



NEWS

Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. Willoughby, Ohio

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (**February 1, 2018**)

CHAGRIN RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERS RECEIVES FUNDING FROM WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY TO ENHANCE FOREST AND STREAM HEALTH

Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. has received an award from the Wildlife Conservation Society Climate Adaptation Fund to enhance the health of forests draining to high-quality streams in the Chagrin and lower Grand River watersheds. Funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the goal of the Climate Adaptation Fund is to help species, ecosystems, and human communities adapt to climate change.

One of 12 projects funded nationwide, the \$181,152 award will be matched with \$184,123 in cash and in-kind services to maintain and enhance the benefits that healthy forests and streams provide. "Chagrin River Watershed Partners is proud to receive this award and looks forward to working with our partners to enhance the health of forests surrounding coldwater streams in the Chagrin and Grand river watersheds. We will share what we learn with natural resource managers and landowners across Ohio's Central Lake Erie basin and the Lake Erie Allegheny region." said Executive Director Heather Elmer.

Forests in northeast Ohio provide many important values to communities including scenic beauty, recreation, stormwater management and flood control, and cleaner air and water. However, climate change may alter our forest ecosystem and interact with and intensify many other stressors including deer browse, pests, pathogens, and invasive species. These stressors are projected to continue intensifying in the future, altering forests as we know them. Protecting and enhancing our forests is one of the most cost-effective ways to address these challenges. Forests in this region benefit from the lake-effect zone of Lake Erie, with heavy clay soils and glacial landforms helping maintain moisture. However, changes in precipitation and temperature will likely stress some northern species like American beech, sugar maple, and eastern hemlock while habitat is projected to become more suitable for other trees, such as many oak species.

Project partners and local funders include Holden Forests & Gardens, Cleveland Metroparks, Lake Metroparks, Geauga Park District, Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake County Stormwater Management Department, Western Reserve Land Conservancy Dominion watershed mini-grant program, Village of Gates Mills, Village of Moreland Hills, Think Media Studios, Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership for Biodiversity, Cleveland Museum of Natural History Trout Club and Ohio Central Basin Steelheaders.

Project partners will complete targeted, on-the-ground management of 500 acres of forests on Holden Arboretum and park district properties surrounding cool, hemlock-dominated ravines with coldwater streams. These coldwater streams have groundwater connections and flow through areas with shaded, north-facing slopes and sheltered ravines that serve as important refugia for wildlife. These streams also benefit from being surrounded by tracts of protected forests, which buffer against development

pressures such as heated stormwater and pollutants. Holden Arboretum and park staff members conducted stream and forest assessments to select sites that surround these coldwater streams harboring many sensitive fish, salamanders, and other wildlife. Enhancing forest health in areas draining to coldwater streams will help protect the long-term function of these habitats for wildlife. The project partners will develop and use forest management techniques focusing on enhancing native species regeneration and diversity, promoting structural complexity, and controlling invasive species. Stream and forest assessments will be conducted as part of a long-term monitoring effort and the data will be used to adapt management approaches for optimal resiliency.

Tools and management techniques developed through this project will be shared with natural resource professionals and private landowners throughout the region. Project partners will work with the Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership for Biodiversity (www.leapbio.org) and watershed organizations in Ohio's Central Lake Erie basin to offer collaborative workshops and field-based trainings for land managers. As an in-kind donation, Think Media Studios will develop a short video demonstrating the value of healthy forests and streams in our region and the climate threats that affect them. By developing and sharing effective management strategies for forests on public and private lands, this project will sustain biodiversity and natural habitats in our region over the coming decades.

Chagrin River Watershed Partners is a nonprofit organization that uses a regional watershed approach to enhance quality of life by preserving rivers, planning for better development and solving natural resource management problems. Sixteen communities, counties and park districts formed the Watershed Partners in 1996 to address rising infrastructure costs because of flooding, erosion and water pollution. Today, the Partners' 34 members represent 91% of the land area in the Chagrin River watershed. For more information about Chagrin River Watershed Partners, visit <http://www.crwp.org>

For more information about the Wildlife Conservation Program Climate Adaptation Fund Program, visit: <http://wcsclimateadaptationfund.org/>.

