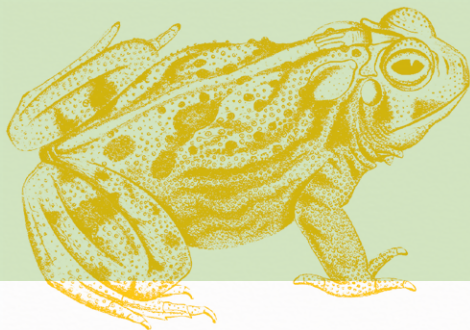




# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



## Parks and Regional Trails

- Angst Nature Preserve MetroPark  
Wayne Township
- Antenen Nature Preserve MetroPark  
St. Clair Township
- Bicentennial Commons  
City of Middletown
- Bunker Hill Cemetery & Pater Park  
Reily Township
- Chrisholm MetroPark  
Madison Township
- Davidson Woods MetroPark  
Hanover Township (Coming in 2026)
- Forest Run MetroPark  
Ross Township
- Gilmore Ponds MetroPark  
City of Hamilton
- Governor Bebb MetroPark  
Morgan Township
- Great Miami River Trail  
City of Middletown, Lemon,  
and Fairfield Townships
- Green Heron MetroPark  
Ross Township
- Indian Creek MetroPark  
Reily Township
- Line Hill Mound MetroPark  
Fairfield Township
- Meadow Ridge MetroPark  
Madison Township
- Mill Race Preserve MetroPark  
Oxford Township
- Pioneer Church  
Reily Township
- Rentschler Forest MetroPark  
Fairfield Township
- Salamander Run MetroPark  
Morgan Township
- Sebald MetroPark  
Madison Township
- Sycamore Bluffs MetroPark  
Milford Township
- Timberhill MetroPark  
Fairfield Township
- Timberman Ridge MetroPark  
Ross Township
- Voice of America MetroPark  
West Chester Township
- Woodsdale MetroPark  
Madison Township

**Mission: The Mission of the MetroParks of Butler County is to provide an exceptional park system that maximizes the community's quality of life through conservation, education, and recreation.**

## OUR IMPACT

**73** miles of owned and managed trails

**5,000** MetroParks manages nearly 5,000 acres of green space

**1,185,074** park visits made in 2025

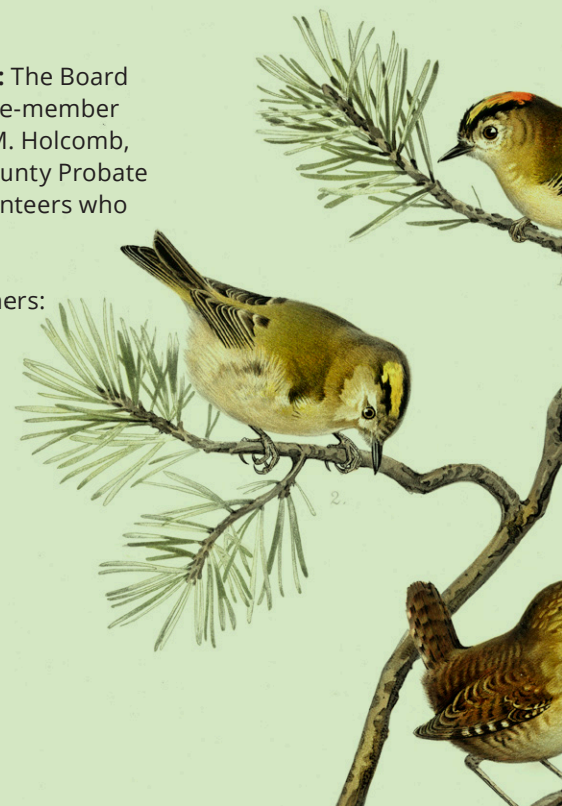
**2,920** service hours given by volunteers

**\$44,071,771.41** in annual economic impact to Butler County from events held at Voice of America MetroPark

**Board of Park Commissioners:** The Board of Park Commissioners is a three-member body appointed by Judge John M. Holcomb, presiding Judge of the Butler County Probate Court. Board members are volunteers who serve three-year terms.

