

Park Ranger at Sharon Woods Metro Park

Chedo Milkovich

Mission Statement

“To conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature.”

About the Organization

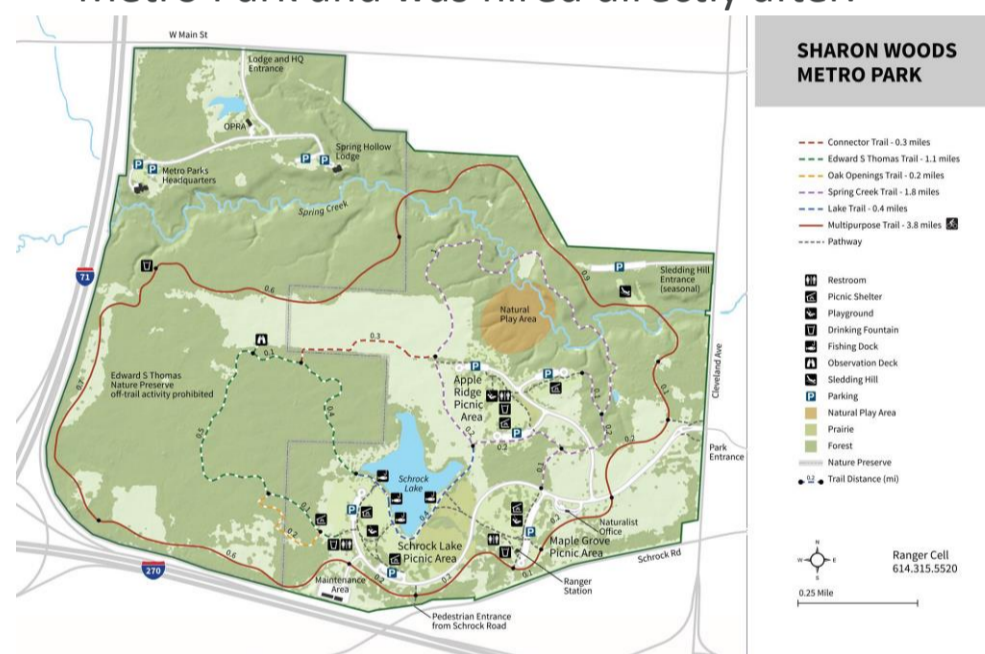
Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks was created in 1945 in order to conserve natural resources and provide natural parks for the people of central Ohio. There are twenty Metro Parks that span several counties, and all have different unique features and landscapes within them. Since Metro Parks is a government entity, nearly all the revenue for the organization comes from the public, with a large percentage coming in the form of property taxes of Franklin County residents. Thus, unlike other many other land or natural resource agencies, the Metro Parks has a strong interface with the public and continues to have broad public support.



Metro Parks Logo

Finding the Job

This position came to me quite organically, as I was taking a class with Larry Peck, the deputy director of Metro Parks, and he offered to send resumes along if anyone was looking for a job with the Metro Parks. So, I had my resume sent to the hiring managers through Larry Peck, and promptly got an interview. From there, I made it into the second round of interviews, which was with one of the managers of Sharon Woods Metro Park and was hired directly after.



Sharon Woods Metro Park Map

On the Job

Sharon Woods Metro Park is located in Westerville, Ohio, about a fifteen-minute drive from Ohio State University's campus, which made commuting to and from work very convenient. Though I worked at Sharon Woods, rangers at the park are also reasonable at Inniswood Metro Gardens, which is about ten minutes away from Sharon Woods. At both locations, consistent duties included general upkeep, patrolling, helping visitors, and opening/closing procedures.

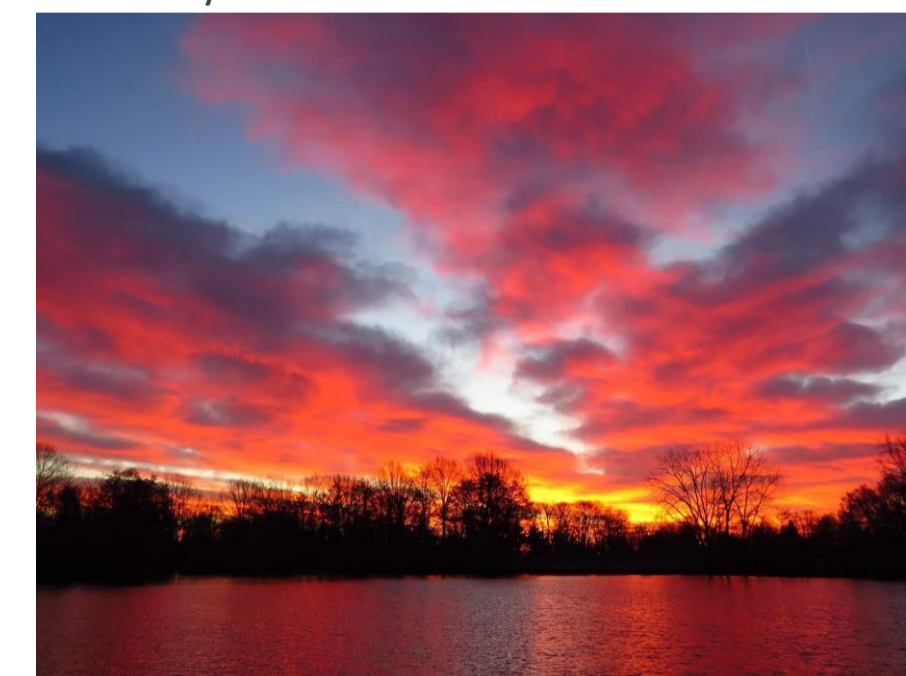


Inniswood Metro Gardens

As a part-time park ranger, my duties varied greatly from day-to-day, as there are several factors which influence park activity. On any given day, there could be lost items, car break-ins, injuries, or anything other potential problem that could happen in a public park. I have yet to deal with any major incidents like injuries or car break-ins on the job, even through the incredibly busy summer months. There is an extreme difference in the job based on seasons, as the amount of downtime in the winter months makes up for the controlled chaos of the summer, especially because Sharon Woods is one of the most popular parks in the entire park district. Starting in the off-season benefitted me greatly, as once things start picking up I had already learned all the basic procedures and routines of the job without issues from park visitors interrupting. In general, the job is a lot of patrolling, interacting with people, and cleaning of both park facilities (restrooms, trash cans) and the park itself (litter).

Reflections

Overall, I have enjoyed my time spent as a part-time park ranger at Sharon Woods Metro Park. I am excited to continue working for the park, as I like working outside and with people, and I get along very well with my co-workers, which I have found to be extremely important in any workplace. I don't think I want to become a ranger full-time, as I think other environmental positions would suit my skills and personality much better, but I'm more than content with the job as a part-time gig. I think I will try to pivot more towards the natural resource side within parks and recreation, as having specific projects that requires research and planning sounds like very rewarding work to me. Beyond base mismatches between myself and the job, the hours were also a huge downside, as I was frequently waking up at 5 AM on weekend to open the park. For any students interested in becoming a park ranger: come with an open mind and be ready to talk.



Sunrise over Schrock Lake



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AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES