



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**Finding Steady Waters**  
A year of relationships  
and rhythm

# WELCOME

## IF 2024 WAS SHAPED BY RIPPLES OF CHANGE, THEN 2025 BECAME OUR YEAR OF FINDING STEADY WATERS

This year, we completed an ambitious strategic planning process, set a clear five-year roadmap, and met or exceeded every goal for the year. Doan Brook Watershed Partnership (DBWP) became fully staffed, launched a new website, expanded youth education, and advanced major habitat restoration and watershed stewardship efforts. These accomplishments were made possible by the dedication of our staff, board, partners, and volunteers.

2025 also brought unforeseen challenges. Federal funding cuts eliminated both NOWCorps positions, placing heavy pressure on our small team. Despite these disruptions, our community rallied, allowing DBWP not only to stay afloat but to grow. Even in a year defined by uncertainty, DBWP proved resilient.

Looking ahead, I am replacing Mo Drinkard as Executive Director. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside her these past few years. I look forward to deepening collaborations with community partners and watershed residents as we work together to restore native habitat, improve water quality, and build ecological resilience here in Greater Cleveland. I am excited to collaborate with all of you in the years ahead. Thank you for everything that you do for our community!



With gratitude,

Emily Kao  
Executive Director

### A LETTER FROM OUR FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As many know, my family relocated to the Carolinas last year. It has been an honor to lead DBWP in a hybrid capacity, but the organization is best served by a Cleveland-based leader.

For me, this is a moment of gratitude. DBWP attracts extraordinary people: passionate, capable, joyful, and deeply committed to this watershed. It has been a privilege to stand with you in this chapter of our shared work.

With deep appreciation,

Mo Drinkard, PhD

# OUR STAFF



**EMILY KAO**  
**Executive Director**

Emily studied Environmental Science, Sustainability and Climate Change at Cornell University before moving to Cleveland to begin her career. Passionate about environmental justice and building community resilience in the face of anthropogenic climate change, Emily sees her work with the Doan Brook and its partners as part of the larger effort to restore native habitat, improve water quality, and empower communities throughout the region to build a resilient and ecologically healthy Greater Cleveland.



**ALEX KIRCHNER**  
**Watershed Program Manager**

Alexander received his B.A. in Environmental Earth Science and Sustainability from Miami University in 2024. Before joining the DBWP, he worked with Summit Soil and Water Conservation District, first as a Watershed Outreach Coordinator through the NOWCorps AmeriCorps program, and later as a Seasonal Conservationist. Alexander is grateful for the opportunity to serve the communities within the Doan Brook watershed as a Watershed Program Manager.



**MAUREEN "MO" DRINKARD, PHD**  
**Former Executive Director**

Mo is a mission-driven nonprofit leader, professor, and conservation scientist. Her work bridges applied research, community partnerships, and social change, turning strong ideas into funded, high-impact programs. A strategic thinker and equity-centered mentor, she has led national initiatives, restored urban watersheds, and expanded experiential learning. She believes science is for everyone and that meaningful change grows from inclusive, community-rooted leadership.

# 2024 - 2025 DONORS

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Thank you to all of our  
anonymous donors silently  
protecting the Doan Brook!

# FUNDERS



# SPONSORS

Ecosystem Champions \$5,000



Watershed Stewards \$2,500



River Guardians \$1,000



# CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

## BECOME A SPONSOR

Visit [dbwp.org/take-action/](http://dbwp.org/take-action/)



	Ecosystem Champion \$5,000	Watershed Steward \$2,500	Brook Guardian \$1,000	Headwaters Advocate \$500
Named as sponsor on all DBWP events (48 in 2025)	✓			
All Family Fishing Day marketing materials (350 shirts)	✓	✓		
All Take to the Lake marketing materials (50 Volunteer T-shirts)	✓	✓	✓	
Appreciation post in monthly newsletter and social media post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Invitational to 6 annual Board of Trustees Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo and website on DBWP website and in annual report	✓	✓	✓	✓



## BOARD MEMBERS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Chairman** – Darnell Brown, At-Large Citizen Representative

**President** – Nancy Moore, Councilwoman, City of Shaker Heights

**Vice President** – Gail Larson, Councilwoman, City of Cleveland Heights

**Secretary** – Laura Gooch, At-Large Citizen Representative & Engineering Consultant

**Treasurer** – Patty Lohiser, At-Large Citizen Representative

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Joel Alpern** – Chief of Education & Experience, Deputy Director, Holden Forests & Gardens

