



The Quarterly

The Little Miami River Partnership Newsletter

Volume 7 Number 2
October, 2005

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**The Little Miami River Watershed
National and State Scenic River**





The Watershed Warble

A report on the activities of the Little Miami River Partnership

The Watershed Report

Written by Dennis TenWolde, LMRP Watershed Coordinator

On October 8th, 2005, Little Miami, Incorporated, held a 25th Anniversary party for the recognition of the Little Miami River as a National Scenic River and Ohio's first Scenic River. This event underscores two of the most important events that have helped the Little Miami River to still be one of the most beautiful river systems in the United States.

First, the Little Miami River was recognized as a national treasure by being designated a National Scenic River. This significant event is not a window dressing designation nor a designation to just show off the fact that it is a beautiful river. It places the river within the framework of national treasures protected and held by the National Park Service. In fact, the designation provides the National Park Service with the ability to help protect this resource. On the same note, being designated the first State Scenic River also provides another level of protection by stating that the State of Ohio is also interested in safeguarding this treasure. Between these two official designations, a Federal agency and a State agency are working together to address environmental issues of the river and to keep it a beautiful and scenic river.

Lastly, the Clean Water Act, passed by Congress over 30 years ago, has done tremendous amounts to help keep the Little Miami River healthy and beautiful. This law was passed to protect us from harm from what was being put into our rivers. To those who wonder what good environmental laws have accomplished, consider this: Over 30 years of Ohio EPA data reveals a tremendous turn around in the quality and health of the river system. Pollution from cities and factories and other regulated sources are now not the main hazard to the river's health. There used to be high concentrations of organic chemicals, heavy metals, and bacteria in all of the river and its tributaries – a situation which made the river

unswimmable and unfishable. Today, we can swim and fish in almost all of the river systems in the Little Miami River and the issues we worry about most are not those that could kill or harm us, but those that harm the river. The environmental laws have not only protected the river and us successfully, they have fundamentally shifted what we consider to be safe and healthy for us and a river.

Todd's Fork Watershed Action Planning

Over the past few months a number of exciting developments have occurred to bring new materials and information to the Todd's Fork Watershed Action Plan process. In July LMRP received the official OEPA and ODNR comments on the draft plan. These comments, when addressed, will allow for the finalization of the planning process. Next, LMRP held a separate meeting with the ABX Environmental Group that addresses environmental conditions at the DHL airport outside Wilmington. The meetings were very successful. Further, ABX held a follow-up meeting on the planning process for other Todd's Fork businesses. This process should allow LMRP to start to develop further business input into the Todd's Fork Watershed Action Plan. Lastly, LMRP also held a meeting with the City of Wilmington on its concerns with the Todd's Fork Watershed Action Plan and what they would like to see included. All of these events should help build a better over all picture of the watershed and also bring people and resources together to implement community-based environmental programs.

Lower Little Miami River Watershed Action Planning

The past few months have been spent on developing and analyzing the water-quality and resource data for the Lower Little Miami River watershed. Although not particularly glamorous, this time intensive process will allow LMRP to create the most accurate, up-to-date picture of environmental conditions for the watershed area.



The Watershed Warble, *continued*

A report on the activities of the Little Miami River Partnership

Warren County Home Sewer Treatment System Plan

The Warren County Health Department has decided to develop a state-endorsable Home Sewer Treatment System Plan to address any HSTS that is causing water quality and health related problems in Warren County. LMRP approached the Warren County Health Department about developing such a plan at the beginning of 2005, offering our assistance. Since then, Warren County has aggressively developed the plan and LMRP has provided extensive data resources to help with that planning process.

Buckeye United Fly Fishers

Over the past few months, LMRP has worked with BUFF to develop some new focuses and ideas for natural resources projects the group wants to undertake. On October 12th, Dennis TenWolde, LMRP Watershed Coordinator was the keynote speaker for BUFF's Annual Dinner. He gave a presentation on the water quality conditions of the Todd's Fork watershed and a short overview of non-profit organizational ability and responsibilities. The 30 minute presentation lasted almost two hours as the 100+ attendees asked numerous, detailed questions. LMRP received a letter later stating that it was one of the best presentations the group has ever had.

