



2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Mission: To promote conservation of land and aquatic resources in a developed environment through stewardship, education and technical assistance.

2008 Highlights

- **Dike 14 Environmental Assessment completed**
- **Technical workshops to raise awareness of compliance issues with the Ohio EPA's storm water permit**
- **Rain barrel & rain garden demonstrations**
- **3rd annual National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Stewards Training Program**
- ***Life Depends on Water* distributed to 400 schools county wide**
- **Riparian buffer education & plantings to 200 landowners in the Rocky River watershed**
- **Coordinated the Equine Environmental Liability Program certification program**
- **Sponsored four students to Forestry Camp**

SOIL & WATER

The building blocks of life on earth

Since 1949, the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff has used its technical expertise to advise land owners about drainage issues and effective storm water pollution prevention, especially related to erosion and sediment control, natural resource protections and water quality issues. This expertise is provided with the assistance of our federal partner, the Natural Resources Conservation Service-USDA, through a variety of programs, events, and technical assistance. Cuyahoga SWCD works to promote minimal standards and practices for natural resource protection and best management practices for storm water management, which directly impacts our quality of life in Cuyahoga County.

Cuyahoga SWCD

A non-regulatory agency

In 2008, Cuyahoga SWCD implemented a county-wide general assistance program aimed at conserving and enhancing water quality, wildlife habitat, and protection of communities and homeowners. Working through collaborative

agreements with communities, the Cuyahoga SWCD offered specialized assistance in conservation education and technical assistance. This assistance, tailored to individual communities' needs, was provided on a voluntary and cooperative basis. Cuyahoga SWCD efforts resulted in implementation of best management practices, a better understanding of storm water pollution prevention, improved ability to manage long-term storm water costs, and community compliance with federally-mandated storm water permit and clean water goals.

Conservation Education and Public Involvement

Conservation education is the foundation of the Cuyahoga SWCD program and it is provided on a county-wide basis. In addition to the general program, Cuyahoga SWCD implemented a comprehensive storm water public involvement and public education program for 25 communities. This year's education theme, "*Going Green in Your Own Backyard*" focused on actions that a typical homeowner could undertake to reduce pollution problems.

Information and assistance on rain garden installation continued to be popular and eight rain gardens were built across the county. Rain barrel workshops were "sold out" and over 200 county residents built rain barrels for use at their home. This effort helped to keep water on site and reduce runoff into streams all while providing a free, natural source of water for gardening. Cuyahoga SWCD staff assisted the City of Cleveland's Summer Youth Program by teaching students about environmental issues and engaging them in rain garden and rain barrel installation.

Staff collaborated with many local agencies including the Cleveland Metroparks and the Cleveland EcoVillage, forging partnerships and providing information on "going green in your own backyard." Cuyahoga SWCD also teamed up with the Cleveland Botanical Garden for a teacher workshop and rain barrel workshop titled "Being a Good Neighbor." In addition, over 400 schools received a copy of the web-based tool *Life Depends on Water* on DVD. This was a collaborative effort with the Ohio Environmental Education Fund and WVIZ Ideastream and provides lesson plans, activities and information based on Northeast Ohio's watersheds.

In total, Cuyahoga SWCD held or participated in 95 events and programs directly reaching over 25,500 people. These included presentations on rain gardens, rain barrels, conservation tips and our watershed programs. In addition, 26,000 copies of the *On the Land* newsletter were distributed to county residents through the mail, libraries and nature centers. Additional information on the "Seven Simple Steps to Clean Water" was mailed directly to 26,000 homes in Cuyahoga County. This brochure also encouraged residents to take our Environmental Awareness Survey which will help our agency assess the level of awareness residents have with regard to

common household activities and their potential impact on the quality of our local water resources. Answers provided will serve as a tool to help develop water quality educational materials and appropriate methods for delivery of these materials and gauge the success of educational programs and ensure the effective spending of public funds.

Conservation Easement Program

Currently, the Cuyahoga SWCD holds 260 acres of land in conservation easements. Conservation easements help protect sensitive wetland and riparian areas. Staff marked easement boundaries and mapped the easements after the boundary coordinates were obtained with a geographical positioning system. Staff monitored the easements for encroachments inside the boundaries and provided educational literature to property owners about the benefits of “keeping it natural”.

Storm Water Program

Cuyahoga SWCD worked with communities to keep them in compliance with their federally mandated Clean Water Act responsibilities. The assistance provided to 25 communities, the county engineers, developers, site designers, builders and individual property owners was aimed at reducing the cost and negative effects of pollution in local waterways through public education, public involvement, detailed plan reviews, comprehensive field reviews, technical advisory reports, and training. Examples of storm water pollution prevention *best management practices*, which illustrate the effectiveness and benefits of low impact development, can be found around the county. In addition to reducing the effects of storm water runoff, some of the implemented practices have served to preserve wetlands and stream corridors, which provides habitat and community green space. Other practices have resulted in improved aesthetics in areas such as parking lots.

