Hello Neighbor!

Like the Portage Park District, you own property in the Breakneck Creek Watershed—land that eventually drains to Breakneck Creek and then on to the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. We thought that you might like to learn a little bit more about it.

What makes the Breakneck Creek Watershed so important?

- It’s the headwaters area providing drinking water from wells or lakes for tens of thousands of people
- It includes several thousand acres of critical natural areas that provide habitat for wildlife
- Its wetlands and forests allow for groundwater infiltration and reduce flood potential
- It includes spawning grounds for great fishing in the Creek and Cuyahoga River
- It’s home to several threatened and endangered species

Enclosed is some more information about the watershed, the Portage Park District, the Portage Soil and Water Conservation District and the Breakneck Creek Watershed Coalition for your review. Please consider attending the upcoming meeting about the Breakneck Creek Watershed on December 12th at 6:00 p.m. at the Garden Meeting Room of the Portage Soil and Water Conservation District, 6970 SR 88, Ravenna. We’d love to meet you!

This mailing was made possible with a grant from the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund, whose funding comes from citizen purchase of the Lake Erie license plate. They understand that we’re all connected through our watersheds and we need to work together to protect our precious resources. We hope you agree.

Sincerely,

Christine Craycroft
Executive Director
Interim Chair, Breakneck Creek Watershed Coalition
Watershed Size: 78 square miles - the second largest tributary to the Cuyahoga River.
Communities: Drains 11 communities with 13,000 households and 34,000 residents.

Growing Rural Communities
The Breakneck Creek Watershed is located amidst the urban centers of Northeast Ohio. It is rich in natural and cultural resources such as forests, wetlands, farmlands, scenic landscapes, recreation areas and rural small-town communities. Much of the land is still undeveloped, with many large parcels still intact. This appealing natural and cultural heritage is attracting significant growth and development, and with it the need to balance changing land uses with wise conservation.

A Long and Winding Creek
The Breakneck Creek Watershed, like most of Northeast Ohio, was shaped by glacial activity thousands of years ago. The surrounding land is relatively flat creating a slow, calmly moving stream flanked by a variety of wetlands in many areas. Breakneck Creek begins to flow from Congress Lake in Stark County and travels north draining 11 different communities before emptying into the Cuyahoga River near the City of Kent. The health of the Breakneck Creek Watershed influences the quality of the Cuyahoga River, Lake Erie and our drinking water. The watershed is also the source of drinking water from surface lakes or wells for tens of thousands of people.

A watershed is a geographic area of land that collects and drains water to a common location such as a stream or lake. Watersheds are generally named for the river to which the land drains, such as Breakneck Creek Watershed or the Cuyahoga River Watershed.

Watershed boundaries follow the hills and valleys of the landscape, not political boundaries that we see on a map. The manner in which communities develop land influences surface and ground water quality and the amount of flooding and erosion experienced in the Breakneck Creek Watershed.

Diverse Habitats
The watershed is home to a great diversity of plant and animal communities and endangered species. The Creek and its adjacent wetlands are important fish and waterfowl breeding grounds, and the riparian and uplands forests and meadows provide important migration corridors.
Increased Flooding - flooding is more common as the amount of impervious surface and uncontrolled storm water runoff increases.

Floodplains - are relatively flat areas along the banks of a stream. They absorb floodwaters and help control downstream flooding and flooding.

Breakneck Creek Watershed Data Sources:
Portage County Natural Resource Inventory 2005, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Transportation, Cuyahoga American Heritage River Initiative

Conservation easements - are important watershed features that protect habitat in perpetuity.
Loss of Riparian Corridor - mowing lawns up to the stream’s edge removes important vegetation, which increases property erosion and damages the stream.

Polluted Runoff - excessive sediment, nutrients and trace heavy metals wash off undermanaged farms and development sites into streams.

Agricultural Waterways - filter storm water by trapping sediment and fertilizer before entering streams.

Water Quality Ponds - trap sediment and other pollutants that wash off development sites before entering streams.

Riparian Corridors - are vegetated lands along streams that protect streamside property from erosion and help maintain healthy water quality and habitat.

Tree Canopy - helps reduce storm water runoff by intercepting precipitation in the canopy and improving water storage capacity in the ground by enriching the soil with organic leaves.

Riparian Corridors become vegetated areas that help to reduce property erosion.

Agricultural Waterways preserve riparian features and prevent erosion.

Water Quality Ponds trap sediment and pollutants before entering streams.

Tree Canopy helps reduce storm water runoff and improve water storage capacity in the ground.
Concerns in Breakneck Creek

**Pollution:** Storm water washes pollutants such as pesticides, sediments and trace metals into Breakneck Creek. Sources of these pollutants range from farms to construction sites and parking lots. This type of pollution, termed “nonpoint source pollution”, contributes to water quality problems in Breakneck Creek. Polluted runoff affects our drinking water and can increase the level of treatment needed for both public and private sources.

