

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

October 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day at 950 Eden Park Drive. Commissioners present: President Molly North, Vice President Kick Lee, Commissioner Phyllis McCallum, and Commissioner John Neyer. Commissioner Susan Castellini was not present. President North called the meeting to order at 9:06am.

Acknowledgement of Public Comments

President North acknowledged public comments received via email, primarily about the Burnet Woods dog park.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Approval of the September 26 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner McCallum motioned to approve the September 26, 2025, meeting minutes. Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Grant Program Update

Parks Grant Writer, Kara Schirmer, gave an overview of her role and work to develop Parks' grant program. Staff provided an overview of secured grants being managed, grants applied for, grants awarded and grants not awarded.

ACTION ITEMS

Foundation Grants Acceptance: Glenway and Owl's Nest

Parks Director, Jason Barron, presented two grant opportunities from the Parks Foundation, one in the amount of \$290,000 for playground and project construction at Glenway Park, and one in the amount of \$2,000,000 to support technical drawings and construction costs for Owl's Nest Park. Staff requested the Board approve the application for and acceptance of these grant funds in an amount up to \$2,290,000. Vice President Lee motioned to approve the application for and acceptance of the grants. Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Parks Foundation Q3 In-Kind Donations

Director Barron shared a list of in-kind donations received from the Parks Foundation in Q3 2025. Staff requested the Board approve the acceptance of these contributions in the total amount of \$48,502.99. Commissioner Neyer motioned to accept the contributions. Commissioner McCallum seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Sawyer Point Landscape Architect Selection

Director Barron briefly explained the selection process to secure a landscape architect for the Sawyer Point playground and overall site redevelopment project. Staff requested the Board approve the award of landscape architect work at Sawyer Point to MKSK in the amount of \$105,000, with an additional \$10,000 to be held in reserve for contingency. Commissioner Neyer motioned to award the work to MKSK. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Planning & Design Update

Director Barron provided updates on the Burnet Woods dog park, the Smale Lot 23 project, the Mt. Airy bike skills course and scheduled ribbon-cutting, the Ault Park playground, Everybody's Treehouse, Parks' Sinton campus and Biochar facility, the Sawyer Point Playground and site repairs, and work to continue and refine the hydrological study at California Woods.

Proposed Education Fee Increases

Manager of Education, Andrew Bernier, gave an in-depth presentation on Parks' Nature Education program including associated pricing, attendance by neighborhood, scholarship availability, and retention. Staff shared a proposed plan to raise fees for Parks' nature education programs, as they are currently well below fees for regional peer programs. The Commissioners and Staff discussed ideas to serve more residents and improve access to Parks education programs, as well as the potential for increased education staff.

Finance / IT Update

Division Manager of Finance and IT, Herta Fairbanks, shared a summary of recent work to review Parks' current financial structure and to identify areas that can be improved, streamlined, and clarified to allow for better tracking and reporting of Parks' financial activities. Staff developed a phased approach to improve organization of the financial structure, with Phase 1 to be implemented in FY26.

Commissioner Neyer excused himself from the meeting due to a time conflict at 10:41am.

HR Update

Director Barron gave an overview of full-time staffing, vacancies, recent appointments and promotions, and noted that the Fall All Staff Celebration would take place on October 23.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Director Barron presented the following updates:

- The Krohn holiday show, Festival of Ferns, will run November 1 – January 4
- New wayfinding signs were installed in the Riverfront parks, in collaboration with America's River Roots, Kolar Design, and the Parks Foundation
- Parks once again participated in the City Manager's Inflatable Olympics, and received an award for Best Team Spirit
- Events throughout Parks including several Halloween celebrations
- The grand opening of the Mt. Airy Bike Skills Course is scheduled for October 29
- Parks Fall All Staff celebration is scheduled for October 23 at Maple Ridge Lodge

ADJOURNMENT

President North adjourned the meeting at 10:48am.

