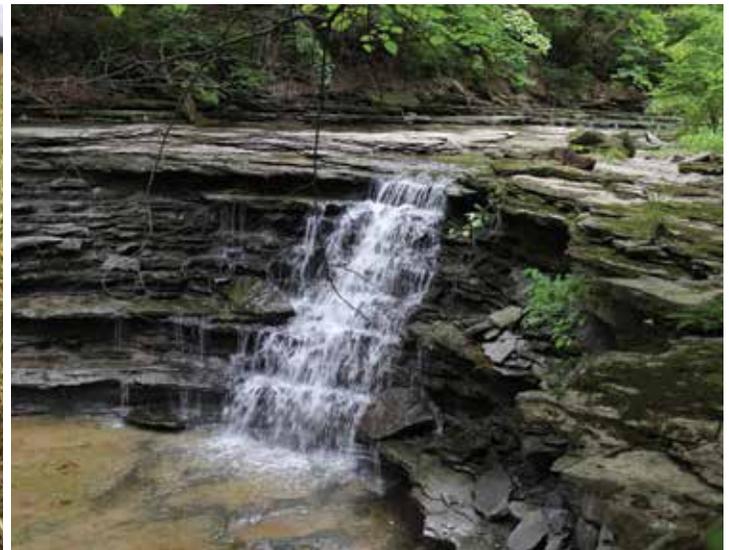




Clermont Soil & Water Conservation District

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



The Clermont Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a political subdivision of the State of Ohio, as authorized under ORC 901: 13 and 940. Clermont SWCD was established by local election of the Clermont County populace in 1943 to work with landowners to help address soil and water conservation issues.

Soil Conservation Districts got their start following the Dust Bowl era in the 1930s, when a period of drought and high winds led to vast amounts of soil being blown from bare, over-plowed farmland, blanketing much of the country with thick layers of dust. In April 1935, Congress passed and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act creating the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service). In 1941, the Ohio Soil Conservation District Enabling Act was passed, allowing the creation of local Soil Conservation Districts. Clermont SWCD was established in August 1943.

In the early years the District focused on working with the Soil Conservation Service and farmers to control erosion, promote water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on agricultural working lands. Over the decades, Clermont, like many other SWCDs, has become a multi-faceted agency that works with rural, suburban and urban landowners alike. The District provides technical assistance, educational programming and other resources to landowners to help them address a diverse range of local conservation issues.

**Our mission is to Promote the
Wise Use of Our Natural Resources
Through Service and Education.**



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The District is governed by a volunteer board of five supervisors elected to three-year terms by the public at our Annual Meeting. The supervisors are responsible for charting the course for the District's conservation programs and providing oversight of our operations and budget. Funding comes from the Clermont County Commissioners, whose contribution is matched by the State through the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission. The District also receives funding from the Adams-Clermont Solid Waste Management District to conduct education programs related to recycling and litter prevention. Other funding comes through grants, sales of conservation related items and donations.



Clermont SWCD Board of Supervisors

From left to right:

- Todd Winemiller, Member
- Joe Glassmeyer, Member
- Melody Newman, Vice-Chair
- Steve Phillips, Secretary-Treasurer
- Dave Anspach, Chair



Melody Newman Retires

Melody Newman of Wayne Township retired from our board at the end of 2019 following nine years of service. Melody ran for the board upon retiring after 30 years as a teacher with CNE Schools. Melody was a valuable asset to our board with her experience and recommendations concerning conservation education, and the District is grateful for the time and knowledge she shared with us.



New Supervisor Elected

In the election held on September 12, Connie O'Connor won a seat on the Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Supervisors. Connie is Director of Education for the Cincinnati Nature Center, where she has worked for the past 24 years. She received her bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Macalester College in St Paul, MN and her masters in natural resources from University of Wisconsin. She is a Certified Interpretive Planner with the National Association for Interpretation. We look forward to Connie's input as we redesign our educational outreach programs.



