

Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board  
Annual Management Report

Date 07/09/2007

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 two years ago. Specific accomplishments include:

- 14,000 students from various schools all over the state have learned about conservation and sustainability through interacting with the mobile classroom when it visited their schools
- 1,500 visitors have enjoyed the natural wonders which the site has to offer by visiting the environmental education center (EEC)
- 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 installation of a new gate
- the boundary has been marked
- Approximately 400 oak saplings have been planted around the perimeter of the EEC
- with funds received from KHLCFB, a parking area has been constructed with room for three school busses and a storage facility capable of storing the Mobile EEC

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 the value of this property has been enhanced as an environmental education facility and as a protected natural habitat for native wildlife. Volunteers from the United States Marine Corp have placed eight wood duck boxes throughout the EEC. Three pairs of wood ducks were spotted this spring.
- B. Description of natural communities: Data has been collected 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. The population of false hellebore (*Veratrum woodii*) has doubled in the past two seasons.
- 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: Seasonal employees have removed large quantities of trash from the EEC including: pots, glassware, gas tanks, barbed wire, shoes, and cans.
- K. Recovery plans for endangered species: No endangered species have been definitively identified at the site. Tentative identifications are being verified.

- 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. The boundary was recently surveyed with Grider Engineering Company to firmly establish the boundaries.
- 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 as well as a large storage facility 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 some of the lumber.
- P. Agreements: KSU is performing all tasks as the sole property manager. The External Advisory Committee meets annually to ensure appropriate progress is being made and gives suggestions on program directions. The Internal Steering Committee was created to coordinate different areas of the University which manage or utilize these facilities.
- 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. All vehicle travel has been limited to the parking area except for authorized University vehicles.

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 14,000 students from schools all over Kentucky have been taught environmental concepts through visits to their school systems by the mobile environmental education trailer. An interactive Web site has been constructed in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Web site, which has received over 5,000 visitors from over 40 countries, provides a virtual tour of the EEC. A quarterly newsletter, distributed to over 900 teachers across Kentucky, has an audio option for the visually impaired. Several graduate and undergraduate classes utilize the facility and three research projects are based at KSU-EEC.

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.. 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.

A grant proposal entitled, “Evaluation of Podcasting for Teaching Natural Resources and Agriculture to Diverse Student Populations” has been submitted. If funded, this grant will look at teaching students with different learning abilities and disabilities.

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.” This is an on-going activity between the University and the environmental education council of the Kentucky Department of Education.

The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) is a comprehensive, undergraduate program designed to substantially increase the quantity and quality of students, especially African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, pursuing degrees and careers in science, mathematics, engineering and technology. This program had several activities at the EEC.

A summer environmental science workshop for Middle and High School teachers will spend a portion of a week at the EEC. This is a U.S. Department of Agriculture funded workshop designed to provide training to teachers to incorporate environmental topics/issues in their school curriculum.

A Strategic Plan for the next five years was accepted by both the Internal Steering Committee and the External Advisory Committee. The strategic plan articulated how many visitors the EEC hoped to welcome over the next five years both at the EEC and with the Mobile EEC. To date we have exceeded our goals in addressing both students with disabilities and all other members of the Commonwealth.

An intern from Midway College will be working this summer as part of her course requirements to map and eradicate invasive species, and also map and identify various unique plant communities throughout the EEC. State of the art GPS and GIS technologies will be utilized.

At this time we would like to request permission to plant 250 American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) saplings in the fall at the EEC. The trees have been donated by the Nut Growers Association of Kentucky.

The Nature Conservancy is in the process of developing a burn plan. The plan would burn approximately 30 acres next to Six Mile Creek and return the vegetation to warm season grasses. Over the next few years an entomologist at KSU plans to evaluate the effect of these activities on insect communities and biodiversity.

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 that they remain valid and relevant. KSU staff and faculty are currently preparing a Final Resource Management Plan.

Submitted by: Kentucky State University  
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