

H2Ohio Initiative Funds Restoration of New Nature Preserve in Litchfield Township

Medina County Park District (MCPD) was recently awarded \$900,000 from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, as part of Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative, to restore 145 acres in Litchfield Township.

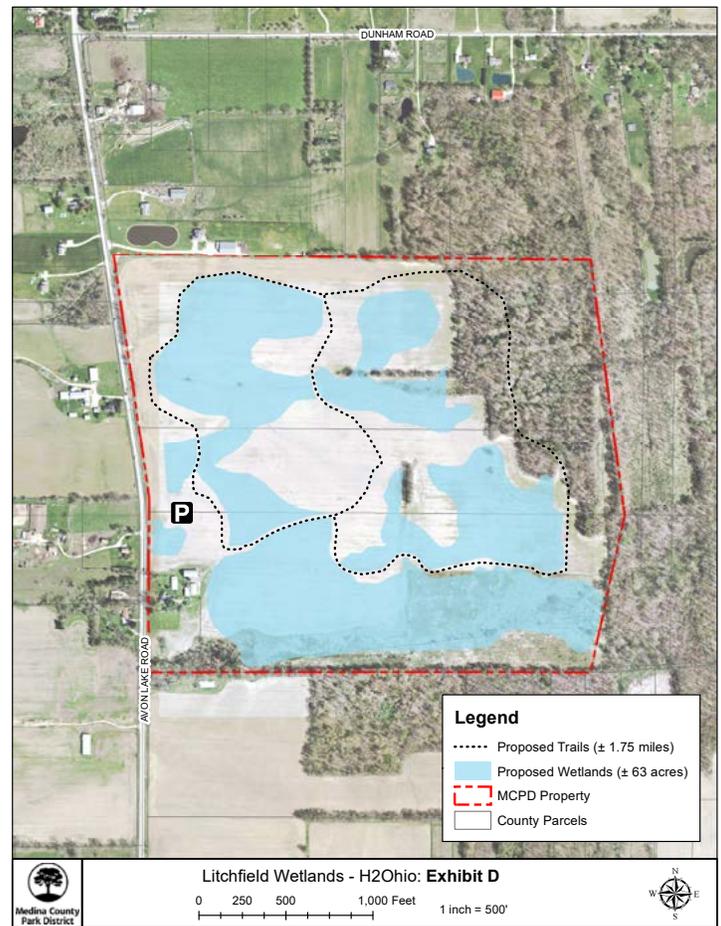
The property is located in the Central Basin of Lake Erie with water flowing north to our Great Lake. Restoring the property will reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loading in the watershed which can contribute to harmful algal blooms -- an issue that has plagued Lake Erie in recent years. This project will also see the creation of more than 60 acres of wetlands and the introduction of native plants.

The park district plans to open this site as the Litchfield Wetlands Nature Preserve by the end of 2022. Director Eppink noted: "I'm looking forward to establishing a nature preserve in an area without a Medina County Park District presence. After chasing a number of funding opportunities to restore this property over the past decade, we are grateful to receive such significant support through the H2Ohio initiative."

The land was purchased by MCPD in 2009 with Clean Ohio funding. (Clean Ohio grants are administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission.) There is currently no public access to the site as it has been farmed under an annual land management agreement to keep invasive plants from taking root. MCPD will budget \$300,000 of its own dollars for public access improvements including parking, restrooms, and trail surfacing. Planning & Operations Manager Isaac Smith envisions more than 1.5 miles of trails for visitors to enjoy once the site is built.

Launched by Governor Mike DeWine in 2019, H2Ohio is a collaborative water-quality effort to provide clean and safe water to Ohio. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency each has a significant role in H2Ohio through the natural infrastructure of wetlands, the reduction in nutrient runoff, and increasing access to clean drinking water and quality sewer systems. To learn more, visit h2.ohio.gov.

This is the second award the park district has received from the program. MCPD's first H2Ohio award was for \$1.52 million to restore three sites near Chippewa Lake in Lafayette and Westfield townships. One of those sites, a 7.5-acre parcel along the Chippewa outlet located off Kennard Road, will be completed next year. The district will also add parking and a kayak launch at the site.



Medina County
Park District

