

ON THE LAND

CUYAHOGA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

LEADING CONSERVATION IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE



Fall/Winter 2008, Issue 4

STOP TREATING SOIL LIKE DIRT

Just as the 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River sparked the Clean Water Act, the Dust Bowl of the 1930's created a demand for stricter conservation laws for soil. Eventually the laws encouraged the creation of local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) in every state.

Soil is one of our most precious resources. The September 2008 issue of National Geographic feature article "Where Food Begins" focuses on soil. The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History has a "Dig it! The Secretes of Soil" exhibit. Interest in the soil we walk,

grow, and build on is growing - and it should be.

We use soil to grow plants to feed us, to treat our waste with septic systems, and as a foundation

for our homes and buildings. Everyday we make choices that affect the soil beneath us. Yet we are losing soil at an alarming rate.

It takes hundreds of years to create an inch of soil and

when we lose topsoil to erosion we are losing the best part with the most organic matter. Most of that soil we lose we will never get back.

It's time we stopped treating our soil like dirt and work to conserve this resource. A good start is to get your soil tested.

Cuyahoga County's Water Quality Control Laboratory recently saved an organiza-

tion thousands of dollars in soil reconstruction costs. Instead of trucking tons of top soil for the purpose of growing grass, they had their soil tested by the Laboratory. By knowing what the soil was lacking enabled them to amend the soil through the addition of the proper nutrients, thus saving money (and soil) in the process. Soil testing can be done at anytime, but Spring and Fall are preferred. Contact the Water Quality Control Laboratory for more information: 216/443-8278.



Environmental Awareness Survey

Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District is encouraging Cuyahoga County residents to participate in a survey to help assess the level of awareness residents have with regard to common household activities and their potential impact on the quality of our local water resources.

Answers provided will serve as a tool to develop water quality educational materials for target audiences, and will help to determine appropriate methods to deliver educational messages.

Over time, the survey will help gauge the success of educational programs to ensure the effective spending of public funds.

Go to our website www.cuyahogawcd.org to participate in the survey.

To ensure a meaningful number of surveys are completed, the deadline to submit the survey is February 13, 2009.

It is requested that only one survey per household be completed and that only those who are at least 18 years of age and a head of the household participate in the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to assist the Cuyahoga SWCD with this effort, your participation is greatly appreciated. Results of the survey will be made public shortly after the deadline has passed.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Kathy King, President of the Cuyahoga County Chapter of the Ohio Horseman's Council says "Luckily we have participated in the EQIP program and the cost share program this year through the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). We are already enjoying the all weather paddocks and are looking forward to the completion of the manure storage container this month. We saw these items as not only ways for us to enjoy our property, keep our horses healthy and dry, but also as a way to be a good neighbor."

She added that we all need to do our part to keep water

systems clean and encourages members to spread the word about these programs.

EQIP supports production of agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, agricultural producers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

For more information contact Jim Storer at 216/524-6580, ext 11 or jim.storer@oh.usda.gov. EQIP is accepting applications for 2009.



Cuyahoga
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

EUCLID CREEK NEWS

Cuyahoga SWCD was awarded \$54,000 over three years to support the Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator position. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) provided state and federal funds, and Cuyahoga SWCD and the Euclid Creek Watershed Council (consisting of the Cities of Beachwood, Cleveland, Euclid, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield

Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid and the Village of Mayfield) provided the local match funds.

The initial grant was a six year grant that ends in 2008 and focused on writing a Watershed Action Plan for Euclid Creek which was endorsed by the state in 2006. The new three year grant will continue implementation of the watershed program by encouraging protection and restoration of critical natural resources, pro-

moting sustainable conservation development and redevelopment, and educating property owners about ways they can help the watershed.

