

A Message from the Executive Committee

This year, 2023 has been a notable year for the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership. First and foremost, we are celebrating our 20th anniversary as a watershed organization. Surprisingly, many of our current 15-member Board have been with the organization since its inception. This says something important about our mission — “To Protect and Restore the Doan Brook” — and about the commitment of our leaders to work together on behalf of our cities — Cleveland, Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights — to achieve that goal.

This year was also a year of change. Our long-time Executive Director Victoria Mills relinquished her leadership role with the Partnership and became our special project consultant. We all know how fortunate we are to be able to retain her talent and watershed knowledge in our organization.

In July, we welcomed Dr. Elizabeth “Beaux” Berkeley as Interim Director. Beaux, as she is now known to all, came to us directly after finishing a two-year Fulbright Scholarship in Zimbabwe. She is quickly adding watershed science to her background as a biologist. To assist her during this time of transition, the Board contracted with the Chagrin River Watershed Partners for grant applications and reporting as well as some event planning. To round out our team, Wendy Donkin from Small Seeds Design is maintaining our website and publicizing our events in emails and social media.

What the DBWP Board has learned through this year of changes is that we have a tenaciously viable organization composed of people who not only care about preserving and restoring the Doan, but also care about and value each other. We recognize the individual contributions that each of us throughout the watershed is making to bring home our mission. We look forward to many more years of partnership in watershed stewardship and stream restoration. Happy Anniversary, to our entire Doan Brook Watershed Partnership community!

— *From the Executive Committee:*
Darnell Brown, Laura Gooch, Karen Knittel, Nancy Moore, and Curt Witchey





Restoring the rain garden at the Rice Branch Library. Photo Tori Mills

Rainy Day Fun: Green Infrastructure Notes

DBWP received a grant from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club to restore a rain garden at Rice Branch Library in the Buckeye neighborhood of Cleveland. After a week of cold and rain, May 5 was sunny, clear, and perfect for installing the new rain garden. We had 17 volunteers from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club and the Northeast Ohio Master Rain Garden Program. Students from neighboring Harvey Rice Elementary asked to join the planting effort after school let out — a nice surprise and a hands-on learning opportunity.

This summer the parking lot and surrounding green space was completely transformed at Stonebrook White Montessori. DBWP guided the school team through planning, grant writing and execution of the new parking lot and bioretention basin that removes 100% of the stormwater from the over-burdened sewer system. Gone is the broken pavement! Gone are the catch basins that flooded with major rains! Here, is an opportunity for students to learn sustainability! A big thanks to Martha Loughridge for inviting DBWP to take part in this project and for contributing to this article.



Photo: Elizabeth Smith

Thank You!

Every year since its inception, the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership roster of donors has grown. We thank you for your support.

Make a “Doan-ation!”

Please join us in the stewardship of our watershed and its ecosystem — our backyard — by returning this form along with your 100% tax-deductible donation — or donate online by visiting www.doanbrookpartnership.org

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Hiking through the Seasons and Years

In 2013, DBWP and Bluestone Conservation began a series of interpretive stream hikes along the Doan Brook and neighboring brooks. Supported by the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, the hikes have become a signature program for both organizations.

First and foremost, the hikes bring people to experience local waters in special places. Interpretation addresses the natural and human forces that shape Cleveland's urban streams. Watershed restoration efforts are featured within the ever-changing weave of local nature and culture.

Hiking began in the Doan Gorge and quickly expanded. In scheduling the gorge hike to end the season in October, one and usually two other events could be added during the preceding summer. Only in the Covid year of 2020 was the schedule reduced to just the gorge hike.

To get past Covid in 2020, a virtual dimension was added. With local videographer Brad Masi, we filmed a tour of the Lake Erie estuaries on Doan, Dugway and Nine Mile brooks. With permission from private landowners, these wonderful features could be brought to the public as never before seen.

In 2021, Ted Auch began annual winter tree identification walks around Lower Lake. The winter season makes tree IDs challenging, but Ted's vast experience with trees provides for wonderful ID clues and a lot of fun for participants.

