

June 2004

Conservation Notes

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We are committed to promoting citizen stewardship of Montgomery County's natural resources by providing conservation education and Technical assistance.

Annual Conservation Tour to Get a Taste of Dixieland

This year's conservation tour is scheduled for August 17, 18 and 19, 2004. The cost of the trip is \$281.00 per person (double occupancy), or \$562 per couple. All meals are included for this three-day trip. The bus will pick up the Montgomery county group and leave at 7:00 a.m., then travel to The Preble office at Eaton Center parking lot for an 8 a.m. departure. This is a two night, three day tour to the Louisville and Danville, Kentucky area.

Tuesday morning, August 17, please have your breakfast at home. The first stop will be enroute at a rest area for a break and snack of muffin and juice/water. The first major stop in Louisville will be a steam boat cruise aboard the Spirit of Jefferson with lunch and a 2-hour cruise. The boat has air conditioned dining. Next, we will tour the Louisville Slugger Museum. Then, we will arrive at the Holiday Inn Lakeview located in Clarksville, Indiana for check-in and a rest. Dinner will be at the Derby Dinner Playhouse, which is a walk across the parking lot. Fiddler on the Roof is the evening's entertainment.

Wednesday, a breakfast buffet is available at the Holiday Inn and then we'll tour the Kentucky Derby Museum at Churchill Downs. The bus will then travel toward Harrodsburg, Kentucky. A cafeteria style hot-bar lunch will be served at an old converted tobacco barn called Wyanettes. We have scheduled an afternoon bus tour with the local Mercer County District Conservationist on conservation projects in the county. At 5:00 p.m. the bus will travel to Danville, Kentucky and check into Comfort Suites. The evening meal will be at the Pioneer Playhouse, where the scheduled show is Bay at the Moon.

Our Thursday itinerary begins with a continental breakfast at the hotel, touring Constitution Square in downtown Danville (3 acres containing 4 log cabins, art gallery and museum). The next stop is a tour of a Georgian style town house called The McDowell House with a gift shop in the premises. Then, we will be traveling to tour the Old Crow Inn (bed and breakfast), a 200 year-old historical site. The site has a winery, pottery and crafts. Trails on the grounds include a rose garden, vineyards, and an organic garden. A box lunch will be served on the grounds. Next we'll travel north for an hour to tour the Woodford Reserve and Labrot/Graham distilleries. Featuring walking tours, film and gift shops. A final stop will be made for an evening meal at a Cracker Barrel in route home either in Dry Ridge or Florence, Kentucky.

Tour reservations will be taken on a first com, first served basis. With this combined group, space will be limited to you are encouraged to stop by the SWCD office to make your reservation and payment prior to our deadline of Friday, July 2, 2004.

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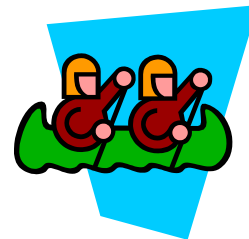
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Calling All River Conservationists

Here's your chance to do something locally that makes a real difference for the better in our community. The Fifth Annual Stillwater River cleanup will happen on Friday, June 18th, from 8:30 am to noon. This event is becoming an annual tradition with many participants. Last year's 95 river enthusiasts netted 22 tires and 2.5 tons of trash!



Everyone will get a free lunch (there is such a thing)! This year we are going to grill hot dogs. And don't forget your free T-shirt to commemorate your sure-to-be memorable experience. They're the ultimate fashion statement for river dogs :)

There will be 4 put-in sites: Indian Hills 4-H Camp in Pleasant Hill, Fenner Rd. at St. Rt. 48, West Milton City Park, and Aullwood Garden near Englewood. Canoes and shuttle service provided, of course. To Register, please contact Angela Manuszak at Miami Conservancy District by June 11th. Pre-registration is required to guarantee a canoe and T-shirt. Just call 937-223-1271, ext. 3263.

This great opportunity is brought to you by some dedicated environmental conservation organizations in the Miami Valley: Miami Conservancy District, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Miami, Darke, and Montgomery Counties, the Stillwater Watershed Project, Veolia Water, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and Brukner Nature Center. We all hope you will join this great fellowship of conservationists.



Wolf Creek Stream Team Update

Our 12-member team met for discussion in February and March this spring, to plan for the monitoring season. We also toured the Brookville Waste Water Treatment Plant. It was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness and facilitate discussion between citizens and Municipal officials.

Thanks to John Weist and staff for educating us about the engineering systems that ensure cleaner streams for wildlife and recreation. One interesting aspect is how the wastewater treatment process has improved since the 1950s. Prior to that time, most raw sewage was dumped directly into streams and rivers. Improvement in our environmental protection tools will always be a work in progress, but we have come a long way, too.