**Andy Boateng** – Sustainability and Resiliency Coordinator, City of Cleveland Heights

**Chris Bongorno** – General Consultant, Holden Parks Trust/University Circle Inc.

**Peter Bode** – President and CEO, Nature Center at Shaker Lakes

**Ramona Lowery-Ferrell** – Director of Public Works, City of Shaker Heights

**Stephanie Howse-Jones** – Councilwoman, Ward 8, City of Cleveland

**Ryan Lopez** – Commissioner, Water Pollution Control, City of Cleveland

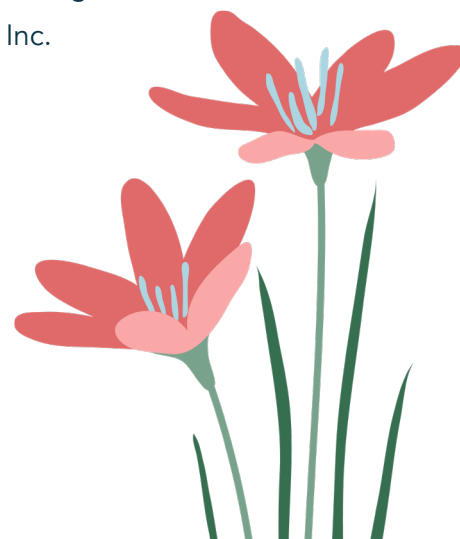
**Stacey Polk** – At-Large Citizen Representative

**Jennifer Lumpkin** – At-Large Citizen Representative

**Greg Van Niel** – Affiliate Trustee, Volunteer Representative

**Cisco Rivera** – Affiliate Trustee, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

**Dr. Roy Larick** – Affiliate Trustee, Bluestone Heights



### SPECIAL THANKS TO



**Len Rincon  
Martinez**

2025 NOWCORPS  
Service Member



**Hayley  
Lalchand**

2025 NOWCORPS  
Service Member



**Leo  
Kenealy**

Part-time Staff

# RECOGNIZING KEY VOLUNTEERS



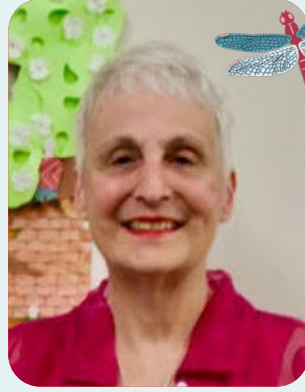
**Greg Van Niel**

Friends of Doan  
Brook Gorge



**John Rode**

Fishing Programs &  
Take to the Lake



**Nan Eisenberg**

Office Management



**Kathy Smachlo**

Water Quality,  
Sustainability Education

Special Thanks to **The Friends of Lower Lake** for all of their hard work!



## DOROTHY MAE ADAMS POCKET PARK

Board Member Jennifer Lumpkin has been spearheading efforts to work on the pocket park honoring late DBWP Board Member Ms. Dorothy Adams. As a member of the DBWP Board, Ms. Adams was a steadfast advocate for environmental justice, and spearheaded initiatives to uplift the Glenville neighborhood where she lived.

This year, Jennifer and some volunteers planted three native trees, and propagated hedge grasses to border the edge of the park. We at DBWP extend our gratitude to the neighbors on East Blvd and Herrick Road in Glenville for their work honoring Ms. Adams.



Photo credit: Jennifer Lumpkin



# 2025 PROGRAM SUMMARY

This year, we hosted 48 public programs with the help of our partners, sponsors and volunteers!



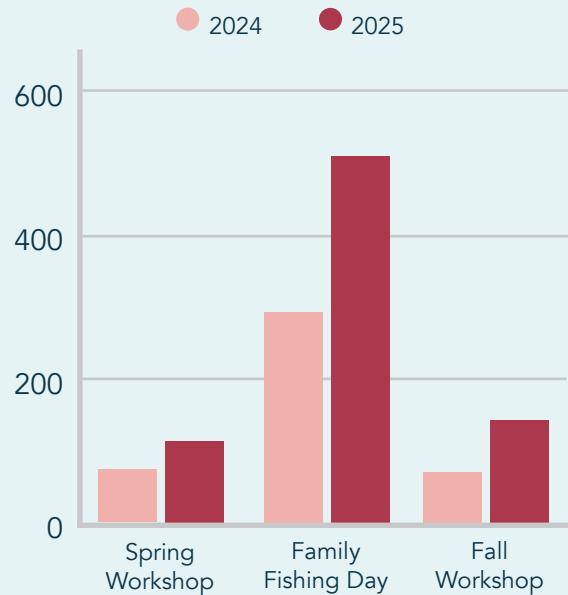
## FAMILY FISHING DAY

We got to go fishing with over 750 aspiring anglers this year at Family Fishing Day and two Fishing Workshops at Rockefeller Lagoon! With free fishing rods, bait and instruction provided with the help of our partners at Cleveland Metroparks, we built upon the success of last year's fishing programs to increase attendance and serve even more of our watershed community!



