

The Resource

Employee Newsletter of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources

May 2002



OPEN ENROLLMENT — AETNA DROPS OUT April 29 – May 10

Once a year state employees get a chance to make changes in their benefits coverage. This year, open enrollment is from April 29 through May 10. Changes or enrollments take effect July 1.

This year, according to the Department of Administrative Services, Aetna U.S. Healthcare declined to respond to the state's request for an insured proposal, and therefore Aetna is no longer an option. If you are currently enrolled in any of the four Aetna plans, you will need to make a new selection during this year's open enrollment.

During this period, you may also enroll in or change your dental, vision, supplemental life insurance coverage, and add eligible dependents to your coverage.

You'll want to review your needs to make an informed choice. For instance, do you need to add or delete any eligible dependents?

Review the health plans' report card; call the providers or visit web sites for answers to your questions.

Read your benefits guide carefully to choose a plan that's right for you.

You don't need to fill out any forms if you're satisfied with your current benefits.

If you're enrolling for the first time, or making changes, submit the enrollment form by the last day of enrollment, May 10. Forms are available on the DAS web site at www.state.oh.us/das/dhr/benindex.html, or call Human Resources, **Brenda Brehm**, benefits officer, at 614-265-6842.

RAISING A GREAT PUMPKIN

Paul 'Gus' Smithhisler, with the Division of Engineering, is a registered professional civil engineer and project manager for ODNR's capital improvement projects. He's involved in the design and construction of ODNR projects, such as boat ramps, marina improvements, trails, and pole buildings. Gus was also recently put in charge of maintenance of roads and parking lots at department facilities.

So he's a man with firsthand knowledge of, and abiding interest in, how things work and fit together. For the past three years, he's had heavy-duty projects of his own — in his garden!

The Great Pumpkin truly exists — as well as the Great Squash. Gus' hobby is growing Atlantic Giant Pumpkins. Pumpkins and squash are both relatives of the gourd family. The giant kinds are a special breed. Gus said, "One of these pumpkins can grow 10 to 30 pounds a day!"

This past year, he grew a green squash that weighed 464 pounds, his largest to date. He has an acre of land on an urban street in Columbus where he grows two or three specimens a year. "That's all I have room for," he explained. "One pumpkin plant covers 400 square feet!"

Gus competes in weigh-off competitions in Indiana and Ohio. The monsters are carefully loaded by harness onto his pickup truck or trailer, just as carefully unloaded and placed on a flat-bed scale. Winners receive a variety of prizes, including cash.

To compete in the world-famous Circleville Pumpkin Show, Gus said, you have to live in Pickaway County.



Gus and Bailey take a ride on Cinderella's coach!

So he's organizing a local pumpkin/squash weigh-off in Columbus this October. "After the weigh-off, you can sell your pumpkin or carve it for Halloween," he said. "They aren't edible, because the big size makes them tasteless. But we do save the seeds to plant and share."

Gus said he has extra seeds if anyone would like to get involved in this gardening challenge. He is also very willing to share his experiences and knowledge with anyone interested, just give him a call.

Gus also recently bought a 1965 Seagraves fire truck that has a 1,000-gallon water tank. "I'm not sure what all I'll do with it, but it'll come in handy for watering my pumpkins," he laughed.

Gus has been with ODNR nine years. He graduated from The Ohio State University with a Bachelor's of Science in Civil Engineering. A native of Mount Vernon, he now lives in Columbus with his wife, Carol, daughter Bailey, and four cats, in a 140-year-old house.

THE NEW HANDHELD THERMAL IMAGER

The department has a new crime-fighting tool, thanks to a resourceful park officer at Hueston Woods.

Last July, **Roger Foresthofel** applied for a grant valued at \$30,000 for a handheld thermal imager. This device, similar to a video camera, senses heat, not light. It generates real-time video in all lighting conditions, including total darkness, showing body heat and footprints up to 2,400 feet away. As part of the grant, Roger was trained how to use the equipment.



