

Raccoon Creek News

Fall 2024

Fall-elujah!

Ohio Scenic River Designation Proposal for Raccoon Creek *The Ohio Department of Natural Resources*

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Natural Areas and Preserves administers the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program. The program's mission is to work cooperatively with local governments, businesses, landowners, non-profit organizations, and other state and federal agencies to protect the aquatic resources and terrestrial communities dependent on healthy riparian habitats. Ohio's Scenic River Act provides for three categories of designation including Wild, Scenic, and Recreational. Ohio currently has 15 designated Wild, Scenic and/or Recreational rivers.

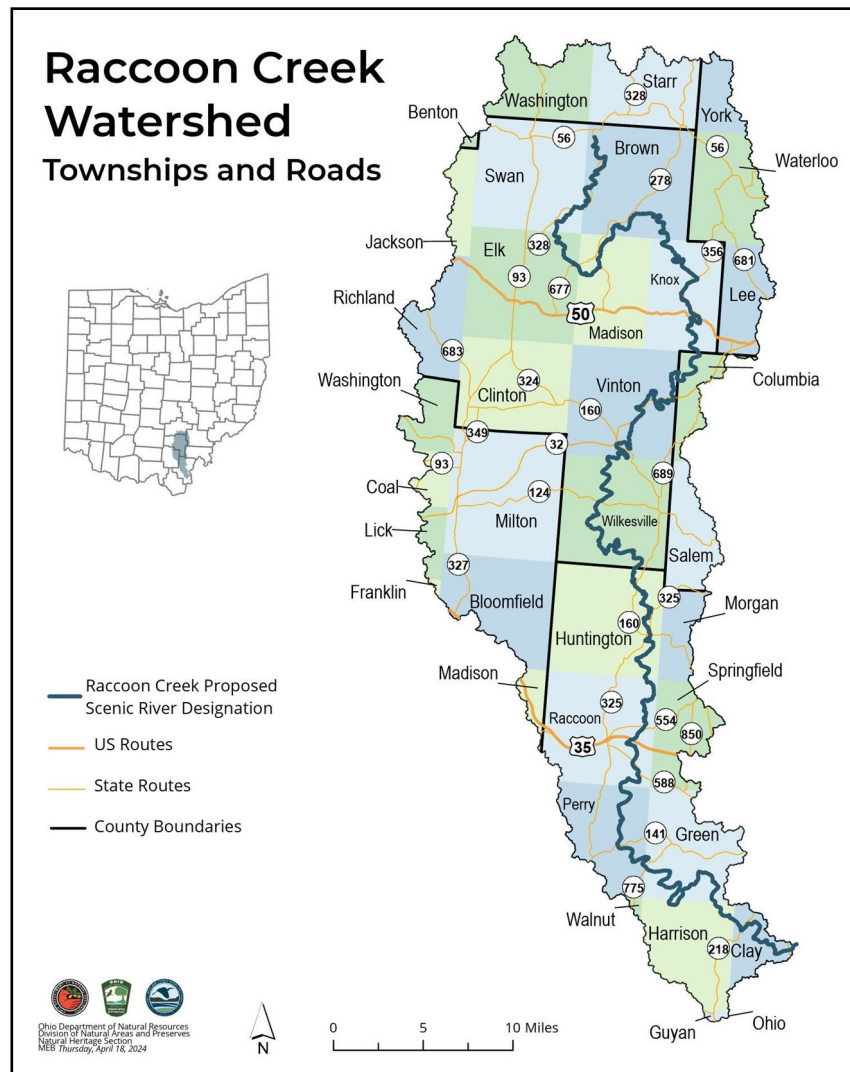
Background

Raccoon Creek is an exceptionally beautiful riverine system with an extensively forested watershed harboring diverse populations of flora and fauna. But by the late 20th century, the creek and its watershed had suffered greatly from unregulated coal mining resulting in a severely impacted stream. Since the 1980s, restoration efforts by national, state, and local agencies alongside local citizens returned this once nearly lifeless stream back to a thriving aquatic ecosystem.

Scenic River Designation Proposal for Raccoon Creek

At the request of the Raccoon Creek Partnership, Raccoon Creek was evaluated by Ohio Scenic Rivers staff using the state's Wild, Scenic and Recreational River designation criteria provided by the Ohio Scenic Rivers Act and was found to meet or exceed the qualifications for Scenic River designation for 111.9 river miles.

