



Outstanding OEEF Grant Projects

for the
General Public
Audience



About the Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF)

The OEEF was created by the General Assembly in 1990 to enhance Ohio citizens' awareness and understanding of environmental issues. It is administered by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) and provides general grants up to \$50,000, and mini-grants up to \$5,000, to support environmental education efforts within the state of Ohio. The OEEF derives its monies from one-half of the civil penalties collected for violations of Ohio's air and water pollution control regulations.

The OEEF funds education projects that target three audiences: pre-school through university students and teachers, the general public, and the regulated community.

OEEF supports projects that increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues, and provide the skills to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. Environmental Education (EE) is based on objective and scientifically sound information, and does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. It teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking, and it enhances their problem-solving and decision-making skills. The successful grant projects highlighted in this booklet exemplify some of the state's best examples of effective environmental education.

Outstanding OEEF Grant Projects for the General Public Audience

Periodically, the OEEF contracts with the Environmental Education Council of Ohio (EECO) for independent evaluation of the success of completed grant projects targeting a general public audience of adult learners and families. EECO assembles a team of formal and non-formal educators and representatives from community-based organizations to select the best completed grant projects to honor with OEEF Outstanding Project Awards. The team reviews current scholarship on adult learning, and publications such as EECO's *Best Practices Guidelines for Environmental Education: Guidelines for Success*, online at <http://www.eeco-online.org/publications/pdfs/beeps.pdf>, and the North American Association for Environmental Education's *Guidelines for Excellence* series, available online at <http://www.naaee.org/publications/guidelines-for-excellence>. Because OEEF grant projects are quite diverse and grant products are often similar in format to portfolios, the team decided to use a holistic instrument for the grant evaluation process. They developed paragraph rubrics for four categories: seminar or workshop, print product, media product, and a combined rubric for multi-faceted public awareness campaigns that include more than one of these elements. These instruments have been refined several times over the years as new award winners have been selected. A tool for Web site evaluation has also been added. The instruments and the award-winners are posted at http://www.epa.ohio.gov/oef/oef_featured_ee_projects.aspx.

This booklet showcases 25 outstanding environmental education projects for the general public audience, selected in 2004, 2006 and 2008. OEEF would like to lift up these excellent examples of effective environmental education, to inspire educators and prospective grant applicants.

2004 OEEF Outstanding Project Awards

**Columbus Health Department, *Project CLEAR*, \$49,103, #00G-057,
Contact: Dana Warner, (614) 645-7417.**

Funded education and public involvement components of an ongoing community effort to reduce air emissions that contribute to ground-level ozone formation. Activities included a survey of local public knowledge and attitudes about ozone and health-related effects; a brochure and speakers' bureau for presentations to local organizations; a program targeting 2,000 asthma patients and their families; 25 deliberative issue forums, seeking input from 400 citizens on appropriate public policy strategies to reduce ozone; and integration of ozone education information in programs conducted by the Ohio Energy Project in 20 central Ohio schools. Collaborating partners included: the American Lung Association of Mid-Ohio; Center for Public Deliberation; Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission; OSU Extension and School of Public Health; allergist/immunologist Dr. Don McNeil; Ohio Energy Project; and Ohio EPA Division of Air Pollution Control.



National Audubon Society, *Developing Birding Festivals as an Environmental Education Opportunity*, \$50,000, #01G-025. Contact: OEEF, (614) 644-2873.

Created a birding festival in Adams County through a workshop to train 35 adults from 15 community organizations. Enhanced an existing birding festival with an additional workshop serving Erie, Lorain and Ottawa Counties for the Lake Erie Wing Watch. Demonstrated to local communities the economic and environmental value of habitat preservation through birding-related ecotourism. Also provided 20 K-8 classrooms with hands-on, proficiency linked education regarding bird life and habitats in their community. Funded salaries for staff to plan and conduct the workshops, provided supplies, printing and partnership activities. Collaborators included the ODNR Division of Wildlife; Cincinnati Museum Center; the Nature Conservancy; P.A.C.T. - A Citizen's Forum; Black River and Firelands Audubon societies; Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge; and Adams, Erie/Sandusky and Ottawa county visitors bureaus.



National Audubon Society, *Expanding Economic Development through Environmental Education: Ohio Birding Trails and Festivals*, \$5,000, #01M-012, Contact: OEEF, (614) 644-2873.

