

III. How to Use This Document

Contained in these pages is a wealth of information about the development and current state of open spaces in the Miami Valley. The open spaces that benefit the Region's residents, ecosystems, and economy are a legacy passed down to us today through the past work of land conservation agencies, such as park districts, land trusts and conservancy districts. These agencies can use this report to support their continued efforts to protect the environment and enhance the quality of life for everyone across the Region. This section suggests several ways to make use of this information as work continues to balance development with conservation.

A Decision Support Tool

The reality of open space is that conservation is largely an opportunity-driven business. While agencies may have goals and objectives, and even an open space wish list, the year-to-year decisions about property and easement acquisitions are primarily based upon which property owners step forward to make their property potentially available. When such opportunities present themselves, decision-making processes by conservation agencies can understandably focus on site-specific factors such as cost, access, and the ecological or cultural values presented by the location. It is conceivable that, at times, an agency may be forced to choose between competing opportunities with a limited pool of resources.

The following are some suggested ways to balance regional concerns with local priorities when considering conservation of open space.

See the Regional in the Local

The composite map reveals highlights in each of the seven counties, thanks mainly to the importance of our rivers and their riparian areas. Agencies are free to broadly define these corridors and give them appropriate weight within the local decision-making processes when choosing between properties in and outside of these zones. For example, while the composite map highlights mostly the stream channels themselves, an agency might prefer to define the full adjacent subwatershed as an area representing the regional priority.

Select Factors that are Congruent with Local Goals

This planning process developed seven geographic factors to help identify regional conservation priorities. Any of these individual factors may be useful for local decision making about property purchase and easements. If the regional composite map does not suit local needs, it may be that one or more of the factor maps could be useful as a guide to conservation. For example, in rapidly urbanizing areas the impervious surface factor may serve as a good guide for priority setting, but less useful in the rural parts of the Region. Conversely, information about headwaters watersheds may be of more value to agencies operating in rural parts of the Miami Valley. The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission can provide maps that focus on an agency's operational area for any of these analysis factors.

Marry this Information with Other Data

Viewing this report's recommendations in the context of other regional trends may help inform conservation agencies' decision processes. Trends and patterns in urban development and data about the Region's prime farmland can provide two additional, valuable perspectives to view land use in the Miami Valley. These were developed at MVRPC as a part of the *Going Places* initiative, and are regularly maintained for use by partners across the Region.

Use in Conjunction with other Going Places Implementation Tools

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission is committed to developing or supporting the development of a broad range of implementation tools coming out of the *Going Places* initiative. The open space information can be used with other land use and project analysis tools to aid in decision making by jurisdictions and conservation agencies.

Open Space Anywhere

Beyond the acquisition and dedication of open space in the form of parks and preserves, communities can also guide the shape of their development to ensure the provision of open spaces for their residents. The approach recommended is a suite of techniques known as conservation design and "Low Impact Development" (LID). The following lists some suggested approaches jurisdictions may consider to enhance open space and environmental conservation in the Miami Valley.

Better Site Design Roundtable

Jurisdictions in the Miami Valley that are continuing to expand and incorporate new parcels for development are strongly encouraged to, at a minimum, allow conservation design in new developments. Better still, development codes could be updated to incentivize such design through reduced requirements and increased density allowances. The Miami Conservancy District offers a valuable service to jurisdictions seeking to review and update zoning and site design codes: the "Better Site Design Roundtable." The roundtable is a facilitated process that takes community stakeholders through a step-by-step assessment of current codes and regulations to identify opportunities to make the codes amenable to approaches that encourage open space and more modern techniques for storm water management. The City of Springfield has completed the Roundtable process and is working toward targeted revisions to city codes and regulations.

Conservation Design

Conservation design is an approach to parcel development that dedicates at least 50 percent of the development land area to public open space. The land preserved is typically the most environmentally sensitive and aesthetically beautiful portions of the parcel, such as stream channels, steeper slopes and forested areas. The balance of the development area is then densely developed, often with advanced storm water management techniques, while the open space becomes an attractive amenity for the development residents and businesses. In the

western United States conservation design is promoted for its protection of natural landscapes, farm land and vistas. In the eastern United States it is promoted as a water quality protection approach.

