

Conservation Spotlight

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



Fall Edition
2010

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~ 65th Annual Meeting ~

You are invited to attend The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's 65th Annual Meeting. This year's event is an Open House of the District's new office located at 22 Triangle Park Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45246. It will be held on Thursday, September 16, 2010, and starts at 2:00 pm. There will be light refreshments served until 7:30 pm. A short business meeting and awards presentation will start at 6:30 p.m. Come visit us at our new location, participate in our silent auction and vote in the election for two supervisors that will serve a three year term starting January 2011.

If you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting and wish to vote for a District Supervisor by absentee ballot, the appropriate request forms will be available on our website www.hcswcd.org. People attending the Annual Meeting can vote at the District office from 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm. You have three options for voting:

1. At the annual meeting, which will take place at the District's office on September 16, 2010 from 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm;
2. At the SWCD office by requesting an absentee ballot during business hours 8:00 am - 4:30 pm from August 26, 2010 to September 15, 2010; or
3. Vote absentee by requesting the proper absentee request forms from the HCSWCD at the following address: *Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, 22 Triangle Park Dr, Cincinnati, OH 45246 - phone number: 513-772-7645.*



Front: Craig Abercrombie, Sam McKinley
Back: Nate Holscher, Denny Benson, Steve Johns

RSVP – Please respond by September 8, 2010

Please call 513-772-7645 or detach the following form and mail to: Hamilton County SWCD, 22 Triangle Park Dr., Cincinnati, Ohio 45246-3411.

So that we may plan for refreshments, we would appreciate an RSVP.



Name: _____ Address: _____
(Please print)

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Number attending: _____ Adult(s) _____ Child(ren) _____

OHIO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION ELECTION LEGAL NOTICE

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will have an election of Supervisors of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to be held in accordance with Chapter 1515 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Residents or landowners, firms, and corporations that own land or occupy land in Hamilton County and are 18 years of age and older may vote for Supervisor. A non-resident landowner, firm or corporation must provide an affidavit of eligibility, which includes designation of a voting representative, prior to casting a ballot (available on the District's website: www.hcswcd.org)

There are three ways an eligible voter can cast a ballot: (1) at the annual meeting, which will take place at the District's office on September 16, 2010 from 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm; (2) at the SWCD office by requesting an absentee ballot during business hours 8:00 am - 4:30 pm from August 26, 2010 to September 15, 2010; or (3) vote absentee by requesting the proper absentee request forms from the HCSWCD at the following address: *Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, 22 Triangle Park Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45246 - phone number: 513-772-7645.*

Two (2) Supervisors will be elected. Nominees are:

