



ODA Updates for Area 5 SWCD Board Meetings September 2022

Submitted By: Rob Hamilton and Cody Hacker, Area 5 Program Specialist

ODA/Area:

Area 5 Administrator's Conference Call – September 8th at 11:30 a.m.

H2Ohio Program – Work continues on the H2Ohio dashboards with the Innovate Ohio Platform. These dashboards will provide up-to-date information about H2Ohio program and projects across ODA, ODNR, and OEPA. The dashboards are nearing completion and will be available for public viewing later this fall.

ODA has announced funding for the construction of 2-stage ditches. A press release for ODA's Request for Proposals (RFPs) was released on Aug 15th. These funds will encourage the construction of 2-stage ditches with funds to offset construction costs. Proposals will be accepted from the 24 counties in ODA's current H2Ohio project area. Proposals will be accepted this fall and successful applications will be notified by Dec 31, 2022.

SWCD Salary Survey- Each year ODA provides a summary report of SWCD staff salaries, which was developed from information reported in Beehive as of August 2022. The report contains a statewide summary of SWCD salaries and is categorized by these positions: *SWCD Administrators/Directors, Office Managers/Administrative Assistants/Program Assist, Urban Technicians/Watershed Coordinators/Resource Specialists/GIS, District Ag Technicians/ Wildlife Specialists/MNM Specialists/SWAT/H2Ohio/Ditch Maint/Forestry, Education Specialists/Outreach Coordinators, and Interns*

Human Resources Initiative – The HR Initiative Committee consists of twelve Soil and Water Conservation partners who are working to improve resources and develop best management practices to assist SWCDs with staffing. An initial meeting was held June 9th to confirm statewide issues and establish common goals to assist SWCDs. The group identified trends when searching for qualified candidates as employees retire and programming increases, to having new hires, leave employment within a year or less creating a rotating door. The committee provided a summary of findings to the OSWCC meeting in August. The HR Initiative committee met at Summer Supervisor School to discuss possible methods of hiring HR experts to develop a HR "Toolkit" to provide templates, guidance, and resources for districts to adapt to their individual needs in addressing today's workforce and office environments.

Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District's Landowner Conservation Program - DSWC staff finalized and approved applications for the 2022 Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District's Landowner Conservation Program. Seventeen Counties were approved for funding up to 40,759 acres of cover crops to be planted this fall. Two new practices were added to this year's signup, Voluntary Nutrient Management Plans (VNMP) and Grazing Management Plans (GMP). 13,915 acres were approved for the development of VNMPs program and 900 acres for GMP. SWCDs will work with producers throughout the remainder of this year and into the spring of 2023 on developing plans and verifying cover crop practices.

CREP programs – USDA Farm Service Agency has been working with ODNR and ODA to develop new agreements for the Lake Erie and Scioto River CREPs. The new agreements will update both programs to comply with 2018 Farm Bill provisions and will replace the current agreements that are due to expire on September 30, 2022. Under the new agreements the State must provide incentive payments for certain practices to meet USDA's funding requirements. New state incentives will be offered on certain practices for new enrollments and for acres being re-enrolled into the program. Once all updates to the agreement and handbook are completed, program training and rollout will be scheduled to review new items and program changes. Tentatively, training will be held in November and anticipated sign-up beginning in December following training.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Wildlife Specialists Celebrate 25 Years of Partnership

We want to highlight the 25th anniversary of the SWCD/ODNR partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts to create and maintain wildlife specialist positions. The partnership originated in 1997 between the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Division of Soil and Water Conservation (now part of Ohio Department of Agriculture), and the Division of Wildlife, with support from the Ohio Farm Bureau. The program arose to provide technical assistance to farmers suffering crop damage by wildlife. In 1998, 12 wildlife specialists were hired in 15 counties to educate farmers and landowners on resolving wildlife damage. Today, there are 20 wildlife specialists across 20 counties.

Wildlife specialists currently service Adams, Athens, **Belmont**, Brown, Columbiana, Erie, **Fairfield**, **Guernsey**, **Hocking**, Knox, Meigs, Monroe, Noble, **Ottawa**, Ross, Scioto, **Seneca**, **Union**, **Vinton**, and **Washington** counties.

