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Hudson >

# Hudson students wade through water for stream restoration

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Hudson High School junior Ross Mclelland and Ohio EPA intern Nate Bruce examine the contents of a net during a stream evaluation near the high school. (Doug Livingston/Ohio.com)

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"Don't say eew. It's an insect; pick it up," says Bill Zawiski of the Ohio EPA. "Is a fish an invertebrate? No. Then put it down."

Zawiski is leading members of the Hudson High School AP Environmental Science class through a stream-testing activity in a portion of the Tinker's Creek sub-watershed area, located on district property, just west of the high school building. It is also the site of a \$682,758 stream restoration project set to begin in mid-June.

The project and ecology studies program began in 2000, with the dream of two science teachers at the high school, Christine DiCato-Thaxton and Matthew Kearns. The two began teaching ecology, and according to DiCato-Thaxton, started the program with about 15 students. The

fundraising drive for the land lab began with a fifty dollar grant from the parent-teacher organization.

What was once, she says, basically a drainage ditch corridor used occasionally by some biology teachers, has evolved into an outdoor learning center for five advanced placement classes, accommodating several hundred students a year.

From that \$50 start-up, the teachers have united the city of Hudson, the US and Ohio EPAs, the school district and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health to provide funding for the 16-week construction project. A grant from the US EPA of \$329,208 required a 40% match from the city of Hudson of at least \$131,000. The city actually provided \$250,000. In-kind donations from the school district, the CCBH and the city of Hudson totaled \$103,550.

The project will create a land lab for student use, a habitat for fish and macro-invertebrates and will meet the city's goal of potentially storing up to 2 million gallons of storm water to prevent flooding.

Last year students created designs for the land lab, several of which were incorporated by Biohabitats, Inc., the project designers. DiCato-Thaxton said some of those students have gotten recognition and college money for their work on the project.

Students will not be involved in the construction itself, which involves stream widening of 1700 linear feet, according to J. Meiring Borchers, Watershed Coordinator for CCBH, who has been heavily involved with the project. It will require the movement of 10,000 cubic yards of earth, which he hastens to say will not be removed from school property. The earth will be used instead, to economically re-grade the sporting fields. Borchers says that other goals of the project are creation of a large flood plain and

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development of two wetland areas.

When the students return in fall, says DiCato-Thaxton, "there will be plenty for them to do," including extensive stream-side plantings, and the return of some structures done by Eagle Scouts that must be removed temporarily. Students will maintain a database monitoring the stream's health.

She estimates that it will take 3 to 5 years for the replaced vegetation to mature to its potential.

Pam Sawchyn, the Grant Coordinator for CCBH, whose efforts secured project funding, says that those desiring to help with future plantings, the creation of better walkways and other needs, may contact her directly if they wish to contribute. (216-201-2001 Ext. 1216; [psawchyn@ccbh.net](mailto:psawchyn@ccbh.net))

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