To date, the program has leveraged \$2.2 million in local, state and federal money towards plans and projects to improve Euclid Creek. Contact Claire Posius, Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator at 216/524-6580, ext. 16 or cposius@cuyahogawcd.org

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM

Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District is now on Facebook! Facebook is a free on-line social networking site. Become a 'fan' of the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District and you will receive up to date information on our events, workshops and speaking engagements. If you have an account on Facebook, search for **Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District** - if you don't have an account, create one today and be a part of the Facebook network.

How can I make a difference for the Rocky River?

- 1. Educate Yourself.** Where are your local streams? How healthy are they? What are the main issues in your corner of the watershed? The Rocky River Watershed Action Plan is a good place to start. You can find it at www.myrockyriver.org/action_plan.htm.
- 2. Explore Your Local Rivers and Streams.** Aside from depending on it for drinking water or your livelihood, nothing builds appreciation for a river like getting up close and personal with it. Wade it. Fish it. Canoe it. Skip rocks in it. Picnic on its banks. Then share it with your friends and family, especially your kids. Just be sure not to trespass.
- 3. Implement Watershed-Friendly Practices around Your Home.** Non-point source pollution is often referred to as "death by a thousand cuts" because it is generated by diffuse, usually low intensity sources spread out over the landscape. Just like a solitary cut on your leg is not life-threatening, no single one of these sources by itself leads to water quality problems, but their cumulative effects are more than enough to degrade our rivers and streams. Each of us has an opportunity to apply our own personal "band-aid" to one of those thousand cuts by doing our part and making changes to how we manage our lawns and the storm water we generate. Testing our soil fertility to ensure that we don't over-fertilize our lawns and gardens; installing rain gardens and rain barrels to reduce the amount of storm water that flows off our rooftops, driveways and lawns when it rains; properly disposing of household hazardous wastes; picking up after our pets; and having our septic tanks pumped on a routine basis are all good places to start. Then multiply your efforts by spreading the word to your neighbors.
- 4. Join the Rocky River Watershed Council.** The RRWC and its partners work hard to protect and restore the Rocky River Watershed. Your membership and tax-deductible contributions directly support these efforts, and your participation in the RRWC's various activities further enhances the RRWC's capacity to improve the health of the Rocky River and its tributaries. www.myrockyriver.org

**And finally, remember that watershed stewardship does, in fact, start with you:
Only you can prevent non-point source pollution!**



**Cuyahoga
Soil and Water
Conservation District**

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Rocky River Watershed Council Annual Meeting

January 22, 2008 - 7:00 PM

Cleveland Metroparks
Rocky River
Nature Center

Come and see what the RRWC accomplished in 2008, and what 2009 will bring! In addition to the election of new Board Members, the featured presentation by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District will focus on their Storm Water Utility plans. All interested parties are encouraged to attend!

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District 59th Annual Meeting and Conservation Day Picnic

The pouring rain didn't deter over 100 people from joining us for our 59th Annual Meeting and Conservation Day Picnic. This year's event was held in the Euclid Creek Reservation at the Upper Highland Picnic Area.

In spite of the weather, we had a fantastic event and were able to highlight the agency's conservation programs and projects along with recognizing our awardees:

Bob Gardin, Friends of Big Creek - Conservationist of the Year

Ann Brokaw, Rocky River High School - Educator of the Year

Albin Weiler, National Wildlife Federation - Volunteer of the Year

We also recognized two individuals who provided

exemplary assistance to Cuyahoga SWCD throughout this year:

Joe Newman, City of Mayfield Heights resident and member of the Euclid Creek Public Education/Public Involvement Committee

Councilman Sean Brennan, City of Parma, Storm Drain Stenciling Project.



Bob Gardin, Jan Rybka, Al Weiler, Sean Brennan, Ann Brokaw

Activities throughout the day included a Stream Monitoring Training Session, led by Dr. Mike Nichols,

conservation partner exhibitor displays, and a Rain Barrel Workshop.

