



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

The mission of the Cuyahoga SWCD is to advocate and implement best management practices for conservation of land and aquatic resources in a developed environment through education, stewardship and technical assistance.

Highlights 2016

- ❖ National grant recipient for urban agriculture
- ❖ Technical assistance provided to two additional communities
- ❖ Two national webinar presentations
- ❖ Web-based field applications initiated
- ❖ Strategic Plan updated
- ❖ Recognized by Ohio Environmental Education Fund for 2 outstanding projects
- ❖ Recognized by the National Wildlife Federation for the Backyard Habitat Stewards program

CUYAHOGA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) marked its 67th year as a key promoter of natural resource protection in Cuyahoga County. Established in 1949 as a political subdivision of the state of Ohio and organized in Cuyahoga County, the Cuyahoga SWCD was first on the scene in promoting the importance of the county's soil and water resources. Beginning in January, Ohio's SWCDs began operating under the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ORC 940) with the oversight of the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission and in partnership with the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The Cuyahoga SWCD is led by five elected Supervisors and three Associate Supervisors, and a professional staff of eight full-time and three part-time staff. A grant from the National

Association of Conservation Districts with additional board support funded a part-time Horticulture Specialist to tackle issues related to urban agriculture that were identified by stakeholders during the annual Local Work Group meeting.

Early in the year, the Board updated the Strategic Plan that provides direction for 2016-2019 and beyond. The strategic priorities in the Plan are:

- Advocate for and provide urban soil and water conservation services and programs
- Work in cooperation with other public/private entities to assist in the achievement of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) targets for impaired local watersheds, as well as providing significant assistance in meeting the bi-national targets to be established for the conservation of Lake Erie
- Establish and maintain strategic alliances to advance soil and water conservation
- Expand the organizational capacity of Cuyahoga SWCD
- Increase community and stakeholder awareness of Cuyahoga SWCD

Cuyahoga SWCD's central work effort focused on assisting communities and landowners within the county. Currently, 28 communities, encompassing 80% of the county's population, have working agreements with the SWCD. These communities rely on the SWCD's expertise to implement their mandated stormwater pollution prevention programs. In 2016, Cleveland Heights and Westlake established working agreements for technical assistance related to stormwater pollution prevention. Funding provided by the communities and the annual subsidy from Cuyahoga County, and funded by the State of Ohio has allowed the SWCD to provide pollution prevention services. Additional funding is provided through grants for water quality improvement projects, stream and habitat restoration projects and educational projects. Implementing the annual goals is the staff's top priority. Aided by strong collaborative partnerships with local communities, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other public agencies, watershed organizations, seasonal interns and volunteers the 2016 programs focused on increasing the understanding of best environmental practices and encouraging behavioral changes to help get those practices on the ground.

Conservation Education Program

Cuyahoga SWCD has educated the public about soil and water resources since its inception in 1949. Education is provided through a variety of programs, workshops, events, and written materials with a goal of reaching diverse audiences where they live, work and play.

In 2016, the Cuyahoga SWCD implemented comprehensive public involvement and public education programs for twenty-six communities. The 2016 theme, **“Lake Erie Starts Here,”** was chosen to help increase awareness about the fragility of Lake Erie and the importance of incorporating best practices for pollution prevention into daily routines. Increased environmental literacy helps lay the foundation for good environmental practices that protect our soil and water resources.

From developing the annual Outreach Strategy for each community to program delivery, county residents have many opportunities to learn about pollution prevention and get involved in pollution prevention activities. Programs such as the perennially-popular rain barrel workshops or stream clean ups were coordinated. More than 350 rain barrels were built and distributed through the rain barrel workshops that were held in various locations. Stream cleanups and habitat enhancement projects, which engaged hundreds of volunteers, were also held throughout the county.

Educational materials, such as the *On The Land* newsletters, fact sheets and web tips were distributed to communities each quarter. Communities also received the “Lake Erie Starts Here” poster. The “Lake Erie Starts Here” brochure was mailed to nearly 40,000 households within the county.



2016 Big Creek Watershed Cleanup Brooklyn Site

Other activities were developed based on each community's requests. Programs or events included teacher workshops, stream monitoring, stream clean ups, tree plantings and storm drain stenciling. Good conservation ensues when the public gets involved in environmental programs and events.