The next regular meeting date is Thursday, November 20, at 9:00am.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR



[External Email] Public Comment: 9/26/2025

From milesedwardspark@gmail.com <milesedwardspark@gmail.com>

Date Thu 9/25/2025 10:24 PM

To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

 1 attachment (894 KB)

MEP_E_coli_June_2025.pdf;

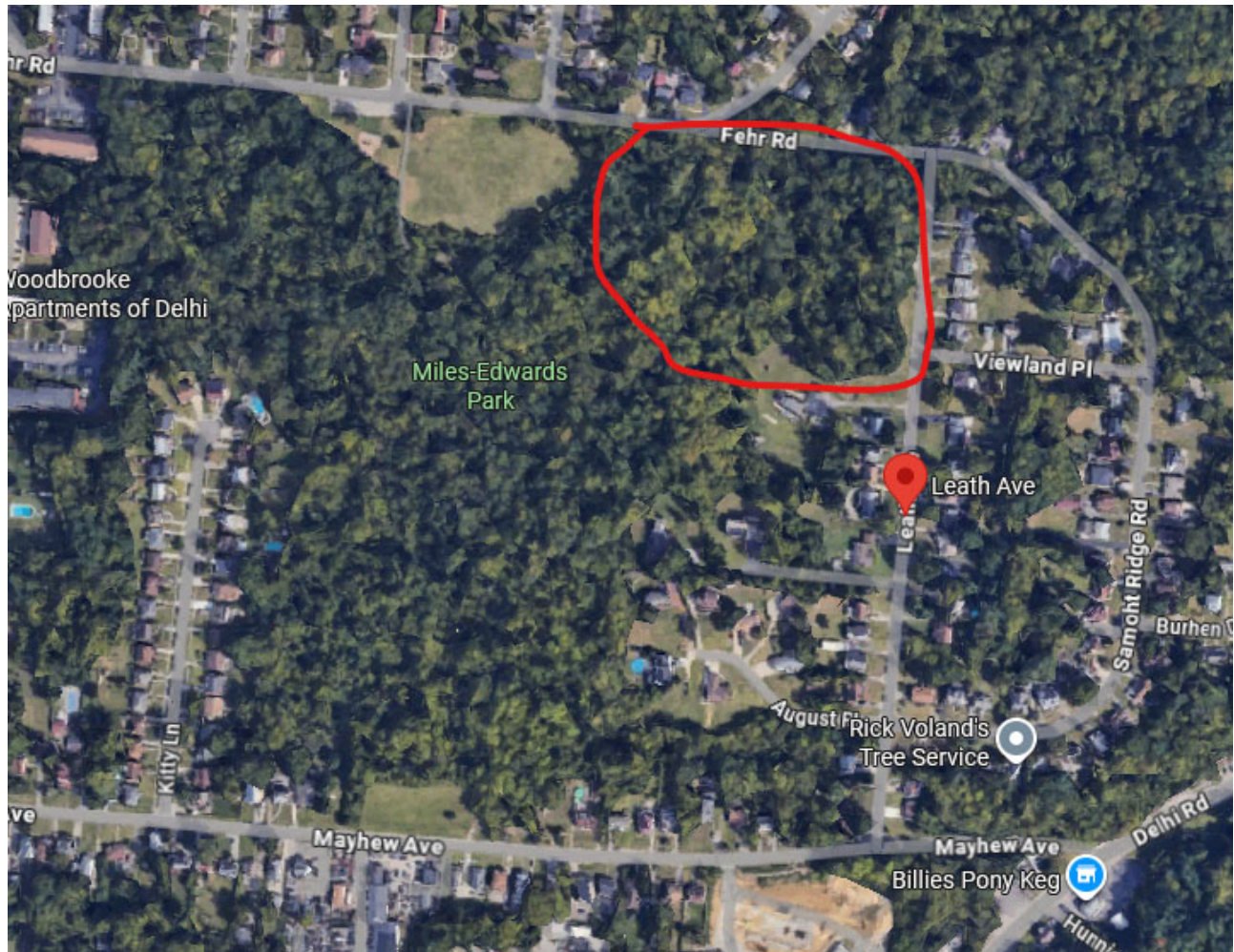
You don't often get email from milesedwardspark@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

My name is Sean Hasenstab, founder of the Miles-Edwards CPAC and this is concerning Miles-Edwards Park.

