

# My Story



## Nature as It Should Be

Erie Bluffs State Park

By Tom Fuhrman, Lake Erie Region Conservancy

*“We see more and more activity as people find out about the park. They enjoy the natural surroundings and freedom to explore.”*



I am very fortunate to have grown up on the shores of Lake Erie. This experience has shaped my life. Prior to the mid-1970s our family cottage was located in the middle of over 1,000 acres of undeveloped



**Keystone Fund Investment:** \$1.5 million

**Total Public/Private Investment:** \$3 million

lakefront in western Erie County. But in the mid-70s that all changed when the Boy Scouts of America sold their 500-acre camp to a private developer. At that point I made a lifetime commitment to protect the 650 acres to the east of us for public access. I made my case to four governors over a 30-year span, became the mayor of Lake City, and in 2001 became a co-founder of the Lake Erie Region Conservancy, all with the sole purpose of preventing the owner, General Public Utility, from selling the property to someone that might not have the public's interest in mind as I did. Thankfully, we were able to convince

the state to purchase the property in 2005 with help from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Keystone Fund, and the R.K. Mellon Foundation.

So today, 11 years after Erie Bluffs became a state park, I'm reminded often that our efforts were well worth it.

We see more and more activity as people find out about the park, and the

most common question is “what is DCNR going to do with the park?” My answer is usually “nothing,” and it usually is well-received. It seems most people are fine with no formal trails, signage, or pavilions. They enjoy the natural surroundings and the freedom to explore and take in nature as it should be.

Who knows how long we can keep it that way?

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