

# NEWS

## & views

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## Meigs SWCD to purchase 168-acre farm

### *Thanks to Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund*

The Meigs Soil and Water Conservation District is in the process of acquiring 168 acres along Little Leading Creek in western Meigs County, thanks to a little help from the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund.

The district acquired \$172,493 from the fund, which will be combined with local funding for the \$229,990 streamside acquisition project, Division of Soil and Water Conservation Chief David Hanselmann noted in recognizing the district's accomplishment.

According to Jim Freeman, Meigs SWCD watershed coordinator and wildlife specialist, the acreage, located near the village of Rutland, includes 3,100 feet of corridor along Little Leading Creek and approximately 1,300 feet of tributary streams.

"One of the biggest problems affecting this section of Little Leading Creek is acid mine drainage and mining sediments," said Freeman. "The property contains areas of abandoned mine land and still bears the scars from strip mining including acidic ponds and high walls."

"The property can be used as a living laboratory to better help students

understand the impact of surface mining on our landscape," Freeman said.



*Meigs SWCD Supervisor Joe Bolin and Education Coordinator Vicki Morrow examine a portion of the 168 acres along Little Leading Creek that the district is purchasing with Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Funds.*

The Meigs SWCD plans to use the Clean Ohio grant to plant streamside forest buffers and possibly create a high-quality wetland. In keeping with the SWCD's mission of promoting conservation and wise land use, the property will be used to educate youngsters and community members on water sampling, conservation practices, and wildlife management, explained Joe Bolin, Meigs SWCD Board member and OFSWCD Director.

Educational activities will include field days for county elementary school students, and soil judging and Envirothon contests for junior high and high school students. Other community uses may include stream clean-ups and special handicapped-accessible and youth hunts.

"There are 11 different types of soils found on the property, and the habitat is incredibly diverse. That makes it perfect for environmental education," said Vicki Morrow, district education coordinator. "Most parts of the farm are readily accessible through a variety of trails crisscrossing the property."

As soon as the district gets title to the property, a detailed conservation plan will be developed for the land, which must be used for the public good and maintained as open space, meaning it must be protected from development, said Bolin. The district hopes to officially acquire the land soon after the beginning of the year.

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# Conservation Views



As I write this last *News & Views* column, I look back on the past six years that have passed by so quickly. So much has happened since I was elected Secretary/Treasurer of the Federation.

As we prepare for our annual meeting, the new Farm Bill and its ramifications for districts looms as the latest change in the conservation movement; one that impacts districts all across the country. But here in Ohio we have seen many other changes,

too. We have a new Chief of the Division of Soil & Water Conservation, David Hanselmann. We have our own employee, Alicia Connelly. We have seen permitting authority for large livestock operations transferred from the Ohio EPA to the Ohio Department of Agriculture. We have seen the state budget cut and the result of those cuts on operations of the Division of Soil and Water Conservation. These are just some of the changes that affect the way we do business. But I am glad to say that the conservation movement continues stronger than ever because of all

the dedicated people we have here in Ohio.

I would like to thank the whole staff of the Division for all of the support over the past six years. They make the job of secretary/treasurer, vice-president and president much easier. The necessity of a part time job these past few years has kept me from spending as much time as I'd have liked on Federation business. The fact that this did not cause our work to suffer attests to the dedication of all partnership members.

New leadership will be taking over in January. Tom Reininger will head the team of Federation officers, and the Division staff will continue to keep Ohio a leader in the conservation movement. And as changes are needed, I know that the team will implement them.

I am very proud to have served in the best state association in the country and thank everyone who has been a part of our efforts. I look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting. ■

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

## Congressman Boehner Visits Darke SWCD



*Congressman John Boehner (left) discusses conservation programs during a tour with Darke SWCD representatives.*

On October 30 Darke SWCD hosted Congressman John Boehner (8th Congressional District) on a tour of several Darke County sites. Congressman Boehner spent the afternoon touring a 50-acre wetland, a farm with 47 acres of filter strips, a no-till farm, and a swine nursery with an anaerobic lagoon.