Cuyahoga SWCD expanded its efforts to provide additional educational and technical service, related to implementation of Clean Water Act responsibilities, for a number of communities. Cuyahoga SWCD's trained and certified technical staff worked to keep communities in compliance and to reduce the impacts of pollution to our waterways. Cuyahoga SWCD's Storm Water Program leads the state in the number of instances of assistance provided related to urban soil conservation and conservation planning. While residential “green field” subdivision has slowed, redevelopment and infrastructure renovation projects remained on schedule. Cuyahoga SWCD staff are experiencing a trend toward more involvement with these types of projects.

- Plan reviews (preliminary plans, storm water pollution prevention plans, and variance and mitigation review- 495
- Comprehensive Field Reviews- 20,500
- Technical Advisory Meetings (Planning/Construction)-88

The SWCD assisted with the development and implementation

of 4 new storm water pollution prevention programs related to local clean water act responsibilities.

Pollution Prevention Training

Pollution Prevention education and training is paramount to getting conservation on the ground. This year's programs include: Equine Environmental Liability Program; Conservation Planning & Soil Conservation; Storm Water Operating Procedures, Procedures for Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan Review; Good Housekeeping Pollution Prevention; and Training for Inspectors. Nearly 1000 people have benefited from the various trainings.

Euclid Creek Watershed Program

The Euclid Creek Watershed Program completed its sixth year with many accomplishments, including its outstanding ability to leverage over \$2 million in funding for habitat restoration, community education and watershed goals. One goal, to restore water quality and habitat in the creek, will be aided by the removal of a dam on the east branch near the Highland Road bridge. Funding was received from the Ohio EPA (Section 319 grant), Natural Resources Conservation Service-USDA (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program), and the Water Resources Restoration Sponsorship Program. The project is expected to be completed in the Fall of 2009.

Clean Ohio funds helped preserve 12.5 acres of headwater wetlands in a conservation easement. This protected area supports home of the rare Dusty Goldenrod plant. Mayfield School District, City of Highland Heights and the Friends of Euclid Creek helped make the project a reality. Mitigation funds provided the match that was needed to finish the project. The wetland will continue to attenuate storm water runoff in the headwaters of Euclid Creek and serve as an educational resource for the Mayfield School District.

Other accomplishments included an invasive garlic mustard plant pull in lower Euclid Creek in partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources; participation in the Beachwood Green Dream, an environmental trade show hosted by the high school, which attracted 2200 people and local businesses; and rain garden and rain barrel workshops and demonstrations that were filled to capacity. The Watershed Coordinator also supported educational efforts for students, educators, watershed council members, and municipal leaders regarding watershed education, stream monitoring and restoration initiatives.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Euclid Creek communities pledged to continue to support the program. The SWCD received a three year grant the Ohio Department of Natural Resources-Division of Soil and Water Conservation for ongoing watershed program support.

(front cover: Lower Euclid Creek)

59TH Annual Meeting & Election

This year's 59th Annual Meeting and Supervisor Election showcased the Euclid Creek Watershed. In spite of a very rainy day, 100 people enjoyed the event, which featured demonstrations, exhibits, and a tour of the "South Euclid Wetlands" restoration project, and a picnic lunch. Patricia Carey and Michael Emancipator, both of Cleveland Heights, were elected to serve three year terms on the Board.

Rocky River Watershed Program

Nearly 200 participating landowners enrolled nearly 10 miles (30 acres) of streamside property in the Rocky River Backyard Buffers Program that was funded through a Lake Erie Protection Fund grant. Participants and partner communities received a total of 20,000 tree and shrub seedlings to plant alongside streams and rivers on their property. Forested riparian buffers serve to enhance streamside habitat, and also reduce stream bank erosion and nutrient loading to the Rocky River. Two volunteer riparian buffer plantings were also conducted through partnerships with Boy Scout Troop 514 and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Additional accomplishments included: Over 350 stakeholders received "The Flow" e-newsletter, which is also posted on the www.myrockyriver.org website; with the help of 150 volunteers, ten miles of the Rocky River got a spring clean up and a rain garden sprouted in Broadview Heights; six presentations, two rain barrel workshops, and one Oil & Gas Workshop were conducted in the watershed, reaching 195 stakeholders ranging from high school students to the Coastal Resources Advisory Council. Presentation topics included "Going Green – One Yard at a Time" and "The Rocky River Watershed;" conceptual recommendations were developed for the Baldwin Creek Dam Removal and Habitat Enhancement Project.

The Rocky River Watershed Coordinator also provided direct assistance to the Rocky River Watershed Council (RRWC), which obtained its 501c3 non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service. The Council promotes stewardship of the Rocky River Watershed by hosting educational public meetings four times per year, exhibiting at events throughout the watershed, and presenting to community groups. The Watershed Council has instituted a dues-paying membership structure and has online donation and membership capabilities.

