

Conservation Highlights



Annual Meeting: November 25, 2013

Keynote Speaker:
Scott Trostel,
Historian & Author



The 58th Annual Meeting for Darke SWCD will be held on Monday, November 25, 2013 at the Greenville VFW, 219 N. Ohio St. This year's featured speaker is Scott Trostel. Scott is a noted historian and writer from near Sidney. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Great Dayton Flood. He will be presenting his program on the 1913 flood in the Northern Miami Valley. Scott's program will focus on the five northern counties and the tragic events from March 24 through March 28, 1913, along with three river valleys north of Dayton.

The 1913 flood was the single largest natural disaster to hit Ohio in its history. He will show images and tell the stories of the flood, the victims and the region north of Dayton as well as the strong local relief efforts necessary for survival of tens of thousands of local residents.

Trostel has written 49 books, three titles focus on the 1913 flood: *And Through the Black Night of Terror*, *Railroads of Western Ohio in the 1913 Flood* and *Letters from the Attic*. Copies will be available at the program.

The Supervisor election will be from 6:00-7:00 PM with dinner beginning at 6:30 PM. This year we have one open seat and two candidates running in the election, see page 2 for more information on the Supervisor election. Once dinner has been served, the program will begin with introductions, conservation awards, guest speaker and end with the election results being announced.

Tickets are \$10, please call or stop by the office to pick up yours today. We look forward to seeing you on November 25th!

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"Serving conservation needs in Darke County since 1955"

Darke SWCD Staff Members

- Jared Coppel — Program Administrator**
- Linda Calland — Secretary**
- Doug Steinbrunner — Technician/Wildlife Specialist**
- Tim Rank — Technician**
- Greg McGlinch — Urban/MNM Specialist**
- Steve Brown — Pheasants Forever Wildlife Biologist**

Darke NRCS Staff Members

- Jim Bennett — District Conservationist**
- John Bleill — Civil Engineering Technician**

DARKE SWCD OFFICE HOURS

Monday — Friday
8:00 AM — 4:30 PM

2013 Darke SWCD Board Candidates

Elect One at Annual Meeting — November 25th



MONTY STUMP lives at 8566 State Route 118, Greenville, in Greenville Township. Monty believes it is very important to be a responsible steward of God’s creation. He has been involved with several conservation practices on their farming operation, such as CRP, buffer strips and wildlife habitat strips. By becoming a board member, Monty can encourage and facilitate these and other practices on other farms in Darke County.

Monty is a graduate of Ansonia Local Schools and has a B.A. in Business Administration from Ohio Northern University. He has been involved with the family farm since 1977. Monty has worked as the Treasurer for the Darke County Board of Education and for the last four plus years he has been working part-time as a crop adjuster for Great American Insurance Company. He attends Grace Brethren Church and has served as an Elder for the last 5 five years. Monty is a member of the National Corn Growers Association, Ohio Soybean Association and Ohio Wheat Growers Association.

Monty married Krista Hurley in 1978 and they have two grown children and two young grandchildren. He is very thankful to have lived and raised his family in Darke County.



ALAN WUEBKER lives at 11637 Versailles-Yorkshire Road, Versailles, in Wayne Township. Alan believes conservation is an every day concern when using manure as a main nutrient for corn. He wants to ensure livestock producers and others can keep using manure without more laws.

Alan farms with his brother Jeff. They grow corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. They also raise dairy, beef and swine, producing over 2,000 pigs weekly. Alan understands what it takes to grow crops and livestock, and to do it in the best environmental way possible.

Alan has served as head advisor for Grade A Kids 4-H Club, head of Darke County Pork Producers, a member of Ohio and National Pork Producers, a member of St. Nicholas Church in Osgood and a member of the Farm Bureau.

Alan is married to Sarah, they have four children and live outside of Versailles. He enjoys woodworking, camping and watching the kids’ activities.

Darke SWCD and City of Greenville Host Successful Home Gardener Workshop

On Monday, September 16, 2013 the Darke SWCD and City of Greenville hosted a Home Gardener Workshop in the Darke County EMA Conference Room. The workshop was attended by 35 registrants interested in home gardening practices. Topics covered at the workshop were soil sampling, no-till gardening and cover crops.

