



City Forest Credits Preservation Project Application

1. Project Name

Hemlock Ridge Forest

2. Project Operator

Provide name of organization/entity and contact information

Organization/Entity: Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Address: 3850 Chagrin River Road

City: Moreland Hills

State: Ohio

Zip: 44022

Contact(s): Sarah Blakely

Ellen Matlock

Phone: 440-528-4165

440-528-4159

Email: sblakely@wrlandconservancy.org

ematlock@wrlandconservancy.org

3. Project Location

Project must be in or adjacent to one of the following. Describe which one of the criteria the project meets and provide the name of the city, town, or jurisdiction where project is located.

Provide the parcel numbers.

- "Urban Area" per Census Bureau maps
- An incorporated or unincorporated city or town
- A planning area for a regional metropolitan planning agency or entity
- Land owned, designated, and used by a municipal or quasi-municipal entity for source water or watershed protection
- A transportation or utility right of way through one of above

The project is located in Concord and Leroy Townships, Lake County, Ohio and is along the boundary of the Cleveland Urban Area per the Census Bureau map. The parcels directly adjacent to the Project Area across the Grand River are included in the Cleveland Urban Area.

Address: Property Centroid: 41.705984, -81.188184

Parcel Number(s): 08A009000050, 08A009000040, 08A009000030,
07A0270000090, 07A0350000050, 07A0340000160

4. Project Description

Provide short narrative of the project goals, Project Area acreage, land ownership, forest characteristics, and land use/zoning. Provide details about when the property was acquired or potential timeline for acquisition. Include information about when carbon crediting was first introduced into the overall project scope.

The Hemlock Ridge Forest preservation project consists of an approximately 255.2-acre Project Area that is part of a 338-acre property. The majority of the property is forested, and the Project Area represents the portion of the forest where trees are at risk of being harvested and converted to another land use which includes the developable area and the portion of the floodplain in Concord Township, but excludes the steep forested slopes and the portion of the floodplain in Leroy Township. Project Operator, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, is partnering with the landowner, Lake Metroparks, to preserve 255.2 acres of threatened forest as part of a larger preservation effort to benefit wildlife habitat, water quality, green space access and connection, and provide carbon sequestration.

Located along a major interstate, the Project Area is at high-risk of conversion for residential and commercial development. It provides a critical buffer for over a mile of the Grand River, a State-designated Wild River. Surrounding land use consists of I-90 to the south, the Grand River to the north with residential lots on the opposite bank, and a mix of residential and commercial developments and protected forest to the east and west. The property is located in two townships, Concord and Leroy Townships and is zoned to allow for residential development across most of the property; a small portion of the property in Leroy Township is also zoned for B2 special interchange commercial development. In Concord Township, no permit is needed to clear trees in the floodplain. Prior to this acquisition, the Property was being maintained by the landowner with the intention of one day developing it as a residential subdivision.

The Project Area's forest stands range from early to mid-successional and are dominated by a variety of maples and oaks supplemented by black cherry, American beech, eastern hemlock, shagbark hickory, white pine, and other hardwood species. With frontage along a mile of the State Scenic Grand River, this tract of land is strategically located to protect high-quality, regionally significant resources and connect more than 4,500 acres of other parks and preserved lands.

Carbon credits will provide a critical revenue source for the long-term preservation of Hemlock Ridge Forest. Western Reserve Land Conservancy began discussion with City Forest Credits before acquiring the property in 2020, with the intent to register the carbon project and record a conservation easement protecting the forest in perpetuity. Erie Land Resources LLC (ELR LLC), an Ohio limited liability company of which Western Reserve Land Conservancy is the sole member, purchased the Property from a bankruptcy auction in 2020 to temporarily secure it from development or logging. ELR LLC assumed considerable risk acquiring the property without a guarantee of a conservation organization being able to quickly purchase and protect this unique property. When considering the feasibility of going at-risk to preserve the Property and its high-quality forest, the carbon credit potential was a contributing factor in the approval decisions to purchase the property without a clear funding path. Lake Metroparks and the Land Conservancy partnered to secure funding for the Metroparks' eventual acquisition of the property in December 2022 with a conservation easement also recorded in December 2022. The Hemlock Ridge Forest is now owned and managed by Lake Metroparks and protected by a conservation easement held and stewarded by Western Reserve Land Conservancy. The Metroparks has agreed to the Land Conservancy's retention of the carbon credit rights as documented in the deed restrictions.

5. Project Impacts

Provide short narrative of the environmental, social, and health impacts this project will achieve. Examples include how the project addresses increased access to green spaces for under-resourced communities,

flood control or watershed protection, benefits for human health and well-being, improved recreation opportunities, or protects bird and wildlife habitat.

Watershed protection: The Project Area is adjacent to more than 1.1 miles of the Grand River and provides buffer for the State-designated Wild River. The Project Area's preserved forest habitat is critical to the health of the 15 identified headwater tributaries that flow through the property. The property's high-quality habitat and location have resulted in its identification in several regional plans as an important piece of land to protect the water quality of the Grand River.

Increased green space access: The property will be managed as a passive-use park and be open to the public only a few miles from the City of Painesville, Ohio. The property will also provide access to a currently inaccessible 280-acre property also owned and managed by Lake Metroparks, and it will connect 1,388 contiguous protected acres along the Grand River. This is a unique chance to fill in a gap in public, preserved areas. Visitors will be able to fish, hike, and paddle a large block of forested parkland.

