

MILLS CREEK FLOODPLAIN ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Why is this project important?

In 2016, the EPA designated Mills Creek an impaired stream due to excessive nutrient pollution within the watershed. The Mills Creek Floodplain Enhancement Project seeks to improve water quality by creating specialized areas outside of golf play that allow excess water from the creek to flow, sediments to settle, and native vegetation to thrive. This benefits golfers and local wildlife by decreasing flood severity on the course, reducing the sediment and nutrient load that enters Lake Erie, and improving habitat for native plants and wildlife that inhabit the course.

What are the goals of this project?

This project's main goal is to improve the function of the floodplain to assist in filtering pollutants being carried in Mills Creek before they reach the Lake. By creating pools with inlets for water to flow, the construction will also provide increased holding capacity for flood waters in non-play areas of the course. Additionally, reinforcing the streambanks with rock will reduce erosion near play and help to preserve the course. Overall, these improvements should make the water cleaner and reduce the length of closures on the course after storm events.

How was this project funded?

This project brought \$900,000 in funds through Governor DeWine's H2Ohio water quality improvement initiative into Erie County to be used for design and construction.

What will the finished project look like?

Areas outside of boundary markers and adjacent to the stream will be unmowed and may look "wild" but will include many native flowering species that will improve the visual interest of the course. Additionally, areas that flooded before may flood less often or less severely.



