



2014 Report to the Community



Enriching the lives of people in Greater Cleveland by:

- Conserving natural habitat
- Restoring the ecological value and sustainability of urban lands
- Expanding neighborhood opportunities to experience nature

www.westcreek.org

DEAR FRIENDS,

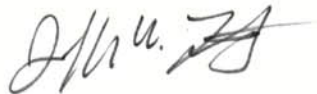
Thanks to your support, West Creek Conservancy is happy to report that 2014 continued our record of significant progress in creating a Greener Greater Cleveland.

Our need for clean water, fresh air, and green spaces where children, adults and wildlife can find sanctuary unites us all to nature — and to the projects of conservation, reclamation, and restoration that your West Creek Conservancy initiates and accomplishes. Some of our projects create neighborhood parkland where families come to experience and enjoy nature; other projects, perhaps hidden away, serve equally important roles preserving both wildlife habitat and green infrastructure to filter the water we all will drink.

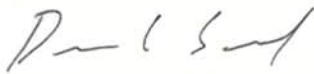
Like few other organizations in Ohio, West Creek Conservancy has developed the expertise to overcome the unique challenges of urban land conservation. We also continue to leverage great returns from the support of friends like you — our sole source of operational funding. In 2014 your donated dollars were multiplied by over 15 and returned to our community in the form of protected and restored land. Like no other organization, we convert your support into direct conservation impact in the neighborhoods where people live.

We invite you to look over the following pages. They showcase a few of our 2014 projects and provide a taste of the work we do throughout Greater Cleveland. These are just some of the results of YOUR support. As we celebrate these projects — these transformations — we hope they inspire you the way they have inspired us.

West Creek Conservancy is where your dollars make a real difference. We thank you for keeping us strong.



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COVER: A winter scene along West Creek valley in Parma. This headwater stream is among hundreds of other natural areas in Cuyahoga County that are protected by West Creek Conservancy.



HOW IS WEST CREEK CONSERVANCY DIFFERENT?

West Creek Conservancy is an innovative and collaborative **catalyst for change** with our:

- **Urban Focus** - Making a difference right within those urban neighborhoods where a great many people live and work.
- **Alert Stance** - Always ready to quickly seize unexpected opportunities to generate a real public benefit.
- **Effective Partnerships** - Initiating and undertaking the heavy lifting to do what we do best, while readily collaborating to encourage and enable others to do what they can do better.
- **Committed Board** - Board members meet often, volunteering readily for program and project responsibilities; many have served for over a decade.
- **Return on Investment** - Each dollar donated to West Creek Conservancy on average has been leveraged to return over \$20 to create a *Greener Greater Cleveland*.

Over 45,000 people live within 1000 feet of a property protected by West Creek Conservancy.

Reclaiming vacant urban land within the Cuyahoga River Corridor

Challenge: Historically, riverfront properties have provided convenient sites for a variety of commercial functions that were ecologically detrimental and often destructive. One such 21-acre riverfront property is across the Cuyahoga River from Cleveland Metroparks Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation and Ohio's Towpath Trail. A prospective purchaser intended to acquire this Brooklyn Heights property to reopen its commercial operations with likely adverse environmental impact on the riparian corridor.

Action: The property parallels the future extension of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad and adjoins land already owned by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District bordering West Creek Conservancy's restored West Creek Confluence in the City of Independence. Alert to the unique reclamation potential of this site, the Conservancy purchased it with funding from the Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Program in 2014.

Outcome: The property includes 2,500 feet of Cuyahoga River frontage, two acres of intact floodplain, and riparian streamside habitat. West Creek Conservancy is coordinating reclamation efforts with the Village of Brooklyn Heights, beginning with native seed mixes and tree plantings, to convert this abandoned property into an attractive riverfront site. When fully restored, it will serve as a catalyst for the reclamation of additional sites within the Cuyahoga River Valley.



"The Village and West Creek Conservancy have enjoyed a long and productive partnership. We have more than doubled the size of our village park, constructed trail, and now have cooperatively worked to reclaim land along the Cuyahoga River. Their integrated approach to conservation is pivotal to our region's sustainability."

