

October 18, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wetlands Science Summit, a Real Barnburner

The 6th Annual Wetlands Science Summit filled the Everal Barn, an historic landmark in Westerville, Ohio, on October 14th. All across our State and Nation, water quality is a serious matter. The conference title “H₂-OH! Ohio Wetlands Work for Water Quality” set the theme of the conference hosted by the Ohio Wetlands Association (OWA), which brought together wetland experts to share their research and practical applications of wetland restoration for improving water quality. Communities across the state are recognizing that wetlands provide cost-effective natural services that improve our quality of life and - OH yes - improve water quality by removing excess nutrients, sediments, toxins and other contaminants that can harm us and, at best, keep us from fully enjoying our rich Ohio water resources.

OWA’s Vice President and Wetland Ecologist for the Midwest Biodiversity Institute, Mick Micacchion emceed the day’s events, which included programs describing how wetlands can - and do! - provide solutions to many water quality issues. The keynote presentation, given by Dr. Bill Mitch, Director of the Everglades Wetlands Research Park in Naples Florida and OWA Board Member, advocated for restoring part of the Great Black Swamp and likened wetlands to kidneys. Mark Dilley, Chief Science Officer and co-owner of MAD Scientist Associates and OWA President shared details of the construction, functional attributes, and community benefits of several Westerville wetlands. Kristi Arend, Research Coordinator and Fisheries Biologist at Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) spoke about how wetlands in the Old Woman Creek have been studied to provide quantification of their pollutant-cleansing ability, with an emphasis on nutrient reduction that benefits Lake Erie’s Western Basin. She also talked about the restoration effort to be conducted in Sandusky Bay to reestablish natural wetland habitats and provide additional removal of pollutants from Lake Erie.

OWA then presented three 2017 Wetland Leader Awards. The award for education went to Bill Resch for his work with the New Albany High School Ecolab. The restoration award was presented to Black Swamp Conservancy and was accepted by Chris Collier. The preservation award was accepted by Alex Czayka on behalf of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

After a vegetarian lunch buffet, Kevin Egan, University of Toledo Economics Professor, shared the economics of water quality issues. He portrayed a variety of compelling cases where wetland restoration is a cost-effective method of improving water quality. Finally, John Watts, Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks’ Resource Manager, talked about the his organization’s efforts in restoring wetland within many of their Parks. In addition to providing a wealth of other ecosystem services, these projects have helped protect water quality in the National Scenic Big Darby Creek watershed and other watersheds in which restoration has been accomplished.

At the end of formal presentation, conference participants were able to participate in one of the three wetland project tours: Heritage Park and the Westerville Water Treatment Plant, the New Albany High School Ecolab, and the Olentangy River Wetlands Research Park on the campus of The Ohio State University. These tours were highly-rated by participants and made for a fun and informative end to a productive and engaging Summit.

The OWA is a statewide, all volunteer, 501(C) 3, nonprofit organization. OWA serves to protect, restore and enjoy Ohio’s wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy. OWA envisions the state of Ohio where wetlands

are healthy, plentiful, and support ecological and societal needs and where citizens care for, appreciate, and interact with these natural treasures.

At OWA we believe in achieving solutions through thoughtful collaborations with partners in government, business and other non-profits. We seek to inspire others to enjoy, appreciate, and respect wetlands throughout Ohio. We work to engage communities in activities that protect and preserve Ohio's wetlands. Informed by science and inspired by their natural beauty, OWA firmly believes that healthy and abundant wetlands will make a better Ohio. Membership information and other ways you can help support Ohio wetlands can be found at www.OHwetlands.org.

###

For further inquiries, please contact Ohio Wetlands Association at info@OHwetlands.org.