

# *Ohio State Parks*

2005 ANNUAL REPORT



PROVIDING FUN, SAFE, CLEAN AND FRIENDLY PLACES FOR FAMILIES TO GATHER AND ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**STRONG FOUNDATION**

# Our values

**mission**

**vision**



## **Mission**

To provide an outdoor recreational experience for Ohio State Park visitors that exceeds their expectations.

## **Vision**

We, the employees of Ohio State Parks, are proud of our incredible natural resources and facilities, and we are devoted to providing fun, safe, clean and friendly places for families and friends to gather and enjoy the great outdoors.



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Organization</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Parks Pride Pass Proposal</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Customer Service</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Customer Focus	
Centralized Reservation System	
Special Events	
Interpretive Services	
Recreational Offerings	
Publications	
Marketing and Advertising	
Website	
Promotional Programs	
Surveys	
Partnerships	
Visitor Safety and Protective Services	
Visitor Occasions	
<b>Resource Management</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Land Transactions	
Wetland Projects	
Waterway Improvements	
Beaches	
Water Quality Issues	
Recreational Trail Projects	
Wildlife Diversity Initiatives	
Sustainable Practices	
Management of Nuisance Species	
Flooding and Storm Damage	
<b>Professional Development</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Employee Satisfaction Survey	
Training	
Employee Recognition Programs	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b> .....	<b>26</b>
Construction Projects	
Project Design	
Roadway Maintenance and Striping Program	
Miscellaneous Park Construction & Improvement Projects	
In-House Construction Initiatives	
Accessibility Improvements	
Fleet Management	
In-House Products and Services	
<b>Fiscal Management</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Budget	
Expenditures	
Revenue	
Concessions	
<b>2006 Goals</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Statistical Abstract of the Ohio State Park System</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Map of Regional Park Units</b> .....	<b>36</b>





**DAN WEST**  
Chief, Ohio State Parks

### Rising to the Challenge

Events in 2005 brought our priorities into sharp focus as we reflected on our past and contemplated our future. **We struggled with perhaps the most challenging budget in our history, and yet we received the greatest affirmation that Ohioans truly care about their state parks and value the facilities and services we provide.** We continued to do more and more with the most overtaxed workforce in memory, and yet our staff affirmed their loyalty and commitment to their jobs.

The year began with a proposal that would have secured critically needed funding at the expense of Ohio State Parks' long tradition of free access for all. Although the proposed Parks Pride Pass—which would have imposed a parking fee on Ohio State Park visitors—was eventually rejected in the public legislative process, our state park system received a resounding “yes vote” from legislators, the media and the public. Citizens and elected officials alike agreed that our state parks should be funded through some mechanism that will allow us to continue serving all Ohioans free of charge. In addition to tremendous moral support and goodwill, we received welcome financial relief to see us through the busy summer season while we continue our quest for long-term stable funding.

We can attribute much of our success in the public arena, and our ability to quickly regroup for the busy season, to the solid foundation and focus afforded by our first strategic plan, Service and Stewardship 2001-2005. For the past five years, our strategic plan has served us well and carried us successfully through hard times. In 2001, the centralized reservation and point-of-sale system was a far-off goal that seemed overwhelming. Today, our state-of-the-art reservation system is one of the nation's best. Since 2001, we have been impacted by the retirement of 229

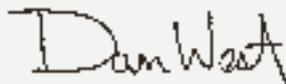
of our most experienced staff, yet our strategies for training up-and-coming managers through the Flickinger Leadership Academy and Ohio Certified Public Manager program are providing a new generation of managers with the tools to be successful. Over the past five years, our capital improvement needs have continued to outpace traditional sources of capital improvement and maintenance funding. Nevertheless, we are still making brick-and-mortar improvements and developing new recreational offerings by forging partnerships, reaching out to the community, and attracting more grant money than ever.

This year, an eclectic team comprised of our staff and stakeholders convened to formulate our new five-year strategic plan. Drawing from a wealth of personal experiences, as well as volumes of trend and research data, the group developed Service and Stewardship 2006-2010. The new strategic plan carries forward our simple but powerful mission, adheres to our core values and overarching goals, and provides practical field-oriented action steps as well as measures to ensure customer-oriented results.

As part of the strategic planning process, we conducted an employee satisfaction survey to ensure that our internal customers are pleased with their experiences at Ohio State Parks. The survey results are extremely gratifying; our employees ranked Ohio State Parks in the top five percent of employers, with an overall employee satisfaction rating of 78 percent. Even with the budget struggles in the parks, dwindling staff, and the logistical and emotional difficulties of regionalization, our employees remain committed and loyal to Ohio State Parks and ultimately our customers. The survey also provided us with insights into what we can do to make our employees feel even more satisfied.

Despite our own budget challenges, our parks are still pumping an estimated **one billion dollars** into Ohio's economy as families purchase gear, gas, food and souvenirs in the local communities during their day trips and overnight getaways at Ohio State Parks.

We are still building an organization that has purpose, focus and alignment; that lives its values every day; and that creates an environment that allows employees to grow and to produce better results, for ourselves and for our customers.



Dan West

CHIEF, OHIO STATE PARKS

# Table of Organization

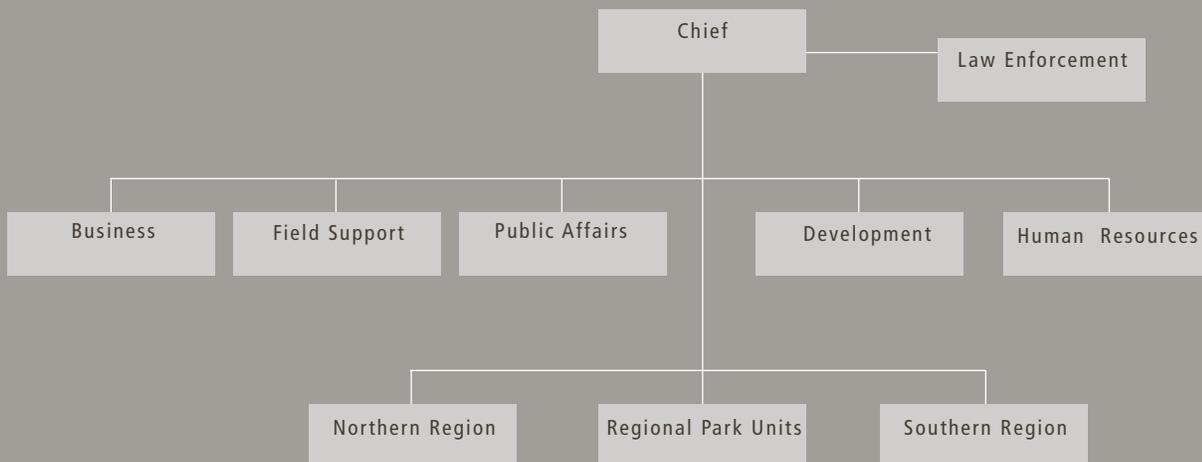
**The organization of Ohio's 74 state parks into regional units was modified slightly, with the incorporation of two parks in one regional unit in northeast Ohio into the neighboring region, resulting in a decrease in the total number of regional units from 27 to 26. The regional units consist of two to five parks in close proximity. Each region works together as a team, sharing financial and human resources as necessary for better economy and efficiency.**



The manager of one of the parks in each unit is designated as the regional manager, and exercises line authority over the other park(s) within the region. The regional manager provides leadership to best utilize resources within the region, and may shift resources to assist the other park(s), thereby ensuring the success of the entire region. In several of the regions, one or more of the smaller regional parks are operated as satellites without a manager on-site.

The north and south regional administrators serve as an extension of the chief's office in the field, providing assistance on operational matters and facilitating uniformity of management strategies within their respective state areas.

The central office groups provide support for the field, perform administrative functions and implement statewide programs.



# Parks Pride Pass Proposal

## Ohio State Parks remain free of charge after parking pass proposal is scrapped.

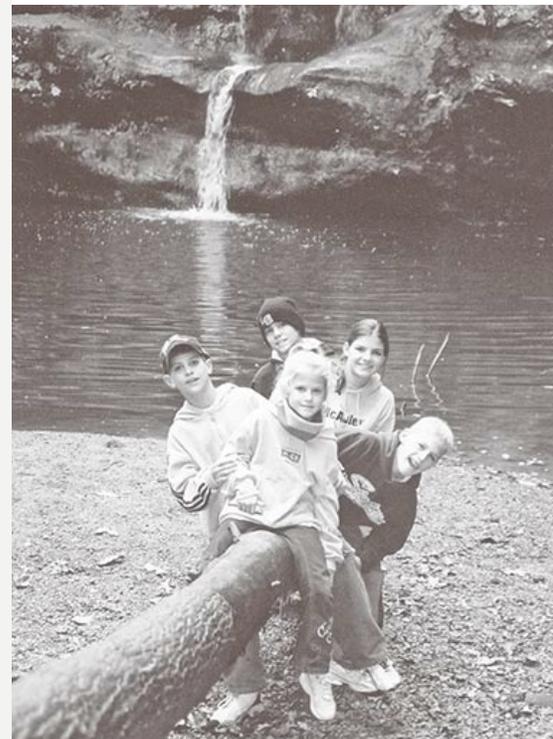
Providing free outdoor recreation opportunities for Ohio families has contributed to the quality of life and community spirit for 56 years. For generations, family traditions and fond memories have been built around the simple pleasures afforded by hassle-free access to Ohio State Park trails, picnic areas, swimming beaches and fishing holes.

However, at the outset of 2005, the division's continuing funding crisis hit a critical level that would force the division to cut back on valued services, or find a guaranteed source of immediate income to address a budget shortfall of approximately \$3 million. A new program was proposed that would impose an unprecedented general fee for parking in Ohio State Parks. The fee would be consistent with a national trend; in 2005, 44 other state park systems were charging visitors an entrance or parking fee.

The program, referred to as the Parks Pride Pass, would require visitors to purchase and display a parking tag in their vehicle. Daily passes would be available through self-service stations around the park, and at all park offices. The daily pass fee would be \$5. Regular visitors would be encouraged to purchase an annual pass for \$25, good for unlimited visits in a 12-month period. The Parks Pride Pass program was scheduled to begin May 1.

A great deal of planning and preparation occupied much of the division's time and energy in the months prior to the proposed launch of the Parks Pride Pass program. A primary challenge was crafting a single approach that would best fit the wide variety and diversity of our state parks, many of which have multiple points of ingress and egress rather than a single entrance and exit. Early in the process, the division met with stakeholders to inform them of the fee proposal and enlist their support. Meanwhile, work continued on numerous logistical considerations, development of policies and procedures on enforcement, and coordination of marketing and public information, along with responding to thousands of comments, complaints and inquiries from customers. As May approached, work began on the physical requirements for implementing the program, from the design and printing of the tag and self-registration envelopes to the fabrication of pipe safes to collect the fees. At the same time, the parks were gearing up for the onset of the busy season, with the added challenge of recovering from destructive winter storms.

The Parks Pride Pass fee proposal received considerable public opposition during the rulemaking process while under review by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review. The proposed rule was eventually dropped, with the Ohio General Assembly passing a statute prohibiting any type of park admission fee or parking fee in the future. In addition to passing the legislation, the General Assembly increased the division's General Revenue Fund allocation for the biennium to compensate for the anticipated revenue that was projected from the parking pass.



# Customer Service



Fall Festival at Buck Creek

**Ohio State Parks' long tradition of community outreach through special events, educational programs and public information continued, despite budget challenges. Parks continued to innovate to provide new facilities and expand their recreational offerings.**

## Customer Focus

Customer Service Champions were selected in each of the 26 park regions to promote excellence in customer service among their peers in the field, and to serve as liaisons for the division's centralized hospitality management program. The champions helped develop training for front-line staff, and introduce the "hot ticket" practice to capture compliments as well as complaints from customers, allowing for immediate acknowledgement of, and rapid response to, customer complaints.

