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## GREEN GAZETTE

A LISTING OF LOCAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE KEEPING KNOX COUNTY GREEN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

2007

A PRODUCT OF THE GREEN SUMMIT

- > A meeting of open space, recreation and conservation minded governmental and private organizations
- > Highlights the progress or milestones achieved by organizations, with respect to conservation and land protection actions
- > Provides contact names, phone numbers, web sites and email addresses to increase information sharing and opportunities for collaboration



### **An Open Letter from the Knox County Park District:**

*When most of us hear the word “infrastructure,” we most often think of things like streets, water plants, utility lines and roads.*

*We probably think this way because we can easily associate a cost to these types of structures, and thus, a common expense to each of our pocket books.*

*But a more basic and even more important part of our common “infrastructure” is the air we breathe [from green plants], the water we drink and the land that produces our food.*

*This is our most important infrastructure, and as development and population expand, it crowds out the very source of our most important assets.*

*As a community, we have inherited a healthy and productive place to live and work, and it is our duty to pass on to future generations a place where clean water, healthy air and productive farmland will continue to sustain and nurture our community.*

The Green Gazette is compiled by the Knox County Park District annually, in celebration of our collective partners’ success stories in conservation, and with an eye towards future collaborative ventures.

### **Owl Creek Trail**

In 2001, a group of residents in Fredericktown started to promote the idea of a multi-use trail from Fredericktown on the old B&O railroad line. With the assistance of the Knox County Commissioners, the group applied for grants to develop a trail connecting Fredericktown to Mount Vernon. With 1,400 signatures from local residents, the trail group enjoys good support for the construction of the trail.

### **The Philander Chase Corporation**

Founded in 2000, The Philander Chase Corporation (PCC) seeks to preserve and maintain the farmland, open spaces, scenic views and characteristic landscapes surrounding Gambier. PCC seeks to engage local partners in the community to preserve the beauty and rural character of Knox County. PCC has purchased over 232 acres, holds permanent conservation easements on another 659 acres and co-holds (with the Ohio Department of Agriculture) agricultural easements on an additional 748 acres. The PCC has been a leader in the Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program and acts as an advocate for local farm owners who wish to protect their farms through agricultural easements.

[www.kenyon.edu/x9465.xml](http://www.kenyon.edu/x9465.xml)

### **Ramser Arboretum**

The Ramser Arboretum was established by Russ Ramser, a local natural gas producer. Today, the Arboretum contains over 150,000 trees on 680 acres next to the hamlet of Jelloway. With over five miles of trails on a variety of terrain, the center is open to the public all year. In 2006, a master plan was completed to guide development on the Arboretum for the next decades. Mr. Ramser left a living legacy for which generations to come will enjoy.

## North Central Ohio Land Conservancy, Inc.

North Central Ohio Land Conservancy, Inc. focuses on protecting greenspace in Richland, Knox, Huron, Sandusky, Wyandotte and Ashland counties. They currently own three parcels totaling 81 acres near Brinkhaven. The organization has obtained grant monies from the Clean Ohio Fund Green Space Conservation Program.

## Ohio Department of Natural Resources

ODNR and two of its divisions, Wildlife and Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) manage lands within the county. The largest is the Division of Wildlife's Kokosing Reservoir, Knox Lake Wildlife Area and Mohican Wildlife Area. These three areas combined total over 2,000 acres of prime game lands. DNAP holds easements on Knox Woods, and parcels of river front property on the Kokosing River. With monies provided by a US EPA 319 grant with the development of the Kokosing River Watershed Plan, DNAP has easement money available to help preserve additional streamside properties. In December 2006, the Mohican River was designated scenic by DNAP. [www.ohiodnr.com](http://www.ohiodnr.com)

## Owl Creek Conservancy

In 2006, Owl Creek Conservancy worked with four landowners to protect more than 250 acres of agricultural lands and woodland along the Kokosing State Scenic River. Owl Creek Conservancy is in negotiations with other landowners to protect an additional 230 acres. To further its mission, the Conservancy collaborated with the Brown Family Environmental Center at Kenyon College, The Knox County Park District and the Ramser Arboretum in presenting the annual "Explore the Nature of Knox County" program. <http://owlcreekconservancy.org/>

## The Brown Family Environmental Center

The Brown Family Environmental Center (BFEC) was established in 1995 and is located on Laymon Road just outside of Gambier. The BFEC is dedicated to research, environmental education and preservation of the natural habitats of Central Ohio, while celebrating the regions rich heritage of farming. The center encompasses 380 acres of land and offers diverse opportunities for research, recreation and relaxation. The Center features a visitors center, several gardens, a seven acre prairie, a ten acre wetland, a pine plantation with over 1,000 trees and extensive grasslands. The BFEC serves all of Knox County and Kenyon College, offers a wide variety of programming each year, and is a recognized leader in environmental education in central Ohio.

