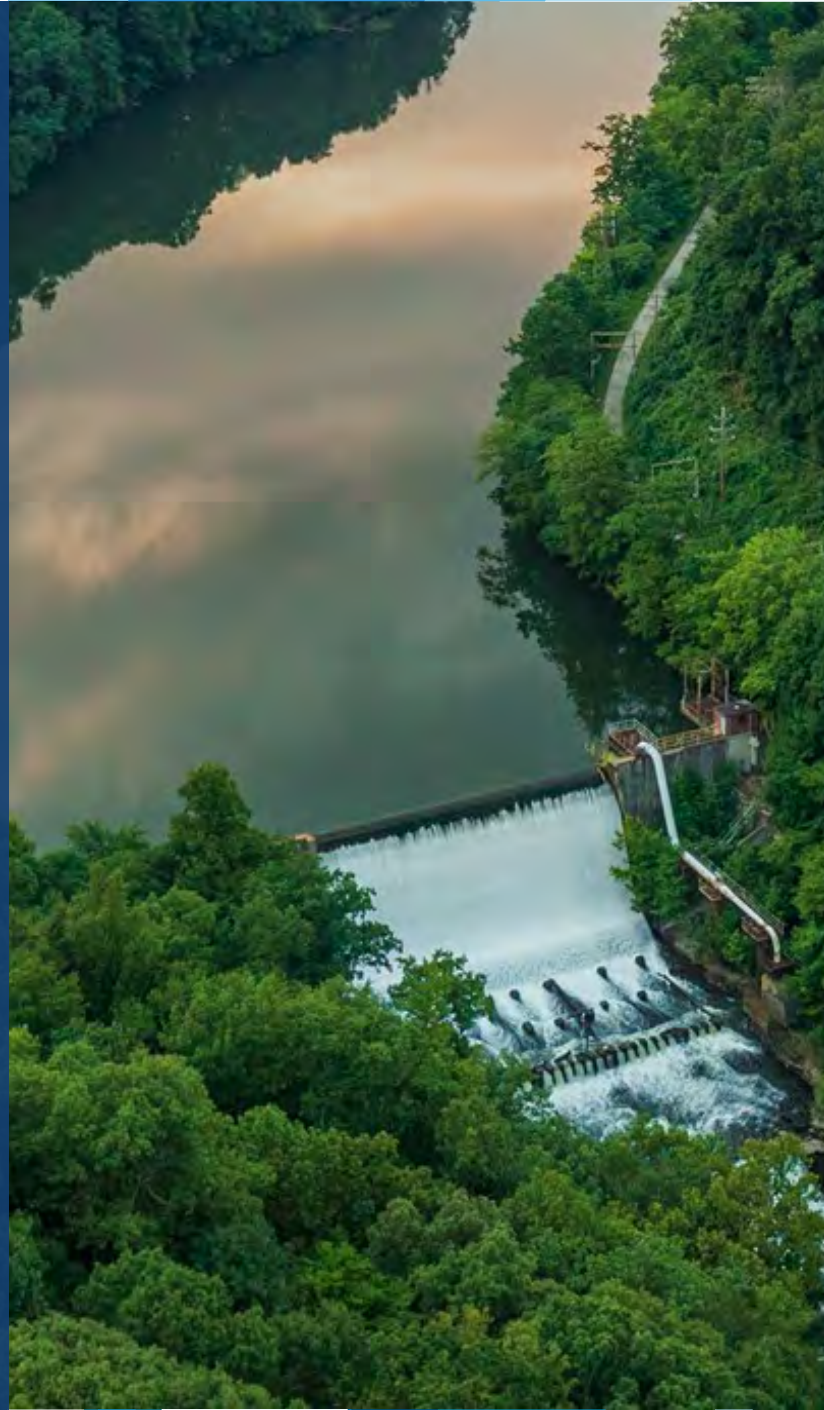


# Ohio Areas of Concern

Program Highlights

2022-2023



Lake Erie  
Commission

Environmental  
Protection  
Agency

# Overview

## BUIs Removed

18

of 34

## Management Actions Complete

56

of 110

## Contaminated Sediment Removed

1 M CYs

of 2.3 M CYs

## Areas of Concern Delisted

1

of 4

In this 2022-2023 Progress Report, the Ohio Area of Concern (AOC) program presents highlights on the work completed and in progress in its AOCs. These activities move Ohio's AOCs closer to the goals established in the [Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement](#). Since the delisting of the [Ashtabula River Area of Concern in 2021](#), there are three Ohio AOCs that remain to be delisted. Over the past two years, significant progress has continued towards the delisting milestone.

Ohio's AOC program priorities include the completion of management actions, including completing the implementation of [Great Lakes Legacy Act](#) projects that focus on the removal of legacy contaminated sediment in these waterways. These actions are aimed at contributing toward the achievement of Ohio's restoration targets for the removal of Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) once the targets are met or justification is provided.

Ohio's remaining AOCs are well on their way to delisting with 56 management action projects complete and 47 management projects under construction in 2022-2023. The AOC program reached a milestone in 2023 when it crossed the halfway point for BUIs removed. At the end of 2023, [Ohio had removed 18 of the original 34 BUIs](#). During 2022-2023, Ohio removed five BUIs, each with public involvement and comment opportunities. This was the most BUI removed within a two-year time-frame in the history of the program.

The Ohio AOC program has worked with over 40 federal, state, and local partners for the implementation of management actions over the years to continue making progress towards delisting the three remaining AOCs in Ohio. To accomplish this, since 2018, the program has leveraged over \$100 million of local and state funding and in-kind resources together with funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to implement the projects needed to restore these Areas of Concern to a level that is comparable to other watersheds within the Ohio Lake Erie watershed.

There are also over 50 local AOC Advisory Committee members across the three remaining AOCs that continue to expand the outreach and public participation within each AOC community. These partnerships continue to move projects successfully forward to completion.

