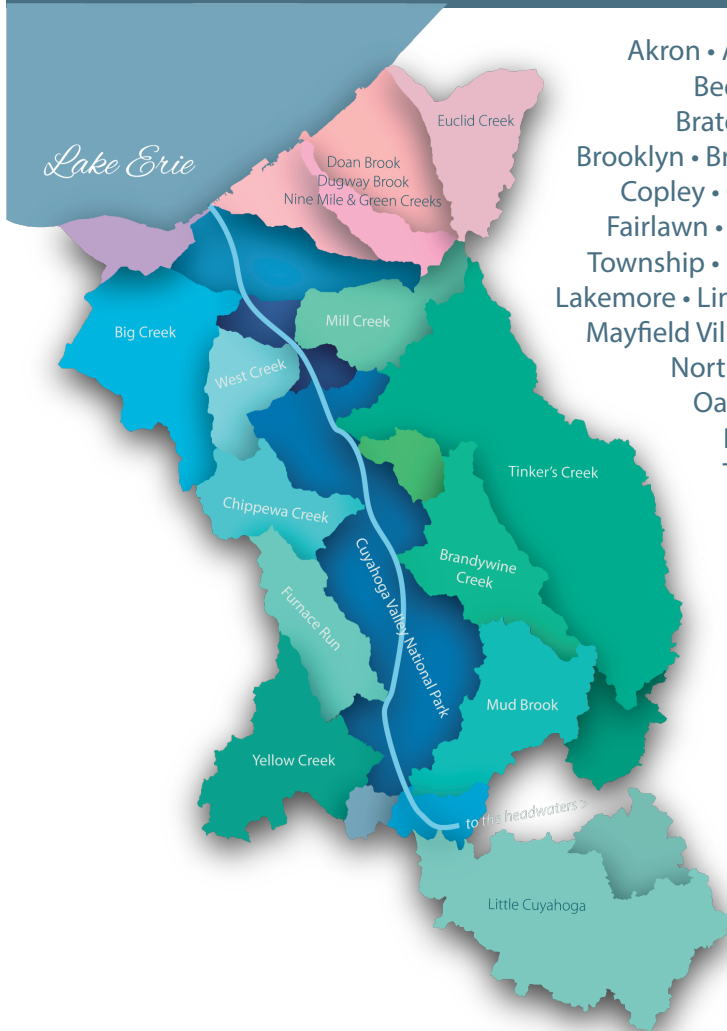


Your community and the

# CUYAHOGA RIVER AOC

A R E A O F C O N C E R N



Akron • Aurora • Bainbridge Township • Bath Township • Beachwood  
Bedford • Bedford Heights • Boston Heights • Boston Township  
Bratenahl • Brecksville • Brimfield Township • Broadview Heights  
Brooklyn • Brooklyn Heights • Brookpark • Cleveland • Cleveland Heights  
Copley • Cuyahoga Falls • Cuyahoga Heights • East Cleveland • Euclid  
Fairlawn • Franklin Township • Garfield Heights • Glenwillow • Granger  
Township • Highland Heights • Highland Hills • Hudson • Independence  
Lakemore • Linndale • Lyndhurst • Macedonia • Magadore • Maple Heights  
Mayfield Village • Mayfield Heights • Newburgh Heights • North Randall  
North Royalton • Northfield Village • Northfield Center Township  
Oakwood • Orange Village • Parma • Parma Heights • Peninsula  
Pepper Pike • Randolph Township • Reminderville • Richfield  
Township • Richfield Village • Richmond Heights • Sagamore  
Hills • Seven Hills • Shaker Heights • Sharon Township  
Silver Lake • Solon • South Euclid • Springfield Township  
Stow • Streetsboro • Suffield Township • Tallmadge  
Twinsburg • Twinsburg Township • University Heights  
Valley View • Walton Hills • Warrensville Heights  
Willoughby Hills

The communities of the  
Cuyahoga River Area of Concern

Working together toward  
sustainable watersheds  
and healthy Great Lakes

A bi-national effort to conserve 84% of North America's, and 20% of the world's, surface fresh water

The Cuyahoga River is one of 27 United States and 14 Canadian Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs) – waters that have experienced environmental degradation, fail to meet the objectives of the U.S.- Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA,) and were identified as being impaired in their ability to support aquatic life or beneficial uses.