<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Bfec/>

## Village of Danville

With a population over 1,100, the Village of Danville serves as the connector between the western terminus of the Mohican Trail and the eastern terminus of the Kokosing Gap Trail. The Village has obtained grant funds to enhance its 10 acre Memorial Park, located along a state designated scenic byway.

## Fredericktown Recreation District

The Fredericktown Recreation District was established in 1979 and serves the 6,000 residents in the area of the Fredericktown School District. The District now owns five park areas in the Village of Fredericktown, and annually serves over 4,000 users per year. Over 380 kids participate in various youth sports leagues each year, as do 170 adults. The District's largest park is Stockman Lake Park, which contains a swimming lake, numerous sports fields and a playground. Total park ground available is over 80 acres.

[http://www.fredericktown.net/parks\\_rec.htm](http://www.fredericktown.net/parks_rec.htm)

## Village of Gambier

For over 150 year, the Village of Gambier had no parks. However, in the middle 1970s, 15 acres containing the old Meadow Lane School was purchased, with additional property to the south added in the 1980s. In the past five years, an additional five acres was purchased at the corner of State Route 229 and Duff Street. The Meadow Lane Park contains a multi-use community center, ball fields, a picnic shelter, play equipment and a large open meadow. Plans are underway for the use of the 10-acre Duff/State Route 229 property, and fencing has been improved adjacent to State Route 229. There is an active movement to improve all the parks, and make the village a walk-friendly community.

<http://www.villageofgambier.org/>

## Heart of Ohio Trail

In November 2000, the Heart of Ohio trail board was organized to convert the old rail bed running from Mount Vernon thru Centerburg and ending at the Delaware County line. The County Commissioners appointed the Heart of Ohio Trail group to manage the eventual trail soon after the group was organized. The group worked hard to move the purchase along and gathered community support and raised funds for the effort. On June 29<sup>th</sup> of 2004, the 16 plus miles of old rail line was transferred to the ownership of the Knox County Commissioners, and work began to develop the trail and raise additional funds to start converting the property into a multi use trail. The Heart of Ohio Trail will be a vital link in the Ohio Erie Trail running from Cleveland to Cincinnati and completes the 35 plus miles of multi-use trails across the county. The Heart of Ohio Trail board has a solid base of support and is determined to continue to place more and more of the trail in use during 2007.

<http://www.heartofohiotrail.org/>

## City of Mount Vernon

The City of Mount Vernon has provided recreational opportunities to its residents for 200 years and now owns over 230 acres of park land. Operating a full range of park and recreation programs, the City serves not only the people of Mount Vernon, but also the surrounding residential areas, attracting thousands of visitors to its ballparks during the summer. The City recently began rebuilding and upgrading the Hiawatha Community Pool. The City purchased 24 acres of land and received a 8-9 acre donation of land for Foundation Park in 2006.

[www.mountvernonohio.org/](http://www.mountvernonohio.org/)

## Mount Vernon Developmental Center

For 100 years, the Mount Vernon Development Center (MVDC) has not only provided care for the most vulnerable citizens of Ohio, but also has served as a place with a history of beautiful buildings set amidst rolling meadows, deep forests of hardwoods and pines. Set on over 300 acres north of Mount Vernon, the center maintains one of Ohio's best examples of an old growth timber stands . The Center is the home for over 300 residents in need of intensive developmental and health services and is actively reaching out to the wider community to help residents enjoy a high quality of community life.

<http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/residential/mvdc.htm>

## Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) was created in 1933 after the historic floods of 1913 for the purpose of controlling flood events. Their mission has expanded to include recreation, and the MWCD manages hundreds of acres of land for a variety of recreational pursuits in Knox County. MWCD also manages the campground at Kokosing Reservoir.

<http://www.mwcdlakes.com/>

## Kokosing Gap Trail

First organized in the late 1980s, the Kokosing Gap Trail group sought to convert 14.5 miles of abandoned rail line into the area's first multi-use recreational trail. That dream has been realized, and today, tens of thousands of people have enjoyed their visit to the nation's longest privately maintained but publicly owned multi-use trail. The trail features scenic vistas of farmland, forests and the beautiful Kokosing River valley. Operated by a board of volunteers, the trail maintains the highest standards of care and provides adequate parking and rest stops that makes the trail assessable to a wide variety of users. It is not unusual for the trail to see over 2,000 visitors on busy holidays. The Kokosing Gap Trail is often cited as one of the best quality of life assets for the community. In 2005, the second phase of repaving was completed to Howard, and in 2006, the final section to Danville was repaved thanks to generous donors.

