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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Recovery Conservation Corps to benefit Athens County**

The new Recovery Conservation Corps Initiative will soon be creating work experience positions, allowing participants to earn college credits for free, and helping to clean up public parks in Athens County.

The federal government's economic stimulus package is paying for the Recovery Conservation Corps program in Athens County and all across the state through the Workforce Investment Act program (WIA). Locally, Athens County Job and Family Services is coordinating the program with Hocking College and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR).

On Tuesday, June 2, the Athens County Commissioners approved the contract with Hocking College for the Recovery Conservation Corps. Athens County is spending \$404,000 in WIA funds from the economic stimulus package on the program, which is creating more than 40 positions to be filled by individuals between the ages of 18-24. Participants will be working at public parks such as Burr Oak State Park, Strouds Run State Park and Lake Snowden Park.

Hocking College will hire and train the eight-person crews for each park. Each group will have a crew leader, assistant crew leader and six crew members, and the participants will be able to work on a wide range of tasks.

"We're excited about it," said Mike Powers, park manager for Burr Oak, Strouds Run and Forked Run state parks. In the state parks, the Recovery Conservation Corps participants will be doing projects such as maintaining trails and repairing dams, Powers said. They also may be doing work such as painting buildings and cutting grass. State parks have seen a decrease in personnel in recent years due to budget reductions, so it will be key to have the Recovery Conservation Corps members working this summer.

"We're looking forward to it," Powers said.

The participants will be paid for their work, and they will also be able to earn up to 10 college credit hours worth of instruction through the work experience. Training will be provided in areas such as First Aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, chainsaw operations and maintenance, recreational equipment operation and maintenance, orientation to careers in natural resources, wood shop instruction and supervision/leadership.

Dr. Roy Palmer, senior vice president at Hocking College, said the program will be a great learning experience for the participants, no matter what field of work they eventually go into.

“This program will be in an environment where they can see the application of what they are learning every day when they go to work. That’s real learning,” Palmer said.

No matter what careers the participants work in later in life, they will receive excellent work experience in the Recovery Conservation Corps and they will know what it is like to work in a park on a professional level, Palmer explained.

“I felt that the old Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the best programs in government, period, because it centered around youth who were uncertain about their future careers. It not only gave them work experience, but also some exposure to natural resource careers, which are outstanding and needed,” Palmer said. “Hocking College is exceptionally pleased to be involved in this project.”

Joe McGowan, director of The Work Station for Athens County Job and Family Services, explained that it is also important for the participants to be able to earn money over the summer through the program. Many college students drop out of school because the tuition costs, book expenses, fees and daily expenses get to be too much.

“Often, the students can’t afford to stay in school,” he said, adding that this program will help the participants earn the money they need for school expenses. The Recovery Conservation Corps participants will also enjoy working on projects that benefit the entire community, McGowan said.

“It’s going to be a good work experience for these folks,” McGowan said.

For more information on the Recovery Conservation Corps program in Athens County, call Nick Claussen at Athens County Job and Family Services at 797-2523.

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