

Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Stage 1

Cleveland, Ohio



Initial conditions



The Towpath Trail has become a defining feature in the Cuyahoga Valley landscape. Constructed over 175 years ago as part of the Ohio & Erie Canal, it began as a simple dirt path for animals pulling canal boats. Today it has become an extraordinary recreational amenity that highlights Cleveland's industrial river valley and serves its surrounding neighborhoods and region.

As the first stage in an effort to complete the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga County, a multi-

Developed through a stakeholder-driven process, the Towpath Trail will reconnect the community with the Cuyahoga River and nature in the industrial heart of the City of Cleveland.

disciplinary team designed a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile extension of the multi-use trail along the banks of the Cuyahoga River. As the team's ecological consultant, Biohabitats' approach was to celebrate the industrial heritage of the valley while regenerating a natural environment that has suffered from two centuries of degradation.

Biohabitats performed extensive field and desktop analyses which included preliminary hydraulic and hydrologic analyses and surveys of aquatic and terrestrial ecology, endangered species, and wetlands. The Biohabitats team identified numerous opportunities for regeneration along the Trail, all of which focused on restoring natural areas, such as river banks and

forested floodplains; creating functional landscapes, such as living structures and urban plant nurseries; and managing rainwater with regenerative stormwater conveyance, rain gardens, and treatment wetlands. To aid the client in prioritizing these opportunities, Biohabitats produced concept and prioritization matrices outlining costs and benefits. Completion of the ecological component of this project represented a key step toward the County's ultimate goal of creating approximately six additional miles of trail and greenway.

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