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Ohio River Foundation Supports Growth in Restoration Program With Hiring of Program Manager

Ohio River Foundation (ORF) has hired Sarah Meadows as its first Restoration Program manager to support the tremendous growth and development opportunities for its Restoration Program.

The Restoration Program is focused on developing projects for public and private landowners that have highly visible impacts on habitat restoration and positive influence on use of best management practices. These projects range from small dam removals to creek and stream restorations to control and elimination of invasive plant species. The target areas encompass the Ohio River watershed, currently focusing on Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky.

Recent beneficiaries of ORF restoration program services include in Kentucky: Harrison and Lewis Counties, Owingsville, Daniel Boone National Forest, and Boone County Conservation District; in Ohio: West Milton, Blue Ash, Cincinnati Parks, Great Parks of Hamilton County, and Clermont County Park District; and in Indiana: Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, and Hoosier National Forest.

“We are very excited to have Sarah on board to help develop and grow ORF’s Restoration Program. Most public and private landowners have insufficient resources to devote to conservation project management or implementation. ORF provides an extremely valuable service for these partners and the benefits accrue not just to them but to the people and natural resources of the Ohio River watershed,” commented Rich Cogen, Executive Director.

Sarah has been working for ORF part-time for four years as a River Explorer Educator and a Youth Conservation Team (YCT) Crew Leader. As a YCT Crew Leader she led the installation of more than 100 habitat restoration projects in county and city parks, national wildlife refuges, and national forests in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. Sarah will focus on developing larger projects and leading the formation of a tri-state coalition to control and reduce invasive plant species’ ecosystem impacts.

"I am excited about the unique opportunity to represent the Ohio River Foundation as a Restoration Program Manager, and I look forward to building new relationships and making positive contributions toward the growth of the restoration program and improvement in the ecological health of the Ohio River watershed," said Sarah about her new position.

One feature of ORF's Restoration Program is the reconnection of rivers and reducing the incidence of harmful algal blooms. Excess nutrient runoff from farms and discharges from wastewater treatment plants creates conditions that promote algal blooms that are detrimental to the survival of aquatic species and can be hazardous to public health. When these contaminated waters are trapped upstream from a dam algal blooms more often occur. Removing these barriers reduces the likelihood that algal blooms will occur.

Furthermore, another issue driving interest for removing these types of structures is public safety. As recreation deaths associated with low-head dams continue to occur, concerned dam owners want them removed. Their removal is not just a benefit to the waterways they impound, but also a potential driver for economic growth through bike and walking trail development and better access to the water for all.

To accomplish the above public health and safety and conservation objectives, ORF's low-head dam and low-water crossing removal projects are increasingly viewed as important to both ecological and public health. In many cases the low-head dams are decades old relics that no longer serve any useful purpose and the crossings are poorly functioning.

The Restoration Program also focuses on improving invasive plant specie control. ORF has been active for several years working on public lands to remove acres of invasive species, such as amur honeysuckle, calary pear, Chinese silvergrass, and burning bush. Its Youth Conservation Teams have employed high school and college students to work on county, city, and national public lands completing more than 200 projects that include removing invasive species, planting more than 500 trees and endangered plants, conducting river cleanups, installing erosion controls, and repairing trails.

Ohio River Foundation is a nonprofit organization serving the 200,000 square mile watershed with education and conservation programs that reach thousands of students every year and assist agencies and communities throughout the watershed in protecting and restoring their natural resources.

To find out how ORF can help you with your conservation project contact Rich Cogen at rcogen@ohioriverfdn.org or 513-460-3365. More information about ORF's can be found at www.ohioriverfdn.org and its Facebook page.

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