



# Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects for the General Public and Regulated Community Audience, 2016



Office of Environmental Education

[www.epa.ohio.gov.oe](http://www.epa.ohio.gov.oe)

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## **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 efforts targeting 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.

## **Selecting Outstanding Grant Projects**

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, pre-school through university-level learners and members of the regulated community. 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.eecoonline.org/publications/pdfs/beeps.pdf>, and the North American Association for Environmental Education's Guidelines for Excellence series, available online at <http://www.naaee.net/publications>. 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. For the pre-school through university audience, the team developed paragraph rubrics for three categories: curriculum development, student activity, and professional development for K-12 educators. For the adult general public and regulated community audiences, the team 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 Website evaluation has also been added. The instruments and the award winners are posted at [http://www.epa.ohio.gov/oeef/oeef\\_featured\\_ee\\_projects.aspx](http://www.epa.ohio.gov/oeef/oeef_featured_ee_projects.aspx).

This booklet showcases 11 outstanding projects for the pre-school to university audience that were selected in 2016. OEEF would like to lift up these excellent examples of effective environmental education to inspire educators and prospective grant applicants.

## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects



**Summit Soil and Water Conservation District,** "NPDES Phase II Education Seminar Series," S11G-059, \$24,153, Statewide, Audience: Regulated Community, Contact: Cynthia Fink, [cfink@summitswcd.org](mailto:cfink@summitswcd.org), 330-929-2871.

Supports ongoing efforts to educate communities regulated under the NPDES permit program for municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Fifteen workshops focusing on the six Minimum Control Measures required by the MS4 permit are planned. Topics include post-construction best management practices (BMPs) for public road projects, illicit discharge detection and elimination, pollution prevention in municipal operations, storm water retrofits, runoff reduction methods, effective public education techniques, low-impact development, construction site inspections, using balanced growth tools, and federal effluent guidelines on construction and development. To supplement these workshops, Center for Watershed Protection webcasts will be available for live viewing throughout the state. In addition, six Excal Visual LLP pollution prevention training kits will be purchased for loan to MS4 communities. Multiple local agencies and organizations are collaborating.

**Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization,** "Cuyahoga ReLEAF: Managing Forest Canopy for Watershed Health in the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern," #S11G-068, \$49,508, Cuyahoga County, Audience: Regulated Community, Contact: Jane Goodman, [goodmanj@crcpo.org](mailto:goodmanj@crcpo.org), 216-496-7694.

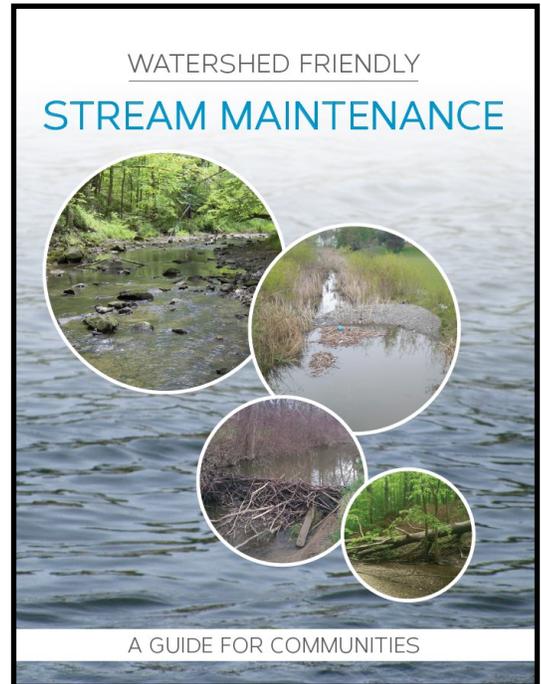
The project helped elected officials, planning and zoning commission members, municipal service directors, school districts and leaders of watershed groups in approximately 38 local communities in eight tributary sub-watersheds to develop and apply Forest Canopy Management tools to improve tributary watershed health in the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern. Provided hands-on training, forest canopy maps and support to help communities increase their use of forest and riparian areas as nonstructural storm water Best Management Practices. The improved awareness of forest cover trends, at-risk areas and the value of healthy forest canopy for long-term watershed health will yield better storm water management and regulatory compliance, support long-term watershed stewardship, and offset the effects of canopy loss from sprawl, pests and invasive species. Multiple local and state organizations collaborated.



## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects

**Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District**, “Watershed -Friendly Stream Maintenance for Communities,” S12G-058, \$16,031, Cuyahoga County, Audience: Regulated Community, Contact: Jared Bartley, [jbartley@cuyahogawcd.org](mailto:jbartley@cuyahogawcd.org), 216-524-6580.

