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For Immediate Release

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Bill Yeck Park Expands to Include Historic Smith Farm

When it comes to preserving parkland, vision, good planning and patience can result in rewards for the community. Earlier this fall, the Centerville-Washington Park District completed a land purchase that has been in the works for 17 years.

In 1992, Park Commissioners Bill Yeck, Harvey Smith and Bob Miller started working on a master plan for expanding Sugar Valley Park, now known as Bill Yeck Park. They discussed an idea with Victor and Mary Jane Smith, which would one day preserve their historic 1800s home and farm as an addition to Bill Yeck Park. After 17 years of negotiations, planning and setting aside money in a land acquisition fund, the Park District recently purchased the 37-acre farm located at 2230 E. Centerville-Station Road. This now makes Bill Yeck Park the district's largest nature park at 194 acres.

“In the next several months, the district will revisit the master plan developed by the Park Commissioners in 1992 and begin to formulate a development plan to incorporate the new area into the existing park,” said Kim Birdseye, Park Board President. “The main focus for this new area is the same as the rest of Bill Yeck Park – nature, history & education.”

The overall goal of the master plan is to preserve a unique natural area, keep alive the history of early industry and of a major pioneer farm and to encourage and support historical, ecological and land-oriented citizen organizations while interpreting nature in creative and experimental ways not offered elsewhere. In their publication *A Sense of Place*, the Centerville-Washington Township Historical Society described the early history of the house as The William Reeder House, dating back to 1804.

“Although Bill Yeck, Victor Smith and Mary Jane Smith are no longer with us, their vision and determination has resulted in an important piece of property being preserved for residents to enjoy nature and history forever,” said Carol Kennard, Park District Director. “The Park District is working closely with the Smith and Yeck families to ensure the new park area preserves the ideas envisioned by them.”

The 37-acre parcel, identified as the Central Core in the master plan, is the keystone of the Bill Yeck Park complex. It is almost completely surrounded by parkland and lies in the center of the “big loop” formed by the Sugar Creek valley. It will provide the main public access to the most spectacular areas of Bill Yeck Park. Forest Field Park is just west of the Smith parcel.

The mission of the Centerville-Washington Park District is to provide quality parks, outdoor recreation, and education while preserving open space. For further information about this and other parks in the district, contact the Centerville-Washington Park District at (937) 433-5155 or visit the website, www.cwpd.org.

Photo: Victor and Mary Jane Smith house, now a part of Bill Yeck Park

