



2019 Report to Our Community

An Urban Land Trust Serving Greater Cleveland

"We dreamed of protecting a significant property for the future. West Creek Conservancy was there to make it happen!"
- See page 5



www.westcreek.org

Dear Friend of Conservation,

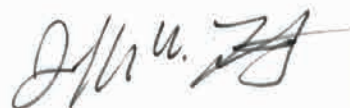
West Creek Conservancy is your catalyst for change. We are here to make your home - our home - better for people and better for nature. But let's be clear about all that we've done and all that we do. None of it would happen without your generous support. Thank you!

By protecting and expanding quality green space, West Creek Conservancy is strengthening our community. Some ways are obvious. Twenty years ago we rallied local citizens to preserve an at-risk valley and create a new park, today's Cleveland Metroparks West Creek Reservation. Did you know that the Conservancy has continually added to it? What began in 1998 as zero acres is now 500 acres - all made possible by YOU. We are continually partnering with landowners to enlarge that park, which now receives over 170,000 visits each year.

Other ways we improve our communities may be less obvious. The Conservancy protects hundreds of properties throughout our region. Some are high-quality green spaces. Some were degraded areas that we have reclaimed and restored. Many are neither large nor public. The Conservancy is preserving these woodlands, streams, and wetlands to maintain their vital roles to improve water quality, manage storm water, control erosion, and expand wildlife habitat. You may never notice all of the natural areas that your donations have preserved, but they all matter.

We are honored to earn your support. Together, West Creek Conservancy and supporters like you share a commitment and the strong belief that this work matters, that urban land conservation is important for the present and for the future of a greener Greater Cleveland.

As you read through our 2019 Report, be assured that your generosity has made every project possible. We thank you again and look forward to your continued support in helping us make nature your neighbor.



Jeff Lennartz
Chair, Board of Directors



Derek Schafer
Executive Director



OUR MISSION

To enrich the lives of people in Greater Cleveland by conserving natural habitat, restoring the ecological value and sustainability of urban land, and expanding neighborhood opportunities to experience nature

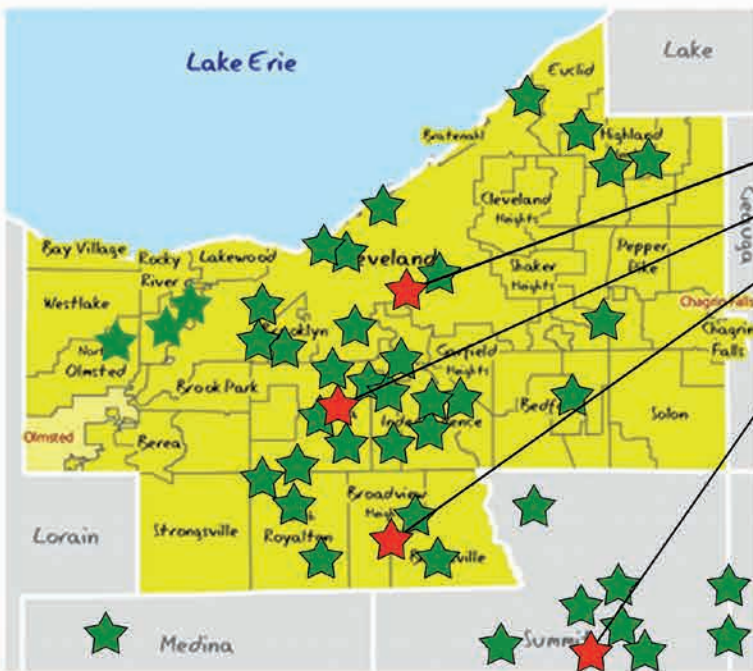


LEFT: Greater Cleveland Trails & Greenways Conference -

Conceived by West Creek Conservancy and Big Creek Connects in 2010, and co-chaired by both groups, the biennial GCTGC brings together hundreds of professionals, community leaders, and advocates to advance regional trails and greenways. Here, a group of 2018 attendees learns how trails will soon link Cleveland's lakefront to the Towpath Trail.

ON THE COVER: Protected Waters -

A scenic branch of Chippewa Creek winds through Broadview Heights. It was identified as a priority conservation area in 2008 and protected in 2018 by West Creek Conservancy. See page 10.



