

FARMLAND PRESERVATION....
ACHIEVING 3,000 ACRES OF PROTECTED WORKING LANDS

Fairfield County permanently protected over 900 acres in 2011 through conservation and agriculture easements. The finalization of two easements for the Young families north of Rushcreek Lake extended a line of protected farmland that now reaches 3 miles east to west. The Thomas families of Baltimore added an additional 89 acres of permanently protected farmland to the Agricultural Security Area along Bickel Church Road.



Left to right: Mike Wolfe (SWCD Board), Mary Lou Thomas, Mike Kiger (County Commissioner), Mike Thomas and Wanda Thomas



Left to right: Joe Young, Mike Kiger (Co. Commissioner), Cathy Young and Mike Wolfe (SWCD Board)

We would like to report that during the past decade the following acres of working lands were permanently protected for agricultural uses:

<u>Township</u>	<u>Acres Protected</u>	<u>Acres Pending</u>
Walnut	1,120.56	90.18
Richland	799.54	
Madison	372.17	
Pleasant	293.52	87.65
Greenfield	146.05	
Hocking	117.43	
Rushcreek	105.608	161.92
<u>Liberty</u>	<u>47.50</u>	
Total Acres	3,002.378	339.75



Left to right: Helen Young, Joe Young, Mike Kiger (Co. Commissioner) and Mike Wolfe (SWCD Board)

**2012 Tree & Wildlife
Packet Sale
information and
order form inside!**

SUPERVISORS SWORN IN DURING REGULAR MEETING

Bob Hoffman (top), re-elected Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisor, and Mark Boving (bottom), newly elected supervisor, were sworn into office by Fairfield County Commissioner Judy Shupe prior to the January 12, 2012, regular board meeting.



FAIRFIELD SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REORGANIZE

On January 12, 2012, the Fairfield SWCD Board of Supervisors selected the following officers for 2012:

Bob Hoffman - Chair
Mike Wolfe - Vice Chair
Bonny Calderwood - Secretary
John Albert - Treasurer/Fiscal Agent
Mark Boving - Member

The regular monthly board meetings will be held on the second Thursday of each month at 5 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.

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.

EARTH CAMP

Earth Camp will be held at Blacklick Woods Metro Park, June 12-14, 2012. It is free and open to all Fairfield County students going into third, fourth, and fifth grades in 2012-2013. 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 to assist as group leaders, so if you know of someone, please call Vicki Kohli at (740) 653-8154.



Need a Grassed Waterway?

With harvest season over and after record rainfalls in 2011, are you finding any gully erosion in your water patterns? These areas could become worse if left unattended, resulting in more soil loss. A grassed waterway could help solve this problem.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can assist with funding for grassed waterways installed in eroded water patterns that qualify. You can receive approximately 50% of the construction cost (based on a state average cost) along with a 40% incentive payment, ultimately resulting in approximately 90% cost-share. You would also receive an annual rental payment based on the soil type and area of land taken out of production.

If you would like to check eligibility and apply for a grassed waterway, see Melissa Horton in our office, or Linda Waidelich at Farm Service Agency. You can contact Melissa with questions at (740) 653-5320.

If your ground is eligible and you apply, the engineering staff will survey the site and design a plan for the waterway(s). Design is based upon the watershed, slope, soils, etc. The average waterway is typically 30' wide by 1' deep, but can vary dependant upon site conditions. You will be sent copies of the plan once it is completed. Once you've chosen a contractor (or you've decided to do the labor yourself) and are ready to begin construction, the staff will layout and follow the project until it is finished. Once the job is approved, you would need to submit your bills to receive payment.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANTS OFFERED

The Fairfield SWCD is sponsoring five \$500 grants for the enhancement of environmental education. These grants are being offered on a competitive basis and are open to all schools within Fairfield County. Proposals are due by March 31, 2012. More information and forms can be found on our website at www.fairfieldswcd.org. Please call Vicki Kohli, Education Specialist, at (740) 653-8154 with any additional questions.

BMP'S FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT

by Perry Orndorff, Wildlife Specialist

Each year our staff spends a lot of time looking at wildlife habitat in Fairfield County. Some parcels are enrolled in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and have specific requirements that must be met for annual management. Other parcels are planted or managed to attract wildlife for a variety of purposes. To stay productive these fields need some annual management as well. We would like to offer a few ideas on managing these areas. The two main grass habitats are warm (prairie) and cool season grasses. The difference in these two habitat types generally refers to when they thrive, with cool-season grasses doing the best in spring and fall and warm-season grasses growing best during the warmest months of the year. Warm-season grasses also grow much taller and are more resistant to lodging during the winter months, making them a better winter cover. Winter cover and nesting cover are often the factors that limit wildlife breeding success from year to year.