The first speaker of the evening was Sam Custer, OSU Extension Darke County. Sam talked to the group about properly pulling soil samples from the garden. Sam advised the group to take their samples in the fall because the labs aren’t as busy analyzing farm samples and that they pull samples every two to three years.

“Take samples in a zigzag pattern throughout the garden. Ideally pull 15 cores, but up to 25 or 30 cores can be used. The key is don’t rush and send in only four,” said Custer to the audience Monday evening.

The second speaker was Alex Johnson. Alex covered his experiences with no-till gardening. Alex talked with the group about his reasoning for eliminating tillage. He also showed photographs of his



garden, which was lawn last fall. And finally Alex talked about the

Continued on page 4

County FFA Land Judging Contest Held in Harrison Township

On September 17, 2013 the Darke SWCD held their annual land judging contest for Darke and Miami County FFA Chapters as they prepare for the District Contest. This year's contest was held at Mark Murphy's Farm off Eaton-Ft Nesbitt Road near New Paris. This year 16 teams from nine schools – Ansonia, Covington, Franklin Monroe, Greenville, Miami East, Mississinawa Valley, Newton, Tri-Village and Versailles – participated in the event.

The land judging contest consists of a rural and an urban test. Each test challenges the students to not only identify soil types, but also consider other soil characteristics when making recommendations for use of that area. The contest consisted of four stations, three soil pits and a written test. The students had 15 minutes to finish the test at each station. Upon completion of the contest, students were asked to hand in their answer keys before Darke SWCD staff would go over the answers and reasoning at each station.

This year Versailles Team #3 finished with the highest team score on the rural test, followed by Versailles Team #2 and Ansonia. The highest individual score was Danielle Hesson from Versailles FFA. Newton Team #1 recorded the highest team score in the urban test, followed by Miami East and Covington. Abby Webb from Newton turned in the highest individual score on the urban test.



“Darke SWCD would like to thank the Murphy’s for graciously hosting this year’s competition, George Skidmore for helping Greg and Tim evaluate the soil pits, Darke County Ditch Maintenance for digging the pits and all the schools for participating in the event. The participation and enthusiasm from the students and teachers is what makes this competition great,” said Jared Coppess, District Administrator for Darke SWCD.

Kids Conservation Corner



F	K	T	W	T	W	S	K	D	R	Z	S	H	F	P
N	K	A	W	O	O	H	D	N	I	W	U	W	K	V
M	O	T	V	I	N	C	E	P	P	C	J	A	Q	J
S	E	I	L	V	K	S	A	A	G	P	B	T	G	E
E	H	B	S	M	R	O	W	H	T	R	A	E	X	Z
Y	D	A	Y	O	L	C	O	V	E	R	C	R	O	P
R	E	H	O	H	R	Z	C	K	B	X	Y	G	M	C
K	E	A	Q	M	W	E	T	L	A	N	D	G	M	U

Winter Conservation

COVERCROP	SOIL
EARTHWORM	WATER
EROSION	WETLAND
HABITAT	WHEAT
RYE	WIND

Visit the Darke SWCD website to find the answers! www.darkeswcd.com

Home Gardeners: Take Cover this Winter!

by Greg McGlinch, District Technician



Fall is here and winter is soon approaching. Have you prepared and protected your garden for next spring? If not, the Darke Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) can help.

The increased interest in cover crops in the agricultural sector has worked its way into the gardening community. The concept of implementing cover crops on a smaller scale has caught the interest of many local gardeners in Darke County. One may ask, what is a cover crop, how will it benefit my garden, what management is involved and where do I acquire seed?

“What is a cover crop?” A cover crop follows a cash crop, like corn, soybeans, or vegetables, and is intended to protect, preserve and benefit the soil until the next cash crop is planted. Generally most people will apply fertilizer, compost, or manure on their garden and till it in this fall. This action leaves the soil exposed to the harsh winter and the swift spring rains. Not to mention Mother Nature’s scabs, weeds, become established and create

additional problems in the upcoming seasons. Cover crops are a way to reduce many of these problems.

