

ON THE LAND

Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District

LEADING CONSERVATION IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE



Fall 2012

Small-Parcel Urban Agriculture: Minimizing Soil Disturbances

Soil structure refers to the arrangement and gluing of minerals and organic matter into larger, stable aggregates (e.g. macro-aggregates). Macro-aggregates promote better aeration and infiltration, deeper rooting and healthier soil organisms. Ray Archuleta, a member of the National Soil Health and Sustainability Team professes that “the fertility of our soil is in the structure of it.” As soil structure is degraded from macro-aggregates to soil fines (e.g. sand, silt and clay), many soil quality functions are lost.

While poor soil quality is common in urban areas, there are strategies that can help *rebuild* soil quality. These strategies include: (1) alleviating soil compaction, (2) rebuilding soil organic matter, and (3) minimizing soil disturbances over time. Soil compaction and organic matter can be addressed through use of bio-drilling cover crops (e.g. tillage radish, buckwheat, etc.) and legumes (nitrogen-fixing plants). However, minimizing soil disturbances over time requires techniques, such as lasagna gardening,

minimized tillage or a no-till approach.

When soil quality strategies are well implemented, a soils performance can be maximized, and small-parcel urban farmers can experience reduced costs and increased yields. However, in order to successfully accomplish this, one must work towards minimizing soil disturbances, including tillage.

Ray Archuleta is featured in two new videos - *Soil Health Lessons in a Minute* - that may inspire concepts to help reduce

costs, increase yields and rebuild soil quality.

(<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/soils/health/?cid=stelprdb1048858>)



Tillage radish helps to aerate and improve soil structure.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Purchasing a house or other property is the biggest investment most people will make in their lifetime. Knowing exactly *what* you are buying should be an important part of the process. Often times this aspect of the purchase is clouded by confusing legal jargon and stacks of paperwork. Both novice and veteran homebuyers can struggle with how to unravel the tangle of paperwork and understand their future property.

A **conservation easement** is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust, private non-profit organization, or a government agency that limits

certain land uses while protecting others. Landowners retain the title and certain rights to the property. This means that if there is a conservation easement on your property you may own the entire parcel but there are restrictions placed on portions of the parcel. In many instances the original land developer agreed to a conservation easement before any of the parcels in a sub-division were even sold. This agreement then passes along through the deed to every subsequent owner.

How can you tell if there is a conservation easement or other restriction on the property you

are intending to purchase? There are some key words included in the language of the property deed that should pique your awareness. An example of the type of language one might see states; “...[F]ree of all encumbrances whatsoever except, conditions, limitation, restrictions and easements...” If you were to see this type of language in your deed it should prompt you to further investigate if there are any encumbrances.

A conservation easement in your backyard can be a great thing. It means that the natural areas and the view that you fell in love with will remain undeveloped forever.

More importantly the unique ecosystem and wildlife habitat will be protected and preserved.

For more information, contact Brent Eysenbach at: beysenbach@cuyahogawcd.org



Keep It Natural!

ROCKY RIVER WATERSHED NEWS

Water Quality Monitoring Is Underway!

The Rocky River Watershed Program began baseline water quality monitoring in Summer 2012. Samples were collected and analyzed at numerous sites in the Abram Creek, Baldwin Creek, Plum Creek (Brunswick) and Upper East Branch subwatersheds and the Main Stem.

The data collected this summer by CSWCD staff, intern Jana Nagle and volunteers Andrew and Heather Blonsky will allow us to better prioritize stream segments for restoration and protection activities, provide baseline data to measure the success of restoration projects and make important updates to the Rocky River Watershed Action Plan. Parameters evaluated included pH, total dissolved solids, conductivity, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, nitrogen and phosphorus.

Ohio EPA reports based on sampling conducted in 1997 and 2001 pointed to elevated nitrogen and

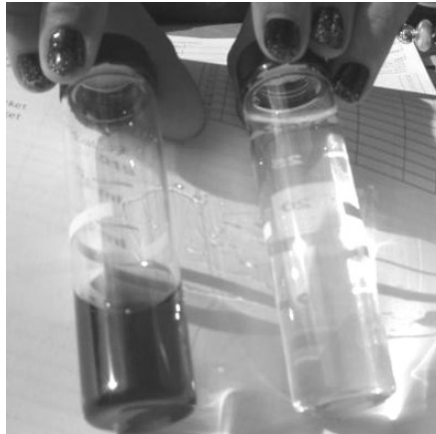
phosphorus concentrations as probable causes of the Rocky River and its tributaries not meeting Clean Water Act goals for supporting healthy fish and aquatic macroinvertebrate communities. The data generated this summer largely reinforces those assertions, but also indicate more severe and widespread issues with phosphorus, while nitrogen enrichment is mostly associated with Waste Water Treatment Plants.

For more information on water quality monitoring activities in the Rocky River Watershed, including more detailed results from Summer 2012, contact:

Jared Bartley
Rocky River Watershed Coordinator
216/524-6580, ext. 14
jbartley@cuyahogascwd.org



Summer intern, Jana Nagle and volunteer Andrew Blonsky assisted staff with water quality monitoring activities.



The colored solution on the left indicates the presence of phosphorus in the sample.

Where does the Rocky River begin?

One of the questions that often gets asked when talking to people about the Rocky River is, "where does it begin?" Most of the time the person asking the question wants to know where it starts being what we would recognize as a river, creek or headwater stream. The answer to this question is: Fifty-nine (59) river miles upstream from the mouth of the Rocky River, in western Hinckley Township, Plum Creek first forms and then flows into the North Branch, to the West Branch, to the Main Stem and out to Lake Erie. But the Rocky River really starts everywhere rain falls in the watershed. It starts on rooftops, parking lots and farm fields, where rain falls and begins making its journey to the nearest storm sewer or headwater stream.

