

44 Environmental Projects Receive TogetherGreen Innovation Grants

October 19, 2011

New York, October 19, 2011 – Energy and dollar savings for churches in Phoenix, gardens for people and wildlife in rural Colorado, and restored habitat for the threatened American eel in the Hudson River are just three expected results of the 44 projects receiving a total of \$1.1 million in the latest round of *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants. This will mark the fourth year of *TogetherGreen* funding to facilitate people-powered conservation action in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Taking place in 27 states, these projects are selected for innovation; potential gains in habitat, water, and energy conservation; and opportunities to engage new audiences in protecting the environment. *TogetherGreen* is funded by a \$20 million grant from Toyota over five years.

"Never underestimate ingenuity and innovation. The approaches that will help us tackle the enormous environmental challenges confronting us today are going to come from unlikely and unpredictable places," said Audubon President David Yarnold. "Each Innovation Grant project is an opportunity for Audubon to partner with local organizations to test and implement creative approaches to build healthier communities and achieve significant conservation results. And as our alliance with Toyota shows, when organizations work together, we can exponentially magnify our impact."

Since 2008, the *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants program has awarded over \$4.7 million to more than 160 environmental projects nationwide. The 2011 awardees are receiving grants ranging from \$5,000 – \$50,000. Funds were awarded to partnerships, mostly between Audubon groups (local Chapters or programs of Audubon's large national network) and organizations in their communities. This year's grant projects involve more than 150 partner organizations nationwide. Many of the projects focus on engaging audiences that have traditionally been under-served by the conservation movement, from urban youth to rural ranchers.

In addition to financial support, grantees take part in workshops to strengthen their capacity to achieve conservation results, including a multi-day professional development course held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and online trainings throughout the year. Audubon staff provides further support, including communications assistance, which leads to more public recognition at the local, state, and national level; and grantees are networked with each other so that they can share best practices and learn from others.

Audubon's partner groups also benefit considerably from Innovation Grants. As Molly Tsongas, director of Tatzo, said, "We are thrilled and honored to be a recipient of this Innovation Grant. *TogetherGreen* is breathing new life into the conservation movement, one that I want to be part of."

Last year's Innovation Grantees helped tens of thousands of people take conservation action in their communities, including Hmong American Eagle Scouts who made and erected roosting towers for rapidly disappearing chimney swifts in Minneapolis, African American student teachers who learned how to involve students in conservation action in Arkansas, rural Missouri teens who restored native cane habitat in the Ozarks, and communities of faith in New York City who cleaned up beaches for horseshoe crabs and migrating birds. Grant recipients leveraged their grants several times over through matching and in-kind support, allowing them to reach more people and deliver even greater conservation results.

“The *TogetherGreen* program grew out of Toyota and Audubon’s joint commitment to conservation, innovation, and diversity,” said Pat Pineda, Toyota’s group vice president of national philanthropy and the Toyota USA Foundation. “This latest group of Innovation Grantees will help further the mission of *TogetherGreen* and serve as a catalyst for environmental change within local communities all across the country.”

Each year, *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants fund projects in a community or region focused on habitat, water, energy, and/or engaging diverse audiences in conservation. Sample projects that will receive 2011 funding include:

- **Habitat:** In New York, Audubon New York and its partners will work with New York State’s Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to protect 120 acres of critical habitat in the New York state park system and educate at least 5,000 people about the importance of restoring wildlife habitat.
- **Water:** In Kentucky, the Friends of Wolf Run, Inc., will work with Lexington residents to improve water quality in streams running through the city. Community groups and individual volunteers will take part in educational stream hikes, clean up days, invasive plant removal and native plant installation work days, and water quality monitoring and assessment to document improvements. The project partners will also lead a general community/media based education and outreach campaign to raise awareness about the initiative and how individual homeowners can help improve the streams running through their properties.
- **Energy:** In California, San Diego Audubon and its partners will launch Lights Out San Diego! to reduce artificial urban lighting to prevent bird collisions during spring and fall migrations and save energy.
- **Engaging diverse audiences in conservation:** In Colorado, the Mountain Roots Food Project will work with food bank recipients, low-income families, schoolchildren, at-risk youth, and members of local Hispanic and Cora (Indian) communities, to create six new community gardens and maintain two gardens in two small, rural, Colorado towns. The gardens will harbor crops and native plants — providing food for humans and habitat for our wild neighbors.

For complete details about the 2011 *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants projects, please visit:
www.togethergreen.org/grants.

#