

# Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District



## Long Range Plan 2020 - 2024

### Our Mission

We are 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.

### Our Vision

To be a dynamic leader in soil and water conservation, working to achieve the sustainable use of our soil and water resources on a local and regional basis.

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## **Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District Operations**

### **How the District Was Established**

On April 27, 1945, landowners voted 201-10 to establish the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District – the 36<sup>th</sup> District in Ohio. The District is a legal and voluntary constituted unit of government, organized under the Ohio Soil Conservation Act of 1941. In those days, over 50% of the county was in agriculture production. The major sources of cash income came from dairy, greenhouse and truck farm crops, poultry, hogs and nursery crops. During the District's first 20 years of service over 35,000 acres of land was affected by conservation improvement. During the same period, crop yield improved nearly 100% as a result of sustained soil fertility, pesticides, improved crop variety and fertilizer.

By the late 1960s, the 1944 Federal Highway Act was producing new arteries of roads that expanded suburban sprawl. As the sprawl of Hamilton County accelerated, the demand for assistance on such issues as erosion, hillside stability, storm water and stream bank erosion grew from the suburban and urban sector. In 1992, the District took on the Administration of the Hamilton County Earthwork Regulations that governed earth movement on development sites.

In 2003, the District was asked to also be responsible for the Education, Community Involvement and Pre-Construction components of Phase II of the Clean Water Act that addressed non-point source pollution. Now, all of the programs within the District are considered "mandated". This fact has thus far ensured our County appropriations.

## Board of Supervisors

A publicly elected, volunteer Board of Supervisors has always directed the District. Supervisors are elected for three-year terms at our Annual meeting. Absentee ballots are available from the District office as well.

This governing body is instrumental in developing the Annual and Long Range Plans of Work and general oversight of the staff and budget. Their input reflects the needs of the community at large.



John Mangan  
Chairman



Michael C. Miller  
Vice Chairman



Scott P. Huber  
Secretary



Jane Wittke  
Treasurer



Kara Schirmer  
Program Chairman

## The SWCD and NRCS Team

A memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which is a division of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Through this agreement, arrays of technical experts work together with the District staff to form a natural resource management team.

## General Nature of Hamilton County

Hamilton County is located in the Southwestern corner of Ohio, along the Kentucky and Indiana borders. It occupies 413 square miles or 265,152 acres. Cincinnati, the county seat, is in the south-central part of the county, along the Ohio River. The 2018 US Census Bureau (Table 1) estimated the total County population to be 816,684. This is a decline of 42,929 over the past decade, but the demand for individual conservation assistance has grown. Suburban growth has resulted in pressure to develop flood plains and steep hillsides where flooding and landslides are severe hazards.

The County landscape is characterized by wide terraces and flood plains, steep hillsides along major rivers and tributary stream valleys and gently rolling glacial till plains. Due to the nature

of Hamilton County Soils, our County is considered one of the most highly erodible counties in the State of Ohio.

The dominant urban land use is residential development. The dominant industries are in the industries of manufacturing machine tools, jet engines, automobiles and soaps and detergents.

Year	Population
2008	799,193
2009	801,190
2010	802,263
2011	800,567
2012	802,367
2013	805,185
2014	807,654
2015	809,606
2016	811,572
2017	814,671
2018	816,684

**Table 1 - Hamilton County Census**

Source: <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

## Funding

Major funding is received from the Hamilton County commissioners with the State of Ohio – Ohio Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil and Water, matching annually a percentage of this funding. District demonstration projects and education activities also receive support from fund-raising efforts and through grants.

Appreciation and recognition is expressed to the Ohio legislative body and the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission for their continued support.

Special recognition goes to the Hamilton County Commissioners:



Denise  
Driehaus



Stephanie  
Summerow  
Dumas



Victoria  
Parks

## **Purpose of the Long-Range Plan**

This Long-Range Plan sets priorities to assist and guide the district's program services over the next five years. It is a roadmap created by gathering input from citizens and landowners within Hamilton County.

## **The Process**

Suggestions were solicited through an online survey on our District website which was publicized by direct e-mails and through Facebook and Twitter. A planning breakfast was also held on May 29, 2019. Over 200 invitations went out to all sectors of the community with 70 people in actual attendance. Those who could not attend were encouraged to provide input through the online survey.