Provided a workshop in Adams County to educate community leaders about the Birding Trails and Festivals project with a goal of replicating the success of Lake Erie Wing Watch activities in southern Ohio communities. Focuses on the importance of habitat preservation and the use of wildlife observation and ecotourism as tools to promote economic development. Appalachian Discovery Birding Trail information is now posted online at www.appalachiandiscovery.com/Birding_Trail.htm.



ClearWater, Inc., *Fate of a River: Revisited*, \$48,785, #02G-015, Contact: Jenny Carter-Cornell, (419) 385-2018 or jcarter@hullinc.com.

Updated a 1965 film about environmental problems in the Maumee River with a new 30-minute documentary to include clips of the original film; before and after scenes to demonstrate the many water quality improvements over the last 35 years; and the need for continued action to address ongoing challenges such as storm water management; changing agricultural practices; wetland restoration; land preservation; reduced channelization; and the formation of watershed groups. A packet of accompanying educational materials was developed utilizing existing publications of partnering organizations. Film and materials aired on public television and were offered to other stations and shared through news releases, a speakers bureau, live Web chats, video distribution to schools, libraries and organizations throughout 14 counties in the Maumee watershed. Project description is available online at www.ohiomfg.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=About_the_OMA&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=20525.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, *Greenways Environmental Education Initiative*, \$37,934, #03G-022. Contact: (614) 228-2663.

Educated local officials and residents in the Alum, Big Walnut and Blacklick Creek watersheds about the benefits of riparian conservation, and the relationship between land use and water quality. Provided a video, Riverfest event, watershed tours, canoe floats, stream cleanups and storm drain marking activities. Video was also made available to municipal officials, residents, developers and construction companies through two public forums. Collaborators included a number of local watershed groups; the Northeast Area Commission; and the Building Industry Association.



Rural Action, Inc., *Conservation Issues on Private Lands: A Southeast Ohio Forest Congress*, \$4,996, #00M-022. Contact: (740) 767-4938 or info@ruralaction.org.

Funded a one-day congress to bring together a wide array of stakeholders with an interest in management of privately-owned forest lands to discuss issues of biodiversity, habitat management, forest conservation and related issues. Stakeholders included private landowners; wood products firms; special forest products producers; hunters; anglers; environmentalists; natural resource agencies; and university faculty. The congress produced prioritized issues for conservation and educational efforts, voluntary agreements of collaboration and a report for print and Internet distribution.



Ohio State University Extension, Community Development Department, Ohio Parks Districts and Extension: Partnerships for Environmental Education Programming, \$5,000, #01M-030. Contact: Joe Heimlich, (614) 292-6926 or Heimlich.1@osu.edu.

Brought 40 county extension agents and 40 metro and district park staff together for an intensive joint planning summit to strengthen and diversify environmental education programming at the local level. Participants created specific action plans to address program gaps and opportunities for implementation and follow up within 6-9 months. Collaborating partners included the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and summit host, Five Rivers Metro Park. The resulting statewide action plan and benefits of this collaboration were shared at one regional, two state and two national professional conferences for nature interpreters and environmental educators.



Greater Cincinnati Occupational Health Center, Community-Based Brownfield Education Project, \$5,000, #02M-015. Contact: LaVerne Mayfield, (513) 531-7101 or gcohc@fuse.net.

Funded the development of a Citizens' Guide to Brownfield Identification, Cleanup and Redevelopment based on a survey of public understanding. Also funded a town hall discussion and presentations at three community meetings to heighten public awareness of brownfield site health and cleanup issues. Ohio Environmental Council collaborated.



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2006 OEEF Outstanding Project Awards

Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG), *Give Water A Hand Education Campaign*, \$49,989, #03G-044, Contact: Kurt Erichsen, kurt@tmacog.org.

Increased citizen understanding of water quality problems in the Maumee River Area of Concern. Provided 145,000 households with a series of six quarterly brochures about water conservation; lawn care; septic systems and illicit discharges; stream bank stabilization; native plants; household hazardous waste disposal; and storm drains and ditches. Reinforced messages with television, cinema and print advertising. Two rural and 14 urban jurisdictions and six local organizations collaborated with TMACOG and the Maumee Remedial Action Plan (RAP). A subsequent mini grant extended the campaign to reach 1,663 additional households in rural communities that are experiencing significant development pressures. Campaign messages are online at www.maumeerap.org/GWAH.html.