Raccoon Creek Watershed Townships and Roads



Visit ohiodnr.gov/scenicrivers to learn more about the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program
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ATHENS
GALLIA
HOCKING
JACKSON
MEIGS
VINTON

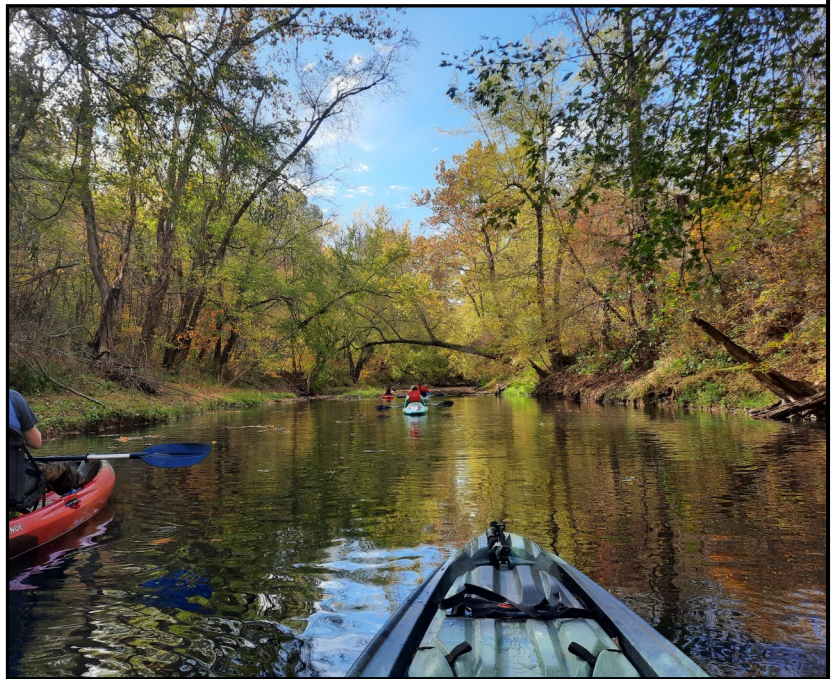
Ohio Scenic River Designation Proposal for Raccoon Creek

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Highlights of the Raccoon Creek State Scenic River Designation Study include:

- The creek is 75% free flowing and reflects natural connectivity to its natural floodplain.
- The percentage of roads within 300 feet of the creek comprises 37.5% despite its location in the Alleghany Plateau and rugged terrain which limits roadway development.
- The length of the segment is more than 20 continuous river miles (111.9 miles).
- The amount of commercial development within 300 feet of the creek does not negatively impact the habitat and quality of stream and floodplain.
- The area adjacent to the creek is forested to a depth of 300' for more than 25% of the stream length, with 61% of the remaining area adjacent to the creek forested to a depth of 120'
- All but one small section of the upper 71.6 miles of the creek equals or exceeds the Ohio EPA's Warmwater (WWH) aquatic life use designation. While the 32.14 miles of the creek downstream from the Vinton Dam meet or exceed Ohio EPA's Exceptional Warmwater (EWH) aquatic life use designation.
- The restoration of Raccoon Creek is a testament to the ongoing efforts of numerous organizations working together to restore the creek's natural characteristics and protect its healthy aquatic ecosystems. When restoration started only 24 species of fish were documented in the entire watershed. Incredibly 92 fish species have now been found.



Next steps

- Ohio Scenic Rivers Program staff continue to meet with local organizations, landholders, and other public and private entities to discuss the potential designation of Raccoon Creek.
- On Sept. 6, 2024, ODNR Director Mary Mertz declared her intent to designate Raccoon Creek as a State Scenic River by issuing a public notice. ODNR will be taking public comments through Nov. 6, 2024. Public comments may be made online at ohiodnr.gov/designation. The Raccoon Creek Scenic River Designation Study is also available to review and download on that web page.

After the public comment period ends, Director Mertz may enter the designation into the ODNR journal creating a new Ohio Scenic River. If this occurs, Raccoon Creek would become Ohio's 16th State Scenic River.

For more information, contact Matthew Smith, Eastern Regional Scenic River Manager

at Matthew.Smith@dnr.ohio.gov or (330) 298-9195. Visit ohiodnr.gov/scenicrivers to learn more about the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program.

Farewell to our 2023-2024 AmeriCorps Members

Laura Tobar and Sarah Frazier



Here I, Laura Tobar, am on one of my first field days sampling Little Raccoon Creek. Amy warned us to be cautious on the bank, as it was quite slippery. As you can see, I did not heed that warning and fell in. We all laughed so hard!

