

# DECOMPRESSION DRIVE

## RIVER PARKS

### & OPTIONAL BLUE CREEK ADD-ON



Begin your driving tour at Side Cut Metropark, the first and oldest Metropark in the Metroparks system. Begin at Ford Street, and drive west down River Rd/Broadway to experience the full stretch of this park. On August 7, 1930, Metroparks leased the side cut canal lands in Maumee from the Ohio Department of Public Works to establish this park. As you drive through the park it is easy to see the natural beauty and historic value of the old canal locks that are present on this land that prompted the urge to preserve and conserve this space. As you drive through Side Cut you have the option to park and picnic in the Silver Lake Area (to the right), or take a short hike (approximately half a mile on the blue Canal Locks Trail) to view the remains of three locks still preserved here. You can also turn left into the Riverview Area to park and picnic.

As you continue west on your drive you will catch your first glimpse of the river. The Maumee River is the largest watershed in the entire Great Lakes region, draining the largest land area of any of the rivers and streams that empty into any of the Great Lakes (over 6000 square miles!). Shortly after you cross under 475 you'll have the option to park at Siegart Lake, a hidden gem of Side Cut. Park in the gravel pull-offs along the road for a view of the Maumee River, or turn into the gravel parking lot to explore Siegart Lake. A patient watcher may see a variety of birds and other wildlife.

As you continue on your drive, make use of the gravel pull-off along River Road near the intersection of Jerome Road to park for a better view of the river and the Jerome Road rapids. Rapids are areas of shallow, fast-moving water in a river or stream. Softer rocks in a riverbed erode away faster than harder rocks, leaving areas where the hard rocks left behind form tiny waterfalls. The water splashing over these rocks captures air bubbles and adds dissolved oxygen to the water, which is good for the health of the river and the creatures that live in it. The soothing murmur of the water over the rocks makes this a prime spot for relaxing and watching for wildlife. As you continue west on River Road you will leave Side Cut Metropark, but will still have plenty of scenic river views as you travel along this winding road that follows the path of the river.

For an optional side adventure, pull into Waterworks Park in Waterville, approximately 5 miles west of Side Cut Metropark and just past the Waterville bridge. Continue driving past the ball fields, all the way to the parking lot located on the river. There is a scenic overlook you can climb to the top of for a bird's eye view of Metroparks' Granger Island. After discovering Granger Island backtrack to River Road and continue driving west for more scenic views.

As you approach the intersection of River Road and the Anthony Wayne Trail, watch for a gravel pull-off on the left side of the road. Park here for an excellent view of the river, the Interurban Bridge, and the Roche de Bout boulder. If you look closely you may notice trees and other vegetation growing from the interior of the bridge where the exterior stone has crumbled away. These plants are not growing from solid stone; this bridge is filled with earth! In front of one of the pillars of the bridge a large boulder is visible. This boulder, known as Roche de Bout (or sometimes spelled Roche de Beouf) was used as a landmark and meeting place for Native American tribes, settlers, and armies in previous centuries.

The Towpath Trail also begins at this parking area. This hike/bike friendly gravel trail follows the Maumee River through Farnsworth and Bend View Metroparks before ending at the Providence Dam in Providence Metropark. At just over 9 miles one way, this hike or ride is best saved for a full-day excursion.

As you continue driving west on River Road you will enter Farnsworth Metropark, another early Metropark that has its origins in the 1930s. As you drive, hike, or park in this park enjoy views of the Maumee River, wildlife sightings, and historic stone structures. As you continue driving you will quickly come to the parking area for the Roche de Bout shelter. This is an excellent spot to park and picnic. This spot offers views of the river, either from your car or from the benches and picnic tables surrounding the shelter.

Continuing on River Road you will come to the Boat Launch Area next. This parking area includes primitive camping and a boat ramp that provides access to the Maumee River for paddle craft and small boats with motors. To stretch your legs, park and explore the primitive campsites along the Maumee River. Several of these sites feature WPA era stone shelters that make a perfect backdrop for making memories.

As you leave the Boat Launch Area and continue west on River Road you will quickly exit Farnsworth Metropark. As you travel through the river parks consider the natural landscape around you. These parks conserve and protect large stretches of the Maumee River floodplain, keeping it natural so that the floodplain can do its jobs. Floodplains are an important part of a healthy river ecosystem. They provide a space for the river to overflow its banks during normal, natural flooding events. Giving the water space to spread out can help decrease the severity of downriver flooding. Floodplains also help filter and clean this precious water that many communities use for drinking water.

