

## WINTER 2026



### ***A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***

*Winter is a time to pause, celebrate success, and prepare for what's next.*

*At Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners, we're entering 2026 with a renewed sense of purpose and optimism as we celebrate our 20th Anniversary as a 501c3 non-profit. This winter, our team and board are excited to begin a strategic planning process to guide the next chapter of TCWP. We're taking a close look at what we've built, what our watershed and communities*

*need most, and how we can grow our impact in meaningful, sustainable ways.*

*We continue to face new challenges in protecting clean water and healthy habitats, while critical watershed protections are being rolled back. But what gives me hope is the strength of this community, and the growing number of people who care deeply about the future of our watershed.*

*In 2026, we will keep showing up: restoring habitat, strengthening partnerships, engaging residents, and building the next generation of watershed stewards. Thank you for being part of this work with us. Your support makes everything possible.*

*With optimism and hope,*

*Dr. Erica Matheny*

*Executive Director*

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## EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

FEB 19: Free Webinar | [Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities: Navigating Landscape of Soil Health](#) FEB

26: Free Event | [Native Plant Gardening](#) Presentation at Aurora Library

MAR 13: Nordon High School STEM Day

MAR 9: [Build a Buzzin' Bee House](#) @ Streetsboro Library (Registration required)

MAR 26: Free Webinar | [Nature Therapy: Finding Balance Through Pollinator Gardening](#)

MAR 31: [Build a Buzzin' Bee House](#) @ Aurora (Registration required)

APR 16: Annual Mayor's Breakfast

APR 20: Brecksville Broadview heights Elementary School Earth Week

APR 25: [Solon Earth Day](#)

May 7-8: [Ohio Stormwater Conference](#) (Registration Required)

May 16: [Northeast Ohio Adventure Fest](#)

May 16: [Summit Metro Parks Native Plant Fest](#)

May 21: [Annual TCWP Foraged Feast](#) (Registration Required)

## TCWP WINTER WEBINAR SERIES



### **Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities:** *Navigating the Complex Landscape of Soil Health*

Join **Sara Continenza**, Executive Director & Founder of **Food Strong**, to explore restoring degraded urban soils through community action and innovation.

Sara will explore:

- How **soil health** supports food access, wellness, and resilient communities
- **Challenges** of contaminated and neglected urban soils
- **Real-world solutions**—from bioremediation to vacant lot restoration
- **Lessons learned** from restoring Cleveland's landscapes

Discover practical ways to rebuild soil—and community—from the ground up.



February 19th: 12pm to 1pm



Online free webinar via zoom



<https://tinyurl.com/b45kajvs>



## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM BRINGS GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE TO NE OHIO



**Pictured L-R:** Joseph Losi, Katie Stuble, Jim Córdoba-Alfaro, Elaine Marsh, Ana Burns

In November, Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners hosted an International Environmental Stewardship Symposium at the Davey SEED Campus, welcoming nearly 80 attendees for a morning of learning and connection.

The symposium featured presentations from TCWP's IREX Fellows, Jim Córdoba-Alfaro and Joseph Losi, who shared their Community Solutions Projects and personal stories of environmental leadership. Their talks highlighted how communities around the world are addressing environmental challenges through local action, education, and collaboration.

Following the presentations, guests enjoyed a panel discussion with Jim and Joseph alongside regional conservation leaders Katie Stuble (Holden Forests & Gardens) and Elaine Marsh (Summit Metro Parks). The conversation explored stewardship, partnership, and the shared responsibility of taking action to protect water and natural resources.

TCWP is grateful to all who attended and to Davey SEED for hosting this meaningful event.

Watch the symposium recording on our YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@TinkersCreekWP>

# LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD: RESTORING PREVIOUS RESTORATION SITES



**Above:** Great Blue Lobelia.

While 2025 was a year focused on planning for the future, it also gave us an opportunity to reinvest in our past work. With support from the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners completed invasive plant removals at two previously restored sites, helping ensure these projects continue to thrive for years to come.

At the Laurel Creek restoration site in Twinsburg, crews removed invasive phragmites, teasel, and cattails. In Hudson, work at the Owen Brown site focused on controlling invasive reed canary grass. These efforts are already opening space for native plants to reclaim the landscape. At Laurel Creek, native wildflowers were seeded in highly visible areas along the sidewalk, creating both ecological and community benefits. At Owen Brown, established native plantings now have room to expand and strengthen the site's overall health.

Maintaining restoration sites is just as important as creating them, and this work helps protect the long-term investment our communities have made in clean water and healthy habitats. We are deeply grateful to partners like Paradise Natives for their expertise and dedication in helping us care for these valuable ecosystems.



## RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES IN OHIO



A male red-breasted nuthatch  
Photo by Matt Siefert

Over the past few months, Ohio has seen an unusual increase in red-breasted nuthatches. These tiny, energetic birds are typically uncommon in our region, but every few years they appear in much larger numbers. This periodic movement is known as *irruptive migration*, which occurs irregularly in response to changing environmental conditions.

Most bird species follow what is called *obligate migration*, traveling at roughly the same time each year. In contrast, irruptive migrants move only when food supplies become scarce. For red-breasted nuthatches, that trigger is a poor cone crop in their northern breeding range in Canada and the northern United States. With fewer seeds available this winter, many birds have traveled south into Ohio in search of food.

As a result, we have a special opportunity to observe these visitors close to home. Red-breasted

nuthatches are often seen creeping headfirst along tree trunks and branches as they forage. They also readily visit backyard feeders stocked with sunflower seeds, suet, or shelled peanuts. Listen for their distinctive nasal calls, which often reveal their presence before they are spotted.

Enjoy this rare seasonal visitor while they're here—it's a small reminder of how closely wildlife responds to changes in our environment.

Want to learn more about irruptive migrants in the U.S.? Check out Finch Research Network's website: <https://finchnetwork.org/here-come-the-finches>.

## SAVE THE DATE! FORAGED FEAST - MAY 21



Mark your calendar for our annual Foraged Feast on May 21. This signature TCWP event celebrates community, nature, and the flavors of the season. We're excited to return to CLE Urban Winery, our fabulous venue from last year, for another memorable evening.

Foraged Feast brings together friends, neighbors, and local experts to enjoy thoughtfully prepared, locally sourced foods, learn from foraging and culinary specialists, and connect over a shared love of the outdoors and our watershed.

More program details will be announced soon. We hope you'll join us for this meaningful and delicious community gathering.

Keep an eye on our events page for more details: [www.tinkerscreek.org/events](http://www.tinkerscreek.org/events).

# FROM NE OHIO TO THE WORLD: BUILDING GLOBAL WATERSHED CONNECTIONS



*Want to support Joseph and Jim as they implement their community service projects at home? Learn more and donate using the links below:*

*Joseph Losi (Solomon Islands):*

<https://gofund.me/bdcdfed4f>

*Jim Córdoba-Alfaro (Costa Rica):* <https://biosurfoundation.org>

This past fall, Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners had the privilege of hosting two US State Department sponsored IREX Community Solutions Program Fellows as part of an international exchange program. Welcoming these fellows, Jim Córdoba-Alfaro from Costa Rica, and Joseph Losi from the Solomon Islands, into our work was an incredible and rewarding opportunity. We shared a variety of challenges across watersheds in our different corners of the globe, but the core goals are shared across borders: clean water, resilient communities, and healthy ecosystems.

Throughout their time with TCWP, our fellows participated in water quality monitoring, community engagement efforts, and conversations with local partners about restoration and education. Their

perspectives sparked thoughtful dialogue and pushed us to reflect on how we communicate impact, build trust with communities, and connect people to place.

What stood out most was the mutual learning. Our team gained new ideas, fresh approaches, and a deeper appreciation for the creativity required to do conservation work in different cultural and ecological contexts. In return, we were proud to share lessons from our watershed, partnerships, and restoration efforts here in Northeast Ohio.

We are grateful to the US State Department and IREX for this opportunity, and especially thankful to our fellows for bringing curiosity, professionalism, and heart to TCWP. Their presence strengthened our work and reminded us that local action is part of a global movement. We plan to continue our work with them overseas through continued connection and sharing each other's stories. Follow us on social media for updates!



**Above Left:** Joseph Losi shares conservation challenges in the Solomon Islands with students at Twinsburg HS. **Above Right:** Erica Matheny and Jim Córdoba-Alfaro preparing for macro invertebrate sampling with Nordonia HS students.

## NEW GRANTS STRENGTHEN TCWP IMPACT

Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners is excited to share news of **three recently awarded grants** that are strengthening our work in watershed education, pollinator habitat, and community stewardship. Together, these investments allow us to expand proven programs, launch new educational tools, and deepen partnerships across the watershed.

### **ADVANCING WATERSHED EDUCATION THROUGH MAPS AND DIGITAL LEARNING**

TCWP received a \$5,000 Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) Mini-Grant from Ohio EPA to develop *Know Your Watershed: Stormwater, Streams, and Stewardship*, an education project centered on creating a digital and printed watershed map of the Tinker's Creek and Brandywine Creek watersheds paired with an online learning portal. The map will highlight watershed boundaries and local landmarks, while the digital content will include videos, quizzes, stewardship

tips, and information about environmental careers.

Designed for use in classrooms, libraries, and community events, *Know Your Watershed* will help residents understand how local waterways are connected and how everyday actions affect water quality, while encouraging long-term stewardship. While the OEEF grant supports map design and digital content development, additional funding is needed to print and distribute the maps. TCWP is seeking support from municipalities, organizations, and businesses interested in helping share this resource throughout Northeast Ohio.