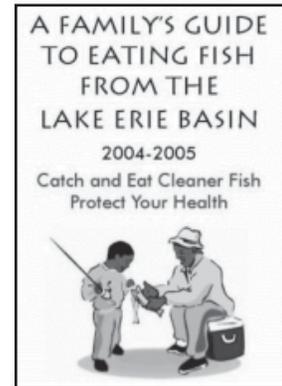
Rural Action, *New Landowner Forest Welcome Wagon Project: Building on the Southeast Ohio Forest Congress*, \$49,961, #04G-070, Contact: Michelle Decker, michelle@ruralaction.org.

Informed 2,500 new forest owners in 10 Appalachian counties about sustainable forestry and environmental issues associated with forest ownership, including information about best management practices; invasive exotics; and threatened and endangered species. Provided in-depth field activities and peer-sharing of land management experiences for 50 participants, and programming on sustainable forestry for 300 landowners at the Appalachian Ohio Landowners Conferences in 2004 and 2005. OSU Extension collaborated on the project.



Ohio Environmental Council, *Communicating Safe Fish Consumption Information to At-Risk Communities in the Ohio River Basin*, \$5,000, #04M-015, Contact: Keith Dimoff, keith@theoec.org.

Extended a successful fish consumption advisory program from the Lake Erie Basin to the Ohio River Basin, to help citizens understand potential risks from eating fish contaminated with mercury and PCBs; steps to avoid those risks; and steps to reduce the pollution prompting the advisories. Materials focused on safer fishing practices such as where to fish, ways to prepare fish and safer amounts and types of fish to eat. Project included train-the-trainer workshops for health care providers, watershed organizations, sporting and fishing groups who helped distribute the materials. Collaborators included Rural Action; Ohio Smallmouth Alliance; Marietta College Environmental Science Program; and the Ohio River Foundation.



Greenacres Foundation, *Saturday Stream Snapshot: Citizen Monitoring Program*, \$4,967, #04M-039, Contact: Anne Lyon, alyon@green-acres.org.

Provided reagents, supplies and equipment to support a successful community outreach and volunteer monitoring program in the lower Little Miami Watershed. The program trained local residents to collect water samples and perform nitrate-nitrogen, total phosphorus, turbidity, conductivity, pH, and fecal coliform analysis. The resulting data was shared with local residents and Ohio EPA. Collaborators included the Izaak Walton League; Little Miami Inc.; Little Miami River Partnership; Hamilton County Wet Weather Initiative; and a number of other local organizations.



Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council/Sunday Creek Associates, *The Environmental History of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds: Tour & Booklet*, \$5,000, #04M-043, Contact: John Winnenberg, jwinnenb@frogned.net.

Highlighted the region's environmental history and recent environmental restoration activities through a two-day bus tour for 25 residents, educators and journalists. Tour visited an acid mine drainage discharge site; a "gob pile" of coal mining waste; wetlands; a forest restoration and medicinal herb reintroduction project; a reclaimed strip mine site; a working underground coal mine; farmland tracts in transition to native hardwood forest; and a state park and Army Corps of Engineers dam. Local college faculty and historians helped develop an introductory booklet on the region's environmental history. The project laid the groundwork for more in-depth efforts to educate residents and encourage low-impact tourism focused on environment and heritage. Multiple collaborators included Hocking College; the Wayne National Forest; OSU Extension; ODNR Division of Forestry; Rural Action; and local watershed groups and recycling agencies.



Geauga Park District, *Save Our Stream - S.O.S.*, \$4,799, #05M-008, Contact: John Oros, oros@geaugaparkdistrict.org.

Project spearheaded by three local high school students, to educate 3,000 4th-9th-grade students and residents of the Chagrin River watershed about the sensitive native brook trout population, its threatened cold water habitat and the effects of nonpoint source pollution. Provided seminars using the EnviroScape nonpoint source pollution model; storm drain stickers; pamphlets; brochures for property owners on riparian buffers; and informational trail signs. Collaborators included the Chagrin River Land Conservancy; Chagrin Watershed Institute; and Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. The students, Karoline Evin McMullen, Angela Primbas and Amanda Weatherhead, received the President's Environmental Youth Award for their efforts. All were ninth graders at Hawken School in Geauga County.



Ohio Environmental Council, “Vernal Pool Education Program”, \$5,000, #05M-033, Contact: David R. Celebrezze, david@theoec.org.

