

Summit Lake

A Report for Our Community

What's Next?

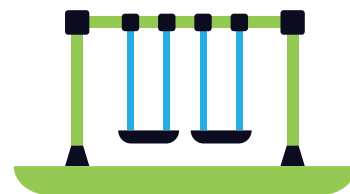
Over the past couple of years, community members and organizations have dedicated resources to improving Summit Lake Park, making it more inviting for residents and visitors through programming and beautification efforts. This work will continue and expand, allowing for more interaction with the lake and surrounding land.

Remember, the tests show that the lake is clean enough for a number of recreational activities, though with a few restrictions. Here are some ways you can enjoy Summit Lake, the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, and park.



Birdwatching

Summit Lake is highly regarded as a place for viewing birds throughout the year. Winter visitors may include Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, which are rare to the area. The lake provides a stopping place for migrating birds in the spring. This includes various types of ducks: Red-breasted Merganser, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, also loons and grebes. In the summer Bald Eagles, Osprey and Great Blue Heron may be seen.



Play and Educate

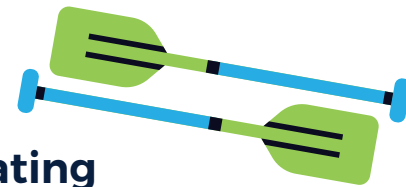
Summit Metro Parks' pop-up nature center, Reach Opportunity Center and Summit Lake Community Center all offer a variety of programs to engage people of all ages in the Summit Lake Area. There is also a nature play area to enjoy, located outside the nature center near the shoreline. The lake is home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Some are native to the Akron area while others have been brought to the region from around the world via the Canal, visitors or other means. Metro Parks' naturalists offer a variety educational programs to help people better understand and appreciate our natural resources.

Illustrated and designed by Mark Roberts
markwilliamroberts.com



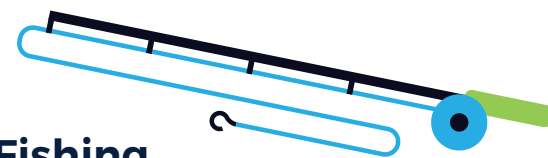
Bicycling/Walking

The Towpath Trail is 87 miles in length, meaning there are many options for users to hop on at Summit Lake and travel north or south to downtown Akron, Cleveland, Summit Metro Parks, Barberton, and beyond. Traveling the towpath gives people a chance to be out in nature and exposed to local culture and history.



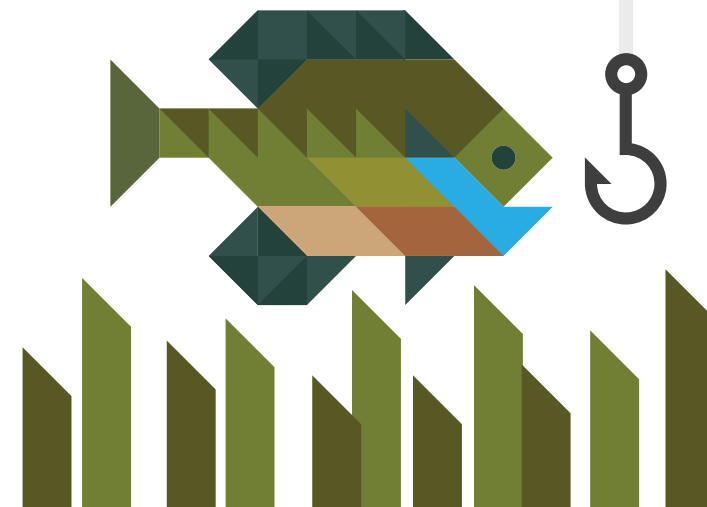
Boating

Canoing and kayaking are acceptable with life jackets. Swimming and wading are not recommended at this time. Like other urban lakes that don't have a designated beach area, lake bottom soil along the shore is mucky, slimy and has some oil content. These conditions do not make it unsafe to wade, but messy for those who decide to put their feet in the water.



Fishing

Fishing is allowed in Summit Lake, but it is recommended that you follow the guidelines set by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, for fish consumption. These recommend only eating the catfish once a month, and all other fish once a week. For more information, visit the Summit Lake Nature Center.



