

Wayne NF Hosts Ohio's First Lady for Partner's Special Project



Tom Redfern, kneeling, shows Mrs. Taft the plant beds at the Wayne NF office as Cheryl Coon and Mary Reddan look on.

Mrs. Hope Taft, wife of Ohio's Governor Bob Taft, visited the Wayne NF in October to tour a special botany project being coordinated by Forest's conservation partners.

The Athens Ranger District played host to Mrs. Hope Taft, wife of Ohio's Governor Bob Taft, on October 10 to tour a special botany project being coordinated by one of the Forest's conservation partners.

Mrs. Taft is botany enthusiast, and has developed a large heritage landscape garden at the Governor's Mansion. She came to hear about, tour, and help dig plants from the future right-of-way for the Highway 33 Bypass that will go around Nelsonville, Ohio with the non-profit group Rural Action.

Rural Action is a sub-contractor to a Stewardship Contract the District has with Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio, and is spearheading a large staff and volunteer effort to rescue as many native plants from the right-of-way area as possible before construction begins next spring. The goal: to replant them along the right-of-way after the

bypass is complete to give the landscape a more natural, native appearance and cut down on the spread of non-native invasive plants.

Mary Reddan, Forest Supervisor, and Devala Clark, Athens District Ranger, gave a brief overview of the project, its impact to the Forest and recreation areas nearby, and the Stewardship Contract details that helped establish the Plant Rescue effort. Clark also presented Mrs. Taft with a special Gathering Permit for her participation that allowed her to gather plants for the Governor's Mansion. Tom Redfern, Rural Action's Plant Rescue Project leader, and the organization's Executive Director Jane Forest-Redfern, explained the group's conservation efforts in the region and presented specifics about the plant rescue project.

Mrs. Taft had remarks for everyone there before the group headed out to look over the large plant beds that have been established behind the Wayne NF office building along Highway 33. Following lunch, Rural Action took the group on a plant rescue trip to an area in the bypass right-of-way to identify and dig native plants.

The plants that Mrs. Taft collected and identified will occupy a special section of the Heritage Garden at the Governor's Mansion. A special marker will be placed to explain how they came to be at the mansion and highlight successful efforts of Rural Action, Hocking College, and the Wayne.