

NEWS

& views

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Technician Development Program Kick-Off

March 4th, 5th, and 6th marked the kick-off of the Technician Development Program. Orientations for the program were held in Sidney, Chillicothe, and Cambridge. A total of 70 participants attended the sessions, including SWCD Technicians and NRCS Conservationists. About seventy-five percent of those participating in the Technician Development Program have less than two years experience in the soil and water conservation field.

Approximately six training sessions, 1-2 days each, will be conducted annually. These sessions are highly participatory and will include a variety of field exercises. As participants progress through the five-year program and display technical competence, they will be assigned classification levels. The classification levels will be an indicator of the technician's progress and will be a useful evaluation tool.

The orientation was the first course in a program offering more than 30 training opportunities. Courses ranging from preparation of engineering plans to advanced stream morphology are aimed at developing the technical abilities of the participants. Individuals not enrolling in the program but desiring to take specific courses may sign up to do so.



Classes for the first two years of the program will be held in each of Ohio's five OFSWCD Areas.

The Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, ODNR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation, and Natural Resources Conservation Service-Ohio have teamed up to offer this program tailored to Ohio Conservation Technicians. For further information you may contact ODNR's Conservation Engineering and Technical Assistance Section at 614-265-6617. ■

Technician Development Program participants work on hydrology exercises during a recent training session.

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Here's The Key

As situations change, approaches to those situations must be considered before actions are taken. For instance, as newlyweds some three decades ago Ruth and I built our home next to her father Ed's dairy farm. One day he let his city-raised son-in-law use one of the farm tractors. When I finished, I pulled the key from the ignition and gave it to him. Ed told me that the key

hadn't been out of the tractor ignition for twenty years, and would I please put it back. I did. The lesson learned that day was that what was a typical action in the city (in this case, removing a key to prevent theft) made little sense on his farm.

As a Federation today we are similarly faced with having to look at how our environment has changed locally, statewide, and nationally. Budget concerns are going to affect how we allocate our resources. The goal of state 1:1 matching funds is still in front of us. There are going to be some difficult choices to make about what we can accomplish. It is a different place that we are in today.

There is a tool that each district, as well as the Federation, can use to help guide the choices that we need to make: a Strategic Plan. Most, if not all, 88 counties have such a document. The Federation generated a Strategic Plan in April of 2001. That effort guided decisions in 2001 and 2002. The Executive Committee, with the help of the Directors, is going to 'dust it off.' Refreshing the strategic plan today in light of our current situation will be an important step toward yielding more positive outcomes tomorrow. I encourage each of you to look at your planning tools as you make your budget decisions.

I want to take a moment to congratulate Hocking SWCD board member Clark Sheets, your new Secretary Treasurer, on his election during the Annual Meeting. Your Federation's leadership team – your officers and area chairs (the new Executive Committee) and other area directors – is looking forward to the challenges of the next two years. As I mentioned at the All Employees seminar in March, the process for this team will be to listen, communicate, and act. Talk to us.

Tom Reininger, President
Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Three Districts Recognized for Perfect Audits

It isn't easy to pull off a perfect audit, but three SWCDs were recognized for just that during the Conservation Partnership All Employee Seminar in Columbus March 4-5. Representatives from Delaware, Hocking, and Summit accepted "gold money bag" plaques from division chief David Hanselmann for their outstanding achievements.



Jeannine Royer, administrative assistant, Summit SWCD; Debbie Later, program administrator for Hocking SWCD; and Larry Ufferman, district administrator, Delaware SWCD.

CONSERVATION CALENDAR

June 8-9-10

Ohio Envirothon, hosted by Area 4 – Urbana University

July 8-9

OSWCC Meeting – Lake County

July 26-Aug 1

Canon Envirothon – Emmitsburg, Maryland

August 3-5

Summer Supervisors School – Toledo

August 12-13-14

Education Workshop – Deer Creek State Park

September 16-17-18

Farm Science Review – London

Focus on Education

By Jeanne Russell, Nonpoint Source Education Coordinator

Show Me the Money!