Central State University Cooperation

LMRP was approached by a professor and graduate student from Central State University to help locate water quality data and information on the Little Miami River. During these conversations, LMRP was able to provide significant sources of data and to start to develop what LMRP hopes is a cooperative environmental education process with Central State University.

The Lower Little Miami River Watershed

Little Miami River Celebration October 8, 2005

Little Miami Inc., Sierra Club, and Greenacres Foundation are hosting a Little Miami River Celebration on October 8, 2005 from 12 Noon to 6 p.m. at Nisbet Park in Loveland, Ohio to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Lower Little Miami River's designation as a National Wild and Scenic River and to re-dedicate ourselves to preserving and protecting this unique and valuable resource for generations to come. Pre-event morning activities include a 5-K run, a bike race, and a canoe float for a nominal fee. The free afternoon event includes two live bands – the Faux Frenchman and the Modulators, children's games and story telling, fly-fishing demonstrations, river fishing lessons, river bug sampling, Greenacres River Lab water monitoring demonstrations, and booths featuring organizations dedicated to preserving and protecting the Little Miami River. At 3:00 p.m., Eric Partee, Executive Director of Little Miami Inc. and Chris Delporte from the National Park Service Office in Washington D.C. will rededicate the Lower Little Miami River by unveiling a new rock and plaque located at the Little Miami Scenic River and Trail Center at 211 Railroad Avenue. Event parking will be provided at Loveland Elementary School and Hopewell Baptist Church on Loveland-Madeira Road and a free shuttle will transport participants to downtown Loveland for the event. Event sponsors include James S. Arnold, Attorneys and Counselors at Law, National City Bank Loveland Office, Adrien Flyfishing Outfitters, HGC Construction, The Works, Paxton's Grill, the Running Spot, Starbucks Coffee, Loveland Bike and Skate Rental, Loveland Canoe and Kayak, and Nature Outfitters.

The Little Miami River was designated as Ohio's first State Scenic River in April 1969. The first National Designation came in August 1973 when the section from Clifton to Foster was dedicated. The lower section of the river from Foster to Ohio River was rejected when Ohio first applied because it did not meet the criteria for a national designation. So area conservationists and residents worked very hard to restore the lower river by conducting river clean-ups, removing dilapidated structures, and restoring the rivers tree-lined banks called the "riparian



zone.” As a result of this massive citizen effort, the lower river achieved its historic National designation in January 1980 and a ceremony was held at Foster where park officials, government representatives, and area conservations dedicated a boulder with a commemorative plaque. On Saturday October 8th, we will re-dedicate ourselves to preserving and protecting the status of the Lower River by unveiling a new public monument at the site of the new Little Miami Scenic River and Trail Center.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed and signed into law in October 1968. The Act declared “that certain selected rivers of the Nation ... that possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.” To accomplish this goal, Congress established the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. The Act provides for “management of a river corridor averaging 320 acres per mile (approximately 1/4 mile on each side of the river) based on the level of development (continued next page)

The Lower Little Miami River Watershed, *continued*

(continued from previous page) existing at the time of designation.” Public lands within an average of ¼-mile corridor on both sides of the stream are managed to “protect their outstanding scenic, recreational, historical/cultural, fish, wildlife, ecological, geological, and hydrological values.” The Little Miami River has a “scenic” designation. These segments are generally undeveloped, but may have occasional road crossings and riverside structures which are visually screened from the river. Motorized use on trails may or may not be permitted. All other activities normally associated with public lands are permitted, as long as visual quality, free flowing condition, and outstanding values are protected. The National Park Service worked with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to develop a management plan for the Little Miami River and authorized the state of Ohio to implement the plan subject to their approval.

