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West Creek Conservancy

# Clear Fork Preserve

Galion, Ohio

Jordan Tackett, Richland County Park District



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*A 57-acre swath of vacant agricultural land transforms into a public nature preserve that improves habitat, water quality, and human connection to nature in an area lacking protected greenspace.*

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## **SERVICES**

Construction  
Design-build  
Ecological Restoration  
Nature Based Solutions

In 2022, the West Creek Conservancy purchased vacant land in a predominantly agricultural area along a channelized, degraded reach of the Clear Fork River. The reach included a reservoir which served as the primary drinking water supply for a downstream community.

To help improve water quality and transform the 57-acre site into an ecologically functioning public nature preserve, WCC turned to Biohabitats. After helping WCC procure funding from the State's H2Ohio program, Biohabitats assessed the site and collaborated with WCC and project partner Meadville Land Service to design and construct the restoration.

The design considered on site beaver colonies that created natural dams which raised the invert of degraded stream and increased floodplain connectivity. Existing wetlands were restored by plugging ditching with woody debris jams and wattles, which included standing snags to provide perches for raptors, and downed logs to serve as cover for other fauna. Pods of native woody species were planted to expand scrub shrub habitat. The restoration also involved invasive species management and the planting of native wetland vegetation in an existing soybean field to reestablish wet meadow habitat for pollinators. The new Clear Fork Preserve reduces sediment and nutrients flowing into the Clear Fork Reservoir while adding new ways for people to experience and enjoy nature.