



2021

**OHIO RIVER
FOUNDATION**

ANNUAL REPORT

OhioRiverfdn.org

From the Executive Director

After weathering a challenging 2020, ORF worked diligently in 2021 to restore a sense of normalcy, pivot, and thrive. The team continues to build out our education, restoration, and advocacy programs to fulfill our mission to protect and improve the ecology in the Ohio River watershed, a source of drinking water for more than 25 million people.

During the first half of 2021, interest in our education and restoration programs gained renewed traction with several new funders and beneficiaries. We adapted the programs for COVID-19 safety and delivered a fabulous experience for more than 2,400 students.

Separately, a number of key advocacy issues came into clearer focus for us and our partners. This included defending the water quality of the river from “forever chemicals”, reinstating decades of environmental regulations rolled back under the former federal administration, and opposing an industrial petrochemical buildout on the Ohio River.

Thank you for your continued interest and support!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rich Cogen".

Rich Cogen,
Executive Director
Ohio River Foundation



ORF Board & Staff

Full-Time Staff

- Rich Cogen, Executive Director
- Bethany Miller, Communications & Development Manager
- Jessica Tegge, Restoration Program Manager

Part-Time/Seasonal Staff

- Sara Brandts, Lead Educator & Membership Coordinator
- Evan Banzhaf, Lead Educator & Education Programs Coordinator
- Bernie Moeller, Senior Educator/Chief Scientist & Restoration Projects Specialist
- Mary Henkener, River Explorer Educator
- Julie Rizzo, Senior River Explorer Educator
- Caroline Cain, River Explorer Educator & Restoration Projects Specialist
- Ray Bowers, River Explorer Educator
- Suki Christy, River Explorer Educator

Board

- Bill Hayes (Board President), Attorney, Frost Brown Todd, LLC
- Gary Allen, Vice President – Environmental, Health and Safety, Valvoline, Inc.
- John Bloch, Executive Corporate Chef, Newly Weds Foods
- Sarah Molloy, Digital Education Development Manager, Dentsply Sirona
- Tom Sperber, CFP, Wealth Management Advisor, Northwestern Mutual
- Amy Tressler, Educator, Franklin County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Nicole Voss, Director, Sustainability at Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.

Ohio River Foundation



Our Mission

For more than 20 years, Ohio River Foundation (ORF) has worked diligently to protect and improve the water quality and ecology of the Ohio River and its watershed. Our efforts have been instrumental in providing and restoring climate change resilient habitats.

About Us

Ohio River Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2000 by a group of citizens who were concerned about the Ohio River and saw the need for increased response to the degradation of this valuable natural resource. ORF is dedicated to protecting and improving the water quality and ecology of the Ohio River and all waters in its 14-state watershed.

What We Do

ORF works towards these goals through environmental education and conservation activities that serve to inspire environmental stewardship and bolster climate change resiliency for native species, habitats, and communities.

ORF has grown to offer programs in education and stewardship that reach thousands of schoolchildren each year and touch the lives of thousands more citizens by protecting water quality and improving quality of life.

Why We Do It

The Ohio River watershed is a source of drinking water, place of recreation and commerce, and wildlife habitat. The health of the river and its tributaries affects the quality of life of everyone in the watershed. That means Ohio River Foundation's constituency is all 25 million people living in the Ohio River watershed (approximately 10% of the U.S. population).

Since 2000, ORF has:



Educated more than
53,000 Students



Removed 5
Dams



Removed
400,000 invasive
plants



Planted 15,600
Trees

Programs

Ohio River Foundation works to protect and restore the water quality and ecology of the Ohio River Watershed through advocacy, habitat restoration, and school education and youth programs. The results of this work create climate change resilient habitats.

Restoration



Through invasive species removal, native plantings, and barrier removals, Ohio River Foundation creates more climate change resilient habitats.

Advocacy



Ohio River Foundation is a strong voice for protecting and restoring the Ohio River and all waters in its watershed. We work at local, state, and federal levels for effective laws and regulations that will reduce pollution, restore vital natural systems like forests and wetlands, and encourage smart growth in our communities.

Education



Through our education programs, we're not just helping improve STEM academic skills; we're also educating the next generation of environmental stewards, voters and government leaders.

Restoration



In 2021, we completed the largest habitat restoration project ever undertaken in Southwest Ohio, planted more than 10,000 trees, protected more than six miles of riverbank, and removed more than 75,000 invasive plant and tree species. Additionally, the team continues to make great progress on our new restoration projects working with landowners to increase pollinator habitat and plant thousands of trees.