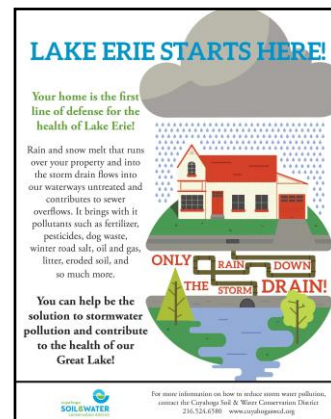
In 2016, staff coordinated and participated in 250 activities. The success of the various programs and activities was possible due to collaboration with numerous state and local

partner initiatives, such as the Cleveland Tree Coalition, Central Lake Erie Basin Collaborative, Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership, Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council and Ohio Farm Bureau Advisory Committee. An estimated 80,000 people were directly reached through the 2016 work effort.

In an effort to build upon the SWCD's long term riparian buffers initiatives, the staff participated in the Tree Stewards Training. The added knowledge about how to properly plant and care for trees will contribute to expanding the regional effort to protect and restore a healthy and sustainable tree canopy in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

Lake Erie Starts Here

Everyone lives in a watershed, and in Cuyahoga County everyone lives in the Lake Erie watershed. Because of this watershed connection, our activities at home, at school at work and throughout the community directly impact not only Lake Erie, but also our local waterways. Cuyahoga SWCD educated thousands



of people throughout the year with the help of written materials, rain barrel workshops and green cleaning workshops, and activities such as stream cleanups and habitat projects. In an effort to connect landowners to the environment, increase biodiversity with native plants, and aid in protecting pollinators, like bees and butterflies, the SWCD sold five varieties of seed packets. With grants from the Ohio Department of Agriculture – Division of Soil and Water Conservation, two native plant gardens were installed in Garfield Heights and Brooklyn.



Native Plant Garden in Garfield Heights

Visit our website for events and conservation education tips!
www.cuyahogaswcd.org

Euclid Creek and Rocky River Watershed Programs

The Euclid Creek and Rocky River watershed programs are aimed at protecting, restoring and perpetuating healthy watersheds through watershed planning, public education and collaboration among the watersheds' many stakeholders. Charged with implementing the state-endorsed watershed action plans (non-point pollution source implementation plans), the staff seeks funding and works with a variety of partners to address impairments in their watersheds through special projects, ongoing environmental education programs and events.

In the **Euclid Creek Watershed**, restoration work started on the largest restoration project in the upper watershed at Acacia Reservation in Lyndhurst. Cleveland Metroparks hired Biohabitats and Meadville Construction to implement the \$1.9 million stream restoration, daylighting and wetland drainage swale project on the Main Branch of Euclid Creek at the former golf course.

Monitoring continues on completed watershed projects to ensure project success - from restoration monitoring at the Lacustrine Wetland and Stream Restoration project at Wildwood Park, to invasive plant management at several conserved properties in Richmond Heights. Each year it is confirmed that stream restoration projects don't just end once the construction is done as is evident from a grant received from Dominion and Western Reserve Land Conservancy to conduct an ecological management plan on the conserved Dusty Goldenrod site in Highland Heights. The management plan will layout steps for best protecting the state endangered plant located on the property and any management actions needed.

Obtaining grant funds for projects is important. This year a proposal was submitted for a stream restoration project behind the Willoughby-Eastlake School of Innovation in Willoughby Hills that if funded will provide an outdoor learning land lab for the students.

Additional program accomplishments included:

- Volunteer Monitoring, six sites monthly
- The 2nd Annual Watershed Summit (52 attendees)
- Technical Assistance provided to 15 residents regarding land and drainage issues
- Community technical assistance related to local stormwater-related ordinances
- Watershed Riparian Planting projects and targeted mailing to 1,500 streamside property owners
- Ecological Inventory initiative
- Stream and park cleanups (4)

- Pollinator Garden installation with girl scouts
- Day in the Life of Euclid Creek Event (121 participants)
- Watershed Presentations - to 2 community groups
- Watershed Signage – fabricated signs for four tributaries
- Rain Barrel, Composting & Green Cleaning workshops (5)
- Watershed Display – participated in 4 community events

In total 892 volunteers contributed a total of 2,006 hours of time to the Euclid Creek Watershed program installing trees and native plants, pulling invasive plants, water quality monitoring, attending watershed meetings, tabling events, and more! This is a monetary value of \$47,273 to the program!

