



OASWCDE news & updates

March | 2022



Upcoming Events

April

- Ohio Native Plant Month
- Area 4 Envirothon, April 26, 2022
 - Nyeerah Nature Preserve, Logan County
- Area 5 Envirothon, April 26, 2022
 - Tar Hollow State Park, Hocking County
- Area 3 Envirothon, April 27, 2022
 - Caldwell Lake, Noble County
- Area 1 Envirothon, April 27, 2022
 - Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Ottawa County
- Area 2 Envirothon, April 28, 2022
 - Kent State University, Mohoning County

June

- State Envirothon, June 6-7, 2022
 - Lake Erie College, Lake County

July

- National Envirothon, July 24-30, 2022
 - Miami University, Butler County

August

- Summer Supervisor School, August 28-30, 2022
 - Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris Hotel

September

- Understanding Algal Blooms: State of the Science Conference, September 7, 2022
- Farm Science Review, September 20-22, 2022

Remember to visit the [OASWCDE website](#) for other events and training opportunities.

If you would like to have your event added to the next newsletter please send details to [Sara Fehring](#) by May 27th.

2021 Outstanding Awards Program

By: Rebecca Longsmith

2021 Outstanding District Employee

Mary Aungst, Medina County SWCD

Mary serves as the administrative assistant for Medina County SWCD and was nominated by Abby Costilow. Abby noted that Mary is the “mother-hen” of the office and is always looking for ways to encourage and uplift her coworkers, going on to say, “every day that I come into work and she is there, is a good day.”

As an administrative assistant, Mary’s work supports all aspects of her district and keeps things running behind the scenes with everything from timesheets to tree sales. She shares her historical knowledge of MCSWCD with other employees to inform wise decision-making for the present.

Mary dedicates a lot of her free time to volunteering with local 4H groups and her county fair. She has been a 4H advisor for 15 years, a County Fair Official for over 15 years, and a Junior Fair 4H rabbit committee chairman for 15 years. Describing Mary’s passion for rabbits and youth, Abby wrote, “as she has said, not everyone is able to care for a cow or a larger animal, but rabbits are an animal that can open up a world of possibilities for many young people no matter where their families live, rural or urban.”



2021 Outstanding District Board Supervisor

Brad Luckey, Carroll SWCD

Brad has been a Carroll SWCD board member since 2016, Board Chair since 2020, and was nominated by Amanda Tubaugh. Before coming to Ohio and Carroll County, Brad worked on his family’s 320+ acre farm in Imperial Valley, California. Amanda describes Brad as a very engaged board member, also serving as a director for the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Brad is



involved with his local community through the Carroll County Farm Bureau and Carroll County Double Beards Chapter of The National Wild Turkey Federation, in addition to his involvement in larger organizations such as Ducks Unlimited.

Amanda praises Brad's desire to understand and embrace the differences in best management practices between here in Ohio and his former California home. Brad has been a strong supporter of CSWCD's soil testing program and has encouraged producers to, "test, don't guess!" When asked to describe what sets Brad apart from other supervisors, Amanda wrote, "one word comes to mind with this question: passion. Brad is passionate about agriculture and conservation. He brings that to every meeting and conversation he has. And his willingness to help in the world of soil and water conservation is second to none."

Partnership Meeting Thank You

By: Matthew Browne

The Ohio Association of Soil & Water Conservation District Employees would like to thank the OFSWCD for putting together another successful Annual Partnership Meeting and giving us the opportunity to be 'Together Again'. We'd also like to thank the numerous partners, agencies, presenters, and vendors who helped make the event a success. The ideas, connections, and discussions during the event will hopefully continue to grow throughout the year and further spur actionable changes for the participants and their communities.



OASWCDE Employee Survey

This survey is intended only for employees of Soil & Water Conservation Districts in Ohio. Data collected will be used to inform discussions related to issues of pay, staff turnover, and other human resource concerns. Please be honest and direct with your responses. Your answers will remain anonymous.

