WINTER 2025

CLERMONT SOIL & WATER EST 1943
Conservation from the Ground Up

THE CLERMONT CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE RESOURCES TO MEET THE CONSERVATION NEEDS OF CLERMONT COUNTY

UNDERSTANDING PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS

Connie O'Connor, Board Member

Residents of Batavia Township recently petitioned to put two issues on this November's ballot. One was a referendum to reverse the approval of a particular planned development. The other was an initiative to remove Article 36, which guides **Planned Developments (PDs)**, from local zoning regulations. Both of these efforts are an attempt to curb residential growth.

My goal was to be curious, not judgmental as I investigated the history, purpose, and design of these type of Planned Developments. **What I learned is that PDs can be a valuable tool in preserving green space if citizens, developers, and public officials work together for the common good.**

PDs are permitted when encoded in a municipality's zoning ordinances. Zoning plans are put in place to promote orderly development, ensure compatibility between land uses, protect property values, public health and safety, and preserve the overall quality of life in a community. A zoning plan maps out which parcels of land are acceptable for agriculture, business, industry, and different kinds of residential use. There are two ways that land gets developed for housing: through standard zoning or through PDs.

Standard zoning requires a builder to follow strict rules about lot dimensions, building placement and density (homes per acre). If developers comply with these, they are pretty much guaranteed to get their plans approved. A parcel of land developed with standard zoning sort of looks like a grid of equal portions, with a house in each square of the grid. No land is set aside to shelter displaced wildlife. No forests or fields remain, except in areas that are too difficult to develop.

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NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAM APPLICATIONS DUE SOON

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) both have application due dates on January 15th. Both these programs offer cost share that can help get agricultural conservation practices on the ground. For more information reach out to the local Clermont NRCS office by calling 513-732-2181, or emailing christina.gates@usda.gov

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Understanding Planned Developments, cont.

But some of the features that give our rural and semi-rural communities their distinctive character can be preserved when subdivisions are designed as a Planned Development. PDs began popping up across the country in the 1950's to promote flexibility and creativity in land use, allowing for a mix of housing types along with a variety of open spaces and community facilities like pools and clubhouses. In PDs, the cost and responsibility to maintain shared amenities falls to residents through their Homeowners Association (HOA).

PDs allow developers to maintain their return on investment while proposing more flexible designs that can better serve the community and environment. They may build in a less land-consumptive way by building fewer homes on larger lots, or they might build on smaller lots while agreeing not to touch other parts of the land. Conservationists see the potential to preserve agricultural land, green space, and areas like wetlands, streams or hillsides with PDs. The undeveloped portions of the land are permanently protected by the HOA.

A conservation-minded community can negotiate with developers to design PDs where the open spaces connect, resulting in large swaths of forests and fields crisscrossing the community. This kind of conservation-based planning is available anywhere PDs are permitted, if only citizens voice their desires.

Eliminating Planned Development Zoning will not necessarily reduce the number of new homes built in subdivisions—but it will limit the ability of public officials to negotiate with developers for better subdivisions. Once a PD ordinance is removed from a zoning plan, it may be hard to put it back in. If residents want to protect the beauty and quality of their communities, there are likely better ways to go about it. **Communication, especially from a respectful, open-minded and organized group of residents, can make a big difference.** Residents can ask for a review of zoning plans/ordinances with opportunities for public input. If elected and appointed officials don't know that residents care about things like green views, bike trails, connected green space, walkable communities, stream setbacks to protect water quality, stronger environmental safeguards, or native plants, they won't advocate for them or write them into code.

Perhaps the most important thing residents can do is seek first to understand the perspectives, powers, and rights of everyone involved in the complex system of land use planning. Through compromise and by centering conversations around common ground, residents might just protect the ground they love.

2026 SLC LOGO CONTEST

We are ready to kick-start the 2026 Spring Litter Clean-up with the annual Logo Contest! Logo designs should focus on litter clean-up and prevention in Clermont County and the East Fork Watershed. Students can register through the website: www.springlittercleanup.com.

The student with the winning design will receive a $100 cash award and a $100 gift to their school art department. There will also be 13 grade-level awards of $25. Entries are due to the Clermont Soil & Water office by 2/27, 2026

SAVE THE DATE

The Annual Spring Litter Clean-up event will be held

APRIL 25, 2026

Questions: Contact Connie Miller (513) 732-7075 ex. 2 or cmiller@clermontcountyohio.gov

Check out some of our past winners!

FREE SCHOOL PROGRAMS!

