

Ohio Environmental Education Fund State Fiscal Year 2021 Agenda

This fact sheet summarizes the SFY21 annual plan of the Office of Environmental Education (OEE) at Ohio EPA, and spending priorities for OEEF-funded activities.

State Fiscal Year 2021 (SFY21) begins July 1, 2020 and ends June 30, 2021. Legislation that created the Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) requires that an agenda be submitted to the state legislature and the governor by April 1 each year describing the proposed uses of the Fund.

The Ohio General Assembly created OEEF in 1990 to enhance public awareness and understanding of issues affecting environmental quality. Funding comes from one half of the civil penalties collected by Ohio EPA for violations of Ohio's air and water pollution control laws. On the OEEF agenda for SFY21 are grant programs, water quality education and monitoring by students and citizens, and environmental science and engineering career initiatives.

Grant Programs

Ohio EPA proposes using OEEF funds to support projects that are closely linked to the Agency's overall priorities and efforts to protect Ohio's environment.

For the SFY21 grant cycles, we are primarily interested in funding environmental career exploration opportunities for K-12 students, and education projects related to four of the most pressing current environmental issues confronting the state.

[Encouraging Ohio students to explore careers in environmental science and environmental engineering](#)

In keeping with the state's emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and preparing students for jobs in Ohio's high-tech economy, Ohio EPA would like for more Ohio students to consider careers in environmental science and engineering. Fundable projects might include teacher workshops, exhibits, classroom activities and field trips to help elementary, middle and high school students interact with Ohio environmental professionals and understand job duties, education and training requirements, demand and pay scales for the wide variety of environmental careers available.

Ohio EPA invites comments on this agenda.

Comments may be submitted electronically to oeef@epa.ohio.gov or by mail to the address at the bottom of this fact sheet. Comments received by 5 p.m. March 31 will be included in the official record.

A public meeting will be held March 30, 2020, to discuss the annual agenda, answer questions and accept public comments. The meeting will be held online only, starting at 3:30 p.m. To register for the meeting, go to <https://ohioepa.webex.com/mw3300/mywebex/default.do?siteurl=ohioepa&service=6>.



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[Reducing nutrient loadings to Ohio's streams and lakes, to improve water quality and prevent Harmful Algal Blooms \(HABs\)](#)



Fundable projects might include efforts to persuade agricultural producers, livestock operations, golf courses, and other entities to adopt nutrient management projects, sediment control projects (filter areas), controlled drainage water management systems, livestock exclusion and manure management, conservation crop rotation projects with cover crops, riparian re-vegetation/protection projects, and alternative technologies such as anaerobic digesters; efforts to persuade businesses and residents to maintain septic systems and apply lawn and garden fertilizers responsibly; and efforts to educate the public about the causes, dangers, and prevention of HABs.

[Using innovative practices to limit the volume and pollution of storm water runoff in order to improve water quality in receiving streams and rivers](#)

Fundable projects might include efforts to persuade developers, site designers, local officials, businesses, and residents to use options such as permeable pavement, vegetated roofs and swales, rain gardens, passive treatment trains, storm water treatment wetlands, low-impact development techniques, sediment and erosion controls, and naturally functioning storm water infrastructure.

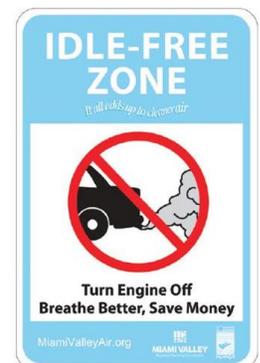


[Encouraging and explaining the importance of habitat restoration efforts to increase biodiversity and improve air and water quality](#)

Fundable projects might include programs, exhibits, publications, and interpretive signs to help students and adults understand the importance of protecting wetlands, vernal pools, riparian corridors, and other critical habitat, and removing or preventing the introduction of invasive species.

[Improving air quality by reducing emissions](#)

Fundable projects might include public awareness campaigns about local air quality concerns and ways to protect public health; efforts to encourage citizens and businesses to reduce engine idling, conserve energy or consider alternative forms of transportation and alternative fuels to lower air emissions.



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Environmental Science and Engineering Career Initiatives

In addition to making this a funding priority for the OEEF general and mini grant competitions, OEEF supports several initiatives to introduce students to careers in environmental technical fields.

Environmental Career Ambassador Network



Ohio EPA is partnering with the Ohio State University School of Environment and Natural Resources and the Environmental Education Council of Ohio to recruit a statewide network of more than 450 professionals who volunteer as Environmental Career Ambassadors. The initiative is designed to bring environmental scientists and engineers from business, industry, government agencies, and the nonprofit sector into classrooms and career/technical centers to explain their job responsibilities, education and training to middle and high school students. Career Ambassadors may also provide field trips, internships and shadowing opportunities for local students. In 2019, ambassador presentations reached more than 37,000 students.

The Environmental Professionals Network (epn.osu.edu) provides an online bridge linking schools with practicing professionals. Members have access to various job tools and resources such as news and current event information from related organizations, the latest research reports from colleagues and a special search function that can be used to find participants for special projects. EPN also holds a monthly event for networking and discussion of

significant current issues about air quality, environmental health and toxicology, sustainability, land use, and conservation. Teachers and career counselors can contact locally available Environmental Career Ambassadors through Ohio EPA or the Environmental Education Council of Ohio, ecco.wildapricot.org/eca.

