

THE WEST WOODS is a 910-acre park that protects the historic sandstone ledges of Ansel's Cave, Silver Creek and its watershed, extensive wetlands and mature forests. The West Woods Nature Center is a venue for innovative exhibits. It is Geauga Park District's intent to protect this natural area in perpetuity, and to utilize the nature center to provide quality nature education.

HISTORY

Evidence suggests that the large rock outcroppings in The West Woods may be the legendary Ansel's Cave. According to local legend, Ansel's Cave sheltered Civil War soldiers and munitions, runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad, Prohibition-era bootleggers and Geauga County resident Ansel Savage, who might have temporarily made the cave his home in the early 1800s.

In the mid-1800s, the David Robinson family set up its homestead on land that would one day be part of The West Woods.

In 1933, W.H. Eisenman purchased approximately 600 acres nearby, which he used for maple sugaring and hosting popular parties. Eventually he donated 100 acres to ASM (American Society for Materials) International for its headquarters. In 1961, ASM purchased the remainder of the homestead from the Eisenman Trust.

The West Woods began taking shape in 1992 when Lewis and Ruth Affelder offered the Park District a life estate donation of 85 acres west of ASM. In January 1994, the Park District purchased 192 acres near ASM from Miller & Company. Then, in April of that same year, ASM offered Geauga Park District the opportunity to purchase more than 500 acres. With support from local conservationist William D. Ginn, who obtained a loan for the much-needed funds and spearheaded a successful fundraising campaign, the preservation of this large parcel became a reality. The passage of a levy by Geauga County residents paid back the loan, and in 1996 an additional 100 acres was added with the support of neighbors and friends, making this park a true community treasure.

The West Woods is named after a story first published in 1885: A.G. Riddle's *The Young Sugar Makers of The West Woods*, which takes place where the park is now located.

HABITATS

The West Woods features over 900 acres of natural diversity that not only pleases the eye but also provides refuge for a variety of wildlife. Wetlands, mature forests and reclaimed farm fields provide habitat for a great number of plant and animal species. Ansel's Cave is composed of ledges of Sharon conglomerate sandstone. Silver Creek is a high quality cold-water stream; protection of its watershed improves water quality for all downstream properties and ultimately impacts the Chagrin River and Lake Erie. Geauga Park District has performed extensive restoration of this valuable resource, and tributaries of Silver Creek have become sites for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife reintroduction of the state "threatened" Brook Trout. These small streams are proving to be a successful habitat for the trout.



Silver Creek on the Pioneer Bridle Trail

Several species listed as potentially threatened have been identified in The West Woods, including the butternut tree, closed gentian and blunt mountain mint wildflowers, tall manna grass and Mourning Warbler. Britt Bunyard, Ph.D., found over 100 species of fungi, several rare in North America.

As the forest continues to mature, intact habitat becomes increasingly valuable to wildlife, including woodland songbirds such as tanagers, warblers, thrushes, vireos and flycatchers; as well as Pileated Woodpeckers, Barred Owls and others which depend on sizable mature forest stands with undisturbed interiors.

Frogs, toads and a large variety of salamanders benefit from the abundance of seeps, springs, streams and both naturally occurring and created wetlands.



The West Woods Nature Center

FACILITIES

The West Woods Nature Center houses innovative displays and hands-on exhibits that explain how the geology (rocks) and hydrology (water) of Geauga County gave rise to the area's diverse natural communities.

Two picnic shelters are available for reservations. Both include electricity and nearby restrooms. The Lewis & Ruth Affelder House is utilized for small group nature education programming, and is available by permit only to educational, conservation and civic groups.

TRAILS

There are currently nearly 7 miles of trails in The West Woods, traversing through woodlands, across streams and past outcroppings of Sharon conglomerate. Enjoy the Discovery Trail, which leads visitors past vernal pools; take the Trout Lily Trail to Sunset Overlook; or follow Neighbors Way from the nature center to the picnic shelters.

