

THE CONSERVATIONIST



Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District Conservation • Development • Self-government

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Steve Sheets Re-elected to Board of Supervisors

Incumbent Steve Sheets, of Kingston Township, was re-elected to the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors at the SWCD's 61st Annual Meeting on November 22, 2005. Steve will begin a new three-year term as supervisor after taking the oath of office during a meeting of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in January.

Also honored at the Annual Meeting were the 2005 Conservation Farmers of the Year, Ken and Julia Longshore of Trenton Township, and the 2005 Conservation Booster, MSI, Inc. The Longshores' conservation efforts date back to 1968 when they established resource management plans for their farm. Using a combination of no-till and

conservation tillage, along with grassed waterways, riparian buffers, and participation in the Upper Big Walnut Creek Atrazine reduction program, they strive to protect valuable topsoil and maintain water quality for future generations. All of this work reflects a strong commitment to natural resource management and to Delaware County Agriculture.

The Conservation Booster award is presented annually to an individual or group that supports the SWCD mission of providing the public with grassroots conservation programs, information, and assistance. MSI, a planning, urban design, and landscape architecture firm, has volunteered staff time and resources to help develop the concept of a natural resources park at the Delaware County Fairgrounds which could be used year-round to encourage landusers to practice natural resources conservation right outside their door.

**SWCD TREE & WILDLIFE PRODUCTS SALE
BEGINS JANUARY 31ST, 2006
LOOK FOR A MAILING IN LATE JANUARY!!**

SWCD CALENDAR

For more info on these events, please call the District Office, (740) 368-1921.

Jan.

1/11	Olentangy Watershed Alliance Board Mtg.
1/12	Upper Scioto River Watershed Project Mtg.
1/16	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - OFFICE CLOSED
1/24	SWCD Board Mtg.
1/28	Leopold Education Project

Feb.

2/2	Upper Big Walnut Creek Water Quality Partnership Mtg.
2/7	Friends of the Lower Olentangy Mtg.
2/8	Olentangy Watershed Alliance Board Mtg.
2/9	Upper Scioto River Watershed Project Mtg.
2/20	Presidents Day - OFFICE CLOSED
2/21	SWCD Board Mtg.

March

3/2	Upper Big Walnut Creek Water Quality Partnership Mtg.
3/7	Friends of the Lower Olentangy Mtg.
3/8	Olentangy Watershed Alliance Board Mtg.
3/9	Upper Scioto River Watershed Project Mtg.
3/21	SWCD Board Mtg.

Delaware SWCD Mission

To provide progressive leadership, support, and assistance to the public through grassroots programs that promote natural resources conservation and stewardship.



FSA Notes

by Don Henry, County Executive Director

Wool/Pelts Mohair Program Benefits Available

Sheep and lamb producers as well as mohair producers are reminded to submit calendar year 2005 shorn wool documents or production evidence to the FSA office. Unshorn lamb (pelts) documents or sales receipts must be submitted by January 31, 2006 to receive program benefits.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program authorizes financing for storage structures including new grain bins, cribs, silos (bunker or upright), new or remanufactured oxygen limiting structures, flat storage, and the renovation of existing facilities to increase storage capacity. The County Committee may approve a maximum of \$100,000 per application. Up to two years of storage (less existing space) for normal production could be approved.

A limit of 85% of the net cost of eligible storage structures, related equipment, concrete foundations, electrical service equipment, etc., all having a useful life of 10 years or more, could be borrowed. The producer must provide the initial 15% down payment. The December 2005 interest rate is 4.50%.

Start Planning Now for 2006 Grassed Waterway Construction

If you have applied for or are planning to have a grassed waterway project constructed during 2006, winter is the time to begin your preparations. If you have already applied to the USDA office for a grassed waterway, you should be getting estimates and lining up a contractor to do the work in the Spring or Summer. The number of contractors who build waterways is limited, and their schedules often fill up fast once the weather breaks. Taking care of this step now will help to ensure that your project is constructed when you want it to be. The seeding dates for grassed waterways are March 15 - May 31 and August 1 to September 15. A waterway seeded outside of these dates can have payments withheld until the next seeding season to ensure that a good grass stand gets established.

Winter is also a good time to have tile installed because it allows the trench backfill to settle before the actual waterway construction begins. Additionally, having the tile installed in advance of the waterway construction will provide a better degree of subsurface drainage later on. This will help with both the construction and vegetative establishment phases of your project.

If you are thinking about constructing a grassed waterway project in 2006 and have not yet contacted the USDA office, please do so as soon as possible. This will allow the NRCS/SWCD staff enough time to do the prep work, field survey, and engineering design for you in time for construction season. Generally speaking, a request for a waterway needs to be made by April 1st to provide enough time to have an engineering plan completed in time for construction to begin in late July.

