

November 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.

District Technical Staff Wrap Up Successful Construction Season

By Dan Jackson, District Technician

Measures of Success

2004 has turned out to be another excellent season for the installation of grassed waterways in Montgomery County. Over 6.6 miles of waterways were constructed, covering some 33.2 acres of farm ground that was gullied from erosion. Nearly 12 miles of subsurface drainage tile was installed on the perimeters of these waterways, thereby improving the drainage on an additional 2,130 acres of prime farmland.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Support

USDA is an important partner with the 25 landowners who wanted to add these erosion control practices to their farms. Nearly \$330,000 in financial assistance was made available by USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), enabling these producers to invest in conservation by making it economically feasible to do so. The long term benefits of this soil conservation and good water management are a sustainable and more productive agricultural base.

Local Partnerships Make it Happen

Steve Boeder, of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, was very busy as one of the first people contacted by land owners and operators to create or enhance existing conservation practices. Steve and/or some District Technicians do an initial site visit to gauge its suitability, while also working with the Farm Service Agency to begin the necessary paperwork. Upon completion of these first steps, the survey and design part of a project could begin. Most waterways are designed by District Technicians Jeremy Huggler and Josh Klepinger. Also assisting in the design work are Stefan Bridenbaugh, Russ Heintz, and Dan Jackson. When landowners and operators approve the design, they must then decide which contractor to use. Montgomery County is fortunate to have some of Ohio's finest tile contractors and heavy equipment operators right here in our area. Often times deciding which contractor to use comes down to who is available to do a project. Thanks to everyone who put in all the long hours to complete these projects. Getting conservation on the land is truly a team effort. The combined cost share from CRP and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) brought a total of \$428,000 of government cost share funding into western Montgomery County in 2004. Congratulations to all those involved for a job well done.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Proposes Study of Wolf Creek Watershed

Local Governments and Citizens Step Forward

The citizens of Brookville, Clayton, Perry and Clay Townships, Trotwood and West Dayton stand to benefit from the partnership formed by their local government representatives, the Wolf Creek Watershed (WCW) Partnership. Our August District Newsletter described how this group formed, and the initiatives that have begun since last summer. The results of a flood damage questionnaire have indicated nearly one quarter of a million dollars damage resulting from heavy rains in late May 2004. And it's likely that much more damage was incurred, since the response rate from the survey was only 1%.

Federal Agency Recognizes Local Efforts

The WCW Partnership is most pleased to report that as a result of citizen and local government involvement, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff traveled to Dayton on October 13th to listen to concerns from each of the Partnership's representatives regarding natural resource issues related to Wolf Creek and stormwater management.

Many Points of View, One Watershed

Each local government representative described stormwater issues relevant to their jurisdiction. Brookville officials noted water management challenges in common with neighboring communities; Clay Township's interests are related to development along the SR 49 corridor, and agricultural drainage pertaining to Wolf Creek outlets; Perry Township is concerned that the removal of logjams would create flooding problems downstream; The City of Clayton wants to explore how Army Corps programs might be helpful for compliance with stormwater management regulations; The City of Trotwood will be hiring a stormwater technician and creating a stormwater utility to begin addressing compliance concerns; The City of Dayton has been in compliance with stormwater regulations since 1997. Part of that program involves annual studies by Wright State University. These studies have shown that major problems are related to sedimentation from upstream sources, excessively high flows, debris, and stream bank erosion. The Wolf Creek Stream Team has found areas of the creek where the aquatic insect population is absent or of a very low diversity. There are also numerous locations where erosion is undermining utility poles and exposing sanitary sewer infrastructure.

Near Term and Long Term Plans

The Partnership will be gathering a focus group of specialists to create a work plan to submit for possible funding to the Planning Assistance to States program. Approximately \$100,000 may be available, requiring a 50% local match, half of which may be in-kind donations (labor, materials). The General Investigation Study would be more comprehensive and we will seek full Federal funding of approximately \$400,000. Two competitive advantages for our watershed initiatives are 1) an established local partnership and 2) The proposed projects will be multi-use. A persevering and dedicated cooperation between our citizens and local governments is crucial and will yield mutual benefits to our communities and the natural resources upon which we depend. A special thanks to all involved who are investing time and commitment to tackle these complex challenges, whose time has come, and we are called to do the right thing.

Greater Ohio Coalition Addresses Urban Sprawl with Smart Growth Initiatives

A new survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America shows Americans strongly prefer their state government work toward improving existing communities instead of continuing to create incentives to build in the countryside.

The 2004 American Community Survey released in October 2004, indicates that more American homebuyers prefer smart growth communities with shorter commute times, sidewalks and places to walk more than sprawling communities.

"We can see from this survey that there is a fundamental shift in market preferences underway," said Gene Krebs, Greater Ohio state director. "As we can see from this year's election, Ohio is a microcosm of American sentiment. That sentiment is clear: Let's prioritize and take care of our existing communities first, instead of continuing to sprawl out into the countryside."

Some findings of the survey are as follows: 86% of Americans want their states to fund improvements in existing communities over incentives for new development in the countryside; 61% of respondents who say they will buy a house in the next three years are more likely to look for a home in a smart growth community (characterized by a mix of housing on various sized lots, sidewalks and shopping nearby) rather than a sprawl community (characterized by single-family houses on one-acre lots located farther from shopping and public transportation); Shorter commute times (79%) and having sidewalks and places to take walks (72%) ranked vary high as a factor in determining where to live.

The survey is based on a national random survey of 1,130 adults from August 26-September 6, 2004. The margin of error is 3 percentage points.

