



Conservation Spotlight

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District
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Winter Edition
2008

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HAPPY RETIREMENT

District Design Technician II, Willie O. Potter has decided to hang up his engineering scale. Willie started his career with the Hamilton County Planning Department in June of 1986 and transferring to the Public Works Department in August 1990 as the first Earthworks Design Technician II. He is the only person to maintain that position from its inception until the present time. In October 1993, the Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District took over the administration of the County Earthwork Regulations and Willie became a District employee.

Willie attended the U.C. Civil Engineering Evening College from 1959 -1965, during which time he worked for the City of Cincinnati Highway Department. He continued to work in engineering with Harry Balke Engineers and John Zorn Engineering until the mid 1970's. His current duties include the first phase of plan and application review received from the Building Department and in some situations the property owners themselves. His duties also include issuing permits and approvals, assisting builders with the Earthwork Applications, plans and the general understanding of the Earthwork Regulations and procedures. Willie has been the hub of the Earthwork Program since the beginning.



Holly Utrata-Halcomb, District Administrator, Willie Potter and Commissioner Todd Portune

Willie has been a great employee; he will be missed by his co-workers and the development community. The District wishes Willie a long, healthy and relaxing retirement. Thank you for all of your dedicated service to the District and the residents of Hamilton County.

District's 63rd Annual Meeting

The District's Annual Meeting was held on Wednesday, September 17, 2008, at the Fernald Nature Preserve in Crosby Township. The Fernald Nature Preserve's new education facility provided us with a wonderful setting to share our displays of the District. The Preserve staff offered guided tours of the grounds and a museum of the history of the Fernald operation.

The day before our Annual Meeting we were uncertain if the meeting was going to happen at all! The Fernald Education building lost all the glass in the front portion of the building due to the wind storm on September 14, 2008. Their staff quickly arranged for the repair which was finished one hour before our event. Raffel's Catering still had no power and had to prepare our dinner at a different location. Our printer also didn't have power and had to quickly shift gears to finish the annual report. The stars all aligned and the meeting fell into place nicely. We want to especially thank Raffel's Catering, Graphic Information Systems and the Fernald Nature Preserve for working together to make this happen!

The annual election resulted in two newly elected supervisors. We congratulate Craig Abercrombie Vice President and Project Manager at Abercrombie & Associates, Inc., and Steve Johns, Director of Citizens for Civic Renewal. They will start their three year terms as supervisors in January 2009

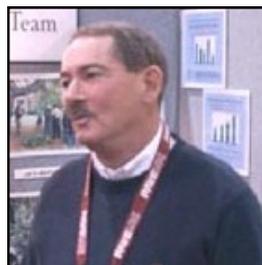
Supervisors Dave Dyke will finish his sixth year of service on the Board and Thomas W. Reininger will finish his 25th year of service on the Board at the end of December 2008. We will miss the support and dedication given by both these gentlemen.



Craig Abercrombie



Steve Johns



Dave Dyke



Thomas W. Reininger

We thank all who contributed to the silent auction in making it a great success!

Broshear Contractors, CET, Denny McKeown's Landscape and Bloomin' Garden Centre, Hamilton Co. SWCD Staff & Supervisors, Janell Concrete & Masonry Equipment, Inc., Jones Fish Hatcheries, Mill Creek Restoration Project, National City Bank, Natorp's, Noritake Factory Store, Raffels, and WCPO. Money was raised for the Diebel/Odegard Scholarship Fund.



Annual Meeting — 2008

Conservation Award Winners



Outstanding Conservation Partner Award
Dave Dyke, Chairman and
Mark Fisher, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

The Zoo has been an enthusiastic partner of our District in developing demonstration storm water Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as a new green roof on the giraffe house, multiple rain gardens, pervious pavement and bio-swales. Signage accompanies most of these BMPs which serves to educate over a million visitors each year. The zoo also hosted several workshops on the above topics for landowners as well as professionals.



Outstanding Natural Resource Advisor
Brian Bohl, Stream Specialist and
Steve Hamilton, Soil Scientist

Steve Hamilton, Soil Scientist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Soil & Water received the 2009 Natural Resource Advisor of the Year award. Steve received this award for providing extensive technical expertise to the District with respect to rain garden, wetland and bioswale design. The District has been actively promoting storm water BMPs such as rain gardens to help filter storm water pollutants from runoff.



