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Ohio EPA Awards \$12,984 in Environmental Education Mini Grants to Three Statewide Projects

Ohio EPA recently awarded a total of \$12,984 in environmental mini grants to three organizations: The Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center at Ohio State University received \$4,951; The Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts received \$4,925; and The Lucas County Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded \$2,535. Eleven projects throughout the state were funded for \$50,000.

The installation of anaerobic digesters, which use organic waste materials to generate renewable energy, is increasing in Ohio. The Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center at Ohio State University has identified as many as 430 livestock farms in Ohio as potential sites for this technology, using animal manure to generate biogas for heat and electricity. Other fuel sources could include food waste and sewage sludge. Grant funds will support the development of a two-day course for investors, regulatory personnel and facility operators. The course will cover the anaerobic digester process, feed stocks, operations, end-product utilization and economics. A combination of classroom instruction and hands-on laboratory analysis will be used along with a site visit to a 500,000 gallon facility located on the campus. The course is expected to be offered twice yearly, and replicated in other states. The Ohio Department of Agriculture Livestock Environmental Permitting Program, Ohio State University Extension and Quasar Energy Group are collaborating.

The Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts received a grant to provide a train-the-trainer program for educators in 25 Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Through a series of five (2-day) modules, Soil and Water Conservation District educators will be trained by education and conservation experts to develop public presentations and school programs using science-based activities correlating with Ohio academic content standards. The program will include a unit on Ohio geology and activities drawn from three respected national curricula: *The Wonders of Wetlands*; *Project Food, Land and People*; and *Facing the Future*, a curriculum addressing sustainability practices. This program builds on a previous, successful effort that also was funded with an Ohio Environmental Education Fund mini grant. The 28 educators who participated in the first program in 2009-2010 have already offered public programs attended by more than 100,000 people.

The Lucas County Soil and Water Conservation District will provide a review class and examination for storm water and construction professionals to obtain certification in construction site erosion, sediment runoff controls and post-construction storm water management. The program will allow participants to maintain compliance with general or site-specific storm water discharge permits. Grant funds will support instruction, supplies and facility rental to hold down costs for participants. Ottawa and Wood County Soil and Water Conservation Districts are collaborating.

The Ohio Environmental Education Fund gives out approximately \$1 million each year for environmental education projects targeting kindergarten through university students, the general public and the regulated community. General grants are given for projects lasting up to 30 months and costing up to \$50,000.

Mini grants are available for projects lasting up to 12 months and costing between \$500 and \$5,000. Proposals for classroom projects, conference speakers, and other activities that are eligible under the general grant program are eligible under the mini-grant program, but the application process is streamlined. Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education reserves up to \$50,000 each grant round to fund projects submitted under this program. Like the general grant program, there are two mini-grant rounds each year, with the next application deadline on July 15, 2011. An electronic letter of intent to apply is due on July 8.

For more information, contact Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education at (614) 644-2873. Staff is available to assist potential grant applicants who contact the office before the submission deadline. Information also is available [online](#).