



## Little River, Big Story

The U-shaped Cuyahoga is 100 miles long. It flows south from its headwaters near Burton, bends in Akron, heads north through Cuyahoga Valley National Park to Cleveland, and spills into Lake Erie.

It was once part of a significant transportation route connecting the Great Lakes and the Ohio River. American Indians canoed it for centuries, portaging over the Akron summit to the Tuscarawas River and beyond. In the 1800s, engineers improved the connection. They used the Cuyahoga's water to feed

the northernmost section of the Ohio & Erie Canal. The canal system helped build the national economy. Akron and Cleveland grew from sleepy villages into booming industrial centers.

With rapid growth came extreme pollution. On June 22, 1969, waste in the Cuyahoga famously caught fire (for at least the thirteenth time). The international attention helped spark the modern environmental movement. Congress created the Environmental Protection Agency and passed the Clean Water Act, resulting in practices that are significantly less polluting.

In the decades since, many partners have collaborated to reduce the river's pollution, improve wastewater treatment, and increase stewardship. Wildlife is returning and people are appreciating this regional resource in new ways.

The Cuyahoga is an Ohio Scenic River (upper portion 1974), a National Heritage Corridor (Ohio & Erie Canalway 1996), and an American Heritage River (1998). In becoming an Ohio Water Trail (2019), the river that burned now sparks excitement, a symbol of efforts to clean up America's waterways.



COVER PHOTO: NPS/D.J. REISER



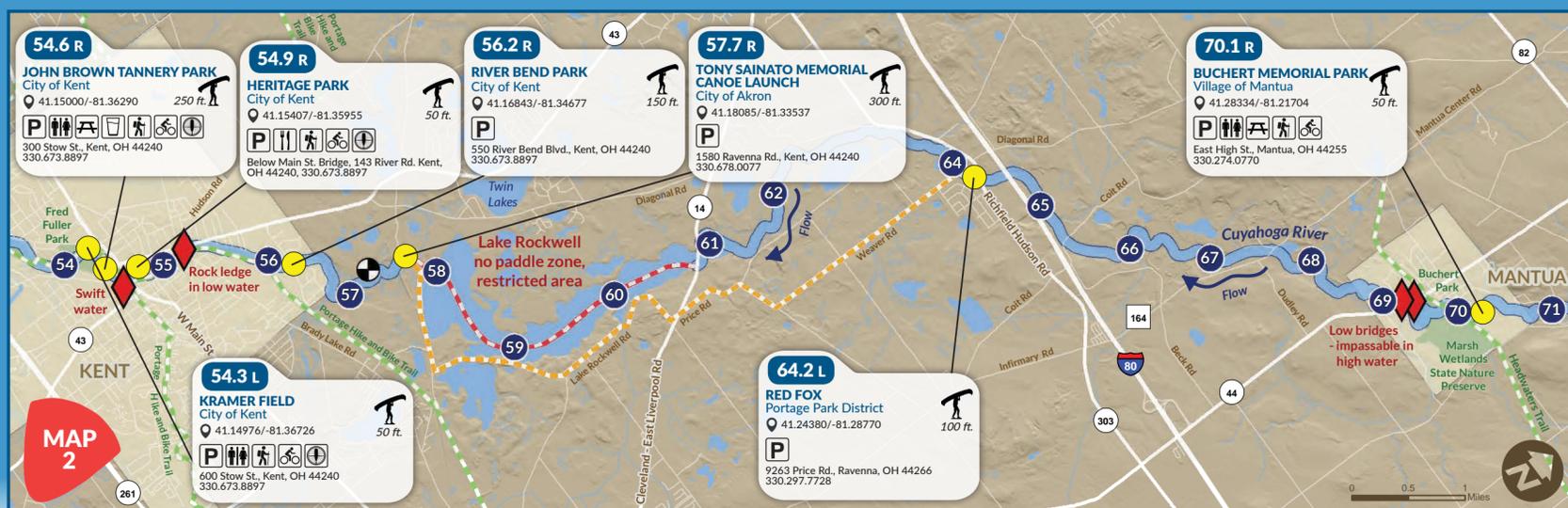
**0.0 R ACCESS SITE LEGEND**

River mile from mouth of Lake Erie  
R-Access river right, L-Access river left

**ACCESS POINT NAME**  
Managing partner  
Latitude/Longitude coordinates

Parking	Walking trail
Restrooms	Biking trail
Picnic facilities	Train station
Drinking water	Pedal/Paddle
Food	Distance from drop-off to water's edge

