



Scranton Flats, How we got here...

## **Towpath Trail wins \$3M in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funds**

To paraphrase an old and wise saying: "you can learn more in defeat than in victory." Such was the case when Tim Donovan of Canalway Partners convened a team of local agencies Cleveland Metroparks (Dick Kerber), The Trust for Public Land (Dave Vasarelhyi), City of Cleveland (George Cantor), Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office (Stan Kosilesky), and Cuyahoga RAP (Jim White) in the Spring of 2009 to rush a grant application for federal stimulus funding for the Towpath Trail project. The opportunity was provided through NOAA; it carried a short turn-around time - 21 days. The request of \$9.2 million asked for funding to purchase 2 parcels along the Scranton Road Peninsula, rid them of any contamination and restore a natural stream bank treatment to the river's edge.

The application failed. The announcement came in July of 2009. The lesson learned was an easy one - asking for funding to restore property when you don't have site control is a losing proposition.

The lesson was not lost on this team.

During this same period, the announcement was made that President Obama's \$450 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding was approved and a grant program would be introduced which would include funding opportunities for projects that addressed mitigation of "beneficial use impairments" in Areas of Concern (AOC) as defined by the US EPA. The Cuyahoga River is an AOC. The project outlined in the NOAA grant focused on restoration of "fish habitat" - a recognized, existing "beneficial use impairment" in the Cuyahoga.

In simple terms, the team recognized that there would be real funding opportunity available under this initiative and felt that we had outlined a realistic approach in the project description included in the NOAA submission. But, just like NOAA, we believed that we needed to secure ownership of the property to find success.

Immediately, the team scrambled to submit an application for Clean Ohio Funds to purchase the two Scranton Road parcels. A price (\$4.8 million) had been negotiated during the NOAA grant process; appraisals were completed; and purchase agreements were signed.

The application was submitted within the deadline just before Labor Day. It asked for \$3.6 million from a pool of \$6.2 million for Cuyahoga County. It should be noted that the NOAA grant also included a fund request to Clean Ohio as a match component that would aid in buying the land. Before the official vote by the local NRAC Committee, the fund request was reduced to \$3.175 million based on the substitution of Clean Ohio Conservation Funds with a prior award of Clean Ohio Trails for \$425,000.



The local NRAC Committee voted to award \$3.175 million to the project, which would provide the needed funding to purchase the Scranton Road parcels in October of 2009. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) announced its grants program on November 23, 2009. The team regrouped and added representatives from the Ohio EPA and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District to write the GLRI grants.

Two applications were submitted for GLRI funds. The requests broke the project into 2 phases: phase 1 to design/ engineer and remediate existing contamination for \$2 million and phase 2 to re-engineer the riverbank, installing a natural treatment that would promote fish habitat for \$1.5 million. In the end, the project would bring the property to the point where the Towpath Trail could be built as part of that project's Phase 4 development.

In addition to GLRI funding, the same team submitted two additional grant requests. The first was directed to the Ohio EPA for WRSP funding. The request of \$1.9 million was submitted to provide a source of local match for the GLRI funds. That grant has been initially ranked in 8th place, putting it out of the money by three places.

A final grant was submitted seeking a second federal stimulus opportunity requesting \$1.5 million from NOAA. It was submitted as a "safety net" to fill any gaps in funds awarded. There has been no announcement yet on that grant which was submitted in February of 2010. There is no disposition at this time.

On May 28, 2010, the US EPA announced the winning grant requests for GLRI funds. Both grants were awarded for a total of \$3 million. The team has regrouped and filled out the needed follow-up documentation and awaits the contracts that will begin the project. The rules for the GLRI funds demand an expedited timeline, so construction activities on these parcels should commence within 2 years from the finalized contract. For the Towpath Trail, this additional funding will expedite the timetable for Phase 4, possibly shaving one year from the project timeline.

<http://canalwaypartners.com/towpath-trail/scranton-flats/>