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NEWS RELEASE

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Yellow Creek Watershed Shows Tremendous Improvement; Opportunities Remain To Reduce Bacteria

Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources today announced that the sampling results from the comprehensive Yellow Creek Stream Survey show the water quality ranks among the best in the state. The Yellow Creek watershed drains portions of Columbiana, Jefferson and Carroll counties into the Ohio River.

Working as a team, Ohio EPA scientists assessed the quality of streams in the Yellow Creek watershed based on their resident fish and insect communities. The team found 90 percent of the watershed is at least good quality, and a majority reflected exceptional or coldwater potential. To determine the state of the river, samplers drew water, fish and macroinvertebrate samples from 78 sites on 44 streams. Of the more than 100,000 fish studied, Ohio EPA found 59 species.

At least half of the biologically impaired sites were in a small area along the densely populated Ohio River corridor. Most of the problems were the result of culverts or other structures that did not allow fish and bugs to migrate freely.

“A large investment by ODNR in the 1980s to address mining impacts has paid off in streams that are recovering and supporting a host of fish and bug species,” Korleski said. “Now it’s time to partner with the local communities to help determine what those communities want to do to further improve their waterways.”

Ohio DNR Director Sean Logan concurred. “The recovery of this watershed is a great example of what can be accomplished through wise conservation practices. Data gathered can also be used by local citizens and municipalities to plan improvements and apply for grants and low-interest loans to further improve stream quality.”

The stream quality data are part of a federally mandated Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report. Ohio’s TMDLs determine the maximum load of pollutants watersheds can receive on a daily basis without violating water quality standards. Areas that are not reaching their full potential have been affected by acid mine drainage, livestock and human sewage. Additional information will be available when the Yellow Creek TMDL is released this summer.

The TMDL program can improve the quality of a stream by taking a comprehensive look at all pollution sources.

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This includes point sources such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, as well as nonpoint sources, including runoff from urban, construction and agricultural areas.

More information about the TMDL process is available on Ohio EPA's Web site at:
http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/tmdl/tmdl_fact_sheet_july04_upd.pdf. The online media kit for today's event is available at: http://www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/media/yellow_creek/.

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