

Conservation Spotlight

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District
29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901
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Dan Taphorn Named Hamilton County Employee of the Year



District Urban Conservationist, Dan Taphorn was named Hamilton County Employee of the Year and received the "Innovation Award." Dan's solution to a situation in Springfield Township has made a huge difference for residents of one subdivision — literally saving 11 homes from being condemned!

The Lux Lane Subdivision in Springfield Township was built in the mid-1960s, before existing Earthworks regulations were put into place. Shortly after moving in, the residents on the north side of Lux Lane started experiencing problems. Uncontrolled fill along the north side of Lux Lane and the stream running through these properties at the base of the fill created slope stability issues early on. The developer's solution was to pipe the stream and re-grade the slope. This provided a short term fix, but did not effectively resolve the problems.

The District has responded to numerous inquiries for assistance in addressing the failing slope for many years, but had no means to provide financial assistance. In 2002, Taphorn met with Commissioner Todd Portune and several of the residents to evaluate the worsening situation and discuss a possible solution. Taphorn's solution was innovative! He recommended working with a contractor to see if they would be willing to assist the property owners and, in return, have a disposal site for clean hard fill. After several on-site meetings with representatives of Barrett Paving and Adleta Construction and Jack Distler of Lux Lane, they agreed to partner with the residents. That wasn't the end of Taphorn's involvement, though.

Taphorn was instrumental in keeping the project moving forward. Not only did he guide the involved parties on how to obtain local, state, and federal permits for this project, he was also instrumental in obtaining temporary and permanent easements from the Board of County Commissioners, Springfield Township and all of the property owners on Lux Lane involved in the project.

Taphorn's involvement in this situation is a great example of how innovative thinking and public, private, and corporate collaboration can lead to a positive outcome. This project saved 11 homes from being condemned and cost the residents nothing.

When asked how he feels about receiving the award, Taphorn modestly said, "The homeowners of Lux Lane and Barrett Paving were the driving forces behind the landslide stabilization project; without their determination and persistence the project probably would not have come together. I am lucky that my supervisor Holly Utrata-Halcomb, the Districts Board of Supervisors and Commissioner Portune were so supportive and allowed me the flexibility to work on this project. I am glad that my idea was able to help stabilize the homes on Lux Lane at no cost to the homeowners and enabled Barrett Paving a place to dispose of clean hard fill."

Taphorn also shared what he likes best about working for Hamilton County. "I like the challenges of working in an urban county. Hamilton County has some of the most erodible soils in the state. I enjoy working with the dedicated staff at Soil & Water and all of the partner agencies within the county. There are a lot of hard-working and knowledgeable employees that work for Hamilton County. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn so much from them. I like working in the community where I grew up, and knowing that we can have a positive effect on Hamilton County's future through our efforts."

63rd Annual Meeting

You are invited to attend The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's 63rd Annual Meeting. It will be an enjoyable night to share our successes and plans for the future. The event will be held on September 17, 2008 at the Fernald Preserve, 7400 Willey Road, Crosby Township, OH 45013-9402. There will be historical Fernald exhibits, limited guided tours, and a self-guided walking tour with SWCD staffed displays. The events will start at 3:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:15 p.m. There will be the opportunity for fellowship, learning about our organization, participation in our silent auction and the election of two supervisors for a three year term.

A short meeting will start at 6:15 p.m. followed by Black Angus Roast Beef or Chicken Marsala dinner catered by Raffel's Catering, Inc.



RSVP – Please respond by August 29, 2008

Please detach and make check/money order payable to: Hamilton County SWCD and return to 29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246-3411. **Deadline to make reservations is August 29, 2008.**

Name: _____ Address: _____
(Please print)

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Vegetarian Only _____ Number of Dinners @ \$5.00 each = \$ _____

Limited guided tours available of the Fernald Preserve. They will begin at 3:30 p.m. Please circle your time of arrival if interested in the tour.

3:30 p.m. 4:00 p.m. 4:30 p.m. 5:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m.

Every effort will be made to meet your time request, but changes may be necessary. We may not be able to meet all the attendees' requests and the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District reserves the right to change or restrict the tours as needed.

If you are unable to attend and wish to vote an absentee ballot, please read and send the following.

