



# RIVERS UNLIMITED

Ohio's Statewide River Conservation Leader Since 1972

Summer 2021



The RU canoes have hauled hundreds of tires out of local waters. Now we can be twice as effective and have exponentially more fun.

## Great News - More Canoes!

Thanks to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Rivers Unlimited was awarded an Ohio Boating Education Grant.

Through this grant, RU will purchase:

- 10 Old Town Discovery Canoes
- 20 canoe paddles
- 20 pfd's (personal flotation devices, life jackets)
- a trailer
- and other related equipment

The grant also provides training for on-water leaders of both Rivers Unlimited and the Mill Creek Yacht Club.

Due to supply shortages caused by the pandemic, look for the new equipment in 2022.

**Thanks ODNR!**

**June 12, July 10, August 14**  
**Citizens' Water Quality Monitoring**  
[riversunlimited.org/wqm](https://riversunlimited.org/wqm)

**June 12-26**  
**Clean Sweep of the Little Miami**  
[Register here](#)

**June 19, August 21**  
**Urban Stream Adventure**  
**Mill Creek Yacht Club**  
Sign up: [www.themillcreekalliance](http://www.themillcreekalliance)

**July 17**  
**Little Miami Trailblazer Adventure**  
More info: [LM Watershed Network](#)

**July 31**  
**Mill Creek Cleanup**  
Sign up: [www.themillcreekalliance](http://www.themillcreekalliance)

**August 7**  
**Paddlefest**  
RU will be supporting "The Mill Creek Peek"

# A Special Journey with “Walking Ancient Ohio”

By Michael C. Miller, Bernie Moller and Lisa Link

Ross County is the home of both the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, which have been proposed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as Paint Creek which is on the verge of Scenic River designation. Because of these two events, on April 25-26, ten members of the *Walking Ancient Ohio* tour group paddled Paint Creek, covering 22 miles with the assistance of Rivers Unlimited water guides, known as the RU Canoe Crew.

## How We Arrived at the Precipice of Scenic River Designation

What it takes to designate a scenic river is 1) EWH (Exceptional Warmwater Habitat) water quality and biota, fish and macroinvertebrates, 2) natural channel uninterrupted by hydraulic constraints, like bridges, levies, and bank stabilization, 3) money to conduct these studies and 4) local support by communities and businesses in the watershed. Aaron Rourke, the former President of Rivers Unlimited, a 501c3 nonprofit, and Bob Gable, head of Scenic Rivers Program for Ohio, recognized the appropriateness of establishing Scenic River status for much of the lower Paint Creek Watershed that met these criteria almost 10 years ago. Unfortunately, one local landowner successfully stalled its consideration for many years, but no more. Aaron found Dr. John Ritter of Whittenberg University who, with GIS Arc-Info, conducted much of the background data analysis required for Scenic River status at a fraction of the normal cost. Rivers Unlimited authorized the study, and the report was completed and turned into Ohio Department of Natural Resources that houses the Scenic Rivers program.



In 2020, Eagles Lodge 1325 in Greenfield, Ohio donated \$5000 to help fund Dr. Ritter's study underwritten by our small nonprofit, Rivers Unlimited. Another strong supporter, Waters Edge Canoe Livery, nominated Paint Creek (including Lower Paint Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, North Fork of the Paint Creek, and Rocky Fork Creek) for Ohio Scenic River Status in 2015. The treasure that is Rocky Fork Gorge has been largely protected by the Arc of Appalachia through its purchase of 60 acres of land now the Highlands Nature Sanctuary.

The Ohio EPA completed a TMDL study in 2012 for these reaches and found that the upper Paint Creek, along with most of its tributaries, was in violation of water quality exceptional and recreational safety criteria. However, the lower mainstem of the Paint Creek and Rocky Fork Creek, below their flood control reservoirs, met exceptional warmwater status and met recreational criteria required for Scenic River status. The upper

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# GETTING TO KNOW OUR HISTORY

## Paddling Ancient Ohio

Focus: Paint Creek Corridor

Partnership with: Walking Ancient Ohio

portion of the creek was compromised by agricultural nutrients, sediment soil erosion and oxygen variation caused by nutrient loading. Still the approved TMDL of the status of the lower watershed units was the impetus to press for acceptance to the Scenic River Program. Paint Creek lies in a glacial lakebed connected to the origin of Lake Tight on the Teays River when the glaciers began to block northern river drainages with ice about 700,000 years ago (lower to mid Pleistocene), depositing the Minford silt over its 25,000 square mile area below its 975 ft lake level. As a result, the banks of the Paint Creek are often lake silts overlain by flood deposits, likely from deforestation due to agricultural clearing between 1820 and 1900.