Green Infrastructure

Broadly speaking, low impact development is an approach to development design that strives to have post-development hydrology as similar as possible to the natural hydrology on a development site. The techniques broadly include conservation site design and distributed storm water management. Specific green infrastructure elements can include pervious pavements, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, urban forestry, rain gardens and parking lot swales. Each of these techniques is intended to manage storm water on-lot, with enhanced infiltration and reduced surface runoff as compared to traditional development surfaces.

Funding Opportunities

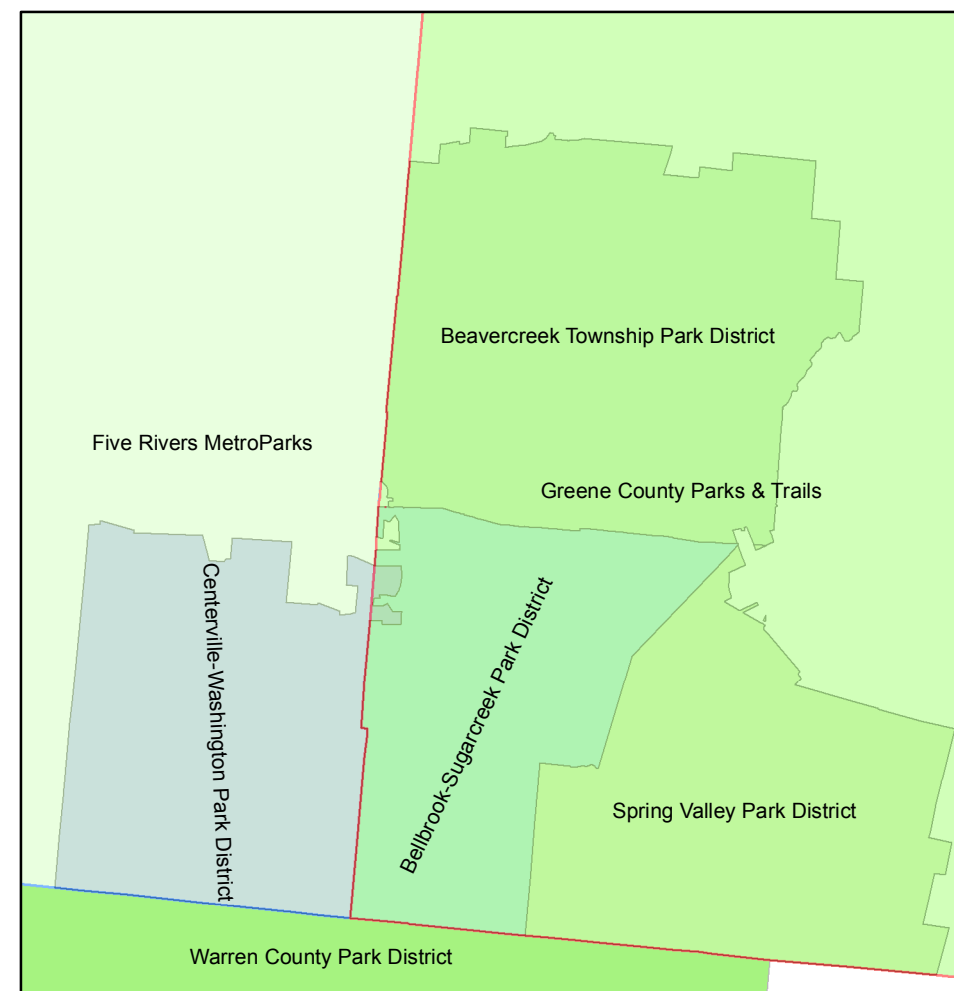
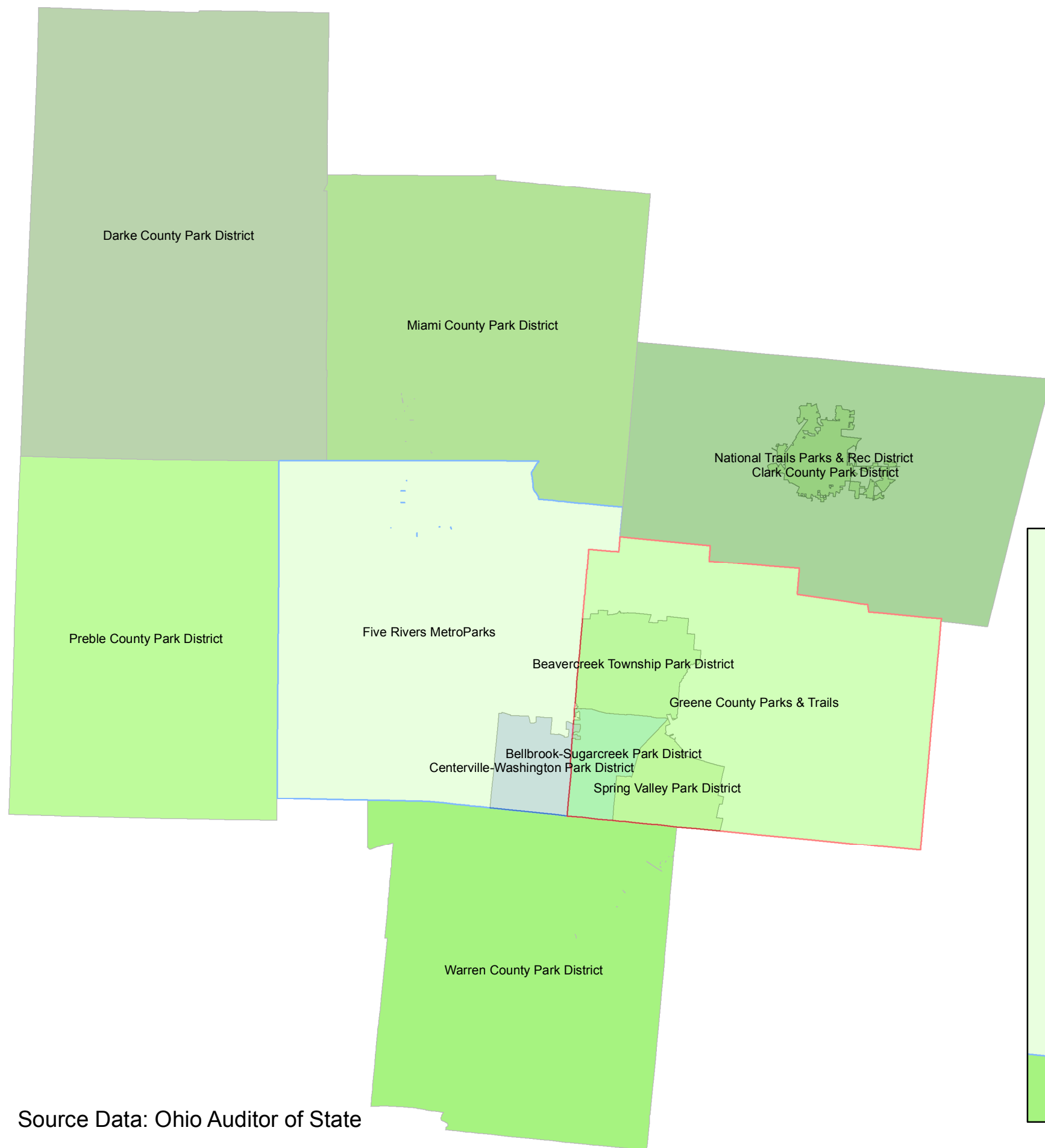
The myriad of agencies across the Miami Valley Region that could potentially serve as implementers of this vision includes 12 park districts, seven Soil and Water Conservation Districts, four land trusts, and two watershed-based conservancy districts. Each of these agencies has a unique vision and mission, geographic coverage, set of financial constraints, and capacity to hold and manage open space assets.

