

# Uncertain Future for Anderson Township Park



Published: 5/19 7:17 pm

Updated: 5/19 7:42 pm

Environmental concerns have put the brakes on a project to improve a local park. Johnson Hills Park is a scenic piece of property in the [Anderson](#) Township Park District.

Township officials originally wanted to put the lake at the bottom of a draw. This would allow runoff from the hills to naturally fill the lake. The Ohio EPA is concerned about protecting running Buffalo [Clover](#) and Indiana Bats.

The forest in the park does have Shag Bark Hickory Trees, which the bats are known to use. However, no one is sure if the bats are actually there. No one's sure there's Buffalo Clover either.

Also at issue are the runoffs, called ephemeral streams. The lake plan would clear about 12 acres, and right now they can't build it. But there are alternatives.

Township Parks Executive Director Ken Kusher says, "You can't just dig a hole in the middle of a field. The question is how you fill a lake? You have to fill it with rain runoff and if it's in the middle of a field you're going to have a real hard time unless there's a natural spring to fill the lake."

In Anderson Township 20 percent of the property is already preserved as parks and green space. County officials say the park problem is a little much.

Anderson Township Trustee Russ Jackson says, "our park district is trying to put a lake in a park, always been a private preserve, always will be, they're not hurting anyone. All those bats will do is move over a tree or two, one side or the other but this kind of regulation is just overcorrection."

A few years ago Anderson Township received grant money to put in sidewalks along Nagle Road. Along with the grant money came environmental restrictions about Buffalo Clover and Indiana Bats. by the time the township had complied with those environmental restrictions, the project cost them two-thirds more than it would have if they'd never accepted that money at all.

Park officials say one other alternative is to go back to the drawing board on the lake, a shelter and parking lot. Re-engineering the project could cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000 additional dollars. A new plan could also be years away.