



The Pathfinder

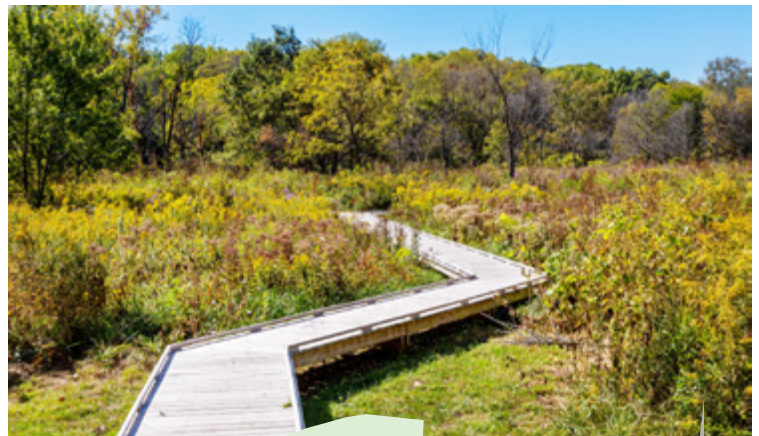
A NEWSLETTER FROM **GREENE COUNTY PARKS & TRAILS**

EARLY SIGNS OF SPRING AT PEARL'S FEN

As winter begins to recede, Pearl's Fen offers a compelling look at one of the earliest signs of seasonal change. Among the first plants to emerge in this unique wetland is skunk cabbage, a species notable for both its distinctive appearance and its unusual ability to generate heat.

Skunk cabbage often appears while snow and ice are still present, pushing through frozen soil with ease. Its mottled purple, hood-like structure, known as a spathe, surrounds a central spike of tiny flowers. What sets this plant apart is its capacity for thermogenesis, a process in which it produces metabolic heat by rapidly breaking down stored starches. Temperatures within the plant can rise significantly above the surrounding air, in some cases approaching that of the human body.

This heat production serves several important functions. It allows skunk cabbage to melt nearby ice, ensuring early emergence, and helps protect its tissues from freezing damage. Additionally, the warmth aids in volatilizing its strong odor, which resembles decaying organic matter. This scent, combined with the elevated temperature, attracts early pollinators such as flies and beetles, which rely on both cues when few other resources are available.



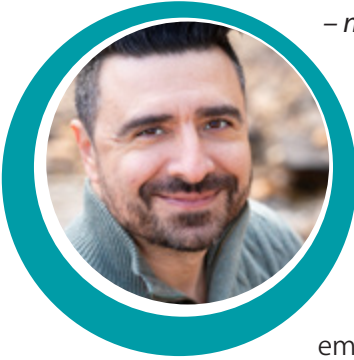
Pearl's Fen provides ideal conditions for this species. As a groundwater-fed wetland, it maintains stable, mineral-rich conditions that support specialized plant communities. In early spring, the fen remains quiet and subdued, offering visitors an opportunity to observe these subtle but remarkable processes firsthand.



A walk through Pearl's Fen during this transitional period reveals the ingenuity of native plants and the quiet but persistent onset of spring.

HELLO, NEIGHBOR!

– notes from our director,
Richard Kharman



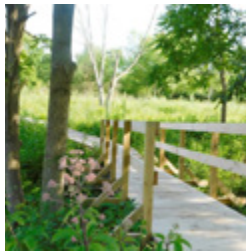
As I write this, it's a wonderful day to reflect on the season of growth we are entering. Since moving my family to western Ohio last June, I have been struck by the way this community embraces the changing landscape.

For me, these transitions are a reminder of why I've spent decades in the Parks and Recreation industry. From my first job at an ice rink in the late 90s to serving as a Senior Manager in Maryland, I've learned that a park system is never static; it is a living, breathing part of the neighborhood.

INVESTING IN OUR FOUNDATION

One of the things I am most passionate about is technical durability. We want our amenities to last for generations, not just seasons. Currently, we are hard at work on several infrastructure projects that reflect this commitment. One highlight is the replacing and repair of the curbing and walkways throughout our system. While these might seem like small details, they are the vital connectors that allow all of us to navigate our parks safely. By prioritizing high-quality materials and proactive maintenance, we are ensuring these pathways remain accessible for decades, not just years.

By choosing high-quality materials and focusing on long-term maintenance, we are ensuring that your tax dollars and our shared resources are used wisely. It's a role I take seriously and with pride. Balancing the "fun" of recreation with the "grit" of facility management is what keeps our system strong.



STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

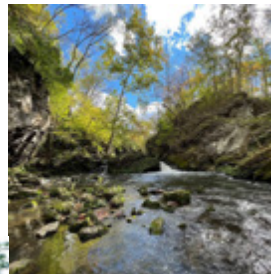
Conservation and recreation are the two pillars we build on here at Greene County. As an avid cyclist, I'm often out on the trails myself, seeing firsthand how important it is to protect our natural corridors while making them accessible. Balancing these two won't always be easy. However, by recognizing the effects of our recreational activities and involving you in our conservation efforts, we can guarantee both ecological well-being and ongoing enjoyment for years to come.



As the weather warms, we are rolling out a full calendar of exciting programs and events throughout the year designed to get you back into your "backyard." From guided educational tours, such as Maple Sugaring which was led by our dedicated staff, to our larger community events and volunteer cleanup days, there are countless ways to get involved and enjoy the fresh air.

A SHARED BACKYARD

The sight of families using our lands every day brings a lot of pride to our team. Whether you are here for a competitive match on the new pickleball courts or a quiet hike to clear your head, please



remember that this space belongs to you. We'll continue encouraging responsible visitor conduct – like staying on designated paths – to ensure that our collective dedication to environmental conservation remains a top priority.

I look forward to seeing you out there. This community has welcomed my family with open arms, and it is a great honor to return that warmth by serving as your Director.

So, welcome to your backyard!



Upcoming Events

SELFIE SCAVENGER HUNT

MAY 1

Turn your park visits into an adventure! From May through August, explore a new park each month, hunt for hidden landmarks, and snap selfies along the way. Share your finds on Facebook for a chance to win awesome prizes and create some fun memories while you're at it!



BACKYARD CRUISE-IN & SWAP MEET

JUNE 6

Rev up for a summer evening of classic cars, great music, and community fun! Join us at Caesar Ford Park for a free Cruise-In featuring vintage rides, food, and good vibes. Bring your vehicle or just come enjoy the show, plus participants have a chance to win door prizes!



FLAG DAY 250

JUNE 14

Join us for an evening of celebration with an America 250 festival that will contain vendors, FREE food (while supplies last), Touch-a-Truck, flag retirement ceremony AND a FREE concert featuring Ryan Adams & The SOBs and the Michelle Robinson Band!



THE GREAT PANCAKE PICKUP



The 2026 Greene County Parks & Trails Great Pancake Pickup at Caesar Ford Park, held on Saturday, March 7th, was a fantastic success and a perfect way to spend a winter morning.

In a busy world, the Great Pancake Pickup offers a chance to slow down and enjoy the little things: a calm drive through nature, a friendly wave from staff, and the comfort of a warm meal waiting for you. It's not about anything fancy, it's about creating a moment that feels easy, welcoming, and connected to the community. For many, it's become a small tradition that marks the season and brings people together in a low-key, feel-good way.



For Greene County Parks & Trails, that simplicity is intentional. Events like the Great Pancake Pickup are not only fundraisers, they're also a way to give back to the community that supports the parks year-round. By creating an experience that's accessible, affordable, and enjoyable for all ages, GCP&T is able to connect with residents in a meaningful way while inviting them to spend time in the parks, even in the winter months.

This year's drive-through ran smoothly from start to finish, thanks to the hard work of Greene County Parks & Trails employees. Staff kept things moving efficiently while still bringing a friendly, upbeat energy to each stop along the way. Smiles, waves, and warm greetings added a personal touch that made the morning feel even more special.

Each meal featured a classic, comforting combination of fluffy pancakes, savory sausage, and syrup, fresh, warm, and ready to enjoy. Guests continued on their way to enjoy their breakfast at home, making it a convenient and cozy start to the day. In total, more than 1,700 meals were served, and the event raised \$3,500 in support of Greene County Parks & Trails.



All in all, the 2026 Great Pancake Pickup was a great reminder that sometimes the simplest experiences are the most memorable. Greene County Parks & Trails extends a big thank you to the staff who made it happen and to everyone who came out to participate. We're grateful for such a supportive community and look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come!

