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**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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***BOWLING GREEN GREENBELT HONORED WITH EARTH DAY AWARD***

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 27, 2005) – The Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), Kentucky League of Cities and Kentucky Association of Counties gathered together on April 22, 2005 at the Governor’s Mansion in Frankfort for Earth Day to honor 12 community initiatives that exemplify principles of sustainability.

EQC created the 2005 Sustainable Community Earth Day Awards to recognize community initiatives that support job growth, environmental stewardship and social equity -- the three pillars of sustainability. Kentuckians are coming to understand that the environment can no longer be separate from the economy. “Our economic health is directly linked to the health of the environment. Each is mutually reinforcing and inter-dependent to our well being and quality of life,” noted EQC Vice Chair, Betsy Bennett.

“Kentucky is poised for economic growth,” commented EQC Chair Lindell Ormsbee. “However, growth at the expense of natural resources, existing community amenities and livability is both shortsighted and unwise.” Without proper attention to the impacts of unmanaged growth, we are at risk of losing those qualities that makes our state a unique and desirable place to live and work.

The City of Bowling Green is working to preserve its urban character along with its natural environment. Everyone who visits the city is struck by its beautiful and historic Fountain Square and its late-1800s to early-1900s commercial and residential neighborhoods. The city has worked hard to preserve its historic neighborhoods. But the jewel in the crown is the Greenbelt system, which will link green spaces around and within the city.

The Greenways Commission of Bowling Green and Warren County was created in 2001 to protect greenspace across the city. Greenways and open space are community amenities that attract residents and businesses and increase nearby property values and tax revenues. Green spaces also enhance the quality of life for residents by providing space for recreation, relaxation, and educational opportunities for children and adults alike.

The first phase of the Greenbelt System became reality in 2002. The 22 acre River Walk Park — the primary trailhead of the system — serves as the most visible symbol of the Greenbelt. The second phase of the multi-faceted project will be a series of interconnecting greenways leading from the River Walk Park.

The Greenway System will eventually connect all city and county parks. Plans for additional phases of the project are under development, including mountain bike trails and dog parks. The Greenbelt system will also work to enhance streams, wetlands, and karst and cave features such as Lost River and incorporate them as part of the greenway system.

Bowling Green has found there is a better way to build our communities – one which will result in a more livable world for our children.

Photo caption. The Bowling Green Greenbelt was honored with an Environmental Quality Commission Earth Day Award. Left to right. Jim Bullington , Former City Commissioner and Former Greenways Chairman; Helen Tyson Siewers, Greenways Coordinator; Lindell Ormsbee, Chair of EQC; and Craig Dowell, Greenways Vice-Chairman.