The Agreement called on each Area of Concern to develop a plan to identify the Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) and their causes, develop criteria for restoration, implement remedial measures, monitor the effectiveness of such measures, and confirm that restoration is achieved.

The lower 46.5 miles of the Cuyahoga River, including all the tributaries and their watersheds that drain to that section of river, and the adjacent Lake Erie shoreline and its tributaries, comprise the Cuyahoga River AOC. The AOC begins at the head of the Gorge Dam pool in Akron/Cuyahoga Falls, ends at Lake Erie, and includes the shoreline from the western Cleveland border east to, and including, Euclid Creek.

# Your community's role in restoring and protecting our most valuable natural resource

Each of us, as individuals and as local governments, has a part in the restoration and protection of our water resources. We are all responsible for the water that flows through our communities and enters the streams, the Cuyahoga River, and Lake Erie. And we all have a role in helping to reach the AOC's goals.

## The goals of the Area of Concern

The Cuyahoga AOC has specific targets to meet before it is taken off the list of impaired waters, or "delisted." In general, these are measured by things like bacteria levels, algae, and aquatic life – whether streams and the water in them are able to support ample, diverse, and healthy populations of fish and bugs, and whether or not fish can move freely through the system.

## Know your watershed

All the rain and snow that falls in the AOC communities winds up in Lake Erie. There are 21 subwatersheds that comprise the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern (AOC.) Each AOC community drains its surface water across one or more of these subwatersheds into a creek, stream, or directly into the river or the lake.

*What to do:*

- *Know where your community sits in the watershed. Knowing where your rain and snowmelt go means being a good neighbor to the communities downstream, since your water affects their parts of the watershed. What happens in your community doesn't stay in your community.*

## Slow your flow

Flooding isn't usually caused by rain falling or snow melting where it lands, but by too much water coming across the surface too fast for the streams or storm drains to handle it. Most of the problems we have with flooding happen because stormwater that lands on paved surfaces – roads, parking lots, roofs – doesn't have a chance to get absorbed into the soil.

Watersheds are supposed to have wetlands to gather, hold, and filter this water. Streams are supposed to have flood plains that let excess water flow over their banks, soak into the surface, and return to the stream when there's room to accommodate it. Instead, developed land with excessive impervious surface sends huge volumes of water over the banks, or through pipes and culverts, and keeps streams in tight channels.

That means more water moving faster with less room to maneuver. And, in addition to flooding, that causes more erosion of stream banks, which results in property owners losing their land as the stream tries to make itself wider.

*What to do:*

- *Give streams room to work. Enforce riparian (meaning "related to rivers") setbacks to keep paving and structures away from stream-banks and to provide a buffer to keep the banks from eroding.*
- *Require, or incentivize, landowners to let the grass grow and plant trees and shrubs in the buffer area to stabilize the soil.*
- *Encourage the use of green infrastructure – rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, etc. – to capture and filter stormwater.*
- *Set aside and retain ample wetlands, which are nature's virtual sponges, to hold and filter runoff.*
- *Plant and maintain trees. Everywhere. They are an essential part of your community's infrastructure as mature trees can pull and hold thousands of gallons of water, and their canopy interrupts and holds rain and snow before it reaches land.*

## Educate your constituents

Everything that affects water quality and flow starts on someone's property. Communities are able to regulate land use and building standards to help reach AOC goals, but it helps when landowners understand why these regulations are necessary and where their responsibilities lie.

*What to do:*

- *Work with your Soil & Water Conservation District, Sewer/Wastewater District, and your local watershed organization, all of which have valuable programs to raise your community's watershed literacy and assist you in making your community members good watershed stewards.*

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For more information about the AOC, visit [cuyahogaoc.org](http://cuyahogaoc.org), or contact [info@cuyahogaoc.org](mailto:info@cuyahogaoc.org)

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