A complaint database was introduced to provide a centralized clearinghouse for tracking customer complaints and documenting their resolution.

## Centralized Reservation System

In its second full year of use, 246,837 reservations for state-operated overnight facilities in Ohio State Parks were made on the centralized reservation system (CRS), an increase of 1.8 percent over 2004. Forty-four percent of camping stays were reserved in advance through the CRS, and walk-in registrations for camping, getaway rentals and state-operated cottages declined 8.27 percent over last year. While cottage guests made their advance reservations through the call center nearly three times more often than over the Internet (61 percent vs. 22 percent), campers used the call center and Internet equally as often. Systemwide, Internet reservations increased to 22.1 percent of all registrations (up from 17.6 percent), and call center reservations increased to 25 percent of all registrations (up from 23.4 percent). The CRS provided additional insight into the demographics of our customers who rented our state-operated overnight facilities; 86.9 percent of guests were from Ohio, 8.5 percent were from surrounding states, and the remaining 4.6 percent were from more distant states or other countries.

Year two of the system saw a significant decline in the number of visitor complaints regarding the overall need and functionality of the CRS. Prior to the start of the camping season, a major change was made in the computer programming to the point-of-sale functions of the system, along with a number of minor programming changes to the web functions, and the interface with the field locations. These changes significantly increased the overall speed of the system, and improved the way that the park staff could maneuver the system in the field, resulting in better customer service. In addition, the park staff received training on both the operational aspects of the system, and on providing better customer service. Clearly these changes and the public's increased acceptance of the system resulted in fewer visitor complaints.

An unexpected opportunity to use the customer data generated through the CRS arose in the ongoing efforts by ODNR and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) to prevent the spread of the emerald ash borer. The division provided the ODA with the names and addresses of campers who had made reservations through the CRS and live in areas that were being quarantined because of emerald ash borer infestation. The ODA sent these individuals notification of their ban on importing and exporting firewood. The CRS data showed that campers from the quarantined areas often camp in Ohio State Parks, and that they frequently visit parks that are a great distance from Michigan and the area in northwest Ohio of known emerald ash borer infestation.

### Special Events

Nearly one million visitors attended special events held at state parks throughout the year. With the help of volunteers and friends groups, 57 parks hosted a wide variety of events, from campouts and heritage festivals to nature hikes and park clean-ups. These parks, plus an additional six parks, served as the venues for community events, as well, for a total of 444 events, including fishing tournaments, boat races, fireworks and community picnics.

The Hocking Hills Winter Hike celebrated its fortieth anniversary in January. This popular annual hike is considered the oldest ongoing special event in Ohio State Parks.

Two events that promote nature tourism, the Mohican Wildlife Weekend and Hocking Hills' "Shoot the Hills" nature photography weekend, were held for the fourth consecutive year. Both of these events, which have been successful in filling their respective parks' state-operated cottages during a relatively slow period in April, have been developed in partnership with local tourism bureaus and businesses.

In October, Malabar Farm once again hosted a dinner theater production in cooperation with The Mansfield Playhouse. In its third year, the event featured a new historical drama, "Phoebe." Like last year's play, "Ceely," the new play is a suspense thriller based on the true story of a colorful local character.

For the sixth year, Alum Creek held the "Fantasy of Lights" holiday light display in partnership with the Alum Creek Marina and Recreation Unlimited, which provides outdoor recreation programs for disabled children and adults.

East Harbor hosted its second annual "Conservation Campout and "Conservation Fair" in August. The event is designed to be educational as well as entertaining, and raise awareness about important conservation issues. The Conservation Fair was incorporated in the Lake Erie Commission's annual CoastWeeks Program.

### Interpretive Services

More than 200,000 park visitors attended summer naturalist programs offered in 50 state parks. In its fourth year, the "Wildlife in the Parks" partnership program with the Division of Wildlife remained a steady foundation for the statewide interpretive program by providing \$80,000 in program support funds. Compliments on visitor surveys and continued strong program attendance demonstrated the attractiveness of our naturalist programs to campers and other day use and overnight guests.

Lake Hope introduced an outdoor skills program based on the "Survivor" TV show concept. This novel junior naturalist program engaged the entire family in a friendly competition to be the last family standing. Lake Hope also introduced a popular hummingbird hand-feeding program that gave park visitors a close-up glimpse of these fascinating birds. More than 2,000 park visitors participated in the program.



Sled dog races at Punderson



Hands-on heritage activities at the Ohio State Fair

Cleveland Lakefront offered a variety of naturalist programs year-round, from ice safety workshops and adventures in canoeing, to neighborhood water sampling for the park's primarily urban audience.

Malabar Farm added to its diverse offerings with "Star Party Nights" astronomy programs held monthly from March through November. The park complemented its popular bluebird nesting box workshops with bat nesting box workshops held in March.

The division's displays at the Ohio State Fair featured several new exhibits this year, including a display promoting Ohio State Park's new bluebird license plate, proper clothing and equipment for outdoor safety, and how campers can help prevent the spread of the emerald ash borer by not moving firewood. The getaway rental display, which featured a "Conestoga" camper cabin model, was moved to the north entrance to the Natural Resources Park, a highly visible, high-traffic area.

### Recreational Offerings

A number of parks offered new and expanded recreational facilities and attractions. Most of these projects were accomplished at little or no cost to the park, with donations raised by friends groups as well as volunteer labor and donated or salvaged materials. Some examples include:

- Nature center remodeling and new exhibits at Lake Alma
- Nature center remodeling and enhancements at Lake Hope
- New flight cage for raptor rehabilitation at Hueston Woods
- Dog park at Alum Creek
- Mini-golf course at Hueston Woods
- Wheelchair accessible overlook at John Bryan
- Soccer fields at Beaver Creek
- Expanded mountain biking trails at Alum Creek and East Fork
- Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) service at the Lake Hope Dining Lodge and the resort lodges

The division has continued to be responsive to customers seeking out Ohio State Parks as a venue for emerging trends in outdoor recreation activities. Harrison Lake hosted the Midwest Geobash, a gathering of nearly 500 geocaching enthusiasts from around Ohio and ten other states. In addition to Harrison Lake, several other state parks cooperated with local geocachers who have set up hunts on state park trails.

The Hueston Woods and Maumee Bay golf courses were listed among the "100 Must-Play Courses in Ohio" published by *GolfStyles Ohio* magazine. They were selected from more than 650 public courses based on the following statement of principles: "Great courses must be pleasurable to a large segment of the golf population, require strategy as well as skill, give average players a fair chance while requiring the utmost from the expert, and preserve the natural beauty of the land."

New getaway rental offerings include a tepee at Dillon, and camper cabins at Harrison Lake, Salt Fork and Shawnee.

### Publications

In its eleventh year of production, two issues of *Ohio State Parks* magazine were published and direct mailed to a subscriber list of more than 45,000 households. A color brochure promoting camping was revised. Nearly 1.5 million promotional pieces, including the camping, park directory, getaway rentals, golf course and winter recreation brochures, the reservation rack cards and business cards, overnight facilities fees and magazines were printed. Hundreds of thousands of these brochures were distributed through the parks, travel shows, 1-800-BUCKEYE operators, Department of Transportation's Travel Information Centers, American Automobile Association outlets, various convention and visitor bureaus, direct mailings, and requests generated from the division's website.

Entries for the "Cool Weather Splendor" photo contest continued to be collected through March. The division received a total of 320 images of scenic beauty and families enjoying state parks in the fall and winter. The photos contest winners were featured in the Fall-Winter issue of *Ohio State Parks* magazine and on the division's website.

## Marketing and Advertising

The year's marketing efforts were focused on promoting camping and building public awareness of the new Ohio State Parks "bluebird" license plate. The campaign consisted of direct mail, news releases, Internet and email marketing. A direct mail campaign promoting camping and the state park license plate was sent in June to almost 200,000 Ohio residents. The packet included a letter from the chief clarifying that day use facilities at Ohio State Parks remain free of charge. The mailing list consisted of customers registered in the centralized reservation system, and owners of recreational vehicles registered with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Print advertising was placed in several publications that provide reader response service, generating over 4,100 requests for general information about Ohio State Parks. Advertisements were placed in "Great Vacation Getaways," which is a travel brochure insert in the travel sections of the Sunday newspaper in all the major Ohio cities as well as over 30 other eastern cities. In partnership with the Division of Travel and Tourism, the division participated in *Discover Ohio*. Ads were also placed in publications targeted to specific outdoor recreational pursuits, including *Woodall's Campground Directory*, *Ohio Camper*, and *Trailer Life* magazine.

Television ads promoting the state park system were aired on the Ohio News Network (ONN) most of the summer.

Ohio State Parks continued to participate in the annual travel shows held in Columbus and Dayton, as well as many other locally-sponsored shows. In addition, through the Ohio Travel Pavilion, brochures were distributed at travel shows in surrounding states.

The division received invaluable promotional benefits, free of charge, for two of the most unique state parks, Hocking Hills and Kelleys Island. Both parks were featured in a travel segment of the "Today Show" television program aired nationwide on NBC affiliate stations on August 4.

## Website

The Internet continues to be an important component of the division's marketing mix, as well as a vehicle for environmental education outreach. Visits to the Ohio State Parks website increased for the third year in a row. User sessions totaled over 2.4 million, for a 9.4 percent increase over 2004. Sessions for the Ohio State Parks website totaled 26.7 percent of total sessions for the ODNR website. Users averaged 7.2 minutes and 4.2 page views per session, compared to 5.5 minutes and 3.3 page views in 2004. Individual park pages account for 55 percent of all page views. The "Wildflower Report" and "Nature Things for Kids" web features were continued for a second year.

Internet marketing consisted of tile ads on the ONN and Woodall websites that linked back to the division's website. Two issues of "E-News from Ohio State Parks" were sent to 8,738 subscribers and 68,047 other recipients who have provided their e-mail address. The electronic newsletter highlights special offers and discounts, new programs and recreational offerings, and upcoming events in the parks.

## Promotional Programs

The Cardinal Camper Club promotional program for camping continued for a sixth year. More than 2,200 memberships were sold. Sales of the cards, which are valid for one year from month of purchase, generated over \$56,000 in revenue. The price of the card remained at \$25. Cardholders received a discount off camping fees of 15 percent from April 1 through October 31, and 20 percent from November 1 through March 31. The program goals include increasing camping occupancy and creating a database for targeted marketing activities. The database contains over 7,000 unique visitor addresses.

To increase cottage usage during the off-season, special rates were offered at all state-operated cottage locations January through March, with Buck Creek, Cowan Lake, and Dillon extending the specials into April, and Pike Lake offering the special rates until mid-May. Buck Creek and Pike Lake offered a special value rate of \$45 per night, while each of the other locations offered \$20 off the regular nightly rate Sunday through Thursday, and \$10 off on Friday and Saturday nights. Buck Creek, Cowan Lake, and Pike Lake repeated the offer during the months of November and December, and Hocking Hills and Dillon also offered the discounts starting in mid-December.