Clermont SWCD and NRCS Staff

Top Row, left to right:

- Jenna Swanson, NRCS Soil Conservationist
- Judy Krebs, Education Specialist
- Becky McClatchey, Natural Resources Specialist
- Susie Steffensen, Administrative Assistant
- Lori Lenhart, NRCS District Conservationist

Bottom Row, left to right:

- Ross Healy, NRCS Soil Conservationist
- John McManus, District Administrator
- Jake Hahn, Technician





AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

Conservation Practices

Clermont SWCD works very closely with local farmers and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to put conservation practices on the ground that help improve soil quality and prevent soil, nutrients and other pollutants from washing off agricultural fields into nearby streams, rivers and lakes. Much of this work is done through various Farm Bill conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which provide producers with financial assistance to install best management practices. In 2019, the following conservation practices were put in place:

- 6788 acres of cover crops planted
- 5272 acres of nutrient management
- 127 acres of no-till
- 82 acres invasive species removal
- Over 14 acres of pollinator habitat
- Six acres of forest stand improvement
- Four animal waste facilities
- Two watering facilities
- One chemical storage facility
- 3.5 acres of wetlands

Additionally, nearly \$700,000 was obligated in 2019 for 24 new contracts covering almost 2000 acres of cover crops, 93 acres of pollinator plantings and 783 acres of other practices. SWCD staff also assisted NRCS with outreach by visiting new producers and assisting with planning and technical support.



Southwest Ohio Agricultural Conservation Menu

In 2019, Clermont SWCD was awarded \$17,141 from Ohio EPA's Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) to develop a new web platform for the agricultural community entitled the Southwest Ohio Agricultural Conservation Menu (SOACM) – www.soacm.com. Collaborating with the SWCDs in neighboring counties, the SOACM website was designed as a one-stop shop for conservation information. Three focus group meetings were held in 2019 with local producers and students from Wilmington College's Agricultural Sciences Department to determine the needs and wants of the agricultural community and next-generation farmers. Feedback gathered from these discussions guided website development. The SOACM website includes streamlined information on conservation programs, best management practices and technical assistance. A unique feature of the SOACM site is the FertRec App, a new online tool developed by Clermont OEQ to provide fertilizer application recommendations based on soil tests and the Tri-State Fertility Guide. The site also includes a Farmer Forum, a blog where farmers can post questions, share information and discuss local issues. Information on soil health, watershed updates and local water quality monitoring data is also available.



Nutrient Management Workshop

With annual harmful algal blooms occurring in East Fork Lake, promoting best nutrient management practices has been a primary focus. In February 2019, Clermont SWCD hosted a nutrient management workshop attended by nearly 50 people. Topics included the 4Rs of nutrient management (right source, rate, time and place), Tri-State Fertilizer Guide recommendations and variable rate technology.

Pollution Abatement

Under an agreement with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Clermont SWCD investigates complaints related to sediment or manure runoff from agricultural activities. If a violation is identified, SWCD staff works together with the landowner to identify ways to correct the problem, lending them technical assistance, advice and expertise as needed. In 2019, staff investigated two complaints, both of which were successfully resolved.



NRCS Office Changes

In 2019, Lori Lenhart, Clermont County's District Conservationist since 2007, accepted a new position with NRCS heading up an urban agricultural initiative in Cincinnati. In addition, Jenna Swanson, Clermont County's Soil Conservationist since 2017, left to take a similar position in her home state of Virginia. We wish them both the best and greatly appreciate the work they provided during their stay in Clermont County.



Lori Lenhart



Jenna Swanson



URBAN STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Drainage and Erosion Assistance

Technical assistance to property owners dealing with drainage or erosion problems is our most requested service. During one of the wettest years on record, SWCD staff conducted 135 site visits, providing guidance to property owners on a range of issues such as flooding/standing water/poor drainage on property, storm sewer infrastructure problems, ditch and streambank erosion, and pond repair/construction/management.