Wildlife habitat: The Project Area's large block of undisturbed forest habitat provides critical wildlife habitat that is made more unique by its proximity to a high-quality main tributary to Lake Erie. The Grand River is one of the few high-quality streams which still supports populations of freshwater mussels. A review of the Ohio Natural Heritage Database identified two federally-listed and three state-listed species in a mussel bed on the property. In addition, four state-listed bat species, three federally-listed flora species, a federally-listed fish species, and two state-listed bird species are associated with the project site. In addition to protecting the high-quality water resources onsite, the forest plays a crucial role in sustaining wildlife. A stated objective of Ohio's Forest Action Plan is to sustain oak-dominated forests to support biological diversity. Nut-producing trees, like the oaks and hickories found in the Project's forest stands, play a critical nutritional role for wildlife.

6. Additional Information

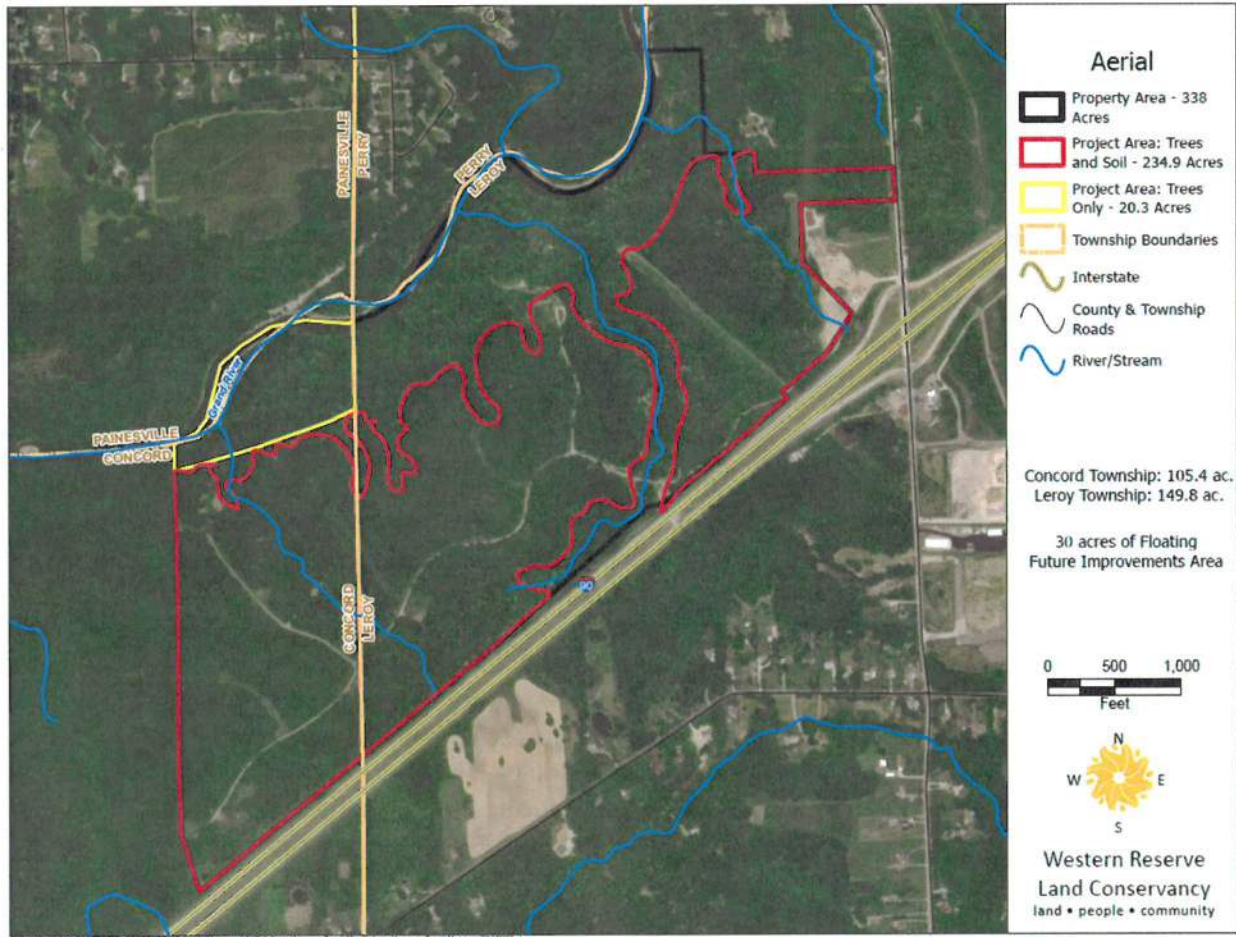
Provide additional information about your project. If the Project Area is part of a larger program or preservation effort, include one sentence with more information. Examples include collaboration with other partners to preserve forestland or how this project fits into a regional initiative.

This preservation project represents years of dedicated effort to protect this significant property. The collaborative partnership between Lake Metroparks and Western Reserve Land Conservancy made the protection of the property's forest, streams, and floodplain possible. Adding to the corridor of protection along the Grand River, the property served to advance the conservation goals of many organizations in Northeast Ohio.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy, nationally-accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, is Ohio's largest land trust with more than 70,000 acres conserved across more than 880 unique properties. The Land Conservancy preserves natural resources which provide multiple environmental benefits and improve the quality of life for residents throughout 29 counties in northern and eastern Ohio. Carbon credits are an excellent extension of the Land Conservancy's mission, furthering conservation goals that will benefit communities, increase valuable open space acreage, and preserve critical wildlife habitat.

7. Map

Provide a map of the Project Area.



PROJECT OPERATOR SIGNATURE

Signed on July 21 in 2023, by Alex Czayka, for Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Signature

Alex Czayka
Printed Name

440-528-4180
Phone

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Email