Approximately 3.5 miles past the Boat Launch Area you will see a turn-off on the left for Bend View Metropark. This parking lot provides the closest access to the Bend View shelter, a partially-enclosed shelter situated on a 90-degree bend on the river that provides breathtaking views. Be prepared for a hike; it is a 3 mile round-trip excursion to the shelter and back. On a chilly autumn day however this three-sided shelter makes an excellent spot for a picnic off the beaten path.

As you leave Bend View Metropark, continue approximately 4 miles west on River Road to Providence Metropark, a park as filled with history as natural beauty. This park sits on the eastern edge of the former canal town Providence, for which it is named. Remnants of the Miami and Erie canal are visible in this park. Park and picnic at the Canal Boat and Issac Ludwig Mill parking lot, or stretch your legs on a quick hike. A short hike west on the towpath trail will take you to Lock 44, the last working lock in Ohio that is still in use by a canal boat.

After leaving the historic area parking lot, continue down River Road to the Providence Dam parking area to end your tour. The dam itself is not visible from the parking lot, but the view is worth the quick hike. This dam was originally built in the 1830s to bring water into the canal. Today it is a popular fishing spot and a great place to sit and enjoy wildlife.

Metroparks Toledo hopes you have enjoyed this Decompression Drive of its' River Parks!

**For an optional add-on to your Decompression Drive, take the following route to explore Blue Creek Metropark. This route will take you north and east to Whitehouse, where you can easily pick up 24 East to head back to Toledo.**

Begin your route by turning north onto Providence-Neapolis-Swanton Road, just west of the Providence Dam parking area. Continue north to Bailey Road, where you will turn east. Follow Bailey Road until you reach Schadel Road, where you will again turn north. Enjoy the beautiful countryside as you travel towards Blue Creek Metropark, and keep an eye out for migrating geese and other birds on your route. As you travel down Schadel Road there are multiple points of interest. Just north of Neapolis-Waterville Road you will find the first parking area for Blue Creek Metropark. Turn right into the Blue Creek Conservation Area Quarry Pond. Park in this gravel lot for access to a hiking trail that explores a small quarry pond with glacial grooves, a restored wetland and ditch, and a restored prairie.

Across the road and slightly south of this parking area you will see a large white barn and several other buildings. This area of Blue Creek Metropark does not have public hiking trails, but hosts several other important community resources. This site was the location of the former Toledo workhouse. In the 1900s this was a self-sustaining prison county workhouse. Several of the buildings that were built for the workhouse have been repurposed to serve Metroparks' mission, among them a gymnasium and dormitory building that now houses the Blue Creek Nursery.

The Blue Creek Nursery is the largest publicly owned nursery in Ohio. This nursery provides native seeds, shrubs, and trees to restore natural areas throughout the region. This site is also home to a wildlife rehabilitation center and demonstration farm fields maintained by Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District.

As you leave the parking area and continue north on Schadel Rd keep your eyes peeled for a stand of large, spaced oak trees. These are chinquapin oaks, whose orange-brown leaves and interesting growth patterns make for a visually appealing fall or winter drive. These oaks are also growing in a recently restored limestone glade. The limestone glade is a unique ecosystem that consists of shallow, sandy soil on top of limestone bedrock. This site has been managed through invasive species control, and at least seven plant species that are state-listed as rare in Ohio can be found here.

