Summary
The School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR) has been a leader in training students in environmental and natural resource management for decades. As these graduates assume positions in public and private organizations, access to continuing education programs and opportunities to network with other professionals is important to their ability to work effectively. SENR has developed and implemented a broad range of capacity building programs/services to support this growing community of environmental professionals and volunteers.

Situation
Every sector of society is affected by environmental and natural resource management issues. Those who choose an environmental career or who choose to volunteer their services to address these issues in their communities look to land-grant institutions like Ohio State for unbiased, research-based information and educational programs to enhance their knowledge and skills and to grow and diversify their professional networks. Given the diverse disciplinary and applied scientific experience of our faculty and staff, SENR is well positioned to be a leader at the state and national levels to help build capacity among professionals and volunteers working to address complex environmental and natural resource issues. Like all academic units, the challenge for SENR is to leverage our scientific expertise to provide high value applied programs and services that will have real, measurable impacts on these individuals and in the communities and organizations in which they live and work.

Response
We have developed five core programs to support the state’s environment and natural resources community:

The Environmental Professionals Network (EPN) serves professionals and volunteers through an online community, a monthly networking breakfast, and larger signature events with respected presenters.
The Master of Environment and Natural Resources (MENR) is a professional practice degree program serving in-career and career-transition professionals, recent graduates, and others.

The Ohio Environmental Leaders Institute (OELI) provides educational programs for environmental, natural resources and sustainability professionals on leadership, collaboration, and communication.

The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) is a natural resources outreach and service program. Participants receive 40 hours of classroom and field instruction, and then provide volunteer service to local, state and national agencies and organizations.

The Ohio Woodland, Water, and Wildlife Conference is a forum for natural resources professionals to network and gain knowledge on natural resource management and the latest research.

IMPACT
EPN has approximately 2,000 online participants. Monthly breakfast programs average more than 130 attendees from diverse career and employment sectors plus students and up to 1,400 at signature events. Feedback shows collaborations/partnerships have been created, grants/internships/jobs gained, and projects initiated/sustained.

MENR students and graduates have been employed by or have volunteered with a wide range of environmental organizations, including federal, state, and local governmental agencies, NGOs and private sector companies. The program serves 15 to 20 graduate students per year.

OELI had three sessions in 2016 and optional events. Twenty-three individuals from public, private and non-profit sectors participated. Evaluations showed 100% of participants were exposed to new information and perspectives on environmental issues and gained new knowledge and skills they could apply in their work.

OCVN was offered by 22 state and local park districts and Extension offices. It certified 142 volunteer naturalists who provided 6,000 volunteer hours to 73 organizations valued at $143,000. One hundred certified volunteer naturalists attended a 2-day conference and 79 participated in OCVN webinar series. Evaluations showed 100% of respondents gained new knowledge/skills.

Over 190 natural resources professionals, responsible for management of almost 48,000 acres across the state, attended the Ohio Woodland Water and Wildlife Conference.