



IMPACT REPORT

2025



Education Empowers Communities

The Foundation for Ohio River Education (FORE) is a 501(c)(3) public charity and Type III functionally integrated supporting organization of the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO), an interstate pollution control agency with authority to operate water quality programs for the Ohio River and its tributaries. FORE teaches people of all ages to become active stewards of the Ohio River Basin through hands-on programs that highlight the cultural, ecological, and economic importance of our shared waterways.

Our STEM-focused experiential activities immerse participants in real-world river science, build environmental literacy, dispel common misconceptions about Ohio River water quality, and foster meaningful stewardship of the waters that sustain our region. Our goal is to improve public perception of local waterways and encourage preservation of their cultural, ecological, and economic value by exploring river science and cultivating a deeper connection to the wonders of our watershed. Each year, thousands of students, educators, families, and volunteers engage with their local waterways through floating classrooms, citizen science projects, mobile aquarium exhibits, and community litter cleanups. These programs spark curiosity, build confidence, encourage stewardship, and open pathways to future careers—creating lasting moments of discovery that inspire lifelong care for clean water and resilient river communities.



Our Partnership with ORSANCO

Headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, FORE was created to provide programming with and in support of ORSANCO's public education and outreach goals, reaching throughout the Ohio River Basin. FORE is self-sustaining, governed by an independent Board of Directors, and receives no direct financial funding from ORSANCO.

FORE's programs are fueled by the generosity of volunteers and funders. We secure our annual operating budget through grants, donations, sponsorships, and philanthropic partnerships. ORSANCO contributes in-kind support including office space, accounting services, scientific expertise, field training, staff collaboration, and water quality data that strengthens the accuracy and credibility of our programs.

FORE, in turn, transforms this expertise into accessible learning experiences for classrooms, families, and communities across the region. This partnership is unique as it enables FORE to bring real-time, professionally validated water quality science to the public and to deliver programs grounded in rigorous methods while remaining engaging, inclusive, and community-focused.



2025 Impact Report

This report offers a snapshot of FORE's year—capturing the experiences, data, and stories that shaped science education and stewardship across the Ohio River Basin in 2025. Inside, you'll see how community partnerships, passionate educators, and committed supporters and donors came together to spark hands-on learning, empower students, and strengthen care for the waterways that sustain us all. We invite you to explore these pages, see the impact you help make possible, and imagine what we can continue to achieve together!

Our Programs

River REACH Floating Classroom

FORE partners with BB Riverboats to use the River Queen as a floating classroom and educational laboratory. While on board, students test water quality using the same methods and equipment as scientists who monitor these waterways. This program engages students in applied STEM disciplines through hands-on water quality monitoring, habitat assessments, and studies of aquatic organisms, including fish and macroinvertebrates, that are used to evaluate the health of the river system. We also partner with local liveries to offer a more in-depth connection with the ecosystem.

River Watchers Citizen Science Program

River Watchers is a citizen science volunteer monitoring program for the Ohio River and selected tributaries across the Ohio River Basin. Outfitted with chemical and macroinvertebrate test kits, foundational water quality training, and ongoing support, participants independently collect samples and conduct tests to evaluate the health of local waterways. Data collected during testing is sent to ORSANCO, where it is evaluated and entered into a collaborative basin-wide database used to better understand long-term water quality trends and connect participating groups.

Ohio River Sweep Litter Cleanup Effort

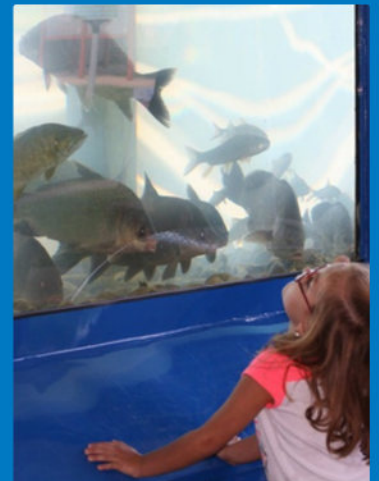
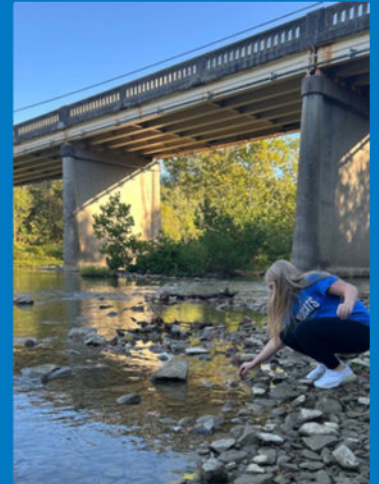
The Ohio River Sweep is one of the nation's largest, longest-running river-wide litter cleanup initiatives, engaging thousands of volunteers in environmental stewardship each year. Since 1989, volunteers have removed tons of trash and debris from riverbanks along the entire 981-mile length of the Ohio River—from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Cairo, Illinois—including countless tributaries and shoreline communities. This long-standing program strengthens community pride, protects local habitats, and fosters a shared commitment to a cleaner, healthier Ohio River.