Photo credits: Markus Adams; Bottom left: John Rode.

### Fishing Attendance by Year



## TAKE TO THE LAKE

This year, 330 members of our watershed community enjoyed paddling lessons, kayak rentals, hikes, yoga, and aquatic stewardship education at Lower Shaker Lake!

64 volunteers made this event possible by running setup, registration, cleanup, by providing sustainability and watershed education at our numerous partner tables, and by keeping our community safe at the CERT tent and all around the lake!



Photo credit: DBWP Staff

## HIKE & BIKE

Each year, we host educational watershed hiking and biking tours with the help of our partners! This year, we partnered with Shaker Historical Society, Dr. Roy Larick of Bluestone Hikes, University Circle Inc, Bike Cleveland, native plant expert Ursula McVey, and more! We had so much fun exploring our watershed together!



Photo credit: DBWP Staff



Photo Credit: Len Rincon Martinez



Special thanks to **Dr. Roy Larick** for leading wonderful geology and ecology centered hikes!

## TREE GIVEAWAY

This year, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the Cleveland Tree Coalition which allowed us to give away 214 beautiful native trees to 116 Cleveland residents! We had so much fun helping residents choose the perfect tree for their yard, talking them through planting, deer protection, and showing them how to use watering bags. With dedicated watering and a little luck, Cleveland's tree canopy is a few hundred trees stronger!