Several residents who live near Fehr Rd and Leath Ave have messaged me through the Miles-Edwards facebook page that the flooding is very bad in that corner of the park. I have been told of sewage issues in the park in the past, but it seems to have gotten worse. Here is a map of where that is generally

located.



I have also been sent a study done by University of Cincinnati on the e. coli levels in the soil of Miles-Edwards. I was sent the study by Bob Hyland, associate professor at UC. Students did a study in Burnet Woods, and the Burnet Woods Advisory Council mentioned Miles-Edwards to them. Soil samples were taken at a depth of 3/4 inches. Some samples were taken in the area of the flooding, the northeast corner of the park. They found high levels of human and non-human e. coli in several sample locations. I have attached the study PDF to this email.

Other concerns are mainly about amenities.

- If a grill could be installed, as I have seen evidence of people cooking with charcoal on the ground near the swingset
- I have seen it happen once, and stepped in it once, but people are using the bathroom in the woods in the park near the swingset. That should be a safety and health issue. Visibility into the park is a reason I started clearing honeysuckle. A port o potty would be great since there are no longer permanent facilities(there used to be a comfort station)
- The swingset is very old, a modern playground would be a nice addition.
- A pathway around the open field so that it can be utilized for running or biking.

I've also noticed the largest endowment fund is the Miles-Edwards fund. It would be great to use some of that for any of the above.

Thank you

Human *E. coli* Found in Miles Edwards Park Soil

Impact Statement

In April 2025, after high human *E. coli* counts were found in Burnet Woods near aging combined sewer (CS) infrastructure, community partners with whom the students collaborated shared the findings with stakeholders to other Cincinnati Parks and asked if they were concerned about similar problems in their neighborhood park. An advocate for Miles Edwards Park (MEP) in the Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati responded with concern about sewer infrastructure in the park. In response, and with service to the city always a focus, the ongoing undergraduate research project turned its attention to the soils in MEP, and this science brief presents preliminary results to help provide information to stakeholders of Miles Edwards Park

Background

A review of the literature helps contextualize and underscore the public's concern surrounding CSO events in public parks and recreational spaces. Brokamp et al. (2017) have found increased risk of GI-related emergency department visits in children who reside near a CSO and following CSO events. Owolabi et al. (2022) showed that CSOs have detrimental impacts on the quality of air, water, and soil. Additional research has concluded that managing CSOs, particularly small-flow events, is important for reducing spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria ABR bacteria (Honda et al., 2020). Li et al. (2023) found *E. coli* is at peak concentrations in warmer conditions and had a higher concentration in sites with CSO events than those without, a concern given recreational spaces are more likely to be used in warmer conditions as well.

A less well-researched area is the risk of *E. coli* contamination, along with other harmful bacteria and pollutants, introduced to surface soils **not by CSO events but as a result of compromised combined sewer infrastructure resulting from tree root invasion, soil slippage, seismic activity, loss of foundation, flooding and sewer back up, and more (Pedersen, 1997)**. Additionally, high pressure systems will push leaks to the soil surface.

It is also possible that in "dry" conditions, phenomena such as capillary action may contribute to contamination events. Capillary action is the movement of water within the spaces of a porous material due to the forces of adhesion, cohesion, and surface tension (USGS, 2018). There could reasonably be any of a number of other factors at work as well.

Project Description

A growing number of student projects are looking at impacts of aging CS infrastructure on the environment throughout the city. Building on previous studies, this particular project focused on evaluating the presence of human *E. coli* Colony Forming Units (CFUs) in the soils of MEP in "dry" conditions as well as after moderate rainfall. For the purposes of this study, "dry" refers to no more than trace rainfall for 48 hours prior to sampling, as ascertained by approximating from nearby MSD gauges; "moderate rainfall" refers more than a trace amount but presumably not enough to cause a CSO. After some digging on the MSD site, it is still unclear to us if the sewer in MEP is a CSO, SSO, storm, or other kind of sewer, although it smells as though human waste is being conveyed.