Storm Water Permit Program

Under Ohio EPA rules, Clermont County and 14 townships and municipalities in the county are required to implement different programs designed to reduce the amount of pollution in storm water runoff. Under an agreement with the Board of County Commissioners, Clermont SWCD administers many of the programs required under the Ohio EPA storm water permit, including:

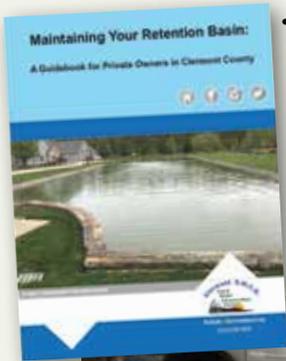
- public education and awareness programs
- public involvement programs
- developing and maintaining maps of storm sewer systems in the county
- illicit discharge detection and elimination
- inspection of post-construction storm water management practices
- developing storm water pollution prevention plans for the County and each municipal and township co-permittee



Summaries of the storm water programs conducted by the District in 2019 are presented on page 7. Copies of the County's Storm Water Management Plan and the annual report submitted to Ohio EPA can be viewed at www.clermontswcd.org/storm-water-reports/.

■ Public Events & Education

- In April, we partnered with Valley View Foundation and several other agencies to host the annual Spring Litter Cleanup, during which 450 volunteers collected 3.2 tons of trash from 11 sites, including 10 miles of riverbank and lake shoreline.
- Also in April, Clermont SWCD, in partnership with the Greater Cincinnati Regional Storm Water Collaborative and the Cincinnati Zoo, held the 7th annual Rain Barrel Art Event, during which 40 rain barrels painted by local artists were auctioned off to raise money for area conservation.
- As members of the Regional Storm Water Collaborative, we helped organize two educational events – a Runoff Reduction Workshop attended by more than 50 professionals, and the 3rd annual Storm Water Management Field Day in October, where 120 people participated.



- Retention Basin Management Guide: We designed and published an in depth guide for landowners and homeowner associations to outline their responsibilities and offer maintenance tips for basins on their property. The guide is available on our website under Resources/SWCD Publications.



Spring Litter Cleanup



Rain barrels painted by area artists



■ Storm Sewer Mapping

Clermont SWCD develops and maintains an inventory of storms sewer systems serving all parts of Clermont County. These maps, which include information on storm mains, catch basins, manholes, discharge points, management basins and more, are an invaluable resource to County, municipal and township officials as they work to manage storm water runoff in their communities. In 2019, SWCD staff completed mapping efforts in the rural parts of the county. The District will continue to update these maps as road improvements and new development occurs.

■ Storm Water Basin Inspection Program

Since 1990, Clermont County storm water regulations have included requirements for the detention of storm water runoff in new developments. Under an agreement with the Board of County Commissioners, Clermont SWCD inspects storm water management practices such as detention/retention basins after construction has been completed. If issues are noted during our inspections, we inform those responsible for maintenance and provide guidance on how to correct the problems. In 2019, staff inspected 143 storm water basins, identifying issues in 30 of these.



Sink hole above outlet

■ Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans

As required by Ohio EPA, Clermont SWCD prepares storm water pollution prevention plans for Clermont County, and for most townships and municipalities in the county. The plans include strategies for minimizing pollution from road maintenance, winter deicing programs, grounds maintenance, and other activities. In 2019, we updated pollution prevention plans for 12 separate communities.

■ Illicit Discharge Inspection & Elimination

Clermont SWCD is responsible for identifying and eliminating illicit discharges to the county's storm sewer system. In 2019, staff inspected over 150 discharge points, finding four illicit discharges, including two incidents of concrete waste being washed into a storm sewer, illegal dumping of restaurant grease, and a home heating oil spill.



WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANS

Clermont SWCD has been working to update watershed management plans which were developed for different sections of the East Fork Little Miami River watershed in the early 2000s. The revised plans include improved data and information along with recommendations for watershed restoration and protection. Once approved by Ohio EPA, potential projects identified in the plans become eligible for funding through various state grants. In 2019, SWCD updated the plan for the Salt Run watershed which is located in the most downstream portion of the East Fork basin, including Miami and Union Townships and the City of Milford.