This year, five sites are being monitored from Brookville to Dayton; 2 are on the North Branch of Wolf Creek. We test for nutrients (nitrate & phosphate), turbidity, dissolved oxygen, pH and several other parameters. The bottom-dwelling aquatic insect larvae are also sampled, identified, and categorized according to pollution tolerance. The monitoring program is designed to collect 'trend' data, meaning that we're looking at the long-term health of the creek. This method helps to distinguish between normal (i.e. seasonal) variations and possible drastic changes that may be related to human activity.

For April and May, the team has completed seven of ten scheduled monitoring sessions; only three were rained out! Not bad for a wet spring. Fifteen volunteers have thus far this year donated a total of 86 hours towards their citizen stewardship of our natural resources. As always, anyone interested should check out the Wolf Creek Stream Team web site, just go to the Montgomery Soil & Water Conservation District web site (www.montgomeryswcd.org) and click on the Wolf Creek Stream Monitor Icon. Interested persons may also attend the next volunteer meeting to be held June 19th or 26th at this office, 9-11 am.

Keeping Sewage in its Place

Compared to sewage discharges from some of Ohio's municipal treatment plants, a faulty home septic system here or there might seem like a minor problem. But consider that more than a million Ohio households process wastewater through individual sewage treatment systems. Of those, the Ohio Department of Health estimates 25 percent are failing. Not only do those failing systems contribute to water quality problems, they can be serious public health threats.

To avoid being part of the problem, watch for signs of failure in your existing system and make sure any new systems are properly designed for the site and conditions.

System failures aren't always easy to see. For instance, a faulty system on extremely permeable soils might let nutrients and pathogens leach into groundwater, contaminating wells. On shallow soils and soils with low permeability, faulty systems are more likely to pollute surface water. Watch for sewage pooling on the soil surface or running into ditches or creeks. Besides being a smelly nuisance, this discharge can spread disease and provide breeding sites for mosquitoes.



Some systems fail because the site is inappropriate for the type of system installed. Others fail because they aren't properly maintained. For instance, if a septic tank is not pumped often enough, sediment will flow into the leach bed or absorption area, clogging the system. Systems also fail if they are overloaded with water from household use or surface drainage.

Eventually, all systems wear out when tanks or pipes break down. Even a well-maintained system will need to be upgraded or replaced after 20 or 30 years. Modern systems are also more effective than many of the systems installed years ago.

If you're not sure how your system operates or how it should be maintained, check with the contractor who installed it or refer to Ohio State University Extension fact sheets on wastewater treatment, available through local offices or at www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~setll (click on "publications"). Information is also available on the Ohio Department of Health website, www.odh.state.oh.us. For help evaluating sites or selecting appropriate systems, check with your local health department or Soil and Water conservation District.

Montgomery SWCD Seeks Board Nominations

The nominating committee of the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) will hold a nomination committee meeting on June 15th for Board members to be elected during the annual meeting on Saturday, September 11, 2004, selecting two Supervisors to serve three-year terms beginning in January 2005.

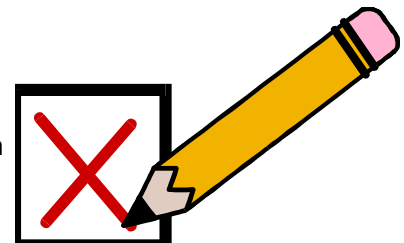
Supervisors meet monthly to conduct District business by entering into working agreements with other agencies, establishing policy, setting priorities concerning the work to be accomplished by a District, approve financial decisions for the continued growth and stability of the agency, and other various tasks promoting the conservation and development of natural resources in this county.

District Administrator Jim Dillon believes the passage of the farm bill and implementation of Phase II storm water quality regulations will guarantee there has never been a more exciting time to be a MSWCD Supervisor. Workloads and priorities will be changing for Districts as the new farm bill has increased funding for conservation by about \$17.1 billion, and new water quality regulations take effect.

This is an opportunity to take an active role in the natural resource arena and serve the community in development and continued support of the agricultural industry. Being a Supervisor offers an individual the opportunity to attend state and national meetings, hearing firsthand information that will affect local landowners, and granting the venue to offer ideas and feedback to many agencies and government officials.

As the District offers a variety of programs, it seeks Supervisors with a diversity of interests such as agriculture, natural resources, education, development, finances, farmland preservation, government and environment, to name a few areas. Supervisors are required to be 18 years of age and must reside in the county to which they are elected. Past Supervisors have included teachers, farmers, business owners, and others.