The grant was awarded by the Technology Transfer Program through the Counter Drug Office of the U.S. Army which gives away equipment to law enforcement agencies, primarily for drug enforcement efforts. In addition to investigating drug-growing activities, ODNR's imager will be used department-wide to detect poachers, missing people, and hidden suspects.

FLICKINGER ACADEMY TRAINS NEW PARK MANAGERS

Ohio State Parks began educating a new generation of park managers in March. The goal of the program, known as the **Flickinger Leadership Academy**, is to encourage current Parks employees to develop and enhance their skills as future leaders of the state park system. Currently, 26 employees are participating.

Parks' chief, **Dan West**, said, "Within the next five years, more than half of our managers face retirement; it's imperative that we begin nurturing a new generation of leaders."

The curriculum includes customer service, business management, human resources, operations, maintenance, law enforcement, and team building. It was developed in conjunction with The Ohio State University and the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy. The academy is named for Victor W. Flickinger, the first chief of Ohio State Parks (1949 to 1964).

Employees currently enrolled in the academy:

Jessica August, central office; **Sybil Bell**, central office; **Jeff Boester**, Pike Lake; **Sandra Brickey**, Lake Alma; **Earl Campfield**, Blue Rock; **Jayne Dudgeon**, Alum Creek; **David Ferguson**, Caesar Creek; **John Gillespie**, Stonelick; **Hal Harper**, Salt Fork; **Jennifer Heller**, Deer Creek; **Brian Hubbard**, Lake Hope; **Brian Kearton**, Dillon; **John Kocher**, Cowan Lake; **Barbara Lesco**, Quail Hollow; **John Lewis**, Mosquito Lake; **Sonya Lindsey**, Deer Creek; **Timothy Moore**, Buckeye Lake; **Melody Olaker**, Scioto Trail; **Robert Pitakos**, Deer Creek; **Dave Sapienza**, Lake Hope; **Robert Sears**, East Fork; **Jodie Shafer**, Delaware; **Michael Stewart**, Barkcamp; **Tim Sypherd**, Pymatuning; **Mary Thomas**, Shawnee; **Martin Webb**, Delaware.

MARY FITCH — DISTINGUISHED PLANNER

In March, **Mary Fitch** was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners. She is a recreation planner with the Resource Planning Team in the Division of Watercraft. The award was for her efforts in helping develop the state park marina on Middle Bass Island. She was nominated for the award by Phil Miller, the division's resource planning administrator.



Through Mary's expertise, the department received two federal grants from the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The grants, totaling \$1.8 million, will be used to improve and expand the state's public marina at Middle Bass Island State Park. The marina project was the only Great Lakes project to receive funding.

Work has already begun on the marina. It now has 50 new slips for transient boaters. Electric service will be added to 24 slips this summer. As part of the grant requirements, an environmental assessment is underway to evaluate cultural, historic, socio-economic and environmental impacts associated with the project, and to avoid, minimize and mitigate for any impacts anticipated.

Mary's teammates who helped secure the funding are **Dave Stites**, Ohio State Parks, **Dave Kieffer**, Engineering, and **Jim Hopewell**, retired from Watercraft.

Mary, who grew up in Akron, has been with Watercraft since September 2000. Previously, in 1980-1984, she worked for the Office of Outdoor Recreation Services (now REALM). She has a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from The Ohio State University, and is a registered landscape architect in Ohio and Kentucky. She and husband Aaron, and children, Clayton and Hannah, live near Alexandria (Licking County) on three wooded acres where they enjoy watching bluebirds, woodpeckers, goldfinches, and deer, and listening to owls and turkeys.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Ohio Legislature was quite active in recent months leading up to the annual spring break recess. School funding and the state's budget shortfalls, all coupled with election year politics, has dominated much of the discussion in the halls of the Statehouse. However, prior to adjourning for spring break, the legislature acted on a number of bills that had significant impact on ODNR.