PROJECTS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Morgana Run, Cleveland - Pg. 4

West Creek Greenway - Pg. 9

Chippewa Creek, Broadview Hts - Pg. 10

Mud Brook, Cuyahoga Falls - Pg. 5

Protecting Land Where People Live

Since its founding in 1997, West Creek Conservancy has completed or enabled nearly 200 conservation projects in over 20 communities across Greater Cleveland. At left, each star indicates one or more projects. The red stars show the four 2018 projects that are highlighted in this Report.

BELOW: Volunteers from CSA Group's Independence office help clean and maintain tree-lawn rain gardens along Klusner Avenue in Parma. West Creek Conservancy and Cleveland Metroparks installed the gardens in 2012 to mitigate the street's flooding issues.



ABOVE: Great Fun, Great Cause! A few of the over 500 attendees in 2018 enjoying Up! A Creek, West Creek Conservancy's yearly conservation gala at Cleveland's Windows on the River. Join us for Up! A Creek in 2019. Get your tickets today at www.westcreek.org.

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MORGANA BLUFFS NATURE PRESERVE

A FORGOTTEN VALLEY RETURNS TO LIFE IN CLEVELAND'S SLAVIC VILLAGE

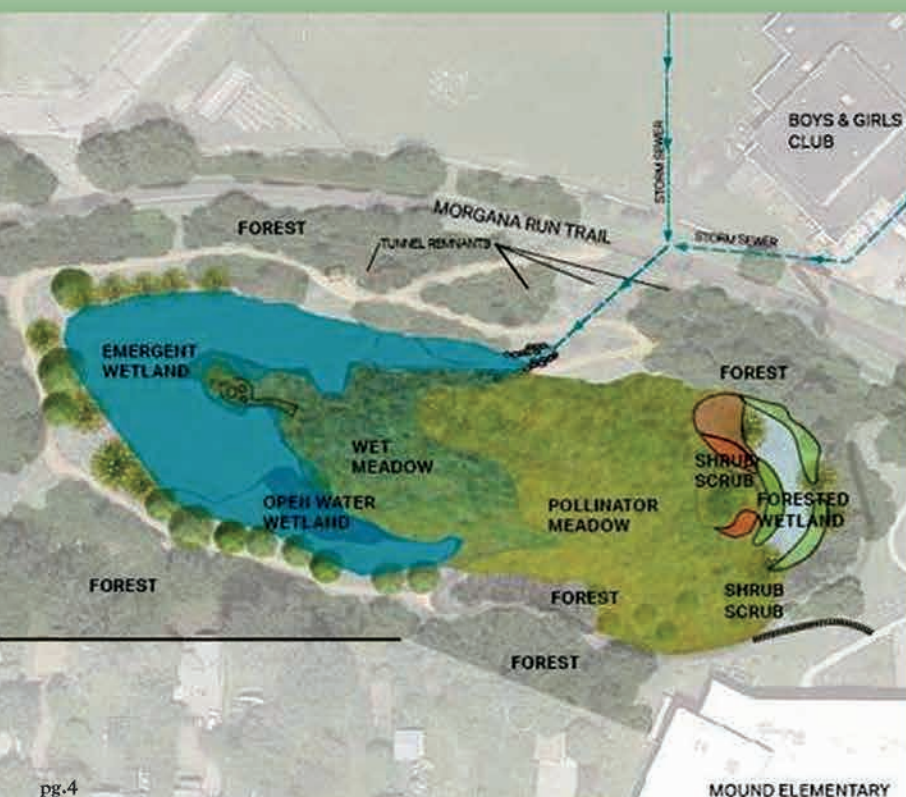
The Challenge: Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland (BGCC) has its flagship club and administrative center in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood. Nearby is Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Mound STEM Elementary School. Between them lies Morgana Run Valley, a forgotten tributary of the Cuyahoga River. It was in this long-neglected valley that BGCC's Chief Development Officer Robert Koonce saw an opportunity. He envisioned a nature preserve and learning lab for the School District and BGCC. To enable this restoration project, he invited West Creek Conservancy to join as a partner

Our Action: West Creek Conservancy agreed to protect the land and accept ownership of 4.5 acres from the City of Cleveland and the School District. Partnering with Slavic Village Development Corporation, the City of Cleveland, BGCC, and the School District, the Conservancy helped the team secure funding from the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District Green Infrastructure Grants Program and the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program.