Site address and managing partner phone



**MAP LEGEND**

Access location	No paddle zone
River gauge	Drive around no paddle zone
River mile	Cuyahoga River Water Trail
Hazard	Open water
Multi-purpose trail	Park
Flow direction	City
	County

## Explore the Cuyahoga

A hallmark of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail is the diversity of opportunities around every crooked turn. Enjoy nature, exercise, and peaceful appreciation. Differences in the paddling skills needed, seasons of flow, and equipment options contribute to this variety.

### Paddling

The calm, rural waters of the Upper Cuyahoga State Scenic River above Kent are best for beginners. Intermediate paddlers might explore from Kent to Cuyahoga Falls with its frequent access points. Only the most experienced paddlers should attempt the Gorge, the only white-water rapids within 250 miles. Long paddles from Akron through Cuyahoga Valley National Park present challenges but offer miles of natural scenery. The industrial and shipping channel in Cleveland requires extra safety precautions. Huge freighters and rowing boat crews glide amid stunning views of the city. Note that there is a no paddle zone - Lake Rockwell - to protect Akron's main source of drinking water.

Kayaks, canoes, standup paddleboards, sculls, and dragon boats often share the waters. Motorized boats and inflated tubes are not allowed in some sections.

Various stretches have multi-purpose trails along the river that offer pedal/paddle options for shuttling. Leave your bike at a downstream trailhead and use it to return to your car after your paddle.

Private liveries and other businesses operate independently to serve people recreating along the river.

For detailed information about paddling each section of the river visit [cuyahogariverwatertrail.org](http://cuyahogariverwatertrail.org).

### Biking, Hiking, and Riding the Train

Connections to the Towpath, Bike & Hike, and other trails allow you to explore nature and local communities on foot or by bike. Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad offers excursions and Bike Aboard service along part of the river.

### Fishing

Dam removal and cleaner water are making a difference. The river now supports over 50 kinds of fish. Kayak fish, fly fish, or cast from shore. Follow current Ohio fishing regulations and consumption guidelines at [wildlife.ohiodnr.gov](http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov). In general, limit yourself to one wild-caught meal per month.

