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Ohio EPA Awards Nearly \$100,000 in Environmental Education Grants to Franklin County Organizations

Ohio EPA has awarded two environmental education general grants worth nearly \$100,000 to the Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) and Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Ten grants were awarded statewide for \$330,540.

Ohio EPA's \$46,728 grant to FLOW will fund a project called "Olentangy Urban Rainscapes." As part of a brownfield housing redevelopment of Columbus' Weinland Park neighborhood, this pilot program will install residential rainscaping to manage urban storm water. Water conservation devices inside new housing also will reduce water consumption. Porch chats, interviews, workshops and signs will involve approximately 250 residents of the neighborhood in learning about, creating and maintaining front yard and curbside rain gardens, rain barrels and bioswales to reduce citizens' watershed footprint, build community pride and provide superior housing for new low-income home buyers. Collaborators include Wagenbrenner Development, Integrity Sustainable Planning and Design, Mark A Dilley and Associates, Watershed Organic Lawn Care, Malcolm J Art, Reed and Lewis Landscape Services and the University Area Enrichment Association.

Ohio EPA's \$47,056 grant to Franklin SWCD will fund a project called "Gardening for Clean Water" in Franklin and Delaware counties. 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 and printed and online materials, Franklin SWCD's 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. The goal is to help customers make informed decisions about the best course of action for their sites. Collaborators include the city of Columbus Department of Public Utilities and Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW).

The Ohio Environmental Education Fund is administered by Ohio EPA. Grants up to \$50,000 are funded from one-half of the civil penalties collected by the Agency for air and water pollution control violations. Eligible grant recipients include environmental groups, public and private schools, colleges and universities, trade or professional organizations, businesses and state and local governments. Approximately \$1 million is given each year.

The next OEEF application deadline is July 16, 2012. An electronic letter of intent to apply is due on July 9. For additional information, contact the Ohio Environmental Education Fund at (614) 644-2873 or visit its website at www.epa.ohio.gov/oeef/.