

River town will protect its life blood

NEW MIAMI _ This historic steel town in Butler County recently took important steps to supply pure, clean drinking water for generations to come.

At its May 15th meeting, the New Miami Village Council passed a drinking water protection ordinance that empowers the village to prevent ground water contamination through zoning, vigilance and hazardous material containment rules. The ordinance is based on model legislation developed by the Hamilton to New Baltimore Ground Water Consortium and used by New Miami's neighboring communities.

New Miami borders Four Mile Creek and the Great Miami River, just northeast of Hamilton. The village depends on three riverside wells to pump an average of 220,000 gallons daily to 3,200 customers. About 700 of those customers live north of village limits in St. Clair Township, which encompasses most of New Miami's drinking water protection area.

Drinking water supplies cross many political boundaries in Butler County, creating the need for intergovernmental collaboration. This prompted OKI Regional Council of Governments to recruit the Friends of the Great Miami and nine other project partners for a federal grant from Ohio EPA and U.S. EPA. That grant funded creation of the *Drinking Water Protection Plan for the Village of New Miami*, which Ohio EPA praised moments before village council passed the drinking water protection ordinance.

Funded under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, the grant project is managed by Bruce Koehler, an environmental planner at OKI and past president of Friends of the Great Miami. Several FOGM members have assisted the project, which helps protect ground water pumped by seven public water systems to more than 300,000 people in Butler and Hamilton counties.

Besides FOGM, project partners who make the joint effort possible are:

- Village of New Miami
- OKI Regional Council of Governments
- Hamilton to New Baltimore Ground Water Consortium
- Miami Conservancy District
- Butler County Storm Water District
- Butler Soil and Water Conservation District
- Miami University's Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs
- Three Valley Conservation Trust
- Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Dr. Michael C. Miller of the University of Cincinnati

Through education and vigilance, the Friends continue to boost drinking water protection in the New Miami area. Much of this results from FOGM's work on a technical assistance grant to advise the public about a hazardous waste cleanup being planned for the former Armco steel and coke plant site at New Miami, next to the Great Miami River.