Samples were first collected at three locations in the northeastern most part of the park under "dry" conditions; however, this is a heavily wooded location without walking trails and not likely to have many human visitors. To test along trails in the park where visitors may be more likely to recreate, samples were also twice collected

at three locations, one approximately 100 feet east/northeast (downstream) of the MSD concrete sewer rise, one immediately adjacent to the MSD rise, and one approximately 100 feet west/southwest (upstream) of the MSD rise.

Surface soil samples to a depth of approximately 3/4 in. were collected using sterile spatulas and 50 ml. conical viles. Viles were filled to 15 ml. line, gently packed with tip of spatula. Soils were collected from a small, approximately 2in. x 2in. area at each sampling location. After collection, viles were sealed, bagged, recorded, put on ice, transported to the lab, and analyzed using a standard filtration method with Hach m-ColiBlue24 reagents. The primary aim of this project is to provide concerned stakeholders to the park with more knowledge on what is happening with regard to their concerns surrounding the sewer infrastructure in the park.

Results

Figure 1 shows human (blue) and non-human (red) *E. coli* CFUs in MEP soils from three locations in the northeastern most part of the park, near where it appears the sewer infrastructure submerges under Fehr Road.

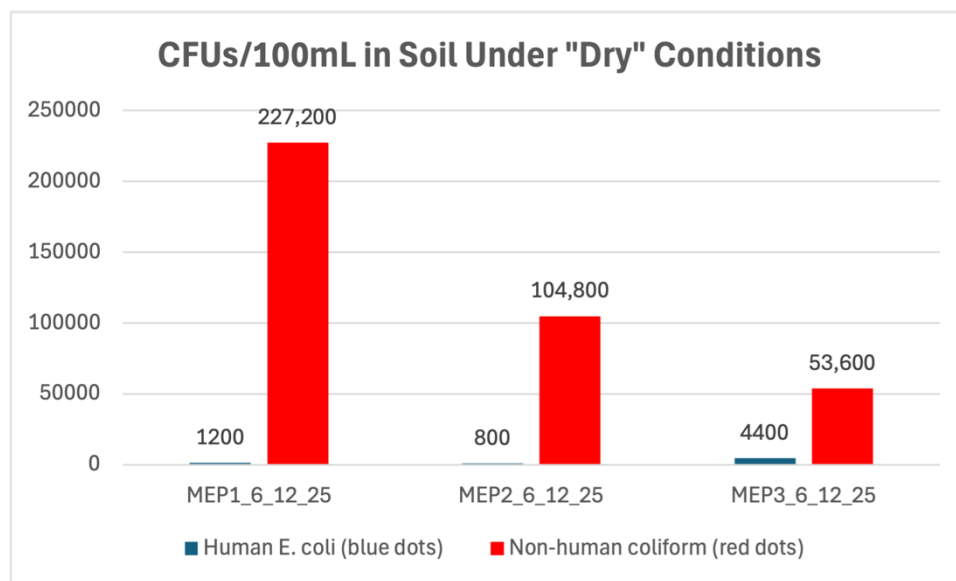


Figure 1. *E. coli* CFUs from "dry" soil samples taken June 12, 2025.

Figure 2 shows human (blue) and non-human (red) *E. coli* CFUs in MEP soils from three locations near the MSD concrete sewer rise. "MEP4" is approximately 100 feet east, or downstream, of the sewer rise, "MEP5" is directly adjacent to the sewer rise, and "MEP6" is approximately 100 feet west, or upstream, of the sewer rise.

