

Conservation Spotlight

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District
29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901
Cincinnati, Ohio 45246-3411



Winter Edition
2007

Phone: 513-772-7645
Fax: 513-772-7656
Website: www.hcswcd.org

Editor: Holly Utrata-Halcomb
Layout: Barbara Connole

District's Annual Meeting

The District held their Annual Meeting, Thursday, September 13, 2007, at Windows On The Green (G.E. Park). This year we did things a little differently. We had a more informal meeting with a power point presentation on our annual activities, displays set-up on the District programs and games that we usually have at educational functions. Both the children and adults enjoyed playing the games and we also had a Cupcake Corner, where the children decorated their own cupcake, which was fun for everyone!

Congratulations goes out to our two newly elected supervisors, Nate Holscher and Sam McKinley. They will start their 3 year terms as supervisors January 1, 2008.

We are sad to say good-bye to the two supervisors that will be going off the board - Joe Allen and Steve Sandfort. Steve has been a board member for over twenty years. We will miss the support he gave the District and also his dedication to the District. Joe has been on the board for 2 terms and has been an asset to the District with his developers point of view and expertise. We wish them well and who knows we could see them back in the future!

We want to congratulate our conservation award winners for 2007:

Teacher of the Year - Julie Forsthoefel, Immaculate Heart of Mary

Urban Cooperator of the Year - Bob Mount from Barrett Paving Materials, Inc. and John Distler from Zicka Walker Homes

Urban Developer of the Year - Dino Jennings from Zicka Walker Homes

Photo Contest Winners - 1st Place Adult Category - Janet Lichtensteiger-Kelly

2nd Place Adult Category - Maureen Dwyer

1st Place Junior Category - Elliott Smith

2nd Place Junior Category - John Frank



Chairman Steve Sandfort pictured with Urban Developer of the Year winner Dino Jennings and Julie Zicka.



Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist pictured with Urban Cooperator award winners John Distler and Robert Mount ®.

*We also have several people to thank for making our Silent Auction a great success!
Thanks goes to: All the supervisors and staff of Hamilton County SWCD, Panera Bread Company, Walmart, Krogers, Janell Concrete and Masonry Equipment, Inc., Ernst Concrete, The Beach Waterpark, Wild Birds Unlimited, Mill Creek Restoration Project, Broshear Contractors and Clear Channel.*

Ag News

John Williams, D.C. and Jeff Barnes, Soil Conservationist-NRCS

CONSERVATION FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR RESEEDING DAMAGED PASTURE

Pastures in Ohio have taken a beating with the unusually dry summer. Many livestock producers who rely on pastures to graze their animals used "sacrifice pasture lots" to confine grazing animals to protect a majority of their pastures from damage. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has designed a way to help producers address this natural resource issue through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Now through December 7, 2007, livestock producers who used sacrifice pasture lots during the 2007 grazing season can apply for EQIP to receive a \$127.56 per acre incentive payment for reseeding these pastures. A maximum of 10% of the total permanent pasture, up to a 20 acre maximum, is eligible for this payment.

Producer eligibility criteria include:

- 1) Having used one "sacrifice" area at least 60 days as a supplemental feeding area.
- 2) Having a minimum of 20 acres of permanent pasture.
- 3) Providing a Farm Plan Map that identifies existing pastures and designated sacrifice areas along with their acreages.
- 4) A current soil test of the sacrificed area dated by December 7th, 2007 (current = less than 5 years old).
- 5) Ability to plant a permanent seeding by the end of the 2008 spring planting season.

In addition, producers must meet the eligibility for EQIP (any producer engaged in livestock or crop production on crop land). *For more information please contact John Williams or Jeff Barnes at 513-887-3720.*

Ponds Need Winter Care

From News & Views – ODNR Div. SWC

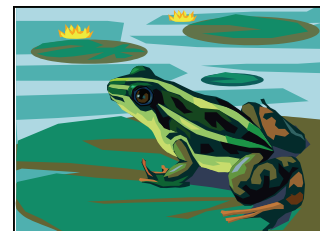
Even in the worst Ohio winters, fish aren't likely to freeze in a well-built pond because they can retreat to deep water when the surface freezes. Still, each year many pond owners find dead fish when their ponds thaw. The problem isn't the cold; it's a lack of dissolved oxygen.

