

Rivers Quarterly

Journal of Rivers Unlimited, Ohio's River Protection Organization

Adopt-a-Stream Program Makes River Protection Personal

With the support of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, RU's new program will increase public stewardship on waterways.

By Nate Holscher

On a recent road trip, you may have noticed that some of our highways are more scenic than others. The attractive ones tend to be free of Big Mac wrappers and other discarded mementos of stops at the drive-through. On the cleaner sections of road, you will usually see a sign that tells us that this highway has been adopted- most often by a group of citizens that's taken responsibility for its maintenance and beautification. And so the basic notion of civic engagement is put to the benefit of all who use the highway. In various forms, the "Adopt-a-Highway" program has prospered throughout the country, giving some of our public roads the scenic quality that can make traveling a joy.

There was a time when the notion of the public road included rivers, which served as highways for many travelers, especially here in Ohio. In the years after the Civil War, waterways ceased to provide transportation or livelihood for as many, and public involvement in our rivers declined drastically. As the country turned its attention to railways and then highways, its waterways began to suffer from the neglect of the many and the abuse of the few.

Thankfully, since the 1970s, our rivers and streams have begun to be revived by federal laws, and a fresh wave of public participation and protection. Many sections of stream, however, are still neglected. While potholes on highways are fixed regularly, old tires often sit in streambeds for years. Dumping, spilling, encroachment and unnecessary erosion still occur at an alarming rate.



A Goodyear for Rivers: In 2008, RU's Adopt-a-Stream program will work with citizens to make sure that they have the resources to cleanup and effectively protect their streams.

ADOPT-A-STREAM continued on page 7

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 *New Book Draws from Work of OSU, RU*
- 3 *Watershed News*
- 4 *Friends of the Great Miami Stay on Track*
- 5 *O'Connor Photo of Little Miami Wins Award*
- 6 *RU Volunteers Shine in Columbus*

New Book Draws from Work of OSU, RU

Economic Valuation of River Systems Will Be Used as Teaching Tool

By Mike Fremont

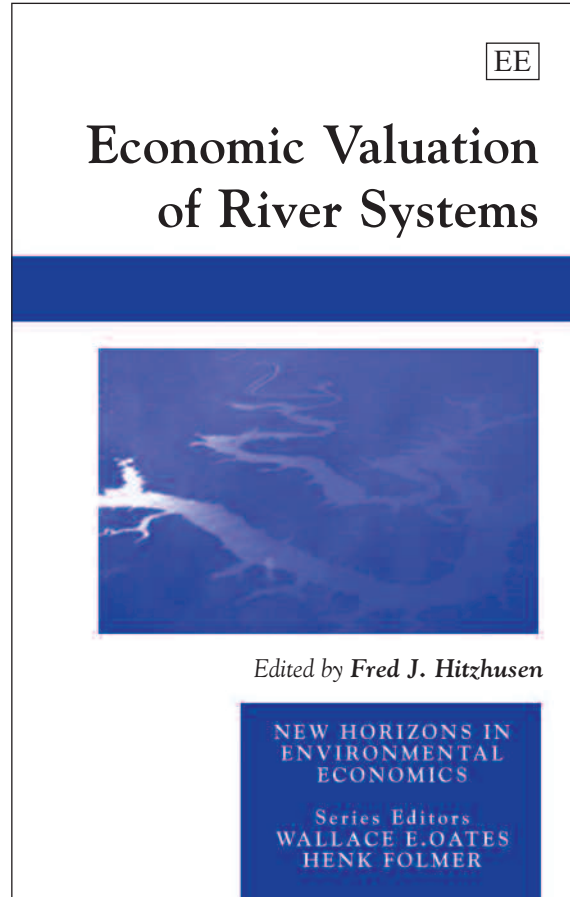
An ECONOMICS BOOK. How boring can you get? However: from the great mass of swirling, turbulent, wind-driven efforts over the years to save rivers, once in a while a treasure washes up onto shore.

Economic Valuation of River Systems is such a gift. Edited by Fred Hitzhusen, published by Edward Elgar of Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2007, 218 pages, \$125.

This is a technical, teaching book drawn from Rivers Unlimited's sponsorship of The Ohio State University's river resource economics studies beginning in 1997.