The word “budget” can be found in nearly everyone’s conversation and correspondence these days - often dressed up with adjectives like “dire,” “deplorable,” “dreadful,” and “disastrous.” And school district budgets are no exception. With this in mind, and a mission to provide each county school student with opportunities to learn about natural resource conservation in the out-of-doors, Preble SWCD initiated a Land Lab Grant Program for local schools several years ago.

Originally two \$250 grants were offered in an effort to reach as many schools with an interest in developing outdoor learning sites as possible. Currently, Preble SWCD offers one \$500 Land Lab and Environmental Education Grant annually. To date, all schools but the newest have received funding.

Funds can be used for supplies, equipment, or printing materials that support the project or its promotion. Funded projects have included nature path development, butterfly gardens, and experimental test plots. Schools have also received grants to purchase water quality test kits and lab equipment. Along with the grant awards comes the opportunity to strengthen partnerships with local schools. The SWCD has provided technical assistance with wetland development and soil testing, as well as conducting environmental education programs at the land labs.

The Preble SWCD Education Committee reviews the applications and makes the award determinations. Priority is given to applications that show evidence of strong volunteer involvement. While this program was originally developed for schools, the district plans to broaden its target audience, as they have received inquiries from a local ministry camp interested in developing a land lab.

In the words of Aldo Leopold, “The objective is to teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and enjoy what he understands.” The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District is helping to meet that objective. If you would like to learn more about their land lab and environmental education grant program, please contact Susan Couser at susan-couser@oh.nacdn.net. ■

Growing Conservation Leadership – Class III

“Growing our people to grow our organization” has been the consistent message for the District Administrator Conservation Leadership training since the program began over four years ago. The purpose of the training is to prepare district administrators to better deal with daily issues as operational managers, allowing the board of supervisors to be more involved in the governance role of the district. To date, 54 SWCD administrators have participated in the three-day leadership training sessions.

“Board members don’t have time to micro-manage the operations of the office. We need to capitalize on the time that board members give by focusing their attention on strategic planning, budgeting, and setting priorities,” said Fred Hammon, SWCD Administrator for the ODNR-Division of Soil and Water Conservation. “This program helps the Administrator and the Board members to better define each other’s roles in the operation and governance of the SWCD,” he added.

The third Conservation Leadership class was held at the Vern Riffe Center in Columbus February 19, 20, & 21. Participants included:

Paul Berringer – Clermont SWCD	Nikki Hawk – Mercer SWCD
Teresa Bradford – Coshocton SWCD	Tammy Jones – Monroe SWCD
Mike Hall – Crawford SWCD	Dan Barker – Morrow SWCD
Janine Rybka – Cuyahoga SWCD	Debbie West – Vinton SWCD
Jeff Ankney – Defiance SWCD	Pam Brooker – Washington SWCD
Eric Dodrill – Erie SWCD	Nicki Kale – Wood SWCD
Don Leeds – Greene SWCD	Bill Clinger – Wyandot SWCD
Lara Burkett – Lucas SWCD	Alicia Connolly – OFSWCD
Pat Gerfen – Marion SWCD	

Mary Jo Kaplan and Ben Senturia, from the Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL), Washington, D.C., presented the three-day workshop. Topics covered included Stages of Organizational Development, Responsibilities of an Effective District Administrator, Four Frames of Leadership, Planning, Supervision, Time Management, Resource Development, Conflict, Partnering with Boards, and Action Planning. The class will meet again July 10-11 for a follow-up review of progress on action plans; each administrator will also bring one board member to the session. ■

OFSWCD Adopts New Organizational Structure

Executive Board and Standing Committees Take Shape

At the delegate session during the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts annual meeting in January, representatives from Ohio's 88 SWCDs voted to accept a new organizational structure that had been approved by the OFSWCD's board of directors at its November 2002 meeting.

The move creates an OFSWCD Executive Board, consisting of the officers and Area chairpersons. Current members are Tom Reininger, president; Ken Riedlinger, vice president; Clark Sheets, secretary-treasurer; Dave Linkhart, past president; Kent Stuckey (Area 1); David Rohrer (Area 2); David Greer (Area 3); Joe Glassmeyer (Area 4); and Lawrence Burdell (Area 5). Also serving as an ex-officio member is Steve Robinson, Union SWCD supervisor and NACD delegate for Ohio.

