

For Immediate Release

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74-Acre Conservation Purchase Adds to Wyandot Wetland Meadows Preserve

Extends protected coastal wetland to three miles along East Sandusky Bay

SANDUSKY, OHIO: A 74-acre marsh and wetlands property along East Sandusky Bay will now be added to the Wyandot Wetland Meadows Preserve, a part of Erie MetroParks' East Sandusky Bay MetroPark. Together with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Sheldon's Marsh State Nature Preserve adjoining to the east, this property becomes part of a three-mile continuous stretch of an environmentally diverse and sensitive area now protected in perpetuity.

The Huron, Ohio, property was purchased for \$1.9 million from Barnes Nursery by The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national conservation organization, following three years of discussion. It has long been a conservation priority for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Erie MetroParks. Three generations of the Barnes family have operated their business, Barnes Nursery, Inc., on acreage that included this pristine section of wetland shoreline.

"This completes a decades-old vision for both protected wetlands and a publicly accessible East Sandusky Bay shoreline," said Sharon Barnes, Barnes Nursery. "We are proud to have worked with The Trust for Public Land, Erie MetroParks and the State of Ohio to conserve this vital natural area."

Barnes Nursery will continue to operate their landscaping and nursery business on Cleveland Road, as well as their nurseries and recycling businesses on several properties along Camp Road in Huron Township. There will be no interruption to Barnes Nursery operations.

The property is being acquired at no cost to Erie MetroParks. Funding included \$1.4 million from the Ohio EPA Water Resource Restoration Sponsorship Program (WRRSP) and a \$500,000 Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation program grant, as administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission. Under the WRRSP program, the Ohio EPA provides funding to purchase high quality wetland sites. The City of Toledo sponsored the WRRSP grant funding for this conservation purchase as a part of wastewater treatment improvements funded through an Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Fund loan. For its sponsorship, the City of Toledo receives a reduced re-payment rate on the loan, saving the City of Toledo and its residents over \$100,000.

"The Barnes family has for years said that the highest and best use of this land was ultimately for conservation," said Amy Bownam-Moore, Erie MetroParks Executive Director. "We are delighted that they, with critical support and assistance from The Trust for Public Land, now have ensured this environmentally rare and sensitive marsh and wetlands remain pristine and accessible to the public for generations to come."

Now at more than 1,300 acres, the East Sandusky Bay MetroPark is a destination for passive recreation and wildlife viewing with access to the Bay. It is known to attract nearly 300 bird species. With its mix of hardwood forest, woodland swamp, cattail marsh and open-water habitat, it is a prime location for both migrating and year-round species, including bald eagles.

"East Sandusky Bay MetroPark is a popular destination, a terrific sanctuary for birds, and the wetlands are vital for the health of the bay," said Dave Vasarhelyi, The Trust for Public Land's senior project manager. "The Barnes family recognized that protecting the wetlands had the greatest value to Erie County, East Sandusky Bay, and all of us. The working relationship our organization has with the Nursery, Erie MetroParks, the City of Toledo, and the State of Ohio is a great example of a united effort towards conservation for the public good."

The Clean Ohio Fund is a \$400 million state bond initiative that invests in local communities by preserving green space and farmland, improving outdoor recreation, and cleaning up abandoned industrial sites known as brownfields. It was first approved by voters in 2000 and overwhelmingly renewed in all 88 counties in 2008.

Since it was founded in 1972, The Trust for Public Land has helped protect 3 million acres of land in 47 states. TPL helped create the East Sandusky Bay MetroPark with an initial land purchase in 2004. Across Ohio TPL has protected more than 12,200 acres valued at more than \$123 million. TPL depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve its mission to preserve land for people. tpl.org/ohio

Barnes Nursery, with 61 years of growing experience, is one of Ohio's leading nurseries and landscape design-and-build companies. barnesnursery.com

Erie MetroParks was founded in 1968 and now includes 11 parks and preserves on more than 3,000 acres across Erie County. The East Sandusky Bay MetroPark includes the Community Foundation Preserve at Eagle Point, Putnam Marsh Nature Preserve, the Joseph Steinen Wildlife Area and the Wyandot Wetland Meadows Preserve. www.eriemetroparks.org

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