Application for Absentee Ballot (please print)

Name of applicant: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

I hereby apply for an absentee ballot and registration envelope from the Hamilton County SWCD. The official Election is to be held on September 17, 2008, from 3:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. at Fernald Preserve, 7400 Willey Road, Crosby Township, Ohio 45030.

I am an eligible voter of the Hamilton County SWCD, because I am:

- 1) ___ At least 18 years old and reside in the District **OR**
- 2) ___ At least 18 years old and own land within the District.

Written Signature

This form must be received in the Hamilton County SWCD office located at 29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246, between August 27, 2008 and by noon September 15, 2008.

The absentee ballot must be received by September 17, 2008 in the District office before 2:00 p.m. or at the Annual Meeting before 6:15 p.m.

Election Legal Notice

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election for Supervisors of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to be held in accordance with Chapter 15.15 of the Ohio Revised Code on September 17, 2008, before the Annual Meeting at Fernald Preserve, 7400 Willey Road, Crosby Township, Ohio 45030.

Two candidates will be elected for a three year term, starting January 1, 2009.

The nominees are: Craig Abercrombie of Green Twp., Dave Dyke of Amberley Village, Kenneth E. Grob of Indian Hill, Steve Johns of Hyde Park, Tom Reininger of Colerain Twp., Peter Mallow of Kenwood

To be eligible to vote you must be of legal voting age (18 years) and reside within or own land within Hamilton County. You may vote on the day of the election from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Hamilton County SWCD, 29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246, at the Annual Meeting from 3:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. or by absentee ballot. Absentee ballots may be obtained by requesting the proper absentee request forms from the Hamilton County SWCD's office. Requests for absentee ballots must be received in writing by the Hamilton County SWCD office between August 27, 2008 and no later than noon on September 15, 2008.

The absentee ballot must be received by September 17, 2008 in the District office before 2:00 p.m. or at the Annual Meeting before 6:15 p.m.

2009 Candidates



Craig Abercrombie currently serves as Assistant Vice President and Project Manager at Abercrombie & Associates, Inc. Civil Engineering + Surveying. He is a Licensed Professional Surveyor in Ohio and a LEED Accredited Professional along with being a member of The United States Green Building Council. Craig graduated from The University of Cincinnati in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Construction Management, and in 2004 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Natural Sciences/Surveying. Craig is a lifelong resident of Hamilton County.

He is an active member of St. Ignatius Parish, Exchange Club of Northwest Cincinnati & Western Economic Council. Craig has extensive experience working cooperatively with the Hamilton County SWCD on both commercial & residential projects. He has successfully designed sites that both serve the needs of the users while

also protecting & conserving the surrounding areas. Craig is currently involved in LEED certification of several projects in the Cincinnati area & has extensive knowledge of erosion control in the challenging terrain of Hamilton County.



Dave Dyke is a Supervisor with SWCD and an Educator of Commercial Floriculture for The Ohio State University, Hamilton County. He works closely with businesses and organizations involved in the greenhouse and garden center industries in the area, including the Cincinnati Flower Growers Association, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, and the Tri-State Green Industry Expo Committee. He has also worked extensively with the green industry, leading an effort to develop a comprehensive stormwater manual for the Cincinnati Metropolitan Sewer District and Southwest Ohio. He recently completed his 6th year as a Trustee, Hamilton County Farm Bureau, Dave has a BS in Botany from Marshall University and a MS in Horticulture from West Virginia University.

Dave is an outdoor enthusiast who enjoys canoeing, hunting, fishing, camping, and gardening. He has worked closely with the Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District to address agricultural and environmental issues through joint programming and other cooperative efforts.



Kenneth E. Grob has been in insurance sales for the last 46 years. He owns a farm in Indian Hill with horses, cattle, and vegetables. Ken has been a Farm Bureau member for the last 21 years, and is presently serving his 6th term as Trustee. He is also a member of the Cincinnati Flower Growers.

Ken is an outdoor enthusiast and enjoys camping and gardening. He would like to serve on the Hamilton Soil and Water Conservation District Board to address agriculture and green house issues through cooperative efforts.