Fall of 2025 - Pre Construction

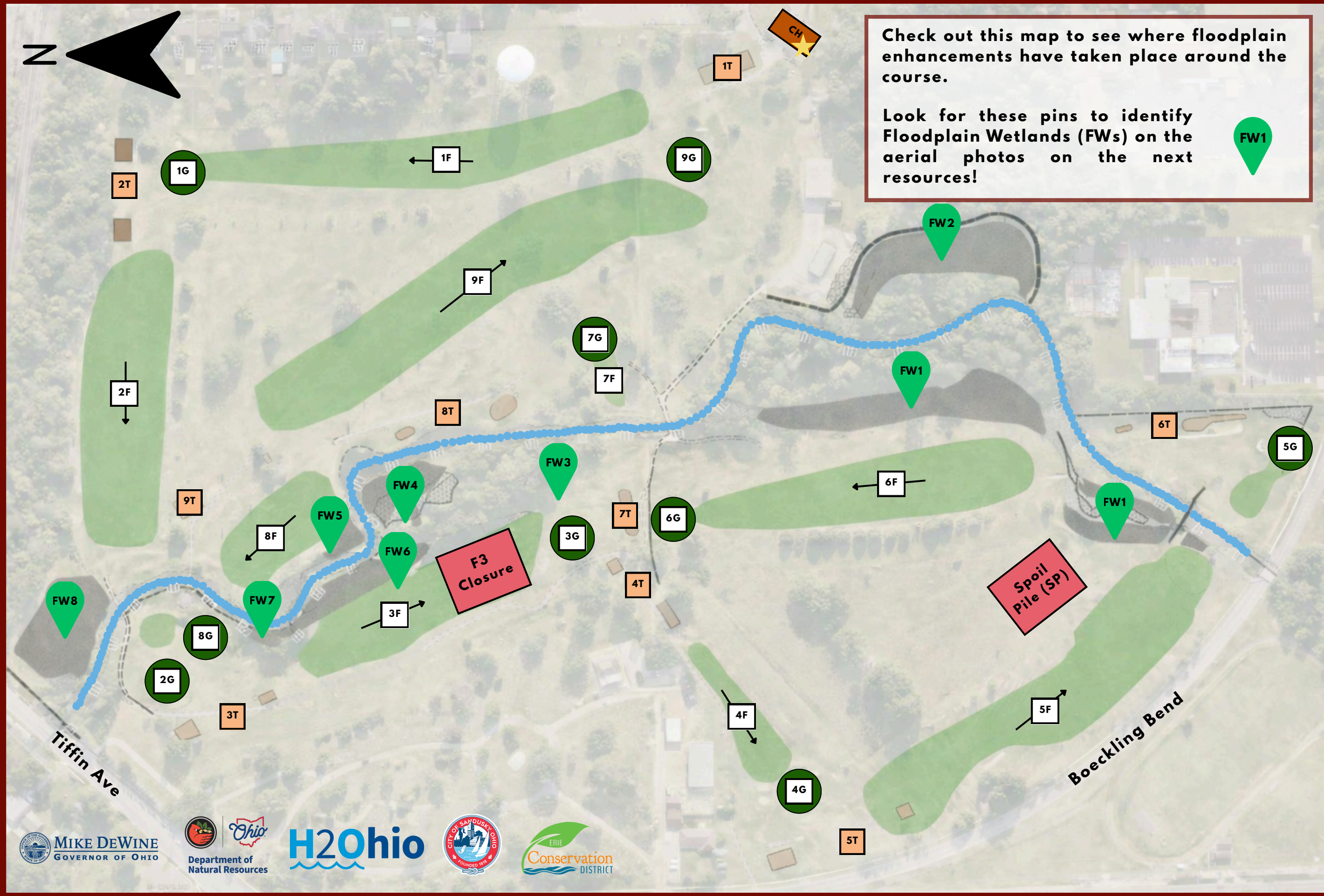


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Check out this map to see where floodplain enhancements have taken place around the course.

Look for these pins to identify Floodplain Wetlands (FWs) on the aerial photos on the next resources!



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How long will Hole 3 be partially closed?

Construction impacts golf play most on Fairway 3. Because it has been raised and regraded, the fairway will flood less than in previous seasons, improving play for years to come. It can take turf grass months to fully establish, and the soil could need over 6 months to settle before cart and foot traffic can resume. Because of this, the hole may be altered most to all of this season. Please avoid impacting recovery by walking, driving, or playing within the fenced area.

When will the project be finished?

Major construction including earthmoving, stream realignment, bank stabilization, and woody plantings were completed before the 2026 season-opening of the course. To boost the establishment of floodplain vegetation, there will also be volunteer planting days in June and July. After these events, erosion control will remain in place until the end of the season and vegetation is established.

What has been planted?

Seven species of trees, two species of shrubs, 19 species of grasses and sedges, and 16 species of wildflower were planted in the floodplain expansion areas! These species create habitat for pollinators, birds, and mammals. Special consideration was given to areas abutting play which have been planted with shorter vegetation to reduce play impact.

What are the project statistics?

- 8 wetland areas constructed totaling 4 acres along Mills Creek
- 2,000 linear feet of streambank stabilized with rock and native plants to prevent the loss of fairways and greens
- Flood protection berm installed near the storage buildings to prevent flood damage
- Approximately 1 acre of Fairway 3 raised and regraded to reduce the pooling of water after storms



Above: designed wetlands and bank stabilization (wrapped in erosion control matting), fairway 3 regrading in progress
Below: designed wetlands near Hole 5 and spoil pile



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How will we measure water quality improvements?

Mills Creek has been monitored by local volunteers since 2011. Over time, we will be able to track creek health before and after it interacts with the project to assess the water quality impacts of the floodplain.

Will this project solve course flooding?

The newly constructed wetlands will provide enhanced flood storage for the stream during 1-2 inch rainfall events. In larger storms (like the one pictured to the right), flooding will still occur, but because of the new construction, water will recede faster and play will be able to resume more quickly than past seasons.

Will this Project attract more geese?