With the 11th year now complete, the hiking program is half as old as DBWP itself — a lot has changed in the

duration. The initial hikes explored unfamiliar places. We were all green. As the years progressed and favorite places were revisited, the ecological and historical narratives could be developed. In their current maturity, the hikes present each place in rich context. In this way, the hikes run parallel with and help grow the Partnership's mission. Legacy programs are improved; new frontiers are broached.

The following hikes have been added in sequence to the annual gorge hike. In more recent years, two of them are mixed and matched with the gorge event to provide three hikes per year:

- 2014:** Doan Shaker landscapes, with the Shaker Historical Society
- 2015:** Doan Rockefeller Park, with the Cultural Gardens Federation
- 2016:** Doan Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, with the Port of Cleveland
- 2017:** Dugway Brooks upper reaches, with the Heights Bicycle Coalition
- 2018:** Doan Shaker Mill Family landscape, with the Shaker Historical Society
- 2019:** Cleveland Heights Rocks and Waters: bus tour of watercourse highlights
- 2020:** Lake Erie Estuaries Video Tour
- 2021:** Blue Rock Brook
- 2022:** Doan Horseshoe Lake, with the Shaker Historical Society
- 2023:** Doan 'Area-51,' with the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes

— *By 2016 Watershed Hero, Roy Larick, Bluestone Heights*



Photo: Beaux Berkeley



Photo: Tori Mills

Doan Brook Restoration at Sowinski Park

In the last three years, DBWP led a fantastic team of partner organizations in the restoration of 1,550 linear feet of Doan Brook in Cleveland's historic Rockefeller Park. The project added new in-stream habitats, called riffles, runs, and pools, which form the base of the riparian food chain. In addition, an acre and a half of floodplain and a small wetland were created. We were thrilled that this, the largest restoration undertaken by the Partnership to date, exceeded grant goals with its design, budget, and timeline. Yet the unforeseen benefits to the community are even more gratifying. Through our close working relationship with the City of Cleveland and Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, park planners were invited to influence the project design. They also utilized data and drone footage to conceptualize a new pedestrian trail, neighborhood sled hill, and environmental education pavilion. These park amenities will be installed in 2024.

Within Rockefeller Park, the restoration occurred at Sowinski Park, which not many people know by name, but may recognize as the largest grassy meadow at the heart of the park. Its position within the watershed is near the end of the Doan Brook's journey to Lake Erie. By Sowinski Park, the brook has drained almost twelve square miles of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, and Cleveland — communities whose landscapes are dominated by parking lots, rooftops, and other hard surfaces that increase flooding. During storms, or springtime snow melt, the brook's velocity and volume are at their peak through Rockefeller Park. Compounding this erosive force, the Doan is constrained by stone walls that impair habitat, sever connections to the floodplain, and cause erosion and sedimentation when they fail. The walls were built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We worked with the State Historic Preservation Office to ensure all historic features that could be protected, were protected. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) funding goals included habitat and fish passage. The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) contributed match funding to reconnect and expand the Doan's floodplain. The meadow at Sowinski Park afforded that opportunity, which will enhance stormwater storage capacity.

River Reach Construction was selected to lead planning and design, and DBWP convened wonderful community-based organizations to expand outreach efforts. We are grateful to Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Famicos Foundation, University Circle Inc., Cleveland Cultural Gardens Federation, St Clair Superior Development, Trust for Public Land, the City of Cleveland Water Pollution Control, Cleveland Parks Department and the City of Cleveland Capital Projects for their contributions.

The project broke ground in late 2022, after two years that were devoted entirely to design, permitting, and community engagement. The brook's channel was moved west, away from the Latvian Cultural Garden. The steep, eroded streambanks were restored to a gradual slope toward the new floodplain. Flooding along Martin Luther King Blvd. is so severe in bad storms that nothing can completely ameliorate treacherous storms, however an expanded floodplain with a capacity to accommodate a greater volume of stormwater will help. A thousand native trees, shrubs, live-stakes and wetland plants were planted to stabilize the floodplain, uptake pollutants, and provide habitat for bugs and birds. All intact WPA walls remained in place, and the City of Cleveland will repurpose the sandstone blocks that had crumbled into the brook. At the request of Cleveland city planners, River Reach created a foundation for new park amenities to be seamlessly added over the next several years. The city raised more than \$850,000 for a new sled hill, trail, benches, trees, a parking bay, and improved access to the St. Clair Superior neighborhood. Teachers from the Willson school, located at the top of the Sowinski sled hill, reached out to DBWP to inquire how the restoration site can be used as a learning lab.

