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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORPC Seeks Nominations for Green Region Awards

(Columbus – July 23, 2014) The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is seeking nominations through August 1, 2014 for the Green Region Awards, honoring individuals and organizations working to create a more vibrant and environmentally sustainable region. MORPC will announce the award recipients at the Summit on Sustainability & the Environment on October 10, 2014 at the Columbus Downtown Hilton.

The *Green Leader Award* is given in recognition of an individual or organization exemplifying outstanding leadership and innovation in seeking comprehensive sustainability solutions to address key challenges facing the region. The 2013 winner of the Green Leader Award was **Josh Knights**, executive director of **The Nature Conservancy**, Ohio Chapter. Under Knights leadership, The Nature Conservancy established the 1,000-acre Darby Headwaters Preserve and is instrumental in conserving portions of Pickerington Ponds, Battelle Darby Creek, and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks.

The *Green Collaborative Achievement Award* is given to a group of organizations or individuals who have shown effectiveness in producing environmental accomplishments through a collaborative effort. Last year's winner, the **Marion Correctional Institution**, strived to achieve sustainability within the facility to reduce their environmental footprint and save taxpayer dollars. The initiatives were driven by an offender organization called "Green Initiatives" and led by Randy Canterbury, group advisor. Their efforts included:

- Food waste diversion: achieved through an on-site composting program;
- Aquaponics: where tilapia are raised and plants thrive from the nutrients of the water;
- A community garden: supplying the local food bank with fresh vegetables throughout the growing season;
- A wildlife program: developed in partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to care for injured wildlife and return them to the wild;
- Energy reduction: alternative means of energy generation were evaluated, and with the expansion of the Aquaponics program, a windmill will be installed to off-set the electric cost;
- A second recycling center: offenders work throughout the institution collecting recyclable items and take items from the community to sort within these centers; and
- An endangered species program: developed in partnership with the Wilds and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in order to replenish the Eastern Hellbender population in Ohio.

Working to Build a Better Region

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Nominations are open to individuals and organizations located within MORPC's 12-county region (Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Pickaway, Ross, and Union counties). Repeat winners will not be selected from the previous two years, but nominees from previous years can be re-submitted.

"Central Ohio is expected to grow by more than 500,000 people in the next 40 years. This growth will have implications on our land use, public infrastructure, the services we provide, and our natural resources," says Kerstin Carr, MORPC Director of Planning & Environment. "This year's summit theme, *Building a Sustainable Future*, focuses on sharing best practices that can help our local governments, businesses, and residents prepare for these changes."

The eighth annual Summit on Sustainability & the Environment is MORPC's signature environmental conference developed to aid community leaders, businesses, and individuals in going green. The event brings hundreds of people together to explore and share sustainable solutions.

Visit www.morpc.org/summit for more information on registration, sponsorship opportunities and award nominations, or contact Amanda McEldowney, amceldowney@morpc.org or 614.233.4112.

– 30 –

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.