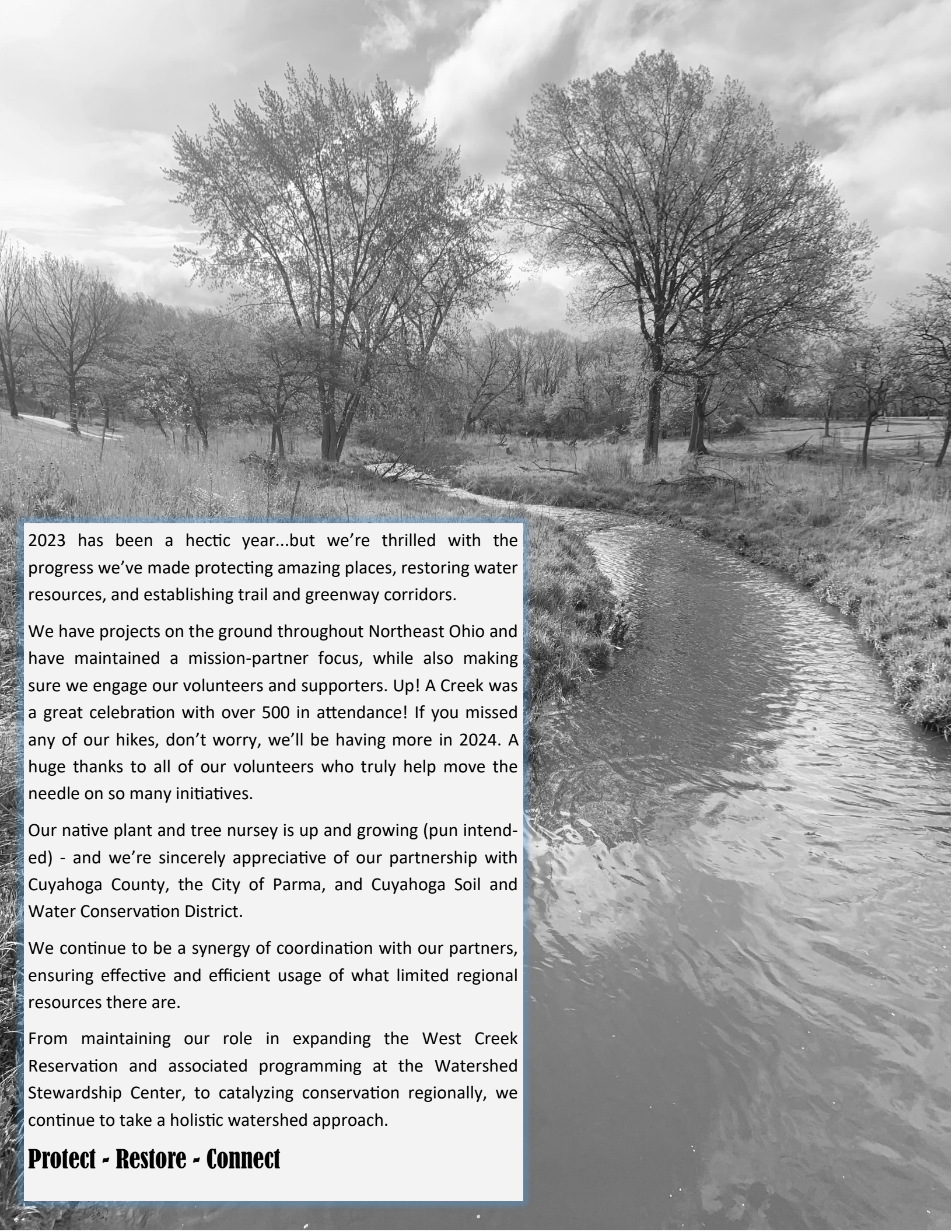




Protect - Restore - Connect
West Creek Conservancy



2023 has been a hectic year...but we're thrilled with the progress we've made protecting amazing places, restoring water resources, and establishing trail and greenway corridors.

We have projects on the ground throughout Northeast Ohio and have maintained a mission-partner focus, while also making sure we engage our volunteers and supporters. Up! A Creek was a great celebration with over 500 in attendance! If you missed any of our hikes, don't worry, we'll be having more in 2024. A huge thanks to all of our volunteers who truly help move the needle on so many initiatives.

Our native plant and tree nursey is up and growing (pun intended) - and we're sincerely appreciative of our partnership with Cuyahoga County, the City of Parma, and Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District.

We continue to be a synergy of coordination with our partners, ensuring effective and efficient usage of what limited regional resources there are.

From maintaining our role in expanding the West Creek Reservation and associated programming at the Watershed Stewardship Center, to catalyzing conservation regionally, we continue to take a holistic watershed approach.

Protect - Restore - Connect

Bird Family Bog Rehabilitation Project



Article credit Ohio Department of Natural Resources "ODNR Celebrates Bird Family Bog"

As part of Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) celebrated the [Bird Family Bog Rehabilitation Project](#) with a ribbon cutting ceremony Friday. The new project in Portage County will be used to help improve water quality in the region.