The Greater Ohio Coalition's purpose is to support—through research, public education and grassroots advocacy—public policy in Ohio to grow our economy and improve our quality of life through intelligent land use. To this end, Greater Ohio will work to support redevelopment of existing communities, strengthen regional cooperation and protect the countryside and Ohio's natural resources.

The coalition believes we will have better schools and better jobs if we invest more in the redevelopment of existing cities and towns and in the preservation of our countryside. This more efficient kind of land use planning will provide incentives for Ohio's youth to stay in Ohio and prosper here. To do this, we need changes in state policy so our communities can make the best use of our land and our talent.

The Greater Ohio Coalition is supported by a statewide network of some of Ohio's most influential public, private and non-profit sector leaders in the fields of land use, transportation, urban revitalization, farmland preservation and economic development. Funding has been secured from The Foundations of George Gund, Greater Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland. For more information, visit www.greaterohio.org.

Now's the Time for No Till

No-till might eliminate the traditional fall tillage chore, but producers can't just wait until spring and start no-tilling. "It starts in the fall," explains Randall Reeder, agricultural engineer with Ohio State University Extension. By planning ahead, farmers can get an earlier start on planting in the spring and improve the productivity of their no-till fields.

During harvest, farmers should adjust equipment so crop residue is distributed uniformly. Soil won't dry evenly in the spring if strips of heavy residue are left to hold in moisture, explains Reeder. Fall weed control is also important on fields that will be no-tilled. "Otherwise you're going to be planting into a weedy mess come spring," he warns.

Farmers with slow-drying soils can plant corn sooner in the spring if they use fall strip tillage. It qualifies as a form of no-till because it leaves residue on the soil surface between strips, explains Reeder. Potassium and phosphorous can even be applied in the strips, but applying nitrogen can be tricky, he adds. Anhydrous ammonia needs to be applied late in the fall so it's not lost over the winter, but strip tillage needs to be done as soon after soybean harvest as possible to avoid wet weather in late fall.

Besides preparing fields for no-till, producers need to prepare machinery. For instance, a corn planter might need row cleaners and different press wheels. Producers should also select seed with no-till in mind since no-till presents different disease and insect challenges.

Farmers sometimes put off switching to no-till because they want to build up soil fertility or correct soil pH first, but Reeder says it's not worth the wait. "Don't delay no-till adoption just to get lime and fertilizer mixed in," he says. "Apply it as needed on the surface." Delaying the switch to no-till delays conservation benefits as well as savings in production costs, he explains.

For more information on no-till, Reeder recommends the book "Conservation Tillage Systems and Management" sold in book form or as a CD-ROM. To order, contact MidWest Plan Service at: www.mwpsdq.org or phone: 800-562-3618

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Conservation Reserve Program Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative

The newest program to enter the CRP sign up this year is CP-33. This program is aimed to create 250,000 acres of Northern Bobwhite Quail habitat. The quail population has been declining greatly for the last 20 years. This is due to the urbanization of land and the loss of habitat to farming. The program will help reestablish habitat needed for the quail population to slowly begin to rise. The program will not only benefit quail but it will also help other upland birds become more populous.

The basic practice is a buffer that will consist of early successional grass and be placed along the side of agricultural fields. The buffer widths will be between 30 and 120 feet. CRP is a voluntary program that provides annual rental payments and cost share assistance to establish long term resource covers on eligible land. To be eligible for the cost share, the practice must follow the guidelines set for the program. The approximate allocated acres for the state of Ohio are 14,200. If you are interested in this program you can find out more information by contacting the FSA office or the NRCS/SWCD office. You can also look on the FSA web site to find out more.

Creating Community Greenways 101

Does your community have enough green space? Are there special places in your community preserved for future generations? Is your community green space protected and sustainable? If you are concerned about green space and ready to take action to preserve the natural corridors and habitats in the Miami Valley area a special workshop will be held on **Saturday, November 20, 2004**, 9:00 am—noon, at the Wegerzyn Gardens Metro Park, 1301 E. Siebenthaler, Dayton OH.

The keynote presenter will be Elaine Marsh, Project Director, Ohio Greenways. Elaine will focus on why greenways are important to communities and share examples of successful projects in other areas of Ohio. She is also president and co-founder of the Crooked River which advocates for the preservation and restoration of the Cuyahoga River.

This workshop is sponsored by Dayton's Newest community environmental organization, the Greenways of Greater Dayton. Members of the organization will share their vision and plans to stimulate the fulfillment of Arthur Morgan's vision of an "emerald necklace" around Dayton.

Three local land preservation organizations will share their accomplishments and plans at the workshop: the Three Valley Conservation Trust, the B-W (Beavercreek Wetlands) Greenway, and the W-H (Wenrick Honeycreek Wetlands) Greenway.

Participants will learn how to get a local greenway organization started and will have the opportunity to make connections with others in the greenway community who have already preserved some emeralds in the "necklace".

Registration is \$5 per participant and is due **(as close as possible to) November 15th**. Mail your registration to: Greenways of Greater Dayton c/o Miami Valley Earth Central, 27 S. St. Clair St. Dayton, OH 45402. Please include your name, phone number and address with check payable to Greenways of Greater Dayton. For more information, call Bob Jurick at 878-6060 or Peggy Schear at 854-6811.

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Calendar of Events

Stream Team Volunteer Meeting	Nov. 20th
Creating Community Greenways	Nov. 20th
Sophomore Career Days at Miami Valley Career Technology Center	Dec. 7th & 8th
Equine Conference	Dec. 11th
Free Farm Tire Disposal	Dec. 6th—11th

For more information on any of these events, call our office at 937-854-7645