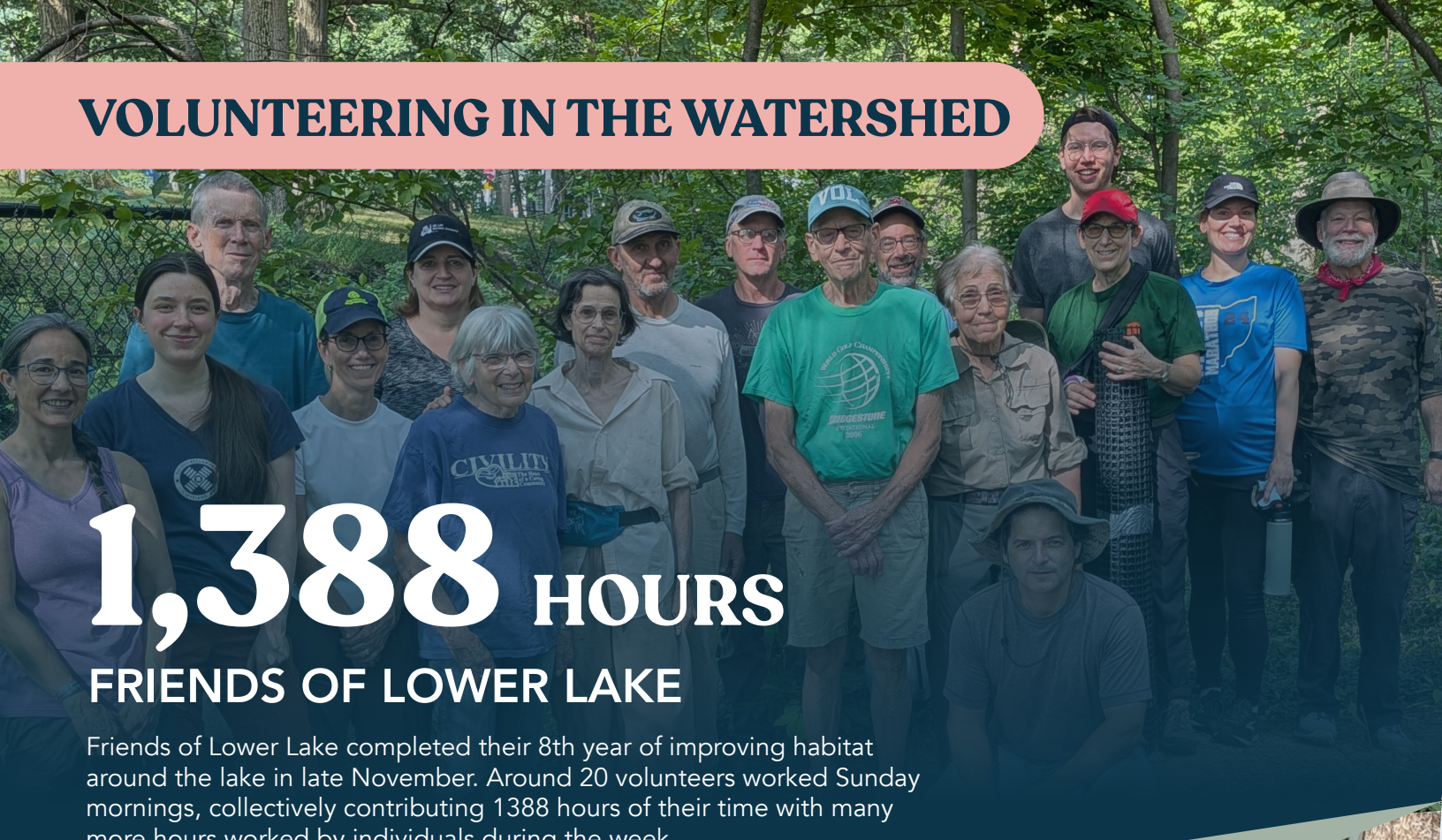


Photo credit: DBWP Staff



This year, we sent targeted mailers to folks living around Rockefeller Lagoon so that they would have our stockings, workshops and watershed festivals on their calendar!

## VOLUNTEERING IN THE WATERSHED



# 1,388 HOURS

### FRIENDS OF LOWER LAKE

Friends of Lower Lake completed their 8th year of improving habitat around the lake in late November. Around 20 volunteers worked Sunday mornings, collectively contributing 1388 hours of their time with many more hours worked by individuals during the week.

Photo credit: Peggy Spaeth



# 80 HOURS

### MISC STEWARDSHIP

# 449 HOURS

### GROW NOT MOW

Grow Not Mow is a community program powered by volunteers like you and championed by the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, the City of Shaker Heights and countless dedicated volunteers which restores and enhances biodiversity in the floodplain of the Doan Brook.

These plantings help to absorb and filter stormwater runoff, prevent soil erosion, and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with mowing.

Photo credit: Peggy Spaeth

A photograph showing two men fishing in a stream. The man on the left is wearing a dark cap and glasses, looking down at his fishing rod. The man on the right is wearing a white t-shirt and a dark cap, looking towards the water. The background is a lush green forest.

# 860 HOURS

## EVENT SUPPORT

Events like Family Fishing Day, Take to the Lake, and the Annual Meeting are made possible by countless volunteers who help with set up, registration, watershed and sustainability education, and more!

Photo credit: Markus Adams

A photograph showing a group of people participating in a stream sweep. They are standing in a grassy area next to a stream, with some people holding bags and others looking towards the water. The background shows trees and a building.

# 122 HOURS

## STREAM SWEEPS

We cleaned up 3325 gallons (95 bags) of trash at stream sweeps across the watershed with the help of the Cleveland Heights Green Team, Bluestone Conservation, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Water Pollution Control, and many wonderful volunteers!

A photograph showing a group of people planting trees. They are standing in a grassy area next to a stream, with some people holding bags and others looking towards the water. The background shows trees and a building.

# 582 HOURS

## FRIENDS OF DOAN BROOK GORGE

In 2025, with the help of nearby neighborhood members, the Friends of the Gorge planted another 85 trees and shrubs – along with several colorful pollinator gardens – in the community-facing parklike area between the gorge and Fairhill Road.

Also, the work to remove choking invasive shrubs and vines continued eastward along the southern bank of the brook, which had the added benefit of restoring views of the brook (including its iconic waterfall) along the Lakes-to-Lake trail from E. 127 Street to Kemper Road.

Photo credit: Greg Van Niel

# Nancy Moore

## 2025 Watershed Hero Award

The Doan Brook Watershed Hero Award celebrates individuals, groups, organizations, or collaborators who have made extraordinary contributions to the mission of restoring and protecting the Doan Brook watershed. This award honors those who have generously shared their time, resources, or expertise, significantly advancing our efforts and fostering community engagement. Their heroic actions inspire others to participate in the mission, creating a positive ripple effect throughout the community. The Doan Brook Watershed Hero Award recognizes these outstanding contributions, acknowledging the vital role they play in ensuring a healthier, more sustainable watershed for future generations.



Nancy Moore has made a lasting and guiding impact on DBWP and is an exemplary steward across the watershed.

Longtime DBWP Board Member and Executive Committee President, Nancy Moore has been a guiding force behind the organization's growth, offering steady leadership, thoughtful counsel, and an unwavering belief in the mission to restore and protect the Doan Brook, and is this year's Watershed Hero. A Shaker Heights City Councilwoman since 2004, Nancy has championed sustainability, tree canopy restoration, and community collaboration by helping to weave environmental stewardship into the city's identity and everyday decision-making.

