

Q1: Which Park do you manage? [open-ended response]

Salt Fork

Lake Hope

Lake Alma State Park

Delaware State Park

Alum Creek State Park

Shawnee State Park

Pymatuning State Park

Guilford

Beaver

Jefferson

Sycamore

Hocking Hills

Lake Logan

Lake Hope

Mt Gilead State Park

A.W. Marion

Deer Creek

Madison Lake

Independence Dam

Findley

East Fork

Stonelick State Park (Clermont)

Lake Loramie

John Bryan State Park

Cowan Lake State Park

Dillon

Blue Rock State Park

Hueston Woods

Caesar Creek

Little Miami

Buck Creek

Burr Oak

Strouds Run

Forked Run

Wingfoot

Portage Lakes

West Branch

Lake Milton

Punderson State Park

Q2: The ConServe Ohio Sustainability Plan was put in place to address various issues at Ohio state parks. Which of the following have you observed at the park you manage, within the past year? [Select all that apply]

Trail erosion/damage: **17**

Littering: **21**

Improper disposal of waste: **17**

Disturbance of wildlife: **9**

Overcrowding: **6**

None: **3**

Other: **2**

- "Vandalism"
- "Feeding animals"

Q3: In a research study from 2008, Park et al. explored the effectiveness of signage in preventing impactful behaviors on park trails. What kind of signage is there in the space you manage? [Select all that apply]

Educational/informational signs: **22**

Warning/cautionary signs: **18**

Trail markers: **25**

Other: **2**

- "Trailhead signs indicating allowable recreational activities on the trail"
- "We have some educational signage and trail markers but our trail markers and blazes need to be updated. With limited staff and budget that is proving to be very hard to do. We are in the process of launching a recycling program which will include a LOT more informational signage."

Q4: When visitors walk off trail, damage is done to the surrounding vegetation and wildlife. In a research study from 2008, Park et al. noted several reasons a park visitor might walk off trail. In your experience, for which of the following reasons have visitors in your park walked off trail in the past year? [Select all that apply]

To get a better view: **17**

To explore: **20**

To take a picture: **15**

Crowding on the trail: **3**

They do not walk off trail: **0**

I don't know: **3**

Other: **11**

- "Hunting" (2)
- "Mushroom hunting" (2)
- "Mountain Bikers making their own path"
- "Some believed there was a shortcut on one of our trails"

- "Off trail travel is permitted, most of our areas are open to public hunting which is prohibited ON a trail"
- "Avoiding wet spots or fallen trees"
- "Muddy conditions or damage from bridle use-alternative route"
- "Fishing shoreline"
- "As far as I know, it is not against park rules to walk off trail. We do not have any signage directing guests to stay on the trail"

Q5: Select all that apply: What types of waste have visitors left behind in the area you manage within the past year?

Dog waste (bagged): **22**

Dog waste (unbagged): **24**

Recyclable waste: **22**

Organic waste: **16**

Electronic waste: **10**

Single-use gear: **19**

Other landfill waste: **22**

Other: **3**

- "Furniture"
- "Litter is a huge issue for the parks especially at our beaches"
- "Grills"

Q6: In your park, what strategies have you tried or implemented to prevent visitors from littering? [Select all that apply]

Educational/informational signage: **23**

Warning/cautionary signage: **14**

Accessible waste/recycling bins: **24**

Absence of waste/recycling bins: **6**

No strategies: **0**

Other: **3**

- "Security cameras"
- "Ownership on guests with signage 'it's your park please don't litter'"
- "We are in the process of launching a parks wide recycling program in our 3 parks with signage and what was supposed to be a public education program involving our collaborators Rural Action and Ohio University as well as our Naturalist. Our Naturalist no longer works here and I have been told we cannot, due to budget issues, hire another Naturalist. We will continue to try."

Q7: If your strategies were successful, what was the strategy(s) and the benefits were you seeing? [Open-ended response]

"We still pick up an incredible amount of litter every week."

"Having dumpster sites, not cans throughout the park. Reduced litter around previous trash can sites."

"Recycling facilities caused guests to think twice about their waste and disposal methods."

"Trash cans only make it easier for people who want to be responsible. The same amount of litter is present with less trash cans."

"We have provided a recycling bin at the Lake Hope Lodge parking lot. Several people utilize this, but some throw trash away in it. Ideally, we would like to have one for our camping area as well as our main area where the beach and picnic areas are at. We do not have the funding for this at this time."

"Recycling information center with loaner buckets is working amazingly at the park."

"LE pursued illegal dumpers"

"More law enforcement to change behavior (saturation patrols), employee presence and education."

