

**Friends of Crowell Hilaka Proposal to the  
Richfield Joint Recreation District Board of Directors  
Monday, January 5, 2015**

*Friends of Crowell Hilaka is here to help and support the Richfield Joint Recreation District in promoting Crowell Hilaka's educational, historical, and recreational potential by continuing to raise awareness and funds, hosting volunteer and social events, and researching the unique history and features of Crowell Hilaka. We acknowledge that the RJRD board is the sole authority in Crowell Hilaka; FoCH being the support group.*

**FoCH Resources:**

- Committed, experienced volunteers
- Familiarity with the property, its history, and its most recent usage as a camp
- Desire to work for benefit of the Richfield community
- Ability to solicit funding as a non-government, non-profit corporation
- Welcoming, inclusive organization to encourage community engagement

**FoCH Views :**

- A growing body of research shows that children are less likely to play outside and are less familiar with nature than in previous generations. People and organizations dedicated to outdoor education and recreation need to develop creative programs and proactive outreach to engage families.
- Proactive engagement costs more money. It would be good to consider ways for the property to generate revenue in addition to taxes. Some of this income could come from providing popular services and attractions.
- The unique, historical features of the Kirby estate should be promoted for tourism as well as education.
- While it is necessary for the RJRD to carefully consider its long term goals in making decisions, some of the desirable features of the property are at risk for damage due to lack of maintenance over the years. Therefore, we would like to get to work on identified projects sooner rather than later.
- Funding by FoCH will be for projects outside of the RJRD budget. We are happy to consider additional requests from the RJRD board. We are prepared to immediately tackle projects with the RJRD's approval.
- We would like to be considered for a space somewhere on the property

**FoCH Request to sponsor the following projects:**

- Annual fundraisers that would allow FoCH to bring in funds from outside the tax base
- Improvement Projects: FoCH funded projects completed either by FoCH organized volunteers or hired experts.
- Volunteer Orientation and Education: Provide the RJRD Board and Volunteers with information about the property and its history
- Development of on-site educational/ recreational program proposals
- Program Support: Either host events or provide support to RJRD hosted events
- Research into national standards, best practices, and state regulations for camping
- Provide 'concierge' or 'camp monitor' services for rented sites.
- Continue to research and promote Crowell Hilaka history.
  
- Immediate repair of damage to the perimeter fence
- Maintenance of existing trails
- Restoration of native plant species
- Garden restoration and maintenance
- Permanent, interpretive signage throughout the Kirby estate and grounds.
- Maintaining a nature hut as an exhibit space for environmental education
- Feasibility study for the relocation of the Oviatt Farmhouse to another site on the property

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## Friends of Crowell Hilaka Resume:

- 2009: Friends of Crowell Hilaka is established. Incorporated and name registered with the state of Ohio  
Researched history of Crowell Hilaka and created a website with the property's features.  
Established a formal, fiscal relationship with the Richfield Historical Society  
Initiated relationship with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy.  
Developed camperships to make usage more approachable  
Developed programming including "Sunday Fundays" free to the community  
Created a contact list and promoted Girl Scout membership and activities at Crowell Hilaka
- 2012: Hosted numerous fund raising events
- 2013: Created community awareness and a pledge drive to raise funds to preserve Crowell Hilaka  
Lead tours for community leadership  
Organized community open house in conjunction with Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- 2014: Developed community awareness via speaking engagements, booths, brochures, facebook, and print articles  
Development of millwheel logo to establish branding  
Development of tagline "Ohio's Hidden Treasure" which was useful in Richfield Together campaign  
Release of our pledges to assist Richfield Together campaign  
Developed relationship Buckeye Trail Association, Ohio Horsemen's Council Summit Chapter, and American International

***Over the past five years, Friends of Crowell Hilaka developed relationships with outside organizations, researched fund development opportunities, and provided programming that promoted the historical features, educational opportunities, recreation, and conservation of the property. We would like to continue developing these ideas and bring our findings to the Richfield Joint Recreation District Board for their use. Examples include but are not limited to:***

## History research:

- Develop relationships with Cleveland Restoration Society, Summit County Historical Society, and other regional historical societies.
- Research the history of Crowell Hilaka at the National, State, Regional (Cleveland and Summit) level
- Research applicable grant opportunities and develop relationships with historical grant writers
- Apply for the National Registry of Historic Places for the entirety of the property to increase grant potential
- Provide historical tours and education for Richfield community and RJRD volunteers

## Education:

- Develop relationship with local schools
- Research grant opportunities including but not limited to STEM/Energy Grants
- Develop and provide educational programming

## Recreation:

- Develop relationships with unique recreational providers (e.g. Canopy Tours (zipline), carriage rides)
- Develop relationship with lifeguards and medical volunteers
- Research ACA accreditation and provide primitive camping with site monitoring
- Develop and provide recreational programming

