

# NEWS

## & views

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## Larry Vance Marks 20 Years as Chief

By Nelson Strong, Administrator, Environmental Education Section

In 1981 no SWCD in Ohio had heard of Manure Nutrient Management (MNM were candy); nobody had heard of a Statewide Digital Soils Information (SDSI) Project; no district had ever heard of WAWA education grants. But they had heard of Larry Vance. And they were about to hear a lot more about him. Because on September 1, 1981, Lawrence G. Vance became chief of ODNR's Division of Soil and Water Districts.

Analysis Program (OCAP) became effective. Larry was now chief of the brand-new Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

On September 1, 2001, Larry began his 21st year as the division's chief. He's only the second chief in the entire history of the Division of Soil and Water Districts/Conservation. Floyd Heft had served as chief from the day the division became part of ODNR in 1969 until Larry became chief in 1981. Floyd had served as executive secretary to the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Committee (now Commission) since 1951.

Larry began his career with the division when he was hired as the first program specialist in 1970. Between 1974 and 1981 Larry held positions in soil conservation programs in Indiana and Iowa. In the 20 years since he returned to Ohio, Larry has served as chief under four governors – Rhodes,

Celeste, Voinovich, and Taft; and five ODNR directors – not to mention a couple of interim directors.

In the past 21 years the soil and water conservation program in Ohio has seen

tremendous growth and diversification. Combined county and state matching funds to districts have increased from \$1,169,238 to \$8,536,973. Districts employ nearly 450 technicians, administrators, wildlife specialists, education specialists, administrative assistants, and other professionals. What does Larry have to say about the past 20 years?

"In total, I've spent 31 years with SWCDs, preceded by 4 years teaching vocational agriculture. It has been gratifying and an experience I will always treasure," Vance said. "I am proud of the professional SWCD employees and NRCS and ODNR staff assisting districts, all of whom have contributed to the betterment of our natural resources. When we realize that many of these employees also have 20 or more years of service, we need to appreciate the fact that they are dedicated to their work as careers – not jobs, and they care deeply about the SWCD programs."

Larry's last day as chief of the division will be February 28, 2002 – exactly 20 years and six months after his first. ■



Chief Larry Vance, accompanied by wife Marian, accepts 20-years-as-Chief service recognition plaque from ODNR Assistant Director Bill Moody at a ceremony during the Farm Science Review.

But Larry would be chief of the DSWD for less than six months. On March 15, 1982, legislation merging the Division of Soil and Water Districts with the Division of Lands and Soil and Ohio Capability

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# Conservation Views

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Over the last several years, district budgets have increased at a double-digit rate. We have worked hard at the state level to demonstrate the importance of maintaining the 1-to-1 match and most years have come close to achieving that goal. The economy has been good and many districts have had a relatively easy time selling their programs to their respective county commissioners.

But oh how quickly times can change!

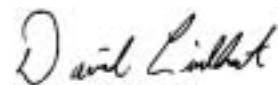
The terrorist attacks of September 11 were just the catalyst to bring about a slowdown of an economy that was already showing the signs of a mild recession. Suddenly every government agency became aware that revenues were declining and budgets would have to be adjusted. People stopped spending on unnecessary items and we don't know what the Christmas season will bring.

What does this mean to districts? I believe that we now face the greatest threat to our financial security that we have seen since I became a supervisor many years ago. At the local level, we are seeing cutbacks in many county programs. At the state level we have already seen a six percent budget reduction to all state

agencies. How this will affect matching funds is still undetermined as of this writing; I hope the impact will be minimal for this budget cycle. But the future threat remains considerable.

What can we do about it? Now, more than ever, it is important to make and maintain those relationships with county commissioners and state legislators. Make sure they are aware of the vital role districts play in the conservation of our natural resources. Show commissioners how much state and federal money comes into the district. When talking to state and local officials, point out that by funding our programs they are investing in cleaner water and a healthier Ohio agricultural economy. Remind them of the improvements our 60-year, grassroots-driven and locally determined conservation efforts have brought to our communities – rural and urban. In short, we have to get out and sell district programs.