[CLICK HERE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY](#)

Membership Dues

Don't forget membership dues for the Ohio Association of Soil & Water Conservation District Employees is due April 1st. Any membership dues received after April 1st will be applied towards 2032 membership. You can find the membership form [here](#).

The NCF-Envirothon kicks off in 132 days and the Ohio Envirothon Committee needs your help!

The OFSWCD and the Ohio Envirothon Committee are excited to be hosting the 2022 National Conservation Federation (NCF)-Envirothon. This weeklong competition will take place from July 24th – July 30th at Miami University. The NCF-Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation problem-solving, teambuilding, and leadership experience for high school students across the United States, Canada, and China.

Staff members from several collaborating organizations have been spending countless hours planning this event. There is still much work to be done. If you are interested in volunteering for the event please keep an eye out for a volunteer request email coming soon! If you are interested in making a donation to help sponsor the event, please email **Janelle Mead** for information.

OFSWCD and the Ohio Envirothon Committee would like to thank everyone who donated towards the Envirothons during the Annual Partnership Meeting. Over \$4,000 was raised for the State Envirothon through the silent auction and over \$11,000 was raised for the NCF-Envirothon with Kirk Hine's most expensive haircut.



Partnerships Key In Expanding Conservation Resources & Opportunities

John Wilson, NRCS State Conservationist for Ohio

As the new NRCS State Conservationist for Ohio, I look forward to working with the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts once again. Though I am new to the position, I have served 22 of my 37 years with NRCS in Ohio and appreciate the staff knowledge and expertise that the state's soil and water conservation districts offer.

Our partnership has delivered conservation solutions at the local level. Together, we have worked hand-in-hand with private landowners to address natural resource priorities. Together, we have worked to empower rural and urban communities with the tools they need to place science-based solutions on the landscape, ensuring the economic and environmental sustainability of their operations. Together, we have been able to produce measurable results, improving wildlife habitat, water quality, soil health, and many other natural resource concerns.



In fiscal year 2021, Ohio NRCS obligated roughly \$28,704,458 in financial assistance to Ohio's private landowners and enrolled more than 141,936 acres in conservation practices. Ohio NRCS also closed 15 WRE easements totaling 634 acres and nine ALE easements totaling 1,970 acres. This success is due, in part, to the strong support of our partners.

As American agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it. We ask you, our partners, to join us in innovating new solutions that protect our lands, biodiversity, and natural resources. You have been, and continue to be, a key part of accelerating conservation on the ground.

Moving forward, we hope to leverage and expand our financial and technical assistance to protect the state's natural resources, create more resilient local and regional food production, and increase assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry. Our partnership with Ohio's soil and water conservation districts is more critical than ever as we work to achieve these goals.

District Feature - Hamilton County

By: Sara Fehring

For the past nine years, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District in collaboration with the Regional Storm Water Collaborative has hosted the Rain Barrel Art Project in partnership with the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden. [The Regional Storm Water Collaboratives](#) is a group of storm water districts, municipalities, and soil and water conservation districts in Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky.

The goal of the Rain Barrel Art Project is to promote the use of rain barrels in the Ohio River Valley through a creative and educational medium. Each year the Rain Barrel Art Project entry period runs from the beginning of November to Mid-January. During the entry period, a wide range of artists submit their designs. In 2022, we had 104 artwork submissions from elementary schools, Junior High Schools, High Schools, and amateur and professional artists. A panel of three judges selected 40 designs to be implemented.

For the past several years the barrels have been donated by Coke Consolidated. In early February, an artist workshop is held where artists receive their barrels along with tips and tricks for painting on a plastic barrel. Artists typically have until the end of March to complete their barrel and then finished barrels go on display at the Cincinnati Zoo for the month of April. An eBay auction is hosted for the sale of the barrels, the auction typically concludes around Earth Day.

In 2021, the Rain Barrel Art Project grossed over \$17,000. Money raised from the auction goes towards environmental education at SaveLocalWaters.org and the Cincinnati Zoo.