Karen Ball, Robert W. Biddle, Pete Mallow, Sam McKinley and Wendi Van Buren

~~~~ 2011 Candidates ~~~~

Karen Ball - On behalf of Hamilton County, she has worked in partnership with MSD, USEPA research and development, USGS and many other local players to develop the demonstration program of the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), which uses green infrastructure to reduce storm water flow into sewers. This approach could someday lead to innovative cost-effective storm water improvements for the purpose of consent. Karen believes the message needs to be communicated to a larger audience so that utilization of the WRRSP funds can be more aggressive in order to improve water quality in our watersheds. She believes Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District is a great organization to spread this message.



Karen respectfully requests your consideration of her as a Supervisor for the Soil and Water Conservation District and respectfully asks for your vote.

Robert W. Biddle owns a small farm in Green Township where he cares for horses. Currently, he is a trustee for the Hamilton County Farm Bureau and serves as a volunteer in the REINS program, which is operated by The Ohio State University Equine Extension Office. Robert is a graduate of The Ohio State University, the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy and the United States Secret Service Dignitary Protection Academy. In 1998, he retired as a commander from the Cincinnati Police Department and served over 25 years in law enforcement. Robert believes an important aspect of soil and water conservation is protection of existing natural environments, especially hillsides.



Pete Mallow is a Certified Planner with a Master's degree in from the University of Cincinnati. Prior to moving to Hamilton County, he served on the Clermont County Planning Commission and the Batavia Twp. BZA. Currently, he resides in Sycamore Township and serves on the Land Use Plan Committee for Sycamore Township.



Pete has extensive experience working with both the public sector and private sector bringing environmentally sustainable projects to fruition, including the region's first LEED Platinum project. The economic and social growth that can come through proper land use decisions is crucial to the wellbeing of our county. If elected, Pete wishes to continue to enhance the district's educational programs for the proper planning and conversation of our resources.

In addition to his professional role, he teaches at UC and is enrolled in their doctoral program in Planning.

Sam McKinley has been interested in conservation since his Boy Scout days, growing up in Hillsboro, Ohio. As Vice Chairman of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, Sam has been able to support this highly effective conservation organization. The only incumbent candidate, he will continue and improve on this work immediately upon reelection. Sam holds a Master's degree in Environmental Planning from UC's DAAP, is an elected member of the Sierra Club Miami Group Executive Committee, and serves on both the ICC and Board of Directors of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments. He works for RA Consultants as a Planning Liaison to Hamilton County for the Metropolitan Sewer District and lives in Northside with his wife and two children.



Wendi Van Buren has been the SW Ohio Regional Urban Forester with Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry since 2003. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Plant Biology at Ohio University. Wendi is a Certified Arborist with a Municipal Specialist Accreditation with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). She has extensive experience in urban forestry, marketing, and volunteer coordination and management.



Although her career is about the green infrastructure within our cities, she believes that there is a strong connection between the urban and rural, and between the trees, the soil, and the water. She would like to make a difference by supporting the organizations that assist landowners in planning and applying conservation practices on their land which ultimately affect us all. Wendi can contribute a strong understanding of the science it takes to make good decisions for the Conservation District.



Early Blight – Common This Gardening Year By Holly Utrata-Halcomb, District Administrator

The most frequent landowner calls I received this past month involved vegetable crops. In most cases, the culprit was due to a variety of fungi that created blight conditions. The record breaking wet and hot June temperatures followed by the sultry and dry July conditions combined to make the perfect environment for vegetable plant disease and infection. Early blight is a very common disease of vegetable crops. It causes leaf spots and tuber blight on potato; it also causes leaf spots, fruit rot and stem lesions on tomato and peppers. The disease can be very destructive if left uncontrolled, often resulting in complete defoliation of plants. In contrast to the name, it rarely develops early, but usually appears on mature foliage.



"Target-spot or Bull's eye" appearance characteristic of early blight lesions.



Dark, leathery, sunken early blight lesions on tomato fruit at the point of stem attachment.

Symptoms

