



Ohio Environmental Education Fund State Fiscal Year 2015 Agenda

This fact sheet summarizes the SFY15 annual plan of the Office of Environmental Education (OEE) at Ohio EPA, and spending priorities for OEEF-funded activities.

State Fiscal Year 2015 (SFY15) begins July 1, 2014, and ends June 30, 2015. 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 SFY15 are grant programs, environmental science and engineering career initiatives, and water quality monitoring by students and citizens.

Grant Programs

Ohio EPA is interested in 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 next two grant cycles, we are primarily interested in funding education projects related to four of the most pressing current environmental issues confronting the state.

- **Improving air quality and efforts to reduce 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.

- **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 and rain barrels, passive treatment trains, storm water treatment wetlands, low-impact development techniques, sediment and erosion controls, and naturally functioning storm water infrastructure.



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 hearing will be held to discuss the annual agenda, answer questions and accept public comments.

Meeting Details

Monday, March 24, 2014
3:00 p.m.
Ohio EPA Conference Center Room A
Lazarus Government Center, 6th floor
50 West Town Street, Columbus

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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.

- **Encouraging and explaining the importance of habitat restoration efforts to increase biodiversity and improve air and water quality.**

Fundable project might include interpretive signs, publications and programs 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.

Environmental Science and Engineering Career Initiatives

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. OEEF supports several initiatives to introduce students to the variety of careers available.



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 www.ohiosci.org/OESEESCHOLARSHIPS.htm.

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 www.epa.ohio.gov/oef/state_science_day.aspx.

Future City Competition

At the middle school level, OEEF supports the 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 www.futurecity.org.



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Environmental Career Ambassador Network

Ohio EPA is partnering with the Ohio State University School of Natural Resources and the Environmental Education Council of Ohio to recruit at least 500 Environmental Career Ambassadors statewide. 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 help develop field trips, internships and shadowing opportunities for students at the local level.

The Environmental Professionals Network (<http://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. EPN members who choose to volunteer as Environmental Career Ambassadors can be contacted by teachers and career counselors through the Network.

Ohio Envirothon

OEEF supports the annual Ohio Envirothon competition, which stimulates, reinforces and enhances interest in the environment and natural resources among high school students.

The Envirothon 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 and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

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 www.ohiodnr.com/default/education/envirothon/default/tabid/8652/Default.aspx.



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 posted online at <http://ohiochemistry.org/aws/OCTC/pt/sp/tieconference>

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Water Quality Monitoring

Credible Data Law

The 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 several workshops around the state each year to prepare teachers and citizens to be certified as Level One Qualified Data Collectors.



WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands

OEEF funds also make it possible for Office of Environmental Education staff members to offer certification for teachers in the **WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands** curriculum in wetland ecology from Environmental Concern, Inc., endorsed by the National Science Teachers Association and the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Healthy Water, Healthy People

Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education coordinates the Healthy Water, Healthy People (HWHP) national 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.

OEEF funding provides educators' guides, technical manuals, water quality testing kits and workshops offering teachers hands-on practice in using them. During SFY15, the Office of Environmental Education will offer a statewide facilitator training to certify additional instructors in the HWHP curriculum and support educator workshops around the state.

Contact Us



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/.