K-12 teachers, schedule your FREE field trips now! These hands-on experiences can focus on topics such as soil chemistry, water quality, fish, habitats, macroinvertebrates, and more.

Check out our School Program Guide to learn more and book programs!

Email Elea at ecooper @clermontcountyohio.gov with questions or special requests.

CALENDAR

Upcoming events with the District

District Calendar

Christmas - Office Closed	—	Dec. 25 and 26
New Years Day - Office Closed	—	Jan. 1
Monthly Board Meeting	—	Jan. 14
MLK Jr. Day - Office Closed	—	Jan. 19
Monthly Board Meeting	—	Feb. 11, 8am
Washington's Birthday - Office Closed	—	Feb. 16
Monthly Board Meeting	—	Mar. 11, 8am

Looking for adult education programs?

We offer those too! We provide free adult education programs for groups such as garden clubs, senior centers, community groups, homeowner's associations, library programs, local businesses, and more. Our staff can present on a variety of topics, including composting, soil health, water quality, pollution prevention, recycling, native and invasive plants, and local conservation projects. These programs are a great opportunity to learn how you can engage with conservation efforts at home and in the community. Contact Elea Cooper at ecooper@clermontcountyohio.gov for requests!

LIGHTS DISPOSAL

While decorating for the holiday season, you may encounter a few strings of lights that mysteriously decided to quit working, or the dreaded wad of lights that is impossible to untangle. Don't throw those strings of lights away – recycle them properly!

The Adams-Clermont Solid Waste District is once again providing residents convenient opportunities to recycle unwanted or non-working decorative string lights. From November 27th until February 1st residents can recycle their traditional or LED-style string lights by dropping them into a specially marked outdoor container at the following locations.

- Shor Park (container is by public restrooms)
- Sycamore Park (container is by public restrooms)
- Chilo Lock 34 Park (Museum and Visitors Center)
- New Richmond Municipal Building: 102 Willow St, New Richmond, OH 45157
- Milford Public Works Facility: 840 Garfield Avenue, Milford, OH 45150
- Clermont Fairgrounds: 1000 Locust St. Owensville, OH 45160 (next to public recycling dumpsters at Locust Street gate)
- Pierce Township Service Department: 950 Locust Corner Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45245 (next to public recycling dumpsters)
- Clermont County Water Resources: 4400 Haskell Lane Batavia, OH 45103
- Cincinnati Nature Center (CNC members only) (Rowe Woods Visitor Center)
- Long Branch Farm & Trails (CNC members only)

Holiday lights cannot be placed in your curbside recycling bin or in the public recycling drop-off container you typically use because they will tangle around the machinery and automated equipment at the recycling processing center. Please note this collection event is for traditional or LED string lights only – fluorescent bulbs, halogen bulbs, or any other holiday decorations cannot be accepted. Businesses or organizations that have a large quantity of holiday lights to recycle can email DSNYDER@clermontcountyohio.gov or call 513-732-7744 for special accommodations.

ANNUAL MEETING AWARD WINNERS

At our Annual Meeting this year, we were proud to honor Chris Nietch as our Cooperator of the Year, Julia McNeal as our Educator of the Year, and Sheila Cox-Riley as our Volunteer of the year. Congratulations to our well-deserved honorees!

Julia McNeal
West Clermont High School

Sheila Cox-Riley
Cincinnati Nature Center

Chris Nietch
US EPA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to Connie O'Connor for her reelection to our Board of Supervisors, and thank you to all of our Board candidates who ran! We are looking forward to another year of working with our fantastic board.

DE-ICING ALTERNATIVES TO SALT

With the recent snow and frigid temperatures, many of us have worked hard to clear our porches, driveways and sidewalks of snow and ice. Commonly we simply spread rock salt over these areas – it is simple and it works. Salt, though, can damage some metals, concrete, and asphalt, and can be harmful to plants, lakes and ponds, and drinking water. Less threatening alternatives to salt are readily available.

A low-corrosion alternative to rock salt is calcium magnesium acetate (CMA). Salt breaks down the surfaces of metals, concrete and asphalt, causing cracking and weakness with extended use season after season, where CMA is only as corrosive as ordinary tap water. Also, CMA is not harmful to vegetation where salt can be deadly to shrubs, orchards, gardens, and trees. CMA actually strengthens the soil and can stimulate plant growth by providing abundant organic acid in the way that liming a garden improves vitality. In surface water such as streams, lakes, and ponds, CMA does not stimulate algae growth or kill aquatic plants as salt does. For CMA to be as damaging to aquatic life as salt is, there would have to be three times the accumulation as that of salt to achieve even half of the damage. The downside to CMA is that it generally takes longer to melt ice and snow compared to rock salt, so it may not be as suitable for rapid ice removal.