The first symptoms usually appear on older leaves and consist of small, irregular, dark brown to black, dead spots ranging in size from a pinpoint to 1/2 inch in diameter. As the spots enlarge, the lesion is a characteristic "target-spot" or "bull's eye" appearance that may grow together, causing infected leaves to turn yellow and die. Usually the oldest leaves become infected first, drying up and dropping from the plant as the disease progresses up the main stem.

Early blight is caused by the fungus *Alternaria solani*. This fungus is universally present in fields where these crops have been grown. This is why crop rotation is important. Spores form on infested plant debris at the soil surface, especially under alternating wet and dry conditions such as we have had this summer. They are easily carried by air currents, wind-blown soil, splashing rain, and irrigation water. It is usually necessary to apply fungicide sprays to fully protect plants from early blight. Applications to tomatoes are usually done 2-3 weeks following emergence or soon after transplanting.

Blossom-end Rot

Early blight is often confused with blossom-end rot. The distinctive difference is that early blight will exhibit a dark, leathery sunken lesion at the point of stem attachment, whereas, blossom-end rot will usually begin as a small water-soaked area at the blossom end of the fruit. This may appear while the fruit is green or during ripening. As the lesion develops, it enlarges, becomes sunken and turns black and leathery. In severe cases, it may completely cover the lower half of the fruit, becoming flat or concave. Secondary pathogens commonly invade the lesion, often resulting in complete destruction of the infected fruit. On peppers, the affected area appears tan, and is sometimes mistaken for sun-scald, which is white. Blossom end rot also occurs on the sides of the pepper fruit and eggplant near the blossom end.



Blossom-end Rot on a Tomato



Blossom-end Rot on Pepper

Cause

Blossom-end rot is not caused by a parasitic organism but is a physiologic disorder associated with a low concentration of calcium in the fruit. Blossom-end rot is induced when demand for calcium exceeds supply. This may result from low calcium levels or high amounts of competitive cation ions in the soil. In general, Hamilton County soils have sufficient calcium content. However, our characteristically high pH may limit the availability of calcium to the plants. If you are seeing symptoms of Blossom-end rot it is most likely due to drought stress, combined with excessive soil moisture fluctuations experienced earlier this summer. These conditions will reduce uptake and movement of calcium into the plant. Soil fertility testing is the only sure way of determining the cause. Test kits are available in our district office.

Management

1. Maintain the soil pH around 6.5 - if you are not sure of your pH, test your soil through our office.
2. Use nitrate nitrogen as the fertilizer nitrogen source. Ammonia nitrogen may increase blossom-end rot as excess ammonium ions reduce calcium uptake. Avoid over-fertilization as side dressings during early fruiting, especially with ammonia forms of nitrogen.
3. Avoid drought stress and wide fluctuations in soil moisture by using mulches and/or irrigation. Plants generally need about one inch of moisture per week from rain or irrigation for proper growth and development.
4. Foliar applications of calcium, which are often advocated, are of little value because of poor absorption and movement to fruit where it is needed.

An excellent resource to help diagnose your gardening problems is OSU Extension's Ohio Line - Go to <http://ohioline.osu.edu/> or <http://plantfacts.osu.edu/>

Ag News

John Williams, D.C. -NRCS

2010 CRP ANNOUNCEMENTS – GENERAL CRP SIGN-UP COMING!!!

Earlier this year at Pheasants Forever's National Pheasant Fest, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced plans for a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general signup. Secretary Vilsack also announced increased acreage allotment for the Continuous CRP practice CP33 (Quail Buffers) which has been significant in increasing wildlife habitat in our area.

- **The new general CRP signup** slated for this year will be the first general signup since 2006. It arrives in time to address the 4.4 million acres of CRP expiring on September 30, 2010. An additional 14.2 million acres of CRP are slated to expire between 2011 and 2013. The new general CRP sign-up should take place sometime this summer within the next couple months. This program could allow eligible landowners to enroll "whole fields" into conservation cover.



"Secretary Vilsack indicated his intent to keep CRP at, or nearly fully enrolled at the program's authorized level of 32 million acres. The secretary outlined just how he intends to accomplish this by utilizing both a general signup and increased allocations for continuous CRP practices targeted at benefiting song birds, pheasants, quail, and waterfowl," reported Dave Nomsen, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever's Vice President of Government Affairs.

- **Conservation Practice 33:** Known as the "Upland Bird Habitat Buffers" or "Quail Buffers" practice, more than 219,000 of the 250,000 acres allocated in the program have been enrolled nationwide of which 14,000+ are in Ohio. The newly announced 100,000 acres will be distributed among Midwest and Southern states. We will receive an additional 10,000 acres for the state of Ohio and these are available right now for eligible landowners.