Most of the oxygen in pond water is produced through photosynthesis by aquatic plants. When the surface freezes, photosynthesis continues if the ice is clear enough to let light through. But when snow covers the ice and blocks the sunlight, photosynthesis stops. If light is blocked long enough, aquatic plants die and, instead of producing oxygen, they use it as they decompose. Gradually, the oxygen in the water is depleted and fish, bacteria, and other aquatic creatures suffocate. In some ponds, especially shallow ponds with high nutrient levels, this can happen in just a few days, but kills occur even in large, deep ponds when nutrient levels are too high.

Even if only some of the fish die, a winterkill can permanently upset the balance of fish species in a pond. For instance, if too many largemouth bass are killed, less desirable species might become over-populated because the bass aren't eating them. Sometimes the only way to return a pond to a balance of species that will provide good fishing is to kill off all the fish and re-stock the pond.

A better option is to prevent winterkill in the first place. Aerating the water through the winter can help. So can controlling excessive aquatic vegetation during the growing season and removing heavy layers of snow from at least a third of a pond's surface. If you try to remove snow, be especially cautious of thin ice.

If a pond seems especially prone to winterkill, it might need to be drained and deepened. If excessive nutrients are causing too much vegetative growth, try to find and eliminate the nutrient source. Another alternative for very shallow ponds is to let the fish die off and manage the pond as wetland habitat for wildlife other than fish.



Stream and Storm Water Management News

Stream Specialist Brian Bohl

Recent OKI-RCC Tour Highlights the Great Miami River Runoff Reduction Project

On October 17, the Hamilton County SWCD partnered with the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) to provide a tour of innovative storm water best management practices (BMPs) at Colerain Township's new 125 acre Heritage Park. Heritage Park is located along the "big bend" in the Great Miami River, just south of the Butler County line and U.S. State Route 27. The installed BMPs include a pervious pavement and rain garden system, which are constructed of permeable media to filter storm water runoff before it discharges to the Great Miami River.

The BMPs have been installed as part of an initiative called the Great Miami Runoff Reduction Project. With funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Targeted Watersheds Program, the Miami Conservancy District awarded OKI \$65,000 to implement the project and educate others regarding the water quality benefits of these BMPs. OKI Environmental Planner, Bruce Koehler, was instrumental in coordinating several key partners for project implementation; including Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District, Friends of the Great Miami, University of Cincinnati, Greenacres Foundation, Hamilton County Storm Water District and Colerain Township. The Hamilton County SWCD has provided technical support on the project as well as education concerning the water treatment and storm water infiltration potential of pervious pavements and rain gardens.

The pervious pavement system, constructed of paver blocks, was installed in September 2005, while the initial rain garden planting occurred in May 2006. The uniqueness of the project stems from the use of multiple BMPs in a "treatment train" to filter storm water. Storm water carrying heavy metals, particulates and nutrients from the adjacent parking lot flows into the paver blocks, underlain by 1" washed gravel at a depth of 18". Percolating through the paver system, the water then enters a PVC pipe, which outlets at the rain garden for further treatment. USEPA studies indicate that pervious pavement systems can remove suspended solids, pathogens, nitrogen and metals at a 65-100% efficiency rate.

Rain gardens are essentially attractive, landscaped areas planted with perennial native plants that can sustain wet periods and moist soils. Although, the rain gardens should drain down in 24 – 48 hours to prevent mosquito breeding and prolonged standing water. The vegetative component provides an additional filtration benefit. Since root systems for some native plantings can extend to 10 feet or more in depth, there is a lot of potential for pollutant removal. At Heritage Park, over 1,200 native plants and 38 species were planted in the rain garden.