2025 Board of Park Commissioners:  
Cynamon Trokhan, President  
Larry Gersbach, Vice President  
Daryl Nelson, Member

For More Information:  
MetroParks of Butler County  
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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2025, MetroParks of Butler County proudly celebrated a remarkable milestone—our 70th anniversary. For seven decades, the vision that established our park system has continued to guide us: protecting natural spaces, connecting people to the outdoors, and providing meaningful opportunities for recreation and learning. While much has changed since 1955, our mission of conservation, education, and recreation remains as relevant today as it was when the first parks were imagined.

Throughout the year we reflected on our past, honored our present, and looked ahead to what's next. A major milestone was the launch of the MetroParks Legacy Foundation—a new fund created in partnership with the Hamilton Community Foundation to support the longterm sustainability and growth of our park system. This foundation will help ensure that future generations continue to enjoy MetroParks' natural spaces and outdoor experiences.

We also took time to look back at our history, sharing memories of the people and places that shaped the system. From early landpreservation efforts to the parks and programs our community enjoys today, these stories underscored that MetroParks has always grown through shared effort and strong community support.

That same spirit will guide our work moving forward. In 2026, MetroParks will finalize its organizational strategic plan—a roadmap shaped by input from the public, staff, and community partners that will guide the next 5–10 years of park planning, natural resource management, and outreach. This plan will position MetroParks to meet emerging community needs while continuing to conserve and enhance our natural resources.

With a strong understanding of our past and a clear vision for the future, we remain grounded in our core values and focused on what lies ahead. The decades to come will bring both opportunities and challenges, from protecting wildlife habitat and restoring natural areas to expanding education programs and ensuring equitable access to outdoor spaces. As we continue to grow and evolve, we will remain firmly rooted in the mission that has guided MetroParks for the past 70 years.

On behalf of the MetroParks Board of Park Commissioners and our amazing staff, I want to thank our visitors, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your passion has sustained these parks and continues to shape their future. As we celebrate this milestone, we remain committed to caring for these special places, so they continue to inspire discovery and stewardship.

Jackie O'Connell  
Executive Director





# CONSERVATION

## OUR IMPACT

**8,443** trees have been planted by staff and volunteers since 2015

**2,017** personnel hours were spent managing invasive plant species in 2025


**529** trees were grown in the MetroParks greenhouse in 2025

**393** acres of prairie and grasslands have been installed since 1997. Grasslands and prairies improve soil erosion and water quality, provide habitat for critical pollinator species, and store carbon, which helps to protect against climate change.





## Restoring the Headwaters: The Transformation of Salamander Run MetroPark



In 2025, Salamander Run MetroPark continued its evolution into a conservation destination, welcoming more than 53,400 visitors to experience a landscape in recovery. The site was acquired in 2014 through the Paddy's Run Conservation Project (PRCP) using Fernald settlement funds and has since been transformed from former agricultural fields into a carefully restored refuge for wildlife and people alike. This transformation reflects years of restoration work led by Three Valley Conservation Trust, dedicated volunteers, and MetroParks of Butler County. Today, the park protects the headwaters of Paddy's Run, which flow into the Great Miami Aquifer, an essential regional drinking water source.

Through actively managed prairies, forests, and wetlands, Salamander Run MetroPark filters runoff and helps deliver clean water to the aquifer, supporting ongoing efforts to flush historical uranium contamination from the former Fernald site towards EPA extraction wells. This level of impact requires intentional, hands-on management. As a heavily and actively managed restoration site,

Salamander Run depends on continuous stewardship to ensure ecological success. In 2025, MetroParks' Natural Resources & Conservation team focused on three key strategies at Salamander Run MetroPark. Staff planted 90 native trees, bringing the park's total to 130 since targeted reforestation efforts began in 2024. More than 20.5 acres of native prairie were intensively maintained, with invasive woody species removed to protect plant diversity and habitat structure. To safeguard young plantings, a controlled bowhunting program was also implemented to manage deer populations and prevent over-browsing.

Visitors may already see signs of success: spotted salamanders, relocated from nearby Indian Creek MetroPark, can be found in the park's vernal pools and streams. As indicator species, salamanders signal the presence of high-quality habitat and clean water, a benefit for both wildlife and people. Building on the foundation established through the PRCP, MetroParks remains committed to the permanent stewardship of Salamander Run MetroPark, ensuring this restored headwaters landscape continues to thrive for generations to come.

Visitors may already see signs of success: spotted salamanders, relocated from nearby Indian Creek MetroPark, can be found in the park's vernal pools and streams.



