

Final Report for OPRA Grant for Dock Structure for Outdoor Education Program at the Nelsonville Presbyterian Farm

Summary of Project Objectives and Participating Agency:

The Nelsonville Presbyterian Farm ("The Farm") stewarded by First Presbyterian Church of Nelsonville, was pleased to receive a grant of \$2,500 from Ohio Parks and Recreation Association in 2019. The grant was designated for the construction of a permanent dock element to be placed in a pond located on site. The pond has been used for both recreational and educational opportunities for various constituents, including the surrounding school systems. Rural Action, a local non-profit who has focused on supporting field education experiences, has partnered with First Presbyterian Church to host local elementary and middle school children on a number of occasions since 2017.

The objective for constructing a permanent dock was to create better access to the pond in order to engage in both aquatic learning labs and recreation. The pond is one element within a recreational system at the Farm, which includes an additional pond, a mile-long network of nature trails, a shelter house, and hardwood forest and open meadows. A team-building challenge course is being constructed to augment the outdoor educational experience.

In 2019, we had planned to increase our programming among school-aged students by ten percent with Rural Action's assistance, totaling one thousand students per year. The dock was to enhance that programming.

Evaluation of Outcomes and Impact

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the Farm's programming, especially with area schools, ceased for a time. We also had difficulty securing the volunteer help to construct the dock. We also discovered a serious leak in the pond, causing us to evaluate whether it should be repaired prior to the placement of the dock. We finally completed the dock construction in the spring of 2022.

Description of Subsequent Plans

While the pandemic, the leak in the pond, and our delayed plans for construction seriously curtailed our implementation of the dock as a programming tool, we have renewed plans for its use. In 2022, we organized the Nelsonville Presbyterian Farm as an LLC and have constituted a robust Board of Directors comprised of both church and community members. We recently partnered with Integrated Services for Behavioral Health to provide the Farm as a regular outdoor space for programming within their residential center for youth. They are particularly interested in the use of the pond and dock. We plan to partner with Rural Action again to reinvigorate our land lab use, of which the pond will be an integral part.

Summary of Expenses Incurred

Our original grant request from OPRA was \$2,500. We redesigned the dock from the original construction plan, resulting in a great reduction of material costs. We also modified the dock form a permanent in-ground structure to one that floats.

Grant Award: \$2,500

Material Expense: \$1,142.00

Project surplus: \$1,358.00

We will return the balance of the grant to the OPRA Foundation.

With gratitude to Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Foundation, we are looking to a promising future of increased capacity and programing at the Nelsonville Presbyterian Farm. We believe the pond will be a very important feature in creating a space where more people can interact with the outdoors and learn about nature.



Photo Caption: A family of the church enjoying the dock.