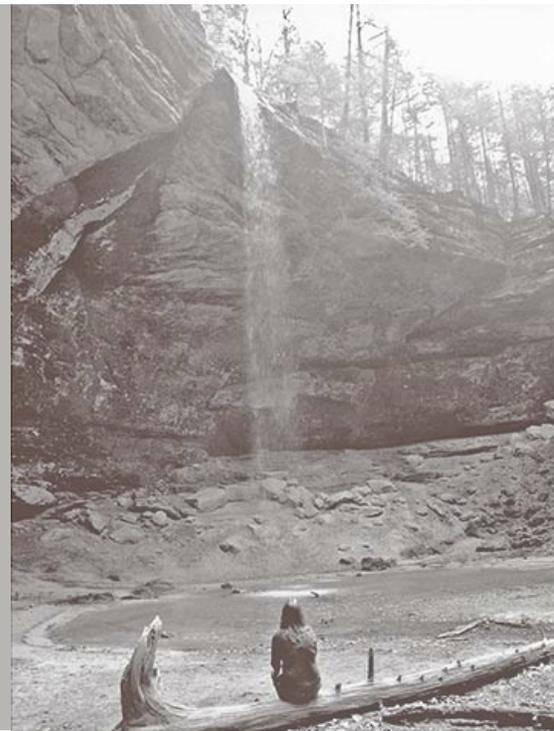
Other promotional programs included a 10 percent discount, Sunday through Thursday, on camping fees to holders of the Ohio Department of Health's "Ohio Kids Card" and a 50 percent discount Sunday through Wednesday at select parks, to members of the Passport America program.

Fishing at Cleveland Lakefront



# Surveys

The annual customer satisfaction survey provided valuable feedback from customers on facilities and services currently offered in our state parks. Additional surveys of the general public quantified the economic benefits state parks contribute to Ohio's economy, and provided information on the public's needs, desires and priorities that will help set a direction for Ohio State Parks to attract and retain customers.



## Customer Satisfaction Survey

Customer satisfaction surveys have been conducted each season since 1992. For the fourth year, the revised program consisted of three surveys geared toward three major facility areas: campgrounds, resort lodge and cottage operations, and day use facilities. The survey instruments focus on customer satisfaction with various aspects of those three areas, such as cleanliness of a specific building or area, the condition of that building or area, and the helpfulness of the employees at those facilities. This data provides specific feedback on park operations and identifies where improvements are needed.

The survey was conducted during the primary operating season, May through October. For the first time, an on-line version of the survey was posted on the division's website for customer convenience.

Visitors were asked to rate their satisfaction with various facility and service categories on a five point scale ranging from excellent (5) to unacceptable (1). A total of 11,861 surveys were returned, with 91.8 percent of respondents rating their overall visit as excellent or good. Overall average ratings were calculated for each facility area. (See Table 1, page 11). Visitors were also asked to provide comments on facilities and services. This valuable feedback allowed park managers to make continuous improvements throughout the season, and provided insight on customer needs and wants for future planning. Demographic information was also collected to help determine visitor characteristics. This information can be used for targeted marketing efforts and planning for future amenities and services.

Of those visitors who responded to the survey, 61

percent were return visitors to a specific state park, 80 percent had visited other state parks, 86 percent would return to that specific state park, and 79 percent would visit other state parks. In addition, 50 percent of respondents were between 35 and 60 years of age, 48 percent had one or more children, and 87 percent were in groups of two or more people. Eighty-seven percent of respondents were from Ohio. Of the respondents from other states, 61 percent were from the states bordering Ohio.

Parks that received the highest ratings for each type of facility listed in the surveys were recognized with the Service Excellence Award. To be eligible for the award, at least 100 surveys had to be completed by park visitors. The ratings for each facility type were averaged, and the parks with the highest average rating from 100 or more surveys received the awards. (See Table 2, page 11)

### Independent Survey

Results were received from a study on attitudes of Ohio residents toward Ohio State Parks performed in November 2004 by The Ohio State University. The independent study questionnaire was developed to provide information on state park usage and satisfaction with recreation experiences at Ohio's state park facilities. A random sample of 2,485 Ohio residences received the questionnaire through the mail. Of those 2,485 households, 737 completed and returned the survey form.

Of those respondents, 310 or 42.1 percent reported they had visited at least one Ohio State Park during 2004 ("current users"). Current users visited state parks an average of 6.5 times per year, and spent an average of \$122.33 per trip to an Ohio State Park, which translates to an overall impact to Ohio's economy of approximately \$1.1 billion dollars.

Eighty-seven percent of current users rated their overall experience at an Ohio State Park as good or excellent. Picnic areas, trails and beaches were the facilities most often visited by current users. Current users who stayed overnight used overnight facilities as follows: 66.3 percent stayed in campgrounds, 22.3 percent stayed in resort lodges, and 11.4 percent rented cottages. "Friends/other park visitors" and "Internet" were the two most popular sources of information about Ohio State Parks cited by current users. The main reason for not visiting Ohio State Parks continues to be lack of time.

Survey results provided a profile of the average Ohio State Park visitor. On average, current users visited 2.1 parks, visit 6.5 times a year, have been visiting state parks for 23 years, drive 36.2 miles to their most frequently visited park, are in the 35 to 60 age group, have one child living at home, and live in a suburban area.

### Economic Impact Study

The division again partnered with the Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism in a statewide study of the economic impact of travel. The division's portion of the study measured the direct and indirect expenditures of overnight visitors to Ohio State Park campgrounds, cottages and lodges during calendar year 2004. According to the study, direct sales to Ohio State Park overnight visitors contributed \$250.4 million to the state's economy. Including direct and indirect effects, state and local taxes supported by these visitors were \$22.5 million and \$15.1 million, respectively. In addition, sales to state park visitors supported 7,500 direct and indirect jobs in Ohio.

The direct economic impact of \$250.4 million is a 14.2 percent decrease from the last economic impact study results, which were \$291.8 million spent by overnight visitors to Ohio State Parks in 2003. The decline is due in part to the implementation of the centralized reservation system, which provided more accurate occupancy data for the study than the occupancy data compiled and submitted in the past by the parks. The study was sponsored by the Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism, and again conducted by Rovelstad & Associates of Racine, Wisconsin and Longwoods International of Toronto, Ontario.



Connecting with nature at Beaver Creek

TABLE 1 OVERALL AVERAGE RATINGS FOR FACILITY AREAS

Facility Area	2005	2004
Campground Operation	4.185	4.067
Resort Lodge Operation	4.251	4.057
Cottage Operation	4.305	4.306
Golf Course	4.464	4.457
Beaches	3.998	4.132
Lake/Boating Facilities	4.149	4.218
Trails	4.355	4.330
Picnic Areas	4.171	4.210
Visitor/Nature Centers	4.403	4.474

TABLE 2 SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Facility	Park	Average Rating
Picnic Areas	Marblehead Lighthouse	4.597
Beach	Lake Milton	4.552
Lake/Boating Facilities	Lake Milton	4.604
Trails	Lake Milton	4.749
Visitor/Nature Center	Malabar Farm	4.624
Getaway Rentals	Harrison Lake	4.899
Cottages	Hueston Woods	4.470
Golf Course	Deer Creek	4.499
Campground	West Branch	4.512
Resort Lodge	Hueston Woods	4.301

# Partnerships

Ohio State Parks' statewide advocacy group, Friends for the Preservation of Ohio State Parks, has become active in a number of areas of benefit to the system. At the same time, partnerships at the local level remained critically important to the parks' ability to deliver customer service and add value to visitors' experiences.



Bike trail dedication at Alum Creek

## Friends Groups and Support Groups

Forty-five parks now have park-specific friends and support groups in place and involved in park improvement projects and special events. Other support groups, including lake advisory councils, civic clubs and Coast Guard auxiliaries, also provided an array of services at parks such as hosting tours, assisting with special events and leading fundraising drives for park projects.

Friends groups made a number of tangible improvements at their respective parks, and several groups enhanced facilities that they helped to build. Shelter houses built in previous years were expanded and improved at Maumee Bay, Harrison Lake and Stonelick. Groups created new special events at which to raise funds for planned improvements at Deer Creek, Salt Fork, Cleveland Lakefront, Hocking Hills and West Branch. Projects on the drawing board include a multi-purpose building at Indian Lake and a camp for disabled children at Rocky Fork.

The Friends for the Preservation of Ohio State Parks continued to serve as an umbrella organization linking the individual park friends and support groups. This statewide friends group, which was chartered as a non-profit advocacy group for the parks, testified before the Senate budget committee, and members took part in public meetings concerning the proposed parking pass. The group also sponsored two statewide meetings at which local groups received training in fundraising, managing a nonprofit and other relevant topics. The group also launched its website, [www.fposp.org](http://www.fposp.org), in order to improve communications with member groups.

The Lake Loramie Improvement Association was honored with the prestigious Chief's Award, which recognizes truly outstanding service and support of Ohio State Parks by an individual or group. It is the division's highest honor, and has been given only seven times. The Lake Loramie Improvement Association, dating back to 1939, boasts a long and rich history of a viable community partnership.

Their latest park project, the Earl's Island Picnic Pavilion, was built with donations from families and businesses that totaled \$180,000, well over the \$150,000 goal. The extra funds will be used for additional improvements around the pavilion, including a playground, volleyball court, horseshoe court, and walking path.

### Volunteer Program

In its 23rd year, the Ohio State Parks Volunteer Program continued to offer thousands of citizens of all ages an opportunity to pitch in and help improve their local state park. Almost 7,000 volunteers provided more than 343,000 hours of service. There were more "Individual" and "Campground Host" volunteers, while somewhat fewer "Group" volunteers were enrolled.

The Volunteer Park of the Year Award was presented to Hueston Woods for the park's wide-ranging program. Volunteers with an interest in the park's equestrian facilities raised funds and helped develop new horseman's campsites, build a shelter house, and provide assistance with landscaping and trail work. Nature center volunteers, many of whom are Miami University students, helped provide animal care seven days a week as well as build new displays and provide tours for the public. Volunteers led the programming at the new archery course, and campground hosts helped increase the number and scope of special events. The park's volunteers donated 22,850 service hours. Honorable mention went to Lake Alma, where the park's volunteers took the lead in improving special events and installing shuffleboard courts and benches.

Almost 280 volunteers from 25 parks attended the statewide campout at West Branch, hosted by the Mosquito Lake Region, including staff from Mosquito Lake, West Branch and Lake Milton.

Volunteers again assisted the division's promotional efforts at the Ohio State Fair, providing teams to staff a camper cabin exhibit near the entrance to the Natural Resources Park. They came from central Ohio area parks including Buckeye Lake, Deer Creek, Dillon, and Mt. Gilead. Volunteers from Malabar Farm provided spinning and weaving demonstrations at the division's log cabin display.

### Corporate Partnerships

Many state parks received corporate sponsorships for local projects and special events. In addition to these local partnerships, the division worked with corporate sponsors on the following statewide projects that served all of the parks:

Visitors to state parks were greeted by almost 600 colorful banners that welcomed them to the park, encouraged them to "Get Fit Naturally" and be aware of the Swim Safe and Hike Safe public outreach programs. Some of the banners featured Spanish language text, and were installed in select parks with Hispanic clientele. Pepsi-Cola, in its fourth year as official beverage supplier to Ohio State Parks, underwrote about half the cost of the banners.

Through a partnership with Ocean Spray and the National Parks Foundation, the division received tens of thousands of packets of raisins for distribution to park visitors. The one-ounce packets of nutritionally balanced snacks served as giveaway items at the parks to help promote beach safety programs, nature programs, and special events.

### Community Partnerships

In its eighth year, the Ohio Trails Partnership (OTP) provided an important network between the various volunteer trail users groups that construct and maintain many of the hiking, bridle and mountain bike trails in state parks. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy joined the OTP in an advisory capacity. OTP members are drawn from the Buckeye Trail Association, the Ohio Horsemen's Council and the Ohio Mountain Bike Association. The annual OTP March Work Weekend was held at Mohican, where many miles of new mountain bike trails and bridle trails have recently been constructed.

