



Letter of Support for Conservation of Theiss Road Property

The Greater Akron Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society whose geographic bounds include much of Summit County and parts of Medina, Portage and Stark Counties, fully supports the proposal of The Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) to purchase the Akron-owned parcel at Theiss and Hardy Roads in the Merriman Valley for total conservation.

Audubon's mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, by working throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. We exist at the local level to advocate for the preservation of ecological resources inherent in green spaces such as those in this property.

We believe that the planned partnership between WRLC and Summit Metro Parks (SMP) is an ideal collaborative effort that will maximize the long-term ecologic and economic value of the land. The unknown long-term costs of opting for residential development of the property are simply too great. SMP is a proven steward of our public lands and together with their Hampton Hills Mountain Bike Park, the conserved properties of West Creek Conservancy, and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, a contiguous wildlife corridor will exist in perpetuity to foster optimal biodiversity.

The City of Akron need only look at the news headlines and communications from SMP to discern that no public or private property is an entity unto itself: regional efforts are vital. Summit County applied for a \$1 Million grant from Ohio Public Works Commission to rebuild Peninsula's Akron-Peninsula Road after erosion of the banks of the Cuyahoga River forced its closure last year.

In an excerpt from SMP's *Green Islands*, Chris Chaney, park biologist states, "While the best way to protect our resources is to avoid using them in the first place, the next best way to engage in conservation is to replenish depleted natural resources." Thus, SMP is embarking on a herculean centennial goal of planting 100 acres of trees that will provide intrinsic value by releasing oxygen, sequestering carbon, stabilizing soils, and reducing water runoff among many other favorable environmental benefits. Volunteer efforts and monetary donations are critical to this campaign's success to help restore the forest cover and connect green spaces.

This property has already rebounded ecologically from a shady environmental past. Wouldn't it be logical to attempt to preserve its current and future value by accepting the local and regional vision WRLC and SMP have proposed? We applaud the efforts of the Preserve the Valley Citizen Action Group for bringing the social, economic and ecologic aspects of the issue to the forefront.

Given the predicted effects of climate change, we cannot stand by silently. Birds are sentinel species, and they indicate that humans may be in danger next. Audubon studies have said that the birds are telling us it's now time to act. We respectfully call on Akron's Office of Integrated Development to choose conservation over development and present WRLC's proposal to Mayor Horrigan, Akron City Planning Commission and Akron City Council.

Greater Akron Audubon Society