



Conservation Spotlight

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

Spring Edition
2009

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Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation District's Winter Conference

New Supervisors Steve Johns and Craig Abercrombie attended the Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation District's Winter Conference in Columbus on January 20 – 21, 2009. Both Supervisors attended the New Supervisor Training and were sworn into office by Ohio Supreme Court Justice Maureen O'Connor. They then accompanied District staff on visits to our 11 state legislators.



Craig Abercrombie, Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Sen. Bill Seitz's Aide Jessie Crews and Steve Johns



Urban Conservationist, Dan Taphorn
State Rep. Louis Blessing
and District Adm. Holly Utrata-Halcomb

2009 Ohio Stormwater Conference

Environmental experts from across Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky will take part in a three day conference addressing stormwater, flooding and water quality concerns across the Tri-State Region. The conference is planned for May 13-15, 2009, at the Manor House, 7440 Mason-Montgomery Road, Mason, OH 45040.

Many local communities are experiencing a dramatic increase in flooding because of continuing development across the Tri-State Region. New roads, parking lots and rooftops are preventing rain and snow from being absorbed into the ground, resulting in polluted streams and flooded homes and businesses.

Professionals who deal with stormwater issues on a regular basis, including engineers, consultants, watershed organizations, governmental organizations and academic staff are expected to attend the conference. Elected officials, professionals, citizens and students are also invited to attend and become better educated about safety and health problems associated with stormwater.

Don't miss out on the largest stormwater conference in Ohio. Register today to ensure your attendance at the conference. Early registration ends April 15th. To view the agenda and register today, go to www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org.

A \$50 fee will be added to late registrations. For more information, contact Holly Utrata-Halcomb at 513-772-7645.

Volunteers Needed Throughout The Summer!!

We are always looking for volunteers to help staff booths at public events. All volunteers will be paired with a District employee or supervisor. Come help us play stormwater cornhole or plinko. For more information about events and dates, please contact Gwen at gwen.roth@hamilton-co.org.

New Strategy for Community Involvement



Hamilton County SWCD has launched a new program on Soil Fertility Testing to help satisfy the NPDES Phase II of the Clean Water Act requirement for Community Involvement. An added benefit is gathering information on the pH and phosphorus levels in our soils. "I am convinced that the only way we can get most landowners to participate in community involvement activities is to somehow impact their property, their health, their finances or their families," said Holly Utrata-Halcomb, District Administrator. This program touches all four points. With fertilizer costs tripling in just the past year, residents can realize a real savings by having their soil fertility tested. We have run several hundred samples and the trend is for our pH to be over 7.0 – which means most people do not have to add lime; and our phosphorus levels are sky high. We plan to map these results in order to see trends for future recommendations.

The Hamilton County Storm Water District has provided funds to cost-share the price of testing. Currently, county residents can have up to two samples tested at the Michigan State University Soil Lab for only \$2.00 each if kits are picked up, or \$3.00 if the kits are mailed. This special will run through April 30, 2009. The ambitious goal is to have at least 1,000 samples tested this year.

This program has been promoted through the newspaper, community newsletters, District newsletter and website and through the following workshops:

"Learn How to Create the Best Garden Ever!"

Just as you need the right ingredients to make a perfect cake, your outdoor plants need the right nutrients, soil texture, moisture and light to perform at their best. This class will be offered on five different dates and will provide you with the basics on how to do just that! Each participant will receive a soil fertility test kit as part of this class.

Presenter: Holly Utrata-Halcomb, District Administrator, Hamilton County SWCD

Fee: \$5.00 for Hamilton County residents

\$15.00 for non-county residents

Payable to Hamilton County SWCD, 29 Triangle Park Dr., Suite 2901, Cincinnati, OH 45246

Class size limited to 25.