It's easy to sell something everyone wants when they have plenty of money. But it's a much harder job when funds are tight. We have a tough job ahead at the local and state level. We all need to pitch in if we are to maintain the strength of district programs.



Dave Linkhart, President  
*Ohio Federation of Soil and Water  
Conservation Districts*

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## Susan Reeves appointed to OSWCC

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Governor Bob Taft has named Brown SWCD board member Susan Reeves to a four-year term on the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission (OSWCC). She replaces Paul Andre, whose term expired at the end of July. Her term runs through June 30, 2005.

A Brown County resident, Reeves owns and operates Bethel Feed and Supply in Clermont County. She and her husband Jerry own a grain farm in Brown County, producing corn, soybeans and wheat.

Reeves was elected to the Brown SWCD Board of Supervisors in 1991 and currently serves as chair. She has been a member of the OFSWCD Board of Directors since 1993.



The mission of the OSWCC is to protect the invaluable water and soil resources of the state by working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Soil & Water

Conservation and with the state's 88 county-based soil and water conservation districts to implement programs to reduce erosion and nonpoint source pollution.

Also serving on the commission are Tom Reininger (Hamilton County); John Bergman (Auglaize County); David Gilmore (Coshocton County); Fred Dailey director, Ohio Department of Agriculture; Dr. Bob Moser, vice president for ag administration and dean, OSU College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; and Steve Robinson, OFSWCD. ODNR Director Sam Speck is an ex-officio member of the commission, and Division of Soil and Water Conservation Chief Larry Vance serves the commission as executive secretary. ■

# Focus on Education

By Jeanne Russell, Nonpoint Source Education Coordinator

## Okay, Parents – On Your Mark, Get Set, TEACH!

Mary June Emerson, Education Coordinator for Mahoning SWCD, has developed a unique program that taps into a hidden resource available to all schools – PARENTS! Joyce Zitkovitch and Barb Loewit, teachers from the Boardman Schools' gifted program, were interested in providing hands-on, environmental learning experiences for all fourth graders in their school district – a total of about 400 students. And they wanted to involve parents in the process.

Working within these guidelines, Mary June developed a plan for a Soil and Water Conservation Day to be held at each of the four elementary schools. The process began by bringing all of the 4th grade and gifted program teachers together for a meeting at the SWCD office. At this meeting Mary June demonstrated their educational models and shared information on the learning activities available. The teachers then chose four activities that would connect well with their course of study and help meet proficiency test outcomes. They chose the EnviroScape watershed model, the ground water flow model, and the "Sum of the Parts" and "Incredible Journey" activities from Project WET.

The next step involved working with the 15-20 parent volunteers to prepare them to lead the activities during the special event at each school. User-friendly, step-by-step instructions, along with all needed materials, were provided to the parents. Mary June worked with all parents that would be demonstrating the EnviroScape model at one time, then with those demonstrating the groundwater model, etc. She also provided several blocks of time when the parents could come into her office and practice working with the models or materials before the Soil and Water Conservation days were held.

Two of the schools held their half-day event in December, the other two in



*Students learn about nonpoint source pollution and watersheds at a Mahoning SWCD-sponsored classroom visit.*

January. Students and their teachers at each school rotated between the four stations for 35-minute sessions. For the "Sum of the Parts" activity, students prepared their individual riverfront properties ahead of time and brought them to the session ready to discuss how their development impacted the water resource. Afterwards, the riverfront property art

works were taped onto hallway walls for all to see. All teachers received follow-up activities for use in their classroom following the Soil and Water Conservation event.

