

## About the AOC

The Cuyahoga River was designated as one of the Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC) in 1987 due to its history of significant environmental harm from human activities, preventing people and wildlife from fully using or enjoying the local waterways. The Cuyahoga River AOC spans the lower 46.5 miles of the river, including all tributaries that flow into this section, as well as the adjacent Lake Erie shoreline and its direct tributaries from the western Cleveland border to Euclid Creek in the east.

### Cuyahoga River AOC 2024 Advisory Committee

The delisting efforts of the Cuyahoga River AOC are led by the Advisory Committee, a group of committed stakeholders from community groups, businesses, government agencies, and other organizations focused on clean water, watershed stewardship, and restoration.

*The Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District is the organization that supports the Advisory Committee by providing administrative assistance, managing funds for programs and projects, and coordinating activities.*

- Jennifer Grieser, Chair - Cleveland Metroparks
- William Hughes, Vice Chair - Public Member
- Carly Beck - Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority
- Peter Bode - Shaker Lakes Nature Center
- Donna Friedman - Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- Pat Gsellman - City of Akron
- Joseph Hadley - NEFCO
- Scott Hardy - Ohio Sea Grant
- Jennifer Heard - Water Pollution Control
- Julianne Kurdila - Cleveland Cliffs, Inc.
- Whitnye Long Jones - Organic Connects, Inc.
- Stephen Love - Cleveland Foundation
- Joseph MacDonald - NOACA
- Elaine Marsh - Summit Metro Parks
- Samantha Martin - Cleveland Water Alliance
- Erica Matheny - Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners
- Elaine Price - Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

- Bryce Pulley - City of Cuyahoga Falls
- Thomas Rayburn - Public Member
- Mike Sekerak - Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- Megan Smith - City of Akron Water Supply Bureau
- Jordyn Stoll - Trout Unlimited
- Meghan Tinker Paynter - Canalway Partners
- Katie Wells - Interlake Maritime Services
- Christina Znidarsic - Davey Resource Group
- Ex-Officio:
- Hannah Boesinger - Ohio Lake Erie Commission
- Kris Patterson - Ohio Lake Erie Commission
- Bryan Hinterberger - US Army Corps Of Engineers
- Ed Kender - Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Leah Medley - US Environmental Protection Agency
- Beth Sparks-Jackson - United States Geological Survey
- Curt Wagner - ODNR Division of Wildlife



#### STAY CONNECTED!

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- cuyahogaoc.org

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30k+  
people reached

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & ENGAGEMENT

This year, the Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee engaged the public through different efforts to raise awareness and encourage the community to help restore the river. They also introduced a new logo that represents a cleaner, healthier river, along with new educational materials.

### PUBLIC EVENTS

On March 15th, the **Biennial Symposium** took place with speakers talking about different topics, including leaders from the Lower Menominee River AOC and scientists working on restoring native mussels at CVNP. The event was a chance to look back and think about how far the Cuyahoga River AOC has come, as it was [#halfwaythere](#) to delisting status!



On October 17th, the Cuyahoga River AOC marked the removal of another BUI - **Beach Closings (Recreational Use)**! Beginning with a cleanup at Edgewater Beach, the event was filled with community networking, environmental advocacy, and a collective celebration of progress toward a healthier river.



### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Throughout the year, members participated in **eleven** different events to engage with the community and share information on the AOC.



**Four** presentations were delivered to help people better understand the AOC's importance in the region and share the progress made so far.













Members successfully led **two** educational tours, highlighting the river's history, restoration projects, and ecological significance.

The Advisory Committee recognized the **City of Cuyahoga Falls** as the 2024 Champion of the River for their environmental stewardship and protection.



## Delisting & BUI Removal Progress

The local Advisory Committee identified ten out of fourteen Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs), human or ecological uses of the ecosystem that have been lost or damaged due to environmental decline, along with their causes to develop strategic projects and actions to restore them. With six BUIs now removed, the Cuyahoga River AOC is more than halfway toward its goal of being delisted as an Area of Concern. **In 2024, BUI 10a — Beach Closings (Recreational Use) — was removed from the list.**

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|--|---|
|  <b>Restrictions on Fish Consumption</b><br>REMOVED in 2018           |  <b>Degradation of Fish Populations</b><br>IMPAIRED              |
|  <b>Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae</b><br>REMOVED in 2021        |  <b>Degradation of Benthos</b><br>IMPAIRED                       |
|  <b>Fish Tumors and Other Deformities</b><br>REMOVED in 2023          |  <b>Restrictions on Navigational Dredging</b><br>IMPAIRED        |
|  <b>Lack of Public Access (locally-identified)</b><br>REMOVED in 2017 |  <b>Beach Closings / Recreational Contact</b><br>REMOVED in 2024 |
|  <b>Degradation of Aesthetics</b><br>REMOVED in 2017                 |  <b>Loss of Fish Habitat</b><br>IMPAIRED                        |

## MAPs in Action (#RestoreTheRiver)

The Ohio EPA, Ohio Lake Erie Commission, and Advisory Committee developed a list of projects to address BUIs and improve conditions in the Cuyahoga River AOC. Construction began on several Management Action Projects (MAPs) this year, helping to remove impairments. Much of this work is funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a key bipartisan source for environmental restoration across the region.