The following maps depict coverages of these various agencies across the Miami Valley and the Great and Little Miami River watersheds.

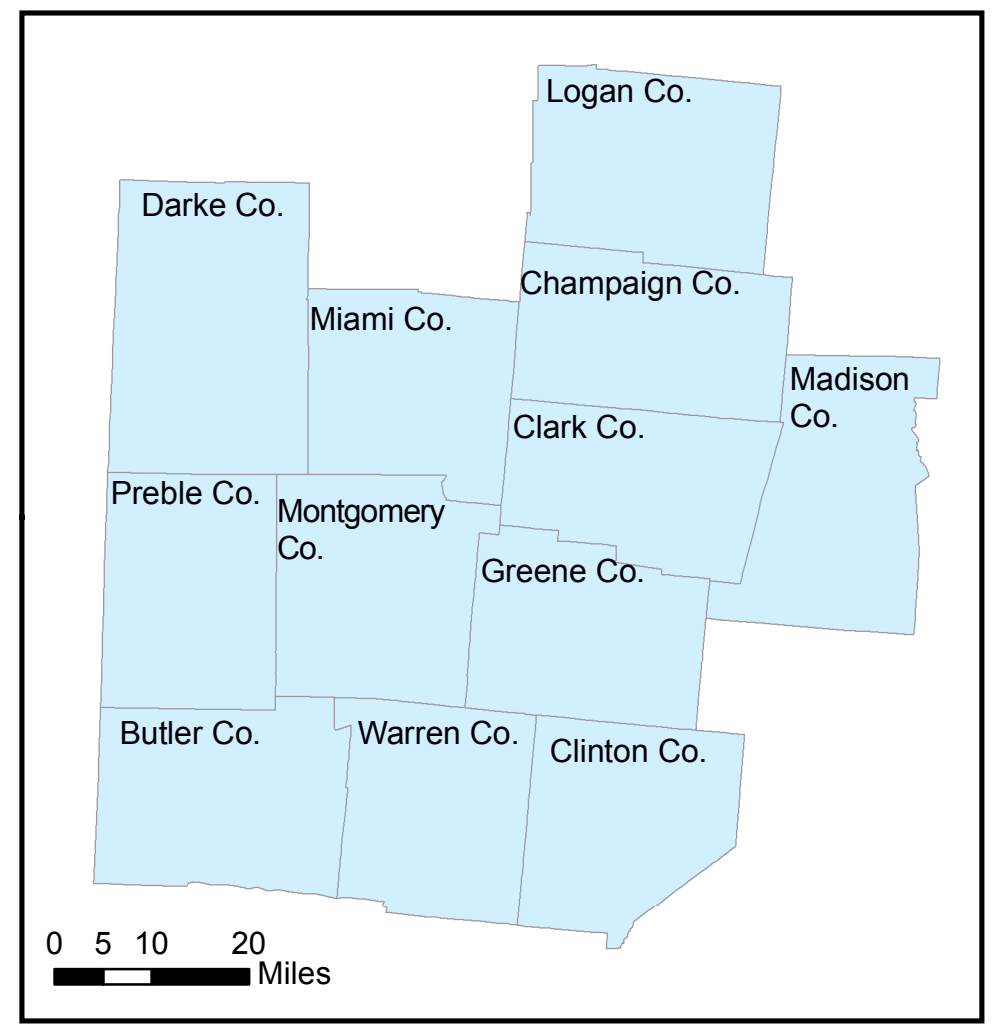
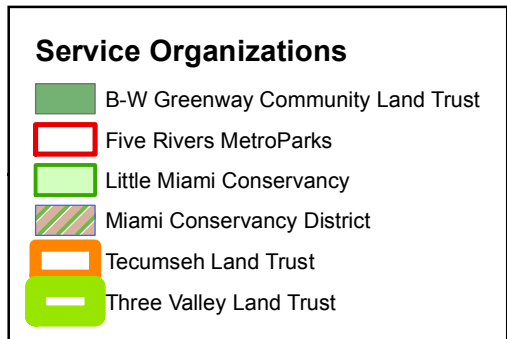
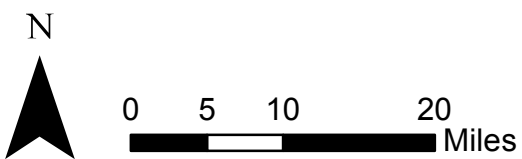
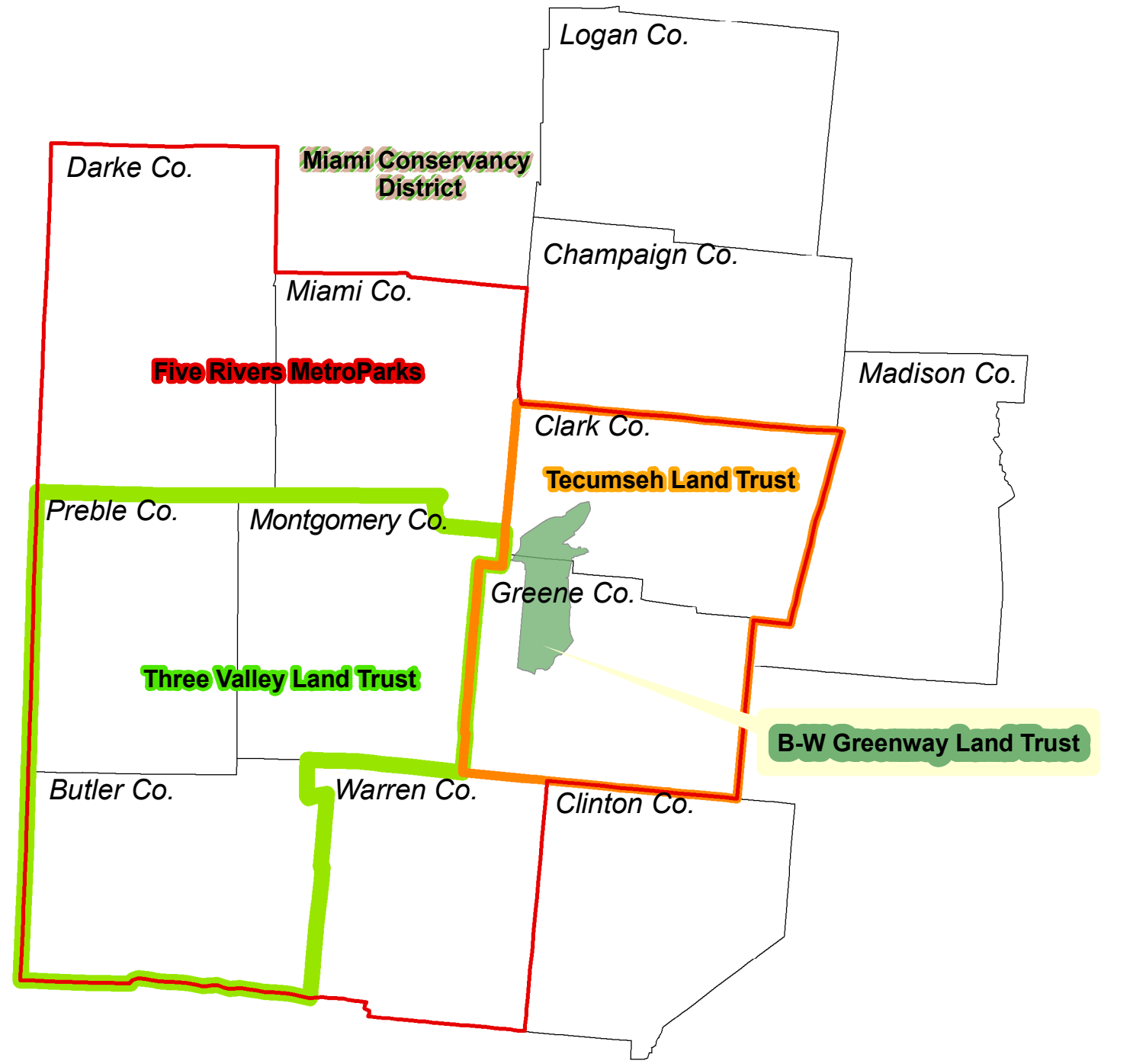


