

ANOTHER FARM SIGNED INTO AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT

On December 28, 2007, Howard and Dixie Smith put pen to paper and signed the Deed of Agricultural Easement on their 80.97 acres in Pleasant Township through the Clean Ohio Fund's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP). The Smith's have been pursuing protection of their family farm since 2002. The Smith's could not be happier to start the New Year with the knowledge that their piece of prime farmland will always produce agricultural products for generations to come.

The Smith Farm has been in continuous family ownership for over two hundred years. The farm encompasses a section of Zane's Trace that helped open Ohio to settlement, and the Harmon House, built in 1802. The Harmon House is now the Smith's home and is the oldest log cabin in Fairfield County. The home has been lived in continuously since its construction by descendants of the original builder. Over time, the original 640 acre farm has dwindled to 80.97 acres, just northeast of the City of Lancaster.

Howard Smith says that "Our community is losing its family farms at an alarming rate. We feel that since our family has farmed this land for over 200 years, we want farming to continue for generations to come. We encourage anyone who is interested in protecting farmland to pursue programs like this one."

The Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Fairfield County Commissioners will hold the Smith's easement in perpetuity. Fairfield County has an estimated 1,347 acres of protected prime farmland through the AEPP and 273 acres held in conservation easements by local land trusts. The Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District anticipates that through the Ohio Department of Agriculture and local land trusts like the Fairfield Land Preservation Association, nearly 1,000 additional acres could be protected in 2008.



From left to Right; Kristen Jensen, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Mike Kiger, Fairfield County Commissioner (Seated) Dixie Smith, Howard Smith, Steve Miller, Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District Board.



**2008 Tree & Wildlife
Packet Sale
information and
order form inside!**

CLEAN OHIO AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT PURCHASE PROGRAM

We would like to congratulate the Thomas Families on Bickel Church Road in Walnut Township who were accepted in the 2007 funding round for the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. Their 53 acre field, south of Bickel Church Road and east of SR 37, will be placed under a protective easement in 2008. The Ohio Department of Agriculture pays qualifying farms some of the difference between agriculture value and full market value of the land. The landowners release the right to develop or alter the land in any manner that is not consistent with the conservation minded nature of the easement. The Fairfield County Commissioners will hold the easement with the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District will monitor the easement annually for compliance. To date 1,308 acres of prime farmland in Fairfield County has been protected through this program, while another 274 acres have been protected through local land trusts.

If you are interested in applying for the 2008 funding round please contact the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District (740) 653-8154 as soon as possible to review eligibility requirements.

Please note that 2008 is the last round of funding for this pilot program administered by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. If you feel that programs like this should continue, please contact State Representative Gerald Stebelton at (614) 466-8100 and Senator Tim Schaffer at (614) 466-5838 and let them know how you feel about this program.

ATTENTION!

IF YOU ARE A CONTRACTOR WHO DOES AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURAL BUILDING WORK (CONCRETE, STEEL, AND/OR WOOD) AND WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR CONTRACTOR LIST, PLEASE CALL THE DISTRICT OFFICE AT (740) 653-8154. LET US KNOW YOUR NAME, LOCATION, PHONE NUMBER, AND THE TYPE OF WORK YOU DO. THESE PROJECTS (USUALLY ANIMAL WASTE STORAGE FACILITIES) WOULD BE GOVERNMENT COST-SHARED AND WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW A DESIGNED PLAN AND MEET NRCS SPECS.

FAIRFIELD SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REORGANIZE

On January 10, 2008, the Fairfield SWCD Board of Supervisors selected the following officers for 2008:

Joe Young - Chair
Dick Kilbarger - Vice Chair
Tim White - Secretary/Backup Treasurer
John Albert - Treasurer/Fiscal Agent
Bonny Calderwood - Member

The regular monthly board meetings will be held on the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Fairfield County Ag Center. Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings. Since the time and date of the meetings can vary, please contact our office for information on any changes to the schedule.