Darke SWCD Board member Don Lecklider, who had served on several Farm Bill committees, invited the congressman to “see how federal conservation program dollars are used to get conservation on

the land,” according to Cyndie Rhoades, district program administrator.

District supervisors and staff discussed CRP, EQIP, and WRP with Boehner and an aide, pointing out that Darke County currently has 11 WRP sites with over 400 acres of restored wetlands, and 1,250 acres (258 miles) of grass and tree buffers that have been established in the past three years. The congressman was interested in the Darke County EQIP program, which has 70 active contracts totaling \$600,000. The group also

viewed a 2,000-acre prairie grass planting.

Congressman Boehner was eager to discuss large livestock operations; Darke County currently supports over 220,000 animal units. He was also interested in the Stillwater Watershed Project, which has distributed more than \$2 million in loans, cost share funds, and incentive payments to farmers and other landowners. The district also discussed its education programs, noting that over the past three years district staff members have given 569 presentations to over 15,000 people of all ages, Pre-K to adult. ■

## CONSERVATION CALENDAR

**February 9-13** NACD Annual Meeting – Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando

**February 18-21** Conservation Leadership Class 3 (District Administrators) – Columbus

**March 4-5** All Employees Meeting – Adams Mark, Columbus

**March 16-19** NACD Spring Legislative Conference – Washington Court Hotel

**April 27- May 4** Soil and Water Stewardship Week – “Food for the Future”

**June 8-9-10** Ohio Envirothon – Urbana University

**July 26-31** Canon Envirothon – Mount St. Mary’s College, Frederick, Maryland

**August 3-5** Summer Supervisors School – Radisson Hotel, Toledo

**August 12-13-14** 11th Annual Education Workshop – Deer Creek State Park

# Focus on Education

By Jeanne Russell, Nonpoint Source Education Coordinator

*Editor's note: This is the second in a series of two articles highlighting the OFSWCD-NACD Conservation Education Teacher-of-the-Year winners for 2002. Congratulations to Cathy Knoop from Hocking County, winner in the elementary category.*

## Conservation Education Teacher of the Year

Cathy Knoop is working to build good stewards of our environment. "My main goal is for my students to grow into citizens who have an appreciation for the natural history where they live. If they develop this appreciation, they start to have a desire to care about and protect what surrounds them."

When asked to share her teaching tips, she responds, "Have fun, get excited, and explore along with the students. You don't have to know everything – students get excited when they can find answers to nature's mysteries and teach the class what they have learned." She suggests grabbing onto that "teachable moment" by being flexible and taking time for the exciting things that happen unexpectedly. And don't limit learning to textbook lessons.

Cathy's fourth grade classroom is alive



*Laurelville elementary teacher Cathy Knoop looks on as students work on school-site pond.*

with plants and animals, including a resident snake and an indoor observation beehive. Students have access to many natural items, hand lenses, and a microscope. There are binoculars, bird charts, and field guides at the window, and a bulletin board for newspaper science articles.

Cathy has been instrumental in establishing outdoor classrooms in the three schools where she has taught science.

With the help of a Junior Naturalist Club, she has planted gardens, meadows, and prairies, and built trails and bird feeding areas. In these natural classrooms her students explore a variety of habitats, investigate scientific concepts, and practice skills such as observation, data collection, classification, comparison, and use of the scientific method and dichotomous keys.

One of her favorite outdoor activities is making maple syrup as a way to help students better understand photosynthesis. Students develop a hypothesis and make predictions. Then for several weeks they collect sap from trees they've tapped, recording daily temperatures and the sap yield per tree. In the final step they tally the sap collected, boil it down to syrup, measure the amount of syrup, and eat it. They calculate a ratio of sap to syrup, read about maple syrup production in Ohio, write poetry about their experiences, and participate in a skit about photosynthesis.

