

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF THE
CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN PARK DISTRICT
POLICY STATEMENT**

SUBJECT: Sustainability Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 17, 2017

I. PURPOSE:

Cleveland Metroparks contributes enduring value to Cleveland and northeast Ohio communities by conserving natural resources and providing recreation and education to over 17 million visitors annually. The Park District protects over 23,200 acres of forests, streams, and other natural areas, including nearly four miles of Lake Erie shoreline. Parks, open space, trails, and other aspects of natural capital provide quantifiable benefits to community health and resilience. This policy outlines Cleveland Metroparks role as a community leader in sustainability in mission-related activities as well as daily operational practices.

While serving as the Chief Engineer of Parks for the City of Cleveland in 1909, William A. Stinchcomb proclaimed, “[t]he importance of conserving our natural resources is now well recognized. Can not it be truly said that these natural wild beautiful valleys and glens which lie adjacent to our rapidly growing urban centers are a kind of ‘natural resource’ of ever increasing value to the public?” Stinchcomb’s vision was realized with the passage of Ohio law allowing for the creation of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District (Cleveland Metroparks) on July 23, 1917. The goal of “conserving our natural resources” has played a central role in the Park District’s 100-year history.

To further our founder’s vision, Cleveland Metroparks remains committed to the stewardship of the environment, our community, and the workplace through the implementation of sustainable practices that preserve natural and economic resources, reduce consumption and waste, reduce the carbon footprint, and promote green practices in our facilities and programs. Environmental stewardship includes the direct protection, management, and restoration of lands, waters, and dynamic processes that sustain our planet. Sustainability efforts shall increase the value or longevity of services while reducing reliance on resources and the negative effect on health and the environment. Environmental sustainability can be further defined as: conducting business in a way that provides the right for future generations to have the same or better quality of life as we have today.

The goal of Cleveland Metroparks is to lead and implement meaningful sustainability initiatives. Cleveland Metroparks 2020: The Emerald Necklace Centennial Plan, completed in fall 2012 and updated in 2015, builds the Park District’s vision around the “triple bottom line” of sustainability - People, Planet, Profit [Fiscal Responsibility]) - by stating, “Cleveland Metroparks will be the national leader for sustainable green infrastructure¹ that provides essential environmental, economic, and community benefits for people in its core service area, the surrounding region,

¹ Green infrastructure is the network of parks, greenways, trees, wetlands, and other resources that provide essential environmental, economic, and community benefits and ecosystem services. It includes engineered systems designed to mimic the function of natural systems.

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and the global reach of the Cleveland Metroparks and the Zoo.” Additionally, the plan makes a “sustainability statement” for each of these areas:

Environmental Sustainability

“Manage operations, maintenance, and facility development to reduce environmental footprint and improve ecological functions.”

Financial Sustainability

“Maintain long-term fiscal strength in order to carry out Cleveland Metroparks mission while reducing dependence on taxes.”

Social Sustainability

“Foster an organizational culture that maximizes the relevance and benefits of Cleveland Metroparks for its users and greater community.”

The 2020 Plan compels Cleveland Metroparks to examine all operations through these lenses to improve the “triple bottom line” and carry out the Park District’s vision with integrity. Further, Strategic Plan Goal 5.4 calls for the development of an environmental sustainability policy related to energy and resource conservation practices.

Demonstrating the significant role Cleveland Metroparks plays in conservation and sustainability, the 2013 Trust for Public Land study entitled, “Economic Benefits of Cleveland Metroparks,” concluded that the Park District returns \$855 million to the community annually as a result of an investment in natural capital. Benefits accrue from multiple aspects of the park, including:

- Trees and shrubs in Cleveland Metroparks trails and parks remove air pollutants that endanger human health and damage structures and reduce pollution control costs in Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township by \$14.4 million per year.
- Cleveland Metroparks reduces stormwater management costs by \$5.12 million annually by capturing precipitation, slowing its runoff, and reducing the amount of stormwater that enters the stormwater system.
- Cuyahoga County’s trails and parks are cited by tourists as a reason for their visit to the area, accounting for 11% of annual tourism spending.

Furthermore, the bike and pedestrian trails throughout the park system reduce vehicle use and emissions while providing health benefits to users. The Trust for Public Land Study helps quantify the spectrum of value provided by vibrant parks, open space, and trails and their crucial role in today’s resilient cities.

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The purpose of this Sustainability Policy is to provide deliberate direction on specific focus areas and planned activities to continually and successfully integrate sustainability into Cleveland Metroparks fabric to further enhance the central vision that conservation has played in Park District's history and mission.