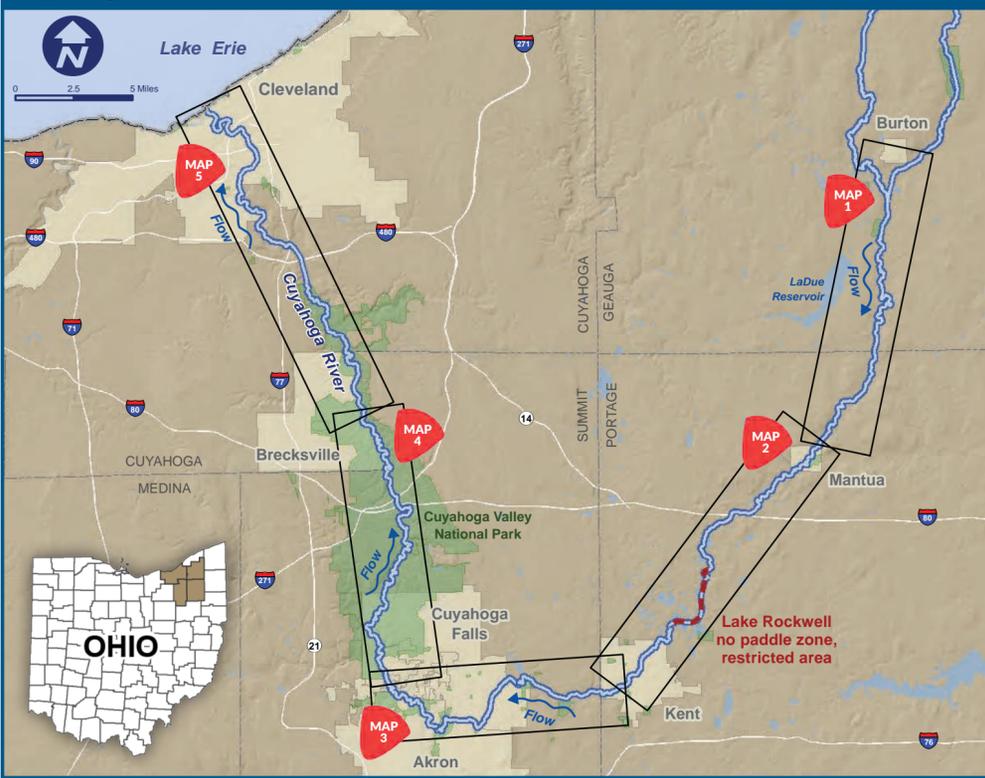
### Wildlife Watching

Better water quality and habitat protection have led to the return of river otters, beavers, and bald eagles. Also look for muskrats, turtles, snakes, deer, herons, warblers, and ducks. Check [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) for birding hotspots and recent sightings.



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## Cuyahoga River Water Trail Overview Map



**Partnerships**  
The Cuyahoga River Water Trail would not be possible without the collaboration of many partners over many years. Managing partners own and maintain the access points.

### Managing Partners

- City of Akron
- City of Cuyahoga Falls
- City of Kent
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Geauga Park District
- Mantua Village
- Portage Park District
- Summit Metro Parks
- Village of Silver Lake

More than a dozen stakeholder partners have been essential in the creation and implementation of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail.

### Stakeholder Partners

- American Canoe Association
- American Whitewater
- Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Cuyahoga River Restoration
- The Friends of the Crooked River
- Friends of the Gorge
- Keelhaulers Canoe Club
- Kent State University - Recreational Services
- National Park Service - Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
- Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- ODNR Scenic Rivers Program
- Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition
- Ohio EPA
- Share the River
- The Trust for Public Land

### And also...

- Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
- Kent State University - College of Architecture and Environmental Design
- Cuyahoga Falls Kayak Race
- Play Harder Adventures

### The partners would like to thank our sponsors for their generous support:

- Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau
- George Gund Foundation
- Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- Ohio & Erie Canalway Association
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources
- REI Co-op
- West Creek Conservancy

### Contact Us

[info@cuyahogariverwatertrail.org](mailto:info@cuyahogariverwatertrail.org)  
[www.cuyahogariverwatertrail.org](http://www.cuyahogariverwatertrail.org)



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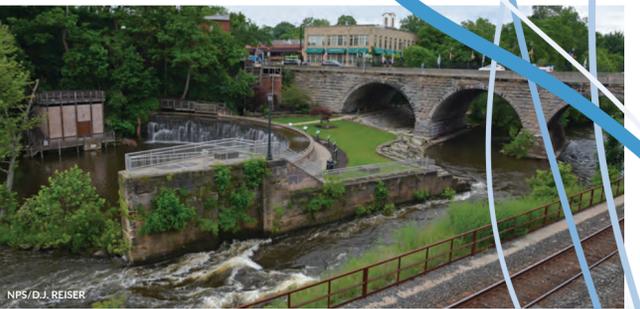
Class V rapids in Cuyahoga Falls  
© IAN ADAMS