In 1984, after 12 years' work to prevent wasteful and destructive dams and channelization projects in Ohio, we at RU thought there might be a more likely way to save certain rivers, other than appealing just to environmental concerns and values such as natural beauty, water quality, birds, fish and wildlife. We thought that this strange new method would be an appeal to the American idea of profit. Community profit. That any degraded river, if made clean and attractive in its corridor would become a greater asset to its community.

How much would it cost to fix a river? What would be the economic benefits – in dollars? Would it pay to fix it? Resource economists could find out.



OSU economists have now established this body of learning, this unique niche of how to do it. We see it as the ultimate logic to restore rivers great and small, as well as protect them from a degraded, developed fate.

RIVER ECONOMICS continued on page 6

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Watershed News

By Nate Holscher

The Ohio River:

With the support of the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), Ohio State University is undertaking an economic valuation of the area's stretch of the Ohio River. The study will ascertain the economic benefits (in real estate, tourism, recreation, etc.) of improving the water quality of the river at a much faster rate than is set in the federally-mandated Consent Decree. The decree requires that the District spend over 2 billion dollars over a number of years to improve water quality currently degraded by sewer overflows, among other things. The study is based on the River Resource Economics Program that Mike Fremont/Rivers Unlimited and Ohio State University initiated in 1997. If the study finds that improving water quality at a faster rate yields economic benefits that could pay for the improvements through an increased tax base, it would give incentive to speed along a process that is currently set to take more than twenty years.

O'Bannon Creek/East Fork Little Miami:

A 118-acre farm and wildlife area on a scenic tributary of O'Bannon Creek in Clermont County may soon be sold and subdivided unless an alternative solution can be found. The farm, located in Goshen Township, is half farmland and half old-growth forest. A tributary of O'Bannon Creek flows over natural waterfalls on the property before it reaches O'Bannon Creek. The land is home to an array of animal life (including fox, wild turkey and mink) as well as some rare plants (synandria, autupurpuroa and ginseng). Rivers Unlimited has been working with one of the landowners to find an alternative solution, but help is still needed. Interested parties should call (513)761-4003.

The Little Miami River:

Despite opposition from Rivers Unlimited, Little Miami Inc and the Izaak Walton League of Cincinnati, a conditional use permit was granted to build a 195 foot cell phone tower in Loveland, approximately 50 yards from the Little Miami River. In opposing the permit, groups noted that constructing a tower so close to a State and National Scenic River was incongruent with the River's

intended purpose, and that there were other locations where the tower could be built without affecting the view from the Little Miami. A lesson learned is that we all must be aware of our local zoning laws, and do what we can to make sure that they give adequate protection to our community rivers.



Can You See Me Now?: A large cell phone tower may soon be visible from the LMR.

The Little Miami River Partnership hosts its annual dinner on Feb. 21st in Dayton. People can view the LMRP's photo contest winners (including those by RU's own Tim and Connie O'Connor) at the Dayton Art Institute at 5:30 pm and then head to a cocktail hour at 6:30 at El Mesan Resturante, which precedes a 7:30 dinner. \$25/person. Info/RSVP at (513)695-2542.

Taylor Creek:

The public is waiting to hear whether or not the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency will deny, accept, or modify a Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit to develop 67-acres in the Taylor Creek sub-watershed and permanently fill over a mile of high-quality headwater stream. About 200 people attended a public hearing co-hosted by the OEPA and the Army Corps of Engineers on Nov. 15th in Green Township, giving testimony on the stream and the development.

Would you like to include news from your watershed or group? E-mail nate.holscher@riversunlimited.org with your updates. 💧

Friends of the Great Miami Stay on Track

By Tom Quinn

Much has changed since the Friends of the Great Miami started organizing in the summer of 1999. Leadership has turned over several times, paid staff has come and gone, and the issues of the day have passed through several cycles.

But much remains the same. From inception, the Friends have enjoyed a clearly written mission statement to keep them on track. It says:

“The Friends of the Great Miami is a citizen-based, education and advocacy group established to conserve, restore and enhance the Great Miami River system for the benefit of wildlife, residents, and the public interest.”

