



FOCUS ON:

Reservoir Access Paths

April 1, 2015

As the city strives to establish reservoir buffers consisting of mature trees and understory, consideration has been given to allow access paths which do not compromise reservoir water quality nor greatly impact riparian habitat. The following information sheet presents guidelines on the establishment and maintenance of access paths across city-owned property. Interested property owners should contact the Columbus Watershed Management Office at (614) 645-1721 for further information on this new option within the land stewardship program.

Establishing A Path

Residents living around Hoover, Griggs, and O'Shaughnessy Reservoirs have expressed interest in maintaining a path across city-owned property in order to access the water. Previously, paths were only permitted when associated with a boat dock.

In reviewing options to allow access, the city has agreed to permit the creation and maintenance of paths, provided the creation of such does not negatively impact water quality or riparian habitat.

What properties are eligible?

Because the creation of an access path requires a disruption of shoreline habitat, some properties with sensitive species or other environmental constraints will not be eligible. Access paths across city property will not be permitted in cases where:

- Property is within a designated nature preserve
- The property line is more than 250' from shore
- Wetlands, state or federally endangered or threatened species, as listed by ODNR, could be affected
- Erodible soils or slopes greater than 20% exist

Who will maintain the path?

The path will be part of the contiguous landowner's stewardship plan. The contiguous landowner will be responsible for all installation and maintenance costs.

Where can the path be located?

Through a site visit, Watershed Management staff will work with the landowner to review path options and draft a land stewardship plan. Paths will be sited foremost to minimize environmental impact, and to reflect the contiguous landowner's preference where compatible. Paths can be designed in various configurations but must not exceed 5 feet in width at any point.

Residents interested in obtaining a boat dock or stake should first identify the best location for the dock which will then influence the path location. The path shall overlap a designated view corridor or dock path if one exists as only one path is permitted per property.



Note: A valid land stewardship agreement must be obtained prior to any disturbance of city property. See reverse side for additional information.

The Process to Obtain an Access Path

Access paths unassociated with docks are a new option within the City of Columbus Land Stewardship Program. Other new options include the ability to create and maintain a view corridor, and options to address invasive and noxious plants. The following presents information specific to access paths.

Current participants in the land stewardship program can amend their land stewardship agreement to include the new options, where desired and permissible. New residents and those interested in enrolling should contact the Columbus Watershed Management office at (614) 645-1721.

Step One - Assess the Landscape

Each stewardship property is unique. Factors such as topography (slope), soils, size and distribution of trees, and other plant species will influence the available options for creating a path. Other factors, such as a planned boat dock location should also be considered.

City of Columbus staff will meet with the contiguous landowner at the property to review eligibility, and path and view corridor options.

Path Alignment:

Straight paths are preferable, though a meandering path may be necessary to avoid trees or desirable plants. Only diseased or hazardous trees, or saplings measuring 2" or less (diameter at breast height) may be removed when establishing the path.

Steps may be required in order to safely accommodate alignment or slope; however slopes greater than 20% will not be eligible for access paths or steps. Paths and steps may not extend beyond the shoreline when the reservoir is at normal pool elevation.

Specifications have been created for stone or timber steps which present allowable dimensions, materials and other standard detail. Please request a copy of the appropriate path specifications from the Watershed Management Office prior to beginning a design.

Conditions of Installing and Maintaining a Path:

The contiguous landowner is responsible to ensure that a path project meets the specifications provided by the City of Columbus, as well as compliance with all applicable building and local codes. Once built, the contiguous landowner must ensure that the path is safely passable, maintained in a good condition, and to the original specification. If erosion is observed, then the landowner must provide another material to stop the soil loss.

Step Two - Develop a Stewardship Plan

Watershed Management staff will help the landowner to develop a new or amended land stewardship plan detailing the planned path. Land stewardship plans are property-specific and may also include elements such as a view corridor or invasive plant removal.

Once a plan is approved, the landowner will sign a land stewardship agreement (LSA). Work may begin as soon as the LSA is submitted and approved.

Path Width and Materials:

Approved paths must not exceed 5 feet in width and will be created using the following materials, listed from most preferred to least:

Mown grass, soil, natural or undyed mulch, washed river gravel, stepping stones, washed river gravel and stepping stones combined, stone slab or timber-framed steps.

All paths, regardless of materials, must be properly installed according to specifications provided by the City of Columbus and continuously monitored for erosion. Some materials will require more regular maintenance than others.

Stairs, decks, or landings built on city property will not be permitted components of approved paths.