INFORMATION SURVEY

We want to hear from you! The Fairfield SWCD would like to know how you would like to receive information on upcoming District programs and services.

- Weekly Eagle-Gazette
"Conservation Corner" articles
- Towne Crier
- District newsletter
- Website
- E-mail (list serve)
- Direct mailing
- Monthly Radio Program
- Local TV
- Other

Please e-mail your preferred methods for information to christina.holt@oh.nacdnet.net or call the District office at (740) 653-8154. This will help us determine where best to use our resources to keep you informed!

Thank You!

PLAN AHEAD FOR DEER DAMAGE CONTROL

By Perry Orndorff, Wildlife Specialist

Many Fairfield County producers experience deer damage in landscaping, nurseries, orchards and row crops each year. The solutions for reducing this damage vary by the type of crop or plant being affected. The earliest calls that I receive each year are usually from nursery owners, tree farms and orchardists, as these operations often receive damage during the winter months. The degree of damage is usually dependent on the severity of our winter conditions. If snow and ice cover the ground for extended periods, deer damage often worsens. Because of the number of trees being damaged by deer, deterrents such as fencing, scare devices and repellents are often not an option. For these producers, deer damage permits help them to deter the local deer population from using an area extensively.

Home landscaping and flower gardens are often the next plants browsed by deer, before many other plants come out of dormancy. In areas frequented by deer in late winter and early spring, repellents, fencing, scare devices and alternative plantings may be more successful for deterring deer. One important point to remember for use of repellents is to begin using them early before deer find a plant that they really like to eat. In this way, the new plants may not be continually browsed off if the repellents are applied regularly. Stop by the District office for a list of repellents and their general usage guidelines.

Once row crops are planted in the spring, these become one of the items most sought by deer as native plants begin to break dormancy. As in orchards and tree farms, other prevention techniques may not be an option simply because of the number of acres planted. If you experience deer damage in your crops, you need to contact me as soon as you note the damage. Deer damage control permits are intended to address crop damage when it is occurring, not before or after the fact. These permits allow landowners to harvest deer outside of normal hunting seasons when other options are not effective. Up to five shooters may be listed, including the landowner or lessee. All shooters must be residents of Fairfield County or an adjacent county and hold a valid Ohio hunting license. None of the shooters listed may assist in using deer damage permits if they have had a wildlife violation. Select your shooters carefully, finding people that are willing to assist producers over the course of the growing season are generally the best helpers.

Two changes in the use of deer control permits should be noted. First, the in-season deer damage permits were discontinued in 2007. This permit formerly allowed producers to harvest does during the fall bowhunting season. Only deer damage permits are now issued, only during the period of the year when legal deer hunting seasons are closed. Again, the goal is to reduce local deer numbers when the damage is occurring. The second change is that deer damage permits cannot be used on property that is actively managed for trophy bucks, or on land where food plots or deer feeders are located. These practices give deer mixed signals on feeding areas. Deer damage permits are intended to allow producers to reduce herd levels until legal hunting seasons begin. If you have any questions about these permits, please call Perry Orndorff at (740) 653-8154.



EARTH CAMP

Earth Camp will be held at Chestnut Ridge Metro Park, June 10-12, 2008. It is free and open to all Fairfield County students going into third, fourth, and fifth grades in 2008-2009. Students must be attending a Fairfield County school and/or live in the county to be eligible. **Sign up begins on May 1st** and registrations will be accepted until the camp is full (maximum of 60 participants).



Also, we are in need of interested high schoolers/previous attendees to assist as group leaders, so if you know of anyone interested, please call Vicki Kohli at (740) 653-8154.

EARTH DAY

Earth Day will be held at Alley Park on Saturday, April 19, 2008. It will be held in conjunction with the "Friends of the Park" pancake breakfast. There will be activities and crafts downstairs in the Nature Center and various displays outside in the tent area. A tree seedling giveaway is also included. Come join us for information regarding our environment and a chance to talk with folks working in that field. Events begin at 8 a.m. and end by noon. Breakfast will be served from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Earth Day is a free family event open to all; however, the pancake breakfast is \$4 per person.