I continued on to have a fulfilling year serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership. I became quite versed in the world of watersheds. I gained an understanding of unregulated coal mining and enjoy being able to educate the public about our remediation efforts. I have learned to identify fish and aquatic macroinvertebrates and will always conduct my own creek studies. I have loved being more versed in the natural world and understanding how the biology in our waters can indicate the health of our streams.

After my term with RCP, I will be serving a second twelve-month term with Rural Action's Sustainable Forestry Program as the Cohort Leader. I am very excited to develop relationships and work on projects with local landowners and organizations. I will continue to pay attention to crawly creatures big and small, and to identify as many living things as possible.

Thank you to Raccoon Creek Partnership for affirming my path in environmental work. I am forever grateful for the experiences and will continue to stay informed and support the efforts of this incredible organization.



One of the best things I've ever done was deciding to be an AmeriCorps member with Raccoon Creek Partnership. It was a truly rewarding opportunity that made a meaningful difference in my life. I've gained valuable hands-on field experience, from assisting in electrofishing to learning how to use seines, kick-nets, and identifying various macroinvertebrates. This role has also introduced me to new parts of Ohio I hadn't explored before and given me the chance to teach both adults and kids about our freshwater ecosystems. Being able to share the knowledge I gained during my term with others has felt impactful and it has deepened my passion for the environmental career path I have chosen. I ended my term early because I was offered a position as the Orphan Well Environmental Specialist with Rural Action. I believe that my time with Raccoon Creek Partnership, along with the guidance from the

wonderful people I met, played a key role in getting me to where I am today, and I'm very grateful for that. I'm excited to continue supporting Raccoon Creek Partnership as a board member and to keep making a difference in my community and local watershed. I wish the new service members, Lou and Jordan, the best of luck in their roles and I am confident they will achieve great things! — Sarah Frazier



Meet Our New AmeriCorps Members!

Lou Arrigo and Jordan Carey

Hi all! My name is Lou Arrigo and I am one of the new AmeriCorps members serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership for the upcoming year. It is my first year with AmeriCorps, and I'm so excited to get started! I recently graduated from Ohio University in the spring of 2024 with a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Conservation and a minor in Environmental and Plant Biology. Through my degree I've been able to gain experience in a wide variety of fields, from mammal sampling to tree identification, and I have even had the opportunity to travel to a field research station in Panama. While my degree was comprehensive, I'm ready to dig in and develop more in-depth, hands-on experience in the field. In my free time I am a big fan of going on hikes looking for critters, and through my field entomology course I picked up the hobby of insect pinning. Otherwise much of my time is taken up by nerdier pursuits like DnD and board games. For the past several years I have worked as an Interpreter and Programmer with the education department at the Toledo Zoo, and I'm excited to be able to continue in public education while also doing boots-on-the-ground work!



Hello! My name is Jordan Carey and I am one of the new AmeriCorps members that will be serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership this upcoming year. I am a graduate of Wellston High School and The University of Rio Grande, where I received a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife conservation. I've been fortunate to have many opportunities through my degree to get experience in the field doing things like working on a Nature preserve in the Hocking hills treating Eastern Hemlock trees for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Aquatic Turtle collection and handling in the local area, and training with Radio telemetry to name a few. All of these experiences have only furthered my passion for Conservation and make me very excited to serve the same watershed that I grew up in and currently live in. I am excited to learn more about watershed management, macroinvertebrates, fish sampling, and engaging in educational efforts. Outside of my AmeriCorps service, I greatly enjoy the outdoors so often you can find me hiking with my dog checking out all of the local flora and fauna. If I'm not outdoors there's a good chance I am doing something basketball related, I am a high school basketball coach and run a travel basketball program. I look forward to working with the Raccoon Creek Partnership and all the new experiences it will bring.



Fall Foliage: Feast or Famine?

Kaylin Callander—Lake Hope State Park Naturalist

Fall is upon us! But what exactly happens when the leaves begin to change color and drop? When can we see peak colors, and will it be a vibrant season? To answer these questions, we must examine three things: amount of sunlight, species of trees, and weather patterns.

Leaves can change their color from as early as mid-September all the way through early November. Typically, mid to late October is the peak time in southern Ohio.