Cathy's students have been actively involved in recycling and waste reduction programs, roadside and stream clean-ups, population studies, and painting Buckeye Trail markers. They gathered and shipped teaching materials to environmental educators in Russia who were in need of supplies. Realizing the importance of soil as a natural resource, her students helped campaign for adoption of Miamian soil as the state soil, conducting soil demonstrations and providing testimony at a state hearing.

## Loxley Honored with Cardinal Award

At the Area 5 Winter Meeting, Division Chief David Hanselmann presented the ODNR Cardinal Award to Kathryn Loxley, a retired teacher from Jackson County. The Cardinal Award honors individuals and organizations demonstrating exceptional awareness and concern for ideals reflected in the department's mission statement: to ensure a balance between the wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all.

A former Jackson County SWCD board

member, Loxley has devoted her time, energy, and her farm to helping ODNR's divisions of Soil & Water Conservation, Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Areas & Preserves to teach sound environmental education and farming practices. She received the OFSWCD Teacher-of-the-Year award in 1983 and 1987, and won the NACD North-Central Region award in that category both years. She continues to work with the county in promoting conservation practices. ■



# Conservation Innovation – Leading Districts Through the 21st Century

## Area Interests

Compiled by program specialists, edited by Dan Kush.

### Area 1

Ed Crawford

#### Splash Bash a Success!

**Hancock SWCD** held its first ever *Splash Bash* for over 500 fourth grade students from both Hancock County and Findlay City Schools. Students visited twenty-two stations on topics related to the effects of water on the environment and nonpoint source pollution. Presenters from EPA, Findlay Fire Department, OSU Master Gardeners, Toledo Zoo, high school science/FFA classes, and adjoining SWCDs presented hands-on activities to educate and entertain the students. One station demonstrated how a glacier was formed. Boring—no way! Bryan Miller, Hancock SWCD, was turned into a human glacier by Paulding SWCD's Jake Priest using flour, ice cream, whipped cream, chocolate chips, chocolate syrup, and water. Get the picture? It was a very popular station. Needless to say, this will now be another annual educational event for Hancock County!

### Area 2

Dorothy Farris and Jeff Van Loon

#### To Spend or Not to Spend

Many SWCDs will be challenged in 2003 to spend a larger portion of their *District Fund* holdings for regular operational purposes. Most SWCD boards have held these funds for a "rainy day" or special need situations; this may be that time. In some cases, SWCDs are approaching or are already at this point in fund management. Programs need not suffer and this is the only way some programs may survive in the tight economic times we are in. Boards should realize that more *District Fund* use is likely in 2003 and probably in 2004.

### Area 3

Chad Amos and Fred Hammon

#### Conservation Family Fun Day

In an effort to increase the attendance and

diversify its audience, **Noble SWCD's** annual meeting was advertised as a "Conservation Family Fun Day." Held at the Eastern Ohio Development Center in Belle Valley, those attending were not only able to eat and vote as usual, but allowed to take tours around the facility and participate in hands-on activities such as fishing, beekeeping, and sheep shearing. Attendees also learned about spring development, rotational grazing, and other conservation practices installed on the farm. The attendance more than doubled from previous years, and the number of kids attending (with their parents – hint) went from near zero to over fifty!



### Area 4

Ed Everman

#### Raising Watershed Awareness

Noel Lemons, trail manager for Five Rivers Metroparks, and Caroline McCulloch, education specialist for **Montgomery SWCD**, installed Wolf Creek Watershed signs on the Rail Trail north of Brookville. The signs will raise public awareness about how land use affects the quality of water in local streams and rivers.

### Area 5

Steve Hawkins and Constance White

#### Do You Canoe?

For far too long, Raccoon Creek has been considered a dead stream. However, since the late 1980s local interest groups have rediscovered this beautiful creek and want to improve its water quality and make it more accessible for recreation. Working together, various conservation partners discovered between 10 and 30 fish species in various creek reaches in 1995. Brett Laverty, Raccoon Creek Project Leader, **Vinton SWCD**, says, "We want to get people reacquainted with the creek. Our hope is to get more involvement and interest in what is being achieved in the stream." To complement the watershed project, state logjam removal funds were used to open up parts of the stream for greater canoe access. Three canoe floats are planned for 2003.

