



# ON THE LAND

## FALL 2015

### CHEERS TO GOOD CONSERVATION

*Written by Janine Rybka,  
District Administrator  
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This year started with a fresh brand and updated website, and finished with the addition of new staff, expanded programs, better collaboration and the addition of three communities now utilizing Cuyahoga SWCD's services for pollution prevention program services.

The storm water program staff's efforts, including better dialog with operators and better reporting

methods, has resulted in fewer "notices of deficiency" on active construction sites. This year, 270 storm water pollution prevention plan reviews were done, and as of November 20th, 1,678 inspections and reports regarding active construction sites were done. An expanded long-term operations and maintenance program now provides reports and training assistance to individual landowners and community staff, which helps to ensure that site-specific storm water facilities continue to function as intended. This year reports were

provided for 764 storm water facilities on 430 sites - a number that will continue to grow.

Conservation education and training, which have always been a primary functions of Cuyahoga SWCD, focused on timely and consistent messages that addressed local and regional pollution concerns. Timely messages identified pollution issues and presented practical solutions. Workshops helped to build skills and promote positive changes in behavior.

*continued on Page 3*

### THE VALUE OF A PRE-CONSTRUCTION MEETING



*Written by Brent Eysenbach,  
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A construction project is serious business. The developer is committing a lot of time and capital in: land acquisition, technical consultant fees, environmental investigations, permits, construction, and more. In the end the expectation is that the project will be completed in a timely manner, on or near budget, and with few, if any, surprises. Cuyahoga SWCD, through our cooperative

agreements with local municipalities, has a place in the construction process and an opportunity to contribute to the overall success of the project.

Cuyahoga SWCD staff members invest substantial time and effort into new construction projects starting during the early stages of a project. Often, the process begins with a preliminary conversation about what types of Best Management Practices (BMPs) are ideal for the project and site. Those preliminary discussions lead to a review of the erosion & sediment control plan and the post-construction storm water management plan. Collectively these are referred to as the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3).

Staff members then conduct monthly inspections to ensure the SWP3 is being implemented appropriately. Toward the end of active construction, Cuyahoga SWCD staff works closely with the

developer/builder to ensure that close out project requirements are met. Following active construction, Cuyahoga SWCD begins to monitor the site on an annual basis to ensure that the installed post-construction BMPs are functioning as designed.

The pre-construction meeting is a very important part of the process. It was left off the list above because often it is a step that is over-looked, especially in terms of the SWP3. The pre-construction meeting is a time when all parties: owners, contractors, engineers, inspectors and city official sit down and discuss the details, sequencing, and expectations for the project. The people who will be working on the project meet each other face-to-face and in essence conduct a conference room rehearsal of the project. The positive communication gains

*continued on Page 3*

## EUCLID CREEK WATERSHED NEWS



*Left to right:*

*Chris Vild and Mayor Gorden;*

*Mayor Roche and other summit attendees;*

*Claire Posius*

On November 12th, Euclid Creek Watershed Program partners came together to celebrate the successes of the program over the past fourteen years. This meeting was the first of its kind in gathering all watershed communities, watershed council and committee members, Friends of Euclid Creek members, and partner agency representatives in one room to meet and greet and to learn more about how each facet works to create the whole Watershed Program. For years each committee has been meeting separately, so Chris Vild, Watershed Council Chair representing Beachwood and Claire Posius, Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator, decided to try out the Summit idea and get everyone together. Attendees were excited to see all of the work that has been done in the watershed and agreed that a Watershed Summit should continue annually to keep the discussions and momentum going. Key members of the program discussed

their agency, group or committee's role in the program.

Highlights from the evening include Ms. Posius' recounting of education and outreach highlights from Watershed Fact Sheets and Rain Barrel Workshops, to Rain Garden installation projects; restoration successes from dam removals to wetland and stream restoration projects; land preservation wins from the Dusty Goldenrod protection to the 155-acre Acacia Reservation; to exciting Green Infrastructure projects being implemented in the Watershed Council communities to reduce storm water volume and improve water quality in the watershed.