The location of the Great Miami Runoff Reduction Project is 11300 East Miami River Road, Cincinnati, OH 45252. Feel free to go check out the site for yourself, or contact the District office for more information about pervious pavement and rain gardens.



OKI-RCC Tour - Pervious pavement presentation at Heritage Park, Colerain Township.



Young volunteers enjoyed planting vigorous garden plugs in the rain garden.

Education Corner

Gwen Roth, Education Specialist and Cheryl Reinke Peck, Education Assistant

The Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts announced an exciting project to showcase all 88 SWCDs. One painting from each county will illustrate the unique or important natural, environmental, agricultural, or historic features of a county, watershed or other area.

Jan Polk (pictured at right) is the artist who painted "Vignettes of Soil and Water Conservation Practices by the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District". She is a Cincinnati artist currently living in Southgate, Kentucky. Jan is an active member of the Cincinnati Art Club and presently serves as Webmaster. Her website is www.janpolk.com.

Jan used a palette knife and alkyd oils to create the impressionistic painting. Her work beautifully depicts various landmarks in the Cincinnati area in addition to Walnut Creek Stables, and the Heyob and Knollman Farms. The State of Ohio flag, bird and flower are also included. The outline of Hamilton County is centered in the painting and the waterways in Hamilton County are painted inside.

We would like to thank Jan for her beautiful painting of Hamilton County and the extensive research that she did to be able to complete this truly beautiful painting.



Envirothon 2008

Calling all High School Teachers!!!

The Envirothon is a competitive, outdoor, academic event for high school students. The Envirothon tests students' knowledge of soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatic ecology and a current environmental issue (Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources).

Interested schools may enter up to two teams (3-5 members per team with alternates). The deadline for entering the number of teams is Friday, February 1, 2008. Please call Gwen at 772 - 7645 x14 by February 1, to register the number of teams from your school.

This year's competition will be held on Tuesday May 6, 2008, at Camp Kern in Oregonia (Warren County). Last year over 70 teams competed from 16 counties. The top four five-member teams continue on to the State Envirothon held in June. The top State team will compete in the national competition (Flagstaff, Arizona).

Study materials are being posted on the Internet. Please visit the website at www.areaenvirothon.org. I hope you join us for the 2008 Envirothon!!

Cupcake Core Sampling Activity: Adapted from materials provided by Women In Mining

Objective: Trying to "see" what is beneath the surface of the earth is one of the jobs of a geologist. Rather than digging up vast tracts of land to expose an oil field, or to find coal bearing strata, core samples can be taken and analyzed to determine the likely composition of the earth's interior. In this activity students model core sampling techniques to find out what sort of layers are in a cupcake.

Materials:

Cupcake mix, plastic knives, foil baking cups, food coloring, drawing paper, toothpicks, frosting, plastic transparent straws

Activity:

Make cupcakes with at least three layers of colored batter. Provide each student with a cupcake, straw, toothpick and drawing paper. Foil baking cups and frosting will prevent the students from seeing the interior of the cupcakes in much the same way that a geologist can't see the interior of the earth. Ask the students to fold a piece of drawing paper into four sections and in one of the sections draw what they think the inside of the cupcake would look like. Ask the students how they might get more information about the cupcake without peeling the foil or cutting it open with a knife. Someone may suggest using the straw to take a core sample. If not, show them how to push the straw into the cupcake and pull out a sample (straws can be cut to a length slightly longer than the depth of the cupcake.) The students should make a second drawing of the cross section of their cupcake based on the information from three core samples. Each new drawing should be carefully labeled and placed in a different section of the recording paper. Finally, the students should cut open the cupcakes with a knife to compare them to the drawings. Keep relating what the students are doing to what real life geologists do. Nobody eats until the discussion is complete!

New Education Offerings

The District has added some new programs over the summer and we have revamped our education brochure. Please call the District office to have a new brochure mailed to you! Remember all programs are correlated to the state science standards.

