

FAIRFIELD FEATURES



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RICHLAND & PLEASANT TOWNSHIP FARMS PROTECTED

The Fairfield County Commissioners have completed the 25th & 26th deeds of agricultural easement in Fairfield County. Joe and Cathy Young (pictured left) of Richland Township joined their neighbors in bringing the total of protected farmland in Richland Township to 1,484 acres. Kathy & Richard Boucher Jr. (pictured right) of Pleasant Township protected 65.22 acres, bringing the total in Pleasant Twp. to 307 acres.



This is a cooperative effort with the Fairfield County Commissioners and the Ohio Department of Agriculture through the Clean Ohio Fund.



LOCAL AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT PURCHASE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

If you are interested in applying for the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program for 2020, sponsored locally by the Fairfield County Board of Commissioners, we ask that you declare your interest by completing a simple form no later than **Friday, January 17, 2020**. We may not know the results of the applications for 6 months.

We will run the competition without the essay questions used in the first few years of the program. All other questions are generally the same and will be scored as they have been in the past. The one decision you need to make prior to application is how much money you require to have an agricultural easement purchased on your property.

To avoid any conflict, you must tell us in writing the lowest price per acre you are willing to accept to have the easement placed on the property. The program will never pay more than \$2,000 an acre per applicant farm. Funding distribution capacity in Fairfield County is limited at this time to \$208,865 for 2020. All applicant properties will be reviewed by the County Engineer for adequate road right-of-way and adjacent intersection alignment.

We encourage you to make a business decision as to the lowest price you can accept. Please contact Jonathan Ferbrache at (740) 415-3925 if you have interest in applying or questions about the program.

Happy Holidays!

76TH ANNUAL MEETING/BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS

This year marked the 76th anniversary of the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District. The annual meeting/banquet was held on September 10, 2019, at the Mill Event Center in conjunction with the Fairfield County Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting. The evening started off with a Board of Supervisors election. This year's candidates were Wendy LaRue of Amanda and Cindy Montoney of Lancaster. Wendy was re-elected to serve another three-year term beginning January 1, 2020.

Our guest speaker this year was Mike Bailey, Vice-President of strategic partnerships for Ohio Farm Bureau.

The 2018 Cooperator of the Year Award was presented to Chad Endsley (Endsley Family Farm). Cooperators are selected annually based on their consistent work to improve their land by reducing soil loss due to erosion, installing conservation practices and participating in educational outreach to the community. Award recipients receive a sign to post on their farms.

The Conservation Partner Award honors partners that have demonstrated outstanding efforts in promoting conservation programs in Fairfield County. The Fairfield County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and Special Ops Teams were chosen to receive the 2018 Conservation Partner of the Year Award for their assistance with the Hunter's Run Conservancy District (HRCDD) dams.



The Conservation Educator of the Year Award is presented annually to a Fairfield County educator who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to teaching conservation, environmental awareness, and natural resource education to students in Fairfield County. This year the 2018 Conservation Educator of the Year Award was given to Connie Smith, Program Assistant with The Ohio State University Extension.

2018 Conservation Educator of the Year Award presented to Connie Smith, Program Assistant with OSU Extension (pictured with Tommy Springer, SWCD Education/Wildlife Specialist)

Congratulations to all of our award winners!



Chad Endsley (Endsley Family Farms) and family were presented with a 2018 Cooperator of the Year Award.



Jon Kochis, Director of Fairfield County EMA, was presented the 2018 Conservation Partner of the Year Award. Pictured are Jonathan Ferbrache (SWCD), Lindel Jackson (HRCDD), Jon Kochis (EMA), Heather Malinowski (HRCDD) and Mike Monnin (HRCDD).



Noah Smith (pictured with Tommy Springer, SWCD) was also recognized for being selected as the recipient of the 2019 Fairfield SWCD College Scholarship.

OHIO TIMBER HARVEST PLANNING PROGRAM

Timber Harvest Plans

Woodland owners in Ohio may/may not be familiar with Ohio's Agricultural Pollution Abatement (APA) Law. They also may/may not be familiar with silvicultural operation and management (O&M) plans, now called "Timber Harvest Plans" (THP) and the filing of those plans with the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Well, if you're a landowner who is contemplating or currently involved in a timber harvest...read further!

The APA law, adopted in 1979 by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Soil and Water Conservation (DSWC), addresses the control of pollutants from areas being used for agricultural production or silvicultural (e.g. logging) operations. The intent of the APA law is to abate pollution of "waters of the state" by sediment and animal waste from farming and sediment from silvicultural operations.

So if you are a woodland owner with an on-going timber harvest or if you are contemplating a harvest, one rule in the APA law you should be familiar with is 1501-15-5-12, which speaks to "Erosion from Silvicultural Operations". To paraphrase, this rule states that in order to abate pollution of waters of the state, the owner, operator, or person responsible for silvicultural operations (e.g. logging) shall apply conservation practices and follow an approved O&M plan in accordance with the "*BMPs for Erosion Control for Logging Practices in Ohio*" handbook. Further, the O&M plan may be filed with the SWCD in the county where the operations are to take place.

