

Title: Bringing Down the Dam; Freeing the Falls

Speaker: Elaine Marsh, Watershed Specialist, Summit Metro Parks

Abstract:

For 100 years, Gorge Metro Park has coexisted with a 420 x 60 foot dam. Now, that dam is being studied by Ohio EPA for removal. Summit Metro Parks is excited by the potential benefits of the removal both to the park district and to the region. The park district has taken the lead in organizing support, facilitating stakeholders and conducting public outreach.

This presentation will examine the interwoven story of the gorge dam, the Cuyahoga River and Gorge Metro Park. It is a fascinating tale of gravity and water, of scenic beauty and contamination, and of competing economies. Mainly, it is the account of how our vision for use of the Gorge has evolved. This evening's program will feature the transformative benefits of dismantling the dam and "Freeing the Falls" which currently lie drowned under this obsolete mass of concrete.

Biography:

Elaine Marsh is a life-long lover of Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River. Currently, she is a Watershed Specialist for Summit Metro Parks. She is a 1989 Co-Founder of Friends of the Crooked River, a grassroots group dedicated to the Cuyahoga River, for which she currently serves as Conservation Director, and the 1996 Founder of Ohio Greenways.

Her role at Summit Metro is to assist the Department of Natural Resources with projects that enhance water quality in the county and to represent the park in community efforts that advance water resources. She facilitates a Stakeholder Group for the Gorge Dam Study and conducts educational programs about the dam.

From 1996-2008, she was employed as Project Director for Ohio Greenways, a statewide program which worked to expand greenways across the state. The project received numerous awards and recognitions, including 2003 Publications Award from the Environmental Education Council of Ohio and two Project of the Year Awards (2001 and 2008) from the Ohio Environmental Education Fund.

She serves on many boards, advisory committees and community projects, including the Cuyahoga AOC, Akron Waterways Renewed, and the Cuyahoga River Water Trail Partnership. Past Board work includes Great Lakes United, the Discover Ohio Water Trails Partnership and the Ohio Science Advisory Board for Environmental Health and Protection. Elaine was a governor appointed member of two advisory boards. She has received numerous recognitions, including 2009 Woman of the Year Award from the Akron Women's History Project, 2013 Champion of the River from the Cuyahoga RAP and the 2005 Life Time Achievement Award from Ohio Environmental Council.

She and Harold, her husband of 40 years, enjoy paddling, biking and hiking.