THANKS, STEVE!

The Fairfield SWCD would like to thank Steve Miller for serving a three-year term on our Board of Supervisors. Aside from being an avid conservationist and farmland preservation advocate, Steve continuously shared his insights on all conservation issues pertaining to Fairfield County. During his term, Steve hosted an Area 5 Educator's workshop, an NRCS Conservation Planning class for personnel throughout Ohio and a SWCD conservation practices tour. Steve and his family also actively manage the timber lands on their farm and Steve frequently spoke with area producers about timber management practices.

Steve was an instrumental player in helping to establish the Fairfield Land Preservation Association, a community based land trust. Steve's family farm was recognized as a century farm and was the first parcel in Fairfield County enrolled in the State of Ohio's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, protecting 451 acres in Walnut Township. His vision for keeping agriculture vital in Fairfield County is something that he practices daily on his farm. During his tenure on the Board, Steve and his wife Debbie were also awarded the Ohio Conservation Farm Family Award for Area 5, a 17 county area in Ohio, for their implementation of conservation practices on their farm. This award is sponsored by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation at ODNR, and co-sponsored by the Ohio Farmer magazine and Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. We appreciate your time, many talents and encouragement Steve, and our best to you in all that you do.



TREES, A BENEFICIAL RESOURCE

Trees are classified as a renewable resource. A renewable resource is one that can be replaced and trees can easily be replaced by simple planting. People across our country plant trees on a daily basis. Private landowners as well as major paper companies invest both time and money to plant trees. Why?

Trees are beneficial to healthy ecosystems in many ways, with oxygen being the first thing that comes to mind for many people when one mentions trees. In fact, it is estimated that trees are responsible for 20 percent of the atmospheric oxygen that is available to us on planet Earth.

Oxygen is actually given off as a by-product during photosynthesis, the process in which plants produce food, and this oxygen is then released into the atmosphere. Animals then utilize this oxygen when they breathe in. Animals in turn give off carbon dioxide following respiration and plants utilize the carbon dioxide for photosynthesis and the production of food once again. This is part of what is referred to as the oxygen cycle.

Trees also play a part in the global weather system by providing shade and thus having a cooling effect on the overall atmosphere. We all have experienced this during summer weather simply by stepping into the shade of a tree on a hot summer day and physically noticing how much cooler it actually feels in the shade. Multiplying this effect on a global scale helps to moderate the temperature on the planet.

Trees also act as a barrier or windbreak against the force of the wind by effectively slowing down or diverting the wind in a different direction. One conservation practice that people install is a windbreak. This typically involves planting three parallel rows of trees on a farm or homestead in a windward location that will cause the wind to be slowed down, thus buffering the farm or homestead from the full force of the wind.

Another big function that trees provide is the stabilization of soil particles. Tree roots hold soil particles in place which ultimately keeps nutrients available in the soil and topsoil, which is where you want them to be so that they remain available for plant uptake and growth.

Trees provide habitat and homes for a multitude of animal species, anything from insects to mammals. Centipedes, pill bugs, bark beetles, spiders, tree frogs, turtles, raccoons, squirrels, birds of prey and songbirds commonly are seen in wooded habitats. They use trees for shelter as well as for a source of food. Many creatures potentially would be lost if the trees were not there.

Trees provide building materials for all of us and provide an incredible source of fuel for heat. Aesthetically trees offer spectacular color to our landscapes. Forests give us areas to picnic, hike, mountain bike and camp. Forests provide a "sense of place" and a chance to understand some of the dynamics of the natural world. Plant a tree!

DISTRICT COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

Don't forget the District college scholarship of \$500 for any graduating senior that plans to study Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation, Environmental Education, Geology, Biology, and the like. Applications are available on our website at www.fairfieldswcd.org, with the Guidance Counselors at each High School, or at the SWCD office. Deadline to apply is March 31. Interviews will be completed in April, with a selection made by May 1.