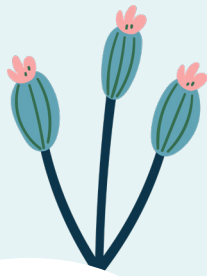
Nancy began her public service on the Shaker Heights School Board, working to reduce opportunity disparities and foster a culture of inclusion and shared accountability. Nancy believes that Shaker's greatest strength lies in its people...its "bright lights," as she calls them. Her leadership has focused on bringing those lights together to create collective solutions and shared progress. Nancy's compassion, intellect, and quiet persistence have left a lasting mark on Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, inspiring staff, volunteers, and partners alike to see civic service as both a privilege and a responsibility.



Photo credit: Markus Adams

# John Barber

## 2025 Doan Brook Impact Award



John Barber is a Cleveland Heights resident and dedicated citizen scientist whose work spans more than fifty years. His efforts have advanced green space preservation, supported the recovery of Peregrine Falcons and Eastern Bluebirds, and contributed to suburban wildlife population monitoring efforts. Now retired after 35 years in the business world, John devotes his time to restoring and maintaining local biodiversity.



Photo credit: Peggy Spaeth



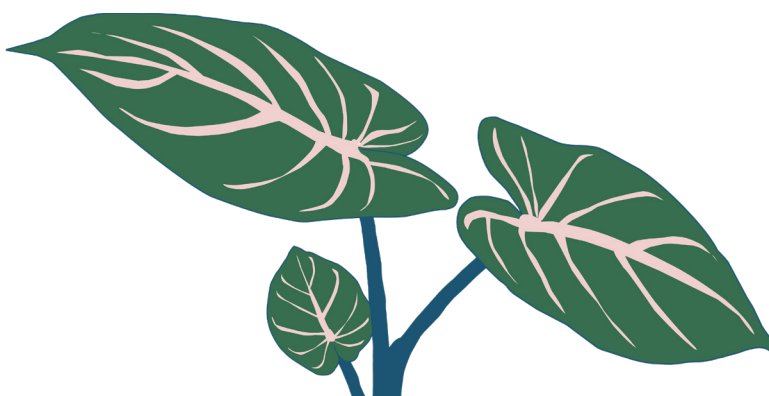
Photo credit: Markus Adams

## THE DOAN BROOK IMPACT AWARD

The Doan Brook Impact Award honors volunteers whose commitment and exceptional service have significantly advanced our mission to restore and protect the Doan Brook watershed. Through their leadership, advocacy, and hands-on involvement in various projects, these volunteers have not only contributed to the restoration of the Doan Brook but have also cultivated a legacy of stewardship that will benefit future generations.

## DOAN BROOK DEDICATION

As co-chair of Friends of Lower Lake Park, John has led weekly volunteer efforts since 2018 to remove invasive species and replant native ones. In addition, he continues to lead regular tours of Lower Lake Park, sharing its ecological and historical significance while raising awareness about ongoing environmental challenges faced by our highly altered urban streams. When questions arose about the future of Lower Lake Park, John stood firmly for an ecologically healthy, free-flowing Doan Brook. Grounded in science, John's advocacy, patience, and integrity have been a steady force in advancing ecological health for the Doan Brook and beyond. John's courage and unwavering dedication to ecological stewardship exemplify the spirit of the Doan Brook Impact Award, honoring a volunteer whose legacy is both significant and enduring.



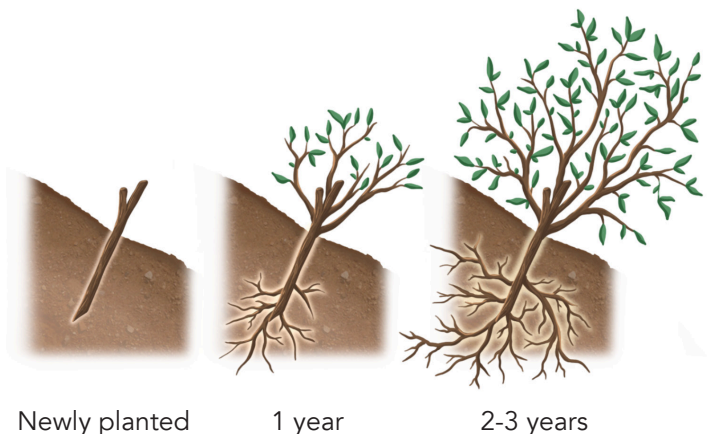
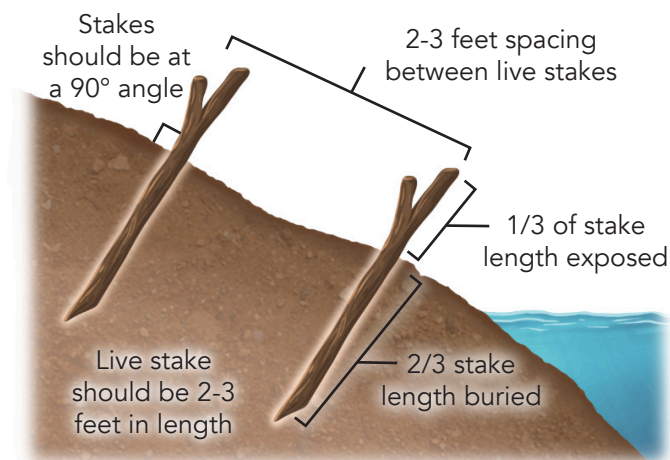
# LIVESTAKES