Steve Johns lives in the City of Cincinnati neighborhood of Hyde Park. He is the Director of Citizens for Civic Renewal, a non-profit dedicated to encouraging more citizen involvement in the public affairs of Greater Cincinnati. Steve holds degrees in Community and Regional Planning, Civil Engineering, and Economics.

Steve loves to travel and explore. When exploring in Greater Cincinnati, he is amazed by the beauty of his adopted home. When traveling around the country, he is a proud booster of Cincinnati. Steve loves to be outside gardening, exercising or just having fun with his family.



Pete Mallow has over ten years of experience in sustainable development through the conservation of our natural resources. Most recently he has been a leader in environmentally friendly development in the Cincinnati region with Neyer Properties. Pete has overseen the development of over 150,000 square feet of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings in the City of Cincinnati.

Pete is a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and holds a Master of Community Planning degree from the University of Cincinnati. Prior to moving to Hamilton County in 2005, Pete served on the Clermont County Planning Commission and the Batavia Township Board of Zoning Appeals and member of the Ohio Valley Development Council since 2001 and has served on its Board of Directors since 2002.

Currently, he serves on the Land Use Plan Committee for Sycamore Township.

Pete's education and experience have taught him, "Successful development is relevant over time, built with purpose and with an eye to the future. Successful development is environmentally friendly, recognizing that the natural and built environment is the measure of place." These precepts guide his professional philosophy.



Thomas W. Reininger has been an SWCD Supervisor since 1983. He serves on the District's Legislative and Urban committees. Tom is a resident of Colerain Twp. where he serves on the Board of Zoning Appeals and works as the Farm Manager of Walnut Creek Stables.

In addition to his local involvement, Tom has served in several state level officer positions including Secretary, Treasurer, and President of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. He has served as a committee member and Chairman of the National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' Urban and Coastal Resources Committee. In addition, Tom has been a delegate for the North Central Region's division of the NACD.

Tom's role as Farm Manager of Walnut Creek Stables has allowed him to demonstrate numerous conservation practices at the farm complex and to other stable owners in southwest Ohio. He believes soil and water are critical components of our quality of life and serving on the Board provides him with the opportunity to promote awareness of the value of these finite resources in our county and across the state.

FINALLY – A RAIN GARDEN MANUAL FOR OUR REGION!!

Rain Gardens are designed to capture and infiltrate rainwater into the landscape. There has been a lot of enthusiasm generated by articles, workshops, and the “Going Green” movement in Hamilton County. Our District receives many calls a week asking for assistance in siting and designing rain gardens. Unfortunately, up until now, those publications have not been written to address our soils and growing climate.

As part of the Metropolitan Sewer District consent decree with USEPA for mitigation to sewer overflow, a new manual has been born – Rain Gardens as a StormWater Management Tool in the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati – Steps to Getting Off the StormWater “Grid”.

Dave Dyke, our SWCD Chairman and Extension Educator from OSU Extension in Hamilton County, organized a committee of experts from USEPA, The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens, OSU, Hamilton County SWCD and Storm Water District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, to put together a rain garden manual for homeowners. Special emphasis is placed on soil amendments and both native plants and other cultivated plants. You can access a copy of the 43 page manual by going to www.hcswcd.org and click on News & Publications in the left hand column. Please note, other sections on turf, contour plantings, bio-retention, plant sources and installation contractors will be added later on this year. Please source this manual if any parts are used for other publications.

SOIL TEST KITS – NOW AVAILABLE AT LOW COST

The District has been offering soil test kits for two years. During this time, over 200 soil samples have been tested. The results reveal that over 94% of the soils had at or above average phosphorus levels and at or above average pH levels. This means that there was no need to add lime or phosphorus to the soil plots tested.

High phosphorus levels in our streams is a major cause of pollution. In order to secure more data on the phosphorus and pH levels throughout the County. Hamilton County Storm Water District has agreed to cost-share the price of soil test kits. **From September 1, 2008 – April 30, 2009, Hamilton County residents may purchase test kits for \$2.00 if picked up at our office or \$3.00 if mailed to you.** Please call our office if you have any questions. Proof of residency will be required. Fall is a great time to conduct soil fertility testing.