MVRPC

Study Area Park Districts



Source Data: Ohio Auditor of State



Service Organization by County

Butler County:	Butler Soil & Water District, Five Rivers MetroParks, Three Valley Land Trust, Miami Conservancy District
Champaign County:	Champaign County Land Trust, Champaign Soil & Water District, Miami Conservancy District
Clark County:	Clark Soil & Water District, Tecumseh Land Trust, Five Rivers MetroParks, B-W Greenway Community Land Trust, Miami Conservancy District, Little Miami Conservancy District
Clinton County:	Clinton County Open Lands, Clinton Soil & Water District, Little Miami Conservancy District
Darke County:	Darke Soil & Water District, Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District
Greene County:	Greene Co. Commissioners, Greene Co. Park District, Greene Soil & Water District, Tecumseh Land Trust, Five Rivers MetroParks, B-W Greenway Community Land Trust, Little Miami Conservancy District, Miami Conservancy District
Logan County:	Logan Soil & Water District, Miami Conservancy District
Madison County:	Madison Soil & Water District, Little Miami Conservancy District
Miami County:	Miami County Park District, Miami Soil & Water District, Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District
Montgomery County:	Montgomery Soil & Water District, Three Valley Land Trust, Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District
Warren County:	Warren Soil & Water District, Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District, Little Miami Conservancy District
Preble County:	Five Rivers MetroParks, Three Valley Land Trust, Miami Conservancy District

There are several different funding streams, each with unique purposes that can be employed to protect additional open space in the Miami Valley in the future. The list below of these opportunities includes short descriptions and web links for further information.

