



Public Interest Center | P.O. Box 1049 | Columbus, OH | 43216-1049

**FOR RELEASE:** May 26, 2011  
**MEDIA CONTACT:** Erin Strouse, (614) 644-2160  
**CITIZEN CONTACT:** Jed Thorp, (614) 644-2160

## **Ohio EPA Awards Westerville More Than \$131,000 for Wetland Project**

Ohio EPA has awarded a \$131,328 grant to the city of Westerville's Parks & Recreation Department to expand and enhance the Highlands Park Wetland. Westerville is matching the grant with \$43,252. The grant is one of 10 totaling \$2.8 million awarded by Ohio EPA to help communities restore waterways impaired by [nonpoint source pollution](#).

The Westerville project will provide visitors to Highlands Park an opportunity to learn about the value functional wetlands have in protecting water quality and aquatic life. The city will educate citizens with a project website and fact sheet and engage them in workshops and a clean-up event. The project was identified in the Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan as an effective and highly visible public demonstration of restoration. The project also was recommended in Ohio EPA's Alum Creek (Big Walnut Creek) watershed restoration plan and [report](#) approved by U.S. EPA in 2005.

The grant will help restore 2.7 acres of wetlands; re-grade; excavate an existing storm water detention basin; re-establish another 0.87 acres of wetlands; and plant 2.89 acres of native wetland vegetation. Newly installed and rehabilitated wetlands will help filter nonpoint source pollutants like nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment out of runoff before they reach Spring Run, a tributary to Alum Creek.

Nonpoint source pollution is the leading cause of water quality impairment in Ohio. It is caused by rain or snowmelt moving over and through the ground, picking up natural and human-made pollutants and depositing them in lakes, rivers, wetlands and other waterways. Other forms of nonpoint source pollution include modifications to natural stream flow, habitat alteration and nutrients. Polluted runoff can have harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries and wildlife.

In 1987, [Section 319](#) of the federal Clean Water Act created a national grant program to control nonpoint source pollution. Ohio EPA administers the grant program for U.S. EPA and distributes millions of federal dollars to projects proposed by local governments and community organizations such as watershed groups. To be eligible, grant recipients must contribute at least a 20 percent match consisting of cash or in-kind contributions or services. Grants of up to \$350,000 are awarded for three-year periods. More information on Section 319 grants is available [online](#).