# EDUCATION



## Learning, Playing, and Growing in Nature

Research shows stress levels fall within minutes of being outside; students who engage with nature also show improved concentration, creativity, problem-solving, and even higher standardized test scores in math, reading, and writing. MetroParks of Butler County recognizes that outdoor programs and environmental education are a top community priority.

In 2025, MetroParks offered a variety of programs, field trips, and special events designed to engage children with nature and hands-on learning. Scholarships through the Friends of Chrisholm were available to schools

that demonstrate financial need, making MetroParks' educational and recreational programs accessible to all. By investing in outdoor education, MetroParks helps Butler County's youth grow healthier, happier, and more connected to the natural world.



## Bringing 1800s Ohio to Life

MetroParks' annual Pioneer Life event at Governor Bebb MetroPark plays an important role in preserving and sharing Butler County's history. Historic interpreters welcomed 646 attendees and offered hands-on experiences that brought early 1800s Ohio life into focus. From candle making to cooking and blacksmithing, children and adults created meaningful connections to the region's past.

Pioneer Village also serves as a vital educational resource for schools, homeschool groups, and private educational programs. The village includes seven preserved structures, including the childhood home of Ohio Governor William Bebb. Programs are designed to meet Ohio Learning Standards and provide immersive, age-appropriate learning that helps students understand history through experience.

Community support for these programs remains strong. Recent survey results show that nearly 30% of households rank Historical Programs as a top MetroParks priority. By investing in Pioneer Life and other historic programming, MetroParks strengthens community identity, supports education, and ensures local history remains accessible for future generations.

## OUR IMPACT

**13,000** Over 13,000 people served by MetroPark's programs and events

## Connecting Community

In 2025, MetroParks of Butler County completed two key projects to improve access and connectivity across the park system. The Elk Creek Connector Road provides a direct vehicular link between Meadow Ridge and Sebald MetroParks. The new connector offers closer parking and easier access to Meadow Ridge MetroPark's North Pond, and also serves as an emergency egress for Sebald

MetroPark, which is prone to flooding. The project was funded primarily through a \$739,275 grant from the Ohio Public Works Commission and the Clean Ohio Fund, and a \$275,000 State Capital Grant.

The Tylersville Trail, located within Voice of America MetroPark, is a pedestrian and bike path that connects the VOA Shopping Center to the park and an

extensive sidewalk network along Tylersville Road. It was funded primarily through a \$474,528 Clean Ohio Trails Fund grant, supporting safe and accessible walking routes for the public.

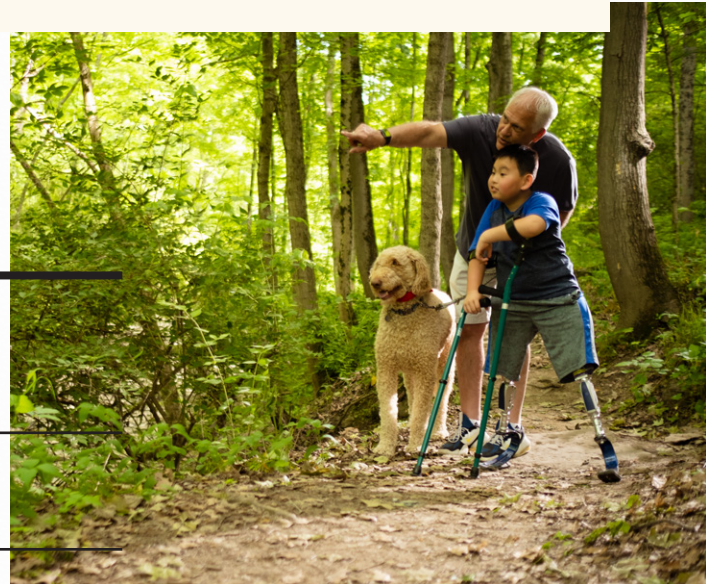
Together, these projects improve park access, expand recreational opportunities, and make it more convenient for Butler County residents to enjoy the parks and trails.



# RECREATION

## OUR IMPACT

**\$526,012** in grant funding received in 2025 for capital improvement projects



## Parks for All

In 2025, MetroParks of Butler County continued its commitment to making recreation accessible to all visitors. The park district released a comprehensive ADA Accessibility Guide to help guests plan visits that meet their individual needs. Two parks, Governor Bebb and Voice of America MetroParks, achieved Wheel the World certification, highlighting their accessible trails and facilities for people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices. In partnership with the Butler County Board of

Developmental Disabilities, a new universal changing table was also installed at Voice of America MetroPark to accommodate visitors of all ages and abilities.

