



Montgomery
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

The Conservation Advocate March 2008

Helping People and Communities Care for Land and Water

Montgomery SWCD 10025 Amity Rd. Brookville Ohio 45309
937-854-7645 Fax 837-2241 www.montgomeryswcd.org

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District Holds First Planning Meeting

By Dan Jackson

Our conference room at the office was filled with almost 25 guests, MSWCD Board, and SWCD staff on February 28th, 2008 for the first of a half dozen planning sessions to develop a five-year strategic plan to guide the District's conservation programs and activities.

The session was moderated by Mr. Dave Ramey of Strategic Leadership Associates. Mr. Ramey has assisted dozens of organizations in developing plans that provide guidance in developing partnerships, streamlining service, encouraging organizational growth, and staying abreast of change.

This first meeting consisted of developing a list of our strengths, our weaknesses and limitations, external threats beyond our control, and a roster of emerging opportunities. The Planning Committee kept Mr. Ramey busy writing down many thoughts and ideas in each category.

Before the two hour meeting ended it was clear that the District enjoys many Strengths, but we also face many challenges in regards to shrinking governmental budgets, a sluggish economy, a county that is both urban and rural, and rapid changes in agriculture.

The outcome we hope to enjoy from these planning sessions will be one where we stay current with changes on the farm and in town, forge new friendships with other conservation groups, work closely with county government, and provide sound advice, good service and conservation leadership to all the residents of Montgomery County.

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Montgomery Soil & Water Conservation District Offers Natural Resource Scholarship

By Jim Dillon

The Montgomery Soil & Water Conservation District (MSWCD) is encouraging environmental stewardship through its offering of a \$500 college scholarship. Any high school senior in Montgomery County who is planning to major in environmental studies or natural resources management is eligible.



The application may be printed from the home page of the District's web site (www.montgomeryswcd.org), faxed or mailed to applicants. The deadline for completed applications is May 1, 2008, at Montgomery Soil & Water Conservation District, 10025 Amity Rd. Brookville, OH 45309. Further questions may be answered by contacting the Cheryl at 854-7646, extension 100.

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2008 A Year of Drainage Improvements and Education

By Stefan Bridenbaugh

Throughout the year I will be reporting about several different topics and ideas which have been addressed in the January 2008 Rural Drainage Systems report. This report is available in the Montgomery SWCD's office if you would like a copy. I hope to give you a good idea of where the Montgomery SWCD will be updating its design procedures and evaluation of the need for drainage projects. Below you will find the first installment of articles from the above mentioned report. In the next newsletter, I will report on the upcoming Drainage Best Management Practices (BMP) manual and Drainage Needs Assessments.

What are rural drainage systems, anyway?

These "systems" include the networks of tile (clay until about 1960, now usually plastic) and open drainageways (ditches) that receive water from individual farms, home lots and small rural communities. They generally cross multiple private properties and often extend several miles to "find" an outlet.

Where are these systems?

They are common in the glaciated parts of Ohio, generally north and west of I-71 on the extensive areas of low grade (<1%), and in similar, although generally smaller areas elsewhere. Ohio has a higher percentage of land that needs or benefits from drainage than any other state. Settlers realized this in the early 1800s when the first drainage systems were installed.

What good do they do?

FOR AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION

Over 7.4 million acres of current (and potential) cropland benefits from drainage—that drains "excess" water out of the soil profile during the growing season, through on-farm tile systems that landowners have installed, and continue to install today at a typical investment over \$600/acre. These on-farm systems seldom can function without connecting to a group project. Increased value of Ohio crop production due to drainage is often worth over \$100/acre. Importantly, these on-farm, systems are also essential for certain cropland conservation practices, especially conservation tillage.

FOR HOMEOWNERS AND RURAL DRAINAGE COMMUNITIES

Estimates indicate more than 500,000 rural homes/lots rely on group drainage projects for outlets for their yard, downspouts, and foundation and basement drains. While not recommended, tens of thousands of on-site septic systems and perimeter drains also tie into group drainage systems. The lots and businesses in many small rural communities often unknowingly also tie into these systems that were installed by farmers decades ago.

(Continued on page 3)

Drainage—(Continued from page 2)

Many of these lot owners and small community residents live in “ignorant bliss” of this reliance, until the system fails and their basement floods or their septic systems fail.

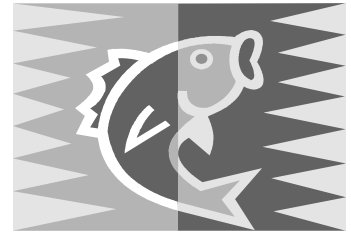
How are these group drainage systems installed and maintained?

Until the mid 1800s most projects were constructed by groups of farmers on their own. In 1859 the state legislature gave authority to boards of county commissioners to construct drainage improvements for groups of landowners. Landowners that needed improved drainage were required to petition commissioners in their county to begin the process. Upon approval of the project to be constructed by county commissioners, benefiting landowners were assessed. Townships also implemented projects in the early 1900s. Finally in 1957 maintenance provisions were added to ditch laws. In 1969 SWCDs were given authority for project construction and maintenance upon county approval. Landowners can petition the county or SWCD requesting an improvement project. A project design is proposed along with a schedule of landowner property tax assessments; public viewings and hearings are held. Upon county commissioner approval, a project for large tile mains, open channels, or both, is bid and constructed, then maintained with future maintenance assessments.