S.B. 150, Watercraft Numbering: Sen. Jeffry Armbruster sponsored this legislation that made changes to the watercraft numbering system, providing more options for owners of canoes, rowboats, and inflatable watercraft. Both the House and Senate approved this measure unanimously, and the Governor signed it into law on April 5.

H.B. 493, Sunday Hunting: Rep. Bob Latta introduced this legislation to make adjustments to current regulations and eliminate many of the current limitations on Sunday

hunting, including acreage requirements. The House passed this measure by a vote of 91-2, and the bill received its first hearing in the Senate Agriculture Committee prior to the recess. Upon return, Sen. Larry Mumper, Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, has indicated quick passage for the bill out of committee.

In addition, the Legislature is reviewing the State's **Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax**, commonly known as the gas tax. A bipartisan study committee is analyzing the various allocations of the revenue generated from the tax and will issue its report, with recommendations, at the end of the year. This is of great importance to ODNR, for both the Waterway Safety Fund and the Boater-Angler Fund, which receive a percentage of the state gas tax.

If you have questions about any legislative activities, feel free to call **Mindy Bankey**, Chief of the Office of Legislative Services, at 614-265-6836, or **Rusty Orben**, Legislative Liaison, at 614-265-6874.

WHAT GOES AROUND...



You may remember last year's story about the peregrine falcons who battled to the death in Cleveland in March. In that confrontation, the reigning queen bird, **Zenith**, dispatched the intruder Clearpath, who usurped the nest site.

However, this spring, the tables were turned and a new bird in town downed the once-proud Zenith.

The newcomer, identified only by a leg band "**SW**" from Pittsburgh, moved into the nest after Zenith flew south in the fall, leaving her mate **Buckeye** behind. Buckeye and the newcomer mated, and she laid four eggs in the roost.

Then, Zenith made her annual return to the nest site on March 28, just before 9:30 a.m. A vicious aerial fight ensued and went on for around 20 minutes. Zenith, inflicted with a fatal neck wound, died on a downtown ledge.

Buckeye sat on the eggs throughout the ordeal. S/*W did not appear to suffer any serious injuries and continued her incubation duties.

Zenith ruled the 12th story nest on the Terminal Tower for the last nine years. She fledged from Omaha, Nebraska, in 1992, to become one of the most productive female falcons in the Midwest, producing 31 young falcons in nine years. This fight was her fifth confrontation with a rival female.

Check out peregrine falcons on ohiodnr.com.

TIDBITS

NATURAL WANDERS: For Ohio's Bicentennial celebration next year, ODNR received a \$35,000 grant from the Bicentennial Commission to produce a travel brochure featuring Ohio's natural highlights. To be called "Natural Wanderings," the brochure will help tourists and Ohioans alike find the places that make Ohio special. Lynn Boydlatour, naturalist with Ohio State Parks, is heading up the project for the Natural Ohio Committee. For Bicentennial information, see www.ohio200.com.

BOATS, BOATS EVERYWHERE: Last year, the Division of Watercraft registered 417,204 watercraft in Ohio. Ohio ranks eighth nationally. Registrations increased in 46 counties, with Franklin County leading the state. Approximately 3.5 million Ohioans boat each year. The typical boat owner takes 18 trips, and spends about 50 percent of the time on the water fishing. National Safe Boating Week is **May 18-25**; Free Fishing Days are **June 1 & 2**; and National Fishing & Boating Week is **June 1-8**.

PARK RETIREMENTS

KISS THE COOK GOODBYE: Carol Brown, secretary at Shawnee State Park, is retiring May 31 with more than 30 years of service. She began her career in 1979 with CCC, transferring to Shawnee in 1996. Known for her quick wit and delicious home cooking, Carol plans on gardening, cooking, travelling, visiting friends and family, and volunteering for an animal rescue service.

RIDING THE RANGE: Don McDowell, a park officer at Shawnee, retired with more than 27 years of service. He is a certified defensive weapon instructor and EMT, with special training in arson and boat theft investigations. Don's retirement interests include attending rodeos, cooking, woodworking, travelling, and motorcycling.