During this season, the decrease in intensity and duration of sunlight, and cooler temperatures, cause the leaves to stop photosynthesis, a process that plants use to make food. As this happens, a corky wall of cells forms between the twig and the leaf stem (abscission zone). Eventually the corky cells seal off the vessels that supply the leaf with nutrients and water and block the flow of sugar back to the main part of the plant. This combination of events triggers the trees to break down chlorophyll, and the green color fades, often revealing other chemical pigments underneath.

What are those other chemicals?

- Carotenoids = yellow and orange
- Anthocyanins = deep red and purple
- Tannins = brownish or tan

Concentrations of those chemicals can be found in specific species of trees to produce predictable colors year after year. Look for yellows and golds in beech, poplar, and hickories. Oranges show in sassafras and sugar maple. Red can be found in red maples, dogwoods, and sumac. Browns are found in oaks which can retain their leaves well into the winter. But what about the weather patterns? It's all about temperature, precipitation, and soil moisture.



Ideally, a rainy growing season followed by an autumn with lots of sunny, dry weather, and crisp, cold nights will produce the most vibrant palette of fall colors. This is especially true for producing anthocyanins, or reds.

Unfortunately, what we have been getting (weather wise) up to the writing of this article is dry conditions. Drought during late summer and early fall can shutdown photosynthesis early causing leaves to release without reaching their full pigmented potential.

If freezing temperatures and a hard frost hit, it can kill the process within the leaves, leading to poor fall color and early leaf drop also.

Want to see the fall foliage at its finest this season? Lake Hope State Park has several free public programs featuring terrific trees!

For more information visit our website on ohiodnr.gov or call our Nature Center at 740-596-3030.



Raccoon Creek Partnership Annual Meeting!

Open to the public!



SNOWVILLE
CREAMERY



Sunday, November 3rd, 2 pm - 4 pm

At Raccoon Creek Outfitters –74815 US-50 #8010, Albany, OH 45710

Join us for our annual meeting, a guest speaker, a bonfire, snacks and hot chocolate, a silent auction, board elections, and lots of fun!

Bring your own chair and any extra bonfire snacks

Thank you to Snowville Creamery for providing the hot chocolate!



Activities and Upcoming Events

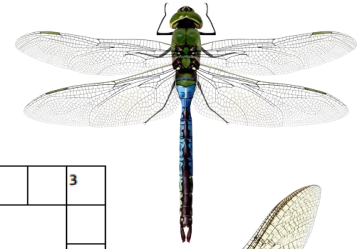
** Creek Critter Crossword **

Across

2. Can and will pinch
4. The lanky cousin of 8-across
6. The family of bass and pumpkinseed
7. Has powerful wings but does NOT breath fire
8. Expert long jumper
9. Short-lived spring swarmer
10. Nymphs of these poor fliers make a home on their namesake

Down

1. Lives in a case
3. Has intimidating mandibles that will only get bigger
5. Common family of small stream fish



Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Raccoon Creek Partnership Annual Meeting / Bonfire will be 2-4 Sunday, November 3rd at Raccoon Creek Outfitters- 74815 US-50 #8010, Albany, OH 45710 . For any updates be sure to check our Facebook and Instagram pages.

Free and open to the public: Silent Auction, Hot Chocolate, apple cider, guest speakers, and a bonfire!

****All events subject to change. ****

For more info visit our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/raccooncreekpartnership/>

Or e-mail raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com or mackey@ohio.edu



Crossword Answers

Across: 2 - Crayfish, 4 - Salamander, 6 - Sunfish, 7 - Dragonfly, 8 - Frog, 9 - Mayfly, 10 - Stonely
Down: 1 - Caddisfly, 3 - Dobsonfly, 5 - Minnow



Raccoon Creek Partnership

c/o Amy Mackey
Voinovich School
The Ridges, Bldg 22
Athens, OH 45701

Place
Postage
Stamp
Here

Send To:



Raccoon Creek Partnership, c/o Amy Mackey
Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service
The Ridges, Building 22
Athens, Ohio 45701

Your contributions are tax deductible.
Please make checks payable to the:
Raccoon Creek Partnership
and send to:

Name			
Address			
Phone			
E-mail			

Yes, I (we) would like to help protect Raccoon Creek

RCP Membership Application



A local partnership working towards conservation,
stewardship, and restoration of the watershed
for a healthier stream and community

Membership

Creek Chub	\$15	
Johnny Darter	\$30	
Channel Catfish	\$50	
Grass Pickerel	\$100	
Spotted Bass	\$500	
Paddlefish	\$1000	