Nine parks partnered with the Ohio Mountain Bike Association to present Get Fit Naturally events in conjunction with the Ohio Mountain Bike Championship (OMBC) Series. These events allowed people of all ages to learn about mountain biking, try their hand at riding the trails, and compete on foot if they preferred, all for the chance to improve their fitness. The race events attracted mountain bikers of all ages, and were combined with other special events at some parks to help promote both the park events and the OMBC races.



Earl's Island Pavilion at Lake Loramie

In collaboration with Hocking Hills Tourism Association, Audubon Ohio, the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, and The Nature Conservancy, along with the Wayne National Forest and the ODNR divisions of Wildlife and Natural Areas and Preserves, the division has helped establish and promote the Hocking Valley Birding Trail. Among the areas in Fairfield, Hocking, Athens and Vinton counties recommended as birding destinations along the Hocking Valley Birding Trail are Hocking Hills, Lake Hope and Lake Logan. A website, [www.birdhocking.com](http://www.birdhocking.com), was developed to advertise the various sites where birders can find trails and observation areas, and provide tips for beginning birders.

The division partnered with various recreation and conservation organizations in the planning and development of the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Program, a statewide initiative to train and certify volunteers who assist in nature interpretation and resource conservation activities. The program is being patterned after the very successful Master Gardener Program administered by the Cooperative Extension Service.

The Buck Creek region initiated a partnership with the Green County Outdoor Education Center to provide service project opportunities in an outdoor setting for at-risk middle school students. Through this program, six students in grades 6 to 8 assisted park staff with planting six-foot white pine trees at John Bryan in September. For the second year, Buck Creek hosted an adventure training weekend for inner-city high school Junior ROTC students in August. Sixteen student cadets participated in nature programs, a park clean-up, and campout.

For the fourth year, Maumee Bay's golf course partnered with a local high school vocational program to provide a hands-on enrichment program for the school's Penta Program shop students. The students built their skills and assisted with a number of services at the golf course, from building and installing bluebird boxes to filling divets and fixing flat tires on golf carts.

#### Inter-Agency Partnerships

A potential emergency was averted through the vigilance of Salt Fork employees and an interdepartmental team when the Salt Fork dam showed signs of possible weakening in February. Employees of the Division of Water and the Division of Engineering helped the staff monitor the dam, conduct investigations, and implement a plan to ensure dam safety. The Office of Communications helped coordinate public meetings and media releases to reassure downstream residents and keep the public apprised of the situation and impacts on recreation at the park. The Salt Fork staff received the Midwest Regional Award of Merit from the Association of State Dam Safety Officials in September for their exemplary efforts. They were also recognized through the ODNR Awards Celebrating Excellence (ACE) program, along with the Water, Engineering, and Communications staff who were involved.

The division partnered with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA) in an employee sharing pilot project. The project provided continuing state employment with ODOT during the winter months for the division's established term employees who go on interruption during the winter. Eligible employees in the northeast Ohio pilot area were offered commercial driver's license training through ODOT to meet the qualifications for ODOT's Highway Technician 1 positions. Two division employees participated in the pilot.

The division helped promote the U.S. Department of Interior's "Take Pride in America" partnership by registering several park events with environmental stewardship and volunteerism themes, such as park clean-ups, as "Take Pride America" activities.

Funding partnerships with the divisions of Watercraft and Wildlife resulted in significant improvements to boating facilities at Buckeye Lake, Caesar Creek, Cleveland Lakefront, East Fork, Grand Lake, Lake Hope, Mosquito Lake, Pymatuning, and Shawnee state parks.



Bike trail extension dedication at Buck Creek

## Visitor Safety and Protective Services

Of the 90,467 visitor contacts by commissioned law enforcement personnel, 31 percent were visitor assists. Of the visitor contacts for law enforcement actions, 89 percent were friendly warnings.

### Special Recognition

Two commissioned officers received awards for their outstanding contributions to the division's law enforcement program. Daniel Cox, a park officer at Hueston Woods, received the division's first ever Meritorious Service Award and Dave Stites, retired Development Group Manager received the division's first ever Distinguished Service Award. Officer Cox was recognized for his valor in apprehending a bank robbery suspect and administering lifesaving first aid to a wounded deputy sheriff during an incident in April. Dave Stites received the Distinguished Service Award for his continued support and contributions to the division's law enforcement program over his 31-year career.

### Physical Fitness Assessments

The division conducted its first physical fitness assessments on all commissioned officers at the winter in-service. A total of 109 officers participated in the assessment, ten of whom were hired after January 1, 2004 and are required to pass an annual fitness test. The annual assessment was conducted by the division's physical fitness specialists and included assessments of an officer's maximum volume of oxygen intake (VO2 max) and upper body and abdominal strength. Flexibility, body fat and vertical jump were also assessed. Four categories where the majority of the officers ranked in the good to excellent range were upper body strength, flexibility, VO2 max, and vertical jump. Annual fitness assessments will benefit officers who are already physically fit by helping them maintain their current level of fitness. It will also help those who are not physically fit but are interested in improving their level of fitness and overall wellness.



Park Officer Dan Cox, Meritorious Service Award recipient

**Law Enforcement Grants**

A \$56,943.00 grant from the Department of Public Safety, Governor’s Highway Safety Office provided funding for 13 state parks to participate in increased traffic enforcement. A \$22,643.00 grant from the Division of Watercraft assisted with lake patrols on the waters of Lake Milton, West Branch, and Mosquito Lake reservoirs.

The Drug/DUI account received \$ 24,225 in fines resulting from violations of O.R.C. Title 4511.19, Operating under the influence and O.R.C. Title 2925, Drug abuse. These fines, in combination with remaining funds, provided \$18,886 toward the purchase of law enforcement equipment. Items purchased include computer accessories, digital cameras and surveillance equipment, portable breathalyzers, weapons safes, drug investigation equipment, evidence-property room materials, and radar units.

**Protective Services**

Commissioned law enforcement personnel provided an array of protective services including assisting park visitors, issuing visitor warnings, conducting investigations and making arrests. The following are the law enforcement statistics reported through the computerized Law Enforcement Tracking System (LETS) Program:

Enforcement Activity	2005	2004	2003
Visitor Assists	27,950	35,852	35,095
Warnings (written or verbal)	55,914	61,721	59,658
Misdemeanor Citations/Arrests	6,455	6,462	5,849
Felony Arrest	148	104	126
Outside Agency Assists	477	772	667
Property Stolen	\$208,088	\$349,499	\$275,730
Vandalism	\$41,266	\$188,439	\$126,900
Investigations	3,636	4,943	4,690

The division introduced the use of patrol rifles so officers will be better equipped to deal with individuals presenting a threat who are heavily armed or barricaded. The rifles were introduced at eight parks. The division also put into service Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW) at Alum Creek and Cleveland Lakefront on a trial basis. There were nine incidents of the display or use of the CEW. The use of bodily force however, was down by eight incidents from last year.

Type of Force Used	2005	2004	2003
Unholster Weapon	19	28	25
Bodily Force	14	22	14
Chemical Agent	2	2	5
Vehicle Pursuit	8	8	7
Injury to Officer	6	2	0
Road Block	0	0	0
Display Shotgun	2	4	3
Suspect Injury	0	1	2
Baton	2	0	2
Canine	0	1	0
CEW	9	-	-
Patrol Rifle	1	-	-
Total Incidents	63	59	49

Ohio State Parks Honor Guard



# Visitor Occasions

Usage of overnight facilities declined an estimated 2.4 percent from 2004. This can be attributed in part to fewer overnight stays because of unfavorable economic conditions, including extraordinarily high gas prices, that impacted travel in Ohio and nationwide.

State Park	2005 Total Visitor Occasions
Adams Lake	209,991
Alum Creek	2,995,906
A.W. Marion	396,185
Barkcamp	173,568
Beaver Creek	281,966
Blue Rock	167,252
Buck Creek	295,466
Buckeye Lake	336,070
Burr Oak	416,840
Caesar Creek	1,436,236
Cleveland Lakefront	7,816,966
Cowan Lake	1,729,312
Crane Creek	331,500
Deer Creek	872,514
Delaware	385,786
Dillon	858,393
East Fork	978,577
East Harbor	1,379,714
Findley	479,170
Forked Run	174,170
Geneva	780,004
Grand Lake St. Marys	737,894
Great Seal	13,472
Guilford Lake	126,472
Harrison Lake	253,635
Headlands Beach	2,250,910
Hocking Hills	2,327,593
Hueston Woods	2,824,870
Independence Dam	72,240
Indian Lake	1,650,578
Jackson Lake	37,770
Jefferson Lake	161,466
John Bryan	267,424
Kiser Lake	409,695
Lake Alma	111,477

State Park	2005 Total Visitor Occasions
Lake Erie Islands	957,475
Lake Hope	841,294
Lake Logan	134,407
Lake Loramie	300,714
Lake Milton	618,810
Lake White	25,529
Little Miami	538,487
Madison Lake	304,738
Malabar Farm	240,890
Marblehead Lighthouse	1,356,740
Mary Jane Thurston	165,333
Maumee Bay	1,034,619
Mohican	557,176
Mosquito Lake	1,961,839
Mt Gilead	184,548
Muskingum River Parkway	270,959
Nelson Kennedy Ledges	15,135
Paint Creek	476,446
Pike Lake	117,275
Portage Lakes	883,362
Punderson	625,009
Pymatuning	268,996
Quail Hollow	238,749
Rocky Fork	715,688
Salt Fork	1,132,211
Scioto Trail	33,251
Shawnee	247,604
Stonelick	472,131
Strouds Run	732,849
Sycamore	201,802
Tar Hollow	79,074
Tinkers Creek	25,981
Van Buren	87,553
West Branch	448,938
Wolf Run	64,887

**Total** **50,101,581**

# Resource Management



**Ohio State Parks staff embraced their role as stewards of Ohio's finest land and water resources as they pursued innovative projects to create and improve wetlands, enhance woodland and meadow habitats, promote wildlife diversity, control nuisance species, and adopt sustainable practices. They worked proactively to offer new and improved recreational opportunities, and responded promptly to correct damage to landscapes and facilities impacted by storms and flooding.**

## Land Transactions

Land purchases, sales, easements and trade agreements helped satisfy the needs of Ohio's individual citizens as well as the State's private and public organizations, while protecting the resource base and public trust concerns. The requests of twelve adjacent land owners were satisfied through the sale of surplus property at four state parks. These sales involved 1.553 acres of surplus property, and were sold for a total of \$41,880.

A total of 2.244 acres of property at Mohican was sold conditionally to the Knox County Park District for their management as a canoe landing and pick-up site. An additional 1.86 acres of property at Burr Oak encompassing the park's former water treatment plant and its related water storage tanks and transmission lines was sold to the Burr Oak Regional Water District, which serves portions of Athens, Morgan, Hocking and Perry counties and other surrounding areas with drinking water.

Management responsibilities at Portage Lakes' Nimisila Reservoir were transferred to the Division of Water according to a management transfer agreement with the division.

Negotiations were conducted with the City of Athens regarding the potential transfer of Strouds Run. The City of Athens currently operates Sells Park and Hawk Woods Preserve, which are located adjacent to Strouds Run and linked to the state park by the Athens trail system. Both the division and the city are continuing to seek a strategy that will optimize available resources, while continuing to serve the community and provide recreational opportunities most efficiently.

## Wetland Projects

Both East Harbor and Maumee Bay undertook projects to control non-native plant species in existing wetlands. Maumee Bay used a number of techniques including mowing, water level manipulation and herbicide to combat non-native invasive plants in existing wetland areas. Maumee Bay received \$4,000 from the Great Lakes Coastal Program to fund the project. East Harbor continued to partner with The Ohio State University's School of Natural Resources to control phragmites on a 20-acre area through water level manipulation.