Live staking is a great way to reduce erosion, restore fish habitat, and improve ecological resilience. Live stakes are dormant cuttings from plants that can be planted along stream banks. By creating a living root system, live stakes hold soil in place, preventing erosion and filtering pollutants. In our watershed, one climate impact we feel the most is erosion and scouring during flood events, which are expected to increase in magnitude, frequency, and intensity. Live stakes are one great tool we can use to combat these negative impacts.



Over the next five years, we plan to assess all accessible and appropriate sites along the 10 miles of lineal stream that make up the Doan Brook for the feasibility of native live stakes installation. Each year, 2 miles of streambank will be assessed and categorized into one of three groups: “ready for live stakes” for locations that meet all requirements; “needs some attention” for areas requiring invasive removal or other preparatory work; and “live staking not possible” for sites that are unsuitable due to accessibility constraints or other limiting factors.

In 2025, Staff and volunteers collaborated to install over 1200 live stakes over 2 installation days. Species installed included silky dogwood, red osier dogwood, silky willow, arrowwood, buttonbush, ninebark, nannyberry, & elderberry.



# SYMPOSIUM PRESENTERS

This year, we invited student scientists, engineers, and habitat stewards who are working on projects in the Doan Brook Watershed to present about their work. These are just a few of the many great projects folks are working on throughout our community.



## THEO WALTER EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT



Theo Walter (Troop 622), spearheaded a project to plant 15 native trees and shrubs in the Doan Brook Gorge.



## PARK IMAGE PROJECT

CWRU's Humanitarian Design Corps is working on a project to install citizen science stations across the watershed.



## BEN LINDSAY EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

Ben Lindsay (Troop 622), created a depth map of Rockefeller Lagoon to aid anglers at community fishing events. Ben and his Troop taught fishing lessons at Family Fishing Day.



## HAWKEN PORCELAINBERRY RESEARCH

Alena Glenn and Loden Rorvig received a grant to research management techniques for invasive porcelainberry along the Doan Brook.

# BROOK & BLOOM

Brook and Bloom is a youth volunteer and leadership program where everyone belongs. Rooted in environmental justice, the program empowers young people to raise their voices and take action for our environment and our communities. Youth will develop workforce and leadership skills while building an inclusive space to learn, lead, and create a healthier, more equitable future. Together, participants will help to install rain gardens at our partner organizations across our communities, helping manage stormwater, support pollinators, and beautify our shared spaces.

If you or someone you know is passionate about hands-on environmental work with a visible difference in your neighborhood, this is the chance to get involved! The program is currently recruiting partner organizations for its upcoming 2026 program.

**For any questions about the program, please contact [brookandbloom@dbwp.org](mailto:brookandbloom@dbwp.org)**

Visit our website at <https://dbwp.org/program/brookandbloom/> for more information



If you are or know of a public community-serving organization that would be interested in receiving a rain garden or facilitating youth engagement, please fill out the form below!

If you or a young person you know may be interested in participating, please scan the QR code below to apply.