### Where the Mound Meets the Water

Combining the journey of *Walking Ancient Ohio* with canoeing down Paint Creek illustrates the interconnectedness of both initiatives. The health and beauty of the Paint Creek corridor enhances the value of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks and offers an opportunity for visitors of this potential World Heritage site to experience the area in much the same way as the people who built the earthworks 2000 years ago. In turn, the preservation of the earthworks and their surrounding areas helps protect the rivers.

Additionally, according to the Greenfield news, participants expressed “the importance of their walk beyond linking the sites is to showcase that each of the sites can be reached without taking the interstate... thereby experiencing the places along the way that are off the beaten path... and by doing so, one gets a much more complete picture of Ohio and the historical significance and charm that each town along the way has to offer.”

Joining in this *Walking Ancient Ohio* event were former first lady of Ohio Hope Taft; Mary Mertz, Director of Ohio Department of Natural Resources; State Senator Steve Wilson and his wife, Jill; Buck Niehoff, author and retired Cincinnati lawyer; Melody Sawyer Richardson, Cincinnati native and former New York City attorney; 700 WLW radio host Jim Scott and his wife, Donna Hartman, former writer for the Cincinnati Enquirer; Kristina Rastaturina; and Aaron Rourke, Scenic River Program Manager.

### The Tour Begins

Bernie Moller, Secretary of Rivers Unlimited, solicited the help of fellow paddlers to ensure safe passage down the 22 miles of Paint Creek. Our canoeists included two National Champions, Bernie Moller and Greg Bechtel; ACA-trained safety boater Lisa Link; Dave Rutter from OKI Regional Planning; Carson Skidmore, middle school science teacher; Michael Miller, President of Rivers Unlimited; and Aaron Rourke, Scenic River Program Manager.

We met the *Walking Ancient Ohio* crew in Bainbridge, OH after they had walked 12 miles Sunday morning to the property of Dan McBee. Mr. McBee let us set up tents and stay the night on his mowed lawn running along the banks of Paint Creek. Now all together, we launched canoes about 3:30 that afternoon, paddling for 5.6 miles past Little Copperas Mountain to Seip Mound, where we were transported back to Mr. McBee's for dinner, an evening fire for discussion and some guitar accompaniment by Dave Rutter.

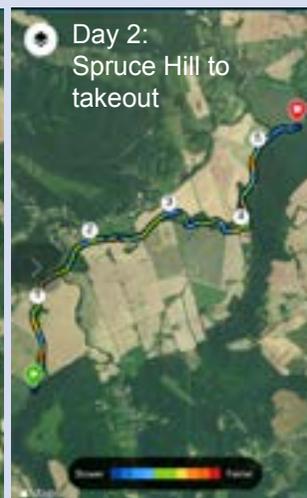
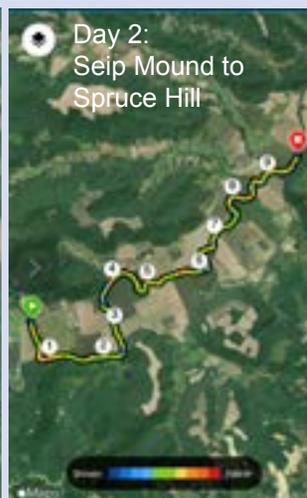
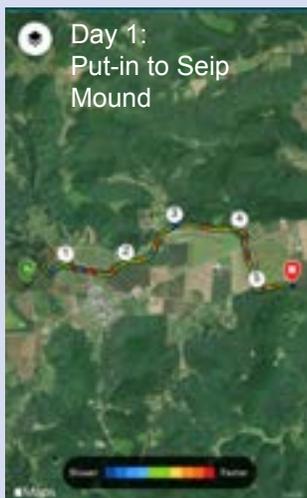
Monday morning, we returned to Seip Mound for a tour lead by Interpretive Ranger and Professor Susan Rasche, showing us the size, planning and similarities among Hopewell sites (100 BC to 500 AD). We left Seip Mound to continue

our water journey. At 11:50am we paddled the 9.7-mile trip from the US50 bridge to Spruce Hill. We paddled past Copperous Mountain, cliffs of Devonian sandstone topped by caprock of Berea limestone. We stopped at Spruce Hill where the Land