In all cases, be sure to sign your contract with FSA prior to beginning construction. Beginning construction without a signed contract could jeopardize your cost-share. Call the NRCS/SWCD office at least 3 days prior to the anticipated construction starting date so that we can do the necessary layout work (flagging the centerline, cut hubs, etc.) for the contractor.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT DRAINAGE

It seems that drainage is always one of the issues high on the priority list for the landowners of Delaware County. Much of Delaware County, like the rest of Ohio, has very poor natural drainage. We rely on our ditches, swales, and subsurface drainage (tile) to move the water away making our properties inhabitable and farmable. According to an article in the November/December issue of *Our Ohio*, the state has approximately 22,500 miles of county ditches, and there is enough tile in northwest Ohio alone to stretch to the moon.

Every property must, to some degree, accept or freely permit the flow of water onto and through that property from the properties upstream. At the same time, the drainage on any given property is dependent on the condition of the drainage system downstream of that property. A poorly maintained drainage system will cease to adequately serve the drainage needs of the watershed. Drainage systems in cities or incorporated areas are maintained by the municipalities using stormwater assessments or sewer fees. In rural or unincorporated areas, the responsibility of maintaining these drainage systems falls to the property owners themselves.

Frequently Used Drainage Terms

Drainage Law: Ohio's drainage laws are complex and are based on precedent case law. Simply put, water should be allowed to enter and exit a property where it always has historically and in the same flow volume. Damages caused by alterations to natural drainage courses, such as filling a ditch, cutting a tile, or improperly rerouting a swale, are a matter of civil law. There has never been an agency designated as the "drainage police" with the authority to resolve such situations.

Petition Ditch Project: When a drainage problem impacts more than one landowner or improving the drainage system will involve work downstream of the affected property or properties, the landowners within a given watershed can choose to file a petition for drainage improvements with the County Commissioners. This process is provided for under Section 6131 of the Ohio Revised Code otherwise known as the County Ditch Petition Law. The costs for petition ditches are divided on an equitable basis between all the properties that have benefit of the project, which are all the properties within the given watershed. In the absence of a petition, landowners can work together on a cooperative basis, or pursue the matter through a civil lawsuit, to improve the drainage. Contact the Soil & Water Conservation District to learn more about petition ditch projects.

Drainage Maintenance: As already stated, an unmaintained drainage system will slowly (or quickly in some cases) degrade to the point where it no longer functions as designed. A significant change was made to the County Ditch Petition Law in 1957. This change, which created Section 6137 of the ORC, mandated that all projects completed under the provisions of Section 6131 be placed on a county-run drainage maintenance program. A drainage maintenance program can be looked at as "insurance" for the drainage system. A project on maintenance will be inspected, at a minimum, annually, and any necessary work will be done to keep the project operating at its designed efficiency. The costs for drainage maintenance, like a petition ditch project, are paid for by the landowners in the watershed.

County Ditch/Tile: The County Ditch Petition Law was originally enacted in 1841. Any project completed using this process is often referred to as a "County" tile or ditch because it was installed using the county process. A common misconception is that all "county" tiles and ditches are county maintained. Only those projects done after 1957 are on maintenance. The maintenance of projects done prior to 1957 is the responsibility of the landowners in the watershed.

Drainage Easements: Properties often have deed or plat restrictions intended to preserve the flow of water through the property and/or allow for the maintenance of the drainage system. Easements can be placed on surface flows, subsurface drains, retention/detention basins, and other drainage features. Easements are often described on the deed or plat of a property, which can be found at the County Recorder's office.

Signup Now Underway for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has received over \$12 million statewide for Ohio farmers through the 2006 Environmental Quality Incentives Program. This program provides farmers with cost-share and incentive payments for conservation activities that help limit soil erosion, improve water and air quality, and protect wildlife habitat. Last year, Delaware County received \$166,507 to fund 49 EQIP applications. Types of projects included Pesticide Management, Nutrient Management, Animal Waste facilities, Secondary Containment facilities, and conservation tillage. For the current signup, animal waste management practices, such as manure storage structures, will receive up to 75% cost-share, as opposed to 50% cost-share for other conservation practices. Limited resource farmers may be eligible to receive 90% cost-share for the first \$5000 of the contract.

Anybody interested in submitting an EQIP application should contact Tom or Justin at the NRCS office (740-368-1921) as soon as possible. All applications must be submitted before to March 3, 2006.

COUNTRY POTATO CHEESE SOUP

Ingredients:

2 Tbls. Margarine or Butter
6 Large diced potatoes
3 stalks chopped celery
2 Medium chopped onions
1/2 Tsp. Salt

Pepper to taste
2 C. Chicken Broth
1 C. Half and Half
2 C. Cheese (Colby or American is good!)



In a sauce pan, melt the butter or margarine. Add the potatoes, onions, celery, salt, and pepper. Saute for about 5 minutes, stirring often. Add the chicken broth. Cover and simmer until vegetables are tender. Put the mixture in a blender and blend smooth. Return to heat and stir in the half and half. Add the cheese and heat until melted. Serves 4 nicely.

-Submitted by SWCD Board Member Sue Cunningham



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