Perhaps the most potent presentation was by Bill Zawiski of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency who discussed a water quality survey of Euclid Creek conducted in 2015. While not final results, they found that the water quality in Euclid Creek overall appears fairly good for an

urban watershed. They found bacteria issues in the watershed and conductivity, chlorides and total dissolved solids were all elevated, likely a result of road salt use. Lastly, fish populations were not meeting Ohio EPA standards. Ohio EPA plans to continue sampling in 2016 to investigate problem areas further.

If you would like to learn more about the program history and accomplishments, please visit the website at [www.EuclidCreekWatershed.org](http://www.EuclidCreekWatershed.org), join our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/euclidcreekwatershed/>, or email Claire Posius at [cposius@cuyahogawcd.org](mailto:cposius@cuyahogawcd.org) to receive monthly email updates about Euclid Creek Watershed Program and volunteer opportunities.

*Written by Claire Posius,  
Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator  
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## ROCKY RIVER WATERSHED NEWS

The establishment of streamside forests is one of the most important actions that we can take to maintain and improve water quality and to minimize problems such as streambank erosion throughout the Rocky River Watershed.

In order to promote the creation of streamside forests on private property, Cuyahoga SWCD and the Rocky River Watershed Council have created the Bucks for Buffers program, funded by the Lake Erie Protection Fund. Through the Bucks for Buffers program, streamside residents in targeted areas of the watershed have the opportunity to earn cash while improving water quality.



### BUCKS FOR BUFFERS

A STREAMSIDE PLANTING PROGRAM

*Here's how Bucks for Buffers works:*

Bucks for Buffers is a reverse auction program. The Rocky River Watershed Council accepts bids from streamside residents who wish to participate. These bids indicate the minimum payment the resident is willing to accept to allow the Rocky River Watershed Council to establish a streamside forest on their property. Once all bids are received, the Rocky River Watershed Council makes arrangements for payment and

tree planting with streamside residents who submitted bids, beginning with the lowest bid and continuing until the available funds for the program have been exhausted.

This Fall, the first Bucks for Buffers auction was conducted in portions of the Abram Creek and Baldwin Creek subwatersheds. 17 landowners submitted bids totaling \$1000. All bids were accepted. Following this successful pilot, we are planning to expand the program in 2016.

*Written by Jared Bartley,  
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**ROCKY RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING**  
**January 27, 2016 - 7:00pm Cleveland Metroparks Rocky River Nature Center**



# CUYAHOGA SWCD ANNUAL MEETING

For the second year, Cuyahoga SWCD teamed up with Cuyahoga County Farm Bureau to hold their respective annual meetings at the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center in Brecksville. In addition to presentations about the organizations' annual activities and the annual awards, the best local produce was transformed into tasty appetizers prepared by Cuyahoga Valley Career Center students (Class of 2016). Cuyahoga SWCD staff wishes to thank the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center, the students, Cuyahoga Farm Bureau and the local farmers - Hansen's Greenhouse and Produce, Sirna Farms, and Woolf Farms.

This year 109 people participated in the election process. Ruth Skuly was re-elected to another three-year term and Rachel Webb was elected to her first term. Congratulations Ruth and Rachel!



Ruth Skuly and Rachel Webb



This year's Conservation Heroes included:

**Volunteers of the Year** - Euclid Creek Volunteer Water Quality Monitors:

- David Smith, a retired businessman;
- David Muthersbaugh, a retired Heights High School math teacher
- David (a retired Case Western Reserve University physics professor) & Bobbie Farrell
- And the late Ted Woodbridge, a retired teacher and businessman

These tireless retirees never gave up on gathering their water samples, even with a frozen creek in winter!