[www.kokosinggaptrail.org/](http://www.kokosinggaptrail.org/)

## Mohican Valley Trail and Bridge of Dreams

In 1996, a group of dedicated individuals founded the Mohican Valley Trail. Along with the Ohio Horseman's Council, the group was able to obtain a grant to purchase a 4.8 mile abandoned rail line. This hard working group hauled away tons of trash, and in 1997, obtained a NatureWorks grant to convert the 370-foot bridge over the Mohican into Ohio's longest covered bridge — the Bridge of Dreams. The Mohican Valley Trail links Danville and Brinkhaven and provides a vital link between the Holmes County Trail and the Kokosing Gap Trail. The trail is a horseman's delight, and Amish buggies are a daily sight along the trail. This multi-use trail is wide enough to also accommodate hikers and fat tire bikes. The Trail Board hopes to improve the surface of the trail to make it more accessible to walkers and bikers.

<http://www.visitknoxohio.org/?article=mvtrail>

## Hilliar Township Memorial Park

Memorial Park, located at the corner of state routes 314 and 3 and US Highway 36 on the east edge of Centerburg, serves as the site of Old Time Farming Festival. This 13 acre park serves as a gathering place for picnics and recreation for the southwestern area of Knox County and the surrounding area. The park is maintained by the Hilliar Township Trustees, and has been enjoyed by several generations of residents.

## Knox County Commissioners

The oldest form of government in Knox County has kept pace with providing citizens of the county with the facilities needed to promote economic development and improve the quality of life in the community. The Board of Commissioners is one of the largest property owners in the county, with facilities ranging from office buildings, a large and ornate performance center (Memorial Building), over 35 miles of multi-use trails and a long list of other properties that help make the county a very desirable place to live. The Board of Commissioners also has helped to fund farmland preservation efforts and assists a number of local groups in their efforts to provide green space and maintain Knox County's rural atmosphere. The Board of Commissioners serves first and foremost as the budgeting agency for all of county government services.

<http://www.knoxcountyohio.org/Commissioners.htm>

## Knox County Horse Park

In 1995, the Knox Chapter of the Ohio Horseman's Council began to partner with the Knox County Commissioners to develop a horse park on Thayer Road, near State Route 3 and US Route 36 west of Mount Vernon. A new and independent organization, the Knox County Horse Park, Inc., now operates the facility. The 54-acre property now contains a series of trails, an arena with lighting, bleachers and a picnic shelter. There is also a camping area for horse owners who use the facility. KCHP, Inc., hopes to raise funds to side the picnic shelter, add lights and improve the competition surface in the arena. The facility brings local and regional horse owners together to enjoy equestrian activities.

<http://www.knoxcountyhorsepark.com/>

## Knox Citizens for Smart Growth

Knox County Citizens for Smart Growth (KSCG) was founded in 2002 to assist in growth and development of the county to best utilize current infrastructure and already available land and buildings. KCSG is committed to saving the unique and productive farmland in Knox County, preventing urban sprawl onto valuable agricultural soil, and revitalizing our town and village centers. KSCG works with townships to strengthen local zoning and planning, and with various citizen groups and officials to support the implementation of the Knox County Comprehensive Plan. The group sponsors educational events with the objective of broadening awareness and understanding of the range of planning and zoning tools available. KCSG lobbies local and State government for stronger planning, zoning and farmland preservation legislation. The organization works with local farmers, Kenyon College and others to establish a local food system and build a strong local economy that will be more independent as cheap oil disappears.

[www.knoxsmartgrowth.org](http://www.knoxsmartgrowth.org)

## Knox County Park District

Established in 1995, the Knox County Park District (KCPD) now owns or operates six properties containing over 320 acres for the purpose of conservation and public enjoyment of natural areas. In 2005, KCPD served as the local sponsor for the establishment of Ohio's first Water Trail on the Kokosing State Scenic River. The District was successful in securing ODNR and Ohio Public Works grants in 2006 to increase recreational opportunity for Knox County citizens and conserve riparian habitat. In 2006, KCPD added another river access point near Pipesville Road to the Kokosing Water Trail. The District sponsors the Green Summit every year as well.

[www.knoxcountyparks.org/](http://www.knoxcountyparks.org/)

## Knox County Regional Planning Commission

The Knox County Commissioners created the Knox County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) in 1971. The Commission was given the responsibility to coordinate planning efforts that deal with issues larger than any city, village or township. The Commission oversaw the update of the Knox County Comprehensive Plan in 2005 through widespread public involvement. The process of updating the plan from 2003 to 2005 offered the Commission an unprecedented opportunity for discussing public issues about a future we deserve.

[http://www.knoxcountyohio.org/offices/Regional\\_Planning\\_Office.htm](http://www.knoxcountyohio.org/offices/Regional_Planning_Office.htm)

## Knox Soil and Water Conservation District

The Knox Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD) has partnered with ODNR to offer a livestock exclusion fencing program to protect local streams and riparian habitat. KSWCD is an active member of RPC and provide landowner assistance regarding a variety of conservation practices.

<http://www.knoxswcd.org/>