In 2022, U.S. EPA set an aspirational milestone to delist the majority of the Great Lakes AOCs, including Ohio's, by 2030. The Ohio AOC program continues to strive towards completing all the management actions by 2027 and removal of the 16 remaining BUIs to achieve that 2030 milestone.

During 2022 and 2023, many ground-breaking events, open houses, public information sessions, and ribbon cutting celebrations were held by AOC project partners to inform, engage, seek input, and celebrate the AOC projects and their progress. For each project completed, there is much to celebrate with the community, project implementer, and AOC program partners

# Black River AOC

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The Black River Area of Concern had several accomplishments these past two years, including the completion of the original reclamation site project area and the construction start of the additional cap and cover areas of the site. Upon completion in early 2024, all management actions in the Black River AOC will be completed, resulting in 40 acres of land restored to limit pollution entering the lower Black River, 15 acres of land restored in other areas of the Black River, 3,475 linear feet of the river and its tributaries restored, and 1,116 feet of fish habitat created in the river. Additionally two BUIs were removed in 2022-2023 in the Black River AOC, including the Restrictions on Navigational Dredging and Fish Tumors or Other Deformities with four BUIs remaining. In 2023, biological BUI evaluations were conducted to assist in planning for the BUI removal recommendations. The Black River AOC will be focused in 2024 on evaluating the removal of its final four BUIs and begin the process for its future delisting with the U.S. EPA, the Ohio AOC Program, and the local Black River AOC Advisory Committee





## Maumee AOC

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The Maumee AOC has over 25 projects being designed, 20 projects beginning construction and 11 projects completed in 2022 and 2023. This includes the completion of two of the larger wildlife habitat management action projects, [Penn 7 Wetland Restoration project](#) and the [Kitty Todd Expansion](#), and [Sandhill Crane Wetland Restoration project](#). An additional milestone for the Maumee AOC was the completion of its first two aquatic management action projects, both along [Prairie Ditch](#) at the Secor Metropark. Management action projects completed since 2018 have resulted in 2,622 acres of new restored, or enhanced wildlife habitat in the Maumee AOC. At the end of 2023, 19 of the 20 wildlife habitat management action projects had been completed with substantial funding provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and project leadership from many Maumee AOC partners.

