



May 13, 2004

Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
Fiscal and Grants Manager  
One Maritime Plaza, Fourth Floor  
Toledo, Ohio 43604

Final Report for Lake Erie Protection Fund small grant #SG 208-03 "Board Development Training for Watershed Organizations"

Dear Fiscal and Grants Manager:

The Ohio Environmental Council is pleased to submit the attached Final Report, along with 10 copies and an electronic version, in accordance with the terms of our grant. We have also included one copy of the Final Accounting using the form provided by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

We are happy to report the successful coordination and hosting of the "How to Build a Sustainable Watershed Organization" conference held last November. We would not have been able to complete this project without the assistance of the Lake Erie Protection Fund and extend a heartfelt expression of gratitude to you.

Please contact us if you need any further information or documentation.

Best regards,

Vicki Deisner  
Executive Director/Fiscal Agent/Authorizing Agent

Keith Dimoff  
Assistant Director/Project Director

1207 GRANDVIEW AVE.  
SUITE 201  
COLUMBUS, OHIO  
43212-3449

VOICE  
(614) 487-7506

FAX  
(614) 487-7510

EMAIL  
oec@theOEC.org

www.theOEC.org

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Final Report  
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Grant Number: Lake Erie Protection Fund Small Grant #SG-208-03

Project Title: Board Development Training for Watershed Organizations

Applicant Organization: Ohio Environmental Council, 1207 Grandview Ave,  
Columbus, Ohio 43212, (614) 487-7506, Federal Tax ID 31-0805578

Brief overview of work completed.

The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is pleased to report the successful coordination and hosting of the "How to Build a Sustainable Watershed Organization" conference on November 7-8, 2003. One copy of the materials from the conference is enclosed; additional copies are available upon request.

The OEC completed the following tasks:

- Executed contracts with trainers from ICL and RN.
- Facilitated a planning committee that included representatives from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio State University Extension (OSU), the Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL), and River Network (RN). The planning committee met several times in person and by phone, and included a final planning meeting in October. The planning committee also ensured broad input from watershed coordinators and local board members or fiscal agents through outreach by ICL and RN.
- Provided ICL and RN with background materials and contact information to enable phone surveys of watershed coordinators and board members and to develop preliminary conference goals and topics.
- Developed the conference agenda, educational goals, and teaching methods with the planning committee.
- Secured all logistical arrangements, including conference rooms, breakout rooms, food service, and accommodations.
- Helped ODNR with recruitment of attendees, including preparation and mailing of the conference registration brochure, the posting and maintenance of electronic registration on the web, and phone calls to invited attendees.
- Coordinated the final planning meeting on October 3, 2003, including accommodations for ICL and RN.

- Printed and assembled the conference binders.
- Coordinated of all conference speakers.
- Confirmed all pre-event logistics, presentations, and materials.
- Staffed the two-day event at the registration table and provided hosting and other logistical support for attendees and presenters (two OEC staff—Sarah Hovanec and Molly Flanagan).
- Presented and facilitated sessions during the two-day event (two OEC staff—Vicki Deisner and Keith Dimoff).
- Prepared, collected, and compiled data from evaluation forms.
- Provided support for follow-up by RN.
- Completed all financial accounting, including paying all bills due for the event.

*What percentage of your project is complete?*

The project is 100% complete.

*Is additional time required to fully complete the project?*

No.

*What significant problems, if any, did you encounter in completing the project?*

We did not encounter any problems in completing the project.

*What products do you anticipate will result from this project?*

The conference and associated materials were successfully completed. A copy of all conference materials and conference evaluations are attached. Additional binders from the conference are available upon request.

*Do your findings agree or disagree with your original hypothesis?*

The project was conceived under the hypothesis that local watershed groups needed support to be more sustainable, thereby leading to their long-term success in

comprehensive watershed planning. Since 2001, OEPA and ODNR have been funding watershed coordinator positions as part of its overall state strategy to develop local watershed restoration plans. The funding carries certain commitments for deliverables, such as watershed action plans. Many watershed coordinators and their fiscal agents and board members have been frustrated with the watershed coordinator position and the associated grant commitments. Watershed coordinators often feel caught in the middle, being in the difficult position of fulfilling the requirements of their grants issued by ODNR versus satisfying the demands of their boards. OEPA and ODNR have concerns that boards are often unaware of the roles and expectations placed upon them and sometimes exhibit a lack of understanding of the contractual responsibilities and requirements of the grants. Further, the state's level of funding for the program is anticipated to be phased out, putting a burden on local groups to diversify their funding sources and to position themselves organizationally for ongoing sustainability. The conference was designed to address this situation.

We are pleased to report that the discussions at the conference confirmed the above hypothesis, and that the completed evaluations collected at the end of the two-day conference confirmed the relevance and need for the training. For example, on a scale of 5, the average response to "The content of this conference was relevant to me" was 4.1, and elicited comments such as "As a state employee I find much of the information valuable to pass on to the customers," "The fundraising information was very helpful," and "The conference provides useful information in useable forms." The average response to "The handouts and visual aids were useful" was 4.2, and included comments like "Good resources in binder" and "I plan to use them at future board meetings and as reference materials during development and evaluation programs." Other comments on the evaluations included "Many practical techniques taught" and "Not just the same platitudes, I learned very practical tools and information about funding."

*What benefits to Lake Erie of the State of Ohio have accrued as a result of your project?*

The state of Ohio's watershed coordinator program has been supported by ODNR and OEPA as a critical component of the state's strategy to protect and restore water quality around the state and in the Lake Erie basin. This conference has strengthened the watershed coordinator program both at the local level and the state level.

At the local level, the conference curriculum was specifically designed to help watershed groups become more sustainable. The agenda included presentations on Elements of a Sustainable Organization; Building a Board and Staff Team; Building Community Support; Fundraising and Financial Diversity; Choosing Your Fundraising Plan; and The Basics of Asking for Money. For representatives of local watershed groups, the conference culminated in their preparation of a specific Action Plan for

their organization to work towards sustainability, further enabling these groups to conduct comprehensive watershed planning.

At the state level, the conference provided an opportunity for the state agency personnel and watershed coordinators to come together in a facilitated environment to discuss the state's watershed coordinator program and ways to improve it. In order to build communication between the agencies and the local groups, the conference agenda included: "Sharing the Vision and Expectations of Ohio's Watershed Program", presented by David Hanselmann, Chief of the Division of Soil and Water Conservation at ODNR, and Lisa Morris, Chief of the Division of Surface Water at OEPA; "Successes and Hurdles Facing Watershed Organizations" led by a panel, followed by table-top discussion that generated a list of topics to guide the next day's discussions; a "Next Steps for Ohio's Watershed Program" session that included representatives from OEPA, ODNR, and OSU in a facilitated discussion on ways to respond to concerns and obstacles raised by the representatives of watershed organizations; and a final report from the state agency session to the entire conference that responded to many issues and set the stage for OEPA, ODNR, OSU and OEC to address the remaining issues.

Ultimately, a successful state watershed program and strong, sustainable local watershed groups will lead to the funding and partnerships necessary to improve the quality of Ohio's lakes, wetlands, rivers and streams, which will benefit Ohioans through cleaner drinking water, reduced flood damage, better recreational opportunities, and improved natural habitat.

#### *List of Attachments*

1. LEPF's Final Accounting form.
2. The one-inch binder for the "How to Build a Sustainable Watershed Organization" conference.
3. Compilation of evaluation comments.