Provided training to help naturalists, educators, landowners, local officials and watershed groups inventory and monitor the health of intermittent bodies of water that play an important role in preserving ecosystem diversity. Workshops in the Black and Cuyahoga River Watersheds provided classroom and field activities to give 100 participants the tools to conduct field surveys. An online data warehouse and Web site enabled sharing of data to help local officials in water quality planning, storm water management and inventorying wetlands. The Nature Conservancy and Ohio EPA’s Division of Surface Water collaborated.



Clermont Soil and Water Conservation District, “Paddling Programs Improve Awareness and Pride in the East Fork”, \$4,980, #05M-034, Contact Paul Berringer, paul.berringer@oh.nacdnet.net.

Provided equipment to implement a new in-stream educational program and support the Adopt-A-Waterway program and annual river sweeps in the East Fork of the Little Miami Watershed. The program paired professionals such as biologists, ecologists and hydrologists with members of the agricultural community, developers, civic organizations, business and community leaders for canoe tours of the river to study the effects of urbanization, hydrologic modification, agricultural runoff, and other sources of water quality impairment. Participants examined healthy areas of the river with thriving riparian corridors, clean substrates and access to flood plains, and unhealthy areas where siltation has degraded aquatic life and where excessive stream bank erosion has occurred. Collaborators included the East Fork Watershed Collaborative; Clermont County Park District; and Clermont County Office of Environmental Quality.



Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District, *“Exposing the Native Mussel Fauna of Northwest Ohio”*, \$5,000, #06M-015, Contact: Jeff Grabarkiewicz, jgrabarkiewicz@co.lucas.oh.us.

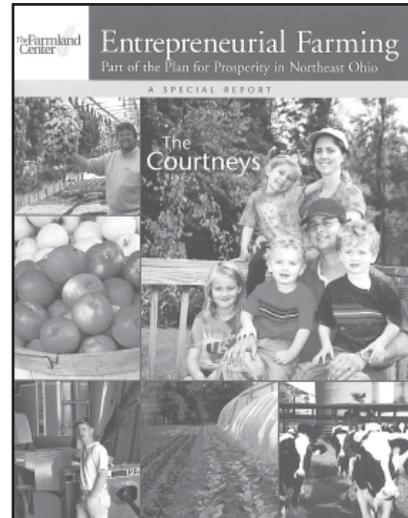
Project included three exhibits on native Ohio mussels and printing of a new K-12 publication about native and exotic mussels based on recently completed Maumee basin survey work conducted by Jeff Grabarkiewicz of the SWCD and Todd Crail of the University of Toledo. Guide may be downloaded at www.farmertodd.com/musselguide/.



2008 OEEF Outstanding Project Awards

The Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council, *Entrepreneurial Farming and Environmental Sustainability in Northeast Ohio*, \$30,488, #05G-010, Contact: Amalie Lipstreu, alipstreu@earthlink.net.

Adapted a successful approach from the Michigan Land Use Institute to educate 5,000 people about sustainable agriculture as an economic development tool that emphasized innovation, conservation and profitable outcomes for farmers and communities. Accompanying report showcased examples of entrepreneurial farming in northeast Ohio that are keeping land productive and profitable, preserving farmland and keeping families on their farms. Disseminated report to developers, agricultural producers and consumers through targeted mailings, workshops, conferences, field tours and Web sites. Project goal was to encourage small-scale farming and alternative strategies for direct marketing and diversification as a means of enhancing both profitability and environmental benefits. The RC&D also provided technical support to communities and farmers seeking to implement the report's suggestions.



**Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Resources,
Project SWEET: Source Water Environmental Education Teams, \$35,171, #05G-054,
Contact: jeanne.russell@dnr.state.oh.us.**

Created a statewide delivery system to educate the general public about ground water and ways to protect drinking water supplies. Forty-seven soil and water conservation districts partnered with local health departments, public water system operators, watershed coordinators, OSU Extension staff and others to create local teams. The project provided train-the-trainer workshops and outreach tools for the teams, including new, user-friendly ground water flow models, drinking water source assessment reports and protection area maps. A listserv and Web page facilitate ongoing communication among teams. Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters collaborated. In its first three years, this initiative has offered 452 demonstrations in 57 counties reaching more than 47,600 people.