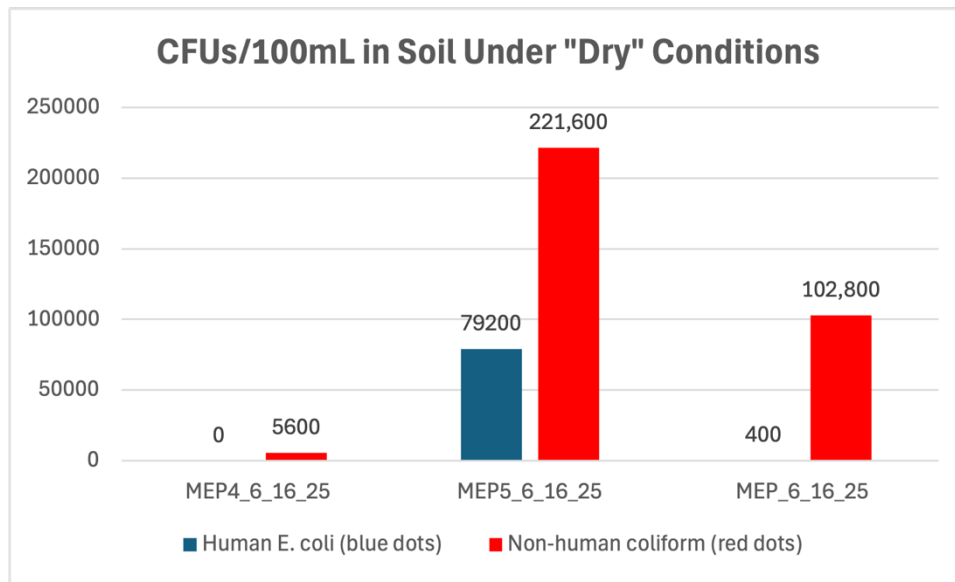


Figure 2. *E. coli* CFUs from "dry" soil samples taken June 12, 2025.

Figure 3 shows human (blue) and non-human (red) *E. coli* CFUs in MEP soils from three locations near the MSD concrete sewer rise. "MEP4" is approximately 100 feet east, or downstream, of the sewer rise, "MEP5" is directly adjacent to the sewer rise, and "MEP6" is approximately 100 feet west, or upstream, of the sewer rise.

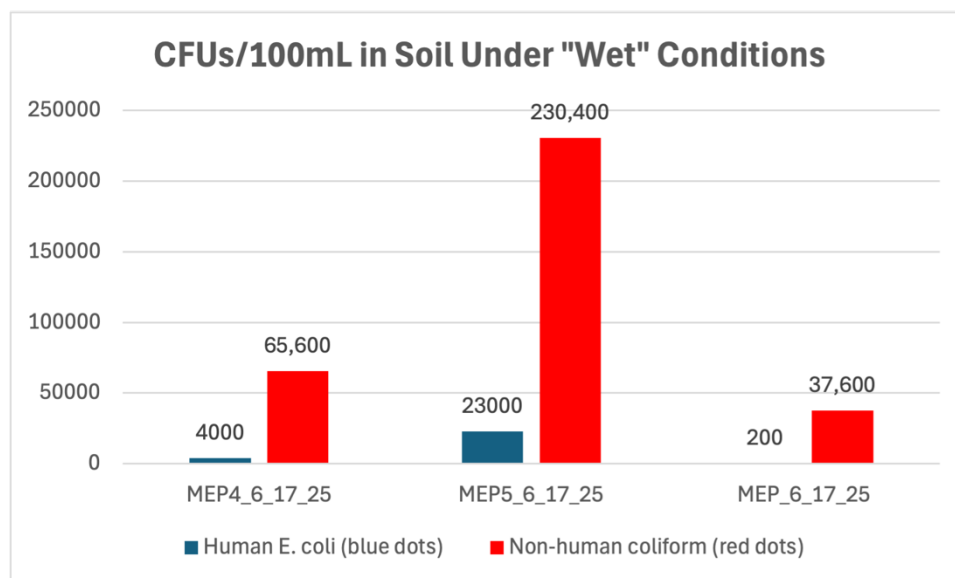


Figure 3. *E. coli* CFUs from "wet" soil samples taken June 17, 2025.

Implications and Recommendations

As an indicator species, the presence of human *E. coli* in soils of a neighborhood park at levels as high as 79,200 CFUs/100mL warrants further investigation. **These results suggest that sewer leakage (exfiltration) may be creating a more prevalent risk than authorities are currently aware, and agree with results found in the literature on the role of small-flow CSO discharges creating conditions that can threaten the public health, especially for children.** These results also suggest that exfiltration may be present in some parks with aging infrastructure and even moderate rainfall may bring harbored *E. coli* to the surface. More research, including dye testing, CCTV, sonar, or some other generally accepted method, of known aging infrastructure in neighborhood parks should be prioritized.

