

NEWS

& views

August/September/October, 2003 A newsletter published by the ODNR Division of Soil and Water Conservation Volume 38 No. 3

Horse “Whisperer” Outspoken About All-Weather Paddocks

By Tom Holmes, Area 2 Resource Management Specialist

Nancy Mayors talks softly about the eleven horses she boards at her stable facility in Geauga County. She tells of the time when many, if not all of her horses were confined for most of the spring and winter months due to rain, snow and unsuitable pastures. Her tone and pitch brighten when she speaks of her all-weather paddock. “It’s the nicest thing...regardless of weather, we use it all the time...it’s the greatest thing.”

In the summer of 1999 Geauga SWCD applied for a Nonpoint Source grant

through the division to further assist and educate the equine industry in Geauga County. Today there are over 6,000 horses in Geauga, a number that is increasing steadily. The Equine grant focused on severe pasture erosion and manure related problems. To satisfy the equine industry needs, Geauga SWCD and NRCS chose to install heavy use pads or all-weather paddocks to address water quality concerns.

District staff and District Conservationist Al Bonnis had NRCS’s standard and specification for Livestock Heavy Use Area amended to address special criteria for pads installed for equine loafing, travel ways, exercising, or temporary confinement. The equine heavy use area protection is primarily constructed of two components – stone and geotextile fabric. To address horse owners’ concerns over hoof bruising, only #10 limestone (screenings) are used. Paddock size varies from 40-foot by 40-foot for a single horse up to 60-foot by 60-foot for multiple horses using the pad at the same time. These minimum pad sizes assume the horses will be stabled most of the time and brought onto the pad periodically for exercise and training.

When horses are confined for longer periods, the pad size should be increased as recommended by an equine specialist.

“We would like to install five more, we like them that much,” Nancy says. “Every horse owner should have one.” She notes that her all-weather paddock has allowed pastures to dry out, aiding vegetation reestablishment and facilitating pasture rotation.

Nancy advertises “mud-free paddocks” in the local newspaper classifieds. “We have had a number of calls from people wanting to know what a mud-free paddock is,” she says. “It’s the first thing people see when they pull into my facility. People looking for a place to board their horses pay close attention to how well a facility is managed and how clean the horses are.”

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Geauga County horse boarders Nancy Mayors (right) and husband Joe Bair are delighted with their all-weather paddock.

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How Do You See It?

I attended the dedication ceremony for a new building recently. Everyone in attendance was given a memento – a key on a key ring commemorating the event. It was an unusual key. It was uncut. One of the people standing near me at the ceremony commented that the key was use-

less, as it wouldn't open anything. I offered a different perspective. I suggested that, far from useless, the key would actually open anything that a person wanted to open. What would be required, though, would be a little work to have the key cut to operate a specific lock. The operative word here is "work." Beyond that, all that was required was a mindset that was open to opportunities and possibilities.

As each of our districts works to implement various aspects of the Farm Bill, we are charged with the responsibility to seek out opportunities that are currently unmet, similar to my uncut key. The "work" that is needed is to apply new ideas that engage landowners who have not previously been a part of the conservation family. A naysayer might believe that districts are telling farmers how to farm. An alternative perspective on these programs, which enable a producer to be both a better steward of soil and water resources and maintain profitability, is that they are an investment. EQIP provisions of the Farm Bill will open new doors and allow districts to engage folks who have been missed or underserved. It will take work, but the reward will be a heritage of which each of us can be proud.

At the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation annual dinner recently I sat next to a couple who had successfully created a living working their land on the edge of a developing urban area. They had a sense that their land might not remain in agriculture in the future, but pride was evident in the stories they told of their experiences in growing a wide variety of crops on their farm. Their "key" to success was to work hard and adjust their crop mix to local needs and the land available to them. In order for each of our districts to be successful we must maintain an active vigilance for necessary adjustments to local needs and to work with all of the tools available to us.

Have a great – and safe – harvest season!

Tom Reininger, OFSWCD President

Conservation Farm Families Honored

Five outstanding conservation farm families were honored on September 18 during the Farm Science Review, marking the 20th anniversary for this high profile statewide recognition of exemplary private lands conservation.

The families honored at this year's ceremony were Walter and Donna Lange of Fulton County; Chase and Kirk Heyman of Huron and Erie counties; Don Guindon, manager of Olney Taber Farm for the Olney Friends Quaker High School in Belmont County; Don and Gloria Riley of Montgomery County; and Russell and Barb Casper who farm in Highland County. Profiles of each farm, including color photos, appeared in the September issue of *Ohio Farmer*.



Since 1984, the Conservation Farm Family Awards program has recognized more than 100 Ohio farm families for their exemplary efforts of conserving soil, water, woodland and wildlife and other natural resources on the land they farm. Conservation farm families also host a variety of educational programs, opening their farms to schools, scout groups, farm organizations and others.