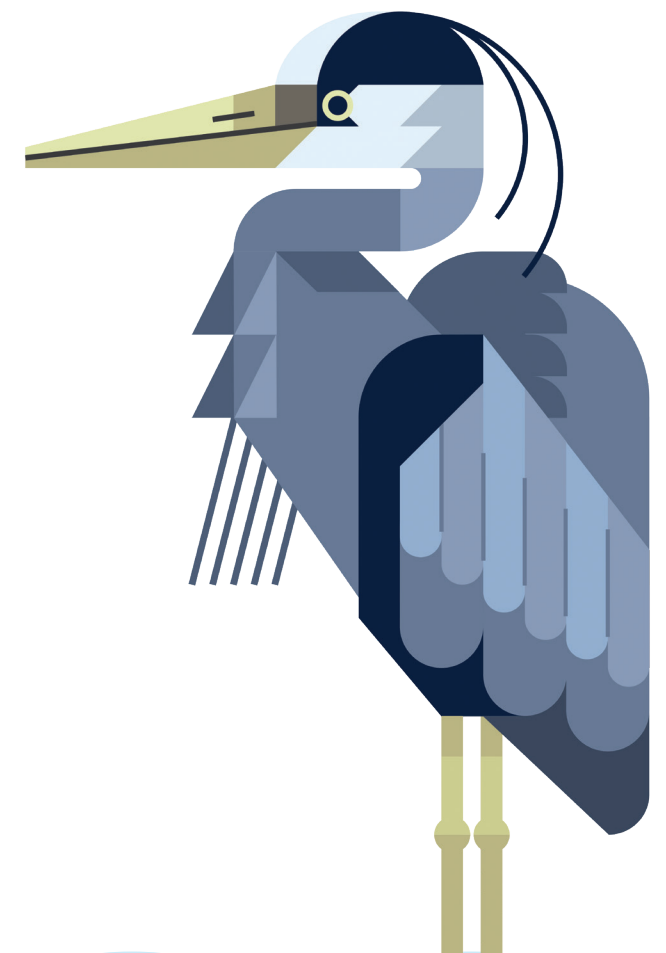
The history of Summit Lake is long and varied, ever since its creation as a natural lake and wetland. Throughout this history, Summit Lake has served as a connector, whether transporting goods along the Ohio & Erie Canal, serving as a destination for rubber industry workers at the former amusement park, or today, as a modest neighborhood park.

However, not all progress led to positive impacts. In the early 1900s, industry used the water from Summit Lake for manufacturing, then dumped the water polluted with heavy metals, oils and chemicals back into the lake. At this same time, homes began to fill the streets lining its shores, but without the advanced sewer system that exists today to keep waste from flowing directly into the water. Though heavy industrial use of the lake has decreased and other modern advances lead to fewer pollutants funneling into the water, our community still wonders: What is the health of Summit Lake, and is it safe?

Over the past year, partners across greater Akron have teamed up with the community to find an answer to these questions, while learning how we can impact Summit Lake's future in positive, meaningful ways. Tests of the water and sediments at the bottom of the lake were conducted to determine if time and natural decomposition of chemicals have healed the lake, and to see how safe the lake may be for the community to use for a variety of recreational purposes.

Through these tests, we are excited to share that the quality of Summit Lake has improved over the past few decades, allowing for opportunities to interact with the lake. In this document, you'll find more information about the health of Summit Lake, it's history, how we can safely interact with the lake, and what you can do to help improve its health. We're excited to share that with you!

Thank you for being a part of Summit Lake. We look forward to working together to create a better future for the neighborhoods residents and visitors.



DANIEL HARRIGAN, MAYOR



The Assessment

Current test results show that water quality of the lake has improved over the last few decades, which means the lake is naturally cleaning itself. Skin contact with the water and the occasional tipping and falling into the water does not pose a health concern, and is safe.

This does not mean the water is perfect. Oil or petroleum pollution still enters the lake and canal on rare occasions. Though the exact source of this pollution is unknown, it could come from a number of sources, including improper disposal of oil.



Dumping

If oil is not properly disposed of, it can drain into the storm sewer system or run off, eventually leading to the lake. Improper disposal includes dumping oil down storm sewer or floor drain.



Runoff

Vehicles can leak oil or petroleum, which runs off streets and driveways into storm drains, again leading to Summit Lake.

When testing the soil at the bottom of the lake, results showed that the first foot of the lake bottom soils does not contain the heavy metal and chemicals of concern to human health. However, oils do remain trapped in the mud that may stain clothes and leave an oily film on the skin.

The oils found in the lake do bother the growth of insects, worms and other critters in the lake bottom and are not healthy for aquatic life since those beings breathe and live in the water for most or all of their life. For people, occasional contact with the lake bottom is of very low health risk.

Doing Your Part

As members of the community, whether resident or visitor you play an important role in the current and future health of Summit Lake and its surrounding park. While the lake is improving, there are still certain steps that can be taken to make it a more enjoyable space for all.