Parents were excited about the opportunity to participate in the program in a meaningful way, and they rose to the challenge admirably. The teachers were delighted to see all the students involved and actively engaged, and commented on how well

prepared the parents were. And Mary June found this to be a wonderful way to bring the soil and water conservation message to teachers, parents, and over 400 students. For more information on how you might implement a similar program in your county, contact Mary June Emerson at Mahoning SWCD (330-533-2231 or [mary@mahoningswcd.org](mailto:mary@mahoningswcd.org)). ■

### CONSERVATION CALENDAR

#### 2001

December 5	Area 5 Winter Meeting – Pickaway-Ross JVS
December 6	Area 3 Winter Meeting – Holiday Inn, Zanesville
December 10	Area 2 Winter Meeting – Millcreek Metropark Farm, Canfield
December 11	Area 1 Winter Meeting – Urbanski Catering, Findlay
December 12	Area 4 Winter Meeting – Brookville VFW, Brookville

#### 2002

January 22-23-24	OFSWCD Annual Meeting – Marriott North, Columbus
February 3-7	NACD Annual Meeting – Nugget Hotel, Reno, Nevada
March 6-7	All-Employee Meeting – Marriott North, Columbus
April 29-May 5	Soil & Water Stewardship Week – "The Gift of Trees"

# Conservation Innovation – Leading Districts Into the 21st Century

## Area Interests

compiled by Program Specialists, edited by Dan Kush, Water Quality Specialist

### Area 1

#### Blue Creek Conservation Area Acquired

*Diana Holt & Ed Crawford*

Lucas SWCD and the Toledo Area Metropark District have formed a partnership for conservation. They are developing the site of the historic Toledo Workhouse in western Lucas County into a conservation area. Formerly known as the Quarry Pond Farm, the SWCD has used the area for educational tours and workshops for several years. When the former owner, the City of Toledo, wanted to sell it to a developer, the SWCD worked with a consortium of interested parties to preserve the parcel. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur provided the remaining funding for the County Commissioners to acquire the site. The district plans to demonstrate agricultural conservation practices on 70 of the 300 acres and continue utilizing the natural features like the oak savanna remnant, wetland, glacial grooves, and fossils with their school education program.

#### Hancock Stirs Up Soil Magic

Hancock SWCD, Findlay-Hancock County Public Library, and the Park District hosted their first annual Harry Potter Festival. The festival, based on this year's best selling children's story, encouraged the imagination and creativity of students age 7-14. Five presenters dressed in costume as characters from the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Each character portrayed an environmental concern using characters and events from the Harry Potter story. District education coordinator Bryan Miller portrayed Professor Gilderoy Lockheart, and discussed soil properties, wetland soils and wetland plants. Afterward, students had a chance to visit the Leaky Cauldron for some chocolate covered frogs and pumpkin juice, while others visited the Sorting Hat and the Mirror of Erised. Over 130 students attended, many dressed like their favorite Harry Potter character, which helped make the day even more magical!

### Area 2

#### Huron SWCD Hits Jackpot for Landowners

*Jeff Van Loon & Dorothy Farris*

Huron SWCD aggressively sought federal

and state program funding to provide cost-share dollars for landowners – and it paid off well this year. Cary Brickner, district manager, reports that the Board likes this approach to getting conservation on the land. Huron County has three EQIP priority watersheds, one 319 project, CREP sign ups, state pollution abatement cost-share, and other funding mechanisms. Total funding for landowners in a twelve-month period totaled \$1.4 million dollars – all of which passed through the district. Administration, technical assistance, and project certification was accomplished this summer with the help of the district's 13 dedicated employees.

#### Lake SWCD “Head of The Class” on Headwater Assessment

Due to development impacts in 1999 and the lack of baseline water quality data, Lake SWCD started a comprehensive headwater stream monitoring program. The headwater stream health assessment involves quantifying habitat, sediment loading, and tolerance thresholds of macroinvertebrates. Unique to their assessment is the use of an Ohio EPA-developed primary Headwater Habitat Evaluation Index (HHEI) that not only identifies water, channel and corridor conditions, but also includes a salamander inventory. Like fish and macroinvertebrates, salamanders are indicators of water quality conditions. Citizens, developers, and public officials will benefit directly, as all data will be linked to and accessed by the county's Geographic Information System. The district's work will not only help protect valuable resources and direct future land uses, but will provide needed data for Ohio EPA in developing new water quality standards.