Mayor Mike Procuk
Village of Brooklyn Heights

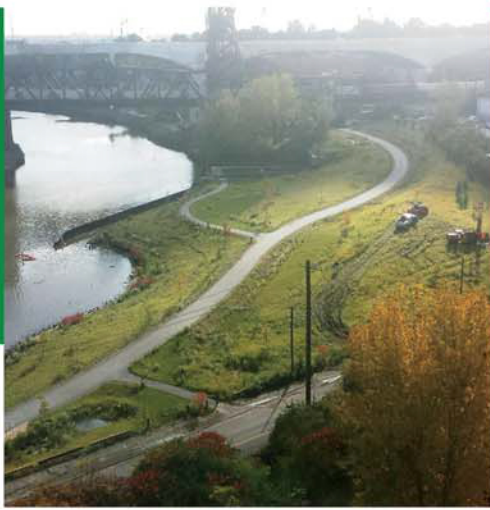
LEFT: Twenty-one acres along this portion of the Cuyahoga River in Brooklyn Heights are now protected by West Creek Conservancy and will be restored for natural habitat.

Connecting people to nature by Creating Recreational Trails & Greenways

Challenge: Extending north from New Philadelphia to Lake Erie, Ohio's Towpath Trail now approaches final completion through the Cleveland Flats to Wendy Park on Whiskey Island. However, difficulties in acquiring small commercial parcels, reclaiming industrial sites, and securing requisite conservation easements grow increasingly challenging within this highly industrialized area.

Action: While focused on extending the West Creek Greenway from Cleveland Metroparks West Creek Reservation to the Towpath Trail, West Creek Conservancy welcomed the opportunity to purchase a critical segment for the Lake Link Trail, strategically positioned within the City of Cleveland near Scranton Road and University Avenue, with funding secured from the Clean Ohio Trails Fund by LANDstudio. This parcel enables the Lake Link Trail to connect Cleveland's lakefront directly to the Towpath Trail.

Outcome: In 2014 West Creek Conservancy transferred this strategic parcel to Cleveland Metroparks for trail development and management. While promoting a healthy, recreational lifestyle, the evolving Greater Cleveland network of appealing trails and parks will conveniently connect people to Lake Erie, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, West Creek Reservation, and the many other natural attractions and destinations within the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor.



"The Lake Link Trail collaboration highlights the opportunities to develop regional assets when organizations such as West Creek Conservancy are willing to engage in non-traditional partnerships. Their involvement was key to the success of establishing this vital connection between two of Northern Ohio's greatest recreational destinations."

Brian Zimmerman
CEO, Cleveland Metroparks

LEFT: Aerial view of West Creek Conservancy's easements along Lake Link Trail in Cleveland, now transferred to Cleveland Metroparks.

RIGHT: Map of proposed Lake Link Trail route (courtesy of project partner Trust for Public Land).



Expanding neighborhood opportunities to experience Nature through Urban Agriculture

Challenge: As younger generations experience modern environments where supermarkets and restaurants are the main source of food, the awareness that human life is sustained by the interdependence of topsoil, plants, water, and sunlight is rapidly dwindling. Although Parma's historic Stearns Homestead had provided an opportunity to observe a farming environment, it had not generated a compelling understanding of the dependence of all human life upon nature.

Action: West Creek Conservancy has spearheaded the introduction of productive urban farming into the Parma community. In July 2014 a partnership of Parma Area Historical Society, the City of Parma, Cleveland Crops, and the Conservancy dedicated the conversion of 17 underutilized acres of Stearns Homestead into "Stearns Farm", a source of locally grown fruits and vegetables. A joint venture of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities and SAW, Inc., Cleveland Crops is an agriculture training and employment program for adults with developmental disabilities. It manages farms throughout the county, training and employing more than 60 people.



Outcome: Having already collaborated with Cleveland Crops in the creation of smaller urban farms at Kinsman Farms in Cleveland and at Springs Hill Farm in Seven Hills, West Creek Conservancy has again succeeded in creating first-hand opportunities to observe and experience the natural transformation of topsoil, plants, water, and sunlight into food—all within conveniently located urban neighborhoods. Stearns Farm successfully blends conservation, productive lands, job training, historic interpretation, and recreation.

LEFT: Dedication day at Cleveland Crops' urban farm at Stearns Homestead in July 2014. West Creek Conservancy spearheaded creation of the 17-acre operation on the historic 48-acre Parma property.