II. POLICY

- A. **Focus Areas and Goals:** Cleveland Metroparks staff shall develop strategies and adopt a Best Practices Guide to advance the following goals in specific areas related to sustainability, conservation and community resilience within the context of the Strategic Plan:
1. Ecological Stewardship of Land, Water, Flora, and Fauna (Protection)
 - a. Acquire and strategically manage land to preserve green space, to increase tree canopy that supports air quality, to improve water quality by preserving and restoring wetlands and headwater streams, and to conserve habitat for plants and wildlife.
 - b. Engage in zoological and natural resource conservation activities to promote a "Future for Wildlife" domestically and internationally.
 - c. Assist community members' ability to increase their "green handprint" by providing opportunities for collaboration in land acquisition and management.
 - d. Plant native and regionally appropriate species and control and manage invasive species.
 2. Water Quality, Conservation, & Storm Water Management (Protection)
 - a. Determine and implement strategies to reduce water usage and improve water quality in buildings and operations.
 - b. Implement structural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to capture and treat stormwater on site.
 - c. Protect and restore watersheds.
 3. Energy Efficiency and Conservation (Organizational Sustainability)
 - a. Identify and adopt green building and site development standards, including energy efficiency in capital and renovation projects.
 - b. Reduce reliance and continually evaluate fuels and overall carbon footprint and/or greenhouse gas emissions.
 - c. Include lean practices in all maintenance and operations functions.
 - d. Consider life-cycle costs of facilities, including building materials and systems and maintain fiscal responsibility over Cleveland Metroparks assets.

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4. Resource Consumption & Waste Reduction (Organizational Sustainability)
 - a. Become a model of sustainable waste management by following EPA Waste Hierarchy of “reduce, reuse, recycle-compost” by promoting good practices among staff, visitors, and the community.
 - b. Incorporate sustainable purchasing guidelines to secure economies of scale, utilize local vendors, and promote sustainable product and service offerings by vendors.

5. Education and Awareness (Engagement formally Come Out and Play)
 - a. Ensure that Cleveland Metroparks employees understand and work towards sustainability in their everyday tasks.
 - b. Spread knowledge of sustainable actions individuals can take through educational programming, interpretive materials, and partnerships with outside organizations.

6. Community Resurgence (Relevancy)
 - a. Work with public and private entities and community advocates to improve equitable access to parks and trails.
 - b. Prioritize resource protection, park development, and trail connections in areas that are currently underserved by Cleveland Metroparks.
 - c. Serve as a model for utilization of green infrastructure investment as a strategy for effective park development, and work with partner jurisdictions to develop and adopt model codes related to resource protection and resilience.
 - d. Continue to document the impact Cleveland Metroparks has on the health and resilience of Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township in Medina County.

7. Trails and Open Space (Connections)
 - a. Continue efforts to connect neighborhoods to parks with trails and transit to encourage non-motorized access.
 - b. Continue to work with partners on the local, county, and regional level to promote trail and greenspace connectivity to optimize health, transportation, environmental, and tourism benefits.

B. ECO Team and Best Practices Guide and Action Plan: Cleveland Metroparks Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with Department Chiefs, shall appoint an employee representative of each Department to serve on the Cleveland Metroparks Employee Conservation Opportunities Team (ECO Team).

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1. The ECO Team shall develop a Best Practices Guide and lead the development of an Action Plan to accomplish the above-delineated goals in the respective focus areas to be approved by the CEO.
 - a. It is recognized that certifications or standards identified in the Best Practices Guide may evolve over time warranting regular updating of this Guide.
2. The ECO Team shall study and make recommendations to the CEO regarding the methodology to measure progress on each goal.
3. In formulating the Best Practices Guide and leading the development of the Action Plan, the ECO Team shall consider the following factors and encourage innovation:
 - a. The prudent use of public dollars;
 - b. The availability of green materials/services;
 - c. The ability to maintain or improve existing service levels and safety; and
 - d. The ability to safeguard the integrity of natural and built facilities/structures, including concerns for historic preservation.
4. Each ECO Team member shall serve as the departmental liaison, will be known as a “Sustainability Coordinator”, and will be the point of contact and clearinghouse for all sustainability-related issues related to this Policy for that department.
 - a. The departmental Sustainability Coordinator along with the Department Chief shall communicate and monitor all applicable Best Practices Guide and Action Plan items to all staff within that department.

C. Compliance with Policy, Best Practices Guide, and Action Plan:

1. All commissioners, employees, officers, volunteers, affiliates, vendors, contractors, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of Cleveland Metroparks shall comply with this Policy, Best Practice Guide and Action Plan.
2. The ECO Team members will undertake a leadership role in formulating the Best Practice Guide and Action Plan with input from appropriate staff; however, the success of Cleveland Metroparks’ sustainability efforts depend upon the appropriate dedication of resources and the efforts and compliance of all commissioners, employees, officers, volunteers, affiliates, vendors, contractors, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of Cleveland Metroparks.

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- 3. The ECO Team will coordinate training necessary to advance the Best Practice Guide and Action Plan.

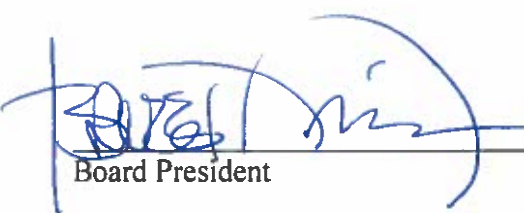
References:

Replaces and Supersedes: n/a

Approved:



Chief Executive Officer-Secretary



Board President

8/17/17

Approval Date

8/2022

Review Date