

SWCDs were created 75+ years ago and it was done on a partnership between the local and state governments with a funding goal of a true 1:1 match. Each is governed by a board of five locally elected (unpaid) officials, who are familiar with the county's resource needs and can deliver a tailor-made conservation program.

SWCDs provide assistance to urban and agricultural land users, specializing in soil erosion prevention and water management. They work with farmers through a voluntary cooperative agreement and provide services that include the survey and design of grassed waterways; erosion control structures; surface and subsurface drainage; farm ponds; windbreaks; and, livestock waste management facilities. They work with developers, local governments and agencies, and others to assist and/or aide the communities in efforts to meet the Ohio EPA MS4 Phase 2 Requirements in addition to erosion control and storm water management for construction activities. With increased focus on water quality challenges in the Lake Erie basin and throughout Ohio, SWCDs have more responsibilities through the implementation of both Senate Bill 150 and Senate Bill 1. Ohio leads the nation in water quality trading programs designed to help businesses meet Clean Water standards. And, they also handle ditch maintenance, floodplain management, CAUV, pipeline standards and many more additional responsibilities in various areas.

SWCDs are critical in delivering the conservation programs contained within the federal Farm Bill. The USDA-NRCS relies on SWCDs to deliver approximately 65% of the conservation workload in Ohio. Landowner cost-share programs have increased and to move these forward SWCDs are needed. Federal dollars for Ohio continue to grow in an effort to address water quality issues both involving the Lake Erie Basin, as well as the Ohio River. In addition to current conservation program workload, Ohio manages 3 federally created Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grants: *Tri-State Western Lake Erie Basin Phosphorus Reduction Initiative (involving 22 SWCDs in NW Ohio)*, *Promoting BMPs for Phosphorus Reduction in central Ohio (involving 4 SWCDs)* and the *East Fork Nutrient Reduction Grant (involving Clermont and several additional SWCDs in SW Ohio)*. Furthermore, we have 3 urban grant initiatives involving Lucas, Cuyahoga and Muskingum SWCDs – each initiative different but designed to address food deserts and other key resource needs.

SWCDs sponsor a number of information and education programs, including field days focused on soil health, cover crops, water quality, grazing, forestry and wildlife efforts, and teacher conservation workshops. Additionally, they provide training on conservation focused development efforts, including stormwater, NPDES issues and much more. They are involved with classroom programs, poster and essay contests and various other efforts including the State Envirothon Program, a conservation-focused high school competition.

Environmental impacts provided by SWCDs include stewardship which has greatly benefited Ohioans with an abundant food supply, water quality improvements in our streams, rivers and lakes, habitat protection, and recreational opportunities. SWCDs have achieved great things: help maintain water quality in 61,532+ miles of streams, home to 1,400 species of aquatic life; help to protect 60,000+ inland lakes, reservoirs and ponds covering 200,000+ acres; decrease cost to treatment plants providing drinking water to 6+ million Ohioans; protect 40,469+ square miles of Ohio land since it takes 500 years to form one inch of topsoil; sustain croplands to continue to provide abundant and affordably priced food and fiber; educate our youth to understand and appreciate Ohio's Natural Resources; assist with conservation practices during construction activities; and, continue to maintain Ohio's natural resources to attract business and new residents to this great state.

Communities and counties benefit tremendously both environmentally and economically as a result of less pollution, productive soils, and cleaner water. Because of the valuable work done by the SWCDs, *millions* of dollars have been offered over the years in technical assistance, education programs, and cost share funding for the installation of costly "best management practices" to both farmers and landowners for conservation programs that protect local water resources and soil resources.