"The Bird Family Bog not only provides a habitat for rare plants and aquatic life, but it will also give Ohio a unique look at the role bogs play in ensuring clean and safe drinking water," Governor DeWine said.

The 170-acre property is located along the Cuyahoga River watershed in Kent, Ohio. The Bird Family Bog project will help improve water quality by preserving the bog and transforming formerly farmed land into future wetlands. The land was acquired by the West Creek Conservancy using \$697,000 from the H2Ohio initiative, along with funds from the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program. West Creek carried out the restoration and reforestation work. Future plans include paved trails and new wetlands.

"This project is a step toward better water quality and will one day provide a place for people to enjoy nature," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said. "We are really excited to add to the growing list of H2Ohio wetlands and share the benefits of these projects with people across Ohio."

The ribbon cutting headlined a bioblitz event, where members of the community visited the bog to help identify as many species and plants as possible in one day.

"Jumping on an opportunity when it presents itself and when a partner asks us for help is what West Creek loves to do," West Creek Conservancy Executive Director Derek Schafer said. "We love seeing a beautiful, unique place like Bird Family Bog, now under the ownership of Portage Park District, become a protected gem for future generations. This would not have been possible without the support from the H2Ohio initiative and the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program."

The Portage Park District will provide additional habitat management with plans to open the area to the public with a paved trail. The Nature Conservancy is working to create new wetlands around the bog.

Governor Mike DeWine created H2Ohio in 2019 as a comprehensive, data-driven approach to combatting algal blooms, enhancing water quality, and improving water infrastructure over the long term. H2Ohio operates in partnership between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission. The initiative focuses on encouraging agricultural best management practices, restoring, and enhancing wetlands, upgrading outdated water infrastructure, and replacing lead pipes. For more information on the H2Ohio initiative, please visit h2.ohio.gov.

Irishtown Bend

For the last several years, we've written about the transformative initiative referred to as 'Irishtown Bend,' which is the approximate 23-acre area along the west bank of the Cuyahoga River, between Columbus, Detroit, Franklin, and of course the Cuyahoga. Unstable and degraded, the area posed a threat to the region; not only health and safety, but also economical.

There are too many partners to list here...but in 2017, West Creek was brought on board for the project, due to the complexity of the land transactions necessary in order to move the project forward. By 2019, we had acquired most of the land necessary, with the final pieces assembled earlier this year.

It is with great pride to see this nearly \$60M stabilization initiative commence. Earlier this year, project partners gathered along the banks of the Cuyahoga to celebrate this momentous occasion. There were many hiccups, inherent delays, and least to say - layers of coordination, funding and overarching logistics to get us all to this point.



Following the stabilization—the property will transform into an amazing public space and place; being nearly 1/2 mile of riverfront, it's also a key linkage for the Cleveland Foundation Lake Link Centennial Trail, a connection from the Towpath to Wendy Park/Whiskey Island, and yes, Lake Erie.

Nearly 10 years ago, unbeknownst to many, West Creek was brought in by LAND studio (then Parkworks) to assist with a small, yet key acquisition that would enable the trail connect over Scranton Road to the future Lake Link trail; which was a key Trust for Public Land acquisition at the time. Fast forward to 2022 - the puzzle pieces align to stabilize, restore, and enable the activation of 23+ acres of parkland at the precipice of Ohio City and the City of Cleveland.

We would also be remiss not to mention the George Gund Foundation, who provided critical support to West Creek that helped us craft the transactional processes necessary to make this happen!

Progress Through Partnerships (for a full list of partners, please check out LAND studio's website).





Riverwood Preserve

The restoration of the former Riverwood property in Akron is near completion - a 50+ acre property, with 1 mile of Cuyahoga River frontage. With the partnership of Petros Homes and support provided by the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program and OD-NR's H2Ohio Program, we have successfully restored over 1.5 miles of stream, 15+ acres of wetland, and 25 acres of riverine floodplain and upland habitat.



Recent Conservation Highlights



Preserving Chippewa Creek

Being a direct tributary of the Cuyahoga River, Chippewa Creek is a critical waterway to protect; and is one of the few watersheds with an endorsed Balanced Growth Plan.

In partnership with the City of Broadview Heights and support from the Clean Ohio Program, West Creek recently protected over 55 acres along the waterway. The project, which included the acquisition of multiple parcels, contains over 1/2 mile of stream, large stands of mature woodlands, and critical bat habitat.



Preserving Pond Brook

With support provided by the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program, West Creek recently protected over 40 acres along Pond Brook, located in the Tinker's Creek watershed within the City of Reminderville. The property contains nearly 1/2 mile of stream, and critical floodplain and streamside wetlands.



Zaclon River Landing

In partnership with the Spartan Alumni Rowing Association (SARA) and support from the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program, Cuyahoga County, and Ohio Brownfield Program - this 4-acre property located on the Cuyahoga River will be restored and transitioned into an access point on the Cuyahoga River with non-motorized boat and riverfront access.

More to come in 2024!

