

On August 26, 2019, the [Put-in-Bay Township Park District](#) and The Conservation Fund announced the conservation of 4.4 acres of critical migratory bird habitat on Ohio's Lake Erie Islands. The protection of this land, which is part of a larger conservation effort on the Islands, will ensure that some of the remaining forest and wetland ecosystems will remain intact and increase recreation opportunities for visitors.

"Put-in-Bay Township Park District has been privileged to work with The Conservation Fund to acquire environmentally sensitive areas," stated Kelly Faris, Chair of Put-in-Bay Township Park District. "It is important that these lands be protected for this generation and future generations. The Park District is dedicated to protecting and preserving these unique areas that sustain the heritage of the Lake Erie Islands."

"Our goal to protect migratory bird habitat and the Lake Erie Islands is our top priority in Ohio," said Peg Kohring, senior associate for conservation services at The Conservation Fund. "We're happy to have worked with Put-in-Bay Township Park District to make this project possible."

A popular recreational destination, the Lake Erie Islands and shores gather nearly 11 million visitors a year. The addition of protected land for the Put-in-Bay Township Park District will increase public access to the various ecosystems the Islands have to offer. The newly-protected land joins 13 adjacent acres and 44 nearby acres already protected by the Park District.

"The support from The Conservation Fund has allowed us to add additional acreage to our Middle Bass Island Wetland Forest Preserve that is now over 35 contiguous acres of island swamp providing habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, reptiles and other wildlife," said Lisa Brohl, CEO of the Put-In-Bay Township Park District and Chair at Lake Erie Islands Conservancy. "Future residents and visitors will be so appreciative of the Fund's assistance to preserve these forests."

This conservation effort will also help protect the water quality of Lake Erie. The ground underneath the Lake Erie Islands is porous, so any pollution caused by development on these islands can easily reach the surrounding lake through this permeable rock.

It is also important to keep these lands protected for the large and diverse flocks of migratory birds that utilize the Islands during their spring migration. Each spring, millions of birds fly north to nest in the United States and Canada. Western Lake Erie, and particularly the Bass Islands, are important resting and feeding areas for their migratory journey. More than 110 species of bird have been documented on Middle Bass Island, including the black-and-white warbler, Tennessee warbler, Cerulean warbler, Golden-winged warbler, Connecticut warbler, and several other warbler species.

In addition, the 4.4 acres of preserved land are home to multiple species of amphibians and snakes, including the eastern fox snake and melanistic garter snake, both of which are Species of Concern in Ohio. The Lake Erie Islands also serve as a breeding area for migrating monarch butterflies, a species that's endured significant population losses in recent decades.

These lands are being conserved, in part, by funding and technical assistance made available by TC Energy and its subsidiary Columbia Gas LLC in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ohio and The Conservation Fund. Additional funds were provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), implemented through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. The Congressionally-authorized GLRI was created to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world. GLRI is funded annually by the U.S. Congress with strong leadership and support from Ohio's U.S. Congressional delegation representing the Lake Erie Islands: U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman and U.S. Representative Marcy Kaptur.

"Protecting Ohio's Lake Erie Islands is critical for maintaining our local ecosystems," said U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown. "Securing this land increases migratory bird habitats and will ensure the Lake Erie Islands and coastline remain a premier destination for birders and outdoor recreation for generations to come."

"I am pleased to see efforts to protect and improve wetlands and forests in and around Lake Erie that serve as habitat for many fish and wildlife populations," said U.S. Senator Rob Portman. "By protecting these ecosystems, we are also boosting tourism and the economy in the region. I will continue my efforts as co-chair of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force to provide federal resources to continue efforts to protect Lake Erie's wildlife, water quality, and ecosystems, such as my GLRI Act and my Migratory Birds of the Americas Act, which was signed into law in March."

"At TC Energy we understand the vital need to conserve, protect and restore habitat – both in the water and on land," said Melissa Dettling, Principal in Environmental Permitting at TC Energy. "We're proud to partner with The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ohio, and to support the Put-in-Bay Township Park District's conservation efforts for local migratory bird habitats."

This acquisition was a team effort. The land was firstly made available through a cooperative effort between Ms. Gayle Rini-Curtis, represented by Mr. Dan Vician, Trustee of the Roy Curtis Remainder Trust, and Mr. Mark Lawless, President of the Burgundy Bay Homeowners Association (BBA),

represented by Mr. David Buda, Esq. Both Ms. Rini-Curtis and the BBA have separately supported Conservation efforts on Middle Bass Island over many years. The Put-in-Bay Township Park District sincerely thanks Ms. Gayle Rini-Curtis and the leaders and members of the Burgundy Bay Association.

About Put-In-Bay Township Park District

In 2006, the Common Pleas Court of Ottawa County, Ohio approved a petition to create the Put-in-Bay Township Park District as a local government entity. It was reaffirmed by the voters of the Bass Islands in 2008. Three Commissioners serve to manage and protect unique island habitats for the public to enjoy.

About Lake Erie Islands Conservancy

The Lake Erie Islands Conservancy was founded as part of the Black Swamp Conservancy in 2000, receiving their own non-profit status in 2015. The mission statement of the Conservancy is to encourage conservation and protection of natural and agricultural lands in the Lake Erie Islands for the benefit of this and future generations. www.lakeerieislandsconservancy.org

About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than eight million acres of land, including nearly 66,000 acres in Ohio.

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