### Area 3

#### Wildlife Specialists Bring Expo Together

*Chad Amos & Fred Hammon*

Area 3 Wildlife Specialists and their SWCDs hosted a Southeast Ohio Hunting and Trapping Exposition on August 25 at the Pritchard Laughlin Center in Cambridge. The goal was to educate sportsmen and women about proper ethics of hunting and trapping on private lands and to increase participants' knowledge of legally harvesting game. Nearly 2,000 men, women and children enjoyed the day, which featured shooting events, vendors, demonstrations, and speakers. Cosponsors included the OFSWCD, ODNR Division of Wildlife, Pheasants Forever, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation,

National Wild Turkey Federation, and The Izaak Walton League. The event was so successful that efforts are now underway to make it an annual event.

### Area 4

#### Public Officials Plan Plenty

*Ray Taylor & Ed Everman*

This year, Warren SWCD combined their annual public officials tour with their planning meeting. To give local officials a deeper appreciation of the impacts of increasing urbanization and stormwater management, the tour included new developments to show the need for sediment and erosion control practices. Urban needs complemented the tour of traditional agricultural conservation practices installed by farmers. After lunch, provided by the district, officials gave “personal” feedback on the many district programs. Supervisors and staff were paired with county officials for one-on-one discussion. Dave McElroy, district administrator, feels that this method of planning is well worth the effort and yields both short and long-term benefits.

#### We All Need Food, Land and People

Shelby, Miami and Darke SWCDs hosted a workshop for 34 teachers on “Food, Land and People” (FLP). During the day-long session, participants did activities on the relationships between agriculture, people, and the environment, including one on soil titled, “Perc Through the Pores.” What made this FLP workshop different was the bonus field tour. It included crop management systems and a fertilizer application demonstration using a global positioning system. Teachers visited a dairy farm to see milking, feeding, and caring for dairy cattle, and discussed dairy herd health with a local veterinarian. The day concluded with a discussion on farmland preservation and the livestock industry in western Ohio.

### Area 5

#### Dig THIS Grant!

*Constance White & Steve Hawkins*

Thanks to an Ohio EPA Environmental Education Fund grant of \$18,670, Franklin SWCD will be building a portable walk-through soil tunnel (ADA accessible). Made of a pop-up tent shell, the tunnel will feature two soil types with horizons depicted and life underground that depends on quality soil. Initial uses will be at countywide public events. Look for its debut in 2002! ■

# SWCDs Support Another Successful FFA Soil Judging Season

By Tim Gerber, Administrator, Soil Inventory and Evaluation Section

About 90 SWCD employees were among the 151 who took a six-hour course on soils as they are evaluated by high school contestants. Most of the other training participants in the five regional workshops were coaches for land judging and Envirothon teams. The course was specifically designed to help SWCD and NRCS field office staff members conduct these contests at the county level.

At least 28 SWCDs held county-level land and soil judging contests this fall, thereby providing teams in their counties with an opportunity to compete prior to the district-level contests. For some SWCDs, it was the first time, but the Clark, Crawford, Montgomery, Perry, Richland, Sandusky, and Wyandot SWCDs have been holding county-level contests since the early 1950s. ODNR and NRCS soil scientists serve as judges at the ten district contests and at the state contest.

The 49th Annual FFA State Land and Soil



About 375 students gathered at the Deer Creek Wildlife Area on an over-cast Saturday morning for the 49th Annual FFA State Land and Soil Judging Contest.

Judging Contest was held on October 13 at Deer Creek Wildlife Area in northwestern Fayette County. The teams judged a variety of soils from pits at eight sites selected by the division's Larry Tornes. Judges for this year's contest were the division's Steve Miller, NRCS' Rich

Gehring, and OSU's Brian Slater.