This is a crucial time in the history of the Little Miami River. Unlike most of the National and Wild Scenic Rivers that flow through sparsely inhabited areas, the lower section of the Little Miami River flows through the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan area and maintaining this designation presents many challenges. Currently Ohio EPA is in the process of acting on 6 different Wastewater Treatment Plant new expansions in the Lower Little Miami River that could degrade the river unless stringent new pollution standards are enforced. The Eastern Corridor Plan recommends a new bridge across the river that is opposed by the National Park Service and others because of its potential to degrade the river. In 2005, the Little Miami River was listed as one of America’s Most Endangered Rivers by *American Rivers* because of threats to the health of the river from sewage and pollution runoff. According to *American Rivers*, “Proposed wastewater plant expansions and new bridges and roads are poised to pollute Ohio’s Little Miami River with more sewage, stormwater, chemicals, and trash. Unless the state insists on modern sewage treatment and sensible transportation planning, the crown jewel of Cincinnati’s and southwestern Ohio’s outdoor destinations could be sullied beyond recovery.” (continued next column)

American Rivers Endangered Rivers designation is given to “outstanding rivers” that may be irreversibly degraded unless action is taken now. To maintain the National Wild and Scenic designation, like before, we all need to work together.

Upcoming Events

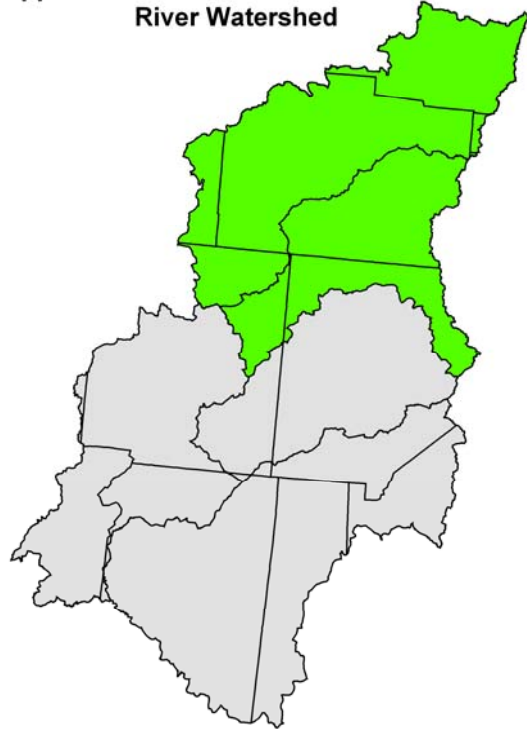
November 13 Saturday Stream Snapshot at River Lab in Loveland, OH. Training at 9:30 a.m. For more information contact Anne Lyon at (513) 891-4227 or alyon@green-acre.org

December 5 Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, and WOW the Wonders of Wetland Teacher Workshop at Greenacres Old Church from 9:00 a.m. – 4 p.m. Registration required. For more information contact Anne Lyon at (513) 891-4227 or alyon@green-acre.org

The Upper Little Miami River and Caesar's Creek Watershed

Upper Little Miami and Caesar's Creek
River Watershed

2nd Annual Little Miami River Watershed Festival



The Todd's Fork Watershed

Todd's Fork
Watershed



The East Fork Watershed

(Curtsey of Jay Dorsey, East Fork Watershed Coordinator)

Watershed Planning

The East Fork watershed coordinator and colleagues are working to complete the watershed plan for the East Fork Headwaters. The last chapter and appendices are being completed. The Headwaters plan will be submitted to the State by the end of October.

All data and public input have been collected for the Lake Tributaries watershed plan. Both the watershed inventory and water resource quality chapters are under development. The Lake Tributaries watershed plan should be completed and submitted by the end of the year

