

Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board

Annual Management Report

Date 06/01/2006

Awarded Agency: Kentucky State University (KSU)

Project Name: Environmental Education Center

County: Henry

Acres: 300

Date of Acquisition: 04/11/2005

Introduction:

Considerable progress has been made since the property was transferred to KSU over a year ago. Specific accomplishments include:

- three new trails have been established, and trees lining these trails have been pruned
- temporary restroom facilities have been installed and serviced
- the aesthetic value of the property has been maintained by managing the grasslands
- species population assessments of the ponds and Six Mile Creek have been conducted
- the entrance was renovated to enhance accessibility, including the installment a new gate.

With funds received from KHLCFB, we have constructed a parking area with room for three school busses. Almost 1,000 children ranging from five to seventeen years old have enjoyed the natural wonders which the site has to offer by visiting the environmental education center (EEC), and 7,000 students from twenty schools have learned about conservation and sustainability through interacting with the mobile classroom when it visited their schools.

Status of Project:

In January of 2004, KSU submitted the Preliminary Resource Management Plan for the KSU-Environmental Education Center. This plan was approved, and the management responsibility as well as ownership of the property was transferred to Kentucky State University.

Compliance with Preliminary Resource Management Plan:

To date, KSU has adhered to all stated goals, guidelines, and objectives. Specific management activity topics and our progress towards satisfying the Resource Management Plan are listed below.

- A. Natural resource protection: Through stewardship and planned management protection we have enhanced the value of this property as an environmental education facility and as a protected natural habitat for native wildlife.
- B. Description of natural communities: A timber cruise is in progress at the EEC to formulate an accurate description of natural communities. Also, an approved biological inventory is in place.
- C. Planned actions to protect endangered, threatened, or species of special concern: Volunteers from the Department of Fish and Wildlife have assessed the mussel population of Six Mile Creek and found no threatened or endangered mussels.
- D. Planned actions to protect water quality: Initial water quality analyses have been conducted on both Six Mile Creek and the pond. GIS mapping is being conducted to examine and establish baseline for the watershed.
- E. Planned hydro-period management: National Science Foundation (NSF) Students conducted an initial assessment of stream water quality. Research and Extension Apprenticeship Program (REAP) students, and Second Street School students will continue monitoring water quality.
- F. Potential developmental pressures: Zoning plans for the surrounding areas are being researched. No problems are anticipated at this time.
- G. Resource restoration and enhancement: Three new trails have been established and maintained. Accommodations for those with physical limitations are included whenever possible. An example is the construction of a wheelchair ramp on the pond observation platform.
- H. Exotic plant and animal removal: Exotic plant species including: autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) have been removed on several occasions by different volunteer groups. Neighbors have been asked to keep livestock on their own properties.
- I. Restoration of wetlands: The EEC is being evaluated for wetland stability.
- J. Improvement of surface water quality: Two large truckloads of trash have been removed from the EEC.
- K. Recovery plans for endangered species: Volunteers from the Department of Fish and Wildlife have assessed the mussel population of Six Mile Creek. Volunteers from the United States Marine Corp have placed eight wood duck boxes throughout the EEC.

- L. Archaeological and historical resource protection: An archaeological assessment of the property has been completed.
- M. Security and safety: Signs have been posted at the entrance of the EEC acknowledging that this land was purchased with funds from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Board and identifying it as KSU property. Staff from KSU supervise all field trips to the EEC.
- N. Maintenance: KSU staff performs all regular maintenance of the site.
- O. Physical Improvements: A parking lot large enough for three school busses to maneuver and park has been constructed with additional funds provided by the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board. An observation platform has been constructed at the pond, with Home Depot donating all the lumber.
- P. Agreements: KSU is performing all tasks as the sole property manager. The External Advisory Council (see attached membership list) has been designed to ensure appropriate progress is being made to develop the EEC. The Internal Steering Committee was created because the University understands what an immense responsibility it is to preserve and enhance this natural area.
- Q. Public use: The EEC is available for public use under KSU Facilities Use policy.
- R. Restrictions: The public is permitted to use the area year-round except during closed periods due to prudent wildlife management practices.

General Comments:

Kentucky State University wishes to allow all students, including those with disabilities, access to the environmental education center. Some students may not be able to physically make the journey to Henry County where the center is located. One solution is to bring the center to them. Over 7,000 students from 20 schools from all over Kentucky have been taught environmental concepts through visits to their school systems by the mobile environmental education trailer.

Kentucky State University also wishes to teach by example and build a “green” mini campus at the Environmental Education Center. We will keep construction and disturbances of any kind to a minimum while building our dream.

Two environmental education grants submitted by KSU personnel have recently been given approval by the U.S.D.A. (please see attached abstracts of the grants). One of these grants, entitled “Comprehensive Program to Expose K-16 Students, Particularly Underrepresented Student Populations to Nature Resource and Environmental Education Opportunities,” will

provide education training for K-12 teachers at the KSU-EEC as well as establish a new Aquatic Ecology course at KSU which will utilize KSU-EEC as its field laboratory. The second grant, “Teaching and Mentoring Students for Careers in Environmental Science & Bioremediation Techniques”, will also utilize the EEC. These two grants total close to \$400,000.

K-12 teachers in the KSU service area will receive environmental education training at the EEC through a program entitled “Job Embedded Professional Development for Teachers using Environment-based Education” (please see attached program description). This is an on-going activity between the University and the environmental education council of the Kentucky Department of Education.

Status of the Final Resource Management Plan:

The archaeological and biological inventories of the property that were commissioned by the Kentucky School for the Blind will continue to be utilized. Dr. Martin has agreed they remain valid and relevant. KSU staff and faculty are currently preparing a Final Resource Management Plan.

Submitted by: Kentucky State University
Environmental Education Center Internal Advisory Committee
103 Athletic Drive
Frankfort Kentucky 40601
502-597-5089