

Highway Improvements to Benefit People & Environment

The permanent loss of any forested area is something that no environmental manager wants. But with some innovative engineering, cooperative planning, and partnership involvement, the Wayne NF has turned the loss of forest to the US 33 Bypass project into as much of an advantage as could be expected.

“The project relocates an 8.5-mile stretch of highway from the town of Nelsonville to a rural forested area north of town,” said Terry Kreinhop, the Forest’s civil engineer liaison for the highway project.

The Wayne worked closely with Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to minimize and mitigate impacts of the Nelsonville bypass, a four-lane controlled access highway between Haydenville and New Floodwood. Kreinhop coordinated the project for the Forest and in many cases, he acted as the agent for the FHWA as well through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

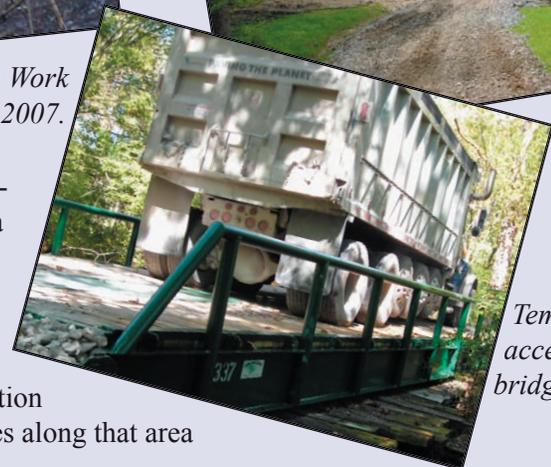
Coordination between agencies has resulted in minimizing the impacts of construction, and includes four wildlife crossings, provisions to reduce and preclude invasive plant species, and revegetate the right-of-way with native plants. The use of higher than usual fencing along the highway will help channel wildlife to one of the four wildlife crossings. The wildlife crossings will be a real boon for a local population of grizzled skipper butterfly, a Regional Forester Sensitive Species and a native of the area, which migrates along that area as well as other animals and amphibians. The culverts also provide habitat connectivity.

Kreinhop also noted \$100,000 has been set aside for new all-terrain vehicle trails, and a large culvert is planned to reconnect orphaned trails cut off by the new bypass. “FHWA and ODOT are trying to be good environmental stewards and are willing to make the extra effort to help us protect our resources.”



A log truck pulls out with logs from the timber contract and the area is shown below after logging was completed.

Above: Work completed through January 9, 2007.

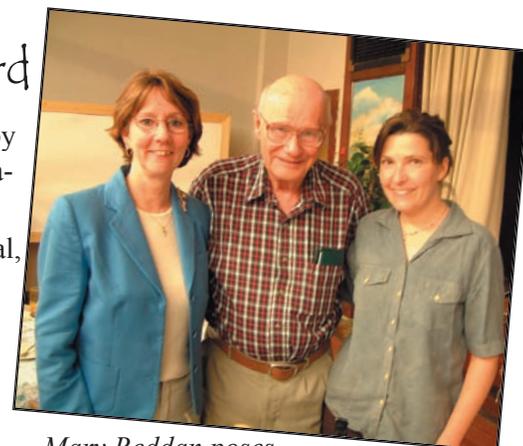


Temporary access bridge.

Wayne receives Rural Action’s 2006 Sustainable Partnership Award

On behalf of the Wayne, Forest Supervisor Mary Reddan accepted one of three annual Sustainability Awards given by Rural Action. Reddan noted, “I was honored to accept this award on behalf of the Forest. It is a reflection of the cooperation and partnerships we are developing as part of the environmental community in Southeastern Ohio.”

According to Jane Forrest Redfern, Rural Action’s Executive Director, Sustainability Awards “recognize an individual, business, or organization that works with Rural Action to build a more sustainable region.” Reddan accepted the award for the Wayne’s efforts in the restoration of watersheds in the Appalachian region, as well as the work on the Highway 33 Nelsonville Bypass. The citation reads: “In appreciation for your cooperation and commitment to the sustainability of our region, your generous spirit and willingness to share your knowledge, experiences, and personal resources with others, leaving the world a better place.”



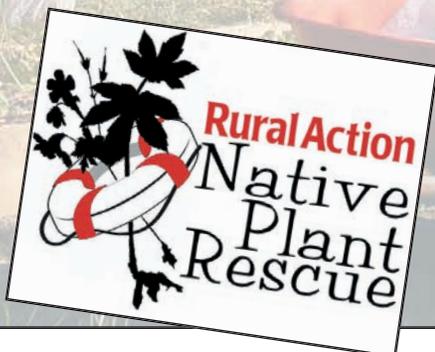
Mary Reddan poses with the other winners of the 2006 Annual Sustainability Awards, Gifford Doxsee of Athens, OH; and Christine Hughes representing the Village Bakery.

Saving Plants for replanting

Working with Rural Action, VISTA, Hocking College, and others the Wayne hosted a native plant rescue to dig and move native forest plants from Highway 33 Bypass site and place them in holding and seed production beds for future restoration projects. Even Mrs. Hope Taft (pictured in the photo on the left), wife of Ohio’s former Governor Bob Taft, came down to participate.

Several plant beds for both shade and sun tolerant plants were constructed behind the Wayne NF office and volunteers worked to locate and move plants which would otherwise have been lost in construction. Mrs. Taft took some of the plants back to the Governor’s Mansion as well, for the heritage landscape garden there.

Rural Action is working with Hocking College to spearhead a large staff and volunteer effort to rescue as many native plants from the right-of-way area as possible before construction begins in late 2007. The goal: to replant these native species along the right-of-way to give the landscape a more natural, native appearance and cut down on the spread of non-native invasive plants.



Volunteers work with Native Plant Rescue.