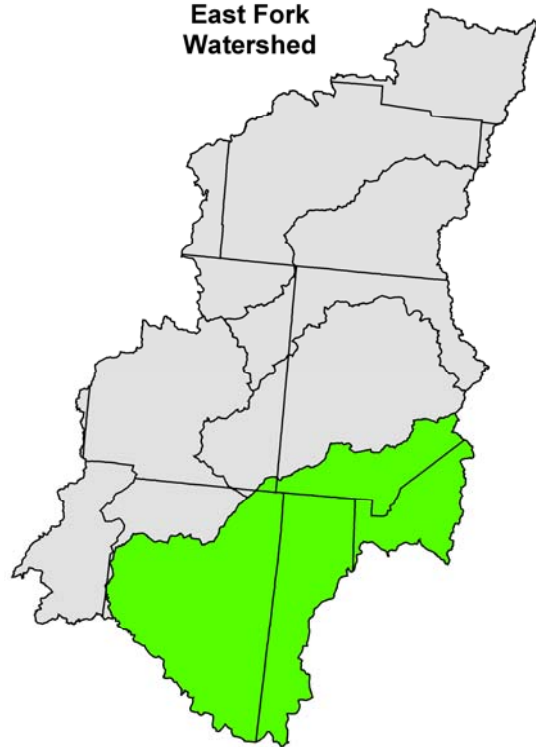
East Fork TMDL

In general, a “total maximum daily load“, or TMDL is a pollutant budget for a river, stream or lake. It represents the maximum amount of a particular pollutant that a surface water body can accept without showing significant signs of impairment. The first step in the TMDL development process is to determine this maximum load. Once this is known, interested stakeholders work together to develop limits for all pollutant sources in the watershed so that the total amount of the pollutant entering the stream does not exceed the TMDL.

In June, the East Fork Watershed Collaborative held two meetings - one each in the upper and lower halves of the watershed - with local conservation leaders to review, and conduct a reality check on, the preliminary water quality assessment developed by project consultant Tetra Tech. The project principals from Tetra Tech have now incorporated that local knowledge into the East Fork TMDL database.

For more information about the East Fork TMDL, call Paul Braasch, Clermont County Office of Environmental Quality, at (513) 732-7745.

East Fork Watershed



East Fork Tire Grab

On Tuesday, June 14, the Clermont County Green Team (Park District, Office of Environmental Quality, Soil and Water Conservation District) teamed with the Harsha Lake U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office and Batavia Township to remove 104 tires from the East Fork River near Elklick Road. The tires were dumped into the river from this remote stretch of Elklick Road. Thanks to all the hard workers for their help with this worthwhile effort.

Lower East Fork Riparian Corridor Protection Project

In fall 2004, East Fork Watershed Collaborative partners submitted an application and received preliminary approval for \$2,000,000 through Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) to protect riparian areas in the Lower East Fork watershed. This grant is expected to protect over 240 acres of riparian land in the Lower East Fork watershed, addressing one major objective of the Lower East Fork Watershed Management Plan.

The East Fork Watershed, *continued*

Nutrient Management Workshop

The East Fork Little Miami River Watershed in Clermont, Brown, and Highland Counties has water quality problems due to excess nutrients in many stream segments and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has identified agriculture as a potential source. However, there is currently little information available on the level of producer knowledge regarding Nutrient Management Best Management Practices as well as the motivating factors that will engage agricultural producers to implement nutrient management strategies that are protective of water quality

With funding through the USDA - Regional Water Quality Program and Ohio State University Extension - Clermont County, a "Nutrient Management Workshop for Large Acreage Producers" was held on August 23, 2005 near Williamsburg, Ohio. Attendees represented farming operations that collectively manage 6,100 crop acres in the East Fork Little Miami River Watershed. Most producers who attended the workshop were already using many commonly recommended Nutrient Best Management Practices. With rising nitrogen prices, there was considerable discussion regarding distinctions between optimizing overall yield versus cost-effective nitrogen usage in the new price range. The main theme articulated by producers was that the use of some amount of additional fertilizer as "insurance" will likely continue until sufficient data demonstrate that cost-effective application concepts can be reasonably implemented in the typical operation. These data should also document that use of the recommendations will not likely incur a loss in short or long-term revenue when compared to their current application practices.

For more information or a copy of the report from the workshop, please contact Stephanie Hines at Ohio State University Extension - Clermont County by email at Hines.180@osu.edu or by phone at (937) 732-7070.

Lower East Fork Water Quality Improvement Project

East Fork Watershed Collaborative partners have completed year one of the \$335,000 Lower East Fork Water Quality Improvement project. During the last six months, grant activities have primarily focused on improvements to failing septic systems in the watershed. A letter was sent to all homeowners with septic systems in the Lower East Fork Watershed informing them about cost-share available through the grant to repair or replace failing systems, and inviting them to participate in our educational workshops for homeowners. The first two workshops were held March 1 (Union Township Building) and March 2 (Miami Township Building), with over 50 homeowners attending each workshop. As part of these free informational sessions, owners of septic systems were given information on proper operation and maintenance to protect water quality and extend the life of their systems. Two more workshops will be held next winter.