Of course, there is the old chemical free option of shoveling. If you want to minimize the amount of work, just shovel a small walking path on sidewalks and two tire paths on driveways. Shoveling these pathways clear even part of the time while also using CMA reduces the chance of accidents and also lowers the threat of salt and chemical damage to the environment.

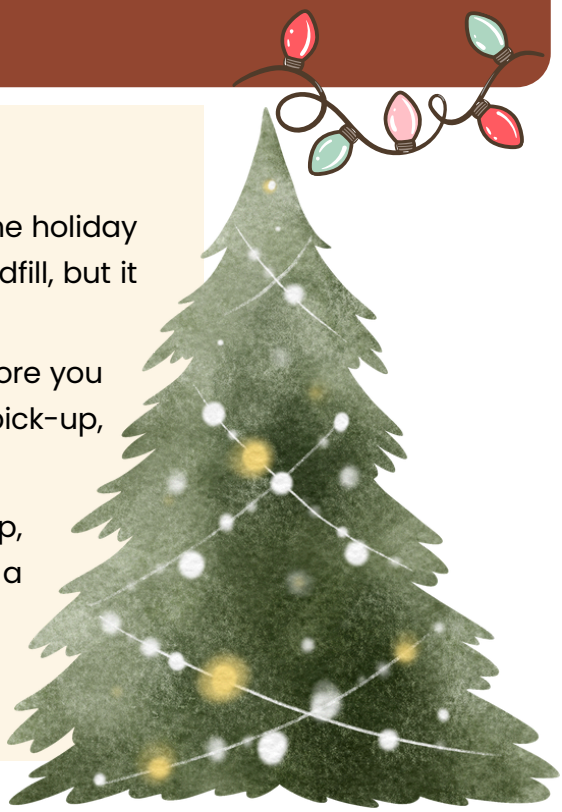
SUSTAINABLE HOLIDAYS

CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Christmas tree recycling is a great gift to the environment after the holiday season ends! "Treecycling" not only keeps cut trees out of the landfill, but it helps support other ecosystems. Best of all, it's FREE and easy!

Please note, this Treecycling program is only for live cut trees. Before you take your cut tree to a collection site or haul it to the curb for pick-up, please be sure to remove all lights, tinsel, and decorations.

There will be drop of sites in Pierce Township, Union Township, certain Clermont Parks, and more! Keep an eye on acswd.org for a full list of drop-off locations.



REDUCING HOLIDAY WASTE

As we celebrate, decorate, give gifts and travel this holiday season, we also generate a lot of waste and increase our energy use. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the volume of household waste in this country increases 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day; that amounts to around one million extra tons of garbage!

Here are some tips to reuse your waste this holiday season:

- **Wrap presents with recyclable paper (not shiny) or paper around the house (posters, newspaper). Ribbons and bows should be saved to reuse.**
- **Choose the sustainable shipping and packaging option when ordering from Amazon!**
- **Reuse or recycle greeting cards, gift wrap, and gift bags.**
- **Give an experience as a gift (concerts, classes, etc).**
- **If your electronics get updated this holiday season, old electronics can be recycled at Staples.**
- **Put lights on a timer or turn them on only when someone is home to conserve power.**
- **Recyclables can be taken to one of the forty recycling drop-off locations found at www.oeq.net/recycle.aspx.**
- **Take a reusable bag along for your holiday gift and meal shopping.**
- **If you need to purchase additional lights, use Energy Star energy efficient lighting. The EPA estimates that these lights use 1/50th of the electricity of conventional lights and last up to 30 years!**
- **Donate old toys at Goodwill or other local thrift stores.**

For more resources, visit:

WWW.ACSWD.ORG

MASTER RAIN GARDENERS COMPLETE COURSE

This fall, we had 10 new Master Rain Gardeners complete our 6 week course. Upon installation of their rain gardens, they will have finished all requirements for their Master Rain Gardener Certification!

Rain gardens are shallow depressions filled with native plants that collect and absorb stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces (where water cannot infiltrate) like roofs and driveways. Instead of sending polluted water straight into storm drains, rain gardens slow the flow, filter out contaminants, and allow the water to soak into the ground. This reduces erosion, improves water quality, and helps protect local streams.

Congratulations to this group and we are so excited to see their beautiful rain gardens be installed this spring. Check out cincyraingardener.org to learn more about rain gardens and future courses!

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