**Flooding and Erosion:** Development can increase impervious surfaces and storm water runoff. This causes Breakneck Creek to receive larger volumes of storm water at higher velocities, which threatens roads, bridges and homes with more frequent flooding and erosion problems.

**Loss of Habitat:** As communities develop, wildlife habitat is lost or fragmented. Aquatic habitat is scoured away as stream channels receive larger amounts of storm water.

Benefits of Watershed Conservation

- Reduced Flooding
- Drinking Water Protection
- Wildlife Habitat
- Recreation Opportunities
- Quality of Life
- Scenic Beauty
- Economic Savings
- Sustainable Resource Use

How You and Your Community Can Help

You can help by:

- Not mowing your lawn to the edge of the stream. Planting this area along the stream with native trees and plants will help minimize erosion and flooding damage to your property.
- Using conservation tillage and other Best Management Practices on farmlands. This can minimize the loss of productive soil and can improve growing conditions on the land.
- Applying fertilizers and pesticides cautiously.
- Maintaining a properly functioning home sewage treatment system.
- Disposing of waste oil and hazardous household waste properly.
- Learning more about your watershed and sharing that knowledge.
- Volunteering to help with watershed cleanups, monitoring, and restoration.

Communities need to adopt, enforce and promote:

- Land use plans and regulations that identify appropriate conservation and development areas, with consideration of the long-term sustainable economic, social and environmental health of the community and region.
- Storm water management plans to control runoff and protect water quality from development both during and after construction.
- Riparian and wetland setback ordinances to help protect these important resources.
- Land conservation plans and programs through the Portage County Soil and Water Conservation District, Portage Park District, Western Reserve Land Conservancy and other conservation organizations.

To learn more, check out: www.cuyahogariverrap.org/BreakneckCreek/Coalition

Production of this brochure was made possible with funding from the American Heritage Rivers program and the Lake Erie Commission’s Lake Erie Protection Fund, which is supported by the Citizens of Ohio through the purchase of the Lake Erie License Plate.
Help Support Your Watershed

Join the Breakneck Creek Watershed Coalition

The Mission of the Breakneck Creek Watershed Coalition is:
to protect and restore water quality and habitat in the Breakneck Creek Watershed through
conservation, preservation, and education for present and future generations.

The Coalition is a group of concerned citizens, local governments, non-profit organizations and resource
agencies that meets regularly to learn more about the watershed and work towards its conservation.

Some of our planned activities include:
• Watershed conservation action planning
• Stream and highway clean-ups
• Participating in community events with displays and educational
  activities
• Stream and wetland quality assessment and monitoring
• Ecological restoration
• Distributing educational materials and giving presentations to local
  officials, schools and public.

If you’d like to learn more or become a member, please complete the form
below and mail to:
Portage Park District
128 N Prospect St. Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-7728 phone; (330) 297-3472 fax

Yes, I’d like to learn more about the Breakneck Creek Watershed Coalition

Name__________________________________________

Address__________________________________________

City, State, Zip____________________________________

Email ____________________________________________

Phone(s)_________________________________________

☐ Please contact me to volunteer

Please see the other side of this form for a brief survey—we’re interested in what you have to say
References and Resources

Portage Park District
For information about the Breakneck Creek Coalition, parks, trails, environmental education, conservation easements and other options for preserving land
128 N Prospect St.
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-7728 phone
www.portageparkdistrict.org

Portage Soil and Water Conservation District
For information on Best Management Practices for farms and construction sites, storm water management, tree planting, environmental education, conservation easements and other options for preserving land
6970 SR 88
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-7633
www.portageswcd.org

Portage County Regional Planning Commission
For information about mapping, planning, zoning and subdivision development
124 N Prospect St.
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-3613
www.co.portage.oh.us/planningcommission.htm

Your local city or township government
For specific information about water, sewer and ditch infrastructure, plans, zoning, regulations and development

Portage Water Resources Department
For information about County water supplies and source water protection
449 S Meridian St.
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-3670
www.co.portage.oh.us/waterresources.htm

Portage Health District
For information about septic systems and water testing
449 S. Meridian St.
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 296-9919
www.co.portage.oh.us/healthdepartment.htm

Portage Solid Waste District
For information about hazardous waste disposal, recycling and landfills
3588 Mogadore Rd.
Kent, Ohio 44240
(330) 678-8808
www.co.portage.oh.us/solidwaste.htm

Western Reserve Land Conservancy
For information about conservation easements and other options for conserving your land
P.O. Box 314
Novelty, Ohio 44072
(440) 729-9631
www.wrlc.cc/

Questionnaire

1. Are there special natural areas in the Breakneck Creek watershed that you would like to see preserved? If so, where are they?

2. Do you know of specific problems or sources of pollution to the watershed that should be addressed?

3. Other comments, concerns or suggestions?
Conserving Breakneck Creek watershed's water quality and habitat
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