

# CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

WINTER 2015



A NEWSLETTER OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## DENNY BENSON REELECTED TO SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Denny Benson was reelected to the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District board, he presently serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. Denny is retired after 32 years as Director of Operation at the Broshear Contractors, Inc. a site development contractor, located in Ross,

Ohio. Denny has been a member of the Ohio Valley Development Council since 2003. He served on the Executive Committee of the Ohio Contractors Association and was chairman of the Executive Committee in 2002. Denny is also Past President of the Board of Directors of the One Way Farm, a homeless shelter for teenage children located in Fairfield, Ohio. Denny resides in White Oak with his wife who works for the Cincinnati Public Schools, and has two adult children.

Congratulations to Denny! His term begins January 1, 2016

## 4TH YEAR OF RAIN BARREL ART PROJECT

By John Nelson

Get ready to be taken by storm, or should I say storm water. The Rain Barrel Art Project is back with barrels full of creativity and splashes of creative genius. The fantastic event organized by the

Regional Storm Water Collaborative and hosted by The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden has opened its website for entries for the 2016 Rain Barrel Art Benefit Auction.

This Rain Barrel Art Project was created to promote the use of rain barrels throughout the Ohio River Valley area via an entertaining yet educational medium. Rain barrels continue to grow in popularity across the country. However, one

of its biggest drawbacks is their dull appearance. The Regional Storm Water Collaborative believes that producing artistic rain barrels

that have unique painted details will make them more desirable and increase public interest.

The Rain Barrel Art Benefit Auction is scheduled for April 21st at the Cincinnati Zoo. Entries to paint a rain barrel for the auction can be submitted via the collaborative website: [savelocalwaters.org](http://savelocalwaters.org). The last date for entries is January 15th. Once an artist's draft has been selected for the auction, the artist will be supplied with a rain barrel to paint. All rain barrels must be returned to the zoo by the first week of April. The barrels will remain on display at the Zoo until the auction. For more information on the Rain Barrel Art Project and the Regional Storm Water Collaborative, visit: [savelocalwaters.org](http://savelocalwaters.org).



HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE  
AGRICULTURE & SOIL FERTILITY | EDUCATION | URBAN STREAMS  
URBANLAND MANAGEMENT & EARTHWORKS | PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS  
22 TRIANGLE PARK DR. CINCINNATI OH 45246  
PHONE: 513-772-7645 | FAX 513-772-7656 | WWW.HCSWCD.ORG  
EDITOR: HOLLY UTRATA-HALCOMB | DESIGN: JOHN NELSON

# KEEP THOSE WINTER BLUES AWAY

By Sara Fehring

Now that we have all stuffed our bellies with Thanksgiving dinner it is time to move forward with the holiday season. As we push farther into December and January we find ourselves spending more and more time indoors and running out of things to keep us occupied. The goal of this article is to inspire you to step out of your comfort zone and try something new this winter. I have included a list of fun activities that can be done with friends and family of all ages. I hope this article helps you think of new and exciting ways to fill your long winter days.

## Go Volunteer!

There are several organizations around the tristate area that are looking for volunteers especially around the holiday season. Below are a few local organizations.

Great Parks of Hamilton County

<http://www.greatparks.org/get-involved/volunteer>

The Freestore Foodbank

<http://freestorefoodbank.org/>

The United Way

<http://www.uwgc.org/>

## Take a Hike!

We could all use a little exercise and fresh air come midwinter. Winter hikes are the perfect way to get some fresh air and exercise; they are also perfect for viewing wildlife. A fresh coat of snow on the ground makes winter a perfect time to look for animal tracks. Winter may not be the best time to observe plants and trees, but it is the perfect time to test your tree identification skills. Without the leaves you must use the bark and other tree characteristics to help in your tree identification. Check with your local city or county parks to see what fun winter hike activities they have to offer.

Great Parks of Hamilton County

<http://www.greatparks.org/recreation/winter-sports>

Cincinnati Parks

<http://www.cincinnati-parks.com/programs-and-events/explore-nature-2/>

## Participate in Citizen Science!

Citizen science allows citizens of all ages to be able to participate in scientific research. There are

hundreds of citizen science projects all over the world that cover a wide range of topics. Citizen science projects occur year round, but there are a few that are specifically designed for winter time. A few that come to mind are Project FeederWatch and the Christmas Bird Count.

Project FeederWatch is a survey that looks at which bird species visit feeders during the winter. Feeders can be located in your backyard, a nature center, a community area or any other location across the United States. Citizens that want to participate in Project FeederWatch are asked to count and record the birds that they see at their feeder. For more information on Project FeederWatch and to find out how you can participate visit their website <http://feederwatch.org/>.