These initiatives help bring MetroParks' vision of "Awakening the Explorer in Everyone" to life, opening the outdoors to more people than ever before. With each accessibility improvement, MetroParks moves closer to a future where parks become welcoming, inclusive, and usable spaces for everyone.



# 2025 PARTNERED PROJECTS

## Saving a Cellar and Preserving the Past

Since its founding in 1995, the Friends of Chrisholm (FOC) non-profit has partnered with MetroParks to preserve the Chrisholm MetroPark Historic Farmstead and share the region's unique Amish-Mennonite heritage. The 17-acre site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, served as the home of 19th-century Amish pioneer Christian Augspurger. This enduring partnership has successfully restored the property's bank barn and the historic Augspurger House, which had been abandoned for over 20 years before the collaboration began.

A critical recent focus of this partnership was the "Save the Cellar" campaign, an initiative to combat a significant water infiltration problem in the Augspurger House basement. The cellar is a standout architectural feature of the property, boasting a unique arched, vaulted ceiling that mirrors the historic beer cellars found in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. This vital preservation effort was made possible by nearly \$20,000 in donations from Augspurger descendants and FOC funding.

## Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Sign Campaign

In 2025, MetroParks partnered with the Butler County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Services (MHARS) Board to install mental health and crisis resource signage throughout all MetroParks locations. The signs display the Butler County Crisis Hotline, the national Suicide & Crisis Hotline (988), and the Veterans Crisis Line, connecting park visitors to immediate support when they need it most. The project was designed as a scalable, low-cost model that other parks and recreation organizations can easily replicate, and it is already being adopted by several agencies across the county and state.

This park-based behavioral health effort recognizes that parks are

not only places for recreation and relaxation, but also places where people go when they are struggling emotionally. Signs were placed in high-traffic areas such as parking lots, trailheads, and kiosks to maximize visibility and reach thousands of visitors.

In recognition of its impact and thoughtful design, the project won First Place in Marketing Innovation at the 2025 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Awards of Excellence and was named a finalist for the 2025 Governor's Award for Parks and Recreation. By pairing access to nature with life-saving resources, MetroParks and MHARS are helping reduce barriers to care and support the well-being of all residents.



# THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 PARTNERS

17 Strong  
Bulls Run Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum  
Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities  
Butler County Chapter of the Ohio Horsemen's Council  
Butler County Engineer's Office  
Butler County Historical Society  
Butler County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Services Board  
Butler County Veteran Services Commission  
Butler Soil & Water Conservation District  
CBI Middletown  
Cincinnati Astronomical Society  
Cincinnati Cricket Club  
City of Fairfield  
City of Hamilton  
City of Middletown  
City of Monroe  
City of Trenton

Clean Ohio Fund  
Cohen Recycling  
Duke Energy Foundation  
Fairfield Community Foundation  
FC Cincinnati  
Fit Body Bootcamp  
Friends of Chrisholm  
Girl Scouts of Western Ohio  
Great Miami Riverway  
Greater Oxford Community Foundation  
Hamilton City Schools  
Hanover Township  
Hamilton Parks Conservancy  
Inspiration Studios  
Lakota Local School District  
Lane Libraries  
Liberty Center  
Liberty Township  
Luke 5 Adventures  
Miami Conservancy District  
Miami University Regionals  
Middletown Community Foundation

MidPointe Library System  
The Muscle Center  
National Park Service  
National Voice of America Museum of Broadcasting  
Northern Cincinnati Foundation  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Orienteering Cincinnati  
OSU Master Gardeners  
Pioneer Church & Burial Ground Restoration Committee  
Satsangyoga & Wellness  
Spoken Bicycles  
St. Clair Township  
Submarine Cincinnati Memorial Association  
Three Valley Conservation Trust  
Travel Butler County  
Union Day Therapeutic School  
West Chester Township  
Windy Fields Bee Farm  
Young Guns Archery