Partner  
Application Form



Participant  
Application Form



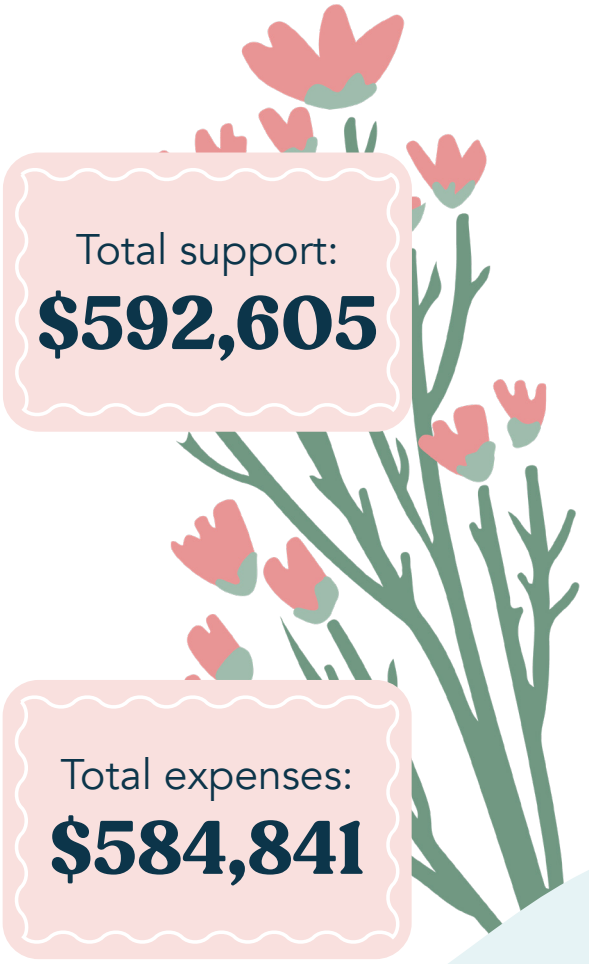
This program is funded through the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC). OLEC provides pass-through Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) support through the Lake Erie Community Grant (LECG), which funds projects that address key environmental challenges. These grants help advance meaningful Lake Erie restoration efforts and strengthen Great Lakes education throughout the communities of Ohio's Lake Erie watershed.

# THE EBB AND FLOW OF THE PARTNERSHIP

## 2023-2025

### REVENUE

	2023	2024	2025
Grants and Programmatic In-Kind	\$622,919	\$371,078	\$538,333
Donations and Other income	\$29,932	\$51,013	\$54,272
	\$652,851	\$422,092	\$592,605



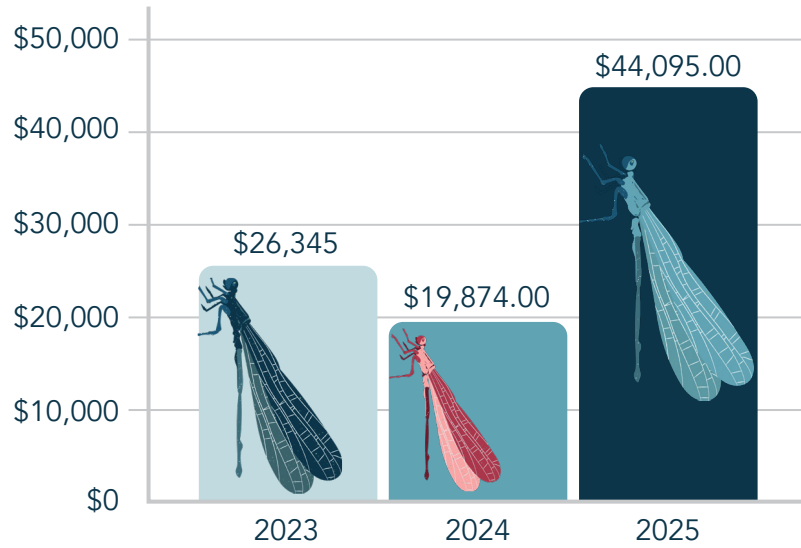
### EXPENSES

	2023	2024	2025
Programs and Staff	\$605,680	\$308,528	\$514,017
Operations	\$59,939	\$79,038	\$60,623
Fundraising	\$3,800	\$4,131	\$10,201
	\$669,419	\$391,697	\$584,841



Photo credit: Peggy Spaeth

# DONATIONS



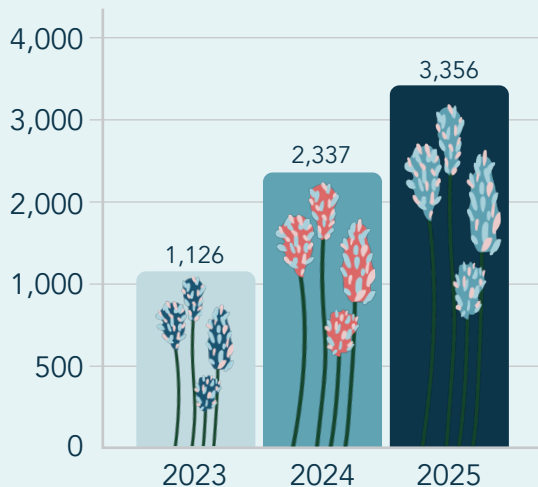
## DONATIONS IN 2025

In the 2025 calendar year, 160 individual donors gave \$44,095 with an average donation of \$193. These dollars directly translate into action in the watershed. We maintain low office expenses and overhead and have a small staff and rely on an army of beloved and appreciated volunteers. We are seeking donations for 2026 to bolster our existing programs and expand several areas of important work identified in our strategic planning process.