On the western side of the county, the **Rocky River Watershed Program** is equally robust. The Rocky River watershed encompasses 16 municipalities and 14 townships in rural, suburban and urban communities. This provides opportunities to implement farm-related pollution prevention programs, as well as the usual programs that Cuyahoga SWCD administers.

Activities in the Rocky River watershed during 2016 included:

- A Five Star grant was awarded to the SWCD and Rocky River Watershed Council for small projects that will include floodplain wetland/vernal pool creation and stormwater control measures. Project partners include NASA-Glenn Research Center, Fairview and Berea High Schools.
- Cuyahoga SWCD was awarded a \$16,500 Coastal Management Assistance Grant through the ODNR Office of Coastal Management for the Retrofitting the Rocky project, which will update previous studies and identify stormwater retrofit opportunities in existing detention and retention basins in four priority sub-watersheds.
- A three-year \$400,000 grant from the Great Lakes Commission to reduce sediment loading in the Rocky River Watershed was completed with the installation of vegetative streambank stabilization practices at 3 residential properties along Baldwin Creek in North Royalton. The project focused on three target sub-watersheds with known sediment issues—Baldwin Creek, Mallet Creek and Plum Creek (Olmsted Falls). The Rocky River's current sediment load of 70,560 tons/year, or 240 tons/year per square mile, is 15 times the estimated background, predevelopment sediment load of 4704 tons/year or 16 tons/year per square mile. Projects to

reduce sediment included grassed waterways and cover crop installation and streambank stabilization.

- The Extreme Makeover: Hinckley Stables Edition project to repair a headcut and channel instability in an ephemeral channel upstream of a Brook Trout population in Hinckley Reservation was completed, reducing the impacts of excessive sediment on this sensitive, high quality ecosystem. This \$40,000 project was funded through Ohio EPA's SWIF grant program.
- The creation of streamside forests continues to be a priority for the Rocky River Watershed Program. Through the Bucks for Buffers Riparian Reverse Auction Pilot Program, funded by a Lake Erie Protection Fund grant, streamside landowners in the watershed were encouraged to *Reforest the Rocky* through incentives for tree plantings along streambanks, leading to the reforestation of 2.5 acres/3000 lineal feet of streambank on 20 properties in the Abram Creek and Baldwin Creek sub-watersheds. Additional partnerships with the Rocky River Watershed Council, Boy Scout Troop 192 and Bethel Temple Christian Church in Parma resulted in an additional acre of riparian reforestation along Baldwin Creek in Parma.



Riparian tree planting in the Rocky River Watershed

Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program

As a non-regulatory public service, the Cuyahoga SWCD Storm Water Program is focused on developing and implementing better methods to help guide planning, design, construction and maintenance of water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs) on active construction sites. As the permit that communities and contractors operate under evolves, so has the District's program which is implemented on behalf of 17 communities and the county. Recently, the City of South Euclid passed an ordinance requiring project developers to have their stormwater pollution prevention plans reviewed by the SWCD.

This was quite an active year for the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District Stormwater Program. The year started out with a rollout of a new field reporting application. The

stormwater staff worked through some initial growing pains but ultimately embraced the new application and convenience it provides. With the help of this application the stormwater staff was able to mount some impressive numbers.

- 2,023 stormwater site inspections on 276 distinct projects.
- 297 stormwater pollution prevention plan reviews on 144 distinct projects
- 118 new project starts
- 76 project completions

What cannot be gleaned from the numbers is the synergy and gains that the new field reporting application has brought to the table. The new system has enabled Cuyahoga SWCDs inspectors to spend more one-on-one time with project managers in the field. The increased interaction has allowed our inspectors to forge professional relationships allowing for in-the-field educational opportunities and assistance. The overall effect is better compliance with NPDES regulations and ultimately a cleaner environment.

Even though the staff was busy with day to day inspections and reviews they still found time to provide training opportunities in a number of ways.

- Conducted **3** Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) funded training sessions on post-construction stormwater control measure maintenance.
- Hosted **3** Stormwater Tool-Box Talks aimed at bringing manufacturers and practitioners together to discuss innovative new products
- Coordinated and participated in **1** all day workshop focused on Erosion and Sediment controls hosted by Northeast Ohio Stormwater Training Council.
- Disseminated **17** Stormwater Technical Tip e-blasts to our professional network focused providing short but insightful information to keep professionals engaged with stormwater management.
- Delivered a presentation at StormCon 2016 in Indianapolis, IN. StormCon is the national convention for stormwater professionals.