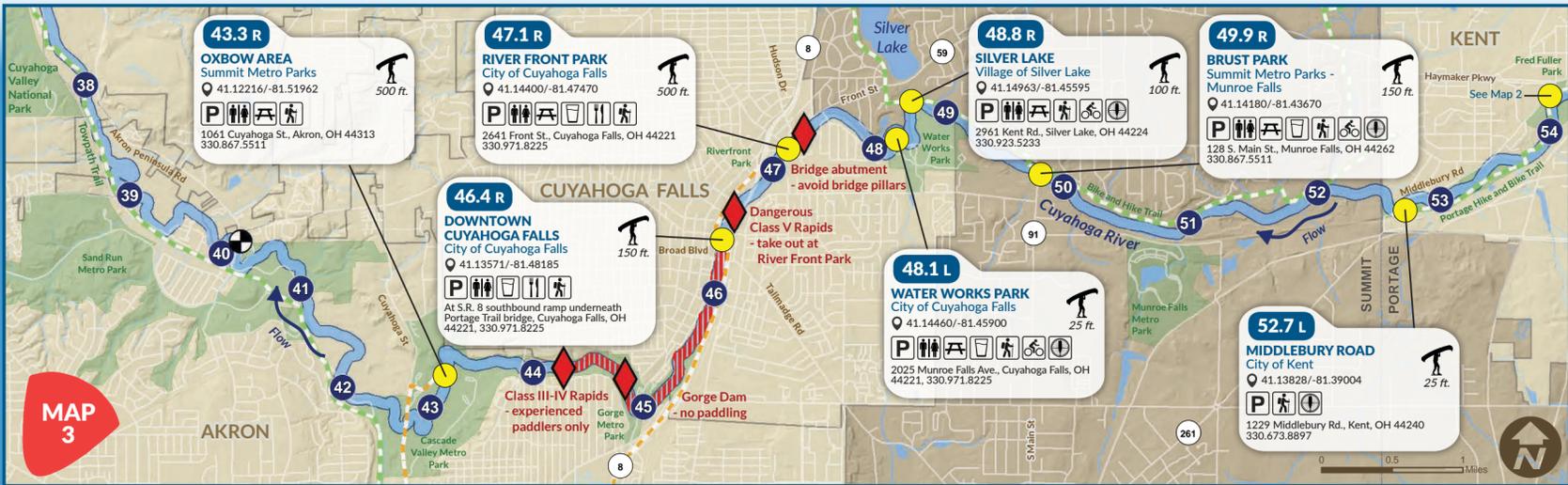
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			County



## Ohio Water Trails

A water trail is a marked route for recreation on navigable waterways such as rivers, lakes, canals, and coastlines. The Ohio Water Trails program in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources works with local partners to promote public boating access by developing designated water trails on Ohio waterways. Together we manage access points, produce maps, sign hazards, identify amenities, and offer programming. The Cuyahoga River Water Trail is the 13th Ohio State Designated Water Trail. To learn about other Ohio Water Trails, visit [watercraft.ohiodnr.gov](http://watercraft.ohiodnr.gov).

"The Cuyahoga River Water Trail offers diverse experiences from calm headwaters and challenging white-water rapids to a national park and a Lake Erie shipping channel. We hope you use this guide, which is made possible through a partnership of many organizations, to stay safe and have fun. Tell us about your adventures by sharing on social media with #OhioFindItHere."

Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine

## Common Hazards

### Floods and Swift Water

- Know the river flow before you go. Check river gauges online at link below.
- Never boat on flooded rivers. High water makes hazards such as lowhead dams, floating logs, and submerged trees more dangerous.

### Check Before You Go:

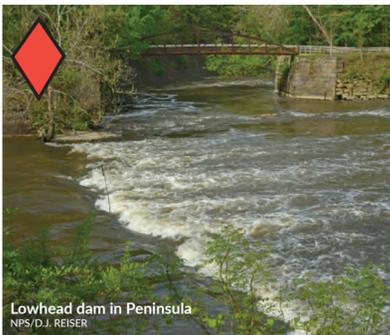
- River gauges [waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis)
- Water quality [ny.water.usgs.gov/maps/nowcast](http://ny.water.usgs.gov/maps/nowcast)

### Water Quality

- Water quality has greatly improved in recent years, however, caution is advised. After periods of rain there is an increase in harmful bacteria, particularly from Akron to Cleveland. Check current conditions online at link above.