We recommend stakeholders and advocates of Miles Edwards Park contact MSD to determine: a) what kind of sewer runs through the valley of the park, b) if MSD monitors the sewer line for overflows, and c) if MSD does monitor, do they have a confirmed overflow taking place on June 16 or June 17, 2025. We also recommend stakeholders to Miles Edwards Park ask the Cincinnati Park Board what precautions they are taking to protect park users from *E. coli* and other potential contaminant risks in the park.

Student Researcher: Elise Bergeron **Faculty Collaborators:** Ken Petren and Bob Hyland

References

- Brokamp, C., Beck, A.F., Muglia, L., Ryan, P. (2017). Combined sewer overflow events and childhood emergency department visits: A case-crossover study. *Sci Total Environ.* 607-608, 1180–1187. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2017.07.104>
- United States Geological Survey. (2018). *Capillary action and water*. www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/capillary-action-and-water#overview. Accessed June 9, 2025.
- Honda, R., Tachi, C., Yasuda, K., Hirata, T., Noguchi, M., Hara-Yamarua, H., Yamamoto-Ikemoto, R., and Watanabe, T. (2020). Estimate discharge of antibiotic-resistant bacteria from combined sewer overflows of urban sewage system. *npj Clean Water*, 3(15). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41545-020-0059-5>
- Li, R., Filippelli, G., & Wang, L. (2023). Precipitation and discharge changes drive increases in *Escherichia coli* concentrations in an urban stream. *The Science of the Total Environment*, 886, 163892–163892. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.163892>
- Owolabi, T. A., Saeed Reza Mohandes, & Zayed, T. (2021). Investigating the impact of sewer overflow on the environment: A comprehensive literature review paper. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 301, 113810–113810. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2021.113810>
- Pedersen, T.L. (1997). *Contamination of water and soil by sewage and water treatment sludge*. ExtoxNet. <https://extoxnet.orst.edu/faqs/safedrink/sewage.htm>. Accessed June 9, 2025.

[External Email] Public Comment October 2025

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Sat 9/27/2025 7:12 AM

To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Dear Cincinnati Parks Staff,

Thank you so very much for the recent repairs to our "architectural feature" in Burnet Woods, the historic concrete slide. It is a beloved landmark and has been a core memory of happy times had by visitors in our Park for decades.

Your commitment to maintaining the health of the forest is also appreciated. Your willingness to educate volunteers and share your knowledge and expertise is what makes volunteering with Cincinnati Parks so rewarding.

Our volunteer coordinator goes above and beyond as well.

Many thanks to you all for protecting our greenspaces and maintaining the Parks we all hold dear!

I see you.

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods Volunteer

[External Email] PUBLIC COMMENT OCT 2025

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Wed 10/8/2025 7:54 PM

To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

 1 attachment (134 KB)

IMG_4692.jpeg;

External Email Communication

Dear Cincinnati Parks Board of Commissioners,

I am writing to ask that you, as an appointed body of stewards, prioritize the health of our woodland areas which are so vital to all living things.

I realize that not everyone sees the value of conservation, but I am sending a kindly reminder to consider the impact of human encroachment when you are considering replacing any undeveloped natural habitat with man made development.

Please support the efforts of our dedicated Parks conservation teams and volunteers to ensure future generations have the opportunity to learn from your example, and so that they understand the value in protecting our shared ecosystem.

