building, an ADA fishing pier, a neighborhood playground, shade structures, a mobile concession area, courtesy docks, observation decks, new sport courts, replacement of the existing shelter, and the renovation of an existing restroom facility.

Scheduled Completion: Summer 2026

Seneca Lake Park

Seneca Beach Amenity and Activity Area: This project was completed in August 2024. Situated between the Parkside Central Campground area to the west and rolling hills to the east, the Seneca Lake Park beach improvements extend both passive and active recreational activities along the shoreline, create new entry points, and address stormwater drainage and erosion. The featured activity will be a destination-sized splashpad nestled into the hillside adjacent to the existing beach house. In addition to the splashpad, the beach improvements include seating areas, shade structures, basketball court, pickleball court, and space for lawn games. At the courtesy docks, a new abutment will be constructed to support the relocation of an existing dock to this area. Pedestrian access between the courtesy docks and the beach will include a concrete trail with a curbed concrete sidewalk separating the lawn and beach area.

Join us for a ribbon-cutting event May 23.

Seneca Lake Marina Boat Ramp and Parking Improvements:

This project includes construction of a new parking lot, continuation of the seawall from a previous project as well as a new sidewalk to improve access between the ramp and the marina.

Substantial Completion: June 2025.

Clendening Lake Park

Cabin Area Upgrades:

This project will consist of a new building that will contain a new water treatment plant in addition to an adjoining laundry facility. The project also includes a generator, fiber optic lines between the marina, water treatment plant, and wastewater treatment plant for SCADA (telemetry), along with grading and site work for future cabins. The parking lot will be paved.

Scheduled Completion: Spring 2025

Marina Building and Site Improvements: This project features a new marina building design which includes retail space and boat rentals. Staff space will include offices, restroom, laundry area, storage, break room, and conference room. The building will provide two family-style restrooms and a laundry room with separate exterior access for the public. The new building location will be adjacent to the existing maintenance facility. The new site improvements include addressing traffic circulation and constructing new parking areas.

Scheduled Completion: Spring 2026

New Cabins: This project will construct three new cabins. Two cabins will have two bedrooms and one bath on the first floor, and an additional bed/bath in the loft. One cabin will have one bedroom and bath on the first floor, and an additional bed in the loft. The cabins include full kitchens and dining areas, living rooms with gas fireplaces, outdoor decks, and an outdoor fire pit.

Scheduled Completion: Summer 2026



Improvements Cont.

Tappan Lake Park

Activity Center Area Amenities:

Improvements include replacing the existing shelter, bridge, and basketball courts, and adding pickleball courts, walking paths, and sidewalks in the field beside the new Welcome Center. There will also be a small playground, fire ring and seating, and an area for lawn games.

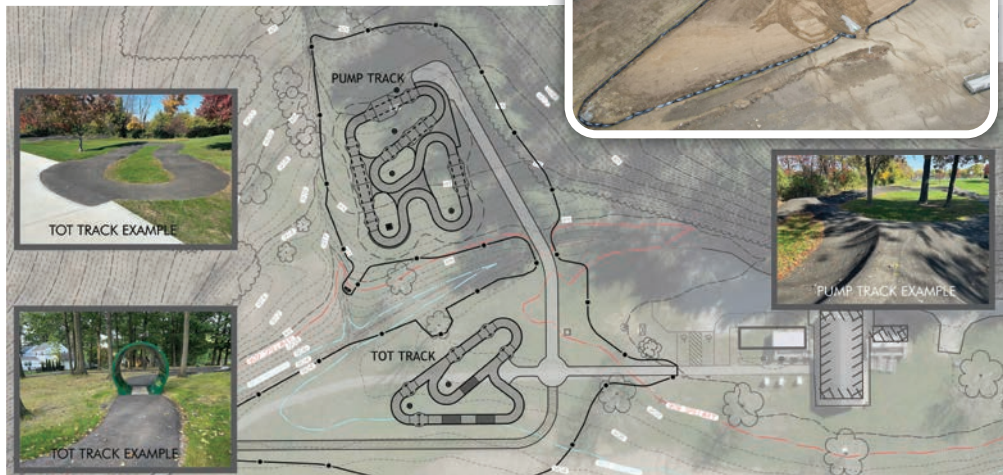
Scheduled Completion: Spring 2025



Pump Track: This project is a new bicycle-specific area that has a circuit of banked turns, rollers, and other features that are designed to be ridden using the biker's momentum. The area will have a smaller 'Tot Track' for beginners and a regular track for more experienced riders. The surface will consist of asphalt and some composite/wood features in banked turns.

Scheduled Completion: Spring 2025

Join us for a ribbon-cutting event May 24.



PUBLISHED BY
**Muskingum Watershed
Conservancy District**

*Call, write or e-mail for a
free subscription*

MAIN OFFICE

1319 Third Street NW
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663
(330) 343-6647
Toll Free: (877) 363-8500
www.MWCD.org
info@mwcd.org

ANNEX OFFICE

2050 Reiser Avenue SE
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663
(330) 343-6647

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday 7 am - 5 pm
Friday 8 am - 5 pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ronald E. Dziedzicki
President

MEMBERS

- Karl R. Gebhardt
- James M. Gresh
- Robert S. Moorehead, Jr.
- Jennifer L. Ponchak

ADMINISTRATION

- Craig W. Butler
Executive Director/Secretary
- David G. Lautenschleger, P.S.,
Chief of Engineering
- James L. Crandall
Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
- Adria L. Bergeron
Director of Marketing and Communications
- Mary C. Burley
Chief of Human Resources
- Bradley P. Janssen
Chief of Natural Resources and Land Management
- Jonathan C. Mizer
Chief Legal Counsel
- Peter M. Novotny
Chief of Recreation
- Matt A. Thomas
Chief of Conservation
- Patrick J. Brockmeier
Chief Ranger
- Ethan J. Zucal
LakeViews Editor



New Philadelphia, OH 44663



SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 44 ISSUE 1

Lake Views



NEED A SPEAKER FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT?

MWCD wants to engage with the community! We can share updates and information on a variety of topics ranging from outdoor recreation, conservation, sustainability, and flood mitigation efforts.

For details, topics, or to book a date, contact Ethan Zucal at MWCD at (330) 556-4814 or by emailing at ezucal@mwcd.org.