

# CLEMONS CREEK WILDLIFE & RECREATION AREA HISTORY & MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013

## ACQUISITION HISTORY

### ACQUISITION #1

In May of 1983, the Washington County Conservation Board first submitted a Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant Application to acquire 120 acres to be known as the Crooked Creek Wildlife Area. This project would have included the existing Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area had it been funded, which it was not. The acquisition attempt was then discontinued.

In 1986, Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant funding was sought for 110 of the 120 acres (the remaining 10 acres was slated to have a shooting range built upon it, and were thus ineligible). The property was appraised at \$42,000 (\$350 per acre), and the price was negotiated to \$30,000 (\$250 per acre). The Wildlife Habitat Stamp Application was rejected because a purchase agreement was in effect, and the property was purchased from the Virginia Mason Medical Foundation entirely with funds from the Washington County Conservation Board's Capital Projects Account.

A Warranty Deed to the original 120 acres of the Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area was filed on July 17, 1986. The only restriction was to permit the harvest of the existing corn crop.

### ACQUISITION #2

During the spring of 1999, the WCCB was approached by the Washington Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. They offered to provide the local share if the WCCB would apply for a Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund Grant to expand the property by approximately 170 acres. This property was then appraised, and the grant sought and received. The following are the cost break downs:

ITEM:	COST:
APPRAISED VALUE:	\$203,500
TITLE OPINION: (From Quote)	\$400
APPRAISAL: (Already Done)	\$500
TOTAL NET COST:	\$204,400
Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund Grant	\$135,500
Izaak Walton League	\$27,370
Pheasants Forever	\$10,000
Turkey Federation	\$8,000
Washington County Conservation Board*	\$23,530
TOTAL REVENUES	\$204,400

- The net effect was the WCCB acquired this property from the Virginia Mason Medical Foundation without cost. The reimbursement for the local share came through the crop lease agreement and a \$5,000 reimbursement from Ducks Unlimited.
- This acquisition also led to the donation of \$3,379.19 from Whitetails Unlimited, although they did not specify where it was to be expended.
- Restrictions exist on this property related to the Wildlife Habitat Stamp grant.

## **ORIGINAL 120 ACRES DESCRIPTION AT THE TIME OF ACQUISITION:**

At the time of acquisition, the Clemons Creek Wildlife Area was described according to the terrain and vegetation present, upland open area, bottomland open area, upland timber, and bottomland timber.

**Upland Open Area:** The upland open area had the stems of winter wheat present at the time of acquisition. The soils were quite eroded. The area that is now the rifle range was a wet, eroded draw full of young willow trees.

**Bottomland Open Area:** The bottomland open area was a corn field at the time of acquisition. The farm managers were not able to harvest the corn until the ground froze up in December because the area was too wet. No tile were known to be present in this field, and surface drainage was attempted by digging shallow ditches to the South and East into Clemons Creek and Crooked Creek. The largest ditch ran East between the North and South forty acres and drained the hillside from the West. This ditch was grown up to willows, and held water most of the time.

**Upland Timber:** The stumps and tops of oak trees present in the upland timber indicated that a selective harvest had been completed less than 10 years before the acquisition. This timber was hygraded out, with the remaining trees of low commercial value (a few large, poorly formed oaks as well as elm, hickory, and locust).

**Bottomland Timber:** The bottom land timber contained a number of walnut trees that were not quite large enough to harvest (12" to 15") as well as other species such as locust and box elder. The understory contained quite a few Ohio buckeye trees.

**Fencing:** At the time of acquisition, no fence existed along the south border nor the west border of the Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area. A reasonable fence existed along the north and east perimeter of the eastern forty acres. The fence along the east and north sides of the North forty acres was a fence of convenience, and fenced out approximately ten acres of the WCCB property. Adjacent landowner Pete Bell indicated that this fence had been placed that way to avoid fencing close to Crooked Creek. A remnant of an interior fence between the north and south forty acres existed along the timber.

## DEVELOPMENT HISTORY PRIOR TO EXPANSION

The development of the Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area on a year to year basis prior to adding the 170 acres in 1999 is described in the following pages:

**1987** In 1987, several public hearings were held regarding the construction of a combination rifle and handgun range. Attendance at these hearings was quite large, and attorney's and insurance agents ended up involved. In September of 1987 the rules and regulations of the Shooting Range were adopted and published.

The "rifle" range & parking area were constructed as follows:

ITEM	COST
Washington County Secondary Roads Did The Design And Dirt Work:	\$7,608.82
The 100 Yard Range Was Tiled:	\$409.00
The Perimeter Was Fenced & Signed:	\$359.32
The Benches Were Built (Using WCCB Lumber & Labor):	\$245.55
A Culvert Was Added To Access The Parking Area:	\$179.40
<b>Total Cost Of Rifle Range &amp; Parking Area:</b>	<b>\$8,802.09</b>
<b>Donation By The Washington Chapter Of The Izaak Walton League</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>
<b>Cost To Washington County Conservation Board</b>	<b>\$3,802.09</b>

**1990** During the winter of 1990, the first Timber Stand Improvement was completed.

**1992** In 1992, the Soil Conservation Service completed a design for an approximately 16 acre marsh. This marsh design required that a particular distance be maintained from Crooked Creek to prevent impeding the flow of the stream during flood conditions. The United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Washington County Conservation Board each contributed funding to the marsh as follows:

FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT
FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE	\$6,497.40
DUCKS UNLIMITED	\$2,165.80
W. C. C. B.	<u>\$490.00</u>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT:</b>	<b>\$9,153.20</b>

Additionally, the United States Fish & Wildlife Service provided the structure, culvert, & anti-seep collar.