Many communities in the Rocky River Watershed have struggled with stream maintenance issues, such as eroding stream banks, clogged culverts, and debris jams. Communities are often caught unaware and forced to scramble to address these problems, that were exacerbated by the heavy rains of 2011. This project incorporated input from communities, regulatory agencies and local resource management agencies to develop a community stream maintenance guide, pilot project and series of workshops and field days to help 11 communities in the Rocky River watershed implement proactive stream maintenance programs that fulfill regulatory requirements and meet community needs while protecting the ecological function and value of the stream system. A pilot project was conducted with the City of Bay Village prior to the manual being finalized. The Rocky River Watershed Council, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District and watershed communities all collaborated.



**The Ohio State University Extension - Darke County**, “Manure Science Review: Nutrient Stewardship Education for Farmers,” #S-15M-033, \$5,000, Darke County, Audience: Regulated Community, Contact: Amanda Douridas, [douridas.9@osu.edu](mailto:douridas.9@osu.edu), 937-484-1526.

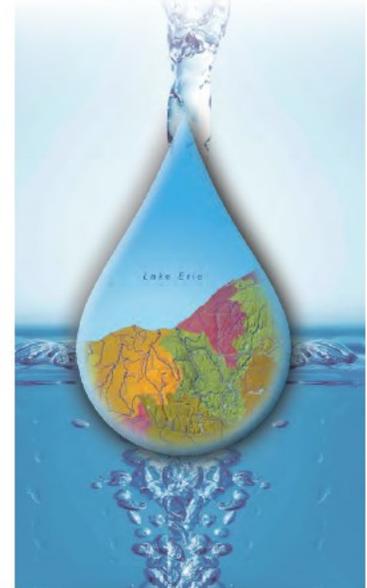
The Manure Science Review, an educational field day that provides science-based information on best practices for manure nutrient management, will be held in Darke County, Ohio in August 2015, reaching an estimated 175-200 farmers. The program will include presentations that provide information on relevant issues, including feeding strategies to reduce phosphorus (P) in manure, methods for reducing nutrient runoff from cropland, and technologies to utilize manure. Field demonstrations, which will illustrate practices and equipment that can reduce the risk of manure nutrient runoff, will include field trials for cover crops and manure side-dressing, technologies for injecting liquid and solid manures, smoking drainage tile to illustrate preferential flow, and manure application equipment calibration. The MSR site is rotated to different regions of the state each year in an effort to reach new livestock producer audiences. The Grand Lake/Wabash Watershed Alliance, Ohio Farm Bureau, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Auglaize, Darke, Mercer and Shelby Counties are helping to plan and publicize the event, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Certified Livestock Manager program is providing continuing education hours for attendees.

## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects

**Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District**, “From the Upper Reaches to Lake Erie’s Beaches: A Banner Year for Nonpoint Source Pollution Solutions,” S10G-065, \$21,900, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Summit Counties, Audience: General Public, Contact: Gail Prunty, [gprunty@geaugaswcd.com](mailto:gprunty@geaugaswcd.com).

Agencies from 7 northeast Ohio counties collaborated to implement a watershed awareness and nonpoint source pollution education campaign targeting residents and homeowners in the Lake Erie Basin. Sets of collapsible banner displays delivered a unified, regional message that empowers residents to practice healthy household and backyard habits that improve water quality and reduce storm water pollution. Reinforced by brochures, websites, articles, and press releases, the displays were showcased at community events and public locations, connecting residents to their watersheds. Collaborators included the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Cuyahoga, Lake, Medina, Portage and Summit Counties, the City of Avon Lake, and the Black River Remedial Action Plan.

### Household Habits for Healthy Waters



**Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts**, “Educators Development Program (EDP) – Level 2,” #S11M-053, \$4,925.00, Statewide, OEEF Priorities: Community Issues, Environmental Career Development. Audience: General Public. Contact: Gwen Roth, [gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org](mailto:gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org), 513-772-7645.

Provided a train-the-trainer program for educators from 25 Soil and Water Conservation Districts around the state. Through a series of five (2-day) modules, the SWCD educators were trained by education and conservation experts to develop public presentations and school programs using science-based activities correlated to the Ohio Academic Content Standards. The program included 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 new curriculum on sustainability. This program built on a very successful previous effort that was also funded with an OEEF mini grant. The 28 educators who participated in the first EDP level 1 program in 2009-2010 had offered public programs attended by more than 100,000 people.



## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects

**Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District**, “An Underground Worm’s-Eye View of Soil Conservation,” F12G-009, \$15,623. Statewide, Audience: General Public, Contact: Dona Rhea, [dona-rhea@delawareswcd.org](mailto:dona-rhea@delawareswcd.org), 740-368-1921.

This project replicates a three dimensional, room sized, inflatable soil tunnel exhibit to educate people about soil conservation. Guests enter beneath the giant tree’s roots with oversized earthworms, grubs, and other soil critters, through a tunnel where they enter the underground world of soil and complete a scavenger hunt, challenging them to find life and knowledge. Educational panels adhered to the unit’s interior, educate on soil conservation and its effects on nature and the world as a whole, while generating curiosity about the world below our feet. The exterior is designed into soil layers, showing soil’s profiles and functions. The exhibit can be trailered for use at other locations around the state. Collaborators include the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Preservation Parks.



**Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District**, “Gardening for Clean Water,” S12G-046, \$47,056, Franklin and Delaware Counties, Audience: General Public, Contact: Sara Ernst, [sernst@franklinswcd.org](mailto:sernst@franklinswcd.org), 614-486-9613.

Watershed action plans in central Ohio identify storm water runoff as a primary cause of local water quality impairments. Central Ohio garden centers report a growing number of customers asking for information on native plants, rain barrels and rain gardens. Through workshops, technical consultation, printed and Web-based materials, this program will educate garden center staff, gardeners and residents about on-site storm water infiltration practices as a means of lessening adverse environmental impacts from storm water so customers can make informed decisions about the best course of action for their site. Collaborators include the City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities, and Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed.

## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects

**Cleveland Metropolitan Park District,**  
“Watershed Volunteer Program,” S12G-062,  
\$44,950, Cuyahoga County, OEEF Priority:  
Community Issues, Audience: General Public,  
Contact: Jennifer Grieser,



Increased rainfall and storm intensity have amplified the negative impacts of storm water on local water quality, and on residential property. In surveys, local residents indicated a willingness to implement beneficial storm water and watershed management practices, but a lack of knowledge about how to do so. This project supported a comprehensive public awareness campaign for residents of the West Creek watershed, and hands-on training for a network of volunteers and community leaders throughout Northeast Ohio. Interactive modules, workshops, site tours, poster sessions and on-site projects included rain garden installation, riparian buffer and wetland planting projects, bioswale maintenance, native seed collection & cleaning, invasive plant removal and monitoring techniques using tools such as the HHEI/HMFEI indices, tree survival survey, photo monitoring, Bank Erosion Hazard Index, Stream Feature Inventory, and pebble counts. The ultimate outcome of this project is the integration of these engaged watershed stewards into the fabric of their communities and neighborhoods to improve local waterways.

**Ohio Invasive Plant Council (OIPC),** “Invasive Plant Education for Ohio Citizens,” S12M-042, \$4,615,  
Statewide, Audience: General Public. Contact: Cheryl Coon, [ccoone@fs.fed.us](mailto:ccoone@fs.fed.us), 740-753-0558.



The project increased awareness of 2,000 Ohio citizens about the ecological and economic impacts of invasive plants, through three workshops, presentations, dissemination of printed informational materials, and Website enhancements. Workshops included identification, reporting, prevention and treatment of invasive plants, landscaping and land management practices, and specific steps that residents can take to control invasive species, such as requiring contractors to clean equipment, asking for non-invasive species at nurseries, and cleaning boots, camping equipment, ATVs and boats between uses. The mini grant provided much-needed updates to posters, brochures and invasive plant factsheet booklets that were first funded with a 1998 OEEF grant to the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. Match was provided through OIPC Board Members' and partners' in-kind time to design printed materials, plan and host 3 invasive plant workshops, set-up OIPC displays at partner events, and update the website. U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, Green Umbrella, ODNR Divisions of Forestry and Wildlife, OSU Extension, and Holden Arboretum collaborated.

## 2016 Ohio Environmental Education Fund Outstanding Projects

### **Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities,**

“Hands Dirty, Feet Wet: Getting to Know the Mill Creek Watershed,” S12M-044, \$4,893, Butler and Hamilton Counties, Audience: General Public. Contact: Jennifer Eismeier, [jeismeier@millcreekwatershed.org](mailto:jeismeier@millcreekwatershed.org), 513-563-



To support the endorsed watershed plan for the Mill Creek, and to augment their ongoing Clean Water Act Section 319 grant for watershed restoration, the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities (MCWCC) is carrying out a multi-faceted public education campaign to inform over 18,000 residents in the 166-square mile Mill Creek Watershed about actions they can take to protect this urban stream. In partnership with communities and environmental organizations in the watershed, MCWCC will distribute two issues of the Voice of the Mill Creek newsletter, leveraging existing online and print resources. An enclosed survey will provide information on residents' baseline level of knowledge and areas of interest which will guide MCWCC in conducting hands-on activities in the Mill Creek that are targeted at residents' stated interests. Planned outreach events include a stream cleanup in the City of Reading, a rain garden tour in the City of Springdale, educational walk along Beaver Run creek highlighting stream restoration, a Mill Creek canoe trip and guided tours of a newly-restored streamside park in Twin Creek Preserve. The Cities of Reading, Springdale, and Wyoming, Green Umbrella, Hamilton Soil and Water Conservation District, OKI Regional Council of Governments, and the University of Cincinnati are all collaborating.