To learn more about being a MSWCD Supervisor or place your name on the slate, contact current supervisors Laura Rench, Fred Glander, or Bill Wissinger. Inquiries may also be made of the nominating committee members Dan Ennist, Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency, Pete Lane, OSU Extension Agent, or Laura Rench, MSWCD Supervisor. For contact information, call the MSWCD office at 854-7645.



District Staff Respond to Oil Spill

Last month, several technicians from this office were called to a site in Trotwood on Diamond Mill Road, following complaints from a resident concerning a gas kind of smell near the road ditch beneath her driveway.

Further investigation revealed that a nearby resident had recently replaced an above ground tank for home heating oil. A large amount of residual oil from the old tank was spilled over a large area of ground nearby.

At this point, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Emergency Spill Response Team was called to the scene, as well as a crew from the Montgomery County Engineer Office. A significant amount of subsurface tile was excavated to locate precisely where the oil was entering the roadside drainage ditch. EPA officials also installed an oil boom to contain the residue and prevent downstream movement.

Near the location of the fuel oil tank, an oil absorptive substance had been spread by the landowner. However, hand excavation below the surface revealed that the oil had infiltrated downward through the soil a significant distance.

The Ohio EPA will be overseeing the remediation of this site, at the expense of the landowner. Just as a reminder to our readers, there are proper ways of disposing of household hazardous wastes. Just contact the Montgomery County Solid Waste District at 225-4999 or <http://www.curby.org/>. Most of the drinking water in Montgomery county is from underground aquifers (wells), and incidents such as this are a serious threat to human health.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)



Local Environmental Officials from the Farm Service Agency, Division of Forestry, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Miami Conservancy District recently met to finalize selection of conservation projects that will receive funding from the EQIP program. Montgomery County has been allocated \$75,000 for 2004 to go toward improving water quality in agricultural settings. This allotment will cover about half of the sixteen applicants.

Many of the projects include Best Management Practices aimed at managing livestock, manure, and fertilizers; practices such as fencing to protect streams, manure storage, heavy use pads and nutrient management are effective in protecting surface water quality from the impacts of cropping and livestock operations.

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Spring 2004 a Productive Season for Conservation Education

Springtime for environmental educators is like Christmas time for retailers. It probably all started with the first Earth Day in April 1970, a time when political activism, science, and environmental awareness all collided. For the last 34 years, the American public has become increasingly aware of environmental problems caused by certain human activities, and what we should or shouldn't do to care for the land that feeds us.

And that's really what conservation education is about—raising public awareness to the level of action. Of course Soil and Water Districts across Ohio and the nation have been working on this since their inception in the 1940s, one landowner at a time.

Our formal education efforts involve the Conservation Poster Contest, Natural Resources Scholarship competition, and the county and regional Envirothon competitions. The Soil Judging contest takes place in the fall.

Our conservation poster contest attracted 62 entries from four different schools; its theme for 2004 was The Living Soil. The District also offers a \$500 scholarship to the winning applicant planning a college major in agriculture or natural resources management. This year's winner is from the Miami Valley Career Technology Center. Envirothon is a competitive field testing event involving environmental knowledge and skills. The local competition attracted approximately 15 teams from Greene and Montgomery Counties. The regional Envirothon, held this year at the Piqua Historical Area / Johnston Farm, hosted over 120 teams from 18 counties. Two teams from Miami Valley CTC earned top placing and will compete in the State Envirothon, June 13-15. This annual event is an excellent opportunity for high school students to gain hands-on experience, build teamwork skills, and become environmentally literate.

Another number of inter-agency events also occurred in April: The Five Rivers Metroparks River Corridor cleanup project, The Honey Creek Watershed festival, The Children's Water Festival at UD, plus miscellaneous displays set up at area events. Closer to home, the District posted healthy earnings for our annual Tree Seedling Sale, and Fish Sale. About 40 people attended our annual pond clinic, that was held at the beautifully renovated facilities at Cox Arboretum, graciously hosted by Five Rivers Metroparks

Amidst this beehive of activity continues routine District business, such as ongoing staff training, inter-agency initiatives, Farmland Preservation Applications, Wolf Creek Stream Team monitoring & activities, science fair judging, and the drainage program, just to name a few.

So yes, it can be a crazy place around here sometimes, but it's a good kind of crazy. We're all working together to try and help people make the world a better place for the future.

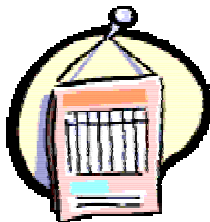
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Calendar of Events

															
	Conservation Bus Tour														
	Conservation Corner Displays (Montgomery County Fair)														
	District Annual Meeting (picnic at Sycamore Park)														
	VIP Air Tour														
															