

# PROTECT RESTORE CONNECT



WEST CREEK  
CONSERVANCY



## THE VISION OF WEST CREEK

West Creek envisions healthier and more vibrant communities through conservation and restoration of our natural areas and streams, and creation of greenways and recreational trails linking neighborhoods and uniting people throughout our region.

## THE MISSION OF WEST CREEK

West Creek enriches the lives of all people in Northeast Ohio by conserving natural habitats, restoring the ecological value of our region's lands and waters, and expanding opportunities to connect people from all cultures to experience nature and discover our great outdoors.





## **THE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF WEST CREEK**

The Values and Guiding Principles of West Creek are the foundation from which the organization aspires to exhibit in its work. They define the high standards set for professionalism and management practices including West Creek's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Operate the organization with high standards of professionalism, ethics, and honesty.
- Maintain a high level of organizational accountability, transparency, and responsibility.
- Recognize that collaboration is key to the organization's success and that it is critical to develop partnerships built on mutual value and respect.
- Commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do.
- Actively promote projects that create greater parity for communities that have been historically underserved.
- Build upon a deep respect for nature and understanding of natural systems.
- Adapt science-based principals to real world practice.
- Commit to innovation, adaptability, and growth to meet changing demands of the environment and area.
- Recognize our land and water are our most precious assets.
- Treat all people of Northeast Ohio with dignity, compassion, and respect.

## **THE CORE COMPETENCIES OR WEST CREEK**

The West Creek organization including the Staff and the Board of Directors are recognized for exhibition of these core competencies and will continue to advocate and use these principles in its work and as guidance for future growth.

- Providing technical expertise, experience, and willingness to pursue and undertake complex and challenging land projects in support of partner organizations and agencies.
- Identifying and implementing viable and significant opportunities for land conservation, restoration, and access throughout Northeast Ohio.
- Providing a catalyst for communities, partners and sponsors to work in collaboration toward common project goals.
- Operating with flexibility, nimbleness, pragmatism, and cooperation in project planning and execution.
- Applying the excellent organizational and technical expertise required to achieve project success.
- Advocating the mission and goals of West Creek and their importance in improving quality of life within communities served.
- Increasing community awareness of the benefits of land and watershed stewardship throughout the region.



## THE HISTORY OF WEST CREEK

Since its founding, West Creek has been a model of citizen action and land conservation, maximizing benefits and leveraging projects to the fullest extent possible. Initially embracing the much-needed role of an urban land trust serving Greater Cleveland, West Creek ultimately evolved into a diverse non-profit conservation organization serving the region. Recognized for its successful conservation and restoration initiatives, West Creek is led by a Board of Directors overseeing a professional Staff and many volunteers.

The original focus of West Creek was an undeveloped 300-acre natural area in the upper West Creek Valley. In the mid-1990s, the property was slated to become another shopping center and the City of Parma's second golf course. Despite its location in a densely populated area, and while the creek and surrounding land had suffered severe degradation over the years, the beauty of the natural area endured.

A small group of concerned citizens recognized the value of preserving the West Creek Valley and formed West Creek Preservation Committee. The Committee proposed an alternative to development that would not only preserve the West Creek Valley but make it available for public enjoyment. The Committee used grass-roots efforts and initiatives to convey their vision for preservation, which garnered widespread community support of both citizens and elected officials. Ultimately, the committee was successful in creating the West Creek Preserve and Greenway, a network of recreational trails and corridors linking the park to neighborhoods, other parks and the Towpath Trail.

In 2006, in partnership with the City of Parma, Cleveland Metroparks, and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, West Creek Preserve became West Creek Reservation, a park that serves over 180,000 visitors annually and is home to the Watershed Stewardship Center. Over the years the Reservation has continued to expand through the work of what is now known as West Creek Conservancy.

West Creek has readily accepted and stepped into roles where the need exists, supporting and assisting partners and communities with a variety of unique and challenging opportunities. West Creek stepped in to serve as the landowner for many critical projects such as Irishtown Bend, Morgana Bluffs Nature Preserve, and the former Haydite Mine.

West Creek's involvement in Irishtown Bend ultimately facilitates the stabilization of a 23-acre area along the Cuyahoga River protecting vital infrastructure and the integrity of the shipping channel. The property will be transformed into an urban park and provide the key linkage for the Lake Link Centennial Trail's connection to Wendy Park, Whiskey Island and Lake Erie. Morgana Bluffs Nature Preserve is a restored urban natural environment and land lab for local children in the Slavic Village neighborhood of the City of Cleveland; a unique partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Ohio. The former Haydite Mine in Independence is a 100-acre site bordering Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, and the Hemlock Creek Trail. West Creek stepped up to secure the land, see it through the reclamation process, and ultimately integrate it into the national park to provide a unique recreational asset for the region.

West Creek has worked closely with many partners, including Cleveland Metroparks where the transfer of critical parcels to Metroparks has enabled such things as the Lake Link Trail connecting Cleveland's Lakefront to the Towpath Trail, the creation and expansion of West Creek Reservation as well as other trail and park developments. In recognition of its longstanding partnership with Cleveland Metroparks, West Creek was awarded the "Outstanding Support Organization" from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials for helping Cleveland Metroparks conserve greenspace and manage stormwater.

At the present time, West Creek is prioritizing conservation throughout the Lake Erie Watershed and beyond. West Creek continues to share its expertise and provide land conservation services to individuals, partner organizations, and communities. West Creek has protected thousands of acres in dozens of communities across the region, while placing importance on water quality improvement, storm water abatement, wetland and riparian corridor restoration, environmental education and outreach, historic preservation, and natural resource stewardship.