East Fork partnered with the Division of Wildlife and the National Turkey Federation to create approximately six acres of wetland. The project also entailed installation of interpretive signage and establishment of a mowed trail to provide access to the wetland area. East Fork received \$1,500 from the Division of Wildlife and \$8,500 from the National Turkey Federation to assist with the project.

A 4.5 acre in-lake wetland was created at Buckeye Lake to protect Onion Island and satisfy the wetland mitigation requirements for a dredging project near Lieb's Island. This wetland area was developed adjacent to an existing wetland using lake-bottom sediment that had been dredged for boater safety. Restoration of the wetland dike wall at Rocky Fork was initiated as part of scheduled maintenance. Approximately 30,000 cubic yards of material were relocated to strengthen the lakeside barrier, which protects the 100-acre wetland from erosion due to wave action.

Wetland delineations associated with various division projects were completed by in-house staff at Grand Lake St. Marys, Buckeye Lake and Pymatuning.

## Waterway Improvements

The focus of dredging and other waterway improvement projects is the enhancement of harbors, channels, and waterways to foster vessel safety. More than 515,000 cubic yards of sediment were dredged from Ohio State Park waterways, including the Muskingum River Parkway, Buckeye Lake, Grand Lake St. Marys, Indian Lake, Lake Loramie, Burr Oak Lake, Harrison Lake and Acton Lake at Hueston Woods. Ongoing dredging projects were completed at the Buckeye Lake West Bay; several areas at Grand Lake St. Marys including Bass Landing East, South Shore Acres and Breezwood Channel; at Indian Lake's Avondale and Lucy's Pond areas; and at Lake Loramie's Luthman Road and Kovermans areas.

Other waterway improvement and related projects included launch ramp repairs, shoreline stabilization, silt trap construction and clean out, stump and debris removal, construction and restoration of dredge material relocation areas, and dredge rehabilitation.

The nuisance aquatic vegetation harvesting program provided safe access for boaters into waterways that had been choked with vegetation. Approximately 3,540 tons of nuisance weeds were removed from state park waterways. This is approximately double the 2004 production.

## Beaches

On-site evaluations of each of the state park beaches on Lake Erie were conducted in association with Dr. Tom Griffiths, Director of Aquatics at Penn State University. As a result of these evaluations, the division has initiated a program to update our beach safety messages and signage at beaches across the state. In addition to the evaluations, Dr. Griffiths conducted a seminar for managers on all aspects of beach operations and care.

Throughout the swimming season, Ohio State Park beaches were monitored for bacterial contamination in accordance with guidelines established by the Ohio Department of Health, and advisories were posted whenever the bacteria content exceeded the levels established by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. During the swimming season, the parks experienced more frequent and severe thunderstorm activity than normal, resulting in a modest increase in the number of advisories being posted. Twenty-five advisories were issued at 24 of 65 inland state park beaches and sampling sites, and 19 advisories were issued at 7 of the 13 Lake Erie beaches in state parks. The duration of advisories ranged from single-day postings at several beaches to a 58-day posting at Madison Lake.

Controlling invasive purple loosestrife is allowing the rare prairie fringed orchid (pictured below) to thrive at Maumee Bay



### Water Quality Issues

Careful monitoring of the water wells at South Bass Island State Park continued in response to the 2004 outbreak of gastrointestinal illness among hundreds of visitors to South Bass Island. Although the well at the park's campground consistently tested negative for harmful bacteria, the park voluntarily discontinued use of the well. Efforts to improve the drinking water system continued in partnership with the local community.

### Recreational Trail Projects

At Buck Creek, work was completed on a project to continue a spur from the Little Miami Scenic Trail near Springfield to Buck Creek's main beach parking lot. Partners in the project, which was initiated in 2003, include the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Springfield.

At Caesar Creek, an inventory of the 20-mile network of hiking trails was conducted to determine where major repairs are needed to prevent erosion and improve visitor safety. The park standardized the design of wood bridges and staircases, and made prefabricated kits for distribution to volunteer service organizations so they can easily install the bridges and staircases on the trail.

East Fork collaborated with the Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance (CORA) for the construction of six additional miles of mountain biking trails at the park. East Fork hosted the International Mountain Biking Association's (IMBA) trail building school in November, which brought more than 40 mountain biking enthusiasts to the park to continue building and improving mountain biking trails.

Work was completed on the second phase of extensions to the Alum Creek mountain biking trail. The trail was constructed by the Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization (COMBO) and dedicated in October.

Lake Hope's 23-mile singletrack bike trail, which was built and is maintained with assistance from the Athens Bicycle Club, was chosen as Ohio's top mountain bike trail by readers of *Mountain Bike Quarterly* magazine.

The Recreational Trail Grant Program administered by the Division of Real Estate and Land Management has been instrumental in the funding of very popular, high quality, additions to state park trails, bikeways and vistas, including the following:

- ✦ A 10 foot wide 7,100 foot paved multiuse trail was initiated along the western shoreline of Grand Lake St. Marys at a cost of \$80,000.
- ✦ At Nelson Kennedy Ledges, work was completed on extensions to the White and Red Trails. Other trail improvements accomplished with the \$29,000 grant include erosion repair, and installation of steps, a bridge, and additional railings in some areas.
- ✦ Mohican State park received \$25,000 for improvements to the Lyons Falls trail.
- ✦ Indian Lake State Park received \$80,000 for the Oldfield Island Trail.
- ✦ Little Miami Scenic Trail received \$1,123,000 as part of the Terrace Park Bikeway project in Hamilton County.

The Snowmobile and Recreational Vehicle Fund program administered by the Division of Real Estate and Land Management provided for the purchase of materials and equipment needed to maintain the 97 miles of snowmobile trail in Ohio State Parks.

### Wildlife Diversity Initiatives

Staff at Maumee Bay formed a partnership with the Toledo Zoo to capture, tag and count Eastern fox snakes in the park. The snake is considered a species of concern in Ohio, but they are abundant in the park.



Mountain biker on Lake Hope's trail

Work began on construction of a butterfly gazebo at Maumee Bay to enhance the park's monarch butterfly rearing and tagging program. The park received a grant from the Division of Wildlife to build the structure, which is designed to be wheelchair accessible. As part of its naturalist and interpretive programming, Shawnee partnered with the North American Butterfly Association to conduct the 14th annual Scioto County butterfly count at the park and adjacent state forest. The park naturalist and volunteers identified 30 different species among the 1,394 individual butterflies they counted.

A survey of wood duck nesting boxes installed at Maumee Bay indicated that 78 percent of them are being used by nesting wood ducks. Efforts to remove non-native species in Maumee Bay's wetlands continued, and Quail Hollow initiated a project to remove invasive plants along with its woodland swamp and peat bog trails.

### Sustainable Practices

The division initiated an evaluation of current practices to reduce energy consumption on a number of fronts including vehicles, equipment, and mowing operations, as well as public buildings and park maintenance and administrative facilities.

### Management of Nuisance Species

The division continued to cooperate with the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Division of Forestry to prevent the spread of the emerald ash borer (EAB). After five infested ash trees were found in Maumee Bay's campground, hundreds of healthy ash trees in the park were cut down and destroyed in accordance with the ODA's strategy of harvesting all ash trees within a half-mile radius of a known infestation site.

Several training workshops were conducted to apprise park managers of the current status of the emerald ash borer in Ohio and to enlist their aid in informing visitors concerning the quarantine on firewood from restricted areas and handling potentially infested firewood in an appropriate manner. A monitoring and resource management strategy workshop was also held for managers of parks most at risk of EAB infestation, instructing them in forestry methods used to identify and quantify ash trees in different park areas and suggesting management practices that could minimize the risk of infestation as well as the negative impacts on visitors if the park does eventually become infested.

Parks were also provided with signs informing campers about the EAB firewood quarantine, maps of the EAB quarantine zones, and plastic drums for use in temporary containment of firewood imported from quarantine zones until it could be burned.

### Natural Resource Management Plans

An interdisciplinary team of division employees was convened to initiate the development of natural resource management plans for each park. The team was charged with identifying the essential elements of a natural resources plan, and providing ongoing guidance and assistance, as needed, for parks as they develop their plans. The team began work with two parks, Maumee Bay and Shawnee, to serve as pilots for developing the plans for other parks.

### Flooding and Storm Damage

Extensive flooding and severe ice storms in December 2004 and January 2005 impacted a number of state parks. January floods in central and eastern Ohio submerged the marina facilities at Delaware and Dillon, and damaged dock structures at Salt Fork. Debris clean-up and repairs took months to complete and cost more than \$650,000. Park staffs worked diligently to complete the clean-up projects so that the parks were ready to greet visitors at the start of the peak season.



Student volunteers from the Green County Outdoor Education Center plant white pines at John Bryan

# Professional Development



Ohio State Parks naturalists

**During the peak season, Ohio State Parks employed a workforce of 454 permanent and 1,139 less-than full-time employees. Within the workforce, there were 396 new hirings of permanent or seasonal employees, 113 reclassifications or promotions, 358 resignations and 56 retirements.**

## Numbers of permanent employees by general job categories are:

Administration	9
Professional and Technical	123
Clerical/Office Support	36
Skilled Craft	127
Protective Services	96
Operational Support	63
<hr/> Total Permanent Employees	<hr/> 454

The division continued to streamline its organizational structure and consolidate resources within the park regions to increase economy and efficiency. Some management positions have not been refilled, creating opportunities to further integrate parks and park operations, such as maintenance, campground, clerical or law enforcement operations, into the regional units. The number of park regions changed from 27 to 26 with the merger of the Guilford Lake and Portage Lakes regions.

The department offered all employees an opportunity to participate in a two-year early retirement program (ERI) effective August 5, 2005 to August 4, 2006. At the onset of the ERI program, the division had 131 employees potentially eligible to retire. Approximately 35 employees retired under the program, or declared their intent to retire.

## Employee Satisfaction Survey

Consistent with the strategy of increasing employee satisfaction outlined in the division's strategic plan, the division contracted with the Leadership Factor, a global research company specializing in satisfaction and loyalty measurement, to establish a baseline for employee satisfaction. An employee satisfaction survey was developed to gauge employees' satisfaction with, and the relative importance of, various workplace dynamics, contemporary issues and challenges. The surveys were distributed to all full- time to intermittent employees in July, and collected in August through a process designed to maintain confidentiality.

The Leadership Factor received 1,080 surveys out of a potential 1,397 employees, representing a 77.3 percent response rate. The Leadership Factor presented the division with a final report of its findings in September. The primary finding was that Ohio State Parks ranks in the top five percent of companies and organizations in the Leadership Factor's worldwide database, with an overall employee satisfaction index of 77.8 percent. The final report also identified four "Priorities for Improvement" as a means to increase employee satisfaction. The priorities for improvement included the following statements that employees ranked high in importance, and relatively low in satisfaction: "Ohio State Parks values its employees," "I feel recognized for work well done," "Employees receive equal (consistent) treatment from management," and "Ohio State Parks is financially secure for the long term." An employee satisfaction survey team was formed to analyze the survey results, recommend strategies for the priorities for improvement, and develop a presentation to convey this information to employees.

## Training

Sexual harassment awareness instruction was completed for current employees, and will continue as part of the on-site orientation program for new employees. The in-house training depicted real life examples, questions and answers, and provided the participants with the department policy, division direction and the governor's executive order. In addition, each employee was given a list of contacts to report alleged incidents of sexual harassment. Volunteer camper hosts also received training on the department's sexual harassment policy in the spring, prior to the busy camping season.

