

CONSERVATION NEWS

Newsletter of
the Defiance
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



In Cooperation with the Defiance County Commissioners

Summer 2014

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District to Host Open House

This year, the District is opening its doors to the community in lieu of a formal Annual Meeting Banquet. The Open House will be held on Wednesday, September 10th from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Evergreen Lane Office complex located at 06879 Evansport Road, Defiance. We will be celebrating 65 years of serving Defiance County residents—promoting the wise use of our natural resources. We feel the Open House will give guests a chance to converse with District Supervisors and staff and will provide a more flexible program with activities for the entire family.

The Open House will begin at 2:00 p.m. with complimentary grilled sandwiches and sides (grill courtesy of Fairview Young Farmers). For dessert, there will be a soft serve ice cream station along with all the toppings. The election will commence at 3:00 p.m. and will conclude at 6:00 p.m. to elect two District Board of Supervisors. There will also be a kid's pedal pull from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (sponsored by the Tinora Young Farmers) followed by an awards ceremony beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Throughout the afternoon, we will have numerous exhibits of District programs. We will have an extensive display of native wildlife, compliments of Joe Blosser, and brief informational sessions. There will also be numerous kids' hands-on activities. For more information, call or visit the District's website at www.defiance-county.com/swcd.



Notice of Election

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election of two Supervisors of the Defiance Soil and Water Conservation District to be held in accordance with Chapter 1515.01-14 of the Ohio Revised Code, at their Open House celebrating their 65th year on Wednesday, September 10, 2014. Two Supervisors will be elected to a three-year term beginning January 1, 2015.

There are three ways an eligible voter can cast a ballot:

- At the Open House, at the SWCD Office (3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. voting time) on Wednesday, September 10, 2014.
- At the SWCD office between Monday, August 20, 2014 and Wednesday, September 10, 2014 until 2:00 p.m.
- Vote absentee by requesting the proper absentee request forms from the SWCD office.

Please contact the District with any questions you may have regarding the election.



Supervisor Candidate Profiles



Luke Case and his wife Dawn reside at 12256 Blosser Road in Farmer Township. They have one daughter, Audra and are expecting another child later this fall.

Luke is a Research Associate in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science at The Ohio State University. Luke also farms on approximately 700 acres and raises cattle, pigs, and chickens.

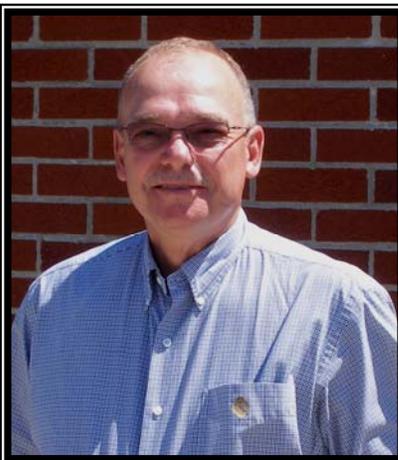
Luke is a member of the Fairview Young Farmers and is on the Finance Board at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sherwood. He likes to spend time outdoors, hunting, and going to the lake.



Jeff Hange resides at 09457 Rosebrook Road in Delaware Township.

Jeff farms 700 acres of corn and soybeans. In addition, he assists his uncle with his farming operation.

Jeff is the Finance Secretary and a member of the choir at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sherwood. He is also Secretary for the Fairview Young Farmers.



Bill Moats and his wife, Susan, reside at 08265 Coy Road in Delaware Township. They have two adult children, daughter Lindsay (Jack) Davis and son Michael Moats and two grandchildren.

A retiree from Defiance GM Powertrain, Bill currently works for the Defiance County Sheriff's office as a Court Security Officer. He farms over 700 acres of corn, soybeans, and wheat with his son.

Bill is currently Vice President on the SWCD Board of Supervisors and is completing his first 3-year term. He is also a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, Defiance County Farm Bureau, Defiance County Associate Deputies, and a member of the Defiance County Fish and Game.



Bryce Rohrs resides at 09502 Cicero Road in Hicksville Township. He is the parent of one daughter, Kennedy Rohrs-Zeller.

Bryce is a fifth generation farmer of approximately 2,000 acres and also owns a trucking company. He is also employed with the Defiance County Sheriff's Department.

Bryce is also a member of the Hicksville Rotary.

Powell Creek Nutrient Reduction Project Update

The District is making great strides towards meeting the objectives set forth in the Powell Creek Nutrient Reduction Project that began in 2013. As this article is being written, over 17 acres of wetland habitat are being constructed on 4 properties in the Powell Creek Watershed. Designed to treat agricultural field runoff, these wetlands play a critical role in sequestering excess nutrients. The wetlands also slow the rate that runoff reaches our streams and provide excellent habitat for wildlife. We are very excited to see the planning and engineering come to fruition.

