



Park District of Ottawa County
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PRESS RELEASE

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August 9, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Park District of Ottawa County, Ottawa County Health Department partner for inaugural fall hiking program highlighting premier hiking destinations

Port Clinton— August 9, 2023— The Park District of Ottawa County is teaming up with the Ottawa County Health Department to offer an all-new Outdoor Hiking Challenge program kicking off September 1 and continuing through November 30, 2023.

The Outdoor Hiking Challenge program highlights the ample outdoor recreation destinations throughout Ottawa County and invites participants to hike at least eight out of 12 locations to earn an Outdoor Hiking Challenge logoed winter hat perfect for those cold days to come. The self-guided hikes are done on the honor system and feature 12 destinations throughout Ottawa County for participants to complete and record on an Outdoor Hiking Challenge form. Sites include East Harbor State Park in Marblehead, Meadowbrook Marsh in Danbury Township, Nehls Memorial Nature Preserve in Catawba Island Township, the North Coast Inland Trail in Elmore and Genoa, Veterans Park in Oak Harbor, Massie Cliffside Preserve in Put-in-Bay Township, and many more locales that showcase autumn's seasonal beauty and invite people to get outside and exploring Ottawa County.

Wicket signs with a QR Code to the Outdoor Hiking Challenge webpage will be set up at each of the 12 destination sites, and participants are encouraged to Like and Share their participation on social media using [#outdoorhikingchallenge](https://twitter.com/outdoorhikingchallenge).

As they complete each hike, participants are asked to record their activities on the Outdoor Hiking Challenge form, which will be made available at the Park District of Ottawa County office, located at 3979 E Knoll Crest Drive in Port Clinton, starting Friday, Sept. 1, and on the Park District of Ottawa County website, ottawacountyparksoh.org, within the Home tab. Forms

will also be available starting Sept. 1 at the Ottawa County Health Department, located at 1856 E. Perry St. in Port Clinton.

Outdoor Hiking Challenge forms/log sheets can also be found at these additional locations from Sept. 1-Nov. 30:

- Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center, 14000 OH-2, Oak Harbor 43449
- Local libraries in Ottawa County
- Senior Centers in Ottawa County

Completed forms must be received by Dec. 8, 2023, to earn a Winter Hat. Hats will be distributed in December. Forms can be submitted by texting a photo to (419) 707-4051, emailing a photo to Park District of Ottawa County Administrative Specialist Sara Hill at shill@ottawacountyparksOH.org, or returning completed forms to the Park District of Ottawa County Office located at 3979 E Knoll Crest Drive in Port Clinton between the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. One entry per person.

A series of Guided Walks, led by partnering agencies, are also scheduled and may be recorded on the Hiking Log Sheet. Guided Walks include:

- 1-2 p.m. Sept. 10 Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Fox Unit. Meet at the Fox Unit across Route 2 from the Visitor Center. Access the Fox Unit off of N Lickert-Harder Rd for a guided, approximately one-mile hike on the storybook and prairie trails. This hike will be geared towards kids exploring the outdoors.
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 16, Lakeside Daisy Glacial Grooves Hike, Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve, Marblehead. Enjoy a guided hike of the restricted-access area of Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve. ODNR – Division of Natural Areas staff will lead visitors to some of the most extensive glacial grooves and best preserved alvar habitat in northern Ohio. Join us for this exciting opportunity to experience the native landscapes and unique geological features that make this nature preserve something special to Ohio.
- 1-2 p.m. Sept. 17 Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Main Unit. Meet at the Visitor Center for a guided, approximately 1.5-mile hike on the boardwalk and through the South Woods trails as we look for birds and other wildlife. Binoculars can be checked out at the Visitor Center at no cost.
- 9-10 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 27, Toussaint Creek Wildlife Area, 11087 W. Toussaint-Portage Road, Oak Harbor. Wildlife Communication Specialist Kelly Schott of the Ohio Division of Wildlife will lead a walk along the dikes around Toussaint Creek Wildlife Area talking about the importance of wetland restoration and management, wetland flora and fauna, and the history of the area.
- 10-11 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 4, Great Egret Marsh Nature Preserve, Marblehead. Join the Ottawa County Health Department on a scenic walk along the Great Egret Marsh Preserve. This trail, a part of the West Harbor Basin, winds along a narrow pool of Lake Erie backwater that geologists believe was once the channel of the Portage River. Learn about mindfulness practices for your mental health as well as the many ways walking and

time outdoors lead to healthier lives. This park was created in 2013 with help from the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund, and the 150 acres here call many waterfowl, including the Great Egret, home.

- 9-10 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 8, Depot Park, Elmore, on the North Coast Inland Trail. Park District of Ottawa County Executive Director Jannah Wilson will lead a guided walk on the North Coast Inland Trail. Meet at Depot Park, Elmore.

Park District of Ottawa County Executive Director Jannah Wilson is excited to form partnerships with area agencies through the Outdoor Hiking Challenge program and help further the Park District's mission of "Connecting People, Places and Parks."

"Fall is a wonderful time to get out and explore our local parks and trails," Wilson said. "We are excited to offer the Outdoor Hiking Challenge as a way to spend time outdoors, exercise and check out new hiking destinations. If you are up for the Challenge, we'll get started on September 1st!"

Michelle Veliz, health educator/public information specialist for the Ottawa County Health Department, is appreciative of the opportunity to showcase the region's natural beauty and further connect with residents and area agencies. The Health Department will lead a Guided Walk on Oct. 4 at the Great Egret Marsh Nature Preserve in Marblehead.

"The Ottawa County Health Department is eagerly awaiting the start of the Outdoor Hiking Challenge," Veliz said. "In Ottawa County we are fortunate to enhance our physical and mental health by participating in this challenge in remarkably beautiful settings. We are honored to partner with the Park District of Ottawa County to help residents appreciate all the outdoor trails that our area offers. Please consider joining us this fall for an exciting opportunity. See you on the trails, friends!"

Learn more about the Outdoor Hiking Challenge and the Park District of Ottawa County by visiting ottawacountyparksoh.org. For questions, reach the Park Office at (419) 707-4051 or email shill@ottawacountyparksoh.org. Like the Park District of Ottawa County on Facebook for further Challenge updates and news.

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