

Important Big Creek parcels in Brooklyn acquired

BIG CREEK LAND CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHED

In our ongoing effort to conserve and enhance the natural resources of Big Creek, last year Friends of Big Creek approached the trustee of two Brooklyn parcels that contained forested land crossing Big Creek. With the assistance of West Creek Preservation Committee, an urban land conservancy, the parcels were successfully acquired in December, ensuring the conservation of these key parcels and their permanent protection as a natural area!

At over 3 acres, with a width of 100 feet and a depth of about 1400 feet, the parcels had in the past been sought by developers interested in building a roadway off Biddulph Avenue to develop housing along Big Creek. Currently, most housing in the area is situated a distance from the creek, helping to preserve a vegetated “buffer” along most of the

creek. River or “riparian” buffers are vegetated areas next to water resources that protect them from polluted run-off, provide bank stabilization and enhance aquatic and wildlife habitat. This acquisition helps assure that most of the stretch of Big Creek between Biddulph and Memphis Avenue, remains in its natural, vegetative state.

The parcels were recognized in the Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan as Priority Conservation Areas. They could also be key in implementing the Big Creek Greenway Trial and Neighborhood Connector Plan, the 2009 study that seeks to connect the Cleveland Metroparks’ Brookside and Big Creek Reservations with a 3-mile all-purpose trail through the City of Brooklyn. Visit friendsofbigcreek.org to learn more about both these plans.

The purchases of the parcels were made possible largely due to the donation of a 3-acre property in North Royalton owned by FOBC Board Member Al Penko. *(See article page 2.)* With a conservation easement being placed on his Big Creek “headwaters” property, most of the proceeds from the sale of Al’s property went towards the purchase of the Biddulph Avenue parcels, several miles downstream.

To complete the acquisition of the parcels, FOBC was granted a loan to bridge the gap in funding. To fulfill this loan and to establish additional seed money to conserve other parcels along Big Creek, FOBC has formed a Land Conservation Fund to help meet financial commitments and continue our conservation efforts. A fundraising effort is in full force in advance of our deadline of June 30th of this year.

Board member donates “headwaters” property in North Royalton

Al Penko, a FOBC board member, had a vision. He hoped that the largely undeveloped stretch of Big Creek running from his property on Ridge Road near Albion Road north to the Snake Hill Conservation Area in Parma could be preserved. That’s when he decided to put a plan in motion. Al donated his property to West Creek Preservation Committee, an urban land conservancy, so they could place a conservation easement on the property’s riparian area, ensuring its permanent protection as a natural area. Through the efforts of WCPC and FOBC volunteers, his historic home was restored and it, along with the property was sold. Proceeds from the sale helped us acquire and conserve more natural area downstream in Brooklyn (See article on page 1.)

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Al Penko for making the choice to save some of our remaining natural areas with his generous donation. It made a difference in two locations!

