

NEWS RELEASE
October 27, 2005

EDISON WOODS WATER QUALITY PROJECT CONTINUES WITH FUNDING ASSURED

The Auditor of State's Office confirmed today that State funds used to maintain, restore and protect the water quality resources of the Edison Woods Preserve, were awarded according to State rules. In a letter released today, but written in August, 2005, Auditor of State Betty Montgomery confirmed that State Capital Improvement Budget dollars released to Erie MetroParks in 2002, were spent in a manner consistent with conditions imposed by the State for the purchase of the property.

Upon hearing the news, MetroParks spokesman Brad Phillips commented, "This is very good news as it insures that the remaining 15 years of the 20-year Restoration Plan will be properly funded". Phillips, Environmental Projects Coordinator, monitors the progress of the water quality restoration project at the 1300 acre Preserve. "Over the coming years, alien invasive plant species must be controlled and native hardwood trees allowed to regrow in designated parts of Edison Woods," he noted.

In 2001, Erie MetroParks began an extensive project to restore the forests, meadows and wetlands of the Edison Woods Preserve. More than 300 acres of largely wet and poorly drained farmland was planted to prairie meadows. Trails were placed in and around each meadow area and throughout the adjacent woodland.

The work was first undertaken as part of an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency program (OEPA) called the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP). The overall purpose of the project was to protect and improve the water quality of streams flowing into nearby Lake Erie. The forests, meadows and wetlands of Edison Woods improve water quality by filtering and slowing surface water flow as water travels toward the Lake. Erie County residents receive about 86% of their drinking water from Lake Erie and its tributaries.

The OEPA dollars paid for the purchase and some of the required natural area restoration at Edison Woods. The MetroParks applied an additional grant from the State Capital Improvement Fund to the present and future costs of the remaining restoration which was required in the OEPA-mandated Restoration Plan.

In 2004, a local anti-trail group claimed that the use of the State Capital Improvement grant was improper. They persuaded State Senator Jeffrey Armbruster to request that the State Auditor review MetroParks and State records.

In its 2003 regular audit of Erie MetroParks, the State Auditor's Office found no improper spending of the State funds. Senator Armbruster requested yet another review in early 2005. The results of that recent probe were stated in the letter released today. In it, Auditor of State Betty Montgomery said expenses for maintenance and

protection of Edison Woods water resources, "...do constitute costs associated with the acquisition of the land." She stated further that after reviewing all documents that "...my office cannot make a determination that the money was misspent", confirming the State Auditor's earlier conclusions.

The 1306-acre Edison Woods Preserve is open to the public 365 days per year during daylight hours. It offers over five miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding. The recently completed Edison Woods Adventure Walkway is accessible to people of all ages and abilities. The Preserve is located in Berlin Township on State Route 61, just north of the Village of Berlin Heights. For more information, contact the MetroParks at 419-625-7783 or visit our website at www.eriemetroparks.org.