



NEWS

Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. Willoughby, Ohio

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (March 15, 2021)

Beaver Creek Restoration Project Underway in Munson Township

A stream and wetland restoration project that includes approximately 1,800 linear feet of stream restoration, 8 acres of riparian enhancement, the creation of wetlands, and invasive plant management is underway at Beaver Creek located within Geauga Park District's Bass Lake Preserve. This project will improve water and habitat quality for Bass Lake and the Chagrin River Watershed by restoring a natural channel flow and floodplain, and wetland habitat.

Bass Lake Preserve is a 606-acre park well-known for its forested wetland complexes and high-quality tributaries. The preserve and its surrounding wetlands also provide habitat for migrating waterfowl and songbirds, bald eagles, beavers, and state protected Northern Wild Rice (*Zizania aquatica*). Bass Lake and its tributaries drain to the Upper Main Branch of the Chagrin River, which has been designated as a State Scenic River for its exceptional aquatic habitat and riparian forests.

However, conditions at the lower mile of Beaver Creek and its associated wetlands within the project area have been exacerbated by human activities. Development within the watershed has resulted in more impervious surfaces, which has increased the volume of polluted stormwater runoff entering the site. This has adversely affected the wetland quality through increased nutrient input and increased erosion. Channelization has also isolated the stream from the floodplain and decreased habitat diversity. Channelized streams tend to lose their ability to naturally process water pollutants as the water cannot spread up and over a floodplain to settle out nutrient-loaded sediment. Additionally, the site's riparian area currently lacks its historical forest cover. These changes have led to the degradation of the surrounding wetlands and promoted conditions for invasive species, causing a significant ecological loss at the site. Restoration of lower Beaver Creek is necessary in order to reconnect its floodplains and restore its forested wetland habitat within the riparian corridor.

In 2017, Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) assisted Geauga Park District in successfully nominating the Beaver Creek Restoration Project for an Ohio EPA Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) award in the amount of \$842,840 through a sponsorship agreement with the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. CRWP is also helping to manage the project by providing technical assistance and review, developing educational deliverables, and administering the sponsorship. The WRRSP provides funding for projects that specifically target the protection and restoration of high-quality streams and wetlands in order to counter the loss of ecological function and biological diversity that jeopardize the health of Ohio's water resources. BioHabitats was selected as the contractor for this project. Construction began in February and is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2021.

This project will restore natural floodplain connectivity along approximately 1,800 linear feet of Beaver Creek using bioengineering techniques and by converting the channelized creek to a series of

interconnected pools and wetlands. Re-creating high-quality wetlands is a primary goal of this project, as Beaver Creek runs through a wetland preserve possessing rare and endangered plant species. The riparian habitat corridor will be restored and stabilized by scarifying and decompacting floodplain soils, creating wetlands, and constructing habitat features from coarse woody debris. The project will also establish new vegetative communities through the planting of more than 8 acres of native seed mixes, herbaceous plugs, clusters of live stakes, woody trees and shrubs, and available onsite material. This restoration will help improve water quality within Bass Lake Preserve by reducing sediment and nutrient loading, and by directly addressing other known water pollution concerns for this tributary. It will also benefit amphibians, birds, and other wildlife that requires large, connected corridors of high-quality forested wetland habitat. Overall, this project will facilitate the recovery of the ecological functions of Beaver Creek and Bass Lake Preserve, buffer Bass Lake from the stressors in the Beaver Creek watershed, and provide habitat to sensitive wildlife.

Geauga Park District manages more than 10,500 acres in 27 open parks and preserves in Geauga County. Its mission is to preserve, conserve and protect the natural features of Geauga County and to provide outdoor recreational experiences to its residents of every age, every ability and at all times of the year. Since 1961, Geauga Park District has worked to ensure that the most delicate ecosystems and the best park sites in the region remain protected from development while providing county residents the opportunity to enjoy these outstanding spaces at their leisure. For more information, visit www.geaugaparkdistrict.org.

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, including the Geauga Park District, represent 91% of the land area in the watershed and it works with partner watershed organizations across Ohio's Central Lake Erie Basin. For more information about the Watershed Partners, visit www.crwp.org.

Please see attached photos.

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Figure 1. Beaver Creek at the project site (approximately river mile 0.6); facing downstream (north). Photo source: Geauga Park District, December 2016.



Figure 1. River bank left (facing downstream towards Bass Lake). Lack of woody riparian vegetation has led to bank erosion and stream sedimentation in Beaver Creek at the project site. Photo source: Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc., April 2013.



Figure 2. Riparian area of Beaver Creek. Photo source: Geauga Park District, December 2016.



Figure 4. Beaver Creek Restoration Project during construction. Photo source: BioHabitats, February 2021.



Figure 5. Woody debris materials to be used in the Beaver Creek Restoration Project during construction. Photo source: BioHabitats, February 2021.



Figure 6. Beaver Creek Restoration Project during construction. Photo source: BioHabitats, February 2021.