What is an O&M plan? Under the APA law, an O&M plan is a written record, approved by the SWCD board of supervisors for the owner or operator of agricultural land that contains implementation schedules and operational procedures for a level of management and best management practices which will abate the degradation of the waters of the state by soil sediment.

Under the APA law, the filing of the O&M plan is **voluntary**, it is not required, but there are benefits for filing! If the SWCD determines that any person owning or responsible for a silvicultural operation is managing such operation in accordance with an operation & management plan currently approved by the SWCD, the person shall be considered in compliance with the state rules for agricultural pollution abatement. In a private civil action for nuisances involving agricultural pollution, it is an affirmative defense if the person owning, operating or otherwise responsible is operating under and in substantial compliance with an approved operation and management plan.

So to summarize, a woodland owner who files an O&M plan prior to conducting a timber harvest, has the plan approved by the SWCD board and then implements and follows the plan, secures some protection for themselves. Protection in the event a pollution complaint is filed against them alleging pollution of waters of the state and an affirmative defense in the event someone would bring a nuisance suit against them in civil court.

This provision regarding filing of O&M plans has existed as long as the APA law has been in effect. However, despite these significant benefits to landowners and loggers, very few O&M plans are filed each year with Ohio's SWCDs. The ODNR-DSWC has recently made significant changes to the O & M process and the forms that are used. The old O & M forms have been replaced with a more detailed planning tool called a Timber Harvest Plan. The new THP provides the same benefits, which the "old" Silvicultural O&M plan, provided.

The DSWC has also developed a Timber Harvest Notice of Intent (NOI). The NOI contains very basic information about the logging operation. Most importantly, the names of all parties involved in the operation, their addresses and phone numbers as well as the dates the harvest is scheduled to begin and end. Unlike the Timber Harvest Plan, the NOI does not provide affirmative defense and does not require SWCD Board approval but it is clearly a proactive step to take when more detailed planning cannot be done prior to harvest. These plans may be developed by the landowner, logger or forester, but ideally should be developed jointly. Although Ohio does not require notification before timber harvests like some other states, keeping the SWCD involved can open the door to free technical assistance that can help keep the site in compliance with the APA law and reduce the risk of complaints.

APPLY NOW FOR EQIP

Now is a good time to apply for USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Applications can be taken throughout the year, with a deadline typically in late fall/early winter. Watch our Facebook page or website for the deadline date. EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat. Common practices cost-shared by EQIP include, but aren't limited to animal waste facilities, grassed waterways, heavy use pads, spring/watering facilities, water and sediment control basins (WASCOBs), wetlands, etc. There are also forestry options available.

EQIP applications are ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal. It is a voluntary, county competitive program. If you are interested or have questions, contact Dave Libben (740) 415-3921 or Brice Shaw (740) 415-3907.

NEED A GRASSED WATERWAY?

Now that harvest season is over and with record rainfalls in 2018-2019, are you finding gully erosion developing 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) or Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can assist with funding for grassed waterways installed in eroded water patterns that qualify. You can receive approximately 50% of the construction cost-share (based on a state average cost). In CRP, you would also receive an annual rental payment based on the soil type and area of land taken out of production over a 10-year period. Upfront EQIP pays a little higher percentage but does not include the annual rental payments.

If you would like to check eligibility, contact Brice Shaw (740) 415-3907 or Kelly Clay at Farm Service Agency (740) 415-3917.

CRP is currently closed, but we can add your name to a list to be contacted when it opens. As mentioned, EQIP applications can be taken at any time, with a deadline likely approaching. Waterways are designed on a first-come, first-serve basis and engineering plans are required to be completed prior to contracting through CRP.

If you are interested regardless of which program or even without one, 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 dependent upon site conditions. You will be sent copies of the plan when it is completed. Once you've chosen a contractor (or you've decided to build it yourself) and are ready to begin construction, the staff will layout and follow the project until it is finished to be sure it follows specifications. Upon completion, the job will have to be approved by appropriate staff and you would need to submit your bills to receive payment if in CRP or EQIP.



CONGRATULATIONS to Kathy Foltz of Baltimore for being chosen as the winner in a drawing for a sunflower bird feeder at our booth at the 2019 Fairfield County Fair. Also, Sharienne Weidner won a bluebird nest box by "liking" our Facebook page. Thanks to everyone who visited us in the AGmazing Agri-Center!

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DO YOU HAVE OLD TILE?

The Fairfield SWCD office has a collection of old tile and we are always looking to add to it. If you find any odd, old, or unique tile on your property, please bring it by the office or call us at (740) 653-8154. We would love to add it to our collection!

If you would prefer to receive the Fairfield Features newsletter by email, just let us know by calling the Fairfield SWCD office at (740) 653-8154.



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