The "education always" principle is what allows our stormwater staff to help change the culture and conversation regarding stormwater management from simply a required regulation to a sound environmental protection practices that are understood and embraced by professionals.

Long Term Operations & Maintenance Program

Cuyahoga SWCD initiated the long term operation and maintenance program in 2009. Typically, the program is included in the Stormwater Program. In 2016, two entities asked the SWCD to implement the program for them. Currently the program goes beyond annual inspections to include geo-locating the stormwater control measures (SCMs) and much-needed educational outreach to the property owners and managers. Staff now takes the approach of assessing the functionality of SCMs, such as bio-retention basins, and providing reports to the communities and SCM owners. These reports include maintenance checklists and “how-to” fact sheets to help guide owners through the inspection and maintenance process.

This year, in addition to inspecting and reporting on the functionality of 660 SCMs, Cuyahoga SWCD staff provided training to 14 municipal service department staff and 5 homeowners associations related to long term care and maintenance of the SCMs. The training was aimed at increasing awareness about the post construction SCMs because of their importance to water quality. The training was done in conjunction with the City of Cleveland.

The “Maintaining Stormwater Control Measures” reference guide was distributed to communities and homeowners associations.

Landowner Assistance

As Cuyahoga County becomes more impervious, and the frequency and intensity of storms increases, the SWCD is flooded with calls for assistance. To help better track and professionalize report of landowner site visits, the staff created a reporting tool that enables the ability to create a report from the field. All reports have a uniform look and sites can be mapped. Assistance was provided, at no cost, to 142 landowners on issues related to streambank erosion, urban agriculture, soils, and drainage.

Conservation Easements

Cuyahoga SWCD holds conservation easements on 266 acres of land in 13 communities. These easements protect sensitive wetland and streamside areas. With assistance from interns, the staff conducted field inspections to ensure that the easements remain protected and in their natural state, and if not, the staff worked with property owners to restore the areas affected by unapproved changes. Using the Fulcrum tool in the field makes easement monitoring much easier, especially in trying to find the easement markers.

Special Projects

The SWCD staff looks for funding from a number of sources and seeks partners to help with a variety of projects.



*Stearns Homestead projects:
Heavy use pad and
tree planting*

Heavy Use Pad and Riparian Stream Plantings

Cuyahoga SWCD, Cuyahoga Farm Bureau and Natural Resources Conservation Service provided a workshop and demonstration about controlling sedimentation on farms with the installation of a heavy use pad. The installation took place on the historic Stearn's Homestead in Parma. Volunteers also helped plant four different varieties of trees and shrubs along a headwaters tributary to Big Creek.



*Justin Husher was hired to
assist urban farmers and
develop a plan to increase
the productivity of urban
farms.*

Urban Agriculture

When Cleveland embraced the concept of urban agriculture in the early 2000's, people of all ages joined the movement. Then in 2012, the USDA NRCS initiated the Seasonal High Tunnel Program, which provided cost share funding for seasonal high tunnels to help farmers extend the growing season. Currently, there are almost 75 high tunnels that have been installed. Unfortunately, some of the high tunnels have been abandoned and plans are underway to salvage some of those abandoned structures. In July, the National Association of Conservation Districts awarded one of the first-ever urban agriculture grants to the Cuyahoga SWCD, which enables the SWCD to provide technical expertise for urban agriculture endeavors throughout the county.

2016 ANNUAL MEETING

Funders

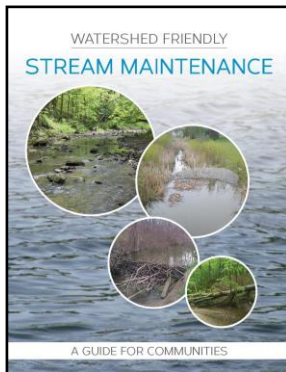
Most of the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District's funding is provided through working agreements with communities within the county. Funds are also received through the Cuyahoga County General Fund and the State of Ohio. Education programs, urban agriculture, soil health, habitat restoration, tree planting, stream bank stabilization and water quality improvement projects are funded in part or implemented in collaboration with other government entities, nonprofit organizations, donations, garden clubs and environmental funds.