"West Creek Conservancy has been an invaluable partner in the development of Cleveland Crops. The Conservancy has collaborated with us to gain access to farm land in Seven Hills, Parma, and Cleveland's Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone. West Creek Conservancy's mission to preserve and protect land and waterways has created a wonderful opportunity for the rapid expansion of Cleveland Crops agriculture training program."

Rich Hoban
Executive Director, SAW, Inc. dba Cleveland Crops
Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities



Restoring stream & wetland habitats to clean Our Air & Water

Challenge: Natural wetlands trap contaminants and sediments from our surface water before it filters into nearby streams. Unfortunately this buffer function has been almost eliminated; over 90 percent of Ohio's wetlands have been destroyed or degraded for development and agriculture. For many communities the resulting pollution of drinking water sources from stormwater runoff has intensified.

Action: When a 12-acre property draining into Euclid Creek became available, West Creek Conservancy partnered with Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District and Friends of Euclid Creek to secure purchase funding from the Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Program. The property, off Bishop Road in Highland Heights, contains high-quality wetlands, functioning floodplain, over 1000 feet of vital headwater streams, and a strong stand of streamside woodlands.



One of the beautiful headwater streams of Euclid Creek now protected by West Creek Conservancy in a 12-acre section of Highland Heights.

Outcome: With West Creek Conservancy now owning the property, the natural filtration of stormwater flowing through Euclid Creek and into Lake Erie is protected from the impending threat of additional unsustainable development. Furthermore, with restoration, fencing, and native plantings by Friends of Euclid Creek and other volunteers, the attractive wetlands and riparian areas of this 12-acre natural greenspace are now a welcome addition to the adjacent 76-acre Highland Heights Community Park.

"I am proud of the collaborative effort shown by West Creek Conservancy and our other project partners to secure the Bishop Road Conservation Property. As a result of these efforts, our city and its residents have secured additional green space for all to enjoy."

Mayor Scott Coleman
City of Highland Heights

FINANCIAL REPORT

Fiscal year ending December 31, 2014. Accrual basis.

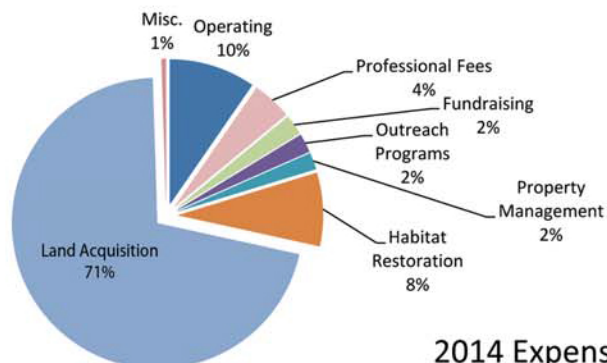
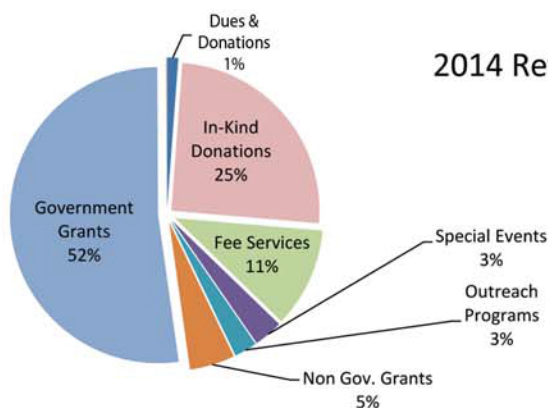
2014 REVENUES

Dues & Donations	\$	16,902
In-Kind Donations	\$	356,793
Fee Services	\$	154,293
Special Events	\$	44,546
Outreach Programs	\$	35,135
Non Gov. Grants	\$	69,700
Government Grants	\$	739,503
Misc.	\$	1,228
Total Revenues	\$	1,418,100

2014 EXPENSES

Operating	\$	149,043
Professional Fees	\$	68,391
Fundraising	\$	34,922
Outreach Programs	\$	32,550
Property Management	\$	29,038
Habitat Restoration	\$	126,546
Land Acquisition	\$	1,100,839
Misc.	\$	7,898
Total Expenses	\$	1,549,227
Change in Net Assets	\$	(131,127)

2014 Revenues



2014 Expenses

WEST CREEK CONSERVANCY DONORS

YOU! – our donors – make it all possible. In 2014 your generosity enabled West Creek Conservancy to protect hundreds of properties and over 800 acres throughout Greater Cleveland. We gratefully acknowledge the individuals, corporations, foundations, and organizations who together contributed funds in support of this important urban conservation work in our neighborhoods. The following donors made contributions between January 1 and December 31, 2014.

