

March, 2006

Conservation Notes

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

Upper Midwest at Risk for Loss of Ash Trees

Emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis* Fairmaire, is an exotic beetle that was discovered in southeastern Michigan in the summer of 2002. The larvae (the immature stage) feed on the inner bark of ash trees, disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. There is no cure. All infected trees will die within 2-3 years.

Emerald ash borer probably arrived in the United States in wood packing material carried on cargo ships or airplanes originating in its native Asia. Emerald ash borer is also established in Windsor, Ontario. It was found in northern Ohio in 2003 and northern Indiana in 2004. Since its discovery, the EAB has:

- Killed at least 8 to 10 million ash trees in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. Most of the devastation is in southeastern Michigan.
- Caused regulatory agencies to enforce quarantines (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan) and fines to prevent potentially infested ash trees, logs or firewood from moving out of areas where EAB damage occurs.
- Cost municipalities, property owners, nursery operators and forest products industries tens of millions of dollars.

A concerted effort to stop EAB has been launched by state and federal officials. Research is being conducted at universities to understand the beetle's life cycle and find ways to detect and contain new infestations, and control EAB adults and larvae.

What to know about EAB:

- It attacks only ash trees (*Fraxinus* species.).
- Adult Beetles are metallic green and about 1/2-inch long.
- Adults leave a D-shaped exit hole in the bark when they emerge in spring.
- Woodpeckers like EAB larvae; heavy woodpecker damage on ash trees may be a sign of infestation.
- Moving firewood is prohibited in many areas of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana because of the EAB quarantine (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan)

Eradication efforts by state and federal agencies in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Canada are under way to prevent small infestations from growing into large infestations. Quarantines are in place to prevent infested ash firewood, logs or nursery trees from being transported and starting new infestations.

Research support and information comes from Michigan State University, Purdue University, the Ohio State University, the Michigan and Ohio Departments of Agriculture; the Michigan, Indiana and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources; the USDA Forest Service; and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

For more information, visit the following web sites: <http://www.ashalert.osu.edu> and <http://www.ohioagriculture.gov/eab>

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Montgomery County Cattleman's Association Organizes Relief Efforts

Local farmer Duane Plessinger wanted to help his fellow cattlemen in Louisiana after hurricane Rita, but wasn't sure where to start. After trying to contact the president of the Louisiana Cattleman's Association to no avail, he saw a story on NBC Nightly News and wrote to the network, asking for the reporter's contact information. Shortly thereafter, Plessinger received a call from the Flying J Ranch owner Charles Brousard; starting with Mr. Brousard, relief efforts from Montgomery County farmers are now being coordinated through the Cameron Parish Extension Agent in southwest Louisiana.

Duane wanted to make sure that whatever relief is sent to Louisiana farmers is equitably distributed. The local Extension Agent surveyed ranchers and 280 applied for aid. Items needed most are hay, feed, and fence. At this time, the amounts available to help are only enough to keep the cattle alive. Actual beef production will not even be an option for at least two years. That's how long it's estimated to take for the rain to wash the salt out of the soil resulting from the storm surge, which lingered for three weeks following the hurricane. In Cameron Parrish alone, 6,000 cattle and 60,000 acres of pasture were destroyed.

Initially, the Montgomery County Cattleman's Association Board voted to donate 22 tons of feed worth \$4,000. It was ordered through the Cargill Co. in nearby LaFayette LA. They sold the feed at cost and provided free delivery. Hay donations continue to flow from Montgomery county and other farmers. To date, \$4,800 worth of hay cubes, 30 round bales, and 675 square bales have been shipped. Personally delivering these by flatbed and semi-truck are: Kevin Dull of Clay Township, Darren Risemiller of Rossburg, and Brian Bailey of Urbana. Duane Plessinger estimates that 12-14 semi loads of hay have already been donated and are awaiting delivery.

After reading about locally organized relief efforts in Farm World Magazine, representatives of the (international) Fellowship of Christian Farmers (FCF) have offered help in many ways. They have paid for all the fuel and road tariffs for each delivery, which is about \$1,200 for one semi load and \$650 for a one ton truck with gooseneck trailer. Additionally, FCF sends about 15-20 farmers per week to the Louisiana area to build fence and repair farm equipment.

Duane has looked into other options for transporting hay - including the US Air Force at Wright Patterson AFB, the Ohio National Guard, and FEMA. So far, none of these other options has worked out.

If you are able to assist in any way with our local efforts toward relief for Louisiana ranchers, contact Duane Plessinger at 2225 N. Snyder Rd. Trotwood OH 45426 / 937-854-2080 / springrunfarm2webtv.net

Waterway Update

As you return to your fields this spring you may find erosion that has taken place over the course of the winter. The USDA has a program that you may be eligible for that can assist you in fixing this problem. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allows for government and landowner cost-sharing for the construction of grassed waterways that provide soil erosion solutions. If you are interested in the program feel free to contact our office to determine your eligibility and to have any questions you may have answered. Currently, the district has 38 waterways, representing 26 landowners and totaling close to 7 miles in length, designed for the 2006 construction season. We would enjoy the opportunity to add your project to that list. Please contact either District Conservationist Steve Boeder or District Technician Jeremy Huggler for more information.

District Employees Receive Service Awards

We are pleased to announce that District Administrative Assistant Cheryl Barkalow and District Secretary Lynn Peters were both recognized at the annual meeting of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (OFSWCD) for 20 years of service each. Both received award plaques and jackets embroidered with the OFSWCD logo.