SWCDs listed in **bold** are in their 25th year of the partnership

Administrative Development Program- October 25th an **ADP in-person session** will be held in the auditorium of the Bromfield. The session will feature Rich Cunningham from the Auditor of State's office. He will be providing information on cash basis reports, pre-audit questionnaires, audit comments/updates and other related items. The day will also include a SWCD panel focused on the management of sales taxes from a district perspective and updated guidance on ORC 940.111. Registration will be required for this session and those details will be made available in the near future.
November 16th @ 1 pm – An ADP webinar focused on the available tools and reports in Beehive. The focus will be on the Annual Plan of Work template in Beehive and how that can be used to help with budgeting both dollars and staff time as districts plan for 2023

Technician Development Program-ODA-DSWC Beginner and Advanced level TDP courses planned for this fall are now open for registration. The Beginner Level is comprised of 7 courses:

Conservation Engineering – Online July 1st through December 31st

Engineering Resources & Math Refresher – Online July 1st through December 31st

Ag Pollution Abatement Program – Online July 1st through December 31st

Inventory and Evaluation – September 27th – Malabar Farm State Park – 3991 Bromfield Rd., Lucas OH 44843

Surveying – September 28th & 29th – Madison SWCD – 831 US-42, London, OH 43140

Basic Hydrology – October 4th – Madison SWCD – 831 US-42, London, OH 43140

Soils Engineering – October 25th – Madison SWCD – 831 US-42, London, OH 43140

Advanced Level TDP classes open for registration:

Grassed Waterways – November 2nd & 3rd – Shelby SWCD – 822 Fair Road, Sidney, OH 45365

Grade Stabilization Structures – November 8th & 9th – Shelby SWCD – 822 Fair Road, Sidney, OH

Grazing Engineering – November 22nd – Madison SWCD – 831 US-42, London, OH 43140

(This class will cover heavy use pads, trails and walkways, and stream crossings.)

Please register using this link: [TDP Registration](#) Once a class has reached capacity, it will no longer show up on the registration page. Payment options include paying by credit card, electronic check or pay later. If you have any questions, please contact Tim Fulks at 614-581-3521 or timothy.fulks@agri.ohio.gov

OFSWCD:

- Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to assist with the NCF Envirothon held at Miami University in July. We held a great weeklong educational event for students from 36 states and 4 Canadian Provinces. It was a challenging process but seeing the promise and excitement about environmental issues through the eyes of these young people made it all worthwhile.
- Staff and Supervisors from around Ohio came together at the end of August for the annual Summer Supervisor's School. Approximately 130 individuals participated in a variety of tours and breakout sessions while also finding time for networking and fellowship. It was a great opportunity to come "Together in Conservation".
- The Federation will once again have an educational area at Farm Science Review scheduled for September 20-22 in London, Ohio. We are always looking for volunteers to assist in preparing the site and staffing the display area during the event. Contact Nikki or Janelle if you want to help!

OSWCC:

- The next OSWCC meeting is scheduled for November 10, 2022, at 9:30 am at ODA Reynoldsburg. For more information about the meeting contact Emily Heppner emily.heppner@agri.ohio.gov.

OASWCDE: On behalf of the OASWCDE board, we hope everyone is staying safe and having a great summer! A few updates below:

- 2022-member count is 256 members.
- The OASWCDE Training Scholarship is a \$50 scholarship that is available year-round. The Scholarship is for OASWCDE members whose districts may not have the funds to send staff to professional development opportunities.
- November 22nd is the deadline to submit material for the December OASWCDE Newsletter.
- There will be five Mental Health in-person workshops offered throughout October and November. Additional details and the registration link will be available in the September edition of the newsletter.
 - Area 1 – Thursday, October 27th
 - Area 2 – Wednesday, November 2nd
 - Area 3 – Thursday, November 3rd
 - Area 4 – Tuesday, November 8th
 - Area 5 – Wednesday, November 9th

- A page for SWCD Job postings has been created on the OASWCDE website, <https://www.oaswcde.org/jobs.html>. This page can be used to promote available positions throughout the state. Job postings for the website are pulled from AllOhio emails. Open positions can also be sent to Sara Fehring, sara.fehring@hamilton-co.org.
- A Farm Science Review workday is being held on September 14th from 8:30am – 3:00pm.