

## Celebrating a Comeback

### Fifty Years on the Cuyahoga River

The Cuyahoga is one of the pivotal North American Rivers. It has influenced major events in the nation's history. The Cuyahoga River is 100 miles long, 22 miles of which are within the national park. Its drainage area covers 813 square miles of northeast Ohio. It has been designated both an Area of Concern and American Heritage River.

Although the 1969 river fire is the most infamous, it was not the first or the largest. The number of fires on the Cuyahoga was anywhere from 11 to 16 fires from the late 1800s. The 1969 fire was the catalyst for passing Public Law 92-500 in Oct. 18, 1972, which is also known as the Clean Water Act.

In 1984, Ohio EPA conducted the first water quality survey in the Cuyahoga River. Since 1984, Ohio EPA has routinely monitored the chemical, biological and habitat of the river to allow us to track water quality improvements. The most recent survey was conducted in 2017. The figures to the right show the improvement in biological measurements over the last 33 years. The (IBI) index is a measurement of the fish health and the ICI index measures the macroinvertebrate (ICI) health.

#### Fish Consumption Advisory

Confirming research showing continued improvements to local water quality, in March 2019, U.S. EPA agreed with Ohio EPA's recommendation that restrictions on fish consumption in the Cuyahoga River (from Gorge Dam to Lake Erie) can be eased. Any remaining advisories for that segment of stream are now consistent with the state's general recommendations (updated yearly), available online at [epa.ohio.gov/dsw/fishadvisory/index](http://epa.ohio.gov/dsw/fishadvisory/index).

#### Point Source Improvements

Ohio has seen water quality improvements as a result of reductions of ammonia in discharges from our wastewater treatment plants. In the late 1980s, more stringent discharge regulations were enforced on wastewater treatment systems. Ammonia levels in the Cuyahoga River were drastically reduced as a result, levels have remained low since. This is important because ammonia is acutely toxic to aquatic life.

Significant water quality improvements have also resulted from reducing the amount of untreated combined sanitary wastewater and storm water from entering the river. Communities within the Akron and Cleveland area have contributed to water quality improvements by supporting Akron Waterways Renewed and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's CSO reduction projects.

#### Non-Point Source Improvements

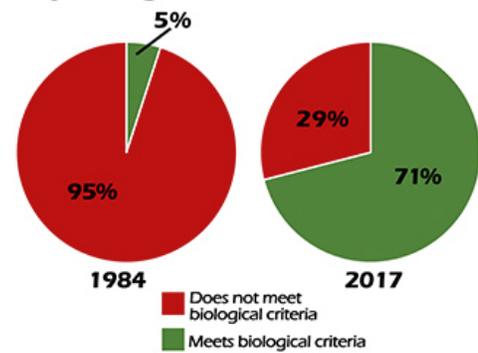
##### Dam Removals

Ohio EPA and its watershed partners have coordinated the successful removal of dams in Kent, Munroe Falls and Cuyahoga Falls. Dam removals help restore the river's natural habitat and ecosystem. Funding has been provided by the Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance.

##### Nonpoint Source Control Grant Projects

Through federal and state grant funding, investments have occurred and continue in a significant manner toward the planning, design and implementation of restoration and remediation efforts in the Cuyahoga River. These planned investments will further improve the Cuyahoga River in the coming years.

#### Cuyahoga Mainstem IBI Scores



#### Cuyahoga Mainstem ICI Scores