"Adding more waste bins"

"We have implemented having more dumpsters in areas that didn't previously have trash receptacles. This has had a small impact on visitors leaving trash, because now they have an area to put it rather than feeling like they have to either leave it on the ground or take it back with them. We have also implemented a recycling dumpster at our park office. More people are recycling things now that otherwise would have wound up in a dumpster bound for a landfill. We have also installed fishing line receptacles near our more popular fishing areas."

"Having trash bins close by helps some"

"Recycling Container (Dumpster)"

"NA"

"People throw garbage from their moving vehicles when driving inside the park to access lodge or golf course."

Q8: Are there any ideas or anything you'd like to see to improve management towards waste/recycling/littering? [Open-ended response]

"People often overlook posted signs and sometimes feel entitled while using state parks. The only real way to deter that behavior is to catch them in the act and issue a citation. Unfortunately, littering is often learned behavior—many who litter grew up in households where it was common. It's also tied to socio-economic factors: individuals from communities with more resources and stability are generally less likely to litter, while those from disadvantaged areas tend to do so more frequently."

"Better access to a uniform disposal site (ex. Containers/bins) for the public to easily recognize across all state parks."

"Free recycle pickups in my area, industrial composting"

"Making recycling more obtainable for all spaces, Rumpke will not service recycling in this park location"

"Would like to provide cabin guests and campers with recycling bags to aid in their efforts to recycle while at the park."

"NA"

"No"

"Incentive ideas are best, funding like it used to be with a division focused on recycling and litter prevention—our employees spend enormous amount of time cleaning up from litter rather than improving the recreational opportunities"

"Recycling center on park and containers provided no charge to park"

"I'm sure it's out there and available for us, but I would like to see more signage implemented in areas around the park that explain the fines for littering. Animal proof trash cans may help in areas, but parks don't always have the staff to go around and dump multiple trash cans which is why we have contracted out our trash service. People will always litter in areas where it's too difficult to have trash receptacles. Maybe some signage that shows the effects of littering on wildlife."

"Some type of bin that can be lifted by a tractor with forks to place at beach, we get mounds of trash every day in summer. right now, we have barrels that our staff empty every day, and they are heavy, we would like to get something equipment could do the heavy lift for - but that also looks really becoming and nice in a public space."

"I think it needs to be taken more seriously by park and district management and not dismissed as unnecessary, too costly, and impossible to make work due to the public apathy. I think leadership needs take a stance on the issue or not. If it is important then the Park Managers need to be given a realistic budget and centralized instructions from head office on how Parks recycles. It takes money, staff, and education to add a recycling program to the parks. Until those things happen it will continue to be half measures and box checking mentality till the program fails and we further our tired opinion that recycling is a waste of time because it doesn't work because we can't afford to do it correctly and the publics apathy will make it impossible to institute."

"Continued upgrades to containers and signs that are attractive to guests to educate and usable"

"Recycling as a feel-good element to it but it's hard to deal with challenges (contamination, insects, full containers, etc.) Our beaches are ground zero for littering and we've had little success at managing it."

Q9: According to ODNR's Clean Marinas Coordinator, Tracey Coe, these are the impacts associated with water recreation. Check all that apply: which 1-2 environmental impacts from water-based recreation do you notice the most often?

Pollution (oil/gas spills, plastics and glass waste, angler waste, etc.): **17**

Invasive Species Spread (zebra mussels, hydrilla, invasive carp, etc.): **12**

Habitat Damage (shoreline erosion, destruction of spawning/nesting sites, trampling/compaction, etc.): **13**

Wildlife Disturbance (depleting numbers of wildlife or their shelter and food sites, animal desensitization, etc.): **3**

Other: **2**

- "Algae water is stagnant"
- "Farming fertilizers and changed application of them create HAB and have a far-reaching impact on our water quality"

Q10: How would you describe the activity level (boating, fishing, beach usage, etc.) of the public waterways from this past season (May-September) compared to years prior? [Select all that apply]

Activity increased significantly and strained ODNR resources (crowding, noise levels, pollution levels were consistently difficult to manage): **5**

Activity increased and challenged ODNR resources (crowding, noise levels, pollution levels became a problem 5+ times this season): **3**

Activity stayed the same and was manageable with ODNR resources (crowding, noise levels, pollution levels became a problem 0-2 times during the season): **15**

Activity was slightly down (crowding, noise levels, pollution levels have decreased in the past year): **0**

Activity decreased significantly (the waterways and beaches maintained a concerningly low population this season): **0**

N/A (I have not been managing at one park for over a year): **0**

Other:

- "Activity stayed about the same and pollution levels are a constant battle, being transported in by the Licking River"

Q11: What does the word "sustainability" mean to you in terms of park management? [Open-ended response]

"Creating systems that can be long lasting in facilitating sustainable practices"

"Providing Park operations with a low environmental impact"

"Managing the land and facilities in such a way that we use as little natural resources as possible to achieve our goal of giving our guests a pleasant stay at our parks and in the outdoors."

