

The banners on the hill represent Girl Scout campsites in North East Ohio which have either been relinquished or are threatened with relinquishment/sale.

Threatened:

Crowell/Hilaka, Great Trail, Lejnar, Pleasant Valley, Sugarbush.

Relinquished /sold in 2009 by GSNEO:

Jessie May, Lycopodia, Singing River, East Palestine Cabin, Wadsworth House, Wintergreen Cabin.

Relinquished by legacy councils:

Lake Erie: Bedford Cabin, Brecksville Hall, Brecksville Lodge, Rocky River Cabin, Ruth Weigand, Margaret Bates. Lake to River: Unalia. Great Trail: Golden Sunrise, Rader's Ranch, Sandonelia.

The story of **Camp Margaret Bates** in Macedonia is especially poignant and instructive. In **1995**, there was a fire at a chemical factory near the camp. Two million gallons of water were used to put out the fire. The water washed through the factory, picking up toxic chemicals, and flowed downstream into Margaret Bates. The camp was immediately closed and stayed closed while safety experts, lawyers, and the GSLEC board of directors debated what to do. Lawyers advised the board that if the camp re-opened, there would always be the risk of liability should a girl ever become ill after camping there, even if the illness had nothing to do with the effects of contamination, and even if no one else at the camp became sick. The council could be sued for everything. So in good faith, and with great sorrow, the board voted to relinquish camp Margaret Bates to protect the future of the council. It was sold to a land development company for 1.6 million dollars. It is now the site of Forest Lake Community on Valley View Rd. There is no trace of toxicity in the land or the groundwater. There are no reports that Forest Lake residents have a higher incidence of illness than the rest of the population.

Moral of the Story: Ask questions. Question whether someone pushing toward a particular outcome might have a hidden agenda. Don't be pressured into unwise choices. Learn from history.

No Girl Scout council is wealthy. Yet we all make choices on how to handle the resources we have. Many councils have made property assessments or are going through the process now. Here is a sampling of some instructive points from the websites of other councils throughout the country:

- Girl Scouts of **Northern California** has a Tents and Trails campaign to raise money for basic maintenance at their twelve camps.
- Girl Scouts of **Connecticut** has, for each of its 18 camps, a pdf including a beautiful map and full set of instructions, amenities, local attractions, takeout restaurants, grocery stores, the emergency numbers, property policies, and the site evaluation.
- Girl Scouts of **Ohio's Heartland** lists each camp with repair needs and the project improvement projects for the year.
- Girl Scouts of our **Nation's Capital** posts this note on the front of their camping page: “want to go camping, but don't have a camp qualified adult? Our resource list enables groups.....to request someone to accompany their troop to one of our GSCNC camps”.
- Girl Scouts **Heart of Pennsylvania** camp page advertises to outside groups camp rentals for weddings, reunions, parties, retreats, homeschooling resources, etc.
- Girl Scouts of **Western Pennsylvania** shows their property assessment process. EACH camp has a full, ninety -plus page assessment detailing each structure and area. The only camps being relinquished truly are beyond repair.

These councils promote camps and camping. Their assessment process is completely transparent and fair. **If they can do it, so can we.**