Dates and Locations at Hamilton County Parks:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| ○ Sunday, March 8, 2009 – Sharon Woods | 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. |
| ○ Saturday, March 14, 2009 – Winton Woods | 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. |
| ○ Sunday, March 15, 2009 – Woodland Mound | 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. |
| ○ Saturday, March 28, 2009 – Miami Whitewater Park | 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. |
| ○ Saturday, March 28, 2009 – Glenwood Gardens | 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. |



Pre-registration and payment required one week before each program – Call 772-7645 for registration information.

Formation of the Cincinnati Area Professional Green Infrastructure Network (CAPGIN)

The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District and The Ohio State University Extension – Hamilton County have collaborated to establish a new organization for all professionals involved in landscape stormwater management in the Cincinnati area – the Cincinnati Area Professional Green Infrastructure Network (CAPGIN).

The Mission is to promote the adoption of green infrastructure in Greater Cincinnati through education, research, and the development of professional standards and practices. Network membership is open to all professionals involved in the green infrastructure industry (e.g. landscapers, designers, growers, turfgrass managers, tree care professionals, consulting firms, NGO's, governmental entities, etc.)

The new organization will serve as a true collaborative and "one stop" clearing house for information on landscape storm water management for all professionals involved in the industry. If you would like to attend the next CAPGIN meeting, please call 513-946-8989 with questions.

Rain Barrel Sale



Students building rain barrels

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District has joined forces with Cincinnati Recreation Commission, Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan Sewer District, Cincinnati Stormwater Management Utility, and Sierra Club to sell Rain Barrels on:
 Friday, April 17, 2009 from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 Saturday, April 18, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Stormwater runoff is a major concern in Hamilton County. As more impervious surface is created by buildings, roads and pavement, stormwater has less vegetation to slow it down, spread it out and soak it in. One simple solution is to install rain barrels to harvest rainwater for re-use. By purchasing a rain barrel, you will be reducing the effects of stormwater and save money on your water bill. You will also be improving the health of your gardens, lawns, and trees. Rain is a naturally soft water and devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals.

In addition to purchasing a superbly designed rain barrel and rain barrel accessories you will also be helping the youth of Greater Cincinnati. The rain barrels are designed and built by the teens and pre-teens of "Vision Trek", which is a year-round mentoring program offered by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission. The young adults of Vision Trek have an opportunity to learn the art of rain barrels, rain gardens, and other sustainable activities as well as earn money and receive school credits at the same time. The Rain Barrel program is held at the McKie Recreation Center in Northside. The kids range in age from 7 – 17 yrs of age. Some of the profits are for field trips like kayaking, snowboarding, and rock climbing. The teen leadership program maximizes the participants' skills and interests and exposes them to experiences they may not have otherwise been able to afford.

Rain barrels are 55 gallon, food grade barrels donated by Jim Beam Global Brands. Unique traits of these barrels include:

- Two corrugated PVC tubes – one to attach to the downspout and one to direct overflow back to the downspout drain. This is critical for barrels located in tight areas to prevent unwanted flow back onto your foundation or neighbor's property. Most commercially available barrels do not have the overflow tube to drain back to the drain.
- A filter and clean out point to capture leaves and debris from entering the barrel from the gutter line.
- A faucet at the bottom of the barrel to connect to a hose or soaker.
- An optional planter strip that is affixed around the barrel to plant flowers, vines or even vegetables.
- Optional Daisy Chain hardware and additional barrel for more holding capacity.

Residents of the City of Cincinnati will receive a **discount of \$10.00 per barrel** courtesy of Cincinnati Stormwater Management Utility. Proof of residency must be provided with a picture I.D. at time of pick up.

Pick up date – Friday, April 17, 2009 & Saturday, April 18, 2009

Location – McKie Recreation Center – 1655 Chase Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45223

Deadline – April 6, 2009 – Please make checks payable to Hamilton County SWCD and mail to 29 Triangle Park Dr., Suite 2901, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246.

Other items created by the "Vision Trek" kids, such as Heavenly Walking Sticks, a cookbook using invasive plants and native plants will also be available on the day of pick up.



