



ON THE LAND

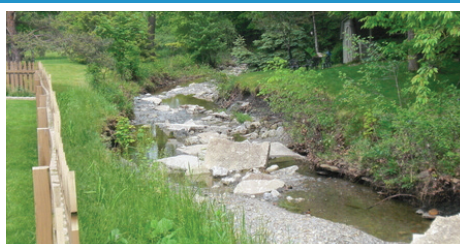
SUMMER 2022

So you want to buy a house? Natural Resource Issues to Consider When Buying or Building a Home

Part of what we do at Cuyahoga SWCD is to respond to landowner requests for assistance related to natural resource issues such as flooding, erosion and poor drainage. Sometimes there's a relatively simple fix – stop mowing right up to the edge of the stream, for example. But other times a more complex, a.k.a. expensive, solution is required.

From constructing costly streambank stabilization practices in order to protect a house or garage that is 10 feet from a streambank, to creating drainage swales, or attempting to sell a house that has been repeatedly flooded or recently classified as in the FEMA 100-year floodplain, homeowners who don't do their homework up front with regard to potential natural resources issues on the property they are considering buying or building on may end up paying for it later. Often, these problems could have been avoided with a little extra planning or investigation before a home was purchased or built.

That's why it was refreshing to get two calls recently from people doing their homework. In the first case, a county resident was considering purchasing a home adjacent to a creek. She had gone to the city and obtained a flood map, but she still had questions. Who is responsible



A backyard creek eroding closer to the fenceline

for clearing out any log jams? Would she be able to build a shed? What additional questions should she ask the city and the current owner (she was not aware of the city's riparian setback ordinance and how it might affect changes she might want to make to the property, for instance)?

In the second case, another resident was considering purchasing a lot in order to build a house. However, he had noticed that water drained slowly there, often seeing small pools



Drainage issues can be a homeowner's nightmare of standing water days after it rained. He had paid for a soil test and wanted help interpreting the results. It turned out that the soil conditions were very limiting for building a house, especially one with a basement. The resident then indicated he would continue searching for a more

appropriate building site.

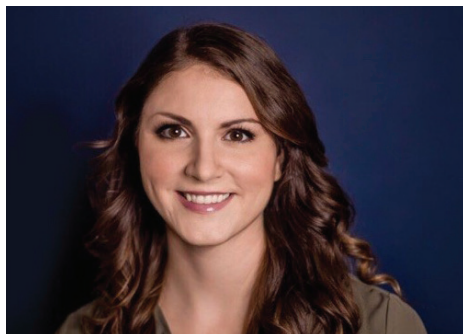
In both of these cases, the residents saved themselves the time, money and frustration of dealing with natural resources concerns that could have at least been better understood, if not altogether avoided, just by doing a little extra work up front.

A Short List of Natural Resource Issues to Consider When Buying or Building a Home:

- Is it in a floodplain?
- Is it within a riparian setback as established by city ordinance?
- Is there a conservation easement or other deed restriction in place?
- Are any buildings or infrastructure within 25 feet of a river, creek or stream? Any eroding streambanks?
- Are there steep slopes that could potentially fail or otherwise affect your plans for the property?
- What type of soil is present? Does the soil drain well?
- Are there perched or seasonal high water tables?
- Is there a sanitary sewer connection, or a septic tank?
- If there is a septic tank, how old is it? When was it last inspected? What were the results?

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Welcome Cuyahoga SWCD's New Staff



Kairsten Nitsch
Watershed Coordinator

After receiving her BA in International Relations with a minor in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, Kairsten did work in refugee community gardens, permaculture farms, and as a community resource manager in Chicago. She spent the past three years supporting community development, water equity, and water affordability initiatives throughout Cleveland.

Kairsten is currently pursuing her master's degree in Urban Planning and Development with a specialization in Environmental Sustainability at Cleveland State University.

She volunteered both as a Zoo Crew teen volunteer at the Cleveland MetroParks Zoo for four years, and as a current Cleveland MetroParks Watershed Volunteer Program participant. In 2020 she was certified as a Watershed Steward and participated in the Master Rain Gardener course by Cuyahoga SWCD.

Kairsten lives in Lakewood near the Rocky River Reservation and can be found kayaking, hiking, or camping with her partner and dog, or spending time with her foster puppies. She is excited to be joining the Cuyahoga SWCD staff as a Watershed Coordinator, supporting environmental justice, education, and conservation efforts.



Kate Chapel
Watershed Coordinator

Kate grew up in the Chagrin River watershed before pursuing a bachelor's degree in botany at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. From there, she earned her master's in conservation ecology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor where she discovered a love for watersheds and has been working for watershed-based organizations ever since.

She's excited to bring her skills and knowledge to Cuyahoga SWCD, the Euclid Creek watershed, and the Master Rain Gardener Program. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, foraging, reading, and hiking with her fur-niece.



Juliet Tonkin
Stormwater Intern

Juliet is excited to return to Cuyahoga SWCD. She interned briefly during high school through Youth Opportunities Unlimited, and absolutely loved her time here!