Pitfalls

One of the best ways to manage a grass stand for wildlife is seasonal mowing. We always walk a fine line between weed control and beneficial stand height. Because warm-season or prairie grasses take longer to become established, mowing these grasses at a height of 10 inches the first year or two after planting is often necessary to control the weedy competition. Beyond that time period, these grasses will out-compete most weeds. Cool-season grasses also need periodic mowing at least once per year. However, this is where some problems arise. For fields enrolled in CRP, annual mowing can only be done after the peak nesting season is over, after July 15th. If there are problems with noxious weeds early in the season, notify the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to get permission to mow the spots in the field with the most weeds. Mowing the whole field the third week in July allows you to control weeds and allow the grass stand to get thicker before plant growth rates slow and fall conditions worsen for area wildlife. Mowing the grasses in September or October prevents the stand from having any value as winter wildlife cover. The CRP program is designed to enhance habitat for wildlife.

For those non-CRP grass stands, an early spot-mowing in late May or early June helps to control nuisance weeds before they can mature and develop seeds. Foxtail, goldenrod and thistle are all managed more easily by mowing at a height of 8-10 inches in the spring. Later mowing in August or a spot-treatment with an herbicide is another option. To control weeds, avoid late mowing in September or October. Fields that are mowed later may be pleasing to the eye, but they may have little to offer in wildlife benefits.

Blocks versus strips?

The best designs if you are planting grasses for wildlife value are those that are planted in large blocks (over 4 acres) or wide (over 40 feet) strips. These designs help nesting birds

and mammals, like rabbits, to lessen the chances that predators like coyotes, foxes or feral cats will find them easily while they are hunting. One option available under the CRP program that has shown some success locally is quail buffer strips. These are wide strips planted to warm-season grasses and other wildlife-friendly seed types along the edge of a cropped field. These strips offer birds access to food and cover resources in the same area, making dangerous travel across open land unnecessary. If you are interested in CRP, please come into the Ag Service Center for more details. If your land does not qualify for the CRP program, you can still create this cover type yourself at minimal cost. We often hear that one species of game bird or game animal are not around anymore because of predators. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of managed grasslands from the Dakotas south to Iowa and Kansas that draw hunters from across the U.S. each fall. These states have the same predators that we have here in Ohio. The difference is that those states have more acres of managed habitat. Instead of lamenting what our county or state has lost (bobwhites, ringnecked pheasants, etc.), let's do what we can to help them out!

WHAT IS ALERT-FAIRFIELD COUNTY?

Alert-Fairfield County is an emergency notification system used by city and county public safety organizations to issue emergency related messages to residents and businesses. These messages include, but are not limited to, weather warnings, public safety threats, and amber alerts. Only true emergencies will be broadcast. The system has the capacity to send thousands of messages via landline, cell phone, TTY, e-mail, text and fax, all within minutes.

Only authorized officials are allowed access to the system. Residents are encouraged to register by visiting the Fairfield County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) website (www.fairfieldema.com) and clicking the Alert-Fairfield logo. Registering your cell and VoIP phones allows you the opportunity to receive automatic tornado warnings for the registered address.

Rest assured information provided on the database will be held in the strictest of confidence. By law, only emergency management may have this information, and it will never be sold, transferred, or shared with anyone. Currently, every landline within Fairfield County is already in the database. The EMA hopes to expand the database through registrations to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone systems and to cell phones to more thoroughly cover the population and provide emergency notifications when necessary.

Questions about the service and how to register may be addressed by visiting the FAQ section of the website or by contacting the EMA via e-mail at ema-lepc@co.fairfield.oh.us or via phone at (740) 654-4357.

HOOTIN & HOWLIN AT HOWELL PARK

Vicki Kohli, Fairfield SWCD Education Specialist will be leading a "lantern-lit" night hike around Howell Park on Thursday, March 8, 2012, at 7 p.m. She will talk about the types of night creatures that live in and around Bremen and Little Rushcreek and help listen for the noises they make. A variety of animal calls will be available for kids to "hoot and howl" with. Kids should be accompanied by an adult. Flashlights are recommended.