“How will it benefit my garden?” Planting cover crops in the summer or fall will help protect the soil from the erosive forces of Mother Nature and hold the valuable nutrients from fertilizers and manure. Nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, needed for vegetable growth, can be salvaged and recycled for upcoming garden crops. Once the cover crops are terminated the residue is left on top of the soil or moved into the soil by earthworms and utilized by other beneficial soil microbes as food. This in turn helps to improve soil organic matter (OM). Soil OM is important in preserving moisture during drought periods, and becomes a pool of nutrients that can be used later by garden plants. The roots of the cover crops help to reduce compaction hence increasing infiltration of water into the soil. Cover crops help to suppress weeds through competition by shading and the release of allelochemicals (a natural herbicide emitted by a plant).

“What level of management should I anticipate?” Management will depend on the cover crop seeded and the termination method. For example an oats and radish mixture seeded in late summer or early fall will need very little management. This cover crop mix will frost kill during the winter time when temperatures dip below 19°

degrees Fahrenheit. Whereas cover crops like cereal rye, annual ryegrass, clovers, and vetches will need to be terminated with herbicides, tilled, or shaded out with fabric in the spring.

“Where do I acquire seed?” There are websites and cover crop dealers that offer a wide selection of cover crops and mixes. These can be purchased in small or bulk quantities depending on the garden size. Another option is the Darke SWCD has introduced two cover crop mixes, Fall Mix and Winter Mix, for use in your garden. The Fall Mix is a blend of oats and radishes. The advantage of this mix is that it is low maintenance and will frost kill in December. The Winter Mix consists of cereal rye and radishes. This blend is winter hardy, meaning the cereal rye will survive through the winter. In the spring you will have to kill the cereal rye by tillage, herbicide application or shading. These two cover crop mixes can be purchased for \$3.00 a pound.

If you are interested in purchasing cover crop mixes or need additional information please stop by the Darke SWCD office located at 1117 South Towne Court, Greenville, Ohio, by calling 937-548-1752 or visiting the website at www.darkeswcd.com. The Darke SWCD has plans to expand the availability, information and types of cover crop mixes available to interested individuals, please watch our website for more information.

HOME GARDENER WORKSHOP CONT. (PAGE 2)

no-till seeder he developed. The seeder allows for uniform depth and spacing in his garden. After the workshop, Alex demonstrated his no-till seeder to those interested. Alex spoke about the challenges and planning that goes into using no-till in the home garden.

The final speaker of the evening was Greg McGlinch, Darke SWCD. Greg talked about his experiences with cover crops in his garden and on the farm. He went over some of the basics of cover crop varieties and the benefits and challenges each have. Greg shared his reasoning with the crowd for using cover crops by asking these two questions, “Is a factory productive if it is only open five months out of

the year? What about our soils?” Greg talked about how the audience can utilize cover crops to improve both their soil and plant health in the garden.

All attendees received a free sample of Darke SWCD’s cover crop blends available, either the fall or winter mix. Darke SWCD is currently offering their cover crop blends to the public in a one pound bag for \$3.00. The blends available, while supplies last, are the Fall Mix and Winter Mix. The Fall Mix is an oat/radish blend and the Winter Mix is a Cereal Rye/Radish blend. For more information on the Home Gardener Workshop presentations or cover crop seed, visit the newly launched Darke SWCD website (www.darkeswcd.com) or call the office at 937-548-1715, Ext. 3.

CONSERVE DARKE COUNTY: *Managing nutrients leads to better yields, cleaner water*

Submitted by Jim Bennett, District Conservationist

Nutrients can help or harm, either leading to bountiful harvests or contributing to water quality issues. How we manage nutrients affects how much is taken up by plants and how much is lost from our farm fields.

Nutrients come from many sources in rural, suburban and urban America. Farmers and ranchers play an important role in finding solutions to prevent nutrients from making their way into our streams, rivers and other water bodies, including the Stillwater River Watershed, which covers roughly 80% of Darke County.

Producers across the United States and here help to improve water quality by managing nutrients, using the right kind, the right amount, applied at the right time, and using the proper method of application.

Plants need nutrients to develop properly. On farms, nutrients are often provided through fertilizer, manure and compost. As the nation's private lands conservation agency, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service helps producers use nutrients wisely – through a conservation practice called nutrient management.

Nutrient management allows farmers and ranchers to achieve optimal agricultural and economic outcomes while improving the quality of air, soil and water.

Through nutrient management, farmers and ranchers perform a soil or plant tissue test to determine nutrient needs and apply only the amount needed to optimize crop yields.