The mission translates into activities such as:

- o Harvesting surplus seedlings and saplings from the mud flats of Oxbow Lake near the Great Miami’s mouth and transplanting them along the river at Colerain Township’s new Heritage Park.*
- o Working with the Boy Scouts to fill gaps in the riverside woodlands along the Fairfield Bike Trail and Fairfield Water Works Park.*
- o Going on canoe outings in the company of well-informed river advocates like Dr. Michael C. Miller, professor of aquatic ecology at the University of Cincinnati.*
- o Joining forces with public water systems, local governments and conservation groups to organize local stations for the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River, a yearly river cleanup.*
- o Educating others about storm water management as part of a grant project with the Miami Conservancy District and OKI Regional Council of Governments.*
- o Identifying and mapping potential sources of pollution to the Great Miami River, its tributaries and its underlying aquifer, which supplies drinking water to more than 300,000 people.*

o Collaborating with the City of Hamilton and Butler County organizations to successfully launch Great Miami River Days, a weekend-long riverside festival.

o Winning grants from Hamilton County Storm Water District, Cinergy Foundation, Xavier University, Ohio EPA and OKI Regional Council of Governments.

More can be done. We seek a few good volunteers to resume the pursuit of a Scenic River designation for the lower Great Miami watershed. Having won resolutions of support by the trustees of Colerain and Whitewater Townships, the group wants to do the same with other political jurisdictions that border the river. That’s what it will take to persuade the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to start a Scenic River study for the Great Miami.

And, of course, the Friends seek more members, guests and volunteers. Your ideas and friendly companionship are welcome. For more information, check out the Friends’ website at www.fogm.org, or contact Brian Bohl at (513)772-7645. 💧



Southwest Ohio’s Other Scenic River: Peaceful and compelling scenes like these await those who join the Friends on a canoe outing. You can also volunteer to help ensure such scenes are preserved on the Great Miami River.

O'Connor Photo of Little Miami Wins Award

By Nate Holscher

For over a year, Tim and Connie O'Connor have been photographing human activity that affects our waterways. Flying at low altitudes in a rotorcraft, they are able to capture detailed images of even relatively small disturbances along rivers and streams that go unnoticed by others. Ironically, it was a photo of a giant disturbance—known to everyone who has ever driven between Cincinnati and Columbus—that recently received accolades. In November, their photo of the I-71 bridge over the Little Miami was honored by the Little Miami River Partnership as the winner of the “Effects of Man” category of the organization’s annual photo contest.

Tim and Connie’s photos, which have played many important roles in RU’s efforts over the past year, are exceptional not only for their subject matter, but also for the overall composition and quality of the photos. The couple is truly making an art form out of snapping pictures at 1,000 feet. 💧



Tim and Connie O'Connor accept the Watchdog of the Year Award at the Ohio Environmental Council's Annual Dinner.



A Bridge Over Troubled Waters: This picture of I-71 crossing the Little Miami River and its corridor netted the O'Connors first place in the “Effects of Man” Category of LMRP’s Photo Contest.

RU Volunteers Shine in Columbus

By *Kenneth Lammers*

Thanks to the generosity of Rivers Unlimited (RU) and Ohio Environmental Council (OEC), my wife, Dorothy, and I enjoyed a very good dinner at OEC's annual event in Columbus on October 27, 2007. The Silent Auction kicked off the event, with attendees checking out all the auction items. This fundraiser included a variety of tickets to events, art work, and other assorted contributions to OEC. We bid on several items and were the highest bidder for two tickets to Cincinnati Ballet's Carmina Burana this spring and four tickets to a Columbus Crew soccer game.

After a welcome by Jack Shaner, Director of Public Affairs, OEC's new Executive Director, Keith Dimof, gave an excellent keynote address on why Ohio's natural resources should be protected. He lamented, as all of us have, the loss of open natural spaces that were available to us as youngsters but are now developed.

Next was the Awards Presentation. Of special note to us was a Lifetime Achievement award given to Ralph Ramey, former Chief of Natural Areas and Preserves for the Ohio DNR, life-long naturalist and hiker, and author of the popular 50 Hikes (and More Hikes) in Ohio. Many other worthy awards were given, but we took special note of the presentation of the Environmental Watchdog award given to Tim and Connie O'Connor. They have been working with RU to do aerial reconnaissance of activities impacting natural habitat, in particular wetlands and streams. We were particularly moved by their dedication in surveying activities, some of which are illegal and damaging to the environment. Also, Tim and Connie are active volunteers for RU and can be found at most monthly RU meetings! 💧

RIVER ECONOMICS continued from page 2

One can see that the recovered and new uses will increase tax base and new economic activity. The new income can be used to defray the costs of restoration, including even the rebuilding of aged sewage treatment systems.

