

LOCAL NEWS

Recycled table donated to park

By ROSS GALLABRESE June 30, 2026 4 min read



Ross Gallabrese TABLE DONATED — The JB Green Team on Monday donated a picnic table made of recycled material to Fernwood State Forest. On hand for the presentation were, from left, Louise Holliday, Jefferson County environmental educator; Ryan Zeisler, forest manager for the Division of Forestry of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources; Anita Petrella, executive director of the JB Green Team; Natalie Lysle, administrative assistant; and Carl Jahncke, an employee of the JB Green Team.

BLOOMINGDALE – The addition of a new picnic table will help teach lessons about the importance of recycling and helping the environment for generations to come.

That's the hope of the JB Green Team, which on Monday donated the item to be used at Fernwood State Forest.

According to Louise Holliday, the group's Jefferson County environmental educator, the addition fits right in with the organization's message. The donation, she said, came as a result of a suggestion from Anita Petrella, executive director of the JB Green Team, and Natalie Lysle, administrative assistant.

"They always had picnic tables for us," said Holliday, who has been teaching area young people about the environment for the last 36 years. "Now, we have all of this recycled lumber and equipment we can use, and they suggested getting a recycled table, since what I talk about when I am out here is about recycling and composting in the landfills."

The Jefferson-Belmont Regional Solid Waste Authority, the organization's official name, helps teach about the environment every May, when the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District brings fifth-graders from around the county to the forest. The two-county governmental agency implements the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's goals for waste reduction, recycling and reducing reliance on land filling waste.

Some of the wooden picnic tables at the state forest have been showing signs of wear, like the one that was replaced Monday. The new table, which was built using wood fibers and plastic, is better able to withstand heavy use and constant exposure to the elements.

"It won't warp like natural wood," Holliday said "And, you're saving trees and using recycled lumber. Plus, its weight -- it's really heavy and very sturdy and it will take just a little bit of water to wash it off."

As a bonus, the construction allows persons who use the table to walk in to them and sit down, as opposed to having to slide along the wooden bench or climb in from behind. Signs on either end of the end of the bench acknowledging the donation by the JB Green Team were created by Signs Ltd.

Ryan Zeisler says having the table in a place where it will be accessible to students when they come to the park is important.

"The table looks awesome," said Zeisler, a forest manager for the Division of Forestry of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. "This is great, and I think it's a good learning piece, too, for farm and field days. It shows all of the students who come from Jefferson County that this is recycled material."

Zeisler oversees five state forests in the region. In addition to Fernwood, the list includes Harrison, Beaver Creek, Yellow Creek and Willow Grove state forests.

"We come every year to the same spot, so we'll be the ones using it, for at least a week every year," Petrella explained.

When the program began, Holliday said, students would take a two-mile hike through the woods. They then would participate in a project where they'd bury objects, like a banana peel, a glass bottle, some newspapers and a plastic cup. Then they would dig it up every year for years. It was likely that only the banana peel and papers would be gone, Holliday said.

The purpose, she and Petrella added, was to demonstrate that some items don't disintegrate in a landfill, and why it is so important to recycle.

Students were amazed at how long it takes certain things to biodegrade, they added, with Petrella pointing out that a water bottle would need 250 years to break down.

Among the other benefits of the education program, Holliday and Petrella explained, is that it exposes some children to places they might otherwise have limited access to.

"One nice thing about this is all of the fifth-grade students," Holliday said. "You have a lot of students who aren't out in the county when you get inner-city schools. They don't realize this beauty is out here."

Some kids never visit places like the state forest if they don't come with their classroom, Petrella explained.