Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists
Impact Statement

SUMMARY
The mission of the OCVN program is to promote awareness and citizen stewardship of Ohio’s natural resources through science-based education and community service. The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) program is a volunteer educational program designed to meet the natural resource education needs of the citizens of Ohio. Its purpose is to educate volunteers who will use the knowledge they gain to teach others about Ohio’s natural resources. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists provide service through their local natural resource organizations so that their activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently delivered to the general public.

SITUATION
Ohio has a rich natural heritage but state and local funds to protect this heritage have been declining in recent years. Our state and local park systems, nature centers, and natural areas and preserves rely heavily on volunteers to maintain trails, monitor for and remove invasive species, and educate visitors on the importance of conservation and stewardship of our natural resources.

RESPONSE
The OCVN program is a research-based scientific training program that emphasizes hands-on natural resource education coupled with volunteer service. Participants in the OCVN program receive 40 hours of combined classroom and field instruction and upon completing the instructional hours, provide 40 hours of volunteer service to their local parks or nature centers. Volunteers become Certified Volunteer Naturalists after completing
their 40 hours of service and are required to provide 20 hours of volunteer service and complete eight hours of advanced training annually. Training programs and volunteer service coordination are provided through local chapters. There are currently 13 OCVN chapters around Ohio.

A new part-time state coordinator was hired in Aug. 2013 to help promote and coordinate the program. In 2013 the State coordinator accomplished the following

- Conducted Strategic Chapter reviews
- Began quarterly chapter coordinator meetings
- Initiated new coordinator mentoring.
- Started OCVN listserv
- Helped initiate a new chapter in central Ohio

**IMPACT of OCVN program in 2013**

- 26,878 volunteer service hours from 406 volunteers
- Service value at $21.79/hr = $585,671
- 4000 more hours than 2012
- Volunteers provided service in the following areas:
  - **Interpretation**—audiences reached include from preschool age to seniors from assisting to leading events. Volunteers were involved with a number of youth events (e.g., STEM, scouts, day camps, middle schools).
  - **Outreach**—staffing booths, recruiting OCVN’s, writing articles, participating in discussions.
  - **Conservation-preservation/restoration** of native plants and forests in a variety of settings (e.g., wetlands).
  - **Maintenance**—volunteers helped to maintain trails and museums and assisted with animal care.

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