



- [Close Window](#)
- [Print This Page](#)
- [Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

Darby Creek Campaign - Grant

Grant Name	Darby Creek Campaign - Grant	Today's Date	12/15/2023
Staff Size	25	Organization Name	Ohio Environmental Council
Total Membership		Annual Operating Budget	\$3,380,555.00
BIPOC-led	No	Operating Budget Year	
C-Suite Staff		Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Notes			

Project Information

Project/Campaign Name	Darby Creek Campaign	Project Address	
Project Location (State or Territory)	OH	Amount Requested from Alliance	\$50,000.00

Proposal Questions

1. Purpose/History Of Organization	The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to protect the environment and health of all Ohio communities through legal and policy advocacy, decision-maker accountability, and civic engagement. The OEC works for pragmatic solutions to keep Ohio clean and beautiful, and our communities safe. We fight for clean air and water, clean energy, and protected public lands. We hold polluters accountable in court while working with communities and companies that want to invest in a clean, more sustainable direction. For more than 50 years, we have led many of the major environmental policy wins in Ohio. The Ohio Environmental Council is the state's most comprehensive, effective and respected environmental advocate for a healthier, more sustainable Ohio. Our experts work daily to restore, protect and strengthen the quality of life for families and communities—from the air we breathe and the water we drink to the food we eat and natural resources we enjoy.	7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes	1) Secure Darby ONRW support and Campaign participation from at least five (5) community organizations new to the campaign, including organizations representing traditionally underrepresented populations. 2) Develop and run at least one digital ad. 3) Generate at least 2,000 public comments supporting an anticipated OEPA draft rule designating the Darby Creeks as ONRW. 4) Help generate at least 2,000 public comments supporting a subsequent Ohio EPA proposed final rule. 5) Secure at least five (5) new local decision maker endorsements of the ONRW designation.
2. Final Success	The Darby Creek Campaign (the Campaign) will be successful upon the official designation of the Big and Little Darby Creeks as "Outstanding National Resource Waters" (ONRW) by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), protecting 89.5 miles of waterways, within the next two years.	8. Evaluate Your Progress	We will measure success by making progress on the above-listed outcomes. Ultimately, we will measure the success of the Campaign by achieving a designation of ONRW for the Big and Little Darby Creeks.

3. Location Details	<p>The Ohio Environmental Council, along with partners, is engaged in the Darby Creek Campaign to secure Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW) protection for all 89.5 miles of the Big and Little Darby Creeks. ONRW status is the highest level of antidegradation protection available under the federal Clean Water Act. ONRW status would prohibit the introduction of all new or increased point source discharge pollution to the Darby Creeks. Significantly, this would be the first ONRW designation for an Ohio waterway.</p> <p>The Big and Little Darby Creeks were designated as National and State Scenic Rivers in 1994, and are recognized as some of the most biologically diverse streams in the Midwest and the nation. They are located within the 556.6 square mile Darby Watershed, specifically situated within the major metropolitan area of Columbus, Ohio. The Darby watershed is in the “backyard” of millions of Central Ohioans, giving it national recreational significance in addition to ecological significance.</p> <p>The Darby Creeks have the most freshwater mussel diversity in all of North America. Freshwater mussels are considered the most endangered animals in the continent; the Darby Creeks provide habitat for six federally listed mussel species. Additionally, these waters are home to more than 86 species of fish, including five state endangered species, one of which is a federally listed, endemic species (the Scioto Madtom). Cool flowing waters and undeveloped riparian zones throughout the Darby Creek system (including floodplains, wetlands, and streamside forests) provide essential habitat for species that are otherwise declining due to climate change and pollution pressures.</p> <p>Studies reveal that the creek system’s health is declining, highlighted by American Rivers’ 2019 designation of the Big Darby Creek as the 9th most endangered river in the nation. In part, designation was made due to rising development pressure in central Ohio (one of the fastest growing metro areas in the nation, measured at 0.89% annually). Development pressure further threatens the Darby Watershed, Big and Little Darby Creeks, and dozens of documented rare plant and animal species. According to estimates from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and Building Industry Association of Central Ohio, over 100,000 new housing units will be needed in the Central Ohio region in the next decade to</p>	9. TCA Funding Plan	<p>Funding will go towards staff time, various tactics (including messaging, digital ads, website, events, outreach), and overhead.</p>
----------------------------	---	----------------------------	---

accommodate these rising population trends (a two-fold increase in current housing permitting).

