

ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTS

In 1991 the Church of the Brethren adopted a position paper on the environment entitled: "Creation: Called to Care." In that paper all members of the church were invited to:

1. Affirm the goodness and beauty of God's creation.
2. Acknowledge our special responsibility for stewardship of the Creator's good earth.
3. Learn of the environmental damages facing the planet.
4. Recognize that our practices and styles of life have had an effect on the environment.
5. Pursue a lifestyle that is wise and responsible in light of our understanding of the problems.
6. Exert our influence in shaping public policy and insisting that industries, businesses, farmers, and consumers relate to the environment in ways that are sensible, healthy, and protective of its integrity.
7. Become involved in organizations and actions to protect and restore the environment and the people in our communities.

Congregations and Districts were also challenged to participation by these actions:

1. Become ecologically sensitive in the conduct of their programs and to bring all under the control of a caring stewardship.
2. Pursue courses of action that promote environmental protection and social justice.
3. Investigate the adequacy of environmental policy and protection at the state and local levels of government
4. Encourage environmental awareness programs in Brethren camps that do not have such programs.

In response to this call to action the Outdoor Ministries Association set up a new program to assist camps in meeting this challenge. This program was intended to encourage Brethren camps throughout the denomination to develop new and innovative programs in the field of environmental education. Funding for the grants comes from gifts from camps and individuals as well as proceeds from auctions at OMA events. The OMA Steering Committee awards grants on an annual basis toward projects to camps who request funding and meet the criteria for the projects. The area of environmental education is broadly defined as the application of Christian principles and ethics to environmental issues and stewardship development in a camp or outdoor setting. The maximum available to a camp for a single project is \$1,000. Although matching funds are not criteria for the initial grant approval, it is encouraged that the environmental grant be used as leverage in seeking other funding support.



At the 2011 spring meeting of the OMA steering committee a program to support congregations in the pursuit of programs to promote environmentally friendly practices and/or educational programs was approved. As with camps, the churches are encouraged to match the grant. Congregational membership in OMA determines the amount of the grant available with a maximum of \$1000 for member churches and \$500 for non-member churches.

The objective of the Environmental Grant Program is to provide incentive to camps and congregations to undertake projects and activities that provide interactive and experiential activities to camps and guests to help them become more acquainted with this wonderful creation that we all live in. This grows out of the greater understanding of the "Creation: Called to Care" where we are reminded that "the Creator-Redeemer seeks the renewal of the creation and calls the people of God to participate in saving acts of renewal. We are called to cooperate with God in the transformation of a world that has not fulfilled its divinely given potential or beauty, peace, health, harmony, justice, and joy (Isa. 11:6-9, Mic. 4:3-4, Eph. 2:10, Rev. 21:1-5). Our task is nothing less than to join God in preserving, renewing and fulfilling the creation. It is to relate to nature in ways that sustain life on the planet, provide for the essential material and physical needs of all humankind, and increase justice and well-being for all life in a peaceful world."



From the beginning of the Environmental Grant program twenty (20) camps and two churches have received grants for a wide variety of projects. Projects have included a variety of nature walks and boardwalks, pond, pond observation deck, bird blinds, outdoor education equipment and supplies, butterfly garden, open air greenhouse, environmental building design, hybrid power system, Wildlife Development Project, Environmental Stewardship Project, lighting upgrades, and a go green program with organic vegetables and rain water collection.

Environmental Grant applications can be located on the OMA website or by contacting the Grants and Awards Member of the OMA Steering Committee.

Grant Recipients and Projects

Brethren Woods – Environmental Study Trail, Rain Barrels, and Weather Station
Camp Alexander Mack – Butterfly Garden, Hybrid Power System for Nature Center
Camp Bethel – Pond Observation Deck, Adventure Village Platforms
Camp Blue Diamond – Outdoor Education Materials, Compost System
Camp Carmel – Erosion Control
Camp Eder – Rain Barrels
Camp Harmony – Goose Pond
Camp Ithiel – Environmental Design for Dining Hall, Environmental Education Stations
Camp La Verne – Nature Center
Camp Mardela – Board Walk, Interpretive Guide Stations, Wood-Burning Water Heater
Camp Myrtlewood – Environmental Stewardship Project
Camp Placid – Energy Efficient Light Bulbs
Camp Swatara – Bird Blind
Inspiration Hills – Wildlife Development Project
Shepherd's Spring – Open Air Greenhouse
Woodland Altars – Bird Blind
Skyridge Church of the Brethren – Soil Restoration and Sustainable Grounds Care
West Charleston Church of the Brethren – Community Organic Garden