#### Ross SWCD Draws a Winner!

The OFSWCD Auxiliary poster contest is an easy way to introduce youngsters to conservation. For 2003 the theme is "Food for the Future." **Ross SWCD** invited nine schools (21 classrooms of first graders) in Ross County to participate; and they loved it! Many people realize that often the youngest students forget what they did during the day. So, to leave a "conservation impression," the SWCD awarded each participant with a t-shirt and McDonalds French fry coupon. Every student (and the district) was a winner!

#### ...Just the Bear Facts...

**Hocking** and **Athens SWCDs** have never been short on innovation in the education department and this year is no exception. The two districts are joining forces with the Division of Wildlife to present a Black Bear Workshop. Set in the beautiful Hocking Hills, the program will be free to the public and will highlight black bear management dos and don'ts, habitat preferences, and trends in Ohio's bear population. This has to be a first for SWCDs! ■

# Two More ODNR Soil Scientists Retire

By Tim Gerber, Administrator, Soil Inventory and Evaluation Section

Terry Lucht and Mark Feusner will be retiring on January 31, reducing the number of soil scientists in the Soil Inventory & Evaluation Section to ten. Linn Roth and Ed Miller retired in February and November 2002, respectively, so the division will have lost four soil scientists – and about 110 staff-years of experience in the Ohio Soil Survey – in less than a year.

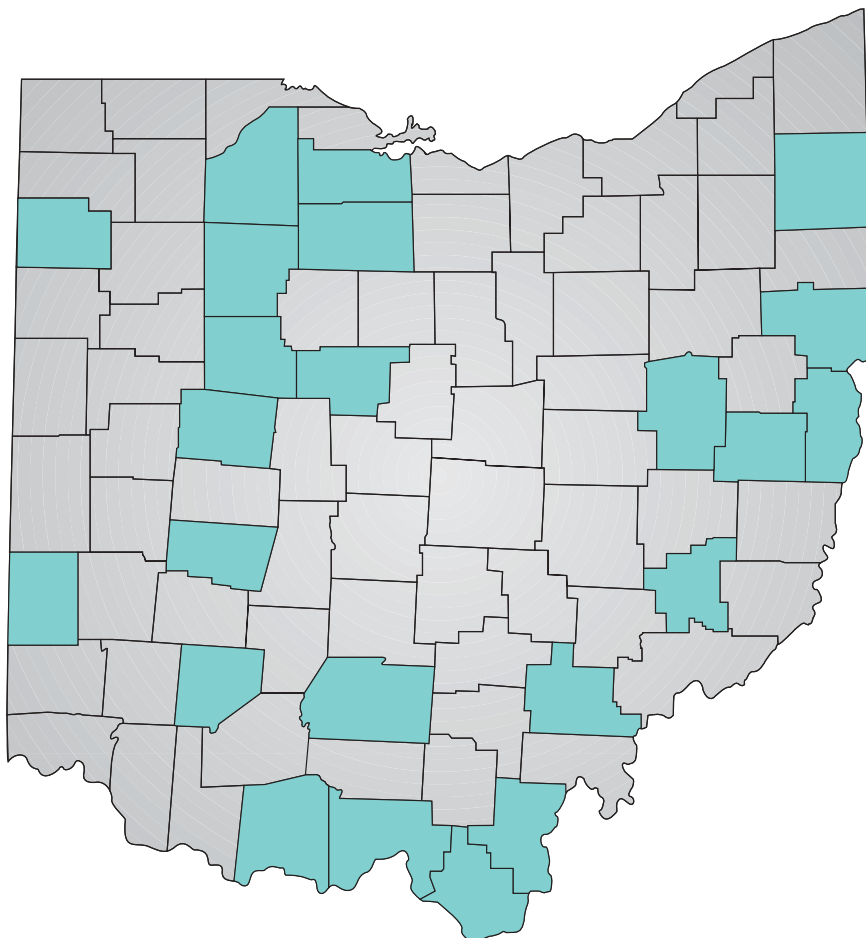
Lucht, Feusner, Roth, and Miller were part of an expansion in ODNR's staffing for soil survey work in the 1970s. When Lucht was hired in June 1972, only 13 counties had USDA Soil Survey books that included soil maps drawn on aerial photographs. Only about 55 percent of the state had been mapped, and soil survey projects had not even begun for 39 counties. (For readers who can't remember 1972, note that shovels and soil augers had already been invented.) Roth and