Employees attended training on a variety of topics such as computer skills, listening techniques, organizational behavior, management and supervision, and employment law. Some employees pursued their bachelors or masters degrees. A majority of the training was paid for from Workforce Development funds, FOP tuition reimbursement, the seminar and conference fund, or the Exempt Professional Development funds rather than using the division training fund.

Thirteen exempt program managers or supervisors graduated from the Ohio Certified Public Manager (OCPM) Program in April. Since its inception in 1998, 50 employees have graduated from, or are currently enrolled in the program. The OCPM curriculum is 300 hours of professional management and leadership training in four learning areas of general administration skills; technical, quantitative and qualitative skills; analytical and conceptual skills; and human relations skills. The program continued to be the management training program of choice.

A detailed training program was developed for front-line staff to improve direct service to our guests. This program was developed by 26 regional "champions" from across the state. Training focused upon creating good first impressions, dealing with difficult customers and renewing a focus on the "Four A's—Attitude, Appearance, Awareness and Actions" as a key to providing exceptional customer service. In the spring, over 140 front line employees participated in this training.

In partnership with Northstar Publishing, Parks & Rec Business and the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association, the division hosted a joint parks maintenance conference along with a recreation trade show at the Salt Fork lodge. The training addressed customer service, regional mowing operations, dam safety, maintenance and leak detection, small construction projects, and products offered by the division's vinyl graphics shop, as well as working with the State Fire Marshal on above-ground and underground storage tank issues, and working with the Ohio Utility Protection service. More than 340 persons attended the overall event, including 79 state park employees.

Waterway and Construction Section employees received training in hazardous communications, construction site National Pollution and Discharge Elimination System permitting, stream protection, regulatory issues and the Ohio Utilities Protection Service. Staffs of the North and South

Seven division employees were honored by the department for their recent military service including Michael Higgins (below); Amber Wooley, Marcus Godsey, Anthony Vinnedge and Jason Milliken (pg. 24); and Paul Evans and Rene Cerda (not pictured).



Construction Units and the Statewide Dredge Unit were recognized with customer service awards for receiving average ratings from their internal customers of 4.5 or more on a five-point scale. In May, the entire Dredge Section participated in a one day planning and training session which included a Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator assessment to aid the employees in effective communications.

The annual Park Managers Conference was held at the Salt Fork lodge in April. The conference was attended by approximately 200 park managers, assistant park managers, golf course superintendents, group and section managers, and other key administrative staff as well as special guests. The agenda included division and department updates, workshops on various topics, and presentations by Lieutenant Governor Bruce Johnson, Ohio Historical Society Director Bill Laidlaw, and keynote speaker Sam Deep, whose topic was exceptional customer service.

Training for commissioned officers included the annual in-service training, fall firearms training and shotgun qualification. Topics covered during the in-service training held at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy in London, Ohio included weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) awareness for first responders. Park officers were instructed on how to put on personal protective equipment, and were fitted for a respirator as part of mandatory Homeland Security Training. Officers participated in a voluntary physical fitness assessment and practiced ground fighting techniques. The agenda also included a policy review, uniform inspection and qualifying with handguns. The fall firearms training and shotgun qualification featured steel targets, which improve accuracy due to the smaller size. All officers attended strategies and tactics of patrol stops re-certification training in the fall, and the division's firearm and traffic stops instructors took a more active role in teaching students in the basic peace officer class at the Hocking College Natural Resources Ranger Academy.



Waterway and Construction Section



## Employee Recognition Programs

### EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

In its thirteenth year, the Employee of the Quarter Award program recognized four employees each quarter for outstanding performance and service to the division.

To date, 194 employees have been nominated by their peers, selected by committee, and recognized for exceptional characteristics. The Employee of the Quarter Award recipients were:

### Winter Quarter

Nancy Rawlings, Lake Hope – Administrative Support  
Ray Carney, West Branch – Maintenance  
David Johnston, Findley – Law Enforcement  
Donald Starr, Central Office – Management

### Spring Quarter

Cindy Glanz, Mary Jane Thurston – Administrative Support  
John Bozick, Quail Hollow – Maintenance  
Jeremy T. Davis, Hocking Hills – Law Enforcement  
Patrick Enright, Central Office – Management

### Summer Quarter

Barbara Allinson, Alum Creek – Administrative Support  
Nathan Zimmerman, East Fork – Maintenance  
Christopher Kelley, Findley – Law Enforcement  
Richard Conder, Barkcamp – Management

### Fall Quarter

Mary Thomas, Shawnee – Administrative Support  
Thomas Grabow, Grand Lake St. Marys – Maintenance  
Nigel Mills, Cleveland Lakefront – Law Enforcement  
Chris Dauner, East Fork – Management

**PARKS LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Hal Harper, regional manager at Salt Fork, received the Parks Leadership Award, a peer-driven recognition of a manager who demonstrates excellent leadership qualities in the areas of customer service, community relations, employee development, and attitude.

**SERVICE & STEWARDSHIP AWARD**

Jim Brower, regional manager at Maumee Bay, received the Service & Stewardship Award for producing tangible results in all five goal areas of the division's strategic plan.

**BILL PRICE AWARD**

Andy Yurasek, naturalist at Deer Creek, received the Bill Price Award in recognition of extraordinary program attendance recorded at his summer naturalist programs and his innovative and fun-loving approach to the profession.

**CUTTING EDGE AWARD**

The division's first Cutting Edge Award, symbolizing the spirit of innovation and ingenuity, was awarded to the Vinyl Graphics Shop at Dillon.

**GAZELLE AWARD**

The Waterway and Construction Section was honored with the Gazelle Award, which recognizes an outstanding park or section staff that exemplifies the qualities of a swift and agile gazelle—the ability to adapt quickly and effectively to change.

**IN MEMORIAM**

We are saddened by the loss of our friend and coworker, David Postek, park officer at Portage Lakes, who passed away on July 24, and Ron Wyatt, NRW at Caesar Creek, who passed away on October 20.

**LIFESAVING AWARDS**

Fifty-three individuals were recognized for their participation in lifesaving actions of a distinguished nature. The Lifesaving Commendation Award was presented to the following employees whose actions saved or attempted to save the life of another:

Hurd Latimer, Park Officer, Rocky Fork  
 Thomas Cassity, Park Officer, Paint Creek  
 Dustin Best, Park Officer, Salt Fork  
 William Edens, Park Officer, Delaware  
 Michael Yates, Park Officer, Alum Creek  
 Caleb Brecheisen, Park Officer, Findley  
 David Johnston, Park Officer, Findley

The Lifesaving Recognition Award was presented to the following employees whose actions saved or attempted to save the life of another, putting their own lives at risk:

Ronald Haines, Park Officer, Pymatuning  
 Richard Phillips, Auto Mechanic, Cowan Lake

The Lifesaving Team Award was presented to the following employees whose team actions saved or attempted to save the life of another:

John Patrick, Park Officer, Cowan Lake  
 Russ Knepper, Park Officer, Cowan Lake  
 Alan Ferguson, Assistant Park Manager, Cowan Lake  
 Tim Carr, Park Manager, Cowan Lake  
 Kevin Erskine, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Joe Soukup, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Rick Stone, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Ron Haines, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront

A lifesaving letter of recognition was received by the following park employees for their assistance to park visitors:

Tim Matia, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Cindy Glanz, Account Clerk, Mary Jane Thurston  
 Gary Donaldson, Conservation Worker, Mary Jane Thurston  
 Charles Gallagher, Natural Resource Specialist, Mary Jane Thurston  
 Michael Nelson, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Nigel Mills, Park Officer Specialist, Cleveland Lakefront  
 Ronald Haines, Park Officer, Cleveland Lakefront

**TEAM AWARD PROGRAM**

The Team Award Program was designed to acknowledge teams of division employees or volunteers who work together to complete a specific project or accomplishment. Fifty-five team award certificates were issued during the program's eighth year. The following teams were recognized:

Salt Fork Dam Monitoring Team  
 Mohican State Park Staff Team  
 Lake Hope Nature Center Renovation Team  
 Muskingum River Buoy Project Team  
 John Bryan Customer Service Team  
 Buck Creek Bi-Lingual Team

The Team of the Year Award was presented to the Lake Milton Walking Path Development Team. The team, which includes park employees, North Construction Unit staff, park volunteers and the Lake Milton Association, raised funds and provided for the design and construction of the handicapped-accessible 1.75-mile recreational trail. In addition to a \$47,000 trail grant the park received, the Lake Milton Association secured a recycling grant for \$26,800, and the team raised \$34,200 in support and donations to cover the total project cost of \$108,000.

# Infrastructure Improvements



**Sprucing up day-use areas, repairing dams, upgrading water and wastewater systems, providing facilities for boaters and anglers, renovating historic locks and dams, and updating lodge and cottage offerings were among the park facility improvements accomplished at an estimated total cost of \$17.4 million.**

## **CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS:**

### **NatureWorks—Ohio's Natural Investment**

**Y**ear eleven of rehabilitation projects funded wholly or in part by NatureWorks has concluded. A highlight was the completion of renovations to the “Old Park” area at Portage Lakes, which now bears little resemblance to its former condition. With its state-of-the-art boat launch ramps, new parking lots, and enhanced picnic area with a new picnic pavilion and modern restrooms, Old Park will become a major attraction for Portage Lakes and the local community. This project was financed through capital dollars as well as NatureWorks funding.

The HVAC system and the array of skylights spanning the main lobby of the resort lodge at Deer Creek were renovated. In addition, major improvements were made to each of Deer Creek's two-bedroom vacation cottages, and two cottages were modified for accessibility. A new, fully accessible cottage was built according to ADA standards to replace a cottage that had been completely destroyed by fire in 2002. These cottage and lodge projects at Deer Creek were funded in part through NatureWorks, and in part through capital improvement funds.

Renovation of the campground check-in at Harrison Lake has been completed, making the campsite registration process more pleasant for customers as well as park staff. About three-fourths of the funding for this project was through NatureWorks, with operating funds providing the remainder. Work was nearly completed on utility improvements at Salt Fork, including electric and sewer upgrades in the campground. The Salt Fork project entailed the development of 20 full-service campsites offering electric, sewer and water hookups.

Work was completed on the development of a 20-site primitive campground on Middle Bass Island, which was open for camping in time for the July 4th holiday. In addition, a restroom and shower facility was installed at the marina. These amenities are significant milestones in the execution of the park's master plan for the second phase of improvements to this new and unique state park. NatureWorks, capital improvement and grant monies all contributed to this project.

Phase 2 improvements at the Salt Fork marina were completed. Aging docks were replaced, and new dock fingers were added. The project also involved construction of a new, modern restroom.

Rehabilitation work was completed at the historic Devola Lock #2 on the Muskingum River parkway, and repairs were made to the dam at Zanesville Lock #10. Capital improvement funding was utilized in addition to NatureWorks funds on the Devola Lock #2 project.

Planning and design of dam and drainage improvements at Buckeye Lake were completed, and work began on debris removal along the South Fork of the Licking River, which provides drainage for Buckeye Lake.

**EXAMPLES OF NATUREWORKS/  
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

The following summary is a sampling of projects constructed in 2005 with estimated total project costs including design and construction dollars.