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Jim King

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West Creek Conservancy

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Kenneth & Mary Foote

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Bluestone Heights
City of Independence
City of Parma
Cleveland Metroparks
Cuyahoga Community College

HONORARIUMS & MEMORIALS

In Memory of

Deborah Burnham

Joyce Louise Adams
Gladys & Thomas Perozek Ann Hanus
Ronald & Linda Bagley

Cuyahoga County Board of Health
 Friends of Parma Libraries
 Friends of Timothy J. DeGeeter
 Independence Garden Club
 Mayfield Village
 National Park Service
 Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
 Ohio Department of Natural Resources
 Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
 Ohio Public Works Commission
 Parma Area Chamber of Commerce
 Parma Area Kiwanis
 SAW Inc
 Slavic Village Development
 Springs Hill Farm
 St. Peter United Church of Christ
 Womens Fellowship
 The Trust for Public Land
 Village of Brooklyn Heights
 Village of Mayfield Heights
 Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society

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 PPG Industries Foundation

The Sherwin Williams Foundation

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 Akron Zoo
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We have made every effort to prepare this donor list accurately. We apologize for any mistakes or omissions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this list, please contact Dawn Petkov at 216.749.3720 or dpetkov@westcreek.org.

ABOUT WEST CREEK CONSERVANCY

Yesterday - West Creek Conservancy was born in 1997 when plans to build a second public golf course, cluster housing, and another shopping center threatened the Parma creek and woodlands where Dave Vasarhelyi had played as a child. A grass-roots group joined with him to mount a successful initiative petition receiving 72% voter support to permanently protect the 160-acre public site. This group – which became West Creek Conservancy - then solicited funding and negotiated with landowners to purchase additional properties and conservation easements to expand the preserve to over 320 acres and to assemble a greenway for trail connections to the Towpath Trail at Cleveland Metroparks Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In 2006 West Creek Conservancy partnered with the City of Parma and Cleveland Metroparks to create West Creek Reservation.

Today - Because people living in urban neighborhoods have dwindling opportunities to experience those natural environments that have been their heritage, West Creek Conservancy has expanded its vision to include urban communities throughout Greater Cleveland. Their volunteer efforts now spearhead dozens of partnerships in the region. In addition to projects highlighted inside this report, 2014 projects included:

- Advancing the **Hemlock Creek Trail Plan** through the approval process in local, state, and federal agencies, thus allowing the City of Independence to begin final engineering of this 1.7-mile trail, one of the longest community connectors to the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
- Protecting 15 acres of riparian habitat along the headwaters of **Baldwin Creek** in partnership with Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, and the City of North Royalton.
- Guiding development of the **Mill Creek Partnership**, securing funding for operating support, and assisting in the completion of the Mill Creek Watershed Action Plan, a document key to future conservation activities in this major watershed of east-central Cuyahoga County.
- Completing vegetation of the newly created 10-acre **West Creek Confluence** site, a floodplain restoration project on the West Creek Greenway in Independence that features meandering waterway and over six acres of new wetland.



Tomorrow - Opportunities to initiate partnerships for projects that protect natural areas for people and wildlife, reclaim vacant urban land to strengthen our neighborhoods, restore streams and habitats to clean our air and water, and connect people to nature by creating recreational trails and greenways are constrained only by the amount of funding available to us.

In the absence of direct tax support for the public services we have been providing since 1997, West Creek Conservancy is totally dependent upon voluntary donations from those who find that our record of accomplishments has earned their ongoing support.

Yesterday and Today are now history . . . but you can help us with Tomorrow!

www.westcreek.org • 216-749-3720



West Creek Conservancy
P. O. Box 347113
Cleveland, OH 44134