

2025 Review for Wayne County Park District/Wayne County Parks

Per: ORC: 1545.08 Yearly Report

NARRATIVE: Following the unsuccessful levy in November 2024, future efforts will focus on increasing public awareness of Wayne County Parks and Barnes Preserve to lay the groundwork for a successful operating levy sometime in the future. The passage of nearly all other levies statewide in 2024 demonstrates strong public support for green spaces.

Work commenced in early spring on the “Wetland Restoration and Stream Enhancement” project but was paused in November due to adverse weather conditions. While the boardwalk and fishing pier are complete, drought conditions over summer and autumn prevented the pond from filling and led to the loss of several newly planted trees. Completion is anticipated by Summer 2026, with fish introduction scheduled for 2027. Financially, two grants—Ohio Public Works and Capital Improvements—and county assistance with matching funds have made this project possible. This project adds another fully accessible venue to Barnes Preserve, offering opportunities for observing aquatic wildlife.. The trail surrounding the pond will remain unpaved but will be suitable for wheelchair users.

For years, the Board has discussed implementing interpretive signage throughout Barnes Preserve. This objective was achieved through a generous donation from the Wayne County Realtors Association, which funded the purchase and helped to install ten educational signs.

A major concern remains the Meadow, where rapid growth of saplings and invasive plants threatens to merge it with nearby wooded areas. Maintaining the Meadow as a distinct habitat is essential for pollinators and migratory bird species. The Board plans to address this issue in 2026.

Barnes Preserve experienced high visitor activity throughout summer and fall, as reflected by consistently full parking lots. The site has become a popular destination for dog walking. Pavilion reservations declined compared to last year, with most bookings for graduation parties and family reunions. Additional events hosted included a wedding, a large family birthday celebration, two memorials, a Blessing of the Animals ceremony, a craft show, church services, and the annual ASPO Trick or Treat event.

Three schools utilized Barnes Preserve for outdoor education classes facilitated by Wayne County Soil and Water, and several bird walks were conducted by the Greater Mohican Audubon Society.

Several new benches were donated and installed along the trails; some will be relocated to the new pond area upon its completion.

15 volunteers helped with the Wayne County Fair booth. Romich Foundation provided freebies, and we handed out bug stickers, brochures, and did bug tattoos. All were good promotional items bringing awareness of Wayne County Parks and the upcoming November levy.

The Friends of Wayne County Parks agreed to contract with a social media company to handle the Facebook page, Instagram, website, etc.

INFO and STATISTICS

Total Revenue: \$ 5,904.00 (from county)

Total Expenses: \$ 7,777.31

State Audit done- No discrepancies

Pavilion Reservations: 17 (most n/c) Donations to Friends group - \$200

Average number of active volunteers: 25

Number of hours of volunteer labor documented: Approx. 800 hours

PARKS:

Barnes Preserve: 76 acres at Barnes Preserve – fully accessible and developed

Includes: Nearly a mile of ADA paved trails through woods and meadow

- 1 mile of dirt/mulched/boardwalk trails
- Large pavilion with picnic tables and grill
- Electric at pavilion
- Seasonal port-a-john
- 1 observation deck overlooking wetland pond
- 2 parking lots (one paved and one gravel)
- 26 park benches throughout the park

1 trash dumpster
10 educational interpretive signs

Parmenter Nature Preserve: 82 acres at Parmenter Preserve (not open)