The goals and objectives set forth in this document were drawn from the online survey and the planning breakfast. They will be accomplished in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA Farm Service Agency, ODA - Division of Soil and Water Resources and working with individuals, groups and organizations who request assistance to put conservation practices on the land. The relationship between the District and any request is a cooperative one.

## **District Services**

A small sample of the services the district provides to local landowners and residents are: soil erosion and hillside stability technical assistance, drainage and stream bank stability consultations, manure and nutrient management, soil fertility testing and cover crop sales, technical assistance in establishing stream buffers, pond issues and siting consultation, wildlife management, and natural resource conservation education programs for youth and adults.

All programs and services of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of NRCS program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

# Long Range Plan of Work (2020 – 2024)

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## Community Education

**Goal: Refining existing services with the goal of streamlining all education efforts within the District under the umbrella of Community Education.**

Objective I - Adopting a District wide coordination of education across programs and services and actively involving the Board of Supervisors in the education process.

Objective II - Refining classroom education programming by targeting specific age and interest demographics, based on curriculum standards.

Objective III - Develop partnerships with local schools, universities, and colleges to offer credits and continuing education units (CEUs)

Objective IV - Educate the public on the causes of biological impairment in local streams.

Objective V - Adopt innovative strategies like social media and internet-based tools to increase the everyday reach of the District.

Objective VI - Explore opportunities for educating new target audiences (e.g. businesses with significant environmental impacts).

## Community Involvement

**Goal: Involving the community to create short-term behavior modifications to conserve natural resources, leading to long-term sustainable behavior change.**

Objective I - Educate the public on identifying & responding to potential threats to local streams and soil health and explore opportunities to track public responsiveness.

Objective II - Provide volunteer opportunities for the public in watershed restoration and monitoring activities.

Objective III - Partner to connect the circle of traditional agriculture and urban agriculture with a focus on new technology and innovative farming practices.



## Earthwork Permit and Enforcement

**Goal: The effective administration, execution and enforcement of the Earthwork Permit to further sustainable growth while conserving the natural resources in Hamilton County.**

Objective I - Preserve the Earthwork Program by ensuring continued support for the program from existing and future stakeholders.

Objective II - Implement technology improvements to streamline the Earthwork permit workflow and inspections to improve customer service and efficiency.

Objective III - Improve knowledge of conservation practices amidst permit applicants to improve compliance.

## **Watershed Planning & Restoration**

**Goal: To restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of Hamilton County's water resources for use and enjoyment by local residents (human and wildlife).**

Objective I - Establish the Upper Cooper Creek watershed as a "Demonstration Watershed" in which efforts to mitigate hydrologic alteration are sustained with a goal of achieving "biological lift" in the Creek.

Objective II - Provide technical assistance to community planning efforts.

## Landowner Consultation

**Goal: Serve as a technical resource to Hamilton County landowners for natural resource management.**

Objective I - Provide landowner visits and consultation for surface and streambank erosion and stormwater impacts.

Objective II - Develop landowner resources and tools that are available for “frequently asked questions” about areas outside our jurisdiction.

## District-Wide Objectives

**Goal: Improve the overall internal and external interaction of the District by addressing current issues and innovation.**

Objective I - Increase partnership opportunities with local organizations, financial groups and educational institutions.

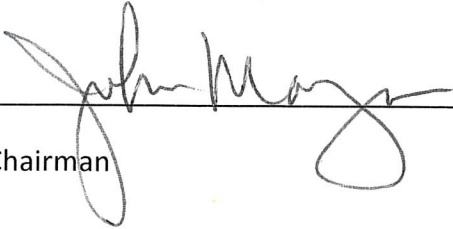
Objective II - Increase collaboration between staff and prioritize training for staff.


Objective III - Rebranding the District to establish community recognition of mission and vision.

Objective IV - Explore and take action on climatic impacts affecting Hamilton County.

**ADOPTION**

The Board of Supervisors Adopted this 2020 – 2024 Long Range Plan Tuesday, April 14, 2020

 4/21/20  
Chairman

 4-22-20  
Secretary