Future City Engineering Competition

At the middle school level, OEEF supports DiscoverE's National Engineers Week Future City Competition™, challenging students to explore careers in environmental engineering by designing a city of the future. Ohio EPA volunteer judges help evaluate student projects on criteria such as energy efficiency, environmental friendliness, open space preservation, waste minimization, water resource management and transportation efficiency. OEEF also sponsors a Special Award for the team with the Best Use of Water Resources Engineering. More information is available at futurecity.org.



Ohio Envirothon

At the high school level, OEEF supports the annual Ohio Envirothon competition, which tests students' knowledge about forestry, soil, water quality, wildlife and current environmental issues and encourages cooperative decision-making and team building. Each year, about 1,500 high school students compete in local competitions with hopes of continuing on to the statewide, and then the national event. The Competition is sponsored in Ohio by the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Natural resource and environmental specialists from many agencies, organizations, colleges, universities, park districts and businesses devise the Envirothon questions and staff the various test stations. More information about the competition is available at ofswcd.org/envirothon.html.

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[Teachers, Industry and the Environment](#)

OEEF provides financial support and Ohio EPA staff members provide presentations for the Ohio Chemistry Technology Council's Teachers, Industry and the Environment (TIE) professional development conference.

The conference demonstrates hands-on, inquiry-based science education and introduces teachers to career opportunities for their students in environmental chemistry and chemical engineering.

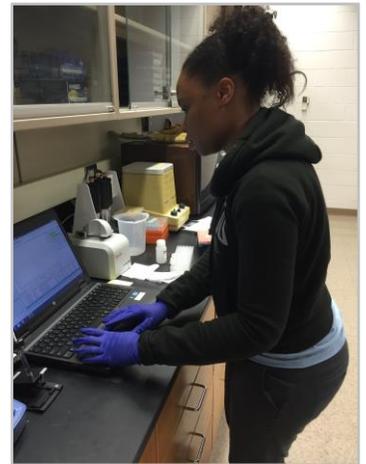
Conference activities and program are available at ohiochemistry.org.

[Scholarships](#)

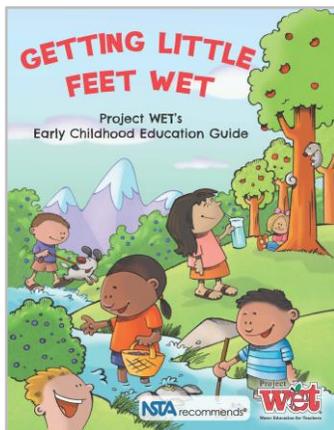
OEEF provides \$50,000 annually in scholarships for environmental science and engineering students at Ohio colleges and universities. Administered through a partnership with the Ohio Academy of Science, the scholarships help students complete their degree programs and begin professional practice. Scholarship applications and recent recipients are at ohiosci.org/oef-scholarship/.

[State Science Day and Governor's Awards for Excellence in Environmental Protection Research](#)

OEEF will continue to provide major sponsor support to the Ohio Academy of Science for State Science Day and the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Environmental Protection Research, honoring the best middle and high school student environmental science projects selected in statewide competition. Descriptions of the most recent award-winning projects are available at epa.ohio.gov/oef/state_science_day.aspx.



[Water Quality Education and Monitoring by Students and Citizens](#)



[Project WET and Healthy Water, Healthy People](#)

Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education provides statewide coordination of Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), an award-winning national curriculum for elementary and middle schools, and Healthy Water, Healthy People (HWHP), Project WET's secondary-school curriculum, introducing middle and high school students to scientific testing procedures for various parameters such as pH, dissolved oxygen and turbidity, as well as threats to water quality. Having a single point of contact for both programs makes it easier to get the best combination of age-appropriate resources to teachers.

The Office of Environmental Education offers facilitator trainings to certify additional WET and HWHP instructors around the state, and supports teacher workshops by providing educators' guides, technical manuals and hands-on practice in using sampling equipment. The office also offers educator workshops to disseminate Project WET's new early childhood curriculum, Getting Little Feet Wet. The OEEF grant application guidelines strongly encourage K-12 applicants to incorporate these excellent teaching resources and adapt them to local watersheds.

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Ohio's Credible Data Law

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop plans to reduce the amount of pollution entering rivers and streams that are not meeting water quality standards.



Ohio's Credible Data law spells out how professionals and volunteers can collect and share the results of their water quality monitoring. As part of this effort, local agencies and community organizations are teaching residents to identify their local watersheds and understand how we all contribute to pollution and can all help to reduce it.

OEEF funding helps citizen scientists and school classes monitor the health of local streams by kick-seining for macro-invertebrates; testing the chemistry of the water column; and understanding how physical features such as overhanging trees, riffles, and vegetation on banks improve water quality.

OEEF staff members offer workshops around the state each year to prepare teachers and citizens to be certified as Level One Qualified Data Collectors.

Ohio Storm Water Conference

OEEF funds Ohio EPA's annual sponsorship of the multi-disciplinary Ohio Storm Water Conference, drawing more than 500 professionals involved in planning, design, implementation, and regulatory compliance related to storm water management, nonpoint source pollution, and the modelling of urban water systems. Topics include Low-Impact Design, NPDES Phase II permit and education requirements, transportation, legal policies, effective Best Management Practices, sustainable development, storm water treatment, public outreach, and innovative equipment, technology, and case studies.



Contact

For more information about the Ohio Environmental Education Fund or Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education, please call (614) 644-2873 or visit us online at epa.ohio.gov/oeef/.