

## Notes from West Creek Conservancy

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# LAKE ERIE STARTS HERE!

## Your home is the first line of defense for the health of Lake Erie!

Rain and snow melt that runs over your property and into the storm drain goes to our waterways untreated. It brings with it stormwater pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, dog waste, winter road salt, oil and gas, litter, eroded soil, and so much more.

You can help be the solution to storm water pollution and

-  Plant a rain garden to capture and infiltrate storm water
-  Establish a no-mow zone around backyard streams
-  Install a rain barrel and harvest water on-site
-  Pick up after your dog to avoid bacteria like E. coli washing into
-  Properly maintain your car to avoid oil and gas leaks.
-  Remove some turf grass and replace with native plants.
-  Use road salt sparingly and sensibly and sweep up extra.
-  Wash your car on the lawn or take it to a commercial car wash.



Information Courtesy of the good folks at:

[www.cuyahogawcd.org](http://www.cuyahogawcd.org)

West Creek Conservancy asks that after you are finished with this newsletter either pass it on to someone else, or recycle it.



## Notes from West Creek Conservancy A land trust serving Greater Cleveland

March 2016

### Complacency until Crisis?

Whether we're confronting harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie that threaten drinking water, the terrible lead situation facing Flint Michigan residents, the damaging extent of invasive species entering the Great Lakes watershed, or even the devastating floods that inundate our cities....we are reacting to each situation.

Though these crisis situation and events may seem daunting to many or too big for one person to solve we all have to not only recognize and accept them, but we have to *embrace* solutions. Collectively we can make preventative changes that have cumulative effects.

There are multiple little actions that everyone can undertake to *embrace* the realization that Lake Erie starts at home. Collectively, these actions have huge impacts on our drinking water. From cleaning up pet waste, to properly disposing of medicine, to ensuring we're not over-fertilizing our lands, each person/each home can *embrace* changes to positively impact our drinking water. Let's avoid simply not reacting to crises, but rather let's all make the little changes that help add up to safe and accessible drinking water.



Raingarden catching sheet flow from the street

Rainwater harvesting (e.g. rain barrels, cisterns) may seem comical in an area with abundant water, but it's a way to utilize resources at the point of impact, while also considering your water bill. We're a built-out community with lots of impervious areas (e.g. roads, driveways, rooftops), so we're now retrofitting our developed areas; this includes rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, pervious pavement/concrete, trees, retention/detention installations, and other similar green infrastructure initiatives. We're approaching tipping points for our waterways, drinking water supplies, and overall biodiversity. In some manner, we can all *embrace* change that positively affects our streams, waterways, and ultimately our drinking water.



West Creek Confluence soaking up over 60 Million gallons of stormwater and a tremendous amount of sediment!

Similarly, with torrential storms we're seeing where floodplains are REALLY needed and subsequently must be retained - or better yet, re-established. Stormwater flows where it wants to and we need to provide a landscape that utilizes our natural systems, rather than impeding them. Waterways need room to breach their banks and flood naturally. Not only does this help filter our water and its pollutants, but it also assists with groundwater aquifer recharge, limits adverse impacts on aquatic life - and for us, helps to limit flood insurance claims, infrastructure damage, and the tragic displacement of homes and businesses when crisis does strike.

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West Creek Conservancy is a part of the solution, but we need everyone on board as well. We strive to not only preserve remaining greenspace, but also to reclaim floodplains that should not have been developed in the first place. We proudly work with a vast array of community partners to restore streams and other habitat, install strategic stormwater control practices, remove impervious surface. Lake Erie starts with each of us. We are sincerely appreciative of all those that support West Creek Conservancy....and if you're not a member yet, we would welcome your support!

[Learn more at westcreek.org](http://westcreek.org)

**Nature's services are invaluable - and often overlooked**

Do you ever think about bills? Bills for food, for clothing, for a place to live. Bills for insurance, your car, gasoline, and utilities. They seem endless. But what about those bills you never pay—the bills you never received? Have you ever noticed? Nature never sends a bill.

Nature is free. We don't have to pay for it. But that can be a real problem. Because nature never sends us a bill, it's easy to overlook the free services we receive. What services? Wetlands clean our water. Woodlands prevent erosion and flooding while converting carbon dioxide. Nature pollinates crops and generates fertile topsoil. Because of nature we have oxygen to breathe, food to eat, and water to drink. And just what is the value of that air, food and water? How much would you be willing to pay for them if nature did send you a bill?

But nature doesn't stop there. Nature provides recreation, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic beauty for us to enjoy. *The Economic Benefit of Cleveland Metroparks*, a 2013 study by *The Trust for Public Land*, reports that Cleveland Metroparks generates over \$855 million annually for our local economy. Trails and natural parks enhance the value of nearby properties because people like to live and work close to them, and are willing to pay for the opportunity.

