

## Celebrating The Nature of Lawrence County

*A reception held in partnership with others promoted the forests and rivers of Lawrence County, Ohio.*



Those who attended the event take time to look at the displays and visit with members of the three partners. Photo taken by Donna Stephenson.

On March 15, 2007 the Wayne National Forest held a dessert and coffee reception in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Symmes Creek Restoration Committee entitled The Nature of Lawrence County: Celebrating our forests & rivers. The event was held from 7:00 - 9:00 pm at the Ohio University Southern Campus Riffe Building Main Rotunda in Ironton.

Ironton District Ranger Gloria Chrismer explains, "Both organizations have been working with us toward conservation efforts for several years. The leadership of the three groups thought it would be

nice to gather our members and supporters together to talk about ongoing projects and upcoming events."

Chrismer kicked off the evening with a presentation on several projects and partners including: Ohio University Southern's Nature Center and outdoor programs, the proposed Whitaker Wetland Restoration Project, and the newly formed Iron Furnace Cooperative Weed Management Area. Significant upcoming events include the Wheelin Sportsmen event on April 19th and the Iron Furnace Festival on June 23rd.

Grayson Thornton, Chair of the Symmes Creek Restoration Committee (SCRC) shared some beautiful images of the creek and folks canoeing and kayaking. SCRC is currently working to establish a 30-mile canoe trail along the southern portion of the creek. SCRC also hosts a canoe raffle and creek clean-up every August, a 10-mile float every June, and a canoe-camping trip at Timbre Ridge Lake every fall.

Pete Whan, Director of Community-based Conservation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) gave an overview of the biological diversity of this area. TNC is working with the Wayne NF to transfer 4,100 acres of land formerly owned by Mead-Westvaco to federal ownership. Until the land, located in the northern part of the District can be transferred, the Division of Wildlife is managing the tract as a

wildlife management area.

The group was treated to an additional guest speaker. Dan Imhoff from the Southeastern Regional Office of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency spoke to the gathering about an upcoming inventory of Symmes Creek that will take place this summer.

"The event was well attended," said Chrismer, "and we had several nice displays up on the projects we'd spoken about. That gave people an opportunity to ask more questions and visit with each of our groups about what we were doing." She was pleased with the turnout, the interest, and the commitment of the group who came to the reception. "It was an excellent time for our supporters, partners, and friends, to help us celebrate the forests and rivers that provide the backdrop for Lawrence County."

*For more information contact Jarel Bartig at 740-753-0903*