



cuyahoga
SOIL & WATER
conservation district



ON *the* LAND

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District | Leading Conservation in the Urban Landscape

FALL 2024

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF CONSERVATION!

Since its establishment in 1949, Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has been working diligently to support residents and landowners in protecting and restoring our county's precious soil and water resources.

In the early 1950s, there were more than 70,000 acres of farmland in the county and the District worked closely with farmers on soil erosion control and other conservation practices. By 1959, the county's farm acreage had been reduced to just

20,000 acres, signaling the beginning of urbanization in Cuyahoga County.

As development and urban sprawl began to transform Cuyahoga County's landscape, the District's priorities shifted to reflect the challenges of rapid urbanization. In 1962, the District's major objective was to "obtain the adoption of conservation on individual lands," helping establish Cuyahoga SWCD's first educational programs for schools, homeowners, and farmers. *(cont.)*

Celebrating 75 Years Of Conservation *(continued)*

As Cuyahoga SWCD continued to evolve between the 1970's and early 2000's, the District played a key role in advocating for local, state, and national legislation supporting soil health and water quality in the Great Lakes Region.

In more recent decades, the District has continued to evolve to meet the growing conservation needs across Cuyahoga County. From workshops and school programs to plan reviews, stormwater inspections, and stream restoration projects, Cuyahoga SWCD has become an established local leader in urban conservation.

Cuyahoga SWCD is excited to build upon our 75 years of conservation experience to help communities and individuals rethink how we protect, restore, and enhance our region's valuable natural resources.

Municipal Recognition Breakfast

On February 16th, 2024, the 75th Anniversary of the Ohio Soil Conservation Commission hearing that established a need for a Soil Conservation District in Cuyahoga County, we hosted a Municipal Recognition Breakfast for local municipal leaders, including service directors, mayors, city council members, and other partners from the communities we serve.

Party for the Planet

On April 5th 1949, the Ohio Soil Conservation Commission voted to officially establish a Soil Conservation District in Cuyahoga County. To celebrate this milestone in our District's history, we joined Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's Party for the Planet event on April 20, 2024, connecting with hundreds of local residents and shared resources to encourage adoption

of conservation practices at home, at work, and in their communities.

Conservation Tours

Cuyahoga SWCD's first Board of Supervisors election was held on May 31st, 1949. To commemorate this important date in our District's history, we hosted two Conservation Tours, giving participants an opportunity to learn more about our work and service areas, and see our team's hard work in action!

Conservation Cruise

Cuyahoga SWCD celebrated big with a cruise of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie aboard the Goodtime III. More than 400 people joined us, and we recognized our four Legacy Conservationists and the Ruth Skuly Educator of the Year for their hard work and commitment to advancing conservation and environmental stewardship throughout their careers.

Visit our website for highlights and photos throughout our 75th year.
cuyahogaswcd.org/75years



February 16 - Municipal Recognition Breakfast



April 20 - Party for the Planet at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo



May 31 - Conservation Tours of Cuyahoga County



July 11 - Conservation Cruise aboard the Goodtime III

Calling All Educators!

As teachers and students are preparing for a new school year, our education team here at Cuyahoga SWCD is preparing for another amazing school year of supporting conservation education both in and out of the classroom. Whether you are a teacher, a student or a youth program leader, we have a program for you!

School Scoops

Native Urban Tree Starters (N.U.T.S.)

Your elementary students can identify the trees growing in their schoolyard, discover how native trees enrich their community and grow a native tree from seed to either take home or donate to the district.

Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences (M.W.E.E.)

MWEE's are site-specific projects designed to get your students engaging with science concepts in real-life applications. Each MWEE Project is unique and can be designed to cover cross-curricular Ohio State Standards at any grade level. Our education team can also help design MWEE Projects that align with Scout badges or the needs of other youth groups.

Envirothon Competition

Get your high schoolers involved with natural resources through the annual Envirothon Competition. Students will work together in teams to show off their knowledge in five categories: Soils, Wildlife, Forestry, Aquatics, and Current Environmental Issues.

Educator Workshops

We offer many different training opportunities to support educators of all types from classroom teachers to scout leaders to naturalists and help them get more comfortable with teaching about environmental education and getting their students involved in hands-on learning experiences. Our next workshop is October 11-13 at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. This will be an immersive 3-day training introducing educators to everything the park has to offer.



Hands-on learning experiences in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Find the right option for your setting!

From loaned kits and models to multi-visit experiences, our programs and resources address a range of conservation topics in a variety of formats suitable for youth in grades K-12.