But there is a growing problem. Although nature is free, it does get expensive . . . when we mess it up.



A massive Beech spreading its roots




Since 1997, West Creek Conservancy has been preserving woodlands, reducing stormwater runoff, expanding access to trails and parks, reducing erosion, creating public greenspace, reclaiming vacant urban land, and restoring streams and habitats to clean our air and water. Thanks for helping us be part of the solution – the solution of letting nature do all the things it does best.




A forested wetland filtering out drinking water

For countless generations our air was safe to breathe and Lake Erie water was safe to drink; but now we have bills—bills for water treatment, waste systems, pollution controls, medical insurance, etc. Harvard University's *Center for Health and the Global Environment* concluded in 2011 that coal's external costs—including environmental cleanup and treatment of related health problems—total \$500 billion annually. Families are really paying for costs like these through everything from health care to taxes. The "cheap" energy that fuels our American economy comes with significant hidden costs.

Although nature never sends us a bill, we must respect and protect nature. Our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren depend upon it. Nature's processes and places that have been damaged or destroyed can be renewed to once again become vibrant and valuable.



# Celebrate World Water Day





Hands-on Activities • Wagon Tours • Entertainment

**Saturday, March 19 • Noon to 4:00 p.m.**

**Watershed Stewardship Center • West Creek Reservation**

clevelandmetroparks.com • 440-887-1968



The water journey continues to new areas of the globe. Grab your passport and explore the cultural and economic roles that water plays across the world at this interactive, family-friendly event. Enjoy free "globally inspired" activities, food tastings, and a fun photo booth to capture this year's adventure.

Admission is **FREE**

- \* Family friendly activities \*
- \* Cultural Indian dance performance \*
- \* NEORS D Sewer Simulator \*
- \* Guided wagon tours \*

# Watershed Volunteer Program



During 2015, volunteers from the Cleveland Metroparks Watershed Volunteer Program have contributed over 1600 hours to help protect our watersheds! Activities have ranged from trainings on stream bank erosion and stream morphology, restoration projects including tree plantings, seed collecting and cleaning, and water quality monitoring through macroinvertebrate monitoring and water chemistry sampling.

This past fall, volunteers helped plant five different restoration sites, including two West Creek Conservancy sites: one along Healey Creek and the other at the West Creek Confluence. Volunteers also had a bit of fun participating in the Great Lake Erie Boat Float in September - their boat won for the best use of recyclable materials!

As of mid-October, 85 volunteers have become Certified Watershed Stewards since the program began in 2012.

Check out their online calendar (<http://www.clevelandmetroparks.com/Main/Watershed-Volunteer-Program.aspx>), and attend one

# Reclaiming Headwater of West Creek

Through pivotal support of the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trails Program, West Creek Conservancy successfully acquired nearly 15 acres along the headwaters of West Creek, including nearly 1/2 mile of stream channel, strong streamside forests, and above all, function/accessible floodplain!

In addition to culminating in a significant extension of the West Creek Greenway, this effort enabled the removal of over 20,000 square feet of impervious areas directly adjacent to the stream, which had not only exacerbated stormwater and erosion, but also stressed an antiquated and over-loaded storm system.



# For your Calendar

- ♦ April 8 - Henninger House Workday  
Time: 9am-11am
- ♦ April 16 - Henninger (OPEN) House  
Time: TBD
- ♦ April 19 - West Creek Conservancy Annual Meeting  
Time: 7pm, Watershed Stewardship Center
- ♦ April 30 - Treadway Creek Hike  
Time: 10am
- ♦ May 12 - Snake Hill Hike  
Time: 5:30pm
- ♦ June 2 - Trails & Greenway Conference  
Visit: [gctrails.org](http://gctrails.org)
- ♦ July 9 - Up A Creek (the NEW Blues for Greens)  
Call 216-749-3720 ext 12

For more info about the hikes/workdays, email [Jakob@westcreek.org](mailto:Jakob@westcreek.org)

Otherwise, call 216-749-3720 ext 12 and get involved today!

Check out our NEW AND IMPROVED [www.westcreek.org](http://www.westcreek.org)

# NEORSD Stormwater Program Update

In case you're not tuned into regional stormwater management, we wanted to provide an update to Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's Stormwater Program; though temporarily suspended, it has now been given a green light by the Ohio Supreme Court.

Reporting from the NEORSD website, which we suggest you review at your leisure....  
<http://neorsd.blogspot.com/2015/09/faq-38-questions-and-answers-about-our.html>

## Why is regional stormwater management necessary?

Stormwater-related problems must be addressed regionally because what happens in one community can affect another. Often one community addresses a problem and may inadvertently move that problem downstream to the next community. Managing stormwater flows is necessary to protect our natural resources, reduce streambank erosion and decrease the pollutants in streams and rivers. If these issues are not addressed today, the problems will continue to get worse and will be more costly to solve in the future.