The voters of the state of Ohio approved a bond issue, Clean Ohio, to fund four categories of projects intended to make the state more environmentally sustainable. Three of these categories have direct or indirect bearing on the preservation of open space.

Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program

The green space program helps to fund preservation of open spaces, sensitive ecological areas, and stream corridors. Special emphasis is given to projects that protect habitat for rare, threatened or endangered species; Preserve high quality wetlands and other scarce natural resources; or Preserve streamside forests, natural stream channels, functioning floodplains, and other natural features of Ohio's waterways.

[HTTP://WWW.PWC.STATE.OH.US/GSCDEFAULT.HTML](http://www.pwc.state.oh.us/GSCDEFAULT.HTML)

Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP)

The farmland preservation program purchases agricultural easements from landowners who volunteer to keep their land in agricultural production in perpetuity. This program protects acreage from hardscape development, but does not create publicly accessible open space.

[HTTP://WWW.AGRI.OHIO.GOV/FARMLAND/FARMLAND.ASPX](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/farmland/farmland.aspx)

Clean Ohio Trails Fund

The Clean Ohio Trails Fund works to improve outdoor recreational opportunities for Ohioans by funding trails for outdoor pursuits of all kinds. Eligible projects include land acquisition for a trail, trail development, and trailhead facilities.

[HTTP://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS](http://realestate.ohiodnr.gov/outdoor-recreation-facility-grants)

NatureWorks

The NatureWorks grant program provides up to 75% reimbursement assistance for local government subdivisions (townships, villages, cities, counties, park districts, joint recreation districts, and conservancy districts) for the acquisition, development, and rehabilitation of recreational areas. Since NatureWorks' inception, the grant has funded over 2,300 public park projects in all Ohio counties.

[HTTP://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS](http://realestate.ohiodnr.gov/outdoor-recreation-facility-grants)

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program provides up to 50% reimbursement assistance for state and local government subdivisions (townships, villages, cities, counties, park districts, joint recreation districts, and conservancy districts) to for the acquisition, development, and rehabilitation of recreational areas. Eligible projects must support the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

[HTTP://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS](http://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS)

Recreational Trails Program

A cooperative project of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Federal Highway Administration, the Rec Trails Program funds development of urban trail linkages, trail head and trailside facilities; restoration of trail areas damaged by usage; improving access for people with disabilities; acquisition of easements and property; and the development and construction of new trails.

[HTTP://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS](http://REALESTATE.OHIODNR.GOV/OUTDOOR-RECREATION-FACILITY-GRANTS)

The Conservation Fund

This private organization assists land trusts and park agencies by making available loan funds to allow for rapid response to emerging opportunities for land preservation. Loans can be repaid using more traditional, and often slower, grant programs.

[HTTP://WWW.CONSERVATIONFUND.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/LAND-CONSERVATION-LOANS](http://WWW.CONSERVATIONFUND.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/LAND-CONSERVATION-LOANS)

The grant opportunities above each require local matching percentage ranging from 20 to 50 percent. These local funds can be great sources of matching dollars:

Local Park District Tax Levy

Using levy funds are a great way to leverage local tax dollars into much larger projects. It should be included in a campaign for the levy that the revenues from the levy will be used in this way.

Greater Dayton Conservation Fund

Established under The Dayton Foundation, conservation fund grants are awarded to support organizations or programs that help protect the Region's natural environment through education, acquisition, restoration and scientific research; encourage collaborations and regional land conservation; and leverage cooperation and support of various efforts of like-minded organizations.

[HTTP://WWW.DAYTONFOUNDATION.ORG/CONSERVATION.HTML](http://WWW.DAYTONFOUNDATION.ORG/CONSERVATION.HTML)

The full tapestry of efforts needed to adequately protect open space in the Miami Valley includes the actions of interested and informed private landowners. The following lists potential funding sources for these actors.

Wetland Restoration Assistance

Funds projects by individuals and organizations to assist with costs associated with wetland restoration projects on private lands in Ohio.

[HTTP://WILDLIFE.OHIODNR.GOV/SPECIES-AND-HABITATS/PRIVATE-LANDS-MANAGEMENT](http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/species-and-habitats/private-lands-management)

Agricultural Conservation Programs

There are a number of Farm Bill programs established to encourage good conservation practices on active agricultural land, such as stream setbacks, grassed waterways and buffer strips. These programs do not create large natural spaces, nor do they create publicly accessible open space, but they do create viable species habitats and protect water quality. These programs are administered by a variety of agencies including county Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.