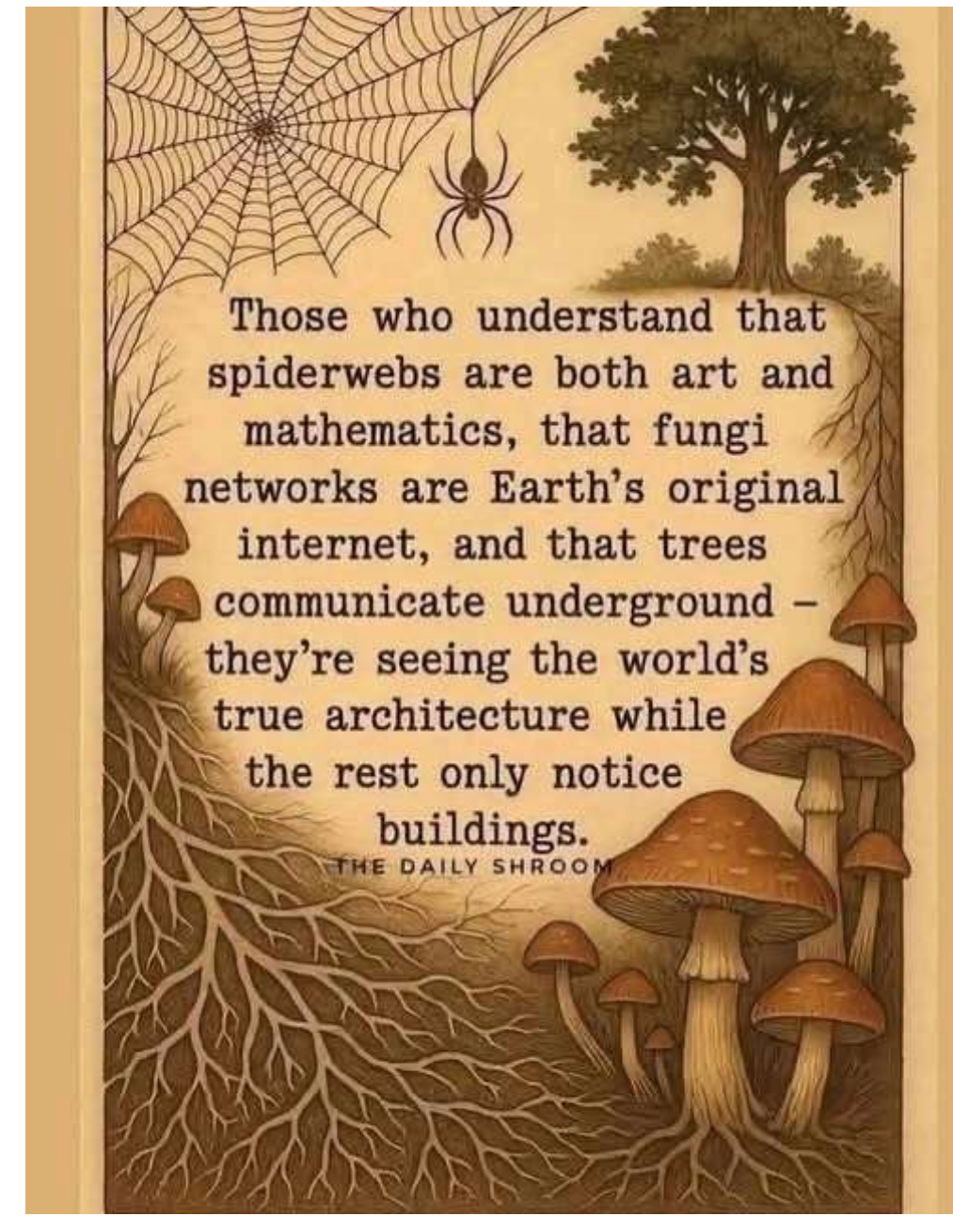
Your decisions have a huge impact.

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods Volunteer

Please include attachment in public comment

A detailed illustration of a forest floor. In the upper right, a large, leafy tree stands. To its left, a large, intricate spiderweb is stretched across the upper left corner, with a spider hanging from it. The ground is covered with several mushrooms of different sizes and shapes, some with brown caps and white stems, others with darker caps. The lower half of the image shows a dense network of tree roots and mycelium (fungi) spreading across the ground, illustrating the 'true architecture' mentioned in the text.

Those who understand that
spiderwebs are both art and
mathematics, that fungi
networks are Earth's original
internet, and that trees
communicate underground –
they're seeing the world's
true architecture while
the rest only notice
buildings.

THE DAILY SHROOM