- Community and individual litter clean ups help to improve the beauty of the lake and improve conditions for wildlife.
- Don't pour **chemicals, oil, medication**, etc down any drains at home or in the streets
- Minimize or stop using **lawn chemicals** for weed control and fertilizer. Fertilizers use can lead to growth of undesirable algae in the lake.
- Use **biodegradable soaps** for car washing.
- If you see an oily sheen on the water, or if you see anyone draining **motor oil or gasoline** into a catch basin, report it.

Nature is doing all it can to help the lake recover from past human abuses. We can all help to make the recovery more successful and lasting.

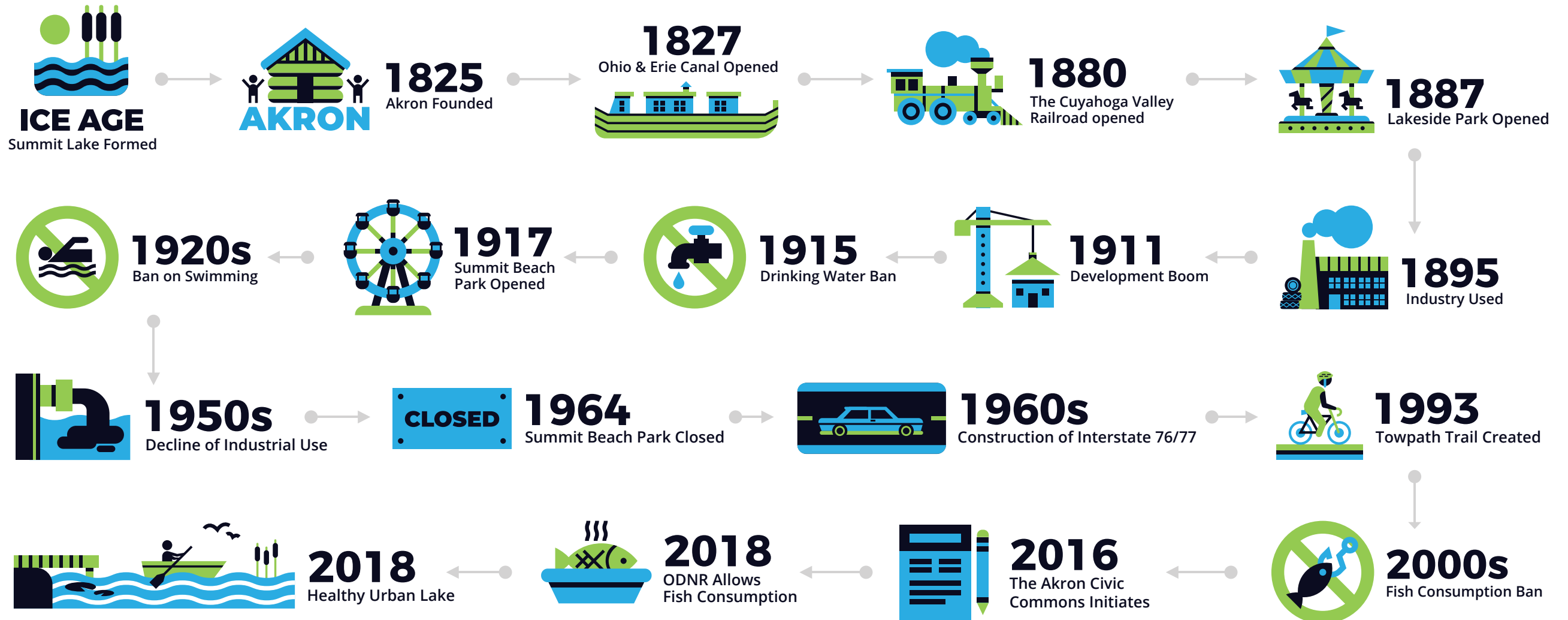


It is important to remember that though there are contaminants that are not good for its overall health, the test results show that Summit Lake is no different than any other Ohio lake, and can be actively used by the community for a variety of activities.

Summit Lake Timeline

A brief history of Summit Lake

When Summit Lake was first formed in the ice age by glaciers, it was a swampy habitat filled with native plants and animals. Development, transportation, industry, and recreation since the 1800s all contributed in good and bad ways to the lake that we see today. In that relatively short time period we've seen Summit Lake have highs and lows, be loved and feared, become a center of civic pride, and a place neglected. Today – together – we're forging a new chapter in the timeline of Summit Lake. One of excitement, to take pride in, and become a true Civic Commons.



For more information or to learn how to get involved, visit akronciviccommons.org.