Earthwork News.....

Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist, Chey Alberto, & Nate Sturm, Urban Technicians

Drought Hits Hamilton County

The drought that most of the country experienced from May to September of this year has affected Hamilton County. At some point during the drought, the area was 13 inches of rain below the average precipitation. While it did not come to the point where water had to be rationed, it came with widespread associated costs. While the effect of lack of water is apparent on farmers crops, other related effects such as higher lawn maintenance costs, cost of taking down trees that did not survive and cost of replacing plants can be considerable.

As far as the Earthwork Program is concerned, the goal remains foremost to control erosion on construction sites and prevent sediment from being discharged from these sites into receiving streams, adjacent properties and storm water structures. Construction sites are still required to implement these controls regardless of the drought. This year, the sites that were seeded in early May still has very sparse growth in July and August. To overcome this challenge, the District worked with the developers and contractors to compensate by adopting practices such as using the dormant seeding specifications from the Rainwater and Land Development Manual, increasing the amount of straw mulch and at times using a tackifier with the straw mulch to hold it in place.

Also, while the lack of precipitation meant less erosion due to rainfall, the District has fielded numerous calls regarding a different form of erosion from construction sites, wind erosion and dust. The extended dry conditions allowed soil particles on construction sites to be easily detached by wind action. Adjacent property owners are saddled with the issue of having to clean dust from the inside and outside of homes and buildings. The District required watering of areas within the site during construction hours to reduce dust

Technician Development Program for Conservation Employees

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District strives to provide the best service available to our community by keeping our employees' education up to date. We are especially proud of the success of our employees in obtaining certifications in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Soil and Water Conservation Technician Development Program. All of our technicians, our administrator and our administrative assistant have participated in this training and classification program.

All four Technicians have achieved Level I & II Certification and completed a majority of the higher level coursework. The program consists of attending several training sessions, ranging from one to four days each, on an annual basis. They are highly participatory and include field exercises, not just classroom lectures. For example, Level II consists of 7 classes, totaling 16 days of work in a year. The class topics include: Transit Survey, Basic Hydraulics, Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, Ponds, Soils Engineering, and Construction Inspection. Once the coursework is completed for each level, a test is administered to verify the technician's knowledge in the subject. Several days are needed to complete the calculations and drawings required. For further information pertaining to this program, see the ODNR website at www.dnr.state.oh.us/soilandwater or contact Justin Reinhart at ODNR at (614) 265-6691.

We believe the program enables the District to broaden our depth of service to our customers and are proud of our employees' success!

Board of Supervisors

Steve Sandfort, Chairman
Dave Dyke, Vice-Chairman
Joe Allen, Secretary
Thomas W. Reininger, Treasurer
Denny Benson, Program Chairman

District Staff

Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Administrator
Barbara Connole, Adm. Assistant
Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist
Chey Alberto, Urban Technician
Nate Sturm, Urban Technician
Gwen Roth, Education Specialist
Cheryl Reinke Peck, Education Ass't.
Brian Bohl, Stream Specialist
Willie Potter, Design Technician

NRCS

John Williams, D.C.
Jeff Barnes, Soil Conservationist

Mission Statement:

A public organization committed to assisting the citizens of Hamilton County through education, technical assistance and leadership to be stewards of our soil and water resources.

All District programs are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Fond Farewell!!

If you have had any dealings with our District office, you have probably come in contact with our outgoing and humorous Administrative Assistant, Barbara Connole. Barb has been a part of our District for 20 years and has now decided to retire. We are all very sad to see Barb leave, but we are excited for her as she starts her new life in Catawba Island, Ohio.



Barb helping out at the "Cupcake Corner" at the Annual Meeting.

Everyone is invited to Barb's farewell party on Thursday, January 31, 2008, from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00p.m. at our District office. Come one - come all and wish Barb a happy future in her retirement.

Happy Holidays to all - from the staff and Supervisors of HCSWCD

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29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901
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