The Christmas Bird Count is the nation's largest running citizen science project. The project takes place from December 14th to January 5th. During the duration of the study participants are asked to observe birds for at least 15 minutes in a location of their choice. After observations are



Image courtesy: [www.thegardenglove.com](http://www.thegardenglove.com)

made and submitted the results are compiled by the Audubon Society and used to study the health and status of birds across the United States. To find out more details on the Christmas Bird Count visit <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

### Make a Craft!

Personally my favorite part of winter is when you can sit in front of a fire with a nice hot mug of hot chocolate and work on a craft project. Pinterest has tons of great ideas for using recycled materials to make bird feeders, decorations, DIY Christmas gifts and many many more fun craft ideas.

Bird feeders can be made from a variety of recyclable objects. The Garden Glove website, <http://www.thegardenglove.com/10-creative-diy-bird-feeders/>, has a ton of fun and interesting ways to make your very own bird feeder. They highlight feeders made from soup cans, pop bottles, wine bottles and even old dishes. Check out their website

to find a new interesting way to feed the birds this winter.

There are lots of great ideas on Pinterest for making your own Christmas Presents or holiday decorations. Some ideas even use recycled material which makes it even better. I can't wait to make a few decorations with all the pine cones from my backyard. Craftaholics Anonymous has some great pine cone crafts on their website, <http://www.craftaholicsanonymous.net/pine-cone-crafts>, go check them out!

### Prep for Spring!

It may be too early to start planting your garden but it is never too soon to start planning! Now is the perfect time to decide what you want to plant during the upcoming gardening season. This will also help you decide when you should get your plants and/or seeds in the ground. Also, don't forget to order your soil test kit for Spring.

## CARING FOR OUR WATERSHEDS

*CFW ASKS STUDENTS TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL THAT ANSWERS THE QUESTION:  
"WHAT CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR WATERSHED?"*



Students can work independently, or as a team of no more than

four to research their local watershed, identify an environmental concern, and come up with a realistic solution.

- Proposals should be approximately 1,000 words and include visuals and a budget. Due March 4, 2016.
- Entries are scored by a panel of judges in the following areas: realistic idea, environmental impact, clear communication, innovation, scope, budget and visuals.
- Ten finalists/teams will make 5-minute verbal

presentations at a final competition on Saturday, May 7, 2016.

- All finalists win cash rewards (up to \$1000) for themselves and matching rewards for their schools. Schools also receive \$100 for every ten complete proposals submitted, even if they do not send students to the finals.

For more information, go to [www.caringforourwatersheds.com](http://www.caringforourwatersheds.com) and click on Ohio.

To volunteer, please contact Gwen. We need help mentoring students, reviewing proposals, inputting scores, etc. If you can help, we can find a task that fits your schedule and likes.



2015 Caring for Our Watershed Finalists

# AREA PROFESSIONALS AWARDED FOR CONSERVATION



Erik Zarnitz, Weekend Meteorologist & Reporter for Channel 5 - WLWT was awarded the Outstanding Communicator Award 2015 for his commitment to reporting to environmental issues and covering numerous topics on conservation. John Nelson, our Public Relations Specialist presented the award to Erik.



Roland Johnson and his wife Clare (not pictured), who built the Land Conservancy of Hamilton County from the ground up were awarded the 2015 Water Quality Partner of the Year Award. Brian Bohl, stream specialist highlighted that the Conservancy has preserved nearly 400 acres of land and 2.5 miles of high quality stream systems, including floodplain wetlands, as he presented the award.



Doug Sehlhorst & Mark Billman (not pictured) of Sehlhorst Equipment Services were awarded the 2015 Outstanding Urban Cooperator Award for the installation and maintenance of Earthwork BMPs. The award was presented by Earthwork Technician, Steve Eberts.



Dave Knof of Fischer Homes was awarded the 2015 Outstanding Urban Cooperator Award for the installation and maintenance of Earthwork BMPs. The award was presented by Earthwork Technician, Chey Alberto.



Bill Knollman from Knollman Farms accepted the 2015 Outstanding Cooperator of the Year Award from the District Administrator, Holly Utrata-Halcomb. This 115 year old, 5th generation, 1300+ Ac., farm has shown its commitment to conservation by participating in the Cover Crop Study that is being conducted by the District.



Jody McOsker of Withrow High School was chosen as our 2015 Conservation Teacher of the Year because of her amazing participation in the Caring For Our Watersheds competition. Gwen Roth, Education Specialist who presented the award, highlighted how Jody went beyond expectations, not only helping student submit entries, but also helping them implement the projects.

