



Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Water Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 92-4

The Ohio Canal System

On July 1, 1989, responsibility for Ohio's state-owned canal systems was transferred by statute from Ohio's Department of Administrative Service to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Within the DNR, the Division of Water has the responsibility for operation, maintenance and management of the canals and associated dams and hydraulic structures. The Office of Real Estate and Land Management within DNR is responsible for issuing land leases, licenses for utility crossing of the canals and sale of abandoned canal land. Land which has no potential for recreation, wildlife, water supply, flood control and drainage purposes or could not be preserved for its historical significance is assessed for sale potential. The feeder reservoirs which were constructed to supply water to the various canal systems were previously placed under the control of the DNR beginning with Licking Reservoir (Buckeye Lake) in 1894. Subsequently, these canal feeder reservoirs, (Portage Lakes, Grand Lake St. Mary's, Indian Lake, Lake Loramie, Summit Lake, Guilford Lake) were to be used for public recreation purposes and continue as such to the present day.

Laws Governing the Canals:

The following sections of the Ohio Revised Code govern the care, use and disposition of the state's canal systems.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
1521.01	Defines "Canal Lands".
1520.02	Give authority for canals to Director of DNR for sale, lease and other disposition of canal lands; provides authority for transfer of canal lands to specific agencies outside DNR.
1520.03	Gives authority for operation and maintenance of canal systems to Director of DNR and authority to lease or sell water from canals and canal reservoirs.
1520.04	Provides for voiding land and water leases for delinquent accounts.

1520.05 Created Canal Lands Fund for deposits of revenues and royalty payments.

1521.08 Provides authority for Division of Water to act on behalf of the Director of DNR to protect, operate, maintain, and keep in repair the canal systems of Ohio.

Chapter 1519. of the Ohio Revised Code covers development and maintenance of a statewide trails system. The statutes under this chapter of Ohio law cover trails which are located on portions of the canal systems throughout the state.

Operation and Maintenance:

The Division of Water has field offices at Grand Lake St. Marys State Park on the Miami and Erie Canal and in downtown Akron on the Ohio and Erie Canal for operation and maintenance of the canal system.

One of the primary functions of the Division of Water canal operations is to supply raw water to various users. These include public utilities, industry, commercial businesses, fish farms, public water supplies, and public and private fire protection units. All users of water from the canal systems and canal reservoirs must have a lease with the Division of Water. A fee for the water is charged unless the usage is by a public agency with no revenue generated. Revenue from water sales and leasing partially covers the expense of operation and maintenance of the canal system.

Maintenance of a routine nature includes mowing, brush cutting, tree removal, bank maintenance for erosion and leaks, towpath surface maintenance, and dredging. All gates and hydraulic structures must be maintained in working order. Signs, fences, gates, and other devices for control of public access must also be maintained. Major maintenance and repair of bank failures is also performed on an emergency basis.

Continued on back!

The St. Marys operation office controls the flow of water over a 26 mile section of the Miami and Erie Canal. This is done through a combination of uncontrolled spillways and operation of several gate structures. Control of flood water flows not only protects the canal, but also prevents flooding of residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural lands along its route.

The Akron operation office must control the flow of water from the Portage Lakes, a complex system of seven lakes, and through the Ohio and Erie Canal. The Portage Lakes system is formed by five earthen dams. The operation of outlets and spillways throughout this system is extremely important. This is done to control local drainage and to pass flood flows. Lake level control is also necessary to prevent water from flowing over these earthen dams, an occurrence which could lead to disastrous failures.

Recreation:

The canals are used extensively for recreation. Fishing, hiking, canoeing, jogging, bicycling, horseback riding, and enjoying nature are among the many recreational

uses. These recreational uses are occurring along sections of the canal that have not been fully developed for recreation as well as in many state and local parks. Toledo Metroparks, Cleveland Metroparks, Akron Metroparks, the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, several local village parks and historical sites, and other county park districts maintain facilities along Ohio’s canals.






Wildlife Conservation:

The public realizes an additional benefit from the unmanaged sections of the canal system. Most of these sections are in rural settings or have become overgrown if in urban areas and provide excellent wildlife habitat. Both watered and unwatered sections of the canal provide an environment beneficial to wildlife. For additional information please contact:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
 Division of Water
 Canal Lands/Hydraulics Operations
 2045 Morse Road
 Columbus, Ohio 43229-6605
 Voice: (614) 265-6731 Fax: (614) 447-9503
 Website: <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/water>

Between 1825 and 1847 the State of Ohio constructed 1000 miles of canals and feeder canals, 33,000 acres of reservoir surface area, 29 dams across streams, 294 lift locks, 44 aqueducts and many smaller structures at a cost of about 16 million dollars. The network of navigable canals provided a system of economical transportation where none had previously existed. The young state with its isolated frontier economy was transformed almost overnight. The canals opened many markets for its agricultural and industrial products, and attracted thousands of immigrants to the state. Today only a few of the deep excavations, the high earthen embankments and the massive structures of timber and cut stone are left to remind us of our debt to those who built Ohio’s first transportation system.

Map Key

-  Canals
-  Feeder Canals
-  Canal Reservoirs
-  Low Dams
-  Operating Facilities