Montgomery/Preble SWCD Pond Clinic

By Jeremy Huggler

The Montgomery/Preble SWCD Pond Clinic will be on May 15th at the Jackson Township Community Center, at the corner of Farmersville Gratis and Lower Gratis Roads west of Farmersville. A fish fry will begin at 5:30 PM in the Community Center, and the program will run from 6 to 8 PM, with presentations outdoors by the pond if the weather permits. Bill Lynch with OSU Extension will be discussing pond issues such as geese, nutrients, and vegetation control, and a representative from Jones Fish & Lake Management will be talking about fish stocking, pond management techniques and equipment. Also, the Montgomery SWCD technicians will be available to answer questions regarding the planning and construction of new ponds. Hope to see you there!



Stillwater State Scenic River Clean Up

By Dan Jackson

The annual canoe float to remove trash and debris from the Stillwater River will occur on Friday, May 30th. Canoes will be launched at four sites, with a distance of over 14 miles being groomed by volunteers in 38 canoes. This effort always has more volunteers than canoes and all the seats fill up fast so if you want to be a volunteer this year, then call Dan Jackson at 854-7646, ext. 115 to reserve a spot.

Our site is from Aullwood Gardens, 930 Aullwood Road, Englewood, south to Dog Leg Road. The day is from 8:30 a.m. to noon, with a picnic lunch for those that volunteer.

The three other sites begin in Darke and Miami Counties and launch at Stillwater Beach, Lauer Road, and Fenner Road. If you want to do one of these sites, we can help you make a reservation. You need to be an adult, or with an adult to participate. The rain date will be Friday, June 13th.

Plessinger Sworn in as Montgomery SWCD Supervisor

Duane Plessinger (right) of Trotwood, Ohio, was sworn into office by Ohio Supreme Court Justice Maureen O'Connor during the 65th Annual Meeting of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (OFSWCD) held in Columbus January 29-30. Plessinger is one of two county residents elected to the Board of the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) at its annual meeting of September 14, 2007.

Elected to a three year term, Plessinger joins re-elected member, Calvin Helsinger, and incumbent board members Doug Crowe, Fred Glander, and Bill Wissinger in administering the MSWCD's natural resource conservation programs.

The OFSWCD was organized in 1943 to further the natural resource conservation mission of the state's 88 county-based Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). As subdivisions of state government, SWCDs have legal authority to assist landowners with a wide range of soil, water, woodland and wildlife conservation objectives. Another important goal is to provide information and education programs on natural resource conservation and management topics for a wide range of county residents.



Montgomery SWCD Seeks Board Nominations

By Jim Dillon

The nominating committee of the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) will meet June 11, 2008 to nominate candidates for its Board of Supervisors. Two members will be elected to the MSWCD Board during its annual meeting on Saturday, September 20, 2008, to serve three-year terms beginning January 1, 2009.

The Board meets monthly to conduct MSWCD business by entering into working agreements with other agencies, establishing policy and priorities on the work to be accomplished by its staff, 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.

Administrator Jim Dillon believes that setting policy on issues regarding urban conservation, education, drainage, and water quality will provide those Supervisors elected many opportunities to make a difference. In fact, Board membership is an opportunity to take an active role in the protection of the natural resources of the County's rural and urban communities. Being a Supervisor also 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, land preservation, government and environment, to name a few areas. Board members 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 ballot, contact Jim or Cheryl at the MSWCD office or by phone at 854-7645 or Nominating Committee members; Fred Glander, MSWCD Board Chairman (855-2665), Mike Dull (833-3339) or Dan Ennist (854-7646 ext. 121).

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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.

Cost-Share Available for Habitat Buffers

By Lee Green

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are currently assisting farmers and landowners interested in signing up cropland acres for the CP33 habitat buffer (also known as *field border* or *quail border*) practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continuous sign-up.

Habitat buffers are strips along the edges of agricultural fields planted to native grasses and wildflowers. The minimum width for a habitat buffer is 30 feet, and the maximum width is 120 feet. A habitat buffer is a new conservation practice that provides adequate habitat for bobwhite quail and other wildlife species by providing essential food sources and cover. These buffers serve as excellent travel corridors, which are essential for bobwhite quail and other wildlife to migrate from one location to another.

To be eligible, the cropland enrolled must satisfy the basic eligibility and cropping history criteria for the Conservation Reserve Program. To determine individual eligibility for the program, farmers and landowners should check with their local FSA office. The following payments are offered for eligible acres:

- One time signing incentive payments of up to \$100 per acre.
- Practice incentive payments of up to 40 percent of the eligible establishment cost. When combined with cost-share assistance of 50 percent, up to 90 percent of reimbursable practice costs are covered.
- Producers will receive annual rental payments for up to 10 years.

Interested farmers and landowners are to sign up at the FSA office, which is located at 10025 Amity Road, Brookville, OH. For questions, contact Lee Greene at the Montgomery FSA/NRCS/SWCD office at 937-854-7646, ext. 102.