Order Form — PLEASE PRINT

Name	Address	State	Zip Code
Daytime phone number	Evening phone number	E-mail address	

Please indicate when you plan to pick up your barrel (s)
 Friday, April 17, 2009 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. _____ Saturday, April 18, 2009 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. _____

of barrels you wish to purchase – Non-City of Cincinnati Resident @ \$80.00 ea. _____
 # of barrels purchased by resident of Cincinnati @ \$70.00 ea. _____
 # of planter strips @ \$25.00 ea. _____
 # of additional barrels w/ daisy chain hardware @ \$45.00 ea. _____

Total amount due _____

Announcing new plant disease fact sheet series

The Ohio State University Department of Plant Pathology is pleased to announce the release of a new series of fact sheets designed to provide an overview of key concepts in plant pathology or the study of plant disease including the reasons why plants get sick, how to control disease and/or manage healthy plants.

The fact sheets listed below can be found at OSU Extension's "Ohioline" website: <http://ohioline.osu.edu>. Search for "Plant Disease Series" to find these and other plant pathology fact sheets.

Introduction to Plant Disease Series

- Plants Get Sick Too! An Introduction to Plant Diseases, PP401.01 (pdf only)
- Diagnosing Sick Plants, PP401.02 (pdf only)
- 20 Questions on Plant Diagnosis, PP401.03 (pdf only)
- Keeping Plants Healthy: An Overview of Integrated Plant Health Management, PP401.04 (pdf only)
- Viral Diseases of Plants, PP401.05 (pdf only)
- Bacterial Diseases of Plants, PP401.06 (pdf only)
- Fungal and Fungal-like Diseases of Plants, PP401.07 (pdf only)
- Nematode Diseases of Plants, PP401.08 (pdf only)
- Parasitic Higher Plants, PP401.09 (pdf only)

Backyard Gardening Line is also made available on the Internet from The Ohio State University Horticulture and Crop Science (HCS) in Virtual Perspective website (bygl.osu.edu). Additional fact sheet information on any of these articles may be found through the OSU fact sheet database (plantfacts.osu.edu).

Education Corner

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

Poster and Essay Contests



The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District is sponsoring both an essay contest and a poster contest this year. The theme is "**Dig It! The Secrets of Soil**", which corresponds with the National Association of Conservation District's Stewardship Week *April 26 – May 3rd*. (For more information, see www.nacdnet.org).

Hamilton County students are eligible to enter each contest. The essay contest is open to students in the following grade divisions: 3 – 5, 6 – 8, and 9 – 12. The poster contest is open to students in the same grade divisions with the addition of K – 2.

For detailed information on each contest, please see our website at www.hcswcd.org.

Both posters and essays are due by **Friday, March 13, 2009** in our office at 29 Triangle Park Drive, Suite 2901, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246, Attention: Cheryl Reinke Peck.

Winners from each grade level category will receive a \$25 gift certificate and sponsoring teachers receive a \$25 gift certificate. All essays and posters become the property of Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Teaching Your Students About Resources



Grades: 5 – 8 Teachers

Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: TBA

Registration: Free, Non-Credit, **Pre-registration is required.**

Help your students learn about natural resources, our connection to them and how we can reduce the amount we use, reuse them wisely and recycle the ones we can. Activities will link with the Ohio social studies and science standards. All participants receive a copy of the "Energy, Economics and Environment" teacher guide and a variety of other creative teaching resources. This program is conducted by the Economics Center for Education and Research, University of Cincinnati, in cooperation with the Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the City of Cincinnati, Office of Environmental Quality. Designed for grades 5 – 8. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Graduate credit from UC Center for Economic Education is available at a discounted rate of \$199 (full credit usually costs \$412). To register, call Douglas Haskell at 513-556-2951 or e-mail douglas.haskell@uc.edu.

