



December 2021  
Annual Appeal



## #MILLCREEKrestoration

- 4 New projects active: Low-head dam mitigation (Arlington Heights), Riparian corridor restoration on Sharon Creek (Ewendale), Wetland enhancement at Twin Creek Preserve (Sharonville), Wetland restoration (Westchester)
- One low-head dam (LHD) project submitted for funding (Reading).
- New partners Lyondell Basell & Wise Temple accomplish restoration activities

## #MILLCREEKeducation

- New EcoArt summer programs with Working in Neighborhoods, Roberts Academy, and Winton Place Youth Center
- Students from UC Center for Field Studies, DAAP, and other institutions visited project sites
- OEPA QDC 15-hour Level II Chemistry Training completed for 4 local monitoring programs
- MCA wins Cincinnati Magazine's 2021 Nonprofit of the Year award for the second time!



## #MILLCREEKrecreation

- 2nd Annual Canoes & Conversations hosted municipal officials and other stakeholders to discuss the benefits of improved land & water trails
- MCYC inducted UC students, The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority employees, and several public groups who participated in urban stream adventures as new crewmates
- Dedicated volunteers keep the stream clean by picking up TONS of trash and debris

# #MILLCREEKrecreation



## Land and Water Trails in the Mill Creek Watershed

**What draws you to your favorite outdoor destination location?** Outdoor enthusiasts search the internet or shop for guides to find information about the best places to visit. What about visiting Mill Creek right in your backyard? Whether you enjoy paddling, hiking, biking, birding, fishing, or any other recreational activities, Mill Creek can provide you with hidden opportunities.

Twenty-four years ago, our Mill Creek was designated by American Rivers as America's most endangered urban river. Many years of abuse and neglect created a smelly, dirty, unhealthy, and nearly abandoned stream. But Cincinnati has not shied away from the challenge to support the resurgence of its local waterway and create a healthy environment.

Mill Creek Alliance is dedicated to making Mill Creek shine and become EXACTLY the kind of place that visitors seek out. Our very own Mill Creek Yacht Club has been guiding paddlers on trips down Mill Creek for almost 28 years! This year they offered the first ever Pop-up Canoe Livery allowing outdoor enthusiasts to paddle on their own, without guides, down the creek. To keep the stream clean, the Yacht Club also expends considerable energy cleaning up trash and debris. Plans are in progress to improve public access points along the creek to allow more independent use of the creek.

In addition to plans for improving the "water trail", there is growing interest in completing paved "land trails" alongside the creek. Momentum and enthusiasm are mounting to complete The Crown Trail, a 34 mile urban trail loop in Cincinnati that includes extending the Mill Creek Greenway Trail (currently 3.5 miles of paved multi-use trail, + 5 miles of on-road bike lane connections) south to the Ohio River, as well as to the north. Once additional segments are completed, biking and walking options around the city will be greatly increased.

So come on down to the creek. If you haven't paddled or biked along Mill Creek, you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you find. Mill Creek is back!! To learn more about paddling, biking, and many other outdoor activities you can do in the Mill Creek Watershed, view our recreation guide online at [www.themillcreekalliance.org/recreation-guide/](http://www.themillcreekalliance.org/recreation-guide/)

**DONATE to assure that land and water trails are a part of Mill Creek's future.**

### SAVE THE DATE

February 5, Seed Bomb Workparty • February 19, Live Staking Event • February 26, WQM Volunteer Training  
March 2, WQM Volunteer Training • March 5, Live Staking Workparty • March 9, State of the Mill Creek Address  
April 2, Workparty in the Watershed TBD • April 22, 28th Annual Mill Creek Cleanup by Canoe  
• May 7, Pop-up Canoe Livery in Evendale • May 21, Urban Stream Adventure  
June 4, Workparty in the Watershed TBD • June 18, Pop-up Canoe Livery in Northside  
*For event details, visit our website: [www.themillcreekalliance.org/calendar-of-events](http://www.themillcreekalliance.org/calendar-of-events)*

MCA Water Quality Monitoring volunteers completed another successful season. If you want to learn more, JOIN US on March 9th for the State of the Mill Creek Address with Dr. Mike Miller (location TBD).

## Impactful Learning Along the Mill Creek Greenway

**How are students navigating the current educational environment?** Although recent polls indicate that between COVID19 and other curriculum concerns a majority of American adults are worried about the education system, we at the Mill Creek Alliance are optimistic. Hosting Gamble Montessori High School students for two days of service showed us a generation of hard working, resilient, and clever students.