So, even if you don't live "on the River," as long as you live in its watershed, the Rocky River – and its protection – begins with **you!**

What's up in the Rocky River?

Join us for the January Rocky River Watershed Council Annual Meeting. Hear this year's highlights, accomplishments and on-going initiatives.

In addition to the election of the Board of Trustees, we will provide updates on the status of projects such as the Baldwin Creek Dam Removal, Healey Creek Restoration and Stopping Sediment at its Source in the Rocky River. Refreshments provided.

**Wednesday, January 23
7:00 PM**

**Rocky River Nature Ctr.
24000 Valley Parkway
www.myrockyriver.org
www.facebook.com/RockyRiverWatershed**



Cuyahoga
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

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EUCLID CREEK WATERSHED UPDATE

Wildwood Wetland and Stream Restoration Project Update



In September, RiverWorks began 'staking' the island marking heights where the soil was to be excavated to form the 2-acre wetland. Nearly half of the original island was excavated below lake water levels to create a new wetland that will provide great habitat, as well as additional flood storage on the very urbanized Euclid Creek.

RiverWorks worked on eliminating invasive plants and the area will be replanted with native plants

including: 200 trees, 650 shrubs, 6,000 wetland plant plugs and 1,000 live plant stakes. Deer and goose protection will be installed to help the plants become better established.

Euclid Creek's flow was restored to its original alignment around the oxbow in early September. Since then bank stabilization work has begun to strengthen the stream bends around the oxbow.

Several small wetlands will be created downstream of the oxbow, just north of the Villa Angela Drive bridge. These areas will have material installed to protect new plants from waves caused by the interaction of Euclid Creek and Lake Erie. These small wetlands are described as 'links to the lake' because they will entice Lake Erie fish into Euclid Creek to the main wetland



Wildwood Wetland and Stream Restoration Area

for a nursery and fish spawning area.

Construction is anticipated to conclude in late November to finish the earth moving work. Additional plantings will complete the project in Spring of 2013.

If you have questions about the

project, please check the project website at:

[www.cuyahogawcd.org/
EuclidCreekFiles/
EC_LacustrineRefuge.htm](http://www.cuyahogawcd.org/EuclidCreekFiles/EC_LacustrineRefuge.htm),
or contact Claire Posius at
216/524-6580 ext. 16

cposius@cuyahogawcd.org

FALL PROGRAMS

Green Cleaning Workshop

Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District will be conducting a "Green Cleaning: Inside and Out" workshop in the Euclid Creek Watershed this fall. The workshop will be held **November 28 at the Highland Heights Community Center and will run from 6:30 to 8:00 PM. The \$10 fee includes cleaning solution recipes and sample cleaners to take home.**

The workshop is intended for anyone interested in reducing the use of toxins and other harsh chemicals at home and in the yard. Household cleaners and

lawn chemicals are potential sources of water pollution, making their way into local streams and rivers, and eventually Lake Erie. By using more natural homemade cleaners, residents can reduce their environmental impact, save money, and reduce their exposure to harmful chemicals.

For more information or to register, contact Claire Posius at 216-524-6580 x16.

Pre-registration is required by November 21.

The workshop is sponsored by the City of Highland Heights, Friends of Euclid Creek, and the Cuyahoga SWCD.

Winter Preparation for Rain Barrels

It's that time of year to prepare your rain barrel for winter. Start by disconnecting the hose on the diverter and plugging the diverter. Clean the barrel and rinse thoroughly. Use bleach, if needed, and rinse well. Do not let water stand in the barrel over the winter.

Turn it upside down for storage or place in the garage or basement, especially if your barrel is painted.



WHO AM I?



This guy is sharing conservation messages.

Learn more at
www.cuyahogawcd.org
then email

aroskilly@cuyahogawcd.org
with the name of our caped mascot to be entered in a drawing for a rain barrel!!!

ON THE LAND

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LEADING CONSERVATION SINCE 1949



Conserving land and aquatic resources in a developed environment through
stewardship, education and technical assistance.

CUYAHOGA SWCD ANNUAL MEETING AND CONSERVATION DAY

Cuyahoga SWCD's 63rd Annual Meeting & Conservation Day was held on a gorgeous Autumn day at Berea's Coe Lake. More than 70 people joined in a variety of fun, family-friendly and educational activities that included a rain barrel workshop, a stroll thru the soil tent, an opportunity to learn how to cast a fishing line, native plant walk and invasive plant pull, and a guided walk along Baldwin Creek to visit the site of three dams scheduled to be removed. Attendees learned about the district, our partners, and voted in our supervisor election.

Congratulations to Fred Cash and Ruth Skuly on re-election to the Cuyahoga SWCD Board of Supervisors. They will serve for the 2013-2015 term.

Each year awards are presented to outstanding people who have helped to advance conservation in Cuyahoga County. This year's awardees included: Al Penko, Conservationist of the Year; Steven Warner, Educator of the Year; and Heather & Andrew Blonsky, Volunteers of the Year.

Fred
Cash
and
Ruth
Skuly



Al Penko

Steve Warner,
Cleveland
Heights High
School



Broadview
Heights Boys
Scouts # 810



2012



From left: Jared Bartley, Jan Rybka,
Heather & Andrew Blonsky, and
Brent Eysenbach.



A visit to Baldwin Creek and site of one of
three dams that will be removed.

The Cuyahoga SWCD is appreciative of the ongoing support of the City of Berea, Container Compliance Corporation, Cleveland Metropolitan Parks, and the Cuyahoga County Farm Bureau for their assistance and support of this year's Conservation Day and Annual meeting.