

# WATER CONSERVATION IS A WORK OF ART

Forty years ago, the Cuyahoga River was considered dead. Now there is abundant aquatic and plant life in the river, and organizations are working daily to support these efforts and keep the Cuyahoga and all the rivers, streams, and lakes in Northeast Ohio clean.

In the past forty years, stricter environmental laws have been passed to protect our water resources. First industries were targeted as the major source of pollution, called *point source pollution* - pollution from a single identifiable source. However, our waterways weren't recovering at the rate predicted, so the Environmental Protection Agency began to address *non-point source pollution* - pollution coming from many different sources.

Essentially non-point source pollution, or storm water pollution, is death by 1,000 cuts. As the rain water or snow melt moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands. Just like a solitary cut on your leg isn't life threatening, no single one of these sources by itself leads to water quality problems, but their cumulative effects are more than enough to degrade our rivers and streams.

In the past two years, the Cuyahoga SWCD has sold more than 1,000 rain barrels in the county. One rain barrel isn't going to restore our lakes and rivers, but collectively, they can make a difference. It is putting a proverbial band-aid on the 1,000 cuts in an attempt to restore and protect our water resources. Every little bit helps. What you do at your home or business, however big or small, can help! We are the source of storm water pollution and with a few small steps, we can be the solution.

This year in addition to the rain barrel workshops, Cuyahoga SWCD is hosting a Rain Barrel Art program. Rain barrels are a great way to conserve water and save it for a sunny day. Decorated barrels make rain water harvesting a work of art! Cuyahoga SWCD is looking for local artists to paint rain barrels to be displayed around the county. Artists will have two months to paint a rain barrel in any way they choose. Barrels will be displayed across Cuyahoga County in various locations and sold to the public in October. Proceeds will go to benefit the Cuyahoga SWCD conservation education programs.

## **Important dates for program:**

Feb. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline to sign up to paint a barrel
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Artists to pick up barrels (anytime after March 1 <sup>st</sup> )
May 15 <sup>th</sup>	Decorated barrels to be returned to Cuyahoga SWCD office
June – Oct.	Decorated barrels will be displayed around Cuyahoga County (locations TBD)
October	Decorated barrels will be for sale to the public

Interested artists should contact Amy Roskilly, Conservation Education Coordinator at 216/524-6580, ext 22 or [aroskilly@cuyahogawcd.org](mailto:aroskilly@cuyahogawcd.org) by February 15<sup>th</sup>.