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

The Cuyahoga SWCD is proud of its long-standing relationship with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS staff worked with numerous landowners to address resource concerns, especially related to soil loss and water quality, and to connect landowners with funding for conservation practices. NRCS has funded and assisted with installation of **69** high tunnels.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Division of Soil and Water Resources and Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) recognized two grant-funded projects implemented by the Cuyahoga SWCD. "Watershed-Friendly Stream Maintenance for Communities" and the Northeast Ohio Public Involvement Public Education (NEOPIPE) work group's "Stormwater Pollution Solutions" banner project were selected as outstanding projects. Staff utilizes the Stream Friendly Maintenance Guide and the Stormwater Education banners in its outreach efforts.



This year's annual meeting was held at the Ohio Aerospace Institute in Brook Park and featured a special presentation about the efforts to protect and restore the Rocky River watershed. Whitney Long of Shaker Heights was elected to serve on the Board of Supervisors for the 2017-2019 term.



*Newly elected Supervisor,
Whitney Long*

2016 Conservation Heroes

In addition to the annual election of Supervisors, the Annual Meeting celebrates people who are dedicated to conservation efforts. This year's *Conservation Heroes* were selected for their commitment to promoting good practices—in the classroom and in the field. The board and staff recognized and thanked the following Conservation Heroes for their contributions to conservation and the environment:

Conservationist of the Year – Lee Gase of Westake

Cooperators of the Year - Brooklyn Centre Naturalists

Gloria Ferris and Sharon Martynowski of Cleveland

Educator of the Year - Colleen Sliwinski from Fairview Park High School.



*Verna Biemel presents the
Educator of the Year award
to Colleen Sliwinski;*



*Elizabeth Hiser & Jan Rybka
with Lee Gase,
Conservationist of the Year;*

*Jan Rybka, Rep. Bill Patmon
with Gloria Ferris and
Sharon Martynowski-
Cooperators of the Year*

Board of Supervisors

The Cuyahoga SWCD Board of Supervisors are volunteers elected to three year terms. Members share their time and talents to set policy and assist staff in program implementation. Board members supported and assisted with the 2016 community outreach efforts, including the Speaker's Bureau, outreach to local legislators, data review and developing position statements.

Ruth Skuly.....Chair
Howard Maier.....Vice Chair
Ted Esborn.....Secretary
Jeremiah Swetel.....Fiscal Agent/Treasurer
Rachel Webb.....Member

Associate Supervisors

Each year the Board appoints associate supervisors. These volunteers provided expanded our capacity and better enabled Cuyahoga SWCD board and staff to meet and exceed the 2015 goals. Their time and service was extremely important to increasing our ability to get conservation on the ground.

Kathleen Bradley - Patricia Carey - Dorothy Hazel

Cuyahoga SWCD Staff

Cuyahoga SWCD staff had a successful year. The work program expanded, staff expertise increased and efficiencies were made for better delivery of our services. The staff's passion for the environment and commitment to Cuyahoga SWCD's mission supported ongoing conservation efforts that protected land and aquatic resources.

Janine Rybka.....District Administrator
Jared Bartley.....Rocky River Watershed Coordinator
Megan DavidAdministrative Assistant
Brent Eysenbach.....Stormwater Program Coordinator
Elizabeth Hiser.....Natural Resources Coordinator
Kelly Parker.....Urban Conservationist
Claire Posius.....Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator
Carla RegenerStormwater Specialist
Amy Roskilly.....Conservation Education Specialist
Brian White.....Urban Conservationist
Lynette Harmon.....District Conservationist, NRCS

Program Interns 2016

The board and staff appreciates the 2016 program assistants who helped with research, stream monitoring and conservation education.

