



Navigating the Current

Ohio's Southwest regional watershed champions, Mill Creek Alliance (MCA), has much to celebrate as 2023 continues to unfold. A full decade has passed since MCA began closely monitoring the water quality of Mill Creek. Thanks to the dedication of an army of volunteer citizen scientists we have hundreds of eyes watching over the waterway. Mill Creek has grown into a symbol of community perseverance and nature's resilience. Our urban waterway has exploded back to life and we are so proud to share some of our achievements in 2023.



One of the signature achievements took place at Clark Rd in Arlington Heights (River Mile 12.2). Here, MCA has mitigated yet another low-head dam (LHD) by installing a riffle to improve fish passage, aquatic habitats and curb erosion. This project is a testament to the effectiveness of combining human intervention with natural processes to mitigate environmental concerns.

To keep the resurgence of Mill Creek shifting in the right direction, part of MCA's mission is to educate and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. In 2023, MCA was awarded over \$49,880 from the Ohio EPA's Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF). With this support, more than a thousand students from 19 different schools and districts received firsthand experiences in ecological sciences along the urban waterway. New curriculum integrating environmental education with our stream restoration work was instituted; new schools were introduced to their local waterway and new lesson plans aligned to both Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and State of Ohio standards allow the inclusion of all students in Greater Cincinnati. MCA's focus though wasn't only centered around traditional students. Mayors, council members, and public works officials from the entire watershed paddled Mill Creek, offering them a unique perspective and, in turn, making them advocates for Mill Creek's rejuvenation.

Our mission goes beyond simply preserving landscape; it involves reconnecting communities which have been impacted by the intensive development within the watershed. With input from many local community members and stakeholders, MCA has worked diligently to address the ecological harms of the past through strategic restoration projects, reintegrating natural systems, and restoring ecosystem balance. By enhancing habitats and reintroducing native plant life, MCA is actively restoring and enhancing the efficacy of local, natural systems within the watershed while carefully considering the needs of all communities to better balance nature and human development.

While our journey toward a thriving, balanced ecosystem has made incredible progress, it is clear that persistent efforts must continue. By focusing on cleaner water, healthier communities, and empowered young minds, we look forward to continue to "Navigate The Current." Join us on this journey by supporting MCA today!