## What are common stormwater-related problems?

Stormwater-related problems include the flooding of streets that stops traffic from moving, or the collapse of streambanks from erosion that causes bridges to crumble or roads to fail. These problems occur at one time or another in every community in our service area.

## How is the Stormwater Fee calculated?

The fee is based on Equivalent Residential Units or ERU, each unit equals 3,000 square feet of impervious area. Impervious area is a surface that prevents or slows water from soaking into the ground. Examples of impervious areas are rooftops, traveled gravel, concrete or asphalt paved areas, private roads, driveways, parking lots and patios.

At West Creek Conservancy we are willing to respond to your questions and explain your potential options!

# Make a Difference! Join West Creek Conservancy or Renew Today!

Annual Memberships: New ☐ Renewal ☐

- ☐ Introductory \$35
- ☐ Woodland Steward \$50
- ☐ Trail Builder \$100
- ☐ River Guardian \$250
- ☐ Greenway Champion \$500
- ☐ Watershed Patron \$1000
- ☐ Conservation Leader \$2500
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ \$\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I would like to volunteer

Please make checks payable to:  
West Creek Conservancy  
PO Box 347113  
Cleveland, OH 44134  
or join online via PayPal @ [www.westcreek.org](http://www.westcreek.org)

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

(For NEW members only - Please list the name of the person that referred you so that they can be entered into our quarterly drawing)

Let's continue to protect local natural areas, restore our streams, create hiking and bicycling trails and complete the West Creek Greenway. Your participation makes a difference, and membership donations are tax deductible as charitable contributions.

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### Project summary

West Creek Conservancy is in the process of creating a free mobile device app to promote coastal and river access, watershed stewardship and public engagement in Ohio's portion of the Lake Erie Basin. The app will use a phone's GPS capability to locate the user in a watershed, map water-related public access points and then make it easy for the user to learn more about that river or stream, connect with watershed organizations, and upload photos and questions. The app will be piloted for Apple devices, improved and then expanded to the Android market. An app marketing plan will be developed and implemented by project partners. The project is being led by West Creek Conservancy and the GreenCityBlueLake Institute of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Other partners include Lake Erie Basin watershed groups, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management (among many others along the rivers and coastal areas of the Lake Erie watershed).

### Objectives

The watershed app project has a number of objectives:

- Help people get out and explore water resources of Ohio's Lake Erie basin (expounding upon ODNR's Coastal and River Access guide; taking it from print to mobile application).
- Create a popular, fun resource for watershed education and public engagement.
- Reach a diverse audience of smartphone users with water quality information.
- Support stewardship efforts of local groups seeking to improve Ohio's water quality.
- Support citizen science programs and school projects.
- Foster collaboration among nonprofit watershed groups and public agencies.
- Increase general public awareness of water quality issues impacting local waterways and Lake Erie.
- Achieve popular usage by marketing the app through not only partner organizations but also reaching out to the private sector (tourism bureau, breweries/wineries, Clean Water Alliance, kayak/canoe rentals, etc).

### Deliverable

Phase I: The app will be a free iPhone app with a custom user interface designed by an award-winning app design firm. Using the phone's GPS, the app will automatically locate the user within a HUC-12 watershed in the Ohio Lake Erie Basin. The app will display a map of the Lake Erie watershed (or subwatershed), public access points and other information. Emphasis will be placed on information that will be useful to a smartphone user in the field.

Each watershed will also have a page linking to additional information such as:

- Watershed group(s) (or other appropriate entity)
- Sign up for email newsletter (if available for that watershed)
- Watershed FAQs
- Lake Erie FAQs
- Photo gallery (moderated)
- Submit comments/questions (moderated)

Additional app features will include watershed and Lake Erie protection tips (refreshes with new tip each time the app is opened), watershed Twitter feed, and other social media integration.

The final mix of features will be determined in consultation with the project partners and the app designers. The goal will be to create an app that is popular socially, easy to use, takes advantage of the power of mobile phones and promotes Lake Erie Basin stewardship and recreation that is economically beneficial for Ohio communities.

Phase II: The watershed app will be developed on an Apple platform initially due to the significantly higher percentage of Apple users who download/utilize apps. Phase I will include integrating Apple-user feedback into app improvements. Phase II will take the improved Apple app and develop a mirror app for Android devices.

### Your Part

To get this mobile application off the ground and on your phone, we are seeking additional support...with an ultimate goal of an additional \$5,000, which will enable FREE access to all iOS and Android users!

To get involved or to make a donation today, call 216-749-3720 ext 12