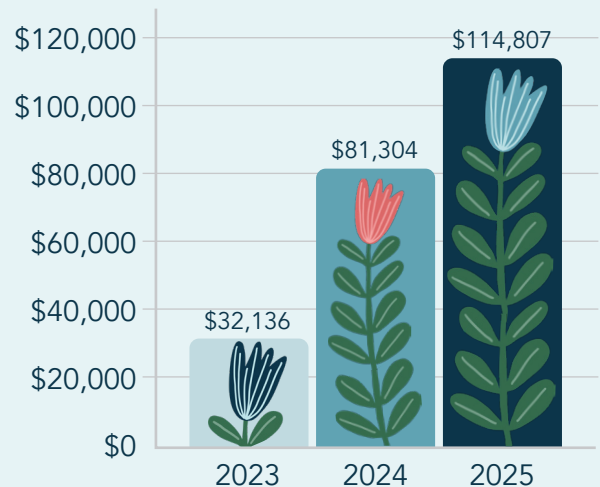


# VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTION

## VOLUNTEER HOURS



## VOLUNTEER IN-KIND VALUE



# 2026 GOALS



## Operations & Staff

- Advance donor and planned giving relationships
- Expand silent auction and sponsorship opportunities



## Education & Engagement

- Brainstorm new program ideas to expand watershed-wide engagement
- Expand outreach to schools
- Continue work on the new website



## Watershed Management

- Expand native tree and plant programs and green infrastructure efforts
- Add salt monitoring and PFAS baseline data to Water Quality Monitoring Program
- Turn our USACE Ecological Assessment into a priority restoration plan for Rockefeller Park



## Habitat Restoration

- Launch Brook & Bloom, a youth volunteer and leadership program
- Keep planting trees
- Secure multi-year funding for stream restoration



## Committees & City Support

- Cultivate a flagship program in each city
- Launch The Confluence - A digital collaboration space for mission aligned partners
- Expand reach of The Ripple Effect - Municipal and organizational partner newsletter



## Sustainability & Climate Change

- Continue to live stake the banks of the Doan
- Move toward low-to-zero waste programming

# MAKE A “DOAN-ATION”

Give today to fund vital programs that keep the Doan Brook healthy for generations to come.

**SCAN THE QR  
CODE TO DONATE**



Visit us online at:

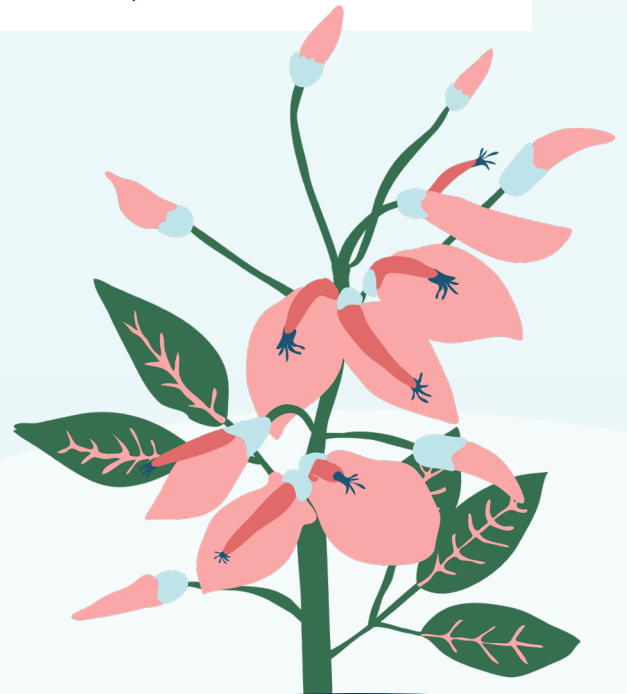
<https://dbwp.org/take-action/donate/>

A gift to DBWP is a gift to the land, the water, and the people who call this region home.

Your generosity fuels community care, environmental resilience, and the promise of a healthier future for all.

Prefer to donate by mail? You're welcome to send a check to this address:

Doan Brook Watershed Partnership  
12200 Fairhill Road  
Cleveland, OH 44120



**Developed by**

Dr. Mo Drinkard, Emily Kao, & Alex Kirchner

**Designed by**

Lupine Studios

**Cover photo by**

Emily Kao