To improve timing, nutrients should be applied when plants can best absorb them, while considering factors like weather, irrigation events and crops that will follow. Sometimes it's best to split nutrient applications to increase the chances of nutrient uptake by the crop while minimizing losses through runoff and leaching.

Nutrients can also be managed through other conservation practices like managing more crop residue on the soil surface and planting cover crops. By maintaining more crop residue on the soil surface and by planting cover crops, the soil is less likely to erode. When soil erodes, it takes nutrients with it.

In the past two years, producers worked with NRCS to implement nutrient management on more than 3.5 million acres in the country, including 3,500 acres in Darke County.

Managing nutrients comes with benefits for the producer, too. Producers can see cost savings from lower inputs and potential yield increases, thus creating a win-win situation.

High concentrations of nutrients in water, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can be harmful to humans, animals and aquatic life. When the runaway nutrients reach estuaries, they can lead to hypoxic zones, or oxygen-depleted waters. The Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes and Gulf of Mexico experience hypoxic events every summer.

With 88 percent of surface water falling on private land before it reaches our lakes, streams and underground aquifers, private landowners, like farmers and ranchers, play an important role in decreasing the amount of nutrients in our waterways.



NRCS conservationists monitor a flow meter and gate valve at a dairy in California. The flow meter helps manage nutrients on the dairy.

If you want more information on nutrient management, stop by our local field office, located at 1117 South Towne Court, Greenville, Ohio 45331.

About Jim Bennett:

Bennett is the District Conservationist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. He works in the agency's Greenville office and can be contacted at 937-548-1715, Ext. 3 or jim.bennett@oh.usda.gov.

About NRCS:

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service helps America's farmers and ranchers conserve the nation's soil, water, air and other natural resources. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment. Learn more at www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov.

Biodiversity Increases the Success of Most Agricultural Systems



Biodiversity helps to prevent disease and pest problems associated with monocultures. Using cover crops and increasing diversity within crop rotations improves soil health and soil function, reduces costs, and increases profitability. Diversity above ground improves diversity below ground, which helps create healthy productive soils.

Cover Crops

Cover crops can be an integral part of a cropping system. Cover crops can be managed to improve soil health, as they help to develop an environment that sustains and nourishes plants, soil microbes and beneficial insects. Cover crops are typically planted in late summer or fall around harvest and before spring planting of the following year's crops. Examples of cover crops include rye, wheat, oats, clovers and other legumes, turnips, radishes, and triticale. Planting several cover crop species together in a mixture can increase their impact on soil health. Each cover crop provides

its own set of benefits, so it's important to choose the right cover crop mixture to meet management goals.

Cover Crop Benefits

Restoring Soil Health – Cover crops help increase organic matter in the soil and improve overall soil health by adding living roots to the soil during more months of the year. Cover crops can improve water infiltration into the soil. Deep-rooted crops like forage radishes create natural water passages. Legume cover crops serve as natural fertilizers while grasses scavenge nutrients that are often lost after harvest or during winter.

Natural Resource Protection – Along with crop residue above ground, cover crops protect the soil against erosive heavy rains and strong winds. Cover crops trap excess nitrogen, keeping it from leaching into groundwater or running off into surface water – releasing it later to feed growing crops.

Livestock Feed – Cover crops can provide livestock producers with additional grazing or haying opportunities.

Wildlife Habitat – Cover crops provide winter food and cover for birds and other wildlife. During the growing season, they can provide food for pollinators.

Soil Health Management Systems

Implementing Soil Health Management Systems can lead to increased organic matter, more soil organisms, reduced soil compaction and improved nutrient storage and cycling. As an added bonus, fully functioning, healthy soils absorb and retain more water, making them less susceptible to runoff and erosion. This means more water will be available for crops when they need it. Soil Health Management Systems allow farmers to enjoy profits because they spend less on fuel and energy while benefiting from the higher crop yields resulting from improved soil conditions.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about Soil Health Management Systems and the technical and financial assistance available to help “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil.”



SOIL FERTILITY & NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT SERIES OFFERED AGAIN!