"Something that can continue to be implemented for an extended period of time."

"It's a philosophy...carrying out operations in a way that's efficient, effective, and consistent with preserving/conserving natural resources."

"Can we afford it? Can we effectively support it with limited staff? Is the effort worth the results?"

"Managing the park in a way that is safe and enjoyable to the public, but with the least amount of impact on the environment or ecosystem of the park."

"Saving resources"

"Balancing environmental, social and economic impacts"

"Meeting today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs."

"Operating efficiently and in a manner that is effective long term"

"Utilizing science-based solutions to solve current environmental issues with little to no increase in overhead or resource usage."

"Managing available resources in a way that doesn't deplete their availability or use"

"practices we put in place to ensure the parks existence. Also, at this park taking land that was once farmed and returning it to its intended purpose"

"To be able to use over and over again."

"To maintain and conserve our natural resources for future generations to enjoy."

"Eliminate single use products"

"Conservation of resources including land, water, energy, and financial."

"Being able to continue at our present rate"

"Overall reduction"

"Viability of the future"

"it's to maintain without depleting the natural resources"

"Helping to maintain the natural areas with better conservation practices"

"For us, sustainability means taking care of the park in a way that keeps it healthy and enjoyable now and in the future. That means protecting the natural environment, maintaining facilities responsibly, and using resources wisely so we don't waste money, energy, or materials. It's also about creating positive experiences for visitors while making sure those same opportunities will still be here for the next generation."

"Sustainability is the ongoing relationship between human activities and the surrounding natural environment, ensuring that parks remain viable ecosystems and enjoyable spaces for decades to come."

"Practice we put in place to ensure the parks existence"

Q12: On a scale of 1-5, how important is encouraging sustainable park-visitor experiences to you? 1 is Not important, and 5 is Extremely important [scale/rating]

1: **0** responses

2: **0** responses

3: **6** responses

4: **7** responses

5: **13** responses

Q13: Do you have any ideas or visions that could lessen the impact of human activity on the wildlife, trails, and/or campgrounds in the park you currently manage? Disregard any blockages that might come to mind

(funding, etc.), we just want to hear your thoughts. [open-ended response, optional]

"I think we have high user spaces for outdoor recreation and then also conserve space with natural areas and preserves; higher use areas utilize park staff to maintain compliance (beaches); on trails offer education on leave no trace and trail etiquette"

"Signage, education, staff to handle the problems before they get out of hand (i.e. wildlife control, invasive removal, trail repairs/markings, etc.)"

"State Park wide recycling program, more public education campaigns in the parks, greater law enforcement presence in the parks, greater staffing levels in general to monitor our land and facilities more often."

"Make trails fully accessible for all users"

"Figuring out a way to have campers use less energy while they're here"

"One vision I have is to design recreation in a way that guides people toward durable surfaces and areas that can handle heavy use, while giving sensitive habitats more space to recover. For example, adding boardwalks or defined gravel paths in high-traffic zones could help protect soil and plant life from being trampled. Another idea is expanding educational signage and programs—when visitors understand why certain areas are fragile, they're more likely to take care of them. We could also integrate "leave no trace" reminders into every part of the visitor experience, from trailheads to campgrounds. Lastly, I'd like to see more native plant restoration around the park and along trails. This would not only improve habitat for wildlife but also act as a natural barrier to keep people and pets from straying into sensitive areas. Overall, the vision is to shape visitor use in a way that allows people to enjoy the park fully while reducing their footprint on the land and wildlife."

"To educate visitors of the impacts from it."

"Limit expansion; more is not always better. would prefer to work on enhancing existing facilities, trails, infrastructure rather than just adding new. I am usually opposed to adding more trails (already have 100 miles), cabins, lodges etc. Prefer parks I manage to preserve the forests, plants etc. and enhance existing trails so they can be sustained. Once again bringing back a division of recycling and litter prevention would save funding by reducing manhours required to clean it up every day. Our beaches are used primarily on weekends by recent immigrants who bring their own cultures and litter education is not a big focus in their countries of origin. Education in multiple languages and funding to target would certainly make a difference. Many users of our parks are new since covid and that is also a group of users not focused on sustainability, litter prevention or even conservation. EDUCATION!"

"Human activity is balanced other than they do not pick up after their animals."

"No"

"Fortunately, this has not been an issue at our park."

"Funding, time and lack of employees. but go through the gorge with wire rope to help keep guest on the trail."

"Figuring out how to keep equestrian riders on designated trails"

"Not allow horse trails which create the most erosion and trail damage"

"Pay attention to what type of wildlife utilize our areas and create a plan to protect the areas used for migration, breeding & feeding. Seasonal closures to help wildlife thrive in areas that are typically over visited. Have a conversation with large projects regarding electrical/lighting and consider the impacts not only to our visitors but wildlife (ex. Darksky international)."