The District is also thrilled with the willingness of a Powell Creek Watershed landowner to install a saturated buffer system on his farm—the first such saturated buffer system to be installed east of Illinois. What is a saturated buffer, you ask? In a nutshell, it is a filter strip with drainage tile water distributed throughout it. A saturated buffer is created by diverting a portion of conventional subsurface drainage that would otherwise discharge directly into a ditch and distribute it throughout a filter strip to help remove excess nutrients.

As we find on many farms, filter strips are placed adjacent to streams and ditches to reduce erosion and to treat surface runoff—this is great! However, a considerable amount of water continues to leave the field, untreated, underneath the filter strip through subsurface drainage systems. The saturated buffer works like this:

A dual chamber (two sets of adjustable weirs) controlled drainage structure is installed on a tile main near the boundary of the field and filter strip. For those of you familiar with standard controlled drainage structures, the upstream weir acts in exactly the same manner—raising the water table throughout the field. This allows for elevating the field's water table at different periods of the year. This management typically results in a 40 percent reduction of tile flow throughout the year.

The key to the saturated buffer system lies in the installation of a lateral distribution tile (4-inch perforated field tile) that exits the structure between the upstream and downstream weirs. This distribution tile then runs the length of the filter strip, parallel to the ditch. Ultimately, during low to moderate flow periods, the subsurface drainage leaving the field is rerouted and allowed to saturate the filter strip. Nutrients are taken up by both the grasses growing on the filter strip as well as microorganisms within the soil. The water is allowed to slowly seep through the filter strip and back into the ditch (provisions are made to ensure the stability of the ditch bank). During high flow events, excess water flows over the top of the weirs and through the existing outlet—ensuring the field can adequately drain. We are excited about the opportunity to showcase this project and hope to work with researchers to quantify the nutrient and flow reductions that result from this system.

In addition to the above practices, the Defiance and Putnam Districts have also implemented:

- 1,617.6 acres of cover crops in 2013 with 803.0 acres contracted to be planted in 2014
- 4 variable rate nutrient management plans on over 800 acres of farm ground
- 21 controlled drainage structures with 17 to be installed this fall

Opportunities still exist for the installation of controlled drainage systems, whole farm management plans with supporting conservation practices, and saturated buffer systems. Please contact Jason Roehrig at 419-782-1794 for more information.



One of 4 Powell Creek wetland projects underway. Over 17 acres of wetland habitat are to be constructed in 2014.



A saturated buffer structure installation.

SWCD Office Hours

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The SWCD Board of Supervisors typically holds its regular monthly meeting (open to the public) on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 a.m. Any changes to this date/time will be posted in the local newspaper.

The Defiance SWCD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

Lake Erie CREP Program Winds Down

With over 4,000 acres of CREP practices enrolled, Defiance County producers have lead the way with Lake Erie CREP. To date, our most popular practices have included over 2,850 acres of filter strips, 410 acres of wetland restorations, and 435 acres of riparian buffers. Sadly, as is often the case, good things must come to an end. If you are still considering enrolling acreage into this program, now is the time to act! Right now, all local CREP funds have been lumped into one pot of money and funds are being encumbered on a first come first served basis. Program bonus payments will remain available until June 30, 2015 or until funds are exhausted. Once signed up, you will have one year to implement the practice. After this deadline, the program comes to an end.

Eligible practices and bonus payments are listed below. Keep in mind that these practices will receive annual payments through the CRP program in addition to the implementation bonuses listed.

CP3A—Hardwood Tree Planting (\$600.00 per acre)

CP5A—Field Windbreaks (\$100.00 per acre)

CP22—Riparian Forest Buffers (\$600.00 per acre)

CP23—Wetland Restoration (\$500.00 per acre with 10 acre max)

CP30—Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffers (\$500.00 per acre)

Please contact the office for more details.



Rain Barrels and Rain Gardens

As part of an effort to improve the quality of water we send to Lake Erie, the Defiance Soil and Water and the City of Defiance will be offering a series of Rain Barrel and Rain Garden workshops!

Rain Barrels are attached to a downspout to collect water for a sunny day! Almost anyone with gutters can take advantage of the many benefits of a rain barrel. Each rain barrel installed is 55 gallons of water that does not enter the storm drains during a rain event. That can really add up and make a difference in the quantity and quality of water entering the river. During a heavy rain, if too much water rushes the sewer system, it can trigger the combined sewers to overflow directly to the river. Because our ditches and streams are flashy (they fill up fast during a rain and then drain quickly), erosion is more likely. Also, large quantities of excess stormwater carry other pollutants from the land such as oil from parking lots, pet waste, and fertilizer.