PARK	PROJECT	COST
Caesar Creek	Caesar Creek Sewer	\$ 1,526,000
Deer Creek	ADA Cottage #21	\$ 241,000
Deer Creek	Phase 2 Lodge/Cottages	\$ 1,418,000
Harrison Lake	Campground check-in	\$ 183,000
Little Miami	Loveland-Milford trail repairs	\$ 244,000
Lake Loramie	West Bank launch ramp	\$ 150,000
Middle Bass Island	Phase 2 improvements/campground/continuing Master plan	
Muskingum River	Lock & Dam #10 Zanesville	\$ 70,000
Muskingum River	Lock & Dam #2 Devola	\$ 2,017,000
Portage Lakes	"Old Park" rehab	\$ 1,773,000
Salt Fork	Dam emergency repair	\$ 3,214,000
Salt Fork	Phase 2 Marina improvements	\$ 895,000
Salt Fork	Utility upgrades	\$ 3,726,000
South Bass Island	Oak Point docks	\$ 215,000
Statewide	SE Ohio water well	\$ 223,000
Statewide	Water well	\$ 78,000
Statewide	Self Registration Infrastructure	\$ 300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$16,273,000</b>

Construction work commenced, but is not yet completed, on the Malabar Farm Visitor Education Center, which is being funded in part through the Malabar Farm Foundation; the launch ramp at Deer Creek's Harding Cabin; an accessible restroom in the Burr Oak resort lodge; lift station repairs at Cleveland Lakefront; and utility improvements at Rocky Fork.

**Capital Improvement Projects**

Several renovation and improvement projects were undertaken using capital funding sources other than NatureWorks.

An emergency project at Salt Fork showcased the collective talent of division and department staff, and the versatility of the capital improvement program. The appearance of boils in the toe of the Salt Fork dam during a routine inspection in February prompted round-the-clock monitoring and a thorough evaluation of the integrity of the dam. While investigations continued through the summer, the water level in the lake was dropped during the peak recreation season to minimize pressure on the dam and ensure the safety of downstream residents. Once the investigators concluded that the toe drain should be replaced, construction work began, entailing dewatering of the drain, excavation of a 40-foot trench, and installation of a new drain pipe.

At Caesar Creek, the wastewater system has been improved dramatically with the replacement of the problematic and failing lift system. This project involved work on more lift stations within a single park than in all other parks combined. Construction work began in November on the wastewater delivery system at Blue Rock.

Work was completed on improvements to the West Bank boat ramp and parking area at Lake Loramie funded through a blend of capital improvement dollars and grant monies from the divisions of Watercraft and Wildlife. Through the Division of Watercraft grant program, 12 new docks were installed at Oak Point on Put-in-Bay, including one dock that is handicapped accessible. With some of the docks built from recycled lumber and others built from treated wood, this project will serve as a pilot to determine which material performs better. Construction work commenced on rehabilitation of a launch ramp at Buck Creek, funded through the Wildlife and Watercraft grant programs.

Work was completed on repairs to the leg of the Little Miami Scenic Trail from Loveland to Milford, a stretch of approximately 8.7 miles of paved multi-use trail.

**Project Design**

Design work has been completed for renovation of the Lake White dam. This complex and extensive dam rehabilitation will be approached in phases, and is projected to cost approximately \$4.8 million in NatureWorks and capital improvement funds.

Design was undertaken for the first phase of electrical service rehabilitation at Deer Creek’s campground, in response to the trend toward larger camping units with greater power demands. This project is funded completely through NatureWorks.

Planning commenced for upgrades to the campground electric at Indian Lake. The initial phase includes one camp loop, and additional loops in this 471-site campground will be addressed as funding permits. The design work will be accomplished in-house by the Division of Engineering, resulting in significant cost savings. Construction work will be funded through NatureWorks.

A number of additional projects were under active design, with anticipated construction in 2006. They are:

- ✦ Little Miami: Terrace park extension
- ✦ Findley: Campground improvements, and waste water improvements
- ✦ Grand Lake St. Marys: West Bank docks repair
- ✦ Mary Jane Thurston: Marina and dock improvements
- ✦ Portage Lakes: Joint office renovation
- ✦ Burr Oak: Lodge ADA improvements, including accessible elevator, and A/C pipe removal
- ✦ Delaware: Marina improvements
- ✦ West Branch: Campground boat launch ramp development
- ✦ Salt Fork: Pilot water study

Investigation and preliminary design work was initiated for a number of marina improvements to be funded by NatureWorks at Delaware, Shawnee, Hueston Woods, and Paint Creek. A NatureWorks funded marina study will be conducted at Caesar Creek to determine the proper location and estimated cost for a proposed marina. Upon completion of the study, the division will seek, through a request for proposal process, private investor(s) to construct and operate the full service marina. Eight Cooperative Boating Facility Grants from the Division of Watercraft in cooperation with the Division of Wildlife will provide \$2,797,300 in waterfront improvements at Buckeye Lake, East Fork, Grand Lake St. Marys, Lake Hope, Mosquito Lake, Pymatuning and Shawnee.

Various phases of preliminary design work, including planning, study and assessment, were conducted for a variety of water and wastewater projects at 24 parks through the capital improvement program. Installation of ultraviolet treatment or de-chlorination equipment is being considered at several parks. Water towers at a number of parks were thoroughly reviewed, and a phased approach to repairs will be developed.



Tent campers at Middle Bass Island

**Roadway Maintenance and Striping Program**

Major projects completed through the Cooperative Roadway Maintenance Program with ODOT include phase 2 resurfacing at West Branch, Portage Lakes, and Pymatuning; bridge improvements at Mohican, Indian Lake, and Little Miami; roadway resurfacing at Paint Creek, Scioto Trail, Rocky Fork, Punderson, Hocking Hills, Barkcamp, Maumee Bay, and Grand Lake St. Marys; emergency sink hole repair at Little Miami, and a culvert replacement at Mosquito and Barkcamp. Expenditures on these projects totaled \$6,891,121. A total of 890 regulatory and directional signs were produced by ODOT through this program for use in the parks. The total cost for signage was \$21,079.

**Miscellaneous Park Construction & Improvement Projects**

A number of repair, replacement and improvement projects at revenue generating park facilities such as lodges, cottages, marinas and concession buildings, were completed using park operating funds; the lodge maintenance, repair and replacement fund (MRR); and the depreciation reserve fund (DR).



Dam improvements at Muskingum River

PARK	PROJECT	COST	FUND
Burr Oak	Front desk remodeling, hallway carpet	\$ 26,012	MRR
	Tennis court fence	\$ 6,890	MRR
	Guest room wallcovering	\$ 48,000	DR
Cleveland Lakefront	E. 55th Street marina dock repairs	\$ 6,000	DR
Deer Creek	Harding Cabin porch replacement	\$ 39,600	DR
Geneva	Marina dredging & new docks	\$ 65,555	MRR
Hueston Woods	Hallway carpet, meeting room AV system	\$ 35,116	MRR
Malabar Farm	Malabar Inn concrete dumpster pad	\$ 3,200	DR
Maumee Bay	Lodge meeting room & cottage redecor	\$ 55,542	MRR
	Emergency water damage repair	\$ 16,283	MRR
	Tennis/basketball court rehab	\$ 144,773	MRR
Mohican	Lobby furniture, wallcovering, mattresses	\$ 113,148	MRR
	Pool renovation & patio furniture	\$ 76,373	MRR
	Fitness room new equipment	\$ 14,051	MRR
Punderson	Lodge meeting room renovation	\$ 124,000	MRR
	Cottage painting	\$ 36,615	MRR
	Fitness room equipment repair	\$ 6,816	MRR
	Lodge exterior painting, ski chalet doors	\$ 42,500	DR
Salt Fork	Cottage int. painting, furn., screen & doors	\$ 46,180	MRR
	Dining room flooring, booths	\$ 47,420	MRR
	Lobby furniture	\$ 47,183	MRR
	Ballfield excavation, outdoor pool cover	\$ 13,317	MRR
Shawnee	Pro shop double doors	\$ 6,500	MRR
	Wireless Internet installation	\$ 34,131	MRR
	Emergency repair to chiller	\$ 8,489	MRR
	Roof repairs	\$ 39,000	MRR
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,102,694</b>	

**In-House Construction Initiatives**

Statewide, 152 construction projects, including 13 emergency projects, were completed with in-house labor and equipment. The types of projects accomplished included utility upgrades, trail improvements, campground upgrades, dock and launch ramp improvements, wetland enhancement projects, beach and golf course enhancements and continued support for special events such as the Ohio Heritage Days at Malabar Farm.

### Accessibility Improvements

Accessibility design standards are incorporated into all new and rehabilitated park structures in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

- ✦ Design planning and investigation continued for a full assessment of the Burr Oak lodge facility for accessibility needs within the building, including vertical circulation, public restrooms, guest rooms and swimming pool. Construction work began on an accessible public restroom in the lodge. The campground at Burr Oak is also being evaluated for renovation including washhouse accessibility and campsite improvements.
- ✦ The Taylor Road launch ramp at Paint Creek was constructed with ADA access and facilities.
- ✦ The rehabilitated launch ramp at Buck Creek included accessibility elements within the re-design.
- ✦ At Portage Lakes, the Old Park project included the addition of accessible restrooms, a picnic shelter, and launch ramp.
- ✦ Construction was completed on a fully accessible cottage at Deer Creek to replace a cottage lost to fire two years ago. Additionally, two other cottages at Deer Creek were completely renovated to ADA standards.

In addition to major capital projects, park staff continued to improve facility access by widening doorways, toilet compartments, and shower stalls; constructing access ramps, modifying campsites, and adding handicapped parking spaces. Accessibility also continued to be enhanced through numerous small projects such as removing thresholds, changing door handles, and updating plumbing fixtures and drinking fountains.

### Fleet Management

As part of the division's strategy to offset recent budgetary impacts, vehicle replacements continued to be deferred. The division purchased only six new replacement vehicles; normal attrition of vehicles required to sustain an average ten year vehicle life is between 50 and 60 units per year. A total of 36 used but serviceable vehicles were acquired from other ODNR divisions, ODOT, local law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Administrative Services vehicle salvage lot. The 36 division vehicles retired after these acquisitions had a total 4,271,500 miles (on average, 118,652 per vehicle); the vehicles that were acquired have total mileage of 2,681,200 (on average, 74,477 miles per vehicle). The fleet-wide vehicle average age and mileage continued to increase, with the average vehicle being 9.5 years old with 95,000 miles.

### In-House Products and Services

The division provided for the installation of T-1 or DSL service to each regional park office to replace dial-up service for Internet access. As expected, this has greatly improved each park's speed of electronic service and has encouraged park staff to make more use of the division and department intranet sites.

Dillon's vinyl graphics sign shop continued to provide a variety of standardized and custom signs for parks, and expanded its offerings with vinyl banners for display during special events and activities at parks.

In-house operations to rehabilitate docks were initiated at Portage Lakes and Rocky Fork. Of the existing 3,700 dock fingers in state parks, 80 percent are more than 15 years old and 76 percent are in poor condition. This in-house effort will help achieve the goal of repairing and replacing aging structures, while saving significant funds when compared with contracted repairs.

Barkcamp continued to offer pre-cut firewood, picnic tables, large charcoal grills and fire-rings. The park also has acquired a commercial quality, computer controlled sign router that will be used to fabricate a variety of signs.

# Fiscal Management



Ohio State Parks expended \$86.6 million in fiscal year 2005, including 28.8 million from revenues generated from fees and charges.

## Budget

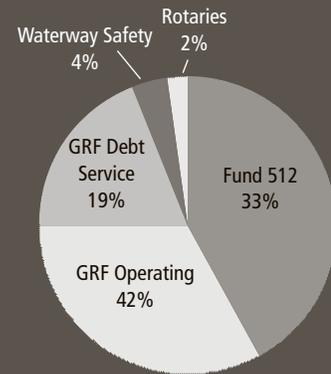
The primary source of the division's operating funding is the state's General Revenue Fund (GRF). In FY 06 the GRF is providing 63 percent of funding; in FY 05, 61 percent of the division's money came from the GRF. A significant part of the increase can be attributed to debt service and the increase in GRF operating that was allocated to address the elimination of the Parks Pride Pass proposal.