The Darke Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Ohio State University Extension, Darke County will be jointly hosting a Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management workshop series beginning in November and wrapping up in April 2014. This series will consist of four workshops –November, January, March and April – that will cover basic agronomy, how to obtain a proper soil sample, a soil lab tour, understanding and interpreting the results, recommendations and how to properly maintain and enhance your soils, and development of a field plan for 2014-15. The cost to participate in this workshop series will be \$10.00. This registration fee will cover all of your meals, resource materials and soil samples for up to 50 acres. Space is limited, so call or email to reserve your spot today!

The first workshop will be November 19th at the Darke County EMA office on County Home Road in Greenville beginning with a meal at 6:00pm. This first workshop will give an introduction to the series, cover how to properly collect a soil sample and discuss nutrient sources and concentrations. It is important to note that the Darke SWCD, through a series of grants and sponsorships, will cover two (2) samples to be tested from your farm. This workshop series will utilize your samples to walk you through understanding your soil fertility and nutrient management needs. You will need to turn in your soil samples at the office before the second meeting date.

The second workshop will take place on January 21, 2014. The group will meet at the Darke SWCD office at 9:00am before traveling to Brookside Labs in New Bremen. While there, we will tour the facility and visit with available technicians to understand the process of soil testing. This is when and where the samples you pull will be delivered for analysis. After the tour, the group will grab lunch before returning to Greenville. The third workshop will be held on March 11th at the

Darke County Parks' Assembly Room, just off 502. This meeting will cover your soil sample test results and begin the process of interpreting and understanding the results for an analysis of your farm. We will also go over recommendations for the area and cover any environmental limits or concerns that may exist. Like the first meeting, this one will begin at 6:00pm with a meal.

Finally, the group will gather for a fourth and final workshop on April 8th. This will cover ways you can build upon or maintain your soil health by identifying practices you can utilize on your farm. The workshop series will end

with an overview of the 4R Tomorrow program and a certificate of completion for all participants.

All workshops in the series will include a meal. The goal is to help you better understand how to identify and address the needs of your soil. Upon completion of the series, you will have a wider knowledge base and many reference materials to help you get the most out of your soil in a healthy manner. The benefits of proper nutrient management are two-fold: the farmer lowers inputs and environmental impairments are reduced. These are two goals any farmer should have because it relates to money and protecting their land," said Greg McGlinch of the Darke SWCD.

This workshop wouldn't be possible without the cooperation of the Darke SWCD; OSU Extension; Menke Consulting;

Brookside Laboratories and the support of our sponsors: The Greater Dayton Fund, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Top of Ohio RC&D Council and the Ohio Livestock Coalition.

If you are interested in learning how to best manage your soil's needs, sign up now for this workshop by calling the Darke SWCD at 937.548.1715, extension 3, visiting our website at www.darkeswcd.com, or email greg.mcglinch@oh.nacdn.net.

Soil Fertility & Nutrient Management Workshop Series

Meeting Dates, Times and Locations

November 19, 2013 6:00-8:30 PM

Darke County EMA, Conference Room

January 21, 2014 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Brookside Labs, New Bremen

March 11, 2014 6:00-8:30 PM

Darke County Parks, Assembly Room

April 8, 2014 6:00-8:30 PM

Location TBD

SPACE IS LIMITED, REGISTER NOW BY CALLING 937-548-1715, EXT. 3

Darke SWCD

1117 South Towne Court
Greenville, OH 45331

Phone: 937.548.1715, Ext. 3
Fax: 937.548.2925

**Serving conservation needs
in Darke County since 1955**



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Conservation Highlights

Fall 2013

WWW.DARKESWCD.COM LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER 2013!

The Darke SWCD is pleased to announce that we have recently launched a website! Bear with us as we enter the online world, our goal is to be able to communicate more effectively with you. We will post upcoming events, sales and meeting information as well as resource materials. Please take a moment to visit us online at www.darkeswcd.com. We would appreciate any feedback you may have to offer. Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

November 4	Darke SWCD Board Meeting
November 12	Rd 1 of Soil Fertility Workshop Series Final Meeting
November 19	Rd 2 of Soil Fertility Workshop Series Begins
November 25	Darke SWCD Annual Meeting & Banquet Supervisor Election
November 28	OFFICE CLOSED (Thanksgiving Day)

*If you would like to
receive the newsletter
via email, visit our
website or email
jared.copess
@oh.nacdnet.net.*