Rain barrels are a free source of water for your garden and landscaping!

Rain gardens are an additional way to prevent stormwater from rushing the system. These gardens can vary in size and are designed to capture roof water and/or yard drainage before it gets to the ditch or storm drain. Ideally, they are planted with beautiful native plants that can tolerate 'getting their feet wet'. As the rainwater enters into the rain garden, it gets soaked up by the plants within 12 hours—no standing water to worry about! Rain gardens are a lovely addition to your landscaping that not only look nice, but serve an important function in keeping our watershed healthy!

Would you like to install a rain barrel or rain garden but need guidance or lack funds? No problem!

The District and the City of Defiance are here to help! We will be holding a series of workshops this year to teach and guide people through the process. Even better, workshop participants will receive rain garden and rain barrel kits to offset the cost of installation. For more information, call the SWCD office at 419-782-1794 or email Stephanie at: ssinger@defiance-county.com.

These programs are funded by an Ohio EPA Environmental Education Grant.



Examples of rain gardens (top) and rain barrels (bottom) utilized to reduce storm water runoff.

Blind Inlets and Controlled Drainage Offer Added Nutrient Reductions

We are all very aware of the importance of proper nutrient management for crop production and its role in protecting water quality. Ensuring effective and responsible use of nutrients begins in the field, where frequent soil nutrient testing and variable rate technology can be used to apply nutrients at the right rate, the right location, at the right time, and from the right fertilizer source. These 4R Nutrient Stewardship principles provide the “framework to achieve cropping system goals—increased production, increased farmer profitability, enhanced environmental protection and improved sustainability.” In addition to managing the nutrients that are being applied to the land, there are also supporting practices such as controlled drainage structures and blind tile inlets that can decrease the potential of nutrients leaving the field.

Many of you are familiar with the controlled drainage structures through several previous programs the District has offered. These structures are used to raise the water table in systematically tiled fields—ultimately to reduce the amount of nutrients that leave the field. In fact, research has consistently shown flow reductions of over 40 percent annually resulting in a proportionate reduction in nutrient loading. In addition to the nutrient reductions, these structures can be managed during the growing season to store water for crop production. A win-win scenario.

You may be less familiar with the blind tile inlet practice. This practice, sometimes referred to as a French drain, essentially converts standpipes located in field depressions into an underground filtration system. The goal is to direct the surface water through a gravel bed to slow the water down and to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that would have otherwise entered the tile system. In addition to the blind inlet’s environmental benefits, they also eliminate the need for standpipes that can create obstacles for equipment.



A blind tile inlet installation prior to the placement of gravel (left) and the completed practice (right). Photos from USDA-ARS.

Please contact Tyler Miller at 419-782-1794 for more information regarding these practices.

Upper Maumee Watershed—Upcoming Events

The Upper Maumee Watershed program has a very active schedule this summer and fall. Be sure to take advantage of the presentations to learn what you can do to improve the quality of water leaving your property!

“Land To Lake” Backyard Conservation—Thursday, August 21st from 2 p.m.-6 p.m. During the Defiance County Fair, visit the display in the Ag Building any time during the week to learn more about composting, rain barrels, rain gardens, and other backyard conservation tips. Jen English, City of Defiance MS4 Coordinator and Stephanie Singer, Defiance SWCD Watershed Coordinator will be there Thursday from 2 p.m.-6 p.m. to answer questions and give specific information about funding available to help install rain gardens and rain barrels.

Movie Screening and Discussion—Tuesday, October 7th at 6:30 p.m. Blue Gold-Water Wars at Defiance Regional Medical Center, Auglaize Room.

Movie Screening and Discussion—Wednesday, November 5th at 6:30 p.m. DIRT at Defiance Regional Medical Center, Auglaize Room.

Rain Garden Workshop for Landscapers—Thursday, December 11th 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Landscapers will learn how to install a rain garden at a reduced cost due to kits available through an Ohio EPA Environmental Education grant. Workshop to be held at Defiance Regional Medical Center, Auglaize Room. Free program-Registration required.

Rain Garden/Rain Barrel Workshops—Thursday, September 18th, 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.; Thursday, October 16th, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. lunch program; Tuesday, January 13th, 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Participants will learn how to install rain gardens and rain barrels. They will also receive a 50 percent cost saving ‘kit’ for both of these practices. Call 419-782-1794 or email Stephanie Singer at ssinger@defiance-county.com to register.