ANNIVERSARIES

5 Years

Carla Jarvis, Cashier, Parks/Blue Rock

10 Years

Daniele Foye, Geologist, Geological Survey/Lake Erie
Patti Barnett, Marketing Section Manager, Parks

15 Years

David Orr, Electronic Design Specialist, Water

20 Years

Diane Davenport-Abele, Treatment Plant Operator, Parks/Blue Rock
Carolyn Caldwell, Wildlife Program Administrator, Wildlife

25 Years

Jeffrey Carter, Wildlife Officer, Wildlife #3

30 Years

Dave Abele, Asst. Park Manager, Parks/Muskingum River Parkway
Patricia Nistelbeck, Admin. Asst., Parks/Development Group

MILESTONES

New Hires

Jerald Watts, Exploratory Drill Operator, Minerals/South
John Hladek, Programmer Specialist, Minerals/South
Andrew Burt, Fisheries Biologist, Wildlife #3

Promotions

Geoffrey Westerfield, to Wildlife Research Technician, Wildlife #3
James Hill, to Asst. Wildlife Mgmt. Supervisor, Wildlife #4
Peter Novotny, Wildlife Officer Supervisor, Wildlife #3
Charles Mansfield, Wildlife Officer District Supervisor, Wildlife/Law Enforcement

Transfers

Thomas Donnelly, from NR Admin., to Wildlife Officer District Supervisor, Wildlife #4

Donna Schrappe, from Communications, to Wildlife/Business Operations Call Center

Chad Wilson, Wildlife Officer, from at-large to Delaware County, Wildlife #1

Janet Richards, Admin. Assistant, from REALM to Wildlife

Retirements

Bob Stewart, Cartographer, Geological Survey, 25 years

Patricia Fagan, NR Administrator, Engineering, 30 years

George Peters, NR Administrator, Recycling, 27 years

Gordon Hufford, Administrative Assistant, Recycling, 29 years

Sondra Ryan, Secretary, Wildlife/Outdoor Skills, 16 years

Thomas Monroe, Asst. Wildlife Mgmt. Supervisor, Wildlife #4, 29+ years

Dave Bergman, Real Estate Administrator, REALM, 25 years

Dave Bitters, State Lands Planning Administrator, REALM, 33 years

Mike Colvin, Coastal Mgmt. Administrator, REALM, 28 years

Mike Cook, Land Mgmt. Administrator, REALM, 29 years

John Davis, Storekeeper, REALM, 18 years

Jeff Hughes, Facility Services Administrator, REALM, 28 years

Steve Kloss, Grants Administrator, REALM, 28 years

Shirley Monnett, Grants Coordinator, REALM, 25 years

Keith Seymour, Property Management Administrator, REALM, 29 years

Terry Wells, GIMS Database Administrator, REALM, 32 years

NEW CHIEFS

David Hanselmann was appointed chief of the Division of Soil & Water Conservation in March.



The 25-year ODNR veteran spent the last 20 years as assistant chief. A resident of Lewis Center, David has a bachelor's degree in biology from

Purdue University and a master's in ecology from Duke. He and wife, Yvette, have two children, Claire and Alex.

Ron Kolbash was named chief of the Division of Recycling & Litter Prevention in March. He

joined ODNR in 1999 as deputy director for resource conservation after a 20-year career in environmental issues management with AEP and



the Ohio Coal Association. Ron is a part-time faculty member at Hocking College and Ohio University/Lancaster. He has a master's degree in ecology from Eastern Michigan University and a doctorate in environmental resource management from Michigan State University. He and wife, Peggy, live in Canal Winchester; they have two sons, Ronn and Chris.

John Dorka was named chief of the Division of Forestry in April. The Worthington resident holds a degree



in forest management from the University of Michigan. He joined the department in 1974, serving as a state forest ranger and district forester in Muskingum

and Athens counties before becoming assistant chief in 1988. John has two children, Kelli and Christopher.



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