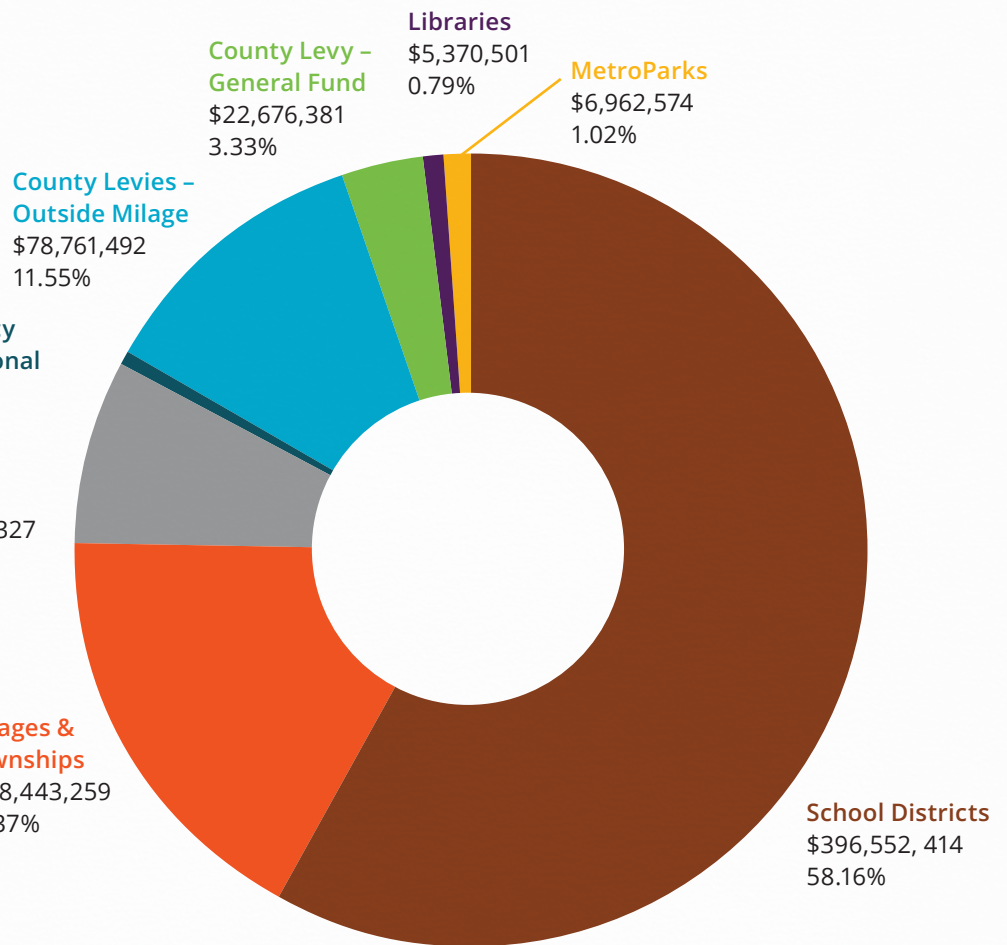


# 2025 FINANCIAL REVIEW

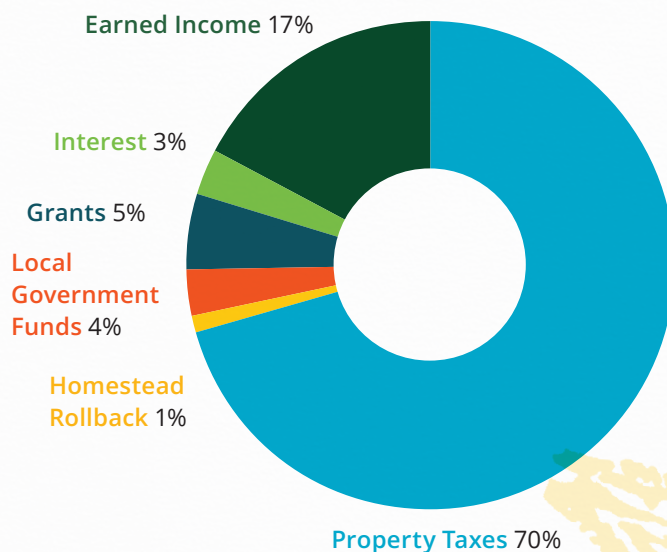
## MetroParks' Operating Levy

MetroParks' current operating levy was approved by voters in November 2021, at the same rate as MetroParks' previous levy. The levy runs through December 31, 2028, and provides about \$6.9 million each year. Because it was approved before Butler County's recent property valuation increase, the levy generates the same annual revenue and did not rise with the valuation change.