The program is sponsored by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, *Ohio Farmer* magazine, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, and Hancor, Inc. ■

Horse "Whisperer" *continued from pg 1*

When asked about operation and maintenance of the paddock Nancy says, "It's fairly simple. We clean up the piles every other day and every Saturday give it a thorough cleaning which includes scraping and raking by hand." Nancy's paddock is two years old and she has only now needed to add new stone, as the horses sometimes paw or dig around, a natural habit that may eventually expose the geotextile.

To find out more about all-weather paddocks, contact Geauga SWCD at 440-834-1122. ■

Focus on Education



OFSWCD Education and Communications Committee chairman David Greer presents the 2003 "Conservation Education District-of-the-Year" plaque to Bryan Miller, Hancock SWCD Education Resource Coordinator

Hancock SWCD – Education District-of-the-Year

Hardin, Crawford Nominate Winning Teachers

Hancock SWCD was recognized at the OFSWCDs 58th Summer Supervisors School in Toledo for having the best "conservation education" program in the state last year. Their program will now compete for national honors in the NACD Conservation Education District-of-the-Year contest cosponsored by Syngenta.

Their extensive school-related programs target students, teachers and home schoolers. They are especially proud of their annual "Splash Bash" water festival which offers over 20 water-related stations with hands-on activities for 500 student participants. With grant funds they were also able to provide resource materials to participating teachers to enhance environmental learning in the classroom and extend the impact of their water festival activities.

Hancock District's education programs also include an action component. A Hancock County high school class helped plant over 900 tree saplings as a windbreak on a local landowner's property, and Findlay High School's environmental science class teamed up with Bowling Green State University to clean up about four miles of river. Last year Hancock SWCD redesigned their annual meeting into a Community Day for people of all ages, including programs about native wildlife and stream monitoring sessions.

District programs are promoted on their website, through newspapers and a weekly radio program, and in their general newsletter and high quality educators' newsletter.

Congratulations to Hancock SWCD for their exemplary conservation education program.

First place honors in the elementary teacher category went to Mary Lee Minor from Crawford County, and Anna Creswell of Hardin Northern High School in Hardin County was named teacher of the year in the secondary grades category. Their programs will be highlighted in upcoming editions of *News & Views*. ■

August Education Workshop A Big Hit!

"Exploring the World at Your Doorstep"

More than 110 SWCD education specialists and partnering teachers came away from the 2003 August Education Workshop (August 12-14) at Deer Creek State Park with loads of new ideas for teaching about natural resources, agriculture, and conservation. This year's workshop, the 11th annual, focused heavily on activities that can be easily replicated in any schoolyard or classroom. Participants could also choose to visit several nearby farms and natural areas.

Sponsored by the Division and the OFSWCD Education and Communications Committee, the workshop drew district employees and teachers from 54 counties despite tight budgets and competition from county fairs and other events. Presenters included SWCD personnel, Ohio EPA's Environmental Education Fund, and ODNR divisions of Soil and Water Conservation, Parks and Recreation, Natural Areas and Preserves, and Wildlife.

Planning is well underway for the 2004 workshop, which will take place at Mohican State Park August 10-12, 2004. ■



ODNR botanist Jim McCormac led two "Field Botany" sessions at the 2003 Education Workshop at Deer Creek State Park.

Meet Your OFSWCD Executive Board

At the delegate session during the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts annual meeting in January, representatives from Ohio's 88 SWCDs voted to create an OFSWCD Executive Board, consisting of the officers and Area chairpersons.

The Area chairs also head up the OFSWCD's five standing committees. In the previous edition of News & Views we profiled Kent Stuckey (Area 1), Joe Glassmeyer (Area 4) and Lawrence Burdell (Area 5). In this edition we profile the chairs of the Education Committee and District Operations Committee.



David Rohrer Area 2

David is owner-operator of Davel Farms, Inc., which is a spin-off of Rohrer Farms, Inc. From 1961-2002 Dave was an owner-operator (along with his brother) in Rohrer Farms, which consisted of a 170-cow milk

herd and 1100 acres in potatoes (250 acres), corn, wheat and alfalfa. Rohrer Farms, Inc. has been in the family for five generations, and has won many awards, including 1st place Ohio Century Farm Program (1996) and Wayne County Goodyear Conservation Farmer Award (1985). The acreage was divided in 2003 and David is now involved primarily in grain farming. The farm is laid out in contour strips and most acreage is under no-till management.

A graduate of Goshen College with a degree in Business Administration, David and his wife Velda (who he met at Goshen) have three grown children. For the past two summers the Rohrers have spent several weeks in Europe visiting their daughter, who works in Germany. One surprise, David says, is the amount of European acreage devoted to wheat production.

David has served on the Wayne SWCD Board of Supervisors since 1987 and has held all offices. He was elected Area 2 Director in 2002, and since January of this year has served as chairman of the OFSWCD's District Operations Committee.



David Greer Area 3

Dave is part-owner of a 240 acre farm that's been in his family for five generations (since 1827) and has been under a soil conservation plan since 1947. A professional educator, he was a science teacher (physics,

chemistry, earth science) at Danville High School until his retirement in 2002, and coached the school's Envirothon teams from 1994-98. Dave was also an instructor (1999-2002) at the Central Ohio Technical College, where he developed and taught a new course on Environmental Science.