For the national press release announcing these awards, visit: <https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/10765/Climate-Adaptation-WCS-Announces-25-Million-in-Awards-to-12-Conservation-Organizations-Across-the-US.aspx>

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Coldwater streams and their surrounding forests provide critical refugia for native coldwater fish, insects, birds, amphibians, plants, and other organisms. Adaptive forest management will help protect the habitat quality of these sensitive systems. Stoney Brook within Lake Metroparks Penitentiary Glen Reservation.



Healthy forests protect the critical habitat of aquatic species like the northern two-lined salamander, a common brookside inhabitant. Pierson Creek, Holden Arboretum.



WCS PROJECT PERSONNEL BIOS

Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP)

Heather Elmer, Executive Director, leads CRWP's watershed protection and restoration programs. She has assessed climate change awareness and information needs among natural resource managers and developed training to enhance adaptation capacity in the Great Lakes region. Heather received an MA in Bioethics from Case Western Reserve University and a BA in Biology and English from Oberlin College.

Alicia Beattie, Project Manager, works with communities and park districts on flooding, erosion, and land use issues. She has led and assisted with planning and implementation of watershed protection, stormwater management, and restoration projects. Ms. Beattie holds a MS in Zoology from Southern Illinois University and a BA in Environmental Studies and Political Science from University of Minnesota.

Christina Znidarsic has served 7 years in a watershed planning capacity with CRWP and is responsible for technical assistance to and coordination with watershed stakeholders, local communities, and regional agencies on restoration project management, water quality protection, regulatory compliance, and best land use practices in planning and zoning. Christina holds a BS in Geology from the College of William and Mary and a MS in Environmental Science from Cleveland State University.

Holden Forests & Gardens

Roger Gettig, Direct of Horticulture and Conservation, has been with Holden for over 21 years. He holds a MS in Landscape Architecture, Ecological Restoration from University of Wisconsin-Madison and a BS in horticulture from The Ohio State University.

Chad Knisely, Natural Areas Manager, has been with Holden since 2012 and worked as a Land Conservation and Stewardship professional for over 8 years at Grand River Partners. He received a BS in Environmental Science from Bowling Green State, with an emphasis in Aquatic Biology.

Cleveland Metroparks (CM)

Dr. Constance Hausman, CM Plant and Restoration Ecologist, will serve as the lead staff member on this project. She has been with CM since 2010 as the Vegetation Research Coordinator and now in her role as Plant and Restoration Ecologist. She holds a PhD in Plant Ecology from Kent State University and completed her dissertation on the ecological effects of Emerald Ash Borer and identification of forest management strategies. Dr. Hausman organizes and oversees restoration projects throughout the Park District's 18 reservations.

Dr. Terry Robison is CM Director of Natural Resources and has been with the Park District since 2007 as the Manager of Field Research and now as Director of Natural Resources. Dr. Robison has over 30 years' experience in genetic, reforestation, ecosystem, and pest research and

management. He holds a PhD in Forestry from Iowa State University and his research interests include urban wildlife and artificial and natural tree regeneration after disturbance.

Geauga Park District

Paul Pira, Park Biologist and Supervisor of the Natural Resource Management Staff, has been with the District for over 12 years and brings 20+ years of research experience, working for governmental agencies and private entities. He writes natural resource management plans for all GPD's lands and conducts stream/wetland assessment and wildlife surveys.

Lake Metroparks

John Pogacnik, Biologist, earned his degree from the Ohio State University. Since then he worked as a ranger with Ohio State Parks. In his 26 years as Lake Metroparks' biologist, he has become a highly regarded expert in Northeast Ohio wildlife and plants.

Tom Koritansky, Natural Resource Manager, has been with Lake Metroparks since 2013. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Kent State University in Conservation and a Master of Arts in Geography/Urban Planning from the University of Akron. Tom is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, Ohio commercial pesticide applicator, and certified Ohio prescribed burn manager.

Allison Ray, Environmental Planner, is a graduate of the University of Calgary with a Master's degree in geography. She joined Lake Metroparks in 2016.

Lake Soil and Water Conservation District

Dan Donaldson, District Administrator, assists local governments, landowners and partners with natural resource planning, ordinances and conservation easements. Mr. Donaldson serves on the Grand River Scenic Rivers Advisory Council and holds a Master's in Public Administration and BA from Cleveland State University in Environmental Studies.

Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Emily Kuzmick, Coordinator for the Ohio Coastal Training Program (CTP) since 2015, works with environmental professionals to identify training and technical assistance and facilitate training events with a multitude of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology and a Master of Science in Environmental Studies, both from Ohio University.