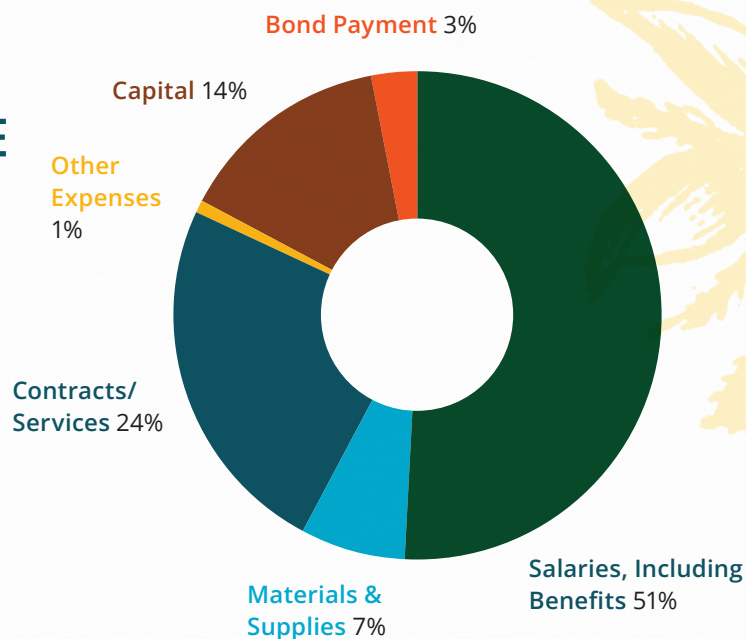
## BUTLER COUNTY 2025 NET PROPERTY TAX DISTRIBUTIONS



## REVENUE BY SOURCE



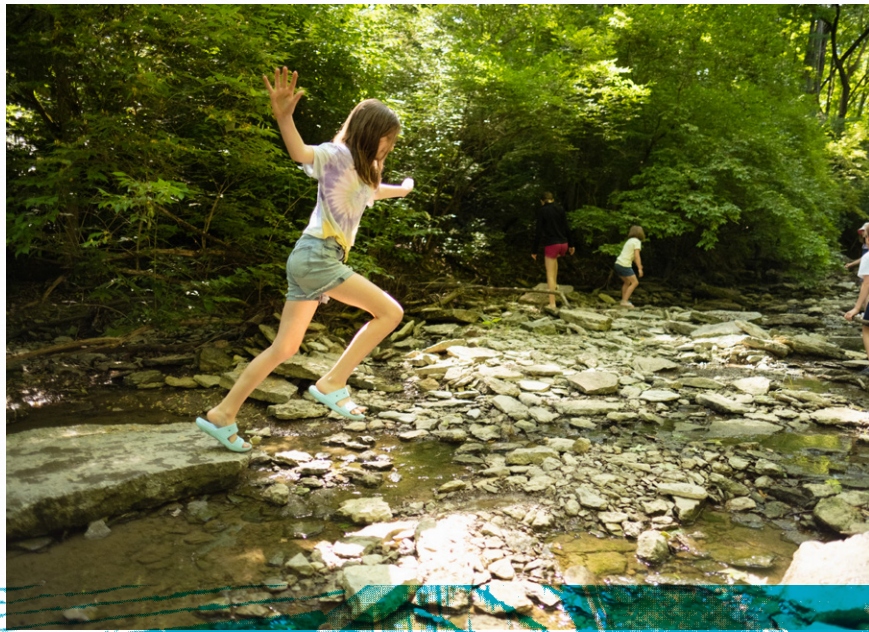
## EXPENSES BY SOURCE



## MetroParks Takes Financial Management In-House

In 2025, MetroParks of Butler County transitioned to managing its own fiscal operations, taking over responsibilities that were previously handled by the Butler County Auditor's Office. This includes bill paying, payroll, and other day-to-day financial processes. Bringing these functions in-house allows MetroParks to operate with greater efficiency, flexibility, and responsiveness to the needs of staff

and the community. The transition also provides more direct oversight and control of budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting. Staff received training and implemented new systems to ensure a smooth and accurate process. This shift marks an important step in strengthening MetroParks' operational independence and capacity as the park system grows and develops into the future.



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