East Fork Lake Farmers Can Sign Up For Conservation Funding

Farmers with fields in the East Fork Lake watershed may now sign up for financial assistance to help put in place conservation practices that help to keep sediments and nutrients on farm fields and out of the lake. Since 2012, East Fork Lake has experienced growing problems with harmful algal blooms thought to be caused by excess nutrients – mainly nitrogen and phosphorus – that come from agricultural fields as well as failing septic systems, wastewater treatment plants and urban runoff. In January 2015, the Clermont Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) was awarded a five-year, $600,000 grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Resource Conservation Partnership Program to help reduce nutrient loadings through agricultural conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips, nutrient management and more.

“For several years, Clermont SWCD and its partners in the East Fork Watershed Cooperative have been working with farmers to install these conservation practices, and the cooperation we have received from the farmers has been tremendous,” said John McManus, Administrator for Clermont SWCD. “I think this grant is a reflection of the dedication of the farmers and the support of the Cooperative. I believe we were able to receive this grant because of these partnerships.”

Lori Lenhart, the District Conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, stated “Along with the more traditional conservation practices, we have added gypsum application as an option under this grant. Gypsum helps aggregate

Native Plants:
Providing Habitat & Improving the Landscape

The Annual 2015 Conservation Plant Sale took place April 25th and was a great success! Our plant sale program offers the opportunity for individuals to develop small areas of reforestation, wildlife enhancement or additions to home landscaping. The program also helps the Clermont SWCD as the profits from the sale go towards supporting our educational outreach programs. Most importantly, Clermont SWCD offered native plants that will provide habitat and flourish in our growing conditions. Many of our residents were excited about the variety of native plants and trees made available through the program.

Why do we encourage planting native? Important insect and pollinator populations are in serious decline because of monocultures and the overuse of pesticides and herbicides. Monocultures (plantings of the same species on large areas, such as
2015 Ohio River Sweep

On Saturday, June 20th thousands of volunteers from Pittsburgh, PA to Cairo, IL will do their part to clean up the 3,000 miles of Ohio River shoreline.

In Clermont County, Ohio volunteers can report to Chilo Lock #34 Park (rough terrain – adults or teens only!), Moscow Riverfront Park at 222 Second Street, Neville – Indian Mound Campground or the riverfront Bandstand in New Richmond.

The event starts at 9am and ends around noon. Volunteers will be asked to sign a waiver and will receive free t-shirts, gloves and trash bags. There will be refreshments available after the event, with most communities hosting a cookout. The Ohio River Sweep will be held rain or shine but cancelled if the weather is dangerous (lightening, etc.).

Participants are asked to wear old, comfortable clothes and closed toe shoes. If you have questions please contact Becky Ploucha, Valley View Foundation, at ors.clermont@gmail.org or at 513-218-4094.

Volunteers “Fight Dirty” at Clean-Up Event

The East Fork Watershed Collaborative and Valley View Foundation are pleased to report that the 2015 Spring Litter Clean-Up for Clermont County and the East Fork Little Miami River Watershed was a great success! The event drew over 560 volunteers to clean up 13 sites and over 7 miles of riverbank and lake shoreline! Volunteers collectively cleared nearly 5 tons of trash from our streams, lakes and parkland areas.

We truly appreciate the support from our event sponsors, including the Clermont County Visitors Bureau, Buckeye United Fly Fishers and Little Miami Conservancy!

Thank you also to our partnering agencies and organizations, including the Clermont County Office of Environmental Quality, Clermont County Park District, Ohio State University Extension, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Division of Parks, Ohio DNR – Division of Watercraft, Clermont Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Highland SWCD, Harsha Lake U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Friends of Stonelick State Park and Mr. Tom Cornwell.

We also want to salute our active communities and partners for their commitment to this event! City of Milford, Village of Williamsburg, Village of Owensville, Village of Bethel, Pierce Township, Milford Junior High School, Lynchburg Middle School, New Richmond, Clermont Co. JCS, Buckeye United Fly Fishers, Valley View Foundation, and Friends of Stonelick State Park.

(residential lawns) do not provide the food insects need. Insects evolved along with their native plants and in most cases cannot feed on non-native plantings. Many animals depend on insects for food (e.g., spiders, reptiles, amphibians and 96% of all terrestrial birds).

Consider the bee and butterfly populations that depend on native plants to collect pollen and provide habitat. Both populations are in serious trouble due to pesticides, monocultures, and the destruction of weeds and wild flowers, such as milkweed - the only food and habitat the Monarch Butterfly needs to survive. Pesticides kill all insects, not just the ones that cause lawn damage. The application of herbicides is also harmful to insect populations because the chemicals eliminate “weeds,” which are crucial food sources for native insects. By eliminating pesticides, you help provide habitat for our pollinators...and put some money back in your pocket!

When you think about adding trees, bushes and flowers to your landscape, please consider natives. Native plants, once established require little maintenance while non-native plants may require extra watering, fertilizing, staking, and may be more susceptible to insect and disease damage. Help support insect populations vital to the health of our environment and the primary source of food for so much of our wildlife. If you would like to be added to our Conservation Plant Sale email list, please call 513-732-7075 X 102, or email me at

(Buckeye United Fly Fishers with their collected trash from the river.)

(Getting Clean at East Fork State Park)
LOVELAND, OH – Competition was intense at the Boy Scouts of America Camp Friedlander on April 28, 2015, as over 430 high school students from southwest Ohio met in the Area IV annual Envirothon. Students were tested on their environmental knowledge in five areas including aquatics, current environmental issues (CEI), forestry, soils and wildlife. The CEI this year focused on urban forestry which really hits home with the amount of tree loss southwest Ohio has endured due to the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian Longhorned Beetle (not to mention the issues with honeysuckle infestations).

CNE, Felicity, and Milford High schools fielded three teams each for Clermont County. The top four placing teams were Beavercreek, Sycamore, Miami Valley CTC and Upper Valley CC which will compete at the Ohio Envirothon on June 8 and 9 at Mohican State Park. Each Envirothon team consists of five students. Besides field testing, teams at the Ohio Envirothon will also be given a problem to solve and must develop an oral presentation on their recommendation. Students also have the opportunity to learn about and network with environmental and natural resources agencies to discuss their roles, environmental issues, and career opportunities.

Major sponsorship for the Area IV Envirothon comes from Honda of America, Cargill, and the 18 Soil & Water Conservation Districts in Southwest Ohio.

Thank you to all the students, advisors, and administrations from the Clermont schools for their hard work and support of the event.

Calendar of Events

- Ohio River Sweep: June 20
- SWCD Office Closed (Holiday): July 3
- SWCD Board Meeting: July 8–8 am
- RCPP Application Deadline: July 17
- Clermont County Fair: July 26-Aug. 1
- SWCD Board Meeting: Aug. 12–8 am
- SWCD Office Closed (Holiday): Sept. 7
- SWCD Board Meeting: Sept. 9–8 am
- SWCD Annual Meeting: Sept. 10

The soil, which allows rain water to move into the soil better. This in turn helps reduce erosion and the runoff of sediments and phosphorus. The calcium in gypsum also binds strongly with phosphorus, reducing chances of runoff and increasing uptake by the growing crop.”

Any farmer within the East Fork Lake watershed that is interested in participating in this program should contact Lori Lenhart at (513) 732-2181 ext. 102, or at lori.lenhart@oh.usda.gov. The deadline to submit an application for funding is Friday July 17.
All NRCS / SWCD programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status.