

# Frances Beasley (1949-Present)

**Assistant Director of Environmental Policy and Planning**

**Department of Public Utilities, City of Columbus, Ohio**

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*“Where we live, work and play is the infrastructure of life. Caring for that has to be a priority for all of us.” Frances Beasley, 2004.*

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## Overview

Frances Beasley is the Assistant Director of Environmental Policy and Planning for the City of Columbus Ohio. She is also pursuing her PhD in Natural Resources at Ohio State University. Beasley assisted in forming Friends of Alum Creek, Friends of Blacklick Creek, Friends of the Scioto, and Friends of Big Walnut Creek. She has also implemented a stream signage project to place signs identifying streams at all stream crossings in Franklin County, researches environmental justice issues, is a member of MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Related Sciences), and founded the Noon Day Walkers a downtown walking group focused on appreciation of the urban and inner city environment. Beasley was able to retire from her position as the assistant director of environmental policy in 2007.

## Early Life and Education

Though she grew up in Columbus, Ohio, Frances Beasley was born in Georgia on October 15, 1949. She is the oldest of four children born to Mary Annelle Beasley-Martin, a former case worker, and Willy James Beasley, a former truck driver and laborer. During Beasley's childhood, Columbus experienced problems common to many urban centers, such as crime, blight and poverty. Beasley, however, didn't realize the environmental implications of her neighborhood's condition until she began her environmental work. Beasley earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Ohio State University. When she graduated, she was not looking for a career in the environmental sector. Her first exposure to the environmental field came when she took a job as a secretary in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Ohio DNR). After that experience, she decided to look into careers in the environment and went back to Ohio State University to get a master's degree in natural resource and environmental policy in 1993. She worked for the Ohio DNR on oil and gas reclamation, recycling and strip mining. Beasley was also interested in water policy and the health of waterways. During her tenure at the Ohio DNR, she served as a program manager on the Ohio Greenways project where she helped direct community-focused water quality education efforts.

## **Career**

Beasley is currently the assistant director of environmental policy and planning for the Department of Public Utilities for the City of Columbus. She considers the highlight of her career to be her appointment to this post by Columbus' Mayor Michael B. Coleman. She considers her most significant achievement to be her on-going work in promoting environmental interests that are inclusive, such as environmental justice and urban environmental education. Beasley credits her career advancement to the fact that she pursued advanced studies in the field. She is currently working on her doctorate at Ohio State.

## **Importance of Mentoring to Career**

She counts several professors among her mentors, including Ohio State Professor Don Floyd and Professors Paul Mohai, Bunyan Bryant and Dorceta Taylor at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. According to Beasley, these professors gave her insight into a broader perspective of the environment. She also credits her grandfather, who was a farmer, with influencing her. Beasley says she "learned a lot by being around him."

## **Advice to Young Professionals**

She feels that minorities interested in the environment should work towards the academic credentials needed for the field and should gain relevant job experiences through internships. She advises young professionals not to let money be an overriding factor in career decisions, and encourages minorities not to limit their career options. Finally, she encourages young professionals not to get discouraged by the challenges they may face and to remember that "there is not always a straight path to the top."