Shor Park Restoration Project

Upon completion of the Lower East Fork watershed plan, Clermont SWCD and the Clermont County Park District secured a Section 319 grant from Ohio EPA in the amount of \$135,080 to restore a section of Avey's Run and create pocket wetlands at Shor Park on Tealtown Road. Construction is expected to begin in 2020.



Wetland Treatment Systems

Wetlands have an exceptional ability to remove nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, keeping them out of our waterways. In fact, the East Fork Watershed Cooperative has shown constructed wetlands to be one of the most cost-effective practices in terms of nutrient removal. Clermont SWCD, aided by the work done by the Cooperative, obtained grant funding in the amount of \$158,950 through the US Fish & Wildlife Service to construct a wetland treatment system along the East Fork in Williamsburg, and to identify additional locations for other constructed wetlands. The Williamsburg site is an empty 3-acre reservoir that was formerly connected to the Williamsburg low-head dam, which was removed in 2018. The project site is an ideal location to study and demonstrate how wetland systems can reduce sediment and nutrient loading into the river and East Fork Lake, and in turn minimize future Harmful Algal Blooms.

Constructed wetland near Amelia, Ohio





East Fork Watershed Cooperative

Since 2008, Clermont SWCD has been an active participant in the East Fork Watershed Cooperative, a group comprised of water quality professionals from a wide range of federal, state and local agencies, all working together to better understand and address water quality concerns in the East Fork of the Little Miami River watershed. In 2019, the Cooperative continued strategic monitoring at edge of field, in small streams, the East Fork River and East Fork Lake. Modeling by US EPA's Office of Research & Development helped to set nutrient reduction targets and to establish a cost efficient management plan that includes the use of cover crops, filter strips, wetlands and grassed waterways to reduce nutrient runoff.

Submerged Vegetated Bed

Clermont SWCD continued its work with Clermont OEQ to monitor and maintain an innovative nutrient removal system sited in an old eroding waterway on a local farm. The system, constructed in 2014, includes an upper detention basin where sediment and attached phosphorus can settle out. From the basin, water flows into a submerged vegetated bed where nitrogen is removed through plant uptake and denitrification. Monitoring results show that the system removes approximately 30% of the nitrogen and phosphorus load. In 2019, our work received the Ohio Storm Water Association's Government Project of the Year Award.



Batavia Dam Removal



Before dam removal



Dam removal



Area after dam removal

The Valley View Foundation, working in partnership with the Clermont SWCD and Village of Batavia, coordinated efforts to remove the Batavia low-head dam in the fall of 2019. The dam was notched on September 4th to begin the removal process and draw down the river level to rescue and relocate freshwater mussels found within the project site. Staff and volunteers contributed 78 hours to search and relocate 1,401 live mussels representing 15 different species, including the *Ligumia recta* (Black Sandshell), a state threatened species. Overall, the abundance and species richness indicated a healthy and diverse mussel community within the project area. Full dam removal and subsequent river restoration activities culminated in October. Removal of the dam opened up 20+ miles of free flowing river along the East Fork from Harsha Lake to its confluence with the Little Miami River.

Funding for the project was provided by Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Fish Passage and Private Partners programs.

- Ohio EPA WRRSP Grant Award: \$763,000
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Private Partners Program: \$15,000
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Fish Passage: \$60,000



EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH



School Programs

Through the District's education programs, we are able to help students and adults understand and appreciate Clermont County's natural resources, and learn how they can help conserve our resources for future generations. Our efforts start with teaching students to appreciate our abundant resources and how to care for our soils and streams. We provide classroom programs free of charge to any school or group within the county. In 2019, the District's Education Specialist spent 102 days in local schools teaching students about a variety of topics including soil characteristics and quality, storm water runoff pollution, pollinators, litter prevention and recycling and much more.

Litter Prevention and Recycling

Clermont SWCD continued to assist the Adams-Clermont Solid Waste District with its litter prevention and recycling education efforts by conducting 23 days of programming in local schools. For the second year, SWCD staff also helped local schools reduce the amount of solid waste generated at the end of the school year, when vast amounts of material are discarded as teachers and students close out the year. The Solid Waste District and Clermont SWCD created this program to divert as much material as possible from going to the landfill. In 2019, three schools (Merwin, Clough Pike and CNE Elementary) participated in the End of School Year Recycling Program, during which approximately 6.5 tons of recyclable material was collected.