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them protect ecologically sensitive lands. Producers enrolled in CRP can plant long-term, resource conserving covers that help to improve water quality, control soil erosion, and provide wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental and cost-share payments.

Both the general CRP program and CP33 practice can provide valuable wildlife habitat and can also take the place of hard to farm or low producing areas, which can be very beneficial to farmers.

To learn more about the CRP program and practices available contact John Williams, District Conservationist at (513) 887-3720 or Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Erik Lewis at (937)-654-3884.

2010 Poster & Essay Contest Winners for the National Association of Conservation District's "Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats"

The National Association of Conservation Districts celebrates Stewardship Week annually with a different theme. This year's topic focused on the importance of conservation habits so that they will result in healthy habitats. We invited the students of Hamilton County Schools to use their creative talents to illustrate these ideals. After receiving an amazing response of posters and the essays winners are as follows:



E.H.Greene Intermediate School

◆ Sixth grade essay winner Keerthi N. - Mrs. Patricia Durbi, Teacher

Symmes Elementary School

◆ Third grade essay winner Elliot C. - Mrs. Brochu and Mrs. O'Connor, Teachers

Symmes Elementary School

◆ Third grade poster winner Madeleine W. - Mrs. Brochu, Teacher

We presented the winners and their sponsoring teachers with bookstore gift cards. Thank you to all the participants for their good work and good conservation habits!

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.ustrata-halcomb@hamilton-co.org or call us at 772-7645.

Education Corner

Gwen Roth, Education Specialist and Niki Marengo, Education Assistant

Call now to schedule free conservation classroom presentations. Spaces fill up quickly! Call 772-6745 and ask for Gwen or Niki!

We have a new face at the District

Please join us in welcoming Niki Marengo as the new education assistant to the District. Niki will be providing educational programs on soil and water conservation to Hamilton County school children as well as assisting in community outreach and the public education of the NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) Phase II Storm Water Program.



Before starting work at the Soil and Water Conservation District in June of 2010, Niki managed a Dewey's Pizza for several years. After deciding to pursue her passion in ecology, Niki returned to school at Miami University for a Bachelor of Integrative Studies degree concentrating in environmental science. She interned for approximately a year at The Hamilton to New Baltimore Groundwater Consortium, where she learned about surface and groundwater issues and protection. While there she also initiated a new annual Consortium and Ohio American Water Works Event to benefit Water For People, *The Race for Global Water 5k*, of which she is the Chair.

Niki enjoys teaching the public about the connection of all living things and the importance of conservation. She loves to see the changes in behavior when children and adults realize their actions can make a difference.

2010 Envirothon

The Area IV Envirothon was held this past May at Voice of America Park in Butler County. Co-hosted by Hamilton County and Butler Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Over 500 people attended the event.

Sycamore High School and Providence Extension Program home-school group participated from Hamilton County. The winning teams, which went on to the State Envirothon were: Centerville HS, Franklin HS (team #1), Franklin HS (team #2) and Beavercreek HS. Next year the event will be held in Miami County on May 3, 2011. For more information go to www.areaivenvirothon.org, or call Gwen at the district office 772-SOIL (7645).

New School Programs



We are currently working on new programs for the 2010/11 school year. Please check our website for these newly added programs. If you have ideas about programs you would like the Soil and Water Conservation District to develop, please call Gwen or Niki at the District office to discuss. Our newest hands-on classroom program focuses on oil spills, clean up attempts and conservation practices we can do locally.

INVESTIGATE!

The 2010 GCEE Ultimate Educator Expo

Tuesday, September 14, 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden

This is a fun, FREE evening for teachers to learn about the resources provided by the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators. GCEE member organizations provide programming to both formal (K-12) and non-formal audiences (youth and adults). Since its inception, GCEE has served dozens of environmental education professionals, hundreds of classroom educators and thousands of greater Cincinnati school children by providing resource fairs, education workshops, classroom programs and field trips. Stop by the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's booth to see all that we have to offer you.



Come learn about all the resources that GCEE members have to offer. For more info and to register, log on to www.cetconnect.org/ultimateeducatorexpo

Get Out! At the 2010 Great Outdoor Weekend

On the weekend of September 25 and 26 experience a FREE sampling of the best nature activities in the Cincinnati Region.



All programs are FREE and open to the public. For more information about the Great Outdoor Weekend go to www.CincyGreatOutdoorWeekend.org