The second largest source of operating funding is fees and charges generated by the state parks and deposited into Fund 512. This fund accounted for approximately 33 percent of the total budget in FY 06, the same percentage of the budget as in FY 05. Approximately 4 percent of the budget is provided by the Waterway Safety Fund, which is designated for specific purposes. The balance of the funds received is obtained from miscellaneous rotary accounts. In FY 06, rotary 161 was eliminated and the depreciation reserve allocation was consolidated into fund 512 as a special line item. While the numbers in the charts on page 32 may seem to indicate a reduction in the rotary accounts, the change in accounts had no financial impact on the division.

Actual expenditures for FY 05 and the total appropriation for FY 06 are indicated in the following charts:

**FUNDING**

FUNDING SOURCE	FY '05 EXPENDED	FY '06 BUDGETED
GRF Operating	\$35,850,223 (42 %)	\$37,874,841 (42 %)
Fund 512 (Fees & Charges)	\$28,785,015 (33 %)	\$29,720,528 (33 %)
GRF Debt Service	\$16,533,052 (19 %)	\$18,699,100 (21 %)
Waterway Safety	\$ 3,693,815 ( 4 %)	\$ 3,792,343 ( 4 %)
Rotaries	\$ 1,735,297 ( 2 %)	\$ 161,753 ( 0 %)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$86,597,402</b>	<b>\$90,248,565</b>



**Revenue**

Ohio State Parks generated \$27,745,543 in revenue, a four percent increase over 2004 revenue. All revenue generated by state parks is deposited into Fund 512. The division received large donations for Malabar Farm and Hocking Hills, which are indicated in the numbers below. Although cottage occupancy has remained fairly stable since 2004, cottage rental revenues appear to have declined from CY 2004. This apparent discrepancy reflects the influx of approximately \$450,000 in advance deposits for state-operated cottages transferred to the division in CY 2004 when the centralized reservation system went on-line.

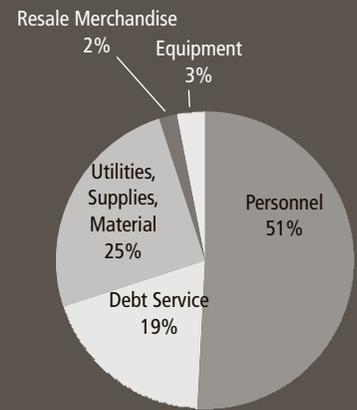
The revenues received in calendar year 2005 were as follows:

REVENUE CATEGORY	CY 2005	CY 2004	PERCENT CHANGE
Camping	\$ 9,903,697	\$ 9,992,539	- 1 %
Self-Operated Retail	\$ 3,682,227	\$ 3,481,513	6 %
Concession Agreements	\$ 3,313,786	\$ 3,217,750	3 %
Cottage Rentals	\$ 2,930,072	\$ 3,401,697	-14 %
Dock Permits	\$ 2,715,674	\$ 2,574,843	5 %
Golf Greens Fees	\$ 1,705,942	\$ 1,618,796	5 %
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,372,907	\$ 926,570	48 %
Grants	\$ 545,392	\$ 216,974	151 %
Donations	\$ 530,577	\$ 56,728	835 %
Getaway Rentals	\$ 515,950	\$ 495,188	4 %
Group Lodge Rentals	\$ 209,845	\$ 77,283	172 %
Royalties & Easements	\$ 106,095	\$ 94,699	12 %
State Agency Transfers	\$ 74,046	\$ 247,774	-70 %
Laundromats	\$ 43,770	\$ 41,204	6 %
Fines & Penalties	\$ 31,612	\$ 24,711	28 %
Pools & Lockers	\$ 26,569	\$ 17,954	48 %
Duck Blinds	\$ 15,135	\$ 15,740	- 4 %
Sales Assets	\$ 14,080	\$ 32,725	-57 %
Land Rentals	\$ 8,167	\$ 46,376	-82 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$27,745,543</b>	<b>\$ 26,581,064</b>	<b>4 %</b>

## EXPENDITURES

An itemization of major expenditures to pay salaries, debt service, utility and maintenance costs, resale items, subsidy payments, operating capital and equipment purchases is as follows:

EXPENSES	FY'05 EXPENDED	FY'06 BUDGETED
Personnel	\$44,035,186 (51 %)	\$45,297,428 (50 %)
Debt Service	\$16,533,053 (19 %)	\$18,699,100 (21 %)
Utilities/Supplies/Material	\$22,053,446 (25 %)	\$22,093,569 (25 %)
Resale Merchandise	\$ 1,717,096 ( 2 %)	\$ 1,871,096 ( 2 %)
Equipment	\$ 2,234,121 ( 3 %)	\$ 1,895,372 ( 2 %)
Subsidy	\$ 12,500 ( 0 %)	\$ 12,500 ( 0 %)
Capital	\$ 12,000 ( 0 %)	\$ 379,500 ( 0 %)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$86,597,402</b>	<b>\$90,248,565</b>



## FUNDING INITIATIVES

### Parks Pride Pass

Pursuant to the Ohio General Assembly's rejection of the proposed "Parks Pride Pass," the division received an increase in GRF allocation for the biennium to offset the lost opportunity for the anticipated revenue that was projected from the parking pass.

### State Park License Plate

The new Ohio State Parks license plate went on sale in April, following the enactment of the enabling legislation, Am. Sub. HB 406 of the 125th General Assembly, which became effective in March. The Ohio State Parks license plates cost consumers an additional \$25 over the usual plate fee, \$15 of which is earmarked for state park interpretive and educational programs and displays.

Sales of the new plate in the first nine months were less than projected, with only 377 being sold. Competition from other specialty license plates has been a major factor contributing to the sluggish sales; Am. Sub. HB 406 authorized 21 new plates, in addition to the one-hundred-plus license plates already available.

### Concessions

Sixty-four concession facilities were operated under 51 separate leases, contracts or short-term agreements. The contracts or agreements on nine of these concession facilities expired and were rebid during the year.

The department and Delaware North Companies entered into a mutual termination of the Deer Creek resort lodge contract to become effective in 2006. The Deer Creek lodge contract was put out for bid, with the bid opening on November 9. In the course of awarding the contract to the apparent highest and best bidder, the winning bidder pulled out of the contracting process. Work began on awarding the contract to the next best bidder, ARAMARK Sports and Entertainment Services, Inc., with contract execution anticipated in March 2006.



## 2006 Goals

- Train every front-line employee in techniques for providing exceptional customer service
- Continue the regional integration process administratively as well as operationally
- Continue to work with the individual park friends groups as well as the statewide association (FPOSP)
- Implement the Leadership Factor's recommendations and meet with each region to present the results of the employee satisfaction survey
- Implement a pilot program to centrally recruit and hire part-time-permanent park officers
- Complete resource management plans for at least two parks to serve as pilots for the other parks
- Continue the capital infrastructure improvement process and dedicate the completion of several major projects
- Make substantial improvements to park roadways and parking lots with the additional funds from ODOT
- Complete the in-house master planning process for North Bass Island
- Increase overall revenue through creative fee structures, marketing, renovation and attracting new customers
- Establish a fund-raising plan for obtaining additional corporate sponsorships and grants that match the needs of the parks
- Provide Wi Fi service in at least four large campgrounds as an added amenity for our customers

# Statistical Abstract

Ohio State Park System 2005

## GENERAL PARK

# State Parks	74
Total Acreage	174,215 <sup>1</sup>
Acreage -- Land	107,810
Acreage -- Water	66,405
Miles of Shoreline	1,026
% of Land that is Developed	21.2%
% of Shoreline that is Developed	26.8%
Visitor Occasions	50,101,581
# Buildings	2,638
# Water Systems	144
# Sewer Systems	142
# Restroom Buildings -- Water Borne	462
# Restroom Buildings -- Pit Privies	501
Miles of Roads Patrolled	1,844
# Felonies	148
# Citations	6,455
# Visitor Assists	27,950
# Park Residences	82
# Dining Lodges/Restaurants	3

## CAMPGROUNDS

# Campgrounds	88
# Campsites	9,007
# Full Service Sites	186
# Electric Sites	6,470
# Non-electric Sites	2,351
# General Group Areas	61
# No-fee, Non-group Primitive Sites	79
# Horse Camps	14
# Horse Camp Sites	337
# Showerhouses	114
# Amphitheaters	50
# Camp Store/Commissaries	44
# Campsites Rented	534,487
Campground Occupancy (244 nights)	23.4% <sup>2</sup>

## CAMPING OPTIONS

# Rent-A-Camp Sites	27
% Rent-A-Camp Occupancy (184 nights)	25.8%
# Rent-A-RV Sites	9
% Rent-A-RV Occupancy (184 nights)	45.3%
# Rent-A-Tepee Sites	7
% Rent-A-Tepee Occupancy (184 nights)	26.9%
# Rent-A-Yurt Sites	12
% Rent-A-Yurt Occupancy (184 nights)	50.7%
# Cabents	4
% Cabent Occupancy (184 nights)	7.1%
# Camper Cabins	46
% Camper Cabins Occupancy (184 nights)	48.3%
# Cedar Cabins	21
% Cedar Cabins Occupancy (184 nights)	61.3%
# Conestoga Cabins	8
% Conestoga Cabins Occupancy (184 nights)	47.5%

## RESORT LODGES & CONCESSION COTTAGES

# Resort Lodges	9
# Resort Lodge Rooms	818
# Lodge Room Nights Rented	137,641
% Lodge Occupancy	46.1%
# Restaurants in Resort Lodges	9

# Concession Cottages	221
# Cottage Nights Rented	33,682
% Cottage Occupancy	41.8%

## STATE OPERATED COTTAGES

# State Operated Cottages	297
# Cottage Nights Rented	40,034
% Cottage Occupancy	36.9%

## GOLF COURSES

# Golf Courses	6
# Golf Rounds	124,009

## BOAT RAMPS/MARINAS/DOCKS

# Boat Ramps	188
# Boater Occasions	7,124,870
# Marina / Boat Rental Operations	46
# Docks - Concession Operated	1,514
# Docks - State Operated	6,046
# Private Docks Licensed	11,136

## BEACHES

# Swimming Beaches	80
# Swimming Occasions	4,422,777
# Beach Concessions	22

## GROUP FACILITIES

# Overnight Group Facilities	6
# Overnight Group Facility Users	19,981
# Beds in Group Facilities	309
# Day-use Group Lodges	13
# Day-use Group Lodge Users	126,956

## VISITOR/NATURE CENTERS

# Visitor/Nature Centers	37
# Visitor/Nature Center Visitor Occasions	1,431,474

## PICNIC AREAS

# Picnic Areas	462
# Picnic Area Visitor Occasions	7,772,050
# Picnic Shelters -- Total	174
# Reservable Picnic Shelters	110

## OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

# Swimming Pools	19
# Tennis Courts	16
# Basketball Courts	78
# Volleyball Courts	96
# Miniature Golf Courses	14
# Disc Golf Courses	4
# Playgrounds	179
# Parks with Bike Rental Operations	21
# Trails - Total	393
Total Miles of Trails	1,155.1
# Multi-Use Trails	123
# Hiking Only Trails	223
# Mountain Bike Only Trails	25
# Bridle Only Trails	22
# Parks with Snow Mobile Trails	11
# Parks with Cross Country Ski Trails	44
# Parks with Sledding Hills	39
# Shooting Ranges	5

<sup>1</sup> Based on REALM's 2005 Land Inventory Report

<sup>2</sup> Includes horse campsites, excludes Volunteer Camper Host sites







Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Recreation  
2045 Morse Rd., C-3  
Columbus, OH 43214

**[ohiostateparks.org](http://ohiostateparks.org)**

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