



Drinking water project creates role for Friends of the Great Miami

Friends of the Great Miami are working with local governments to protect drinking water in the Great Miami River valley.

The citizen-based local watershed group will help identify potential sources of drinking water pollution in Butler and Hamilton counties, Ohio. This is one of the main tasks for a team project sponsored by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI). The Ohio EPA has awarded \$69,000 in federal funds to the effort and 10 project partners have agreed to provide \$50,000 worth of in-kind services.

The relationship between surface water and ground water will be an important part of this project. The Great Miami River and its tributaries replenish an underground aquifer that provides drinking water to more than a 500,000 people in a 15-county region. When public water systems pump water from wells drilled into that aquifer, they increase the likelihood that surface water pollutants can become ground water pollutants through a process known as induced infiltration.

The Village of New Miami, an upriver neighbor to the City of Hamilton, has joined the project to develop a drinking water protection plan for the village's public water system. For technical guidance, New Miami is reaching out to a diverse project team that includes a groundwater protection coordinator from the Hamilton to New Baltimore Ground Water Consortium. Since the 1960s, the Consortium has set the standard for regional cooperation among public water systems that pump drinking water from the Great Miami aquifer in Butler and Hamilton counties.

Other key people working on this project are two hydrogeologists, a public water system operator, the president of New Miami's Board of Public Affairs, a GIS (geographic information systems) manager, an environmental planner and a University of Cincinnati professor. They will be aided by the latest technology, including a tablet personal computer, a digital camera, GPS (global positioning system), detailed digital mapping and computerized inventory forms to document potential pollution sources.

Much of the work will be accomplished during stream walks in hip waders or river excursions in canoes. The biggest challenge may not be technical or scientific, but simply the need to never drop or dunk the sensitive computer gear.

Potential pollution sources will be sought along these waterways:

- Segments of the Great Miami River, from the Village of New Miami in Butler County to the community of New Baltimore in Hamilton County
- Four Mile Creek in Butler County
- Banklick Creek in Hamilton and Butler counties
- Pleasant Run in Hamilton and Butler counties
- Indian Creek in Butler County
- A nameless tributary in Butler County

The project also will sponsor education and conservation efforts. Friends of the Great Miami can help by planting riverside trees, sponsoring canoe trips, doing river cleanups, labeling storm drains and more. For more information, visit the Calendar of Events on our website at www.fogm.org.