The Impact: In our inner cities, where residents are surrounded by noise, pollution, and the hardscapes of urban life, nature makes a deep and lasting impact by reducing stress and crime, improving health, and restoring property values. Groundbreaking for the restoration project was held October 5, 2018. Site improvements will include ADA accessible trails, invasive species removal, and native tree plantings. Storm water from the BGCC site will be redirected into the preserve to enhance the wetlands. When it opens in late 2019, Morgana Bluffs Nature Preserve will become a primary learning and recreation tool for the Slavic Village area. Says Robert, "With our [BGCC] members and the population of nearby schools, the neighborhood sees 1700 students daily. The kids - and the community - will now have a high quality nature preserve within walking distance, right in the heart of one of Cleveland's most struggling neighborhoods."



ABOVE: Youngsters from the Boys & Girls Club on the Morgana Run Trail.



"West Creek Conservancy has been a crucial partner in our Morgana Bluffs Project. As a recipient of their expertise and good will, we extend our thanks."

*- Robert Koonce,
Chief Development Officer,
Boy & Girls Clubs of Cleveland*

LEFT: Site restoration plan for Morgana Bluffs Nature Preserve.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2007, an abandoned rail corridor next to this project site became Cleveland's 1st rail-to-trail project: the 2-mile long Morgana Run Trail.



A LASTING CONTRIBUTION

CONSERVATION DREAM COMES TRUE FOR CUYAHOGA FALLS COUPLE

The Challenge: Zoning policies often encourage the destruction of greenfields to make way for new development. As a result, our region's remaining pockets of unprotected green space are vanishing. This is especially senseless in locales where outmigration has already left abundant space available. Responsible local citizens can strengthen their communities by preserving their green space and infilling their older neighborhoods with new households.

Our Action: West Creek Conservancy joined with Bill and Deborah McCort to protect an undeveloped portion of land they acquired in the center of Summit County. In 2018, the couple learned that the property was on the auction block. It included a one-room cabin and large lawn, but was mostly wild. Upon exploring the property, they came to love its wildness. When learning that development plans loomed, the conservation-minded McCorts felt compelled to act. They bid - and they won! "We are still in shock that we did it," remarks Bill. "We are now the owners, better, the custodians of this magnificent land."

After the auction, they contacted West Creek Conservancy about permanent protection of the land. Conservancy staff met with the McCorts and everything fell into place quickly. Bill and Deborah donated a permanent conservation easement to the Conservancy. The McCorts will replace the cabin with a new home and move in.

The Impact: Thanks to the McCorts' partnership with West Creek Conservancy, 20 acres of natural habitat will no longer be threatened by development. The property features, as Bill states, "towering hills shaped by glaciers, an expansive hardwood forest, and all the native wildlife representative of Northeast Ohio." It also contains over 3000 feet of tributaries of Mud Brook, a sub-watershed of the Cuyahoga River.

"After working with Derek Schafer and Peter Bode, seeing and feeling their excitement and commitment to conserve natural habitat for the future, we are pleased and confident that our land and creeks are protected in perpetuity with the Conservancy. Thank you, West Creek Conservancy, for making our dream come true."

- Bill & Deborah McCort,
Cuyahoga Falls



WEST CREEK CONSERVANCY DONORS

YOU - OUR DONORS - MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE! In 2018 your generosity allowed West Creek Conservancy to protect hundreds of properties throughout Greater Cleveland. We are grateful to all the individuals, corporations, foundations, and organizations who have supported our vital work. Contributions received between January 1 and December 31, 2018, are listed here.

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We make every effort to list our donors accurately. We regret any errors or omissions. If you have any questions about this list, please contact Dawn at 216-749-3720 ext. 10 or dpetkov@westcreek.org

We also extend thanks to our many volunteers who have given generously of their time and energy in support of our mission. Thank you!

Financial Statement Year ended December 31, 2018, accrual basis, unaudited

2018 Revenue

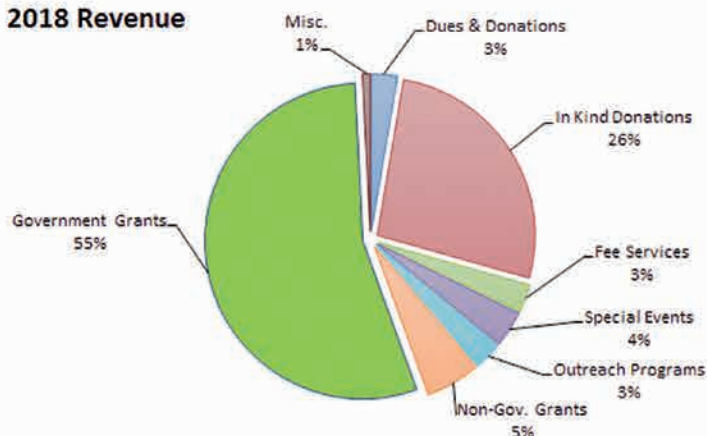
Government Grants	\$ 2,155,567
In-Kind Donations*	\$ 1,050,337
Non-Gov. Grants	\$ 220,450
Special Events	\$ 145,227
Fee Services	\$ 114,775
Outreach Programs	\$ 114,359
Dues & Donations	\$ 105,505
Misc.	\$ 31,472
Total Revenues	\$ 3,937,693