Ninety-seven teams from 72 Ohio high schools earned the right to compete at the state level. Some schools brought two teams – one to judge soils for agricultural uses and another for the urban use contest. The following teams and individuals excelled in the contests:

#### **Agricultural Uses – Teams:**

- First Place: Logan HS (Hocking)
- Second Place: Wilmington HS (Clinton)
- Third Place: Morgan HS (Morgan)

#### **Agricultural Uses – Individuals:**

- First Place: Nathan Trough (Hancock)
- Second Place: Derek Harden (Hocking)
- Third Place: Kurtis Shipp (Auglaize)

#### **Urban Uses – Teams:**

- First Place: Ohio Valley HS (Adams)
- Second Place: Upper Sandusky HS (Wyandot)
- Third Place: Talawanda HS (Butler)

#### **Urban Uses – Individuals:**

- First Place: Nick Jacquemin (Butler)
- Second Place: Daniel Romick (Hancock)
- Third Place: Garth Maibach (Wayne) ■



### **Another New Soil Scientist Hired**

Matt Deaton is the newest addition to the division's Soil Inventory and Evaluation Section staff. He was hired recently as a soil resources specialist and assigned to the Southwest Ohio Soil Survey Project Office in Wilmington. The office staff currently includes three ODNR soil scientists and two NRCS soil scientists, including Project Leader Doug Dotson. Project team members are completing field investigations in Preble County, finalizing the soil survey manuscripts for Clinton, Fairfield, and Ross Counties, and supporting digitizing work for Champaign, Darke, Fayette, Highland, Madison, Miami, Pickaway, and Ross Counties. Matt graduated from The Ohio State University in June. ■



### **Hines to Head Conservation Engineering Section**

Kirk Hines has been tapped to head the division's Conservation Engineering Section. A registered professional engineer, Kirk has been the division's natural resources engineer for Area 5 since April, 2000. Prior to that he served as agricultural engineer and supervising engineer for the Fairfield SWCD. He will supervise the five area-based natural resources engineers assisting Ohio districts.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Supervision of SWCD compliance with standards and specifications

approved by the chief, regulations of state and federal agencies, and sound engineering practices.

- Supervision of engineering aspects of agricultural pollution abatement cost sharing and complaint enforcement, and
- Planning and developing engineering projects for livestock waste facilities and natural stream channel design projects.

He will also be involved in developing new nonpoint source water pollution control practices for the state, will help determine clean-up costs associated with agricultural pollution sites, and will coordinate engineering assistance and training for SWCDs with NRCS staff. ■

### CAP Receives Award



*ODNR Director Sam Speck presents the “2001 Ohio Lake Erie Award” to Bill Rohrs (center), CAP County Coordinator and area 1 program specialist Ed Crawford, CAP State Coordinator.*

On September 6 the Conservation Action Project (CAP) received the Ohio Lake Erie Commission’s “2001 Ohio Lake Erie Award” for outstanding contributions toward protection and restoration of Ohio’s Great Lake. The Award was presented by ODNR Director Sam Speck during the Commission’s annual meeting.

Formed in 1988, CAP’s goal is to promote the adoption of conservation tillage practices in the Maumee River watershed to reduce soil erosion and phosphorus loading to the river and Lake Erie. Today, CAP involves seven counties – Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Lucas, Paulding, Williams, and Wood – and boasts support from 15 local companies, agencies, ag dealers, and farmers who have collectively donated more than \$763,

250 in money and services toward CAP programs.

In addition to technical and financial assistance, CAP has initiated a number of educational events – such as field days, workshops, seminars, and demonstrations – to promote conservation tillage. CAP also publishes a newsletter which is mailed to more than 2,400 addresses in Ohio, Indian, and Michigan, and has launched a web site – [www.capofohio.org](http://www.capofohio.org).

Conservation tillage adoption in the Maumee watershed has increased from about 5 percent to a high of about 80 percent since CAP’s inception, and it’s estimated that more than 1.7 million tons of sediment and 3.4 million pounds of phosphorus have been kept out of the Maumee River and Lake Erie. ■



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