

## EAST FORK NEWS AND NOTES

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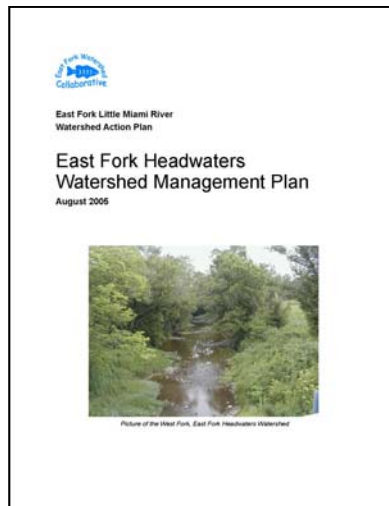
### A Personal Note from Watershed Coordinator Jay Dorsey

I recently accepted a position with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Soil and Water Conservation in Columbus. I will continue to work throughout Ohio in the watershed management field, and specialize in the areas of stormwater management and stream restoration.

I think we can all be proud of the many things that we have accomplished together over the last three years in the East Fork watershed. This newsletter will update you on some of those accomplishments. The Collaborative hopes to have a new coordinator on board soon who will help carry on with the many exciting projects that are underway. If he or she receives the same kind of support and friendship I have these last three years, they will surely have a productive and enjoyable time serving as your watershed coordinator. Thank you for your continued commitment to conservation.

### Watershed Planning

The watershed coordinator and colleagues completed the East Fork Headwaters watershed plan this fall, and submitted the plan to the State for endorsement.



All data and public input have been collected for the Lake Tributaries watershed plan. The watershed plan is under development and should be completed and submitted in early 2006.

### 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 info about the East Fork TMDL, call Paul Braasch, Clermont Office of Environmental Quality, at (513) 732-7745.

### Project SIGNS

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

The East Fork Watershed Collaborative 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 have been installed in Highland County, and a like number will be installed in Brown and Clinton Counties later this summer.

### 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 this 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 nine applications for cost-share. Four systems have been installed to date. 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 the East Fork Watershed Coordinator, at 732-7075.



### 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. Clermont County and the East Fork Collaborative are just completing their final project plan for OPEA approval.

### Highland County 319 Grant

The Highland Soil and Water Conservation District (Highland SWCD), in collaboration with the Highland County Health Department and the East Fork Watershed Collaborative, applied for and received an Ohio EPA grant to improve the performance of septic systems in the Highland County East Fork region. The \$233,000 grant provides cost-share to repair or replace up to 60 failing septic systems, and to support educational workshops to familiarize homeowners with proper operation and maintenance of their septic systems.

### Canoe Programs and Volunteer Opportunities

The East Fork Watershed Collaborative applied for and received two grants to purchase canoes to use for the East Fork River Sweep, Adopt-a-Waterway and other educational programs. The Collaborative received a \$11,160 grant from the Boating Safety Education Program of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources,

Division of Watercraft, and a \$4,980 grant from the Ohio Environmental Education Fund to purchase 16 canoes, two canoe trailers, life vests, and paddles.

*Educational Canoe Floats* - This past summer, the Collaborative hosted two educational canoe floats on the East Fork during which local elected officials, other community leaders and landowners learn more about

how streams function. During the floats, attendees heard a historical overview of the area - with special emphasis on the East Fork River - from Rick Crawford, Clermont County historian. They also discussed opportunities for managing stormwater quantity and quality, and canoed two miles of the East Fork Little Miami River. Stream biologists from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources used an electrical shocking technique to sample the types of fish found in this segment of the East Fork. The biologists shared what they found, highlighting fish species indicative of the good water quality in the East Fork.



*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 Twp to remove 104 tires from the East Fork River near Elklick Rd. The tires were dumped into the river from this remote stretch of Elklick Rd. Thanks to all the hard workers for their help with this worthwhile effort.



*Adopt-a-Waterway Program* - With the purchase of the canoes mentioned above, the East Fork Collaborative is looking to expand our Adopt-a-Waterway program. Groups of any size (companies, non-profits, civic organizations) can adopt a stream segment of 2-3 miles length, similar to the Adopt-a-Highway program. The Collaborative provides canoes, trash bags, gloves and trash pickup for two events each year. There are about 40 "canoeable" miles of the East Fork that could be adopted, and a slew of smaller tributaries that would

also benefit from an annual clean-up. Two new groups adopted segments of the East Fork in 2005. To sign up your group, or for more information, contact the East Fork watershed coordinator at (513) 732-7075.