## Conservation:

- Continue Native Plant Restoration
- Provide trail and building maintenance
- Develop relationship with Youth and Adult Volunteers (e.g. Scouts)
- Develop relationship with Rocky River Watershed, Brian Zimmerman Cleveland Metroparks, Keith Shy Summit Metroparks, Bath Nature Preserve

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- **Annual fundraisers that would allow FoCH to bring in funds from outside the tax base**  
Implementation of each event is subject to prior review and approval by the RJRD board.
- **Volunteer Orientation and Education:** Provide the RJRD Board and Volunteers with information about the property and its history. Site tours can be customized for area of interest and difficulty of terrain.
- **Development of on-site educational/recreational program proposals.** There is no shortage of ideas or experienced volunteers. Implementation of each event is subject to prior review and approval by RJRD board.
- **Program Support:** Either host events or provide support to RJRD hosted events.
- **Research into national standards, best practices, and state regulations for camping:** If camping were ever permitted, there are three existing tent sites outside of the Clean Ohio restricted zone:
  1. Windy Hill: West side of property; south of the stables. Former platform tent site. Could be converted to car camping if desired. Probably best accessed from stable entrance, but repair of the road could make site accessible from Crowell/South gate.
  2. High Lea: West side of property, north of the stables. Primitive (ground tent) site. Shelter, kitchen, and outhouse all handicapped accessible.
  3. Paddler: North edge of Lake Linnea adjacent to Gemini Cabin. Primitive (ground tent) site. Not as easily accessible by car or established as High Lea.
- **Immediate repair of damage to the perimeter fence.** Storm damage has caused several breaches in the fence, making it easy for anyone to walk in. While most trespassers are benign (even protective) of the property, there has been some vandalism. An intact fence will deter casual vandalism and help control access. It may also help protect new plantings by limiting introduction of additional deer.
- **Maintenance of existing trails.** Since 2009, FoCH has provided basic upkeep to some of the existing trails. FoCH is interested in evaluating and improving some of the lesser used trails, redirecting Pine Lake Trail to avoid the lower areas adjacent to Lake Linnea, providing new signage, and additional bridges, walkways, and railings. FoCH is also interested in assisting Buckeye Trail Association and/or Ohio Horseman's Council with any of their projects as well.
- **Restoration of native plant species.** Program begun in 2010. Would like to obtain state herbicide certification consult with advisory groups on best practices for control of buckthorn, bayberry, multi-flora rose, privet, etc., identify native species in affected areas, and monitor and plant desirable native species.
- **Garden restoration and maintenance.**
  1. Kirby House Garden: West side of house. Remnants remain of Kirby's wildflower garden complete with small pond. Historic photos match existing traces of the garden and pond. Recommend restoration for both historic and aesthetic value.
  2. Spif's Garden Memorial: Between Amity and Lake Linnea. Garden and memorial has been maintained by Pruitt family for over 20 years. Recommend continuing upkeep for historic and recreation value.
  3. Moss Garden: Along Deer Leap Trail. Not actually a garden, but a natural occurrence at the confluence of Sandy Creek into the main creek. No maintenance required, but FoCH would like to add signage to draw attention to this beautiful location for others to appreciate.

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4. Butterfly Garden: South of Kirby's Millwheel by the sundial. Planted in 2000, this garden is not historic. FoCH could transfer up the hill to combine with Kirby House Garden if the RJRD prefers.
  5. North House Garden: North of North House. The ruins of garden scattered in the woods across the road at North House. Some of the nearby groundcover (myrtle, pachysandra, and lilies of the valley) may be from the Neal Family or Girl Scouts. The large rhododendron in the woods is most likely from the Neal Family. Restoring this garden without original photos would be tough. Recommend leaving as is unless further evidence or funding turns up.
- **Permanent, interpretive signage throughout the Kirby estate and grounds.** FoCH envisions professional trailside signboards with historic imagery explaining Kirby's work, the purpose of the mill, the patented lake, and construction of the bouncy house. The content and location of the sign(s) all subject to approval by RJRD Board.
  - **Maintaining a nature hut as an exhibit space for environmental education.** The current Nature Hut is a small building along the Windy Hill Trail (currently in need of repair) and can be seen from the Main Road between Kirby House and Garfield Hall. It is a single room without power or water. Once used as a trailside nature exhibit, FoCH envisions a few simple, self-guided displays and books for visitors.
  - **Feasibility study for the relocation of the Oviatt Farmhouse to another site on the property.** The Oviatt Farm House, located outside the fence on the corner of West Streetsboro Road and Oviatt Road, is by far the oldest structure on the property and represents a significant part of Crowell Hilaka and Richfield history. The ODNR prohibits human habitation immediately downstream of any large dam and informed GSNEO that the house could no longer be used. FoCH would like to continue researching the historical significance and the current condition of the house to see if it is worth the cost of relocation. If so, then we would need to work with the RJRD to consider potential nearby sites and projected uses. If feasible, pending there are no other immediate needs for funding to improve the Kirby estate structures, then we would like to fundraise for the project.