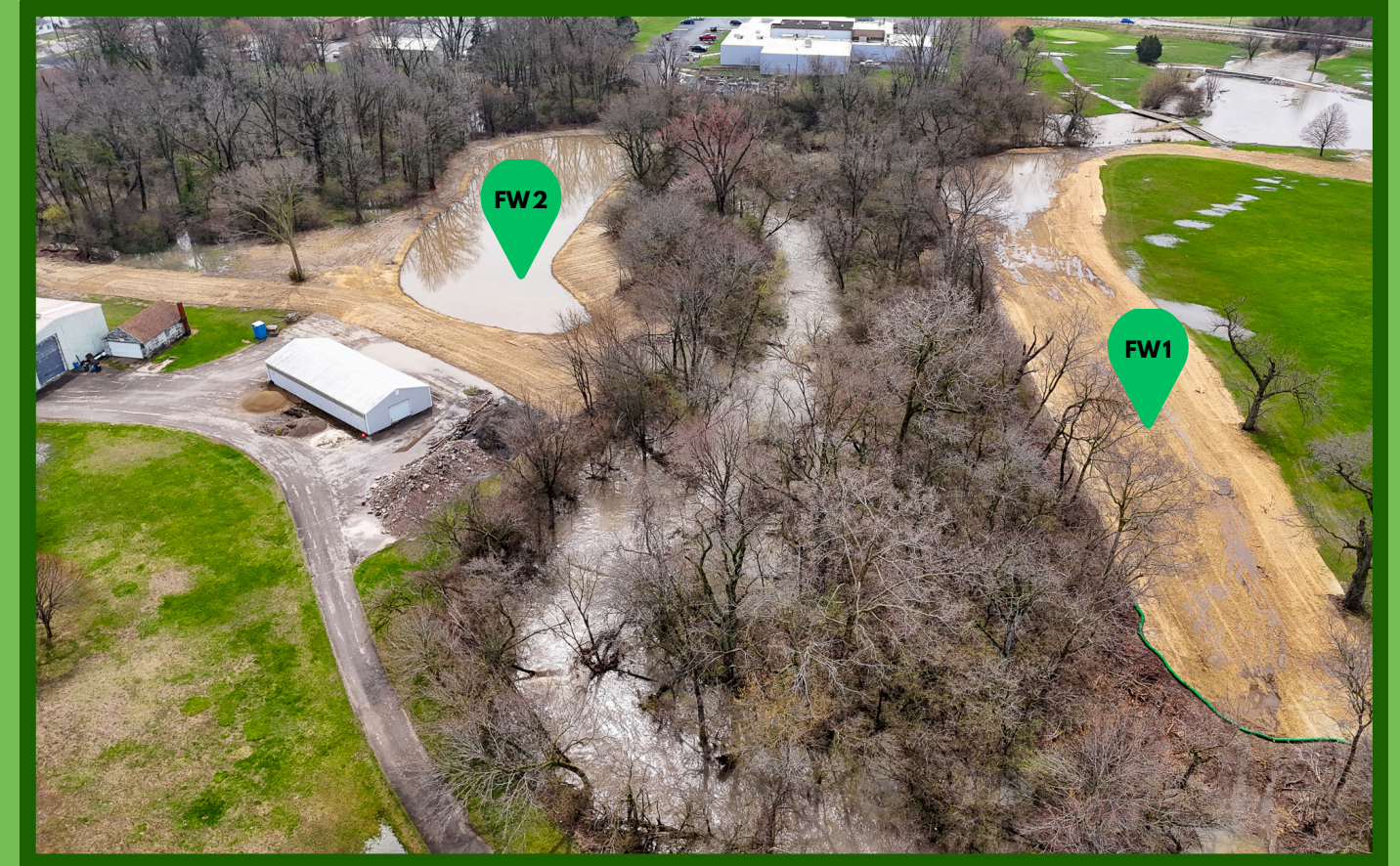
Most golf courses provide the perfect habitat for Canada geese since they prefer open water and mowed grass. This project will create areas of vegetation tall enough to discourage geese in certain areas of the course, as taller vegetation can hide predators.

Is this project going to make mosquitos worse?

Mosquito populations change yearly based on weather conditions such as temperature, rainfall, and humidity. Mosquitos can travel up to 3 miles from their breeding grounds, which include natural areas and standing water in residential areas like clogged gutters, tires, or buckets. While this project will create wet areas that could serve as breeding area for mosquitos, it will also create habitat for natural predators. This project should not significantly change the mosquito presence at the golf course.

Will more golf balls be lost?

Unfortunately, this depends more on the skill of the golfers than the course. Nearly all areas of the project are strategically located out-of-bounds. Still, we understand slices happen - in fact, during the construction of this project over 15 5-gallon buckets of golf balls were collected! Warm up and work on your form to keep the balls in play.



Above: designed wetlands taking in water after large rain event
Below: 4" of rain exceeds designed wetland capacity but remains within floodplain zone without impacting Fairways 5 and 6