This year's event also served as the 6th Annual Euclid Creek Day and highlighted exciting projects in Euclid Creek. Attendees hiked to the East Branch Dam which is scheduled to be removed to allow for fish passage and stream restoration in the Summer of 2009. They also took a tour of City of South Euclid's Langerdale Retention Basin wetland retrofit project, and the City of Lyndhurst facilitated a rain garden planting at Schaeffer Park.

Special thanks to the Richmond Heights Key Club for cooking our picnic lunch and the Regina and Brush Environmental Clubs for helping with the rain garden.

We also held our annual meeting and election and we

are happy to announce that Pat Carey will be continuing on our board and we welcome Michael Emancipator who will begin his term on our board in January 2009.

On behalf of the Cuyahoga SWCD's Board of Supervisors and staff, we want to extend a very special thank you to Aimee Lane for her six years of dedicated service to the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Supervisors.

Thank you to everyone who attended our event and braved the rain! Next year is the 60th anniversary of the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District. Be sure to check our website for more events and programs that highlight 60 years of getting conservation on the ground in Cuyahoga County!

CUYAHOGA COUNTY HISTORICAL AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District is continuing to digitize our Cuyahoga County Historical Aerial Photographs. Currently, the 1951 and 1959 photos have been scanned and are able to be viewed on the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) website. Clients may access the CPL website from the following link - <http://www.cuyahogawcd.org/resources-mapping.htm>. Please note we currently have 1977, 1979, and 1988 in our office. Clients should call 216/524-6580, ext 10 to schedule an appointment to view aerial photographs. The office is open Monday - Friday, excluding holidays, from 8:00am - 4:00pm.

Public Involvement - Public Education RAIN BARRELS - Save the Rain for a Sunny Day!!

Cuyahoga SWCD had an enormous response to our rain barrel workshops this year. We will be hosting more workshops starting in the spring so be sure to check our website and sign up as these sell out quickly. A rain barrel is a container used to collect and store rainwater that would otherwise be lost to runoff and likely diverted to a storm drain. Collected water may then be used to water lawns and gardens.



Rain Barrel being made at a workshop held at the Rocky River Nature Center

DID YOU KNOW?

- Installing a rain barrel helps with water conservation as 60% of our municipal water supply goes directly to watering our lawns.
- Rain barrels help with protection of local watersheds. Seventy million pounds of pesticides are applied to lawns each year, contaminating storm water (rainwater) runoff.
- The water collected in a rain barrel provides a source of natural gardening - using rainwater to water your garden is natural and healthy. Plants and beneficial microbes in the soil like rainwater because it is naturally soft - free of chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals.

For more information, contact Amy Roskilly, Conservation Education Coordinator at 216/524-6580, ext 22 or aroskilly@cuyahogawcd.org

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SCHOOL SCOOPS

Cool Tools for Effective Environmental Education

ENVIROTHON:

On October 8, 2008, over 200 students from 14 different high schools braved the rain and cold to participate in the Quad County Envirothon held at the Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) Squire Valleevue and Valley Ridge Farms. This year's event was hosted by Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, and Ashtabula County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The Quad County Envirothon is held each Fall so students can get

an idea about what Envirothon is all about and practice at the five eco-stations - Soils, Forestry, Aquatics, Wildlife, and Current Environmental Issues (Biodiversity in a Changing World is the 2009 theme).

The Canon Envirothon is a unique outdoor team event designed to stimulate, reinforce, and enhance interest in the environment and natural resources. With the mission of developing knowledgeable, skilled, and dedicated citizens

who carry the conservation ethic throughout their lives, the Envirothon is an effective way to link students with hands-on land stewardship.

Thank you to CWRU Squire Valleevue and Valley Ridge Farms and to all the presenters who braved the rain as well.

www.envirothon.org
www.cuyahogawcd.org



Todd Houser from Cuyahoga SWCD, instructs students on soils at the Quad County Envirothon

**Area 2 Envirothon competition will be held on
April 29, 2009 at Camp Asbury in Hiram, OH.
Packets will be delivered to schools early 2009.
Check our website for more information.**