Visit our website to find the right one for you, or reach out to Tim Becker, Education Program Coordinator
tbecker@cuyahogawcd.org

Re-naturing program in Strongsville reduces costs, improves neighborhood

Nine Homeowner's Associations (HOAs) worked with Cuyahoga SWCD and the City of Strongsville to take unused common areas maintained as turf grass and restore them to a natural area. Planting a mix of native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers creates a beautiful area for recreation while reducing the gas and fertilizer consumed for landscaping.

Rebuilding Urban Tree Canopy

The inspiration for this program came from Jennifer Milbrandt, Natural Resources Coordinator for the City of Strongsville, and her work rebuilding the city's urban forest. Jennifer has previously created an inventory of all the forested areas in the city and found that each year there is a net loss to urban canopy. Yet past programs to reforest urban areas have been met with some challenges; planting more trees leads to an increased need for leaf removal in the fall. Simultaneously, multiple HOAs approached Jennifer about how to reduce the burden of landscaping costs. Jennifer saw an opportunity to work with Cuyahoga SWCD and address these concerns with a "Re-Naturing Program" that incentivises HOAs to stop mowing turf grass in unused common areas and plant native species instead.

Balancing Reforestation with Community Needs

Native trees and shrubs provide many benefits, both ecological and for human habitation. Yet maintaining safe trees near houses can be costly. By replanting common areas away from buildings, that are intended to stay natural, there is very little risk to structures and little cost associated. Leaves and fallen branches do not need to be removed, and the neighbors benefit from the reduction of landscaping costs, less gas burned in lawnmowers, reduced flooding and erosion near streams, and a beautiful recreation space.

Vist www.cuyahogawcd.org/watershed-management for more information on watershed management



Previously mowed streambank now hosts native plants, trees, and shrubs

The Value of Urban Trees

- Native trees provide many benefits to people and wildlife that turf grass does not.
- Native trees soak up and filter stormwater before it flows to our creeks, as well as sinking carbon, cleaning the air, reducing local air temperatures, and providing habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. Not mowing turf grass reduces gas usage and the cost of landscaping.
- Re-natured areas can be beautiful assets for their neighborhood as well as wildlife; several HOAs in this program added walking trails and benches to create a new recreation space. Other ways to improve these spaces can be adding birdhouses, native flower beds, and more!

Digging into Soil Decompaction

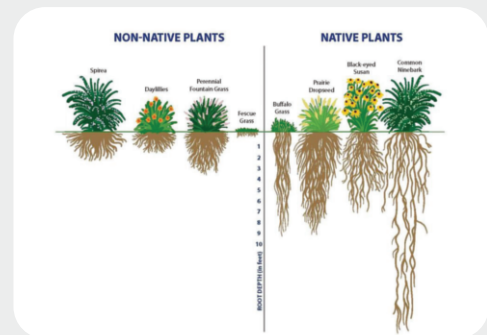
A popular saying among stormwater management practitioners is “slow it down, spread it out, soak it in”; the “it” referring to stormwater runoff. “Soaking it in” is the idea that stormwater runoff can be infiltrated into the soil at the location where the raindrop falls or in a nearby stormwater control measure designed to infiltrate collected water.

Soaking it in

A common misconception is that grassed surfaces have good infiltration. The reality is that most urban soils are highly compacted. Even non-urban land such as sports practice fields or landscaped areas around businesses exhibit signs of compaction. This equates to stormwater running off the field before it has an opportunity to soak in and restore moisture to the soil profile. This compaction can be mitigated by not using certain portions of a property and letting nature take over. Allowing grasses to grow tall, roots to penetrate deeper into the soil, and not mowing or trampling the land which leads to compaction. However, aesthetic norms dictate that land be kept tidy through mowing or available for productive uses such as sports. The compromise then comes down to land and soil management.

Upfront decisions and intentional land management will help guide if and how soil decompaction is right for your property.

If the situation is right, begin the decompaction journey by marking your utility connections and then tilling a space in your lawn to a depth of 12-18 inches or more. Spread four inches of finished compost across the area and use a hard tined rake to thoroughly incorporate it. It's preferable to reseed the area with native plants and grasses. Minimize use of the area, especially when the soil is wet. Begin a periodic routine of soil aeration and compost amendment to preserve and enhance the area. The Ohio Rainwater and Land Development Manual has more in-depth specifications if you have a commercial business or larger area where you would like to apply decompaction techniques.



Native plants have long root systems that help soak in stormwater

Quick tips for soaking it in

- Restore air space and organic matter to soil through periodic aeration and amending with compost.
- Minimize mowing and use of the land. Install deep rooting and aesthetically pleasing native plants to do the job naturally.
- Soil decompaction is a fairly simple practice that can be scaled up or down to meet the size of your project.
- Contact the stormwater team at Cuyahoga SWCD for more advice when you are ready to begin your decompaction project.