Juliet is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science

from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. At school, she is a guide at the Gillespie Museum, a rock and mineral museum on campus and also enjoys exploring Florida's natural areas on runs with her cross-country team.

She is happy to be back home for the summer and is having fun conducting inspections and learning more about stormwater management.



Kipp Dietrich
NOWCorps Member

Kipp graduated from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse in the spring of 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology with an Environmental Science concentration. In the fall of 2021, he joined the NOWCorps program, which focuses on watershed health in northeastern Ohio hoping it would give him some real-life experience and help decide what type of work he would want to do in the future.

Kipp had originally served at Tinker's Creek Watershed Partners as a Watershed Steward, and is now at Cuyahoga SWCD. Kipp looks forward to learning about a different branch in the environmental field, assisting with the water quality monitoring program, and participating in all of the exciting events before his service year ends in September.

Upcoming Construction General Permit Renewal

The current Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) General Permit Authorization for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activity Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is set to expire in April 2023.

This permit is commonly referred to as the Construction General Permit (OHC000005). As part of the renewal process, the OEPA Division of Surface Water conducts outreach activities designed to solicit comments from the public on provisions of the permit that may need to be revised, new additions, or even items that should be considered for removal.

Cuyahoga SWCD is fortunate to occupy a place in the industry, due to our work with municipalities and stormwater management, where we are invited to provide comments during the early stakeholder outreach portion of the renewal process. This gives Cuyahoga SWCD an opportunity to provide insight on provisions of the permit that may need to be revised or clarified and even advance new items that we would like to see addressed in the renewed permit.

Over the next year there will certainly be lots of discussion about the provisions of the next general permit. For now, some of the items that Cuyahoga SWCD is offering for consideration are as follows: 1) Clarify how municipalities and plan reviewers should interpret land use conditions for redevelopment projects. Should redevelopment projects use the pervious/impervious area calculations of the previous development or base the pervious/impervious calculations on the land use cover at the time of the applying



2016 – Previous Condition: Building scheduled for demolition



2022 – Existing Condition: Demo complete & site is grassed

Sites where historic structures have been demolished may be considered either “redevelopment” or “new development” depending on the current interpretation of the permit language.

for a permit for the redevelopment? (see photo above)

Clarification on this topic would resolve the ambiguity that is encountered specifically when there is a time gap between demolition of the previous structures and redevelopment of the new project.



New development can disturb existing stormwater BMPs-like this bioretention basin-which can become damaged or overloaded due to the changing layout of the site.

2) Clarify what municipalities are required to do when a project with an existing water quality facility is proposed for redevelopment. The general permit typically allows redevelopment projects to only provide 20% of the calculated water quality volume.

This reduced water quality volume requirement is seen as an incentive to encourage redevelopment over new development of greenfield sites. The concern is that a legacy water quality facility which had been providing 100% water quality treatment to a development could be degraded when that site develops. While there is no great answer right now some possibilities include providing 120% water quality treatment to

further advance water quality goals or simply requiring 100% water quality treatment again so that nothing is gained or lost.

3) Finally, in older cities that have a combined sewer system a goal is often to “off-load” stormwater from the system to minimize flooding and overflow events. In these situations, sanitary flow from a redevelopment project is sent to the combined sewer while stormwater flows are diverted to a stormwater only pipe and eventually into the environment.

The concern is that while a project that is off-loading stormwater may meet the conditions of a redevelopment project, it is in fact creating new untreated stormwater flows. Should projects that meet this description provide the incentivized 20% water quality volume or should they be required to provide 100% water quality volume since the stormwater flows are new to the environment?

Over the next year the staff at Cuyahoga SWCD will research and discuss these questions, while staying engaged with the Construction General Permit renewal process. The goal is to help craft an easily understandable permit that will comprehensively address water quality goals and protect our waterways for fishable and swimmable uses.

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SAVE THE DATE
November 10, 2022
Cuyahoga SWCD
Annual Meeting
& Supervisor
Election

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Envirothon

Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation competition for high school students sponsored by the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The students learn about aquatics, forestry, soil, wildlife and one current environmental issue. As they test their knowledge on these topics, students also learn problem solving, teamwork and leadership skills- not to mention getting some fun hands-on experience outdoors!

On April 28th, Envirothon teams from all over northeast Ohio gathered for the Area 2 Envirothon. Students had the chance to enjoy a sunny day on the campus of Kent State University-Salem while tackling challenges like analyzing the layers in a soil pit or identifying invasive



Students in the soil pit at Envirothon

species. Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School finished in the top three and went on to do us proud representing Cuyahoga County at the Ohio Envirothon on June 6th and 7th.

Interested in forming an Envirothon team? Cuyahoga SWCD can assist teams by providing preparation kits or in-person trainings.

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Are You NUTS?



Students sort out various seeds to start trees.

Native Urban Tree Starters (NUTS) is a program that actively involves students in the process of restoring the tree canopy in Cuyahoga County. Students help gather tree seeds, prepare them for germination, sprout them and finally plant them out. Activities can be tailored to the needs of a school, class or other organizations, including a variety of subject areas.

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