Life Below the Waterline Freshwater Mobile Aquarium

Life Below the Waterline is a traveling mobile aquarium showcasing 2,200 gallons of native Ohio River fish. Staffed by ORSANCO biologists and trained FORE educators, the aquarium brings river science to life by highlighting aquatic habitats, biodiversity, river ecology, and water quality. By featuring fish collected from nearby water bodies, the exhibit offers participants a rare, up-close and personal opportunity to observe and connect with fish most could never imagine existed. This immersive experience transforms the river from an abstract concept into a living ecosystem—sparking curiosity, deepening understanding, and inspiring care for the waters and aquatic life that sustain our region.

Ohio River Academy Pilot Project – **NEW!**

Thanks to support from the Bosch Community Fund, FORE launched the Ohio River Academy pilot program, a scalable watershed to workforce model connecting students to science, stewardship, and STEM career pathways. The Academy includes classroom lessons, virtual scientist sessions, hands-on field experience, teacher training, and student-led research projects supported by ORSANCO data. Each cohort will join a network of schools across the tri-state region, collaborating to share data, examine regional trends, and work together on problem-solving projects. Through coordinated classroom and field experiences, students gain a deeper understanding of their interconnected relationship with the watershed and develop the skills to become future environmental leaders.





Foundation for Ohio River Education

At a Glance

**2025
Totals**

47K+

Individuals
Reached

200+

Programs &
Events

10K+

Students

5K+

Volunteers

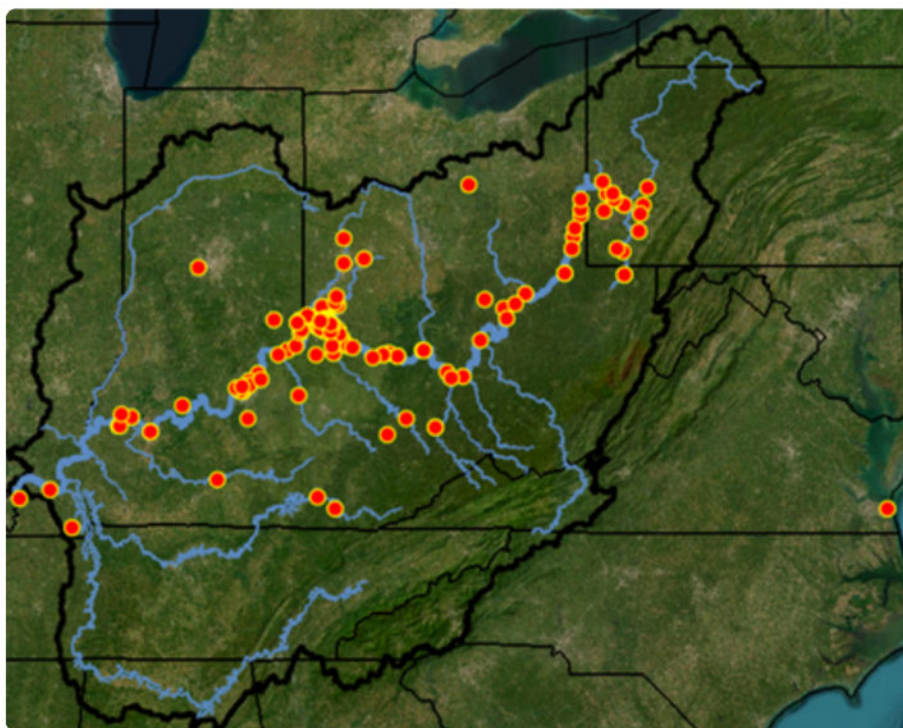
300+

Community
Partners

Education & Outreach Programs

In 2025, FORE reached more than 47,000 individuals across six states (Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia) through our River REACH floating classroom, River Watchers citizen-science program, Life Below the Waterline mobile aquarium, Ohio River Sweep, and other community education events.

We served more than 60 schools—many in communities where more than half of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch—and would not have had access to hands-on science experiences without donor support. Because of you, students tested water quality, collected real data, and discovered how their daily choices impact the health of the Ohio River and its tributaries.