District Education Programs

The Defiance SWCD participated in the Defiance Public Library Summer Reading Series. The program is a great way to encourage youth reading throughout the summer and many free, exciting programs were offered to teach and entertain participants. The theme this year was “Fizz, Boom, Read” and focused on science curriculum. Bill Grimes, Education Specialist, provided programs on the properties of water by studying water on “Zork” and Stephanie Singer, Upper Maumee Watershed Coordinator, performed stream studies to look at water chemistry and macroinvertebrates living in the streams. Students learned that the presence of certain aquatic “bugs” can be an indicator of a stream’s long-term health.



Stephanie Singer, Watershed Coordinator for the Defiance SWCD, reviews water quality parameters that are used to determine stream health.



During one session of the Black Swamp Educator's Extravaganza, participants participated in an in-depth study of bats.

The District also co-hosted the Kid's Outdoor Science Camp (KOSC) and the Black Swamp Educator's Extravaganza. The KOSC ran from June 4th-7th at 4-H Camp Palmer with 26 Defiance County students participating. The District would like to thank 3 Rivers Conservation Club and Fairview Young Farmers for providing funding towards the scholarships provided to all Defiance County students! The Black Swamp Educator's Extravaganza was held from June 18th-20th at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and at Kellys Island. This training provided new ways for educators to teach students about fracking, energy, aquatics, and numerous other topics. The District is currently prepping for upcoming classroom presentations and for the Sixth Grade School Tour to be held at Auglaize Village on September 26, 2014. Here, approximately 300 students will learn about the conservation of our natural resources.

Conservation Action Project Cover Crop Cost-Sharing

The Conservation Action Project (CAP) Board of Trustees has approved a 2014 Cover Crop program and will be accepting applications for planting a cover crop during the 2014 growing season (July-October). This is a one-time offer. The producer must agree to plant a minimum of 20 acres of a cover crop per NRCS standards and will be reimbursed \$25.00 per acre or a maximum payment of \$500.00. This program is open to all producers on a first come first served basis. Applications will be accepted from July 21, 2014 thru September 30, 2014. Please contact the District for program specifics and contracts or contact CAP at 419-354-5517. The program is limited to 400 acres or 20 applicants, so be sure to act immediately if you are interested in participating!



Congratulations!

The Spring *Conservation News* prize giveaway was awarded to Loren and Martha Smith of Hicksville. Loren and Martha won a set of gardening tools, gloves, and a rain gauge for submitting their completed word puzzle. Be sure to complete this edition's puzzle and return it to the District office by September 12, 2014 to be entered into the random drawing. Feel free to bring your completed puzzles with you to our Open House on September 10, 2014 and we will be sure to enter them into the drawing!



Loren and Martha Smith receiving gardening tools for the puzzle prize giveaway.

District Open House Word Search

Find the thirty words in the puzzle below pertaining to our Open House on September 10th from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Once completed, return the puzzle to the District by September 12th. An entry will be randomly drawn and the winner will be awarded a gift basket. Thanks for reading *Conservation News* and good luck!

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 APPRECIATION
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 PRESENTATION
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 PROGRAM
 PROJECTS
 SANDWICH



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 SESSION
 SOCIALIZING
 STAFF
 SUPERVISOR
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 WILDLIFE

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CONSERVATION NEWS

Defiance Soil and Water Conservation District

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New BMP Auction Project Will Accept Bids This Summer

A new project is studying how conservation auctions in Northwest Ohio can be used to pay corn and soybean producers for adopting agricultural best management practices (BMPs) that improve water quality. As part of this research project, we will host the Defiance-Tiffin Watershed BMP Auction. Through the auction, we will pay corn and soybean producers in Defiance County who farm within the Tiffin River Watershed to adopt new BMPs that reduce the amount of phosphorus that enters the Tiffin River and flows into Lake Erie. Reducing excess phosphorus improves our water quality and limits the frequency and size of algal blooms.

Growers can bid to adopt: 1) cover crops, 2) filter strips, and/or 3) subsurface drainage control structures. Bids are confidential and will be accepted from July 21st to September 30, 2014. Utilizing a targeted approach, project researchers will evaluate bids and select projects that reduce the most phosphorus runoff per dollar until our budget runs out. Funding will be provided for new BMPs, not ones that are already used on a specific field. Winning bidders will be notified in early November so practices can be planned and implemented in 2015.

Bid packets can be picked up at the SWCD Office or printed from the auction website. To have a bid packet mailed to you, please call or email Leah Harris (Phone: 804-357-8510; Email: leahmh@msu.edu). You may also call Leah to request information about the potential environmental benefits (reduced phosphorus runoff) from using BMPs on your land. Be sure to take advantage of this opportunity. This project offers the flexibility to tailor the implementation of these BMPs to your needs. The District will gladly assist in BMP designs and will provide maps to be submitted with your bid packets. Please call the office to schedule an appointment. For more information, please visit the auction's website at www.DefianceTiffinBMPAuction.org.