# GREAT SUCCESS AT THE GREAT MIAMI RIVER CLEANUP

By Brian Bohl

The 11th Annual Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River took place on Saturday, October 24th, 2015. Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District worked to facilitate the clean-up efforts in Colerain and Crosby Township. The event drew more than 50 volunteers, including members of the Colerain Township High School KEY Club, Cub Scout and Brownie Troops as well as watershed partners such as Friends of the Great Miami, Rivers Unlimited and the Ohio River Foundation. Trash and debris that is explicitly dumped, or, via stormwater, washed into our storm drains and river systems are ongoing challenges as we strive to maintain the integrity of

our waterways. However, events such as the Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River are critical in the reduction of waste that threaten wildlife and water quality alike. During the 2015 event, 81 tires and roughly 20 cubic yards of trash and recyclables were removed from the Great Miami River and surrounding floodplain. Included were larger items such as vinyl siding, doors and pieces of drywall. Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District would like to thank the Hamilton to New Baltimore Ground Water Consortium for providing event resources and Colerain Township for river access and waste hauling services. We hope to see you at the 2016 Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River!



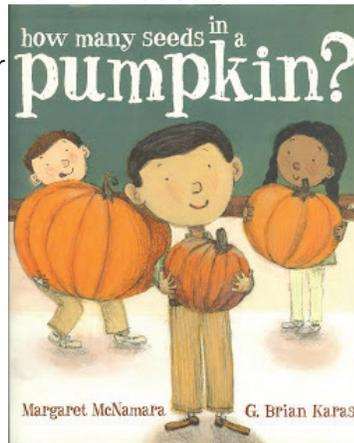
# Bookworm Burrow

By Sara Fehring

How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin

Written by: Margaret McNamara and G. Brian Karas

It's not too late to have some pumpkin fun! Before you throw your fall pumpkins on the compost let's see what ideas you can get from Mr. Tiffin's class. Follow Mr. Tiffin's class as they explore the inside of a pumpkin to see how many seeds they can find. Mr. Tiffin places three different sized pumpkins in front of his class, he then ask the class to estimate which pumpkin they think has the most seeds. The class assumes that the largest pumpkin would have the most seeds and the smallest pumpkin would have the least seeds. Upon completion of their investigation they found something completely different. This story does a great job showing that judging something based on its size is not always accurate. This book would fit great into your science or math curriculum and could be used as an excuse to have some ewwy goeey pumpkin fun!



## Board of Supervisors

Scott P. Huber, Chairman

Denny Benson, Vice-Chairman

Steve Johns, Secretary

Pam Simmons, Treasurer

Sam McKinley, Program Chairman

## District Staff

Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Administrator

Susan Juriga, Administrative Assistant

John Nelson, Public Relations Specialist

Dan Taphorn, Urban Conservationist

Chey Alberto, Urban Technician

Steve Eberts, Urban Technician

Gwen Z. Roth, Education Specialist

Sara Fehring, Education Assistant

Brian Bohl, Stream Specialist

Carrie Gibbons, Program Assistant

## NRCS

John Williams, District Conservationist

William Cook, Soil Conservationist

**Follow us on social media!**

**WEBSITE**



**NEWSLETTER**



**TWITTER**



**FACEBOOK**



Hamilton County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District  
22 Triangle Park Dr.  
Cincinnati, OH 45246  
(513) 772-7645  
[www.hcswcd.org](http://www.hcswcd.org)

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Thanksgiving Days (Office Closed) - Nov. 26th - 27th

Rain Barrel Art Project Submission Period Nov. 16th - Jan 15th  
(see Page 1 for more info.)

Board Meeting - Dec. 8th

Christmas Eve & Day (Office Closed) - Dec. 24th & 25th

New Year's Day (Office Closed) - Jan. 1st

Board Meeting - Jan. 12th

Board Meeting - Feb. 9th

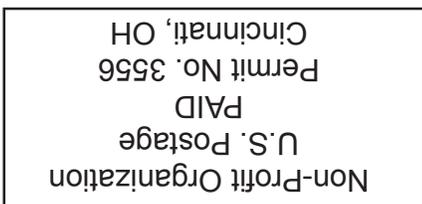
GMR River Lab Data Analysis Presentation - TBD  
(Call for more info)

Caring for Watershed Entry Deadline - Mar. 4th  
(see page 3 for more info.)

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.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Hamilton County Soil and Water  
Conservation District  
22 Triangle Park Drive  
Cincinnati, OH 45246-3411