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

The OEC will continue working with partners in order to achieve an OEPA designation of “Outstanding National Resource Waters” (ONRW) for the 89.5 miles that comprise Big and Little Darby Creeks. Due to progress of the Campaign to date, and coming timelines of anticipated OEPA decisions, the OEC is confident that a decision should be made within the next two years (before the end of 2025).

The Ohio EPA is the official decision maker for the ONRW designation determination, and the Ohio Governor Mike DeWine will undoubtedly play a major role in this decision. In November 2023, the OEPA began a rulemaking process to solicit public input on whether it should designate the Big and Little Darby Creeks as ONRW. The agency began this “Early Stakeholder Outreach” process thanks to the advocacy efforts of the OEC, our partner organizations, and thousands of citizens who called for the ONRW determination throughout much of 2023. Indeed, the magnitude of public response has been a key motivator for the OEPA to move through the designation process, and remains an essential strategy for the OEC in moving forward with the Campaign.

If OEPA decides to proceed to the next step in its rulemaking process—which is highly likely, based on the Campaign’s focus on public pressure and the pace of events thus far—OEPA will draft a ONRW rule for public comment. We expect this would occur in 2024. OEPA would then file the proposed rule, mostly likely in 2024 or 2025. The fact that Ohio EPA began the rulemaking process at the request of the community is an important iterative win. Currently, the Campaign sits at a critical advocacy juncture; should the OEPA decide to continue with the next step in the rulemaking process, then the final success of ONRW designation becomes highly likely. Therefore, Campaign efforts are highly critical at this point!

With funding from The Conservation Alliance, the OEC will be able to carry the Campaign further into 2024, continuing to make progress on the ultimate Campaign goal: an Outstanding National Resource Waters designation. Objectives supporting this goal include: educating lawmakers and the public about the importance of the Darby Creek system and its protection; ensuring the public is equipped to provide meaningful feedback and be engaged with the Campaign; continuing to work with and

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

The OEC believes that to mitigate climate change, we must work to end environmental discrimination, and build an equitable movement. We make intentional investments of time, dollars, and knowledge to protect the air, land, water, and democracy alongside partners that have been historically marginalized. We advocate to promote a healthy Ohio for all that call Ohio home, especially for populations that are known to face the brunt of environmental injustices. Indeed, in 2022 the OEC finalized a Partnership Principles of Engagement framework to articulate the hows and whys for the OEC’s engagement with partner organizations and communities. This living document will serve as an internal roadmap to help institutionalize our core values and guide our internal processes to ensure we are acting on values of inclusive power-sharing, and that voices of those most impacted are best heard.

build a coalition of diverse partners and supporters.

With an ONRW designation, the natural resources that comprise the Darby Creek system will be held to the highest possible antidegradation requirements afforded by the Clean Water Act. These protections provide safeguards against point source pollution, such as new industrial or wastewater treatment plant discharges into the watershed. The OEPA is tasked by law with categorizing Ohio's waterways with their water quality designations, including ONRW status. In order to be classified as an ONRW, a water body must possess either national ecological or national recreational significance. The Big and Little Darby have both national ecological and recreational significance; thus, ONRW status is the only appropriate designation.

The following is a timeline of key milestones of the Campaign that have been achieved to date, all in the past year:

*November 2022: The OEC, Center for Biological Diversity, and Darby Creek Association filed an appeal of a Wastewater expansion permit. We began collecting stories from the community about their experiences with the Big and Little Darby Creeks. Those stories help us to build an important narrative: that Big and Little Darby are vital to the Central Ohio community.