**Cooperators of the Year:**

Jamel and Lawanda Rahkeera's Village Family Farm has been in existence since 2010. The Rahkeeras understand the importance of healthy soil, so they have employed cover crops to help protect and restore the soil on the farm. They also received federal funding to install seasonal high tunnels and drip irrigation. The Rahkeeras also have participated, held and hosted a number of workshops and presentations for people from preschool to seniors on their farm.

**Conservationist of the Year**

Sean Brennan - a Brecksville/Broadview Heights High School teacher, President of Parma City Council, civic activist and environmental activist was honored. Sean has stenciled storm drains, participated in stream clean ups and helped to preserve sensitive open space. He has supported many organizations, such as Cuyahoga AOC, Friends of Big Creek, West Creek Conservancy and Cuyahoga SWCD.

Congratulations to all our heroes!



Volunteers of the Year (above)  
Conservationist of the Year (left)  
Cooperator of the Year (right)



*Cheers.. - cont. from page 1*

Rain barrel (13 workshops), rain garden and green cleaning solutions workshops continued to attract new participants. *Earth Partnership for Schools* and the *Backyard Habitat Stewards* programs reached diverse audiences from across the county and attracted future volunteers.

The Euclid Creek and Rocky River watershed programs were successful in receiving funding for conservation projects, such as tree plantings and cover crop plantings. The projects were successfully implemented to reduce erosion, sedimentation and phosphorus loadings in the streams - and those projects also got new audiences involved. Stream assessments were done to identify areas for future restoration projects and a new stream maintenance guide was published and is being combined with training of community staff to further instill the benefits of good conservation practices.

**The Cuyahoga SWCD board and staff is grateful to our many partners and offer best wishes for a wonderful 2016 to all of our stakeholders!**



*Value.. - cont. from page 1*

achieved during a pre-construction meeting last throughout the life of the project and helps smooth out any obstacles that may be encountered.

All of this is important to the average citizen in that a streamlined and smooth running development project reduces the amount of time that municipal officials spend on a project. That efficiency saves tax dollars while helping to protect and conserve our natural resources.

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## A NEW LOOK FOR YOUR WINTER GARDEN

In late September, the National Wildlife Federation posted an article titled 'Why You Should Leave the Leaves' that has been passed around the internet hundreds of times, inviting people to take a break from the rake this Fall. The article quotes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about how leaves and other yard debris account for more than 13% of the nation's solid waste - 33 million tons a year. They recommend letting the leaves stay where they fall and chopping them up with a mulching mower; making compost by combining fall leaves with other yard waste; and leaving them for habitat that rely on leaf litter for food, shelter, and nesting materials.

In addition to that, we recommend that you become comfortable with being a lazy

gardener. One critical mistake people make is leaving their gardens naked over the winter, pulling up every plant and discarding them. It's easy to focus on how things look above the ground and while a 'neat' garden may be aesthetically pleasing to some, the soil below starves when you pull out the plants. The real story of your soil is in the biological composition below the surface - macrofauna, microorganisms, roots, and organic matter. All of these need food and not just during the Spring and Summer. Leaving your soil naked over the winter promotes weed growth, erosion, and starves the organic matter living in the soil. Your soil ends up on life support and the plant health and production eventually becomes dependent on outside forces like fertilizer, it become more susceptible to

pests so it needs pesticides, it needs watered more frequently, and it become less robust and less drought tolerant.

Pulling the plants disrupts the relationship between the root and the organic matter in the soil. The organic matter depends on that food source thru the winter months. So leave the leaves and leave the plants where they are. If you want to neaten up your garden, trim the plants down but leave the root system intact. However, keep in mind that birds and other animals use the plant debris for shelter, food, and habitat so be ok with letting it go and enjoy Fall and Winter look of your garden knowing that you are feeding the soil all winter long.

*Written by Amy Roskilly,  
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*Left: Nitrogen fixing to  
the roots of plants.*

*Right: A winter garden paradise  
for habitat above and  
the soil below.  
(photo credit to houzz.com)*