We quote from the EVRS dust jacket:

"It is rare to find a book that attempts to integrate physical, biological and social sciences (economics) to address environmental problems, but this book does a great job of it. It is also rare to find a book that addresses both the benefits and costs of river restoration, and again this book delivers. This collection of case studies provides an informative and practical guide to conducting economic analyses of many different types of river restoration. Scientists interested in quantifying the benefits and costs of river restoration will gain a very quick and thorough education from the case studies presented in this book".

--John Loomis, Colorado State University

The book applies benefit-cost analysis and a wide array of non-market and distribution economic valuation methods in ecologic context to determine the payoff and distribution impacts of various infrastructure and water quality improvements of eight river systems in the Great Lakes region of the US. The generally positive results have important implications for public policy and future research.

Prime readership is the wide range of academics, NGO and government agency staff and citizen action groups concerned with the management and protection of rivers and other natural resource systems.

River Resource Economics has come of age. We're proud of RU's part in this process! 💧

Liquid Asset: Economic evaluations of rivers help determine the extent to which cleaner waterways will bolster local economies.



ADOPT-A-STREAM continued from page 1

This spring, thanks in large part to the generous support of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Rivers Unlimited is bringing the notion of citizen stewardship to the waterways of southwest Ohio. RU's "Adopt-a-Stream" program will take the success of the highway program and adapt it to the benefit of our local rivers and streams. The program pairs citizens and civic groups with a local stretch of stream that is in need of a consistent public presence. Rivers Unlimited will then work with the participants to make sure that they have the tools they need- bags, gloves, trash grabbers, trash pick-up, etc.- to complete three clean-ups (spring, summer and fall) each year. But the clean-ups are not merely ends in themselves – they will cultivate the kind of watchful and consistent presence that is necessary to protect and improve the quality of a stream. And RU is making sure that participants have far more than physical tools – the program ensures that adopters are equipped with the knowledge, support and confidence to serve as effective stream stewards.

Once participants have chosen a stretch of stream to adopt, RU will post a sign along the stream in a spot of high visibility, informing the public of its active citizen presence and providing contact information in the event of pollution, and also for citizens interested in becoming involved in its care. Along with logistical

support for clean-ups, RU will provide support in three other ways:

- 1) A "Know Your Watershed" brochure providing citizens with the information relevant to the effective care of their stream. This information includes the forms of degradation that threaten our local rivers, what to be on the lookout for, ways in which citizens can prevent pollution, and how to contact the right people when degradation is identified.
- 2) A yearly stream stewardship conference for volunteers and adoptees.
- 3) Ongoing support and consultation from RU staff, volunteers and board members. Support will include consultation on pollution and erosion issues, advice for responsible maintenance and beautification and aerial photography of adopted segments.

RU is starting its efforts with a pilot program on the Great Miami River Watershed and nearby streams. We are currently pairing civic organizations (scouts, volunteer organizations, etc) and groups of individuals with sections of waterway in need of stewardship. To be paired with a stream segment, or to learn more about the program, please call Nate Holscher at (513)761-4003. 💧

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL RIVERS! A Benefit Concert for Rivers Unlimited

Friday, March 14th, 2008
Southgate House Ballroom, Newport, KY

Featuring the Musical Intonations of:
500 Miles to Memphis, Nathan Holscher, and Todd Deatherage

Tickets \$10 at the Door.
Doors Open at 9:00 pm. Be there or be square.
For More Information, phone (513) 761-4003



Join Our Effort!

Help Rivers Unlimited Protect Ohio's Greatest Resources.

YES! I want to help Rivers Unlimited protect the 61,000 miles of rivers and streams in Ohio from pollutants and other forms of degradation. Use my gift to help the nation's oldest statewide river protection organization continue to protect and restore these scenic waterways which are vital to the health, economy and quality of life in our state.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution of:

- \$35 – Basic Membership
- \$50 – Family or Group Membership
- \$100 – River Sustainer
- \$250 – River Steward
- \$___ Other

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I prefer to have my donation recognized anonymously.

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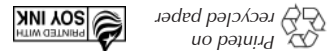
Interested in submitting an article to be published in the next edition of Rivers Quarterly?

The submission deadline for articles to be printed in the Spring 2008 Rivers Quarterly is April 9th.

If you or your watershed organization has a river issue that Ohioans should know about, please email your article and pictures (not required) to nate.holscher@riversunlimited.org Direct any questions or comments to the same email address or call (513)761-4003.



EarthShare of Ohio helped fund this issue of Rivers Quarterly.



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