

## Press Release

### Announcing the Armco Park Solar Pollinator Habitat Discovery Trail

#### A New Self-Guided Environmental Education Resource in Warren County

Date: September 30, 2020

Where can families learn what flowers, butterflies, and green energy have in common? At the Warren County Armco Park Solar Pollinator Habitat Discovery Trail! The new wildflower garden and walking trail surround a solar panel farm and contain 7 self-guided interactive learning stations for local families to learn more about the science behind pollinators and solar power.

In 2019, Warren County Park District, in partnership with Rocknoll Energy Systems, installed the solar power farm at Armco Park to reduce park energy costs and carbon emissions. To keep the area park-like and biologically productive, the panel design was adapted to allow for native plants and wildflowers to provide a protected habitat for endangered pollinators. Pollinators, including bees and butterflies in Ohio, are under pressure from loss of habitat. According to the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative ([www.ophi.info/](http://www.ophi.info/)), several pollinator species, including the Rusty Patched Bumblebee and Karner Blue Butterfly, have been lost to Ohio in the past several decades.

According to Larry Easterly, Warren County Park District Director, “this project has been so well received by the community and offers a really unique education opportunity for our residents, so we decided to take it to the next level.” In 2019, a park survey of participants in nature programs showed that more than 90% were interested in more education about pollinators and solar power. The Park District applied for and received an Ohio EPA Environmental Education grant to construct a trail with permanent interactive learning stations.

The trail is now complete and open to the public. “With so many public programs cancelled due to the current health crisis, we are excited to offer a self-guided science and nature exploration opportunity to local families,” said Warren County Park District Naturalist, Shannon Pennington. The trail includes a welcome kiosk which will include seasonal updates and suggested activities from Ms. Pennington.

The learning stations tell the stories of how both green energy and native pollinators are important to not only the environment but human health and well-being. “Importantly, the trail includes simple ideas that families can do at home to help save energy and protect native bees and butterflies,” said Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist, Dianna Kenneally, who helped design the trail and write the grant application.

The pollinator habitat is also a demonstration garden for local homeowners interested in gardening for pollinators. “The Solar Pollinator Habitat hosts many of the native plants that are necessary to allow our native pollinators to thrive,” shared Melissa Proffitt, Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District Education Specialist.

As with many successful projects, the trail was a result of collaboration and support from individuals and organizations from across the community including the Ohio EPA ([www.epa.state.oh.us](http://www.epa.state.oh.us)), Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District ([www.warrenswcd.com](http://www.warrenswcd.com)), Friends of Warren County Park District ([www.fwcpdoh.com](http://www.fwcpdoh.com)), Rocknoll Energy Systems ([www.rocknollenergy.com](http://www.rocknollenergy.com)), Miami University Project Dragonfly (<https://projectdragonfly.miamioh.edu/>), and the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative ([www.ophi.info/](http://www.ophi.info/)).

Armco Park is located at [1223 N State Route 741, Lebanon, OH 45036](#). The Solar Pollinator Habitat Discovery Trail can be found at the parking lot near the boat dock. The park is free and open to the public every day from 8:00 AM to dusk – (Time Varies – please check posted time at park entrance).

For more information, about the project go to: [www.fwcpdoh.com/solar-pollinator-habitat](http://www.fwcpdoh.com/solar-pollinator-habitat)

To download pictures of the Solar Pollinator Habitat Trail, go to <https://photos.app.goo.gl/MTD3z2EjNVmiWUV9>

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