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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Local Conservation Projects Funded Through Mini-Grant Program**

Awarded by Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

**3/18/2016 FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**— Four local, non-profit organizations will receive funding for conservation projects through Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District's Conservation Mini-Grant program. Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed, Chadwick Arboretum, The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, and the Friends of the Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden are awarded with the 2016 Mini-Grants.

Funds that the District raises during their annual meeting, silent auction, tree sale, and affiliate membership program are added to the District's Conservation Fund. This fund supports the implementation of small conservation projects throughout the county through their Conservation Mini-Grant program and direct project funding. The program provides funding to local non-profit organizations, including school districts, each spring. This competitive program typically funds up to three applicants that demonstrate the need and ability to carry out on-the-ground conservation projects. Remaining funds are utilized throughout the year by the Franklin Soil and Water to implement conservation projects and programs in coordination with area partners.

This year, Franklin Soil and Water received 17 applications, a record-breaking number for the Mini-Grant program. As a result of a large pool of qualified applications, the District and their Board of Supervisors has awarded Mini-Grants to four organizations this year, the first time over three applicants have received funding awards. Each project will be awarded up to \$1500 toward their respected project for 2016.

Projects that have been awarded Mini-Grant funds this year include:

1. Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) and Cranbrook Elementary: The restoration of Slyh Run with the removal of invasive species and planting native trees.
2. Chadwick Arboretum: Tree plantings and planting demonstrations during their ArboBlitz 2016.
3. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium: Installation of a butterfly garden to improve habitat and educate visitors.
4. Friends of the Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden: Native tree plantings and improve habitat on their grounds.

Questions regarding the Conservation Mini-Grant Program can be directed to Kyle Wilson, Conservation Program Manager, or Sara Ernst, Conservation Implementation Specialist, at (614)486-9613.

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The mission of Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote land-use decisions for the conservation, protection and improvement of soil and water resources by providing information assistance through effective partnering, technical guidance and education.