Dave is active on many fronts; he is secretary of the Heart of Ohio RC&D Council, serves on the Kokosing Scenic River Advisory Committee, is a charter member of the Knox County Chapter of Pheasants Forever, and serves on the board of Innovative Farmers of Ohio. As statewide Coordinator for OSU Extension's 4-H WHEP (Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program) he has developed instructional materials, facilitated coaches' workshops, conducted the Statewide Invitational Competition, and hosted the national contest in 2002. He's a member of EECO (Environmental Education Council of Ohio), SECO (Science Education Council of Ohio), and NSTA (National Science Teachers Association).

Like his father before him, Dave is a Knox SWCD supervisor. He's an Area 3 Director and Chair of the OFSWCD Education and Communications Committee.

Districts Taking Advantage of New Options for Providing Better Soils Information

By Tim Gerber, Administrator, Soil Inventory and Evaluation Section

An article entitled “New Options: Investing to Upgrade Soil Management Information” appeared in the July/August edition of News & Views. In it, I reported that the Clermont, Union, and Van Wert SWCDs had signed contracts with the Ohio Soil Inventory (OSI) Board to upgrade their pre-1979 soil survey publications. Since then, the Supervisors for the Henry, Miami, Montgomery, and Richland districts have requested that the OSI Board agencies develop “Supplement” publications for their customers, to upgrade soil management information in their outdated soil survey publications.

I also reported in that article that “SSURGO Digital Soil Survey” CDs were being developed for counties that had their soils information digitized and SSURGO-certified by NRCS. Since then, 13 districts have received copies of the CDs with text, tables, soil maps on 1994 aerial photography, and software to read the digital data. Five more districts are due to receive CDs with soils information for their counties by November 1. ODNR has contracted to have CDs generated for 17 more counties, as NRCS certifies the digital data for additional counties month-by-month. Additional capital improvement funding will be

requested to produce the CDs for each county as its digital data is certified.

A year ago, there were no plans to develop SSURGO Digital Soil Survey CDs for 15 districts, since their counties had not scheduled to participate in the Statewide Digital Soils Information (SDSI) Project. District Supervisors and staff in nine of those counties have worked to commit local funding to have their soils information digitized by 2006, with the benefit of a 4:1 match from state and federal funding. The remaining six districts are still working to obtain local funding to participate in the SDSI Project.



Division soil scientist Steve Miller demonstrated the capability and user-friendliness of Trumbull's Digital Soil Survey to ODNR Director Sam Speck during the Farm Science Review.

Future Options for Updating Soils Information

Before deciding to participate in the SDSI Project recently, the Henry District Board asked a good question: Would having their non-SSURGO digital data replaced with SSURGO make it possible for their 1974 soil survey publication to be updated or maintained continuously at no additional cost to the county? In my written response, I described options for updating soils information that were available to districts in the past and those that are available now. The future is unclear.

Fourteen districts took advantage of an option between 1982 and 1992 to have the OSI Board agencies (NRCS, ODNR, and OARDC) conduct field investigations in their counties to update their older soil surveys.

That option could not be offered after 1994 because of reduced funding for soil survey work.

Soil survey “Supplements” and SSURGO CD products are the best options for updating soils information for district customers today. OSI Board members believe that these are excellent options for 15 districts with pre-1979 soil survey publications and 18 districts that no longer have USDA soil survey publications in stock for distribution to customers. For the future, districts with SSURGO data for their county will be in a much better position to take advantage of options that new technology will offer, as long as state and federal funding for soil survey work continues. ■



Crawford SWCD chairperson Lisa Wurm accepts the Ohio Conservation Grand Award from OFSWCD president Tom Reininger.



Delaware SWCD chairperson Jim Sherman accepts the Ohio Conservation Grand Award from OFSWCD president Tom Reininger.

“Conservation Pride – Always a Hit!”

The Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts held its annual Summer Supervisors School in Toledo August 3-5. More than 400 SWCD supervisors and staff, NRCS, ODNR, and other agency representatives registered for the event, which featured 12 concurrent workshops on Monday and five field trip options on Tuesday in addition to OFSWCD committee meetings on Sunday, and Monday morning’s general session.

At the Awards Luncheon on Monday, a number of SWCDs and individuals were honored:

Ohio Conservation Award Program Grand Winners
Crawford SWCD, Delaware SWCD

Conservation Education Teacher-of-the-Year and
District-of-the-Year

Mary Lee Minor (Crawford SWCD) – Elementary Grades
Anna Creswell (Hardin SWCD) – Secondary Grades
Hancock SWCD (See page 3)

OASWCDE Scholarships

Sherry West Memorial Scholarship – Anthony Halley, son of Karen Halley (Pickaway SWCD education coordinator)
OASWCDE Continuing Education Scholarship – Lynda Adams (Shelby SWCD education coordinator)



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