



**John R. Kasich**, Governor  
**Mary Taylor**, Lt. Governor  
**Craig W. Butler**, Director

**Ohio Environmental Education Council**  
**Carolyn Watkins, Chief, Office of Environmental Education**  
**Before the Sunset Review Committee**  
**December 7, 2015**

Good afternoon, Chairman Brown, Vice Chairman Jordan and members of the Ohio Sunset Review Committee, my name is Carolyn Watkins and I am the Chief of Ohio EPA's Office of Environmental Education. I am here today to encourage the continuation of the Ohio Environmental Education Council.

State law (ORC 3745.21) lays out two primary purposes of the Environmental Education Council: first, to advise the Director of the Ohio EPA in administering the Ohio Environmental Education Fund, or OEEF, and second, to assist the Director in preparing an annual agenda for the uses of the Fund during the next fiscal year, and to provide an annual financial report on previous year expenditures. The Council serves as a broad-based public advisory group, providing accountability and direction for grant programs that distribute approximately \$1 million each year for education projects targeting pre-school through university students and teachers, the general public, and the regulated community.

The Council consists of 12 members: two members of the general assembly; one from the House and one from the Senate, three *ex officio* members representing the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of Natural Resources (ODNR), the Director of Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), one member appointed by the Board of Regents to represent university-level educators, and six members appointed by the Governor to represent large and small business, statewide environmental advocacy organizations, municipalities, and elementary/secondary school teachers.

The Council has strongly supported Ohio EPA efforts to align OEEF funding priorities with the Agency's regulatory and programmatic priorities, such as education about ways to reduce the nutrient loadings to rivers and streams that contribute to the formation of harmful

algal blooms. The Council also supports Ohio EPA's efforts to align funding priorities with other state programs and to introduce students to real-world careers in environmental science and engineering, in keeping with the state's emphasis on STEM fields.

The Council also encourages the leveraging of OEEF grant funds with other funding sources, awarding more points to grant applications with strong collaboration and more in-kind match dollars. In making grant awards, the Council tries to balance the needs of the OEEF's three different target audiences (K-12, general public, and regulated community) and places scoring incentives for education projects that help regulated entities such as farmers and small businesses understand the environmental regulations they must comply with. Outreach efforts and scoring incentives have greatly increased the number of funded general public projects to help Ohio citizens understand technical aspects of environmental issues, and to help local governments meet environmental mandates for public education. The Council is also sensitive to the importance of serving all geographic regions of the state, and implemented scoring incentives for applications from under-served counties. Thanks to these incentives, OEEF grants have been awarded to entities in 82 of Ohio's 88 counties.

Overall, the Ohio Environmental Education Council provides a valuable service in providing public accountability, setting priorities to ensure that funds are distributed equitably and funding projects are unbiased, effective, and based on sound science. For these reasons, I encourage you to retain the Ohio Environmental Education Council and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.