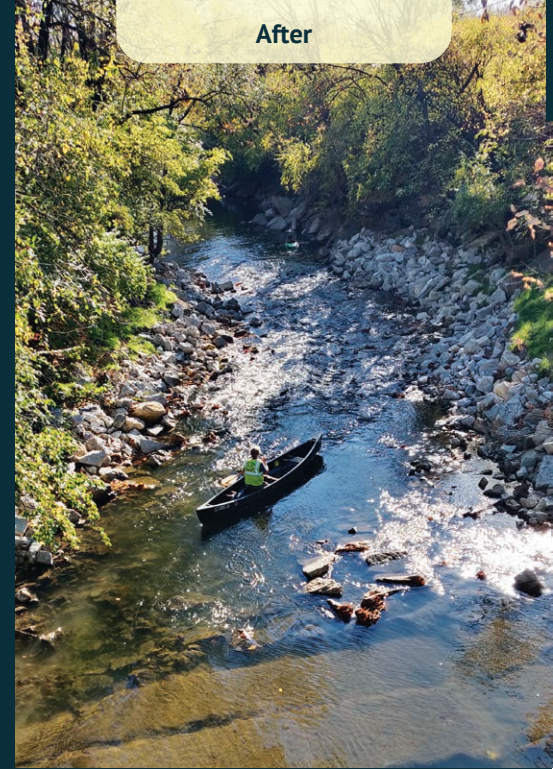
Before



During



After



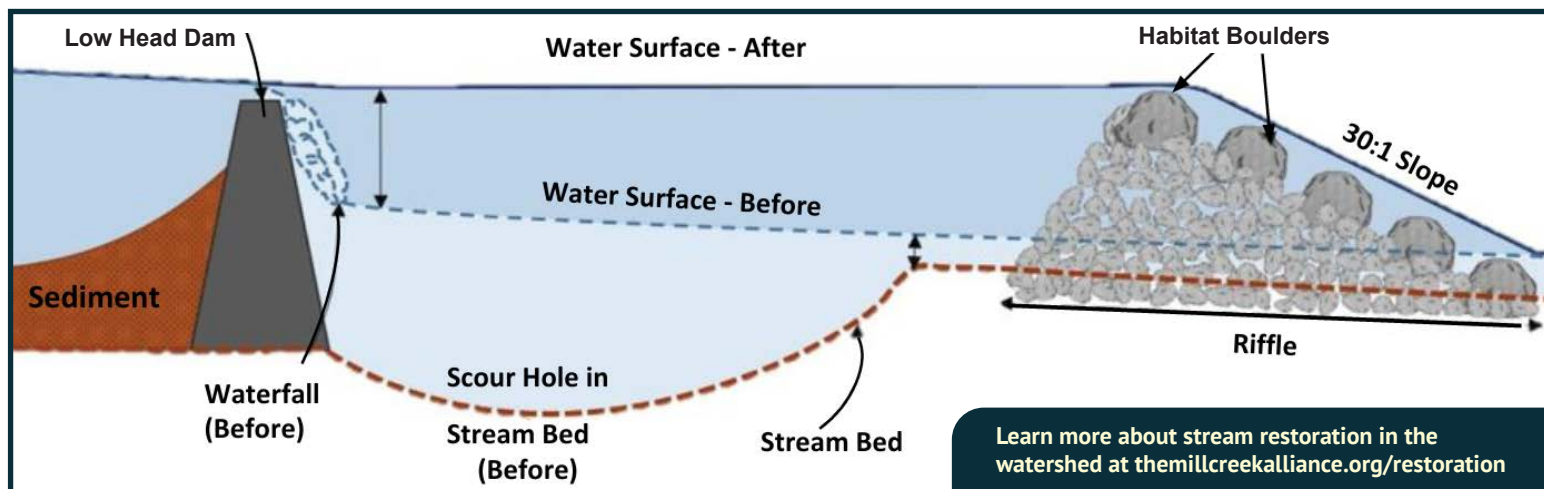
Improving Stream Habitats

DONATE to Restore our Ecosystem

Mill Creek Alliance completed the River Mile (RM) 12.2 low head dam mitigation project this summer! Located in the Mill Creek mainstem at Clark Road, Arlington Heights, it's part of mitigating the remaining 6 of 29 LHDs that once blocked Mill Creek. Within a few years we expect there will be none remaining and the entire 28 miles of the Mill Creek will once again be free-flowing and connected to the Ohio River.

The \$229,000 project was funded by Ohio EPA's \$319 program, designed by Warren High, formerly with Christopher B. Burke Engineering, and constructed by Benchmark Land Management. The project complements an active LHD mitigation project at RM 12.0, and two proposed LHD projects at RM 11.8 and RM 13.4. These are among a cluster of 12 restoration projects in the Sharon Creek-Mill Creek subwatershed valued at over \$4.5 million that eliminate fish barriers and provide ecological lift for the Mill Creek.

LHD RM 12.2 is a result of a sewer line constructed across the stream. It was not removed, but remains in place because it is necessary infrastructure. However, the dam has been mitigated with the installation of a 120' long riffle with 1,200 tons of rocks placed at a 30:1 slope. The project meets multiple goals including: protecting infrastructure, improving water quality, restoring habitat, and increasing recreational utility, all of which support the vision of a healthy Mill Creek that benefits human health and environment in the watershed.



Leading the Way in Exploration

While Mill Creek itself only represents a tiny fraction of the watershed, it's the part we all think about most. Why? Well because once you have paddled it, you become attached, you want to take it under your wing and nurture it. Why? Because Mill Creek is in the heart of our city! No matter where you are going, you seem to pass over it several times. But being down on the creek is a whole new perspective on the familiar. "I've lived in this city for 40+ years and until I paddled the creek, I barely noticed it," says Finance Director, Linda Keller. Linda continues, "Now, when I'm at my desk and working on 'other things MCA,' I dream of dappled sunlight in Sharonville piercing through the leaves and falling on the running water. I see the fish swimming upstream beside my boat while paddling through the concrete channel in Ivorydale. I chase a heron while paddling at the front of the canoe pack, and an eagle soars over the boats in South Cumminsville. I hear the sound of the train whistle (and see its conductor, who once waved at me) as it races over the railroad trestle in Reading while I'm recording a video of the oncoming paddlers. I'm at the mouth of Mill Creek on the Ohio, sitting on a log, surrounded by friends, watching the Paddlefest paddlers go by." Mill Creek never fails to deliver rewarding experiences whenever paddling or exploring its waters. Check our website for more information regarding our Public Stream Adventures and join us on the Mill Creek as we navigate the current alongside the intrepid explorers of the Mill Creek Yacht Club (MCYC).