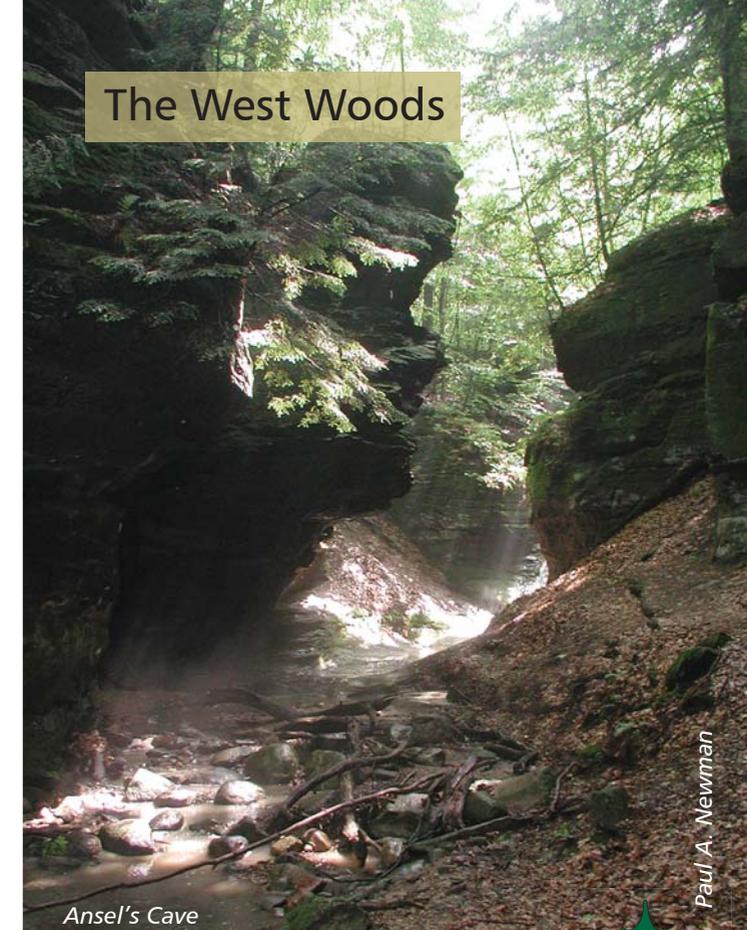
 The Pioneer Bridle Trail is open to horseback riders and hikers, making a large loop west of the nature center and connecting to the Music Street Link and Affelder Link trails. Horse trailer parking is available in the north parking lot.

 Ansel's Cave Trail leads from the picnic shelter area to Ansel's Cave. Ansel's Cave Link Trail provides additional access to and from the nature center.



Boardwalk on the Ansel's Cave Trail

The West Woods



Ansel's Cave

Paul A. Newman

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT



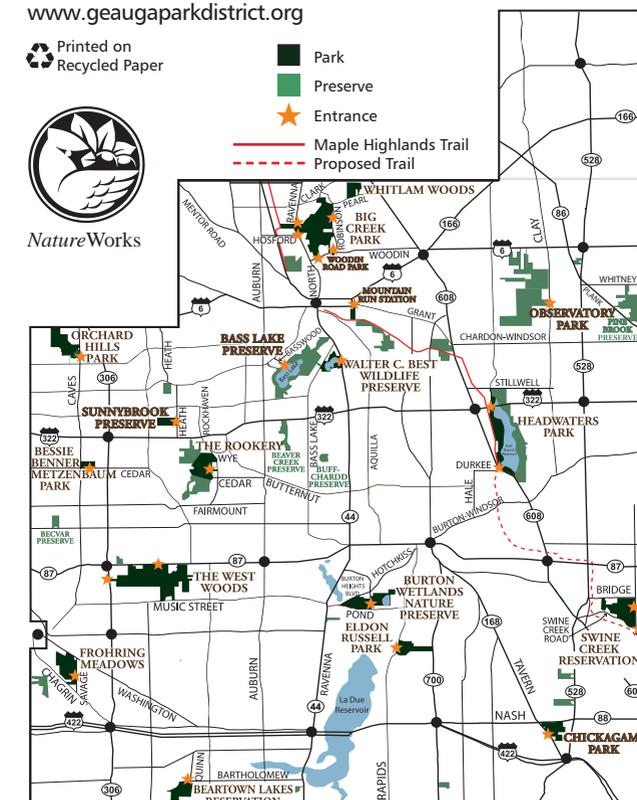
GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT

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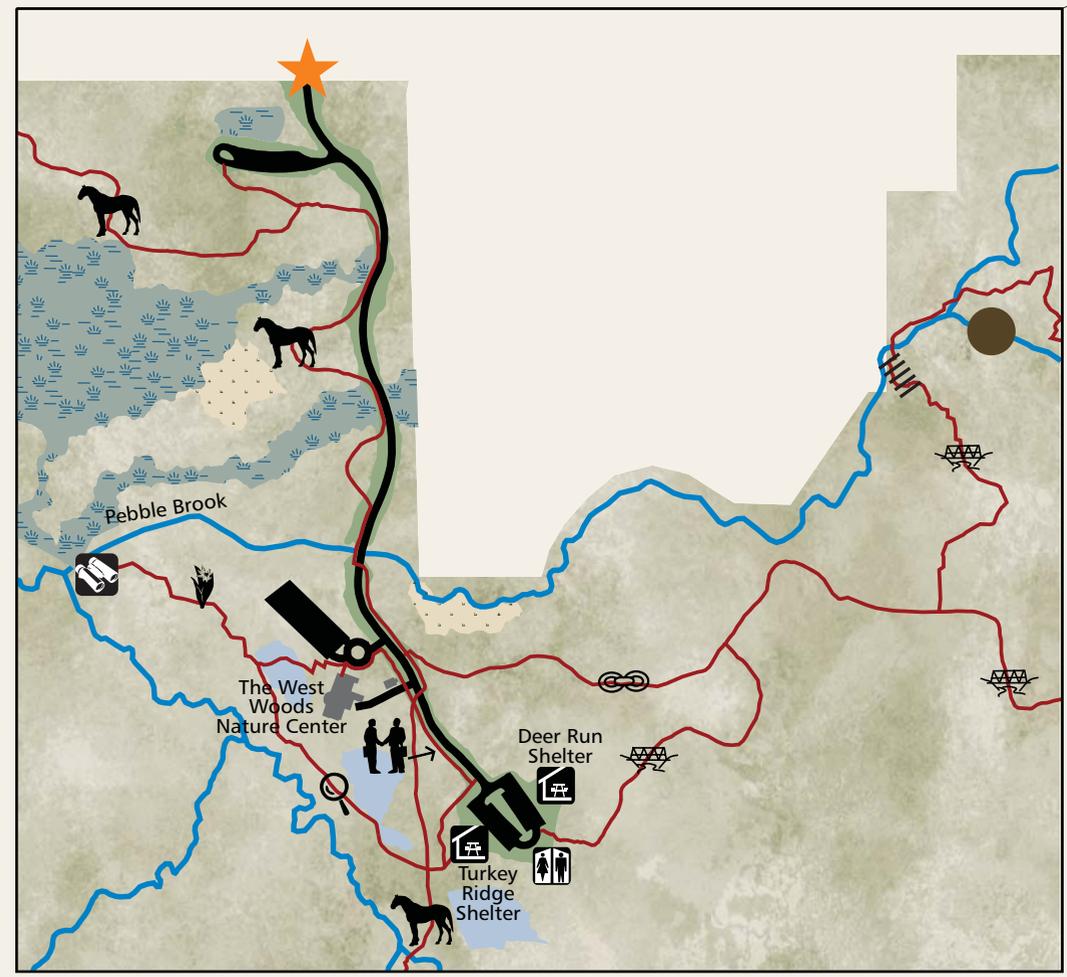
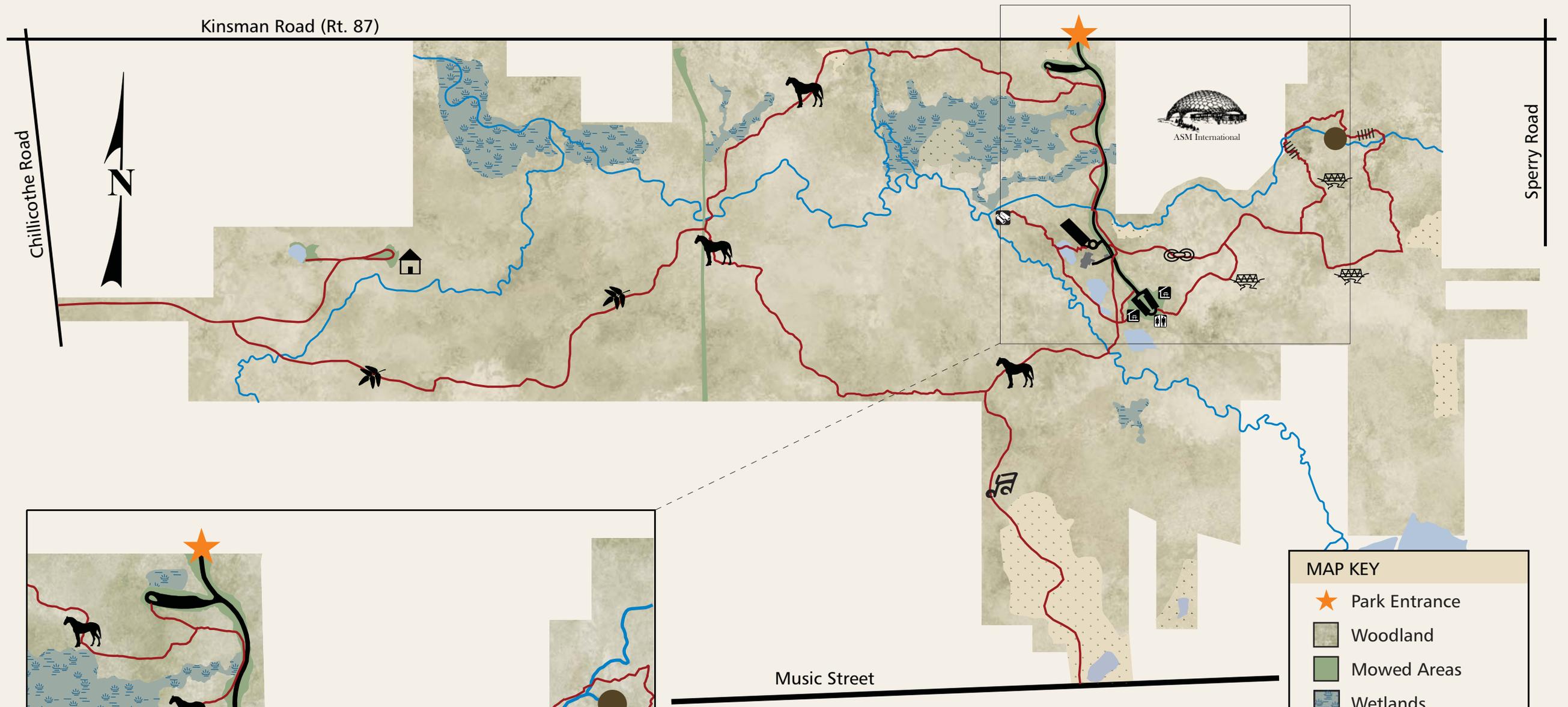
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NatureWorks



The West Woods Lat: N 41 27.779 Long: W 081 18.251 10M0811



TRAILS					MILES
	Ansel's Cave Trail				1.5
	Neighbors Way				.1
	Ansel's Cave Trail Link				.2
	Discovery Trail				.3
	Pioneer Bridle Trail				2.7
	Trout Lily Trail				.1
	Music Street Link				.7
	Affelder Link				1.1

* portions of trail not suitable for skis ** horses not permitted on portions of trail

MAP KEY

- Park Entrance
- Woodland
- Mowed Areas
- Wetlands
- Meadow/Shrub
- Vernal Pool
- Ansel's Cave
- Stairs
- Sunset Overlook
- Affelder House
- Restrooms

PICNIC AREAS

- Deer Run Shelter
- Turkey Ridge Shelter