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Great Parks and Sunoco Settle Oil Spill Dispute Major Restoration Underway At Oak Glen Nature Preserve

The Board of Park Commissioners of Great Parks of Hamilton County (Great Parks) today approved a settlement with Sunoco Pipeline L.P. (Sunoco) over a March 2014 oil spill into the Oak Glen Nature Preserve (Oak Glen) from a Sunoco pipeline. The settlement resulted from lengthy negotiations between representatives of Sunoco and Great Parks as well as discussion among Great Parks' technical environmental representatives, Sunoco's technical staff, and consultants. The Settlement Agreement was recommended and presented to the Great Parks Commissioners for approval today, and it is being correspondingly recommended and presented to Sunoco's upper management for approval.

The settlement commits Sunoco to conduct a multi-phase major restoration of Oak Glen, which work has been approved by Great Parks, Ohio EPA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The first phase of restoration work began in August 2016 and remaining work is scheduled for the remainder of 2016 with final planting and restoration work to occur in Spring 2017.

"Restoration of Oak Glen as a habitat for wildlife, including endangered species, is our top priority as stewards of this exceptional nature preserve," said Jack Sutton, Executive Director of Great Parks. "Sunoco is devoting significant resources to this restoration effort, which will involve stream and habitat restoration, removal of a dam built to collect oil, removal of oil when it surfaces in the stream, removal of impacted trees and replacement, and removal of roads and paths installed in Spring 2014 for emergency response work," Sutton noted. "Sunoco's restoration plans have been subject to rigorous review by federal and state officials, as well as Great Parks. This collaborative effort had led to approval of plans and this settlement."

Oak Glen is a 402 acre nature preserve located in Colerain Township. Beginning in 1999 with an initial acquisition of natural woodlands, Oak Glen has been a preserve with mature forests and diverse native wildlife. It is home for two state endangered animals (Cave Salamander and the Lark Sparrow), several rare plant species, and provides habitat for many other animals. Parts of it were acquired with Clean Ohio Conservation Fund grant monies and are permanently restricted for conservation purposes only.

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Board of Park Commissioners:
DeVere Burt • William Burwinkel
HC Buck Niehoff • Joseph C. Seta
Geraldine Warner • Jack Sutton, Executive Director

Mission: to preserve and protect natural resources and to provide outdoor recreation and education in order to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

The settlement resolves potential claims arising from an incident which occurred on March 17, 2014, when a Great Parks Park Rangers discovered that an underground pipeline owned by Mid-Valley Pipeline and managed by Sunoco Pipeline released crude oil into the Oak Glen Nature Preserve. A Unified Command was established with the U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA, Great Parks of Hamilton County, Colerain Township, and Sunoco to address the immediate effects of the spill. The discharge of the crude oil, coupled with the emergency response and initial cleanup activities impacted the preserve, the native flora and fauna, and the two state endangered animals. Field work by Sunoco and its contractors continued throughout all of 2014 in an effort to complete emergency cleanup and begin the remediation and restoration of the nature preserve. Sunoco has cooperated with Great Parks and the Natural Resource Trustees (Ohio EPA, and U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service), to investigate the nature and extent of environmental damage and develop the plans necessary for remediation and restoration.

Ohio EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives, serving as Natural Resource Trustees, have regulatory government oversight of natural resource damages and restoration of Oak Glen. Great Parks has, since the discovery of the oil spill, collaborated with the Trustees in the development of the restoration plans and the coordination of the on-site activities to remediate and restore the Oak Glen Preserve. Ohio EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will retain regulatory oversight of Sunoco's ongoing and upcoming restoration of Oak Glen, coordinating with Great Parks, to insure an effective restoration of the Oak Glen Preserve. Sunoco also agreed to reimburse Great Parks for past costs incurred by Great Parks as part of the settlement.

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A valid Motor Vehicle Permit is required to enter the parks. Cost for residents of Hamilton County: \$10 annual/\$3 daily; other visitors: \$14 annual/\$5 daily. Otto Armleder Memorial Park and Fernbank Park are cooperative ventures with the City of Cincinnati; a Motor Vehicle Permit is not required.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.greatparks.org/> or call 513-521-7275. Also, be sure to check out our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter to find out more about what's happening at the parks.

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