***Interested in supporting map printing? Contact us at [info@tinkerscreek.org](mailto:info@tinkerscreek.org).***



## **EXPANDING HABITAT FOR NATIVE POLLINATORS**

With continued support from Enbridge and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, TCWP is excited to expand our *Native Pollinators and Bee House Workshops* through 2026. This funding allows us to offer more hands-on workshops, reach new audiences, and create more nesting habitat for native bees across the watershed.

At these grant-supported workshops, participants learn the importance of native pollinators while building bee houses and planting small pollinator gardens of their own. Ongoing guidance and replacement nesting materials help ensure these projects succeed long term, turning simple

backyard actions into lasting stewardship and meaningful habitat improvements.

## CREATING A NEW COMMUNITY POLLINATOR GARDEN IN MAPLE HEIGHTS



TCWP also received a **\$1,000 Conservation Action Grant from Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District** for our ***Maple Heights Pollinator Garden*** project. TCWP will partner with the **City of Maple Heights** on the transformation of a vacant garden plot into a native pollinator garden. This new green space will provide food and habitat for pollinators while improving soil health and supporting stormwater management.

Community members, including students, volunteers, and the Senior Citizen Garden Club, will participate in planting and care, and educational signage will highlight the benefits of native plants and stewardship.

### LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED

To find upcoming **Native Bee House workshops**, **volunteer opportunities for the Maple Heights pollinator garden**, and other ways to participate, visit our **Events page**:

<https://tinkerscreek.org/events/>

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# LET'S CONNECT AT THE 2026 OHIO STORMWATER CONFERENCE



Mark your calendar for **May 6–8, 2026**, and join stormwater professionals from across Ohio and beyond at the **19th Annual Ohio Stormwater Conference** at the Kalahari Resort in Sandusky. Founded and hosted by Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners, this premier event offers timely regulatory updates, educational sessions on best practices and emerging technologies, and valuable networking with engineers, municipal leaders, and watershed professionals. A **pre-conference MS4 Bootcamp** on May 6 provides an extra day of hands-on training. **Registration opens February 15th. Learn more and register: [ohstormwaterconference.com](https://ohstormwaterconference.com)**

## DRINKERS FOR TINKER'S CREATES COMMUNITY FOR CLEAN WATER

On Thursday, October 23rd Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners hosted **Drinkers for Tinker's** at *Eighty-Three Brewery* in Akron. Community members gathered to enjoy award-winning craft beer, brewery tours, and pinball, while connecting with others who care about Northeast Ohio's waterways. The event highlighted how everyday actions and community support play a role in protecting streams, wildlife, and critical habitat, including those that support river otters in our region.

Drinkers for Tinker's was made possible through the generous support of **Enbridge, Davey Resource Group, R2O, Eurofins, and The Shelly Company**, whose sponsorship helped make the evening a success.



Above L-R: Jim Córdoba-Alfaro, Joseph Losi, Kaylee Nickol, Erica Matheny, Angela Brodie, Matt Siefert

Events like Drinkers for Tinker's are an important way for TCWP to **build community, raise awareness, and support ongoing watershed protection efforts**. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the night a success. *We look forward to raising another glass with you next year!*

## OTTERLY SPEAKING: A WINTER CREEK NOTE 🦦



Hi TCWP Supporter,

It's your neighborhood river otter checking in from Tinker's Creek.

Winter might look quiet, but this creek is still hard at work. Cold water and melting snow carry road salt, trash, and runoff straight into the stream. And trust me... I notice. When the water is clean, I can hunt, travel, and thrive. When it's polluted, everything gets harder for the fish, bugs, plants, and animals that depend on this place.

That's why TCWP's work matters year-round, not just in warm weather. Monitoring water quality, restoring streambanks, planting natives, and teaching people how to protect our watershed helps keep this habitat healthy for all of us (including me).

So here's my winter request: go easy on salt, keep storm drains clear of debris, and keep supporting the folks protecting our creeks.

See you when the thaw hits,

Your Creek Otter Friend

# THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS AND SPONSORS!

## 2026 BUSINESS MEMBERS

We are incredibly grateful for the support of our business members and sponsors.

Thank you for supporting watershed work!

*Thank you*  
to our **2026** business members!



Our reason is water.™



*Aquatic Enhancement  
& Survey, Inc.*

Much gratitude to our member communities. Thank you for your partnership.

Aurora

Beachwood

Bedford Heights

Boston Heights

Franklin Township

Glenwillow

Hudson

Macedonia

Maple Heights

Northfield

Reminderville

Solon

Streetsboro

Twinsburg

Valley View

Walton Hills

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**Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners** stewards Tinker's Creek and Brandywine Creek watersheds in more than 24 communities every day. You can be part of this!

**Become a Member Today!**



Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners  
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