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MARCH MUDNESS



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GO!

GET ACTIVE

Take a walk on the muddy side

Prevent damage to trails by getting a little dirty.

By **Debbie Juniewicz**
Contributing Writer

A little mud never hurt anyone, but avoiding it can definitely do some damage to the trails.

“Instinctively, someone comes to a mud puddle and they go around it, they don’t want to get muddy, but with hikers it’s the opposite,” said Dayton Hikers organizer Andy Niekamp. “Walking through the mud minimizes the impact on the trails.”

This time of year, puddles and muddy trails can be almost unavoidable, although many people try.

“It can be very tempting to keep your shoes clean and dry by walking around big puddles and mud on the trail, but when many people begin walking around the wet or muddy spots along the trail, those sections of trail keep widening,” said Angie Sheldon, Five Rivers MetroParks outdoor recreation coordinator. “As the trail widens, people begin trampling trail-side vegetation that may be fragile which can lead to soil erosion. Research has shown that vegetation impacts can occur quickly and take a long time to rebound.”

Increased usage of local parks makes it even more important to care for the trails. So what can you do to do your part?

Steer clear

If you don’t want to get muddy, there are alternatives to natural surfaces.

“This area has miles of paved multi-use trails,”



Melting snow and rainy days mean more muddy trails.
CONTRIBUTED



The right footwear can go a long way toward making the most of the muddy season.



Walking through the mud, not around it, can prevent widening of local trails.

impact on the trails.

“People think ‘my one set of footprints won’t hurt anything,’ but that one set of footprints on the side of the trail adds to another set, it’s the cumulative effect,”

Niekamp said. “It doesn’t take long to do real damage and widen the trail.”

Be prepared

A little preparation can go a long way toward having an enjoyable muddy adventure.

“The best thing you can do is to plan ahead and prepare for the trail to be wet and muddy,” Sheldon said. “Wear hiking shoes that you don’t mind getting dirty, so when you get to a puddle, you just smile and trudge right through the mud and continue on your way.”

Niekamp recommends a shoe with a heavy-duty sole, mid cut to ankle height, paired with some wool socks. Gaiters will also help keep mud off your pant legs. Trekking poles will come in handy when the trails are sloppy.

“They really help you keep your balance,” he said. “And, often times, it’s easier to go through the mud than around it, and safer too.”

Preparation also includes a post-hike routine.

“When I know I’ll be hiking in the mud, I’ll usually bring a change of shoes for the car and towel or bag to place my muddy shoes on,” Sheldon said.

Niekamp makes sure he has a bag or bin in the car to put his muddy boots in, but they don’t stay there long.

“You want to clean off the boots right away and not let the mud dry, that’s especially true of leather boots that can easily become damaged,” he said. “Wash them off and let them dry and you’ll have a clean pair of footwear the next day.”

Contact this contributing writer at djuniewicz@gmail.com.

FOOD



The Great Pancake Pick-Up will be held on March 6 at the Greene County Parks and Trails office headquarters in Xenia from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on March 6. CONTRIBUTED

Greene Co. Parks & Trails’ free pancake breakfast to go on as drive-through

By **Sarah Franks**
Staff Writer

XENIA — People can get their fill of fluffy flapjacks to benefit the Greene Co. Parks & Trails department in a COVID-19-safe manner this weekend.

The annual Pancakes in the Park event, traditionally hosted at the Russ Nature Preserve, will take place at the parks’ headquarters to provide a limited-contact drive-through event instead. The “Great Pancake Pick-Up” will be held at 635 Dayton-Xenia Road from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on March 6.

Guests will receive pancakes, bacon and homemade maple syrup made by the GCPT staff, with the syrup from trees in Greene County, parks officials said. The parking lot will be opening for anyone who wants to picnic in their car.

The event is free, although donations are appreciated, according to organizers.

“We are all so excited to be able to get back into programming and events,

because it really is all about the people,” said Hanna Lamb, GCPT marketing specialist. “The reason this came about was the simple fact we were all a little bummed out that we weren’t able to host the annual pancake breakfast, so we decided to make it a pick-up.”

Guests will come through the building from the bay doors on the maintenance shop, according to a release. Once each guest receives their brunch boxes, they will continue through the shop to exit. Peirce Park is also across the way if anyone would like venture to that area.

“The hope is that we can return to the Russ next year, so we can celebrate the maple sugaring season with our community again,” Lamb said. “All donations will go towards the event for next year.”

For questions and more information about the event, contact Hanna Lamb at 937-562-6457.

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