The price for soil fertility kits generally sell for \$10.00 picked up at our office, or \$12.00 if mailed. You will receive a report on the Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, pH, Magnesium, Iron and Cation Exchange levels along with recommendations on how to amend your soil for optimum plant specific growth. Call our office for details at 772-7645.

KEEP INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED!!

The Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts provides a weekly update on bills being introduced to the Ohio House of Representatives and Senate and the progress of these bills. To access these weekly reports, go to http://ofswcd.org/statehouse_news.htm. Your representatives want to hear from you.

TIMBER THEFT

According to the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF), Rep. Ross McGregor is asking the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Forestry Association and OFBF to come up with a plan to reduce timber theft in Ohio. Ohio law requires property owners to prove that timber theft was "intentional," a standard nearly impossible to enforce. In addition to changing this standard, McGregor is eyeing possible changes to civil penalties for timber theft, as well as a comprehensive timber theft educational campaign. Stay tuned for more announcements.....

CONSERVATION PAYS

Through a competition being sponsored by the National Association of Counties, residents of Hamilton County can register their commitment to energy conservation at www.greencounties.org/changetheworld and receive discounts on energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs offered through Office Depot.

OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES and THANKS!

One of our past Supervisors, Stanley Strimple, lost his wife Faye Strimple on July 10, 2008. Stan was a farmer in Harrison Twp., and served as a Supervisor from 1958 – 1997. Faye was an integral part of Stan's life and supported him through his years of service with HCSWCD.

Recently Stan visited the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District booth at Crosby Days, held on May 18, 2008 at Stricker's Grove in Crosby Township. He graciously gave us some vintage HCSWCD Annual Reports dating back to 1961. These will be kept for the District's historical files.

We send our condolences for his loss and thank Stan for all his years of service. We wish him the very best.



Earthwork News

LANDSLIDES OF 2008 by Robert E. Sheets, P.E.

The spring of 2008 has seen a high number of landslides in Hamilton County. These landslides were triggered by our wettest period in history between October and March, exacerbated by the severe drought conditions experienced in the summer of 2007. Roughly 33 landslides have been reported to the HCSWCD.

Repair costs for major landslides can easily extend into the millions of dollars, excluding the cost for repair or replacement of affected structures. More commonly, landslides are less severe, causing distress to structures in the form of foundation movement and cracking, or damage to attached structures such as pools, driveways, septic systems, and buried utility lines. Many slides only affect lawn areas or wooded slopes. However small, any landslide represents a considerable problem and potential expense to the owners of the affected property. The cost for geotechnical engineering alone is more than most homeowners would care to afford. However, the input of a geotechnical engineer is well warranted in any case where money is to be spent to repair or manage a landslide condition.



Your SWCD is often in the unfortunate position of explaining to concerned land owners that what they are experiencing is indeed a landslide, and that even the smallest landslides are never easy or inexpensive to repair. Insurance rarely covers damages associated with earth movement. Likewise, there are no public monies set aside for such assistance.

Proper drainage is of the utmost importance in maintaining stable slopes, and it is one of the few conditions that homeowners can reasonably control. In nearly every case, landslide activity is in some way related to excess surface or subsurface water. All drainage, including surface water sources (yard swales, downspout and sump outlets, etc.), as well as piped water, should be properly controlled and outletted away from slopes, or piped or discreetly channelized to the base of the slope. If continual wetness or seepage is noted on or near a slope, this could be a sign of trouble which should be investigated. This water may be the result of a broken water or utility line, or the water may be natural. In either case, such a saturated condition could compromise the stability of an otherwise stable slope.

Beyond drainage, homeowners should ensure that all areas on and adjacent to all slopes are fully vegetated with a thick, healthy ground cover. If a slope is bounded by a stream at its base, pay particular attention to stream bank erosion or undercutting of the toe of the slope. Stream undercutting is also a frequent trigger of landslides.

In 1990, when Hamilton County's Earthworks Regulations were adopted, **the county reportedly led the nation in cost, per capita, resulting from landslide damage.** Owing to our abundance of hillsides, troublesome landslides will undoubtedly continue to occur. Please contact HCSWCD if we can answer questions or if you have problems that may be related to or you suspect landslide activity.