The Lower East Fork 319 grant allows the Clermont County General Health District to offer up to \$5,000 to residents to help them pay for the cost of septic system repair or replacement. These funds are available to residents of the Lower East Fork Watershed on a first come, first served basis. Since the grant began we have received ten applications for cost-share. Three systems have been completed. Additionally, as a direct result of grant activities, over 180 septic systems in the Lower East Fork watershed have been permanently added to the Basic System Assessment (BSA) program. With their incorporation into the BSA program, the performance of these septic systems will be inspected at least once every three years, reducing the number of failing septic systems that could potentially degrade water quality.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the above project should call Jay Dorsey, East Fork Watershed Coordinator, at 732-7075.

The East Fork Watershed, *continued*

Canoe-Based Programs Expanded in East Fork

Thanks to grants from the Ohio Division of Watercraft and Ohio EPA, the Clermont Soil & Water Conservation District and East Fork Collaborative were able to purchase 2 trailers and 16 canoes in 2005. The canoes are being used in a variety of programs that will help clean up the East Fork Little Miami River, and educate the public about water quality and canoe safety.

The District conducted two (2) half-day educational floats this summer along the East Fork River which attracted about 60 participants. The float included a 1 ½ hr. canoe trip, a fish shocking demonstration by the ODNR - Division of Wildlife, and a brief presentation about "Life Along the River" by historian Rick Crawford. Participants were fascinated as biologist Kipp Brown exhibited an endangered "Mountain Madtom" fish caught during a demonstration near Perintown. Mr. Brown said he was very impressed with the diversity and quantity of species he was able to net in the East Fork, and claimed that "many of the species required exceptional water quality to thrive."

The float also included a presentation by watershed coordinator Jay Dorsey about how Ohio EPA measures water quality in streams. Dr. Dorsey stated that "sections of the East Fork River are classified as exceptional warmwater habitat by Ohio EPA, because of the diverse aquatic life the river supports." The East Fork is one of just a few rivers in Ohio that have this high quality designation.

Two canoe safety education classes were also sponsored by the District at Stonelick and Harsha Lakes this summer. Participants were trained by certified instructors in basic paddling, safety and water rescue techniques.

The District's canoes were also used in the annual East Fork Riversweep, and several Adopt-A-Waterway river cleanup events. The District welcomed two new groups this year to the Adopt-A-Waterway program. Batavia Rotary Club has adopted a section of the East Fork River just below Batavia, and another group of interested citizens adopted a section of the river from Stonelick-Olive Branch Rd. to Miami Glen. The groups commit to two cleanup events a year, with the District providing the canoes and supplies. Anyone interested in participating in future canoe programs can contact Jay Dorsey at 732-7075.



The East Fork Watershed, *continued*

Project SIGNS

As part of a region-wide public awareness campaign called Project SIGNS, watershed signs with tributary name have been posted at more than 30 stream crossings in the East Fork Watershed, and about 250 stream crossings throughout the Tri-state area.

The East Fork Watershed Collaborative has received a \$1000 Watershed Awareness to Watershed Action (WAWA) grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to purchase and install watershed signs at stream crossings in the upper portion of the East Fork watershed. The signs include the names of the watershed and stream segment, and the message "Keep It Clean." Four sets of signs are currently being installed in Highland County, and a like number will be installed in Brown and Clinton Counties later this summer.

Highland County Water Quality Project

In 2004, the Highland Soil and Water Conservation District (Highland SWCD), in collaboration with the Highland County Health District and East Fork Watershed Collaborative, applied for a \$233,000 Ohio EPA grant to improve the performance of septic systems in the Highland County East Fork region. We recently received word that this grant will be awarded, and the project will begin in January 2006. The grant will provide cost-share to East Fork watershed residents in Highland County to repair or replace failing septic systems. The grant also supports educational workshops to familiarize homeowners with proper operation and maintenance of their septic systems.