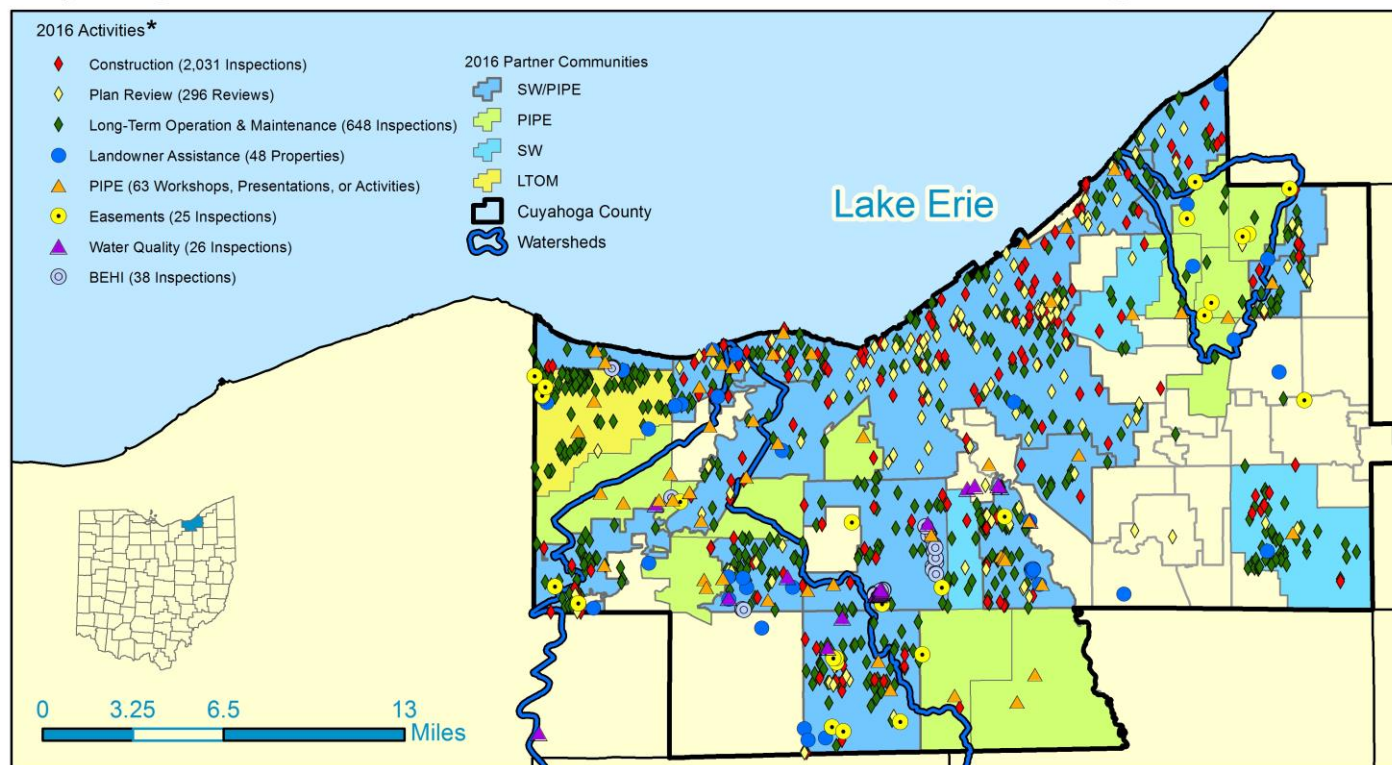
Adam Delaney - Allison Dumas
Anne Roberto - Augustina Odenbrett

Cash Basis 2016

RECEIPTS	DISTRICT FUND	SPECIAL FUND
Taxes		
Grants:		
Local Government		476,700
State Government		267,129
Federal Government		
Sale of Products/Materials	6,402	
All Other Revenue	699,965	
TOTAL RECEIPTS	706,367	743,829
DISBURSEMENTS		
Salaries		523,209
Supplies	537	3,701
Equipment	7,312	32,006
Contract Services/Cost Share Payments	186,103	17,514
Office Rent		16,500
Travel & Expenses	1,496	6,282
Advertising/Printing	13,558	18,503
PERS		73,004
Worker's Comp		
Unemployment Compensation		
Hospitalization		
Medicare		
Product/Materials for Resale	11,827	
Other (postage, printing, county indirect fees, insurance & bonds, phone, fax, internet, dues)	39,086	140,457
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	259,919	831,176
Total Receipts Over/(Under)	446,448	(87,347)



Cuyahoga SWCD Partner Communities and Watershed Programs



* Monthly Construction Inspections, Multiple Construction Plan Reviews Per Site, Annual Long-Term Operation & Maintenance Inspections, Annual Easement Monitoring
Partner Community Programs: SW = Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Review, Construction Site Inspections, and Long-Term Operation & Maintenance Inspections,
LTOM = Long-Term Operation and Maintenance, PIPE = Public Involvement and Public Education Programs, County Programs: Landowner Assistance and Easement Monitoring

Check out our website at www.cuyahogaswcd.org

Cuyahoga SWCD is an equal opportunity employer and provider