NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
Natural Landscape and Vegetation

Orange Township has a distinct landscape with wooded areas, farmland, and various other forms of natural landscapes for residents to enjoy. There are currently over 20 miles of trails, about 321 acres of publicly-owned open space (2.3% of the Township), and over 3,247 acres dedicated to parks (about 23% of the Township). There are also just under 3,000 acres of privately-owned, undeveloped lots. Some of these lots border existing public open space or other natural resources and could expand upon or enhance these amenities.

Water Resources

The community is fortunate to have Alum Creek Reservoir, rivers, creeks, wetlands, and ravines located throughout the Township. These waterways are extremely important and must be protected; if contaminated, such an event could impact the entire region. During the 2017 election, the residents of Delaware County passed a renewal levy for the Preservation Parks with overwhelming support. This levy will allow Preservation Parks to purchase roughly 241 acres in Orange Township, expanding the 66 acres of Shale Hollow that they currently own (Figures 35 and 36). Most of this land is adjacent to Alum Creek or its tributaries and will be used to help preserve the health of the region's waterways. There are two areas within the Township that have been identified by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) as areas with a high groundwater pollution potential. The area at greatest pollution risk is located near the southwest corner of Highbanks Metro Park along the Olentangy River, and the other area is the floodplain along Alum Creek from I-71 to the southeast corner of the Township (Figure 35).
Existing Shale Hollow Park

Preservation Parks Expansion

Fig. 38

Fig. 39
Public Meeting 9/12: SWOT Analysis

Strengths
Township leaders and residents communicated that natural resources are a valued strength. Residents thought the variety of natural resources, open space, and the community’s willingness to preserve and value the landscape are major strengths of Orange Township. In fact, it is one of the reasons many people decided to call Orange Township home. Other strengths included decent sidewalks and paths that are well maintained throughout the year.

Weaknesses
Some residents expressed being upset about private property being taken for trail development.

Opportunities
Residents expressed that a primary opportunity for natural resources is to improve the connectivity between different natural resource areas and parks.

Threats
Residents are concerned about the pressure that many farmers or undeveloped landowners feel from increased development. Other concerns include problems with the availability of future water resources and impacts of stormwater runoff.

Refer to Appendix C.1 for 9/12 Meeting Results

Public Meeting 10/5: Poster Presentations

Overall, the second public meeting reinforced that residents enjoy the diverse landscape and would like to preserve it while expanding the number of recreational facilities in the Township.

There were mixed results when discussing the number of parks in the Township; all residents said that they like the current parks, but there was some disagreement on the addition of future parks. All the goals for this section received positive feedback, however there was still concern about the issue of the Township purchasing property from private landowners. Overall, this section received many positive comments and all concerns were heard and addressed in the goals and strategies of this chapter.

Refer to Appendix C.2 for 10/5 Meeting Results
Public Survey

Natural resources and conservation were identified by many residents as one of the highest ranked areas of concern. One of the biggest concerns regarding natural resources is that Orange Township is starting to lose its rural character because of the increase in growth, and that it is important to control this growth. Many residents would like to see developers held responsible for preserving open space within subdivisions. Another major concern that was voiced throughout the survey is the lack of connectivity of bike paths and the parks and natural recreation areas. One resident explained that it takes “way too long to get the paths in and the ones that exist often just end.” This is a huge concern because bike paths and trails are not properly utilized if they do not connect destinations, thus reducing the effectiveness of the paths and the return on investment for the Township. The last concern that residents voiced regarding natural resources and conservation is that the Township is losing some of its unique character when vegetation is removed for development and not replaced or replanted. Residents are upset with the loss of trees, shrubs, greenspace, and habitat reduction.
Goal NR-1: Reduce Development Impacts on Natural Resources

Strategy NR-1.1: Connect existing open space and natural resources by using multi-use paths.

Strategy NR-1.2: Consider designated growth areas to help concentrate growth in specific parts of the Township.

Strategy NR-1.3: Consider zoning requirements that use design standards that take natural features into consideration.

Strategy NR-1.4: Consider zoning amendments that encourage developers to practice conservation development by clustering structures and setting aside a minimum of 20% of continuous open space.

Strategy NR-1.5: Consider partnering with agencies like the Soil and Water Conservation District to educate developers and homeowners about low impact development strategies.

Strategy NR-1.6: Consider zoning amendments that encourage no net-loss of wetlands within the Township.

Strategy NR-1.7: Consider buffers around all waterways to reduce the chance of contamination.

Strategy NR-1.8: Consider the use of permeable surfaces and green infrastructure through incentives.

Responsible Parties: Township Administrator, Orange Township Planning and Zoning staff, the Park Board, the Maintenance and Parks Department, Delaware County Regional Planning Commission, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Preservation Parks.