



Montgomery
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

The Conservation Advocate January 2008

Helping People and Communities Care for Land and Water

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2007 Farm Bill May Benefit Local FSA Office

By Dan Jackson

The United States Senate voted 79 to 14 on December 14th in support of the 2007 Farm Bill. The Bill's next stop will be a conference committee made up of members of the Senate and House of Representatives meeting in January to reconcile differences between versions that have passed both houses of Congress.

The local benefit for our area is in language inserted by Senator Sherrod Brown (D) of Ohio that will stop the unnecessary closure of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office co-located with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), and Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) at 10025 Amity Road in Perry Township. The FSA office was moved from New Lebanon in the spring of 2001 in an effort to provide more convenience for area landowners and operators in their dealings with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) many conservation programs. Co-location has worked very smoothly for all parties involved and we are blessed with one of the finest USDA Service Centers in the tri-state.

The USDA has been closing and consolidating FSA offices across the nation during the last couple of years in an effort deemed to save money. Several offices in Ohio have been earmarked to be closed and consolidated with offices in neighboring counties, including the Montgomery County FSA office. This plan (which has since been put into action) is for the FSA door in Perry Township to be shuttered this spring and the staff relocated to a shared facility with the Preble County office.

State FSA officials have attempted to convince users of the Montgomery County FSA office, that it will be just as convenient for them to drive to Eaton, Greenville, Troy, Xenia, or Hamilton to conduct business with the FSA. The large turnout of farmers and landowners at a rally opposing the consolidation in early September at Golden Gate Park in Brookville, expressed local opinion concerning this cost saving idea.

Sadly, Senator Brown's efforts could be short lived in that the Farm Bill as always reflects the vast country we are. Acting Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Connors has spoken negatively about the cost of the new Farm Bill, and President Bush has threatened to veto the bill if changes aren't made. Every person in the country who is interested in the well being of agriculture will find items that could both please them or repulse them in the proposed Farm Bill.

Innovation and change happen every day on American farms. Farm Bills are hammered out every six years in Washington with hope, but innovation and change sometimes seems in short supply. Whatever your take is on the Farm Bill, there does exist one item that does make real good sense, and that's Senator Brown's effort to keep the Farm Service Agency in Montgomery County.

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2007 A Year of Change in Drainage!

By Stefan Bridenbaugh

Open drainage ditch reconstruction and maintenance is moving forward with the times. As a famous individual once said nothing stays the same except for change. In today's world the farmer and landowner still need good drainage which requires clean and clear open ditches and well maintained drainage tile. On the other hand, the public wants clean and clear water for recreation, swimming and drinking. This is the purpose of the Clean Water Act (CWA) which is monitored and enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The CWA came into existence in 1972 to protect the waters of the United States from illicit discharge of pollutants, and to create a permitting system to regulate existing discharges. At the time these included outlets from sewage treatment plants, storm water outlets from construction sites or other known sources. Since that time, the interpretation has broadened to include non-point discharges such as construction site storm water runoff, runoff from farm fields carrying sediment, etc.

In 2006 some environmental groups and citizens became concerned over open ditch reconstruction in several counties in Ohio. The Bee Run Ditch in Marion County, near Columbus, Ohio is one of these sites. The CWA states that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit be obtained from EPA whenever a construction project will disturb more than one acre of land. The Bee Run Ditch project exceeded one acre but was not a stream. The OEPA report ruled that it emptied into Bee Run itself which was delineated as Waters of the United States. The OEPA felt that construction activities would damage the stream bed's ecosystem and mostly aquatic life due to sedimentation.

Most ditch projects are really reconstruction of a man-made channel for drainage. These projects are in the upper reaches of a watershed where these channels are not streams with year round water flow, and may go dry or have variable flows. The ditch reconstruction projects we work with generally have less than two thousand acres of watershed and are existing man-made drainage ditches not streams.

The way that drainage projects are perceived is changing and it is up to everyone interested in agricultural drainage to be vigilant in requiring them to be designed to minimize negative impact on the environment while providing the necessary improvement in drainage. To this end, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio County Engineer's Association and Soil and Water Conservation District personnel have formed a drainage committee to look at these drainage issues. This (Continued on page 3)

Drainage—(Continued from page 2)

committee has been working with Dan Dudley of the Ohio EPA to come up with drainage project best management practices and guidelines for open channel reconstruction.