Outstanding Conservation Teacher of the Year
Amy Brubaker, Roberts Paideia Academy
and Gwen Roth, Education Specialist

Ms. Brubaker has taught in Cincinnati Public Schools for 12 years: Roberts, Central Fairmount and Heberle Elementary Schools. She has also taught internationally in Taiwan, Hungary and Kiribati. As a lead teacher, she taught grades 3-6. She loves teaching science and having Gwen Roth come into her classroom to share real world experiences with the kids.



Conservation Contractor of the Year
Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist,
and Floyd Brown, Smith & Brown Contractor

Floyd Brown, co-owner of Smith & Brown Contractors committed himself to understanding the requirements of the Earthwork Regulations and the Ohio EPA's NPDES Permit over the past eighteen months to better serve his clients. Because of Floyd's efforts, his employees have increased their communication with the District, become more knowledgeable on the Permit requirements and improved the implementation of the Best Management Practices used in erosion and sediment control. His efforts have helped prevent tons of sediment from entering our water ways and minimized the impacts to the environment from their projects.



Conservation Urban Partner of the Year
Hamilton County Building Department
Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist,
Tonia Edwards, Building Commissioner,
Cindy Reatherford, Permit Coordinator
Bud Hanes, Inspection Supervisor

The Hamilton County Building Department has been a strong supporter and solid partner of the District over the years. They coordinate with District Staff to ensure that the geotechnical certification is complete before issuing a Certificate of Occupancy. They also ensure that plans and applications are routed to us in an efficient manner, and ensure that the District's approvals are received before issuing Building Permits. The District would like to thank Tonia Edwards, Building Commissioner and her dedicated staff for all of their support.



The 2008 Annual Report is available. You can obtain a copy on our web site www.hcswcd.org or call the office for a copy, 513-772-7645.

Education Corner

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

Envirothon 2009

Calling all High School Teachers!!! The Envirothon is a competitive, outdoor, academic event for high school students who are tested on their knowledge of soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatic ecology and a current environmental issue (Biodiversity in a Changing World). This year's competition will be held on Tuesday May 5, 2009, at the East Liberty Honda Auto Plant in Marysville (Logan 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 Canon Envirothon in August (Asheville, North Carolina).

Interested schools may enter up to two teams (3-5 members per team). The deadline for entering the number of teams is Friday, February 6, 2009. **Please call Gwen at 772-7645 x14 by February 6**, to register the number of teams from your school.

Study materials are being posted on the Internet. Please visit the website at www.areaenvirothon.org. I hope you join us for the 2009 Envirothon!!

Agricultural Education Day in Hamilton County

On October 4, 2008, Symmes Township Park was transformed into a local farm complete with alpacas, sheep, chickens and even a big beautiful cow to help teach 3rd and 4th grade students about agriculture and food production. Over 300 students attended a 2 hour session where they traveled through ten stations learning about where our food comes from and how it gets to our table. Stations included baking an apple pie, learning about wool production from alpacas, learning about popcorn, tasting fresh honey straight from the hive, sifting compost and learning about farm animals. Our District soil tent was used for a scavenger hunt and students could also plant a pizza garden afterwards.



Many agencies came together to help plan and execute this fabulous day, including the Cincinnati Horticultural Society, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District, Hamilton County Farm Bureau and OSU Extension - Hamilton County.

In the evening, almost one thousand people registered to come and enjoy some family fun and amazing fall décor. Kids made their own apple pie, planted an herb pizza garden, sheared an alpaca and spun yarn, created a fuzzy grass man, pet the farm animals and so much more. We even had pets come in costume to participate in the pet parade.

For more information about Agricultural Education Day or to sign up to receive info about the 2009 event, please contact Gwen Z. Roth at gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org or 513-772-7645.

Upcoming Workshops

Soils Workshop — Sponsored by: Butler and Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Join us to learn *What is soil? Where does it come from? What is erosion and how can we reduce it? And much more...* Find out about life underground in the Hamilton County SWCD's *Soil Tunnel* and the Butler County SWCD's *Education Soil Trailer*. Try many wonderful hands-on activities and get some great background information to boost your knowledge and level of comfort teaching soils to your students.

Participants will receive teacher resources to use in the classroom, light breakfast, snacks and the NSTA book *"Dig In! Hands On Soil Investigations"* **PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED** by Friday, February 6

Date: Friday, February 20, 2009 **Time:** 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Location: TBD **Cost:** \$20
Who: Educators grades 2-4 **Graduate Credit:** UC credit available at a reduced rate from the Economics Center

To register or for more questions, contact:

Gwen Roth (513-772-7645 or gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org) or Lynn White (513-785-6666 or whitelr@butlercountyohio.org)

Project WET Workshop — Sponsored by: Butler, Warren and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Greenacres Foundation.