*January 2023: On January 31, the Ohio Environmental Council, Center for Biological Diversity, Darby Creek Association, American Rivers, Forest Keeper, Ohio Scenic Rivers Association, Sierra Club Ohio, and the Nature Conservancy collectively submitted a technical comment to the Ohio EPA to designate the Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters. In total, over three thousand (3,000) people submitted public comments in support of the ONRW designation for the Creeks.

*August 2023: Following the Ohio EPA's announcement on June 13, 2023 to extend the existing Big Darby Creek protections that exist in Franklin County to Madison County and Plain City, the OEC and partners filed a comment calling for additional protections for those sections of the Big Darby Creek. The additional necessary protections focus on the potential impacts, especially stormwater, of the new development in these areas without proper planning.

*October & November 2023: The Ohio EPA announced a rulemaking process to consider classifying Big and Little Darby Creeks as ONRW. Over 800 OEC members submitted public comments to the OEPA, telling them about the value

that the Creeks hold. The OEC also partnered with other organizations and local officials to submit letters of support for the designation.

5. Key Decision Makers

In order to be successful with a ONRW designation, strategic engagement and education of elected leaders and the OEPA is essential. As an advocacy organization with over 50 years of experience in the policy arena, the OEC is well-practiced in engaging and educating elected leaders and state agencies alike. Additionally, we have relationships with and are respected by electeds and agencies for our pragmatic, science-based and across-the-aisle approach to policy.

The OEC and partners view two decision makers as key to the success of this Campaign: Director Vogel of the OEPA, and Governor Mike DeWine. Since the designation ultimately lies in the power of the OEPA, Director Vogel is a key decision maker, as is Governor DeWine. Both are well known for their support of Ohio's water quality, and the unprecedented water quality funding program, H2Ohio, created under the DeWine administration. Moreover, Governor DeWine has connections to the Darby Watershed, as he spearheaded a campaign during his U.S. Senate term (1995-2007) to establish a portion of the Darby Watershed as a Federal Fish & Wildlife Reserve. While that campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, given the Governor's history with the Darby Watershed, the OEC and partners agree that Governor DeWine may well favor ONRW designation.

However, designation is wrapped up in politics, and this particular ONRW designation represents a tough political fight. While, legally, the OEPA is required to designate the Darby Creeks as ONRW if they possess either national ecological or recreational significance (which they clearly do), the politically powerful Building Industry Association is opposing the designation. This makes the continued growth of public support for the Campaign all the more important.

6. Elevate Voices

Throughout the public commenting process of the Campaign, we have helped leverage thousands of citizen voices. Such a robust response ultimately led the OEPA to begin the rulemaking process for designation. The OEC is committed to building the public support groundswell, -- particularly in the Columbus, Ohio metro region. As the Campaign continues, and as part of the OEC's commitment to working with and uplifting voices of historically underrepresented populations, we and

11. Confidential Items N/A

our partners will continue to make efforts to engage these groups.

The OEC works as a convener and council-provider, in coalition and community, with various organizations, policy makers, and residents across the region. We bring diverse people together for a shared purpose, forge strategic and intersectional partnerships to strengthen Ohio's environmental movement, and honor community leadership. We work in a bipartisan manner across the political spectrum.

The following points—referenced from the OEC's Principles of Engagement document—are specific to and describe stakeholder inclusion/engagement. This document was officially released in 2022, and is intended to serve as a "living document," helping to guide our relationships with organizations, institutions, and individuals.

*Center Equity from the Outset - The OEC commits to intentionally seeking additional perspectives and working to actively dismantle barriers for participation in policymaking by including affected organizations, communities, and individuals to participate at the earliest point in the process, letting the people speak for themselves. Partners should strategize in a collaborative manner and share decision making power.

*Foster Inclusivity - The OEC commits to creating inclusive and open spaces to foster an environment that promotes participation, innovation, creativity, teamwork, and mutual respect. We aim to build in time for authentic connection.

Created By Samantha Miller, 12/15/2023, 6:15 PM

Last Modified By Samantha Miller, 12/15/2023, 6:15 PM

Copyright © 2000-2024 salesforce.com, inc. All rights reserved.