Manager for Arc of Appalachia gave us a history of the site, whether Indian, Viking or settlers built walls, and the evidence for each postulated group.

At 3:36pm we left Spruce Hill on a 5.6-mile trip down the debris (natural, not trash) filled creek past heavily eroded farm fields to end our journey at Paint Valley near a small kayak livery. Our hosts had another 4 mile hike to reach their destination of Hopewell. We said fond farewells and happy travels and left the walkers as we put the ODNr canoes away and drove home with appreciation for the many nonprofits working together to make their cultural and natural environment better.



## Queen of the Stream, part II, “Methods of My Madness”

(or “How to Catch Mill Creek Carp with Flies”)

by: Andy Sutthoff

Last issue we waxed philosophical about the thrill of landing the smart, powerful, bulldog-like carp in the urban Mill Creek. In this article, I'll share my methods and expertise for catching that carp on a fly rod.

(We'll start with a short overlap from last issue. Read the full article from Winter 2021 here)

Typically in tight quarters, most fly casting performed on the Mill Creek is short and targeted to minimize snagging and scaring fish. A “long” cast may be 30', if the terrain behind you permits it.

One has to recognize active feeding behavior to successfully catch carp from the Mill Creek. As I mentioned before, fly fishing for carp is a sight fishing experience, which means most of your opportunities will come from shallow water. Look for feeding fish to be rooting around in the bottom sediment for aquatic worms and insects or searching rock piles for wayward crayfish. The most catchable fish will have their heads down and their tails up, methodically working through the sediment, often leaving a mud trail in their wake. Carp that are not actively feeding or appear to be sunning themselves are low percentage fish. It's best to move on and find more promising targets.

Carp are relatively easy to find on the Mill Creek. I often look for shallow mud flats adjacent to fast riffles or long, slow moving pools. Active fish will move up on these flats to feed while still being close to the safety of deeper water. I also find carp near riprap, backwater eddies and underneath overhanging brush. The trick is finding the right “ambush” point to present a fly to the fish. As it goes, even under the best circumstances, the fish often finds a reason to refuse the fly. Such is life. Did I mention this fly fishing for carp stuff can be maddening?



Fly tackle for carp is relatively straightforward. I prefer a 9 ft., 7 weight rod with a medium fast action coupled with a large arbor reel spooled with an olive colored weight forward line and 150 yards of 20 lbs dacron backing. I then attach a 9 ft. fluorocarbon leader to the fly line. Fluorocarbon is more abrasion resistant than traditional monofilament and it's virtually invisible to fish in the water. At the end of the fluorocarbon leader, I attach my fly with a loop knot. The loop knot gives the fly more action since it can freely move on the looped fluorocarbon.

Since carp are omnivorous feeders, my favorite carp flies are patterns that suggest life rather than specific prey. I tie flies sparsely and weighted on size 6-10 hooks, using materials such as marabou, squirrel fur and hen feathers that provide excellent movement in the water. Patterns such as the Common Craw and the Hybrid Worm are proven carp producers.

Even though the Mill Creek has made great strides in its rehabilitation, it's still a polluted and physically degraded stream. As a standard practice, I wait 3-4 days after a rain event to see if the queens of the stream might entertain eating my flies. Aside from the health concerns, it generally takes the creek this long to clear, making sight fishing to carp possible.

Late May through mid-June and early September through mid-October are the most productive months for carp fishing on the Mill Creek. The weather is usually stable this time of year, the stream has regular flows, and the fish are hungry. Maybe we all don't share Izaak Walton's view of the carp as the queen of rivers, but once you hook your first carp on a fly rod, you can't help but wonder if Izaak Walton was right.



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