### Lowhead Dams and Waterfalls

- Know the location of these hazards. Portage (carry your boat) around and launch at a safe distance downstream.
- Small dams are especially dangerous. Hydraulic turbulence at the base can trap you.



Lowhead dam in Peninsula  
NPS/D.J. REISER

### Strainers

- A strainer is created by a manmade or natural obstruction that allows water to pass through, but traps boats and people.
- Avoid strainers or other obstructions, especially in swift water. These include overhanging branches, downed trees, log jams, and flooded islands.
- Portage (carry your boat) around any section of water that seems unsafe.



### Foot Entrapments

- Never stand or walk in swift water. If you fall, you can become pinned underwater.
- Always keep your feet up and pointed downstream.
- Swim to shore or calm water before standing.



NPS/D.J. REISER

### Use Extra Caution in Cleveland

- Search "Cuyahoga River Safety Task Force" online for critical safety information.
- The huge freighters in the shipping channel cannot see you. They do not leave much room on the sides when maneuvering the bends. Their side propellers create waves that can knock you over.
- Be aware of motorized recreational boats.
- Stay close to shore unless crossing, wear bright colors, and always point your boat into the wake to avoid capsizing.
- Monitor boat traffic on a VHF marine radio, track freighter transit on marine traffic apps, and know your passing zones.



CLEVELAND METROPARKS/KYLE LANZER

In case of emergency Dial 911

## Plan a Safe Trip

**Safety is your responsibility. Be ready for an emergency.**

**Check water conditions and weather.** Check water quality and levels (blue box, left) before you depart. Avoid extreme weather. If the water looks too hazardous to swim, don't boat on it!

**Scout your course when possible.** Check out access, exits, and potential hazards from the shore.

**Never boat alone and leave a "float plan" with a reliable person.** Say where you are going and when you will leave and return. Contact the person once you return safely.

**Wear a life jacket at all times.** By law, children under 10 must wear life jackets of an appropriate size.

**Register your boat.** Canoes and kayaks must be registered with the state. Search Ohio Department of Natural Resources Watercraft.

**Regulations vary.** It is your responsibility to know and follow all regulations for specific parks, jurisdictions, and conditions.

**Load your boat evenly.** Keep the weight in the boat centered for stability. Do not overload.

**Always maintain three points of contact.** For example, while moving around, keep two hands and one foot touching the boat.

**Portage (carry your boat) around hazards.**

**Be prepared to capsize and swim.** Hold onto your boat unless your life is endangered. Grab the upstream side of your capsized boat.

**Know your exact location at all times.** If you need help, call 911 and report where you are on the river.

**Stay hydrated.** Pack plenty of drinking water and avoid overexertion. Avoid alcohol while paddling.

**Avoid hypothermia.** Be prepared for cold air and water by dressing properly. Be aware of the symptoms of hypothermia and knowledgeable of its treatment. Bring a change of clothing in a waterproof bag.

## Water Trail Courtesy

**Practice Leave No Trace Principles to enjoy and protect our natural spaces.** Appreciate artifacts and natural objects but leave them undisturbed. Dispose of waste properly, pack it out. Visit [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org) for details.

**Respect the privacy and rights of landowners.** Designated access sites on the water trail are public property. All others should be considered private property.



**Respect wildlife.** Observe from a distance. Don't feed, follow, or approach wildlife. Control pets or leave them at home.

**Clean boater information.** Adopt environmental boating practices. Avoid introducing non-native species, including live bait, by following the "Clean, Drain, Dry" method. Clean all equipment by removing visible plant and animal species. Drain all water. Dry all equipment completely before moving to a new body of water.