Barkalow has been instrumental in organizing and expanding the annual District tree sale. Proceeds from tree sales over the years funded most of the construction for the District's new office building on Amity Road in 1996. Montgomery is the only one of two SWCD office in Ohio that owns the building. She also manages all the District's budget and accounting programs. Barkalow is a strong supporter of livestock 4H projects, has served as 4H Judge and member of the Montgomery County Farm Bureau's County Committee.

Peters is a Secretary for the Montgomery SWCD. She is well-connected to the local community, which helps the Technicians as they work with landowners on group drainage projects. Peters has for many years been an enthusiastic participant in the annual conservation bus tour and state-wide professional development training opportunities for District employees. She is an avid promoter of recycling, and sees that all office paper, plastic, glass and aluminum is recycled.

Pond Clinic Planned

The District's traditional pond clinic is slated for Thursday May 4th, 6:30-8:00 pm at the Farmersville Community Center. A special mailing will be sent out in April. If you wish to be on the pond clinic mailing list, contact the office at 854-7645 or email us from the web site, www.montgomeryswcd.org

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Ground Water: Out of Sight, But Not Out of Mind



By Kevin McCray, CAE, Executive Director
National Ground Water Association

Some 47 percent of the U.S. population depends on ground water, the water that fills cracks and other openings in beds of rock and sand, for its drinking water supply-be it from either a public source or private well. In rural areas, the number is about 96 percent.

That fact alone justifies the need for National Ground Water Awareness during the month of March.

But ground water is important to us in many other ways, as well. Consider:

- Ground water provides much of the flow of many streams; often lakes and streams are "windows" to the water table. Ground water adds 492 billion gallons per day to U.S. surface water bodies. In large part, the flow in a stream represents water that has flowed from the ground into the stream channel.
- Scientists estimate U.S. ground water reserves to be at least 33,000 trillion gallons-equal to the amount discharged into the Gulf of Mexico by the Mississippi River in the past 200 years.
- The United States uses 83.3 billion gallons per day of fresh ground water for public supply, private supply, irrigation, livestock, manufacturing, mining, thermoelectric power, and other purposes.
- Ground water is tapped through wells placed in water-bearing soils and rocks beneath the surface of the earth. There are nearly 15.9 million of these wells serving households, cities, business, and agriculture every day. Wells are constructed by the 8,100 contracting firms employing nearly 55,000 people dedicated to providing and protecting our nation's ground water supplies.
- Irrigation accounts for the largest use of ground water in the U.S., about 65 percent of all the ground water pumped each day. Some 58 billion gallons of ground water are used daily for agricultural irrigation from more than 374,082 wells. Irrigation is a major reason for the abundance of fresh produce and grains that we all enjoy.
- One ton of ground water used by industry generates an estimated \$14,000 worth of output.

These facts help us connect with the important role we each play as stewards, or protectors, of ground water. Man can adversely affect the resource. Fortunately, there are simple steps that will help protect ground water and the wells systems that distribute it.

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Always use licensed or certified water well drillers and pump installers when a well is constructed or serviced, or when the pump is installed or serviced.

Keep hazardous materials away from any well. Never dump such materials, motor oil, or anything else that could impact water quality onto the land surface, into a hole or pit, or into a surface water supply.

These tips and more are available from sources such as a state ground water or water well association, NGWA, or from your county agricultural extension agent or state government agency with responsibility for ground water. A convenient source for a broader understanding of our ground water protector role can be found at www.wellowner.org, a Web service of the National Ground Water Association. National Ground Water Awareness is not a celebration, like the Fourth of July has become. Instead, we should use this time to reflect more deeply on ground water's value and its contributions to our lives.

District Supervisor Fred Glander Testifies at NACD Farm Forum

Fred Glander, of the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board of supervisors and full time farmer, testified at the Farm Forum during the annual meeting of the National Association of conservation Districts (NACD), held in Houston Texas in early February. Testimony was being given as NACD seeks input from the nation's farming industry to be used when lobbying for the 2007 Farm Bill.

Glander stated that Montgomery SWCD has good partnerships with The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The District also works closely with local, state, and federal legislators. These are all important partners in the delivery of cost share programs and technical assistance to farmers for implementing important soil and water conservation practices.

A variety of programs are available for farmers that help them conserve soil and water quality. The following programs have been funded in Montgomery County for fiscal year 2005.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) received 27 applications for cost share on various kinds of practices related to water quality. 20 practices were funded for a total of \$105,383. This will be spent on farms that have conservation plans in place, totaling 3700 acres. The practices being funded include heavy use pads for cattle, agrichemical containment facilities, exclusion fencing (protecting streams) and nutrient management plans.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has 29 contracts for FY 2005. \$600,000 has been spent for cost share to construct 12 miles of waterways, including tile and related structures. Waterways are low-lying areas taken out of crop production and planted to grass because they are susceptible to gully erosion. Thus, three goals are achieved: farmers continue to receive income, fertile soil is kept from washing away, and water quality is protected from siltation and other forms of pollution that may be attached to soil particles. Over the last five years, producers in Montgomery county have installed about 50 miles of waterways; USDA has paid out over \$2 million in cost share payments.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) funded the construction of one wetland / wildlife area, which received \$19,000 in cost share.

If Montgomery SWCD in-kind services are included, the total Federal dollars brought to the county for conservation in 2005 is \$692,226. During testimony, Glander added that farmers need continued support for these programs in the 2007 Federal Farm Bill to give them needed financial assistance to protect the nation's soil fertility and water quality. Mr. Glander received his 40-year service award as a Board member, from the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

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Calendar of Events

														
	Tree Sale Pick up				Second Week of April (weather permitting)									
	Conservation Poster & Scholarship Deadline				May 1st									
	Pond Clinic				May 4th Farmersville Community Center									
	Fish Sale Order Deadline				May 5th									
														