Partnership with Developmental Disabilities

In 2019, Clermont SWCD continued a partnership with the County's Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD) that has greatly benefited both organizations. The partnership began when Clermont SWCD was looking for assistance with preparing materials for the numerous education programs given through the year. Knowing that Clermont DD had several programs that help students become more involved in the community, we reached out to them for help. Soon, students from both the Wildey Center and the Douglas A. Collins Center began to prepare materials for multiple education programs. To celebrate this relationship, Clermont DD presented Clermont SWCD with a Friends of Developmental Disabilities at its annual banquet on October 23.

Pond Management Clinic

For many years, Clermont SWCD has hosted an annual Pond Management Clinic in the spring where we share information and resources on pond construction and management. Several improvements were made to this year's Pond Clinic, with breakout sessions and a keynote speaker added, and a pond walk at the Cincinnati Nature Center, the new site for the event. A total of 55 people attended and learned about topics such as problems that arise as ponds age, pond design, fish stocking, pond weed control, vegetative buffers and more.



Conservation Tours

Clermont SWCD hosted two tours of conservation practices in the fall of 2019, one for local and state officials and a second for technicians from other districts in an 18 county area (Area IV). In early October, elected officials were treated to a cover crop demonstration at a local farm, visits to two restoration/bank stabilization projects along O'Bannon Creek, and a tour of the Batavia dam removal project. Area IV technicians gathered later that month to tour a prairie project at the Cincinnati Nature Center and US EPA's experimental stream facility in Milford. In the afternoon, part of the group visited an organic produce farm and met with a local farmer who has modified his combine to enable him to plant a cover crop while harvesting, while a second group visited the O'Bannon Creek restoration and Batavia dam removal projects.



Conservation Plant Sale

Each Spring, Clermont SWCD holds a plant sale for Clermont County and neighboring county residents. Customers can purchase low cost plants to enhance their home landscaping, develop small areas of reforestation, and provide plants for native and pollinator gardens.

A variety of tree and shrub seedlings as well as perennials are offered, focusing on native plants that thrive in our soils and are beneficial to our pollinators and wildlife. Many of these plants can be used to replace invasive plants such as Asian bush honeysuckle, non-native groundcovers and perennial flowers that offer little benefit to bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. In 2019, 2,251 plants and 20 rain barrels were sold to more than 130 people.



A GLIMPSE INTO 2020

The year of 2020 brings with it many changes and opportunities. Our Education Coordinator of 31 years, Judy Krebs retired in January. She will be greatly missed by generations of students and teachers. Our new Education Coordinator, Kat Zelak, looks forward to designing new, innovative programs and educating Clermont County residents on subjects such as conservation, recycling and environmental health.

2020 also presents many challenges, especially as we adjust to the changes required to combat COVID-19. Clermont SWCD board and staff have responded accordingly and found resourceful ways to continue our mission while honoring state/local orders and recommendations.



FINANCIAL REPORT

CLERMONT SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

DISTRICT ACCOUNT

BALANCE ON HAND JANUARY 1, 2019 : \$150,256.00

Income :	\$6,300.00	Grants
	\$6,518.00	Donations/Local Grants
	\$8,046.00	Resale Income
	\$1,907.00	Other - Registrations, Compensation
	\$377.00	Interest Income

Expenditures : -\$ 24,270.00

BALANCE ON HAND DECEMBER 31, 2019 : \$149,134.00

SPECIAL ACCOUNT

BALANCE ON HAND JANUARY 1, 2019 : \$264,725.00

Income :	\$271,481.00	County Funding
	\$179,027.00	State Match
	\$12,210.00	Solid Waste
	\$38,607.00	Individual Grants

Expenditures : -\$486,769.00

BALANCE ON HAND DECEMBER 31, 2019 : \$279,281.00



FIND US AT:

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@ClermontSWCD