*Each dot represents communities FORE served through its programs.



Community Events



36 communities



19K + participants



River Watchers



659 students



16 schools



Life Below the Waterline



30+ fish species



8 communities



21K + participants



River REACH



304 students



7 schools

“

We, students and teachers alike, felt engaged, informed, and empowered by the environmental experiences (hands-on labs/activities) and informative content. Additionally, students are/were inspired to consider future environmental careers/jobs as they evidenced the opportunities to impact their immediate as well as global environments.

Jackie Frye

**11th Grade Intervention Specialist
Aiken New Tech High School**



River REACH Floating Classroom

Thanks to support from Perfection Group, we were able to offer multiple programs to underserved schools at reduced or no cost and host a free open house for students from Esperanza Latino Center of NKY, along with a variety of local educators and partner agencies. We are also grateful for our ongoing partnership with BB Riverboats, which continues to host our program by providing the space, riverboat excursions, and presentations from their highly qualified maritime staff. Support from the Bosch Community Fund allowed students in the new Ohio River Academy to participate in River REACH and gave the FORE team multiple opportunities to connect with them throughout the fall. During these sessions, students collected and sampled Ohio River water quality data that they later used for research projects during the school year. With this additional specialized time and attention, we observed increased awareness of Ohio River issues, improved understanding of water quality, stronger content knowledge, and a deeper personal connection to the watershed network.

River Watchers Citizen Science Program

Thanks to grants from EQT Foundation, Bosch Community Fund, and West Virginia American Water, FORE expanded into additional schools across West Virginia, the Greater Pittsburgh region, and Northern Kentucky by providing water-quality testing kits, hands-on activities, and teacher training. This support removed cost and capacity barriers, enabling educators to integrate field-based monitoring into their curricula and empowering students to collect real-world water data in local waterways. Students gained practical STEM skills while contributing data to ORSANCO's basin-wide datasets, strengthening regional understanding of water quality trends and reinforcing the value of community-based science across the Ohio River Basin.

Life Below the Waterline Mobile Aquarium

Thanks to ORSANCO and numerous partner agencies, our Life Below the Waterline freshwater mobile aquarium exhibit captivated over 21,000 participants and featured native species such as Muskellunge, Northern Pike, and Redhorse. The exhibit helped communities see firsthand the biodiversity thriving beneath the surface of their waterways. This included a special opportunity for thousands of people to meet the Ohio River's native fish species up close and personal at the America's River Roots Festival in Cincinnati this October.



Ohio River Sweep

With support from the Ohio EPA Community Litter Grant program and more than 20 sponsors, together with a wide variety of dedicated community partners, FORE provided the resources and coordination needed to carry out an extensive river-wide litter removal effort throughout the Ohio River Basin. Thousands of volunteers were mobilized across hundreds of miles of shoreline to remove significant volumes of trash, debris, and dumped materials from the Ohio River and its connected waterways. The season culminated in a large-scale, collaborative mega cleanup event held on October 4 in conjunction with America's River Roots Festival. One of the largest Ohio River Sweep efforts in recent years, the weekend leading up to the festival brought together more than 400 volunteers at 19 sites along 51 miles of the Ohio River, resulting in the removal of thousands of pounds of trash and recycling.



Indiana

3 programs
674 participants
15 cleanup events
9 counties
564 volunteers



Kentucky

25 programs
20,074 participants
53 cleanup events
25 counties
1,948 volunteers



Ohio

38 programs
24,093 participants
44 cleanup events
18 counties
1,655 volunteers



Pennsylvania

5 programs
546 participants
9 cleanup events
5 counties
229 volunteers



Virginia

0 programs
1 participant
1 cleanup event
1 county
1 volunteer



West Virginia

2 programs
1,555 participants
14 cleanup events
9 counties
744 volunteers



Help Launch the ORSANCO-FORE Mobile Water Quality Lab

Together, FORE and ORSANCO are mobilizing support to launch a transformative Mobile Water Quality Lab initiative focused exclusively on improving emergency spill and pollution response affecting the Ohio River and shared waters of the Ohio River Basin. The Lab is designed to strengthen the region's ability to assess and respond to waterway impacts with greater speed, accuracy, and transparency, while also expanding public education and community involvement to support stewardship and protection of our watershed and drinking water sources.

The mobile unit will enable FORE and ORSANCO to work alongside water utilities and environmental agencies during spill and pollution events, providing rapid, on-site analysis and delivering real-time data that communities and emergency responders urgently need to evaluate impacts to water quality during critical incidents. By increasing access to timely, reliable information, the Mobile Water Quality Lab will enhance coordination, support informed decision-making, and build public confidence in waterway spill response efforts.