During the 3rd week of October, MCA engaged nearly 100 Gamble Montessori High School students in innovative educational programming that explored the intersection of community service, food security, and environmental engineering. Students rotated through three activities on a neglected portion of the Mill Greenway Trail in Northside.

Working together, the 7th & 8th grade students tackled invasive Johnson Grass & Amur Bush Honeysuckle overrunning the fruit trees, native plants, and sculptures near the Freedom Tree Grove. Students removed an impressive amount of Honeysuckle in addition to 60+ large bags of invasive plants. The bags were later removed thanks to the help of our friends at Keep Cincinnati Beautiful and the City of Cincinnati.

Next, guided by volunteer group leaders from the Society of St. Andrew's (SOSA) Ohio Gleaning Network, students collected fruit from the public edible forest using equipment borrowed from another local non-profit, Working in Neighborhoods (WIN). All told, Gamble students collected an astounding 175 pounds of pears that SOSA volunteers donated to Churches Active In Northside (CAIN) in support of their community-based ministry to challenge poverty by feeding bodies and souls.

Lastly, MCA linked its restoration and education programs by having the Gamble Gators visit the award-winning Mill Creek Low-Head Dam Mitigation project. With an eye towards empowering students to become the next generation of environmental professionals, Gamble students were challenged with a series of environmental engineering calculations. Using simple geometry, students estimated the size, weight, and cost of the stone needed to construct the 120-foot long riffle. Although one girl stated "I'm not good at math. I failed it last year," with MCA staff encouragement, the student successfully proved she could do engineering calculations – applying math to solve complex real-world problems.

MCA staff asked Gamble students to consider the activities of the day in light of potential professional pursuits. This service activity provided students with first-hand knowledge of what it means to become scientists, engineers, planners, public health professionals, municipal administrators, or entrepreneurs. We are proud that Mill Creek served as a venue for student enrichment, environmental education, community service, and partnership building.

**DONATE to support youth in the exploration of their natural environment.**



# #MILLCREEKrestoration



## Bald Eagles Return to a Restored Mill Creek

**Have you seen bald eagles along the Mill Creek?** In 2021, there have been at least three sightings of bald eagles in the Lower Mill Creek Watershed - along the Beekman Corridor to Northside and to the I-75 Mitchell Avenue exit in Spring Grove. There have also been multiple sightings at Winton Lake (West Fork Mill Creek). The presence of bald eagles is an excellent marker of recovery of our Mill Creek ecosystem. Our efforts to restore the stream environment help make this good news possible.

Although all species need shelter, food, and water, bald eagles are a demanding species. They require tall trees near waterbodies where they can shelter, raise young, and look for prey. Bald eagles need mature trees to support the weight of their nests, which can weigh 1,000 pounds! The raptors prefer to hunt within 2 miles of their nests to support their diet primarily of fish, waterfowl, and other aquatic prey. When America adopted the bald eagle as the national symbol in 1782, the country may have had as many as 100,000 nesting eagles (according to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service). The first major decline of the species probably began in the mid to late 1800's, due to humans overhunting their food, overharvesting their habitat trees, and shooting them in a mistaken effort to protect domestic livestock. As early as 1940, Congress passed the Bald Eagle Protection Act, fearing that the species was "threatened with extinction." Along with chemical poisoning from DDT and lead in the environment, by 1963, only 487 nesting pairs of bald eagles remained in the U.S.

Since that time, Americans have revamped their thinking about the environment. Federal, State, and local agencies in partnership with industry and private citizens have banned chemicals of concern, protected streams and waterways, planted trees, and now have a better understanding of how ecosystems, such as watersheds, work.

The Mill Creek Alliance is proud to be part of this generational effort. We completed an Ohio Stormwater Association award-winning project in the very area where the eagles were spotted this year. Before our Mill Creek Low-Head Dam Mitigation project, two concrete-encased sewer lines crossed the Mill Creek, and acted as 3-foot high fish barriers. Fish swimming up the Mill Creek from the Ohio River were blocked from passing. The project left the utility lines in place, but used limestone boulders to create a 120-foot long, gradual ramp for fish and other aquatic species to wander up and down the Mill Creek. Because of this change, bald eagles can now follow fish upstream and expand their fishing range.

We're so thankful to know our efforts have made a difference and to see the fruits of our collective labor. It shows that your investment in restoration efforts has paid off, and will continue to do so in the years to come.

**DONATE to support restoration of the Mill Creek Watershed.**

**Become a Donor  
Invest in Your Local Water**

**DONATE NOW**

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*Thank you...*

**to all who have donated this  
year, especially those who  
helped make our 2021 Second  
Annual Trash-a-Thon FUNdraiser  
more successful than ever!**