

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

SUBJECT: Sustainability Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 14, 2022

I. PURPOSE:

Cleveland Metroparks contributes enduring value to Cleveland and northeast Ohio communities by conserving natural resources and providing recreation and education to over 20 million visitors annually. The Park District protects over 24,400 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. Cannot 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, improve resiliency to climate change, 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.

As Cleveland Metroparks enters its second century of stewardship, we are excited to renew our mission, goals and objectives alongside our community and partners through the Second Century of Stewardship System Plan adopted by the Board in February 2022.

While conserving and protecting parks, forests, and waterways in the region over the last century has helped prioritize goals and strategic decision-making, Cleveland Metroparks has thrived through innovation and adaptation to enhance community connections and relevancy. Beyond just the protection of natural resources, the Park District also has the unique ability to enhance and uplift communities, strengthen the region’s connection to nature and create the next

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generation of environmental stewards reflected in its updated organizational mission of “protecting nature, connecting communities and inspiring conservation of our world.” This mission expresses the foundational aspirations of the Park District along with the values and community challenges of today and tomorrow. It is supported by six Core Goals moving the mission to action: Conserve, Connect, Welcome, Engage, Sustain and Innovate.

The purpose of this Sustainability Policy is to provide deliberate direction on specific focus areas and planned activities to integrate sustainability continually and successfully 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 (Conserve)
 - 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, regionally appropriate and climate resilient species and control and manage invasive species.
 - e. Restore land and natural resources to alleviate stressors of climate change.
2. Water Quality, Conservation, & Storm Water Management (Conserve)
 - 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.

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- d. Embrace strategies, including partnerships, to adapt to the consequences of climate change
3. Energy Efficiency and Conservation (Sustain)
 - a. Identify and implement green building and site development standards (e.g., USGBC LEED, SITES rating system, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), etc.) including energy efficiency in capital and renovation projects.
 - b. Reduce reliance and continually evaluate fuels and overall carbon footprint and/or greenhouse gas emissions related to all operations including transportation.
 - 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.
 4. Resource Consumption & Waste Reduction (Sustain)
 - a. Follow Cleveland Metroparks's Purchasing Policy on Sustainability Practices included in Section 200 when considering both products, vendors, and services to reduce our environmental, social, and financial impact.
 - b. Be a model of sustainable waste management with a zero-waste vision by following the waste hierarchy principles of "reduce, reuse, and recycle," but further, also "refuse, rethink, and redesign" to prevent waste in the first place and promote best practices among employees, volunteers, visitors, and the community.
 5. Education and Awareness (Engage)
 - a. Ensure that Cleveland Metroparks employees and volunteers understand and work towards sustainability in their everyday tasks.
 - b. Spread knowledge of and inspire change for sustainable actions individuals can take through educational programming, interpretive materials, and partnerships with outside organizations.
 6. Community Resurgence (Welcome)
 - 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

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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.
- e. Dedicate significant resources to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in parks, including founding a conservation corps that welcomes young people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, to help create the next generation of conservation leaders.
- f. Improve resiliency of communities through investment in quality greenspaces, natural resources, and park amenities.

7. Trails and Open Space (Connect)

- 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.
- c. Invest in and publicize natural surface trail improvements, inviting meaningful connections between people and the places we live, regardless of ability.
- d. Prioritize sustainability in trail construction and maintenance per Cleveland Metroparks' Sustainable Trail Standards*, minimizing maintenance needs while protecting natural resources and trail users.

III. ECO Team and Sustainability Plan: Cleveland Metroparks Chief Executive Officer (CEO) shall appoint at least one employee representative of each Department to serve on the Cleveland Metroparks Excellence in Conservation Opportunities Team (ECO Team).

A. The ECO Team shall work a to accomplish the above-delineated goals in the respective focus areas.

B. In its work, the ECO Team shall consider the following factors and encourage innovation:

- 1. The prudent use of public dollars promoting financial sustainability.
- 2. The availability of green materials/services.
- 3. The ability to maintain or improve existing service levels and safety.
- 4. The ability to safeguard the integrity of natural and built facilities/structures, including concerns for historic preservation.

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5. 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.

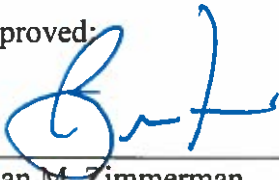
C. Compliance with Policy, Best Practices Guide, and Action Plan:

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 and implemented strategies to advance this Policy.
2. The ECO Team members will undertake a leadership role in formulating the strategies to advance this Policy 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.
3. The ECO Team will coordinate training necessary to advance this Policy and strategies.

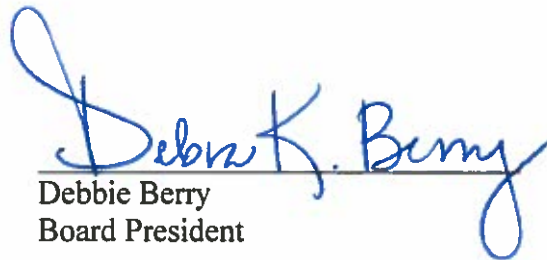
References:

Replaces and Supersedes: Sustainability Policy, August 17, 2017.

Approved:



Brian M. Zimmerman
Chief Executive Officer-Secretary



Debbie Berry
Board President

9-14-22

Approval Date

September 2027

Review Date