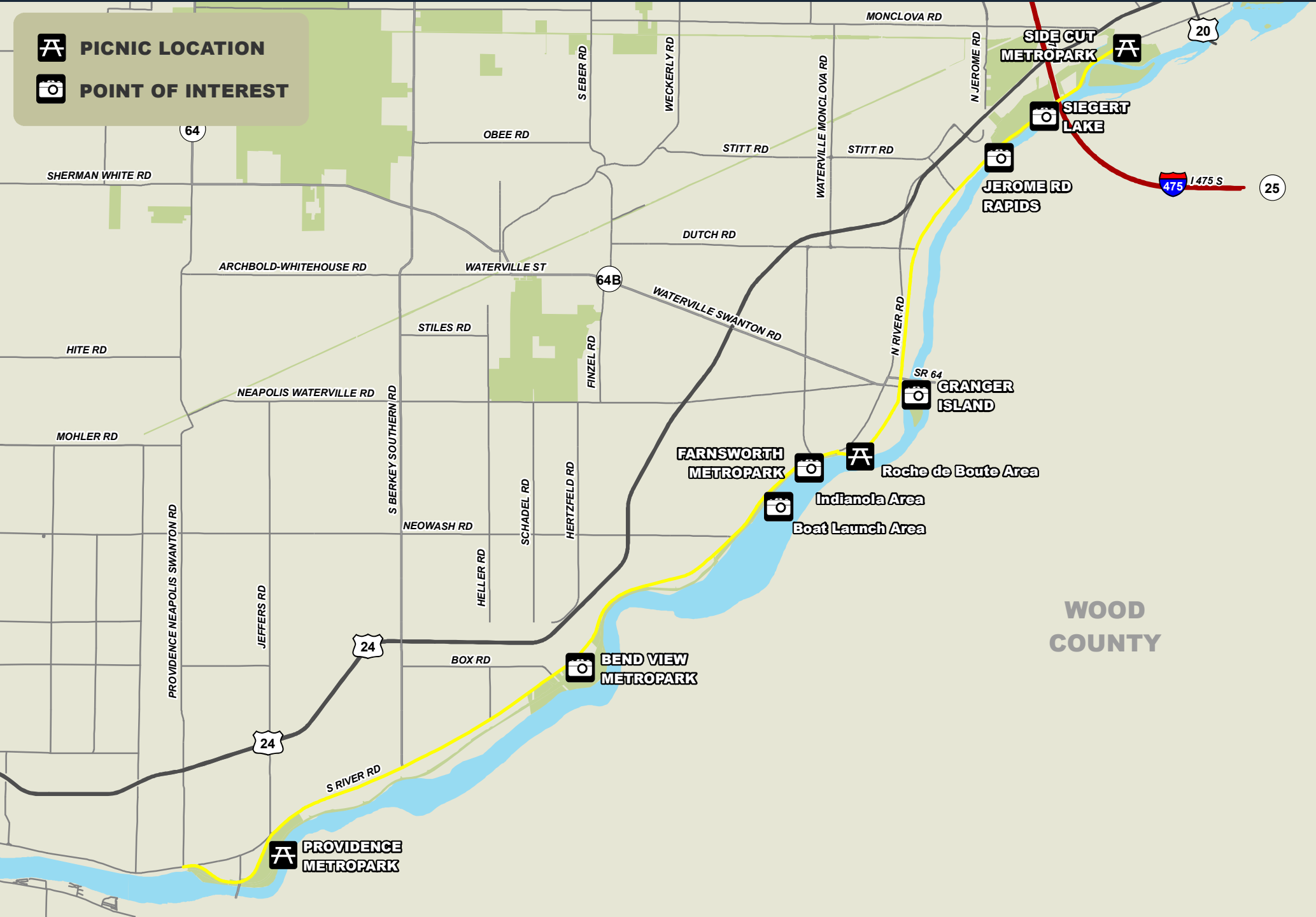
Past the limestone glade turn west onto Stiles Road to continue your tour. On your left you will see the propagation fields where the native plants are grown and harvested. Take a quick right to turn north onto Providence Street. Continue past the soccer fields and turn right into the Nona France area of Blue Creek Metropark. Continue through the long gravel parking lot until you reach a small parking area near the sledding hill. From this location you have easy access to many park features, making it a good spot to park and picnic.

This area of Blue Creek features a large quarry pond available for fishing and paddling. The site of a former limestone quarry, this pond now sports crystal-clear water for recreation. This park also features a hike/bike trail around the pond. Benches and swings spaced around the rim of the pond provide scenic overlooks to sit and decompress or picnic.

Metroparks Toledo hopes you have enjoyed this Decompression Drive add-on of Blue Creek Metropark!

# DECOMPRESSION DRIVE SIDE CUT TO PROVIDENCE

-  PICNIC LOCATION
-  POINT OF INTEREST



# DECOMPRESSION DRIVE PROVIDENCE TO BLUE CREEK



PICNIC LOCATION



POINT OF INTEREST