If you have any questions regarding the Rain Barrel Art Project please reach out to [Sara Fehring](#).



In each newsletter, we would like to feature a creative and innovative project that is being undertaken by a District. If your District has a project you would like to feature in the June edition of the newsletter please reach out to [Sara Fehring](#) no later than May 27th.

Cuyahoga SWCD's new Executive Director

It is an incredible honor for me to step into the role of Executive Director at the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). This is a role that aligns perfectly with my passion for the natural environment and sustainability, my background in municipal government, and my love of working with and for people.

To introduce myself, I am a life-long Cuyahoga resident, growing up in Brookpark and attending

John Carroll University for my undergraduate degree in Biology. This is where my interest in ecology and natural systems was first sparked, and what ultimately led me to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Science from Cleveland State University, with a focus on stormwater management in urban environments.

In 2010, I started working for the City of Cleveland Mayor's Office of Sustainability and was fortunate to work on a wide range of sustainability projects, programs, and policies over my 11+ years there. I was promoted to Director of Sustainability in 2017,

where I continued to help advance sustainability and climate action initiatives within Cleveland's municipal operations and throughout the community.

When the opportunity arose to join Cuyahoga SWCD as Executive Director, I couldn't pass it up. Having worked with a number of staff at Cuyahoga SWCD over the years, I was very familiar with the great work they do in the community. This role will allow me to tap into my science background while building on the leadership and strategic planning skills I developed at the City. I am particularly excited about the chance to get out in the field and hopefully get my hands dirty (doing a tree planting or stream cleanup, of course!)

In the few months I've been here, I am constantly impressed at the volume and diversity of work Cuyahoga SWCD does. From pre-and post-construction stormwater inspections to school programs and stream restoration projects, there is no shortage of work around here and Cuyahoga SWCD does an awesome job of staying on top of it all. I've commented multiple times on how much we do as a District and how organized the office is.

I absolutely cannot talk about how great Cuyahoga SWCD is without recognizing my amazing predecessor, Jan Rybka. In her 20 years at the District, Jan was able to turn an understaffed and budget-less organization into a stable and sustainable leader in the conservation space. At Jan's retirement party she mentioned that I will bring a new "energy" to the role. While I'm excited to take the helm, the energy Jan brought to Cuyahoga SWCD is leaving some VERY big shoes to fill.

As I settle into my new role as Executive Director, I am looking forward to getting to know our staff and scope of work better so I can provide support in achieving Cuyahoga SWCD's mission. I hope to elevate and prioritize equity in the work we do and implement sustainable practices and policies wherever possible. I am also excited to meet with elected officials, community leaders, and service directors in the communities we serve to understand their priorities when it comes to soil and water conservation and make sure we are taking these into account in our work.

I look forward to leading a new chapter at Cuyahoga SWCD. I feel truly grateful for the many wonderful people and organizations I have had the opportunity to work with, and am very excited for all of those I have yet to meet.



Welcome, New Hire!



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As new staff members are added to your team please send an email and photo to [Sara Fehring](#). The goal is to highlight new staff members quarterly.

2021 Board of Directors

Area 1

- [Matthew Browne](#) - Lucas SWCD
- [Beth Diesch](#) - Seneca CD

Area 2

- [Amy Roskilly](#) - Cuyahoga SWCD
- [Chad Stang](#) - Huron SWCD

Area 3

- [Katie Kovaly](#) - Monroe SWCD
- [Amanda Tubaug](#) - Carroll SWCD

Area 4

- [Kelly Crout](#) - Butler SWCD
- [Sara Fehring](#) - Hamilton County CD

Area 5

- Vacant
- [Rebecca Longsmith](#) - Delaware SWCD



Visit our [website](#) for:

- **Catastrophic Sick Leave Program**
- **Events and Education**
- **Membership Forms**
- **Scholarships and Awards**
- **By-laws**

Serving Employees - Building Community - Developing Professionals

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