Education Corner

Gwen Roth, Education Specialist

2008 Envirothon

The Area IV Envirothon was held this past May. The Envirothon is a competition testing high school students from an 18 county area on Soils, Aquatics, Wildlife, Forestry and a Current Environmental Issue. This year, the subject was Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources. The event was held at Camp Kern in Warren County with approximately 400 students tested by state and local resource professionals. Sycamore H.S. sent two teams placing 18th and 32nd out of 70 teams. The winning teams were: Riverside, Bethel, Beaver Creek, Franklin. Next year the event will be held in Union County on May 5, 2009. For more information go to www.areaivenvirothon.org, or call Gwen at the district office 772-SOIL.

Ultimate Educator Expo (Tuesday, September 9, 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.)

The Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators present the 2008 Ultimate Educator Expo "It's Getting Easy Going Green." Join us at the Zoo for the ultimate opportunity to learn about environmental education resources available in our community. Exhibitors from governmental, non-profit and educational organizations will provide you with grade level appropriate training opportunities, lesson plans, field trips and tons of free stuff, especially on being "green". We offer FREE Zoo admission & parking, break out sessions, refreshments and door prizes just for you. Don't miss seeing the newest Zoo exhibit featuring giraffes and their "green roof" barn. Event was sponsored by: Frisch's, GreenBird and Ohio Soft Drink Association. To register: <http://www.cetconnect.org/ultimateeducatorexpo>.

"Water is Life" Poster Contest Winner

A poster contest was held in conjunction with the National Association of Conservation District's Stewardship Week at the end of April. The theme for 2008 was "Water is Life." Students illustrated posters depicting this theme and were judged on understanding the issue and how it signified water conservation. This year's winner is Zoe Zeszut, a 9th grader from Mother of Mercy High School in Westwood. Zoe's poster is entitled "Clean Water Makes Everyone Jump for Joy". Her teacher, Karen Kron, submitted her work. Both were awarded gift certificates to Half Price Books. The District would like to thank Zoe for her wonderful poster and to her teacher, Karen, for her encouragement. We hope to see Zoe's artwork in the contest again next year.

Board of Supervisors

Dave Dyke, Chairman
Thomas W. Reininger, Vice-Chairman
Denny Benson, Secretary
Nate Holscher, Treasurer
Sam McKinley, Program Chairman

District Staff

Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Administrator
Susan Juriga, Adm. Assistant
Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist
Chey Alberto, Urban Technician
Nate Sturm, Urban Technician
Gwen Z. Roth, Education Specialist
Cheryl Reinke Peck, Education Asst.
Brian Bohl, Stream Specialist
Annette Meagher, Public Involvement
Coordinator
Robert Sheets, Geotechnical Engineer
Willie Potter, Design Technician

NRCS

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

Additional Upcoming Events

Harvest Home Fest—September 5, 6 & 7. Volunteers needed for this event!
Ultimate Educator Expo—September 9 between 3:00-6:00pm.
Basin Basics—Come learn storm water basin maintenance on September 8 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Sponsored by Warren County. Held at Cottell Park, 5847 Irwin-Simpson Rd., Mason, Ohio. For information, call 695-1337.

Please contact Gwen Roth for more information on the following workshops.

Water and Waste Workshop (11/5/08) 8:00–3:30pm. Learn what happens to our waste. Tour MSD and Rumpke landfill to get an up close and personal lesson. \$10 includes field trip, lesson plans and two curricula.

Worm Workshop (10/8/08) 4:00–6:30pm. Learn how to raise worms in your classroom. Get a worm bin and tons of science lessons and information. \$10 includes bin, books and lesson plans.

Project WILD and WILD Aquatic Workshop (11/14/08) 8:00–3:30pm. Learn water-related activities that emphasize aquatic wildlife and aquatic ecosystems. \$25 includes two curricula and activity supplies.

Teachers, would you like to receive e-mail notification of upcoming events and workshops for educators? If so, please e-mail your name, e-mail address, school name and grade level to gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org.

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.

GO GREEN!!—"Conservation Spotlight" can be delivered via e-mail. This alternative will help save paper. If you are interested in changing your subscription to e-mail, contact holly.utrata-halcomb@hamilton-co.org or call us at 772-7645.



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