

CUYAHOGA RIVER AOC

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



31k+

people reached

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, the Advisory Committee connected with the public through many events, encouraging the community to actively support the river's restoration. Partnering with NEORS's GIS Team, they also launched an updated interactive map showcasing AOC projects.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

On April 1st, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission hosted the **Ohio AOC Summit**, bringing together local advocates and community partners from across Lake Erie's shoreline. The summit showcased teamwork and innovation, letting attendees share knowledge, tackle challenges, and highlight projects restoring the state's waters for people and wildlife.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Throughout the year, members tabled at **fourteen** events to connect with the community and raise awareness about the AOC.

Members delivered **ten** presentations, bringing the story of the AOC to life and highlighting the progress in restoring the region's waterways.



In mid-September, representatives of the Advisory Committee joined over 300 partners in Toledo for the **Areas of Concern Cross-Agency Partnership Summit**. The event brought together federal, state, and local leaders, showcasing the collaboration and commitment driving efforts to delist the region's remaining 24 AOCs.



The Advisory Committee hosted **two** immersive tours, offering participants a firsthand look at the river's ongoing restoration projects and achievements.

The Cuyahoga River AOC was represented at **four** industry gatherings, sharing expertise through panels and building connections across the region.



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.



Restrictions on Fish Consumption
REMOVED in 2018



Degradation of Fish Populations
IMPAIRED



Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae
REMOVED in 2021



Degradation of Benthos
IMPAIRED



Fish Tumors and Other Deformities
REMOVED in 2023



Restrictions on Navigational Dredging
IMPAIRED



Lack of Public Access (locally-identified)
REMOVED in 2017



Beach Closings / Recreational Contact
REMOVED in 2024



Degradation of Aesthetics
REMOVED in 2017



Loss of Fish Habitat
IMPAIRED

Projects Completed

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. On July 18, partners celebrated the completion of the \$17M West Creek Flume and Stabilization Project. This Management Action Project (MAP) restored and stabilized 6,500 feet of stream, enhanced habitat, improved fish passage, reduced erosion, and removed the outdated concrete flume near I-480. Led by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), the project represents a major investment in long-term ecological health and infrastructure protection.



Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Much of the progress in the Cuyahoga River AOC is supported by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a key bipartisan investment in freshwater restoration across the region. Celebrating 15 years in 2025, GLRI continues to fund projects that address long-standing impairments and move the river closer to delisting. In his personal capacity, Advisory Committee Vice-Chair Bill Hughes attended this year's annual Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C. to advocate for ongoing support. In August, the Advisory Committee received a grant from Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition to host a restoration tour in Akron, highlighting projects that demonstrate how collaborative investments are accelerating recovery and strengthening surrounding communities.



Who We Are

The Cuyahoga River was designated a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) in 1987 because decades of environmental damage from human activity kept people and wildlife from fully enjoying the river. The AOC covers the lower 46.5 miles of the river, including all tributaries in this section, plus the adjacent Lake Erie shoreline and its direct tributaries from western Cleveland to Euclid Creek.

Ohio EPA and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission are the state agencies in charge of delisting Ohio's three remaining AOCs (Cuyahoga, Black, and Maumee). Its path to delisting is guided by the Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee, a group of local stakeholders who work to implement MAPs, remove BUIs, and advocate for the river and its communities.

STAY CONNECTED!

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Environmental Protection Agency
Lake Erie Commission



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