Current Invasive Species Removal Projects



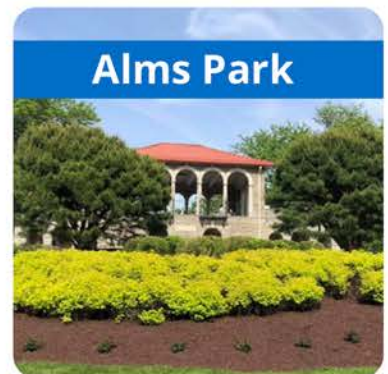
Kingswood Park

- Protected 10 acres
- 32,000 invasive plants and trees removed
- 100+ native trees, grasses, shrubs, and wildflowers protected
- 12 community volunteer events
- 75 volunteers
- 276 hours volunteer participation



Summit Park

- Protected 14.75 acres from harmful invasives
- 40,500 invasive plants and trees removed
- 24 trees planted
- 4 community volunteer events
- 23 volunteers
- 92 hours volunteer participation



Alms Park

- Continued partnership with Alms Park Allies and Cincinnati Parks
- Restored 2 acres
- 17 volunteers
- 50 hours volunteer participation

Advocacy.

Maintaining a healthy environment is dependent upon the existence (and vigilant enforcement) of environmental laws and regulations. Unfortunately, this was very challenging during the previous administration as rollbacks to decades-old regulations were threatening many safeguards to the environment.

In 2021, we continued efforts from the prior four years as the new federal administration works to re-establish regulatory protections. As an example, nutrient pollution has long been a problem for the Ohio River. In the absence of governmental regulation to address this worsening problem, ORF and nine other organizations filed a petition with the USEPA asking it to promulgate regulations to address this problem.

“Forever chemicals” (or PFAS - per- and polyflouroalkyl substances) that bioaccumulate in the environment and tissues of animals are increasingly in the news. These substances have been found in drinking water sources and in the general human population. Links to cancers and other illnesses are of growing concern. Federal and state governments are still exploring what regulations are most effective in protecting health. ORF is working diligently with national and regional partners to make the producers of these chemicals more accountable for deleterious effects of their products, and more importantly, identifying possible revisions to the approval process for new chemicals so we can avoid this type of recurring pollution problem.

On the Ohio River itself, many groups, large and small, have been fighting an industrial petrochemical buildout where factories would be built to process natural gas fracking liquids into petrochemical products, like plastic pellets. Fortunately, in the last year, developments point to a lessening of industrial interest in the projects. We will continue to support the local groups who are on the front lines in this fight to avoid what would be the creation of another possible “Cancer Alley” as exists along the Mississippi River in Louisiana where cancer rates soar in communities near these types of factories.



Key Issues



Forever chemicals
PFOA and PFAS)



Nutrient Pollution



Petrochemical
Buildout

Education

We've continued our education programs. The team adapted the popular Mussels in the Classroom (MIC) program for COVID safety protocols and virtual presentations, and we restarted our River Explorer program. These hands-on STEM enrichment programs allow us to reach thousands of children each year and help foster a lifetime of appreciation for nature and the environment.



Mussels in the Classroom

Through ORF's Mussels in the Classroom program (MIC), students get the chance to play host to and learn about freshwater mussels and their importance to river ecosystems. ORF launched MIC, the only program of its kind, in 2017.

River Explorer

River Explorer is an outdoor learning lab that provides experiential, activity-based environmental-focused STEM education about the Ohio River and its watershed, in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. Thousands of students participate each year.



2021 - BY THE NUMBERS

MIC & River Explorer



2,401
Students



33
Schools



30-40%
Improvement

Youth Conservation Teams



18
Students



16
Schools

2021 Cincinnati Coffee Festival

Without Great Water, You Can't Have Great Coffee.



The 2021 Cincinnati Coffee Festival was a tremendous success raising more than \$50,000 to support our work. Thousands of guests attended the event on October 22-24 at Cincinnati's iconic Music Hall.

There they met with over 50 vendors including purveyors of coffee, tea, flavored waters, chocolate, baked goods, ceramics, and much more.

Platinum Buzz on Friday evening included the crowd favorite Latte Art Throwdown, an interactive scavenger hunt, specialty coffee and tea cocktails, and Dinner by the Bite.

The weekend sessions featured live music, a silent auction, painting with coffee by Jarold Cadion, and Latte Art in Action where participants learned the secrets to pouring gorgeous latte art at home.



CCF Green Team

Since 2019, Cincinnati Coffee Festival has been taking steps to drastically reduce its landfill-bound waste. In 2021, Cincinnati Coffee Festival's composting efforts collected 1,518 lbs. (384 gallons!) of compostable materials and food waste!

