

April 2003

Conservation Notes

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Celebrate Spring with Adventures In Conservation Education

After one of the hardest winters in recent memory, you can almost hear a collective sigh of relief as temperatures reach a lovely "cruising altitude".

Our annual education programs are gearing up, and there's opportunities for youth and adult groups to participate in conservation education.

Soil and Water Stewardship week is April 27th-May 4th. This year's theme is "Food for the Future", highlighting the most basic issue for any society: a sustainable food supply. Many complex systems must come together to make our food supply abundant, safe, and affordable for now and future generations. Understanding where our food comes from and how it gets to our grocery stores is vital to safeguarding this essential resource for everyone.

Free guide books for Church Leaders and Educators provide excellent background reading and ideas for activities, sermons, and discussions. Other free promotional materials are available, such as posters, bookmarks, placemats, activity booklets, T-Shirts, etc. Contact the District office for these free items while supplies last.

Help kids tap into their creativity by



checking out our Conservation Poster contest. It follows the same theme as Stewardship Week each year. Any individual or youth group K-12 is eligible to participate. Poster sizes may range from 8.5"x 11" up to 22" x 28". There is also a digital art category. Winners will receive cash prizes and recognition at our Annual District Banquet. The deadline for poster entries in the District office is May 1st .

For graduating high school seniors, we also offer a \$500 scholarship for those planning to major in natural resources or agriculture. A scholarship to pay for enrollment in the Ohio Forestry Camp is also being offered to applicants from grades 9-12, also on a competitive basis. Deadlines for both scholarships are May 15th.

Contact Caroline at the District office for more information and applications.

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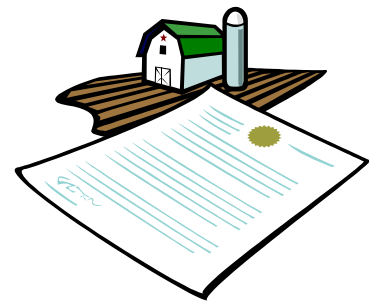
The Ohio Department of Agriculture is entering the second year of the Agriculture Easement Purchase Program (AEPP). It's designed to help family farmers plan their estate such that their land will remain in perpetuity as farm land.

At the same time, the farmer can still reap an 'economic harvest' by selling the right to develop the land for commercial or large scale residential use. The Ohio AEPP program is an effort to mitigate the urban sprawl that converted 212,000 acres of Ohio farmland to mainly residential uses from 1992-97.

In Montgomery County, the Dull, Pansing, and Chambers' farms have sold development rights on a total of 471 acres in Clay and

Perry Townships. This will ensure that the acreage will remain in agricultural use into perpetuity, for use by future generations. There are also income, estate, and capital gains tax benefits involved.

The Montgomery SWCD has assisted land owners in completing the process of applying for the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. This year's deadline is April 30th; contact Dan Jackson at the District office for more information.



Annual Pond Clinic and Fish Sale Set for April 22nd

Spring time for Soil and Water Districts and the people we serve means fish fingerlings and tree seedlings. Although the tree sale deadline is past, there's still time to stock your pond and learn more about how to be a good steward in managing it.

Since we take turns hosting, Preble SWCD is organizing this year's clinic. It will be held at Cross's Campground, 7777 State Route 127 in Camden, (just south of Eaton) from 6-8 pm on April 22nd. We'll be sending out fliers during the last week of March, which will contain more information about the presenters and agenda. Call the District office if you want to be on the mailing list for the annual Pond Clinic.

You can use the form in this newsletter to order your fish. Just complete and mail back to our office. You can also pick up one at the clinic and place your order at that time. The deadline for fish orders is April 25th; payment must accompany order, and pick-ups will be Wednesday, April 30th at the District office, from 4 to 6 pm.

Stocking Recommendations (fish per acre)	
Largemouth bass	100
Bluegill	500
Yellow Perch	100
Channel Catfish	100
Fathead Minnows	2-4 gal.

Order Form

<u>Species</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Subtotal</u>
Largemouth Bass	2-4"	25 for \$21		
Shellcrackers	3-5"	25 for \$20		
Black Crappie	3-5"	25 for \$21		
Bluegill	3-5"	25 for \$15		
Yellow Perch	3-5"	25 for \$21		
Channel Catfish	3-5"	25 for \$12		
Fathead Minnows	1-3"	100 for \$7		
White Amur	8-12"	\$13 each		

Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Payment must accompany order. Make checks payable to Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District. Pick up will be Wednesday, April 30th, 4-6:00 pm.