Look for a report from this committee in the February Ohio Farmer magazine. I feel the recommendations being made represent a good compromise between the environment and the need for drainage. Look for follow up articles in future newsletters to keep you updated on how the district will be moving forward with better ditch projects in the future. Please feel free to call me at anytime to talk about your drainage needs or concerns. I know the only way the MSWCD can succeed is with help and support from landowners like you. I thank those landowners who stop in and talk drainage with me on a regular basis, I consider you guys priceless to our success. You can contact me at 854-7646 extension 106.

Water Quality Program Report

By Jeremy Huggler

The Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) technicians have been busy planning and designing conservation practices through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). A total of one pond and 11 waterway projects have been requested to date for 2008 implementation. The status of CRP and other program incentives for conservation practices after the end of this year is uncertain until either the new Farm Bill is resolved and approved or the existing Farm Bill is extended.

In the meantime, landowners and farm operators should focus on maintaining existing conservation practices, especially for winter wildlife cover and to protect against erosion from snowmelt and heavy spring rains. Please contact the MSWCD office as early as possible for assistance with planning waterways, tile, wetlands or other practices for 2008, or if you have questions about maintaining existing practices. We look forward to another successful year of putting conservation on the land.

Great Miami River Watershed Water Quality Credit Trading Program

By Jim Dillon

The Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) is pleased to announce the availability of funds for the implementation of agricultural management practices that reduce nutrient discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus into the rivers and streams of the Great Miami River's Watershed. Projects will be chosen for funding by the Water Quality Trading Program's Project Advisory Group and be ranked by the lowest cost/per pound of nutrient reduction.

Those projects selected will receive funding as soon as a Project Agreement is executed with payments issued following project inspection and verification by the MSWCD. Funds up to \$300,000 will be awarded in this round, depending on the projects submitted and approved.

The MSWCD will work with interested agricultural producers to identify and propose management practices that accomplish the desired nutrient reduction. Project Proposals will be accepted from January 11 through March 28, 2008. Successful applicants will be notified of chosen projects no later than April 11, 2008. For more information, please contact Jim Dillon at 854-7646 ext.104 or view on line at: http://www.miamiconservancy.org/water/quality_credit.asp.

SOIL AND WATER EDUCATOR/ INFORMATION SPECIALIST OBTAINS NEW POSITION

by Dan Jackson

Montgomery SWCD regrets to announce that Caroline McColloch has left after seven and a half years with us as Education/Information Specialist. She has found a new career calling as a textbook editor with a publishing concern in the Dayton area. This position will offer her the right setting to use her creative talents and her editing skills, which have been very evident in her efforts with our newsletter and web-site.

Caroline will be missed by many of us whose lives she has enriched. She was always a ready resource for our staff when it came to questions about science, biology, writing, language, and computers. She always could take our newsletter bullet points, articles, or topics and edit them in to top notch reading.

She made many friends through her outreach in to schools, river clean ups, other SWCD's, conservation and civic groups. She made many dear friends among the group of volunteers known as the Wolf Creek Stream Team and found great satisfaction in her interaction with college students just getting started with their lives.

We as a staff listened to Caroline talk about the great love of her Grandmother's farm near Piqua, which eventually became her farm. We heard countless stories about her love of horses and the years she spent working with them. Her laughter will be missed, leaving the building a lot quieter.

Our best wishes go out to Caroline and her new employment. Thanks for the seven plus years.

2008 Montgomery SWCD Board Meetings

will be held on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office.

Upcoming Dates

Feb. 18 — Office Closed for President's Day
 March 14 — Order Deadline for Tree/Plant Sale
 April 17 & 18 — Anticipated Tree/Plant Orders Pick Up
 April 27—May 4—Soil & Water Stewardship Week—
 Theme: Water Is Life
 Information & materials available at
nacdnet.org/stewardship/2008/

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All programs and services provided by the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District are available to everyone without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, handicap or marital status.



Calendar of Events



Office Closed—November 22 & 23, 2007
December 25, 2007
January 1, 2008

Board Meetings—December 5, 2007
January 2, 2008

Legislator's Breakfast—December 7, 2007

Conservation Tree/Plant Sale— Orders Accepted
January—March 2008