This marsh was completed mid July, 1992. A flood occurred in August or September that topped the levy. When the flood ended, the levy had held and the marsh was full!

**1993** Adjacent land owners Pete & David Bell agreed to use the north border as marked (the fence is not on the line) for purposes of posting the area for public hunting, and to agree that this be considered a fence of convenience and not the property line. If a timber harvest or land sale should take place in that area, a legal survey will need to be done.

**1999** The water level of the marsh was held high through the summer months due to an increasingly developing fishery, with large numbers of bass in the 3-4 pound class, crappies to 12 inches, and bluegills of all sizes. Unfortunately, the muskrat population exploded and their burrowing into the bank resulted in a number of breaks and leaks. Two broods of Canada Geese were hatched in the marsh, and the dozen or so wood duck boxes were 100% utilized (some of them were dump nests). Efforts were made to find trappers to reduce the muskrat population. Although they were somewhat successful, a major decision was made to lower the level once the waterfowl seasons were over and the migration complete. This was done, and a major fish kill occurred, resulting in an outcry from some area sportsmen. The decision was made to manage this area as a marsh from this point forward, especially since it is considered to have inadequate mean depth to support a fishery over time and because the funding for the marsh came from Ducks Unlimited and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service with that purpose.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE 170 ACRE ADDITION TO THE PROPERTY AS OF THE 1999 ACQUISITION:**

The 170 acre addition to the Clemons Creek Wildlife Area lies to the west of the original property. The following information(excerpted and summarized from the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund grant) describes it at the time of our acquisition:

#### **1. PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION**

This acquisition site was best described as a south facing slope of crop ground and CRP acres dissected by a number of wooded gullies. It was bounded on the north by an oak timber, the south and west by a public road, and the east by the WCCB's Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area.

1. There was an old house that was falling down and represented a hazard.
2. There was a hand dug well associated with the house. It, too, represented a serious public safety hazard.
3. The existing stands of brome grass were getting quite weak, and woody vegetation was encroaching on them. The current land owners converted part of this to switchgrass (about 5 acres).
4. The existing stands of native prairie were struggling to survive woody encroachment.

## **HISTORY OF MAJOR MANAGEMENT OF THE COMBINED PROPERTY SINCE 1999**

- 1999: The WCCB took possession of the 170 acre addition in October of 1999. The well was filled and the house buried immediately. Adjacent Landowners were contacted regarding posting or fencing, with appropriate actions taken according to mutual agreements.
  - Further fall and winter efforts were made to remove brush from the remanant prairie stand lying near the west edge of the property. Additionally, the property line through the timber near the north east corner was cleared as appropriate.
  - An Annual Lease Agreement was negotiated and entered into with a Tenant. This agreement generated \$9,877 per year in either cash or in-kind services. Under the requirements of the Habitat Stamp Fund, these revenues must be returned to the property. This included 43.6 acres of CRP Acres, with payments going to the Tenant as the WCCB was deemed ineligible.
  - The WCCB began paying property taxes on the leased ground.
- 2000 The WCCB enrolled two plots totaling 10.5 acres into the CP33 Program which providing funding assistance for creating three small wetlands, seeding, and a host of other developments.
- 2001 The WCCB added the Clay Target feature to the rifle range at a cost of \$3,448. Waterways were rebuilt. The Washington County Secondary Roads Department built two wetlands as a bridge mitigation without cost to the WCCB. (See Map For Locations).
- 2002 The pond was built at a cost of \$15,183.
- 2004 The Washington County Secondary Road Department built a wetland located 1/8 mile west of the pond without cost to the WCCB as a bridge mitigation. (See Map For Locations)
- 2005 The 16 acre marsh was rebuilt. This included moving the outlet/water control structure as well as creating islands and various other wetland habitats. The backslope along the outside of the dike was widened dramatically in an effort to curtail the constant issues with muskrats breaching it and causing it to leak. The total cost was \$21,742.
- 2008: The archery range was built for under \$300 due to all dirt work being donated by Delong Construction and most materials donated by the forming Washington County Archers group.
- 2011: The Washington County Archers built a tower which lead to the current Lease Agreement and proof of insurance with them. The tower is thus their sole property & responsibility.
- 2011: The WCCB constructed a pit vault latrine at a cost of \$8,551.

## **MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY & INFORMATION:**

The Conservation Area Management Objective has been adopted and in place for the Clemons Creek Wildlife & Recreation Area since it was acquired.

The Shooting Ranges (Rifle, archery, clay target) have specific access and certification requirements created in conjunction with insurance agents, attorneys, and public officials. The current rules and regulations are provided with this document.

The archery tower is owned and operated by Washington County Archers, Inc. They are required to provide annual proof of insurance for this structure as well as their public events. A copy of this Lease is included with this document.

**FINAL NOTE:** Any development considerations on the 170 Acre Addition are legally obligated to be in compliance with the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant agreement which applies there.