A Synergy of: Protect - Restore - Connect



Stream and Habitat Restoration Underway at West Creek Reservation Addition

At the former Padua Franciscan property off W. Ridgewood Drive in Parma, West Creek Conservancy made great progress in 2022 restoring streams, floodplains, wetlands, and natural habitats. The nearly 19-acre property will be added to the Cleveland Metroparks' West Creek Reservation once construction is complete.

A primary task of ours was to lengthen a historic headwater stream of West Creek and decrease its slope. The creek flows into the Cuyahoga River, which in turn connects to Lake Erie. Re-establishment of the headwater stream's original, sinuous shape reduces flooding risk. Preventing flooding and erosion of the stream minimizes sediment in the water, ensuring healthy respiration for aquatic animals and clean drinking water for Ohioans.

As part of the approximately 1,650 linear feet of stream restoration, we installed pools and riffles to oxygenate water as it flows over and around boulders. We also dug detention ponds nearby to hold water during and after rain events. The ponds house fish and amphibians, while plantings of native grasses adjacent to the ponds and stream collect water.

Securely installed dead and dying trees serve as snags — habitats for wildlife such as birds and mammals. Removal of trees from their former locations also reduces the risk of trunks and branches falling on paths and trails, increasing safety for future visitors of this West Creek Reservation addition. Native trees have been planted throughout the property to collect water and add wildlife habitat, and for visitors to experience the shade, aesthetic value, and health benefits that healthy living trees provide.

With more than 40,000 people living within 1 mile of West Creek Reservation's park and trail system, residents of Parma and surrounding communities will have greater access to green space and more opportunities for hiking, cycling, birding, and more following the restoration.

Support for this long-term initiative has included the Ohio Public Works Commission's Clean Ohio Greenspace Fund, the Ohio EPA's 319 Program, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Cleveland Metroparks, the City of Parma, and the James M. Cox Foundation.

Stearn's Native Plant & Tree Nursery

Located in the heart of Parma

Stearn's Native Plant & Tree Nursery is up and running; a partnership with the City of Parma, Cuyahoga County and Cuyahoga SWCD. Located on 16 acres, rear of Stearn's Farm, West Creek has started the propagation of native plants and trees. This is an effort to not only advocate and teach about the benefits of native vegetation, but to also produce and distribute such product to local/regional projects. We often host tours, hikes, workshops and other events and are always on the lookout for additional volunteers looking to donate some time and energy.

Thank you to Cuyahoga County and the Urban Tree Canopy Program, as well as the City of Parma, Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District and the hundreds of volunteers that have lent their time and expertise to the project

To learn more, contact Kara@westcreek.org





With a packed house of 500, our 2023 Up! A Creek was a phenomenal evening of celebrating West Creek! With the infamous wine toss, dinner-time heads and tails, nearly 50 raffle/auction packages, live music, great food and spirits - and most importantly our generous guests, sponsors and volunteers, who all help bring the night together - it was a night worth celebrating! More to come soon about 2024....

Full list of our generous contributors can be found at www.westcreek.org



PROTECT | RESTORE | CONNECT

WHAT WE DO:

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 Northeast Ohio, West Creek ultimately evolved into a diverse nonprofit conservation organization that serves the region.

West Creek has protected thousands of acres in dozens of communities across the region, while placing importance on water quality improvement, stormwater abatement, wetland and riparian corridor restoration, environmental education and outreach, historic preservation and natural resource stewardship.

West Creek envisions healthier and more vibrant communities through the conservation and restoration of our natural areas and streams, as well as the creation of greenways and recreational trails, thereby linking neighborhoods and uniting people throughout the region. The mission of West Creek is to enrich 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.

HOW TO HELP:

Giving: Your gift will make an immediate impact, as well as a legacy of conservation in our community. For every \$1 donated, 96¢ is provided directly toward protecting and restoring our essential land and water resources. You can support West Creek through direct financial gifts, planned giving, appreciated stock donations, real estate donation, event sponsorships, project support, in-kind donations and corporate matching programs. To pledge your support today, please visit westcreek.org/support-us.

Volunteering: Come out and join us! There are many opportunities throughout the year to become involved and help fulfill West Creek's mission. Individual, corporate and board opportunities are available. For more information, contact kara@westcreek.org.



CELEBRATING

26 YEARS of Making Nature
your Neighbor

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**AN URBAN LAND TRUST
SERVING NORTHEAST OHIO**


WEST CREEK
CONSERVANCY



JOIN TODAY!
westcreek.org



West Creek Conservancy
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Cleveland OH 44134



www.westcreek.org contact us at info@westcreek.org

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Protecting your land!

At West Creek, we are humbled to protect our land and water resources for future generations. Whether the land gets integrated into a park or trail system, or simply preserved for its beauty or uniqueness, we're proud to provide such stewardship and care for it.

We welcome opportunities across Northeast Ohio to preserve our natural heritage: woodlands, wetlands, rivers and streams, farms or family homesteads.

If you ever want to consider conserving your property, please feel free to reach out!

Protect - Restore - Connect

An impact now but a legacy gift!