After such a positive response from the neighborhood (even when the site was a hillside of mud), DBWP has already begun fundraising for additional stream restoration in Rockefeller Park. Our next target is a series of low-head dams between Wade Park Drive and Superior Ave. They impede fish passage and have outlived their original intent. We see residents fishing along previously restored sections of the brook and we look forward to the day when fisher-folk line the banks of Doan Brook all the way to Lake Erie!

—By Victoria Mills



Native Plant Restoration Begins in the Gorge



Students from Hawken School help remove invasive lesser celandine from the Gorge. Photo: Tori Mills

**Thanks to all DBWP volunteers!
Call or visit our website if you are
interested in volunteering.**

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The Doan Brook Gorge has been called an "unknown gem" — a majestic corridor where the brook meanders through rocky, cavern-like walls from Coventry Road and Martin Luther King Jr Drive. However, the majesty of the area is threatened by the intrusion of invasive plants; the fact that it is unknown to most of its nearby residents is unfortunate. For the last 2+ years, a small group of volunteers has taken it upon themselves to remove the invasive species, plant natives, and reveal this gem and its informal trails to the neighbors who may not be aware of this vast, public green space. Under the guidance of the DBWP, the team has logged over 500 hours removing invasive honeysuckle, buckthorn, privet (and countless other invaders), while planting more than 150 trees and shrubs. The Gorge has welcomed new specimens of oak, birch, witch hazel, hornbeam, dogwood, tupelo — in total, more than 20 different species of tree, shrub, and fern that are appropriate to the unique ecology of the terrain.

The team has worked systematically from west to east along the southern bank of the brook, starting with the trailhead above the MLK culvert, past the "debris rack" and beyond Belgian Village condominiums. With the support of the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District, Dominion Energy, LEAP Conservation Fund and Shaker Heights Garden Club, each year another chunk of territory has seen its seedbank turned from invasive to native. It is heartening to see wild natives move into the cleared areas on their own — jewelweed, wild raspberry, goldenrod, wood fern and others. Along with them comes the wildlife, including pollinating butterflies and bees, herons and other birds, squirrels, and the unavoidable deer.

Significant progress has been made in fewer than 3 years, proving that much can be done by a small group with vision, dedication, and the right tools. But the work is not done, and as the project moves closer to the adjacent nature-starved neighborhoods, a major goal is to remove a choking border of invasives that hides the Gorge from view and makes the area near the brook seem forbidding. Working with DBWP and the organizations participating in the Parklands Management Committee, the team intends to recruit more volunteers to make the Gorge more welcoming — with new trail entry points, more attractive native plantings, and helpful navigation and wayfinding. In time, the Gorge will be a better-known gem, and an even more majestic one. If you would like to volunteer with this effort, email info@doanbrookpartnership.org, attention Greg Van Niel.

— **By Greg Van Niel & Tami Masuoka**

The Biodiversity Brigade



Photo: Peggy Spaeth

The Friends of Lower Lake, a program of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, had its sixth successful stewardship season at Lower Lake in 2023, with volunteers putting in nearly 1,000 hours of work. Since project inception in 2018, volunteers have worked over 8,300 hours to remove invasive trees, shrubs, and forbs, and replace these invasives with plants native to Ohio. A core group of 10-25 volunteers works weekly on Sunday mornings.

In 2023 the FLL team focused on monitoring replanted areas to remove returning invasive plants, secure deer protection around native trees and shrubs, and add additional native species to increase biodiversity. We stopped all stewardship work around the western end of



Marking the new trailhead on North Woodland. Photo: Peggy Spaeth

Lower Lake in anticipation of major NEORSD construction of the new dam in the next 3-5 years.

We planted a new trailhead garden along North Woodland, enhancing the entrance to Lower Lake Park found on maps of 1935 and 1940. This also creates a clear trail connection to the improved trailhead across the street at the Nature Center. We're grateful for a grant from the Shaker Lakes Garden Club for their support of both trailhead improvements.

A large new pollinator garden of 20 different species was installed along the South Park sidewalk near the intersection with Leighton Road. The garden, part of the Heights Native Pollinator Pathway, has signage to inspire passersby to connect their gardening efforts to healthy habitat.