The move also creates five OFSWCD standing committees, each chaired by an Executive Committee member:

- District Operations – David Rohrer
- Working Lands – Lawrence Burdell
- Education/Communications – David Greer
- Urban – Joe Glassmeyer
- Environment and Resource Policy – Kent Stuckey

All of the committees met during the first two weeks of April to get organized and begin evaluating existing OFSWCD resolutions. Each of the committees will meet again at Summer Supervisors School in Toledo (August 3), followed by a full Board of Directors meeting.

In upcoming editions of *News & Views* we will profile the members of the Executive Committee and provide insights into issues facing the various committees. ■



OFSWCD officers for 2003, 2004 are – left to right – Clark Sheets, Hocking SWCD, secretary-treasurer; Ken Riedlinger, Wyandot SWCD, vice president; Tom Reininger, Hamilton SWCD, president; and Dave Linkhart, Greene SWCD, past-president.

The Ohio Soil Survey: Cooperative for 50 Years

By Tim Gerber, ODNR and Jon Gerken, NRCS

If you know any of the 26 NRCS or ODNR soil scientists who are a part of the Ohio Soil Survey, chances are you may not know which of the two agencies employs them. This lack of apparent distinction between agencies is a testament to the effectiveness of the Ohio Soil Inventory Board, which was created by a memorandum of understanding signed in May 1953.

During the past 50 years, NRCS, ODNR, and Ohio State institutions (School of Natural Resources, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, and OSU Extension) have undergone name changes, re-organizations, re-locations, expansions and reductions in staffing, and changes in leadership and priorities. These changes have certainly impacted the state's soil survey program, but Board coordination of these three agencies has maintained a level of stability that otherwise could not have been achieved here.

To encourage similar cooperative benefits at the national level, last year Division Chief David Hanselmann began encouraging his colleagues in the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) to seek direct representation for NASCA in the National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference. With the signing of a memorandum of understanding between NRCS and NASCA recently, NASCA officially became a part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

Ohio Soil Inventory Board members Jon Gerken (NRCS), Tim Gerber (ODNR), and Neil Smeck (OARDC) meet monthly to plan and coordinate various aspects of the state's soil sur-



NASCA President Steve Cauthen (left) and NRCS Chief Bruce Knight signed a memorandum of understanding establishing NASCA as a member of the National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference during the 2003 NACD annual meeting.

vey program, and schedule a two-day Work Planning Conference each summer to develop a business plan for the upcoming federal fiscal year. The first part of this year's conference is scheduled for late June.

The Ohio Soil Survey Business Plan for the current fiscal year can be accessed on NRCS' Ohio website, at <http://www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov>. It documents the status of manuscript and map development for 12 counties and field activities in two other counties. Information on the scheduling of digitizing work for 70 counties is included, along with plans for editing the National Soil Information System (NASIS) database for 28 counties during this fiscal year. Some aspects of the state's soil survey are more glam-

orous than others, but all are critical to delivering important soils information to landowners and units of government.

The Statewide Digital Soils Information (SDSI) Project, which is a part of a national SSURGO Initiative, and the Soil Information Delivery Program are probably the most visible parts of the Ohio Soil Survey now. Both are excellent examples of how NRCS, ODNR, and the OSU institutions

have tackled tasks that could not be completed independently. Although the three entities are funded separately and have missions that differ at least slightly, they share many objectives. And, with only 30 soil scientists available to contribute, coordinating their activities is well worth the Soil Inventory Board's efforts. ■



Henry Shriver (left) accepts "OFSWCD Hall of Fame" clock from Tom Reininger; Lynn Meyer, who spends the winter in Florida, was unable to attend the banquet.

Hall of Fame

During the closing banquet of the OFSWCD's 60th Annual Meeting, Henry Schriver, Lorain SWCD, and Lynn Meyers, Butler SWCD became the 69th and 70th members of the Federation's Hall of Fame.

40 Years of Service

Also during the annual awards banquet, Don Loudenslager was recognized for 40 years of service as an elected board member of the Marion SWCD. Don and his wife Reva have been heavily involved in OFSWCD activities since Don was first elected to the Marion District Board of Supervisors.



Dave Linkhart (left) congratulates Don Loudenslager on 40 years of service to the Marion SWCD.



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