Project SWEET training



FLOW river cleanup

**Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed, FLOWER: FLOW Educational Resources,
\$48,566, #05G-070, Contact: Heather Dean, flow2004@sbcglobal.net,
(614) 267-3386.**

Provided a multi-faceted campaign to educate residents about storm water issues and the Lower Olentangy Watershed Action Plan. The campaign included a canoe float and river clean-up; eight community dialogue meetings with expert speakers; two focus groups; 10 backyard conservation workshops (including a cost share on the purchase of rain barrels); a bus tour for local media and community leaders; pre-movie slide shows in local theaters; publications, multi-media presentations, and Web site coverage. Results of the campaign were shared statewide, and copies of educational materials were provided to other watershed groups in Central Ohio.

Ohio Parks and Recreation Association, *Solutions for Ohio Communities: A Model for Open Space Protection*, \$47,168, #05G-083, Contact: Elaine Marsh, ohgreenway@aol.com, (330) 657-2055.

Building on a previous OEEF-funded project for open space project managers, this project increased the strategic skills of community leaders and open space project managers to define, justify and protect green infrastructure. The program developed a DVD that included more than 300 reference documents related to the definition and benefits of green infrastructure; protection planning strategies; and local examples of implementation. Over the course of this program, 5,624 people attended presentations at conferences, workshops and community planning forums where participants received the first version of the DVD. As a result of participant evaluation, the final DVD, which includes nearly two hours of video presentation, was produced and distributed to an additional 5,384 community leaders. Through the technical assistance portion of the program, 59 projects made some progress in the protection of open space.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, *“Greenways Program Pilot Prairie Project,” \$50,000, #06G-015, Contact: (614) 228-2663.*

Reduced the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and the frequency of lawn mowing and irrigation, by providing information about lawn-to-prairie conversions to individuals who make landscaping decisions for large corporate, municipal, airport and golf course properties. Through demonstration projects that converted at least six acres of stream-side property from lawn to native prairie habitat, the Greenways Program helped reduce ozone and fine particulates in the air and reduced nonpoint source pollution into Central Ohio streams. Collaborators included Ashland, Inc.; COSI; Tolles Career and Technical Center; City of Reynoldsburg; City of Dublin; City of Columbus - Department of Public Utilities; Delaware Preservation Parks; and Columbus Metro Parks.



Clermont 20/20 Clean and Green Collaborative, “Clermont 20/20 Master Recycler Composter Program”, \$4,916, #06M-013, Contact: Becky Ploucha, cleanandgreen@clermont2020.org.

Created a Master Recycler Composter Manual which was distributed to 25 participants during two eight-week courses that equipped volunteers from the community to conduct outreach programs. After graduating, volunteers have remained involved in a variety of projects and programs, including creating battery recycling opportunities through local school districts; doing presentations for Scouting groups and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Clermont County; and spearheading efforts for the Clean and Green Spring Litter Pickup and Ohio River Sweep.

The Summit/Akron Solid Waste Management Authority, Making Recycling Work Through Environmental Awareness, \$29,037, #07G-006, Contact: Jenny Markovich, jmarkovich@sasqma.org.

Supported a multi-faceted city-wide public awareness campaign targeting 27,362 residents of the city of Barberton, in an effort to raise residential recycling rates and tonnages collected from less than 7 percent to more than 10 percent. Campaign included a recycling drop-off center demonstration project in a multi-unit low-income housing complex; community-specific brochures; utility bill inserts; a traveling exhibit; and incentive programs, supported and reinforced by ongoing school programs. Collaborators included the City of Barberton; Barberton Schools; and the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority.



Mill Creek Restoration Project, “Integrating Cultural History and a Heightened Sense of Place with Community-based Approaches to Public Storm Water Education, Urban River Regeneration and Neighborhood Revitalization,” \$50,000, #F-07G-039, Contact: Robin Corathers, robin@millcreekrestoration.org.

Helped to increase public appreciation of the rich cultural history of Mill Creek, a major transportation route in the Underground Railroad; to create functional and educational storm water and wildlife habitat demonstration projects; and to engage more adults (287 participated) and students in revitalizing the blighted Mill Creek corridor in Cincinnati. Educational activities included an oral history project with North Fairmount seniors by Mill Creek students, trained by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center; design and installation of the Laughing Brook wetland, public art, environmental education and storm water demonstration project; planting Mill Creek Freedom Trees; creating a native tree nursery in partnership with a local nonprofit nursery; field work at a native prairie restoration site along the river; and successful work with a developer to integrate eco-friendly storm water strategies into American Can, the \$30 million brownfield redevelopment that will have enormous impacts on the local neighborhoods. Collaborators included neighborhood residents and civic associations; businesses; local governments; artists; other nonprofits; students and teachers; and a major contractor and developer.





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