Join us to learn *What is water? Is it a solid a liquid or a gas? How much water do I use every day? What are local water-related issues? Where can a water molecule go in the water cycle? And much more...* Try many wonderful hands-on activities and get some great background information to boost your knowledge and level of comfort in teaching about water to your students.

Participants will receive teacher resources to use in their classroom, light breakfast, snacks, and the Project WET curriculum guide. **PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED** by Friday, February 13

Date: Saturday, February 28, 2009 **Location:** Izaak Walton League Lodge (Loveland, Ohio)
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. **Cost:** \$25.00
Who: Educators grades K-12 **Graduate Credit:** UC credit available at a reduced rate from the Economics Center

To register or for more questions, contact:

Gwen Roth (513-772-7645 or gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

A collaboration of organizations will be presenting a series of sessions on specific conservation landscaping practices every Thursday from March 5 – April 2, 2008 from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm at Terwilliger Lodge in Dahl Park, Montgomery, Ohio. Here is a peek at the Mini Series Schedule:

Mini Series Schedule: Thursday evenings 6:30 – 8:00 pm

March 5 Rain Gardens and Contour Planting

Dave Dyke, OSU Extension, Hamilton County
Joe Boggs, OSU Extension, Hamilton County
Tara Maddock, Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities

March 12 Soil Testing and Sustainable Plant Selection

Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District
Steve Foltz, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden

March 19 Rain Barrels & Water Harvesting

Pam Simmons, Green City Resources
Tara Maddock, Mill Creek Watershed Council of Council

March 26 Composting & Mulching Mowers

Holly Christmann, Hamilton County Solid Waste District
John Duke, American Compost Society

April 2 Lawn Care & Integrated Pest Management

Joe Boggs, OSU Extension, Hamilton County



The sessions will be free, but registration will be required. Go to www.ci.montgomery.oh.us for more information.

MULCHING LEAVES



SAVE TIME RAKING by mulching leaves into your lawn. It's great to have large shade trees but disposal of the leaves can be a challenge. There is good news, however. Studies done at Michigan State University, Purdue University and Cornell University demonstrate that you do not have to rake and bag leaves or have the municipality haul them away. Instead, mulch them with your lawn mower. It will save work, improve your soil, add nutrients to the lawn and reduce yard waste disposal.

Here's how to do it. These studies conclude that there were many more benefits than negatives for turf managers and homeowners who mulch tree leaves into existing sites.

Use a mulching mower or take the grass catcher off your mower and mow over the leaves. Any kind of rotary-action mower will do the job, and any kind of leaves can be chopped up. Depending on the depth of the leaves several passes may be required to chop the leaves fine enough to work down into the lawn canopy. Once the shredded leaves settle in, microbes and worms will recycle the leaf tissue.

Earthwork News.....

Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist, Chey Alberto, Nate Sturm, Urban Technicians, Robert Sheets, Geotechnical Engineer, and Willie Potter, Design Technician II

2008 Construction Season

This year's construction season offered mixed challenges in terms of grading, erosion and sediment controls and other construction activities. The extremely wet conditions of early spring gave way to a summer with relatively low precipitation that extended into fall.

The extended dry period provided contractors with good working conditions to accomplish a lot of grading on their construction sites. It has also provided relatively easy conditions to manage sites as it pertains to sediment control. However, the same extended dry conditions were not helpful when it came to stabilization or seeding of idle areas or areas on final grade. The lack of precipitation slowed down the germination and growth of the seed applied to bare areas on construction sites. Some sites that seeded in early September still did not have significant germination by October. The windstorm leftover from Hurricane Ike in mid September blew away most of the straw and the seed that was applied on sites before the windstorm. These sites had to be re-seeded.

The lack of precipitation and above average temperatures in the 1st week of November presented concerns that seeding applied late in the season would start to germinate and have to face abrupt change to colder and even wetter and freezing conditions without a well established root system.

At this point in the season, the District recommends following the dormant seeding specifications from the State of Ohio "Rainwater and Land Development Manual" that calls for 50% more seed. The District also encourages incorporating winter wheat or rye with the seeding. The winter wheat or rye will germinate in colder temperature and provide additional protection for the dormant seed. It will also fix nitrogen in the soil and improve fertility. To avoid wasting time and money, these issues need to be considered and discussed with seeding contractors or landscapers before proceeding.