Miller were hired in 1974, and Feusner was hired in 1977. Their first supervisors were soil scientists in the middle third of their careers who had been trained by ODNR's first generation of soil scientists.

By 1992, when field investigations were completed in the 88th county, the four had mapped the soils over about five percent of the state, in 16 counties. They have also worked on project teams for soil survey updates in seven other counties. They advanced to positions of greater responsibility as the previous generation of soil scientists retired or made career changes to less physically demanding jobs. The four served in leadership roles for soil survey projects in 12 counties during their careers. Miller served as the Soil Inventory Coordinator for the division over the past 11 years.

After Lucht and Feusner retire, the Soil Inventory & Evaluation Section will still have five soil scientists with more than 20 years' experience in the Ohio Soil Survey, plus two other soil scientists with about 15 years' experience. The three youngest soil scientists were hired as a result of the 1998 Strategic Plan in anticipation of the need to replace a generation of soil scientists early in the 21st Century. Fortunately, they were hired early enough for Lucht, Feusner, and Miller to serve as mentors to them during the past two years.

Of course, the section will need to be reorganized as a result of the rapid reduction in staffing. However its mission, "to improve the usefulness and maintain the relevancy of soils information," is not expected to change. The Statewide Digital Soils Information (SDSI) Project is easily the section's most visible program, but it only highlights the need for up-to-date and technically sound information based on additional field investigations by soil scientists who can also process and interpret data collected by their predecessors. Hiring entry-level soil scientists has been identified as one of the division's priorities during the next biennium. ■



*Division soil scientists Terry Lucht, Mark Feusner, Linn Roth, and Ed Miller served as members of soil survey project teams in the 23 shaded counties during their careers.*

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## Meigs SWCD purchase

*continued from page 1*

According to DSWC chief Hanselmann, other SWCDs could take advantage of the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund. SWCDs should assess how the grants could benefit their local conservation program, he added. The capital improvements budget passed by the state legislature in December contains \$37.5 million for the Clean Ohio Fund.

For more information about these grants, check out the Ohio Public Works Commission website at: [www.pwc.state.oh.us/clean\\_ohio.html](http://www.pwc.state.oh.us/clean_ohio.html)

### ODNR Director Speck Elected Chairman, Great Lakes Commission



Sam Speck, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, was elected in November to a two-year term as chairman of the board of the Great

Lakes Commission, an international agency of states and provinces promoting the wise development, use, and conservation of resources in the Great Lakes basin and St. Lawrence River.

Delegates representing governments of the eight Great Lakes states and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec voted unanimously to elect Speck as chairman at the commission's annual meeting in Cleveland.

Speck was named by Governor Taft in 1999 to head Ohio's delegation to the Great Lakes Commission and was elected vice-chairman of the commission's board in 2000. Currently, he also chairs the water management working group of the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

"This is a very exciting point in history for the Great Lakes Commission, given the issues and challenges we face," Speck said. "It is a great privilege to be elected

chair at a time when so much can be accomplished."

Speck said the Commission has been presented with a number of significant opportunities: ongoing efforts to develop a framework to manage water use, as called for in Annex 2001 of the Great Lakes Charter; the challenge of battling aquatic invasive species through reauthorization and implementation of the National Invasive Species Act; and working with the Council of Great Lakes Governors and other parties to frame, develop a national program to address, and advocate for a comprehensive set of priorities to restore and protect the Great Lakes. ■



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