EARTH DAY

Earth Day will be held at Alley Park on Saturday, April 21, 2012. 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. Earth Day is a free family event open to all; however, there will be a \$4 charge for the pancake breakfast. Events begin at 8 a.m. and end by noon. Breakfast will be served from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.



DRUG & ELECTRONICS COLLECTION DAY SET

Fairfield Soil & Water Conservation District, in cooperation with Violet Township, Fairfield County Sheriff's Department, and Lancaster-Fairfield County Recycling & Litter Prevention Program, will be conducting another prescription drug and electronics collection event on Saturday, April 28, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Violet Township Service Center. This year we will again collect electronics that include television disposal for a minimal fee (\$1 per diagonal inch). To follow more about this event and many others, please become a fan of ours on facebook or visit our website at www.fairfieldswcd.org.

SOCIL PROGRAM BEING HELD

The Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living (SOCIL) will be holding a program on "Preparing for the New Season". The program will be on Tuesday, March 13 from 6:30 - 8 p.m. at the Ag Center in Lancaster. The guest speaker will be Kent McGuire, Ohio AgrAbility Program Coordinator/OSU Ag Safety and Health with The Ohio State University. This is a free program; however, registration is requested to attend. Please call Linda McDonald, SOCIL Community Outreach Coordinator, at (740) 689-1494 ext. 12.

COMPOSTING WORKSHOP BEING HELD IN APRIL

A backyard composting workshop (including leaves) will be co-hosted by the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Lancaster Parks and Recreation on Thursday, April 19, 2012.

The workshop will be held from 5 to 6 p.m. at the Lancaster Parks and Recreation office located at 1507 E. Main Street in Lancaster. The workshop will be held outside by the current leaf composting demonstration bin. Topics to be discussed will include types of compost bins, what items to put into your bin, how to maintain your compost material and what to do with the finished product - compost.

"STREAMLINING" MANURE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Livestock manure has always been an important source of fertilizer for crops in Ohio. However, Ohio agriculture is under increasing environmental, social, and economic pressure to apply manure in ways that maximize the utilization of nutrients, protect surface and ground water, and provide assurance to the public that steps are being taken to prevent pollution from affecting their health and the environment.

OSU Extension in Fairfield County along with Fairfield SWCD have received limited grant funding which can help. The grant will pay for manure sample analysis and soil tests for local participants who agree to complete a manure nutrient workbook.

1. The grant will pay for soil and manure samples. Typically we have tested 5 composite soil samples and one manure sample per farm.
2. The grant can provide maps of each field where manure is to be applied if needed (sensitive areas should be identified).
3. The producer will complete nutrient management workbook field sheets for each field where manure application is planned.
4. The producer agrees to retain the soil and manure testing results with the workbook and track their manure applications in the workbook (this is not an official Conservation Plan).

For more information on the Nutrient Management Workbook contact Jonathan Ferbrache with the Fairfield SWCD office at (740) 653-8154 or Stan Smith with the OSU Extension office in Fairfield County at (740) 653-5419.

**ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A “TRAIN CAR LOAD”
OF SEED, FERTILIZER, EQUIPMENT?**

You now can gain access to the Baldwin Run Transload Facility at 911 Ewing Street in Lancaster, Ohio. The facility is owned and operated by the Lancaster Port Authority. The Tran-load is a SELF-load truck-to-rail and SELF-unload rail-to-truck facility. It will handle up to six rail cars at a time. The cost to use the facility is \$100 per rail car. Rail America is the connecting shortline and it connects with CSX at Parsons Yard in Columbus. Lancaster Sanitation (nearby Ewing Street) operates a weigh scale Monday-Friday from 7:30-4:00 for truck weigh-ins. Contact Mike Pettit, Director of Lancaster Port Authority at (740) 687-6670 ext. 210 or (740) 215-8029 to enter into a user agreement and for RailAmerica contact information.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Fairfield SWCD Annual Meeting/Banquet will be held on September 6, 2012, at Alley Park. Look for more information in the next upcoming newsletter and on our website at www.fairfieldswcd.org.

District Supervisors

John Albert
Mark Boving
Bonny Calderwood
Bob Hoffman
Mike Wolfe

District Personnel

Amy Boyer
Nikki Drake
Jonathan Ferbrache
Christina Holt
Rita Kemmerer
Vicki Kohli
Chad Lucht
Perry Orndorff

NRCS Personnel

Melissa Horton
Dave Libben
Mark Scarpitti