Both Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights adopted our recommendation to mow less on selected land on both sides of Lower Lake. We are monitoring these places for unwanted species and adding plants where needed. Mowing less and growing more provides safe havens for over-wintering insects, and saves public works time and gas.

The Friends of Lower Lake continued its educational work through public lectures and tours, new volunteer training, and coordination with other stewardship projects in both cities. Coordination with the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes expanded up the Doan watershed. Educational walks with city officials, NEORSD, and NEORSD dam re-construction contractors increased as the design of the project got underway.

The volunteers of the Friends of Lower Lake remain committed to improving habitat in the watershed, engaging with and educating the public, and working closely with DBWP, the cities and NEORSD to maintain the parklands as natural areas, providing healthy habitat for insects, birds, plants, and people.



The view from North Woodland bridge before and after restoration. Photo: Peggy Spaeth

**— By John Barber & Peggy Spaeth
Co-Chairs, Friends of Lower Lake
2018 and 2020 Watershed Heroes**

Summer Splashes & Fun

Family Fishing Day at Rockefeller Lagoon and Take to the Lake at Lower Shaker Lake serve to connect people with the watershed through recreational experiences. They attract both repeat participants, as well as those new to programs offered by Doan Brook Watershed Partnership. They help form the foundation for outreach to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. Additionally, these events rely on a strong network of organizations and volunteers to provide safe, high-quality experiences.



Stocking trout last October.
Photo: Elizabeth Smith

In 2023 we continued changes in fishing events first inspired by Covid-19 guidelines in 2021. Rather than focusing on one big event, fish stocking at Rockefeller Lagoon was expanded to five dates spaced throughout the year. Trout were stocked in late March and again in October. These prized cold water fish improved early and late season fishing opportunities. Bluegills, Perch and Catfish were stocked in May, July, and September. Bluegills readily bite on a range of live bait making them an ideal fish for children and those new to fishing. Both bluegills and catfish are excellent table fare for those who like to eat fish — and many, many people do! We are grateful to the Holden Parks Trust, which has funded our farm-raised fish stocking since 2008.



Fresh catch during the Panfish Workshop last May. Photo: Tori Mills

Together with the Cleveland Metroparks Youth Outdoors, we provided programming to accompany each fish stocking. Expert instruction, live bait, and loaner rods were provided at no cost, reducing barriers to participation. A Youth Outdoors group from the City of Cleveland learned the basics of fishing in April. Workshops in May and September allowed both online sign-up and walk-up participation. Give-away rods for children were provided for the July Family Fishing Day event and subsequent programs, through a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The Chagrin River Watershed Partners staff helped execute the July 29 Family Fishing Day, along with countless volunteers.



Volunteers teach participants how to bait and cast. Photo: Tori Mills

The combined attendance at all dates matches past attendance numbers of the one, large, annual event.

Take to the Lake in late August is the one day each year where people are encouraged to explore Lower Shaker Lake by canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard. Participants could use their own boat or rent one from local outfitter, Breakaway Excursions. Small group kayaking lessons were provided by Cleveland Metroparks Outdoor Recreation for people new to the sport and those wishing to grow their skills. Both lessons and rentals offered a range of kayak sizes that including small kayaks for youth, resulting in a very family-friendly event. Safety was provided by spotters from the Shaker Community Emergency Response Team and on-water safety volunteers. Additional partners provided on-land activities including hikes, recycling information, yoga, and live music. Event organizer, Greg Van Niel, received enthusiastic feedback, with many people thrilled to experience this beloved lake from a uniquely different perspective.

By 2022 Watershed Hero, John Rode



Kayak skills workshop with Cleveland Metroparks Outdoor Recreation. Photo: Tori Mills

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Doan Brook Watershed Partnership

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
for the year ended December 31, 2022

Revenue and Support

City support	\$95,000	13%
Grants	557,829	76%
Contributions	24,667	3%
In-kind support	47,824	7%
Misc.	5,578	1%

Total Revenue and Support **\$730,898**

Expenses

Program expense	\$627,421	92%
Management services	40,704	6%
Fundraising expenses	14,494	2%

Total Expenses **\$682,619**