2018 Expenses

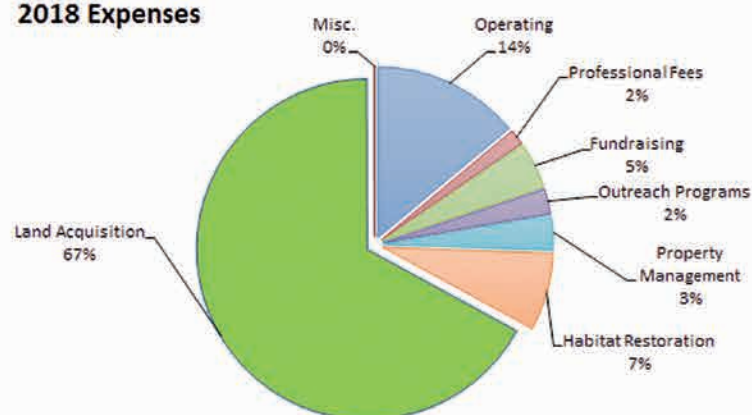
Land Acquisition	\$ 1,734,994
Operating	\$ 361,438
Habitat Restoration	\$ 191,181
Fundraising	\$ 115,245
Property Management	\$ 86,016
Outreach Programs	\$ 60,794
Professional Fees	\$ 38,133
Misc.	\$ 720
Total Expenses	\$ 2,588,520

Change in Net Assets \$ 1,349,173

2018 Revenue



2018 Expenses



*Not reflected here is a land donation received in 2018 and appraised at \$21 million. "In-Kind Donations" typically includes all donated properties and easements. This large donation is excluded here to prevent distortion of our financial presentation. For more information, contact Derek at 216-749-3720 ext. 12 or dschafer@westcreek.org.



RIGHT: A Beautiful Day for a Cleanup - In partnership with Canalway Partners, volunteers throughout the community helped to remove trash at sites along West Creek and Mill Creek during RiverSweep 2018. Many tons of debris were removed including these decades-old shopping carts along West Creek. Join us May 11th for RiverSweep 2019! Visit westcreek.org.





CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

PROGRESS ON THE WEST CREEK GREENWAY

The Challenge: Parks and green space are must-haves for livable, thriving communities. Trails and natural parks provide people a path to mental well-being, healthy lifestyles, social vitality, and neighborhood pride. On many levels, they also generate economic benefits for our residents and our communities. But natural areas, and people's access to them, are limited in many of our urban communities

Our Action: Upon forming in 1997, West Creek Conservancy embarked on campaigns to protect vulnerable natural lands in the densely populated center of Cuyahoga

ABOVE: **Discovering the West Creek Greenway** - West Creek Conservancy led several public walks in 2018 to explore proposed sections of the West Creek Greenway, including this one in Seven Hills. Join our 2019 walks and other activities! Visit westcreek.org.

County. The Conservancy also envisioned trails to link them. In total, over 1000 acres of unprotected green space were identified along a proposed trail network over 20 miles long - the West Creek Greenway. The Greenway radiates from West Creek Valley in Parma, linking the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga Valley National Park to neighborhoods across seven communities. Year by year, the Conservancy has partnered with landowners to acquire and protect properties critical to the Greenway, steadily moving the bold vision forward.

In 2018 the Conservancy continued progress on the West Creek Greenway by:

- Adding 40 acres to West Creek Reservation, expanding it to 500 acres. The park was created by the Conservancy over 20 years ago and has been endowed during the past decade with world-class visitor amenities by our partner Cleveland Metroparks.
- Undertaking reclamation of the former Parmadale campus to prepare 80 acres, acquired in 2017, for addition to the West Creek Greenway and Reservation.
- Protecting 46 more acres elsewhere along the Greenway. The new conservation lands contain over two miles of stream and represent key links in the Greenway route.
- Earning over \$560,000 in federal funds towards West Creek Greenway construction.
- Joining with its partners, after 14 years of planning, to celebrate the groundbreaking of the 1.7-mile long Hemlock Creek Trail in Independence (see photo on back cover). The grand opening for this pivotal leg of the Greenway is scheduled for June 1, 2019. Hemlock Creek Trail will cross the Cuyahoga River and join directly to the Towpath Trail.
- Being awarded over \$550,000 for three restoration projects along upper West Creek, plus coordinated funding for another \$5 million to restore lower West Creek.