In addition to its emergency response role, the Mobile Water Quality Lab will serve as a traveling public education exhibit alongside FORE's Life Below the Waterline freshwater mobile aquarium, partner agency activities, and drinking water utility analysis learning modules. Through live demonstrations, hands-on environmental science, and advanced monitoring technology for spill response, such as a portable gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) system, the Lab will teach communities how spills are detected, evaluated, and managed to protect water quality.

This initiative will strengthen collaboration with environmental protection agencies, support faster and more accurate assessment of spill impacts to waterways, and help communities better understand water quality data, response actions, and the potential implications for their drinking water and the vital resources they rely on every day.

It is a bold step forward for our region, combining innovation, resilience, and public trust. Through this initiative, we can better protect the health of our shared waterways by safeguarding drinking water supplies, aquatic life, and river-based recreational activities for millions of people across the Basin.

BUT WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT! 



Your generosity will:

- Prevent program cutbacks during this challenging funding climate
- Expand experiential learning and career exploration opportunities across the Basin
- Ensure that students from underserved communities have equal access to high-quality STEM experiences
- Support new and expanded river science initiatives, including the Mobile Water Quality Lab
- Strengthen our region's future by developing the next generation of environmental leaders and stewards

FORE Critical Funding Need

FORE is facing a critical funding need at a time when families across the country are experiencing economic strain and communities are recovering from natural disasters and environmental crises, from extreme weather events to chemical spills. These challenges remind us how fragile our ecosystems truly are and underscore the growing need for communities to have access to reliable data and hands-on environmental science experiences that connect them directly to the waterways sustaining the region.

We think about the students who step aboard our floating classroom for the first time, many of whom have never been on a boat, seen the Ohio River up close, or handled real scientific instruments. For a few precious hours, the challenges they face at home fade into the background. They become scientists, filled with curiosity and confidence as new learning opportunities unfold. We also see this same sense of wonder when community members encounter native fish from the Ohio River or their local waterways through our mobile aquarium, often for the first time. These experiences help participants understand their place within the watershed and the role they play in protecting it. They are more than lessons. They are formative moments that shape understanding, belonging, and stewardship that ripple outward through families and communities.

FORE programs offer hands-on, experiential learning rooted in real river science that bridges significant educational gaps and provides opportunities many schools and communities would not otherwise have access to and we need your help expanding our programs and nurturing our region's future stewards and problem solvers. Demand for these programs continues to grow across the Ohio River Basin, even as the capacity to deliver them is increasingly strained. At this critical moment, sustaining access to reliable data and water quality education is essential to ensuring that students and communities remain informed, connected, and prepared to care for the resources of our shared waterways, including drinking water, recreation, aquatic life, and the economic vitality of our communities.

Be a River Champion in 2026!

As we look forward, one truth is clear: demand for advanced science and experiential learning has never been higher, while funding for these programs is increasingly uncertain. Across the country, support for environmental education has been reduced, and FORE is no exception. Schools and communities across the Ohio River Basin are requesting more hands-on river science, water quality learning, and real-world experiences than our current resources can support. Without renewed investment, we risk scaling back programs at the very moment students and communities need them most.

When you stand with FORE as a River Champion in 2026, you help sustain hands-on river science, water quality education, and watershed engagement that connect students and communities directly to the Ohio River and the importance of protecting water quality. Your support ensures continued access to credible, science-based learning experiences that protect public health, strengthen environmental awareness, and prepare the next generation to care for the waterways that sustain our region.

Thank you for making this work possible!

Together, we can shape a safer, stronger, more resilient Basin for generations to come. Please renew your commitment today.

Donations can be made by visiting our website, scanning the QR code, or using the enclosed information card. To learn more about giving options such as endowment contributions, stock gifts, or planned giving, contact Thanh T. Pham, Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor at 513-762-5276 or Thanh.Pham@morganstanley.com. To learn more about FORE or see our programs in action, visit riverlearning.org or follow us at [instagram.com/OhioRiverLearning](https://www.instagram.com/OhioRiverLearning) and [facebook.com/OhioRiverLearning](https://www.facebook.com/OhioRiverLearning).

**Donate
online!**



**Thank You,
2025
Supporters!**





Foundation For Ohio River Education
c/o ORSANCO
 5735 Kellogg Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45230

513-231-7719
www.riverlearning.com

Follow us on socials!
 @ohioriverlearning
 Foundation for Ohio River Education