Drainage Program Update

In the January edition of this newsletter, we talked about some changes in the Drainage Program that staff are continuing to work on. To summarize, here are some of the factors that add to the difficulty of constructing and maintaining large drainage projects:

- Differing land uses
- Large numbers of land owners
- Scope and cost of project
- Equitable assessment method

Generally, there is little disagreement that changing land use has made the current assessment method obsolete. In an effort to address this situation, our staff has met with their counterparts in other Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Counties) in Ohio, to study their methods of assessing costs of drainage projects.

Additional staff work sessions have resulted in recommended revision of assessment criteria. These are being evaluated on several upcoming drainage projects, before official adoption; they were developed using the *Montgomery County Soil Survey* and Technical Release 55 (TR 55), from *Urban Hydrology for Small Watersheds*, published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The suggested revisions are as follows:

1. Incorporation of additional land use categories and hydrologic soil groups.
2. Use of a standard range of distances to determine the location of a parcel from the main tile or ditch ("improvement").
3. Replacement of the agricultural productivity factor with a soil drainage factor (based on soil type).
4. Correlating the benefit (flood protection/property enhancement) directly to a parcel's elevation and intensity of (human) use.

Previously only four land use categories were used: agricultural, residential, woods, and roads. Currently, we are looking at eleven land uses, including such items as parking lots, industrial districts, open space, farmsteads, etc.

The agricultural productivity factor doesn't apply to parcels in non-agricultural use. It makes more sense to look at soil types in terms of natural drainage characteristics, because this factor is independent of land use. Each of the thirty eight soil types in Montgomery County is rated according to how well –or not–water naturally moves downward.

Determining a parcel's benefit from a proposed drainage project used to be rated according to a descriptive evaluation of actual flooding, degree of health and safety hazards, crop damage, and the like. The proposed method now considers local topography as described in the Soil Survey, such as depressional (concave surface), 0-2% slopes, etc. Intensity of land use, means just that: for example a residential or business parcel has a more intense use than cropland or open space, and these differences are rated accordingly in the assessment formula.

Numerous drainage project requests have been on the waiting list for many years. Therefore, staff are currently researching records to confirm watershed acres and existing tile. The next step will be to contact landowners nearest the main tile zone to evaluate present support for continuing with the project request.

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What is a Watershed?



A watershed is an area of land that drains into a lake or river. There's the dictionary definition, but we all know that stewardship involves learning and learning is more than just memorizing definitions. Let's consider the "big picture" if you will, a concept that informs our decisions as we try to solve problems.

As rainwater and melting snow run downhill, they gather sediment and other materials and may carry them into our streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. From an aerial view, watersheds have the appearance of a large tree with branches extending across the landscape. The largest or principal stream of the watershed is the tree's trunk, while the larger branches are the primary streams and the smaller branches are secondary streams all feeding into each other as they make the journey into the larger main stream of the watershed.

Did you know you're in a watershed right now? We all live in a watershed. Homes, farms, ranches, forests, small towns, big cities, and more make up watersheds. Watersheds cross county, state, and even international borders. In some areas watersheds are also called drainage basins. Other countries use other names; e.g. Australians call them catchments.

Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Some encompass millions of square miles; others are just a few acres. Just as creeks drain into rivers, watersheds are nearly always part of a larger watershed in extent. For example, Ohio contains 44 "principal" watersheds, but all of them drain to either lake Erie or the Ohio River. Watersheds are nature's way of dividing up the landscape.

We would suggest that you list important watersheds in your county to add some local "flavor."

Why is your watershed important? Watersheds are the places we call home, where we work and where we play. Everyone relies on water and other natural resources to exist. What you and others do on the land within your watershed impacts the quality and quantity of water and our other natural resources.

Healthy watersheds are vital for a healthy environment and economy. We use water for drinking, irrigation, and industry. Many people also enjoy lakes and streams for their beauty and for boating, fishing, and swimming. Wildlife also needs healthy watersheds for food and shelter.

Managing the water and other natural resources is an effective and efficient way to sustain the local economy and ensure environmental health.

Government agencies, natural resources departments and environmentalists now recognize that the best way to protect our vital natural resources is to understand and manage them on a watershed basis. Everything that is done in a watershed affects the entire watershed's system.

So please take care of your watershed, and your watershed will take care of you. Because, as the saying goes, "We all live downstream."

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Calendar of Events

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	Tree Seedling Pick-Ups (Tentative)				April 17, 18				
	Pond Clinic Cross's Campground Camden, OH				April 22nd				
	Fish Sale Order Deadline				April 25				
	Five Rivers Metroparks Annual River Cleanup				April 26				
	Soil and Water Stewardship Week				April 27-May 4				
	Poster Contest Deadline				May 1				
									