Ag News

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

HORSE MANURE

Although we do not have an official count of horses in our County, my hunch is that it is the largest livestock commodity we have. Handling the manure properly is imperative for health reasons (animal and human alike) and for the protection of our water quality.

If you choose to apply horse manure on the land, PLEASE observe the following rules to protect not only the environment, but also to reduce your personal liability.

- ◆ On fields with good vegetative cover, stay at least 35 feet away from road ditches, streams, grass waterways or swales and tile inlets. Increase the setback to 100 ft., if vegetative cover is less than 50%.
- ◆ Stay at least 100 feet from private wells and 300 feet away from sinkholes.
- ◆ Do not apply if field conditions are wet or if heavy rains are forecasted.
- ◆ Keep application rates light.
- ◆ If applying on frozen or snow-covered ground is necessary, apply only on areas that have 90% vegetative cover. Keep application rates below 5 tons/ac, increase setbacks for ditches, waterways, wells, etc. to 200 ft.



Your SWCD/NRCS staff are more than willing to come out and work through the options with you. You may qualify for federal cost-share funds for some of these solutions. We also have expertise in pasture management. Give us a call at 513-772-7645.

NRCS Accepting EQIP Applications

The Hamilton County NRCS office is now accepting applications for the FY2009 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) sign-up. EQIP is a program designed to address and correct resource concerns on agricultural land. EQIP can also provide incentives to remove honeysuckle and grapevines from forest stands 5 acres or larger. Minimum requirements are that the farm must be registered with the Farm Service Agency and the applicant must have produced \$1,000 in agricultural products (money criteria n/a to Forestry apps.). Applicants will compete against all other applicants in Hamilton County by going through a pre-determined ranking process. Although at this point we have no definite dates, we do know that the ranking period will not be until after 1-1-09. If you have any questions you can call Jeff Barnes, Soil Conservationist in the Hamilton Field office at 513-887-3720.

Attention Farmers - FERTILIZER COST ON THE RISE

This past winter, fertilizer prices jumped dramatically. Randy Zondag, OSU Extension, reported that prices this fall have again gone up and some growers are having difficulties securing fertilizer for the upcoming season. This should be an indicator that the price, supply or quantity of fertilizer purchased last year will not be similar and any plans for 2009 should include an increase in the costs of these inputs.

Now is an excellent time to test your soil for fertility. Soil test kits can be purchased from our office for only \$2.00 if picked up and \$3.00 if mailed. Limit 2/landowner. A complete lab analysis will be mailed to you within 1 -2 weeks. Plan appropriately and make no assumptions as to price or supply.

A Little Work Now Can Reduce Disease and Pest Problems Next Spring

Though it is too late to apply pesticides to control insect and leaf diseases on plants, it is not too late to perform some garden hygiene to reduce these pests next year. Insect and disease problems often over-winter on infected leaves and stems left in the landscape. Removing these safe harbors will not prevent a disease outbreak next year, but it can greatly reduce the severity. Most perennials can be pruned down to the ground and leaves of woody plants can be raked out of the beds. If there were pest problems this past year, you should be extra careful to do a good cleanup this fall. If the garden trash is added to a compost pile, be sure the pile is well constructed so it heats up and decays completely or else you may just spread insect and disease troubles with the compost the following season.

Every Recipe Requires the Same Two Essential Elements



Soil & Water

The District Staff and Supervisors Wish You a Bountiful and Happy Holiday Season!!

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 Ass't.
Brian Bohl, Stream Specialist
Annette Meagher, Public Involvement
Coordinator
Robert Sheets, Geotechnical Engineer
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.

Additional Up Coming Events

February 20—Soils Workshop (see page 3)

February 28—Project WET Workshop (see page 3)

For Information contact:

Gwen Roth (513-772-7645 or gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org) or

Lynn White (513-785-6666 or whitelr@butlercountyohio.org)

February 19—The Earthwork Program will be participating in the Ohio Valley Development Council and the Greater Cincinnati Home Builders Associations Table Top Event. Call 513-851-6300 for information.

Conservation Landscaping Practices Sessions

March 5—Rain Gardens and Contour Planting

March 12—Soil Testing and Sustainable Plant Selection

March 19—Rain Barrels & Water Harvesting

March 26—Composting & Mulching Mowers

April 2—Lawn Care & Integrated Pest Management

For more information on the workshop go to www.ci.montgomery.oh.us

The office will be closed December 25, 2008 — January 1, 2009.

The 2008 Annual Report is available. You can obtain a copy on our website, www.hcswcd.org or call the office for a copy, 513-772-7645.

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