Each Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in Ohio is administered by a five-member board of supervisors, each serving a three year term. These supervisors guide the staff and partnering agencies in efforts to implement conservation programs in their respective counties. Supervisor elections are special elections, independent of a general election, conducted annually by the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission (OSWCC) pursuant to rules adopted under Chapter 119 and 940 of Ohio Revised Code. The Ohio Department of Agriculture staff, as official designated agents, oversee local SWCD supervisor elections, on behalf of the OSWCC.

HOW TO VOTE



IN PERSON AT THE CSWCD OFFICE

September 7th - October 4th | 8:30am-3:00pm
3311 Perkins Avenue | Suite 100 | Cleveland, OH 44114
(Free parking available on Perkins Ave. & East 36th St.)



ABSENTEE AND MAIL-IN VOTING

September 7th-October 1st | Request a mail-in ballot

- **phone:** 216.503.0719
- **email:** thaendiges@cuyahogawcd.org
- **web:** www.cuyahogawcd.org/2024supervisorelection



AT THE CUYAHOGA SWCD STORMWATER RUNOFF*

October 6th | 8:30-10:30am
Clark Field Park (Tremont Pk. & Clark Ave.)
www.cuyahogawcd.org/events/runoff
**You do not have to register for the event to vote in the election, but we hope you do!*

Eligible voters must be at least eighteen years of age at the time of the official election and be a resident or own land in Cuyahoga County.

www.cuyahogawcd.org/2024supervisorelection

Follow us on social
[@cuyahogawcd](#)



Love the newsletter but hate the paper?

Contact Amy Roskilly, aroskilly@cuyahogawcd.org. We can put you on our broadcast email list that includes an electronic version of our newsletter and other pertinent conservation news!



MEET THE CANDIDATES

CUYAHOGA SWCD 2024 SUPERVISOR ELECTION



**CAROLINE
KELEMEN**

Caroline Kelemen currently serves as Vice Chair for Cuyahoga SWCD Board of Supervisors and is seeking their third term on the board. Since graduating with an Agricultural Engineering degree from Purdue University, Caroline has been working on storm, sewer and potable water projects in Northeast Ohio. Caroline has worked on stormwater master planning, erosion assessments, water quality and quantity monitoring, asset management and construction inspection in both the public and private sector. They currently work on conveyance construction projects for Wade Trim. Caroline is an active caver and hiker and has hiked the Appalachian Trail. Caroline believes fostering the diversity of the environment and the environmental sector is essential for building the resiliency needed to face environmental challenges. It takes all kinds to build a better world.



**ANTON
KRIEGER**

Anton Krieger started as an environmental justice organizer at Buckeye Environmental Network in 2021 and is now the program manager of the oil & gas waste program. He received his Master of Public Administration from Cleveland State University with a dual specialization in economic development and city management. During his Masters, Anton studied the importance of green infrastructure and land conservation in future city planning efforts in Cuyahoga County. He formerly served on the Rocky River Watershed Council Board of Directors.



**SAMANTHA
MARTIN**

Samantha Martin blends a background of marketing, public relations, stewarding partnerships, and mission-based storytelling. She serves as the Director of Communications & Engagement at Cleveland Water Alliance (CWA), overseeing the branding, messaging, and promotion of the internationally renowned freshwater innovation cluster and its Smart Lake Erie Watershed: the largest digitally connected freshwater body in the world. Throughout her time with CWA, she led and launched an organization-wide rebranding effort to reflect its global leadership. She is passionate about crafting impact-driven communications processes, strategies, and campaigns, and has successfully garnered local, regional, national, and international media coverage of the organization's projects and programs. Her experience also includes cultivating engagement with CWA's vast network through executing events, webinars, and giving opportunities. She currently serves on the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern Advisory Committee and holds a BA from Baldwin-Wallace College in Public Relations and Political Science.



**CHRISTINA
ZNIDARSIC**

Christina Znidarsic is a Northeast Ohio native with a deep-seated passion for the environment. She leads the stream and wetland restoration team for Davey Resource Group's Northern Ohio consulting office and holds a Masters degree in Environmental Science from Cleveland State University and a BS in Geology from the College of William and Mary. She has over 13 years of experience in stream and wetland restoration, watershed planning, stormwater policy, and environmental education and outreach. She lives in Cleveland with her husband and two extremely spoiled cats and loves riding her bicycle, hiking, and tending to her 100% native plant garden!



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Sunday, October 6
Starts and ends at Clark Field
8:00am - registration/packet pick-up
9:00am - 5k & 1-mile run/walk begin

Celebrate Stormwater Awareness Week!
Run or walk on the Towpath Trail and learn about stormwater and how to slow it down, spread it out and soak it in!

www.cuyahogaswcd.org