Ag News

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

Conservation Programs Make Low Production Areas Profitable

Erik Lewis, Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, Pheasant Forever

There is no doubt that we are in a time of an unpredictable economy. Increasing food costs, global food demands, rising energy costs, and demands for ethanol are causing the agricultural industry to be equally unbalanced. Experts all agree that this is something we have never seen before and it is yet to be seen what the future will hold. These uncertainties in the farming community have caused farmers to feel the need to expand their operations and try to maximize their areas of production. One farmer remarked "I haven't seen fence rows removed like this since the 1970's". Just take a drive through the rural areas of our state and it is plain to see that in many cases farm fields



have been expanded to ditch and road edges and fence rows removed in the effort to maximize farm incomes. One thing that is for certain is that these practices will undoubtedly have impacts on conservation and increase loss of wildlife habitat. I am by no means knocking farmers for trying to increase their farm profits, in fact the opposite. I hope to help our area farmers increase their farming profits by using conservation programs. Let's take a look at some research done by Joe Nester of Nester Ag., who has a different outlook on agricultural production and conservation programs.

Joe is an independent Crop Consultant in NW Ohio. He has also served as President of the Ohio Association of Independent Crop Consultants and Board Chair of Ohio Certified Crop Advisors. Joe works with farmers in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana to improve their farm operations and maximize farming profits. Nester Ag works with farmers on using the latest technologies and research to stay competitive in today's agricultural industry. They are recommending that farmers use crop yield monitors, precise chemical applications, and conservation programs to increase farm profits. Research by Nester Ag has shown that many areas of a field in crop production are poor yielding areas and reduce overall farm income. Areas that are showing to be low producing areas are along ditches, streams, wet areas in the fields, fence rows, and woodlots. This can be due to different reasons. Areas along ditches and streams tend to be more compacted and the first to flood; while areas along fence rows and woodlots receive shade and root competition from other plants. When farmers try to farm these low yield areas with such high input costs, they are really putting themselves in financial danger. "We are finding that the farmer is losing money on the first 100 feet along these low production areas and it takes profits from the next 100 feet to offset these losses. The best option in these situations is to not farm these areas and make profit on the rest". Using conservation programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), or Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) on these areas make economic sense. Filter strips and field borders can be established in these areas and keep farmers from investing in these areas and this will help make more bottom line profit. These practices can also help control soil erosion, help improve water quality, and restore diminishing wildlife habitat.

If you are interested in learning more about how conservation programs can benefit you and your property, even if you don't have farm ground or just have a few acres you want to restore to habitat, please contact Erik Lewis, Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist at 937-654-3884.

Stream and Storm Water Management News

Stream Specialist Brian Bohl

GREAT MIAMI CLEAN SWEEP 2009

Coming May 2009! the GREAT MIAMI CLEAN SWEEP 2009. Volunteers will be needed to help clean up along the banks of the GREAT MIAMI. This is a great opportunity for groups and organizations. Call Brian Bohl for more details, 513-772-7645.

Pond Clinic



Hamilton County SWCD and Butler County SWCD will be sponsoring a Pond Clinic for both counties. The Pond Clinics are scheduled in April 2009 and June 2009. Butler County SWCD's presentation will be for ponds. Hamilton County's presentation will have sessions on water gardens, stormwater basins, and pond construction and maintenance. These are free programs, for more information, call 513-772-7645.

Board of Supervisors

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

NRCS

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

Additional Upcoming Events

March 10 – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Teaching Your Students About Resources
Douglas Haskell at 513-556-2951 or email Douglas.haskell@uc.edu

March 13 – Poster and Essay Contest “Dig It! The Secrets of Soil”
Cheryl Reinke Peck 513-772-7645 (see page three for details)

Create the Best Garden Ever

March 8, 14, 15, and 28 – Join Holly Utrata-Halcomb and learn about soils
(see page 2 for details)

Rain Barrel Sale — McKie Recreation Center (seep page 3 for details)

April 17 from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. and **April 18** from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Great Miami Clean Sweep 2009

May 2009 – Great opportunity for groups or organizations. Call Brian Bohl for
details, 513-772-7645

“LEEDing the Way to a Greener Future”

September 15 – 2009 Ultimate Educator Expo
registration – <http://www.cetconnect.org/ultimatereducatorsexpo/>

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.

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Conservation District
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