In addition to working on habitat projects, the Maumee AOC has been making progress to address legacy contaminated sediments utilizing the resources of the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA). During 2022-23, the GLLA work focused on the Lower Maumee River and Swan Creek. This work included the completion of [Focused Feasibility Studies \(FFS\)](#) for two sites in the Lower Maumee River and a draft FFS (expected to be complete in early 2024) for the lower three miles of the Swan Creek.

Combined, these three project areas could remove up to 400,000 cubic yards of the legacy contaminated sediment from these waterways. Cleanup of the contaminated sediments in these areas will complement the ongoing revitalization of public use and access of the Maumee River and its strong tradition as one of the most active Great Lakes ports.

The Maumee AOC also removed two BUIs: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption and Degradation of Aesthetics. Evaluations continue for the remaining BUIs and additional removals are expected in 2024-25.

In 2024, the Maumee AOC will be focused on continuing progress with its remaining Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment projects and the implementation of its management actions related to its wildlife, aquatic and beach closing AOC related BUIs.



## Cuyahoga River AOC

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The Cuyahoga River continues to improve its conditions and its restorative return to a free-flowing river system in its lower 46 miles. This is being realized through the removal of historical barriers in the river's mainstem, and first barriers within the AOC's tributaries, and the removal of legacy contaminated sediments that remain from its industrial past. The Cuyahoga River AOC currently has 14 active management action projects. In 2022, the first of these, Cascade Valley View was completed. In 2023, two more management actions were completed; Sowinski Park Stream Restoration and Canal Diversion Dam. These three projects include over a mile of restored habitat. It has resulted in the discovery of previously unseen fish species that demonstrate that these projects collectively are making a difference in improving conditions in the AOC. The remaining 11 projects continue to make progress toward a goal of completing all management actions by 2027.

Two significant milestones occurred for Cuyahoga AOC's Great Lakes Legacy Act projects. The Cuyahoga River Old Channel kicked off its Remedial Design process in Spring of 2022, with project partners working towards the future removal of approximately 100,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment. The most significant project in the AOC, the Cuyahoga Gorge Dam and Sediment Removal will remove over 870,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments from behind the dam and remove the 56 foot Gorge Dam structure once completed. The remedial design is

substantially complete, and the remedial action project agreement was signed by project partners in Fall of 2023.

This milestone commences implementation of this historic project in the Cuyahoga River. The Gorge project utilized 13 sources of funding and 10 project partners to align the project for its planned start in 2024. The Gorge project will be one of the largest contaminated sediment projects in the Great Lakes Areas of Concern and is a result of 20 years of work by local, state and federal partners.

In 2024, the Cuyahoga River AOC will kick off the construction of the Cuyahoga Gorge Great Lakes Legacy Act project, complete the remedial design for the Cuyahoga River Old Channel Great Lakes Legacy Act project, and continue implementing its remaining management actions associated with its AOC related beneficial use impairments.



# Ohio Areas of Concern Program Highlights 2022-2023

The Ohio AOC Program recognizes the many partners, including over 40 implementation partners and 50 AOC Community Advisory Committee members, in these accomplishments and their contribution in reaching new milestones over the past two years. The Black, Maumee, and Cuyahoga are well on their way to completing the remaining projects, removing BUIs, and moving towards the delisting process before 2030. To stay up to date or get involved in a local AOC Advisory Committee, visit each AOC's website and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission Ohio AOC Program website.

For more information about Ohio's Areas of Concern and to get involved visit:

[Ohio Lake Erie Commission – Ohio's Areas of Concern Program](#)

[Black River AOC](#)

[Maumee AOC](#)

[Cuyahoga River AOC](#)



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