DONATE to Explore Mill Creek



"Mill Creek is one more step to being tire-free in 2023 with these 400+ tires we pulled out during Trash-a-Thon."

– Greg Bechtel of MCYC.

10 Years Monitoring our Watershed Communities

DONATE to Fund Another Decade

2023 marks the triumphant milestone of a full decade of unwavering commitment to guarding the watershed and monitoring Mill Creek and its tributaries. In this remarkable span of time, we have been keeping our eyes on the shifting currents and analyzing trends of our Mill Creek's water quality. Most recently we are excited about the completed stream improvements by the LHD mitigation project at RM 12.2. Completion of the RM 12.2 and 12.0 projects, as well as other proposed LHD projects in this part of the watershed breathes life into formerly inhospitable waters, crafting intricate microhabitats that allow new life to flourish in our ecosystem. Your support of the WQM program will allow us to better assess this stretch of the creek and closer analyze how our work improves both water chemistry and species biodiversity. Will you help fund the next decade of water monitoring?



Lessons for All Learners

DONATE to Empower the Next Generation

The last season of MCA's Education Program was booming! Teachers reaching out to MCA desired deeply to take their students out of the classroom and give them a transformative experience. The thirst for hands-on lessons in ecological field science was readily apparent amongst teachers in CPS, Northwest Local School District, and 80+ schools throughout the watershed which spans portions of Butler and Hamilton counties. MCA is grateful for the support it received from the OEEF grant as well as the L&L Nippert Charitable Foundation. With this grant money, we were able to create modified lesson plans aligned with the newly adopted NGSS standards for Cincinnati Public Schools and Ohio State Standards for all other districts outside of CPS. We were able to purchase new waders to ensure every student was able to safely access the waterway and partake in water quality education lessons. Outdated chemical testing equipment was replaced and the new equipment was utilized during an emergency situation on Mill Creek when there was a great influx of untreated waters due to a power failure at the MSD treatment plant.

These grants allowed us to not only enhance lessons, but also reconnect communities by providing transportation to schools in need. Buses can be a significant financial burden, often ranging from \$350 to \$400 per bus. This support not only made our program accessible to a wider audience but also emphasized the importance of experiential learning in the field of ecological science. It's clear that the support of the Ohio EPA and L&L Nippert Charitable Foundation has been instrumental in propelling our Education Program to new heights, benefiting students and teachers alike. Nonetheless, our growth depends on people like you; your support is needed to empower the next generation of environmental stewards!



Stay in the loop in 2024!

- 1. Visit Our Website:** themillcreekalliance.org/calendar-of-events
We'll post all the details there as soon as they're confirmed.
- 2. Follow Us on Social Media:**
Connect with us on your favorite social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to get real-time updates of the Mill Creek.
- 3. Contact Us:**
 - Volunteers needed for Water Quality Monitoring on the 2nd Saturday of each month (March-Nov.) Online Training for WQM and Information can be found online or contact aroberts@themillcreekalliance.org
 - Looking for community service opportunities to restore Mill Creek for your large or small group? Contact bkottler@themillcreekalliance.org
 - Plan ahead for the next semester and let's get your students outside with an Environmental Education Program. Contact jdwyer@themillcreekalliance.org

Donate today for cleaner water!



Invest in Your Local Watershed

Mill Creek Alliance • 1223 Jefferson Avenue • Reading, OH 45215 • www.themillcreekalliance.org
513.563.8800 • info@themillcreekalliance.org • [f](https://www.facebook.com/MillCreekAlliance) [i](https://www.instagram.com/MillCreekAlliance) [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/MillCreekAlliance) [y](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) @MillCreekAlliance