

Lakefront Nature Preserve: Trash to Treasure

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Walking along the hiking trail in the Lakefront Nature Preserve, it can be easy to forget that this park began as a “confined disposal facility” or CDF. From 1979 to 1999, sediments from dredge sites in Lake Erie were deposited in this 88-acre site, formerly known as Dike 14. As the name implies, Dike 14 was one of a series of CDFs constructed after the passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972 prohibited the dumping of dredge spoils directly into Lake Erie.

Some quick facts about the Nature Preserve Providing 1.2 miles of manmade shore access and rising 39 feet above lake level the Dike today contains 5.66 million cubic yards of consolidated dredge material. Left untouched since the last disposal in 1999, all the vegetation and wildlife now present in the Preserve has occurred naturally, including over 290 species of birds. In 2004, the site was recognized as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Other wildlife in the Nature preserve includes deer, fox, raccoons and coyotes, along with dozens of species of butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians.

Walking the trail Now open to the public, the Preserve’s 1.3-mile walking loop is an easy hike with beautiful lakefront views. On a hike along the gentle pathway in late summer, tall grasses reach above the hiker’s head, sheltering the traveler from the heat. A variety of wildflowers grow along the trail, along with a scattering of immature trees. Insects hum and birds dart in and out of the grass. As the trail nears the shore, panoramic views of the Cleveland skyline can be seen over the tops of the rusted steel panels used to contain the dredge spoils

Future directions for the Preserve. The dike 14 Master Plan of the City Planning Commission of the City of Cleveland identifies “habitat preservation and enhancement as its primary effort and enjoyment of those habitats as the site’s primary use. . . These habitats include wildflower meadows, lowland woodlands, upland woodlands, a group of conifer trees, and a wetland.” Future plans for the site include additional trails, a central gathering area for visiting groups, the construction of a universally accessible ramp to a 30 foot tall ‘raptor’ tower, an observation area at the ‘Beak’ or point of the Park, and an adaptively reused steel structure repurposed as a pier.

planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/lakefront/dike14.html