Cleveland's Nature Preserve at Dike 14

Brownfield funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Cuyahoga County Board of County Commissioners was used to conduct an environmental assessment of the confined disposal facility called Dike 14 on Cleveland's east side lakefront. The two year project, which included a historical review, soil testing, and ecological and

human health risk assessment, determined that only five of the 88 acres posed an ecological risk. District staff has committed to working with the Cleveland Cuyahoga County Port Authority, the City of Cleveland and members of the Dike 14 Environmental Collaborative to open the site as a lakefront nature preserve. As a Collaborative member, and in support of the site being used for environmental education and ecotourism, Cuyahoga SWCD also co-hosted the semi-annual nature event open houses and provided additional environmental education programs and tours on Dike 14.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA (NRCS) assisted the District in many ways. NRCS administers the federal Farm Bill programs related to natural resources in agricultural and other natural resource management situations to help solve natural resource problems like degraded water quality. In 2008 there were five active contracts in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and one Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract in Cuyahoga County. The contracts included three animal waste storage structures, two concrete pads for dumpsters that handle animal wastes, seven fence installations and five sets of all weather paddocks. All of these conservation practices addressed water quality concerns related to horses. The WHIP contract will help fund the removal of a concrete dam in order to improve water quality and facilitate fish passage up and down a stream.

NRCS also provides one full time district conservationist for Cuyahoga County and the support personnel needed to assist the District with many conservation activities and projects. NRCS personnel can work on conservation planning, survey, and design construction layout and construction inspection of conservation practices that are being applied by private landowners and do not compete with private sector engineers. NRCS administers and provides a coordinator for the Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program. Cuyahoga County is one of the nine counties involved in the Western Reserve RC&D.

Conservation Partners

The ongoing effort to get conservation on the ground requires teamwork that crosses municipal, watershed, and county boundaries. Cuyahoga SWCD benefited from the generous assistance of many partners in the effort to raise awareness of the benefits of natural resource protection through the promotion and implementation of good practices that reduce costs, increase green space, and restore the natural function of the "green infrastructure" on a regional basis, and through general educational activities. Cuyahoga SWCD staff worked proudly with a variety of regional and local partners that included federal, state, and local governmental agencies, watershed stakeholders, universities, schools, local businesses, developers, planners, engineers, citizens and many others.

Volunteers

Volunteers wholeheartedly supported SWCD conservation efforts. From marking easements to hosting exhibits, from being involved in stream clean ups, to helping with programs, volunteers aided the SWCD in accomplishing its 2008 goals. Thanks to volunteer support, the District has extended conservation education, watershed protection and storm water management programs throughout the county. Volunteers included Cuyahoga SWCD Board and Associate Board members, staff from various federal, state and county agencies, watershed organizations, watershed councils, *Friends* groups, municipal staff, students, garden clubs, local universities, local businesses, youth groups, and citizen volunteers and stakeholders.

Board of Supervisors & Associates

The Cuyahoga SWCD Board of Supervisors is an elected board of volunteers who serve three year terms. The board is comprised of Cuyahoga County residents, who are interested in promoting and implementing conservation practices in the county. The Board of Supervisors share their time and talent to assist staff in conservation program implementation.

Ruth Skuly.....Chair
 Fred Cash.....Vice Chair
 Patricia Carey.....Treasurer
 Kevin Kubovcik.....Fiscal Agent
 Aimee Lane.....Secretary

Associate supervisors are annually appointed to assist the staff and board with conservation program implementation.

Ivan Hack, Jr.....Associate Supervisor
 Dorothy Hazel.....Associate Supervisor
 James Kastelic.....Associate Supervisor
 James Weber.....Associate Supervisor

Cuyahoga SWCD & NRCS Staff

Janine Rybka.....District Administrator
 Todd Houser.....Storm Water Program Manager
 Jared Bartley.....Rocky River Watershed Coordinator
 Bernadette Hackett.....Administrative Assistant
 Patricia Hughes.....Urban Conservation Specialist
 Glenn Lingle.....Urban Conservation Specialist
 Claire Posius.....Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator
 Amy Roskilly.....Conservation Education Coordinator
 Lisa Vavro.....Storm Water Specialist II
 Jim Storer.....District Conservationist, NRCS

Cuyahoga SWCD is an equal opportunity employer and provider

Program Support

The Cuyahoga SWCD is funded by both public and private sources. Cuyahoga SWCD is grateful for the support from the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners and local municipalities, which enables us to leverage matching funds from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources-Division of Soil & Water Conservation. In addition, grant funds were received to implement specific projects.

Cash Basis Special Fund & District Fund

RECEIPTS	TOTALS
Local Government	117,842
State Government	512,019
Federal Government	0
Sale of Products	2,396
All Other Revenue/grants	448,566
TOTAL RECEIPTS	1,080,823

DISBURSEMENTS

Salaries	370,336
Supplies	13,271
Equipment-auto, computers	53,739
Contract Services	92,990
Rent	12,000
Training & duty-related travel	6,656
Printing & advertising	20,324
PERS	51,705
Worker's Compensation	2,394
Unemployment Compensation	0
Hospitalization , benefits	78,673
Medicare	5,265
Postage/mailings	11,356
County indirect services	20,317
Other*	36,626
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$775,652

*Cash basis report lists the following items in "other": phone, fax, internet, insurance, SWCD newsletter, misc fees & program supplies, service charges, professional dues, meeting/workshop expenses.



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