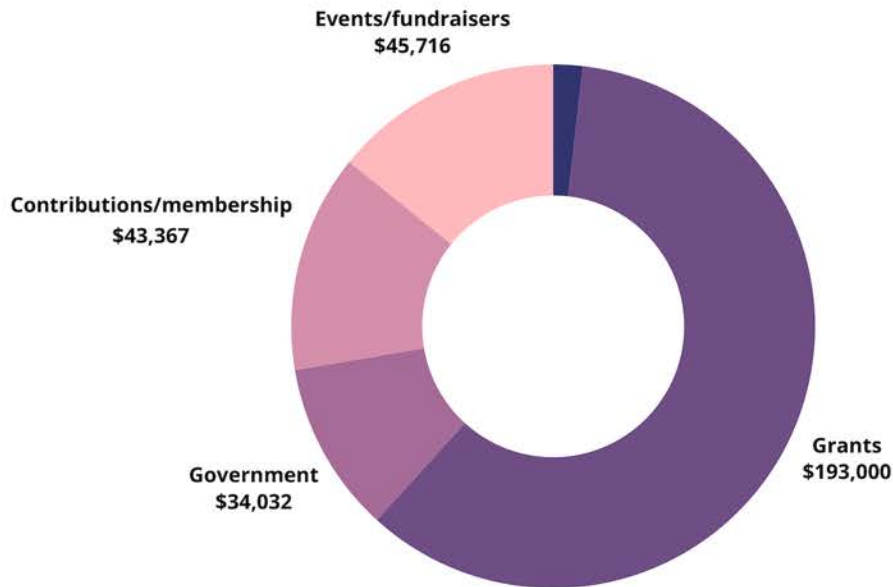
All compostable sample cups, coffee grounds, tea leaves, and leftover crumbs from the festival become fertilizer for local farmers, landscapers, and gardeners, instead of going to a landfill.



Thank you to our event sponsors!: Pixel & Timber, Seven Hills Coffee Roasters, Deeper Roots Coffee, La Terza Coffee, Carabello Coffee, Park National Bank, Allegra 360 Printing, Busam Subaru, Green River Spirits, Frost Brown Todd, Churchills Fine Teas, Frameworks, Snowville Creamery, and Alpine Valley Pure Service.

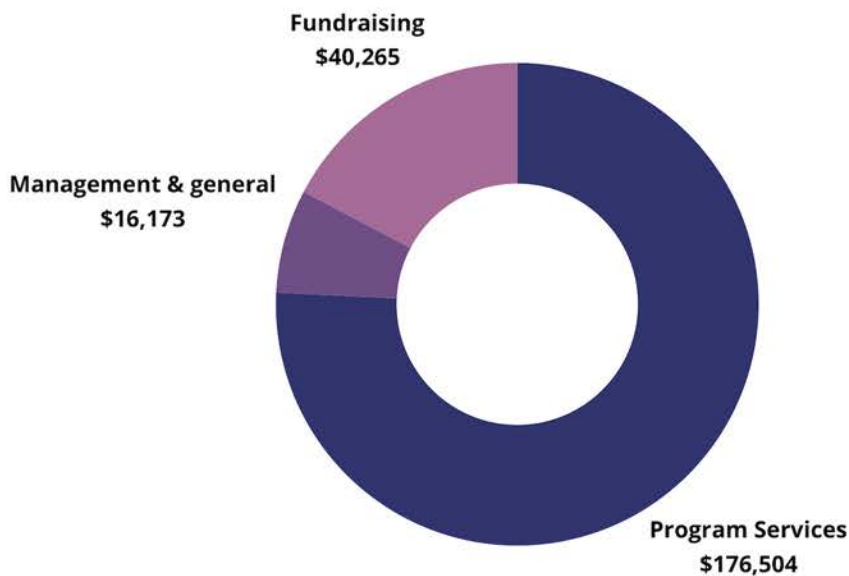
Financials

Revenue



Total = \$321,930

Expenses



Total = \$232,942



\$26,676

Total Individual Donations



197

Member Donations



\$135

Average Donation

Operations

Staffing Updates



Jessica Tegge has been promoted to a full-time position with ORF as Restoration Program Manager. After three years of extraordinary work performance and dedication, she will be focusing on the implementation and development of restoration projects. She will also continue to be part of the education team.



Bethany Miller is our new Development and Communications Manager. She will be leading ORF membership and corporate relationship development. She will also be responsible for ORF marketing and communications.

Board Updates



Bill Hayes has been elected President of the Foundation. We are excited about the opportunities to grow and flourish under his leadership.

We are also excited to introduce three new board members: John Bloch, Sarah Molloy, and Tom Sperber. We're thrilled to have their insights, advice, and involvement in helping ORF continue to grow in the coming years.



Molloy



Sperber



Bloch

Thank You to our Donors & Sponsors!



The James J. and Joan A. Gardner
Family Foundation



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INTERNATIONAL



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 Jason Tucker
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 Chad & Betsy Warwick
 Sally Weinkam
 Annette Wells
 Polly Whittaker
 Ted Yang

Thank You, Long-Time ORF Members!

Thank you to our members! With members like you, we are able to expand on our education, restoration, and advocacy programs, fulfilling our mission of protecting and restoring the Ohio River Watershed. All of this is possible because of people like you!



"Over the years, we have enjoyed watching the organization grow, and to see new programs develop that involve the young people of Cincinnati. Ohio River Foundation has been able to increase the focus on clean water and the environment. Our future depends upon the youth of today understanding the importance of maintaining a clean environment, and I believe you have been able to reach and educate this group."

-- Betsy & Chad Warwick, ORF Members since 2003



"The Ohio River is our region's most significant asset and also our historic front door. We are reawakening to the importance of the Ohio River. The Ohio River Foundation's good work is important to our region's future."

-- Lee Robinson, ORF Member since 2002