The Impact: When complete, you will be able to travel on the West Creek Greenway from the Towpath Trail in Valley View all the way to Big Creek Reservation in Parma Heights, mostly by woodland trail. The Greenway will also connect you to Cleveland Metroparks' West Creek and Ohio & Erie Canal Reservations as well as to Brooklyn Heights Park and numerous other city parks. Over 50,000 residents and employees will be within a 15-minute walk of the Greenway.



BEHIND THE BACKYARDS

CONSERVING THE HEADWATERS OF CHIPPEWA CREEK



The Challenge: Nestled behind rows of houses in Broadview Heights lies an area containing headwaters of Chippewa Creek. Although thickly wooded in spots, this area has not been spared from neighborhood encroachment and misuse. Headwaters are important for their ability to capture storm water and snow melt. Lands unable to absorb excess water contribute to downstream erosion and the flooding of homes and businesses.

Our Action: A roadside “For Sale” sign came to the attention of West Creek Conservancy. The land was found to be a priority conservation area identified in the Chippewa Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan, the first such plan to be approved by the State of Ohio in 2008. In partnership with the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, the Conservancy acquired a series of parcels containing this northern branch of Chippewa Creek. Several blighted structures were removed and over two acres of impervious area and damaged streamside habitats were restored.

The Impact: Twenty acres of Chippewa Creek headwaters, including lovely forests, over 3000 feet of clear-running stream, two acres of high-quality wetland, and a beautiful waterfall, are now reclaimed and protected. With ongoing stewardship provided by the Conservancy, the property will become a home to healthier populations of native plants and animals as it provides greater benefits to people.

ABOVE: Protecting Upper Chippewa Creek - Known downstream for the deep gorge it cuts through Cleveland Metroparks Brecksville Reservation, Chippewa Creek begins miles to the west and north of the park. West Creek Conservancy recently reclaimed and protected 20 acres of this upstream branch in Broadview Heights.



ABOVE: These native Mayapple plants are thriving in the shaded, moist soils of the protected headwaters area.



ABOVE: Young Trees Take Hold - In partnership with the Village of Cuyahoga Heights and Case Western Reserve University, West Creek Conservancy provided large native saplings that were planted by Case students along Mill Creek in Bacci Park to improve bank stability and floodplain habitat. Plantings like this are part of the ongoing restoration initiatives of West Creek Conservancy.

**IS YOUR COMPANY or GROUP
interested in volunteering with us?**

Contact Emily at 216-749-3720 ext. 11 or emily@westcreek.org

YES! I Want to Help Make Nature Our Neighbor

☐ **YES! I want to join West Creek Conservancy & help protect green space in Greater Cleveland.**

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Introductory | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Woodland Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Trail Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Greenway Champion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Watershed Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ |

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make your check payable to **West Creek Conservancy**, PO Box 347113, Cleveland, OH 44134.

You can also pay by credit card online at www.westcreek.org or by calling 216-749-3720 ext. 10.

☐ Please send me information on making a gift to West Creek Conservancy through my will or estate plan.

☐ I have already included West Creek Conservancy in my will or estate plan.

☐ Email me updates on programs and member events. My email address is _____



2019 Main Events

11 (Sat) at 9:00am
STREAMSWEEP Meet for stream clean-ups near Giant Eagle
 Roadview Rd. in Parma.

22 (Sat) at 8:00am - 9:00pm
ANGUISH FEST 50th Anniversary of Cuyahoga River's
 at Rivergate Park in Cleveland.

17 (Sat) at 6:30pm
WEST CREEK Annual Gala at Windows on the River in
 Cleveland. **ADVANCED TICKETS REQUIRED.**

18 (Fri) at 7pm
PIZZA & PIEROGIES in the PARK at West Creek
 Reservation in Parma. **TICKETS REQUIRED**

27 (Sat) at 8:00am
HEMLOCK HUSTLE 5K RUN & 1 MILE WALK
 Benefit Run on Hemlock Creek Trail in Independence.

13 (Tues) at 6:30pm
HOLIDAY PARTY at West Creek Reservation in Parma.

216-749-3720



An Urban Land Trust Serving G

